

# BEYOND MODERN JAZZ

## THE EVOLUTION OF POSTMODERN JAZZ PERFORMANCE AND COMPOSITION FROM 1969 TO THE PRESENT

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## ABSTRACT

In the following paper, I will address what I perceive to be a gap in scholarship regarding the evolution of African-American classical music (popularly referred to as ‘jazz’) following the end of its primary phase of development, which I would refer to as the *pre-modern* and *modern* periods, and which I define as stretching roughly from the turn of the last century until the end of the 1960s. To this end, I will borrow from concepts of postmodernism as expressed by Jean-François Lyotard, James Morley, and Kenneth Gloag, in order to attempt to define what I feel it means within the context of the jazz lineage.

In the process of examining this ‘post-history’, I will bring particular focus to the contributions of two key figures, Keith Jarrett and Wynton Marsalis. I will also look at a series of my own compositions and consider where they fit into the ‘postmodern’ paradigm.

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## Chapter 1 ‘Got No Kick Against Modern Jazz...’<sup>1</sup>

‘Jazz’ is the now standardized term used to describe various streams of popular and art music which originated in the southern United States around the turn of the last century, primarily within the African-American community. It was cobbled together from a blend of earlier African-American folk and classical styles, particularly blues and ragtime, along with diverse influences such as Jewish vaudeville, popular song, and klezmer music; Irish, French, and Scottish traditional music; European classical, romantic, and military band music; and what Jelly Roll Morton called “The Spanish Tinge”<sup>2</sup>, the Hispanic/Caribbean/Latin American influence that has been part of the equation from the very beginnings of the music, returning through the years in various forms. One of the key features of jazz is the element of improvisation. It seems feasible that the culture of the improvised solo may have roots in the African *griot*, or storytelling, tradition (the griot had a role in many African societies that was akin to a historian, passing on stories and history through prose, poetry, and song), which in the United States manifested in the guises of the Black preacher and the blues singer, who mastered the art of building drama through sermon or song, gradually elevating the congregation or audience into an ecstatic state in the process. The instrumental jazz soloist provided a similar function, and the

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<sup>1</sup> Chuck Berry, “Roll Over Beethoven” (1956)

<sup>2</sup> Lomax, Alan, *Mister Jelly Roll: The Fortunes of Jelly Roll Morton, New Orleans Creole and “Inventor of Jazz”* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2001 [orig. published 1950]) p 62

‘voice’ of the individual storyteller (soloist) came to be valued above interpretative skill, which is the emphasis in European classical music.

Though it has been reinvented again and again through numerous cultural lenses, jazz is a uniquely American creation that rests on the very broad shoulders of two equally rich and complex systems of counterpoint: the rhythmic counterpoint of Western Africa that is the basis for the feeling of syncopation, polyrhythm, and ceaseless forward motion that we have come to know as “groove”; and the melodic counterpoint of Western Europe, which is the foundation of the system of Western tonal harmony. However, it is worth noting that even this standard narrative, that jazz is the product of a mix of European harmony and African rhythm, is an oversimplification. There are many melodic and harmonic elements in jazz that are probably African in origin, for example, the dominant seventh chord as used in a ‘blues’ context, which doesn’t function as a true resolving dominant chord at all, but rather creates a unique tonic quality that is neither major nor minor. The African origins of this tonal colour are explained by the German scholar and anthropologist Gerhard Kubick in the following interview excerpt:

Across the West African savanna you often find a characteristic pentatonic system. We discovered that it is generated from the use of harmonics up to the 9<sup>th</sup>, sometimes the 10<sup>th</sup> partial. That is this kind of the scale, from top to bottom:

D C Bb G E C

It is a so-called natural scale. It is slightly different from the notes found on European instruments with their tuning temperament. If you can construct the natural harmonic series over a fundamental you call see, the 5<sup>th</sup> partial will be a somewhat flat major third which we call E-386, and the 7<sup>th</sup> partial is indeed flat by 31 cents, we call it B-flat-969. It’s not nuclear physics, of course. Now B-flat-

969 is the higher blue note. Next, if you transpose this West African savannah scale from the level of C to the level of F, the fifth down, or a fourth up (it doesn't matter), you get this scale:

G F Eb C A F

Once again with two slightly flat intervals as compared with the notes of the Western tempered total system. And now comes the trick. If you integrate these two pentatonic columns, the basic form and the transposition, you get the common blues tonal scale, showing an interference pattern between the pitches of E-386 over C and E-flat-969 over F. That explains the fluctuating quality of the lower blue note.

It seems this integration was reached by African-American musicians in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century when they were trying to align the tonality of field hollers, many of which are in savannah pentatonic system, with a guitar chord progressions they had learned. It then turned out to be possible to first back a field holler melody with the tonic chord (C) on the guitar, and then switch back to the subdominant chord (F). But the dominant chord was alien to the new system, and therefore, as I mentioned, blues and jazz history is also the history of many attempts to change it or substitute it.<sup>3</sup>

The pentatonic scale described by Kubick, if expressed vertically, spells out what in Western harmony would be called a dominant 9th chord. The use of this type of 'dominant' sound as a tonic function chord and its juxtaposition, melodically, with certain flatted, or 'blue', notes as described above, is unique to the blues tonality, which eventually became integrated into nearly all the streams of American music, including, of course, jazz.

Similarly, there are rhythmic elements that are European, such as the influence of dance forms like the march, jig, reel, waltz, rhumba.. Regardless, this particular blend of

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<sup>3</sup> *Africa and the Blues: an interview with Gerhard Kubick* ([www.afropop.org](http://www.afropop.org), April, 2007)

African and European (and probably Indigenous American) influences could only have emerged in America.

Pianist Bill Evans explains jazz in the following way:

I feel that jazz is not so much a style as it is a process of making music. It's the process of making one minute's music in one minute's time. Whereas when you compose, you can make one minute's music and take three months... We tend to think of jazz as a stylistic medium, but we must remember that in an absolute sense, jazz is more of a certain creative process of spontaneity than a style... Any good teacher of serious classical composition will always tell a student that the composition should sound as if it's improvised. It should have a spontaneous quality, so actually, the art of music is the art of speaking with this spontaneous quality.<sup>4</sup>

Three decades earlier, the brilliant, flamboyant New Orleans Creole pianist and composer Ferdinand "Jelly Roll" Morton made a statement that superficially seems to contradict Evans, but upon closer examination suggests something similar:

Ragtime is a certain type of syncopation and only certain tunes can be played in that idea. But jazz is a style that can be applied to any type of tune.<sup>5</sup>

In other words, according to Morton, jazz is a process through which any song, whether a classical theme, pop song, or even, in the instance of saxophone great Sonny Rollins' album *Way Out West*, traditional Western cowboy songs, can be 'jazzed', i.e. 'swung', syncopated, and used as a framework for improvisation.

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<sup>4</sup> *The Universal Mind of Bill Evans* (Rhapsody Films, 1966)

<sup>5</sup> Lomax, p 62

## 1.1 A brief note on the use of the word ‘Jazz’

The origins of the word jazz (earlier spelling variants included jass and jas) are the subject of much speculation. The first known example of the word’s use in print was from 1912, in reference to baseball: pitcher Ben Henderson was quoted in the Los Angeles times referring to his wobbly curve ball (possibly a knuckle ball) as a ‘jazz ball’<sup>6</sup>. It has also been linked to the 19<sup>th</sup> century slang term *jasm*, a variant of *jism*, meaning spirit or vitality (also used to refer to semen) and to the French *jaser*, meaning *to gossip, prattle, chatter or blab* and was also apparently used to refer to copulation<sup>7</sup>. It has been a point of contention for some, mainly African-Americans who find the term demeaning and unbecoming of their great contribution to world culture. It was no less a figure than Duke Ellington who was quoted as saying, “I’m not a jazz artist, I’m Duke Ellington”<sup>8</sup>. During the Civil Rights era of the 1960s, when African-Americans were struggling to cast off the shackles of colonialism, slavery, servitude and institutionalized racism, efforts increased to create more dignified alternatives, most of which had ethnic connotations (“Black Music”) or implied an assertion of equality with other advanced art forms (“America’s Classical Music”, as coined by the late pianist and educator Dr. Billy Taylor). More recently, New Orleans-born trumpeter and multi-instrumentalist Nicholas

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<sup>6</sup> Ben Zimmer, *How Baseball Gave Us “Jazz”: The surprising origins of a 100-year-old word* (The Boston Globe, March 25, 2012)

<sup>7</sup> *About Words: a blog from Cambridge Dictionaries Online: “Jazz Is a Four-Letter Word”, by Hugh Rawson* (June 27, 2011); bab.la French-English dictionary

<sup>8</sup> Bill Milkowski, *Tony Bennett: In an Ellingtonian Mood* (JazzTimes, December 1999)

Payton has reignited the debate, suggesting that “Jazz is the white appropriation of Black American music”, and that it is “an oppressive colonialist slave term and I want no part of it”. He has suggested an acronym, ‘BAM’, standing for ‘Black American Music’<sup>9</sup>, which would include so-called ‘jazz’ under an umbrella that also includes soul, R&B, hip hop, blues, and other traditionally African-American forms of musical expression. Payton emphasizes that the term doesn’t exclude individuals of any ethnicity from playing the music, it merely acknowledges its origins, in the same way one would speak of ‘Irish’ or ‘Brazilian’ music.

The history of the United States is mired in uncomfortable social politics and racial divisions, and it should be no surprise that the country’s national art form reflects those same issues. That important discussion is beyond the scope of this thesis. While respecting those who understandably consider the word limiting, vague, or even offensive, I have used the familiar term *jazz* for the sake of consistency and clarity.

## **1.2 When was Jazz Modern?**

In order to properly investigate the meaning of ‘postmodern’ jazz, we must first come to some sort of consensus on what constitutes ‘modern’ jazz, and attempt to identify, at least

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<sup>9</sup> Nicholas Payton, *The Cherub Speaks* (Internet blog: November 8, 2013, October 8, 2013)

approximately, the time frame in question, particularly the point at which the “modern” era came to a conclusion. I propose that this date can be pinpointed as roughly the end of the 1960s.

According to most standard jazz histories, the era of ‘modern’ jazz began in the mid-1940s, when the Swing Era, in which big bands with jazz soloists played music that was mainly for dancing, gave way to a much more intricate, virtuosic version of the music which was eventually given the onomatopoeic name *bebop*.

The new music evolved at after hours jam sessions in New York City and was spearheaded by pioneers like trumpeter John Birks “Dizzy” Gillespie, alto saxophonist Charlie Parker, guitarist Charlie Christian, drummers Kenny Clarke and Max Roach, and pianist-composers Thelonious Monk, Lennie Tristano and Earl “Bud” Powell. It featured blisteringly fast tempos and long 8<sup>th</sup> note lines woven through dense chord structures, often borrowed from popular ‘standards’ of the day. The basic melodic/harmonic language of bebop was built largely on diatonic scalar and arpeggiated lines with chromatic passing and approach notes to facilitate harmonic voice-leading and an emphasis on the upper extensions of the chord (i.e. beyond the 7<sup>th</sup>) such as the 9, 11, and 13. The flatted fifth in particular became emblematic of the sound of bebop modernism, and it served a triple function: as the raised 11<sup>th</sup> of a major or dominant 7<sup>th</sup> chord (the



‘true’ 11<sup>th</sup> according to the overtone series<sup>10</sup>), as a leading tone to the 5<sup>th</sup>, and as a ‘blue note’ that kept the intricate new music rooted in the feeling of the blues. It was initially perceived as a major departure, and many people considered it dissonant and strange-sounding.

From our vantage point now, however, it is easy to hear bebop as a logical extension of the language of the great soloists of the Swing era, which is perfectly illustrated by the work of the two preeminent pre-bebop tenor saxophonists: the ‘vertical’ (chord-based) approach of Coleman Hawkins and the ‘horizontal’ (melody-based) approach of Lester Young. Charlie Parker in a sense amalgamated these two approaches, developing a highly logical kind of ‘horizontal verticalism’, in which chord tones are targeted and connected by rapidly moving lines. This language became the foundation on which linear jazz improvisation was built for the next quarter century; terms like ‘cool jazz’ and ‘hard bop’ described a certain attitude or aesthetic, but on a fundamental musical level the language was the same. Before he began exploring modes, pentatonic scales and intervallic shapes as improvisational devices, John Coltrane was essentially a highly advanced bebop player. Even Ornette Coleman, who ultimately abandoned predetermined harmonic

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<sup>10</sup> The harmonic overtone series consists of the many notes, or ‘partials’, contained within a single note, similar to the multiple colours that exist within white light, which reveal themselves when diffused through a prism. When the 11<sup>th</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> appears in the overtone series (11<sup>th</sup> partial), it is approximately a #11 (#4). When jazz pianists or guitarists voice a major or dominant 7<sup>th</sup> chord that includes the 11<sup>th</sup>, it is actually the #11 that they will use; despite the fact that it is not diatonic to the major scale, it doesn’t create the dissonance that the “natural” 11 does, which forms a highly dissonant minor 9<sup>th</sup> interval with the 3<sup>rd</sup> of the chord. This is the partial basis for George Russell’s *Lydian Chromatic Concept of Tonal Organization*, which revolves around the idea that the Lydian scale (the major scale with a raised 4<sup>th</sup>, the same note as the #11) is the “true” major scale.

structures altogether, still strung melodic lines together in a fashion that owed a clear debt to Parker and his colleagues.

And yet there is a basic flaw in the premise that jazz as modern art music, meant for serious listening rather than dancing or entertainment, started when swing gave way to bebop. This discounts the very serious and highly modern music that Duke Ellington had been creating since the mid-1920s, to say nothing of Jelly Roll Morton's even earlier work as a composer, and Louis Armstrong's early Hot Five and Hot Seven recordings. Cornetist Bix Beiderbecke wrote a series of piano pieces in the late 1920s, the most famous being "In A Mist", that clearly reflected the influence of the French composers he admired, particularly Debussy.<sup>11</sup> And many of the pre-bebop pianists, like Earl Hines, Mary Lou Williams, Willie "The Lion" Smith, and particularly Art Tatum were quite harmonically advanced, in some ways more so than the pianists of the bebop era. Author and pianist Ted Gioia reminds us that Tatum, "...Employing massive chord structures...created dazzling harmonic variations and elevated passing chords (often compacted four to a bar, measure after measure) to a level of sophistication that has never been surpassed in either jazz or classical music."<sup>12</sup> Certainly, all of these musicians made music that leaned in a more commercial or populist direction, but they also made highly innovative, experimental, and sophisticated art. Indeed, one only has to look to the 1960s and contrast the emergence of accessible, danceable 'soul' jazz with the more avant garde

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<sup>11</sup> Peter C. Mancall and Mitchell Newton-Matza, *Jazz Age: People and Perspectives* (Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2009) 105

<sup>12</sup> Ted Gioia, *The History of Jazz* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997) 102

forms with which it coexisted to realize that, even after jazz had ceased to be primarily a ‘popular’ music, it continued to develop along both populist and artistic pathways (nor were the two always necessarily mutually exclusive). There is, then, a school of thought, one that I personally subscribe to, that says that *all* jazz from the primary period of the music’s evolution is modern, that jazz itself is a product of the modern era, having emerged in an industrialized and urbanized America at the same time as modernism was manifesting as a movement in all the arts. At least as early as the 1920s, there was a ‘conversation’ between African-American music and contemporary European music. Composers like Stravinsky, Delius, Shostakovich, Dvořák, Ravel, and Debussy acknowledged and absorbed the sounds and spirit of jazz, blues, and ragtime.<sup>13</sup> Debussy’s familiar piano piece “Golliwog’s Cakewalk” (an offensive title by modern standards<sup>14</sup>), Stravinsky’s “Ebony Concerto”, written for the Woody Herman Orchestra, and the two suites for jazz orchestra by Shostakovich are among the most obvious examples. American jazz and popular music composers and performers responded in kind, with Duke Ellington citing Delius as an influence<sup>15</sup>, Charlie Parker famously lauding Stravinsky, Hindemith, Prokofiev and others.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Jack Sullivan, *New World Symphonies: How American Culture Changed European Music* (Danbury, CT: Yale University Press, 1999)

<sup>14</sup> A “Golliwog” was a character based on a racially caricatured black minstrel doll that originally appeared in children’s books by author Florence Kate Upton. Dr. David Pilgrim, *The Golliwog Caricature* (Jim Crow Museum, Ferris State University, November, 2000)

<sup>15</sup> *Duke Ellington Loves His Music, Likes Delius, Dislikes Jazz Critics, Deplores Some People's Ignorance of Swing* (No author credited; interview from The Harvard Crimson, October 19, 1937)

<sup>16</sup> Graeme Kay, *Jazz and Stravinsky* ([http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio3/classical/tchaikovsky/atoz/strav\\_j.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio3/classical/tchaikovsky/atoz/strav_j.shtml))

Regardless of whether we date the beginning of modernism in jazz from its earliest beginnings or from the bebop era, it is more crucial to this thesis to identify its approximate end period. In one of his controversial blogs, Nicholas Payton claims that “Jazz died in 1959”<sup>17</sup>. While this statement may be viewed as a bit extreme, it is certainly true that the music reached a kind of artistic zenith during the years between 1958 and 1961, a period that saw the release of several of the most groundbreaking recordings in history, including Miles Davis’ *Kind of Blue*, John Coltrane’s *Giant Steps*, Dave Brubeck’s *Time Out*, Charles Mingus’ *Mingus Ah Um*, Ornette Coleman’s *The Shape of Jazz to Come*, and Bill Evans’ *Sunday at the Village Vanguard* and *Waltz for Debby*. But it would be ridiculous to assert that this was the end of creative growth in the music. These recordings provided inspiration and a variety of musical templates that were explored in the decade that followed. They ranged from mode-based improvisation to open-form (‘free’) improvisation, odd time signatures and metric modulation, complex harmonic motion, no harmonic motion, and, courtesy of pianist Evans, a contrapuntal approach to trio playing in which the bassist and drummer became equal partners in dialogue, rather than mere accompanists.

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<sup>17</sup> Nicholas Payton, *The Cherub Speaks* (Internet blog: November 27, 2011)

It was during this pivotal decade of the 1960s that two significant groups emerged which would assimilate and amalgamate, between them, all of these new directions the music had been pointed in. The first of these was the John Coltrane Quartet, which went through a series of personnel changes before solidifying its classic lineup, including pianist McCoy Tyner, bassist Jimmy Garrison, and drummer Elvin Jones, in 1962. The other was the group that Miles Davis formed in 1964, which came to be known as the ‘Second Great Quintet’ (the ‘First’ had included Coltrane along with Red Garland, Paul Chambers and “Philly” Joe Jones), featuring pianist Herbie Hancock, bassist Ron Carter, and teenaged drum prodigy Tony Williams. The final piece of the puzzle was tenor saxophonist Wayne Shorter, who was quickly evolving into the most important jazz composer of his generation, a gift he had begun nurturing earlier as a member of Art Blakey’s Jazz Messengers but that he was able to bring to fruition in the less traditional, more open-ended environment the Davis group provided.

The specific impact of these groups will be examined in greater detail in later chapters, but for now let it suffice to say that they collectively represented a culmination of everything that had come before them over the course of sixty-plus years of jazz’s development.

In 1967, liver cancer permanently silenced the restless musical quest of John Coltrane, who ranks with Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, and Charlie Parker as one of jazz’s towering icons. Two years later, Davis recorded *In A Silent Way*. This album, and the

subsequent *Bitches Brew*, marked a major departure from the previous trajectory of his career. Inspired by the rock, funk, and Soul sounds of Jimi Hendrix, Sly Stone, James Brown, and The Beatles, and by the potential to maintain relevance through reaching a wider, younger audience, he abandoned the classic acoustic jazz quintet model in favour of larger groups featuring multiple electric keyboards, electric guitar, electric bass, and sometimes multiple drummer/percussionists. Many who heard these sounds accused Davis of ‘selling out’. In my opinion, however, it is difficult to discern any semblance of commerciality in these recordings. They are avant-garde tone paintings, innovative musical statements that still sound adventurous today. It should be remembered that the rock audiences of the late 1960s were arguably much more sophisticated than they are today. They had grown up over the course of the decade, following the Beatles from lightweight early fare of the “I Want To Hold Your Hand” variety to artistic masterpieces like *Rubber Soul*, *Revolver*, and *Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band*. They were ready to take in the heady poetry of singer-songwriters like Bob Dylan, Joni Mitchell, and Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young. They were ready for the more challenging, experiential form of rock music that was increasingly on offer from bands like Cream, the Jimi Hendrix Experience, the Who, the Grateful Dead, Led Zeppelin, Pink Floyd, Black Sabbath, Jefferson Airplane, and others. This new degree of sophistication and receptivity among the youth audience extended, to a certain degree at least, to jazz. It was not unusual in the late 1960s and 70s for one’s record collection to include *Kind of Blue*, Coltrane’s *A Love Supreme*, and Brubeck’s *Time Out* alongside *Led Zeppelin II* and Pink Floyd’s *Dark Side of the Moon*. Davis’ embrace of electric instruments, rock and funk

rhythms, simple modal vamps in place of dense chord progressions, and amplification that allowed him to play in large theatre and arena-style venues provided a way in for these young listeners, and he began sharing festival and concert bills with many of the aforementioned rock acts. But the music continued to be adventurous and creative, a vibrant blend of elements that could no longer really be considered jazz but wasn't rock either (hence the coining of the term 'fusion').

Before long, most of the jazz-trained musicians who had been associated with Davis during the previous few years, and many other jazz artists as well, embraced the fusion mandate, abandoning the jazz mainstream in favour of music that was coloured by rock or rhythm and blues, some for artistic reasons, others for commercial ones. 'Fusion' was not a unified movement by any means, any more than jazz had been before it. It ranged from the shifting time signatures and grandiose virtuosity of John McLaughlin's Mahavishnu Orchestra (which had much in common with progressive rock bands like Yes, King Crimson, and Genesis) to the sophisticated funk of Herbie Hancock's Headhunters, from the samba and flamenco-inflected music of Return to Forever with Chick Corea and Stanley Clarke to the overtly commercial proto-smooth jazz of George Benson and Grover Washington, Jr.

At this point, several trends seemed to emerge that suggest that the first major period of jazz evolution, the modern period, was drawing to a close. The music was becoming increasingly fragmented and factionalized, with traditionalists disparaging those who

‘sold out’ to fusion, musicians associated with the avant-garde<sup>18</sup> disparaging the traditionalists, and many of those that had embraced fusion enjoying a degree of financial success that was elusive to those who remained committed to the music’s mainstream. Perhaps most significantly, jazz ceased to be primarily an expression of “black” culture, morphing into a more universal, global phenomenon. This could be seen quite blatantly in Europe. Where previous generations of European jazz players were mostly satisfied to approximate American jazz, European improvising musicians of the 1970s took the inspiration they derived from Ellington, Monk, Coltrane, and others and channeled it into more personal approaches that reflected their own cultural and geographic realities and folk and classical heritages.

