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“We Both Speak African”: Gillespie, Pozo, and the Making of Afro- Cuban Jazz

by David F. Garcia

The emergence of Afro-Cuban jazz in the United States in the late 1940s was closely interrelated with bebop’s popularization. Musically, bebop represented for many mid-century observers the next stage in jazz’s evolution toward a technical and compositional complexity on par with European art music. Socially, it demonstrated the contribution that African American jazz musicians made in elevating a unique American music to the level of high culture. Many African American jazz musicians contributed to these developments, but none were more important than Charlie Parker and John Birks “Dizzy” Gillespie. And it was Gillespie, in collaboration with black Cuban musician Luciano “Chano” Pozo, who also played a central role in the development of Afro-Cuban jazz, a seminal moment in the history of the African diaspora. Pozo, according to Gillespie, articulated this sentiment when he explained that the inability of the two musicians to communicate with each other in their native Spanish and English did not matter because “we both speak African.”¹

Scholars of jazz and African American culture and history have rightly characterized bebop and, to a much lesser degree, Afro-Cuban jazz as powerful artistic and social statements that challenged the status quo in American racial politics following World War II. But they have not looked critically at the tensions and ambivalence that Afro-Cuban music and musicians evoked in many African American bebop musicians when it came to matters of not only musical aesthetics but racial ideology and national identity. Nor have jazz and Latin music scholars in particular studied the reception of Afro-Cuban jazz within the broader contexts of American and European society in which the discourse of racial difference continued to be shaped by the notions of Anglo and European cultural supremacy and African inferiority.

These lacunae in the scholarship on bebop and Afro-Cuban jazz can be addressed by documenting the circumstances surrounding Gillespie and Pozo’s three most important collaborative efforts: “Cubana Be,” “Cubana Bop,” and “Manteca.” The reception of these arrangements as they were performed by Gillespie’s big band in the United States and Paris in 1947 and 1948 reveals the conflicted emotions that Afro-Cuban jazz music provoked among some bebop musicians and their audiences. They also suggest that bebop’s modernist musical ideals and accomplishments afforded Gillespie and other African American bebop musicians the opportunity to utilize and, at times, exploit Afro-Cuban music and musicians for ideological as well as commercial purposes.

As Raúl Fernández has stressed, Gillespie and Pozo’s collaboration “needs to be seen as one large step in the process rather than a totally unexpected breakthrough” in the development of Afro-Cuban jazz.² Indeed, the intersection of Caribbean and Mexican music and musicians with those of New Orleans has been traced back to jazz’s emergence during the late nineteenth century. It is this long history of artistic exchange among American, Caribbean, and Latin American musicians that Jelly Roll Morton alluded to in identifying the “Latin tinge” in jazz.



*Dizzy Gillespie with conguero Chano Pozo and
tenor saxophonist James Moody, 1948
Photo courtesy of Frank Driggs*

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Gillespie and Pozo (continued)

Gillespie himself began experimenting with Afro-Cuban elements in his music as early as 1940 when he befriended Cuban trumpeter, saxophonist, and fellow Cab Calloway band member Mario Bauzá, one of the early architects of mambo and Afro-Cuban jazz. Gillespie identified his arrangement of “Pickin’ the Cabbage,” which Calloway’s band recorded in March 1940, as his first to express “a Latin feeling.”³³ Gillespie continued to infuse his arrangements with Afro-Cuban elements, most notably in “Night in Tunisia” which he recorded with his own big band in February 1946.

Gillespie considered his experiments with Afro-Cuban music an integral part of the overall innovations that would significantly shape the musical trajectory of bebop. In fact, the trumpeter stressed that his use of Afro-Cuban music was “instinctive.” As he stated in his autobiography, “I’ve always had that Latin feeling. You’d probably have to put me in psychoanalysis to find out where it came from, but I’ve always felt polyrhythmic from a long way back. Maybe I’m one of those ‘African survivals’ that hung on after slavery among Negroes in South Carolina.”³⁴ By 1947 his work with Afro-Cuban music and bebop came together as a result of his collaborations with composer and arrangers George Russell, Walter Fuller, and most importantly, Chano Pozo.

Gillespie commissioned Russell to complete a piece the former had sketched and titled “Cubana Be.” Russell later wrote a follow-up to “Cubana Be” which he titled “Cubana Bop.”³⁵ On September 29, 1947 the Gillespie big band premiered the two-movement piece collectively titled *Afro-Cuban Drum Suite* at Carnegie Hall on a program that jazz promoter Leonard Feather titled “The New Jazz.” Writing for *Down Beat*, Michael Levin reported that Gillespie’s audience at Carnegie Hall “unquestionably liked the . . . number . . . illustrating a point the *Beat* has often made: that there is much jazz can pick up on from the South American and Afro-Cuban rhythm styles.”³⁶ Not all reviewers, however, were impressed with this or the other pieces on the program. One critic writing for the *New York Herald Tribune* took exception to the program’s title “The New Jazz” and, in particular, Feather’s description of Gillespie’s music as “modern American music” because he felt the music “[leaned] heavily on the early Stravinsky of [*The Rite of Spring*] and . . . on the impressionism of Delius and Debussy.”³⁷ Other commentators, such as professor of history Lawrence Dunbar Reddick who reviewed the band’s performance in Atlanta in November 1949, made the same observation, describing the overall sound of the *Afro-Cuban Drum Suite* as “Stravinsky-like.”³⁸

Soon after this performance Russell suggested to Gillespie that Pozo be given more time at the opening of “Cubana Bop” to sing chants and play rhythms from the sacred and secret Abakuá society of Cuba. Pozo’s chants and accompanying conga playing were added in time for the studio recorded version made with RCA Victor on December 22, 1947. Pozo’s chanting and playing in live performances and on the studio recording did not go unnoticed by critics, some of whom described the musician and his drumming using tropes from evolutionist discourse such as “weird,” “primitive,” and “tribal.”³⁹ Perhaps the best example of such language is found in French composer and jazz historian André Hodeir’s review of the Gillespie big band’s performance in Paris on February 28, 1948. He commented on Pozo’s featured solo in “Cubana Bop”:

This is Pozo Gonzales, a beautiful specimen of a native of the coast of West Africa. ‘A true cannibal,’ said a brave lady next to me with a small shiver of fear at the idea that she might have encountered him at a corner of the jungle. . . . Nevertheless, the man [Pozo] ‘takes’ his audience. One has to see him, rolling his disturbing eyes while he repeats [the word] ‘Simbad’ [sic], followed by silence; so the entire hall is silent, even those who mocked him just an instant ago, and it is a truly oppressive moment. Finally, he shouts once more, ‘Simbad!’, very loudly, and it is general release, applause, laughter, euphoria.⁴⁰

While his performances of “Cubana Bop” evoked images of the exotic African savage for some American and French commentators, Pozo’s extensive knowledge of African-derived Cuban folkloric and religious music resonated deeply with Gillespie’s racial identity as well as with his musical convictions. As Gillespie recounted, “When Chano [joined the band], he really opened things up. . . . Chano wasn’t a writer, but stone African. He knew rhythm—rhythm from Africa.”⁴¹ George Russell’s interpretation of Pozo’s impact, however, stressed his own interests in non-Western religions and universality: “We were striving for exactly that kind of world grasp, a kind of universality. There were all kinds of influences in that piece, but chief was the melding of the Afro-Cuban and . . . jazz.”⁴² In other instances Pozo’s contributions collided with both the aesthetic underpinnings of bebop music, as upheld by Gillespie himself, and the racial and ideological convictions of some of the musicians in the Gillespie band.

Gillespie’s big band recorded “Manteca” for RCA Victor on December 30, 1947. Co-written by Gillespie and Pozo, the tune quickly became a critical as well as commercial success, popular among bebop musicians and jazz audiences in general. Musically, “Manteca” marked a crystallization of the Afro-Cuban jazz style. In September 1948 *Down Beat* gave the record its highest “Tops” rating, saying that “the combination of [the Afro-Cuban rhythmic] beat and bop figures and orchestration is dynamite.”⁴³ Whereas he drew from Afro-Cuban folkloric sources for “Cubana Bop,” Pozo borrowed melodic and rhythmic materials from contemporary Cuban popular dance music to compose the signature opening section of “Manteca.”

Gillespie and arranger Walter Fuller, however, balked at allowing Pozo’s musical ideas to constitute the entirety or even a majority of the arrangement. Indeed, some of Gillespie’s musicians were ambivalent about Pozo’s musical ideas as well as the addition of

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ISAM Matters

Just before we went to press, we received the sad news that CUNY Distinguished Professor *emeritus* H. Wiley Hitchcock, 84, the Institute's founder and first Director, had passed away on 5 December 2007 after a lengthy illness.

