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Out Out, Damned Horn

by Henry Pleasants

LONDON

In his memoir *Am I Playing Too Loud?*, Gerald Moore, the distinguished English vocal accompanist, recalled his tribulations as a cinema organist in Canada, saying of the instrument:

"It shares pride of place for sheer horror with the saxophone, harmonica, and the concertina. They are all incapable of producing other than ignoble sounds."

It is an assertion calculated to raise the hackles of many who find the sounds made by these instruments, when well played, beautiful, even enchanting. One wonders, indeed, whether Moore had heard the harmonica played by Larry Adler (not to mention Toots Thielemans) or the saxophone played by Coleman Hawkins, Sidney Bechet, Johnny Hodges, Ben Webster, Lester Young or Stan Getz.

Still, Moore, on the subject of the saxophone, was mild compared with the London *Daily News* in 1927, long before any of these artists, with the exception of Bechet, had been heard in England:

"The saxophone is a long metal instrument bent at both ends. It is alleged to be musical. The creature has a series of tiny taps stuck upon it, apparently at random. These taps are very sensitive; when touched they cause the instrument to utter miserable sounds, suggesting untold agony. At either end there is a hole. People, sometimes for no reason at all, blow down the small end of the saxophone, which then shrieks and moans as if attacked by a million imps of torture. The shrieks issue from the large end. So the moans."

Well, the cinema organ, the harmonica and the saxophone have all survived the abuse. But despite their popularity — or possibly because of it — they have never quite achieved respectability, and most curiously in the case of the saxophone, the most popular and ubiquitous of the three.

It has long been indispensable in military, concert and jazz bands and in many types of jazz combo. But it is still ostracized, with some notable but rare exceptions, by "serious" composers, and this despite the enthusiastic sponsorship nearly a hundred and fifty years ago of no less a master of the orchestra than Hector Berlioz.

It was Berlioz, quite by accident — and the eloquent phrasing of Lester Young's tenor behind Billie Holliday — that put Jim Hol, an English free-lance typographer, and not a musician, on the research trail that has led to a small pamphlet, a mere twelve pages, titled *Some Saxophone History — Its Origin and Early Use*, neatly summarized by an English reviewer in two words: sax discrimination.

Jim Hol was reading the David Cairns translation of *The Memoirs of Hector Berlioz*, under the impression that Berlioz was a French novelist, when he came upon this passage, dated 1843:

"Adolphe Sax is now making rotary-valve trumpets (sic), large and small, in all possible keys, familiar and unfamiliar, instruments whose excellent tone-quality and finished workmanship are indisputable. It is scarcely to be believed that this gifted young artist should be finding it difficult to maintain his position and make a career in Paris. The persecutions he suffers are worthy of the Middle Ages and recall the antics of the enemies of Benvenuto, the Florentine sculptor.

"They lure away his workmen, steal his designs, accuse him of insanity, and bring legal proceedings against him. You feel that with a little more dash they would assassinate him. Such is the hatred inventors inspire in rivals who are incapable of inventing anything themselves."

Berlioz may have erred. Hol quotes Wally Horwood, Sax's English biographer, to the effect that there were, in fact, at least three serious attempts on Sax's life, one of them fatal, if not to Sax. Through what was apparently a case of mistaken identity, one of his most loyal employees was stabbed through the heart.

The animosity was aroused, of course, not because the sound of Sax's instruments was so awful, but because so many found it so good. The fact that, as a Belgian, he was considered an interloper may also have had something to do with it.

To return to Berlioz, he came back to the subject of Sax three years later, and went out on a limb — too weak, as it turned out — predicting: "The saxophone, the latest member of the clarinet family, an instrument which will prove extremely useful when players have learned to exploit its qualities, should be given its own separate position in the curriculum, for before long every composer will want to use it."

Many, including Berlioz, have done so, most notably and effectively Ravel in his orchestration of Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition*, but only minimally, and always for the achievement of a special, usually exotic, effect. Its employment almost always calls for the engagement of an outsider, a free-lance saxophonist. And that is one of the reasons offered by Hol for the reluctance of "serious" composers to include the saxophone in their instrumentation. Symphony orchestra reed players can't, don't or won't play it.

Jim Hol was fascinated not only by what Berlioz had to say about Sax's instruments and his travails, but also by the one-syllable name. His own name is properly Holloway, shortened to Hol before he ever came upon Sax, a name seeming to invite picturesque suffixes, as in saxhorn, a forerunner of the saxophone, patented in France in 1845.

"Sax," says Hol, "evidently knew he had a fine name for an inventor, and wanted to make the most of it. But today the name of his most famous invention is so familiar that its creator's identity is somehow lost... Even the common abbreviation, 'sax,' which is just the man's name, after all, is so rich with connotations of sex and jazz and blacks that its mid-Nineteenth Century Belgian owner seems out of place."

