

THE RELATIONSHIP OF JAZZ TO WESTERN CLASSICAL MUSIC

A TWO-WAY CONNECTION

While many have argued that there has never been a close relationship between jazz and Western art music, a case can be made that certain relationships have always existed between these two divergent styles of music. It is the very existence of these relationships that has in many ways helped to enable jazz to move forward, always pushing earlier boundaries, rejecting stereotypes, and redefining itself. Jazz, like most art forms, is an experiment, a workshop producing music not always bound by traditional rules and accepted practices. Sincerity, practicality, freshness, and spontaneity have been its greatest virtues and the only rule often followed has been whether it sounds good. Racial prejudices often were responsible for the early boundaries between jazz and European art music. It was virtually impossible for a black musician to be accepted into an established symphony orchestra or opera company, so by virtue of necessity, African Americans had to create their own music; but musicians on both sides of the imaginary boundary between classical music and jazz, regardless of color, have always valued experimentation and the importance to their art of raising new questions. Perhaps it was this urgent need to experiment that helped to eventually draw black and white musicians together in a quest for new ways to present their music. It is only logical then that there should be common ground between these seemingly disparate musicians. A chronological examination of the bond between these two musical styles will illustrate this point.

EARLY JAZZ

We know that most of the early jazz musicians responsible for formulating the style had very little if any formal training. Few blacks had access to formal music instruction, though the elevated social status of Creoles around the turn of the century in New Orleans promoted their access to higher forms of cultural training and experiences. Pianist and composer Jelly Roll Morton touted his classical background as a Creole by quoting from Chopin's "Funeral March" in his "Dead Man's Blues" recorded by the Red Hot Peppers in 1926. Ragtime, the earliest of jazz styles that served as the basis for much early instrumental jazz, has deep roots in the European tradition, borrowing sophisticated, multi-thematic forms from classical models. While the emphasis on reoccurring syncopations may have been uniquely American, every other aspect of rag compositions was European derived. The premier exponents of this style sought to further validate the ragtime style by composing extended, multi-movement concert works based on their earlier piano works in the style. For example, Scott Joplin composed his first opera, *A Guest of Honor* in 1903, though his publisher refused to publish it and it was performed only once. In 1911 Joplin penned *Treemonisha*, his second more lengthy opera in the rag style. Harlem stride pianist James P. Johnson premiered his symphony *Yamecrow* in Carnegie Hall in 1928. He followed this effort with the *Harlem Symphony* (1934) and *American Symphonic Suite* (1934) among others that represented his efforts to merge jazz with the classical tradition.

It is also well documented that Bix Beiderbecke and some of his cohorts from the Paul Whiteman and Gene Goldkette Orchestras were attracted to the French classical style of composition in the 1920s and created pieces that reflected the impressionistic qualities associated with Claude Debussy, Gabriel Faurè, and Maurice Ravel. Arranger and friend Bill Challis notated several Beiderbecke piano compositions, of which "In a Mist" is best known. Paul Whiteman employed arrangers such as Ferde Grofé who were perhaps most comfortable in the classical tradition. Whiteman himself was a classically trained string player. In his 1926 biography *Jazz*, Whiteman indicates how committed he was to the marriage of the classical music doctrine to the emerging jazz style in order to create a new, American music that was reflective of a new land and new cultural aesthetic. The Whiteman Orchestra's 1924 premier of Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*, orchestrated by Grofé, was his first success, proving that elements of the two divergent styles could coexist. The *Rhapsody* was followed by his *Concerto in F*, *The American in Paris*, and the truly American opera *Porgy and Bess*, later adopted by Gil Evans as a showcase for jazz trumpeter Miles Davis. In the same year that Whiteman premiered Gershwin's *Rhapsody*, society bandleader Vincent Lopez organized a 40-piece orchestra to premiere at the Metropolitan Opera House W. C. Handy's "Evolution of the Blues."



Bandleader Paul Whiteman, promoted as the "King of Jazz" in the 1920s, poses for a publicity shot.

Clarinetist Benny Goodman in a 1954 reunion of his trio with Teddy Wilson on piano and Gene Krupa on drums.



Beiderbecke's lack of formal training became more of an exception than the norm even for many second-generation jazz players, however, and it became commonplace in the mid to late twenties to find jazz musicians who had openly embraced classical training. Their solid traditional foundation enabled them to work in theaters, radio, and other situations that demanded a more classically trained, literate musician. Benny Goodman is an excellent example of the newer breed of jazz musicians to emerge in the late 1920s. Goodman recorded and performed numerous times with classical musicians. His relationship with classical musicians is exemplified by his recording of the Mozart Clarinet Quintet with the Budapest String Quartet (1938). He later commissioned Bela Bartók to compose "Contrasts" (1938) and Aaron Copeland and Paul Hindemith accepted commissions from Goodman in 1947 to create clarinet concertos. As a versatile performer, Goodman premiered both. Copeland had demonstrated his interest in jazz in the twenties when he composed "Music for the Theater" (1925) and the 1927 "Piano Concerto."

