

THE AVANT-GARDE IN JAZZ AS REPRESENTATIVE OF LATE 20TH CENTURY
AMERICAN ART MUSIC

By

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To all of these great musicians who opened artistic doors for us to walk through, enjoy
and spread peace to the planet.

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In the history of the music referred to as jazz, there is a clear progression in the advancement of improvisational/compositional techniques. This change occurred from the earliest days of blues and diatonic tonal systems, through advancements in chromatic techniques and sophisticated harmonic devices.

By the nineteen fifties, jazz music had moved from being dance music to being music for listening and contemplation. John (Dizzy) Gillespie and Charlie Parker began using improvisational techniques that were radical at the time in terms of harmonic and rhythmic structures but were still tied to traditional song forms. These developments led to other even more progressive developments exemplified by Sun Ra, Ornette Coleman, Cecil Taylor, and later, the Art Ensemble of Chicago.

Characteristics of this “avant-garde” movement in jazz are:

1. Freedom from American song form
2. Freedom from major minor systems of tonal organization
3. Freedom from traditional rhythmic and metric structural requirements
4. Use of modern compositional techniques and motivic development in improvisations

5. Rehearsed improvisations that led to spontaneous group composition
6. Music as a reflection and expression of the social and political circumstances of the time.

The innovators in the jazz avant-garde movement were learned musicians who chose to forsake commercial potential and instead dedicated themselves to the music for the sake of expressing their views on the world.

A thorough examination of this music coupled with interviews with some of the pioneers and practitioners of the movement are examined herein. Even using strict definitions and standards, these considerations clearly demonstrate the artistic intentions and technical sophistication that warrant the designation of “art music.” As demonstrated in the text, the music referred to as jazz avant-garde emerges through a logical progression of Afro-American music, and its practitioners were open to and freely used most, if not all, of the influences present in the United States at the time.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

During the second half of the twentieth century, a new movement developed in music. This music, born of Afro-American traditions, shed the shackles of old rules and performance practices of the time and explored new musical territory. The musicians who created and developed this music embraced the whole world of musical influences including the contemporary classical music of Europe and that of cultures as diverse as African and Asian.¹ By incorporating so many of the musical and cultural influences of the time, the “Avant-Garde” in jazz is a near complete synthesis of the musical art stemming from American traditions during the second half of the 20th century. It can be argued that the avant-garde in jazz is among the most culturally and stylistically inclusive musical genres in existence when we take into consideration the varied approaches and backgrounds of its practitioners.

Definition of Avant-Garde Jazz

Avant-garde jazz in this study refers to music that is largely improvised while using many of the techniques and devices of contemporary music from European classical traditions. In terms of time period, this music begins sometime during the 1950s, probably with the works of Lennie Tristano, Ornette Coleman, Cecil Taylor, Sun Ra and Albert Ayler. The term “avant-garde,” though widely used, is not an accurate use by present day standards because we can no longer say that this music is the “new thing.” As Archie Shepp put forward in his interview with me: “Perhaps it is time for a

¹ As we study the music and musical backgrounds of John Coltrane, The AACM and Cecil Taylor, this is evident. These facts are referenced in the chapters on the avant-garde in Gridley and Deveaux, Giddens.

more accurate, descriptive term for the genre.”² Scott Deveaux and Gary Giddens, in their book, “*Jazz, Essential Listening*,” discuss some of the names this music has been called:

The jazz school that came to be called avant-garde was first known by other names, few of them neutral. One critic coined the term "anti-jazz" to attack its apparent rejection of mainstream jazz. Another widespread designation echoed the title of an album by Ornette Coleman, *Free Jazz*, released in 1961 with a cover reproduction of a Jackson Pollock painting, as if to underscore its challenging modernity. Some called it Black Music, arguing that its ferocity expressed the particular frustration of African Americans during the civil rights years. Others called it new music, the “New Thing,” “revolutionary music,” and “fire music”. Ironically, the name that finally stuck had been indicated in the title of the first avant-garde album, Cecil Taylor’s 1956 *Jazz Advance*.³

For purposes of this document I use the terms “jazz avant-garde” and “avant-garde” to identify this music, even though there are those who claim that this music is not jazz. I also use the term “free jazz” interchangeably as these terms generally, though not technically, refer to the same music and both terms are equally nonsensical.

The definition of jazz is beyond the scope of this document and I don’t wish to enter the controversy concerning jazz/not jazz, as we cannot solve that question here. We can, however, look at the music and discern its qualities, regardless of the labels we may give it.

Delimitations

The purpose of this document is to examine the historic trends that led to avant-garde jazz and to examine the influences of this history on the musicians of the jazz avant-garde. In presenting the music and the musicians in historical context, we will

² Archie Shepp Interview.

³ Deveaux, Scott and Giddens, Gary; *Jazz, Essential Listening*, W.W. Norton and Company, Inc., New York. 2011, p.308.

examine controversies about whether the jazz avant-garde is music, whether it is art, etc. At present, there is a certain acceptance of this music as being art and having a legitimacy. In using the term “art,” I don’t wish to enter into the argument over the art vs. popular music binary. Archie Shepp explains very succinctly the irrelevance of the argument, especially as it pertains to African-American music. He sees the argument as elitist, therefore irrelevant.⁴ Furthermore, Shepp goes on to state that the music of African Americans should not be subject to the approval of the adherents of Euro-American traditions as the cultural differences involved in these musical creations warrant their own standards.⁵ However, examining the music in historical context means we are looking at musicians who were heavily criticized, even by black musicians and critics, so the temptation to defend this music is at times, irresistible and appropriate. ⁶

As George Lewis points out, there was always a line between the “avant-garde,” meaning the avant-garde of “Downtown,” “Downtown II,” Fluxus, etc. and the avant-garde which came from Afro-Americans. Professor Lewis shows that, though the similarities between the two avant-garde movements were far greater than the differences, there was a general separation of the two that was served up by the media. John Cage was part of a movement of indeterminacy in music along with Henry Cowell (both critics of jazz music) and the so-called New York School: Earle Brown, Morton

⁴ Shepp, Archie; interview, June 21, 2015. Paris, France. Professor Shepp speaks at length about names for this music and the lack of an appropriately descriptive term for what we call “avant-garde.”

⁵ Shepp interview.

⁶ Kofsky gives us many of these critiques from allegedly knowledgeable critics.

Feldman and Christian Wolff.⁷ However, there was no coming together of these movements until late in the twentieth century when Sun Ra had collaborations with Cage and Stockhausen. These disparities must be addressed but only in the context of presenting the commonalities that exist between seemingly different musical movements and to view the weight of traditions of separation between people, genres, backgrounds, etc.

Though there were many others who contributed to the jazz avant-garde movement in music, this study will focus on a relative few in order to more thoroughly study the music itself. Besides Cecil Taylor and Ornette Coleman, discussed in this volume are musicians Archie Shepp, Anthony Braxton, Sam Rivers, The Art Ensemble of Chicago, Steve Lacy, George Lewis, Henry Threadgill, Oliver Lake, David Murray, and John Betsch.

Because of the number of artists involved in this study, there were necessary limits to the depth of the analyses of the improvisations. This is justified because the point of this document is to illustrate the general trends in the music and to identify any universal characteristics. The individual idiosyncrasies in the compositions/improvisations, though important, are not the focus of this document. The point is, certain characteristics in this music that is called avant-garde/free jazz go through not only Afro-American music but reflect a general progression of music shared to a large extent by Western (Eurocentric) music.

John Coltrane's contributions are beyond debate but to discuss his work to any great extent would be redundant given the wealth of literature already in existence on

⁷ Lewis 2008. Professor Lewis goes in-depth on this subject in Chapter nine p.358-388.

this brilliant artist. However, in order to give a comprehensive view of this musical genre (if it is indeed one genre) Coltrane's concepts must be discussed. His musical progression illustrates clearly a movement through traditions until these traditions no longer satisfied his creativity. His later works marked a significant progression in improvisational techniques. These works were based on the history of Afro-American music and incorporated techniques and musical devices from many cultural sources including Western art-music and more exotic forms.⁸ These practices extended to the works of other artists to a significant degree and are foundational to the work of many jazz artists, myself included.

Of particular interest to this research is Sun Ra, a visionary jazz composer, bandleader, piano and synthesizer player, poet, philosopher, and pioneer of Afrofuturism. There is considerable literature about Sun Ra which I will augment with observations and anecdotes from the time I spent performing with him. Contrary to the contention of musician Sun Ra and members of the Arkestra ensemble, there is no evidence supporting the claims that Sun Ra invented free jazz.⁹ However, his musical progression toward the avant-garde illustrates clearly the foundations for this music and establishes Sun Ra as an important leader in modern music.

In the academic study of music, the jazz avant-garde has been largely neglected. Even the late works of John Coltrane have been, for the most part, left out of the academic discourse. There is a general acknowledgement of Ornette Coleman and

⁸ The progression of Coltrane's music is illustrated clearly in Gridley as well as Deveaux, Giddens, and is commonly known in the jazz world. For an in-depth study of Coltrane's progression, see the works by Lewis Porter (2000).

⁹ Gridley and Lewis, 2008.

some mention of Cecil Taylor. However, one of the leaders of the avant-garde, Sun Ra, is for the most part, marginalized, as are many important artists of this musical movement. In fact, many important artists are barely mentioned in the most commonly used texts for Jazz History classes.¹⁰ Gridley, who is a lover of the avant-garde, contends that this music, by its nature, appeals to a smaller, non-commercially oriented audience, one that is consequently “music for art’s sake.¹¹ In fact, in January of 2016 Dr. Gridley confided to me that he has faced pressure from publishers to be less inclusive of the avant-garde in his writings than he wanted to be.¹²

The avant-garde musicians were greatly criticized as being less than capable musicians as their freedom from traditional forms was taken by many as an inability to play music in traditional ways. Their abandonment of strophic forms, especially the American song form, was heavily criticized as being the result of not wanting to learn musical traditions. This is far from being true, as I show in this document. Many regarded these musicians as charlatans because they refused to conform to convention.¹³ Their music was, in fact, the true musical voice of its time precisely because of this departure from convention. At the same time, they recognized and employed musical and cultural traditions where deemed appropriate by the composers.

¹⁰ Probably the most important or widely used of these texts are the Gridley, *Jazz Styles: History and Analysis*, (2006), and Deveaux and Giddens, *Jazz, Essential Listening* (2010). Though both have positive entries on avant-garde, they write about very few artists.

¹¹ Gridley; *Jazz Styles*, (2006).

¹² Conversation with Mark Gridley at the Jazz Educators National Conference in Louisville, KY, January, 2016.

¹³ Jost (1994) in chapter on Sun Ra. p.180.

The music we know as avant-garde jazz is the most historically oriented jazz in the history of the genre. As Deveaux and Giddens (2010) explain:

Although critics routinely pilloried the avant-garde for rejecting jazz conventions, it ultimately proved to be the most inclusive form of jazz in history. The innovators of bop apprenticed in swing bands but played exclusively in their own modern styles; they never played New Orleans jazz (except to belittle it). A later innovator, Miles Davis, constantly changed his perspective, but it was always focused on the present and future, never the past. Yet the avant-garde, which seemed to incarnate the very definition of futurism, welcomed every kind of musical influence and allusion. It brought instruments previously ignored or underemployed in jazz (bass clarinet, cello, tuba, wood flutes, soprano and bass saxophone, exotic rhythm instruments, the African kalimba, and the Australian didgeridoo, among others) into the thick of things.¹⁴

What has happened with the avant-garde in jazz is reminiscent of the entries in Slonimsky's *Lexicon of Musical Invective* (1953) where the great composers of Western music were skewered brutally by critics and so called experts.¹⁵ There is a general trend in jazz education to acknowledge this forward-looking music to a lesser degree than is indicated by the artistic contributions of its practitioners. Because these artists are not bound to conventions like song form, tonality or major-minor systems of tonal organization, their music is not easily accessible to many people.¹⁶

Methodology

In this document I use articles and reviews from various journals to illustrate pertinent points. I have examined the music itself through analysis to discuss the devices employed. These analyses invite comparison not only to the various artists of

¹⁴ Deveaux and Giddens, (2010).

¹⁵ Slonimsky, Nicholas; *Lexicon of Musical Invective*, (2000).

¹⁶ Personal note: During my 45 years as a professional musician, I have performed many concerts for school children. The more forward-thinking music has always been well received by the kids. My personal observation is that people are open to this music if they are not already prejudiced against it by convention.

the avant-garde but also to those of other musical genres. This research shows that the musician/composers of the avant-garde studied techniques employed by the great composers of Western music, particularly Schoenberg, Bartok, Stockhausen, and Cage. Considerable analyses of this music have been done by others, particularly author Ekkehard Jost, in his book *Free Jazz* (1994), that show the devices used. These analyses, along with the musicians' musical histories, point to knowledge and use of Western musical techniques and compositional devices. One problem with this is brought to the surface by the question: Why must the music of the jazz avant-garde be judged by European standards? Archie Shepp put forward in his interview that the music of Afro-Americans is complete in itself and should not rely on its acceptance by Eurocentric academicians.¹⁷ While I agree completely with Professor Shepp, I contend that the inclusion of European classical techniques only makes the music richer and more complete as an American expression.

Because of the inclusivity of the avant-garde, I contend that this music serves as a near-complete synthesis of twentieth century techniques and styles originating from the United States. This is well illustrated in the works of the Chicago-based Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM), Sun Ra and Oliver Lake among others. The musicians of the jazz avant-garde typically choose from all of the musical influences around them in creating their projects. As Oliver Lake explains:

Whatever portions of the music or styles of music I like or have been drawn to I have incorporated it into to what I've done. I work with string quartets, I work with orchestras, I work with big bands, saxophone quartets. You know, it varies from size of instrumentation it doesn't really matter. I work with steel pans. Right now I have an organ quartet that I've been working with for the last 4, 5, 6, 7 years, so for me it's all there to be

¹⁷ Archie Shepp interview.

... Traditionally I think musicians have been open-minded and I think I exemplify that to a degree, maybe not the extreme but that's been one of the things that I've incorporated in my music. Whatever I like and am drawn to I've been able to incorporate it into what I compose and what I perform with so it's been very interesting for me to take that approach.¹⁸

In Chapter 3 there is an overview of the development of jazz music during the first half of the twentieth century. This chronological explanation of the general progression of the harmonic, melodic, rhythmic and other aspects of the music will help to illustrate the logical and arguably inevitable birth of the style we call “avant-garde.”

I have included interviews with some of these artists on their music and their motivations for doing what they do instead of seeking commercial success as a principle objective. These musicians make clear that their personal expressions are more important than fame and/or financial reward; thus, music for art's sake. However, the art vs. popular music binary also invites disdain from certain musicians. As Archie Shepp stated clearly in our interview, he views this as an elitist argument.¹⁹ The musicians of the jazz avant-garde must deal with the realities of the culture industry for their very survival, thus blurring the lines of this binary.

A certain amount of biographical material is essential in order to understand the influences and motivations of avant-garde jazz musicians. There is no need and therefore no attempt to make these data all-inclusive about these musicians' lives. The point is to show the backgrounds of the musicians and how these contributed to the musical directions they have taken. The most important characteristic is that, in large part, they have typical American musical training such as participation in school bands,

¹⁸ Oliver Lake Interview. p. 3.

¹⁹ Archie Shepp interview.

piano lessons, early experiences with church music either in a congregation or as musical participants, college music education, and performance in military bands.²⁰

Improvisation employs very much the same creative process as composition and in some ways they are completely inseparable.²¹ Famoudou Don Moye makes it very clear in our discussions that the Art Ensemble of Chicago rehearsed and to a great degree, planned improvisations.²² As Mark Gridley noted in his *Jazz Styles*, referring to the Art Ensemble of Chicago: “The group’s repertory...was distinguished by its avoidance of traditional format in which improvised solos are strung together one after another, without a storytelling quality to unify the piece.”²³ In fact, the works of the Art Ensemble of Chicago more closely resemble compositions than improvised “jazz tunes,” due to the continuity of thematic material and their collective, rather than individual, approach to making music.²⁴ Their music blurs the line between composition and improvisation and begs the question of whether there is a line between composition and improvisation, especially if the improvisations are directed within a collective environment. This is especially true when we consider that, at the same time, Western composers were experimenting with indeterminism, a kind of improvisation.

²⁰ These points are made in all of the biographies and general texts on jazz.

²¹ Taylor made that very clear in rehearsals in Berlin 1993 when we were preparing to record the “Always A Pleasure” CD.

²² Moye, Famoudou Don; Telephone conversation, May 3, 2015.

²³ Gridley, Mark C.; *Jazz Styles: History and Analysis*, Pearson, New York, (2012).

²⁴ *ibid.* p. 330-331.

There is a discussion of why many of the avant-garde artists don't use the term "jazz" to describe their music. First of all, there is no agreed upon definition of jazz.²⁵ There is a general sentiment that the term jazz is too limiting to describe this music.²⁶ This further illustrates the cultural inclusivity of the music and the musicians discussed in this document. The musicians of the jazz avant-garde are important participants in a musical and artistic direction, moving toward dismissing lines of categorization in music and art in general.²⁷

²⁵ Gridley, (2006), P.10. Dr. Gridley discusses four possible definitions of jazz and illustrates the difficulty of defining jazz music.

²⁶ Based on conversations with Henry Threadgill, Sun Ra, George Lewis and many others.

²⁷ From discussions with many of the avant-garde over my years of being a part of the movement.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

General Histories of Jazz

Putting forth that this “revolution” in music was not a revolution at all but the next logical step in the development of Afro-American, thus American music, necessitates an explanation of the development of jazz and Afro-American music leading to the avant-garde. Therefore, general textbooks on jazz history are appropriate as they adequately explain the historic movements in chronological order. The sources used in this dissertation to cover the general trends in the history of jazz are:

- Mark Gridley, *Jazz Styles and Analysis*, (2006)¹
- Scott Deveaux and Gary Giddens, *Jazz, Essential Listening*, (2010)²
- Jon Hassé and Tad Lathrop, *Discover Jazz*, (2011)³.

All three cover the basic trends in the historical development of this music very well with Hassé and Lathrop (2011) giving considerable attention to the avant-garde and the diversity of artists in the genre.

General Histories of Afro-American Music

Literature on Music of African Americans. For general information on the history and trends in Afro-American music, there is the groundbreaking work of Eileen Southern, *The Music of Black Americans: A History* (1997).⁴ Dr. Southern goes in-depth, not only on the history of the music and musicians but her book puts all of the

¹ Gridley, Mark C.; *Jazz Styles: History and Analysis*. New York: Pearson, 2012.

² Deveaux, Scott and Giddens, Gary. *Jazz, Essential Listening*. New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc., 2010.

³ Hass, John Edward and Lathrop, Tad. *Discover Jazz*. New York: Pearson, 2012.

⁴ Southern, Eileen. *The Music of Black Americans: A History*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company. 1997.

music in cultural contexts, giving a deeper understanding of the historic and cultural trends affecting the people who made the music.

This vantage point is important in understanding the forces that led to the jazz avant-garde. There is an in-depth explanation of the African influences on Afro-American culture in general, as well as the musical manifestations of these influences. Dr. Southern shows clearly the continuation of African influence through the various periods and styles of black music in America. In this dissertation, these African influences will be evaluated with regard to the terms of “art vs. popular music,” anti-jazz (as “avant-garde jazz” was called by significant critics of the time), and the generalities we make concerning legitimacy, artistry, and cultural relevance.

In *African American Music: An Introduction*, (2006)⁵ Mellonie Burnim and Portia Maultsby have assembled a collection of essays on African American music by various contributors. Besides the historic musical developments, their document deals extensively with the scholarship on African American social and political issues at work. In this book, there is a chapter written by Lawrence Levin, on “African American Music as Resistance,”⁶ which gives an account of the difficulties of protest through what we think of as normal outlets for political expression. This is not to say that the predominant practices of Black American music were in protest. However, considering the African propensity for having music become a part of every aspect of life, it naturally follows that a certain amount of the music would have to refer to the oppression faced

⁵ Burnim, Mellonee V. and Maultsby, Portia K., Editors. *African American Music*. New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2006.

⁶ Burnim and Maultsby 2006.p.587-642.

by the people. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that music made by intelligent, educated, black musicians would, at least at times, reflect this aspect of life. Though the musicians of the avant-garde, as well as those of bebop, rhythm and blues, and other forms of black music would say that they are not making music from anger, I have not met a single black professional musician who would deny the influence of 400 years of oppression on their lives and on their music.⁷ Therefore, we must consider the possibility that the music of the jazz avant-garde has some degree of expression of the societal issues at work with relevance to the lives of these artists.

“The Civil Rights Movement,” another section of Burnim and Maultsby’s book, written by Bernice Johnson Reagon⁸ gives an account of music directly related to the civil rights movement in the United States. The fact that the movement and the music were so closely related to black churches is an indication of the ongoing influence that freedom songs have to this day. Any black musician living in the nineteen-fifties and sixties would have been acutely aware of the freedom songs and related hymns sung during demonstrations for human rights.

The Political Motivations of the Musicians

Black Nationalism and Revolution. In *Black Nationalism and the Revolution in Music*, (1970)⁹, Frank Kofsky makes the case that anger toward the racial injustices in America is the force behind this “musical revolution.” Kofsky also makes the argument that the music is Black Music, as opposed to American Music, which fuels the animosity

⁷ Over the years I have found that this anger is pervasive and rarely shared with the white media. This is especially true for those musicians who traveled in the South in the 1960s and before.

⁸ Burnim and Maultsby 2006.p.598-623.

⁹ Kofsky, Frank. *Black Nationalism and the Revolution in Music*. New York: Pathfinder, 1970.

toward the avant-garde movement in jazz by many writers. Though Kofsky does acknowledge that people of any color can play jazz, he makes the argument that the cultural aspects of jazz music make it more natural for young black musicians to follow and that it requires an extra step for white musicians to become accomplished enough in order to play jazz.

Kofsky makes the point that the social conditions of the mid-twentieth century would, by necessity, lead the musicians to express their lives, and sometimes their anger, through their music. He shows how any hint that a black musician was unhappy with racial oppression was highly detrimental to that person's career and livelihood.¹⁰ Kofsky illustrates this clearly with his in-depth handling of the many critiques in major publications, stating exactly how unwelcome any thoughts of anger and/or protest are from the black musician. These attitudes clouded the image of the jazz "avant-garde" and allowed the search for cultural relevance to be taken as the exclusion of whites. Nothing could be further from the truth, as Kofsky notes. The so-called "Black Nationalist" musicians of the "avant-garde," for the most part, had integrated ensembles and most studied European classical music.¹¹ Professor Kofsky writes about how Duke Ellington was a propaganda win for the United States at Senegal's World Festival of Negro Arts:

Soviet Poet Yevgeny Yevtushenko had been summoned to Moscow to do for Soviet propaganda what Ellington had done for the Americans...Of course, the New York Times, in speaking of this, failed to mention that

¹⁰ibid.p.27 I have asked the question to several prominent musicians about the expectation for the "negro to stay in his place" and the answer is always an outpouring of profanity and a big "yes, it's there!"

¹¹ In my musical life I have found that the avant-garde is perhaps the most racially and culturally inclusive music in existence.

Ellington was denied the Pulitzer prize the year before (1965), because of being a practitioner of negro music (jazz).

In her book, *Freedom Sounds: Civil Rights Call Out to Jazz Africa*, (2010)¹², Dr. Ingrid Monson, Quincy Jones Professor of African American Music at Harvard University, gives an in-depth account of the influence of the Civil Rights Movement and the movement toward independence in Africa on jazz in the 1950s and 60s. Dr. Monson illustrates how aesthetic discussion was, to a great degree, shaped by these movements and the resulting moral pressure on musicians to take action.

In *Blues People: Negro Music in White America*, (1999)¹³, Amiri Baraka (formerly Leroi Jones) addresses the plight of the Negro in America and makes the argument that the resulting anger is the primary influence in the avant-garde. Baraka was one of the leading exponents of jazz, especially free jazz, as a political expression. He called the jazz avant-garde “New Black Music”, a term offensive to those who took it as a term of exclusion. In contrast, author Ekkehard Jost dismisses the intent of exclusion connected with the term.¹⁴

The Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM)

The AACM, born in Chicago, was highly influential from the 1960's on. The highly accepted, definitive text about the AACM is *A Power Stronger Than Itself: The AACM and American Experimental Music*, by George E. Lewis.¹⁵ Though it is unusual to include a resume in this part of a document, his compelling qualifications for this

¹² Monson, Ingrid. *Civil Rights Call Out to Jazz and Africa*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.

¹³ Baraka, Amiri (LeRoi Jones). *Blues People: Negro Music in White America*. New York: Morrow, 1963.

¹⁴ Jost, Ekkehard. *Free Jazz*. New York: Da Capo Press, 1994.p11-12.

¹⁵ Lewis, George E. (2008) *A Power Stronger Than Itself*. Chicago. 2008, University of Chicago Press.

document are best explained by his biographical information on the Columbia University website:

George E. Lewis is the Edwin H. Case Professor of American Music at Columbia University. A 2015 Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, Lewis has received a MacArthur Fellowship (2002), a Guggenheim Fellowship (2015), a United States Artists Walker Fellowship (2011), an Alpert Award in the Arts (1999), and fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts. In 2015, Lewis received the degree of Doctor of Music (DMus, *honoris causa*) from the University of Edinburgh.

A member of the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM) since 1971, Lewis's work in electronic and computer music, computer-based multimedia installations, and notated and improvisative forms is documented on more than 140 recordings. His work has been presented by the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, London Philharmonia Orchestra, Radio-Sinfonieorchester Stuttgart, Boston Modern Orchestra Project, Talea Ensemble, Dinosaur Annex, Ensemble Pamplemousse, Wet Ink, Ensemble Erik Satie, Eco Ensemble, and others, with commissions from American Composers Orchestra, International Contemporary Ensemble, Harvestworks, Ensemble Either/Or, Orkestra Futura, Turning Point Ensemble, San Francisco Contemporary Music Players, 2010 Vancouver Cultural Olympiad, IRCAM, Glasgow Improvisers Orchestra, and others. Lewis has served as Ernest Bloch Visiting Professor of Music, University of California, Berkeley; Paul Fromm Composer in Residence, American Academy in Rome; Resident Scholar, Center for Disciplinary Innovation, University of Chicago; and CAC Fitt Artist In Residence, Brown University.

Lewis received the 2012 SEAMUS Award from the Society for Electro-Acoustic Music in the United States, and his book, *A Power Stronger Than Itself: The AACM and American Experimental Music* (University of Chicago Press, 2008) received the American Book Award and the American Musicological Society's Music in American Culture Award. Lewis is the co-editor of the forthcoming two-volume *Oxford Handbook of Critical Improvisation Studies*, and his opera *Afterword*, commissioned by the Gray Center for Arts and Inquiry at the University of Chicago, premiered at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago in October 2015. Professor Lewis came to Columbia in 2004, having previously taught at the University of California, San Diego, Mills College, the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, the Koninklijke Conservatorium Den Haag, and Simon Fraser University's Contemporary Arts Summer Institute. Lewis studied composition with Muhal Richard Abrams at the AACM School of Music, and trombone with Dean Hey.

In *A Power Stronger Than Itself*, George Lewis explains the critical acceptance issues facing the AACM and gives a compelling argument about the merit of AACM artists as American artists of high caliber with good training. Lewis concludes that because the musicians of the AACM and the jazz “avant-garde” in general were black and associated with improvised music, the art/music writers treated them separately. Professor Lewis shows that the music of the AACM was, in fact, very inclusive of an immense body of influences, organized study and an emphasis on individualism within the collective.

Many of the issues brought forward by Lewis also apply in a general sense to the other musicians of the avant-garde. These include the search for new ways to play music, moving in a composition-oriented direction and using multiple historic and multicultural influences. Professor Lewis’ book leaves no doubt as to the serious nature of the AACM musicians and their dedication to stylistic inclusivity.

Sources dealing with analyses of “free jazz”

On its publication in 1974, *Free Jazz: The Roots of Jazz*, (reprinted 1994)¹⁶ by Ekkehard Jost made possibly the first real examination of the “avant-garde,” “Free Jazz,” or whatever we should call it. Jost took selected musicians, examined their music and produced in-depth analyses. Jost gives stylistic portraits of the principle individuals and movements in *Free Jazz* at the time. He addresses compositional practices, improvisational practices, relationships to the press and attitudes of the musicians. He deals with the issues of Black Nationalism and perceptions of anger in the music and helps to clarify the same.

¹⁶ Jost, Ekkehard. *Free Jazz*. New York: Da Capo Press, 1994.

In her 1994 doctoral dissertation, *Analyzing Free Jazz*,¹⁷ Dr. Lynette Westendorf takes an interesting look at some of the same music that Jost examined, as well as other works. Dr. Westendorf does not cover as many artists as does Jost (Westendorf deals with Coltrane, Ornette Coleman and Cecil Taylor) but she offers more in-depth analyses of their works in some instances. Of particular interest to me is that Westendorf addresses, “the differences and similarities between jazz and Euro-American music, since the latter forms the pedagogical standard of modern music education.”

At present, the issue of pedagogical standard is less true than in the twentieth century but the subject is relevant nonetheless, as Dr. Westendorf gives us a good look at the musical influences in play from the standpoint of a theorist. She also addresses the difficulties in analysis of avant-garde jazz, as traditional notation is often not adequate to describe many of the examples of free jazz.

Improvisation and Composition

In *Thinking in Jazz: The Infinite Art of Improvisation*, (1994)¹⁸, Dr. Paul Berliner has done an in-depth study of improvisation in jazz with many interviews of musicians explaining their creative processes. This book digs into the issue of improvisation vs. composition and shows their similar thought processes.

¹⁷ Westendorf, Lynette. *Analyzing Free Jazz*. Doctoral dissertation: University of Washington, 1994.

¹⁸ Berliner, Paul F. *Thinking in Jazz: The Infinite Art of Improvisation*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994.

Sources on Specific Musicians

In his book, *Four Lives in the Bebop Business*, (2004)¹⁹, A.B. Spellman gives accounts of the lives of Cecil Taylor and Ornette Coleman (also, but not included in this dissertation, Jackie McClean and Herbie Nichols). Spellman's close association with these musicians allows him particularly in-depth access to their influences and motivations. Spellman's work includes excellent interviews with Cecil Taylor, rich in content about his influences, musical and personal. This work shows the interconnections between all elements of Taylor and his music. Spellman, with his personal contact with Cecil Taylor, shows clearly how Taylor's life transcends boundaries between people and their expressions.

In *Ornette Coleman: The Harmolodic Life*, (1994)²⁰, author John Litweiler illustrates the varied influences and experiences of Ornette Coleman as well as in-depth descriptions of Coleman's music.

In *Space is the Place: The Lives and Times of Sun Ra*, (1994)²¹, John Szwed gives an in-depth look into the life of musician Sun Ra. He traces Ra's history from his early days in Birmingham, Alabama through his lives in Chicago, New York and Philadelphia. Szwed gives much insight into the personal and musical influences at work in this brilliant but mysterious artist, whose work, like those of other avant-garde jazz musicians, arose from the rich history of jazz to produce a music that was an inclusive amalgamation of nearly every musical influence available.

¹⁹ Spellman, A.B. *Four Lives in the Bebop Business*. New York: Random House. 1966.

²⁰ Litweiler, John. "Ornette Coleman: The Harmolodic Life. Boston. 1994, Da Capo Press

²¹ Szwed, John. *Space is the Place: The Lives and Times of Sun Ra*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1997.

CHAPTER 3 RELEVANT HISTORICAL TRENDS LEADING TO THE AVANT-GARDE

In this chapter, the many books and articles on jazz and the music of Afro-Americans are documented. There is no need to duplicate that work. However, in order to make the necessary points about the jazz avant-garde, the music must be placed in a historical context. There is a clear and logical progression that has taken place and led to an avant-garde. In fact, in some respects the music of African Americans, especially in jazz, has been the avant-garde of its time throughout its development.

To properly address the subject of the avant-garde, some historical information is essential in order to view the progression that has taken place and led to its genesis.

The African Aesthetic in Afro-American Music

African musical elements and influences are and have been essential in what we call jazz music. In order to explain the progression that has taken place in the formation of this music, we must begin with West Africa, the role of music in West African societies and the general characteristics of West African music. In this document we will see how these influences are present in Afro-American music and especially the avant-garde. In his book, *African American Musical Heritage: An Appreciation, Historical Summary, an Introduction to Music Fundamentals* (2012)¹, Lenard Bowie describes West African musical practices and the role of music in the lives of West Africans. First, there was the use and importance of music in virtually every aspect of life. West Africa, circa 1600, was an oral society and music was a part of a storytelling practice, which is how tribal histories were maintained and how they disseminated information. Music

¹ Bowie, Lenard C.: *African American Musical Heritage: An Appreciation, Historical Summary, and Introduction to Music Fundamentals*. Xlibris Corporation, 2012.

accompanied religious ceremonies, weddings, funerals, and most events in the lives of the people. The music was functional, and not art for the sake of art.

A principle characteristic of the music in West Africa is the importance of rhythm. This is evident not only in the drumming but on all instruments and vocals. Dr. Bowie explains:

In performances, one instrument, or voice will outline a basic metronomic-like timeline, with every other instrument or voice in the ensemble simultaneously laying down a separate and distinct rhythmic pattern. Many of these patterns, whether played or sang, have been established by centuries of tradition. Tradition permitted considerable free improvisation on certain patterns so long as the central meaning was not obscured. When performed by several voices or instruments, the interaction of several rhythmic patterns often in rhythmic permutations known, in Western terms, as polyrhythms or polymers.²

Most tribes in the region speak in tone languages wherein pitch and rhythm determine meanings about what is being said. These tone languages actually shaped the melodies used in the music. There was also considerable use of melisma in emphasizing and expressing important words.³

Most melodies were pentatonic. That is not to say that they were exclusively pentatonic because there is some West African music that uses melodic lines resembling Western seven note scales. However, the vast majority of West African music is pentatonic and there was no concept of formalized harmony, as we know it in Western music. A common practice was to improvise words and melodies as one went along. West Africans also used different sounds of the voice such as groans, guttural

² Bowie, Lenard C.: *African American Musical Heritage: An Appreciation, Historical Summary, and Introduction to Music Fundamentals* (2012); Xlibris Corporation.

³ Ibid, p. 72.

sounds and falsetto. The aforementioned characteristics are important because they remain in the music of African Americans to the present day.⁴

In the United States, particularly in New Orleans, those of African heritage began to play Western instruments and to employ Western harmonic and melodic concepts, giving birth to blues, jazz, gospel and other new forms of music. Of these new genres, jazz has continued to be the most progressive in terms of harmonic, melodic and rhythmic functions and has influenced and been influenced by much of world culture.

It was a natural for jazz musicians to search for new things to add to the music in terms of chord progressions, melodies, rhythms and forms. Though the music defied the convention of the times, each “period” formed its own conventions, which were built upon and to some extent defined by musicians of each subsequent period. The following is a discussion of the progression that took place, with an emphasis on the innovations of the various periods in the development of jazz music. The point is to show a logical and somewhat orderly progression towards the avant-garde from the standpoint of melodic, rhythmic and harmonic vocabularies, and use of form.

Blues

A discussion of jazz harmony and melody must start with the blues. Blues at the time of its origins may have had one, two, or three chords. The vocal styles used considerable pentatonic melodies but also involved use of what we now call blue notes. The blues vocalists also made use of cries, guttural sounds, grunts, moans, falsetto and could be very melismatic. Blues singers would play around with pitches to produce soulful effects and they used rhythmic displacement, the practice of manipulating

⁴ One has only to listen to any black music from gospel to jazz, blues or hip hop to hear these devices.

starting times for their phrases. The idea of this style was (is) to project certain emotions (sad, happy, humorous, etc.), so many sounds were fair game in the process. The music known as the blues was a direct descendant of African music and provides the base for jazz music.

Ragtime

“Ragtime” comes from the word “rag”, which was similar to military march music while using rhythms stylistic of African American banjo music. Ragtime was characterized by extensive syncopation and a generally strong rhythmic drive. This music did not emphasize improvisation and therefore there is debate about whether it was actually jazz or a precursor of jazz.⁵ For purposes of this document, that distinction is of little relevance because either way, ragtime is an important part of the progression leading to present-day jazz and African American music in general. Nevertheless, when we listen to ragtime piano playing, even though the music is composed, it has the feeling of having been improvised.

Though we tend to think of ragtime as being piano music, there were ragtime bands, singers and banjo players.⁶ Even though ragtime music had more harmonic and melodic complexity than blues and traditional African forms, the emphasis on rhythm separated this music from that of Western traditions. However, there are basic elements of ragtime, which are of European influence such as use of tonality, functional harmony and use of form.

⁵ Gridley, (2012) p.39.

⁶ Ibid.

Being dance music, with the kind of syncopation present in ragtime, and considering that blacks wrote most ragtime compositions, there is an obvious African/African American base to ragtime composition and performance. Ragtime illustrates the coming together of cultural influences, a trend that continues through the history of American music.

European composers were attracted to and influenced by ragtime and this new music coming from the United States and the Americas in general. Claude Debussy used ragtime influences in some of his piano pieces, notably “Golliwog’s Cake Walk” (1913) which is from his Piano Suite, *Children’s Corner*.⁷ The members of Les Six, Darius Milhaud, Erik Satie, Francis Poulenc, Germaine Tailleferre and Arthur Honegger also had an affection for ragtime and it is evident in some of their compositions. Satie’s ballet, *Parade (Ragtime du Paquebot)* (1917)⁸ is one of many examples. Igor Stravinsky composed a work for solo piano called *Piano-Rag-Music* in 1919.⁹ Therefore, by the early twentieth century, the cross-pollination had already made itself evident on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean.

Early Jazz

Early Jazz refers to the music that emerged, principally from New Orleans, during the first thirty years of the twentieth century. Mark Gridley in his fine general text *Jazz Styles* (2011) gives a very good, concise description of the general characteristics of this music:

⁷ Debussy, Claude. *Children’s Corner, Suite for Piano*. Paris: [Durand & Fils](#), 1908.

⁸ Satie, Erik. *Parade*. Paris: Rouart, Lerolle et Cie., 1917.

⁹ Stravinsky, Igor. *Piano Rag Music*. London: [J. & W. Chester](#), n.d.1920.