The use of the suffix "-phone" for the naming of a wind instruments was, Hol tells us, "like the instrument itself, an innovation by Sax. Others followed him: the inventors of the sommerophone, the sarrusophone, the sudrephone, the heckelphone, and the albisiphone. But to most people, perhaps, the names of only Sax's and Sousa's -phones are familiar, due to their use in popular music and jazz.

"I've looked into this inventor -phone business quite extensively," Hol says, "but for reasons of space have had to edit out a long, interesting and irrelevant discussion of the herculesophone, cornophone, holtonphone, antoniophone,

sonorophone and many others. These are all wind instruments. The percussive -phones are not, of course, the inventions of persons named Xyl, Vibra, Tubu, etc."

Adolphe Sax's inventive urges were not confined to horns. Hol tells us of a plan he announced during the Crimean War for a "saxocannon," designed to fire a shot of 550 tons. And then there was, in 1860, his project to construct an organ so enormous that it could be heard throughout Paris. As Hol tells it:

"Built on a platform provided by four towers higher than Notre Dame, it would be powered by several steam engines compressing air in vast cylinders at up to fifteen times its normal atmospheric pressure; a battery of elephant-hide kettle drums and giant triangles would provide percussion.

"This project was an elaboration of a proposal he made in 1841 to mount an organ on the front of a steam locomotive. He claimed it would play so loudly that the engine itself would be inaudible, and everyone for miles around would be able to hear the music, making the arrangement particularly suitable for the inauguration of railroad lines."

— HP

by Michael Zwerin

PARIS

After Sax patented his saxophone in 1846, Berlioz wrote: "Its principal merit is the beautiful variety of its accent; deep and calm, passionate, dreamy, melancholic, like an echo of an echo... To my knowledge, no existing musical instrument possesses that curious sonority perched on the limit of silence."

In his autobiography, *Father of the Blues*, W.C. Handy — who claimed to have been the first to use a saxophone in an American orchestra, in 1909 — describes the instrument as "moaning like a sinner on revival day." For Arnold Bennett, the saxophone was "the embodiment of the spirit of beer."

It combines the speed of woodwinds with the carrying power of brass and at the beginning Sax intended the seven instruments in his new family for marching bands, replacing clarinets, oboes and bassoons. It was an easy instrument to learn. Each village could now have its own band. You can produce a tone in an hour, learn a simple tune in a day. Brass players, faced with embouchure problems, may take weeks to reach the same point; violinists even longer. Fingering is much less demanding than on older reed instruments.

An exhibition on Sax and the saxophone, presented two years ago at the Centre Culturel de la Communaute Francaise de Belgique, offered a fascinating collection of documents, vintage instruments and audio-visual illustrations about the inventor and his invention. The displays included Sax's other inventions: families of brass instruments called saxhorns, saxotrombas and saxtubas; that enormous organ powered and pushed by a steam locomotive for public events; a design for an egg-shaped concert hall; an air purifier for sufferers of respiratory diseases — forty-six patents in all. But he is of course principally remembered for the saxophone family, which in range, homogeneity, speed and subtlety, became the wind instrument equivalent of the violin family, and the musical voice of the Twentieth century.

Adolphe Sax was born in Dinant, Belgium, November 6, 1814, the son of Charles-Joseph Sax, whose factory employing two hundred workers was the largest wind-instrument producer in Europe. At the age of twelve, Adolphe was an apprentice there. He studied flute at the Brussels Royal Conservatory of Music and won a prize playing the revolutionary fingering system devised by Theobald Boehm.

His first patent was for a bass clarinet, redesigned to give it more flexibility and power. He demonstrated his first saxophone in 1840, behind a curtain because it was not yet patented. It caught the attention of the government of King Louis-Philippe of France, which ordered its military officials to equip their bands with Sax's new instruments. There were articles in the newspapers, pro and con. His competitors used their influence and filed lawsuits against him. A battle of the bands — one conducted by Sax, the other using traditional instruments — on the Champ de Mars in Paris resulted in a jury prize for Sax. The press was almost unanimously favorable. He won large contracts.

Sax moved to Paris. The revolution of 1848 installed a republic and ended the monarchy, including its support of Sax, who filed for bankruptcy in 1852. But the Second Empire followed shortly and in 1854 Napoleon III granted Sax a subsidy. As political fortunes changed, he went bankrupt again, continuing his manufacturing business on a smaller scale. By the time of his death in 1894, he was in reduced circumstances and few people would have bet on the future of the saxophone.

