Welcome friends and colleagues to the eighth annual Mannes Institute. I’d like to thank Dean Lowry, not just for allowing us to be here, but for coming to our opening session and extending such a warm and gracious welcome to this distinguished institution. It is an honor for me to bring the Institute to Eastman, and establish ties between our country’s best small conservatory and its best larger one. As some of you might know, the Institute is funded entirely by private people, with no institutional support from Mannes, Eastman, or any place else. This event is the achievement of a small handful of imaginative individuals whose only goal is the advancement of musical scholarship.

Kicking off the Institute each summer is a momentous occasion for me. To quote Shakespeare, it’s the one time of year I’m dressed in a little, brief authority. In between, I have, as Thoreau said of himself, a real genius for staying at home. Over the next four days, however, in the halls of this magnificent building, we will discover a different vision of who we are, or who at least I think we might try to be.

The Institute has a watchword: “Deliberate with Coolness, Analyze with Criticism, Reflect with Candor, and Evaluate with Conviction.” This mostly comes from an article published in 1787 under the pseudonym Cato during the debate over the adoption of the U.S. Constitution. Many historians think the author was New York’s Governor George Clinton—no relationship to Hillary—but there’s no conclusive evidence. Against almost unanimous support for ratification, Cato urged people to think for themselves, by deliberating with coolness, analyzing with criticism, reflecting with candor, and evaluating with conviction. This challenge of independent thought and reasoned skepticism articulates the credo of the Institute. The logo on your badges, da Vinci’s Vitruvian Man, is an iconic symbol of the spirit of rational inquiry that guides our deliberations.

The Mannes Institute is an experiment in collaborative learning. We’re a community in constant flux and realignment, with new members coming and going, all of whom think and care deeply about music and seek a forum to share their insights, doubts, and discoveries. This is a place where we can discuss ideas among peers who appreciate, stimulate, and challenge us in a mutually respectful way. We are invited to examine our own thinking out loud before others in a safe and receptive environment.

The purpose of the Institute is to air our views, not on the mute and tidy pages of academic journals or books, but in the dynamic give and take of an interactive classroom, where good spirited haggling, trial balloons, half-baked truths, sudden intuitions, and speculative rebuttals are all fair game. Our modality is one of mutual engagement. We welcome dissent and debate rather than the uniformity of groupthink on one hand, or the pitfalls of insularity on the other. We affirm a noble tradition of humanistic inquiry premised on the rigorous testing of ideas through collegial interrogation, rooted in venerable disciplines.
of independent thought, critical examination, and free-ranging discourse. We thrive on what Virginia Woolf calls the stimulus of contradiction.

The Institute presents myriad opportunities for spontaneous conversations and collaborations both in our workshops and the social spaces in between. Within our cadre of 45, there are innumerable subsets and combinations for interaction. I urge you to drop your shyness and inhibitions, to relax and take your intellectual shoes off, let your academic hair down, and get to know one another as friends. Reach out to others, particularly those you don’t yet know or who’s expertise lies elsewhere, in a warm and receptive way. Be available, curious, and inclusive. Branch out. Join in. Express yourself. There’s no hierarchy here, not a lot of structure, no one who doesn’t belong, and no one who doesn’t have something valuable to contribute.

The people in this room embody the current state of jazz and pop scholarship gathering together 75 years after *Sophisticated Lady* and 50 years after *Great Balls of Fire*. Over the next four days, in a posture of monastic retreat in the midst of a teeming festival, cloistered in one of the most esteemed conservatories in the world, we will hold up a mirror to our music and to ourselves as a band of brothers and sisters with a unified mission.

Our congress is a momentous occasion in the evolution and intersection of two evolving disciplines. We are at the forefront of our field, imparting through our dedication increased stature and credibility to these vital vernacular repertoires. We’ve come a long way from Adorno. Whether it’s a Bird or a Beatles, we’re chasing, a Door or a Trane, we’re here to proclaim their genius and validate musical traditions beyond the stagnant pale and ossification of the concert hall, with living roots in vibrant cultures and real people speaking living languages we understand and sing ourselves. We’ve cast off the chains of cultural colonialism and the high-art pretensions of musical modernism. We’re here to represent. This is change we can believe in—yes we can.

And so goes the Institute itself. This is a different creature than our normal academic conferences. We’re about change here too. The Institute’s more participatory and less formal, more candid and less programmed. We’re more personal, more challenging, and frankly, more satisfying. We consider things in depth, with attention to detail. We roll our sleeves up. We’re more about process than results. We’re improvisational rather than compositional. Our workshops are jam sessions, not stage performances. This is a safe haven where we can drop our titles and pretenses, thrive on a riff, test drive a theory, look an assumption in the eye, and become students once again.

