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GHANABA AND THE HERITAGE OF AFRICAN JAZZ

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The essence of jazz as an African American artform traces to the indigenous music of African peoples: their cosmology, way of life, aesthetics, instruments, performance practices, contexts, and meanings as expressed in the dance drama. While the connections between jazz and African diasporic musics in the Americas have been documented in the many styles of Latin Jazz—Afro-Cuban, Puerto Rican, Dominican, Brazilian—and through a body of research, its ultimate source, African music, has been little understood, researched, or presented in a significant way in the West, especially in a jazz context. The history of racial and cultural stereotypes which have plagued African peoples has had a musical counterpart, rather than the true sense of an ancient and dynamic heritage, highly specialized, refined, and diverse. The distance and relative inaccessibility of African villages has been one aspect of the problem, although in today's world this is less so. The media prevalence of mass market, electrified, pop styles of both Jazz and African music has also served to obscure a deeper connection between the traditional and acoustic styles in each tradition. Let us focus on one African musician who has dedicated his life to the development of African Jazz as an expression of the African diaspora in the twentieth and twenty-first century.

While many jazz artists have visited the African continent—mostly on concert tours, some for study—including trumpeter Louis Armstrong, pianist Randy Weston, and drummers Buhaina Art Blakey, Max Roach, and Edward Blackwell, only a few African musicians have had the opportunity to live in the United States and assimilate the jazz tradition. One such artist is Guy Warren of Ghana, known as *Ghanaba* (“born of Ghana”), *Odomankoma Kyrema* (“the Divine Drummer”). I will present a biographical sketch of his life, a discography and printed sources, selected writings,

and observations from my playing and interviews with him during my summer 1996 research in Ghana.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF GHANABA

Warren Gamaliel Akwei (Guy Warren) was born in Accra, the capital city of Ghana (at the time known as the Gold Coast, a British colony), on May 4th, 1923, the son of Richard Mabuo Akwei and Susuana Awula Abila Moore. His father, headmaster of the Ghana National School in Accra, named his son after United States President Warren Gamaliel Harding. Warren Akwei was educated at the Government Elementary Boys' School, Accra, from 1928 to 1939, leading the school band in his last two years. He was active in the dramatic arts, playing lead roles in the pantomime, "Zacariah Fee," produced by Governor Sir Arnold Hudson in 1937-1939. He then enrolled at the Odorgonno Secondary School, Accra, in 1940, and successfully auditioned for membership as a drummer in the Accra Rhythmic Orchestra led by Yebuah Mensah.

Warren earned a Teacher Training Scholarship to Achimota College, Accra, in 1941, where he was elected captain of the soccer and volleyball teams. He left college in 1943 to enlist in the O.S.S. (Office of Strategic Services), a United States agency dealing with overt and covert operations during the Second World War. This position brought him to the United States in 1943, and in the same year, he returned to Accra and joined the *Spectator Daily* newspaper, under the editorship of Robert Wuta-Ofei, as an undercover for O.S.S.

He worked for the Gold Coast Radio Broadcasting Service as a jazz disc-jockey in 1944, and soon joined with other Ghanaians to form the *Tempos*, whose personnel would include himself on drums; Joe Kelly, clarinet and tenor saxophone; E.T. Mensah (younger brother of Yebuah Mensah), trumpet; Pa Hughes, alto saxophone; Baby Nelson and Pete Johnson, guitar; Adolf Doku and Johnny Dodds Schall, piano; James Bossman and Serious Amarfi, bass. (Serious is the older brother of Sol Amarfi, who drummed with *Osibisa*, a well known Ghanaian band based in London.) The *Tempos* was considered by many to be the epitome of African jazz ensembles.

Warren was editor of the *Daily Echo*, *Gold Coast Independent*, and *Star of West Africa* from 1950 to 1952. While reporting in London for the *Daily Echo* during 1950, he did a series of jazz programs for the British Broadcasting Service, and played drums with Kenny Graham's *Afro-Cubist*

ensemble. He formed his own *Afro-Cubist* ensemble in Ghana which performed at the 1953 inauguration of President William Tubman of Liberia. He remained in that country's capital, Monrovia, to become assistant director and resident disc jockey at station ELBC, the National Broadcasting Service of Liberia. His live playing and radio shows helped introduce many West Africans to jazz and Caribbean music.

In 1955 he moved to Chicago, and joined the Gene Esposito band as co-leader, percussionist, and arranger. This ensemble recorded his best known album, *Africa Speaks, America Answers* in 1956 for Decca records. It included his composition "That Happy Feeling," and he subsequently joined ASCAP as a composer in 1957. That same year he moved to New York City, forming the *Zoundz* ensemble, and continued to develop a musical style combining African musical elements with jazz, which he called *African Jazz*. The *Zoundz* included vibraphonist Ollie Shearer, bassist Ray Mackinney, and Guy Warren on a modified drum set employing a hand drum as a floor tom and the hourglass-shaped double headed string-tension armpit talking drum known as *dondo* (see *Downbeat* magazine May 4, 1955). This group played at the African Room, a nightclub at 780 Third Avenue in Manhattan.

Warren had heard the Afro-Cuban jazz style with hand drummer Chano Pozo in trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie's ensemble, and he wanted to create a new style of jazz which incorporated traditional African aesthetics, performance practices, forms, melodies, rhythms, instruments, and inflections. He had contact or performed with many jazz innovators, such as Duke Ellington, Billy Strayhorn, Charlie Parker, Lester Young, Thelonious Monk, Billie Holiday, Max Roach, Buhaina Art Blakey, and Louis Armstrong. He subsequently recorded for RCA Victor, Regal, Columbia, and his own Safari label. He performed at the Ghana Jazz Festival in Accra in 1960.

Since the 1950s, he has gradually modified the jazz drumset, replacing western instruments with traditional African drums. He presently employs an African drumset consisting of carved wooden drums of the Akan people of central-western Ghana: two large *fontomfrom* placed on their side and played with foot pedals as bass drums, an *apentemma* directly facing him in the position of a snare drum, and two *fontomfrom* and two *atumpan* to his right and left on stands as toms. *Fontomfrom* are huge, long, deep-toned master drums, *apentemma* are medium-sized hand drums, and *atumpan* are large, deep-toned master drums, the talking drums of the Akan. Ghanaba uses the two long curved wooden sticks that are traditionally used on *fontomfrom* and *atumpan* in this new context. His pioneering work in jazz and African music also earned him the name *Ghanaba*.

He was associated with Kwame Nkrumah, the first president of Ghana (the former Gold Coast), following its independence from Britain in 1957.

Ghanaba has continued to pursue literary interests, writing a number of articles and essays. In 1966 he published a short autobiography, *I Have a Story to Tell*, which focused on his experiences in the American jazz world. This work was eventually expanded into his *Ghanaba, Odomankoma Kyrema, the Divine Drummer*. He has been active in theater, starring in Ethiopian-born Haile Gerima's 1993 film *Sankofa* (a Ghanaian proverb and Adinkra symbol meaning "remember the past, return to your roots"), which received a favorable review in the *Washington Post* (Sunday, October 24, 1993). Ghanaba also created a talking drums interpretation of the *Hallelujah Chorus* by Handel, which led to his being honored in 1981 as an *Odomankoma Kyrema*, by *Aklowa*, the African Heritage village based at Takeley, near London.