The saxophone was never seriously integrated into classical music, aside from isolated works of Berlioz, Stravinsky, Milhaud and some others. Then came jazz. At the beginning, the dominant jazz instruments were trumpets and cornets. Buddy Bolden, King Oliver, Freddie Keppard and Louis Armstrong were kings.

After that the saxophone began to move in. In 1918, a clarinet player named Sidney Bechet was seduced by a soprano saxophone in a London shop window. In his autobiography, *Treat It Gentle*, Bechet comments, "This was a piece of good luck for me because it wasn't long after this before people started saying they didn't want clarinets in their bands no more."

The saxophone began to be described as "throbbing" or "wailing" as soloists such as Bechet, Adrian Rollini and Johnny Hodges rediscovered it in the '20s. Its melodic capabilities were explored by Ben Webster, Coleman Hawkins, and Lester Young in the '30s. Saxophone sections were the real stars of the dance bands. Charlie Parker played the instrument harder and faster in the '40s. Lee Konitz and Paul Desmond cooled it out in the '50s. Serge Chaloff, Gerry Mulligan and Pepper Adams picked up from Ellingtonian Harry Carney and explored the underexposed baritone sax. Steve Lacy rediscovered the soprano, which had been neglected since Bechet.

Louis Jordan, King Curtis and Junior Walker introduced the saxophone to rhythm and blues as combos gradually replaced bands in popular music. John Coltrane and Eric Dolphy stretched the physical and emotional range of the saxophone in the '60s, while Archie Shepp, Pharoah Sanders, Albert Ayler and Anthony Braxton invented sounds never before heard.

With rock and roll, the instrument went into eclipse along with jazz itself. The electric guitar took over. But to approach the subtlety and variety of saxophones, guitarists had to employ auxiliary equipment such as wah-wah pedals, phasers and flangers. The synthesizer, the first important new instrument invented since the saxophone, served cold '70s technopop well, but people need warmth too and the saxophone combines human breath with the speed of a guitar or a keyboard. In the mid-'70s Andy McKay with Roxy Music and David Payne with Ian Drury introduced the saxophone to rock. Saxophones became integral to young groups such as the Q-Tips and Dexy's Midnight Runners. Clarence Clemons' tenor is essential to the power of Bruce Springsteen's material. Phil Woods' alto has been featured prominently on Billy Joel's hits. Steely Dan would not be quite what it is without Wayne Shorter's tenor.

So those among us who never knew it had left will be pleased to learn that the saxophone has been making a comeback. Its continuing contemporary appeal is illustrated by a sixteen-year-old music student who switched from guitar to tenor sax, giving as his reason: "I want to play an instrument I can kiss."

—MZ

Quo Vadis?

What is jazz? And where is it going?

These two questions have been asked so often that musicians started coming up with funny answers. To the former, Bob Brookmeyer replied, "It's a living," and to the latter, "Down Forty-eighth Street to Jim and Andy's." And Stan Kenton, according to a probably apocryphal story, said, "*We're* going to Kansas City."

No satisfactory answer to the first question is possible, for the reason that there is no single element in jazz that cannot be found in other forms of music. The inside snobbery of this once snobbed-upon music permits the ultimate dismissal, "It isn't jazz," for whatever music meets the stone wall of someone's subjective disapproval. It has been said of the music of Dizzy Gillespie, Bill Evans, Ornette Coleman, Cecil Taylor and the Miles Davis group.

Many musicians would like to dispense with the term *jazz*, not so much because it lacks respectability — if anything it has gained a little too much respectability — but because it is restrictive and exclusionary. If someone were to say that Bill Evan's three-piano recording of the love theme from *Spartacus* isn't jazz, I would be inclined to shrug and say, "So what?" It is a magnificent piece of extemporaneous music that has more in common with Chopin than Jelly Roll Morton. And one could question whether Duke Ellington's *The Single Petal of a Rose* is jazz according to the general specifications of the music. But again, who cares?

If we cannot say with certainty what jazz is, we can at least and at last approach the second of these portenteous questions, *Where is jazz going?* The answer is:

Nowhere. It's there. It has arrived where it was going.

Paradoxically, to see how and why this is so we have to return to the first question, which is more effectively approached by considering what jazz isn't.

It will not do to define it as music that uses what Henry Pleasants has felicitously termed explicit rhythm. All music has rhythm. It is the fundamental and common element, though it may be merely implicit. Some forms of music, however, utilize specific rhythm, usually on a percussion instrument as an accompaniment to or foundation of melody and possibly harmony. But jazz is far from being the only music that does this. Native American and East Indian music, Arab music, Greek music, all do this. Indeed, most forms of popular music do it, particularly music meant to accompany dance. And whether a drum is used is irrelevant. Flamenco music doesn't use drums, although it is a tremendously rhythmic and hard-swinging music. To be sure, castanets and a dancer's clapping hands could be considered percussion, and in a sense the floor is a drum played by the dancer's feet. In any event, the explicit rhythm of drums is not essential to the definition of jazz. The Nat Cole Trio did not use drums, and Art Tatum was best heard playing solo.

