

Playing Standards: Authenticity, Evaluation, and Agency among Seattle Jazz Musicians

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation investigates the performance standards used to evaluate selected Seattle jazz musicians, as well as the effects of these standards on musicians' educational, professional, and community experiences. My study synthesizes theoretical and methodological approaches from ethnomusicology, jazz studies, and other disciplines; draws from interviews with Seattle jazz musicians who studied jazz at a college level; and incorporates my experiences as performing jazz musician, scholar, and educator. I explore issues of authenticity, evaluation, and agency. I argue that individual performers generate their own definitions of jazz musicianship in response to competing standards and notions of authenticity held by instructors, audiences, and other musicians. I show that some performers feel disadvantaged or marginalized by negative evaluations based on certain restrictive criteria. Standards function within technical, conceptual, and social domains of musicianship, as well as in relationship to social categories such as gender and race. Oftentimes, musicians either cannot or do not wish to satisfy evaluative standards – including homogeneous definitions of playing technique rooted in particular notions of talent; static forms of jazz tradition based on certain notions of historical convention; restrictive modes of social presentation tied to specific notions of artistry; and exclusionary social structures reflecting overlapping ideologies of gender and race. This study shows that jazz musicians develop adaptive approaches by making their own choices and by using strategies particular to their musical setting, thereby asserting their agency. These approaches include recognizing tensions, conflicts, and biases in evaluative standards, as well as taking responsibility for their own musical development. I demonstrate that standards function through processes of acceptance, contestation, or adaptation. While these standards create structural limitations for

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jazz musicians, they are still able develop their own identities, senses of authenticity, and motivations to continue performing.

INTRODUCTION

Background

This dissertation investigates judgments of musical performance using specific performance standards; the effects of this judgment on selected Seattle jazz musicians' educational, professional, and community experiences; as well as the impacts on their attitudes toward their musicianship and musical development. In the dissertation title, "playing standards" refers to two concepts. First, many jazz musicians in the United States often play "standards" – or codified repertoire. These include well-known Tin Pan Alley compositions and those written by iconic jazz musicians. Second, evaluators – including jazz musicians, audiences, music critics, and jazz instructors – use certain standards to judge the playing of jazz musicians and ultimately, to judge the musicians themselves. I have linked these two concepts to demonstrate the value that many jazz musicians place on historical precedence and convention, even though many associate improvisation in jazz with freedom, innovation, and transgression.

This study was borne out of my experiences as a jazz bassist. While I was an undergraduate student attending a highly-competitive jazz studies program in the U.S. South, I made a series of observations. I noticed that not all students were treated in the same way, but rather that performers with higher levels of musicianship were afforded more status and opportunities. In addition, I realized that some students played only "straight-ahead" jazz (music grounded in the conventions of 1930s-1960s jazz styles), and that these musicians often looked down on those who did not. Moreover, I observed that students demonstrated different kinds of demeanor in their social interactions and presentation. Those who were the most focused, driven, and virtuosic were not always the easiest to collaborate with in performance. I also learned that female musicians (myself included) often experienced different expectations and treatment

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because of their gender. Finally, I took note of the fact that while Black jazz musicians such as John Coltrane, Charlie Parker, and Miles Davis were heavily emphasized in history and improvisation courses, there were very few Black students enrolled in the program. This conspicuous absence went mostly unacknowledged by the student body and instructors.

The behavior observed in all five cases involved judgments of student musicians (as being good or bad, real or fake, authentic or inauthentic, etc.) based on specific criteria, standards, or reference points. Both overt and covert standards were used by evaluators to judge musicians according to their ability level, stylistic choices, attitude, gender, and race. Even though there were many commonly-held standards among faculty and students in the program, there were still differences of opinion. As I started working professionally as a bassist in the area around my undergraduate school, I discovered that audiences and other working musicians often used conflicting standards for judging performance. I then moved to Seattle for graduate school and discovered very different sets of standards among students (or alumni) and audiences in the region. I began to realize how much professional success as a performing musician was dependent on negotiating differing notions of what jazz music is and what it should be.

The primary motivation for this study, however, was coming to terms with my lingering feelings of inauthenticity as a jazz musician, an aftereffect of my time in a highly competitive program. I initially attributed these feelings to perceptions of my gender. I could fill an entire volume with anecdotes from my educational and professional experiences concerning sexist treatment: comments about my instrument being “big” or “heavy”; shock or delighted surprise at my improvisational abilities; presumptions that I was the vocalist for the group; assumptions that I was carrying gear for an as yet unseen bassist boyfriend; expectations that I would take care of

administrative duties in group settings; and the first- or second-hand comments from musicians about females being inherently inferior, less aggressive, etc. All of these experiences reinforced my understanding that female jazz musicians are perceived to be inherently less authentic than males ones.

I initially planned to focus my dissertation exclusively on the experiences of female musicians in educational settings, but as I began talking with friends and colleagues, I realized that many male jazz musicians also struggled with feelings of inauthenticity. Despite having attended college or completed degrees many years in the past, they still grappled with feelings of inauthenticity and their inability to satisfy certain standards. I reoriented my study to include a more diverse sample population and began to ask whether musicians' perceptions of themselves as inauthentic could lead to discouragement (and among other musicians, attrition). What was it that made so many musicians feel inauthentic? More specifically, what were the standards that had imposed these sorts of pressures, expectations, and restrictions on jazz musicians that led so many to feel inauthentic?

I began to define these standards as competing notions of authenticity, and they became the focus of my dissertation. I conducted ethnographic fieldwork in and around Seattle, Washington which included interviews with jazz musicians in the area about their experiences as both students and as performers. This fieldwork was informed by several primary research questions: What drives musicians to feel that they are perceived as inauthentic? What roles do educators, other musicians, and audience members play in generating these feelings? What are the roles of ideologies of gender and race? In order to address these questions, I needed to design useful research methodology and recruit a diverse sample population for the fieldwork stage of the study.

Fieldwork

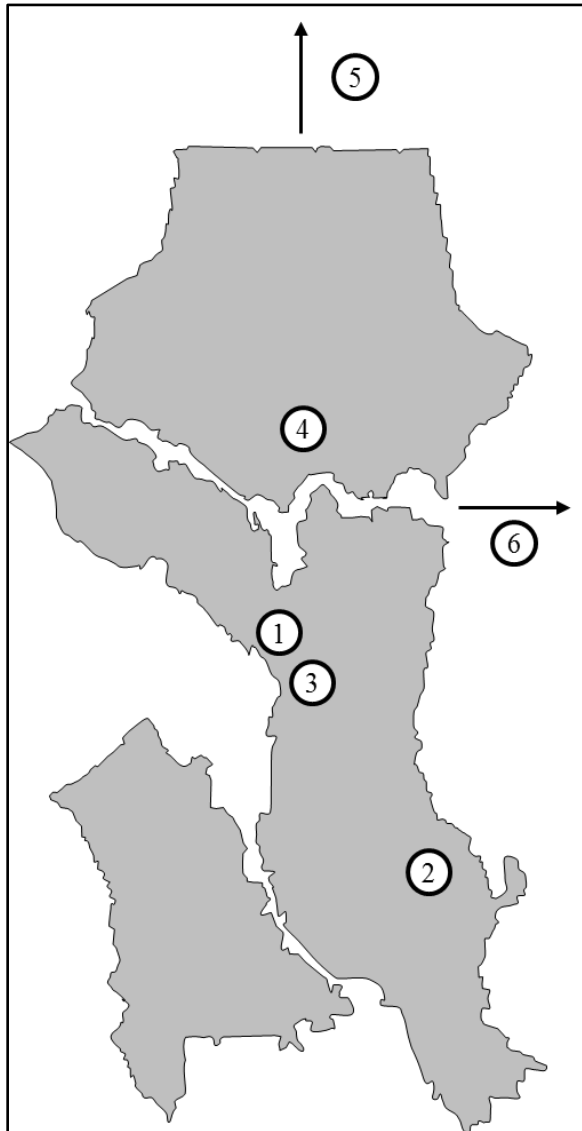
While my study was interdisciplinary in scope, it was firmly grounded in ethnographic methods and other disciplinary conventions of ethnomusicology. Although I was very much an insider in my area of study, I grappled with what has been termed the crisis of representation. In the past several decades, scholars in anthropology and related disciplines have recognized that ethnographic accounts inherently present partial, biased, subjective versions of truth (Clifford and Marcus 1986; Denzin 1997; Derrida 1981; Van Maanen 1995). Ethnomusicologists Gregory Barz and Timothy Cooley consider these shifts in the context of ethnomusicology, noting that “[m]usic’s ephemeral nature predisposes ethnomusicologists to embrace multiple realities” and that ethnomusicologists “often feel as if they are chasing shadows in the field when striving to perceive and understand musical meaning” (1997: 3). In addition to reflecting on my own subjective reality, I also considered connections between ethnographic fieldwork and pedagogy (Wong 1998) and the impacts of my gender on my own fieldwork project (Babbiracki 1997, Baron and Kotthoff 2001, Bell 1993). While I recognized the impossibility of ethnographic objectivity during my fieldwork, I tried to be self-reflexive and identify the ways my own experiences biased my interpretations. I also was keenly aware of my position in the study – as a performer working in Seattle, as an educator and former student, and as an interdisciplinary scholar.

The primary research methods of my fieldwork were interviewing and participant-observation. I collected data during a six month period, from March to August of 2013, with primary consultants participating in three-part interviews. Participants were recruited through word-of-mouth and based on their availability. Because of this, each consultant is part of my extended musical network. Each part of the interview, lasting between 30 and 60 minutes, had a

different focus (see Interview Schedule in Appendix A). The first part centered on individuals' life histories and musical backgrounds, with an emphasis on their experiences in formal education and within their primary musical communities. The second part of the interview focused on their personal definitions of musical authenticity. I asked them to define related qualities such as natural, real, and traditional, and then compare these definitions to the definitions specific to their own educational and community settings. The third part of the interview pertained to issues of gender and race in educational and community settings. These questions included questions about the demographics of faculty, other students, and audience members as well as the gender and race of influential musicians. I also asked my consultants about how they believed their own gender and race affected the ways in which they were perceived as musicians in educational and community settings. In addition to conducting these interviews, I observed my consultants and other musicians in various rehearsal or performance settings.

During my fieldwork, I interviewed eight musicians. They included male and female adult instrumentalists from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds who were currently living in or around Seattle (although several have since relocated). These performers were actively working in a professional or semi-professional capacity (such as playing in ensembles for club shows, private events, and cruise ship patrons), and involved in at least one jazz community. In addition, each consultant had completed at least one academic year in an undergraduate music program somewhere in the United States; had finished their undergraduate education at least one calendar year prior to participation in study; had studied jazz as part of their education; and had focused their musical education on their primary instrument.

I conducted my interviews at either my residency or those of the consulted musicians. For this reason, I do not list interview locations in my citations. In addition, I observed rehearsals and performances at a variety of locations, such as rehearsal spaces, homes, restaurants, and clubs.



My observations encompassed a wide geographical area in and around Seattle (see fig. 1). For example, I went to jazz-specific venues such as Tula's Restaurant and Jazz Club¹ (1) in Belltown and eclectic venues that include many jazz acts such as The Royal Room² (2) in Columbia City. I also went to restaurants hosting jam sessions, such as Own N' Thistle Irish Pub³ (3) near Pioneer Square and artistic venues such as Chapel Performance Space⁴ (4) in Wallingford. While the majority of my research was focused in Seattle proper, I traveled to venues north of Seattle (5) in cities such as Mill Creek and Anacortes, as well as areas east of Seattle (6) in cities such as Bellevue and Redmond.

Figure 1. Geographical Scope of Study.

¹ <http://www.tulas.com/>. Accessed June 20, 2015.

² <http://theroyalroomseattle.com/>. Accessed June 20, 2015.

³ <http://www.owlinthistle.com/>. Accessed June 20, 2015.

⁴ <http://chapelspace.blogspot.com/>. Accessed June 20, 2015.

The eight instrumentalists who participated as interviewees came from diverse backgrounds. They identified with various racial and/or ethnic identities, including Caucasian or some variation thereof, African-American, Filipino-American, Mexican-American and White/Native-American; and they ranged in age from early 30s to early 50s. Their primary instruments, highest level of musical education, and professional lives are specified below. Each musician is represented by initials, which have been changed from their actual initials in order to maintain their anonymity.

A.D., a White/American Indian female, is an upright and electric bassist with a bachelor's and master's degree in music who works full-time as a performer and private instructor.

C.S., a Filipino-American male, is a trombonist with a bachelor's degree in music who works full-time in a non-musical profession and as a part-time performer.

D.H., a White male, is a drummer with some undergraduate music experience who works full-time as performer and private instructor, as well as part-time in a non-musical profession.

H.L., a Hispanic-American male, is a saxophonist and ukulele player who almost finished a bachelor's degree in music who works full-time as a performer, private instructor, and instrument repairperson.

K.G., a White female, is a trombonist with a bachelor's and a master's degree in music who works full-time as a performer and teacher.

N.E., a Black male, is a saxophonist with some college music experience who works full-time in a non-musical profession and as a part-time performer.

N.R., a White male, is a saxophonist with some undergraduate music experience who works full-time in a non-musical profession and as a part-time performer.

R.S., a White male, is a pianist with an undergraduate degree in music who works full-time in a non-musical profession and as a part-time performer.

As I conducted the study, I was taken by both the similarities and differences between these eight jazz musicians. Although these musicians lived and worked in the Seattle area at the time of the study, they had attended educational institutions in different locations – the Pacific Northwest, Midwest, South, and Northeast. These educational institutions included community colleges, state universities with music programs, and private universities or musical conservatories. In their non-musical, professional lives, my consultants worked in various fields, including accounting, architecture, electrical engineering, naturalist education, and software development. Despite this wide range of experiences, the musicians I consulted all shared similar educational and communal experiences pertaining to evaluation and feedback from educators, audiences, and other musicians.

While my consultants had previously lived and studied in various parts of the country, I situate their musical experiences in the distinct culture of Seattle. The city houses several

nationally-recognized high school jazz programs. The large ensembles in these programs participate (along with professional ensembles in the area) in the jazz repertory movement. The jazz repertory movement consists of “performing original arrangements” or “commissioning new versions of classic works” (DeVeaux and Giddins 2009: 522). In both cases, emphasis is placed on preserving historical conventions and repertoire. Although many local jazz musicians emphasize this form of traditionalism, there are other jazz musicians who perform in avant-garde styles, and some who work in both traditional and avant-garde forms. On the one hand, despite being smaller in size than the major centers of jazz in the United States – such as New York City, Chicago, and Los Angeles – Seattle is intellectually and economically vibrant enough to support various styles of jazz (including swing, bebop, Latin, and free) and a variety of venues (including clubs, restaurants, festivals, and non-profit organizations). On the other hand, Seattle is relatively geographically isolated, which makes it more difficult (although certainly not impossible) for jazz musicians in the area to interact with jazz communities in other parts of the country.

In spite of this geographical isolation, Seattle has a rich history of jazz (De Barros and Calderón 1993). Jackson Street, in the city’s Central District, was a major jazz center during the early to mid-20th century for musicians such as Ray Charles, Quincy Jones, and Ernestine Anderson. In addition, this area was a site of collaboration and solidarity between Asian Americans and Black Americans before and during World War II (Lipsitz 2001: 360). In some ways, this legacy continues. For example, during my fieldwork, I observed musicians at the Jackson Street Jazz Walk,⁵ which continues as an annual event. That said, the regional geography and racial demographics of Seattle jazz has changed greatly since World War II. While the Central District is still ethnically diverse, it is no longer a regional epicenter for jazz.

⁵ <http://jazzwalk.org/>. Accessed June 20, 2015.

Two other factors contributed to the unique culture of Seattle. First, based on my experiences, I feel that many White residents of Seattle pride themselves on living in a socially-progressive city. In spite of this, there is ample evidence of social stratification and structural inequality, especially pertaining to race. Several of my consultants grew up in South Seattle and described the economic discrepancies between the minority-heavy southern neighborhoods and predominantly-White northern ones. Second, Seattle is part of the Pacific Northwest, which has been identified as one of the most secular regions of the country (Killen and Silk 2004). Given the associations between jazz and Black sacred traditions, both racial demographics and secularism create tensions in standards for jazz musicians and notions of authenticity. These regional characteristics were especially significant because they shaped the kinds of standards encountered by and used to judge jazz musicians in different settings. While regional characteristics affected the particular standards used to evaluate Seattle jazz musician, my consultants' individual backgrounds greatly influenced their responses to these evaluative standards.

Consultant Backgrounds

My consultants exerted agency throughout their musical careers through their choices of instrument, genre, and social group. In describing their musical backgrounds, they explained why they chose their particular instrument, oftentimes in response to particular external forces. R.S. was the only who did not frame his decision in terms of reaction, noting that it was “one of those ‘as early as I can remember’ sort of things” (Interview, June 18, 2013). He cited photographs of him as a young child “at a piano just fascinated by the sounds that came outside of the box” (ibid). He still acknowledged the role of family, however, noting, “My dad played – probably an

early influence” (ibid). N.R. described a similar form of influence from his own father, who did not play an instrument but “was into jazz music” (Interview, July 8, 2013). N.R. believed that his father wanted him to play saxophone because, “To him, it seemed like a common choice,” referring to the fact that saxophone is highly emblematic of jazz music (ibid).

Other musicians made their choices in reaction to certain ensemble structures. A.D. described a visit from a chamber orchestra at her elementary school where she was instantly drawn to the *basso continuo* part played by the bass – that is, the bass line, often played in conjunction with an improvising keyboard instrument, used in Baroque music. Describing this independent line, she noted, “I really liked that. I also really liked the lower tones. And they had their own part and it was so intricate...It was more like the role more than the instrument itself” (Interview, July 31, 2013). She responded to the autonomy of the instrument just as much as its sonic texture.

C.S. and K.G. (who are both trombonists who switched from other instruments) cited similar reasons for choosing their instrument: the need and demand for trombonists in ensembles. C.S., who had started out playing clarinet, observed that,

Everyone [in middle school] played trumpet... clarinet... flute... saxophone... In middle school there was probably maybe one, two trombone players. I mean they were always outnumbered by those other instruments - those kind of “popular” instruments. Band directors, they always needed trombone players. (Interview, May 31, 2013)

K.G. related a similar account of switching instruments in middle school, but described it in terms of her previous experiences as a flute player.

When I got to 7th grade, there were just so many of the common instruments – trumpet, clarinet, flute – that they really hadn't recruited anyone to play low brass or percussion. So I kinda took a look around, and there were 16 flutists, and I was like 8th chair, so it was sort of an equal number in either direction and I thought "I don't really want to be middle-of-the-pack." So I volunteered – when they were looking for people to switch instruments. (Interview, June 14, 2013)

Both trombonists switched from more commonly played, highly competitive instruments. Playing trombone allowed them to be more in-demand and more autonomous as one of the few players of their instrument.

For H.L., a movement away from competitive instruments carried over into adulthood. While he started out playing saxophone in middle school because he wanted to participate in school bands, he recently began to play ukulele. In jazz performance settings, there is generally an overabundance of saxophone players, often leading to rivalry between these musicians. H.L. cited this as a reason for his decision to start playing ukulele.

That's why I went to ukulele, because I did some ukulele clubs in Seattle and you walk in with a uke and everyone loves you. It's like, "Good, we got another one!" And they're happy to help you and it's very communal and it's a great feeling to be in a room where there's no competition. (Interview, July 17, 2013)

In contrast to saxophonists, his fellow "uke" players were more welcoming and supportive, which made learning ukulele more enjoyable.

Other musicians described extramusical factors in their choice of instrument. N.E. describes how he was limited to playing saxophone because one of his cousins already owned one and had given up playing. He joked that he started playing the saxophone because “it was the only one [instrument] that people in my family already owned. I actually wanted to play trumpet, but no one wanted to buy one, so alto saxophone it was” (Interview, August 27, 2013). C.S. had also described choosing between clarinet, violin, and flute for his first instrument, because they were the only instruments owned by his cousins (Interview, May 31, 2013). Both N.E. and C.S. were restricted by their families’ limited financial resources but exerted agency by still choosing to pursue an available instrument.

As I completed my fieldwork and began writing my dissertation, I grappled with how to refer to my consultants. While all of these musicians played jazz of some sort, many of them currently or previously played other types of music – such as classical, marching band, rock, and blues. For some of these musicians (and for myself), the term “jazz musician” was fraught with emotional implications. Throughout the fieldwork and writing process, I continually had to ask myself whether or not I identified as an authentic jazz musician. I eventually decided to refer to my consultants as jazz musicians, but did so for the sake of clarity and specificity. Instead of viewing my consultants as falling within the category of jazz musicianship, I view them as performers who have exerted agency by choosing to play musical forms that they understand as jazz and part of a jazz tradition. As with their choices of instruments, their decisions to play jazz were made in response to a number of other factors.

While C.S. made his own choice of instrument, his father was influential in exposing him to various recordings. His dad was considerably older than most parents of young children and had been a young adult during the Swing Era. C.S. explained how this affected his musical

tastes, that during his childhood he was “into the Swing Era type” of music (Interview, May 31, 2013). He explained,

My dad was literally an old man and I was kind of brought up on Benny Goodman and Glenn Miller type of music. My dad bought me tapes [from these artists]...All those big names... (ibid)

While C.S. played in small-group jazz ensembles at the time of the study, he was most familiar with big band jazz and repertoire. For him, this was not so much an acquired taste as an outgrowth of his childhood listening habits.

N.E., on the other hand, had not been exposed to a lot of jazz music before he started playing saxophone. He joked that “My favorite artist at the time was Tupac. I mean, who wasn’t? Tupac was the freakin’ man!” (Interview, August 27, 2013) He was drawn to the challenge and complexity of learning jazz music.

I joined the jazz band at my high school and I was *terrible* [laughs] and it bugged me. But also the music seemed a lot more complex than the stuff I was used to hearing, or used to listening to. But I didn’t quite understand it. I distinctly remember being in I think 8th grade and hearing – no, trying to read the actual sheet-music for “Take the ‘A’ Train,” which is such a simple tune, but I could *not* figure that out...And then I started to play a little more seriously, actually practicing and doing that. (ibid)

Although N.E. initially struggled with understanding jazz music, he was highly determined to learn. Over time, he became a skilled player and improviser.

D.H. recounted a specific, formative event in his childhood. His parents (who were both musicians themselves) took him to see legendary jazz and big band drummer Buddy Rich. He recalled that the opening band, the Don Ellis orchestra (another well-known group) had exhausted themselves in performance trying to match the intensity of Rich's band. D.H. noted that, "Even as a little kid, I could see that they'd destroyed themselves." He continued his description, contrasting the fatigue of the opening band with the energy of the headlining group.

Then out comes Buddy Rich's band – four bars [in] and everybody's screaming because it was so exciting, but he knew – it was like this contained excitement.

They were trying to give everything they had and he was trying to take everything we had from the audience. So it was this difference of – Don Ellis' band was on the rollercoaster, Buddy Rich's band was the rollercoaster. (Interview, July 27, 2013)

D.H. was especially taken with Rich's solo performance, as well as the incredible effect he had on the audience. He recounted this experience in evocative detail.

So he [Buddy Rich] took this drum solo, a lot of things had happened. Then he did his classic roll that gets louder and louder and louder. I ran up to the front to watch. And as his roll got louder and louder, and faster, I saw shrapnel coming from – maybe it was from his sticks or the coating of his drumhead – you could see this shit smoking off his drums [laughs]. And then I hear behind me this

BBBBBBBBBB – sounded like a jet or something then it gets louder and louder and I turn around and realize that everyone is *losing their mind*. I looked down and I started crying, like “ok, that’s – this is it, I’m going to be *that guy*. I’m going to be a drummer. I’m going to make the audiences go completely apeshit like this. This is the most *powerful* thing I have ever seen a human being do. (ibid)

Thus, while D.H. had started playing drums at his parents’ behest, this incident marked his identification as a drummer and solidified his affinity toward big band jazz drumming.

While some of the musicians in this study had started studying jazz early on in their musical careers, others began playing jazz after years of classical training. K.G. described jazz as “a tricky beast” (Interview, June 14, 2013). Unlike some of the other musicians, she had not received extensive formal training in jazz, but had to learn through experience and performance.

Learning to play different types of jazz is experiential. And it is with classical music as well, it’s just pounded in your head more. So what I know of certain styles of jazz is based on listening and performing it myself. It’s more ear-training – just knowing what to listen for and how to make it happen. (ibid)

When K.G. started working as a cruise ship musician, it was “a huge crash-course” in small-group jazz playing. While learning jazz improvisation required a great deal of listening, practice, and repetition, she eventually became more comfortable with it. She even acknowledged that jazz allowed for much more of a “progressive flare” than classical music (ibid). While each of these musicians made individualized choices to play jazz music, they would eventually have to contend with debates over what jazz is or should be.

As I collected musicians' life histories through my interviews with them, I noticed that many described the importance of social affinity and belonging in their musical lives. For H.L., these social aspects were primary motivations in his decision to begin playing music. He explained that he had started playing in band when he was in sixth grade and he joked that, "I honestly thought it would make me cooler" (Interview, July 17, 2013). His decision was tied to the regional culture of South Texas, where "there's two things you're good at: band or football – that's really it. And I wasn't good at football" (ibid). He was glad that he joined the band because at that young age, "it makes you feel like maybe you'll be part of a group" (ibid).

Other musicians described similar social motivations later in their musical lives. R.S., for instance, was already a seasoned musician by the time he got to college. At this point in his life, he was pursuing a psychology degree from a school that was not where he ultimately earned his degree. He described the influence of a roommate who "was a trombone player and had a full life to that point in music bands... *Very talented, very passionate* about it" (Interview, June 18, 2013). This roommate and "his circle of friends" motivated R.S. to move from merely taking lessons and practicing to getting "ingratiated in that small music community there." He explained how, "I got my mores there" (ibid). The concept of "mores" is especially pertinent to this chapter because it encompasses values, traditions, and codes of social conduct. While jazz musicians are evaluated by audiences, instructors, and other musicians based on their demeanor, their own mores shaped their attitudes and beliefs about music. In the case of R.S., his socialization into his roommates' community helped him to become more serious about musical performance.

For other musicians I consulted, their participation in certain ensembles created long-term social connections. When he described his primary ensemble, C.S. explained, "I grew up with some of these guys" – meaning fellow members of the band. His fellow musicians included

friends whom he had met in high school or college and had known for “5, 10, 15, 20 years” (Interview, May 31, 2013). He described the unique social characteristics of the group.

It’s pretty easygoing. I think the mission is not to try to be a professional band. But the mission is to try to play the best you can, sound the best you can, and overall have a great time doing it. (ibid)

Although the group was more representative of a community ensemble, rather than a professional one, C.S. maintained that musicians in the group were dedicated to trying to play their personal best. Moreover, his description emphasized the importance of fun and enjoyment in musical performance.

These themes – choice of instrument or instruments, introduction to jazz music, and social motivations – illustrate the ways in which my consultants exerted agency as musicians. While I found that these responses were specific to each individual, I also found that these responses were contextually-dependent and greatly informed by specific musical setting.

Musical Settings

The musicians I consulted distinguished between three primary settings: educational, professional, and community. Following my consultants’ verbal discourse about these settings, I outline and define them in specific ways for this study. At the same time, I recognize that there are other ways to approach these settings, and that they may not always be clearly distinct. Formal educational settings provide “the deliberate, systematic delivery of knowledge, skills and attitudes with well-defined specifications for space, time, materials, and teacher qualifications” (Coffman 2012: 200). For my consultants, the majority of their learning occurred in high school,

college, and in some cases graduate school. For the purposes of this dissertation, these contexts comprise educational settings.

In his cross-cultural examination of musical learning, Bruno Nettl stresses that “‘learning music’ means many things” depending on the context or setting (Nettl [1983] 2005: 388). He identifies several elements of musical learning that are nearly universal in human societies. The first of these is “learning a musical system, consisting of many (and sometimes various types of) discrete units of many sorts that a musician – composer, performer, improviser, or even informed listener – learns to manipulate” (ibid). Both in and outside of formal educational settings, jazz musicians learn to manipulate various units – including scales/modes, chord tones (such as the root, 3rd, degree or 7th degree of a given chord), motifs, and grooves – particularly in the processes of improvisation.

A second cross-cultural element of musical learning that Nettl identifies is practice, referring to the “repetition of a great deal of didactic materials” (ibid: 394). In educational and other contexts, jazz educators and musicians place great emphasis on time-intensive and continual practice. “Woodshedding” or “shedding” for short is a term with a longstanding history in the jazz lexicon. It metaphorically refers to long hours spent in a practice room (the “woodshed”) engaged in laborious practice (or “chopping wood”).

A third and final element described by Nettl is the “distinction between the practicing musician and the master teacher” in musical learning (ibid: 396). In jazz education, teachers or instructors hold higher positions of power and authority than student musicians. These educators are usually respected musicians in their own right. A college student studying music may, however, encounter a variety of power differentials between private instructors, teachers in related disciplines such as music history or theory, and graduate student instructors who hold an

intermediate position between undergraduate students and faculty. What is most relevant to this study is that educators are in a position to evaluate student musicians, resulting in tangible rewards or consequences such as admittance into or rejection from programs and ensembles, placement in ensembles and courses, and grades.

Professional settings provide occupational work, monetary compensation, and opportunities for advancement, such as in occupational capacity, skill level, and level of influence. As Robert Faulkner notes in his analysis of Hollywood studio musicians, however, “[t]he business of music constitutes no homogeneous grouping of performers about whose characteristics one can easily summarize” (Faulkner 1985: 11). Rather, he describes “a wide array of working settings, many career escalators, and diverse identities” (ibid). According to him, this heterogeneity of professionalism is manifest at a local level.

Even within the same metropolitan area, the number of musical subcommunities or orbits varies in terms of complexity of production process and managerial organization, stability of work, size of enterprise, artistic and financial ends, colleagues, and ideologies. (ibid)

Based on this analysis, I believe that professional musicianship should be thought of in terms of self-identification of performers, in relation to the pursuit of specific objectives, and as a fluid set of practices. As an example, in my own work as a performer, I have vacillated several times between being what would be described as a hobbyist and having performance as my sole source of income.

Community settings emphasize interaction and socialization, rather than establishing rankings based on skill level or learner status. Scholars concerned with studying and facilitating

musical communities, such as those in the field of Community Music, have noted that these settings emphasize “the promotion of participation regardless of skill or ‘talent’” and are generally comprised of “a group who have the same collective identity” (Webster 1997: 2 qtd. in Higgins 2008: 27). Developing musicians may find it difficult to find accessible, communal settings in which to participate in jazz performance because so many jazz musicians strive for virtuosity and advanced performance skills. In my own experiences, I have found that most jazz performance settings are built around a collective identity. Here, I borrow from Anderson’s notions of nations as “imagined communities” – labeled so because “the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (Anderson 1991: 7). In my opinion, this sense of communion among jazz musicians and/or aficionados is facilitated by widely-known conventions, repertoire, and pedagogies. A more tangible example of this phenomenon can be found in the recent emergence of virtual jazz communities (see Prouty 2012a). All three settings – educational, professional, and community – are sites in which performers negotiate notions of authenticity, processes of evaluation, and their own agency.

Key Concepts and Main Argument

Although my fieldwork was initially focused primarily on notions of authenticity, I quickly realized that this concept was not ideal as an analytical framework because it was so ambiguous. Furthermore, I discovered countless definitions of musical authenticity that were often covert and highly subjective. To address these complications, I chose the concept of playing standards (alternately referred to as performance standards) to encompass the variety of phenomenon examined in this study. As mentioned earlier, in jazz, playing standards refers to

the performance of a standard repertoire – including Tin Pan Alley compositions and well-known tunes from iconic jazz musicians. While I have modified the meaning to create a kind of pun, my rationale for doing so was to use language that would be understandable and accessible to jazz musicians.

In my framework, playing standards encompasses three distinct concepts: authenticity, evaluation, and agency (see fig. 2). While I still incorporate the concept of authenticity, I use this term to refer specifically to the attribution of value and idealized qualities to certain jazz musicians, where these attributions are made by individuals other than the musician. Standards, however, also encompass the processes of evaluation, whereby musicians and musical performances are judged using norms (frames of reference) and criteria (conditions to be satisfied). In addition, I consider the role of performer agency, both in terms of how jazz musicians form their own sense of authenticity and how they strategically respond to negative or restrictive judgments.

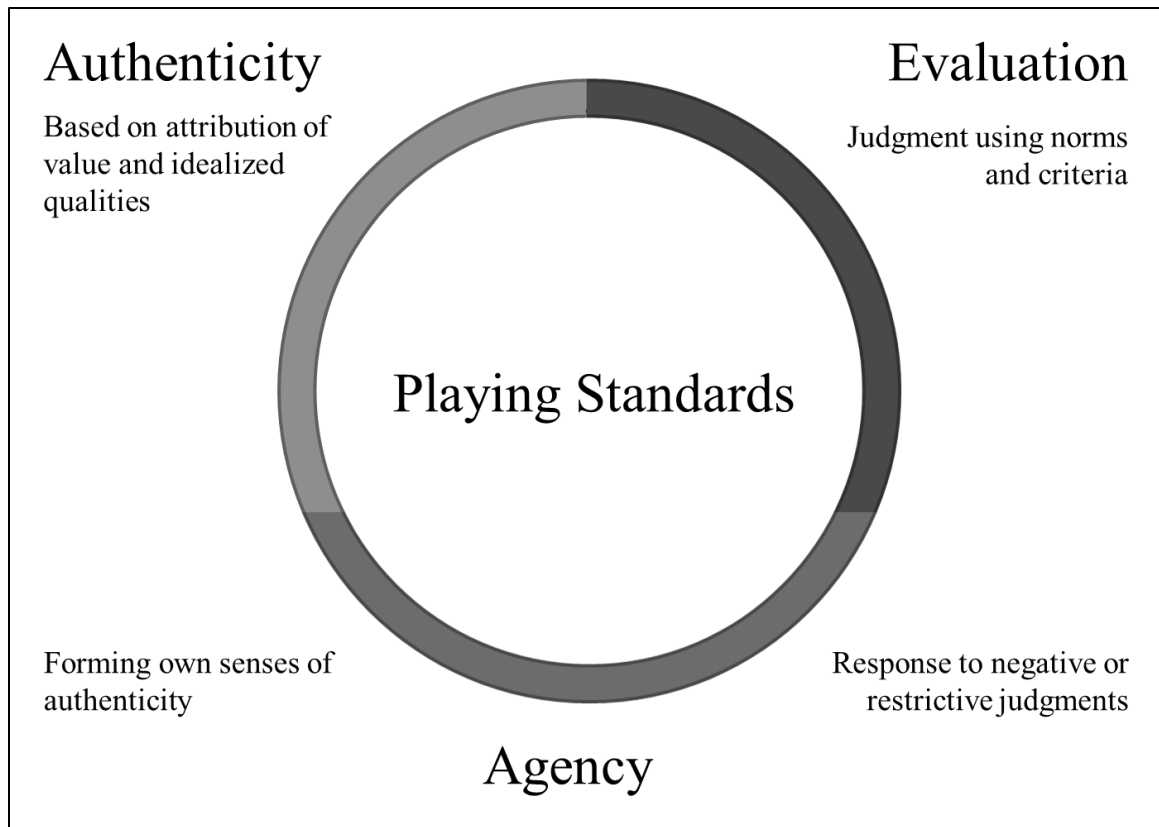


Figure 2. Framework for Playing Standards.

I approach authenticity as the satisfaction of certain standards – whether explicit or implicit. Instructors, audiences, and other performers use these standards to categorize jazz musicians as either authentic or inauthentic. Mahon notes that authenticity is “far from natural,” but that “prevailing views of what is authentic become naturalized categories” (Mahon 2004: 10). Other scholars have suggested that authenticity is “an absolute, a goal that can never be fully attained” (Barker and Y. Taylor 2007: x). In his examination of authenticity in Chicago blues cultures, David Grazian asserts that authenticity refers to “the ability of a place or event to conform to an idealized representation of reality: that is, to a set of expectations regarding how such a thing ought to look, sound, and feel” (2003: 10-11). While his definition also emphasizes the idealized nature of authenticity, he also makes reference to it being about how “a thing ought to” be. In the case of jazz, in order to have an idea of “how it ought to be,” one must first have an

idea of “how it is.” In other words, standards of authenticity are based first and foremost on the experiences of those determining them.

I define evaluation as the determination of value by an outside observer. In this study, it is an attribution of value to a specific jazz musician. In order to judge musicians’ authenticity (or inauthenticity), it is necessary for them to first be evaluated by another individual and for some sort of relative value to be determined. Mahon notes that notions of authenticity are used to “evaluate the quality of art and the integrity of people” (Mahon 2004: 10). Whoever is conducting the evaluation determines the standards used to categorize a given jazz musician as either authentic or inauthentic. In my interviews with Seattle jazz musicians, my consultants identified various evaluators, such as instructors, directors, audiences, and other (student) musicians. These evaluations, made by outside agents and interpreted by my consultants, formed the bulk of my analysis in this dissertation.

Evaluation is part of a larger sociocultural process of producing musical taxonomies. Writing about this topic, Nettl notes that “[m]ost societies do distinguish, rank, and group musicians by ability, accomplishment, musical or social role, and other criteria, and find ways of showing differences of status” (Nettl [1983] 2005: 365-6). Evaluation thus involves not only the differentiation of jazz musicians, but also the ranking and categorization of these musicians. Put another way, meeting the standards of authenticity results in higher ranking and positive categorization – both of which ascribe prestige to jazz musicians. My consultants noted that formal and informal rankings were present in their educational, community, and/or professional settings.

An example of formal rankings is norm-referenced assessment, which is used in educational institutions to “establish an ordering of students, comparing one with another, within

a specific cohort” and thus “some students are deemed ‘better’ than others” (Fautley 2010: 16). In my interviews with consultants, the two most commonly-mentioned forms of ranking were grades and ensemble placements. In the case of the former, students complete high-stakes exams or juries to determine their lesson grade. Although these examinations are officially not graded on a curve, they are still often scored partly in relation to the performances of other students and often intentionally or unintentionally foster a sense of competition. In the case of ensemble placement, pre-term auditions are used to determine whether or not a student will be admitted into an ensemble or to determine their position in a given ensemble. In large programs with multiple, hierarchical ensembles, the ranking and standing of musicians are made explicitly clear.

An example of informal ranking is comparative failure. In his analysis of Hollywood studio musicians, Faulkner uses the concept of comparative failure to describe the feelings of his subjects, noting:

Recognition and fame are strongly emphasized in the artistic as well as in the scientific community. Both fields are populated by great men to whom one compares one’s achievement and against whom one is likely to fail. A persistent career problem for some studio musicians is their feeling of comparative failure as solo artists. They failed as concert performers. (Faulkner 1985: 52-3)

While all of these musicians were satisfied with their careers and professional trajectories, almost all of them recounted instances of being compared or comparing themselves to other musicians of higher status.

In my examination of evaluative hierarchies, I draw from my training in feminist studies, a discipline that Sharlene Nagy Hesse-Biber, Patricia Leavy, and Michelle L. Yaiser describe as being built on “the premise of challenging hierarchical modes of creating and distributing knowledge” (Hesse-Biber et al 2004: 3). These feminist scholars contrast these epistemological approaches with positivism – what social scientists more commonly refer to as the “scientific method” (ibid: 5). Hesse-Biber et al argue that, “[a]ccording to positivism the social world is ordered and thus predictable” (ibid: 6). Because of this, I have taken care to treat musical hierarchies as both socially-constructed and problematic, not as merely a reflection of social order.

I approach agency in this dissertation as the informed choices and actions my consultants have made in response to negative categorizations and to negotiate competing standards of authenticity. Other scholars have defined agency as “the ability to act or to perform an action” (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 2000:8). These actions are contextually-dependent and are “what people choose to do given the particular structural and discursive configurations in which they live” (Monson 2008: 538). Approaching agency in these ways has allowed me to critique restrictive or exclusionary systems while still acknowledging the considered choices of those who are disadvantaged by these structures. In interviews, my consultants described many different ways of exerting agency. A common theme that linked their responses was the recognition of the subjective nature of authenticity, as well as the biases and assumptions underlying standards. Once they recognized that authenticity was subjective, that there were particular biases underlying particular standards, and that authenticity and standards were not absolute “givens” or “truths,” my consultants were able to define authenticity and standards in their own ways, to assert their own senses of their musicianship, and thereby exert their agency.

Ultimately, playing standards cannot be treated as concepts or mental objects, even if they have tangible consequences in the lives of jazz musicians. Rather, they function through specific processes such as perpetuation, contestation, and adaptation. While these processes create structural limitations for jazz musicians, these musicians are still able to develop their own identities, senses of authenticity, and motivations to continue performing. In order to conceptualize these standards, however, I have chosen to focus on specific domains of authenticity, evaluation, and agency.

Chapter Outline

I develop and support my main argument through five chapters which demonstrate that Seattle jazz musicians negotiate competing performance standards and notions of authenticity in evaluation, as well as exert agency in response to these standards. Each chapter examines a different domain of jazz that is subject to different performance standards, notions of authenticity, and modes of evaluation. These domains are technique, tradition, demeanor, gender, and race.

Chapter one investigates how jazz musicians in Seattle responded to standards of technical musicianship. These musicians are evaluated based on levels and types of skills used to manipulate musical instruments. They also must contend with competing notions of authentic jazz technique – such as innate talent, developed “chops,” and individualized technical approaches – to ultimately define their technical musicianship in their own terms. I explore the ways in which evaluations of technique affected my consultants’ experiences in educational and other performance settings. I show that negative evaluations of technique led some consultants to feel discouraged and marginalized. For example, several consultants expressed the opinion that students who were more technically advanced were regarded as having greater talent or potential

and were given preferential treatment by instructors and other musicians. These judgements were especially disruptive because they did not take into account individual rates of development. In addition, my consultants negotiated tensions between standards of virtuosity versus expressiveness and developed their own opinions about how to balance ability and personality in technique. In spite of these different standards, the musicians I interviewed found ways to develop their technique at their own rate and through their own approaches, thereby exerting their agency as performers.

In chapter two, I examine how jazz musicians in Seattle have negotiated different standards of tradition – concerning the proper uses of stylistic elements in conceptual musicianship – held by instructors, other musicians, and audiences. These standards and corresponding notions of authenticity include adherence to past convention, mimetic reproduction of familiar recordings, and creative innovation. I focus on the effects of evaluative feedback on my consultants’ interpretation of tradition. In some cases, my consultants could not or did not wish to conform to certain standards put forth by evaluators. As with technique, my consultants grappled with tensions between standards. In this case, they expressed the opinion that knowledge of historical convention was necessary for developing original musical ideas. They also acknowledged, however, that a total emphasis on historical tradition, such as an emphasis espoused in jazz discourse by figureheads such as Wynton Marsalis, has led to stagnation within jazz. Additionally, many consultants described audiences who had highly specific notions of the jazz tradition (specifically, popular music from the Swing Era of jazz, such as Glenn Miller’s “In the Mood”), resulting in highly restricted professional settings. The musicians I interviewed were able to overcome such constraints by developing and asserting their own concept of jazz through their own approach to tradition.

The third chapter investigates how jazz musicians in Seattle have responded to different standards of musical demeanor from instructors, other musicians, and audiences. This domain of social musicianship, which encompasses interaction and presentation, pertains to ideas of how jazz musicians behave or should behave in performance and other social activities. Standards of demeanor and corresponding notions of authenticity include dedication, artistry, and being a “good hang” (jazz slang for sociability). I focus on the effects of evaluative feedback from instructors, other musicians, and audiences about my consultants’ demeanor, and show how some consultants were negatively affected in educational and professional settings. Some consultants expressed the opinion that musicians who were dedicated exclusively to their music and who focused on artistry rather than commercialism were more highly valued in certain settings. This was in spite of the fact that these more valued musicians were usually not the most enjoyable to work with or the most sociable. Consultants argued that a professional musician needed to be a “good hang” – that is, fun to work with in performance. Additionally, they emphasized the value of having some monetary concern (without becoming completely commercialized) and connecting with audiences (without being too “schmooze-y” – or using social graces to mask musical deficiencies). Such pragmatic philosophies were not always emphasized in the consultants’ educations, and for the most part they had to create their own professional trajectories. Ultimately, my consultants developed their own demeanor – including modes of interaction and presentation – that reflected their particular professional attitudes, interests, and goals.

While I was aware of intersectionality (Crenshaw 1989) and the complex interactions between gender, race, and other social categories, I made the deliberate choice to divide Chapters 4 and 5 into gender and race because I felt that specific standards were built around the each

category individually. Chapter four investigates how jazz musicians in Seattle have contended with gender ideologies and overcome being negatively categorized based on gender by instructors, audiences, and other musicians. These musicians negotiate biased notions of authentic jazz musicianship – such as the idea that male musicians are inherently more talented, traditional, and dedicated than female musicians. I focus on the effects of feedback from instructors, other musicians, and audiences about consultants' gender, showing that such feedback has had the potential to hinder and marginalize certain musicians in various performance settings.

My consultants, both males and females, expressed three primary opinions concerning gender: First, they felt that female musicians were often disassociated from what are commonly perceived as large, loud, or otherwise physically-demanding instruments and were frequently expected to be weaker (and thus less talented) players. Second, they felt that female jazz musicians were perceived as being less traditional because of their absence from dominant historical narratives, especially dominant historical narratives in college courses and textbooks. Third, they felt that female jazz musicians were presumed to be less dedicated and artistic than their male peers because of their associations with domesticity and childcare, although at the same time this association was an advantage for female music teachers because they were more trusted by children's parents.

While both male and female consultants observed these same phenomena, males but were less affected by it and had different interpretations of it. For example, both male and female consultants noted that female instrumentalists tended to get more applause from audiences. Some male consultants saw that as their female peers having an advantage over them. Female musicians, however, disliked the extra applause because it insinuated that their successful

performance had defied lower expectations. In order to contend with negative (or positive, but condescending) evaluations based on gender, I argue, female consultants have learned to recognize and selectively ignore the biases underlying these evaluations and have developed their musicianship in particular ways.

