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A CENTURY OF JAZZ IN EUROPE – PRESERVING ITS MUSICAL HERITAGE

History of European Jazz – The Music, Musicians and Audience in Context

The recent publication of *History of European Jazz – The Music, Musicians and Audience in Context* (Martinelli 2018), the final result of a research project supported by the Europe Jazz Network (EJN) with funding from the Creative Europe programme of the European Union (EU), marks a milestone in the shared perception of European jazz as a common heritage. The massive 752-page book covers the linear narrative of jazz history in 34 national chapters, each devoted to a different country and authored by a native specialist. In these accounts, the readers hear the vibrant voice of the local culture, not the impressions of a visiting Anglo-American author. Each chapter includes extensive discography and bibliography, creating a unique reference tool. For the first time in one of Europe's shared languages, there's a comprehensive national account of the adoption and the impact of jazz across the continent, including areas that are not part of political Europe but were, and still are, a part of its cultural tradition. The book closes, almost as a pointer to further research, with a discussion of common aspects of this history in six monographic chapters dedicated to subjects that run across national boundaries: early African-American entertainers in Europe before 1927, musicians of Jewish and Gypsy origin, jazz in European films, the dialogue of the avant-gardes in the 1960s and the concept and development of jazz festivals in Europe.



*designed by Mark Lee for
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While the volume fulfils its function as the first organic panorama of European jazz, and will certainly help further researchers, its development raised numerous issues related to how this history of over a hundred years is preserved and made available for study. In fact, some of the chapters that were discussed in the preparation of the book could not be included because the available documents were too limited to the major European countries:

among them were a chapter about women musicians in European jazz and another dedicated to the impact of radio broadcasts. However, now the book includes a wealth of information never available before in English about these subjects. So, when researchers approach the subject of women in European jazz or the role played by the radio, they will find references inside each national chapter.

History of European Jazz – A Brief Outline

The history of European Jazz took place over a complex, changing and, at times, dramatic context. Its earlier incarnations can be traced to the many African-Americans and African entertainers that came to Europe following the wave of Africanisation of American popular music that began in the middle of the 19th century. Minstrel shows, university choirs with their repertory of spiritual hymns, ragtime pianists and banjoists entered the European musical scene and began to change it. Claude Debussy composed his *Golliwog's Cake-walk* in a ragtime-inspired style around 1906, and it invokes a complex maze of relationships between European racism, slave trade, manufacture and 'high' culture (see de Martelly, 2010). In the volume about the *History of European Jazz* this phase is covered in detail by Dr. Rainer Lotz, author of the landmark collection *Black Europe* (Lotz 2013), in one of the closing thematic chapters that is not dedicated to a specific country.

The First World War brought this first period to a dramatic end, however, at the same time, American troops, and in particular the 369th Infantry (commonly known as the Harlem Hellfighters) band, under the leadership of James Reese Europe, introduced in 1918 the sound of orchestrated ragtime with instrumental breaks in the Old World, a precursor in a way to the big bands of the 1930s. The Original Dixieland Jazz Band, who had recorded in 1917 the first disc with the word 'jazz' (actually 'jass') on the label, toured and recorded in Europe in 1919; their track was followed by many American jazz musicians who stayed in Europe for long tours or actually moved here, enriching the local scenes.



Photo by M. Descamps

Django Reinhardt, the Roma guitarist who arguably created the first European sound in Jazz, in his caravan in 1950.

Jazz was the soundtrack to musical, choreographic, visual design and literary experiments in Paris, Moscow and Berlin in the 1920s. In the 1930s, what arguably could be termed the first fully European approach to jazz was generated by the Hot Club de France Quintet, an unheard of grouping of violin, guitars and bass missing all the brass and percussion that represented the sound of jazz until then, under the leadership of Roma musician Django Reinhardt: born in Belgium, resident of France, a European of sorts with a nomadic lifestyle. American specialist Michael Dregni delineates in a dedicated chapter of the *History of European Jazz* his style and impact on jazz worldwide.

