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Introduction to the IASJ Journal of Applied Jazz Research

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Introduction to the IASJ Journal of Applied Jazz Research

The Beginning of Jazz Research

From the start, jazz has always been of interest to many different people in many different areas of study. One of those areas of study was jazz research, which, in its early stages, consisted of activities such as gathering biographical data, collecting records, creating or assembling media, and discussions on the very nature of jazz—i.e. What is jazz? What is not jazz? Of course, the debate also dealt with foundational questions such as ‘who invented jazz?’ which led to the inevitable search for a stylistic hierarchy that would then determine who would be deemed the “best” or “most important” performers. Concomitantly, we find the word ‘jazz’ in a musical context appearing around 1915 in newspapers in the USA, and the first books on jazz appeared later in the early 1930’s in both Europe and later in the USA¹.

In the first few decades, jazz clubs were real brick-and-mortar venues in which jazz performers played for a dedicated audience that listened, danced, and socialized with jazz as the “soundtrack.” Jazz clubs were indeed real clubs with subscribed members who attended concerts, exchanged records, and collected pictures. For example, the ‘Hot Club de France’ at its peak in the 1930’s and 1940’s was a well-structured and large organization with its own magazine, which helped to connect jazz clubs all over France and Europe.

On the other hand, jazz musicians, for the most part, were not initially very interested in analyzing or researching the music they were creating--“theorizing” was the task of the academic or the knowledgeable fan, not the working musician. If these early jazz musicians were asked: “What is jazz?”—the answers given were often cryptic and secretive (a well-known response at the time was: “If you have to ask, you will never know.”) This helped to create an aura around jazz that alluded to it being an “underground” art that was, even though it was popular music, was still somehow “subversive”; jazz was seen as a cultural force that was undermining the mainstream “white” culture. This attitude was further bolstered by the fact that jazz was learned “in the street” during informal gatherings known as “jam sessions.” This music was not learned in the university, it was learned communally, resembling a more African aural tradition. In the modern iteration, this aural tradition utilized the technology of the time—budding musicians learned from intensive repeated listening to jazz records, after which they copied the style by transcribing improvised solos. While many were, essentially autodidacts in their jazz instruction, many received technical training on their instruments, which often entailed classical music instruction. Nonetheless, until the end of the 1970’s, many jazz musicians, in terms of their jazz studies, were still self-taught.

While jazz was indeed a buzz word in the arts and in culture of the “roaring ‘20s” and the ‘30s, but the music was taken not taken seriously by many people. Until the mid 1940’s the majority of people, including well-educated composers of contemporary music, of ‘art’ music, saw jazz as something exotic, frivolous, entertaining but not worthy of serious study. Likewise, in academia, jazz was not seen as something that should be studied at all—it had

¹ ‘Le Jazz Hot’, Hugues Panassié, R.A. Correa-Paris, 1934;
‘The first Book of Jazz’ Langston Hughes, New York, 1955

no place in the academy. So much so, in fact, that performing jazz inside the walls of academies, conservatories and universities was often forbidden. Given the ubiquitous presence of jazz in higher education today, it is hard to understand that until the 1950's, the attitude towards jazz was so hostile.

Jazz Speeds Up

After the 2nd World War, jazz as musical genre, and indeed, the entire jazz “landscape,” changed rapidly as different areas of study, beyond jazz performance, emerged. Consequently, one of those areas—namely jazz research—began to be taken seriously. By the 1960s, jazz research was blossoming in different directions—jazz theory, jazz history, jazz pedagogy, and jazz as a cultural and social phenomenon. New jazz styles proliferated as well; before the mid 1940's jazz consisted of only two styles: New Orleans Style and Swing. After the mid-1940s, Bebop emerged, then the ‘birth’ of Cool Jazz in 1949, followed by the Hard Bop in the mid-1950s, Modal Jazz in the late 1950s, and finally Free Jazz in the early 1960s. In addition, the hybrid so-called ‘Third Stream’ style was created in the late 1950s, an artificial style in which jazz and certain elements of classical music were to be fused. And that “fusion” continued as jazz musicians like Poland’s Jazz Rockers in 1962 and groups in England’s “Canterbury Scene,” began using elements of rock and roll--the burgeoning new popular music which was taking the entire world by storm--and combining it with jazz. In a mere 15 years, jazz had suddenly become an intriguing genre of music that offered a wide range of styles with various compositional and improvisational techniques, a wide range of musical forms, and a similarly wide range of accepted ensembles. With all these changes, the performance settings multiplied as well as jazz could be heard not only in clubs and lofts, but also more formal performance spaces like auditoriums and concert halls, and even outdoor festivals.