Tackling issues of race, chapter five investigates how jazz musicians in Seattle have negotiated audiences' assumptions that certain musicians are inherently more talented, traditional, and dedicated because of their race, and are thus perceived by audiences as more authentic jazz musicians. I focus on the effects of feedback (often covert) from instructors, other musicians, and audiences about my consultants' race. In many cases, this feedback affected their experiences in educational, professional, and community settings. I highlight three primary opinions concerning race that my consultants expressed: First, they felt that Black jazz musicians were often presumed to be inherently more talented than other musicians because of the historical precedence of Black musicians, highlighting the irony that African Americans are conspicuously absent from many performance and educational settings in Seattle. Second, they felt that Hispanic or Asian American jazz musicians were perceived as being less traditional because of their absence from dominant historical narratives. Third, they felt that White jazz musicians were presumed to be more dedicated and artistic, as represented in the stereotype of the "nerdy White jazz musician." This characterization of White jazz musicians, my consultants suggested, was used to avoid discussions of cultural appropriation, that is, the current predominance of White musicians in a historically African American form. My consultants learned to both recognize and selectively ignore the biases underlying feedback that was either negative (or positive, but condescending), and to continue to perform by deciding which

techniques, concepts, and modes of racial presentation they would use to develop their own musicianship.

In each of these five domains – technique, tradition, demeanor, gender, and race – different performance standards and notions of authenticity are utilized in various ways. In order to make sense of this, I begin by analyzing technique. I quickly identified this domain as encompassing the most commonly used sets of evaluative criteria. More importantly, it was also the aspect of musicianship most discussed by my consultants.

CHAPTER 1: TECHNIQUE

Introduction

After completing my fieldwork – including interviews and participant-observation in a variety of settings – I struggled with how to introduce specific types of performance standards in the lives of jazz musicians. In my conversations with my consultants and others, I had noticed that both notions of authenticity and evaluative criteria encompassed a variety of topics and sub-topics. I also noticed that three basic categories of musicianship emerged in these discussions: technical (pertaining to the mechanics of sound production on musical instruments), conceptual (pertaining to the theoretical and historical knowledge needed to produce and understand musical ideas), and social (pertaining to the relationships, attitudes, and interactions which facilitated musical production in groups). Eventually, I decided to begin my analysis with a discussion of technique, technical musicianship, and related performance standards among Seattle jazz musicians.

In many ways, technique is an ideal starting point for understanding various standards of musicianship. Described as a “set of repeatable, practical skills or methods employed for a certain end” (Peraino 2006: 3; see also Foucault 1988), technique is not an end in and of itself. Rather, technique is used to perform certain repertoire, create expressive or innovative sounds, produce specific sound qualities, or other specific functions. For this reason, technical standards varied greatly according to setting and audience. For example, I observed that the kinds of techniques jazz musicians used at weddings, receptions, and other formal performances were vastly different than those used at late-night jam sessions. I noticed that bands playing at music clubs in or around downtown Seattle used different types of technique in these venues than, for example, when the same bands played concerts or festivals in areas outside of Seattle.

Another reason that I chose to begin with technique was that my consultants suggested that most audiences – no matter what their level of formal musical training – had some sort of criteria for technical evaluation. Whereas general audiences may have not understood the elements of conceptual musicianship, or the protocol for social musicianship used among jazz musicians, these audiences could still identify technical deficiencies such as intonation problems or failure to execute certain ideas on an instrument. This combination of being a means to an end, contextual-dependence, and ubiquity among evaluators made technique and standards of technical musicianship ideal starting points for my analysis.

In music, technique refers to instrument-specific sets of skilled movements. These processes correspond to what is referred to as the psychomotor domain of learning (Dave 1970) in the field of education. This domain consists of five hierarchical levels that increase in complexity: imitation, manipulation, precision, articulation, and naturalization. Articulation refers to the coordination of movements. This is essential for any instrument – whether coordinating breath with body (as with brass/woodwind instruments), right hand with left (as with string instruments and piano), or all four limbs with each other (as with drums). Naturalization describes the stage wherein movements become effortless. As I will demonstrate in this chapter, musicians are evaluated by educators, audiences, and other musicians based on their comparative levels of technical skill, as well as the types of skill used in performance.

In formal educational settings, students' levels of technical skill are often evaluated through juries – an end-of-term performance for a panel of educators, similar to an audition, used to determine students' lesson grades. In describing the jury process and evaluation in his education, R.S. noted that it “was difficult for many [other students] – it certainly was for me” (Interview, June 18, 2013). He attributed the “edginess and competitiveness” surrounding this

process to the fact that “music is subjective” and that “there’s always something at-fault when we try to objectify it” (ibid). He still acknowledged, however, that a “jury panel tries to be as objective and quantifiable as possible, though” (ibid). He further explained,

So I think that level of scrutiny – it was definitely difficult for me, and I think that also was “in the air” – there’s this monitoring, this evaluation that in the end, when you get your grade, says something about – well, this is how I think it’s internalized – people identify with that grade. (ibid)

In addition to formal evaluations such as juries, other consultants described similar experiences with informal evaluations – such as verbal feedback about technique from instructors, audiences, and other musicians. As R.S. noted, musicians often “identify” with such judgments of technical skill.

I suggest that notions of musical authenticity frequently inform standards for and evaluations of technique. For example, naturalization, which is developed over time through extensive practice and advanced learning, is often conflated with innate, “natural” talent. The musicians I consulted described having to overcome being categorized as untalented in comparison to other musicians by their instructors. In addition, these musicians had to negotiate competing notions of authenticity and standards for jazz technique. In this chapter, I examine three such notions: innate talent, or the idea that technical skill is the product of innate traits; developed “chops,” or the preference for advanced and powerful displays of technical skill; and individualized technical approaches, or the acknowledgement of different forms of skill used in performance. I argue that my consultants negotiated technical expectations from instructors,

audiences, and other musicians, and ultimately defined their technical musicianship in their own terms.

Innate Talent

While musical talent has a variety of definitions or interpretations, I treat it as the attribution of technical skill based on perceived intrinsic qualities, or “an innate ability or proclivity to learn in a particular domain” (Winner and Drake 1996: 271). Talent is a form of aptitude or innate ability. Aptitude is distinct from achievement, referring to skill that has been developed over time and through practice. Exploring such distinctions between musical achievement and aptitude, Edwin Gordon notes that “[w]hereas music achievement is intellectual and primarily in the brain, music aptitude is spontaneous and primarily in the cells and genes, that is, in the entire body” (Gordon 1997: 42). Because talent and aptitude are viewed by some evaluators as more “natural” because of innate, intrinsic, or biological origins, these characteristics are connected to notions of authenticity where naturalness is viewed as being more real or genuine. In discussing talent, A.D. related a quote from one of her colleagues defining it as “the rate of assimilation” (Interview, July 31, 2013). Thus, while talent is defined by some individuals as an intrinsic quality, it can also function as a system of ranking wherein higher rates of assimilation are preferred by instructors and other evaluators.

One of the first ethnomusicological examinations of musical talent was Henry Kingsbury’s *Music, Talent, and Performance: A Conservatory Cultural System* (1988). In it, Kingsbury connected talent to the maintenance of certain social structures within formal educational settings, specifically musical conservatories focused on Western art music.

[Talent] brings us directly to a discussion of inequalities of social esteem, authority, and power, something that is a basic element in any social process. One of the most basic aspects of the notion of talent is that of differentiation: some people have tremendous amounts of talent, some have little or none; many have talent in some areas but not in others. (Kingsbury 1988: 62-3)

He noted that in order for this differentiation (based on talent) to function, it must be grounded in some sort of tangible difference between musicians.

Talent thus conceived is understood as located 'in' the person's mind, psyche, or perceptual apparatus, and is widely felt to be transmitted genetically, like hair and eye color. Talent, then, is a representation of differentials of potential for certain socially valued behavior, differentials that are believed to be ordained not in social order but rather by the inherent nature of people. (ibid)

Thus, talent is tacitly used to justify existing social structures in formal music education such as placement in orchestral ensembles and social standing of students within instructors' studios.

In a broader analysis of talent and social structures, music educator Robert Walker notes that most cultures have communal musical performances settings "where everyone participates and where the notion of musical talent is irrelevant" as well as more restrictive ones "where only the specially talented and trained perform, and where the rest listen and participate as observers" (Walker 2007: 32). Thus, while Kingsbury's analysis pertains to classical conservatories, these phenomena are observable in society in general.

Several of my consultants expressed the opinion that instructors gave preferential treatment to students who were more technically advanced and regarded as having greater talent or potential. When discussing this issue, K.G. relayed a story about one of her classmates, a fellow trombonist and freshman, who was considered to be highly talented by both faculty and other students. She noted that this student had had “really good training, like [music] theory training in high school” (Interview, June 14, 2013). As a result, he had an advantage over K.G.

So while I was struggling with all the theory classes, he was just like “this is so easy!” And I was so pissed because everyone just bowed down to his musical knowledge. What I think was sort of skipped over was – everyone was like, “Oh, he’s just good” – but he was just better set up for success. He wasn’t necessarily more talented. (ibid)

Thus, while this student’s success was because of more extensive training and greater degree of musical knowledge, he was considered inherently more talented and musical than other students. In concluding this story, K.G. observed, jokingly “I’d like to point out that he no longer plays trombone” but did recognize that, “He is a conductor and a composer, though” (ibid). Her intention here is not to denigrate her former classmate, but rather to point to the irony of the situation. Although instructors and other students made assumptions about his future success as a performer and trombonist based on perceptions of his talent, these assumptions did not bear out in that did not become a full-time performer for his career.

In a similar manner, C.S. described fellow student musicians who were presumed to be more talented by instructors. These students “always got put in top bands, always got the solos, [and] always got the accolades” (Interview, May 31, 2013). I asked C.S. if he felt these

musicians were more naturally talented and he tentatively agreed, but still attributed their success to “better discipline [and] better education on their instrument” (ibid). I asked him about these students’ backgrounds and he replied,

Probably more upper-income. Maybe honors students. Parents who were maybe a little more financially stable - that they could fund their kids with private lessons before college. So, in some ways, they might not necessarily be talented, but they had the resources to...become talented or master their instrument a lot better than say I was, than just me. (ibid)

These other students possessed what Swedish sociologists Erik Nylander and Andreas Melldahl describe as inherited assets and acquired assets (2015: 89-90). The former refers to variables such as being of higher social class, having family members who are musicians, and growing up with large collections of recordings in one’s household; the latter refers to elements such as starting to play at a young age, having extensive musical education, and developing professional interests in music. While C.S.’s classmates enjoyed higher status because of perceived natural talent (that is, their social position was viewed as part of the natural order), this status was the product of financial resources and educational access that C.S. lacked.

Musicians who are perceived by instructors as less talented than other performers are especially disadvantaged because these perceptions do not take into account their individual learning processes or their potential for improvement. For example, Kingsbury describes how such judgments discourage certain individuals from musical performance.

An authoritative negative judgment tends to become a proscription against subsequent musical-social behavior... The domain of music, in which attributions of talent are balanced by injunctions against those judged to be unmusical, contrasts significantly with the domain of speech and language acquisition. Prohibitive depreciations of communicative action are generally not found in connection with language learning. (Kingsbury 1988: 73)

While musicians receive negative in a variety of settings, negative feedback in education can be especially detrimental because instructors serve as authorities whose judgments carry tangible consequences such as grades, ensemble placements, and academic standing. Unlike language acquisition, where young children are allowed to make mistakes and learn at their own pace, musicians with slower or atypical rates of musical development are frequently judged as “unmusical.” One implication, I suggest, is that those who are seen as unmusical by authorities are also perceived to be inauthentic musicians.

Several musicians I consulted addressed issues of talent and judgment in their own work as teachers. In one instance, A.D. explained her policy against emphasizing talent in lessons.

In my studio, I don't like to use the word “perfect” because – A Suzuki teacher once told me that they do not like to use that word in the Suzuki method. And I thought that was brilliant because it's really not a useful word in teaching. And I find that “talent” is a similar word because – everyone knows what it means but it's also very hard to quantify. And I feel like if a student thinks that they are not talented, then they're discouraged. (Interview, July 31, 2013)

A.D. also addressed the flip side of this issue, noting, “if a student thinks they are talented, I think it can really affect work ethic” (ibid). By this, she meant that students who are praised for having innate ability might feel less motivated to practice because they were already sufficiently musical. She still maintained, however, that she believes that talent “exists on some level” (ibid).

Like A.D., other musicians in this study acknowledged the existence of musical aptitude, but deemphasized its importance in learning. K.G. made a similar observation about her own students.

Even my students now who are really good, *I know* they don't practice that much – they're just good. They're not great yet – they're good for their level but they're relying on what they can do. If they want to continue in music, they're going to learn really quick that you can't just be good. (Interview, June 14, 2013)

H.L. asserted that the best musicians were those who could “marry the knowledge and the nature” (Interview, July 17, 2013). In other words, they were able to build on their innate talent through learned knowledge. He asserted that after an initial period of quick development, “Nature's done its job, it got you started. You have to personally be motivated and stick with it” (ibid). Both K.G. and H.L. acknowledged differences in aptitude but ultimately emphasized the primary importance of hard work and dedicated practice over time.

N.R. echoed a sentiment expressed by others that notions of talent minimized the role of hard work. While he acknowledged that “there are naturally talented people,” he still maintained that it was “like a diss of some sort” because it was “ignoring all the work they've put in over the years to it [developing musicianship]” (Interview, July 8, 2013). In a similar manner, K.G.

asserted that “you can dismiss all of the work that someone’s done by saying, ‘Oh, you just must have picked that up, you’re so good’” (Interview, June 14, 2013). K.G. explained,

They [good musicians] might’ve had natural talent, but what went well for them was that talent was developed in such a way to bring them to where they are now. You can be naturally talented, naturally gifted, but it doesn’t mean anything if you don’t build skill on top of that. (ibid)

As with notions of talent in education, my consultants were critical of the use of such notions among general audiences. Both N.R. and K.G. argued that attributions of natural talent negated the hard work and practice of skilled musicians.

While notions of talent were prevalent in the educational and professional lives of consultants, oftentimes the inverse was true in community settings. Here, I am referring to ensembles – both in educational institutions (such as marching bands) and outside of educational institutions (such as community bands) – that emphasize “the promotion of participation regardless of skill or ‘talent’” (Webster 1997: 2 qtd. in Higgins 2008: 27). N.R. was critical of the lack of competition within such ensembles.

I think competition in music makes – like sports, same thing with sports – makes everyone perform to a higher level, holds everyone accountable, and makes the ensemble significantly better. I think that was significantly lacking in the marching band, even some of the jazz ensembles. It was just sort of a “sit here, play this part.” Maybe by that time it’s expected that you have your own motivation – which I think a lot of people did. (Interview, July 8, 2013)

Thus, while N.R. concedes that some musicians had developed intrinsic motivations needed to develop without competition, the end result was a lack of accountability and group development.

In a similar manner, N.E. expressed frustration with the stagnation and lack of professionalism in his primary ensemble.

The frustrating thing is playing with a group that has that level of talent – potential talent – and not realizing it is really frustrating because, you know, we’re not asking everyone to set the world on fire. Everyone doesn’t have to get up and just give barn-burning⁶ solos – just know your part, play your part, show up on time, sound crisp – that’s it! When you can’t get that level out of the group [exasperated] oh, it’s maddening! (Interview, August 27, 2013)

While he frames this discussion in terms of “potential talent,” he does not suggest, like N.R., that competition is the solution to this problem of apathy among musicians. Rather, N.E. is calling for a certain level of professionalism (“show up on time”) and competency (“know your part, play your part”).

Whether heavily emphasized in or conspicuously absent from performance settings, notions of talent have longstanding effects on musicians. Several musicians described coming to terms with their own talent in comparison to that of other musicians. In one example, K.G. commented on her own musical development.

⁶ “Barn burning” (often abbreviated to “burning”) is jazz slang for a performance (usually an improvised solo) that is fast, technically complex, and physically demanding but seemingly effortless.

I have to say, I don't think I lack natural talent. I have a feeling that some of it was just latent for longer than some people's because it took a while for my musical education to catch up to where some other people were. So when I entered undergrad, I felt like I was really far behind in just knowledge of music, understanding theory and all that stuff. It felt like a struggle to catch up to that, but once I did, I felt like I was on a level that was all right. (Interview, June 14, 2013)

Thus, while K.G. felt like she had to “struggle to catch up” to her peers because her rate of development was comparatively slower, she felt that over time she was able to be on an equal level with her classmates.

D.H., on the other hand, grappled with larger debates of nature versus nurture. He discussed “strengths psychology,” a stream of psychology that asserts that individuals should identify and focus on specific areas of aptitude in order to achieve success (Rath 2007). D.H. described fellow students in elementary school who made much more rapid progress than he did. He realized “I couldn't be as good as I am at drums right now if it wasn't a strength. That it was a strength that had to be worked on a lot harder than it was for other people” (Interview, July 27, 2013). He described his own students who struggled for months or years and then made rapid progress. To further illustrate this point, he cited his colleague's experience working with students in dance.

[The] coach for the dance school, she says you get all these kids who are super-talented, get it super-easy. They had the right bodies for it and they're 4, 5 years old and doing great...And then some kid, who's just been there on the periphery,

some girl, jumps like a gazelle in front of her in junior high. [She's] known her for 8 years and all of the sudden she's the one getting the dance scholarships and all this stuff. She said, "You cannot ever make a judgment about who's going to make it and who's not going to make it and who's going to get the most out of it." Because there are a lot of talented students who don't think much of *dance* and other kids who struggle with it who love dance more than anything in this world.

(ibid)

This observation is applicable to music as well. Some people are better set-up – physically, cognitively, or economically – for musical performance. While rapid acquisition is often taken as an indicator of long-term success, the most successful performers may prove to be those whose love and dedication carries them through to becoming an advanced musician.

Notions of talent, although elusive in definition, are prevalent in the lives of my consultants. This prevalence is manifest in the preferential treatment of students in education, the minimization of hard work among audiences, and the lack of motivation in certain community settings. Each of these scenarios represents a different definition of musical authenticity. In the first case, educators and other students presume that certain musicians are inherently more talented than others, and thus more authentic. In the second, musicians' skill is presumed to be a product of natural talent, rather than effort. And in the third case, musicians who do not consider themselves to be talented are less motivated to put effort into their learning and performance. For the musicians in the study, negotiating these definitions meant learning to recognize inherent biases. Additionally, they had to come to terms with their own levels of aptitude and rates of technical development and learn to see themselves as authentic musicians. In the next section, I

examine technical development – not in terms of innate ability (as with talent), but in terms of physical strength and facility.

Developed “Chops”

Based on my own experiences as a jazz musician, I understand the jazz slang term “chops” to refer to a set of technical skills that allows a musician to display virtuosity in performance. A musician is said to “have chops,” implying that it is an object of possession rather than the process of technical development. The term itself refers to a musician’s face, mouth, or jaw – which are all involved in the embouchure, or facial configuration used for sound production in brass or woodwind instruments. Brass players, particularly lead trumpet players who play in physically-challenging, higher registers, might refer to their chops being “busted” – meaning that they have physically taxed their facial muscles used in playing. A bandleader might ask a musician during rehearsal or performance, “How are your chops doing?” meaning, “Are you able to keep playing challenging music or do we need to switch to easier music to give you a break?” Even bassists and drummers will refer to the state of their chops; although in this case, they mean their limbs, joints, muscles, or fingers.

Although I have frequently heard the term used by jazz musicians, I found little scholarship describing or analyzing it as a concept. Strikingly, in his extensive (over 700 pages) ethnomusicological study of jazz, *Thinking in Jazz: The Infinite Art of Improvisation*, Paul Berliner makes only one passing reference to “chops:”

Because of the constraints that musical instruments potentially place upon the expression of feelings and ideas, technical command over instruments –

commonly described as chops – is a matter much discussed by artists. (Berliner 1994: 259-60)

He also notes that “[b]eyond issues of natural talent, musicians account for the capabilities of players according to their discipline” (ibid: 260). Thus, chops are not necessarily seen by jazz musicians as a manifestation of talent, but the result of hard work and dedicated practice. I hypothesize that the reason chops are “much discussed” by jazz musicians and rarely mentioned by scholars is that the latter group is focused on the end product of improvisation while the former group is focused on trying to achieve that end. While chops are in some ways merely a means to an end in the service of improvisation, they are an essential component of in the lives of professional musicians.

In addition to their prominence among working musicians, notions of “chops” are also manifest in formal educational settings. As with constructions of talent, perceptions of chops are used to compare musicians’ level of technical skill. Thus, this construct functions as a form of norm-referenced assessment, which is “used to establish an ordering of students, comparing one with another, within a specific cohort” (Fautley 2010: 16). These orderings are particularly manifest in ensemble placement within educational institutions. During auditions, student musicians are compared to each other in order to determine if and where a student should be placed in an ensemble. While these formal evaluations are also based on notions of tradition (which will be discussed in Chapter 2), they rely primarily on notions of exceptional technique – that is, chops.

R.S. related an account of being adjudicated at a jazz competition, in which high school, college, and other types of bands were judged and awarded prizes. Although the incident does not directly pertain to chops, it illustrates the ways that technical ability is tied to power and

dominance among jazz musicians. R.S. described the feedback that he and his bandmates received after their performance at the competition.

The adjudicator complemented several people in the group, then he got to me, and he spent – somewhere between 10 and 15 minutes – mostly if you were to measure the direction of communication it was about 98% him towards me – I had very little chance for response – just *grinding* me on how I played and how I did. He was out of line – there’s no doubt in my mind. He was bullying – he was aggressive. (Interview, June 18, 2013)

Although R.S. “stomached it,” he “was hurting” and “did not have a good experience” in this competition and adjudication. He was critical of what he termed “social aggression in music” because it discouraged musical development and led to painful experiences for many musicians (ibid). Whatever the intention of the adjudicator, his bullying of R.S. seems based on R.S.’s perceived technical weakness and vulnerability.

Other musicians described interactions with instructors in which they received negative feedback indicating they lacked proper technical skill or discipline. C.S. described a specific lesson in which his professor threatened to discontinue lessons if C.S. did not improve his technique.

I mean, I walked into lessons one day and I basically got my ass kicked – he [the professor] just told me that he didn’t want to teach me anymore if I wasn’t going to put in the effort and that I was being really lazy and that I should probably quit

some ensembles...or quit marching band...be really serious about my instrument.

(Interview, May 31, 2013)

This threat was especially anxiety-inducing because C.S. was an upperclassman and would have been unable to graduate if he did not receive lesson credits. While this interaction prompted him to practice more at the time, it continued to affect him after he graduated.

Even now I don't think that I'm a very good technical musician – I think I'm pretty technically weak...and I'm pretty much aware of that. I want to work on it, when I can. I try to work on it. As far as my nature goes, I want everything right away, so I'm pretty much discouraged if I don't get it right away, I pretty much give up. For me, I occasionally need a swift kick in the butt – which is what he did, and it got me going but it wasn't where I wanted to be at the time. (ibid)

Thus, while he acknowledged that he needed a “kick in the butt” from time to time, he also admitted that he did not enjoy being berated by his professor about his technique. Furthermore, he continued to have low confidence in his technical abilities, even though he tried to continue developing these abilities as much as possible.

Notions of chops are also prevalent in professional settings. For example, when I asked A.D. how she defined chops, her first thought was that “people [meaning audiences and other musicians] are taken aback by that and they respect it” (Interview, July 31, 2013). She also acknowledged, however, that general audiences did not distinguish between talent and chops. She noted,

I think people don't really care how you got there, especially when it comes to a money making sort of thing – “Oh, we're going to play this wedding gig?” – they don't care if you've practiced or you were born that way, they just want you to get the job done, they want you to play jazz standards as wallpaper during a wedding reception and for people not to look at you [laughs] I think that's all people care about. (ibid)

Put another way, she argued that paying audiences appreciated technical competence, but did not necessarily ascribe natural aptitude or dedicated effort to it.

A.D. distinguished between these hired professional settings – in which musicians were expected to be proficient but inconspicuous – and jam sessions between musicians. A jam session is an informal performance that takes place in clubs or other small-scale venues. Usually, horn players take turns “calling tunes” (suggesting a jazz standard or other composition to play) and soloing. Oftentimes, there is a “house band” (a dedicated rhythm section) and a host or hostess for the even. A.D. described how technique functions within such settings.

I guess with chops I'm picturing more of a jam-session type setting, where people are being showy or at their own gig, where it's like, “This is my group and I'm going to play a lot of hard stuff.” I think people are impressed by it. (ibid)

By “at their own gig,” she is referring to performances where the bandleader and his or her ensemble are featured at a club or other venue, as opposed to playing for a wedding or other hired service. As with jam sessions, the audiences at such performances are primarily other musicians, and they place specific emphasis and value on such displays of technical mastery.

While my consultants described the importance of chops, they also stressed the need for musical appropriateness. A.D. tried to explain this idea in terms of her instrument, the double bass, which usually serves a supporting role in jazz ensembles.

If a bass player plays good time and really outlines the [chord] changes and doesn't even take any solos and you don't really notice them, I think that that's a huge compliment. I think that most musicians are going to like that – whether they totally realize it or not. (ibid)

She explained how just as not being noticed could be a positive thing, being noticed could be a negative one – that mistakes are often more perceptible to listeners.

I think maybe for the bass, I might stick out if things are not going well, like, “Oh, I think that person dropped a beat” or, “They dropped part of the form,” “Oh, they didn't keep the form during the solo,” “They slowed down during their solo.” If you notice the negative – it's such a weird, subtle, very important instrument, but it is subtle. (ibid)

In my own experiences as a bassist, I have observed the same trends as A.D. – bassists are expected to be supportive and competent, while instrumentalists such as saxophonists, trumpeters, and drummers are often expected to be virtuosic and flashy. I would argue, however, that players of each instrument are subject to different notions of what constitutes appropriate technique. In other words, having “chops” is not always about flashy displays of technique.

A.D. brought up two additional points related to notions of chops among working jazz musicians. First, she discussed technique in terms of thresholds.

I think that it's a threshold situation, so if someone isn't quite good enough to play certain [chord] changes, that's evident. If they're good enough, them being monumentally better, I don't think matters that much to the scene. (ibid)

Second, she argued that certain displays of chops could be a breach of social etiquette.

Describing a recent experience, she explained,

I was at a [jam] session a month or two ago and I don't know why but there were tons of trombone players there – like seven, something preposterous. And they kept taking a lot of choruses, and I was like, “Ok, so...?” I thought it was egotistical and a bit weird for trombone player #6 to keep playing with his eyes closed and taking chorus after chorus after chorus. I don't really care how good he sounds – that's a rude thing to do. Again, it's not honoring the music. The music doesn't need twelve more choruses of trombone solo [laughs]. (ibid)

Both of these observations were guided by a sense of appropriateness – that a requisite amount of competency could facilitate appropriateness and that excessive displays of technique could be inappropriate.

One prominent debate that was brought up by musicians concerned whether or not having chops is necessary for musical success. D.H. described virtuosic technical skill as being necessary for some, but not all musicians.

There's a big difference between chops and musical result, and technique. And that end result – it's like eggs from the Golden Goose – and the goose... For some people, they don't need great technique to produce the eggs. Other people need the technique or production stops. (Interview, July 27, 2013)

For him, the end results of successful musicianship were not necessarily dependent on having chops or a specific level of technique.

While A.D. asserted the need for a certain amount of chops, she also explained that she did not place as much emphasis on it as did other musicians she knew. She did, however, acknowledge that there was value to chops in professional contexts.

I mean, you've got to have some chops. If your tone is bad – I don't really care what instrument it is – or you really don't know the tune that well, I mean, there's a point where you have to know it, and I totally get that. But I think at some point it only matters so much to me. And I would say that's probably true for most people – whether they're totally forthcoming about that or not. (Interview, July 31, 2013)

She was critical of displays of chops for their own sake, noting,

I wouldn't say that it's distasteful, but usually it's kind of a parlor trick if someone's that flashy – if the action's⁷ really low on the bass so it's easier to play

⁷ Action refers to the height of the double bass strings off the fingerboard. Placing the action very low, where the strings are only a few millimeters above the strings, allows bassists to more easily execute technically complex lines, but may compromise their sound quality.

fast notes, I'm just not really that impressed by it. But I very much understand that audiences are into it, so it's totally cool to have a little trick here and there, it's totally kosher because that's part of the business is the show business side of it. I think I'm getting into what I value personally, more than the world. (ibid)

She was careful to distinguish between audience tastes and her own musical values. This demonstrates competing standards and corresponding notions of authenticity vis-à-vis technical ability and chops. She acknowledged that audiences were “impressed” by such flashy displays, and that there was some value to appealing to these audience tastes. As a musician, however, she placed greater emphasis on being contextually-appropriate with technical execution.

While the jazz musicians I consulted held different views of chops, they each – in some way – acknowledged the need for a certain amount of technical proficiency. R.S. concisely explained the need with the idea that,

There's a certain freedom in playing if you have a certain capacity on your instrument – that's real nice to have. And you know as a player, if you're struggling to move through a line while you're improvising, physically, it's going to be a constraint. (Interview, June 18, 2013)

Thus, while some audiences and musicians valued chops for their own sake, musicians such as R.S. emphasized technical capacity as a means of facilitating improvisation.

While notions of talent and chops are both related to technical skill and ability, there are some key differences between the two. The former emphasizes the origins of technique (where naturalness is correlated with authenticity), while the latter emphasizes the uses of technique

(where physical dominance, appropriateness, or facility are regarded as more authentic). In order to negotiate these competing technical standards, my consultants had to learn to identify the values of others – whether instructors, audiences, or other musicians. In addition, they also had to determine their own needs and values in regards to their own playing and their particular instrument. In the next section, I examine the ways in which more individualized technical approaches are developed and evaluated in jazz performance contexts.

Individualized Technical Approaches

As I have demonstrated in the previous two sections, notions of talent and chops often generate specific technical standards in jazz. However, many iconic jazz musicians, such as Thelonious Monk, Ornette Coleman, and Charles Mingus, are known for distinct sounds requiring individualized technical approaches. In discussing evaluation in jazz education, jazz studies scholar David Ake notes that such programs reinforce certain ideals, “setting norms for tone, vibrato, and pitch center” (Ake 2002: 120). He describes how this affects various ensembles.

This pedagogical approach appears somewhat understandable where big bands are concerned, with that large ensemble’s increased possibility of chaos, but less so in small-group settings, where so many important jazz musicians earned their reputations through distinctive, flexible, and sometimes quite unorthodox “sounds.” (ibid)

Reading this passage, I was reminded of an experience in my undergraduate education. During a jazz history class, the professor posed a discussion question to the students: If Thelonious Monk

was to attend our program as a student, would he be successful in taking classes? After discussing the matter for a bit, we reluctantly conceded that he probably would not do well in the program – that his idiosyncratic technique would not pass muster with the highly standardized evaluative processes. I bring this up not to question the legitimacy of such standards in jazz education, but rather to demonstrate how tensions between historical precedents and contemporary practices are manifest in educational settings.

Many evaluators, both in and outside of education, value exceptional displays of technical skill – whether conceptualized as talent or chops. Most jazz musicians, however, do not value this skill alone, as Berliner emphasizes.

While praising individuals for their technical mastery, musicians rarely appreciate such accomplishment as an end in itself. Many distinguish the physical strength and technical dexterity that performers sometimes exploit in “empty displays of virtuosity” from the ability to play with sensitivity, to create meaningful music with an instrument. (Berliner 1994: 261)

This passage echoes the sentiments expressed by my consultants in the previous section – that technical facility should be used in the service of creative improvisation. The idea of playing “with sensitivity,” however, connects to larger debates about individuality and emotional expressiveness.

Some scholars examine expression as a facet of technical playing. In the book *The Contradictions of Jazz*, Paul Rinzler makes the point that technique is often perceived by jazz musicians “merely as a means that accomplishes the true end of, say, emotional expressiveness” (Rinzler 2009: 95). K.G. expressed a similar viewpoint when asked what she considered to be the

mark of a good performance. She began by noting that she preferred listening to musicians “who have obvious skill and technical control – good intonation, sound, a command of musical language” (Interview, June 14, 2013). Expanding upon this statement, she added quickly,

But that said – and if it can be combined with those first categories, then the performance is especially enjoyable – for me, the defining mark of a true musician is expression and performance. So, do they bring you in to what they’re trying to do? Are they saying what they want to say? (ibid)

K.G. did not distinguish between technique for its own sake and expressive technique; rather, she saw technical command and expressiveness as two distinct qualities which may or may not be both present in a given performance. She went so far as to state that she can appreciate the latter without the former, noting that, “I prefer to listen to highly-trained musicians, but it’s not exclusive. I can appreciate performances by folks whose technique might be a little rough but their heart is really on their sleeve” (ibid). In my experience, while some formally trained musicians (whether in or outside of jazz) cannot enjoy the work of musicians with technical deficiencies, the majority of them share K.G.’s tastes in performance.

Jazz musicians often use the term expression to describe the individual personality and emotions that are conveyed through technical playing. Other similar terms used by jazz musicians include finding/having your own “sound,” “concept,” “approach,” or “voice.” While various musicians place value on these concepts, their corresponding qualities can be difficult to define. D.H. articulated this ambiguity in his own playing, based on feedback from audience members and other musicians.

People keep saying to me, “You can express yourself through your drumming!” I’m like, “What am I expressing, [vocalizes beat pattern]? Or am I expressing how I feel today, am I bringing that out... Maybe as an actor – I can express how I felt *at one time*. That’s not expressing myself today and I’m not an actor. Maybe they’re saying you can express your personality. You have a way of being and this is one of the ways you’re allowed to be that way of being. (Interview, July 27, 2013)

This commentary succinctly captured four differing definitions of musical expressiveness. First, he vocalized a beat pattern replicating the sound of his drum playing to represent expression merely as an aspect of technical sound production. Second, he referred to expression in terms of mood or how he “feels” on a particular day, suggesting that his emotions determine his technique in these settings. Third, he described expression as acting, or expressing past feelings, which is a performance-based skill that extends beyond technical execution. Finally, he conceptualized expression in terms of personality, or a specific “way of being” among many; this definition encompasses much more than technique and integrates philosophy, identity, and perception. These definitions of musical expressiveness range from purely technical (sound production) to all-encompassing (expressing a “way of being”).

In describing expression, C.S. focused his discussion on feeling in a given moment, similar to the second definition listed by D.H. above.

It's all about how you feel. What you're feeling at the moment. I think that's the beauty of jazz...when you're improvising it's not the same, it's what you're feeling at that particular moment... Let's just say you're playing a fast bebop tune...one

day you may feel playing in the beat, playing 15,000 notes...but some days, it could be the same tempo, but you just want to elongate everything - because maybe you just had a bad day and you just want to draw everything out... It's all about emotion, how you get your feelings out. (Interview, May 31, 2013)

For C.S., musical expression was specifically tied to the variations allowed for in jazz improvisation. He described how musicians can produce multiple interpretations of a given tune, and that these interpretations are determined by mood.

Another facet of expression is the role of experience. In discussing his educational philosophies with his saxophone students, H.L. described aspects of experiential musicianship that often go overlooked by these young learners.

I wish there was a way to explain things like that and to get students to understand that sooner. But I think musicianship comes down to experience a lot of the time – just being good experiencing life, being a good person and then you just get gigs and get to play more and more and more. (Interview, July 17, 2013)

While he emphasized that these positive experiences and interactions help to develop musicianship and musicality, he also addressed the role of negative experiences. For him, it was equally important for players to have negative experiences in their musical and personal lives.

I try to be very forward with my students, no matter what I'm teaching. I always say, "Right now I'm better than you, I'm going to be better for a long time, but eventually you'll be better than I will. If you stick with it and take these nuggets

that I'm going to give to you. But it's almost going to be impossible for you to catch up to me, because I've listened to a lot more records than you have, I've been in love, I've been brokenhearted, I've been broke. So yeah, I have a lot more life experience so when I play 'My Funny Valentine'⁸ it's going to sound a lot different than yours." (ibid)

In this statement, H.L. distinguished between technical level and level of experience, reinforcing the role that experience plays in musical expression.

Other musicians conceptualized expression as part of a larger, fuller life. K.G. had a lengthy account that illustrated this principle. She described this as, "One of my sort of 'aha' moments' as a young musician" which "occurred in between college and graduate school" (Interview, June 14, 2013). While visiting home, her high school teacher informed her about a visiting musician giving a masterclass and lessons to interested students. Although she could not make the masterclass, she signed up for a lesson. She explained that "he was a very good performer, a very good teacher," but that,

I was sort of in this holding pattern [with playing trombone] or just weird head-space where I'd just gotten out of school and I didn't really know what to do with my life or with my music – but I was still practicing fairly diligently. So I went to this lesson and just kind of perfunctorily performed whatever I was working on.
(ibid)

⁸ "My Funny Valentine" is a well-known jazz standard (usually played as a slow-tempo ballad) based on a show tune written in 1937 by Richard Rodgers and Lorenz Hart. The song is in a minor key and has a melancholy sound; its lyrics focus on finding beauty in the imperfections of a lover.

K.G. was experiencing a common phenomenon among musicians inside and outside of jazz – she had hit a plateau in her musical and technical development. While she was maintaining her technique via practice, she felt her playing was lackluster.

Her guest teacher tried to address this problem by getting her to connect her emotional experiences to her playing.

God bless him, he stopped me and we had this conversation... he was like, “You don’t want to live a boring life – you want to be adventurous and do all these things and you’ve already done a lot and you take joy in every day” and all this stuff. He’s like, “You have to live your life that way, if that’s how you want to play your trombone. You cannot be a total stick-in-the-mud and pick up your instrument and emote.” (ibid)

For the teacher, a well-rounded life was a necessary condition for musical expression. K.G. acknowledged that this was not always the case, noting that it “isn’t necessarily true for everybody – I know there are people out there who that [their instrument] is their tool for expression” (ibid). She still maintained, however, that this more holistic mindset was beneficial to the majority of musicians.

But I think for most of us – the sort of emotionally well-adjusted folks – if we don’t have experience in certain joys, and sorrows, and sadnesses, how are we going to know how those come across in music? And the more we listen to things that express those, the more tools we had in our bag to help us do it ourselves... and obviously you don’t have to go out and live a ridiculous life [laughs]. (ibid)

Like H.L., K.G. connected experience to listening, although she specifically described listening as a means to figuring out how to express emotions through musical performance. For K.G., successful musicianship was not merely a matter of acquiring exceptional levels of technical skill; rather, it was through developing various techniques to express human emotions and experiences.

In my interviews, the majority of my consultants described individual technical approaches in terms of expressiveness or related concepts. This type of emotional honesty is also sometimes referred to as “soul.”⁹ When I asked N.E. how he determined whether a musician was good or bad, he used this term, explaining,

For me, there has to be some soul in the playing. I guess it's not enough to just play the notes on the page. I'll speak to jazz – because that's my background. You listen to a lot of players – even professional players – that sound as if they're just playing them by rote – they're just going through the motions. You can study solos and learn arpeggios and patterns and go, “When I hit this [chord] change, I'll hit this [note].” I mean, it's something we all do to some extent, but there's a certain degree of intent and feeling in some folks' playing and not in others.

(Interview, August 27, 2013)

N.E. spoke to a tension often discussed among musicians between using pre-established musical pattern to learn improvisation and incorporating one's own emotions and feeling. He was,

⁹ In *Black Resonance: Iconic Women Singers and African American Literature*, Emily J. Lordi uses the term “resonance” to describe the significance of Black female singers who shaped Soul music as a musical genre. According to her, resonance “connotes reverberation, echo, the sounding again that ‘resound’ implies” (2013: 6). Furthermore, she asserts that resonant music “names a ‘sympathetic response’ or vibration between things” (ibid). While this term is somewhat removed from the sacred and racial associations of the term soul, it still speaks to the musical intentions described by N.E. in the quote above.

however, the only one of my consultants to use the term “soul,” specifically and the only Black musician who I interviewed. This suggests to me that non-Black jazz musicians, particularly White musicians, might be reluctant to use this term because of its racial connotations (see further discussion in Chapter 5).

The educational and professional lives of the musicians I interviewed were shaped by various standards of technical skill – whether manifest as talent, chops, or expressiveness. In various ways, however, these musicians were able to figure out strategies to develop their technique at their own rate and through their own approaches. By doing so, they exerted agency as performers. These approaches were informed by certain precedents such as historical jazz musicians known for their idiosyncratic techniques and varied definitions of emotional expressiveness. What marks these approaches as examples of performer agency are the individualized choices made by the musicians’ themselves in response to external forces.

Conclusion

For the jazz musicians in this study, there was a long process between starting to play their instruments and their developing individualized approaches on said instruments. Both starting and end points are examples of performer agency. In between these two stages, they had to negotiate various definitions of technical skill and authenticity. Notions of talent perpetuated the idea that certain musicians were inherently more musical and more destined for long-term success. This did not always prove to be the case, however. K.G. described a colleague who received preferential treatment as a performer in college only to go onto a non-performance based music career. She later was able to recognize her own ability as talent and that she learned at a different rate than others. C.S. noted similar preferential treatment in his education, and later

described how he continued to feel his own technique was lacking. D.H. remained mystified by the role of nature versus nurture in musical development. Most of these musicians acknowledged the existence of musical aptitude in some form, but maintained that hard work and determination were the most important factors in long-term success. Although these musicians had to contend with these viewpoints of some instructors and audiences, most were eventually able to recognize the underlying assumptions and biases of these mindsets.

While notions of talent attributed innate origins to technical skill, notions of “chops” valorized certain levels of development. This term was tied to physicality, strength, and aggression – as exemplified by N.S.’s experience being bullied by an adjudicator for improper technique. As with talent, there were debates over the importance of having chops. A.D. discussed the concept in relationship to other facets of musicianship such as appropriateness, competency, and etiquette. D.H. went so far as to assert that chops were not always necessary for creating successful, musical end products. While musicians acknowledged the need for a certain amount of chops, they also emphasized that technique was often contextually-dependent. Furthermore, gratuitous displays of technique were often seen as flashy or inappropriate.

Both musicians and scholars pointed to the fact that technique in and of itself is rarely the desired outcome of jazz musicianship. Rather, technique needed to be used to facilitate creative improvisation and emotional expression. While some musicians, such as D.H., struggled to define expressiveness, others connected it to feeling, emotion, and personal experience. While these notions of expressiveness were still bound to certain standards of jazz musicianship, they allowed musicians to develop their own individualized approaches based on their own personalities, experiences, and emotions. On a larger scale, these musicians shifted from focusing on external evaluations – from instructors, audiences, and fellow musicians and based

on codified technical – to developing their own technical values, approaches, and practice techniques. Ultimately, they developed their own senses of technique and ideas about the role of technique in musical performance.

While the domain of technique illustrates a variety of evaluative standards and definitions of authenticity, these are not exclusive to jazz as a genre. Technical virtuosity is valued in classical music, as well as certain forms of popular and folk music. It is used as an evaluative reference-point by instructors, audiences, and musicians alike (albeit in different forms). In the next chapter, I examine standards that are used specifically to define jazz as a genre. Here, the focus shifts from sound production on musical instruments to the invocation of certain jazz traditions via performance and improvisation.

CHAPTER 2: TRADITION

Introduction

As with technique, tradition is a concept used to define some of the various performance standards used to evaluate Seattle jazz musicians. Whereas technique is often viewed by musicians as a means to an end (see Chapter 1), notions of tradition are tied to desired performance outcomes – such as maintaining historical convention or creating innovative music based on existing musical forms. Another similarity between technique and tradition is that standards in these two domains vary greatly according to setting and audience. Educational institutions tend to promote certain narratives of tradition, although these narratives also tend to vary from institution to institution. In a similar manner, different jazz communities are built around specific understandings of tradition. While there are some variations in definition in these two settings, notions of tradition are often drastically different among general audiences. I suggest that this discrepancy is due to differences in training between jazz musicians and non-musician listeners – a discrepancy that is less discernable in the case of technique discussed in Chapter 1. While tradition is also used to determine evaluative criteria, unlike technique, it is used in jazz communities to shape understandings of history and culture.

In this chapter, I examine how Seattle jazz musicians have experienced and negotiated various notions of tradition in different settings, including their experiences being categorized as contextually inappropriate or historically inaccurate by instructors, other musicians, and audiences. I contend that musicians are expected to conform to certain established musical frameworks. I explore some of the ways these musicians negotiate competing definitions of authentic jazz tradition – including adhering to past conventions (using established practices in improvisation and interpretation), playing familiar music (reproducing well-known recordings),

and creative innovation (expressing one's own ideas). I argue that ultimately, the performers consulted define jazz tradition in their own terms.

Among jazz musicians, notions of tradition are tied to improvisation and related forms of pedagogy in and outside of formal education. Jazz improvisation requires a great deal of theoretical knowledge and conceptual understanding of music. At all of the academic institutions I have attended, I observed jazz musicians (particularly those who play chords, such as pianists and bassists) avoid attending their music theory classes as much as possible, save for test days, because it was painfully boring for them. In contrast, their classically-trained peers usually struggled greatly in these courses. To me, this suggested that playing jazz helped to promote conceptual understandings of music. In recent times, several scholars have pointed to the potential of improvisation as a tool for teaching music theory and musicianship in higher education (Palmer 2014). In *Music Theory through Improvisation: A New Approach to Musicianship Training*, jazz musician and educator Ed Sarath argues for a “trans-stylistic approach” to learning improvisation. By this, he means that “instead of specifying style elements in advance,” educators should “allow style elements to manifest as the byproduct of the creative process” (2010: 1). While all of my consultants had finished their education before these discussions were playing out in educational institutions, they were all influenced by their improvisational training (although some consultants – particularly horn players or those who had started out as classical musicians – struggled with improvisation more than others). If improvisation becomes part of the core music curriculum in many educational institutions, I suspect that standards for conceptual musicianship and notions of authentic tradition will be greatly changed.

In order to contextualize specific forms of jazz tradition, I draw from historian Eric Hobsbawm's notions of invented tradition, which he defines as,

a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behavior by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past.

(1983: 1)

There are two especially important facets of this definition of invented tradition. First, he mentions that traditions "inculcate certain values and norms." This is especially true in jazz, where notions of tradition determine playing standards and expected performer behavior. Second, he mentions that tradition "implies continuity with the past." In jazz or other practices, notions of tradition are usually based on some sort of historical or cultural precedent.