He has six children, four sons and two daughters. His eldest son, Guy Warren, Jr., is a sculptor, painter, and carver who lives in New York City; his second son, Glenn Gillespie Warren, is a jazz drummer who was featured on Ghanaba's 1979 Safari album titled *That Happy Feeling*. A third son, Gamal Abdel Nasser Warren, is a political science student, while a fourth son, Gamaliel Joseph Warren, is a jazz drummer living in Gary, Indiana. His first daughter, Midie, was born in 1977, while his second daughter, Gye Nyame Hossana, was born in 1982.

Ghanaba has compiled an African Heritage Library at his residence which focuses on the history of the African presence in jazz. The library includes large holdings of records, audio tapes, pictures, books, music, magazines (including the American *Downbeat*), newspapers, letters, paintings, sculpture, instruments, and other artifacts.

His use of African drums in a jazz drumset context has its Ghanaian precursor in the assemblage and playing by one musician of different sized and pitched indigenous drums, such as the *sogo*, *kidi*, and *kagan* of the Ewe people of southeastern Ghana. These instruments are traditionally played individually, one to a part. This practice was known as "one-man jazz," perhaps influenced by, and named as a result of, the exposure of Africans to jazz styles through radio and records since the 1930s, and international tours by such artists as Louis Armstrong, who performed in Ghana during the 1950s. In fact, the American drumset itself is known to this day in Ghana as "jazz drums."

Ghanaba has continued to compose, perform, and record up to the present time, making his home at the village of Midie, near Amasaman, a town near Accra. He has performed at many national and international events and is

well known for his large outdoor concerts at Black Star Square in Accra, in combination with African drummers and other ensembles. His solos include a vocabulary ranging from traditional ensemble and processional music to dance, song, chant, and jazz phrasing, as well as call-and-response with audiences numbering in the thousands. He was honored with a photographic exhibition of his career at the United States Information Service in Accra on the 40th anniversary of Ghanaian independence, March 6, 1997.

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ESSAYS BY AND ABOUT GHANABA

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The Intensity Factor by Deborah Bertonoff

The following essay is dedicated to the thesis that the secret of art in action is intensity. By this I do not mean energy but the capacity of the artist to concentrate his innermost forces into one single awareness. Intensity is a capacity to detach oneself from everything that we call the outer world, the faculty of self-dedication. It involves the total human being: his thoughts, his feelings, his will, his essence. It is the quality which marks the true believer, to whom service and mission are one.

The secret of this intensity lies beyond us, just as every creative power remains inexplicable in the last resort. However, we can always sense it, even if we can never measure it. I sense artistic integrity as a reciprocal onslaught: the object of art attacks the artist and he attacks the object. The artist's inherent technique comes into being in this way, being born of the intensity of the meeting. The deepest, innermost *I* expresses itself here.

As I said to begin with: the intensity I have in mind is the capacity of detaching oneself from everything we call the outer world. For not only the common man but also the exceptional one and even the true artist are all equally exposed to a multitude of voices, which call him and not infrequently drown out his innermost Self, the only-one that matters in this connection.

To hear this inner voice constantly and ever more exclusively—that, if I may say so, is the path and goal of intensity. Intensity permits you to hear this innermost voice of your hidden *Self*; and only when obeying this voice do you attain an ever more penetrating insight.

What impressed me most, I think, in the whole range of dancing, remains the lesson of an American-Italian jazz-dancer and teacher, which I observed

for twenty days when we both taught at the same seminar at the University of Legon, Ghana. He was then maybe thirty years old, and what struck me was his constant unrest. Early and late he was in a kind of exaltation, as though he were actually hearing only with an inner ear. However, he had to link it with his duties in the outer world, but his behaviour was no more usual in the usual run of things than it was in his lessons. He would thank a pupil during a lesson as if she were offering him a gift, precisely because she had understood him. It was so moving to witness how he strove with all the fibres of his being to be understood; and it was this passionate wish which caused him to be so grateful. Before the lesson he was fully at one with his students, drawing them as it were to himself, and his "thanks" were there because he had been so thoroughly comprehended thanks to his movements. He was quite capable of going down on his knees at the slightest kindness or mark of attention. . . . It might be said that the movements of his body expressed, the very essence of his own Spirit-of-the-Dance, and he could formulate it through movement.

He certainly had a poorer verbal vocabulary at his disposal than the wealth and expression displayed in his movement. He is goodness itself, as can be seen in his exercises. When he exercises and extends his body, you can see patience, concern, and tenderness. His swift pacing resembles the padding of a light-footed animal, or even the swimming of fish in water; I am tempted to say that his thrust in the relation of his muscles to space, has never hurt the air. . . . One might add that he dances with every fibre and all his nerves.

Once he had an accident in which his face was badly injured. One eye began to squint and he wears sunglasses which, a sign of shortsightedness, do not seem to match those arms and legs of his in their reaching far into space. Shining black hair; a nose almost too delicate for a man; and a very sad, twisted mouth. He once betrayed the fact that he actually developed his extraordinary jazz technique only after the accident, when he learned always to cover his face with his arms. In his form, as I already said, there is constant unrest, even when he is simply sitting, standing, or walking. It is only the rhythm of music that brings him into a complete harmony and a coordination of soul and body. One more thing which is absolutely characteristic and I have never witnessed with anyone but him: he may, let us say, be sitting when he suddenly hears music, and is, as it were, raised from the chair. Without any preparation he can proceed from sitting into dancing.

. . . The excess of his inner adrou: at the beginning of the lesson he is already red-hot, at the end he is white-hot. Sparks flash from him and the

average cold pupil stands dumb before this Vesuvius. In this example intensity becomes visible. Only from this unique "how" do you attain the "what," whether you call it lesson or work of art. It never emerges into form. It is always at melting point. It is always fluid fire.

... For the Master Drummer of Ghana (Ghanaba) it is above all the counterpoint in his rhythms. Each separate finger of his is capable of beating a particular motif. His rhythms then combine together and merge one in the other, a mosaic. When he uses the drumstick, the drumstick is actually an extension of his hand, and the limited area of the drumskin becomes the medium for the various tones and the half-tones. From one and the same drum he can give expression to each and every stage, from the gentlest pianissimo to roaring outcry. The drum of his is more than a musical instrument. One might almost say that he writes novels on it. He gives an experience a narrative form with his drum. And it is with good reason that he names his works. ... For his time sense is not that of the ever renowned day. His measure of time calls for collecting himself, concentrating himself, preparing to discover himself anew. So when he returns to the drum, maybe after months have passed, the practising, the repetition, have not ceased even for an instant. The drum is always in his consciousness and his technique for mastering it, his ever increasing joy in mastery, never abandons him.

Unlike the dancer, who may himself be more of an instrument upon which and through which someone greater plays, he is fully aware of being possessed. He is fundamentally spiritual, a deep thinker, a seeker after truth; he sees the hollowness of so-called world renown (and he himself is famous, although anonymous in the deepest sense). He knows that the most important, the deepest, the everlasting demand of the artist is made upon himself. His seclusion from the world, externally and internally, his unvoiced protest against prevailing untruth in Art, is in essence a confession of faith. He has never ceased to be a true son of Africa. The spirits of trees and rivers live in him and through him. ... The strict discipline of the Indian penitent and the elemental wildness of the Animist are in his spirit, giving his drumming its unique quality.