The earliest jazz musicians took liberties with the tunes and the accompaniments in their performances. Their new ideas and embellishments sometimes became more important to a performance than the tunes themselves. This trend evolved across the 1920s, and in some performances of the 1930s all that remained of the original was the tune's spirit and chord progressions. What is today called improvising was referred to by early jazz musicians as "messin' around," "embellishing," "jassing," or "jazzing up."¹⁰

The earliest jazz had roots in ragtime, blues, and brass band music. However, after a few years, several important differences were heard:

1. Much of each performance was improvised.
2. Rhythmic feeling was looser and more relaxed, thus anticipating the jazz swing feeling.
3. The music generated some of its own repertory of compositions.
4. Its collectively improvised format created a more complex musical product than was typical in ragtime, blues, or brass band music.
5. The earliest jazz was even more exciting than ragtime, blues, or brass band music.¹¹

My conclusion as to the general trend is a development and advancement of all previous elements of the music resulting in more complex harmonies and greater melodic flexibility in the improvisations. At the same time, the African elements such as the sounds made on the instruments, melisma, and an emphasis on rhythm, remained in the music.

There are more chords, so there is a progression in harmonic sensibilities. The following are characteristics of early jazz.

1. The melodies in the composed tunes and in the improvisations are more complex and begin to exploit major/minor systems of tonal organization.

¹⁰ Gridley, M. (2012). p.59

¹¹ Ibid. p.59

2. Group improvisation allowed for more notes and lines to happen at the same time so players and listeners were exposed to more textures and a type of *improvised* counterpoint.
3. The repertoire began to establish formal structures and to adopt such structures as those similar to mainstream American songs, which were improvised upon in jazz performances.
4. The improvisations were based on these forms in terms of the connection between the chords and their implied scales.
5. As this music is primarily for dancing, there is still a rhythmic emphasis with considerable syncopation, adding to the excitement. However, the melodic, harmonic and structural concepts are considerably more complex than in previous African American music. Here we see the beginning of a new performance practice among these musicians. This practice, at first radical and innovative, becomes a new convention over time.

The next parts of this history show a continuation of the addition of Western and other musical influences to this music. Louis Armstrong came from this period (though he performed and evolved well beyond the early jazz styles) and raised the technical standards of performance considerably. He developed a technical proficiency and range on his instrument (trumpet) that was unprecedented in African American music, and he began to travel the world presenting this new American music. His travels allowed Armstrong to influence musical output of other cultures, notably in Europe, where he toured extensively.¹²

The exchange of music between the continents is important to the discussion about the inclusivity of the avant-garde. Many of the musicians were trained in European music and many Europeans became interested in this new music coming from the Americas, particularly the United States. This cross-pollination influenced the music of both continents.

¹² These facts are related in every general history of jazz music and are considered common knowledge.

Big Bands

There was a long tradition of Negro brass bands that played marches and developed into dance bands. By the early twentieth century these bands played standard band repertoire, arrangements and compositions. James Reese Europe, a classically trained musician, began using full orchestra as a means of expressing the music of African Americans. His Carnegie Hall performance in 1912 brought attention to this new musical development. His military band was reputed to be the best in the world and they created new and different sounds and musical gestures (of African American origin) on their instruments.¹³ This was the avant-garde of the time.

The following quote refers to the performance of James Europe's band at the World's Fair in Paris in 1918, representing the United States.

Europe's group performed in a series of concerts with some of the greatest marching bands of France, Britain, and Italy. After one performance, the French band-leader asked for one of Europe's arrangements so that his band could play some of this American jazz. The next day the leader questioned Europe because his bands' version did not sound like the original. After listening to them play, Europe agreed and tried to explain how the jazz effect was accomplished. The puzzled Frenchman later inspected Europe's instruments; his band felt that the only explanation for the sounds they created could be that the instruments were doctored.¹⁰

The fact that the instruments were not doctored demonstrated that there were new instrumental techniques being employed by these musicians.

Important in the subject of Euro-Afro-American cross-pollination is that Paul Whiteman (white) and Fletcher Henderson (black), leaders of early big bands, were

¹³ Beil, Richard G. James Reese Europe "The Jazz Lieutenant". Parlor Songs Academy," 2013.

both classically trained musicians whose bands entertained white audiences and who had highly diverse repertoires which crossed cultural and racial boundaries.¹⁴

The music in general began to use more involved forms and expand its harmonic and melodic vocabularies. Edward Kennedy (Duke) Ellington led arguably the most important of the big bands. He experimented with instrumental colors and exploited individual timbres in ways reminiscent of the French Impressionist composers. He also made use of space in his piano style and used considerable dissonance in his music.¹⁵

Ellington's Suites illustrate his musical curiosity and diverse interests. Ellington's jazz treatments of music by Tchaikovsky (*Nutcracker*) and Grieg (*Peer Gynt*) show Ellington's interest in Western classical music.¹⁶ His Far East Suite and Latin American Suite show the influence of Ellington's travels and his propensity to include his life experiences in his music.¹⁷ Ellington also collaborated with Max Roach and Charles Mingus on the recording *Money Jungle*. This trio recording demonstrates a more progressive use of jazz characteristics than previous Ellington releases.¹⁸

Thus, we now see:

1. Music from Afro-American traditions,
2. Influences of Western Classical music,
3. Influences of music from other cultures (the beginnings of "world music"),

¹⁴ Accounts of both musicians have been published in many documents, including every jazz text I have examined.

¹⁵ Personal observations made through listening analysis.

¹⁶ Duke Ellington. *Three Suites*. New York: Columbia, 1990.

¹⁷ Duke Ellington. *Far East Suite*. RCA Bluebird/BMG Heritage, 2003.

¹⁸ Duke Ellington. *Money Jungle*. New York: United Artists Jazz, 1963.

4. Use of extended ideas (suites),
5. Refusal to be bound by older conventions, and
6. Collaborations with forward thinking musicians, interested in transcending old boundaries.

Duke Ellington was the “avant-garde” of his time.

Bebop

Thelonious Monk continued and expanded the piano style of Duke Ellington in the use of dissonance, and the use of space. Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker greatly expanded the harmonic and melodic language of jazz while demonstrating unprecedented virtuosity on their instruments. Bebop was characterized by small combos of musicians who challenged the conventions of jazz music. This was not dance music and not the same kind of “popular music” that jazz had been. Bebop was criticized as being “crazy music” and “Chinese music,” even by many of the jazz giants of the time.¹⁹ We could say that bebop was the avant-garde of the late 1940s and 1950s.

The “modern jazz” we call bop or bebop developed gradually from the swing music of the previous period by musicians who mastered those styles and began to explore new ways of approaching chord progressions and their scalar implications. Rather than being a reaction *against* swing styles, modern jazz developed smoothly *from* swing styles.²⁰ Nevertheless, this new music called “bebop” was changing jazz

¹⁹ Descriptions found in-depth in Gridley M. (2012), and Deveaux & Giddins, (2010).

²⁰ Gridley, M. (2012), pp. 163

from dancing music to listening music and it received a great deal of hostile reactions from musicians, listeners and the jazz press.²¹

We can observe certain characteristics of bebop that illustrate clearly the direction of movement in jazz away from “popular music” and more toward music as art.²² Bebop musicians played considerably faster tempos, used more complex harmonic patterns in the tunes and began to substitute chord changes in standard tunes with more interesting and complex harmonic progressions. Melodic material became much more intricate than in previous periods of jazz music and there was considerably more chromaticism. There was a general characteristic of unprecedented virtuosity among the practitioners of bebop, especially Gillespie and Parker.²³

Dizzy Gillespie, through the relationships he forged, was highly instrumental in making cross-cultural musical explorations with Cuban musicians. These collaborations, especially with Chano Pozo, were instrumental in gaining wider exposure for Afro-Cuban music.²⁴

Example 3-1 illustrates the melodic progression that took place from traditional jazz to bebop. There is the tune *Indiana* and parallel to it is the Charlie Parker composition, *Donna Lee*, which uses the same general chord progression. Composing

²¹ This can be seen in many of the reviews of Charlie Parker, Thelonious Monk, and other be-boppers, even Dizzy Gillespie.

²² Here the door is open for a continuation of the argument about why popular music is or is not art. The question of a definition of art music and the lack of same has given rise to quite the discussion among music scholars over this subject. Therefore, I could assert that jazz was art music from its beginnings. However, for purposes of this document, I will not enter into that discussion because I contend that jazz became art music by European standards because of the progression I am describing in this chapter.

²³ This is clear upon listening to any of the recordings with Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker together and separately.

²⁴ Gridley (2012) explores this in-depth as do all general jazz history texts.

new melodies for an existing piece of music was a typical practice in bebop music. In this case, the harmonic progression is changed little by Parker but the most significant changes, by far, are in the melodic content. There are many more notes and there is chromaticism, which is nearly non-existent in more traditional forms of jazz except in passing tones, and embellishments like (the so-called) blue notes.

Score

Indiana/Donna Lee

Indiana

Donna Lee

5

9

13

Chord progressions: F7, D7, G7, F, D7, G7, C7, F, Gm7, C7, C aug7, F, F7, Bb, Bbdim7, F, Cm7, B7, Bb, E7, Bbdim7, F, D7, G7, Gm7, D7, G7, G7#11, Gm7.

Example 3-1. Comparison of the melody lines in Indiana and Donna Lee

17 C7 F7 D7 G7

17 C7 F D7 G7 3

21 Em7 A7 Dm7 Bbm7

21 G7 Em7b5 A7 3 Dm7 A7

26 F Em7 A7 Dm Bbdim7

26 Dm7 A7 Dm7 3 Fdim

30 F Gm7 C7

30 F D7 Gm7 C7

32 F

32 F

Example 3-1. Continued

Jazz musician Archie Shepp states:

Parker's performance is as avant-garde as anything that's being played today. His language, it's just that he's playing what you might call hep popular songs, which seems to take something from the respect that he would ordinarily get for having taken the work and creating something totally different out of the composition. A work like Cole Porter has a certain number of bars, certain chords, but by the time Parker finishes with it, we're being introduced to scales, rhythms, a music language, which is totally apart from the song itself as written.²⁵

Cool Jazz – The Exploration of a Modal Approach to Jazz

“Cool jazz” was thought of as being easier to follow, maybe softer than the bop of Gillespie and Parker.²⁶ There were many practitioners on the West Coast so this music became thought of as “West Coast Jazz.” There is no intent here to give a history of the cool so there will be only limited discussion of individuals. Musicians in this field included Dave Brubeck and his work with meter, experimenting with 5/4 and 7/4 time signatures. Gerry Mulligan, Lee Konitz and many other prominent practitioners expanded cool jazz.²⁷ However, for purposes of this document I will address the work of Miles Davis, as it is he, above all, who set the stage for the modal jazz work of John Coltrane. It was also Miles Davis, with Gil Evans as arranger, who strongly influenced the direction of larger ensembles.²⁸

In 1958, Miles Davis recorded Milestones, a tune with only two chords, thus beginning modal jazz. In 1959, Davis recorded *Kind of Blue*, which further explored modalities. Without the restrictions of standard chord progressions, there was more

²⁵ Archie Shepp interview, p.3.

²⁶ Jost, Gridley (2012) and virtually all other jazz historians draw this conclusion.

²⁷ Gridley (2012).

²⁸ Miles Davis. *Sketches of Spain* (1960, 2014).

emphasis on melodic aspects of the improvisations, and therefore more of a horizontal, rather than a vertical approach. Through the use of one chord for several measures at a time, more time was available to explore each modality. Davis explored modes much as a composer would, making musical statements involving motivic development with a considerable use of space and stretching modality toward chromaticism.²⁹ There is no evidence that these ideas came directly from medieval music but church modes were the basis for the scales used in this music.

Miles Davis' composition *Flamenco Sketches* on the *Kind of Blue* album (Example 3-2) consists of five sections of different lengths, each with its mode to be exploited. There is no theme or formal melody.³⁰

The soloists could expand or contract the length of time on each section according to their own inclinations. The modal approaches developed in the Miles Davis Sextet expanded to include chromaticism just those created during the Renaissance by composers such as Lassus.³¹ This spirit of rejecting the conventions of standardized (and therefore, to Davis, restrictive) chord progressions was considered radical for the time.³² This was the avant-garde of its period and John Coltrane was to take this modal style of playing jazz to new heights, as addressed later in the chapter on Coltrane.

²⁹ My personal observations from years of playing this music myself and learning Davis' solos.

³⁰ Many jazz performances have had improvisations over a framework instead of a fixed melody, in blues, and most notably in bebop.

³¹ We can see this in compositions by Lassus, the chanson, *Bon Jour Mon Coeur* and *Requiem Aeternam*.

³² Besides the references in the literature, I have heard this from many musicians during my career.

Flamenco Sketches

Miles Davis

The image displays five musical staves, each representing a different mode. Each staff begins with a treble clef and a common time signature (C). The notes are written as half notes. The modes are: 1. C Ionian (C, D, E, F, G, A, B); 2. Ab Ionian (Ab, Bb, C, Db, Eb, F, G); 3. Bb Ionian (Bb, C, D, Eb, F, G, Ab); 4. D Phrygian (D, Eb, F, G, A, B, C); 5. G Aeolian (G, Ab, Bb, C, D, Eb, F). The modes are numbered 1 through 5 at the beginning of each staff.

Example 3-2. Modes presented without melodic lines

Hard Bop

A continuation of be-bop became known as hard bop and it could be thought of as appearing and developing at roughly the same time as the jazz avant-garde. Hard bop incorporated more Afro-American elements such as funk and gospel. This style of music often used repetitive figures, sometimes Latin American in origin, in the rhythms. Rhythms could be hard driving, thus the name “hard bop.” Composers such as Benny Golson and Wayne Shorter composed pieces that went beyond standard pop song

progressions.³³ Clifford Brown, Max Roach, Cannonball Adderley and Freddie Hubbard were some of the major practitioners of hard bop and some consider Miles Davis to have been a part of this, with the exception of his album *Kind of Blue*.³⁴ Drummers Philly Joe Jones, Tony Williams and Art Blakey were known for their powerful drumming styles and would frequently overpower other instrumentalists.³⁵ Though hard bop is, by general musical characteristics like melody, harmony and metric characteristics, more conservative than the jazz avant-garde, there are parallels in development between the two.³⁶ As Kofsky put it in *Black Nationalism and the Revolution in Music*, (1970):

Like the generation of avant-garde musicians who followed them in the 1960s, the young black players of the late 1950s were highly literate, both musically and politically. That they chose to simplify the framework of jazz from the overtly formalized, effete and mannered conventions of the cool/West Coast period was due not to their inability to master these conventions, but from their fundamental refusal to concede that the game was worth the candle. Thus they instead formulated a new set of stylistic guidelines that combined the complexity of bebop with a heightened stress on the black basics, blues and gospel music.³⁷

³³ Gridley (2012).

³⁴ Considering the progressive and inclusive nature of Davis' work in the 50s and 60s, along with his high-energy rhythmic approach, this point of view is unimpeachable. Now modalism is just one more device to be used and expounded upon at will.

³⁵ This is mentioned in Gridley (2012) and other texts. I would like to add that having played with these overpowering hard bop drummers like Philly Joe and Blakey, their power is essential to this music. This powerful drumming style pushes the energy to new levels, much to the disdain of more traditionalist musicians.

³⁶ I have been at music events where avant-garde musicians and hard boppers were all together, interacting musically and personally as a part of one movement. An in-depth discussion of this would be beyond the scope of this document.

³⁷ Kofsky, (1970), p.40.

CHAPTER 4 THE BEGINNINGS OF THE JAZZ AVANT-GARDE

Understanding the perennial artists who began the “avant-garde” movement and what “avant-garde” music reflects in society is the key to the understanding the creation of this unique musical style and why it is a hallmark in the evolution of jazz and modern culture. Avant-garde is a style of music and improvisation that combines avant-garde art music and composition within jazz frameworks. This music provides “musical spaces” to explore purposeful ideas of varying motifs which ultimately is the underlining framework and glue that binds spontaneous improvisation with composition. This framework or varying structure may be composed note for note in advance, partially, or even completely.

Avant-garde jazz has often been associated by many scholars with the politics of Black Nationalism. The term avant-garde is also used loosely to describe the work of any musician who radically departs from the tradition altogether. In the same vein, avant-gardism rejects the "institution of art" and challenges social and artistic values.¹ Avant-garde music can therefore be considered important to modern human history because its collective and robust elements helped define new ways of approaching music and art. The avant-garde movement and impact is still felt today, with new musicians who look to avant-garde music as a means to understanding how to have a unique voice.² Avant-

¹ Baraka, (1963).

² See Appendix XXX (YOU DON'T HAVE THIS IN THE DOCUMENT YET!) with testimonies by musicians and producers concerning the influence of Sun Ra.

garde music also embodies the fundamental definition of jazz itself, which is, “the power of individual expression.”

In identifying avant-garde music and the avant-garde culture there are several key musicians and groups that were on the cutting edge of the moment. Most historians credit Ornette Coleman as pioneering the Free Jazz Movement. However, Lennie Tristano explored the idea of free jazz and collective improvisation in his 1949 recording, “*Intuition*.”³ Unfortunately, the record company, fearing total rejection by the public, did not issue these tracks until years later. As a result of not releasing that 1949 recording, Ornette Coleman was credited by historians with first introducing avant-garde jazz to the world in 1959. John Coltrane was another notable influence in this movement and Coltrane was at the top of most musicians’ polls in the mid-1960’s, especially in Europe. Coltrane also was a tremendous help in furthering the careers of other contemporary free jazz players such as Archie Shepp, Pharaoh Sanders, and McCoy Tyner. Charles Mingus had also already pushed hard on the emotional musical fabric of compositions and music performances, forcing them into a freer expression. In 1956 Mingus recorded “*Pithecanthropus Erectus*” and shocked the listening world with his daring use of some free playing.

Review of Specific Musicians. Although these artists’ works have been well documented, their histories are very important with regards to understanding the musical underpinnings and musical and social influences leading up to and expressed by avant-garde jazz.

³ Tristano, Lennie and Marsh, Wayne. *Intuition*. Capitol Records, 1949

Charles Mingus

Charles Mingus was a classically trained bassist, pianist, bandleader and composer. He grew up in Watts, California, sang in the choir in church and, beginning at eight years old, listened to Duke Ellington. Mingus stated, "When I first heard Duke Ellington in person, I almost jumped out of the balcony. One piece excited me so much that I screamed."⁴

His early professional experience included work with such people as Louis Armstrong, Lionel Hampton and Kid Ory. After settling in New York, Mingus played and recorded with such musicians as Dizzy Gillespie, Charlie Parker, Art Tatum, Miles Davis, Bud Powell, and Duke Ellington. Drawing on these varied experiences, Mingus forged a style consisting of diverse influences including gospel music from church, the ensemble sound of Ellington, impressionistic sound structures, the improvisation of New Orleans bands, and the rhythms of Spanish-American folklore.⁵

Like Ellington, the musicians in Mingus's ensembles are invited into the composition process as he often gave sketches for them instead of a definitive score. This allowed the distinct personalities of the musicians in the band to be part of the musical compositions. This method was important because the trend led to a synthesis of improvisation and composition, or at least a narrowing of the distinction between the two. As Ted Curson said to me: "If you can play with

⁴ Hentoff (1961), p.164.

⁵ Jost (1994), p.36-37.

Mingus, you can play with anybody.”⁶ This was because of the diversity of Mingus’ music and the need for musicians to find their musical voices in the expression of the pieces.

Mingus also used traditional jazz forms but added content and used devices such as hemiola and free improvisation. At times a fixed rhythmic pattern may reappear as an ostinato in collective choruses and a composed theme may occur with improvised accompanying parts. *Folk Forms No. 1* has periods in which a soloist and rhythm section are assigned roles quite different from those of jazz tradition.⁷

Ornette Coleman

In his book *Free Jazz*, Jost (1994) introduces Ornette Coleman. “In 1959, more or less overnight, Ornette Coleman became a figure of contention that split the jazz community straight across. He was hailed as ‘the new Charlie Parker,’ as the man who symbolized a departure for new musical shores; and he was ridiculed as a charlatan and a primitive.”⁸ With the emergence of Coleman, musicians entered the arguments over whether this was jazz, whether this was in fact anti-jazz, and whether Coleman was a charlatan or not. The question was, did he aid the critics in their war against this new music?⁹

⁶ From a conversation I had with Ted Curson in Paris during the summer of 2014. Ted needed a trumpet repaired and because I know Paris well and am fluent in French, I helped him to get to the repair shop and translated for him. While waiting for the repair, we spoke of his music and career influences.

⁷ Charles Mingus, *Charles Mingus Presents Charles Mingus* (1960), America AM, 6082.

⁸ Jost. (1994), p. 44.

⁹ Ibid.

George Lewis describes Coleman's musical outlook:

Coleman, then as now, sought to involve himself not so much in "extending the boundaries of jazz," but in erasing the barriers placed around African American creativity generally, and around his work in particular. Seeing himself very early on as in international dialogue with musicians from every field, Coleman's string trios and quartets, as well as his orchestral work *Skies of America* (1972), challenged notions of black non-entitlement to the infrastructural means of experimental music production, and to the impulse of experimentalism itself.¹⁰

Coleman had his first extended engagement in New York at the legendary "Five Spot" and, as Nat Hentoff relates: "For months, grimly skeptical jazzmen lined up at the Five Spot's bar. They made fun of Coleman but were naggingly worried that he might, after all, have something to say – and in a new way."¹¹

Ornette Coleman was born March 19, 1930, in Ft. Worth, Texas and was mainly self-taught as an alto saxophone player, which perhaps aided him in unique approaches to the music. He spent his early years playing with rhythm and blues bands, mostly in the Southwestern United States. During the fifties in Los Angeles, Coleman was devoted to studies in music theory, and, especially, composition.¹² An important overall characteristic of his music is that Coleman was not bound to the axiomatic prerequisites of jazz in the fifties. He did not use a pre-determined harmonic framework as a basis for composition and improvisation. Even in his earliest recordings (1958-59), his improvisations were harmonically unrestrained.¹³

¹⁰ Lewis. (2001). p. 125-126.

¹¹ Hentoff (1961), p.226.

¹² This matter of being interested in and studying composition will continue to show itself throughout this document as the music progresses more and more away from virtuosity for its own sake. This virtuosity for its own sake was replaced by using the improvisations as compositions. Though it can be argued that this tendency goes back to some Louis Armstrong recordings (*Stardust* in particular), Miles Davis exhibited this, beginning with his modal music.

¹³ As can be heard on his first recording, *Something Else* Coleman, Ornette. *Something Else!!!*.

His recording “*Free Jazz*” featured two quartets each consisting of drums, bass, woodwind and trumpet (cornet). The title of the piece became one of the names for this new music. Because of the unorthodoxy exhibited by Coleman and Cecil Taylor, among others, many critics and musicians claimed that these musicians played “free” because they weren’t serious and couldn’t do anything else.¹⁴ Ornette Coleman has since gone on to win many awards and much recognition for his musical genius.¹⁵

In later years, Coleman experimented with electronic instruments and had collaborations with musicians from different genres (guitarist Jerry Garcia for example).

An important recording to discuss is “Lonely Woman” from *The Shape of Jazz to Come*. The inspiration for this work is a painting of a tearful “bourgeois, wealthy-looking white lady sitting with the most sad and lonely expression...”¹⁶ Coleman says in the liner notes: “Music is for our feelings. I think jazz should try to express more kinds of feeling than it has up to now.”¹⁷

The development of Coleman’s improvised solo on “Lonely Woman” is based on his use of motivic chain-associations. In this unique approach, motivic cells are themselves composed and experimented with in real time. John Litweiler

Contemporary Records C3551, 1958.

¹⁴ During the seventies as an up and coming musician, I heard repeatedly from musicians I worked with and respected about how “these guys don’t swing” or, “They can’t play changes, that’s why they play that out shit.”

¹⁵ Among these awards is a MacArthur Fellowship (1994) and a Pulitzer Prize (2007).

¹⁶ Litweiler, Ornette Coleman: *The Harmolodic Life*, (1994), p.36.

¹⁷ Ornette Coleman, liner notes for *The Shape of Jazz to Come*.

defines this type of improvisational process as *motive evolution*, which he describes as the composer’s modification, transmutation, replication, and polymerization of the melodic germ cell, which may be as small as three notes and whose essence involves its shape.¹⁸ This is illustrated in Example 4-1, below, where Lynette Westendorf identifies the melodic “gestures” of the solo.

Example 4-1. Melodic “gestures” of the solo. From Lynette Westendorf’s *Analyzing Free Jazz*¹⁹

Each melodic “gesture” is separated by double bars. The motivic ideas developed in the solo contain common characteristics that Coleman is using as compositional

¹⁸ Litweiler. 1994 p.57

¹⁹ Westendorf, Lynette. *Analyzing Free Jazz*. Doctoral dissertation: University of Washington, 1994.p.75

tools (shape, pitch, pacing, consistency of motion, and sense of direction). The lyrical beauty in “Lonely Woman,” combined with the rhythmic elasticity, the conversational quality of the melodic line, the heterophonic treatment of the octave doublings, the linear approach to harmony, the variety of tone color, and the method of associative development are but a few of the elements which have rendered significance to Ornette Coleman’s music.²⁰ George Russell said in 1960:

...chords have always helped the jazz player to shape melody, maybe to an extent that he is now over-dependent on the chord. Ornette seems to depend mostly on the overall tonality of the song as a point of departure for the melody. By this I don’t mean that the key the music might be in. His pieces don’t readily infer key. They could almost be in any key or no key. I mean that the melody and the chords of his compositions have an overall sound which Ornette seems to use as a point of departure. This approach liberates the improviser to sing his own song really, without having to meet the deadline of any particular chord. Not that he can’t be vertical and say a chord if he chooses.²¹

Cecil Taylor

Cecil Taylor was born in New York and grew up in a predominantly white middle class neighborhood in Long Island. He started piano lessons at his mother’s request at age five with his neighbor across the street that was a piano teacher and the wife of a timpanist who was in Toscanini’s orchestra. Later he studied percussion with the husband and Taylor credits the studies in percussion as being very important to his music. As a child, Taylor was exposed to the music of Chick Webb, Gene Krupa, Cab Calloway and other jazz artists and these proved a lasting influence. Of these the strongest influence was Duke Ellington. Taylor

²⁰ Westendorf.1994. p.82.

²¹ George Russell, “Ornette Coleman and Tonality,” Jazz Review. June, 1960, p.9.

studied classical piano at the New York College of Music and New England Conservatory. While in Boston he was exposed to and subsequently became more entrenched in the jazz tradition. There he began doing gigs with different jazz musicians and became a part of the jazz scene in Boston.

Along with Ornette Coleman, Taylor was the first jazz musician to consciously place himself outside of the mainstream.²² He formed his first band in 1956 with the saxophonist Steve Lacy, releasing his first recording, *Jazz Advance*, that same year. He released eleven more records in the next five years (including one featuring John Coltrane, called, for marketing reasons, *Coltrane Time*.) Taylor speaks to his attitudes on the creative spirit in the following statement: "If the making of music is your over-all goal, the way you live becomes a kind of musical process."²³ This is reflected in his approach to musical improvisation. In Example 4-2 from the recording "Second Layer", Taylor demonstrates how he varies his basic ideas to be compositional within a given framework.



Example 4-2. Second Layer variations from Westendorf, *Analyzing Free Jazz*²⁴

²² Spellman, (2004), p. xi.

²³ Nat Hentoff, "The Persistent Challenge of Cecil Taylor," *Down Beat* 32, no. 5 (25 February 1965): p. 17.

²⁴ Westendorf, Lynette. *Analyzing Free Jazz*. Doctoral dissertation: University of Washington, 1994.p.146

Example 4-3 demonstrates Taylor's use of the B-A-C-H motive (in retrograde inversion and transposed). The repeated figure and intervallic character here is easily identifiable throughout the remainder of the music.



Example 4-3. Taylor's use of B-A-C-H motive Westendorf, *Analyzing Free Jazz*²⁵

The examples above show Cecil Taylor in the context of a Western-trained composer/musician. However, there are other important elements in his music that must be considered. Taylor's cultural heritage is still fundamental to all aspects of his music. Afro-American musical traditions are evident in terms of the rhythmic and emotional content of his performances. Taylor also has Native American heritage which he expresses and a certain dance quality is always there. In interviews he speaks of the importance of dance as well as everything else that a person is, to his music. This is discussed in Taylor's interview with Funkhouser (1995)²⁶

²⁵ Westendorf, Lynette. *Analyzing Free Jazz*. Doctoral dissertation: University of Washington, 1994.p.133

²⁶ Funkhouser, C. (1995). Being Matter Ignited..., an interview with Cecil Taylor. *Hambone magazine*, Nr.12.

Steve Lacy

Steve Lacy (July 23, 1934–June 4, 2004) was born Steven Norman Lackritz in New York City. A saxophonist and composer, he earned a reputation as one of the most important soprano saxophone players in jazz history. In his book, *Steve Lacy – Conversations* (2006),²⁷ Jason Weiss tells the story by using Steve Lacy's words and those of his friends and colleagues. The following quotes illustrate Lacy's place in the arts:

As far back as I can remember, Steve Lacy has represented the sound of the soprano saxophone. Influenced by Bechet, he has in turn influenced every player of the soprano. His music has always been very personal, and always in search of new paths.

-Lee Konitz, *Jazz Magazine* (Paris)²⁸

Steve Lacy's soul-rending sounds emerge out of the chaos of our times like the announcement of the beautiful nonviolent anarchist revolution. In the passionate intelligence of his compositions, every note is the sound of freedom.

-Judith Malina, actress, writer, and co-founder of the Living Theatre²⁹

Steve Lacy was a universalist whose unending curiosity took him to myriad nooks and crannies of the artistic and intellectual life of his own mind and that of the planet. . . . Throughout his life, Steve collaborated with writers, poets, philosophers, painters, and musicians from everywhere. Along the way, he stimulated and encouraged many of the people with whom he worked to create in ways they never had before. . . . There was also the quality of his mind. Steve possessed an intelligence that was at once poetic, yet clear, precise, penetrating, elegant, often ironic and humorous-much like his own music. . . . Narrow ideological restrictions and categories

²⁷ Weiss, Jason, editor. *Steve Lacy, Conversations*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006

²⁸ As quoted in Weiss (2006). p. 1-2.

²⁹ Ibid

were not his bag. He was open to everything-seeking, appreciating, and expressing all manner of experience.

-Richard Teitelbaum, composer, performer, and professor of music at Bard College, from program notes for a 2005 tribute concert.³⁰

Steve Lacy, second child of Russian-Jewish immigrants, grew up on the upper west side of New York City. However, even as a young boy he refused to be confined to cultural, ethnic, or racial preconceptions. He started on piano at eight years of age, though not enthusiastically. He listened to many kinds of music, and after hearing Art Tatum, he decided that the piano was not the path to pursue.

Lacy discovered Duke Ellington when he was twelve or thirteen years old and shortly afterward switched to clarinet. Then later, inspired by Sidney Bechet, he found his sound on soprano saxophone, which became his instrument exclusively. Lacy became a serious student of jazz, reading books and listening to records, and he was still under age when he started playing Dixieland in clubs with legendary figures in New York City.

When he was nineteen, Lacy met Cecil Taylor, a meeting that changed his direction toward modernist expression and the avant-garde. Taylor and Lacy worked together for several years. "Steve Lacy was deeply influenced by Thelonious Monk and he gravitated to Cecil Taylor's brilliance...with Monk's approach...whose compositions fit the soprano sax perfectly."³¹ Relative to the diversity of the music, Lacy said he nurtured himself with Charlie Parker, Anton

³⁰ As quoted in Weiss (2006). p. 1.

³¹ John Betsch. email sent to augment interview discussion, (November 8, 2016).

Webern, Kurt Weill, Ellington, even standard tunes – whatever he could find that would fit.³²

An examination of Lacy's music during the fifties shows some important characteristics. Steve Lacy played the soprano saxophone, an instrument that was in disuse, at least in jazz music, from the early forties on. Two issues with the instrument were that it is difficult to play in tune and the sound can be shrill and obnoxious if the player is not sufficiently skilled on the instrument.

Lacy played and recorded the music of Monk, and other standard jazz tunes. He remained true to style and technically very correct. His intonation and tone quality were exceptionally good on this difficult instrument.³³ Lacy shows a commitment to fundamentals and history of the art form, especially when considering that he was introduced to jazz by the music of Duke Ellington and was a Dixieland musician for several years.

Steve Lacy went on to perform and record with trumpeter Don Cherry, trombonist Roswell Rudd and other avant-garde musicians in New York. That group had a concentration on the music of Thelonious Monk, even though there was no pianist, necessitating other ways of looking at the music. Upon moving to Europe in 1965, Lacy began his period of moving toward "freedom" in expressing the music. Upon being asked about sticking to the chord changes, Lacy said in an interview with Martin Davidson:

³² From personal conversations.

³³ We can examine Lacy's recordings from the period such as Prestige 7125 entitled "Soprano Sax." Here he plays the tune "Alone Together" and is very true to style.

We played them very strictly, especially at first. We didn't dare deviate at all. We improvised right on the structures whether there were five bars or seven bars or funny keys or everything. We tried to stick to the letter of the law, whatever that was. The thing is, though, it was an every night experience – we wanted to play those tunes every night. So after a while, if you do things every night you start to take liberties and the liberty was what interested us - a liberty through this discipline. And sure enough it worked - there was something on the other side, and we began to get through to a kind of freedom, a kind of looseness. It got looser and looser until it sounded like some New Orleans stuff after a while.³⁴

These words express what Steve Lacy pursued for the rest of his life. He had collaborations with such musicians as Italian trumpeter Enrico Rava, and South Africans Johnny Dyani and Louis Moholo. In Rome, Lacy worked with Musica Elettronica Viva, the improvisational collective made up of American experimental composers mostly from the concert music realm (Frederic Rzewski, Alvin Curran, Richard Teitelbaum). It was also in Rome that Lacy met his wife and closest collaborator, Swiss-born musician and singer, Irene Aebi.

Steve Lacy went on to use poetry and other texts as material for lyrics, and he also composed and recorded song cycles. He performed in non-traditional contexts, playing art openings, doing projects with painters and dancers, and giving concerts with unusual formations. We see this multi-disciplinary approach in much of the avant-garde.

By the late 1970s Lacy formed his definitive group with Irene Aebi, Steve Potts on saxophone, Jean Jacques Avenel on bass, Oliver Johnson on drums

³⁴ Davidson, Martin The great big beautiful sounds of Steve Lacy. *INTO JAZZ* May 1974. Accessed at emanemdisc.com

(replaced in 1989 by John Betsch), and Bobby Few on piano.³⁵ This group, which played together for nearly thirty years, developed a group improvisation/composition conception. As John Betsch explained, “Rehearsal was done with very few words and the music took its own direction naturally.”³⁶

John Coltrane

This document demands history and commentary on John Coltrane as his personal progression mirrors, to a great extent, the progression of the genre itself. Though Coltrane’s use of “free jazz” occurred later than did Ornette Coleman and Cecil Taylor, his work in extending modal jazz set a precedent that has been important to the style we call avant-garde.

Trane, as musicians called him, was born in Hamlet, North Carolina. His father played several instruments and was an influence for Coltrane to study Eb horn and clarinet. In high school in Philadelphia, he listened to a great deal of jazz and was influenced by the saxophonists of the time (among them Lester Young and Johnny Hodges). He began playing the alto saxophone. After high school, Coltrane continued his studies at the Ornstein School of Music and later at Granoff Studios. During WWII, Coltrane performed in the U.S. Navy Band in Hawaii.³⁷

A paragraph from Coltrane’s official bio on the John Coltrane Website sums up the next part of his progression:

³⁵ While living in Paris from 1978 to 1982, I saw Lacy several times in solo and in duo with saxophonist Steve Potts. I was fortunate enough to play one concert with this group in 1980 at a club where much experimental music was taking place.

³⁶ John Betsch, Interview by telephone, (October 10, 2016).

³⁷ Deveaux & Giddens (2010). p. 286-287.

After the war, Coltrane began playing tenor saxophone with the Eddie "CleanHead" Vinson Band, and was later quoted as saying, "A wider area of listening opened up for me. There were many things that people like Hawk, and Ben and Tab Smith were doing in the '40's that I didn't understand, but that I felt emotionally."³⁸

Playing with Vinson meant having a strong connection to the roots of African American music. By this time, Coltrane was a "trained" musician with Gospel church background, military band experience, and he was an excellent blues player.

Next, Coltrane spent time performing with Jimmy Heath and began to experiment with harmonies and melodies. Later, he joined Dizzy Gillespie's band and, in 1958, Coltrane was hired by Miles Davis. In the late 50s, Coltrane developed a three-on-one approach to chord progressions that became known as "sheets of sound."³⁹

During the time Coltrane was with Miles Davis, they experimented extensively with modal playing among other things. However, the approach they took did not limit them to the modes they were working with. There was much chromaticism and room for Coltrane to employ his superimposition of chord progressions on top of the chord(s) already established for the compositions they were playing. In reviewing live performances from this period it is apparent that Trane was moving forward in terms of finding ways to extend musical boundaries.

³⁸ From John Coltrane Official Website, John Coltrane Biography (<http://www.johncoltrane.com/biography.html>).

³⁹ "Sheets of sound" is the common term for this device, as seen in Gridley (2006) and all jazz references concerning the development of John Coltrane.

However, we cannot call this a revolution because Coltrane's work is a logical extension of the progression this music has taken since its inception.

There has been a tendency since the beginning of jazz to progressively develop the melodic conceptions, and to let go of past "restrictions." This desire for progressive sound represents a natural tendency for creative musicians to search for new ways of doing things.

Coltrane was known for being a disciplined musician, practicing and studying for long hours, perfecting his craft and developing his art.⁴⁰ He examined the music and looked for ways to enhance what was there and explore that which was not yet found. Important is his time with Miles Davis and his exploration of freedom within modality, an almost impossible conundrum. Modality suggests certain scales and their derivatives. Coltrane strongly inserted chromaticism into modal playing. We can see this in the YouTube videos of the Miles Davis Quintet with Coltrane playing *So What* and other tunes of that period.⁴¹

Coltrane advanced modal playing by moving melodic motifs, constructed from permutations of the pentatonic scale, in parallel motion over a tonal center. These motifs were often minor triadic shapes moved in step-wise motion that were supported by open voicings built from 4ths and tri-tones. McCoy Tyner continued exploring this practice after Coltrane died. "Passion Dance," from the 1967 album *The Real McCoy*, is a modal piece centered around the tonal center F. Example 4-4 suggests that McCoy plays fragments of various pentatonic scales over the tonal

⁴⁰ There are many accounts of this in the literature. See Porter ((2000).).