While the qualifier "invented" points to the socially constructed nature of traditions, other scholars have questioned whether tradition should be viewed strictly as a social construction. Benjamin Brinner, for example, writes:

Awareness of invented traditions should not blind us to phenomena that can reasonably be considered traditional. Although many scholars now appear to be leery of using the word with anything other than ironic distance, tradition is still useful to designate cultural knowledge that has been developed and shared by a group for a considerable time. (2009: 29)

While acknowledging the socially constructed (and contested) nature of jazz tradition, I still have chosen to treat competing definitions of jazz tradition – such as convention (use of specific elements), familiarity (reproduction of certain recordings), and creativity (production of original material) – as forms of cultural knowledge. Of these definitions, past conventions are most akin to invented traditions.

Past Convention

I view conventions in jazz as the various protocols – whether spoken or unspoken – that determine the use and treatment of certain musical elements, such as improvisational material and stylistic interpretations. Broadly speaking, conventions are used by instructors, audiences, and musicians to define the parameters or boundaries of jazz as a genre. I argue that jazz conventions require certain forms of musical competence. In *Knowing Music, Making Music*, ethnomusicologist Benjamin Brinner defines competence as “an integrated complex of skills and knowledge upon which a musician relies within a particular cultural context” (1995: 1). This competence integrates technique (skill) and conceptual understanding (knowledge), and is contextually-dependent.

Several scholars have engaged with debates over the boundaries of jazz. In his discussion of Internet communities, jazz studies scholar Ken Prouty lists the different kinds of definitions for jazz, as well as their corresponding boundaries.

For some, jazz is strictly bounded, a genre whose stylistic identity does not include the likes of certain (sub)genres... For a second set of members, jazz is still stylistically bounded, but the boundaries encompass a broader range of

approaches...For the last set of members, the notion of boundedness is antithetical to jazz itself...(2012a: 77)

In *Jazz/Not Jazz: The Music and Its Boundaries* (2012), editors David Ake, Charles Hiroshi Garrett, and Daniel Goldmark acknowledge the anxieties surrounding the unbounded nature of jazz:

We accept that viewing jazz as an open-ended, multifaceted idea or set of discourses rather than a prescribed and proscribed set of specific musical devices, names, places, or styles opens the door for charges of radical relativism: if anything and everyone can be seen, heard, or described as jazz, then the category becomes meaningless. (2012: 6)

They also argue, however, that, “Theoretically this is a possibility. On a practical level, though, that has not happened, nor is it likely to happen” (ibid). This flexible, but certain interpretation of the genre has proved to be true in the case in my experiences – while most of the jazz musicians I have known are open to a variety of interpretations of jazz, they still had the knowledge base to identify “straight-ahead” (highly conventional) jazz and more peripheral forms such as fusion, smooth jazz, and free jazz, as well as to understand connections between jazz and non-jazz forms such as rock, funk, Brazilian, Cuban, and other styles.

One model that I have found especially helpful in my analysis of tradition comes from sociologist Jennifer Lena’s *Banding Together: How Communities Create Genres in Popular Music*. She proposes four genre types: avant-garde – which is concerned with innovation and moving the art form forward; scene-based – which is concerned with cultivating social affinity

and connections; industry-based – which is concerned with generating profit; and, traditionalist – concerned with preserving social and artistic practices of the past (2012: 28-47). This model allows me to see how jazz functions as each of these four genre types. Throughout history, certain jazz musicians such as Cecil Taylor, Sun Ra, and John Zorn have been associated with the avant-garde. Many Seattle jazz musicians participate in such practices, although the majority of my consultants did not identify with this particular genre. Although the most recognizable, scene-based manifestations of jazz are in the past (such as bebop in the 1940s and cool jazz in the 1950s), contemporary Seattle jazz musicians function within various local music scenes. While popular music forms are often denigrated by jazz musicians, there are many performers “who have strategically straddled stylistic lines between popular music and jazz, such as Paul Whiteman, Louis Jordan, Frank Sinatra, Herb Alpert, and Quincy Jones” (Washburne 2004: 123). Many individual jazz musicians identify themselves as traditionalists. This genre type, however, is especially prominent in some (although not all) institutions for jazz education.

Another way to understand the boundaries of jazz is in terms of centers and peripheries. In *The Contradictions of Jazz*, jazz studies scholar Paul Rinzler defines the “core” of jazz as a genre.

The core is the center of the nature and definition of jazz, and defines its tradition. This core is similar to common practice in classical music, which denotes a set of musical practices common to the area of Bach through Brahms. The tradition is best seen as just the core of a definition of jazz, and not coequal to all jazz. (2008: 90)

He identifies several key facets of the core of jazz (ibid: 90-91, see also Gridley, Maxham, and Hoff 1989).

Several of these facets outlined by Rinzler pertain to rhythm in jazz. First, swing/groove is a rhythmic feel characterized by syncopation and asymmetry of eighth notes where the first note of a pair is held slightly longer than the second. Second, there are specific roles of the rhythm section members such as walking a bass line and playing specific drum cymbal patterns. In addition, jazz is based on improvisation, or creating spontaneous musical compositions in real-time performance.

Other facets pertain to formal and harmonic elements. For example, many jazz tunes use chorus form – a cyclical structure of many Tin Pan Alley compositions. In jazz, usually the verse of the original song is omitted, with the exception of some vocal performances. These choruses form the basis of jazz improvisations, where musicians usually take several “choruses” for each solo. Furthermore, these reinterpreted compositions use standard jazz harmony which is similar to Western tonality. Common qualities of this type of harmony include circle-of-fifths type progressions, cadences, and resolutions to the tonic, as well as extensions and other conventions more specific to jazz.

Finally, several of Rinzler’s facets pertain to stylistic elements and ensemble conventions. He points out that jazz draws heavily from the blues, referring to the 12-bar form and chord structure derived from blues music, as well as certain treatments of rhythm, bending of pitches, and other musical conventions. Jazz is based on the ensemble formation of the combo, a small group usually consisting of a rhythm section (drums, bass, piano, etc.) and a few horns such as trumpet, saxophone, or trombone. What is important here is that the epicenter of jazz is based on specific musical elements such as rhythm, harmony, style, and texture. In my

experiences working with jazz musicians, I would argue that many other musicians share Rinzler's mindset about the core of jazz tradition.

Rinzler explains that "some modifications to the core tradition are generally uncontested and not controversial" (ibid: 91), such as Latin jazz and non-improvisational big band performances. He defines this as the "undisputed area" (ibid). He also defines an outer circle to his model, however, which he terms "the disputed area" (ibid). This domain "contains substyles of jazz that some might not consider jazz (perhaps free jazz or smooth jazz)" (ibid). In my experience, most jazz musicians have a clear sense of what constitutes the foundations and fringes of jazz music. Definitions of core, undisputed area, and disputed area, however, vary greatly according to musician.

Debates over proper jazz conventions are especially pertinent in examinations of evaluation in jazz education. In his discussion of jazz improvisation pedagogy, ethnomusicologist and jazz studies scholar John Murphy acknowledges a paradox of assessing student improvisations, noting that "the institution requires evaluation according to a consistent set of criteria, while the tradition requires a personal statement" (Murphy 2009: 180). While Murphy places value on having clearly-defined criteria, he acknowledges opposing views among students.

Having served on improvisational juries, I think these desired qualities are reasonable. A student need not play in one specific way to demonstrate them. But in a comment on a draft of this chapter, a student argued that these criteria are precisely the reason university improvisers tend to sound the same: competent, but with nothing personal to say. (ibid: 180-1)

This relates to issues raised in Chapter 1 of proper technique versus individual expression. The “desired qualities” for improvisation that are used in evaluation thus conflict with the historical precedence of individuality and distinct improvisational styles among musicians. The net result, as Murphy’s student points out, is competency without personality.

In discussing her educational experiences, A.D. described the evaluative methods used at her undergraduate and graduate institutions. She acknowledged that “[t]here were certain, straight up *standards*” and that “at some point you have to have them” (Interview, July 31, 2013). She first described the rating system used for ensemble placement in her undergraduate program, noting that “the first number was your reading¹⁰ skill, [then] there were like 4 or 5 numbers, like *musicality*, improvisation, technique maybe?” While acknowledging their function for ensemble placement, she felt that “they didn’t end up being really useful” because otherwise exceptionally-skilled musicians who were deficient in one area could be held back. She joked that, “I left with the same ratings as I began with, if that gives you any sort of barometer” (ibid).

In shifting to discussing her graduate program, she mentioned having “certain exams that were very bebop-oriented,” such as playing and improvising over the Charlie Parker composition “Confirmation” at 200 BPM.¹¹ She explained the pros and cons of this approach.

For better or worse, that’s the situation there. It doesn’t test creativity; it doesn’t test a lot of other skills. I both like and dislike bebop as a barometer – it’s fast, it’s virtuosic, it’s evident what you should be playing over each chord change, so it’s a very convenient way to test, but it also is limiting to that style. (ibid)

¹⁰ Referring to sight-reading, or playing previously unseen, written music in real-time (at performance tempo) with little or no mistakes.

¹¹ This is incredibly challenging for any instrument, but especially so for double bass. I myself have taken a similar test and I have known jazz musicians – who studied at various institutions around the country who described having to play “Confirmation” for a class or exam.

She saw these evaluations as flawed, but necessary and conceded that “no matter what, you’re going to get a lot of criticism” (ibid). To her, it was important for jazz education to have the same standards as in classical conservatories, even if these standards represented a narrow or incomplete view of jazz musicianship. Put another way, these institutional standards legitimized jazz as an art form, but still prescribed limited interpretations of jazz tradition.

K.G. also spoke to this issue, describing the pressures in her graduate institution, as well as her responses to these demands.

There was such a high standard for how you interpreted certain types of jazz. If you didn’t know what you were doing, people really sneered at you, and I think I’ve always fought against that. I want to try my best to match the style that you’re going for but I also want it to be my own. (Interview, June 14, 2013)

She described a recurring tension among jazz musicians – how best to understand and represent a given style while still providing your own interpretation. This speaks again to conflicting views of jazz tradition as accurate interpretation versus individualized expression.

Another way in which jazz education promotes specific definitions of tradition is through jazz history courses. N.R. described his interpretation of this process of learning historically important figures in the jazz tradition through academic coursework.

I guess you learn about what the general public or what academia defines as authentic or historically important, so there’s that driving factor which afterwards I guess you’re left to see for yourself what you want to make of it. When you’re doing a jazz history class – which is a one-shot, one-and-done class – it’s like

“here’s this guy, here’s what it means to the music, so take that, that’s all you get.” (Interview, July 8, 2013)

In short, students were exposed to a narrow canon of historically significant jazz musicians. Musicians like N.R. were left to figure out how to apply this knowledge in their post-graduate musical lives.

Scholars in jazz studies have critiqued these canonical narratives. One of the earliest and most well-known examples of such a critique is Scott DeVeaux’s “Constructing the Jazz Tradition: Jazz Historiography” (1991). He explains, “To judge from textbooks aimed at the college market, something like an official history of jazz has taken hold in recent years” and that in these texts, “jazz is presented as a coherent whole, and its history as a skillfully contrived and easily comprehended narrative” (1991: 525). He presents this as a series of styles or periods: an “obligatory nod to African origins,” and then “New Orleans jazz up through the 1920s, swing in the 1930s, bebop in the 1940s, cool jazz and hard bop in the 1950s, free jazz and fusion in the 1960s” (ibid). He explains that,

But from textbook to textbook, there is substantive agreement on the defining features of each style, the pantheon of great innovators, and the canon of recorded masterpieces. (ibid)

While musicians formed different opinions of jazz history after completing their formal education (as described by N.R. in the previous paragraph), these recurring narratives shaped the educational experiences of my consultants.

In another example of canonical formations, some jazz musicians remain staunchly traditionalist. R.S. described an incident in which he “fishbowed” a conversation (meaning he observed as a witness, but was not actually involved in the discussion) about this issue. Two musicians in his ensemble were “saying that they wanted to be more traditional but were speaking about another player in the group that would not fit that category at all” (Interview, June 18, 2013). One of the musicians brought up how jazz venues differed from other genre types.

[One musician said,] “If it’s a classical concert, you can look at the program and see Brahms. If you go to a rock club you see a rock concert. But if you got a jazz concert, all of the sudden you’ve got classical music there and you’ve got this and that and all these things.” And they were both of the perspective that that was problematic – that by putting everything in the boat, that there was a dilution of the tradition. (ibid)

Thus, while some jazz venues feature an eclectic array of styles (which has a certain historical precedent in jazz, given that it is a highly syncretic form), some jazz musicians crave the consistency associated with canonical narratives.

Another facet of debates over tradition and convention is the discourse espoused by figureheads such as Wynton Marsalis – a well-known jazz trumpeter and educator. Marsalis, who was prominently featured in the 2001, ten-part Ken Burns documentary, *Jazz* (2000), has prominently advocated for conservative approaches to jazz tradition. N.E. expressed a view of Marsalis that I have heard from many other jazz musicians. While acknowledging Marsalis’ talent, N.E. was critical of his approach.

His [Marsalis'] basic line is, unless it's Marsalis and company,¹² everything that happened after like 1965 is not jazz – which is *insane!* ... That is a ridiculous comment – nutty! His point is, I guess, that there are all these people doing this kind of music who just don't *understand* like Basin Street stuff,¹³ they don't understand Louis Armstrong and Duke Ellington and Thelonious Monk and all this stuff that sort of comes before. They're trying to transcend it without getting [the music]. (Interview, August 27, 2013)

The tension N.E. presented concerns the need for jazz musicians to understand elements of tradition (or possessing a certain degree of historical competence) without becoming restricted by them. I discuss this issue in greater detail in the third section of this chapter, concerning creativity and innovation.

While most jazz musicians have developed the competency to identify or demonstrate expected conventions, there are still many competing ideas about what constitutes proper interpretations of jazz tradition. In educational settings, the needs for evaluative consistency and narrative cohesiveness can translate into narrow standards and historical canons. Some musicians, as well as figureheads such as Wynton Marsalis, advocate for stylistic and historical demarcations for jazz as a genre. While none of the musicians in this study espoused such viewpoints, they had to contend with them from instructors and other musicians. In the next section, I discuss an equally prominent form of traditional convention: the expectations of audiences for musicians to play music that is familiar to them.

¹² Here, N.E. is referring to jazz musicians associated with Wynton Marsalis, who have played on his records and in a neo-classical style.

¹³ Basin Street refers to the music of early, New Orleans-style jazz

Familiar Recordings

About halfway through my fieldwork interviews, I began to notice that almost every single musician had mentioned bandleader Glenn Miller's "In the Mood." First released in 1939, the recording was emblematic of the most popularized and mainstream forms of swing and big band music. As a piece of music, it is repetitious and simplistic. If played in a concert, there is almost always no improvisation. Instead, certain musicians play transcribed solos from the original recording. From my own experiences playing big band repertoire, I understood why all these musicians were bringing it up. Most jazz musicians do not particularly enjoy playing it, and yet it is extremely popular with most audiences. Whereas certain instructors and jazz musicians valued conventions as a way to maintain or continue jazz as a genre, many audiences desired highly conventional music that was familiar to them. Stories about "In the Mood" demonstrate the various ways that jazz musicians responded to and negotiated these audience expectations.

C.S. was the first musician I consulted who brought up "In the Mood." I had asked him what he perceived to be other people's musical authenticity. He used the song, in a hypothetical big band performance, to illustrate his point.

Audience members know what they want to hear. They want to hear original solos, they want to hear original articulations, they want to hear original notes, original note lengths. They want to hear what it is like on the recording.

(Interview, May 31, 2013)

In this response, C.S. described a form of mimesis expected by many audiences. By original, he is referring to the use of musical elements – such as original solos, note lengths, and articulations – found in the original recording of "In the Mood." In other words, audiences wanted a note-for-

note reproduction in which all notes were played in the exact same manner as the recording. This conception of originality differed from those of other jazz musicians, who generally refer to originality as a form of musical creativity and innovation.

C.S. explained that in these performance contexts, improvised solos could be a deviation from audiences' notions of authenticity, and emphasized the importance of familiarity for audiences.

And that's what I think [of] as authentic and when you deviate from that, when you start playing your own improvised solos... it just doesn't seem the same. It doesn't seem right. I think audience members, when they go to that type of thing, they expect to hear what's on the recording, because that's what they're familiar with. (ibid)

This interpretation of audience tastes did not necessarily reflect his personal views of authenticity. Rather, it demonstrated the prevalence of these audience expectations, which he had incorporated into his understanding of authenticity.

What is especially interesting about C.S.'s response is that he was the only one to describe this phenomenon without criticizing it, likely because he had a much different relationship to this music than my other consultants. As mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, C.S. had grown up listening to Glenn Miller and similar artists because of his much-older father. To him, these recordings were not watered-down versions of big band jazz, but were his first foray into jazz as a whole. Furthermore, rather than viewing preexisting recordings as restrictive, he viewed them as powerful teaching tools. He maintained that, "If you want to play something really authentic, then you gotta just listen to a recording – kinda nit-pick at what

bands did back then” (ibid). Rather than focusing on the narrow set of conventions expected by audiences, he focused on recordings as a means of understanding and learning specific conventions.

This discussion illustrates the ways that recording technologies and artifacts inform individual understandings of jazz tradition and authenticity. In their ethnomusicological examination of sound engineering, Paul Greene and Thomas Porcello discuss the relationships between authenticity and technology.

[M]atters of “authenticity” and “sincerity” are deeply caught up in *local* (as well as global) cultural discourses and ideologies of truth, value, anxiety, desire, and pleasure. While technologies that inspire these concerns, anxieties, and desires may be somewhat universal, the ensuing discourses, ideologies, and sound engineering practices are not. (Greene and Porcello 2005: 12, emphases in original)

In the case of musicians’ experiences with “In the Mood,” the technology in question, a specific sound recording, was universal. Each of these accounts, however, revealed vastly different attitudes and practices – among both musicians and audiences.

Other ethnomusicologists have examined the larger musical and cultural implications of sound recording practices. Building on his concept of *soundscape* (a sonic environment that is perceived and understood by an individual or a society), R. Murray Schafer uses the term *schizophonia* to refer to the split between an original sound and its electroacoustic reproduction (1969: 43-7). In a later discussion, Charles Keil incorporates schizophonia into what he terms mediated musics, emphasizing that “sounds Schizophonically split from their sources...have

been with us for over a century...freezing musical processes as objects of study, a precondition and a continuing, if largely taken for granted, frame of reference” (Keil 1984: 91). While Keil describes recordings as objects of academic study, his comments about “freezing musical processes” and recordings as frames of reference are equally applicable to this discussion of “In the Mood.”

Other scholars have paid specific attention to the question of authenticity in technological reproduction. In *Capturing Sound: How Technology Has Changed Music*, musicologist Mark Katz references Walter Benjamin’s oft-quoted essay “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” (originally published in 1936) and its assertion that reproduced art (and, by extension, recorded music) lacks a kind of spatial authenticity, or “its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be” (Benjamin 1968: 222, quoted in Katz 2004: 14). While Katz acknowledges that “mass-produced art does lack temporal and physical uniqueness,” he also contends that “reproductions, no longer bound to the circumstances of their creation, may encourage new experiences and generate new traditions, whatever they may be” (Katz 2004: 15). As C.S. pointed out, recordings can and do often serve as learning resources, which have the potential to facilitate “new traditions.” As some of the subsequent accounts will demonstrate, however, audiences’ expectations concerning recordings such as “In the Mood” can also be highly restrictive.

Sound recordings carry particular implications in the field of jazz studies. In “The Media of Memory: The Seductive Menace of Records in Jazz History,” Jed Rasula notes that, “Despite the prodigious use of recordings in formulating perspectives on jazz history, historians have tended to avoid theorizing that actual status and function of these artifacts – the very artifacts that constitute what would seem to constitute primary evidence about jazz music” (Rasula 1995:

134). He postulates that part of the reason for this is that recordings place specific restrictions on musical production, such as the fact that “drums were not used for early jazz recordings because they made the stylus jump the groove” and the typical three-minute song length imposed by early 78-rpm records (ibid). While recordings do play an important role in providing “evidence about jazz music,” they also have the potential to place temporal and artistic limitations on certain practices.

In comparison to C.S., K.G. regarded these technological conventions and expectations much differently. She described her experiences working on a cruise ship in which hyper-traditionalism and conformation to audience expectations was required.

We’d do these dance band sets, religiously, on my first ship and our piano player and bandleader had been in the Glenn Miller band, so it was a nightmare – the same sets *every* time, so you just knew you were going to have to play “In the Mood” again and again. He was *adamant* that people play the recorded solos from like “In the Mood” or “Sing, Sing, Sing.”¹⁴ It was like [imitating bandleader], “People want to hear that trumpet solo, so you gotta learn it!” (Interview, June 14, 2013)

The bandleader’s comment was referring to the fact that the trumpet solo on the original recording of “In the Mood” is so iconic that trumpet soloists are expected to play it note for note, rather than improvise their own solos. K.G. was especially frustrated by these restrictions on improvisation. She explained, “It always drove me nuts that you’re given an opportunity for

¹⁴ “Sing, Sing, Sing” is another well-known song from the Swing Era, most famously recorded by clarinetist and bandleader Benny Goodman in 1937.

someone to improvise and then [someone else] said, ‘No! It has to be this way’” (ibid). Like C.S., K.G. understood authenticity in terms of audience expectations.

So you did have to be pretty authentic in terms of how you interpreted that gig...And there’s a lot of like, “Do you know this recording? Do it like it is on the recording.” There’s a lot of that going around. More so than any other place I’ve been – outside of like a Ren Faire. [laughs] (ibid)

She described working in the setting – which she joked was similar to a Renaissance Faire in its orthodoxy – as having to “stick to the script” and cited these restrictions as one of her primary reasons for leaving (and not planning to return to) cruise ship work.

H.L. had yet another take on this issue. Rather than focusing on the tensions between audiences’ expectations and musicians’ desires, he emphasized the importance of bridging the two. He explained, “I think to be authentic, the audience and the players have to have an idea of where they’re going to meet... if there’s a disconnect there, then it’s hard for the audience to appreciate” (Interview, July 17, 2013). He compared playing a chart by Buddy Rich or Stan Kenton¹⁵ to playing one by Glen Miller or Benny Goodman.

If we’re playing let’s say Buddy Rich or Stan Kenton– where they say play loud and a little bit boisterous – to some people that’s just noise because they’re not used to Stan Kenton. And all of us [musicians] might go, “Man - that came out pretty good!” [laughs] But then we play something like “In the Mood” and if we

¹⁵ Kenton was a composer, bandleader, and arranger known for playing intense, challenging, and experimental big band music.

don't have that thin vibrato – that Benny Goodman's¹⁶ players had – audiences might go “well that doesn't sound like Benny Goodman. So there's a disconnect – we're authentic to ourselves but to them we're not authentic to Benny Goodman.

(ibid)

H.L. in effect synthesized both C.S.'s view that audiences demand a certain authenticity to the recording with K.G.'s assertion that authentic reproductions are in conflict with individual or collective authenticity. All three speak the ways in which professional musicians must negotiate competing notions of authenticity in relationship to audience expectations of tradition.

When describing audience expectations, D.H. expressed the opinion that these narrow frames of reference drastically restricted the potential for playing more contemporary big band music. He explained that for general audiences listening to such music, it was “like Indian music to them – syllables going by” or “like Chinese traditional music” (Interview, July 27, 2013), genres that are often inaccessible to unfamiliar audiences. He explained that he had received negative feedback from students and other invited audience members.

I've also had people come and complain – [imitating audience member] “I thought you were going to play ‘In the Mood!’” In writing - [imitating writing out sign] “We're not going to play ‘In the Mood!’” They don't care, they come expecting it...And then they come in and they're like, “Aahhh, aahhh!!! Weird sounds and it's loud!!!” (ibid)

¹⁶ H.L. incorrectly attributes “In the Mood” to Benny Goodman, rather than Glenn Miller, but the two bandleaders were close enough in style and time period that his point holds true regardless.

For D.H. this issue was not purely a tension to be negotiated, but a fundamental source of frustration without a clear solution.

Although each of these four accounts of “In the Mood” demonstrated similar audience expectations for familiar compositions (and by extension, similar relationships to recording technology), each of the four musicians had different responses to these expectations. C.S. viewed audience expectations neutrally, and emphasized the importance of recordings as learning tools. K.G. reacted strongly against the restrictions placed on cruise ship performances and cited it as one of her primary reasons for leaving this setting. H.L. described the process as one of negotiation between musicians’ and audiences’ expectations and desires. D.H. had resigned himself to audiences with what he saw as frustratingly narrow tastes. Each account revealed sets of motivations between musicians and audiences. In the next section, I examine competing definitions of tradition from the musicians’ perspectives, and the specific desires to perform in creative and innovative ways.

Creative Innovation

Throughout this chapter, I have discussed tensions between tradition (whether canonical conventions or familiar recordings) and individualized, original ideas. In *The Contradictions of Jazz*, Rinzler presents creativity/tradition as one of several contradictory pairs of values in jazz music, including individualism/interconnectedness, assertion/openness, and freedom/responsibility (2008: 10-11). He defines creativity as “[t]he production of (artistic) novelty” and tradition as “[t]hat which is preserved and which forms the foundation for a discipline” (Rinzler 2008: 10). In my own experience, most jazz musicians are concerned with both production and preservation. In *Jazz Rock: A History*, jazz studies scholar Stuart Nicholson argues that one of the

reasons jazz rock, a sub-genre of jazz, has been denigrated among musicians or excluded from historical narratives such as textbooks is “the emergence in recent years of a ‘jazz cannon’ and the argument that denies that the ‘jazz tradition’ is a tradition of change” (1998: xiii). Many contemporary jazz musicians have grappled with how to preserve certain traditional conventions without losing the perpetual innovation that has characterized jazz throughout its history.

Scholars in various disciplines have engaged with the concept of musical or artistic creativity. In “Creativity, Originality, and Value in Music Performance,” musical psychology scholars Aaron Williamon, Sam Thompson, Tânia Lisboa, and Charles Wiffen offer three basic definitions of creativity.

Current discourse on creativity – from anecdotal accounts to systematic investigations – often conflates three quite distinct concepts: (1) “creativity” as a component of human cognition and psychological functioning; (2) “originality” as the probability that a thought, behavior, or product has not occurred previously; and (3) “value” as determined by the society that witnesses the thought, behavior, or product. (2006: 162)

While each of these concepts carries distinct implications, they are often very difficult to distinguish from each other in practice. Notions of creativity among jazz musicians may incorporate elements of cognition, innovation, and social values.

This first definition of creativity corresponds to the revised cognitive domain of learning, as outlined by David Krathwohl (2002, based on Bloom and Krathwohl 1956.). Here, there are six knowledge-based activities arranged in hierarchical order from simple to complex: remember, understand, apply, analyze, evaluate, and create (Krathwohl 2002: 215). In many

ways, this model corresponds with technique and technical skill (see discussion of the psychomotor domain of learning discussed in Chapter 1). Just as evaluators may attribute advanced technical skill to a musician's innate ability, so too might these evaluators attribute advanced musical cognition and creativity to this same ability. It is impossible to treat creativity as a cognitive function because these functions are subject to various social values and assumptions.

The second definition of creativity listed by Williamon et al focuses on originality as a form of change and innovation. Speaking to these issues in musical improvisation, psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, with Grant Rich, outline a systems approach to understanding improvisational interactions and implications (1997). They argue that individuals function within two environmental aspects: a cultural/symbolic aspect called the domain and a social aspect called the field. The domain is necessary because creativity functions within symbolic fields. The authors assert that creativity "occurs when a person makes a change in a domain, a change that will be transmitted through time" (Csikszentmihalyi and Rich 1997: 46). These changes, however, must be sanctioned by some sort of group or gatekeepers referred to as the field (ibid: 47). Not only are notions of originality contextually-dependent, works of originality must be contextually-appropriate to be sanctioned and perpetuated.

Applying this model to the case of jazz, it could be argued that much of jazz's domain, which I would define as a set of conventions, has been perpetuated or preserved. The field of jazz, however, has undergone significant change as jazz has moved to the realm of art music and has a decreasing listenership (DeVeaux and Giddins 2009: 539). H.L. spoke to this point when he noted that "what sucks about jazz is it's kind of had its day in that new players aren't going to make the impact that old players have in our ear and in our view of jazz" (Interview, July 17,

2013). In other words, jazz musicians can apply creative changes to the domain of jazz; however, these changes carry far less impact and are far less likely to be transmitted over time than they would have been in the past.

Williamson et al's third definition of creativity speaks to the specific norms, values, and discourses surrounding the concept of creativity. Scholars in ethnomusicology have paid specific attention to creativity through this lens. In "Imagining Creativity: An Ethnomusicological Perspective on How Belief Systems Encourage or Inhibit Creative Activities in Music," Juniper Hill makes a comparative examination of six music-cultures (2012). Based on her analysis, she defines creativity as "the process of using divergent thinking and exercising volition in the creation of a sound product that does not conform to an entirely predetermined model" (Hill 2012: 88). She contends that "ideology influencing the type and degree of creative activities in a given music-culture includes culturally-specific beliefs regarding inspiration, talent, authority, and values" (ibid). Building from this model, I suggest that Seattle jazz musicians negotiate not only competing definitions of creativity, but also differing ideologies concerning who is (or is not) creative – as well as who should (or should not) be creative. In order to contend with the challenges of trying to satisfy different standards, my consultants developed and asserted their own approaches to creativity, often in relationship to tradition.

As a case in point, when discussing creativity and tradition, A.D. argued that one of the most important aspects of any kind of musical production was clarity.

I think that's really what it is, if someone's like "ok, I'm going to do old jazz standards, but with a different feel" or "I'm going to write tunes that I'm trying to make them sound like Tin Pan Alley songs." It's *clear*, even if it's weird and new and different, even if it ends up being like, "Oh, maybe that was a weird thing to

try,” whatever it is – I like that clarity, I guess. That’s what I value, personally.

(Interview, July 31, 2013)

In the two examples of clarity that she provided, the guiding approach and use of particular conventions was evident. She also qualified her statement to convey that these were her own values, suggesting that other musicians or audiences might hold different ones.

A.D. offered a further analysis of Seattle’s jazz culture, distinguishing between traditional and creative values. She began by explaining, “I have a small group of guys that are severely straight-ahead and they play traditional jazz – bebop and before – they have a certain evaluation that I’m similar to, but I’m not as strict as” (ibid). Again, she clarified her own values in relation to other musicians. She explained that these musicians “don’t like a lot of the creativity” and that she saw “two really distinct camps in Seattle right now – the guys who really want to play standards and the guys who really want to innovate” (ibid).

She saw herself as navigating between the two camps and noted, “I’m more on the standards side now, but I have been in more creative ensembles and I do appreciate it” (ibid). While she acknowledged that audiences in Seattle appreciated both traditionalism and innovation, she situated an appreciation for creativity in the context of the city’s character, that “there is something cultural here in Seattle that’s a little *wacky*. People value creativity – even more than they might even like the music, but they think it’s cool to like new, weird stuff.” She later mentioned that the “*huge* emphasis on creativity” in the Seattle scene was often “at the expense of the music” but she also conceded that “when things are new, they’re always going to be rough around the edges” (ibid). In this way, A.D. was able to clearly articulate her personal values and how these values compared to those of musicians and audiences in the area.

In discussing creativity, several of my consultants expressed the opinion that jazz musicians needed a certain amount of fundamental knowledge about tradition in order to innovate. N.E. succinctly expressed this sentiment.

I think that one thing people tend to do a little too much – and I’m certainly guilty of it, too – is trying to innovate before you completely understand – not necessarily your art, but I guess the foundation. It’s all basically reinterpretation. You’re adding something new to it, but you can’t change it, can’t modify it, before you truly understand what you’re modifying. (Interview, August 27, 2013)

Other consultants echoed this sentiment of putting foundational understanding before innovation. My interpretation of this is that these musicians recognized that creativity was a process of cognitive development, rather than an innate talent that could be immediately expressed. As N.E. pointed out, however, he and many other musicians try to rush this process.

To explain how foundational knowledge facilitates innovation, N.E. described how he had “been listening to a lot of 80s stuff lately – fusion stuff” (ibid). Although this era and style of jazz is often denigrated by jazz musicians, N.E. saw value in some of it.

Most of it is not bad – some of it’s crap. But you can hear very easily how some of that stuff rolls into smooth jazz and Kenny G, but you can also hear how that was an experiment and these guys took it and went in different directions with it. Because all of them were grounded in the past and those who were [grounded in the past] moved on and those who weren’t fell into drum sampling machines and crap like that. (ibid)

N.E. distinguished between two types of musicians: those who were “grounded in the past” and those who were not. For the former group, their incorporation of electronic sounds was “an experiment” that they eventually “moved on” from to do other types of music. In the case of the latter group, their lack of foundational understanding led them into excessively commercialized forms of smooth jazz.

Many of my consultants discussed creativity exclusively outside of their formal education. When asked about creativity and expression in their educational experiences, most cited technique and improvisational conventions as the primary foci of their instructors. R.S., however, described a much different educational environment. He explained how faculty at his institution strove to help students “very cognizantly – find their own voices” (Interview, June 18, 2013). He also described how students were encouraged to “not be a clone of Charlie Parker or some other player.” Here, he discussed the specific transition from imitation to innovation.

Which we all do [referring to imitating players like Charlie Parker] – it’s part of how we learn the lineage. But that next leap is – I think – a real milestone and a very difficult one and one where mentorship is welcome, great if you can have it... Their invitation and encouragement of me as a player – and the fellow students I worked with – it was the same sort of thing. You’re doing this to cut your soul – something very deep is being touched and trying to come out. (ibid)

This description encapsulated foundational knowledge and innovation discussed by N.E. However, R.S. was unique in that his educational institution actively encouraged students making the transition from being “a clone of Charlie Parker” to finding “their own voices.” This is especially notable in relationship to other programs (such as those described by A.D.) which

heavily emphasize Charlie Parker in the evaluations of students. These accounts from R.S. and A.D. demonstrate how standards of tradition and creativity vary greatly according to institutional setting.

Not all musicians were so actively encouraged to find “their own voices.” I asked D.H. about his experiences with individual or creative approaches. He replied that “it’s really undervalued – individuality” (Interview, July 27, 2013). He identified disconnects between discourses about jazz musicians and actual practices.

They always talk about jazz musicians, “The great individuals, always making shit up!” They’re the most conformist, terrified kind of sheep of any kind of musician I’ve played with. I haven’t seen that valued in the circles that I’ve played in and I’ve spent my life playing with the wrong kinds of people – where they were librarians, keepers of jazz. They weren’t the guys pushing the form forward. And I wanted to do that. I worked pretty hard on being the first to do certain things. (ibid)

His account demonstrates how individual jazz musicians may strive to develop creative approaches and be “the first to do certain things,” they may also be restricted by other musicians who are highly conformist.

Seattle jazz musicians have encountered competing definitions of and standards for creativity, innovation, and individuality. Creativity is an especially elusive concept in jazz – often at odds with traditionalism and functioning simultaneously as cognitive process, invention, and cultural value. A.D. described her own experiences with traditionalist and creative facets of the Seattle jazz scene, as well as her own preference for clarity with either approach. N.E.

espoused a common sentiment among jazz musicians that innovation must be built on foundational knowledge. Unlike my other consultants, N.S. explained that his educational institution encouraged the development of individual approaches and D.H. criticized his conformist and restrictive peers. While each of these musicians worked to develop their own creative, individual, or innovative approaches, they were each exerting agency in response to differing sets of influences, restrictions, and interactions.

Conclusion

Each of the musicians in this study chose, at some point in their musical career, to learn how to play jazz and each of them encountered competing standards for what constitutes jazz tradition, historical authenticity, and creativity. These standards varied greatly among educators, audiences, and other musicians. Each of my consultants responded differently to these standards, and were influenced and restricted to varying degrees. While they accepted or rejected certain definitions of tradition as a matter of personal opinion, some of them also acknowledged differing viewpoints among audiences, educators, figureheads, and other musicians.

For the purposes of my study, I focused on three primary manifestations of tradition. In the first case, I examined how perceptions of past conventions determined the desired improvisational and interpretive approaches for musicians. These conventions were often used as evaluative criteria in formal education, as described by A.D. In addition, these conventions reinforced historical canons, as described by N.R., and led to traditionalist mindsets among certain musicians, as described by R.S. For the second example, I shifted my focus to familiar recordings, best exemplified by Glenn Miller's "In the Mood." Sound recordings such as these served as narrow frames-of-reference for general audiences and in turn shaped audience

expectations for jazz performances. While C.S. merely described this phenomenon, without any sort of judgment, other consultants were critical of the restrictions that these narrow expectations created – such as discouraging improvisation and contemporary big band styles. In the final section, I focused on creativity and innovation as both manifestations of tradition and expressions of individual “voices.” A.D. explained the tensions between tradition and creativity in the Seattle jazz scene. Other musicians described influences (such as R.S.’ educational experiences) and restrictions (such as D.H.’s conformist peers) on their own cognitive development.

The domain of tradition exemplifies a variety of evaluative standards and definitions of authenticity pertaining to cognitive processes and individual interpretations of jazz music. These standards serve to define the parameters of jazz as a set of historical conventions, familiar recordings, or individual, creative practices. In turn, these parameters influence evaluations of jazz musicians. In the next chapter, I shift my focus from jazz as an individual practice to a collective one. Here, I demonstrate that definitions of jazz affect standards for demeanor, including social interaction and presentation.

CHAPTER 3: DEMEANOR

Introduction

While I was easily able to define technical and conceptual domains of musicianship in my analyses, I struggled with how to conceptualize the domain of social musicianship, or collectivity among jazz musicians. In addition to interactions – among musicians and between musicians and audience – social musicianship encompasses the attitudes and presentation of performers. I wanted to examine musicianship in terms of live performance and social processes before and after performance (including rehearsals and break time conversations at venues). During my fieldwork, I noticed that interactions with other jazz musicians in and outside of performance tended to mirror each other. The musicians who were the most fun to play with were not always the most virtuosic, but rather those who were sociable and funny offstage. I also noticed that the inverse was true – that some of the most brilliant players were also the most antisocial. I strived to find a suitable term to describe these complex phenomena.

I eventually decided to focus on the demeanor of jazz musicians, including interaction, attitude, behavior, and social presentation in and outside of performance. I also use the term to describe the ways that jazz musicians are perceived by others (such as instructors, audiences, and other musicians) during performance and related social interactions. Although demeanor is an elusive concept to define, I realized early on in my research that socialization was an important facet of musicianship for my consultants. In addition, demeanor was directly tied to consultants' professional experiences. Each of the musicians in the study came to their own choices about their professional trajectories in music. For some, music making was a side-project that supplemented income from other fields. For others, musical performance and teaching were their

primary occupations. As with other domains of musicianship, choices in the domain of demeanor were shaped by different forms of influence and restriction.

Just as jazz musicians are evaluated on their technique and use of traditional elements, they are also judged based on their demeanor. In *Blue Chicago: the Search for Authenticity in Urban Blues Clubs*, sociologist David Grazian explains how notions of authenticity are tied to specific modes of social presentation. He first asserts that “all of social life is performed” and that “authenticity, therefore, is always manufactured: like life itself, it is a grand performance, and while some performances may be more convincing than others, its status as contrivance hardly changes as a result” (Grazian 2003: 11). By its very nature, notions of authenticity in musical performance require musicians to adapt some sort of persona or mode of social presentation. He also explains the contextually-dependent nature of notions of authenticity.

The search for authenticity incorrectly presumes that people typically observe highly predictable, customary patterns of behavior – a conceit that tricks us into thinking that the cultural worlds other than our own are homogenous and unchanging, rather than complex and contradictory. (ibid)

While it is thus possible to identify certain protocols or codes of conduct (similar to musical conventions discussed in Chapter 2), individual behaviors vary greatly depending on context and condition.

In *The Contradictions of Jazz* (2008), Rinzler outlines the contradictory pair of individualism/interconnectedness. This dichotomy is especially pertinent to discussion of demeanor among jazz musicians. Rinzler distinguishes between individualism, which focuses on “a person as a single person, without regard to social relations,” and interconnectedness,

referring to the “relationships between two or more people, especially the music created when a musician improvises in the context of what other musicians in the ensemble have performed” (2008: 10). While evaluators can only observe the external behavior and demeanor of jazz musicians through interpersonal interactions, these evaluators often make specific assumptions about the personality or intrapersonal life of the individual musician in question. As with tradition and creativity, however, there is still a great deal of overlap between individual and collective factors in musical performances.

Interactions between jazz musicians and audience members provide rich sites of analysis pertaining to the issue of demeanor. Bertram Ashe describes how jazz musicians perform specific roles for audiences.

The question is, then, for both the jazz musician and the jazz audience member, is this: *what do we see* when we’re watching a jazz performance? There is a distinct difference between going to see a jazz concert and listening to a jazz recording made in a studio...an onstage jazz musician not only performs the music, but also “performs” the role of “jazz musician.” In a sense, it’s theater, although that theatrical aspect is certainly subordinate to the music. (Ashe 1999: 285, emphasis in original)

While this observation certainly holds true for concert performances of jazz such as in a club or on a performance arts stage, these dynamics are also pertinent to interactions among musicians or in informal performance contexts such as restaurant gigs and weddings. While certain community settings allow musicians to present an “authentic self” wherein they are not concerned with projecting idealized images of themselves, it is almost impossible to move

beyond the codes of conduct and expected modes of presentation that are inherent in most performances settings.

This chapter explores the ways in which Seattle jazz musicians have negotiated competing notions of authentic demeanor, as manifest through social presentation and interaction. These notions pertain to ideas of how jazz musicians behave or should behave in and outside of performance. I discuss three such notions. First, notions of dedication place high value on musicians who are focused almost exclusively on performance and their careers. Second, notions of artistry valorize musicians who create art and do not concern themselves with commercial interests or financial gain. Finally, notions of being a “good hang” allow musicians to develop their own modes of social presentation by encouraging affinity among these musicians. As with technique and tradition, these notions are contextually-dependent and often in conflict with each other. In order negotiate different standards, Seattle jazz musicians choose musical trajectories and participate in communities which reflect their own social values.

Dedication

Dedication refers to the levels of focus, exclusion, and devotion that are expected of jazz musicians. While some general audiences conceptualize musical authenticity in these terms, this quality is especially prominent among educators and other musicians. For example, in his ethnographic examination of a large school of music, Bruno Nettl characterizes this setting as “a religious system ruled by the great composers worshipped and interpreted by a priesthood” (Nettl [1983] 2005: 190-91). While this observation is applicable primarily to classical student musicians, it holds equally true for jazz students. Based on my own observations in jazz education, I suggest that this monastic structure to college jazz education leads to two primary

consequences. First, it creates an environment that is exclusionary to female participants (see Chapter 4); second, it disassociates jazz musicianship from marriage, parenthood, and diverse modes of socialization. While many jazz musicians successfully balance music, family, and friends, such a balance conflicts with certain standards of musicianship and musical demeanor.

H.L. grappled with these issues as a student. During his junior year of college, he made a conscious choice to not be hyper-dedicated to his musical practice, explaining,

I kind of said to myself, “Self, you’re not going to be that good – you’re never going to be an 8 [on a scale of musicianship from 1-10], *unless* you give up the stuff that makes us human.” Like family and all that sort of stuff – very rare do you get great people – who are good at anything – who are good at the family and the life stuff. It’s rare – unless you’re a 6. But 8s and 9s, you’re not good at anything else but doing what your mind is meant to do. (Interview, July 17, 2013)

He had realized that the amount of time and effort needed to achieve musical virtuosity would mean sacrificing relationships with family and other life pursuits – as he put it, “the stuff that makes us human.” He then gave examples of people who were exceptionally brilliant in one particular area, but did not have an active social life.

Like Warren Buffet – I was reading some stuff about how every Wednesday he has a burger or something from the same place where he’s been eating burgers for that past 40 years in Omaha where he’s been living because that’s his thing. He doesn’t care – he reads *Wall Street Journal*. He wakes up, *Wall Street Journal*, and he does his studying for the day. He reads. He has a routine, he’s not very

social. He's just...in numbers. And Buddy Rich, he was a jerk but man could he play his drums. (ibid)

By making this choice, H.L. was giving up the potential to be an exceptional musician – a decision that he did not regret.

And I made a choice to pick the other way – the road *more* traveled – and I don't regret it. I do try to do the best I can to keep up my 4 status. [laughs] But I think that journey's fun. Once you get past some things – once you're ok with yourself – then music is more fun. And I think anything is that way. (ibid)

H.L. recognized that musical dedication came at enormous costs and exerted agency by making his choice and acting accordingly. In their own ways, each of my consultants in this study chose not to pursue the path of dedication. Instead, they each balanced individual professional endeavors and interests – whether in or outside of music.

Dedication corresponds to the affective domain of learning (Bloom 1964), which includes five hierarchical layers: receiving (“a willingness to receive information”), responding (“the individual actively participating in his or her own learning”), valuing (ranging “from simple acceptance of a value to one of commitment”), organization (“the process that individuals go through as they bring together different values, resolve conflicts among them and start to internalize the values”) and characterization (when “the individual has a value system in terms of his/her beliefs, ideas and attitudes that control their behaviour in a consistent and predictable manner”) (Kennedy 2006: 35-6, adapted from Bloom et al., 1964). In order to manifest their dedication to their musical development, jazz musicians must engage in valuing (accepting

dedication as an ideal quality), organization (affiliating themselves with likeminded musicians), and characterization (demonstrating behavior, attitudes, or identities that reflect a dedicated mindset).

Some scholars have discussed the specific modes of social organization which characterize jazz musicianship. In the article, “The Jazz Community” (1960), Alan Merriam and Raymond Mack provide an anthropological examination of jazz musicians and communities. Although written over fifty years ago, the article describes many phenomena that are still observable among contemporary jazz musicians. The authors define jazz community as a “set of people who share an interest in jazz, and who share it at a level of intensity such that they participate to some extent in the occupational role and ideology of the professional jazz musician” (1960: 211). These communities are built on certain norms, such as those “regarding proper and improper language, good and bad music, stylish and unstylish clothing, acceptable and unacceptable audience behavior, and so on” (ibid). To this day, jazz musicians are frequently bound by shared interests and modes of speech, dress, and other behavior.