Whether he is performing in public, or engaging in a rehearsal, or giving an example during a lesson: there is no difference in intensity. Everything about or within him is at work. The ultimate that must be attained is always before his eyes, and always torments him ... between him and the drum there is no intermediary space, no intermediary thought, no intermediary emotion. ... His is the elegance of African dignity, the elegance of

tears clad in finest silks, ... connected across the spatial, temporal vastness by means of his drum.

* * * * *

When Ouspensky first saw the Dancing Dervishes in Constantinople, he grasped that this was not, as was currently claimed, some kind of craziness but the very opposite. In and by means of their wild whirling, they seem to solve the deepest of problems. ... He saw them a second time several years later. And meanwhile, says he, he had come to understand the principle, and at the same time he comprehended why they do not reveal their secret: "It is easy to tell what they do and how they do it. But in order to understand it fully one must first know why they do it. *And this cannot be told.*"

The Evolution of the Drums in Jazz, by Ghanaba

1. The African slaves in the U.S.A. made drums from wood in their environment, and played them in the African Form. This Form was banned by the European slave-owners, because it was not conducive to public peace and harmony. Only European music and instruments were allowed, and non-African forms of drumming were encouraged socially in churches, marches, dances. ...

2. In the 1900s, the African American drummer developed a form of drumming which introduced the revolutionary bass drum foot pedal, and mostly reduced the drums to keeping tempo, staying in the background. Baby Dodds developed this African American form to solo-virtuoso level.

3. In the 1930s the African American drummer further developed the use of the European bass and side drums, and added other percussive instruments like gongs, cymbals, triangles, and so on, yielding Sonny Greer, Big Sid Catlett, and Papa Jo Jones.

4. In the 1940s the form was further developed by Kenny Clarke and perfected by Max Roach. At this point the Afro-Cuban form was added to the existing African American form by Chano Pozo, from Cuba.

5. In the 1950-60s the African-American-Cuban form developed still further, producing extensions of Max Roach, in the form of Elvin Jones, Tony Williams, Eddie Blackwell, Billy Higgins, and Sunny Murray.

6. In the 1950-60s the pure African form, which had been banned in slave days, was rewoven into jazz by Guy Warren of Ghana, a.k.a. Ghanaba, in

his album *Africa Speaks, America Answers!* (Decca DL 8446; Brunswick LAT 8237) featuring the "talking drum" or *dondo*, a traditional drum which has been in wide use in Africa for generations. This drum was unknown to the jazz world; it is shaped like an hourglass, and has two ends covered with skins. The skins are laced with leather thongs, which run back and forth from one end of the drum to the other. The drum is held in the armpit and is hit with a specially-designed curved stick. The drummer can vary the pitch of the drum by pressing the thongs with the inside upper arm against the upper chest or with the fingers. The drum can thus produce a wide range of sound. This African instrument was used to play *African Jazz*.

7. In the 1970s Ghanaba further replaced the traditional African American jazz drums with Ghanaian drums called *Fontomfrom*. These are huge hand-carved drums, named after the *zounzzz* they produce when they are played. He used the African American bass drum foot pedal to play the *Fontomfrom* for the first time in history. Traditionally the Ghanaian master drummer uses his hands, holding special sticks curved at the tip to play these drums. Ghanaba's form [of African Jazz] brought the evolution of the drums in jazz full circle, initiating three revolutions: (i) changing the construction of the music, by replacing Americo-European themes with African material; (ii) replacing traditional [jazz] rhythms with African rhythms; and (iii) replacing the traditional African American jazz drums [drumset] with African drums [drumset].

Excerpts from my Summer 1996 Research in Ghana by royal hartigan
 photography by Heidi Mitchem

In my research on jazz and African music with master drummers Freeman Kwadzo Donkor, Abraham Kobena Adzenyah, and C.K. Ladzekpo, our conversations inevitably turned to Ghanaba, formerly known as Guy Warren, a Ghanaian jazz drumset player who had lived and performed in the United States and was famous in West Africa. On previous trips to Ghana I was unsuccessful in contacting Ghanaba, but Nick Robertson, the political affairs officer at U.S.I.S. Accra at that time, arranged transportation and introduced me to John Ray, a visual artist from Oakland, California, who lives in Accra and is a friend of Ghanaba. [Nick is an excellent vibraphonist who, during his tenure in Ghana, was part of a Ghanaian jazz ensemble in Accra and actively promoted jazz and the arts through live performances, support for indigenous musicians, and assistance with research on African diasporic culture and music.]



Figure 1: Ghanaba and his African drumset

Master drummer Godwin Agbeli, my video colleague Heidi Mitchem, and I travelled by auto on the road from Accra to Nsawam, going past urban areas and markets, meeting the rolling green hills of the countryside at Amasaman, and turning off the main motorway onto a dirt road near the



Figure 2: The countryside at Amasaman, near the village of Midie



Figure 3: L-R: photographer Heidi Mitchem, royal hartigan, Ghanaba, and master drummer Godwin Kwasi Agbeli

village of Midie. After about two miles, we saw a small dirt path barely wide enough for a car, but with a sign that read "African Heritage Library," and we knew this was our way. After proceeding a short distance surrounded by lush vegetation and trees we arrived at the farm, library, and home of Ghanaba. Going inside we saw two rooms full of artwork, instruments, and sculptures, with another large space containing records, tapes, newspapers, magazines, books, letters, and other writings. The walls were covered with posters, record covers, and other memorabilia showing a life of international music making. Suddenly a man in traditional Ghanaian dress greeted us, and this was Ghanaba. He stood quietly, with a dignity and calm intensity which made us feel at home.

We spent two days interviewing Ghanaba, focusing on his life growing up in Ghana, musical development, experiences in the United States as a jazz player, return to Ghana, and innovations in the genre of African jazz. Since my research derives from a direct experience of the music through performance, I asked Ghanaba at the end of our first day if we could bring a drumset to exchange ideas and he agreed, adding that he would bring out his African drumset and other instruments. On our second day we arrived and saw three pairs of huge Akan master drums in the form of a drumset. Two *fontomfrom* were laid on their side and connected to two bass drum pedals to function as bass drums; two *fontomfrom* and two *atumpan*, one



Figure 4: Setting up Ghanaba's drumset

on each side, were fixed on stands to function as toms; and a single smaller *apentemma* support drum was in the position of a snare drum. Since one *fontomfrom* is larger than an entire western drumset, his African drumset was truly awe-inspiring, from a purely visual perspective, a carved work



Figure 5: The author standing at Ghanaba's drumset; note the traditional drumset to right rear in front of Godwin Agbeli's truck

of art, dwarfing my tiny jazz kit. Its sound was like cannons in battle, as he played with traditional curved wooden sticks.

Ghanaba also set up other traditional drums, another pair of *Atumpan*, two *apentemma*, one hourglass-shaped armpit “talking” *dondo*, a *gongon* cylindrical drum, and a number of bells and rattles. Four Ghanaian drummers functioned as a support ensemble for his African drumset playing. I then set up my jazz set next to his.

He and the four drummers began with a processional, singing, dancing, and drumming around the open space where we had set up. After a time they took positions at the ensemble set-up and exploded into a fast twelve-eight style with *gankogui* double bells, *gongon*, and *atumpan* accompanying Ghanaba on his drumset. It was over 100 degrees Fahrenheit, and they played for forty minutes at this intense pace.

Ghanaba motioned for me to join them and, as I sat at my jazz kit, he began playing phrases that I answered. He pointed to me and I played a series of *gongon* and *dondo* rhythms on bass drum and toms from the *Bambaya* music of the *Dagomba* people of northern Ghana.