Meanwhile, in America, jazz became academicized, finally recognized as the serious art form it had always been and subsequently moving from the street to the classroom, as more and more colleges and universities began adding “jazz’ or ‘Black Music’ studies programs to their curricula. This was a positive trend on the face of it, but in some ways it represented the beginning of the end of the old ‘master-apprentice’ oral tradition paradigm, which had fueled the development of the music since the beginning. Jazz was getting codified and gentrified, and was possibly losing a bit of its soul in the process.

These last two topics will be examined in greater detail in Chapter 3.

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<sup>18</sup> Merriam-Webster dictionary defines the term *Avant-Garde* (from the French, “vanguard” or “cutting edge”) as “an intelligentsia that develops new or experimental concepts especially in the arts”. In the area of jazz and improvised music it is used broadly to refer to a wide range of free improvisors and experimental composers who are the spiritual descendants of innovators like Eric Dolphy, George Russell, Ornette Coleman, Albert Ayler, Cecil Taylor, and late-period John Coltrane.



Did jazz indeed “die” in 1959, as Nicholas Payton suggested? Perhaps not, but it clearly reached a kind of pinnacle and by 1970, to paraphrase Frank Zappa, it was smelling pretty funny.<sup>19</sup>

This ‘near-death’, representing as it were a kind of collapse of modernism, set the stage for a rebirth, an era of postmodernism. In order to discover exactly what this means, we must begin by formulating an adequate definition of postmodernism as it best relates to the ongoing development of the jazz language.

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<sup>19</sup> “Jazz isn’t dead, it just smells funny.” Quote popularly attributed to Zappa, the iconoclastic progressive rock guitarist and songwriter and composer of contemporary symphonic and chamber music, whose groups often included musicians associated with jazz and fusion.

## Chapter 2 Beyond Linear Evolution: Defining postmodernism in the context of jazz history

The term *postmodern* has, at this point, been used and abused to the point of being almost indefinable, but initially it served to indicate a philosophy that was obviously a reaction to *modernism*. In the words of musicologist Dr. Kenneth Gloag,

“It can be assumed that postmodernism is a word, a concept, that has been developed in order to define culture after modernism, with the prefix ‘post’ simply indicating the going beyond of modernism. But how that culture is identified, defined and discussed remains open to interpretation.”

The French philosopher and sociologist Jean-Francois Lyotard is credited with introducing the term to the general public. In his 1979 book, *The Postmodern Condition*, he says:

I will use the term *modern* to designate any science that legitimates itself with reference to a metadiscourse...making an explicit appeal to some grand narrative, such as the dialectics of Spirit, the hermeneutics of meaning, the emancipation of the rational or working subject, or the creation of wealth...Simplifying to the extreme, I define *postmodern* as *incredulity toward metanarratives* [latter italics are mine].

Gloag again:

In translating Lyotard’s version of the modern...into the context of music, we can see that, for example, Schoenberg’s ‘emancipation of the dissonance’, which distanced music from the conventions and traditions of tonality, followed by the development of serialism, which sought to rationalize musical content as defined by pitch, could be argued to represent musical versions of the attempted

construction of modern metanarratives in that they are intentionally big ideas about the nature of music with large-scale historical, formal, and stylistic implications. [For Lyotard], if we cannot invest belief in the big ideas of modernism, the meta or grand narratives, what remains, in contrast to the large, is the small: the 'little narrative' (micronarrative) is now the primary form of 'imaginative invention'. The focus is now shifted from the large to the small, and in making this move there is also a resulting shift from the singular (there cannot be that many potential metanarratives) to the plural. If the 'little narrative' is now primary there can of course be many such little narratives. This means, in effect, that there are now many stories to be told, and many different voices with which to tell them. These multiple stories, and voices, now suggest a culture made up of many different things: a plural and fragmented cultural, social and political landscape, with each fragmentary 'little narrative' potentially claiming its own identity and value without at any point coalescing into a larger totality. In other words, each 'little narrative' constructs its own sense of a self-contained legitimacy within a broad spectrum defined as postmodernism.

Thus, by this definition, the grand concepts of modernism, with their steady and constant quest for progress, innovation and ever-increasing degrees of complexity, having exhausted themselves, are thereby rejected. This rejection of what Lyotard calls the "metanarrative", the singular, overarching goals of modernism, inevitably leads to a series of "micronarratives", which run the gamut from *neo-conservatism*, a return to and re-contextualizing of older, more conventional or traditional approaches or styles, to *deconstructionalism*, featuring abstractions and re-imaginings far more radical than those contained under the umbrella of modernism.

The writer James Morley provides further perspective:

Firstly, postmodernism was a movement in architecture that rejected the modernist, avant garde, passion for the new. Modernism is here understood in art and architecture as the project of rejecting tradition in favour of going "where no man has gone before" or better: to create forms for no other purpose than novelty. Modernism was an exploration of possibilities and a perpetual search for uniqueness and its cognate--individuality. Modernism's valorization of the new

was rejected by architectural postmodernism in the 50's and 60's for conservative reasons. They wanted to maintain elements of modern utility while returning to the reassuring classical forms of the past. The result of this was an ironic brick-a-brack or collage approach to construction that combines several traditional styles into one structure. As collage, meaning is found in combinations of already created patterns.<sup>20</sup>

This view of postmodernism, exemplified by the rejection of newness for newness' sake and subsequent return to traditional values in the world of architecture, corresponds, as we shall see, with the rise of Wynton Marsalis and the "Young Lions" in jazz during the 1980s and '90s. Morley continues by providing us with the following succinct contextualization of postmodernism:

1. Premodernism: Original meaning is possessed by authority (for example, the Catholic Church). The individual is dominated by tradition.
2. Modernism: The enlightenment-humanist rejection of tradition and authority in favour of reason and natural science. This is founded upon the assumption of the autonomous individual as the sole source of meaning and truth- the Cartesian *cogito*. Progress and novelty are valorized within a linear conception of history- a history of a "real" world that becomes increasingly real or objectified. One could view this as a Protestant mode of consciousness.
3. Postmodernism: A rejection of the sovereign autonomous individual with an emphasis upon anarchic collective, anonymous experience. Collage, diversity, the mystically unrepresentable, Dionysian passion are the foci of attention. Most importantly we see the dissolution of distinctions, the merging of subject and object,

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<sup>20</sup> James Morley (as posted on the *Postmodern Culture* electronic conference list, and reprinted in *The Electronic Labyrinth* [<http://www.iath.virginia.edu/elab/hf10242.html>], Jan. 21, 2004)

self and other. This is a sarcastic playful parody of western modernity and the "John Wayne" individual and a radical, anarchist rejection of all attempts to define, reify or represent the human subject.

## **2.1 The Collage**

In jazz and improvised music, this ‘collage’ or micronarrative effect can be clearly witnessed in the diversity of approaches we see today, from the very conservative and traditional to the very experimental, from models based on the narrowest definitions of what jazz ‘should’ be to cross-pollenizations and hybrid forms so complex and varied as to place the music’s parameters in a near constant state of reassessment and debate. Jazz has always been about individualism, but that individualism previously existed more or less from the viewpoint of a specific cultural lens (I’m speaking here not strictly of African-American culture, although that is obviously a key part of the equation, but of ‘jazz culture’ in a broader sense). Now, with such a rich mosaic of musical approaches to draw upon, the individual may organize and reorganize the smaller tiles to reflect his or her own larger artistic vision whose relationship to the older culture may be obvious or tenuous, yet nonetheless reflects the *modus operandi* of jazz, affirming in a sense Bill Evans’s description of jazz as ‘process’ rather than ‘style’.

Morely touches on an interesting aspect of some definitions of postmodernism: the idea that it may contain an element of irony, even parody. While it is difficult to imagine the multitude of serious jazz and improvising artists writing and performing today doing so

with tongues planted in cheeks, there is perhaps another way of looking at this premise. In the process of constructing this postmodern collage, familiar elements are combined, reworked, and re-contextualized. When Wynton Marsalis references Miles Davis, Duke Ellington or Louis Armstrong, or his brother Branford pays homage to the music of the Keith Jarrett American Quartet, or Kurt Rosenwinkel transposes the spirit of fusion guitarist Alan Holdsworth into a more mainstream framework; when Nicholas Payton releases an album called *Bitches* (in obvious reference to Miles Davis' *Bitches Brew*) that draws on the influences of Stevie Wonder and Marvin Gaye as well as the expected jazz ones; when Robert Glasper collaborates with hip-hop artists like Mos Def, Brad Meldau deconstructs Radiohead or the Bad Plus plays Black Sabbath's "Iron Man" or reinterprets The Rite of Spring, there is perhaps a bit of a nudge and a wink; not parody, per se- again, these are serious artists making serious music- but a nod to those in the know who get the joke. Some examples of this will be seen in the final chapter examining my own compositions, notably two pieces meant, respectively, to evoke the rolling polyrhythmic triplet swing of drummer Elvin Jones and the so-called 'boogaloo' feel popularized in the 1960s on the Blue Note record label- a sort of cross between a rock/funk groove and a Latin cha cha cha<sup>21</sup>. In both cases the pieces evoke the spirit of the original reference points, yet incorporate elements from outside the idioms in question. To put it another way, an homage is paid that will be recognizable to listeners familiar with the genre, yet

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<sup>21</sup> Some classic examples of the 'boogaloo' feel include the Herbie Hancock compositions "Watermelon Man" and "Cantaloupe Island", Ron Carter's "Eighty One", Lee Morgan's "Sidewinder", and Eddie Harris' "Cold Duck Time".

it is not expressed literally. In this way, a piece of art is crafted that is very much of its time, while simultaneously existing as part of an established tradition or lineage.

The key point to make here, in identifying the line between modernism and postmodernism, is that modernism, at least in theory, represents a *progressive evolution*, a continuous process of discovery and striving for something new that builds upon the previous developments. Music historians have vastly oversimplified this idea. There have always been multiple, parallel streams of evolution, mixed with periodic revivals of earlier styles (like the Dixieland and folk-blues revivals of the 1960s. The progressive model has an inherent limitation in that it implies that John Coltrane, for example, represents an ‘improvement’ on Charlie Parker; whereas it seems ludicrous to suggest that one could improve upon the perfection of a Parker, an Armstrong, a Bach, or a Mahler. The German sociologist and philosopher Max Weber (1864-1920) expands on this idea:

Scientific work is chained to the course of progress; whereas in the realm of art there is no progress in the same sense. It is not true that the work of art of a period that has worked out new technical means, or, for instance, the laws of perspective, stands therefore higher than a work of art devoid of all knowledge of those means and laws- if its form does justice to the material, that is, if its object has been chosen and formed so that it could be artistically mastered without applying those conditions and means. A work of art, which is genuine ‘fulfillment’, is never surpassed; it will never be antiquated. Individuals may differ in appreciating the personal significance of works of art, but no one will ever be able to say of such a work that it is ‘outstripped’ by another work that is also ‘fulfillment’.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Max Weber, *Science as a Vocation* (Munich: Duncker & Humblodt, 1919) p 7

But while progress in art may, if we agree with Weber, be a myth, change is not, and the history of any major form or discipline in its main evolutionary stage is a history of sometimes subtle, sometimes radical, reactionary change. This change often reaches a pinnacle when the conventions that emerge over time through codification of past innovations are first pushed to their limits (Wagner, Mahler, Coltrane, Shorter), then stretched beyond them without completely abandoning the conventional structures (Stravinsky, Bartok, Shostakovich, Ornette Coleman), before finally being dismantled and deconstructed altogether (Schoenberg, Webern, Cecil Taylor), usually resulting in forms that may potentially challenge all but the most open-minded listeners. As a superficial working model then, the idea of jazz history as a series of quasi-Biblical 'begats' (Armstrong to Hawkins/Young to Parker to Coltrane to Coleman, and so on) suits our purposes, even if the reality is not quite so facile or linear. We can see a parallel in European art music, though the progression from the Renaissance to the baroque to classical, romantic, impressionist, and modern periods took place over a considerably greater time frame. Jazz, a product of the information age and the advent of recording technology, mirrors the accelerated growth that took place in all facets of culture and technology during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In this evolutionary phase, each new development challenges the ears of listeners accustomed to prior sonic reference points. So it was that the so-called 'moldy figs', traditionalists accustomed to Swing and pre-Swing styles, rejected bebop as dissonant and unintelligible; boppers had trouble understanding what Coltrane was doing after 1960; and many listeners and musicians of all generations were



confused, even angered, by Ornette Coleman's abandonment of standard harmonic structures altogether. Miles Davis, a famously restless artist who, after his early apprenticeship with Charlie Parker, reinvented himself musically every decade or so, inevitably left behind a certain percentage of his listeners each time he made a change, albeit picking up new (usually younger) ones in the process. Again, we can find parallels to this in other genres of music- two famous examples are the riots that ensued at the Paris premiere of Stravinsky's *Le Sacre de Printemps* (*The Rite of Spring*), and Bob Dylan's electric set featuring members of Paul Butterfield's blues-rock outfit at the 1965 Newport Folk Festival, which upset many fans accustomed to his acoustic folk aesthetic.

Postmodernism, by contrast, assumes that the bulk of these innovations and initially offending, radical changes are in the past. Subjective stylistic preferences and cultural, philosophical and generational differences continue to divide audiences and musicians, and to generate debate over what is or isn't jazz, but there is no longer a sense of the potential for something radically new to foster shock, anger or bewilderment. Jazz, as ever, remains about digesting the language of the past masters and ultimately developing one's individual voice. Now, though, the entire history of the music, from New Orleans to Cecil Taylor, is there to draw from. The popular music tradition that has always fed and interbred with jazz, represented early on by the Broadway and film 'standards' of the 1920s, '30s and '40s, has expanded to include rock, R&B, and hip hop from the 1960s to the present. The body of European classical music, from Monteverdi to Schoenberg, is available for study and reference. Jazz has always had a 'world music' aspect as well

(with its diverse Afro-European roots it is, almost by definition, itself a world music), from Morton's "Spanish tinge" to Dizzy Gillespie's Afro-Cuban collaborations, Stan Getz and Charlie Byrd's introduction of the sounds of Brazil to North American audiences, Randy Weston's explorations of jazz' African roots, and Coltrane's fascination with Indian music. Today, the idea of the 'global village' has become a reality. The expansion of air travel, as well as the virtual travel made possible by the Internet, has provided us with unprecedented access to the cultural traditions of the world. Additionally, the ethnic makeup of the improvising musicians of the postmodern era is much more diverse than at any other time in the music's history, and many performers are eager to find ways to integrate elements of their own cultural and geographic backgrounds into their work. As a result, they are drawing on a wider than ever range of musical influences, including Balkan, Arabic, Jewish, East Asian, South Asian, African, Celtic, and many others, including Latin American and Caribbean traditions beyond the familiar Cuban and Brazilian ones.

To summarize, then, postmodernism is less about a constantly forward-looking linear evolution, and more about the idea of a mosaic or tapestry of established genres, approaches and traditions that one can borrow from and stitch together in infinite combinations to create a personal style.

## **2.2 Keith Jarrett and Wynton Marsalis: Father Figures of Postmodern Jazz?**

The seeds for postmodernism in jazz were planted in the late 1960s and early '70s, but it would be another decade after that before they would really take root, and only in the 1990s and 2000s, after many proclamations concerning jazz's imminent demise, would we see the flowering of a truly rich and diverse postmodern jazz culture that persists today. While many artists were ultimately responsible for laying the groundwork for this new phase in the music's evolution, in the following two chapters I would like to zero in on two musicians whose contributions I have come to regard as particularly significant: pianist Keith Jarrett and trumpeter Wynton Marsalis.

On the surface, Jarrett and Marsalis seem like very different figures, yet they have a surprising amount in common. Both were prodigies who made strong impacts at relatively young ages when they emerged, slightly over a decade apart. Both apprenticed with that legendary nurturer of young talent, drummer Art Blakey, and they shared a Miles Davis connection as well- Jarrett as a one-time Davis sideman, Marsalis as a kind of 'rebellious son' figure who modeled his early style largely on Davis' 1960s work and recruited his famous rhythm section of that period (Herbie Hancock, Ron Carter, Tony Williams) for his debut recording, yet later loudly and publically denounced Davis as a 'sellout' for his forays into fusion. Both Jarrett and Marsalis are technical virtuosos of the highest order on their respective instruments, and they have each proved, through recording and performance, to be fine interpreters of the European classical repertoire. Both have championed the use of traditional acoustic instruments over electronic ones

and eschewed any kind of overt pandering to commercialism. Finally, both are extremely charismatic figures that have been accused of egotism, even arrogance, and have made comments in print that are opinionated, controversial, and polarizing.

Where they differ is largely an issue of mandate. For Jarrett, who was born in Pennsylvania and is of primarily Eastern European heritage, it is about the medium rather than the message; like Bill Evans, he seems to view ‘jazz’ as an approach to making music, rather than a style per se. Though he is clearly a master of the common vocabulary that most contemporary jazz artists share, for him it is merely a set of tools to enable spontaneous self-expression- a way to tap into some kind of transcendent life force. It is a philosophy of musical inevitability as opposed to one of historical reverence or authenticity. Even Jarrett’s concentration, since the early 1980s, on the ‘standards’ of the Great American Songbook, a repertoire he has referred to as “a kind of tribal language”<sup>23</sup>, is less about the preservation of a historical tradition than about the potential freedom that can come with playing material that is so familiar as to be practically imbedded in one’s DNA.

Marsalis, on the other hand, has a much more specific, neo-conservative cultural agenda. He is an African-American from, significantly, New Orleans, the mythic birthplace of jazz. Wynton’s father, pianist Ellis Marsalis, is one of the most respected teachers of jazz

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<sup>23</sup> Art Lange, *The Keith Jarrett Interview* (Downbeat, June, 1984)

in New Orleans, having mentored many younger musicians, the most famous (aside from his sons) being the pianist and singer Harry Connick, Jr. Clearly, Wynton inherited some of his father's professorial leanings. He is charismatic and highly articulate, with the ability to weave a seamless blend of highbrow and 'street' language into a compelling, if occasionally pretentious, poetic prose. While he has sometimes been accused of discriminating against white musicians (an absurd assertion if one considers that the number of white musicians he has employed over the years is probably greater than the number of African-Americans in all of the major U.S. symphony orchestras combined), I would suggest that his agenda is preservationist rather than racial. If, as Marsalis and many others contend, jazz is America's greatest original contribution to world art and culture, then it surely belongs to all Americans, and, by extension, to the world. Hewn from the wood of both Africa and Europe, it was nonetheless African-American genius specifically that brought it to actualization, in an environment where its creators and their ancestors were subjected to enslavement, abuse, terrorism, and systemic discrimination. There are also complex issues around the idea of cultural appropriation. In my personal interpretation, I believe that Marsalis' twofold manifesto is A) to re-establish the relevance of jazz to the African-American community as a vital expression of that culture's history and traditions and encourage African-Americans to re-assert control over the telling of their own story, and B) to ensure that the 'African accent' in the music, as expressed through elements such as syncopation, blues feeling, call-and-response, and swing, is not lost or de-emphasized, no matter who is playing it- a perfectly valid, even vital perspective.

From these two parallel standpoints then, spiritual transcendence and cultural specificity,  
a *postmodern jazz* is born.

## Chapter 3 Planting the seeds: Jazz in the 1970s

### 3.1 Fragmentation

The 1970s was a challenging period for jazz. Many of the older musicians were languishing as the music industry came to be dominated by rock, pop, Soul, and fusion. Some, perhaps seeing the writing on the wall, had relocated to Europe starting as far back as the mid-‘50s. Others, such as trumpeters Donald Byrd and Freddie Hubbard, tried to stay relevant by making forays into the fusion market.

Meanwhile, the last generation of influential jazz modernists, particularly those that had been associated with Miles Davis’ groups and recordings of the mid-to-late ‘60s, were now at the forefront of the fusion movement. Most of the musicians associated with Davis’ landmark proto-fusion records *In A Silent Way* and *Bitches Brew* had gone on to form the defining fusion groups of the ‘70s, including Tony Williams (The Tony Williams Lifetime), Wayne Shorter and Josef Zawinul (Weather Report), John McLaughlin and Billy Cobham (Mahavishnu Orchestra), Chick Corea (Return to Forever), Herbie Hancock and Bennie Maupin (Headhunters). Each of these groups represented a different stylistic approach. Mahavishnu’s music, for example, was closely related to the progressive rock of groups like Yes, Genesis, and King Crimson, with an emphasis on virtuosic instrumental technique and complex time signature changes. Headhunters was rooted in the funk and R&B sounds that Hancock grew up with in inner city Chicago. Return to Forever reflected bassist/co-leader Stanley Clarke’s funk leanings

as well as Corea's love of Spanish flamenco and Brazilian samba, unified by their shared jazz roots. Weather Report started as almost an electric free jazz ensemble. When original bassist and co-founder Miroslav Vitous left in 1974, replaced first by electric bassist Alphonso Johnson and eventually by the great Jaco Pastorius, the direction changed profoundly, moving toward a potentially more commercial yet still highly sophisticated and creative funk/world music approach. As time went on, Zawinul gradually became the dominant figure in the group, as composer, arranger and orchestrator; nonetheless, Shorter (and, for the period he was in the group, Pastorius, a fine composer as well as bassist) continued to contribute, further developing the painterly compositional style and profound sense of harmony that established him as one of the very greatest composers in American music.

Those that largely chose to stay the course of 'acoustic' jazz rooted in the African-American lineage, despite its limited commercial appeal, built to a large degree on the harmonic language established in the previous decade by composers like Shorter, Hancock, Corea, and Joe Henderson, and especially on the modality, pentatonic vocabulary, quartal harmony and burning intensity of middle-period John Coltrane. Trumpeter Woody Shaw, saxophonists David Liebman, Gary Bartz, and Steve Grossman, and pianists Hal Galper, Richie Beirach, John Hicks, and Ronnie Matthews, among



numerous others, fell into this category<sup>24</sup>. Other artists like Pharoah Sanders and Archie Shepp, both of whom had been associated with Coltrane in his later years, tapped more into the folk essence of Coltrane's music, its spiritual intent, favouring drones, modal vamps, simple and powerful themes, and blues-rooted free improvisation rather than intricate harmonies and melodic structures.

Meanwhile the pianist Bill Evans, another former Davis associate and a major figure during the late 1950s and '60s, maintained an active presence through the '70s until his death in 1980, strongly influencing a new generation of pianists with his lyrical touch, harmonic mastery, and the contrapuntal, interactive approach to trio playing that he had introduced in the early '60s with Scott LaFaro and Paul Motian.

### **3.2 The rise of Jazz Festivals and Jazz Education**

Interestingly, despite jazz's tenuous and fragmented state and uncertain future, two significant trends took hold in the 1970s: the proliferation of jazz festivals, large mostly outdoor events in which audiences could listen to several performers and groups throughout the day over the course of a few days; and the expansion of jazz as a subject taught in colleges and universities.