One factor that has changed since the time of Merriam and Mack’s article, however, is the relationship between jazz communities and general society. The authors describe the social isolation and countercultural aspects of jazz musicianship. Among the numerous qualities of jazz communities, the most common is “the isolation of the group from society at large, an isolation which is at once psychological, social, and physical” (Merriam and Mack 1960: 211). While these senses of isolation can certainly still be observed among jazz musicians, the contemporary reality is more complicated. In a more recent analysis, Rinzler notes that jazz has historically been countercultural because “a large number of its best musicians have been African American, and racism placed African Americans outside the mainstream of American society” (Rinzler

2008: 24). And yet, jazz was also a popular, mainstream form during the swing era. He observes how in more recent times, “[t]he abundance of jazz programs and ensembles in public schools, colleges, and universities positions jazz firmly within American education” (ibid). Just as jazz musicians must contend with the popularized tastes of general audiences (as discussed in Chapter 2), they must also grapple with the position of jazz as simultaneously countercultural and institutionally sanctioned.

In “Crossing the Street: Rethinking Jazz Education,” jazz studies scholar David Ake notes that this countercultural mode of presentation is manifest in formal educational settings. He explains that textbooks and other publications do more than “simply to focus readers’ attention on jazz life in particular geographical areas” (2012: 250). Rather, they detail the ways that jazz musicians should look and act.

They also reinforce and shape understandings of how jazz is supposed to look and who is supposed to play it, which is to say that these publications promote an *image* of jazz as much as report on the genre’s sounds. And they have tended to portray jazz musicians not just as city based but also self-possessed, sophisticated, and utterly disdainful of the commonplace. In a word, hip. (ibid)

Based on my experiences and conversation with other musicians, I believe that this sense of hipness permeates many educational institutions. This sense, however, often contradicts institutional protocols.

N.E. gave a humorous account of this contradiction. He went to a high school that was far less funded than other schools with more prestigious music school programs. When his band participated in jazz band competitions, they were going up against students who were far more

economically advantaged (and far less racially and ethnically diverse). N.E.'s bandmates were able to win trophies at these competitions, which were upset victories for the group. He asserted, however, "I could care less about the stupid trophy" (Interview, August 27, 2013). He nonetheless was amused by the contrast between his bandmates and their competitors. He noted that, "all the kids in their tuxedos were like – I mean, *literally*, they wore tuxedos, and we went to J. Jacobs and bought \$50 olive green suits. It could not have been more of a contrast" (ibid). He continued on, recalling,

We were like hell on toast – all of us were outside smokin' weed, getting' high and going in and playing jazz. [laughs] It's funny, as an adult, I'm like, "That was *way more* 'jazz' than what they were doing!" ... Everyone's ties on like this [gesturing that they're askew] and then you have some kid in cummerbunds, who's counting his music very meticulously using the digits on his finger. [laughs] (ibid)

N.E. perceived that his bandmates' drug use and apathy was more in line with the social conventions of jazz than their tuxedo-clad, meticulous competitors who were representing prestigious institutions.

Other musicians I consulted described experiences that contradicted discourses of jazz demeanor. In a passage from *Thinking in Jazz*, ethnomusicologist Paul Berliner suggests that improvisational demeanor is based on listening and evaluation.

During collective improvising, the activities of creating, listening, and evaluating become integral parts of the same process. Outside of their performances, to

refine their grasp of the abilities upon which improvisation depends, players constantly hone their skills as critics and expert listeners. When studying recordings or attending concerts by other players, they divide their attention among the individuals participating in a group's varied musical stream, evaluating the cogency and continuity of each part and following their interrelationships. (Berliner 1994: 387)

D.H., however, saw an inverse relationship between musical training and listening. He noted that the rock bands he had played with were “frickin’ *awesome!* No musical training, can’t read music” (Interview, July 27, 2013). He observed a phenomenon where “the more training someone had, the less they were able to communicate with someone else. The more practicing they’d done, the less they were able to fall into a groove with somebody else” (ibid). He described his work in blues bands and explained how “we’d just have this awesome, romantic/sexual, basketball game kind of *collective, fantastic unification!* ... That was *fantastic!!!*” (ibid) Continuing with his sports metaphor, he described jazz musicians as self-centered baseball players.

Then you go to jazz guys and they’re all like baseball players – “What’s my average?!...What are my stats?!” You know, they’ve got their own baseball card of themselves. They’re like trying to play their best solo, they don’t hear what anybody else is doing. (ibid)

While Berliner’s analysis presents a profile of dedicated jazz musicians as attentive and focused listeners, D.H.’s account described these musicians as uncommunicative and self-centered.

Not all musicians felt this way about other jazz musicians. For N.E., working with other jazz musicians, particularly those who were more advanced than him provided an opportunity to advance (and to a certain extent, adapt to the performance styles of others). He began by describing the conditions which helped him to develop as a musician.

But really it's just the chance to play with better musicians. Better musicians make you play better. They make you want to go home and practice. They make you want to perform better. And the music is better, the interactions are better – people are listening. I guess with all music interaction is important but with jazz it's *critical*. It's not jazz if you aren't listening to each other. I guess any improvised music is that way. It's great playing with talented folks. (Interview, August 27, 2013)

For N.E., these adaptive interactions were a reciprocal process – while he was more likely to listen and respond to the music of better players, these better players were also more likely to listen and respond to him. Based on my experiences as a jazz musician, I believe that most jazz musicians' personalities fall somewhere between the two extremes outlined by D.H. and N.E. – from the self-absorbed “baseball player” to the inspiring and attentive “better musician.”

While my consultants explained that dedication was emphasized by others in educational and performance settings, many of them exerted agency by negotiating or contesting this value in their musical lives. H.L., for example, described a drastic life choice made during the end of his college career to not pursue musical dedication, which clearly suggests that such dedication was emphasized by instructors and other student musicians. In a much different account, N.E. recounted his experiences competing against more dedicated high school students, and how these

other students' modes of presentation were antithetical to jazz. This demonstrates the tensions between two conflicting definitions of dedication: as adherence to the countercultural conduct associated with jazz or as being an excellent student in formal education. Finally, there is the matter of dedication and interaction. In his account of playing with musicians in different styles, D.H. argued that formally-trained, highly dedicated musicians were less communicative and made for a less enjoyable performance experience. All of these competing standards pertained to specific levels of music and professional focus, even if these foci were manifest in different ways. In the next section, I discuss artistry as a specific type of focus, emphasizing aesthetic values over commercial interests.

Artistry

I conceptualize artistry as the attribution of artistic value to a given musician. In order to define artistry, it is first necessary to define the figure of an artist. While individual definitions of art are highly subjective, I argue that for the majority of jazz musicians, an artist is someone who generates music that satisfies certain aesthetic standards. In the jazz textbook *All That Jazz!*, Jack Wheaton outlines an evolutionary trajectory for art: “Most fine art goes through three stages: It begins as folk art, becomes commercial, and finally, if it has any lasting value, matures and becomes fine art” (Wheaton 1994: 81). According to him, folk art is tribal or subcultural, functional, and orally transmitted (ibid: 82). Commercial art is “created for a mass market” based on the “desire for money and fame” (ibid: 102). Finally, fine art “is art for art’s sake, and has a more esoteric appeal than commercial and folk art” (ibid: 142). While most jazz musicians have more nuanced understandings of musical forms, this narrative of fine art as superior to folk and

commercial forms continues to permeate many forms of jazz discourse, such as textbooks and talk among musicians.

In jazz, as in other forms of music, commercial excess is viewed as inauthentic. In “Vicars of ‘Wannabe’: Authenticity and the Spice Girls,” musicologist Elizabeth Leach argues that markers of commercialism in various forms of music are usually perceived as being inherently inauthentic.

Although in musical terms the markers for authenticity change in their detail depending on the types of music being set within the terms of the opposition, the fundamental implication remains the same – the authentic music is more real because it is less designed as a commercial venture. (2001: 143)

For some evaluators, financial interests and motivations are seen as a corruption of (or at least distraction from) artistic endeavors and aesthetic principles.

While some jazz musicians hold this view of commercialism, others acknowledge that pure artistry is not financially or professionally feasible. When A.D. talked about giving private lessons (a common stream of income for working musicians), she mentioned that some musicians might see teaching as not real musicianship.

Some people, I think, do look down on [teaching] a little bit, but they’re probably the same people who look down on having musical theater gigs instead of “authentic” gigs, which, no one can really pay their bills playing really creative music all the time. Or maybe ten of us could, just on this coast. (Interview, July 31, 2013)

These “‘authentic’ gigs...playing really creative music” are emblematic of musical artistry, but generally not profitable enough to make a living. As A.D. acknowledged, there are a very small handful of musicians who are able to make a living entirely out of “artistic” musical production. For most musicians, however, the professional realities include other sources of income, such as teaching and playing for musical theater.

While anti-commercial sentiments are found among jazz musicians, they are not universal. In a separate discussion of her educational experiences, A.D. explained how the two educational institutions she attended (where she completed her undergraduate and graduate degrees) promoted opposing views of artistry and commerce. In her undergraduate education, commercial interests were often prioritized over other aspects of musicianship.

And I feel at [undergraduate school] it was so trade-school oriented that everyone was super into promoting themselves – maybe to a fault. I think that we really knew how to value our money-making ability in the business. Maybe to the point where some folks, myself included by the time I left, probably could’ve stood to *practice* more. (ibid)

Her graduate school instructors, in contrast, emphasized technical musicianship but did not encourage musicians to self-promote or financially advocate for themselves as they did at A.D.’s undergraduate institution.

[Graduate school] I feel was totally the opposite. There was no room for interpretation which was *great*, in a way. I finally practiced my arpeggios regularly [laughs] that kind of thing – so that was the strength of that place. I

knew musicians there who didn't ask for the bread¹ that they deserved in the business, it was the opposite problem. So I feel like between the two it was great.

(ibid)

The counterbalance of these two schools had allowed A.D. to negotiate competing definitions of artistry, and to define her professional values, which incorporated both technical development and financial savvy.

Certain jazz musicians have become highly emblematic of debates over art and commerce. For example, smooth jazz saxophonist Kenny G is often denigrated by jazz musicians. In "Does Kenny G Play Bad Jazz?: A Case Study," ethnomusicologist Christopher Washburne situates jazz musicians' hatred of Kenny G in terms of larger debates, noting that "[f]or decades tensions between commercialism and artistic integrity have fueled numerous debates in the jazz world" (2004: 123). The lines between these two musical orientations, however, are often blurred. Washburne is critical of this heavily enforced divide, noting,

The disjuncture between the jazz tradition and popular culture deserves close scholarly scrutiny. We need to find out about our own cultural context, a context which enables Kenny G to be so popular, and we need to scrutinize why his accessibility comes at the expense and exclusion of others. (ibid: 136-7)

While Kenny G has a level of visibility that is much higher than that of most jazz musicians, most jazz musicians still must learn to negotiate how to be accessible to audiences without losing standing in the eyes of other jazz musicians.

¹ "Bread" is a slang term used among jazz musicians to refer to money earned through musical work

D.H. echoed Washburne's sentiments and was critical of jazz musicians' attitudes toward Kenny G. When D.H. brought up Kenny G., D.H. argued that he exemplified conceptual skill and accessibility, that, "He's a star sax player, he works out his solos, he writes his songs. He doesn't do the standard, jazz crapshoot solo thing" (Interview, July 27, 2013). Earlier in the interview, D.H. had used the term "crapshoot solo" to refer to the common practice among jazz musicians of recording an improvised solo without any preplanning, leaving it a "crapshoot" as to how it would turn out. Based on my own experiences, it seems to me that most recorded solos are neither completely written out nor completely unplanned. Kenny G's practices are distinct, however, from those of musicians working outside the genre of smooth jazz.

Rather than seeing Kenny G as a musician to be denigrated, D.H. argued that musicians could learn something from his approach.

Kenny G should be pretty inspiring. We shouldn't look at Kenny G and go, "Oh shit, he sucks and the world loves it." It's like, "Shit, I can write something shitty and the world's going to love it, I just gotta follow that kind of formula." (ibid)

While D.H. described Kenny G's music as "shitty," D.H. still valued certain aspects of his performance – such as developing an exceptional level of technique, creating original music, and connecting with audiences. At a different part of the interview, D.H. had noted that, "It's like jazz musicians really aren't supposed to succeed with an audience. There's like this 'shoot yourself in the foot' thing with jazz musicians where if an audience loves you, it's bad" (ibid).

Ultimately, jazz musicians must figure out how to balance their own artistic interests with audience expectations (even if educational programs such as A.D.'s emphasize commercial skills). N.E. discussed tensions between art and commerce at length, focusing on the important

issue of “whether or not what the public thinks matters” (Interview, August 27, 2013). He noted that “being a learned musician or a learned artist, you know more than they [the public/audiences] do about the art – you know what’s authentic, what’s not authentic” (ibid). He contended that it is “important to remember who the audience is and pull a little bit of that in your playing,” but explained that you don’t “necessarily have to change what you’re doing [musically or artistically]” (ibid). He continued, noting that,

...there are those who go too far – you can end up being Liberace...But at the same time, you don’t want to go, “This is high art!” and you raise your nose at them...you can have an authentic connection with people and not be so rigid about the art...And you learn new things that way – you discover things. That’s how we make the next move. (ibid)

To N.E., connecting with and being considerate of audiences was not antithetical to artistic production. Rather, these connections had the potential to advance art forms and develop new kinds of music.

Like dedication, my consultants negotiated and contested notions of artistry. Whereas the former affected their musical lives and professional trajectories, the latter influenced their musical output. While some musicians, such as A.D., received a well-rounded education between her undergraduate and graduate institutions (which emphasized commercialism and dedication, respectively), most musicians had to figure out their own approach to artistic presentations and audience interactions. N.E. succinctly described this process and emphasized the importance of striking a balance – avoiding both inaccessibility to audiences and commercial excess. In addition, musicians such as Kenny G are representative of the anti-commercialist sentiment

among jazz musicians, which translates to a disdain for audience appreciation. For financial and personal reasons, however, accessibility is highly valued by certain jazz musicians. In the next section, I examine being a “good hang” as a way to be accessible through social interactions and demeanor.

Being a “Good Hang”

As with the term “chops,” I was surprised at the dearth of scholarship addressing notions of “hanging” or “being a good hang” among jazz musicians. In *Thinking in Jazz*, Berliner only briefly mentions the term when he notes that, “One conventional way for young artists to share information is through informal study sessions, a mixture of socializing, shoptalk, and demonstrations known as hanging out” (1994: 37). While this account illustrates the strong connections between learning and socializing among jazz musicians, “hanging out” is an activity. Being a “good hang” is a trait or ability that carries much different implications than the mere act of socialization. Furthermore, a musician’s ability to “hang” (or lack thereof) is considered to be part of her or his musicianship, and to a certain extent, a determination of the musician’s value as a potential collaborator. Throughout my fieldwork, my consultants argued that a professional musician needed to be a “good hang” – that is, fun and enjoyable to work with in performance.

Several musicians expressed their appreciation for “hanging,” and emphasized its importance in their professional lives. H.L. did so by contrasting being “a good person” with being a “jerk.”

True professional musicians *want to play*. As long as you can kind of hang and you’re happy and you’re a good person... I think that’s another thing, you can’t be a jerk and be professional. Most jerks – if you’re not good, if you’re not a 9 [on

a scale of musicianship from 1-10] and you're a jerk, you're ok, if you're a 6 and a jerk, you're not going to get called [to work as a musician] anymore. [laughs]

(Interview, July 17, 2013)

Furthermore, he argued that these social skills were not taught in many formal educational settings, and that jazz musicians usually had to figure these aspects of musicianship out on their own.

We don't teach that professionalism – don't be a jerk, I don't know how else to say it. Show up, be ready to go, be prepared, and if you're a 5 or 6, you're going to get a lot more gigs than if you're a jerk and an 8 or 9. (ibid)

To H.L., being a good hang was an essential and valuable component for musical professionalism. He acknowledged that jazz musicians are willing to tolerate highly skilled musicians who are jerks (those at the 9 or 10 level), but only because their technical and/or conceptual musicianship makes up for their lack of social graces. These professional conventions reflect both shared motivations (“True professional musicians *want to play*”) and consideration for other players (“Show up, be ready to go, be prepared”). Based on my experiences, I believe H.L. is correct when he asserts that intermediate, sociable players are more likely to get work than advanced, unsociable ones.

In certain professional settings, jazz musicians may have to demonstrate their ability to “hang” in order to be accepted. K.G. explained how this played out in her work as a cruise ship musician.

You have to be able to “read”² on ships because you only get one shot – like one rehearsal and two shows. Or, you’re reading it on the floor, on dance band night. Right away, you got this week grace period, if you’ve never done it before, they give you a little bit longer because it’s stressful. But you sort of have a week to prove that you can read, you can play on the spot, and you can “hang.” (Interview, June 14, 2013)

While musicians first have to demonstrate a certain level of technical and conceptual musicianship (both of which are required to sight-read and quickly learn music), they then have to demonstrate that they can “hang.” To be lacking in either area of musicianship carried consequences.

If you can’t do those things, [and] if you’re lucky enough that you get to keep the gig, you probably will be pretty ostracized – I mean, you don’t really want to hang out with bad musicians, no matter how cool they are. If you can do those things, you’re like *immediately* accepted. If you have a bad attitude, someone’s going to knock you down a peg. (ibid)

While these standards were more explicit and enforced in professional, cruise ship settings, most musicians in the study described some sort of awareness that having a bad attitude was detrimental to one’s musical life.

² To “read” means being able to sight-read music and play with a high degree of accuracy – this may be on-the-spot (performers are often required to play music that they’ve never seen before in a concert setting) or after a few, brief rehearsals in which musicians have only been able to read through the music once or twice before the performance.

Not all musicians viewed “hanging” as an inherently positive quality. When I asked A.D. about her own definitions of the term, she emphasized the need for some degree of social musicianship, but without using it to compensate for musical deficiencies.

Well, I think that this is always a thin line which we musicians ride, which is that you want to be socially accessible, but at the same time, there’s a little bit of skepticism where it’s like, “That person is such a great hang – but are they *really* a strong enough player?” I feel like sometimes there’s guys that are so “schmooze-y” that it’s like “yeah, gosh – how do they play? What gigs are they doing? I haven’t heard them play in *years!*” They talk a good line – I get a little skeptical about that. (Interview, July 31, 2013)

One way of interpreting this is that by developing collective skill, these musicians had overlooked individual skills and knowledge. In spite of this skepticism (in which “hanging” could become “schmooze-y”), A.D. still emphasized the value and professional necessity of having some social skills in musical interactions.

However, I will say that you could be *fantastic* and if you’re no fun to deal with, I don’t want to work with you. It’s so monumental. I think it’s hugely important...if you’re going to be in show business *at all*, I think that you have to be rather social. (ibid)

She expressed sympathy for “someone who’s a great, skilled musician and just does not have the social skills” (ibid). She felt that she had enough social skills to be professionally successful, and

that these skills had worked to her advantage. She viewed hanging as one facet of musicianship to be used in conjunction with other forms of musical activity.

In addition to being a professional trait, “hanging” can also be a form of collective musical interaction. N.R. described interaction and group identity while explaining the positive qualities of his primary ensemble and musical community.

I think as a band, maybe that one thing – I mean, I don’t hold natural talent much in there because we all come from so many different places. I wouldn’t say we’re a naturally talented band by *any means*. I’d say what sticks out to me is we are true to ourselves, we know who we are, and I think we stick with it – we play that out really well. (Interview, July 8, 2013)

N.R. distinguished between being a naturally talented band (which would mean drawing from many highly gifted players) and a band that stays true to their own collective identity. He also felt that this social connection in the group helps the band to connect with audiences.

Maybe that’s what people like about us – they know we’ve known each other for a long time at some level – or most of us have. We’ve all known each other for a few years now, I suppose, and we’re all in some way connected to a larger thing and I think that shows. I think that’s one thing that does make our music authentic – at least for me – that we can communicate at that level. (ibid)

This definition of “hanging” and (inter)personal authenticity was not just limited to performance.

N.R. also described how this process plays out in rehearsals.

Another thing I'd add on to the "true to one's self" thing – I think it's pretty obvious when we get a new song, right away whether it's a "yay" or "nay." The first run-through – not so much whether it's too challenging or not, but whether it's like, "No, this is not us, this is just goofy." I think that's pretty dead-obvious right away from a rehearsal standpoint, which maybe that speaks to that also.

(ibid)

Thus, the musicians in N.R.'s group did not judge new, potential material on its level of technical challenge. Rather, they could instantly judge after just one "run-through" playing the full arrangement one time in its entirety whether or not the song is reflective of their character and values.

One facet of "hanging" borne out my interviews is adaptability, or possessing adaptive skills needed to receive and respond to a variety of musical and social information. H.L. mentioned adaptability when I asked him what he considered to be the most valuable skill that he had learned as a musician.

It's the ability to *adapt*. It's so important in any career and being a musician, adapting is what we do – adapting to situations, adapting to new people playing around you, listening to other sections. That's what we're built to do is adapt to our situations and make the group *better*. (Interview, July 17, 2013)

For H.L., adaptability required a certain amount of cooperation and sensitivity to other players.

While some jazz musicians take this approach, others take more competitive stances.

Interactive responses are also imbued with value judgments, which would encumber adaptation. Berliner describes the processes of evaluation which are embedded in many interactions between jazz musicians.

In other instances, students develop their understanding from observing open critical discussion, discovering that evaluations reflect not only the different values of critics, but also their predisposition toward collegiality. Musicians who are generous in their praise sometimes describe their counterparts as “monsters” or muthafuckahs” or “hip” or “bad” [meaning “great”] for the formidable skills...At times, artists’ views can be harsh. They indicate with classic understatement that an acknowledged master simply, “can play,” or they comment tersely that a player whose taste differs from their own “can’t play.” (Berliner 1994: 282)

While positive evaluations can build affinities between players, negative ones (such as asserting that particular musicians “can’t play”) discourage adaptation because players dismiss musical differences as bad musicianship, rather than making an effort to negotiate or adapt to these differences.

While notions of “hanging” or being a “good hang” were imbued with certain restrictions, they were ultimately a way for my consultants to develop their own demeanor. These modes of interaction reflected their particular professional attitudes and levels of artistic dedication. Several musicians discussed “hanging” as a professional qualification – H.L. described its value, K.G. explained how it was enforced in cruise ship settings, and A.D. identified the limitations of “hanging” (schmoozing to mask technical deficiencies). Hanging

was also a particular mode of ensemble interaction, as in the case of N.R.'s description of the collective identity and tastes of his bandmates. Notions of hanging, moreover, overlapped with those of adaptability. Here, the idea was to quickly respond to other musicians in order to improve the musical output of the group as a whole. Each of the musicians in this study had come to their own decisions about dedication and artistry in their musical and professional lives. By being "good hangs," however, they were able to act on these values and thereby exert their agency as musicians.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have explored performer demeanor, a term I have used to encompass various modes of interaction between musicians, instructors, and audiences. As a performer, a jazz musician performs a certain role – whether for audiences or other musicians. This performance of self is manifest in three ways. First, notions of dedication place value on musicians who are highly focused and devoted to their work as performers. Many musicians, like H.L., have chosen to pursue more diversified approaches to music. As N.E. pointed out, this dedication could be manifest as adherence to the spirit of jazz, sometimes referred to as hipness; it could also be manifest as studiousness, as in Nettle's description of monastic university students. Second, notions of artistry prescribe or proscribe certain musical practices – emphasizing high or fine art over more commercial endeavors. As A.D. explained, the reality is that most working musicians must have some financial concern. Debates over artistic authenticity manifest as backlash against more commercialized artists like Kenny G. Some musicians such as D.H., however, have defended Kenny G's approach and been critical of jazz musicians' disdain for audiences. Finally, notions of "hanging" or being a "good hang"

encourage musicians to be friendly, outgoing, and courteous. As A.D. pointed out, these social skills can be taken to an extreme to mask musical deficiencies. Almost all of my consultants, however, spoke to the importance of being a good hang in performance settings.

Each of these standards of presentation focused on the relationships between individual musicians and collectives – whether groups of musicians or audiences. If technique and tradition are about how jazz musicians should sound, then demeanor concerns how jazz musicians should act (and in the case of presentation, how they should look). While demeanor pertains to observable attitudes and behaviors, other visual elements can affect evaluators' perceptions of jazz musicians. In the next chapter, I examine how perceptions about a performer's gender lead to evaluative assumptions about his or her authenticity before he or she has even played a note.

CHAPTER 4: GENDER

Introduction

My dissertation project was initially motivated by my experiences as a female jazz musician. I had hypothesized that my gender caused me to be perceived by some evaluators as less authentic. Throughout my fieldwork and writing, I began to realize that the realities were more complex. Gendered standards – as with other types – include tensions, conflicts, and limitations. As I talked with other female musicians, both in and outside of formal interviews, they described how their treatment as females varied greatly according to setting. I slowly started to notice that when female musicians failed to satisfy certain performance standards, negative evaluations were based on certain domains of musicianship. In other words, female musicians were considered inauthentic because of specific notions of technique (they did not play the expected musical instrument), tradition (they participated in a musical practice not associated with female instrumentalists), and demeanor (they carried themselves in ways that were not normalized for females). Furthermore, male musicians were also affected – albeit in different ways – by these standards.

This chapter investigates how jazz musicians in Seattle, both female and male, have contented with gendered standards and negative categorizations from instructors, audiences, and other musicians. These musicians negotiate biased notions of authentic jazz musicianship – such as the idea that male musicians are inherently more talented, traditional, and dedicated than female musicians. I focus on the effects of feedback from instructors, other musicians, and audiences about consultants' gender, showing that such feedback has had the potential to hinder and marginalize them in various performance settings. Musicians, both male and female, expressed three primary opinions concerning gender: First, they felt that female musicians were

often disassociated from what is commonly perceived as large, loud, or otherwise physically-demanding instruments and were frequently expected to be weaker (and thus less talented) players. Second, they felt that female jazz musicians were perceived as being less traditional because of their absence from dominant historical narratives, especially dominant historical narratives in college courses and textbooks. Third, they felt that female jazz musicians were presumed to be less dedicated and artistic than their male peers because of their associations with domesticity and childcare, although at the same time this association was an advantage for female music teachers because they were more trusted by children's parents. I conclude that gender ideologies create specific standards for and expectations of jazz musicianship.

Although I eventually expanded the scope of my dissertation study to include a variety of standards, gender was the initial focus of my inquiry. I drew from my own experiences as a female jazz musician/bassist and hypothesized that my gender marked me as inherently less authentic than my male colleagues. I felt as though evaluators made assumptions about my musicianship based on my gender presentation before they had heard me play a note of music.

My consultants described similar experiences. K.G. explained how she had received condescending comments from instructors and other musicians throughout her career as a trombonist – “from taking up the horn from day one, all the way till now” (Interview, June 14, 2013). She explained,

Terminology like, “Don’t be *shy!*” “You can play louder!” “Take a *big breath*, you can do it!” Weird platitudes – you’re playing softly, not because you don’t know how to play loudly properly, but because you’re a girl. That’s always rankled me and I’ve done my best to *never* hear that again. (ibid)

In her view, these comments were not based on her deficiencies or needs for improvement, but rather presumptions about her weaknesses based on her femaleness. She also implied that comments such as these overlooked learning and development. She differentiated between playing softly “because you don’t know how to play loudly properly” and “because you’re a girl” (ibid). The former identifies an area for potential improvement, while the latter suggests that she could not learn to play in any other way.

While many of these gendered presumptions are based in particular performance contexts, they are also shaped by larger societal ideologies. In “Disability and the Justification of Inequality in American History,” historian Douglas Baynton notes that discrimination has historically been justified by the presumed flaws of women and other subordinate groups.

Opponents of political and social equality for women cited their supposed physical, intellectual, and psychological flaws, deficits, and deviations from the male norm. These flaws – irrationality, excessive emotionality, physical weakness – are in essence mental, emotional, and physical disabilities. (2001: 33)

The comments described by K.G demonstrated this phenomenon of women being considered physically inferior. By telling her to play louder, her evaluators suggested that she was inherently physically deficient because of her femaleness. According to Baynton’s model, these presumptions about females exist to justify their subordinate status in many social contexts.

This rhetoric of disability is not only used to justify inequalities, it is also used to argue for the equality of certain groups. Baynton notes that proponents of equality have historically denied that “the groups in question actually had those disabilities; they were not disabled, the argument went, and therefore were not proper subjects for discrimination” (ibid: 34). Because of

this, he notes that “rarely have oppressed groups denied that disability is an adequate justification for social and political inequality” (ibid). In order to thus interrogate various gender ideologies, it is necessary to identify the notions of dis/ability which underlie them. While ability is especially linked to talent as a physical ability, it also connected to reproduction of tradition as a cognitive ability and demeanor as a social ability.

Baynton’s analysis also encompasses discussion of race. In a similar manner as women, he argues that racial minorities have also historically been constructed as inferior vis-à-vis disability.

Arguments for racial inequality and immigration restrictions invoked supposed tendencies to feeble-mindedness, mental illness, deafness, blindness, and other disabilities in particular races and ethnic groups. (ibid)

In constructing this chapter and the next one, I grappled with whether or not I should separate the domains of gender and race into two separate chapters. From my training in feminist studies, I was aware of the concept of intersectionality (Crenshaw 1989). This term refers to the fact that systems of oppression (based on gender, race, class, sexuality, etc.) intersect and affect individuals differently based on their subjectivities. While I acknowledge the realities and complexities of intersectionality, I rationalize my choice to address gender and race separately because most performance standards reference gender and race as two separate categories. This is not to say that jazz musicians are not judged based on the combination of their gender and race, but that it is easier to analyze the two processes by separating them.

In addition to clarifying my position on gender and race, I also assert that issues of gender are not exclusively pertinent to female jazz musicians. Put another way, gender

ideologies also affect men. D.H., who had initially been encouraged by his parents to play drums in order to make him more masculine, explained how gender shaped his musical experiences. He described being bullied as a child, that he “was a kid that was used for target-practice for spit-wads on the bus” (Interview, July 27, 2013). Because of this, he was sensitive to the fact that “it was considered [by his peers] feminine to play music” (ibid). He observed that his primary band, “There’s a lot of, [angrily] ‘You’ve got to be a *masculine* musician!’ kind of thing, so people don’t think you’re a feminine musician” (ibid). He continued on, clarifying,

In [the] band, that’s part of why all the guys are such *loud* players is we’re trying to rail against the spit-wad spitters and all the people who thought because we were musicians we were not real men...And there was a lot of trying to show I was a man even though I wasn’t an athlete, even though I wasn’t a straight-A student, I was part of the “man” thing. (ibid)

For both D.H. and his male bandmates, playing music was a way to demonstrate masculinity outside of athletics or scholastic achievement. Because music was sexually suspect to some, however, D.H.’s male bandmates felt that they had to overcompensate by playing loudly and aggressively.

D.H.’s account demonstrates several key characteristics of current gender ideologies in the United States. First, the attempts of male musicians to be aggressive performers reflected “widely shared conceptions of gender [that] associate femininity with vulnerability and masculinity with dangerousness” (Hollander 2004: 297). Second, the emphasis placed on masculinity by these musicians reinforced that tendency “in popular culture as a whole,” in which “that which is perceived as ‘masculine’ enjoys widespread hegemony over that which is

described and produced as ‘feminine’” (Jarman-Ivens 2007: 3). Third, it exemplifies feminist musicologist Susan McClary’s points that “musical discourse has been carefully guarded from female participation in part because of its ability to articulate patterns of desire” (1991: 151). She explains how these designations are based on the “mind/body split that has plagued Western culture for centuries.” In the model, paradoxically, music is “the most cerebral, nonmaterial of media is at the same time the medium most capable of engaging the body.” (ibid)

McClary describes the same type of ambivalence experienced by D.H. – that music was simultaneously a feminine endeavor and a site to demonstrate one’s masculinity.

To the very large extent that mind is defined as masculine and body as feminine in Western culture, music is always in danger of being perceived as a feminine (or effeminate) enterprise altogether. And one of the means of asserting masculine control over the music is by denying the very possibility of participation by women. For how can an enterprise be feminine if actual women are excluded? (ibid: 151-152)

This exclusion of female participants is still prevalent in certain musical settings – albeit to a lesser extent than it has been throughout the history of Western music. Instrumental jazz continues to be male-dominated and while female instrumentalists are usually not actively excluded, they are nonetheless often considered outsiders by audiences and other musicians.

In *Women and Music in Cross-Cultural Perspective*, ethnomusicologist Ellen Koskoff examines the intersecting relationships between music, gender, and social structure. She asserts that “[a]symmetries and other arrangements noted in inter-gender relations are frequently reflected in various music practices cross-culturally” (1987: 10). For this reason, “music

performance provides one of the best contexts for observing and understanding the gender structure of any society” (ibid). She hypothesizes that,

This may be so because in many societies the underlying conceptual frameworks of both gender and musical/social dynamics share an important structural feature: they both rely, to some degree, on notions of power and control. (ibid)

In my own analysis, I am attuned to the role of music in both reflecting and reinforcing gender norms and structures, as well as how “notions of power and control” function within musical settings and in relationship to gender.

To explore how gender functions within educational institutions, I draw from music education scholar Lucy Green, who suggests that the music classroom is a site of gendered ideology. She writes that the music classroom is

a microcosmic version of the wider society, containing a variety of musical practices, wherein the discourse on music and musical meanings themselves are reproduced in combination with the formation of personal identity in terms of gender. (1997: 166)

Furthermore, musical experiences in educational settings can inform gender identity, which can “contribute to the construction of a sense of self as a gendered being, a sense which takes on the appearance of truth” (ibid: 192). Thus, not only do educational institutions have the potential to reinforce gender norms and structures, they also have the power to legitimize and establish them as “truth.” In short, both societal and educational settings give rise to gendered standards for jazz

musicianship. One of the most prominent examples of gendered standards is sex-stereotyping of musical instruments.

Gender and Musical Instruments

Gender ideologies create expectations about which instruments male and female musicians can and should play. Notions of gender affect the choice and use of musical instruments among performers, as well as how these musicians' techniques are perceived by evaluators. Associations between gender and technology occur in two primary ways. First, women are disassociated from musical technology (hence their association with the "natural" voice) and by extension with certain technologically-complex instruments, such as guitar and drums. Second, women are disassociated from certain instruments that are perceived to be highly physically challenging to play. In the former instance, women are presumed to lack the cognitive knowledge to utilize complex technologies. In the case of the latter, women are assumed to lack the physical strength and aggression to play certain instruments. My consultants were able to overcome such potentially restrictive ideologies by deploying certain strategies and thereby exerting their agency as musicians.

Several scholars have made note of the fact that "there is a persistent notion – possibly beginning in western societies and radiating outward with the spread of its technology – that technology is 'masculine', in opposition to nature, which is 'feminine'" (Greene and Porcello 2005: 8, see also Bradby 1993: 156 and Théberge 1997: 123). Bruno Nettl also comments on this phenomenon in his ethnographic examination of musical conservatories.

The struggles for dominance within the performing portion of the music school intersect significantly with perceived and actual contrasts in gender roles in

culture and music...vocal music is more associated with women than is instrumental music...the relative monopoly of males over instruments may be symbolic of male political domination and may be related to traditional male control over large, complex tools, particularly over weapons. (1995: 60)

Nettl situates these gender dynamics in the context of higher education, but these ideologies are prevalent in other settings as well.

Gendered associations in music have given rise to what has been termed sex-stereotyping of instruments. In “The Sex-Stereotyping of Musical Instruments,” music education scholars Harold Abeles and Susan Porter use quantitative studies of elementary school students and teachers, as well as parents of students to trace gendered associations of common school instruments, as well as the prevalence of these associations among elementary school students. The authors note that these associations “serve to constrict the behavior and thus the opportunities of individual” (1978: 65). Specifically, they “limit the range of musical experiences available to male and female musicians in several ways, including participation in instrumental ensembles and selection of vocations in instrumental music” (ibid). The authors expand upon these assertions in a subsequent study and demonstrate recurring associations such as drum set as a masculine instrument and violin as a feminine one (Abeles and Porter 1979). In a much more recent study, Abeles (2009) examines current attitudes about the gender associations of instruments. He notes that there are more students playing instruments that are not coded to their gender. That said, he still observes the continued prevalence of instrument stereotypes found in the 1970s.

These associations between musical instruments and gender subjectivities emerged in my interviews with jazz musicians. For example, when I asked C.S. about his musical background,

he mentioned that he started on clarinet before switching to trombone. I asked him if he made the choice to play clarinet. He replied,

No - that...no, not really...well, yes...[laughs]...My older cousins played some instruments when they were growing up and it was free at the time; we didn't have to rent an instrument and so my choice was a flute, clarinet, or violin. And obviously the clarinet was the more - kind of - *manly* instrument, out of the three.

(Interview, May 31, 2013)

C.S.'s answer implied that the manliness of the clarinet was an obvious difference between the instruments. I asked him to clarify what he meant by this previous statement, to which he responded,

I don't know, I just always thought that flute was a girl's instrument and violin was kind of lame...and clarinet was the best option out there. I didn't necessarily think it [clarinet] was a girl's instrument at the time...It wasn't girly or stupid.

(ibid)

According to Abeles and Porter, both flute and violin are consistently coded as feminine, while clarinet is considered a more gender-neutral instrument – that is, not as feminine as the previous two, but still not as masculine as instruments such as drums (1978, 1979). Thus, even though their original research was from the 1970s, their findings have held somewhat true in more recent times.

My consultants explained how gender ideologies determined their choices of instruments. D.H. described how his parents encouraged him to play drums because they “thought drums were the flashiest – and probably would help me with my ‘femininity’ because the boys in my neighborhood and at my school always called me a ‘femme’ and a ‘fag’” (Interview, July 27, 2013). He continued, “So [my parents] got me into some masculine striving. They got me on the drums” (ibid).

Other consultants described experiences which reinforced these sex-stereotypes of instruments in higher educational settings. In discussing her experiences with gender and music, K.G. told a story from her undergraduate years about being confronted with, and in turn challenging, sex-stereotyping of instruments. The interaction began with her meeting a well-known faculty emeritus.

I was ushering this concert and we were all excited – we were all in a tizzy because this retired voice professor was coming to see this performance and she had been the person who had put [undergraduate school’s] voice studies on the map, basically. So she rolls up in her wheelchair, with her caretaker and I take her ticket and she wants to start a conversation. She’s like, “Are you a music student? I want to hear about the next generation” all this stuff. (Interview, June 14, 2013)

At this point, she was recalling an interaction with the retired professor that would have been typical for a young student meeting an educational authority.

As K.G. continued this story, however, the tone of her voice changed, and she began anticipating the humor of what should have been a pleasant, intergenerational exchange to one that quickly shifted to a heated argument.

And I told her, “Yes.” and she said, “Do you study an instrument?” I said, “I play trombone.” And she kinda lost her shit a little bit. She was like, [loud, angry voice] “No, no, no, no, no! You can’t do – what? What are you doing?” Like, “That is a *man*’s instrument, you cannot play that – it’s so *heavy*, so *loud*!” She was just going for all these stereotypical things. Her caretaker is just rolling her eyes at me, [imitating caretaker, whispering] “She does this all the time.” It was just stupid. [laughs] (ibid)

K.G. described this woman’s rant as an example of “all these stereotypical things” about female musicianship and masculine-coded instruments (ibid).

While K.G. was taken aback by these comments, she was able to respond to this women’s anger by pointing out the obvious flaws in her logic.

And for once in my life, I had the wherewithal to just look at her and be like, “How many women play the *harp*? Harp’s freakin’ heavy! What does that have to do with anything?” And she just got flustered and was like, “Let’s go find a seat!” I’ve always held that up as an example of one of the times that someone’s just pooped out all the stereotypes in one go. And still to this day, there’s been other instances where people have said stuff to me and I’ve just froze up and not been sure how to respond to it. But I’m still proud of myself for being able to have a comeback or some reason why she was full of shit. (ibid)

K.G.’s response to the professor demonstrates that there is no one, stable set of criteria for masculine-coded instruments. Every potential criterion for masculinity (such as the trombone

being a heavy instrument) has at least one counterexample among feminine-coded instruments, such as the harp.¹

Addressing how these stereotypes of gender and instruments function within jazz performance contexts, jazz historian Linda Dahl offers more of a cross-cultural perspective of sex-stereotyping of instruments, focusing on their implications for female, adult jazz musicians. While acknowledging the complex issues surrounding these practices, she outlines some general patterns which emerge in performance contexts. First, she notes that “there is a widespread notion that the larger the instrument is, and the deeper its sound, the more masculine it is” (1984: 36). Second, she asserts that certain instruments such as guitar and drums have been imbued with “phallic or sexual symbolism” (ibid). My own experiences corroborate Dahl’s assessments of instrument associations in jazz settings – particularly in the case of instruments which are highly emblematic of the genre, such as trumpet and saxophone.

Based on my observations of sex-stereotyping instruments in jazz, I believe that masculine-coded instruments are those that possess a certain number of qualities associated with aggressiveness. These criteria, however, are not stable – their value is negotiated and leveraged in performance and interaction. These masculine-coded elements include:

- Physical effort, whether in the face, lungs, joints, and/or limbs
- Loudness, or the ability to overpower other instruments in the ensemble
- Prominence, whether a solo instrument (such as saxophone) or one that controls the ensemble (such as drums)

¹ Although large and heavy, the harp has a gentle timbre and angelic associations – both of which are considered more feminine. Interestingly, the majority of classical harpists that I have known have been male, and the one jazz harpist that I have worked with was female.

- Lower register, suggesting the vocal register of men
- Large instrument, which requires physical effort to manipulate and which appears intimidating (corresponds to lower register)
- Military associations, in which instruments have lineages in military bands (most prominent are trumpet and drums)
- Sexual imagery, whether the phallic associations of the guitar or feminine shape of the bass²

Every typical musical instrument used in jazz, including saxophone,³ trumpet, trombone, piano, guitar, bass, and drums conforms to one or more of these qualities, serving to establish the fundamental masculinity of jazz musicians. At the same time, however, each of these instruments (with the possible exception of the drums – which is widely considered to be the most “masculine” jazz instrument) lacks certain masculine elements such as large size and low register. Male musicians wishing to emphasize their masculinity in music must thus on some level play up the aggressive qualities of their instruments.

A further examination of stereotypes reveals contradictions between gendered associations pertaining to musical instruments. I have always found it interesting that high-pitched instruments – such as violin and flute – are considered feminine (as a result of females generally having a higher voice register than males) yet lead trumpeters take pride in being able to play extremely high notes. In a jazz big band, one player leads the trumpet section and is

² This association between the double bass and a “feminine” hourglass shape has led to some rather awkward comments from other musicians and audiences about my presumed homosexuality.

³ Jazz saxophonists may “double” (meaning they are proficient on one of more instruments related to the saxophone that can be used to add timbre to a musical arrangement) on feminine-coded or neutral instruments such as flute or clarinet.

expected to play the highest (in pitch) and most prominent melodic line in the section. Lead trumpeters have undertaken extensive practice to play in the upper register of their instrument. In my experience, they are almost always male and tend to have a certain amount of machismo.

As a female jazz musician, A.D. addressed some of these instrument stereotypes in her own life and work experiences. She began by noting that associations between gender and instruments were somewhat malleable, joking that, “I always like to remind my students that [Mozart’s opera] ‘The Magic Flute’ was about the ‘manly’ flute, you know, hundreds of years ago [laughs]. Women were not allowed to play it” (Interview, July 31, 2013). She also emphasized that, “I don’t even really mention gender in my studio with my students, but it just so happens that about half of my students are girls and about half my students are guys – it doesn’t really come into play with me at all” (ibid). In her professional career, however, she found that,

There’s not that many ladies who play the bass. There’s *no* drummers – I mean like one. There’s hardly any female drummers is my point. Jazz guitar is maybe the least. I think I know more female jazz drummers than jazz guitarists. And then there’s other things – I think that clarinet is right down the middle, cello is right down the middle. It’s really interesting how that ends up being the case. (ibid)

Her experiences confirm Dahl’s (1984) assertions about the masculine associations with guitar and Abeles and Porter’s findings about the masculine associations of drums and the gender-neutrality of clarinet and cello (1978, 1979).

Some musicians challenged gender norms through their choice of instrument while others reinforced gender norms. Both A.D. and K.G. knowingly challenged norms by playing large,

deep-pitched instruments. C.S. and D.H., however, started on instruments because they were either not feminine (in the case of C.S. playing clarinet instead violin or flute) or were widely regarded as masculine (in the case of D.H. playing drums at his parents' behest). Whether they made choices that challenged or reinforced gender norms, each musician was directly affected by these norms. The female musicians, I suggest, were more explicitly affected because the masculine associations of their instruments marked them as outsiders. In the next section, I examine another condition that leads to female exclusion: the disassociation of female instrumentalists from jazz narratives and traditions.

Gender and Canon

As discussed in Chapter 2, there are many different interpretations of jazz tradition and the parameters of jazz as a genre. Based on my experiences as a musician and student, however, I argue that most of the dominant narratives of jazz history emphasize the participation of male musicians. If there is any mention of female performers in these discourses, it is usually in reference to a small handful of vocalists such as Billie Holiday and Ella Fitzgerald and, even less often, to pianists such as Lil Hardin, Mary Lou Williams, and Marian McPartland.

In *Gender and the Musical Canon*, musicologist Marcia Citron examines the functions and effects of canonical narratives. Although her focus is on Western classical music, it is equally applicable to jazz. She describes canons as “a specified body of works in a given field” ([1993] 2000: 15). These bodies of works are incredibly influential on musical practices because “[b]y setting standards they represent what is considered worthy of inclusion” (ibid). She emphasizes the exclusionary nature of canons, as well as the way that certain works are omitted – whether intentionally or not. While musical canons are somewhat fixed in their

exclusion or omission of works/artists, they still function as a process. Citron explains that canons “self-perpetuate” and that “[a]s canonic values become entrenched over time, the prescriptive and normative powers of canons become even greater” (ibid).