At that point Ghanaba and his drummers created an ensemble groove that felt like a New Orleans second line, so I played an Ed Blackwell four-four



Figure 6: Ghanaba tuning his drumset, counterclockwise, L-R: large *fontomfrom* and *atumpan* in the position of floor toms; first *fontomfrom* laid on its side and played with a pedal as a bass drum; *apentemma* drum in the position of a snare drum; second *fontomfrom* on its side with a pedal as a second bass drum; and *atumpan* and *fontomfrom* in the position of toms to the player's left



Figure 7: View showing bass drum foot pedals attached to two *fontomfrom* drums

snare rhythm in eighth notes with changing accents over a bass drum dotted-quarter—dotted-quarter—quarter heartbeat with open high hat foot splashes on beats two and four. He soloed over my groove, and his strokes on all the large drums sounded like a brass band full of horns. We were



Figure 8: Ghanaba and his ensemble

sweating madly under the midday sun but laughing at the connections that were happening.

After bringing the New Orleans/Africa sound around a few times, Ghanaba's drummers left their drums, moving behind us and clapping in unison with my high-hat on two and four (in western terms). Godwin Kwasi Agbeli began to play the *atumpan* drums, and I instinctively moved to a Sidney Catlett floor tom style and felt a swing groove as never before in all my years of playing. Ghanaba started playing bebop figures on his African drumset in the midst of all this, so I responded, keeping time on ride cymbal as he played, and mirroring his phrases on snare, toms, and bass drum. We began to trade fours, sixes, eights, and twelves. By now the playing had been going on for almost two hours in the extreme heat and we were soaked, but the music just kept going.

Suddenly, he left his drums and started dancing phrases which I again answered in a bebop drumset style. His four drummers continued clapping what I heard as two and four, driving the time. I then joined him, laying out some tap dance rhythms with my feet on the Ghanaian soil. Ghanaba then sat at my drumset, and proceeded to play fours, sixes, and eights in a strong bebop style which I answered with my tap dancing. He and his drummers eventually formed a line which Godwin and I joined as a processional around and away from the main area, singing, dancing, and playing tradi-



Figure 9: Ghanaba's drummers



Figure 10: Ghanaba and me trading phrases while his drummers clapped

tional drums, bells, and rattles. After more than two hours of hard playing and dancing, I felt a connection to the West African and African American traditions as never before, to Ghanaba and the other musicians, and to myself in ways unexplainable.



Figure 11: Drum conversations with Godwin Kwasi Agbeli (right) playing Atumpan

After a break, we talked about his life commitment to the development of Africanjazz. He feels the African American jazz tradition will come full circle in the twenty-first century, looking back to its roots and forming a new and dynamic artform which continues his innovations of the last forty years, assimilating African cosmology, aesthetics, contexts of performance, themes, performance practices, melodic materials, harmonic approaches, rhythmic sensibilities, instruments, and drum ensemble textures. He sees African arts as the source for change in the coming years of social, economic, and political upheaval.

Ghanaba pointed out that mass market commodification of music through the media have historically allowed only the electrified pop styles of Africa and the Americas to spread to each other's continent. He feels that these are by nature diluted and superficial, while the less publicized acoustic and traditional styles of both jazz and African music are deep spiritual expressions of peoples' ways of life. He sees the meeting and cross fertilizations of these acoustic traditions as the future of meaningful Afrocentric expression, more powerful than "all the atomic energy stored up." The meeting of John Coltrane and the traditional Master Drummer, short circuiting, literally and figuratively, the commercialized imitations to forge a new African consciousness.

He showed us his African Heritage Library, with thousands of printed, audio, and photographic items showing the life of an African jazz musician



Figure 12: Connecting the African American jazz drumset to its African ancestors



Figure 13: Completing the Circle of Jazz and African Music

and the African presence in jazz. He spoke of how he would like someone to preserve and curate his library of materials, which document the history of that presence. As he spoke I could see history before my eyes and ears, a man who grew up in West Africa, whose peoples are the source of so much of the beauty in the American fabric, despite the genocide of passages past and present; a man who grew up with Louis Armstrong and Papa Jo Jones in his ears, who had the rare opportunity to come to the United States and live as a jazz artist with New Orleans and swing musicians, beboppers, John Coltrane, and the experimental players. Someone who brought an African sensibility to jazz music, innovating melodies, rhythms, and radically reshaping the drumset with African drums. A man who returned to the homeland and spread African jazz.

As we were leaving the sun was getting lower in the sky and I heard Miles Davis' *Sketches of Spain* on his battery-powered stereo. The fragrance of jasmine incense was strong. We walked arm in arm and as we embraced I promised him I would let people know of his work in African jazz and return with other musicians who would continue his path. While vital and strong at 77 years of age, he is seeking someone to carry on his work, to bring his voice to the United States in performances, residencies, and lectures, and maintain and expand his African Heritage Library/Museum of Jazz: A path that will complete the circle of infinity.

NOTE

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BOOK REVIEWS

Editor's note: The Book Review section in this issue begins with two reviews, from different viewpoints, of Paul Berliner's *Thinking in Jazz*.

Paul F. Berliner, *Thinking in Jazz: The Infinite Act of Improvisation* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1994, 904 pp., \$29.95 paperback)

Reviewed by royal hartigan

Paul Berliner has contributed a significant study which provides insight into the art of jazz improvisation. (I will follow Berliner's use of "jazz" in this review, although I prefer the term "African American music," with specific elements described as the music of King Oliver or of John Coltrane.) While informing his work with prior and contemporary scholarship and addressing theoretical issues, he focuses on the musicians themselves, their words and improvisations, meticulously arranging over fifteen years of interviews, study, transcription, analysis, and original ideas into a sequence which loosely mirrors a player's musical development.

Beginning with the soundscapes of the womb and infancy, he traces the early musical environments of performers from church, home, school, and community (Part 1, chapter 1) to informal and formal study through jam sessions, sitting in, membership in bands, private practice and study, and colleges and conservatories (chapter 2).

The development of specific improvisational skills by individual players is treated in Part 2. Personal growth as aided by fluency with the repertory of jazz compositions, key transcriptions, aural and written melodic assimilation, tonal and timbral inflection, and harmonic progressions and

forms is discussed in chapter 3 while chapter 4 treats physical and technical mastery and the internalization of motives, phrases, and solos as a repository for melodic invention. In chapter 5 Berliner describes the learner's expansion of experience as a means of evolving a personal sound: familiarity with a wide range of soloist models and, on a larger scale, the entire heritage of jazz, from New Orleans and swing through bebop and hard bop to modal and free styles.

He moves to a consideration of the varied concepts of time, beat, and rhythmic phrasing as well as chordal, scalar, and theoretical strategies for melodic improvisation in chapter 6, followed by a treatment of how melodic raw materials are realized into concrete ideas for solo construction in chapter 7. Chapter 8 focuses on large scale soloing as storytelling, its difficulties and risks as spontaneous composition, creative solutions to unexpected events in performance, and the dramatic dimensions of such intense ensemble interplay.

