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Musical Performance and Trans Identity: Narratives of Selfhood, Embodied Identities, and Musicking

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in Music

by

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June 2018

The dissertation of Randy Mark Drake is approved.

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Englebert Humperdinck
Jennifer Leitham
Tak Matsumoto and Daniel Ho
Metropolitan Master Chorale
Bob Mintzer
Singcopation, Mt. San Antonio College
Tom Scott
Coyote Joe Stevens
Masayoshi Takanaka
Trans Chorus of Los Angeles
University of North Texas One O'Clock Lab Band
Bill Watrous
Kirk Whalum

Studio

Birds of a Feather
Ralph Carmichael
Daniel Ho
Kilauea
Jennifer Leitham
Tak Matsumoto
Kevin McCourt
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ABSTRACT

Musical Performance and Trans Identity: Narratives of Selfhood, Embodied Identities, and Musicking

by

Randy Mark Drake

This dissertation is an ethnography of trans identity and North American music and explores the ways musicking makes viable underrepresented forms of embodiment. The subjects of this ethnomusicological study—Jennifer Leitham, Trans Chorus of Los Angeles, Transcendence Gospel Choir, and Joe Stevens—are contemporary musicians who are trans identified. Contemplating the multiple facets of identity embodied by these individuals and groups, I consider relationships among their subjectivities, identities, bodies and behaviors, and interactions with others, and how those relationships are explored, affirmed, celebrated, judged, contested, and valued (or not) through their music and musical performances. An ethnomusicological approach allows the performances and narratives of these artists to show multiple levels and intersections of identity in relation to gender, sexuality, race, class, ethnicity, religion, age, and disability. The dissertation draws from interviews, performances, and onsite fieldwork in and around Los Angeles and the San Francisco Bay Area between 2009 and 2016. Ethnographic data include interviews with artists and audience members as well as live performances, rehearsals, recordings, videos, and social networks. Jennifer

Leitham challenges an association of gender and sexual identity in jazz while simultaneously finding it a difficult category of music to navigate when her trans identity is foregrounded. For some of the vocalists in the Trans Chorus of Los Angeles and the Transcendence Gospel Choir of San Francisco subjectivity, identity, and embodiment are connected to ideas about voices, bodies, and behaviors and these attributes are highly variable. For example, whether singers are attempting to extend their range, grapple with the effects of androgen hormones, or both, their voices, like all singers' voices, are in process. Joe Stevens's musical life presents us with particular ways in which trans subjects harness musical genre in order to perform trans identities. Genre, voice, embodiment, and transition all contribute to the ways in which masculinity and vulnerability frame Joe's identity, and they are juxtaposed with his female gender assignment at birth. The project ultimately concludes that sharing musical performances of trans identity requires a thinking through of bodies and behaviors, where gender identity as multiplicitous, varied, and diverse, is always in relation, contention, or collusion with sociopolitical and cultural forces that control those bodies and behaviors. Musicking provides a strategic arena where trans subjectivities and identities flourish.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

This dissertation is an ethnography of trans identity and North American music and explores the ways musicking makes viable underrepresented forms of embodiment. The trans identified artists of the dissertation present us with a multitude of complex identities and subjectivities that demonstrate the ways in which their musicking mediates, creates, influences, articulates, or is articulated by, gender- and sexuality-based identities.[1] By looking into the multiple facets of identity embodied by these individuals and groups, I consider relationships among their subjectivities, identities, bodies and behaviors, and interactions with others, and how those relationships are explored, affirmed, celebrated, judged, contested, and valued (or not) through their music and musical performances. I examine the ways in which music reaffirms, constructs or contests different cultural and social conceptions of gender and sexuality related to trans identity. Whether contemplating concepts of gender fluidity, conservative representations, or ostracism because of trans identity, the trans musicians here complicate social categories of identity, musical genres, and even what it means to have a gender identity.

Trans identified musicians continue to struggle with marginalization despite the increased media attention around trans identities, but they also benefit from that mediated exposure. Popular cultural stars like Laverne Cox, Janet Mock, Chaz Bono, and Caitlyn

[1] Christopher Small has created the gerund "musicking" to explain the social activity of music-making through performance: "Musicking is an activity by means of which we bring into existence a set of relationships that model the relationships of our world, not as they are but as we would wish them to be, and if through musicking we learn about and explore those relationships, we affirm them to ourselves and anyone else who may be paying attention, and we celebrate them, then musicking is in fact a way of knowing our world—not that pre-given physical world, divorced from human experience, that modern science claims to know but the experiential world of relationships in all its complexity—and knowing it, we learn how to live well in it" (1998: 50).

Jenner, as well as television shows *Orange is the New Black* and *Transparent,* are just a few of the current offerings that increase awareness and exposure of trans issues and identities, but the trans lives most prominently depicted in popular culture do not often reflect the realities of life for the participants of this dissertation. The musicians' identities are often used to exclude them from opportunities available to more established and accepted artists.[2] By considering the desires of the artists themselves, as well as how those desires are articulated through the music they make and the selves they create, this study looks at the relationship between trans identities and normative assumptions about music and identity. Gender norms are both constructed and contested inside music and that is something that affects all of us (McClary 1991; Subotnik 1991 and 1996).

The artists also add to the growing work of transgender studies, which examines the complexities of gendered life. When intersected with race, class, age, and other categorical identity designations, these musicians' identities are revealed as multiple and complex. It is important to continue constructing knowledge about gender-based identities in order for us to build upon the understanding of the complexity of human identity. When combined with musicking, transgender studies add to a larger issue framing music and identity. Why is music so integral to issues of gender and trans identity? Musicking is often celebrated for liberating people and ideas, but it can also confine. Musicking for the artists in this dissertation is not confined to ideas about finding oneself or escaping oppression, but is also about negotiating structures of power (Davis 1998; Hayes 2010; Namaste 2000; Walser 1993; Whiteley 2000). In relation to musical performance and music genre, each of the artists here narrate multiple layers of subjectivity, identity, and embodiment, as well as grapple with

[2] For an in-depth historical project that traces the erasure of Black and trans life in the United States from the mid-nineteenth century to present-day see Riley C. Snorton's *Black on Both Sides: A Racial History of Trans Identity.*

the systems of power that institutionalize and regulate such narrations of existence.

The issues set forth in the chapters that follow are explained through the participants' lived experiences. Research questions informing the participants' lived experiences include: How do people perform gender through music? How and why does an individual trans musician make decisions regarding their music and identities? What choices, beliefs, desires, and perceptions do they articulate? What are the consequences of being trans identified related to musicking? What aspects of identity, if any, become salient through trans performance? When a musical event brings together a cross-categorical mix of identities, is a collective identity being produced or not, and if so, what kind?

The musicians of this study do not share the same orientations to performance and the same qualities of empowerment in performance contexts. The individual narratives reveal the different ways in which these trans identified artists think about subjectivity and identity and how performance contributes to individual subjectivities and identities. In some ways, the identities of the artists and their musical practices are used to marginalize their contributions to music. To reiterate the important questions integral to this study—what are the desires of the artists themselves and how are these desires articulated with the music they make and the selves they create?

Trans identity is historically, culturally, and politically bound up with ideas about gender binaries. I look at several issues concerning split-brain syndrome, gender binaries, double-consciousness, and genre boundaries that have sought to define gender identity and trans identities. The ways in which some trans individuals have dealt with such binaries is important to their understandings of who they are. Moving beyond essentialized notions of gender identity, paying attention to bodies and their behaviors sheds light on how these

individuals categorize themselves. In this sense, I seek to understand the intertwining elements framing embodiment—subjectivity, materiality, discursivity—and how musical performance contributes to this understanding (Engdahl 2014). I have the privilege of performing with Jennifer Leitham on a regular basis, and the ideas mentioned above play an integral role in Jennifer's life and musical career.[3] Jennifer is an American jazz bassist, vocalist, composer, and educator, assigned male at birth in 1953 and given the name John Leitham. Her career as a jazz musician and her desires for female identity have been informed by the historical tensions of gendered labor found within the jazz genre (Interview, August 13, 2009).

I consider performativity, trans identity, and jazz music through the lens of Jennifer Leitham's career to demonstrate multiple performances of identity in a genre that has been less tolerant of gender nonconforming identities. The lack of community support for a jazz musician who is trans identified makes Jennifer's story remarkable and demonstrates the continued power of gender hierarchies in this particular genre. There is a powerful perception that heterosexual males have historically dominated jazz music (Porter 2002; Rustin 2005; Rustin and Tucker 2008; Tucker 2000). In this opening chapter, I discuss how that perception is based on some historical truths. Jennifer, as a case study, challenges this association of gender and sexual identity in jazz while simultaneously finding it a difficult category of music to navigate when her trans identity is foregrounded.

I look at voice, embodiment and transition related to trans identities and music. These three focal points of identity concern all of the participants of this study. I present the lived

[3] I refer to my main research participants by their first names in order to keep transparent different positionalities and to mark this as a strength, rather than as a weakness, of this research project.

experiences of members of the Trans Chorus of Los Angeles and the Transcendence Gospel Choir of San Francisco. These participants help the contextualization of Jennifer's project. Focusing attention on the voice and vocal performances of these two choirs generates ideas about individual voices, embodiment, safe spaces, and community. For some of the singers in the choirs, identity includes ideas about their voices and how that is necessarily connected to ideas about their bodies, and both may be in transition. Whether singers are attempting to extend their range, grapple with the effects of androgen hormones, or both, their voices, like all singers' voices, are in process.

Voice, embodiment, trans masculinity, and genre are examined through country/Americana artist Joe Stevens. As a trans man, Joe's ability to pass as biologically male is complicated by his association with queer identity. Joe's life presents us with particular ways in which trans subjects use musical genre in order to perform trans identities. But this is not a simple matter of gender subversion. The Americana genre as a brand has particular normative assumptions about gendered performance. These assumptions offer Joe and other queer identified artists alternatives to a different community of listeners. Does the Americana brand and its ideals force non-conforming gendered artists into subversion? Genre, voice, embodiment, and transition all contribute to the ways in which masculinity and vulnerability frame Joe's identity, and they are juxtaposed with his female gender assignment at birth.

Subjectivity, Identity, and Music

Because my research participants are heavily invested in conveying ideas about their subjectivity, identity, and music, I want to be clear how I conceive of these terms, how they

are applied throughout this dissertation, and the terms' importance to ethnomusicology. Subjectivity includes the collection of the perceptions, experiences, expectations, personal and cultural understanding, and beliefs specific to a person. I am interested in that part of subjectivity that is formed around conceptions of "the self." Ethnomusicologist Thomas Turino conceptualizes the self as "the composite of the total number of habits that determine the tendencies for everything we think, feel, experience and do" (2008: 101). "Habits" are "the repetition of any particular behavior, thought, or reaction in similar circumstances or in reaction to similar stimuli in the present and future based on such repetitions in the past" (95). Turino applies his conception of "habits" to the self, identity, and culture, noting that "habits" are "both relatively stable and also dynamic and changeable; thus this model explains the consistent yet dynamic nature of individuals and cultural formations" (95).

Referencing the self in terms of habits can be further nuanced following the ideas of ethnomusicologist Harris M. Berger who maintains the self is "not a thing lurking behind experience or a distinct type of metaphysical entity" but rather "a concrete element of experience that emerges from the person's engagement with the world" (Berger and Del Negro 2004: 71). Berger explains how "self-experience is present in the lived arrangement of phenomena," and that our ability to shift the focus of phenomena related to our experiences constitute part of what we understand as "the self" (76). It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to detail the ways in which Berger richly nuances the phenomenological understandings of selfhood, and the many different ways "the self can emerge in experience" (79). Lived experience includes the habits that inform conceptions of selfhood culled from past, present, and future experiences. What is important for the musicians and listeners present in this study is how an active engagement with music and performance events forms

conceptions of subjectivity and the self: "Self-experience is not imposed on the participant by the musical sound or any element of the event; to the contrary, it emerges from the participant's active, culturally informed engagement with that sound and with that event in perception" (87). These perceptions are best articulated through the narratives of the participants.

In this dissertation, I strive to hear, be sensitive to, and do my best to understand the subjective narratives of my research subjects. As ethnomusicologist Timothy Cooley notes in his study of a Górale ethnicity located in the Polish Tatra Mountains: "Narratives are the stories people tell about themselves and about others" (2005: 62). For my purposes, the narratives of the individual participants of this dissertation best articulate their own subjectivities in relation to music and music performance. This is important for ethnomusicologists and ethnographic inquiry since music often serves "a central role in the building of personal, private conceptions of self and self-hood" (Roy 2015: 206). But self-identifications are also formed through intersubjective experience, which includes the everyday sharing of interactions with others (Titon 2008: 33). Subjectivities are also influenced by cultural, institutional, political, environmental, or other factoring conditions beyond subjective control. In other words, I want to respect individual self-identifications while also paying close attention to how subjective experience is equally a process of socialization, including my own involvement in this process.[4]

As an example of that involvement, my introduction to the Trans Chorus of Los Angeles was initially framed as an opportunity for some members of the choir to circulate their stories to as many people as possible. Although the political possibilities of the project

[4] See Jocelyne Guilbault and Roy Cape's *Roy Cape: A Life on the Calypso and Soca Bandstand* for an exemplary model combining personal narratives, storytelling, and authorial voice.

were introduced in this way, I found myself explaining to participants the reality of a specific readership for this dissertation. This does not negate any future advocacy work that I hope to accomplish with the individuals of this study, but I needed and wanted to be transparent about the reach of this dissertation. I discuss my relationships with my research participants below and throughout this dissertation. I recognize the importance of these relationships and am indebted to Deborah Wong's contributions on performance ethnography that help to frame those relationships: "…the inevitability of multiple subjectivities on the part of both ethnographer and interlocutor is now usually understood, and the task of representing the overlap is thus difficult and necessary" (Wong 2008: 83).

I now turn to a discussion of identity and music that include various theoretical and methodological approaches that inform this dissertation. Berger and Del Negro succinctly explain the overarching approach about music and identity I plan to employ: "To get a fuller understanding, we must account for the multidimensional nature of identity, the interpretive dilemmas of power, and the different ways that ideas about identity emerge in experience" (2004: 151). But, rather than working from a larger ethnomusicological model that relates music and identity through larger social groups or communities, this dissertation considers the "stances" of a variety of richly complex individuals who each have something to contribute to the overall meaning of a musical event and to ideas about identity (Berger 2009). Writ large, one of the overarching research questions I ask is how do music and identity in the musical scenes I study add new understandings and knowledge about gender and gendered relationships? Jane Sugarman's work with singers in Albania also provides some helpful questions: "How do individuals within a community," or a musical scene,

"come to regard themselves as gendered beings, and to appraise certain qualities and activities in gendered terms?" For people who are trans identified, how do their lived experiences help us understand how "power is exerted and experienced in gender relations?" (1997: 31).

My interest in music and identity was greatly inspired by Dr. Timothy Cooley through his "Music and Identity" course at UCSB. Professor Cooley's course asked many of the questions that guide this dissertation. In order for me to get a better grasp on the work that ethnomusicology has done regarding music and identity, I reviewed two articles offered in Professor Cooley's course written by Timothy Rice—an article originally published in 2007 "Reflections on Music and Identity in *Ethnomusicology*" and a follow-up 2010 article titled "Disciplining Ethnomusicology: A Call for a New Approach." The 2007 piece surveys the work of ethnomusicologists contributing to the journal *Ethnomusicology* on the subject of music and identity over a twenty-five year period. I did this not to critique the work of the ethnomusicologists cited by Rice, but rather to give me some ideas about what ethnomusicologists have done with music and identity. Both articles point out how identity is taken for granted as a social category. I do not plan here to provide details on Rice's discoveries about scholarship on music and identity in the journal *Ethnomusicology*. I will, however, briefly discuss the trends taken by ethnomusicologists regarding music and identity because I seek similar approaches.

In the 2007 article, Rice begins by explaining a few aspects of identity: individual self-identity, group identity, and he asks where social identity comes from. Important for me is Rice's section titled "what does music contribute to identity?" ([2007] 2017: 154). Here, Rice believes there are four basic positions taken in the ethnomusicological literature he

reviewed:

> (1) music gives symbolic shape to a pre-existing or emergent identity
> (2) musical performance provides the opportunity for communities sharing an identity to see themselves in action and to imagine others who might share the same style of performance.
> (3) music may contribute to an identity, to its "feel" or affective quality.
> (4) music gives to an identity, especially a subaltern identity, a positive valence (154-56).

There are obvious intersections with Rice's positions in my own work, and I include some of these theoretical insights in this dissertation. I believe the lived experiences of the participants in the music scenes I discuss bring clarity to how music contributes to identity in the ways mentioned above, and it is their individual stories that provide the nuanced meanings about music and identity.

Berger and Del Negro offer an in-depth explanation of how we as humans come to interpret identity in all of its various forms and facets, and that explanation guides my discussions of music and identity. The above positions listed by Rice begin to demonstrate the ways in which identity is an interpretive process that depends on the meanings and understandings of the social actors involved (Berger and Del Negro 2004: 125). Applying folklore as their scholarly base, Berger and Del Negro first detail this process through a three-parameter model that categorizes identity for scholarly purposes along axes that span types of social groups, affirmative to relational perceptions defining those social groups, and the institutionalized and regulated representations of identity as well as those based on social interaction (135). The model is presented as one way to interpret an overarching, one-dimensional identity for individuals or large ethnic groups, but Berger and Del Negro also point out the importance of interpreting the multidimensional nature of identity (139). For the purposes of this present study, it is important to recognize that more than one dimension of

identity is always present. When this happens varying aspects of multidimensional identity are organized according to various "foreground/background" structures, and interpreting the relationships among the structures reveals rich and complex forms of identity (146). Foregrounded perceptions of identity are more easily accessible visually, aurally, and are often informed through reflective perceptions we may have about identity categories. A visual first impression of identity when encountering an individual or group for the first time provides a simple example of a foregrounded perception of identity. In such an encounter perceived categories of identity may reflectively be induced to frame an identity according to race, gender, sex, class, ethnicity, disability or age. Berger and Del Negro note two different forms of background identity interpretations: "*defining* backgrounds," which more directly impact foregrounded dimensions of identity and experience, and "*receding* backgrounds," which do not alter an interpretation of identity for an interpreter as they are overall not significant to the interpretive experience (146). The ways in which "the different dimensions of identity form a gestalt—a complex whole in which the various parts color and inform one another" is one way this dissertation seeks to explain and discuss the intersections of music and identity (2004: 146). Suggesting that identity forms a "complex whole" does appear as a somewhat fixed entity here, but it is Berger's and Del Negro's insistence on identity as multidimensional that interests me.

This latter point is an important aspect of Ruth Hellier's edited volume *Women Singers in Global Contexts*, a resource that is very similar to work I aspire to accomplish here. In recognizing the variety of intersections of identity that make up individual selves, the authors in Hellier's edited volume "specifically deal with multiplicity, complexity, and shifting identities" (2013: 14). The multiple and shifting nature of identities is certainly how

many of the participants within this dissertation will be discussed in relation to gender, sexuality, class, race, age, religion and music. And since each of their stories is unique, a metanarrative of trans identity is not present within these pages, but rather, iterations of trans identity are shaped by fields of actions and invention based on patterns and structures of thinking.

Taking the concept of identity that Berger and Del Negro posit above, along with ideas about identity as multidimensional, the concept of *stance* will aid understandings of the participants' relationships with music and identity. In *Stance: Ideas about Emotion, Style, and Meaning for the Study of Expressive Culture,* Berger explains how

> in a strictly preliminary fashion we can understand stance as the valual qualities of the relationship that a person has to a text, performance, practice, or item of expressive culture (5). Thinking about performance events in terms of the stances of composers, performers, and audience members encourages us to attend, not to reified styles, but to the specific ways in which the differing participants in a performance actively and socially shape their actions and make them meaningful. Viewing expressive culture in terms of intentionality, we take lived experience as our study object, place people at the center of our analysis, and focus on the social processes with which they engage with texts. (2009: 24-25)

The stances of the individuals in this dissertation in relation to their musical activities and performances actively shape their identities and contribute to the meaning of musical events. These stances reveal the ways in which the participants' identities are multiple, complex, and shifting. Their narratives demonstrate how they grapple with, articulate, and practice their affective engagement with the music they perform and produce, which in turn, contributes to ideas about who they are. As mentioned above, the "lived arrangement of phenomena" is present in self-experience that contributes to conceptions of "the self" (Berger and Del Negro 2004: 76). The foreground and background of perceptual experience conveys information related to identity interpretation (147). At the same time, social processes inform ideas about

identity in ways that contribute to the narratives of these trans identified individuals.

Another aspect of identity includes the salient nature of identity categories. Again, Thomas Turino's concept of habits is instructive: "*identity* involves the *partial* and *variable* selection of habits and attributes that we use to represent ourselves to ourselves and to others, as well as those aspects that are perceived by ourselves and others as salient" (2008: 102). Psychologists Sheldon Stryker and Peter J. Burke explain that identities are salient when they produce "the probability that an identity will be invoked across a variety of situations, or alternatively across persons in a given situation" (2000: 286). As Turino suggests, "we choose to foreground certain aspects of ourselves (occupation, color, religion, gender, age) for self-presentation, or have those aspects chosen for us, depending on what is socially important in a given context and within the society at large" (2008: 103). When situations or people are formed along what is considered normative and dominating categories of identities—black, white, male, female, heterosexual, gay, poor, wealthy, etc.—identity salience may appear clear and fairly straightforward. It should be self-evident that the subjects of this dissertation, as is the case for many of us, are not aligned in such straightforward ways, and identity saliency is complex due to the participants' musical practices, performances, and music, which allows for multiple renderings of identity and subjectivity. Essentialized notions of identity, therefore, are difficult to sustain when nuancing identity interpretations.

Music, as a listening and performance practice, can however, produce a saliency of identities extremely well, and often contribute to feelings of collective identity, whether real or imagined. Ethnomusicologist Moshe Morad's study of gay identity during Cuba's Special

Period examines “the role of musical spaces in maintaining a gay scene in a society that does not allow for distinctively gay meeting places, activism, organizations, or media” (2016: 6). Here music is “social glue” that mediates a sense of unified identity in very unsettling times (1). A broader example is country music; a genre of music especially prone to historical ideas about the South, rural lifestyles, patriotism, and sacredness, all leading to its imagined association as something essentially American. In singing about transition and gender variance, how might a trans man complicate or contribute to this perception of country music? In their analysis of drag performances, Leila Rupp and Verta Taylor explain that cultural performances “provide free places where subordinated and dominant groups can come together to produce and create a shared culture of opposition” (2003: 216). This project looks at those moments of musical performance where what are perceived as normative salient identities are transformed into complex and ambiguous identities. The stances of each of the participants contribute to these differing levels of complexity.

The idea that identities are complex, ambiguous, and possibly oppositional is not new. Queer theory, as a post-structuralist formation, is partly premised on the idea that myriad forms of gender, sexuality, and desire contribute to multiple and unstable positions of identity. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick enlightens us about one of the things that “queer” can refer to: “the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone's gender, of anyone's sexuality aren't made (or can't be made) to signify monolithically” (1993: 8). Some of the participants present queer narratives and musical moments that offer insights into how trans identity can be complex, ambiguous, and possibly, oppositional. And trans identity is only one of multiple facets of identity these participants articulate.