The self-perpetuation of canons helps to explain why notions of gendered tradition are so difficult to reconfigure; canonical formations are both self-perpetuating and self-legitimizing.

In jazz performance and scholarship, canons as gendered have been until recently largely ignored, even as scholars in the disciplinary movement of “new jazz studies” began to critically examine historical and traditional narratives (DeVeaux 1991, Gabbard 1995a and 1995b, and M. Tucker 1998). In the volume *Big Ears: Listening for Gender in Jazz Studies*, editors Nichole T. Rustin and Sherrie Tucker address this scholarly ambivalence toward gender within the discipline.

There was a time, not so long ago, when scholars in jazz studies who sounded the words “gender” and “jazz” in the same sentence could get themselves bounced from any number of “clubs.” The venues where jazz discourse is played – academic, journalistic, and musical – harbored a chill for those who wished to question the gender-jazz status quo that frequented these clubs. For many of us, we learned that to participate in jazz discourse, one needed to leave one’s “gender analysis” at the door. (2008: 6)

These metaphors effectively emphasize the relationships between actual jazz clubs (in which performers perpetuate their own forms of canon and exclusion) with the disciplinary gatekeeping of jazz studies academics.

Many of my consultants discussed the exclusion of female musicians from their educational canons. When I asked N.R. about the representation of female artists in his education, he stated that while his bandmates were an even mix of males and females, these gender ratios did not extend to positions of leadership.⁴

I think the majority of directors I've had have been male. I'm trying to think if I've even had a female – I feel like most of the classes were taught by males as well... I didn't think about it, but I think it's been mostly male. (Interview, July 8, 2013).

While N.R. recognized this discrepancy when questioned about it, he had been previously unaware – suggesting that the dominance of male directors and instructors was seen as normal and thus was unquestioned. When I asked him about the representation of female musicians in history courses, he noted that “most of the ones they [professors] talk about are guys. With the exception of vocalists – I feel like there are more female vocalists” (ibid). Furthermore, without prompting, he mentioned that, “I think most of the times I look at a jazz chart⁵ there's a guy that wrote it. I never really thought about it much before but I think it's pretty heavily male” (ibid). The predominance of male composers had previously been taken for granted by N.R.

Notions of tradition and canonical formations have direct bearing on constructions of authenticity in jazz music. In *Swing Shift: “All-Girl” Bands of the 1940s*, historian and jazz studies scholar Sherrie Tucker examines the lives of female instrumentalists as well as their

⁴ Other scholars have discussed issues of gender and leadership in New Music in the United States (Mcsweeney 2013) and in Balinese girls' gamelan (Downing 2010).

⁵ A “chart” refers to either a leadsheet (including the melody and chord changes of a composition to be interpreted by the improvising musicians) or an individual part of a big band arrangement. Both forms of notation usually list the composer and (if applicable) arranger in the top, left-hand corner of the music.

deliberate exclusion from musical discourse. In her introduction, Tucker explains the struggles she experienced early in her research, trying to learn more about “all-girl”⁶ bands of the 1940s.

Almost immediately on embarking on this project, I encountered notions that all-girl bands lacked an intangible, yet crucial “authenticity” possessed by men’s bands. The man who answered my first telephone call to the American Federation of Musicians (AFM) local in San Francisco responded to my request for information by insisting, “Groups of housewives who got together during the war would not be considered *real bands*. They wouldn’t have been professional, and they wouldn’t have belonged to a union.” (2001: 3)

Upon encountering these attitudes, Tucker jokes, “Ah, that explains it. All-girl bands are absent from recorded history because they weren’t real!” (ibid) From this account, Tucker begins here analysis of how female musicians have come to be excluded from historical narratives.

She specifically addresses the way women are marginalized and trivialized within historical discourse. After discussing the historical assumptions made by the man from AFM, she notes that in order to address the exclusion of female musicians from jazz and swing,

it is necessary to address the powerful stories of omission and novelty that pass as common sense in conventional swing histories. It did not matter which way the applause meter swung; women’s bands were constructed as inauthentic for a variety of ideological, social, and political reasons. (ibid: 4)

⁶ Tucker qualifies her use of this term by noting that her consulting musicians preferred and self-identified with this term.

Tucker's analysis connects the exclusion of female musicians from canonical narratives, the novelty status of female performers, and the perceived inauthenticity of female musicians regardless of a positive rating through an "applause meter."

Because female jazz instrumentalists are perceived as less traditional (and by extension, less authentic) they are marked as outsiders within male-dominated spaces. In *Space Invaders: Race, Gender and Bodies out of Place*, sociologist Nirmal Puwar considers the significance of the "arrival of women and racialised minorities in spaces from which they have been historically or conceptually excluded" (2004: 1). Of these individuals, she notes that, "While they now exist on the inside [of previously guarded spaces], they still do not have an undisputed right to occupy that space" (ibid). These individuals continue to challenge what she terms the "somatic norm."

Some female jazz musicians have experiences in which their right to occupy the male-dominant space of jazz is questioned. K.G. described one such incident when she was playing in a school big band. After rehearsing a section of music, the ensemble director critiqued a mistake made by K.G. and another musician in her section. The director singled her out, however, and demanded that she play in a more masculine way, using explicit metaphors.

And I understand where he's coming from in terms of [he knows] what he wants the band to sound like, but his whole tirade [to me] on, "You couldn't play that, I expect my band to have balls and if you don't have a pair, grow a pair..." you know, "Play like a man, sit down and shut up!" What bothered me more about that whole situation was the other bass trombone player had screwed up just as much as I had and he didn't get any reprimand. I mean, I guess it was folded in to what he said to the whole band. It felt specifically like a, "You should do this or get out of here" to me specifically. (Interview, June 14, 2013)

These tirades, in which K.G. was told she needed to “grow a pair” of testicles, suggest the enforcement of a “somatic norm.” Even though these comments from the director were directed at the whole band (his comments were “folded in” to a larger discussion of the ideal, masculine sound of the band), he still singled out K.G. rather than addressing both her and her male section member – the other bass trombone player. Whatever the director’s intentions, he made it clear that female musicians did not have an “undisputed right” to be in the band.

While definitions of jazz tradition vary greatly among musicians, gendered narratives are prominent in many forms of jazz discourse. Because canonical formations exclude female participants in jazz (save for a few vocalists and pianists), the absence of female directors and composers is taken for granted by many jazz musicians. This disassociation between women and jazz tradition legitimizes male-dominated spaces in which musicians actively exclude women or question the right for women to participate. In addition, these narratives have yet another consequence: the promotion of certain modes of visual presentation based on musicians’ gender.

Gender and Visual Presentation

Because male and female jazz musicians are discursively positioned differently in relationship to technologies and traditions, each group is expected or assumed to exemplify certain demeanors. This includes physical and behavioral modes of presentation in performance. In her analysis of all-girl bands and historical discourse, Sherrie Tucker explains that one reason that female musicians are regarded as less authentic is that they have traditionally been perceived as visual objects by male audiences and scholars. Because all-girl bands are “understood as white and glamorous” in jazz/swing histories, these bands have been interpreted by historians as “visual and unmusical” (2000: 11). By emphasizing the whiteness and glamour of female

musicians, these discourses simultaneously serve to emphasize physical qualities and value, while implying that female musicians are unmusical (suggesting their looks compensate for a lack of musicianship).

These constructions of women as visual objects correspond to what feminist film scholar Laura Mulvey terms the “male gaze,” in which “pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female” (1975: 11). She notes that, “In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote to-be-looked-at-ness” (ibid). Thus, females who are seen more than heard are constructed as fundamentally different subjects than their male counterparts.

Some musicians addressed the physical objectification of women. Although N.E. is male, he was able to identify some the unfair expectations placed on female musicians.

Women are still held to more of a ridiculous standard when it comes to music.

When a guy’s playing – he’s just playing. When a woman’s playing, she’s simultaneously playing and looking sexy at the same time. Which is ridiculous!

Women aren’t forced to dress that way, but a lot of them... There’s just that weird expectation – maybe “sexy” is too far, but “ladylike,” I guess. It’s like, “You can’t vocalize⁷ while you play!” or “You can’t make faces while you play!” Which are things that *everyone does!* But if you’re a woman, you can’t do it. It’s “unnatural” to move your face, or if you’re at a club to yell anything. You have to always be more ladylike and reserved. (Interview, August 27, 2013)

⁷ Here, he is referring to non-verbal moans, grunts, and other expressions that are common during improvisation in which improvisers try to focus on the mentally-demanding task of expressing musical ideas.

N.E. acknowledges that women “aren’t forced to dress that way” (and hence exert their own agency regarding their gender presentation), but also points to the expectations that these notions of femininity create. Whether “sexy” or “ladylike,” women are expected to play up their femininity in their demeanor and mode of presentation and avoid masculine behaviors – such as vocalizing, making faces, or yelling – which are accepted aspects of jazz musicianship for male musicians.

In addition to being expected to be more visually appealing than male musicians, female musicians are often assumed to be less dedicated than their male counterparts. In her chapter “How Women Become Musicians,” sociologist Mavis Bayton examines the experiences of female musicians. Despite interviewing women from a “whole gamut of popular music” and a “wide range of experiences,” she observes similar restrictions faced by all of these musicians the female musicians she consulted” (1990: 254). She argues that “women find it hard to commit themselves to music in the way H. Stith Bennett⁸ shows that male musicians do” and that these female musicians “do not typically have that *total* dedication” (ibid, emphasis in original). I do not view dedication as something one has, nor do I treat it as something which women possess less of than men.⁹ Based on my experiences, I argue that women are often discouraged from dedicating the majority of their lives to musical performance. Furthermore, when women do choose to dedicate their lives to both musical and non-musical pursuits, this choice is seen as a reflection of their femaleness or femininity. While women are not as pressured to dedicate their lives to domesticity and motherhood as they have been in the past, there is still a pressure in contemporary times for women to balance career and family interests. In contrast, males are

⁸ See Bennett 1990 in same volume.

⁹ For example, in Chapter 3, H.L. (a male) was the consultant who was most vocal about his decision to pursue a more holistic life and not be completely dedicated to music.

often sent the message that they can have families without compromising their careers. As Bayton explains, women are “expected to be most ‘committed’ to their families, to their children and partners,” rather than to their musical and professional endeavors (ibid: 256).

When I asked A.D. why she thought jazz music continued to be so male-dominated, her answer revealed her own tensions about working as a musician and potentially starting a family.

I don't really know [why jazz remains male-dominated]. I guess if I had to speculate, it's a bachelor profession. Not completely. There are a lot of married guys out there. But being out late at night, by yourself, I'm not sure if that's a woman's greatest desire all the time. It comes into play with me desiring to have a family at some point – I'm not going to lie. (Interview, July 31, 2013)

A.D. recognized that the jazz musician's lifestyle was somewhat antithetical to married and family life, and that this might be undesirable for certain women, she also acknowledged that there were ways to balance these two concerns, noting that, “I'm so used to that lifestyle, even as a kid, that it doesn't really ruffle my feathers. And I don't think I'm going to be the kind of mom who has a strict 7:30 p.m. bedtime for my toddler or anything” (ibid). She was pragmatic about balancing work and family because she had been raised by a father who was a musician and knew that balancing professional and parental obligations was possible.

During this discussion, I asked A.D. why she thought that there continued to be such a large discrepancy between male and female participation as professional jazz musicians (what I would estimate to be around a 9:1 male/female ratio across the country, with perhaps a slightly higher ratio of female musicians in Seattle and other more progressive regions). She had previously mentioned that, “When I was in high school, we were *half* girls in the orchestra. And

then out in the working world – of the bass players – there’s not that many working bassist that are girls” (ibid). Several other musicians I consulted brought up the fact that in most elementary and high school music programs, there was usually an even split between male and female music students. In her response to my question, A.D. argued that those who end up professional musicians make up only a small percentage of students who started music in elementary school, noting that, “Frankly, most of us in high school orchestra didn’t go on to be professionals – so that’s part of the statistic” (ibid). What seems to be a high rate of attrition among female musicians suggests that there are many ways in which female students are more likely to be discouraged from professional musicianship.

In addition to discouraging females from professional musicianship, gender ideologies which associate maleness with professional musicianship may cause female performers to need additional mentorship – which in turn places greater pressure on them. When talking about her educational experiences, K.G. described her female professor (who taught classical style trombone, but still groomed her students for performance careers encompassing various styles of music) and the professor’s approach to teaching female students.

In grad school, I studied with a women and she tended to gravitate towards having the other women in her studio, I think, more so. I think we were compatible as teacher and student, but I also think she related to her women students in a certain way...She knew *all* of the women in the business and frequently put us in touch with them – which was cool. She knew [that] things have not progressed to the point where you can just relate to anyone. (Interview, June 14, 2013)

This professor recognized that female students faced certain difficulties and tried to assist by seeking out female students, developing strong connections, and helping her student build professional networks of other female musicians.

Within jazz performance settings, many musicians and educators have organized venues such as all-female big bands and all-girl jazz camps to encourage the musical participation and development of girls and women without reinforcing pressures to play at the same level as men. In describing her musical background, K.G. mentioned that as an undergraduate, she had frequently “subbed”¹⁰ in with a local, all-women jazz band and that she “started to learn the ropes of big band playing from that group” (ibid). Later in the interview, she talked about her own professional anxieties concerning gender.

I guess my biggest concern in all of my education was – and this is still a problem, very much so – you feel as a woman trying to learn *any* instrument, or *any* field, or any course of study that there’s this extra pressure – like, “If you fail, you failed the whole half of the female population because you were the one who was going to prove to everyone that women can do whatever they want.” (ibid)

As K.G. points out, these pressures are present in jazz musicianship, other musical forms, and in non-musical fields. Because women are presumed to be less dedicated (and thus less likely to succeed as musicians), the stakes become higher for female musicians because personal failures may be attributed to gender. Venues such as all-female bands are designed to provide a lower-

¹⁰ “Subbing” is when an outside musician substitutes for a full-time band member who cannot make a rehearsal or gig. Usually, big bands have a list of musicians who are regular “subs” in the group.

stakes environment for female musicians where they can make mistakes without feeling like failures, while still encouraging dedicated and concerted musical development.

While gender ideologies that associate femininity with domesticity create restrictions and pressures for female musicians, they also allow for certain opportunities. Because there are many associations between females and childrearing in society, females are considered more qualified to teach children and young adults. In his ethnography of music programs in public universities, Bruno Nettl comments,

Since 1970, concern with civil rights, feminism, and sexual politics has led to more rapid movement of women students into areas earlier almost exclusively dominated by men. Throughout, however, one possible outlet for women's interest in instrumental music has remained the profession of teaching children.

(1995: 61)

Teaching children – whether as a school teacher, private instructor, or both – allows women to balance the masculine-coded elements of instrumental and/or jazz performance with the feminine-coded aspects of working with children. This is not meant as any sort of indictment of music educators who work with children. I have known both male and female educators who were passionate about and dedicated to their work, and their professional motivations had nothing to do with their gender. This is merely meant to point out the way in which notions of dedication, vis-à-vis pedagogy, affect the lives of musicians, for better or for worse.

A.D. spoke specifically about how her gender affected her teaching career and made teaching a more viable option than it would be for male musicians.

I have a lot more work as a teacher as a woman. I mean, if you don't really know me, you're going to be way more prone to leave your middle school kid in a room alone with me for an hour...I have a policy that I just don't touch my students *at all*. I will hug them if it's in front of their parents and they're hugging me – very specific parameters. Even that I try to minimize, and I'm a pretty touchy person. But I do think I get a lot of work – people inherently trust women more in that setting. (Interview, July 31, 2013)

Her femaleness made her more trustworthy among her students' parents – although she still took precautions regarding physical contact with her students.

Male teachers, in contrast, had to contend with negative association. I have known several male educators who have encountered mistrust and ambivalence from parents and female educators over their decisions to teach children. While this issue was not directly acknowledged by my male interviewees, H.L. noted that, “It really makes me feel good when I can prove to a parent that I'm trustworthy and then they leave their child with me to give them a lesson” (Interview, July 17, 2013). He recognized that this trust was a positive reflection on his character. These accounts from A.D. and H.L. demonstrated how male and female musicians are affected differently by gender ideologies.

In some instances, both male and female consultants observed similar behavior, but interpreted it differently based on their gender. For example, both groups noted that female instrumentalists tended to receive more applause from audiences. Some of my male consultants viewed this as their female peers having an advantage over them. For example, C.S. explained how “aggressive” female musicians had an advantage over male players.

It could be in any other genre [than jazz] where the community is male-dominated...and a female plays a solo. She'll get more applause than another male will...Female musicians you perceive to be less aggressive at their instruments than male musicians are... In a male-dominated world, females are meant to be delicate or dainty – they're not aggressive. But when they get down to it, people are just like, "Yeah!" They love it...You just don't expect that from a female. I guess some people don't. Because you're expected to be more ladylike. (Interview, May 31, 2013)

His interpretation echoed N.E.'s statements that female jazz musicians were expected to be "ladylike." Whereas N.E. saw this as an extra pressure that was unfair to women, C.S. treated it as an advantage that was slightly unfair to men. This demonstrated also that male musicians had different interpretations of female musicians' experiences.

When discussing this type of audience reaction with female musicians, they expressed dislike for such applause because it insinuated that their successful performance had defied lower expectations. A.D. described this view, but began by explaining how her novelty as a musician was a professional advantage.

I think that in general, it is a positive thing to be a woman [musician] because the exceptionalism of it. Show business always has this little touch of something being different is preferred. Even to a fault, I think. (Interview, July 31, 2013)

While she situated sexual difference as a professional advantage to female musicians, she still conceded that these modes of differentiation could be problematic.

To illustrate how the novelty of female musicians impacted her musical life, A.D. described a recent interaction with audiences (most of whom were fellow musicians) at a jam session.

So for instance, I was at this straight-ahead jam session last night, and I played only a couple tunes and I took a solo on each of the tunes and I *absolutely* got the biggest applause. (ibid)

While she appreciated the increased audience applause, she questioned the underlying assumptions that led to it.

I feel as though the applause is...“Oh, she knows what she’s doing...” But it’s almost insulting because it’s like a surprise, it’s like, “Oh! She didn’t totally fold.”¹¹ That’s great!” Everyone hollers when they clap and I resent that, but I try not to show it because people are just really genuinely trying to enjoy the music and they like it and it’s fun and it makes it different. And it’s absolutely to my advantage that they remember me. (ibid)

For her, this audience attention was both positive and negative (even if well-intentioned). While she was frustrated by this condescending treatment, she recognized that her memorability helped her to achieve professional success.

¹¹ To “fold” is a term commonly used by jazz musicians to describe when a musician fails monumentally during performance.

In order to deal with these types of responses from audiences and other musicians, A.D. had to come to terms with own identity as a musician.

...I feel like you might have to prove yourself an extra little bit before you get that extra treatment. So if you're not quite as good as the guys, you got to make sure, you've got to be right there and be on that same level. But I also realized I had a lot of self-doubt, and some of that might've been gender issues and I just was like, "Psshhh... There are so many mediocre guys." There's a lot of great ones too, but I just had to get over it – I'm at the level I'm at, people notice I'm a woman and I just have to go from there and not let it get to me, because there's really no point.
(ibid)

K.G. echoed this sentiment when she commented that it was a "no-win situation" because, "If you fail, it's because you're a woman, but if you succeed and get a positive audience response, it's because you're a woman" (Interview, June 14, 2013).

In "Fitting the Part," ethnomusicologist, jazz scholar, and jazz musician Ingrid Monson provides a reflexive account of her experiences as a similar musician, similar to the those of A.D. and K.G.

I had come to realize that no matter how well I played, audiences would always react ambivalently – not because of me, but because of the gendered assumptions in our society about what instruments are appropriate for women to play. Some people would love the transgression, and other would be disturbed by it. These

reactions were not personal, but structured by a history and culture that were beyond any individual's control. (Monson 2008a: 280)

Monson reacts with the pragmatism described by A.D.

This was a very liberating realization. Yes, you can try to undermine gendered or racialized presumptions through excellence, charm, a sense of humor, hard work, and generous acts, but that is not going to be able to stop people from making categorical presumptions based on who you are. (ibid)

Based on my experiences as a female jazz musician and talking to other female musicians, I argue that female musicians each grapple with expectations from audience members, instructors, and other musicians. While many female musicians, like Monson, recognize and accept the nature of gender ideologies in music, they remain a source of frustration for others. While my consultants reacted differently to expected forms of demeanor and social presentation, they each demonstrated how jazz musicians – particularly female ones – must negotiate various standards of gender and musicianship.

Like technique and tradition, notions of demeanor – specifically, modes of visual presentation – affect the ways in which both male and female musicians are perceived by evaluators. While visually objectified, female musicians are often positively associated with teaching children, which can prove financially advantageous. On the flip side, male musicians have to contend with negative associations, which can impede their efforts to earn an income from teaching. In the case of audience response to female jazz musicians, there are many differing opinions over whether or not this excessive attention is advantageous or

disadvantageous for women. While male musicians are certainly affected by gender ideologies related to demeanor, female musicians are especially affected by them because they generate nearly constant reminders of female difference and otherness. Women must learn to contend with negative (or positive, but condescending) evaluations based on their gender and presentation. Ultimately, my female consultants have learned to recognize and selectively ignore the biases underlying these evaluations and have developed their musicianship in their own ways despite gendered expectations.

Conclusion

Notions of gender affect the experiences of both male and female musicians by creating certain associations, expectations, or assumptions related to technique, tradition, and demeanor. In the case of technique, women are disassociated from certain musical instruments based on loudness or the perceived physical challenge of playing certain instruments, which are associated with maleness and masculinity. These associations are reflected in notions of tradition, in which female instrumentalists are all but excluded from historical narratives. While these associations between masculinity and certain instruments have specific manifestations in jazz performance cultures, they are representative of larger canonical formations in which female musicians and composers are not emphasized in scholarly discourse. Because there is little historical precedence for female jazz instrumentalists, they are often viewed as outsiders in male-dominated spaces. They are, however, more advantaged in the realm of teaching children. The experiences of female musicians are further compounded by gendered standards for demeanor and social presentation. Although female performers perceived as aggressive may receive positive responses from audiences, these responses reinforce the idea that male and female

musicians are fundamentally different. While male jazz musicians are certainly affected by ideologies of gender, female ones must contend more often with negative or biased evaluations in terms of their abilities as performers. In the next chapter, I examine how other ideologies and discourses in jazz function in relationship to notions of race and ethnicity in education, performance, and society.

CHAPTER 5: RACE

Introduction

The city of Seattle and surrounding areas are characterized by distinct racial demographics, secularism, and supposed tolerance (often coupled with structural inequality). While there are many non-White jazz musicians working in the city, the overall makeup tends to reflect the predominance of White Americans in the region. In addition, I have noticed a relatively large number of Asian-American musicians and the conspicuous absence of Black musicians – although there are still some in the city. Having worked as a jazz musician in Chicago (where I worked with many Black jazz musicians) and Dallas (where I worked with many Hispanic jazz musicians), I was keenly aware of how the racial demographics of jazz musicians varied across geographical regions. As I talked with musicians throughout my fieldwork, I became further aware of Seattle’s racial character. Several of my consultants grew up in the south part of the city and described the prevalence of minorities¹ and poverty in these areas. In contrast, they described the prevalence of Caucasians and affluence in other areas of Seattle. As I engaged in discussions of race and observed racial dynamics in various venues, I struggled with how to address performance standards pertaining to race. My challenge was figuring out how to address notions of race specific to Seattle while still acknowledging larger discourses of race and American ethnicity which permeate jazz narratives as a whole.

In this chapter, I investigate how jazz musicians in Seattle have negotiated audiences’ assumptions that certain musicians are inherently more talented, traditional, and dedicated

¹ In South Seattle, there is a large population of African immigrants (particularly from East Africa), contributing to the diversity of the area. However, in informal conversations with musicians from those areas, they described how these immigrants and their children had distinct identities from African Americans, even though both groups could be described as Black. Several consultants mentioned other jazz musicians who were first-generation African American on one or both sides of their family. This is yet another factor that contributes to the racial demographics of the Seattle area.

because of their race. As a result, they are perceived by audiences to be more authentic jazz musicians. I examine the effects of feedback (often covert) from instructors, other musicians, and audiences about my consultants' race. In many cases, this feedback hindered their musical development and marginalized them in educational, professional, and community settings. Furthermore, I highlight three primary opinions concerning race that my consultants expressed: First, they felt that Black jazz musicians were often presumed to be inherently more talented than other musicians because of the historical precedence of Black musicians, highlighting the irony that African Americans are conspicuously absent from many performance and educational settings in Seattle. Second, they felt that Hispanic- or Asian-American jazz musicians were perceived as being less traditional because of their absence from dominant historical narratives. Third, they felt that White jazz musicians were presumed to be more dedicated and artistic, as represented in the stereotype of the "nerdy White jazz musician." This characterization of White jazz musicians, my consultants suggested, was used to avoid discussions of cultural appropriation, that is, the current predominance of White musicians in a historically African American form.

One of the most prominent themes pertaining to race in my discussions with musicians was the distinct status of Black jazz musicians in performance contexts. N.E., who is African American, commented,

I think for me, music is one of the few places where being the only Black person in the room, no one really bats an eye. Maybe if I were playing classical music, it'd be a different thing, but I play jazz. (Interview, August 27, 2013)

This comment pointed to two primary issues. First, Black jazz musicians are conspicuously absent from many contemporary performance contexts (hence, N.E. referred to being “the only Black person in the room” in a typical setting). However, the historical precedence of jazz as a predominantly African American form allows for contemporary, Black jazz musicians to be seen as normal and appropriate (hence, N.E. asserted that “no one really bats an eye”). Second, although Black musicians are accepted in jazz, these racial associations are not transferable to other styles of music, such as classical. While I observed that gender norms held constant throughout musical genres and between musical and non-musical contexts, I also observed that assumptions about race were not as stable.

Another prominent issue in these discussions was the status of White jazz musicians. When I asked K.G. if her race was an issue in her education, she replied, “I’m pretty solidly Caucasian and I’ve gone to schools where everyone looked similar to me in that regard” (Interview, June 14, 2013). However, she conceded that Whiteness could “definitely be used as a negative thing” – referring to critiques of cultural appropriation or accusations of being “square” (ibid). In the latter case, she was referencing “square” as a jazz slang term for a musician who plays in a rigid, conservative, or stylistically inappropriate manner. While racial ideologies certainly affected her, she maintained that, “generally I’ve never felt singled out for that as much as I have my gender” (ibid). While K.G. felt like an outsider in jazz because of gender (as discussed in Chapter 4), she did not feel like her Whiteness marked her as different or inauthentic.

Other musicians I consulted, who were neither Black nor White, had their own set of responses to racial norms. For example, while I was interviewing H.L., we discussed the processes of trial-and-error and persistence needed to succeed in musical careers. While he

talked about other life experiences, he specifically mentioned the role that his race and ethnicity – one not typically associated with jazz music – has played in his musical life.

I think being a minority helps – gives me motivation to be better. Not for *La Raza* or anything like that – I don't really care about that. I never really get into that motivation of my race is motivating me so I look good for other Hispanic people. I don't really care. I care about how the world perceives *me*. (Interview, July 17, 2013)

H.L. wanted his musicianship and professionalism to be judged on its own terms, rather than through the lens of racial ideologies. He strove to do quality work and earn the trust and respect of his colleagues and students. While H.L. was able to use this as a positive motivation (and thus exert agency), he and his professional identity were both greatly affected by these associations between jazz and certain racial subjectivities.

Jazz discourse frequently conflates racial categories such as Black versus White with other categories of American ethnic identity. I believe it is important, however, to differentiate between race and ethnicity. Ethnomusicologist Ruth Stone offers a concise definition of race.

Race focuses on identities based on perceptions about skin color. These distinctions are socially constructed categories used in most cases to establish hierarchical structures and to discriminate against or exclude certain groups of people from certain social, political, religious, and other settings. (Stone 2008: 158)

Both authenticity and evaluation rely on categorical criteria such as race. My research findings suggest that while categorical assumptions of race are rarely used to consciously discriminate against jazz musicians, these assumptions still affect how these musicians are perceived and evaluated by others, such as audiences and other musicians. For the purposes of my analysis, I have identified the three primary racial categories of jazz musicianship as Black, White, and Other. The third category refers to those individuals who fall outside the Black/White racial binary that characterizes much of American society, including Asian- and Hispanic-American musicians.

Ethnicity is often defined by scholars through geographical or other forms of boundaries (Tonkin, Chapman, and McDonald 1989), rather than through physical traits as with race. In *Ethnicity, Identity, and Music: the Musical Construction of Place*, ethnomusicologist Martin Stokes provides a definition of ethnicity, emphasizing boundaries.

Ethnicities are to be understood in terms of the construction, maintenance, and negotiation of boundaries, and not on the “putative” social essences which fill the gaps between them. Ethnic boundaries define and maintain social identities, which can only exist in a context of opposition and relativities. (1994: 6)

While notions of race are prevalent in jazz discourse (such as historical narratives which focus on the different contributions of Black and White musicians), this rhetoric is also related to constructions of American ethnic identity. In *Jazz/Not Jazz: The Music and Its Boundaries*, editors David Ake, Charles Hiroshi Garrett, and Daniel Goldmark note that, “Geography is another significant factor that has helped to define ‘real’ jazz from what some aficionados see as inauthentic practices” (2012: 6). The authors situate the United States as the “global arbiter of

jazz tastes” (ibid). In my analysis, I am concerned with the ways that American ethnicity is imagined through jazz, as well the particular racial formations which are used to constitute these associations between music and ethnicity. To begin, I focus on one of the most predominant racial tropes in jazz discourse: the idea that Black jazz musicians are inherently talented and technically gifted.

Race and Talent

Based on my own experiences as a White jazz musician and interviewing consultants of various races, I believe that there is a common association in jazz performance contexts between Black musicians and talent, or innate technical ability. Because of this longstanding association, Black musicians are often presumed to be more talented by audiences and other musicians. Furthermore, Black musicians are regarded as hyper-authentic based on assumed natural abilities. Although most racialized standards treat Blackness as a standalone category, notions of race in jazz are tied specifically to Black masculinity. Sherrie Tucker notes that,

The masculinist focus of dominant jazz and swing histories may, in fact, stem from long-standing white fascination with perceptions of a style of black masculinity associated with jazz and swing performances. (2000: 20)

While my own analysis focuses on race as the nexus of certain performance standards, I acknowledge that notions of gender and race are complexly intertwined. Furthermore, my study was limited by the fact that I was unable to consult with Black female jazz musicians. This was not a deliberate omission, but an unfortunate result of the gender and racial demographics among Seattle jazz musicians.

Several scholars have remarked on the presumed aptitude of Black musicians. Ingrid Monson examines these associations between Blackness and talent, as well as rhetorical responses to them.

If jazz is one of the few cultural activities in which being African American is evaluated as “better” or more “authentic” than being non-African American, a white musician’s appeal to a colorblind rhetoric might cloak a move to minimize the black cultural advantage by “lowering” an assertive African American from his or her pedestal to a more “equal” playing field. (1996: 203)

I concur that Black jazz musicians are often evaluated as more authentic than non-Black musicians, and that such “colorblind rhetoric” exists in jazz discourse, although both may be covertly expressed. The two most common rhetorical sentiments that I have come across in jazz education are some variation of “Anyone can play jazz” and “Jazz is America’s music.” These statements promote the idea that jazz can be played by all – or at least all Americans. These “colorblind” sentiments, however, are directly at odds with narratives emphasizing the contributions of various racial and ethnic groups. These categorical formations are informally positioned in descending order from most to least influential: Black American, White American, Latino (primarily Cuban and Brazilian), European (primarily French and Scandinavian), and all others. While I acknowledge the cognitive dissonance between these racial/ethnic hierarchies and colorblind rhetoric, I do not believe that colorblind rhetoric is used by White jazz musicians to nullify the higher status of Black jazz musicians, as Monson suggests. Rather, I believe it functions as a way to reconcile the continued valorization, and in some cases, fetishization, of Black musicians while still legitimizing the participation of White American musicians.

While some of my consultants acknowledged the existence of what I term notions of racialized talent, they did not personally agree with them. N.R., who is White, noted the possibility that people made certain assumptions about players based on their race. He compared himself to one of his band members, who is Black.

With [the band], I don't want to make stereotypes, but there's this assumption that maybe [my bandmate] would be a better improviser than I would be just because he is African American. I'm sure there are assumptions like that, but it's hard for me to know what other people are thinking. And I don't try to make those kinds of assumptions. And I've been exposed to know better, I guess – or know more about it. (Interview, July 8, 2013)

N.R.'s comments reveal both the prevalence of these attitudes (“I'm sure there are assumptions like that”) and their covertness (“but it's hard for me to know what other people are thinking”). He also distances himself from the assumptions – saying that his experiences have given him a more nuanced view of the issue.

Even in instances where there are perceived racial differences, musicians attributed these more to nurture than to nature. N.E. discussed his own experiences, and explained why he felt more connected to African American musical forms as a Black person.

In a way – and this might sound racist and crazy of me – but there's a certain connection to certain strains of music over others. With jazz, I feel a little more tied-in. For me there's a through-line from Gospel and Blues and Jazz and R&B. It's there! It's in my dad's record collection, it's in mine, it's in the stuff that my

grandparents listened to. I can hear the through-line from people humming in fields to rap. It doesn't follow for all music. I would say I approach the music in a different way – which may or may not be more authentic – it's all relative.

(Interview, August 27, 2013)

N.E.'s musical approach had been informed by being exposed to the music of his parents and grandparents, which has helped him to trace a "through-line" among various musical forms. While he acknowledges notions of racialized talent, he personally attributes these musical abilities to exposure, listening habits, and familial influence.

Notions of racialized talent relate to larger debates over the presumed superiority of Black musicians in jazz music. In *Jazz in Black and White: Race, Culture, and Identity in the Jazz Community*, Charley Gerard argues that "there is a strong correlation between artistic success in jazz and being African American" (1998: xiv). Drawing on a variety of scholarship about African American music and culture, he is critical of scholars who have sought a "race-neutral vision of jazz as an art form" and those who have battled "what they consider to be the anti-white slant of jazz musicians and critics" (ibid). On the flip side of race-neutrality, he notes that conceptions of "the black mystique" have carried their own set of issues.

Central to the cultivation of the black mystique is the notion that African Americans are different from whites. Under this assumption, whites latch on to the extreme features of African American culture that set blacks apart from white America. By extracting these features from less sensational ones, they help fortify the belief that African Americans are the wielders of almost mythical abilities and

bearers of numberless flaws, by turns enviable, pitiable, and despicable. (ibid: 97-8)

Notions of racialized talent work to establish the “mythical abilities” of Black artists while also serving to differentiate between Black and White cultural elements. These presumed abilities are coupled with just as many presumed “flaws.”

In his discussion of race, N.E. explained how these associations and expectations translated to his own life.

Being Black, it’s like, [imitating others observing him] “Well, he’s probably just got some... They’ve just got some natural rhythm, *those* people.” I mean, not literally, but there is an expectation – it’d be surprising if I was terrible at it.

(Interview, August 27, 2013)

He contrasted this expectation of success with expectations of failure experienced by female musicians and by Black individuals in other contexts.

I think women get the raw end of the stick in that way – I see people expect them to be not as good. It’s like a Black guy in a math class, [imitating others discussing math student] “Oh, he probably has the lowest score in the room.” It’s not that there’s any truth to it, it’s just sort of how people’s brains work. (ibid)

He acknowledged that these categorical assumptions were not based in any kind of “truth,” but that they were the result of habitual thinking, or “just sort of how people’s brains work.”

The relative scarcity of Black musicians in contemporary jazz music has rendered them even more hyper-authentic among audiences. After explaining her feelings of being objectified as a female musician (discussed in Chapter 4), A.D. noted that one of her friends experienced similar treatment. She explained that her friend was dark-skinned and that, “he just looks very ‘Black,’ I don’t know how else to put it” (Interview, July 31, 2013). She explained the connections between gender and race.

Much in the way that I can almost --- The worst thing I can say is like being a “prop” onstage as a woman. I feel like he kind of has that in a racial way. And not that he does that on purpose. I’m saying people are like, “Wow! Look at this Black guy – there’s not that many of those in jazz anymore.” It’s like, “Oh, cool!” And I think it’s a little insulting. I don’t know how he feels about it – I can’t speak for him. But people definitely think it’s “neat,” so I have observed that. People think they’re being edgy and frankly that’s pretty antiquated and not that cool. (ibid)

According to A.D., audiences responded to this musician with excitement based on the scarcity of Black jazz musicians in the Seattle area and because it creates a sense of being more authentic. She was quick to note that she “can’t speak for him,” making it clear that these are her own observations and interpretations of the situation and may be different from those of the musician himself.

Additionally, she points out that audiences and other musicians think that they are being “edgy,” meaning that they feel hip and transgressive merely through associating with a Black musician, when in fact this behavior is “pretty antiquated.” By this, she was referring to the long

history of White musicians and fans seeking out certain experiences through association with Black musicians and cultural forms. Ingrid Monson speaks to the specific ways that Black Americans function “as a symbol of social conscience, sexual freedom, and resistance to the dominant order in the imagination of liberal white Americans” (1995: 398). It follows that these attitudes among White audiences would be especially prevalent in Seattle because the city is much more liberal and progressive than other parts of the country.

Tensions between different racial imaginings of jazz have been further complicated by the emergence of educational institutions as one of the primary influences on jazz music and culture. In *Jazz Cultures*, jazz studies scholar David Ake examines the cultural roles and effects of jazz education, noting that, “Over the past thirty years, college music departments have emerged as among the most powerful forces shaping understandings of jazz in this country” (2002: 112). He contrasts understandings of jazz in the early to mid-20th century – as a “disreputable ‘underground’ music played by African-American or white outsiders” to its more recent legitimization in college programs, where it is perceived as “a technically demanding but fun ‘All-American’ music” (ibid). The shift to jazz as an “All-American” musical form also reflected the shift from jazz as being the domain of “African-American or white outsiders” to being “All-American” and thus accessible to all (although still predominantly White) Americans.

While I can only speak to my own educational experiences (which occurred primarily in the first decade of the 21st century), it seems to me that the lines between college jazz programs and jazz “beyond the academy walls” are very blurred. The majority of musicians I have worked with have had at least some college education relating to jazz – whether through community colleges, universities, or conservatories. Musicians usually establish the primary hubs of their musical networks through college experience and may interface with a network of alums from a

particular institution if they move to a new location. Another manifestation of this ambiguity is the culture of college jazz programs themselves. On the one hand, they serve to promote an institutionally-sanctioned vision of jazz as a legitimate art form. On the other hand, these programs are sites of socialization in which musicians learn slang, attitudes, manners of dress, and other aspects of participation that are preserved from a time when jazz was a transgressive form associated primarily with African Americans.

Despite the attempts to preserve forms of African American culture through jazz education, educational institutions are often financially inaccessible to Black students and other minority groups. When describing his educational experiences, N.E. expressed his frustration at realizing at the start of his college career that the majority of students were White and from wealthy backgrounds.

When I got to [my undergraduate school], I felt a little bit like, “Well this makes sense...this is the natural conclusion from what I’ve been seeing for years.” It makes sense that everyone I’m seeing here, a) would come from a slightly different ethnic background than me and b) tend to have more money than I do. It just makes sense! You need to have all of those things lined up in order to [get into college]. (Interview, August 27, 2013)

He saw this movement toward racial and socioeconomic homogeneity in college as the “natural conclusion” of elementary, middle school, and high school programs which pooled resources into a few select schools in better neighborhoods, while leaving schools in poorer areas without sufficient funding. N.E. was quick to emphasize that this issue was more about economic status and class than race, but that demographics of the former affected those of the latter.

Notions of racialized talent perpetuate assumptions about the hyper-authenticity of Black jazz musicians. The reason that Black jazz musicians are perceived by some audiences and musicians as more authentic is because Blackness is associated with innate technical abilities, which are viewed as being more “natural.” This is part of a larger process of creating categorical associations based on individuals’ skin color. While these stereotypes are ostensibly positive, they also imply flaws and deficiencies in Black people outside of music (such as N.E.’s description of Black math students). Even though Black jazz musicians have become increasingly rare in some places and settings, this has only increased their perceived social value and status as authentic (such as A.D.’s story of her friend). As jazz education becomes a major force in the continued development of the genre, the hyper-authenticity of Black jazz musicians takes on new significance. College jazz programs may promote African-American musical forms, yet they are often inaccessible to many musicians who are not from White, middle- or upper-class backgrounds. These changing demographics create a sense of absence and also put pressure on White jazz musicians to legitimize their current predominance in jazz. One way that this is accomplished is through discourses of jazz tradition which emphasize a Black/White racial dichotomy. In the next section, I examine the effects of these ideologies, particularly on musicians who are neither Black nor White.

Race and Narrative

Many jazz narratives, such as those used in films or textbooks, reinforce the idea that the majority of influential jazz musicians are either Black or White Americans. In *Writing Jazz: Race, Nationalism, and Modern Culture in the 1920s*, jazz scholar Nicholas M. Evans interrogates such racial binaries in historical and contemporary jazz narratives.

Saying that jazz's parentage is white and black, or European and African, fails to account fully for its complex background. Similarly, locating jazz within the dialectical relation of folk art and fine art does not capture its full aesthetic range. The music emerged from and developed in relation to such a wide variety of contexts and genres that it defies all of these categories. (2000: 10)

Whether focusing on race ("white and black"), origin ("European and African"), or function ("folk art and fine art"), each of these categorical constructions overlooks the complexities and heterogeneity of jazz and the people who have been part of its history.

Some scholars have specifically addressed specific narratives of jazz that promote a Black/White racial dichotomy. Ethnomusicologist Deborah Wong explains how such narratives exclude musicians of certain races and ethnicities.

Questions of who speaks, who ought to be speaking, and who has spoken too much already are more and more frequently cast in racialized terms... The tug-and-pull over ownership has centered on who is making the music and who is writing about it. Both arguments have been cast in Black and White terms; the racialization of jazz has been aggressively binary because it is a ventriloquist, metonymic stand-in for control over an American Elsewhere. The long history of Other colors in jazz – that is, Asians and Latinos – is constantly refigured as absence. (2000: 67)

Based on my experiences as a jazz musician, I argue that Wong's assertions about racial tensions not only hold true in performance contexts, but also within jazz education.

Discourses of race function within larger narratives of jazz musicianship. Jazz studies scholar Sherrie Tucker points out that in these romanticized narratives, jazz musicians are almost always presented as,

U.S. American and male, usually poor, and often black, routinely unique, natural geniuses – who transcend humble backgrounds by creating very special music that makes America feel good, and makes the rest of the world feel good about America. (2004: 248)

These meta-narratives combine notions of ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, race, and education. This specific intersection of social categories serves to erase many social complexities in jazz.

In a similar manner, Ingrid Monson outlines her philosophies of scholarship and teaching, which recognize the complexities of race and other, intersecting social categories.

In my courses, my goal has been to try to have honest and nuanced conversations about race that do not fall into the trap of an either-or paradigm. Drawing attention to the multiple social categories that go into describing any individual (a combination of age, race, gender, sexual orientation, class, national origin, ethnicity, health status, and, undoubtedly others) and how they combine in the histories of the musicians and other social actors has been crucial to my academic and pedagogical practice. (2008: 284)

Both analyses outline numerous, influential categories in the construction of racial discourses of jazz. They each point to the intersections of scholarship, discourse, and pedagogy. Because jazz music is so firmly entrenched in educational institutions, the norms and narratives – which are commonly perpetuated through college courses – affect the experiences of student musicians. Romanticized discourses that valorize jazz musicians of specific traits – whether race, gender, class, or educational background – this leads to certain standards for jazz musicians.

Most of the White musicians I consulted described their race as a non-issue in their education. This was not the case, however, for musicians of other backgrounds. When I asked C.S. about his educational experiences, he explained how his race and ethnicity as a Filipino-American marked him as being outside the norm. Because of this, he felt that he received different treatment than other students.

Maybe some professors didn't take me seriously, because...I mean, how many Asian or Filipino guys come through the music department who are serious about it? Maybe it's just me and my paranoia, but you don't see too many Asian guys from where I grew up. (Interview, May 31, 2013)

By “where I grew up,” he was referring to being from a lower socioeconomic status and living in a more impoverished area of the city – which he described as “not a great neighborhood” (ibid).

Furthermore, he explained that the public schools that he attended were not as well-funded and focused on music as other schools in more affluent areas of the city. He speculated that his background had affected his perception by instructors and other students in college.

My family wasn't wealthy. And I went to a school where music wasn't king and we didn't get the funding and...it wasn't taken seriously. So maybe they [college professors and students] just kinda saw me and didn't take me seriously – even though I was serious about the music. (ibid)

For him, his racial identity was closely tied to a socioeconomic background that was different than most of his classmates.

I asked C.S. if there were particular behaviors on the part of others which made him feel as though he was being taken less seriously. He replied,

I think it just was mostly looks...and probably just the way they talked to me...versus [other students]. Eh, I just kinda felt like they blew me off. It was just kinda passive thing, like walk down the hall and say, "Hi" to be nice... And you just weren't sure if they were going to be [as] friendly to you as maybe someone would be to...another person. (ibid)

I asked him if these professors and students were more likely to be "friendly" to individuals of the same race as they were, to which he replied, "Yeah. Maybe that's just my paranoia" (ibid).

During this discussion, he posed a rhetorical question about the racial demographics of most music departments. This question reflected common associations and stereotypes about the ethnic makeup of students in music departments.

Really – I’m going to ask it again – how many Asian musicians, who aren’t Chinese or Korean, walk through the halls of a music building, trying to get a performance degree or [a music] education degree? (ibid)

He then directed the question to me, saying, “I mean, have you seen many?” After waiting for a few seconds, he said, “See, if you’re trying to think, then...no” (ibid). He thus affirmed affinity between musicians of the same race (predominately White) while also describing the more stereotypical ethnicities of Asian or Asian-American music students. His educational experience was negatively affected because he felt alienated from other students based on his race.²

H.L. described similar feelings of alienation in performance contexts outside of education. As a Hispanic jazz musicians working in a predominately White region of the country, he felt more pressured to perform at a certain level. He also expressed relief that he was not held to the same expectations as Black jazz musicians.