Nor will it do to define jazz simply as improvised music, although Bill Evans and Dave Brubeck, among others, have insisted that the fact of improvisation is the critical element. There is nothing odd or even unusual about improvisation in music. Indeed, written music is the aberration. It had a moment in the sun of history, and its hegemony may be waning as "classical" music is displaced by jazz and other forms of unpremeditated music.

Improvisation is part and parcel of country-and-western music. It has to be, since many of its best practitioners can't read — which they have in common with Erroll Garner and Wes Montgomery.

And of course the music of India is improvised. British guitarist Derek Bailey has diligently pursued the question of improvisation in various kinds of music and written a book titled, forthrightly enough, *Musical Improvisation* (Prentice-Hall). Discussing his craft with Bailey in a 1974 radio interview, the Indian musician Viram Jasani sounded a lot like a jazz musician.

"You get to the stage," he said, "where you don't repeat the phrases your teacher has taught you, you start creating your own different phrases within that raga. And you intuit when you're playing a phrase which is out of context, out of that framework. In other words, when you learn a raga you are really learning something which is very abstract and you don't learn a raga in terms of its tonal content."

Bailey asked if the function of improvisation was to intensify the mood of a raga. Jasani answered, "That's absolutely right. To bring out the most in that raga. In purely mathematical terms a series of notes can be combined in hundreds of different ways. But it's useless in your improvisation to go through all of these. Theoretically it might be correct but it doesn't allow for the feelings of the raga, it doesn't allow for music.

"One has to figure out a way in which the possibilities of that raga will enhance its mood.

"And of course a raga can be considered a limiting thing. How, after all, do you recognize a raga? Because you recognize certain characteristic features about it. And if you are going to play that raga you can't help but play those characteristic features. So this, perhaps, is not improvisation. But your improvisation comes into play when you are trying to use the information presented to you in terms of musical facts, using your ability, and the experience acquired over the years of practicing that raga, and listening to other people play that raga, to put all this together and create some new phrase or a new idea within that raga."

Long improvisations within the framework of various modes were part of early church music, and it is in the church that improvisation has remained alive in European music — because of the necessity of variability of pacing in religious services, for one thing. The French organist, composer, and improviser Marcel Dupre, who died in 1971, would improvise entire symphonies.

Renaissance organists, harpsichordists, and lutenists would use well-known vocal melodies, the way musicians use standard songs, as the foundations for elaborate impromptus, and it was in fact out of this practice that western instrumental music developed. Some types of composition grew out of improvisation, including the prelude and toccata.

And according to the written testimony of people who heard them, the improvisations of John Bull, Frescobaldi, Bach, Handel, Mozart, Beethoven, Liszt, Busoni, and Chopin were at least as powerful as their compositions, and sometimes more so. Later academics have questioned whether these improvisations were indeed that moving, suggesting that the excitement of the moment created that impression. But this reveals only a mystified fear of the improvisation process, and in any case misses the point: one of the salient facts of improvisation is its emotional intensity. There is no reason to doubt the testimony of those who actually heard Bach. We have only the written sketches for his music; the evidence is that he was a stunning player.

The late Alec Templeton used to do a trick on radio broadcasts — improvising in various styles on thematic material supplied by the audience. This always dazzled the groundlings. But that parlour game goes back into the mists of musical history. In the Eighteenth Century, the better keyboard players would improvise not merely variations but formal fugues on themes supplied by members of the audience. Dupre's book *Improvisation a l'Orgue*, published in 1925, is an extensive treatise on harmony, counterpoint, and chorale, suite, variation and symphonic forms. The best organists are *required* to be able to create complex musical forms spontaneously.

We have little idea how the harpsichord parts were to be played in Bach's orchestral music, because he wrote numbered chord symbols (Nashville players have sort of reinvented the system), intending to play himself on those changes.

It becomes obvious, with a little reflection on history and the various musical cultures of the world, that the hegemony of written music is in fact a comparatively new thing. It was only by

writing it down — in a notational system that nobody finds adequate — that we have been able to preserve "the music of the past." In fact we have not preserved the music of the past at all. We have preserved some diagrams for the reconstruction of the music, but those diagrams are imprecise. Because Bach did not use tempo markings, we do not know at what speed his pieces should be played. We guess. Baroque music played by a modern symphony orchestra sounds nothing like it did in its own time. To hear it played on baroque instruments is revelatory.

