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| Jazz and Modernism |
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| Jazz is the music of modernism. As a musical art form, it rests heavily on improvisation, and employs a multitude of rhythms, harmonies, and melodic motifs. Early modern jazz includes the Jazz Age of the 1920s, and Swing and Big Band music from the 1930s. High modern jazz styles include, bebop, cool, Avant-Garde, free, modal, Afro-Cuban, hard-bop, and post-bop — all spanning from the 1940s (bebop) to the 1960s (Avant-Garde). In the early modern jazz of the 1920s and the Jazz Age, musicians and composers including Duke Ellington began making significant musical contributions to nightclubs in New York City such as the Cotton Club in Harlem (Ellington’s contributions were significant during the Harlem Renaissance). Gary Giddins and Scott DeVeaux claim that the most commonly performed composer in jazz is Duke Ellington, who wrote over 1,000 compositions over the course of his career. Thelonious Monk is considered the second most performed composer, with approximately seventy original compositions written during his career. Notable jazz musicians of modernism include Duke Ellington (1899-1974), Thelonious Monk (1917-1982), Dizzy Gillespie (1917-1993), Charlie Parker (1920-1955), Charles Mingus (1922-1979), Miles Davis (1926-1991), John Coltrane (1926-1967), Ornette Coleman (1930--), and John Zorn (1953--). |
| Jazz is the music of modernism. As a musical art form, it rests heavily on improvisation, and employs a multitude of rhythms, harmonies, and melodic motifs. Early modern jazz includes the Jazz Age of the 1920s, and Swing and Big Band music from the 1930s. High modern jazz styles include, bebop, cool, Avant-Garde, free, modal, Afro-Cuban, hard-bop, and post-bop — all spanning from the 1940s (bebop) to the 1960s (Avant-Garde). In the early modern jazz of the 1920s and the Jazz Age, musicians and composers including Duke Ellington began making significant musical contributions to nightclubs in New York City such as the Cotton Club in Harlem (Ellington’s contributions were significant during the Harlem Renaissance). Gary Giddins and Scott DeVeaux claim that the most commonly performed composer in jazz is Duke Ellington, who wrote over 1,000 compositions over the course of his career. Thelonious Monk is considered the second most performed composer, with approximately seventy original compositions written during his career. Notable jazz musicians of modernism include Duke Ellington (1899-1974), Thelonious Monk (1917-1982), Dizzy Gillespie (1917-1993), Charlie Parker (1920-1955), Charles Mingus (1922-1979), Miles Davis (1926-1991), John Coltrane (1926-1967), Ornette Coleman (1930--), and John Zorn (1953--).  The origins of jazz lie in the late 19th and early 20th century African American experience. Jazz culture started in New Orleans, and spread to cities across the U.S. including Kansas City, Chicago, and New York City. Widely considered the centre of the jazz world from the early twentieth century through to present, New York City featured a number of jazz neighbourhoods, including Harlem and Greenwich Village, with musicians Thelonious Monk and John Coltrane performing modern jazz at the Five Spot Café in 1957, Charles Mingus at the Café Bohemia in 1955, Ornette Coleman at the Five Spot Café in 1959, and John Coltrane at the Village Vanguard in 1961.  Dizzy Gillespie became a cultural ambassador of jazz, representing the music of the Americas by performing Afro-Cuban jazz and bebop, which he founded along with others. His international tours were supported by the U.S. Department of State. Duke Ellington toured Soviet Russia during the Cold War, and diplomatically promoted jazz as American foreign policy. Both Ellington and Gillespie played a role in the U.S.’s jazz diplomacy undertaken in the Soviet Union and other regions of the world from 1954 to 1968, in which jazz functioned as a device to practice global diplomacy in a manner that reshaped democracy’s image worldwide.  Many notable jazz musicians have expressed social, cultural, and political views through their music. Bassist Charles Mingus composed and recorded ‘Fables of Faubus,’ released on his modern jazz album *Mingus Ah Um* (1959), which he wrote in protest of Arkansas’s segregationist Governor Orval Faubus, who attempted to prevent the court-ordered desegregation of Little Rock Central High School in 1957. Mingus’s composition ‘Meditations on Integration,’ was performed internationally at a renowned Paris Concert in 1964, and Avant-Garde jazz instrumentalist Eric Dolphy was a band member featured there. John Coltrane’s jazz composition titled ‘Alabama’ was written as a response to a Ku Klux Klan bombing of a Baptist church in Birmingham in 1963. Coltrane performed the composition during a live recording of an Avant-Garde album at the famed Birdland jazz club in New York City. In 1961, Coltrane wrote the composition ‘Song of the Underground Railroad’ for his *Africa/Brass* recording sessions, which reflected a social engagement with African American history and the Civil Rights movement. Duke Ellington composed the jazz symphony *Black, Brown, and Beige*, which premiered at Carnegie Hall in the 1940s, with the same type of social conscience.  