Rethinking Interaction in Jazz Improvisation*

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ABSTRACT: In recent years, the notion that “good jazz improvisation is sociable and interactive just like a conversation” (Monson 1996, 84) has become near-conventional wisdom in jazz scholarship. This paper revisits this assumption and considers some cases in which certain sorts of interactions may not always be present or desirable in jazz performance. Three types of improvised interaction are defined: (1) “microinteraction,” which occurs at a very small scale (e.g. participatory discrepancies) and is not specific to jazz; (2) “macrointeraction,” which concerns general levels of musical intensity; and (3) “motivic interaction”—players exchanging identifiable motivic figures—which is a chief concern of today’s jazz researchers. Further, motivic interaction can be either dialogic, when two or more musicians interact with one another, or monologic, when one player pursues a given musical strategy and others respond but the first player does not reciprocate (as in “call and response”). The paper concludes by briefly considering some of the reasons for, and implications of, the emergence of interaction-oriented jazz scholarship during the late twentieth century.

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[1] In the wake of Paul Berliner’s and Ingrid Monson’s landmark interview-based research of the mid-1990s, the notion that “good jazz improvisation is sociable and interactive just like a conversation” (Monson 1996, 84) has become near-conventional wisdom in the field of jazz studies. Numerous other scholars have since demonstrated conclusively that spontaneous ensemble interaction is a prominent element of jazz, and in so doing have greatly enriched our knowledge and understanding of this signal Afrodiasporic art form as both a musical and a social practice. Some have even gone so far as to characterize jazz as “a music that demands interaction” (Doffman 2011, 213); it has been said that dialogical interplay between participants is “fundamental and always present” within the idiom (Szwed 2000, 65), that it is “continual” (Gratier 2008, 80) and “constant throughout a performance” (Iyer 2004, 394), and that “if [it] doesn’t happen, it’s not good jazz” (Monson 1996, 84). Yet the concept of interaction in jazz nevertheless remains somewhat undertheorized. More still needs to be said about what, exactly, it is, and about the various roles it plays in everyday performance practice.

[2] For the purposes of this discussion, I define musical interaction as involving one or more members of an ensemble improvising spontaneously in response to what other participants are playing. Improvisation, in itself, need not necessarily be interactive. But interaction, as defined here, occurs extemporaneously, rather than being predetermined in the manner of a
scripted conversation or, say, the contrapuntal interplay in a fugal Baroque composition. Musicians’ statements and performance practices suggest that interaction, so conceived, can take a variety of different forms, some of which are ubiquitous in most any live performed music, including jazz, while others—including modes of interaction that are considered highly characteristic of jazz—are far from omnipresent in this particular idiom and can even at times be undesirable. If we can better understand when and why jazz musicians sometimes claim to prefer noninteractive performance conditions, we will be able to recognize more clearly the nature and limits of improvisatory interaction itself, as well as to differentiate more precisely between some of its various manifestations. We will also be positioned to briefly step back and consider why interaction emerged as a major focus of jazz scholarship at a particular point in time, and this trend’s consequences for how jazz is viewed within the academy today.

[3] Jazz musicians do not always regard ensemble interaction as essential. For one thing, the idiom has a long tradition of unaccompanied solo playing. Pianist Billy Taylor (1921–2010) once observed that:

Many keyboard players enjoy improvising alone because solo playing gives them the freedom to organize all the elements of their music completely on their own terms. When playing solo, they do not have to react or respond to musical phrases, harmonic tensions, or rhythmic patterns provided by other musicians, as they do in jazz groups. Sometimes this leads to self-indulgent music which is boring and formless, but on other occasions the player is able to create music which is meaningful to many listeners on many different levels (1982, 23).

Needless to say, jazz is a diverse art form, and Taylor plainly depicts solo playing as an exception to the norm. Moreover, when playing unaccompanied, many jazz pianists tend to mimic the idiom’s typical interactive group format by enacting several ensemble roles concurrently. Taylor himself might treat a rubato unaccompanied ballad as an opportunity for unfettered pianistic self-expression, but when playing up-tempo alone he was more likely to support his right hand’s horn-like melodic lines with left-hand stride patterns, walking tenths, or chordal bebop comping, all strategies embodying the dynamics of a multi-person rhythm section.

[4] Unaccompanied playing, as described by Taylor, can of course be considered merely an exceptional—though quite widespread—limit case within a prevailing interactive jazz aesthetic. In ensembles, real-time improvised interplay is common, as many studies have demonstrated. But even among jazz players who directly cite the importance of collective ensemble interaction, musical practices vary considerably. Pianist and composer Horace Silver (1927–2014) described a good rhythm section as one that “really hit[s] it together” and “make[s] the horn players better” (Lyons 1983, 124). Yet it is not self-evident how, precisely, he might actualize this sort of collaborative, altruistic performance ethic, and whether it necessarily involves interactive techniques. While accompanying trumpeter Miles Davis’s first solo chorus on a 1954 recording of “Doxy” (transcribed in Example 1), Silver undoubtedly coordinates temporally and stylistically with bassist Percy Heath and drummer Kenny “Klook” Clarke to create an effective “groove” texture, but unambiguous moments or passages of interaction between the players are otherwise not easy to discern. The pianist himself said that synchronization and “groove” were aesthetic desiderata when working with this particular rhythm section, recalling that “Percy Heath told me to listen carefully to Klook’s cymbal beat so that I would be turned on and be able to groove with him” (Silver 2006, 60). He thought a jazz rhythm section’s primary obligation was to support a soloist with an inspiring, idiomatically appropriate musical environment—“we’ve got to raise our hands and uplift them to the sky” (Lyons 1983, 124); “when everything is cooking, the rhythm section is cohesive, everything is smooth, . . . it’s like you’re sailing, floating around in space, there’s not no real effort to anything” (Gleason 2016, 221). But still, the role of ensemble interaction, to this end, is hardly clear; within the transcribed trumpet chorus from “Doxy” there are few obvious, specific instances of responsorial rhythmic or melodic exchange. Silver’s own piano solo later in the same performance (Example 2) likewise evinces fairly little, if any, readily identifiable motivic interaction between pianist, bassist, and drummer.