Wiley had a truly extraordinary career. He was born 28 September 1923, in Detroit. After attending Dartmouth and University of Michigan, studying at the Conservatoire Américain (under Nadia Boulanger) and teaching at the University of Michigan, N.Y.U., and Hunter College, Wiley came to Brooklyn College in 1971 where he founded Institute for Studies in American Music. This was four years prior to the establishment of the Sonneck Society (now the Society for American Music), at a time when few musicologists recognized the breadth and significance of American music.

Wiley was a brilliant scholar, a true man of letters, and a model musicologist with multifaceted interests, impeccable standards, and a long record of path-breaking publications. His highly-esteemed work in American music studies, especially the compiling, with Stanley Sadie, of the four-volume *New Grove Dictionary of American Music* (1986), was built on excellent earlier contributions to the fields of French and Italian Baroque music, particularly his comprehensive catalogue of the works of Marc-Antoine Charpentier (1982). *Amerigrove* (as it came to be known) was the first comprehensive reference work on American music, with entries ranging from folk and popular idioms to jazz and concert hall music. His 1969 textbook for Prentice-Hall, *Music in the United States: An Introduction*, went through four editions and is still widely used. It was this book, in fact, that first exposed me to the many subtleties of this fascinating field of study. As a champion of the music of Charles Ives, he was unmatched, and one of his later projects was a remarkable edition of Ives's 129 Songs (2004), part of the ongoing MUSA (Music of the United States of America) series that Wiley was instrumental in founding.

Wiley was a staunch advocate of American music of all kinds, and counted among his innumerable friends composers, scholars, musicians and enthusiasts from all over the world. In 1990-92 he served as President of the American Musicological Society, and the list of distinguished projects and committees to which he brought his expertise seems endless. Wiley was a respected colleague at Brooklyn College's Conservatory of Music as well as at the CUNY Graduate Center's Doctoral Program in Music, where he became a mentor and friend to many newly-minted Ph.D.s in music, even after his retirement from CUNY in 1993.

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On a personal note, though I met Wiley while still in graduate school (at my very first Sonneck Society meeting, in fact), I didn't

get to know him well until I moved to New York. Though not one to keep his opinions to himself, he was always an encouraging and supportive friend, no matter what scholarly project I was pursuing, and I often found that though at times I resisted his suggestions, they would turn out to be completely right. In our many meals together—I recall a particularly memorable one at the Century Club, where he seemed as impressed as I by the occasional passing of a celebrity—he always showed a pointed interest in the doings of the Institute, as well as in my own work (and never failed to point out if they had *crème brûlée*—a personal favorite of mine—on the menu). And when he spoke he managed somehow to combine the down-home charm of his Midwest upbringing with his role as an esteemed elder statesman in New York's cultural life.



H. Wiley Hitchcock 1923-2007

One of Wiley's last projects, undertaken with Charles Fussell at a time when most scholars would have retired, was an edition of Virgil Thomson's opera *Four Saints in Three Acts* (also for the MUSA series). I remember his almost child-like excitement at discovering a new detail or interesting anecdote about the late composer (a longtime friend) and his librettist, Gertrude Stein. The edition, a splendid final gift to the musical community, is currently in production, and the MUSA office hopes for a late 2008 release.

In recent months, leafing through some of Wiley's files, I've come to appreciate the amount of grueling work and sheer determination that went into the initial launching of this Institute. That he was able to do this while both teaching and producing indispensable

scholarship, especially at a time when American music was still viewed as a poor cousin to the work of the European masters, is remarkable. But then, Wiley was a remarkable man. He will be sorely missed by all who knew him.

— J.T.

Note: Though the news came too late to do Wiley's legacy justice in these pages, we plan a commemorative issue of the Newsletter for Spring 2008. In addition, though this fall has been an especially stimulating term for the Institute and its staff—a fact that no doubt would have delighted Wiley—we will wait until the spring to provide details.

* * *

A memorial service for Professor H. Wiley Hitchcock is planned for 8 March 2008 at 5 p.m., at St. Peter's Church in Manhattan (Lexington Ave. at 54th St.). Readers are invited to keep an eye on our website, www.bcisam.org, for additional information.

A Note from the New Director

“These are big shoes to fill.” The cliché popped into my head repeatedly as I moved into the Director’s office at ISAM this fall and constantly confronted—physically and metaphorically—the legacy of previous leaders of the Institute: founder and first Director H. Wiley Hitchcock, and his successors Carol J. Oja and Ellie M. Hisama, all of whom brought their unique expertise and imagination to the Institute, and left a vital legacy that will continue to inform the future path of the organization.

The Institute now boasts a 36-year history. It was created during a time when the study of American music was viewed with considerable suspicion by academia. Even the founding of the first professional society devoted entirely to the study of American Music, the Sonneck Society (now The Society for American Music) was still four years away. Thankfully, this music is now considered a valid topic for scholarly discourse, and centers for its study have arisen throughout the country and world.

But as the study of American music has become more mainstream, important new questions have been raised. What is “American music”? Music of the United States? (this has long been the assumption). Music of The Americas? In this era of interconnected global culture, with the cross-pollination of musical traditions taking place throughout the world, can we really speak of “American music” as a discreet entity? These are some of the questions we hope to address as we rethink the mission of an Institute for Studies in American Music in 2007 and beyond.

Though we will always maintain an interest in the national and international scenes in both our publications and presentations, we also wish to explore further the traditions of our own backyard. Located in New York, one of the most diverse cities in the world, the possibilities for study and discovery seem endless. In future issues, I will inaugurate a column called “Music From The Boroughs” that will delve into the musical life of one of our city’s five unique “principalities.” We will also pay particular attention to our own local scene, collaborating with other Brooklyn-based cultural organizations with an eye toward symposia and concerts highlighting the borough’s rich jazz tradition and diverse ethnic music cultures.

Browsing through these pages before they go to press, I sense an elegiac tone to this issue of the *Newsletter*, as we note the loss not only of the Institute’s founder and first Director, but of two major figures in improvised music. The strong emphasis on jazz is not surprising given my background as a jazz historian. Yet the Institute remains committed to promoting a wide variety of musical genres and historical periods, and, as it has throughout its history, will always celebrate the musicians and scholars whose creativity is still vividly with us, while stopping occasionally to mourn those who pass on.

I have been associated with ISAM since I first arrived at Brooklyn College fourteen years ago, and so the move to Director seems comfortable. Of course I will rely heavily on the expertise of my colleague Ray Allen, as well as the staff of the Institute. With their help, the organization will continue to grow and maintain its relevance as we move into the future, though we will always welcome input and suggestions from our readers. I sincerely hope those who have supported both the *Newsletter* and our Institute in the past will be pleased with the exciting road ahead.

—Jeffrey Taylor

Reprising Gershwin

After compiling the 690 page tome *Aaron Copland: The Life and Work of an Uncommon Man* (Henry Holt & Company, 1999), Howard Pollack turned his attention to the man who eclipsed Copland as America’s best known composer. The result, *George Gershwin: His Life and Work* (University of California Press, 2006), is no less monumental, weighing in at a hefty 884 pages (including over 100 pages of references and a 60-page index). That a university press would publish such a prodigious volume in this age of increasingly streamlined scholarship is itself remarkable, and the editors at California should be applauded for undertaking the project.

With more than a dozen Gershwin biographies and numerous books and articles devoted to his music already on the shelves, and in the wake of the tremendous publicity generated by the 1998 centenary of the composer’s birth, one might ask if yet another Gershwin treatise is really necessary. The answer is yes, and the justification is two-fold. First, unlike the informative but largely anecdotal biographies by Charles Schwartz (1973), Edward Jablonski (1987), and Joan Pyser (1993), Pollack’s account of the Gershwin story draws on a trove of archival and manuscript material and volumes of serious secondary scholarship that have become available over the past two decades. Secondly, unlike previous authors who folded Gershwin’s biography and creative output together into a single chronological narrative, Pollack has chosen to break them out, devoting slightly over a quarter of the volume to Gershwin’s life, and the remaining space to analysis of his theater and concert works. The resulting volume works equally well as straight biography and a reference guide to his music.

Pollack weaves an engaging narrative of Gershwin’s childhood, musical education, and journey from Tin Pan Alley to Broadway and the concert stage. He plumbs neglected areas of the composer’s life, such as his early training with pianist Charles Hambitzer and composition/theory study with Edward Kilenyi and Rubin Goldmark. By recounting his deep involvement in the practice and study of classical music starting at age thirteen, Pollack puts to rest the myth that Gershwin was an untrained genius who somehow stumbled upon serious music in later life.

Considerable space is also devoted to Gershwin’s Jewish-Russian heritage and conjecture over the possible Jewish influences in his music. Gershwin’s own reflections on the matter in both public and private conversations suggest that he believed “the internal, deep emotional elements” of at least some of his melodies had origins in Hebrew chant and Yiddish folk music. Certain melodic traits, such as the use of modal irregularities, pentatonic scales, and falling thirds are common to Jewish folk music and a number of Gershwin tunes. But Pollack concludes the composer owed far more to the blues and jazz idioms and the conventions of American popular song than to Hebrew or Yiddish idioms. That said, the Jewish background Gershwin shared with many of America’s most influential early twentieth-century song writers leaves the question open for further speculation.