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<sup>24</sup> Liebman, Bartz, and Grossman all played electric music with Miles Davis during this period, but mostly eschewed it when it came to their own projects.

Impressario and sometime pianist George Wein founded what is usually considered the first significant jazz festival at Newport, Rhode Island in 1954. By the 1970s, major jazz festivals existed throughout North America and Europe and were starting to appear in other parts of the world, notably Japan, which embraced jazz to a degree that elevated its practitioners to near-godlike status. In a very real way, the jazz festival as an entity deserves partial credit for creating the postmodern collage, by presenting a kind of summational snapshot of the music's history. At a typical festival in the 1970s one might hear, over the course of a single afternoon and evening, a Dixieland or New Orleans revival band; bebop and post bop legends like Dizzy Gillespie, Art Blakey, the Heath Brothers, the Modern Jazz Quartet, Stan Getz or Phil Woods; a blues artist like Buddy Guy or B.B. King; one of the still-functioning classic jazz orchestras like Count Basie, Duke Ellington, or Buddy Rich (or their newer counterparts, Thad Jones/Mel Lewis and Toshiko Akiyoshi/Lew Tabackin); an AACM-oriented group like the Art Ensemble of Chicago; a fusion group like Weather Report; a pop or Soul outfit; a legendary singer like Betty Carter, Sarah Vaughan or Nina Simone; and some of the emerging stars of the day like Keith Jarrett or Woody Shaw.

Jazz, for reasons largely related to elitism and racism, was for a long time looked upon as a lesser music, distinct from so-called "serious" or "legitimate" music, terms understood to refer to the European classical tradition. Its gradual integration into post-secondary curricula was a major step toward the music's gaining mainstream legitimacy in terms of

public and academic perception. Given that the Europeans were among the first to recognize the merits of jazz as high art, it is perhaps not surprising that it was there rather than the music's U.S. homeland that the first jazz studies program was founded, at the Hoch Conservatory in Frankfurt in 1928. The Nazis shut the program down five years later (it was founded by two Jews, Bernhard Sekles and Mátyás Sieber), but trombonist Albert Mangelsdorff reopened it in 1976. In the U.S., in 1945, Lawrence Berk founded the Schilinger House music school in Boston. He based its curriculum on the Schilinger System, created by his mentor, Joseph Schilinger, of which he was a certified practitioner. In 1954 he changed the school's name to pay tribute to his son Lee, reversing Lee Berk's first and last names to brand what grew into (and remains) the most iconic of jazz-based institutions, the Berklee School of Music. Its legendary status has a close second in the program founded in 1947 at the University of North Texas. Many of the seeds of jazz postmodernism were planted in these and other institutions like the University of Miami. The list of today's musical heroes who attended Berklee alone during the 1950s, '60s, '70s, and '80s is staggering. It includes John Abercrombie, Toshiko Akiyoshi, Keith Jarrett, Terri-Lynne Carrington, Cindy Blackman, Branford Marsalis, Gary Burton, Wil Calhoun, Cyrus Chestnut, Brad Meldau, Diana Krall, Ingrid Jensen, Bruce Hornsby, Joe Lovano, David S. Ware, Jeff "Tain" Watts, Kenny Werner, John Pattitucci, Ernie Watts, Danilo Perez, Mike Stern, Sonny Sharrock, Kurt Rosenwinkel, Mark Turner, Wallace Roney, and many, many more. The jazz students of these decades would become the postmodern stars of the '70s, '80s, 90's and beyond.

It is relevant to note that many of the more successful artists who benefited from the social networking and information-sharing environment at Berklee, North Texas, and other colleges nonetheless never finished their studies, using the schools as a springboard to the place they really wanted to be, the school of the street, the world of the working musician. The spread of the jazz education paradigm, which coincided with the winding down of the modern jazz era, had two especially significant, in some ways detrimental, impacts on the emerging postmodern landscape. They were:

1. **Removal of jazz from its cultural context.** Musicians of all races and nationalities had been playing, contributing to, and influencing jazz practically since its inception. However, it was, at its core, an expression of African-American culture and values systems, and the majority of major movements and progressions took place within or in reference to that context. Many of these musicians may have had formal training, generally in the European tradition, studying privately with teachers on their chosen instrument, gaining an understanding of fundamentals like technique, sound production, reading, and harmony; this kind of knowledge was beneficial to anyone who was serious about music of any kind. However, the bulk of the development of the music took place in informal settings- on bandstands and after-hours clubs, backstage rooms, buses and trains, peoples' houses and lofts. It amounted to a highly evolved oral tradition, with a complex rhythmic, melodic, and harmonic language that evolved over time and was passed down from one generation to the next, branching off into numerous dialects along the way. It

was Dizzy Gillespie and Thelonious Monk sitting side by side at a piano discussing chords and progressions; it was Sonny Rollins or John Coltrane showing up at Monk's apartment for an impromptu lesson with the master; it was Charlie Parker playing along with Lester Young and Stravinsky recordings; it was Lennie Tristano teaching his students scales and voicings, then getting them to sing the solos of Young and Parker. Suddenly, in the world of jazz academia, African-American teachers and students were often in the minority, and the music tended to be taught from a more European perspective, one that emphasized harmony over rhythm and 'chord-scale' theory as the primary reference point for developing improvisational material. The music became codified, with an emphasis on a systemized version of the bebop vocabulary of Charlie Parker seasoned with the modal/pentatonic language of Coltrane, Tyner, and Corea and the harmony of Bill Evans. Students were guided toward the same artists, recordings, and solos while alternative paths paved by individuals such as Thelonious Monk, Ahmad Jamal, Andrew Hill, Herbie Nichols, Warne Marsh, Muhal Richard Abrams, Henry Threadgill, and others remained largely unexplored and pre-bebop artists like Armstrong, Young, and Ellington all but ignored.

2. **The demise of the master-apprentice system.** In the old paradigm, the impetus to practice and hone one's skills was that, if a young musician

reached a certain level, he or she might have the opportunity to join an established group, thus entering an environment where he/she could learn from older, more seasoned players, gain experience, develop confidence and even greater skills. Even the music's greatest geniuses were shaped by these crucial experiences- Louis Armstrong with King Oliver, Charlie Parker with Earl Hines and Jay McShann, John Coltrane with Monk and Davis, and so on. In the 1930s or '40s, one might have the opportunity to join one of the established orchestras: Ellington, Basie, Goodman. Later, in the '50s and '60s, bandleaders like Charles Mingus, Horace Silver, Art Blakey, Betty Carter, Stan Getz, and Miles Davis gained reputations as developers of young talent, who would change personnel (and sometimes, notably in the case of Davis, musical direction) every few years. There was certainly some overlap between this system and the rise of institutionalized jazz- in some cases some of the older established bandleaders who were still touring in the '70s and '80s, like Blakey, Buddy Rich, Maynard Ferguson, and others would look to the schools as sources of good young players to recruit. But gradually, as these opportunities dwindled (and many of the older masters passed on), the model changed. Now young musicians might learn from a master musician in a classroom or private lesson environment, or indirectly through transcribing improvised solos from admired recordings, but they now tended to develop their musical skills and reflexes, individually and collectively, through playing with each other, their peer group.

Eventually, Wynton Marsalis and a few others would take on the task of reviving the apprenticeship paradigm, but by then it was mostly too late.

### **3.3 Chicago and Europe: alternate musical universes**

The late 1960s also saw the rise of two streams of musical development that, while clearly related to and rooted in the jazz lineage, represented quite separate schools of musical thought that were as distinct from the mainstream of jazz as they were from each other. Each became a major musical force in the 1970s.

Chicago had long been an important musical centre, particularly for African-Americans. Sitting at the north end of the Mississippi River, it was the place where second and third-generation rural bluesmen from the Mississippi Delta like Muddy Waters and Buddy Guy landed in the 1940s and '50s, discovered electricity, and created the template for generations of American and British rock guitarists. It was here that Louis Armstrong followed his mentor, Joe "King" Oliver, in 1922, a lightning bolt of inspiration for local musicians like Eddie Condon, Max Kaminsky, Hoagy Carmichael, and Bix Beiderbecke. Later, it was home to unique improvisers like Von Freeman, Bunky Green, and Eddie Harris, who the savvy musician looking for alternative approaches within a mainstream framework could turn to for inspiration.

In 1965, Chicago gave rise to one of the most important nurturing grounds for African-American creativity of the later 20th century, the Association for the Advancement of

Creative Musicians (AACM). Formed as a collective by a small group of like-minded envelope-pushing musicians, its father figure and president was the quietly charismatic and sage-like pianist and composer Muhal Richard Abrams. Abrams, born in Chicago in 1930, was a walking encyclopedia of music, having absorbed the jazz piano lineage through Teddy Wilson, Art Tatum, Bud Powell, and Thelonious Monk and the African-American orchestral tradition through Fletcher Henderson and Duke Ellington. He had also studied the scores of the great European composers, as well as the theory and composition methods of Joseph Schilinger. Often associated with terms like ‘avant-garde’ and ‘free jazz’, in reality most of the musicians of the AACM were, like Abrams, highly disciplined, studied conceptualists, intellectuals, and theoreticians who developed advanced and original ways to blend composition and improvisation that built on the lineage of Ellington, Monk, Mingus, and Ornette Coleman but transcended easy categories like ‘jazz’ (they coined the playful term ‘Great Black Music’ as a broader descriptive). The influence of the artists who emerged through this community, including Abrams, Anthony Braxton, George Lewis, Henry Threadgill, Wadada Leo Smith, and the Art Ensemble of Chicago, continues to be felt today, notably in musical communities like the ‘Downtown’ New York scene centred around the Knitting Factory club, a venue that continues to present creative music today in the latest of several locations.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the ocean in Europe, some similarly intriguing things were brewing. Europeans had always had an interesting relationship with jazz. Perhaps because of Louisiana’s French colonial roots and the crucial role in the music’s early



development played by New Orleans Creoles with French heritage like Jelly Roll Morton and Sidney Bechet, France was one of the first European countries to embrace jazz and African-American performers. Bechet made his first appearance there in 1925 with a revue that also included the legendary Josephine Baker. He would eventually move there, in 1950. Other American jazz musicians continued this trend over the next decade or so, as people like Dexter Gordon, Kenny Drew, Kenny Clarke, Idrees Sulieman, Don Byas, and Bud Powell settled in places like Copenhagen, Paris, and Amsterdam, where appreciation for art music was a given, a decent living could be made, and the racism and second-class citizen status inflicted on African-Americans in the U.S. was much less of a day-to-day source of stress. In the cities where these musicians settled, local jazz players now had access to the source of the music. In Copenhagen and Paris especially, a few developed the ability to credibly recreate the sound and feel of American jazz, often with impressive virtuosity, and musicians such as bassists Pierre Michelot (French) and the young Danish prodigy Niels-Henning Ørsted Pederson, drummers Alex Riel and Daniel Humair (Danish and Swiss, respectively), and Catalonian pianist Tete Montouliu gained reputations as dependable accompanists for visiting jazz greats as well as expatriates. Yet, to find an example of a distinctively European approach to jazz, one would need to travel back to an earlier Paris of the 1930s and '40s, when the Belgian-born Roma guitarist Django Reinhardt, perhaps the first truly transcendent jazz genius to emerge from somewhere other than the United States, carved out a singular style that blended American Swing with a sensibility that reflected the unbridled passion and romanticism of his French and Roma heritage. His frequent collaborator, the Franco-Italian violinist

and pianist Stephane Grappelli, was also a key contributor to the development of this unique style. A somewhat watered-down version of this ‘Gypsy Jazz’ (sometimes called *Manouche*, a term also used to refer to the Romani people of France themselves) persists today in European Roma communities, with many practitioners even favouring the French-made Selmer guitars that were Reinhardt’s trademark.

Reinhardt was a rare artist though. It wasn’t until the later 1960s that the improvising musicians of Europe began in larger numbers to move away from mere imitation of American jazz and forge more nationalistic approaches that reflected the linguistic rhythm, geographic landscape, and cultural idiosyncracies of their respective homelands, in much the same way as composers like Sibelius (Finland), Shostakovich (Russia), Khatchaturian (Armenia), Ravel (France), Copland (United States) and others had moved away from the Austro-German symphonic tradition that had formed them to create music that was more culturally specific. America still provided the core inspiration- Monk, Ellington, Davis, Evans, and Coltrane were the gods, avant-gardists like Cecil Taylor, Bill Dixon, Paul Bley, Archie Shepp, and Ornette Coleman the apostles. But ‘free jazz’, with its connotations of Black consciousness, rebellion, and the struggle for civil rights, was reinvented to mirror, for example, the quirky humour and eccentricity of the Dutch in the hands of artists like Misha Mengelberg, Willem Breuker, and Han Bennik.

One of the most vivid transformations took place in Scandinavia, particularly Norway, which had less early direct contact with American jazz than Denmark or Sweden, and where a young saxophonist named Jan Garbarek was beginning to make a name for

himself. Garbarek was born in 1947 in Mysen, Norway of mixed Polish and Norwegian parentage. By the late 1960s, he had forged a style modeled on the high-octane free jazz of artists like Albert Ayler and Archie Shepp. A few years later, he abandoned this approach. His sound changed; he began honing a piercingly bright, reedy, icily focused tone that suggested the influence of Native American saxophonist Jim Pepper (who had a similar impact on the sound of Michael Brecker, the influential American saxophonist whose star was on the rise in the 1970s). Garbarek absorbed elements of Middle Eastern and Indian music, but perhaps most significantly he started to explore the folk sounds of his native Norway, creating in the process a frosty yet highly emotive style that seemed to evoke the dramatic landscape of his homeland with its ice-covered mountains and sprawling fjords. Other Norwegian musicians, such as guitarist Terje Rypdal, followed a similar path. Over the years Garbarek collaborated with diverse musicians from around the globe, many of whom were, like Garbarek, associated with the German ECM record label. Among these were Rypdal, Swedish pianist Bobo Stenson, Germans Eberhardt Weber and Rainer Bruninghaus (bass and piano respectively), Brazilian pianist and guitarist Egberto Gismonti, Czech bassist Miroslav Vitous, Indian tabla virtuoso Zakir Hussain, and Canadian/English trumpeter/composer Kenny Wheeler. Among his most fruitful collaborations was with Keith Jarrett, who formed a group with Garbarek, bassist Palle Danielson, and drummer Jon Christiansen that became known as the 'European' or 'Scandinavian' Quartet, in contrast to his 'American Quartet' with Dewey Redman, Charlie Haden, and Paul Motian. This group, as we will see in the following chapter, was largely responsible for crafting what came to be known as the 'ECM sound'.

Manfred Eicher, a German classically-trained bassist and producer, founded the ECM (Editions of Contemporary Music) label in 1969 with a mandate to produce recordings of jazz and improvised music with the same attention to sonic detail that was usually applied to recordings of European concert music. During the 1970s, the label became a sort of ‘Ground Zero’ for the new European jazz, though the label also provided an outlet for a sizable contingent of American artists with compatible sensibilities, including guitarists John Abercrombie, Pat Metheny, Ralph Towner, and Bill Frisell, pianists Chick Corea, Paul Bley, and Richie Beirach, saxophonist Charles Lloyd, drummer Jack DeJohnette, and vibraphonist Gary Burton. Significantly, though ECM became indelibly associated with the ‘Euro-Jazz’ aesthetic, Eicher also documented several of the AACM artists, including the Art Ensemble of Chicago and saxophonist/composers Anthony Braxton and Marion Brown.

In his controversial book *Is Jazz Dead? (Or Has It Moved to a New Address)*, British critic Stuart Nicholson posits the theory that, while America was clearly the birthplace of jazz and the home of all of its major developments up until the 1970s or ‘80s, at that point it stagnated into a pool of neo-conservatism and Europe took over as the hotbed of jazz growth and innovation. Nicholson raises some interesting and valid points, but ultimately his argument is overly simplistic, assuming as it does that art must be ‘innovative’ or ‘different’ to be creative, with no allowances made for creativity to flourish within a folk tradition, and little acknowledgement of the many artists and

movements in postmodern America that continued to make fresh and forward-looking contributions that were at least as original as what was happening in Europe.

Nonetheless, semantics and arguments about definitions of jazz aside, the new European musicians and the AACM members provided fascinating and compelling alternative musical realities, and the ECM label, in its own way, was as important a documentor of improvisation-based music in the 1970s and '80s as Blue Note had been in the '50s and '60s.

## Chapter 4 Bridging Modernism and Postmodernism: Keith Jarrett

If I could call everything I did “Hymn”, it would be appropriate because that’s what they are when they’re correct...If [the music] does not connect with a greater power, and if I do not surrender to it, nothing happens. In that sense everything feels like a hymn, because I don’t have access to this just by the fact of being Keith Jarrett and having recorded all the time. There’s no reason why I should have this experience. Every time it’s a gift. –Keith Jarrett<sup>25</sup>

Keith Jarrett was born in Allentown, Pennsylvania on May 8, 1945 of mixed European heritage (his mother was Hungarian, his father probably French or Scots/Irish, with some possible ties to the Pennsylvania Dutch, the German Mennonites of the region). He was raised in the Christian Science church, which promotes ideas such as spiritual healing and the unreality of matter, ideas that may have impacted the ecstatic, otherworldly approach to improvising he would eventually develop. Jarrett showed an early aptitude for music and started piano lessons just before his third birthday, becoming proficient on several other instruments along the way, including drums, saxophone, and guitar.

He moved to Boston in 1963 where he briefly attended the Berklee School of Music before relocating again a year later, this time to New York. It was here that his obvious brilliance started to attract attention. The legendary bandleader and drummer Art Blakey asked Jarrett to join his famous Jazz Messengers group. He recorded only one album with Blakey, 1966’s *Buttercorn Lady*, before leaving to join saxophonist Charles Lloyd’s quartet on the recommendation of Lloyd’s prodigious young drummer, Jack DeJohnette,

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<sup>25</sup> Art Lange, *The Keith Jarrett Interview* (Downbeat, June, 1984)

who had heard Jarrett perform with Blakey. This was the beginning of a musical bond between Jarrett and DeJohnette that endures nearly fifty years later. Lloyd's group, which also included bassist Cecil McBee (later replaced by Ron McClure), developed a populist version of John Coltrane's highly spiritualized and impassioned mid-'60s sound, blending jazz, rock, and folk influences with 'world' elements drawn from Lloyd's fascination with Asiatic and Native American sounds (Lloyd was himself of mixed African-American, Native American, Mongolian, and Irish ancestry), performed within an acoustic jazz quartet format. Lloyd's music was sophisticated yet accessible, and he and his group soon found themselves working on the same bills with popular rock acts of the time, such as The Grateful Dead and Janis Joplin.

This aesthetic of mixing jazz and rock elements in an acoustic format became a hallmark of Jarrett's and DeJohnette's work. While Jarrett played electric piano and electronic organ with Miles Davis, whose fusion-based groups he played with in the early 1970s after the breakup of the Lloyd Quartet, aside from his 1971 duo recording with DeJohnette, *Ruta and Daitya*, he never used electronics in any of his subsequent recordings. Yet while he was dismissive of the fusion aesthetic and of electric keyboards, likening them in an interview to "plastic broccoli"<sup>26</sup>, both he and DeJohnette were influenced by the creative rock music of the 1960s and '70s, sharing a particular affinity

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<sup>26</sup> Becca Pulliam, *Maintaining Standards: Keith Jarrett and Dave Grusin* (Downbeat, May, 1992)

for the music of The Band.<sup>27</sup> The Band started as The Hawks, rockabilly star Ronnie Hawkins' backing group in the clubs on the Yonge Street strip in his adopted hometown of Toronto. It consisted of four Canadians (Robbie Robertson, Rick Danko, Garth Hudson, and Richard Manuel) and drummer/vocalist Levon Helm, who had followed Hawkins north from their native Arkansas. It was Helm's special and distinctive groove and slightly behind the beat placement of the *backbeat* (the second and 4<sup>th</sup> beats of the bar, traditionally played on the snare drum in blues, rock, R&B, country, and other popular music styles) that had a particular impact on Jarrett and DeJohnette.<sup>28</sup> After touring with Hawkins and later Bob Dylan, the members of The Band settled in Woodstock, New York, where they wrote and recorded their classic, influential albums *Music From Big Pink* and *The Band* in 1968 and '69 respectively. Though most of the members hailed from north of the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel, they shared a fascination with the mythology and imagery of the American South, and evolved a style that effortlessly wove together elements of Delta blues, country and hillbilly music, gospel, folk balladry, New Orleans jazz and R&B, and Vaudeville/carnival music into a haunting musical stew given wings by the moving vocals of Manuel, Danko, and Helm and grounded in the earth by Robertson's guitar, Danko's tuba-like bass guitar, and Helm's deep, swampy backbeat. This country, blues, and gospel-inflected American heartland feeling, popular music's answer to Aaron Copland's orchestral music, permeates much of Jarrett's improvised

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<sup>27</sup> Geoffery Himes, *Jack DeJohnette: Relishing the Here and Now* (Jazz Times, March, 2012)

<sup>28</sup> Ethan Iverson, *Do The Math* (Internet blog: Interview with Keith Jarrett, September 2009)



solo work, and the extended vamps that became a trademark of his trio performances with DeJohnette and bassist Gary Peacock.

In the 1970s, Jarrett began performing wholly improvised solo concerts. The recording from one of these, 1975's *The Köln Concert*, so entranced listeners with its meditative ruminations, singing melodies, rollicking gospel vamps, and unabashed romanticism with occasional flurries of pure virtuosity that it went on to become the best-selling solo piano album of all time.<sup>29</sup> But while the solo concerts were and remain an indelible part of the Jarrett oeuvre (as his performances of European classical music would become later on), for postmodern jazz musicians it was his leadership of three very different groups that would have the biggest impact and influence.

The first of these was what came to be known as the 'American Quartet'. Jarrett had already been working in a trio format with Ornette Coleman's former bassist Charlie Haden and ex-Bill Evans drummer Paul Motian when he decided to add another musician with a strong Coleman association, saxophonist Dewey Redman. The members of the group played multiple instruments: Redman doubled on the Chinese musette, Jarrett played soprano saxophone, and everyone played various percussion instruments. The group was often augmented by an auxilliary percussionist and occasionally even a guitarist. They developed an earthy, folky sound that juxtaposed Jarrett's lyrical, ecstatic,

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<sup>29</sup> *Rolling Stone: 50 Greatest Live Albums of All Time* (April 25, 2015)

virtuosic piano with influences from Coleman-inspired free improvisation, Middle Eastern and African music, American gospel music, and straightahead jazz. While Jarrett was the primary composer, all four members contributed to the group's repertoire.