MODERN CLASSICAL COMPOSERS EMBRACE JAZZ

Most of the European classical composers discovered early jazz through published sheet music of rags, cakewalks, and two-steps. Some witnessed early jazz firsthand by traveling to New York, while others experienced it through American musicians traveling to Europe in the early twentieth century or through recordings that made their way slowly across the Atlantic. The primary ingredient in jazz that intrigued these classicists was the rhythmic vitality and its experimental nature. Composer John Aldan Carpenter recognized jazz as "the first art innovation originating in America to be accepted seriously in Europe"¹ and Leopold Stokowski, conductor of the Philadelphia Orchestra, admired jazz musicians who "are not hampered by traditions or convention, and with their with new ideas, their constant experiments, they are causing new blood to flow in the veins of music."² Claude Debussy's Gollywog's Cakewalk" and Igor Stravinsky's "Ragtime," "L'Histoire du soldat," and "Piano Rag Music" all show an infatuation with the rhythmic aspects of jazz, however, most are considered more novelties than genuine works that embrace and reflect the essence of jazz. Paul Hindemith's "Suite 1922" illustrates a similar tendency. Darius Milhaud, however, in his 1924 "La Création du monde" "The Creation of the World" retrospectively received the most attention as a work that not only reflects jazz's rhythmic vitality, but also to some degree its instrumentation. A drum set is usually featured in performances of this piece along with the

alto saxophone, rarely heard in classical scores and used here as a substitute for the viola. A jazz-like fugue also helps to establish this work as one of the more successful early twentieth-century classical compositions to embrace jazz. The subject of this fugue is a blues scale based on the juxtaposing of major and minor thirds that is the essence of this fundamental jazz phenomenon. Aside perhaps from this Milhaud work, the early efforts to absorb and reflect elements of jazz in classical scores were for the most part not successful at doing more than creating diluted caricatures of jazz. Milhaud's work, however, pales in comparison to the work of American jazz performers that same year including the efforts by Paul Whiteman and George Gershwin.

Dmitri Shostakovich's "Suite No. 1" (1934) and "Suite No. 2" (1938) are often included in discussions about the influence of jazz on classical composers. It is a stretch to consider either of these works as much more than light, multi-movement works that reflected French cabaret music of the 1920s. The titles—waltz, polka, foxtrot, and march—provide an accurate description of his adaptation of these styles. The use of the term "Jazz" in the titles of these suites is a good example of how this term has been blatantly misused.

Aside from the 12-tone serial composers, Igor Stravinsky was one of the most adventuresome classical composers of the twentieth century. His early interest in jazz is apparent in "L'Histoire du soldat" and "Ragtime." The rhythmically driving ballet scores "Firebird," "Petrouchka," and "The Rite of Spring" served to encourage jazz performers in later years to commission him to create new works in a crossover style. His "Ebony Concerto" was commissioned and premiered by the Woody Herman Band at Carnegie Hall in 1946. The piece is in three movements—Moderato, Andante, and Moderato. There are similarities in this work to his "Symphony in Three Movements" and "Ragtime." Donald Fuller in his 1946 *Modern Music* review declared that the piece "succeeded amazingly in combining jazz elements with the lighter side of [Stravinsky's] neoclassical manner."³ In some ways, Stravinsky's work, like those concert works by James P. Johnson and other cited jazz composers including Duke Ellington, is a precursor to the third-stream jazz style and the numerous chamber jazz works that emerged in the catalog of this movement.

Leonard Bernstein, one of the finest examples of an American musician and true Renaissance man, while upholding the highest standards as a composer and conductor, embraced jazz as a source of inspiration. His score for the musical *West Side Story* is a fine example of how jazz has permeated many aspects of American music, including musical theater. Following Stravinsky's example, Bernstein accepted a 1949 commission from jazz clarinetist and bandleader Woody Herman to create his "Prelude, Fugue and Riffs." While it clearly shows the influence of jazz rhythms and is indebted to the free-spirited improvisatory nature of jazz, Bernstein's work does not make use of the wide range of possibilities available in the jazz orchestra. This piece, like so many others by classical composers up to this point, resembles more closely a traditional wind ensemble piece written in a jazz style featuring a clarinet soloist trained in jazz. The piece is often referred to as a written out jam session, and consequently it lends itself well to performances by non-jazz clarinetists.

THIRD STREAM JAZZ

The fact that significant jazz and classical composers as well as performers like Miles Davis, J. J. Johnson, John Lewis, Duke Ellington, Charles Mingus, and Gunther Schuller were attracted to the idea of merging certain aspects of the jazz tradition with classical composition techniques and instrumentations lends credibility to the third stream jazz movement. While the product of this movement in the mid and late-1950s through early 1960s was not particularly attractive to the general public, nor for that matter to many of the jazz musicians, it was a movement that has endured, had lasting influence, and gained some momentum as time passed. The most definitive recording of works in the third-stream style was produced by Columbia Records in two 1950s recordings—"Music for Brass" (1956) and "Modern Jazz Concert" (1957)—that featured a collection of four compositions commissioned for premier at

Brandeis University's Festival of the Arts. Compositions from these two recordings were later included in an LP compilation entitled *Outstanding Jazz Compositions of the 20th Century*. The recording fell out of print for many years until the long-awaited reissue by Columbia on compact disc entitled appropriately *The Birth of Third Stream*. These landmark recordings, which serve to document the work of crossover composers J. J. Johnson, Gunther Schuller, John Lewis, 12-tone serial composer Milton Babbitt (omitted from the most recent reissue), Charles Mingus, Duke Ellington, and George Russell, represent the wide range of possibilities for composers who are open to the influences of both music styles. It was Schuller, a true Renaissance man in this age of specialization, who participated in the movement and coined the term "third stream" to describe it. As European classical art music is labeled the first stream, American jazz the second, the term third stream seemed appropriate to describe a style of music that combined elements of both traditions. It was a logical direction for jazz composers to pursue, since by the late 1950s jazz had developed a strong tradition with an identity and repertoire that could now withstand the risk of affiliations with the music from which its founders had initially sought distance. Jazz pianist composer John Lewis described it as a "hybrid," while Schuller used the term to include music that "attempts to fuse the essential characteristics of jazz and so called 'classical' music."⁴ While third stream jazz was far more structured and organized from the compositional standpoint than any other style of jazz, composers who work in this style seek to create pieces that present the illusion or impression of spontaneity that is so essential to good jazz. The problem these composers faced was in creating music that, on one hand, was tightly controlled while also allowing the important elements of jazz—rhythmic vitality, spontaneity and the essential element of improvisation - to rule. As many of the pieces from the heart of this period show, this union was a tall order and one that often went unsatisfied. Consequently, much of the original music labeled "third stream" was not well received by either the jazz audience or the classical crowd. In Schuller's own words: "A fair amount of controversy did, of course, surround this kind of music in the 1950s and early 1960s, primarily in the professional magazines and journals. Great fears were expressed on both sides of the stylistic fence that, in coming together, the two musics would seriously damage each other. Jazz critics were worried that the 'spontaneity' of jazz would be severely affected with alleged 'stiffness,' 'straightness,' 'abstractness'—what was deemed the 'academicism' – of modern 'classical music.' Conversely, critics on the 'classical' side either considered these 'experiments' as simplistic and naïve, or were concerned that the sacred precincts of modern music would be contaminated by the populist 'vulgarity' and/or 'simple-mindedness' of jazz."⁵