There is a system, also inadequate, for notating choreography. But thus far no one has mistaken the diagrams for dance itself. That is what we have done in western music: mistaken black marks on white paper for music itself. And our reverence for marked paper has been increased by the way in which we usually learn music, which is to study the practices and precedents of past masters. All we have of their works are those diagrams, and we have become worshipful of them. But they are not the music itself. Chopin, it should be remembered, made his living as a player — as did Spohr and Mozart. Their improvisations are lost to us forever. Those of Lester Young are not. This is a fact of the profoundest significance for the future of jazz, and perhaps all western music.

During the Nineteenth Century, the composer was gradually elevated to princely status and the player demoted into the role of a sort of serf. It was not even necessary that a composer be a fine player. And the player was not only not required to invent music, he was forbidden from doing it. He was, unless he was a virtuoso soloist, not even allowed any latitude of interpretation. That was vested in another authority figure, the conductor, who dictated dynamics, tempi, phrasing, and all other shadings. Indeed, even the virtuoso soloist played the music of others, for the most part. There was for a time a lingering tolerance of the performer's own creative aspirations: in earlier concertos, the candenzas were left open for the soloist's inventions. Gradually, this practice came to an end, and soloists played candenzas written by the composer or developed by earlier performers.

There is something sad about the modern symphonic musician, who too commonly knows nothing or very little of the theoretical elements of music. He has been turned into a superb automaton, but he does not really know how music is made. I remember a conversation with a harpist who was in awe of the ability to improvise. All that girl could do, and she did it extremely well, was to play the notes on the paper in front of her. A young man came to Tony Aless to study jazz piano in New York. Tony soon found that there was little he could teach him about the piano itself: given a Bach invention or some such, the young man played the instrument masterfully. And so Tony concentrated on teaching him harmony and the other materials of composition and improvisation. After a year, the young man diffidently confessed that he had a degree from a major conservatory.

This separation of the roles of composers and players is, as it should by now be obvious, a new and abnormal state of affairs, substantially a result of the Nineteenth Century evolution of European classical music. It is with jazz that improvisation is restored to the western musical tradition, and the player is given back the right to invent music for himself.

Now, as Henry Pleasants has pointed out in *The Agony of Modern Music, Classical Music and All that Jazz*, and other writings, when jazz developed a yen to be respectable, its critics and chroniclers took to aping classical-music critics. And they made several fundamental errors of assumption about European classical music, about which too many of them knew little.

The first of these was that music must always progress. The second was that jazz would follow European music in the extension of harmonic practice into eventual atonality. Some musicians agreed with this assessment. Lennie Tristano was one.

There are musical forms — that of India, for example — in which there is no comparable emphasis on progress. Such music is in fact strongly rooted in tradition, and the idea that to command respect a musician must depart from past practices would strike its players and appreciators as odd. There is among them no assumption that a musician is uncreative if he is not changing the very vocabulary with which music is made. Indeed, the ultimate musical creativity may lie in being original in the use of a known system. Jazz offers a proof of this. Listen to, among others, Oscar Peterson, Bill Evans, Kenny Drew, Monty Alexander, Phineas Newborn — all of whom I cite because of technical proficiency and therefore a comparative lack of limitation — and hear how individually they make music out of the same basic materials. Or compare Clark Terry to Dizzy Gillespie to see how personally the truly gifted player can adapt the self-same materials and instrument to his own ends.

And so we might herewith formulate a principle: *it is not necessary to alter the system in order to be creative.*

It is after Debussy and early Stravinsky that European music begins to part company with the audience. If Henry Pleasants is right, this is the point where tradition begins to thin out to the point of emotional sterility. There is intellect enough in Twentieth Century classical music. And if you approach music as an exercise in logic designed for appreciation by the specialist, there is some very interesting stuff in it. What is comparatively scarce is heart. Therefore its audience appeal is limited, and without an audience to pay the bills, music at a professional level cannot exist. The avant-garde is maintained by grants, not by audience support.

What European classical music did, over a period of a very few lifetimes, was to explore the harmonic materials of a tonal system arising out of the eventual division of the octave into twelve parts. There are other ways to divide the octave, which is indeed an inappropriate term, since there are more than eight divisions of it. The ragas of India divide the "octave" into twenty-two parts, not all of them of equal size. The smallest interval used is the sruti. Shri N.M. Adyonthaya, in a book called *Melody Music of India*, cited by Derek Bailey, says that "a further explanation of the basis of the srutis may be found in the audio phenomenon that when two notes of the same pitch are struck simultaneously and one of them is raised gradually higher and higher in pitch relationship or pitch ratio, one of them serving as a basic note of reference, the ear responds and tolerates at certain definite points, and there are twenty-two such points at each of which the degree of tolerance consonance or dissonance, is varying. These twenty-two points have been the basis of the twenty-two srutis of Indian music from time immemorial."