Gershwin’s rise to stardom is contextualized against the backdrop of New York’s diverse music cultures of the early twentieth century. Pollack takes brief but informative excursions into the worlds of ragtime, stride piano, early jazz, Tin Pan Alley, Yiddish theater, and early modernist composition. He explores Gershwin’s relationship

Gershwin (continued)

with influential figures Eubie Blake, James Weldon Johnson, Duke Ellington, Irving Berlin, Jerome Kern, Cole Porter, Henry Cowell, Aaron Copland, and Joseph Schillinger; all of whom exerted varying influences on Gershwin's creative endeavors.

Pollack treats Gershwin's personal life with similar depth and sensitivity. His charismatic personality put him at the center of a large circle of New York luminaries including critic Samuel Chotzinoff, pianist Oscar Levant, critic Carl Van Vechten, comedians Groucho and Harpo Marx, and playwright S.N. Behrman. Pollack dismisses speculations that Gershwin (who never married) was gay, noting his penchant for attractive, intelligent women including pianist/composer Kay Swift with whom he shared a close relationship for over a decade. Allegations that Gershwin fathered a son with chorus girl Margaret Manners are noted but not sensationalized; Pollack systematically reviews the evidence, and concludes it is "circumstantial, and the matter, unresolved" (p.21).

The "Work" section of the book, spanning thirty-four chapters, surveys Gershwin's entire oeuvre of stage, film, and concert material, from the popular song "Raggin' the Traumerei" (1913) through soundtracks to *Goldwyn Follies* (1938) and *Kiss Me, Stupid* (1964, with George's melodies posthumously lyricized by his brother Ira). The works are presented in roughly chronological order, although Pollack doesn't hesitate to jump forward in time to discuss revivals, film adaptations, and recordings of a given song, show, or concert work. The work section may serve as an encyclopedic compendium allowing readers to quickly locate commentary on any of Gershwin's hundreds of creations: his first Broadway success, *Lady be Good*; his most influential song, "I've Got Rhythm;" the Pulitzer Prize winning political satire *Of Thee I Sing*; or his final and most enduring concert work, the opera *Porgy and Bess* (to which Pollack devotes four chapters).

The chapters in the work section follow a common structure. Pollack initially lays out the historical circumstances in which each work was conceived and actualized. He then offers general commentary on the music itself, reviews critical responses to the work, and finally recounts the entire performance history that includes not only opening runs but stage revivals, film scores, and audio recordings. The musical theater and *Porgy and Bess* chapters include useful plot summaries. The breadth of coverage and attention to referencing is extraordinary, given the enormity of Gershwin's creative output.

Some readers will undoubtedly be disappointed that Pollack's musical commentary is narrative rather than analytical, and contains no musical notation (whether this is due to space limitations or difficulty in obtaining reproduction rights is not explained). When the author does slip into more technical discussions of melodic intervals, harmonic structure, and form he often makes reference to specific sections of a particular score, a practice that may frustrate or distract those readers who will not have the music in front of them. Nevertheless Pollack strikes a satisfactory balance by mingling relatively simple technical language with well-crafted descriptive prose. His sketch of the slow movement of Gershwin's Concerto in F is exemplary: "The music unfolds an ABACA rondo form whose main theme, introduced by solo trumpet and wind choir in counterpoint, evokes the blues. Reversing its role in the

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Music in Gotham
in collaboration with
The New York Philharmonic
and
*The Institute for Studies in
American Music*
announces a conference

The 19th-Century American Orchestra



"Americans have always been besotted by orchestras," so writes the New Yorker's music critic, Alex Ross. This first scholarly conference on the nineteenth century orchestra will consider some of the ways this fascination came about, and grew in diverse locales. Over time, orchestras acquired symbolic roles in cities such as Boston, Chicago, Cincinnati, and New York.

The word "orchestra" was used in the nineteenth century for many different kinds of ensembles: festival, concert, theater, saloon, ball, hotel, and restaurant orchestras. Presenters at the conference will be examining several varieties of orchestras, who began them, their functions and, regarding the symphonies, who supported such costly cultural artifacts. In turn, we hope that this conference stimulates our colleagues to look into the beginnings and early development of hitherto untold orchestral life in their own cities and towns. The hoped-for result will be a comprehensive history of orchestral activity, and a better understanding of what it takes for an orchestra and its players to prosper and for its audiences to gain the aesthetic capital that a civilized society requires.

January 17-19, 2008

At the City University of New York Graduate Center

For details, visit:
web.gc.cuny.edu/BrookCenter/gotham

Indian Concepts in the Music of John Coltrane

John Coltrane was at the forefront of many important directions in jazz in the 1950s and 1960s, including those that have been labeled hard bop, modal jazz, avant-garde jazz, and world music. One interest that became an increasingly dominant focus for him in his later years was the study of Indian music and spirituality. While Coltrane's music remained firmly rooted in jazz, this exploration was an important part of the development of Coltrane's personal style from the early 1960s to the end of his life in 1967. A number of factors inspired Coltrane to explore Indian music and thought, and an investigation of specific applications of these ideas in his music will provide some insight into his stylistic motivations.

Coltrane exhibited a constant drive to absorb new ideas throughout his career. The years between 1955 and 1960 were a period of dramatic transition in his stylistic direction. In the late 1950s he began to explore modal jazz with Miles Davis, and by the time he recorded "My Favorite Things" in 1960, it was apparent that this harmonically static approach to improvisation was becoming a crucial element in Coltrane's evolving style. In even later recordings such as *Om* (1965) and *Ascension* (1965), he seemed to abandon conventional concepts of harmonic structure entirely. During this time, his music expresses a kind of transcendent religious ecstasy, sometimes incorporating prayers or chants.

In the course of his search for structure within this loosening of harmonic boundaries, Coltrane began studying Indian and other non-Western scales and modes. Lewis Porter notes that Coltrane started paying particular attention to the music of the Indian *sitar* master Ravi Shankar in early 1961.¹ "I collect the records he's made, and his music moves me" Coltrane stated. "I'm certain that if I recorded with him I'd increase my possibilities tenfold, because I'm familiar with what he does and I understand and appreciate his work."² Following their introduction in 1964, Shankar and Coltrane began to converse about Indian music. Regarding these lessons, Shankar recalled: "I could give just bare beginning and main things about Indian music and he became more and more interested."³ Coltrane had intended to spend six months studying with Shankar in 1967, but died before this could take place.⁴ The importance of Shankar to Coltrane is evidenced by the fact that the latter named his son Ravi in 1965.

Coltrane also developed an interest in Indian religion and philosophy. Though raised in a Methodist household, he did not consider himself to be specifically Hindu, Christian, Muslim, or any other single faith. However, by the mid-1960s, the religion and philosophy

of India took on a special importance for him, as evidenced by the titles of such compositions as "India" (1961, from *Live At the Village Vanguard*) and "Om" (1965, from the album *Om*). Lewis Porter notes that Coltrane "made a special study of India," including the writings of Paramahansa Yogananda and Mohandas Gandhi.⁵ Bill Cole states that Coltrane was aware of the works of the South Indian spiritual teacher and philosopher Krishnamurti and practiced yoga.⁶

Coltrane integrated Indian music and concepts into his style in a number of ways. On the one hand, he incorporated various structural elements of Indian music. These include the use of the drone, ideas of melodic development, and rhythmic and metric considerations. On the other hand, he drew from Indian religion and philosophy in both literal and abstract ways. While none of these elements dominated his playing and composing, as a whole they reflect Coltrane's profound interest in drawing from the music and thought of India as his personal style evolved.

The Indian use of the drone was a significant influence on much of Coltrane's music after the late 1950s, beginning with his 1959 composition "Naima" from the album *Giant Steps*. "India" provides a more overt reference to the Indian drone. In this piece, which is probably derived from an Indian Vedic chant,⁷ a G pedal point is used throughout. Coltrane uses this drone-like pedal point in other tunes as well, such as "Psalm" (1964, from *A Love Supreme*), "After the Rain" (1963, from *Impressions*), and "Chim Chim Chere" (1965, from *The John Coltrane Quartet Plays*).

Alap, the free-meter introductory portion of a performance of North Indian classical music, also inspired Coltrane in some of his work. In the development of the Hindustani (North Indian) *alap*, performers explore the various ways they can arrive at the successive notes of the *raga*. At times, Coltrane would similarly focus a portion of his improvisation on a single note. The entire piece "Psalm" is somewhat reminiscent of an Indian *alap* both in its rubato presentation over a bass drone and its tendency to continually return to a single note. While this concept is not uniquely Indian,⁸ the drone and free-meter presentation point to the Indian *alap* as a likely inspiration.