It in order to resist a strictly postmodern interpretation of identity that the last paragraph may imply, it is also important to examine how my participants' narratives and musical events are historically framed and contextualized. Timothy Rice poses another question related to this idea that I find must be considered here: "Who has the power to define identities and do all individuals have the same range of identity choices and the same mobility in making identity choices?" ([2007] 2017: 151). The participants' identities are obviously influenced by historical and cultural events, politics, and social structures and institutions that perceivably regulate and police social norms. When recognizing and critically questioning social discourses, Turino points out that

> discursively produced categories like 'race,' 'ethnicity,' 'nation,' 'modern' should be understood *as subjects for social analysis rather than objective rubrics that can be used in the process of social analysis and description*. This distinction is crucial; discursively produced categories of social identity must be understood in relation to the discourses that produce the terms and the social and political functions of those discourses. (2008: 103-104, italics in original)

Music, as ethnomusicologist Martin Stokes reminds us, "provides means by which people recognize identities and places, and the boundaries which separate them" (1994: 5). Morad's discussions of the differing uses of Cuban bolero provide an example of how well the genre is appropriated as an aspect of gay identity. Morad explains that "the liminality of bolero poetry and its social status resonates well with the liminality of gay existence in Special Period Havana" (2016: 206). Thus, when I consider issues of genre and identity, I look at the ways in which the artists in this study narrate their identities and whether or not they reify, challenge, or complicate genre boundaries. Genre boundaries partly determine the interpretative framework of identity for some of the artists in this study. And to be very clear, this dissertation regards subjectivity, identity, music, and their relationship to sociocultural and political processes from a Western cultural view and a specifically North American

location.

There is, of course, a small but growing amount of scholarship that discusses trans embodiment and music in other geographical areas of the world. Anthropologist Ted Swedenburg discusses pop star Danna International's complicated mixing of identities along the Israel-Egyptian border (2000). Musicologist Jessica Schwartz looks at the Republic of the Marshall Islands performer Li-Cassey's contribution to Rongelapese cultural promotion. Cassey complicates the roles and presence of transgender performers within Marshallese culture (2015). Anthropologist Dredge Byung'chu Käng describes K-pop cover dance through Asian sissies (young feminine gay men) to demonstrate how "cover dance as ritualized performance and as social practice allows Thai sissies to embody modern Asian femininity" (Käng 2014: 560). Ethnomusicologist Jeff Roy explores connections between *hijra* music and identity in order to nuance trans-*hijra* identities and current discourses encompassing issues of gender, sexuality, and identity in India's growing LGBTIQ landscape (2016, 2015). This work offers alternative understandings of trans identities in other locations of the world that may or may not utilize Westernized terms and conceptions. When it is appropriate to compare and contrast the participants of this study with other conceptions of trans identity in other locations, I attempt to include those ideas.

Additionally, I work to avoid objectifying identities as markers of some kind of unique queer experience. Thomas Turino explains how older models of anthropological work realized subjectivities and identities as homogenous wholes and how recent poststructuralist work fosters ideas of identity that are fluid and contingent. Turino's position is one I wish to consider here: "the earlier essentialist, homogeneous views of identity, and more recent ideas about identities being fluid, constructed, and multiple, must *both* be held in mind

simultaneously in order to understand identity in relation to expressive cultural practices" (Turino 2004: 9, my emphasis). I take seriously Sherri Tucker's charge that we "seek approaches that are able to look at the queering that occurs in performances presumed to be 'straight,' and the 'straightening' that occurs in performances that are presumed to be 'queer'" (2008: 4). In following Sara Ahmed's calls to be cautious in objectifying queer subjects, Ahmed asks "what does it mean to be oriented?" and "what difference does it make what we are oriented toward?" (Ahmed 2006: 1). Being oriented to heterosexuality is a perceived line of straightness, and alternative identities challenge or twist these lines of straightness. Importantly, lines of orientation create hierarchies, those of dominate alignments (or straightness) and those of marginal alignments (or twisted), yet are always intersecting and informed by each other. Queering and straightening must be regarded in relation to, and intersected with, "race, gender, class, modernity, and other discourses, social categories, and fields of power" (Tucker 2008: 4).

Many of the ideas above about subjectivity, music, and identity are present throughout this dissertation: the multidimensional facets of identity, the dynamics of power that are part of that multidimensionality, the different ways identities emerge through experience and habits, and the ways in which music plays a role in those processes reveal rich detail about music and identity. The next section compliments the latter and highlights the necessary need to consider the gendered aspects of identity through bodies and behaviors.

Transgender Studies

Transgender studies are an emerging field that is concerned with forms of embodiment aligned in some ways with the groundbreaking work of queer studies. Both

foster challenges to perceived stable categories of identity. Both fields of study are linked through their "activist investments, their dissident methodologies, and their critical interrogation of and resistance to gender and sexual norms… While *queer* is associated primarily with nonnormative desires and sexual practices, and *transgender* is associated primarily with nonnormative gender identifications and embodiments, it is both theoretically and practically difficult to draw a clear line between them" (Love 2014: 172). I find Susan Stryker's widely conceived concept of transgender studies useful to this dissertation:

> …the field of transgender studies is concerned with anything that disrupts, denaturalizes, rearticulates, and makes visible the normative linkages we generally assume to exist between the biological specificity of the sexually differentiated human body, the social roles and statuses that a particular form of body is expected to occupy, the subjectively experienced relationship between a gendered sense of self and social expectations of gender-role performance, and the cultural mechanisms that work to sustain or thwart specific configurations of gendered personhood. (2006: 3)

To the extent that this dissertation's focus is mainly aligned with issues of embodiment rather than sexual orientation or sexuality, then transgender studies is utilized more than queer studies, but both are essential when juxtaposed with insights from my research participants. Despite the desires of some trans identified people to reach the perceived materiality of an opposite anatomical sex, Stryker notes that transgender phenomena "call into question both the stability of the material referent 'sex' and the relationship of that category to the linguistic, social, and psychical categories of 'gender'" (2006: 9). Eve Sedgwick notes that in "twentieth-century Western culture gender and sexuality represent two analytic axes that may productively be imagined as distinct from one another as, say, gender and class, or class and race. Distinct, that is to say, no more than minimally, but nonetheless usefully" (2008: 30).

When my research participants make distinctions between sexuality and gender, or when they do not, I hope to be clear about their interpretations and meanings when

discussing gendered embodiment, sexual orientation, and sexual preference. In explaining trans identities in relation to subjectivity and gender, Talia Bettcher professes that "our self-identifications are generally complex and hard to pin down. Indeed, the very meanings of gender terms are not stable. They're both variable and contested" (Bettcher, "Trapped…" 2014: 389). It is the complexities and multiplicities of subjectivities and gendered meanings that scramble our understandings of identities.

Sociologist Andrew Seeber greatly nuances how sex (body morphology as male and female), sex category (secondary sex characteristics), and gender (behaviors coded as masculine and feminine) all play their part in determinations of sex and gender for all bodies (Seeber 2015). The distinctions between these three aspects of identity become especially poignant with trans identities. As for this dissertation, I allow the individual participants to speak about their identities and when I make an analysis I do my best to frame it around their subjective understandings. This study is concerned with matters of bodies and behaviors as gendered aspects of identity more so than sex and sex category, but sex also plays a large role in essentializing gender and cannot be neatly separated from ideas about gender. When my research subjects discuss their subjectivities in relationship to music they are primarily sharing gendered meanings about their identities. In most instances, sex characteristics and secondary sex characteristics are not usually a source of information that is shared with me personally. When it is appropriate and pertinent to ideas about identity and music on a larger scale, I include sex, sex category, and gender to nuance understandings and to keep them distinct.

Until recently, the word "transgender" was used as an umbrella term that arose in activist settings, most notably through Leslie Feinberg's proclamation that the oppression of

all types of gender-variant people is the result of capitalism (Feinberg 2006: 205). Susan Stryker also offers a simpler way to conceptualize the word: "the movement across a socially imposed boundary away from an unchosen starting place" (2008: 1). The implicit fluidity and simplicity in this definition is but a starting point for my research subjects. This dissertation looks at the flexibility of this form and idea of embodiment juxtaposed with the expectations of gendered music performance, the subjective ways my research subjects align—or do not align—with such expectations, and the ways in which their notions of embodiment complicate, challenge, reinvent, or reify existing cultural categories of music they participate in. In this sense, another way to conceptualize the work of these artists in conjunction with transgender studies is to regard how Gayle Salamon considers embodiment in *Assuming a Body: Transgender and Rhetorics of Materiality.* Salamon seeks "to challenge the notion that the materiality of the body is something to which we have unmediated access, something of which we can have epistemological certainty, and contend that epistemological uncertainty can have great use, both ethically and politically, in the lives of the non-normatively gendered" (2010: 1). A part of Salamon's project is to "unyoke bodily materiality from bodily feeling" (9). Paying careful attention to how these artists discuss their subjectivities will help show the ways the materiality of the body is put into question. Their insight helps us think how affect, or "bodily feeling," plays an important role in self-identity but one that is often contested in theoretical practice.

Other categorical distinctions also come into play regarding identity, and it is especially important to regard how gender, race, ability, class, age, religion, and other identity categories intersect. Thus gender alone is not sufficient when discussing white manifestations of trans identity. In other words, what applies to one identity of trans

embodiment does not necessarily apply to others and vice versa. Some forms of identity and embodiment may be privileged above others in certain situations, while that same embodiment and identity may be less privileged under differing circumstances.

Questions of identity and subjectivity include ideas about the self, psychoanalysis, embodiment, and transition and they are necessarily tied to perceptions of others, social practices, institutionalized power structures, and academic scholarship. The artists in this study relate ideas about themselves through the music practices they choose to partake in. Psychoanalysis helps us look at what it means to think of oneself in terms of embodiment and in some cases transition. When it is appropriate to include psychoanalysis in order to clarify or discuss some identities in this dissertation, those ideas will be interweaved into the discussion. To be clear, transition and movement across borders of gender identity categories can be contradictory and not all trans individuals aspire to move from one gender category to another. This dissertation carefully considers the views of the participants. Ideas about transition and movement, as well as other ways of envisioning embodiment are important to each individual. Even the use of transgender, transsexual, trans*, genderqueer, gender expansive, and other labels are subjectively unique to each individual and dependent upon that individual's usage. The uses of such labels are sometimes tied to other people's perceptions. Some of the artists in this dissertation have been profoundly influenced by perceptions of embodiment according to other people, and they have been influenced by ideas of what constitutes an acceptable form of embodiment in specific music genres.

Trans as a Prefix

Although "transgender" developed in the early 1990s to encompass a wide range of

gender variance, it is less popularly used today. I will make use of the prefix "trans" in this dissertation, and its use is meant to be inclusive in its broadest sense, however, it too is currently being scrutinized and contested. "Trans*" (with an asterisk) is one of the most recent attempts to be more inclusive, especially on blogs and some socially conscious websites. Issues over whether or not the label "trans" (without the asterisk) was more specific to binaried understandings of trans women and trans men appeared to exclude others who contested the gender binary. My use of the term "trans" in relationship to the labels/categories of identity and subjectivity that encompass other labels (transgender, transsexual, and trans*) is by no means meant as a definitive defining term. Wherever possible, the individuals present in this dissertation will provide their own labels, categories, pronouns, identifying characteristics, and interpretations they believe best encompasses their subjectivities and identities. My use of "trans" echoes its use by Elias Dylan Krell: "I signal the widest possible understanding of the term" (2014: 25). For the purposes of this dissertation, I use "trans" as an adjective before other categories of identity. It's simply short and to the point.

In regards to biological sex and gender assignment, I follow Dean Spade's suggestion:

> When we talk about someone trans we should identify them by their current gender, and if we need to refer to their assigned gender at birth we could say they were 'assigned male' or 'assigned female' rather than that they are 'biologically male' or 'biologically female.' These 'bio' terms reproduce the oppressive logic that our bodies have some purported biological gendered truth in them, separate from our social gender role. Our bodies have varying parts, but it is socialization that assigns our body parts gendered meaning. (2011)[5]

[5] Some of the abbreviations that accompany this line of thinking include: FAAB, female assigned at birth, AFAB, assigned female at birth, CAFAB, coercively assigned female at birth, MAAB, male assigned at birth, AMAB, assigned male at birth, CAMAB, coercively assigned male at birth. This is a partial list at best. In this dissertation I will write out birth assignment designations fully rather than

This is indeed the way many of my research participants understand themselves and they articulate this through their musical practices.

Gender Binaries and Heterosexuality

I want to briefly provide a short background on the ways heterosexuality has historically come to be taken for granted. The work of feminist and queer scholars has shown how it has become a standard of identity (Foucault 1990; Katz 1995; Tucker 2000; Warner 1999). It is important in the lives of the artists and contributors to this project to understand how this conception has affected them. This is because a history of acceptable forms of gendered embodiment is necessarily tied to ideas about heterosexuality, which Jonathan Katz notes "signifies one particular historical arrangement of the sexes and their pleasures" (1995: 14). The ways in which heterosexuality has influenced what "normative gender" is perceived to be roles over into institutionalized forms of bodily enforcement. This brief excursion into the history of heterosexuality's making is informed by feminist and queer theorists, some of whom have been at the forefront of providing alternatives about minoritized forms of gendered embodiment and sexuality.

The entire idea of heterosexuality as an unquestioned norm is something Katz has analyzed in great depth. Katz traces how heterosexuality has been "mediated by language and ideas" and that "the social organization of erotic interactions is not fixed, the political economy of pleasure has changed substantially over time" (181, 190). The problematic use of the word at its outset began as sexual perversion. Dr. James G. Kiernan established this idea in 1892. Katz notes that Kiernan used the term to explain how heterosexuals "experienced

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use any of these abbreviations. (http://askanonbinary.tumblr.com/post/23213059152/hey-what-does-dmabdfab-mean)

so-called male erotic attraction to females *and* so-called female erotic attraction to males" (20). The word "hetero-sexuality" by Krafft-Ebing, which began circulating around the same time as Kiernan's, denotes the erotic relationship between a man and a woman: "Contrary to Kiernan's earlier attribution, Krafft-Ebing consistently uses hetero-sexual to mean normal sex" (22). Importantly, Krafft-Ebing described a new way of experiencing pleasure while simultaneously referencing this form of sexuality as deviant because opposite sex desire and lust place procreation outside consciousness. Krafft-Ebing is referencing how the passion of different-sex lust and desire no longer serve a reproductive aim. Thus, Krafft-Ebing's hetero-sexual, at first, was lumped in with other sexual instincts that are "linked with the non-procreative perverse" (22). Krafft-Ebing's case studies involved treating patients (in Katz's book, he notes that they are all men) who had some same-sex desires, yet they also displayed some different-sex lust. Katz notes that Krafft-Ebing did not reject the "reproductive norm," but his use of the term "*hetero-sexual*" began to reference a "normal different-sex eroticism" (23, 28). Eventually in the twentieth century, Krafft-Ebing's term came "to signify a different-sex sexuality completely free from any tie to reproduction" (28).

Krafft-Ebing also coined the term "*homo-sexual*," something that "always signifies a same-sex desire," which was interpreted as "pathological because [it is] non-reproductive"(Katz 1995: 22). Both of Krafft-Ebing's terms "helped to make sex difference and eros the basic distinguishing features of a new linguistic, conceptual, and social ordering of desire. His hetero-sexual and homo-sexual offered the modern world two sex-differentiated eroticisms, one normal and good, one abnormal and bad, a division which would come to dominate our twentieth-century vision of the sexual universe" (28). Besides labeling the sexual desires of individuals, these concepts of heterosexuality and

homosexuality have been far-reaching, obviously influencing life decisions of some of my research individuals. Jennifer Leitham's decision to identify as male in order to perform jazz music for most of her career was partially predicated on the idea that female performers would not be treated equally. Although Jennifer's decision involves gendered embodiment, the concept of heterosexuality also plays its perplexing role in her decision by being an unspoken standard of behavior for men and women in the genre. In other words, identifying as male in jazz meant to Jennifer that acceptance was predicated on a heterosexual understanding of relationships and masculine role-playing. I discuss jazz music's historical propensity for heterosexual identifications below.

Sex drive is most influentially analyzed by Sigmund Freud and becomes a concept that is independent of procreation. But Freud's continued us of the term "normal" to reference the sex-love between men and women as "normal sexual development" is juxtaposed against that which is abnormal—homosexuality (Katz 1995: 81). Freud and other medical professionals moved the "nineteenth century's tentative, ambiguous heterosexual concept" into stabilized territory. "As the term *heterosexual* moved out of the small world of medical discourse into the big world of the American mass media, the heterosexual idea moved from abnormal to normal, and from normal to normative" (82). This nature of heterosexuality as a twentieth-century phenomena established an often unquestioned normative. This normative plays a role in some of my research subjects' conceptions of themselves. The interventions of feminist and queer theorists will aid us in questioning, challenging, and at times deconstructing that norm.

Michel Foucault recognized some issues with this normative and begins to hint at its ability to regulate desire and control social relations. In looking at the historically specific

ways in which human sexuality developed, Foucault asks what forms of power regulate sexual pleasures and why some pleasures are seen as abominations and others as normative:

> Through the various discourses, legal sanctions against minor perversions were multiplied; sexual irregularity was annexed to mental illness; from childhood to old age, a *norm* of sexual development was defined and all the possible deviations were carefully described; pedagogical controls and medical treatments were organized; around the least fantasies, moralists, but especially doctors, brandished the whole emphatic vocabulary of abomination… All this garrulous attention which has us in a stew over sexuality, is it not motivated by one basic concern: to ensure population, to reproduce labor capacity, to perpetuate the form of social relations: in short, to constitute a sexuality that is economically useful and politically conservative? (1990: 36-37, emphasis added)

Foucault questions the twentieth-century idea that sexuality has an essential core. By looking at whose sexuality is being put into question, whose desires are being highlighted, Foucault discusses the constructed nature of human sexuality that Freud and other scientific inquires put forth.

Breaking apart the stability of gender categories has been a trademark of queer theory. Judith Butler has most famously provided feminist, queer, and transgender scholarship with theories about gender performativity. Butler importantly develops ideas about gender as something that is neither natural nor innate, but rather a social construct that serves particular purposes and institutions where the ritualized categories of male and female continually create the social fiction of those categories (Butler 2011, 2004, 2006). Butler's meticulously philosophical engagement detailed in *Gender Trouble* leads her to declare that not only are the surface politics of the body inevitably fabricated, but also that the meanings that produce an interior essence are regulated. Gender is performative, where "acts and gestures, articulated and enacted desires create the illusion of an interior and organizing gender core, an illusion discursively maintained for the purposes of the regulation of sexuality within the obligatory frame of reproductive heterosexuality" (2006: 186). The

gendered way we act and speak is constantly being formed, replicated, and reinforced as an identity. In ritualizing the categories of male and female, we continuously create the social fiction of these categories.

Talia Bettcher notes "this vision may not be politically useful for trans folk who seek to emphasize the importance of gender identity and realness for some trans people" (Bettcher, "Feminist…" 2014). In later work, Butler addresses these concerns, writing that "it is crucial to realize that a livable life does require various degrees of stability. In the same way that a life for which no categories of recognition exist is not a livable life, so a life for which those categories constitute unlivable constraint is not an acceptable option" (Butler 2004: 8). Butler's earlier work considered "subversion only in the *disruption* of stable identity" (Bettcher, "Feminist…" 2014). Bettcher adds how Butler's *Undoing Gender* concedes that "without some stability, life is not livable" (Bettcher, "Feminist…" 2014). This latter distinction makes viable forms of trans embodiment that do not ascribe to ideas about the illusion of gender categories. And yet, Jay Prosser explains that some transsexual bodies are concerned with that which gender performance rejects—"to be nonperformative, to be constative," to embrace the "*narrative* of becoming a biological man or a biological woman—in brief and simple the materiality of the sexed body" (Prosser 1998: 32). Prosser's work has also been critiqued for leaving out the ways in which outside forces add to the narratives of the latter trans identified individuals. The vacillation between these perspectives is kept in mind throughout this study.

In this dissertation, some of the participants' narratives are invested in relating their bodies and behaviors in terms that reference male, female, masculinity, and femininity. These are not the only ways these individuals explain their subjectivities. What is important is

explaining an embodiment and behavior that encompasses forms of gendered identity unique to each individual and how music plays a role in those explanations. Thus, there are times when some aspects of gender are subjectively regarded as performative while simultaneously experienced in reference to stable identity categories.

Today, the ripple effects of the historical construction of heterosexuality play a role in more recent political and medical conflicts concerning alternative forms of embodiment. The idea of marriage in the United States between a man and woman has implicitly implied heterosexuality. It is only recently that marriage now includes minoritized forms of sexuality and gender. In June of 2015 the U.S. Supreme Court legalized the right for all Americans, regardless of their gender or sexual orientation, to marry the people they love. This historic victory for gay rights certainly helps to widen the acceptance of gender variant people, and laws in this country that protect an individual's right to identify themselves in alternatively gendered terms are slowly changing. But that does not directly translate to stopping daily discrimination against trans identified people. Some individuals who struggle with family members over how their bodies should be perceived take their own lives. The medical field requires a thorough psychological process for those trans individuals who desire surgery in order to change their gender. These issues, and others, will present themselves in specific ways regarding the subjects of this dissertation.

The explosion of mediated forms of entertainment in the United States that include trans identities and their stories has brought unprecedented attention to this segment of the population. While this is certainly a boost in exposure for trans identities, this does not necessarily translate into direct benefits for a majority of trans identified individuals, and heterosexuality's influence on social institutions and social interactions continues to

dominate the daily lives of trans identified people. The success of television shows such as *Transparent*, *I am Cait, Transcendent, Orange is the New Black,* as well as films, *Tangerine, The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert, Transamerica, The Danish Girl,* and others, have obviously brought plenty of exposure to trans identified people. But these shows and films do not necessarily reflect the realities of many trans identified people, especially trans people of color, who are proportionately at higher risk for being ignored by all segments of society.

Jazz, Gender, and Performance

In this section of the introduction, I want to focus this conception of heterosexuality onto the musical genre of jazz, beginning with a fieldwork moment that encapsulates the ideas set forth above. On September 21, 2014 in Philadelphia, I performed with Jennifer Leitham's jazz trio at OutBeat: America's First Queer Jazz Festival. For Jennifer and myself, this was an extremely momentous occasion, a chance to perform at a festival in concert with jazz musicians both Jennifer and I emulate and admire – Fred Hersch, Bill Stewart, Terri Lynn Carrington, Andy Bey, and others. In addition to the music, there were panel discussions led by *JazzTimes* journalist John Murph that occasionally attempted to address what a "gay" element in jazz might sound like, but the panelists resisted any notions of gay aesthetics located in the music itself. At a panel entitled, "From Strayhorn to Cecil: Jazz Innovation in America" featuring David Hajdu, John Szwed, and Orrin Evans, Hajdu commented on jazz music's heteronormative tendencies. A woman present questioned that assumption by claiming "jazz is not heteronormative, it's human." Jennifer Leitham responded, first, by identifying herself as transgender, and then explaining that her early jazz

career was predicated on heteronormative discourses of jazz performance and interpersonal relationships that she believed stifled her ability to perform as a woman. Artists also took issue with festival organizers who promoted the event as America's First Queer Jazz Festival. They felt that the use of "queer" might alienate people, preferring to refer to the event as America's first LGBT jazz festival. But considering the ways in which some gender marginalized musicians in other genres of music must find alternative ways to distribute, market, and perform their music, these labels can be important. Whether regarded as a queer jazz festival or LGBT jazz festival, Jennifer and I both understand that if it were not for this historical first we would not be performing. These discussions around the gendered sonic and embodied positionalities of jazz are predicated on ideas that implicate a heterosexual understanding of relationships and masculine role-playing. Unlike other popular music genres that are more openly acceptable of alternatively gendered embodiments, for example punk and pop music, jazz music's history and current perception still lean toward heteronormative understandings.

