

A Constructivist Analysis of Jazz Pedagogy in European Sinti Communities

by

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Dedication

To the jazz musicians of the European Sinti community.

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Abstract

Jazz found its way into the fabric of Sinti families and communities through the work of innovative Manouche guitarist, Django Reinhardt. The Sinti people are a subgroup of the Romanies, pejoratively called “Gypsies.” How did jazz become an essential part of the European Sinti identity and culture? How do Sinti musicians develop skills as fluent jazz improvisers? In this article, I draw from Constructivist learning theory as developed by psychologists Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky, and applied to music education by Jackie Wiggins, to describe the significance of the social environment in Sinti jazz pedagogy. I analyze the responses of eight Sinti jazz musicians whom I interviewed about their early music learning experiences, Sinti identity and culture, and activism. My interlocutors discuss the essential role of social interaction in the music learning process. The cultural practices of intergenerational learning, performance-based learning, and aural pedagogy facilitate environments wherein young learners develop an embodied knowledge of jazz improvisation, and a contextual understanding of jazz as a social practice, essential to Sinti identity and community building. Following the research article, there are programs and program notes from two dissertation recitals, as required for the completion of my Doctor of Musical Arts degree.

Chapter 1 Introduction

On a cool summer evening in July, 2022, I sat at the festival grounds of the Django Reinhardt festival in Hildesheim, Germany. Picnic tables were scattered in the field of the centuries-old Gut Steuerwald stables that served as the festival grounds. In the center was a temporary stage, which was in the process of being assembled for the performances on the following day. As dusk fell, I was joined by several musicians who were performing at the festival, including Polish Sinti guitarist and vocalist, Józef Merstein Jochymczyk, and Czech Sinti guitarists, Tschavolo Vlasák and his father Carlos Kája Vlasák. After introductions, we began enjoying food, drinks, and conversation. I was able to speak in English with Tschavolo Vlasák, and Google Translate allowed me to communicate with my other new acquaintances, as I spoke neither Czech, nor Polish. Despite their various nationalities, Jochymczyk and the Vlasáks communicated in Romani, the language spoken by the Sinti people. Several musicians took their instruments out of their cases and asked if I would like to jam with them. Of course, I was thrilled at the offer, although a bit apprehensive as I wondered what we might play together.

After they agreed on a piece, the jamming commenced. I used my training as a jazz musician to carefully listen to the music. I internally wondered, “What is the key? What is the form? What is the chord progression?” Fortunately for me, many of the pieces we played were either based on jazz standards or shared many common characteristics, thus I was able join in with improvised accompaniment and solo. Many of the pieces began with a rubato verse sung by Jochymczyk, which typically transitioned into a swing groove. The swing feel was introduced and propelled by the quarter-note strumming of the rhythm guitar. I felt immediately welcomed, as

those gathered cheered me on during my solo. I was amazed by Tschavolo Vlasák's flawless virtuosity as I played the rhythm accompaniment.

As my later interviews confirmed, the type of jam session that I experienced in Hildesheim is a common occurrence in Sinti culture. The next day, after the musicians performed at the festival, another jam session continued late into the evening. I observed everyone enjoying the music, but not *just* the music; we also enjoyed sharing one others' company, and connecting through music.

This experience sparked two questions – How did jazz become an integral aspect of the European Sinti community? And how do Sinti musicians become fluent jazz improvisers? As a jazz performer, researcher, and educator, I began to consider the relationship between culture and the music learning process in Sinti communities.

Chapter 2 Methodology

In the Summer 2022, I travelled to Berlin, Germany to conduct interviews with Sinti jazz musicians. The European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture (ERIAC) assisted me connecting with the community of European Sinti musicians and generously provided gallery space to conduct interviews. I collected qualitative data in the form of seven video interviews with eight Sinti musicians, several of whom I met at the Django Reinhardt festival in Hildesheim. My interlocutors resided in three countries in Europe: Germany, Poland, and the Czech Republic. The questions in my interviews focused on the following topics: early music learning experiences, Sinti identity and culture, and activism.

As my research developed, I decided to concentrate primarily on the relationship between Sinti culture, music pedagogy, and music-epistemological development, or how the musicians understand and conceptualize their music. My interlocutors underscored the essential role of Sinti families and the broader Sinti community in their musical development. Their emphasis on the importance of social interaction in the music learning process caused me consider the potential connection between Sinti jazz pedagogy and Constructivism.

Constructivism is both a psychological learning theory as well a teaching philosophy (Wiggins, 2004, p. 88). The psychological learning theory is based on the work of cognitive psychologist Jean Piaget and social psychologist, Lev Vygotsky (Morford, 2007). Piaget's research is concerned with "individual constructivism," which refers to the "theoretical perspective that focuses on how people, as individuals, construct meaning from the events

around them” (Ormrod, 2003, p. 226). Piaget asserts that the human brain organizes concepts through the mediation of various “schemes,” which serve to group similar actions and thoughts (Ormrod, 2003, p. 25). A learner develops and modifies these schemes by interacting with objects and events their environment.

Vygotsky’s research focuses on the social aspect of learning, arguing that social interaction with those who are more knowledgeable is essential for humans to construct knowledge (Morford, 2007). Through interacting with their environment, learners construct knowledge by collectively imposing meaning on the world (Ormrod, 2003). Thus, social constructivism refers to the efforts of two or more peers to collaboratively construct knowledge. Cooperative social activity, discourse, and debate are potential activities for negotiating meaning in the context of a social group (Fosnot, 2005, p. ix). Vygotsky’s social constructivist perspective suggests that knowledge does not exist primarily in the mind of the knower, but arises as the “complex interaction of all knowers” joint perspectives (Morford, 2007 p. 77).

The contemporary theory of Constructivism combines the views of Piaget and Vygotsky, (Morford, 2007), which provide the basis for developing a Constructivist teaching philosophy. Wiggins (2004) outlines the basic tenets of constructivist teaching as they pertain to music:

- People learn through constructing their own understanding as a result of their experiences and interactions with others.
- Each individual constructs his or her own reality through experiences and interactions. The ways we perceive the world are colored by our personal collection of experiences.
- All ways of knowing and interpreting the world are valid for each for the individual who holds them.

- To learn, people must have opportunities to construct their own understanding of what is being taught.
- People are best able to construct understanding when new information is presented in a holistic context for one that enables them to understand how parts connect to the whole.
- Learning occurs in a social context. Teaching and learning are social processes.
- School learning experiences should be real life experiences that include ample opportunity for meaningful interaction with peers and teacher.
- Within these experiences, both teacher and peers provide scaffolding that enables the individual to succeed.
- Students need to understand the goals of the experience and have sufficient grounding in the processes and understandings necessary to achieve the goals.
- Learning experiences should be highly contextual, rooted in genuine (musical) experience. The context, goal, processes, and understandings necessary for reaching the goal must be evident to the student.
- The ideal teaching/learning experience enables students to engage in the solution of genuine (musical) problems, rooted in genuine (musical) contexts. Good problems are structured in ways that enable students to find and seek solutions to new problems.
- Problems for learning should be designed in ways that will foster multiple solutions and the various solutions should be considered and valued for their uniqueness, creativity, and originality. This is a particularly important aspect of

problem solving in the arts, since these qualities are highly valued in the arts. (pp. 88–89)

When discussing their music learning process, my interlocutors described experiences that supported many of the tenets outlined by Wiggins (2004). They discussed the social nature of music learning, the highly contextual environment within Sinti communities and families, and the opportunity for learners to engage in musical problem-solving through original and creative improvisations. These experiences are examples that support Constructivism. However, I also learned about some aspects of Sinti pedagogy that are ambivalent in relation to Constructivism, particularly pertaining to learner autonomy.