[5] In some instances, jazz musicians have expressly stated that interactive musical processes can at times be undesirable or even creative hindrances. Davis (1926–91) recalled that, while he was playing in alto saxophonist Charlie Parker’s Quintet during the 1940s, Parker “used to turn the rhythm section around. Like we’d be playing a blues, and Bird [i.e., Parker] would start on the eleventh bar, and as the rhythm section stayed where they were and Bird played where he was it sounded as if the rhythm section was on one and three instead of two and four. Every time that would happen, [drummer] Max Roach used to scream at [pianist] Duke Jordan not to follow Bird, but to stay where he was. Then, eventually it came round as Bird had planned and we were together again” (Hentoff 1959, 90, quoted in Carr 1998, 35–36). By Davis’s account, such performances were most likely to turn out successfully if the rhythm section steadfastly adhered to the predetermined meter...
and harmonies without directly responding to Parker's rhythmically complex solo lines—by, in effect, limiting their interaction with the saxophonist in certain crucial respects, so as not to become distracted or confused.

Soloists, too, sometimes prefer that rhythm sections not interact much with the spotlighted individual improviser. “I've always thought that I want to have a steady bass player and a steady rhythm section,” reflects tenor saxophonist Sonny Rollins (b. 1930). “When I got those guys to just play steady, then I could play more abstractly. . . . I've always looked for guys to play the song form, then I can extemporize on it, rather than guys who want to go, ‘Oh, this is a phrase that sounds good, let me go with that phrase.’” In a similar vein, alto saxophonist Lou Donaldson (b. 1926) told Berliner that he prefers “the piano player to play as basic as he can. He should play the basic chords to the song and leave the improvisation to me. A lot of piano players talk about feeding me ideas, but I don't need no feeding” (1994, 406). And if Rollins and Donaldson, as soloists, evidently find overtly responsive or suggestive accompanists to be somewhat of an encumbrance, rhythm section players, by the same token, may consider markedly interactive horn players to have compromised their own creative independence. The pianist and composer Thelonious Monk (1917–82), according to his saxophonist sideman Steve Lacy (1934–2004), “never told me what to do, but he told what not to do when I did something that bothered him. For example, when we were playing together sometimes he would play something on the piano and I would pick that up and play that on my horn, and I thought I was being slick, you know. And he stopped me and he said, ‘Don't do that. I'm the piano player; you play your part—I'm accompanying you. Don't pick up on my things’” (Gross 1997). Ethnomusicologist Gabriel Solis recounts that, when hiring sidemen, Monk likewise “sought out drummers who played solid, traditional time” and was less disposed towards busy, rhythmically challenging percussionists such as his occasional accompanist Roy Haynes (2008, 122). All told, these musicians each suggest that certain sorts of interaction can be detrimental, and that sometimes it is best for jazz players to adhere to conventional ensemble roles without immediately responding or otherwise adapting to one another's spontaneous flights of inspiration.

To be sure, the foregoing anecdotes tell only part of the story, and one reason the concept of musical interaction has proven so interpretatively fruitful is that it can be, and has been, applied to a much broader variety of jazz performance techniques than those mentioned so far. For the sake of precision, I find it helpful to distinguish between three different kinds of interaction which, though neither discrete nor exhaustive, all commonly occur during group performances in many musical idioms, including jazz. I call the first of these “microinteraction.” Microinteraction takes place at a very fine level of musical detail, too small in scale to be quantified by standard Western notation, and includes such phenomena as the tiny adjustments in tempo, dynamics, pitch, and articulation that musicians make while playing together. In any idiom, microinteraction is essential for live ensemble music making (Clayton 2013, 34)—Nicholas Cook notes that classical string quartet players interact spontaneously while collectively negotiating the musical parameters that their scores do not dictate: “the players listen to one another, each accommodating his or her intonation to the others” (2013, 235), and likewise “each is continuously . . . accommodating his or her timing to the others”, giving rise to a shared, communal temporality” (2004, 15). Temporal microinteraction, in particular, is always a precondition for musical ensembles to remain synchronized because humans are not individually capable of maintaining perfect objective timing; a group performance would quickly unravel without the sort of microinteractive coordination Cook describes.

The Miles Davis Quintet engaged in some unusually tangible temporal microinteraction during some live performances that were recorded in late 1965 at the Plugged Nickel in Chicago. On a rendition of “No Blues,” tenor saxophonist Wayne Shorter (b. 1933) begins his solo at a tempo of approximately quarter note = 180, so that his first twelve-bar blues chorus spans more than fifteen seconds (track time 3:27; Example 3a). Gradually the ensemble—spurred by the rhythm section of pianist Herbie Hancock, bassist Ron Carter, and drummer Tony Williams—accelerates its tempo until, by Shorter's ninth chorus, they together reach a pace of roughly quarter note = 336, with twelve bars elapsing in under nine seconds (4:58; Example 3b). Their tempo then starts to slow incrementally, subsiding to quarter note = 140 as Shorter's solo ends (9:12; Example 3c). Clearly such steady, yet extreme, ensemble tempo changes require continual microinteractive synchronization, with all members of the group listening attentively to one another while adjusting their tempo at a rate that is almost imperceptible from each beat to the next (Rasch 1988; Goebel and Palmer 2009).

The more typical, everyday modes of temporal synchronization that jazz ensembles undertake when playing at more-or-less steady tempos can often be much harder for listeners to hear; as pianist Vijay Iyer has noted, these processes are most tangible to performers themselves, by means of embodied—rather than purely auditory—perception (2002, 391–407). Indeed, players may not always be consciously aware of such processes while they are occurring (Schiavio and Hoffding 2015). But sometimes even these subtler microinteractions can be quite perceptible to nonparticipants as well as performers. The Duke Ellington Orchestra's rhythm section opens a 1959 recording of the uptempo blues “Ready Go!”
with bassist Jimmy Woode quite audibly playing at a markedly slower tempo (approximately quarter note = 190) than pianist Ellington and drummer Sam Woodyard (15:14; Example 4). At the fifth bar (15:19), Woode begins to gather speed, and by measure 7 (15:21) Ellington's keyboard comping is decisively pushing the tempo, with Woodyard closely following suit (15:22). By measures 9–10 all three players have begun to synchronize at a faster pace (15:24). As they reach the top of the second chorus (15:28), Woodyard initiates another slight tempo acceleration, shifting from his hi-hat to the ride cymbal, and the three players settle in at a pace of around quarter note = 224, joined by tenor saxophone soloist Paul Gonsalves.