"Song of Praise" (1965, from *The John Coltrane Quartet Plays*) also exhibits features of Indian *alap*. Like "Psalm," the entire piece is presented in free meter over a bass drone. "Song of Praise" creates a further parallel with the first part of an Indian *alap*, as can be seen in Example 1. In Hindustani *alap*, the performer first

Example 1: Excerpt from John Coltrane's "Song of Praise"
Transcription by Carl Clements

Coltrane and India (continued)

establishes the tonic. Subsequently, each important note in the *raga* is systematically introduced until the middle-register tonic is stated. In Example 1, which shows how the first part of “Song of Praise” reflects this feature of *alap*, Coltrane’s performance is divided into numbered phrases, each of which cadences to the circled note (the phrase number can be found over each circle). As with the Hindustani *alap*, he first emphasizes the tonic D in the lower register in line A phrase 1. Phrase 2 resolves to G a fourth above D. Phrase 3 returns to the lower D. Phrase 4 introduces G a fourth above the D; phrase 5 states the fifth (A); phrase 6 establishes the major seventh (C#); and phrase 7, after touching the high G, resolves to D in the middle register. Thus he has used the notes D, G, A, and C# to establish an internal structure resembling that of Hindustani *alap* development.

Beginning at line C phrase 8, Coltrane repeats the systematic note development of lines A and B, as can be seen from the circled notes in phrases 8 through 14. This time, however, the cadences are more elaborate and embellished, and culminate on the upper register tonic in line D, phrase 15. After this second systematic development, he explores the highest register of the instrument and treats his phrases and cadences in a much freer manner over the instrument’s full range. This repetition of the ascending note development is suggestive of the typical progression of full presentation of *alap*, in which note by note development is repeated with increasing intensity.

A further structural element in “Song of Praise” that parallels Indian music appears in bassist Jimmy Garrison’s free-meter introduction. This solo makes extensive use of pedal point in several ways. Of particular interest is his alternation between moving lines and pedal point, as shown in Example 2a. This bears a close resemblance to the use of *bol* patterns played in the *chor* section of *alap* by players of the Hindustani *sitar*, as shown in Example 2b.⁹ In this excerpt from Ravi Shankar’s performance of Rag Malkauns (1968, from *The Ravi Shankar Collection - Sound of the Sitar*), he maintains a C# pedal and, as is typical of this style of playing, alternates rhythmically between stroking the fixed pitch *chikari* drone strings and playing melodic patterns on the main strings.

Some of Coltrane’s rhythmic ideas also seem to be inspired by Indian music, particularly his use of unconventional time signatures. *Tal* is the guiding rhythmic principle of the classical music of India. According to N.A. Jairazbhoy, “the term *tal*, perhaps best translated as ‘time measure,’ is conceived as a cycle.”¹⁰ This cycle

may theoretically consist of any number of beats, and *tals* consisting of five, seven, or ten beats are very common. In “Nature Boy” (1965, *The John Coltrane Quartet Plays*), the tune is first stated in free meter, then the rhythm section begins to play in 10/4 meter for the improvisational sections. The regular use of odd meter *tals*, such as the ten beat *jhaptal* commonly used by Shankar and other Hindustani classical musicians, is a likely source of Coltrane’s inspiration here. Indeed, many of Coltrane’s performances in this period convey a broad sense of rhythmic cycle. Elvin Jones plays an important role in establishing this feeling, and this aspect of his playing probably helps explain Coltrane’s preference for this ground-breaking drummer.



Example 2a: Excerpt from Jimmy Garrison’s bass solo in “Song of Praise”
Transcription by Carl Clements

Beyond explicit applications of Indian musical ideas, Coltrane also drew from extra-musical Indian elements. One example is his interest in the Indian concept of *rasa*, the “emotion or mood” of a *raga*.¹¹ In an interview with Nat Hentoff, Coltrane said that he had “already been looking into those approaches to music—as in India—in which particular sounds and scales are intended to produce specific emotional meanings.”¹² He also wished to be able to tap into what he believed to be the mystical power of music:

I would like to discover a method so that if I want it to rain, it will start right away to rain. If one of my friends is ill, I’d like to play a certain song and he will be cured; when he’d be broke, I’d bring out a different sound and immediately he’d receive all the money he needed.¹³

This same concept appears in a variety of Indian stories about the power of music. O. Gosvami writes that, when properly performed, “the *Raga* is believed to have the power to move the elements in nature, in man and in animal,” citing examples of performances in which Rag Dipak generated intense heat and Rag Megha brought on torrential rains.¹⁴

The titles of many of Coltrane’s later compositions suggest broad spiritual concepts that might be associated with Indian and other religious thought. Besides “India” and “Om,” the album titles *A Love Supreme* (1965), *Ascension* (1965), *Selflessness* (1965), and *Meditations* (1965) all evoke Hindu or Buddhist imagery or concepts. As Nat Hentoff writes in his book *Jazz Is*, “Coltrane became a theosophist of jazz. ... In this respect, as well as musically, he has been a powerful influence on many musicians since.”¹⁵

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Leroy Jenkins: Reflections

*Editor's note: On 13 May 2007, Saint Peter's Church in Manhattan hosted celebration of the life and music of violinist, violist, and composer Leroy Jenkins, who passed away in February of this year. Musical offerings included performances by Jenkins's colleagues from the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM) and an excerpt from his 2004 opera *Coincidents*. Trombonist, author, and composer George Lewis, another luminary in AACM's history and a longtime friend, offered the following reflections.*

Throughout his long and fruitful creative life, Leroy Jenkins seemed to be everywhere at once. The major improvising violinist of the twentieth century, Leroy invented the postmodern conception of the instrument. But for Leroy, mobility and range were key. Leroy produced operas, ballets, electronic and computer music, and collaborated with theater artists, writers, video artists, and choreographers. No form of creativity was foreign to him.

Where did this drive to mobility come from? What were his "roots," so to speak?

Well, it all started with Uncle Buck.

Leroy was the child of 1920s migrants who met in Chicago, two people among the millions who came streaming out of the South in the Great Migration, one of the largest internal relocations in the history of America. His great-uncle Buck Jenkins traveled under very different conditions from the fabled train ride of Louis Armstrong from New Orleans. Perhaps he read about life in the North from the *Chicago Defender's* glowing reports of jobs and freedom. Blacks were piling en masse into trucks, cars, and trains, and as Southern whites saw their superexploited labor force slipping away, entire trains were diverted and hijacked, the travelers dragged out and beaten.

Like many migrants, Buck didn't have train fare anyway, so he simply hopped a freight from the little town of Prospect, Tennessee, and found a job and a place to stay in "Bronzeville," the regional capital of black America on Chicago's South Side. He sent for Leroy's father Henry, who married his boss's Mississippi-born niece, and on March 11, 1932, Leroy was born.

When Leroy was eight or nine, his auntie's boyfriend Riley brought a violin to the house. Leroy was transfixed by the finger-busting classical marvels Riley played, and pleaded with

his mother to get him a violin. Soon, a half-size, red-colored violin came from Montgomery Wards by mail order. It cost \$25, which his mother paid for on credit. Leroy recalled that at first, he had "a terrible sound. I almost gave it up, but I figured I'd keep doing it and I'd sound like Riley."

Leroy was listening to Billy Eckstine, Louis Jordan, Billie Holiday, and The Ink Spots. But Leroy was becoming a classically trained musician in the orchestra and the choir at Ebenezer Baptist Church, playing the music of black composers such as William Grant Still, Clarence Cameron White, and Will Marion Cook under the direction of Dr. O.W. Frederick, who became Jenkins' first formal music teacher. At Chicago's DuSable High School, Leroy studied with the fabled Captain Walter Dyett, celebrated far and wide for the pupils he had nurtured to success in the music world—Dinah Washington, Nat "King" Cole, Richard Davis, Eddie Harris, Dorothy Donegan, Henry Threadgill.

Leroy attended the historically black Florida A&M University in Tallahassee on (of all things) a bassoon scholarship. He continued his classical violin studies with his other major teacher,

Bruce Hayden, and was teaching himself the craft of composition. He returned to Chicago in 1965, intending to develop a more or less conventional jazz violin repertoire, when he attended a concert by Roscoe Mitchell, Kalaparusha Maurice McIntyre, Malachi Favors, Alvin Fielder, Thurman Barker—the beginnings of the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians. "I felt so ignorant—Man, what are they doing? But I was fascinated by it. So

I joined up, and after a while I changed my whole style on the violin. The atmosphere was free enough for you to do your thing. I didn't have to copy off anybody. It was different from what I had associated with jazz before."