By the mid 1960s, Jazz, as a serious musical phenomenon, could no longer be ignored. However, the acceptance of jazz as a serious and distinctive musical genre, worthy of academic study, did not happen overnight. In the 1960s and 1970s, even the word ‘jazz’ was still very loaded and fraught with difficulties. For example, jazz bands at universities in the USA were, awkwardly, referred to as ‘lab-bands’, which was perhaps an attempt to give them a more “scientific” label that would, rhetorically at least, imply that the work these groups were doing was on par with the work being done in the rest of the academy. In contrast, in Europe, jazz bands were closely tied to radio stations, which placed them in an entirely different environment with its own economic pressures—they were considered to play “light music” or “entertainment music” and were sometimes still referred to archaically, as “dance orchestras.” Nonetheless, progress was being made as the first small-scale jazz studies programs, like the one at the Kunstuniversität in Graz, Austria. Still, the established conservatories in the major European capitals, with their century-old traditions and culture steeped in classical music, were slow to embrace jazz—it was not until the early 1980s that jazz enjoyed wide-scale acceptance in academia.

Jazz Education Breakthrough

To this date, it has not been thoroughly investigated what caused the exponential growth of public and private jazz programs in the United States, Canada, and Europe. In the United States, for example, the Berklee College of Music, which had been teaching jazz and popular styles since 1945, led the jazz and popular music education movement when it was

renamed in 1970. (A year later, Berklee awarded its first honorary doctorate to Duke Ellington, sending a strong message to the academy that jazz had arrived in higher education.) In Europe, conservatories such as the 'Royal Conservatoire' in The Hague, The Netherlands founded in the 1826, suddenly opened their doors for jazz studies in 1979. Ancillary businesses emerged to support the burgeoning jazz education industry. For example, a small family business started by Jamey Aebersold in the heartland of the United States in 1967 became a huge international success, with his wildly popular "play along" recordings becoming a staple in hundreds of thousands of young jazz musicians' libraries. Along with the pedagogical developments, there was also a growing demand for a proper accounting of the history of jazz. For example, "The Making of Jazz" by Jim Collier, published in 1979 was sold legally and illegally in hundreds of thousands copies in several languages all over the world.

The newly opened and booming jazz departments at academies, conservatories and universities created a demand for qualified teachers. For the most part, these teachers were jazz performers who had seen the rise of three or four styles in jazz and had learned the music "on the street" for the most part. Some of these players, like trumpet player Ack van Rooyen in The Netherlands and Graham Collier in the UK had actually been active in shaping these styles. Quite often but not always, the first phalanx of jazz teachers also had a background in classical music, so they had both the "street" education in jazz, as well as the more formal classical pedagogies which had been developed, in some cases, for a century or more. Most importantly, they felt a duty to initiate a younger generation of musicians in those styles, but to do so required bringing jazz education into the mainstream culture of higher education, which presented many challenges.

First of all, there was very little extant pedagogical materials available. A "Fake Book" here, a "Real Book" there, some "play-a-longs" that created a kind of "jazz karaoke" pedagogy, which mimicked "the street" but had none of the interpersonal and musical interactions that made "the street" pedagogy so powerful and effective. These jazz materials still had to be put in a logical order to become viable jazz pedagogical methods, and those methods had to be placed with the academic structures in the university system. Jazz performers from the past, never bothered much to reflect on what they were doing, let alone sharing their 'knowledge' with others, with the exception of a few such as Barry Harris and his 6th-diminished chord-scale theory. Some of the be-bop musicians did develop pedagogical systems, but they did not enjoy widespread distribution and remained niche approaches that were, more or less, "proprietary," closely tied to their authors and their small community of fellow travelers.² Consequently, in the 1980's, a great deal of new jazz pedagogical material was developed by the first generation of jazz teachers, often using the classical music methods as a basis. In a very real sense, jazz research in the 1980's started as jazz theory and jazz pedagogical methods that were being developed for use in the academic setting, where degrees required curricula, and those curricula all required texts and assessment mechanisms, as well as formal approval from curriculum committees, deans, provosts, and Boards of Trustees. As such, jazz—an art form with its roots in "the street"—