Chapter 9 describes the relationship of precomposed musical ideas from previous improvised performance or practice experiences and original ones generated in the moment as a continual cycle of "generation, application, and renewal" (242): the solidification of new ideas into elements of an artist's motivic, solo, or compositional repertory, and their use, in turn, as fertile ground for yet other spontaneous inventions. Part 2 concludes with a grasp of the issues relating to the long, gradual maturation of a soloist's art—goals, evaluations, and setbacks (chapter 10). Topics include the multiple approaches to swing, melodic substance, harmonic content, originality, emotional transcendence, technical virtuosity, spontaneity, the development of a personal voice, stylistic changes over time in the jazz tradition and their effects on an artist's personal style, and critical feedback.

Berliner devotes Part 3 to the musical and social abilities which relate to the interactive, collective dynamics of improvisation. Chapter 11 treats individual and collective arrangements of compositions, their generation, development, revision, and transmission in rehearsal and over successive performances through aural or visual scoring, constituent instrumental and vocal parts, and ensemble direction, all as diverse means of realization of preconceived works.

Performance practices relating to the rhythm section are discussed in chapter 12, with the nature, evolution, techniques, and traditional and changing functions of the bass, drum set, and piano used as models. Instrumental and sectional conventions relating to diverse jazz idioms, stylistic combinations, ensemble repertory, and overall ensemble instrumentation are conceived as guides for strategies of accompaniment.

In chapter 13 he describes the dynamics of collective interaction and realization of a piece in performance, dealing with the creation, maintenance, and malleability of the groove, relations between the soloist and rhythm section, development of an overall ensemble feeling, surprises and challenges resulting from error, and the changing ratio of precomposed to improvised material.

Chapter 14 focuses on the evaluation of group performances, describing the transcendent nature of jazz at its best as well as many factors contributing to unsuccessful experiences, such as lack of musicianship, attentiveness, and/or rapport, or conflicting notions of time, conversation, soloist-accompanist functions, and general taste.

The inner dynamics of ensembles are approached in chapter 15, with an emphasis on the negotiation of conflicts. Areas addressed include the accommodation of musical differences during and outside of performance, hierarchic versus democratic concepts of a group's organization, the effects of a market business mentality in commodifying jazz and sharpening interpersonal and stylistic conflict, personnel changes and the life cycles of bands, and the value of diverse ensemble and stylistic experiences in a player's career.

Berliner devotes Part 4 to extramusical factors which affect improvisation and an overall performance, with chapter 16 considering a venue's size, design, management policy, and acoustics, the rigors of travel, the nature of different audiences, the drama of audience-performer interaction, performers' dress and demeanor, varying responses to knowledgeable and difficult audiences, and recording studios as performance venues.

His Epilogue looks at jazz as a personal way of life, including its place in the evolution of the world's musics. Current realities of the global music environment enable jazz as an assimilative artform to embrace diverse global traditions and numerous examples of the emerging crosscultural international scene are cited. He proceeds to discuss improvisation as composition and the lifetime path and mission of jazz improvisors.

Part 5 consists of musical transcriptions of improvised performances with analytical and informative commentary. This section includes examples of short to medium length, as well as four longer, comprehensive solo-accompaniment scores (parts of which are interspersed with the shorter examples), three by Miles Davis ensembles and one by the John Coltrane quartet. The scores reveal the dynamics of group interplay, an essential quality of the jazz artform, and the transcriptions and accompanying narrative as a whole are a goldmine of information for both scholarly research and instrumental practice (as in woodshedding).

The book concludes with two appendices, one documenting a congressional resolution on jazz, and the other a roster of artists interviewed, followed by a list of sources for musical figures and transcriptions (the latter called "music texts" by the author), endnotes, a discography, videography, and bibliography, and an index.

* * * * *

Throughout this work Berliner writes in a straightforward and clear style, thankfully avoiding an irrelevant academic tone, often using the words of musicians to underline his points. Their voices and his give a human quality to the 504 pages of text and 251 pages of music transcriptions and analysis, making the book hard to put down. We get a feel of the lives, the community, the people, the sounds, the intensity and heart of the jazz world. We are presented with many personal, social, historic, and musical issues surrounding this artform and its practice of improvisation, some not evident even to performers, and always from many individual points of view. The complexities, differences of opinion, varying backgrounds, problems, and human variables on a given topic are not laundered out of the pages to present us with a shrink-wrapped account or methodology; rather, he gives us all these things in showing the many sides of an issue, the reality of the music and its practitioners. His organization, analysis, interpretation, and presentation of voluminous research data—including over three thousand pages from interviews alone—forms a coherent and disciplined path which all readers can follow. Theoretical jumps to draw an analogy, make a point, or relate an insight derive largely from the music or musicians themselves, and are not imposed on the reader or the evidence presented. For those interested in other research on the topics discussed, his endnotes, music and artist source lists, discography, videography, and bibliography provide in most cases good references. The endnotes often contain insightful commentary or information which stimulate the reader to make new connections or rethink issues, and a helpful index allows easy access to a topic, composition, person, or place in such a large book. One suggestion which would greatly enhance jazz studies would be to make the interview and performance tapes, as well as some of the videotapes, available for the public. This may not be practical due to the volume of the research materials and the amount of editing required.

There are so many exceptional qualities to this work that specific citations of each would literally entail another book. I will mention a few, followed by areas where other perspectives than the author's might be considered or constructive/differing points raised.

Berliner states his overall goal is to increase the abilities of readers in understanding jazz in much the same way as its improvisors do (Introduction, 15). Given the size, depth, and qualities noted above he has succeeded within the limitations he has defined his work by: thinking as an aspect of improvisation in bebop and bebop-related styles.

The author contextualizes jazz as an African American music which people of all backgrounds can share as players and listeners. He speaks of the cultural milieu from which the music has been born and developed and in which many of its adherents find a home: the black community, household, and (especially Holiness) churches (chapter 1, 25 and 29). Its African identity and roots are explored regarding the vocalization of pitch, its infection, and human expressiveness, whether through a tusk horn, bamboo flute, cornet, or saxophone (chapter 3, 68). The tonal, timbral, and rhythmic complexity and sophistication of West African drum orchestras are described in terms of the relation of multiple bell, rattle, and drum parts to a whole, as well as the ever-changing flow of rhythmic nuance, beat perception, and layers of time, accent, and function (chapter 6, 147–48). In both cases the informed reader can clearly see the parallel and heritage of instrumental and vocal spoken inflection, relation of tonality to language, and ensemble intensity and interplay characteristic of both the West African and African American traditions.

One of many perceptive analogies is found in the discussion on the application of improvisation to form (chapter 7, pp. 179ff). Trumpeter Dick Whitsell relates an improvised solo to a journey, in this case a three-dimensional dance around his living room, singing an improvisation and moving over various spaces, each representing a specific chord in a composition. Successive movements through the room repeat the precise order of spaces and chords, with the sung improvisations relating to the harmonic nature of each. Seeing harmonic form as a kinetic physical space mirrors an African sense of a piece's development through time and space, realizing song, dance, and instrumental repertoire in a spontaneous drama.

Berliner gives an excellent description of the drummer's art (chapter 12, 327–28), creating phrases, orchestrating patterns throughout the multiple drums and cymbals, and how

redistributing the elements of a conventional figure among drum components in varied sequences can not only change its melodic shape but create the acoustical impression of splitting the figure into different fragments, bringing a variety of rhythmic configurations into relief. Drum or cymbal strokes of like pitch, timbre, or dynamic intensity tend to migrate into new patterns, emerging from the original figures with transformed identities.

His insight into the technical dynamics of drumset coordinated independence reveals a complexity of rhythmic and metric layering which is an essential aspect of jazz drumming, and reflects the manipulation of pitch, timbre, dynamics, and durations found in the West African drum ensemble.