Our day job as scholars is to think, but the actual business of thinking, our intuitions and embryonic conceptions, unfortunately have little place in our professional conduct. The rich shadows of speculation are rarely cast in our finished products. We’re not allowed to feel our way, hover on the borderland of truth, or wander in the maze of a probable argument. Traditional scholarly modalities are more orthodox—there’s little room for doubt.

The Institute has a different agenda. We offer a site for the construction and deconstruction of paradigms, a locus for active self-critique. In our circular workshops, polished arguments and nascent hypotheses confront and cross-fertilize each another. We plant seeds that will bear the fruit of further research. We’re gathered here at Eastman not just to learn from each other, but also to teach each other. Each of you is here not just to take, but also to give. Ours is not a solitary endeavor. It’s too easy, as someone said of Emerson, to be a sage in one’s own study. Here our ideas are subjected to instant scrutiny and supplementation, tested and enhanced in the crucible of collegial collaboration and interrogation.
Let me be perfectly honest: the task before you is rigorous. The Institute is not a stroll in the park. You are all welcome here, but there’s a price of admission. Something is asked of you while you’re here. There’s work to be done, not just by our coaches, but by each of you as players on the team. Our scorecard depends on you. So unless necessary, you’re expected to commit and be present with us fully in mind, body, and spirit each step of the way, at all events including our workshops, our plenary meetings, our daily meals, and our social gatherings. Don’t wander off mentally, physically, or otherwise. You’re expected to participate, to speak up, to raise issues, pose questions and offer insights, and to share of yourself as a colleague.

The relentless pace and intensity of the program, for which in some quarters I’ve earned the reputation of De Sade, is designed to induce fatigue, a sort of dizziness Derrida calls “intellectual vertigo.” By eroding our resistance, we loosen convictions in our own habits of thought. We’ll become exhausted yet exhilarated. If you’re lucky, you’ll experience a kind of conceptual brainwashing, or at least a bath, if only temporarily, as a predicate for private reflection and reconstruction in the recovery room at home. We’ll carry away a memory of achievement, of having been through something demanding yet worthwhile, and of having done it together. We’ll earn our diplomas, and be proud of them.

So what is the Mannes Institute? It’s both a physical place and a conceptual space. It’s a nursery of reflections where we think aloud and build camaraderie in a deeper and more meaningful way. It’s an activity, a mode of noncompetitive and egalitarian interaction. It’s our constitutional convention. As patient scholars secluded in our studies, chained to our committees, immersed in our families, entrenched in our teaching, what opportunities do these four special days present?

Now, I would say is our time for ourselves, our time to think together side by side. Now is our time to drop our ranks and resumes and teach not just our students, but each other as well. Now is our time to take stock of our work, assess where we are, and where we want to go. Now is our chance to ask questions without answers, and float answers yet to be tested. Now is our time to delve deeper into music we love, and start dating music we’ve just met. Now is our moment to celebrate diversity and multiple perspectives, and to appreciate the richness of who we are as scholars, as colleagues, as friends, and simply as people.

This is what makes the Institute so special. It’s why I do what I do, why we’re in our eighth year, and why I think each of you is here. There’s nothing quite like it in the world. So just as Dean Lowry welcomed you to Eastman, this magnificent shrine of music, I welcome you to our musical think tank, the Mannes Institute, this “discursive democracy” in Habermas’ words, where all of you matter, and each of you has a vital role to play.

You’ve done all this work, and come all this way. We’re finally here. I’m inviting you now to seize the day, and maximize the astonishing potential we’ve collectively brought to bear. I’m asking you to bond together as a team, a band of scholars, yoking yourselves more closely to one another in a fraternity of discourse, so we may gradually come to think and feel as one, united paradoxically through a polyphony of voices, so we may emerge in the end, each of us revitalized though a genuine meeting of the minds.
2008 Institute Members

Lori Burns
John Covach
Walt Everett
Cynthia Folio
Steve Larson
Henry Martin
Fernando Benadon
David Carson Berry
Nicole Biamonte
Benjamin Bierman
Barbara Bleij
Mark Butler
Matt Butterfield
Guy Capuzzo
Laurent Cugny
Christopher Doll
Andrew Flory
Karen Fournier
Ben Givan
Sumanth Gopinath
Dai Griffiths
Daniel Harrison
Dave Headlam
Richard Hermann
Robert Hodson
John Howland
Timothy Hughes
Patricia Julien
Timothy Koozin
Betsy Marvin
Horace Maxile
James McGowan
Jocelyn Neal
Shaughn O’Donnell
Joti Rockwell
Keith Salley
Janna Saslaw
Ramon Satyendra
Daniel Sonenberg
Mark Spicer
Steven Strunk
Robert Wason
Carl Woideck
Albin Zak

Special Guests:

Lewis Porter
Harold Danko
Joyce McDonough