The Modern Jazz Quartet circa 1956; L-R: bassist Percy Heath, drummer Connie Kay, pianist John Lewis, and vibraphonist Milt Jackson.

Some of the best work found on the aforementioned Columbia recording are those pieces by Modern Jazz Quartet (MJQ) pianist John Lewis, composer/conductor/author Gunther Schuller, bebop trombonist J. J. Johnson, classical composer Milton Babbitt who contributed the 12-tone piece "All Set," George Russell, and of course Duke Ellington.

John Lewis as composer and musical director of the popular MJQ is considered one of the most convincing leaders of the third stream movement. The MJQ did more than any organized group to promote this movement, no doubt because of its commitment to the

"cool," restrained style of jazz and Lewis's education in classical composition techniques. It was then a natural marriage of style for the MJQ personnel. Their initial recording in this vein, *MJQ and Orchestra*, featured works by Lewis, French composer/author André Hodeir, Werner Heider's "Divertimento," and Schuller's adventuresome three-movement "Concertino for Jazz Quartet and Orchestra." Hodeir had studied at the Paris Conservatory with Oliver Messiaen, while the German Heider

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encountered jazz as a member of GI combos during the war years. He later worked as an arranger for German radio orchestras. Some years later in 1987, the quartet issued *Three Windows* featuring its collaboration with the New York Chamber Symphony for which Lewis functioned as composer, conductor, and pianist.

As is the case with many new movements in art, Father Time is often kinder than are contemporary critics, and adventuresome efforts became more widely accepted and respected as time passed. The marriage of classical music and jazz in this third stream tradition is an example of just such a development, for more recent efforts, though not often labeled “third stream,” have become more widely accepted as composers learn how best to marry what on the surface appears to be two polar opposites.

JAZZ INTERPRETATIONS OF CLASSICAL SCORES

Just as classical composers were drawn to jazz by its unique instrumentations, brass mutes, and rhythmic syncopations, jazz composers, arrangers, and performers have been drawn to classical repertoire for its technical challenges and for harmonic and structural inspiration. For example, virtuoso pianist Art Tatum recorded his own interpretations of Massenet’s “Elegie” and Dvorak’s “Humoresque” in the 1930s. The Swing Era gave way to several reinterpretations of classical works by big bands. Tommy Dorsey’s version of Rimsky-Korsakov’s “Song of India” was a popular hit. Innovative big band leader Claude Thornhill, who in many ways was influential in the formation of the Miles Davis Birth of the Cool ensemble, had a penchant for adapting and transforming classical scores to a jazz setting. For example, Thornhill adapted Brahms’ “Hungarian Dance #5” in 1941. Shortly after the war, Gil Evans, while serving as arranger for the more modern Thornhill band, followed suit and penned an arrangement of Tchaikovsky’s “Arab Dance.” Evans’s later work with Miles Davis led to his stirring arrangement of the Rodrigo’s “Concierto de Aranjuez” (originally for guitar and orchestra) and Gershwin’s opera *Porgy and Bess*, two collaborations that constitute landmark works for both the arranger and performer.

Even Duke Ellington, who rarely performed works by other composers other than his collaborator Billy Strayhorn, created swinging versions of Peter Tchaikovsky’s “Nutcracker Suite” and the “Peer Gynt Suites No. 1 & 2” by Anton Grieg. Stan Kenton, the progressive big band leader who emerged in the late 1940s, maintained a cutting-edge big band for 38 years that recorded a much-maligned version of Wagnerian operatic works including “Prelude to Tristan and Isolde” and the Preludes to Acts I and III of *Lohengrin*. This was not Kenton’s only foray into the area of what many referred to as “progressive” orchestral jazz. The Kenton band collaborated with several adventuresome composers to premier new works in a crossover style. His 1951 recording of Bob Graettinger’s multi-movement *City of Glass* recording by his “Innovations in Modern Music” orchestra is now considered a seminal work. Kenton’s Los Angeles Neophonic Orchestra over a decade later premiered new compositions by Hollywood television and film composers who had roots in jazz. This outstanding recording, featuring unusual amalgamations of jazz, film, and classical music styles, has been recently reissued and is cited in the selected list of recordings at the close of this chapter.

The standard big band instrumentation of five saxophones, four trumpets, three or four trombones and three or four rhythm was the classic big band model during the Swing Era and was considered by most to be the best vehicle for the presentation of popular dance music. On the other hand, more contemporary big band leaders like Stan Kenton, Eddie Sauter, and Bill Finegan expanded their band’s instrumentation to provide unique and unusual orchestrations



Miles Davis with arranger Gil Evans in a recording session circa 1955.

Stan Kenton and his innovative orchestra.



that departed radically from the stereotypical dance band tradition. While Sauter and Finegan had done time as arrangers with popular swing bands before starting their own, both shared a penchant for more adventuresome jazz and were interested in classical music. Their arrangements of classical pieces by Beethoven (“Moonlight Sonata”—Finegan), Tchaikovsky (Tchaikovsky Piano Concerto—Finegan), and Prokofiev (which Sauter-Finegan based on “Troika” from the “Lieutenant Kijè Suite”) placed the Sauter-Finegan Band in a unique category almost all its own.