In the mid-1970s he formed another quartet which overlapped with the first one. Apart from Jarrett, its members were all Scandinavians: saxophonist Jan Garbarek and drummer Jon Christensen from Norway, plus Swedish bassist Palle Danielssen. Accordingly, the unit became known as the 'European' or 'Scandinavian' Quartet. Many of the same influences were present in this group, notably the gospel, Middle Eastern, and Ornette Coleman elements, but it had a somewhat more refined, less raw, and decidedly more European sound, with folk and classical influences creeping in via the Scandinavians and Jarrett's own Eastern European heritage. This group made five acclaimed albums for the ECM label between 1974 and 1979 and the music they made became emblematic of the so-called 'ECM sound', enhanced by Manfred Eicher's high fidelity production values.

Finally, in the early 1980s, Jarrett rounded up his longtime cohort DeJohnette and the bassist Gary Peacock (whose resumé ran the gamut from Bill Evans to Albert Ayler) and formed a trio whose mandate, to the surprise of everyone familiar with Jarrett's prior work (including his trio mates), was to mine the riches of the Great American Songbook, the treasure chest of Broadway, Tin Pan Alley, and film songs from the 1920s, '30s, 40s, and '50s that had long been favoured as improvisational vehicles by jazz artists, who

were drawn to their beautifully constructed melodies and lush cadential harmonic progressions. Peacock recalls his initial reaction to Keith's concept:

I remember very clearly, telling myself, "I need a little time to think about it." Because a lot of people were still doing standards. I was still at the Cornish Institute in Seattle teaching music theory, and we were always dealing with standards. And I was thinking, "Why would anyone want to do standards? I don't want to get out there and play a standard. I mean, just to play a standard—what's the big deal? And then, after a while, it was like, "If Keith is interested in doing it, it can't just be about the music; it has to be something a little bit further than that." So, I called him up and said, "Yeah, okay, I'm game for it." But part of me was saying, "If this starts to be [gestures for lights, camera, action!], 'Standards 1'" I was prepared to say, "I think I'm gonna leave." But what happened was, as you know, we were going to do an album in a day and a half, and we did it in three hours.<sup>30</sup>

Having created an inspired musical batter, blending elements of Americana with his first quartet and redefining European jazz with his second, Jarrett put the icing on his postmodern cake with a trio that ranks with those of Nat Cole, Oscar Peterson, Bill Evans, Ahmad Jamal, and Brad Meldau amongst the most important and influential jazz piano trios of all time. Returning to traditional jazz values while simultaneously transcending them, the Standards Trio looked to the past with love and respect but not sentimentality, to create a music that was of its time and also timeless- swinging yet abstract, funky yet romantic, structured yet free, intelligent yet profoundly moving.

If I were a 'stylist', it wouldn't happen. If I were a self-conscious artist the way most people think an artist is supposed to be for some reason-and mostly critics seem to think that-I would be saying something only I could say, and would be

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<sup>30</sup> John Ephland, *Why Play Standards?* (Interview with Keith Jarrett, Jack DeJohnette, and Gary Peacock, Downbeat, February, 1996)

avoiding anything anyone else has ever said, and I would somehow sound unique. Where to me-I've said this before-that's step number one: you finally have your own sound and what you like; you have a way of making your music. Now, throw that away, and that's the beginning of being an artist...if you throw it away, then at any moment you can sound like anything, except it won't be that other thing. – Keith Jarrett<sup>31</sup>

These three groups had an indelible impact on subsequent generations of postmodern jazz musicians. It is virtually impossible to imagine the work of Kenny Werner, Joe Lovano, Bill Frisell, the Branford Marsalis Quartet, the Brad Meldau Trio, Robert Glasper, John Taylor, Gerald Clayton, Joshua Redman, Kurt Rosenwinkel, or the Brian Blade Fellowship without them, disparate as these artists and groups are. Like Coltrane before him, Jarrett had shown us jazz' potential as a form of prayer, a pathway to ecstasy, a discipline to be mastered then 'unmastered', its elements thoroughly digested, internalized, and then forgotten with the ultimate goals of purity of intent, freedom of expression, and spiritual self-realization. It would take the efforts of a brash, brainy young trumpeter from Louisiana to bring us back down to Earth.

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<sup>31</sup> Art Lange, *The Keith Jarrett Interview* (Downbeat, June, 1984)

## Chapter 5 Back to the Future: Wynton Marsalis

“...the greatest trumpet player since Booker Little, Don Cherry, Freddie Hubbard and Woody Shaw, and the most rhythmically intricate and original since Dizzy Gillespie” –writer Stanley Crouch<sup>32</sup>

“Why, then, do we find Mr. Marsalis and his congress of wannabes extolling the virtues of “pure” jazz taking upon themselves the twin mantles of protector and rejuvenator? We are, in my opinion, witnessing no less than a modern cultural parallel to Germany in the 1930s, with a megalomaniacal “arbiter of good taste” undertaking a redefinition and reclassification of a country’s expressive potential, ostensibly to weed out contaminating influences.” –bassist Anthony Jackson, 1991<sup>33</sup>

“People say, ‘Man, you sound like you’re imitating Miles in the ‘60s’, or else, ‘He sounds like he’s imitating Elvin Jones’. So what? You don’t come up with something new. You have to play through something. The problem with some of the stuff the critics think is innovative is that it sounds like European music-European, avant-garde, classical 20<sup>th</sup> century static rhythm music with blues licks in it. And all these cats can say for themselves is, ‘We don’t sound like anybody else’. That doesn’t mean shit. The key is to sound like somebody else, to take what is already there and sound like an extension of that...Music has a tradition that you have to understand before you can move to the next step.” –Wynton Marsalis<sup>34</sup>

No musician of the last three decades has received more accolades or more disdain than Wynton Marsalis. Hailed as a near-prophet by those who resonated with his neo-conservative message of a return to traditional jazz values, he was equally reviled as a

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<sup>32</sup> Mya Jaggi, *Blowing Up a Storm* (The Guardian, January 25, 2003)

<sup>33</sup> Anthony Jackson, *The New Dark Age* (Bass Player, March-April 1991)

<sup>34</sup> A. James Liska, *Wynton and Branford: A Common Understanding* (Downbeat, December, 1982)

reactionary, accused of taking the music backwards and killing creativity. As always, the truth is much more nuanced. Today, 30 years after he exploded onto the scene as an opinionated and outspoken teenaged prodigy, Marsalis is smoothly transitioning through middle age into the role of wise and benevolent elder statesman, and we are in a better position to accurately and impartially assess his legacy.

New York City had long replaced New Orleans as the jazz centre of the universe by October 18, 1961. Yet it was in that latter city, the historic cradle of the music, on that date, that Wynton Learson Marsalis entered the world. The symbolism of this fact, along with his exceptional musicianship and charismatic persona, would seem to neatly position Marsalis for the role of new postmodern jazz messiah. Like many of the early New Orleans legends like Sidney Bechet and Jelly Roll Morton, he came from Creole stock, with mixed French/European and African heritage. The fact that he played the trumpet, an instrument rife with Biblical symbolism and (with its cousin, the cornet) strongly associated with the Crescent City's jazz mythology, made the image complete. It was the instrument of the legendary, never-recorded Buddy Bolden, the great father figure Joe 'King' Oliver, and countless others, culminating of course in the rise of Oliver's protégé and jazz' *original* messiah, Louis Armstrong.

In New Orleans, jazz in its earliest forms continued to exist as a folk tradition. Growing up in this legendary city with a well connected father, pianist and music professor Ellis Marsalis, gave the young Wynton invaluable access to musicians whose experience went

back practically to the beginnings of jazz. Among these was banjoist/guitarist Danny Barker, who had performed with Sidney Bechet, Jelly Roll Morton, James P. Johnson, Bunk Johnson, Lucky Millinder, Cab Calloway, and Benny Carter, and with whom Marsalis had the opportunity to work starting when he was just eight years of age. Inevitably, this background provided Marsalis with a different perspective from peers who grew up in other centres and environments. Like most jazz musicians of his generation, he eventually was drawn to the work of modernists like Miles Davis, John Coltrane, and Freddie Hubbard; yet his foundation rested on a frame of reference that encompassed the history of jazz, reaching back to its folkloric, pre-swing roots. As he entered his teens, Marsalis turned his attention to European concert music, which led to performances with the New Orleans Youth Orchestra, New Orleans Symphony Orchestra, and the New Orleans Symphony Orchestra Brass Quintet, while he simultaneously played in various jazz and funk groups. At 17, he was the youngest musician ever admitted to the Berkshire Music Center at Tanglewood, where he won the Harvey Shapiro Award as Outstanding Brass Player. In 1979, like Miles Davis more than three decades earlier, he moved to New York to attend the Julliard School of Music. And just as Davis had gradually left school behind in order to play with masters like Charlie Parker, Wynton leapt at the chance to join Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers in 1980, bringing his saxophonist elder brother, Branford, along for the ride.

Wynton's self-titled debut recording, released on Columbia in 1982 when he was still only 19 years old, was highly symbolic in its choice of personnel. In addition to Branford

and himself, half the album featured one of the last great, influential rhythm sections of the modern period: pianist Herbie Hancock, bassist Ron Carter, and drummer Tony Williams, who had previously formed the backbone of Miles Davis' Second Great Quintet. The remainder of the album featured, along with bassists Charles Fambrough and Clarence Seay, two of the most important postmodern jazz musicians who would help the Marsalises carry this legacy forward: pianist Kenny Kirkland and drummer Jeff 'Tain' Watts, who were at the beginning of their respective careers. They were among the first high-level, post-fusion musicians who were true products of the postmodern collage. In the late 1980s, as Wynton began to move in different musical directions, they were absorbed into Branford Marsalis' original quartet, with bassist Robert Hurst III.

While in the modern era musicians emerged as part of a continuum, building on the work of previous generations, young players in the postmodern period often found themselves working their way backwards. Watts, for example, grew up listening to R&B and rock music, as well as fusion groups like Weather Report, Headhunters, Return to Forever, and the Mahavishnu Orchestra; his early influences included many of the drummers associated with these groups, including Mike Clark, Lenny White, and Billy Cobham. Eventually he must have realized that all of these artists had emerged from a jazz drumming tradition, which ultimately led him to go back and investigate people like Art Blakey, Elvin Jones, Tony Williams, and Max Roach. Amalgamating and reconciling these worlds of influence, the fusion with the straightahead and, perhaps more importantly, the seemingly opposite approaches of Davis-era Williams (light, spiky,



driving, cleanly articulated) and Jones (heavy, rolling, powerful) transformed Watts into arguably the most impressive and influential jazz drummer of his generation. Kirkland achieved a similar stylistic reconciliation; if Herbie Hancock's clustery, impressionistic harmonies and fluid, futuristic bebop-based lines represented one modern piano path and McCoy Tyner's crashing open 5ths, quartal voicings and pentatonic-based improvisations another, Kirkland seamlessly and effortlessly brought these worlds together, seasoned with healthy doses of Chick Corea's sprightly angularity and Keith Jarrett's funky romanticism, all with a firm grounding in the bebop language of Bud Powell.

With these musicians and others of like mind, including bassists Charnett Moffett and Robert Hurst III and pianist Marcus Roberts (who replaced Kirkland when Kirkland and Branford joined rock musician Sting's group), Wynton Marsalis made a series of exceptional recordings between the mid-1980s and early 1990s that were groundbreaking and innovative in their approaches to rhythm and harmony (see 5.1.1), despite an overarching conservatism, as reflected in, for example, their commitment to 4/4 swing and the use of the traditional hard bop quintet instrumentation of trumpet, saxophone, piano, acoustic bass, and drums. I believe that this kind of dichotomy is at the heart of the postmodern paradigm. The exploratory, questing nature of these early recordings reached a creative pinnacle with the albums *Black Codes from the Underground*, *J Mood*, *Standard Time vol. 1*, and *Live at Blues Alley*. After 1988's *Blues Alley*, Marsalis began increasingly reaching back into the past to explore the blues and other more traditional elements of the music.

Older and younger musicians alike objected to Marsalis's conservative musical philosophy, which was influenced by the writers Stanley Crouch and Albert Murray. Many felt that Marsalis, by espousing a narrow definition of what jazz was or 'should' be, was undermining the very forces of creativity, growth, and personal expression that had always defined the music. However, others perceived that this neo-conservatism was merely a part of a natural cycle. From this viewpoint, which I have come to accept, the music had become so fragmented as to have lost its focus and essence in many ways. In a sense, Marsalis and the 'Young Lions' pressed the reset button, refocusing the music and redefining its basic values so a new period of growth and evolution could begin. While the seeming backward turn the music was taking was alarming to many, it soon became apparent that things would not stay in this reactionary place- they would soon begin changing and evolving anew. Marsalis and his disciples had, effectively, provided not only a strong reminder of the music's roots and traditions but also a powerful model to follow, evolve from, and rebel against. This perspective represents the thrust of my argument: that Marsalis, by returning to a traditional framework and demonstrating that individual innovation and creativity could take place within that framework, helped to launch the second wave of jazz development, the postmodern phase.

## **5.1 Evaluating Marsalis' contributions**

Today, we find ourselves privy to a vibrant collage of postmodern approaches to jazz and improvised music. Wynton Marsalis and the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra (his

primary focus for the past couple of decades) are only a small part of this picture. From our current vantage point, we are better positioned to objectively examine the period in which the outspoken Marsalis was the music's most visible and powerful figurehead and spokesperson, and to determine what values and aesthetics he brought to the table that have directly and indirectly impacted improvising musicians in the years that followed, even those that disagreed with his tactics and mandate.

#### ***5.1.1 The Miles Davis Second Great Quintet as postmodern point of departure***

We have already established the importance of the John Coltrane Quartet with McCoy Tyner, Jimmy Garrison, and Elvin Jones, and the Miles Davis Quintet with Wayne Shorter, Herbie Hancock, Ron Carter, and Tony Williams. Each of these groups had a profound influence on the subsequent generation of jazz players, from the standpoints of both composition and improvisation. In the first decade or so following the death of Coltrane and Davis' movement into so-called fusion, the Coltrane model was the prevalent point of departure. The emotional power and weight of Coltrane's mid-1960s music made it compelling and accessible, even to those who were unable to fully grasp its complexity. The modal harmony, in which a single tonal centre such as D Dorian might last 8 or 16 bars or the entire tune (though a musician as harmonically sophisticated as Coltrane could and did endlessly superimpose multiple harmonies against this tonal centre), was deceptively open and simple. The typically high intensity level on medium and uptempo pieces was often maintained throughout and there was often a minimum of

dynamic variation. Once established, tempos also remained constant. As well, it was common to draw vocabulary from pentatonic scales, which blues and rock musicians also favoured, albeit in a much more simplified manner. It is my opinion that there are two primary reasons for the popularity of this approach: the emotional intensity and perception of spiritual elevation that accompanied it, and the potential to perform second- or third-rate approximations of it. There were many musicians of the period who were well-schooled in the jazz tradition and had absorbed and integrated many influences besides that of Coltrane, and who were able to expand upon this language in a way that did justice to the extremely high level of musicianship that Coltrane displayed. Among these were Woody Shaw, Dave Liebman, Charles Lloyd, Larry Young, Hal Galper, Canadian guitarist Sonny Greenwich, and Coltrane's own former bandmates McCoy Tyner and Elvin Jones. However, it was easy enough for lesser musicians to make music that superficially resembled this aesthetic in harmonic openness and emotional intensity, yet proved lacking in terms of musical discipline and sophistication. Many rock groups of the late 1960s and early '70s forged their own approximations of the Coltrane Quartet aesthetic, including Cream, the Allman Brothers, the Jimi Hendrix Experience, Santana, The Doors, and Led Zeppelin. I mention this not to disparage these groups in any way- these are all important, innovative artists and groups and I personally admire many of them. My point is that even in other genres, including music that is inherently less harmonically and rhythmically complex than jazz such as rock music, this type of general influence and feeling can be directly applied.

However, the music of the Davis Quintet is quite a different model. Rather than the more open modal harmony favoured by Coltrane in the mid-1960s, the compositions of Davis, Hancock, Williams, and particularly Shorter (who contributed the greatest share of the band's repertoire) tended to feature much denser chord progressions. The harmony was also modal, but in a different way; instead of the entire tune being based upon one or two modal tonalities, it often contained many chords that were mostly non-functional (i.e not based on traditional tonic/subdominant/dominant cadential relationships) and derived from various modes of the major, melodic minor, harmonic minor, and harmonic major scales. In live performance they would play some of these original compositions by Shorter and the others, but would often fall back on familiar American Songbook standards like "Stella by Starlight" and "All of You", which also had denser chord progressions though they were more conventional and cadential in nature. The musicians would stretch, abstract, and obscure the forms of these songs; yet as free as the music sometimes sounded, the songs' structures remained generally intact as an underlying foundation. Dynamics would shift on a dime from a whisper to a roar. There was great rhythmic variation as well, as the rhythm section would employ techniques such as *metric modulation* to shift between different tempo grids, for example starting in 4/4 time, then allowing the quarter note triplet to become a new quarter note in 3/4 time. They used the traditional swing pulse with walking bass as a primary model but also began to incorporate rhythms related to rock and R&B (for example the so-called 'boogaloo' groove heard on Ron Carter's composition "Eighty One", essentially a blend of rock or funk with the Afro-Cuban cha-cha-cha). There was a strong sense of counterpoint;

Carter's basslines, for example, were not always simple movements from root to root but often functioned as self-contained counter-melodies. Such was his harmonic savvy that he could spontaneously change the function of a chord voicing Hancock might play by placing an alternative root under it. The Davis group, taking the hard bop aesthetic to its limit, had found a balance between freedom and form, and between modal, cadential, and open harmony. They found ways of organically integrating rock rhythms and occasional forays into odd and mixed meters without sacrificing the fundamental jazz sensibility and emphasis on swing. Yet, almost as quickly as this advanced approach to music-making was formulated, it was abandoned. After a brief period of fronting an even freer group (with Chick Corea, Dave Holland, and Jack DeJohnette replacing Hancock, Carter, and Williams respectively), Davis recorded the multi-layered rock/jazz tone poems *In A Silent Way* and *Bitches Brew*, helping to launch the fusion movement in the process. After that, Shorter co-founded Weather Report; Hancock formed the Mwandishi band, which brought together rock rhythms and Hancock's rich sense of harmony in a traditional jazz sextet format, then the Headhunters, which went further into a funk/R&B direction, with Hancock largely eschewing the piano in favour of multiple electric keyboards; Carter became unofficial house bassist for CTI records, playing on countless crossover jazz and fusion recordings; and Williams also pursued a fusion path, fronting various versions of his Lifetime band. These four musicians reunited briefly in the late 1970s to once again play acoustic jazz music as the V.S.O.P. Quintet, with Freddie Hubbard, rather than Davis, holding the trumpet chair. The reunion served as a reminder that the seeds of a highly realized model for jazz composition and improvisation had been planted a decade

earlier and no one had really responded to the challenge of further exploring its potential, except in fairly superficial ways.

In choosing to employ the Second Quintet rhythm section for half of his debut recording and including compositions by both Carter and Williams, Marsalis served notice that he was prepared, at that time anyway, to take up the gauntlet. It was a subtle way of acknowledging the debt he owed to Davis. It also called attention to the fact that Hancock, Carter, and Williams had advanced the jazz language to a degree that was perhaps obscured by the directions their musical paths took after the breakup of the Quintet. By using a rhythm section drawn from amongst his peers for the remainder of the album, young musicians with the requisite virtuosity, openness, and musicality, he seemed to be saying: “someone needs to pick up where these guys left off. If they are no longer interested, we’ll do it.”

Over the course of the next several years and albums, Marsalis and company explored the harmonic language of Shorter and Hancock, and expanded upon the abrupt tempo changes, metric modulations, ostinatos, and mixed meters pioneered by Carter and Williams. They showed the musicians of their generation that there was still life in acoustic, swing-based jazz music, that expressive freedom and creativity, innovation even, could, paradoxically, take place within strictly defined parameters and disciplined mastery of traditional elements.

Ironically, like Davis, Marsalis soon abandoned the approach, choosing instead (unlike Davis) to delve ever deeper into the past. Other musicians of his generation such as Terence Blanchard, Roy Hargrove, and Wallace Roney (whose tone and chromatic melodicism could be uncannily reminiscent of Davis) continued to mine the spirit of the Second Quintet, but it would take one of the Quintet's key members, Wayne Shorter himself, to bring the seeds they had planted in the 1960s to full fruition. In 2000, nine years after Davis' death, he formed a quartet with three important postmodernists, pianist Danilo Perez, bassist John Patitucci, and drummer Brian Blade. Collectively, they took the spirit of the Davis group to previously unforeseen heights, blurring to an even greater degree the line between freedom and form, transcending the obvious instrumental mastery of the individual members to achieve a rare and mysterious collective magic. My own feeling is that this group represents the closest thing we have to a model for the full realization of jazz' postmodern potential.

### **5.1.2    *The return to Swing and the Blues***

“To play jazz, you have to embrace swing, and the art of swing. It is an objective of a jazz musician to swing. It's a basic, fundamental component of this music. A group of musicians struggling to elegantly dance improvised melodies in complete rhythmic coordination as each introduces another sense of where the beat should actually be. The ultimate give-and-take is right there, *swing*.” –Wynton Marsalis<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Wynton Marsalis with Selwynn Seyfu Hinds: *To a Young Jazz Musician: Letters from the Road* (New York: Random House, 2005) pp 49-50



Despite his early embrace of the adventurous and exploratory spirit of the Davis Quintet, Marsalis was, at his core, a musical conservative who dismissed fusion as a sellout to commerciality and ‘free jazz’ (apart from the music of Ornette Coleman, whom he respected) as largely the work of undisciplined charlatans. In response to the increasingly broad spectrum of music being touted as ‘jazz’, Marsalis promoted a narrow and reactionary definition of the music, which excluded not only the majority of so-called free jazz and fusion but also much European improvised music. For him, certain elements were non-negotiable. One of these was *swing*, the lilting, shuffling rhythmic feel that simultaneously delayed and emphasized the *upbeat* (the second of each pair of 8<sup>th</sup> notes), making music that might be written in 4/4 time feel more like 12/8. Derived from abstractions of ancient West African *bembé* rhythms,<sup>36</sup> the swing feeling once permeated all forms of American folk and art music, including blues, country, and early rock’n’roll and R&B, in addition to jazz. By the 1970s, much of the jazz-oriented music, including fusion, leaned more heavily on *straight 8<sup>th</sup> note* grooves borrowed from rock, funk, and Latin American music, as well as the loose, floaty, broken style of time-keeping that came to be known as the ‘ECM’ feel. By contrast, much of the so-called ‘free’ jazz involved free tempo as well as free harmony, in other words the absence of a defined steady pulse. Wynton declared that not only was swing a desirable element but ultimately a necessary one, if one was to call the music they were playing ‘jazz’.