While discussing swing as rhythmic substance (chapter 10, 244–45), the author points out the innumerable ways of feeling and playing time, expressing rhythmic subtlety through accent, phrasing, space, and relation to the beat. This is a welcome antidote to the singleminded mentality found among some mainstream players that swing is a fixed rhythmic formula expressing time in only one way. A West African drum ensemble, Juba patten' and handclaps from the Georgia Sea Islands, tap dancers, a 1920s woodblock, for example, can all swing as much as a bebop ride cymbal.

Berliner gives a good account of the challenges to artists in different styles of jazz when confronted with new innovations or movements, such as New Orleans players with bebop during the 1940s, and beboppers with the experimental movements of the 1960s (chapter 10, 276ff.). This teaches us all that jazz, as any music culture, is not a fixed tradition with a single paramount school, but rather a dynamic heritage with many styles, each changing over time, and the introduction of new ones as well. The implication is that to be blind to the totality of the jazz tradition and its new possibilities is to lose the innovative core of its meaning as an open artform, diluting the music into an ever more replicable and perfectable concrete object.

He makes difficult, ambiguous, personal events or topics understandable through painstaking analysis and sensitive writing, as with chapter 15's treatment of the artistic growth and life span of ensembles (416ff.). Personal and musical differences and their resolution on and off the bandstand, power relations, and other issues dealing with human chaos and irrationality as much as conscious intent and reason are presented in a way which not only enlightens a general reader, but also assures musicians who have gone through similar personal ordeals during their path of artistic growth that such difficult events are shared by many others. In this respect Berliner has helped many musicians on the fragmented contemporary scene understand that they are not alone in the travails of survival, fears, and estrangement from mainstream society and its "culture." He has reconnected our experiences for both us and everyone to see in a positive way, knowing that we are not alone and that we are part of a great tradition, despite its lack of acceptance in the society at large, and that most of us choose this road at great material sacrifice. In this same chapter (431–434) the author gives us an accurate, detailed look at how the economic realities of a market capi-

talist economy threaten the vitality of the jazz artform and its players, causing artistic conflict, commercial pressures, the dearth of meaningful recording, touring, and live venues, all contributing to greatly lessened occasions and contexts for performance, the lifeblood of the music. This dynamic may be observed in most serious aspects of the arts—and life itself—in contemporary industrial societies, a result of the commodification of expression, devaluation of things done for their own sake, and the tendency at all levels of interaction to change human identity and behavior from rational, spiritual ways of being into materialist, economic ones.

Berliner contributes a moving description of the evolution of music on our planet and gives us a sense of jazz as part of this continuum (Epilogue, 488–9). Its reproduction here is the only commentary that needs to be given:

Artists' most expansive views and practices reflect an appreciation for the uniqueness of jazz within the broad sweep of the evolution of music. It is as if the world is seen rotating on its axis, holding an atmosphere close to its surface whose protective shield consists not simply of vapors but of the sounds of nature, which have nurtured the aesthetic side of humanity, offering since its earliest existence an inspiration for music making. Over the millennia, within the open arena of the world's soundscape, the cries of animals, the rhythm of thunder, the wind's play upon reeds, and the water's rippling over stone interact with the expressive human inventions they inspire. Language, song, and musical instruments, each with its own implications for composition, give rise to a diverse web of music systems and technological tools for their development.

From one part of the world to the next, such systems are rarely isolated or static. Like other elements of the earth's atmosphere, those comprising its soundscape have changed over time, sometimes subtly, at other times drastically. In every country, village, and household, individuals historically perform music inherited from their ancestors. Preserving many of its features and altering others, artists of each generation create new performance practices and repertory, eventually placing their cumulative tradition into the hands of the next generation. It is as if, within each society, its selected ancestral voices assume lives of their own, maintaining featured positions within the society's musical tradition as generations of singers, instrumentalists, and composers carry the ancient voices forward, even as they themselves join them.

Within the global network of music systems, contact among different societies stimulates change in the evolution of their respective traditions. In some instances, varied music systems born on two disparate continents join on yet a third continent, where they cross-fertilize one another, producing new stylistic fusions that eventually assert their independence from their parent traditions. The stage was set for such dramatic events in the birth of a new constellation of musical languages a few hundred years ago, when European

expansionism and an African diaspora removed many European and African ancestral voices from their homelands. In the wake of patterns of trade, colonial domination, religious proselytism, and slavery, these voices dispersed to many parts of the world. In America, where European, African, and Native American ancestral voices mixed in the soundscape, African composers and their descendants created a unique family of musical traditions drawing from their heritage and the diverse elements of the international music culture around them. Jazz came forth from this family with its own affiliated conventions to develop through generations of creators, preserving and expanding upon contributions of the tradition's most significant composers and performers.

The importance of communicating with others through improvisation, connecting players with each other and with listeners, is discussed in terms of telling a story imbued with emotion (chapter 10, 255–59). In this aspect jazz mirrors the West African dance drama, where all present are connected as part of the performance. A description of the exhilaration of improvisation as a dancing “on the edge of certainty and surprise” (chapter 8, 220) gives the reader an intimate sense of the magic of jazz performance. Berliner deepens this sense in an account of the essence and goal of jazz interaction, its emotional-spiritual transcendence, in a section on ascending to the music's heights (chapter 14, 388–95). The rapport, intensity, openness, extra- or meta-physical feelings experienced and expressed by performers in these pages reminds us why we play and listen to jazz, and of its nature as beyond the everyday reality we all accept too easily. This can teach us that we should not accept the workaday world as real, and that art can raise us to a higher consciousness and reality, one which need not be the exception, but the rule. It is likely that jazz musicians and listeners have known this all along.

A significant truth is brought into focus when jazz improvisation is seen as not just a technical practice for producing records or concerts, but as an “artistic way of going through life” (Epilogue, 486), implying a sensibility which extends to social, political, philosophic, and personal behavior; ultimately to a way of being.

While these are but a few of the book's strong points, there are some areas, unavoidable in a work of this magnitude, where different assumptions, approaches, or conclusions may be raised. These are offered in the spirit of constructive criticism.

The first is a minor correction, regarding Berliner's discussion of the drumset (chapter 12, 324). He states that the snare drum sits to the player's left and the toms to the right. The actual positioning finds the snare imme-

diately in front of the player, while a variable number of toms have historically been placed in a descending pitch sequence from directly in front (just beyond and above the snare) around to the drummer's right. The most common set up has been one or two toms of high to medium pitch mounted on the bass drum and one floor tom of lower pitch standing on the floor (hence the terms “mounted” and “floor” tom). For a left-handed drummer, the positions are usually reversed.

The author's use of the term “free jazz” to describe nonmainstream music of the 1960s is a misnomer commonly used by scholars of this artform. Many experimental or nontraditional styles have flourished during and since that decade, only a few of which approached a free, unrestricted performance practice. Most employed different structural perspectives than the song forms, harmonic progressions, solo language, or typical swing grooves of bebop, yet they nonetheless used structural references such as timbral and textural contrast and similarity, rhythm and density patterns, order of prearranged events, and melodic development, to name a few. Ornette Coleman's “free jazz” was structured along these nontraditional lines, and the rhythmic style underlying much of his innovative work was quite conservative. Edward Blackwell's masterful drumming in a variety of New Orleans-rooted straight ahead grooves served as a “lighthouse”; as Ed described it to me, “no matter where the music went, it came back to the groove” (p.c., 1991).

