

Integrating the Postmodern Avant-Garde: Art Music(s) at the Intersection of Improvisation

By

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Kevin Todd Fullerton

M.M., University of South Dakota, 2007

M.M., University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 2002

B.A., Iowa State University, 2000

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Chair: Roberta Freund Schwartz

Colin Roust

Alan Street

Dan Gailey

Sherrie Tucker

Date Defended: March 8, 2018

The dissertation committee for Kevin Fullerton
certifies that this is the approved version of the following dissertation:

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Chair: Roberta Freund Schwartz

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ABSTRACT

In the wake of World War II, American artists and musicians participated in a cultural shift, with dramatic consequences. Musicians and artists engaged with postmodernism through experimentation. They were searching for new possibilities, creating a work that consists of a “field of relation,” or a framework, from which the artist improvises. I posit that avant-garde jazz and avant-garde classical music were not as separate, as they are most often regarded, but a single impulse concerned with expression of intuitive, process-oriented music that grew from a few examples in the first half of the century to a true movement of American experimentalism in the 1950s. Considering composers such as John Cage, Earle Brown, and Morton Feldman alongside Cecil Taylor, Ornette Coleman, Charles Mingus, and Sun Ra enriches our understanding of the experimental impulse. While these musicians were from different backgrounds most of them were formally educated in music; they studied the Western European canon, absorbed the music(s) they heard around them, and transformed what they learned into new works. The power dynamic between classical and jazz, serious and popular, heavily influenced the way American pan-avant-garde music was received. Intellectual African American contributions to American culture as a whole have been veiled until the last few decades. This study is an attempt to offer a strategy for the study of postwar American experimentalism. Students who primarily study the Western European canon would benefit from learning about avant-garde jazz as it would provide more context and vice versa. If jazz history courses and history of Western music courses adopt this definition of American avant-garde, students will leave the classroom with a broader understanding of American music.

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Forms ranging from structures *that move* to structures *within which* we move- call for changing perspectives and multiple interpretations. But, as I have already pointed out, a work of art is never really “closed,” because even the most definitive exterior always encloses an infinity of possible “readings.”¹

Umberto Eco

In the wake of World War II, American artists and musicians participated in a cultural shift, with dramatic consequences. Avant-garde musicians and artists engaged with postmodernism through experimentation. They were searching for new possibilities, which resulted in many innovations in both jazz and classical music.² The American avant-garde that flourished in the 1950s and 1960s often challenged audiences to listen to the process of assemblage and accept the performance as the composition.³ This approach to experimentalism, involving the use of nontraditional compositional models, unorthodox uses of instruments, chance techniques in composition and performance, improvisation, and collective composition, is process-oriented music, where audiences witness musical real-time creativity from the performers. This process can include thematic development through improvisation, communication within the ensemble and acceptance of the unknown. The work is “immediate, spontaneous, and unique: a ritual celebration, not a fixed art object bounded by predetermined

¹Umberto Eco, *The Open Work*, trans. Anna Cancogni (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1989), 24. I Italics in original source.

² Throughout this dissertation jazz is used as general term referring to a genre of music that was created by African American musicians in New Orleans during the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries. Jazz originated as a fusion of Western European, African, and Latin American elements. It was performed by black musicians in its early stages, but white musicians and Latin American musicians became significant participants by 1917, and European musicians by the 1920s.

³ A musical work indicates compositions, performances, improvisations, and recordings. Also, throughout my discussion of improvisation, pre-composed material refers to musical segments that are obviously planned and rehearsed, perhaps in unison with multiple players, but not necessarily notated on the page. Many jazz groups verbally discuss material and aurally rehearse composed elements.

relationships, or notational straitjackets.”⁴ The uncertain outcome of the performance generates tension, thereby engaging the ensemble with the creative process. Rather than concentrating on the interpretation of a frozen composition, avant-garde composers began showcasing different methods of experimentation in performance, creating a work that consists of a “field of relation,” or a framework, from which the artist improvises.⁵ Compositions became works in movement. As Earle Brown stated, “A performance is composed rather than a composition is performed. I prefer to think of form as the result of activity in relation to a “labyrinth of implications” rather than as a fixed configuration.”⁶

Avant-garde composers questioned norms, were unorthodox in their approach, and found inspiration in all mediums. As with many labels ascribed to artistic movements, the participants of the avant-garde did not enjoy the term, as exemplified by Charlotte Moorman:

We hated it—all of us did—Varèse, Cage, Tudor, Behrman. A lady came to the first festival, held at Judson Hall, which was right across the street from Carnegie Hall. We called it “Six Concerts, ’63.” After she saw our little notice outside the hall, this nice little tourist lady said, “Aw, I think I’ll go in.” She came in and bought a ticket and was so outraged at the performance of John Cage and David Tudor that she tried to sue us. Now those things are a problem. You have to answer such complaint. You have to get lawyers to handle it. Some people have so much time on their hands that they can do those annoying things to you. So that’s when I added “Avant-Garde” to the name, just so that everyone would know that the festivals are not composed of works by Mozart.⁷

Moorman continues with a wild, surreal tale about the second avant-garde concert, in which there was an actual chimpanzee in a blue dress, and performers wore costumes that involved

⁴ George Lewis, “Improvised Music after 1950: Afrological and Eurological Perspectives,” *Black Music Research Journal*, 22 (Supplement: Best of BMRJ 2002): 230.

⁵ Eco, *The Open Work*, 19.

⁶ Earle Brown, “Form in der Neuen Musik,” *Darmstädter Beiträge zur Neuen Musik* 10 (1966), 61.

⁷ Charlotte Moorman, “Interview with Charlotte Moorman on the Avant-Garde Festivals,” interview by Stephen Varble, *Critical Mass: Happenings, Fluxus, Performance, Intermedia and Rutgers University 1958-1972*, ed. Geoffrey Hendricks (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2003), 173.

sheer gauze dresses, a fur g-string, red tights, rice, and ketchup.⁸ The experimental techniques of the avant-garde lost their revolutionary status over time but remain important elements of postmodernism.

In *The Open Work*, Umberto Eco begins his discussion by citing *Klavierstück XI* by Karlheinz Stockhausen and Luciano Berio's *Sequenza III* as examples, but the range of compositional methods Eco mentions might equally apply to Cecil Taylor's *Air, Unit Structures*, or Ornette Coleman's *Free Jazz*. I posit that avant-garde jazz and avant-garde classical music were not separate, as they are most often regarded, but rather a single impulse that I label the American pan-avant-garde, concerned with expression of intuitive, process-oriented music that grew from a few examples in the first half of the century to a true movement of American experimentalism in the 1950s.

Considering composers such as John Cage, Earle Brown, and Morton Feldman alongside Cecil Taylor, Ornette Coleman, Charles Mingus, and Sun Ra enriches our understanding of the experimental impulse. While these musicians were from different backgrounds, most of them were formally educated in music; they studied the Western European canon, absorbed the music(s) they heard around them, and transformed what they learned into new works. The histories of jazz and classical music have heretofore been written as if the musicians composing and performing these styles were solely affiliated with one or the other.⁹ However, the relationship between jazz and classical is not necessarily a binary. After World War II, composers, artists, and writers engaged with what is now referenced as a postmodernist culture,

⁸ Ibid., 173-174.

⁹ Two examples of such texts are J. Peter Burkholder, Donald Jay Grout, and Claude V. Palisca, *A History of Western Music*, 9th Edition (New York, NY: WW Norton & Co.2014); and Ted Gioia, *The History of Jazz*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011). These texts are insightful in many ways, but perpetuate this separation of genres within experimental and avant-garde musics. I also specifically discuss other texts later in this chapter.

beginning an era of collaboration and combination that was much more extensive than historians have often recognized.

Postmodernism is characterized by diverse definitions and can be enigmatic. Frederic Jameson's exploration of these concepts in *Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* provides a good starting point for understanding postmodernism. According to Jameson, it functions as the cultural dominant, and is "the force field in which very different kinds of cultural impulses... 'residual' and 'emergent' forms of cultural production—must make their way.¹⁰" Perceiving postmodernism as an aesthetic limits the principles only to artists, musicians, writers, whereas perceiving postmodernism as a culture creates space for more participants in a pluralistic culture that contains disparate sets of choices we collectively share. We can wear kimonos while dining at a Mexican restaurant that serves Belgian style beer while watching American baseball on the television. The notion of one aesthetic that drives American artists does not accurately reflect our society. Our postmodern culture "allows for the presence and coexistence of a range of very different, yet subordinate features."¹¹ It is this very plurality that both complicates an understanding of postmodernism and describes it as the underlying force within our daily lives.

It is especially difficult to identify residual and emergent forms of cultural production when discussing the same composer. John Cage's catalogue of compositions can be used to identify several important artistic tendencies throughout the twentieth century. This is similar in jazz discussions of composers such as Charles Mingus. Was Mingus a classical composer, a hard bop performer, or a free jazz musician? The answer is, of course, "yes, all of the above." Along

¹⁰ Frederic Jameson, *Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press 2003), 56-57.

¹¹ Jameson, *Postmodernism*, 4.

with Jameson's notion of postmodernism as the cultural dominant, I identify with Jonathan Kramer's notion of postmodernism as an attitude rather than a time period, as well as Andreas Huyssen's ideas of postmodernism, which allow the coexistence of what on the surface appear as conflicting ideas.¹² Allowing for multiple readings of compositions and discourse of conflicting ideas enriches and illustrates our perceptions of pluralism.

Though the prefix 'post' implies a conclusion to modernism, it did not end when postmodernism began. Residual forms of production are part of the complicated nature of our postmodern culture. The open nature of postmodernism allows for modernist principles, artists, and composers to function within the postmodernist realm. For example, Louis Armstrong enjoyed a long career performing the style of early jazz that made him an international icon. He did not adopt bebop or free jazz. In fact, there was conflict between older jazz artists and beboppers, or "moldy figs" and modern jazz fans, respectively. Such tension between tradition and experimentation also has parallels throughout history that transcend genre and artistic medium. Scholars continue to debate distinctions between modernism, high modernism and postmodernism. For example, *The Cambridge Companion to John Cage* includes the chapters, "Cage and High Modernism," and "Cage and Postmodernism."¹³ In "Cage and High Modernism," the author David Bernstein defines high modernism as autonomous, formalist and anti-representational, positivistic, rationalistic and de-politicized. He views the systematic nature of Cage's compositional processes, along with his exploration of sound as exemplifying high modernist thinking. To support his ideas, he discusses *The Seasons* (1947), *String Quartet in*

¹² Andreas Huyssen, "New German Critique," *Modernity and Postmodernity* no. 33 (Autumn, 1984): 5-52; Jonathan D. Kramer, *Postmodern Music, Postmodern Listening*, ed. Robert Carl (New York: Bloomsbury Academic Publishing Inc., 2016), 21.

¹³ Alastair Williams, "Cage and Postmodernism," in *The Cambridge Companion to John Cage*, ed. David Nicholls (Cambridge University Press, 2013), 227-241; and David W. Bernstein, "Cage and High Modernism," in *The Cambridge Companion to John Cage*, ed. David Nicholls (Cambridge University Press, 2013), 186-213.

Four Parts (1949-50), *Concerto for Prepared Piano and Chamber Orchestra* (1950-51), and several other compositions. Throughout the article he cites the cultural shifts that occurred as a result of World War II and argues that high modernism developed as a reaction to what he views as the end of modernism.¹⁴ On the other hand, Alistair Williams in, “Cage and Postmodernism,” states that, “Cage is as tangled as the diverse currents that feed postmodernism, and therefore, “it is not difficult to find parallels between Cage’s aesthetics and the postmodernist ethos.”¹⁵ I subscribe to Williams’s point of view as it allows for the possibility of the coexistence of different ethos and attitudes, rather than relying on a linear evolutionary perspective as asserted by Bernstein.

After World War II, the pace of change within composers’ methods dramatically increased. According to Gergen, in postmodern culture there is a “perseverance of the past” and “an acceleration of the future.”¹⁶ Glenn Watkins also discusses this in his *Pyramids at the Louvre*. He provides a great look at postmodernism while providing specific insights about many of our influential composers:

The degree to which the pace quickened in the second half of the century is exemplified in the work of Olivier Messiaen. His use of Greek modes in the 1940s ostensibly reached back to the beginning of Western civilization, but by the end of that decade he was already broadening his perspectives to incorporate manifestations of Hindu culture alongside the medieval Tristan legend and even a gamelan-like ensemble in his *Turangalila-Symphonie* (1946-1948) for large orchestra.¹⁷

¹⁴ Bernstein, 210.

¹⁵ Williams, 227.

¹⁶ Gergen, *Saturated Self*, 62.

¹⁷ Watkins, *Pyramids at the Louvre: Music, Culture, and Collage from Stravinsky to the Postmodernists* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2013), 447.

Messiaen is not an American composer, but he was an influential figure, as were many other European composers who dominate the curriculum in American music programs:¹⁸

Owing to the exigencies of war, American musical education had been taken securely under the wing of a European elite now transported across the Atlantic. It was a pedagogical dominance that was to last for a considerable time, and one that was in some very real measure responsible for the tenor of musical training in institutions of learning throughout the country. For in 1939 the vast majority of the most influential music professors in America either were of foreign birth or had received their advanced training abroad.¹⁹

Gergen's *The Saturated Self* is another valuable source that details the pluralistic nature of our postmodern culture and the effect it has on our daily life:

As social saturation proceeds we become pastiches, imitate assemblages of each other. In memory, we carry others' patterns of being with us. Each of us becomes the other, a representative, or a replacement. To put it more broadly, as the century has progressed selves have become increasingly populated with the characters of others.²⁰

For example, orchestra concerts with nineteenth century symphonies on the same program as new compositions, and jazz orchestras performing Jimmy Lunceford charts alongside arrangements of Radiohead tunes are not only entertaining, but they have a profound effect on our perceptions of past and present, reconfiguration and innovation.

Within postmodernism is a framework, almost an expectation, of pluralism. According to Gergen, "The postmodern condition more generally is marked by a plurality of voices vying for the right to reality—to be accepted as a legitimate expression of the true and the good."²¹ I see this plurality as multi-layered. It is transgressive, but it is also individual. This freedom also allows composers the space to evoke different time periods and influences. According to

¹⁸ International influence was not a new phenomenon, as many American composers completed their training in Germany and Austria, but I, along with other scholars, posit that during and after World War II the influence of Western European composers on American composers increased.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 386.

²⁰ Gergen, *Saturated Self*, 71.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 7.

Kramer, “the blurring of the distinction between past and present is one postmodern cultural value that is reflected in postmodern music.”²²

Postmodern composers do not have a representative work that symbolizes their compositional approach. The individual catalogues of American avant-garde composers fall into different aspects of American music. John Cage’s *4’33”* is perhaps his most familiar composition; however, it is hardly indicative of his music for piano, his landscape works, or his works for orchestra. Likewise, Cecil Taylor’s *Unit Structures* is a useful example of how Taylor organizes his compositions and how the ensemble works to create a cohesive unit. However, it does not quite prepare the listener for his use of spoken word or his interpretations of jazz standards.²³

Scholars of classical and jazz music are re-examining the relationship between the two musical arenas and interchange of perspectives in American society. George E. Lewis provides two terms for discussions of American postmodern experimentalism: Afrological and Eurological. Lewis treats the two terms as complementary adjectives:

These terms refer metaphorically to musical belief systems and behavior, which in my view exemplify particular kinds of musical “logic.” At the same time, these terms are intended to historicize the particularity of perspective characteristics of two systems that have evolved in such divergent cultural environments.²⁴

For Lewis, Afrological addresses music that is influenced by blues and jazz, whereas Eurological addresses music that stems from American concert music influenced by the European tradition.²⁵

They become necessary when discussing pluralistic musicians after 1945, who defied genre

²² Jonathan D. Kramer, “The Nature and Origins of Musical Postmodernism,” 21.

²³ The term standard in this context refers to jazz repertoire. Jazz standards are a crucial element of jazz culture, and range from songs based on the blues, Tin Pan Alley tunes, excerpts from musicals, and original compositions.

²⁴ George Lewis, “Improvised Music after 1950: Afrological and Eurological Perspectives,” *Black Music Research Journal* 22, supplement: Best of BMRJ (2002): 217.

²⁵ Throughout this dissertation I will employ the terms Afrological and Eurological in a slightly different fashion to describe particular logics or codes of performance.

labels in attempts at self-expression and discovery. Musical elements that can be identified as originating from Africa and African American sources are not solely used by black musicians, as indicated by Amiri Baraka:

...the Africanisms are not limited to black people, but indeed American Culture, itself, is shaped by and includes a great many Africanisms. So that American culture, in the real world, is a composite of African, European, and Native or Akwesasne cultures, history, and people.²⁶

The power dynamic between classical and jazz, serious and popular, heavily influenced the way American pan-avant-garde music was received. While avant-garde classical music benefited from its close association with the Western European tradition, avant-garde jazz held lower status until it could prove itself. Ingrid Monson's *Saying Something* provides effective musical analysis connected to insightful commentary on the jazz community, signifyin(g), and racial discourse.²⁷ She dissects the narrative of the development of jazz, primarily Gunther Schuller's version.²⁸ She views his work as both insightful and pejorative in his observations and characterizations of jazz, which highlights the problematic nature of trying to pin down and discuss a multi-faceted music:²⁹

One likely reason for the paucity of critical material on this large and compelling subject is that, in matters of race, silence and evasion have historically ruled literary discourse. Evasion has fostered another, substituted language in which the issues are encoded, foreclosing open debate. The situation is aggravated by the

²⁶ LeRoi Jones (Amiri Baraka), *Blues People: Negro Music in White America* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2002), x-xi.

²⁷ Signifyin(g) is an important practice and process of Afrological storytelling. It consists of rhetorical, culturally determinative gestures or figures that allow for African Americans to establish discourse parallel to dominant white American hegemony. It is a process that will be further explained in the next chapter.

²⁸ Gunther Schuller, *Early Jazz: Its Roots and Musical Development*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968). The book remains very useful today, as Schuller presents a significant amount of details on early jazz, and influential jazz musicians. However, Monson's view is that Schuller negates African-American contributions, and analyzes jazz from a Western European perspective, only highlighting Western sounding moments of music as significant. In addition to influential texts on jazz, Monson also uses Cornel West's *Race Matters* and Toni Morrison's *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* as part of the foundation of her perspective.

²⁹Ingrid Monson *Saying Something: Jazz Improvisation and Interaction* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press 1996), 135-137.

tremor that breaks into discourse on race. It is further complicated by the fact that the habit of ignoring race is understood to be a graceful, even generous, liberal gesture. To notice is to recognize an already discredited difference. To enforce its invisibility through silence is to allow the black body a shadow less participation in the dominant cultural body.³⁰

An example of such evasion in literature is Kenneth Gergen's *The Saturated Self*. His discussion of postmodernism is very helpful, but his perspective focuses on musicians from the Western European tradition:

The works of Philip Glass and Terry Riley nicely illustrate the eroding distinction between classical (or serious) music and popular fare...At the level of popular music, the Beatles were perhaps the first important indicator of modernism's demise. Rather than embracing a singular musical tradition, or a circumscribed range of instruments, the Beatles moved at will across the musical spectrum.³¹

The significance of the Beatles is not in question, but they were not the first. One should study the American works that influenced the Beatles, such as blues, R & B, early black rock 'n' roll, country music, and jazz. However, Gergen discusses what he is familiar with and evades the inclusion of jazz.

Intellectual African American contributions to American culture as a whole have been veiled until the last few decades.³² Eric Porter, in *What Is This Thing Called Jazz?*, highlights many musicians in his book, including Charles Mingus:

Mingus pursued his hybrid musical vision within institutions and social spaces structured by racism. He and other black Americans recognized that musical categories and tastes were forms of distinction that went hand in hand with the logic of racism and segregation, as well as with class divisions within the black community... African American musicians in California had to contend with segregated unions in Los Angeles and San Francisco, which often limit their employment options to small clubs and after-hours joints and effectively kept

³⁰ Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), 9-10.

³¹ Kenneth J. Gergen, *The Saturated Self: Dilemmas of Identity in Contemporary Life* (New York: Harper Collins, 1991), 117.

³² Eric Porter, *What Is This Thing Called Jazz? African American Musicians as Artists, Critics, and Activists* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), xiv.

them out of symphonies, radio orchestras, Hollywood studio work, and better-paying nightclub gigs. Mingus's experience in the late 1940s of being mistakenly admitted to the white union in San Francisco (a bandleader "passed" him off as Latino) and subsequently turned in by a fearful black union delegate gave him particular insight in to the absurdity of segregated social spaces and cultural categories.³³

According to Burton Peretti:

The story of early jazz is unusual in American cultural history. Our historiographical tradition has invariably treated white history as the mainstream of the American past, but white jazz history is an appendix to an African-American mainstream. In creating jazz, black players exercised a kind of cultural leadership in America that has rarely been permitted or acknowledged."³⁴

Early critics viewed jazz musicians as untutored, operating from inspiration and intuition, performing statements of the heart but not the mind. In fact, too much training was viewed as replacing inspiration and degrading to the "authentically inspired performance."³⁵ Ted Gioia provides a concise history of this struggle in his article entitled "Jazz and the Primitivist Myth."

According to Gioia:

Hugues Panassie, Charles Delaunay, and Robert Goffin were the founding fathers of jazz studies. In criticism, discography, and biography they made the first real steps. Their views, assumptions, and biases served as starting points for the next generation of critics, both in the United States and abroad...By the time jazz studies began in earnest in the United States, the discipline was already established by these overseas models. Jazz still retains to this day the marks of this initial European perspective."³⁶

The glorification of the primitivist myth resulted in stories that tend to ignore the amount of work and training involved in jazz. However, a brief look into the lives of influential jazz musicians offers an alternative story. Louis Armstrong, for example, was heavily influenced by classical works. While at the Home for Colored Waifs, Louis Armstrong

³³ Ibid., 106.

³⁴ Burton Peretti, *Creation of Jazz: Music, Race, and Culture in Urban America* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 177.

³⁵ Ibid., 137.

³⁶ Ted Gioia, "Jazz and the Primitivist Myth," *The Musical Quarterly* 73, no. 1 (1989): 136.

learned works by Liszt, Haydn, Mahler, and Bach. Also, consider Armstrong's comments about record collecting:

Big event for me then was buying a wind-up Victrola. Most of my records were the Original Dixieland Jazz Band—Larry Shields and his bunch. They were the first to record the music I played. I had Caruso records too, and Henry Burr, Galli-Curci, Tetrizzini—they were all my favorites. Then there was the Irish tenor, McCormack—beautiful phrasing.³⁷

Lil Hardin's influence on Armstrong is often understated. She was an integral figure in his famous Hot Five recordings, transcribed lead sheets for him, and provided professional direction. In addition, she was a classically trained pianist, and very comfortable on the band stand. In the summer of 1918 she moved from Memphis to Chicago with her parents. Hardin studied music at Fisk University and was able to obtain a job at Jones' Music Store in Chicago demonstrating the sheet music for customers. Mrs. Jennie Jones, the owner, also ran a booking agency, so musicians hung out at the music store during the day to jam. She attracted a crowd as she performed, improvised, and "added to" the classics, particularly when faced with a challenge by Jelly Roll Morton.³⁸

Jelly Roll sat down, the piano rocked, the floor shivered, the people swayed while he ferociously attacked the keyboard with his long skinny fingers, beating out a double rhythm with his feet on the loud pedal. I was thrilled, amazed, and scared.

Well, I'm really in for it, and suddenly remembering that he had played nothing classical, I sat down to the piano very confidently, played some Bach, Chopin and the *Witches' Dance*, which they especially liked. The session ended with me still the winner.³⁹

The primitivist narrative, belied by the examples of Armstrong and Hardin, influenced the reception of a significant portion of American music. When postmodern artists—both jazz and

³⁷ Louis Armstrong, *A Self-Portrait, the Interview by Richard Meryman* (New York: Eakins Press, 1971), 24.

³⁸ Eli H. Newberger, "The Development of New Orleans and Stride Piano Styles," *Journal of Jazz Studies* 4 no. 2 (Spring/Summer 1977): 47-49.

³⁹ Lil Armstrong, "Lil Armstrong Reminisces About Early Chicago Days," *DownBeat*, June 1, 1951, 12.

classical—began experimenting on stage, the color line played a conscious and subconscious role in how audiences heard the music, subsequently influencing the opinions of critics and authors.

In *Postmodern Music Postmodern Listening*, Kramer acknowledges the difficulty in discussing postmodernism and the avant-garde. His comments illustrate the way jazz occupies both popular and “serious” musical realms:

It is curious that this kind of music has no adequate label. Some call it “classical” music, but that suggests music of the classical period. Others call it “serious” music, but surely there is serious jazz and serious popular song. “Concert” music also does not work, because many other kinds of music are heard in concerts. “Art” music is inadequate, because who could reasonably deny that music of, say, the Beatles or of Duke Ellington is art? That Cecil Taylor’s Unit Structures or the Grateful Dead are art?⁴⁰

Nonetheless, his focus remains mostly on avant-garde classical works.

Music curricula rely on many texts on experimentalism written from the Western European perspective. For example, in *Experimental Music Cage and Beyond*, Michael Nyman relies on John Cage as both the definition and starting point of experimentalism as a movement. He writes about the importance of process, changes in notation, game play, changes in expectations of performers and performances. My main issue with this text is that Nyman considers the impulse to experiment on stage a solely Eurological phenomenon, and he ignores many influential composers such as Henry Cowell, Ruth Crawford Seeger, and Charles Ives. The book would benefit by including Afrological composers, and experimentalists from early in the twentieth century. David Cope’s *New Directions in Music* positions experimentalism as a classical phenomenon. His labels of experimental subgenres position them within postmodernism, tools for exploration, and self-expression. Even though he readily acknowledges

⁴⁰ Jonathan D. Kramer, *Postmodern Music, Postmodern Listening*, 23.

the influence of jazz on composers and the art of improvisation he doesn't use specific jazz composers as a study focus. In addition, Paul Griffiths declares that his *Modern Music and After*, now in its third edition, is not "a history of music since 1945. It is not even a history of Western classical music...since 1945."⁴¹ However, the book is often regarded by others as a thorough treatment of the multiple styles and approaches of the classical avant-garde after 1945, as he addresses experimentalism through the music of American and Western European composers such as Ligeti, Berio, Cage, Brown, Gubaidulina, and Reich. As with the Nyman and Cope texts, this monograph would also benefit from the inclusion of Afrological composers.

Scholarly literature on jazz has changed and developed since the days of Delauney and Pannasie. In addition to Ingrid Monson, Eric Porter, and Ted Gioia, authors now devote significant portions of their texts to analyzing works and dissolving persistent remnants of the primitivist myth. Scott Deveaux's *The Birth of Bebop: A Social and Musical History* provides a thorough analysis of jazz in the late 1930s and the development of bebop in the 1940s.⁴² Deveaux's writing provides extensive analysis of the musicians' relationships, methods, and innovations. One of the best books on free jazz is *Free Jazz* by Ekkehard Jost; published in 1974, it remains an important work that provides useful analyses of Ornette Coleman, Cecil Taylor, Charles Mingus, John Coltrane, Archie Shepp, Albert Ayler, Don Cherry, Sun Ra, the American Association of Creative Musicians (AACM), and the Art Ensemble of Chicago. It is one of the first books on free jazz that focuses more on the musical than the cultural phenomenon.⁴³

Paul Berliner's *Thinking in Jazz* provides an exhaustive account of the ways jazz musicians work together. He deals with communication between musicians in performance,

⁴¹ Paul Griffiths, *Modern Music and After* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), xvii.

⁴² Scott Deveaux, *The Birth of Bebop: A Social and Musical History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, c1997).

⁴³ Ekkehard Jost, *Free Jazz* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1974).

rehearsal techniques, phases of development, and repertoire. His account of the individual nature of each musician and their transformations of standards illuminates the multiple perspectives, backgrounds, and influences that each musician brings to a performance. Berliner does not discuss intersections of jazz and classical music but *Thinking in Jazz* is valuable because of the way he discusses jazz. He highlights the formal education of many jazz musicians, the significance of master and apprentice relationships, and the deliberate nature of the art. The techniques highlighted in the book are also the same as used in experimental classical music. Berliner's correlations between jazz and classical musicians are helpful in understanding an integrated pan-avant-garde.⁴⁴

During the first part of the twenty-first century authors have begun to acknowledge the similarities between American pan-avant-garde composers. Benjamin Piekutt's *Experimentalism Otherwise* delves into the correlations between classical experimentalism and avant-garde jazz.⁴⁵ Daniel Belgrad's *Culture of Spontaneity* discusses the rise of improvisation in visual arts, text, music, and the changes in culture surrounding these different art forms. He takes the perspective of the experimental aesthetic as a counterculture that can function as a mediator between high and low art.⁴⁶ George Lewis' exhaustive book on the AACM, *A Power Stronger Than Itself*, is significant in that it illustrates the amount of work and study that members of the AACM devote to their music, while interrogating the genre distinctions that dominate musical discourse.⁴⁷ Finally, *Improvisation* by Derek Bailey, a classically trained guitarist comfortable in both

⁴⁴ Paul Berliner, *Thinking in Jazz: The Infinite Art of Improvisation* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994).

⁴⁵ Benjamin Piekutt, *Experimentalism Otherwise: The New York Avant-Garde and Its Limits* (California Studies in 20th-Century Music, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011).

⁴⁶ Daniel Belgrad, *The culture of spontaneity: improvisation and the arts in postwar America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 1.

⁴⁷ George Lewis, *A Power Stronger Than Itself: The AACM and American Experimental Music* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2008).