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<sup>36</sup> Nick Galvin, *The Difficulty of Defining Swing* (The Sydney Morning Herald, May 3, 2014)

Another element that was getting increasingly watered down as jazz moved more and more outside the African-American community and culture was the blues feeling. The term *blues* has multiple implications; it can refer to any of a number of African-American folk music styles (for example, Delta, Piedmont, or Chicago-style blues); to the standardized 12 measure form based on a I-IV-V-I chord progression which permeates American music from country and bluegrass to jazz to early rock 'n' roll; or, perhaps most significantly, to an aesthetic, or essence, in the music. It is an essence that is in some ways difficult to quantify. It has roots in the spirituals and work songs of African Americans going back to slavery times, and contains elements that may be partially derived from Native American chant<sup>37</sup> as well as African and Middle Eastern sources. In a technical sense, it includes things like so-called 'blue notes', specific dissonances such as the flatted 3<sup>rd</sup> and flatted 5<sup>th</sup> played against a chord containing the natural version of those notes, thereby creating an intentional kind of 'rub' or 'crunch'. These blue notes are approximate- they may exist in the cracks between the major and minor 3<sup>rd</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup>, and may not always be landed upon squarely but may appear as grace notes, slides, bends or slurs. In less technical terms, the blues is often thought of as mournful or sad, yet it can just as often feel celebratory and life-affirming. It is most importantly a very human feeling, almost an extension of speech which infuses the music with a certain subjectivity. Even as innovators like Armstrong, Beiderbecke, Ellington, Parker, Davis, Monk, Mingus, Coltrane, Abrams, and Coleman pushed the boundaries of jazz in myriad

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<sup>37</sup> Joe Gioia, *Native American Influence in the History of the Blues* (Utne Reader, June 2013)

directions, the blues feeling was never far below the surface. Marsalis and others were wary of the over-Europeanization of jazz, and felt that the ‘authenticity’ of the music, however intricate and sophisticated it might be, required a firm grounding in this African-American folk essence.

### ***5.1.3 Restoring the ‘true’ sound of the bass and the sonic balance of the jazz ensemble***

A number of the recordings released by both Wynton and Branford Marsalis, specifically those produced by their younger brother Delfayo, contain the following words in the liner notes:

“To obtain more wood sound from the bass, this album recorded without usage of the *dreaded* bass direct”

By the end of the 1920s the *pizzicato* (plucked with the fingers, as opposed to played with the bow as was the standard symphonic practice) bass viol had mostly replaced the tuba as the bass instrument of choice in the jazz group. The pedantic, two-beat oompah of the tuba gave way to the more propulsive, fluid ‘walking’ quarter notes of the string bass. Early on, the bass was unamplified. The player relied on a strong pull and a relatively ‘high action’ (meaning that the strings were set further from the fingerboard, requiring greater pressure both to depress the string with the left hand and to pluck it with the right) to generate a full sound and greater volume. This higher string action made it difficult to play high up on the neck, so most accompaniment and soloing was performed in the low and middle register. In the 1970s, drummers, in some cases influenced by the intensity of

rock and fusion music, were playing at higher volume levels and sometimes using larger drum sizes. Meanwhile, bassists were becoming less content to always take a back seat to other soloists in the group, and many started lowering their action somewhat, which gave them an expanded capability to play fluid, horn-like solos, often high on the neck in so-called 'thumb position'. Also, as the electric bass guitar, the preferred bass instrument in rock and fusion groups, gained prominence, there was a sense that 'acoustic' bassists perhaps felt a need to compete with the bass guitar's greater volume potential and ease of play. The venues were changing as well; jazz was moving from small clubs and theatres to concert halls and large outdoor festival stages. All these factors conspired to create a need for greater amplification of the string bass. Where previously the bass was unamplified or lightly miked, now an electronic pickup placed near the bridge of the instrument and connected directly to an amplifier or PA system via a quarter inch-to-quarter inch guitar cable came into favour. The pickup allowed for greater volume with less physical effort. Bassists could play with greater speed over a wider range on the neck and still be heard in large venues over amplified instruments and loud drummers. The trade-off was that the instrument's natural wood sound and the percussive quality that came with more string resistance were often sacrificed in favour of a more electronic sound that has been likened to a giant rubber band. In the recording studio the effect became even more exaggerated as engineers started recording the bass with the pickup plugged directly into the mixing board. A handful of bassists who came of age in the '70s managed to make artful use of these new techniques and sounds, particularly those influenced by the fleet, melodic, contrapuntal style of Scott LaFaro, among them Eddie

Gomez, Gary Peacock, Marc Johnson, Miroslav Vitous, and George Mraz (Gomez, Peacock, and Johnson even followed in LaFaro's footsteps as members of Bill Evans' trios). However, those that favoured a more traditional approach to the instrument did not fare as well.

It was not merely the sound of the instrument that was compromised; the entire sonic balance and rhythmic feeling of the jazz ensemble often suffered. In most forms of contemporary rock, pop, fusion, and R&B-oriented music, the bass tends to be very prominent in the mix. In the more acoustic setting of the jazz ensemble, however, the bass is like the heartbeat, a propulsive underpinning that is felt as much as heard. When the bass is too forward in the mix, much of that propulsive quality is lost. The other instrumentalists in the group will also tend to play more loudly in reaction to the increased bass volume, so the overall dynamic range of the group often narrows.

Marsalis and his peers rejected the electrified bass sound in favour of a return to the natural sound of the instrument. In the studio, this meant using a microphone to record the bass, as opposed to plugging the pickup directly into the board. In a live situation, the player might still choose to make light use of the pickup and amplifier, or again use a microphone instead of the pickup. The microphone provided an excellent compromise, as bassists could still make use of the technical advances the instrument had enjoyed, including playing horn-like solos and using the upper and middle registers as well as the lower one, while maintaining a truer tonal quality, sonic balance, and rhythmic feel.

What is perhaps most interesting about the rejection of the more electrified string bass sound is that it has become the norm, transcending issues of style and mandate; even musicians far removed from Marsalis' conservative musical worldview have largely embraced this significant aesthetic shift. While the Marsalis brothers (and the bassists associated with them, such as Robert Hurst III, Christian McBride, Eric Revis, and Ben Wolfe) cannot be given all the credit for this trend, they were unquestionably instrumental in nurturing and promoting it.

#### ***5.1.4 Education through mentoring, and the revival of the apprenticeship system and jazz as oral tradition***

In the mid-1990s, Marsalis helmed a series for the American PBS network called *Marsalis on Music*. The series was aimed at children, and was very much in the tradition of Leonard Bernstein's Young People's Concerts from the 1960s. Like Bernstein, Marsalis had a gift for speaking to young people about music without talking down to them. In perhaps the best episode, Marsalis directs the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra while renowned conductor Seiji Ozawa leads a group made up of members of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Movement by movement, they contrast Tchaikovsky's original score for the Nutcracker Suite with Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn's adaptation of the same work for the Ellington Orchestra. Using one of the most beloved works for children in the European concert repertoire to contrast the jazz and classical modus operandi in a way that is engaging and entertaining is nothing short of inspired, as

evidenced by the looks of wonderment on the faces of the children in the audience.

Marsalis has also recently been involved with the National Young Arts Foundation, which identifies young creative artists across all disciplines who are perceived to have the potential to make important future contributions and provides them with support and mentorship. These are just two examples of the kinds of initiatives Marsalis has aligned himself with which expose young people to art music and help them to develop the tools necessary for self-expression within these forms. He has been a role model particularly for young African-Americans, reminding them of the rich and indelible musical legacy their ancestors left behind, instilling awareness of and pride in these accomplishments from which the community had perhaps become estranged.

He has made it an important part of his mandate to find young, unknown musicians whose potential he sees and bring them into his groups, giving them a platform from which to gain experience and hone their skills, taking on the role of mold and shaper in the manner of his former boss, Art Blakey, and others such as Betty Carter. He also has made a point, while traveling during festival season and other times, of interfacing with local musicians through sitting in at jam sessions and gigs and teaching master classes and private lessons, thereby consciously acknowledging the importance for the music's global health of developing a sense of community at the regional level. For all of Marsalis' reputation for brashness and controversy, I have personally witnessed his warmth, graciousness, and approachability in these kinds of environments.

In summary, Marsalis has helped us to realize that creative, vibrant, relevant music can be made using traditional structures and values. By emphasizing discipline, structure, instrumental mastery, and respect for and understanding of the music's lineage and root culture, he has provided a solid and clearly defined nucleus for jazz in the postmodern age. Whether or not people agree with his motives or methods is almost beside the point. Like all traditionalist codifications in art, the Marsalis model exists to be rebelled against as much as followed. Regardless of whether we like the man, his music, or his message, whether we see him as latter day saviour or regressive, narrow-minded zealot, Wynton Marsalis has been an anchor for postmodern jazz musicians, a link between a glorious past and an uncertain future, providing us with a certain kind of grounding whether we have realized it or not.



## Chapter 6 Obedience, Rebellion, and the Death of Factionalism: Jazz in the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s

In the wake of the Marsalis ‘reset’, jazz and improvisation-based music became heavily factionalized. As the postmodern collage exploded, cliques formed, most visibly in the New York City area which was still the music’s creative epicentre. Divisions emerged along stylistic, philosophical, regional, and ethnic lines. While harsh words and attitudes sometimes transpired between these factions, hostility between them was not as pronounced as one might suspect, and there were musicians who were able to move smoothly between them, such as saxophonist Joe Lovano, drummer Marvin “Smitty” Smith, pianist Geri Allen, and vocalist Cassandra Wilson. However, they represented distinct musical cultures with intense differences in mandate. Below is a brief survey of three of the important movements of the 1980s/’90s, each of which has hugely influenced subsequent generations of improvising musicians.

### **6.1 Wynton’s Children: The ‘Young Lions’**

‘Young Lions’ was a catch phrase critics coined to describe the legion of precocious, primarily African-American young neo-traditionalists who arose in the wake of the Marsalis phenomenon. In some cases they gravitated toward an approach that was even less adventurous than Marsalis’, often a throwback to the soulful hard bop of the 1960s in the mode of Art Blakey, the Adderly brothers, and Horace Silver but arguably sometimes

lacking some the freshness and vitality that those artists brought when they initially forged the style. Many of these players, including trumpeter Marlon Jordan, saxophonist Christopher Hollyday, and the Harper Brothers (trumpeter Phillip and drummer Winard), all highly accomplished musicians, nonetheless had brief ascensions followed by descent into relative obscurity. Other Lions, like trumpeters Terrence Blanchard, Roy Hargrove, Nicholas Payton, and Wallace Roney, bassist Christian McBride, saxophonists Kenny Garrett and Joshua Redman, vibraphonist Stefon Harris, pianists Cyrus Chestnut, Marcus Roberts, Benny Green, and Geoff Keezer, drummers Lewis Nash, Brian Blade, and Greg Hutchinson, and guitarists Russell Malone and Peter Bernstein, developed into important and vital creative forces with major staying power, branching out in a multitude of directions while remaining rooted in the music's traditional structures and continuing to inspire and influence young musicians today. All reaped the initial benefits of riding on the coattails of Marsalis' extraordinary rise to mega-stardom, with record labels, for perhaps the last time, competing to sign the 'next Wynton'.

## **6.2 Brooklyn Rising: M-Base**

A number of young African-American musicians emerging in the 1980s were not content to rehash or expand upon the past, and many saw Marsalis as a figure, however gifted, who was intent on taking the music backwards rather than forward. Their spiritual leader was the prodigiously gifted alto saxophonist, composer and theoretician Steve Coleman. Coleman, Greg Osby, Robin Eubanks, Graham Haynes (son of the legendary drummer Roy Haynes), Gary Thomas, Geri Allen, Cassandra Wilson, and others of like-mind

formed a loose collective called ‘M-Base’, an acronym coined by Coleman that stood for ‘Macro-Basic Array of Structured Extemporizations’. The musicians emphasized that M-Base represented a musical philosophy rather than a style, though certain stylistic elements became associated with their output, particularly the incorporation of extremely complex meters and beat cycles conceived in opposition to standard European concepts of ‘time signature’, juxtaposed with a danceable funk sensibility and strong African rhythmic influences. Brooklyn, NY, where many musicians resided, became the major hub of M-Base activity. However, the influence of Chicago’s renegade improviser/composers such as saxophonists Von Freeman and Bunky Green, as well as the AACM artists, ran deep in the veins of the movement, particularly via Coleman, himself a Windy City native. Rather than restricting themselves to a limited vision of what ‘jazz’ was, they preferred instead to view themselves as part of a larger continuum of the musical lineage of the African diaspora, which embraced everything from Charlie Parker to Henry Threadgill to James Brown, as well as African and Latin American rhythmic language. The breadth of their mandate echoes Bill Evans’ assertion that jazz is an approach to making music rather than a style. In Coleman’s words,

For us [M-Base] means expressing our experiences through music that uses improvisation and structure as two of its main ingredients. There is no limitation on the kind of structures or the type of improvisation, or the style of the music.

The main goal is to creatively express our experiences as they are today and to try

and build common creative musical languages in order to do this on some kind of large collective level (macro, basic, array).<sup>38</sup>

The music of the M-Base artists stood well apart from any previously established notions of ‘free jazz’, ‘fusion’, or ‘straightahead’ jazz. As such, it was very much in the tradition of the AACM and presented one of the earliest and most powerfully original postmodern alternatives to the neo-traditionalism of Marsalis and the Lions.

### **6.3 Zorn of Plenty: the ‘Downtown’ scene**

“...the music is not jazz music, it's not classical music, it's not rock music. It's a new kind of music ... So I feel like that created a deep misunderstanding in what this music is. People started judging this new music with the standards of jazz, with the definitions of what jazz is and isn't, because stories about it appeared in jazz magazines. And now I'll do a gig at the Marciac Jazz Festival and I'll get offstage and Wynton Marsalis will say, 'That's not jazz.' And I'll say, 'You're right! But this is the only gig I've got, man. Give me another festival and I'll play there!’” –John Zorn<sup>39</sup>

Another alternative scene began to emerge in the 1980s and ‘90s that centred around the small clubs of Manhattan’s East Village and Lower East Side. One club in particular, the Knitting Factory, became its unofficial base of operations. It shared much philosophical common ground with the M-Base movement, including drawing heavily on the inspiration of AACM artists like Threadgill, Abrams, Braxton, and others, while also being connected to avant-garde composers like John Cage, Morton Feldman, Terry Riley, and LaMonte Young. Unlike M-Base however it was never a formal collective, and the

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<sup>38</sup> [http://www.m-base.com/mbase\\_explanation.html](http://www.m-base.com/mbase_explanation.html)

<sup>39</sup> Bill Milkowski, *John Zorn: The Working Man* (JazzTimes, May, 2009)

majority of its 'members' were (with some notable exceptions) non-African-Americans, with a significant Jewish presence. It came to be known as the 'Downtown' scene, in order to contrast it with the 'Uptown' mainstreamers and the Brooklyn M-Basers and also as an extension of the original 'Downtown' avant garde composition scene of the 1970s, which included people like Feldman, Riley, Young, Steve Reich, Phillip Glass, Laurie Anderson, and others. As with the Young Lions and the M-Basers, the Downtowners encompassed a wide spectrum of musical approaches, and it was more a kind of fraternity of like-minded individuals than a stylistically unified movement.

The closest thing the Downtown scene had to a Coleman-like figurehead was the similarly mercurial alto saxophonist, composer, and cultural instigator John Zorn. Older than both Coleman and Marsalis, Zorn was associated with the earlier '70s Downtown scene, but it wasn't until the mid-1980s that he began to have a wider impact. His saxophone playing was steeped in seemingly equal parts Charlie Parker, Ornette Coleman, and the Slavic, klezmer, and Roma music of his Ashkenazic Jewish roots. An incredibly prolific composer and bandleader, his various groups like Masada and Naked City and his writing for everything from jazz and rock-oriented groups to symphonic and chamber ensembles bridged seemingly irreconcilable influences, ranging from bebop and free jazz to klezmer, contemporary classical, hardcore, and even surf rock, also bringing together musicians from diverse backgrounds. He pioneered so-called 'game' pieces (*Cobra* being the best known), using things like flash cards to facilitate a random sequence of pre-determined events or possibilities. In Zorn's words,

Composing is more than just imagining music- it's knowing how to communicate it to musicians. And you don't give an improviser music that's completely written out, or ask a classical musician to improvise. I'm interested in speaking to musicians on their own terms, and in bringing out the best in what they do. To challenge them and excite them.<sup>40</sup>

Zorn's eclecticism, prolificness, virtuosity, and highly evolved sense of humour and irony made him the poster child for the postmodern collage taken to the extremes of its potential. His example created an inclusive environment that encouraged other musicians with similarly wide-ranging tastes and influences, people like Dave Douglas, Tim Berne, Bill Frisell, Joey Baron, Don Byron, Bobby Previte, Wayne Horvitz, Uri Caine, Susie Ibarra, Matthew Shipp, David S. Ware, William Parker, and numerous others who have continued to push the limits of composed/improvised music throughout the '80s, 90s and well into the 2000s.

#### **6.4 Can't Everyone Just Get Along?: The death of factionalism**

One of the clearest signs that a mature postmodern jazz culture has emerged in the new millenium is the gradual dissolution of the cliques and factions that had divided musicians from the late 1960s to at least the middle of the '90s. It's not that they have disappeared entirely (to claim as much would be akin to the statement that the election of Barrack Obama as president meant that the U.S. was now 'post-racial'), but they are considerably less pronounced. There is a general feeling of mutual respect now. Marsalis' preservationist mandate seems less threatening than it once did, and his Jazz at Lincoln

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<sup>40</sup> Paul Schmelzer, *Visionary, Mensch, Dude: 60 on John Zorn at 60* (Walker Magazine, April 3, 2013)

Center series has featured 'Downtown' musicians like Bill Frisell and Dave Douglas and unlikely collaborations with artists like Willie Nelson and Eric Clapton. Musicians associated with the eclectic M-Base and Downtown scenes returned to their mainstream roots through collaborations with elder statesmen like Ron Carter (Joey Baron), Elvin Jones (Bill Frisell), and Jim Hall (Greg Osby). Older postmodernists like Joe Lovano, Jack DeJohnette, and Dave Holland have continued to ignore any and all factional boundaries, as they always have, while younger artists like Brad Meldau, Chris Potter, Kurt Rosenwinkel, Mark Turner, Walter Smith III, Ambrose Akinmusire, Uri Caine, Esperanza Spalding, Avashai Cohen, Robert Glasper, Dave Binney, and others followed gleefully in their footsteps, unselfconsciously playing straight-ahead jazz, free improvisation, rock covers, and music influenced by various world cultures, collaborating with hip hop artists and string quartets as the spirit moved them. The elitism, racism, distrust and lack of understanding that once divided classical and improvising musicians was disappearing. The artificial racial divide that has split the United States for so long has, at certain times, crept insidiously into jazz; This is less and less the case as artists, musicians in general and jazz and improvising musicians specifically represent a subculture that ultimately transcends such earthly limitations.

The influences of European classical music, contemporary popular music, and various world musics have now been integrated so completely as to render formerly relevant terms unnecessary. The large ensemble music of Maria Schneider or Vince Mendoza can not properly be called 'third stream', nor is the term 'fusion' sufficient to contain the Bad

Plus' Black Sabbath and Metallica interpretations, Roy Hargrove's R&B drenched RH Factor, Robert Glasper's hip hop explorations, or Kurt Rosenwinkel's epic, soaring electric guitar oddysseys.

It now seems perfectly natural within the umbrella of 'jazz guitar', for example, for an artist like Rosenwinkel to flourish side by side with neo-traditionalists like Peter Bernstein and Russell Malone, an explorer of intricate and poetical through-composed structures like Ben Monder, and a whammy-bar wielding, improvisational mind-bender like Mary Halvorson. Colleagues of mine who are slightly older grew up playing in more traditional settings and had to learn to deal with the complex harmony and time signatures that were coming into the music. Many of the musicians from the following generation, meanwhile, were quite comfortable playing those complex structures but fell down when it came to playing, for example, a convincing 4/4 swing feel. Now, young musicians can do it all- they continue to deal with ever greater levels of complexity, yet they are likely to be equally at home with a deep 4/4 groove in the manner of the Wynton Kelly Trio, or, for that matter, with open-form improvisation.

With the death of factionalism comes true freedom, the kind of freedom the so-called 'free' jazz players were seeking- the freedom to be oneself, and to fully embrace, uncensored, all the elements that might require. With the metanarrative of jazz as a historical art form continuing to inform the present at the same time as it fades further and further in the rearview mirror, the seemingly limitless potential of the personal



micronarrative, the individual collage, is thriving like never before. Perhaps, as Nicholas Payton says, jazz did die in 1959- every medium has its 'heyday', after all. Every death, though, sets the stage for a rebirth, and jazz and its related forms have been reborn many times since then, ultimately blossoming into the rich diversity we see today- a fully realized postmodern jazz.

## Chapter 7 My Own Private Micronarrative: Defining my place in the postmodern jazz landscape

### 7.1 A Postmodern Jazz Story

In June of 1987 I boarded a train in Toronto and traveled westward across the vast Canadian landscape, past the spectacular rocky coastline of Lake Superior, through the lake country of western Ontario and eastern Manitoba with its teeming waterfowl, into the endless sunset of the prairies. Passing through the city of Calgary, Alberta, the flatness of the prairie gradually rose into deceptively gentle foothills before suddenly exploding into the dramatic grandeur of the Canadian Rockies. Snaking through the breathtaking mountain landscape, we finally came to rest in the town of Banff, nestled on the edge of Banff National Park in the Bow River Valley. Stepping off the train into the pine-scented air, a taxi took me up the winding stretch of road that led to the Banff Centre for the Arts.

In recent years, the Banff Centre has expanded to embrace corporate conferences and ‘mountain culture’, but when I first landed there as a wide-eyed 20-year-old it was still ‘just’ an arts centre- a veritable Shangri La for people born with the affliction of needing to make art. Making that initial trek up Tunnel Mountain Drive was like passing through a virtual Ellis Island (“give us your tired, your poor, your huddled artists yearning to be free”) and entering a brave new world positively vibrating with creative energy. The summer programs at that time included dance, theatre, and chamber music, but I was

there to attend the International Jazz Workshop, which at that time flourished under the directorship of British-born bassist Dave Holland.