Another type of musical interaction, which I refer to as “macrointeraction,” involves the broad sorts of collective coordination whereby improvising musicians play in unified (or at least compatible) stylistic idioms (Gratier 2008, 88) and at mutually coherent intensity levels. For instance, if one ensemble member, mid-performance, starts playing louder, or with shorter rhythmic values, or with increasingly dissonant harmonies, others may follow suit by reinforcing, complementing, or otherwise accommodating this general musical strategy. Macrointeraction occurs quite demonstratively on “Montreux Blues,” a live 1975 recording featuring three leading jazz trumpeters: Roy Eldridge, Clark Terry, and Dizzy Gillespie. As Gillespie (1917–93) begins his solo (4:27; Example 5a), pianist Oscar Peterson and drummer Louie Bellson drop out, leaving the trumpeter to “stroll,” with only bassist Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen accompanying, for his first five choruses. Peterson and Bellson then re-enter (5:25; Example 5b), whereupon the music's energy gradually rises, with various fluctuations, over the course of the next six or seven choruses, at which point Terry and Eldridge start riffing behind the soloist (6:56; Example 5c), ratcheting up the intensity level still further. According to Peterson (1925–2007), Gillespie habitually favored this sort of macrointeractive trajectory: “Dizzy loved brute force behind him when he was ready for it; however, he did not like to be forced down into it, preferring instead to have a few choruses of lighter rhythmic involvement, which allowed him to create his flights of linear fancy (many times with a mute) and then open up the floodgates of rhythmic impetus on the listener” (Peterson 2002, 213–14). Affirming Peterson's caveat restraint during the solo's opening choruses, Gillespie himself remembered that, during his early days as a bebop innovator during the 1940s, he and other horn players often wanted “a piano player to stay outta the way” rather than to play “leading chords” that more decisively articulated a tune's rhythms or harmonies (Gillespie 1979, 206–7).

A third type of musical interplay, which I term “motivic interaction” (following Waters 2011, 57–59; see also Berliner 1994, 368–80), has in recent times drawn considerable attention from jazz scholars. It involves one musician playing a perceptible figure or gesture and others responding with gestures of their own when improvised in the moment, these sorts of dialogic exchanges clearly manifest real-time social communication. Naturally, unless participants are available to provide corroborating testimony, external observers can do no more than impute intentionality to such gestural interactions based on evidence such as their temporal proximity and stylistic improbability (Meyer 1973, 73–74); without firsthand verification, we can only conjecture as to whether a given musician consciously meant to do one thing or another. A fairly plausible instance occurs toward the end of Miles Davis’s solo on a 1958 studio recording of “Straight No Chaser,” transcribed in Example 6. At measure 4 of the excerpt, as the trumpeter pauses between phrases, pianist Red Garland assertively interjects three six- or seven-note chords whose uppermost notes are F5, A5, and B5. Flanagan promptly enters with a rootless B13 voicing on the fourth beat of measure 6 that echoes Rollins's notes by sounding the pitches A and G, with the latter note as a prominent upper voice. Rollins continues the call-and-response (a characteristic Afrodiasporic antiphonal device) with another short, somewhat more intricate phrase that ends with two eighth notes, Bb and F, on the first beat of measure 8; Flanagan responds again by placing two eighth notes on the fourth beat of measure 8, the first of which is another Bb. Rollins's next phrase, an ascending arpeggiation, concludes on an Ab, a sharp dissonance against the Eb7–F7 progression outlined by bassist Doug Watkins in measures 9–10; Flanagan sustains the musical dialogue by likewise emphasizing Ab as his chords' upper voice in measures 10 and 11. And again, when Rollins finishes his fourth phrase with the pitch Ab on the third beat of measure 12, Flanagan promptly answers by voicing a chord with Ab as its highest pitch at the end of the same measure. These musical exchanges typify motivic interaction: a musician plays a given note, pattern, or phrase in response to something played by another ensemble member. “Blue 7” was evidently a performance where Rollins was amenable to interplay effected by his sideman, notwithstanding his later claim to prefer...
accompanists who “just play steady” (consider also his responsorial four-bar exchange on a recording of “Sonny Boy” in Example 8).

[13] Motivic interactive responses need not be as directly imitative as Flanagan's; they can instead complement or even be in tension with other performers' musical gestures. Herbie Hancock (b. 1940) recalls that, while playing in Davis's rhythm section during the mid-1960s, he became aware of “the kind of sixth sense that Tony [Williams] had of what Miles might play, or what Tony chose to do to respond to the previous moment. Even when he chose to play something kind of against a rhythm that Miles was playing, it just seemed to fit in the perfect place” (Siegel 1997). Some players consider complementary or oppositional interaction to be more effective than duplicative musical reinforcement: vocalist Dee Dee Bridgewater (b. 1950) tells of feeling creatively constrained by a piano accompanist who tended to anticipate or double too many of her sung phrases (Davis 2005, 51).

[14] In any given collectively improvised performance, all three types of interaction—micro-, macro-, and motivic—may happen simultaneously. Although each can occur as a two-way dialogic process, they can all just as easily be monologic, with one player pursuing a given musical strategy and another responding, but without the first reciprocating. Call-and-response interplay often exhibits this sort of asymmetrical interpersonal dynamic: one musician leads and another follows. Organist Jimmy Smith (1925–2005) and guitarist Wes Montgomery (1923–68) illustrate while trading fours on their 1966 recording of “Down By the Riverside,” transcribed in Example 9. What is more, they switch their responsorial roles midway through the passage. During their first chorus-and-a-half, Montgomery responds to Smith, imitating or transforming the organist's motives or figuration: in measures 5–8 the guitarist modifies a riff that Smith introduced in measures 1–4, and in measures 13–16 he picks up on the minor-pentatonicism of Smith's immediately preceding figure. But then, in measures 17–20, the organist plays an ornate, highly chromatic stream of eighth-notes, upping the interactive ante, because such complex chromaticism is much harder to execute at high speed on a guitar than on a keyboard instrument, let alone to replicate on the fly. Rather than try to replicate this complex figuration, Montgomery answers with a diatonicized version of Smith's intricate passage—like the organist, he outlines a descending sequence of broken thirds, but he does so while adhering entirely to notes of the E-major scale, without chromaticism (measures 21–25).