It is no use for members and champions of the avant-garde to tell us that the only reason we don't like certain sounds is conditioning — or worse, an obstinacy in ignorance. There are sounds in nature we find unpleasant, including that which you get when digging and your shovel hits a rock or the one you make by dragging a piece of chalk or a thumbnail at a right angle across a blackboard. These sounds are so repellent that the mere mention of them will make some people squirm. For sound, as I have pointed out, works directly on the nervous system, which is why music alone among the arts requires no process of comprehension to be appreciated. In saying that it does, the so-called avant-garde is flying in the face of music's very nature. All of our senses are sophisticated extensions of the sense of touch. Hearing is a warning system. And there are sounds that we find alarming, in and of themselves, and others that we find pleasant. Our survival depends on this. And music is an exploitation of our emotional sensitivity to sound.

(We really don't know very much about our response to vibrations, including those of light. It has been discovered by policemen that locking a violent prisoner in a room painted pink will reduce him to abject passivity. No one knows why.)

European composers over a period of a few centuries explored what the human organism found pleasing within a certain system

of sounds. This research came to be seen as the *purpose* of the exercise, which it is not. Research became an end in itself, while the true purpose of music, communication, was forgotten. And because intellect was the tool with which the research was accomplished, the manifestation of the composer's intelligence rather than his emotional depth and wisdom came to be seen as the reason for music's existence.

A moment's reflection will reveal that our life purpose is emotional, not intellectual. We do what pleases us, and if satisfying an abiding curiosity about the nature of things is what gives you joy, you may become a physicist. Einstein did what he did because it gave him pleasure.

It pleases us to explore our own emotions in conditions of safety. Perhaps the most peculiar of our esthetic responses is the pleasure we derive from being frightened, from feeling endangered. So long as we *know* that we are not actually in jeopardy, we enjoy the shivers that come with riding a roller-coaster or watching a suspense movie. The "pity and terror" aroused is the basis of tragedy in drama.

And emotion is what music is widely presumed to be all about. Music and intelligence are required to make music — good music, anyway — but they are not its purpose.

Now, European classical music explored the vocabulary of our twelve-part octave (as opposed to the Indian twenty-two part "octave", for example) as a means of causing those emotional experiences that in some mysterious way seem essential to our spiritual growth. And just at the point when we learned how far we could stretch the system and still achieve emotional communication — just as we completed the compilation of music's vocabulary and useful syntactical structure — we decided to throw the whole thing out. Or at least some theorists said we had to throw it out. It was at this point that we began to argue that all twelve tones are equal.

And it was then that music drifted away from being an art toward becoming a science, with an extremely limited appeal for anyone but a fellow scientist with the specialized education to admire the exercises in thought. We condemned those composers who insisted on using the vocabulary and grammar of the old system to move audiences to joy or a vicarious sorrow. Such men were considered corny, and they were sentenced — Rachmaninoff, Tchaikovsky, Grieg, Rimsky-Korsakov — to a general condescension from critics and other intellectuals, even though they retained a formidable favor with audiences, not all of whose members could be conveniently classified as stupid. Even Chopin is held in a certain muted disdain because his music is so emotional, but his obvious intelligence keeps him in the pantheon, and pianists have a passion for his music. And let us not forget that it was not long ago that Mozart suffered a certain disfavor.

The composers relegated to a lower echelon of respect all have something in common. They are not German. And they explored the folk-music resources of their native countries. Now the Germans have dominated musical thought since the time of Bach. Debussy objected to this dominance and tried to unseat it. He did not succeed.

All nations suffer from what I have with amusement called French Autumn Syndrome, but no nation suffers as severely from it as the Germans. The Germans believe like no other people that their culture is superior to all the rest on earth. And what does not conform to German ideals, in music or anything else, is going to meet with German disapproval. Given the scope and weight of the German influence in music, the art itself will be required to conform to German standards. And the highest priority of German thought is *ordnung*, as they call it — order. It was inevitable that the Germans would seek to develop a logical *system* for making music. And that is what serialism in its original form and in its later permutations is. It was inevitable that the Germans would be the people who would ascribe to music a logical rather than an emotional purpose.

The hegemony of serialism in Twentieth Century European classical music is manifest in a remark made by Pierre Boulez. He first heard the music of Arnold Schoenberg in 1945. Some time later he said, "I realized that here was a language of our time. No other language was possible. It was the most radical revolution since Monteverdi." It is an astonishing statement, and I find it hard to believe that anyone of Boulez's intelligence could have made it, but he did.