Berliner's Epilogue discusses the ability of jazz as an open artform to assimilate diverse influences while retaining its identity, noting specific adaptations of world traditions into the African American jazz context (490–1). While his insight is accurate, it is unfortunate many leading artists and scholars of jazz and world music connections were not mentioned. The Asian American jazz movement has been a strong force throughout the United States and internationally with recordings on major labels, significant airplay, and live concerts in most major American cities such as New York, Washington, Chicago, Philadelphia, Los Angeles, and San Francisco. This genre has flourished since its founding and leadership by Fred Wei-han Ho and Russell Baba in the early 1980s. Ho has given lectures, workshops, and collaborative multidisciplinary presentations and concerts internationally, and has contributed articles and edited landmark books, such as his most recent *Sounding Off! Music as Subversion/Resistance/Revolution* (Autonomedia Books, 1995).

The idea, term, and practice of African Jazz is traceable to Ghanaba (formerly Guy Warren) of Ghana, who resided and performed in the United States during the 1950s and 1960s with his group the African Zoundz.

Ghanaba currently lives in Ghana, continuing to transform the drumset with African instruments, maintaining a museum/library of the African Jazz Heritage, and performing (see accompanying article on Ghanaba in this issue). Important research on the connections and heritage of West African drumming and culture and African American traditions (with a focus on jazz) was conducted by master drummers Abraham Kobena Adzenyah, Freeman Kwadzo Donkor, and Edward Blackwell at Wesleyan University between 1981–86. Their work has been published in numerous forms—*The African American Review* and *Percussive Notes*, to name two—and presented in scholarly venues, at least one of which Berliner attended (Annual Convention of the Society for Ethnomusicology, Chicago, October 1991).

The adaptation of Persian and Middle Eastern tuning, melody, rhythms, and form into jazz has been researched, recorded, published, presented, and played live on the New York scene and nationally since 1987 by Hafez Modirzadeh of San Francisco State University (California). His work in reconstructing saxophone tuning through alternate fingerings to match Persian temperament and using this new sound as an essential aspect of improvised solos as well as compositions—as opposed to an incidental, short term effect—constitutes a significant breakthrough in concepts of Western tuning.

These omissions obscure the long standing and committed work of artists who are the leading innovators regarding indigenous Asian, Middle Eastern, and West African traditions and jazz.

In the Introduction and Epilogue, Berliner speaks of an imbalance in the popular conception of jazz improvisation as “spontaneous” and “intuitive” (492) or “without previous preparation” (17), which he hopes to redress by documenting the cognitive aspects of this art. While there is a great amount of rational and intuitive thinking, as well as feeling, extramusical and personal elements, and other human activities which make up the preparation and performance of this music, this seems a curious stance for four reasons.

First, there are myriad styles of personal, idiomatic, and era-related improvisation whose dynamics regarding these issues are different, and thus there is not one, but many kinds of improvisation, each with its own balance of behavioral elements. This work tends to see jazz improvisation as a unified and singular practice, which it is not. Since different eras, styles, and players approach improvisation differently, with various combinations of rational and intuitive thought, feeling, and so on, there is no one definable logic of improvisation, but many. In this regard it mirrors life, a dynamic mix of many human qualities, some knowable, some unknowable. This work, with its focus on rational thinking, does not consider much that

is human and mysterious in improvisation. In jazz, it is what is done with its elements, including logic, not the logic itself, that is important. As a scholarly work, perhaps these considerations are outside its scope; if this is so, it is our loss.

Second, while thinking, feeling, analysis, skill development, intuition, spontaneity, logic, and illogic are many factors involved in jazz improvisation, it is important to distinguish between these factors as activities of preparation—private practice and study, lessons, workshops, rehearsals, and so on—and as those of performance, which is radically different and has its own set of demands and behaviors. It is also necessary to distinguish between analytical, logical thinking and intuitive, spontaneous thinking. Unlike earlier eras when apprentice musicians would learn primarily by observation and in sessions, today’s climate does not encourage informal sessions and apprenticeships. Methods books, tapes, videos, high school and college courses, and formal lessons are the main paths of growth. Transcription, analytical thinking, and theory are elements used in learning, while feeling, intuitive thinking, spontaneity, and the freedom to create by countering the logical and theoretical with precisely the opposite, are tools of performance: an intuitive sensory system or, to quote Abraham Kobena Adzenyah, a “hearing system,” takes over and sound is a direct extension of inner being. To reduce jazz and improvisation to a single logical system from one style era has engendered the reproduction of past improvisational innovations as stylized commodities used as academic models and for car commercials, ignoring the spiritual essence of the music and the organic, creative whole, of which rational thinking is only one part.

Third, the prevalence of such a popular conception is questionable. Where is it articulated? On the contrary, I have found in teaching and discussions with thousands of lay people over twenty-five years that, upon hearing jazz, most *assume* it is a result of considerable preperformance preparation and thought, both individually and in ensemble. In fact, it occasionally takes some convincing to persuade new listeners (those even with considerable artistry in other traditions) that the miraculous interplay in the jazz artform is not fully rehearsed or notated.

Fourth, with the presence of the current method books, tapes, videos, high school and college courses on jazz improvisation mentioned above, the opposite argument could be made, that it has been reduced to a diluted technical training, devoid of those emotional sensibilities and cultural background which are its lifeblood as an African American music. It would be harmful to replace an intuitive stereotype of improvisation, if one existed, with an overly technical-rationalist one, an occurrence which has regretta-

bly plagued general scholarship and especially, the high school and university teaching of jazz.

The academicization of afrocetric oral expression reflects a trend in academia and institutions to study and discuss what is quantifiable and rationally knowable in many disciplines, including music, while excluding the equally real and perhaps more important noncognitive aspects of behavior which integrate with thought. "Jazz is feeling" (Melba Liston, note 17, 792), not "computer music" (Gary Bartz, loc. cit.), and "while the music's still here . . . the voices are gone" (George Duvivier, loc. cit.). Since philosopher René Descartes's dictum (and, ultimately traceable to the Greek philosophers Aristotle or Thales of Miletus) "*cogito, ergo sum*," the Western academy has adopted a similar "we think, therefore we analyze" credo. The resulting artificial separation of thought from other aspects of human consciousness flies in the face of the realities of world cultures and their artistic expression, including the African American tradition known as jazz. This separation of the rational from the intuitive whole is regrettably evident in music schools and universities—as well as contemporary Western society itself—producing, as Berliner notes, legions of technically proficient players locked into one style era and with little or no exposure to the social, cultural, and spiritual realities which are the goal and essence of jazz. Two notable exceptions to this trend are the work of trumpeter/composer/educator William Dixon at Bennington College from 1968 to 1996 and trombonist/composer/educator William Lowe at Wesleyan and Northeastern Universities from 1978 to the present.