The faculty, built around members of Holland's 1980s quintet, was a microcosm of early postmodern jazz approaches or micronarratives. There was saxophonist Steve Coleman, co-founder of the M-Base collective, weaving angular intervallic improvisations over Afrocentric odd-meter funk grooves and mind-bending beat cycles. There was trumpeter/composer Kenny Wheeler, the neo-Romantic, his piercing yet mournful trumpet sound vaguely rooted in the slightly skewed bebop of Booker Little and the plaintive cry of Miles Davis but unmistakably his own; raised in equal measure on big band discipline and free jazz abstraction, he ultimately embraced a highly lyrical, poetic composition style that matched achingly heartfelt melodies with beautiful and complex chord progressions. There was drummer Marvin "Smitty" Smith, who, like Jeff Watts, found equal space in his frame of reference for Billy Cobham and for Max Roach. There was Kevin Eubanks, like me a progressive rock fan, with a virtuosic guitar style that owed as much to John McLaughlin and Jimi Hendrix as to Wes Montgomery and George Benson. There were saxophonist Pat LaBarbera and multi-instrumentalist Don Thompson, embodying, respectively, the post-Coltrane and post-Bill Evans approaches. There was Holland himself, who had replaced Ron Carter in the Miles Davis group, seeing Davis through his transition from restlessly exploratory modern jazz to fusion. Holland was in many ways the ultimate postmodern jazz musician, equally at home accompanying mainstream masters like Hank Jones, contemporary icons like Herbie

Hancock and Pat Metheny, and iconoclasts like Sam Rivers and Anthony Braxton, happy to pump out Ray Brown-inspired swinging quarter notes, Scott LaFaro-esque counterpoint lines, free form flights, or funky odd meter grooves as required, without ever sacrificing the individuality and integrity that defined him as a musician. There was the wise and sage-like Muhal Richard Abrams, who provided a link with the whole jazz piano lineage, the Ellingtonian jazz orchestral continuum, and the AACM legacy, plus a wealth of information on techniques and theories of composition. And finally, there was Ghanaian master drummer Abraham Adzenyah, who made sure we stayed connected to the rhythmic core as well as the social function of the music.

These musicians, and others who preceeded and followed them on the Banff faculty, had an immeasurable impact on the directions that jazz and improvised music took in Canada (and beyond) between the mid-1980s and early 2000s. The tradition of exposing participants to a diverse range of approaches has continued after Holland to the present day under the successive leadership of Steve Coleman, Hugh Fraser, Kenny Werner, Dave Douglas, and Vijay Iyer. It has served as a veritable laboratory of postmodern jazz, giving generations of young musicians an opportunity to find their comfort zone while simultaneously giving them the tools and inspiration to explore beyond that comfort zone. It was here that my friend and colleague Andy Milne, a participant at the same time as me, was taken under Steve Coleman's wing and gradually transformed from talented jazz pianist into visionary composer, bandleader, and keyboardist. Other friends I had the opportunity to play and explore with at Banff included drummer John Hollenbeck, who

has become one of the most original composers of jazz orchestra and improvisation-based chamber music in New York, and Kenny Rampton, a mainstay of that bastion of neo-traditionalism, the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra. Banff was a welcome alternative to the increasingly standardized and gentrified jazz education model. Its lesson was not “do it *this* way” but rather “respect- and learn from- *all* the ways- then find your own.”

Long before my arrival at Banff, my fate was sealed. It was a recording by Dizzy Gillespie that I discovered at around four years old in a summer home my parents rented in Michigan that set the wheels in motion. Through my parents, I had already heard a great deal of music, mostly of the classical and folk variety. But these exotic sounds that crackled from the turntable, classic big band and septet tracks from the mid-to-late 1940s like Manteca, Good Bait, 52<sup>nd</sup> Street Theme, and A Night In Tunisia, were unlike anything I’d ever heard, yet somehow familiar. By age 10 I was playing drums and euphonium and starting to pick out tunes by ear on the piano. A couple of years later I began studies with saxophonist and pianist Stephen Horenstein, a professor in the Black Music department at Bennington College in Bennington, Vermont, where my family resided at the time. The department’s director was the charismatic trumpeter Bill Dixon, a musician with strong ties to the elites of the avant garde like Cecil Taylor and Archie Shepp. My mother often took me to lectures and concerts at Bennington, and I recall seeing the drummer Milford Graves perform a duet with a dancer, and hearing George Russell speak about his Lydian Concept. Meanwhile, under Horenstein’s tutelage, I learned jazz standards and compositions by Ellington and Monk. The older brother of my

junior high school best friend in Bennington was a jazz saxophonist named David Bindman, who also played piano well, and he often gave me helpful advice and passed along records for me to listen to. He also allowed me to attend and observe rehearsals of his group, the Bennington Contemporary Jazz Quintet. Meanwhile, I connected with a drummer and a bass guitarist who were both a year ahead of me in school. They recruited me for a trio and introduced me to the music of Weather Report.

In my quest to discover everything I could about jazz, I raided libraries and record stores and the boxes of ‘for review only’ records that arrived in the mail, addressed to my music and dance critic mother. My naïveté proved beneficial as I devoured anything remotely related to jazz: early ragtime string bands, folk and electric blues, 1950s and ‘60s R&B and rock ‘n’ roll, jazz and improvised sounds from the early Louis Armstrong Hot Five and Hot Seven recordings to Cecil Taylor, and everything in between- Basie, Lester Young, Charlie Parker, Mingus, Monk, Ellington, Woody Shaw, Clifford Brown, Donald Byrd, and especially John Coltrane.

Over time I gravitated toward certain music and artists more than others, and as a pianist I developed what I would call the typical postmodern jazz piano frame of reference. In general terms, the formula consisted of the following:

- A solid basis in the bebop language of Bud Powell,
- A relationship to ‘time feel’ or ‘swing’ gleaned from 1950s pianists like Wynton Kelly, Red Garland, and Oscar Peterson, and

- A blend of language derived from what I call the ‘big five’ of post-Powell/Tristano modern jazz piano: Bill Evans, McCoy Tyner, Herbie Hancock, Chick Corea, and Keith Jarrett<sup>41</sup>.

Individual pianists might demonstrate different proportions of these influences, and borrow language from other important piano influences like Thelonious Monk, Lennie Tristano, Ahmad Jamal, Dave Brubeck, Hank Jones, Herbie Nichols, Phineas Newborn, Jr., or Cecil Taylor to carve out an individual voice.

In this regard, I feel a particular kinship with pianists like Kenny Kirkland, Mulgrew Miller, Geri Allen, James Williams, Kenny Werner, Joanne Brackeen, Kirk Lightsey, John Hicks, George Cables, John Taylor, Russell Ferrante, Bill Mays, Kenny Barron, Billy Childs, Renee Rosnes, Joey Calderazzo, Benny Green, Jim McNeely, Ronnie Matthews, Bernie Senensky, Andy Laverne, Richie Beirach, Bruce Hornsby, Lyle Mays, and others who came of age in the 1970s and ‘80s. While artists like Evans, Hancock, and Tyner were part of the metanarrative of modernism, each signifying a radical reinvention of the jazz piano language within the tradition, the pianists listed above represent a rich mosaic of individual micronarratives made possible by employing

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<sup>41</sup> Though I have identified Jarrett as a key shaper of postmodern jazz, I also see him as one of the last important “modern” jazz pianists.

endless variations on the aforementioned formula.<sup>42</sup> Reconciling seemingly disparate elements, such as Evansian Romanticism, Tynerian power, and Petersonian driving swing became the *raison d'être* of postmodern piano jazz.

## 7.2 Compositional development

From the standpoint of postmodern jazz composition, we are looking once more at a reconciliation of disparate elements. The modernist jazz composers of the 1950s, '60s, and early '70s laid the groundwork, falling roughly into three categories: 1. *Composer-arrangers* who might play an instrument but primarily focused on the writing aspect; 2. *composer-improvisers*, who were often important and influential instrumentalists but who paid particular attention to the art and craft of composition and were even more influential in this area; and 3. *improviser-composers*, who were instrumental soloists first and foremost and essentially wrote compositions as vehicles for improvisation. In the first category were people like Gil Evans, George Russell, and Carla Bley (today this torch has been picked up by Vince Mendoza and Maria Schneider). In the second, Thelonious Monk, Charles Mingus, Horace Silver, Oliver Nelson, Bob Brookmeyer, Thad Jones, Benny Golson, Wayne Shorter, Steve Swallow, and Kenny Wheeler. In the third, Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, Lennie Tristano, Miles Davis, John Coltrane,

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<sup>42</sup> It should be noted that the formula is only one paradigm, arguably the most prevalent one. There were plenty of great pianists who followed alternative pathways, such as Randy Weston and the South African Abdullah Ibrahim (Dollar Brand), who sprang from the Ellington-Monk continuum.



Sonny Rollins, McCoy Tyner, and others. Some, including Bud Powell, Bill Evans, Cedar Walton, Gerry Mulligan, Herbie Hancock, Chick Corea, Joe Henderson, Freddie Hubbard, Woody Shaw, Ornette Coleman, and Keith Jarrett, were somewhere in the middle of this equation, almost equally influential as composers and as instrumentalist-soloists.

As jazz composers in the postmodern era, then, we are confronted with a collage of melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic elements to be drawn from and woven together in endless combinations to create a personal micronarrative within the overarching jazz/improvised music tradition. Some of the rhythmic elements can include:

- Traditional 4/4 swing rhythm and other traditional rhythmic frameworks, including the jazz waltz (or swing 3).
- Odd and compound meters and beat cycles.
- Tempo fluctuations and metric modulation.
- Polyrhythms, cross rhythms, odd groupings and phrase lengths.
- Rock, funk, hip hop, gospel, and R&B-influenced beats.
- Latin American and Afro-Caribbean rhythms (bossa nova, samba, rhumba/guaguanco, cha cha cha, guajira, son montuno, tango, merengue, reggae, calypso, cumbia, Afro-Peruvian rhythms, etc.).
- Rhythmic language borrowed from other world cultures including African, Middle Eastern, Balkan, Spanish, and South Asian.
- Rubato or free tempo (no strictly defined pulse).

- The so-called 'ECM' groove- not quite bossa nova or rock/funk but a loose, broken straight 8th jazz feel.

Harmonic elements could include:

- Conventional cadential harmony, e.g. ii-V7-I.
- 'Non-functional' harmony based on modes of the major, melodic minor, harmonic minor, and harmonic major scales, as pioneered by people like Shorter, Davis, Henderson, Corea, and Hancock.
- Harmony based on parallel 4ths and 5ths, à la Tyner and Corea.
- Polychords and so-called 'slash' chords (a chord placed over an alternate bass note, e.g. B/C). Examples of slash chords could be heard as far back as at least the 1940s but they came into more prominent usage via Hancock, Shorter, et al and were extensively explored by Dave Liebman and Richie Beirach starting in the 1970s. There is an influence here from 20th century European composers such as Bartok, Stravinsky, Schoenberg, and Ravel.
- 'Open' harmony- no defined chord progression, left up to the improviser to create melodic lines that may imply a harmonic basis or may be strictly chromatic or interval-based, related to Ornette Coleman's concept of 'harmolodics'.
- Simpler triad-based chords associated with folk and pop music, and related to what I call the 'heartland' sound, the folk/country/gospel quality that

manifested in symphonic music through people like Aaron Copland, pop-rock through Joni Mitchell, The Band, and Bruce Hornsby, and jazz through Keith Jarrett, Pat Metheny, Bill Frisell and others. This includes chords built in open 5ths, and sounds like the major triad with the added 9th or suspended 2nd and the 3rd in the bass, e.g. Csus2/E (ECDG), and the major 7th chord with no 3rd, e.g. G/C (CBDG).

Melodic material might be derived from the following sources:

- Bebop-style fast moving 8th note lines, based on traditional scalar and arpeggio-based material with chromatic passing and approach tones.
- Pentatonic and 4th-based melodies in the manner of Coltrane, Tyner, Corea, and Woody Shaw.
- ‘Romantic’ melodies, typical of the kinds of stirring themes written by 19th century European composers like Beethoven, Brahms, Schubert, Chopin, Rachmaninoff, Wagner, and Mahler, some of the Great American Songbook composers like Gershwin, Porter, Berlin, and Arlen, and certain modern jazz composers like Bill Evans, Wayne Shorter, Kenny Wheeler, and Keith Jarrett. These melodies would be long and lyrical, often with irregular phrases, wide interval leaps such as 6ths and 7ths, and chromaticism, a blend of dissonance and resolving consonance engineered to tug at the emotions.

- Intervallic melodies, based on combining of different interval shapes or on unconventional scales and patterns, including scales borrowed from various world cultures. Books like Nicholas Slonimsky's *Thesaurus of Scales and Melodic Patterns* and Yusef Lateef's *Repository of Scales and Melodic Patterns* are popular sources of these kinds of structures.

And finally, the *form* of a piece may reflect variations on traditional structures (12 bar blues, 32 bar song form, AABA, ABAC, and so on) or use other formats like *through-composition* (in which one section leads into the next with none of the material repeated exactly). Extended forms and suites are also commonly explored ideas borrowed from the European tradition. The relationship between the composed and improvised sections of a piece can also vary greatly. In short-form pieces, improvisation often happens in the traditional fashion, which involves each soloist playing over the chord structure of the entire tune. It is also possible to have the melody, rather than a harmonic structure, serve as the basis for open-form (so-called 'free') improvising, with or without a steady time pulse, in the manner of Ornette Coleman, or have an improvised section that is harmonically distinct from the main composed sections of the piece. In extended pieces, improvised passages may be integrated into the larger fabric of the composition, with different soloists potentially playing over different sections or structures, as opposed to the standard model in which everyone improvises over the same structure, the basic song form.

### **7.3 Analysis of original works**

Since this thesis is part of a degree in composition, part of my mandate involved writing a series of pieces that reflect my personal musical aesthetic as it has evolved to this point in time, and help to define my place in the postmodern jazz landscape. In the final pages of this thesis, I will present these pieces, to be accompanied by my most recent CD recording, *The Waves* (which features all the pieces included here), along with some commentary and analysis that will attempt to pinpoint some of the influences and collage elements that have shaped each piece.

# The Bull and the Roses

David Restivo

♩ = 101

**up tempo broken swing**

Measures 1-4 of the musical score. The score is in 4/4 time. The first two staves (treble and alto) are empty. The piano part (grand staff) begins with a key signature of two flats (Bb and Eb). The chords for measures 1-4 are: Fm11, Bbm9, C(add9)/E, Am11, and Dm11. The piano part features a complex, arpeggiated texture in the right hand and a more rhythmic bass line in the left hand.

Measures 5-8 of the musical score. The first two staves (treble and alto) are empty. The piano part continues with the same key signature. The chords for measures 5-8 are: Fm11, Bbm9, C(add9)/E, C(sus2)/B, Am11(b6), and Bbm9(b6). The piano part maintains the complex, arpeggiated texture in the right hand and the rhythmic bass line in the left hand.

Measures 9-12 of the musical score. The first two staves (treble and alto) contain a melodic line. The piano part continues with the same key signature. The chords for measures 9-12 are: Dbmaj7(#11), F#m11, Ab(sus2)/C, Fm11, Dbmaj7, and Fm9. The piano part features a complex, arpeggiated texture in the right hand and a more rhythmic bass line in the left hand.

2

13

Chords:  $D\flat\text{maj}7(\#11)$ ,  $F\text{maj}7(\text{sus}4)$ ,  $E\text{maj}7(\text{add}13)$

17

Chords:  $D^+7$ ,  $A\flat^+7$ ,  $G\flat^9(\#11)$ ,  $A\flat(\text{add}9\#11)$ ,  $B\flat^6(\#11)$ ,  $C(\#11)$

♩ = 101

21 half-time (straight 8ths)

Half time (Str. 8ths)

Half time (Str. 8ths)

Chords:  $B/E$ ,  $A\text{m}^{11}$ ,  $E(\text{add}9)/G\#$ ,  $D\text{m}^{11}$ ,  $G/C$ ,  $F\text{m}^{11}$ ,  $F/B\flat$ ,  $E\text{bm}^{11}$

$\text{♩} = 101$

3

25 **Tempo I**

Musical score for measures 25-28. The score is in 4/4 time, marked **Tempo I**. It features a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The piano part has a steady eighth-note bass line. Chords are indicated below the piano staff: Eb/E, C/Gb, Gb/Ab, C(add4)/Bb, C(sus4), and C/D.

29

Musical score for measures 29-32. The score continues with the vocal line and piano accompaniment. Chords indicated are C/F and Am<sup>11</sup>.

**To Coda**  $\phi$

To solos

33

Musical score for measures 33-36. The score concludes with a Coda section. The piano part features long, sustained chords. Chords indicated are C/F, G(sus4), and Am<sup>11</sup>. The vocal line has a final melodic phrase. The section is marked "(Last X only)" for both the vocal and piano parts.



37  Drum solo

Drum solo

Drum solo

Drum solo

Fm<sup>11</sup> Bbm<sup>9</sup> C(add9)/E Am<sup>11</sup> Dm<sup>11</sup>

41

Fm<sup>11</sup> Bbm<sup>9</sup> C(add9)/E C(sus2)/B Am<sup>11</sup>(b6) Bbm<sup>9</sup>(b6)

45 Drums!

8

8

8

8



53 Drum solo cont'd.-open, fade

Drum solo continues

Cm

Dbmaj7(#11)

57

open- fade or rit

Cm

Dbmaj7(#11)

D/Eb

C/F

Emaj7(#9)

SOLOS (Piano, trumpet, tenor [with set-up])

SOLOS (Piano, trumpet, tenor [with set-up])

Fm11

Bbm9

C(add9)/E

Am11

Dm11

6

65 Fm<sup>11</sup> Bbm<sup>6/9</sup> C(add<sup>9</sup>)/E Am<sup>(b6)</sup> Bbm<sup>(b6)</sup>

69 Ebmaj7(#11) Abm<sup>11</sup> Bb(add<sup>9</sup>)/D Eb Gm<sup>11</sup>

73 Dbmaj7(#11) Fmaj7(sus4) Emaj7(#11)

77 D<sup>+7</sup> G<sup>b7</sup>(#11) A<sup>b</sup>(add9#11) B<sup>b</sup> D/C

D<sup>+7</sup> G<sup>b7</sup>(#11) A<sup>b</sup>(add9#11) B<sup>b</sup> D/C

D<sup>+7</sup> G<sup>b7</sup>(#11) A<sup>b</sup>(add9#11) B<sup>b</sup> D/C

Half time feel

81 E<sup>maj7</sup> A<sup>m11</sup> E(add9)/G<sup>#</sup> D<sup>m11</sup>

E<sup>maj7</sup> A<sup>m11</sup> E(add9)/G<sup>#</sup> D<sup>m11</sup>

Half time feel

E<sup>maj7</sup> A<sup>m11</sup> E(add9)/G<sup>#</sup> D<sup>m11</sup>

E<sup>maj7</sup> A<sup>m11</sup> E(add9)/G<sup>#</sup> D<sup>m11</sup>

Half time feel

E<sup>maj7</sup> A<sup>m11</sup> E(add9)/G<sup>#</sup> D<sup>m11</sup>

E<sup>maj7</sup> A<sup>m11</sup> E(add9)/G<sup>#</sup> D<sup>m11</sup>

85 C<sup>maj7</sup> F<sup>m11</sup> B<sup>b</sup><sup>maj7</sup> E<sup>b</sup><sup>m11</sup>

C<sup>maj7</sup> F<sup>m11</sup> B<sup>b</sup><sup>maj7</sup> E<sup>b</sup><sup>m11</sup>

C<sup>maj7</sup> F<sup>m11</sup> B<sup>b</sup><sup>maj7</sup> E<sup>b</sup><sup>m11</sup>

8 A Tempo

89 Eb/E C/Gb Ab(sus4) C/Bb D7(sus4)

A Tempo

89 Eb/E C/Gb Ab(sus4) C/Bb D7(sus4)

A Tempo

89 Eb/E C/Gb Ab(sus4) C/Bb D7(sus4)

A Tempo

89 Eb/E C/Gb Ab(sus4) C/Bb D7(sus4)

93 C/F Am<sup>11</sup> C/F Am<sup>11</sup>

93 C/F Am<sup>11</sup> C/F Am<sup>11</sup>

C/F Am<sup>11</sup> C/F Am<sup>11</sup>

C/F Am<sup>11</sup> C/F Am<sup>11</sup>

**D.C. al Coda**

(After solos)

97 F G Am<sup>11</sup>

97 F G Am<sup>11</sup>

F G Am<sup>11</sup>

F G Am<sup>11</sup>

(After solos)

(After solos)

(After tenor solo)

101 Set-up for tenor solo

Set up for tenor solo (1st 8 bars)

Set up for tenor solo (1st 8 bars)

Chords:  $Fm^{11}$ ,  $Bbm^9$ ,  $C^{(add9)}/E$ ,  $Am^{11}$ ,  $Dm^{11}$

105

Back to bar 69

Back to bar 69

Back to bar 69

Chords:  $Fm^{11}$ ,  $Bbm^9$ ,  $C^{(add9)}/E$ ,  $Am^{11(b6)}$ ,  $Bbm^9(b6)$

*The Bull and the Roses* was inspired, in part, by some of the recent recordings by saxophonist Walter Smith III and trumpeter Ambrose Akinmusire. I have found their music particularly compelling as it combines many of the traditional and contemporary jazz elements that have always appealed to me, in a way that sounds and feels entirely current and timely. These elements include: an intense post-bop sensibility, with intricate, boppish lines and the classic trumpet and tenor saxophone front line using a mix of unison and tertian and quartal harmonies; ‘romantic’ melody; complex rhythmic figures; a mix of driving swing, “ECM” style straight 8<sup>th</sup> note feels, and free tempo; and a mix of traditional cadential and modal harmony with more open-sounding “heartland”-type chords. Blends of singing lyricism and burning intensity, beauty and dissonance, complexity and simplicity, have always particularly appealed to me and tend to figure prominently in most of my favourite music, regardless of genre.

*The Bull and the Roses* was engineered as an “opener”, an exciting uptempo swing piece to begin an album or a live set and immediately engage the listener. It opens with an 8 bar rhythmic chordal pattern played unaccompanied by the piano. At bar 9, the horns and rhythm section enter, playing a melody based on the same rhythmic motif heard in the bassline of the opening piano vamp. This motif, which is essentially based on a “3 over 4” hemiola pattern (3 beat phrases against the underlying 4/4 pulse, so 2 bars of 4/4 sounds like 2 bars of 3/4 plus one bar of 2/4- the same pattern is at the heart of the vamp for John Coltrane’s piece “Equinox”) continues as the subject of the following 12 bars, completing a 16 bar A section.

The “B” section of the piece, starting at bar 21, moves from the fast swing into a half-time straight 8<sup>th</sup> note feel, which lasts for 4 half-time bars (8 bars if one is still counting at the original tempo). Aside from a momentary change in rhythmic feel or tempo, there is also a distinct change in mood- this section is spacious and lyrical in contrast with the intensity of the first section. Then, at bar 25, there is an explosive return to the original tempo in a four bar interlude that acts as a buildup to the final 8 bars, which is the release. The *form* is through-composed. In lieu of repeated sections, a sense of continuity is achieved through the development of *motifs*.

The *melody* from bar 9 to bar 12 is scalar, basically ascending in a stepwise fashion with adjustments made for the changing harmony. The response in bars 13-16 is similar rhythmically but is intervallic, featuring wide leaps of 5ths and 6ths. The next phrase, in bars 17-20, returns to stepwise motion, this time using the whole-tone scale. In the next section, the contrasting half-time, the melody takes on more of a sweeping, romantic-style shape. This is followed in bars 25-28 by another contrasting figure, a descending intervallic pattern based on the minor 3<sup>rd</sup> tonal axis (the outline of a diminished 7<sup>th</sup> chord, or equal division of the octave into minor 3rds) that, despite its intervallic construction has a ‘bebop’ quality. The final release, in bars 29-36, is the spacious part of the tune melodically, and it once again falls into the ‘romantic’ paradigm, with dramatic ascending interval leaps in bars 31-33 providing a sense of climax.



