

An Approach to
Creative Jazz
Education

The Application of Polyfreedom
in an Academic Context

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Introduction

Since its resurgence in the 1980s, best represented by the rise to international stardom of trumpeter Wynton Marsalis, jazz has found a solid foothold in the curriculum of academic education. In universities and specialist music schools alike, from New York to Sydney, the many facets of jazz are the subject of serious analysis and study.

This is a wonderful thing to have happened. For the many brilliantly creative American musicians of the last 100 years, both of African origin and otherwise, to be enshrined in this way is a testament to both their achievements and the open-mindedness of the academic establishment. The placement of jazz in the university environment will ensure its preservation for future generations and encourage ongoing collaboration between its ideas and techniques and those of other disciplines. This can only lead to creative development for all concerned.

On a more practical note, the promulgation of jazz education has also come to function as a welcome source of income for musicians, and has encouraged the publication of a vast library of useful resources (the Charles Mingus and Thelonious Monk fake books being the first to come to mind).

I hope that many in jazz education circles would agree with me that this is a field in its infancy, and one with room for improvement. Having been through formal jazz education, I am writing this document in an attempt to elucidate the problems that I and others like me have encountered within the system, and to propose a possible alternative. It is hoped that this document will be received as it is intended, as a means to achieve variety and genuine dialogue within the jazz education community.

The problems that I distinguish within current jazz education are:

- **A gap between understanding of music theory and practical application.** Just as knowing the rules of football doesn't make one a great footballer, so knowledge of jazz harmony doesn't make one a great improviser. How to use what one knows (in other words, developing an aesthetic, probably the most important consideration in any art) is left to chance or, at best, osmosis in the majority of jazz education.

- **A misrepresentation of traditional jazz learning.** The main methods for technical and aesthetic development in modern jazz education are not those that were used by the great players of the music's history.
 - i. Learning others' solos: These were originally committed to memory, taken from recordings either on one's instrument, at the piano or with the voice (ideally the latter according to Lennie Tristano, to avoid the source exerting too much influence). They were not taken from written scores. The greatest benefit of learning others' solos is in the act of transcription, not the physical repetition of the material. I can personally attest to the emotional difference of being able to sing one's hero's greatest solos. It creates a bond and musical appreciation that far exceeds purely visual and mechanical interaction.
 - ii. Licks: While it is true that especially from the bebop era onwards, licks have been an important part of jazz, there are two factors worth considering here. Firstly, musicians composed their own licks in order to be as personal as possible, the rote copying of others' licks being seriously frowned upon. This link between composition and licks is particularly noticeable in a comparison of the bebop generation's songs and solos. Secondly, they drew and adapted from a much wider range of sources than just other jazz musicians. Charlie Parker carrying around the score of Stravinsky's *Firebird* is one of the most notable example of this.

- **Overemphasis on the solo.** Soloing is probably the most rigorous discipline in jazz, so it is not surprising that the majority of emphasis is placed upon it in education. But it is obviously not the only discipline, and no hard and fast methods for cultivating these others (e.g. live interaction, melodic interpretation) have been advanced in the same way that they have for soloing. Once more they are left largely to chance or osmosis. It doesn't seem unfair to say that jazz today has a culture of the soloist rather than a culture of swing, as lamented by Wynton Marsalis in *To a Young Jazz Musician*. Neither is it particularly a culture of personal expressiveness.

- **A narrow focus on jazz history.** As far as practical application goes, jazz education begins with, at the very earliest, swing (usually Coleman Hawkins' *Body & Soul* solo), and ends with John Coltrane's classic quartet. Techniques from early jazz such as group or counterpoint improvisation, arpeggiated accompaniment, vocalised sections or any one of the dazzling arrangement options demonstrated in Louis Armstrong's *Hot Five* and *Seven* recordings are entirely absent. Free jazz techniques are also left undiscussed, as are the advances made in polyfreedom by Sun Ra, Anthony Braxton, Steve Lacy and

others. The most surprising omission, however, is the work of Lennie Tristano, the first person to create a formal jazz curriculum and mentor to such luminaries as Lee Konitz, Bill Evans and Warne Marsh. In order for jazz education to reach its full potential and result in a music rich enough to honour its founders, all of these options need to be made available to the student musician.

- **A lack of attention to the cultural context that has given birth to jazz.** Unlike classical arts, jazz was not created as a means of pleasing the rich or cultural elite of its time. It was a pop music within which there were certain elements that it was discovered could be taken to the level of high art. It is supremely democratic in that there is something in it for tastes ranging from the gaudy to the refined. Even those held up as the epitome of high art in jazz retained a connection with pop culture. *Charlie Parker with Strings* and Coltrane's *My Favourite Things* are the obvious examples, but the paragons of free and post-free jazz display a desire to connect with their audience too. It strikes me that, as well as being a discreet set of practices, jazz has always riffed on the zeitgeist. Pop culture is its natural habitat. And not to preserve that ability to riff culturally as well as musically is to fail in preserving jazz.

There are also considerations of a somewhat more philosophical nature that occur whenever any creative art form is placed in an academic context. These are worth introducing here as they are particularly relevant to jazz, but they are weighty cultural issues which, although I deal with them as means allow throughout this document, are perhaps beyond its scope to address. I wish to emphasise again that I bring these considerations up with the intention of promoting discussion and with nothing but the highest respect for all those involved with jazz in the academic community.

- Among the hottest topic in education circles recently is standardised testing. The argument (as laid out in Ken Robinson's brilliant *Out of Our Minds*) is that academia is all about standards, and in order to have standards we need a means of judging them. These means should be fixed and transparent so that anybody testing him or herself against them is given a fair assessment of their abilities. The spanner in the works is the concept of multiple intelligences, which states that the current means of judging is biased towards intellectual intelligence rather than considerate of all of the others we possess (social, emotional, kinaesthetic, etc.), for the simple reason that intellectual intelligence is the easiest one to teach and score. According to Robinson, the basic question of academia needs to be rephrased from "how intelligent are you?" to "how are you intelligent?". This is extremely relevant to jazz, and the arts in general, which differ from, say, economics or computer programming,

in that they use a much larger array of intelligences, with greater fluidity. In a single evening, a jazz musician will use social intelligence to communicate with the audience and bandmates (the latter requiring particular precision mid-song), intellectual intelligence to remember chord progressions and the setlist, kinaesthetic intelligence to interact with their instrument, emotional intelligence to imbue melodies with meaning...the list goes on. Suffice it to say that developing instrumental technique and music theory knowledge alone, because they are the easiest to judge, is insufficient. Yet if there is any truth at all in the points I have raised earlier, this is currently general practice.

- This also brings up the question of who is qualified to judge art. Jazz history is littered with examples of individuals who are shunned after shaking the status quo, are accepted by the cognoscenti and eventually become household names (Lester Young being one of the less obvious ones). There were in all likelihood university professors in the 40s and 50s who would have been incensed at the idea of bebop being taught in conservatories, just as their are some today unsure of why Anthony Braxton holds a professorship. Clearly, and I'm sure the majority of those in the establishment would agree, membership in academia is no qualification of universal objectivity. So the question is: if not purely by technique or theoretical knowledge, then how is an artist to be judged, especially in a system necessarily comparative, when the experience of art is so subjective and flexible? It has been said that there is no way that Thelonious Monk would be able to win The Thelonious Monk International Jazz Piano Competition because of his unconventional technique, and this is exactly the kind of disconnect between judgement and actual creative worth that I'm referring to.
- More than anything else, jazz is concerned with freedom of personal self-expression, not surprising for the music of former slaves. Compare jazz to other musics that include that most individualistic technique, improvised soloing, and one sees that neither African nor Hindustani Classical music has quite the same emphasis on the need for personal input. The former stresses community commitment, the latter divine inspiration (though of course neither is that simple), and one sees in jazz history neither a strongly established social structure nor a universal spiritual paradigm. Yet quotations from jazz greats on the importance of finding one's own voice abound. The difficulty of the jazz educator is how to imbue in their students an understanding of and respect for the past masters, while at the same time encouraging them to follow a path of their own choosing. In other words, relegating historical, theoretical and technical exploration to the role of subordinates and means to self-exploration. For example, a study of hardbop doesn't just mean looking at

important figures and the methods they employed, but also one's reaction to them and what that reveals about oneself. Not only to arrive at objective conclusions about the time period, but to subsume the music of, for example, Hank Mobley, Horace Silver or Lee Morgan into a personal style with genuine depth. In other words, reflecting and expanding on history rather than copying it (see John Zorn's *News for Lulu* in this case). The necessity for personal expression in jazz lends its education a psychological dimension which may or may not be able to find a place for itself within the striving for objectivity that is characteristic of academia.

- Finally, an economic consideration. It is a fact of today's competitive free market world that every institution must be a sharp-minded business in order to survive, and universities are no exception. In their case, balancing a high-quality product and appealing image with expenditure is the base equation. However, I personally feel that jazz can have a cultural function well beyond that of interesting option in a university curriculum. Art and social change are bedfellows historically, and in the relatively short time that it has been around this is particularly true of jazz. Yet social change is rarely the concern of universities, balancing the budget being quite understandably the priority in the current financial climate. Clearly though, if its current practitioners want jazz to reach for any higher goal, the support of academia can only be a beginning.

What We Mean When We Talk About Jazz

"Taking responsibility for something is generally a good way of gaining some measure of control over it. That's certainly true when it comes to one's own life. You take responsibility for it and all of a sudden you have control over it. And I think it extends to other things as well."

(Alan Moore)

The Problem

"Jazz is dead" is an expression heard from both aficionados and detractors of the music, and sometimes even from jazz musicians themselves (though in the latter case it often risks coming across as the complaining of a puppeteer that his puppet won't act lifelike enough). What is it that prompts people to make this statement? The reasons given are usually related to the music's transition to academicism, change of cultural context or apparent halt in innovativeness. But whether there is truth in them or not, why would these factors in and of themselves be reason for a musical tradition to die? The real problem to be discussed here though, and the focus of this chapter, is the same one faced by atheists and believers over the statement "God is dead": the meaning of the most important word in the phrase is unclear. We can't say with any accuracy what "jazz" is actually referring to any more.

Partly this is because jazz has been put through the commercial publicity wringer. As a label, it has been used for everything from music to dance to clothing, perfume, style, attitude and even (as *Chicago* has immortalised) white murderesses! While this is not a problem for pop culture, which thrives on superficial image, it is problematic for the academic, musicological perspective. The fact is that the word jazz has been applied to a vast array of recordings, musical practices and theories - and withheld from others - but the usage is impossible to judge because no clear criteria for inclusion or exclusion actually exist. Diversity precludes any easy definition. Cast the net too wide and music of a fundamentally different ilk is also included. Not cast adventurously enough and we're left with a conservative, castrated facsimile of the rich, contradictory reality.

As an example, if one chooses extended improvisation as definitive of jazz, then African and Indian music must also be included. Try to justify that it's the usage of that American invention, the drum kit, and not only are Jimmy Giuffre's experimental trios excluded but Nat King Cole's famous group too. And while it's undeniable that

jazz no longer has the share in popular culture that it once did, especially within the African American community, to try to define it in terms of the period or demographics of its greatest popularity is to ignore the deep roots that it has in international culture today.

This whole discussion is compounded by the fact that almost every major figure in the development of jazz from Duke Ellington to Ornette Coleman has distanced himself from the word at some time or another. There is very clearly a discrepancy between the reality of the music and the rendering of it into words that even the "founding fathers" of the genre were aware of.

It's fair to point out that it may not be important to have a precise definition of jazz. As musicians, we have an instinctual understanding, it's enough for our purposes and the absence of precise meaning lends a certain freedom. I would agree with this if it wasn't for the lack of a sense of unity that currently pervades jazz. There is a connection that ties, for example, Sidney Bechet to Albert Ayler, Louis Armstrong's trumpet to Woody Shaw's. Yet how often do traditional jazz musicians, free improvisors and post-boppers listen seriously to each other's music, let alone sit down together and learn from one another? Lester Young had a huge influence on bebop, but how often would a bebopper seriously consider inviting a swing-influenced musician on a gig, or vice versa? An instinctual understanding of what jazz means too often leads to a definition reflecting personal preferences rather than encompassing the tradition as a whole. We owe it to both students and the broader academic community to have more on offer than this.

There is another, more subtle problem here. Despite the intellectual reasons proffered earlier, I believe that the actual cause behind the sentiment "jazz is dead" is a feeling. It's the feeling that jazz musicians nowadays are by and large not connected to the tradition in the active, participatory way that they were in the past. Referring to the Alan Moore quote at the beginning of this chapter, the lack of a real sense of responsibility for jazz prevents us from taking personal control. And how could one be expected take responsibility for something as nebulous as jazz? Psychologically speaking, one is not in control of something that one cannot either describe or define. I don't think it's an exaggeration to say that our creative audacity and potential contributions to the genre are all too often neutered by a limited sense of tangible relevance to the modern world. And the root of that is an insufficient sense of meaning.

So if it's a quest for meaning that we're talking about, isn't this a personal problem? Yes, but in the same way that there is a generic conception of what constitutes jazz harmony, there should also be a generic conception of what jazz means too. Just as

some musicians choose to operate within standard harmonic practice and others choose to probe, personalise, transcend or downright abandon it, generic jazz meaning would exist to be accepted or challenged dependant on one's personal inclination.

At the very least, if I am to use the word jazz extensively throughout this document and, in the bigger picture, if jazz is to put down strong roots in the academic world, there must be some mutual understanding as to what it actually means to us. Below is my proposal in this regard.

A Solution

The definition that I would like to put forward for jazz starts with historical fact. It is undeniable that towards the end of the 19th Century in Mississippi, a new musical milieu crystallised in the African slave and mixed-race population. Its ingredients included the polyrhythms of Africa, European classical harmony, Church hymns, funeral marches and the French brass band tradition. There were two streams to this development, the rural blues and urban jazz (with ragtime being an arguable but shorter-lived third stream).

The first of these leaned more towards a focussed, compositional approach based on simple harmonic structures and idiosyncratic lyrics, the second towards improvised development over a wider variety of structures. Of course, there was a good deal of crossover between the two, and they were united by one principle: the importance of individual self expression, the right of individuals to choose how to express themselves. Personal style was of paramount importance.

It's hardly surprising that within a culture of slaves and outcastes, a preoccupation with individualistic expression should arise in art (there is no shortage of quotations from jazz and blues musicians throughout the musics' histories stressing the importance of this quality). Neither is it surprising that this should happen in America, the home of individualism. It's what Wynton Marsalis is talking about in *To a Young Jazz Musician* when he invokes the image of "the lone man on the prairie with a shotgun in his hand - sworn enemy of bullshit." One stakes out a cultural and musical territory with one's art, that one believes in and is willing to defend. Bullshit in this case represents the forces that wish to oppose the right to stake one's claim where one chooses, Marsalis's example being the pressure to conform to hip-hop ideals in modern African American youth culture.

So it is possible to see jazz and blues as two aspects of one tradition, united by their common cultural origin but, more importantly, their emphasis on self-expression. Jazz is the more exploratory aspect, blues the more ruminative, of the same approach to music as necessarily requiring personal contribution. The inclusion of improvisation is a natural but not essential extension of this requirement, composition and interpretation also being areas in which individuality can be expressed.

I propose that instead of trying to define jazz, we broaden our conception and instead talk about the jazz/blues tradition, which is defined by the requirement it places on all participants to make personal contributions to the music. This responsibility for self-expression is at least equal to the needs of the group, and far outweighs public expectation in importance. Remember the number of jazz musicians alone willing to challenge the public's and fellow musicians' expectations in the name of their personal style, though of course such challenges are not always necessary.

The usefulness of thinking in this way is immediately apparent as it separates this tradition from others around the world. Neither African, Balinese, Hindustani or Western classical music has the same emphasis on every musician making as much personal contribution as possible. There are other ideals at work in these traditions that necessitate the sublimation of the individual. Western Classical composers often come close (a young Debussy's reply when asked what rules of composition he follows: "mon plaisir" - "whatever I please") but require interpreters trained out of individualism to bring their music alive. Some avant-garde composers have tried to cajole performers of their works into finding their own voice, with graphic scores for example, but this is not a fundamental requirement of the genre and, I would argue, shows the influence of the jazz/blues tradition.

The inclusiveness of this way of looking at things may not appeal to some people, as the consequent rise of the emphasis on personal expression can be traced throughout 20th Century Western music. For example, the blues stream inspired Elvis Presley, who opened the door for Buddy Holly, who inspired the Beatles, who gave birth to modern pop songwriting. Jamaican Ska was inspired by jazz, which slowed down to become Reggae, then fused with rap (an offshoot of blues vocalisation) to become Ragga. All of this and much more comes under the banner of the jazz/blues tradition as I have defined it. Just to be clear, I'm not saying that jazz and blues are directly responsible for it all. Globalisation precipitated an international need for personally expressive music - especially in countries with an oppressed percentage of the population - that was met by local musicians. North America's role was as the powder keg to set the trend alight.

So the jazz/blues tradition is inclusive of a broad variety of styles, but it also goes beyond that. Any technique from any international music tradition which is used as a tool for personal expression becomes a part of it. This is especially noticeable in jazz of the 1960s, which sought influences far beyond its borders. John McLaughlin's long-term connection with Indian music is another example of international influences harnessed to the ideals of the jazz/blues tradition.

As with any definition, though, there is exclusion here as well as inclusion. Besides the world traditions mentioned above, there is a great deal of music which doesn't place any emphasis on the personal expressiveness of every musician involved. The needs of the audience or societal mores can take precedence. Of more interest when attempting to whittle a clear definition though, there is also music which appears to support individualistic creativity but in fact does not. Early European American jazz bands which used entirely notated arrangements and solos may be an important part of cultural history, but they don't merit inclusion in the jazz/blues tradition. Modern pop music, appearing to sell outright the uniqueness of its stars' personalities, usually decides what those personalities will be in a boardroom based on market research. A jazz musician only using other people's licks when soloing is also not in the tradition.

Often, especially in today's saturated, publicity-heavy market, it can be difficult to recognise personal expressiveness. It is even possible for an artist to believe they have an individual voice when in fact they do not. But careful and persistent listening, based on accumulated experience, yields dividends here. We already have so many examples of brilliant, individualistic music at our disposal that, despite the hallmark uniqueness of personal expression, it is possible to recognise. It also has a habit of persisting over time that music merely claiming to be personal does not.

Hopefully it can be seen that, while being very inclusive and allowing for some grey area in the difficulty of recognising personal expressiveness, my definition of the jazz/blues tradition as requiring personal expression from all musicians involved is logically consistent and functional. So what does jazz mean in this context? As mentioned earlier, in the historical origins of individualistic music, blues had a more introverted, ruminative, reflective quality. Jazz was more exploratory, extroverted and extemporaneous, the Yang to the Ying of blues. So within the jazz/blues tradition, jazz is that music which tends towards the improvised end of the spectrum rather than the compositional. Of course, this is not perfect as many blues musicians are consummate improvisors. But it wasn't at the heart of early blues in the way that it was for early jazz. And as one follows the development of individualistic music throughout the last century, the distinction becomes clearer. Ska was clearly more

jazz-, Reggae more blues-influenced. Soloing always played a minor role in the Beatles's oeuvre, showing a blues leaning. There are anomalies - should Jimi Hendrix be considered jazz or blues? - but this is within the larger, clearly defined jazz/blues tradition that requires above all else personal expression. What would it say about our individualism if there weren't anomalies?

In conclusion, I define jazz as that branch of personally creative music which places an emphasis on improvised creativity.

Among the best reasons for accepting this definition is that by and large this is what one already finds at the most creative music education establishments around the world. Young musicians with a penchant for personal expression aren't interested in sticking to Miles Davis's pithy four-word summary of jazz history as "Louis Armstrong; Charlie Parker", or anything even close to it. They want to embrace the full swath of 20th Century music, and the music of the world, and decide for themselves what territory to stake out and defend with their art.

The Consequences: Jazz and Democracy

In the same way that Hindustani classical musicians dedicate themselves to discovering and exploring the transcendent moods within raga and tala, and Western classical musicians to expressing the sense of cultured refinement at the heart of their tradition, then - by my definition of the genre - jazz musicians are dedicated to personal expression in music. They are defenders of the right of individuals to express themselves in whatever way they find most fitting.

This allows musicians a great deal of freedom, but also comes with a certain responsibility, namely that of being as aware as possible of their options so that the decisions they make as artists are educated ones. One cannot contribute to the tradition by giving free rein to one's individuality if one is unaware of - or biased through ignorance against - any possibility.

In this way, jazz begs comparison with democracy. A jazz band in full swing, comprised of musicians each with a unique personal style, is a kinetic model of the tension between educated personal freedom and responsibility to the group. Its functioning is symbolic of the fact that these two things are not incompatible, and a lesson by example of the democratic spirit. From this perspective, a jazz performance is not only entertainment but also an instrument for social awareness and change. I personally can think of no better resolution to the quest proposed at the beginning of this chapter for meaning and relevancy in modern jazz than this

embodiment of democracy in the music.

Because of this connection to democracy, though, there is a further responsibility implied for anyone considering him or herself a true fan of jazz. David Foster Wallace, in his essay *Authority and American Usage*, defines a democratic spirit as "one that combines rigour and humility, i.e., passionate conviction plus a sedulous respect for the convictions of others". So on top of the self-education and soul-searching that leads to conviction in one's beliefs and actions (in other words, individuality), the jazz fan - and particularly the jazz musician - must develop to an equal degree tolerance for the individuality of others. One can intuit over time whether a musician is contributing to the tradition by being in tune with their individual voice or not, and change ones involvement with and actions towards them accordingly (more on this act of judgement later). However, there must always be an unwavering respect for their right to make whatever choices they wish, according to whatever yardstick they care to employ.

Furthermore, any genuine new increase in the creative freedom available to jazz musicians must be welcomed, even if it is not necessarily enjoyed. To quote Nelson Mandela: "To be free is not merely to cast off one's chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others." With the great personal freedom that past generations of jazz musicians have won for us comes an equal responsibility in the present moment.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have proposed a need to renew the meaning of jazz, in both the intellectual, definitive sense and the private, emotional one. My solution to both lies in the importance that personal expression holds for the music. Without defence for personal expression, jazz ceases to be itself. The price of that artistic freedom is a necessary respect for the freedom of others.

This presents the jazz educator with a particular challenge: that of imparting knowledge of the practical aspects of the tradition to the student, while at the same time respecting and, ideally, encouraging a personal approach to creativity. The teacher of jazz must be more than a library of techniques, the methods used an encouragement to go beyond mere imitation. I would like to present a model for jazz education, as I have defined the word here, that satisfies these requirements.

Where We Are Now

As a frame for my own approach to jazz education, I'd like to place our present position in jazz history into the context of the history of the music as a whole.

Let's start with the observation that throughout the history of jazz one sees a constant striving for new forms of expression: The rawness of the New Orleans style forged into the high energy of the big bands and the sophistication of swing; the precision and abstraction of bebop as a reaction against increasing triteness and predictability in commercial jazz; lick-heavy hardbop prompting more lyrical modal playing. Always, in individual players as well as in the music as a whole, there is movement away from the established and into the unknown. Cause prompts effect, which then becomes cause for change itself. This to me is improvisation in its truest sense: a constant striving to reexamine and go beyond what has already been done, both personally and collectively, and not from a need for novelty but for the joy of exploration. The incredible spirit of improvisation within the jazz tradition is what led Whitney Balliett to label it "the sound of surprise" and Kenny Werner to perhaps overenthusiastically define jazz as innovation in his *Effortless Mastery*.

I don't believe anything new or out of the ordinary has been said in the previous paragraph, but next in the historical sequence begun above is free-jazz, which is surrounded by a great deal of controversy and, in my opinion, misunderstanding. For my approach to jazz education to be appreciated, a more analytical view of free-jazz than is commonly held becomes necessary. In particular, there are two misconceptions about this period of the music's development that are relevant, both products of the only superficial attention that this admittedly cryptic genre seems to attract.

Misconception 1: Free-jazz was motivated by a new desire in jazz to abandon - or even rebel against - structure.

Although they are being considered together here for convenience sake, there are really two parts to this misconception, the "new" and the "abandon structure" part. Both are understandable (though still incorrect) given the branding that free-jazz received during its conception. Promotion as The New Thing and The Avant-garde and association with the struggles of The Civil Rights Movement were useful tools for selling albums and filling seats at concerts, but in the long term they have only served to obscure the intelligence and subtlety with which free-jazz musicians were

extending and restructuring jazz.

To begin with the question of structure, both of the albums that brought free-jazz to wider public attention, Ornette Coleman's *Free Jazz* and John Coltrane's *Ascension*, are in fact carefully structured statements, though not in a way that was common at the time. A great many of the other recordings held up as archetypical of the movement retain various different structural features actually typical of jazz (e.g. *The Shape of Jazz to Come*). I would even go as far as to say that free-jazz actually revived some of the structuring techniques of the New Orleans era, such as group improvisation, overtly programmatic content and spiritual goals.

But clearly free-jazz musicians were doing something different from their predecessors, and if not abandoning or rebelling against structure, they were obviously relaxing it to a large degree sometimes. But to take this back to the misconception that we're dealing with, was this new? An interesting perspective can be gleaned from *An Open Letter to the Avant-garde*, to be found in *Charles Mingus - More Than a Fake Book*.

During the furore that accompanied the emergence of free-jazz, the bellicose bassist tried to organise a recording session of established jazz musicians who would "improvise and play free - and everybody do what they want to do to outdo the avant-garde." This was partly as a joke (a criticism of the concept of avant-garde itself), partly to admonish what he saw as the poor technique of the younger players (though by his own admission he hadn't heard Pharoah Sanders or Cecil Taylor properly) and partly because he knew that it wasn't a problem for any skilled jazz musician to improvise outside of structure. Thad Jones, Dizzy Gillespie and Clark Terry, three trumpeters with quite different approaches, were signed up for the project. This alone is enough to make one suspect that free-jazz was not necessarily new. But it goes further when Mingus suggested to Duke Ellington that he be involved too. His reply was "Why should we go back that far? Let's not take music back that far, Mingus." Ellington, the arch-structuralist of jazz, saw free improvisation as essentially too basic to be of particular interest! If *An Open Letter to the Avant-garde* proves anything, it's that free-jazz was not actually as revolutionary as either its historical branding or current understanding would have us believe.