² Trumpet player Robert 'Boysie' Lowery, the teacher of among others Clifford Brown, is another exception. He developed a method for jazz improvisation that he shared with other musicians. Another example is George Russell, whose book "The Lydian Chromatic Concept of Tonal Organization" (1953) was garnered a lot of interest from jazz musicians in the 1960s and '70s.

must simultaneously remain true to its roots while also conforming to the formal traditions in academic culture in the academy. For many then, and still today, this has proven to be an uneasy coupling.

The Need for Organization

Another problem facing the first-generation jazz teachers was the lack of an ability to communicate and share ideas and resources. By the end of the 1980's this changed for the better—the National Association of Jazz Education (NAJE) played an important role in connecting jazz educators in the USA and Canada, and to a lesser extent, the rest of the world. Formed in 1968, NAJE's initial focus was on jazz education in the USA, but by 1989, it changed its name to the International Association of Jazz Educators. Clearly, the intent was to seek an international membership for the organization. From its beginning as a small, volunteer-run support group, by the 1980s, IAJE's annual conferences attracted hundreds of attendees, which, but the 1990s grew to attract an astonishing 10,000 or more participants. These conferences were not primarily concerned with developing jazz research or jazz pedagogy—instead, the focus was on providing an opportunity for buying and selling of jazz related books, materials, and instruments, as well as showcasing artists, workshops, and clinics. Only a very small part of these conferences, often taking place in huge hotels with concurrent sessions, was dedicated to some sort of jazz research. These conferences were large, sprawling events that were funded in large part by conference fees which were paid for with the professional development and other grant funding available for faculty members at North American universities. These conferences provided a dedicated jazz outlet for scholarly and creative activities for the growing number of university faculty members teaching jazz. The research part of these conferences was, for the most part, focused on “fact finding”—i.e., a “scientific” approach that relied heavily on theoretical analysis of transcriptions of improvised solos.

In Europe, however, another organization emerged--the International Association of Schools of Jazz (IASJ). The IASJ, initiated in 1989 by saxophonist David Liebman and officially founded by Graham Collier, Ulf Radelius, and Wouter Turkenburg on November 4th 1991, had a decidedly different approach to connecting jazz teachers world-wide. The first “IASJ Jazz Meeting” took place at the Royal Conservatoire in The Hague, The Netherlands, in 1990, and since then, it has held its annual jazz meetings all over the world, emphasizing its “international” mission. The IASJ differentiates itself in several ways: first, equal value is given to all the members in the organization, meaning that students, teachers, and jazz program directors are viewed and treated as co-equal shareholders. This priority requires that the meetings are deliberately small, and most importantly, there are no concurrent sessions. This helps to create intensive, person-to-person, interaction and the non-concurrent sessions creates an environment where the daily discussions and presentations are a shared experience. The music performances at the conferences are similarly designed to highlight the students, rather than the faculty or other jazz artists. Lastly, there are no vendors or booking agents involved. The IASJ is thus intentionally designed to build community around a shared performance experience, and shared reflection and discussion of the latest developments in jazz performance, jazz education and jazz research.

Academization

By the end of the 1990's, jazz research both in the USA and Europe was still primarily oriented towards jazz history (in particular, creating an accurate record), jazz pedagogy and a variety of topics in jazz theory. Most of the activities, therefore, consisted of categorizing performers and styles in a coherent historiography, analyzing transcriptions, which serve as the "primary sources" for both jazz theory and jazz pedagogy, and developing, from all these research sources, efficacious jazz pedagogies.