Berliner gives an excellent history of changes in the drummer's art in chapter 12, yet his statement "Because of the early commercial position of jazz as accompaniment for dancing, the drummer's central function has been to maintain a strong regular beat within the framework of conventional tempos and meters" (324–45) needs expansion. This role is only one of many historically filled by jazz percussionists. Others include providing a timbral background for musical events, soloing, dialoguing with the ensemble or soloists, anticipating solo, section, or ensemble phrases, marking formal elements such as different sections in a piece's development, and creating intensity and drama in the context of a performance. These functions, evident from the work of Buddy Gilmore in James Reese Europe's ensemble and Baby Dodds, through Chick Webb, Jo Jones, Max Roach, and Elvin Jones, to Anthony Williams, Edward Blackwell, Jack DeJohnette, and Andrew Cyrille, are as important and central to jazz drumming as they are to the artistry of the West African master drummer. Unfortunately, jazz scholarship has relied too heavily on recordings and not enough on the oral

tradition of which these artists are a part. Especially in the early years recordings created an artificial product, although Gilmore's drumming on the 1914 issue of Europe's "Castle House Rag" provides good evidence of his multiple functions. To include dancing as one element in the performance experience does not of itself relegate the music or drumming to a commercial status, especially if one has experienced the dynamic dance styles of West Africa or the Savoy Ballroom: here dance is part of the transcendence, with physical motion a carrier of intensity for both players and dancers. Commercialization from forces external to the art will dilute both dance and music which, on their own, can reach infinity.

One notion of the history of jazz music and drumming held by some scholars and musicians, is that of a grand evolution from simple beginnings in the early decades of this century to more complex structures culminating in bebop and bebop-derived idioms since the 1940s. While there have been new approaches to technique, style, harmonic language, rhythmic practice, instrumentation, and other elements, to posit from these changes an upward progression—as a science in a scientific age—is to miss the meaning of this music tradition. The timbral combinations, formal structures, and possibilities of rhythmic orchestration may have been far more complex in the 1920s than the 1940s or 1950s, while the reverse is true for other elements; complexity does not beget evolution, and the music reaches its transcendent expression from a 1928 Louis Armstrong "West End Blues" or a 1980s Sun Ra "Space Is The Place" as genuinely as it does from Charlie Parker's 1945 "Koko." Or, for that matter, from a lonely Johnnie Lee Moore levee holler.

Berliner's view that the artists interviewed for his work provide a representative sample of the "core of the jazz community" is questionable, since, by his own admission, most "devoted their careers to bebop or related hard bop styles" (Introduction, 7). The 1920s, 1930s, and 1960s to the present represent areas of innovation and empowerment (though never economic), yet their adherents, especially post-1960s non-bebop players, have not been significantly represented here. An examination of early performance practice and the many experimental styles since the 1960s would have shed a different and expansive perspective on the nature of jazz improvisation and contributed greatly to this work.

Improvisation is one means of achieving transcendence in jazz. To limit such a study to one style-era (bebop) as a core, focusing on one cognitive aspect (rational thinking) of one element (improvisation) is both an act of dedicated scholarship—given the depth and size of his research—and a restriction of a topic to a narrow scope, converting a technical means into

an end in itself. This book is commendable (and awe-inspiring) as one tool for understanding jazz and improvisation, but, despite its length and depth, gives an incomplete view of the nature and meaning of each. In reality, there are many era-related, stylistic, instrumental, and personal approaches to jazz improvisation which are all valid. While some of the artists' views in the book can extend to all types of jazz, others cannot; and the author's focus on bebop-centered thinking and systematic logic reflects a general problem in jazz presentation, scholarship, and teaching, the limitation of authentic jazz to one confined style.

Berliner addresses the problems jazz artists encounter in a profit-driven market society during chapters 15 and 16. He relates how club owners, agents, and other business people who determine players' opportunities can adversely affect their careers, demanding high-profile, accessible music and personnel that will sell well to the public, while creating a vicious cycle of necessary yet thwarted recognition and employment that is difficult to break into given the "vise of a tightened market" environment (chapter 15, 431).

He notes how record companies and management often undermine creativity and a player's personal voice in an effort to fulfill perceived market tastes (chapter 16, 465, 474, and 477). By dictating the commercial nature of the music performed; its specific repertoire, arrangement, and style; band personnel; tape editing, length, and mixing; and marketing image, the musicians lose control of their own music and ensembles (chapter 16, 454, 477–483). This usurpation by business interests extends even to royalties, as companies gain publication rights to a piece and, in effect, pay royalties to themselves (478). As Curtis Fuller laments, commercial rock groups are promoted and paid for a year to develop one hit tune while jazz ensembles are rushed into the studio for a short session with complex new material and personnel for quick takes blind to depth and quality (479–480). The authors shows how this phenomenon has plagued jazz during its history, from Billie Holiday (474) to Max Roach and other contemporary artists (481–482).

These outside forces contribute to the dilution and commodification of the artform as a strategy for economic purposes, an entertainment, for control, as, for example, the innovative music of Charlie Parker and John Coltrane being used in television commercials to sell products. Where the fixed and knowable is given primacy, kings of jazz are anointed and, in Berliner's view as well, eurocentric commentators deaf to the music's essence regularly publish critiques and books affecting musicians' careers (note 6 to page 6, 769).

Berliner sees the lack of understanding of jazz and improvisation as a problem for its wider acceptance, and one motive for his book (Introduction, 5). While true, this is only a symptom of the larger dilemmas facing the tradition: the music is, and has historically been, controlled at every level by business interests ignorant of, and unsympathetic to, its meaning; the music is used as a product for economic purposes in capitalist societies diametrically opposed to the nature of its formulation as a communal, shared endeavor; except for a few small FM radio stations, the music is denied the access and exposure which would expand its audience, understanding, and acceptance; the music is conceived, transmitted, and played in many quarters as a fully knowable, quantifiable, logical commodity without addressing its deeper social, historical, political, personal, and spiritual dimensions. These obstacles all spring from one underlying cause which has attended its entire history and prehistory, the denial of, or prejudice against, the artform as an African American music culture. The lack of real appreciation and knowledge, expressed in funny hats and forced comic tap dance routines to pseudo-imaged three-piece power suits, is a function of larger cultural and racial issues ranging from animosity and fear to ignorance of a Black aesthetic.

As an ethnomusicologist and activist for African and African American music and culture, Paul Berliner has demonstrated a level of insight and commitment over the years which have given him a visibility. Although his book has a specific focus which may be seen as technical, in such a large and influential work which deals to some extent with the nature, history, and meaning of jazz, it would have been appropriate and beneficial for him to address these issues and the African American cultural center of the tradition, in order to help readers understand its history, performance practice, improvisation, social organization, and the problems it encounters from disrespect and ignorance, external control, commodification, and lack of access.

Despite these areas where I suggest a different perspective, his work is a masterpiece of preparation, thought, feeling, comprehensive analysis, sensitivity to the artform and its practitioners, and clear, well organized writing. This work, its depth and length, makes obvious that it was an effort of love for jazz music, its heritage as an African American artform, and the people who are its players and listeners.

He has given us a sense of the inner feeling of the music through his own ideas and the words of those who act in it as a way of life. It is a work which musicians and listeners of all levels of experience can grasp and should read. A basic understanding of the music can be derived by the new listener, while

highly complex techniques and issues are brought to light and enriched for the experienced musician and scholar. Its reading will last a lifetime, since its scope and multiple facets—transcriptions, historical documentation, salient and ever surfacing personal, social, and artistic issues, general topics on jazz and improvisation, personal anecdotes of the players, and his own analysis—enable us to use it for many purposes, any one of which would justify its acquisition. I have found a rereading or reexamination of its text and musical materials only enhances the experience and insight gained. In this sense Paul Berliner's book is like a great solo or composition, showing us an aspect of jazz music making from the inside, which only gets better with time.

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It is better to music about music than to talk about music, so in the words of Roland Wiggins, back to the woodshed.