⁴¹ Miles Davis, John Coltrane-Konserthuset Stockholm. https://youtu.be/4_z221y8TOs Coltrane solo beginning 5:20.

center F, therefore allowing him to paint different sounds or colors relative to an F tonality.

Dmin-pentatonic Cmin-pentatonic Dmin-pentatonic

5 Cmin-pentatonic Dmin-pentatonic Cmin-pentatonic F=Tonic

9 Cmin-pentatonic Dmin-pentatonic Cmin-pentatonic

13 Cmin Bmin-pentatonic Gmin-pentatonic Gmin Fmin-pentatonic Ebmin-pentatonic

Example 4-4. Tyner's fragments of pentatonic scales over the tonal center F

In this style, pentatonic scales are used as the primary building blocks and there is extensive chromaticism. Now modality is a device rather than a restrictive technique for composition and improvisation.⁴²

What Coltrane did with chord progressions was significant. Trane superimposed chord progressions over existing chord progressions in tunes. This comes from the conception of a turn-around. A turn-around is how we get back to the tonic chord or to the beginning of a new section in a piece of music. The basic idea is ii-V7-I; however, there are many variations on this. The idea is that the progression must lead us to a certain harmonic/tonal destination. Coltrane came up with a movement in major thirds as a type of turn around on which he based some of his compositions, notably *Giant Steps* and *Countdown*. *Countdown* is

⁴² Transcription courtesy of Zach Chester, used by permission.

examined here. *Countdown* is based on the Miles Davis composition entitled *Tune-Up*. Example 4-5 is a comparison of the melodies and chord changes to *Tune-Up* and *Countdown*.⁴³

Tune-Up/Countdown

The musical score is presented in four systems, each with two staves. The top staff represents the melody, and the bottom staff represents the chord progression. Measure numbers are indicated at the beginning of each system.

System 1 (Measures 1-4):
 Melody: Em7, A7, DMaj7, DMaj7
 Chords: Em7, F7, Bbmaj7, Db7, Gbmaj7, A7, Dmaj7

System 2 (Measures 5-8):
 Melody: Dm7, G7, CMaj7, CMaj7
 Chords: Dm7, Eb7, AbMaj7, B7, EMaj7, G7, CMaj7

System 3 (Measures 9-12):
 Melody: Cm7, F7, Bbmaj7, EbMaj7
 Chords: Cm7, Db7, Gbmaj7, A7, Dm7, F7, Bbmaj7

System 4 (Measures 13-16):
 Melody: Em7, A7, Bbmaj7, Em7, A7
 Chords: Em7, F7, Bbmaj7, (Eb7)

Example 4-5. Comparison of the melodies and chord changes to *Tune-Up* and *Countdown*.

⁴³ John Coltrane. Giant Steps and Miles Davis. *Cooking*. Transcriptions by author.

Em7 | A7 | Dmaj7 | Dmaj7 |

becomes:

Em7 F7 | Bbmaj7- Db7 | Gmaj7- A7 | Dmaj7 |

The destination is the same but the routes are different. The piece descends by one step after four measures, then again four measures later, but the relationships between the two compositions remain the same. Then, for the last four measures the two tunes are closer to harmonic unison.

John Coltrane was a voracious reader and studied many disciplines to search for truth, which he then expressed musically.⁴⁴ An important high point is his masterpiece, “A Love Supreme” which shows mastery of traditions, strong expression, a spiritual outlook and a certain release from traditional roles of the musicians in the ensemble. This is jazz as chamber music. The musicians are playing according to preplanned thematic material but remain free to, and indeed are obligated to, express their individuality in this music. There are times when the drummer (Elvin Jones) is playing a drone more than a rhythm. During “solo sections,” these are still very collectivist ideals. Coltrane leads the way but the rest of the quartet follows without being restricted to the conventions of the time. Nevertheless, they are still true to the traditions of Afro-American music. They use their technical advances and theoretical advances to further express the basics of music, and for them, African American music. The expressive qualities are there, there is much improvisation and the use of different sounds from the “trained

⁴⁴ This is fairly common knowledge about Coltrane and is, in fact, legendary.

sounds” learned in school, all within the context of expressing and furthering the art form.⁴⁵

Nevertheless, the traditional Western training of the musicians is plainly evident in terms of technical precision of the players. Tyner’s technique is obviously classical and Coltrane’s technical ability, tone quality and harmonic knowledge reflect his conservatory training.

Archie Shepp

Archie Shepp was born in Fort Lauderdale, Florida in 1937. His father, a professional banjo player, introduced Shepp to music. In 1944 the family moved to Philadelphia and later Shepp started on tenor saxophone. As an adolescent, he befriended and played music with the young Lee Morgan. Archie Shepp studied literature and dramatics at Goddard College in Vermont, then graduated and moved to New York in 1959. After some time, he met and began to work with Cecil Taylor.⁴⁶

In 1964 Shepp began his association with John Coltrane, who became a mentor.⁴⁷ Shepp was on Coltrane’s album *Ascension*, which featured a big band playing free jazz. Coltrane also had Shepp perform with him on other recordings and at festivals internationally.

From there Archie Shepp became associated with the racial struggle in the United States and its relation to the music. As Jost writes:

⁴⁵ These sounds refer to the “honks, squeals, harmonics and other sounds associated with the “negritude” of black musical expression.

⁴⁶ Jost (1994). P.105.

⁴⁷ Archie Shepp (personal communication Archie and I had while on tour).

Archie Shepp is not one of those well-behaved people who modestly goes on playing his music and leaves the talking to the critics. Far from it. He is vociferous about social abuses and pillories racial discrimination when and where he sees it, a circumstance that has led to Shepp's outlook on life being discussed more often, and in more detail, than his music. . . . Shepp is angry, and he has a right to be. . .but . . . to imagine that anger is it's [his music's] only motive force is to block one's understanding of this music. For one must not overlook the somewhat crotchety humour in his improvising and his compositions alike, the subtle emotion that distinguishes his interpretations of Ellington ballads, and the earthy strength-optimistic, not destructive-of his blues improvisations.⁴⁸

Archie Shepp later became Professor at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst and has continued to travel and perform until the present time. Professor Shepp is also invited as clinician at schools and conservatories worldwide as an accepted authority on avant-garde jazz and its origins. As for Shepp's early musical background, it started with the blues:

I played the blues before I played anything. That's what sort of got me into some of the cats and the jazz players, because I could play the blues, before I could play chord changes on my own.⁴⁹

In terms of other players' influences Shepp says:

Another interesting thing is that all the great improvisers have been great blues players including [Art] Tatum, James P. Johnson, right up to Coltrane and Ornette Coleman whose early music was greatly influenced by Charlie Parker.⁵⁰

This theme resonates with many of the avant-garde musicians and with those musicians of other jazz subdivisions and periods. Archie Shepp, as is true of most other musicians of the avant-garde, was influenced by the entire history of

⁴⁸ Jost. (1994), p.105.

⁴⁹ Archie Shepp personal communication.

⁵⁰ *ibid.*

Afro-American music and his sound on the tenor saxophone is often compared to such historic figures as Ben Webster and Dexter Gordon.⁵¹ In a personal communication with me, Shepp describes the debt all music owes to history:

A historical preference that comes from the voice that has been carried over to the instruments. Also another quality of this music is wholism. You can't separate dance, music performance, the style of music performance, the language, all of these things ... for example, rapping today owes its history to traditional African music. I'll give you an example, I heard a performance of a dance ritual on a UNESCO record that I was teaching. Now this ritual was played by instruments by the drum. But it was, it's sacrilegious for them to record the drum. So one of the priests actually sang the ritual. It was kind of a modern day rap, except that he sang a very complex piece of music. You would call that avant-garde actually because it's something that I've never heard done in the west. A person actually singing, note for note sounded phonetically, a drum rhythm. So to that extent, our modern music, so called avant-garde music, owes a profound debt you might say to what went before.

You can look at the 1920s when Louis Armstrong started – became important. Many classical performers accused him of playing on a special mouthpiece. They couldn't believe that he was doing what he was doing on a traditional trumpet mouthpiece.... so much of our music, so much of the present of our music is rooted in the past.⁵²

⁵¹ Gridley (2006) and Jost (1994) write about this. During my times touring with Archie I heard this historic approach and he always stressed this history when discussing our performances.

⁵² Archie Shepp (personal communication, p.2).

CHAPTER 5 SUN RA, AND THE PROGRESSION TOWARD A UNIFIED CONCEPTION OF BLACK MUSIC

Sun Ra was born Herman Blount in 1914 in Birmingham, Alabama – at that time perhaps the most racially segregated city in the world. A very intelligent and very curious child, he spent much of his time alone reading and learned to sight-read music at a very young age. By his early teenage years, he was regarded as a skilled pianist and composer. Although Blount based his musical activities in Birmingham until 1945, his big band toured extensively, playing Chicago in 1934 where he registered with the local musicians' union under the name Sonny Blount. Blount read extensively, researching mystical and occult practices, ancient culture, biblical history, and contemporary developments in science and space exploration. He attended Alabama A&M College (now University).¹

During 1942-1943 he was imprisoned for draft resistance prior to being released with a 4-F classification. After his release, Blount moved to Chicago in the winter of 1946. Although regarded as eccentric by some, Blount was a respected and studied musician and was regularly employed as a pianist, composer, and arranger in the vibrant Southside Chicago music scene. For several years, he scored music for shows in the Club DeLisa, a variety theatre.

Ra worked with such jazz artists as Stuff Smith, Coleman Hawkins, Yusef Lateef, Gene Wright (Eugene Wright and his Dukes of Swing). He played extensively with the legendary musician Fletcher Henderson, and created some arrangements for the band.²

¹ Szwed (1997). Discussed at length in Chapter 1, p.3-56.

² Jost (1994). p. 180-181.

He disowned the "slave name" he had been given at birth, becoming instead Le Sony'r Ra and later, Sun Ra.

In the 50s, he began to piece together his own groups, initially what he referred to as "space trios." Eventually he formed the Arkestra in 1955, a large ensemble that would define his career. The Arkestra attracted a number of excellent musicians from the Chicago area who lived together in a type of commune, constantly rehearsing and experimenting.³ Among these musicians were tenor saxophonist and clarinetist John Gilmore and alto saxophonist Marshall Allen, both of whom stayed with Ra until his passing. Marshall Allen leads the Arkestra to this day. I myself played with the Arkestra intermittently between 1979 and 1986 both in the United States and Europe.

Sonny (as those of us in the Arkestra called him) was known for having long, focused rehearsals as he insisted on being disciplined and required this of his musicians. Though I was with the Arkestra much later than the 50s and 60s, I will recount an interesting conversation relevant to this subject. Once, we were on a six-week tour in Europe. While in Rome, I woke up and went to see the Coliseum. When I got back to the hotel I went to Sonny's room and he said; "Longineu, you were not at rehearsal." I responded that nobody called me to say there was rehearsal. His response was: "I'm not going to call you to tell you about rehearsal." At first I was baffled, and then I realized that there is *a/ways* rehearsal. When you are awake, you practice. With Sun Ra, the music came first and discipline was at the center of every activity.

³ Saved (1997). p.87-100.

While on tour, more often than not, we would travel, arrive at the venue and rehearse for at least three hours (with no breaks of course), then one or two hours later the orchestra would play a three-hour concert. The music that was rehearsed might or might not be played that night. The next day the same scenario would repeat and maybe something from the previous days' rehearsal would be included in the program. Maybe something from two days ago would also be included in the program. The Arkestra members had to be disciplined in learning and remembering music. Sun Ra never called tunes and he never set a program in advance of the concert. He would start playing something and you had better know what it was and come in with your part at the right time. That meant we were obliged to know all of the music very well.⁴

During the Chicago years, the Arkestra played music that had roots in the traditions of the time, including swing, jump and hard bop. Most of Sun Ra's music at that time was structured on functional harmony with significant use of blues. However, *El is a Sound of Joy* and *Fall of the Log* exhibit modality used as a compositional device. Jost says, "There is nothing to show that it was intended to be a point of departure for a new concept of improvisation, as it was later for Davis (Miles) and Coltrane."⁵

One of Sun Ra's important works from this time was *Saturn* (important because it stayed in Ra's repertoire for the remainder of his long career). Saturn starts out with an

⁴ These observations of mine came from my times traveling and performing internationally with the Arkestra from 1979 until 1987.

⁵ Jost, (1994), p.184

angular melody over an approximately recurring rhythm, and then transitions to a standard sounding big band swinging melody and rhythm.⁶

One significance of this period in the history of the Arkestra is that it shows a continuation of the very strong musical fundamentals and historical musical knowledge possessed by Sun Ra and demanded of his musicians. This is in addition to the fact that Sun Ra was also engaged in searching for new and different things to do with his music. In 1956 he released his album *Super Sonic Jazz* on which he plays a Wurlitzer electric piano on the selection *India*. Sun Ra was one of the first musicians to make use of electric pianos and later, the Moog synthesizer.⁷

Sun Ra and his friend and business partner, Alton Abraham, founded El Saturn Research in 1957, which would record and distribute albums by the Arkestra as well as the vocal and R&B groups rehearsed by Sun Ra during the late 1950s. Additionally, Ra and Abraham organized Thmei Research, an organization dedicated to "subjects cosmic, spiritual, philosophical, religious, historical, scientific, economical, etc." Thmei also provided financing for El Saturn's earliest releases and issued a newsletter and book catalog.

Sun Ra and the Arkestra were a mainstay on the Chicago music scene throughout the decade but in 1961, Sun Ra and members of the Arkestra, including Marshall Allen and John Gilmore, moved to New York City where difficulty finding work encouraged communal living arrangements. The significance of this is that the musicians were at Sun Ra's disposal to practice and rehearse every day, all day. Sun

⁶ *Saturn*. Transcription by Rob Cohen. Cohen, Rob E. Saturn. The Sun Ra Memorial mArchestRa. www.rob-cohen.com

⁷ Jost, (1994).

Ra required an extremely high level of dedication to his music on the part of the musicians of the Arkestra.⁸

As for Sun Ra's far reaching influence on music:

The resonance of that name and its significance for contemporary music is by no means restricted to the esoteric or strictly jazz-minded. He is the source for a stream of afro-futurist aesthetics that runs through George Clinton's P-funk and Afrika Bambaataa's Zulu Nation, through hip hop, house and techno to modern exponents like Madlib, Flying Lotus and Janelle Monae.⁹

In order to have an understanding of Sun Ra's influence on music, I propose that we examine the present day comments of musicians from inside and outside of the jazz world, who have been greatly influenced by him. These are included in Appendix C.

An important characteristic of Arkestra performances was musical eclecticism. Sun Ra concerts were noted for the progressive nature of the music. However, one frequently overlooked aspect of his performances is the historical approach to the music. The Arkestra might start out with African-derived music using African instruments, with Marshall Allen playing kora and other musicians playing drums and percussion. Then there might be some free improvisation and some chants about Sun Ra bringing the light. Sun Ra would conduct the free jazz episodes, and from there the music could go in any direction.

During the course of these performances, Sun Ra would play stride piano in the style of Eubie Blake, music by Duke Ellington, Fletcher Henderson and Coleman Hawkins. Sun Ra explored electronic keyboards and synthesizers, atonality, blues and

⁸ Besides the accounts of many musicians, my own experiences as a part of the Arkestra confirm this.

⁹ thevinylfactory.com. *Sun Ra Changed My Life: 13 Artists Reflect On the Legacy and Influence of Sun Ra*. May 22, 2014

any other device that might occur to him at any time. However, in every performance I ever did with the Arkestra, there were significant portions of the concerts playing early jazz from the big band repertoire, especially Fletcher Henderson. Sun Ra was one of the most historically and culturally inclusive musicians in all of Afro-American music, or any music of the twentieth century.¹⁰

The video from Jazz Festival di Kongsberg by NRK1 gives a good illustration of a truncated Sun Ra concert.¹¹ First, there is an introduction with Marshall Allen playing a kora along with other Arkestra members playing assorted percussion instruments. Then Sun Ra explains the value of music:

Musicians are in God's harmony department. If you have no harmony on the planet, it's traceable to the harmony department. If you have disharmony on this planet, it's because the harmony department isn't doing what it's supposed to do.¹²

After two and a half minutes, a dancer enters doing a creative, improvisatory dance. Just before five minutes, June Tyson enters singing a song which is a Sun Ra poem about the power of the universe. At 6:20 there is a freely improvised section in which the musicians intuitively follow each other and a male dancer enters dressed in robes with a beak like a bird. At 9:35 Tyson recites/sings "Strange World", accompanied vocally by Arkestra members. Tyson's style is reminiscent of Sprechstimme. This is followed by more group improvisation, and another female

¹⁰ These are my personal observations made during my times in the Arkestra.

¹¹ <https://youtu.be/brxlieN5g74> Sun Ra and his Arkestra - Jazz Festival di Kongsberg Broadcast by NRK1, 1982-09-17.

¹² Ibid. 0:30.

dancer enters with lightning bolts coming from her head. At 11:08, June Tyson sings, “When the world was in darkness and darkness was ignorance, along came Ra...”

At 13:30, Ra leads the Arkestra in the composition Watusi, which is in 6/8 time with an Afro-futuristic feel. At 15:38, Sun Ra begins to conduct the Arkestra in a freely improvised interlude that sets up Marshall Allen on alto saxophone playing an expressionistic solo with drum accompaniment by the legendary Clifford Jarvis, who plays a solo after Marshall. In these sections, both musicians demonstrate great technical prowess. The full band re-enters (takes off) at about 20:00, leading to trombonist Tyrone Hill, baritone saxophonist Danny Thompson and bass clarinetist Elo Omo dancing in front of the Arkestra while playing. At 20:10, John Gilmore, one of the greatest saxophone players in jazz, begins an improvisation using the upper register and harmonics.¹³ At 24:00, Sun Ra enters with the synthesizer with bass and drums. At 29:00, the Arkestra plays the Fletcher Henderson tune, “Yeah Man,” which features trumpeter Longineu Parsons and John Gilmore and on which Sun Ra and the Arkestra demonstrate their knowledge of traditional jazz styles.¹⁴

Concerning his music, Sun Ra says:

I’m just a natural for music. I’ve always been but my mind has been on, I’d say, on other dimensions in a natural sort of way. Earth has a lot of different forms of musics that I can appreciate so I listen to all different types of music. And now I present it in a sort of another inter-dimensional way, to add a little touch to it of something else. Cause music is a language, you see, and a message too. So if I take a song that people know and add a touch to it and then take songs they don’t know and add a little touch of this with whatever instruments, there’s a possibility something can be accomplished that never was accomplished before.

¹³ John Gilmore has an impeccable reputation in the business and was highly respected. Besides playing in the Arkestra with him, I have had conversations about him with McCoy Tyner, Archie Shepp and many others. His brilliance is unanimously agreed on except perhaps by the jazz neoclassicists.

¹⁴ NRK1 broadcast. 1982

Because, since music is a language, there are a lot of things that people don't know, that they can learn, not through understanding the music but through feeling it. That's what I'm aiming at, to get people to feel what I'm talking about.¹⁵

Concerning requirements of musicians in the Arkestra, Sonny continues:

You have to have a lot of discipline, you have to have patience, you have to have endurance, you have to really rise up above being yourself. . . musicians have to rise up above themselves to continue playing with the band.

Adventurous, influential, and inclusive, Sun Ra's work with the Arkestra exemplifies the techniques and the ethos of the avant-garde, creating a historically informed music that embraced and incorporated influences from a huge array of sources. Sun Ra, always stressed searching for something with the music. We were always charged with trying to find new and interesting things to do with our instruments but always with the discipline of historical knowledge.

¹⁵ NRK1 broadcast, 26:05

CHAPTER 6 THE AACM AND COLLECTIVISM

Deveaux and Giddens (2011) make a case for the musical/cultural inclusivity of the AACM and the Black Artist Group of St. Louis:

Although critics routinely pilloried the avant-garde for rejecting jazz conventions, it ultimately proved to be the most inclusive form of jazz in history. The innovators of bop apprenticed in swing bands but played exclusively in their own modern styles...Yet the avant-garde, which seemed to incarnate the very definition of futurism, welcomed every kind of musical influence and allusion. It brought instruments previously ignored or underemployed in jazz (bass clarinet, cello, tuba, wood flutes, soprano and bass saxophone, exotic rhythm instruments, the African kalimba and the Australian didgeridoo, among others) into the thick of things. The full canvas of avant-garde interests did not become apparent until a second generation of avant-garde musicians, most of them schooled in the Midwest, made names for themselves in the 1970s. For the first time since the early days in New Orleans, these musicians came together as members of collectives, which helped to arrange rehearsals, secure work, and encourage the creation of new music as opposed to new versions of old tunes.¹

The Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM) was founded in the South Side of Chicago by pianist/composer Muhal Richard Abrams, pianist Jodie Christian, drummer Steve McCall, and composer Phil Cochran.

Chicago, by all accounts, was a hotbed of musical activity in the 1950s and the black musicians were well employed. But by the 1960s, because of shifting musical fashions, changing population patterns and discriminatory enforcement of cabaret licensing laws, dance band gigs, general music club dates, R&B recording sessions and the like were starting to go away. In reaction, in 1962, pianist Muhal Richard Abrams formed the Experimental Band that included saxophonists Fred Anderson, Joseph

¹ Deveaux, Giddens, p. 320.

Jarman and Roscoe Mitchell and drummers Jack DeJohnette and Steve McCall, which led to the formation of the AACM, which was incorporated in 1965.²

If these Chicago jazz artists had given in to inevitably changing musical tastes, jazz might have devolved into a nostalgia bath or succumbed to the commercial excesses of the fusion era that followed. Instead, the Chicago musicians who half a century ago created the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians, or AACM, invented original musical languages, created intriguing new instruments, crafted novel ways of penning scores and otherwise defied long-standing presumptions about how music was supposed to be made.

Because their work was steeped in the rituals of ancient Africa, as well as certain traditions of early New Orleans music, the AACM artists managed to convey a vast sweep of black cultural history — even as they were reinventing an art form. And though they didn't necessarily intend it, their breakthroughs opened the door to new ways of creating, staging and perceiving music.³

Though there were excellent high school band programs in Chicago's south side, there was a tradition of auto-didacticism that was dominant among Chicago's jazz musicians, as it wasn't until the 60s and 70s that jazz began to rise in secondary and post-secondary education. This auto-didacticism is at the heart of the AACM. However, there was always a collective point of view in which this individual approach still flourished.

One important result of these origins was that the musicians were not confined to conventions as taught in the academy, especially at that time. However, this by no means led to an exclusion of European influences. As Lewis states, “[the music]

² Discussed at length in Lewis (2008). p.97-162

³ Howard Reich. AACM Celebrates a golden anniversary.

incorporated insights, sounds, techniques, and methods from a variety of areas, including European high musical modernism.”⁴

At the AACM School, Muhal Richard Abrams, leader of the AACM, taught a mathematical approach to music created by Russian composer and theorist, Joseph Schillinger, as well as various new techniques. Other characteristics of the teachings and the resulting music of the AACM are a nonhierarchical approach to time, and use of an expanded array of instruments. The melodic lines exhibit greater rhythmic complexity and expanded harmonic practices such as serial, pantonal, polytonal, microtonal, and atonal techniques. The works also show large-scale structural integrity (as in the works of Anthony Braxton which are entitled with mathematical symbols). They eschewed the concept of teleological tonality that was still important to bebop and even the middle works of Coltrane.⁵

One night in 1979, I was leading a trio in Le Chevalier de Temple, a late night restaurant/club in Paris, and Muhal came by after his concert and wanted to play with us. We called standard jazz tunes from different eras, Muhal demonstrated his mastery of jazz traditions and we had a wonderful night of music until 5 a.m. Afterward, we had a conversation concerning basics and traditions and Muhal stressed the need for musicians to know how to play the historical styles.

A detailed study of the AACM and Black Artists Guild (BAG) would be far beyond the scope of this document, but the above statements give a general picture of the collectivist movement in the avant-garde.

⁴ Lewis (2004), p. 16.

⁵ Lewis (2008).

Perhaps the most prominent of the AACM groups, the Art Ensemble of Chicago, led by trumpeter Lester Bowie, played music which traversed musical and cultural boundaries. They played all Afro-American traditions, incorporated African elements and featured much ensemble improvisation. Other members of the band were Joseph Jarman, Roscoe Mitchell, Malachi Favors and Famoudou Don Moye. They avoided the traditional format where there was the “head” followed by solos. They incorporated many percussion instruments into their performances as well as wooden flutes and practically the entire saxophone family. They were known to rehearse for long hours and for weeks at a time before going on tour, and their improvisations became group compositions.⁶

I have performed and jammed with many of the artists from the AACM and BAG, and the musicians always came together in the spirit of exploration individually and as contributors to the collective. This is very much in contrast to the “star syndrome” that many AACM and BAG members and Sun Ra Arkestra members disdained. There was always a principle objective of making something meaningful and positive with the music and there was a certain reverence to the music.⁷ Though knowledge of the history was important, it was also important not to play clichés or learned patterns in their music.⁸

⁶ Personal observations over years of hearing them and knowing them. Also, confirmed in conversation with Famoudou Don Moye, drummer with the Art Ensemble.

⁷ From New York to Paris and Italy, I played with Muhal, Jarman, Moye, Kalaparusha, Leonard Jones, Oliver Lake, Hamiet Bluiett and others of the AACM and BAG.

⁸ Once in rehearsal with Jarman, he said to me: “The next time you feel one of your jazz licks coming on, don’t do it.”

Of the musicians in the AACM, MacArthur Award winner, Anthony Braxton is probably the most prolific. His works include works with geometric diagrams as titles, symphonic works, projects that reinvestigated the compositions of Charlie Parker. He has compositions numbered in the hundreds and employs practically the whole woodwind family in his work. Musicologist Ronald Radano in his Braxton biography wrote:

Braxton had already begun to express the liberties of the postmodern, ranging across genres and exploring high-modernist concert music and experimentalism. Soon he would transcend the jazz category altogether, actively participating in experimental-music circles, most notably in New York, where he collaborated with the composer-performers Philip Glass, David Behrman, and Frederick [sic] Rzewski.⁹

MacArthur Award winner George Lewis, besides being an excellent trombonist, is an innovator in the field of electroacoustic and interactive electronic music. Henry Threadgill, a Pulitzer Prize winner, led the group Air, and he uses many different instruments and unusual instrument combinations.

Of the BAG, Oliver Lake stands out as a musician/composer who traverses musical styles at will. Lake has led groups as stylistically diverse as a reggae group called Jump Up, trios with acclaimed jazz artists, the World Saxophone Quartet, and an organ trio. He has collaborated with the Flux String Quartet, Bjork, Mos Def, and the Brooklyn Philharmonic among many others.¹⁰ Lake is also a painter and a poet.

⁹ Radano, R. (1994), *New Musical Configurations: Anthony Braxton's Cultural Critique*, University of Chicago press, p. 25.

¹⁰ Besides the information in Lake's biography on his official website, I have known, performed and recorded with him and am very aware of his work.

Guided by their unique cultural heritage and training, the musicians in these collectives have made some of the most culturally and stylistically inclusive music in history.

CHAPTER 7 CONCLUSIONS

Cecil Taylor was not beholden to jazz traditions and standard approaches to chord progressions but, without question, he was a product of Afro-American musical traditions. Individualistic in approaches to instruments in terms of exploitation of non-traditional sounds, his compositions marked a departure from musical norms normally adhered to in jazz. Originally much maligned, he was eventually recognized as a genius.

Ornette Coleman was not beholden to jazz traditions and standard approaches to chord progressions but, he was also a product of Afro-American musical traditions. Individualistic in approaches to instruments in terms of exploitation of non-traditional sounds, his compositions marked a departure from musical norms normally adhered to in jazz. Originally much maligned, eventually he was recognized as a genius.

We can name others who fit the above statement. These artists' lives bring up questions of adherence to musical conventions as requirements for music and being a musician. From the standpoint of swing, the avant-garde contributed to the breaking down of the rhythmic, chordal and formal hierarchies rigidly adhered to in jazz music. Though the artists who created and developed this music were greatly maligned as being charlatans, their contributions to American and world music are now being recognized by the music establishment and they are recipients of some of the largest and most prestigious awards given to artists in the field of music.¹

¹ Cecil Taylor, Ornette Coleman, Anthony Braxton and George Lewis have received McArthur grants. Archie Shepp and Ornette Coleman are NEA Jazz Masters.

John Coltrane came from African American church traditions, conservatory training, military band, blues gigs, jazz traditions and he also explored music of other cultures and spirituality. By the end of his career, his music was so advanced that he alienated many of his dedicated listeners. The alternative would have been to stay where he was musically at a certain point. However, as Steve Lacy said about playing the same music, after a while you get sick and tired of it no matter how good it is.

Sun Ra developed a complete musical, theatrical expression that had a strong historic base. His music was based on many traditions of music such as Fletcher Henderson, his experiences as a Vaudeville pianist, his experiences growing up in Birmingham, Alabama, his knowledge of classical music and his experiences with the entire history of jazz and Afro-American musical traditions. Sun Ra combined philosophy and music and as an artist, influenced countless musicians.

The musicians of the AACM, born in Chicago and the Black Artists Guild of St. Louis emphasized collectivism and emphasis on composition. There is more emphasis on group improvisation/composition than on having solos while at the same time individuality of expression is encouraged. Their music became conversational in nature and they were driven by curiosity about all kinds of music, art, literature, politics, history and multiculturalism.

Oliver Lake and David Murray have won some of the top awards for musicians and both practice artistic diversity, and have developed knowledge of musical and cultural traditions while pushing the envelope. These musicians have pursued musical directions which have kept them out of the mainstream of the music industry in spite of, or because of, their brilliance. John Betsch, a drummer from Jacksonville, Florida who

has lived for many years in New York and Paris explains his motivation for being a part of the avant-garde:

It's more fun, it's more interesting, it's more stimulating, its more challenging, it's a terrible thing to be bored, some things that I do make more money, but are very boring and I get very upset with myself when I'm bored... and every moment is new, when you challenge yourself to deal with the newness of every moment, and try to find something significant and meaningful in every moment, then going back to the same old banal blah blah blah is kind of silly. It's just more interesting to be creative, or try to be creative. Sometimes you don't have to try, it just happens.²

This mirrors what I have heard from all of the avant-garde musicians I know.

There is a general desire to move past what has been done before. Henry Threadgill, another award winning multi-instrumentalist from the AACM states:

When I write music, I want something powerful to come at people... and it don't have to fit no categories. How can you deal with a broad range of thoughts and emotions if you stay locked into one road? So I open up my music completely. Keep it wide open. I like the idea of engaging the listener by making music that's not passive. I like playing for people who have a broad diet. Otherwise, it's like someone who only eats hot dogs. I think it's ridiculous that people discriminate against a broad spectrum of music, stuff like opera, punk rock, country.³

This statement points out the search for diversity displayed by avant-garde musicians and what is a refusal to be limited by either musical or cultural convention.

Looking at the biographical information on the backgrounds of these musicians and examining their musical output, it is clear that this music expresses their humanity. This is the music of love and positivity, not hatred or bitterness. These musicians do not practice racial or cultural exclusivity.

² John Betsch interview.

³ Threadgill interview with Dan Oulette from jazzhouse.org

George Lewis makes strong points about the treatment of the African-American avant-garde as being separate from the skills, motivations and influences of the “avant-garde,” “Downtown,” Fluxus, etc. This music we call “Avant-garde,” “Black Avant-garde,” “Afro-American Avant-garde” with its “Free Jazz” component is separate from the aforementioned movements, and the question is for what reasons? We must each answer this question for ourselves.

Are we culturally biased? Is it inevitable? The world is too large to be comprehended in its entirety. Therefore, we take our incomplete knowledge and try to comprehend the expressions of the artist. The artist, because of his curiosity, searches and we follow this journey into the unknown. As Threadgill says:

In America, record companies and radio stations disrespect the faith and intelligence of the audience to be interested in music that doesn't sound the same as everything else. They think the audience is stupid. I think the audience is hungry for music that stretches. I've seen it when I play shows. I've had people come up to me and say they were surprised by how much they enjoyed my music because they had heard so many negative things about it. That's what I try to accomplish as an artist: engage people to listen and at least give the music a chance.⁴

What are the standards by which we judge music? How do we judge music as being “serious?” There is the art music vs. popular music binary that Archie Shepp says is an elitist argument that doesn't apply to Afro-American music. Shepp goes on to say, “Because people dance to it doesn't lessen the quality of musical creation.”⁵ As we examine and attempt to judge this music, which standards are relevant?

⁴ Threadgill interview with Dan Oulette from jazzhouse.com

⁵ Archie Shepp interview

Historically, there is a tendency toward going past the accepted performance practices of the time, especially for those composers we remember from hundreds of years ago. Most of the great composers of European music were heavily criticized for pursuing new ways of composing their music, but is critical acclaim a necessary criterion for good music? History says it is not. Is public acceptance necessary for good music? Again, history says it is not. This raises the question of what good music is and whose opinions matter. The following is a look at some of the critical reviews of composers' works as found in Slonimsky's *A Lexicon of Musical Invective* (2000):

To hear a whole program of Ravel's works is like watching some midget or pygmy doing clever, but very small, things within a limited scope. Moreover, the almost reptilian cold-bloodedness, which one suspects of having been consciously cultivated, of most of M. Ravel's music is almost repulsive when heard in bulk; even its beauties are like the markings on snakes and lizards.

(London *Times*, April 28, 1924.)

Debussy's *L'Après-midi d'un faune* was a strong example of modern ugliness. The faun must have had a terrible afternoon, for the poor beast brayed on muted horns and whinnied on flutes, and avoided all trace of soothing melody, until the audience began to share his sorrows. The work gives as much dissonance as any of the most modern art works in music. All these erratic and erotic spasms but indicate that our music is going through a transition state. When will the melodist of the future to arrive?

(Louis Elson, *Boston Daily Advertiser*, February 25, 1904)

M. Frederic Chopin has, by some means or other which we cannot divine, obtained an enormous reputation but too often refused to composers of ten times his genius. M. Chopin is by no means a putter down of commonplaces; but he is, what by many would be esteemed worse, a dealer in the most absurd and hyperbolic extravagances...The entire works of Chopin present a motley surface of ranting hyperbole and excruciating cacophony. When he is not thus singular, he is no better than Strauss or any other waltz compounder...There is an excuse at present for Chopin's delinquencies; he is entrapped in the enthralling bonds of that arch-enchantress, George Sand, celebrated equally for the number and excellence of her romances and her lovers; not less we wonder how she, who once swayed the heart of the sublime and terrible

religious democrat Lammenais, can be content to wanton away her dreamlike existence with an artistic nonentity like Chopin.

(*Musical World*, London, October 28, 1841)⁶

Reviews like this demonstrate the irrelevance and the ignorance of the critic. As Slonimsky states about his collection of musical critiques:

Its animating purpose is to demonstrate that music is an art in progress, and that objections leveled at every musical innovator are all derived from the same psychological inhibition, which may be described as non-acceptance of the unfamiliar.⁷

As Trotsky said:

To what purpose, let us ask, is literary criticism? In any case, the artist, if he is a true artist, will tell us about his unique individuality better than his babbling critic.”

He goes on to say:

Individuality is a welding together of tribal, national, class, temporary and institutional elements and, in fact, it is in the uniqueness of this welding together, in the proportions of this psychochemical mixture, that individuality is expressed.⁸

This is exactly the case with the musicians of the jazz avant-garde. As with the great classical composers whose music, though different for their times, was descended from its traditions, avant-garde jazz was much maligned in spite of its learned and historic approaches to music.

⁶ These are as quoted in Slonimsky, N., (2000), *Lexicon of Musical Invective: Critical Assaults on Composers Since Beethoven's Time*, W. W. Norton and Company.

⁷ Slonimsky, p.3.

⁸ Trotsky, Leon. *Literature and Revolution*. p.59-60.

As Archie Shepp stated so emphatically, “So much of our music, so much of the present of our music is rooted in the past.”⁹ In fact, Ravel, Debussy, Stravinsky, Chopin, and Beethoven were the avant-garde of their times. Now they are standards by which we regard others.

We must ask ourselves why is it that some musicians choose an avant-garde route? Sun Ra said: “Musicians are God’s harmony department.”¹⁰ In my many conversations with other musicians of the avant-garde movement, the predominant conversation has been about the spiritual aspects of the music from the various standpoints of the players. There is a sense of seeking something higher than ourselves. David Murray speaks of the purpose of a musician:

I think what our job is supposed to be is to reflect the society that we live in. We supposed to be a [force] that the society can pound itself against. We’re supposed to tell people when to stop and when to go. We’re supposed to let people know that maybe humanity is meant for a change. I mean I’m reading Ezekiel right now. And when he seen that wheel, it had lions’ faces, it had wheels that didn’t move, it had wheels that moved, it had wheels that had wings on it, it had all kinds of wheels.

That's avant-garde. Now, when we get to what Ezekiel saw ... Ooo that's the way to go because you know, what's expected of us as human beings is not even being close to being achieved in music right now. We stopped somewhere along the line, especially in jazz. We stopped and all of a sudden everybody's got a CD. Everybody used to have a [business] card, now everybody's got their own company.¹¹

As for the issue of life experience, Murray continues:

You know I heard a jazz cat say, I don't wanna hear a cat when he's 20, I wanna hear a cat when he's 60 when he really got a story to tell. He might be really good, he might win a Grammy, but yeah I like to hear that same guy after he had a couple of divorces and what else is gonna happen to

⁹ Archie Shepp interview, p.2.

¹⁰ NRK1 broadcast.

¹¹ David Murray interview, p.10.

him in his life. Let's see what those same notes. Let's see what happens then. So, I'm there now. So we're there now. What we were playing then is not relevant anymore. They got it on record, but it's not relevant. What's relevant and why people would come hear you or come hear me play would be what we've learned. I think in the process, there's something else besides [what we know].¹²

Ultimately, the reviews, opinions by other musicians, relatively small audiences etc., do not reflect the music. The jazz avant-garde is made up of musicians who are interested in all of the music around them. After tracing the backgrounds and influences of these great artists, it is clear that the jazz avant-garde is the closest thing to a complete synthesis of Afro-American, therefore American music. This music expresses an attitude of adventure in the search for new and different ways to compose and improvise.