In the first decade of the 20th century, all music academies, conservatories, and universities in Europe underwent a massive "reformation" which was designed to consolidate resources while simultaneously bringing consistency and transparency to the bachelor, master and PhD programs across the continent. In 1999, political leaders in Europe signed the 'Bologna Declaration,' whose intent was to create a more transparent and manageable structure in higher education. In this new structure, largely based upon the one in the USA, research was placed in a separate category where it quickly established itself as an autonomous area of study.

As with the early development of jazz educational methods, the jazz departments of the academies, conservatories and universities first turned to classical musicology as their model for jazz research. This model, however, was not a good fit for jazz research--it did not take long before it became apparent that jazz research had to develop a new approach to research, one that recognized the unique musical, cultural, historical, and aesthetic qualities of jazz, of improvisation, and of the rhythmic phenomenon at the heart of it all, known as "swing." Jazz research turned away from classical musicological methodologies and looks for an approach to research that was more "practice based." Art schools also implemented similar programmatic changes in their bachelor, master, and PhD curricula and came to the same conclusion: the visual arts also needed a kind of research that was closer to their practice. This new research genre that came in existence for research in all arts and music was called "artistic research."

Applied Jazz Research

A perennial feature of the IASJ Jazz Meetings is the "Ongoing Dialogues." These are the non-concurrent discussion forums (reference earlier) that occur at the conferences and are normally directed by the Executive Director of the IASJ, Wouter Turkenburg. During these sessions, directors of jazz programs, teachers, and even students, present and discuss a wide range of topics. Although these sessions were not labelled as such, in reality, they were actually open forums engaged in different types of jazz research. In the early years, some of these were published as articles Graham Collier in an informal magazine called "Jazz Changes." One of the reasons that the "Ongoing Dialogues" were not recognized as jazz research was that the presentations were only one part of the session--after each presentation an open-ended discussion took place on how to apply, in practice, whatever was presented. Another reason is that the "Ongoing Dialogues" did not follow the standard academic format of a "scientific" presentation in which the audience is a receptive vessel rather than an active participant. Finally, the IASJ did not impose the normal the strict submission requirements normally found in academic conferences (i.e. peer review by committee with blind or double blind protocols). Instead, the Executive Director decided on which presentations would be invited, but always with a "more is better" approach that

allowed for many voices to be heard. In these ways, the Ongoing Dialogues developed a unique platform for a specific kind research, which was named “applied jazz research.”

For quite some time, there have been ‘applied sciences’ in the various types of research, however, it was not a focus in jazz research. As jazz pedagogy was initially rooted in classical music pedagogical methodologies, jazz research in many cases was, and still is, rooted in classical music research methodologies. These types of jazz research have their own place in the larger discipline, but their methodologies are further removed from practice, and may thus not be of “practical” use to the jazz performer or teacher, both of whom need research that is applicable where jazz has its roots—namely, on “the street.” Jazz research following the path of classical music research are appropriate in their own contextual frameworks, but we believe that the time is ripe for a new platform dedicated to applied jazz research, a kind of research that is fed by and feeding jazz performance and jazz education.

The IASJ Journal of Applied Jazz Research

The IASJ Journal of Applied Jazz Research is the appropriate platform for jazz research that jazz performance and jazz education needs: research that is applicable and useful for anyone in jazz, for anyone with an interest in jazz.

Articles on any kind of topic, in any form, are welcome, including, but not limited to:

- Articles on research that has already been completed
- Opinion pieces
- Blogs
- In-depth interviews
- Pedagogical approaches
- Jazz marketing or other “business” strategies
- Anything else whose utility is evident.

Due to the applied nature of this kind of research, there is less need for copious footnotes or extensive bibliographies, although these elements may be needed when appropriate. Contributions to the IASJ Journal of Applied Jazz Research are read by the editors and reviewed by members of the board of advisors.

The Journal especially welcomes contributions from recently graduated PhD and master students. The Journal is published online only, a format which supports the intent to be nimble flexible, and responsive to our members, colleagues, and jazz practitioners of all kinds.

The Editors of the IASJ Journal for Applied Research
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