A lot of the bands here are all-White. And luckily I’m not Black in that they won’t assume that I should be good at jazz. I think it probably a little bit – the greats have mostly been Black. (Interview, July 17, 2013)

His comment speaks to the prevalence narratives of jazz and race. Although he felt like an outsider because he was non White, he also conceded that he was under less pressure because he was not expected to be talented in the same way that a Black musician might be.

² Wong describes how Asian American jazz musicians such as Mark Izu and Anthony Brown expressed frustrations with ethnic labels and representation in performance at a symposium on Asian American jazz at the 1996 San Francisco Jazz Festival (2004: 306-16). Although C.S. speaks to these frustrations in reference to his formal education (not long after 1996), I suggest that these tensions are consistent across time and settings – particularly in the context of West Coast cities such as Seattle and San Francisco with comparatively large Asian American populations.

While he felt that he was not under the same pressure as Black musicians, he still felt that he was disassociated with jazz because of his race, ethnicity, and regional background.³

But I go in and I don't fit in that mold because South Texas and jazz don't really go together. It's forced me a little bit to be better and practice more. I've done some sitting in gigs, just like practices, and I get the first look of, "Who's he?" and the second, after we're done, of, "Ok, he's alright." But maybe if I was an old White guy – maybe I'd be ok. (ibid)

H.L. recognized that he was the subject of certain assumptions based on his race. Because jazz music is not associated with South Texas (or Tejano/Hispanic-Americans), he felt like he needed to demonstrate his musical value – and to prove that he had the right to be there. While he was usually able to meet the conditional approval of other musicians, he felt like he would have an easier time if he were "an old White guy."

While notions of jazz tradition often invoke the kinds of "colorblind rhetoric" discussed by Monson (1996: 203), these notions reinforce discourses that suggest that jazz musicians are either Black or White. These discourses are perpetuated through education and other sites of narrative formation, such as representations of jazz in popular media. For musicians who are neither Black nor White (such as Hispanic- and Asian-Americans), these narratives create feelings of isolation or otherness. Responses to these phenomena varied. For example, H.L. (who is Hispanic-American) was motivated to prove himself to others in spite of possible stereotypes.

³ Macías (2003: 184-86) describes the culture of postwar Los Angeles in which Mexican American jazz musicians such as Eduardo "Lalo" Guerrero and Don Tosti were emblematic of affinities and exchanges between Hispanic and Black Americans. H.L.'s attitudes are borne out of living in Seattle, which has a comparatively low Hispanic population, and are thus representative of regional, rather than national trends.

C.S. (who is Asian-American), however, expressed frustration and alienation in his educational experiences. While these two musicians were situated as outsiders, both of their accounts suggested that White musicians were the presumed default in many performance settings (although C.S. made brief reference to the fact that many classical music students are East Asian or of East Asian descent). Furthermore, H.L. expressed his opinion that Black musicians were presumed to be more talented. I argue that notions of racialized tradition function as a means to situate Black and White musicians relatively equally, while still maintaining notions of racialized talent. In the next section, I examine the specific modes of presentation used to establish the legitimacy of White jazz musicians.

Race and Nerdiness

In my educational and performance experiences, I have heard many other (usually White) musicians refer to the stereotype of the “nerdy White jazz musician.” While I borrow from Ingrid Monson’s conception of “hipness” (Monson 1995), I believe that this stereotype of the “nerdy White jazz musician” is a combination of hipness and studiousness. The latter is a form of intellectual dedication which tacitly compensates for the lack of natural talent possessed by White musicians in comparison to Black ones. In this way, White and Black musicians are positioned as relative equals, while Black musicians are still imbued with natural talent. While these mindsets may not be conscious or explicit in the interactions of White musicians, I posit that they allow White musicians to participate in jazz without concern over ethics and appropriation. Furthermore, by perpetuating the association between jazz and Blackness, White musicians are able to affiliate themselves with the transgression and hyper-authenticity of both jazz and Blackness.

In her article “The Problem with White Hipness: Race, Gender, and Cultural Conceptions in Jazz Historical Discourse,” Monson describes the qualities associated to with hipness, noting that, “To be hip, in one common definition, is to be ‘in the know,’” not to be duped by the world around one, and to react with dignity and ‘cool’ when faced with an assault on one's being” (Monson 1995: 399). This concept reflects a kind of street-smarts, or vernacular knowledge, coupled with resilience and emotional control. While hipness is certainly prominent in formal and informal educational settings, it is primarily a form of social interaction.

I use the term studiousness to encompass the various knowledge sets – some of which are derived from African American vernacular culture, others of which are derived from conventions of the Western conservatory system – that characterize educational and performance settings in jazz. Whatever the particular domain of musicianship or mode of acquisition, notions of studiousness imply that the essence of jazz music is not just intrinsic to Black musicians, but rather, can also be acquired through education and training. In her analysis, Monson notes the “intersection of gender and racial stereotypes in the concept of hipness” (Monson 1995: 402). She argues that the “‘subcultural’ image of bebop was nourished by a conflation of the music with a style of black masculinity that held, and continues to hold, great appeal for white audiences and musicians” (ibid). This assertion points to the fact that these associations are held by many audience members, not just musicians.

These ideas of education and learning are manifest in the stereotype of what is sometimes referred to by musicians as “nerdy, White jazz musicians” (or some variant thereof). Several musicians discussed this designation for White musicians in my interviews with them. One of the first to explicitly bring up this concept was K.G., when we discussed notions of race in education.

I know there's a lot of --- the whole concept of, "Has jazz been appropriated by nerdy white dudes with saxophones?" And what was it to begin with, where did it come from? But that's happened with pretty much every form of American music – since we started writing music of Americans. It started out as Black folk music and ended up as a White cultural signifier – like rock music. (Interview, June 14, 2013)

K.G. acknowledges that educational settings reflect a certain degree of appropriation – and that this issue is considered (although not necessarily discussed) by many White musicians. She also links the trajectory of appropriation in jazz music with that of rock and other African American musical forms.

When I asked A.D. about the stereotype of "the nerdy white dude jazz musician," she attributed this to the rise of jazz in academia and jazz being "just barely old enough to study" (Interview, July 31, 2013). She continued,

It's hard to study things that are happening at the moment. It goes to the university – and clearly we have a lot of different types of folks studying at the university right now. It's not just Whiteville. But there's definitely – I think there's some component to it being "academic" at this point. I don't know exactly why it is... I don't know why it isn't studied by other folks more. (ibid)

A.D. was reluctant to attribute the stereotype to the academic institutionalization of jazz. As she pointed out, contemporary universities are not exclusively White – there are varying degrees and types of racial diversity. She still was cognizant of the fact, however, that the racial and

socioeconomic demographics of many schools were different than those of jazz musicians in earlier eras. At the same time, as K.G. pointed out, it is hard to know “what was it to begin with” (Interview, June 14, 2013), meaning that the imagined racial demographics of past traditions may have been quite different from the reality.

K.G.’s and A.D.’s accounts suggest that notions of race “haunt” educational (and non-educational) settings. In *Music and the Racial Imagination*, ethnomusicologists Ronald Radano and Philip Bohlman assert that,

A specter lurks in the house of music, and it goes by the name of race. For most observers, it hovers and haunts barely noticed, so well hidden it is beneath the rigors of the scholarly apparatus. The racial specter, nonetheless, has an enormously powerful, nearly palpable effect: it casts a shadow across the putatively “objective” enterprise. (2000: 1)

The metaphor of a specter suggests that race is simultaneously ever-present yet mostly invisible to observers. I argue that a similar specter haunted my research and interviews with my consultants. While racial ideologies were ever present in the educational, professional, and community experiences of my consultants, these ideologies were often covert, unconscious, and difficult to express.

In the article “After the Silence of Aesthetic Enchantment: Race, Music, and Music Education,” music education scholar Wayne Bowman rhetorically questions whether or not music education is haunted by Radano and Bohlman’s racial specter and concludes, “*How could it not be?*” (2005: 2, emphasis in original). Bowman concurs that “music’s very nature is such that it works hand in glove with the racial imagination” (ibid). He is quick to note, however, that

this process of perpetuating racial ideologies is subtle, unintentional, and often unnoticeable to musicians and musical scholars.

To be clear, this is not to declare all musicians, musicologists, ethnomusicologists, and music educators racists. The whole process is much more subtle than that. In fact, such subtlety and elusiveness are among the reasons for characterizing it as ghost-like. It hovers mostly beyond our purview, casting an ethereal shadow over our altruistic engagements, our scholarly endeavors, our methodological efforts. We scarcely notice it. But it's there: an ineluctable force borne of music's power to signify and its remarkable fluidity and multivalence.

(ibid)

Whether examining musical practices inside or outside of formal education, it is important to acknowledge both the prevalence and invisibility of racial discourse. Stereotypes of the “nerdy White jazz musician” provide a prime example of these mechanisms in practice. These stereotypes perpetuate notions of difference between Black and White jazz musicians. While the former group is imbued with natural talent and technical skill (as discussed in the first part of this chapter), the latter group achieves technical and improvisational mastery through dedicated study.

Although these notions of racial difference are covertly manifest in educational and performance settings, they are rarely discussed as such. In “Jazz as Political and Musical Practice,” Monson examines debates among musicians and scholars in discourses of race and jazz. The most controversial topic of this debate, she asserts, is “the idea that there is a white sound and a black sound in jazz” (2009: 28). In contrast to this assertion is the argument that jazz

is “universal – an art music open to all who master its repertory, improvisational mode of musical creation, and demand for individuality and originality” (ibid). I suggest that the stereotype of the “nerdy White jazz musician” reinforces both the idea of a Black and White “sound” in jazz and the argument of jazz as a universal art form. This stereotype implies that it is possible for musicians of any race to master the parameters of jazz, but that certain White jazz musicians have achieved this mastery through dedicated study of jazz and hipness, not through innate, racialized talent.

In the same chapter, Monson points to a third issue in discourses of jazz and race, the fact that jazz “is a music whose origins are in African America” (ibid: 28). She explains that,

To erase that aesthetic history in the name of universalism, many argue, whitewashes the history of the music in a way that allows non-African Americans to appropriate and profit from black cultural forms with impunity. (ibid: 28-9)

Ultimately, Monson argues that it does not matter “how well a white American other non-African American may master the sonic parameters of African American musical style,” that “as long as racially stratified social structure exists, she or he will have a different social relationship to the music than will an African American” (ibid: 33). For her, the musical elements of jazz cannot be separated from social and cultural conditions.

She qualifies this statement, however, arguing that this difference does not negate the authenticity or struggles of White jazz musicians, explaining,

This is not to say that the relationship is less real, less musical, inflected by class, or less important, but only to say that the structural and historical issues beyond our individual agency make it different. (ibid)

Put another way, she is not proposing that Black jazz musicians are more authentic than White or other non-Black jazz musicians. Rather, she is pointing out that discourses of race and jazz do not properly acknowledge stratified social structures which lead to racial inequality for Black Americans. I argue that racial ideologies and corresponding notions of authenticity serve to reinforce racial differences without emphasizing the complexities and difficult realities of racial inequality.

My consultants had more nuanced opinions of differences between Black and White musicians and musical forms. For example, I asked N.E. if it felt to odd to be one of the few Black students at his university and studying predominantly Black jazz musicians. He concurred, but also acknowledged that, “I do think that we tend to overemphasize the contributions of one race over another [in education]” (Interview, August 27, 2013). He discussed this phenomenon in relationship to rock and roll.

Some of my favorite artists of all time aren't Black, they're just incredible musicians. Although if you look at rock and roll, you could say it's reversed – that the contributions of White musicians are weighed more heavily than the contributions of Black musicians because they're more recent. If you look at the Beatles, Elvis, Rolling Stones – all incredible musicians who did completely change the music, but that would not have existed if not for, whatever...[It] works both ways. (ibid)

N.E. argued that American music was dependent on the contributions of both White and Black musicians, as well as the European influence of White, British rock musicians.

When he discussed these exchanges and contributions in relation to jazz, he referenced the influence of European American, Tin Pan Alley composers on the form.

Jazz music is the same way – a lot of these standard [chord] progressions are borrowed. A lot of the [harmonic] resolutions are typically what you find in tons of Western music. There's a lot of borrowing from show tunes. Imagine jazz without Rhythm changes⁴ for goodness sake. That's like half the catalog – just throw it all away. In various bits and pieces there's that Gershwin influence. It's all equally important. (ibid)

He asserted that by emphasizing Black musicians over White ones (or vice-versa), it overlooked cross-racial borrowings, exchanges, and appropriations. While Monson argues for scholars to acknowledge the difference social relationships between Black and White musicians, N.E. argued for educators to acknowledge the overlapping musical relationships between these two groups.

Notions of racialized studiousness work in conjunction with those of talent to create two different musical trajectories for White and Black jazz musicians. Just as success among Black musicians is seen as a product of aptitude, success among White musicians is seen as a result of achievement. This has led to the stereotype of the “nerdy, White jazz musician,” which reflects the idealization of hipness, or of being “in the know,” with the predominance of White musicians

⁴ “Rhythm changes” are the set of chords based on the composition “I Got Rhythm” (1930) by George Gershwin that serves as the harmony for many subsequent jazz tunes such as “Thriving from a Riff” (1945) by Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie, as well as “Oleo” (1954) by Sonny Rollins.

in post-secondary, educational institutions. Notions of race are often lurking as “specters” in society, musical communities, and educational institutions. Because of this covertness, it is imperative to acknowledge, interrogate, and analyze their functions and manifestations in these settings. While many other scholars have described these and other racial phenomena, what I have tried to do here is demonstrate the way that they are embedded in notions of musical authenticity and corresponding standards of musicianship as well as the ways that racialized conceptions of musicianship overlap with musical constructions of technique, tradition, and demeanor. In other words, it is impossible to fully separate the issue of race from other facets of musical and cultural production. Ultimately, notions of talent, tradition, and studiousness reinforce the idea of a Black/White racial binary with others relegated to marginal status in jazz music of the United States.

Conclusion

Although their experiences varied by their race, my consultants learned to both recognize the biases underlying racialized feedback and to continue to perform by deciding which techniques, concepts, and modes of demeanor they would use to develop their own musicianship. These biases gave rise to three primary discourses. First, many audiences and musicians presume that Black jazz musicians are inherently more talented than non-Black ones. Put another way, Blackness is often correlated to technical aptitude. While my consultants recognized and critiqued these mindsets, they also described their prevalence. Second, notions of tradition emphasized differences between Black and White musicians. As a result, musicians who were neither Black nor White (such as Asian- or Hispanic-Americans) felt marginalized in educational

and performance settings. Finally, musicians described specific modes of presentation used by White jazz musicians, giving rise to the stereotype of the “nerdy White jazz musician.”

While issues of White appropriation of Black musical forms extend throughout the history of jazz, these specific modes of presentation are situated in contemporary society and regional culture. They have been greatly shaped by the induction of jazz music into educational institutions. All three forms of rhetoric generate modes of racial and ethnic categorization that label musicians as either Black or White, or as an Other. My consultants were critical, however, of these fixed categories and developed more nuanced understandings of race, ethnicity, and culture. As I have demonstrated in this chapter, notions of race do not function in a vacuum. Rather, they are deployed in relation to various domains of musicianship. In the conclusion of this dissertation, I discuss how each of these domains illustrates the complex functions of musical standards, notions of authenticity, evaluation, and performer agency.

CONCLUSION

In my research, I identified various standards that instructors, audiences, and other musicians used to evaluate and authenticate Seattle jazz musicians. While some of these standards placed restrictions on performers, the jazz musicians I consulted responded by exerting their agency through their musical choices and actions. In examining different domains of musicianship (technique, tradition, and demeanor) and related social categories (gender and race), I discovered three basic processes at work. First, I noticed that there were often tensions between two or more standards which were both of value to musicians. Educator John Holt describes tension as “if two hands were pulling us hard in opposite directions. Each is pulling us toward something good, one is as strong as the other, and *neither will tire or let go*” (1972: 27-8, emphasis in original). Second, I observed that many times there were conflicts between different groups of evaluators (such as educators versus general audiences) and among individuals (such as between certain jazz musicians) regarding the definitions of standards. Third, I discovered that jazz musicians were frequently held to evaluative standards that they either could not or did not wish to satisfy. By examining these processes, I believe it is possible to outline general patterns among the complexities of performance standards described by Seattle jazz musicians.

In Chapter 1, I focused on the domain of technique, in which my consultants negotiated competing definitions of technical authenticity – such as tensions between virtuosity and individualized technical approaches. While these musicians contended with many technical standards, there were relatively few conflicts between evaluators across settings. For example, my consultants explained that notions of talent were emphasized by both classical and jazz educators. While “chops” was a term specific to jazz, displays of strength and virtuosity in instrumental playing were valued by both jazz musicians and general audiences. Some of my

consultants emphasized the importance of expressiveness over virtuosity while still maintaining the value of both traits, suggesting tensions between the two standards. While many of my consultants' educational institutions emphasized technical skill first and foremost, individuality and expressiveness were still valued by some instructors, audiences, and other musicians. I believe that the uncontested nature of these standards is attributable to the tangibility of technique. It is relatively easy for evaluators to observe musicians manipulate their respective instruments using specific techniques or skills. While there are usually varying definitions of what constitutes a "good" or "bad" performance in musical settings, I believe that most evaluators are able to make some sort of judgement about individuals' technique.

For Chapter 2, I shifted my focus to the domain of tradition. Whereas standards of technique emphasized skill, those for tradition were connected to knowledge. Unlike technique, however, this knowledge was often much less tangible, leading to conflicting standards of tradition and corresponding notions of historical or cultural authenticity. In addition, technique seemed to be more observable in instrumental performances, while tradition relied on imaginations of history and genre. My consultants described how in educational settings, historical conventions – based on the playing styles of iconic jazz musicians – were used as evaluative criteria. Within these standards, tensions often emerged between traditionalism (preservation of conventions) and innovation (creation of new forms in the vein of historical players). While my consultants acknowledged the limitations of traditionalist modes of evaluation, they also pointed out the need for some form of evaluative standards, such as those used in classical music. As a whole, educational standards for tradition usually conflicted with the expectations of general audiences. In these cases, audiences and some bandleaders wanted jazz musicians to mimetically reproduce familiar recordings. For example, several of my

consultants described how audiences used Glenn Miller's "In the Mood" as a touchstone for jazz and big band music. These expectations discouraged jazz musicians from improvisation, as well as from playing in contemporary, less mainstream styles. At the same time, however, consultants pointed out that many audiences in Seattle valued creativity for its own sake. While these musicians placed value on creative improvisation, they emphasized that true innovation required a foundational understanding of tradition and convention. I argue that these tensions and conflicts speak to different methods of defining musical parameters of jazz as a genre. Put another way, evaluators used differing standards because of differences in their educational background, listening tastes, and other factors.

Chapter 3 addressed the domain of demeanor, encompassing facets of social musicianship such as interaction, presentation, and attitude. As with the tradition, my consultants described standards of behavior or social protocol which varied greatly according to setting. While both classical and jazz education emphasized dedication and devotion among musicians, there were tensions between the staid culture of educational institutions and discourses of jazz musicians as countercultural and hip. As my consultants pointed out, certain jazz conventions and attitudes (such as apathy and drug use) were often at odds with those adapted from classical music and used in contemporary jazz education (such as formal dress and meticulousness). In addition, some consultants expressed their reluctance to be solely dedicated to musical performance in their professional and personal lives. In the realm of artistry, musicians described tensions and conflicts between standards. On the one hand, they recognized the commercial excess that was denigrated by certain jazz musicians. On the other hand, they recognized that being inaccessible to most audiences was both financially unfeasible and musically restricting. Some of my consultants even expressed support for musicians like Kenny G, who had been

widely castigated by other jazz musicians. In contrast to notions of artistry, the concept of being a “good hang” emphasized sociability, accessibility, and connections among musicians (or between musicians and audiences). While some musicians pointed out that “hanging” could be taken too far (such as in the case of musicians who used “schmoozing” to cover musical deficiencies), most acknowledged the professional value of sociability. I contend that this domain is especially fraught with tensions between, conflicts among, and rejections of standards because there are so many competing notions of jazz musicianship and corresponding behavior. Whereas evaluators in the domain of tradition were concerned with how a jazz musician should sound, those in the domain of demeanor were focused on how these musicians should look and act. As intricate as jazz’s sonic elements were, I discovered that human social behavior was ultimately much more complex.

In Chapter 4, I shifted my analysis from areas of musicianship to gender as a specific social category. In many ways, this domain was relatively consistent because gender ideologies were similar across contexts. My consultants described inequalities between men and women in educational, professional, and community settings. While women had some advantages, such as novelty appeal to audiences and having an easier time gaining child students, for the most part, female musicians were disadvantaged by ideologies of gender and jazz. Consultants identified three standards that female (and some male) jazz musicians could not, and often did not wish to satisfy. First, with sex-stereotyping of instruments, female musicians were disassociated from larger or physically-challenging instruments. Second, female musicians were not considered to be part of historical canons, narratives, or traditions. As a result, female musicians were treated as outsiders in many contemporary performance settings. Third, female performers were objectified in performance, expected to emphasize their visual presentation, and presumed to be

less dedicated than their male peers. While jazz musicians exerted agency in challenging these restrictive standards, standards of gender in jazz continued to be perpetuated in various settings. I suggest that this prevalence and consistency is due to the fact that such ideologies are based on the relatively simple formation of a male/female binary.

In Chapter 5, I demonstrated that there were many similarities between standards of gender and those of race because both functioned through the use of socially-constructed categories. As with gender, some of my consultants described ways in which their race affected the ways in which they were perceived and evaluated by others. Whereas gender norms functioned in fairly consistent ways, racial norms in jazz varied greatly from those of general society. There were also major differences between racial standards in jazz and classical musics (as referenced by N.E.'s quote that he would be much more out of place as a Black classical musician than as a jazz musician). In educational settings, notions of race were similar to, but much more covert than notions outside of academia and formal education. While my consultants described how both musicians and audiences espoused racialized viewpoints, most of my consultants observed this behavior more in general audiences. Furthermore, racial and ethnic categories were much more complex and covert than the male/female binary used in gender ideologies. Many of these racial and ethnic discourses, however, reduced racial/ethnic categorization down to Black versus White, or Black and White versus Other.

The complexities of these five domains, including many forms of consistency and variation in the use of evaluative standards, required a multi-faceted analysis that examined the roles of instructors, audiences, and other musicians, as well as the conditions of educational, professional, and community settings. By doing a small-scale, localized project that I was intimately familiar with and was deeply personal for me, I was able to identify these connections

and fully engage in interdisciplinary ethnomusicological scholarship as a performer, educator, and researcher.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

I. Background Information

1. When and why did you start playing your primary instrument?
2. When and why did begin your undergraduate and (if applicable) graduate musical education?
3. What things did you like about your education?
4. What things did you dislike about your education?
5. When and why did you begin your involvement with your primary musical community?
6. What things do you like about your musical community?
7. What things do you dislike about your musical community?

II. Authenticity

1. How do you evaluate whether a musician or musical performance is good or bad?
2. How would you define “authentic” musicianship - as being naturally talented, true to one’s self and/or a particular tradition (or none of the above)?
3. In your education, how were instrumentalists evaluated as to whether or not they were good musicians?
4. In you education, how prevalent were notions of “authentic” musicianship - as being naturally talented, true to one’s self and/or a particular tradition (or none of the above)?
5. In your musical community and performance, how are instrumentalists evaluated as to whether or not they are good musicians?
6. In your musical community and performance, how prevalent are notions of “authentic” musicianship - as being naturally talented, true to one’s self and/or a particular tradition (or none of the above)?
7. How have your experiences in education, community, and performance informed your own definitions of musicianship?

III. Gender and Race

1. In your education, what was the gender makeup of students, faculty, and influential musicians/composers/historical figures?
2. In your education, what was the racial/ethnic makeup?

3. In your musical community and in performance, what is the gender makeup of musicians, audience/other community members, and influential musicians/composers/historical figures?
4. In your musical community and in performance, what is the racial and ethnic makeup?
5. Do you feel that your gender affected how you were perceived as a musician in your educational setting(s)? Is so, to what extent? If not, did you ever observe other musicians who experienced this?
6. Do you feel that your race/ethnicity affected how you were perceived as a musician in your educational setting(s)? Is so, to what extent? If not, did you ever observe other musicians who experienced this?
7. Do you feel that your gender affects how you are perceived as a musician in performance and in your community? Is so, to what extent? If not, did you ever observe other musicians who experienced this?
8. Do you feel that your race/ethnicity affects how you are perceived as a musician in performance and in your community? Is so, to what extent? If not, did you ever observe other musicians who experienced this?

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW EXCERPTS

In the following section, I present longer-form excerpts from my fieldwork interviews. These excerpts are organized in chronological order to show how my approaches to interviewing changed over the course of time. Each consultant's interview is divided into parts I, II, and III (see Interview Schedule in Appendix A). In some cases, I have selected excerpts which were partially quoted in the body of the dissertation in order to give a more nuanced depiction of consultant responses. In other cases, I have chosen to quote sections which were especially relevant or poignant, but were not included in the dissertation itself.

C.S., Part I: Musical Background

May 31, 2013

LP: When and why did you start playing trombone?

CS: I started playing trombone...when I was in middle school. I was first interested in that just as an alternative to clarinet, and –

LP: [interjecting] When did you start playing clarinet?

CS: ...That was like fourth grade, like elementary school “learn how to play music” type of things...

LP: Did you have much choice in that?

CS: No - that...no, not really...well, yes...[laughs]...My older cousins played some instruments when they were growing up and it was free at the time; we didn't have to rent an instrument and so my choice was a flute, clarinet, or violin. And obviously the clarinet was the more - kind of - *manly* instrument, out of the three.

LP: [interjecting] Was there anything that made you think that [clarinet was manly], or was there talk about it, or was it unspoken?

CS: ...not...not unspoken...just...I don't know, I just always thought that flute was a girl's instrument and violin was kind of lame...and clarinet was the best option out there. I didn't necessarily think it [clarinet] was a girl's instrument at the time...It wasn't girly or stupid.

But back to the trombone, I started playing that in middle-school, probably in... [thinking]...seventh grade or eighth grade. Clarinet was still my primary instrument, but I just picked it [trombone] up because it was interesting...it was something different. But I didn't really start *playing* the trombone full-time until my freshman year in high school, when they

needed trombone players. There was like two of them in the band and my band director wanted another one and I told him, “Hey, I played a little bit of trombone in middle school, you know, if you want me to play...I’ll definitely give up clarinet to play trombone.” So I just played it ever since.

LP: Was that your primary instrument after that?

CS: Pretty soon after that. I didn’t play clarinet after that again.

LP: Was there anything in particular about the instrument that appealed to you?

CS: It was different...I mean, everyone played trumpet... clarinet... flute... saxophone... In middle school there was probably maybe one, two trombone players. I mean they were always outnumbered by those other instruments - those kind of “popular” instruments. Band directors, they always needed trombone players.

LP: When and why did you start playing jazz?

CS: I started playing jazz, uh...for a little bit in middle school...but it wasn’t really serious since I was still doing clarinet, but...um...I started playing in my freshman year of high school...’cause...they needed a trombone player...

I didn’t really give any thought to playing in high school jazz lab or anything like that, just that they just needed a trombone player and I was like, “Hey, I’ll do it!”

LP: Did you listen to jazz before you started playing?

CS: I did. I grew up [being] into the Swing Era type...I don’t know – that stuff’s still jazz to me...My dad was literally an old man and he...um...I was kind of brought up on Benny Goodman and Glenn Miller type of music...My dad bought me tapes...All those big names...

LP: Had he been really into the music during that time period?

CS: Oh, yeah! It was their music...I mean, my dad was old and it was his generation that grew up with that type of music.

LP: But he never played?

CS: No, he never played, no...He just listened and went to dance halls and all that stuff...clubs...whatever they did in the 30s and 40s...[joking] besides killing people...

LP: What are some stereotypes associated with trombone players?

CS: [joking] They’re very good-looking...that’s about it.

Seriously, they’re...fat...they have big bellies, and they have beards. And they’re weird...That’s the stereotype.

LP: Does that have some basis in reality, do you think?

CS: Weird, yes. Fat, no, not really. But mainly weird...

I don't know, in high school it was always...it was the stereotype that it was like some...like a Santa Claus type of guy. [laughs] Like white beard, glasses...suspenders, you know...and a pot-belly...played trombone. More ugly, less humorous. But real trombone players are more humorous and weird. Like I am...

LP: What about stereotypes of jazz musicians?

CS: You mean like musicians to smoke cigarettes and drink a lot...and...stay up late hours...and...smoke weed, and play in clubs? Not beyond, you know, that they smoke weed, cigarettes, and drink.

...

LP: Was there anything you disliked about your undergrad experience?

CS: I disliked how --- now, this is not fact, this is just my perception... I disliked how I was treated as a music major... I felt that I was just someone there, just to obtain a degree... I felt that I wasn't one of their prized musicians... or someone from a musical family... or a musical [high] school... or some kind of "higher-up" type of [music] program... that I came from.

...

LP: What do you like most about playing in the group?

CS: Um, I like that, that I grew up with some of these guys...and *girl*. Most of them – well, not most of them... some of the original guys – like four of them – I played with in high school. It's kinda morphed into mostly people that I played in college with. Like marching band guys. I think what I like most is that I've know these people for... 5, 10, 15, 20 years.

And, it's pretty easygoing. I think the mission is not to try to...be a professional band. But the mission is to try to play the best you can, sound the best you can...and overall have a great time doing it.

C.S., Part II: Authenticity

LP: How would you define a good musician or musical performance?

CS: Since I'm in a big band setting, I'm going to tell you...how I describe a good musical performance... I'm going to tell you [about] a good [ensemble] performance rather than a musical, individual performance. I always think that you know when you have a good musical performance when you - as a musician sitting in the band - are looking out into the crowd and you see like, moving... [people] shaking their head and getting *really, really* into it. To me, that... You're delivering a *good* product; you're delivering a good musical performance because, as individuals and as a band, you're... letting your feelings be known - speaking to your audience through your instruments. And when the audience digs it, you know you're giving a good musical performance.

...

LP: How would you define a bad musician/musical performance?

CS: [laughs] When you know that... you feel like you've messed up. I mean, as a musician, you can tell that you have not played well...your group has not played well. And... you can tell when the audience isn't paying attention...that much. Then, that's how I would define a bad musical performance.

LP: What about if you're an audience member?

CS: You just kinda know since... you're [pauses] well, you just know. You know, you're a person who listens to music...not necessarily the genre that I play...but, music in general. You kinda know when something is bad. If I'm sitting there, as a musician, I kinda give away my emotions. I guess I would cringe, or like raise my eyebrow... I would just go [seethes loudly]

And you can tell too if you're looking at the band...the musicians. You can tell that they themselves know that they're not doing...great because - to go back to my previous answer - they're not diggin' what they're playing. You can just tell by their face - they're just kinda stoic, or like "I wanna get this over with"-type of face. Or...they have a look of embarrassment. I guess it's just the opposite of my first answer. They just know.

LP: How would you define an "authentic" musical performance?

CS: Like playing a standard or playing a well-known song?

LP: What comes to mind when you hear people talking about musical authenticity?

CS: What comes to mind is... Well it's a big band setting, so let's just say a big band is playing... "In the Mood"... audience members know what they want to hear. They want to hear original solos, they want to hear original articulations, they want to hear original notes, original note lengths. They want to hear what it is like on the recording. They want to hear recorded songs. And that's what I think [of] as authentic and when you deviate from that, when you start playing your own improvised solos... it just doesn't seem the same. It doesn't seem right. I think audience members, when they go to that type of thing, they expect to hear what's on the recording, because that's what they're familiar with...

...

LP: In your musical life, how important are these definitions of musical authenticity?

CS: It's not that important... It's important that...whenever we play something in my band that we... I first want us to play it like how it was recorded. I want it to sound like how it was recorded - which is impossible because most of it's done in a studio and it's polished and everything like that... But, I want us to start out that way...to lay a groundwork that's like, "Ok, this is what it sounds like"...and *then* kinda add our own things into it...as far as modern, big band types of things... Like I said, if we're going back and playing big band, Swing-Era types of tunes, people want to hear what's on the recordings, so...I want to copy what they did. I want to

emulate what they did, just so it gives the audience a feel of like, “Hey! It's a big band dance!...back in the 40s...we're gonna have fun...whatever”... As much as they probably don't think about that...*too* much...they just kinda go, they just wanna have a good time... I'm *sure* that what they want to hear is what was originally recorded...because it kinda brings back...memories...of maybe when they were growing up...maybe their grandparents or parents...maybe they've listened to it themselves.

So, for me, it's important in two ways. In the modern vein it gives you...some type of foundation. If you're going back into the era, if you're doing big band dances, you want to keep that same sound...for the people. And, as a musician, it...kinda puts you in your... let's just say the predecessor to your instrument. It puts you in their shoes...what they had to deal with...how their technique was...and maybe how exciting or boring it was...how they played their instrument in a setting like that. And maybe you can learn something from it. ... You might be sounding like you didn't think you could be sounding, or didn't think you could play. You'd be less sophisticated on your instrument... Maybe as a person it's kinda hard to...de-evolve...into something, because today we're always striving to try to be *better*... we're striving to evolve into a better person and in some ways it might be hard to do that [devolve], but it's always good to find out...to learn about what people did in the past and how they did things their way.

...

LP: In your education, were there notions – spoken or unspoken – that certain players were naturally more talented or better musicians than others? If so, why?

[emphatic] Yeah, because they always got put in top bands...they always got the solos...they always got the accolades. Those musicians, students...got to do a lot of “extracurricular activities” with the other top musicians...or, instrumentalists in that time...

LP: What do you mean?

CS: You know, just like hang out... Maybe go on field-trips...or have a little more lesson time...or special privileges. I don't know, I probably can't prove that, but you can tell. They had a little more leeway...well, not leeway, maybe more pampered than some of the non-talented, non-prodigy musicians that were there.

LP: Do you think these were people who were more naturally talented?

CS: [tentatively] ...yeah... And they probably had the better discipline...better education on their instrument than maybe I...got.

LP: What sort of backgrounds did they come from?

CS: Probably more upper-income. Maybe honors students. Parents who were maybe a little more financially stable - that they could fund their kids with private lessons before college. So, in some ways, they might not necessarily be talented, but they had the resources to...become talented or master their instrument a lot better than say I was, than just me.

LP: In your education, were there notions that musicians should stay true to themselves? If so, how and to what extent?

No... More of like, "You need to work on your instrument a bit more"...

...

LP: In your community, how are instrumentalists evaluated as to whether or not they are good musicians?

CS: [laughs] The amount of solos that they get, basically. That's the primary reason. The secondary reason is [if] you're playing a lead part. The third reason is if you have a [music] degree. That's how it's defined as good musicians.

...

LP: How have your experiences in education and community informed your own definitions of musicianship?

CS: I think it's made me a little more aware of...what music is and – not just music, but jazz in general – what it can be. What it could be. And, to me, what it is. Maybe it's just because I've had that secondary education and I'm always looking back as to what I've learned – when I was in college. You learn about setting grooves and making people feel good... You learn about sound and you learn about technical ability in that setting. But once you get out and then you start immersing yourself in blogs or surrounding yourself with better musicians...or you just get really frustrated and try to find answers for yourself like what music can be.

To go back to my first answer...about what makes a good musician... You kinda get that feeling...or that... You kinda come to that answer through your experiences, but you never really think about it until someone says it. Like making the audience feel good or toe-tapping or dancing and everything like that. As a musician, you think about that, but you really don't think about that until someone says it...and when someone says it and it kinda makes sense to you. It's about making people feel good.

C.S., Part III: Gender and Race

LP: What was the racial/ethnic makeup of students and faculty [in your education]?

CS: Caucasian. I'm sorry, they [fellow students] were pretty much Caucasian. I mean, you had some Asians here and there...like me...but they were pretty much...Caucasian. I don't know what to tell you.

LP: What about faculty?

CS: [laughs] Caucasian. I don't know what to tell you.

LP: Musicians, composers, historical figures?

CS: [joking, emphasizing each syllable] Cau...casian. I'm not joking, it was all white people. [laughs] Unless you got into jazz, and then it was African-Americans.

LP: What about compositions that you played in ensembles?

CS: We did one by a Japanese composer [Toshiko Akiyoshi]– I guess it was a little more diverse when you went into jazz. You had some Caucasians, some African-Americans – Count Basie big band arrangements, Thad Jones. A little more diverse, not too much besides white and African-American. It [the Toshiko Akiyoshi chart] was actually pretty cool.

[Anticipating next question, joking] The answer to your next question is “Caucasian.”

...

CS: The band is a little more diverse than other bands out there... It's a fairly good mix of white people, African-Americans, Asians, women...all within the same age range, too.

...

LP: Do you feel that your race/ethnicity affected how you were perceived as a musician in your educational setting(s) and if so, to what extent?

CS: I do feel a little bit of it. I don't think... Maybe some professors didn't take me seriously, because...I mean, how many Asian or Filipino guys come through the music department, that are serious about it? Maybe it's just me and my paranoia. ... But you don't see too many...Asian guys from where I grew up. If you saw an Asian person, it's probably because they lived in a pretty... They lived and they went... They lived in a good neighborhood and went to a good school. I mean, I come from ----- which is not a great neighborhood. My family wasn't financially... We weren't wealthy. And I went to ----- school where music wasn't king and we didn't get the funding and...it wasn't taken seriously. So maybe they just kinda saw me and didn't take me seriously – even though I was serious about the music.

LP: Was there anything in particular that they did that made you feel like they didn't take you seriously?

CS: [hesitant] Not really.... Maybe I'm going stereotypical here, but I think it just was mostly looks...and probably just the way they talked to me...verses... Eh, I just kinda felt like they blew me off. It was just kinda passive thing, like walk down the hall and say “hi” to be nice... And you just weren't sure if they were going to be [as] friendly to you as maybe someone would be to...another person.

LP: A person of their same race?

CS: Yeah. Maybe that's just my paranoia. Really – I'm going to ask it again – how many Asian musicians, who aren't Chinese or Korean, walk through the halls of a music building, trying to get a performance degree or [a music] education degree? I mean, have you seen many? [waits for reply] See, if you're trying to think, then...no.

LP: Actually, I was friends with a lot of Thai musicians in college.

CS: Were they financially wealthy?

LP: Yes...

CS: See, there you go.

LP: Do you feel that your gender affects how you are perceived as a musician in your community and if so, to what extent?

CS: Not really, no. I don't think anyone thinks about if you're...a man, you know.

Now...if the roles were reversed, and if I was a female, then yes. Maybe it's because...ladies are outnumbered. I know I've heard comments...from people that...about you. As one person put it, you "play a mean bass." [laughs]

I've heard comments from other musicians where...well like with you, they'll say you had a really good solo. Now if it was like other musicians – let's just say our trumpet player or our trombone player – they'd [female musicians] get more compliments than other male musicians. I think it's probably because of the nature... It's like...they're outnumbered by the males and it's probably because they never... I mean, in our band, I think female musicians tend to be a little shy...about it. Maybe it could be true in other bands as well. It could be in any other genre where the community is male-dominated...and a female plays a solo. She'll get more applause than another male will. She'll get more praise and accolades from other musicians than a male will. It's just how it is. How many females do you see play bass or trombone? Or honk out a saxophone like...I don't know, Cannonball Adderley or Charlie Parker? Female musicians...you perceive to be less aggressive at their instruments than male musicians are – like when you have a solo and you really "get into it." That's like male chauvinist...like being really dominant, like "this is mine." How many female soloists that you hear tend to be like that? None. I mean, I wouldn't say none...but some. But when a female musician gets into that mentality, when they are into it...you don't expect that. You just don't. In a male-dominated world, females are meant to be delicate or dainty – they're not aggressive. But when they get down to it, people are just like "Yeah!" – they love it. They get more applause than if a guy did the same thing. You just don't expect that from a female. I guess some people don't. Because you're expected to be more lady-like.

...

CS: [On race in the band] Even though some of us...some of us Filipino guys...say things in our language, in our dialect, to make fun of other people. But otherwise people don't care about race or anything like that. Maybe that's a good thing – we can use a different language to communicate and no one else would know. So maybe there's some derogatory things that we say... I think we're so diverse – some people might already know what we're saying. That's the thing – we've been around each other a long time and once you teach people – so then we just come up with other words that no one else knows [laughs] Which is cool. But people don't think about the race. Doesn't matter.

K.G., Part I: Musical Background

June 14, 2013

LP: When and why did you start playing trombone?

KG: I started playing in seventh grade...so around age 12. I had initially started band on flute – partially because I wanted to and also partially from pressure from my mother, who had played flute...and wanted to play flute again [laughs] so she wanted her daughter to have a flute handy so that she could also play it... But when I got to 7th grade, there were...just so many of the common instruments – trumpet, clarinet, flute – that they really hadn't recruited anyone to play low brass or percussion. So I kinda took a look around, and there were 16 flutists, and I was like 8th chair, so it was sorta an equal number in either direction and I thought "I don't really want to be [in the] middle of the pack." So I volunteered – when they were looking for people to switch instruments. They offered you free instrument rental and startup lessons, the band direction also would keep you caught up, basically, because you had to stay in the same band...you couldn't go back a grade.

And I don't know why I picked trombone... Everyone always asks: "Do you like playing glissandos?" or, whatever... I was like, "frankly, I do not remember," I just was like "that one sounds good!" [laughs] My dad wanted me to play tuba, because he thought it would be cool to have someone in the family who played tuba...and...my mom didn't really have an opinion... But I ended up playing trombone and I never looked back. [laughs]

...

LP: What are some associated characteristics/stereotypes of [trombone] players of your primary musical genre?

KG: In jazz, because there aren't a lot of – there certainly aren't as many trombone players as there are trumpets or saxophones – so as far as the horn section goes – one of the things I've always gotten is a little bit of a condescending tone, like, "Oh, well, if you can't play that 'cause you play the trombone..." – like with jazz licks and stuff like that. It's like "why wouldn't I be able to play that? It's not that hard." [laughs] But because they don't see it happen very often, there's sort of a standard that you can't play things as well as people with keys can.

...

LP: [Why did you start college as a music major?]

KG: I went to college for music...sort of on a whim. [laughs] I – all through high school had kinda been groomed to be some sort of scientist – that was my academic strength. And I *loved* band very dearly and I liked making music but what I think I actually liked about it was the camaraderie and the social environment. So when I was choosing schools, I sorta had this half-and-half – half my schools were really strong science schools and the other half were decent music schools. And when I ended up falling in love with [undergraduate school] – which was both, really – it felt like the right choice because I could change my mind if I wanted to. But I ended up going in as a music major because I realized – sort of at the last minute – that I didn't

want to give up that environment and wanted to be a part of it. I didn't regret it at all. I loved that I had chosen that. The friends I made my freshman year of school are still my friends. I also don't regret chasing a more academic, research-oriented career because after high school, that sort of stopped suiting me. I grew in a different direction.

LP: What about for masters?

KG: I took two years off of school after I graduated. One of them was intentional, and the other was because I didn't get in anywhere my first round of grad school auditions [laughs]. But in that time, I realized that I didn't have the necessary skills – I really felt like I was lacking in some skills and experience – in order to be a professional musician, and I felt like I needed more experience – more training, basically. Less experience, I guess, and more training – more dedicated study on trombone and I felt like getting a master's degree would do that because you get to do less coursework and you can spend more time in the practice room. There's a higher standard on you than there would be as an undergrad. So that's why I went back to masters.

...

LP: When and why did you begin [working on cruise ships]?

KG: I chose to go to cruise ships because I had just... So, right out of grad school, I started with this quintet, we ended up moving up here, and I – through various processes, just things didn't work – I decided to quit the group and I felt like I needed to find some way to prove to them and myself that I could still be a professional musician. So the clearest choice – and several people had already recommended it to me – was to audition for a ship. And it hadn't been on my radar. I mean, [cruise ship line] would come to [graduate school] all the time and hold auditions, so I knew it existed as a career because I had seen jazz musicians from [graduate school] go through the process. But that wasn't what I wanted to do, so I didn't pay much attention to it. The funny part... The ironic part is that I auditioned and got booked to do a contract, but it didn't start for almost another year. So I had this gig waiting for me, but in the meantime I had to sit on my butt and wait for it to happen. So it kinda came about as a necessity, basically – a job necessity. I needed to make money as a musician and ships are sort of an easy route for that...

LP: What kinds of musical activities [did you do on your cruise ship work]?

KG: Well, as a trombonist you're part of a show-band, so it's like a 7-8 piece group and your primary responsibility is to play music in the theater, so whether there's a guest entertainer who has a "book"¹ and you'd come and have one rehearsal and then play it. Or, there's a production-show show, so the cast and the dancers. Occasionally those don't have band but like one or two given on the ship will have...they'll wanna have backup band. Which is kinda stupid because it's all multi-tracked anyway and the...usually the sound mixer doesn't put the band in the house very much so you're sitting there getting paid to pretty much mime your instrument. But we would also do stuff out in the lobbies – play either small-group big band stuff, like dance band stuff, or jazz combo stuff.

¹ A personalized collection of compositions or arrangements for potential accompanying musicians

LP: What things did you like about [this work]?

KG: I loved the... I tended to avoid the ship characters who had been around a long time and were sorta embittered and never wanted to do anything. So I loved the people that I met who were kinda in the same place as me – that were willing to go explore and make the most of this free travel we were getting, basically.

I don't really have much good to say about the actual *music* we were making on ships, but I loved my fellow musicians – they were awesome, cool people. We always had a good time together, whether we were in the crew bar bitching and drinking or out in Spain somewhere, just trying to get away from that environment and enjoy what was given to us.

LP: What things did you dislike about [this work]?