The Boyd Raeburn big band confused dance crowds with its modern arrangements that were often influenced by a mix of European concert music and bebop. The use of French horns and seven woodwinds was highly unusual. The band’s short career from 1944 to 1948 was no doubt due in part to its unpopular repertoire that did not invite dancing, like “Boyd Meets Stravinsky.” For that matter, by the late 1940s even swing dance bands had begun to lose the widespread appeal they had enjoyed a decade earlier.

Critics on both sides of the fence took issue with many of these efforts, particularly those that reshaped masterworks from the classical repertoire to suite the jazz audience. The classical music crowd felt it was sacrilegious to tamper with these great masterworks, while the jazz critics felt these experimenting artists had abandoned the jazz tradition and everything it stood for. They were accused of trivializing great works of art and tainting them with the vulgar, vernacular street language of jazz. Some felt that these efforts only confirmed that jazz performers were once again attempting to elevate themselves and their music from its “low-brow” standing by appropriating “high-brow” works of art already accepted by the intelligencia. Undaunted by their critics, jazz bandleaders and composers continued to tamper with the classical repertoire, lending their own measure of jazz in each new rendition. For example, in the 1960s, the European vocal group the Swingle Singers recorded with a jazz rhythm section their own wordless, scat sung versions of works by Mozart and Bach.

Spurred by the success of the Stanley Kubrick film *2001*, Latin American composer/arranger Eumir Deodato created a popular adaptation of Richard Strauss’s “Also Sprach Zarathustra.” This same self-titled LP featured famed jazz and studio flutist Hubert Laws in Deodato’s rendition of Claude Debussy’s “Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun.” Deodato’s follow-up recording, “Deodato 2,” included adaptations of Gershwin’s “Rhapsody in Blue” and Maurice Ravel’s “Pavane for a Dead Princess.” In each case the music was impeccably played and beautifully recorded on Creed Taylor’s now defunct CTI label, a popular home in the 1970s for beautifully produced studio jazz recordings featuring some of New York’s finest jazz and studio recording musicians. Jazz and film composer Bob James

followed Deodato's lead with his recorded version of Modeste Moussorgsky's "Night on Bald Mountain." This same recording featured his adaptation of Pachelbel's famous "Cannon in D." While not original compositions, these works in their own way brought together two divergent styles and introduced a new musical vocabulary to the jazz composer, performer, and listener.

CTI producer Creed Taylor capitalized that same year on the success of the 1973 Deodato recordings by issuing Don Sebesky's *Giant Box*, a two-record set. Sebesky, a former Maynard Ferguson big band sideman and arranger, created a stir among jazz composers by borrowing excerpts of Stravinsky's ballet score the "Firebird Suite" for his recreation entitled "Birds of Fire." Also included on the

Giant Box is Sebesky's arrangement of Sergei Rachmaninoff's "Vocalise." Six years later he released another double LP entitled *Three Works for Jazz Soloists and Symphony Orchestra*. Once again Stravinsky's music served as Sebesky's inspiration. This time he reconstructed Stravinsky's "The Rites of Spring," using its essential ingredients as a basis to recompose a new work that would serve as a springboard for a parade of exceptional jazz soloists. Also included in this fine recording is his original opus "Concerto for Bird and Bela in Bb," self-described as "a musical account of an imaginary meeting between Charlie 'Bird' Parker and Bela Bartók in the form of a Concerto for Jazz Quintet and Orchestra in the key of Bb."⁶ It is conventional in terms of the concerto formula that features three movements. The Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and jazz soloists Jon Faddis, trumpet; Alex Foster, alto saxophone; Gordon Beck, piano; Richard Davis, bass; and Jimmy Madison, drums, are outstanding on this important recording. The final track included on this LP is the melodically sensuous "Sebastians's Theme" which Sebesky credits to J. S. Bach for inspiration.

Other jazz composers who started their careers during the big band and bebop eras but moved on to embrace classical forms and instrumentations include Manny Albam and Lalo Schifrin among others. Both of these composers have composed multi-movement works in the jazz style, written for film, and utilized string orchestras. Albam's more recent work can be heard on saxophonist Joe Lovano's *Celebrating Sinatra* recording. He also contributed an orchestral jazz work to Jack Elliot's American Jazz Philharmonic. Following his apprenticeship as Dizzy Gillespie's pianist, Schifrin established a career as a film and television composer with his most well know work being the TV series *Mission Impossible*. His best-known concert jazz work is *Gillespiana*, a multi-movement work composed to feature Dizzy Gillespie and his quintet. This recording and others by Albam, J. J. Johnson, Schuller, and Schifrin are included in the discography at the close of this chapter.

JAZZ AND FILM MUSIC

The efforts to marry jazz with classical music, either through the process of recomposing masterworks or creating new works in the classical image, were encouraged by two motivating forces. One was simply the jazz composer's need for self-improvement, much like the spirit that influenced young jazz performers at the end of the big band Swing Era to move jazz in a new direction that would present different challenges to both performer and listener. The other force at work in the 1960s and 1970s was the desire for jazz composers to become active in Hollywood film and television circles. The lure of the film and television industry was great especially for the jazz composer who, following the demise of the big band era, saw



There are many jazz works classified as Third stream that utilize a full symphony orchestra.

few outlets that would provide fame, fortune, and at the very least a steady income. Consequently, many looked to broaden their range of skills as composers and arrangers. Jazz-influenced scores married well to film since the very nature of jazz often conveys a wide range of emotions and moods, and, as a reflection of popular culture, were useful in establishing certain period scenes. Jazz can be very programmatic in nature, as demonstrated numerous times by Duke Ellington, and this attribute attracted many film producers to the music. Have you ever seen a sultry scene from a thriller or detective story that doesn't feature a bluesy, sultry, smoky, seductive, and sensuous saxophone solo?