My qualitative data does not necessarily reflect the feelings of all jazz musicians from the broader Sinti community in Europe. Even within my group of interlocutors, they shared a wide diversity of perspectives on certain issues. Additionally, none of my interlocutors indicated knowledge of Constructivism, and therefore, they were not consciously implementing it as a teaching philosophy. This essay analyzes the music teaching and learning processes of my interlocutors by examining parallels with certain tenets of Constructivism. The common theme, which I derived from my research, is the essential nature of social interaction in the music learning process.

The purpose of my analyses is to describe the significance of the social learning environment in Sinti jazz pedagogy, which I believe may represent broader themes in music teaching and learning within Sinti communities in Europe. I present an analysis of several interlocutors' statements utilizing the tenets of Constructivism in music as described by Wiggins (2004). My research underscores the effectiveness of a Constructivist approach in cultivating

musicians who are skilled improvisers and developed a holistic understanding of music in the context of their culture.

Chapter 3 A Brief Historical Background of the Sinti People

The Sinti people are an ethnic subgroup of the Romanies, which include *gitanos*, *Manouche*, and *Kalderash* subgroups among others (Ashton-Smith, 2017, p. 15). The ancestors of the Romanies originated in Northern India and migrated west during the Muslim raids of AD 1013 and AD 1027 (Hancock, 2007). Today, Romani communities exist in Europe, the Americas, the Middle East, Central Asia, and Australia (Mirga & Gheorghe, 1977 as cited in Hancock, 2007). While the Romanies do not maintain a single nation-state as their homeland, their shared cultural and linguistic roots create a cohesive bond between these often geographically separate groups (Hancock, 2007).

Non-Roma developed the term “Gypsy,” which many view as a pejorative label, to describe the Romanies. In Western society, the Romanies have faced “antigypsyism,” or anti-gypsy prejudice and discrimination (Hancock, 2007). Much of the discrimination against Romani has been based on racism, negative stereotypes, and a misunderstanding (on the part of Non-Romani) of Romani cultures and origins. Particularly in Europe, antigypsism has resulted in the systematic oppression of the Romanies. The Vlax group of Romanies were enslaved between the mid-14th and mid-19th Centuries by the Wallachian and Moldavian estates in Eastern Europe. Additionally, the Holocaust serves as an important reminder of the horrific consequences of racism, which resulted in the genocide of over 10,000 Romani people (Kelso, 2013, p. 61). According to the *Stiftung Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas* website (n.d.), a Memorial to the Sinti and Roma of Europe murdered under National Socialism was opened to

the public in 2012 in Berlin, Germany. During my fieldwork in Berlin, I had the opportunity to pay respects at this powerful memorial. Visitors experience the contemplative outdoor setting of the Berlin Tiergarten, while listening to the continuous haunting recording on violin. Tragically, antigypsism continues to maintain a strong political force in Europe, as demonstrated by former Italian Prime Minister, Matteo Salvini, who called for the expulsion of thousands of Roma in 2018 (Kirchgaessner, 2018).

Hancock explains that education of non-Roma on the accurate history and culture of the Romanies is essential for combating discrimination (2007). He states, “In order for things to change, the Gypsy Image must be deconstructed, and a more accurate one put in its place—in the bureaucratic structures as well as in the textbooks” (p. 9). Hancock, who is Romani himself, represents a new generation of scholars, who are working to reclaim Romani identity in a discourse that has traditionally been defined by non-Roma academics (Hancock, 2007).

Non-profit organizations including ERIAC are also working to combat anti-Romani discrimination through what Lie (2021) calls “cultural activism” (p. 21). ERIAC was established in 2017 as a joint initiative of the Council of Europe and the Open Society Foundation to “increase the self-esteem of Roma and to decrease negative prejudice of the majority populations towards the Roma by means of arts, culture, history, and media” (eriac.org). Lie (2021) discusses the role L’Association pour la Promotion des Populations d’Origine Nomade d’Alsace (APPONA) in promoting jazz manouche as a form of cultural activism, “mitigate[ing] racism and to more fully incorporate Manouches into Alsatian and French societies” (p. 22).

Chapter 4 Django Reinhardt, QHCF Jazz, and West German Sinti

The style of jazz practiced by my Sinti interlocutors is based on the music of legendary Manouche guitarist, Django Reinhardt, particularly on his recordings with the Quintette du Hot Club de France (QHCF). Reinhardt launched his jazz career in the 1930s leading the QHCF, and later performed with prominent jazz artists including Duke Ellington, Rex Stewart, Coleman Hawkins, and Benny Carter (Lie, 2021). Reinhardt is known as Europe's most famous jazz musician.

Popular narratives about the development of the QHCF jazz style, often referred to jazz manouche or "Gypsy" jazz, suggest that Reinhardt consciously created a unique style by blending traditional Romani music with jazz, which seamlessly led to the practice of QHCF jazz seen in Romani families today (Lie, p. 33). However, Lie (2021) points out several problems with this narrative. First, anthropologist Patrick Williams (2000, p. 410) indicates that Reinhardt's community of Manouche was not known to have a distinctive ethnic music practice. Lie (2021) states that prior to rising to jazz stardom, Reinhardt was known as a prolific guitarist in the *bal-musette* style, a genre which was popularized in France in the early 20th Century. Additionally, terms such as "swing manouche," "jazz gitan," or "Gypsy jazz," were not used during Reinhardt's lifetime (p. 5). About two the decades following Reinhardt's death in 1956, a group of musicians began performing in a style inspired by his QHCF recordings, which codified his approach to jazz, connecting it with their Romani ethnicity (Lie, 2021, p. 32).

According to Lie (2021), West German Sinti musicians first encountered practitioners of QHCF jazz in the 1950s and 1960s during Christian pilgrimages and Romani conventions. Record producer, Siegfried Maeker stated in an interview, “Django’s music entered the repertoire of German Sinti and became a sort of folkloric music” (Lefort & Maeker, 1997, p. 20 as quoted in Lie, 2021, p. 47). In March 1967, West German Sinti violist, Schnukenack Reinhardt and his cousins performed at one of these Romani conventions, the “Tsigane and Gitan gala” (Lie, 2021, p. 47). In collaboration Maeker, Schnukenack Reinhardt subsequently released a series of albums entitled *Musik Deutscher Zigeuner* (MDZ), or German Gypsy Music. This collection was produced not only with the intent of profitability, but also to “increase the visibility of Sinti cultures and communities” (Lie, 2021, p 46). They included jazz compositions by Django Reinhardt, as well as Schukenack Reinhardt, in addition to traditional csárdás music, which Sinti people referred to as “Hungarian” music. While the early MDZ recordings featured a simple alternation between jazz and csárdás pieces, later recordings demonstrated a more fluid mixing of styles (Lie, 2021).