Authoritarian regimes always regarded jazz with deep suspicion. For the Fascist regime in Italy and the Nazi regime in Germany, it was decadent music – a genre whose tunes were often arranged by Jewish composers and brought to success by African-American performers could hardly be popular with the Aryan race supremacists – besides being associated with USA, an enemy country at the time. Jewish musicians suffered persecution and had to escape or hide trying to survive, as detailed in the article curated by Gabriele Coen in the *History of European Jazz*. Both sides tried to harness the music for propaganda during the war, with the uncanny result that in the last years of the Second World War, jazz was played equally by Allied and Axis radios, with opposing aims.

After the Second World War, the development of jazz in the post-bebop era was hugely influenced by the division of Europe in two opposing blocs. In the Eastern bloc, it was subjected to political control, regarded with suspicion, and employed as a propaganda tool by the USA. In the Western bloc, the *Voice of America Jazz Hour* was popular across the whole Communist area. Jazz music and its milieu served as a reference point for dissent in Poland, Russia, Czechoslovakia, the Baltic states as well as in Greece, Portugal and Spain during the military dictatorships of the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. In the Western democracies, jazz poured out



Photo by Wouter van Gool

The Newport International Youth Band in concert in July 1958 in an agricultural auction hall in Blokker, The Netherlands: George Gruntz (piano), Gilberto Cuppini (drums), Rudolph 'Ruud' Jacobs (bass); saxes (from left) Bernt Rosengren (tenor), Vladimiro Bas Zabache (alto), Hans Salomon (alto), Jan Wróblewski (tenor), Ronnie Ross (baritone); trombones: Christian Kellens, Kurt Järnberg, Erich Kleinschuster, Albert Mangelsdorff; trumpets: Palle Bolwig, Roger Guérin, Duško Gojkovic, Jose Magalhais; conductor Marshall Brown.



The Globe Unity Orchestra in Neukirchen-Vluyn in 1975: (clockwise from top left) Peter Brötzmann (bass sax), Rüdiger Carl (alto sax), Michel Pilz (clarinet), Anthony Braxton (alto sax), Evan Parker (tenor sax), Gerd Dudek (soprano sax), Kenny Wheeler (trumpet), Enrico Rava (trumpet), Günter Christmann (trombone), Albert Mangelsdorff (trombone), Paul Rutherford (trombone), Peter Kowald (tuba), Paul Lovens (drums), Buschi Niebergall (double bass) and Alexander von Schlippenbach (piano).

derived musics, if you like – became a forum of choice for exchanges between European musicians, with the creation of specific bands, such as the *Globe Unity Orchestra* in Germany, where in particular jazz musicians entertained a dialogue across the wall.

Punk music, folk revival, pop hits, contemporary classical music and even ancient music performers all adopted jazz techniques, approaches and attitudes: improvisation, unorthodox instrumental usage, do-it-yourself production, self-organisation are a few instances of this pervasive process where the sonic explorations of jazz musicians served to reintroduce extinct musical practices in Europe, including non-tempered tuning, non-Western instruments, singing styles and non-harmonic processes. From the solo performance to new versions of orchestrated music, from composition to improvisation and back, from acoustic to electronic, European jazz covered new and exciting ground involving new generations and further discoveries.

European jazz festivals, record labels, film soundtracks and specialised press provided access and integration not only to European musicians but also to

of the clubs and concert halls entering the public space in the late 1960s, when free jazz became one of the iconic music of civil rights, pacifist and student movements in USA as well as in Europe.

Jazz – a Shared Idiom Across Europe

As early as the mid 1950s, the shared idiom of jazz became the medium of choice for continental aggregations of musicians: the first time, interestingly enough, upon American initiative when George Wein, the promoter of the Newport Festival, commissioned Marshall Brown to create an International Youth Band that was, in fact, an all-European jazz orchestra. Several analogous initiatives followed. However, it was in the mid 1960s with the birth of what is commonly known as Free European Improvised Music that jazz – or jazz-derived

immigrants and refugees, and specifically brought music to disadvantaged areas and sections of the population. The development of European institutions, with the subsequent creation of joint educational and student exchange programmes created a fertile environment for younger generations of jazz musicians who could cooperate with peers without the obstacles of different currencies, borders, and tax systems. Previous generations had to rely on organisations operating on a voluntary basis, such as the European Jazz Federation, who tried to provide information and support, facilitating exchanges, specifically through the first European jazz magazine, the international edition of Poland's *Jazz Forum* (still in activity but only in Polish).