Sherrie Tucker has written about the problematic linkages of gender, sexuality and jazz: "On the one hand, jazz has been subject to racist stereotypes from the dominant culture about African Americans as extra-sexual, primitive, exotic, etc. On the other hand, jazz has been subject to 'uplift' ideology that understandably claims it as a sign of dignity, genius, high art: a move that appears to remove sexuality from the discussion, but often cements particular and very narrow images of black hetero-masculinity into ideas about what jazz means" (2008).

As evidenced by its perceived historical movement from brothels to concert halls, the genre itself, like many others, has undergone a process of transformation. As Tucker noted,

there is a certain discourse about instrumental jazz that makes salient the idea that the music is predominantly performed by gifted, virtuosic male improvisers. This historical and in some respects ongoing representation of jazz identity contributes to a historically straight-line narrative of male dominance in jazz performance. But issues of race are also intertwined with these salient ideas of masculine identity in jazz, and race continues to be an important arena of discussion regarding the genre's music and its identities.

Herman Gray has related how "self representations of black masculinity in the United States are historically structured by and against dominant (and dominating) discourses of masculinity and race, specifically (whiteness)" (1995: 401). For Gray himself, as well as other African American men, "jazz men articulated a different way of knowing ourselves and seeing the world" (401). The figure of the Black jazz man was a different form of masculinity both "policed and exoticized by white men and women alike… policed as a social threat because he transgressed the social role assigned to him by the dominant culture and celebrated as the 'modern primitive' because he embodied and expressed a masculinity that explicitly rejected the reigning codes of propriety and place" (401).[6]

Nicole T. Rustin notes that Gray relates how "thinking about jazz has created blackness, or race, as a metalanguage through which gender, specifically the feminine, drops out of view" (2005: 446). Rustin discusses the work of pianist and composer Mary Lou Williams and how Williams embodies a form of female masculinity when it comes to jazz. Rustin argues that "women like Williams are possibly only 'masculine'; rarely are they seen as black and feminine" (2005: 460). Williams, in an interview with Marian McPartland in 1957,

[6] I want to thank Professor George Lipsitz and UCSB's Black Studies Department for pointing out the importance of capitalizing Black. As a historical and political term cultivated in the 1960s, the use of the word references the linked fate and political mission of Afro-diasporic peoples and is not about a color nor interchangeable with white.

reveals this embodied sensibility noting that when "working with men, you get to think like a man when you play. You automatically become strong, though this doesn't mean you're not feminine" (McPartland 1957: 12). Rustin relates that Williams understood her own authority as a performer as something "located within her physical prowess rather than her gendered self," which is one of the ways in which masculine representations of jazz are articulated (2005: 449). Rustin also relates how Williams created a tension between her female masculinity and African American womanhood. Williams endured unwanted sexual advances within the African American, masculine jazz environment and was discriminated against in regard to her composing abilities (456-58).

Added to ideas that jazz is a masculine endeavor, are largely unspoken ideas that it is also heterosexual. In other words, Black masculinity in relation to jazz as necessarily being heterosexual. Benjamin Piekut, in writing about the ways in which patterns of gender and sexuality infused relationships and issues in New York's avant-garde jazz scene in the mid-1960s, notes that "in a context of material deprivation, marked by nonexistent or limited employment opportunities and unequal wage structures, the discourse of 'fundamentalist' black heterosexual masculinity provided a discursive realignment of power toward those to whom it had historically been denied" (2010: 36). Piekut, as well as others, have also problematized the idea that heterosexuality was an unquestionable aspect of jazz artists' lives. Piekut relates how jazz musicians and composers such as Cecil Taylor, Bill Dixon, and Carla Bley of New York's Jazz Composers Guild challenged ideas about jazz music's virulent aspects that were framed by comments and actions taken by Amiri Baraka, Archie Shepp and others from the Black Arts Repertory Theater. Cecil Taylor, according to Piekut, "avoided a clear presentation of straight, queer, gay, or bisexual identity," and therefore his

"problematic sexual ambivalence" undermined "the moral fundamentalism of Black Arts heterosexuality" (34-35).

The framing of heterosexuality as monolithic of male and female relations is further complicated by the intersection of race. As Cathy Cohen has pointed out, there are many forms of heterosexual love and sex that have been restricted, banned, or punished—it is important to challenge assumptions "of a uniform heteronormativity from which all heterosexuals benefit" (2005: 37-38). The interracial dynamics of heterosexual relationships has certainly witnessed unequal understandings about what constitutes normative heterosexual practices. Patricia Hill Collins writes that certain assumptions about the hyper-sexualization of African American men and women by white people is more accurately termed "hyper-heterosexualization," and has played a key role in racialization (2004: 105-106). Adding to this, Sherrie Tucker notes that hyper-hetrosexualization leaves "the construction of black heterosexuality as primitive, hedonistic, natural—against which white modern heterosexuality could be normalized" (Tucker 2008).

Historically, there has been very little mention of non-normatively gendered individuals' contributions to the music—Billy Tipton and Billy Strayhorn being exceptions. Tipton's assigned gender at birth, as well as Strayhorn's sexual preference, was not publicly visible or known.[7] Gay men have pondered the consequences of coming out as a jazz performer due to the music's masculine and heterosexual tendencies. Unlike some other popular music genres, discourse on jazz performance has tended to focus historically on the virile nature of performing the music. As there is a perceived assertive and unambiguous masculinity associated with jazz performance, "homosexuality or feminine-coded behavior is

[7] I discuss Billy Tipton's embodied identity in Chapter 3 by juxtaposing Jennifer Leitham and Tipton to recount two very different lives and jazz careers.

often regarded with deep suspicion" (Hollerbach 2004: 165). Francis Davis, a jazz critic for *The Village Voice,* captures this homophobic ambience in relation to Chet Baker, West Coast jazz and the 1950s environment of jazz:

> No one thought he [Chet Baker] was gay, but he sounded effeminate to some—an equally grave offense in the 1950s, a testosterone-counting decade in which the pianist Horace Silver's denigration of West Coast cool as *'fag' jazz* was widely and approvingly quoted, and in which two men meeting for the first time each felt obliged, as Norman Mailer once put it, to prove he was 'less queer' than the other. (Davis 2004: 279)

In addition to this gendered representation of cool jazz, Kelsey Klotz details racial ideologies in cool jazz through the narratives of musicians and critics as well as the writings of scholars and historians. Klotz explains the construction of whiteness in cool jazz narratives and seeks to question the historical sources that reify this formation. Instead of relying on the "privileged and outmoded associations between European classical music, intellect, and whiteness, and the equally outmoded associations between 'authentic' jazz, primitivism, and blackness," Klotz carefully nuances the history of cool jazz to reveal how musicians and audiences, both Black and white, did not conform to the conventional histories still plaguing the genre (2016: 374).

Jennifer Leitham feared the loss of her career if her well-established bass performance persona as John Leitham was compromised. A part of that fear was based on the acceptance of women in the jazz world since women instrumentalists have been historically marginalized and ignored. The absence of women as instrumental players in jazz historiography has also contributed to the music's perceived masculine dominance. Of course, more recent exceptions to this history of jazz include the contributions of women artists by scholars such as Sally Placksin (1982), Linda Dahl (1984), Leslie Gourse (1995), Sherrie Tucker (2000), and Alex Stewart (2007). Sherrie Tucker relates that one reason for

the trajectory of this history is that "jazz is, among other things, a narrative, often constructed as a straight line from inevitable style to inevitable style, genius to genius" (2008). Tucker states that the omission of women in jazz historiography is "more a result of uncritical reproduction of dominant gender ideology than careless omission" (2000: 6). It is a history of jazzmen. In this way, "jazz and swing musicianship is gendered before anyone blows a note" (2000: 7). Tucker's research into all-women bands of the WWII era notes that expected roles for women included being homemakers and rearing children (318). She argues that the burden of proof as "real" musicians continues to fall on women jazz players (56-57).

Linda F. Williams has demonstrated the interdependencies and intersections of race, gender, sexuality, class, and age in discussing contemporary Black women jazz musicians. Williams considers how these musicians negotiated issues of race and gender in performance venues as well as their conceptualizations of feminism. In addition to differing levels of marginalization related to race, gender, and generational affiliation, Williams notes that "African American female musicians who fit 'middle-class standards' on the basis of their advanced education and professional credentials are more likely to think of themselves foremost in terms of their occupational or professional standing" (2007: 127-28). Williams found that those who did not attend college remain "outside formal feminist teachings" (128). Importantly, Williams is concerned with the diversity of African American women musicians' experiences in jazz based on the intersections of racial, gendered, class, and generational identities.

Jennifer's identity as a white trans individual certainly plays a role in the opportunities and career choices she made. The extent to which her career may have benefitted because of her white racial identity is complicated by her trans identity. I look at

these intersections of identity in chapters throughout this dissertation, focusing on interpretations of Jennifer's identities in Chapter 2 and 3. Jennifer gained her knowledge of playing through lessons and on the gig training. In some respects, Jennifer has felt alienated from the university teaching environment. Although she now teaches privately, a short teaching stint at California State University, Long Beach was one of her favorite, former positions. Jennifer's identity in the jazz world circulates around generational, racial, class, and gendered dynamics. Thus, while part of her identity narrative includes referencing the lack of women in jazz, her identity as bassist, female, formerly male, non-college trained, and trans identified all play a role in conceptions of herself and her relationships.

Eric Porter relates how early jazz music's masculine embodiment were related to deep-seated ideas about genius and the human body. Men were assumed to be the purveyors of intellect and creativity while women were perceived as more attuned to nature (Porter 2002: 27). These beliefs were manifested in prejudices about women's artistic abilities, and Black women especially were pressured not to compete with working jazz musicians, since as Linda Dahl argues, the musicians "came to represent both symbolic and concrete proof" of African American manhood (Dahl 1984: ix-x). Benjamin Piekut reminds us that as gendered labor, jazz was a space wherein "labor itself could be reframed as a (black) male activity" (2010: 36). While these ideas about the creative and intellectual prowess of jazz partially contributed to the eventual recognition of the music as an American art form, the music initially existed on the margins of society. Working-class Black men shared entertainment and underground economic spaces with pimps, drug dealers, and prostitutes (Porter 2002: 28). More importantly, the men who participated in this "sporting life" culture, gained access

to "alternative, expressive capital that challenged American society's denial of the status and rights of manhood to African American men" (28).

In popular culture the history of jazz has essentially been presented as a narrative of heroic individuals. George Lipsitz, in a critique of Ken Burns's nineteen-hour serial documentary *Jazz* and other jazz historical narratives, points out that the film reduces the "infinitely diverse and plural practices" of the music "into one time, modernity; into one place, 'America'; and into one subjectivity, the heroic artist who turns adversity and alienation into aesthetic triumph" (2007: 83). This depiction of the practitioners of jazz celebrates the U.S. nation as unique and exceptional and does so from a heroic male perspective. Lipsitz notes that this historical narrative overlooks "the unequal and exploitative gender relations that structured entry into the world of playing jazz for a living" (92). Lipsitz acknowledges that Burns's *Jazz* does reflect part of the truth of the history of jazz, but he notes that the documentary fails to consider the "plurality of new social relationships that the music has helped bring into being" (105).

It is this background on jazz history that informed Jennifer Leitham's decisions regarding her identity and career. The third chapter of this dissertation discusses Jennifer's identity in relation to the history presented above.

Chapter Layouts

The issues set forth in the chapters that follow are explained through the participants' lived experiences. In Chapter 2 I examine how trans identity is historically, culturally, and politically bound up with ideas about gender binarisms. I look at several issues concerning split-brain syndrome, gender binaries, double-consciousness, generational boundaries, and

genre boundaries that have sought to define gender identity and trans identities. I unpack these ideas in relation to Jennifer Leitham's lived experience using neuroscience, philosophy, transgender studies, and a song analysis. I also consider ideas about being split in the musical world related to Jennifer's narratives. I then interpret facets of Jennifer's identity that includes ideas about the self, how others perceive us, and external ideas about gender.

The importance to Jennifer of articulating her struggle in terms of gender binaries must be regarded alongside the ways in which her identity and music helps to break down those binaries. Splits and barriers related to split-brain syndrome, dualism, double consciousness, wrong-body narratives, and transitioning all inform Jennifer's subjectivity. Insights and histories informed by neuroscience and philosophy will aid in framing the interpretations that Jennifer has about wrong-body narratives. Those ideas are then further complicated by work in transgender studies and the insights garnered from Jennifer and her fans. The chapter concludes with an analysis of the music and lyrics of Jennifer's tune "Split Brain," a tune that exemplifies the ways in which Jennifer uses music as a way to perform gender.

For Chapter 3, I look at performativity, trans identity, and jazz music through Jennifer Leitham to demonstrate multiple performances of identity in a genre that has been less tolerant of gender nonconforming identities. I intersperse Jennifer's biographical narrative with histories and narratives of jazz music and performance that include references to male and female performers. This is to situate Jennifer's personal story in relation to jazz music's gendered and racial past presented above. I trace Jennifer's geographical moves from Pennsylvania to California in relation to her career and identity choices. I look at the complex ways in which interpreting Jennifer's identity as a jazz musician has, in part, been determined

by the genre's history, how she has internally dealt with social norms, and what it means to perform white, masculine, feminine, and gender expansive forms of identity. What is especially rich and intricate about Jennifer's life are her experiences with multiple performances of identity, and this means she has much to tell us about multiple identities in terms of gender and jazz music.

Chapter 4 discusses voice, embodiment, and transition related to trans identities. These issues concern all of the participants of this study. I present the lived experiences of members of the Trans Chorus of Los Angeles (TCLA) and the Transcendence Gospel Choir of San Francisco (TGC)—taking a more nuanced approach with singers in TCLA. These participants help to contextualize Jennifer's project. Focusing our attention on the voice and vocal performances of these two choirs sets up ideas about individual voices, embodiment, safe spaces, and community. The subjectivity of the singers often times includes conceptions of voice and embodiment as well as expected behaviors associated with both. For trans men, hormone replacement therapy (HRT) may affect radical changes in the voice within a short time. HRT tends not to affect trans women as dramatically, but they may wish to raise their speaking fundamental frequency (SFF), extend their vocal range, and work on the timbre of their voices. A portion of this chapter looks at what it means to sing with voices in transition. Whether singers are attempting to extend their range, grapple with the effects of androgen hormones, or both, their voices, like all singers voices, are in process.

That process is also perceived as safe when practiced within certain physical spaces. In considering Foucault's concept of heterotopia, the physical locations of the choirs' rehearsals are perceived as safe spaces. This chapter partly considers what a heterotopic site offers the choirs, especially TCLA. Being in a space encompassing a community of trans,

genderqueer, non-conforming, nonbinary, genderless identities is a starting place for acceptance, but finding acceptance beyond such safe havens poses challenges.

Chapter 5 adds trans masculinity to a continuing discussion of voice and embodiment through country/Americana artist Joe Stevens. Joe is part of a growing field of queer identified artists who use the conventional norms of country and Americana music to alter particular normative assumptions about gendered performance. The chapter begins with some brief historical ideas about roots, country, Americana, and singer-songwriter music that considers the sociopolitical, racial, and gendered discourses that accompany them in order to situate Joe and his identity within its framework. Added to this brief history are a few boundary-crossing artists who offered alternatives to the essentialist notions of identities found in the histories and discourses of these genre categories.

The chapter then examines the Americana music genre/brand as a way to understand how queer artists appropriate its supposed staid qualities. The Americana brand is often defined in opposition to mainstream country, as something personal and anti-commercial, which resonates well with the singer-songwriting work of queer identified artists. Queer artists disrupt ideas of Americana as brand that caters to ideas of a common cultural history. They are more likely often to form their own networks and communities of fans, which in some ways, keeps them distanced from larger events and fan bases promoted by the Americana Music Association.

I then consider voice, embodiment, and transition specifically involving Joe's identity and music. Joe's story is obviously very different than Jennifer Leitham's and is unique in its own way. As a trans man, Joe's ability to pass as biologically male is complicated by his association of queer identity. The visual aspects of passing present an able-bodiedness that

may appear to stabilize Joe's identity, as may his racial identity as a white man. But Joe's declarations of being trans identified, as well as hidden disabilities that have taken a toll on his voice, demonstrate much more than the visual can represent. Joe's life presents us with particular ways in which trans subjects harness musical genre in order to perform trans identities.

What happens to a voice in transition, specifically a trans man's voice? The voices of trans men can rapidly change while undergoing hormone therapy. I look at ways these changes are approached both with speaking and singing voices while Joe relates how he handled his own transitional period. Genre, voice, embodiment, and transition all contribute to the ways in which masculinity and vulnerability frame Joe's identity, and they are juxtaposed with his female gender assignment at birth.

In the concluding chapter of the dissertation, Chapter 6, I sum up the conceptualization of this project by reviewing what the relationship is between a trans body and embodiment, how people perform gender through music, and how, when the body is a signifier of gender, gender is performed in music through the trans body. The research questions toward the beginning of this introduction contribute to many other frameworks of creative subjectivity and referentiality. They do not, however, present us with any grand themes or conclusions that can be applied to the research subjects within. By using theories to make sense of these artists decisions (asking, why do you do this?), those decisions make it possible to share performances of multiple facets of identity, including trans identity. In turn, the music these artists make allow us a much deeper look into the complicated world of gender and music.

Who am I that I Should Be Writing about Trans Identity?

As the narrator and author of this project, my last task in this introduction is to portray the topics of my research and the conditions of my own subjectivity in relation to my research participants. The topics of my research have evolved over the years and were instigated while completing a Masters in Jazz at California State University, Long Beach. A brief final project involved writing about Jennifer Leitham and her jazz career, but it was clear from the outset that her identity spanned a wide spectrum of identity categories. The complex nature of her identity and relationship with music was not at all apparent to me at the beginning, but I slowly began to learn about her identity, and identity in general, in all of its intersectional, salient, multidimensional and diverse categorizations. It took some time for me to include other research subjects, but the richness of identity as experienced through all of my research participants has only enhanced this dissertation. It is not only the incredibly diverse ways we identify ourselves, including our relationships to music, that matters, but also how we navigate our subjectivities in relation to powerfully perceived soicio-political and cultural forces that shape understandings of who we are. Expanding my research to encompass a variety of ways trans identified people narrate understandings of themselves moved me into areas of neuroscience, philosophy, phenomenology, musicology, ethnomusicology, feminist and queer theory, and transgender studies. By sharing performances of trans identity that thinks through bodies and behaviors, I learned that gender identity as multiplicitous, varied, and diverse, is always in relation, contention, or collusion with sociopolitical and cultural forces that control those bodies and behaviors.

Long before I began placing ideas on document pages I was “musicking” with Jennifer Leitham as a drum set performer (Small 1998). I first met Jennifer, who was John

Leitham at the time, in 1989 through jazz trombonist Bill Watrous. Although we occasionally did gigs with Watrous around the Los Angeles area, Jennifer and I never really took the time to get to know each other further. During this time period, I was working with a group of performers who were doing a lot of smooth jazz gigs and our paths did not cross very often. In 2002, the year she had scheduled what was at the time labeled Sexual Reassignment Surgery (SRS), I began performing with Jennifer as part of her trio and we gradually developed a friendship. At the time, however, I was not cognizant of Jennifer's surgery plans. For the first several years we performed infrequently, and our relationship was based more on professional musicianship rather than friendship. By the time of her 2006 CD release, we were much closer friends. Thus, my professional relationship with Jennifer preceded that of friendship, but our friendship became increasingly important to me because Jennifer consistently continued to call me to perform with her in Los Angeles. That kind of consistency is rare in relation to my performing career. I am indebted to the years of creative music making and financial benefits that performing with Jennifer have provided. The professional quality of our relationship remains, but it is greatly enhanced by our sharing of life events that do not always revolve around performing.

Even though the diversity of peoples in Los Angeles is massive, trans identified musicians and some of their fans cross genre boundaries in their awareness of each other. At some point in my research endeavors it was suggested I include other trans identified musicians beyond Jennifer. Many of Jennifer's fans and friends always referenced other trans and queer identified artists in interviews I conducted with them or in casual conversations. This was how I learned of Joe Stevens, whom I first met in 2014. Joe keeps himself incredibly busy traveling across the United States and other parts of the world performing,

promoting projects like the documentary film *Real Boy*, and supporting other trans and queer identified artists. I have since performed with Joe and Jennifer on a new musical workshop that features the life of Albert Cashier—an Irish-born immigrant assigned female at birth who served in the Union Army during the American Civil War.

Also in early 2014, another friend of Jennifer's mentioned the Transcendence Gospel Choir (TGC) to me in a casual conversation. The time I spent with members of this choir was limited, and to my knowledge, they are not currently active in the San Francisco Bay area. But their identification with God and a place of worship frame an important part of their identities, which includes a spiritual aspect of identity that further complicates understandings of trans identities.

Another fan of Jennifer's, James Wen, informed me of a newer choir formed in Los Angeles in 2015, the Trans Chorus of Los Angeles. I began attending rehearsals of the choir toward the end of 2015 and have since performed several times with the choir, often with Jennifer Leitham on bass. The members of this choir were very open to sharing their stories of identity and relationships to music, and it was an opportunity I pursued as a researcher first. The opportunity to perform with the choir came later, and I am truly humbled by their willingness to include me in performances. I am blessed by their infectious warmth, love, and acceptance.

I have been asked why I have not pursued artists in other genres of music that seemingly appear to be more inclusive of queer and trans identified artists. First, the participants of this dissertation were referred to me through Jennifer's friends and those participants were aware of Jennifer's work as a musician. Second, queer and trans identified artists in some genres of music, for example pop and punk, are more plentiful compared with

the genres and artists I research in this dissertation. Because Jennifer's identity is seldom encountered in jazz performance, it made sense for me to look at trans identities in areas of musical performance less written about and researched. Jazz, Americana, and choral settings are not typically considered as subjects of study with alternatively gendered people, especially those who are trans identified. The combination of conversing with people who knew Jennifer and a lack of written work on trans identities in jazz, Americana, and choral groups shifted my attention to individuals who perform music in these areas.

The conditions of my own subjectivity in relation to this project is especially important given my identity as a white, male, older, heterosexuality-practicing American ethnographer and musician. I am close in age to Jennifer and we travel in some of the same musical circles now more than ever. Jennifer's friendship is paramount. It is my association with Jennifer that bolstered my credibility with other trans identified musicians, and without Jennifer's continual support that credibility might not be sustainable. My gender and racial identity represents an embodiment that is often marked as the hegemonic position of oppression for the people I seek to interpret and represent, and therefore, I am sensitive about speaking for this group of trans identified artists. I especially appreciated the moments during my interviews or times in course work where I was reminded of my privileged position as a white male. Those were important moments to keep foregrounded in my positionality with my research participants. At the same time, I believe my research participants understood my skills, abilities, and empathy as both a researcher and musician for the purposes of narrating their lives to advance understandings of gender and music.