This is also supported by countless quotes from free-jazz practitioners and the more adventurous musicians of previous generations who joined them, stating that they don't see any essential difference in the process behind their music and other jazz (though obviously the end product is not the same). For example, Ornette Coleman has said that he sees himself as starting where Charlie Parker left off, which is conceivably true given Edgard Varese's story of his encounter with Parker. And in the

liner notes to one of their several collaborations together, Max Roach has stated that Anthony Braxton is also in the spirit of Bird. Let us not forget either that the first recordings that can be called free-jazz were made by Lennie Tristano's quintet in 1949, a good decade before the emergence of the genre.

So it's fair to say that free-jazz was neither solely concerned with abandoning structure or was necessarily introducing something new to the tradition. This begs the questions: What was the real motivation behind free-jazz, and how exactly was it different from its predecessors?

Digression: On the motivation behind and developments of free-jazz

Far be it from me to subscribe one motivation to every musician who identified with the free-jazz label. Yet I would like to propose that there is a common thread running through all of the music that they produced, and which in that sense defines the genre.

At the beginning of this chapter, I identified the spirit of improvisation which runs throughout jazz history. This was a spirit which all but disappeared from European culture with the rise of the worship of genius around the time of Beethoven, he being one of the first large-scale examples of this kind of adoration. But the spirit of improvisation was reintroduced to the Western world through globalisation, specifically through Africa in America's case, where it had a huge impact on creativity in general but on music in particular.

I assert that the motivation behind free-jazz was to place this spirit of improvisation, which had already been the leading factor in jazz's rapid development, as the highest priority of the music. In other words, structure was to be at the service of the improvisor's needs and no structure need be considered a necessity. So one finds in free-jazz a huge variety of different structuring methods, each suited to the interests of the individual musician or bandleader, and yet a continuation of the heart of the tradition.

Further digression: The European Paradigm Shift

I don't believe it ends there. Over the last one hundred years in Western art, again coinciding with extensive globalisation, there has come a time within each field when an artist or group of artists has made a statement which says something definitive about their genre. Granted that any good work of art, at any time in history, is in

some way a definitive statement about its genre, the kind of statement I'm referring to goes one step further and somehow seems to comment on the very medium that the genre exists in. Examples include:

- Nijinski's "knock-kneed" choreography for *The Rite of Spring*, which emphasised the angularity of the human form as well as its grace.
- Marcel Duchamp's (or R. Mutt's) *Fountain*, showing that sculpture is everywhere, a matter of context as much as anything else.
- Rene Magritte's *The Treachery of Images* revealing how painting can never be more than representation.
- The definition of music as an act of listening that is John Cage's *4'33"*.

Just to be clear, their richness means that pieces of this kind can be interpreted in multiple ways, of which my crude summary of those mentioned here is but one, and some interpretations of which the artist himself might actually disagree with. However, that these pieces all opened the door onto a new period in Western art, or are archetypal of movements that opened it, is undeniable whether one personally likes the work or not.

What these statements represent is the stepping into self-consciousness of the art form. When this happens, its practitioners are no longer only concerned with traditional subjects and techniques, but with the fundamental limitations of its nature (in dance, the human body; in music, sound; in poetry, language; etc.). For example, *Fountain* is a sculpture that is partly a comment on the art of sculpting. In this sense, it is self-aware because it reflects on its own existence as an object to be observed in a particular context. Rodin's *The Thinker* does not share this quality. Too much effort has been put into shaping it into something representational for it to make explicit statements about its own nature. In fact, it is trying to obscure the fact that it is made from stone. With this shift into self-consciousness, Western creativity moved somewhat closer to its Asian counterpart, which has never been shy to exploit imperfection and irregularity to reveal and comment on basic media and context (a comparison of traditional European and Japanese ceramics is telling in this regard).

There is also something of a parallel here with the forays of science into the observer-conscious world of quantum physics, and it is not an exaggeration to say that Western culture as a whole has undergone a huge paradigm shift over the past 150 years.

When free-jazz musicians placed the spirit of improvisation at the centre of their music, I believe that they revealed a fundamental truth about jazz in the same way that Duchamp had for sculpture and Nijinski had for dance. They revealed that jazz is a music which exists within the medium of improvisation. Just as allowing movements both graceful and angular into dance better exposed the human form

behind them, so complete freedom with structure exposed how improvisation is the fundamental principle of jazz.

Another way to say this is that jazz is better seen as improvisation with structure imposed on it than as structure with improvisation used to create variation. To clarify this point, I'd like to draw a comparison with another tradition that uses improvisation extensively, Hindustani classical music. Initially resulting from the collision between traditional Indian music and that of an invading Muslim culture - in much the same way as jazz resulted from a collision between African and American culture - Hindustani music uses improvisation to take both performer and listener into ecstatic religious states that cannot be reached through composed structures alone. Yet at its heart are *raga* and *tala*, scalar and rhythmic structures associated with occasion, time of day, specific emotions and deities. No matter how ecstatic their improvisation, musicians cannot step outside of this rich web of traditional associations without being considered in error (though they do have the option of attempting to extend the web's associations). So it can be said that Hindustani classical music is fundamentally structure with improvisation used to create variation.

Compare this to jazz, where no single structural feature has remained constant throughout its history. Chord progressions, which had been present up until then, effectively disappeared in modal jazz. By the 1960s, the swing groove had undergone multiple transformations. Melody was challenged by Coltrane's "sheets of sound" approach. Instrumentation has ranged from solo to orchestral. But improvisation has always been there, there is simply no other constant.

Of course, there are also examples of jazz which is completely composed, without any improvisation. But the difference is in the attitude of the musicians. They have temporarily given up their freedom to structure, but are entirely capable of operating without it (and they'll leave your band if you don't give them a solo sooner or later!). There is the expectation of making a personal contribution. Compare this with Western classical musicians, who may be able to make any score come alive, including a jazz one, but are by and large powerless to produce their art without a notated source of some kind. As with Hindustani music, their challenge is to find freedom only within the structure provided. Jazz, on the other hand, derives its power from the dauntingly infinite freedom of improvisation.

The developments of free-jazz are also tied to the paradigm shift in Western creativity by another factor, the freedom it opened up for musicians to choose a personal context for their creativity. Consider how the movement away from pure representation in painting hinted at by Van Gogh, which blossomed in Picasso (epitomised by the pivotal *Les Femmes d'Alger*), gave birth to a whole slew of

artists who questioned the founding principles of visual art and built their own expressive worlds: Miro, Kandinsky, Gorky, Klee, Rothko, Pollock, to name just a few. By working with the basic ingredients of their medium, they were able to find the area which most naturally appealed to them and develop individual styles with lasting impact and value. Klee had an affinity for (among other things) the craft side of art, Rothko for silhouette and subtle colour variation, Pollock for capturing action. Without the freedom of context that allowed these preferences to express themselves, it is doubtful whether these artists would have been able to develop their approach to the extent that they did, and the world of visual art would be that much poorer. The same freedom was won definitively for jazz musicians by free-jazz.

However, jazz is different from the other art forms mentioned above because, as stated in the previous chapter, the democratic right to discover and use one's personal voice has been one of its highest priorities from the very beginning. From this perspective, the free-jazz movement's efforts to extend the breadth of the possibilities available to musicians searching for a personal voice into the realm of context was completely in line with the thrust of the tradition. It wasn't conceptually revolutionary in at all the same way that it was for older artistic traditions, an observation which further erodes the idea of free-jazz as something new.

Another hallmark of the paradigm shift in Western creativity that free-jazz shares, which also brings us to the second misconception I want to deal with, is its social divisiveness. There is a need to stress here, because of the persistent association of radicalism with anger, that there is no indication that any of the artists involved in the development of modern art, including free-jazz, were attempting to denigrate their predecessors. Duchamp didn't hate Rodin, or Walt Whitman William Shakespeare. Coltrane's respect for Sidney Bechet is well documented. Perhaps these artists were aware of how their creations would be received by their respective publics though. By and large, the act of reevaluating society's fundamental preconceptions is never welcomed by those not interested or involved in the reevaluation process. And yet this is exactly what was necessary for modern creatives in order for them to feel that they were making a contribution to tradition rather than simply imitating it. There is a subtle difference between wanting to erase the past and not wanting to be over-influenced by it, the lack of understanding of which has lead modern creativity to be branded as everything from the aforementioned angry to unemotional and intellectual, rather than the more accurate brave. These accusations may be accurate in some cases, but certainly not true of the majority. And while some examples of public outrage, such as the riot following *The Rite of Spring's* Paris premiere, are perhaps genuine expressions of public disapproval, promotional forces keen to exploit the shock factor have aided rather than eased a gaping divide in understanding of modern art.

To my mind, traditional and modern approaches to creativity are not in a competitive but a symbiotic relationship. Radical works don't negate those produced in a pre-paradigm shift style, but highlight fundamental qualities within them, rendering them appreciable in an entirely different way. The abstract cartoon faces of Miro's later work can reveal afresh the subtlety of realistic portraiture. Rothko's blending of colour makes us more aware of the skill involved in reproducing a sunset. Whitman's free verse allows the rhythm of a sonnet to be felt anew. The cacophony of noise improvisation is a palette cleanser for a subtly crafted chord progression. It is a fitting conclusion to these digressions to note that it has always been through embracing diversity and its resultant contrasts that the real power of art has been revealed, the irony being that diversity is one of the most difficult of things for us as a species to come to terms with.

Misconception 2: Free-jazz marked the end of development in jazz

Whether superficial marketing hindered understanding of it or not, it is undeniable that free-jazz marked the beginning of a rift between jazz and the public - and between jazz musicians themselves. The advent of pop culture as a media-driven enterprise, always on the lookout for the next big hit, confined jazz to the status of a museum piece for the time being. Dwindling interest in the music meant less financial support, which divided and scattered the jazz community, many of whom were left uncertain what direction the music was going in anyway.

Those with a big enough reputation, such as Miles Davis, Sonny Rollins or The MJQ, were able to make the leap to international stardom, touring with and recording for the companies big enough to take advantage of the remaining jazz fans. Others expatriated to Europe and elsewhere, where their music still had a reasonably consistent following (Dexter Gordon, Lee Konitz, though this had already been a trend among jazz musicians since Sidney Bechet). Those that stayed in The States were faced with the option of either sticking to their guns and weathering the lean years (Joe Henderson) or "selling out", turning to the funk and easy listening music which were in demand. Many gave up playing to find jobs which could support their families.

One could be forgiven for thinking that development had entirely ceased in the music. Most certainly, the balance-counterbalance growth of jazz's golden age was no longer present, not surprising given the lack of the pressure provided by an avid fan base and the scattering of the musician community. It appeared that the time had come for jazz, inspired by the requirements of modern marketing, to fashion itself

into something more easily defined (possibly a reaction against free-jazz's inscrutability). While musicians with personal styles could still be found quite readily, young players coming up tended to emulate the early 1960s quartet of John Coltrane, this group becoming the epitome of modern jazz. Free improvisation as a genre defined by its avoidance of traditional structure, inspired by Karlheinz Stockhausen as much as Ornette Coleman, established itself, most strongly in Europe. With the resurgence of interest in jazz in the 80s, given impetus by marketing companies' realisation of the enduring appeal of the swing era, an attitude of retrospective stocktaking, seemingly championed by Wynton Marsalis, took centre stage. Treating the music as if it had finished developing and needed to be clearly defined for preservation purposes, this dovetailed perfectly with a growing interest from academia, which saw in jazz not only a subject worthy of analysis but a source of income from the growing number of prospective students.

This brings us to where we are now. To summarise:

- A general perception of jazz as a fringe art which is either an overtly entertaining or difficult, intellectual music.
- A nevertheless growing interest in practicing jazz as an art form.
- A diminishing number of the jazz greats who developed personal voices during the golden age of the music.
- A general tendency among people involved in the music towards definition and division when considering jazz of both the present and past.
- A homogeneity of style in emerging jazz players.
- A crystallisation of free improvisation as a genre separate and different from jazz, largely ignored by the mainstream.
- A similar crystallisation of jazz as a genre defined by certain structural features (to use terms from earlier, structure animated by improvisation rather than improvisation with structure imposed on it).

But this is not a complete picture of the current situation. I don't believe that development ended with free-jazz. I believe that the creative, organic medium that jazz has always has been is still actively developing, but in a different way.

There is an extremely neglected thread of the music's history, pioneered by those who went through free improvisation and came out the other side. Their approach retains the definition introduced earlier of jazz as improvisation with structure imposed on it and also harmonises the rift that has formed between contemporary jazz and free improvisation. It's best known proponents are Sun Ra, Anthony Braxton and The Art Ensemble of Chicago, but it is Steve Lacy who has done the most to codify this approach. Here is an explanation in his words:

Back in the 60's, we played completely (we thought) free: no harmony, melody, rhythm, or structure - just controlled chaos, automatic writing, action painting. It was very exciting, revolutionary music; but after one year, the music started to sound the same, every night. It was no longer 'free'. Then came the 'post-free', where we started to limit and control, and exploit the kind of playing we had discovered.

After some years of this, the discarded elements (melody, harmony, rhythm, structure, form) returned to the music, but not like before: renovated, refreshed, wide open with possibilities. We called this 'poly-free', because the freedom might be anywhere, in a given piece. Also, one became free to be not free, if one chose.

So the basic premise of this approach is that free improvisation, though creatively valid, is alone insufficient to sustain jazz for the long term. Structure of some kind eventually becomes necessary (The proof of this is in the most dedicated free improvisors, e.g. Evan Parker, Derek Bailey, early Anthony Braxton, who turned to sound groupings and abstract pattern work, specifically Slonimsky's *Thesaurus of Scales and Melodic Patterns*, to sustain interest). But the real strength of the new approach is that it recognises that any way of structuring at all can be employed. One is free to be free, but also free to choose whatever kinds of limitations one wishes, even a traditional jazz structure. For want of an overarching term that all proponents of this approach identified with (not surprising considering how scattered they were), I'm going to stick with Lacy's moniker - polyfreedom.

An in-depth analysis of polyfree musicians is unfortunately outside of the realm of this document. For a riveting insight into Anthony Braxton's prolific output, I refer you to Graham Locke's *Forces in Motion*, or any of the liner notes that Locke has written for Braxton's albums. From these, it's clear that a great many of the restrictions Braxton places on himself are those also found in avant-garde Western classical music. But let us not forget that he has also done recordings of standards and jazz classics too. Steve Lacy's character is nicely revealed in *Conversations*, compiled by Jason Weiss, but there is sadly little detailed analysis of his music currently available. From my experience with it, I can say that the number of different structuring methods he uses is dazzling - from free improvisation through chord progressions and melody to pentatonic scales - yet always subtle and appropriate.

It will have to suffice here to note without exhaustive proof that the striking thing about polyfree musicians is their diversity. The freedom of context that they inherited from free-jazz is at the heart of this. Each musician is completely free to choose exactly the restrictions, and number of restrictions - including zero - that will

challenge and bring out the best in their individual creativity at that time. Despite Wynton Marsalis's apparent criticism of Ornette Coleman for exercising freedom of context (*To a Young Jazz Musician*) this is in a sense the highest goal for any music that claims to be about personal self-expression.

A lot is being said about synaesthesia and its relationship with learning in neurological circles these days (see Sachs, *Musicophilia*). Another of the characteristics of polyfreedom is the license it gives to explore the means through which one's brain actually interprets sound and music information. Anthony Braxton's cryptic graphic titles and scores are examples of this. Steve Lacy has written many songs with short titles descriptive of motion - Trickle, Snips, Stamps. Clearly he is inspired by the kinetic. Sun Ra's ornate cosmology was informed by and intimately attached to his music, fantasy and myth being a natural part of his creative process. In short, polyfreedom makes possible a dimension of personal exploration far exceeding that of any previous period of the music's history.

But does this count as development in jazz? Given the fact that a vast variety and combination of structuring methods - including those of academic jazz theory, every preceding period of the tradition and any music from around the world - are only just beginning to be explored by musicians, it's hard not to see this as forward movement. However, it's also important to recognise that this is not development as we traditionally think about it in jazz. Before, the music's most important creative community was located in somewhere between one block (52nd Street) and four or five American cities. Now, it's all over the world. We can't expect the same balance-counterbalance growth as before in such a sprawling community. Instead, I think the development that polyfreedom is offering is a broad one leading to diversity of a kind previously unknown in music. With the advent of the internet, people can search for exactly what they want and have it delivered to their front door from anywhere in the world. Someone with a personal style and approach in Wellington N.Z. can have an international following. By encouraging every jazz musician to explore whatever structuring techniques inspire them, not only do we ensure that there's a version of jazz out there for anybody interested, we ensure that somebody will always be coming up with a way of doing things that hasn't been done before.

This may appear to some like a departure from the tradition rather than a development of it, jazz stretched beyond all recognition. But as structure imposed on improvisation, even before free-jazz forced it into self-awareness, this is always how it has been with "the sound of surprise".

Furthermore, in the same way that examples of free-jazz can be found before its emergence as a genre, so too for polyfreedom. Jazz clarinetist Tony Scott went into a studio with traditional Japanese musicians and improvised with them on pentatonic scales, starting the New Age music genre. Rahsaan Roland Kirk freely mixed structuring techniques from different eras of jazz, including New Orleans, modal and free-jazz, often on the same album. Pee Wee Russell exercised polyfreedom when he began playing Monk and Ornette Coleman tunes. The ultimate example is Lennie Tristano, who would begin sets with two saxes playing Bach (almost complete restriction), play standards or improvise over chord changes (melodic and harmonic restrictions) and include a free improvisation (no restriction). I would even go as far as to say that any great jazz musician, regardless of what past or future period of the music, is in some sense a polyfree musician, as all must be fully aware of and have mastered the restrictions placed on themselves. Guitarist Kurt Rosenwinkel and trumpeter Kirk Knuffke are two American musicians of the current generation that I'm aware of as continuing this tradition. I was lucky enough to attend college in the north of England with musicians who went on to establish a style distinctive to that region which exemplifies polyfreedom, and can be heard as The Geordie Approach.

Of course, there will always be musicians satisfied with imitating the past, trying to breathe improvisatory life into structures that they consider definitive enough to never go beyond. It was enough for Louis Armstrong's and Charlie Parker's imitators at those times, and is still very much a valid and respectable option today. But where is jazz as a living, developing art form now? I believe that we're in the age of polyfreedom, and it is from this perspective that my jazz education method begins.

A Polyfree Model for Creative Jazz Education

If one is willing to accept the definition of jazz as improvisation with structure imposed on it, then the starting place for an education method must be with a model which encompasses the various structuring methods - and other factors affecting structure - that students can expect to encounter. By interacting with this model, preferences and weaknesses within their own intelligence fingerprint can be identified and they can start to build a personal approach and style. Through contrast, contact with new structures also better reveals the depth of possibility inherent in improvisation.

This model is provided below. The structuring methods and other factors are presented as layers in a sequence, through which the musician's motivation passes.

One of the most difficult aspects of creating an education system for an art form is the need to balance objectivity and subjectivity. We'll take a detailed look at this in a later chapter, but an excellent example for our current purposes can be found in the way that time is perceived. We all know that it flows at a constant rate. No one ever questions the accuracy of a clock unless it's out of sync with other clocks. But this is not our experience. Time flows very differently when we're in a hurry or enjoying ourselves than when we're bored or in pain. A musician playing with a metronome for the first time has the distressing experience of the machine speeding up and slowing down. There is a fundamental schism between our subjective experiential reality and our intellectual objectivity.

In art education, the solution is not to strive for objectivity as may be the case in the sciences or mathematics. Yes, through constant exposure to the metronome our beginner musician gradually develops a regular beat. That's a far cry from being able to imbue it with bounce and personality though, let alone handle the time distortions that happen when playing with different musicians and the time dilation of live performance. In fact, overexposure to the metronome may lead to rigidity in these areas. A symbiosis of the subjective and objective must occur. (Personally, my experience of playing in tempo with a band ranges from hearing the beat in my head, feeling it in my body and having a constant feedback loop with the other players to sometimes completely letting go of the rhythm altogether!)

The ordering of the layers in the model below is an attempt to bring together the objective and subjective as a gradual journey from our deep internal selves to external consensus reality:

- Motivation and Pre-sound Conceptions have their origins in our subconscious selves, among our earliest experiences and memories (with Silence representing the "edge" between our subconscious and conscious selves).
- Notes, Intervals and Melody are the basic building blocks of music and all have a strong connection with the emotions housed in our mammalian limbic system (think of how a single cry of the plover or deer inspires the Japanese poet, or of how babies and toddlers express pure emotion in tone and pitch).
- Chords and Chord Progressions, Form, Modal Backgrounds and Chromaticism, while retaining a relationship with emotion, are derived from deeper analysis. They are more complex and abstract in character, especially in interaction with other layers and each other - you may have noticed several bullet points which represent these interactions - and correspond to our higher, rational brain functions. These layers are the staple of current academic jazz education.
- Noise / Concrete Sound (derived from the French term *musique concrète*) is sound as it is in the physical world. Often microtonal, imperfectly formed and random, it is the raw material that we pull into our internal world to forge into music.

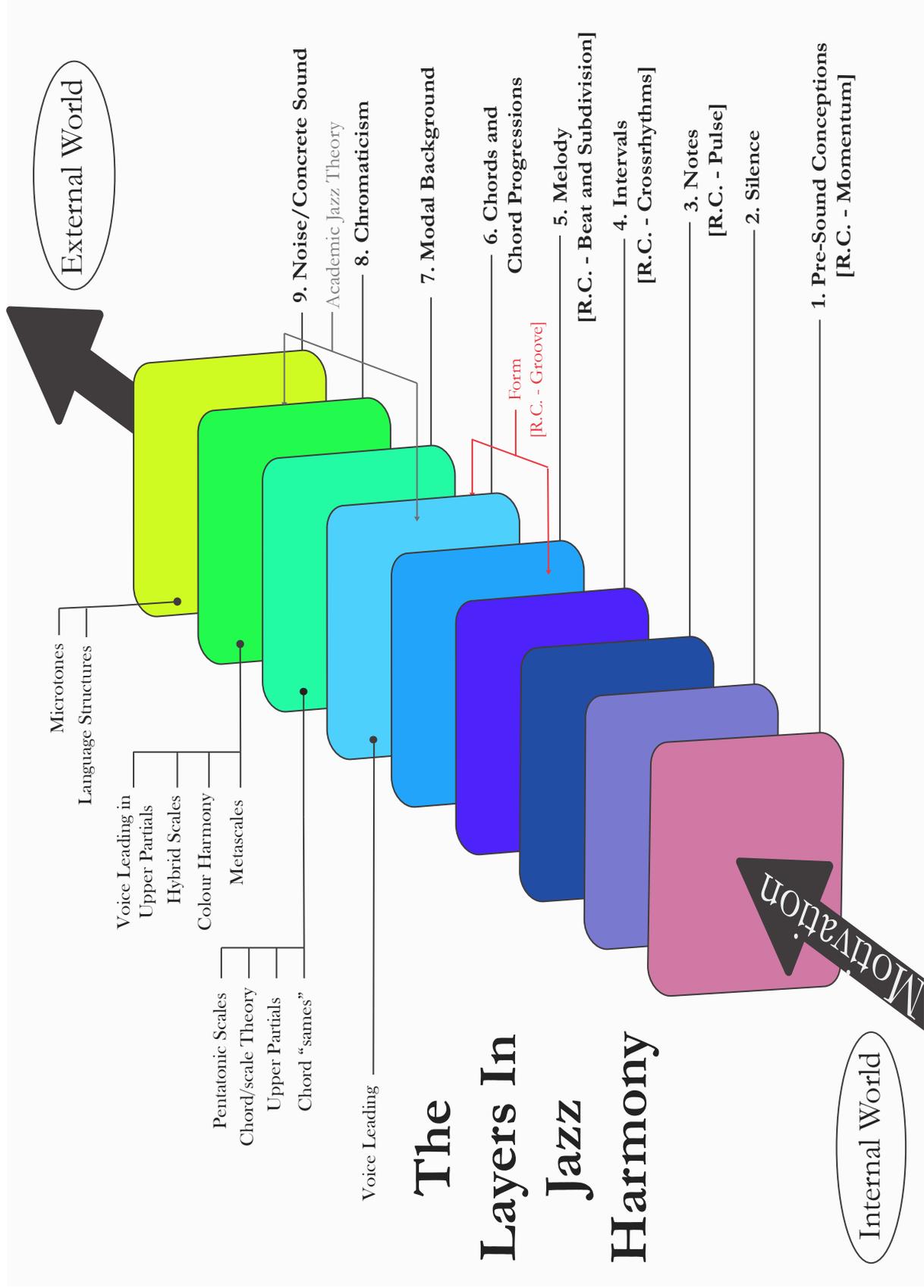
Structuring methods related to rhythm are also integrated into this model as aspects of certain layers. These are rhythmic component, and will be dealt with in their own chapter.

By presenting students with a model such as this, which integrates the subjective and objective into a spectrum in which they can recognise aspects of themselves, education at a deeper level than the simple memorisation and repetition of information becomes possible. This is education as self-exploration, where the role of the establishment, as well as ensuring that students know their comfort zones well, is to encourage balance by going outside of them too. The bebop aficionado should be taught the expressive power of a simple melody or single interval. The lover of ballads must be exposed to more technical pursuits. Both of these can only benefit from knowing the wilds of pure noise, just as the free improviser benefits from being able to effectively enter tonality.

The goal here is not necessarily to create über-jazzers, players who can operate in all layers with equal ease. Homogeneity of any kind is as undesirable in jazz as incompetency. But musicians must be well-rounded, possessing a thorough understanding of all the options available to them, if their individual style is to flourish and withstand the rigours of a life of performance. True improvisation is the ability to harmonise one's personal approach with whatever situation one finds oneself in, meeting the demands of group responsibility while retaining individual freedom of

expression. So the actual goal of this education method is to teach jazz “harmony” in an expanded internal and social sense of the word.