This was the beginning of the odyssey of Leroy Jenkins. By 1969, he was in Paris, where he and the first generation of AACM musicians—Joseph Jarman, Leo Smith, Anthony Braxton, Roscoe Mitchell, Malachi Favors, Steve McCall, and Lester Bowie—realized that their experimental music was succeeding in an international arena. "L'école de Chicago" was breaking all the rules. No sound was excluded and no tradition was sacrosanct, and as audiences for the events sometimes approached rock-concert levels, Leroy observed with his customary self-deprecating humor, "Country boys from Chicago, we weren't used to that kind of thing."



Leroy Jenkins (1932-2007)
Photo by Linda Harris

Max Roach: Bringing the (M)Boom Back

During the Harlem Renaissance a poet lamented “you took my boom boom away.” He was writing of the attempt to strip African Americans of their African cultural heritage, symbolically represented by the antebellum prohibition against African drumming. Maxwell Lemuel Roach (1924-2007), master jazz percussionist and composer, did as much as anyone to bring back the boom of drums in African American culture. On August 16, 2007 Max Roach, at the age of eighty-three, made his transition, but not before changing the face of music, and inspiring and mentoring generations of musicians and music lovers. His vast musical achievements exceed the merely musical. Max Roach was an institution, the embodiment of our culture, and a man of ideas and action who was consistently brilliant *and* consistently courageous.

Roach’s virtuosity and strength as a drummer was unmatched. He was among the generation of musicians who called their art “modern music,” later dubbed as “bebop” by the critical establishment. Indeed, these musicians were consummate modernists inasmuch as they were virtuosic, transcendent artists who heralded not only new techniques in music, but new visions of the world and the place of their culture within it. More than any other generation of musical geniuses, Roach and his co-creators Charles Parker, John Birks Gillespie, Thelonious Monk, and Earl Powell combined a mastery of both diatonic music, bequeathed to us by Europe, and blues-based improvisation, courtesy of African American praxis. That these musicians created modern American music while living in Jim Crow conditions as artists and as citizens probably provided fodder for much of the pathos and humor (as opposed to sentimentality) that makes for good blues-based music. The scourge of institutional racism prevented a more widespread appreciation of their work at the time of its inception, but today the immensity of their contribution to twentieth-century art and culture is undeniable, if not yet fully acknowledged.

While Kenny Clarke is generally acknowledged as the first innovator of bebop drumming for moving the pulse from the bass drum to the ride cymbal while dropping bombs with the bass drum and providing asymmetrical accents on the snare, Roach soon emerged as his equal. Due in part to Clarke becoming an ex-patriot and to Roach’s supreme musicality, the latter became the premier bebop drummer of his generation, with the great Roy Haynes his only living peer. Roach’s dedication led to an unprecedented virtuosity, as he could play any tempo with ease and subtlety. And he was known as a *melodic* drummer. How many of those are there? Roach could translate melodies to the trap drums, and when accompanying a soloist his rhythms contained the shadings and nuances that listeners expected only from pitched instruments. He once told me that when he was a young musician involved in the modern music

movement they would play five or six sets on their regular shows during the evening until past midnight. Then they would go uptown to a club like Minton’s and jam until seven or eight in the morning, experimenting with the new sounds in front of an audience, testing their mettle against one another. After a quick meal they would go to each other’s houses to study, practice, and rehearse until they had to catch a few winks, and then start the cycle all over again. He added wryly, “but we were after something.”

Were he merely an extraordinary musician Roach’s story might have ended right there. After all, most of us are not innovators, and even the few who are rarely go on to make other meaningful contributions. Not so with Roach. Effortlessly he moved on after the bebop era, never losing the lessons learned, and never stuck in time or in any way “genre impaired.” He co-led with Clifford Brown one of the three leading hard-bop combos of the 1950s (the

other two being the Miles Davis Quintet and the Jazz Messengers). Tragically, Brown and the pianist Richie Powell would die young in a car accident. But Roach continued. He discovered one of the greatest singers and lyricists in jazz, Abbey Lincoln. In fact, she credits him with transforming her from a cabaret singer into a jazz musician, from a sex symbol to a leading artist. Their collaborations were historic, not only for the originality and vibrancy of the music, but also for their self-conscious political and social messages. As I look at my prized Beauford Smith photograph of Max Roach and Malcolm X for inspiration, I am reminded that Roach was one of the most outspoken artists of his generation. He fought against racism in the industry and in society, participating with the equally outspoken Charles Mingus in boycotts against the mainstream industry, including famously the Newport Jazz Festival, and in launching an artist owned record company. He took his lumps but never abandoned the fight.



Max Roach (1924-2007)
Photo courtesy of the Institute of Jazz Studies,
Rutgers University

What is more, Roach never stopped growing as an artist. He was able to collaborate with as wide a spectrum of performers as anyone in jazz. As a band leader he formed the percussion ensemble Mboom, and an unusual group that augmented a traditional jazz quartet with a string quartet. He performed in duos with people as diverse as pianist Cecil Taylor, trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie, and saxophonist Archie Shepp. And he performed solo! He encouraged the iconoclasts, including the so-called avant garde; he welcomed the hip hop generation and all forms of the music. In an age when people who could play changes in the bebop style would disparage those who could not, Roach welcomed all comers. He was not only an innovator and an elder statesman of jazz, but a musician who could play on anybody’s terms.

Sometimes I wonder if I will live long enough to see the day when busts of Roach, Parker, and Gillespie are as ubiquitous as those of Bach, Beethoven, and Mozart. Maybe not, as ironically, jazz musicians do

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Women in Electronic Music

New World Records has begun to fulfill its promise to re-release the entire Composers Recordings (CRI) catalogue with the production of CD reissues of earlier phonograph recordings. Notable in the group is *New Music for Electronic and Recorded Media: Women in Electronic Music – 1977* (New World Records 80653-2), first issued on Thomas Buckner's 1750 Arch label. The original release featured Charles Amirkhanian's selections of electro-acoustic works by seven women who were, or would become, prominent composers of their day. Although the 1977 album title did not refer to gender, the project sought to raise the visibility of women in classical music. The composers selected were Johanna M. Beyer, Annea Lockwood, Pauline Oliveros, Laurie Spiegel, Megan Roberts, Ruth Anderson, and the soon-to-be well-known Laurie Anderson.

As with many technological developments from the beginning of the twentieth century that came to fruition after World War II, the ideas of early electro-acoustic composers outpaced the readily available technology. For example, Johanna M. Beyer's 1939 *Music of the Spheres*, which opens the CD, allowed violins to be substituted for the three electronic instruments specified in her original score. The first performance of *Music of the Spheres* as conceived by Beyer was produced and recorded in 1977 specifically for this album. After a lion's roar and triangle duet opening, the piece unfolds with one of the electronic instruments performing an ostinato figure that gradually accelerates and then decelerates while the other two electronic instruments present a two-voice contrapuntal melody, punctuated throughout by occasional triangle attacks.

The repetitive motorized sounds that open Annea Lockwood's *World Rhythms* are jolting after the serenity of Beyer's work. A composition exploring the polyrhythms of nature, a series of initial water sounds precedes an overlapping succession of recordings of pulsars, earthquakes, volcanoes, geysers, rivers, peepers, fire, storms, waves, and breathing. Recordings of nature and the shared journey are important elements in Lockwood's work, and would be displayed again on a larger scale in her well-known *A Sound Map of the Hudson River* (1982) and the recently completed epic *A Sound Map of the Danube*.

Oliveros's 1965 San Francisco Tape Music Center work *Bye Bye Butterfly* demonstrates her early use of electronic music technology to create an improvised real-time performance piece. The studio equipment available to her was too large and bulky to move easily into a concert hall, so her works in this style were improvised directly to magnetic tape. She continued to work on this concept, which she called the Expanded Instrument System (EIS), and its current digital incarnation, created with design and programming contributions by Panaiotis, David Gamper, and Zevin Polzin, remains central to much of the music that Oliveros composes today.

Bye Bye Butterfly opens with a primary texture of electronic combination tones processed through tape delay feedback loops.

Halfway through, a recording of *Madame Butterfly* is introduced and processed in a similar fashion (a precursor to the digital sampling and looping we take for granted in music today). Oliveros explained that she simply wanted to include an LP recording in her new composition, and her choice of the *Madame Butterfly* disc was completely random. This chance selection, however, can also be heard as a metaphorical goodbye to Pauline Oliveros, the orchestral French horn player from Houston, as this spirit from the past mingles with the new sounds of the experimental composer she had become.

Appalachian Grove I, inspired by mountain fiddle music, is an up-tempo, computer-generated composition by the highly inventive and under-recognized composer Laurie Spiegel. Produced at Bell Labs in 1974 using Max Mathews's GROOVE programming system, Spiegel says the piece was "composed in reaction to an overdose of heavy, sad, introspective contemporary music." Spiegel's simple computer-generated timbres result in the discrete, fast-moving dots of sound that dominate the composition. The pointillistic opening leads to a passage of sustained sounds that then return to the initial texture. A broader selection of Spiegel's musical experiments from this period can be heard on her EMF recording *Obsolete Systems*.