Whether I am embraced as an insider, or more properly as an outsider who brings "a limited if unique view," I would hope my presence in the lives of my participants

demonstrates a desire to bridge understanding and acceptance of them as individuals on their own terms (Nettl 2005: 159-60). I hope this dissertation reflects a high level of sensitivity through the stories and analysis provided. I am in debt to all of the participants for their contributions, their enthusiasm about their subjectivities, their pains and struggles with identity, their love for music, and above all, their love for each other.

Chapter 2 Modes of Duality: Trans Identity, Jazz, and Jennifer Leitham's "Split Brain"

"While I was married, my wife used to tell me that I had a split-brain syndrome – a disconnect.[8] My body didn't line-up with what my brain was telling me. But I play bass left-handed, throw a baseball right-handed, and bat left-handed, so I think I have an integrated brain… Scientists have noted the differences in brain hemispheres…so if the right side of the brain controls the left side of the body, and the left side of the brain controls the right side of the body, then only left-handed people are in their right mind!" (Jennifer Leitham – a narrative spoken before almost every performance of "Split Brain").[9] I have heard this humorous story recited on stage countless times by Jennifer Leitham from my seated position next to her and behind a four-piece drum kit. The punch line is my cue to count off and begin the tune "Split Brain."

According to Jennifer[10], the tune itself was written as an instrumental in 1984 for a group she had with Tonight Show drummer Ed Shaughnessy.[11] In a phone conversation in December of 2013, Jennifer told me in the 1980s she was "split in-half" trying to live publicly as male and privately as female (pers. comm., December 6, 2013). Jennifer explains

[8] John (now Jennifer) Leitham was married to a woman from 1982 to 1999. The story of their marriage related to this chapter begins on page 54.

[9] A YouTube video of the tune is part of a live performance DVD made in 2011—*Jennifer Leitham: The Real Me LIVE!* This video includes myself on drums and can be accessed here: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n2KsjGE-OEE

[10] Throughout this chapter I will use the name Jennifer as well as feminine pronouns (Jennifer's choice of pronouns) to refer to Jennifer Leitham.

[11] I continue to refer to my main research participants by their first names in order to keep transparent different positionalities and to mark this as a strength, rather than as a weakness, of this research project.

the title itself in part of the liner notes of *The Real Me* CD: "My ex had a degree in Experimental Psychology and thought (back in our early years together) that my conundrum was the result of a condition known as a 'Split Brain.' One side of the brain doesn't work well with the other" (Leitham 2006).

The lyrics came later during the 1990s and Jennifer mentions that once she wrote those lyrics any ideas about having a split brain ended. This part of the story she also relays to audiences on gigs stating that the lyrics have nothing to do with the title in scientific terms, yet she keeps the title "just to be perverse" (pers. comm., December 6, 2013). But the lyrics do reveal a journey of personal identity that resonates with ideas of being split, and of a gender battle between male and female subjectivity. That gender battle reached a climax when Jennifer's female subjectivity could no longer be hidden and where she publicly transitioned as a female in 2001. Although I performed with John Leitham a handful of times before becoming a regular performer in her trio, we never got to know each other well. As an older, white, male jazz performer I have come to realize that relative to Jennifer, my identity is taken for granted as a backing musician. Andy Langham (Jennifer's first choice for pianists) and I do not need to answer endless questions about what we do or who we are. I have come to greatly appreciate the work that Jennifer puts into writing and performing music as well as the ways she publicly and intimately reveals herself.

For my purposes, the ways in which Jennifer speaks of a "split-brain syndrome" is a useful starting point regarding her subjectivity and its relationship to larger sociocultural issues. These ideas about identity emphasize "the lived shaping and constraining elements" experienced by Jennifer and other trans individuals (Hellier 2013: 13). "Split-brain syndrome" only partially reflects neuroscience's work with split-brain patients, which has

moved beyond ideas that the brain is organized into two conscious systems.[12] Jennifer's comment about her body not lining up with what her brain was telling her might loosely resemble ideas about a mind/body split, or dualism; a form of subjectivity she grappled with for years manifested in an outwardly physical male body that did not conform to Jennifer's internal notion of being female. At points in her life, Jennifer has described this disconnect through a wrong-body narrative, which is a problematic and contested area of transgender subjectivity and research (Engdahl 2014, Prosser 1998, Mason-Schrock 1996). Wrong-body narratives rely heavily on the idea that there is an inner core of gendered identity that uses a sexed body for expression or disengagement. This was an important part of Jennifer's understanding of her identity at a young age. It is important to discuss how this gendered binarism of the body relates to Jennifer. Gayle Salamon notes that bodies are "always shaped by the social world in which we are inescapably situated" (2010: 76). Indeed, the tension that exists "between the historicity of the body and the immediacy of its felt sense is the precise location of bodily being" (77). Salamon notes that social construction contributes historically to this "felt sense" of the body and points out that a body is both "socially constructed" and has a "felt sense that is undeniable" (77). This tension is nowhere more pronounced than with trans identified individuals, who complicate notions of an inner gendered core, whether they embrace a wrong-body narrative or not. Trans identity reveals much about the complexity of gendered binarisms and contributes to ideas of identity as multiplicitous. Unlike the process of attaining a perceived cultural state of femininity or masculinity, trans identity moves within temporal frameworks of identity, prompting Elias Dylan Krell to claim that "there is no one path through nor point at which one has arrived at trans identity" (2014: 107).

[12] For a fairly accessible neurological look at historical and current ideas about brain functioning, see Michael Gazzaniga's *Who's in Charge: Free Will and the Science of the Brain*, 2011.

The notion that Jennifer lived publicly as male and privately as female may also be related to ideas about double consciousness. Her fear of being revealed as female in a jazz world that she believed to be male-dominated and homophobic kept her feminine identity in check. Jennifer is acutely aware of jazz music's visual and recorded past. She has talked about the historical legacy of famous jazz photographs and recordings, and notes that it is a history of men (Interview, July 21, 2010).

These ideas about being split are useful frameworks that need to be unpacked in order to understand the lived experiences of some of the artists in this study. Being split does, of course, immediately imply binary and dichotomous ideas about subjectivities, identities and those identities in relationship to others. This chapter looks at those notions of being split that have been both scientifically and culturally developed and examines those ideas through various dimensions of gendered identity. The importance to Jennifer of articulating her struggle along gendered binaries must be considered alongside the ways in which her identity and music helps to break down those binaries. Therefore, splits and barriers related to split-brain syndrome, dualism, double consciousness, wrong-body narratives, and transitioning all contribute to Jennifer's subjectivity. Insights and histories informed by neuroscience and philosophy will aid in framing the interpretations that Jennifer has about wrong-body narratives. Those ideas are then further complicated by work in transgender studies and the insights garnered from Jennifer and her fans. The chapter concludes with an analysis of the music and lyrics of Jennifer's tune "Split Brain," a tune that exemplifies the ways in which Jennifer uses music as a way to perform gender.

By utilizing Jennifer's "Split Brain," I plan to present a nuanced look at trans identity and music employing Berger's notion of stance. Berger explains that a "stance-oriented

approach calls us to specify the objects to which meanings are ascribed, make clear the role of agency in performance, illuminate the interpretive variability between actors in or across production processes, and show how all of this plays out in their lived experiences; such lived meanings are the reality from which generalizations about cultural styles, approaches, or sensibilities are abstracted" (2009: 24). Rather than argue that Jennifer's lived experiences draw us to general conclusions about a general cultural style or approach, or even more importantly any generalizations about identity, I utilize stance in this chapter to reveal a multidimensional notion of identity. In this way, subjectivity becomes more than "talking merely about an internal feeling," it also involves "ways of being in the world, in interaction with others" (Bettcher 2014). The next sections of this chapter discuss the various splits defined in scientific terms and developed in cultural discourses that all shape the experiences of Jennifer herself.

The Neurological Split and Dual Consciousness

"The great pleasure and feeling in my right brain is more than my left brain can find the words to tell you." Roger W. Sperry, Nobel prize 1981.

In the 1960s, neurobiologist and neuropsychologist Roger Sperry began conducting studies involving animal and human brains, which eventually lead to the discovery that the left and right hemispheres of the brain are specialized in different tasks. Generally speaking, Sperry's work revealed that the left hemisphere is dominant in language: processing what you hear and handling most of the duties of speaking. It also is responsible for carrying out logic and works to retrieve facts from your memory. The right hemisphere is mainly in charge of spatial abilities, face recognition and processing music. The right hemisphere also

helps us comprehend visual imagery and plays a role in language by interpreting context and another person's tone.[13] Both hemispheres of the brain are connected in the middle by a part of the brain called the corpus callous. Sperry and cognitive neuroscientist Michael Gazzaniga, who was a graduate student working with Sperry at the time, worked with epilepsy patients whose corpus callous had been severed in order to prevent those patients from having seizures (Gazzaniga et al. 1968; Sperry 1966 and 1961). The severing of the corpus callous broke the connection between the left and right hemispheres. The resulting split-brain phenomena left the two sides of the brain unable to communicate with each other. Further developments in split-brain studies postulated the very controversial notion of dual consciousness – a theoretical concept in neuroscience where a person may develop two separate conscious entities within oneself after undergoing a corpus callosotomy (Gazzaniga 2011: 53-60). That theory was controversial from its outset and continues to be debated and revised (Bayne 2008; Iacoboni et al. 1996; Schechter 2013 and 2012). It is not my intent here to debate the work of neuroscientists who have questioned the idea of dual consciousness as a scientific phenomenon. The point is to show how the concept of a split-brain in science has led to notions about a binary in consciousness and how it continues to be debated. Those ideas do often feed into cultural notions of being "split," but manifest themselves in differing ways. It is the latter ideas that informed Jennifer's wife in her comment to Jennifer that she may have a split-brain syndrome.

The latter work in neuroscience is different from the concept of "dual consciousness" and "double consciousness" set forth by Franz Fanon and W.E.B. Du Bois, respectively. Fanon related how colonized subjects must simultaneously embrace two different cultural

[13] "Background to the Split Brain Experiments," http://www.nobelprize.org/educational/medicine/split-brain/background.html

identities, while Du Bois explained what it means to always regard "one's self through the eyes of others" (Fanon 2008; Du Bois 2003). To the extent that both scholars relate the experiences of marginalized identities in relation to the self and others, dualities of identity become important to the lives of the trans identified musicians in this study.

There are multiple ways of conceiving notions of double consciousness and subjectivity related to racially and psychologically specific issues. Fanon's work in *Black Skin, White Masks* relates how a Black subject's psyche is harmed by a divided perception of one's self in relation to both a native cultural origin and the culture of a colonizer. In discussing Black subjectivity, Fanon examines "how colonialism is internalized by the colonized, how an inferiority complex is inculcated, and how, through the mechanism of racism, black people end up emulating their oppressors" (Sardar in Fanon 2008: x). Fanon's work describes Black identity being regarded as darkness and ugliness when it comes into contact with the white world—a world of "*Justice, Truth, Virginity*. It [whiteness] defines what it means to be civilized" (xiii, 139). For Fanon, being Black in this situation can only be done so "in relation to the white man" (83). "In the collective unconscious, black = ugliness, sin, darkness, immorality" (149).

This dichotomous yet intertwined rendering of dual consciousness, of Black and white identity in relation to each other, has some corollaries to trans individual's narratives related to male and female identity. For example, some trans women lament the male privilege of moving safely and comfortably in public spaces. That perceived freedom of movement contrasts with a more cautious and fearful understanding of movement for some trans women in similar public settings. This is, of course not relegated to trans women alone. In this way, safety for a woman is regulated by the perceived actions of men in social spaces.

For trans and queer people of color (TQPOC), race and gender create a double bind of marginal identity that make them one of the most vulnerable population segments of society. Issues of class also condition their identities. TQPOC may not have adequate living conditions and access to resources that other trans individuals enjoy. Their existence is partly shaped by a "collective unconscious" that continually pathologizes their identities (Fanon 2008: 149).

W.E.B. Du Bois presents being African American as a psychological challenge: "One ever feels his two-ness,—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife,—this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self" (Du Bois 2007: 2). These ideas of being split racially have informed critical race theory for decades. Du Bois and Fanon also note that Blacks have to constantly be aware of the consciousness of whites and, unlike the ways a change in gender can be imagined and acted upon, they are not attempting to become white. For my purposes here, both Fanon and Du Bois postulate ways of being in the world where psychological and embodied double binds create identities that are split along racial lines. I do not wish to equate experiences of race with those of gender, but rather, the concept of being split is one important element in understanding the experiences of some trans identified people. For Jennifer, the perceived reality of jazz music's history meant that being male identified was advantageous when navigating the jazz world as an instrumentalist. In relationship to men, women instrumentalists were not taken seriously. It should also be noted that as a white trans individual, Jennifer's identity is in-line with a more privileged "trans normativity" (Snorton

and Haritaworn 2013). As similarly implicated in ideas about heteronormativity and homonormativity, trans normativity as white, middle class trans subjectivity elides the voices of TQPOC. The current political environment that advances the causes of trans people often leaves hidden some of the most vulnerable of trans populations. While Jennifer has benefitted in some ways from this association of trans normativity, her identity in jazz complicates its effectiveness.

In relation to our current political climate, another split that involves the lived experiences of trans people occurs between class concerns and cultural issues, both of which shape American politics and cannot be as easily separated as the latter issues of subjectivity. Briefly speaking, class concerns involve a widening inequality in the United States due to differences in levels of income and wealth, and the income gap pales in comparison to the wealth gap. Brewer and Stonecash explain how this creates renewed debates between the haves and have-nots where "differences in income create dramatically different opportunities in the areas of education, health care, housing, and overall quality of life" (2007: xiv). Culturally, there are conflicting issues concerning "what constitutes appropriate behavior, different views of morality, and ultimately different views on right and wrong" (xv). Brewer and Stonecash note that in order to understand American politics it is important to learn about each of these sets of concerns. For the purposes of this dissertation, these issues place trans people in the middle of the debates about cultural and class politics. They are a population less likely to have the economic means to access health care, housing, and education, and they bear part of an LGBT history that has been on the negative end of historically mainstream ideas concerning morality and right and wrong. This is especially true for TQPOC. Despite the increased media visibility of trans people and some claims that

trans rights are the New Civil Rights Movement, gaining equal protections are still a current political concern for many trans individuals. All of the latter ideas related to a split subjectivity and the politics that affect trans identity inform Jennifer's lived experiences and subjectivity.

In the early 1980s, Jennifer (formerly John) met her soon-to-be wife, Sandra,[14] while working in Philadelphia (Jennifer is originally from Reading, PA). Sandra was very accepting of Jennifer's feminine subjectivity and they agreed to keep that intimate, between the two of them only. Jennifer continually went through periods of accepting and rejecting her feminine subjectivity, but during the late 1970s and early 1980s before meeting Sandra, she had recently begun to make public excursions as her female self around Philadelphia apart from the jazz world. This included visiting clothing boutiques in the city and briefly meeting new people away from the jazz scene. Eventually, Jennifer became completely comfortable being her feminine self with Sandra at home, where they agreed that Jennifer's female subjectivity and identity would remain private. This was an important aspect of their relationship. They married in 1982 and Jennifer continued to live with a feminine subjectivity she felt was always her "real" self, and her masculine persona, a perceived gender affiliation built around a career in jazz performance. Jennifer struggled with this dual subjectivity because she felt the masculine persona was an act, but it was an act she believed necessary in order to have a successful jazz career. Although Jennifer continued to grapple with both of these aspects of her identity, a move to Los Angeles around 1984 presented her with new musical opportunities that kept any public presentations of her female self in check.

[14] Sandra's name is fictitious and being used in place of the real name of Jennifer's former wife.

Gender Binaries, Generational Divides, and Being Split in the Musical World

In order to situate Jennifer's experience in historical perspective, it is important to remember the work of second-wave feminism in characterizing women as an oppressed group, even though that history is not equal regarding Black and white women. Historically, women have been subservient to men in many countries of the world. They have been defined in relation to men. In a foundational anthology for feminist studies from 1974, *Women, Culture, and Society,* Michelle Rosaldo relates this historical and cultural trend: "…in cultural systems we find a recurrent opposition: between man, who in the last analysis stands for 'culture,' and woman, who (defined through symbols that stress her biological and sexual functions) stands for 'nature,' and often for disorder" (31). Rosaldo also recognizes that while acknowledging male authority, "women may direct it to their own interests," and the anthology's authors "are not denying women importance" (21). Highlighting the work of feminists informed by second-wave feminism, Shelia Whiteley notes that by the 1970s "the separation of the domestic and the public sphere" was identified as "the most significant boundary in society. With women bearing and raising children, their lives were largely bound to the domestic sphere. Conversely, men spent more time outside the home and were thus able to engage in activities which had the potential to generate political structures" (2000: 2).

Black women did not similarly experience this public and private split. Angela Davis notes that "working-class women and Black women alike were fundamentally linked to their men by the class exploitation and racist oppression which did not discriminate between the sexes" (1983: 142). Davis also elaborates on the importance of understanding how the majority of Black women worked outside the home form the time of slavery through the 1970s and beyond (230-31). Notwithstanding the very real differences between women that developed in the 1980s with the important political impact of Black feminism, the binary implications of this history between men and women play an important role concerning ideas of embodiment experienced by some trans people. They have some implications for a white

woman who chooses to perform instrumental jazz, especially a white, trans woman after establishing a career as a man.

Jennifer continued to walk a tightrope of male and female subjectivity in Philadelphia in the early 1980s. She was adept at stealthily moving physically as female between her residence and public spaces. Her female subjectivity was affirmed by women owners of dancewear and wig shops where she was able to experiment with clothing, make-up, and hairstyles. Meanwhile, her jazz life as John flourished and she believed she had the best of both worlds. But she always lived in fear of being "found out" – having her female identity discovered in public in such a way that it would ruin her jazz career (Leitham 2006).

Another element of Jennifer's identity and subjectivity that needs to be considered in relation to issues of gender and sexuality is one that involves a generational divide. Psychologists Russell and Bohan have studied how the relationships between LGBT adults and youth are framed through "differences in age and historical experience" (2005: 1). The youth they studied avoid any connections with dichotomous and traditional understandings related to two exclusive categories of sexual orientation and gender, often making partner choices "defined not by the sex of the other individual but by gender-free qualities" (3). This view "contrasts sharply with that of many adults, for whom the very terms 'lesbian' and 'gay' represent hard-won acknowledgement of the legitimacy of their identities, for whom bisexuality reflects an inability to come to terms with one's true identity, and for whom sexual orientation is perceived (and experienced) as fixed, unchosen, and core to identity" (3).

This divide manifested itself as something Jennifer perceived and related to me at a performance event we did in Santa Monica, CA in October 2014. The Unitarian Universalist

Community Church celebrated a "Coming Out" weekend, which recognized and honored the awareness of trans identified people. Jennifer's music was presented in-between other elements of the morning services. A children's reading included *The Adventures of Tulip, Birthday Wish Fairy*, which introduces readers to trans-identified children and their desires to match their bodies with who they believe they are on the inside (Bergman 2012). While the book is framed through a wrong-body narrative, it introduces a complex topic to young readers. Jennifer communicated to the audience that a resource like *Tulip* was not available for her when she was growing up. She explained that in her mind jazz music was at the time homophobic and heteronormative, and thus, saw no alternative to pretending to be male.[15] An interview with Liam, who identifies as genderqueer, followed the children's story. Liam noted that expressions such as "boys and girls," "ladies and gents," and "men and women" do not resonate and prefers "adults" or "folks." Liam also related "they" as their personal pronoun choice. In reference to Liam, Jennifer related to me that a younger genderqueer generation tends to push her experience to the background. Jennifer believes they celebrate the freedom of gender fluidity too easily.[16] This generational split manifests itself in stereotypical ideas about how each generation regards one another: a younger generation of LGBT people consider their elders as no longer knowledgeable on gender issues, and an older generation view youth as too extreme regarding their views on gender identity and sexual orientation.

[15] Jennifer was attracted to the musical challenges of the jazz genre as an impressionable twenty year old through Philadelphian mentor Al Stauffer long before she had any understanding of the social implications of performing the genre.

[16] This information and experience was acquired from fieldwork done on October 12, 2014 at the Unitarian Universalist Community Church in Santa Monica, CA.

The intersections of identity that include race and gender quickly complicate ideas of being split. Although Fanon's work is not a work of gender relations and must be considered in light of its historical context, a trans individual of color will have racial and gendered experiences quite different from a white trans individual. In as much as race and gender are fundamental to the self and operate through visual markers on the body, they also signify the first observations others make of us. Sometimes, a combination of mixed race and ambiguous gender that does not align with what is perceived as traditional racial and gendered categories can create anxieties for other people (Alcoff 2006: 7). Thus, a trans person of color may experience a more intersectional combination of identity categories, making daily living much more challenging. That is more evident in the subjectivities and identities of members of the Trans Chorus of Los Angeles and the Transcendence Gospel Choir. The diverse voices and embodiments of the individuals in these two groups, discussed in Chapter 4, contribute to a wide range of multidimensional identities.

For the most part, Jennifer has benefited from her racial identity in relation to her jazz career. As a white jazz artist, her connections to other well-established white jazz artists, such as Mel Tormé, Jack Sheldon, and Doc Severinsen, have allowed her to have a lengthy and varied career. There is somewhat of a segregated jazz scene in Los Angeles, and Jennifer travels in a circle of West Coast jazz musicians who are predominantly white men. As a trans musician, her identity has brought forth new opportunities as a solo artist and widened her presence and notoriety in the jazz community. But being known as a trans person has also made it more difficult to be taken seriously by some people in that same jazz community.[17]

[17] The West Coast jazz environment and Jennifer's opportunities within that environment is discussed in the next chapter.

What does it mean to be split in the musical world? Studies of music cognition in split-brain patients have yielded conflicting results. Gates and Bradshaw explain that one hemisphere of the brain should not be regarded as dominant for music cognition (1977). Another study states that "it is probably justifiable to assume that dominance for general musical faculty tends to develop in the right hemisphere first," while a third "support the notion of right hemisphere specialization for harmony perception in music" (Damásio and Damásio 1977; Tramo and Bharucha 1991). While this work is fascinating and useful in understanding music cognition and perception, ideas of being culturally split in the music world have larger implications and consequences for the lived experiences of musicians. To be clear, I am not suggesting that trans individuals suffer from some kind of neurological pathology. I am interested in how my research subjects make use of such ideas, which is often in metaphorical terms.

I will take up issues regarding identity and jazz, country, and gospel music in the chapters that follow, but will briefly mention here some of the issues that scholars of music have reflected on and articulated about splits in gendered performance and music itself. It is important to note that all of the scholars mentioned in this section work to break down the ideological, discursive, and subjective splits that are being presented here. The point here is to highlight how those splits are informing the work of these scholars and how they continue to inform the experiences of some trans identified musicians.

In her groundbreaking treatise *Feminine Endings,* Susan McClary makes inquiries into "the ways in which music is shaped by constructions of gender and sexuality even in the most fundamental of musical concepts and procedures" (1991: 9). Using the musical cadence as a prime example of a split between the feminine and masculine, McClary explains how the

"feminine" in feminine cadence is regarded as "weak, abnormal, and subjective," the "masculine is strong, normal, and objective" (9-10). Importantly, McClary asks not only how we participate in the gendered and sexual meanings of music, but also how music comes to define us in our social organization of gender and sexuality. She notes that in Western culture, "music *itself* is always in danger of being regarded as the feminine Other that circumvents reason and arouses desire" (79). McClary identifies how "female participation in music is riskier than in either literature or the visual arts" because "the charismatic performance of one's music is often crucial to its promotion and transmission, where women on the stage are viewed as sexual commodities" and where "musical discourse has been carefully guarded from female participation in part because of its ability to articulate patterns of desire" (151). In this way, music performance participates in a larger historical and cultural perception where the "mind is defined as masculine and the body as feminine in Western culture" (151). That cultural divide imbued Jennifer's subjectivity in jazz where masculine bass performance took precedence until 2001. Jazz music as a masculine endeavor defined the path Jennifer chose.