Chapter 5 Sinti Roots and Intergenerational Learning

Modern QHCF jazz has developed into a familial practice that is strongly connected to Sinti identity, despite the lack of evidence that Django Reinhardt conceptualized his music as inspired by his Romani identity. In our interview, Carlos Kai Vlasák states that “Gypsy” jazz can be traced back to “Sinti roots.” Interpreting to English for his father, Tschavolo Vlasák, noted that Sinti culture is the foundation of “Gypsy” jazz because “Django was [a] Gypsy, Sinti.”

The cultural practice of intergenerational learning within Sinti families, as exemplified by the father-son Vlasák duo, further solidifies the connection between jazz and the Sinti community. Sandro Roy, a German Sinti jazz violinist, who is also classically trained, shared in our interview that he learned from his father, saying, “So my father is a jazz guitarist... And so he was one of the mentors. My first mentor was my father.” In our interview, Jochymczyk described a similar intergenerational learning experience saying,

So it all happened within the family. My parents and my grandparents used to play. They were also musicians and so I had contact with the instrument since the earliest days... this delivery [and] passing on within the family, as it is in our Sinti and Roma culture, that families pass it on from one generation to the next.”

Intergenerational learning provides a highly contextual environment, wherein learners are positioned as perpetuators of the Sinti cultural legacy. When discussing her work with Manouche musicians, Lie (2021) states that jazz “can be a vessel for cultural memory and intergenerational transmission, and a way to generate affective bonds within and between communities” (pp. 19–

20). Roy describes how he views music as a catalyst for recalling the lived experiences of his Sinti ancestors through the *espressivo* style, which he demonstrated in our interview.

We have our own style to play *espressivo*. It's in our blood . . . it's in our soul. So, because the history of it is the family, the strong family, and the older people in this community... and also the freedom that we grew up [with]... The... older generation... they grew up in the Caravan, you know. They didn't grow up in a house or flat or something else... Also our history with the Second World War, so that is also deep in our soul.

Espressivo, translated in English as “expressive,” is a common direction written in classical music scores. Perhaps by using the term, *espressivo*, Roy is drawing from his classical training to describe what he calls the “most prominent elements” in the Sinti jazz tradition. Although, for Roy, *espressivo* is not only a musical style, but also an aural means to commemorate his Sinti ancestors, connecting the past generations with the present; it tells the story of the Sinti people from the caravan, through World War II. Roy shares this history through the *espressivo*, legato tone. Based on the description of his early learning experiences, Roy likely learned this technique from a family member. In his description, Roy is also drawing on his personal experience as a Sinti person and his knowledge of the history of the Romanies. The *espressivo* tone demonstrates a tangible example of how Roy expresses his Sinti identity through jazz performance.

Jochymczyk also views jazz as a way of celebrating his ancestors. He stated, I play loads of our old family-related songs that my grandparents used to sing, my relatives used to sing in the 40s, 50s or maybe even in the 30s. These are all traditional

Sinti and Roma songs, and I play them in order to remind everybody of them, to keep a memory of what used to be sung in our family.

Furthermore, Jochymczyk believes that jazz represents the Sinti struggle for freedom of expression.

Music means freedom... also my people were ... not free. There were all these regulations that were banning different things. And there were even these times when we were hiding in the forests and people were hunting for us as if we were animals. We were banned from speaking our language... The Spanish General Franco in Spain did everything to kill all the Romani and our traditions to the core, but Flamenco remained and stayed, and became national Spanish music. And what would they have for music if they didn't have Flamenco? What would the Russians have if there weren't... the romance melodies that come from our culture.

When I asked Jochymczyk about his thoughts on combatting discrimination against Romani, he stated that music can be an effective tool to achieve this goal. Additionally, festivals like the one in Hildesheim, Germany work to bring non-Romani and Romani people together.

The practice of intergenerational learning within Sinti families supports Constructivism. The highly contextual learning environment within the family allows jazz to function as a catalyst for community building, and fosters relationships between family members through meaningful interactions. Additionally, jazz serves a much broader purpose beyond simply the pleasure of performing, allowing my interlocutors to reflect on past generations and the history of the Sinti people. My interlocutors expressed an awareness of their role in celebrating the legacy of their ancestors and perpetuating the culture of the Sinti people through their music. I argue that the goals of community building and identity development are equally important (if

not more) to skill development in Sinti music pedagogy. This approach represents a holistic pedagogical philosophy, essential to Constructivism.

Chapter 6 The Gender Gap in Jazz

Based on my observations, music was primarily taught, learned, and performed by the men in the family. While, it was outside the scope of my interview questions, it is important to note that the lack of women playing jazz in Sinti communities parallels the gender imbalance in the broader jazz field. On an international level, jazz continues to be male-dominated. Buscatto's (2022) case studies of the jazz communities in France and Japan reveals gender imbalances in both countries. In France, only about eight percent of jazz musicians are women. In Japan, a gender gap remains; however, the situation recently improved as 30 percent of jazz musicians are women.

From a Constructivist standpoint, it is important to consider how systemic social structures discourage women from participating in the jazz field. In his analysis of the gender gap in jazz, Mortenson-Spokes (2023), explains the importance of examining the early history of jazz, which excluded women. Unfortunately, these historic issues in jazz have led to the gender imbalance that persists today. Wehr (2016) presents a Social Constructivist theoretical framework for understanding the reasons behind why jazz remains male-dominated. He draws from Bandura's (1997) theoretical model of self-efficacy, Kanter's (1977) theories of tokenism, and Steele and Aronson's stereotype threat (2005), to understand the experiences of women in jazz, shared in the *Jazz Changes* headline article, "Women in Jazz: Why Aren't There More Women in Jazz Education?" (Meredith, 1997, as cited in Wehr, 2016).

To summarize his argument, Wehr (2016) believes that the current gender imbalance leads to women experiencing tokenism in jazz environments (p. 475), which occurs when women make up less than fifteen percent of the group (Kanter, 1997 as cited in Wehr, 2016). Tokenism creates an environment where women fear confirming negative stereotypes about female jazz musicians, which is described by Steel & Aronson (2005) as stereotype threat (Wehr, 2016, p. 479). One potential stereotype is the “iron maiden-role,” which “describes the strong-woman who resists being placed in the other categories through demonstrating confidence, and/or by closing off sexual interests” (Wehr, 2016, p. 478). A woman may fear being labeled as an “iron maiden” if she plays too aggressively. On the other hand, if she forgoes the aggressive style in favor of a gentler approach, she may fall into the stereotype of “playing like a girl” (Wehr, 2016, p. 479). Stereotype threat potentially produces anxiety for women who are performing jazz, a psychological state which contributes to low self-efficacy, or the low personal belief in one’s ability to succeed (Bandura, 1997 as cited in Wehr, 2016). Thus, if women feel anxious in jazz environments due to tokenism and stereotype threat, they are likely to have less confidence that they can successfully perform jazz, and therefore be less likely to participate.

Chapter 7 Performance-based Learning Communities

In addition to the process of intergenerational learning withing the immediate family, gatherings with extended family in the broader Sinti community facilitate performances that serve as learning opportunities. Tschavolo Vlasák, described the ubiquitous nature of music learning within the context of Sinti families:

In the Sinti and Roma community they are play[ing]... every kid and every family in the Sinti community... That's so unique because it's traditional, it's a like a saga... the kid is learning from his father, the father is learning from his grandfather and that's... so unique.