The two Laurie Anderson pieces that close the CD, *New York Social Life* and *Time to Go*, gave the world its first exposure to the experimental composer/performance artist who would soon achieve mainstream success with the rise of *Oh, Superman* on the British pop charts. *New York Social Life* follows Anderson through a day of quick conversations often beginning with "Hey, how are you," and ending with "really busy now," "we should really get together," and "got to go." Interspersed are a gallery owner's lament that "It's just not like it was in the '60s, those were the days," and a man from Cleveland inviting her to perform, saying her work is "not really my style, kind of trite, but listen, it's just my opinion." Her day ends with a friend calling to say "and listen Laurie, if you want to talk, I'll leave my answering machine on and just give me a ring any time." Anderson delivers her text with a waltz-like lilt accompanied by an unconventional performance on the *tambura* by Scott Johnson. *Time to Go* opens with a guitar and organ riff performed by Johnson as Anderson tells the story of Diego, a night-shift guard at the Museum of Modern Art whose job it is to snap the patrons out from their "art trances" and tell them to leave. As the story ends, a multi-tracked minimalist violin duo by Anderson thickens the texture while her voice continues to repeat the phrase "time to go."

With this release, New World Records is proving a worthy caretaker of the extensive and historically important CRI catalogue while continuing its mission to anthologize American contemporary music.

— Douglas Cohen
Brooklyn College



Laurie Spiegel
Photo by Joel Chadabe

Celebrating a Minnesota Legend

In June 1981, at Carleton College in Northfield, Minnesota, a plaque was dedicated for the jazz cornetist Paul Wesley “Doc” Evans, himself a 1929 graduate of the College and something of a local legend. The plaque featured a poem by Jack “Jax” Lucas, also a Carleton graduate and longtime English professor there, who had made a name for himself as a jazz writer for *Down Beat* and *The Record Changer* in the 1940s. For years afterwards, students would pass the plaque, housed in the College’s Music and Drama Center, developing a tradition of rubbing his nose for luck, and vaguely wondering about his significance. In fact, it was partly questions like “who is this guy?” that helped prompt Stephen Kelly, a music professor at Carleton, to organize a centennial celebration of Evans’s life.

On 5-6 October 2007, Carleton hosted an event to honor its local hero. The program was planned as an extension of the Doc Evans Festival that Doc’s son Allan had organized for years in Albert Lea, Minnesota. The Carleton celebration combined a student convocation, a series of academic papers, a panel discussion with those who had known or worked with Doc, and, perhaps most importantly, a splendid evening concert in Carleton’s Skinner Memorial Chapel. Making the event especially poignant was the attendance of Doc’s widow Eleanor and several members of his family, as well as members of the Lucas family. The presence of the latter seemed especially appropriate, for Doc had written on one of his LPs (on display in a fascinating exhibit about the cornetist and his life), “my best to Jack, who really made all these things possible.”

Paul Wesley Evans—always known as “Doc”—was born in Spring Valley, Minnesota in 1907, and died in the Twin Cities seventy years later. Though he made no records until 1947, he was an established musician in the Minneapolis area by the 1930s, and in the 1940s was a regular at Mitch’s club in Mendota, Minnesota, a venue that attracted swing-band leaders like Claude Thornhill and Ray McKinley. He received offers to travel, but he turned them down to stay in his native state and close to his family. He did spend five years as a mainstay on Chicago’s jazz scene, but returned to Minnesota in 1952, where he hosted a television show and played a series of now-legendary concerts at Minneapolis’s Walker Arts Center. He also built a second career in classical music, founding the still-thriving Bloomington Symphony and writing two string quartets.

On cornet, Doc developed an instantly recognizable style, one with strong roots in Louis Armstrong and Bix Beiderbecke, but with its own warmth and melodic power. Even in his performances of the much overplayed “The Saints Go Marching In” he always seemed to

have something very important to say. He never showed an interest in newer jazz styles, but perfected his own unique take on the music of his early heroes—a feat that, in the face of a tradition in which constant innovation is prized, one cannot help admire.

Though I never met Doc, I do claim a strong personal connection to the man: in 1958 he founded the Rampart Street Club in Mendota, at a location that would later be taken over by the Hall Brothers Jazz Band and renamed The Emporium of Jazz. After graduating from Carleton in 1981 I lived in the Twin Cities for many years, and spent countless hours at “The Emp,” as we affectionally called it. There I had a chance to hear and meet some of jazz’s great players as they passed through town, and developed lasting friendships with members of the Hall Brothers band itself.

In fact, it was a member of the Hall Brothers Band—Richard “Butch” Thompson—who organized and hosted the musical portions of the centennial celebration. Thompson, perhaps best known

for his long stint as pianist on Garrison Keillor’s *A Prairie Home Companion* radio show, assembled a tribute band that included trombonist Dave Graf, drummer Phil Hey, and Thompson’s Hall Brothers cohorts Bill Evans and Charlie DeVore. Rounding out the ensemble were three special guests: clarinetist Kim Cusack, called out from Chicago on a moment’s notice to replace an ailing Mike Polad; the brilliant cornetist and trumpeter Jon-Erik Kellso, well-known to New York audiences for his work with Vince Giordano’s Nighthawks; and banjo legend Lowell Schreyer who, sadly, passed away just a month after the event.

Doc always called his music “Dixieland”—a term unfortunately now often used as a pejorative to

evoke musicians who don nostalgic straw hats and arm-bands to play for pizza parlors and mall openings. Though still immensely popular, particularly on the West Coast and in the Midwest, this style, with its basis on simple chord structures and reliance on a nearly century-old repertory, is still viewed with suspicion among some jazz musicians who specialize in post-1940s styles. Yet for Evans, the word had no such negative connotations: it implied a deeply-felt art that at its best could convey an entire range of emotions—from the despondency of early blues to the sheer joy of tunes by Armstrong, Beiderbecke, Jelly Roll Morton, and others. And in the musical performances at the October celebration the tired musical clichés and ideological baggage often associated with Dixieland seemed to slink out the back door. This was truly first-rate music, played by artists at the top of their game. Highlights were Kellso’s poignant lyricism on muted cornet in a rendition of Fats Waller’s “Squeeze Me” (accompanied only by piano, bass, and drums) and an exhilarating performance of Evans’s arrangement of King Oliver’s “Doctor Jazz.” As I confessed to the symposium

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Doc Evans
Photo courtesy of Allan Evans

Gershwin (continued)

first movement, the piano imitates, not a pensive episode, but a witty dialogue largely carried out between the soloist and the strings (B). The ensuing C interlude, with its magnificent big tune, constitutes the heart of the movement, if not the entire concerto. ...its prevailing E-major tonality contrasts poetically with the larger tonal context.” (p. 349)

On the cultural front Pollack does not shy away from issues of race, class, and cultural hierarchy that infused debates over the validity of Gershwin’s music. While he approaches the controversies surrounding a number of Gershwin’s works with a studied thoroughness, he consistently comes down as a defender of the composer. He contends *Rhapsody in Blue* is more than a patched together collection of catchy pop tunes as some argued, for it exhibits an “extraordinary unity” of thematic material, and the “work’s form serves the complexity of its ideas” (p. 300). The Pulitzer Prize board’s decision to give its prestigious award to *Of Thee I Sing* for the book and lyrics while excluding Gershwin’s musical score was simply “indefensible” (p. 518). Although it produced a number of “hit tunes,” *Porgy and Bess* stands as “the most successful American opera to date” and should not be demoted to the stature of pedestrian musical theater. And while some critics raised troubling questions regarding the opera’s portrayal of African Americans and their culture, Pollack concludes *Porgy and Bess* “shows its author to be deeply humane in his sensitive understanding of the weakness and resilience, the haplessness and dignity, of an oppressed but tight-knit group” (p. 591).

Pollack’s *Gershwin* promises to reach a wide readership. Gershwin fans will appreciate the insightful life story as well as the ease with which they can thumb through the works section to find out more about their favorite songs, shows, and orchestral pieces. Musicologists and students can look to the book as a model of meticulously researched and lucidly written musical biography, and the works section as a useful starting point for more in-depth research on specific pieces. Cultural historians will find fresh insights regarding the role music and theater played in American life during the 1920s and 1930s.

Can the totality of Gershwin’s life and music be captured between the covers of any single volume? Howard Pollack has unquestionably produced the most exhaustive effort to date, but given America’s enduring fascination with Gershwin it’s unlikely we have heard the last word on the man and his music.