Since its fruition, jazz has been a source of inquiry, inspiration, and critique for important intellectuals, writers, and artists across the world. LeRoi Jones (Amiri Baraka) wrote about alto saxophonist and bebop progenitor Charlie Parker in his work *Dutchman* (1964) and Avant-Garde tenor saxophonist John Coltrane in his musical and cultural criticism, including Coltrane’s performance on the album *My Favorite Things* (1961). Cool jazz was popular in cities such as Los Angeles in the 1940s and 1950s, but modal jazz soon emerged with Davis’s output in the second half of the 1950s, most notably his album *Kind of Blue* (1959), featuring tenor saxophonist John Coltrane. The tenor saxophonist performed at cultural institutions such as New York City’s Museum of Modern Art (an establishment that continues to present jazz concerts today), and spent time reading writers such as French philosopher, sociologist, and political thinker Raymond Aron’s *The Opium of the Intellectuals* (1955), which, in part, influenced his Avant-Garde musical liberation of the jazz establishment in the 1960s, alongside the work of Ornette Coleman. Frankfurt School philosopher Theodor W. Adorno was critical of jazz, producing critiques including ‘Farewell to Jazz’ (1933), ‘On Jazz’ (1936), ‘Perennial Fashion-Jazz’ (1953), and his negative remarks in the chapter ‘The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception,’ from *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944). In the visual arts, Robert Rauschenberg created and titled an artwork for Thelonious Monk (‘Monk’ [1955]), while French artist Henri Matisse’s works titled *Jazz* (1947) celebrated the musical genre that was characterized by its spontaneity and improvisatory disposition. Ornette Coleman’s album *Free Jazz* (1961) features a print of a painting by artist Jackson Pollock in its album art. Coleman composed music for the film adaptation of William S. Borroughs’s novel *Naked Lunch* (1991). Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg were enthused primarily by bepop jazz. The beats, more generally, had been attracted to bebop, post-bop, and early Avant-Garde jazz performed at Greenwich Village establishments in the 1950s, with the music there inspiring many writers, poets, and artists. Playwright Edward Albee’s *The Death of Bessie Smith* (1959) showed the influence of 1920s and 1930s jazz and blues-centred music on 20th century American culture and beyond (Albee’s play originally premiered in the Berlin theatre). Elsewhere, French existentialist philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre was found sitting at Cafes in Paris’s Left Bank in intellectual and aesthetic dialogue with Miles Davis during the trumpeter’s attendance at the first International Jazz Festival in 1949.  After the Jazz Age of the 1920s, Swing jazz and Big-Band’s became popular in the 1930s. Following this came the bebop revolution of the 1940s with Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie, the first fully modern style of jazz, which resulted in the performance and recording of music that rested heavily on improvisation in small group settings. By the end of the 1950s, the avant-garde movement had emerged, and rose to the forefront of jazz in the 1960s with the triumph of musicians like John Coltrane and Ornette Coleman. Avant-Garde jazz rested even more so on improvisation, while free jazz rested entirely on improvisation in collective settings of small groups and occasionally large ensembles. Harmonically, the music was much more loosely structured, and was liberated from standard chord progressions for improvisators to develop themes of their own that were abstract, intricate, or singular. In other cases, Avant-Garde and free jazz improvisers sonically transcended the very notion of the thematic itself.  Musicians of Modernism outside of the jazz tradition have collaborated with jazz musicians from time to time. An example of such is Richard Teitelbaum’s recorded work with Avant-Garde jazz drummer Andew Cyrille. Pauline Oliveros has performed with Avant-Garde jazz improvisers on New York’s Downtown Music scene. One musical style of Avant-Garde jazz is free improvisation, and alto saxophonist John Zorn worked with sound artists such as Christian Marclay on these aesthetic terms. Zorn has also incorporated Jewish influences into his Avant-Garde jazz, which reflects his long-term artistic engagement with Radical Jewish Culture. |
| Further reading:  (Adorno)  (Adorno, Farewell to Jazz)  (Appel)  (The Birth of Bepop: A Social and Musical History)  (Giddins and DeVeaux)  (Gioia)  (Jost)  (Myers)  (O'Meally, Edwards and Griffin)  (Schuller)  (Shaw)  (Shipton)  (Whitehead) |