Lello Franzen, a Sinti jazz guitarist residing in Berlin, Germany grew up in a musical family, learning jazz from a young age. In our interview, he described how music performances at gatherings with his extended family provide learning opportunities for children:

So with us—you really grow up with the music, you are a little child, you are coming into the family, are at birthdays or also in your own family. My father for example plays guitar, my uncle, my grandfather, all of them play and no matter where you went, in the past as a child, if there were birthdays . . . no matter where you go, within our family, everywhere are instruments and everywhere you have the chance to make music. And that is simply wonderful—to play together with your family.

Franzen's and Vlasák's accounts illustrate the immersive musical environment my interlocutors experienced from a young age. The environments were filled with live music

performances by family members, and offered opportunities for the them to participate actively in the music making process.

Franzen's description of attending various family events that featured live music performances provides a glimpse into the social function of music in his community. These informal performances support and complement social interaction, which is the primary goal of these events. The attendees in Franzen's description are also the bandmembers, and are actively engaged in the performance. In this context, there is fluidity between roles of audience member and performer, encouraging social interaction between all people at the gathering.

Lie (2021) describes a similar interactive relationship between Manouche audience members and musicians during a performance she attended at a *tart flambée* restaurant in a French Alsatian village (pp. 1–4). While most of the patrons at the restaurant were, non-Manouches, several family members of the band leader, Gigi, arrived later in the evening. After playing a relatively conservative first set, Gigi invited several family members on stage to join the band during the second set. One of the guest family members performed several extended solos leading to a series of musical climaxes, during which the family members in the audience enthusiastically cheered. However, some of the non-Manouche patrons and were visibly annoyed by the boisterous conduct of the Manouche family.

While acknowledging the chaotic end to the performance, Gigi, explained that to “*not* invite his cousins to the stage would have violated Manouche norms” (Lie, 2021, p. 4). Thus, the performance that Lie (2021) described is another example that highlights the fluidity of the roles of performers and audience members in Manouche culture. The negative reaction from non-Manouches to the interactive and improvisatory nature of the performance reveals both a difference in cultural expectations at a performance, and the prejudice of the non-Manouche

French patrons against the Manouches. As Lie (2021) states, “Manouches are publicly lauded as some of its most authentic bearers. At the same time, Manouches are widely portrayed as exotic, incompatible with hegemonic French mores, and valuable to the nation only in their musical capacities” (p. 4).

The practice of inviting family members from the audience to perform with the ensemble creates an environment that encourages a different type of participation than typically occurs in performances wherein audience members are expected sit quietly and listen, for example in European classical concert halls. Therefore, the performances, described by Lie as well as my interlocutors, constitute social learning environments that encourage interaction between audience members and performers, and thus support Constructivism. Less skilled musicians learn through authentic, real-world performance experiences by sharing the stage with more skilled musicians. The act of performing constitutes the learning process, and thus the goals of learning are intrinsic to the learning process.

Additionally, the non-performing audience members contribute to collective meaning-making during the performance by verbally cheering the musicians during climactic moments of the improvised solos. The ability for performers and audience members to agree on climactic moments is reflective of their common cultural experiences and collective understanding of the music. In this way, both the non-performers and the performers jointly construct the trajectory and meaning of the improvisations.

Chapter 8 Oral Pedagogy and Improvisation

Oral pedagogy is a central aspect of the learning environment within Sinti families and communities. Jochymczyk described this phenomenon in Polish Sinti communities, saying, “[T]here is no written passing on of anything, be it the language or culture, the dialects, our Sinti Polish dialect. It is all being passed through talking about it so it’s an oral way of passing it on.” Each of my interlocutors described how they learned jazz aurally without the aid of notation. Roy believes that 80 to 90 percent of Sinti musicians are not able to read notation, describing them as autodidacts who learn entirely by ear. In my fieldwork, all my interlocutors learned jazz completely by ear, although some learned notation in separate classical music studies.

The aural approach to music pedagogy in Sinti families is an effective method to teach improvisation. Suzuki recognizes the effectiveness of aural music pedagogy (Kendall, 1996). In Suzuki’s “Mother Tongue” method, he parallels music learning and language development as both are oral and social processes. Azzara and Grunow (2006) connect spontaneous conversation with musical improvisation. In their method book series, *Developing Musicianship Through Improvisation*, they seek to teach musical improvisation in a way that reflects language learning, prescribing the following steps: listening, imitation, positive encouragement from others, and development of words, phrases, and statements.

As in language learning, aural pedagogy in music can potentially be a highly interactive, social learning process, thus supporting Constructivism. However, aural pedagogy is not intrinsically Constructivist, as Wiggins (2004) demonstrates in a vignette of a first-grade music

classroom. To summarize this example, the teacher begins class with an invented warm-up song, which consists of the students echoing various phrases sung by the teacher, including “Good morning, how are you?” Wiggins notes that the students are “approaching the pitch, but mostly singing below it” (p. 82). Additionally, she notices that while students are respectfully listening and participating in the activity, some students are fidgeting and others are “gazing around the room” (p. 83). While these types of warm-up exercises are commonly used as classroom activities, Wiggins (2004) does not believe that they support Constructivism, because they do not provide students “opportunit[ies] for intentionality and personal meaning-making” (p. 85). Essentially, the students are forced to imitate the teacher exactly, without exercising any freedom to make musical choices.

Teaching with the previously described approach could be considered the “banking concept of education,” outlined by Paulo Friere (Freire, 2014, p. 72). In banking education, the teacher performs the role of narrator, while students “mechanically memorize” the narrated content (p. 72). This process turns the students into containers or receptacles, in which the teacher deposits their knowledge. The banking concept is the antithesis of Constructivism as it provides no opportunity for students to construct their own knowledge through social interaction and decision making, but instead forces them to accept and replicate what the teacher narrates without question.

Wiggins (2004) contrasts the previous vignette with a second, which she feels exemplifies the Constructivist approach. In this example, the teacher develops a lesson based on the 1920’s popular song by Remick, Henderson, and Dixon, “Bye Bye Blackbird.” After the teacher sings the song for the class, she invites them to join in on the refrain, “bye, bye, blackbird,” which they successfully sing in tune. Then, she demonstrates an improvised scat solo

based on the melody, and asks the students to sing the refrain section, which they can achieve with some guidance. Next, the students enthusiastically sing the entire melody together. Finally, the teacher allows her students to improvise their own scat solos over the melody, while the entire class responds with the refrain.

Wiggins (2004) argues that the teacher in second example utilizes Constructivism by providing opportunities for students to make “genuine musical decisions” (p. 90) in situations like those presented to real musicians. Students are encouraged to “generate original musical ideas in real musical contexts” (p. 90). This type of environment allows students to take on leadership roles, while providing the appropriate scaffolding to support “musical independence” (p. 90).

In a similar way to improvisers in the second example, jazz musicians make intentional decisions and generate original musical statements during their improvisations. Goldman (2016) describes improvisation as *a way of knowing*, arguing that improvisers understand music in a special way that allows them to use its components to improvise. He uses the example of a C major chord, stating that there are many different ways to know a C major chord: “...multiple haptic touches, proprioceptive feels, sounds, motor correlates (i.e., how to physically play it), visual images (e.g., how it looks to play it on a guitar or keyboard...)” (section 3, para. 2), among others. Goldman argues that trained improvisers develop a unique quality of a knowledge, which allows them to manipulate music-theoretical content through specific bodily motions (section 4, para. 7).

