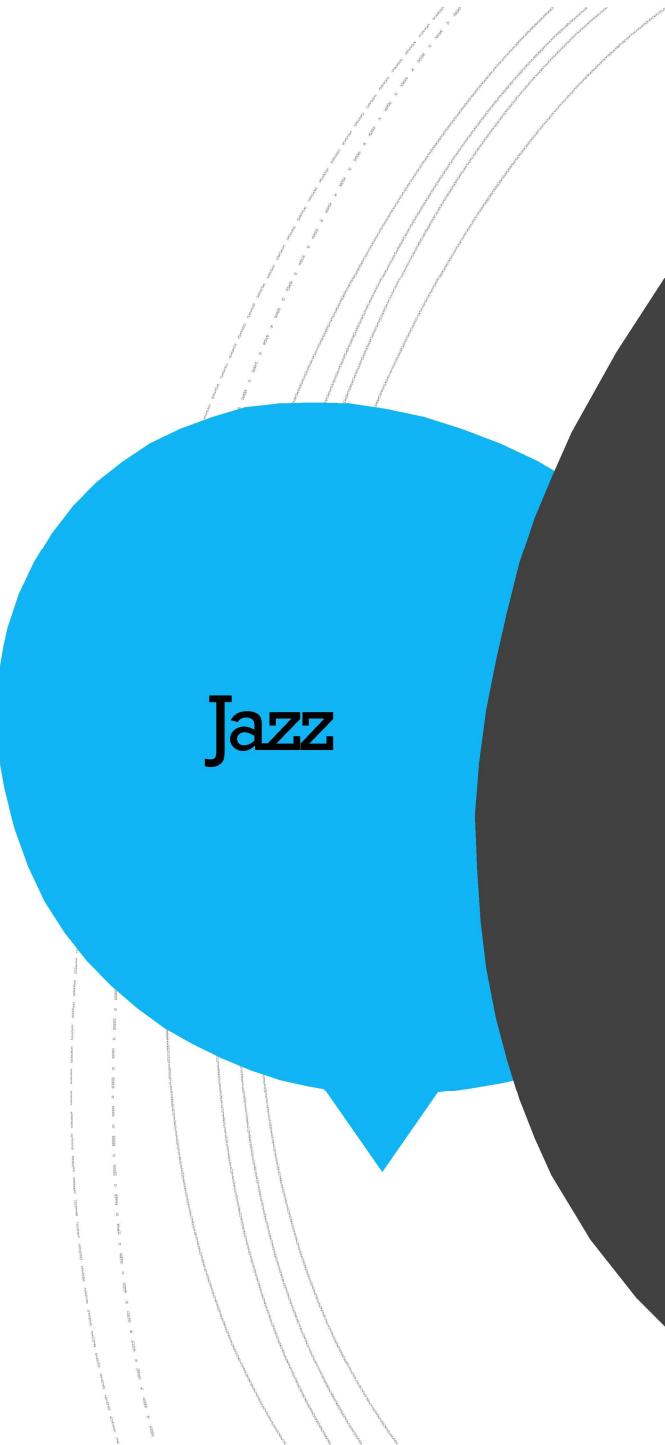


# Contemporary Music

*Lecture by Kenny Lim*

# Jazz (1900 - 1950)





# Jazz

- Very diverse and complex to be defined by any single formula
- Music rooted in improvisation & syncopation rhythm
- Performed by a small group (*or combo*) of three to eight players; or by a “big band” of ten to fifteen.

# Characteristics

## Rhythms

- Back bone of Jazz
- Syncopated and Swing
- 4 beats to a bar

## Instruments

- More emphasis on wind and brass
- Main instruments: Cornet, trumpets, saxophone, piano, clarinet, vibraphone & trombone
- Rhythm section: Piano, plucked double bass, percussion (Drumset), banjo/ guitar

## Melody

- Flexible
- Major scale: always lower/ flatten the 3<sup>rd</sup>/ 5<sup>th</sup>/ 7<sup>th</sup>

## Chords

- Traditional tonal system
- Throughout the years, harmonic vocabulary become increasingly complex, sophisticated and chromatic
- Often uses 5 to 6 note chords that sound rich and lush

# Characteristics

## Improvisation

- Creation of music at the time it is performed
- Without any specific notations
- The players can play music they want spontaneously and impromptu
- But according to the series of chords given

- Use blue scales, major/minor etc.
- Each soloists will take turns to improvise
- A jazz improvisation is usually in theme-and-variation form

## Cont. on Improvisation

- Each statement of the basic harmonic pattern or melody is called chorus.
- In a jazz performance that is based on a 32 bar melody might be outlined as follow:
  - Chorus 1 (32 bars)      Theme
  - Chorus 2 (32 bars)      Variation 1
  - Chorus 3 (32 bars)      Variation 2
  - Chorus 3 (32 bars)      Variation 3
  - Chorus 4 (32 bars)      Variation 3
  - Chorus 5 (32 bars)      Theme