Christopher Small's *Musicking: The Meanings of Performance and Listening* affirms McClary's insights. Small traces the masculine/feminine dichotomy of concert music from its beginnings in opera and eventual transformation to symphonic works, placing the development of "the secondary gender characteristics of femininity" in historical context. Small notes that the victory of the protagonist in a symphonic drama is "signaled in the overwhelming majority of symphonic works by a scene of triumph and celebration that forms the final movement," and that "protagonist is masculine, established, as in opera, at the beginning of the work with the tonic key, the aberrant key is feminine, the irruption of the

feminine into that logically ordered world is the source of the conflict" (1998: 170). The use of the words *masculine* and *feminine* are not literal – it is the "acting out of all the anxieties and conflicts that are implicit in those two words" (171). Small is responding to and intervening in a long history of discussions about music that privilege the composition and the score over the performance and its reception. Part of McClary's work also offers an analysis of compositions and scores and preceded Small's insight, but her look into the meanings of pleasure and desire found in the musical works she studies is in line with Small's ideas about the implicit meanings of masculine dominance heard in the music and its forms. The gendered "splits" that McClary and Small point out in the Western art music canon are keenly reflective of the historical conditions regulating the public and private lives of men and women described earlier by Rosaldo and Whiteley. I argue that these historical and dichotomous discussions of music inform the historical, lived experiences of some trans musicians. Jennifer found it difficult to imagine a jazz career that included performing on acoustic bass as a woman. As the introductory chapter explained, jazz music as a genre has a complicated relationship with Black masculinity, but writ large, jazz music's elevation to an art status kept the music's growth tied to masculine intellect.

While it is important to be specific and nuanced about gender dynamics regarding certain genres of music, some generalizations can be observed regarding men and women's participation as instrumentalists. Being split in the music world has often had corollaries with cultural ideas about women being subservient to men. For example, jazz music has historically been recorded as a male-dominated genre; women instrumentalists have not been taken seriously as performers. Part of the reason for this can be explained by expected norms that historically place women as homemakers who would be unable to handle the demands of

touring and traveling. In jazz, African American women were especially impressed upon not to compete with a form of music that allowed for an expression of African American manhood. Mavis Bayton has commented on the difficult choices women historically faced in choosing between motherhood or having a career, something that contributed to the scarcity of female musicians in many genres of music (1998: 33).

Rock music's masculine tendencies have been discussed ever since the late 1970s when popular music scholars such as Simon Frith and Angela McRobbie looked at the ways in which rock music has historically been a masculine endeavor (Frith 2007, 1978). Shelia Whiteley has noted that the early days of heavy metal in the 1970s centered on male aggression and "women rockers continued to be judged more on appearance than performing ability" (2000: 14). Mary Ann Clawson makes nuanced connections between the masculine experience of forming a band in adolescence and other all-male organizations like sports teams and fraternities. Clawson draws a parallel between male rock band formation and male sports teams by demonstrating how both "contribute to the social construction and reproduction of contemporary masculinity through the articulation of strength and skill as masculine, and through the character of sport as a sex-segregated social sphere that promotes male solidarity. Male 'embodiment' is in this view acquired and shaped through masculinising social practices" (2007: 108). Clawson's study is a unique look at adolescent segregation between girls and boys in the early formation of a rock music band. Girls tended to either experiment with instruments early on and did not form bands, or learned to play an instrument later on in their mid-twenties (105, 111).

Jennifer's experience of being split musically was infinitely tied to her female subjectivity. Part of this involved defining herself "in relation to standards of jazz artistry

generally established by men" (Porter 2002: 154). But Jennifer also experienced emotional and psychological upsides and downsides through her performances that worked to keep her struggling between her male persona and female subjectivity. A highlight of her career involved working with Mel Tormé. The touring schedule was comfortably paced and performance venues and accommodations were top-notch. Jennifer has often commented that working with Tormé brought her to musical heights she had not experienced before. Tormé allowed the musicians who backed him up a large amount of musical freedom. Extended solo space was something Jennifer cherished. Jennifer's performance stance with Tormé was euphoric, and she relates that the musical highs and constant touring caused abatement in her female self. Jennifer has noted about this period that her gender dysphoria—the condition of feeling one's emotional and psychological identity as male or female is opposite to one's assigned sex at birth—was subdued greatly. During periods she describes as musical "down" times it was more difficult to deny her female subjectivity (Interview, August 13, 2009). This aspect of Jennifer's subjectivity increased when her heightened performance stance of musical prowess abated.

Tormé suffered a stroke in 1996 and never returned to performance, passing at the age of 73 in 1999. Jennifer began performing with Doc Severinsen soon after Tormé's stroke, but returning to a position in the band as the "quarter note donkey" was musically stifling.[18] Eventually the need to continuously suppress her female subjectivity became unbearable. She was ready to find another line of work other than music in order to expose the world to Jennifer. A brief aspect of Jennifer's public transition is discussed below, while the personal

[18] The "quarter note donkey" is a favorite expression of Jennifer's that denotes the traditional musical role in jazz of playing a bass line in the form of repeated quarter notes—a "walking" bass line. While this is a common role for jazz bassists and is also one of the most foundational, for Jennifer, being completely relegated to this role in any musical group leaves little room for creative aberrance. She attributes the originator of the expression to Charles Mingus.

story of that transition as well as a bodily transition and its aftermath is explained in Chapter 3.

Trans Subjectivity & Identity

As a jazz musician, Jennifer spent many years traversing the masculine musical world, convinced that to do otherwise would be career suicide. But the constant feelings of feminine subjectivity, both bodily and psychologically experienced ultimately challenges any essentialist ideas inherent in the mind/body split as well as creating a host of other gender related issues regarding music-making, the relationships derived from that practice, and identity. In this section, I want to consider Jennifer's lived experience and trans embodiment as an intertwining of subjectivity, materiality, and discursivity. Included with Jennifer's experiences are a few different theoretical positions about trans embodiment that inform Jennifer's and other trans individual's subjectivities.

At times, Jennifer has spoken about her subjectivity in terms of passing, which is the idea that one is accepted both socially and successfully as the gender one is presenting:

> I like to think I have some hopes in that direction, I know I that I get read and clocked. But I'm probably one of the more acceptable transgender people as far as appearance goes, I kinda look the part, I look female, I feel really comfortable in my demeanor… I certainly have my awkward moments, but… I don't consciously try to be anything… I just project myself as who I feel I am… and sometimes that means being hyper-feminine, sometimes that means being masculine. (Interview, July 21, 2010)

She relates that in 2010 she may have been more self-conscious about an aspect of herself that she regarded as being more masculine - getting back into playing softball and being physically active. She has a passion for playing baseball, throwing right-handed and batting left handed, and she notes that her natural athleticism at a young age helped her outwardly

"fit-in" with other males. Jennifer adds that currently she does not think of gender roles much at all, and is a "woman with an interesting back story. I take no offense to anyone who thinks of me as trans, but I don't really subscribe to labeling" (pers. comm., August 17, 2015).[19] Jennifer's ultimate goal was to move from male to female, but the "back story" that involves making such a move is also there as part of Jennifer's identity. Part of that "back story" involves the wrong-body narrative.

For many trans identified people, wrong-body narratives are a way in which they relate their subjectivity. This is especially an idea that Jennifer has referred to in relation to her own experience. It is important to discuss this as an aspect of trans identity because it is how some trans individuals have articulated their subjectivity. Those narratives are also tied to diagnoses from the medical field that control treatment and they also play a role in legal recognition for those who self-identify as trans. The medical field requires a thorough psychological process for those trans individuals who desire surgery in order to change their gender. That process includes living for a certain amount of time as the gender they wish to become. Although the recently published *Diagnostical and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, fifth ed, (*DSM-5*) put out by the American Psychiatric Association changed "gender identity disorder" to a diagnosis of "gender dysphoria," Ulrica Engdahl notes that the *DSM-5* "still uses ideas of a 'wrong body,' expressed, though, in a way that does not necessarily put the wrongness with the body but that does put it somewhere along the line between expectations from others and an inner experience and its expression" (2014: 268).

[19] Not having to consider gender roles as defining characteristics is a subjective position I can mostly make for myself. Notwithstanding my presence in feminist studies courses, my subjectivity aligns with the normative histories of cisgendered individuals, whose assigned sex at birth and gender identity fall within the normatively perceived male and female binary. In order to be partial when using trans as an umbrella term throughout this project, I prefer to use "non-trans" rather than cisgender when discussing people who do not self-identify as gender nonconforming.

Thus the *DSM-5* reads: "For a person to be diagnosed with gender dysphoria, there must be a marked difference between the individual's expressed/experienced gender and the gender others would assign him or her, and it must continue for six months" (American Psychiatric Association 2013).

Douglas Mason-Schrock analyses the interactive processes of narrative construction with preoperative transsexuals in their quest for a "true self." Mason-Schrock states that "transsexuals… believe they were born in wrong-sexed bodies and want to remedy the mistake, eventually through surgery" (1996: 176). This narrative still resonates with some trans identified individuals. But there is more at work here than this journey's ending goal. The concept itself has been criticized from feminist, queer, and trans theoretical and political stances. Engdahl elaborates on the problem that essentialism plays in these narratives: "The body is assumed wrong in relation to an inner, real, and authentic gender identity, thus giving the impression of an essence that the body constrains, producing a reified image of both body and self as static and separate entities and thereby correlating an essentialism of genital materiality that disputes the realness of transgender experience" (2014: 269). The cultural interpretations of bodies and the subjectively felt meanings of trans embodiment are what are at work here. The materiality of the body and the subjectivity of the self cannot be neatly separated, and they work together to inform multidimensional interpretations of identity. The current focus on medical transition leaves behind those trans individuals who do not desire surgery and wish to live ambiguously. Part of this project considers the narrations of trans subjects who do choose to identify this way.

Susan Stryker, a trans studies scholar, has noted that transgender phenomena "point the way to a different understanding of how bodies mean, how representation works, and

what counts as legitimate knowledge" (2006: 8-9). Despite the desires of some trans identified people to reach the perceived materiality of an opposite anatomical sex, transgender phenomena "call into question both the stability of the material referent 'sex' and the relationship of that category to the linguistic, social, and psychical categories of 'gender'" (9). Trans identified people, the ambiguous bodies of physically intersexed individuals, transsexuals, transvestites, butches, femmes, and queens, all put into question any simplistic notions of material determinism regarding sex and gender.

Even though Jennifer has repeatedly related her experience in binary terms, her identity has traversed a plethora of transgender phenomena. I believe her lived experience provides us with knowledge about the fluidity of gender and sex categories while simultaneously offering a look at the difficulty of working within those socially imposed categories. Despite the ways in which Jennifer has presented her story as one of transition between two gender categories (a narrative that is an extremely important experience for her), the actual experience itself presents us with a different way of conceiving bodily materiality and subjectivity.

In *Assuming a Body,* Gayle Salamon, aided by phenomenology and psychoanalysis, places the relationship we all have with our subjectivities and our bodies as a starting point for possibility:

> Our lives are only thinkable, and livable, through our bodies. Phenomenology offers a helpful way to explore this, in that it insists that my perceptions always flow from the perspective that my body gives me, and the limitations of that perspective enable as well as constrain me. It is not that I possess or am attached to or am carried around by a body, but that I am a body. Psychoanalysis helps on this point as well: I think Freud is getting at something similar when he tells us that the ego is a bodily ego, first and foremost. The trouble begins when we understand the equation of self with body to be the end of the inquiry instead of the beginning. If we grant that bodies are what we are, we forget that we don't yet know in what that being consists. (Salamon and Corbett 2011: 223)

Salamon is interested in what "new forms of embodiment a transgendered subjectivity enables" (2010: 8). Salamon works through Husserl's phenomenological idea involving the "real." The body is but one of many "objects" experienced in the world: "This implies not so much that the object is one thing for many people but that it is many things for many people. A real object is a 'complex of all its possible appearances,' containing within it the possibility of its own being for and from the perspective of any individual person. In this sense, what constitutes something as real is not its materiality but a horizon of possibility, an openness to all the different experiences that it represents to any given person" (Husserl in Salamon 2010: 91). In this way, I want to be clear that I believe Jennifer's experience opens us up to new possibilities of thinking about bodies, behaviors, and selves. Embracing the many colorful ways of conceiving of gender identity and subjectivity individually—masculine, feminine, transitioning, transgender, genderqueer, gender nonconforming, etc.—steers us away from stable referents.

Another complication to add to these discussions of trans subjectivities is the way in which transgender identities and lives have been historically depicted in popular culture as either tragic or comedic. Think about popular films such as *The Crying Game* (1992), *Boys Don't Cry* (1999), and *Soldier's Girl* (2003), or popular reality TV shows such as *Geraldo* and *Jerry Springer*. The trans identified characters and people in these films and shows are represented as people who must harbor gender secrets and suffer pain or death for being trans identified. Comedic tropes of trans characters include sketches form *Saturday Night Live*, *The Hangover: Part II*, and episodes of *Family Guy*. Trans characters are the brunt of jokes in relation to other characters in these popular culture artifacts. Although there are new shows that are currently changing these depictions of trans life, the latter depictions have

contributed to the historical anxiety of trans bodies and fuel ideas about trans bodies as unlivable. Importantly, there are trans individuals, for example two trans women of color, Laverne Cox and Janet Mock, who are currently changing these depictions and creating space for more inclusive ideas of what it means to be trans identified.

Turning the focus back to Jennifer, I would like to introduce some of the queering effects that her identity presents. I argue that Jennifer's identity challenges barriers regarding the cultural and the natural (biological) self given by the brain and materiality, even though growing up she herself articulated her subjectivity mostly in terms of binary norms. Jennifer was aware that something did not align with those norms regarding her subjective self. She often wondered how others were reading her body. For most of her teenage years, Jennifer notes that this was a daily self-conscious affect because she did not experience puberty until she was a senior in high school. That was a difficult year for Jennifer. Throughout high school she relates that she was small in size for her age and says quite literally: "I looked like a girl" (Interview, August 13, 2009). When puberty hit, the growth of hair on her legs and underarms along with slight facial hair sent her into a deep depression. These subjective feelings were reinforced through a bodily materiality that created for Jennifer an association with femininity, and it was an association she believed needed to be kept silent. A lack of resources that might have helped direct and release those feelings was not available. John Leitham's identity as a young musician included a pageboy haircut and a very high singing voice. Her voice was an attribute in rock bands she began performing in during her senior year.

Before her public transition in 2001 (see Chapter 3), there were emotional mood swings involved with hormone therapy. Jennifer notes that some of the physical changes that

took place during hormone therapy involved changes in her fingertips. She believes the hormone treatments made her fingers more sensitive, which made playing the bass easier. As John, she kept her long hair tied back in a ponytail on gigs, but let it down whenever she became Jennifer. I suggest that Jennifer's gender identity involved an in-betweeness that made it difficult for others to "read," therefore creating a queering effect of her identity. Jennifer's discomfort was certainly evident to herself, but one that she articulated as embodying feminine characteristics. Embodying the spaces between male and female subjectivity is often a desired position for gender non-conforming people. This newer beyond-the-binary concept of identity for trans individuals that developed during the 1990s has taken center stage in trans identity politics.

Music was a way for Jennifer to cope with these feelings that she herself has described as gender dysphoria. It has been difficult for Jennifer to reach the point where she no longer feels the need to consider gender roles when describing herself. Music has been a therapeutic thread throughout the ordeal. The CD release of *The Real Me* was Jennifer's musical coming out in relation to the journey she made from an incongruent male embodiment to an affirming female embodiment. Added to this subjective experience is the important notion of gender transition as a journey narrative. Even though that journey narrative is often perceived as one between two fixed points, the productive work of trans narratives offer expressions of gender diversity and affective work that point away from a final destination. In regards to the work of affect, Sara Ahmed argues that feelings register for us on the surfaces of our bodies, and that these sensations cause our body to come into awareness for us. Affect is the felt exchange we have between our bodies and other objects or bodies (2004). Elias Dylan Krell elaborates: "Affect is not simply feeling, but a structure that

constitutes the space between ourselves and other objects. Affects condition the position, quality, and (im)mobility of bodies in space" (2014: 13). As mentioned earlier, the tropes of tragedy and comedy mapped onto trans lives in popular culture are characteristic of undesirable affects of trans identity that were formed during modernity. But trans individuals also point us to the affective possibilities of "bodies in space" (13).

Transitioning

There were several factors that contributed to Jennifer's desire to publicly transition to female during 2001. Jennifer and Sandra had grown apart over the last several years of their marriage due to Jennifer's increased desire to move about in public spaces as female. The very intimate sharing of Jennifer's feminine subjectivity with Sandra was a key factor in their relationship and something Sandra was reluctant to see changed. Eventually divorce papers were served by Sandra, who had also called several of Jennifer's employers and friends "outing" her and warning them that Jennifer was going to be changing from male to female. Sandra also informed Jennifer's mother that her son was going to be changing into a woman. This was embarrassing for Jennifer and was not the way she had hoped to relate it to the people she worked for and loved. But despite Jennifer's lack of control regarding this communicative nightmare, the burden of informing people about this dimension of her identity was lifted. Hormone therapy gave Jennifer a certain sense of euphoria and affirmed her desire to physically transition. Jennifer had also been stashing money away to help finance the cost of sexual reassignment surgery, or SRS.[20] With a loss of family and marital support as well as a decision to accept the possibility of not playing music as a profession,

[20] Sex reassignment surgery (initialized as SRS) is also known as gender reassignment surgery (GRS), genital reconstruction surgery, sex affirmation surgery, gender confirmation surgery, or sex realignment surgery.

Jennifer honestly felt she had nothing more to lose by publicly presenting herself as female. The next chapter details how Jennifer made this transition publicly.

Lucas Cassidy Crawford says that gender transition is always "perceived as journey narratives – rural to urban, moving in a 'straight line' away from a 'wrong body'" (2013: 475). Jay Prosser has noted that "both transsexual and transgendered narratives produce the ongoing functional power that the categories of man and woman still carry for a sense of cultural belonging" (1998: 11). Prosser relates that being "trapped in the wrong body is simply what transsexuality feels like" (69). "Body image… clearly already has a material force for transsexuals" (69), insofar as the ego "is ultimately derived from bodily sensations" (65). Crawford has critiqued this line of thinking by suggesting that these body narratives are derived through complicated affective work that demonstrate how "feelings are generative rather than reflective, productive rather than derivative, and innovative rather than symptomatic" (2013: 476). Crawford states that Prosser "comes dangerously close to suggesting that wrong-body narratives emanate from our skin without the effects of other people or places, or external ideas about gender" (476). In a similar fashion to Salamon's ideas about the body as a "horizon of possibility," Crawford concludes that feelings about oneself, or affect, is the "body's capacity to *undermine* our best attempts at deciding on identities and selves" (italics in original, 477). Although Prosser's observation garnered from trans identified people themselves is important to their sense of self, Crawford's insight demonstrates the instability of buying into socially accepted gender norms that hardly recognize trans identities as either male or female. In other words, are some trans individuals heavily invested in attaining a binaried conception of male or female identity in order to be accepted as gendered subjects within that binary system? That outcome certainly has its

appeal as Prosser has noted, but as Crawford's assessment demonstrates, the social attitudes and cultural reality directed toward many trans individuals tends to discount, rather than affirm, their identities in relation to masculine and feminine categories. In other words, the affective work of the self and the ways others see us, must be taken into consideration when describing identity.

Also, trans identity reveals a wonderful diversity in gender expression, diversity that continues to challenge the operations of social power that create gender norms. Queer theory has often celebrated the liberating aspects of gender non-conforming people, but my intent is to recognize that Jennifer's identity is both liberatory and restricted by gender norms. Again, Jennifer's own narrative points to the restrictive categories of male and female, yet, at the same time, her lived experience demonstrates the instability of those categories. This does not mean that those categories suddenly wither and become passé, but trans lives offer the possibilities of transforming those categories.

Talia Bettcher argues that "in many trans subcultures… the meaning of terms such as *woman* and *man* are altered so that both trans men and trans women turn out to paradigm instances of men and women respectively… an MTF may count as a man in mainstream culture while she may count as a woman in a resistant trans subculture" (2012: 241-42). Altering the meanings of supposed stable gendered categories is a desire for many trans people. But Bettcher elaborates further on the claims of self-identity that take into account more than any simple idea of living beyond-the-binary: "The political conflict, at any rate, is framed in terms of competing cultural formations where the dominant one possesses institutional power and the capacity to enforce a way of life and way of seeing the world, regardless of the personal costs to the trans people involved and regardless of subcultural

socially practices which help give their lives meaning" (2014). I believe Bettcher's nuanced take on trans identity takes into account both the liberatory politics of trans identity and its more repressed presentation in mainstream politics. Jennifer's subjectivity tends not to express the more liberatory side of trans identity as she did not partake in subcultural social practices in Los Angeles that celebrate trans identities, and she has been affected by institutional powers that regulate gender categories. Although it may seem that Jennifer has been negatively affected by the inability to embrace liberatory trans politics and the powers of regulatory control, I argue that in being "split" between these two aspects of trans identity, Jennifer was, and continues to be, a pioneer of trans identity.

Jennifer's "Split Brain"

As mentioned earlier, Jennifer's CD *The Real Me* is a musical coming out. The music is a culmination of several years of writing and performing new compositions that reveal Jennifer's journey of subjectivity. In this section, I discuss "Split Brain" and its importance to Jennifer's subjectivity and identity.[21] The song's lyrics present both the idea of a wrong-body narrative and a journey narrative of transition. The liner notes written by Jennifer regarding "Split Brain" retell the story that opens this chapter. Jennifer also adds that "the lyric is a more recent development. It's become a tune that is about acceptance of one's true self and the ramifications involved" (Leitham 2006).

One way to examine "Split Brain" is by looking at the song's lyrical content and relating this to Jennifer's specific identity, but I am also interested in moving beyond the text to relate how this music is a work of the self. As I have noted above, the idea of being split-in-half can still permeate issues of identity and music-making. When individuals wrestle with

[21] I discuss the importance of other selections from *The Real Me* in the next chapter.

the affective qualities of being split, duality, or double-consciousness, the work of binaries, whether related to age, race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, or disability, is reified in ways that sometimes suggests no other alternatives. Part of Jennifer's tune addresses these feelings of doubleness, but is complicated when intertwined with the shifting and transitional experiences of trans people. Rather than treat "Split Brain" as some kind of literal statement about being "split in-half," I am more interested in how this song and its reception with audiences might tell us something different about music and identity. I am, however, also sensitive to the ways in which some trans identified and gender nonconforming people speak about this song, and the ways in which they often reference in binary terms the journey the song conveys.

Jennifer originally wrote this song as an instrumental. The form of the song is based on a standard jazz format of AABA, although each A section is 16 measures in length while the B section, or "bridge," is half that length at 8 measures (please see the music for "Split Brain" in Appendix A). There is also the standard practice of contrasting the B section harmonically and melodically from the A section. What makes this tune slightly different than other "standard" jazz forms is the length of the A section and its harmonic movement. The first 8 measures are all based around an E minor harmony. The remaining 8 measures move through a short sequence of ii-V-I in C for four measures, then a ii-V-i in E minor through another four measures. Like the harmony, the melody here, in contrast to the B section, is more open and spacious. The B section's harmony moves chromatically down every two measures by half steps from C7 to F#7 with a much busier and syncopated melodic line. This section's contrast with the A sections "splits" the tune nicely.