The *harmonic* movement is essentially non-functional and mode-based, although the first 4 bars could be analyzed functionally as a kind of i-iv-V in F minor followed by a v-i to D minor (with the Ami7 acting as a mixed-mode substitution for A7). Non-functional harmony of this type has motion, as more traditional cadence-based harmony does, but it is a decidedly different type of motion. Without clear V-I-style resolutions, the music takes on a questing or searching quality, akin to what Joni Mitchell referred to as her “chords of inquiry”<sup>43</sup>, providing questions but not necessarily answers. The chords are a mix of conventional tertian voicings built in 3rds and 2nds (Fmi11, Bbm6/9), ‘heartland’-style chords (Cadd9/E) and quartal shapes (the Dmi11 voicing in bar 4 and the Bbmib6 voicing in bar 8). Most of the chords have modal implications- for example, the mib6 chords (including the Cadd9/E, which is a variant of the same and could be expressed as Emib6) are expressions of an Aeolian (major scale, mode 6) tonality. The other chords are mostly Dorian (mode 2) or Lydian (mode 4) derivations. There are two brief points in the piece in which the harmony is related to *symmetrical scales* (scales which create an equal division of the octave) rather than modes: bars 17-20 (whole tone scale- equal division of the octave into major 2nds) and bar 25 (diminished scale- equal division of the octave into alternating whole and half steps). It is worth noting also that the chords in bars 25-28 are ‘slash chords’ based on the idea of moving triads in the right hand against a moving bassline in the left hand. The bassline follows the outline of an ascending whole

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<sup>43</sup> Alexandra Gill, *Joni Mitchell in Person* (Globe and Mail, February 16, 2007)

tone scale starting on E, while the right hand chords are related to the minor 3<sup>rd</sup> tonal axis (C, Eb, Gb, A).

# Honeydew Harbour

**Boogaloo** ♩ = 120

David Restivo

**INTRO**

Trumpet in B♭

Tenor Saxophone

Piano

**INTRO (Open)**

**A**

4

Tpt.

Ten. Sax.

Pno.

Unison 1st time (top line), add harmony 2nd X

D<sup>7</sup>alt. E♭maj<sup>7</sup> D<sup>7</sup>alt. E♭maj<sup>7</sup> D<sup>7</sup>alt.

7

Tpt.

Ten. Sax.

Pno.

Cm<sup>11</sup>

10

Tpt.

Ten. Sax.

Pno.

15

**B**

Tpt.

Ten. Sax.

Pno.

A<sup>7</sup>alt.

A<sup>b</sup>maj7

D<sup>7</sup>alt. G<sup>7</sup>alt.

19

Tpt.

Ten. Sax.

Pno.

Cm<sup>11</sup>

**C**

22 D<sup>7</sup>alt. E<sup>b</sup>maj7 E<sup>b</sup>maj7 D<sup>7</sup>alt. E<sup>b</sup>maj7 D<sup>7</sup>alt.

Tpt. Solos

Ten. Sax. Solos

Pno. Solos

25 Cm<sup>11</sup>

Tpt.

Ten. Sax.

Pno.

28 A<sup>7</sup>alt. A<sup>b</sup>maj7 D<sup>7</sup>alt. G<sup>7</sup>alt.

Tpt.

Ten. Sax.

Pno.

32 Cm<sup>11</sup>

Tpt.

Ten. Sax.

Pno.

*Honeydew Harbour* is an example of the winking irony that can be part of the postmodern equation. It specifically pays homage to the Blue Note records era of the 1960s. Often recordings by people like Lee Morgan, Freddie Hubbard, Herbie Hancock, Grant Green, and others would feature a funk-influenced tune toward the beginning of the album, something with some potential commercial appeal in contrast with more adventurous material that might appear later on. Several of Hancock's tunes written in that style became jazz standards, notably two named after melons, "Watermelon Man" and "Cantaloupe Island", which the "Honeydew" reference plays upon.

The particular rhythmic feel shared by the Hancock tunes mentioned above became a signature of the Blue Note recordings from that era, and was known as the 'boogaloo', which, as previously noted, was basically a hybrid of a funk-rock beat and an Afro-Cuban cha cha cha. This tune is a 'postmodern boogaloo', using contemporary elements that wouldn't be found in a traditional piece in the genre, such as changes in time signature and odd phrases, like the 3 bar phrase in the intro vamp, which carries through the A section. The melody is blues-based, as one would expect, but the unpredictable rhythmic phrasing contrasts with the direct simplicity of that blues quality. The repeating bass ostinato with accompanying chordal pattern is another signature element (it is a device that is used in both of the Hancock tunes) re-contextualized here through the use of the unusual phrase length and descending mix of tertian and quartal chords built around an F pivot note.

A possible reference point for this piece would be Chris Potter's 2001 album *Gratitude*, on which he pays tribute to several of his saxophone heroes, including Joe Henderson, John Coltrane, Wayne Shorter, Sonny Rollins, Michael Brecker, and Eddie Harris. Harris, an underappreciated figure in many ways, employed an interesting blend of bluesy jazz-funk accessibility and sophisticated intervallic melodicism. Potter's tune "High Noon", dedicated to Harris, similarly references the 1960s jazz-funk aesthetic while placing itself in the 21<sup>st</sup> century through the use of shifting time signatures and less predictable phrasing. I have attempted to achieve something similar in my own composition, to create something that is evocative of a certain musical epoch in a referential way but that simultaneously sounds current and fresh and reflective of my own unique set of influences and aesthetic preferences.

# New One

(for mary margaret zahara)

free or straight 8th ballad

David Restivo

**A**  $E^b_{-}(b6)$   
 $A^b_{-}6/9$   $(C^bMA^7 \text{ 2nd X}) B^{07}/E^b$

5  $D^b13sus^4$   $E^b_{-}11$   $B^b/B$   $(B^b/B)$   $A^b_{-}11$   $G^b_{-}/E^b_{+}$

**To Coda**  $\phi$

9  $A^badd^9/C$   $B^b7/D$  1.  $E^b_{-}$   $A^b_{-}11$   $D^b/G^b/B^b$

11 2.  $E^b_{-}$   $F7(b9b5)$   $B^b7(b9)$

**B**

13  $E/Ftriad$   $G^9sus^4$   $E7(b9b13)$

15  $FMA^7(b5)$   $CMA^7$   $Asus^2/D$   $Fsus^2$   $A/D$   $D^bMA^7sus^4$

18  $B^bphryg$  **D.S. al Coda**

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10

Tpt.

Ten. Sax.

Pno.

15

**B**

Tpt.

Ten. Sax.

Pno.

A<sup>7</sup>alt.

A<sup>b</sup>maj7

D<sup>7</sup>alt. G<sup>7</sup>alt.

19

Tpt.

Ten. Sax.

Pno.

Cm<sup>11</sup>

*New One* began its life very organically, as a wordless lullaby I improvised while singing to my infant daughter.

Eventually it became embedded enough in my consciousness that it evolved into a piece I felt worthy of performance.

One of the hallmarks of postmodern jazz is that improvisation based on a pre-determined harmonic structure and so called “free”, or open form, improvisation were no longer mutually exclusive. While there would always be musicians who specialized in one or the other, many who followed in the footsteps of people like Keith Jarrett, Charlie Haden, Dave Liebman, Paul Bley, Sam Rivers, Steve Lacy, Dave Holland, Julian Priester, and Joe Lovano were quite comfortable in either realm, moving between them depending on the context from gig to gig, set to set, even within a single tune.

The concept of free improvisation can manifest in a number of ways. Stereotypically, it is thought of as implying atonality, yet Jarrett proved that one could improvise freely while, at least some of the time, sitting strongly in a conventional tonality or key centre. Even the music of Ornette Coleman, the ‘godfather’ of free jazz, often sounded quite tonal and implied traditional structures like blues and Rhythm changes. In Coleman’s concept of “harmolodics”, however, the melody, rather than any chord progression that melody might imply, was the primary point of departure for improvisation. The soloist, using the written melody as a launching pad, would create his or her own melodies that might stay within the tonality(s) of the tune or veer off into other tonalities or key centres, or into

non-harmonic, interval- or sound-based territory. In other words, instead of the chord progression dictating the improvised melody, the improvised melody creates any “harmony” that one might hear.

“New One” is built around a simple, melancholic folk-like melody that has a vaguely Slavic or Hebraic quality, a reflection, perhaps, of my own eastern European Jewish roots and the Russian Gypsy music I was exposed to as a child through my mother. It is intended to be performed *rubato*, without strict tempo. The speed with which the piece unfolds is dictated by whomever is responsible for playing the melody, typically the saxophonist. While I have written chords to accompany the melody, the harmonic structure is abandoned during the improvisation, which will often be a collective one rather than a series of individual solos; the free tempo is also maintained during the improvisation. The piece is essentially a ballad, slow and lyrical in character, yet the direction the improvisation takes is completely open to the feeling of the moment; it may remain in expansive, lyrical territory or build to a chaotic frenzy, stay rooted in the tonality of the melody or move away from it entirely.

This juxtaposition of lyrical, folk-like melodic simplicity with free improvisation has an obvious precedent in some of Jarrett’s 1970s work, but a crucial earlier model is Ornette Coleman’s plaintive, moving “Lonely Woman” from his groundbreaking 1959 album *The Shape of Jazz to Come*. Other reference points would be some of the work of Albert Ayler, Pharoah Sanders, and Charles Lloyd.

**Straight 8ths (16th note pulse)**

♩ = 96

# Kurt and Mark

**A**

David Restivo

Trumpet in B♭

Tenor Saxophone

1st X Bass and piano unison melody, 2nd X tenor

Tacet 1st X

F(add4) Ebm11 Gm6/9 Ab<sup>OMA</sup>7 B♭(sus2)/A Bbm9 F/Gb

5

Tpt.

Ten. Sax.

F(add4) Ebm11 Db6/9 Dm(b6) Eb7(sus4) C<sup>MA</sup>7(#5) Dbm11

9

Tpt.

Ten. Sax.

Trumpet and tenor

Db/D Dm/C B♭(sus4)/B B♭MA7(#11)

**B**

14 FMA7(b5) Bbm(b6) A $\flat$  Dbm(b6) BMA7(b5) Am<sup>11</sup> FMA7(b5)

Tpt.

Ten. Sax.

18 Em<sup>11</sup> B(sus2) A<sup>7</sup>(sus4) GMA7(#11)

Tpt.

Ten. Sax.

21 F#m<sup>11</sup> CMA7 GbMA7(b5)

Tpt.

Ten. Sax.

5/16

5/16

5/16

23 FMA7(b5) Bbm(b6) A $\flat$  Dbm(b6) BMA7(b5) Am<sup>11</sup>

Tpt.

Ten. Sax.

(Drums: cross-stick 8th notes on 3/8 bars)

29 FMA7(b5) (Looser)

Tpt.

Ten. Sax.

FMA7(b5) (Looser)

FMA7(b5) (Looser)

33 Em<sup>11</sup> B(sus2) A7(sus4) GMA7(#11) F#m<sup>11</sup> CMA7

Tpt.

Ten. Sax.

Em<sup>11</sup> B(sus2) A7(sus4) GMA7(#11) F#m<sup>11</sup> CMA7

Em<sup>11</sup> B(sus2) A7(sus4) GMA7(#11) F#m<sup>11</sup> CMA7

**C To Coda**  $\phi$

39  $G^{\flat}MA7$  (Looser again)  $Gm^{11}$   $A^{\flat}6/9$

Tpt. **Fine**

Ten. Sax.  $G^{\flat}MA7$  (Looser again)  $Gm^{11}$   $A^{\flat}6/9$

$G^{\flat}MA7$  (Looser again)  $Gm^{11}$   $A^{\flat}6/9$

Solo Structure: Piano solo from D till end of F; last time F is open for trumpet solo, last two bars on cue; then D.C. al Coda (Coda open for saxophone solo).

**D**

Piano Solo 45  $F^{(add4)}$   $Ebm^{11}$   $Gm6/9$   $A^{\flat}OMA7$   $B^{\flat}(sus2)/A$   $Bbm^9$   $F/G^{\flat}$

Tpt.  $F^{(add4)}$   $Ebm^{11}$   $Gm6/9$   $A^{\flat}OMA7$   $B^{\flat}(sus2)/A$   $Bbm^9$   $F/G^{\flat}$

Ten. Sax.  $F^{(add4)}$   $Ebm^{11}$   $Gm6/9$   $A^{\flat}OMA7$   $B^{\flat}(sus2)/A$   $Bbm^9$   $F/G^{\flat}$

Piano solo starts unaccompanied

Piano Solo  $F^{(add4)}$   $Ebm^{11}$   $Gm6/9$   $A^{\flat}OMA7$   $B^{\flat}(sus2)/A$   $Bbm^9$   $F/G^{\flat}$

49  $F^{(add4)}$   $Ebm^{11}$   $D^{\flat}6/9$   $Dm^{(b6)}$   $E^{\flat}7(sus4)$   $CMA7(\sharp5)$   $Dbm^{11}$

Tpt.  $F^{(add4)}$   $Ebm^{11}$   $D^{\flat}6/9$   $Dm^{(b6)}$   $E^{\flat}7(sus4)$   $CMA7(\sharp5)$   $Dbm^{11}$

Ten. Sax.  $F^{(add4)}$   $Ebm^{11}$   $D^{\flat}6/9$   $Dm^{(b6)}$   $E^{\flat}7(sus4)$   $CMA7(\sharp5)$   $Dbm^{11}$

53  $\text{Db}/\text{D}$   $\text{Dm}/\text{C}$   $\text{Bb}(\text{sus4})/\text{B}$   $\text{BbMA7}(\sharp 11)$

Tpt.

Ten. Sax.

Bass and drums enter here

$\text{Db}/\text{D}$   $\text{Dm}/\text{C}$   $\text{Bb}(\text{sus4})/\text{B}$   $\text{BbMA7}(\sharp 11)$

# E

58  $\text{FMA7}(\text{b5})$   $\text{Bbm}(\text{b6})$   $\text{Ab}$   $\text{Dbm}(\text{b6})$   $\text{BMA7}(\text{b5})$   $\text{Am}11$   $\text{FMA7}(\text{b5})$

Tpt.

Ten. Sax.

$\text{FMA7}(\text{b5})$   $\text{Bbm}(\text{b6})$   $\text{Ab}$   $\text{Dbm}(\text{b6})$   $\text{BMA7}(\text{b5})$   $\text{Am}11$   $\text{FMA7}(\text{b5})$

63  $\text{Em}11$   $\text{B}(\text{sus2})$   $\text{A}7(\text{sus4})$   $\text{GMA7}(\sharp 11)$   $\text{F}\sharp\text{m}11$   $\text{CMA7}$   $\text{GbMA7}(\text{b5})$

Tpt.

Ten. Sax.

$\text{Em}11$   $\text{B}(\text{sus2})$   $\text{A}7(\text{sus4})$   $\text{GMA7}(\sharp 11)$   $\text{F}\sharp\text{m}11$   $\text{CMA7}$   $\text{GbMA7}(\text{b5})$

67  $\text{FMA7}(\text{b5})$   $\text{Bbm}(\text{b6})$   $\text{Ab}$   $\text{Dbm}(\text{b6})$   $\text{BMA7}(\text{b5})$   $\text{Am}11$

Tpt.

Ten. Sax.

$\text{FMA7}(\text{b5})$   $\text{Bbm}(\text{b6})$   $\text{Ab}$   $\text{Dbm}(\text{b6})$   $\text{BMA7}(\text{b5})$   $\text{Am}11$



73 FMA7(b5) (Looser)

Tpt.

Ten. Sax.

77 Em<sup>11</sup> B(sus2) A<sup>7</sup>(sus4) GMA7(#11)

Tpt.

Ten. Sax.


81 F#m<sup>11</sup> CMA7


Tpt.

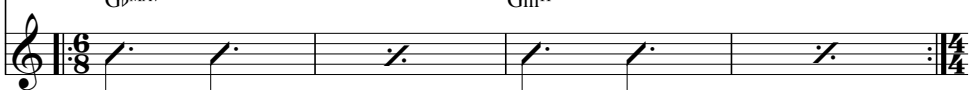
Ten. Sax.

**F** Last piano chorus stay here and transition to open trumpet solo.  $G\flat^{MA7}$   $Gm^{11}$

83


Tpt. 


Ten. Sax. 




On cue after trumpet solo  $A\flat^{\flat 6}$  **D.C.al Coda**

87

Tpt. 

Ten. Sax. 



## OPEN SAXOPHONE SOLO

Tpt.  $FMA7(b5)$   $Bbm(b6)$   $A\flat$   $Dbm(b6)$   $BMA7(b5)$   $Am^{11}$   $FMA7(b5)$

Ten. Sax.  $FMA7(b5)$   $Bbm(b6)$   $A\flat$   $Dbm(b6)$   $BMA7(b5)$   $Am^{11}$   $FMA7(b5)$   
 Open Tenor solo

Open Tenor solo  $Dbm(b6)$   $BMA7(b5)$   $Am^{11}$   $FMA7(b5)$   
 $FMA7(b5)$   $Bbm(b6)$   $A\flat$

On cue D.S. al FINE

Tpt.  $Em^{11}$   $B(sus2)$   $A^7(sus4)$   $GMA7(\sharp 11)$   $F\sharp m^{11}$   $CMA7$   $G\flat MA7(b5)$  On cue D.S. al FINE

Ten. Sax.  $Em^{11}$   $B(sus2)$   $A^7(sus4)$   $GMA7(\sharp 11)$   $F\sharp m^{11}$   $CMA7$   $G\flat MA7(b5)$  On cue D.S. al

$Em^{11}$   $B(sus2)$   $A^7(sus4)$   $GMA7(\sharp 11)$   $F\sharp m^{11}$   $CMA7$   $G\flat MA7(b5)$  On cue D.S. al

Like most musicians of my generation, my musical tastes are extremely diverse, and my interest in music from outside the jazz realm, such as contemporary classical music and the progressive rock of Genesis, Yes, and Led Zeppelin, has filtered through into my compositions over the years, re-contextualizing itself to fit the ‘jazz’ model. I have been drawn to other jazz artists who have embraced some of the qualities inherent in this type of music, including a kind of sweeping, ‘epic’ sensibility, and the use of extended form through-composition with a long, dramatic emotional arc. Early on this brought me to groups like Weather Report and the Pat Metheny Group, a bit later to the work of guitarist Kevin Eubanks, whose fluid use of odd meter grooves owed much to the progressive rock and fusion oeuvres. The self-titled 1986 debut solo release by Metheny Group keyboardist Lyle Mays was hugely influential for me as well. My first album, *Prayer For Humankind(ness)* (Radioland/Universal, 2000), was heavily reflective of these influences, particularly those of Mays and Eubanks. The composition “Taurus Trap” was a centerpiece of that album, an extended form piece that evokes the spirit of the Mays album, as well as *The Lamb Lies Down On Broadway* by Genesis (Charisma, 1975), another album I listened to extensively through the mid 1980s and 1990s.

In more recent years, my hunger for this ‘epic’ sensibility has been satisfied by immersion in the symphonies of Gustav Mahler, and, in the jazz realm, by the work of guitarist Kurt Rosenwinkel and his frequent collaborator, saxophonist Mark Turner. Rosenwinkel brings together a unique blend of influence from traditional jazz guitarists like Grant Green and Kenny Burrell and the legato, Coltranesque “sheets of sound” of

fusion guitarist Allan Holdsworth. His use of his own falsetto voice in unison with his chorused guitar lines creates an eerie, emotionally charged effect. His compositions have a compelling, cyclical quality, often through-composed but with strong recurring motifs. His music is not ‘fusion’ in the usual sense- despite the fact that much of it is straight 8<sup>th</sup> note-based, it is clearly coming from a jazz cultural perspective. Yet his performances often contain the kind of intensity and start-to-finish experiential narrative quality that one would expect from a concert by one of the classic creative rock bands like Pink Floyd or Led Zeppelin. Like Rosenwinkel on guitar, Turner is one of the most distinctive saxophone voices of his generation, melding the cool, airy tone and angular melodicism of Warne Marsh with the focused intensity of John Coltrane into a sound that is instantly identifiable to those familiar with it. His expressive use of the altissimo register (the notes that extend above the normal range of the horn) and effortlessly fluid, rhythmically intricate intervallic lines are also trademarks. Both Turner and Rosenwinkel are masters of the long build, gradually layering idea upon idea over the course of a solo to reach a soaring climax that can leave the listener breathless.

The piece *Kurt and Mark* is in keeping with my personal history of writing through-composed pieces with this sort of sensibility, though its structure is more compact than earlier works like “Taurus Trap” and its feeling updated to reflect the influence of Turner and Rosenwinkel, whose spirit I believe it captures, without resorting to mimicry. The harmony is almost entirely modal and non-functional, built around the melody, which is comparatively simple. It relates to my former teacher Kenny Werner’s concept

of “Random Harmony”, the idea that melody notes can be paired with randomly chosen bass notes and then harmonized with any number of possible chords that fit that particular pairing, with the only limitation being that internal minor 9<sup>th</sup> intervals are generally to be avoided. For example: if the melody note is C and the bass note is Db, the possibilities would include DbMA7, DbMA7b5, DbMA7#5, DbmiMA7, DboMA7 (C/Db), DbMA7sus4, Ab/Db, and so on.

The piece is basically through-composed, but the structure is almost akin to the verse-chorus template used in modern pop music, as opposed to the kinds of AABA or ABAC structures favoured in American Songbook-type standards. The A section is a kind of verse which repeats, an introduction of sorts. The five bars starting at measure 9 represent a kind of ‘pre-chorus’, a place of rest and relative calm before the intense build that starts at B, which is the equivalent of the ‘chorus’. The entire B section is built on a 6-note motif that cycles through a number of random modal areas between bars 14 and 22. From bar 23, the same sequence repeats but is rhythmically compressed by switching from the slow 4/4 to a fast 11/16 meter (the basic underlying pulse/tempo doesn’t change). The change to 6/8 at bar 39 is effectively the release, the resolution of the tension that builds through the entire B section, though the intensity level remains high until the metric modulation back to 4/4 at bar 43. In order to move away from the standard “head, solo, solo, head” formula and maintain the feeling of through-composition during the improvisations, I have structured it so that the piano solos over the A and B sections, the trumpet plays over the 6/8 section which is opened up, and the saxophone solos on the B

vamp at the end after the final statement of the melody. While I originally included the 11/16 section in the saxophone solo, it has proven to work better in performance to simply loop the 4/4 section, and this change is reflected in the current version of the score.