[15] As the next chorus begins (measure 25), Smith imitates Montgomery's broken thirds, reversing the musicians' preceding interactive roles. The guitarist takes the initiative thereafter. At measures 29–32 he quotes Red Garland's composition “Blues by Five,” and Smith replies with a developmental passage springing from the same motivic pattern (measure 32); Montgomery then starts the next chorus with a short repetitive riff (measures 37–40) that the organist again replicates, with drummer Grady Tate joining in the interplay by reinforcing their syncopated accents with his bass or snare drum at two-bar intervals (measures 38, 40, and 42). The remaining sixteen measures (measures 45–60) consist of Montgomery and Smith passing back and forth a descending arpeggiated melodic pattern. Only during this final passage and at the earlier fleeting moment when the call-and-response relationship reverses (measures 21–29) are they both concurrently interacting motivically with each other; elsewhere either one or the other is clearly taking an initiating role. Naturally, the initiating player could be said to be interacting motivically in the sense that he may expect a “response” to his “calls,” but even so, the relationship would not be symmetrical.

[16] Whereas microinteraction is necessary in any successful live group performance and macrointeraction is a straightforward precondition for competent collective improvisation, motivic interaction is only intermittently present in jazz. The opening of trumpeter Lee Morgan's 1958 solo on “Moanin’,” recorded with Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers, offers a clear-cut illustration, redolent of the above-cited remarks of Rollins, Donaldson, Lacy, and others. “Moanin’” was one of the Jazz Messengers' greatest popular successes; Monson describes the trumpet solo as “just the kind of exuberant, bluesy playing that has earned Morgan [1938–72] the reputation of being the quintessential hard bopper and the absolute embodiment of ‘badness’” (2007, 76). Moreover, Morgan crafted his solo fairly consistently each time the band played the tune, both in live performances and on the alternate and master studio takes, excerpts of which are transcribed in Examples 10a and 10b (McMillan 2008, 87–88). The many similarities between the two takes suggest that, though the players all certainly engage in micro- and macrointeraction, not much spontaneous motivic interaction takes place. The rhythm section lays down a groove and articulates the music’s harmonies and formal structure, but for the most part bassist Jymie Merritt and drummer Art Blakey do not directly respond motivically to Morgan's melodic line nor to each other. In fact, aside from microinteractive alterations, Blakey executes his backbeat pattern almost identically from each measure to the next throughout both of the transcribed passages. Bobby Timmons's piano comping engages antiphonally with the trumpeter's phrases, though it is probably somewhat predetermined rather than spontaneously interactive, given that its rhythmic profile is quite similar in both renditions. Morgan, whose solo varies the most between the two versions despite its
stable overall trajectory, could be interpreted as interacting with the rhythm section at a macro level, yet he does not respond motivically to the other players in any overt unequivocal way. Within these excerpts from “Moanin’,” the musicians mutually coordinate temporally, dynamically, and stylistically on the whole, but otherwise execute largely independent defined roles (see also Rinzler 1988, 156; and Love 2016, 71). In perhaps the most memorable moment from one of the most famous performances in postwar recorded jazz, there is almost no spontaneous motivic interaction at all.

[17] To be sure, the opening of Morgan’s solo is atypical in that it is much more predetermined than most postwar jazz improvisations. Ordinarily, mainstream post-bop ensemble performances involve sporadic episodes of motivic interaction interspersed within passages, sometimes quite lengthy, where musicians focus on fulfilling individual roles, adhering to a predetermined formal roadmap, staying rhythmically coordinated, and providing one another with a mutually agreeable, effective macrointeractive playing environment. Consider the Gerry Mulligan Quartet’s 1952 rendition of “Bernie’s Tune,” which is transcribed, except for its opening and closing head statements, in Example 11. Collective interaction was certainly an element of the Quartet’s aesthetic: bassist Bob Whitlock spoke of the players as “musical conversationalist[s]” (Myers 2012), and drummer Chico Hamilton emphasized that all four musicians contributed significantly to the ensemble’s distinctive sound (Panken 2013). Yet at the same time, baritone saxophonist Mulligan streamlined the rhythm section’s accompanimental texture by eliminating the piano, which was customary at the time, and by asking Hamilton to use a pared-down drum kit; his aim was to allow himself and trumpeter Chet Baker greater improvisational latitude by reducing ensemble elements that he felt could potentially be intrusive or confining (Goldberg 1965, 9–10). (46)

[18] “Bernie’s Tune” exhibits only occasional moments of unequivocal motivic interaction. Toward the end of Mulligan’s solo, in measures 26–28, Hamilton responds with alacrity to the saxophonist’s fragmentary melodic gestures by interjecting short, incisive drum fills. Later on, at measures 66–67, when Mulligan initiates a chorus of polyphonic melodic activity by both horn players, Baker answers in measure 68 by echoing and then manipulating the leader’s incipit motive (two eighth notes and a quarter note, ascending stepwise). (47) Much of the ensuing macrointeractive texture springs motivically from this initial antiphonal exchange, with Mulligan and Baker concurrently developing similar melodic patterns, yet there are few, if any, unequivocal points of additional motivic interaction between them. Moreover, throughout the preceding separate trumpet and saxophone solo choruses, all four musicians tend mainly to treat their musical roles as functionally complementary but without much motivic interplay—just as Blakey’s Messengers do while accompanying Morgan.

[19] The musical evidence and players’ comments adduced here suggest that it is not uncommon to find jazz ensembles engaging in little or no motivic interaction; in such cases, spontaneous interplay is instead limited to the sorts of micro- and macrointeraction that can be found in almost any live group performance of any musical idiom (Gratier 2008, 82). This certainly does not mean that motivic interaction is not a common, prominent, and fundamental element of much jazz. But it at least raises questions about why theories of interaction in jazz emerged at a particular historical moment in music research. Although a thorough consideration of the various related intellectual trends and institutional changes would be beyond this essay’s scope, a few brief observations are in order.