Janko Lauenberger, a guitarist from Berlin described his experience with academic music theory in our interview:

It's always helpful if you've had some theory. But when I began, I learned without theory. I didn't know what my harmonies were called, and I couldn't name them, which keys. With me, it all begins with the ear. Naturally, there's also theory. By playing, theory explains itself and you easily keep on learning.

Lauenberger's description of theory as "explain[ing] itself" through playing, provides insight into *how* he knows music; he understands music in an *embodied* way. In other words, his way of knowing theory is fundamentally derived from his experience as a guitarist. Additionally, Lauenberger's comments about his musical upbringing "begin[ning] with the ear," suggests that his experience learning by ear facilitates the development of his embodied theoretical knowledge.

I believe this embodied way of understanding, in which musical knowledge is inextricably linked to performance, is fundamental to the epistemology of Sinti musicians, and results from the tradition of aural pedagogy in Sinti culture. As Constructivist theory outlines, learners construct their knowledge through *action*, or by *doing*. Aural pedagogy facilitates an environment where young musicians learn through performative action. Therefore, aural pedagogy also supports the development of embodied knowledge, allowing musicians to improvise. Improvisers are, in effect, musical problem-solvers, utilizing a their embodied knowledge to invent cohesive musical phrases that navigate the harmonic motion of a given piece.

Chapter 9 Learner Autonomy and the Role of the Teacher

Improvisation affords learners a certain level of autonomy to make decisions during performances. However, learner autonomy, essential to Constructivism, can further be examined by considering the role of the “teacher,” or experienced performer, in the learning environment: Is the learner forced to play music from a young age, or is the option simply available for them to pursue on their own? Does the teacher offer explicit or implicit instruction? How much freedom does the teacher allow for the learner to develop a personal musical identity?

Franzen offers insight on the role of teachers in his family, saying,

You get an instrument squeezed into your hand as a small child and you start to play, as long as you like. And as soon as you show real interest in it, then other people from the family [come] that will show you something, your cousins, your uncles etc. etc. And that of course is also an approach, you clearly learn from everyone else too and you can also copy a bit from them.

When discussing his early experiences with music, Jermaine Landsberger, a German Sinti jazz pianist, stated the following:

...[I] wasn't pushed into it or grew up with it, and there was never a note, there was never a teacher, there was never a lesson. My father was a jazz guitarist...and he had a keyboard [at home] and at some point I got interested in the keyboard and tried melodies from my memory, from hearing it, until it worked... There was never something like: you have to learn this, this chord is named this way; but the musicians were there, because my

dad always had a lot of visitors, they sat down, they played and you simply played along, so it was ... you were directly with the music, and everything worked through hearing and learning by “*do[ing] it*”... We all sat together and without saying much, my dad would take the guitar, play and I went to the piano.

Both accounts demonstrate a learner-centered approach to pedagogy, where children are granted a high degree of autonomy. In Landsberger’s case, it was entirely up to him to experiment and figure out what sounded good. His family and a community of musicians provided the environment for him to learn through participation. However, he was never forced to play or even provided with any explicit instruction.

Franzen describes how participation in music initially occurs with some coercion as older family members “squeeze” the instrument into the hands of young children. However, the children are given autonomy to decide for how long a period they want to play, and presumably they can choose to stop at any time. Further instruction is provided by older family members only after the learner has indicated their interest. At that point, the experienced musicians support the child’s interest, providing the necessary scaffolding for them to continue learning.

My interlocutors shared additional views on learner autonomy as it relates the genre of QHCF jazz. In our interviews I asked if they transcribe Reinhardt’s solos and if they have thoughts about replicating Reinhardt’s style more broadly. These conversations helped me to understand how they resolved the tension between preserving the tradition, and developing a personal musical identity.

I asked Jochymczyk if he performs solos exactly as Django Reinhardt performed them. He responded by saying,

No, it's not exactly like Django. Maybe at the beginning I would have wished for that to sound exactly like Django, but then I have never played an improvisation the same way. It was always dependent on the moment, the feeling... the decision upon the expression I wanted to use, so all that was dependent.”

Additionally, Jochymczyk continued by stating, “...nobody's playing a given melody in exactly the same way. It's about this feeling, about the soul that you put into music.”

When I asked Roy if he had transcribed solos by Reinhardt or Grappelli, he responded by saying,

No, I never transcribed whole solos. But maybe I listened to this recording so much that if I'm playing a dominant seven scale, in my ear was what Django is playing. There was like in my mind, in my head, there was this kind of style of dominant seven licks that Django is using, or Grappelli. So I tried and it was quite similar to Grappelli or Django, but it was not the same.”

Furthermore, Roy emphasized the importance of incorporating elements from other styles into the Sinti jazz tradition:

I believe it is very important that we... try to figure out a new style. So if you listen to Biréli Lagrène, his Gypsy project, in a way it is very traditional, but in his style, [there are so many] bebop or modern elements that... you can't say that is only Django. So we have to try to keep a good way of tradition, but to mix the new styles in the tradition so it... will be more colorful in the future for our community.

Lauenberger feels it is important to consider the culture of his Sinti predecessors including Reinhardt, and to take those influences with him while “blazing a new trail for a new time.” Lauenberger argues that the Sinti style is best described as *approach* to playing, rather

than a repertoire of traditional melodies. He stated, “I think the Sinti and Roma have always taken modern music from their current environment, and we’ve simply played it. That’s how it happened. Because it’s not what we play, it’s how we play it.” Lauenberger says that he does not believe there are traditional Sinti melodies per se, but that Sinti musicians, like Reinhardt, played the music of their time with a unique Sinti style.

Landsberger agrees with Lauenberger, underscoring that Reinhardt himself was actually an innovator. “We can learn to draw on plentiful resources, just like Django Reinhardt did, to not stop moving forward, to not just play and imitate, but also to create from that, because Django Reinhardt was a[n] [innovator].”

However, not all my interlocutors agree that it is best to allow modern influences to change the tradition. Manolito Steinbach, a guitarist from Germany, responded negatively to the idea of modernizing the jazz manouche style of Django. He stated,

I’m of the opinion that [the tradition is] really important, because it’s our life, it’s a part of us. And when we throw away that part of us, just because we live in a world, in a system where everything is very modern, then I’m not living, then I’m just living modernity, and modernity is ephemeral, but tradition — it remains. And we should continue the tradition.

Steinbach’s statement illustrates a wider debate within the QHCF jazz community about preserving the tradition of Reinhardt’s style (Lie, 2021). Lie discusses the wide diversity of opinions about modernizing QHCF jazz within the Manouche community in France. Some Manouche musicians feel that any deviation from the style as performed by Reinhardt is a betrayal of the values of QHCF jazz, while other musicians feel freer to include influences from outside the genre (pp. 119 – 123). Additionally, Lie (2021) parallels the ambivalence in the

Manouche community with the discourse surrounding creativity and replication found in jazz education in the United States.

Wilf (2012) examines and dismantles the binary of tradition versus creativity in his discussion of the “rituals of creativity.” He uses this term to describe how university jazz students utilize transcription to both replicate the past, but also to experience the spontaneity of the artists in the recordings they transcribe. Wilf (2012) states that the emphasis placed on transcription in jazz studies has resulted in university students performing fully transcribed solos on their recitals.