Returning to the model below, I would like to leave Motivation aside for the moment and take a detailed look at each of the layers in turn, also dealing with the bullet points as they become relevant. Example exercises for the student will be provided when appropriate, in this lighter text colour for easier reference.



The Musical Layers in Jazz Harmony

1. Pre-sound Conceptions

In discussion, I once heard an established, competent jazz musician say "I don't have any conception." But clearly, if you're playing music you must have ideas about what its function is, whether in society, for your immediate audience or for you personally. This is the content of the first layer.

As mentioned earlier, these ideas are often passed on to us intuitively during our early years and first experiences with music - and left unquestioned. Making them conscious, confirming one's belief in them or rejecting them in favour of others, is an important part of developing individuality. Even if one comes to the zen-like conclusion that no conception is the highest conception, there is still the task of ridding oneself of all conceptions!

The problem that we face nowadays is that the original conception that came preinstalled in jazz is no longer relevant. Early jazz and blues musicians knew that their role was to be the musical voice of their culture, a culture which was quite clearly segregated from and subservient to the dominant one. There was no need to question their function, and the first attempts by Caucasian American bands to replicate this new music only served to prove how culture-specific it was. But now, over a hundred years later and while there is still plenty of room for improvement, segregation is not the same issue that it was, and the quintessentially African American music is an international commercial industry. Among the best symbols for this change, because it is such a big contrast with jazz's social and geographic origins, is the fact that the King of Thailand is a jazz musician! It would be fascinating to ask him what he believes the function of his music to be.

Seeing as so few jazz musicians in today's world can claim to be the voice of the African American community, there is a need to update the conception of what jazz is for (as discussed in *What We Talk About When We Talk About Jazz*). But why should this be a single, universal purpose? The freedom of context introduced into the tradition by free-jazz is just as relevant in this layer as it is in any other. So not only has formulating a conception become a necessary process for any serious jazz musician, it has also become a personal process. There is no compulsion for us all to agree here, this is another source of the diversity that creativity thrives on. But

there is also need for personal psychological grounding within the infinite number of possible answers.

We know that jazz is important to us - you wouldn't have made it this far into this document if it wasn't! - but we don't always know why. Those of us playing internationally can't claim to be the voice of a culture into which we weren't born, and even American jazz musicians are involved in an art form proclaimed dead by some compatriots. Investigate this for yourself, try to figure out what your assumptions are now with reference to your early musical experiences, or research what your role models' conceptions were (many of the jazz greats were quite expansive on the subject) and what other musical traditions believe. Bring this up in conversation with musician friends. While you might not necessarily agree with one another, sharing such ideas will bring you closer together, especially onstage. It is in unexpected ways such as this that a solid conception can influence live performance.

2. Silence

Appropriately, very little needs to be said here. Silence is the key ingredient in music. Without it, what we do as musicians cannot stand out in contrast. Yet very little is said about it in formal jazz education literature.

My favourite example of handling this subject is guitarist Mick Goodrick, who provides transcriptions of the best silences he's ever played in *The Advancing Guitarist* - also a great example of teaching through humour. Another worthwhile anecdote is that Lee Konitz considers his greatest solo ever to be the time that the rhythm section sounded so good that he didn't play anything!

The reason that using silence effectively in a solo is so difficult is the same reason that some people talk too much - fear. Our minds are incredibly self-aware, and as social animals we are naturally concerned with what others think about us. When these two factors reign unchecked, the result is a constant need to prove or ingratiate ourselves. So mastering silence in music is essentially the same as learning to master one's own internal workings.

Another factor is time dilation, a phenomenon well known to actors but very rarely discussed in music. When on stage, time goes faster for the performer - who is in a heightened state of awareness - than it does for the audience. So while the performer feels that they're boring and tries harder to impress, the audience wonders

why they're overplaying. It can also become a negative feedback loop if the struggling performer senses the audience's discomfort and tries even harder. Personally, I feel that a great deal of the reliance on technical acrobatics and the consequent lack of silence in modern jazz can be put down to a simple lack of awareness of time dilation. Make students you're aware of it, try to have them feel its effect next time they're on stage.

Silence and humour often go together. Check out the way that standup comedians use silence to increase anticipation, or give you just enough time to think you know where they're going before surprising you with something just outside your circle of expectations. Thelonious Monk mastered using this same technique in his improvisations.

The main factor when actually using silence is listening. More on that in a later chapter.

3. Notes

The efficient production of a single note is the basic skill of any instrumentalist. But single notes go much deeper than just beginner's technique. On the piano for example, which has an apparently simple method of note production, one can easily tell the difference between the touch of Bill Evans, Thelonious Monk and others. Some saxophonists are identifiable just from their tonguing. There is a great deal of room for personal expression in this layer. A fresh approach to basic sound production was also what revitalised Kenny Werner's music after his breakdown, leading to the Effortless Mastery approach. So there is clearly a lot of potential for self-empowerment here.

The single note can be a powerful means of entrance into the realm of the imagination: "A note can be small as a pin or as big as the world, it depends on your imagination" (Thelonious Monk via Steve Lacy). Think of all the wonderful jazz solos punctuated by held long notes and the effect that this has (Coltrane's *Blue Trane* is the first to come to mind). There is a spiritual dimension too. Simple sound generation is one of the most primal examples of the application of one's will to the external world. Little else says "I am here" or "I exist" more than the production of a sustained tone.

But it is best to begin exploration of this layer with practical considerations. Consider

the fundamental physics of your instrument. By what means is sound produced? For the violin, it's the bow being drawn across the string, for piano the mallet hitting the string. For reed instruments it's the breath vibrating the reed. By definition, it will be a single tone that is produced. Practice this basic activity again and again. Turn it into an improvisation trying out different ways of starting the sound. Use unconventional and frowned-up methods as well as common ones, just for the joy of seeing what happens. Remember that this is an improvisation - an exploration - so "good" and "bad" are not necessarily terms that apply here. See what your instrument is capable of.

To my mind, the definition of good musical technique is efficiency, and this plays a huge part in our perception of beauty as well. That which produces greater natural vibration with less effort will by definition be more beautiful, at least from the technical perspective which decides how our instruments are designed. But therein also lies the caveat. The beauty of technique is not the only factor at work in a complete aesthetic. The other primary consideration is personal expression.

Technique as it has been taught to you may have come with unnecessary baggage. In my case, I've found throat position to be far more important in playing the saxophone and clarinet than the oft-discussed embouchure (in fact, I see embouchure as an extension of throat position). Also, physically, you are different from everybody else on the planet, so what is efficient for the majority may not be so for you. In both of these examples, an exploration of basic sound production as outlined above can allow personal expression to make a valuable contribution to technique

Once you feel that you've opened yourself up and challenged yourself with this improvisation, come back to playing a single note as efficiently as possible. Try not to fall back on habit but make efficiency your aim. Has anything changed - is anything from your improvisation creeping in as a source of personal expression? Hopefully, but if not at the very least you've discovered some interesting sounds and alternatives on your instrument that may integrate themselves into your personal style over time.

Another way to approach single notes is to isolate a particular aspect and treat that to an improvisation. Sounds as we experience them are made up of pitch, duration, tempo (only really applicable to a single sound if vibrato is used), timbre, volume and attack. Choose one aspect while keeping the others fixed and play with it, explore it until it opens up to you or you've found a certain flexibility within it. On a fixed random pitch, do a volume or attack improvisation. Or set duration with a metronome and slide about through the pitch spectrum (not really for pianists!). This is about

designing creative exercises for yourself to explore the fundamental possibilities of your instrument, with the aim of giving your music the quality of being unconditioned. We are most like ourselves when we are unconditioned.

4. Intervals

In the words of Steve Lacy, intervals are "the most important part of training" for improvisors (*Findings*) because they, rather than single notes, are the basic building block of music. Whereas single notes express beingness, intervals are more reminiscent of words - a somewhat more sophisticated form of expression.

Lacy devised an exercise where he randomised all of the intervals up to the augmented 9th over the whole range of the soprano saxophone and worked through them as a list. A similar effect can be achieved by having all of the notes on one's instrument on chits in a bag and drawing two out at random (though this sometimes results in intervals much bigger than a 9th). However one randomises one's intervals, the important part of the process is to develop a connection between your voice, your instrument and language. Sing the interval, ideally at the same pitch as your instrument (a challenge for bassists!). Play with dynamics and different rhythms, see what words your interval suggests to you. For a high level example of this concept at work, listen to Mingus and Eric Dolphy's exchanges at the end of the bassist's composition *What Love*.

The opposite process can also be very enlightening. Take a word (Lacy's examples are "hello" and "sorry") and repeat it to yourself over and over. What interval does your vocalisation of this word use? Figure it out and play it instrumentally, adding any attack or volume inflections if you can. Developing the relationship between one's voice, how you express yourself naturally, and one's music is, according to Lacy, the fundamental principle of self-expression. And as recordings of his composition lectures reveal, this was also the method he used to set hundreds of poems in several different languages to music, creating the sub-genre he sometimes referred to as lit-jazz.

If you are in the process of learning the intervals, one popular way to do so which is very much in accordance with developing the language-music connection is to find songs you know very well, ideally with lyrics, which begin with the intervals being memorised. Brahms's *Lullaby* begins with a minor 3rd ascending ("go to - sleep"), Gershwin's *Summertime* with a descending major 3rd ("sum - mer"). To have this

connection installed at such a basic level of ear training is, I believe, a great advantage.

I have come across very little reference to the importance of studying intervals in music education literature. Yet if Lacy's oeuvre is any indication, they have the potential to make a huge contribution to any musician's work.

5. Melody

In the same way that syllables combine into words, and these into the basic meaningful structure of language - the sentence - so notes together form intervals and intervals together, phrases. The phrase is the simplest musical structure, and a sense of phrasing is what differentiates a random string of notes from melody.

The importance of melody in jazz cannot be overestimated, and a lack of emphasis on it is one of the key differences between modern jazz and the "golden age" of the music (including free-jazz). I'm not suggesting that everybody should be a melodic player. We all have our preferences, and these are the natural source of the diversity that is the lifeblood of jazz. Yet we should all be familiar with as many of the angles on the music as possible, especially the important ones.

The fact is that melody is the hub of a great many musical practices, a focal point from which multiple facets of music extrude. It is the most important. As mentioned above, it harnesses notes and intervals, organising them into cogent statements. Melody also defines harmony by its movement, the history of Western music showing us how harmonisation and counterpoint, beginning with the interval of a 5th in plainchant, are clearly extensions of melodic line. Scale and arpeggio are summaries or abstractions of the many paths that melody takes as a matter of natural course. That it is always the singer that decides the appropriate tempo for their performance of a song is proof that melodic concerns take precedence over rhythmic ones, and melody also offers the most natural connection between music and language.

Jazz musicians with their aesthetic firmly planted in melody are clearly distinguishable from those based more in technique or emotion, for example. There is a groundedness in their approach that allows them to enter into other areas of expression without loss of balance. Again, this is not to say that all playing other than melodic should be left aside. Consider the many versions of Coleman Hawkins's

Body and Soul, often held up as epitomes and the origin of harmonic, vertical improvisation. Thanks to his foundation in melodicism, his phrases never lose the bounce and sense of rhyme essential for maintaining interest (in the same way that even Bach's most arpeggiated of preludes retain a feeling of line, or multiple line, to them). Or Coltrane's famous *Chasin' the Trane* and *One Down, One Up* live performances. Both show him constantly referring back to the melody as a source for and respite from a maelstrom of different types of ideas, which would not remain as cogent as a whole were it not for this referencing. My favourite example of a player who remained constantly dedicated to melodic invention is Warne Marsh. Not only could he maintain a sense of melody over incredibly high tempos, but he had a bewildering polyrhythmic skill set - the ability to improvise phrases of uneven length, at different subdivisions of the beat - which was never used in anything but the most tasteful, unpretentious and melodic way. Perhaps this is the strongest reason for maintaining a strong connection with melody in our playing: it being so fundamental an access point for the human mind into the world of music that a good relationship with it is to the musician essentially the same as a good relationship with other people.

There are many ways to deepen ones connection to melody as a musician. Learning the words to songs, and being able to sing them as well as play them instrumentally are both great methods, fostering a deeper appreciation of the emotional content and internal tensions of the melody. The best method though comes from Lennie Tristano who, after insisting on an incredibly thorough practical knowledge of scalic material, would have students work for extended periods of time playing melodies with a metronome at 60bpm.

This incredibly simple exercise - playing a melody over and over again, at such a slow tempo (that's quarter notes at 60bpm rather than on beats 2 and 4) - can yield incredible results. The mind has time to fully absorb each nuance of the melody, and over time begins to fill in the harmony surrounding each note, the words if one knows them (and sometimes original ones if one doesn't!) and a broad, personal sense of subdivision and swing. A feeling of altered state pervades, as though meditating, and before long one is improvising using all of these elements without really thinking about it. This is improvisation as exploited fortuitous accident rather than tension-laden necessity.

Upon completing a period of this kind of melodic focus, there is a great sense of absorbing new insight into the chosen material, and over time a greater level of relaxation when approaching the many challenges of jazz. By learning to keep the melody central, one is learning to rest one's weight on something that cannot fail to support it.

Tristano's disciple Lee Konitz, over decades of using this exercise, has developed a personal awareness of ten levels of improvisation between simply playing a melody and complete improvisation over it. This begins with freer rhythmic interpretation, embellishment and decoration, and is treated to a more detailed explanation in Andy Hamilton's wonderful book *Lee Konitz - Conversations on the Improviser's Art*.

- An aspect of music that falls in between melody and chords is **voice leading**. It can be seen as the many tiny melodic movements that make up harmonic change, or a breaking up of chordal accompaniment into the individual lines that constitute it. Either way, it is a valuable tool for the student musician. The traditional way that it is used in modern jazz education is simply for the player to follow a single line through a harmonic progression, alone or accompanied, which is useful for improving the ear and "making the changes" better during improvisation. However, by presenting the student with restrictions and freedoms based around voice leading, far more interesting and beneficial exercises, potentially adaptable to the specific needs of the student, can be designed. For example, the student must stick to one melodic line moving through a progression but rhythm is free, or interest must be sustained through volume variation. For those in need of harmonic challenge, keeping two or three voice leadings going simultaneously in different registers of the instrument would be a stimulating experience with many applications to performance. A freer, less chord-specific exercise that I have used with wind ensembles is one that I call Sound Cloud. Players are not to breathe at the same time as each other, and are restricted to one tone or semitone movement up or down only per breath. The result is a shifting, improvised harmonic situation good for improving the ear and ability to sustain interest in a group situation, therefore having a strong social element too. An extended version of this is to have, on top of three or four musicians performing the improvised voice leading, another improvising a solo over the top, or all of the performers taking it in turns to solo in an order which is improvised. It is easy to imagine how this could be adapted to other kinds of instruments, the breath restriction being replaced by a single drawing of the bow for strings or the length of a sustained note with the pedal down on piano. As a final aside, it is worth noting how, uncertain kinds of music, freedom of voice leading actually overpowers conventional harmonic rules, representing a kind of halfway house between tonality and free dissonance. This is commonly known as non-functional harmony Wayne Shorter's compositions from the '60s and those of Antônio Carlos Jobim being excellent examples.

6. Chords and Chord Progressions

A great deal of information is readily available on the subject of chord types, progressions and substitutions in jazz and other music literature (see Mark Levine's *The Jazz Theory Book*), so there is little need to go into descriptive detail here. There are, however, a couple of points worth making on the presentation of these ideas within a polyfree system. They must be placed in the context of being simply another category of restriction to be mastered, an equal to other concerns that together make up a much more diverse whole than is typically presented to the student. This serves not only to produce well rounded musicians, but to decrease the stress involved in dealing with chord-related restriction for those to whom it doesn't come naturally.

To begin with, a hierarchy of chordal complexity is necessary, coupled with an awareness that all levels on it are equally valid creative options. Increased complexity is no guarantee of musicality, and every level presents its own challenges to be met by the performer. A major triad can be as difficult to approach creatively as a 9#11.

The levels of complexity that I propose apply to functional harmony, but also to musical ideas which do not fit comfortably into the conventional shorthand notation used for it. A brief flick through *The Thelonious Monk Fake Book* reveals multiple examples of what I'm talking about - chords such as those in *Eronel* (m7M7) and *Little Rootie Tootie* which defy simplification and are an integral enough part of the composition to demand more than a casual rendering. Often, personal style is dependant on such irreducible details, and if it is our goal to inculcate this quality in our students then it must be integrated into the approach at every available opportunity.

Without further ado:

1. Simple Chords - those that are fundamental to the establishing of a tonality. Major, minor, dominant 7th, diminished, half diminished, augmented, suspended 4th and 2nd.
2. Basic Colourations - those that serve to clarify the function of a simple chord. Major 7, minor 6 & minor 7 (major 6 is not included here because it does not help differentiate major from dominant, one of the ways in which the behaviour of major and minor tonalities differ).

3. Extended Colourations - extensions, additions and slash chords that add a level of complexity beyond functionality.

Major 9, #11, 6, 6/9 & +9, minor +9 & 6/9, minor 11, all dominant extension variations, all slash chords.

4. Personalised Chords and Voicings.

Those that do not fit into conventional notation or, if they do, require notation of a level of complexity beyond practical usage in an improvised situation.

As well as a system such as this which presents chords to the student in a way which emphasises the spectrum of choices available, it is also very important to differentiate between chords and voicings. The trap that there is a danger of falling into is the automatic association of one with the other - "this is how a C major chord is played on the piano". While, of course, there are standard ways of doing things that naturally suggest themselves through the physicality and physics of an instrument, these are starting points. To not go beyond them is to ignore the potential for creativity and improvisation here.

Chords - F major, Db minor 6, B diminished 7, whatever - are actually abstract theoretical concepts. Chord groups share mathematical relationships, but Bb major and A major, for example, are vastly different experiences. The simplest expression of chords in concrete form is as root position voicings of stacked 3rds (and occasionally 2nds and 4ths), but a cluster of the notes B, C, D and E can be as expressive of the tonality C major in the right context as the root position voicing. As well as knowing standard solutions to the problem of how to express chords as voicings on their instrument, students must be encouraged to find their own solutions if our goal is to maximise personal expression. Furthermore, to be genuinely responsive in an improvisation requires the ability to adjust one's voicings in response to the stimulus of other musicians. This can't be achieved with standardised reactions.

As with any of these layers, we can develop aspects of it by using restrictions to further improvised range and flexibility. Select any chord type at random (probably from the first level is best to begin) and remove all rhythmic restrictions so as to be operating in a "timeless" space. Improvise voicings with the restriction that each chord tone can only be used once in the voicing. Do not repeat voicings. Try to go outside what you usually do, into the impractical or "wrong", pushing yourself beyond what you can come up with intellectually (if a restriction gets accidentally broken, what are the consequences?). Increase the speed if this added pressure helps. Now relax the restriction on how many times each chord tone can appear in the voicing and do the same thing again. Or fix the pitch of one of the chord tones (C in Ab major being fixed to middle C, for example) and improvise voicings around that. The more

one can enter into a state of play here, the “rules” being manipulable to propel one into the most interesting game possible, the more beneficial the exercise. Work with voicings like this is equally as applicable to melodic as harmonic instruments, perhaps with the initial inclusion of a restriction to only move upwards on the instrument.

A similar exercise is possible with the Personalised Chords and Voicings level of complexity. Here one chooses two or three notes at random (from a hat or digital randomiser) and begins voicing them in the same way as the previous exercise, though of course no root is specified here. If a particular voicing attracts one’s attention (either positively or negatively!) then fix it and begin filling in other notes, continuing with the restriction that the same voicing cannot be repeated twice. Return to the improvised iterations of the three original random notes if this gets boring - or choose three notes from the new voicings invented and continue in the same way with those (by the way, if you find something particularly interesting, don’t forget to make a quick note of it before continuing). Always strive for a sense of deep fun (not the cheap thrill of the merely entertaining) with these exercises. A good teacher can point you in the right direction, but only you can get yourself there.

A second point related to how chords should be presented in a polyfree system of education lies in harmonisation. Given that a melody can be harmonised in multiple different ways, it is important that the harmonisations students encounter reflect both the original composer’s intentions and a desire for the student to find as much freedom within the composition as possible. There are currently standard practices in the writing of jazz charts - chiefly the inclusion of the major 7 in every major chord and the b9 in every dominant 7 that leads to a minor chord - which are antithetical to both of the aforementioned goals. I understand that the major 7th, for example, clarifies beyond a doubt that a major chord is not dominant, but it is not as though any of the sounds unnecessarily promoted in this way are definitive of the jazz tradition in and of themselves. A major chord on its own should suffice to the educated musician, who then embellishes it dependant on context and whim.

A further negative harmonisation habit can be found in the influence of chord/scale theory. This is the excessive use of extensions to spell out exactly which scale a student should play over a chord. In the progression I bVII7 VI7 (e.g. F Eb7 D7 in F major), it shouldn’t be necessary to add a #11 to the bVII7 chord. When the lydian dominant sound is most readily applicable in a key should be obvious to the musician through theoretical or, ideally, aural training. Seeing the #11 discourages implying a iim7 V7 over the bVII7 (in F, Bbm7 Eb7) or daring to play the #5 of the bVII7 (the note Cb over the Eb7, which would resolve interestingly if suspended over the D7 or resolved to its C). We are not doing students a favour by diminishing the

risk naturally involved in improvised interaction in this way. Both of the problems I've highlighted relating to harmonisation are examples of what I call choice theft (a term borrowed from China Miéville's novel *Perdido Street Station*).

My personal preference for jazz charts is for them to use the bare minimum of complexity, limited only to the first of the categories defined above, with extensions added where the melody demands it (bars 7 and 8 of *You'd Be So Nice to Come Home To* requiring a major 6 chord, for example). This not only communicates to accompanying musicians where their freedom and restrictions lie - there being no reason not to place a careful major 7, 9 or even #11 in the voicing of the major 6 mentioned above - but also encourages an ongoing relationship with the melody throughout solos. Of course, there is also the jazz musician's penchant for composing new chord progression for a popular melody (e.g. Bud Powell's *Like Someone in Love*) - which should always be credited and never taken as canon without such credit - and the spontaneous changing of chords during improvisation, both of which brings us to the next area, reharmonisation.

There are two approaches to reharmonisation, which can be represented pianistically by Bud Powell and Lennie Tristano. The former was one of the chief architects of the bebop revolution, a child prodigy who brought an incredible wealth of classical technique and theoretical knowledge to bear on his music. His preference was for compositional reharmonisation of chord progressions. In other words, rewriting the harmony of a song using such techniques as tritone substitution, working backwards from resolution points through the circle of 5ths at a faster rate of harmonic change, and the harmonisation of melody notes as extensions in their accompanying chord. These preprepared reharmonisations would then serve as the basis for improvisation, largely unvaried. The approach that Powell is representing here was embraced by those that came out of the bebop generation, particularly John Coltrane, who went on to incorporate the major 3rd progression associated with his *Giant Steps* into both standards (*Body and Soul*, *But Not for Me*, *Satellite = How High the Moon*) and the compositions of his mentors (*26-2 = Charlie Parker's Confirmation*, *Countdown = Miles Davis's Tune Up*). In fact, it's not unfair to say that a search for new ways to harmonise and reharmonise is one of the defining features of jazz musicians who drew or draw inspiration from bebop, and the rationally graspable nature of such endeavour has made it a cornerstone topic of modern jazz education.

Lennie Tristano, though no technical slouch, had a different approach. A contemporary of Powell's who nevertheless acknowledged a musical debt to the younger pianist, Tristano's preference was for the simple, unaltered chord progression. However, one of the options available to the soloist and the

accompanists following them was to improvise substitutions in the heat of the moment. This requires a more internalised, instinctual understanding of reharmonisation that only comes into play when improvising at much higher tempos in the compositional approach represented by Bud Powell. It also requires a different kind of interactiveness. Tristano's ensembles have often been criticised for not giving their rhythm sections enough freedom, relegating them to more of a backing track for, rather than co-creator with, the soloist. This ignores the rigour of the challenge presented to them. If the soloist can begin improvising substitutions at any time and bitonality is to be avoided, the rhythm section must be incredibly attentive harmonically. Little wonder that they had less attention to dedicate to decorating the beat in the way that bebop rhythm sections did.

The point here is that by giving soloists the freedom to spontaneously reharmonise rather than restricting them to a pre-arranged sequence, Tristano solidified an approach different from but equally valid as that which was practiced in the bebop prevalent at the time and is institutionalised in education now. It is interesting to note that the idea of a soloist free to improvise whatever chords desired over the underlying harmony was taken up by John Coltrane in his modal period when he began superimposing *Giant Steps* progressions over modal and free accompaniments, bitonality being openly ushered in here. Furthermore, while Ornette Coleman's approach doesn't use chord progressions per se, there is very often the desire for the soloist and accompanists to spontaneously create novel harmonies together, in essence the same motivation as Tristano's. Given the validity of this approach and its clear importance within the jazz tradition, it is a matter of choice theft if spontaneous reharmonisation is not given an equal amount of attention as compositional reharmonisation in jazz education. There are students who will respond better to one than the other and both tendencies must be catered to.

A final example of choice theft in this chord layer is a subtle one. One of the most valuable functions that jazz education can serve is to inculcate in us an appreciation for the great innovators of the music. A large part of this is the ingenious harmonic solutions they found to meet the challenges of self-expression that their period in history placed upon them. No one can fail to benefit from studying the way in which any of the jazz masters approached chords and chord progressions. It must not be forgotten, though, that as exhaustive as these innovations are, they don't represent an end to the potential latent in harmony. While many of them are very broadly applicable, none should be considered definitive. In *The Jazz Theory Book*, which serves as an invaluable compendium, replete with transcriptions, of the practices of jazz greats, the discussion of harmonic movement takes its cue for what movements work - and by implication, don't - entirely from established examples. We must be

very careful about such implications. Western classical music alone has shown that any chord can be followed by any other, in the right context. Our starting point in the pedagogy of harmonic practice must be the infinite ocean of possibility and the immediate interests of our student. The past is there to guide us through the bewildering number of options, but more important is an eye on what is needed in the here and now.