Another issue of importance is the perception of the avant-garde as being music of anger, music of Black Nationalism. In the 1950s and 60s, any Black artist who spoke out against the racial injustices in America was branded “angry” or a “Black Nationalist,” highly detrimental to one’s career.¹³ When dealing with the issue of anger, we must consider that in 1960s America, particularly in the South but not confined there, African-Americans lived under an apartheid system. There were laws that prohibited blacks from staying in hotels, eating in restaurants, and attending public universities. Concerts and theatrical events were segregated. Housing was limited to certain areas for blacks regardless of the financial means of home buyers. As a kid in the 1960s, I remember that it was against the law to go to restaurants, movie theaters, even Jacksonville Beach

¹² David Murray interview, p.15.

¹³ Kofsky goes in depth about this in his Introduction.p.9-67.

until after the Civil Rights Act of 1964 passed in Congress and was signed into law by President Lyndon Johnson.

People who protested non-violently to this state of affairs were beaten, attacked by police dogs and, not infrequently, killed.¹⁴ How could any Black American not be angry at the perpetrators of such atrocities? Yet, it was a given that to say so was absolutely unacceptable for one's business because of the ensuing label of "angry black person".

Racial anger has little or nothing to do with atonality, pan-tonality, leaving strophic forms, or any of the musical devices employed by avant-garde artists. However, anger has everything to do with an artist standing on stage and being his/her musical self, refusing to bow down to the expectations of the culture or industry or to any white man.

As has already been noted, there was considerable resistance to the avant-garde for political reasons even though the musical devices used were not of themselves political. However, the players, subjected to the demeaning way of life of an African-American in mid-twentieth century America, were angry about this just as most (if not all) African-Americans were. Therefore, as all other emotions of an artist go into his/her art, anger is there in the personal energy of the performers just like beauty, love, and any other feeling a person might express. How could it reasonably be otherwise?

As Baraka says:

There was always a border beyond which the Negro could not go, whether musically or socially. There was always a possible limitation to any

¹⁴ In 1966 I and nine other Black kids integrated a public high school in Jacksonville, Florida. Our mentor, Rutledge Pearson was killed on a dark highway during our second year at the school. I had an uncle, Dr. Edward Lord M.D. who was killed in Bainbridge, Georgia because he spoke out against discrimination.

dilution or excession of cultural or spiritual references. The Negro could not ever become white and that was his strength; at some point, always, he could not participate in the dominant tenor of the white man's culture. It was at this juncture that he had to make use of other resources, whether African, subcultural, or hermetic. And it was this boundary, this no man's land, that provided the logic and beauty of his music.¹⁵

There is also the historic Western way of regarding the African as Krehbiel wrote:

"Why savages who have never developed a musical or other art should be supposed to have more refined aesthetic sensibilities than the peoples who have cultivated music for centuries, passes my poor powers of understanding..."¹⁶

By 1920, a few years after Krehbeil wrote this: "...a great mass of white Americans are dancing a West African (Ashanti) ancestor dance they know as the "Charleston."¹⁷

Oliver Lake addressed this in his interview with me:

I've been asked that too about the music at that time when the Black Artists Group was formed and said that when they heard us improvising, we sounded like angry young men and we were pissed and making a political point. But from my personal experience I was not angry and what I played again was about joy and it wasn't, even though it had squeaks and squawks but I wasn't making a political statement when I was playing my solo. And I don't think the Black Artists Group was ... even from the musician's standpoint there was a lot of political statements being made in the poetry and the theater pieces that the Black Artists Group did but the musicians themselves in our improvisations, they didn't come out of anger. They were coming out of joy and again going back to what I said earlier, playing with the notion of direct communication and world peace. But some of the writers who reviewed what we were doing thought we were angry. Personally I was not angry. And I wasn't trying to interpret that through the playing in my improvisations. But we were making political statements as a group. I mean the Black Artists Group was, but they were

¹⁵ Baraka 1963. p.80.

¹⁶ H.E. Krehbiel, *Afro-American Folksongs* (New York), G. Schirmer, 1914, p.73.

¹⁷ Baraka 1963. P.17.

coming strongly more through the poetry written, spoken word and the theater pieces that we were doing had a definite political slant on them.¹⁸

In fact, black musicians were very involved with the struggle by doing benefits for civil rights organizations as well as Black Nationalist groups.¹⁹ Though the struggle for civil rights was always very much on the minds of black musicians in general. Lake says the following about his musical purpose:

I mean I think the only thing that it has to do is communicate and that's what I'm trying to do every time I get on the stage, on the bandstand, is make a pure honest communication from my heart and hopefully and generally most of the time the audience feels that I'm honest and they reciprocate with their energy that comes back to me and it's a life fulfilling thing that keeps continuing, that has continued throughout my career. I think that's the goal of all the music is to make the world a better place and make a positive communication. When we pick up those instruments, at least that's what I'm doing, I'm trying to – I'm playing for world peace.²⁰

John Coltrane expressed similar sentiments:

My goal is to live the truly religious life, and express it in my music. If you live it, when you play there's no problem because the music is part of the whole thing. To be a musician is really something. It goes very, very deep. My music is the spiritual expression of what I am-my faith, my knowledge, my being. ²¹

The Afro-American origins and characteristics of the jazz avant-garde are not an impediment to anyone of any ethnicity, as demonstrated by Steve Lacy, Charlie Haden, Dave Holland and many other white contributors to the music. Concerning the music being labeled by Baraka as “New Black Music,” Jost (1994) stated:

For although it cannot be argued that white jazz musicians, far from merely swimming along with the tide of free jazz, have in some cases made decisive contributions to its development, it is plain that the early

¹⁸ Oliver Lake interview.

¹⁹ Munson.

²⁰ Oliver Lake interview, p.2.

²¹ Quote found on the home page of the John Coltrane website www.johncoltrane.com

forms of free jazz and the innovations that marked its path came for the most part from black musicians.

After seventy years of jazz, the observation that white musicians play music that is “black” in essence should surprise us as little as the statement that 18th century German composers wrote “Italian” operas.²²

These statements are not to suggest that the Civil Rights struggle, complete with Black Nationalist ideals, was not a part of the music, especially the avant-garde. When I posed the question to John Betsch, “Have you ever met a musician in the jazz world who wasn’t angry?” his response was an emphatic, “No!”²³ To suggest that only those musicians who spoke out at one time or another is just an example of angry people like Archie Shepp and Amiri Baraka (as stated by Gridley) reeks of the expectation that “the Negro must stay in his place.” This is one more attempt to paint a picture of the happy Negro, content to be subservient to the master.

As for comparisons with European traditions and expectations, Duke Ellington, responding to those who compared him to Bach, Ravel, and Stravinsky said:

If I seem a little shy about being displayed on a critical platform with the classical big shots, let me also dispel the notion that I hesitate to place the jazz medium in a top musical category. Jazz, swing, jive and every other musical phenomenon of American musical life are as much an art medium as are the most profound works of the famous classical composers. To attempt to elevate the status of the jazz musician by forcing the level of his best work into comparisons with classical music is to deny him his rightful share of originality. Let us remember that many “long hair” composers freely admit that they have been influenced by the jazz idiom.... Music, like any other art form, reflects the mood, temperament and environment of its creators.²⁴

²² Jost (1994), p.12.

²³ John Betsch interview.

²⁴ Ellington. “Certainly It’s Music.” p.246-48.

Therefore, we are dealing with a very inclusive part of the American musical language. The jazz avant-garde speaks to the universality of being human as its practitioners agree on having no musical boundaries or exclusions. It is a music of exploration, a search for the new and better, a metaphor for us as humans to move forward and embrace the new and different.

One final anecdote: I went to New York to attend one of the 50th Anniversary Concerts of the AACM in the Fall of 2015. The group for the concert was led by Muhal Abrams. After their brilliant concert, I went up to Muhal and asked him if he would speak with me about his music for my dissertation. His response says everything:

“I won’t do it. I won’t talk about the music like that. The music speaks for itself!”

CHAPTER 8 OF THINGS UNKNOWN

Of Things Unknown is a composition for trumpet and string quartet. It represents my journey as a musician, from jazz clubs to chamber music, from world music to symphony orchestras. The thematic material is from different genres of music, all fitting together as a metaphor for how humans must learn to live. The different themes and motives have no problems co-existing and coming together to make a unified whole.

The composition consists of three movements, and is composed as a quintet rather than trumpet accompanied by string quartet. The first (Appendix A) and third movements (Appendix C) are relatively fast with the second movement (Appendix B) being an adagio movement.

Of Things Unknown

21

C Tpt.

Vln. I *mf* *mp*

Vln. II *mf* *p*

Vla. *mf* *p*

Vc. *mf* *p*

27

C Tpt.

Vln. I *f*

Vln. II

Vla. *mp* *mf*

Vc. *mf*

34

C Tpt.

Vln. I *p*

Vln. II *mf*

Vla.

Vc.

Detailed description: This is a page of a musical score for the piece 'Of Things Unknown'. It features five staves: C Tpt., Vln. I, Vln. II, Vla., and Vc. The score is divided into three systems. The first system (measures 21-26) shows the C Tpt. with a melodic line, Vln. I with a complex melodic line marked *mf* and *mp*, Vln. II with a rhythmic accompaniment marked *mf* and *p*, Vla. with a similar rhythmic accompaniment marked *mf* and *p*, and Vc. with a bass line marked *mf* and *p*. The second system (measures 27-33) shows the C Tpt. with rests, Vln. I with a melodic line marked *f*, Vln. II with rests, Vla. with a melodic line marked *mp* and *mf*, and Vc. with a bass line marked *mf*. The third system (measures 34-39) shows the C Tpt. with rests, Vln. I with a melodic line marked *p*, Vln. II with a melodic line marked *mf*, Vla. with a melodic line, and Vc. with a bass line. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

Of Things Unknown

Allegro

The musical score is divided into three systems. The first system (measures 41-47) features a C Trumpet part with a melodic line, and string parts (Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Cello) with a rhythmic accompaniment. Dynamics range from *p* to *f*. The second system (measures 48-53) shows the C Trumpet part resting while the strings continue their accompaniment. The third system (measures 54-59) features a more active C Trumpet part with a melodic line, and the strings providing a consistent rhythmic base. The score concludes with a 3/4 time signature change.

Of Things Unknown

60 *Con sord.*

C Tpt.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

pizz.

mp

pizz.

pizz.

pizz.

66

C Tpt.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

arco

mf

mp

arco

71

C Tpt.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

arco

ff

f

arco

f

arco

f

f

Of Things Unknown

The musical score is divided into three systems, each starting with a measure number: 76, 80, and 85. The instruments are C Tpt., Vln. I, Vln. II, Vla., and Vc. The first system (measures 76-79) features a dynamic marking of *f* (forte) at the beginning. The second system (measures 80-84) continues the orchestration. The third system (measures 85-89) shows the C Tpt. part mostly at rest, while the strings continue their rhythmic patterns. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

Of Things Unknown

90

C Tpt.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

94

Senza sord.

f

mf

mf

mf

99

ff

The musical score is arranged in three systems. The first system (measures 90-93) shows the C Tpt. and Vln. I parts as rests, while Vln. II, Vla., and Vc. play rhythmic patterns. The second system (measures 94-98) introduces the C Tpt. with a melodic line marked *f*, and Vln. I and Vc. with *mf* dynamics. The third system (measures 99-102) features a more complex texture with *ff* dynamics in the C Tpt. and Vln. I parts, and *mf* in the Vln. II, Vla., and Vc. parts. The score includes various musical notations such as stems, beams, and slurs.

Of Things Unknown

104

C Tpt.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

f

110

C Tpt.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

117 *rit.*

C Tpt.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

p *f* *mf* *p* *f*

Detailed description: This is a page of a musical score for the piece 'Of Things Unknown'. It contains three systems of staves. The first system (measures 104-109) features a C Trumpet part that is mostly silent, with dynamic markings of *f* for the Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Violoncello parts. The second system (measures 110-116) shows more activity, with the C Trumpet part remaining silent. The Violin I part has dynamic markings of *f* and *mf*. The Violoncello part has dynamic markings of *p* and *f*. The third system (measures 117-122) begins with a *rit.* (ritardando) marking. The C Trumpet part has a *mf* marking. The Violin I part has dynamic markings of *p* and *f*. The Violoncello part has dynamic markings of *p* and *f*.

Of Things Unknown

123

C Tpt.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

f

This system covers measures 123 to 127. The C Tpt. part has a whole rest in measure 123 and then enters in measure 124. The Vln. I part has a melodic line with a forte (*f*) dynamic starting in measure 124. The Vln. II part plays a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes. The Vla. part plays a steady eighth-note accompaniment. The Vc. part has a melodic line with a forte (*f*) dynamic starting in measure 124.

128

C Tpt.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

This system covers measures 128 to 131. The C Tpt. part has a melodic line starting in measure 128. The Vln. I part has a melodic line starting in measure 128. The Vln. II part has a melodic line starting in measure 128. The Vla. part has a melodic line starting in measure 128. The Vc. part has a melodic line starting in measure 128.

132

C Tpt.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

f

This system covers measures 132 to 135. The C Tpt. part has a whole rest in measure 132. The Vln. I part has a melodic line starting in measure 132. The Vln. II part has a melodic line starting in measure 132. The Vla. part has a melodic line starting in measure 132. The Vc. part has a melodic line starting in measure 132 with a forte (*f*) dynamic.

Of Things Unknown

137

C Tpt.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

147

C Tpt.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

ff

147

C Tpt.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

mf

Of Things Unknown

153

C Tpt. *mf* *Open*

Vln. I *mp*

Vln. II *mp*

Vla. *mp*

Vc. *mf*

159

C Tpt.

Vln. I *mf*

Vln. II *mf*

Vla. *mf*

Vc. *mf*

166

C Tpt. *mp*

Vln. I *mp*

Vln. II *mp*

Vla. *mp*

Vc. *mp*

Detailed description: This page of a musical score for 'Of Things Unknown' contains three systems of staves. The first system (measures 153-158) features a C Trumpet part with a dynamic of *mf* and an instruction to 'Open' the instrument. The Violin I and II parts play a melodic line with a dynamic of *mp*. The Viola part has a long note in the first measure followed by a rhythmic pattern. The Violoncello part plays a steady eighth-note accompaniment with a dynamic of *mf*. The second system (measures 159-165) shows the C Trumpet part with a melodic line. The Violin I and II parts continue their melodic lines with a dynamic of *mf*. The Viola part continues its rhythmic pattern. The Violoncello part continues its accompaniment with a dynamic of *mf*. The third system (measures 166-172) features the C Trumpet part with a dynamic of *mp*. The Violin I and II parts play a melodic line with a dynamic of *mp*. The Viola part plays a rhythmic accompaniment with a dynamic of *mp*. The Violoncello part continues its accompaniment with a dynamic of *mp*.

Of Things Unknown

174

C Tpt. *mf*

Vln. I *p*

Vln. II *p*

Vla. *mf* *p*

Vc. *mf* *p*

Detailed description: This system covers measures 174 to 182. The C Trumpet part has a melodic line starting in measure 174 with a *mf* dynamic. The Violin I and II parts have a similar melodic line, with Violin I starting in measure 175 and Violin II in measure 176. The Viola part has a more active line, starting in measure 174 with a *mf* dynamic and ending in measure 182 with a *p* dynamic. The Violoncello part has a steady bass line, starting in measure 174 with a *mf* dynamic and ending in measure 182 with a *p* dynamic.

183

Vln. I *f*

Vln. II *f*

Vla.

Vc.

Detailed description: This system covers measures 183 to 191. The C Trumpet part is silent. The Violin I and II parts have a melodic line starting in measure 183 with a *f* dynamic. The Viola part has a steady bass line. The Violoncello part has a steady bass line.

192

C Tpt. *mf*

Vln. I *mp*

Vln. II *mp*

Vla. *mf* *mp*

Vc. *mf* *mp*

Detailed description: This system covers measures 192 to 200. The C Trumpet part has a melodic line starting in measure 192 with a *mf* dynamic. The Violin I and II parts have a melodic line starting in measure 192 with a *mp* dynamic. The Viola part has a melodic line starting in measure 192 with a *mf* dynamic and ending in measure 200 with a *mp* dynamic. The Violoncello part has a steady bass line, starting in measure 192 with a *mf* dynamic and ending in measure 200 with a *mp* dynamic.

Of Things Unknown

200

C Tpt.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

206

C Tpt.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

f

rit.

f

215

C Tpt.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

a tempo

f

accel.

Detailed description: This page of a musical score is titled "Of Things Unknown". It contains three systems of music for five instruments: C Tpt., Vln. I, Vln. II, Vla., and Vc. The first system (measures 200-205) shows the C Tpt. with a melodic line, while the strings play a steady accompaniment. The second system (measures 206-214) features a *rit.* (ritardando) in the C Tpt. part, which then rests. The strings continue, with the Vc. marked *f* (forte). The third system (measures 215-219) is marked *a tempo* and shows the C Tpt. resting, while the Vln. I and Vc. parts have *f* dynamics. The Vc. part also includes an *accel.* (accelerando) marking.

Of Things Unknown

228

C Tpt.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Detailed description: This system covers measures 228 to 233. The C Tpt. part is silent. Vln. I plays a melodic line with slurs and accents. Vln. II is silent. Vla. plays a steady accompaniment of eighth notes. Vc. plays a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with slurs.

229

C Tpt.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

f

Detailed description: This system covers measures 234 to 239. The C Tpt. part is silent. Vln. I continues its melodic line. Vln. II enters in measure 237 with a melodic line. Vla. continues its accompaniment. Vc. continues its rhythmic pattern. A dynamic marking of *f* (forte) is present in measure 237.

234

C Tpt.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Detailed description: This system covers measures 240 to 245. The C Tpt. part is silent. Vln. I is silent. Vln. II plays a melodic line with slurs. Vla. continues its accompaniment. Vc. continues its rhythmic pattern.

Of Things Unknown

238

C Tpt.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

242

C Tpt.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

246

C Tpt.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Of Things Unknown

250

C Tpt.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

254

C Tpt.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

ff

ff

ff

ff

ff

ff

Detailed description: This is a page of a musical score for the piece "Of Things Unknown". It contains two systems of staves. The first system covers measures 250 to 253, and the second system covers measures 254 to 257. The instruments are C Trumpet (C Tpt.), Violin I (Vln. I), Violin II (Vln. II), Viola (Vla.), and Violoncello (Vc.). The C Tpt. part has a melodic line with some slurs and accents. The string parts (Vln. I, Vln. II, Vla., Vc.) are playing a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes. The Vln. I part has a dynamic marking of *ff* (fortissimo) starting in measure 254. The Vln. II part also has a *ff* marking. The Vla. part has a *ff* marking. The Vc. part has a *ff* marking. There are also some accents and slurs in the string parts.

OF THINGS UNKNOWN: SECOND MOVEMENT

Of Things Unknown

2nd Movement

Longineu Parsons

Trumpet in C *freely*
mp

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Cello

C Tpt. *Adagio*

Vln. I *mf*

Vln. II *mp*

Vla. *mp*

Vc. *mp*

C Tpt. *16*

Vln. I *mf*

Vln. II *mf*

Vla. *mf*

Vc. *mf*

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Of Things Unknown

22

C Tpt.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

30

C Tpt.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

37

C Tpt.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Of Things Unknown

43

C Tpt.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

50

C Tpt.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

f

56

C Tpt.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

ff

Of Things Unknown

62

C Tpt. Vln. I Vln. II Vla. Vc.

ff *ff* *ff*

This system covers measures 62 to 66. The C Tpt. part has a melodic line with some rests. The Vln. I and Vln. II parts feature a dense, rhythmic texture with many sixteenth notes and slurs. The Vla. part has a similar rhythmic texture with slurs. The Vc. part has a more sparse, rhythmic accompaniment. Dynamics include *ff* in measures 62, 63, and 64.

67

C Tpt. Vln. I Vln. II Vla. Vc.

mf *mf* *p* *mf* *p*

This system covers measures 67 to 71. The C Tpt. part has a melodic line with slurs and dynamics of *mf*. The Vln. I and Vln. II parts have long, sustained notes with slurs and dynamics of *mf* and *p*. The Vla. part has long, sustained notes with slurs and dynamics of *mf* and *p*. The Vc. part has long, sustained notes with slurs and dynamics of *mf* and *p*.

72

C Tpt. Vln. I Vln. II Vla. Vc.

f *f* *f* *f*

This system covers measures 72 to 75. The C Tpt. part has a melodic line with slurs and dynamics of *f*. The Vln. I, Vln. II, and Vla. parts have long, sustained notes with slurs and dynamics of *f*. The Vc. part has long, sustained notes with slurs and dynamics of *f*. There is a time signature change to 3/4 at the beginning of measure 73.

Of Things Unknown

76

C Tpt.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

mp

84

C Tpt.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

ppp

pp

pp

pp

pp

pp

The musical score is divided into two systems. The first system, starting at measure 76, features five staves: C Tpt., Vln. I, Vln. II, Vla., and Vc. The C Tpt. part begins with a melodic line in 4/4 time, marked *mp*. The Vln. I and Vln. II parts have similar melodic lines, with Vln. II also marked *mp*. The Vla. and Vc. parts provide harmonic support with sustained notes, also marked *mp*. The second system, starting at measure 84, features the same five staves. The C Tpt. part has a melodic line with a quintuplet (marked 5) and is marked *ppp*. The Vln. I, Vln. II, Vla., and Vc. parts have sustained notes and are marked *pp*. The score concludes with a double bar line.

Of Things Unknown

28

C Tpt. *mp*

Vln. I *mp*

Vln. II *ff* *mp*

Vla.

Vc. *ff*

29

C Tpt. *mf* *f*

Vln. I *mf* *f*

Vln. II *mf* *f*

Vla. *pizz.* *mf* *f*

Vc. *mf* *f*

30

C Tpt.

Vln. I *f*

Vln. II *f*

Vla. *f* *pizz.*

Vc. *f*

Detailed description: This page contains three systems of musical notation for the piece 'Of Things Unknown'. The first system (measures 28-31) features a C Trumpet part with a melodic line starting at measure 28, marked *mp*. The Violin I part has a similar melodic line, also marked *mp*. The Violin II part plays a rhythmic accompaniment, marked *ff* in measure 28 and *mp* in measure 30. The Viola and Violoncello parts provide a steady bass line, with the Cello marked *ff*. The second system (measures 32-35) shows the C Trumpet part becoming more active, marked *mf* and *f*. The Violin I and II parts continue their rhythmic accompaniment, with the Violin I marked *mf* and *f*. The Viola and Cello parts also continue their accompaniment, with the Viola marked *pizz.* and *mf*, and the Cello marked *mf* and *f*. The third system (measures 36-39) features a more complex rhythmic accompaniment for the Violin I and II parts, marked *f*. The Viola and Cello parts continue their accompaniment, with the Viola marked *f* and *pizz.*, and the Cello marked *f*. The C Trumpet part has a melodic line, marked *f*.

Of Things Unknown

34

C Tpt. Vln. I Vln. II Vla. Vc.

This system contains measures 34 through 38. The C Tpt. part begins with a whole rest in measure 34, followed by a melodic line starting in measure 35. The Vln. I part has a melodic line starting in measure 34. The Vln. II part plays a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes. The Vla. and Vc. parts play a steady eighth-note accompaniment. The key signature has one flat and the time signature is 3/4.

39

C Tpt. Vln. I Vln. II Vla. Vc.

This system contains measures 39 through 43. The C Tpt. part has a whole rest until measure 42, then plays a short phrase in measure 43 marked *mp*. The Vln. I part plays a sixteenth-note pattern starting in measure 39, marked *ff*. The Vln. II part plays a similar sixteenth-note pattern, marked *ff*. The Vla. part plays a sixteenth-note pattern, marked *ff*. The Vc. part plays a sixteenth-note pattern, marked *ff*. The key signature has one flat and the time signature is 3/4.

44

C Tpt. Vln. I Vln. II Vla. Vc.

This system contains measures 44 through 48. The C Tpt. part has a melodic line starting in measure 44, marked *cresc.*. The Vln. I part has a melodic line starting in measure 44, marked *cresc.*. The Vln. II part has a melodic line starting in measure 44, marked *cresc.*. The Vla. part has a melodic line starting in measure 44, marked *cresc.*. The Vc. part has a melodic line starting in measure 44, marked *cresc.*. The key signature has one flat and the time signature is 3/4.

Of Things Unknown

This musical score is for the piece "Of Things Unknown" and is divided into three systems. The instruments are C Tpt., Vln. I, Vln. II, Vla., and Vc. The score includes dynamic markings such as *ff* (fortissimo) and *mf* (mezzo-forte). The first system (measures 49-54) features a C Tpt. part with a melodic line starting at measure 49, and string parts (Vln. I, Vln. II, Vla., Vc.) with rhythmic patterns. The second system (measures 55-56) shows the C Tpt. part with a melodic line starting at measure 55, and the string parts continuing their rhythmic patterns. The third system (measures 57-60) features a C Tpt. part with a melodic line starting at measure 57, and the string parts continuing their rhythmic patterns. The score is written in 4/4 time and includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings.

Of Things Unknown

This musical score is for the piece "Of Things Unknown" and is divided into three systems of staves. The instruments are C Tpt., Vln. I, Vln. II, Vla., and Vc. The score includes measure numbers 62, 67, and 72. The first system (measures 62-66) features a C Tpt. line with a melodic line and a dynamic marking of *mf*. The Vln. I and Vln. II parts play a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes. The Vla. and Vc. parts provide a steady bass line. The second system (measures 67-71) shows a change in the C Tpt. part, with a dynamic marking of *f*. The Vln. I part continues with a rhythmic pattern, while the Vln. II part has a more active melodic line. The Vla. and Vc. parts maintain their accompaniment. The third system (measures 72-76) features a C Tpt. part that is mostly silent, with a dynamic marking of *f*. The Vln. I part has a rhythmic accompaniment, while the Vln. II part has a melodic line. The Vla. and Vc. parts continue with their accompaniment. The score concludes with a final measure in 3/4 time.

Of Things Unknown

76

C Tpt.

Vln. I *crpesc.*

Vln. II *crpesc.*

Vla. *crpesc.*

Vc. *crpesc.*

80

C Tpt.

Vln. I *ff*

Vln. II *ff*

Vla. *ff*

Vc. *ff*

84

C Tpt. *mf*

Vln. I *mp*

Vln. II *mf*

Vla. *mf* *pizz.* *mf*

Vc. *mf* *mp*

The musical score is arranged in five systems. The first system (measures 76-79) features a C Tpt. part with rests and four string parts (Vln. I, Vln. II, Vla., Vc.) with a *crpesc.* (crescendo) marking. The second system (measures 80-83) features a C Tpt. part with rests and string parts with a *ff* (fortissimo) marking. The third system (measures 84-87) features a C Tpt. part with a *mf* (mezzo-forte) marking and string parts with *mf* and *mp* (mezzo-piano) markings, including a *pizz.* (pizzicato) instruction for the Viola.

Of Things Unknown

The image displays a musical score for the piece "Of Things Unknown". It is organized into three systems, each starting with a measure number: 80, 84, and 88. The instruments are arranged vertically as follows:

- C Tpt. (C Trumpet):** The top staff in each system, which is mostly silent (indicated by a whole rest).
- Vln. I (Violin I):** The second staff, featuring a melodic line with various articulations like accents and slurs.
- Vln. II (Violin II):** The third staff, providing harmonic support with a more rhythmic and melodic line.
- Vla. (Viola):** The fourth staff, playing a consistent rhythmic pattern with dynamic markings of *mp* (mezzo-piano) and *mf* (mezzo-forte).
- Vc. (Violoncello):** The bottom staff, playing a steady, rhythmic accompaniment.

Key musical details include dynamic markings such as *mp* and *mf*, and performance instructions like *pizz.* (pizzicato) for the Violin II. The score uses standard musical notation, including treble and bass clefs, stems, beams, and various note values.

Of Things Unknown

102

C Tpt.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

arco

106

C Tpt.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

mf

mf

109

C Tpt.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

arco

mf

f

f

f

f

Detailed description: This image shows three systems of a musical score for the piece 'Of Things Unknown'. Each system contains five staves: C Tpt., Vln. I, Vln. II, Vla., and Vc. The first system (measures 102-105) features a C Tpt. staff with rests, Vln. I with a melodic line, Vln. II with a rhythmic pattern, Vla. with a complex rhythmic accompaniment, and Vc. with a steady bass line. The second system (measures 106-108) shows Vln. I with rests, Vln. II with a melodic line, Vla. with rests, and Vc. with a melodic line. The third system (measures 109-112) features Vln. I with rests, Vln. II with rests, Vla. with a complex rhythmic accompaniment, and Vc. with a melodic line. Dynamics include *mf* and *f*, and the word 'arco' is used for the violin and viola parts.

Of Things Unknown

114

C Tpt.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

120

C Tpt.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

124

C Tpt.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Of Things Unknown

129

C Tpt. Vln. I Vln. II Vla. Vc.

pizz.

pizz.

This system covers measures 129 to 133. The C Tpt. part begins with a melodic line in 4/4 time. The Vln. I part features a complex melodic line with many accidentals and a 'pizz.' marking at the end. The Vln. II part provides harmonic support with chords and some melodic movement. The Vla. part has a steady eighth-note accompaniment. The Vc. part has a rhythmic bass line with some melodic elements.

134

C Tpt. Vln. I Vln. II Vla. Vc.

mp

mp

3

This system covers measures 134 to 138. The C Tpt. part has a melodic line starting with a 'mp' dynamic. The Vln. I part has a melodic line with a 'mp' dynamic and a triplet of eighth notes. The Vln. II part has a steady eighth-note accompaniment. The Vla. part has a steady eighth-note accompaniment. The Vc. part has a rhythmic bass line with some melodic elements.

139

C Tpt. Vln. I Vln. II Vla. Vc.

mf < *f*

arco

f

arco

f

f

This system covers measures 139 to 143. The C Tpt. part has a melodic line with a dynamic change from 'mf' to 'f'. The Vln. I part has a melodic line with an 'arco' marking and a 'f' dynamic. The Vln. II part has a steady eighth-note accompaniment with an 'arco' marking and a 'f' dynamic. The Vla. part has a steady eighth-note accompaniment with an 'arco' marking and a 'f' dynamic. The Vc. part has a rhythmic bass line with some melodic elements and a 'f' dynamic.

Of Things Unknown

142

C Tpt. Vln. I Vln. II Vla. Vc.

This system covers measures 142 to 145. The C Tpt. part begins with a rest in measure 142, followed by a melodic line in measures 143-145. Vln. I plays a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes with a flat in the first measure. Vln. II and Vla. play chords, with Vln. II having a flat in the first measure. Vc. plays a steady eighth-note accompaniment.

146

C Tpt. Vln. I Vln. II Vla. Vc.

This system covers measures 146 to 149. The C Tpt. part has a rest in measure 146, then a melodic line in measures 147-149. Vln. I plays a melodic line with a flat in the first measure. Vln. II and Vla. play chords, with Vln. II having a flat in the first measure. Vc. continues with its eighth-note accompaniment.

150

C Tpt. Vln. I Vln. II Vla. Vc.

This system covers measures 150 to 153. The C Tpt. part has a rest in measure 150, then a melodic line in measures 151-153. Vln. I plays a melodic line with a flat in the first measure. Vln. II and Vla. play chords, with Vln. II having a flat in the first measure. Vc. continues with its eighth-note accompaniment.

Of Things Unknown

153

C Tpt. Vln. I Vln. II Vla. Vc.

arco *f*

Detailed description: This system contains measures 153 to 156. The C Tpt. part has a melodic line starting with a half note G4, followed by quarter notes A4, B4, and C5, then a half note G4. A slur covers the last two notes, with a *pp.* dynamic marking. The Vln. I and Vln. II parts play a rhythmic accompaniment of eighth notes. The Vla. part has a similar rhythmic pattern, with an *arco* marking and a *f* dynamic starting in measure 155. The Vc. part plays a bass line with eighth notes and quarter notes, also marked *f* in measure 155. The time signature changes from 3/4 to 5/4 between measures 155 and 156.

157

C Tpt. Vln. I Vln. II Vla. Vc.

f

Detailed description: This system contains measures 157 to 160. The C Tpt. part is silent. The Vln. I and Vln. II parts are silent. The Vla. part continues with a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes, marked *f* in measure 158. The Vc. part continues with a bass line of eighth and quarter notes, also marked *f* in measure 158. The time signature changes from 5/4 to 3/4 between measures 158 and 159, and back to 5/4 between measures 159 and 160.

162

C Tpt. Vln. I Vln. II Vla. Vc.

f

Detailed description: This system contains measures 162 to 165. The C Tpt. part has a melodic line starting with a half note G4, followed by quarter notes A4, B4, and C5, then a half note G4. A slur covers the last two notes, with a *f* dynamic marking. The Vln. I and Vln. II parts are silent. The Vla. part continues with a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes, marked *f* in measure 163. The Vc. part continues with a bass line of eighth and quarter notes, also marked *f* in measure 163. The time signature changes from 5/4 to 3/4 between measures 163 and 164, and back to 5/4 between measures 164 and 165.

Of Things Unknown

167

C Tpt.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

ff

ff arco

ff

ff

172

C Tpt.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

cresc.

cresc.

cresc.

cresc.

177

C Tpt.

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

ff

f

f

f

fff

f

APPENDIX A
INTERVIEW WITH ARCHIE SHEPP

Longineu Parsons = LP
Archie Shepp = AS

AS: It's probably as much historical as it is in the present ...

LP: Uh huh.

AS: I can often cite a common ... I think you'll find it in Duke Ellington's Music is My Mistress. It talks about ... he and Charlie Mingus recorded that, recording ...

LP: Yeah yeah, that trio recording.

AS: Yeah, I forget the name of it ... Mingus wrote to Mr. Ellington and he said "Duke, why don't we do something avant-garde?" Duke wrote him back and he said "Oh Charles, let's not go back to that." [Laughter] So that's kind of what I think of the avant-garde. I can remember when I was a young man he said I was an avant-gardista. Now that I'm getting to be an older man, they call me a veteran of the avant-garde. So I began to wonder what they mean by avant-garde – it's been used in a number of contexts. Certainly at first in the classical music, the world of classical art. [inaudible] and so on back in the early 20th century. Dancers, musicians, classical musicians – that term has been used quite a bit.

LP: Yeah.

AS: Avant-garde and I'm not sure if everybody means the same thing or if the term really has any meaning beyond something contemporary.

LP: Yeah, that's true.

AS: Because it can ... It's a term that seems to change depending on the age of the music, of the art form, of the artist and so on. So I don't see myself ... [get into a coffee conversation]

LP: See the term avant-garde, I use that term with the music just because we don't have another term to define it. Like Sam Rivers said years ago, he said you know the term is really not relevant for this music because avant-garde means new, and this music has been around for a quite a while ...

AS: Quite a while, absolutely.

LP: So, therefore it's not really avant-garde. We don't have another term ...

AS: But it's continuing to, it continues to evolve. And in fact, that's what's interesting about it is, though it has a history, it is the music that continues to unfold. Partly because it's an existential music. Meaning that it tells us, in the words of Marvin

Gaye "what's going on". It's no accident that kids, young people are rapping today, which is another form of avant-garde expression, even though it doesn't have a very strong compositional basis. It is a form of avant-garde expression because it harkens back, here again to our historical ... to the evolution of this music. I mean by that for example, West African and East African languages are tonal languages. Words that change their meaning with the inflection and the tonality of the voice itself.

LP: That's right.

AS: And this has been carried over into instrumental performance which we have created instruments like the banjo, which combines ... we brought the banjo here.

LP: That's ours.

AS: And it combines the tambour percussion and the chord, the string instruments that combines two qualities. We created our preference for sound in terms of vocals. Our music is vocalized. Saxophones and trumpets, then the sound of the note frequently. And that's in accord with the languages we came out of which actually do the same thing. One thing is that developing a thesis for Black music, we have to understand that it's the values of that music, the musical values are somewhat different. That the voice plays a very important role and that the voice actually does different things. I mean, Bach and Beethoven don't have ... [hums]. They don't bend notes, they don't ... [inaudible].

LP: Yeah, okay.

AS: But that's because of our preference. A historical preference that comes from the voice that has been carried over to the instruments. Also another quality of this music is wholism. You can't separate dance, music performance, the style of music performance, the language, all of these things ... for example, rapping today owes its history to traditional African music. I'll give you an example, I heard a performance of a dance ritual on a UNESCO record that I was teaching. Now this ritual was played by instruments by the drum. But it was, it's sacrilegious for them to record the drum. So one of the priests actually sang the ritual. It was kind of a modern day rap, except that he sang a very complex piece of music. You would call that avant-garde actually because it's something that I've have never heard done in the west. A person actually singing, note for note sounded phonetically, a drum rhythm. So to that extent, our modern music, so called avant-garde music owes a profound debt you might say to what went before.

You can look at the 1920s when Louis Armstrong started, became important. Many classical performers accused him of playing on a special mouthpiece. They couldn't believe that he was doing what he was doing on a traditional trumpet mouthpiece. So when you say, when you mentioned the Sam Rivers comment

... so much of our music, so much of the present of our music is rooted in the past.

LP: Which is very important to know. Because what we have is the result of a long history ... [inaudible]

AS: A continuum. Exactly. And that has to be made clear, because we shouldn't think of ... I mean from an academic view, we shouldn't argue that our music is like someone else's music because it comes from an entirely different set of values. Thus when we arrive at someone like Ornette Coleman or John Coltrane, you could say that a song like Africa Brass could never have been created if Dizzy Gillespie hadn't written A Night In Tunisia.

LP: That's right.

AS: Or, Dizzy would never have written A Night in Tunisia if Juan Tizol and Duke hadn't written Caravan. So there's a very explicit connection between what went before and what we hear now.

LP: And I'll take what you just said a step further and say, you or I couldn't do what we do if Louis Armstrong hadn't done what he did with Stardust.

AS: Absolutely. Or West End Blues ...

LP: Oh yeah, oh yeah.

AS: Yeah, and Earl Hines who introduced the 6 4 chords back in the 1920s. When they did the West End Blues, they called it the trumpet style - he was playing 6, 4 chords in the left hand and octaves in the right which they called the trumpet style. In fact, we have been avant-garde for a long time. Many of the techniques that were initially introduced by African American songsmiths are still relatively new and still being adapted by western performers. Especially the things, the language. Because it is a language that we're talking about as much as notes.

LP: Yes, so then this music has been avant-garde from the very beginning.