Eurological and Afrological settings, provides insights from other musicians, but also offers personal testimony to the experience of the improviser.⁴⁸ He contextualizes improvisation and its function throughout history by focusing on the many different perspectives of improvisation. Further, the book contains many primary sources and quotes from composers and musicians.

Postmodernism as an aesthetic has the luxury of taking what it wants from other eras, including modernism. According to Frederic Jameson, as a result of the fragmentation of styles by individual composers, “modernist styles become postmodern codes.”⁴⁹ Chapter Two is devoted to a discussion of codes of meaning within compositions. Codes become modes of expression that a composer can use to create new works, which can include narrative, spiritual, political, historicist, quotation, spectacle, pastiche and collage. Stylistic distinctions within the postmodern context have a range of power over a composition as a whole. The postmodern composer can operate in a very broad arena while at the same time utilizing specific modes to suggest extramusical meaning or tradition. It is also worthwhile to consider the logics behind the works rather than solely relying on genre-specific compositions. The focus on a logic behind a composition allows analysis to transcend genre and identify the inspiration and construction of a composition. However, instead of only two logics—Afrological and Eurological—postmodernism consists of an “explosion of logics.”⁵⁰ I will offer examples of postmodern readings of specific compositions and will address each of these modes of expression individually. However, I will also demonstrate how these modes are usually layered, placed in complement or conflict, and used unevenly within a single work. The music of Sun Ra, for example, is spiritual but also political, a spectacle and historicist. The way in which these modes

⁴⁸ Derek Bailey, *Improvisation: Its Nature and Practice in Music* (London: The British Library National Sound Archive, 1992).

⁴⁹ Jameson, *Postmodernism*, 65.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 48.

manifest also offers an opportunity to explore the issue of agency of performers and composers. Intent is a complex problem and can be an important element in understanding a performance or composition.

Chapter 3 is devoted to Third Stream music, which is commonly defined as a composition comprised of elements from both jazz and classical music. The intersection of the two is still under-recognized in the literature today, even though musicians readily acknowledge the impact different styles of music had on their own development. The intersections are not always a jazz arrangement of a classical work, such as Bill Mathieu's jazz scoring of Beethoven's *Symphony No. 5*.⁵¹ Sometimes they are discovered in the background of the musician's development. For example, Earle Brown relied on his familiarity with improvisation from his jazz background as inspiration and the basis for his compositions.⁵² Further, consider Herbie Hancock, a classically trained pianist who has participated in several important changes in the jazz idiom. An interview from 1977 in *DownBeat* illustrates the influence of classical composers both new and historical:

Silver: You told me that Tony Williams was the first one to introduce you to synthesizers.

Hancock: Actually, Donald Byrd did; he was checking it out too for the first time—contemporary classical music and *musique concrète*. Donald got a record by Edgar Varèse, in '61 or '62. I'm not sure if it was synthesizer music, but it was one of that nature. But the first time it really came up was with Tony when we were with Miles, in '63. I remember something we heard by Karlheinz Stockhausen. I really took that one in—I felt it. And I was listening to John Cage and all that through Tony...⁵³

⁵¹ Bill Mathieu, "The Inner Ear," *DownBeat*, October 27, 1960, 58-59, 61, 64-65. This was used in an attempt to explain the similarities and differences between classical and jazz music, which included the score of Mathieu's arrangement.

⁵² Earle Brown, "An Interview with Composer Earle Brown," interview by John Yaffé, *Contemporary Music Review* 26 (June, August, 2007): 300.

⁵³ Herbie Hancock, "Revamping the Past, Creating the future," interview by Conrad Silver, *DownBeat*, September 8, 1977, 17, 55, 58.

Hancock continues by stating that *Chameleon* was inspired by the hypnotic nature of *Bolero* by Maurice Ravel.⁵⁴

Chapter 4 is devoted to the importance of process over product in postmodern music performance. Specifically, this chapter contains analyses of recordings of indeterminate compositions and improvisations. I view experimental and free improvisation as an impulse that often materializes as a cathartic event. Reliance on the process of composition in performance carries an internal logic, based on the idea of using one's influences to create, not recreate.

Chapter 5 is devoted to synthesizing a strategy for the study of American postmodern experimental music as an integrated art form. Students who primarily study traditional Eurological music would benefit from learning about the Afrological avant-garde, as it would provide more context, and vice versa. If jazz history courses and history of Western music courses included this definition of an American pan-avant-garde, students would leave the classroom with a broader understanding of American music.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

CHAPTER 2 POSTMODERN CODES

Modes of expression, inspired by Frederic Jameson's notion of postmodern codes, are elements of tradition that postmodernists use in different ways to express an idea or perspective. Some are often cited as principal characteristics of postmodernism, such as pastiche, historicism, politics, collage, spectacle, quotation, Afrological, Eurological, spiritual, and narrative. I am operating from Jameson's perspective that "postmodernism allows for a discursive heterogeneity that includes modernist principles, but also a without a norm." Codes provide meaning and are trans-genre artifacts from modernism.¹

The pluralistic nature of postmodernism is perhaps part of why postmodernism is so difficult to define. Pluralism is inherent in human consciousness, but after World War II performers expanded their use of different styles, mediums, and explicit use of multicultural influences. According to Kenneth Gergen:

Increasingly we emerge as the possessors of many voices. Each self contains a multiplicity of others, singing different melodies, different verses, and with different rhythms. Nor do these many voices necessarily harmonize. At times they join together, at times they fail to listen to one to another, and at times they create a jarring discord.²

Glenn Watkins echoes this statement with more specificity in *Pyramids at the Louvre*:

The exodus by European composers to American in the thirties as well as the first-hand observations by American performers and composers at home and in lands south of its border and in the Pacific encouraged not only an enlarged perspective but a diversity of expression hardly imaginable at the turn of the century. Although all these factors played a role in the formation of whatever it was that was to constitute American music, the magic was to be explained not by any formula but by the recognition of a Grand Collage of the social, artistic, and political events that occurred between 1900 and 1950. If the force of multicultural interaction was not new, the range and immediacy were...the advantages of inclusion were obvious unless the aim was to locate a mythic *Urexpession* with

¹ Jameson, *Postmodernism*, 17.

² Gergen, *Saturated*, 83.

no possible claim to authenticity. And by 1939 the pluralism of America's culture had become too pronounced to tempt many to such an adventure.³

Codes are usually layered, placed in complement or conflict, and used unevenly within a single musical work. At times the whole is more important than the individual parts and it is often difficult to isolate individual characteristics in postmodern works, but identifying individual codes is still enlightening. Sometimes codes are only heard or read by the listeners, sometimes they are deliberately ascribed by the composer, or both. Codes can provide societal commentary, evoke tradition and/or irony, concurrently or asynchronously. For example, a politically motivated work could contain a mixture of quotation, Afrological and Eurological characteristics, and also be a spectacle. Understanding how codes manifest in compositions is a step toward explaining the pluralistic nature of the pan-avant-garde and postmodern American music.

Pastiche

Pastiche, in improvisations and compositions, manifests as quotation of short melodic phrases, larger sections of a composition, or allusions to a familiar composer or styles. For example, in Cage's *Imaginary Landscape No. 5* (1952), an indeterminate work for magnetic tape, the performer is required to assemble recorded excerpts according to the score. The premiere of this work was assembled for dancer Jean Erdman, who was working on a solo dance and asked Cage to compose something in a jazz style:

I had a dance I wanted very much to do, which was based on old jazz, and I had all these 78 records, and I used to use them to improvise. It was kind of an improvised piece anyway...I said to David [Tudor], "I want John to do the music to this and its jazz, and I don't have the courage to ask him because he hates jazz...maybe you could ask him for me."⁴

³ Watkins, *Pyramids*, 396.

⁴ Rebecca Y. Kim, "John Cage in Separate Togetherness with Jazz," *Contemporary Music Review* 31, no. 1 (February 2012): 71.

Instead, Cage used samples from recordings by Count Basie, Billy Eckstine, Louis Armstrong, Dizzy Gillespie, Coleman Hawkins, Ethel Waters, Miles Davis; the final quotation is “Fish for Supper” by Al Kooper and the Savoy Sultans.⁵ The score uses time space notation graphed in lines similar to the graphic notation of Joseph Schillinger, and the times indicated on the score do not and most likely will not correspond with natural breaks in the musical excerpts, such as ends of choruses, sections, or solos. Though Cage used jazz records for the performance, the score does not specify recordings of a particular genre, nor does it indicate that they need be consistent. This is a prime example of pastiche, as disparate musical excerpts are assembled without any regard for musical continuity.

In many of Cage’s indeterminate works, as with postmodern works generally, intent is a complex problem, and can be an important element in understanding both performance and composition. Postmodernism allows the individual to move in and out of different domains, defined by psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi as:

a set of symbolic rules and procedures...Domains are in turn nested in what we usually call culture, or the symbolic knowledge shared by a particular society, or by humanity as a whole.”⁶

Controversy occurs when the individual moves in and out of these domains when the general public does not expect or think the individual should. There are identifiable traits to our culture’s sense of classical, jazz, rock, and pop musics. However, these traits do not necessarily map onto the artist; in the postmodern era, the composer and performer are not necessarily identified solely with a single genre. There are many composers trained in all of the genres mentioned above that

⁵ Ibid., 74.

⁶ Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Creativity: Flow and the Psychology of Discovery and Invention* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1990), 27-28.

compose music in a variety of domains. The intent of the composer and performer frames the way postmodern codes are received. For example, Third Stream music is generally defined as the combination of jazz and classical elements into a musical work. Is Cage's *Imaginary Landscape No. 5* a Third Stream work? The primary classical element of the work is the fact that it was assembled by Cage; his recognition as a classical composer overshadows the fact that his use of the score as a guide, or lead sheet, is Afrological, as well as his use of Afrologically based music for the performance.

Another example of pastiche is Sonny Rollins' *The Solo Album*. It is a recording of a live solo performance at the Metropolitan Museum of Modern Art in 1985 and contains two parts: "Soloscope 1" and "Soloscope 2."⁷ Both are stream of consciousness improvisations. Rollins alludes to tunes, performs familiar licks, and briefly develops musical motives. For example, in "Soloscope 1" he quotes "Pop Goes the Weasel" (5:15).⁸ The quote emerges out of a flurry of notes and after the initial quote he manipulates and develops the motive for about seventy-five seconds. A few minutes later (8:53) Rollins quotes "Peter's Theme" from Sergei Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf*, then quickly moves to different material, which manifests as a quotation of George Cohan's "Over There!" (9:35). There are no further allusions until Rollins quotes the full chorus melody of the folk tune "Polly, Wolly, Doodle" (13:40). He then develops the melodic content and returns with a full quote (15:45). One can hear the audience react to his musical quotations with approval and the quotes keep the audience engaged throughout the improvisations. Rollins' extemporaneous exhibition is an impressive journey through process as performance, and he moves in and out of different musical domains with ease.

⁷ Sonny Rollins, *The Solo Album*, recorded in concert in The Sculpture Gard of The Museum of Modern Art, New York City, July 19, 1985, Milestone Records, M-9137, 1985, LP.

⁸ Time references are included in the event the reader is interested in hearing the recordings and listening for the quotations.

Afrological and Eurological

George Lewis' terms Afrological and Eurological provide a method of analyzing certain aspects of a composition. These are not essentialist terms and perception is different from one listener to another; it can be difficult to ascribe specific characteristics solely to one logic. However, they are useful when describing certain aspects of a composition. Complex rhythms, polyrhythms, compositions with an open form, and works with cyclical construction in a set pattern are generally indicative of an Afrological musical perspective. Further, timbral explorations such as bent notes, blue notes, and using the full potential character of the voice are well documented within the context of African American music and could be considered Afrological:

An Afrological notion of an improviser's "sound" may be seen as analogous to the Eurological concept of compositional "style," especially in a musically semiotic sense. Moreover, for an improviser working in Afrological forms, "sound," sensibility, personality, and intelligence cannot be separated from an improviser's phenomenal (as distinct from formal) definition of music.⁹

Lewis also considers the importance of storytelling in improvisation Afrological, and the avoidance of storytelling in improvisation Eurological.¹⁰ An important aspect of Afrological storytelling is signifyin(g). The practice of signifyin(g) consists of employing rhetorical gestures or figures in culturally determinative ways as a method for African Americans to establish discourse that runs parallel to dominant white American hegemony. There are of course moments of intersection, but this practice was derived in a deliberate attempt to form an identity that illustrates DuBois's notion of double-sidedness, or double-consciousness. Henry Louis

⁹ Lewis, "Improvised," 241.

¹⁰ Ibid., 239-242. Lewis considers the avoidance of storytelling a direct critique of jazz improvisation, as in his view many of the Eurological improvisers considered their work superior: for example, Stockhausen's stance that his intuitive music was intellectually and musically superior to his idea of free jazz. See Karlheinz Stockhausen and Jonathan Cott, *The American Poetry Review* 3, no. 5 (September/October 1974): 8-13, 9.

Gates Jr., a prominent author on the subject, states in the *Signifyin(g) Monkey* that this term has a distinctive meaning in African American culture:

the African-American community transformed the term “signification” into their own signifier...the complexities of the (re)naming ritual, which apparently took place anonymously and unrecorded in antebellum America. Some black genius or a community of witty and sensitive speakers emptied the signifier “signification” of its received concepts and filled this empty signifier with their own concepts.¹¹

The term is confusing in that the meaning is similar to the standard English use, and also the opposite. It is political, semantic, rhetorical, and a process. A primary feature of signifyin(g) is its reliance on indirect modes of discourse:

A number of individuals interested in black verbal behavior have devoted attention to the “way of talking” which is known in black communities as signifying. Signifying can be a tactic employed in game activity—verbal dueling—which is engaged in as an end in itself... Signifying, however, also refers to a way of encoding messages or meanings in natural conversation which involves, in most cases, an element of indirection. This kind of signifying might best be viewed as an alternative message form, selected for its artistic merit, and may occur embedded in a variety of discourse.¹²

Musical signifyin(g) can occur in many ways. According to Samuel Floyd in *The Power of Black Music*, signifyin(g) is, “troping: the transformation of pre-existing musical material; such transformations may be evident, or fairly opaque.¹³ For example, Cecil Taylor invites the audience to consider his inspiration for “Of What” on his 1958 album *Looking Ahead* as something of a game. It is a transformation of a standard and Taylor expects the audience to listen well enough to guess the basis of the tune:

Of What is “sort of introspective...it might be fun to let the listener, by the way, work out what tune it’s based on. In it, everybody in the trio had to utilize their instruments to the very fullest extent of their imaginative powers, and the

¹¹Henry Louis Gates, Jr., *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 46.

¹² Monson, *Saying Something*, 87.

¹³ Samuel A. Floyd, Jr., *The Power of Black Music: Interpreting Its History from Africa to the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 8.

resulting textures may help explain the title. It's a 32-bar tune with interesting things happening in it.¹⁴

Another example is Charles Mingus and his Jazz Workshop's "All the Things You Could Be by Now If Sigmund Freud's Wife was Your Mother." The composition is a reference to the jazz standard "All the Things You Are," which was composed in 1939 for the musical *Very Warm for May*, and became a jazz standard after it was performed by musicians such as Tommy Dorsey, Ella Fitzgerald, and Charlie Parker. According to Mingus, his title "probably came... from the way the audience was reacting one night."¹⁵ The composition doesn't resemble "All the Things You Are" in any way; Mingus' composition is up tempo, dissonant, and contains disjunct melodic lines with capricious meter fluctuations:

The musicians keep the original structure of "All The Things You Are" in their minds but do not even play the tune's chord structure. The piece in general is based on A flat. Again, the rhythms change. There is no set beat, and yet there's an implicit rhythmic flow, up and down, throughout the work. "Mingus and I," explains Dannie Richmond, "feel each other out as we go, but always, when the time comes to back into the original beat, we're both always there. The best way I can explain is that we find a beat that's in the air, and just take it out of the air when we want it."¹⁶

In many ways signifyin(g) is embedded within American culture, due in part to the popularity of African American forms of music. Signifyin(g), at least indirectly, provided the foundation for postmodernism, the pan-avant-garde and postmodern artists, and became a framework for pan-avant-garde artists to subvert social norms and traditional Eurological musical practices. Further, the classical avant-garde heard bebop musicians transform pop tunes,

¹⁴ Nat Hentoff, liner notes *Looking Ahead*, The Cecil Taylor Quartet, recorded June 9, 1958, Contemporary Records S7562, 1959, LP.

¹⁵ Nat Hentoff, liner notes *Charles Mingus Presents Charles Mingus*, recorded October 20, 1960, Candid CJM 8005, 1960. LP.

¹⁶ Hentoff, *Looking Ahead*.

and were influenced by these ideas. For example, Cage's rhetorical games, in which he mocks academic intellectualized composition in "II. Indeterminacy," which contains the epigraph:

The excessively small type in the following pages is an attempt to emphasize the intentionally pontifical character of this lecture.¹⁷

The essay is in single-spaced very small font. In other essays, he divides the lines into odd sections in atypical formats. He reformats the written word in a pedantic academic style that is similar to process of signifyin(g).

The last Afrological aspect to consider is the emphasis on process over product. This is often cited as a feature of postmodernism, and I submit that it is primarily Afrological. Transforming and commenting upon pre-composed melodies is common practice in African American music. This is evident in dozens of blues derived from the original hokum blues of Georgia Tom and Tampa Red, the Delta blues of Robert Johnson, and jazz versions of Tin Pan Alley tunes, as well as avant-garde classical indeterminate works.

Considering musical works as representations of certain codes of expression requires acceptance of the notion of the musical object, which I consider a Eurological construct. Postmodernism effectively inverts the modernist concept of the musical work. It does not abolish the idea; rather, it redefined the notion to include performance.¹⁸ Conflating the roles of composer and performer with the emphasis on process over product is one of the reasons the avant-garde is considered radical. The composer-performer relationship is part of "*Werktreue*—the notion of being true or faithful to a work in representing it in performance."¹⁹ Other musical

¹⁷ John Cage, *Silence: Lectures and Writings* (Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1961), 35.

¹⁸ For more on the topic of the musical object and performance consult Lydia Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum Of Musical Works: An Essay In The Philosophy Of Music* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992); Matthew Butterfield, "The Musical Object Revisited," *Music Analysis* 21, no. 3 (October, 2002): 327-380; and Patricia Carpenter, "The Musical Object," *Current Musicology*, no. 5 (January, 1967): 56-87.

¹⁹ Butterfield, "The Musical Object Revisited," 330.

characteristics I attribute to Eurological composition include tone clusters, disjunct melodic lines, dissonance, serialism, concert ensemble instrumentation, octave displacement, *musique concrète*, serialism, whole tone scales, and octatonicism.

Roland Kirk's "Rip, Rig, and Panic" (1965) contains both Afrological and Eurological elements. It opens with a duet between Kirk on alto saxophone and Richard Davis on upright bass playing in an *arco* style; the piano enters after the initial phrase. The sound of shattering glass marks the end of the introduction, and the head promptly begins with the melody in the saxophone and piano. The tune is in AABA form, with a composed A section performed in unison by the saxophone and piano. The B section is improvised by Kirk. The accompaniment lacks a functional tonal chord progression, the solos are dissonant and disjunct, and the drummer maintains a fast swing-style rhythm. Afrological elements are the swing rhythms, standard jazz quartet instrumentation, reliance on improvisation as part of the form, and Kirk's experimental use of the amplifier at the end of the work. Eurological components are pianist Byard's use of whole tone scales while comping, as well as during his own solo; the use of siren (performed by Kirk during the drum solo); and shattering a glass live in the studio at the end of the introduction.²⁰ Further, in the liner notes to the album Kirk offers ways in which he was influenced by Edgard Varèse:

When the glass breaks it reminds me of a time when I was about 17 and I used to sit in the hallway at home practicing those double and triple stops. It was the kind of hallway where there are decorations and stuff. Once when I played a certain harmonic a glass vase fell off the shelf. I don't know if the wind caused it or I did but it stuck in my mind and I decided to do it in this piece. The ending was done with an amplifier; I can shake it in a certain way to get those sounds. I was inspired by the music of Edgard Varèse.²¹

²⁰ The term comping, refers to the practice of harmonic instruments accompanying a soloist during improvised sections. Accompaniments are usually improvised as well, but they serve a supporting role for the soloist.

²¹ The Roland Kirk Quartet featuring Elvin Jones, *Rip, Rig, & Panic*, recorded January 13, 1965, Limelight LM 86027, 1965, LP.

Historicism

In our postmodern world, we are surrounded by history and invention. It is around us all the time for consumption, study, and transformation. History is part of the present due to the preservation of historical artifacts and styles in museums, scores and recordings. Postmodern artists are acutely aware of history. Postmodernism developed while the world was tending to the crisis of post-World War II, and artists were compelled to either use their history as inspiration or as anti-influence. According to Alan Liu:

We do not have history, but we have historicism. Historicism is a façade or screen history like a Hollywood history film or computer game in the style of *Civilization*. It is a “pastiche” of special effects, virtual “worlds,” or detachable “skins” ...levitation just above historical foundations.”²²

This quote provides a good description of Anthony Braxton’s *Piece Three*, in which Braxton layers historicist codes within a pastiche framework. Braxton uses a Sousa-style march melody and rhythms that evoke the sense of an American parade. This is juxtaposed with sections of Stravinsky-esque mixed meter and atonal improvisation. Frederic Jameson states that historicism is “namely the random cannibalization of all the styles of the past, the play of random stylistic allusion...,”²³ and emphasizes that this kind of art is not devoid of passion nor “incompatible with humor.” As in the case of *Piece Three*, pastiche is often humorous due to juxtapositions of historical styles and techniques from multiple domains.

History can become a reference code for postmodern musicians as musical moments created to reference a time period, genre, or composer. For example, the third movement of George Rochberg’s *String Quartet No. 6* is a series of variations on Johann Pachelbel’s *Canon in*

²² Alan Liu, *Local Transcendence: Essays on Postmodern Historicism and the Database* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 4.

²³ Jameson, *Postmodernism*, 65-66.

D from 1680. Rochberg uses a variety of techniques in the quartet; the third movement is a reprieve. The use of *Canon in D* is out of place within the context of the rest of the composition.

Narrative and the Programmatic

According to Earle Brown, “my music is definitely mosaic, not narrative. I’ve never wanted to tell a story. I wanted to create abstract sound objects, *objets sonores*.”²⁴ Many other composers have uttered similar sentiments, which has resulted in postmodernism being framed as anti-narrative. However, it is easy to find exceptions to this idea, and I feel the notion of anti-narrativity is likely overstated. In fact, I believe the underlying foundation to postmodernism is unapologetic individualism, which can be expressed through storytelling, musical imagery, social and political commentary, and spiritual (not necessarily religious) statements, all delivered by any means necessary.

There is a long tradition in musical history of extramusical commentary: using musical elements to deliver a message. There are instances in which a seemingly simple title change has a profound effect on the experience of listening to a composition. A title can deliver the composer’s intent, frame of mind, and inspiration, or provide enough information for the listener to develop a story while listening to the work. For example, Krzysztof Penderecki’s *Threnody to the Victims of Hiroshima* (1960) was originally titled *8’37*, an innocuous title without any context for emotional preparation of the audience. Penderecki transformed his work into musical trauma with the title change. Through the use of sustained tone clusters, extended techniques in layered ostinati, microtones, and glissandi, Penderecki creates a tonal landscape that seems to be suspended in time. Virtuoso performers are required to execute a performance of this work, as Penderecki uses a combination of graphic and staff notation in fragmented systems. Performers

²⁴ Brown, “An Interview with Composer Earle Brown,” 297.

need to have total control over their instruments in order to effectively convey the wide dynamic ranges, harmonics, and pointillistic textures. Reading these sounds as *Threnody to the Victims of Hiroshima*, rather than 8'37, conjures images of the atom bomb, sirens, chaos, an interruption of daily life, and reflections on published photos of the event.

Charles Mingus' *Pithecanthropus Erectus* is inspired by nineteenth-century tone poems. Mingus uses a relatively traditional technique for an orchestral work, but it was avant-garde for jazz composition in 1956:

This composition is actually a jazz tone poem because it depicts musically my conception of the modern counterpart of the first man to stand erect—how proud he was, considering himself “the first” to ascend from all fours, pounding his chest and preaching his superiority over the manimals [sic] still in prone positions. Overcome with self-esteem, he goes out to rule the world, if not the universe, but both his own failure to realize that inevitable emancipation of those he sought to enslave, and his greed in attempting to stand on a false security, deny him not only the right of being a man, but finally destroy him completely, Basically the composition can be divided into four movements: (1) evolution, (2) superiority-complex, (3) decline, and (4) destruction.²⁵

He provides a storyline outlined by each movement of the work. Mingus's use of the word “movement” is perhaps a bit misleading if taken literally, as the movements are sections of the composition and the fourth amounts to only a few bars of improvised material. Mingus plans for the general meaning for each movement, but also relies on the rest of the Jazz Workshop (Jackie McLean, alto saxophone; J.R. Monterose, tenor saxophone; Mal Waldron, piano; Willie Jones, drums) to execute the story:

The first three movements are played in an ABAC form by the group, the alto and tenor together describing the second movement; then each soloist repeats this form, telling the story in his own way. After the last solo, the group again plays the original form, except that the third movement now develops into what I have called the fourth movement. The last movement is based on the third, but increases in tempo and intensity and reaches a definite climax, indicating the final destruction in the manner that of a dying organism has one last frantic burst of

²⁵ Charles Mingus, liner notes to *Pithecanthropus Erectus*, recorded January 30, 1956, Atlantic 1237, 1956, LP.

motion before gasping its last breath. This piece was chosen as the title of the album because of the width of musical visibility and imagination contained in the thematic material.²⁶

In the A and B sections Mingus on bass provides a strong quarter note pulse in 4/4 time as Jones provides support on drums with strong swing patterns. McLean and Monterose tell the story in a hard bop style. The A section is sixteen measures long and has a strong melodic theme, and the B section is twenty-four bars long. The C section is in 6/8 time and lasts approximately twenty-four bars, with a five-bar coda that slows to a full stop. During the solos, the B section is shorter and the solos do not come to a full stop. The C section in both the opening and in the solo sections functions similar to a shout chorus in a big band arrangement, but utilizes collective improvisation, and Mingus further intensifies the section with a fast descending arpeggiated bass line. The third movement quickly dissolves in the fourth movement in which the organism dies and the composition ends.

Mingus' version of "A Foggy Day" illustrates his impulse to create art from the everyday object. When asked to record the popular standard he wanted to bring the title to life, so he turned it into a programmatic pop tune that fit his world:

This is actually subtitled "A Foggy Day in San Francisco" because I've never been to London and have collected these sounds from the Bay Area. You might be tempted to laugh on first hearing—and a good, healthy laugh never hurt anyone—but on second hearing, try to imagine the tenor playing the melody as John Doe walking down Market Street to the ferry building, hearing the sounds of a big city on a foggy day—the rumble of truck, clang of cable car, scuffle of crowd, jumble of traffic, moan of fog horn, cop's whistle, car horn, the drunk left over from the night before who just dropped his last quarter, and that damned twelve o'clock whistle that used to wake me up! All these sounds make much music. I have tried to reproduce some of them musically, and if you can see these pictures as you listen to the track—even to the ferry boat, amid the guiding fog horns, creaking to a stop at the docks (as reproduced by the bass)—then I have succeeded.²⁷

²⁶ Mingus, *Pithecanthropus Erectus*.

²⁷ Ibid.

Political

Throughout Western European musical history there are many examples of politically motivated compositions that are either nationalistic, satirical, or intended as protest. This becomes a code in postmodernism that can be used to provide a narrative or simply a general frame of reference. Many avant-garde works were conceived as political statements or were received as such by listeners. The contrarian nature of experimentalism carries an implied sense of the political by forcing the audience to question the power dynamics between conductor and ensemble, audience and ensemble, and commercialism and art music. Open works are not only open in structure, but open to interpretation. Statements can range from explicit references to an event, such as Pendrecki's *Victims of Hiroshima*, or more generally, as commentaries on the societal expectations placed on artists by subverting social norms or composing as a contrarian to provoke and stimulate audiences.

It is important to consider that often composers were simply attempting to write something new without signifying anything. Works were sometimes misconstrued as political when in fact they were musical explorations of structures and sounds without an external agenda. This was lost on some, as illustrated by Earle Brown:

Morty and I were once interviewed by [Heinz-Klaus] Metzger for an RCA record, in Cologne, and I could not get it into Metzger's mind that I had not done these things politically. I said that I'm interested in inviting the performers into the process. I used to play with jazz musicians. We were equal. We played together, we worked together, we conversed together [he scats an exchange of jazz improvisation between instruments]. But he couldn't understand that. In his world, it was a political statement. You've done away with the conductor, you've done away with everything authoritarian. They were—and still are—so ingrained with political activism.

When Maderna and I first conducted *Available Forms II* in Cologne, [Hans] Helms wrote an introduction to the programme. He wrote, "It's like the Declaration of Independence! America the Beautiful! Everybody is free!" Well, everybody is not free in that piece. But he was so far to one side that he couldn't

get it. Morty had the same problem. Thought his very quiet music was a statement against rock-and-roll, or something. It was very shortsighted, from people who have quite developed intellects.²⁸

An intentionally political group was FLUXUS. They were a loosely formed aggregate that focused on what they called happenings: performance art works that might contain music. Their performances ranged from irrational to chaotic to politically artistic statements. Dick Higgins, a prominent member, described FLUXUS as an outgrowth of happenings that coalesced into a movement by a group of people and the kind of forms which are associated with FLUXUS artistically. It started with the work and then came together, applying the name FLUXUS to work that already existed, as if it started in the middle of the situation rather than the beginning.²⁹ A few scores from the FLUXUS work book include:

Yoko Ono, *Four Pieces for Orchestra* to La Monte Young
(Provisional Instruction. It may be revised by conductor.)