The same kind of rigidity obtained in jazz after the innovations of Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie in the 1940s. Paul Desmond went out of his way not to listen to Parker because, as he once told me, "I realized that if I did I would be lost. Only later when I was a little more secure about who I was did I allow myself the luxury of listening to him." Paul recalled the period as a kind of musical McCarthyism. If you didn't play like Bird, you were out of the club. And if you did, of course, you were a mere imitator.

And now there is an element in jazz that believes we should throw out the tonal system, in emulation of classical music — precisely when, ironically, younger "classical" composers are returning to it. And all this thinking is based on the notion that there is a single "right" way to make music. This is as restrictive as the Boulez view of Schoenberg.

But there are very substantial reasons why the thinking that went into the evolution of European classical music is inappropriate to jazz. The primary direction of European classical music after the baroque era was the exploration of harmony. Let us reconsider the implications of the fact that we did not retain the music of the past but only diagrams telling us how to make proximate reconstructions. What the student was left to examine was the logic of the process. And this came to be seen as the actual purpose of music. This being so, Arnold Schoenberg was historically inevitable.

If jazz were to follow classical music in that direction, it would be the death of it. Jazz will die when and if it ignores what Debussy called "the alchemy of sound" in favor of "the science of the beaver". I do not deny, say, Cecil Taylor his right to make music in his own way — so long as he does not deny me my right to prefer something else and make music another way.

Fortunately, jazz is unlikely to follow European classical music into atonality. George Tremblay, the Canadian-born serialist composer who developed his own system of composition and deeply influenced film and television scoring because he trained so many Los Angeles composers, used to say that various musical excesses should be tried if only to find out that they shouldn't have been done. We have done that. We have been doing it since Lennie Tristano began experimenting with atonalism. And we have learned, as symphony conductors already knew, that audiences stubbornly insist on being bored by it and retain a taste for music they find accessible.

The assumption that jazz has to "go" somewhere is derived from the European musical model, and it is fundamentally false. For it fails to take into consideration two critically important factors: (1) jazz is a player's music more than a composer's music; and (2) in jazz we truly do have the music of the past. Not the blueprints from which to construct an approximation of it but the music itself.

Something similar has happened in all the performing arts. We can only be told what Garrick's acting was like; future generations will be able to see that of Laurence Olivier. And they will be able to see the dancing of Gene Kelly, Moira Shearer, Rudolph Nuryev. Actual performance can now be caught and preserved.

And the implications for jazz of this fact are beginning to be apparent. The idea of the "only way" to play jazz, of the "next thing", has collapsed. The young trumpet player Vaughan Nark, who was about three years old when Ornette Coleman first created a stir, doesn't play like Coleman or Don Cherry. He is

following in the footsteps of Dizzy Gillespie. Richie Cole is following in the direction of Phil Woods — not very well, sad to say. Phil, who started out following Charlie Parker, has long since developed his own identity, just as Dizzy Gillespie, inspired by Roy Eldridge, became a strong individualist. Wynton Marsalis has not followed any of the "next thing" models of twenty or so years ago; indeed, he wasn't even born when Carla Bley and others were straining to escape tonality. Marsalis comes out of Dizzy Gillespie and Clark Terry. Judy Carmichael's piano playing is not a consequence of Bill Evans or Bud Powell. She plays in the school of James P. Johnson and Fats Waller. Not long ago I heard a young guitarist for whom Charlie Christian might as well have never been born. He plays like Eddie Laing.

In jazz, the performance is everything. The written music is secondary. This is the antithesis of the priority in most "classical music". Jazz grew up with the phonograph record. That is to say, jazz developed when the performance itself could be preserved. And it seems to me that jazz is to a large extent the consequence of this fact. Jazz musicians didn't study diagrams of music; they listened to and emulated their models. This produced, among other things, an explosive expansion of instrumental technique. Maynard Ferguson practiced with Harry James records, and concluded he could go even higher on the horn — and he did. The late Bill Chase in turn practiced with Maynard Ferguson records and decided he could go still higher. The older orchestration books are obsolete when they describe the limitations of trombone: jazz musicians blasted them wide open. And thus the virtuosity of jazz players burgeoned until they surpassed symphonic players on those instruments that jazz embraced, with the exceptions of piano and the stringed instruments, whose techniques and scope had been explored extensively long before jazz was born. (To this day, few jazz pianists have approached in size of technique the standards set by the great concert pianists. No jazz pianist has ever attained the level of playing you hear in Glenn Gould's last recording of *The Goldberg Variations.*)

It is conceivable that there is a young trumpet player somewhere modelling a nascent style on that of Louis Armstrong or Roy Eldridge, a young pianist poring over the trio recordings of Nat Cole. (Indeed, one may hope that there is.) And it is in this that jazz differs radically from classical music. Among other things that our notational system cannot convey is tone. And there are endless shadings of phrasings and rhythm that the system can't even approximate. You can write out a Clark Terry solo, but Wynton Marsalis would not have been able to imitate its time feeling and Clark's extraordinary inflectional subtleties unless he had *heard* him. It is precisely those unwritable nuances that make jazz an intensely emotional music.