AS: Absolutely. Perhaps too much emphasis is placed on composition. For example, if you look at societies like BMI and SACEM, which are supposed to protect composers' rights ... Well, if Charlie Parker plays a song like "The Way You Look Tonight", I don't know if Rodgers and Hammerstein wrote it, they get the credit for that. But in fact, if he didn't play the melody and he gave the song another name, the work would become his. So what we call the Black composer is frequently also the performer.

Parker's performance is as avant-garde as anything that's being played today. His language, it's just that he's playing what you might call hep popular songs, which seems to take something from the respect that he would ordinarily get for having

taken the work and creating something totally different out of the composition. A work like Cole Porter has a certain number of bars, certain chords, but by the time Parker finishes with it, we're being introduced to scales, rhythms, a music language, which is totally apart from the song itself as written. I think what's unfortunate ... take like Moody's "Mood for Love", which is "I'm in the mood for love", but he doesn't play that in the song ever. It never comes up, but he never got credit. BMI would not give him credit for writing an original song, mostly because of the name "Mood for Love". Moody's Mood - they would not extrapolate the title from the actual performance. Moody demonstrates how a work can totally be reinterpreted by a musician, in this case, a Black musician, he doesn't receive any credit for it.

Illinois Jacquet spent most of his life, the rest of his life trying to get credit for the solo on "Flying Home", which was classic. When I was a kid, every saxophone player had to learn it. [Hums song] It was written by Billy Goodman, probably by Charlie Christian, but they both get credit for the title. Illinois' solo made the song when he was with Lionel Hampton, anybody that joined Hamp's band, had to play Illinois' solo. It became classic, but he never collected a dime for that. All the money went to Benny Goodman and Charlie Christian was already dead, so you could imagine that Benny probably quite a bit of money off Illinois Jacquet's solo.

So, there's a dichotomy between the African American as performer, composer, improviser, innovator ... already we're into something new. It's the evolution of music, because the white symphony bands, the orchestras, they have never been capable of taking a written work and creating something original out of original work. That was up to the jazz performers like Armstrong, [inaudible], and Dizzy.

LP: Yeah and see and what you're saying is important to one of my important points that I'm making in the dissertation - is that what we think of as improvisations made by African American musicians is actually the same creative process as composers do. It's just that it's at the moment.

AS: Existential. It's being done - it's right on at that time. It's like going into a restaurant and asking to eat immediately. You can go into to a so-called jazz performance and you're served up something brand new immediately - that has been precomposed, though there is a method to this performance. What's exciting about it is it's done right on the spot. But it is an existential moment.

LP: And requires tremendous historical knowledge.

AS: Absolutely. There's a method to the ...

LP: Technical ability.

AS: Yeah. And that really may be what it's about is that the techniques by which music is created, no matter if it's Ornette, or Cecil, or Randy Weston, or whoever, but the techniques are pretty much consistent. They evolve with changing the sound of the instrument, altering the tonal qualities, either by bending notes rhythmic qualities. We are constantly creating a new language. And I think of Black music as a language as much as music, because in fact it comes from a tonal language. A language which takes it's meaning from tonality.

Our performers, particularly those who create, improvising performers, are actually using ... you might say phonetic qualities, linguistic qualities. They're adding language to notes. And the notes take on different meaning. I heard Illinois' [Jacquet] play a phrase and I could swear he said hello. Because we ... I thought of it as a continuation of the talking drum. We do have a talking drum, the *dundun*, which comes from Nigeria. And so I think what is interesting about African American music is that we have brought the drum to all the other instruments, that they all, that our instruments speak.

What's interesting about Ornette's sound is his sound. Ultimately, the thing about most of these performers is not what they play. When I think of Coltrane, all the notes he played, basically, I think of his sound. That's the thing that comes to my ear first.

LP: Yeah, which we can identify the first two notes ...

AS: [Inaudible]. Exactly. This a quality that does not come up in western classical music because sound is uniform, and people are expected to all sound alike. So it's a question of ...

LP: Yeah because of performance practice.

AS: Performance style and technique which are fundamentally different. In some senses, they cannot be compared.

LP: Well you know there are people in the classical world who are making the argument that classical music in its interpretation with all this performance practice is not accurate. The same way the guys who learned all those jazz tunes and they learned all those ... they transcribed those solos, and they sound how guys used to play but the music has no testicles.

AS: Yeah.

LP: And so there are classical people who are making the argument about that, we don't really know what it sounds like, because now everybody's supposed to do it like this. And at the time that Bach was playing, it wouldn't have been like that. Individuals would have played the music like they played it.

AS: Absolutely.

LP: And of course improvisation was an important part of baroque music. The whole idea of reading figured bass meant you had something that relates to the way we have chord symbols, and you're supposed to voice, make your voicings and make your melody up as you go.

AS: Absolutely. The one single difference that I find that is that our music frequently, not always, was configured to dance, and to vocal performance. Like the traditional African music, you will find that many of the songs that they sing, they also dance. Not always, but in essence music has brought the new world, dance is also a fundamental aspect of that music performance. I can remember back in the days when cats played a lot of blues. But the dancers frequently connected directly to the music performance. As the dance got hot, the guys playing, they got hot ... because they were playing for the dance. This phenomenon does not exist in western music. It's true that they did, as you say they did, they improvised on figured bass, there were court dances and folk dances. But, the direct connection in our music between the drum, the dance and the voice is undeniable.

And it continues today in the form of rap music. Even though because the role of the composer have been reduced. A lot of the music today is pre recorded, and it's sampled or mixed into a live performance [inaudible], limited to the extent where the performers are not actually musicians. Limited in a musical sense but they are more poets. That figures into our music performance anyway because the voice is always storytelling, blues elements, have always been part of Black music performance. So when I think of my own terms at work and how I approach a piece of music, I try to include all of those elements into my potential work, whatever it is. I want something that's gonna swing, something that evokes the sound of the voice, even if there are no words. I'm thinking phonetically as I write. I try to include elements that will relate to dance. So that in a sense, James Brown's mantra "Get Up And Dance" should be inside the work. What I write ... not Everything I write is to dance, but if I write a piece that has a beat, I'm willing to swing and I'm willing to have those qualities which really derive from traditional African music. So for me, new music could not exist without the qualities that were first laid down by the traditional African composer.

LP: So, yeah once again this music is based on this long history ...

AS: It's a continuum ...

LP: Your personal approach is definitely a part of that, and that's one reason why I definitely wanted to talk with you about it. Because I know that about you from the times that we spent together playing music, times talking about music. And what you're saying makes me think also about what happened with [Jay inaudible] when you talk about notes and all those. Once that was seen, the things that happened at the Paris conservatory that American mentality wouldn't allow. But the things that happened in Paris conservatory were Claude Debussy

starting to recognize and incorporate things.

AS: [inaudible] scales and ...

LP: Yes, and [Ravel??], the most famous of French composers incorporated. We listen to [miscellaneous conversation] Andre Jolivet from Paris Conservatory. His second trumpet concerto sounds like a cat improvising over the orchestra.

AS: Ah, mm hmm.

LP: Andre Jolivet, Paris Conservatory. There's a Jolivet Room right now in the conservatory at Paris.

[miscellaneous talk]

LP: And there's a recording of Maurice Andre and a recording of Wynton Marsalis. And it just sounds like either one is just jammin' over the orchestra.

AS: [inaudible]

LP: At that time in America that wouldn't have been considered, you know, in the academy in America [inaudible] just oh no what are you doing.

AS: When was it written?

LP: It seems like it's from the 50s. The 40s or the 50s.

AS: Oh it's a rather modern piece of music.

LP: Yeah.

AS: Yeah, okay.

LP: Yeah, just to show the effect that this has had. So, now I see it as ... see once again the composers are different. The composers have started to take, have started to recognize this history that we speak of and starting to incorporate it, and some of them have tremendous respect for it. The ones living in the old way don't, because they don't understand it and don't wish to because they wanna think of themselves as God or whatever.

AS: Well yeah and, because I think the term classical music which is a term that I hear quite frequently, is a music that is considered to belong to western music performance ...

LP: That's one of the definition yes, one of them.

AS: For example, not only performance, but western musical instruments. The piano, the trumpet, the trombone, they were all instruments that were developed here in the west. What's interesting is how African Americans have changed the sounds

of those instruments. For example, Coleman Hawkins, whom some people say invented the saxophone, he didn't, but he actually changed the sound of the saxophone as it's played generally. Deepening its tone, adding vibrato, enriching the sound quality, getting the buzzing sound that we hear on the balafones in Zambia. So many of those qualities carry over into the performance, into contemporary African American performance sounds. The qualities of instruments that we invented in Africa whose sound we brought here to America and added to western instruments. The trombone, if you hear some of the [chicka inaudible] with Ellington, the way, the [inaudible] he gets with the plunger, techniques, coaching, playing over the high F on the saxophone. There are no keys up there, but he plays perfect intonation. He's changed the way slightly the way Charlie Parker did, he's changed the way saxophone players play. Even encouraged [Sumner? Inaudible] to put another note on the instrument. [Inaudible] Hawkins and Webster where they put the high F on the saxophone because African American musicians were playing, jazz musicians, were playing way above that, but playing what they call freaknotes at the time and Coltrane actually legitimized that vibe being able to play at that time [inaudible] the triple F.

LP: You know Sam Rivers, once we were talking, and I brought up his formal education. And he said well look let me tell you, I learned much more from the guys who were not trained than I ever learned from the trained guys. Because the guys who were not trained weren't trained to restrain themselves. They did things that the trained guys never would've thought of doing.

AS: Absolutely.

LP: Because they weren't imprisoned by convention.

AS: Yeah.

LP: Now see there's a person who I've been reading who was important part of how I originally wanted to do this dissertation, a guy named Theodore Adorno.

AS: I don't think I know him.

LP: Yeah, his real name was Wiesengrund, German Jewish, who ... mostly Marxist. These guys, the Frankfurt 5, they figured that ... they were kind of leaning towards Marxism, they felt he was like about most of the things, and he had definite ideas of what constitutes music as art.

AS: Yeah.

LP: And I don't agree with Adorno, but his standards were so stringent for what makes art. Part of my point is, I'm saying that what we call the avant-garde in jazz meets those standards. The most stringent standards of what makes art ... not just because of the technical process, but that the music had to defy convention.

AS: That's what Sam Rivers said. He said that about Wynton, he said Wynton is not controversial.

LP: Yeah.

AS: And all the great players have been controversial.

LP: Well yeah ...

AS: [inaudible] Parker, Coltrane except Art Tatum. There was not much controversy about him.

LP: But it's not even just in our music, there's a book Slonimsky wrote where it's just nothing but bad reviews of all the great composers.

AS: [Laughs]

LP: I mean it says Beethoven sucks, Claude Debussy sucks, Ravel sucks. I mean just on about all these terrible things people were saying about these people at the time. They were all controversial at the time.

AS: And Slonimsky was controversial. In fact he said that nobody bought his book but his friends, until John Coltrane – he did a lecture at Berkeley – until people found out that Trane used his book in his studies and so on. That was when his book sold in large numbers, after people found out. A lot of jazz musicians.

LP: Right. I bought one of them because of exactly that.

AS: I bought my copy. [Laughter] I've even worked in it a little bit, I mean I've worked with symmetric scales and so on, I'm sure you have. But he indicates that nobody bought his book. I think he said he sold 80 copies when the book first came out. And it didn't sell much after that until Coltrane.

LP: So one of these things is the music has to stand for something.

AS: Yeah.

LP: So what we call the avant-garde in jazz, I mean the whole movement of jazz, whenever we got to that time, we talking about 1960s in America.

AS: Yeah.

LP: So to me that music really expressed what we were gonna do in the 60s. Now see my part of the 60s, you know the Little Rock, Arkansas kids, what they did, I was a part of that in Jacksonville, Florida. I was one of those for that time.

AS: Yeah.

LP: So in that way, I was a part of the movement, a part of the struggle, very

emotionally involved in it, which has affected me strongly to this day.

AS: I'm sure.

LP: So, I contend that an important part of this music was one of my real personal heroes, Nat Turner, because he was one of the reasons that the drums - they tried to suppress the drums in North America.

AS: I remember, because of Mr. Turner.

LP: Because what you were saying earlier about language and drums ... because the slaves could communicate with those drums.

AS: Yeah, and with voice. They say the song, "Steal Away" was created during that time it might have been written by Nat Turner.

LP: See, when I was a kid in elementary school growing up in segregation, see our teachers taught us those songs.

AS: Oh we learned them.

LP: They really meant we had to sing 'em.

AS: Yeah, "Lift up Your Voice and Sing", of course that's later ...

LP: But those songs were, you know "Steal Away" because what's getting' ready to happen is ... [cross-talk, inaudible] somebody else, and we gonna steal away to Jesus across that Mason Dixon Line which was the River Jordan in the song.

AS: Absolutely, yeah. So here again language is so fundamental to the interpretation of African American music. The songs even take on political meaning, many of them. Some of the work songs, some of the spirituals told the slaves how to follow the North Star to Canada. Many of our songs are what they call the work songs, are called instructional songs. Some of the splitting rail ties. The songs to sing on the railroad. They instruct a new worker – move to the left, now move over to the right. [Singing] So these songs combine information with music qualities itself. Ours is one of the few song type song forms. We created a music, which is totally, it's holistic in the sense that ... For example, someone dies in Yoruba, in the Yoruba religion, 7 days after the person is dead the family of the deceased they go to a musician, a drummer, and he creates a song. After that, they go to a sculptor and he makes a mask. And then they create a dance so around the music is functional. The death of a person leads to the creation of dance, music, and sculpture. Ultimately a kind of ritual or theatre. I find all these qualities avant-garde because there's no equivalent in the west for these phenomena.

LP: So could you think of anything else we could call this music that we call avant-garde, you know like we musical periods they talk about swing and big band.

They talk about bebop.

AS: You know what Duke said to Dizzy when he came up with the name bebop, Duke said don't use that name. Because once people give a name to your music, they date your music. Like avant-garde, so for avant-garde jazz music people think of 1960s. They don't think of 2015. Ellington called his music the music of Ellington. He didn't call his music jazz really. He uses jazz but he didn't call his orchestra a jazz – so what I'm saying, what I'm getting at is the term avant-garde may not be necessary. It may be superfluous.

LP: It's no longer appropriate.

AS: Exactly, and it never was. It could never really define what was being done at the time or people who were doing things we thought was leading to, were on the cutting edge. Like Ornette in the 60s and Cecil who would bring music other than Miles Davis and music that didn't use chords, it changed tempo.

[Cross-talk in different language - French] rather than what's going on. By using terms, some terms like avant-garde to describe dadah [inaudible], they really actually placed the music in a certain time warp. Which is what you don't want. So in fact perhaps you have to redefine in your own terms, from your own perspective what you're talking about.

I can remember when I was teaching at the University of Buffalo. It was just the beginning of Black studies, and I was the first acting head of the Black Studies Committee. They didn't have a department, they had a Black Studies Committee which was formed by [Charles Kyle]. During this time, I was also performing, a performing artist, and I took frequent trips to Europe to perform. So much so that the department, the music department complained. They were really trying to put me out. I had a joint appointment with the Black studies music department. But the music department, at that point they wanted to get me out of the music department because I was at least 2 months out of the year I wasn't even there, I would be overseas. So they decided that they were going to have a committee meeting and that I should answer some questions for them about music, so test my general musical qualifications. So one of them came to me and said, Professor [inaudible], we want to ask you some questions, but the fact is we don't know anything about jazz, could you tell us something about it so we can ask you some [laughs] about it. They wanted me to prepare them to actually, to quiz me on my music. So there's a contradiction, that academic musicians, most of them, are obviously very familiar with western classical music. They knew basically nothing about contemporary African American music, simple jazz.

LP: I remember something about, concerning you and your music. I was on tour with you once when we were in Italy and we had a concert the next day with Dexter Gordon. 'Cause remember there was a while when we had a few concerts at the same ...

AS: Yeah, had the same time as Dex.

LP: Yeah. So I was having dinner with Dexter. And of course you know it was one of those old fashioned Italian things where one course at a time, the right wine for that course, you know with just Dexter and me you can imagine how it was. So we're talking and he's saying yeah, you know we're proud of Archie. You know we're proud of him. He was out there, but now he's playing tunes, but you know he still has that twist to it but you know I'm proud of him, what he's doing. So In other words, his thing was the thing and he's saying you're all right. As though, who was he? I mean yeah he's Dexter Gordon, the great Dexter Gordon.

AS: Oh but that makes me feel good ...

LP: But when we got to the concert ...

AS: Because I had such respect for Dex, and Johnny [Griffin], and all the cats. Without them, I don't feel that I would have really played the note, I mean, without Trane and some of the guys like C Sharpe, and Lee Morgan who was very helpful to me. I might have because my father played the blues, I played the blues before I played anything. That's what sort of got me in with some of the cats, the jazz players because I could play the blues before I could play chord changes on my horn.

LP: See, yeah. Your total, your music has a certain totality in terms of historical perspective. But what happened at the concert the next night - we played first, audience loved it. Pat plays, however many people there, thousands of people.

AS: That was in Italy, yeah.

LP: And then when Dexter played, the audience started thinning out. That wasn't the only time that happened, the other concert ... right that because to me, and evidently to the audience, your music was speaking about right then. Dexter had become conventional.

AS: Well you can say that. I'll tell you a story - When I first came to Europe, well the second time I came there, 1963, that was the year that John Kennedy was killed. We played in Denmark and Dexter was there - he was living there. He had come there with a bad habit of drugs and alcohol. His wife had completely turned him around there. He had been there for several months, maybe a year. He was playing at a club called the Montmartre. I can remember, we came there with a band, an avant-garde band called the New York Contemporary Five. John Tchicai, Don Cherry, and Donnie Moore, J.C. Moses. But Dexter was the featured man. When we got there he had been playing at the Montmartre for 6 months every night with Neil, Neil was just about 17 years old and Alex [inaudible]. And I used to be there every night to hear Dex and his quartet. It was really a learning experience for me. I'd only heard about Dex when I was in Philly and I had his records. To really be there and hear him live was an experience. Just to watch him, he was quite a showman. He was very confident

on stage. It was a learning experience for me.

So you know the thing, it's important to remember, this comes up with Jimmie Vaughan and Richard Wright. People often accuse Jimmie of the father and son syndrome. Richard Wright was very good to Jimmie. In fact the first book he wrote was very critical of Richard Wright. Now he said some things that probably needed to be said about Mr. Wright because he talks about identity and so on. The fact that we shouldn't ... which is important, in order for us to achieve our identity, we don't have to compare ourselves to other people, other races, and our identity should be based on our own choices ... and he accuses Richard Wright of being subject to making comparisons between black and white people. So in his works frequently, the Negro feels inferior to white people. Vaughan's point is we should not make that comparison, maybe we're better. Maybe we're the same. But the point is that the comparisons are irrelevant, because we have a different ... our cultural, social cultural evolution has been different from theirs. So to some degree, it's up to you to define or redefine the subject in your own image.

Dexter was an informer to me. In other words, frequently within Black art, the younger performer has been used against his or her informant, against the older performer. For example with Dizzy and Louis Armstrong. People tried to create a gap between Dizz, saying that Dizzy's music, Dizzy had criticized Armstrong and so on. Stravinsky could not have existed without Bach. Nobody ever makes the argument that Stravinsky got a bigger applause or more people appreciated him than Bach because it's understood logically that without Bach, Vivaldi and all these, that you would never have had a Stravinsky. I'm saying with Dexter it's the same thing. Even if the audience has left and thinned out, in my mind, I knew who Dexter Gordon was. If I had been part of the audience, I wouldn't have left.

LP: But see, if you go to a classical concert, what we call classical, European classical. Music is presented in historical art most of the time. So that concert should have been presented in historical order which meant he should've played first, and then you played. Because I'm not saying ...

AS: But you know how they do that, they put the star on, he was the star in fact they put him on last. Sometimes people leave I tell you also, because it's getting late. And I complain about that, I play concerts where they put us on last. We are to be first to the sound check, that means early. And then we go on by maybe to 1:00, 12:00 that night after three or four other bands have played. So by the time we get to go on, half the audience is gone. Frequently, that's because the train left, the train is leaving, so it might have been that too, people had heard so much music by the time they saw a performer, half the audience is gone when he [inaudible].

LP: I wouldn't give him that one. It was early and there was one set of [inaudible] and

then there was one set of Dexter Gordon.

JP: Where was it?

LP: This one might have been in Ravenna. This was definitely ...

AS: It was a tour in Italy.

LP: And we were together on a few concerts.

AS: And they found it too classical, too ...

LP: Well you know how hot blooded the Italians are. Archie came out there and you know, I mean ... and even though playing tunes that some people would play conventionally, he was Archie Shepp. So, it had what Dexter would call that twist. Those are his words the night before.

AS: Is that Dexter?

LP: Yeah, he's got that twist to it. But it was that twist or whatever we want to call it that gave it relevance to that time, to that day, with that audience. We don't even have to make the argument that it was universal and it would've been that way if it had been somewhere else. But at that time, on that day, and I felt that it was really appropriate because there was a certain sound that you brought with the quintet and, as much as I love Dexter's beautiful sound and wonderful musicianship and all this, musically, it was a letdown. Now take it from another musician that was there. It wasn't a matter of being [inaudible] I'm with Archie so we gonna kick their ass. It wasn't that because this was the great Dexter Gordon and this is Dexter Gordon. However, this was the effect that took place and so, to me that's an important part of what this music is about. The music that historically you are so associated with. Because it spoke ... speaks ... but going back at the time since this is an academic document we're doing. It spoke to this revolution that was taking place in America and in the world and that's why it's so important.

AS: Well yeah and also the thing about our music, African American music, is that it continues to keep pace with the time. For example, you can look at guys today like Puff Daddy, Snoop Dogg, Pharrell Williams ... they are popular not only because they are playing popular music, but because apparently they're in tune with the youth of today. This has always been a quality of African American music. It's always on the cutting edge. It's unfortunate today that young people don't listen to Ellington and Trane and people like that the way they do. Ornette and Albert Ayler are probably musically unknown. On the other hand, the music that they are listening to is relevant. That has influenced young people, their whole new generation of youth all over the world from Canada to Kenya. Rap, soul music, break dancing, flash dancing. We have created an entirely new ... well since it's not music it's basically poetry ... we've created an entirely new

form.

[Max] said something very interesting, he said these kids today, they can't afford music lessons. When I was a kid you could study music in school. But they have made something out of nothing. This was the way he put it. I think that's a part of our creative process. The slave, when he had nothing, he created something. He had a banjo and a piece of, a drum, if he could make one. If he didn't have that, he would beat on his chest. He would sing, or she. So we have continually forged something of quality. Really basically having very few tools to do it with. And that could be said right up to today. I heard Chuck D, he recorded with me a few years ago. Very generous because he didn't ask for any money. But I heard him do an interview in which he said that when these guys first got started, they would frequently ask musicians to accompany them. The musicians would always ask for money. Of course they had no money, they were just getting started. So eventually they just did what they did with the drum and eventually they created the drum machine. I mean this all grows out of people, kids from the streets from the Bronx and Brooklyn.

But the base of this music is in the blues.

LP: Surely.

AS: Yeah, it's in the blues. So that rap music is a kind of an evolution of blues form, in which the singer is left out, and we have only a person speaking. But I relate that to what I was saying earlier about the priest reciting the drum ritual.

LP: Okay, and we can take that further and think about you on stage when you wailing and you sound like, you remind me of a Black preacher in the church, when it starts getting' up and getting' up, and people start hollerin' and [cross-talk] It's like that. So let me ask you this now. One of the arguments about music as art is that if you're trying to please the public then it can't be art because the public's not on it. They're not ready for it. So ...

AS: I think that's a class, a class point of view or you could say elitist.

LP: Yeah sure.

AS: Yeah, I think it's an elitist argument, because ... the Bible tells us to make a joyful noise and it doesn't single out court or the vessel. It says for God. So music, oh gee, [inaudible]. But music, I think, I take this in the opposite point that music is for everyone. And not only for people who have been trained academically to appreciate it

LP: Now, see. I never heard you say okay we gonna do this because people are gonna dig it.

AS: You never heard me say I'm gonna do it, because they ain't gonna dig it.

[Laughter]

LP: No, that's true, that's true. But it was always it felt like to me, that's why I always really enjoyed playing music with you is because, seemed like you come out there you wanna do it the way you feel, the way you think and that's it.

AS: That's all you can do.

LP: And it just so happens that they love it.

AS: Well, you know, I hope that they did. Of course there were many times they didn't. I've gotten a lot of bad reviews. But I can remember my mother years ago, I went home, when I started recording for Impulse. When I got home she said well son are you still playing those songs that ain't have no tunes? [Laughter] It made me reflect that ... I wondered if it didn't have any tune did that mean she didn't like it or she didn't hear it, she didn't say that. But at the time of her death, she died when she was 50 my mother, she was a young woman. It was very sad. I remember after the funeral, I rode home with one of her friends, a lady. My mother was a beautician and, this lady was slightly younger than she was. We were talking and she said that, she told me she had moved ... we sat in the car talking for a while ... she said she had moved out to California. We were in Philadelphia at the time, I was raised in Philly as you know. She said Archie, I've got all of your records, she said but when are you gonna play something that I understand? It struck me. Many of my audiences in Europe were European audiences. I really didn't have a very close connection with my own people in the United States apparently because no songs with no tune – the people weren't really connecting to. And that's when I began to think and to perform, play standards, to play more of my own original music that had a beat and it swung. Because I felt it important to begin to make a connection with the African American audience. That wasn't all together my fault. The companies like Blue Note did a lot of the soul music recordings. They would make sure their recordings were in all the night clubs and so on. I could go into any club in Philly and I'd be sure to hear Horace Silver or Art Blakey. They had great bands, I don't mean to say that. [Freddie Hubbard, Herbie], all that music was being played. They did a good with distributing that music. The kind of music we were playing, so called avant-garde music, free music, was not distributed very well Even by big companies, like Impulse. So, to some degree, the lack of popularity of that music had to do with the diffusion of music. As you can see, groups like the Beatles became more and more popular. We started about the same time. Their music was played constantly and universally. Our music was restricted because we had a much more limited audience, we were playing music that didn't have singable melodies frequently and music which was more academically oriented.

LP: Exactly. If I analyze it as a theorist, and say analyze Rolling Stones and analyze Trane, then it's like well yes this is for the general public, the Stones because there's not very much to it from the standpoint of a theorist. And then I look at

Trane and say look at all this. He's away from major minor, thorough knowledge of history, great technique. So then I could look at that from the standpoint of the theories and say well this is just more advanced music period.

AS: Well hold it. Because you could say that about the Stones because they're basically imitators. They're imitating a music which goes back ... For example if you're singing Home Sweet Chicago, you could compare that to Coltrane. Because in fact, that's where Coltrane learned the blues. He didn't learn it from the Stones, but he learned it from Robert Johnson and people like that. I mean, [inaudible, Jefferson].

LP: But those weren't the people on the radio. Like you said ...

AS: And another interesting thing is that all the great improvisers have been great blues players including [Art] Tatum, [inaudible], James P. Johnson, right up to Coltrane

LP: And Ornette Coleman.

AS: And Coleman whose a lot of his music, his early songs, are very much influenced by Charlie Parker's melodies. Or Miles like [singing].

LP: I haven't heard anything by Ornette Coleman that wasn't that soulful quality from the blues.

AS: Because it sounds like Miles' Milestones [singing]. How's it go, Milestones [singing]. You can almost hear the blessing coming out of Milestones, and some of Ornette's blues are straight out of Charlie Parker in a way. Although he's not using chords. So what became of our music could not have been possible without the elements that existed before.

LP: Absolutely.

JP: I remember something you told when you went to Charlie Parker ...

AS: Performance, yeah. I was 17. That was just before he died.

JP: Yes, because [French].

AS: [French]

JP: [French]

AS: [French] Jimmie, he told the story about John Coltrane. He was playing at a club in Philly.

JP: [French]

AS: The Charlie Parker concert was done at a big hall in Philly that they called the Met. It's no longer there. I remember we got there, I had just started playing and I had just met Lee Morgan and I was really into the music. And the man upstairs who lived in my home, he knew quite a bit about the music. My father's a banjo player, he didn't like Charlie Parker, he didn't like Bud Powell, none of those guys. Think he said you think you're a man now, huh? Listening to Charlie Parker and all that stuff. He didn't really sort of come to grips with that until after I got out of college. He said well you know, that music, it's not so bad, he said. He kind of came and started coming here. But this was when we went to hear Bird I was enraged because I thought everybody listened to Charlie Parker. It was a hall that held over a thousand people. And I tell you the truth, he was trained with a 39 piece orchestra. They guy from my street wrote the music. And there were more people on stage than there were in the audience and Bird wasn't there. It was like waiting for Godot. About an hour and a half later ... nobody moved. The fear was that he was not gonna come. Nobody was mad that he was late, everybody was getting nervous cause he was coming from New York to Philly. That was really sad, was such a surprise. In fact probably there was as many white people in the audience as blacks and there weren't many people in the audience, so this music was not being ... It's not that it wasn't copyrighted, it wasn't really being played on the radio. The only jazz musician I had heard was on the radio was Stan Getz. He had a hit, "Moonlight in Vermont" and "How High the Moon", they'd play Getz occasionally. But, the other thing she was talking about with Trane, which was many years later. He came to Philadelphia to play his song for me, by way of North Carolina. He was playing at a club down on South Street called [Pep's Bar]. At the next corner, it was another bar a bit more sophisticated where we would see the pimps and the whores used to hang. People with ties on. It was a much more sophisticated place called the Showboat. And there Charles Lloyd was playing. [Jimmy Heath told this story. He said he went into the Showboat, the place was packed. Charles was billed as the guy who sounds exactly like John Coltrane. So he went down to Pep's Bar where Coltrane was playing and the place was almost empty. There is a contradiction in that ... even though these little bars were frequented mostly by black people. We are frequently more enticed, we're easier to believe something that is like something else rather than the actual original. It's like the Emperor's new clothes, not that Charles was naked, but he wasn't Coltrane. But he was being billed as the guy that sounded like Coltrane. And in fact, Coltrane, the real phenomenon, was there and nobody was there to listen to him. It's real contradiction, I think. Nothing against Charles, because Charles and I are good friends. We've gone through all [inaudible]. I really like him. But that's how that was.

LP: The issue about people coming to hear and people not coming. The small audience, would you say its because the music just wasn't on the radio? Would you say its because of that more so than the actual ...

AS: Well I think a lot of it has to do with how the music is presented, the frequency, it's availability. In fact one might think that so called avant-garde black music,

and this includes Coltrane who had problems at the end of his life that audiences didn't like what he was playing. But if people were more exposed, our people were more exposed to a variety of musical forms, their taste might change a bit, might augment, may become broader.

LP: Well [inaudible] said that the radio stations say they play what the people wanna hear. And then I say, well no, they want to hear what you make [cross-talk] play. So that's been my point.

AS: There's a catch 22 there, yeah.

LP: Yeah. Now I remember a conversation I had with McCoy one night in Sweet Basil. He had just played and one of the saxophone players they had put with him to make [inaudible]. I think it was [inaudible]. Anyway they had one of those guys up there playing with McCoy Tyner [inaudible] that same period. And I was sitting at the bar with McCoy and you know how McCoy is. He's always the straight guy ...

AS: Well we grew up together. I knew McCoy. One of my first gigs was with McCoy.

LP: So here's McCoy at the bar, drinking cognac. This was when he was getting a ponytail and with the cognac. And he said you know, back when we played this music with John, it was for the common man. The cab drivers. They dug this music. Now look who we playing it for. They don't even know what it is. They here 'cause they think they're supposed to be.

AS: Isn't that something?

LP: So how am I supposed to get up? [cross-talk]

AS: Yeah I can dig you got that feeling again.

LP: And surely enough ... see somebody had said, this other musician said man I heard McCoy and he sounded like an imitation of himself. And then when I heard him that night I said yeah I can see what this guy was saying. Because ...

AS: 'Cause the feeling

LP: Then after talking with McCoy, then I could see why ...

AS: Why he was like this

LP: He said why should I care about this? And then when I saw him later, when he was just with the trio, with an audience in Montreux and he made this big 9 foot Steinway look like a small fragile thing that might explode at any moment because it couldn't contain the sound.

AS: All that power, yeah. You know I remember one night at the Half Notes in New

York, you know that club on Spring Street and Trane used to play there all the time. We were there on a Sunday night and the club on Sundays, the clubs have to close at 3 in New York, normally they close at 4. But it was Sunday night and they had to close at 3. The joint was packed. Elvin, Trane, McCoy, Garrison. So the club went and made an announcement because nobody wanted to leave. Normally, everybody would leave at 3 o'clock because they know the club was gonna close. But after Trane ... they played such a hard set before, just like church, literally like church in a secular context. The place was packed, the club owners didn't know what to do because nobody was leaving. And Trane was still there. He made an announcement, he said look we'll play one more set, we won't serve any drinks, and I'll lock the door so nobody else can come in. Nobody left, they served no drinks. Trane and the group came up - ,they played about an hour or so, but it was so intense, that you would've had the feeling that you were at a church. In fact, there was a guy there named Big George who came to all of Coltrane's concerts. And would the music would reach a certain pitch, it would be like in a church when someone says Amen. Preach the gospel. When Trane would reach a certain point, he would say get it John. I can remember when we did... what do they call that, the date with Freddie Hubbard. When we did that date Trane [inaudible] he said you know Shepp, I miss Big George being here to say get it John. [Laughter]

LP: I heard about Big George. Bill Cody told me about that. He said man they're probably paying this cat to be in the gig because every time he would stand up and say get it John [cross-talk] to another level.

AS: Take it to another level. Get it John.

LP: Yeah, that's what I heard.

AS: It was rather like church when the old ladies, old men preach the gospel, amen. That soul, you know. It's kind of call and response between that.

LP: So now here is this music which is defined...

AS: Did you know that Trane was with Big Maybelle, you know Big Maybelle, who sang Candy. She was a great blues singer. Trane was her favorite blues player. Whenever she would come to Philadelphia, when she needed a saxophone player, she would ask for John Coltrane.

LP: Yeah...

AS: Because one of the last great blues improvisers, innovators was John Coltrane.

LP: Yeah which is a tradition that you have kept going. If I listen to you, that's what ... [cross-talk]

AS: Wish I could play the blues like John, but I play 'em like Archie.

LP: You play 'em like you. [Laughter] Which is serious. And you make the public do that. So, we have this music which has defined many of the old conventions, but from this, from the conventions it's kind of...

AS: Has evolved to the present day, what's goin' on today.

LP: And then which touches people on a level that's beyond the intellectual level.

AS: Absolutely.

LP: But nevertheless ...

AS: That's why we don't play for musicians and intellectuals because our music has always been music for the people. Like McCoy said.

LP: But at the same time, if a theorist is analyzing the work, it appeals to the intellectuals too.

AS: Absolutely. Because it has a quality which is outside the western musical conventions.

LP: Well, as a western trained composer, I would say that it ... the music uses to a great extent, modern western compositional practice, getting away from major/minor [cross-talk]

AS: Changing key major and minor, yeah.

LP: Everythings being organized in terms of using all twelve tones of every octave if you so choose. Not being restricted to these scales go with these chords like what they teach people in the academy of jazz. If the academy were to keep up with the reality of what the music is, it would have to also go into this music that Trane played the music you were part of when it was being born and all this. But it's not in the academy. It stops there, it stops, giant steps is the end of it, for the most part. Because still with giant steps, these are the scales you have to play from that go with these chords. I would say that jazz music is like Mozart. I like Mozart. I spend money to go to hear concerts with Mozart music and enjoyed every minute, so I'm not criticizing that. But what speaks to people at the time, see and so what they teaching in the academy for jazz now isn't, in my opinion, is not relevant for the year 2015.

AS: [inaudible] Because we use the term jazz. The term jazz itself is limited. My theory of the word is that it's a French term. The way jazz is originally spelled is JASS. There is a city in France named JASS.

JP: No. A city?

AS: A town, yes. It's in [Aututen]. I found it on the map. It's called a city or town. It's limited. It limits us to exactly that. A music that was born around 1900 to the

present day to Wynton Marsalis. But within that we're confined to the conventions that all that implies. Like you say a scale following, specific scales and so on. If you listen to Coltrane talk about jazz, John says well after I wrote Giant Steps, I dispensed with playing chords formally, because I felt I had exhausted all the harmonic possibilities, conventional possibilities I could. And after that you hear Interstellar Space and things like that. The story goes that he was playing at a club in New Jersey just before he died and the audience started booing. Rashid Ali told me that. That the crowd started booing. They didn't like what he was playing. "Cause Trane at that point was really totally [inaudible]

LP: Rashid like when they played [inaudible].

AS: Yeah, like totally free. It was a black audience at the club down in New Jersey. They wanted to hear My Favorite Things, Giant Steps, and things like that. At one point he said, Trane took the horn out of his mouth and started beating his chest and singing. Just before he died. He said after the concert, he told [Rashid] I don't know what to do. He says I played all the chords I can play, I played all the notes I can play, I better start singing.

LP: Because he had graduated from composing.

AS: Well he completely exhausted all of the possibilities of so called jazz music. At that point I think we have to begin to give this music, to describe it in terms that describe all of its possibilities, its comprehension. For example, contemporary African American instrumental music because there is a difference between our instrumental and our vocal tradition. For example, Michael Jackson is not "a jazz singer", but Ella Fitzgerald is. And why. Because she's said to sing in the style of the horn.

LP: Yeah, sometimes she sounds like Dizzy Gillespie.

AS: Yeah, or bird. On that Lady be Good. It's probably one of the biggest scat records. She sings it with the Chick Webb orchestra. It comes from the 40s. I used to play it for my class. She has a solo on it that you would think was actually played by a horn. I mean a very sophisticated horn like Dizzy or Bird, [inaudible] a lot of singers we have who fall under that tradition. Our vocal tradition and our instrumental tradition are somewhat can be different. For example, we've got liturgical music, gospel music, quartets, the Blind Boys, the Swan Silvertones. Some of them are incredible and fantastic gospel groups. Our instrumental tradition, when I say contemporary instrumental African American music, I use the term instrumental, because I'm referring primarily to instruments and voices that can be related to the playing of the instruments, rather than jazz, I say that because I think jazz limits us to a particular definition.

LP: I agree with you on that, we have Sunny Fortune referred to as the young guys with an attitude.

AS: We've had them for a long time.