- **Pentatonic scales** occupy a unique position between chords and scales. While some complex chords are impossible to notate accurately in common nomenclature as discussed earlier, pentatonics can be expressed as both chords and scales (e.g. C major pentatonic = C6/9). They also hold a unique position in human history. It is an almost universal trait of our species everywhere across the planet to be able to perceive the octave, a mathematical relationship somehow hardwired into our perception of things. No less mysterious is the fact that the majority of cultures at some time during their development choose to divide that octave up into five. Tunings vary considerably, but there is something fundamentally appealing about the many guises of the pentatonic scale (as demonstrated admirably by Bobby McFerrin at the World Science Festival). This is immediately provable by simply picking up your instrument and letting your mind and fingers run over any pentatonic scale. Something about its tensions and releases is just so pleasing, the scale almost seems to play itself! This is why it is such an ideal tool for the beginner improviser, but also to help the seasoned performer remember how valuable focussing on simplicity can be. For a more advanced exercise, limit yourself to five notes but allow those notes to change over time, a great way to end up exploring some of the more exotic pentatonics but also excellent practice for following the ear, which seems to want to lead one down interesting avenues when given such a restriction. As guitarists know all too well, modern pentatonic scales can be used over chord progressions to spell out the harmony very simply (C major pentatonic over C major chord, for example) or to emphasise extensions (G major or D major pentatonics over C major), the variety of different pentatonics in common use offering many such application. Viewed from the perspective of being piled up 4ths, pentatonic scales also have a strong relationship with quartal harmony. Finally, several of Steve Lacy's songs are based on less common pentatonic structures yet maintain a great character, sense of tonality and groove (see *First and Last Pain* from *Packet*: C F Gb A# B), making them an ideal starting place for deeper exploration.

- Chord/scale theory** is one of the hallmarks of modern jazz education, and far better explanations can be found than there is time for here. However, I believe it is a fair summary of the theory to say that it states that chords and scales are actually two aspects of the same thing, namely tonality. Chords imply certain scales, especially when in progressions, and scales are the origin of chords as piled up intervals (pile up enough of them and you'll eventually have all of the notes of a scale, e.g. C13#11 = G melodic minor scale). The implication of this understanding for jazz is that a harmonic solution to a chord in a progression can be found by matching a scale to it in which that chord appears. C7 appears in F major scale, so will work when played against it, becoming the mode C Mixolydian. I remember when this theory was first introduced to me and I rushed home to work out every possible mode and corresponding chord that could be derived from major, harmonic minor, melodic minor and harmonic major scales. It was quite a rush, a real intellectual meal, but didn't actually end up doing anything to improve my playing! Also, I couldn't help but find exceptions to the theory in my favourite jazz tunes and transcribed solo, particularly bebop ones. Of course, it's somewhat naive to expect a theory of harmony to explain everything and revolutionise one's playing in the process. But it is important to make the limitations of any theory a part its propagation. There are two shortcomings in the application of chord/scale theory to jazz improvisation that I'd like to tackle. The first, the danger of its over-application, will be dealt with in the Modal Background layer. The second, its limitations, and solutions in the form of complimentary harmonic theories, are presented in the Colour Harmony and Metascales bullet points. It is believed that these theories working together provide a much more accurate picture of what one actually finds in the practice of jazz, and a wider inroad for the beginner student, than the chord/scale theory can alone.
- As mentioned earlier, piling up the intervals that make up a chord can be continued to a saturation point where it is descriptive of a specific scale. The notes above the 7th of the chords, going beyond the octave, are known as **upper partials** or extensions and were one of the chief innovations introduced into jazz by the bebop revolution (the apocryphal story being that the breakthrough came to Charlie Parker one night in a hotel room as a flash of inspiration). Their introduction took two forms, the inclusion of extensions in the harmonic voicings used by accompanists and the implying of these same extensions in melodic invention. It is worth noting that this approach to melody was innovative not because it included notes from outside the chord - Ds, F#s and As had always been used in jazz against C7, for example - but in the way that they were organised to present harmonic contrast to the fundamental

tonality (D major triad implied against C7, to continue with the previous example). From this perspective, the incorporation of upper partials into one's approach is akin to the use of bitonality, and in my opinion this is how it should be presented to students. The tactic so far has been to have students memorise bebop licks, or have them compose licks of their own in that mould. This burdens the pure concept behind such material with rhythmic and historical baggage that may not be of interest to, or in the best interests of, the student ("let's learn bebop" versus "let's figure out how to incorporate bitonality into your approach"). This can be done easily enough by having a student sketch out a rough progression that works on top of a ii7 V7 I, using their knowledge of chord/scale theory, which is often the foundation for initial exploration of extensions. Over Dm7 G7 C, perhaps they come up with C Faug G. They are then restricted to improvising using only the notes of their superimposed chords as the teacher plays through the ii7 V7 I that the chords superimpose over, in free tempo. This can be explored further by setting a tempo, focussing on the voice leadings of the extensions (more on this later) or incorporating other notes while keeping the bitonal feeling, and changing key. In this way, the student internalises the fundamental skill while developing improvisational ability and retaining a personal connection with the results of their effort.

- **Chord "sames"** is the name that I give to an approach which focusses on scale notes that remain tonal throughout a progression. Often, we are so focussed on the difficulties involved in making the changes that we forget what stays the same - and how beautifully effective it can be. Over a ii7 V7 I in C major, what notes from C major scale are always consonant? C is dissonant over G7, F over the C chord, B somewhat problematic over Dm7. So we're left with D, E, G and A. These notes will work at any point over the ii7 V7 I (and, incidentally, also the I vi7 ii7 V7). Have the progression played at a consistent tempo by either an accompanist or a backing track (there seems little point in experimenting with free tempo here) and improvise over it using only the four notes that are consistently tonal. Anything from a single held note, its colouration changed by the shifting harmony underneath, to a simplified approximation of Coltrane's "sheets of sound" is possible. Rhythmic subtlety is prioritised in a harmonic context that is both educational to the ear and risk-free, making this an ideal exercise for introducing beginner improvisors to chordal structure.

Form

The Melody and the Chords and Chord Progressions layers can be seen as constituting together a distinct layer combining qualities of both, under the banner of Form. While formal structures such as AABA, ABAC and more complex variations including introductions, interludes and tag endings are covered thoroughly in modern jazz education, form as an abstract concept is less comprehensively addressed, something of an omission given the huge contribution that the genre has made to world culture in this area. I would go as far as to say that developments in form count among jazz's most valuable innovations.

One of my earliest and most inspiring saxophone teachers was fond of saying that one can find everything in Baroque music that one finds in jazz. I have found this to be largely true, with the exception of the drum kit and a certain aspect of form, but let us begin with similarities. Both jazz and Baroque music share an approach to structure best described as modular. Sections that vary very little, if at all, are ordered and repeated to create a pleasing overall shape (in this regard, form is one of the most intuitive aspects of music). The minuet, for example, features two thematically related sections each of which immediately repeats itself (minuet I), followed by two more of somewhat related material treated in the same way (minuet II), followed by a reiteration of the original material without repeats (see any of Bach's suites for solo cello). The resulting form could be expressed as AABBCDDAB. While few jazz compositions reach this level of complexity (Mingus comes close with *Reincarnation of a Lovebird* - ABCBDEABB), a comparison with the relatively sprawling, more through-composed structure of later Western classical music reveals the similarity between jazz and Baroque forms. There is a certain economy of means, a constant recycling and referencing of what has come before.

There is a difference between these two, however, (separate from the main one I'll discuss later) hidden within this modular similarity. Jazz has an even greater focus on economy of material than Baroque music does. The simplest of jazz tunes is comprised of only 4 bars of material (Monk's *Friday the Thirteenth*), followed closely by AABA structures of 4 bars per section (a total of 8 bars of material, e.g. *Bemsha Swing*). This is inconceivable for Baroque music, and reveals an important relationship between form and personal expressiveness. Improvisation, the most powerful tool for personal expression, while available to the Baroque musician, was limited to cadenzas, embellishment and, in the case of the continuo instrument, sometimes voicings. Their music utilised repetition to the point where a certain amount of improvisation was welcome to sustain interest. Along comes jazz, with its comparatively limited material, and the need for improvisation is off the charts! In the

early days of the music, complex arrangements were used in tandem with improvisation to avoid repetitiveness (see Armstrong's Hot 5s and 7s). Eventually, however, in a journey for which *Kind of Blue* was a tipping point, the prearranged elements became as simple as a short melody, single mode or structural feature, to the point where it was possible for pure, spontaneous self-expression to exist on its own, free of any predetermined structure if so desired. What more proof could be needed that an appreciation of form is essential for the jazz musician, given that a naturally occurring necessity to focus on it helped give birth to the music's most important feature? Further confirmation of this can be found in a comparison with Brazilian choro, which shares many of the qualities of jazz but uses forms far more like those of Baroque music. Improvisation in the extended sense, though, is by and large absent.

Here is a good place to note the influence that the modular form jazz reintroduced into music had on world culture. The foundation that American jazz and blues laid for rock, reggae, funk, motown and pop music everywhere is well recognised. Together, they provided a template that has proved so efficient at sustaining interest as to be almost impossible to avoid. Looking at form though, while the twelve bars of blues and variations on it can be traced as a rich vein throughout all of the music mentioned above, the majority of what one finds clearly owes a debt of gratitude to the more varied structuring methods of jazz. When commentators say that The Beatles, Pink Floyd or drum'n'bass are influenced by jazz, it is important to recognise that the modular approach to form is a part of what they're referring to.

Now to that aspect of form that jazz does not share with Baroque, or any other, music. In 1956, Charles Mingus recorded *Pithecanthropus Erectus*, a 10-minute-long "tone poem" which introduced a startling structural feature to a wider audience - a section within a composed structure that opened up for an indeterminate period of time, dependant on the group or soloist's inclination. A modular structure with an unpredictable module! Seven years earlier, in 1949, Lennie Tristano had recorded *Intuition* and *Digression*, freely improvised pieces that proved that form could be improvised just as fluidly as melody by an attentive ensemble. These were different though, stand-alone improvisations. *Pithecanthropus Erectus* demonstrated plasticity of form, an ability to change approach to structure while within structure. Mingus continued to explore this, most notably in *Mingus Ah Um's Better Git It in Your Soul*, but the next big watermarks were *Flamenco Sketches* on *Kind of Blue* and Coltrane's *My Favorite Things*, both of which reversed the ratio of composed to improvised material. Plasticity of form was almost entirely definitive of these, a series of modes being the only structural constants in the former, a change from E minor to E major in the latter.

Both Mingus and Coltrane continued to explore this area with astonishing results. *My Favorite Things* accompanied Coltrane to the end of his life, morphing into incredible shapes to accommodate the saxophonist's ever more experimental soloing. Along the way, plasticity was also a hallmark of other modal compositions he chose to explore with his quartet (e.g. *Miles' Mode*). As for Mingus, all I can do is point you in the direction of his live recordings of *Fables of Faubus*, astonishing examples of both individual virtuosity and group interaction.

Ornette Coleman is often thought of as more of a proponent of the freely improvised structure in the mould of *Intuition* and *Digression*, and while this is not untrue, it ignores his intimate relationship with composed melody. Melody is as definitive of form as chord progressions are, and a relationship between his heads and subsequent solos is very common. From this perspective, his improvisations can be seen as plastic variations of his clearly modular melodies. An example of this is the composition *Peace* from *The Shape of Jazz to Come*, an AABA song with a half-time feel bridge played by the bass. The half-time feel is reincorporated as a structural feature for the soloists despite the lack of clearly defined form during improvisation, an ingenious use of plasticity.

Steve Lacy's relationship to form borders on the schizophrenic. His compositions are fastidious in their attention to detail, requiring precise repetition of limited material and careful memorisation of overall structure (e.g. *The Window* - Ax4 Bx4 Cx4 Dx4 solos Dx4 Cx4 Bx4 Ax4 - or *Morning Joy* - Ax3 Bx2 Ax4 C Ax4 C Ax4 solos Ax4 C tag ending Ax4 Bx2). Yet his instructions for improvisation are very often to just "solo on the introduction", play on a particular mode or simply "improvise". Organisation of a very high order and a plasticity to rival Coltrane's late work are brought together. Perhaps inspired by this contrast, Lacy's rhythm sections were always incredibly adept at creating a sense of structure within improvisations (e.g. the pedal in *Prospectus*, changes of feel mid-solo in *Wickets* and *Prayer*), endowing plasticity with a wonderful, spontaneous modularity.

While Hindustani classical and African traditional music use extended improvisation, the fact that their forms are not modular - and therefore don't share the same focus on cycling through limited amounts of material as jazz - precludes them from exploring plasticity. Modularity and the potential for the plastic use of it are unique to our music and should be a part of what is communicated to students.

7. Modal Background

Chord/scale theory codifies how its titular musical elements are interrelated, dependant on one another. The connected concept of modes - a common scale with a note other than its natural root emphasised, to create a unique series of internal tensions and releases - has come to hold a special place within jazz practice and education. Modalism in this and an expanded sense will be integrated into a polyfree approach here.

To begin with, a mode can be a valuable restriction in its own right. Let us first differentiate between and clarify two approaches, though. Dm7 is most commonly associated with D Dorian, second mode of C major scale, though this can be dependant on context. A composer might specify "Dm7 throughout" on a chart and, because of the Dorian nature of the melody, it could be safely assumed that the tune is "in" D Dorian mode. It would be advisable for soloists to use D Dorian since it has been established as the home key, but Dm7 as a restriction does not limit one to that alone. Witness Coltrane's approach to the *So What* changes (renovated as *Impressions* with his own quartet). D and Eb Dorian are clearly at the heart of his solos, but the improvisation is far from restricted to the notes of C major and Db major scales respectively. The second, contrasting approach would be that appropriate to *Flamenco Sketches* and some of Freddie Hubbard's modal composition, where the restriction is the mode itself. To go outside of it would be to miss the point of the challenge presented, and in these cases it would be more appropriate to label the composition with the necessary mode.

A third approach is what could be termed polymodalism. A scale is presented, but it's root left unspecified so that any of the modes within it can be emphasised. This emphasis would most likely come down to the bass and chordal player's choice of notes, but a good accompanist is both attentive to the other improvisors and capable of harmonic vagueness (e.g. Jaco Pastorius playing Joni Mitchell's tunes). Polymodalism is found throughout Steve Lacy's oeuvre (see *Prospectus*, for example) and as a minimalistic restriction in the work of some free improvisors (Evan Parker often dedicates pieces in specific modes to certain people).

These three serve as a reasonable summary of how modes are used practically in jazz. Now for how they have come to be used in jazz education, which I believe shows some discrepancy with practical usage.

My main bone of contention is in the application of chord/scale theory to every component of a progression, as can be found in the Aebersold playalong series, for

example. In a ii7 V7 I, the mode corresponding to each chord (in C: D Dorian, G Mixolydian, C Ionian) is linked to it, often written out directly underneath for ease of visual reference. This despite the fact that they all come from the same parent scale, so one finds the notes of that scale written out three times from three different starting notes. This might seem practical at first, especially for those of a visual learning bent, but there are a host of problems that arise from it.

Chief among them is that it ignores the vital role that the ear must play for improvised lines to sound cogent. To continue with the example above, the ear perceives a ii7 V7 I as a movement within one tonal area. An ear trained in basic voice leading can navigate the movements within this tonality far more easily and, more importantly, fluidly than the mind trained to think of it as three separate modes. To conceive of it in this way is to completely ignore all horizontal movement, focussing purely on the vertical. Better to label the whole ii7 V7 I as emanating from a single background mode, with a changing root as in polymodalism. This allows for a compression of information - one scale over however many bars the progression lasts as opposed to three modes - and an assignment of tasks to the tool best able to handle them. The ear handles voice leading effortlessly, while the intellect is less likely to disturb the flow of creativity with its analytical metacommentary if given broad, general information to hold on to. With the intellect removed from trying to keep up with every chord change, the body can take over feeling the rhythm, and a stronger sense of swing emerges.

A further criticism of the over-application of chord/scale theory detailed above is that it introduces the odious concept of the "avoid note". The idea is that in using G Mixolydian over a G7, for example, the note C is dissonant and therefore should be avoided. One minute with any transcribed solo will reveal the fallacious nature of this idea, it is a prime example of the problems that arise when an intellectual approach is taken to something that is not rational. Tadd Dameron wouldn't have given us that beautiful held F over a C major chord (another "avoid note") at the end of *Hot House* if rationality were governing his choices. The majority of jazz practice couldn't exist if the intellect were in charge! However, perhaps this is a semantic problem. If it had been named the "tension note" instead, would this concept be less evocative of a Victorian classroom? Even this sensitive renaming ignores the subtle shadings of tension and release that exists in any mode applied to a chord. To single out one note as somehow needing more careful treatment than others - let alone being best left alone - is simply the propagation of blunt understanding. It has been scientifically proven by scientists at Johns Hopkins University, who placed improvising musicians in an MRI scanner, that self-editing areas of the brain switch off during the process. Concepts that stress avoidance rather than an instinctual usage honed through experience will only work against the student player. I propose my own replacement

theory to the “avoid note” in the Colour Harmony bullet point below.

Add to this the fact that connecting every chord in a progression to its respective mode encourages a focussing on root notes which, though appropriate to bass and chordal instruments, is detrimental to creative melodic soloing, and there is ample reason to question the application of chord/scale theory in this way as an educational tool. However, the nail in the coffin is that it is simply not how jazz musicians think when improvising, and it is not how jazz was ever taught before its entry into academicism. Granted, how jazz musicians actually think is somewhat mysterious, and always personal, but to reduce that process to a theory which bears little or no resemblance to it and is in fact antithetical to the flow state at its heart, makes no sense. Let us build increasingly accurate models of how jazz works from a practical, result-based perspective, throwing out what doesn't work, rather than leading with convenient theories.

Far be it from me to suggest that theories cannot be useful, though. This Modal Background layer exists - as well as to categorise the ways in which modes are used in jazz - to introduce theoretical models useful to students. The primary point I wish to make is the one which was introduced in the criticism of the excessive application of chord/scale theory, that modes are best applied to entire diatonic progressions such as the ii7 V7 I or I vi7 ii7 V7 as a background tonality, with bass movement and voice leading information provided and responded to by the ear, as in polymodalism (making polymodal improvisation a great introductory exercise to soloing over progressions). As well as Colour Harmony mentioned above, a theory arising from the vagueness of the chord/scale approach called Metascales is included in the preceding bullet points, both being inserted between layers as there are chromatic implications. Finally, then, one more point on modes as background tonalities. The astute reader will have noticed that non-diatonic progressions such as secondary dominants haven't been covered yet. There are two rules governing which mode applies best in such situations from a theoretical standpoint, though it must be remembered that the melody used with a progression will influence what scales sound most natural over it. The ear should always be given priority over theory. If it sounds right, it is!

The first rule is that the more closely related scale will provide the smoother movement. In a jump from I to III7 - C to E7 in C major, as in *Sunny Side of the Street* - the E7 suggests an A major scale to the inexperienced neophyte. However, an A harmonic minor scale will give a much smoother transition, and link better with the F chord in the next bar (F Lydian), because of its closer relationship to C major scale. This is not to say that a C# or F# (the differences between A major and A harmonic minor) couldn't work, just that they will be perceived very differently, as

contrasting with the background tonality. Note that this is not the case with the transition from the second A section into the B section of *I've Got Rhythm* (C to E7 again) where the F# in the melody endows a brighter quality, making A major scale a more likely choice. Applying chord/scale theory is an art not a science, but this rule is a helpful guideline.

Secondly, if one is taking a theoretical approach to inform one's playing, it makes sense to utilise the full breadth of that theory. In the first four bars of *Take the A Train*, we see a movement from I to II7, C to D7, with the melody taking the b5 or #11 of the II7 chord. When asked what scale to use over the D7 during solos, a common answer would be D Mixolydian or C Lydian (really the same thing), but in either case not only is the melody note ignored but a higher tension note (G) is favoured over a more colourful one (G#/Ab). I would suggest that by searching a little further afield, into A melodic minor, which is not that distantly removed from C major, we can find a far more suitable candidate in D Lydian Dominant. I have found that this choice works far better for any strongly stated II7 chord in a progression than the Lydian of its home key, and I would summarise this choice as a rule thus: Aim for maximum saturation of the harmony, with colouring notes over harmonically tense ones (for exact definitions of these, see Colour Harmony below). So for example, in the I to III7 of *Sunny Side of the Street* above, I would choose to think of C Harmonic Major scale over the E7 as it replaces the G# and A of A harmonic minor scale with G and Ab, the G being far more useful for the improviser to have close at hand intellectually (C harmonic major is also just as closely related to C major as A melodic minor is, so the first rule is satisfied too). Similarly, over an A7 as a VI7 chord (we're in C major again), F harmonic major scale is preferable to D harmonic minor.

I realise that my use of the harmonic major is somewhat unusual (the technical name of the mode in question is the Phrygian b4), but as a final example of the practicality of my approach to applying chord/scale theory I offer a breakdown of how it works with particular progressions, for your consideration.

chord progression:	ii7	V7	I	VI7
in C major:	Dm7	G7	C	A7
modal background:	— — C maj. (use ear) — —			F harm. maj.

chord progression:	ii7b5	V7	i6
in C major:	Bm7b5	E7	Am6
modal background:	— A harm. min. (use ear) —		A mel. min.

chord progression:	I	I7	IV	bVII7
in C major:	C	C7	F	Bb7
modal background:	C maj.	F maj.	C maj.	F mel. min.

chord progression:	I	III7	VI7	ii7
in C major:	C	E7	A7	Dm7
modal background:	C maj.	C harm. maj.	F harm. maj.	C maj.

chord progression:	I	IV	iii7	biidim7
in C major:	C	F	Em7	Ebdim7
modal background:	— — C maj. (use ear) — —			Eb dim.

- It has already been mentioned how chord/scale theory can be used to decide which extensions to place over a chord. We're now going to build on this by looking at **voice leading in the upper partials**. This takes two forms, between and within chords. The first is simple enough. If we have, for example, the progression Dm9 G7b13 CM9, on top of the usual voice leadings beneath the octave we now also have the movement from 9 to b13 to 9, E Eb D. This approach can be practiced in the same ways as normal voice leading, as detailed above, and is important to develop as it emphasises the melodic implications of a very harmonic outlook. Now to upper partial voice leading within a chord, and it is here that we encounter the opposite side of the problem of applying chord/scale theory to individual chords: multiple scales can fit over any given one. Over a dominant 7th, for example, the Mixolydian, Mixolydian b9b13, Lydian Dominant, Phrygian b4, Altered and Diminished scales are all viable options at any time during its duration, at least theoretically. The difference between these modes is found entirely in the notes between chord tones, any such interstitial note being expressible as an extension as well as a passing tone. So given that multiple background modes can be freely interchanged, movement of upper partials while the chord remains the same makes perfect sense. To frame this another way - from the perspective of bitonality introduced previously - the harmonic movement of a superimposed progression can be faster than the one it is being used against. To give a simple example over a V7 I progression in C, let us imagine a DbM then a Dm triad over the G7, followed by a Em triad over the C. This would be expressed chordally as G7b9#11 G9 Cmaj7 and involve the diminished or altered scale over the first half of the G7, then C major for the rest of the progression. While all this is necessary to understand, perhaps it is more complicated than practical application demands. More often than not, the change of a single extension mid-chord is a striking statement in itself

(see bar 4 of Parker's *Blues for Alice*, D to Db - 9 to b9 - over a Cm7 chord). The effectiveness of using upper partial voice leading in improvisation is a strong argument for keeping chord charts free of unnecessary extensions - so that the space is free to play with - and an explanation for why so many great horn players like to play in trios without a chordal instrument.

- **Hybrid scales** are those which extend beyond the octave, incorporating more than one approach to a chord within themselves. I first encountered them through John Klopotoski's enlightening (and currently unpublished) book on his experiences with Warne Marsh, *A Jazz Life*, as polytonal material used with a complex rhythmic exercise devised by Lennie Tristano. They can act as a useful bridge between a modal background approach and chromaticism, offering an introduction both theoretical and aural to how "outside" sounds (those not traditionally considered consonant) can be incorporated into tonal music. I leave the bulk of the information to be presented by *A Jazz Life*, but here are two examples of dominant hybrid scales in C to whet the appetite:

C D E F G A Bb C D E F# G A Bb C D

(combining C Mixolydian and G Melodic Minor to introduce the Lydian Dominant)

C D E F G A Bb C Db Eb F G A Bb C Db Eb F G

(combining C Mixolydian and Bb Melodic Minor to introduce b9 and #9)

- In the same way that Debussy did for Western classical music, the bebop innovators initiated a change in jazz away from a consonance versus dissonance paradigm and into **colour harmony**. Put simply, this means that any combination of notes is open to consideration, no contrast is taboo, the deciding factor being the gesture one wishes to make. This was a huge step forward in the personal creative freedom of the jazz musician and ensured the genre's place among the high arts of world culture. It also left behind a challenge for jazz educators. Conventional tonality follows well established rules - scales cannot contain consecutive semitones, for example - mirroring the relationship that representational art has with the laws of perspective. What to do when options that not only circumvent these rules but sometimes downright contradict them become available and are naturally of great interest to the student? One approach is to encourage the development of sensitivity of choice, so that decisions are made with an awareness of their consequences. I do this by choosing a chord in a particular context, specifying whether it is for melodic or harmonic use, and arranging the twelve chromatic notes into four categories based on this. The categories are Definitive, Complementary, Challenging and Disruptive, and every chord type in every

context that it appears will have a different pattern of distribution within them, also dependant on whether for melodic or harmonic usage. Definitive notes are those that make up the chord. Complimentary are those which are the most obvious choices in traditional diatonic thought. Challenging are those that do not contradict the functionality but neither do they necessarily affirm the larger context of the chord. Disruptive notes negate the chord's nature (an awareness of this in a chromatic context being the closest any jazz education method that wishes to be considered both modern and genuinely in support of personal freedom of expression should come to the idea of an "avoid note"). It is very important to recognise that beyond a certain point there are no right answers here (excepting the Definitive category, which must be made clear in order for the exercise to function). Rather, it is a forced look at the fine tuning of harmony as colour, an exploration of the minutia of tonality. **Here is my distribution for the melodic usage of a tonic C major chord:**

chord	Def.	Comp.	Chal.	Dis.
		B	Ab	Bb
C major		A	F#	
as tonic	G		F	
(melodic)	E	D	Eb	
	C		Db	

Some of my decisions might not be the ones that you'd make, but there is logic behind every placement, as there must be for this exercise to be of any use. F, for example, is not included in Complimentary because it can threaten the major quality with a suspended one. Db does not disrupt the tonality, although it is very tense, because B is not one of the Definitive notes. Compare this chart with one for the harmonic usage of a tonic CM7:

chord	Def.	Comp.	Chal.	Dis.
	B		Ab	Bb
CM7	G	A	F#	
as tonic	E		Eb	F
(harmonic)	C	D		Db

The B moved to Definitive renders the Db disruptive of the tonality because of the cluster its inclusion in any CM7 voicing would create with the root (a cluster around another note, the G for example, wouldn't be disruptive, but also bear in mind that disruptiveness is not necessarily something to be avoided, this is just about making the musician aware of the consequences of their choices). F has also become disruptive as it would turn any situation into

some kind of F/C voicing. Finally, for comparison with the first chart, here is my distribution for a melodic usage of C major chord in a IV position (in other words, in G major):

chord	Def.	Comp.	Chal.	Dis.
		B	Ab	Bb
C major	G	A		
as IV	E	F#	Eb	F
(melodic)	C	D	Db	

F# has now become a Complimentary note in keeping with the Lydian nature of the situation, and F Disruptive for the same reason. Seen from the perspective of this exercise, colour harmony is a kind of theoretical chess, the chromatic notes dancing between categories as the harmonic context changes. By playing with and refining their approach to it, students can deepen their intuitive reactions and respond with that colouration best suited to the statement they wish to make.