I believe that teachers who exemplify Constructivist principles support their students in making their own decisions about how to interpret the historical tradition of Reinhardt. If a teacher imposes their own interpretation of the tradition on the student, this would diminish student autonomy, and would not align with Constructivist principles. Encouraging young learners to experiment with different styles, learn from many skilled musicians, and hear a diversity of perspectives on the tradition are possible ways support a student in making informed choices about their own musical identity development. Therefore, the philosophy of my interlocutors who were interested in creating something new and original, perhaps drawing from multiple styles, aligns with Constructivism.

In our interview, Tchavolo Vlasák stated that he learned from recordings and YouTube videos of prominent jazz artists in addition to learning from his father. Vlasák has taken these influences and developed his own unique musical identity. The decision-making process necessary to synthesize various influences exemplifies Constructivism.

Chapter 10 Conclusion

Based on the work of Django Reinhardt and his followers, jazz found its way into the fabric of Sinti families and communities. My interlocutors shared that they consider themselves to be part of a living tradition, rooted in Sinti culture and passed on from one generation to the next. The different perspectives among my interlocutors about the importance of replicating the tradition established by Reinhardt reflect different philosophies on learner autonomy and the role of the teacher.

For my interlocutors, jazz is more than just a form of recreation; it functions as a holistic way to build family and community bonds, express Sinti identity, and resist the oppressive forces of antigypsism. Furthermore, musicians learn within the context of the broader oral tradition in Sinti culture, and develop an embodied understanding of musical concepts, which they use creatively in jazz improvisations. Extended family gatherings and performances serve as learning environments, and real-world opportunities for young aspiring musicians to learn through *doing*. During performances, audience members and performers simultaneously create and draw from their collective cultural understanding to interact and communicate in a musical context. As my analysis has demonstrated, the function of the social learning environment within Sinti families and communities supports the core tenets of the Constructivist learning theory.

Unlike the highly contextual nature of the social learning environment within Sinti communities, formal university jazz education programs in the United States typically develop curricula utilizing the traditional university course structure, with separate courses including jazz

theory, jazz improvisation, jazz ensemble, and jazz history among other potential offerings.

Constructivism could serve as an effective learning theory to develop jazz curricula that is more holistic, supports community building, and facilitates greater student autonomy and identity development.

Chapter 11 First Dissertation Recital Program

GABE CONDON, GUITAR

KENNETH GILL, TROMBONE

STEPHEN ODURO, DRUM SET

Special guest **ROBERT HURST, BASS**

Saturday, December 2, 2023

Britton Recital Hall

3:00 PM

Giant Steps (1959)

John Coltrane
(1926–1967)

Robert Hurst, bass
Stephen Oduro, drum set

Four on Six (1960)

John L. (Wes) Montgomery
(1923–1968)
arr. Gabe Condon

Robert Hurst, bass
Stephen Oduro, drum set

Simpler Time (2011)

Gabe Condon
(b. 1991)

Robert Hurst, bass
Stephen Oduro, drum set

Give Your Heart to Me (2013)

Gabe Condon
(b. 1991)

Robert Hurst, bass

Along Came Betty (1958)

Benny Golson
(b. 1929)

Robert Hurst, bass

Donna Lee (1947)

Charlie Parker
(1920–1959)

Robert Hurst, bass
Stephen Oduro, drum set

Speak Up (2012)

Gabe Condon
(b. 1991)

Robert Hurst, bass
Kenneth Gill, trombone
Stephen Oduro, drum set

Ode to St. Cecile (1975)

Mary Lou Williams
(1910–1981)

Robert Hurst, bass
Kenneth Gill, trombone
Stephen Oduro, drum set

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree
Doctor of Musical Arts

Horace A. Rackham School of Graduate Studies

DISSERTATION COMMITTEE

Professor Andrew Bishop, *chair*

Professor Kai Schnabel Cortina

Professor Karen Fournier

Professor Ellen Rowe

Professor Stephen Rush

11.1 Program Notes

John Coltrane: “Giant Steps.”

John Coltrane rose to fame performing with the influential ensemble, the Miles Davis Quintet starting in 1955 (Porter, 2013). In 1955, they recorded the album, *‘Round about Midnight* on Columbia records (Porter, 2013). Coltrane recorded his first album as a leader in May 1957 after leaving Davis’ group temporarily. By the time Davis rehired Coltrane in 1958, he had experienced a spiritual awakening, leading to increased musical productivity. He developed amazing virtuosity on his instrument, utilizing a new technique that Ira Gitler labeled, “sheets of sound” (Porter, 2013).

1959 was a pivotal year in Coltrane's career, during which time he recorded two of the most influential albums in jazz history – *Kind of Blue* as a member of the Miles Davis Quintet, and *Giant Steps*, for which he was the leader (Porter, 2013). “Giant Steps,” the title track, represents a culmination of Coltrane's most famous harmonic technique, the tonicization of harmonies related by major thirds (Porter, 2013). This piece has become a litmus test at jazz jam sessions, serving to identify the most skilled improvisers who have mastered difficult harmonic motion between distantly related key centers at a rapid tempo. Additional Coltrane compositions that utilize motion in thirds include, “Countdown,” “26-2,” and “Exotica.” Following the period in Coltrane's career focused on tonal harmonies, as exemplified in compositions like “Giant Steps,” the later part of Coltrane's compositional career focused on modal progressions, and developing his interest in African and Indian music genres.

Gabe Condon: “Simpler Time,” “Speak Up,” and “Give Your Heart to Me.”

These three pieces were written during my undergraduate and master's studies at the Eastman School of Music, during which time I studied jazz composition with Bill Dobbins. They represent my most mature compositions from this fruitful period of study. Simpler Time was originally composed as a study of the compositional style of Keith Jarrett. The straight-eighth groove, as well as the triadic harmony, particularly the plagal motion in the bridge, connect with my background performing folk and pop music, particularly influenced by James Taylor. As the title suggests, the piece serves to reminisce about a younger, less complicated time in my life by utilizing relatively simple harmonies, and by drawing from some of the musical styles I was listening to during that period.

Speak Up is written in a Bossa Nova style. During the time I composed this piece, I was very interested in the compositions of Antonio Carlos Jobim, particularly his collaborations with

jazz saxophonist Stan Getz, who is also an important influence on my improvisation style. Speak Up was written as I reflected on situations when I held back my genuine identity, or tried to be someone I was not. More generally, it is a call for greater openness, communication, honesty, and genuine self-expression.

Give Your Heart to Me, was written for my wife as a message of love upon the occasion of our engagement to be married. The lyrics, harmony, and melody seemed to write themselves, coming to the inevitable Coda section at the end of the piece. This song is a story of how love was tested, and grew stronger and deeper over time.

Benny Golson: “Along Came Betty.”

The illustrious composer, arranger, and saxophonist, Benny Golson has written over 300 compositions (Piras, 2012), many of which have become jazz standards including, “I Remember Clifford,” “Stablemates,” “Whisper Not,” “Killer Joe,” and “Blues March” (Merod, 2014). His work as artistic director for Art Blakey’s Jazz Messengers from 1958–1959 (Piras, 2012) helped to evolve the “hard bop” style (Merod, 2014). Additionally, Golson’s writing for the six-piece ensemble, the Jazztet, which he formed with trumpeter, Art Farmer in 1959, “refined and extended ensemble jazz voicing” (Merod, 2014, p 94). Golson’s writing style is influenced by Tadd Dameron, and his rich saxophone tone is reminiscent of Coleman Hawkins (Piras, 2012).