I recently asked Jennifer what she was thinking about musically when she first wrote the song as an instrumental. Her idea was that the A sections were more open and logical, which she noted corresponds to the left hemisphere of the brain. According to Jennifer, the bridge's contrast is associated with the right hemisphere because it is the more creative section of the song (pers. comm., July 11, 2017). Jennifer made no reference to the idea that the song was written about her identity back in 1984, yet she also told me in 2013 that during those years she was "split in-half" trying to live publicly as male and privately as female (pers. comm., December 6, 2013). The liner notes about "Split Brain" from *The Real Me CD* also point toward the "conundrum" facing Jennifer back in the 1980s (Leitham 2006). In my opinion, Jennifer did make associations with this song back in 1984 that involved more than a musical take on the left and right hemispheres of the brain. Since adding the lyrics, Jennifer's public introduction of the song follows the narrative written at the beginning of this chapter.

The lyrics partially invoke a wrong-body narrative—the idea of living in a wrongly sexed body and the desire to move away from that toward a correctly sexed body. These lyrics (below) begin by referencing a journey toward a final destination and reference that journey in binary terms:

Verse 1:
I took a ride out on the freeway
I took the long way, trying to get home
But you know it's a drive I shouldn't have to make
The road was too long, the path was a song, it's too much to take

Verse 2:
Why did the one side want to dominate
Why did the other hide, in plain sight
I knew it wasn't a choice, I didn't hesitate
Just to make it all one, the deed was no fun, to make it allright

B Section (bridge):
But I was the only one to see it all from the start
Kept it inside, went for the ride
Didn't know why, in my heart
You came, and we decided just to
Put it away and pretend it was a game
It wasn't cool to bend the rule and go to school
To learn that life isn't in your name

Verse 3:
Now that the nexus is behind me
I take no joy in losses made
They're gone but now it's a whole new world of wonder
You know the mind is the key, the happiness free, there's no one to blame

Solos, repeat verse 3

Verse 4:
We go along with our conundrums
We take the way that hurts the least
It's tough, but what if the way that hurts releases
The life we control, the joy in our soul, the path is to peace

B Section (bridge) repeats

These verses appear to reify the feelings of a double consciousness and, if armed with knowledge of Jennifer's past, a transition from one socially imposed, pre-existing gender category to the other. Living with the dual relationship of performing as male and "living" as female was something Jennifer was experiencing back in the 1980s. There is also a very personal side of this story brought forth in the bridge's lyrics. Jennifer's wife eventually came to resent the gradual transition working to make Jennifer "publicly" female. That was a part of their relationship keeping them together—"Jennifer" in private *only* at home.

I also mention destination to highlight how Jennifer has related the transition to female as a liberating experience, but it is not an experience for all trans identified people. This is to allow a consideration of the kind of knowledge that trans people have of their "own

embodied experience, and of their relationships to the discourses and institutions that act upon and through them" (Stryker 2006: 13). Stryker and Aizura have also noted that "there must be careful attention to the movement of transgender phenomena, knowledges, and practices across regions, nations, and rural-urban spaces" and "how various local phenomena imagine their own relationship to those things that 'transgender' can often evoke – modernity, metropolitanism, Eurocentrism, whiteness, globalization, transnationalism" (Stryker and Aizura 2013: 9). Indeed, "the production of transgender whiteness as a process of value-extraction from bodies of color both within and outside the global north and west therefore remains an important target of criticism" (10). This is simply to relate how Jennifer's experience cannot account for any universalizing ideas about transgender phenomena and is a reminder that in some ways "trans normativity" applies to Jennifer herself. Transgender phenomena's "multiple and contradictory statuses of visibility and erasure, of presence and absence, are intimately related to the operations of social power that create norms, impart consequence to difference, and construct the space of a dominant culture" (Stryker 2006: 15).

The music also relates the emotional work of transition. Transition and transformation have been a part of Jennifer's life challenges, and they are, of course, not unique to her alone. There are differing levels of public and private visibility that the song displays that are also displayed in Jennifer's work of the self. Multiple transitions and transformations are taking place at once—changes in subjectivity, personal choices, musical choices, and personal relationships. This is certainly not an experience relegated to some trans identified people alone, but concerning those identities, this is more a state of *becoming* rather than *being*. Judith Halberstam—although writing about the radical styles crafted in queer punk bands,

slam poetry events, and drag king boy bands—relates that the identities formed around those styles "do not express some mythically pure form of agency or will but rather model other modes of being and becoming that scramble our understandings of place, time, development, action, and transformation" (2005: 186-187). I argue that Jennifer does this kind of work in jazz music—"scrambling" what it means to be a performer of the music. I do not mean to imply that her music invokes a trans aesthetic.[22] Rather her presence as a performer of the genre offers an alternative identity of jazz performance that opens up possibilities for other LGBTQ performers.

Lucas Crawford discusses gender transition in terms of rural and urban migration. Transition as journey narratives goes hand-in-hand with ideas about geographical migration. Crawford invokes Deleuze and Guattari's concept of "deterritorialization" which implicates both body and space; "…the literal shapes we impose upon bodies, buildings, or hillsides are constitutive of how we will be able to move and be moved. If these nonurban motifs are not accidental, how might a kind of gender nomadism – of refusing home, of refusing the straightest and quickest path between two points – demand a reconfiguration of how we think and feel about space?" (Crawford 2013: 478). Crawford looks at differences between urban and rural depictions of trans identity and transition. Urban areas are places where trans identity is expected to be "out" within a community of identity while at the same time offering an escape from one's history by merging with the crowds of urban areas. Crawford, writing from personal experience, asks, what if rural communities mark trans identity as unremarkable and unnoticed? In doing so, Crawford further complicates the idea that trans identity moves seamlessly from one form of gendered being to another, especially in relation

[22] In the next chapter, I consider the ways jazz musicians work against ideas of jazz as having any gendered connotations apparent in its aesthetic make-up.

to movement from rural to urban spaces where a perceived escape from small town identity motivates trans individuals (2013: 481). While this is not an experience specific to Jennifer, it complicates the narratives of transition and trans identity itself.

Julian Carter wants to consider transition in terms of physical gestures; "movements from place to place (*trans/situ)* that simultaneously shift our relations with our own bodies and the bodies of others" (131). Carter does a close reading of a work by contemporary choreographer Sean Dorsey. Carter helpfully relates the wrong-body trope and gender transition as a "reparative process through which one alters a bad form so that its structure aligns with and reflects a particular content more precisely. That understanding presumes that content exists prior to and separate from its expression… the problem with such accounts of transition is that they can consider time only as an inert substance linking physical moments or embodied states that are static in themselves" (2013: 141). Carter counters this idea by noting that "Dorsey offers a vision of transitional time, and transitioning bodies, as dynamic and relational negotiations of wrongness… transition enfolds the body in its own material substance, yet allows for that substance's alteration. Anticipation, retroflexion, and continuity co-exist in the same body, at the same moving moment of space and time" (141). Carter is suggesting that transitioning bodies embrace past and present bodily experiences while simultaneously working toward a bodily future: "Transitioning subjects anticipate a gender content they generate recursively out of their physical medium's formal potential in relation to the context of its emergence. One might say that transition wraps the body in the folds of social time" (141). Is it possible to consider Jennifer's identity in these terms? I believe her embodied identities have embraced past, present, and future bodily experiences even if she herself has related those experiences in binary terms. In other words, Jennifer moved through

transition having past knowledge of being male embodied and what that meant for her career was substantial. Simultaneously, the ongoing feelings and notions of being female embodied were ever present and acted upon while the male embodied career flourished. Jennifer also imagined and eventually pursued a public future of female presentation and embodiment. It should be obvious that this is not a simple movement from male to female. Multidimensional levels of identity are at work here. There are gendered facets of Jennifer's identity that embrace elements of bodily past, present, and future—embodiments that continue to inform her subjectivity and identify.

Joe Stevens has articulated to me that "you're never done transitioning" and, moving beyond gender, he meant that in relation to changes that occur to individuals in all areas of life (Interview, July 30, 2014). Despite the narratives of transitioning that Jennifer has relayed, she has also embraced her subjectivity in relation to being trans identified. Jennifer does this through lobbying efforts on Capitol Hill (she has been to Washington, D.C. several times to speak with members of Congress regarding trans issues), speaking engagements at various public events, and is continually supportive of trans people in all arenas of life. Jennifer built a successful career as a male performer and now has a solo career that is built in part on her identity as a trans musician. I believe these aspects of her identity cannot be neatly parceled out and should be celebrated here as they articulate the possibilities for trans bodies and identities. That Jennifer uses music performance to relate her embodied trans identity is significant. Music performance is at the heart of transitional time and contributes to the formation of gendered identities.

In many ways, artists take on the burden of all gendered and racial identities, and the ways in which musicians perform those identities informs others who grapple with their own

issues of subjectivity and identity. In addition to the affective work that "Split Brain" does in articulating certain individual aspects of trans identity, that work is also relayed to audience members. Krell notes that "performance opens modes of self-fashioning and of resistance for artists, which can be taken up by their audience members as celebratory representations of trans identity" (2104: 9). This is not to suggest that all audiences and all performances do this kind of affective work. In fact, Krell also adds that "one aspect of the unpredictability of performance is that we cannot control who or how people will take it up" (244).

Jennifer has inspired others whether they identify as trans or not. Transition is not a goal for Gillian (Jill). Jill is an assigned male, but feels comfortable cross-dressing as female at Jennifer's shows, where, by her own admission, her physical appearance can indeed be very ambiguous (Interview, April 27, 2013). Jill has no desire to physically transition to female, but wholeheartedly supports Jennifer's decision to do so. Jill interprets the ride on the freeway as a metaphor for life—a road we must all take, but a road for Jennifer that has been filled with detours and blockages. Jill describes herself as "two-spirited," finding support and recognition in queer and trans communities. Jill says:

> Ultimately, the tough journey that cost [Jennifer] so much was imminently worth it. That fills me with hope. It certainly has universal meaning: we should all strive for our own authenticity, to follow the dictates of our daimôn or controlling spirit. On the down side, Jennifer's words and life make me feel a bit like a coward for not taking her road to the end. But that's HER road, and every road is different. (Interview, April 27, 2013)

Again, a journey narrative that implies a final destination is evident in Jill's take on Jennifer's song. But Jill herself is not making that journey.

For Abby, who is non-trans, the song itself resonates with ideas of living a life where one does not fit in:

> In the arts, I was too intellectual, practical and didn't suffer fools lightly. I got frustrated and angry and sick of dealing with dummies. In the law, I'm too soft, too liberal, too self-deprecating, have too much of a sense of humor, and miss the creative loonies of the arts. I hate the corporate environment but feel like a nerd in more "bohemian" settings. I am the type of person who likes to sit at a safe distance and observe. And I'm also the person who jumps in, takes over and attracts too much attention. I have been more comfortable with lesbians than with my life with straight women, and maybe that's some part of this 'hidden' me that I'm not entirely copping to. (pers. comm., June 27, 2014)

Abby says she does not have Jennifer's optimism, but she notes that this is an aspect of Jennifer she admires and respects. She has been an avid supporter and regular attendee at many of Jennifer's gigs. Related to Jennifer and "Split Brain," Abby says that "I simply want to be happy in my own skin, and be myself and be ok with that… and accept that being 'split' may not be unhealthy, if I can 'make it all one' in the service of my own happiness" (pers. comm., June 27, 2014).

In some ways, I believe Jennifer inspires trans and non-trans individuals alike to embrace changes that take place in life. It is in the process of *becoming* where identities and subjectivities are always in flux. This also speaks to how "the different dimensions of identity form a gestalt—a complex whole in which the various parts color and inform one another" (Berger and Del Negro 2004: 125). The idea that there will be a final destination, although romantic and something that appears grounding in nature, is not really sustainable. Looking at all of the different aspects of Jennifer's identity gives us insight into how trans lives might affect all of us. I consider myself blessed to be working with such an amazing musician. At the same time, I am amazed at her resiliency and tenacity when it comes to negotiating her career. Despite the work that "Split Brain" does to illuminate for Jennifer her gendered duality, for others, the song, as well as Jennifer's performances, allow for an expression of diverse subjectivities and offer an inspiration to lives that embrace a state of

becoming. The next chapter brings more biographical work on Jennifer into perspective in relation to her career as a jazz musician.

Chapter 3 Jazz, Career Losses, Identity Gains and Trans Subjectivity

Fear generally ruled my life, I grew up just shakin' in my boots that people were going to find out what I really was like… The fact that I knew about my gender situation really early… It dawned on me when I was about four years old… I also got pretty well pounded into me that that kind of behavior was not to be tolerated… I went underground completely with it… Most of my childhood I grew up thinking there's something really wrong with me.[23]

Setting the stage

Although the foregoing statement articulates and pertains to the early life experience of Jennifer (John) Leitham, that experience—the shame and confusion of not meeting other people's expectations of normative gender alignment—is not uncommon for a former generation of trans individuals. Obviously, each individual's story is unique, and the current cultural and political climate of tolerance surrounding transgender identity is improving, but ostracism experienced by trans people continues in certain arenas of life. While advocacy groups, access to information, and personal counseling are currently easier for trans people to obtain, Jennifer's generation lacked any such avenues of assistance or visible role models that may have informed them about trans identity.[24] Her story takes place within a specific historical context of time and place where ideas about gender non-conformity would have been easily misunderstood. Transgender or transsexual identity was something Jennifer never even considered during her childhood and young adult years. While the visibility of LGBT identities has dramatically increased since the 1960s and 70s, challenges still exist for trans identified people. This is evidenced through the continuing struggles that transgender and

[23] Jennifer Leitham, interview by author, digital recording Pasadena, CA, August 13, 2009.

[24] Throughout this chapter I will use the name Jennifer as well as feminine pronouns to refer to Jennifer Leitham.

gender non-conforming people face regarding healthcare, bullying, and other forms of discrimination.[25]

Jennifer Leitham is a gifted jazz musician, composer, and vocalist who is also trans identified. In this chapter, I intersperse Jennifer's biographical narrative with histories and narratives of jazz music and performance that include references to male and female performers. This is to situate Jennifer's personal story in relation to jazz music's gendered and racial past. I take as inspiration Ruth Hellier's ethnomusicological edited volume of women singers. The authors of that volume draw from feminist theory, historiography, and postmodern scholarship to "recognize the value and significance of a single life, not in order to make generalizations about other lives or about a broader context, or indeed to further a comparative approach, but solely in terms of that one person, regardless of status and recognition" (2013: 7). What is important in Hellier's volume about status and recognition is not whether the women singers were well-known singers, but rather how each singer had a personal relationship with the authors of that volume. Like Hellier's volume, this dissertation echoes the regard for single lives, but also makes comparisons of those lives in order to relate how choices and decisions made by individuals reveal "multiplicity, complexity, and shifting identities" (14). Jennifer's life choices are also informed by the larger social, cultural, and historical situations of her times. Thus, in Jennifer's case, career choices and decisions involve a level of status and recognition that play a role in her subjectivity and identity. How and why did Jennifer make choices and decisions regarding her music career? How did this affect her subjectivity and identity? What choices, beliefs, desires, and perceptions does she articulate herself? What are the consequences of being trans identified related to a particular

[25] National Center for Transgender Equality, "Home Page," National Center for Transgender Equality, http://transequality.org/ (accessed November 27, 2010).

community of jazz musicians and fans? In this chapter, I look at the complex ways in which Jennifer's identity as a jazz musician has, in part, been determined by the genre's history, how she has internally dealt with-social norms, and what it means to embody white, masculine, feminine, and gender expansive forms of identity. What is especially rich and complex about Jennifer's life are her experiences with multiple performances of identity, and this means she has much to tell us about multiple identities in terms of gender and jazz music. In this chapter, Jennifer often describes her subjectivity in relation to gender binaries. Of course I want to honor her narratives in relation to her ideas about herself, but I also plan to discuss what it means when facets of her trans identity are foregrounded and what that may mean in relation to the performers of jazz music. There are also places where I take a more interpretive approach in grappling with jazz and identity.

I hope to avoid an approach that objectifies the trans subject. Sherrie Tucker, aided by Jonathan Ned Katz's ideas on queer historiography, warns scholars about limiting queer theory to bodies that offer alternatives to gendered depictions of jazz:

> If a dominant fantasy of the 'jazzman' (I am using 'man' intentionally) in one discursive moment or another is constructed, even romanticized, as hyper-hetero-masculine, we might aim to disrupt this routine by *proving* that some actual musicians and fans 'deviate' from that norm. But to do so without 'naming the norm' and 'considering it perplexing,' is to risk mapping another set of desires on bodies already saturated with sexualized and romanticized projections. (Tucker 2008)

In some instances, bodies that have the potential to deviate from the norm may actually desire to remain unnamed. Some alternatively gendered identities fear rejection from jazz musicians and wish not to draw attention to their difference. This is not, however, the case for Jennifer.

Jennifer's success as a jazz musician involves a complicated mix of living with expected gendered norms, deviating from those norms, and performing subjectivities that are

reflected through her music. The gendered history of jazz music performance is mostly invested in a masculine presentation of the music, from its performance history of the great men of jazz to taboos that include its homophobic nature. In some ways this historically male-oriented past related to *instrumental performance* perceivably continues, and, in what follows, I want to question whether Jennifer and other LGBTQ identified artists are slowly creating space where alternative subjectivities can be enacted. Many gay and lesbian jazz musicians dismiss any notions of queer aesthetics in jazz, but their presence does open up possibilities for future LGBTQ performers. What's at stake in this particular genre is whether alternatively gendered artists contribute to larger ideas of how "music invites individuals to question subjectivity as it is composed according to the structure of 'compulsory heterosexuality' in phallocentric, patriarchal culture" (Peraino 2003: 433). What does it mean to be a trans identified artist performing jazz music?

Jennifer's Early Life and Identity in Jazz

Jennifer was assigned male at birth, but early on in her life experience she self-identified as female. As evidenced in the quote above relative to some of her earliest memories as a child, Jennifer knew she was different from defined roles of gender assignment, and life in 1950s Reading, Pennsylvania, offered no solace or understandings about her gender identity. Jennifer notes that she survived adolescence by playing baseball, something she excelled at and greatly enjoyed. The Leitham family moved to King of Prussia in 1964. When puberty hit, she fell into a deep depression and survived her high school senior year by staying active in the school choir. The choir director, Mrs. Brownlow, encouraged her to stay on track for graduation. While in the choir, Jennifer discovered that

she had a fairly high singing voice. Although she was placed in the tenor section at the time, Jennifer felt she was more of a mezzo-soprano. Occasionally singing the "Star Spangled Banner" over loudspeakers before the start of many school days and being part of a barbershop quartet were some of the benefits the choir offered. The choral training substantiated other advantages during that senior year and beyond:

> I started to hang around with some young rock 'n' roll musicians that had bands. And because of my voice, I was a valuable person to have around… I could sing high harmonies… it harkened me back to when I was in fourth grade and The Beatles invasion happened… I was in this talent show where four of us "guys" - quote, unquote – got together and we mimicked The Beatles. We did a lip-sync thing to the Beatles, and I was Paul, so I held this instrument [bass] left-handed. (Interview, August 13, 2009)

Jennifer likes to comment that she figured guitars were played right-handed and basses were played left-handed. She only later realized, after taking up the instrument left-handed, that Paul McCartney was an exception to an instrument more commonly performed right-handed. It is more likely she knew the difference all-along, but Jennifer has since commented that playing the bass left-handed always felt natural. Since Jennifer also loves to play softball and throws a ball right-handed, this is more symbolic of ambidexterity, which she has also commented on regarding conceptions of herself. Occasionally Jennifer still performs on electric bass, although she prefers the upright, acoustic bass. And because she is a left-handed player, she must always perform on her own left-handed instrument. That instrument used to travel everywhere with her in a massive hard shell bass case, but more recently Jennifer packs an electric upright bass that can be easily disassembled for trips. The cost of transporting the larger specialized instrument has become prohibitive.

Playing the part of Paul McCartney led Jennifer to consider getting into local rock groups. As both bassist and singer, Jennifer was soon performing in rock bands and easily

navigated high harmonies that local rock bands sought after in a musician. Playing bass allowed Jennifer to shift the focus away from her gendered quandaries of subjectivity. Musical performance became the escape and immersible relief from the friction caused by male and female experiences of embodiment.

Jennifer's experience of gendered friction is not unique. Leslie Feinberg, a grass roots activist for transgender equality, has written about her own struggles to overcome the masculine/feminine gender binary that haunted her as a child. Her upbringing left no tolerance for thinking any other way, which was direct and forceful: "Men are masculine and women are feminine. End of subject" (1996: 102). But Feinberg states that she found relief in the "gay drag community—drag queens and drag kings—in the bars of Toronto and southern Ontario when I was a very young teen."[26] Family members who reinforce gender binaries as non-negotiable identities contribute to a suppression of desires for trans individuals. Those desires may include placing one's subjectivity in-line with a gendered body that is different from the physical body presented and assigned at birth. This suppression also works outside the family where it is not surprising that trans individuals experience acts of injustice, persecution, and violence when they work against the perceived attributes of a dual gendered society (Felsenthal 2004: 210). A prime example of such behavior has been studied and discussed at length regarding the short life of Brandon Teena. Brandon Teena was an American trans man murdered at age 21 in Humboldt, Nebraska in 1993. The story of the two men convicted of murdering Teena along with two other friends, Lisa Lambert and Philip DeVine, involves raping and assaulting Teena days before the murders. Part of the events leading up to Teena's murder involved the killers' inability to perceive Teena

[26] http://home.mira.net/~janie/essays/feinberg96.html

successfully passing as a man. Brandon Teena's story subsequently became sensationalized in print and film. Judith Halberstam analyzes in great depth, and from many angles, the stories concerning Teena's life and death as well as those of Lambert and DeVine. Race, nonnormative masculinities, rural life, queer identity, and heteromasculinities all play a role in creating an "archive capable of providing a record of the complex interactions of race, class, gender, and sexuality that result in murder, but whose origins lie in state-authorized formations of racism, homophobia, and poverty" (Halberstam 2005: 46). In *Black on Both Sides*, C. Riley Snorton looks closely at DeVine's fate and relationship to Lambert and Teena, adding an important inclusion to the story that has been ignored in popular retellings of the murders (2017).

I want to quickly discuss the implications of being a woman instrumentalist performing jazz before turning back to Jennifer, who perceived performing as a woman in the genre to be detrimental to her career. To underscore the difficulties of penetrating the jazz world as a woman, Ingrid Monson's combination as both a woman and trumpet player was often met with resistance. Early on in her performance career, the "broader fraternity of trumpet players" did not accept Monson. "There was something about being a woman that was disqualifying" (2008: 270). The lack of women jazz instrumentalists is certainly historically evident regarding rhythm section performers. The acoustic bass in jazz finds its historical corollary within the "cultural sphere of orchestra and band instruments" (Clawson 1999: 203). Within that world, "there is a widespread notion that the larger the instrument is, and the deeper its sound, the more masculine it is—and, as a corollary, the fewer women who play it" (Dahl 1984: 36).