Those composers who first introduced jazz to the cinema and television were Duke Ellington (*Asphalt Jungle*, *Paris Blues* and *Anatomy of a Murder*), Elmer Bernstein with his jazz score to the film *The Man with the Golden Arm*, and Henry Mancini with his score for the TV program series *Peter Gunn*. Neither Mancini nor Bernstein can be considered real jazz composers, but their success served to encourage jazz composers and lure them to Hollywood. Two such composers were bebop trombonist J. J. Johnson and saxophonist Oliver Nelson. Nelson contributed several important jazz recordings in the 1960s including "Blues and the Abstract Truth" and numerous recordings featuring jazz organist Jimmy Smith. Like Duke Ellington, many of Nelson's scores, or at least their titles, showed his commitment to the equal rights movement and the African-American race in general. "Emancipation Blues" and "Black, Brown and Beautiful" (Ellington composed "Black, Brown, and Beige") serve as good examples of his use of the Ellingtonian model. Nelson also created several multi-movement suites, again following in the Ellington tradition. His most well know is the *Jazzhattan Suite* recorded on the Verve label. Nelson became a successful film and television composer supplying an exceptional score featuring Sonny Rollins for the movie *Alfie* as well as music for the television series *Ironsides* featuring actor Raymond Burr. J. J. Johnson, an important bebop trombone innovator, became very involved in the initial third stream movement along with Schuller. Johnson subsequently served as composer, arranger, and orchestrator in Hollywood for many films and TV shows. His most noted multi-movement jazz concert work, aside from his third stream *Poem [Suite] For Brass* is *Perceptions*, written to feature Dizzy Gillespie.

MODERN JAZZ ARTISTS EMBRACE CLASSICAL MUSIC

Perhaps no jazz artist has done more to elevate jazz to concert status than Duke Ellington (see Chapter 7). Ellington's efforts in the form of numerous multi-movement suites for jazz band, sacred works for big band, chorus and soloists, film scores, musicals, and ballet (*The River* premiered by the Alvin Ailey Dance Company) established models that illustrated how jazz could be presented in a more serious light and how certain aspects of the classical tradition could be merged with jazz. Jazz pianist and composer Mary Lou Williams (see Chapter 8) created "The Zodiac Suite," which was originally conceived for trio and solo piano, later served as the inspiration for the full orchestral version premiered in part at New York's prestigious Carnegie Hall. It was performed in its entirety at New York's Town Hall in 1946. These first modern jazz composers laid the groundwork for the postmoderns who followed, creating in some cases works that have remained relatively obscure. For example, German composer Rolf Lieberman's "Concerto for Jazz Band and Orchestra" remains a rarely performed work. The Chicago Symphony who joined forces with the Sauter/Finegan Orchestra recorded it for the RCA label. In addition to Lieberman's demanding 12-tone-influenced score, the recording featured other works by innovative composer Eddie Sauter and Bill Finegan. As the notes that accompany this recording suggest, "the Sauter-Finegan Orchestra was the standard bearer of an avant-garde and intellectual form of jazz that went far beyond the jazz forms known as 'New Orleans,' 'Kansas City,' 'Chicago,' and 'bebop'". Premiered by conductor Fritz Reiner at Chicago's Orchestra Hall in 1954, the United Press reviewed the performance, reporting "A mixed crowd of 'hepcats' and classicists heard a cacophonous explosion and voiced their approval by giving Reiner and his orchestra one of

the longest ovations ever heard on ‘Symphony Night’ in Orchestra Hall.”⁷ The composer said that his concerto was an attempt to bring current dance music into “art” music. Lieberman stressed that dance had always been closely intertwined with the developments of European classical music as was the case in modern American culture, but the instrumentations and performance practices differed radically. Lieberman said that: “These considerations forced me to use two ‘specialized’ orchestras [in his “Concerto”]. Toward the end of the nineteenth century ‘art music lost contact with the practical dance music of the day. Twentieth Century symphonic music, which was so closely bound to music for practical use, has become completely emancipated [from dance].” Liebermann went on to analyze his work: “Three classical jazz forms were used: the ‘jump,’ the ‘blues,’ and the ‘boogie-woogie.’ Since these dances are all in 4/4 time, the interludes of the symphony orchestra were largely built on irregular meters (3,5,7,9). In the end the two orchestras come together in the South American dance rhythm of the mambo.”⁸ Ironically, and despite the apparent favorable reception of Liebermann’s innovative concerto, it has had few performances since its premier.

Jazz composer and theorist George Russell has managed to create a body of work throughout his lifetime that transcends the traditional. He has refused to conform to either standard jazz or European classical traditions. His first major effort as a jazz composer was commissioned by Dizzy Gillespie and he scored “Cubano-Be, Cubano Bop” for Gillespie’s Cu-bop big band of the mid-1940s. Russell’s harmonic and rhythmic language in this piece is unencumbered by the prior jazz tradition and in fact reflects a great deal of classical influences. Russell’s “A Bird in Igor’s Yard” makes obvious reference to Charlie “Bird” Parker and Igor Stravinsky. Russell’s subsequent efforts as a composer were largely the result of his major treatise on jazz theory that he described as his *Lydian Chromatic Concept of Tonal Organization*. While there have been many published books about the theories of music relating to classical music, this treatise represents the first effort on the part of a jazz personality to articulate new concepts and precepts about the nature of music and the way it can be organized for a jazz setting. Russell’s “Concerto for Billy the Kid,” which featured pianist Bill Evans in a stunning performance, and his three-movement suite *All About Rosie*, which was commissioned by the Brandeis Festival, are all concrete examples of the applications of the theories presented in his Lydian chromatic theoretical treatise.