Upon first signal from the conductor, each performer begins to rub a dowel, screwdriver or file across the f hole of any string instrument which will be provided for that purpose, or with an eraser on the surface of a wind instrument.

Second signal will indicate termination.

Upon third signal, each performer peels off a tape taped upon their instrument.

Upon fourth signal, each performer tears off a page from the score. New instructions to these pieces will most likely be provided by La Monte Young during rehearsal.³⁰

Dick Higgins

Danger Music Number One, Spontaneously catch hold of a hoist hook and be raised up at least three stories. April, 1961³¹

Dick Higgins

Danger Music Number Nine

(for Nam June Paik), Volunteer to have your spine removed, February, 1962

²⁸ Earle Brown, "An Interview with Composer Earle Brown," 305.

²⁹ Dick Higgins, "FLUXUS," interview by Carl Nørrested and Svend Thomsen, "Metadrama" performances at State Museums for Art, Copenhagen 1986. Video: TVF, 1986/2005.

³⁰ Ken Friedman, Owen Smith & Lauren Sawchyn ed., *Fluxus Performance Workbook* (Performance Research e-Publications, 2002), 86.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 50.

The Thousand Symphonies is an explicitly political work by Higgins. It does not contain one thousand symphonies, as the title suggests. Rather, Higgins uses the number as a ridiculous notion of someone actually composing one thousand symphonies and connects the irrational idea to the increase in police arrests of teenagers with small amounts of marijuana. Higgins provided commentary on the development of *The Thousand Symphonies* (Figures 1a and 1b):

In the Spring of 1968 Geoffrey Hendricks and Robert Watts told me of a project that was afoot at Douglass College, where both were teaching at the time, to organize a show around guns. At that time the USA police seemed to have nothing better to do than to chase down teenagers for possessing miniscule amounts of marijuana and throwing them in jail, thus ruining their lives. Remembering George's piece for me and my music paper, I decided it would be more worthy if one could set all the policemen in the USA to composing symphonies themselves. So I proposed that the beautiful music paper be machine gunned and that symphonies be derived from the result. Geoffrey Hendricks arranged for Captain Toby of the South Brunswick Police to do this, which duly happened with a 9mm MP40 Schmeisser submachine gun.³²

The work premiered at Douglass College, New Brunswick, New Jersey on December 9, 1968. Phil Corner, another FLUXUS member, conducted the volunteer orchestra. Symphonies 21, 160, 200, 203, 204, 343, 460, 730, 827 were on the program, with a note to the audience that the specific order of the symphonies would be determined and announced during the performance.³³

³² Dick Higgins, "The Thousand Symphonies: Their Story," in *Critical Mass: Happenings, Fluxus, Performance, Intermedia and Rutgers University 1958-1972*, ed. Geoffrey Hendricks (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2003), 102.

³³ *Ibid.*, 110.



Figure 1a: Dick Higgins composing *The Thousand Symphonies*

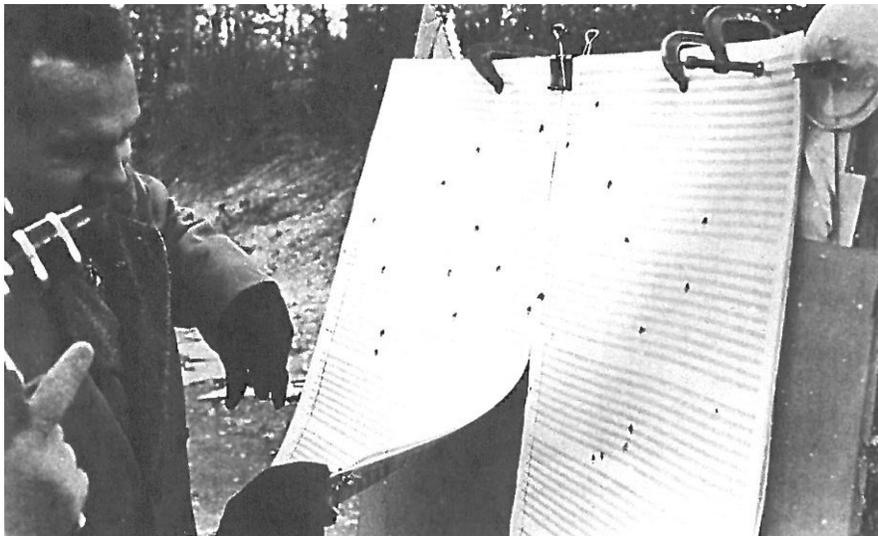


Figure 1b: Dick Higgins inspecting his score for *The Thousand Symphonies*³⁴

In the jazz realm, there were many politically motivated compositions, such as John Coltrane's "Alabama," Sonny Rollins' *Freedom Suite*, and Duke Ellington's *Black and Tan Fantasy*. An iconic recording directly associated with the civil rights movement is *We Insist: Freedom Now Suite*, recorded by the Max Roach Quartet featuring Abbey Lincoln. The

³⁴ Ibid., 105.

recording includes visceral displays of emotions and virtuoso performance; the review in *DownBeat* in 1961 states, “I do not know if all this is jazz or not. It makes little difference. I do know that this is magnificent music, powerful music, vital music.”³⁵ It is a five-movement work that presents to the listener a story of African American history from slavery to the civil rights movement: “Driva’ Man,” “Freedom Day,” “Triptych: Prayer/Protest/Peace,” “All Africa,” and “Tears for Johannesburg.”

The album cover immediately contextualized the recording with a photograph from the student lunch counter sit-ins in Greensboro, North Carolina. Lincoln employs all parts of the voice, and uses multiple techniques such as recitative, *Sprechstimme*, screams, and scatting. The work was a collaboration between drummer Max Roach and poet Oscar Brown Jr. According to Monson, in an essay in *JazzTimes*, they approached the work from different perspectives. Brown was more interested in a Martin Luther King approach, while Malcolm X resonated more with Roach. They were not able to reconcile their differences and abandoned the project. According to Monson, “Brown did not know about the *Freedom Now Suite* recording until he received a post card from Nat Hentoff requesting biographical material to be included in the liner notes to the album.”³⁶ The album was recorded in 1960 and was performed live at two events in 1961, first at a benefit for the Congress of Racial Equality, followed by a performance at the annual convention of the NAACP, which included dancers (including Maya Angelou). According to Monson, “in Dan Morgenstern’s review of the latter performance he stated, ‘*Freedom Now* consciously employs jazz as a weapon in the good fight and proves it can be a potent one.’”³⁷

³⁵ D. DeM [Don DeMicheal], review of “Max Roach, We Insist! Freedom Now Suite,” *DownBeat*, March 30, 1961.

³⁶ Ingrid Monson, “Revisited! The Freedom Now Suite,” *JazzTimes*, September, 2001, <https://jazztimes.com/features/revisited-the-freedom-now-suite/>

³⁷ Monson, “Revisited.”

In addition to political commentary, *Freedom Now* contains programmatic and Afrological codes. For example, Roach uses a rim shot in the first movement to evoke a whip crack. Afrological elements include the seven-stroke bell pattern heard in “All Africa” and “Tears for Johannesburg” (a common feature of West African music), the use of percussion ensemble, ostinato, and an open work structure. The most criticized aspect of *Freedom Now* was Abbey Lincoln’s stylized screaming in “Protest.” She screams for over one minute while Roach accompanies her. The purpose, as Hentoff states in the liner notes, is “a final uncontrollable unleashing of rage and anger that have been compressed in fear for so long that the only catharsis can be the extremely painful tearing out of all the accumulated fury and hurt and blinding bitterness. It is all forms of protest, certainly including violence.”³⁸ Monson finds significance in the ensemble’s use of 5/4 meter for much of the work. She feels the ensemble was signifyin(g) with this choice:

5/4 meter frames the large-scale shape of “Freedom Now suite,” appearing as it does at the beginning middle and end. Given the popularity of Dave Brubeck’s “Take Five” from 1959’s *Time Out*, it would be hard not to read Roach’s metrical choice as a commentary on “Take Five.” Although experiments in different meters (including Roach’s own *Jazz in 3/4 Time* from 1957) had long preceded Brubeck’s album, the version of 5/4 time most under discussion in jazz at the time of “Freedom Now Suite” was Brubeck’s. The amount of attention devoted to Brubeck and other prominent white West Coast musicians in the press was a sore point among African American musicians in the ‘50s and early ‘60s. The press, in their view, overlooked more deserving African American figures such as Thelonious Monk, Sonny Rollins, Art Blakey and Max Roach. By framing the “Freedom Now Suite” in 5/4 Roach turns the meter associated with “Take Five” on its head, using it in a more ambitious way, both musically and politically.³⁹

³⁸ Nat Hentoff, liner notes *We Insist! Max Roach’s Freedom Now Suite*, recorded August 31 and September 6, 1960, Candid CJS-9002, 1960, LP.

³⁹ Monson, “Revisited.”

Spiritual

Spirituality in American postmodernism music is not limited to organized religions. A multitude of spiritual practices became influential in the early twentieth century and had a growing presence in postmodern music. Ruth Crawford's spiritual concept, the Buddhism of John Cage and his use of the *I Ching*, and La Monte Young's *Well Tuned Piano* are all part of the centuries old tradition of spirituality treated as the basis for a composition or performance. We also need to consider the spiritual traditions evident in Ellington's *Black and Tan Fantasy*, Charles Mingus' raucous ring shout "Wednesday Night Prayer Meeting," Melba Liston's gospel jazz tours during the 1960s, and John Coltrane's *A Love Supreme*. By the early 1960s, Coltrane practiced what he called a universal religion and studied Zen, Zoroastrianism, and committed to daily meditations.⁴⁰ For example, the dedication to Coltrane's iconic album *A Love Supreme* displays the purpose of the album:

This album is a humble offering to Him. An attempt to say "THANK YOU GOD" through our work, even as we do in our hearts and with our tongues. May He help and strengthen all men in every good endeavor.⁴¹

American composer Ruth Crawford, as well as others, was influenced by Walt Whitman and nineteenth-century American Transcendentalism.⁴² Crawford had a deep interest in mysticism connected to American intellectual and spiritual traditions. She began her 1927 diary by quoting *Walden Pond*, and referenced other writings of Thoreau and Emerson, and she frequently referenced Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*. According to Judith Tick:

⁴⁰ Franya J. Berkman, "Appropriating Universality: The Coltranes and 1960s Spirituality," *American Studies* 48, no. 1 (Spring 2007): 44.

⁴¹ John Coltrane, liner notes *A Love Supreme*, recorded December 9, 1964, Impulse! AS-77, 1965, LP.

⁴² Judith Tick, "Ruth Crawford's 'Spiritual Concept': The Sound-Ideals of an Early American Modernist, 1924-1930," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 44, no. 2 (Summer 1991): 223.

Crawford also interpreted Whitman as confirmation of her own compositional stance towards sound sources. As Crawford read him, he did not divide sound into two camps, music and noise; he embraced the totality of the sonic universe.

Crawford used “spiritual concept” as the basis for an avant-garde style in her music. It was aligned with her compositional development in a number of different ways, including the composers she honored as models and the stylistic issues she chose to tackle.⁴³

She preferred to wonder about things rather than knowing them and considered artistic emotions closely related to religious emotions, as she discussed in her diary on November 15, 1927:

I suddenly realize that close relation of the artistic and the religious emotion; art and religion result both from a need for man to express something big in himself. The religious express this up-flowing, expanding, engulfing, flowering emotion by trying to create better conditions around them, helping poor and sick people, or else simply by spending this not-containable joy that threatens to burst them in worship of a great God... In the same way the composer of music releases these surging painful joys into tones, the sculptor into marble, the painter into color and rhythm, the poet into sweeping words... Doing this, they either exchange religion for their art, feeling no need for the former, or, merging the two in mystic beauty, attain greater heights in their art, become spiritual, not simply “religious” and creators in the highest sense.⁴⁴

The influence of mysticism, theosophy, and Eastern religious philosophy is evident in many genres. The artist Dane Rudhyar incorporated Eastern thought into his art and was a crucial mentor in Crawford’s life. Together they explored the writings of Madame Blavatsky and the music of Alexander Scriabin.⁴⁵ For example, Crawford used Scriabin’s notion of the mystic chord from his *Prometheus Symphony* of 1910 in her *Sonata for Violin and Piano*.⁴⁶ Sun Ra also studied Scriabin and incorporated Scriabin’s mystic chord throughout his music. Sun Ra, as well as his alto saxophonist Marshall Allen, used the chord in improvisations primarily in scale form, but sometimes as a vertical chord. Classical theory describes the chord as a nearly whole-tone

⁴³ Ibid., 228-229, 232.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 223.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 224.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 236.

hexachord. This collection of pitches can also be interpreted as a C# diminished 11th chord, which can be found in jazz writing during the forties and fifties.⁴⁷ Sun Ra could have easily taught his Arkestra members about the hexachord by studying the compositions of Ellington, Thelonious Monk, John Coltrane, or even Stan Kenton, but he chose Scriabin's *Prometheus Symphony* and taught the chord within the context of anthroposophy. Studying the chord through the music of Scriabin, rather than echoing a jazz chord, reiterates the notion that he did not want to be a bebop imitator, but focused instead on music that transcended genre. It was deliberately anti-essentialist, and part of his continuous effort to move through musical domains as he wished. Further, it offered an opportunity for lecturing on theosophy and mysticism.

Madame Blavatsky was very critical of religious hegemony of Western Europe. She believed that there was an "Ancient Wisdom" or a truth that united all religions.⁴⁸ She taught and wrote about universal connection in the spiritual realms which informed human existence. Blavatsky's writings influenced the Austrian anthroposophist Rudolf Steiner. Both were influential to Scriabin, Stefan Wolf, David Tudor, and Sun Ra. Steiner's teaching of Eurythmy clearly had an influence on Sun Ra.⁴⁹ Steiner viewed music as part of the sciences and regarded music as a bridge from terrestrial life to the spiritual realms. According to Steiner:

You will see here an art of movement that lets the soul-spiritual elements shine directly in to the movements of the human limbs, letting the eurythmist feel himself as a soul-and-spiritual being.⁵⁰

We believe that in the sense of Goethe's conception, when the whole human being is brought to expression, higher natural laws shine through what is being presented to the external senses. And we believe that on that basis a genuine new art can arise, nobler than any contemporary dance form.⁵¹

⁴⁷ This is often a result of chromatic voice-leading.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 226.

⁴⁹ Rudolf Steiner, *An Introduction to Eurythmy: Talks given before sixteen eurythmy performances*, (Hudson, New York: Anthroposophic Press, 1984). Steiner defines eurythmy as visible speech and a form of dance he developed within the Waldorf curriculum.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 27.

⁵¹ Ibid., 47.

It is opening up a fresh source for art through the fact that it uses the human being as the medium for its expression; that is, the human being with his inner inclinations to movement. The idea that underlies our endeavor comes altogether from what I would like to call Goetheanism, from Goethe's conception of his artistic perception.⁵²

When the human soul gives itself up to the melodies and harmonies of music, the importance of this musical involvement lies in the fact that music does not relate to anything so definitely as does speech. One can even say that when one turns from musical activity to speech activity it is, in a sense, a process of waking up.⁵³

Artists considered improvisation as a spiritual experience creating direct communication with a higher power, evidenced by Rudyhar, Sun Ra, and La Monte Young. Rudyhar believed music had this sort of power to connect to something more than other musicians and audiences as stated in his *The Rebirth of Hindu Music*:

A tone is a living cell. It is composed of organic matter. It has the power of assimilation, of reproduction, of making exchanges, of growing. It is a microcosmos reflecting faithfully the macrocosmos, its laws, its cycles, its centre. Concentrate on a cell, and the mysteries of universe may be revealed to you therein. Concentrate on a tone and in it, you may discover the secret of being and find Ishwara, The Christ within.⁵⁴

La Monte Young arrived at this principle through studying Indian classical music. According to Young, "Pandit Pran Nath said that when you're singing and you're perfectly in tune it's like meeting God. The meaning of this statement is that the concentration is so much to sing perfectly in tune that you literally give up your body and go to a higher spiritual state."⁵⁵ While attending

⁵² Ibid., 65.

⁵³ Ibid., 234.

⁵⁴ Dane Rudhyar, *The Rebirth of Hindu Music* (New York: Samuel Weiser, 1928, reprint 1970), 18. See also Judith Tick, "Ruth Crawford," 238.

⁵⁵ La Monte Young, *La Monte Young and Marian Zazeela at the Dream House*, interview by Frank J. Oteri, transcribed by Frank J. Oteri, August 13-14, 2003, p. 4, www.newmusicbox.org [accessed April 19, 2015].

UCLA he heard Ali Akbar Khan's recording which, according to Young, was the first full-length raga recording released in the U.S.⁵⁶

Steiner's notion of bridging the everyday world with the spirit world rings throughout Sun Ra's rehearsing and influence on his band mates. Sun Ra included other musicians if their spirit felt right. It didn't matter to him if a person had musical training. If their vibrations felt right he felt he could train them to perform in the Arkestra. Sun Ra's rehearsals were interspersed with extensive lectures. He would discuss the origins of words, ancient Egyptian texts, and outer space. The Arkestra would sometimes rehearse all day, play a gig, and then rehearse into the night. Performances often consisted of music that was not rehearsed that day. Danny Thompson stated, "You never know when rehearsal is going to be. It might be at four in the morning. It might be at six in the morning. Six in the morning to twelve at night. It might be anytime. You just had to be ready. It didn't matter what time of day it was."⁵⁷ As James Jacson also discussed:

You can't really say how it works out. You can get somebody from Timbuktu man and it works out! Well Sunny's got that ability that leaders have for being able to pick the person that's gonna fit....and they fit!⁵⁸

Sun Ra's Eurological inspiration came from European composers, authors such as Blavatsky and Steiner, and also Pythagoras and writers on esoteric traditions, such as Gurdijeff.⁵⁹ While at Florida A&M he studied Bach, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Schumann, Chopin, and Samuel Coleridge-Taylor. He also became obsessed with the Bible.

According to Szwed:

⁵⁶ Young, *La Monte Young*, 3.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ *Sun Ra: A Joyful Noise* directed by Robert Mugge (Philadelphia: Winstar, 1980, 1999), 16mm filmstrip/DVD, 60 minutes.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 108.

Much of his reading emerged from the Bible, where more and more it seemed to him that what he was looking for could be found. But as he went deeper into the Bible he began to understand the meaning of “revised”: it had been edited, and some books removed, maybe first at the Council of Bishop at Nicene, where it was said that certain important books which connected Egypt to the Bible had been suppressed. Now, as he read, some of the most critical passages appeared either suspiciously transparent or hopelessly impenetrable. Like Milton, he thought that much of the Bible seemed to be badly translated—perhaps intentionally so—from some unknown original. Soon he began to suspect that it had been put together wrong and was being read wrong.⁶⁰

A significant portion of Sun Ra’s philosophy was based on African American authors like Booker T Washington and W.E.B. Dubois. Reading their works, he developed an optimistic view that through discipline and scholarship he would find freedom, and that the objectivity of science would provide the remedy for racism.⁶¹ He was also passionate about Egyptology. According to Szwed, “he began to teach himself to read the inscriptions on the tombs and the pyramids. He believed that hieroglyphics, like the pyramids and monuments, held secrets, and were part of the system of Egyptian science.”⁶² He also studied the music of African American composers such as Nathaniel Dett and Will Marion Cook.⁶³

In many ways, Sun Ra is a perfect representation of postmodernism, as his performances often contained many codes and commentaries. Much of what Sun Ra and his Arkestra performed was in the jazz idiom, an Afrological context.⁶⁴ He was an intellectual, and a formally trained musician who devoted his life to his music with acetic intensity. Sun Ra was focused on getting his performers to experiment and rely on intuition. He was always trying to keep musicians in a state of flow, whether in rehearsal or performance. He warned them to not become

⁶⁰ Ibid., 63-65.

⁶¹ John Szwed, *Space is the Place: The Lives and Times of Sun Ra* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1997), 65.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid., 27-28.

⁶⁴ I am specifically writing about Sun Ra and his Arkestra through the 1950s and 1960s. Therefore, I am intentionally using past tense, even though the Arkestra is still performing and touring under the direction of alto saxophonist and longtime Sun Ra disciple Marshall Allen.

bebop imitators and often lectured they were playing music of the future, not bebop.⁶⁵ Sun Ra provided “a field of possibilities” for his musicians and audiences.⁶⁶ As trombonist Julian

Priester stated:

He would write something out, it would only be a sketch of what he really wants and then he would go through a process of changing that original idea around, so that by the third or fourth rehearsal there was nothing familiar on that paper...and it started to grow from that and he would still add ideas to what he was directing every day. Sun Ra was a genius at it, he sort of directed us and kept us in the dark at the same time.⁶⁷

The saxophonist John Gilmore states, “He was the first one to introduce me to the higher forms of music, past what Bird and Diz were doing. I could read really well after playing clarinet in the Army band, but it took me about six months to hear the intervals in Sun Ra’s music.”⁶⁸

According to Sun Ra’s reed player James Jacson:

He once said to me, ‘You know how many notes there are between C and D? If you deal with those tones you can play nature, and nature doesn’t know notes. That’s why religions have bells, which sound all the transient tones. You’re not musicians, you’re *tone scientists*.’⁶⁹

Trumpeter Art Hoyle explains, “His music didn’t take into consideration the physical limitations of the instrument. There were wide intervals that brass players don’t normally play. We practiced every day for five hours a day in Pat Patrick’s living room on the South Side of Chicago... We needed five hours; otherwise we would never have been able to play the music.”⁷⁰ Sun Ra offered freedom of expression through performing compositions, collective improvisation, and free form improvisation. Further, he utilized nontraditional jazz band instrumentation. For

⁶⁵ Charlie Parker died in 1955, and the wake of Charlie Parker’s death was palpable throughout the international jazz community, so this really is quite a statement.

⁶⁶ Eco, *Open Work*, x.

⁶⁷ Szwed, *Space is the Place*, 124.

⁶⁸ *Sun Ra: A Joyful Noise*.

⁶⁹ Szwed, *Space is the Place*, 112.

⁷⁰ Art Hoyle, interview by Chicago Jazz Magazine, July 25, 2010, www.chicagojazz.com.

example, James Jacson, a member of the Arkestra for thirty years, played bassoon and percussion. Sun Ra even had Jacson make a drum from a tree that was struck by lightning across the street from their house and named it “Ancient Infinity Lightening Wood Drum.”

Sun Ra provided an alternative to the frozen big band arrangements that had become commonplace. In the early phase of the Arkestra Sun Ra maintained two books: one with more traditional arrangements of standards such as “Body and Soul” or “Embraceable You,” and one with his own experimental compositions.⁷¹ This allowed him to get steady work for the band. Sun Ra and the Arkestra’s ability to perform standards allowed them to maintain widespread popularity.⁷² Sun Ra and the Arkestra would often perform a popular jazz composition in a recognizable fashion, but then evolve it into a wild interpretation that would depart from thematic material, formal and harmonic structure. For example, Sun Ra’s performance at the Montreux Jazz Festival in 1976 includes a long interpretation of Duke Ellington’s *Take the A Train*. Sun Ra begins with a solo piano performance moving from thematic content to wild dissonant flourishes. He concludes the solo by returning to the thematic material at significantly faster tempo, the band enters, and after a quick performance through the head Johnny Griffin improvises on tenor saxophone through many choruses with varying levels of accompaniment, and intermittent stop time in the rhythm section. Then, after a raucous drum solo, the band performs the head and concludes the performance. However, by the late 1950s after the Arkestra had gained a following and the standard pop tunes began to function as intermissions to his original compositions. Sun Ra’s attempts to distance himself and the Arkestra from standard

⁷¹ Szwed, *Space is the Place*, 34-35.

⁷² This is illustrated by Art Hoyle, “He was a great musician, though... One night he played “Stardust.” It was one of the most brilliant renditions I’ve heard.” Hoyle’s endorsement of Sun Ra is contingent on his interpretation of “Stardust,” a piece from the standard repertoire rather than his original works, use of instruments, and rehearsal techniques. He didn’t agree with Sun Ra’s approach, but since Sun Ra could play something from the standard repertoire he was creditable to a certain degree. Art Hoyle, Interview.

repertoire and bebop positioned the group outside of the jazz canon. This created a difficult situation for some musicians to reconcile, as they had aspirations of performing with different groups.

Sun Ra recorded hundreds of albums with varying levels of distribution and marketing. He started recording consistently in 1956 in Chicago. His discography contains compositions that cover a staggering range of styles. For example, “Enlightenment” was recorded on the album *Jazz in Silhouette* (1958). It begins with a beautifully haunting melody in the baritone sax accompanied by the piano. Countermelody improvisations enter during the repeat of the melody. The texture grows as the big band enters with new harmonized material. Lyrics were added after the original recording and the tune is sometimes used as processional and recessional music. Then there is “Rocket Number Nine,” which is a fast tempo tune with rapid fire lyrics and dissonant intervals. The tune was recorded in 1960, but was not released until 1966 on the album *Interstellar Low Ways*. The album contains recordings from 1956-1960, four dramatic years of transformation not only in Sun Ra’s output, but also the pan-avant-garde. If *Interstellar Low Ways* had been released shortly after it was recorded, it might have not only changed the reception of Sun Ra’s music, but also perhaps that of other jazz avant-garde music, including Ornette Coleman’s *Free Jazz*. By 1960 he had an extensive catalog of recordings, but much of the music wasn’t released until the mid-1960s or later. His *Sound of Joy* was recorded in 1956 but only released in 1968. The changes in music between 1956 and 1968 were dramatic. These Sun Ra albums demonstrate extramusical narrativity, free improvisation, extended improvisation, timbral exploration, and electric instruments earlier than many other musicians understood to be writing with similar possibilities.

Sun Ra embraced narrativity. He combined Wagner's notion of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* with Steiner's Eurythmy and provided a narrative for his musicians and audiences.⁷³ The titles of his original compositions were often games, similar to many of Taylor's works and those by FLUXUS. They were inspired by dreams and ideas from reading *Popular Mechanics* such as "Thermodynamics" and "Fission."⁷⁴ Ra felt his purpose was to:

reach toward their feelings not their minds because they've been brain washed. I reach what they're supposed to be not what they are. I'm not a man. I'm an angel. If I was a man I couldn't do anything. He always fails. As an angel I can do a lot of things... The curse on this planet is the music musicians are playing. That they're forced to play by people who want money. The creator sees you according to your music. Your music is your personal ambassador to the creator. I'm right here as a bridge for them to get help. I'm talking about equations that will help them. Equations from the ancient texts.⁷⁵

He developed a character that allowed him the freedom to express any thought he wished about music, politics, and humanity. Informed by the historical texts and fueled by the space race of his time, Sun Ra claimed that he was from Saturn and sent to Earth to save the human race. Inspired by the theosophical writings of Rudolf Steiner, Sun Ra applied the language and principles of the scientific method to music in attempts to bridge the physical world and the spiritual realm. Sun Ra's comprehensive execution of his approach still makes people guess whether it was a stage persona or not.

Sun Ra accomplished this with variety of specific tools. The Arkestra wore costumes that evoked ideas of space and history, such as old Wagnerian costumes from an opera house, shiny metallic helmets, and chainmail. Sun Ra used his Moog keyboard as the power for the Arkestra's space ship. He also incorporated what he called the "space key," which was a tool that provided

⁷³ Ibid., 108.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 35.

⁷⁵ *Space is the Place*, directed by John Coney, written by Joshua Smith and Sun Ra, November, 1974.

the Arkestra with a foundation for extended improvisations. It was a drone that offered coherence to the ensemble as members improvised atonal melodies. The musicians certainly were not concerned with specific functional harmonic chord progressions, but they played off of the drone, providing interesting moments of tension and resolution. Sometimes the drone was performed on the keyboard by Sun Ra or the horns, or simply on drums and percussion, as in “Ancient Aethopia.”