[20] At least as long ago as the 1930s and ’40s, a number of influential critics identified spontaneous collective creativity as one of jazz’s cardinal traits while also concurrently characterizing the music’s social function as liberatory and egalitarian (Panassié 1936, 35; Goffin 1944, 222; Finkelstein 1948, 238). Before long, certain writers began drawing direct connections between these coexisting structural principles and cultural meanings, arguing that jazz musically exemplified human freedom and social equality. For Hugues Panassié, “the beauty of jazz music” was to be found neither in “the melodic quality of the solos [nor] the architecture of an arrangement,” (48) but rather in their collective “groove,” (49) whose tempo depends on and social equality. For Hugues Panassié, “the beauty of jazz music” was to be found neither in “the melodic quality of the

[21] Over the course of the following decades, the notion that jazz exemplified non-hierarchical, collaborative social ideals became increasingly widespread. (51) In U.S. political discourse, the idiom was regularly cited as an emblem of American democracy (“H. Con. Res. 57” [1987] 1999). (52) In the private economic sector, it was routinely extolled as an instructive
model for a relatively unregimented, collaborative corporate structure—illustrating the sort of “field for interaction” (Bastien and Hostager 1998, 598) that business organizations might emulate. All in all, by the early 1990s it had become a commonplace that jazz improvisation embodied principles of individual freedom, equality, collective co-operation, and spontaneity, a view elegantly encapsulated by the theory of musical interaction, with its attendant metaphor of performance as dialogue or conversation. (54)

[22] Meanwhile, within late-twentieth-century academia, theories of musical interaction were linked to several key intellectual developments. About three decades ago, jazz studies was starting to flower as a research field at more or less the same time that Western art music began to be subjected to increasingly stringent political critiques, its immanent values cast as markedly hierarchical (Ake 2016, 23). During the same period, a number of influential academic literary critics were formulating new, Afrodiasporically grounded theories that construed aesthetic meaning in terms of the social conventions of conversational interaction (Baker 1984; Napier 2000); Henry Louis Gates, Jr., in particular, demonstrated how such perspectives could be productively applied to jazz (1988, 63–64, 104–5), throwing down a gauntlet that was adroitly taken up by music scholars such as Walser (1993) and Monson (1994 and 1996). Interaction-oriented conceptual frameworks thus cleared new disciplinary space for jazz research by providing an illuminating interpretative toolkit that was geared toward the dialogical aesthetics of black American culture and methodologically independent from traditional approaches to Western classical music (Michaelsen 2013a, 11–12 and 25). What is more, interaction-based theories of jazz, in effect, one-upped an earlier generation of postwar formalist critics who had contended that jazz was classical music’s equal as a legitimate object of serious inquiry: (57) when viewed in terms of ensemble interaction, jazz implicitly emerged as politically and morally superior to Western art music insofar as it more fully expressed egalitarian or collaborative values such as respect, trust, deference, and altruism. These qualities came most clearly into focus when analytical attention was shifted away from exclusive focus on the individual soloist, which had typically been formalists’ main concern, and took into consideration the rhythm section’s collective role (Monson 1996, 1). (58)

[23] Interaction-focused perspectives on jazz have, if anything, gained still more currency in the early twenty-first century’s sociopolitical climate of flux, disruption, and instability. (59) With the rise of a collectivist popular ideology privileging “the wisdom of crowds” (Surowiecki 2004; Howe 2008) over individuals’ independent knowledge and expertise, jazz—and musical improvisation generally—has emerged as an empowering metaphor for humanity’s ability to solve problems through spontaneous, diffusely organized communal action. In a recent book devoted to the politics of free jazz and experimental music, Daniel Fischlin, Ajay Heble, and George Lipsitz contend that “improvisation functions . . . as a model for understanding and, indeed, for generating an ethics of co-creation. Improvisation accentuates matters of responsibility, interdependence, trust and social obligation . . . and aligns with the broader rights project of promoting a culture of collective responsibility, dispersed authority, and self-active democracy” (2013, 198). (60) This claim, the authors make clear, crucially depends on our conceiving of “improvisation as an embodied, face-to-face interaction among musicians” (193), that “entails norms of egalitarian exchange, debate, dissent, and openness” (Evans and Boyle 1992, ix). Such sweeping metaphorical notions of musical improvisation are undoubtedly potent for rhetorical purposes, but, I submit, they do not do justice to the more complex, variegated historical reality of jazz musicians’ lived experience and creative practices. (62)

[24] It is also worth recognizing that academic jazz studies’ increased focus on musical interactivity has occurred concurrently with what George E. Lewis calls “the mainstreaming of interactivity as a consumer product” geared toward “information storage and retrieval strategies that late capitalism has found useful in its encounter with new media” (2009, 462). Lewis may well be justified in arguing that “strong interactivity,” exemplified by the comparatively autonomous, idiosyncratic dimension of humanly improvised performance, can potentially counteract such commercial strategies (460–62). Nevertheless, music scholars’ discursive terms do not signify in a disciplinary vacuum; for all that interactive aspects of jazz improvisation have drawn attention by virtue of their inherent interpretative utility and positive sociopolitical value, their intrinsic appeal has likely been heightened because similar terms and concepts have been widely promulgated by corporations in society at large. (64)

[25] Interaction’s role in jazz may additionally have been somewhat overstated because overly broad generalizations have been drawn from unrepresentative case studies. Interaction-oriented studies have largely focused on players whose careers began since the 1940s—above all, practitioners of the subidioms loosely known as bebop, hard bop, free jazz, and their more recent offshoots. (65) Jazz of the 1960s has an especially visible presence in recent scholarship (Solis 2006, 332, 349). Although these postwar subidioms’ degree of interactivity can greatly vary, as the preceding pages have shown, they are not necessarily typical of jazz in general—they tend to feature more motivic interaction than do some of jazz’s diverse performance practices (Michaelsen 2013a, vii, 27). The “interactively created African American jazz ideal,” Tom Perchard has
recently argued, is essentially “an abstraction of post-bop practice sometimes made metonym for a much longer, and much more variable ‘jazz tradition’” (2011a, 89). Interaction is, to be sure, often present in earlier jazz styles—it certainly occurs in New Orleans-style polyphony, when improvised. But a great deal of pre-World-War II jazz, especially music from the swing era, placed less emphasis on spontaneous interplay and, at times, heavily emphasized composition and arrangement.

[26] At any rate, by privileging postwar jazz styles as a research focus, scholars of interaction are in accord with the longstanding textbook narrative of jazz history that depicts the music as evolving from vernacular and commercial origins into a structurally complex elite music whose first artistic pinnacle was bebop (DeVeaux 1998; Gendron 2002). This may not be coincidental. The sorts of motivic recurrence and complementation that are today frequently seen as jazz’s characteristic interactive social processes are often the very same features that formalist analysts have historically valorized, from a more abstract standpoint, as aspects of structural coherence, except that formalists have tended to focus on such strategies as pursued by a single improviser rather than as shared dialogically between multiple players. (Montgomery and Smith’s call-and-response interplay on “Down by the Riverside,” for example, could easily be heard as a succession of formal motivic transformations as well as a ludic conversational exchange.) Both analytically- and ethnographically-oriented scholars have regarded bebop and post-bop styles as the principal stylistic loci of these sorts of sociomusical practices. So for all that studies of motivic interaction ostensibly offer an alternative to formalist musical analysis (Monson 1996, 135–36), they have done so largely within the parameters of the prevailing jazz canon—a canon grounded in formalist conceptions of aesthetic progress. If anything, their purview has been somewhat more limited.