It is becoming clear that jazz can do something classical music cannot do, not because it is impossible but because its implicit philosophy will not let it: renew itself from its own past. Prokofiev's *Classical Symphony* is one of the rare examples of this. Constant Lambert, in *Music Ho!* criticized Stravinsky for what he called time-travelling. And when Cannonball Adderley and others in the informal back-to-the-roots movement began to draw on elements from the past of jazz, they ran into a certain amount of flak from critics, who failed to see that jazz as a player's music rather than a writer's music not only could do this comfortably but inevitably would do it. Indeed, the complaint of established jazz players about the jazz-education movement is that it too often does not communicate familiarity with the major figures of the music's past. In this, in fact, the movement actually poses the most serious threat to jazz besides the destructive treatment of the music by the mass record industry. Like the jazz critics before them, the jazz academics are emulating a classical model, turning out young players who are incredibly proficient but lack individuality. By standardizing playing, which involves an assumption about the "right" way to play a given instrument, jazz education risks recreating in this music the kind of conformity endemic to music conservatories.

Fortunately the treasury of recorded jazz we have accumulated militates against passive submission to academic theory.

We are all committed to seeking our own happiness. And if it pleases a young pianist to labor at the emulation of Bud Powell or Fats Waller, no critic is going to dissuade him from doing so on the grounds that he is "derivative" or "eclectic" — both of which epithets have been leveled at Oscar Peterson, to the sublime indifference of all the pianists who idolize him. In using these terms (and I am talking about the overuse of them, as opposed to a justified yawn at sterile slavish imitation), critics have embraced the latent assumption of classical critics that the system must everlastingly be expanded, if not overthrown and supplanted. Jazz musicians, fortunately, retain a wholesome indifference to voices of authority and seem likely to do whatever pleases them and, within reason, the audience.

Whenever jazz has drifted toward the desire to be intellectually impressive, it has laid a large egg. To be sure, an intelligent understanding of the musician's skills adds to one's enjoyment the music. But it is not essential to it, and in the most exquisite art the technique slips beneath our notice: the experience is all. Juggling is a skill that leaves us amazed, but it communicates little emotion beyond that. Appreciation and understanding of a musician's skill adds frosting to the cake, but the real nourishment is in the cake. An artist has no right in fact to demand intellectual understanding of the audience. *How* he does what he does is strictly his business. But *what* he does is theirs, and they have the right to shrug and walk away if he cannot hold their attention by the appeal of his work. If the audience brings an appreciation of juggling skills, as it were, to the act of listening to music, all well and good. But it should not be the purpose in being there. That's where classical music got itself into a trap; and that is the snare jazz is likely to sidestep because of its rooting in performance rather than theory.

And so jazz is where it wanted to be. It explored the vocabulary of music to the limit of a reasonable layman's tolerance. A few musicians went beyond that but in the very process showed us what that tolerance was. And many younger musicians seem delighted to use the vocabulary as it has been compiled, rather than try constantly to invent a new language.

It is in this sense that jazz is going nowhere. For the forseeable future, it is likely to use the brilliant musical materials explored and assembled during these past centuries. It is not going to throw tradition out, the way classical music did to its detriment.

This brings us back to the question of what jazz actually is. Can we satisfactorily define it as a music combining African rhythmic pulsation with European harmonic and melodic practices, with an emphasis on improvisation? No, because that definition would fit Brazilian samba, which has a separate history, style and identity. But wait a minute. When Dizzy Gillespie recorded *Chega de Saudade*, did that song suddenly become jazz? And when jazz musicians began using samba patterns consistently, did samba then become jazz? In a way, yes. Faure's *Pavanne* and Chopin's *E-minor prelude* have become part of the jazz repertoire because of the performers who have recorded them.

And that is one of the beauties of jazz, its lack of exclusionary purity, its willingness to embrace anything that strikes its players as interesting, its indifference to stylistic or ethnic origin.

You might say, to appropriate a pun from James Joyce, that jazz is a great whorn, the last strumpet.

And it seems likely to stay in business for some time to come, going nowhere, shamelessly selling pleasure.

I don't like any chords with numbers in 'em.
— Unknown country guitarist