- It was mentioned in the voice leading in the upper partials bullet point that there is a certain vagueness inherent in chord/scale theory. This can be exploited to make what I call **metascales**. The A minor triad, for example, can be found three times throughout the major scales, twice in the harmonic minors, and so on. By combining all of the modes of A minor, we end up with a highly chromatic archetype of the tonality as a whole. This can then be experimented with in improvisations over a drone of the chord to both stretch the ear and effectively work melody into less consonant areas. Because the metascale saturates the harmony to the point where it can be defined by which chromatic notes are not included, it can be helpful in figuring out the Disruptive category in colour harmony. This feature also makes it an ideal starting place for the technically competent neophyte improviser eager to “shred”. Because the simpler chord has the more inclusive metascale, a basic harmonic restriction and awareness of the few notes which are disruptive are all that is needed for a free-flowing exploration. I leave it to the reader to produce a full list of metascales for all of the chord types, but here are a few to get you started:

chord	metascale (& excluded notes)
Am	A Bb B C D D# E F F# G G# (C#)
C	C D D# E F F# G Ab A B (Db Bb)
G7	G Ab A A# B C C# D Eb E F (F#)
Bm7b5	B C C# D E F G G# A (D# F# A#)

A further, as yet largely unexplored application of the process which produces metascales can be found in the music of Steve Lacy. He uses it with chords which fit less comfortably into traditional nomenclature - more like collections of notes than chords - to derive material which allows for a very flexible harmonic approach. For example, in *Prayer* (of which there is a phenomenal version on the album *Bye-ya*) the primary feature of the bassline is the ascending notes C# G# D#. Lacy uses these notes to generate a metascale which is then the basis for the rest of the composition and improvisation. The only excluded note is D and the tonality allows for the major and minor 3rds, 6ths and 7ths, a wonderful and simple colour harmony distribution, as the Challenging category is unnecessary! Improvisation is particularly enjoyable as there is a clear “inside” and “outside”, what lies in between these demanding a high level of interaction from both the soloist and accompanists to create cogent musical statements.

8. Chromaticism

Chromatic music is that which places an equal emphasis on all twelve notes of the tempered system, contrasting with tonal music which, no matter how far it may journey, eventually resolves into a particular key. Chromaticism was born into Western classical music through the twelve-tone techniques of Arnold Schoenberg, specifically the tone row, where a complete, repetition-free ordering of the notes is manipulated to generate material. The tone row itself has only seen minimal usage in jazz. *Miles' Mode* (aka *Red Planet*) is one example of a melody that employs a tone row and its retrograde, and Steve Lacy's hauntingly poetic *Cloudy* consists of eleven tone rows. However, the spirit of chromaticism has been thoroughly embraced by jazz musicians in both a tonal context, to create melodies that contrast against their chordal accompaniment (playing “outside”), and in free improvisation as a means of generating harmonically non-specific material.

The main vehicle for the importing of chromaticism into jazz has been Nicolas Slonimsky's *Thesaurus of Scales and Melodic Patterns*, which gained popularity among musicians in the mid-50s, exerting a particularly strong influence on John Coltrane. It should be noted that the *Thesaurus* is not chromatic in the sense that Schoenberg's music was, with an iron intent that each note should be treated equally (somewhat akin to musical socialism). Rather, it uses equal divisions of different numbers of octaves (from one octave divided in half by the tritone through to eleven

octaves divided into twelve major 7ths) as the basis for generating patterns, regardless of potential tonal implications. The emphasis is on the ordered use of intervals rather than notes, and it is this method which seems to have the greatest appeal to the jazz improviser.

Another approach to chromaticism can be found in Steve Coleman's Symmetrical Movement Concept, introduced on the M-Base website. Steve Lacy also developed an exercise in *Findings* which can help integrate a chromatic approach to melody and improve the harmonic ear. Six consecutive chromatic notes are chosen and played with so as to try and imply specific tonal centres.

The sheer volume of possibilities that confront one in exploring the intervallic chromaticism found in jazz can be a serious deterrent to moving forward, especially if one wishes to do so in an ordered fashion. A way around this is to forgo any formulaic order and use a random interval generator (chits in a bag, or the digitl equivalent). If one draws a major 3rd, minor 3rd and minor 7th, these intervals are alternated up and down to produce a pattern all the way up the instrument (or downwards in the case that the overall resultant interval is under the starting note). If our starting note is C, the pattern generated from the above selection would be: C↗E↘C#↗B↗D#↘C↗Bb↗D↘B↗A, etc.

The overall resultant interval, from the first note to the note where repetition of the pattern begins, is an ascending major 7th, so once one has reached the top of one's instrument with the pattern, there are ten more starting places for this to be a full exploration of the material (e.g. starting on C#, D, Eb, etc.). Number of intervals selected, ordering down then up, intervals over an octave and replacing chits straight back into the bag after selection for the possibility of their repetition are variations that can be introduced. It is also recommended to start from the lowest note of your instrument that the pattern allows and work upwards (or highest and work down in the case of a descending overall resultant interval) for maximum coverage.

- **Microtones** are intervals between notes, sounds whose pitches are not included in the mathematically even, chromatic tuning on which Western music is based. There is, of course, much music around the world with its own tuning system. In India, for example, the octave is divided into 22 shrutis or perceivable differences. Alternative tuning systems have also been proposed within Western classical music, most notably by Harry Partch, who took to designing his own instruments. Bruno Bartolozzi experimented with adapting traditional orchestral instruments to the same end (see *New Sounds for Woodwind*). While microtones are a staple of free-improvised music, and deserve attention for that reason alone, we don't usually think of more

traditional jazz as microtonal. Yet the choked notes of Louis Armstrong's trumpet and exuberant tonal shadings of Lester Young are exactly that. Let us also not forget that the b5 of the blues scale was an attempt by early African arrivals to America to integrate their native tuning into the European pentatonic scale. Microtonality is very specific to individual instruments and such detail is outside the scope of this document, so this brief bullet point will have to suffice as a reminder of its usefulness.

- “Language” is an interesting word. It can apply to an every-changing dictionary of agreed-upon meanings associated with particular geographical locations, such as English, French or Japanese, yet is still applicable when the meaning is absent, as in gibberish. Our bodies have their own one, and more abstract activities such as music and computer programming are also described as languages. It is in this latter sense that I use the term “**language structures**”, inspired by Anthony Braxton's categorisation method, language types. To clarify the meaning of this term, let us consider the extended techniques developed in modern Western classical music, that made their way into jazz in the 60s through Pharaoh Sanders, the AACM and others. Such techniques are not communicable through traditional notation, requiring specialised symbols either explained elsewhere or left to the interpretation of the musician. There is in the least a small degree of freedom left to the performer, but the area of that technique is nevertheless defined, and movement outside of it perceivable. Take flutter-tonguing, where the player of a clarinet, for example, allows their tongue to brush freely over the mouthpiece and reed, giving the note a rough buzz. It would be very difficult for two clarinetists to get exactly the same flutter-tonguing consistently, yet the technique is still clearly different from growling with the throat or rapid double-tonguing. When Anthony Braxton did his first solo concert, he was shocked to discover how quickly he ran out of material. So he divided areas of what he could do on the saxophone into language types (such as Accented Long Sounds, Trills, Multiphonics, etc.) which could be combined with or contrasted against each other to sustain extended interest. As in flutter-tonguing, there is an area of freedom within a definable boundary. The same is actually true of traditional performance directions found at the beginning and throughout classical music scores (even those that have come to be associated with a specific tempo range). These are all example of language structures, not because they are described in language rather than through notation, but because, like meaning, there is flexibility of interpretation. It can be a lot of fun to begin seeing your music in these terms. Play a single, unaffected note on your instrument, one that you consider worthy of a technically proficient performer, and try to describe its qualities in as succinct a way as possible.

Draw a picture or graphic notation if it helps. For me, my cleanest notes are like circular steel bars extending away from the instrument. Now try to apply this description to every note you play. Can you maintain the language structure throughout your full range? It doesn't matter what notes you play. Try the same descriptive exercise with vibrato or a fixed dynamic. The same approach can also be taken with improvisation. Give yourself the full chromatic scale to work with and try to improvise "happily" or "like someone walking on eggshells". Harmonic and rhythmic considerations will generally take care of themselves. One can also focus on specific technical issues by doing "fast scale passage" or "heavy articulation" improvisations, or on extended techniques with "multiphonics", "microtones" or "sliding notes". For every area that one opens up through exploration in this way, a new dimension of interest has been added to one's music - keep a list of successful language structures and ones you'd like to try out. Perhaps the biggest advantage of working with them is the door they offer to synaesthetic experience. One begins to process the sonic through other mediums, to think more about the vibe of what one is producing, in broader terms rather than as specific musical details. This is one of the hallmarks of any great jazz solo, a sense of inhabiting and flowing between different moods as opposed to a constant searching for individual ideas. I believe this is because the best soloists are thinking in language structures, particularly noticeable in free improvisation where everything hangs on the skilful use of them. Their effect on composition can also be seen. To assume that there is nothing special in the fact that the majority of Monk's tunes are named for people and places dear to him, or that Mingus's titles were just a convenient soapbox for his political views, is to ignore how these things acted as language structures, informing the content of what was written. A fine compositional example is Steve Lacy, who considered himself a master at naming things. When he called a piece dedicated to Rex Stewart *The Crust*, it was because he saw a "crusty" quality in his mentor that he wished to capture as a keepsake, and all the elements - the melody, bassline, form, instructions for improvisation and improvisation itself - are extensions of this quality. I would even go as far with language structures as to say that Charlie Parker thought about his innovative contributions to jazz in this way. It seems to me very unlikely, given the passion that he brought to his musical delivery, that he would have conceived of implying bitonality by emphasising chord extensions in such dry, theoretical terms as these. Something more along the lines of "skipping over the harmonic rooftops" or "swinging from skyscraper to skyscraper" seems far more likely. To conclude, considering the potential that language structures have not only to bring together imagination and technique in the serious musician, but also to add creative appeal for the beginner ("play like a

hopping rabbit” rather than “staccato”), they represent an underused and exciting frontier in music education.

9. Noise / Concrete Sound

The final layer deals with sound as it's found in the outside world - untempered, chaotic and random. Which is not to say unbeautiful! Jazz has always had a closer relationship with what I'll call concrete sound than other art musics. Western classical musicians cultivate an otherworldly refinement in their approach (I once offended a bassist by commenting “what beautiful noise!” on their rendition of a movement from a Bach solo cello suite) and Indian music takes the finely trained human voice as its paragon. Yet in jazz one sees a gradually increasing interest in concrete sound. Eric Dolphy played along with birds, Roland Kirk included a sample of a baby crying and an actual glass shattering in his recordings, Steve Lacy's *The Duck* is a composition all about imitating animal noises, and the exhortations of preachers can be found in Albert Ayler's music (in fairness it should also be mentioned that classical composers are different from the performers of their genre, e.g. the Toy Symphony - of unknown authorship - incorporating noise elements, and Messiaen's obsession with birdsong). Even in early jazz though, there is a certain affinity for concrete sound in the free use of slurrings, growls and choked notes. The approach of wind players of this period in particular reveals an unconditioned exploration of the sonic potential of their instruments. Clarinets and saxophones came into their own outside of traditional classical usage, Wilton Crawley's slap-tonguing and chicken calls being an excellent example of just how far this went before the sophistication of swing and intensity of bebop set in.

In this way, jazz as a whole shares a closer connection to Asian artistic sensibilities, which have always taken the natural world as their primary source of inspiration (“In premodern Japanese aesthetics, the distance between art and nature was considerably shorter than in its Western counterpart” - Ueda Makoto, quoted in D. Richie's *A Tractate on Japanese Aesthetics*). Jazz may have gone even further though, by being able to integrate ambient urban sounds - trains, car horns, jackhammers - into itself. This being the case, it isn't an exaggeration to say that as jazz musicians, it is part of our responsibility to be aware of the sounds around us and allow them to make a contribution to our creative process.

One final point on concrete sound. No matter how unusual or unpleasant a sound is, it follows a natural law, that of the harmonic series. This states that a fundamental

tone produces a series of overtones at specific mathematical intervals, the balance among which determines the quality of the sound. The human brain actually experiences all of these overtones and, in what amounts to an incredibly complex act of synthesis, constructs the single phenomenon heard by the conscious mind (see Daniel J. Levitin's *This Is Your Brain on Music*). So next time you encounter a squeaky door or aircraft engine, spend time with that sound. It is an expression of a universal principle, an entirely unique collection of happenings and a construction of your own mind all at the same time. If that's not interesting and worthy of attention, I don't know what is!

Conclusion

These are the layers and interstitial bullet points in my extended definition of jazz harmony, which provide a thorough and practical foundation for the structuring methods that jazz musicians must be fluent in, presented in an intuitive mnemonic system. By working with these both theoretically and kinaesthetically - coming to an understanding of what they mean to them personally - students will be well prepared to meet the broad array of challenges that improvised creativity will pose to them.

One final note on the role of the teacher. The majority of exercises presented throughout this section have one feature in common: they place restrictions of different kinds on the improvisational freedom of the student, in an attempt to challenge deeper exploration and reveal new aspects. Like an attentive personal trainer applying weights, it is the responsibility of the teacher to be sensitive to the needs of the student when suggesting restrictions. There are no universal certainties in what will trip them into genuine creativity. To continue with the training analogy, one individual might need multiple reps with light weights, while another thrives on intensely focussed heavy lifting. As strength develops, different strategies are also necessary. Trust your intuition and be willing to make mistakes. Within the profundity of music, the teacher is really just a student with more experience.

Integrating Rhythm

The elements that make up skill with rhythm can also be mapped onto the layers of jazz harmony to complete the technical aspect of the system. While the order of the rhythmic components produced by this mapping may not always be what is expected, there is an intuitive logic to it that I believe stands up to scrutiny.

Momentum

There is something mysterious about rhythmic momentum, that sense of forward motion that can be perceived in such sounds as rain or running water. It invites us in, entices us, plays with our expectations. While it didn't become overt in jazz until the free revolution of the '60s, particularly in the drumming of Sunny Murray, an appreciation for the ebb and flow in its density and interest is fundamental to any subtlety of skill in handling rhythm, especially in an improvised context. This mysteriousness is why the momentum layer is connected to the subconscious world of Pre-sound Conceptions. Free rhythmic flow has the power to evoke associations and images within us that we may not even be aware of unless we explore.

Sun Ra said that "As all marines are riflemen, all members of the Arkestra are percussionists", and I believe that this should be true of all jazz musicians too, even if just to a basic degree. Playing with percussion takes us back to our childhood, when the sounds things made were a constant source of wonder. As we grow up and learn about the concepts detailed further down this list, the wonder is replaced by a sense of right and wrong, appropriate and inappropriate. Experimenting with momentum on simple rattles and shakers (or my favourite, the flexitone) takes us back to a more intuitive mindset which can only make positive contributions to the creative process.

Pulse

Single notes are vibrations with a particular, constant frequency, in other words, a pulse. Thus the Notes layer and the Pulse rhythmic component are naturally allied.

Regularity is something of an obsession in modern jazz, the idea being that everybody must be able to keep perfect time if a band is to stay together. Other objections to this aside for now, it is simply not borne out in practice. A scientific-minded friend in college once timed every solo on one of the medium-tempo tunes from *Kind of Blue*, dividing them by the number of choruses taken, and found considerable variation in the average seconds per chorus of the some of the greatest jazz improvisors ever to have lived. Rather than saying anything about Miles et al., this is a serious challenge to the idea of perfectly regular metre. While it would be ridiculous to suggest that it is okay for tempos to speed up or slow down unintentionally, there is a middle ground between the two extremes worth exploring.

Have you ever done a Zen clap? This is when a large group of people all try to do a single big clap above their heads at the same time. As well as being exhilaratingly loud when done well, it is an excellent attentiveness exercise and bonding experience. A similar thing can be achieved by having a group all try to clap a regular pulse together. It usually starts off with some jostling for control, but as people relax and begin to experience the physical component of keeping time, there is a natural synergy that takes place as bodies begin responding instinctually. Eventually, it is as though something is born into the situation, and it is uncertain whether the people are generating the rhythm or the rhythm controlling the people! There is a character in the air, defined and given meaning by the tempo. Speeding up or slowing down will gradually change this character, and it is this that should be our benchmark when considering pulse in improvisation. Sure, tracks on *Kind of Blue* speed up and slow down, but the rhythmic character is inviolate, one of the “thin stretched parchment[s]” (to quote Bill Evans’s liner notes) that the sextet skilfully brushes onto and against, aware of exactly how much pressure it can withstand. The “Zen pulse” exercise above can be varied by allowing the group to find its own tempo at the beginning rather than having one specified, experiment with allowing the tempo to speed up or slow down “on its own” (particularly difficult for control freaks) and expanding and shrinking the size of the group while maintaining the clap.

Crossrhythms

One of the things that composer Conlon Nancarrow is famous for other than his studies for player piano is creating a machine which could slide pitches up and down, maintaining relative distance between intervals should there be more than one

note. This machine could also drop pitches to the depth where they were perceivable as pulses rather than tones, and when he did this to the interval of a perfect 5th, the result was a 3 over 2 rhythm - a crossrhythm. All interval relationships are actually crossrhythms (harmony of any kind is in fact the juxtaposition of different, super high-speed rhythms against each other), which is why this rhythmic component is linked to the Intervals layer.

We are accustomed to thinking of crossrhythms as a complicated, higher level of music making, but this is a cultural bias. It is no more or less difficult than learning to modulate fluently between keys, for example. The easiest way to approach crossrhythms is to first find the common denominator of the pulses being practiced, 6 in the case of 3 over 2. While counting to 6, click the fingers on your one hand every two beats, with your other hand do every three beats. Obviously, this gets more complicated as the common denominator grows, where diagrammatic sketches can become useful. Interesting variations can be introduced by including foot taps as well as finger clicks, working the rhythm through different limbs like drummers do.

A fun crossrhythmic exercise is introduced by Steve Coleman at a workshop from 2008 in The Hague, available on YouTube. He sings the Looney Tunes theme and, by keeping the subdivision strict, is able to clap increasingly complex rhythms over the top. This is essentially the same as the exercise detailed above, but with the two rhythms divided between the voice and hands rather than each in one hand. However, the inclusion of melodic material, especially via the voice, adds a wonderfully concrete connectivity sometimes lacking in purely counted exercises.

There are also the Lennie Tristano crossrhythm studies alluded to in the hybrid scales bullet point, which are complex, exhaustive and part of a larger approach to “outside” playing. Once again, I refer you to John Klopotoski’s as yet unpublished work, *A Jazz Life*.

Beat and Subdivision

Crossrhythms present us with a set period of time divided up evenly, with one of the pulses - where the juxtaposed rhythms meet - being felt more strongly than others. This is also the definition of the musical structure known as a bar. Bars are abstractions of regular patterns of emphasis found within melodies, so this next rhythmic component is tied to the Melody layer.

As mentioned above, the idea of a bar is an abstraction based on naturally occurring stresses within melody. The most regular stresses are beats, with a less frequent but slightly stronger one letting us know how many beats in a bar. The area between beats can also be emphasised differently, which is subdivision.

This is all basic music theory, summed up by the time signature of a piece of music. However, this summary is also a reduction. Two melodies can be in the same time signature and tempo yet feel very different, more than one time signature might seem to be applicable to a single melody, or convention take precedence over accurate description for convenience of reading. To an extent this is unavoidable, perhaps even desirable on occasion, but it should be recognised that the handful of time signatures commonly in use are a fraction of what is available to explore. What is the difference between 6/8 and 6/4, for example? Is a samba better notated in 2/2, 2/4 or 4/4? Is that 6/8 or 12/8? These kind of questions can help deepen our appreciation for the subtlety of rhythmic inflexion, regardless of whether there are hard and fast answers.

One region within beat and subdivision which has received a great deal of attention in modern jazz, introduced by Paul Desmond's *Take Five* but thoroughly expanded upon by Don Ellis, is complex time signatures. Groove pieces, rearrangement of standards and strophic originals have all become vehicles for the exploration of this area, composers from the traditionally-minded to the experimental (such as Anthony Braxton and Steve Lacy) incorporating it into their work. Dave Holland's groups are particularly noteworthy. There is one quality that divides the great work in this area from the rest, which runs the risk of becoming indistinguishable among all the complexity, and that is a recognition of the supremacy of melody. Like harmony, rhythm is an extrusion from melody, and untethered from it runs the risk of becoming intellectual exercise rather than visceral experience. Often, band members playing in complex time signatures are visibly each in their own head, disconnected from one another and their bodies, which is where the warp and woof of beat that makes odd metres so infuriatingly enticing is taking place. One model among several outside of jazz for melodically-based complex time signature playing is Bulgarian traditional music, which has the advantage of being designed for dancing and therefore necessitates a connection to the physical.

Now for a look at subdivision. It is a problematic area in jazz because of the concept of swing, which is usually explained as turning eighth note subdivision into a quarter note plus an eighth note under a triplet. Only the most staid of jazz bands would actually swing like this consistently though, it is a rough guide at best. From examination of actual practice, it is more accurate to say that the approach to subdivision in jazz is one of crossrhythm between beats. There is a general

preference for a triplet subdivision with the final third emphasised, but this is another area open for improvisation, as careful listening to any great soloist or drummer will testify. Ethan Iverson's interview with Wynton Marsalis at his Do the Math website talks about this explicitly, the most detailed discussion I've been able to find on the subject. Billie Holiday's phrasing is mentioned, whose approach has been described elsewhere as heightened speech, and it is in language that we find the closest analogy to jazz subdivision. Try transcribing a recorded sentence, your own or that of a great speaker, and you'll naturally be forced to switch between duple and triple. Setting poetry to music yields similar results, so it is no surprise that one finds a very refined approach to subdivision in the compositions and improvisation of Steve Lacy, who set hundreds of poems (his rhythmic conception in more traditional contexts is extremely underrated). Study of speech in these ways is, in my opinion, a far more beneficial, efficient and enjoyable way to get a good "feel" than spending hours practicing triplets. It's also a great way to incorporate another aspect of the natural world into your approach.

Finally, a subdivision exercise from Indian classical music which I have found to be very useful. In Hindustani music theory, there is a dedicated set of syllables used for rhythm, as though it were related more to language than mathematics (several world traditions have this feature, the advantages of which will be explored in the next rhythmic component). They are:

- 1 = TA
- 2 = TA KA
- 3 = TA KI TA
- 4 = TA KA DI MI (beyond 4, compounds are used)
- 5 = TA KI TA TA KA
- 6 = TA KI TA TA KI TA
- 7 = TA KA DI MI TA KI TA
- 8 = TA KA DI MI TA KA DI MI
- 9 = TA KA DI MI TA KI TA TA KA

The exercise is simply to set a metronome to 60bpm or thereabouts and begin by saying TA on every beat for several cycles. Then move to TA KA, where the KA divides the beat evenly in half. Proceed down the list every few cycles, doing your best to fit the entire "sentence" evenly into the beat, then go back up again. This will be shaky at first, but time spent on it will yield results in both practice and listening.

Groove

Like pulse, groove is one of those collective phenomena easily drained of power if approached from a too individualistic, overly analytical perspective. The success of Latin American musicians in holding on to the spirit of their groove is in no small part due to their refusal to let clave be subjected to excessive intellectual dissection. Yet this is not to say that groove shouldn't be analysed. Every genre finds an approach in this area which best suits the needs of its musicians, and having gone far beyond dedication to swing alone, it is natural for jazz players to favour the intellectual understanding which allows for a broader knowledge base. However, the weakness of our situation must also be acknowledged. To move from conceptual understanding to the purely experiential, physical one required to really groove eventually necessitates a letting go of intellectual control - the information storage system must give way to the living, breathing thing itself ("the map is not the territory"). This is a terrifying prospect for people like us raised in a culture where intellect is the primary method of relating to the world, doubly so in an academic context which is the pinnacle of intellectuality. It is only by learning to have complete faith in our physical selves, and those of our co-creators, that we can hope to balance the current breadth with the potential depth of our music.