Since the 1960s, many jazz artists came to jazz following a well-grounded education on their instruments in the classical tradition. It is no surprise then that more and more artists began to fulfill dreams that included performing classical repertoire with orchestras, or partnering with composers who have created new works in a crossover style. While Artie Shaw, Charlie Parker, and Clifford Brown had recorded with string and chamber groups, the music they recorded was little more than pop standards arranged for an ensemble of classical musicians that allowed for brief improvisations. Pianist Bill Evans is a good example of the next generation of more classically trained jazz musicians that followed and whose work constituted a more complete melding of styles. He began a relationship with composer/conductor Claus Ogerman in 1966 when he recorded Ogerman’s adaptations of classical works for piano and orchestra. Their recording included arranged works by Scriabin, Faure, Bach, Chopin, and Granados. In 1974 Evans and Ogerman were reunited to record Ogerman’s *Symbiosis* composed to feature Evans’s trio with a large orchestra of strings and New York-based studio wind players well versed in the jazz tradition. At first listenings the work provides a riveting, fresh and extremely captivating experience, though further listening sessions reveal its unevenness over the course of two lengthy movements. Evans is



The conductor plays a paramount role in classical music performances. Rarely is this the case in jazz. However, large scale compositions in the Third stream style often offer an exception to this form.

featured on both acoustic and electric piano—a trendy instrument in the 1970s. Despite its flaws, Ogermann’s work came one step closer to realizing a more amicable marriage between the jazz and classical traditions.

Tenor saxophonist Stan Getz, associated with the Cool and Bop styles of jazz, was featured soloist on an innovative suite of works for strings, bass, and drums created for Getz by Eddie Sauter. The suite, entitled *Focus*, was recorded on the Verve label in 1961 by an under-rehearsed string ensemble including the Beaux-Arts String Quartet with Roy Haynes on drums and featuring Getz in obbligato improvisations. Sauter provided Getz with only abbreviated sketches of the orchestral scores to use as a basis for his improvisations. The result is exceptional and should be required listening for this chapter despite the poorly rehearsed orchestra. The opening movement, “I’m Late, I’m Late,” is an obvious homage to Stravinsky, who exerted a great influence on jazz composers and performers from this era and for decades to follow.

It would be remiss not to mention the efforts by pianist/composer Dave Brubeck. Brubeck, who studied composition with Darius Milhaud in the 1940s considers himself a composer who happens to play the piano. The press has focused primarily on his work as leader of the popular jazz quartet, though his classical background in composition is obvious when one considers his entire output. Brubeck has composed ballets, a musical, an oratorio, four cantatas, a mass, and various works for jazz quartet and orchestra. His most widely performed works from this catalog are those of religious nature.

The German ECM record label founded in the 1970s and discussed in some detail in Chapter 14 did much to encourage and enhance the careers of American crossover jazz artists who coupled jazz with various aspects of the European classical traditions as well as with world music. Perhaps the label’s most successful artist in this regard was Keith Jarrett whose solo piano recordings established him as a major force in the 1970s. The success of these recordings led to further recordings featuring his compositions for various instrumentations from small chamber ensembles to full orchestra. While improvisation was often one aspect of these Jarrett pieces, it is often difficult to classify them as jazz. His ECM recordings “In the Cave,” “Luminescence,” with the Stuttgart Philharmonic, and “Abour-Zena” defy categorization or stylistic classification and labels. In addition, he has also performed and recorded classical repertoire and improvisations on harpsichord and organ.

The 1970s, while remembered as the decade when acoustic jazz was forgotten, did in fact foster a number of experimental and non-electric jazz excursions, including one that combined both elements. “Apocalypse,” released by Columbia Records in 1974, featured an unusual combination of the electrified Mahavishnu Orchestra with the London Symphony Orchestra under the baton of Michael Tilson Thomas. This recording brings together the electrifying fusion sounds of John McLaughlin’s influential high-energy, jazz-fusion group (Mahavishnu) and the traditional orchestra with orchestrations by Michael Gibbs. The music is a reflection of the seventies as it is both frenetic and meditative. The odd-meters that deviated from the traditional 4/4 or 3/4 time signatures were also indicative of the times. For example, trumpet player/composer Don Ellis, who fused strings with his big band to explore not only odd-meters but also music of world cultures, used a specially designed trumpet capable of playing quarter-tones. This trumpet gave him the capability of adding 12 more pitches to the traditional 12-tone chromatic scale. Ellis’s recordings generated much more attention than the aforementioned Mahavishnu orchestral recording, which was unfortunate since Gibbs’ effort to bring together two seemingly diverse music genres was quite successful.

Pianist/composer Roger Kellaway studied piano and composition at the New England Conservatory. Following his studies at NEC he performed with mainstream jazz groups led by artists such as saxophonists Al Cohn and Zoot Simms and brass men Clark Terry and Bob Brookmeyer. Later he enjoyed a successful career in Hollywood composing for film and television. In 1971 he was commissioned by George Balanchine to create a ballet score (*PAMTGG*). During this same decade he premiered *Portraits of Time* with the Los Angeles

Philharmonic and he formed the successful Cello Quartet. Consisting of piano, bass, cello, and percussion, Kellaway's Cello Quartet featured an interesting blend of improvisation, classical composition techniques, and an unusual instrumentation. It is therefore apparent that the seventies was not without a number of interesting experiments in jazz composition, which intermingled aspects of both music worlds in an effort to create a final product that was neither.

Avant-garde composers such as Cecil Taylor, Ornette Coleman, and Anthony Braxton have also contributed works that defy classification and fuse elements of jazz and contemporary classical music. In each case, these composer/performers utilized some instruments not typically associated with the jazz style and required these performers to be familiar with jazz performance practices and the art of free improvisation. While they may require the performers to improvise and step out of their traditional classical or jazz roles, their music often utilizes some instruments associated with the jazz style and requires performers familiar with jazz performance practices. Ornette Coleman's historic "Skies of America" for full orchestra is just such a work. Anthony Braxton, who has moved freely in both contemporary classical and jazz circles, has even composed a lengthy opera. His "Creative Orchestra Music 1976," an excerpt of which is included on the accompanying anthology, is one of the most outstanding and innovative recordings from the 1970s and stands as evidence that much still remains to be accomplished with the big band.