Along Came Betty was recorded on the album, *Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers* in 1958. This piece begins with a simple opening melodic motive, characteristic of Golson’s compositions (Piras, 2012). However, chromatic ii V harmonic accompaniment adds brilliant color to the three-note melodic figure. A second melodic motive is introduced in the second four measures, which reappears in bridge of the piece. The beginning of the bridge marks the climax

of the melodic statement, which is reinforced by a shift in the rhythm section from a two-feel to a four-four walking feel.

Wes Montgomery: “Four on Six” (arranged by Gabe Condon).

Wes Montgomery is known as the most influential jazz guitarist following Charlie Christian (Porter & Kernfield, 2002). He developed a unique technique, utilizing his thumb to play melodic improvisations in single-note lines, and in octaves. Guitarists, George Benson and Pat Martino cite the impact of Montgomery on their playing.

“Four on Six,” recorded on the 1960 release, *The Incredible Jazz Guitar of Wes Montgomery*, was written during the period Porter & Kernfield (2002) consider to be the peak of Montgomery’s career, when he was recording with outstanding rhythm section musicians including, Tommy Flannigan, Ron Carter, Milt Jackson, and Hank Jones, among others. Later in his career, Montgomery gained a wider audience with more commercial releases, including his 1965 recording of “Goin’ Out of My Head,” for which he won a Grammy Award.

“Four on Six,” drawing a reference to four fingers on six guitar strings, is based on the Gershwin composition, “Summertime” from the 1935 opera, *Porgy and Bess*. The overall harmonic structure remains the same, however, the new melody, additional chromatic harmony, and increased tempo, develop “Summertime” into a completely new composition in the hard bop jazz style. The arrangement of “Four on Six” by Gabe Condon utilizes the meter of 7/8, changing the original 4/4 swing groove. Condon modified the original bass ostinato to outline the 2-2-3 pattern in the new 7/8 groove.

Charlie Parker: “Donna Lee.”

Charlie Parker’s innovative artistry exemplified the bebop style, which was developed in the 1940s (Gioia, 1997, p. 205). The overt display of modernism found in the bebop style

manifest itself in new, complex and chromatic melodies, performed with high rhythmic density and at rapid tempos (Gioia, 1997, pp. 201–202).

Donna Lee is an original melody, composed by Charlie Parker, which utilizes the harmonies of “Back Home Again in Indiana,” the song composed by Hanley with lyrics by MacDonald. A contrafact, refers to a composition that contains an original melody written over existing chord changes. Parker and his close collaborator, Dizzy Gillespie wrote many pieces using this technique. Donna Lee features a chromatic eighth-note melody, which exemplifies the bebop style. There are numerous chromatic passing tones and enclosures, which are often used on metrically “weak” beats to facilitate effortless motion from one chord tone to the next. Chromatic extensions and alterations are used prominently on dominant seventh chords, adding harmonic color and increased tension.

Mary Lou Williams: “Ode to St. Cecile.”

The influential jazz pianist and composer, Mary Lou Williams, had a career spanning more than five decades. In 1929 she began working as a pianist, composer and arranger for Andy Kirk’s *Clouds of Joy* (Kernodle, 2013). In the 1930s, her arrangements were recognized by the jazz community, and incorporated in the repertoire of notable bandleaders including Earl Hines, Benny Goodman, Jimmie Lunceford and Duke Ellington.

Despite many successes in the 1940s, including the premier of a twelve-movement composition, *Zodiac Suite*, Williams continued to be marginalized as a woman in the male-dominated jazz field (Kernodle, 2014). While Williams hoped for more opportunities in Europe, moving there in the early 1950s, she ultimately decided to take a hiatus from performing. During this three-year period, Williams converted to Catholicism and formed an organization dedicated to rehabilitating musicians who faced substance addiction.

Williams began to compose music again in 1963 with a series of religiously influenced works including “Hymn in Honor of St. Martin De Porres,” “The Devil,” and “Anima Christi” (Kernodle, 2014). “Ode to St. Cecile” referencing the patron saint of music, is connected to her religious faith. The piece is based on a twelve-bar minor blues form. Williams substitutes the typical iv chord harmony in measure four, with a flat-ii chord, giving the piece a modal aesthetic. Additionally, Williams’ use of pentatonic and fourths structures emphasize her modal approach, while she also draws on other minor scales and traditional blues and bebop vocabulary. The ostinato in the bass and the emphasis on beats two and four in the drum set draw from influences outside of jazz including funk and rock and roll.

Chapter 12 Second Dissertation Recital Program

GABE CONDON, GUITAR

KENNETH GILL, TROMBONE

STEPHEN ODURO, DRUM SET

Special guests: **ELLEN ROWE, PIANO**

NICHOLAS WALKER, BASS

THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN JAZZ ENSEMBLE

Saturday, March 16, 2024

Stamps Auditorium

12:30 PM

Blues for Sweet Pea (2021)

Gabe Condon
(b. 1991)

The University of Michigan Jazz Ensemble
Gabe Condon, conductor

Improvisation with Multidominant Elements (2024)

Gabe Condon
(b. 1991)

Gabe Condon, guitar

Stablemates (1955)

Benny Golson
(b. 1929)

Gabe Condon, guitar
Stephen Oduro, drum set
Nicholas Walker, bass

Free (1959)

Ornette Coleman
(1930–2015)

Gabe Condon, guitar
Stephen Oduro, drum set
Nicholas Walker, bass

Blues Connotation (1960)

Ornette Coleman

| | | |
|-------------------------------|---|---------------------------|
| | Gabe Condon, guitar Stephen Oduro, drum set Nicholas Walker, bass | (1930–2015) |
| Ida Lupino (1964) | Gabe Condon, guitar Ellen, Rowe, piano | Carla Bley (1936–2023) |
| Blues for Barry (2022) | Gabe Condon, guitar Ellen, Rowe, piano | Gabe Condon (b. 1991) |
| Gravity Dance (2024) | Gabe Condon, guitar Stephen Oduro, drum set Nicholas Walker, bass | Gabe Condon (b. 1991) |
| Freedom’s Song (2017) | Gabe Condon, guitar Kenneth Gill, trombone Stephen Oduro, drum set Nicholas Walker, bass | Gabe Condon (b. 1991) |

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Musical Arts

Horace A. Rackham School of Graduate Studies

DISSERTATION COMMITTEE

Professor Andrew Bishop, *chair*

Professor Kai Schnabel Cortina

Professor Karen Fournier

Professor Ellen Rowe

Professor Stephen Rush

12.1 Program Notes

University of Michigan Jazz Ensemble Personnel; Saxophones: Tom Kohn, Houston Patton, Nick Napier, Ethan Moleski, Time Grieme, Matthew Dardick; Trumpets: Gavin Ard,

Callum Roberts, Adam Solomon, Davis Reinhart; Trombones: Tommy Hodgman, Stephen Paul, SC Klein, Chris Tam; Guitar: John Vanduinen; Piano: Liam Charron, Rowan Tucker-Meyer; Bass: Jack Nissen, Anna Thielke; Drum Set; Stephen Oduro; Jazz Ensemble Manager: John Vanduinen.