I do not believe he actually thought he was from outer space, but rather that he felt the need to elevate his thoughts above the binary racial discourse of the mid twentieth century in order to be heard. A powerful element of being in the Arkestra is that Sun Ra’s extensive discussions on Egyptology helped create a sense of community and meaning. According to trombonist Tyrone Hill, “Knowing about ancient Egypt makes me feel better as a person, ‘cause those were black people. Our race don’t [sic] know very much about ourselves. In America, education and the mass media tell you black people got nothing to offer, but we’ve done many beautiful things. Sun Ra made me aware of this.”⁷⁶ Sun Ra’s racial discourse was incorporated in his rehearsals, as illustrated by this lengthy direction to his drummer Lex Humphries:

That last phrase was off because you played it correctly. You should play it wrong—a little ahead of the beat. It’s very effective. That’s the way the older jazz musicians played it. They played a little bit ahead, then later, Chicago musicians decided to play a little bit behind the beat and that’s not easy to do. It’s a little ahead or behind. Then there’s music that’s right on the beat. Well, white people can do that. If it’s on the beat they got you, and say, “That’s *my* stuff!” If you get ahead of the beat or behind the beat they be talking about you and say it ain’t [sic] even music, ‘cause they can’t play it. If you play on the beat you can forget it, you won’t have a job. So stay ahead of the beat, something you can’t count. Now, Lex Humphries [the drummer] is passive. He’s thinking “Everything is beautiful, ‘cause I’m going to heaven when I die. “So he’s happy. But you don’t believe that, you’re restless. You look out at the world and you say, “Something’s wrong with this stuff.” Then you get so mad you can play it on your instrument. Play some fire on it. If you’re not mad at the world you don’t have what it takes. The world lacks for warriors. You have to prepare yourself accordingly.... In your

⁷⁶ *Sun Ra: A Joyful Noise*.

solos, you can do that: play ahead of the beat... then you got three things to work with. Because it's war in music. Black and white. You got to be where you can win. You can't win over there with a symphony band, 'cause you ain't got no symphony band or nothing. Without unity you can't win. The white race is together. Don't be fooled, talking about revolution'... what the white race got to revolute [sic] against? They got everything. That's not for you. Not no revolting [sic] for black people, no freedom, no peace. They need unity, precision, and disciple. That's what jazz is. They say jazz is dead. No, the musicians are dead, jazz will never die. They make the music dead 'cause a dead man can't play live music. He can only be dead.⁷⁷

From the audience's perspective, a Sun Ra concert is often an assault on the senses that causes you to drop your expectations, listen and watch. From the Arkestra's perspective a concert is part of a continuous journey to spiritual enlightenment. From rehearsal to performance they are in a relentless quest for pure intuitive higher forms of music. Sun Ra exemplified the freedom postmodernists had to cross different musical domains, and his use of postmodern codes resonated with a diverse audience, which created a following of disciples that continue to promote his work.

The Arkestra moved seamlessly between original compositions, jazz standards, and other popular jazz compositions, as part of an endless quest for spiritual fulfillment through music. Sun Ra's metanarrative was a Wagner-Scriabin inspired spectacle. An individual performance would go on for hours, contain stimulating visuals, dancers, nontraditional jazz band instruments, and a sonic saturation that would overload the senses. Augmented big band instrumentation, metallic alien costumes, narration, lights, and walls of sound were all ingredients Sun Ra used throughout his performances. A study of Sun Ra not only highlights spiritualism in postmodern music, but also other modes as discussed throughout this chapter.

⁷⁷ Szwed, *Space is the Place*, 99.

Whether the modes are identified individually or layered throughout compositions, they provide meaning to compositions and performances. Specific meaning can vary for individual performers and listeners, but the terms discussed in this chapter provide the language for discussions of musical phenomena that can rise above traditional genre distinctions and labels. Further, they can become important elements in a course on this music, which will be discussed in the final chapter of this dissertation.

CHAPTER 3 THE MIX

What is composition but nothing more than having people recognize the organizational palette out of which they draw... The ultimate struggle is to challenge musical concepts that America has adopted from the West.

Cecil Taylor¹

There are so many composers, so many points of view, that those clinging to the traditional viewpoints are lost. Life has gone on, swiftly, complicatedly, and has passed them by.

Morton Feldman²

The impulse to combine pre-existing material goes beyond genre, and there are examples from many cultures of culling material from the past and manipulating it into new works and styles. The practice of combining specific elements from different genres and arranging classical works for jazz ensembles continued to the extent that in 1956 Gunther Schuller labeled such music Third Stream to demarcate a separate musical entity from both classical and jazz. Schuller did not list specific elements required for a work to be considered Third Stream. He was simply acknowledging the melding of two significant musical streams, or forces, in American culture into one musical event. As he stated:

years ago I formulated the Third Stream idea, by which I meant just a lot of musics coming into each other, intersecting in different ways with different strengths and in different combinations. That process is going on right now, and I wouldn't be able to predict where it will be ten years from now. We do that more than any other country in the world, and that, I think, is one of the characteristics of American music making. And it's very exciting.³

¹ *Cecil Taylor: All the Notes*, directed by Chris Felver (2005), 72 minutes.

² Morton Feldman, *Give My Regards to Eighth Street: Collected Writings of Morton Feldman*, ed. B. H. Friedman (Cambridge: Exact Change, 2000), 17.

³ Gunther Schuller, "Gunther Schuller: On the American Melting Pot," interview by Robert Palmer, *DownBeat*, February 12, 1976, 38.

His label described what was already taking place in the arts, which Charles Mingus discussed in *DownBeat* in 1951. Mingus' concert works illustrate influences from nineteenth and twentieth century classical composers, as well as jazz and music of Spain. For example, *Half-Mast Inhibition* was composed when he was seventeen. It is a capricious work containing multiple sections that evoke different styles of music, ranging from American marches to the orchestral music of Manuel de Falla.

Mingus described at length his ideas about the tension between jazz and classical music, and offered solutions to the issue:

How many jazz musicians realize that a musician classically trained, never having even listened to jazz, could sit in with a jazz group and read and swing the most? I mean reading jazz that has been mathematically written—every phrase, dynamics, and notations. Write down the free-flowing lines in a time with which the classically trained musician is familiar. For instance, write him in 12/8 while the band still swings in 4/4. It can be done. I've done it... The only difference being that the trained jazz musician learns to *feel* (emphasis in original text) naturally, through reading or improvisation, while the classical musician is trained to read only the conception written and no more.

Those who have always separated the two into jazz and classical will finally see that it's all one music we're playing and what they've been buying is just the confusion out of the separation of the two. Then Kenton can play Carnegie, not as the representative of "jazz," but as a modern composer of American music.

Is it possible that the world has convinced us that all artistic talent belongs to past centuries? Can't we look around us and see there is a wealth of talent and genius seeking to express itself? Charlie Parker is in his own inimitable way creating complete, clearly thought-out compositions of melodic line every time he plays a solo, as surely as one was ever written down by Brahms or Chopin or Tchaikovsky.

Kenton is just one of the multitude who is suffering while trying to show his country that music is *one*, now that jazz has advanced out of its "by ear alone" stage.⁴

⁴ Charles Mingus and Ralph J. Gleason, "Charlie Mingus: A Thinking Musician," *DownBeat*, June 1, 1951, 7. Italics and quotes in original text.

Mingus goes on to discuss effective ways to compose that combine classical and jazz elements, the importance of studying historic composers, and his hope for jazz to be recognized as an art.⁵ He wanted all composers to be able to feel free to express themselves and not be bound by commercial demands, and hoped that the color line would someday dissolve:

Today musicians in all races are proving that no race is endowed with special abilities for any profession and that every musician has an equal chance if given the proper start and study needed for playing correctly. Once this is universally recognized, musicians like Buddy Collette flute, Milton Hinton (bass), and Bill Douglas (drums), among countless others, will find their places in any symphony as competent musicians.

Now these musicians find a color bar preventing their acceptance in symphonies and the qualifications are unknown except to myself and few other musicians who have worked or studied with these thoroughly trained men whose reading, conception, and playing are beyond reproach.

Can we send a potential Ravel, Debussy, or Stravinsky to his grave without affording him the chance to prove that music has advanced many steps and that many composers as great as any of the old are being forced to write background music for the slipping of Mabel's girdle, rather than the true emotions of his inner self?⁶

In the postmodern world, musicians experimented with timbre, methodology, sources of inspiration, and musical styles they studied while honing their craft. An important element to understand is the underlying philosophy of studying all of the music that was available.

According to pianist Keith Jarrett:

An artist is many times unconsciously viewed as a one-dimensional being in a three-dimensional world. It's not hard to understand as applied to a sort of fanaticism which is the result or the cause of what I would call "Style." An artist "stylizes" something by viewing it in his way and immediately this view becomes a "law" by which an audience recognizes an artist. If this law changes at any time the audience must justify its lack of recognition by such comments as "He's lost his touch," or "He's gone commercial, or "He's trying to be mysterious" or

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

“above our heads” etc. etc. but never “He’s discovering and utilizing all the aspects of himself that he finds,” and of course those aspects are numberless.”⁷

Postmodern musical domains are more permeable than some listeners are ready to appreciate. Composers who wrote Third Stream works also composed in other genres, such as hard bop, dodecaphonic chamber works, electronic music, choral works, and orchestral works. However, their identity is often determined by their most familiar composition. From George Rochberg’s perspective:

Translated into practice, this would mean the use of every device and every technique appropriate to its specific gestural repertory in combination with every other device and technique until theoretically all that we are and all that we know is bided forth in the richest, most diverse music ever known to man, *ars combinatoria*.⁸

As Cecil Taylor states, “So in our small way what we attempt to do is to look and see and receive and become a sponge and attempt to make anything that exists as part of the palette to describe whatever it is we think we want to do...”⁹ Ornette Coleman is associated with the creation of free jazz, but he was very prolific during the late 1950s and 1960s, recording primarily free jazz-oriented works, but also classical chamber works and Third Stream compositions. For example, Coleman performs on *John Lewis Presents Contemporary Music: Compositions by Gunther Schuller and Jim Hall*, recorded on December 19 and 20, 1960. Many of the members of this ensemble recorded Coleman’s *Free Jazz* with him the next day. Further, *Forms and Sounds* (1967) is a composition Coleman wrote so that he could perform in Europe as

⁷ Keith Jarrett, *Scattered Words* (Germany: ECM Records, 2003), 26.

⁸ George Rochberg, “Reflections on the Renewal of Music,” *Current Musicology* 13 (1972): 81. Emphasis in original.

⁹ Cecil Taylor, “Being Matter Ignited,” interview and text by Chris Funkhouser, *Hambone*, no. 12 (September 3, 1994), <http://wings.buffalo.edu/epc/authors/funkhouser/ceciltaylor.html>.

a classical musician. The work consists of a string quartet scored with atonal, Webern-inspired disjunct lines, which function as the foundation for Coleman's improvisations.

Other ensembles such as The Modern Jazz Quartet, led by John Lewis, were specifically looking back at European classical idioms and juxtaposing them in a jazz context. In many instances, their efforts were well received, as indicated in a review of a performance of their ballet suite "The Comedy":

Attitudes are obviously undergoing a change when a nightclub audience will listen quietly to a work as long as this. But they will probably have to change a good deal more before Mr. Coleman can hope to leave controversy behind as completely as the Modern Jazz Quartet has.¹⁰

Interpretations of what constitutes Third Stream are still controversial. John Coltrane's *Miles Mode*, also known as Eric Dolphy's *Red Planet*, uses a twelve-tone row for the head. Coltrane and Dolphy both recorded the tune in a quintet format. This is technically a Third Stream work, but the instrumentation and modally based improvisation that follows the head keeps the piece in the jazz domain. In addition, Terry Riley's *Music for The Gift* is a five-part work that was performed live for Radio France in 1963 with Chet Baker and a jazz ensemble.¹¹ Riley performed live with the group, sitting on stage recording short motives by Baker and manipulating the recorded sounds, which results in a dense and constantly shifting texture. Since Terry Riley occupies the classical domain, this could be considered a Third Stream work; however, there is really only jazz content. It is more accurate to call this Riley's jazz album.

¹⁰ Kenneth Terry, "George Crumb Makrokosmic Cartographer," *DownBeat*, October 21, 1976, 18, 50-51.

¹¹ Terry Riley, *Music for the gift*, Elision Fields, EF105, 2000, compact disc. Originally recorded in 1963 in Paris at Radio France. Riley's technique demonstrated on the album foreshadows Steve Reich's *It's Gonna Rain*.

Berliner, in *Thinking in Jazz*, cites artists speaking about a “jazz way of life,” which requires sustained practice, completely immersing oneself in the music, developing a sensitivity to one’s environment, and listening to all varieties of music:

When artists speak of jazz as a way of life, they also refer to the improviser’s sensitivity to the soundscape, which can inspire composition in much the same way the visual world inspires a painter. Just as a painter finds material in an abandoned field, extrapolating images from its littered formations and borrowing features of their varied textures, shapes, colors, and qualities of light and shadow.¹²

Keyboardist Sir Roland Hanna illustrated this point in a 1975 interview in *DownBeat* magazine:

For instance, in the last three or four years I’ve been involved in listening to Joseph Jongen, if you know him. He’s a Belgian composer. He’s written a number of symphonic pieces that are just now coming to the fore, and you might hear them if you listen to someone like, say Virgil Fox... I’m also involved in listening to pieces by Albeniz, music that you don’t hear often. You know, I’ll go to the library and pick up some (Jacques) Offenbach. When you read his ordinary piano pieces, there’s not much there. But when you look at his symphonic works, you find the guy was a fantastic orchestrator. So, in one area he may have fallen short, but in another area, he was a genius, and like Stravinsky, he tried everything... I spend a lot of time trying to find out what’s going on and listening to new compositions. Elliott Carter has written a lot of new works. His string quartets are fantastic.¹³

While *Thinking in Jazz* is devoted to studying the relationships, practice, and art of jazz, the constant search for something new is a fundamental aesthetic of composers regardless of genre. The ability of musicians to take elements from scores and recordings and adapt them into their own craft is an important aspect of composition. It becomes experimental and avant-garde when musicians use nontraditional elements, such as homemade instruments, extramusical inspirations, spoken word, tone clusters, tone rows, vocal techniques, and extended techniques.

¹² Berliner, *Thinking in Jazz*, 486-487.

¹³ Roland Hanna, “The Two-Fisted Rubato of Sir Roland Hanna,” interview by Ray Townley and Eric Nemeyer, *DownBeat*, April 10, 1975, 16.

Even the scale of a performance can become experimental. Consider the large-scale compositions of Earle Brown, Stockhausen, Anthony Braxton, and Sun Ra, which were probably influenced by composers such as Berlioz, Wagner, Mahler, and Scriabin, who had grand visions and created large scale works that required massive multimedia performing forces. Composers experimented with spatial arrangement of their performers, such as Iannis Xenakis's *Polytope de Montreal*. This work is scored for four orchestras, each consisting of piccolo, piccolo clarinet in Eb, contrabass clarinet, contrabassoon, trumpet in C, tenor trombone, percussion (large gong, Japanese wood block, untuned tom-toms), four violins and four cellos. It was composed as accompaniment for the "Poem of Light" for the French Pavilion Expo of 1967 in Montreal:

These are placed among the audience, on a flat, circular area for instance, as in *Terrêtektorh*, along four radii which are at right angles, at the four cardinal pointes of the concert area.¹⁴

Experimental techniques can be difficult to notate or fully explain in manuscript; therefore, the role of the score changed. In a study of the musicians' own testimony it becomes very clear that the process was deliberate, intentional, thoughtful, conscientious, and visionary, a process I call collective composition. Aural orchestration and arranging dictated by the bandleader is a traditional aspect of jazz and developed within the Eurological realm by the avant-garde. For example, as Mingus stated in the liner notes to the album *Charlie Mingus Jazz Workshop*, recorded in 1956:

My whole conception with my present Jazz Workshop group deals with nothing written. I "write" compositions—but only on mental score paper—then I lay out the composition part by part to the musicians. I play them the "framework" on piano so that they are all familiar with my interpretation and feeling and with the scale and chord progressions to be used. Each man's own particular style is taken into consideration, both in ensemble and in solos. For instance, they are given different rows of notes to use against each chord but they choose their own notes and play them in their own style, from scales as well as chords, except where a particular mood is indicated. In this way, I find it possible to keep my own

¹⁴ Iannis Xenakis, *Polytope* (London: Boosey & Hawkes Music Publishers Limited, 1969).

compositional flavors in the pieces and yet to allow the musicians more individual freedom in the creation of their group lines and solos.¹⁵

Ornette Coleman discusses composing in this way:

I really wrote the music because I have the ability to write the music. I wasn't trying to change my class or category or become blacker or whiter. I was just doing something that I could do. And yet, I haven't had any, really, white people that's in the field try and relate to me on a musical level. It's like they were trying to discourage me that there's something that I shouldn't think about. [*Skies of America* is] the way I play. I just wrote it out for a larger orchestra, that's all. It's like writing a letter, you know. I don't sit down and try and *figure out* something. I just heard something in my head and took the pen and wrote it out. But that was because I've been playing for twenty years and after doing that for twenty years, I should be able to do it.¹⁶

Postmodern composers regard everything as musical, and all sounds can have a musical impact:

Flugelhornist Julius Ellerby ventures early in the morning to Golden Gate Park to perform with bird songs, copying elements of their rhythmic phrasing and crisply articulated melodies; saxophonists Rashaan Roland Kirk and Paul Winter have intertwined improvisations with the song of wolves...Patterns with musical implications, from the heartbeat to the rhythm of physical motion, are inherent in all aspects of the lives of improviser. "Rhythm is all around, you know?" Miles Davis conjectures. "If Tony [Williams] was walking down the street and stumbled, he might want to play that [rhythm]."¹⁷

These sentiments echo those of John Cage and many other classical composers. As visual artists use found objects as sources and important elements in their works, avant-garde musicians took in whatever they could. Their found objects were bird songs, noises from urban areas, and quotations from other composers. Just as Cage was looking for a new sound with the prepared piano and seashells, Ornette Coleman was doing the same with violin. The focus was on the process of discovery and embracing curiosity. Performing on unfamiliar instruments forced them to create something that did not conform to the traditional idea of musical beauty: polished,

¹⁵ Charles Mingus, liner notes *Pithecanthropus Erectus*, Charlie Mingus Jazz Workshop, Atlantic Recording Corporation, Atlantic 1237, 1956, LP.

¹⁶ John Litweiler, *Ornette Coleman: A Harmolodic Life* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 1993), 145.

¹⁷ Berliner, *Thinking in Jazz*, 487.

warm, in equal temperament, metered and with predictable rhythms. These ideas in turn opened up many possibilities for composers. According to Earle Brown:

Once you get into abstraction, where multiple interpretations are possible, that's where open form occurred to me: because of the multiple ways of interpreting a Bill De Kooning... Then the thing to do is create a world in which each person interprets it differently. Because that's what they're going to do anyway. So, let's take into consideration the fact that everyone is different, and that there can also be different versions of the same piece.¹⁸

By the 1940s music education programs in public secondary schools in America produced a growing body of jazz artists with formal classical musical training. According to jazz composer Bill Holman in 1958:

It's getting to be desirable in jazz, particularly for the writer. Not that you should merely be able to quote from classical composers, but the techniques you learn from formal study enable you to express yourself better. The danger here is getting involved in technique for its own sake... Bartok... A lot of his music is written around Hungarian folk music and, rhythmically, to me it's almost as swinging as jazz. This swinging feeling is mostly evident in his string quartets. There's a real parallel between America's folk music, from which jazz came, and Bartok's Hungarian folk music.¹⁹

These musicians were not only studying classical music, but they were also listening to jazz, performing in marching bands, concert bands, symphony orchestras, and studying Western European musical theory, accompanied by a growing interest in world music. For Cecil Taylor, performing was a matter of using one's background as inspiration to create something new, often improvised:

The reality is that what I play is jazz. Anything happening after is fine. Somehow my comping has become a matter of put-down. It's not nervous. I try to provide a full orchestral background. That causes a horn player to really play. He'll respond, if he can. You look at the reviews. See what happens when Coltrane and I play together. He and Dolphy can hear me.²⁰

¹⁸ Brown, "An Interview with Composer Earle Brown," 302.

¹⁹ John Tynan, "Bill Holman," *DownBeat*, August 7, 1958, 13.

²⁰ Bill Cross, "Cecil Taylor's Struggle for Existence; Portrait of the Artist as a Coiled Spring," *DownBeat*, October 26, 1961, 21.

When Taylor accompanies a soloist, he is not thinking about Third Stream, but rather about the rich texture of an orchestra and attempting to bring that to a jazz ensemble. Taylor often cites Duke Ellington as significant influence, but states that he also listens to something by Ligeti every day.²¹

During the 1950s American musicians began listening to recordings of Spanish, Asian, Indian, and Indonesian musics. For example, a *DownBeat* issue from 1959 featured a review of *Jazz Sahara* (1958) by Ahmed Abdul-Malik for oud and bass, which also included Johnny Griffin, tenor; Naim Karacand, violin; Jack Ghanaim, kanoon; Mike Hamway, darabek; Bilal Abdurrahman, duf; and Al Harewood, drums. The reviewer did not quite know what to do with this recording:

How in the devil can one rate this? The Middle Eastern rhythm and string instrumental work calls from different standards of judgment than jazz. This could be excellent or inferior as ethnic music of the Arab countries, for all that any poor benighted American can tell... The jazz factor here is Griffin, who deserves praise for courage beyond the call of duty. He who can blow "Salt Peanuts" and "Surrey with the Fringe on Top" to the sounds of the kanoon and darabeka is no ordinary man... For those who are looking for wild new kicks in jazz, this maybe is *it*. Three stars are for Griffin's contribution.²²

Classical musicians were also experimenting with international musical styles and jazz; some even had jazz backgrounds, which influenced their compositions. This typically included music ensembles in schools, but also encompassed private study with influential composers and performers, individual study of texts historical and modern, and exploration of musical resources. Like other postmodern composers, minimalist composer La Monte Young's background included jazz and classical music. In high school he performed in a Dixieland band,

²¹ Taylor, "Being Matter Ignited," 7.

²² Review, *Jazz Sahara* by Ahmed Abdul-Malik, *DownBeat*, July 9, 1959, 31.

listened to Charlie Parker, Miles Davis, Lenny Tristano, and Lee Konitz.²³ Further, in addition to a passion for Anton Webern's music, Young developed an appreciation for Japanese gagaku music, as well as Indian Classical music after hearing Ali Akbar Khan's recording:

A drone with nothing else around it, just a drone. Only for an instant, you know, it seemed like so much then but when I go back to the recording and listen it's only a few seconds. But this recording and Japanese gagaku music and the music of Anton Webern that I had been listening to all somehow jelled together to make what became the beginnings of what my music was.²⁴

Earle Brown describes the fusion of influences as a dichotomy that needed to be reconciled:

I had been working for a long time on how to get out of metric music...I was interested in the constructivism of Schillinger and, at the same time, very devoted to the spontaneity of jazz. So that dichotomy was always in my mind. After I stopping studying with Roslyn Brogue Henning at Schillinger House in 1950, I began thinking on my own, and began to meditate on putting these things together in different ways.²⁵

John Adams also acknowledges the contribution of jazz composers and indicates some level of influence of jazz on his compositions:

I've been very conscious lately of Nancarrow because he, as well as many jazz composers, has worked very hard to create this wonderful sense of underlying pulsation over which many, many layers of events are simultaneously operating.²⁶

Two twentieth century theorists and composers often cited as influences by classical and jazz composers are Joseph Schillinger and Nicolas Slonimsky. Schillinger was a Russian music theorist who immigrated to the United States in the early twentieth century; Henry Cowell brought him to the United States to teach at the New School, where he developed a system of

²³ La Monte Young and Marian Zazeela at the Dream House, "In Conversation with Frank J. Oteri," videotaped by Randy Nordschow, transcribed by Frank J. Oteri, Randy Nordschow, Amanda MacBlane and Rob Wilkerson, *NewMusicBox* (August 13-August 14, 2003), 2.

²⁴ Young, "In Conversation with Frank J. Oteri," 4.

²⁵ Brown, "An Interview with Composer Earle Brown," 299.

²⁶ John Adams, Rebecca Jemian, and Anne Marie de Zeeuw, "An Interview with John Adams," *Perspectives of New Music* 34, no. 2 (Summer 1996): 94.

composition that relied on mathematical principles, graphic designs, and pre-compositional planning.²⁷

According to Slonimsky, who was a close friend, “The publication of the *Schillinger System of Musical Composition* is a cultural event of considerable import.”²⁸ The music publisher Carl Fischer created a division called the Schillinger Institute, whose main purpose was to convince schools to teach the Schillinger system and use the *Schillinger System of Musical Composition* as the textbook. Many schools across the United States did so, but two teachers brought the most visibility to the Schillinger system: Rudolf Schramm at New York University and Lawrence Berk at the Schillinger House of Music in Boston, which was later named the Berklee School of Music.²⁹

Schillinger’s method focused on mathematical principles in creating chord structures, themes, and formal structures. Using geometric notation, the abscissa is used to indicate duration of pitches and the ordinate illustrates the semitones; a melody “looks like a terraced skyscraper,” (Figure 2).³⁰ The method provided nomenclature for composers who were attempting to deal with new technologies, instrument combinations, and expressions. “In Schillinger’s classes, students used the fluctuating curve of a busy stock market day as a *cantus firmus* for contrapuntal exercises.”³¹ In addition, his *The Mathematical Basis of the Arts* discusses how his methodology can be applied to music, visual art, and literature.

²⁷ Brown, “An Interview with Composer Earle Brown,” 291.

²⁸ Nicolas Slonimsky, review of *The Schillinger System of Musical Composition* by Joseph Schillinger, *The Musical Quarterly* 32, no. 3 (July, 1946): 465.

²⁹ Philip DiTullio. “Joseph Schillinger: Resurrecting a Musical Visionary,” *Contemporary Music Review*, 30, no 2 (April 2011): 188.

³⁰ Slonimsky, “Schillinger,” 468.

³¹ *Ibid.*

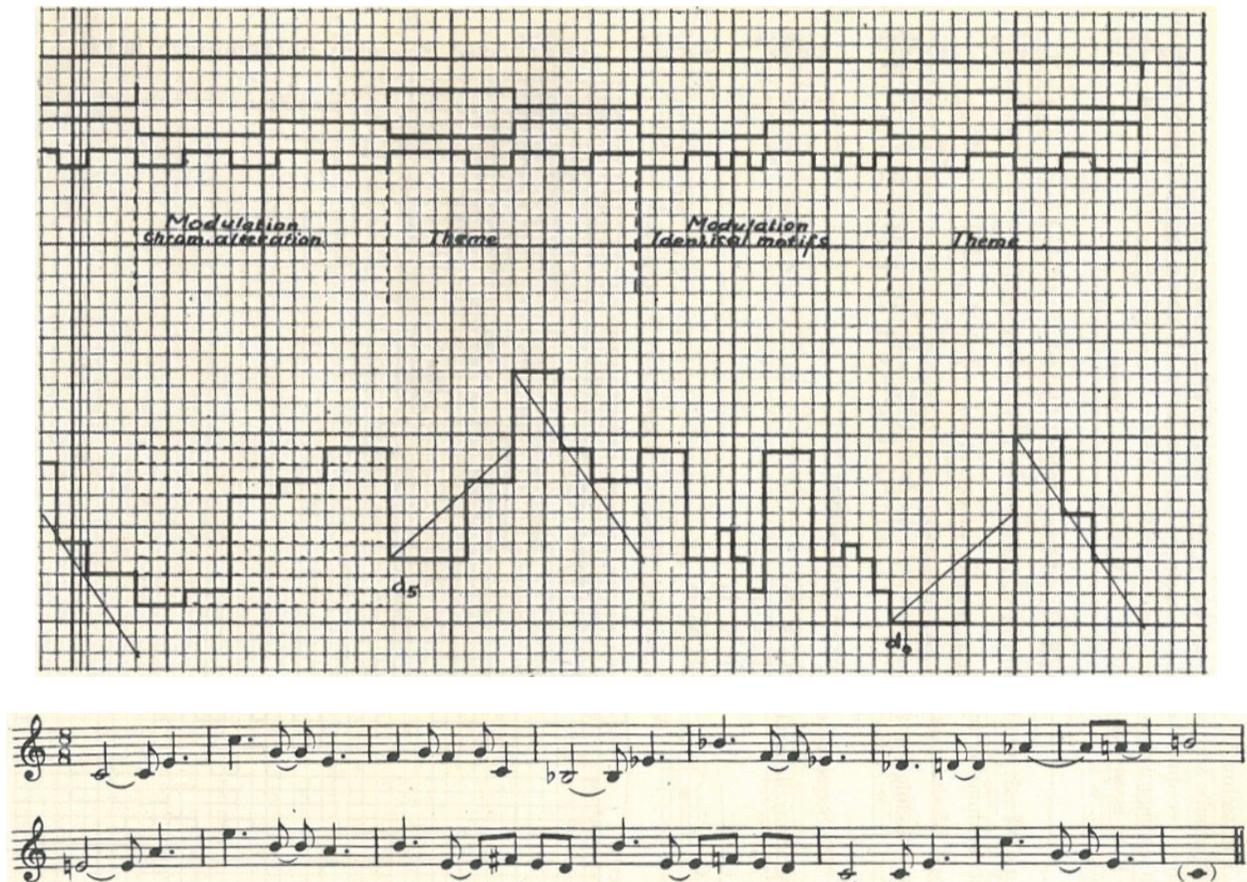


Figure 2: Example of Joseph Schillinger's skyscraper notation³²

Schillinger was successful in the United States as a teacher of Broadway composers, arrangers, and jazz musicians. George Gershwin used Schillinger's technique of harmonic strata in the orchestral part of *Porgy and Bess*, but Earle Brown spoke more explicitly about his use of the Schillinger method.³³ According to Brown, "the Schillinger techniques have always been an influence on me. I've never given them up, and I believe in them still."³⁴ When asked about the allure of the Schillinger method, Brown's response was:

³² Joseph Schillinger, *The Schillinger System of Musical Composition* (New York: Carl Fischer, Inc., 1941), 328.

³³ *Ibid.*, 466.

³⁴ Louis Pine, "Conversation with Earle Brown about Constructivism and Schillinger's System of Musical Composition," *Contemporary Music Review* 30, no. 2 (April 2011): 167.