KG: [laughs] I disliked the hierarchy there. It was really – I know you don't want to talk about the dissertation² - but I thought it was really well put – the way he dissected that musicians on ships sit in this grey area. Whereas most crew members fall into a very definite hierarchy – like the captain down to the guy who cleans the toilets – your experience and your role on the ship are very black and white all the way up. But the entertainment staff is such a weird area because we're primarily like western, well-educated, highly-trained individuals. But we're not getting paid very much and we don't have any of this ship work experience, so we're not very useful to the running of a ship, you know? But because we've put in so much time to be *this*, we expect to be treated with commiserate respect but these people are seeing us as being useless, basically. [laughs]

So there's just this total attitude... People here are bitter and people up here are bitter at you – it's like this mutual hatred, or just tension. And I think that was just – for me, aside from playing shitty music sometimes or having to eat in the crew mess – that was the worst part for me – just feeling like I was not respected for all the work that I'd put in for the job I was doing. Because they don't see you do the work, because you did it before you got there, I think a lot of people on ships – and I think this happens on land as well, maybe not to the same extent – are dismissive of your efforts, basically. Like, you didn't scrub toilets for five years before you got promoted to Cabin Steward, and then you didn't do Cabin Steward for another year before you got to be hotel director, you know? They don't see you move up in this thing because you've already done your training and so they just dismiss it as “anyone could play that instrument, I could play that instrument” and then you're like “no you can't – not to this level.” And some people on ships who aren't entertainers are amazing musicians or performers, but that's not what they're getting paid to do, they didn't audition, so anyway... There's some bitterness there; lots of tension.

K.G., Part II: Authenticity

LP: How would you define a good musician or musical performance?

² Here, she is referring to the dissertation, *Musicology and Cruisicology: Formal Musical Performance on Cruise Ships 2003-2011* (Cashman 2012) for which she had also participated as a consultant (although for that dissertation, she filled out a questionnaire). I had joked before the interview that Cashman's dissertation made me asking her about cruise ship experience irrelevant and that I didn't want her to mention the dissertation.

KG: Well, the sort of obvious ones from a trained musician's perspective is... I prefer listening to musician who have obvious skill and technical control – good intonation, sound, a command of musical language. But that said – and if it can be combined with those first categories, then the performance is especially enjoyable – for me, the defining mark of a true musicians is expression and performance. So, do they bring you in to what they're trying to do? Are they saying what they want to say? Sometimes for me – and this makes a little jealous sometimes – people who can make it look effortless – like “yes, I'm so in control of what I'm doing that I can just perform.” And I use – in the developing of my own skills - obviously for me, I have to use the first set of categories – you know, technical skill, intonation and melodic language, musical language – to access the first because I can't do one without the other.

So I prefer to listen to highly-trained musicians, but it's not exclusive. I can appreciate performances by folks whose technique might be a little rough but their heart is really on their sleeve.

LP: What about a bad musician/musical performance?

KG: I think a bad musician is someone who just doesn't care. I came across this a lot on ships – that they might be technically very skilled but had just given up performing at a high standard – they're bored or annoyed or bitter, or any of this. It doesn't happen terribly often in the real world, but it does happen. And then people who, on the other hand, kinda get to a point where they stop improving their skills because they either think that they don't have to or what they're doing performance-wise doesn't require them to, so they just sorta stagnate at a certain mediocre level, basically. That's not necessarily bad musicianship, but it is lazy musicianship and I think that's worse, for me. You can be a bad musician, as long as you're having fun, it's fine. [laughs] But laziness really gets to me – laziness and like disinterestedness, apathy.

LP: How would you define an “authentic” musical performance?

KG: Hmm. Because from musicologist's perspective, that can mean “does it fit within sphere of...the category or genre or era of what you're playing. But if you mean it in a performance context, I just would rather listen to someone be creative than technically perfect, I guess. So an authentic performance... It's really great when they come together – like when someone is just technically perfect and musically expressive and all that. But if I have to choose, I would chose that first – I would rather listen to someone put their heart into it and say what they want to say, regardless of what genre they're performing in or what era of classical they're supposed to be representing. I'd rather see someone be creative there than perform it to a certain standard and have no joy in what they're doing. And it's a hard thing to do – I mean, I know from my own practice that performing what you hear requires you put 75% more of what you hear in order to translate. It's a delicate balance.

LP: Do you think some instrumentalists are naturally more talented or better musicians than others and if so, why? [referring to previous comment about “effortless”]

KG: [tentative] Yeah... I guess I sort of regret using the term “effortless” because there's obviously effort involved. Do you ever read the comic “Toothpaste for Dinner”?³ It's just like a

³ <http://www.toothpastefordinner.com/index.php?date=042013>

little, pencil comic. The other day – and I really wanted to copy and paste it and I forgot – the comic was – it was like two drawings – two little people, and one of them had a clarinet and the other one had this little speech bubble and was like, “Oh my, how talented!” and the caption read: “Talented: Just a way of dismissing years of establishing skill.” [laughs] So there was just this... Yeah, you can dismiss all of the work that someone’s done by saying “oh, you just must have picked that up, you’re so good” but even the most technically skilled, good performing musician moved up into those positions. I mean, they worked hard. They might’ve had natural talent, but what went well for them was that talent was developed in such a way to bring them to where they’re are now. You can be naturally talented, naturally gifted, but it doesn’t mean anything if you don’t build skill on top of that. There are people that, I think, maybe their first performance of anything is like amazing a miraculous and people see that potential in them, but they’re not going to go anywhere if that’s all they rely on.

...

KG: And I think world music can fall into that trap as well, sometimes – and I know that there are other issues there – but performing... Let’s say someone calls me to sit in their *Salsa* band – I’m going to try my damndest to match the *Salsa* style – I’m not going to be perfect because I have a different realm of experiences and I can only do so much to *strictly* reproduce a *Salsa* trombone sound. That said, I’m sure it’s less enjoyable to listen to me than to listen to an actual Cuban musician play it because I’m sure they’re much better at it. [laughs] But in that regard, I feel like music is like creative commons. You should be able to access whatever kind of music you play – put your experience into it. And then the people who invented it or have been performing it for centuries and do it a certain way – and that is *so* valuable – but I like... I’m going to dig myself into a deeper, hypocritical hole, because obviously I hate it when people play jazz “square” [laughs] or do all that stuff. But I think that’s more of an issue of not feeling it properly, not having the right spirit.

[Graduate institution] is a prime example of that – there was such a high standard for how you interpreted certain types of jazz. If you didn’t know what you were doing, people really sneered at you, and I think I’ve always fought against that. I want to try my best to match the style that you’re going for but I also want it to be my own

...

KG: One of the things I like about the real world is that you’re judged by how well you perform and how good of a person you are. And if you’re doing those two things right, then you’ll get gigs. I mean, it’s nice to be given specific compliments on how you perform or what your strengths are, but it’s also nice to see it happen in sort of a physical form – in way of more people call you for certain things or more diverse things. To me, that’s the next logical step: “Am I now using *these* skills to get *work*?” And if it’s working, it’s working.

...

LP: What about tradition [on cruise ships]?

KG: Very important. We’d do these dance band sets, religiously, on my first ship and our piano play/band leader had been in the Glenn Miller band, so it was a nightmare – the same sets *every*

time, so you just knew you were going to have to play “In the Mood” again and again. He was *adamant* that people play the recorded solos from like “In the Mood” or “Sing, Sing, Sing.” It’s like “people want to hear that trumpet solo, so you gotta learn it!” Which is just *so frustrating!* That sucks. I mean, it’s different when it’s written or you kinda goof around and you play it the way... Like someone squeaked on the recording so you squeak there... It always drove me nuts that you’re given an opportunity for someone to improvise and then said “no! It has to be this way.” So you did have to be pretty authentic in terms of how you interpreted that gig or a lot of – there’s a sub-set of entertainers who are “vocal impressionists” so they want their backing band to be playing just like the backing band of the person they’re imitating – be true to that. And there’s a lot of like “do you know this recording? Do it like it is on the recording.” There’s a lot of that going around. More so than any other place I’ve been – outside of like a Ren Faire. [laughs] It’s strongly advised that you stick to the script. And that’s part of why I don’t want to do it anymore...

K.G., Part III: Gender and Race

LP: [What was the gender makeup on your ships?]

KG: Ships are men – male-oriented environments. Ships as a whole – any given ship you’re on – women are 20% of the population. It’s not even a 3/4ths split, it’s... There aren’t a lot of women on ships. And most of them are entertainment or services staff. Every outfit had that same split to it and music was not... There were more women in the entertainment department but most of them were dancers and singers. So within a given show-band, we were pretty lucky if there was another woman there with us. In every band I was in, at some point over my contract, there would be another woman somewhere in the band. Once we had three. That was exciting! [laughs] But it was usually just one or two. Solo performers were a little different – like string trios were almost always women. They got better scores, patron comments when they were all women – randy old men like to look at beautiful, Eastern-European women playing violins. So pretty low.

LP: What was the race and ethnicity?

KG: There I would say more western than white. There was almost always someone with some sort of language barrier in the band. A lot of South Americans, which was cool – like Argentines, Columbians. There must be some sort of funnel into ship gigs from there. The party bands are like 100% Filipino, like all the time. [laughs] They have this weird connection between the entertainment department and the rest of the staff because cruise ships are so heavily staffed by Filipino and Indian people. So we would have this... It was like a window into that world, basically. They would talk to you because you were a musician but they mostly hung out with their *paisanos*. It was interesting.

Ships are weird because you get a lot of different ethnic groups and races but they tend to stick to certain departments and people will move up and down. For example, marine staff – so like the captain and his staff – on our ships are Greek, every single one of them. It’s just where they hire them, I guess. [laughs] The security team was Israeli, all the times. They were scary! [laughs] - because they’d all been in war, both the men and the women alike. And then a lot of the more menial labor jobs were done by [inaudible] and Indians sort of people – people that you kind of

traditionally see in the world as doing menial labor – were doing menial labor on ships. It's all about where they recruit people from and I think they recruit entertainment from the West – countries that have higher educational levels that have room for musical development.

...

LP: Do you feel that your gender affects how you are perceived as a musician [working on cruise ships]?

KG: On stage, with the band, not so much – most people there were either American or trained in places where they had female friends and colleagues who could play that they no question about whether you were a good musician or not. The whole ship environment is incredibly stressful to women because you're always being ogled, or teased, or patronized, or glass ceilinged, or what not. It's just a constant battle to not kill somebody. I think even though on stage most people accepted you at face value, the other side of that coin was that if you *failed* to be a good musician, again it was this idea that you failed because you were a woman and not because you were a bad musician. That was sort of amplified on ships, to a certain extent. Because even if the majority of the entertainers were progressive, forward-thinking people, you're in an environment where that's a strong part of the culture – having that attitude towards women, so it is pervasive. That was a struggle.

But I got the most comments from patrons, cruise ship passengers who would come up and single me out – tell me I was good and that it was fun to listen to me – but then proceed to break the ice with “So tell me what it's like to be a girl in this band.” It's like [under breath], “It's *woman*, thank you very much.” [laughs] So I have all kinds of... I could share a number of cruise-ship passenger comments that have cracked me up, but also been annoying. This British man came up after a jazz set and said [affecting British accent], “Well, that's an awfully *masculine* instrument!” And to my horrified stare, he backpedaled – he was like “I mean, you don't see that very often.” Why would you say that to me? Most other people were like, “Oh, it's so great that you're doing this as a woman, we never would've done it in my generation.” That was mostly the women who would say that. . . Somebody else said, “Wow, it's not every day you see a woman boner.” He thought he was being funny. And my response was, “Do you want to rephrase that?” Did you want to not say that? I think you should not say that.

LP: I feel like I've heard that a lot before, it's not that original...

KG: Yeah. It's also *really dumb*. And it is a funny word, I'll give you that, but still...

But mostly variations on the theme of “oh, it's so amazing! How do you do this? We want to know insights.” It was always refreshing when someone would *legitimately* compliment my skill without having to mention what I look like. And the other women would always get that – maybe to a lesser extent because trombone's the most “masculine” instrument – other than the drums, I guess. And there was always just a heady air of excitement amongst other women in the department when a new band member was coming in who was female. When I showed up at this previous ship, the piano player was a woman and the minute I stepped on stage, she was like [excited], “Oh my God! Big hugs!” But her roommate was the saxophone player and she [the saxophonist] had just left. She was like “I can't believe we got so lucky – we lost one girl and we

got another one!” So yes, it’s exciting amongst the women. I don’t think the men really care that much. Passengers sure care – and it’s weird. You are a novelty...

R.S., Part I: Musical Background

June 18, 2013

LP: When and why did you start playing your primary musical genre? I guess talk about jazz, since that’s what we’ll be talking about.

RS: I might mention classical, but *only because* now that I’m into jazz, and improvising specifically, I would say in hindsight, part of me regrets that whole “classical journey” [laughs] that I was on.

LP: Why don’t you start with why you did classical and then why you did jazz.

RS: Just inspired by hearing virtuosic sound. I think I was just like – in the way it made me feel – just wanted to jump in and... I mean, “How can I make that happen?” So early on, when I was younger and kind of rebellious, wanting to play more *bombastic* and loud tunes... But I was not... It annoyed me that I couldn’t improvise and that I was so glued to a written page of notes. And I find anger can often be a great clarifier. So I did start exploring improvisation – I still am.

...

RS: This might be worth noting – there was quite a bit of drug culture associated with the music too. And I did get involved with that a bit and I didn’t like that. And so also part of the parallel move to a new school was to leave that culture, so it was healthy. A health choice.

LP: What things did you like about your education?

RS: A few things come to mind. The program itself – I thought – had design and structure in place to really help and promote a learning culture around jazz. So every Sunday, there was a mid-day jazz series with invited artists – usually pretty big players, ones you could really look up to and learn something from. Students also had weekly – a performance where they would perform for each other – which I thought was *great!* It gave the opportunity to be supportive of other players. The faculty itself, they were many of themselves working. So from a mentorship point-of-view, if we define mentorship as the mentor has been somewhere where the mentee wants to go, this staff seemed very well aligned with that. I think that’s terrific.

There was also a *great, extraordinary* shared feeling and intensity of practice and intensity goading up on. I remember myself and others just putting in – you’re probably familiar with this too - like 12 hours straight, all day into the night, having the keys to the building. For me – I didn’t know this then, this is something I’m saying in hindsight – but that creates a feeling of belonging and community, perhaps – where how we are being in the world is shared. And I think that’s a certain food of sorts and really valuable.

R.S., Part II: Authenticity

LP: How would you define a good musician or musical performance?

RS: I'll start with the musical performance. Before I answer – I often need context to inform my answers. In say a learning environment, some of what might be used to constitute a good performance, I wouldn't really use. So for example, that music could be exceptionally emotive or inspiring or some of the transcendental qualities of music draw in so many people. I might be willing to completely dismiss those things if it was say a school setting where there's a bunch of kindergarteners. So those are some contextual elements that would influence how I answer that.

So I guess part of my answer is context determines how to evaluate the quality of good music or good musicianship.

LP: If you are in a context where musicians are expected to be proficient on their instruments and whatever style they're playing, and you are expecting them to emote or – I guess it's a difficult thing to quantify – any way you would qualify whether that's there or not.

RS: Well, personal experience – I think generally when human beings gather, when we gather, there's more opportunity for depth. I think when music is emotive – for example, whenever you stir emotions – there's more opportunity for depth and when we share that in a common space that's an "X" – I don't know exactly how to describe it – there's an opportunity for the ecstatic, for healing, for community, for belonging, celebration. There's another opportunity for music – if it coincides with an event that happened and there's something in the air – whatever it is. Good music then would be one that promotes the even in a way that everyone feels. So context is relevant in that point.

I have a real mind for structure and architecture, so that's probably why my mind needs those – a consideration of those things.

LP: What about a bad musician/musical performance?

RS: I would say just the absence of those things post-performance. I think this stimulates this idea of expectations with music, just all together. So if I'm a community environment and there's music going on, it's kind of like beauty's in the eye of the beholder. Not exactly that but permission or kindness or interest, gentleness, frankly, with whoever is up on stage is kind of in the eye of audience members, I think. So my general disposition is to be as open and warm, loving as I can be because we're all in this game of here together. Negative energy is more expensive than positive energy. I'm probably guilty of being negative too.

If I was to really try to answer your question as to what would be bad is if I really experience something that – if I could observe and actual, negative intention on part of the musicians in some way. Something that was deliberate in its nature – to the ill effect of the assembled. The sort of thing may have happened in some musical situations, concert, where they're amped-up, there's drug usage going on and the music's accelerating things. And there's a climate now for real risk – for people who are taking that. It's extremely "effective" but... [trails off]

LP: How would you define an "authentic" musical performance?

RS: Probably fed by two things. Events – like current events – and the people that are involved with this, and then culture – cultural that we’re fed that describe how we do things.

LP: Do you think that authenticity *does* relate to those expectations? Do you think there’s ways of being true to your time and place or your culture?

RS: Yeah. It’s like where does one point their attention? Like personal expression, I would say the truer one is to that ability. That would be authentic to me – to whatever level of purity there is in that endeavor. If it’s a tradition or a lineage or a style, it gets a little more mental but one could make arguments that they were more true to that form, style, tradition. Although western music is a little more “heady” – certainly if I’m in a village and the villagers are celebrating, I don’t think people think about these sorts of things.

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LP: Were there notions [in your education]– spoken or unspoken – that certain players were naturally more talented or better musicians than others and if so, why?

RS: Yeah, there was definitely players that shined. However it was – I’ll just say it was that naturally quality to play and people like it. You could probably have lots of conversations about what makes music likeable. How does my improvisation sound good vs. bad? But the people who were good at that in the jazz program stood out – they definitely stood out. And I would say on the classical side of it, I would say that it seemed like more bombastic, virtuosic music would be more eye-catching.

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RS: After hearing these three kinds of themes or trends that have emerged about interpreting authenticity, I’ve noticed that the word “true” – being true to something was common to all of them. What that made me think about is maybe if I were to define authenticity, it’s the activity itself of being true in some form or another. If there is that intent or post-even where we all experience this truthfulness, then that would be authentic. Or to invert it, a dishonest or untrue performance is inauthentic because other things are happening.

R.S., Part III: Gender and Race

LP: So we’re going to start out with the demographics of your educational settings. What was the gender makeup of students, faculty, and influential musicians/composers/historical figures?

RS: I think it was majority male – it’s an estimate, I’m going to say 60-40, 65-35, something like that – swayed toward the majority men. Faculty, more of the vocal teachers were women. Like the student body – just a little more male. Like a 60-40 thing would be an estimate. Well as we know, the literature is very predominantly male. And I think that was noted in the music history classes and some efforts were put in to try to bring in female composers in the music history stuff. Performers – you know, I don’t actually recall doing that much study of performers.

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LP: What was the racial/ethnic makeup of students, faculty, and influential musicians/composers/historical figures?

RS: Predominantly White for faculty. Students was more diverse. And I think that the diversity was a product – not as much an intentional product – more a product of a large number of applicants auditioning internationally. So just because of that pool. I don't know if the audition process took note of that in some sort of diversity selector. There really was quite a range of international students for the jazz program. For the classical, both faculty and students predominantly White.

LP: What about musicians and composers?

RS: European [laughs]. Just go through the periods – that whole, flip through a textbook sort of thing. Male, and then if you see a chapter that says “you know, there are notable women in the field.”

LP: Was there any name-checking of non-White composers?

RS: Not really. But I did take an ethnomusicology class. I don't if that was a required or if they were trying to hit the mark with the few elective classes that you could take. So I did take that course – I didn't like it.

LP: May I ask what you didn't like about it?

RS: Sure. [laughs] In remembering it, I was bored with it. I think it was probably a combination of the teacher, the delivery – although it can't be completely faulted like it's his problem. I student brings to the classroom their readiness. But there was something about – that my own lack of acquaintance with the music. We listened to a lot of things – like he had actually been to Africa – and he was playing recordings from villages and I just wasn't connecting with the music, so I'd hear like rattles and things and it just didn't--- I didn't lean in, like “tell me more.” I found myself listening, giving it a shot, and being just like, “Ugh. I'm not interested.” That's how it was.

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LP: Do you feel that your gender affected how you were perceived as a musician in your educational settings and if so, to what extent?

RS: I'm sure it did. I think my awareness of how my gender influences that or really anything is something I'm becoming more and more awake to. So broadly speaking, I do see unfairness, gender inequities in certain situations – selections for jobs, management roles, things where it's obvious or not so obvious – certain biases happen. I'm not coming up with a direct example where some of this kind of life purview was something I could reflect on. I just very much suspect it was that case.

I think of my piano teacher being remarkably common--- I would define “education” to its Latin roots: *educare* – “to draw out.” *Instructare* is to “pack in” – so we have a lot of instruction in the culture right now – it's inserting. My piano teacher was always true to an educator in the truest

sense of the form and I saw him doing that to all of us and I didn't really see that gender was influencing that. Not in that context.

LP: Do you feel that your race/ethnicity affected how you were perceived as a musician in your educational setting(s)? Is so, to what extent?

RS: I can't say that I'm aware of any influence. I would say that there's probably a lot of earned privilege with White skin in this time. But to even to have those two words to talk about is a concept I had to be told and learn about from others. So, yeah—I can't think of anything I could speak of, I wish I could.

LP: Do you feel that your gender affects how you are perceived as a musician in your community? Is so, to what extent?

RS: I don't think so. --- [asst. dir.] came to me once and said "you're a rock musician, you're a star!" I don't know if that was just teasing or related to gender or he was just bustin' my chops. No, I don't think so – not that I'm aware of.

LP: Do you feel that your race/ethnicity affects how you are perceived as a musician in your community and if so, to what extent?

RS: Not that I'm aware of.

LP: [Were there specific instances in either setting where others were being perceived certain ways because of their gender and/or race?]

RS: I did see female professors offer more nurturance to female students. It may have been some sort of shared empathy and commonality.

It's one of those thing that's tricky because there's probably biases and certain modifications that happen because of discrimination that are not in the best interest of the person and I bet there are also times when it is a good thing – when there is some mindfulness. Even when it's mindfulness about something that is not so good about the kind of climate, that mindfulness might help the men or for the betterment. Which might've been the case when I saw the professors tending to the female students – which I think might have to do with the emotional terrain. There's more – it either comes more naturally to women and is also more culturally-encouraged.

LP: Did you ever get a sense that female musicians had a more difficult time going through the program?

RS: Yeah, I do. We talked before about stress in the environment. At least visibly, I remember much more so about women struggling with the stress of the program than men.

LP: Anything you can think of in community?

RS: Just the observation – it was self-created – I pointed out to [director] that we only had two females in the band and he was very aware, he was like "I know, we're trying to get more of a balance."

...

RS [addendum to interview]: It would be a real dovetail. I'm thinking about performance. There was a time in Seattle a few years ago for a group called ----- . We were in one of the restaurant-jazz places in the city. We're sitting in these really cramped chairs to watch the performance and paying for very expensive meals – for us. I had a revolution at this moment – it's one of the reasons I started going down the jazz path that I'm on now. It was intense. They were up there doing their thing, having a good time and I realized that--- And I wanted to move, I wanted to actually dance, I was being moved. One of my definitions of music is movement. So I felt very stifled, or improper – like I had 10 stiff shirts on. That change – that pissed me off. I felt there's a system of exploit where the restaurant is taking in this income and there's just something – I felt I was being robbed of this certain kind of authenticity, perhaps, of what's here. And it also got me thinking about performers and audience and at that time when I was going through this, performance became like a bad word to me – and performer. And I started exploring and being interested in the merge of performer and audience because the set of expectations – at least in this restaurant scenario – really bothered me. Which was that you have a paying audience member who wants to be entertained or pleased, and then they deliver. So I just had a lot of critique of that system. Putting the system aside – just personally and maybe on the musical path that I want to go down – it's not that one. It's more where there's much more perhaps community or relationship between the performers – the so-called performers - and the audience. And I would like to experiment or change that whole dynamic where it's not – those expectations really aren't there. I guess my critique at the time was I felt like there was a degradation of the music – of all of us in some way. Like we were reducing something here – ourselves or the music – in this environment, that wasn't ok with me. It actually was hot – I was really heated about this and started to energize the trailblazing, self-teaching path that I've done before and continue to do.

They were doing an incredible performance and they were dancing – they were Flamenco dancers. I don't know if it was the way that music was influencing me – what that music calls for. Another definition of music is invocation – to call in. I wanted that to come out. I really had the bad feeling about the word performance and performer – and the whole set of expectations associated with performance. I had also a history of pretty panic-y performances on my part – anxiety – I'm *still* working on that. In large part because of me and the whole history there but also I think because a lot of expectations are coming from the audience.

LP: Is there another term that you can come up with/replace with?

RS: I don't have one for me, but the term that snapped in was “artist.” But it's interesting that I don't self-refer that way. Before when we were talking about finding one's voice – I think when my voice is there I'll have more of an identity or something that I might identify with. Right now, if I were to identify with anything, it's studentship.

N.R., Part I: Background

July 8, 2013

LP: When and why did you begin playing your primary instrument?

NR: I think I started that in 5th grade. I started on clarinet in the 4th [grade], only so I could play saxophone in 5th grade. I think a lot of it was the influence of my dad wanting me to play the instrument – he was into jazz music. To him, it seemed like a common choice.

LP: Is he a musician himself?

NR: No, just an aficionado. I think that was what really pushed me that way. When I think back to that, I think I remember going to ----- basketball games at the time and seeing the band there, and that was where we had a lot of discussions about it – about wanting to be in the group at some time.

LP: Were you drawn to a particular saxophone?

NR: I don't think I really knew at the time. At the time, it was just shove an alto [sax] in your hand and start with that one. And I played that all the way through high school – that's when I switched to tenor, near the end – more because there was a *need* for it. Nowadays, I like them both a lot, I'll play around with both of them, but tenor's my primary. I think the range it's in.

LP: When and why did you begin your undergraduate musical education?

NR: I think I've always really enjoyed it. I know marching band was something that I went straight into once I got into college because it was something I was doing in high school and wanted to continue to do – to play jazz. It's an escape from the rigors of [non-music major], I guess – the other side of the brain a little bit. By the time you're doing ensembles, you're almost halfway to a minor. And I do like music theory – it's sort of a mathematical part of music or the intellectual part of it, however you want to say it. I minored in undergrad – so I did the theory and a lot of ensemble stuff. The fun classes – American Pop song, history of jazz – the cultural part of things too. I'm not a big history person, I can't remember stuff, but when it's music, when it's attached to, it's more easy for me to remember #1, and it's more interesting to me, I think. It has to do so much with culture as well.

LP: What things did you like about your music education?

NR: It was just something different to get my mind off [major], that was part of it. A different group of people to be around, I guess I could add to that – a different group of friends. That was one of the big things, I think, when you first get to a university that size, it's an easy way to narrow it down – to find a small group of people that you can relate to, talk to. Different group of people, different thought process. Just, changing it up, more so.

...

LP: What do you like about the group?

NR: I like the community of the group – they're all people I've known for a long time. Well, most of them are people I've known for a long time. I like that even if we aren't that close as individuals from a social perspective, we're pretty tight on the musical end of it. I feel like even if the rehearsals are so-so, we can pull it off at the gig, we got it in us. I like hearing comments

from other people saying, “You guys are really a tight group.” I like being part of a group that gives a crap – I think we all really care about it and want to be there.

LP: What about dislikes?

NR: Dislike more from a personal standpoint is I don’t have the time that I wish I had to be able to commit to it all the time. I really need and want to practice more, especially on the improv level. My only dislike is I want to provide more to it, I don’t think I’m providing what I’d like to provide to the group. And from a music standpoint, I think I can up my game.

N.R., Part II: Authenticity

LP: [The] ideas of being naturally talented, true to one’s self, or true to a tradition – do any of those resonate with you?

NR: I think the one of naturally talented, I think I have mixed feelings about that one, only from the standpoint that I think there are naturally talented people, but don’t think that anyone can just go sit up there and play a concerto on piano – I think that’s almost ignoring all the work they’ve put in over the years to it, and almost like a diss of some sort. I don’t know if I take that one into account so much – maybe with vocal stuff, because there are people who have specific vocal stuff. Obviously they’ve still worked at it, but that’s the only one I feel there’s really a “gift” or natural talent. There definitely are people that from a vocal standpoint, it clicks a lot faster.

...

LP: What about in your own performance? Do you feel like you are coming out of a certain tradition or influenced by certain things?

NR: I feel like when I’m playing – I think that’s where tradition comes through a lot with jazz anyway – just knowing the sound. From a learning standpoint, I guess you could say maybe you have to master the tradition a little bit before you become your own person, and I think that’s still where I’m at – just trying to catch up a little bit in that way. And then the “true to yourself” thing and getting your own stuff in there.

LP: In your education, how were instrumentalists evaluated as to whether or not they were good musicians?

NR: I don’t feel like they were enough in the ensembles I was in, honestly. I think that – obviously, you had to audition for stuff. Let’s say going in to marching band stuff, which wasn’t that much, but you’d audition for other ensembles like basketball band and stuff and so that was your rating – if you made it, you’re good; if not – But even then we got dumbed-down to the point where the director was like, “Well I want to make sure that everyone gets a chance to participate in something.” And I think that was the one thing – Going back to middle school, that was the first time I had a taste of what competition in music was. I think competition in music makes – like sports, same thing with sports – makes everyone perform to a higher level, holds everyone accountable, and makes the ensemble significantly better. I think that was significantly lacking in the marching band, even some of the jazz ensembles. It was just sort of a “sit here, play this part.” Maybe by that time it’s expected that you have your own motivation – which I

think a lot of people did. But I do think that the competition makes it a lot better. You never hear if it was poorly done in ensemble half the time in sort of the community ones. Maybe you heard compliments and something about it's good, but there was never any chair shifting, there was never any competition for, "Oh, I messed that one up, I got bumped down." I still remember in middle school being – going in one day and messing something up and being moved halfway down the section, and how that felt and how it made me want to be better, get back up there. So, you had the positive and the negative side of being evaluated where after a while it just goes away.

...

NR: I think as a band, maybe that one thing – I mean, I don't hold natural talent much in there because we all come from so many different places. I wouldn't say we're a naturally talented band by *any means*. I'd say what sticks out to me is we are true to ourselves, we know who we are, and I think we stick with it – we play that out really well. Maybe that's what people like about us – they know we've known each other for a long time at some level – or most of us have. We've all known each other for a few years now, I suppose, and we're all in some way connected to a larger thing and I think that shows. I think that's one thing that does make our music authentic – at least for me – that we can communicate at that level. Tradition-wise, I feel like that's something that [bandleader] has there, he wants to keep these old traditions. His song choices and the stuff we get and play through – I actually like listening to his stories about "this and this and this is how it was" because I think that's the tradition aspect of it that comes through. I don't think the natural talent thing is a big deal because we have so many different people, so many different areas of study and people there who spend a lot of time practicing and music is their thing and people who are more – like myself – who have an office job during the day, who come there and want to get out of that and play music.

Another thing I'd add on to the "true to one's self" thing – I think it's pretty obvious when we get a new song, right away whether it's a "yay" or "nay." The first run-thru – not so much whether it's too challenging or not, but whether it's like "no, this is not us, this is just goofy." I think that's pretty dead-obvious right away from a rehearsal standpoint, which maybe that speaks to that also.

LP: How have your experiences in your education and community informed your own definitions of musicianship?

NR: I'd say #1, exposure – just exposure to the good, the bad, and the ugly and playing with a lot of people and even just – One thing that marching band did, even though I wouldn't say the caliber of music is incredibly high was there were a lot of gigs where you'd show up and be like "why are we even here?" But with some of those it turns out really cool and other times you really are like a wallflower and you're like "why did we even come here?" And then you just get a taste of other people's impression of you – you get a taste of what other people think are good music. So exposure to other people's thoughts and ideals, what a lot of people think are good music, what a lot of people think are authentic. Going through the education part, you go through history classes, I guess you learn about what the general public or what academia defines as authentic or historically important, so there's that driving factor which afterwards I guess you're left to see for yourself what you want to make of it. When you're doing a jazz history class –

which is a one-shot, one-and-done class – it’s like “here’s this guy, here’s what it means to the music, so take that, that’s all you get.” There’s that influence there as well.

N.R., Part III: Gender and Race

LP: What was the gender makeup in your music education?

NR: Every ensemble’s been pretty mixed...I think the majority of directors I’ve had have been male. I’m trying to think if I’ve even had a female – I feel like most of the classes were taught by males as well... I didn’t think about it, but I think it’s been mostly male.

LP: What about musicians you were studying?

NR: Maybe jazz bands have been more male dominated, but like marching band it was 50-50.

Mostly guys – if you think about historical jazz musicians, most of the ones they talk about are guys. With the exception of vocalists – I feel like there’s more female vocalists. I think most of the times I look at a jazz chart there’s a guy that wrote it. I never really thought about it much before but I think it’s pretty heavily male.

...

LP: Do you think female musicians [in your community] get treated differently?

NR: I think that we all like it – I think as a guy, we like having the girls around, at least. I think none of us want to be just an all-guys group. I think that it does add some excitement – you talk to some of the people who’ve been following us for a while and they’re like “oh, it’s great to see some more girls in the group!” It doesn’t affect me as a guy in the group but it does affect the group as a whole. I think we all want [laughs] some estrogen in the group.

One thing I can think of – most of us grew up playing in bands that were probably balanced in gender. I think that’s probably more of what we want – we don’t want to be a gentlemen’s club. I want it to be a mixed community group.

LP: Do you think there’s a change in the gender makeup over time?

NR: Well, I think that’s the organization of it. K-12, you have no control over it – you just show up. Or, it’s kinda word-of-mouth, it’s a bunch of friends that have gotten together, so maybe it’s more of a relationship thing – guys know more guys, so we get more guys to join.

I think that most people I know who are still playing are male. I guess availability is one thing, and just knowing people who are still around.

LP: Do you think that people get excited about the racial diversity as much as they do the band’s gender equality.

NR: My guess would be [tentatively] yes, but I guess that’s kind of hard to say because the ones we hear the most feedback from are family and friends. I think we live in a tolerant city – I think

people are used to it. I don't think people are counting the number of races. I don't think it's looked on positively or negatively – it's just comfortable and it is what it is. I've never heard comments about it, but of course maybe that is more taboo than male-female. No one's going to come up and say "Hey! You've got a Mexican in the group now, that's great!" So it's hard to say.

H.L., Open-Ended Interview

July 17, 2013

HL: I started thinking about competition a lot 2 years ago with playing the ukulele – and I started thinking about how in the business of renting and fixing instruments, it's kind of a – it's cutthroat because we're taking somebody else's money and there's not that many dollars to go around. I was thinking, why aren't there millions of saxophone players, or any instrument. If you talk about any town let's just say having 10 saxophone players from beginners to high school kids, there should be tons and tons of any instrument out there. And I started talking with some people, and it's the competition. If a saxophone player walks into a room, ultimately the first thing you ask is – they size them up. "What are you playing on? Where did you study?" All these questions that anybody's asking until they play and you either go one way or the other – they're cool or they're not. If they can play, they can hang, they're fine. And that's hard – it's like dating – if you don't feel like they can hang, even *visually*, then you kinda get away from that.

It's tough – you know, whether it's being - sometimes – Hispanic, I go "well I don't get that – maybe I shouldn't be playing this style of music." And I think sometimes if you don't look the part, sometimes that affects you. But the competition is *hard* and you just gotta--- That's why I went to ukulele, because I did some ukulele clubs in Seattle and you walk in with a uke and everyone loves you. It's like "good, we got another one!" And they're happy to help you and it's very communal and it's a great feeling to be in a room where there's no competition. You just hear if someone's better – and you just hear it and know that that person's good. But they don't care if you're not good. But I think in any kind of educated instrument – whether saxophone or flute – the competition, there's not enough jobs. So you're constantly trying to beat the other person instead of joining them. That's why – I didn't switch instruments but I've been putting a lot of effort towards the ukulele because it's fun, it's communal, and people don't have this--- Since it's not very popular or widespread, as much as we might think it is, it's still kitschy – it's still fun. It's a little bit of a novelty, but that's ok! But the saxophone isn't a novelty. So I think we have to beat everybody and that completion sucks.

...

LP: When and why did you start playing sax?

HL: I started in the 6th grade. In South Texas. And I honestly thought it would make me cooler. It's cliché but a part of me thought--- I was overweight and a big kid and I thought well, I wasn't good at football. And in Texas there's two things you're good at: band or football – that's really it. And I wasn't good at football – maybe I could've been, but it was hot outside [laughs] and I'm a wimp a little bit. And I thought, "wow, the saxophone – that's it." At 6th grade - whatever age that is – it makes you feel like maybe you'll be part of a group. In Texas it's like that – you're

cool because you're in band – *sometimes*. But you have a chance. If you're nothing, you have no chance. If you're in football you have a better chance. But that's why I did it. Luckily we had a great program – we still do. I had a free lesson every week from 6th grade to 12th grade. We had a teacher for every major instrument – clarinet, saxophone, flute, everything. So we're lucky in that respect to have that. I wasn't very good at first. Until I went to another town because of my mom's divorce and their bands were *bad*. And I was *really* good. So that gave me some confidence. So when I came back I kind of perpetuated that and practiced more. But I was kind of a slacker. Not till I was good compared to everyone else in the school – I came back and I had confidence and that got me to be first chair in there and keep moving up. So that's how I got into it.

LP: Why education after high school?

HL: Man--- [laughs] I just went because I didn't know anything else. I honestly didn't know anything else. My mom has businesses so I would work at her shops or her day-cares and I didn't know anything else but work and band. So I figured, I like band and I really like my teachers. They're motivating, they're important to people. I wanted to be important to people. In [undergraduate school] where I went – [it] pumps out a lot of music educators. I never wanted to be a lawyer, or a doctor, or accountant. I just went “band director” and I did it. And I showed up for summer band and I got my socks blown off because there were upperclassmen who were just *so good* at marching band stuff. The great thing about --- is every music major has to be in band – marching band. So we had a very good marching band because we had not just people showing up off the street, music majors were all in the band. So it was 180 music majors besides some people who were engineering majors or whatever. But 180 music majors in a marching band is pretty awesome sometimes. But it was fun and got me into it.

LP: What kinds of things in college prepared you for your professional life?

HL: I think music in college and in high school – mainly in college – having a really good saxophone teacher, I wouldn't say saxophone teacher but a good teacher and you learn so many things that I think are so important in the professional life whether it's music or – I fix instruments. It's the ability to *adapt*. It's so important in any career and being a musician, adapting is what we do – adapting to situations, adapting to new people playing around you, listening to other sections. That's what we're built to do is adapt to our situations and make the group *better*. That's why I think I've excelled in a lot of things I've done whether it's fixing instruments – I taught at [community college] and put on seminars – it's because I can adapt. And I think music did that for me. Nothing else has taught me--- I can remember thinking back to my teacher teaching me sight reading, which I think is what I excelled at the most. And memorizing things wasn't really my forte – still isn't – but I could go into any group and at least keep me. That's what separated me from other students, I think, in college to get gigs was sight reading. It wasn't because I could solo very well, but put a chart in front of me – I kept up with the band and I sounded like I was meant to be there. And that's the biggest thing is adaptability. I don't know any other thing to do that would teach it so well – besides a sport. I think sports can do that too but besides sports there's nothing else. And I think music is kind of a sport – we're competing, we're a group, a team. And I think it's a great sport. If it were a sport it'd be great.

...

HL: I think that's harder because well one, the type of person who goes into that – part of em' is – like any artist really good at anything – *anything*. Like Tiger Woods or Warren Buffet – they're *weird*, a little bit. They are because they usually weren't getting drunk, they were practicing. So they're alone *twice as much* as anybody who's – let's just say on a scale from 1-10 – anybody who's a '4' or '5.' If you're an '8,' you've practiced twice as much as a '5.' And the 10s there's very, very few. So if you're between 5 and 10, you practiced *twice as much* or more than this other person – so you're alone twice as much. So that creates something psychologically – you're used to being alone. You're used to the way you do things, you're usually very methodical. [Referring to dedicated musicians in college] They weren't the fun ones. They weren't usually very social – as social as maybe a 5 or 4 because that wasn't really part of their brain. They don't care about making friends – “I want to be better at that piece of music.” So I think as they got better they were – they spent more time learning how to teach than how to play.

...

HL: I think the biggest thing is the audience--- Well one, the 9s make us look bad. I think it's hard because there aren't--- The opportunities to play are usually by the people who are really good or are connected. That's the other thing about musicians – it's a good ol' boys club. And it's hard for 3s who aren't up at 1 o'clock in the morning to get the next gig because at that point someone's going to say “hey, I can't make it tomorrow, can you sit in?” Well, the only people awake are the other 9s, not the 3s and 4s. I think the other thing is noise-making. It could be as simple as “I can't make noise in my condo.” Or “my kid's asleep, I can practice. That time that I would've practiced, I can't make the noise.” And that's another reason why I picked the uke – I can do that pretty much any time of the day and not bother anybody. Practicing my saxophone is an event. “Ok, I'm not hungry, I don't have anything on my mind, I'm going to get my horn out, get music out, go through the whole thing of practice.” With an instrument like the uke, there aren't many 9s or many professional 9s – there's lots of 3s and 4s – we're fine with it. And we're ok with being in awe of the 9s whereas saxophone players are, we're in awe but we're also jealous of the 9 and adding that jealousy component, or whatever feeling that is.

You don't get it with a communal instrument like a drum – like a drum circle where you could either be 100 years old or an 18-year old pothead – we're all having a good time playing the drum. And I think that's a big issues is *fun*. There's not that many venues to play fun saxophone music. There's not many gigs. It's not just how to motivate the 3s and 4s to be better, it's are there enough gigs to play. Or events or logistically getting 18 people together. I think that's another thing is logistics. I've been thinking about starting smaller groups. I've been thinking about leading something. But it's hard to anybody – people who are interested in music are already doing something in music. You're busy and the drummer's busy and where are you going to meet? You get logistics about it and that's tough. It could be as simple as logistics. I practice just to better myself because I like being alone sometimes, not around anybody – it's calming.

I don't read books, I try to fiddle around with games, but I practice and I fix instruments where I'm alone doing my thing. And if you have kids, kids are also tough because they take time and their schedules aren't conducive to your practice schedule. I don't think it's complicated why people don't do it, I think it's simple – they just don't have time or it's not as important to them as they thought it might be. My teacher in a college had a sign: “There's only one kind of

motivation – self-motivation.” And that’s hard – whatever you’re trying to do. People aren’t as motivated to be a good saxophone player as they are to be a good dad or a good accountant.

...

HL: And if we don’t have a leader who’s guiding us to an authentic sound – whether it’s “jazz authentic” or “[band name]-authentic,” then we just have a lot of voices playing together – or playing at the same time, not playing together. And sometimes I feel that. If you don’t have a leader with a strong vision – even if it’s not your vision – if it’s strong you believe it. But if you don’t have a vision, you leave it up to the players and we’re like children – we want to be told what to do a little bit, we want to be guided. We’re sitting down with other players because we need that guidance to make authenticity – whatever that is. That’s hard I think. Because if you have a lot of 4 players, we’re there for fun, we don’t want to be guided. It goes back to that question, how do we motivate 3s and 4s to become 5s 6s. The leader, maybe?

LP: Is musical leadership taught well in education?

HL: I think it just happens and it’s usually the people who practice just lead – maybe not verbally but they play and the weaker players want to play up to them. I think what’s kind of backwards. [Saxophone teacher], one thing he always did was not put the best player in the first position. Like the bari[tone] sax player – almost everywhere you go the bari sax player is like the 3rd or 4th best player – when it’s harder than the 2nd alto or 2nd tenor, or even the 1st tenor, because you’re alone a lot, you’re switching between trombone and saxophone parts in the arrangement, or bass parts, you’re switching so much and you’re kind of in your own zone but you have the 4th best player? You should have the 2nd best player. Like bass clarinet, they put not the best clarinet player on clarinet – when that’s a lot harder to play, there’s a lot more nuances. Why isn’t the best player on that instrument? I think that’s the same way with leaders. They assume that the best player is the best leader – that’s just how it is. Like [how] the quarterback is the leader. He may be able to throw the ball 50 yards, but can he motivate the team? I don’t know of a good way that anyone’s ever told me to follow the person with the best *idea*. It’s always the best player, not the best idea.

...

HL: Right, being *your* best – not *the* best, *your* best. That’s hard for anybody. I think people think if they think that way, they’ve given up. I think it’s more you’ve succeed at learning something about yourself. I think true professionals believe that.

True professional musicians *want to play*. As long as you can kind of hang and you’re happy and you’re a good person--- I think that’s another thing, you can’t be a jerk and be professional. Most jerks – if you’re not good, if you’re not a 9 and you’re a jerk, you’re ok, if you’re a 6 and a jerk, you’re not going to get called anymore. [laughs] We don’t teach that professionalism – don’t be a jerk, I don’t know how else to say it. Show up, be ready to go, be prepared, and if you’re a 5 or 6, you’re going to get a lot more gigs than if you’re a jerk and an 8 or 9.

...

HL: I wish there was a way to explain things like that and to get students to understand that sooner. But I think musicianship comes down to experience a lot of the time – just being good experience in life, being a good person and then you just get gigs and get to play more and more and more. Also I think being able to be “bad” for a long time, and knowing that you’ll be better one day. I think that’s what kids need to be taught – that it’s ok to be bad. And I try to be very forward with my students, not matter what I’m teaching. I always say, “Right now I’m better than you, I’m going to be better for a long time, but eventually you’ll be better than I will. If you stick with it and take these nuggets that I’m going to give to you. But it’s almost going to be impossible for you to catch up to me, because I’ve listened to a lot more records than you have, I’ve been in love, I’ve been broken hearted, I’ve been *broke*. So yeah, I have a lot more life experience so when I play ‘My Funny Valentine’ it’s going to sound a lot different than yours.”

And same thing with fixing instruments – the nuances to do certain things, there’s so many nuances, that you don’t learn them until after 10 years. You go “if I hit the heat here, it’s going to do this” or whatever, you don’t know that and you can’t possibly be taught everything or somebody can’t vocalize all of that. You gotta burn your finger, you’ve got to cut yourself, you’ve got to do all these things to get to the point of “good at it.” I think being a minority helps – gives me motivation to be better. Not for *La Raza* or anything like that – I don’t really care about that. I never really get into that motivation of my race is motivating me so I look good for other Hispanic people. I don’t really care. I care about how the world perceives *me*. It really makes me feel good when I can prove to a parent that I’m trustworthy and then they leave their child with me to give them a lesson. That is more important than somehow proving to the world that Hispanics can play jazz. I don’t really care about the generalization, I just want them to go “[H.L.] can play, [H.L.]’s a good guy.” That. I do think of myself. But I also think of it other ways.