[27] There is no question that theories of improvisational interaction have been powerful, illuminating tools for understanding jazz’s musical principles and their social meanings. But if we overemphasize interaction’s role in jazz, drawing attention away from contrasting performance techniques, the inevitable if unintended result is an overly narrow and homogeneous conception of the idiom. For beyond Blakey’s “Moanin’” or Mulligan’s “Bernie’s Tune”—and beyond the post-bop styles that have been this article’s main focus—lies a wealth of music and a host of players, all squarely within the conventionally accepted jazz tradition, for whom motivic interaction has not always been an overriding musical concern. Jazz encompasses an unaccompanied piano school from the Harlem stride of James P. Johnson through the hyperindividualistic virtuosity of Art Tatum to the untrammeled invention of Cecil Taylor and Keith Jarrett. Composers and arrangers from Jelly Roll Morton, Duke Ellington, and Fletcher Henderson to Gil Evans, Thad Jones, Carla Bley, and Maria Schneider all rank among the idiom’s most influential innovators. The improvised melodies of early soloists such as Louis Armstrong, Sidney Bechet, and Coleman Hawkins do not, in many instances, tend to respond motivically to accompanying musicians—Hawkins was in fact renowned for his ability to improvise brilliantly with minimal attention to his fellow ensemble members (Schuller 1989, 433; discussed in DeVeaux 1997, 268). And contemporary smooth jazz often emphasizes a combination of minimally-embellished melodies with fixed arrangements and recording production techniques typical of pop music, rather than improvisatory interaction (Washburne 2004, 127–37; Carson 2008, 2–5). These musics and musicians have remained enduring presences in jazz scholarship in spite of the rise of interaction theories—and not because such theories have, to date, shed significant light on them. Only when we recognize the limits of interaction theories, along with their strengths, and only once we acknowledge their disciplinary context and motivating ideologies, do we truly open our eyes to jazz’s infinite variety.

[28] “Jazz,” Langston Hughes once wrote, “is a great big sea. It washes up all kinds of fish and shells and spume and waves with a steady old beat, or off-beat” (1958, 493). If this extraordinarily pluralistic musical idiom can be sociably conversational, it can also just as easily be a medium for assertive individualistic self-expression. It may be egalitarian and collaborative, yet also occasionally competitive, combative, and adversarial. It can require amiable co-operation, but can equally depend on inequitably divided responsibilities. And however much we may idealize the jazz ensemble as embodying democratic values, we should not forget that, socially and musically, many jazz bands have in reality functioned far more hierarchically than collaboratively. Jazz is, if anything, an ocean of complexities and contradictions, and to recognize these is only to appreciate more deeply its makers’ creative breadth and vision.

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Discography

Blakey, Art, and the Jazz Messengers. 1959. Moanin’. Blue Note 4003. LP.

Davis, Miles. 1957. Bags’ Groove. Prestige 7109. LP.


**Filmography**

Burns, Ken. 2001. *Jazz*. PBS DVD.

**Footnotes**

* For their advice and assistance, I thank Matt Butterfield, Joel Haney, Gayle Murchison, Lewis Porter, and Gabriel Solis. Return to text

1. Berliner 1994; Monson 1996. Two brief, though significant, studies of interaction in jazz that predate these contributions are Stewart 1986 and Rinzler 1988. See also Rinzler 2008, 101–9. Return to text


3. Michaelsen opts for a definition that is more generalized, objective, and disembodied, but that otherwise accords with the present formulation; in his view, “interactions are moments of intervention in which the collision of two separate streams results in an alteration of either or both of their paths” (2013a, 49). Needless to say, this article deals only with interaction between collaborating musicians, and not interaction involving extra-ensemble elements, such as the relationship between performers and a live audience (discussed in Ashe 1999; Jackson 2012, 151–54 and 187–215; Brand et al. 2012; Steinbeck 2016; and Greenland 2016, 139–68). Return to text

4. The conversational dimension of Baroque counterpoint is noted by Monson (1996, 80–81). Precomposed musical interaction is also discussed in Cook 2013, 260–63; and in Haney 2013. Naturally, even spontaneous improvisation is not based on purely ex nihilo creativity—it typically involves predetermined elements or strategies (see Smith and Dean 1997, 29; quoted in Dean 2010, 18). Return to text

5. Another pianist, Bill Evans, expressly states that he prefers playing unaccompanied to working with a bass-and-drums rhythm section (“Conversation/Demonstration: The Touch of Your Lips—Evans Solo,” *Marian McPartland’s Piano Jazz with Guest Bill Evans* [The Jazz Alliance 12004], recorded Nov. 6, 1978), discussed in Michaelsen 2013a, 10. Apparently Evans was not initially enthusiastic about the interactive, non-walking accompanimental style of Scott La Faro, the bassist in his famous
trio of the early 1960s (Golson and Merod 2016, 111).

6. Examples include Taylor's solo piano recordings of “In a Sentimental Mood” and “Laura” (slow rubato ballads), “Easy Like” (stride), “Night and Day” (walking tenths), and “Joy Spring” (bebop comping), all from his album Ten Fingers—One Voice (Arkadia Jazz 71602), recorded August 6–8, 1996. Taylor's ethnographic authority is discussed in Ramsey 2001, 28–30. The use of a dialogic approach to solo playing is directly indicated by the title of drummer Max Roach's unaccompanied recording “Conversation,” Deeds Not Words (Riverside 1122), recorded September 4, 1958, discussed in Porter and Ullman 1993, 265.


9. One of the few possible, though equivocal, instances of motivic interaction occurs in measure 12, where Clarke fleetingly reinforces some of the eighth-note triplets that Silver initiated a bar earlier.

10. Quoted in Stern 1996. Along the same lines, Rollins explains that his longtime bassist “Bob Cranshaw was a person I always hired because he maintained the fixed portion of it, and that would allow me to extemporize freely” (Massimo 2008). Cranshaw concurs, explaining that “because I’m really trying to play the changes in the bottom, I usually stay where I am. I can hear [Rollins] if he’s in another place” (Iverson 2014). For a historical perspective on the “fixed group—variable group” Afrodiasporic musical principle, which is implicit in these musicians' remarks, see Brothers 1994; Brothers 2006, 286–88; and Brothers 2014, 6–7. Barry Kernfeld proposes that “if ever there was an argument for conceiving of jazz group playing not as a process of democratic, interdependent, musical conversation, but as being dominated by a great individual artist, that artist is Rollins” (2002, 446). See also Spring 1999, 296.