I don't know. Being in Boston, I was bored with people like Walter Piston. I wasn't going to go study with him. So, I studied privately with Roslyn Brogue Henning, who was a terrific teacher. Her doctorate was in twentieth-century polyphony. She started me in the ninth century, working all the way through the different styles up to Bach. Then we jumped to Berg...she was a twelve-tone composer. That was very, very important to me. But Schillinger was even more important, because it kept me from getting academic. Schillinger died in 1943, but I was studying with people who had studied with him, like NBC and CBS staff composers from New York...There was Larry Berk, who ran the school, and Kenneth MacKillop, who was my particular teacher.³⁵

Brown uses the term “constructionistic” when discussing his works and credits the concept to Schillinger. Brown justifies his use of the word constructivism:

Well, I started as a GI, and I started at Schillinger House with about 25 people in my class, and I was one of two who graduated. I studied engineering and mathematics at Northeastern University before I went into the Air Force. So, I was able to see things, I think, in Schillinger that a lot of other people couldn't. I saw the construction principles of it, and the sensibility of pre-compositional planning, and all of that.³⁶

Brown studied compositional techniques ranging from Piston to Schillinger, but it was the Schillinger method that intrigued him the most. “I used to read Piston's book on harmony, counterpoint and such. But Schillinger was really involved in some heavy stuff. There were four species of harmony: diatonic, diatonic-symmetric, pure symmetric, and atonal. I mean, that's really something! Then, binomial periodicities and coordination of time structures; all that stuff was very interesting.³⁷ Brown had a comprehensive understanding of Schillinger's method, as well as the techniques of his contemporaries. As composers developed their own techniques that were superimposed on established processes, parallels developed that were not isolated to one country, genre, or school, as illustrated by Brown:

³⁵ Brown, “An Interview with Composer Earle Brown,” 291.

³⁶ Pine, “Conversation with Earle Brown,” 176.

³⁷ Brown, “An Interview with Composer Earle Brown,” 290-292.

Three Pieces is simpler than *Perspectives*. But they're both twelve-tone works with the Schillinger concept of rhythmic groups, which is what Messiaen and Boulez call *cellules*. It's amazing, because I did Schillinger long before I knew of Boulez and Stockhausen. And when I first talked to Stockhausen in Cologne, in 1956, our vocabularies were very similar... It was a big thing with Schillinger: economy, and creating coherence through such rational division. So, it would keep cycling and extending itself. It's a generative growth principle. That's the way I did those pieces. And just as with Messiaen, you could cut up the rhythmic group into three groups of five attacks each: A, B and C. Then you do the permutation so that, B-C-A, et cetera, to get six different versions.³⁸

John Cage did not cite Schillinger as a major influence, but his use of some of his methods and causal references to Schillinger indicate the theorist had some sort of presence in his life.³⁹ Figure 3, is page one of the score for Cage's *Imaginary Landscape No. 5*. Notice the use of graph paper and similar methodology for sketching musical ideas. Further Figure 4 is the score for Feldman's *Intersection 3*, which will be discussed further in Chapter 4. Feldman's methodology is either derivative of Cage or Schillinger.

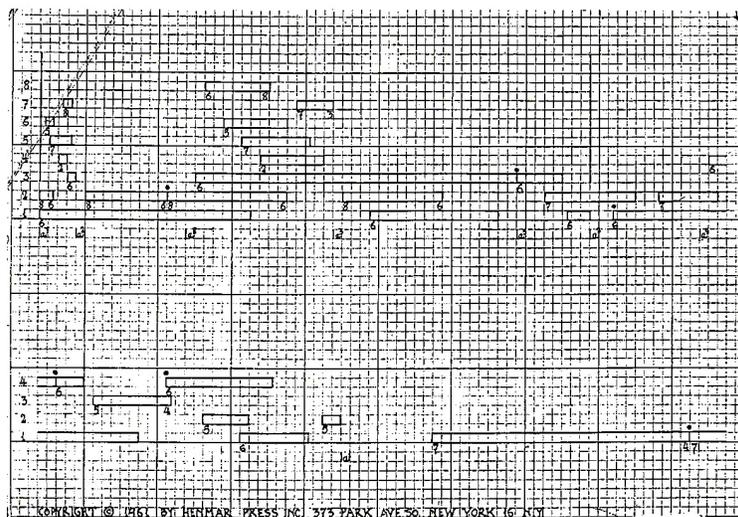


Figure 3: John Cage, *Imaginary Landscape No. 5* (excerpt)⁴⁰

³⁸ Ibid., 293.

³⁹ Cage, *Silence*, 16.

⁴⁰ John Cage, *Imaginary landscape no. 5: for any 42 phonograph records* (New York, N.Y.: Henmar Press, c1961).

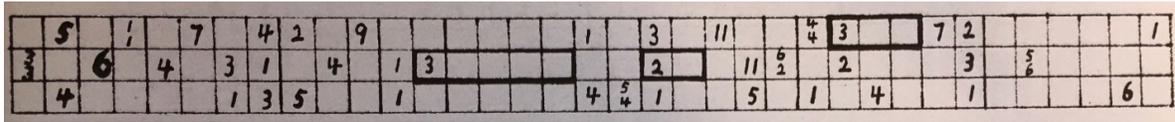


Figure 4: Morton Feldman, *Intersection 3* (excerpt)⁴¹

Schillinger’s influence reaches far into the fabric of American music. In addition to John Cage and Earle Brown, some jazz musicians were students of the Schillinger method. In the 1950s Richard Abrams taught Schillinger’s method to students of the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM). According to Abrams, “Schillinger analyzed music as raw material, and learning the possibilities gave you an analytical basis to create anything you want [sic]. It’s basic and brilliant. But I don’t want to be accused of being driven by what I learned from Schillinger. I am the sum product of the study of a lot of things.” Schillinger’s pupil Rudolf Schramm taught Schillinger’s method not only to Jimmy Heath (who introduced it to Wynton Marsalis), but also Eubie Blake, Mercer Ellington, Eddie Barefield, Doc Cheatham, and Gil Fuller, who wrote for the Gillespie big band. Other Schillinger teachers include Franklin Marks in Hollywood and Ted Royal at Julliard.⁴² The effect of the Schillinger method on the prominent composers listed above undoubtedly influenced other musicians, such as George Lewis and Jason Moran, who have also cited Schillinger as an important source of inspiration. For Moran, “It helped me break the mold of sitting at a piano and thinking what

⁴¹ Morton Feldman, *Intersection 3 for Solo Piano* (New York: C.F. Peters Corporation, 1962).

⁴² Warren Brodsky, “Joseph Schillinger (1895-1943): Music Science Promethean,” *American Music* 21, no. 1 (Spring 2003): 51.

sounds pleasing to my ear, and instead be able to compose away from the instrument—to almost create a different version of yourself.”⁴³

Theorist, composer, and author Nicolas Slonimsky is known for his wit, compositions, and many books, notably, *Thesaurus of Scales and Melodic Patterns*.⁴⁴ The book contains an exhaustive array of melodic motives and scales described with labels ascribed by Slonimsky. Many composers used the *Thesaurus* as source material for composition. For example, John Adams used the text while composing the *Violin Concerto*:

This was derived through scale systems. I had created a group of transpositions that I put into my computer, which allowed me to take any scale or pitch sequence and to multiply it by this mode. I think there are actually two or three modes that I keep flipping back and forth to in this movement. I took them from the Slonimsky *Thesaurus of Scales and Melodic Patterns*, I can't remember what they're called now. I think I originally derived the rising figure as a diatonic figure which I then submitted to modal transpositions. And then of course they're all 6/4 major triads, which is very interesting because a major triad is a very pleasant and socially user-friendly interval. But when they're perfectly parallel and follow lines that are essentially atonal, it creates a very interesting effect where I think the atonality dominates over the tonality of the vertical arrangements.⁴⁵

John Coltrane also used the *Thesaurus*. To compose “Giant Steps,” he used the “ditone progressions” from the *Thesaurus*; in jazz terms, a series of ii-V-I progressions divided by thirds.⁴⁶ “Giant Steps,” is one of Coltrane’s most iconic compositions, due to the fast tempo and his agile improvisations over frequent chord changes. The work has become a rite of passage for young aspiring jazz musicians.⁴⁷

⁴³ Ted Panken, “For the 84th Birthday of Muhal Richard Abrams, Two *DownBeat* Articles (2006, 2010), one *Jazziz* Article (2011), and a Profile for All About Jazz (2007),” *Today Is The Question: Ted Panken on Music, Politics and the Arts*, September 19, 2014, <https://tedpanken.wordpress.com/2014/09/19/for-the-84th-birthday-of-muhal-richard-abrams-two-downbeat-articles-2009-2010-and-one-jazziz-article-2011/>.

⁴⁴ Nicolas Slonimsky, *Thesaurus of Scales and Melodic Patterns* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1947).

⁴⁵ John Adams, Rebecca Jemian, and Anne Marie de Zeeuw, “An Interview with John Adams,” *Perspectives of New Music*, vol. 34, no. 2 (Summer 1996): 98-99.

⁴⁶ Lewis Porter, *John Coltrane: His Life and Music* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2000), 149.

⁴⁷ While the book is influential, it is important to note that Slonimsky did not necessarily invent the melodic patterns catalogued in *Thesaurus*. For example, “Tritone Progression-Interpolation of One Note,” on page one contains a

DownBeat

DownBeat magazine began publication in 1934 and is still an important source for the jazz and music world. *DownBeat* often wrestles with the question of genre and features lengthy interviews with prominent jazz composers such as Miles Davis, John Coltrane, Dave Brubeck; starting in the 1960s it also featured interviews with more Eurological composers such as Terry Riley, John Cage, and Karlheinz Stockhausen. Each issue also contains several reviews encompassing a wide range of styles and performing forces. In 1959, *DownBeat* started to review classical, folk, and popular records, in addition to the considerable space devoted to reviews of new jazz records, which were a component of the magazine since its inception. For example, Jimmy Giuffre, a progressive jazz musician who experiments with harmony, forms, and instruments with Lee Konitz, had compositions featured in both the jazz and the classical record review sections. The classical reviews were not limited to composers recognized in the jazz community; there were also reviews of new recordings of Beethoven, Bartók, and Morton Feldman. In effect, this suggested the two genres were of equal importance to the jazz community.

Generations of musicians grew up reading this magazine, and by the 1970s, the idea of musicians' influence across many genres was not a new thing. Afrological, Eurological, historicist, political, and spiritual compositions are discussed in each issue of *DownBeat*. These are not the terms used by the editors and contributors of the magazine, but the combination of genres discussed in each issue exemplify several postmodernist codes. While the development of postmodern music can be traced through the articles and reviews in *DownBeat*, much of the

motive that is identical to the theme of Thelonious Monk's "Epistrophy." However, a deliberate correlation is unlikely, since Monk's tune was composed in 1941, well before *Thesaurus* was published.

support for postmodern music was cultivated by composer-led organizations developed specifically to support new, creative music that transcended ideas of genre.

One example is the American Association of Creative Musicians (AACM), a Chicago-based community of artists. According to Braxton:

The AACM has created a separate school of thought, quite different from the jazz tradition of New York; probably the biggest difference in the music between Chicago and New York is the environment—in Chicago there was time to research and study and rehearse some of the elements that constitute how the music would flow in Chicago. I think between '66 and '68, or maybe in '69, there was a lot of creativity happening; no one was so much concerned with labels, and because everybody came from different directions eventually they went and continued in their own directions.⁴⁸

The AACM became a musical force that set a precedent for later groups, such as the Art Ensemble of Chicago, and many influential musicians' careers developed because of the AACM, such as Henry Threadgill, Randy Weston, Richard Abrams, and Anthony Braxton.⁴⁹ The AACM were Afrological composers whose goal was to compose new music, perform it live, and teach others how to create. Many of the members continued throughout the rest of the twentieth century, including Anthony Braxton, who is still composing music today.

Braxton exemplifies the postmodern aesthetic and has perplexed many music critics throughout his career. He studied composers of the second Viennese school, Cage, and Stockhausen, as well as Parker, Coleman, Coltrane, and Ellington, so critics often did not know how to discuss his music. However, by the late 20th Century and the early 21st Century he has been recognized more and more for his work:

⁴⁸ Anthony Braxton, *Composition Notes, Book A* (Lebanon, NH: Synthesis Music, 1988), 274.

⁴⁹ Members benefited from the camaraderie and the exchange of ideas, and provided musical instruction to local children, picking them up from their homes and taking them to Lincoln Center in Chicago, where they were provided a hot lunch and music lessons for free. Anthony Braxton provided these details in an interview during the recognition ceremonies for the Jazz Masters award from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) in 2014. Anthony Braxton, interview by Josephine Reed for *Art Works Podcasts*, National Endowment for the Arts, December 19, 2013.

I was very surprised. For the last 50 years the jazz community has pushed me back—and I can respect that. In the interim I came to see my work as kind of an in between space. It's not jazz, not classical, not black, not white. And so, at 68 years old, suddenly to receive a call from the National Endowment for the Arts was quite a surprise. What a wonderful honor. I'm grateful that this has happened. Certainly, I admire the men and women who have come before me. And for something like this to happen in my senior period I must say, life is really something.

I see my work as affirmation of universality, as an affirmation of our wonderful country. I have deep love for America. I see my work as springing from a base that can be called jazz, and from that base I was able to explore world music. And so, my work is an affirmation of my experiences like everyone else. And my experiences have been universal experiences. And this was deliberate because what I was looking for was not an ethnic centric solution to anything. Rather with my music there was an opportunity to bring things together rather than to separate things.⁵⁰

His debut album, *Three Compositions of New Jazz*, illustrates his stance in between jazz and classical. The three pieces were composed in 1967 and emphasize the new and developing trends in postmodern music. The album contains two compositions by Braxton represented as diagrams, but he also references them as *Composition 6D* (Figure 5) and *Composition 6E* (Figure 6).

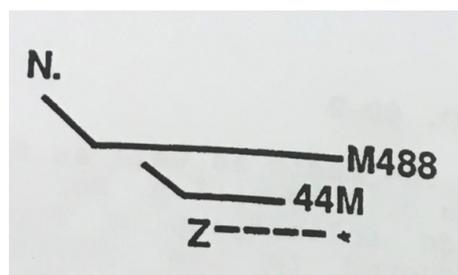


Figure 5: Anthony Braxton, *Composition 6D*

⁵⁰ Braxton, NEA interview, 2014.

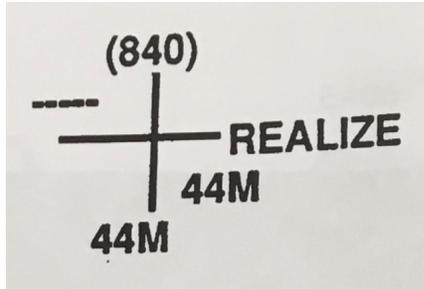


Figure 6: Anthony Braxton, *Composition 6E*

Composition 6D was composed in 1968 and performed that fall at the University of Chicago by Leroy Jenkins, Leo Smith, and Muhal Richard Abrams. According to Braxton, the composition is in collage form, which is a focus on independent phrase movement that allows for extended improvisation. For Braxton, collage form was a direct result of the way in which members of the AACM pursued alternative formal structures for and approaches to composition. Each part was composed separately, without consideration of the resulting simultaneities when the parts are performed together. While the order and duration of the solos is decided by the performers, the tempo is supposed to be fast, and the pianist is instructed to “maintain an arrhythmic generated foundation throughout the whole of Composition No. 6D’s territory.” The work is scored for alto saxophone, violin, trumpet and piano.⁵¹

Composition 6E was also composed in 1968 and performed at the University of Chicago in the fall of that year by Braxton, Smith, and Leroy Jenkins. Braxton describes the work as a response to the “seriousness of the phenomenon” of the rise of “Trans African creativity.”⁵² It is intended for three multi-instrumentalists, and “conceived as a vehicle to re-examine and re-utilize the dynamics of creative vocal music,” and dedicated to Eric Dolphy and Louis

⁵¹ Braxton, *Composition Notes A*, 52-54.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 57.

Armstrong.⁵³ The work contains two sections of open improvisation that follow the form A1 A2 B A1. The form AABA is of course not new, but Braxton uses it in a different way; it indicates the overall structure of the work as the three instrumentalists improvise through the sections, not individual choruses that encompass the whole form. The varied instrumentation, including vocals from all three instrumentalists, creates a soundscape that doesn't seem possible for only three performers. The pointilistic textures contains atonal, disjunct melodic motives, prose-like rhythms, and extended instrumental techniques.

The Bell is the third work on the album and was composed by fellow AACM member Leo Wadada Smith. *The Bell* was the debut of Smith's notation system he calls Ankhramation, which is a combination of graphic notation, traditional notation, and specific instructions (see Figure 7).⁵⁴ Smith's process is very similar to Earl Brown's ideas of open form and Braxton's collage form, but additionally allows performers the prospect of open interpretation. It reads like an indeterminate score that contains short composed musical sections, and the performers decide the overall duration.

⁵³ Ibid., 57-58, 60.

⁵⁴ Leo Wadada Smith, "Music: Interview; Leo Wadada Smith," interview by John Corbett, Summer 2016, <http://bombmagazine.org/article/891969/wadada-leo-smith>.

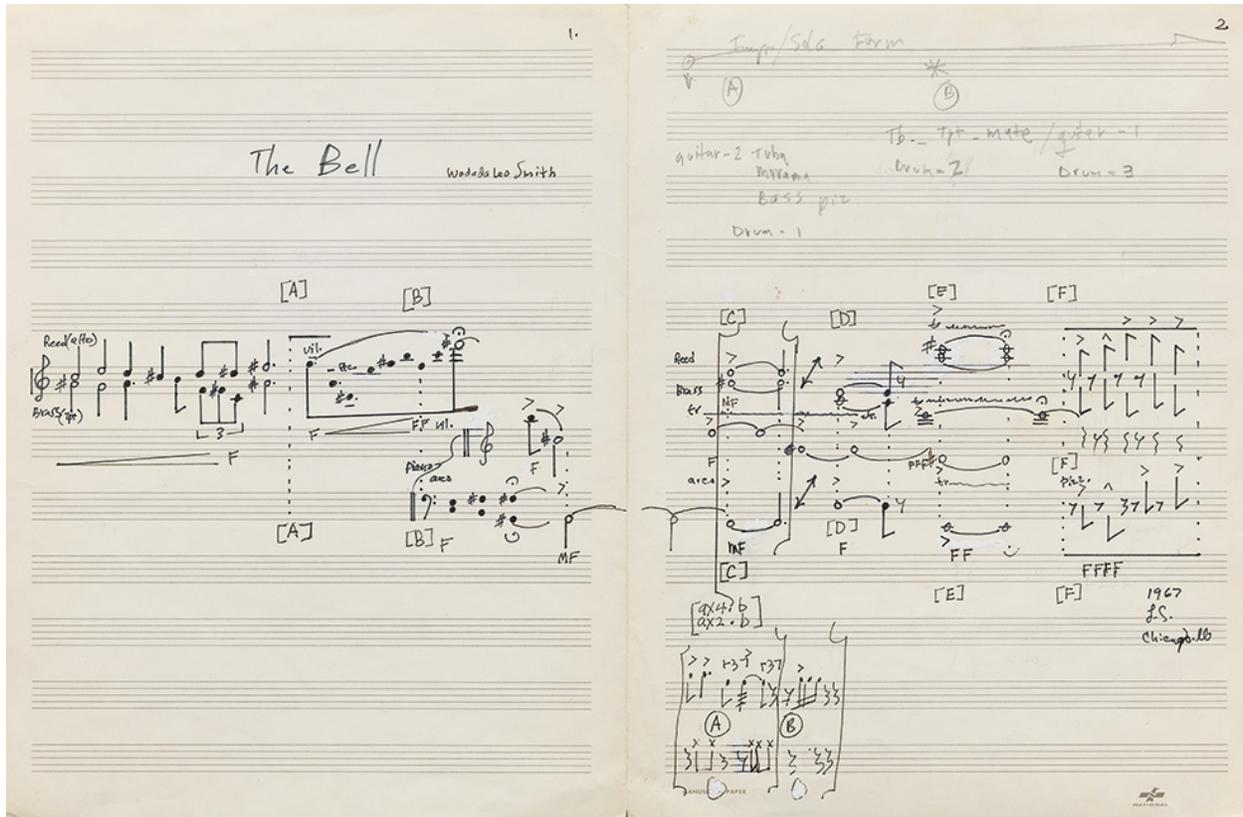


Figure 7: Leo Wadada Smith, *The Bell*⁵⁵

Lennox School

The Lennox School in Massachusetts was a summer education program that employed high profile jazz musicians as faculty and trained many musicians that became an integral part of the development of jazz and jazz education. The school consisted of a board of directors with members from various backgrounds, including Henry Cowell. The school held summer sessions from 1957-60. Mahalia Jackson participated one year, and Gunther Schuller, John Lewis, and Ornette Coleman met during their participation in the program. Martin Williams wrote of Coleman:

Several of the faculty justly hoped that “the critics” would not fill him full of wrong ideas about this duty to be “the next thing”—or whatever. Somehow, one has the feeling hearing him play or talk that he will simply do what he must do,

⁵⁵ Ibid.

not taking credit for his talent but simply feeling a duty to explore and use it, so long as he can work not deluded about “recognition,” that he will play the music he hears, obey his muse, and fulfill his destiny as an artist, perhaps listening to what advice seems just and helpful, but forgetting the rest, and resign himself patiently to the fate that nay innovator must have.⁵⁶

Williams illustrates the notion of the autonomous artist and how the faculty supported Coleman’s exploration of his art, without the need to cater to the marketplace. Many avant-garde jazz artists dealt with this conflict; what they played to make a living did not always correspond to their interests, and often they had to explore what they were passionate about in other venues.⁵⁷

The influential jazz educator Dave Baker also studied at the Lennox School and was able to work with George Russell, Ornette Coleman, Herb Pomeroy, Gunther Schuller, Bob Brookmeyer, John Lewis and the Modern Jazz Quartet, Max Roach, and Kenny Dorham. According to Baker, “That first year was exploratory: all of us were trying to find our voices. The only one with any secure vision of where he was going was probably Ornette.”⁵⁸ Musicians were exposed to rigorous and innovative music history and music theory courses. Schuller and Marshall Stearns taught jazz history; Bill Russo taught his own arranging techniques while George Russell taught his Lydian chromatic concept.⁵⁹

The Sixth Avenue Loft

The Sixth Avenue Loft in New York City was another important venue for postmodern innovation from the mid-1950s through the 1960s. Photographer Eugene Smith lived in the building along with many musicians, including composer and Julliard professor Hall Overton. The building became a hub of musical collaboration. According to Smith, “They were searching

⁵⁶ Martin Williams, “A Letter From Lennox, Mass,” *Jazz Review* 2, no. 9 (October, 1959): 32.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁵⁸ Darius Brubeck, “David Baker & The Lenox School of Jazz,” *Jazz Education Journal* (September, 2002): 43- 44.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 44.

for something they can't find in their club dates."⁶⁰ All night jam sessions and rehearsals consumed the building, and Smith had a tape recorder rolling for a large portion of his time there. For example, Smith recorded Thelonious Monk and Hall Overton working together in 1955, in preparation for the Modern Jazz Festival concert on April 23, 1955.⁶¹ Smith referred to the musicians involved as the "gang upstairs," which included Charles Mingus, Kenny Clarke, Art Farmer, Eddie Bert, Teo Macero, Hall Overton, and Thelonious Monk.⁶² The partnership between Monk and Overton resulted in big band performances at Town Hall in 1959, Lincoln Center in 1963, and Carnegie Hall in 1964. The Town Hall recording was live, and included Overton's complicated transcriptions of Monk's compositions. According to trombonist Eddie Bert:

Monk trusted Hall because Hall knew exactly what to do. He knew what to leave out and what to put in. And you got to know that with Monk. I mean, you can't just—you know, it's not vanilla. In other words, it ain't like usual. It's got to be what Monk did. And the band, that tentet [sic], was like a piano. You had to write it like a piano. So, you'd be playin' all kind of parts. They intertwine and go up and down. Each instrument was like a key on the piano. Monk must have been pleased with Town Hall or else he wouldn't have wanted to work with Hall again on Lincoln Center and Carnegie Hall."⁶³

Monk and Hall were both excited about their collaborations, which is evident in the transcriptions of their recorded conversation by Eugene Smith:

Monk: Those three arrangements are crazy. I like 'em.

Overton: Yeah, I do too.

Monk: I like 'em... We got enough to start a rehearsal, three arrangements, you know?

Overton: Sure

Monk: If they [the band] did one arrangement a day that would be a motherfucker

⁶⁰ Sam Stephenson, *The Jazz Loft Project: Photographs and Tapes of W. Eugene Smith From 821 Sixth Avenue 1957-1965* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2009), 16.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 51.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 52.

Overton: Boy, I tell you, they're going to sweat their balls off on that, uh, "[Little] Rootie Tootie." It's gonna be a hard one for them, to get that clean, all that phrasing clean...

In addition to Monk and Overton, Alice Coltrane lived in the building for a short time; Roland Kirk, Charlie Rouse, Ronnie Free, Paul Bley, and Bob Brookmeyer also jammed there regularly. However, the Loft was not only for jazz musicians. Steve Reich lived in the building for two years before attending Julliard and experimented with a string quartet in the loft. Artists such as Salvador Dali and Marc Chagall also made appearances and spent time with the musicians.⁶⁴ The loft was a known hot spot for new creative activity. Many musicians not directly mentioned on the tape recordings must have at least passed through the loft. The environment was ideal for experimentation with compositions, discussing new recordings, and post gig jam sessions.

The Brandeis Music Festival

In 1957 Brandeis University commissioned works from Gunther Schuller, Harold Shapero, Milton Babbitt, Jimmy Giuffre, George Russell, and Charles Mingus for that year's music festival. Brandeis was known for being supportive of jazz, and the festival aimed to elevate jazz through commissioned Third Stream works:

On most campuses, jazz is something the authorities tolerate because the students like it. Brandeis University, though, looks on it as an art to be recognized and fostered. At its first Festival of the Creative Arts in 1952, the university held a symposium on the subject. In its current festival, it has gone a step further.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ross Parmenter, "Brandeis Rocks to Beat of Jazz Played at Fete of Creative Arts," *New York Times*, June 8, 1957, 21.

Mingus's contribution, *Revelations*, is scored for trumpet, alto and tenor saxophones, trombone, harp, and bass.⁶⁶ Mingus employs the techniques as described in his *DownBeat* interview from 1951. Much of the swing-styled content is written in triplets, while other parts are in duple rhythms. The score provides instructions for improvised sections that highlight Afrological influences, while the formal structure, use of percussion, and *arco* bass writing evokes Eurological tropes. The work contains sections with steady rhythm, recitative style solos, and spoken word. It is capricious in nature, as the sections do not follow predictable eight or twelve measure patterns. Highlights of the work include lyrical melodic material traded between the trumpet and flute, and shout chorus styled sections.

The concert and the resulting recording were marginally successful. Ross Parmenter, the concert reviewer, and Don Heckman, the record reviewer, were independently underwhelmed with all of the works. However, Heckman cited the cultural significance of the concert:

One of the remarkable things about the Brandeis Jazz Concert recording is that it ever took place at all. As Gunther Schuller mentions in his liner notes, it could not have taken place ten years ago. In that short period, the acceptance of jazz as an art by the public and musician alike has been so rapid that composers and performers of this caliber have been able to work and develop in an increasingly favorable climate of opinion.⁶⁷

In a *DownBeat* magazine "Blindfold Test," AACM composer and performer Randy Weston, was given Milton Babbitt's *All Set* as one of his excerpts.⁶⁸ His comments summarize the general sentiment of all the Brandeis Music Festival commissions for the 1957 festival:

You can take it off—I've heard enough. I don't know what to make of that...It certainly isn't jazz... Is it supposed to be jazz? I don't see any connection

⁶⁶ Charles Mingus, *Revelations* (Newton Center, Massachusetts: Margun Music Inc., 1976).

⁶⁷ Don Heckman, "Recording Review: Modern Jazz Concert: Six Compositions commissioned by the 1957 Brandeis University Festive of the Arts," *Jazz Review* 2, no. 10 (November 1959): 39-40.

⁶⁸ A featured section at the end of every issue of *DownBeat* is the Blindfold Test. A musician is given four to six recorded musical excerpts and they are supposed to identify as much as they can about the recording such as album title, composition, personnel, etc. The detail many musicians can provide is astounding.

between this and jazz...I've heard some things of this kind—it's not jazz, and it's not classical music—it's somewhere in between.

I wonder if the composer, and the musicians involved in things like this can be sincere. It sounds like a joke against jazz and like a bunch of guys playing a lot of exercises. I can appreciate Bartok. Shostakovich, Schoenberg, Alban Berg, and any of the great modern classical composers, but I consider this a waste of tape and time—the kind of thing that shouldn't be recorded. No stars.

...I don't believe jazz will move in the direction of that last record, but I believe people may be led to believe that kind of music is jazz...But I think jazz, as I conceive it, will survive.⁶⁹

Varèse Jam Sessions

An understated aspect of Edgard Varèse is his fascination with jazz. He had plans to meet with Charlie Parker when he returned from Europe in 1955, but Parker died shortly before.⁷⁰

Varèse also had a profound influence on other jazz musicians. Fletcher Henderson studied with him, Eric Dolphy performed many of Varèse's compositions, and he served as an inspiration for Roland Kirk's "Rip, Rig, and Panic" (1965).⁷¹ In 1957, Varèse approached Earle Brown, who was working for Columbia Records with Teo Macero at the time and wanted to bring together some jazz musicians to try out some of his compositions. Brown arranged a series of jam sessions for an eclectic group of musicians while Varèse was working on *Poème électronique*.⁷²

The sessions occurred in New York between March and August 1957, shortly before Varèse left for Europe. The musicians included Art Farmer, trumpet; Teo Macero, tenor saxophone; Hal McKusick, clarinet and alto saxophone; Hall Overton, piano; Frank Rehak, trombone; Ed

⁶⁹ Randy Weston, "Blindfold Test," *DownBeat*, October 30, 1958, 8.