I don’t care who you are, if you can hang with the band and you make us better, bring it. I think most of the people who have the idea of race and gender – 1) It’s cliché, but they’re not happy with themselves – they’re not ok with being a 4 and that you might be in your world a 6.5. I’m ok if you’re a 10, I don’t really care as long as you show up and make us sound good. But it’s hard sometimes. Unless we’re friends, it’s hard to get past that. I think sports are the same way – how many Black guys do you see on a hockey court? You might see one or two. Other players don’t care what he is as long as he can get down the ice and score, they don’t care. We care – the viewers of the game, may care. The people in the band don’t care – we don’t care but somebody out there may care.

...

HL: Well, I think – and this is not a guy/girl thing – it’s that you’ve listened to a lot of bass players and I’m assuming most of them are guys, so you play like what you hear. So it’s not a conscious, “You play like a girl or guy,” it’s, “You play like a good bass player – which is probably a guy in who you’re listening to.” It’s not a bad thing, it’s just what it is. Until we get – what sucks about jazz is it’s kind of had its day in that new players aren’t going to make the impact that old players have in our ear and in our view of jazz. And the same can be said for any kind of music. In South Texas, the big genre is *Tejano*. And old guys already did it – every young guy is trying to be like Mas and Selena and all those Tejano greats – they’re all trying to

be like that or recreate it a little bit. Country music – you could argue that country music isn't country music anymore. Is it evolution or is it playing to the audience? Or your senses?

When I play my saxophone, I think Stan Getz and Gerry Mulligan, *but* somebody may think Joshua Redman or somebody who's alive today. But I personally don't think that – I don't like that sound, I don't want to produce that sound. It could also be equipment – old mouthpieces make different sounds than new, modern aesthetics, and saxophones too. They're just different. But I don't know how that plays – if it's just evolution. At some point the Beach Boys were the thing, now it's Justin Timberlake. Is it evolution or is it devolution? Is it good or bad? I don't think it is.

...

HL: I think that kind of thinking is important. One of my favorite recording artists right now is Victoria Vox and she's a ukulele player, songwriter, - she went to Berklee. She's got – in the ukulele world right now, they make their money by touring, house parties, classes all around the country. And she's a business – and wherever she goes she's "on" and no matter what fan comes up to her she's ready to talk. I'm met several guys – and gals – who are performing around the country. Not rich – but making a living. That's the new model too is putting out your own music, recording stuff whether it's at your home studio, putting it on YouTube, getting out to venues, and just work, work, work... I think these people like Victoria Vox and Lil' Rev who are travelling from convention to house party to whatever around the country, year-round and working. Like they used to be in the 30s and 40s – working musicians travelling around to make money.

D.H., Part I: Musical Background

July 27, 2013

LP: When and why did you start playing drums?

DH: So, when I was in my 4th grade year, my mom and dad were really worried about me because I was doing poorly in school and I was extremely shy and retiring, and showed signs of depression. And not athletic, not really hanging out with friends and stuff. So my called my grandmother and asked her what to do. My mom was the Most Talented Musician in the Miss America Pageant, [year] – got that award. And she was Miss Idaho – a clarinetist. So my grandma said to her: "Well, look at the two of you. You're both very accomplished musicians. Obviously that's probably been passed on to your son – the raw talent for that. Success begets success. You need to get him on an instrument, get him in lessons – away from everyone else. Let him take off." My mom was like, "Oh yeah, of course, duh!"

So we talked about what would be the right instrument for [me]. And they were both woodwinds players – Dad plays flute and sax, and composes and arranges, plays piano. And they thought about all the instruments – "What would bring out ---?" Thinking more something everyone pays attention to that keeps you in the limelight, makes him feel good about himself. They though drums were the flashiest – and probably would help me with my "femininity" because the boys in my neighborhood and at my school always called me a "femme" and a "fag" and paid me a lot

of – you know, the athletic guys – paid me a lot of unwanted attention. It just felt weird, like “why are you obsessing about me?”

LP: Was there any reason for that?

DH: I was just not athletic and I was *scared*. I was a scared guy. I thought I’d be destroyed if I played a sport. So they got me into some masculine striving. They got me on the drums. That’s how it all began. I was brushing my teeth one morning and Mom and Dad came into the bathroom, were acting nonchalant. And they were like, “hey ---, what instrument would you like to play? What do you think would be a good instrument for you?” I was like “What?!? What are you talking about?!?” I couldn’t even imagine that they were talking about musical instruments. I was holding a toothbrush. I think the first thing that came to mind was dental instruments. And then they’re like, “Well you can play trumpet...saxophone...” and then Dad says, “What do you think of drums?” Mom says, “Yeah! Girls like drummers!”

So this was kind of this thing where suddenly I realized my mom thinks girls don’t like me, that that’s important to my mom that girls *do* like me. It was a lot of really shocking, ice-down-the-back. “Everyone watches the drummer when the band plays.” So I feel now really fortunate that my expectation of drums was going to be “girls like drummers” and “everyone watches the drummer.” When I was playing with Dad this weekend in his saxophone quartet, I was all over everybody about “how can this be a quartet when there are *five* of us? I should sit in front of you guys, you know that, right? Everybody’s going to be craning their necks to see me.” Which was hilarious because the audience got up, filled the aisle, came up, and were taking pictures through the sax players’ legs, so...

Anyway, that’s how it all began. I got home from school that night and I was watching a movie – she was letting me get away with it for some reason, she was being indulgent, not making me do my homework first. Dad comes home, swings open the door “[Excited panting] Are you ready to go?” I’m like, “ready to go – who...?” And he’s like “IT’S TIME FOR YOUR DRUM LESSON! LET’S GO!!!” And so I’m like [to mom] “why do I ---” “Oh sorry, honey, I forgot to tell you.” She was sitting there trying to think of a way to tell me that I was going to have a drum lesson *that day*. So he put me in the car and he handed me this box that had a practice pad in it and there were a pair of sticks in there and I’m riding over crying in the car. I get there and Dad sits there with me for a minute while this professor at the music school – the percussion guy – started to teach me. And then Dad said, “Well, I’m going to take off” and left me there with him.

And for months, I don’t think heard much of *anything* he said. You know he would talk “blahblahblah...Now do it.” And I’d be paralyzed. Then he’d say “now what did I say?” and I would say [hesitantly], “To play evenly?” and it just kind of dragged like that. And then I heard drums in a rock song – just riding in the car I picked out the drums and I was walking towards my drum lesson in a long hall of the university – in this beautiful fine arts building, a 4th grader – and I went [beat-boxing basic rock backbeat pattern]. I got to the door of the drum teacher and I wouldn’t knock on the door, because I was scared I’d lose this beat. In fact, I tried to get beats going with my mouth a lot and nothing happened. And all of the sudden this thing came out while I was walking. I was scared it would stop when I stopped walking. So when I got to his door, when I’m going through the hallways, I turned around and kept walking down the hall [laughs] and kept the beat going. So that was my first lessons.

The teacher was a little – *a lot* competitive with Dad, but also just a total nut-butt about teaching me how to count everything. So eventually my dad had me play with my sister and mom – my mom sort of played bass when she gigged with my dad. So we played some church songs at a party in the house and then started playing in the parks. In the summer, we'd play for holidays – or [religious holiday], I think that's what it was. So I played in the park with them and the girls gathered. "Hey drummer!" That was kind of a thing. It was *so true* – parents said it, it happened. They seemed to know what goes with me. And then when I was in 6th grade, my dad went on sabbatical to [local city] and I studied with a really hot drummer there who had played with George Shearing. I practiced a lot and worked really hard on studies. I got there and nobody knew who I was, so I started really working hard and just being the dumb kid who worked so hard.

That was my new identity and kids admired it. I saw a kid doing it and just started tearing up thinking what a cool guy he was and like a day and a half later I was like, "I could be that guy!" Because I'd always been a "learned helplessness guy" in school before that. So then it became "learned self-help guy." Then I practiced a lot and in the summer Dad said "I don't have any drummers lined up for my gigs tonight, you're coming with us." They put a little mustache on me. So now – this is the summer after 6th grade, I'm 11 – and we played a night club. I feel asleep in the 3rd set – kept falling asleep on the drums, knocking myself awake because I did not want to miss out on this. And then whenever I dragged or rushed, Dad got out the cowbell, no matter what the song was. [Imitating cowbell] Thunk. Thunk. Thunk. "You're dragging! You're rushing!" that kind of a thing. And there was always the terror that he's going to replace me with an adult and after the school year started...

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LP: Do you feel like you got something out of the musical education experiences you got at college?

DH: What was weird about college band was I'd get in there and feel really awkward. And part of it was the acoustics of the room, where the drums are so bright in the rehearsal room – the other instruments probably sound ok, drums are too loud. But it could also be – even though it's my dad's band and all that – it always felt like I had... [Current bandleader's] band is the first time I ever felt like a school band was not "sterile." But I had a lot of those problems when I started with [current bandleader's] band, the first year and a half. And then I realized some things reading books on performance – peak performance training, athletic kinds of research. My biggest takeaway was it was kind of like this mix of church and school and a little bit of music to play at school. It wasn't like a greasy rock bar, it wasn't like practicing at home. So there's that.

But my dad taught me a lot and he was always really into promoting the masculinity of the musicians. He'd make us sing the parts, then accuse us of singing "like girls." So we'd have to go back and sing it again and really *punch* all the things and do all the crescendos and [singing beat pattern] duhduhduhduh duhduhduhduh. And he would accuse the girls of "playing like girls." I was a kid that used for target-practice for spit-wads on the bus – not as bad as other kids, but one of the things, and I think it's something we see in [current bandleader's] band is it was considered feminine to play music, so there's a lot of [angrily] "you've got to be a masculine musician!" kind of thing, so people don't think you're a feminine musician. In [current

bandleader's] band, that's part of why all the guys are such *loud* players is we were trying to rail against the spit-wad spitters and all the people who thought because we were musicians we were not real man. So Dad loved a strong drummer – like [current bandleader], it's just really uncommon in a jazz scenario to want a drummer who can play strong, loud. And there was a lot of trying to show I was a man even though I wasn't an athlete, even though I wasn't a straight-A student, I was part of the “man” thing.

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D.H., Part II: Authenticity

DH: Well you know, when I started playing jazz in [local city], I noticed – they're called “casuals” there, I don't know what they're called here (society gigs?) – so when I started playing those, I noticed that the guys who balded – who were younger than me but they'd balded early – they were considered the really *great guys*. They were considered really devoted, really up-and-coming. And the really attractive guys, the pretty-boys, they were considered the fluffy, silly musicians. The more socially-adept they were, with women, it seemed like the more they were kind of poo-poo'ed. And this was the men's club – where you have all the guys kind of getting beaten down by the old guys – “you don't understand how it works yet.” You had the young guys trying to get acceptance from these mentors – who were often not mentors. You're lucky when you actually get someone who's really trying to help you. And they're usually closer in age – like 5 years older. And so they just had physical features that implied loss of beauty that helped them with the age-group thing. And then same-age stuff, they were looking for conformists, they were looking for guys who fit in to their – whatever you want to feel comfortable.

And the guys I thought were the best players – like hot trumpet players who were bombastic, maybe even autistic now, I think. I didn't know what it was then, I just thought it was “man, this guy's kind of a drag to be around at the dinner table, insulting my girlfriend, but when he starts to play the trumpet, man he's *brilliant*.” So those guys were – their opportunities were limited, even though they were the better players. And I noticed that when I was in [local city], so-and-so was the best bass player, why? “Well, because he has more skill and ability.” No, *this guy* is eight times better than him, and this guy was young and attractive. And when he got older, and a little more weathered, but played almost the same, he was the accepted top-jazz-all-around bass player. It took him 12 years. So I don't know how that shifted, how these hierarchies shift.

It's like the jazz musicians really aren't supposed to succeed with an audience. There's like this “shoot yourself in the foot” thing with jazz musicians where if an audience love you, it's bad. But if they go see someone from out of town who's touring, and they draw a big audience, that's *good!* Maybe it's just their out-of-town-ness or--- All the local guys have to go back in their closets and figure out what it is about them that is not as good *technically* as that person that came to town. They didn't really understand that there was a performance aspect to it. The rock bands...are frickin' *awesome!* No musical training, can't read music – usually no music training, sometimes – I've played in bands where they were really trained. There seemed to be this – the more training someone had, the less they were able to communicate with someone else. The more practicing they'd done, the less they were able to fall into a groove with somebody else. So I'd go out with the blues guys, and we'd just have this awesome, romantic/sexual, basketball game kind of *collective, fantastic unification!* Oxytocin for men – and the women in the band, if

there happened to be one, and there were never two in the band, it seemed like. That was *fantastic!!!* Then you go to jazz guys and they're all like baseball players – "What's my average?!?! What's my average?!?! What are my stats?!?!" You know, they've got their own baseball card of themselves. They're like trying to play their best solo, they don't hear what anybody else is doing.

I know there are guys who do listen who play jazz, but I had a really hard time getting in the pocket⁴ with these guys. It was playing with [current bandleader], someone pointed out to me – "jazz musicians aren't listening, so you have to play alone." A drummer has to just keep the tempo, play alone, provide all the good grooves, feelings, and everything else is just going to swim – you're going to feel the bass player go behind you, and then ahead, then behind you. They'll start thinking everything's great the less committed your groove is. If I started playing swishier sounding cymbals – less precision – and softer on the cymbal just louder on the hi-hat – it's just the middle of nowhere – and that's it. And everything else can just floooooat in between those things. And that's the opposite of East Coast feel – the East Coast musicians. They're mostly caught on precision – knowing it. So there's that thing too – differences.

But the rock guys--- The blues guys, they're not collaborating on anything, they can't write a song for shit, it's just horrible – *but*, they can groove on somebody else's song. The rock guys all wanna write their own songs, become stars, but the groove--- And they can discuss, they can negotiate, they can offer these Frankenstein's monsters songs – sometimes they're good songs. Yeah, it's so rewarding to play with the rock guys, the greater jazz guys. They're like gangsters! You know we talk about bands being in marriages, and the jazz marriage is the strong, silent type and the rock marriage is very communicative, family-oriented marriage.

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DH: It was super suspect in the 70s, too. Rock music – you just stood there and watched, musicians just stood there and played. Heavy metal saved rock – I don't care what anybody says. It led to all this exciting new rock music that is so creative now. So did – you know, no opportunity to record because the rap came in and everything – the musicians had to be... For so long, we were trying to be machines – "play that drum roll so you can't tell which hand...[vocalizing] Sssssssshhhhhh! Be a machine, don't change tempo, [vocalizing] duhduhduhduh, duhduhduhduh." Now in drum magazines they brag about how they love when the tempo shifts and they're human being and they're fighting against Skynet. It's this whole different thing that's got a... You know, it's jazz now – the prog rock and speed metal and all that stuff – they don't improvise, so it's not that kind of jazz, but it's definitely at the level of like Glenn Miller was when he played the same part every night in the Swing Era. But they're like jazz or like Classical in that nobody's dancing to their music.

And you can be a drum star and not sell any records, or a Guitar Hero and not sell any records, but you can sell a *shitload* of instruments. By having this person associated with it, because of all these die-hard fans. I think the lack of femininity in jazz has killed it. You talk about it's the

⁴ Being "in the pocket" means that all of the musicians in the ensemble have a shared sense of rhythm or groove. Usually, this leads to more comfortable playing experience for musicians and more enjoyable listening experience for audiences.

body – if the musician is up there and isn't dancing, isn't being an entertainer, there's no body. If all the musicians aren't being entertaining, if they aren't being flamboyant, which is a womanly thing. The woman is the peacock – in humans it's the woman that's the cleavage and it's the man that's the "observe the cleavage" – it's been that way... I know it's shifting a lot – men are more exploited now. But everyone would love to go see a pretty woman playing in front of a band compared to [chuckles] going to see a bunch of men with their heads down and it's like BALD SPOT!!!! "Let's go watch a bunch of bald spots for a few hours!!! See how soft they can play." [laughs]

D.H., Part III: Gender and Race

LP: Has your gender/race affected how you were perceived?

DH: Well I went to this bar to sit in with the band and I think I was the only White guy in the bar that night – in Boston. These big Black women started hitting on me. A couple of Black guys – young guys – were getting drunk and looking at me like they were going to start crying – "Black women are hitting on you, you've got everything" - kind of the doe-eye thing. Then I got up to play, and those ladies were very vocal. So I started playing – I can't remember the song – and they're like "c'mon [D.H.]!!! C'mon do something." And I just don't feel like doing more than I'm doing which is keeping it in the pocket. Then they go "No, he cool. [D.H.] cool." And when I played in the Black bands, the initial shock was always "oh my God, why is this grooving so much? This guy obviously understands the Black Experience" – which I don't. It's just that I've practiced drums and I've got some sort of feeling for it. It doesn't have any racial meanings to me as a player.

I always believed I was better than I was – I always have – and that it just wasn't coming out for some reason – couldn't get it out and what was it? Did I need to sleep differently? Did I need to do meditation? And I turned out, yeah, in a lot of ways I did need more mediation. Like after I'd sort of built on that "healing your child within" stuff, I started also, on the way to the gig- In [East Coast city], I would imagine all the people whose voices screw up my playing. There's the audience – wishing me I'd do better or worse – and I just imagined putting them all in a room and them slamming the door. I'd sit in like this octagonal room with like 8 doors, and I'd shove my parents into a door and slam it, mentally slam all of these people out of my performance. And then I'd get there to play and I wouldn't be constrained or attached to the audience or their expectations, the band – two audiences there. And they'd love my performance and they'd get very attached to me and the odd thing was I didn't care. That's how I got love. I wasn't – I didn't have disdain for the audience, I just allowed myself to be separate and have my own personal rights –

LP: R-I-T-E-S or R-I-G-H-T-S?

DH: Well the rites allowed me to have the rights – which was the right to play well.

...

DH: The physical-striver girls, the ones who play like guys, I'm impressed and it makes me think, "Well, if a woman can do that, I can do that." And I've always taken inspiration from

female athletes and women doing things because I've always had that feminine image of myself from elementary school on. But when I saw [female drummer] play, it was super-sexual. And I was super-attracted to her. We hung out, but I didn't push it. Finally I saw what women saw in my drumming - their perspective when they came up to hit on me. That was the relationship I'd established with them. And the guy who booked the gig was putting out a weekly report on the gigs on his evening when he booked the club. And he talked about her and he expressed it as "a lover" - if she were a lover, her drumming was a lover. And then he talked about how she would be doing many things at once - or moving around to many different things - while also handling the main thing of the lovemaking at the same time. Every part of her lover's body would be constantly awakened, inspired, but the beat, the fucking, is constantly going. And all this other stuff is going. So two men got that thing from her. And it was so effortless, so gentle the way she put into these lighter touches on - what I despise - these different percussion instruments like cowbells and woodblocks. So she just made it all come alive - she reinterpreted all these songs.

A.D., Part I: Musical Background

July 31, 2013

LP: When and why did you start playing your instrument?

AD: So I was in third grade, and I was playing piano already - taking piano lessons - and I was looking for another instrument. And I had tried saxophone - which I *hated* - mostly because Lisa Simpson played the saxophone. A Baroque chamber orchestra came to my elementary school and there was only bass player and they were evidently playing the *basso continuo* part - even though I didn't really know what that was. I just thought it was really *great* and I preferred the bass clef from piano lessons because 'A' was the first space. My father helped me get an instrument - we went and rented one. And that was that. I was 8.

LP: Was there anything about the instrument itself that appealed to you?

AD: Yeah - I guess that there was only one of them - I really liked that. I also really liked the lower tones. And they had their own part and it was so intricate. I was really attracted to that music - and I still really love Baroque music. It was more like the role more than the instrument itself.

LP: At what point did you decide that this was something you wanted to pursue beyond high school?

AD: I think there was always part of me that wanted to go study music, and specifically at a school because I'm an academic person. But frankly part of it was nothing else was really appealing to me. It's not that romantic to say [laughs] but I had gotten to the end of high school and got into [undergraduate school] and there was really nothing else that I wanted to do at that point. I hadn't done well in the sciences. My father was a trade music, so it just seemed like "Oh, a person can do this and I like this just fine and I know what I'm doing with this." I knew how to get money from my trade, so really I think it was that more than anything else. I have to say that I didn't really take some of it seriously until well into - if not after - grad school. Just certain things about how I handled myself, how to be professional, just what to practice... I'd always

gotten away with a certain level of – well, the bass is in such high demand that I think I got away with a certain level of mediocrity until the last 4 or 5 years – knowing what to practice.

...

LP: How did you get involved in your community?

AD: So my father was a trade musician – he was a trumpet player. Not all that trained, just a solid, go-to trumpet player that did not have a degree in it. So he had been playing Mexican music for 20 years before I was really on that scene. Because he was in it, I was around it when I was a kid. And when I was 15, his bass player’s wife had a health issue, so I needed to take over for a little while. So it was kind of an on-and-off thing. I would do summers – he wouldn’t let me gig during the school year. I mean, those gigs, you’d be getting home at six in the morning; there’s a reason why he wouldn’t let me do it during the school year. So that was my first real gigging experience.

...

LP: What things do you like about the community?

AD: One of the hardest things about me thinking about moving away in a year is I really do like a lot of the work that I have. So I get these – I have some gigs that are yearlies, like once a year, that, you know, Christmas party – I get that gig. Or some of these – like I was saying – Parks Department gigs. I feel like the scene is really *loyal*, that I get the work I’ve been given and it seems pretty honorable. And I really enjoy that I can play some straight-ahead jazz gigs in that kind of setting. I’ve played in part-time/semi-professional orchestras, again, since I was in college, I guess. . . I just feel as though it’s a friendly community and there’s very few backstabbers and I don’t think they last very long. And I think that’s a huge compliment that you can give, for a scene. And I feel like even if I move away – because I’ve done it twice – I still do get calls. I have to make it evident that I’ll be back in town *plenty*, so that they call me. But I feel like if anything, it’s been very warm. Maybe that’s because I’m from here, but I really get that impression. It’s a limited amount of work, but it is genuinely warm.

Oh, and one more thing I will add – I think we have a good big band scene here. Kind of a freakishly large amount of big band people here in a small city. So that’s a big compliment.

LP: What things do you dislike about the community?

AD: There are things I don’t like – I think it’s probably size of the city and the geographic isolation that we have here in Seattle. That it can never be all that *big*. I mean, that’s just the nature of it. So, if there’s either a musician that you don’t care for as much or you had a weird experience with – you’re definitely going to run across that person. Or, if anything, I think I have a reputation for being sort of a stickler about money. I think that word can get out pretty quickly because it’s so small. Like, to rehearse if it’s just one gig and I’m picking something up, that kind of thing. And the rehearsal thing is huge. I feel like sometimes people will ask you to play a gig and they’ll expect more rehearsal than either what is necessary or... There’s a certain amount of professionalism that I feel is not as cut-and-dry as maybe what I found on the East Coast, where everyone assumes that you don’t have time and they’re like – when you get a call: “This is

the gig, this is the pay, do you want to do it?” And then they move on to the next person. I prefer that mentality. Here it’s – I don’t know – someone will say “Do you want to do this gig at such-and-such time?” And it’s almost like pulling teeth – “*does* it pay?” And if they say no, I’m like “well, I’m really sorry but I don’t want to do that...” It’s a little touchy-feely, I guess. But overall, if that’s the worse you can say about a scene, I don’t think it’s that bad. I think for this region not being that populous, we have a lot of good stuff going on.

A.D., Part II: Authenticity

LP: How do you judge whether or not someone is a good musician?

AD: A lot of it depends on the style. [Audio temporarily cuts out] Frankly, someone who dedicates their whole life to jazz and can really play circles around me, it’s the same thing – I respect that a lot. And it’s huge with me. At the expense of dogging anyone – I was at a straight-ahead jam session last night at — and there was a person who came in and he was playing ukulele – which is *fine* – but it was definitely taking the straight-ahead session and steering it off-course, and none of the musicians liked it. None of the people that were there playing straight-ahead jazz were like “ok.” Yeah, you’re playing “Night and Day” [a jazz standard], but you’re not really doing it in a jazzy way. And it just felt very egotistical on this person’s part. I didn’t like it because it was about *him*, and not about the music. I think the biggest thing for me is whatever music you’re going to do – if you’re going to innovate, that’s ok too – I think the music should be served first. That’s my biggest value.

LP: What about in your musical education – how were musicians evaluated as to whether or not they were good musicians?

AD: That’s also a complex question, but it’s fun to answer. There were certain, straight up *standards* that – I mean, at some point you have to have them, I think. At [undergraduate school], there was a ratings system. I don’t *exactly* remember how it went, but it was like the first number was your reading skill, there were like 4 or 5 numbers, like *musicality*, improvisation, technique maybe. They were there for a reason, so that people could get placed in the right ensemble, but they didn’t end up being really useful because – like you’d have a guitar player come in, and they would get the lowest score for their reading and then *very high* scores for everything else, because a lot of guitar players at [undergraduate school] evidently do not read music. And then they’d be in a setting where they’d have to read music, and they’d pull everyone back even though they were *killer* guitar players. That kind of thing.

It didn’t really help, I felt, but they had to do something. I left with the same ratings as I began with, if that gives you any sort of barometer. I would think that after 4 years of music school I was a much better player, but somehow my ratings auditions never really got better than the first time I got there [laughs]. Maybe it is a reflection more on myself than I want to believe. I thought that was a little bit arbitrary. It also was very jazz-oriented, and [undergraduate school] has so much more going on than jazz. So, it was like a “how well do you play jazz?” test more than anything else. But I think you do have to do *something* when you have a music school of [large number] people, whatever it is now.

At [graduate school], we had certain exams that were very bebop-oriented – how well can you play Charlie Parker’s “Confirmation” and the changes, at 200 BPM, and another tune. For better or worse, that’s the situation there. It doesn’t test creativity; it doesn’t test a lot of other skills. I both like and dislike bebop as a barometer – it’s fast, it’s virtuosic, it’s evident what you should be playing over each chord change, so it’s a very convenient way to test, but it also is limiting to that style, so I thought it was a decent system. I think no matter what, you’re going to get a lot of criticism. I figure if the classical world conservatories have *whatever* standards they have, I think jazz totally should have some sort of standards like that.

LP: Did the attitudes of fellow students reflect the evaluative standards?

AD: Yes and no. I think on some level. I’m going to use [graduate school] — as an example here. There was a lot of truth to where people were placed – and I was never placed very high in the [ensemble] system. [Explaining system and top ensemble] Certainly, all the people in that band deserved to be there. I think there was a lot of other kinds of things going on in the rest of the bands. I think once you got past the [second and third ranked ensembles], there was a lot more room for interpretation. . . And I *really* respect that I just didn’t do well in those auditions, or maybe I wasn’t enough of a strong player then, but I think I had a pretty healthy idea of what it reflected, which was my skill level at that time in that sort of audition. I think if I read better, knew my tunes better then, that would’ve been different. But I don’t think that it just the end-all, be-all. I don’t think I could’ve gone on being a working musician if I really believed that.

...

LP: Shifting to community, what is your sense of how other musicians evaluate musicianship?

AD: I feel like musicians here – It’s a vast group of people. Maybe I should speak about the people I consider to be my colleagues – other working musicians. I think within that, there’s – I have a small group of guys that are severely straight-ahead and they play traditional jazz – bebop and before – they have a certain evaluation that I’m similar to, but I’m not as strict as. They don’t like a lot of the creativity, I guess, for lack of a better word, that’s going on – new music, innovative-type jazz. There’s a *huge* group here, I think, in Seattle, that very much values new music under a jazz umbrella. . .

I think that there’s a huge emphasis and value on newer music and creativity. I’m seeing this as two really distinct camps in Seattle right now – the guys who really want to play standards and the guys who really want to innovate. And I would say I’m more on the standards side now, but I have been in more creative ensembles and I do appreciate it. And I think if there’s any rift that I can see, that’s probably it. But audiences, I think, *like* both. I think that there is something cultural here in Seattle that’s a little *wacky*. People value creativity – even more than they might even like the music, but they think it’s cool to like new, weird stuff. So I would say that is cultural, both in the musicians themselves and the audiences here – that’s what I’ve observed.

...

AD: I feel as though a good concept is somewhat definable. You know, I’ve played for singer-songwriter type people – that’s obviously creative because it’s new music, no one’s ever written it before. If I’m a new bass player on it, and they don’t have a record where they can say,

“Here’s my CD, here’s what the last bass player played,” if they can tell me what they want, then that’s a concept and I really respect that. I try to be stylistically appropriate, not play very *busy* on a singer-songwriter type gig. I think a great compliment to play more busy, like, “Oh, we could use more fills.” That’s good – they’re actually asking for that. I really haven’t had that happen a lot in that genre. I *hate* to be asked to play more simply – it means I haven’t been doing my job that well.

I think that’s really what it is, if someone’s like, “Ok, I’m going to do old jazz standards, but with a different feel” or, “I’m going to write tunes that I’m trying to make them sound like Tin Pan Alley songs.” It’s *clear*, even if it’s weird and new and different, even if it ends up being like “oh, maybe that was a weird thing to try,” whatever it is – I like that clarity, I guess. That’s what I value, personally.

I think within the scene, with the exception of this handful of guys that’s super-traditional, I think within this local, Seattle scene, there’s a *huge* emphasis on creativity – even at the expense of the music. However, when things are new, they’re always going to be rough around the edges. I mean, the reason why orchestras can play really complex music so well is they’ve been practicing that really short list of excerpts their whole lives, so even though they’re hard, they really know them. So I think that’s part of it – when things are new. Also, there’s hits from the 60s we never hear because they weren’t that good, now we hear the good ones – for better or for worse. I mean, it’s all a judgment call. But anything that’s new is going to have that risk, I guess. I think it’s a big question mark for a lot of us where – jazz, in this particular case, is going, or rock for that matter. I think that’s a big part of it – we’re all a bit lost. Some people choose to play a specific style – that’s at least definable.

...

LP: Any closing comments about authenticity?

AD: There was other thing that I thought about, that I have to compliment the scene on here. There’s really strong school programs, and as a result, there’s a lot of work for us music teachers. If there were not work in orchestras and jazz bands where I teach, I would have no work, I certainly would have to take a different day job. I look at teaching as – I mean it’s not playing, so it is a “day job,” but I get so much out of it musically that it almost doesn’t count in the same way. And without those strong school programs, there’s just not that much work there. And it also gives us greater audiences – people who are more hip to what’s going on, appreciate it more. I think that’s priceless.

LP: In your experience, is teaching looked down upon or seen as less valuable than performance?

AD: Yes, I think it is with certain people. Personally, I will fight it to the death. I say quite often that if I have students who enjoy the music and respect the music and practice, I’d rather deal with them than musicians who don’t respect the music – they don’t learn the tunes that we’re going to play for the gig or they’re just burnt out. I don’t care how old the person is or really what level they’re at – if they respect the music, I will *gladly* teach them, because I’d rather spend my time doing that. And the pay is better, per hour, usually, so my point is I’m respected

for my time with the money, I'm respected with the music – that is a greater experience for me to have, day-to-day. Some people, I think, do look down on it a little bit, but they're probably the same people who look down on having musical theater gigs instead of “authentic” gigs, which, no one can really pay their bills playing really creative music all the time. Or maybe ten of us could, just on this coast.

A.D., Part III: Gender and Race

LP: What are the gender demographics in your community?

AD: It really depends on what circle. So, string teachers – mostly women. If you're talking about classical colleagues, almost dead-center, half and half. And if you're talking jazz, almost completely guys and very few women. And it depends on instrument, of course. I mean, if you're dealing with vocal jazz it's almost completely women. And I do play for vocal jazz folks, so that does come into play, but I'm not a jazz vocalist myself.

LP: Within instruments, do you feel there's some kind of gender division?

AD: Definitely. I think that that's constantly changing. I always like to remind my students that “The Magic Flute” was about the “manly” flute, you know, hundreds of years ago [laughs]. Women were not allowed to play it, so... Yes, I will say that without trying – I don't even really mention gender in my studio with my students, but it just so happens that about half of my students are girls and about half my students are guys – it doesn't really come into play with me at all. However, professionally, there's not that many ladies who play the bass. There's *no* drummers – I mean like one. There's hardly any female drummers is my point. Jazz guitar is maybe the least. I think I know more female jazz drummers than jazz guitarists. And then there's other things – I think that clarinet is right down the middle, cello is right down the middle.

It's really interesting how that ends up being the case. And as I said, I think it's changing. I think it's constantly in a state of flux. I think that it's arbitrary – like color with gender, that kind of thing. I think that it's different in a school setting than in a professional setting. When I was in high school, we were *half* girls in the orchestra. And then out in the working world – of the bass players – there's not that many working bassist that are girls. I think that setting matters a lot.

LP: Do you think there's any reason why there's that divide?

AD: I don't really know. I guess if I had to speculate, it's a bachelor profession. Not completely. There's a lot of married guys out there. But being out late at night, by yourself, I'm not sure if that's a woman's greatest desire all the time. It comes into play with me desiring to have a family at some point – I'm not going to lie. But it's... I'm so used to that lifestyle, even as a kid, that it doesn't really ruffle my feathers. And I don't think I'm going to be the kind of mom who has a strict 7:30pm bedtime for my toddler or anything. Frankly, most of us in high school orchestra didn't go on to be professionals – so that's part of the statistic.

LP: What about racial demographics?

AD: I think the most fascinating thing to me is most of the jazz musicians I play with are White dudes. And obviously, historically it has not been that way in jazz. In fact, integration was such a

problem for *so* long – you couldn't play for White audiences if you were Black, that sort of stuff. So I always find that to be somewhat ironic, but it is what it is. I like the music and I think that anyone is welcome to invest their life in the music, so I try not to lose any sleep over it. Well, I have plenty of friends in New York – now that I think about it – there's a lot of different racial components. Several friends that are Black – seem to all play trumpet. I know a lot of Jews in the business – I mean, that's a demographic unto itself, if you want to consider that race or religion, I know it's a special case. I think that there's plenty of diversity in it, but it's maybe more white in my experience than I'm sure it was 50 years ago, for instance.

LP: Do you have any thoughts as to why there's the stereotype of the nerdy white dude jazz musician?

AD: [laughs] I've put some thought into this, and I don't really have an answer and it's not the most researched answer, but some of it is jazz is finally just barely old enough to study. It's hard to study things that are happening at the moment. It goes to the university – and clearly we have a lot of different types of folks studying at the university right now. It's not just Whiteville. But there's definitely – I think there's some component to it being “academic” at this point. I don't know exactly why it is... I don't know why it isn't studied by other folks more.

...

LP: Any closing thoughts [on gender and race]?

AD: I guess in ways we haven't *really* gotten beyond it. Just because it's show business. I always think of Josephine Baker – we're certainly not at that level anymore, thank God. But I think it comes into play and it's the “freak” mentality – that something's a little different and so it's cool. And I think if people use that to their advantage, great. If they use that to make it in the business – I actually respect it. But I think we should call it for what it is. And understand that it is a facet of music, just like actual technique is. That's my humble opinion about it.

N.E., Part I: Musical Background

August 27, 2013

LP: When and why did you start playing your instrument?

NE: Well I didn't start playing seriously until high school, but I initially started playing because [laughs] it was the only one that people in my family already owned. I actually wanted to play trumpet, but no one wanted to buy one, so alto saxophone it was.

LP: Who in your family owned the saxophone?

NE: My cousin played. He did the typical start at 6th grade and decided it wasn't cool in 9th grade. And so I was right on track to do the same thing. But yeah, I think I started playing in 5th or 6th grade because I discovered you could essentially get two P.E. classes in a row – because you have music and then P.E., so you skipped out of math and something else – which probably wasn't good for me, but there you go.

LP: What made you decide to get more serious about it?

NE: I joined the jazz band at my high school and I was *terrible* [laughs] and it bugged me. But also the music seemed a lot more complex than the stuff I was used to hearing, or used to listening to. But I didn't quite understand it. I distinctly remember being in I think 8th grade and hearing – no, trying to read the actual sheet-music for [Duke Ellington's] "Take the 'A' Train," which is such a simple tune, but I could *not* figure that out. "This thing is dotted twice! I don't understand what's going..." And then I started to play a little more seriously, actually practicing and doing that.

LP: When and why did you begin your undergraduate music education?

NE: Well at that point – I took private lessons through high school, well starting in my sophomore through my senior year I took lessons. I took lessons in the first year – first or second, first and second? I studied with [teacher] for like 4 or 5 years. And when I got to [undergraduate school], it was like, "Well, you have to see if you can keep that whole thing going." From playing with him and studying with him, I had met a lot of folks at [undergraduate school]. Then it was like "well may you can [inaudible] without studying" although think a lot of them expected me to study. Maybe I could weasel my way into some of the classes. I never got to study with [primary professor] maybe if I had, I probably would've gone a different route [laughs], but I wasn't able to do that without being a declared major, because he's so busy. I just had a lot of friends who did that. I did that jazz camp at ---- a year or two, which was kind of fun. There's a lot of local high schools – well, the three big ones – almost everyone does that. It costs an arm and a leg, though. My parents couldn't afford to send me but that one time. Yeah, I kinda kept it up a little while after that.

LP: What things did you like about your education?

NE: Well because I was kinda self-guided, I got to take what I wanted to take [laughs]. I would say it's fairly enjoyable – all I really did was theory and combos and just things I was interested in. I think I did a composition course, I can't remember. It was arranging, that's what it was. It was just things that I was interested in. Because I wasn't on a guided course, I got to choose my own faculty. I chose the courses. So basically it was just talking to friends and going "Hey, what was cool?" "Ah, you gotta take _____'s class, it's so awesome!" So then I was able to do that. For me, it was a break from [major] which was stressing me out, still is. But that's what music was, it was a release.

LP: What things did you dislike about your education?

NE: Well again, maybe it was because I wasn't "on the in," but I didn't – To me, it was kind of frustrating that if you weren't a declared music major, there were only certain avenues that were open to you. I understand that there's limited class sizes and that sort of thing, but if you were just someone interested in playing and wanted to get better, to get sort of informally educated, there were really no avenues available to you. It was only if you could talk a professor into letting you shadow the class or if you had a friend who would share things that they'd gotten in a lesson, like, "Oh, can I borrow ____? Did you get that handout of this transcription?" or whatever. Again, my plans probably would've been a little different if I had declared, but it was

a little frustrating to me – It seems like with college, especially, it should be open in a way that’s available that may or may not... I mean, you are paying tuition, right? Maybe that’s a ridiculous way of looking at it, but I always thought that the only things people did – I played the --- band, not because I think that’s a musical organization, but because I like football and they had great seats. But everyone who was in that band played like Jazz Band 8 [8th grade level] or something like that, which was just awful.

N.E., Part II: Authenticity

LP: In your musical education, how prevalent were notions of authentic musicianship?

NE: What was weird was actually when I was studying with [teacher], that wasn’t as much of an issues with him. It was bizarre [explaining his teacher’s background and involvement in bebop scene]. But if you listened to him play, he had this really kind of old-school, bebop – a little bit hard bop but really relaxed... whatever. But then he was *totally* into all this other stuff that you wouldn’t imagine him to be into. In a big way – he was into rock. All that stuff was good – there was nothing “wrong.” “There are certain notes that don’t work in this key, but Miles Davis did and made it work, so if you can find a way to get out of it, fine.” He was totally big on that.

It was different when I was at [undergraduate school]. Maybe we were trying to do more than we understood. And maybe that’s why they were so busy putting us in check. But it was weird how there was very rigid “thou shalt do ____.” “Your line should have a certain rhythm to it. You should hit these moving tones, but not these...” I mean, some of that makes sense – it just makes better music. But it was weird how sort of rigid some of it was. But we all sort of got that at different levels. There was always a lot of things where people – I guess it’s basically an audience of musicians – would be like, “Aw, that was totally awesome!” and dug that and [professor] is like [shakes head disapprovingly] [laughs]. I do wish it was more, “I see what you’re trying to do there...” instead of, “We’re just going to clip your wings until you’re ready.” Like “if you want to do that, here’s how you go about doing that.” And then you can see, “This is a big mountain you’re trying to climb here, I want you to know, you’re *here* and you’re trying to get *there*” as opposed to, “Don’t worry about that, that’s way beyond you, you’ll never be able to... We’ll deal with that three years from now.”

N.E., Part III: Gender and Race

LP: I want to start with demographics – what was the gender makeup?

NE: I guess I should go ahead and say that I’m Black. . . . Well, the reason I mention it is that it all rolls together. The experience of being – I’m born and raised in Seattle, which is statistic-wise, the 2nd whitest city in the country. You can be like, “Oh, it doesn’t matter” but it *kind of does*. So you go to [local university], [it] is slightly less than one and a half percent African-American, 30% Asian – I think Asian’s the largest minority group. But the reason that I point that out is because if you move into – if you start studying things like music that are more [sighs] I know it sounds weird but, especially like jazz, it felt like the people who were studying were – there’s quite a few African-Americans [in jazz] obviously, but there’s a *huge mix*! There’ Jewish folks, there’s not as many women but there are quite a few women, but when you look at the people who are studying, two words basically: white and male. And usually with a little bit more

money in the bank than I have. I mean that's just typically what it is, if you look at the high schools that are the best high schools – they have more money, they're mostly white and male. And [prominent high school] is in a rich neighborhood, relatively speaking, compared to [poorer area of Seattle], where I grew up, which is white and male. There are a few females too but it's the largely ethnic makeup – it's what it is. But it may just be this area of the world. I'm sure if I were sitting in New Orleans it'd be different. I do feel like this particular art – not that it's a bad thing, just saying that it's interesting that – I would say that largely comprises most of the folks that do it – this particular music. I think that maybe it's because other – Well, women are underrepresented in everything, typically. Except for – interestingly enough – education.

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NE: Ok, here's the race card. You're playing this sort of music and all and everyone's telling you this, this, and that and, "This is how it's done" and everything else. And I'm thinking to myself – "But...that's not how it sounds to me." Maybe there's sort of a question of authenticity there, but that's not how it sounds to me. I think that's important – that those mixes of influences matter, if you want it to be accessible to different people. And as crazy as it sounds, there are those days where you're like [angrily] "White people came up with this crap!!!! What the hell?!?!!" [laughs] Basically the idea that people need to know that it's available to them. I don't think there's not as many women playing because "women aren't good at music" – that's ridiculous! It's because they don't know that it's available to them. I don't know how you change that.

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LP: How does your race affect how you are perceived?

NE: I don't feel that at all, never have. It's like "Can he play? No? Get out!" "Can he play? Yeah? Ok, he can stay." Growing up here – people just don't care. The rest of the country's like "Oh my God, gay people!" and we're like [apathetic] "I don't care." It's not even like you have an opinion, you just don't care. I would say in my chose profession it tends to matter more, just because of the rarity and the scarcity of it. It'd be maybe like if I played Classical. I will say, I could say that if you were part of an ethnicity that wasn't naturally as involved, it would be easy for people to make these kind of – maybe stereotyping's a harsh word, but sort of snap judgments and decisions about what you can and can't do just by looking at you – we all do it to some extent. But I would say in my own experience, no. I don't think there's any limitations. It probably helped that if you're looking at the wall, all the people playing jazz are the same color I am, so that probably makes a difference [laughs].

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LP: [Do you think African Americans are generally considered more authentic?]

NE: I will say this – maybe African-Americans in the case of this pop culture seem more "authentic" is that they're a product of their environment. They have more to say about their environment. If the people that lived in Compton in the early 90s were White, you would've gotten some similar expression. It may not have been rap, per se, but it would've been something like that. It just so happens that it's grown out of this history that sort of came before it.

In a way – and this might sound racist and crazy of me – but there’s a certain connection to certain strains of music over others. With jazz, I feel a little more tied-in. For me there’s a through-line from Gospel and Blues and Jazz and RnB. It’s there! It’s in my dad’s record collection, it’s in mine, it’s in the stuff that my grandparents listened to. I can hear the through line from people humming in fields to rap. It doesn’t follow for all music. I would say I approach the music in a different way – which may or may not be more authentic – it’s all relative.

Let’s take two piano players: I really like Chick Corea, I really like Herbie Hancock. I understand Herbie Hancock a lot more than Chick Corea. And I don’t mean understand the music – yes, I can read the sheet music and see technically what they’re doing but I have a closer cultural relationship to what Herbie Hancock’s doing because I can follow the through line of the music and follow the other artists that are sort of in and around what he’s doing – because that’s what I grew up listening to. Whereas Chick Corea I’m fascinated by because it’s sort of this – to me it sounds more technical and angular and there’s a Latin influence that I don’t have that same connection with. I guess it depends. I do think that people assume that by virtue of being Black, you’re more “soulful.” But I think that’s only because with this kind of genre of music, you have that connection.

Let’s take Pink Floyd – this is music I didn’t listen to growing up. My dad *had all that stuff*, which is weird, I never even knew he had it but he didn’t listen to it. The only stuff he wanted to listen to over and over and over and over again was George Clinton or George Duke, Herbie Hancock. So that’s what I listened to, even though there was this other stuff out there. The first time I listened to Queen I was like, “Whoa!” or Frank Zappa or something like. I would say that I can play the music and I appreciate the music but I’m not as culturally tied-in with that stuff.

It’s kind of like in comedy how they say that all comedy is inherently Jewish. You have a leg-up if you’re Jewish because you sort of understand *so much* of the culture. Because there have been so many artists and producers who have informed that. It’s not to say that it’s all that. But if you aren’t Black or Latino, and you are doing White jokes – there’s a certain element that’s there – it doesn’t hurt. There’s all these cultural references and words that have just been added to the culture – through-line there. There’s Adam Sandler and Mark Marin – you could do this forever. So it’s kind of like that. Where it’s – I don’t think it’s a bad thing, necessarily. With this particular genre of music, I feel that I have --- does “the Black Perspective” sound too weird? I have that ear – that approach to it. That’s not to say it’s the only one, it’s just the one that I have. I know what my parents were listening to in the 70s and I know what my grandparents were listening to in the 50s and 60s. I think that everyone has that one some level. Maybe that’s why I’d get funny looks if I was playing classical – “What do you know about this?”