## Jazz styles

- Ragtime
- Blues
- New Orleans
- Swing
- Bebop

# Ragtime

- A style of composed piano music that flourished from the 1890s to about 1915
- Developed primarily by African American pianists who traveled in the Midwest and south playing in saloons and dance halls
- It is generally in duple meter
- Performed in a moderate march tempo
- Right hand plays a highly syncopated melody, while the left hand steadily maintains the beat with an “oom-pah” accompaniment
- Normally contains several melodies that are similar in character
- Forms: AA BB A CC DD or Introduction – AA BB CC DD EE

# Scott Joplin (1868 – 1917)



- King of ragtime
- Trained in “classical” music and wrote a ballet and two operas, as well as many piano rags (term used for ragtime)
- *Maple leaf Rag & The Entertainer*

# Blues

- The most important foundation of jazz
- Grew out of African American folk music, such as work songs, spirituals, and the field hollers of slaves.
- Vocal blues is intensely personal, often containing sexual references and dealing with the pain of betrayal, desertion, and unrequited love
- Music is almost in quadruple meter
- Poetic lyric
- Normally have lyrics such as 'baby' or 'honey, etc.'

Bessie  
Smith  
(1894 –  
1937)

## Lost Your Head Blues (1926)



- Known as the “empress of the blues”

# New Orleans Style

- Based on march/ church melodies, ragtime piece, popular songs/ 12-bar blues
- Use **scat singing** = singing with lyrics without meaning
- Jazz in *New Orleans style* (or *Dixieland*) was typically played by a small group of five to eight performers.

# King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band

Dippermouth Blues (1923)

- Based on 12-bar blues
- Trumpet solo is widely imitated due to it's "blue" note and syncopations

# Louis Armstrong (1901 – 1971)



- Second cornist in King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band
- At the age of 64, he had his greatest popular success, the hit recording Hello, Dolly! (number one in 1964)

# Swing

- Developed in the 1920s and flourished from 1935 to 1945, a decade nicknamed the “swing era”
- Mainly played by big bands
- Around 14-15 musicians
- Three sections:
  - Saxophone (3/5 players)
  - Brass instruments (3/4 trumpet and trombones)
  - Rhythm section (piano, percussion, guitar and bass)
- Music was composed or arranged rather than improvised



# Benny Goodman (1909 – 1986)

- King of swing
- Leads the most popular musical group in the 1930s in United States
- 1938 concert in Carnegie Hall sets one of the most important performance in jazz history



# Bebop

- A complex style of music usually for small jazz groups consisting 4 -6 player
- Often extremely fast beat
- Meant for attentive listening, not dancing, and it's sophisticated harmonies and unpredictable rhythms bewildered many listeners

# Dizzy Gillespie (1917 – 1993)



A night in Tunisia (composed 1942)

*“I sat down at the piano to improvise some chord changes... The melody had a Latin, even oriental feeling to it... a special kind of syncopation in the bass line.”* – Dizzy Gillespie

# Jazz Styles since 1950

- Cool Jazz
- Free Jazz
- Jazz Rock

## Cool Jazz

- Related to bop but was far calmer and more relaxed in character
- Leaders: Lester Young and Stan Getz
- Gentle attack and little vibrato
- Tended to be longer than bebop works and relied more heavily on arrangements
- Sometimes uses instruments that were new to jazz such as French horn, flute and cello

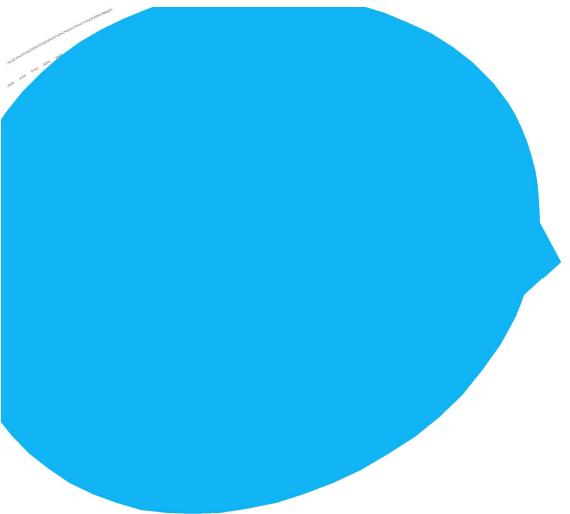
# Free Jazz

- A style that is not based on regular forms or established chord patterns
- Randomness
- Solo section of different length
- Improvisation by multiple players at once
- Ornette Coleman and John Coltrane

*“I don’t tell my members of my group what to do, I let everyone express himself just as he wants to.”* – Ornette Coleman

## Jazz Rock

- Late 1960s rock became a potent influence to jazz
- Jazz Rock or Fusion
- Includes acoustic winds and brass instruments along with synthesizers and electric piano, guitar and bass
- Style combined improvisations with rock rhythms and tone colors



Which jazz styles do you  
prefer?