⁷⁰ Vivian Perlis and Libby Van Cleve *Composers' Voices from Ives to Ellington* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2005), 115.

⁷¹ Roland Kirk, liner notes, "Rip, Rig & Panic."

⁷² Olivia Mattis, "From Bebop to Poo-wip: Jazz Influences in Varèse's *Poème électronique*," in *Edgard Varèse: Composer, Sound Sculptor, Visionary* ed. Felix Meyer and Heidi Zimmermann (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell Press, 2006), 312.

Shaughnessy, drums; and Charles Mingus, bass. Brown, John Cage, Merce Cunningham, and jazz arranger George Handy were also there.⁷³ According to Brown:

those people came, and they were anxious to come. And I had said to Varèse, 'I'm sure they'll come. They'd love to meet you and talk with you and everything else.' And so, when I invited these people, they all showed up on a Sunday afternoon...it was just a kind of collective improvisation. And with Hal McCusick came a guy that just absolutely used to astonish me: a man named George Handy. He was an arranger for Boyd Raeburn and a lot of other orchestras, and George Handy did some very, very far-out arranging in the '40s...And I remember after we finished this, or halfway through it or whatever it was, I asked George, 'What do you think of this?' He says, 'Aw, man, we did this all the time with the Woody Herman band; it's called head arrangements.' You play this: p-ch, p-ch ch; you do this figure: po-po-ti-ta, po-po-ti-ta; po-po-ti-ta; the trumpet would go: bow, bow, bow. And they do that; they do that; they do that. It's called a head arraignment. You don't write it down; you just sort of verbally dictate. And George said, 'Aw, man, we've been doing this for years.' But was all new to Varèse. It wasn't new to me, 'cause I was a jazz musician, but it was new to Varèse.⁷⁴

John Cage also commented on these sessions:

Recently (1957-58) he has found a notation for jazz improvisation of a form controlled by himself. Though the specific notes are not determined by him, the amplitudes are; they are characteristic of his imagination, and the improvisation, though somewhat indeterminate, sound like his other works.⁷⁵

The score (Figure 8) is one of the charts Varèse used in the jam sessions. The numbers on the left margin indicate recording channels. The graphic notation could be interpreted by any combination of instruments and does not indicate jazz construction. This score is important because it is virtually identical to the score the composer used for his *Poème électronique*.

⁷³ Ibid., 312-313.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 313. Single quotation marks in original text.

⁷⁵ Cage, *Silence*, 84.

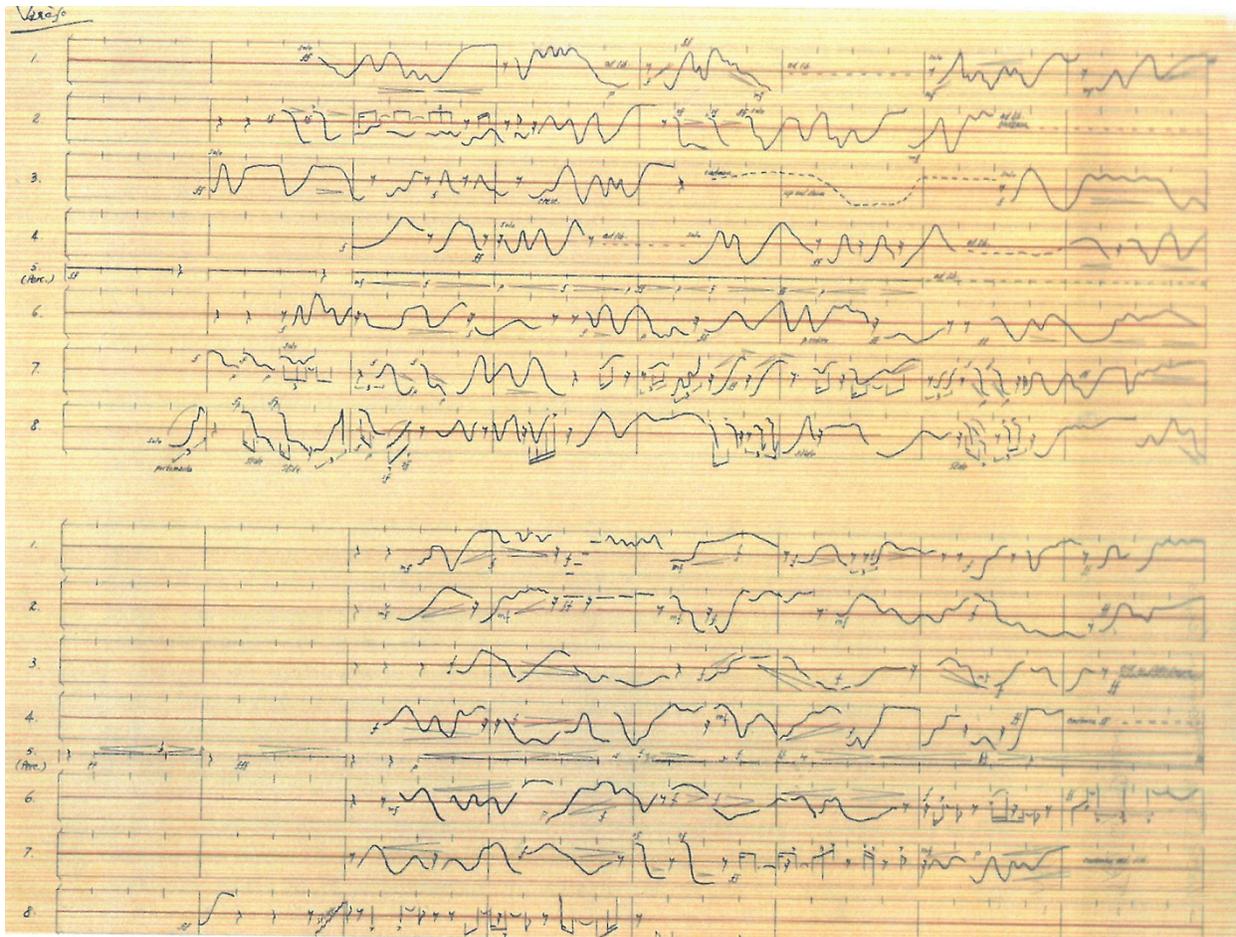


Figure 8: Score for Edgard Varèse's 1957 jam sessions⁷⁶

Imperfections in a Given Space

On Friday, November 26, 1965, John Cage made his debut performance with a jazz ensemble. He performed a midnight concert with one of Joseph Jarman's quartets, which included Ellis "Pete" Bishop, Bob Hodge, and Douglas Mitchell. Jarman had met Cage at the ONCE festival in Ann Arbor, MI earlier that year, and asked Cage if he would perform with his

⁷⁶ Alex Ross, "Varèse does jazz," July, 2010, in *The Rest is Noise*, <http://www.therestisnoise.com/2010/07/varèse-does-jazz.html>.

quartet. Jarman was honored to have Cage perform with him, and credited the AACM with preparing him for such a collaboration.⁷⁷

On the concert flyer Jarman not only made the case for the performance, but also summarized postmodern composition by citing “increasing interest on the part of jazz musicians in the concepts and patterns of contemporary music. And at the same time that jazz musicians were becoming dissatisfied with the traditional rhythms and structures of the music they had been playing, contemporary composers were becoming increasingly absorbed by the potential inherent in the jazz form.”⁷⁸

Jarman’s primary quartet, with Fred Anderson, Bill Brimfield, Charles Clar, and Arthur Reed, opened the concert; “Imperfection in a Given Space,” was performed by Jarman’s new quartet and Cage was the second half of the performance.⁷⁹ According to musicologist Paul Steinbeck, Cage wanted the quartet spread apart around the venue, in order to “achieve greater nonintentionality, and there was very limited rehearsal of their piece. Cage sat at a table in front of the stage and made electronic sounds, with a microphone attached to his throat to record himself drinking water and swallowing aspirin.”⁸⁰

In the performance Bishop and Jarman performed up in the balcony facing the back wall. Hodge played bass but also dragged a bamboo rod against the wooden stage floor to produce a stuttering sound. Mitchell used mallets to play inside the piano after playing the drums.⁸¹

The concert reviewer for *DownBeat* approached the concert with more traditional jazz in mind:

Cage sent a variety of electronic stimuli into the auditorium through a complex of electronic amplification equipment (the sound of an eraser on paper, or of water

⁷⁷ Paul Steinbeck, “Urban Magic: The Art Ensemble of Chicago’s Great Black Music” (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2008), 96.

⁷⁸ Kim, “John Cage in Separate Togetherness with Jazz,” 78.

⁷⁹ Steinbeck, “Urban Magic,” 95.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 95-96.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 96.

being swallowed, when amplified a thousandfold, makes for an eerie listening experience indeed!), to which the Jarman group was to respond musically.

They *did* produce something, to be sure: the bleats, cries, flutters of notes, and calls they unleashed from their instruments as they moved freely through the auditorium made for an unusual listening experience, it was scarcely what could be called a *musical* experience.

There seemed...to be very little in the way of actual interaction with what Cage was generating; it was as though the group were merely sending into the air its own unrelated signals at the same time as the electronic ones were being generated, with little or no regard to ordering or organizing the combined sounds in something meaningful.⁸²

Through his complaints Welding actually illustrates the concert was successful. Cage did not want to telegraph any intentionality throughout the performance. This is not to disparage Welding; rather, it helps illustrate how difficult many of these performances were for avid listeners, and for critics to shed expectations based on previous concert experiences and listen to a live performance with fresh ears, without comparisons, without notions of right or wrong.

The New York Philharmonic 1964

In 1964 the New York Philharmonic held an avant-garde series consisting of five programs. Each contained canonic works, early twentieth century compositions and one or two avant-garde works. The mixture of compositions must have been interesting for the audiences. For example, Earle Brown's *Available Forms II* debuted on the fifth program in the avant-garde series with the New York Philharmonic Program V on February 6, 1964. It was conducted by Leonard Bernstein and Brown. Other works on the program were Vivaldi, *Concerto for Violin and Orchestra, F major, Opus 8, No. 3 ("Fall")*, Tchaikovsky, *Symphony No. 6, B minor, Opus*

⁸² Pete Welding, "Joseph Jarman – John Cage," *DownBeat*, January 13, 1966, 35. Emphasis in original text.

74, Cage, *Atlas Eclipticalis* with *Winter Music (Electronic Version)*. *Available Forms II* is scored for two orchestras requiring two conductors.

In addition to the Avant-Garde series, Bernstein conducted several Young People's Concerts. That of February 8, entitled, "Jazz in the Concert Hall," included *Journey into Jazz* by Gunther Schuller, with text by Nat Hentoff and soloists Don Ellis, trumpet, Benny Golson, tenor saxophone, Eric Dolphy, alto saxophone Richard Davis bass, and Joe Cocuzzo percussion; *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra* by Aaron Copland, with Copland as the soloist; and *Improvisations for Orchestra and Jazz Soloists* by Larry Austin, conducted by Schuller.⁸³ Austin's *Improvisations for Orchestra and Jazz Soloists* is in three movements—fast blues, slow blues, very fast blues— all played without pause. The work was used for both the avant-garde series and a Young People's Concert, but had been premiered by the Philharmonic in 1961, which was broadcast on television.

Conclusion

Schuller's label Third Stream was an attempt to describe the deliberate trend of fusion after World War II and was well intended, but the application of the label became problematic. Third Stream compositions created a limited conception of what the genre entailed, and use of the Third Stream moniker in the 1960s by music critics and later by journalists and musicians effectively overshadowed the widespread experimentalism and transcendence of genre by composers. For example, in the review for Taylor's *The World of Cecil Taylor* the author stated:

At his best, I hear Taylor creating a spontaneous, improvised Third Stream music—i.e., a true synthesis of material from jazz and contemporary "classical" music. In itself this is a formidable accomplishment, and Taylor is, to my

⁸³ "Jazz in the Concert Hall," *New York Philharmonic Young People's Concert*, 342nd concert—41st season (Philharmonic Hall, Lincoln Center, New York, NY, February 8, 1964).

knowledge, the only musician currently playing (as opposed to composing) this type of music at such a high level.⁸⁴

The way the author uses the label Third Stream indicates that the term had become normalized in musical criticism by the early 1960s. Further, including the word “improvised” as an adjective of Taylor’s music indicates that the reviewer, and perhaps others, viewed Third Stream as totally composed music.

By the 1960s, the reactions to the avant-garde were mostly two sided: either in support or critical. Many listeners just did not know what to make of it. The music often elicited more questions than anything: What am I supposed to listen to? Where is the melody? Does it take any skill to play that? Dave Baker’s recollection of his time at the Lenox School illustrates part of the larger conversation that occurred during the rise of the pan-avant-garde:

I remember very vividly that this was the time of incubation of ideas, and there were factions. There were the people who were saying, “Man, what is Ornette talking about?” But he had his champions; he had John Lewis, George Russell, and Jimmy Giuffre very, very excited about what was happening...there were others, like Bob Brookmeyer, who left the camp; and others, including me, felt really threatened about this. We hadn’t even had our day in the sun, and all of a sudden there was a new movement.”⁸⁵

While many were impressed with the musical innovations, they often left not only audiences but also other musicians, who were trying to hone their craft and develop their own careers, unsettled. Jazz critic Nat Hentoff wrote an essay for *DownBeat* in 1965, entitled with a quote by bassist Gary Peacock, “Learning to Listen to Avant-Garde—A Basic Problem.”⁸⁶ He emphasized the importance of being willing to listen and trying to understand the music. He also made an attempt to contextualize what many of the musicians were trying to do:

⁸⁴ F.K., review “The World of Cecil Taylor,” *DownBeat*, March 30, 1961, 40-41.

⁸⁵ Darius Brubeck, “David Baker & The Lenox School of Jazz,” *Jazz Education Journal* 35.2 (September 2002): 44.

⁸⁶ Nat Hentoff, “Learning to Listen to Avant-Garde—A Basic Problem,” *DownBeat*, December 2, 1965, 13.

Whether you like it or not, many of the new players are committed to music not only as a way of expression but also as one of the ways in which to change the world. Or more basically, to change their listeners. Not to convert them to particular kinds of politics but to stimulate them to an awareness of how hard it is to retain individuality, let alone integrity, in an increasingly organized society in which fewer and fewer people have a part in the key decisions that affect their lives.⁸⁷

Hentoff also positions avant-garde music historically by mentioning the controversy that surrounded Beethoven's and Stravinsky's musical innovations. Avant-garde musicians were educated and trained musicians that understood the historical development of music and aspired to create individualized new compositions. Audiences' and critics' historical knowledge and training was not their concern.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

CHAPTER 4 THE PROCESS

You practice so you can invent... the joy of practicing leads you to the celebration of creation!¹

Cecil Taylor

What I was learning (all too quickly) was that “ideas” did not count for much. In fact, it was precisely the “ideas”—what Stravinsky charmingly refers to as the “seams” in his work—that, even then marred most music form. What I began to look for, and what I soon found, was a process only vaguely outlined, an action only vaguely defined: *one draws more freely on unruled paper*.²

Morton Feldman

That intrigued me, just knocked me out: never the same twice, but always the same.³

Earle Brown

For me improvisation has become the most important element in the music, the real thing that breathes inspiration and life into it... I feel so metaphysical about music that I almost hate to talk about it in any kind of way. To a certain degree I work everything out...but as I'm playing along, I never know what's going to happen next...⁴

Terry Riley

In addition to taking in and learning from a diverse set of resources, another unifying element within the pan-avant-garde, and postmodernism generally, is the emphasis of process over product in performance. In my view, the emphasis on process over product is an Afrological element in American music that influenced both jazz and classical musicians. In jazz, the process of elaborating on pre-composed elements is a central part of performances.⁵ Composing in performance gained prominence in the classical arena during the 1940s. There are earlier

¹ Cecil Taylor: *All the Notes*.

² Feldman, *Give My Regards to Eighth Street*, 15. Emphasis in original text.

³ Brown, “An Interview with Composer Earle Brown,” 302.

⁴ Robert Palmer, “Terry Riley: Doctor of Improvised Surgery,” *DownBeat* November 20, 1975, 18.

⁵ Pre-composed here refers to musical segments that are obviously planned and rehearsed; they may be notated or verbally discussed and aurally rehearsed prior to performance.

examples, such as Cowell's String Quartet No. 3, but Cage is credited for establishing the term indeterminacy as it relates to musical style in his writings and compositions. Indeterminacy and improvisation are two artistic processes that are related and intertwined, but can also be independent of each other.

Indeterminate works contain composer specified elements, but the process of constructing the overall work is completed in the performance. Indeterminacy can describe a multitude of compositions that involve an extensive amount of interpretation by the performer. Many are not scored for specific instruments. Others are written in such a way that the performer can read the score from front to back, back to front, or upside down, or assemble various excerpts in any order. Some indeterminate works involve using instruments in nontraditional ways. For example, David Cope's *BTRB* instructs the performer to disassemble the trombone and play different pieces of the instrument. It also instructs the performer to choose a brief excerpt of music to use throughout the performance, which can be from any musical style.

Indeterminate works are often discussed as classical compositions by figures such as the New York School composers John Cage, Earle Brown, Christian Wolff, and Morton Feldman. An example of early indeterminate composition is Feldman's *Intersection 3* (1953) for solo piano. The score is three staves that represent high, middle, and low registers (see Figure 4 in Chapter 3). The numbers represent how many pitches should sound simultaneously; the performer decides what pitches to perform. The metronome marking for this work is 176 beats per pitch block. Due to the fast tempo, the performer will most likely decide specific pitch combinations, register, and dynamics in rehearsal. The work will then become an arrangement of *Intersection 3*, realized by the performer.

An example for multiple instruments is Earle Brown's *Novara*, scored for flute, bass clarinet, trumpet in Bb, piano, two violins, viola, and cello. Brown's specific instructions ensure that each performance will have its own identity:

The conductor may begin a performance with any event on any page and may proceed from any page to any other page at any time, with or without repetitions or omissions of pages or events, remaining on any page or event as long as he wishes.⁶

The instructions continue with details regarding time notation, modifications, dynamics, and suggestions on gestures for the conductor. The conductor's role is to decide which blocks and which pages the performers should read by using an arrow to point to the particular page. The conductor can go fast, choose where to place fermatas, and repeat or omit anything. Listening to a recording while following the score is virtually impossible. One can listen for identifiable moments from the score, but it is a more satisfying experience to simply listen to the pitch relationships, rhythms, and timbral combinations that develop throughout the performance. The method Brown used in *Novara* is very effective in creating an indeterminate work. The score uses traditionally notated pitches with some extended techniques. However, the score systems are very brief, consisting of five motive blocks on each of the four pages (see Figures 9a-9d). The instrumentation, combined with a few of the musical motives, may identify the work as *Novara*, but the level of autonomy granted to the conductor and the ensemble ensures that it would undoubtedly be impossible to reproduce any given performance.

⁶ Earle Brown, *Novara* (London, England: Universal Edition, 1979).

Novara

1

Earle Brown

1962

Flute
Trumpet in Bb
Bb Bass Clarinet

Flz... breathy Flz... Flz...
cup mute
hy

mf p p mf pp f p mp mf f f mf p p f p mp p p f mf p ff f mp p
p < mp p mf f > mp < mf p f mp mp f p mp p pp p p mp p mf p < mf f > p < mp
pp p mp mf p f p < mp p pp < mp mf p < mp p p pp p mf pp ff p mf mp mp p p

Piano
Violin 1

mute keys
pizz. sust.
batt. pizz.

mp f p mp p p p mp mf mp mf ff p mpp
ff mp p mf ff f ff mp mpp mf p f mf ff mf ff p pf

percuss.
Violin 1

mf
f

Violin 2
Viola
V'cello

arco to pont. nat. pizz. arco
strum arco pizz. pont. nat. p. arco pont. nat. arco
pizz. arco pont. Pizz. gliss. D. tasto batt. nat. gliss. sul D.

mp ff mp p ff mp f ff mp ff mp ff mp mf
fff mf f f mf p mf f f ff mf ff mp mf mp
ff f mf p fff mf f mf p f ff fff mf ff mp

Trpt.
Via.

harmon mute*
arco con sord.

mp
mf

* always with stem removed.

1) Transposed here

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Figure 9a: Earle Brown, *Novara*, page 1

The image shows a page of musical notation for Earle Brown's *Novara*, page 3. The main score includes staves for Flute (Fl.), Trumpet (Trp.), Bass Clarinet (B. Clar.), Piano (Pno.), Violin 1 (Vln.1), Violin 2 (Vln.2), Viola (Via.), and Violoncello (Vic.). Large red numbers '1', '2', '3', '4', and '5' are overlaid on the score. Two inset boxes provide detailed performance instructions:

- Inset 4 (Wind Instruments):** Shows three staves for Flute, Trumpet, and Bass Clarinet. Instructions include 'wind only 1)', 'wind, key slap', and 'wind, valve slap'. A footnote states: '1) Through the instrument. (no tone)'. Dynamics range from *p* to *pp*.
- Inset 5 (String Instruments):** Shows three staves for Violin 1, Violin 2, and Viola. Instructions include 'con sord.', 'tasto', 'nat.', 'pizz. arco', 'gliss.', 'arco beyond bridge', 'pizz. (bb)', 'pont. tremolo', and 'nat. (tr.)'. Dynamics range from *pp* to *mf*.

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Figure 9c: Earle Brown, *Novara*, page 3

4

Fl. wind whistle Flz wind

Trp. valve wind valve

B. Clar. wind

Pno. catch resonance only with sustaining pedal

Vin. 1 APERIODIC RHYTHM strum ± ff

Vin. 2 strum ± ff

Via. strum ± ff

Vic. strum ± ff

LEGATO

Fl. mp

Trp. p

B. Clar. p

arco pmo

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Figure 9d: Earle Brown, *Novara*, page 4

Terry Riley also composed several indeterminate works. Riley studied classical, jazz, and world music, and is quick to acknowledge the ways in which different music influences his compositions. For example, John Coltrane directly inspired Riley to learn soprano saxophone and compose *Poppy Nogood*.⁷ Throughout his development as a composer, Riley has experimented with different methods and searched for his own style. He developed his sketches for his minimalist work, *In C*, after experimenting with cutting and splicing a tape recording of Chet Baker's quartet performing Miles Davis' *So What*:

In 1963, just before I left Europe, I did a piece by taping Chet Baker's band playing and then cutting the parts up. In other words, I recorded all the instruments separately and then re-formed the parts. They were playing Miles' "So What" with that bass figure, and I took that bass part and stacked it up so that I had six layers of bass, and then I looped it, put it through delays, things like that, so that by the time I had finished putting the piece together there were like 20 trumpets, 15 basses. That's when I started really working with long term tape delay and with loops, and after I started on my way back to the States I decided I'd like to try the same ideas purely with instruments, no tapes. I started making sketches and then one night after I was back in California I started hearing the whole first line of *In C*.⁸

In C was premiered in San Francisco in 1964. While the directions and method of performance do not indicate any sense of improvisation, individual performers choose the number of repetitions of each section, and the overall effect of the work conveys the idea of collective improvisation. The combination of timbres, registers, and dynamics of each instrument create an evolving texture that is unpredictable to the listener. It is similar to Brown's *Novara*, as the written instructions allow performers the autonomy to create a unique performance. As Riley indicates in the score, a performance of *In C* can continue for hours, days, weeks, months, or years, depending on the number of repetitions of each of the 53 notated motives. While indeterminacy is usually associated with classical works like *Intersection 3*, *Novara*, and *In C*,

⁷ Palmer, "Terry Riley," 18.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 17.

they share similarities with many jazz compositions, and it is worth considering that indeterminacy was inspired on some level by the Afrologisms in jazz embedded in the musical fabric of American culture. It is clear looking at the biographies of John Cage, and Earle Brown that they were aware of and engaged with jazz. According to Cage:

Jazz is equivalent to Bach (steady beat, dependable motor), and the love of Bach is generally coupled with the love of jazz. Jazz is more seductive, less moralistic than Bach. It popularizes the pleasures and pains of the physical life, whereas Bach is close to church and all that...Giving up Bach, jazz, and order is difficult...It's a very serious question. For if we do it—give them up, that is—what do we have left?⁹

In comments regarding his *Concert for Piano and Orchestra*, Cage specifically acknowledges contributions from jazz, “What are the orchestral timbres of the *Concert for Piano and Orchestra*? It is impossible to predict, but this may be said: they invite the timbres of jazz, which more than serious music has explored the possibilities of instruments.”¹⁰ Even though Cage excludes jazz from “serious” music, his comment demonstrates respect for the timbral exploration by jazz musicians, which is also an Afrological principle. Further, Cage also comments on rhythmic manipulation in hot jazz as fascinating:

The “perpetual conflict” between clarity and grace is what makes hot jazz hot. The best performers continually anticipate or delay the phrase beginnings and endings. They also, in their performances, treat the beat or pulse, and indeed, the measure, with grace: putting more or fewer icti within the measure's limits than are expected (similar alterations of pitch and timbre are also customary), contracting or extending the duration of the unit. This, not syncopation, is what pleases the hep-cats.¹¹

Earle Brown was a jazz musician, and this experience influenced his music. According to Brown, “I wrote twelve-tone serial music myself for a couple years. [But] my background was

⁹ Cage, *Silence*, 263.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 31.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 5.

jazz, so I found that complete total systematic control of every note and nuance was sort of contrary to my nature.” In a variety of interviews Brown shares many anecdotes about his experiences as a jazz musician, notably performing with saxophonist Zoot Sims.¹²

Jazz has always been a process-oriented music. The focus on creating a work anew each time it is performed is a part of jazz culture that fosters a sense of communal indeterminacy. The use of the lead sheet requires jazz musicians to decide on many musical parameters. Even if the lead sheet indicates style, tempo, and chords, they are suggestions, not requirements. Most lead sheets present only the main melody and chord progressions; while the general structure of the head usually remains more or less intact from performance to performance, individual musicians can decide tempo and style. If there are multiple front-line melody instruments, thematic content might be divided between them. For example, in a typical AABA standard, the trumpet might perform the A sections while the saxophone performs the B section. The band might rehearse regularly and plan the structure for each tune. However, on many occasions these kinds of arrangements are decided on the bandstand shortly before a performance. Other ways musicians typically vary the standard include improvised backgrounds to accompany the soloist, different introductions and conclusions.

While extended improvisation was an integral part of the avant-garde and free jazz, it is worth recalling that all night jam sessions have long been a part of the jazz tradition. Stories of improvisation battles between musicians such as Coleman Hawkins and Lester Young for example, are legendary. In these cutting contests, the musicians experimented with licks, riffs, and motives, playing fast blues, standards, any tune called in any key, and in any tempo.

¹² Earle Brown, “An Interview with Earle Brown,” interview by Amy Beal, *Contemporary Music Review* 26, nos. 3/4 (June/August 2007): 348; Earle Brown, “On December 1952,” *American Music* 26, No. 1 (Spring 2008): 7; Earle Brown, “An Interview with Composer Earle Brown,” interview by John Yaffé, *Contemporary Music Review* 26, nos. 3/4 (June/August 2007): 302.

Perhaps the most famous recording of avant-garde jazz is *Free Jazz: A Collective Improvisation (Free Jazz)* by the Ornette Coleman Double Quartet, released in 1961. Two versions of the work were recorded in 1960: *Free Jazz*, released in 1961, and the first take from the recording date, released on the 1971 on the album *Twins* as “First Take.”¹³ For the recording, Coleman assembled a double quartet, each recorded on different channels. In the left channel are Ornette Coleman, alto; Don Cherry, pocket trumpet; Scott LaFaro, bass; and Billy Higgins, drums. In the right channel are Eric Dolphy, bass clarinet; Freddie Hubbard, trumpet; Charlie Haden, bass; and Ed Blackwell, drums. *Free Jazz* not only became an iconic album, but also the moniker for the subgenre of the same name. The work exemplifies improvisation without strict restrictions of specific formal structures, such as regular measured segments and chord progressions. There are, however, composed musical segments and an overall formal structure to the work, which demonstrates the same principles as many classical indeterminate compositions.