Documenting Jazz

In its original homeland, USA, documents about jazz and other music of the African diaspora have been preserved further, rather thanks to the commitment of private collectors than to the efforts of public institutions that only recently established policies of acquiring, cataloguing and digitising jazz collections from individuals and estates. Shellac (78 rpm) records of early jazz, blues and gospel produced especially by independent and Southern labels would be lost by now, if a small group had not begun collecting them and related artefacts (catalogues, recording logs, advertisements, photos, scores, letters) as well as collecting information through oral histories.

Europe is where jazz was included among the other modern arts, serving as inspiration not only for musicians in all fields but also for writers, poets, painters and film directors. The jazz magazine, the jazz history book, the jazz festival and the specialist record label can all originally be traced to Europe. This is not to downplay racism, imperialist adventures and even genocide against African people that marred the history of European powers, that in fact carried on the slave trade in the colonies before USA declared independence. Besides, jazz musicians of African origin were marginalised in several European countries while African-Americans were often welcomed as stars and enjoyed long residences in Europe. It is a complex and contradictory history, today maybe relevant as never before and worth telling in its multiple aspects.

Its intense intellectual history produced extraordinary music, documented on record since the 1930s (the Parisian label *Swing*, which issued most of Django's recordings, is arguably the first world label dedicated to jazz, preceding New York's *Blue Note* by a few months), this includes specialist magazines – several are competing for the title of first, but Dutch *De Jazzwereld* seems the most likely candidate – along with all the promotional literature attached to

festivals, jazz-clubs, record label, musicians' organisations and the like. First photos and, then film and video, documented the all-important visual aspects of the music – its presentation, context and instrumental evolution. In fact, some of the key video recordings of African-American innovators from the late 1960s onwards are available today only thanks to the archives of European TV stations. Finally, private papers, scrapbooks, agendas, letters and contracts document the relationships among the agents of the scene and the concrete reality of financial transactions.

The locution 'jazz apostles' has been applied to the historical characters who, in their countries, took the role of spreading the jazz culture, organising concerts and festivals, presenting on the radio, publishing articles, magazines and books, arguing on the public stage on behalf of the music when attacked by political or cultural authorities, networking with similar-minded individuals in other countries and keeping track of all these activities besides collecting records. Their collections became the generating seeds of many European jazz archives. The *Darmstadt Jazz Archive* was born from the collection of Joachim Berendt, a true jazz apostle and German populariser of jazz, whose work had a major impact on the global scene; the *Siena Jazz Archive* began with the collections of Arrigo Polillo, Italy's jazz apostle.

The situation of these jazz archives is, however, very differentiated and unequal across the continent. Some major countries still do not have an archive dedicated to jazz, on the model of institutions such as the *Dutch Jazz Archive* or the *Darmstadt Jazz Archive*. There is not a fixed set of good practices and a centralised forum for these archives. Public institutions such as the national library and sound archives do include jazz-related materials in their holdings. However, to this day, the presence of European jazz in the Europeana Collections is limited, unbalanced and rather random.

Integrating jazz collections into wider archives is not always possible, or positive. Problems arise from the very simple and basic act of cataloguing a record, where the hierarchy of importance of responsibilities in jazz is different, if not opposed, to the one used for classical music. In jazz, the 'author' of a recording can be the interpreter rather than the composer. Furthermore, sometimes, authorship is shared with professional figures who hardly appear in classical Western music, such as the arranger. Jazz researchers need to know who plays contrabass in a specific ensemble, sometimes more than who is formally responsible for its composition (if extant). The oral nature of the transmission of the music, the relevance of improvisation and the way groups

are formed within the musical environment of jazz require the context that only the above-mentioned documents can integrally provide.

A coordinated effort is now needed to coordinate and direct the process of preserving the complex and shared heritage of European jazz. The existing jazz and popular music archives, the relevant sections of national libraries and phonographic/sound archives, the major centres of research on the history of European jazz that have been meeting and exchanging their findings in the *Rhythm Changes* programme financed by EU for a few years but which now continues on its own (*Rhythm Changes*), European initiatives (such as *Europeanana*), the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) and the European Music Council (EMC) all need to be involved and be actors in this process to preserve the heritage of an area where European musical creativity best expressed itself in the past hundred years.

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