—Ray Allen
Brooklyn College

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Gillespie and Pozo (continued)

a conga player to begin with. Bassist Al McKibbon, for example, was initially disturbed by Pozo's non-Western drumming technique, commenting "here is this guy beating this god damn drum with his hands . . . And Dizzy could see him in the band, [but] I couldn't."¹⁴ Despite integrating Pozo and the conga drum into the big band format, Gillespie ultimately felt that "Chano wasn't too hip about American music. If I'd let ["Manteca"] go like he wanted it, it would've been strictly Afro-Cuban, all the way. There wouldn't have been a bridge."¹⁵ Fuller suggested that listening to Pozo's other Afro-Cuban-inspired compositions will "drive you nuts because . . . it just keeps going and repeats itself ad infinitum."¹⁶ Clearly, Gillespie and Fuller's musical intervention in Pozo's conception of "Manteca" signals their concerns over what they perceived as a harmonically static and structurally incomplete musical composition; that is, something that was simply too Afro-Cuban. Fuller remembers assuring Gillespie that he would "fix it," referring to Pozo's musical ideas.¹⁷ In fact, Fuller altered many of Pozo's ideas to better conform to conventional jazz structures.

Following the December 1947 recording sessions that produced "Cubana Be," "Cubana Bop," and "Manteca," the Gillespie big band set sail for Europe, kicking off a three-month tour that ended in the U.S. The featured Afro-Cuban jazz numbers for this tour were "Cubana Be" and "Cubana Bop." After taking much of March and April of 1948 off, the band went out on the road again touring the Midwest and California. By September Gillespie was enjoying mass popularity as *The New Yorker Magazine* and *Life* featured the so-called "cult leader" of bebop in its pages. Also, the band had substituted "Cubana Be" and "Cubana Bop" with "Manteca" as the featured Afro-Cuban jazz number. Gillespie even added Pozo's Abakuá chants and drumming to "Manteca's" arrangement. Pozo's popularity led *Life* magazine to include two photos of the Cuban in its spread on Gillespie and his band. The captions for the photos read: "Frenzied drummer . . . whips beboppers into fever with Congo beat" and "Shouting incoherently, drummer goes into a bop transport."¹⁸ *Down Beat* published a review of the band's September 1948 performance in Milwaukee in which the reviewer stated "'Manteca' . . . was done almost as a tribal rite, becoming downright primitive."¹⁹ This and Hodeir's use of primitivist language suggests that for many in the United States and Europe Pozo and his drumming and chanting evoked racial stereotypes of the African savage, images that had also framed the reception of early jazz in the 1910s and 1920s.

One might presume that such stereotypes contradicted Gillespie's purpose in featuring Pozo in these Afro-Cuban jazz numbers. In fact, Gillespie's behavior on stage during performances of "Manteca," dating from the fall of 1948, suggests that the bandleader might have exploited his audience's fascination with exoticism. In the recording of the band's October 9, 1948 performance of "Manteca" at New York's Royal Roost, Gillespie is heard mimicking the band's vocal response to Pozo's chants in Abakuá to the amusement of the audience who react with laughter. While Gillespie was known to clown on stage, this particular recording suggests he realized his audience was interpreting Pozo's featured solos as nothing more than exotic spectacles. It is ironic, nevertheless, to listen to Gillespie satirize Pozo's Abakuá chants given his otherwise genuine convictions in fusing Afro-Cuban music with jazz as an expression of his identification with African diasporic music and culture.

Most jazz historians have marginalized the history of Afro-Cuban jazz despite the fact that many Afro-Cuban jazz pieces such as "Manteca" are recognized and continue to be performed as jazz standards. Why? The answers to this question may be traced to the aesthetic and ideational ambivalences that Afro-Cuban music and culture evoked among African American jazz musicians and critics in general in the late 1940s.

As the collaborative efforts of Gillespie, Pozo, Russell, and Fuller show, Afro-Cuban music, with its two- and four-bar cyclical structures and paucity of harmonic development, seemingly collided with jazz's dominant twelve-bar blues and thirty-two-bar song forms and its increasingly sophisticated harmonic palette. Nevertheless, Gillespie in particular helped negotiate these musical impasses in order to realize his artistic goal of fusing Afro-Cuban music and jazz. Such perceived musical collisions and impasses should be attributed not only to what Afro-Cuban music actually posed structurally but also to what it signified within primitivist and evolutionary ideological frameworks. Many bebop musicians and jazz critics in the United States and Paris considered Afro-Cuban music and instruments (particularly the conga drum) symbolic vestiges of jazz's African origins and, thus, antithetical to jazz's more highly evolved state.

André Hodeir, for instance, viewed Afro-Cuban music as violating the progress he perceived jazz to have attained. The French critic was the first to propose a periodization of jazz history wherein he pushed jazz's origins "back on the evolutionary chain" by weighing its debt to African incantation and drumming.²⁰ Hodeir's characterization of Pozo's drumming and Abakuá chanting suggests he saw the Cuban musician as the literal embodiment of jazz's African roots and distant past. Harlem Renaissance intellectuals Maud Cuney-Hare and Alain Locke, who helped crystallize what Guthrie Ramsey calls the "rhetoric of the New Negro," had downplayed the African origins of African American folk spirituals, blues, and jazz under similar ideological concerns, namely, to promote the "elevation" of black music and culture by assimilating it to Eurocentric musical and cultural norms.²¹ More importantly, Al McKibbon's annoyance and Walter Fuller's ambivalence toward Pozo's musical ideas and use of the conga drum might be attributed to the legacy of the "rhetoric of the New Negro" to the extent to which Pozo and Afro-Cuban music represented for them a bygone and best forgotten past. Only Gillespie seemed to recognize the significance of that lost past, and voiced a commitment to its recovery.

Because notions of musical progress and racial elevation framed the thinking of so many jazz writers, musicians, and intellectuals, Gillespie's embracing of Afro-Cuban music signifies a significant ideological and cultural shift in the United States at mid-century. Yet it was the cultural and ideological capital he had accrued among these same constituencies in defining and popularizing bebop that in the end put him in a privileged position to integrate Pozo and Afro-Cuban music into his band and compositions. Moreover, although Gillespie felt the synthesis of bebop and Afro-Cuban music defined the future of jazz, he delegated very clear roles to American and Cuban musicians in the achievement of this synthesis: bebop, Gillespie claimed, "will be an amalgamation of two styles, so blended you won't be able to call it bop or Afro-Cuban. . . . It will be Americans playing the bop and Cubans the rhythms which will make it truly a music of

Continued on page 14

Gillespie and Pozo (continued)

the Americas.”²² Ethnic and national particularity ultimately trumped what the phrase “we both speak African” might otherwise suggest as having been a truly ecumenical and egalitarian collaboration between two black musicians of the Americas.

—*University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill*

Notes

¹ Dizzy Gillespie with Al Fraser, *To Be, or not ... to Bop* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1985), 318. The line “we both speak African” is a modification of Gillespie’s original approximation of Pozo’s accent that reads: “Deehee no peek pani, me no peek Angli, bo peek African.”

² Raúl Fernández, *From Afro-Cuban Rhythms to Latin Jazz* (Berkeley: University of California Press and Chicago: Center for Black Music Research, 2006), 62.

³ Gillespie with Fraser, 171.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*, 324.

⁶ Michael Levin, “Despite Bad Acoustics, Gillespie Concert Offers Some Excellent Music,” *Down Beat* 14/22 (October 22, 1947): 1.

⁷ “Dizzy Gillespie Orchestra Heard at Carnegie Hall,” *New York Herald Tribune* (September 30, 1947): 20.

⁸ L. D. Reddick, “Dizzy Gillespie in Atlanta,” *Phylon* 10/1 (1949): 48. Reddick was professor of history at the University of Atlanta at the time he attended and reviewed this concert.

⁹ For a review of the studio version of “Cubana Be” and “Cubana Bop” see “Diggin’ the Discs with Tom,” *Down Beat* (January 14, 1949): 18.

¹⁰ André Hodeir, “Dizzy Gillespie à Paris,” *Jazz Hot* 21 (March 1948): 7. Author’s translation.

¹¹ Gillespie with Fraser, 320.

¹² *Ibid.*, 324.

¹³ “Diggin’ the Discs with Tom,” *Down Beat* (September 22, 1948): 13.

¹⁴ Gillespie with Fraser, 320.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 321.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 322.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ “Bebop: New Jazz School is Led by Trumpeter Who is Hot, Cool and Gone,” *Life* (October 11, 1948): 140-141.

¹⁹ John Osmundsen, “Diz Presents Milwaukee a ‘Clean’ Band,” *Down Beat* (October 20, 1948): 11.

²⁰ John Gennari, “Jazz Criticism: Its Developments and Ideologies,” *Black American Literature Forum* 25/3 (Fall 1991): 457, 481-482.

²¹ Guthrie Ramsey, “Cosmopolitan or Provincial? Ideology in Early Black Music Historiography, 1867-1940,” *Black Music Research Journal* 16/1 (Spring 1996): 23-28, 36.

²² “Diz to Put Bop Touch to More Standard Tunes,” *Down Beat* (March 11, 1949): 3.