Listening to *Free Jazz* as an mp3 allows the listener to experience the album without interruption. The original album cuts the track into two parts just before the end of Don Cherry’s solo and before the ensemble enters to demarcate the beginning of a new section. This alone creates an awkward listening experience. In 1961 the sounds from the album were strain enough for the listener, and the loose formal structure created an untethered experience that was unsettling to some. Here are two reactions in *DownBeat* published as a record review, “Double View of a Double Quartet”:

It’s every man-jack for himself in an eight-man emotional regurgitation. Rules? Forget ’em. Where does neurosis end and psychosis begin? The answer must lie somewhere within this maelstrom...if nothing else, this witch’s brew is the logical end product of a bankrupt philosophy of ultra-individualism in music. “Collective Improvisation?” Nonsense. The only semblance of collectivity lies in the fact that these eight nihilists were collected together in one studio at one time and with one

¹³ Ornette Coleman, *Free Jazz: A Collective Improvisation*, December 21, 1960, Atlantic 1364, 1961, LP; and Ornette Coleman, “First Take,” *Twins* recorded December 21, 1960, Atlantic 1588, 1971, LP.

common cause: to destroy the music that gave them birth. Give them top marks for the attempt.¹⁴

However, to some the adventure of the recording was refreshing, even with the awkward bifurcation of the vinyl issue:

Using only the sketchiest of outlines to guide them, the players have fashioned a forceful, impassioned work that might stand as the ultimate manifesto of the new wave of young jazz expressionists. The results are never dull... In first hearing, *Free Jazz* strikes one as a spiraling, discursive, chaotic jumble of jagged rhythms and pointless cacophonies, among which whoever are interlarded a number of striking solo segments (particularly those of the two bassists). The force, intensity, and biting passion that motivate it also come across... On repeated listening, however, the form of the work gradually reveals itself, and it is seen that the piece is far less unconventional than it might at first appear. It does not break with jazz tradition; rather, it restores to currency an element that has been absent in most jazz since the onset of the swing orchestra—spontaneous group improvisation. Yet Coleman has restored it with a vengeance; here we have better than half an hour's worth, with only a minimal amount of it predetermined to any degree... It seems to me that experiments ought to be presented as such—and not as finished works. This piece does have more than its share of inevitable rough spots, but how much of this results from this group having been brought together in the studio just for the purposes of recording this piece?... Still Coleman has made his point with this disc, and this cannot be denied him. I, for one, have been completely won over. I look forward to more pieces of this nature—but of a less ambitious scheme.¹⁵

The two extant takes of *Free Jazz: A Collective Improvisation* by the Ornette Coleman Double Quartet allow the listener to learn how the personnel improvise. The improvisations are very different from “First Take” to *Free Jazz*. The backgrounds are most often derived from the soloist and the ensemble creates the accompaniment as a direct response to the call, an exact copy, or a complement. The improvised sections are considerably longer in the album version, so there may have been several other recorded or rehearsed attempts, but the way Martin Williams describes the session in the liner notes makes this unlikely:

¹⁴ J.A.T [John A. Tynan] and P.W. [Pete Welding], review “Double View of a Double Quartet,” *DownBeat* January 18, 1962, 28.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

It was done in one “take” at a single recording session. No one knew how long it would last; two tape machines were simply kept going and when *Free Jazz* was over, it had taken over 38 minutes—the length of an LP. There was nothing more to play, there were no re-takes, no splices.¹⁶

We know this actually wasn’t true, however, as Martin Williams also wrote the liner notes for Coleman’s album *Twins*:

First Take [sic] is a real discovery, a long-forgotten performance, forgotten alike (it seems) by its producer, its performers, its engineer. It is, literally, a shorter “first take” of *Free Jazz*... Perhaps it was forgotten in the excitement over the way the full-length version turned out. But this shorter version has qualities and excitements of its own, and the validity therefore to stand on its own.¹⁷

The benefit of having access to both *Free Jazz* and “First Take,” is that the composed elements and overall organization become clear in comparison. “First Take” is 16:56, while the album version is 37:04. At first glance, it appears as though the first take is only a partial version of “Free Jazz;” however, closer analysis reveals that it is a complete version of the tune with shorter solo sections.

The overall work is D centric, but some of the tonal centers shift during the improvisations; for example, during the bass section Haden and LaFaro perform in A for an extended period of time. The composed sections are identifiable only because the ensemble is playing in unison and they are present in both “First Take” and *Free Jazz*. Figure 10 presents a transcription by the present author of the composed material.¹⁸ The opening material is a sound

¹⁶ Martin Williams, liner notes *Free Jazz*.

¹⁷ Martin Williams, liner notes *Twins*.

¹⁸ The use of handwritten notation is deliberate, and I intentionally omit measure lines in an attempt to demonstrate the ebb and flow of the material. This allowed me to customize the notation to better represent how the music is heard, rather than conforming the music to notation software parameters. For example, Block 1 is the representation of the sound mass at the opening of the recording, which is impossible to notate in notation software. Also, in Block 2, while composed, the notes sound as though Coleman conducts when to change notes rather than the ensemble counting four beats to a whole note. In the recording one can hear him change notes slightly before the rest of the ensemble.

mass in which the musicians select their own starting pitch and play runs and flourishes as they choose. The actual head, Block 4, is not heard until approximately ten minutes into the recording, when it is played in its entirety. The tonal center of the composed material creeps up chromatically from D flat to D to E minor. This is typical of many of Ornette Coleman's improvisations, which usually explore tonal centers either a major second or minor second apart.¹⁹ The work concludes with material similar to the opening of the recording: frantic flourishes from the whole ensemble that transition to improvised half notes that provide dissonant simultaneities.



Figure 10: *Free Jazz*, transcription of composed sections

¹⁹ Ekkehard Jost illustrates this in his book *Free Jazz* (pages 47-69), but one can also discover this by listening to Coleman's solos on "Congeniality," "Blues Connotation," or "Crossbreeding."

The formal diagram of *Free Jazz* is:

1 | 2 | Eric Dolphy's solo | 2 | 1 | 2 | Freddie Hubbard solo | 3 | 4 | Ornette Coleman's solo | 4 | Don Cherry's solo | collective improvisation | last three measures of 4 | Bass Duet | 5 | Bass solos | 1 | Billy Higgins's solo | 5 | Ed Blackwell | 1 | 2 | 5 |

In Blocks 1 and 2 the performers choose their pitches, whereas Blocks 3-5 are consistent throughout the recording. While Block 5 is only one note played in different octaves, I deem it significant because it is used in the same way in the two recorded takes, and it functions as a structural division between solos and the final note of the recording.

Another jazz-oriented example of indeterminacy is Cecil Taylor's "Air." One can also hear loosely agreed upon material, such as the motive in Figure 11. While brief, it is used as a signpost throughout the performance; Taylor uses the pitch classes of the motive as simultaneities and as monophonic lines.



Figure 11: "Air" motive, Cecil Taylor

Introduction— drums, piano | Head—saxophone—Shepp solo | Taylor solo | Taylor and Murray solos |

Figure 12: Formal structure of "Air"

The basic structure for "Air" is constant throughout the different takes, but the duration of each section varies. Sunny Murray is the drummer for the earlier takes, which have a different overall character and intensity than the later ones. Murray performs a fast swing pattern on the ride

cymbal throughout, which creates a driving intensity that fuels Taylor's Stravinskyesque flourishes. The result of the steady swing pattern makes the recording sound like a jazz performance throughout, whereas the later takes contain more texture changes that keep an uninitiated listener guessing who the performers are and the intended genre. The actual melodic motive is not clearly heard until the later takes, but Taylor uses the structure of the motive as his guide for his block chords in the earlier takes. Cecil Taylor and Dennis Charles exhibit how well they understand each other and work together in the sections where they trade fours. The sections seem to emerge organically and they respond to each other as one would in a conversation. Taylor's penchant for the percussive use of the piano makes this section rhythmically invigorating. The trading section remains in the last two takes, which suggests preplanning at least of that particular section.

Improvisation

Improvisation is a process that is more associated with jazz than twentieth century classical music. During the 1950s it was a new novel idea in the classical avant-garde, whereas in jazz the avant-garde musicians were expanding the possibilities of improvisation in performance.

Saxophonist Steve Lacy states:

I'm attracted to improvisation because of something I value. That is a freshness, a certain quality, which can only be obtained by improvisation, something you cannot possibly get from writing. It is something to do with the "edge". Always being on the brink of the unknown and being prepared for the leap. And when you go on out there you have all your years of preparation and all your sensibilities and you prepare means but it is a leap into the unknown.²⁰

According to composer Leo Smith, improvisation is "an art form used by creative musicians to deliver an expression or musical thought at the very instant that their idea is

²⁰ Bailey, *Improvisation*, 57.

conceived.”²¹ Earle Brown views improvisation as, “not re-creating a pre-conceived form (reading through a *thing*) but creating, in the moment of hearing, a form arising from those unique circumstances of composing, rehearsing, working and responding as one does *only* in that moment.”²² Taking this notion a bit further, Anthony Braxton defines improvisation as:

- 1) a discipline that allows complete self-expression that involves the science of creative postulation as it unfolds in ‘actual’ time.
- 2) a discipline that utilizes the dynamics of moment postulation in both the context of individual postulation and its related affinity-dynamics, as well as cultural vibrational transference...²³

John Cage improvised the majority of *Sonatas and Interludes* (1948).²⁴ Further, he also developed what he called “structural improvisation”:

Given a period of time, I will divide it. Say we have eight minutes. We’ll divide it into sections of either one, two, three, or four minutes long. We’ll have a minimum of two parts, each four minutes long, or three parts—four minutes, three minutes, one minute, in any order—or whatever. Then, if I have 10 sounds, I can find out through the use of chance operations which of those 10 sounds go in the first section, which go in the second section, and which go into the third. Then I improvise using the number of sounds that have been determined from the first section, the number sounds for the second, and the number of sounds for the third, and I will have an improvisation which is characterized by a change of sound at those different times, no matter what I play.²⁵

One of Cage’s often cited quotes comes from an interview with Bill Shoemaker for *DownBeat* magazine in 1984:

Bill Shoemaker: Did your opposition to improvisation center around the issue that jazz improvisers, for example, work with an inventory of phrases and play essentially, what they already know?

Cage: Depending on memory and taste, yes. The other thing that is difficult for me in jazz improvisation is the element of response from one musician to another,

²¹ Leo Smith, *Notes (8 Pieces) Source a New World Music: Creative Music*, (Chicago: Corbett vs. Dempsey and The Renaissance Society at the University of Chicago on the occasion of the exhibition: Wadada Leo Smith, *Ankhrasmaton: The Language Scores, 1967-2015*, 2015), 20.

²² Earle Brown, “Form in der Neuen Musik,” 64.

²³ Anthony Braxton, *Tri-Axium Writings* (San Francisco: Synthesis Music, 1985), 511.

²⁴ John Cage, *Silence*, 19.

²⁵ Bill Shoemaker, “The Age of Cage,” *DownBeat* December, 1984, 28.

which is often very strong. The most evident form of that is where there is a single soloist and the others are playing in an accompanimental form, and when the soloist reaches a conclusion, another one takes his place. I prefer, in this case, the final chorus where all soloists join together, freely.²⁶

While this might be perceived as negative, one could consider this an accurate account if he was referencing jazz of the 1920s. Solos usually contained frequent paraphrases of the head, with limited use of chromaticism. Further, the role of improvisation in swing tended to be very structured in recordings and live performances. In some arrangements solos range from being completely composed to allowing space for improvisation over two or three choruses. Cage's comments only become problematic if applied to improvisations of virtuosic performers such as Charlie Parker, John Coltrane, Cecil Taylor, and Charles Mingus. Many improvisers do have a collection of licks—musical motives that he or she enjoys—that are remembered from a previous performance, and perhaps even written down and learned in every key, and in retrograde, inversion, and other permutations. The use of licks and quotations is not a sort of shortfall or crutch; improvisers use them as a means to connect with the audience, and particularly, with other musicians. In the jazz tradition, quotation functions as the pass to the bandstand. It is a way to validate a performer's place in the tradition, akin to a biographical note in a program at a classical concert, a real time aural resume:

Whenever those licks really fit in with the story you were telling, you'd stick them in your solo. Then, other people could tell by listening to you that you were influenced by Diz or Fats or whoever...And if players weren't working on those things, well then, they weren't trying to be artists in a true sense.²⁷

Jazz improvisation influenced the classical avant-garde in two ways. First, as an aesthetic influence, in which the actual composition might not use improvisation but the nature

²⁶ Shoemaker, "The Age of Cage," 26-29.

²⁷ Berliner, *Thinking in Jazz*, 249.

or spirit of improvisation is the inspiration for the piece. Earle Brown's *Folio and Four Systems* is this type of composition. While the actual work employs a minimal amount of improvisation, it is the intent that I find important: for performers to use the graphic scores and perform them spontaneously, using them as springboards for improvisations.²⁸

Folio and Four Systems consists of six movements: "October 52," "November 52," "December 52," "March 53," "June 53," and "Four Systems." It represents Brown's most extreme experiments with open form and graphic notation. His development of open forms was connected to the mobiles of Alexander Calder and the action painting of Jackson Pollock, but he was also influenced by his own jazz background. In *Folio*, Brown was working toward combining his ideas of mobile forms with the temporal aesthetic of jazz and improvisation:

There's such a thing as improvisational composition...I had this idealistic, romantic feeling that I could, with a graphic score and classical musicians... The whole series of *October*, *November*, and *December* was progressively trying to get them free of having to have every little bit of information before they had guts enough to play. And I was convinced.²⁹

The score for "December 1952" (Figure 13) immediately illustrates the freedom and open structure of the work. According to Brown:

You can play it from left to right but my original intention was that you might play this, which would be about in the middle of the register then this is louder obviously and it's a cluster, way at the bottom of your register whatever instrument you happen to be playing and this is at the top, and then you go through it in an direction of any amount of time by any number of instruments and/or sound producing object...you will not hear a composition performed you will hear a performance being composed...it's like in jazz a performer having chord progressions to base their improvisations on and so this is another way of giving them something.³⁰

²⁸ Earle Brown, "On December 1952," 6-7.

²⁹ Earle Brown, "An Interview with Composer Earle Brown," 300.

³⁰ Earle Brown, interview by James Pritchett, November 16, 1984, interview MD09, transcript, The Earle Brown Music Foundation, Rye, New York.

Two recordings of the work further exhibit the range of possibilities for this score. *December 1952*, as performed by David Tudor on the piano and recorded in 1952, is 6'16" in length.³¹ Tudor creates an unpredictable sonic landscape with sustained forte punctuations in the low register, staccato hits in the high register, hits on strings and piano frame, chords, and single pitches. Tudor's use of silence evokes Webern, while the unpredictable jumps in register are akin to the improvisations of Cecil Taylor. However, the recording by Eberhard Blum, Frances-Marie Uitti, Nils Vigeland entitled *The New York School* contains a trio version of *December 1952*.³² Their performance uses flute, piano, and cello and is 42" of Webern-style pointillism. The two interpretations occupy the extreme ends of the spectrum of possibilities for this work.

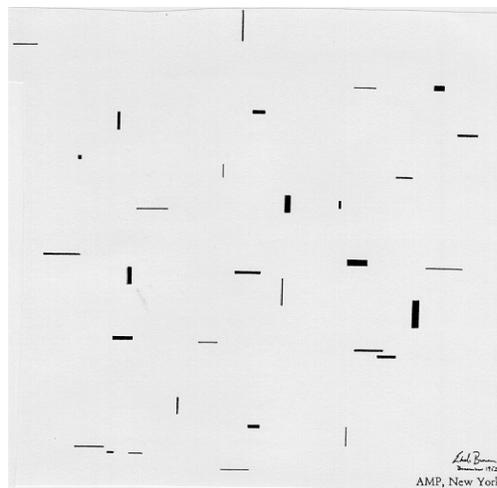


Figure 13: Earle Brown, *December 1952*

The second way jazz improvisation influenced the classical avant-garde is the development of free improvisation ensembles. Many of the musicians involved had worked as jazz musicians, but they made deliberate efforts to shed any sort of jazz characteristics in their

³¹ David Tudor, solo piano, "December 1952," in *Earle Brown Selected Work 1952-1965* recorded 1974, New World Records 80650-2, 2006, CD, Album reissue, remastered.

³² Eberhard Blum, Frances-Maire Uitti, and Nils Vigeland, "December 1952," in *The New York School* recorded August 12-13, 1991, hat ART 6101, 1992, CD.

music and tried to focus on free improvisation. Two American examples are Lukas Foss and Larry Austin. They fostered the development of many European ensembles as well, which proliferated in the late 1960s.

Larry Austin is a composer and performer who has worked in academia, and he studied with Violet Archer, Darius Milhaud, and Andrew Imbrie. While a student at North Texas State he played trumpet in the first One O' Clock Lab Band. During the 1960s he was immersed in experimenting with improvisation. He is one of the founders of *SOURCE: Music of the Avant Garde*. In addition to improvisation he has also focused on electroacoustic music and has developed complex algorithms that he uses to create musical content.³³ He states:

Foss had an influence on me in terms of forming an improvisation ensemble. I think he formed his improvisation ensemble in southern California in 1956, at about the same time Art Woodbury and I were experimenting with free jazz. The Foss group worked from schemes and formats, graphic roadmaps to guide the performers, and they were intent on creating stand-up, classical contemporary music. I was really impressed by their late '50s record, by the skill and inventiveness in that neo-classic genre. I don't think anyone could have mistaken it for jazz.³⁴

Larry Austin formed the New Music Ensemble in Davis, California in 1963. He was with them long enough to make a recording before he left for Rome, where he established another improvisation ensemble. The New Music Ensemble experimented with group free improvisation. As Austin stated, "No scheme, no format, no pre-conceived concept but the group dynamic itself.... except how we feel about one another's playing and responding to it in the

³³ For more information, consult Thomas Clark's work on Larry Austin: Thomas Clark and Larry Austin, "Coasts: on the Creative Edge," *Computer Music Journal* 13, no. 1 (Spring 1989): 21-35; and Thomas Clark, "Duality of Process and Drama," *Perspectives of New Music* 23, no. 1 (Autumn-Winter, 1984): 112-125.

³⁴ Larry Austin, "Forum: Improvisation," *Perspectives of New Music* 21, no. 1/2 (Autumn, 1982-Summer, 1983): 31.

moment...stand-up composing...there was no recognized leadership. The group dynamic was the thing to sustain: individuals coming together to make music and react freely to one another.”³⁵

Austin credits many composers as influences, including Darius Milhaud, Gunther Schuller, John Cage, and Lukas Foss. Foss formed his own improvisation ensemble in 1957 while he was a professor at UCLA.³⁶ It is from the classical avant-garde that Austin learned to consider his improvisations compositions:

So, Foss was influencing me, and Gunther Schuller was influencing me with his Third Stream notions, and Darius Milhaud was admonishing me to “let the jazz come out,” and John Cage’s ideas and music were changing me. Milhaud, Schuller, Foss, and Cage, I say to myself now, had an important influence on my work at that time. Actually, the idea of improvising as a way of making music had always been with me, but I had never connected it with my work as an art music composer. They made that connection for me.³⁷

This is a good illustration of the strength of the divide between classical and jazz idioms in the mid twentieth century. Larry Austin, who performed in the free jazz idiom and then transitioned to focusing solely on nongenre specific improvisation, could not see that what he had been doing all along was art music.³⁸

Lukas Foss has a diverse set of accomplishments as a composer, conductor, and performer. He is often quoted on improvisation in modern music and experimental textbooks; for example, in David Cope’s *New Directions in Music*. His work provides examples of improvised

³⁵ Larry Austin, “Forum: Improvisation,” *Perspectives of New Music*, Vol. 21, No. 1/2 (Autumn, 1982-Summer, 1983): 27-28.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 31.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ In this interview, he shares an aside that describes the culture at University of North Texas when he was a student and that the jazz musicians studying there had t-shirts that said “NTSU JAZZ!” as a reaction some other students made t-shirts that said “NTSU LEGIT!” According to Austin, “I thought to myself that neither of those would fit me—I’m hybrid: jazz-legit, legit-jazz. I and many others improvise between the two, but to declare anything formal about the phenomenon is probably to misunderstand it. I’m certainly not going to propose a new T-shirt...I’ve always improvised, and I just keep on doing it. If anyone asks me what my music is about, I say I’m still a jazz musician, and I’ve never stopped being one. It’s just that people have stopped recognizing that what I do is jazz.” Larry Austin, “Forum: Improvisation,” 32.

works that were classically oriented. Foss did not rely on a full score for his compositions. He would sketch what he called an instruction sheet for the ensemble from which to collectively work. Like Sun Ra, the group recorded performances and rehearsal, and listened and learned from each recording.³⁹ Lukas Foss's *Studies in Improvisation* received four stars in *DownBeat* in 1962:

Foss and his group work from intricate graphs and charts that, when the mystique is cleared away, are only more complex and more controlled extensions of the patterns that jazz groups lay out for similar purposes.⁴⁰

The titles on the album indicate a Eurological perspective: "Fantasy and Fugue," "Music for Clarinet, Percussion, and Piano," "Variations on a Theme in Unison," "Quintet," "Encore I," "Encore II," and "Encore III."⁴¹ The ensemble improvises in a classical style, without swing, blue notes, or any jazz inflection. Composed elements can be identified by the ensemble unisons, but other moments seem improvised. Foss tried to deliberately keep the composed and improvised sections distinct:

Recently there have been efforts at blurring the dividing line between composition and improvisation. I would rather emphasize it. In our concerts I like to present the composed and the improvised side by side (but not mixed).⁴²

Improvisation requires an enormous amount of preparation, both physically and mentally. It requires comfort with your instrument and faith in yourself to create in the moment, which requires daily practice similar to that of a writer. According to saxophonist Ronnie Scott:

how do I judge whether what I've played is...satisfactory, it is very difficult because what seems to happen is that one becomes unconscious of playing, you know, it becomes as if something else has taken over and you're just an intermediary between whatever else and the instrument, and everything you try

³⁹ Ibid., 684-685.

⁴⁰ D. H. [Don Henahan], review "Studies in Improvisation," *DownBeat* January 4, 1962, 23.

⁴¹ The personnel on the album include Lukas Foss, piano; Richard Dufallo, clarinet; Howard Colf, cello; Charles Delancey, percussion; and David Duke, French horn.

⁴² Luka Foss, "Improvisation versus Composition," *The Musical Times* 103, No. 1436 (October 1962): 684.

seems to come off, or at least, even if it doesn't come off it doesn't seem to matter very much, it's still a certain kind of feeling that you're aiming for – or unconsciously aiming for – and when this happens – inspiration – duende – whatever you like to call it – a happy conjunction of conditions and events and middle attitudes – it will feel good. It will feel that “I should be what I am” kind of thing.⁴³

The mental component of improvisation entails developing the confidence to stand on stage in front of an audience and not know what is going to happen from one moment to the next. Sustaining faith in practice, the process of creation, and the other musicians involved helps to develop the confidence required for improvisation. While this sort of confidence is also needed when performing composed music, improvisation is a different mental process. Everything happens in split-second decisions. The present moment is of the utmost importance. This intense exhibition of personal expression becomes even more profound within an ensemble of musicians communicating with one another. The energizing moment(s) are the foundational aspect to the sense of community and “universal sense of focused concentration” that develops with improvisation-based ensembles.⁴⁴

These moments during improvisation are powerful and mysterious. Our brains can only process a finite number of stimuli at a time; when we become overwhelmed, our sense of self is suspended for the moment.⁴⁵ These moments are often described as “feeling the music,” but this does not quite encapsulate what is actually occurring:

At the most challenging levels, people actually report experiencing a transcendence of self, caused by the unusually high involvement with a system of action so much more complex than what one usually encounters in everyday life...consciousness is in harmony, and the self—invisible during the flow episode—emerges strengthened. The negentropic quality of the flow experience makes it autotelic or intrinsically rewarding.⁴⁶

⁴³ Bailey, *Improvisation*, 52.

⁴⁴ Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Isabella Selega Csikszentmihalyi, *Optimal Experience: Psychological Studies Of Flow In Consciousness*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 32.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 33.

Psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi has dedicated his life to researching this phenomenon in music and realms outside the arts. Through detailed interviews and years of studying the behavior of musicians in performance and after, he defined this phenomenon as an autotelic experience he calls flow. According to Csikszentmihalyi:

Artists, athletes, composers, dancers, scientists, and people from all walks of life, when they describe how it feels when they are doing something that is worth doing for its own sake, use terms that are interchangeable in their minutest details. This unanimity suggests that order in consciousness produces a very specific experiential state, so desirable that one wishes to replicate it as often as possible. To this state we have given the name of “flow,” using a term that many respondents used in their interviews to explain what the optimal experience felt like.⁴⁷

This is very similar to automatism as described with surrealist artists and theosophical composers such as Dane Rudhyar.⁴⁸ The aspect of flow being intrinsically motivating helps explain the tireless devotion of many of the most famous jazz musicians to developing new skills through improvisation. Coltrane’s sheets of sound, extended, and open improvisations are a result of flow. According to Csikszentmihalyi:

...optimal experience requires a balance between the challenges perceived in a given situation and the skills a person brings to it...flow is a dynamic force...no activity can sustain it for long unless both the challenges and the skills become more complex. To return in flow and replicate the enjoyment they desire, they will have to find stronger opposition. To remain in flow, one must increase the complexity of the activity by developing new skills and taking on new challenges. This holds just as true for enjoying business, for playing the piano...It is because of this spiraling complexity that people describe flow as a process of ‘discovering something new,’ flow forces people to stretch themselves, to always take on another challenge, to improve on their abilities⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Ibid., 29.

⁴⁸ Tick, “Ruth Crawford,” 234.

⁴⁹ Csikszentmihalyi, *Optimal Experience*, 30.

Saxophonist Steve Lacy provides a meaningful—although hyperbolic—summation of this phenomenon:

For me that's where the music always has to be—on the edge—in between the known and the unknown and you have to keep pushing it towards the unknown otherwise it and you die.⁵⁰

The idea of flow is one intuitively recognized by improvising musicians. Cecil Taylor describes himself as “merely a vessel.”⁵¹ When Keith Jarrett was asked, “What happens when the solo piece is in motion so to speak?” he responded, “Wow, I have no idea. It's a total mystery to me.”⁵² This is further illustrated by bassist Gary Peacock, “First the music enters us, and if the music enters you, you don't have to worry so much about what to play...the music is telling you what to play, and you just ride along and float through it...I mean it's like when we're playing something in time and it will lock. Yeah, I mean that's not us, how is that possible, how can that happen you know?”⁵³ Jarrett refers to the music as an entity living on its own until he plays it:

Creativity is misunderstood, because the result is often given more weight than the process. The event in real life—the music in *La Scala*, for example—is the only thing that is *everything*. That's partly because so many people are involved in the event, in the process of living and breathing at the same moment...for a concert to be good, I have to be in an ecstatic state of consciousness—sensitivity taken to the greatest possible extreme so I'm aware of every tiny, tiny micro detail. This is actually the only way someone can do this and get away with it. If you're going to get burned by the flame, you don't just wander around outside it, you have to jump in it. So the risk is that—people think I'm overly serious when I say things like this, but it's the truth—if I put myself in that vulnerable a position, of surrendering to these sensitivities, and then the music sounds horrible to me, I could be wounded by the concert... It's taking a chance. If you're improvising all the subject matter is coming through you. You're not interpreting something. When the information is coming in and what you're playing is good, there's no way to describe it other than to call it ecstasy.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Derek Bailey, *Improvisation*, 54.

⁵¹ Cecil Taylor, “Being Matter Ignited,” 2.

⁵² Keith Jarrett, National Endowment for the Arts Jazz Masters Awards, January 13, 2014, Jazz at Lincoln Center-Allen Room, New York, NY. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fDbOKHOuy9M>.

⁵³ *Keith Jarrett - Art of Improvisation*, Berlin, Germany: Euroarts Music International GmbH, May 17, 2005, DVD.

⁵⁴ Keith Jarrett, “Keith Jarrett: How I Create,” interview Keith Goetzman, *Utne Magazine*, web specials archive, accessed February 9, 2012, <http://www.utne.com/arts/howicreate>.

Flow is also experienced by classical composers. For example, according to Cage:

One evening Morton Feldman said that when he composed he was dead; this recalls to me the statements of my father, an inventor, who says he does his best work when he is sound asleep. The two suggest the “deep sleep” of Indian mental practice. The ego no longer blocks action. A fluency obtains which is characteristic of nature.⁵⁵

Brown’s references to working on *Folio* resembles flow state of mind, but he frames it as synergy, which is a specific reference to author Buckminster Fuller. Brown’s description of this process is virtually identical to Sun Ra’s notion of vibrations, and his rehearsal process.

Through the process of collective composition, Brown felt this same sense of flow:

When I was doing *Folio*, I read about Buckminster Fuller and the concept of synergy; I looked it up in the dictionary, and it said that synergy is the result of two or more forces coming into contact with one another, the result of which is unpredictable. In other words, the result is more than the sum of the two forces by themselves. And it occurred to me: I have an idea, I put it on paper, I give it to say, David Tudor, and he does something else with it. I make it highly ambiguous, I don’t know what David’s going to do with it, and sometimes David doesn’t know what he’s going to do with it. So, it’s like creating something, sending it out into the world, and having it be a force. My concept is a force, the piece of paper is a force, it goes to a performer—or many performers—and what they bring to it is a synergistic force. Then it goes out to the audience, and we don’t know what they think of it.⁵⁶

According to composer and pianist La Monte Young:

As much as I have studied, and as much as I have practiced, and all of these things put together, how seriously I have dedicated my life to the study of music, this thing that comes through me is some other kind of miracle. It’s like a blessing. It has to do with seeking it. I wanted it. It was something I was interested in, in the abstract, and somehow, I as given it. And this extraordinary energy that I have when I perform, to do *The Well-Tuned Piano* for six hours and twenty-four minutes, or sing raga for two hours straight, somehow, I’ve always found music flowing out of me. I used to go to sessions in Los Angeles, jazz sessions. I used to play at this place called the Big Top on Hollywood Boulevard, one of the most creative session spots in the whole L.A. area. As soon as they saw me walk through the door, they knew I was going to play for a long time...I was

⁵⁵ Cage, *Silence*, 37.

⁵⁶ Earle Brown, “An Interview with Composer Earle Brown,” 301-302.

just playing and playing. And somehow, something began to flow through me. Improvisation helped me understand this process.⁵⁷

Many musical phenomena can be charted while listening to improvisations. It can often be difficult to discern whether a musician is in flow or not but consider the improvisations in Coleman's *Free Jazz*. The content of the improvisations can be grouped into three broad categories: Afrological, Eurological, and stream of consciousness. The Afrological material consists of allusions to rhythm and blues, bebop, and hard bop. The Eurological moments contain material that alludes to classical oriented motives. The stream of consciousness materials are double time flourishes, sheets of sound, scalar passages, and often incorporated chromaticism. In addition to specific allusions to styles of music, the varying rhythms employed throughout each solo vacillate between Afrological and Eurological. While there are many identifiable examples throughout the thirty-eight-minute recording, a few examples will suffice.