11. For more examples of jazz improvisers expressing similar views, see Berliner 1994, 404–9.

12. While playing alongside Haynes in Monk's quartet, tenor saxophonist Johnny Griffin also found the drummer's accompaniment to be overly active and complex (Sidran 1995, 207).

13. This phenomenon is discussed in Berliner 1994, 348–52. Berliner's work is my point of departure for the conceptual distinctions proposed here.

14. Charles Keil's well-known theory of participatory discrepancies, for example, is concerned with this sort of subtle temporal interplay between ensemble musicians (Keil 1966, Keil 1987, Keil et al. 1995). For a critique, see Butterfield 2010. For empirically grounded case studies, see Doffman 2011, 221–23; and Doffman 2013.


16. Cook calls attention to John Potter's description of a similar process of microinteraction occurring between classical vocalists as they mutually adjust their intonation when singing a Renaissance mass (Cook 2004, 17). See also Cook 2005; and Cook 2013, 225–26. Pianist Emanuel Ax characterizes classical chamber-music performance practice as a situation in which “no one leads and no one follows” (quoted in Ross 2009, 60). For a sociological perspective on collaborative interaction among classical chamber musicians, particularly in rehearsal, see Sennett 2012, 14–22.
17. Humans cannot even detect which of two sounds occurs first unless they occur at least fifteen milliseconds apart. See Hirsch 1959. For an overview of empirical research on various aspects of timekeeping in musical performance, see Palmer 1997. For a phenomenological analysis of “the pluridimensionality of time simultaneously lived through by man and fellow man . . . in the relationship between two or more individuals making music together,” see Schütz 1951, 94.


19. Michaelsen mentions this track in the course of an extensive discussion of tempo fluctuations in the Davis Quintet's performance of “The Theme” from the Plugged Nickel recordings (2013a, 169–72).

20. According to Doffman, “within jazz, the aesthetic seems to demand a very open approach to shared time; the discursive positions that the players adopt are about looseness, flexibility and fluidity” (2013, 81).


22. “Ready Go!” begins at track time 15:14 (rather than 0:00) because it is the final section of Ellington's Toot Suite, whose six sections were all programmed together as a single digital track on the album's compact disc edition.

23. Various musicians’ comments on this sort of interaction are quoted in Berliner 1994, 353–68.

24. Macrointeraction includes, but is not limited to, what Paul Rinzler describes as a rhythm section “responding to the ‘peaks’ of the soloist” (1988, 157), as well as two phenomena discussed by Michaelsen: “interaction with ensemble roles and functions” (2013a, 115) and “interaction with musical styles” (2013a, 148). See also Michaelsen 2013b.


26. Likewise, the ensemble's drummer, Bellson, reflects that “I was always taught to be an accompanist until it was time to solo. I learned that from Dizzy, too. To be able to hear a soloist, what they're playing, so that you can give them proper backing. Sometimes, in the rhythm section, if the piano and the bass and the drums are all comping at the same time, it's too busy and the soloist has to turn around and say, ‘Wait a minute, what's going on? Where are the fundamentals?’” (Enright 2009, 298).

27. Partly quoted in Ramsey 2013, 137. See also Gleason 2016, 77.

28. My concept of “motivic interaction” is somewhat broader than what Rinzler calls “common motive” interaction, which is restricted to “the exact repetition of a phrase either rhythmically or melodically” (1988, 157).


30. Because the piano is quite far back in the recording mix, my transcription of Garland's comping is only an approximation. I am relatively confident, however, about the notation of the uppermost piano notes in measure 4.
31. Sonny Rollins, “Blue 7,” Saxophone Colossus (Prestige 7079), recorded June 22, 1956. For more on this recording, and on Schuller's analysis, see Givan 2014.

32. See, for example, Maultsby 1990, 193; and Floyd 1995 95–96 and passim.


34. Musical interaction involving elements that are in tension with one another is somewhat akin to the sort of “divergent” group creativity described by Sawyer 1997, 187 and discussed in a musical context by Steinbeck 2008, 402 and Michaelsen 2013a, 59–61.

35. For more on Williams’s interactive performance strategies with the Davis Quintet, see Coolman 1997, 77–85; and Waters 2011, 73–74 and passim.

36. For instance, in “Blue 7,” as Flanagan interacts motivically with Rollins, the players also engage in macrointeraction insofar as their individual contributions are stylistically compatible and are at similar intensity levels. And at the same time, they engage in microinteraction in order to stay temporally coordinated.


39. Elizabeth Hellmuth Margulis notes that “the ability to repeat another person’s musical utterance lies at the heart of what we understand as musical communication” (2014, 136).

40. At this point in the performance, Smith and Montgomery’s interplay is suggestive of two of the general classifications of interaction that Canonne and Garnier identify in their theory of collective free musical improvisation: Montgomery first adopts a “playing along” strategy by “play[ing] what he is implicitly expected to play,” whereupon Smith chooses a “densification strategy” by “deliberately creat[ing] complexity” (2012, 202).

41. One of the anonymous reviewers of this article notes that this riff is quite similar to Charles Earland’s blues head, recorded several years later, “Key Club Cookout,” Living Black! (Prestige 10009), recorded September 17, 1970.

42. For an empirical perspective on symmetrical musical interactions, see Canonne and Garnier 2011, 39–40.

43. Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers, “Moanin’,” Moanin’ (Blue Note 4003), recorded October 30, 1958.

44. On the reception of “Moanin’,” see McMillan 2008, 87; see also Perchard 2006, 87.

46. See also Chico Hamilton’s comments on playing with pianoless groups (Enstice and Rubin 1992, 194).

47. Though it is impossible to know whether the horn players’ contrapuntal passage beginning at measures 66–67 was generated spontaneously at the time the disc was recorded, it evidently became routinized at some point either before or afterward, given that Mulligan and Baker play very similar motives at a corresponding moment (2:16) on another version of the same tune that the Quartet recorded five months later, joined by alto saxophonist Lee Konitz (Gerry Mulligan, “Bernie’s Tune,” The Complete Pacific Jazz Recordings [Pacific Jazz 7243 8 38263 2], recorded January 23, 1953).