Coltrane and India (continued)

In “Om,” Coltrane’s integration of Indian religion into his music is overt. The title refers to “the sound that represents the reverberations of all creation in Hinduism.”¹⁶ The group recites a chant at the beginning and end of this composition that was “reportedly taken from the *Bhagavad-Gita*, a classic poem of Hinduism.”¹⁷ The conclusion of this chant was: “I, the oblation and I the flame into which it is offered. I am the sire of the world and this world’s mother and grandsire. I am he who awards to each the fruit of his action. I make all things clean. I am Om—OM—OM—OM!”¹⁸ This is clearly derived from verses sixteen and seventeen of the ninth discourse of the *Bhagavad Gita* in which Krishna, who has revealed himself to the warrior Arjuna as the incarnation of the god Vishnu, explains how his divine essence permeates all things.

The first verse of this discourse reads: “The Blessed Lord said: What I am going to tell thee, the uncarping, is the thing most secret, the essential knowledge attended with all the comprehensive knowledge, by knowing which thou shall be released from evil.”¹⁹ The ideas of “Om” may hold a key to the understanding of much of Coltrane’s later work, for he seems ever more eager to break out of the conventional boundaries of jazz to express the unity of all things. The expansion of intensity in his work could be seen as a reflection of Hindu teachings. Eric Nisenson writes that “the point of [Coltrane’s] music was, to use a now hackneyed Sixties phrase, to ‘expand the consciousness’ of the listeners, to create nothing less than a transcendent religious experience. The spiritual burden borne by the Indian musician is certainly something to which Coltrane could relate.”²⁰

Coltrane was not the only jazz musician in the early- to mid-1960s to look to Indian music for inspiration, as can be seen in the works of Yusef Lateef, Harihar Rao and Don Ellis, and John Mayer. Coltrane was apparently among the first to do so, however, and his high profile in the jazz world inspired many others to follow suit. Former bandmates Miles Davis, Pharaoh Sanders, and Alice Coltrane later drew from Indian sources to varying degrees. By the late 1960s, Indian ideas had begun to permeate Western popular and art music, from the Beatles to Philip Glass. Coltrane and Ravi Shankar were likely two of the most prominent catalysts for this movement.

Musicians such as John McLaughlin, Dave Liebman, and Jan Garbarek continued to carry on Coltrane’s work from the early 1970s to the present. Each of these musicians acknowledges the significance of Coltrane’s music to the development of their individual styles, and their distinct backgrounds are indicative of the range of his legacy. The phenomenon of Indian-jazz fusion has become thoroughly international, with musicians from the United States, Europe, India, and elsewhere presenting their own interpretations of this merging of musical systems. This is evident in the music of such stylists as Steve Coleman, Oregon and Natraj, Trilok Gurtu, Badal Roy, and Zakir Hussain.

With India’s ever-growing international role, its cultural presence is increasingly seen in musics as diverse as hip hop, jazz, Western art music, and background scores for movies and television. As the number of Indian immigrants has dramatically increased since the 1960s, Western perception of Indian culture has begun to move beyond the exotic and into the everyday. Coltrane’s pioneering work with Indian conceptions in jazz nonetheless continues to stand out as a major achievement. When one considers his enormous impact on the beginnings of Indian-jazz fusion, it is evident that his spirit pervades the genre. The frequent use of odd time signatures, modality, and other Indian-derived concepts in present-day jazz shows how thoroughly his innovations have been integrated into this music. In this area, as in so many others, musicians of diverse backgrounds owe an enormous debt to John Coltrane.

—*Carl Clements*
The Graduate Center, CUNY

Coltrane and India (continued)

Notes

¹ Lewis Porter, *John Coltrane: His Life and Music* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2000), 209.

² 1961 interview by Francois Postif, quoted in Porter, 209.

³ Gerry Farrell, *Indian Music and the West* (Oxford: 1997), 191.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Porter, 259.

⁶ Bill Cole, *John Coltrane* (New York: Schirmer, 1976), 97.

⁷ Porter, 209. This composition, according to Bill Bauer, may be based on a Vedic chant from the Folkways album *Religious Music of India* (New York: Folkways 4431, 1952, recorded by Alain Danielou). See also Soniya K. Brar's elaboration of this concept in her Master's thesis "Transculturalism and Musical Refashioning: The Use of Hindustani Musical Element in the Works of John Coltrane" (University of Texas at Austin, 2000), 72-79.

⁸ Lewis Porter points to the use of the "recitation tone" by black American preachers as a source for this concept. See Porter, 246.

⁹ *The Ravi Shankar Collection - Sound of the Sitar* (New York: Angel Records, 2000).

¹⁰ N.A. Jairazbhoy, *The Rags of North Indian Music: Their Structure and Evolution* (London: Faber, 1971), 33.

¹¹ Ali Akbar Khan and George Ruckert, *The Classical Music of North India: The Music of the Baba Allauddin Gharana As Taught by Ali Akbar Khan* (St. Louis: East Bay Books, 1991), 350.

¹² From Nat Hentoff's notes to *Coltrane "Live" At the Village Vanguard*. Quoted in Porter, 211.

¹³ From Clouzet and Delorme, "Entretien avec John Coltrane," 12-13. Quoted in Porter, 211.

¹⁴ O. Gosvami, *The Story of Indian Music: Its Growth and Synthesis* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1961), 245.

¹⁵ Nat Hentoff, *Jazz Is* (New York: Random House, 1976).

¹⁶ Farrell, 191.

¹⁷ Porter, 265.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Sri Aurobindo translates these verses as: "I am the ritual action, I the sacrifice, I the food-oblation, I the fire-giving herb, the mantra I, I the butter, I the flame, and the offering too I am. "I am the Father of this world, the Mother, the Ordainer, the first Creator, the object of knowledge, the sacred syllable OM and also the Rik, Sama and Yajur (Vedas)." See *The Bhagavad Gita, with Translation and Commentary in the Words of Sri Aurobindo* (Jhunjhunu, Rajasthan: Sri Aurobindo Divine Life Trust, 1992), 239.

²⁰ Eric Nisenson, *Ascension: John Coltrane and His Quest* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), 111.

Leroy Jenkins (continued)

The power of music is founded on soul-infused bodies—bodies that change, learn, grow, and decline. What musicians must do to keep both tradition and mobility alive is to work to create the conditions under which new bodies consecrate themselves to the musical act. This is one of two great gifts that Leroy gave to younger artists—Anthony Davis, James Emery, John Blake, Brandon Ross, Myra Melford, myself, and so many others. The other great gift was Leroy himself, playing the violin and bouncing around in ecstatic joy; conducting an ensemble with arms akimbo, gesturing wildly, eyes wide open, hopping on one foot; or simply excited about some new idea or sound, talking faster and faster and faster.

Leroy Jenkins spent his life defending the spirit of the great musicians who realized that the absence of definite borders is the greatest strength of any music that seeks to endure as an international symbol of freedom and mobility. As Henry Threadgill told

me, this kind of accomplishment requires a certain type of character. "These people kept stretching their own boundaries, in spite of adversity, and with great bulldog tenacity, have forged ahead when there was no payday, through all these years, and have not fallen by the wayside into obscurity."

These are just some of the many great lessons—of sacrifice, renewal, and triumph—that Leroy Jenkins has given us.

—George Lewis
Columbia University

Doc Evans (continued)

audience on the following day, a smile never left my face the entire evening. Critics and musicians might question the validity of playing in jazz styles that have outlived their time (though what is to be made of the dozens of saxophonists in New York who resurrect recordings of Charlie Parker now over half a century old?). But when played well, this music is quite simply irresistible, and one senses Evans himself would have been delighted.

The final symposium, featuring three decades of Carleton graduates, provided some academic heft to the event, moving from a more general celebration of the art of jazz by the Smithsonian Institution's John Hasse (class of 1971), through my own re-evaluation of the so-called "Dixieland Revival" of the 1940s, to a fascinating exploration of Evans's unique cornet style by Mark Flaherty (class of 1994). The final panel discussion, featuring Thompson, DeVore, and Allan Evans, gave more intimate insights into a man who touched many lives, both musically and personally.

During the Friday convocation there was mention of this celebration becoming an annual event at Carleton, an idea that was met by a rousing round of applause. If the tireless work of Stephen Kelly, Allan Evans, and the host of others who made this event possible is any indication, Doc's legacy is secure.

Note: for more information, see Allan Evans's website www.docevens.org, which holds a treasure-trove of information about his father.

—Jeffrey Taylor
Brooklyn College and the Graduate Center, CUNY

Max Roach (continued)

not yet enjoy the widespread acceptance and reputation in America as do the European masters. But we can take solace knowing that their contributions have been recorded for posterity, and that they are finally beginning to receive the accolades denied them in their lifetimes. Long live Max Roach.

—Salim Washington
Brooklyn College



Dizzy Gillespie

*Photo courtesy of the Institute of Jazz Studies,
Rutgers University*

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