Two Afrological examples are in Freddie Hubbard's and Ornette Coleman's solos. During his solo Freddie Hubbard's makes use of a hard bop pattern (Figure 14). The blues-oriented melodic sensibility and exaggerated swing rhythm position this passage not only as a hard bop lick, but also Afrological. The material occurs for approximately eight seconds, then Hubbard moves into stream of consciousness, improvising double-time lines in even rhythm.

⁵⁷ La Monte Young and Marian Zazeela "In Conversation with Frank J. Oteri," 5.



Figure 14: Freddie Hubbard solo excerpt from *Free Jazz* (7:05-7:13)

In Coleman's solo, he performs a riff that evokes the rhythm and blues of Louis Jordan that is perhaps similar to those Coleman used when he played in rhythm and blues bands in the 1940s (Figure 15). The excerpt is simply an arpeggiated A minor triad. However, the stylized exaggerated swing rhythm, a ghost note ("x") and a fall, position this excerpt in rhythm and blues, and thereby is Afrological.



Figure 15: Ornette Coleman solo excerpt from *Free Jazz* (11:30)

Eurological elements include the opening material and a specific moment during the improvised bass duet. The clustered, collectively improvised burst at the opening more closely evokes Varèse-style sound mass than anything in the jazz idiom, and the patterns are similar to chord planing and mutations. The specific referential moment occurs at 30:00, when Charlie Haden and Scott LaFaro depart from the melodic bop and walking bass line; Haden then slows the tempo and establishes an andante, arpeggiated accompaniment in A minor while LaFaro performs a meandering lyrical melody that finally resolves on A. After the resolution, LaFaro begins a new melody with rapid pitch reiterations in pizzicato style that mimics sustained half-

notes. The slow rhythm of the melody, combined with Haden's slow waltz style accompaniment, provide an exquisite allusion to *Gymnopedie No. 2* of Erik Satie (Figures 16 and 17). In Figure 17, Haden's material is represented on the bottom staff and LaFaro's on the top staff. The excerpt concludes on a brief resolution in D minor, where Haden lands on an A and LaFaro lands on a D. This Satie allusion is not in "First Take," which suggests it was improvised rather than pre-planned.

2^{ème} GYMNOPÉDIE
ERIK SATIE
Version révisée en 1969
Lent et triste. (♩ = 63)
PIANO.
pp
3-4
5 2 3 5 2-1 3-4 2 3 5
3 1 3-5 2 3 5 3-5

Figure 16: Erik Satie, *Gymnopedie No. 2*⁵⁸

⁵⁸ Erik Satie, *Piano Solo*. Paris (France: Editions Salabert, 1989), 27.



Figure 17: Charlie Haden and Scott LaFaro duet excerpt from *Free Jazz*⁵⁹

Haden and LaFaro were close friends and listened to many different recordings together on a daily basis, including the music of Erik Satie, as Haden stated in a *DownBeat* interview:

⁵⁹ Transcribed by author. Again, handwritten notation was a deliberate decision. I omitted bar lines to convey the ebb and flow of the material.

We'd go to Carolina Pines Coffee shop on La Brea for breakfast, or maybe Tiny Naylor's. After our gigs we'd go to different guys' houses and play music, some classical, and we'd talk about different composers and musicians. We'd talk about art, life, music. Discuss Satie, Sonny Rollins, books, spirituality, improvisation, creative things, technical things.⁶⁰

Haden also referenced the music of Satie as a particular influence, especially during the 1950s.⁶¹

While the process of constructing an indeterminate work is very different than the preparation for an improvised work, both are intense, complicated, and often the audience cannot tell the difference between the two. The relationship between indeterminacy and improvisation is often conflated. In an interview with Terry Riley in *DownBeat*, the interviewer calls *In C* collective improvisation, rather than a more accurate description of an indeterminate or minimalist work. Perhaps it does not make much of a difference if an audience member cannot differentiate between indeterminate or improvised, but it absolutely matters to composers and performers. The performer can execute the work only after he or she has spent time with the composition and developed an understanding of its construction and what is expected of them.

⁶⁰ Helene LaFaro Fernández, *Jade Visions: The Life and Music of Scott LaFaro* (Denton, TX: University of North Texas Press, 2009), 84.

⁶¹ Haden was influenced in the 1950s by piano works of Chopin and Satie.
<http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/culturemonster/2011/08/influences-bass-players-charlie-haden.html>,
<http://www.brooklynrail.org/2014/09/music/the-shape-of-protest-to-come-liberation-music-orchestra-and-charlie-hadens-legacy>.

CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION

Nat Hentoff's 1965 *DownBeat* column, "Learning to Listen to the Avant-Garde, A Basic Problem," highlights issues with avant-garde music that continue to complicate its reception.¹ Over forty years later, Hentoff's comments remain relevant, particularly his suggestion that listening to and understanding the avant-garde really is not "a basic problem." Sometimes audiences resist avant-garde performances with skepticism and dismiss the motivation behind experimental music, as well as the required craft and training. Resistance to pan-avant-garde music can also be related to rigid perceptions of melody and harmony.

One way to improve understanding of the avant-garde is to synthesize a strategy for teaching American postmodern avant-garde as an integrated art form, considering jazz and classical avant-garde movements as one, and related to other artistic disciplines, such as visual arts, theater, dance, and literature. While there are many differences between individual works, the impetus behind much of the musical exploration is similar and often inspired by the same sources. American postmodern composers operate on a genre spectrum that includes classical, jazz, film, theater, popular, folk, and non-Western idioms. A key element with pan-avant-gardists is their knowledge and manipulation of different musical domains. Postmodern codes emerge within these phenomena as composers use quotation, collage, and eclecticism; intentionally fusing disparate elements into a composition or performance. Avant-garde music requires audiences to arrive with open minds and listen without preconceived expectations. Intermusicality of this nature elicits conversations about the intersectionality of the artists and

¹ Hentoff, "Learning to Listen to Avant-Garde," 13.

their audiences. Issues in courses on the American avant-garde are often related to the ways we identify with music, and the ways American pan-avant-gardists engaged with postmodernism.

Other creative disciplines, such as visual arts, literature, dance, and theater influenced many composers, so a synchronous discussion of the changes in all of these areas helps to contextualize the music within American culture. In addition, since the temporal aspect of music makes it difficult to study, focused attention on postmodern visual art works provides a tool for explaining postmodern characteristics. Abstract paintings, sculptures, or installations are tangible objects that can become tools in a discussion of an avant-garde musical example. Consider Christo and Jeanne-Claude's *Valley Curtain* (Figure 18), a 200,200 square feet curtain installed between two mountain slopes. While the curtain is a basic solid color, the sheer scale of the installation framed by the mountain slopes was an awesome accomplishment. The size of the curtain made the installation an impressive spectacle, which was augmented by the added texture provided by the wind. Composers experimented with ensembles and musical content in the same ways. For example, LaMonte Young's *Well Tuned Piano* seems basic on the outset. It is a solo piano work that involves repetitive motives that slowly change and develop. The impressive aspect of the work is the duration of six hours and twenty-three minutes.

Earle Brown combined his jazz experience with the ideas behind Alexander Calder's installation techniques and developed his open form methodology. Morton Feldman viewed new trends in visual arts as a methodology for composition:

the new painting made me desirous of a sound world more direct, more immediate, more physical than anything that had existed heretofore... The new structure required a concentration more demanding than if the technique were that of still photography, which for me is what precise notation has come to imply.²

² Feldman, *Give My Regards to Eighth Street: Collected Writings of Morton Feldman*, 5.



Figure 18: Valley Curtain (photo by Wolfgang Volz)³

Consider the openness of Brown's *December 1952* (See Figure 13 above) and then ask yourself: what would Piet Mondrian's painting *Composition in Color A* sound like (Figure 19)?

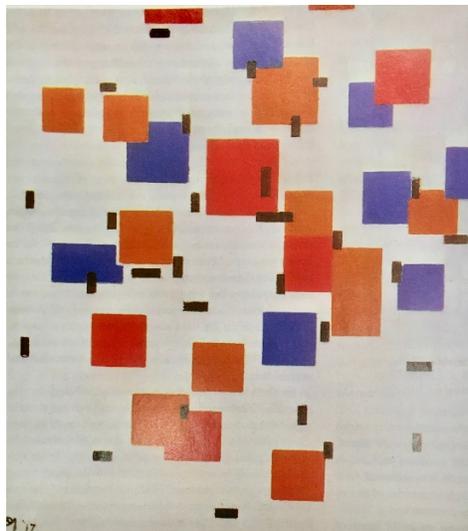


Figure 19: Piet Mondrian, *Composition in Color A*⁴

³ <http://christojeanneclaude.net/projects/valley-curtain>

⁴ H.H. Arnason, *History of Modern Art: Painting, Sculpture, Architecture, Photography Fifth Edition* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, Inc., 2003), 216.

Influential connections in literature include anthroposophical writers such as Madame Blavatsky and Rudolf Steiner; nineteenth-century American transcendentalists, and Gertrude Stein. Connections to dance include Merce Cunningham's work with John Cage, Alvin Ailey's dance company, and Sun Ra's collaboration with June Tyson and dancers. Theater corollaries include the performance art works of FLUXUS; Charlotte Moorman's work with John Cage; and the Living Theater. The Living Theater was founded in 1947 by Judith Malina and Julian Beck. Productions during the 1950s and 1960s included unconventional stagings of the writings of Gertrude Stein, William Carlos Williams, John Ashberry, and Berthold Brecht.⁵ John Cage's *Music of Changes* premiered at a Living Theater production, and Cecil Taylor's *Quartet* accompanied the Living Theater's production of *The Connection*.

In addition to being influenced by other composers, experimental composers were also influenced by literature, theater, dance, and the visual arts mediums to execute their works. For example, John Cage used the *I Ching* to construct his *Music of Changes*, and Keith Jarrett's *Sacred Hymns* is based off of the hymns of G.I. Gurdjieff. Also, whether it is Charlotte Moorman's acting in a performance of John Cage's *Theater Piece* or Alvin Ailey using Cecil Taylor and Keith Jarrett's music for his dance company, experimental composers view music as a life force, which is a part of everything around them. Constructing analytical discussion of the musical events in some of the multi-art works by these composers will facilitate further analysis within their own specific disciplines.

My ideas about teaching a course on the American pan-avant-garde are grounded by my own teaching experience and supported by the work of Kimberly Ankney and Daniel Healy. In *Envisioning Music Teacher Education*, they discuss the notion of responsive pedagogy during a

⁵ <http://www.livingtheatre.org/home>, accessed October 16, 2017.

class on free improvisation,⁶ where the professor responds to the background of each student and the events during the students' improvisations: "*Responsive pedagogy* is the practice of closely monitoring students' past and emergent understandings of music making and adapting to students' musical understandings on all levels of musical interaction."⁷

Responsive pedagogy provides a model for how I propose we teach classes on the pan-avant-garde. Whether it is a unit within a music history sequence or a graduate seminar, the emphasis should be on the performative aspects of the music so that students can live and experience what avant-gardists were trying to do. Experiencing indeterminate forms, extended techniques, and improvising as a performer forces the students to engage in the process. As Carolyn Abbate discusses in "Music—Drastic or Gnostic," focusing on the performative elements heightens experience and intimacy with the topic. Experiencing improvisation, even as a novice, increases the ability to explain and teach the practice. Abbate asks:

What does it mean to write about performed music? About an opera live and unfolding in time and not an operatic work? Shouldn't this be what we do, since we love music for its reality, for voices and sounds that linger long after they are no longer there? Love is not based on great works as unperformed abstractions or even as subtended by an imagined or hypothetical performance.⁸

Abbate's focus is on nineteenth century works, such as Richard Wagner's *Die Meistersinger*, but her discourse also speaks to a way to connect the pan-avant-garde to students in the classroom.

This also builds on Nicholas Cook's "Between Process and Product: Music and/as Performance" to concentrate more on the performance and the process of performing.⁹

⁶ Kimberly Lansinger Ankney and Daniel J. Healy, "Teaching Free Improvisation: Building a Responsive Pedagogy through Core Practices," *Envisioning Music Teacher Education*, ed. Susan Wharton Conkling (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015).

⁷ *Ibid.*, 67.

⁸ Carolyn Abbate, "Music—Drastic or Gnostic?," *Critical Inquiry* 30 (Spring 2004): 505.

⁹ Nicholas Cook's "Between Process and Product: Music and/as Performance," *Music Theory Online* 7 (April, 2001): <http://www.mtosmt.org/issues/mto.01.7.2/mto.01.7.2.cook.html>

In their article “Redefining Teaching, Re-Imagining Teacher Education,” Pam Grossman, Karen Hammerness and Morva McDonald discuss the importance of bridging the gap between foundations courses and methods courses.¹⁰ In their work, they emphasize the development of pedagogies of enactment that work in concert with pedagogies of reflection and investigation.¹¹ They propose a responsive pedagogy in conjunction with the following six core ideals:

- discovering students’ past musical experiences
- adapting class activities to students’ musical understanding
- navigating between individual goals and larger end goals
- exercising flexibility in approach to repertoire;
- monitoring students’ emerging understanding of music making
- encouraging risk taking

I believe there are many ways to accomplish this in a course on the American pan-avant-garde with this set of core ideals.¹² I do not advocate using the six sequentially throughout the course. Rather, they might be intermingled, and foundational knowledge is acquired through the experience.

The course could begin by working on fundamental musical elements via readings, lecture, and in class discussions. Through conversations the instructor can gain an idea of the musical experience of the students. Some might arrive with a good working knowledge of the New York School and free jazz composers, whereas in a different semester the students might need more exploration of the canonical avant-garde.¹³ Once an understanding of each students’ personal music history is developed, a list of artists to study can be generated.

¹⁰ Pam Grossman, Karen Hammerness and Morva McDonald, “Redefining Teaching, Re-Imagining Teacher Education,” *Teachers and Teaching: theory and practice* 15, no. 2 (April, 2009): 273-289.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 274.

¹² Ankney and Healy, “Teaching Free Improvisation,” 77.

¹³ I use the phrase canonical avant-garde to describe Henry Cowell, Edgard Varèse, the New York School, and Ornette Coleman, who are discussed in most survey style music history courses.

Effective tools to facilitate class discussions and navigating the material include Socratic style discussions of listening examples, videos of performances, and readings. Using the flipped classroom model, actual class time can be devoted to listening, performing, and doing. Traditional score analysis should also be a key element, as there are many experimental works that have full scores with instructions and traditional notation. Aside from scores of individual works, I advocate incorporating SOURCE and the FLUXUS workbook. The SOURCE books contain scores from many different avant-garde composers and employ a variety of combinations of traditional notation, graphic notation, prose, and found objects. The FLUXUS workbook is mostly brief descriptions or instructions of individual happenings that leave significant room for interpretation by the performer(s). A jazz corollary to FLUXUS includes jazz-oriented compositions with nonsensical or sarcastic titles, such as Coleman's "We Now Interrupt for a Commercial" (1968), or Cecil Taylor's "Of What" (1958).¹⁴

For compositions in which scores are not available, much can be learned by discussing different interpretations of the same composition. Scores often do not exist for many improvised works, but some sketches, transcriptions, and excerpts are accessible for studying. For example, the sketched outline for Coltrane's *A Love Supreme* is available via Lewis Porter's definitive biography of the musician.¹⁵ One could also use lead sheets and discuss multiple recordings of the same tune, such as "A Foggy Day." Classes would benefit from studying and comparing Louis Armstrong and Ella Fitzgerald's version to Charles Mingus's programmatic interpretation. Comparing recordings to the lead sheet allows students to identify how the performers depart from the composed elements and differ from each other.

¹⁴ Ornette Coleman, *New York is Now*, recorded April 29 and May 7, 1968, Blue Note, BST 84287, 1968, LP; Cecil Taylor, *Looking Ahead*, recorded June 9, 1958, Contemporary Records, Inc., 8481, 1959, LP.

¹⁵ Lewis Porter, *John Coltrane: His Life and Music* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2000).

Access to multiple takes of a recording are useful in improvisation and indeterminate music studies, as they highlight which sections, if any, are pre-composed. Often there are identical sections, motives or even single notes that provide formal structure to an improvisatory work, and multiple takes allow the listener to learn when they occur, how they are used, and highlight the extemporaneous nature of improvisation. Cecil Taylor's "Air," for example, was recorded for the albums *Air* and *The World of Cecil Taylor* in October 1960. Between the two albums there are eighteen takes of "Air" available.¹⁶ In-depth study of all of the different takes not only exposes students to the ways Taylor incorporates the piano style of Bartók and Stravinsky with Bud Powell, virtuosity, and free improvisation in his works, but also the process of indeterminate composition and improvisation. A suggested classical corollary is different recordings of Earle Brown's *December 1952, Four Systems*, or *Twenty-Five Pages*. The different takes and interpretations can be used as assignments, with portions of each recording assigned to groups of students to outline the overall structure, identify composed material, or transcribe short passages. The class then may compare the transcriptions and the different recordings. This exercise could be employed with both graduate students and undergraduate students, and modified for non-majors by eliminating the transcription element. Recordings and performance studies depend upon access, but ideally multiple performances of one composition can be found to stimulate a discussion of the different choices performers made for the compositions.

A helpful method to begin conversations about improvisation is intensity graphs, which focus on musical phenomenon rather than nomenclature, and are helpful as a complement to or in the absence of a score when teaching indeterminate and improvised works.¹⁷ An intensity

¹⁶ Taylor was not satisfied with the first seventeen takes of the recording, but it is not clear what Taylor was searching for as the ideal performance.

¹⁷ Ingrid T. Monson, *Saying Something*, 139.

graph illustrates how the listener experiences the music as it unfolds. The intensity of the music escalates or diminishes as dynamics, rhythms, and harmonies change. Figure 20 is an intensity graph of my listening experience to “Part 1” of *La Scala* by Keith Jarrett.¹⁸ The graph serves as an outline of my interpretation of the overall structure of the work. A cadence or cadential gesture at the thirty-minute mark results in diminished intensity, but at thirty-five minutes the combination of wide range and polyphonic texture dramatically increases intensity.

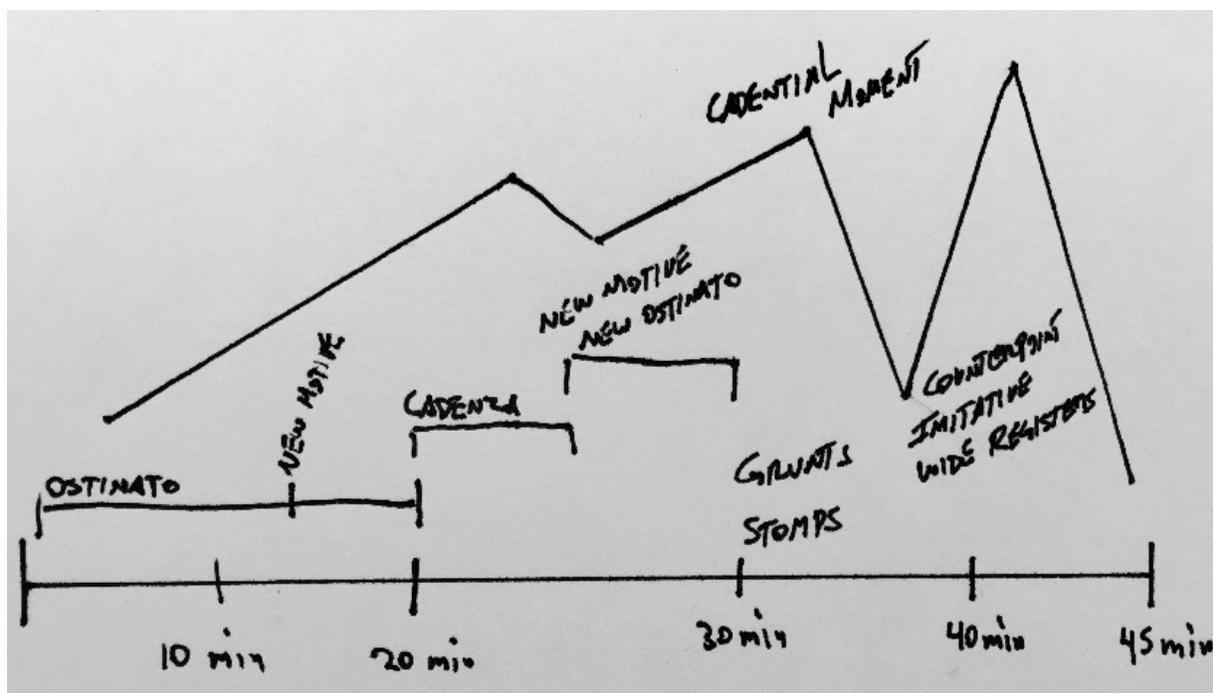


Figure 100: Author’s Intensity graph of Keith Jarrett’s *La Scala*, Part 1.

A worthwhile exercise is to have students sketch intensity graphs individually as they listened to a recording such as *La Scala* in class, and then discuss their interpretations with classmates. Since this does not require actual notation, it can be employed in a course for non-majors.

¹⁸ Keith Jarrett, *La Scala*, ECM Records, recorded February 13, 1995, ECM 1640, 1995, compact disc.

Discussions of influence are extremely important, as they can teach students the reasons for certain developments. As discussed earlier, Schillinger's graphing methods had an impact on Cage and Feldman. Subsequently, their work created space for other composers to consider their own way of scoring their musical ideas. Paul Berliner's method of charting musical genealogies, highlighted in *Thinking in Jazz*, is also useful in discussions of improvisatory works. Berliner's influence tree helps illustrate the mixture of influences on many avant-gardists and postmodern musicians. In *Thinking in Jazz*, he charts the influences of trumpeter John McNeil. This idea can also be applied to discussions of classical avant-garde performer David Tudor. His performance of *December '52* shows the influence of Second Viennese School composers, Cowell, and John Cage. The lines on the score could be interpreted as absolutely anything. Each line could be excerpts of different folk songs, bird songs, or excerpts from Beethoven piano sonatas. However, Tudor chose extreme registers, octave displacement, extended techniques, and a pointillistic texture.

The dizzying variety of methodologies employed by the pan-avant-garde provides ample opportunity for fruitful discussions. Required readings should include the writings of Joseph Schillinger, Nicolas Slonimsky, John Cage, Ornette Coleman, Anthony Braxton, Earle Brown, Leo Smith, George Rochberg, Elliott Carter, George Russell, and Yuseff Lateef. These composers documented their own methodologies, and focused study would highlight parallels in their approach. Documentation of these methodologies varies. There are many books available to assist in learning about John Cage and the New York School composers. Anthony Braxton has documented his works in the multi-volume series *Composition Notes*.¹⁹ However, many jazz avant-garde composers relied on the liner notes of their albums to describe not only their

¹⁹ Anthony Braxton, *Composition Notes* (Lebanon, NH: Synthesis Music, 1988), 274.

inspiration and context of recording, but also their methodology. An enlightening description of Ornette Coleman's Harmolodic theory is in the liner notes for his album *Skies of America*:

“Skies of America” is a collection of compositions and orchestration for a symphony orchestra based on a theory book called *The Harmolodic Theory* which uses melody, harmony, and the instrumentation of movement of forms... The writing is applied to harmolodic modulation meaning to modulate in range without changing keys. There are eight themes and a harmolodic movement for each theme...the movements are written free of key and use the total collective blending of the transposed and non-transposed instruments using the same intervals.²⁰

Coleman worked on *The Harmolodic Theory* for decades, but it was unfortunately never published. Coleman provided more commentary about his harmolodic theory throughout his career, such as this quote from 2015:

Harmolodics is where all ideas—all relationships and harmony—are equally in unison. Say you were talking somewhere, and someone came in and started a different conversation with you, and you started your conversation in whatever they were talking about—that doesn't mean that whatever you were talking about before has left your mind. It only means that you've decided to answer this person. So therefore, to be more precise, how can you tell the meaning of something just because of the sound of your voice?²¹

Cecil Taylor's methodology is as enigmatic as Coleman's. However, due to the work of filmmaker Chris Felver in *All the Notes*, we have some documentation of Taylor's scores. Two examples are illustrated in Figures 21a and 21b. Note, that Taylor relies on pitch names with graphic alterations. He offers a brief explanation in the film:

I don't use notes. I use alphabet. If it's above middle C, I use plus. If it's below middle C it's minus...I may play 10 notes if I want to and then what I got from Monk I may play harmonics so that I play six sounds in one hand...or also work at something in which I'm wanting contrary motion.²²

²⁰ Ornette Coleman, *Skies of America*, Columbia KC 31562, 1972, LP.

²¹ Ornette Coleman, “An Interview with Ornette Coleman,” interview by Andy Hamilton, June 18, 2015, <https://www.andyhamilton.org/single-post/2015/06/18/An-Interview-with-Ornette-Coleman>.

²² Ibid.

In the film, Taylor also expresses a bit of frustration with other musicians. Many performers want more prescriptive direction than he is willing to deliver, to which he states, “Gentlemen I gave you the form...that’s what we practiced. Now invent!”²³

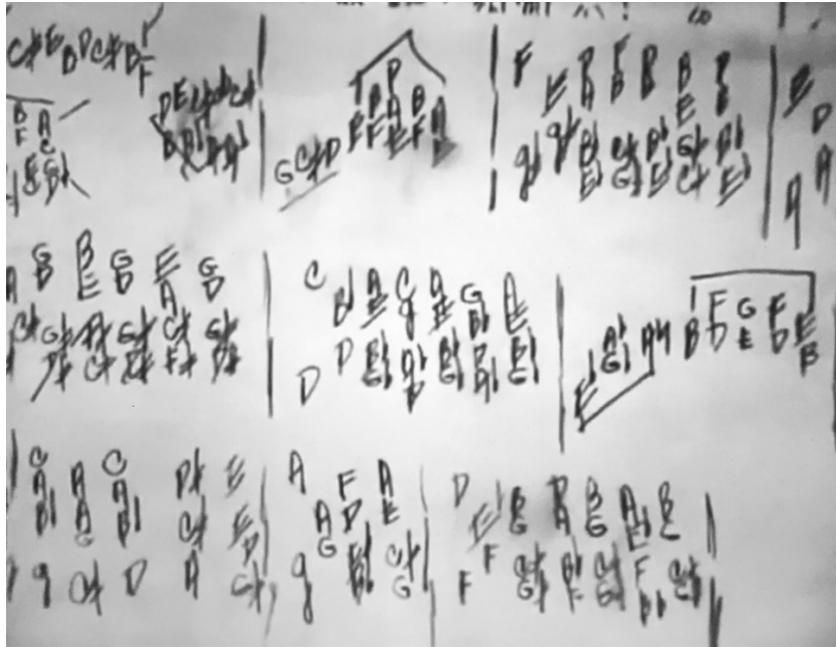


Figure 21a: Cecil Taylor's notation system

²³ *ibid.*

of any given performance. Inserting ourselves into the process of performance is a good way to develop an appreciation for the kind of decisions performers are required to make in indeterminate and improvised performances. Students could even perform several indeterminate works. Brown's *December '52*, or his *Twenty-Five Pages* are scores that can be explored by any level of musician and instrumentation. Taking students through the process of decision making is valuable in a study of the improvisational avant-garde. Experiencing this music from the performer's perspective creates a more intimate understanding of the process. This aspect of the course may admittedly be a big stretch for some students. It would potentially be their first and only exposure to improvisatory music, which would make the experience even more valuable for them, move them outside of their comfort zone, and experience being an avant-garde performer. For undergraduate students, I would keep the same goals in mind: students taking the risk of performing an avant-garde work, studying artists outside the canon, and contemplating the methodologies of the composers. However, much of the experience would need to be abridged in a history sequence class.

The relevance of pan-avant-garde works is often the largest barrier to address. Therefore, it is helpful to emphasize the cultural importance and function of different genres. A traditional course model for music appreciation follows a chronological discussion of time periods and related composers. However, as historical and current works are immediately accessible on the radio and playlists in iTunes, Spotify, or Pandora, students may engage more consistently by discussing performing forces and expanding on the chronological development within each respective group. Therefore, a general timeline of the course could be as follows: foundations and definitions, active listening; vocal music from chant through the madrigal, opera, Lieder, jazz, gospel, and rock; small ensemble music; orchestral music; and improvisation. This

organization integrates the postmodern avant-garde throughout the semester. For example, the content on orchestral music might begin in the seventeenth century with the development of the orchestra, and cover selected works of the succeeding eras, ending with perhaps Stockhausen's *Gruppen* or Earle Brown's *Available Forms II*. This style of organization also creates space to discuss ways in which students experience the music in their daily lives.

I believe that by focusing on the performative element in class, using other creative disciplines as tools for exploration, employing transcriptions, actively exploring performance spaces, and group analysis of musical works, students will acquire an understanding of the American postmodern avant-garde as an integrated phenomenon. Teaching courses on the pan-avant-garde in this manner is a movement toward reconciling the boundaries within the avant-garde and American music. Students will increase their cultural competence as a result as well. By learning about the reciprocal nature of influence within the artistic disciplines and the development of American postmodernism, they will develop foundational musical history knowledge, and better understand current musical phenomena in our society. As students engage with postmodern modes of expression, or codes, they will learn how to use them in their own compositions and performances. This knowledge will allow them to engage with the pluralities that are present within our postmodern culture. Current performers rarely have the luxury to perform solely in one musical genre and will be more successful as performers and educators if they are comfortable crossing multiple musical domains.

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