The chapter on Trance and Improvisation in Jazz will take a more thorough look at this problem in relation to creativity as a whole, as it is the manifestation in rhythm of a larger challenge we face. But it is appropriate to reincorporate something from earlier at this point. In the Zen pulse exercise, one of the goals is to generate a character which is both defined by and defines the tempo. This paradox is one of the hallmarks of going outside the intellect, and it is just as applicable to groove. In a group, begin counting a time signature, aiming for consistency of emphasis on the beats (in 4/4, is 3 slightly stronger than 2 and 4, perhaps?). Once stable, transfer this to clapping or simple percussion instruments. As thinking gives way to experience through the repetitiveness, the character should appear, as though summoned as a spirit might be. To maintain it is challenge enough, but it can also be played with by allowing individuals to begin fleshing out the texture with improvised additions, or even doing a clapped solos. Beware though, this is when the intellect is most likely to switch back on again and the rhythm become counted rather than felt. Learn to feel the difference within yourself and admit when you're not in the zone. To solo without resorting to counting is truly difficult, but as the group becomes more proficient try two, three or more soloists while maintaining focus on the character.

One variation on this exercise is to insert between the initial counting and the transfer to clapping a period of gibberish counting. Numbers have such a strong

association with rationality that their use can make it difficult to enter into a flow state. This is why I like the classical Indian syllables in the subdivision exercise from earlier - their language emphasis allows for a more visceral perception of the experiences that the exercise presents. Likewise with gibberish here. It removes the intellectual safety that numbers provide, eroding the meta-commentary of analysis.

No discussion of groove would be complete without mention of position relative to the beat. One of the hallmarks of any truly groovy situation is the tendency for some performers to push the beat and other to drag behind it slightly. This is a naturally occurring phenomenon and also an expression of personal style at a very fine level. Even though these are tiny instances of time we're talking about here, it is partly the tension between them that generates the excitement felt, as though there is the slight suggestion that things just might fall apart. Of course, entering into this tension requires the kind of trust discussed above, a willingness to let go of control, all the more reason to develop fluency in going beyond the intellect.

Outside of its musical context, dictionaries define a groove as a cut or depression in solid material - perhaps to guide motion as in a record - or as a routine. Inside music, we often think of grooves as attached to particular genres, and genres are very often defined by their grooves, but as improvisors it is worth moving back towards the fundamental connotations of the word for the sake of freedom and flexibility. I would define a groove as any rhythmic pattern which appears to want to be repeated. This has its basis in our neurology. Just as in harmony, certain rhythmic patterns have a natural appeal to the human brain, for reasons that science has yet to decode but which are obviously real given the viral nature of musical genres. Our experience of this is both kinetic in the form of specific dance styles associated with the groove, and also dramatic - grooves are spoken of as having particular characters and these characters appeal to different kinds of people (think of the difference between rock'n'roll and hard rock). Any rhythmic pattern can be repeated indefinitely by a trained musician, but not all patterns have an inherent character that wants to do so, can entrance the brain to want to join in. This seeming aliveness is at the heart of the "summoning" of pulses and time signatures mentioned in the previous rhythmic components, and may be most applicable to groove. The musician must realise that a sense of effortlessness - leaning on something that appears outside of oneself, self-generating - is inherent in and definitive of groovy music. It makes music both more appealing to an audience and easier on the performer.

Finally in this introduction to the rhythmic components, as the engine which sustains its repetitions, groove is related to the meta-layer Form. A very interesting correlation between form and groove can be seen in the examination of the histories of genres. There are very few examples of changes in form that did not correspond with a change in groove. As the blocks of chords of early jazz shifted into the more flowing progressions of swing, rhythm became lighter and more sophisticated. When chords shifted to modes, a more polyrhythmic approach emerged, and abandoning traditional harmony unleashed pure momentum. Likewise in Jamaican music, ska to reggae to ragga were changes in form as much as groove.

Rhythmic components stretch no further outward along the layers than Form, analogous to the primarily physical, intellectually inscrutable nature of rhythm. “It don’t mean a thing if it ain’t got that swing” can be boiled down to the fact that it has to be felt to be worth anything.

A Brief Analysis of Famous Jazz Recordings

Using the Layers

Now that all of the material associated with the layers of jazz harmony has been introduced, we can begin to look at their application. As will be seen, while each layer can be focussed on individually for practice purposes, the ultimate goal is to achieve a kinetic fluency with all of them. This is achieved through the integration of motivation and listening, subjects dealt with in the next two chapters, but in the meantime I'd like to present three analyses of famous recordings to demonstrate how the layers are at work in the processes of jazz masters.

All such masters are aware of all of the layers and their interaction, even if only intuitively and most probably not in the terms I have used. Lester Young would have been aware of the relationship between chords and scales, for example, but perhaps not intellectually and certainly not as chord/scale theory. That having been said, personal and cultural factors lead to certain layers being favoured or highlighted in different performers. The way in which layers are understood and which ones express themselves most readily are the factors that result in individual and collective style.

Sidney Bechet: *Summertime*

Recorded in 1939 and the first instrumental rendition of this classic standard, like most music with its origins in early jazz the emphasis is firmly on the Melody and Chord layers. The theme and frequently the countermelody too are heard throughout the piece, kept constantly in the listener's awareness, and improvisation could best be described as arpeggiation with passing notes. This contrasts beautifully with Bechet's constant dipping into the Concrete Sound layer with wide, vocal vibrato and animal growls and slurs, especially given that his foil, guitarist Teddy Bunn, is unable to follow him into that area. That said, Bunn is far more present in the Interval layer than Bechet, introducing expressive wide jumps throughout.

It goes without saying that all of the musicians on this recording are proficient in the Notes layer, and the subtle use of space implies the same for Silence. Given the consistent approach and common cultural origin of this band, it is also reasonable to assume a strong degree of similarity in Pre-sound Conceptions. There is a

homogeneity of practice here, no juxtaposition of aesthetics as one might find in recordings of New Orleans figures playing with a swing band, for example, or contrasting approaches to the same style (e.g. Coleman Hawkins and Lester Young). Recorded on the cusp of swing's height of popularity, *Summertime* nevertheless has its roots planted squarely in early jazz, most noticeable in the unambiguous rhythm and subdivision.

Miles Davis: *So What* (from *Kind of Blue*)

This track, recorded in 1959 and introducer of modalism to a wider jazz audience, begins with something of a subversion of the Melody layer. To have the bass play the theme, at the point where the expectation is for it to be delivered as obviously as possible, and relegating the horns to a limited accompaniment role, de-emphasises the importance of an overarching melody tying everything together (as was the case in *Summertime*) and focusses attention on other considerations instead. The Chord layer is honoured - this is not polymodalism - but of course it is Modal Background that is the star here. Chromaticism is flirted with in the form of blues notes, but the sophisticated atmosphere pretty much precludes entry into the Concrete Sound layer save for some instrumental tonal colouring. Moving inwards through the layers, despite its lessened influence Melody is clearly at the heart of soloing (Coltrane's "sheets of sound" and Evans's clusters straining somewhat against this), but there is also a heightened emphasis on intervals, intervallic patterns and held or repeated notes. The spacious context lends added meaning to these simple techniques, and gives Silence an especially prominent role.

This spaciousness also has the effect of allowing Pre-sound Conceptions to express themselves particularly eloquently. By this point in jazz, having passed through bebop and the blind emulation of it, it was clear enough to anyone who understood the music that it was about having a personal voice, interpreting the tradition in one's own way. With its extreme evening out of harmonic movement, *So What* denies the musician any theoretical or lick-based hiding places. Fundamental conceptions of how and why the music works for one are more readily revealed. Obviously, it is impossible to know exactly what these were for the members of the Miles Davis Sextet that day, but there are clear differences between soloists. Thanks to the context, perhaps bigger differences than had ever been possible in jazz before. All of them consider their work to be art, Cannonball Adderley least so. His light phrasing and somewhat less focussed development of ideas hint at the funky pop direction his music would take, and provide a welcome contrast to Davis and Coltrane. The former of these clearly believes in the logical development of ideas, the solo as a platform to make a single, cogent, almost philosophical statement. The latter, on the

other hand, with his repetitions, held notes and blues inflections comes across more as impassioned preacher delivering an insistent sermon on the highest truth. Bill Evans's riffing over the horn figures is another contrast, a Zen-like willingness to be blown this way and that while maintaining a connection with personal inspiration. While none of these observations are hard and fast conceptions as such, they are at the very least intimations of the different value systems informing each of these singular musicians, without which they simply wouldn't have been who they were.

Rhythmically speaking, *Kind of Blue* was recorded at a time when swing was still everything to jazz musicians, in the same way that clave remains now to their Latin counterparts. Jimmy Cobb grooves and fills with taste and easy eloquence, the polyrhythms later introduced through modalism not even hinted at. The most daring rhythmic innovations here are in the subdivisions of the soloists, who all seem inspired by the less restrictive harmony to vocal levels of subtlety in that area.

A final point related to Form. *So What* might be harmonically innovative, but it still falls into the category of AABA structure, the staple of standards. However, with the addition of the introduction (by Gil Evans) and the very clever way in which the horns are used to bolster the piano voicings - three times out of four from the second A onwards in the head and slightly varied behind the piano solo - an entirely different effect is achieved. It is as though we're listening to a chamber ensemble playing a through-composed arrangement rather than a jazz sextet jamming on a standard structure, which is only heightened by the (unintentional?) walking of the bass in the first A of the final theme. A truly masterful crafting of form.

Albert Ayler: *Ghosts: First Variation* (from *Spiritual Unity*)

From the very first stuttered notes of this track, recorded in 1964, it is clear that we're in a world heavily indebted to the Concrete Sound layer. This is quickly balanced by a bold melodic introduction, though, which hints at chromaticism but finally resolves into a chordal march. Four layers are hinted at in the first ten seconds, by a solo saxophone - a bold statement and no small feat. The melody continues in the march vein, accompanied now by bass in very harmonic fashion, yet both melodic instruments seem to be on the brink of sliding into Concrete Sound throughout, somewhat like Bechet earlier. Sunny Murray's drums hiss subtly throughout, grounded in momentum and providing contrast to the regular pulse and perceptibly changing duple/triple subdivisions of the melody.

A quick note on the form of the theme. Phrases are grouped in twos, each group beginning with the same material, creating an AA'BB'CC' structure. This kind of form is less common in jazz - one early example being Ellington's *Rockin' in Rhythm* - but came into increased use from the '60s onwards (Steve Lacy explored it very thoroughly). The effect here, particularly given the march-like quality of the melodic content, is of a harkening back to folk or traditional music, a beautiful contrast with the modernity of approach.

Now to improvisation. Ayler's solo may seem chaotic, but the layers of jazz harmony are just as applicable here as elsewhere. Let us note the clarity with which he phrases. He is clearly as comfortable in the Silence layer as any of the other musicians discussed in this chapter and is sculpting his statements with care. Initial improvisation is familiar from the introduction - chromatic melody interspersed with chordal march - which is clever usage in itself, but this gives way to other techniques too. Swift, gestural scalar runs meet with low register honks, rapidly repeated cells of notes become blistering harmonics, overblown intervallic jumping leads to plaintive wail. The overall trend seems to be to contrast and weave material from the Concrete Sound layer with that of other layers. A broad skill set is on display, this is no technical slouch at work, and neither is it someone insensitive to the subtleties of intelligent musical structuring. Likewise with Gary Peacock on bass. While these musicians choose to base their vocabularies in extended techniques, language structures and Concrete Sound, they are far from limited to them. All of the layers can express themselves with natural, personal fluency, allowing this trio to command a depth of artistry of the highest order.

One of the biggest advantages of the system of jazz harmony I propose is that it can enable us to see beyond the hype or prejudice that unusual vocabulary and other factors subject to sensationalisation can generate. It is the overall creative skill of the performer that should concern us, whether one enjoys the music itself or not. The layers can help us to dig deeper than personal preference, and develop appreciation that operates on a different level. This goes for the noise music fan and his opinion of early jazz as much as for the traditionalist and free improvisation. In the end, it is us who benefit most from cultivating this cooler judgement as it serves not only to broaden our tastes and interests but brings objectivity to the work we do on our own music.

Finally in this analysis of *Ghosts*, the solidarity of conception among these musicians is extremely strong. Not since early jazz had there been such unity in the purpose of the music as there was during the free revolution. I have attributed this to the shared desire to establish the improvised spirit of jazz as the centre of the creative process, and that is certainly what one finds on this album. Through the maelstrom of different

sounds, one can intuit a bigger picture of or higher perspective on the music, influencing its immediate creation and overall direction. This is the group mind, only accessible through connectedness in the Pre-sound Conceptions layer. While necessarily present in such great earlier recordings as *So What*, in these cases it is often accompanied by an individualism that serves to balance it, allowing for more popular appeal. Absorption in group mind requires selflessness, a willingness to let go of ideas of who one is and how others perceive one, to be fully present with bandmates and open to any possibility. The degree of ability among all members of an ensemble to do this defines how successfully it can free improvise. Seen from this perspective, it is no surprise that musicians associated with free-jazz drew inspiration from those world spiritual traditions that emphasise ego dissolution.

Integrating Motivation

We've now arrived at what is possibly the most sensitive area of this system, a discussion of motivation. What motivates us can be so personal that, not only is it difficult to put into words, it's often difficult to recognise within ourselves. At this point, the role of the teacher becomes more that of mentor, and it is wise only to engage in this kind of interaction if the instructive relationship is a trusting and comfortable one. If you are a teacher in this position, it's vital to be willing and prepared to share your own internal workings and discoveries if that's what you're hoping for in return from the student.

We've seen how motivation is represented as passing through the layers - it is the essential active principle of the whole model. The layers represent static knowledge which can be acquired and honed through theoretical understanding or physical repetition. Even the most internal of layers, Pre-sound Conceptions, is about ideas - "what is music?" or "what is music for?". Motivation poses us the question "why are you playing music?".

The fact is that music is an incredibly demanding art form, with very little practical reward in the modern world for most performers. So there must be something powerful at work for one to be willing to dedicate oneself to learning jazz. If that strong intention is not explored and freed of restrictions unknowingly placed on it, there is no amount of theoretical knowledge or practice that will allow the musician to play to their full potential.

In the model proposed by this document, the fundamental idea is that motivation which is biased will be unable to engage every layer as it passes through. It is difficult to be more specific than this as there is so much room for variation here, but allow me give a few examples.

Example 1

A young man whose father is a jazz saxophonist wishes to follow in his footsteps. This stems from an unconscious desire to please his father, a distant man who was away touring a lot when the young man was a boy, unable to give him the affection he desired. The young man is a brilliant tenor saxophonist because of early exposure to the instrument, but feels distanced from his audience and is often accused of being overly technical and soloing too long.

The problem here is that the young man's desire to please his father is unconscious. His interest in pursuing music is coloured by the fact that the choice of tenor sax is an attempt to bridge the gap he feels between them. He has distanced himself from his emotions to avoid dealing with this pain, which is only reinforced by the music he's involved in reminding him of his father. When he applies his motivation to his considerable skill set, he is unable to connect with the emotional elements (layers 3, 4 & 5) because of this distancing. The effort he's putting into long solos reflect his struggle to keep emotions in check while constantly being reminded of them.

Rendering this feedback loop conscious can happen in one of two ways. If the emotional problem is brought to the surface through therapy, this young man's playing will eventually improve in the problem areas. Alternatively, a music teacher aware of the connection between motivational issues and the layers and close enough to the young man to know about and offer comments on his family situation can offer advice on means to tackle the problem through music. Slow practice to emphasise the emotional content of songs - especially songs with a paternal theme, that he associates with his father or has even composed for him - or switching to alto sax or another woodwind instrument might be examples of paths that would lead to breakthroughs in understanding of both himself and his music.

It should be noted that, for the same reason that we naturally hold ourselves away from our pain, there could be resistance in this young man to trying these musical techniques out. A trusting, nonjudgemental relationship with the teacher and an awareness of the theory behind the suggested exercises can both be of help. However, there is absolutely no substitute for the student's own desire to get to the root of the problem.

Example 2

A woman from a conservative background discovered a talent in her teenage years for instrument construction and improvised music making which blossomed into a fruitful career, despite her family's warnings. Now in her thirties, she finds herself stuck in a creative loop and typecast as an aggressive maker of noise music.

She is already familiar with psychology and alternative ways of thought, and chooses to compare herself against the layers described above. She finds that while the extreme end layers are very well developed, number 5 to 8 are aspects that are not just wholly missing from her music but which she is sometimes actively critical of. There is a connection in her mind between the cool rationality of music's theoretical

side and the lack of passion with which her parents expected her to lead her life. In the same way that her creativity had an element of rebellion to it, so she has been unconsciously rebelling against a theoretical approach to music.

Her parents' expectations were also based on her gender, so she naturally feels a need to project a powerful, masculine image to the world, including through her music. So delicacy, particularly that of melody, has consequently been neglected.

Once these have been made conscious, a whole slew of creative possibilities present themselves. She can begin making instruments structured to more scientific principles, use hand signals to introduce greater variety into improvisations, base pieces on modes or over chords, compose emotional melodies to incorporate. Finding such solutions is not the difficulty here though, they generally present themselves once the larger obstacle of unconscious associations - blocks to the natural flow of motivation - are overcome.

To clarify again briefly, I'm not saying that we are all naturally motivated to master all of the layers. But an attitude of curiosity towards them is healthy - and dismissal and obsession unhealthy - whether one actually explores them all or not. As this example demonstrates, theoretical layers can be approached from a free improvisor's perspective too. The ideal is to have an understanding of what each layer means to you personally.

Example 3

A bassist from an averagely creative background, inspired to take up jazz by recordings of the great innovators of the music, found a steady, well-paying job after studying at college, into which he settled for 20 years. He now finds himself the butt of jokes, especially from the younger players he encounters at work, and is eventually able to admit to himself that there is some truth in the nickname "workhorse" that they use behind his back. He has lost all joy in making music, it has become rote, and he's tired of it.

In conversation with a fellow musician friend about the problem, he encounters the idea of motivation passing through layers of understanding. He finds that he has adverse reactions to the Note and Interval layers when they're presented to him, considering them too elementary to be worth exploring. Because he has been unconsciously fuelled by the desire to innovate like his heroes, all of his attention has been on the advanced technical and theoretical content of the music, which alone cannot be sustained over the long term.

By returning to practice of basic fundamentals, now including incorporating his voice into his musicality, a sense of flow and phrasing enters his performance. His listening tastes broaden to include easy-swinging jazz, and he starts to enjoy the experience of just being present onstage with the other musicians, without concern for innovation.

Encouraged by these result, he returns to the layers and realises that, although the abstract chromatic patterns of number 8 are very familiar to him, pure noise has always been somewhat meaningless. He begins experimenting with free improvisations and finds an outlet for some unusual attacks his recent exploration of basic technique revealed. These eventually make their way into his performance at work too, surprising and delighting his bandmates.

These three examples, and this discussion of motivation in general, highlight one of the basic truths of creativity: the artist and his work are extremely intimately connected. The music we produce is an expression of our acquired knowledge and skill, but not only that. Our subconscious - our deeper, hidden processes - also makes a contribution. This is especially true of jazz, which not only demands more personal input than the conscious mind could possibly provide but is forged in the moment. The pressure of such instantaneous creation exposes our best and worst qualities, and if we're not willing to work with the negative inside us as well as the positive, we cannot reach our full potential. The "inner game" must be as important as the external skill.

My own experience with motivational issues is one of the main impetuses behind writing this document. I consider overcoming some very large subconscious blocks to be among my finest achievements. Raised by a homophobic father, for many years I was deeply closeted, unable to admit my attraction to other men even to myself. While I worked hard at music, the flow required to be a convincing improviser always eluded me. It was a constant, mostly unsuccessful struggle. Eventually, in my twenties and self-sufficient, I started to admit my feeling to myself. The first time I told someone, it was like a different person speaking through my mouth! The effect on my music was almost instant. Suddenly ideas were coming to me smoothly, if anything in too big a supply. Levels of music I'd heard people talk about but dismissed, particularly social aspects, sprung up in my awareness wanting to be dealt with. I realised that my dislike of bebop came from a fear of advanced technique, which requires a connection to the body that I couldn't allow myself previously. I started to appreciate the emotional, especially romantic, content of songs. It wasn't until my 30th year, when I discovered and began practicing Lennie

Tristano's study method, which deals with emotional content as much as technique, that I feel like I had any grasp of what it really means to be involved in making music.

I'm very grateful for this experience of self-discovery - though it would've been nice if it could've happened a little earlier on in my life! - because it has left me with a lasting understanding of how influential the subconscious is. Without its wholehearted cooperation, we cannot operate at our best in either life or, by extension, creativity. In fact, I remain convinced that the central thing that we're responding to when we enjoy Coltrane, Miles, Parker, Armstrong or any other great jazz musician is the unreserved participation of every part of their being - especially the elusive subconscious.

An Active Model Through Listening

If motivation is the most sensitive area of this model, then listening is the coup de grâce, the cherry on top, the bow that ties it all together. Whereas motivation moves from the internal world to the external, active listening allows us to connect the external - fellow performers, the audible results of the our own creative process and other random factors - back to the internal. We now have a feedback loop.

The operative word here is active. We've all heard about how important it is to listen to the people that you're playing with, to the point where it's something of a cliché. But it is our job as musicians, perhaps our highest priority, to find meaning in the oft-repeated adage. It is not enough to simply have our ear on the soloist, or let habit take over for a second while we give others a moment of attention. What we play should come from a natural, cultivated response to what we hear other people doing. This is the only way that a jazz band can be a true breeding ground for personal style. Nothing should be taken for granted, any and every approach must be recognised and supported, superhuman flexibility should be the least one expects of oneself.

This is why free improvisation is such a valuable tool for the jazz musician. In this context, listening can be placed as a higher priority than any other activity, including playing, and one can explore natural responses free from the concern that they may not fit with some imposed structure. Once restrictions are reintroduced, perhaps in the form of a beat or chord progression, keeping listening as the prioritised activity becomes the challenge. But in the process, many of the major problems faced by jazz musicians (use of silence, generating new material, overall solo structure, for example) solve themselves.

The finest example, expression of and exercise for active listening, even better than free improvisation, is John Cage's *4'33"*. In the composer's words, from the score: "The title of this work is the total length in minutes and seconds of its performance. At Woodstock, N.Y., August 2, 1952, [first performance] the title was *4'33"* and the three parts were *33"*, *2'40"*, and *1'20"*. It was performed by David Tudor, pianist, who indicated the beginnings of parts by closing, the endings by opening, the keyboard lid...However, the work may be performed by any instrumentalist(s) and the movements may last any length of time." Cage also talked about doing "performances" of this piece while on walks through the countryside, the climax of one such constitutional being a startled deer rushing across his path and into the foliage. While there is clearly humour here, John Cage took *4'33"* as seriously as he

did any piece of music, even naming it his most important composition.

In the same way that anything placed in a gallery becomes art, anything that is actively listened to becomes music (the difference between these two being that while not everyone is a gallery curator, anybody can listen!). By listening to someone intently, you are essentially turning anything they do into music. Fair enough, this is a subjective difference, but it changes your attitude towards them, and that can make a big difference practically if you're creating music together. The active listener is compassionate towards their subject and truly takes on board whatever they do. They are affected and changed by the act of listening in a way that is not possible with superficial attention. There is a deeper emotional connection, the subconscious becomes involved.

It is no coincidence that Cage was under the influence of Zen Buddhism when he conceived of *4'33"*. Attentiveness such as this piece demands is one of the key principles of Zen meditation and lifestyle, and actually underpins spiritual practice of most kinds. When we exercise attentiveness, elements of ourselves that are usually engaged in disparate, sometimes competing tasks are brought together in the most subtle part of our makeup, awareness (which, it is worth noting, is not the same as our conscious mind). As one gains proficiency in it, attentiveness has the power to allow the conscious and unconscious minds to harmonise their very often conflicting interests. In other words, active listening is another way to naturally analyse and purify one's motivation.

To summarise, the model I propose as a basis for jazz education is a feedback loop. Motivation passes through the layers of acquired knowledge and skill, from which it selects freely - based on current needs - because it has been rid of biases. The results and their overall context are perceived through active listening, which allows the perceiver a heightened awareness of both the external situation and their internal reaction to it. This perception in turn prompts the choices motivation makes, and so on around and around. The conscious mind can be a part of this process, but it is not in control of it. This is what is referred to in Asian spiritual texts as not-doing, more on which is included in the chapter *Trance and Improvisation in Jazz*.

I believe that this feedback loop is at work in any and every great jazz performance, and that a lack of awareness of or attention to this wider creative context that music theory is only a part of, is the fundamental problem with modern academic jazz education.

My favourite example of someone who embodies this idea of motivation and active listening working in perfect unison is ubiquitous swing drummer Jo Jones. In videos (see *The Sound of Jazz*), he is always relaxed, joyous and incredibly attentive, and not a single drum stroke is out of place. He has perfect taste and is seemingly effortless. But this is hardly the only example. The classic John Coltrane Quartet, even at its most thrashingly intense, is incredibly attentive. Attentiveness doesn't have to mean subdued or serious results either. The playfulness of Monk's interactions with Charlie Rouse and their various rhythm sections have their origin in active listening and freedom of action. And one would be hard-pressed to find a better example of pure, exuberant pleasure in the act of collective creativity than Steve Lacy's sextet. Finally, John Zorn's penchant for directing with hand signals in his *Masada* (and other) groups brings the musicians' already high need for attentiveness into another realm altogether.

The Social Aspect of Improvisation

As I'm sure is the case for you too, I've been lucky enough to see some incredible musical performances in my life. What is less common for a jazz musician is that I've also developed an interest and some skill in improvised theatre, performing that as much as music over the last few years. Steve Lacy's advice to be open to all of the arts also encouraged me to take a workshop with a major figure in Butoh (a heavily improvised Japanese dance form) and take a habit of extemporaneous doodling more seriously.

In all of the collectively improvised activities that I've encountered, whether as performer or audience member, I have found the feedback loop that active listening initiates to be of primary importance in the success of that performance. Are the artists paying attention to one another at a deeper level? Do their actions flow unencumbered from that awareness? If the answer to these is mostly yes, it is pretty much guaranteed that something of worth will stay with one after the performance is over. If the artists are masters of these skills, then their power to blow one away becomes unquestionable.