But Jennifer's story does not originate from a position as a female assigned at birth. Even though she has often articulated her subjectivity as that of female, her position as a musician began with the notion that a masculine presentation was necessary in order to perform jazz music. At times, Jennifer chose to accept and act on her desire for femininity, but kept this private, maintaining her masculine public persona in professional life. The pressure of professional rejection and public acceptance kept facets of Jennifer's trans identity in the shadows. I want to be clear that this is how Jennifer articulated her subjectivity in relation to her career.

The fears of losing work, being treated differently, and the choices she made are predicated on the foregrounding of her trans identity. In other words, Jennifer's movement within, between, and around gender categories is different than the experiences a non-trans woman may have in relation to jazz. A non-trans woman does not grapple with the idea of passing on a daily basis. Jennifer was apprehensive about her ability to pass as a woman, even though she successfully did so apart from music performance spaces. The idea of passing as a woman in jazz performance was unthinkable since she had already established herself as a male performer. Jennifer's past was constituted by the subjective idea that something was very wrong with this gender mismatch. The unsettled grounding of perceived gender identity, while not completely unique or specific to every trans individual, can be manifested acutely in some individuals who see it as a daily struggle.

The fear of being rejected in jazz performance as other than a male instrumentalist is an experience that may appear to have some parallels with the story of Billy Tipton. When I explain my connections with Jennifer to other jazz aficionados, they often evoke Tipton's name as a corollary experience. But this has its problems. Assigned female at birth, Tipton,

performed on both piano and saxophone, lived life as a man and successfully navigated a jazz career spanning well over fifty years. Upon Tipton's death in 1989, Tipton's body—literally laid bare by paramedics, funeral home directors, and subsequently the news that created a public fascination out of Tipton's life—revealed that Tipton was female. Tipton's life is often mentioned as an example of the extent to which a person must go to infiltrate the masculine world of jazz performance. Diane Middlebrook's highly publicized biography of Tipton, *Suits Me: The Double Life of Billy Tipton*, does exactly this by demonstrating the difficulties Tipton had in finding gigs in Oklahoma City in 1934. The biography discusses the ways Tipton "performed" masculinity, but does not investigate the motivations Tipton may have had for leading a life as a male beyond suggesting that Tipton's male persona fooled everyone and was simply motivated by Tipton's desire to perform jazz music (Middlebrook 1998: 57-58). Middlebrook points out that even Tipton's closest life partners never knew of Tipton's female embodiment. The idea that Tipton's life was successful based on his own decisions and choices are something the stories about Tipton often fail to mention.[27] Cultural critic Clark Humphrey points to the story's triumph: "Tipton wasn't a jazz great and probably knew he'd never be one, but he died a success at becoming something, and someone, he wanted against all odds to become–and without benefit of surgeries, shots, or hormone pills" (Humphrey 1998). Considering the subjective desires of Tipton complicates the sensationalized narratives that highlight Tipton's life.

It is difficult to know exactly (especially in 1934 Oklahoma City) what role instrumental jazz as a male-dominated performance arena might have played in the story of

[27] For an extended analysis of Middlebrook's biography about Billy Tipton, as well as the film *The Brandon Teena Story*, see Judith Halberstam's article *Telling Tales: Brandon Teena, Billy Tipton, and Transgender Biography* (2000).

Billy Tipton, but Jennifer thought it to be consequential during her formative years as a performer in Philadelphia. Tipton's first experiences with jazz may have been framed as a female assigned at birth, while Jennifer's were as a male assigned at birth. Both performers chose to present as male since, to some extent, they both perceived the genre to be male-dominated. Thus the similarities between Tipton and Jennifer in relation to the performance of the music's gendered past highlight the prominence of masculine identified instrumentalists within the genre. But the similarities quickly fade when presented with each individual's contextually rich and personal story. For example, Tipton's transition to jazz performance was performed in relative obscurity at a young age while Jennifer chose a public setting at a much older age. According to accounts from family members who knew Tipton, they were as surprised to learn of Tipton's female assignment as that of complete strangers. Jennifer chose to confide in those closest to her throughout her life and career.

As mentioned in the introduction to this dissertation, a helpful way to consider Jennifer, Billy Tipton, as well as other subjects of this dissertation, might better be thought of lives that encompass what Avery Gordon calls a "complex personhood:"

> …all people (albeit in specific forms whose specificity is sometimes everything) remember and forget, are beset by contradiction, and recognize and misrecognize themselves and others… Complex personhood means that the stories people tell about themselves, about their troubles, about their social worlds, and about their society's problems are entangled and weave between what is immediately available as a story and what their imaginations are reaching toward… At the very least, complex personhood is about conferring the respect on others that comes from presuming that life and people's lives are simultaneously straightforward and full of enormously subtle meaning. (1996: 4-5)

Jennifer flourished with her female subjectivity at home and in places she felt safe to do so. She confided in those she trusted in order to present herself as female and then changed roles when it was time to perform as a jazz bassist. The private and public fluctuations of

Jennifer's identity are behaviors that demonstrate action, movement, and fluidity within experiences of gender. In other words, Jennifer moved between perceived gender roles early in her career in order to sustain her identity. This is not to suggest that Jennifer was transitioning. It is to highlight the active role of gender as a performative act and "is accomplished by 'doing' something rather than 'being' something" (Stryker 2006: 10). Jennifer chose movement between the performative roles of male and female identities in order to survive.

Sherrie Tucker presents us with an alternative history of women instrumentalists who were active in the United States during the 1930s and 1940s (Tucker 2000). Tucker's scholarship is an important contribution to herstories about jazz instrumentalists, even though Jennifer often pointed to the great men of jazz as being exemplars of the genre (Hellier 2013: 1). That is a narrative that has historically been told many times over and can be found more recently in Ken Burns's nine-part documentary film *Jazz* (2001). George Lipsitz's critique of the film points to the combined "privileged time of modernity and the privileged space of America" as contributors in *Jazz* that "draw attention to one privileged social subject: the heroic creative artist" (2007: 84). Lipsitz goes on to list many alternative artists' contributions, including important women contributors, to the genre's history. I do not wish to conflate female and trans subjectivities here, but both are at work in Jennifer's decisions about performing jazz. It should be understandable why Jennifer desired secrecy. She felt the need to present herself in public as male partly due to her perception of a lack of women instrumentalists. Despite the perceived obstacles and the ways Jennifer felt it necessary to present as male in bass performance, she found ways to engage her female subjectivity away

from the jazz world. I develop this part of Jennifer's story, as well as her development as a performer, below.

Life in Philly, Eventual Move to California, and Controlling Gender Dysphoria

The depression brought on by puberty contributed to Jennifer's disinterest in school, and as mentioned above, if not for the school's choir director, Jennifer may not have graduated from high school. Jennifer often skipped school during her senior year and hitchhiked from King of Prussia to Norristown in order to work in a car wash in the afternoons, then returned to King of Prussia to work in a fast food restaurant at night. Jennifer worked these two jobs in order to have enough money to purchase her first electric bass, which was her ticket to playing in local bands.

This was also the period of glam rock, and Jennifer explains that "David Bowie-esque bands who wore makeup and mostly female attire were the rage, even on the local level. Best of all, it seemed to attract girls who accepted me into their tribe" (Leitham 2006). A string of steady club dates allowed Jennifer the opportunity to meet women: "It seemed girls were very interested in my feminine ways. In those early days I never volunteered any information about it but they didn't take long to get to the heart of the matter. With the clothes and makeup I was wearing on stage all that was needed to finish the job was a skirt and there were plenty of girlfriends who gladly zipped me up. Fun!" (2006). Jennifer does not specifically mention whether or not she was explicitly presenting as female with these girlfriends, but she "received makeup tips, we went shopping, and on my night off, we went dancing. No one seemed to be able to tell that I might have been different underneath than the rest of the girls." This period of Jennifer's life was something she describes as a "zany

roller coaster ride" (2006). The highs included performing each night and befriending local women, while the lows included being fired from the local band due to substance abuse (a very brief experimental period for Jennifer) and purging her feminine wardrobe and subsequently, her female subjectivity. According to Jennifer, the reasons for the purging, which happened several times throughout her career, were related to the idea that "keeping mum about my true nature was essential if I was to make a go of it in the macho, male-dominated music world in Philadelphia" (2006). This was one way Jennifer attempted to keep her female subjectivity at bay. Often, studying music intensely allowed Jennifer to perceivably rid herself both physically and mentally of many things feminine. Working with an intense practice regime and bass lesson schedule kept Jennifer's mind occupied and focused. Social life dwindled, as did dwelling on female subjectivity.

This period of intense study began in the early 1970s. Jennifer lived in Philadelphia and began studying string bass in earnest with Al Stauffer. Stauffer helped Jennifer find Tom Brunner, who, as she affectionately and humorously notes, performed a "bass reassignment"—taking an old right-handed string bass and transforming it for a left-hand player (Interview, August 13, 2009). Philadelphia offered Jennifer a period of growth on the string bass that included learning flamenco techniques from Carlos Rubio. Jennifer perfected this skill that includes plucking the strings of the instrument from the knuckles of her left hand. She often utilizes the technique, which includes a large physical motion of her arm and hand, on her improvisations and solo bass pieces. Jennifer often moves her entire body with this technique, and the physicality of the motions is visually aggressive. Jennifer and Carlos often jammed together, and she says that she translated his "Spanish classical guitar approach" to bass noting that "the attack and articulation is invaluable for expression… it's

really wonderful to have that variety, especially learning it that early on in my studying career" (Interview, August 13, 2009). I am not suggesting here a masculine presentation regarding Jennifer's technique. She regards this as adding to the expressiveness of her musicality. I highlight this aspect of her playing as a technique that is uncommon with many jazz bassists.

Despite the desires to purge her feminine tendencies during this time, Jennifer shared an intimate relationship with a woman who allowed Jennifer to be her feminine self. For a period of six months, Jennifer was "lost in a feminine cloud. I indulged in cosmetics, perfume, long luxurious baths, Chanel suits, sparkling jewels, so well groomed and pampered. For a young person fighting a war over gender, it was a true paradise" (Leitham 2006). That relationship was short lived, but it did allow space for a continuing involvement of Jennifer's female subjectivity, albeit related through a particular narrative of femininity. The descriptions of femininity offered by Jennifer in this narrative are a stereotypically gendered construction of identity. This is evidenced by Jennifer's foregrounding of reflective perceptions about womanhood based on the stereotypical, cultural formation of woman as an identity category. As far as I am aware, this particular kind of experience is rarely evident in Jennifer's narrative, but in this instance it offers more insight into Jennifer's multidimensional facets of identity.

In the early 1980s, Jennifer had a regular gig at the infamous Palumbo's in South Philadelphia and she and Sandra, Jennifer's soon-to-be wife, had recently moved in together. Jennifer became completely comfortable presenting her feminine self with Sandra at home, where they agreed that Jennifer's female identity would remain private, as detailed in the preceding chapter of this dissertation. During that time, Woody Herman's management

called and offered Jennifer a road gig. As far as Jennifer was concerned, this was an opportunity. It was also an on-the-job training event. Her first gig with Woody was both a working audition and a chance to learn. Woody was notorious for performing the song "Caldonia" at tempos that often reached more than 400 beats per minute. The band was known to clock each full chorus of the song just to see if they could beat that timing night after night. The first time Jennifer played this song with Woody she attempted to vary her walking bass line by playing a different pitch for each quarter note. Jennifer found this extremely difficult. After this first performance of "Caldonia," Woody informed Jennifer that it was not a crime to repeat notes in order to sustain the tempo comfortably. Jennifer's touring stint with Woody Herman's Thundering Herd was short. According to Jennifer, after six months she was let go partly due to a clique of Eastman musicians who controlled personnel changes within the band (Interview, August 13, 2009). But Jennifer enjoyed performing for large audiences, and Woody's gig set the stage for her willingness to do more touring work in order to increase her exposure and income. Back in Philadelphia Jennifer did a lot of free-lancing work, often backing traveling acts such as Jon Hendricks, Soupy Sales, and Hank Mobley. Jennifer believes that the jazz music scene in Philadelphia during this time was fairly integrated (approximately 1982 to 1984). She remembers working with both Black and white artists, especially in organ trios of guitar, organ, and drums where bass was added. Jennifer attributes part of her feel for jazz as being culled from "the Philly organ trio groove" (Interview, August 13, 2009). This was also a time of great intimacy with Sandra and the two of them married in April of 1982. Jennifer's relationship with Sandra stabilized Jennifer's public and private movements between gender categories. In other words, Jennifer

accepted the idea of keeping her female subjectivity and identity between herself and Sandra, at least for the time being.

While the overall music scene in Philadelphia was fairly healthy at the time, jazz gigs began to wane locally when the gambling casinos in Atlantic City, New Jersey, drew Philly musicians to more lucrative endeavors. Jennifer didn't care for the casino work at all, and several prominent local musicians let her know that in order to further her career she would need to move to New York or Los Angeles. Since Sandra had family in Orange County California who were willing to house them until they got financially established, a move to Los Angeles made the most logical sense.

Upon moving to California in 1984, the bassist contacted a contingent of Philadelphian musicians she knew in order to start performing locally. By 1987, Jennifer was fairly well grounded in the Los Angeles jazz and casual music scene. During that year, Jennifer began performing with jazz vocalist Mel Tormé, where she reached a new highpoint in her musical career. She also notes how that musical high allowed her to repress desires to act on her female subjectivity. Jennifer discusses this period in medical terms as that of gender dysphoria, which is the idea of living in a wrongly sexed body and the desire to move away from that toward a correctly sexed body (gender dysphoria is discussed in the preceding chapter of this dissertation). "The music was so great, and Mel was such a genius… to have this nagging thing about your gender identity, it's easier to suppress that when you have all these other stimuli going on in your life" (Interview, August 13, 2009). For Jennifer, the high level of musicianship required with Tormé kept her focus on performance and allowed her feminine tendencies to be abated.

Other trans individuals have found other ways to alleviate issues of gender dysphoria. Sociologist and social activist, Lori Girshick, related other coping strategies that trans individuals use in order to diminish the emotional impact of not fitting in with cultural expectations, whether those expectations involve feelings of difference or loss of relationships in communities or with family and friends. Girshick's work presents the narratives of trans individuals who have turned to "alcohol, meditation, therapy, cross-dressing, writing, fantasy, drugs, and isolation" in order to get through difficult times (2008: 169-70). These powerful stories reveal issues of shame that lead to self-doubts and a sense of unworthiness. While touring, it was easier for Jennifer to work through these issues when music performance demanded a high level of affective engagement. When at home—an intimate and safe space—Jennifer had support from Sandra in which to realize her feminine self. I want to suggest here that Jennifer's experience is an experience that some trans individuals face. Jennifer did experience self-doubt about presenting publicly as female, and she found ways to cope with those doubts when performance levels were high. Whether public or private, the movements between two perceived binary gender presentations were Jennifer's reality at that point in time.

Becoming Publicly Jennifer

After a stroke left Tormé unable to perform, Jennifer began working for Doc Severinsen in 1996 where she eventually reached an identity crisis and was no longer willing to keep her female identity private. In comparison to her work with Tormé, Jennifer mentions that the musical situation with Severinsen eventually became stifling. Being on the road, playing the same material night after night, and more importantly, a lack of creative input, all

contributed to a reemergence of Jennifer's desire to materialize a female self. In a comparison between Tormé and Severinsen, Jennifer reflects that "maybe I expected too much…Mel's gig had a lot more joy…I guess there was nowhere to go but down" (Interview, August 13, 2009). Jennifer's willingness to straddle a male persona and female subjectivity eventually broke down. "All those years I kept it under wraps, because I wanted to play music for a living, it wasn't until I got to the point where I was ready to give up playing music… where I really had the gumption to transition, I assumed when I did that… my career was over, I'd never play again" (Interview, August 13, 2009).

Even though those feelings were ever present in Jennifer's mind, and despite her reservations about the musical circumstances in Severinsen's band, beginning in 2001 Severinsen supported Jennifer by keeping her employed and allowed her to present herself as female on the bandstand during their gigs together. In the documentary that celebrates Jennifer's journey of identity, *I Stand Corrected*, Severinsen states, "I hired you as a bass player, not as a man or a woman" (Severinsen 2012). Severinsen's support was significant for Jennifer because it was the starting point of presenting herself as a female performer. Severinsen relayed to other band members that jokes about Jennifer would not be tolerated and that Jennifer's decision to present herself as female on stage was to be respected and affirmed. Severinsen appreciates diversity: "A band is like a sports team; it can't exist without diverse people of differing abilities who make their individual contributions to the whole enterprise" (Boston 1996). Jennifer and Severinsen often joked about who had better tastes in clothing. While Jennifer has an affinity for Mary Jane shoes, Severinsen finds them too plain and unsophisticated (Severinsen 2012). Severinsen understands showmanship and what it means to present one's self on stage, and he has always worn flashy and

unconventional clothing. Whether or not this contributed to his willingness to let Jennifer transition on stage or not, the move was a definite boost to Jennifer's feminine ego.

With the support of friends and skilled guidance, Jennifer began to consider the possibility of completely transitioning as a female. She was determined to undergo gender reassignment surgery (GRS) despite the possibility of what she calls "professional suicide" (Interview, July 21, 2010). (GRS is also known as sex reassignment surgery [SRS], genital reconstruction surgery, sex realignment surgery, and more recently, sex affirmation surgery or gender confirmation surgery). Jennifer's doctor, Gary Alter,[28] suggested that Jennifer consider having her transition documented by The Learning Channel. He agreed to reduce his fee for the surgery if Jennifer consented to being documented. She liked the idea since her story could aid other trans individuals, and Jennifer is never one to shy away from publicity. There were still fears of how this surgery and a full transition would affect her performing career, but Jennifer was ready to do other work if playing the bass became financially unfeasible. She even considered working at a cosmetics counter in a large department store if performing music did not pan out after surgery.

As Jennifer's surgery date neared, she related to friends that she was ready to give up "her male power pedestal to become a second-class citizen," especially in the music world (Interview, July 21, 2010). This comment references the idea Jennifer believed in regards to the perception other musicians had about the inferiority of women instrumentalists. I asked Jennifer to elaborate on what she meant by "male power pedestal" and why this would make her a second-class citizen after completing SRS:

[28] Jennifer often pays a both humorous and serious tribute to Dr. Gary Alter when she introduces her tune "The Altered Blues." The tune is a tribute to Alter and a sonic representation of gender identity disorder or gender dysphoria (see below). Gary J. Alter, M.D. is a board certified Plastic Surgeon and Urologist and is an Assistant Clinical Professor of Plastic Surgery at UCLA's School of Medicine.

> Just think of the history of jazz music, of all the famous photographs, all of the seminal records in jazz, and think of how many women you've ever seen in those pictures or heard on those records. There's hardly any… willingly giving up the vestige of my outwardly appearing male, giving that up meant that I realized the big level work was never going to come my way again… the possibility of recording with the greatest people in the art form or touring…I knew that would be shut-off to me. That's what's happened. (Interview, July 21, 2010)

Moving forward with the procedure in July of 2002, Jennifer suffered complications and a lengthy recovery that made pursuing work in Los Angeles unmanageable. During this period, despite her willingness to leave music behind, the relentless practice of the acoustic bass and music composition became sources of solace and a major part of her physical healing and mental well-being. A few weeks after surgery, she did perform several local gigs that were scheduled before the procedure and eventually continued to travel with Doc Severinsen's band. But the recovery period was lengthy, and Jennifer often needed help moving her musical equipment.

During almost a year of recuperation, Jennifer lost work in the Los Angeles area jazz community. Jennifer partially blames herself for this, since traveling with Severinsen made it difficult to cultivate gigs locally. Still, when the time came to reenter the jazz community where she had built a robust career, some local musicians did not hire Jennifer. When I asked Jennifer about this, she related, "being transgender and all that is how they think of me, they don't think of me as a woman, they don't think of me as a musician, I'm some sort of freak that they don't want to be associated with, so most of them just don't call me" (Interview, August 13, 2009). Jennifer elaborated on this further during another interview where she stated that other Los Angeles musicians were afraid of being associated with Jennifer on stage: "the idea of me being a woman on the bandstand with these players, it was more that I was a transgender person on the stage with them, not so much a woman, they didn't really

accept me that way" (Interview, July 21, 2010). Jennifer added that she personally struggled with how to present herself in public, and her attempts to put herself at ease on stage may have led to awkward relations between musicians. In retrospect, she believes that after transitioning she was more apt to self-consciously believe she was not presenting well, which may have caused more discomfort for her than anyone else (Interview, July 21, 2010). But, musicians who once knew and performed with John now had to adapt to Jennifer; this may have led to uncomfortable situations. For some of the musicians who once shared the stage with Jennifer, the attention brought on by a change in gender classification took precedence over musical ability. I would add here that Jennifer disrupted long-standing normalities of jazz performance and discourse and may have challenged musicians to question their own biased beliefs. This, in turn, could have resulted in breakthroughs in their own development, but instead created uncomfortable situations for these musicians, and ultimately left Jennifer in charge of her own destiny.

This candid look from Jennifer about her position in the jazz world after she transitioned was a revelation for me. I came to realize how some of Jennifer's fears of losing work were grounded in ideas about women working in the jazz world. As part of the process of reflection, how much of being in the jazz world as a male performer is taken for granted, not only for other performers, but for myself as well? I do not have to answer endless questions about my identity and uniqueness in jazz whenever I perform with Jennifer. Media representations of Jennifer tend to foreground her trans identity. This is a pet peeve for Jennifer who laments the idea that so much attention is given to this aspect of her identity. The music she composes and performs is occasionally relegated to the background, and sometimes Jennifer grows weary of the rather constant focus on her trans identity. Still, she is

also keenly aware that her identity has opened her up to other arenas of possibility. Being asked to speak in university and business settings as well as performing for venues and events that promote a more inclusive diversity of gender expression has brought more public exposure. Being included in a first time event held in September 2014, OutBeat: America's First Queer Jazz Festival, is an example of a more inclusive event. That has not, however, translated to higher levels of income. Living in Los Angeles on a mostly performance oriented income is very difficult. Fortunately, she finds great joy in performance, and also teaches bass to a handful of students to help supplement the performance income.

Los Angeles Jazz Circa 1980s

In this section of the chapter, I want to discuss the Los Angeles jazz scene that Jennifer was a part of during the 1980s. I do this to add clarification about the racial dynamics of the jazz scene in Los Angeles and why Jennifer performed with mostly white musicians. Some of the artists Jennifer performed with might well be classified in some circles as West Coast jazz artists, which is often regarded as a sub-genre of cool jazz that developed around Los Angeles and San Francisco during the 1950s.[29] The racial history of the genre that developed during the 1950s is detailed in Kelsey Klotz's project, which reveals the ways musicians and audiences negotiated the construction of whiteness in cool jazz narratives (Klotz 2016: xii). I am not interested in labeling the artists, including Jennifer, as West Coast or cool jazz performers since many of these performers covered a variety of

[29] Ted Gioia discusses the varieties of West Coast jazz from the musician's perspective in *West Coast Jazz: Modern Jazz in California, 1945-1960* (1998). The work includes the importance of the African American scene centered around Central Avenue in Los Angeles in the genre's early development and helps to dismantle the banal juxtaposition of West Coast jazz and East Coast bop. An important oral history collection that details the musical and social life in Los Angeles from the 1920s to the early 1950s is *Central Avenue Sounds: Jazz in Los Angeles*, Clora Bryant et al., eds. (1998).

different jazz styles in Los Angeles throughout their careers. What is important to note is how cool jazz was perceived as a white and intellectually superior form of jazz whereas a more "authentic" form of the genre marked blackness and primitivism as its underlying characteristics. I discuss this tendency in the jazz genre as a whole in the introduction of this dissertation.