LP: Yeah. They're not so young now. Seems like they really had come on the scene now and said well jazz is this, it fits within this ... and they talk about what swing is ...

AS: Louis Armstrong ...

LP: And I'm saying I don't see you out here dancing with your woman, how in the hell you know what swing is? Cause you don't even dance. How you know how to swing. What kind of bullshit are you trying to give me. So they don't even know their own traditions, but they act like they know all of them, but they only participate selectively.

AS: Most of them have learned their tradition in the conservatory. Even guys like Wynton whose father's a very fine – Ellis is a great piano player. At the same time, I think Wynton puts more stock in his education as an academically, Juilliard trained musician. Which he should be proud of, he's a very good musician. But he does in the fact for example that his brother studied saxophone first with Charles [inaudible]. Charles told me that story we worked together. He said Branford used to be my student. But I suspect that Branford talks about the saxophones he wouldn't mention Charles Neville. Herbie Hancock [inaudible] you might think he would say Duke Ellington, but he said Stravinsky. I don't think if he heard Stravinsky around the house when he was a kid. That wasn't the case with me. My daddy used to play a whole bunch of blues around the house.

LP: Herbie Hancock said he was a classical player first, and he didn't get into jazz until somebody came to his school and played so much stuff that he couldn't play and messed him up.

AS: Maybe Andrew Hill. Andrew told me that story, that Herbie was very impressed by him when he heard him play.

LP: Probably was him. Now, I was teaching a class, Afro American music. So I'm teaching people who are not music people.

AS: Yeah. I know how that goes.

LP: Yeah I betcha you do. You probably had to deal with that same chord in class. So when I got to talk about 60s and I'm playing Trane and I'm playing something, it wasn't Interstellar Space, but it was late Trane and one of the students said how come we aren't playing nice songs, so we can know the melodies to. So I had to tell them ... I said now think about people in the street fighting for freedom, getting the shit beat out of them and they saying we shall overcome knowing they're gonna get beat and they're getting beat. Where's this song supposed to come from that you wanna hear? How can you such an expectation if they really expressing what they going through.

AS: Yeah, absolutely.

LP: So, this is the music by my way of thinking, the thing that made the music so real was that it's expressing the reality of the time, therefore how could it be restricted to convention and be real, because convention meant subservient.

AS: Absolutely, and ours has never been music that has configured exactly with convention, more so it has told it's own story and it's told our story in our own way. Frequently that has meant breaking all the rules.

LP: Like you said from the beginning though, is breaking the rules from the beginning if we made the rules according to western music.

AS: Absolutely.

LP: They broke the rules from day 1.

AS: Rollin Wiggins tells this story, he was auditioning for a scholarship for Juilliard, and I forget who was the director at the time, a very well-known composer, brought him into his office, and told him, I want you to break all the rules of counterpoint, that was his audition. And he got the scholarship. And this theory is that African American music works in just the opposite way that western music theory works. When he was asked to break the rules of counterpoint, it was something that he had been working with all his life. Showing how his music, he came from a family of preachers. In fact, he's the one that he says he taught McCoy how to use the pentatonic scale. He's out of Philly, he used to teach at University ... Dr. Wiggins, he's well known. He says that our music is in fact theoretically in many ways diametrically different. Theoretically from western classical music. When he was asked ... I'm trying to think of the composer, he's a well known composer. He was asked to break all the rules of counterpoint, it was something that he had already been giving a lot of thought to.

LP: That's an interesting exam to give somebody, because, if you gonna break the rules, how do you know if you're breakin' them if you don't know 'em.

AS: It's almost like thinking backwards and forwards at the same time.

LP: So then when Trane did what he did, we can't forget about that Trane was a conservatory trained guy. And McCoy.

AS: Trane went to Granoff.

LP: McCoy went to Curtis, right?

AS: Did he go with Curtis? I don't know, he might have. I knew him from the time he was 15. Yeah we played together when we were just young kids. Before McCoy even knew chords. I mean he would sometimes play the wrong chords.

And Lee Morgan used to say, he's say, we playing McCoy, he's gonna be playing the wrong chords. McCoy was only 15 at the time. And Lee was 16, but he was a genius. I mean he played all over town, with guys like Trane, much older players. That's why he was so important to me, I was a year older than he was, but he was really very, he showed me how to approach learning to play so-called jazz music on the saxophone.

LP: Lee Morgan was turnin' a corner, right at the end. When he came up with that [inaudible] was the last session, you know the one with the blue cover.

AS: Yeah, he was getting better and better, he was evolving, he was one of the most exciting players of this era.

LP: What he was playing, it was from intellectual standpoint, was very interesting. From that as a theorist looking at and comparing it to what was going on at the time, it was interesting. I don't mean it in a way like when you say somebody going to a concert and maybe you didn't really like it say oh yes that was interesting. I don't mean it like that at all. It was, it really ...

AS: Compelling.

LP: Compelling. He was going somewhere with those opera tunes and all.

AS: The opera he was writing in different rhythms at the time as I remember.

LP: Yeah writing these long forms of compositions and stuff.

AS: He still is. They're starting one in [in Miami or something inaudible]. He's got a big band, not a big band, maybe 9 pieces. They sound marvelous. But then again a lot of the music is written and I don't always get the swing out of that music. He really is a swinger, he can play. I don't always get that from the compositions. It's obviously the writing, it's interesting.

LP: So, that brings up another thing since you said about the swing, because, let's say somebody like Wynton and those guys, will use that word as criticism of certain other people. Like asking Cecil Taylor what separates his music from classical music. So swing as they refer to it, is that a necessary element for our music if the music is going to be good. Is it a necessary element?

AS: They never define what they mean by swing. What I mean by swing is dance. Dance elements, dance convention. Music which makes you feel, which has a kinetic, dynamic feeling that makes you wanna get up and dance. I call that music that swings. That could be James Brown, Wilson Pickett, it could be Coltrane, it could be whoever if the music has that quality of dance.

Woman's voice: Cecil was dancing' [cross-talk]

LP: Cecil, he was dancing on the piano.

AS: Well you know what he says. Cecil, of course, if you want to talk about the more intellectual,

he brings an intellectual, academic aspect to African American music. I remember as a young man, when I used to play with him, I spent a lot of time talking to him. He was a big influence on me in my philosophy of music. He's about 10 years older than I am. When we weren't practicing we would talk. And so one day he said when I play the piano, you know he studied dance, he studied formal classical dance. He said when I play the piano, I feel like my fingers are dancers on the keys. So his concept of dance is integral to his approach to music, whether we see that as jitterbug, or twists, or some popular dance. By swing he means that kind of swing, that is innate to his fingers and to his soul. And the dance he does, is his own dance, it's not a popular dance. So, I suppose when they speak of swing, they don't realize that his swing is the way he swings.

Woman's Voice : some musician now, some jazz musician are bring in the way that kept them from music, that's a way too. look what you said was doing with music, he pose near contemporary music

AS: It was in fact contemporary. He did things like release balloons, you could just hear the balloons deflating against electronic he prepared music. We did a concert here like that. He had 20 minutes of prepared music. [cross-talk] [inaudible] refused to play it. Even if you used to play that kind of music. Many people feel that kind of music doesn't swing. But I'm gonna show you it's writing from the point of you of swing. There are other aspects to African derived music. I mean all traditional African music isn't meant to be danced to. There are ritual forms which are sung, which in a sense can be compared to Coltrane, as his music evolves, he plays less swing and more ritual type music which expresses ideas, more so than provokes you to want to get up and dance. I think that part of our music has to be also looked at, the part that is not related to dance, but related more to ideas that express sociocultural meanings.

LP: Yes. Especially if we're talking about music as art. We think in western terms of music as art as opposed to music that's popular. And from the things that you said, and I have to agree with you ... that just because it's for people to dance to. Just because people like it doesn't exclude it from being art. Like when I hear Duke Ellington's suites, how can we say that that's not art, especially when we put it into historical context and realize when he did those things and think about what else was going on in the world of music at that time. That's art.

AS: It swung.

LP: And if we go back and talk about western music, would we say that Blue Danube, the waltz, is not art, because it's a waltz?

AS: People dance to it. That doesn't lessen the quality of musical creation.

LP: So, I'm hearing people talk about this swings, or this doesn't swing and they don't even dance.

AS: They don't even know what swing is.

LP: To them, they actually have the term down in the academy. What's the rhythm on this"oh it's a swing"... what they mean is it means ding ding da ding, and they mean that's a swing... I'm like you, what the hell does that have to do with swing necessarily. If it doesn't make me want to move, it's not swing. It could be ding ding da ding, or whatever it is.

AS: That's the way I look at it, and that's being lost in the music, as we become more and more academically focused, we begin to lose some of the primary elements that really existed always and we can find it in the spirituals, the gospels, in the jubilees. Some of those old numbers, they swing. If you go to one of those sanctified churches, and they beating the tambourines and people dancing, it doesn't get any better in the nightclub. But their focus is religious. We do have a liturgical element to our music which also swings.

LP: Yeah, because when you're in the church and they getting' down you wanna get up ...

AS: You wanna get up.

LP: And if you're in a band it better make you wanna get up.

AS: It make you wanna join the church, that's how I joined the church. Music was so good, the preacher called the people up, and I got up, I was baptized twice.

LP: It must have been good.

AS: It was good music.

LP: Which brings us back to that concert where you played and the people all up and that's what they wanted to hear, they came for that.

AS: Well hopefully.

LP: Oh they did. They knew what they were gonna hear, it was gonna get 'em up. I mean in Italy, we know how Italians are. The jokes we always tell about the comfort level of being in Italy, all the trains late, they fight over stuff.

AS: They are on strike. There was a restaurant in Italy that we went there and on one side it said out to lunch. When we came back we saw the other side it said on strike.

LP: So that quality is so important to all of our music, and you exemplify that. See that's the thing.

AS: We were together, in what year was it ...

LP: We started up, probably about 1980, probably 1982. Because of you I got to climb a pyramid in Mexico. John Betsch and I climbed the pyramid.

AS: Yea, I remember down in Mexico. Yeah absolutely. That was quite something. We were there for about a week

LP: Yeah. That's right. The first time we played together is when you had me join you in Rome.

AS: Oh yeah ...

LP: Theatrico Olimpico in Rome.

AS: I'm trying to think of that. That was a while ago.

LP: When we played in Mexico City. Arturo Sandoval was the opening act.

AS: Was Arturo there? I seem to kind of remember that.

LP: And at that time his show was more look what I can do.

[multiple conversation]

AS: He's a very good trumpet player.

LP: Yeah helluva trumpet player. For real. But man, I really appreciate your taking this time with me and just know that what I want to do is present what I present in the most positive light.

AS: Absolutely. And create new terminology, create definitions that have not been thought of, that really come out of your experience, that may even take you beyond terms like jazz and so on, and to the creation of the people's music out of the people's experience, which is what our music is. It has evolved from an instrumental place today to the spoken word. And I consider all that, if you will, avant-garde. It's outside of the context of what's been created by western art and western artists. Let me say it's context, it's been created within this context. But in a way it's gone beyond that because it has elements that come to us, that we have kept and nurtured, going back to Africa. Including the sound of instruments, the techniques that we use, the inclusion of elements, like vocal elements, kinetic elements, like dance. All that's in the music. It's the only music you'll find in the world like that. The music that actually provokes and makes people dance. Where dance is intrinsic to its creation. On the other hand, it doesn't have to include dance at all. It can become a ritual of music that has meanings in a more sociocultural.

LP: Yes, this music doesn't have a requirement of living up to western standards.

AS: Absolutely. You have no obligation to do that.

LP: And what I'm saying is in spite of that, it does it.

AS: It does it, yeah. If you want to make the comparison, the comparison could be me.

LP: That as the as the theorist I can look at it and say, it stands up and here's why. Here's what they're doing spontaneously or thinking spontaneously. It's way more involved than just spontaneous

AS: It's evolved.

LP: But, it's the same mental process, the same creative process as composition, you just don't get to sit there and erase the notes that you don't like.

AS: When you play that note, it's gone...you will only find this in our music. And as you say you can go back to the 16th, 17th century and there's kind of improvisational convention. It really doesn't, you can make comparisons, within the sense they don't compare. When you think of tribes in West Africa or East Africa and the dance, the rhythm so they can figure it in a way but in another way they don't.

LP: Music is cultural and the culture that this music is from is really specific and adds a statement of [cross-talk]

AS: That's what I think should be made clear. That we have own cultural priorities and definitions. It does not have to configure with western standards. Not at all. Simply because our music stands on it's own without western music. The interesting thing is that it is combined with western music and taking that music further than it might ever have gone. When I look at kids like Justin Bieber today and realize that they're coming out of Chuck D and guys like that, it tells us that we have created something that is constantly being imitated, even our language within music.

LP: Yes. Even the Beatles and Stones said they got their stuff from BB King, Little Richard, Chuck Berry and on and on. Theirs is derived from that.

AS: A lot of today's contemporary music, also not too traditional African American music, and to the evolution of African American music all over the world.

LP: Let's say we wanna give somebody, a student, a university level student a real education in what we call jazz or whatever we want to call it now. From what you said, and that I agree with completely, that maybe that education needs to start with playing some drums, some African drums and learning some African songs

and maybe play in a choral and such things and then maybe spending some time in the church, maybe play some blues for a while.

AS: Yeah. I think all that is important. The blues would probably be the way we would start today to introduce a student to that music. I was on a jury recently here in France and listened to young musicians, they were all quite expert, all French, very good musicians. One of the criticisms I made was that, too. First, I didn't think their music was very interesting 'cause it didn't swing. Secondly, that none of them played the blues. And to some degree, that is the basis of our music. I heard Lester Young in an interview that he did here in France and the interviewer asked him what do you think of blues? And he said I got big eyes, I got eyes for that. Then he said if you can't play the blues, you can't play shit.

LP: Yeah, see I'm with him on that and obviously you are.

AS: Absolutely. And that's where, no matter how much academic training a person has, especially in African American, it's musical soul begins in the black church and in the blues. What we call the blues. Maybe we should have another name for that.

LP: And then the music in the black church is just when people who play the blues wanna play in church.

AS: People in church wanting to start playing the blues. Like reverend Thomas Dorsey. Thomas A. Dorsey wrote "Take my Hand Precious Lord". Now he played piano for [Ma Rainey]. It wasn't until his wife died that he was thrown into such a state of depression, he stopped playing blues music and he decided to give all his efforts to the church. Liturgic music. And he wrote the song for his wife "Precious Lord Take My Hand". And he was known before as Georgia Tom Dorsey, he had his hat on the side, he played a bunch of blues for [Ma Rainey].

LP: Okay I'm gonna look him up.

AS: Yeah, after that he stopped playing blues music altogether. I saw an interview with him just before he died in his 90s, and he played just a little bit, just to recall the old days. But for years he hadn't played that. So blues is in a sense defines who we are. And there are so many ways to play it. These guys like Coltrane, Tatum, they show that. It's a free music if you listen to Chasing the Train. John completely turns the whole arrangement around, it's rather like composition. But it's not that, because he's playing outside that. Hey man, I gotta go and practice a little bit.

(Woman speaks french) The term jazz in my opinion is a french word, when they changed the two s into z's, it anglicized. I

AS: Jass, just like it was spelled in New Orleans.

[French]

AS: So the term jazz in my opinion, is actually a French word originally. Which became, when they changed the two Ss to two Zs, it was anglicized.

LP: I wouldn't doubt it at all.

AS: It's logical. 'Cause they were there. And it's their word. And it's not an English word.

LP: And if Louisiana wasn't French, a lot of stuff would be different. Yeah I mean it's because it was French, don't think that they could have a Congo Square.

AS: And they could use the drum where it wasn't used in other areas.

LP After my man Nat Turner, there weren't gonna be any drums.

AS: No more drums. As Duke says, another kind of music evolved in the east coast. Because before Mississippi, they say the blues comes from Mississippi, but actually the blues was brought to Mississippi, from places like Virginia, Georgia, South Carolina, those were the original 13 colonies, from the east coast. So when we talk about jazz coming from New Orleans, in fact, it probably along in some elements were already developing on the east coast in 1804 in the 19th century. blacks arrived in the new world just around 1690s, definitely entities.

The slave balls were big events going on around that time much after 1690s, definitely in the 17th centuries where they became big entertainment entities.

APPENDIX B
INTERVIEW WITH DAVID MURRAY

Longineu Parsons = LP
David Murray = DM

LP: So what I'm gonna write about concerning you is how your whole conversation is so serious. Yeah, and about how you have this, from what I can see, what I know you have this quest for knowledge to know what's happening. And to be honest, the honest opinion we were talking about earlier, and so then I would say from playing music with you and listening to you, that this is all that's reflected in your music and music is so honest. It's who you are.

DM: It better be at this point.

LP: But at any point. In New York in 1982.

DM: Oh yeah. Oh, we were serious. We were serious. We were serious when we came over here the first time in '76. I was looking at the thing with James the other day and we had done a duet and we called it Solomon's Sons, and I was tripping off the picture. Finally we both had on white shoes. We had white shoes and you know our version of a big tie or whatever sickest shit we thought we had on ... But we was in the [Stedley or Studio?] Museum, we were playing a duet in Harlem.

LP: Uh huh.

DM: I mean that's a high level museum. It wasn't just in ... we weren't playin' in no chitlin circuit we were playing at the [Stedley/Studio] Museum. A duet and we saw that Solomon that's what we recorded it as. That cat had, he brought it out for us to sign and so we were sitting there reminiscing over shit and James said man you got me started in Europe. I said no I got you started when you stayed at my apartment for a year when you came to New York. That's when I got you started [laughter] Had to remind him. You people forget, people forget when they stay at your house for a year. That's where it started you know a year is a long time.

LP: Yeah.

DM: Cat come to your house. Butch came and stayed at my house for a year. I came to Ray Anderson's house and stayed for 3 months, 2 months. He was like man uhh, you know um you been here 2 months man and maybe it's time you get your own place, you know what I'm sayin'. And I was like, wow all right. So that's when I got a job. I got a job playing on 51st and 8th Avenue, with this cat named, uh. He was a good drummer man, Spooner. Eddie Spooner, and he played for this pimp. There was a cat, he was a pimp. And he had different

prostitutes and really liked jazz and so he had us ... we were just a prop. We had like a trio. We would play and then some old raggedy looking person would come in and go in the bathroom and wash up and then they'd have a drink and then leave. Change their clothes. I didn't know. It took me about a week to figure out what was happening. Then finally I realized what was up. 7 days a week it was \$15. So we were at \$15 a night for 7 days and I must have did that for 6 months, and that's how I got a really amazing partner. Finally, I started getting other gigs around the city. But I was really thankful for that gig. \$15 a night plus drinks. You could drink.

LP: Yeah, okay.

DM: And um, those worldly cats in the band would come and sit in sometimes. He was the grandson, of that chick who used to sing Love for Sale (Love for sale. tah dah tah tadh).

LP: Any number of people have sung it.

DM: No the one who made it a hit.

LP: Yeah.

DM: The house, not Anita O' Day. Who else sang this scat. Anyway, she had a grandson that he was kind of off in the rocker. Dina Washington.

LP: Oh Dina Washington did this?

DM: Actually it was her son. But he had a – it didn't go all the way up to – the elevator didn't go to the 13, so he would get on the drums sometimes, and he would get mad when he came in and out. Yeah. Then he would destroy the gig. But that was only really distraction. But yeah that was the 51st that was my first gig in New York. I can say that. That's what got me out of Ray's crib.

LP: Uh huh. You had to really want to play music, otherwise you could have done something else.

DM: Well, you know Arthur was a security guard at a porno spot?

LP: Arthur Blythe?

DM: Yeah, and I really didn't wanna do that kind of stuff. I had made up my mind that whatever I did, no matter how bad it was, it had to have something to do with me having to playing the horn. So, I had to have that horn in my mouth. That was my whole thing. Whatever job, no matter how bad it was ... Now I would do almost anything but I didn't ever play on the street. Some cats, after me a lot of

cats played on the street. And they made good money and reputations on the street. Cats do it now. They made a thing out of ... But you gotta work on that.

LP: Yeah I did it with Omar Hakim's father.

DM: Okay. Okay. Wow. Okay.

LP: You have to treat it like a business, 7 days a week.

DM: You have to treat it like that. But I just never had that, I always seen it as something else. I'm not gonna do that, and I'm not gonna be a garbage man, because I had been a garbage man before at Berkeley. My father was a garbage man. I washed dishes and stuff like that. I decided when I came to New York I wasn't doin' none of that stuff. I wasn't gonna do nothing that had nothing to do with music.

LP: How old were you when you got in New York?

DM: 20.

LP: 20. Okay. Yeah moving to New York at 20 years old deciding to do nothing but music, that's commitment.

DM: I didn't move to New York. I came to New York on independent study. And I really hadn't intended to move. Shit just started jumping off and ... Actually there was a turning point when Doug interviewed Dewey Redman one time. And he said man put that pencil down and pick up the saxophone. That's what turned me around. When he said that, oh Dewey wants to practice with me, that's cool, I was like yeah. And that's when I wrote Dewey's Circle. Because you know, Dewey had said man, quit acting like a student, come on over here with us. That's what he was saying. And I had, at that point I was looking for that, but I didn't know how to ask. I was interviewing people like Ornette. I interviewed McCoy. I had an interview with John Cage, Cecil Taylor.

LP: Yeah.

DM: So I played with Cecil. It was a great experience, playing with Cecil that early. He let me sit in with them a couple of times at the Five Spot and that really, and that really uhh, made my, that really brought me along really fast to play with him at the Five Spot. But you know, I sat in with Sun Ra and everybody who came to the Five Spot. Because that was the last year of the Five Spot. In '75, the year I came was the last year. Towards the end of December man, Five Spot closed around Christmas time, that was it. It wasn't open in '76. That was the last year of the Five Spot. [inaudible] and that place was legendary. Baraka talks about that in the book. And I had done a solo concert that year and uhh ... and the

Termini Brothers they had seen I had some – wait was that '75? Yeah that was '75. And I had a friend, John French had a pillow store down the street around St. Marks' place so I figured well ... I convinced him to do a solo concert there because he had all these pillows he was selling. It's a pillow store. So we did a concert and everybody sat on pillows. And I had to place like, I had some skates, and I was... That's why I was big in loft jazz, because I had skates.

LP: Okay.

DM: I had some skates and I had a backpack, and I had tape and staples, and I was like the loft guy. I would put up other people's posters. I had a little system, I'd put them up. I could do this whole corner man in 3 minutes. Cass would see me and say man hook me up and they gave me \$5 dollars ... I gotcha. [inaudible] Lewis, hey man give you \$10 for doing it up kid. So that's how, that I think more than my plan, I think that was one of the reasons I was one of the leaders of loft jazz, because I was good at putting shit up. Putting up posters and shit.

LP: Yeah, because it seems like ...

DM: It was free enterprise.

LP: Seems like you've always seen that.

DM: It was about going to a cat and saying, and it wasn't even just lofts. I'd go to a coffee house. Hey man, let's see some music in here man it's all dead up there ... can I do a concert here? Go to the pillow shop, hey man, I can do a concert right over there. I bet you could make some money. I'll give you like half the money, 25% or something. And do all the advertising man let's do it like two Sundays from now. That was my skill. I see a place and I see me in it. And so I did it solo. Sometimes with bass player, with a drummer, and that was loft jazz. That's all it was, just turning something that was nothing into something.

LP: Ah ha. Yeah, so you just went your way.

DM: Yeah.

LP: Did it your way.

DM: Well, I had no name. The bebop cats was playing at Sweet Basil and other clubs [inaudible] all that. I mean you had to be famous to be over here. So I concentrated on the east side. The lower east side. Then we had to move to Soho, then we had to move west. It was part of a movement. We had to move to Soho and then west. Then we moved up Chelsea. I mean there were years where I didn't even go to midtown. The only reason I go to midtown is to get some reeds. Very interesting.

DM: You gotta clear your own path sometimes, and kind of defy things. If you go along the way you'll just be another one of them. Be a follower. I was never really good enough to do that. I mean growing up, playing the saxophone. I had to play flute to get in college. [inaudible Sam Newton got me through inaudible] and that was it, you know, I got in, but it wasn't me. I assumed it wasn't really accepted. So I always had to be apart from things. I just learned how to include that, in what I do and let it augment my music. Strings, it could be strings ... I learned how to write for strings ... I remember I did my first string concert in New York, the public theater, and I did all ballads. And it was wonderful, claps all around, all my ballads. Next time I tried to get a little bit more - got good reviews. The next time I tried to get a little more creative with the strings. I bombed. I bombed terribly - bad reviews, NY Times, everybody said it was horrible.

LP: Okay, but now, bombed because of their reviews, how do you feel about that music?

DM: It sucked.

LP: It did, okay.

DM: It truly sucked. They were right. [laughter] They were totally right, but that's what I get for going out of my world. That's what I get for trying to step into something that I really didn't know about. So what it did it challenged me to actually study how strings, how you have to understand the strings. You can't do a D flat blues with strings, it ain't gonna work. Just don't think you can do [inaudible] with strings.

LP: No.

DM: So it was a lesson for me. But I had to get - I grew up under a microscope. When I left college, I was 20. I knew how to play a saxophone, I had taken some theory classes in high school and yeah, I've been playing a long time. But as far as being a composer, I wasn't there yet. So all of my stuff had been trial and error, failing, and like what you were saying before. I failed miserably. I give people songs and they give it back to me and wouldn't say nothing. [laughter] I went through a whole period of that. And then I learned, okay well you know there are certain criteria you have to adhere to in order to be accepted in the art. And I learned by being [inaudible] that okay, I'm not gonna do that again, but I'm gonna keep going on that path. Oh yeah your big band it sounds too heavy handed. Okay well then I'll learn how to write them differently. Learn how to spread everything out. You don't have to double everything. Everything needs to be [inaudible] There's reasons why you don't double things. I had to learn all that by process and now I know. But it took me 40 years to learn it. And now I know and now I don't get gigs for big things because there ain't none. So I don't have a chance to, unless I put together a big project and really get some funding to put behind it, I don't get a chance to do those things that I really like to do, that

I learned how to do by trial and error. There's no more trial and error now because if I hit New York with a big band, it's gotta be right. And I'm not gonna do it unless it's right. The days of the Monday night big bands are over. If you gonna show up with a big band now, it's gotta be right, be tight you know. All the people out there watching, everybody's watching, everybody's criticizing, everybody's doing this, everybody's doing that. But now that I know how to do it, they just want me in quartet and trio, so that's what I'm doing. But I have a lot of things in the back that I've learned from a lot of great people. I watched Sun Ra, I watched Cecil. I watched Cecil when he did his big band. He was great, the way he channels information and hands it out. I mean he could take - Cecil could take a phrase, a four bar phrase and he'll make a composition out of that. Other people can't seem to do that. He'll go really inside ... can you remember the third stream and all what they did. All that, it was beautiful. But what they did was just really just went inside of the composition itself. And they just made it [moto?] or they concentrated on just maybe two or three notes. I interviewed John Cage when I first came to New York and he was talking about ... And I listened. John Cage was one of the most creative cats. Baraka talks about that in his book, the Autobiography of LeRoi Jones by Amiri Baraka.

LP: I need to read that.

DM: I just, it's one of my bibles now. Because it's really about ... It's about music, really. Even more than it's about poets, revolutionary poets and activism, it's about music. The musicians are really high on his list. He's always talking about Sonny Murray, he's talking about John Cage. Those cats, they were all connected in the art scene in the 60s and late 50s.

LP: Yeah, see the composers are identified.

DM: Of course. George Russell ... I mean, my friend was with me the other day when we ... at my concert and he know that we did stuff we did Strayhorn the other day and I was featured with Italian band and they brought me in. I did a couple, I did Money Jungle and I did Chelsea Bridge. My arrangement. I had actually lost the arrangement so I did it on the train on the way up. I just did what I thought I did before and changed it a little bit. I actually made it better. But ... and then my friend, when we did the concert, my friend he stayed and hung out with James for a couple of days and he said man that was the first time I seen a jazz concert where the guy was conducting the whole time. I said well we did that before. He says but not like that. It was like it was a classical concert and it wasn't a big band. It was like a, six horns. I've never seen that before. Like six horns and the rhythm section plus me. He said I just never seen that before, it was really different. Those guys, they performed it really well but when it was time to solo, they just looked at you and then your job obviously was to put some life into it and that's what you did. I said yeah, that was pretty much what the guy was thinking that he would do. That's why I was there. But the guys were very good musicians. They played the shit out of Such Sweet Thunder.

LP: Uh huh.

DM: The cat he had truncated the arrangements from a big band and it did sound – I mean it sounded more harmonious than it usually is. With Ellington there's more dissonance. It's like listening to a lot of grind and rubs. But here it was even more consonance. There was too much consonance ... it was just too nice.

LP: Too much consonance, too nice.

DM: Yeah it was just way too nice. It's like everything was just, the chords were all complete, it's like a light handed piano player did the arrangement, which is what happened because the guy really couldn't play. He conducted the band, that's why he's a conductor. It needed the edge. But the people liked the concert because it reminded you of what Ellington did in one way but then in the other ... it didn't to me.

LP: Uh huh. Because Ellington was listening to the cutting edge people at his time.

DM: Yeah, I mean like when I played in the Charlie Mingus Super Band. We did a live concert with Jon Faddis here in Paris. Oh man, Clifford Jordan – I was sitting between Clifford Jordan and John Handy. And they were all pissed off because somebody else had done the arrangement, and not me. All the flat nines and plus nines were not in the chords. And all the rubs had then kind of taken away. Again, it was too consonant.

LP: Was that who was Sy or must have been Coleman ...

DM: Sy Coleman had done those – he had done the arrangements.

LP: So he watered it down.

DM: Yeah.

LP: I don't know why they expected anything else to come from him.

DM: Well, that's what happened with the repertory. That's what I get when I, when they say a band is going - when the leader dies ... for me that's it man I don't know. I think the guys are gonna be turning over in their graves man. Other people man, you might find – Even the Ellington band, if he had a band two years ago, they might be playing the same arrangements, but it ain't the same.

LP: No, it couldn't be.

DM: It's not the same.

LP: I never bothered to hear any of ...

DM: You know, leaders ... those leaderless orchestras, you know where the leader died [inaudible]. Even I cried when I went to see Sun Ra. Even him. When Sun Ra had died it was the first time I had seen Sun Ra without Sun Ra. I felt a tear on my face ... I said what the hell is going on. I had to slap myself because why you crying I said you missed Sun Ra, that's why. That man, that man was dissonance plus. I mean, he was a composer and then he was an instant composer too. He knew what fired it though. Man there's stories about him making fire and the fire spotted ... him making fire, they see him fire and they see him smoke but then it wasn't no fire then the smoke went away. It's a legend now, you know Sun Ra. I don't know if that's music or what it is, but Sun Ra was very special.

LP: Very.

DM: I mean, composers, man ...

LP: So without the dissonance, how does the music move anywhere if there's not dissonance?

DM: We got to stop it from going into this repertory. If you gonna play Satin Doll again, even Duke Ellington was tired of Satin Doll. I don't know how somebody's gonna put it in repertory. It's just gonna be like ... I don't know it's like watching Alvin Ailey Company, you know, of now, compared to what it was.

LP: Oh yeah, with Alvin Ailey.

DM: Yeah, without the principal dancers, without [cross-talk] It's just very difficult to watch. Some things have to die is what I'm trying to say. Some things need to die. Like dinosaurs, they died, they needed to die for us to live, you know. Some of this stuff has gotta die in jazz. It's gotta go. And like I need to stop talking and do something and really find out who they really are. The composers really need to go inside and stop hiding in the repertoire, in this whole repository of detachment of songs and of ways to arrange that are so tired and old, which talks a lot about the guy who was working a lot with Miles Davis ... Gil, talks about Gil. I got a tape of Butch [Morris] that talks about how Gil would, every day he would change one note and see what that rub would do to the whole ensemble. One, just one. Maybe only in one section. Maybe in the bass or maybe in the piano, maybe in the trombone section. When you change it, I mean that's real living composers, real living composer. I mean Gil used to come up and see our Monday night big band all the time. He loved it. He loved how we take the music and destroy it and bring it back. He loved Butch. He loved what Butch was doing. He was into very creative things, you know. He wasn't just a sedentary cat who knew his harmony and only just dealt with that. Like that was King, you know, he liked to challenge himself.

LP: Yeah. Okay it's obvious that Gil was dealing with Jimi Hendrix all the way back in the 70s.

DM: Yeah, see there. John Cage was like that. He challenged himself. So but what if, I mean those cats ... I imagine that John Cage, when I interviewed him, I wish I had the interview. I imagine, it took me an hour for him to say a word in the interview.

LP: Oh yeah?

DM: Yeah. He didn't even say – I asked a whole bunch of questions and he didn't say nothing. Then he says, you know silence is where we all have to start. Then I shut up. Because that was him telling me to shut up. And then listen to what I have to say. I kept asking questions, but I didn't understand. I wasn't old enough. I was 20, I didn't know shit. I should have done that from the start, but I didn't know. I was a brash young man, inquisitive. Trying to figure out my way and who to ask stuff. I asked Ornette the same shit and he nodded out the first time ...

LP: Oh yeah? Oh okay.

DM: Yeah. He's brilliant, a brilliant one, but still stone cold. He'd wake up and, play some pool and we talked shit for a while. It took me three days to get an interview out of him.

LP: Oh man.

DM: It wasn't like he don't sit down, or he don't talk ...

LP: Yeah, well it seems like the creative process has some torment that goes along with it. We put historically great figures ...

DM: The problem is to me – you're right. The problem is that there have been so many, when you speak of the avant-garde, what we call "avant-garde", in New York ... When I first came to New York, I didn't realize that I was way ahead of a lot of people. Because a lot of people that played the saxophone, they were true charlatans.

LP: Yes.

DM: And I didn't want to bull shit. But there were a lot of true charlatans. I mean cats that would play between A and B flat and stay there all day. Then it would just get louder, and the mouth would bleed, and louder ... overtone that into an octave lower.

LP: Some of those guys moved to Paris.

DM: Yeah a lot of them moved to Paris. You know who they are. We don't have to name them.

LP: No we don't. We know exactly.

DM: What pissed me off is that I had come up under Benny Carter and Bobby Bradford and Arthur Blythe. So when they started comparing me to those guys, I knew something was wrong. I had to move on out from there.

LP: Uh huh.

DM: I mean I'm talking about just playing the saxophone-wise, I was no composer then. I didn't really know how to ... I could write a melody, but that would be about it. I might can make a song, but ... I read Frank Wright and I just remember I showed him about ten bebop tunes, note by note, you know without the music. You know when you do that, [inaudible] we were sharing together. Then we get together about three months later, and he didn't know them no more. I said but we went over that. He said ... he learned them. But then he didn't know them no more. So it was at that point that I realized that Frank was tone deaf. I had never met a musician that was tone deaf before. But that in itself was some of the quality of who he was. So there's a lot of people like that, that had a certain quality of Frank Wright. This cat would play that A to B flat thing until the cows came home, but he couldn't play a tune. But you know, he made a name for himself. So all of a sudden, I'm lumped in with these guys and I realized then I don't wanna be here. I love these guys, but I don't wanna be here.

LP: Yeah, it's not appropriate for you.

DM: Well, because I had been under Bobby and Arthur and John, these three cats were virtuosos on the instrument. So then I realized the thing that I had to do to put myself apart from these other guys, the charlatans, who made a name for themselves. I'm not saying that they were not relevant, I'm not saying that. I just couldn't hire them to play in my band. So I had to move on out and change my music and move in a different direction. That's what I did and that's what defined my career. I moved out, because you listen to ... One time I lost a gig. I was trying to get a gig doing some, doing some writing in L.A., and somebody sent the guy who directed a trio record I had done really early on and I didn't get that job. That's what he does. He's gonna write for my movie, this guy, and you know we was out. We were like "oh no", this could be a movie, this could be the soundtrack for a train wreck in about 3 seconds maybe, but, I mean, I totally got discredited, so ... So your past can mess up your future, you know.

LP: Yes.

DM: So that happened to me a lot. I remember when they did that thing Big River on Broadway. My name was up, and I had to be a composer for that. I remember I had a big band rehearsal and all the people from the theatre came down. My cats didn't show up. They were late. My big band. Cats just walkin' in ... that was it. That was New York. This is how ... Then somebody had the nerve to say well you should've told us that these people were gonna be here. I said well I told you to be here. Then they talkin' about how come you didn't say we was going to be doing a thing for Big River. I said well I don't even know, we certainly not doing it now. But the rehearsal was at 12, not 2. And so, you know, I lost that. But that's what happened, you know it's New York. New York shit comes up shit goes down and you can't ... can't get upset about it. I was upset then, but I'm not now.

LP: Now before you were talking about people liking this and not liking that. For business of course, we have to have people like us to a certain extent in order to get work. But when it comes down to who you really are, do you really care?

DM: Um, that's a good question. Because uhh ... no I don't. When it comes down to it ... I think the spirituality of what I do is gonna come through. And it's gonna win me the prize if it was my prize to have anyway. Maybe it wasn't my prize to have. I've heard people tell me to my face ... You know, like I had the cat at the Blue Note tell me, you know, years ago, says well you know you'll never work here at the Blue Note because you represent the same kind of thing, and we don't want that in here. So we can't hire you because if we hire you, then it's gonna open the door to all those other guys from the lower east side. And if we have you, then it's gonna take our credibility down. I said okay well maybe - I'm playing at the Blue Note next week. I played at all the Blue Notes now. Time changes a lot of things. People die. People get fired. What was avant-garde 30 years ago is not avant-garde now.

LP: Yeah, so the term is not literal anymore.

DM: It's not really good, at the time it's not working that well.

LP: I was looking for another term to use, but that's just that has kind of stuck with that.

DM: People know that term. I mean, I went to teach in Branburg High School in Denmark. I had named my class, but they called my class free music. I just call it free music because David Murray's free music class they had the soprano player, Lacy had a class. A lot of different people had that class. But my class was called free music for some reason. So I used Beaver Harris' phrase and I crossed it out when I walked in on the blackboard. I crossed it out and said free music means that we don't get paid. That was Beaver Harris' answer to that, so

that's what I wrote. And we ended up in that class playing Murray's Steps. You know about Murray's Steps?

LP: No.

DM: I'll give it to you, but uhh ... by the end of the two weeks, every class I walked down the hallway and there were 80 men and 80 women, exactly. And there were about 30 practice rooms all in a row. After 2 weeks, all the classes, everybody in there were playing Murray's Steps at different tempo. All the way down the hallway. There some hard ass changes. But you know that's my answer to giant steps.