# Melodies of Hope and Healing

## For Newtown

Piano plays A melody one time as intro

**A**

David Restivo

Countermelody-Tacet 1st X

Soprano Saxophone

Flugelhorn in Bb

Bass and drums tacet 1st time, enter on repeat

Gm(b6) F9(sus4) F/Bb

Gm(b6) F9(sus4) F/Bb

3

Sop. Sax.

Tpt.

F(add9)/A Gm Eb(#11)

F(add9)/A Gm Eb(#11)

6

Sop. Sax.

Tpt.

Eb(#11) Cm11 G(add9)/B F(sus4)/A Cm9 Bb/Eb Gm11

Eb(#11) Cm11 G(add9)/B F(sus4)/A Cm9 Bb/Eb Gm11



2 9 Enter here 1st time

Sop. Sax. Cm<sup>11</sup> Dm<sup>7</sup> Gm<sup>11</sup> Am<sup>7</sup>

Tpt. D/E<sup>b</sup> triad Cm<sup>11</sup> Dm<sup>7</sup> Gm<sup>11</sup> Am<sup>7</sup>

15 Em<sup>7</sup> F#m<sup>11</sup> C#m<sup>11</sup> C7(#11) Bb/A<sup>b</sup>

Sop. Sax.

Tpt. Em<sup>7</sup> F#m<sup>11</sup> C#m<sup>11</sup> C7(#11) Bb/A<sup>b</sup>

20 Fmaj7/C Dbmaj7(add13) F(add9)/A Bbmaj7(#5) Bb<sup>6</sup> Eb

Sop. Sax.

Tpt. Fmaj7/C Dbmaj7(add13) F(add9)/A Bbmaj7(#5) Bb<sup>6</sup> Eb (1st X pickup)

**B**

3

24 Gm(maj7)/D (Soprano lead)

Sop. Sax.

Tpt.

Gm(maj7)/D

29 D Gm(maj7) Bbmaj7(#5) C7(b9) (add 9)

Sop. Sax.

Tpt.

D Gm(maj7) Bbmaj7(#5) C7(b9) (add 9)

33 D

Sop. Sax.

Tpt.

D

**C**

37

Sop. Sax.



Tpt.



43

Sop. Sax.



Tpt.

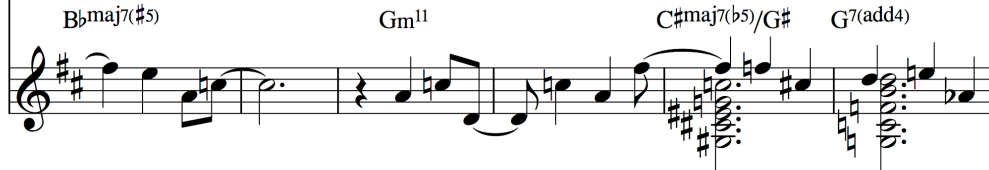


47

Sop. Sax.



Tpt.

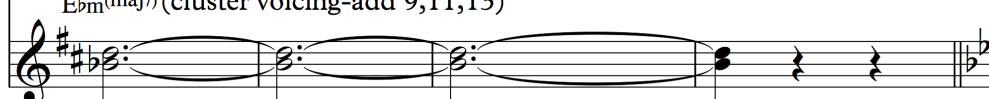
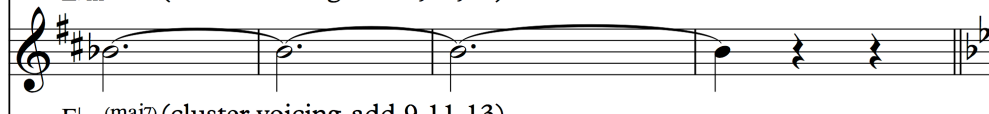


53

Sop. Sax.



Tpt.



**SOLOS** D- 1st time: bass, piano on DS 5

57 **D**  $Gm^{(b6)}$   $F^9(sus4)$   $Bb^{maj7}$   $Eb^{(\#11)}$

Sop. Sax.

Tpt.

$Gm^{(b6)}$   $F^9(sus4)$   $Bb^{maj7}$   $Eb^{(\#11)}$   
**SOLOS** (Bass, piano)  
 Bass solo (Piano on DS)

62  $Cm^{11}$   $F(sus4)/A$   $Bb/Eb$

Sop. Sax.

Tpt.

$Cm^{11}$   $F(sus4)/A$   $Bb/Eb$

65  $Gm^{11}$   $D/Eb$

Sop. Sax.

Tpt.

$Gm^{11}$   $D/Eb$

69  $Cm^{11}$   $Gm^{11}$   $Em^{11}$   $Dbm^{11}$   $C^7alt.$

Sop. Sax.

Tpt.

$Cm^{11}$   $Gm^{11}$   $Em^{11}$   $C\#m^{11}$   $C^7alt.$

$Cm^{11}$   $Gm^{11}$   $Em^{11}$   $C\#m^{11}$   $C^7alt.$

75  $B\flat/A\flat$   $F/C$   $D\flat\text{maj}7$   $F/A$   $B\flat\text{maj}7(\sharp 5)$   $E\flat$  **To Coda**  $\phi$

Sop. Sax.

Tpt.

80 **E** **Soprano solo**  $Gm(\text{maj}7)/D$

Sop. Sax.

Tpt.

88  $D\text{maj}7/C$   $G\text{maj}7(\sharp 11)/B$

Sop. Sax.

Tpt.

94  $B\flat\text{maj}7(\sharp 5)$   $Gm^{11}$

Sop. Sax.

Tpt.

98  $B\flat\text{maj}7(\sharp 5)$   $Gm^{11}$

Sop. Sax.

Tpt.

**D.S. al Coda**

102  $D\flat\text{maj}7(b5)/G\flat$   $G7(\text{add}4)$   $E\flat m(\text{maj}7)$

Sop. Sax.

Tpt.

$Gm(\text{maj}7)/D$  (Play melody behind flugel solo)

Sop. Sax.

$Gm(\text{maj}7)/D$  Flugel solo- play in holes around soprano melody

Tpt.

$Gm(\text{maj}7)/D$  Flugel solo (soprano plays melody)

Sop. Sax. D Gm(maj7) Bbmaj7(#5) C7(b9) (add 9)

Tpt. D Gm(maj7) Bbmaj7(#5) C7(b9) (add9)

Sop. Sax. D

Tpt. D 4

Sop. Sax. Dmaj7/C Gmaj7(#11)/B

Tpt. Dmaj7/C 4 Gmaj7(#11)/B

Sop. Sax. Bbmaj7(#5) Gm11

Tpt. Bbmaj7(#5) Gm11

Sop. Sax.  $B\flat\text{maj}7(\sharp 5)$   $Gm^{11}$

Tpt.  $B\flat\text{maj}7(\sharp 5)$   $Gm^{11}$

Sop. Sax.  $D\flat\text{maj}7(b5)/G\flat$   $G^7(\text{add}4)$   $E\flat m(\text{maj}7)$

Tpt.  $D\flat\text{maj}7(b5)/G\flat$   $G^7(\text{add}4)$   $E\flat m(\text{maj}7)$

4

Sop. Sax.  $Gm(b6)$   $F^9(\text{sus}4)$   $F/B\flat$   $F(\text{add}9)/A$   $Gm$   $E\flat(\sharp 11)$

Flugel solo continues to end

Tpt.  $Gm(b6)$   $F^9(\text{sus}4)$   $F/B\flat$   $F(\text{add}9)/A$   $Gm$   $E\flat(\sharp 11)$



Sop. Sax. Eb(#11) Cm<sup>11</sup> G(add9)/B F(sus4)/A Cm<sup>9</sup> Bb/Eb Gm<sup>11</sup>

Tpt. Eb(#11) Cm<sup>11</sup> G(add9)/B F(sus4)/A Cm<sup>9</sup> Bb/Eb Gm<sup>11</sup>

Tpt. Eb(#11) Cm<sup>11</sup> G(add9)/B F(sus4)/A Cm<sup>9</sup> Bb/Eb Gm<sup>11</sup>

Sop. Sax. D/Eb Cm<sup>11</sup> Dm<sup>7</sup> Gm<sup>11</sup> Am<sup>7</sup> Em<sup>7</sup> F#m<sup>11</sup> C#m<sup>11</sup>

Tpt. D/Eb Cm<sup>11</sup> Dm<sup>7</sup> Gm<sup>11</sup> Am<sup>7</sup> Em<sup>7</sup> F#m<sup>11</sup> C#m<sup>11</sup>

Tpt. D/Eb Cm<sup>11</sup> Dm<sup>7</sup> Gm<sup>11</sup> Am<sup>7</sup> Em<sup>7</sup> F#m<sup>11</sup> C#m<sup>11</sup>

Sop. Sax. C7(#11) Bb/Ab

Tpt. C7(#11) Bb/Ab

Tpt. C7(#11) Bb/Ab

Sop. Sax. Fmaj7/C Dbmaj7(add13) F(add9)/A Bbmaj7(#5) Bb<sup>6</sup> Eb

Tpt. Fmaj7/C Dbmaj7(add13) F(add9)/A Bbmaj7(#5) Bb<sup>6</sup> Eb Flugel cadenza

Tpt. Fmaj7/C Dbmaj7(add13) F(add9)/A Bbmaj7(#5) Bb<sup>6</sup> Eb

*Melodies of Hope and Healing* has a more conventional AABA structure, and began as an exercise in writing a Romantic melody, the general parameters of which are outlined on page 92 and in greater detail in Volume 2 of Ron Miller's *Modal Jazz Composition and Harmony*.<sup>44</sup> While many jazz composers have written these types of melodies, two standouts in the contemporary idiom are Wayne Shorter and Kenny Wheeler. In this particular instance I wrote two separate melodies, which I later put together. The first, played by the flugelhorn at A, has a mournful, almost Celtic feel, like an Irish or Scottish ballad. It is comparatively simple harmonically, with a mix of triads, modal chords, and "Heartland"-style chords, all mostly sitting in a Bb tonal center. Interestingly, the section does not resolve to a tonic Bb or G minor chord but ends instead on Eb major, the IV chord. This gives the whole thing, subjectively speaking, an inquisitive, even lonely, unresolved quality. This quality put me in mind of the tragic school shooting at the Sandy Hook School in Newtown, Connecticut that took place in December 2012. This event had personal resonance for me since the saxophonist Jimmy Greene, who had been a colleague and friend during my time as a faculty member at the University of Manitoba and had just moved with his family back to his home state of Connecticut, lost his daughter Ana Grace in the shooting. Several members of the jazz community wrote tributes to Ana, including Jimmy's former boss Harry Connick, Jr. This became my own humble offering.

The B section, based on the second of the Romantic-style melodies I composed, has more

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of a Middle Eastern or Slavic quality, being centered in a D “harmonic major” (natural 3, natural 7, flat 6) scale tonality. This section has the soprano saxophone taking over as the lead voice.

Finally, almost as an afterthought, I wrote a third melody, the countermelody played by the soprano on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> A sections against the primary flugelhorn melody. My interest in Bach’s music is an obvious source of inspiration for the use of contrapuntal moving lines (as opposed to strict unison or harmonized melody with chordal accompaniment) , but another, perhaps less obvious, reference is the “Canticle” part sung by Art Garfunkel on his and Paul Simon’s recording of the folk song “Scarborough Fair”.

# Subway Muse

med. up straight 8ths

David Restivo

INTRO 4X

Piano

4 **A**

Pno.

A<sup>b7</sup> B<sup>7</sup> E A<sup>7</sup> A<sup>b-11</sup>

7

Pno.

Alydian E<sup>-11</sup>

9 **B**

Pno.

CMA<sup>7</sup>/A<sup>b</sup> C<sup>6/9</sup> C<sup>+9</sup>

2

12

Pno.

1. 2.

$A^b/B^b$   $D^bsus^2/F$   $B^b4/A^b$   $EMA^7(\#5)$

17

**C**

$E^bsus^4$   $C^b/E^b$   $E^bsus^4$   $C^b/E^b$   $E^bsus^4$

22

**D** 4X

For most of its existence, jazz has mostly lived rhythmically in the west-African rooted 6/8-12/8 realm. The primary manifestation of this has been swing 4/4, with the jazz waltz or swing 3 being an outgrowth that gained traction from the 1960s on though there are earlier examples, such as Fats Waller's "Jitterbug Waltz". Experimentation with "odd" meters beyond the standard 3 and 4 began quite early- Lennie Tristano explored them as far back as the late 1940s, and Max Roach and Dave Brubeck picked up the torch a decade later (with Brubeck's *Time Out* and its Paul Desmond-penned track in 5/4 meter "Take Five" becoming a surprise commercial hit). In the 1960s, trumpeter, composer and jazz orchestra leader Don Ellis, inspired among other things by Indian classical music and folk music of the Balkan region, wrote music that incorporated highly intricate time signatures, beat cycles, and subdivisions. Finally, in the 1970s, fusion groups like the Mahavishnu Orchestra (whose founder, John McLaughlin, was also deeply influenced by Indian music) moved in similar directions.

In the postmodern era this kind of rhythmic language no longer has the air of novelty about it; it has been fully integrated into the mainstream of the music. It takes many forms and levels of intricacy, from more straightforward odd meter tunes of Dave Holland and Kevin Eubanks to the Balkan-inspired work of Dave Douglas and other Downtown musicians, to the mind-boggling beat cycles favoured by Steve Coleman, Andy Milne, and Vijay Iyer and the advanced metric modulation techniques pioneered by drummer Ari Hoenig, with bassist Johannes Weidenmüller and with the Jean-Michel Pilc trio.

For myself, odd meters have always felt quite natural when used in an organic fashion and they are a rhythmic colour I have drawn on as far back as the late 1980s. This, again, was a period where I became heavily interested in progressive rock music and particularly the music of Genesis, whose rhythm section of bassist Mike Rutherford and drummer Phil Collins seemed to float effortlessly through time signatures like 7/4, 7/8, 9/8, 10/4, and 13/8. Collins in particular was a virtuoso who wasn't phased by challenging meters like these, but his love of jazz and R&B music gave him a sense of groove that made his approach to them feel looser and less cerebral, more 'swinging' than other progressive rock and fusion drummers of the time. The influence of Genesis on my feel for odd meters led me to call one early composition, built around an ostinato in 17/8, "The River of Constant Change". The title is actually borrowed from a lyric from the song Firth of Fifth ("...The sands of time were eroded by – the river of constant change"), from the 1973 Genesis album *Selling England By the Pound*.

*Subway Muse* is primarily in a 5/4 meter. It begins though with an ostinato 3-bar phrase, with a series of chords moving over a repeating bassline. Though written in 4/4, the ostinato, because of the odd phrase, actually feels like a slow 6. When the melody begins at A, it starts in 6/4 using the same quarter note as the 4/4, which morphs into the 5/4 two bars later. The 6 is basically divided into 4 and 2, which contracts easily into the 3 and 2 of the 5. It remains in 5 until the second ending at B, at which point there is a series of time signature shifts that lead back into the ostinato.

The chords in the ostinato section are basically modal, with the following scalar implications: F  $\frac{1}{2}$ -whole diminished, Db Lydian, Cb Phrygian, Bb Phrygian, and Eb Dorian. Aside from the V7-I and bVII7-I leading into bars 3 and 4, the harmony in the rest of the piece is mostly non-functional, with the gravitational pull leaning toward an Eb Dorian or Mixolydian tonal centre. The melodic material is simple relative to the harmonic and rhythmic material, being based on a pair of closely related motifs.



# The Waves

David Restivo

**Med. swing**

Piano

Bass play bottom notes

The piano introduction consists of two staves in 4/4 time. The right hand plays a series of chords and single notes, while the left hand plays a bass line with octaves and chords. The key signature has two flats (Bb and Eb).

Pno.

(Last X only- pickup)

This section is marked with a '3' above the first measure, indicating a triplet. It features a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. The section ends with a pickup for the next section.

Pno.

Bass and piano L.H.

This section is marked with a '5' above the first measure. It features a bass line in the left hand and chords in the right hand. The key signature has two flats (Bb and Eb).

9 **A**

Tpt.

Ten. Sax.

Pno.

Play top line 1st X, bottom on repeat

Trumpet and tenor- unison 1st X till last 3 bars, harmony on repeat

This section is marked with a '9' and a box containing 'A'. It features a melody in the trumpet and tenor saxophone, and a bass line in the piano. The key signature has two flats (Bb and Eb).

2

13

Tpt.

Ten. Sax.

Pno.

Harmony starts here 1st X1.

17

Tpt.

Ten. Sax.

Pno.

**B**

19

Tpt.

Ten. Sax.

Pno.

Bbm Gbm(maj7) Am(maj7) Fm13

**B**

Bbm Gbm(maj7) Am(maj7) Fm13

Detailed description: This musical score is for three instruments: Trumpet (Tpt.), Tenor Saxophone (Ten. Sax.), and Piano (Pno.). It is divided into three systems. The first system (measures 13-16) features a first ending bracketed over measures 13-15. The Tpt. and Ten. Sax. parts play triplets of eighth notes. The Pno. part has a right hand with triplets and a left hand with chords (Dm, Bb) and triplets. A text annotation 'Harmony starts here 1st X1.' points to measure 13. The second system (measures 17-18) continues the triplet patterns. The third system (measures 19-22) begins with a section marker 'B' and shows harmonic changes: Bbm, Gbm(maj7), Am(maj7), and Fm13. The Tpt. part has rests in measures 19-21 and enters in measure 22. The Ten. Sax. and Pno. parts continue with triplet patterns. A second section marker 'B' appears at the start of measure 19 in the Pno. part.

23 E<sup>7</sup>alt. A<sup>maj7</sup> F<sup>maj7</sup> D<sup>b</sup>maj7

Tpt.

Ten. Sax.

Pno.

27

Tpt.

Ten. Sax.

Pno.

31 C Dm B<sup>b</sup> Solos C Dm

Tpt.

Ten. Sax.

Pno.

4

35 Dm B♭ C Dm

Tpt.

Ten. Sax.

Pno.

39 B♭m G♭m(maj7) Am(maj7) Fm<sup>13</sup>

Tpt.

Ten. Sax.

Pno.

43 E<sup>7</sup>alt. A maj7 Fmaj7 D♭maj7

Tpt.

Ten. Sax.

Pno.

47 Am(b6) Bbm11 Cm(sus4) Bb(sus4) Cm(sus4) Am(b6) Bbm11 Cm(sus4)

Tpt.

Ten. Sax.

Pno.

Am(b6) Bbm11 Cm(sus4) Bb(sus4) Cm(sus4) Am(b6) Bbm11 Cm(sus4)

Am(b6) Bbm11 Cm(sus4) Bb(sus4) Cm(sus4) Am(b6) Bbm11 Cm(sus4)

*The Waves* has a double meaning for me. It takes its title from the book of the same name by Virginia Woolf, a fascinating, innovative novel in which there is no external dialogue. Instead, all the activity takes place in the minds of each of the main characters, a group of lifelong friends, with the perspective constantly shifting. The reader is taken through the major life changes and events that shape the friends' collective journey, as seen through the distinct lenses of each individual's inner world. This seemed like a good metaphor for this collection of compositions (it will ultimately be the title of the album), which is a window into my own inner dialogue, the thoughts, feelings, experiences, and influences that have shaped me. At the same time, this particular composition is built on the kind of rolling triplet feel that is most strongly associated with the late drummer Elvin Jones (particularly in his work with John Coltrane), a feel that evokes for me a sense of earth's primal forces, the power of tides and the rhythmic crashing of waves onto the shore.

The A section melody is also based on the 8<sup>th</sup> note triplet subdivision, which reinforces this feeling of rolling forward motion. In keeping with the influence of Jones and his strong association with Coltrane and pianist McCoy Tyner, the melody is pentatonic in nature. It essentially implies a blend of the D minor (D F G A C) and A minor (A C D E G) pentatonic scales. The B section provides a contrast with the constancy of the triplet figures in the A section, varying the rhythmic subdivisions and shifting the feel to more of a walking swing. The melody becomes more rhythmically intricate in the first four bars of B, then broadens in the second four, resolving to a two bar sustain which provides an opportunity for the drummer to play a fill which sets up a return to the triplet feel as

the group returns to the opening ostinato. The B section melody also draws from the pentatonic language, particularly in the first three bars, in which the following scales are clearly discernible:

Bar 1 (Bbm): F minor pentatonic (F Ab Bb C Eb)

Bar 2 (GbmiMA7): Gb minor 6<sup>th</sup> pentatonic (Gb A Cb Db Eb)

Bar 3 (AmiMA7): B minor pentatonic (B D E F# A), with the note C (the 3<sup>rd</sup> in the key of A minor) borrowed from the A minor pentatonic scale.

The piece is bookended by an ostinato or vamp that makes use of the kind of quartal (4<sup>th</sup>-based) harmony associated with Tyner. Harmonically, the A section has an open feeling that again relates to Tyner and to Coltrane's modal period, moving between D Dorian and Bb Lydian tonalities. Again in the interest of contrast, there is a greater amount of harmonic activity in the B section, with the chords changing every bar. While this section is not typical of Coltrane or Tyner's harmonic language, the movement of chords in major and minor 3rds connects in a broad way with Coltrane's "Giant Steps" matrix,<sup>45</sup> and also to some of the compositions of saxophonist Joe Henderson.

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<sup>45</sup> Basically a template for moving between three tonal centres a major 3<sup>rd</sup> apart, with an eventual return to the 'parent' tonality facilitated by the fact that major 3rds, like minor 3rds, major and minor 2nds, and augmented 4ths/diminished 5ths, are symmetrical intervals which equally divide the octave. Related to the concept of minor and major 3<sup>rd</sup> "tonal axes", the idea that tonal centres a major or minor 3<sup>rd</sup> apart can be interchangeable. The tonal axis is strongly associated with the 20<sup>th</sup> century Hungarian composer Bela Bartok, but was explored earlier by Wagner and Mahler among others, and traces of it can be heard in Duke Ellington's work, pre-dating Coltrane by at least two decades.

## **7.4 Conclusion**

In this cycle of compositions then, we see a body of work that I feel is typical of the postmodern attitude, featuring a diversity of approaches filtered through a personalized viewpoint and set of emotional choices, woven together into a unified whole.

The particular path I have carved out represents a kind of middle ground within this broad musical landscape; it is neither as far removed from the traditionalist mainstream as, for example, The Bad Plus, Vijay Iyer, or Steve Coleman, nor is it as locked into it as Marsalis and company (though I admire and am influenced by all these artists). In essence, I have taken the things that inspire and move me from many different musical areas and molded them into a personal voice. Elements of straightahead swing, post-bop modernism, funk, odd meter grooves, free improvisation, romanticism, and influences from pop, rock, classical, and world music swirl together in my brain and organize themselves into a sound that, I would like to think, is uniquely mine. Resting firmly on the shoulders of the towering metanarratives of the past, my own micronarrative continues to emerge and evolve, taking its place in the vast and rich tapestry of postmodern jazz.



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[\* The recordings listed either represent personal influences or are otherwise directly related to the subject matter of this thesis]

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