JAZZ PLAYERS WHO PERFORM CLASSICAL MUSIC

Benny Goodman was perhaps one of the first, if not the first jazz musician to show that versatility could be a virtue and that jazz musicians were capable of performing classical music, if properly trained. Many have followed his lead and some of these efforts have already been sited. It is worth adding several additional performers to a growing list of crossover artists, no doubt the result of university and conservatory programs around the country that have embraced jazz. For example, Keith Jarrett, Chick Corea, and Herbie Hancock are exceptionally well-trained classical pianists. Corea recorded a Mozart concert work with the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra with contemporary vocal wizard Bobby McFerrin conducting. McFerrin, a crossover performer who has enjoyed a multi-faceted career as a uniquely gifted, improvising vocalist and orchestra conductor, is a contemporary artist who defies categorization. As a vocalist, he often performs a capella with a wide-ranging repertoire from Bach to contemporary pop and jazz. Clarinetist Eddie Daniels, another well-schooled performer, gave up the tenor saxophone to actively pursue his career as a clarinetist at a time when few wanted to hear jazz played on an instrument that had fallen out of favor with musicians and listeners following the close of the swing era. He is an incredible musician whose "Breakthrough" recording on the GRP label leaves no room for doubt about his ability to travel comfortably in classical and jazz circles. On this recording he presents rearranged works by J. S. and C. P. E. Bach and contemporary Italian composer Jorge Calandrelli who contributed his "Concerto for Jazz Clarinet and Orchestra" to the session. The orchestral arrangements showcased on this recording are stellar, as is Daniels's unbelievable technical command of his instrument and liquid tone from register to register.

The Marsalis brothers have also each ventured into the area of classical music, Wynton being the most successful and chalking up Grammy awards the same year for both jazz and classical recordings. No other jazz artist has ever received this distinction. His collaborations with opera soloist Kathleen Battle are also memorable. Brother Branford contributed his own recording of classical works featuring the soprano saxophone on his CD *Romances*.

CURRENT EVENT IN MODERN TIMES

A handful of young and some seasoned foot soldiers are still composing for the jazz orchestra, breathing new life into the nearly forgotten big band medium. Composers such as Vince Mendoza, Maria Schneider, Bob Brookmeyer, Jim McNeely, and Jeff Beal have provided evidence that there is still life in this old medium. In particular, Vince Mendoza's *Epiphany* featuring the London Philharmonic Orchestra and an impressive cast of American jazz soloists offers a lesson in how best to merge these two divergent art forms. While this recording may have gone nearly unnoticed, his subsequent partnership with Joni Mitchell was recognized with a Grammy award for elegant orchestrations of standards. Maria Schneider's recent big band recordings *Allegresse* and *Concert in the Garden* deserve mention here also because of the groundbreaking scores that lead the listener to imagine a much larger, more orchestral ensemble than what is actually present. Inspired by collaborations with dancers, her music often implies dance-like gestures and scenic panoramas. Schneider has reinvented the jazz orchestra and navigated an entirely new course for this medium. Brookmeyer and McNeely also have shown that composition techniques borrowed from the classical world have useful applications to the big band format. Jeff Beal has composed for the famed Netherlands Metropole Orchestra (for which Mendoza serves as resident guest conductor) among others and contributed the score for the recent Oscar winning film *Pollack*. Several of these composers' best works are included in the discography at the close of this chapter. In every case, these contemporary jazz composers have all broken away from shopworn forms developed by Swing Era writers and conquered the problem of creating lengthy, episodic works for the big band. Much of their work is done in Europe where great respect for these American pioneers is logical since this new music is often fraught with European influences.

In the early years, the organization of a jazz concert where audiences were required to listen instead of dance or socialize at the bar was in itself no small accomplishment. Early pre-jazz artist James Reese Europe organized such a concert at Carnegie Hall in 1912 and was no doubt the first to lay claim to this accomplishment. Benny Goodman's famed 1938 Carnegie Hall performance, which he called "From Spirituals to Swing," gave even more credence to the idea of presenting jazz in a well respected concert venue. This performance also did much to advance the notion that jazz had a traceable history and had evolved from a well-defined tradition in America. Venues like Carnegie Hall, Aeolian Hall, Chicago's Orchestra Hall, and later Lincoln Center were considered hallowed halls for the recreation of European masterworks, but now in the twenty-first century, these old attitudes have deteriorated because of the earlier efforts of jazz and classical artists. We now see classical artists such as conductor/pianist Daniel Barenboim collaborating with members of his Chicago Symphony in renditions of Ellington classics. Noted classical clarinetist Richard Stoltzman has admitted that he enjoys if not aspires to be a "jazzier." He was, therefore, the natural choice to collaborate with Woody Herman's contemporary big band to recreate Stravinsky's "Ebony Concerto" in 1987. Opera diva Renée Fleming worked her way through college singing scat in local clubs and now sees this background as a distinct advantage in her interpretation of Baroque repertoire that requires elaborate ornamentations.⁹ Europe's greatest composers through the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries often were convincing improvisers, and their music frequently reflected the folk, religious, and dance music of the day. It is interesting to observe contemporary jazz musicians being drawn to this esthetic and the classical repertoire while classical musicians are lured back to the earlier tradition of improvisation.