LP: Oh, okay.

DM: It's harder than giant steps.

LP: Okay. Yeah I would love to have that.

DM: Yeah. I thought you might have played it but I guess not. And I have done big band arrangements of it, I've done octet arrangements, different kinds of arrangements. But Murray's Steps ... you know... Anyway I guess I don't know how I did that and then Lacy said man how come you ... then they ended Lacy's class. They wanted to play my composition in his class. You know, he didn't give a shit. He got into it too. [laughter] But it was a cool ... L Shankar was there. Everybody uhh ... It was interesting. Brian Smith was there with Moncur. What's her name? Sherry's daughter, uh Sherry's step daughter ... not her, but her real father who is [Amadou Djar]. He's a percussion player in synagogue. He was teaching a course there too. L Shankar, the violin player with [Bobby] ... who was there, we all had a ball. We had a concert, teachers, it was fantastic. I really had a good time. Now you know, they put you with all kind of different people, and after a [inaudible - while their name was when I started playing with ,] and the name starts to wear off, the avant-garde label starts to fade. But then it comes back. Depends on who you play with. But now it comes back, it still comes back but then it puts me apart in a better way. Whatever that I build with coming from the left and going to the right are more center really. Whatever has happened has worked for me. So I always these days I just try not to define my music by those terms. I just try to call it what my name is.

LP: And see, that point of view fits very much where I'm coming from about what this music is now. Once Cecil was really pissed off at Wynton Marsalis. He said "you know what that "Vinton" said to me?"

DM: Oh yeah I remember the whole period. I remember when he stopped being pissed, we were all together when he stopped.

LP: Oh, they alright now?

DM: Well, I was there because they did um, they did like some kind of a movie or something and they were following us around. Wynton had invited all of the avant-garde because he wanted to include the avant-garde but he wanted people to know what it was. He invited me, he invited Cecil, he invited the World Sax Quartet, he invited different people from what he called out. And he tried to explain it to his ... because he was gonna do a concert and he was gonna include us all of a sudden, put us in the concert. Like he was gonna present us.

LP: Uh huh ...

DM: So he wanted to know what we really meant. He wanted to define what I meant when I wrote [inaudible]. What am I actually doing musically. He wanted to know why Cecil played those what's new changes even though he wasn't playing What's New. He wanted to know all these things. You know Stanley had gotten to his head. For a long time there, he would open his mouth and he would sound like Stanley. And everybody knew it. And then after a while, they went off on each other. It all went to hell. Finally, Albert Murray stopped talking to Stanley. I mean there was a whole legacy of shit that went on up there.

LP: Oh yeah.

DM: Now, he's by himself. He still talks to Stanley. I go over to Stanley's house sometimes, he calls. But it ain't the same. He had to put Stanley far apart, you know. But he's learned, he and his brother ... I used to go to Italy and the cat would play me a tape of what Branford had said about me on the tape so I could hear his words. And I read it in Italian, but I was like, did he really say that? Then the cat went back and got the tape of what he said. Man, he called me everything, except the child of God. And I asked him I said I didn't know you felt that way about me. He says, and this is ... Now, we talk about that shit now. He said man I was young, I said a lot of stupid shit. I said [inaudible]. That's true and your brother was even younger and said a lot of dumb shit and they're embarrassed about it ...

LP: Okay, [cross-talk] Cecil was saying that what is it that separates your music from European classical music. What I say about it is what we call the avant-garde in jazz is when the musicians were so progressive that they said fuck all these distinctions. I'm gonna get the music from wherever I can, take all these influences and make music, record music, not try to say well we play jazz and we're going to be separate over here. Because that's not, to me that's not a reflection of the world that we live in.

DM: No. When Sun Ra said he was looking for Saturn, he wasn't bullshitting. That's where his inspiration was coming from. It wasn't coming from Stravinsky. He could care less, and I care less too. But you know, we always have these negroes who always have to be in the middle to define the rest of us. And that's

what Stanley's problem is, that's what Wynton's problem is. They have to be the explainers to white people of what we're actually doing. As if it needed an explanation.

LP: And if you could explain it with words, what are we doing making the music?

DM: I think what our job is supposed to be is reflect the society that we live in. We supposed to be a [inaudible] that the society can pound itself against. We're supposed to tell people when to stop and when to go. We supposed to let people know that maybe humanity is meant for a change. I mean I'm reading Ezekiel right now. And when he seen that wheel, it had lions faces, it had wheels that didn't move, it had wheels that moved, it had wheels that had wings on it, it had all kinds of wheels. Have you read Ezekiel?

LP: Yeah.

DM: Lately?

LP: Not lately, no.

DM: That's avant-garde. Now, when we get to what Ezekiel saw ... Ooo that's the way to go because you know, what's expected of us as human beings is not even being closed to being achieved in music right now. We stopped somewhere along the line, especially in jazz. We stopped and all of a sudden everybody's got a CD, everybody used to have card, everybody's got their own company, like you.

LP: Mm hmm.

DM: Which is good, in some instances but in other cases it's not because it's terrible. There's so much turmoil in more music out there that's ever been, it's more musicians that's ever been, it's more bad musicians that has ever been, and because of marketing, they think that they're as good as the people who are actually good. So you have to fight. You have to define yourself really clearly these days as to who you are. Otherwise you'll get lost in the shuffle. That's what I think.

LP: So, how would you define yourself?

DM: As a bullheaded saxophone player who really don't give a fuck about nobody.

LP: All right [laughter]. I mean, in the world we live in, if you're not stubborn enough to be that, how can you do anything to make sense ...

DM: I'm reading Ezekiel and I'm reading Mike Tyson. Have you read the Mike Tyson book?

LP: No.

DM: This boy was gifted, completely stupid, went through millions of dollars. He got a tattoo on his face because he said he was ugly. He defied everything, he was a beast, he was labeled. Every time he went to a state he had to register as a sex offender. He fought his way out of all kind of financial holes. And he won. Finally, he won. Now he's seeing the best psychiatrists in the country, in the world. And he survived and he's still breathing, and he doesn't wanna fight anymore because he lost the heart for it. And now he's figuring out a way to still be an entertainer. Spike helped him a lot. When they did that one man show, and his book Undisputed Truth. There it is right there. I love it I mean along with Ezekiel. It's the worst thing you can read and the best thing you can read at the same time. [laughter] Mike Tyson ... I mean he was supposed to have been dead 12 times over. He talks about doing a half pound of stuff and going to fight somebody.

LP: Oh no. You mean the blow?

DM: Mm hmm.

LP: And then go and fight?

DM: Uh huh. The shit on those pages is terrible. Terrible, terrible. He's supposed to have been dead.

LP: Yeah, really.

DM: But he's not. And I met Mike Tyson one time and when I met Mike ... I've seen him twice but I met him one time ... I was on Crenshaw at the hotel where uh, what's that lady that used to do the angel story ... Della Reese. She was preaching ... me and you used to go to that church. I had just got back from Europe, I was with my son, Mingus and I had my hat on, I had my bag, and I had my saxophone ... And he was getting ready to go on a picnic with somebody so we're sittin' on top of a car and he came over and said who are you man? He come ask me who I was. I said, I'm David Murray, Mike, how you doing? Hey man what's happenin'? And he was like, I wasn't sure who you were. I said, I'm a jazz musician. He said you got any sides with you? Hey man but you could check it out. I'm sure he checked me out. But you know, that's the Mike I met. But I had seen Mike 20 years before that. We were in the World Trade Center one time and there was an electric storm at the World Trade Center and we were at the top, so we couldn't go down. So we all had to stay in the restaurant. Expensive, very nice. He was there with his boys, and said :”Hey bitch, bring me some pie”. Talkin’ to the waitress man. “Hoe”... I was like ... I was embarrassed. The way he and his boys were carrying on. I had my kid there. It was terrible. But I've seen the difference between then and now and I'm sure he's different

than that now, but ... He was off the hook. He was worse than any rapper you would ever see. That's Mike Tyson. But I mean people change. He got beat up enough I mean he beat up enough people. When he got beat up by Lennox Lewis he said I don't wanna fight again, I ain't fightin', he can whoop my ass, i don't wanna fight him. There's no more fight in me. And he finally admitted there's no more fight so he had to figure out a way to get out of that game. He used to beat up Don King. Physically.

LP: Really?

DM: He busted his eye socket and broke his nose and all kind of shit. See Muhammad Ali, they would talk to him, but Mike would punch him. You stole money away from me BAM! He got on a fight with him in the car, he ended up having to get out of the car, he left him on the highway, him and his girlfriend and his daughter. You know, he was out, this cat was out.

LP: He left Don King in the Highway?

DM: No, No, Don King left him.

LP: Oh.

DM: Because he had a suit for a 100 million against Don King. Then he was going against his lawyers and kept getting money underhand, on the other side. So that Don King would think that he was gonna drop the suit. He gave him half a million here, half a million there. Because it was a 100 million dollar suit. He wouldn't tell his lawyer but he was going underneath and getting half a million from Don, a million here, 2 million ... Trying to get Don to drop the case, but he never dropped it. Then, people around him, his handlers, they started talking to Don King under the table from another side.

LP: Oh.

DM: Then they convinced him to go bankrupt, chapter 11. And then he did that. Then the case got thrown out, so Don King only ended up only having to pay 14 million. Because he went Chapter 11, so it had to go to another judge. His life was complicated. To me he was avant-garde. That's an avant-garde negro there. If you wanna talk about avant-garde, I think it's him. Not me. [laughter] You got a loaded firecracker and you give him 100 million dollars and see what he'll do.

LP: Yeah, but see I'd like to think of avant-garde as being, trying to do something positive.

DM: Oh he did some positive. He knocked some people out.

LP: Yeah so he entertained all of them.

DM: He entertained us all. He knocked people out, he got the bum of the month club going ... you know anyway I'm not here to talk about him.

LP: That's right [laughter].

DM: But boy, between him and Ezekiel I don't know. We have some great composers out there. We have people that are incredible.

LP: Who do you feel that's incredible out there?

DM: Right now?

LP: Yeah.

DM: George Russell. Is he still alive?

LP: I haven't heard anything contrary, but he must be a pretty old guy if he is.

DM: He's probably pretty old. When I was in Reno the other day I met the ex-wife of that cat that James used to always study. He was a composer, a black composer. I don't remember his name.

LP: [inaudible]

DM: No, the black one. But he only died maybe 15 years ago. He lived out in Long Island. James studied with him. I'll have to go back and get his name. You know when people died 15 years, you forget their names.

LP: Yeah.

DM: It happens, you know. But he was great. Anthony Davis. Bryson. Roscoe. Cats that have survived a lot of stuff. Cecil. Frank Foster was really out there, towards this year. The best jazz cat is a tenor player and had a brother who played bass. You know the short cat, he got a brother play bass, live out in long island. You know two brothers, they from Philly. He's the best jazz composer. Right now he does big band. You know he does the computer thing too. Jimmy Heath.

LP: Oh Jimmy Heath, oh yeah okay.

DM: Yeah Jimmy... I think Jimmy's about the best right now.

LP: Yeah, okay.

DM: In jazz, I mean if i can say so. He would be the Thad Jones of now.

LP: What is it about his music that makes you feel that way?

DM: He just knows all the nuances man. He knows the nuances of the saxophone and he translates that into the big band. He studied all the traditions. If you wanted to do something for Basie, like some Basie-esque he wanted to do [inaudible]. He knows how to esque, we say. He knows how to do all the esque. You know Basie wouldn't take a song unless it sounded like Basie. If you wrote a song that was just a big band chart, he wouldn't want it. Trombone player he's pretty good too. He went to Berkeley. What's his name, dark skin brother who play trombone, a crazy mother fucker, he's a good [inaudible]. I haven't seen him in a while, I forget his name too. This is one of these Alzheimers interviews you know ... you know the guy but you forget his name. You know everything about him. You know, dark skinned brother, he plays with the Mingus Dynasty Band. You know him. He played with my big band. He went to Berkeley. He's Craig's band. Craig [inaudible]. But I mean if you're talking about ... there's this guy out there, Chad, what's his name, Chad Fisher, he's pretty tight out in Hollywood. He does some music for Shonda Rhimes stuff on Hollywood, you know the thing about the president. You know the president he loves this black chick, Olivia.

LP: Oh they're saying scandal?

DM: Yeah he does the music for Scandal. The brother is pretty tight ... I mean, I'm happy for him. He's in the right place you know, sometimes being in the right place and not being in New York is a good place.

LP: See, one thing I always liked about your playing was that you're aware of the things that came before but you never let anything restrict you. You just play like you wanna play. Where musicians come up and we supposed to do this and we supposed to do that, and it goes like this and in school they always teach people it goes ...

DM: [inaudible] If you don't write a book you can't write the same book. It's who they are . Always teach people, it's supposed to go like this. Well, we suppose to be books, if we gonna write a book, we ain't gonna write the same thing, so why you gonna play the same solo somebody did? Because that ain't gonna work either.

LP: See what I hear now with the people coming out of school, it's sounding like because they're doing the same transcriptions.

DM: It sounds like classwork on stage.

LP: Yeah. Yeah, so the music doesn't have that edge that makes it worth listening to like [inaudible] ...

DM: It's not memorable, it's got no guts ... You know I heard a jazz cat say, I don't wanna hear a cat when he's 20, I wanna hear a cat when he's 60 when he really got a story to tell. He might be really good, he might win a Grammy, but yeah I like to hear that same guy after he had a couple of divorces and what else is gonna happen to him in his life. Let's see what's with those same notes. Let's see what happens then. So, I'm there now. So we're there now. What we were playing then is not relevant anymore. They got it on record, but it's not relevant. What's relevant and why people would come hear you or come hear me play would be what we've learned. I think in the process, there's something else besides

I'm good man, I'm enjoying...

APPENDIX C
INTERVIEW WITH JOHN BETSCH

Longineu Parsons = LP
John Betsch = JB

LP: We're recording now.

JB: Okay good. Very good.

LP: So did you have a chance to think about what I said I would ask you about?

JB: Oh yeah, did you see my email?

LP: Oh no I haven't been online today.

JB: Okay. Okay well I sent you an email. Okay, well first of all, Steve Lacy, as I said in the email, was very much influenced by Monk in terms of being as laconic as possible. He said very little in terms of direction in rehearsal, you know. He just put the music out and said as little as possible. That was pretty much his lifestyle anyway. Uh, Jerry on the other-

LP: [inaudible] the musicians could find their own way to the ...

JB: Exactly. Exactly, yeah.

LP: Yeah. So then would you say that becomes kind of a groove composition?

JB: Oh definitely. Most, most, most definitely, yeah. Oh yeah, that was part of the magic of working with him.

LP: Uh huh.

JB: It was truly ... well I mean there would be forms of the different compositions but after that we were just gone [laughs]. Yeah, it was really, really, really gone. The ... Okay there were chordal structures, but within that, we were all very free to do whatever we felt like was needed. And, uh, you could, you could call it group improvisation, you know, you could call it group improvisation. 'Cause we were pretty loose.

LP: Okay. I mean I say that because I'm sure he had, I mean I didn't even read the book before, I mean back years ago when I was living in Paris and there were always strings to play, I mean notes to play, melodies to read and such things.

JB: Yeah.

LP: But after we get to that part, or after you guys would get to that part then you'd have these other things that we might rethink of as improvisation but like I was talking with Famoudou and he talked about how much they practice those

improvisations. They practice those pieces to where he came up to be group improvisation.

JB: Yeah. I can definitely relate to that.

LP: Part of what I wanna get at is that this is a kind of real time composition that's being done.

JB: Yeah. Yeah, oh definitely.

LP: And the claim was always made all the way to back to [inaudible] but then you have patterns and you play this on the changes and all that.

JB: Yeah.

LP: And, but then with the so-called avant-garde or whatever we want to call it now, there's much more of a composition feeling to it. I mean process, I think.

JB: Yeah. Yeah, exactly. Yes, because there was so much space left, that the relationships of the way we related were so wide open and creative it was very, very adventurous, you know. And that led to some real compositional adventures.

LP: Uh huh, okay. Yeah.

JB: 'Cause I mean with JJ, as creative as he was, there was always something interesting going on, no matter what. And we always had something to fill the void from that and he and I just – Somebody called us [Mambos], you know, we had a little Mambo that we did that was just constant, constant composition and creativity.

LP: Oh, okay.

JB: Yeah.

LP: Yeah, and I mean, Lacey and Bobby Few played together forever.

JB: [Whistles] Yeah. Oh God, I don't know exactly how many, but it was over 20.

LP: Oh yeah. How long was it for you?

JB: 18. And JJ ... it was around 30, I think.

LP: Yeah that's what I think, around 30 because when I was there in '78 they were playing together. When I first moved there in '78 they were playing together and had been, so ...

JB: Yeah. Yeah, it was a good 30 something. And, you know, while we're talking about [Lacey], I keep telling people he worked with [Monk] 6 days a week for 16

weeks doing the Apollo Theater opposite the Miles Davis Sextet, thank you very much and then went down to the five spot and played with [Monk] 6 days a week for 16 weeks.

LP: Ahhhhh.

JB: You know. So, I mean in an atmosphere like that, all kinds of shit can happen. And did happen, you know. But unfortunately those kind of opportunities don't exist anymore. I mean when you can get 2 days in a row ... I just got 3 days in a row – 4, excuse me, 4 days in a row in Athens with Craig Handy and Kirk Lightsey.

LP: Uh huh.

JB: See, so I mean 4 days in one place is a dream now [laughs]. But it can become real.

LP: Okay.

JB: But that's how the music really goes somewhere, is just playing every day, you know. 'Cause I mean when you're getting one gig together every 3rd blue moon it gets kind of silly.

LP: Hello I lost you.

JB: I said when you get just one gig every 3rd blue moon it's not very conducive to much creative activity, you know. But you do what you can.

LP: Yeah.

JB: So, [inaudible].

LP: Oh yeah, okay. Yeah that's right. Well you know when I have those times to play you know I have time to play a [inaudible].

JB: Exactly.

LP: That's the problem we have now, no time to really build to come together and play and we can play nicely but it's not that same kind of thing where we feel each other and know where we going just all intuitively.

JB: Exactament. And that was part of the magic of Henry's band. Henry would block a set of time, you know, for rehearsal and a gig project like as he called it the Great North American Tour Part 1. He would have rehearsal several days in a row from 10 to 1. And there was a tune called 10 to 1.

LP: Uh huh.

JB: You know. And so that's how that group really, really, really jelled and became an organic thing, you know.

LP: Mm hmm.

JB: 'Cause we would just rehearse every day at a certain time and that was that. We would just develop from that and then take off from there. And we were able to do, you know, 2 and 3 nights in the Tin Palace, in Sweet Basil ...

LP: Uh huh.

JB: And that was very very very important.

LP: Ah, okay. Yeah, I mean now it's so rare to even find a one week gig.

JB: Exactly.

LP: Let alone any gigs where you were there all week for a month at a time, like [inaudible].

JB: No, no, no. As far as I know, the Café Central in Madrid is 5 days and I mean I've got 4 in the Half Note in Athens. And these are the only places I know of now that give more than 2 or 3 days. Except for the superstars, who get several days in, you know Didier Lockwood still gets 3 and 4 days in the [inaudible] and that kind of stuff. But yeah, it is pretty spread out.

LP: Uh huh. Oh yeah. So you were with Lacy you said 18 years?

JB: Yeah.

LP: Wow.

JB: Yeah. We went from the sextet into a big band. There was a Steve Lacy Festival in Vienna, which was pretty amazing. We had a big band, you know dancers, and it was a phenomenal experience, actually. But, we went from that to the sextet, back to the sextet, quartet and then trio.

LP: Mm hmm. Oh okay. So trio, you Jean Jacques (Avenel) and Lacy.

JB: Yeah.

LP: Oh that must have been mean.

JB: It was ridiculous. Absolutely ridiculous. There's a label recording called The Rent from the old church in Portland, Oregon. A French guy had that label, I can't remember the name of the label it's on. But yeah, that was represented very well. The Rent ... I can't remember the names of ... of the trio recordings. But we did ... Well the trio, there would be occasional vocals by Irene also. But basically the trio did I think at least 3 recordings. One live and a couple of others

that I can think of right now. Jazzheimers kicking in you know what I mean?
[Laughs]

LP: Mm hmm.

JB: But ... yeah that was ... I mean JJ and Lacey you know had such a long history. I was sometimes just confounded just listening to the two of them, you know. And just sort of, woooooo, you know doing what I could to make the shit interesting from the percussion area 'cause they were so, so adventurous and creative, it was amazing.

LP: Yeah, I bet. Okay.

JB: Yeah.

LP: Uh huh, yeah ...

JB: Now, say what?

LP: I have your email up here now.

JB: Ah.

LP: Mm hmm. Yeah, so I mean you played with so many of these cats for so many years.

JB: Yeah.

LP: You must, you must have seen some things that they all do.

JB: Oh yeah.

LP: Which they all had.

JB: Oh definitely.

LP: Can you share some of that? Yeah, so ...

JB: Well like I said Lacy and JJ had such a long history. They had a really really, really phenomenal relationship and they played off each other so miraculously in terms of harmonic adventures, you know. And JJ and I just did our Mambo under it [laughs]. It was really fun. The sextet which was really 7 pieces [of Henry] had really very structured things. There are only a couple of things that were totally loose. One was a ballad called Just Be. And even that had some harmonic signposts here and there. But the only really totally, totally, totally gone in terms of harmony and rhythm was a piece called You're Mistaken and Misguided. Yeah, they were pretty structured compositions with Henry, actually.

LP: Uh huh, You're Mistaken and Misguided.

JB: And Misguided. [Laughter] But like I said in the email man, I wrote a poem once that consisted of Henry's compositional titles that were unbelievable. I told him it was a review of – He did 2 CDs that came out at around the same time and there was a review in the magazine and the first 2 compositions on one of the CDs was Ticked Pink and Dark Black. I read the review in [Rintano's] and I lost it, man. I just lost it. [Laughter] Oh boy there was so much humor in Henry's everything. You know in the titles of his compositions and his playing and his whole approach was just so humorous. It was really just big big big fun. Big big fun. And Fred, of course, boy Yeah, playing with Fred was always an adventure too. I've been blessed to have worked extensively with JJ and Fred (Hopkins) who were about the most creative bassists on that level of music and Santi (Dibriano), you know Santi is right up in there too. Santi was a dearly beloved professor. Yeah, I was really blessed to have adventured, is the best way to put it with those three. Because they really stretched it out.

LP: Uh huh.

JB: Really stretched it out. And we just had a ball. Had a stone ball. Mark Elias with Dewey Redman, that was also big fun.

LP: Alright.

JB: That was also big fun. But Dewey ... oh man one time we did a duo in Brooklyn and he just played one note real long, I thought I was gonna faint it was so beautiful. Just his sound was so magical, you know.

LP: Uh huh.

JB: And the last things with him were with John Menegon who was also an excellent creative bass player. And [Reevca Maca Tule], the pianist from the Rome area. Structurally, yeah, there were only a couple of things that were, modal pieces of Dewey that he played on the [inaudible] and Turn Over Baby, which was like a blues vamp ... just a vamp with a blues feeling.

LP: [inaudible] that's just wrong.

JB: Yeah. [Laughter] Hey man, we had a tune called Le Clit.

LP: Who wrote that?

JB: Dewey.

LP: Le Clit.

JB: Yeah.

LP: Uh huh.

JB: Yeah he was a funny, nasty boy. We had so much fun.

LP: So the music really could be about anything. Some of it could be about the movement but some could be about that thing which is the most important thing, you know, like the clit.

JB: Yeah.

LP: You know more important subjects, I mean you know. Have to get to the most important things. Yeah ... [laughter] ... yeah.

JB: Yeah. As far as the movement is concerned, when I first moved into New York, I lucked up with Roland Alexander who had a very, very, very unique and strong quintet with Malachi Thompson, [Rafiq Rahim] playing piano, and Hakim Jami. We had a suite dedicated to Malcolm X and I still regret that we never got that sucker recorded. 'Cause that was, in terms of directly inspired by nationalist movement, etc. etc. etc. That was the only one really specific example of something on that level.

LP: Uh huh. Now do you remember when, and for me it's more reading back at the stuff now, because I was too young, I didn't have access to that stuff ... The information, but when people like – down the critics, people like Mike Zwerin and Morgenstern talking about we don't need Black Nationalism in the music, these musicians basically full of it from doing this kind of stuff. In reading that stuff now, I get the feeling – and I mean I know Mike Zwerin for years, you know and we played plenty of music ...

JB: Yeah.

LP: But it just sounds to me like the Negro must stay in his place. Do you-

JB: Exactly.

LP: Exactly, huh? So that's what you get out of it too.

JB: Most definitely.

LP: And so it really pisses me off to read that for exactly that because that's what it feels like and so I needed for somebody there to say what you just said. That exactly on that.

JB: Yeah. Precisely. I don't know what ... You know, I mean, writers have to [Tom] to their editors, I suppose and not be totally truthful about their feelings 'cause I know Mike Zwerin wouldn't really endorse that perspective if it wasn't for like an editor with a hammer over his head or something like that, 'cause that wasn't him. I don't believe. I hope not.

LP: Well, ...

JB: If it would have been ... huh?

LP: Well see what I'm seeing here are some of the same guys who said that early on change their minds.

JB: Yeah.

LP: As time went on. So he might have really felt it at the time because let's face it, in 1960, I mean, that was really radical because they're so accustomed to the Negro staying in his place. People would think that because Dizzy Gillespie would like to clown and all that, that he wasn't furious about what was going. Whereas I have personal stories about Dizzy that show just the opposite. You know I was on a gig with Dizzy when he told me why he said he was wearing African clothes, he said yeah, I'm wearing this in the honor of this tribe – he was just in Africa – he said I was made a chief of the tribe and I'd rather be the chief of a tribe in Africa than the King of England.

JB: Hello. I'm really glad you used the word serious so something when somebody asked him if he considered playing serious music. And his response was you think I'm kidding? [laughter]

LP: Yeah, well you know there's the first woman to get a doctorate in composition from Julliard, a well-known lady in composition, Ellen Zwilich. I was having a lesson with her and she told me that she was a jazz pianist.

JB: Uh huh.

LP: And that she said we talked about that very definition of serious music and she said wait a minute, you mean to tell me that Dizzy Gillespie is not serious? You're gonna tell me Charlie Parker was not serious?

JB: Right.

LP: What is all this with serious music. And here she is one of the top people in what they call serious music. So part of the point that I'm making is like George Lewis said in his book. If you have a chance to go through it, 'cause that's a huge thing.

JB: Oh yeah I've been – oh yeah man, I've definitely gotten that one down. Yeah, that's some ...

LP: Talking about downtown and why are these people separate because of a one drop rule concerning improvisation being in force. However, at the same time, now you have the same people who criticize the music, you know, [Cage] and those people and Henry Cowell and they're talking about [inaudible] this, so what is that if it's not a type of improvisation.

JB: Thank you.

LP: So now you have this and you know and maybe these guys softened up later, I don't know. But his point is this music is just as serious. People from the same roots ...

JB: Thank you.

LP: Okay look at it like this. Let me ... where did you study music and what did you study before you played professionally? Why don't you run that down one time 'cause I want it for the record because that's the important part. The point being you know that you studied the same things that a John Cage or anybody else would have studied in your formative years.

JB: Mm hmm.

LP: So why don't you run down here your training one time so I can have it on ...

JB: Okay. Okay. First of all, I must say that the Jacksonville, Florida public school system had outstanding school bands.

LP: Yep.

JB: You know. I mean Billy Moore, I'm sorry. And although we lived on the same street I regret that I didn't just move into his house [laughs]. So we were very, very, very blessed to have that to grow up in and to have the Marching 100 come to town for the Gator Bowl every year and really stir shit up, you know? 'Cause that was a phenomenal inspiration. Then I'll never forget going to Tallahassee on a band festival, and hearing all those woodwinds in the FAMU symphonic band and my scalp ... my whole molecular structure man just went berserk. It was really, really a phenomenal thing. I was sent to Wooster school in Danbury because my mother wanted me to be a priest and really discouraged me from any musical endeavor.

LP: [Laughter] You could have really made some money then man, think. You could make all the money and screw the church sisters.

JB: Thank you. And dummy me talkin' about yeah I wanna get some drugs ... big dummy. [Laughter] The bain of my existence you know I look around and I say you big dummy what the fuck is wrong with you. Anyway ...

LP: [Laughter] I'm just imagining you now, you know, here you are the preacher up there tellin' everybody talking all that stuff, man drivin' in a nice Cadillac, you know the newest one, white on white ... [laughter]

JB: Exactament.

LP: Everything you wanna eat delivered to your front door. Never have to cook.

JB: WHAT?? [laughter] Cook?

Yeah, that was a really stupid move on my part. Anyway, so, to shut me up, mama sent me to Fisk and the only thing then going on was piano and voice. But, I started playing professionally with the late Bob Holmes, who was the only brother on Music Row aside from Brenton Banks the violinist really doing something. You know, Bob had amazing sessions on Music Row ...

LP: Music Row meaning that's in Nashville?

JB: Yeah. Yeah.

LP: Uh huh.

JB: Yeah. And in fact there was on Duke Ellington's birthday there was a tribute to Bob in the Fisk Chapel and unfortunately I couldn't get there. But anyway, he was the beginning of my professional activity. Him and an organist named Kossie Gardner also from Nashville. Bob wasn't from Nashville, he just lived there and worked there. Kossie and Louis Smith, Lord have mercy, Louis Smith was teaching at Tennessee State. I started doing gigs with him. There was, the first loft I ever saw was in Nashville, it was called the Third Floor on 2nd Avenue. And Louis Smith, a great bass player named Chuck Sanders and Leonard Martin, pianists, and ... beautiful drummer his last name was Morris, I can't think of his first name right now. That was ... Anyway, that was the beginning of the natural activity. But Fisk and I just couldn't, I mean I didn't want to be there, so I left and went to Berkeley and I had Fred Buda for a drum teacher, I mean everybody in the world wanted Alan Dawson, you know. But, yeah so that was that. I went back to Fisk after being in [inaudible] and stayed there a bit until Boo announced that she was gonna be [inaudible with Max Roach and Archie Shepp]. And that was like wow. So I ended up up there. Again, I should have just moved into Max's house 'cause ...

LP: Yeah right Max Roach, my goodness.

JB: Yeah. Yeah. Why I didn't just move into his house is something I'll never understand either. So as far as educational background, that was that. But the real education is on the bandstand.

LP: Uh huh.

JB: You know, how you relate to the different bass players, how you relate to different rooms, you know the acoustics in different rooms. Just how you relate to sound around you is really the proving ground and the training ground, really. That's really what that's about.

LP: Uh huh. I get it.

JB: 'Cause this is about spontaneous compositions.

LP: As far as schools but then you also have to also learn from the life itself, I mean it's the real school.

JB: Thank you. Thank you. Exactament. It's still school.

LP: Yeah. So, it's funny what I'm finding out doing this research on this and looking at the music itself. In looking at, seeing those critics talk about how this is a revolution in music. Frank Kofsky with his book about Black Nationalism and the revolution in music. I can see where Kofsky is coming from and I really wanted to be supportive of his work in this. I really wanted to, but the more I get into it, I can see well okay that was one of the influences. And the music itself wasn't a revolution against anything. It wasn't that revolutionary when you consider the progression that is taking place. I have an outline now, I can show the progression clearly it led to Ornette Coleman or more so it led to Trane and led to Cecil and led really to Art Ensemble of Chicago. The progression is clear looking at it now. There was no revolution, they just added techniques, added devices and added devices the same as classical music is done and look where it is now. You could have a Cage and a Stockhausen and a [inaudible] and all this. And then you can also have Steve Reich and those guys with the minimalist thing. I'm looking at it now and I see where George Lewis is right. What's the difference?

JB: Yeah, yeah.

LP: The only difference is some of them are Black and have some improv background so therefore the one drop rule kicks in.

JB: Right.

LP: So it's treated separately. However, the reason I wanted to talk with you about your education is to show that this separation is not really accurate. It's not accurate. It comes from that elitism from the classical areas.

JB: Exactly. Ex. Ac. tly.

LP: And see that's part of the reason I'm doing what I'm doing. Being a person playing the music from African origins but with classical credentials.

JB: Yeah.

LP: All my masters work, all my doctoral work is all classical. Not one drop of jazz in it.

JB: Uh huh.

LP: It allows me to speak in a way that the others have to listen to, that's all. But you know the music I think about Archie Shepp said about the music can be judged on its own, we don't have to judge the music by Euro standards.

JB: Thank you.

LP: As true as that is, it still, by Euro standards we can't diminish the importance of the music or the quality of the music even if we do go by Euro standards. And that's really my point. We don't need to go by Euro standards but even if we do ... so would you think that that's correct?

JB: Definitely. Definitely. I mean, to hear Dewey Redman play one note is as valid as hearing Yehudi Menuhin play one note.

LP: Uh huh.

JB: And in some ways more profound.

LP: Uh huh.

JB: In that, Dewey could just give so much, for lack of a better word, soul and emotion in one note that it just makes all that other academic stuff just sound academic. That's all there is to it.

LP: Uh huh. Okay. Uh huh. You ever checked out a guy named Theodore Adorno?

JB: No.

LP: Music critic.

JB: Who's he?

LP: Well John Cage refers to him as to the president of the critics or the godfather of the critics or whatever. Adorno, I mean his name was Wiesengrun, a German who escaped Hitler. Renowned critic and all this. Now he said, but he was making essays in the 30s about jazz music, well about music in general, and what's art and all. Could have been ... how do I say ... like maybe it could have been art, it could have gone that way, but instead it just became a practice of new conventions and you stick to the conventions and in that way I do have to agree with him that every phase in jazz made its conventions and you're supposed to stick to them and as soon as you did something else, the older guys talked about you funny. Like they down Dizzy and Bird and of course they down Ornette and Cecil and Sun Ra, [Kool] and all this kind of stuff. But Adorno said that jazz, was the Negro celebrating his castration. That's puttin' on a show for the man, that's what it is, 'bout puttin' on a show for the man, all that smilin' at them and all that. Celebrating his own castration. Instead of branching out and being true to his own heritage.

JB: [Whistles]

LP: So, he was having to criticize for that, of course.

JB: Uh huh. Of course.

LP: And of course he didn't have a Miles Davis to listen to, he didn't have a Trane to listen to 'cause they weren't there yet ...

JB: And he didn't have an Albert Ayler and Melvin Graves to listen to.

LP: Yeah, or a Cecil Taylor who I'm sure would have impressed him.

JB: Yeah.

LP: So anyway it's just because the art form hadn't advanced to that point yet. But you know the part about celebrating the castration, I mean have to share that opinion to a great extent when I see people puttin' on the show for the man and this minstrelsy that exists with the rappers.

JB: Yeah. Pretty ridiculous.

LP: Yeah. Celebrating the castration. In other words, why put up with this stuff if I want to make music like everything is all right. Smile at them and be happy to make their money and be a part of the culture industry. Whereas the people ... AACM. These are people who decided not to be a part of the culture industry.

JB: Thank you.

LP: They're in the culture industry but decided not to be dick suckers.

JB: Yeah.

LP: You know, Cecil, Ornette and such, did things like they wanted to.

JB: Exactly.

LP: Archie Shepp. They could call out the culture industry.

JB: Yeah. Muhal ...

LP: Yeah especially Muhal because of the AACM about finding making their own venues to play their own music, having their own rehearsals, their own thing on their own side of town and not crawl over there begging for a gig from the man.

JB: Exactly.

LP: Not celebrating their castration at the hands of the man.

JB: Yep. Exactament.

LP: So these guys, the way I see it, these guys deserve a certain respect just for making that move. I mean that's not the only reason that they deserve respect but if that were all there was, that still is enough reason.

JB: Sure. Of course.

LP: It's a little perplexing. But it foreshadows where we are 'cause the culture industry is certainly not interested in that music still.

JB: No. Not in the United States anyway.

LP: And these are the guys who are being awarded these awards, these record missions by agencies of people who are much more in the know. Look at George Lewis and his awards. Look at Henry [Threadgill] and ... You know these guys, Oliver Lake and David Murray and all these people. Now they are celebrated by the people who [inaudible] the Euro world and the culture industry has nothing to do with this stuff.

JB: Mm mmm. (no)

LP: You see so with this, I have some definite plans to move some things forward. This dissertation is kind of an anchor.

JB: Uh huh.

LP: To do some more business with. And that's really why I want to figure you prominently in this thing.

JB: Uh huh.

LP: So I can speak of the great drummer John Betsch who is one more artist deserving of much wider recognition and we need to give it to him while he's here.

JB: Mm hmm.

LP: Because you played with all these cats, the way I see it you are an expression of where music is now.

JB: Mm hmm.

LP: Because of being around those guys for so much and also a well of knowledge about this music and about the people who play it and who played it.

JB: Precisely. Thank you. Now, I also mentioned in the email on [inaudible] recording that we did, the last tune is called Never Been to Alabama.

LP: Uh huh, yeah I see that.

JB: Yeah. And that really flipped me out. When he said that, I mean, we did a good tape, and then he just said I've never been to Alabama and it was like BAM, you know? Because it really, really fit the feeling of the music without flag waving as it were.

LP: Okay.

JB: It just had a very, very down, southern, for lack of a better word, soulful feeling about it. For him to see he'd never been to Alabama like that was really, really phenomenal. That's one of the reasons why I'm in Europe is that there are people everywhere it seems who understand and appreciate where we, and when I say we, we African American improvising musicians are coming from.

LP: Uh huh.

JB: And they appreciate it and respect it and try to incorporate into their statement, you know what I mean?

LP: Yeah.

JB: So that's my saving grace, really [laughs]. Otherwise I'd have jumped out the Goddamn window a long time ago or gone back to the ministry. Gone to the seminary.

LP: [Laughs]

JB: Like somebody with some sense in his head.

LP: Yeah, well. John, I can see you now.

JB: Uh huh [laughs].

LP: Uh huh.

JB: I mean my father's picture is in Mt. Olive, you know.

LP: Yeah.

JB: I mean that was laid out for me. And me and my dumbass come like oh I want to get some drugs and go to New York ... you stupid motherfucker ...

[Laughter]

LP: What was it like all that time you toured with Archie Shepp?