Artists who reach this level exhibit certain social skills, natural byproducts of attentive listening, which can also be included in education as a means of making it easier to enter into the feedback loop. These skills are especially well codified in improv theatre, it being the least abstract of the improvised arts, and most clearly by Keith Johnstone (who considers theatre a branch of anthropology) and Viola Spolin.

The broadest of the skills is an awareness of social status. As primates, we have an incredibly sophisticated, often unconscious understanding of this. We can tell from a glance at someone's body language whether they tend to high or low status, and many of our everyday disagreements are in fact thinly veiled status battles.

This applies to music in two ways. Firstly, there is a natural status built in to the physics of the instruments we play. If a trumpeter and a flautist play the same note at the same time, the trumpet's richer harmonic series means the flute can barely be heard. The trumpet is more powerful, therefore higher status. The fact that the human brain processes higher sounds first also has the implication of lower instruments generally taking lower status, again depending on tonal qualities. Compare, for example, an acoustic bass and tenor sax combination - where the sax is clearly top dog - with a tuba and piccolo duo. The balance is less obvious and more dependant on content in the second. Change that piccolo to a flute, and the less piercing tone and diminished top register tend to favour the tuba as the stronger.

Of course, it also depends on how the instrument is used, and that is the second way in which status applies to music. One can approach a powerful, high status instrument such as the tenor sax quietly and subtly, like Lester Young, or a low status instrument aggressively like Charles Mingus on bass. It's very important to develop an awareness of one's natural musical status preferences in order to choose ideal bandmates, but also to be able to play with one's status and be a diverse performer.

To summarise, the higher status one's instrument, the more danger of accidentally overpowering fellow performers, so the greater the need for flexibility of status (I'm talking to you, drummers!). Simultaneously, players of low status instruments need to know how to take charge when necessary. I hope it's clear that I'm not advocating any particular status preference, just an awareness of it. The Jimmy Giuffre trio's introverted musings are just as valid as the high energy bordering on competitiveness of the Coltrane quartet. But if they were always competitive or introverted, we would not respond in the same way that we do. Keith Johnstone defines friendship as the ability to freely change status with someone, and this is as true in music as elsewhere.

As a little coda on the subject, it's worth noting that the magical moment in *So What* on *Kind of Blue*, when the rhythm section kicks in and Miles plays the first few notes of his solo, owes part of its power to a shift in status. Previously, the bass - usually lowest in the pecking order - had been leading with the melody, while the horns were in the accompaniment role. When all of that gets reversed to what we're used to normally, and for a brief moment we're left unsure of who's going to be "in charge", it makes Miles's intro all the more electrifying.

The Golden Rules of Improvisation

The remaining social skills that are a product of active listening are more easily explained, so I've listed them here with minimal notes.

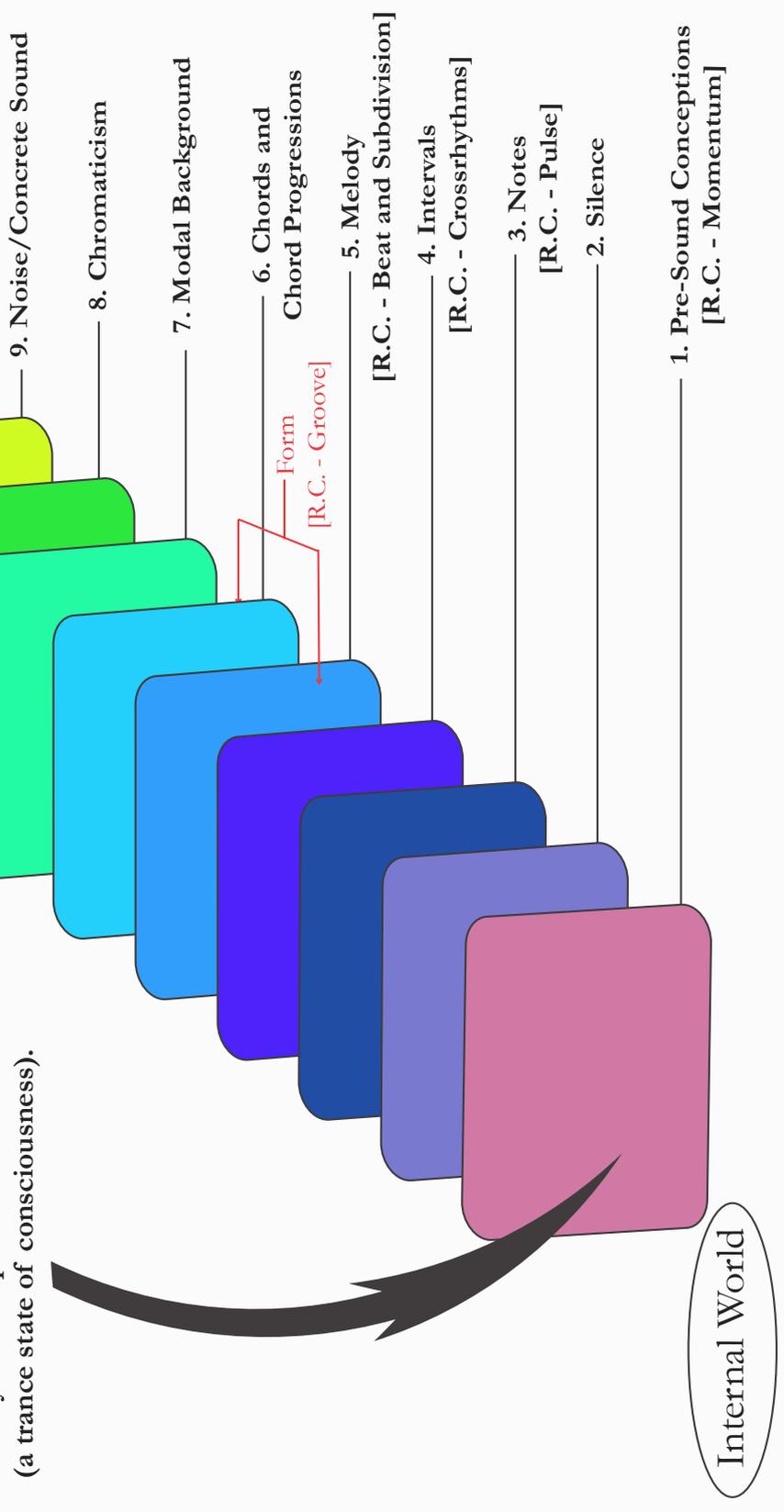
- Listening is more important than doing, doing should arise from listening.
- "The improviser has to realise that the more obvious he is, the more original he appears" (Keith Johnstone, *Impro*). More on this in the chapter Trance and Improvisation in Jazz.
- Make others look good and you look good automatically (echoing Monk's exhortation to Lacy to "make the drummer sound good").
- Desire to delight fellow players.
- Whether the challenge is from outside oneself or within, go towards the danger. An audience can feel when you're playing it safe, and can conversely be brought to the edge of its seats by simple risks. It boils down to a willingness to be vulnerable onstage.
- Be open to everything that's happening, whether outside oneself or within, intentional or not. These are called offers in improv theatre. Keith Johnstone in *Impro* again: "Once you learn to accept offers, then accidents can no longer interrupt the action." The reason great jazz musicians appear not to make any mistakes, yet can still excite us, is that they have learned to flow with the offers they receive.
- Let yourself be changed by what happens onstage. The definition of routine - which is the opposite of improvisation - is not allowing oneself to be changed.

I am in the process of designing exercises and games for improvising musicians based on improv theatre, with the express aim of helping cultivate these skills in an academic context. Free improvisation is also a great way of working on them, and I have found the compositions of Steve Lacy (especially the more restrictive, abstract ones, such as *Stamps*) to be very helpful too. But it is worth remembering that these are all natural extensions of active listening, for which there is no substitute.

External World

The external world reconnected with the internal world through **ACTIVE LISTENING**.

A feedback loop forms which allows for genuine spontaneity and deepens social interaction (a trance state of consciousness).



A Compendium of Restrictions

An ongoing collection of possible restrictions that can be used to limit the freedom of improvising musicians for performance, composition and education purposes. It is not recommended that these be selected from and combined at random except for occasionally in personal practice. Particularly in education, they must be chosen very carefully, to meet needs clearly perceived in the student, with the intention of helping them enter into a creative flow state rather than on the whim or out of the curiosity of the teacher. These are tools, and their effectiveness depends on skilled use.

Harmonic Restrictions

- Specific pitch (e.g. C4)
- Selection of pitches
- Single note (any octave)
- Selection of notes:
 - Random
 - Pentatonic
 - Scale or mode
- Specific interval
- Selection of intervals
- Single chord
- Chord changes or progression
- Voice leading
- Tonality:
 - Metascale
 - Polymodalism
 - Improvised chord changes
- “Inside” and “outside”

Rhythmic Restrictions

- Momentum
- Changing tempo

- Consistent tempo:
 - Pulse
 - Time signature
 - Groove
- Rhythmic pattern
- Inspired by (“off”) a rhythmic pattern

Melodic Restrictions

- A melody or melodic fragment
- Phrasing:
 - Number of notes
 - Melodic shape
 - In relation to resolution:
 - Always/never resolving
 - Call and response
 - Tension levels (as in colour harmony)
 - Extend and advance (develop or move on)
- Embellishments
- Off a melody

Social Restrictions

- Solo
- Accompany
- Solo order
- Group improvisation
- Conversation
- Group solo (with or without accompaniment)
- Pecking order (imposed status hierarchy)
- Improvising conductor

Other Restrictions

- Language structure
- Pre-sound conception
- A game (restrictions combined with a goal of some kind)

Trance and Improvisation in Jazz

A great deal has been said in this document about personal expression and discovering one's own artistic voice. The time has come to deal with exactly what this means.

The Monk-Bhagavan Equation

Two quotations can frame personal creativity for us in a way which is relatively easy to understand. The first is by Thelonious Monk: "A genius is the one most like himself." A direct relationship between creative ability and self-understanding is posited here. From Monk's perspective, technique, theoretical knowledge and all other factors are relegated to being inferior skills underneath knowing who you are. While this fits very nicely with the polyfree approach to education detailed above, especially in the area of motivation, it leaves the artist with the very reasonable question "well, who am I?".

This is one of the most fundamental questions of human existence, and every ideology from militant atheism to new age spirituality weighs in with an opinion (in fact, ideologies are defined by their answers here). However, among the world views that have most inspired individualistically creative artists since the globalisation of ideas - tribalism, shamanism, Taoism, Hinduism, Sufism, Zen Buddhism, Bahá'í - there is a mystical leaning that offers a surprisingly consistent outlook on how we can improve our understanding of ourselves. This is particularly well formulated by Indian guru Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi (1879-1950), of the advaita school of Hinduism, whose consistent and practical teachings also draw comparison to Zen. He said that "Knowing oneself is only being oneself." To put this in context, action based on superficial thought about who I am must give way to how I act naturally, when I am unconditioned, if I want to be creative in a personal way. "Be as you are" - to quote Bhagavan again - not as you think you are.

To summarise how these two quotations work together: personal expression is most dependant on self-knowledge, self-knowledge is arrived at through action free of self-defining thought.

Process Oriented Psychology (POP)

Inherent in the second part of the equation above is the view that there is something counterproductive or even unnatural in many of the opinions that we hold about ourselves. Process Oriented Psychology, a branch of Jungian psychoanalysis, is useful in understanding and can even provide proof of this. It was originally founded on the observation that unusual physical symptoms are mirrored in dream experiences and vice versa. For example, someone who unknowingly tenses their jaw when they're unable to express themselves at work might dream of having their jawbone replaced with a mechanical one and biting their boss. To the POP psychologist, the chronic jaw pain, the dream and the emotions involved are all manifestations of the same thing trying to happen, perhaps in this case a need to be more assertive.

The model used by POP for the human being is of a conscious mind which of necessity has a fixed definition of self, atop a subconscious which has no such definition, freely exploring and responding to the data of the senses. There is already a parallel here with the idea that who we think we are may not actually be accurate all of the time. Limitations imposed by the conscious mind's self-definition are called edges, and psychological problems are seen as conflicts between edges and the natural workings of the subconscious. The process oriented psychologist's role, then, is as a facilitator for the conscious mind, to help it accept those parts of its overall self that it resists. This is made easier for the therapist by the fact that, the body being the realm of the subconscious, the quality being resisted by the conscious mind will often appear somehow in physicality unnoticed by the patient. For example, people brought up to believe that they're particularly passive, yet find themselves in a situation where it is natural to express the aggressive tendencies we all have, may display them in sudden gestures or a tense or loud voice, without realising. Ironically, they will get offended when others suggest that they're aggressive, even though that's the message that their physicality is sending. This is termed a double signal. The main difficulty for the psychologist is that the quality causing the problem is by definition the one that the conscious mind is least willing to accept in itself, so techniques such as mirroring and role-play and free movement are used to facilitate self-understanding. Rather than an illness that requires treatment, psychological problems are processes that need to be played with until expressed consciously.

The founder of POP, Arnold Mindell, has gone on to study with the shamans of several indigenous peoples and continuously pushed his theories to include analogies with politics (deep democracy) and quantum physics (entanglement). He is heavily published - I particularly recommend *The Shaman's Body* - and has lead thousands of workshops all over the planet as well as working with large

multinational corporations on internal problems. One of Mindell's students, Lane Arye, has specialised in the application of POP to musicians and artists in general. It is in his book, *Unintentional Music: Releasing Your Deepest Creativity*, that one can find example after example of creative people unconsciously limiting themselves because of an inability to accept the natural workings of their subconscious, as described above. It is in the acceptance by the conscious mind of one's entire self - as the ongoing process of development that it is - that true personal expression is found.

This is especially true of jazz, and any form of expression that employs improvisation. In order to improvise, a willingness to accept offers (an improv theatre term you might remember) from the subconscious on a moment-by-moment basis must be cultivated if the art is to remain truly spontaneous, to the point where any break in the flow is noticeable by the audience. This includes an attitude to mistakes that sees them as attempts by the subconscious to communicate something useful rather than as errors on the part of the performer.

The Intelligence Fingerprint

Another modern theory of self that can shed some light on personal creativity is that of multiple intelligences. In the words of education expert Sir Ken Robinson, "We think about the world in all the ways we experience it." So there is an emotional intelligence, a kinaesthetic one, aural, visual and so on, as well as the intellectual ability the word usually makes us think of. This idea has led to the concept of an intelligence fingerprint, that each of us has a unique pattern of strengths and weaknesses woven into our skills for relating to and interacting with the world. Who we are both creatively and otherwise is an expression of this fingerprint.

But clearly not all of us are connected to all of our intelligences, having been brought up in a culture that emphasises the intellectual. And if POP is brought into the equation, it could also be the case that some of us are actively hostile towards some of our ways of thinking, they being a part of our subconscious. If the aim is to accept ourselves as we are, not only those areas of intelligence one has strength and weakness in must be considered, but also those areas that one is able to access consciously. It is conceivable that there are people out there who are geniuses in areas of intelligence that they simply haven't been put in touch with. Conscious effort is insufficient to make that connection.

To summarise for the time being, in order to be creative it is fair to say that we must be willing to go outside ourselves as we think we are. This model of creativity is

supported by countless quotations from artists, for example Igor Stravinsky's comment "I am the vessel through which The Rite [of Spring] passed" and Steve Lacy's that "when the music really takes place, well, you're gone, the musician is gone" (*Lift the Bandstand* documentary).

Beyond the Conscious

There is a word for accessing areas of ourselves outside our conscious minds, and that word is trance. Another expression meaning the same thing is altered state of consciousness, an unaltered one being our everyday mode of experiencing, which is of course a little different for everybody (people whose everyday state differs too much from the average are often social outcasts of various different kinds).

Noticeably altered states can be induced by extreme emotional situations, exercise, drugs, art and meditation, and other spiritual and religious practices both ascetic and ecstatic. It has also been suggested that our evolution into language use and the self-consciousness that comes with it may have been prompted by exposure to psychedelic (literally "revealing the mind") substances found in nature. Whether true or not, it is clear from any examination of human behaviour that trance and altered states are a fundamental part of our makeup.

Modern culture has a very poor record in dealing with trance, in fact by and large it has tried to wipe it out. This is most apparent in colonial history, where invading cultures went to huge lengths to criminalise indigenous trance-based traditions. The problem in this case stems from the rise to power of the Christian church in Europe, which desired to be the sole means of contact with the higher powers of the universe that trance states often appear to give us. It thus needed to invalidate the individual's connection to experiences outside the conscious mind.

Keith Johnstone, one of the originators of improvised theatre, has gone as far as to say that nowadays we live in a culture that is afraid of trance. Yet this is gradually changing. The repercussions of our current limited-trance social structure are coming back to haunt us in multiple ways, from environmental concerns to the failure of our leadership systems. Increasingly, individuals are attempting to reconnect in a personal way with higher powers, whether perceived as supernatural or otherwise, as a remedy to these problems. This ongoing trend is stereotypically exemplified by the hippie movement of the 1960s, but a more recent example can be found in Graham Hancock's talk *The War on Consciousness*.

We have already noted that true improvisation is defined by an ongoing willingness to accept cues from outside the conscious mind. It is thus a trance experience, and

the presence of trance can be traced throughout jazz history in particular. The music's traditionally strong relationship with drugs and the outsider status of its musicians in the eyes of both the authorities and their own community - as though they were flirting with something taboo - are signs of this. Consider also the ritual clothing, especially in bebop. Plus there's the fact that almost every great innovator in jazz has been African American, attributable to the fact that the coloured population is less distantly removed from a culture of trance than their European counterparts. Finally, it is worth noticing how the emergence of free-jazz, which I posited earlier made a definitive statement about the nature of jazz as a whole, coincides with the return to awareness of trance in Western culture in the 1960s, this return having had a powerful effect on all of the arts. Sun Ra's Arkestra and The Art Ensemble of Chicago are two examples of a wholehearted embrace of multiple aspects of trance in jazz, but it is a vein that runs much deeper and less obviously.

Mask and Identity

The concept of accessing altered states may still be unclear to some readers, so I'd like to offer a concrete example and relate that to one of the ways I believe trance operates in jazz.

One of colonialism's methods for establishing its hold on an indigenous population was to ban rituals involving masks. These masks were believed to have the power to invoke the deity or spirit they represented in the one wearing them, visibly changing body language and behaviour. The mask tradition has been reclaimed by Keith Johnstone and Steve Jarand, among others, as a facet of modern theatre. The process begins by donning a mask, usually covering the top half of the face, and being shown the resulting combination in a head-sized mirror. Facial features are such a large part of our self-identity that, by fitting the jaw shape to the mask and making sounds that complement its character, the actor transcends him or herself and becomes a different person. Masks being archetypal caricatures of normal human faces, the resulting personalities are larger than life, like spirits or demons, and can hold an entrancing fascination for audiences.

I have had several opportunities to work with masks in this way. The experience is of being taken over by an outside power, as in hypnotism, and observing the actions and even thought processes of the mask character without identifying with them. In fact, identification with them guarantees and is the definition of leaving the trance state. Someone using a particular mask for the first time is unable to talk intelligibly or intellectualise, but the mask character can gradually be taught to do both, and for the original observing identity, it's like watching oneself learn as a child again. I once

asked a mask instructor to show me how to play a slide whistle while wearing a mask I knew to be an eager-to-please personality. The sheer unalloyed joy, free from any intellectual baggage, of discovering music making again is not something I'm going to forget for a while.

In the same way that a mask can overwhelm one's visual self-image and induce a trance state, I believe that the way one sounds can do the same. Improvising horn players are essentially creating a "voice mask" to allow themselves to transcend the conscious mind and more readily accept offers from the subconscious, specifically those aspects of their intelligence fingerprint outside normal awareness. For keyboardists and guitarists, it's as though their proprioceptive identity, how things feel, has taken on a new, sonic personality (this is especially believable if you've ever seen a pianist playing on the edge of a table, completely absorbed in a kinaesthetic world). Of course, proprioceptive trance also applies to some extent to horn players and vocal trance to chordal instrumentalists (maybe explaining why so many of them sing or moan while playing). From this perspective, one could say that the chosen instrument plays the person as much as the person plays the instrument! The importance of such biofeedback in developing his incredibly unique approach has been recognised in an interview with saxophonist Evan Parker (*Amplified Gesture* documentary) and also explains why great improvisors play differently on different instruments (Charlie Parker or Ornette Coleman on tenor sax, for example).

A Brief Comparison

In this chapter, we're talking about what it means to have a personal creative voice, and we began with the observation that this stems from developing an appreciation of who one is, in the broadest possible sense. I have proposed that the only way for this to happen is through trance states, not to blank out the conscious mind but to allow it access to the individual's full potential.

To me, the sign of a truly great, personal improviser is the seeming effortlessness with which they perform. Ideas flow from one to the next with an incredible naturalness, and this is true whether music, theatre, dance or painting is the subject of discussion. There is a state of mind in harmony with itself and its surroundings, akin to the goals of Taoism or Zen Buddhism, though very often in the arts it is reached through means that these philosophies wouldn't condone - meaning, at the very least, excessive caffeine consumption! This is a mind necessarily in an altered state, in order to access its full potential.

The comparison I'd like to make here is between this vision of improvisation as a dialogue between the conscious and subconscious and the one inherent in modern jazz education, where what we play is an expression of our intellectual understanding of music theory. We're taught how theory works, but not what to do with it, how to use it or make it come alive. So the conscious mind, which for most of us means the intellect, takes charge. Concentrating with the intellect inevitably produces physical tension, and the amount of concentration necessary to improvise using the intellect alone means a correspondingly large amount of tension in both the body and the music. Some people are capable of this concentration, and these are the ones that benefit most in the current jazz education context.

Compare this image of a jazz musician - tense, restless, forceful, using up idea after idea onstage, a troubled artist - with the traditional one of the smooth "hip cat." And compare modern players, who technically are far better trained, with even a merely competent musician from earlier jazz history. To me, the difference speaks for itself. There is a sense of personality in older jazz by and large missing today. That difference is access to the intelligences outside the intellect. Only by using all of ourselves can we achieve naturalness in our music, and this information must be made available to the student of jazz.

(As a brief aside, the image of jazz musicians as forever searching and striving is an unintentional part of John Coltrane's legacy. But let us not forget Elvin Jones's description of him as "sitting on a mountain of ideas, and they would flake off every three or four seconds" - a description of a process involving far less intentional struggle than associated with Trane nowadays)

What's It All About?

Another way of looking at this situation is through the eyes of the anthropologist. In *Origins of the Modern Mind* (as summarised in Oliver Sacks's *Musicophilia*), Merlin Donald proposes that between the "episodic" lives of our ape ancestors and our modern linguistic selves, there were tens or hundreds of thousands of years where our culture was "mimetic". This means that we were communicating through suggestive noise and motion long before we developed abstract signification (words). Assuming that one is willing to accept that the mimetic is the origin of what we now call the arts, and that self-consciousness arose with our use of language, our current difficulties with trance states and creativity in general can be seen as a conflict between two neural modes of operation. Our sense of individual, conscious self, housed in the language centres of the brain, struggles with its much older, more corporeal and group-oriented sibling.

This can help us make sense of the function the arts can serve for humankind. Great art is never just intellectual or sensual, it is a coming together of these. It is in creativity, through altered states that open up the intellect to collaboration with those things outside itself, that the struggle between the mimetic and abstract is reconciled. Through the arts, we find wholeness and a kind of dynamic peace.

The discovery of mirror neurons taught us that there is an area of our brains that doesn't see us as separate from others. If someone is eating a banana, part of us thinks that we're eating a banana too, though this is verified through sensory data to give accurate information to the individual. This explains why we are willing to pay top dollar to be in an enormous, packed crowd watching a pop star strut their stuff: at some level, we think that's us on stage. This is also why the arts are so valuable. A part of someone watching someone else in a creative, altered state also believes itself to be in an altered state too. We participate in what we observe, and to observe someone harmonising their internal conflict is to have one's own somewhat harmonised too.

One of the guiding principles of improvised theatre is that the audience wants to see someone changed, by another or by their surroundings or situation. They want the benefits of participating in change, from the safety of their own seats. And as performers, that's what we offer them. This is also true of jazz. A jazz musician who is truly improvising is creating a conversation between their conscious and subconscious minds, during which the conscious mind will at some point be presented with the choice between ceasing participation or being changed, going in a direction it hasn't conceived of before. The difference between the great improvisors of the tradition and the others is a willingness to constantly be changed by themselves as well as their surroundings.

A Warning

Developing a personal creative voice is a challenge. It requires a willingness to constantly explore outside the comfort zone of the conscious mind and play with states of awareness still surrounded by taboo in our culture. There is the potential to encounter areas of oneself that threaten madness, as can be seen in the biography of practically every great jazz musician (though I personally believe that this is as much to do with misunderstanding within and incorrect support from their community).

Until recently, the importance of trance in creativity has been unconscious. In jazz education, for example, the necessity of interpreting music theory through a trance state in order for it to actually be expressive has been neglected - you either get it or you don't. The danger I wish to address here is to do with the making of trance conscious.

In the same way that identifying with your mask character's processes in mask work equals no longer expressing that character, thinking "I am in a trance" is usually a sign that you're not! This means that you can't decide to have a personal creative voice, you can only expose yourself to the possibility of it happening. Our conscious minds are very, very intelligent, especially when it comes to protecting themselves. Many of them will not enter into altered states willingly, and may even try to replicate such states on their own terms in order to remain safe. They can fool us. Add to this that no one enters into or experiences such states in the same way, and you have a recipe for the trivialisation of trance. By making trance conscious, we risk turning it into an intellectual pursuit.

But trance is a transcending of the intellectual, and it can be detected. That's what the early supporters of Lester Young, Thelonious Monk and Anthony Braxton (not to mention Pablo Picasso, Jackson Pollock and innovators in every genre) sensed in their work before their ears had even had a chance to work out what was going on. There is a truthfulness and innocence, a complete lack of desire to convince, in art that comes from the opening of the conscious mind to the subconscious. Feelings have to be trusted above thought to know the difference.