Perhaps no composer has done more to develop a jazz-like repertoire for the classical musician in the latter part of the twentieth century than Claude Bolling. This contemporary French jazz pianist and film composer has, in the past several decades, produced a steady output of crossover pieces that combine the skills of a classically trained soloist and his jazz piano trio. Each work has been recorded and published with the first success established by his "Suite for Flute and Jazz Piano" recorded by the renowned classical flutist Jean-Pierre Rampal in 1975. The success of this piece encouraged a second suite for the same instrumentation along with similar showcases for trumpet ("Toot Suite"), violin ("Suite for Violin and Jazz

Piano Trio”), and cello (“Suite for Cello and Jazz Piano Trio”) which was recorded by Yo-Yo Ma, and the “Concerto for Guitar and Jazz Piano.” These pieces offer very little if any opportunity for improvisation on the part of the soloist and most of the “jazz” is left up to the trio of piano, bass, and drums. These pieces are, nevertheless, performed frequently when classical artists wish to provide some variety.

On the other side of the collapsing fence that once served as a real boundary between jazz and classical music, jazz players schooled in the classical tradition are adding their own entrée to the twenty-first century menu. Now that there is an established tradition of jazz being performed in the same settings as European concert music, jazz artists like Wynton Marsalis and Jon Faddis formed alliances with the Lincoln Center and Carnegie Hall. Wynton Marsalis is conductor of the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra, which offers a full subscription season much like symphony orchestras and spends a good many weeks a year touring. Marsalis also serves as the program coordinator for *Jazz at Lincoln Center*, a concert series dedicated to promoting jazz at the Center. Faddis led the Carnegie Hall Jazz Orchestra, dedicated not only to commissioning and premiering new works, but also presents new renditions of older jazz standards from the repertoire. Unfortunately, this was a short-lived effort.

American contemporary jazz pianist Uri Caine, trained in the European classical tradition, has been very successful at erasing boundaries. His recordings of deconstructed, rearranged masterworks have caught the eye of listeners and critics. One such project produced a two-CD reworking of works by Gustav Mahler entitled *Gustav Mahler in Toblach*. Caine has also tackled works by Robert Schumann (*Love and Fugue: Robert Schumann*), Richard Wagner (*Wagner e Venezia*), and most recently Bach’s enigmatic “Goldberg Variations.” As was the case with earlier remakes of classical works, Caine’s work has not gone without its critics, yet the music world seems more open now to the cross-pollination process, hopeful that the results will rejuvenate music for twenty-first century.

The ongoing controversy that surrounds the merging of jazz and classical music will continue, as it has since Paul Whiteman first combined street music with the respectable orchestra; but controversy is good and often prompts further experimentation, pushing boundaries and challenging performers and composers to achieve new heights. The future of jazz may in fact rest on new ways to fold other styles of music into itself, creating new sounds that challenge listeners and performers. Jazz has traveled much ground since its birth only one century ago and will continue revitalization by absorbing and reflecting other types of music. There is no reason why classical music cannot be one such source for new inspiration. For that matter, in this twenty-first century, what is classical music? It may be that the best result of new collaborations and hybrid mixes will resemble neither classical music nor jazz, but something all together different and be identified as simply American music.

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

- American Jazz Philharmonic*
GRP
GRD-9730
- Eddie Daniels: Breakthrough*
GRP
GRPD-9533
- The Best of Claude Thornhill*
Columbia
CK 46152
- Stravinsky/Milhaud Woody
Herman & Orchestra*
Everest
EVC 9049
- Mary Lou Williams: The Zodiac
Suite*
Vintage Jazz Classics
VJC-1035
- James P. Johnson: Victory
Stride*
Music Masters Classics
01612-67140-2
- Stan Getz Focus*
Verve
821 982-2
- Bill Evans Trio: With Symphony
Orchestra*
Verve
821 983-2
- Bill Evans Symbiosis*
Verve
314 523 381-2
- Duke Ellington: Three Suites*
Columbia
CK 46825
- Art Tatum*
Best of Jazz
4022
- Stan Kenton—City of Glass by
Bob Graettinger*
Capitol Jazz
7243 8 32084 2 5
- Stan Kenton Conducts the Los
Angeles Neophonic Orchestra*
Capitol Jazz
CDP 7243 4 94502 2 6
- Liebermann: Concerto for Jazz
Band and Symphony Orchestra*
RCA Gold Seal
AGL1-3882
- R. Lieberman, I. Stravinsky, D.
Ellington: Jazz Concerto*
Arkadia AK 145.1
- Don Sebesky: Three Works for
Jazz Band Soloists and
Symphony Orchestra*
DCC Jazz
DJZ-639
- George Russell: Jazz in the
Space Age*
MCA Records
MCA2-4017
- The Swingle Singers: Anyone
for Mozart*
Philips
PHS 600-149
- Prelude—Deodato*
CTI
CTI-6021
- Deodato 2*
CTI
CTI 6029
- Don Sebesky Giant Box*
CTI
CTX 6031/32
- Three Windows: The Modern
Jazz Quartet with the New York
Chamber Symphony*
Atlantic Jazz
8176-1
- The Modern Jazz Quartet and
Orchestra*
Atlantic
1359
- Ebony: Richard Stoltzman &
Woody Herman's Thundering
Herd*
RCA Victor 6486-2-RC
- The Birth of Third Stream*
Columbia CK 64929
- Russell Garcia's Variations for
Flugelhorn, String Quartet,
Bass, and Drums*
Trend-Discovery Records TR-
522
- William Russo's Street Music,
Op. 65: A Blues Concerto*
Deutsche Gramophone 2530 788
- Joseph Horowitz's Jazz
Concerto and
Fritz Pauer's Concerto for Big
Band and Symphony Orchestra*
Aries Records LP-1616
- Leonard Bernstein Conducts
Music of Our Time*
Columbia ML 6133
- Mahavishnu Orchestra:
Apocalypse*
Columbia C 32957
- Benny Goodman Collector's
Edition: Barkók, Bernstein,
Copland, Stravinsky*
CBS Masterworks M 42227
- Bob James One*
CTI 6043
- Don Ellis: Tears of Joy*
Columbia G 30927

CHAPTER NOTES

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