JB: Well, the band, the rhythm section with Kenny Werner and Santi Dibriano. We first of all had a good understanding amongst us. So it was really just a matter of lighting the fire and having Archie just take off as far as he could. That was best, a nightly challenge. Because Dewey had one approach but Archie was just so

physically challenging that we had, how can I put it ... Yeah, it was a very enjoyable challenge. Very enjoyable challenge. It was more physically demanding than anybody else, partly because of Gabby Kleinschmit. Having us on the goddamn train forever ... I mean one time we did the Munich festival and we had been on the train forever and had exactly 19 minutes to lay down in the hotel before we had to go hit it. So it was a physical challenge, but musically and spiritually it was most enjoyable in that it pushed the button. It pushed the envelope, you know. It pushed the envelope every time. It was a physical challenge, a real gauntlet was thrown down because that's how Archie is.

LP: Yeah, and see ... There's this guy now, Gridley, Mark Gridley has done a whole thing on anger and music, perception of the [inaudible] people really angry and saying that well Archie Shepp is just an angry person, Baraka is just an angry person ... That's how it is. What's his name, who I mentioned earlier who wrote the book about Black Nationalism and he's just angry.

JB: Kofsky.

LP: Yeah, Kofsky. And they're just angry people. Just because that's not the main motivation for all the music, it's the motivation for some of it.

JB: Yeah.

LP: It's still the motivation behind a person wanting to excel.

JB: Hello. Yeah.

LP: So Gridley was trying to explain to me that these are different issues. So I kind of understand what he's saying, but I also, I don't think that you can separate what a Black American is going through in the 50s.

JB: Right.

LP: For the rest of his/or life.

JB: Thank you very much. Thank you very much.

LP: So if music is your main thing, how can it not be some influence on your music?

JB: Thank you very much. Thank you very much. And that is so, so, so stupid to try to separate life experience from your artistic expression. What the hell is that about? That's castration right there, to try and separate that? Forget it. That's ridiculous.

LP: Mm hmm. Yeah. Uh huh. You just made the statement that I need the most [laughs].

JB: I mean how can you separate the experience of segregation from whatever it is you do in your life? That was a horrendous experience for all of us.

LP: Yep.

JB: How people can even conceive of separating that from whatever it is we do in life is ridiculous.

LP: Yeah, well. You know these guys writing these books are somewhat musicians themselves. The word somewhat being the operative word here.

JB: Exactly.

LP: But I'm glad you said how ridiculous that is.

JB: Yeah.

LP: So Archie Shepp speaks out against the situation because he's just an angry person.

JB: Well, why is he angry?

LP: Yeah right but that doesn't matter. He must stay in his place.

JB: Right. Yeah, these academic book writers really need to just get a life, to coin a phrase. Just get a fucking life.

LP: So anyway, we have people, certain well known, real classicists in jazz. We claim that this music is not jazz. So then we have people like Henry Threadgill who says okay right, I'm not playing jazz. I wonder about that. I want to ask Henry about it. I think that I know what he means and I think that I agree with him. I just probably want to hear him express it. Here's how I look at it, and I would like to hear what you have to say about this. You know I have a definition for jazz, just like we don't have a definition for blues. That doesn't exist. How you can define something like this. But yet there are people who claim that within what jazz is, Cecil Taylor, for example, that's not jazz. As a musician, I can feel like, well, okay fuck you then, it's not jazz. I'm not restricted to what you say jazz is. But who can say what it is.

JB: Thank you. There is the issue – who the fuck are they to say anything? Can they do it? Can they do it? [inaudible] piano and organ and directed the church choir. Whenever an Errol Garner record came on she'd say, oh he doesn't read music. And I was like so what? Can you do any of this? You know, so what? What is a word? A word is a word. Fuck it. That's my feeling.

LP: Uh huh.

JB: Why do you have to ... if you can't understand music by your ears, why do you need words? That's your problem. As we used to say in the Army, sounds like a personal problem, go see the chaplain.

LP: [Laughs] Now I'm gonna use this in this dissertation now, I just want you to know, I'm using all of this that you're saying now.

JB: Please, please that's why I'm saying it.

LP: Okay.

JB: That's exactly why I'm saying it. It sounds like a personal problem. You know how many critics it takes to screw in a lightbulb right?

LP: No.

JB: 6. One to do it and 5 to get on the guest list to check it out.

[Laughter]

JB: You dig? They use jive to pay many to support what they're supposed to be criticizing and making their living off of.

LP: Uh huh.

JB: You see.

LP: I see [laughs]. Okay, that's a pretty good one.

JB: Yeah.

LP: Oh yeah man. Shoot this is good. So now I definitely have what I want from you for now.

JB: Oh great.

LP: And that's probably it because I'm turning in this document soon. I'm working on conclusions now, last chapter. And going back fixing up other chapters.

JB: Uh huh.

LP: That's why you're important to the conclusion because you still here, you went through all of that and you here to help talk about it now as a sort of conclusion. What led up to this. If we look at Miles Davis doing so what in his treatment of modality, we can look at early to mid-renaissance music when modality started to get close to tonality and started chromatics .

JB: Mm hmm.

LP: When we look at what Trane did with his use of chords and stuff and how he played on those chords [inaudible] countdown. It's not that far from JS Bach.

JB: Thank you very much.

LP: The different scales that they didn't use in baroque, but the idea is the same.

JB: Thank you very much. Now I told you I started in Nashville with a bass player named Chuck Sanders. Chuck said something to me one day, he said Bach was the first bebopper. It hit me like a brick, man.

LP: Understand that most of that stuff was improvised that he did, I mean he could improvise ...

JB: Thank you!

LP: And you give him just a motif and he would improvise a fugue on it. He was notorious for that.

JB: Thank you. Beethoven too. Mozart too. They were improvising.

LP: [Inaudible] improvise of piano.

JB: And by the way, you ever see a portrait of Beethoven?

LP: Yeah, yeah I know where you're coming from, yes definitely.

JB: Yeah. His granddaddy was from the Sudan. Thank you very much.

LP: Oh, that's where it is, so you have it pinpointed, okay.

JB: Yeah his granddaddy was from the Sudan. And if you look at the descriptions of him, he was kinky haired with pock marked swarthy skin. Hello [unintelligible]

LP: [inaudible] his nose and the shape of his lips, yeah I've read all that.

JB: Thank you. And listen his use of timpani in his symphonic music. Hello.

LP: Yeah where it actually takes part in the melody in the symphony. Yes.

JB: Thank you very much.

LP: On the 9th Symphony, on the first movement of the ninth symphony. Second movement ...

JB: Thank you.

LP: Yeah, that's true. The use of rhythm at the end, his endings extended rhythmically where you think it's gonna end but he just doesn't want to let it go yet. And he's got [inaudible].

JB: Exactly.

LP: Yeah I'm well aware of that. So then this separation of the music could be thought of as the separation that human beings have always put between each other for whatever reason. I do my thing my way and if you doing it any differently or if you look different or if you different in any kind of way, then you're screwed, because I'm right.

JB: Yeah. And I'll kill ya.

LP: Yeah. Because look at the avant-garde guys who they say were so Black Nationalists, so racist against whites, but look at the makeup of the groups, going to Charlie Hayden, being with Ornette. You know we can go on and on about who's in the groups. Look at all that time with Sam Rivers with Dave Holland on bass.

JB: Gary Peacock quit Miles to play with Albert Ayler.

LP: Uh huh. Yeah. So there's no evidence to say that there was racism involved in the music, you know in these musicians. So these guys, these critics were way, way off base. Who's in Ornette Coleman's band?

JB: What the critics do man, they gotta come up with something to make themselves valid and sell fucking magazines and books. That's all they do. They don't say anything. They make a fucking statement that will sell their shit.

LP: Yeah. Critics are working for the record companies so they're beholden to those people who are paying them.

JB: Hello. [Laughs] Yeah man, that's the bottom line right there. That is the bottom line. Who's paying who.

LP: Yeah, the culture industry.

JB: Exactly. Who's paying who to stick it how far in.

LP: Uh huh. Yeah it's the culture industry.

JB: Yeah.

LP: And I guess part of the industry, I mean it's like the rest of society, it's the Negro must stay in his place.

JB: Exactament.

LP: Anyway right now his place is in the White House.

JB: Hello hello. Thank you very much.

LP: Yeah. Life is different.

JB: Yeah. It's definitely a different world right now boy. That's for damn sure.

LP: Yeah. Well John man I really appreciate this man. You gave me just what I was looking for.

JB: My pleasure believe me. My pleasure believe me.

LP: I have you on speaker here I'm gonna come and let Rudine play hello to you

JB: Love hearing Joanna's voice 😊

JB: One point I think I should make about the modality shit, with Miles.

LP: Uh huh.

JB: Miles got Bill Evans from [Mingus] and the first thing he said to Bill Evans was what's he doin'? And Mingus was doing modes.

LP: Mm hmm.

JB: You dig?

LP: Yeah.

JB: Mingus was the one.

LP: Yeah well there's no claim anywhere that Miles invented that. Miles developed it.

JB: Yeah.

LP: And laid the groundwork for Trane. That's why I would do well on Miles with this because on this part, I didn't want to make a history of jazz.

JB: Sure.

LP: Because that's already there. That's all over the place in many books on that kind of stuff. It's more a matter of showing the relationship – showing the progression that has taken place. It really started [Lee Conitz, Brubeck] there's all that West coast style that's credited with starting the modal thing. Of course there's [Mingus], that puts [Mingus] in a different category because he's one who took all these influences – you did most – but he also did the this and the that and so many things. I don't see him as a part of that discussion.

JB: Thank you. He's a discussion all by himself.

LP: Exactly yeah, he had to be that. Just like Miles. You know like [tune up] Miles did countdown. I mean that Trane did countdown. Archie said that when he was with Trane, Trane talked about Miles all the time.

JB: Mm hmm. I can believe that.

LP: So of course that was his relationship to modal music because Miles, I mean Trane was with Miles during that time. He developed things to another level so that's why it has to be about Miles.

JB: Sure. Oh by the way, Miles gave Trane his first soprano saxophone.

LP: Oh really?

JB: He gave it to him as a gift.

LP: Uh huh.

JB: When he was leaving the band he said here.

LP: Ahhhhhh.

JB: Yeah, dig that shit.

LP: Uh huh.

APPENDIX D
INTERVIEW WITH OLIVER LAKE

Longineu Parsons = LP
Oliver Lake = OL

LP: Okay, so I think this is it, I think it's recording.

OL: All right.

LP: Yeah man. So, you know I'm ... oh and before we even go any further I just want to also ... you know you and I did something at a radio station here.

OL: Mm hmm.

LP: At the University station and I pulled it out and listened to it after all these years in quartet and it sounds good.

OL: Oh.

LP: So maybe it should come out on one of our companies

OL: Wow ... We did enough for a CD?

LP: Yeah, I think so. Yeah So what if I drop by to you and you listen to it and see what you think about it.

OL: Okay, cool.

LP: Okay. A lot of things have changed here since those times: we're under new leadership ...

OL: Mm hmm.

LP: My personal life has changed a lot and things are moving very much forward.

OL: Aw that's great to hear man. Yeah I've been pretty cool too. Everything's been going pretty smooth.

LP: Okay, yeah, so anyway it's interesting what you said about the avant-garde about it being ahead, it's implying that it's something that's ahead of its time you want to be dealt with now and what I'm saying is ... that goes along with what you say it is, it's the most representative of the time.

OL: Right, and that's why I lean toward contemporary -

LP: Uh huh.

OL: Rather than using the term avant-garde because again I'm just saying I want to be dealt with now. I want to be dealt with today and I feel that the music that I'm doing and what my cohorts are doing is about today. It's contemporary. It's not ahead of its time in dealing with what's happening right now And we want to be dealt with right now rather than where traditionally a lot of some artists have been dealt with after they've passed.

LP: Yeah, a lot.

[Laughter]

OL: So those are some of the reasons I kind of shied away from the term avant-garde.

LP: Well, yeah. So if jazz, you know and I'm tired of that term too because somebody else named it that and now we have these other people who are claiming to, because they from New Orleans you know they're saying jazz fits within certain parameters so that might exclude you and me anyway and make [inaudible] ...

OL: Well now you get into the jazz police and that gets to be rough territory [laughs].

LP: Yeah who has the right to do this?

OL: That's correct. And especially 'cause we're all in the same boat man, I mean we're all trying to survive and live through this music. So, and once we recognize that we're in the same time link why try to make that division even wide, or even make a division at all between the music that ... 'cause it's all the same music. It's all one music.

LP: So if we live in a time where you have total harmony, you have chromaticism within it, everybody's using it, then we have a move away from tonality and we speak of people like Stravinsky and such people we have Bartok already trying to move away then we have Schoenberg with his thing and we have people like Alban Berg. Then we have people like Karlheinz Stockhausen then isn't it natural for us to also from the African American side have a Sun Ra and a Ornette Coleman and a Cecil Taylor ...

OL: Of course. Yeah.

LP: So Cecil was really pissed one time man because Wynton Marsalis was interviewing him and he said ... and Wynton asked him well what is it the separation of music from European classical music and you know how Cecil is man, he was fuming he says this is from a guy who made his reputation playing Vivaldi, how can he ask me that. You know how Cecil is. [Laughter] So now that made me think okay now looking at the music who deals with [inaudible] why does it have to be separated from that, from European classical music or anything else. I thought the fight was, you know our stuff is just as good as anybody else's and needs to be recognized. So why do we have to be separate

from anybody's music, separate from the traditional jazz people but separate from Stockhausen and Schoenberg and all that especially looking back and seeing that this is what Muhal was teaching at the AACM school.

OL: Mm hmm.

LP: We have some like Archie Shepp who say well you know fuck them we don't need to be associated with them anyway, with the European classical. And we have our own thing and we don't need to be. So, and then looking at your career, at how you go through music with no barriers - this is what I see as a fellow musician about you. That you play music according to how you see it and feel it and you don't draw those lines to separate yourself from yourself when you're doing music.

OL: That's exactly my approach. I mean it's been very eclectic and I've been - whatever portions of the music or styles of music I like or have been drawn to I have incorporated it into to what I've done. I work with string quartets, I work with orchestras, I work with big bands, saxophone quartets. You know, it varies from size of instrumentation it doesn't really matter, I work with steel pans. Right now I have an orian quartet that I've been working with for the last 4, 5, 6, 7 years, so for me it's all there to be ... Traditionally I think musicians have been open minded and I think I exemplify that to a degree, maybe not the extreme but that's been one of the things that I've incorporated in my music. Whatever I like and am drawn to I've been able to incorporate it into what I compose and what I perform with so it's been very interesting for me to take that approach.

LP: Yeah, and see a lot of people like here in the academic world, the music that we call avant-garde, jazz avant-garde, is basically excluded. They'll mention the names Ornette Coleman and Cecil Taylor and maybe somebody mentions the name of Sun Ra but they really not gonna talk about ...

OL: Well you even look back at that film that this guy did, um, Ken Burns ...

LP: Yeah.

OL: He included the one saxophone quartet he excluded a lot of ... he went up to a certain year and stopped. He went up to 1970 and excluded everything after that.

LP: Exactly.

OL: So, I mean that was intentional and he had people who were guiding him when he was making that film. He tried to eliminate a whole segment of the music and it's crazy.

LP: Yeah, yeah it is. It is but this is what people have done as far back as we know. I have a book by Nicholas Slonimsky, it's a history of musical [inaudible] and it's got awful reviews on all the famous European composers. Claude Debussy is

the - this music is an assault on the ears of the serious listener. Now to review who said that I mean we haven't heard anything from that son of a bitch since, I mean I don't know ... [laughter] Claude Debussy everybody who studied music knows, you know.

OL: Mm hmm.

LP: So, and I mean how Stravinsky sucks and how Beethoven sucks I mean I've read - there are reviews out there, horrible reviews about all these great people made by people who are forgotten in history.

OL: Mm hmm.

LP: So, for somebody to say well you know this music doesn't count, well I say well damn that might mean it, maybe that in itself is an indication that it's very important.

OL: Mm hmm. Yeah, I mean me and my contemporaries still have a large audience in, around the world and are continuing to survive and play and perform and create so I mean ... all, it gets back to the point of the validity of all the music and all of it being the same, and we're all in the same boat or the same bags or however you want to look at it. It's unfortunate that these divisions occur but that's kind of the way it's been done in the world of the critics and writers and so forth have divided everybody up into camps and I try to avoid that, not only in my concept of performance and composition, but just my whole philosophy has been open to all kinds of music and all [inaudible]. I've written big band arrangements of hip hop pieces. I don't exclude anything from my palate so it's been very exciting for me.

LP: Okay and see that's a very important part of the point that I'm making in this dissertation, but I'm saying this is the most relevant, the most characteristic reference in taste in of what's coming out of America is, you know, the movement that you are so important in.

OL: Mm hmm.

LP: That whole thing. And, and that it's not a revolution in music. It's a natural progression that took place because of the world that we live in.

OL: Exactly. And the communications boom that has taken place, I mean the world is getting smaller and smaller every day with all this inventions and technology and internet and everything that exists, so, the world gets smaller every day because of the multiplication of the technology.

LP: Yeah so we have a guy like Don Cherry sittin' in lotus position playing with a sitar. I saw this in New York, you know that's being open to the world that we live in.

OL: Mm hmm.

LP: When ... And the whole thing about jazz being limited to times, now you know, I mean as far as the way it's taught and everything, like the Ken Burns series which is very much like the schoolboy series, you know, the schoolboy teaching in the university system and stuff. And the first time I ever played a Fletcher Henderson chart was when I was with Sun Ra.

OL: Mm hmm.

LP: I don't know if I'm looking around at university bands and some jazz bands when I see them play and all this stuff, I have yet to hear anybody play Fletcher Henderson or Chick Webb.

OL: Mm hmm.

LP: So, they're leaving off that part and then they're leaving off whatever happened after about the late 60s and 70s like you said. So, the - all right so I'm saying is what I'd like to hear what you have to say about that whole exclusion thing which you really kind of said, it's just a matter of you might have some more to say about it. But it's just like they've cut it off to the beginning and what happened later so maybe that whole element about having to, what swing really means and stuff might be lost. Like you know you have the neo classicist in jazz saying oh yeah, you know, but it has the swing you know, it's got the swing. To the point where if it's "ding ding di ding ding di ding" they'll even call it swing. What kind of beat do you play? Oh it's a swing. So that's telling me these mother fuckers don't even know what swing is.

OL: Plus you know that kind of limits to me what the point of the music is about, I mean I think the highest point of the music, for me, is about communication. About making an honest, pure, direct communication. And whether that communication happens with the "ding di di ding" or no drums at all, that's the important part of it, is the communication.

LP: Ah ha. Yeah, so in other words don't restrict you to saying your music has to do this or has to do that.

OL: Exactly. I mean I think the only thing that it has to do is communicate and that's what I'm trying to do every time I get on the stage, on the bandstand, is make a pure honest communication from my heart and hopefully and generally most of the time the audience feels that I'm honest and they reciprocate with their energy that comes back to me and it's a life fulfilling thing that keeps continuing, that has continued throughout my career. I think that's the goal of all the music is to make the world a better place and make a positive communication. When we pick up those instruments, at least that's what I'm doing, I'm trying to - I'm playing for world peace. I don't see how it should be defined on to whether it says "ding ding di ding" or not ... you know, so ...

LP: Yeah and that's an important point, you playing for world peace, you trying to communicate and the musical characteristics don't have to be restricted, they are your communication at that time.

OL: Exactly. And that's why for me having an open approach to listening to all musics that are out there and if I feel like incorporating world music or hip hop or reggae or anything into what I'm doing I can do that. I think that my main guideline is a clear and direct communication. Not restricted by style.

LP: Right, okay. And then the other thing that's impressive about the music that you made clear which I'm making clear in this dissertation ... Okay you have some people who might say I'm not gonna play like that, and so they don't learn anything about it and so maybe they don't know how to play changes or don't know how to play. But what I'm finding out, let's take you for example, you know, David Murray, Train, Archie Shepp. These people know, you guys know a whole lot of music so it's not like you do what you do out of ignorance as some people would portray you.

OL: Mm hmm.

LP: It's totally inaccurate. In fact the truth is really the opposite. That this music is the most culturally inclusive and the most historically inclusive music probably that has ever existed.

OL: Yeah that's true too and I know I never really considered myself a strong change player but I've always incorporated changes into my melodies and I like writing strong melodies and sometimes I have tunes that have no changes and then sometimes I have tunes that do have changes, so again it goes back to being inclusive and being open and incorporating all those different styles and sounds and colors into what I do and hopefully come out with my unique voice.

LP: Yeah have you read George Lewis' book? I've seen you know his ...

OL: No you know I've started it but I haven't finished it.

LP: Yeah really interesting ...

OL: He interviewed me for that book too, as well so I've got to get finished on it.

LP: Uh huh. Yeah, I saw what he did. Yeah I read the interview in there about you. Yeah man. It was interesting for me because it just shows it doesn't pay to think you know. I'm thinking I know all about this and I'm reading all this stuff I was ignorant about. I didn't even realize AACM had a national school going on in Chicago and move all the teaching and what he was teaching and stuff.

OL: Mm hmm.

LP: And as a musician, as hanging out with the same cats, and you know reading and stuff and listening and all this kind of stuff ... If I don't know about this, I think that most people who at least in the academic world and people who are not all the time into music, don't have any idea of how serious this is. If you read some of the old interviews of people you get the idea that you're talking about music that was revolutionary because everybody was ready to go out and kill all the white people and so forth and so forth. [Laughter] To the point that now we have guys writing about how, well, you know the music is not really music of anger. They even did a scientific study to refute that about anger and how it reflected in music and testing people to see which kind of people responded to the music and thought that it sounded angry and the people who were already angry.

OL: Uh huh.

LP: People with anger type personalities. So for somebody to go that far to reject the notion, to me is really to reject the notion that Black Nationalism has anything to do with it. Whereas I contend that ... because other people are saying well yeah they didn't write the music thinking about this. But I contend that if it's the time you living in, how can it not be in your music even if it's not conscious. Even if you didn't intentionally say well I'm gonna write this tune because I'm really pissed off at the fact that it's not even legal for me to go into a restaurant or maybe it just became legal and now ... but everybody looks funny because they don't want any niggers in there and how is that not gonna be somewhere in there.

OL: I've been asked that too about the music at that time when the Black Artists Group was formed and said that when they heard us improvising, we sounded like angry young men and we were pissed and making a political point, but from my personal experience I did, was not angry and what I played again was about joy and it wasn't, even though it had squeaks and squawks but I wasn't making a political statement when I was playing my solo. And I don't think the Black Artists Group was ... even from the musician's standpoint there was a lot of political statements being made in the poetry and the theater pieces that the Black Artists Group did but the musicians themselves in our improvisations, they didn't come out of anger. They were coming out of joy and again going back to what I said earlier, playing with the notion of direct communication and world peace, but some of the writers who reviewed what we were doing thought we were angry. Personally I was not angry. And wasn't trying to interpret that through the playing in my improvisations. But we were making political statements as a group. I mean the Black Artists Group was, but they were coming strongly more through the poetry written, spoken word and the theater pieces that we were doing had a definite political slant on them.

LP: Okay.

OL: But you know at the same time the AACM had their school going, they had started before the Black Artists Group. We were inspired by them and started

the Black Artists Group and we had a school going at the same time that the AACM school was going on and then we were doing exchange concerts with the AACM. We'd load a busload of Black Artists Group musicians and go to Chicago and do a concert and then we would invite the ACM groups to come to do concerts in St. Louis. So there was a strong collaboration between both groups at that time. We started a couple of years after the ACM did.

LP: Oh yeah. Yeah, in St. Louis, I mean in St. Louis the city and not really in the south, but very much like the south in a lot of ways ...

OL: Oh yeah because a lot of people migrated from the south to St. Louis and Chicago and into the Midwest were from the south.

LP: Yeah, had to be. Yes of course.

OL: Mm hmm.

LP: Of course. And I mean the white attitudes also were a lot like the south, from what I understand. Is that true? I mean it was de facto segregation?

OL: Oh yeah. Oh yeah.

LP: Uh huh. Yeah, so I wonder about the effect of that on ... I mean I'm saying I wonder because I'm talking like an interviewer. I grew up in Jacksonville, Florida. To me I know ...

OL: So you had some experience?

LP: Yeah [laughter]. But I'm just asking that way just to get you to talk, that's all.

OL: Mm hmm.

LP: I wonder what it would feel like to come from that and maybe have an incident, you know, we go through what we go through during the course of a day and then go to the gig at night. So maybe it is relief, joy, the pride to be on the bandstand. I can dig it. But to me sometimes also when I get up there it's I'm gonna show these motherfuckers today. That's not what this is.

OL: Mm hmm.

LP: So it just seems to me that must be in there, but I'm not gonna say that unless somebody else says it to me.

OL: Uh huh.

LP: So I'm not gonna put words ... And whatever I write that you said, I'm gonna make sure you've seen it before it goes anywhere.

OL: Okay.

LP: Because um, I've had people write something that I didn't want them to write. A statement or something. So I wouldn't ever do that to anybody.

OL: Mm hmm.

LP: So I'm not gonna put words in your mouth and I'm gonna run everything by you that I say that you said to make sure that it's what you meant to say.

OL: Okay.

LP: Not that we have anything controversial being said anyway, I mean ...

OL: No [laughs].

LP: But just a matter of principal I wanna make that clear.

OL: Okay.

LP: So it's interesting to hear different points of view so at one point I was thinking you know, here I am writing this thing, trying to say why this music stands up as art on the highest level, to the most stringent standards of what some people consider as art. And then maybe the musicians who I'm writing about don't give a flying fuck 'cause they're saying why should we worry about their standards? And that's totally valid - why worry about somebody else's standards.

OL: Mm hmm.

LP: I'm referring specifically more to just one of the most harsh critics of anything that's not European classical music. That's Theodore Adorno.

OL: I've never heard of him.

LP: Yeah, see once again ... [laughter].

OL: No I'm not in the academic world so I probably just haven't come across that. I'm writing his name down, he was a critic?

LP: Yeah, yeah he'd be at music colleges and all this kind of stuff ... [inaudible] He was one of the Frankfurt Five - they were somewhat Marxists, mostly Marxists - they thought Marx was right about most things. He wrote about all kind of stuff and he wrote about some highly critical articles about jazz music but this is maybe the 30s when he was [inaudible]. So he didn't have a Trane to listen to, you know he didn't have Arnett to listen to. He was listening to white people playing jazz of their time and they can say like well you know they're trying to keep the thing that they got from the Negro but they not really keeping that and it's now an old convention, I mean it's a new convention but it's now a convention to play jazz because at the beginning maybe it was, it had something to do with art. So okay, so there's this most harsh critic and what I'm saying is if we take

his points of view for what art must be because he's the worse one, then the music that we call avant-garde in jazz stands up better than any other music to his idea of what art is. Therefore it's got to be the highest form of art coming out of America. Because this guy can stand for something, it's got to be away from convention, it can be a part what they called the culture industry.

OL: Well you know for years they said it has been known that the only pure form that was born in America is the music that's called jazz.

LP: Yeah?

OL: I mean you've heard that for many years.

LP: Yeah, and I've had historical things here documented showing where that's been stated by the French to the early part of the 20th Century, the very beginnings of 20th Century with James Reese Europe when he went over there with his band ... his all Black band.

OL: Mm hmm. Right.

LP: So, yeah that's been well established. It's just that now some of our own are saying that the stuff ended about 1970.

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LP: That's an important point. In fact, for them to try to deny the music I think is a strong argument for why it's so important. Let's look at Beethoven for example, there was only one critic of his time who liked his music. That was a guy named E.T.A Hoffman. That's the only one. But now all these critics, we don't even know who they are, but who doesn't know Beethoven?

OL: Mm hmm. Yeah I think time will tell ... that's the history of ...

LP: Like you said though, time needs to tell right now.

OL: [Laughs] Right ...

LP: Not years from now.

OL: Yeah we had a contemporary today [laughter].

LP: That's the reason why I'm taking this. This is the book that I've wanted to write for 20 years. Since I was working on the doctorate before but I stopped because I took this job here at FAMU.

OL: Mm hmm.

Oh you still teaching trumpet?

LP: Yeah, I mean I still teach trumpet at FAMU, but the University of Florida over in Gainesville, their trumpet teacher got sick. So they needed somebody to come in and fill in. I went and did that and in the process decided to go on back to school.

OL: Mm hmm.

LP: And so now I'm getting to write this after all because since I'm dealing with composers, their point of view is different. They want this to be written. They think it's really important because composers like your music. Of course because you are a composer you are a part of that. They see that. To them, they basically get on their knees and worship me because I played with Sun Ra.

OL: Uh huh.

LP: Of course other people might not even know who Sun Ra was. Other people around there, but to the composers, it's a whole different thing.

OL: Right, right.

LP: Because these are the guys who are from Schoenberg, Bartok, who say okay, yeah, I like the romantic period but it's gone, it's done. I like tonality but it's gone, it's done. It's there for me to use if I want to. Like you're saying, all these things out here think that you use as you want to, not be restricted by. But our jazz neo-classicists think that these are the rules we have to follow so they sound like college theory teachers.

OL: Mm hmm. Mm hmm.

LP: You know, these are the rules, this is how the [inaudible] and all this. Who in the hell are you just cause you famous, what you do to say that this is how music has to be.

OL: You know I went and did a thing at Bard College on the weekend and there was a young saxophone player. He was really a good improviser. After we played, they did my big band music and then afterwards he came to me and asked me about some cadence ... I don't remember the cadence that he asked, he asked can you change the notes of the cadence, the so and so cadence? I said of course you can. The rules of that are being broke and let him know that you learn the rules, but then you ... it's open for you to change them as you like and be as exploratory as you want to be and can be and it's all open and you don't have to be locked into any particular rules about the music.

LP: Yeah. You don't have to be locked into rules. Therefore, maybe rules, maybe that's the wrong word to begin with. We've learned these things as rules because of what the theorists say. I mean were they rules to Claude Debussy? So I say to my students that we have to use a different word. That we have to

use the word performance practice instead of rules. This is accepted performance practice, not a rule, this is just what people have done, that's all.

OL: And if you go by sound, and you can be the judge of what sounds good to you and let that be your guide.

LP: Well, yeah.

OL: And if I use that throughout my career when I'm composing, it may not adhere to what the other compositional performance practices, but I like what I hear and then if I like it, I go for it. And it's simple as that for me a lot of times in terms of voice leadings, resolutions from this to that, that's how you come up with creative and unexpected sounds. And that's one of the things I'm trying to do.

LP: Yeah, ultimately what else is there to do?

OL: Mm hmm.

LP: So, the most interesting interview in some ways, is the interview that didn't happen. That was Muhal when he said look, I'm not gonna talk about this music. The music speaks for itself.

OL: This is what he said to you when you called him for an interview?

LP: When I saw him face to face in New York, when I flew up there to go to that AACM 50th anniversary to the last concert.

OL: Mm hmm.

LP: He said no do what you have to do, write what you have to write, but I'm not going to interview and talk about this music, it stands on its own. I'm gonna end the dissertation with that - after running through all this ... [laughter], if you had only listened to it, it would stand on its own.

OL: Aw that's great. That's great.

LP: But that's only after I prove the point and then say you should've just listened to it.

OL: Mm hmm.

LP: It's there. It's beautiful music made by incredibly creative and highly inquisitive people who have gone out and studied all they could in the ways that they did and use every device that they had access to, to make music which does speak for itself. It includes everything in the planet as we know.

OL: Right.

LP: I mean if it's all the traditions of jazz, if it's European things and European developments and European traditions, they are all there. African, African traditions and modern African influences are there. Eastern, you know like Indian and Chinese and on and on and on. It's all there.

OL: Mm hmm.

LP: A little bit some here, some there, it's mixed in. It's not oh I'm going to write a Chinese piece. No, you just hear it in the music.

OL: Right. Yup.

LP: I mean that's my opinion of it. That's what I hear. That's how I play. That's me and I do want to be careful not to overstep what I say according to my own opinions. But of course it's my opinions that's driving the whole thing, the whole writing. I do want it to be what the actual people who are doing it have to say. I'm just trying to prove this point, the point that you just made. I'm really trying to prove those points.

OL: Right.

LP: And I can see why somebody like Muhal would say well hell why do we have to prove it to them? Fuck them. Okay. [Laughter] And Archie Shepp, you know, Archie feels like we don't have to prove it, but it's good to do it anyway. To have it out there, to document this work of these brilliant musicians, and now people go to school, you study all this music, and you gonna leave out probably the most important ...

OL: Right and it's important that you do it to because that Ken Burns film has been used occasionally as guidelines for the young students across the country in music programs. There has to be some other historical reference to let people know that that's not the complete story.

LP: Yeah, so I have actually enlisted the aid of somebody unexpectedly, because of a conversation at a jazz educator's convention. You know the guy who wrote ... he wrote one of the texts that we use a lot in jazz history and stuff and in jazz style classes. It's Mark Gridley.

OL: Okay.

LP: History and analysis. And I'm looking at the book and I'm saying he said nice things about the avant-garde, just not so much. So anyway, I was talking with him and we talked and he was saying that he was knocked out, he had never met anybody who had played with Sun Ra and he said he had three really moving musical experiences, transcendent musical experiences in his life. One of them was hearing Sun Ra. He loves Albert Ayler. We had an interesting conversation about having to learn all these traditions that we have and being in them, and then maybe sometimes even being so deeply steeped in those

traditions can stand in the way of creativity. But anyway he said that he is offering all the help he can be for finding sources or whatever I need because he would like to see the avant-garde expressed more in the [inaudible].

OL: What stage are you at now in doing the book? Are you in the closing stages or midway or what would you say?

LP: I'm midway. Because most of my research is done and I've started writing. My direction is clear, I have my ending. Now it's just kind of, it's more the technical part of putting it all together ...

OL: Right.

LP: You have made the points that I've wanted to make. It's amazing how much I can, if I did quotes that I'm gonna make from you, from David Murray, from Archie, from John Betsch, and it's gonna be the same stuff. The same things. You guys are all saying the same thing, you know it's all the same thing about being inclusive. Not being restricted. Respectful of all the historic things.

OL: Right.

LP: So, it's just amazing what I'm hearing here. It's what I knew already, but I ...

OL: Right, just reaffirm ... [laughs]

LP: It doesn't count if I say it. It doesn't count at all. I'm here writing the paper, so I mean they're not interested in my opinions unless I can prove them. So the only way I can prove them is if I can say Oliver Lake said and talk about how you speak about the inclusivity of your music and the fact, and other stuff I noted Oliver Lake string quartet and so and so and this piece and then I'll do some kind of analysis of how it goes, some of the music I have on you and some of the music I've looked you up on YouTube and then I can say I remember playing music with Oliver Lake and speak about these things. But I have to just be able to refer everything I say to someone or something.

OL: Mm hmm.

LP: Otherwise it's not valid. It's just me making ...

OL: I understand.

LP: Yeah, so anyway, I just want to sing the praise of this music and make it clear how important it is to American history in the art.

OL: Mm hmm.

LP: And that it is art by the highest, by the most stringent standards of the worst assholes who try to describe ...

OL: [Laughs]

LP: Because first of all if somebody is trying to say what art is, who has the right? You know there's no definition for art music in any dictionary that I know of. Not even in the New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, 20 fucking volumes. There's no definition of art music.

OL: Mm hmm.

LP: There's no definition of art music in the New Harvard Dictionary of Music.

OL: Wow.

LP: But you have people out here trying to say what art is in music. Well, there is no acknowledged or accepted definition for it. Those volumes don't even attempt it. So to me that just says who has the right to say what art is anyway in music.

OL: Mm hmm.

LP: But what I'll do is I'm identifying certain things that many people agree on make art music, some things that people disagree on and make art music and then I'm gonna say by the worst ones, the ones who say it's gotta be this or it's gotta be that and it's gotta be this or it's gotta be that otherwise it's not art. The worst snobs, this music stands up to them.

OL: Right.

LP: So in other words, all you others shut the fuck up.

OL: [Laughs] Well you think you got enough quotes from me today?

LP: Oh yeah, yeah this is beautiful. If I have other things, is it all right if I call you back?

OL: Oh sure, sure. I'm around.

LP: Okay and I'm gonna send you this music too man. It's nice, it's very well recorded.

OL: Okay.

LP Well Oliver thanks a million man and I'll be getting back with you ...

OL: Okay Longineu.

LP: inaudible] when I get this stuff on drop box. Have a good one man.

OL: Okay. You too man. Thanks

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<https://youtu.be/sfRYwXErGjA> Steve Lacy in concert with Irene Aebi, Steve Potts, Jean Jacques Avenel, Oliver Johnson and Bobby Few.

<https://youtu.be/brxlieN5g74> Sun Ra and his Arkestra - Jazz Festival di Kongsberg Broadcast by NRK1, 1982-09-17

https://youtu.be/4_z221y8TOs Miles Davis, John Coltrane-Konserthuset Stockholm

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Longineu Parsons has been hailed by critics internationally as being one of the world's finest trumpet players. He also performs on recorders, flute, percussion and as a vocalist. Longineu performs classical and jazz on trumpet and his compositions include orchestral works and chamber music as well as jazz and world music. He is the protégé of the great cornetist, Nat Adderley, and performs regularly with pianist, Nat Adderley Jr.

Longineu is founder and president of Tribal Records and he has produced and engineered recordings from traditional to modern jazz as well as classical, R&B and world music. Longineu's musical history is very stylistically inclusive as is represented in his various musical projects. Longineu has performed and recorded with such greats as Cab Calloway, Nat Adderley, Cecil Taylor, Nancy Wilson, Joe Williams, Herbie Mann, Frank Foster, Mal Waldron, Philly Joe Jones, Archie Shepp, Sun Ra, Sam Rivers, David Murray, Oliver Lake, Billy Harper, Hamiett Bliuett, Jarman/Moye Quartet, and many others.

He has also performed and recorded with artists from many other countries such as the Mighty Sparrow (Trinidad), Pierre Akendengue (Gabon), François Lindemann (Switzerland), Richard Roux (Madagascar), and many groups and individual artists from the Caribbean, South America, China and India.

Longineu has performed in some thirty countries in North, South and Central America, Europe, Asia, the Middle East and Africa. He has performed for such dignitaries as the King of Morocco, the President of Gabon, the Royal Family of the Netherlands, the President of Austria, the U.S. Ambassador to France, The Royal Family of Monaco and for UNESCO.

Longineu has a B.S. in Music from Florida A&M University, M.M. in Trumpet Performance and Ph.D. in Composition from the University of Florida. He has also studied at the Berklee College of Music in Boston.