48. “La beauté de la musique de jazz, ce n’est pas la qualité mélodique des solos, l’architecture d’un arrangement.”

49. Panassié uses the English term “groove” in his French text.

50. Stearns’s words, quoted here, specifically refer to New Orleans marching-band music, though that particular idiom is cited in support of an argument about jazz in general. For more discussion of Stearns’s writings and politics, see Gennari 2006, 146–55; Burford 2014, 440; and Jankowsky 2016, 277–78.

51. Max Roach, for instance, asserts that “jazz is a democratic form of music” (quoted in Berliner 1994, 417).

52. Discussed in Clark 2015, 72–76. See also Burns 2001 (discussed in Kelley 2001, 10). On jazz as an emblem of racial uplift, see Howland 2009.


54. Jazz has become an especially frequent point of reference among academic creativity theorists, who see it as exemplifying principles of collective production and invention. See, for example, Sawyer 2003 (discussed in Cook 2013, 233–34; and Doffman 2011, 210) and Sawyer 2005.

55. Among musicologists, Susan McClary has been an especially eloquent and influential proponent of such arguments (see, for instance, McClary 1987 and McClary 1991, 68–69). See also Kingsbury 1988; Nettl 1995; Brinner 1995, 170–72 and 204; and Small 1998, 81–83. Of course, hierarchical political interpretations of Western Classical music originate well before the 1980s; they are explicit in the influential theoretical writings of Heinrich Schenker, for example (see Schenker 1997, 5–6; Littlefield and Neumeyer 1992; Cook 2007, 140–98; and Clark 2007).

56. Another important influence on Monson’s scholarship is the poststructuralist sociological work of Pierre Bourdieu, who once explained his “practice theory” of human culture with a musical metaphor that was explicitly counterposed against the norms of nonimprovised Western symphonic performance (Bourdieu 1977, 72; discussed in Monson 1996, 214 and Monson 2009, 23–24).

57. Two widely read works of criticism asserting that jazz’s formal structure is aesthetically on a par with classical music’s are Hodeir 1956 and Schuller 1958. Both of these articles are discussed in Walser 1997.

58. Earlier ethnomusicological scholarship on musical improvisation also dealt primarily with single performers rather than collective ensemble improvisation. See, for example, Nettl and Riddle 1973; and Nettl 1974.
59. On these aspects of twenty-first-century society and politics, see Bauman 2000, Bauman 2007, and Bauman 2011.

60. See also Fischlin and Heble 2004, 17, 24; Doffman 2011, 224; Canonne 2013, 50; and Caines and Heble 2015, 2–3.

61. Quoted in Fischlin, Heble, and Lipsitz 2013, 193. Another study dealing with the relationship between musical improvisation, interaction, and egalitarian social collaboration is Magrini 1998.

62. Here I am sympathetic to Alan Stanbridge’s proposal that scholars such as Heble “move beyond the idealized visions of outmoded political rhetoric, à la [Jacques] Attali, or the romanticized celebrations of ‘marginality,’ à la [Susan] McClary, in favour of a considerably more pragmatic—and considerably more realistic—perspective on contemporary music-making, acknowledging not only the positive socio-political potential of improvisatory creative practice, but also its social and political limits” (2008, 10; discussed in Cook 2013, 410–11). See also Dean 2010, 17–19.

63. Lately, consumer interactivity of this sort has been increasingly deployed by internet companies as a mechanism for consumer data collection (Vaidhyanathan 2011, 82–114; Lee 2014).

64. Interestingly, a major recent collective academic research initiative devoted to improvisation and social relations was partially funded by a foundation whose leaders were formerly affiliated with the corporation that created the Blackberry smartphone wireless communication device (Laver 2016, 250–51). Although this source of financial support may certainly have had no influence on the initiative’s research findings, the philanthropists’ decision to fund the project may well evince similar convictions regarding social interaction and connectivity to the beliefs that motivated their work in the corporate sphere.


66. For a succinct overview of interactive aesthetics in postwar free improvisation, see Corbett 2016, 47–67.

67. New Orleans-style small-group polyphony evidently emerged through interactive improvisation, but ensembles typically routinized their performances into fairly fixed, memorized arrangements (Brothers 2014, 92; Hobson 2014, 123).

68. John F. Szwed notes that hard bop, during the 1950s, tended to be even more musically interactive than bebop of the mid-1940s (2000, 197). See also Spring 1999, 297–98.

69. Bruce Boyd Raeburn calls into question this prevailing view of jazz’s evolutionary history, arguing that a good deal of critical discourse positioning jazz as an art form predates the bebop era (2009, 179–81).

70. Explicitly acknowledging these dual interpretative perspectives on musical unity in the performance practice of pianist and composer Thelonious Monk, Gabriel Solis writes of “unification as a set of abstract musical relationships, and at the same time . . . as a way of furthering the dynamic interaction among improvising musicians” (2008, 48). For a resolutely formalist, non-ethnographic perspective on interaction in jazz improvisation, see Hodson 2007.

71. Gary Tomlinson has observed that the established jazz canon functions as “a strategy for exclusion” in much the same
way as the Western art music canon its proponents sought to destabilize (1992, 76). For two evolutionary views of jazz's history, see Ulanov 1952, 348; and Hodeir 1956, 34–35.

72. This sort of outcome always looms, and may well be unavoidable, whenever a particular theory or methodology is brought to bear upon a given field of inquiry: aspects of the subject matter that do not interface productively with the conceptual apparatus tend to be given short shrift (discussed in Krugman 1995, 1–3).


76. In Ralph Ellison's famous formulation, “true jazz is an art of individual assertion within and against the group” (2001, 36).

77. Giddins and DeVeaux write that, as a bandleader, the swing-era singer and saxophonist Louis Jordan (1908–75) “was a martinet, yet for all his endless rehearsing, [his] ensemble retained a loose-limbed joy” (2009, 488).

78. Eitan Y. Wilf quotes an educator in the New School's jazz performance program who explains that “there are times when democracy doesn't work. There's a time when the only thing that works is a dictatorship. . . . In my band, I'm the manager; I'm a dictator, but I'm a caring dictator. I'm a listening dictator. I like to get feedback, I like that, just don't be a pain in the ass about it. But I like the feedback and I'll think about it and then once I'll make my decision, that's it—that's the way it's gonna be” (2014, 86). See also Monson 1999, 52.

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