Carla Bley: “Ida Lupino”

Carla Bley’s diverse musical oeuvre includes influential avant-garde jazz works, and reflects influences from styles outside of jazz including rock, tango, Indian music, and European Classical music (Schlicht, 2012). Bassist, Charlie Hayden, stated that Bley fluently speaks many musical languages, “like a mockingbird” (Beal, 2011, p. 2). Beal (2011) argues that Bley’s enigmatic style, which lies somewhere in the “gray space” between accessible and avant-garde has contributed to a lack of scholarship on her work (p. 1). Bley composed for a variety of ensembles, but had a special affinity for traditional instrumentations including brass choir (Beal 2011). However, she also utilized uncommon effects including mechanical instruments and untrained voices singing. Beal (2011) describes Bley’s approach toward various idioms as both respectful and irreverent, and at other times idiosyncratically her own (p. 2).

Bley composed “Ida Lupino,” as a tribute to the trailblazing female film maker who worked in the male-dominated Hollywood Film industry during the 1950s (Micucci, 2017). Beal (2011), describes how “Ida Lupino” represents the Dionysian side of Bley’s compositional personality (p. 18). Stravinsky discussed the Dionysian and Apollonian aspects of a composer’s personality. The Dionysian side refers to the smooth, lyrical, repetitive, and calm melodies (Beal, 2011, p. 18). On the other hand, the Apollonian side, exemplified in Bley’s piece, “Ictus,” refers to chromatic, fast, and energetic melodies. “Ida Lupino” was first recorded by Paul Bley in 1964,

but it was not released until 1975 on the album *Turning Point* (Micucci, 2017). Additionally, Carla Bley recorded the piece on her album, *Dinner Music*.

Ornette Coleman: “Free,” “Blues Connotation.”

Ornette Coleman’s 1961 release, *Free Jazz*, was the most influential recording on the development of the avant-garde jazz scene in the 1960s (Schuller & West, 2024). While Coleman is known as one of the most prominent figures in jazz, he is also significantly controversial. His radically new concept was met with hostility from both audience members and musicians. Coleman’s revolutionary approach “abandon[ed] traditional chorus and phrase structure, reinterpreting jazz rhythm, beat, and swing along freer, non-symmetrical lines” (Schuller & West, 2024, section 2, para. 1). However, Coleman’s style was rooted in the jazz tradition of collective improvisation, and primarily influenced by Charlie Parker and rhythm-and-blues bands. Furthermore, Coleman drew from the blues and approached his improvisations with a modal concept.

“Free” from the album, *Change of the Century*, and “Blues Connotation” from the album, *This is Our Music*, immediately preceded the release of *Free Jazz* (Schuller & West, 2024). Both compositions exemplify Coleman’s blues-oriented style. The melody for “Blues Connotation” utilizes the twelve-bar blues form, with a slight wrinkle in the penultimate measure, which lasts only two beats before continuing to the pickup notes of the repeated melody. The solo sections do not follow the blues form, but maintain a consistent pulse, and refer back to the tonal center of the piece.

“Free” begins with a melody statement that outlines an F major pentatonic scale, shifting to an F-sharp major pentatonic scale, before resolving back to F major. There are three total statements of the melody at the beginning of the piece. Between the second and third statements,

there is a short bass and drum interlude. The solo section form is open, and is grounded in an up-tempo swing groove. There are moments in the solo section, particularly in the transitions between solos and the transition back to the last melody statement, wherein the steady tempo is not maintained.

Gabe Condon: “Blues for Sweet Pea,” “Improvisation with Multidominant Elements,” “Blues for Barry,” “Gravity Dance,” “Freedom’s Song.”

“Blues for Sweet Pea” was composed as a learning experience for high school students to internalize idiomatic rhythms, melodic phrases, and forms in a jazz style. This piece prominently utilizes variations of the “Charleston” rhythm, blues phrases, and call-and-response phrases between the different sections of the ensemble. By writing a composition for students to learn idiomatic jazz vocabulary through performance, in the context of a real piece, I am encouraging students to develop an embodied understanding of these concepts, based on aural pedagogy.

“Improvisation with Multidominant Elements” is a piece created spontaneously in the performance. Art critic, Robert L. Douglas, describes multidominant elements, an aesthetic found in African American art, as the “the multiple use of colors in intense degrees, or the multiple use of textures design patterns, or shapes” (Douglas, 1991). George Lewis draws parallels between multidominant elements in art and those in music by utilizing Olly Wilson’s *Predilections of Black Music* (Wilson, 1999) as an analytical framework (Lewis, 2009). My piece will feature multidominant elements, as discussed by Lewis, by utilizing the following approaches: A wide variety of textures and sounds, dense and repetitive structures, and multiple meters juxtaposed over one another.

“Blues for Barry” was written as a tribute to Barry Harris, the influential pianist and innovative jazz pedagogue. I composed a new melody as contrafact over the harmonic changes from Charlie Parker’s “Blues for Alice,” otherwise known as a “Bird Blues.”

“Gravity Dance,” is an exploration of a rhythmic-based compositional process. I began by improvising the rhythm, and recorded it. After I notated the rhythm for a section, I subsequently composed the melody and harmonies.

Freedom’s Song is a reflection on the fragility of democratic ideals in American society. Furthermore, this piece, written in a jazz context recalls the legacy of jazz musicians who have been involved in social justice through their music. Notably, musicians including Abby Lincoln, Max Roach, and Charles Mingus explicitly supported the American Civil Rights Movement through their recordings and live performances (Monson, 2007).

Benny Golson, “Stablemates”

Benny Golson’s worked as artistic director for Art Blakey’s jazz messengers from 1958–1959 (Piras, 2012), and he also founded the six-piece ensemble, the Jazztet with trumpeter, Art Farmer (Merod, 2014). In addition to composing pieces for jazz ensembles, he also spent over ten years of his career composing for film and TV, including soundtracks for “*Ironside*, *M*A*S*H*, *Mission: Impossible*, *The Mod Squad*, and *Room 222*” (Piras. 2012).

“Stablemates” was recorded by Miles Davis on his 1956 album, *The New Miles Davis Quintet*. Stablemates follows ABA form, and it features a singable melody. The harmonic motion of the A sections has a general descending arc, frequently moving by half-step or circle of fifths. There are tonicizations at both the beginning and the end of the A sections, solidifying D-flat major as the tonic key. The harmonic motion of the B section ascends for the first half and then descends for the second half, and includes only motion by half-step or circle of fifths. An

interesting aspect of the form of “Stablemates” is the fourteen-measure A sections, making the piece a total of 36 measures, an atypical length for jazz standards.

Appendix: List of Formal Interviews

- Lello Franzen; Berlin, Germany; 27 July 2022; questions in English, responses in German and English; translated by Britta Keener.
- Józef Merstein Jochymczyk; virtual; 20 July 2022; questions in English, responses in Polish; interpretation and translation by Karolina Golimowska.
- Jermaine Landsberger; Berlin, Germany; 28 July 2022; questions in English, responses in German and English; translated by Britta Keener.
- Janko Lauenberger; Berlin, Germany; 18 July 2022; questions in English, responses in German and English; interpretation by Red Tape Translation, translation by Fachübersetzungsdienst GmbH, edited by Britta Keener.
- Sandro Roy; Berlin, Germany; 28 July 2022; questions and responses in English.
- Manolito Steinbach; virtual; 26 July 2022; questions and responses in German; translated by Alistair Duncan.
- Tschavolo Vlasák and Carlos Kája Vlasák; Hildesheim, Germany; 9 July 2022; questions and responses in English; Tschavolo Vlasák interpreted for Kája Vlasák.

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