Lennie Tristano, whose work was accused of coldness but nevertheless seems to be withstanding the test of time, drew the distinction between emotion and feeling in music. His use of words is somewhat personal here. Emotion is the forcing of passion into one's performance to intentionally elicit a response from the audience. Feeling is allowing the natural expressiveness of music to do what it does, and invites the audience to reflect on its meaning and implications for themselves. The former is a trick that gets tired and is tiring, the latter is the fountainhead of genuine art, and the difference between them is intentionality, the decision to use or transcend the conscious mind. In other words, trance.

Instant Trance

Here are a few (legal) ways to instantly start experimenting with trance in your music:

- Focus on singing the melody in your head while improvising, or on the groove, or on anything other than what you think you should be giving your full attention to.
- Use Miles Davis's technique of planning what to do, then at the last second doing something completely different. Aim to surprise yourself or throw yourself off.
- Summarising Zen Buddhism, John Cage said that "If something is boring after two minutes, try it for four. If still boring, then eight. Then sixteen. Then thirty-two. Eventually one discovers that it is not boring at all." Steve Lacy: "Work a long time in - or on - a small area, and spend an unlimited time on it, until it opens up...Keep it up until you start to hallucinate." Monk: "A note can be as small as a pin or as big as the world, it depends on your imagination." Work with limitations in your practice to begin seeing your music from different perspectives, or seeing different perspectives in your music. They will follow you onstage.
- Watch for synaesthetic responses in yourself to music. Does a particular saxophone tone remind you of rough concrete? Are phrases dancing? These may be intelligences outside your conscious mind, that you have untapped strength in and which can be applied to your creativity.
- Try standing or sitting in different ways (or places, if applicable) when playing. Every body position, or position in relation to others, expresses something different both to ourselves and those watching us. You might find a different character inside yourself who can make a unique contribution.
- Take up another art form that has interested you for a long time or just recently. This kind of lateral exploration, even if casual, will change your creativity as a whole. (I found the language I needed to talk about problems in modern jazz through improv theatre)
- Find a daily practice that helps ground you in your body more, making the conscious mind more flexible - tai chi, meditation, exercise of some kind.
- Be in the general habit of questioning your belief systems and opinions of yourself, not to label them as good or bad but to prepare them for the challenges from the subconscious that come from being creative.
- One warmup from improv theatre is to run around a room pointing at things

and saying “this is a [something that it’s not]”. This is a direct challenge to the intellectual mind and if done fast enough results in a euphoric, altered state “brain freeze”.

- Talking gibberish can have a similar effect, and this can be heightened by slowing it down to produce glossolalia, also known as speaking in tongues. When done effectively, the vocalisation becomes automatic and there is a synaesthetic visual component to the experience. Psychonaut Terence McKenna spoke a great deal on this phenomenon.
- The *Get High Now (Without Drugs)* book and app offer many ways to take short journeys outside yourself.

Notes on Judgement

The following is an attempt to deal with the problem that was raised in the introduction, regarding how art is to be judged. In the same way that a lack of tangible meaning within jazz neuters the potential contributions of musicians, so the arts as a whole suffer when guidelines for judgement are unclear.

Part I

- In the postmodern world, the arts have been subjected to so much experimentation that what defines them has become as broad and as simple as conceivably possible. Post-John Cage, for example, we're left with the definition of music as organised sound. Our situation is not to be bemoaned in the least, but we do need to recognise the problem that it leaves for us to tackle: judgement of art has been rendered entirely subjective. The most important consequences of this are a lack of responsibility on the part of the artist to any traditional aesthetic, and a weakened position for any institution where artistic authority is a necessity. The latter is particularly pertinent to art education.
- A polyfree approach to jazz education is no exception in this regard. In fact, as a system that actively recognises diversity and promotes the exploration of personal preference, it is particularly susceptible to subjectivity. Yet if we wish to give students meaningful feedback on their abilities and progress, the need to judge and compare in a meaningful way remains.
- Duke Ellington said "There are two kinds of music. Good music, and the other kind." To one of the greatest and most open-minded performer-composers of the jazz tradition, there is a clear difference between what deserves praise and is unworthy of mention. We can't know exactly what Ellington's criterion were, but we know that he had them, and that alone suggests to us that judgement shouldn't be abandoned lightly.
- Let us recognise that the idea of a universal standard by which all artistic endeavour could be measured holds great appeal for us in our rational society. For too long, art has been able to slip between the fingers of analysis back into the world of subjectivity from whence it came, and this "eye of the beholder" clause is genuinely frustrating. It's for this reason that the arts take

a back seat in our education curricula, are seen as the pastime of the wealthy, overeducated or snobbish (unless marketed to us as pop art, which somehow circumvents the problem of actual judgement of content, as a kind of anti-art) and are fashioned into forms banal and grotesque in the name of freedom of expression, unfettered by any fear of criticism that can claim objectivity.

- What if this frustration at art is of our own making, a reductionists desire for the easy answer to a fundamentally complex problem? What if, on the other side of the labyrinth of personal opinion, there is some touchstone that exists, waiting for us to make the potentially arduous journey to retrieve it?
- Echoing Ellington, Steve Lacy said "Life and death are, to my mind, the only criteria in music worth considering." This is a comparatively pared down dichotomy, with the contrasting advantages of being both more abstract and higher stake. While the meaning of life and death in this context is intuitive rather than rational, their more urgent associations lend added weight to the decision. Also, by moving away from the very casual ideas of good and bad, we are one step removed from personal opinion. In a social context, it is possible to recognise that someone is a valuable, constructive member of society without having to like them. Likewise, we can feel that a piece of art is alive without necessarily liking it.
- Why are we not willing to apply the complexity of our social interactions to our relationship with art? Because dealing with complexity takes so much effort. Whether we're talking about that new guy at the office or an abstract Miro, to move from first impressions to a thorough understanding not just of the object but also of what our initial reaction says about us, is more difficult than to just write it off as bad. I believe that, with the correct approach, the music of Bach, for example, has depth enough to be appreciated by anyone, at the very least from the perspective that they can see why others might enjoy it. Yet for the majority, a superficial judgement of Bach, when weighed against the known benefits of going beyond that, is enough. (The reasons why we are genetically inclined to favour the superficial are clearly outlined in Nassim Nicholas Taleb's *The Black Swan*)
- The advantage of Lacy's life-death dichotomy is that it forces us, as any even casual student of art should be forced, to investigate thoroughly, to go beyond the superficial, before we are willing to condemn a work as dead. The huge logical flaw with it is that what life and death actually mean in this context is undefined. It's more like an enquiry into the state of someone's soul than a precise medical examination. But this is not accidental. It is useful to know

that the notebooks of Georges Braque had a big influence on Lacy, to the point where he actually set some of the text to music. One of these reads "The only thing of value in art: that which cannot be explained." Both men were of the opinion that artistic beauty is ultimately inscrutable, that for creativity to be truly alive there must be something mysterious about it. Another way of putting it is that if we can explain exactly why a work is good, then either it isn't or we haven't enquired into its nature deeply enough.

- Does this logical flaw in the life-death dichotomy leave us back in the entirely subjective again? It certainly renders any judgement of art ultimately a matter of intuition, beyond our ability to describe exactly. But it is not an intuition reliant on personal opinion. It is like developing a new sense for detecting the inexplicable, honed through personal experience but nevertheless a sense everyone possesses (comparison with social ability is again applicable). On the other hand, neither is the dichotomy a rallying cry against rational judgement. It doesn't say that mystery is the only criterion, just the most important. There must be factors contributing to the creation of the mystery which can be discussed. So we are left with something of a tightrope walk with objectivity and subjectivity on either side, that could be called reinforced subjectivity.
- An indirect use of Lacy's criterion to judge art is to see how the artists themselves respond to it. By and large, artists who are serious about their work welcome serious consideration of its value by any reasonable standard.
- When all's said and done, the life-death dichotomy comes from and is suggestive of a worldview in which the natural function of art is and always has been to take us beyond - short-circuit, if you will - the intellect. To quote Braque again, "Art is made to trouble, science reassures." Subscription to this worldview is one way to go beyond the complete subjectivity that we have inherited from postmodernism, without having to resort to outdated aesthetic systems.
- These observations about the inherent mystery of great art are all well and good from a theoretical standpoint, but it's important that we understand their origin in practice. To that end, I present a short case study on the topic, focussing on the music of John Coltrane. He is the perfect subject for this enquiry because no other musician in the history of jazz has been intellectually scrutinised so thoroughly: books of transcriptions and licks; analyses of solos; theses on the advances he made in structuring methods from bebop to free-jazz. It's fair to say that anybody who has undertaken

study of jazz since the 1970s, especially on tenor saxophone, has been in some way influenced by Coltrane. Yet no matter how much we talk about diminished scales over the dominant, Giant Steps changes, multiple voice leadings in his "sheets of sound" or the bags of discarded, over-filed mouthpieces necessary to produce that incredible tone, none of these things explains John Coltrane. The circumstances that led to his existence and the direction of his development are too complicated for us to capture, much less reproduce in any meaningful way (in fact, the most noteworthy tenor saxophonists since Coltrane, Mark Turner and Chris Potter, have explored areas other than those staked out by Trane). Our intellectual analyses are useful starting points for a deeper understanding, or mental footholds for the neophyte, but copying techniques derived from analysis does not produce the same artistic response in the listener. There is simply something inscrutable that makes us not just admire this man's music, but love it, and we're no closer to describing what that is either individually or culturally than when Coltrane first began to attract attention. This is the mystery of great art in practical terms.

Part II

- The idea that artistic beauty is necessarily beyond the reach of rational understanding puts us clearly in the realm of mysticism. I propose that we give a name to that quality in art which cannot be subjected to intellectual reduction, I suggest that we call it magic. One of the advantages of this word is that it has multiple associations. On the one hand, it is what we call those ingenious parlour tricks that leave us with a sense of wonder, a wonder not far removed from that which great art provides too. This is magic as popular phenomenon - think of how a teen in the 1980s would have used the word to describe an idol. On the other hand, magick is also a serious tradition of spiritual belief practiced by pagans, druids and shamans, concerned with exploring consciousness through the symbolism it uses. In its most philosophical European form, as Hermetic Magick, it is associated with Aleister Crowley and, more recently, writer Alan Moore. In the name of full disclosure, I have a longstanding interest in the paradigms and practices of various schools of mysticism. However, its inclusion here is not intended as either promotion of or justification for any beliefs I hold (for justification of the magick worldview, I refer you to John Michael Greer's essay *Clarke's Fallacy*). As will be seen, there is a great deal that aesthetics can learn from mystical traditions, both being concerned with the workings of the internal world, and magick is simply one among these. Besides, I wish to use magic in a much

broader sense throughout this section, and have inserted a “k” at the end to differentiate between the established philosophical system and a wider cultural usage.

- Like all mystical traditions, magick asserts the ultimate unknowability of reality, a useful parallel with the aesthetic dilemma that postmodernism has landed us in. It also holds that, despite the solipsistic nature of human existence, there are certain forces or energies at work in all of our lives that it is possible for anyone to relate to. Finally and perhaps most importantly for our purposes, it stresses the necessity of working with and balancing these forces in order to achieve harmony both internally and with the outside world. These forces and energies are often seen as operating in opposing pairs, or as two polarities resulting in a balanced third. A very general example of this would be how the processes of growth and decay in the universe allow for life to exist, but any stable state can be analysed using this method, which is known as the theory of polarity. Let's apply this way of thinking to the process of making jazz.
- Bear in mind that this is not an attempt to explain the universe but a symbolic understanding of it that has consistently proven useful to people throughout history, even outside magick. In fact, the Ying Yang symbol of ancient Taoism expresses the concept of polarity in Asian culture, with this simple idea taken to staggeringly complex and subtle heights in traditional Chinese and Japanese aesthetics. So we are hardly breaking new ground by thinking about jazz in these terms.
- Presented here is a basic list of opposing pairs that are in operation when the desired result is jazz, with the rationale behind placing them together. These are certainly not beyond debate, but being born out of careful observation, neither are they proposed casually.
 - Expression/Technique: generally, when one is emphasised, the other diminishes in significance; musicians tend to favour one or the other.
 - Present/Past: when so much good music has already been made, deciding what to do now is a challenge; musicians tend to either copy or rebel against past music.
 - Self/Group: all of us being essentially ego-driven, it's difficult to focus on both one's and one's co-creators' artistic desires; soloists in particular tend to either forget their rhythm section or rely too much on it.I invite you to take a break from reading now and apply these - and any similarly justifiable criteria you care to - to a musician that you and most others consider to be great. Then try the same with someone who is respected by many but who you personally do not find enjoyable to listen to.

Be warned, in this second case your conscious mind won't want you to find points in their favour. This is essentially an exercise in attempting a higher level of objectivity (my attempts are included in the following two points).

- If we examine Coltrane again, this time from the perspective of polarity, we find that even his most technical phrases are imbued with emotion, and that even his ballad playing is incredibly precise. He had a thorough knowledge of the past yet never stopped looking forward, and was known for the quality relationships he had with his collaborators. In magical terms he is balanced, in harmony with himself and the world. His balance in no way explains Coltrane's greatness, but it is certainly a sign of it. Already we can see how, through mysticism's concept of polarity, there is the possibility of reconciling the fundamental inscrutability of art with our desire to judge it.
- Application of polarity is more complicated when considering a musician one doesn't like. Personally, I have never been able to understand why pianist Brad Meldau is held in such high regard. I'm unable to sit down and listen to all of one of his albums, and didn't enjoy the concert I went to - it seemed like nothing but intense technique, except for the final Radiohead cover. But that cover shows me that he can handle more tender emotions if he wants to, so maybe the intensity is an emotional choice too. While there are echoes of Bill Evans and McCoy Tyner in his playing, he certainly isn't copying them. And he has loyal accompanists. So rationally I'm forced to conclude that there is a high probability that Brad Meldau is in fact a truly great jazz musician, despite my misgivings. Exposure to his solo version of *My Favourite Things* placed all of this in a context where, although the track lost me occasionally, I was unable to deny the magic of it. This may well elicit a "duh, of course he's great" reaction from Meldau fans, but remember that the process above represents a stepping outside of personal preference, which is easier said than done. The true benefit here is that one learns about oneself. My experience with Brad Meldau teaches me that I'm insensitive to the use of technique to convey intensity, perhaps because I find it intimidating. By comparison, I also gain insight into what I appreciate in my favourite performers - among other things, a more measured use of technique. The benefits of this self-knowledge are twofold. First, my ability to judge is strengthened. Intensity of technique can no longer fool me into not seeing the magic of a performance. Secondly, one's artistic approach being a natural extension of one's preferences, I have found a weak point in my creative aesthetic which can now be worked on. I become a better artist.

- Judgement of art is analogous to quantum physics in that the observer must always be taken into account. An opinion means nothing without knowing something about the person it belongs to. The quality that is most valuable when judging is self-knowledge as it allows one to step outside personal preference. There is also a causal relationship between this knowledge and artistic development: The more self-aware one is, the easier it is to move forward as a creative individual, by playing to one's strengths and bolstering one's weaknesses. This ties in with the overall theme of the polyfree approach to jazz education.
- In both the preferred and disliked musician versions of the polarity application exercise above, I asked you to choose someone who is already well respected. For that to be the case, there must already be some kind of magic at work. Judging the quality of that magic brings us to the complimentary magical theory of attraction. We've all heard the relationship adage that opposites attract. While mystical traditions don't deny this, they place more emphasis on the opposing theory that similar things are drawn together. More precisely, things that are balanced, or unbalanced in the same way, will be mutually attractive. Consider punk music, which has an overt message of rebellion. It is very difficult to enjoy punk unless one identifies with this rebelliousness somehow. A seemingly content, law-abiding individual is unlikely to listen to punk - unless they have an unconscious desire to rebel, which is why it is more correct to say that apparent opposites attract rather than simply that opposites attract - just as someone with a penchant for technically complicated, intellectual stimulation from their music is unlikely to listen either. So it is possible to categorise and judge art based on who, or what facets of oneself, it appeals to.
- The danger of applying the theory of attraction to judging art is again personal opinion. Judgement and self-knowledge must be sought in equal measure. Good examples to demonstrate this can be found in the world of pop music. For such huge numbers of people to consider themselves fans of one individual, magic of some kind must be present. But that's not to say that the individual is either responsible for that magic or worthy of its results. Let's begin with Madonna, who has a career spanning over thirty years and broad public appeal. As a musician, it's very easy to dismiss her fans as foolish for being interested in her music, which she neither writes nor performs without considerable support, to the point where it can hardly be considered hers. But when she's judged more as a performance artist, managing her image through music releases, live performance and other media, the skill involved in keeping a diverse public engaged over such a long period becomes more

apparent. Add to this that she is unafraid of offending the establishment, refusing to compromise the content of her live shows under pressure from conservative forces, and, like Miles Davis, has consistently courted controversy by anticipating future trends, and it is easier to believe that there is something worthwhile in her brand of magic. Take, on the other hand, Justin Bieber, who won a fan-voted Milestone Award for "ingenuity and innovation" in music. While he clearly displays ability as both a musician and songwriter, the fact that the majority of his fan base are teens and tweens, a particularly vulnerable age group, gives grounds to suspect that his success is more the result of targeted marketing than a powerful natural appeal. Nor does he possess the subtle understanding of human nature that seems to characterise Madonna, having been booed for arrogance after his acceptance speech for the above-mentioned award. Remember, in neither of these cases is it possible to say anything definitive about the nature of either artists' magic. But at the same time it is more than personal opinion to say that Bieber's currently appears to be of a lesser quality.

- We can take the same attraction-based approach in an analysis of jazz history. It began as the product of a specific minority group, implying a culturally limited appeal, but was soon adapted to a huge variety of tastes. In fact, it wouldn't be unfair to say that a great deal of its then-omnipotent magic and huge following was due to its flexibility. One offshoot with a cult following, bebop, emphasised the high art potential of the music, attracting intellectuals and hipsters, and was eventually absorbed into the mainstream, raising the profile of jazz as a whole but losing some audience to developing pop forms. One could say that the magic became somewhat more rarefied and focussed at this time. Free-jazz took the process begun by bebop to its logical conclusion, capturing the mystic heart of the music but leaving those without a feeling for the abstract uninterested. It was, in general, too intense a magic to be of interest to anyone except those with a more persistent bent. Yet somehow the quality of that magic stopped the genre from dying out, and a new generation, not raised on jazz, began exploring it. The ultimate justification of the worth of jazz is that it is still extant - and not just as a novelty, like disco - despite at one point having lost almost all of its attractiveness in becoming one of the most esoteric musics in history. From this, we can learn that magic is unpredictable: one couldn't have known from its limited beginnings the full potential of jazz, and could be forgiven for having dismissed it as merely a passing fad. What wouldn't be forgivable would be to continue holding a negative opinion when presented with new information. A judgement is not just limited by the person making it, but by the time it is made in too.

- So far, we've looked at the theory of attraction in the cultural macrocosm, but it is also relevant to the individual microcosm. An artist of any kind can develop a more objective picture of their work by noticing the people who like it or attend their events. Similarly in the microcosm, the opinion of someone who actively works on their artistic perception can be trusted more than that of someone who doesn't. This may feel like a sacrilegious thing to say - that in the world of art someone's opinion is more valuable than someone else's - but just as you want a doctor to judge your illness or a trained mechanic your car, an aesthete should be trusted to be attracted to magic of quality.
- This talk of macrocosm and microcosm brings us to a third magical theory that is useful in the judgement of art, that of levels of reality. The scientific worldview that dominates our understanding nowadays posits only one reality, that of physical matter. But from an experiential standpoint, all of us inhabit multiple levels (or channels, as Process Oriented Psychology calls them): physical, but also intellectual, emotional, social, spiritual and so on. The hallmark of good art is that it, like us, also inhabits these levels. This is why African musicians say that outsiders "just like the sound that the music makes" or Cuban musicians get angry when questioned overly about clave. For them, there is a level to their art that is not being appreciated (spiritual and social in these two cases). Take Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, for example. Not only is the story logically consistent and emotionally rich, but it also resonates on both an archetypal and populist level. So a work of art can be judged based on what levels it accesses - as long as the ones who judge are also bearing in mind that there may be levels to which they are insensitive!
- Modern visual art is particularly inclined to limit itself to one level. Damien Hirst is said to have explored the theme of shock with his series of animals in formaldehyde, yet there seems to be nothing more to the works than one's initial emotional reaction. A great deal of installation art explains how the viewer should think about the experience, hardly necessary for art with a natural intellectual element. The pop art of Keith Haring also appears to be similarly one dimensional until it is compared with early tribal drawing and the cultural relevance of its themes - everything from love and sex to alien encounters - becomes apparent. A brilliant example of the difference between genuine art and its single-level imitator can be seen in the documentary *Exit Through the Gift Shop*, by the incredibly creative Banksy. He is clearly someone with a refined concept of judgement, if this film is anything to go by.

- It could also be said that aesthetics itself works in levels. At the bottom we have personal opinion, where anyone has the right to claim that anything they like is art. However, that enjoyment being entirely subjective renders others's views irrelevant. At the top is a Buddha-like acceptance of any creativity as essentially good, in which there is no room for critical judgement. In between is the grey area for those who believe that art can have a function and that the function comes with a responsibility for both the artist and the audience. The difficult we're faced with is that, like the world we live in, all of these levels exist at the same time!
- To conclude, different ways of thinking work best in different areas. The scientific method has proven invaluable for understanding and manipulating the fundamental nature of the physical world, less useful in dealing with the human body. Mathematics will enable you to send a spacecraft to the moon, but not predict the stock market (see Taleb's *The Black Swan* for further examples of such misapplication). There is currently no way of thinking that will allow us to pass definitive judgement on our arts, and until evolution provides us with the means to do so, the best we can manage is to try to go beyond our initial reactions and personal opinions - to aim for a reinforced subjectivity. I contend that the concepts detailed above as found in mystical thought are the most reliable ways at our disposal to do so. Already within Western magick, there is a movement to have the bending of creative energies to one's will that is at the heart of the tradition considered The Art behind all of the arts (see Alan Moore's essay *Fossil Angels*). Traditional tribal and Asian mysticism also continues to be a constant source of inspiration for artists of all genres around the planet. We are a species still reeling from the shock to our cultural identities that globalisation precipitated, and postmodernism is a symptom of that shock. Our job now is to build a world culture reflective of the qualities that both differentiate and unite us, and mysticism of some kind clearly has a role to play in that.

Conclusion

Picture a spectrum with composition at one end and improvisation at the other, the difference between these two being that, in Steve Lacy's words, "in composition you have all the time you need to think about what you are going to say in fifteen seconds, whereas when you improvise you only have fifteen seconds to say what you want to say." Any genre of music - and, in fact, any human activity - can be placed on this spectrum. Conlon Nancarrow's studies for player piano would be at the furthest end of composition. Beginning a little further inwards because of its emphasis on interpretation, Western classical music. Jazz would stretch across pretty much the whole thing, with a strong emphasis towards the improvised end.

Now picture another spectrum, with product orientation at one end and process orientation at the other. In essence, this spectrum is the same as the previous one. Composition is concerned with perfecting a final product, improvisation with losing oneself in a flow state, a process, intended to be unpredictable - a different product every time. Also connecting the two spectra, the fact that just as pure composition (infinite time to prepare) and pure improvisation (complete unpreparedness) are impossible, so too are pure product and process orientation.

Now, whereas jazz as a music covers nearly the entirety of the composition-improvisation spectrum, current jazz education methods have a heavy bias towards product orientation. Decisions are made about how it should sound, then techniques applied to achieve that end. It is the opposite of what would objectively be expected. This is a discrepancy that must be taken seriously if we don't want the spirit of improvisation that is clearly so vital to jazz to go the same way as it did for Baroque music. Already, this can be seen happening in the too-often mindless repetition of licks and transcribed solos. Genuinely spontaneous creativity is a flame requiring careful, intuitive tending if it is not to be a random flash-in-the-pan phenomenon. As the generation formulating jazz education - caught between the tangible magic of those living legends that remain from the music's golden age and the requirements of academia - we are in a unique position to capture the essence of jazz. Let us do so with as thorough a fidelity as possible.

Hopefully there were elements of my approach to jazz education which appealed to you, but perhaps not. Teaching is as personal as any creative activity. However, there is one thing I'd like for everyone who reads this document to take away from the experience, and that is the vital need that exists to teach personal process over generic product if there is to be any hope of passing on the full breadth of this

vibrant, living tradition we love. Our task is to keep something complex and diverse alive in a world which tends towards simplification. Unless we can adapt to the needs of individual students with the same flexibility, creativity and idiosyncratic style that we bring to our improvised solos, this is not going to be possible. There are already loud cries for reform from within academia, let's meet them by each finding personal solutions to putting jazz at the forefront of a new wave of actively creative education.

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Huw Lloyd is a British musician, composer, improv actor and educator based in Tokyo, where he has lived since 2002.

He completed his music training on saxophone at Leeds College of Music in 2000 before moving to Paris where he switched to clarinet and studied briefly with jazz legend Steve Lacy. Since 2007, Huw has been developing an interest in improvised theatre, quickly graduating from student to performer and instructor for the Tokyo Comedy Store. He has taken workshops with internationally recognised teachers such as “father of improv” Keith Johnstone, Shawn Kinley, Gary Schwartz and Rob Adler, and practiced trance mask under Jun Imai and Steve Jarand.

Huw has combined his interests in jazz and improv theatre with Steve Lacy’s theory of polyfreedom, which treats creativity as a balance between freedom and restriction, to develop a method of improvisation instruction which he currently applies in his music, private lessons, workshops and compositions. He counts musicians, actors, poets and painters both professional and otherwise among those that have benefitted from his unique approach to education.

Huw directs and plays contrabass clarinet in the PopJazz Quartet, an idiosyncratic ensemble covering classic pop and rock tunes, and mixes improvised music and theatre in his experimental event, the PopJazz Circus. He is currently working on The Jazz Tarot, a practice randomiser app, and the lecture series “What Jazz Musicians Can Learn from Improvised Theatre”.

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