The circle of performers Jennifer worked with were mostly white, male artists of her generation. Although I moved to Los Angeles in 1989, this is partially a period of time that I can speak of from my own experience. I occasionally performed with some of the same musicians who performed jazz regularly in the 1990s that knew Jennifer (John, at the time). But I have always attempted to perform in several circles of players and genres of music in order to survive financially. Thus, I was constantly juggling straight-ahead jazz, smooth jazz, pop, and casual music gigs. Those gigs also contained a greater number of male performers. Jennifer's performance career, like my own, has been centered on some of the better-known white musicians of the Los Angeles jazz scene during the mid-1980s—Woody Herman, George Shearing, Bill Watrous, Peggy Lee, Mel Tormé, Gerry Mulligan and others. In a 2009 *Jazz Times* article, Don Heckman wrote:

> The world that Jennifer has moved in since the early '80s has been at the center of the highest levels of jazz performance. More than 100 recordings as an A-list bassist, eight CDs of her own, long-term stints with Mel Tormé, Doc Severinsen and the Woody Herman Thundering Herd as well as appearances with the likes of Gerry Mulligan, Joe Pass, Louis Bellson, Bill Watrous, Cleo Laine and dozens of others attest to the far-ranging versatility of her playing. (Heckman 2009)

Leitham also performed in Benny Carter's quintet, one of the few African American bandleaders she had an association with, and occasionally performed alongside other African American artists playing jazz in Los Angeles such as Chico Hamilton, Buddy Collette, and Snooky Young. Traveling and touring kept Jennifer from doing regular local dates and

necessitated a constant juggling of communication between herself and musicians in Los Angeles concerning her availability.

The Los Angeles jazz scene for Jennifer began in 1983 and by 1987 she was touring with Tormé. Most of the leaders of groups that Jennifer performed with had mostly white musicians in their bands. This was not always the case, but by and large the side musicians, whether male or female, were usually white, and it was a situation generally taken for granted. Stating that the situation was taken for granted reveals the force of unacknowledged hegemonic power at work within this particular scene. Maintaining this privileged position relies on the normalization reflected in the idea that race is never thought about or acted upon differently. The broader issue of white privilege plays its role in sustaining these attitudes. George Lipsitz thoroughly uncovers how whiteness wields unacknowledged power, property, and racial politics in the United States: "…since the passage of civil rights legislation in the 1960s whiteness dares not speak its name, cannot speak in its own behalf, but rather advances through a color-blind language radically at odds with the distinctly racialized distribution of resources and life chances in U. S. society" (Lipsitz 2006: 250n4). Thus, the large-scale investment in whiteness that Lipsitz unpacks in relation to this country plays its role in sustaining a partially segregated jazz scene in Los Angeles.

Sources that discuss the historical underpinnings of a jazz environment in Los Angeles from any period are scarce, especially during the 1980s and 1990s (see Bryant et al. 1998, Gioia 1998, and Isoardi 2006). The vibrant jazz scene that took place along Central Avenue beginning in the 1950s can be found in archived oral histories located at the University of California, Los Angeles. Charles Sharp has written about the vibrant experimental music communities of Los Angeles from the 1950s to 2008 through under-

appreciated African American musicians such as Horace Tapscott, John Carter, and Bobby Bradford. Sharp discusses some of the problems associated with the geographical, economic, and cultural racial divisions across the city, which contributed to differing and divided jazz scenes of Black and white musicians well into the 1990s (2008).

A quick look at the personnel of Doc Severinsen's Tonight Show band from 1985 to 2005 indicates that the majority of musicians on the band were some of the top studio jazz musicians in Los Angeles. John Audino, Chuck Findley, Gilbert Falco, Bruce Paulson, John Bambridge, Pete Christlieb, Bill Perkins, Ross Tompkins, Ed Shaughnessy, and Jennifer were some of the white performers in the band, while Snooky Young and Ernie Watts were two well-known African American performers. These were the musicians that Jennifer was associated with the most.

I traveled within a smaller circle of performers in Los Angeles, and it was with trombonist Bill Watrous (one of the musicians mentioned above) where Jennifer Leitham and I first met in 1989. Although we occasionally did gigs with Watrous, Jennifer and I never really took the time to get to know each other until later. During this time period (1990s), I was working with a group of performers who were doing a lot of smooth jazz gigs and our paths did not cross very often. In 2002, the year she had scheduled SRS, I began performing with Jennifer as part of her trio and we gradually developed a friendship. At the time, however, I was not cognizant of Jennifer's surgery plans. In other words, we spoke infrequently about personal matters, and focused instead on the performance of her musical compositions. For the first several years we performed infrequently, and our relationship was based more on professional musicianship rather than friendship. By the time of her 2006 CD release, we were much closer friends.

Trans Identity in Relation to Jazz Music

In the introduction to this dissertation I discussed jazz music's gendered and racial past that contributed to some of the decisions Jennifer made regarding her own career. Considering this background of jazz music's gendered performance practice and sociocultural history, how is Jennifer's subjectivity as a white, trans identified bassist tied to that history?

Jennifer's navigation of her subjectivity includes not only a transition to female, but also a paradoxical move to a subordinate position within a male-dominated genre of music. As I have shown, Jennifer herself articulated her jazz career as a gendered journey relative to binary terms, which includes establishing that career as male, transitioning publicly from male to female while still performing, and for her especially, has as an ending point her solo career as female. That trajectory in binary terms is not sufficient enough in order to understand Jennifer's story. It should not be unsurprising why Jennifer waited for so many years to make her transition. In her mind, jazz music's gendered past and an already established career meant ostracism by a Los Angeles community, and that is what initially happened after her transition.

Jennifer also embraced the binary aspect of transgender identity that follows a trajectory of moving oneself from male to female, and it was a trajectory that included a wrong-body narrative. That is a very important part of this story. In other words, Jennifer did not consider an alternative lifestyle and identity that may have included defining her subjectivity through facets of her trans identity. For many years, Jennifer consistently spoke of her identity as that of being female. When it finally became unbearable to continue hiding her female identity, Jennifer chose to go public with that identity at the risk of losing her

performance career. The willingness to give up a career in order to become female needs to be acknowledged as a real lived experience for Jennifer.

Being unable to fully comprehend internally what was happening with a body that felt externally incorrect, Jennifer worked imaginatively to realign internal and external notions of female subjectivity. This lived experience is one way interpreting trans identity is realized. For Jennifer, a lack of information about trans identity, trans role models, and knowledgeable friends kept her subjectivity moving between male and female roles. Jennifer chose to keep her female subjectivity private, but this manifestation of her subjectivity created a tension internally that could only be rectified by going public.

The problem with ideas about a wrong-body narrative is that they "take the dominant meanings of gender terms for granted" (Bettcher 2014: 390). Bettcher discusses the idea that we should "recognize a multiplicity of trans worlds in relation to a multiplicity of dominant ones" (390). This is to bring attention the idea that a trans woman may be recognized and live as a woman in a trans subculture while simultaneously being ostracized for being a man living as a woman in dominant culture. Bettcher is attempting to show that the rigid formation of gender binaries is not the problem, but rather "the starting assumption that there is only one interpretation in the first place (the dominant one)" (390). Bettcher is keen to show how the wrong-body scenario can be lived as resistance if bodies and their representations work, for example, to alter terms such as "woman" and "man" (2014: 403). Wrong-body narratives do tend to leave intact a representational relation between gender presentation and the sexed body, and Bettcher would like to see a "fuller opposition to the very basis of reality enforcement—namely, the entire representational relation between gender representation and genitalia" (403). Bettcher's analysis is enticing, yet the actual lived

experience of some trans individuals that are heavily invested in identifying as male or female, or who do not have access to trans subcultures, would appear to foreclose opportunities for opposition. And yet, I believe Jennifer has, in part, offered some opposition through her music.

In specifically discussing Jennifer, what role does musical performance play in the process of foregrounding trans identity and more specifically, how does musical performance relate to Jennifer's transition? During Jennifer's recovery process from SRS, she worked on performance practices and musical compositions she felt would best express her newfound freedom.

Part of Jennifer's liberation can be traced through her first compact disc release as Jennifer in 2006—*The Real Me*. The CD is Jennifer's musical coming out celebration. One of Los Angeles's best-known jazz DJ's, Helen Borgers, wrote in the liner notes of this CD: "She revels in her freedom and her new body. She is exuberant about the path her life has taken. She is not shy about discussing her transition, the years of trying to hide her feelings, the pain of the process, nor the joy in the outcome. She dares to be herself and dares us to know her" (*The Real Me* 2006). The CD cover's photo speaks volumes about Jennifer's transition to female (see Figure 1 on page 120). Jennifer strikes a beautiful pose: donning only a pair of red pumps, standing behind her acoustic bass, hands folded on top of the upper bout of the instrument, her head—topped with long flowing black hair—is turned to her left while her face, eyes, and lips are set in a contemplative gaze. There are two butterfly wings that resemble the Monarch species pattern spread to both sides of Jennifer's back. Rather than the more familiar colors of the Monarch, the wings of green, black, and white spots

symbolize a metamorphosis—it is the next stage in Jennifer's life history, and the music on this CD reflects that metamorphosis.

An example of the musical narrative accompanying Jennifer's new life can be found in her description of the tune "The Altered Blues." The tune

> is a musical mood piece that deals with Gender Identity Disorder. I named it for my surgeon, Dr. (Gary) Alter. It contains a continuous drone of 'D' and 'G' notes throughout. They never go away, and are prevalent in each chord. Long ago in my preschool days my family lived near a church that rang its bells all day long. There were two notes, 'D' and 'G'. Those 'D' and 'G' notes found their way into my subconscious. Gender Identity Disorder is a similar thing: it's always there; it doesn't go away. You can try to fight it but you won't be successful. It's only learning to accept GID and make music with it that enables you to have a happy, healthy life. And that's what happens in 'The Altered Blues.' We try to make music with those notes that won't go away. (*The Real Me* 2006)

Jennifer's stance on the aforementioned composition informs the majority of her gendered history. The two notes reference the wrong-body narrative of gender dysphoria. It is important to discuss this as an aspect of trans identity because it is how some trans individuals have articulated their subjectivity. Those narratives are also tied to diagnoses from the medical field that control treatment and they also play a role in legal recognition for those who self-identify as trans. At the time, Gender Identity Disorder (GID) was the medical diagnosis Jennifer understood as specifically related to her situation.[30] Jennifer went through a lengthy process of psychological evaluation and was required to live publicly as female before being allowed to surgically transition. Today it is more common for trans individuals to consider GID (known as Gender Dysphoria today) as problematic, something that did not occur to Jennifer or to other trans identified people of her generation. They disagree on whether claiming a pathological medical condition for their identity is helpful or harmful. On

[30] I discuss what Gender Identity Disorder (now Gender Dysphoria as designated by the *Diagnostical and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, fifth ed, or *DSM-5*) means for trans individuals in Chapter 2.

one hand, seeking medical intervention is seen as confirming a binaried gender system that bolsters two gendered choices—male and female. On the other hand, there are trans individuals who do not consider choices of gender as pathological. They feel they should have the right to choose their own identity classifications as well as choose any physical alterations of their bodies whether they identify with gender categories or not.

In returning to "The Altered Blues," there is a relational conjoining of straightness and queerness relative to this song. In one way, the narrative about, and the performance of, this song acts as a straightening device. The narrative speaks directly to the experience of a gender binary. The aesthetic of the song is explained and performed as an acceptance of understanding one's identity as that between male and female. Yet, at the same time, a queering affect takes place in relation to this straightening of supposed gender binaries. Jennifer occupies a liminal state between male and female identities. Her past life as male still informs how she explains herself to others, and her music reflects those ideas.

The song, with its reference and performance mimicking the church bell drone, can also be disorienting. Throughout her career and life, Jennifer has faced moments of disorientation when it comes to her subjectivity and identity. Sara Ahmed writes that "queer moments happen when things fail to cohere. In such moments of failure, when things do not stay in place or cohere as place, disorientation happens… the question then becomes how we 'face' or approach such moments of disorientation" (2006: 170). This kind of disorientation happened, at least for a while, when Jennifer returned to the jazz scene of Los Angeles after surgery.

Another significant contribution to the metamorphosis of Jennifer's identity is the addition of her voice. Two tracks of the CD bring back her first love of singing. A chapter of

this dissertation discusses the tune "Split Brain" and its meanings for Jennifer and others. Another song composed by Jennifer, "Stick It in Your Ear," was originally meant for Mel Tormé to sing (*The Real Me* 2006). Jennifer notes that when Tormé first heard the melody he was very interested in singing the song. Before he passed away, she was unable to present him with the lyrics and ended up recording and performing it herself. The song's meaning laments the lost art of songwriting that brought a clarity and simplicity to lyrics, melody, and harmony and hopes that a future generation will bring it all back.

Although Jennifer spent the majority of her life relating her subjectivity in relationship to male and female identities, today Jennifer often rallies for trans people's rights and sometimes says that she no longer thinks about gender at all. Yet at each venue where we perform, Jennifer often articulates her gendered past relative to tunes chosen from *The Real Me* CD. Her lived experience is a different take on trans subjectivity relative to Joe Stevens and members of both the Transcendence Gospel Choir and the Trans Chorus of Los Angeles (these artists are discussed in the next two chapters). If there is a connection that can be made between each of these artists, it is that each of them shares a common goal of presenting their subjectivities to a larger social world.

As noted above, after SRS, Jennifer felt the need to reinvent her career. To do so, she became the leader of her own trio and began to book her own gigs. Jennifer has always felt that she wants to be regarded most for her music and not her trans identity. Her initial desire was to align herself with the male figures of jazz, or to remain in a world of jazz that would not have sensationalized difference or foregrounded her trans identity. In some respects, Jennifer's desire to travel the jazz environment as an accomplished musician without gender baggage was an experience that was easier to do as John. This is a narrative and trajectory of

straightness in relation to jazz. The desire to move from male to female, and to be accepted as a musician first and foremost is a straightening device that keeps intact a gendered binary.

But Jennifer ends up twisting this straightening story and queering the narrative in relation to identity. Again, the importance of relationality regarding straightening and queering are informative here. In other words, understanding Jennifer's identity in jazz requires understandings about the straightness and queering of jazz in relation to each other. Jennifer's foregrounding of trans identity, which she herself publicly acknowledges and in some instances uses to further her career, includes the experience of performing jazz as both a man and a woman. An objection to this idea could be that Jennifer is so well known as having once been John that her experience of being a woman in jazz is not the same as other women. It should be obvious that Jennifer's experience is different from other women performers in jazz. But Jennifer argues otherwise, and she has the experience of performing with all-women jazz bands like The Diva Jazz Orchestra that enlightens her experience on the plight of women instrumentalists. But since facets of trans identity are part of Jennifer's identity, the desired trajectory she narrates is slanted or twisted. Hers is a unique experience in jazz, and for better or worse, it has come to signify difference. Her new career, new fans, new music, all contribute to a queering effect of who performs this music.

Ahmed points out that "it takes a lot of work to shift one's orientation, whether sexual or otherwise. Such work is necessary precisely given how some orientations become socially given by being repeated over time, as a repetition that is often hidden from view and the pressure to conform to the 'socially given' is high" (2006: 101). For many years, the resources and mentors associated with trans identity did not exist in Jennifer's jazz environment. Jennifer still struggles with being taken seriously as a bass performer. There are

festival organizers who too often do not ask Jennifer to return for repeat performances, while other artists continue to perform at those festivals year after year. Jennifer's fans are well aware of her trans identity, and I would argue she is paving the way for future jazz performers who may wish to be represented as LGBTQ artists. She is also adding to conversations about the gendered make-up of performers and their contributions to jazz. Jennifer, willingly or unwillingly, is a role model for artists who may want to be trans identified in jazz, or be recognized as part of an LGBTQ community of jazz performers, and taken seriously for it.[31] Again, Jennifer had no role models or prior experiences for this precedent in the jazz world. Despite her desire that people accept her through her music first and foremost, Jennifer has a gendered history and relationship to the music that even she rarely denies. We cannot know for certain how the next generation may perceive of Jennifer's performances and music. It is possible that she will be regarded as one of the first important trans musicians in jazz music history who opened doors for other trans and gender expansive artists, all of whom will have something to contribute to jazz musical performance and re-shaping ideas about who performs this music.

[31] Gay jazz musicians are quick to dismiss any gay aesthetics in the music itself, but do agree that lyrics can contribute to a gay aesthetic. These musicians also note that their coming out as gay in the jazz community may foster a sense of inclusivity and visibility for a younger generation of performers who identify as gay. See James Gavin in *JazzTimes,* "Homophobia in Jazz" December 2001; Frances Davis in *The New York Times,* "In the Macho World of Jazz, Don't Ask, Don't Tell" September 2002; and Frances Davis in the *National Arts Journalism Program* "Destination Out:" April 2001.

Figure 1 CD cover for *The Real Me* CD, used by permission, photo: Mary Ann Halpin

Chapter 4 Transitional Spaces: Voice, Embodiment, and Choral Heterotopias

Jennifer Leitham and I are keeping our eyes and ears focused on the Trans Chorus of Los Angeles's (TCLA) artistic and musical director, Lindsey Deaton, as we begin the first selection for an historic evening of music performance. It is Saturday evening May 7, 2016 at the University of California, Los Angeles's Schoenberg Hall, and TCLA is in concert with two other choirs—the Gay Men's Chorus of Los Angeles (GMCLA) and Vox Femina. The first song is a mid-16th century French madrigal by Pierre Certon, "La, la, la, je ne l'ose dire" that is normally performed a cappella, but tonight is underscored by a pre-programmed and fully recorded vocal and rhythm track of the song operated by a DJ. The challenge for Jennifer and me is to follow the conducting movements of the director since we cannot hear the backing tracks controlled by the DJ. Our bass and drum parts have to lock in with this backing track, but I am letting that track carry the actual time and groove. In keeping my volume at a very low level, I am hoping the track can be heard and followed by everyone in the choir. Lindsey is ultimately in charge of keeping us all together. For me, this is a brief challenge at the beginning of the evening, but other than a short moment of delay concerning the triggering of the backing track, the performance of the song goes smoothly and is followed by a raucous affirmation of applause by the audience. I do not mind at all adjusting my volume throughout this night's performance because the focus is on the presence of the singing voices and bodies. It is their night to shine, as this is the debut public performance of

TCLA. The overarching theme for this evening's performance is True Colors: Celebrating Our Authentic Selves.[32]

The songs that follow the opening, "Genderfreak" and "Iris," are well received by the audience consisting of a majority of fans and supporters of the three choral groups. Part of the evening is dedicated to eleven trans individuals who have died since the beginning of 2016. Their individual photographs are projected on a backwall sound partition as the choir sings "Iris," a song containing a refrain that Lindsey says "cries our plea" as trans individuals: "I don't want the world to see me, cause I don't think that they'd understand. When everything's meant to be broken, I just want you to know who I am" (pers. comm., January 31, 2016, Goo Goo Dolls 2010). The fourth song of the performance features Rex Wilde of TCLA who walks to the front of the stage as the group's first soloist and begins to sing the following verse of "You Have More Friends Than You Know:"

We feel, we hear, your pain, your fear.
But we're here, to say, who you are, is o.k.

This lyrical recognition of personal affect and affirmation through community is also reflected in "True Colors," the ending song for this evening's performance:

But I see your true colors
And that's why I love you
So don't be afraid to let them show
Your true colors
True colors are beautiful
Like a rainbow

[32] The GMCLA website promoted the event as follows: "On May 7, the newly formed Trans Chorus of Los Angeles presents their debut performance, *TRUE COLORS – Celebrating our Authentic Selves*. This historic evening will include performances by allies from VOX Femina and Gay Men's Chorus of Los Angeles. The Trans Chorus of Los Angeles, Gay Men's Chorus of Los Angeles and VOX Femina will sing selections of songs that highlight the power of music to change the world. Please join in supporting and celebrating TCLA – a new voice for the transgender community in Los Angeles." http://gmcla.org/gmcla3/gmcla-concerts-and-events/true-colors/

This 1986 Cyndi Lauper song subsequently became the backdrop for the first annual True Colors Tour in 2007. That tour, as well as Lauper herself, continues to support the Human Rights Campaign, the largest national lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender civil rights organization in the United States (Lauper 2007). Thus the musical selections for this night's debut were deliberately chosen to showcase the choir as "a new voice for the transgender community in Los Angeles" (GMCLA 2017).

Focusing our attention on the voice and vocal performance of this night's performance sets up the ideas below about individual voices, embodiment, safe spaces, and community that encompass this chapter. Despite the wide and differing range of individual stories present in the lives of each choir member, there is unity in this diversity and this night's performance is the beginning of many to follow that highlight ideas about this choir as a "new" voice for trans people. But this "new" voice needs to be articulated by the ways in which some individual choir members learn to sing with voices in transition. For some of these singers, the ideas about their voices are necessarily tied to ideas about their bodies, and both may be in transition. A portion of this chapter looks at what it means to sing with voices in transition. Whether singers are attempting to extend their range, grapple with the effects of androgen hormones, or both, their voices, like all singers' voices, are in process. For trans men, hormone replacement therapy (HRT) may affect radical changes in the voice within a short time. HRT tends not to affect trans women as dramatically, but they may wish to raise their speaking fundamental frequency (SFF), extend their vocal range, and work on the timbre of their voices.

The choir as a group is also transitioning from rehearsals to public performances. The importance of the concert described above for the members of the choir cannot be

understated. The affirming empowerment these singers experienced that evening was an important affect indicated to me by many of the choir members. The response of the approximately five hundred and twenty people in attendance was enthusiastically supportive and positive. An organizing principal that underlies this particular choir involves the idea that they will be publicly visible and proactively present. Lindsey's numerous interviews continually reference the idea that one goal for the members of this choir is to "empower trans and gender-nonconforming people to love their voices" (Womack 2016). But questions about individual identity, community, and musicality complicate the celebration and declaration of TCLA as a new voice. While the responses to the choir this particular evening were overwhelmingly positive, there are concerns about the professionalism of the choir as well as the group's musicality as articulated by the director and others. Musicologist James Q. Davies notes that "bodies themselves must be made sense of in environments of intense social debate" (2014: 6). How does the choir director see her role overall? How and why do individual choir members make decisions regarding their voices and identities? What choices, beliefs, desires, and perceptions do they articulate themselves? How are ideas about success framed for this choir? It has been a challenge to balance the choir as representing participation and empowerment as well as good musicianship.

Chapter Layout

In this chapter, I look at the importance of two choirs related to ideas about the gendered body and voice, racial and class issues related to medical access and musical training, the choirs as a heterotopic safe space, and how aspects of community and voice contribute to concerns and ideas about musicality. I begin with the narratives of members of TCLA to

foreground ideas about voice and embodiment as bodies and behaviors that contribute to conceptions of internal identity. The second choir is the Transcendence Gospel Choir (TGC) of Oakland, CA, and although my time spent with TGC was considerably less than that spent with TCLA, TGC adds the elements of religion and faith at the crossroads of trans identity. Many of the narratives describe voices in transition, but they are also narratives of belonging, and the narratives relate many complex relationships between voice, body, and interpersonal relationships with others. The narratives are also, of course, unique to each individual, and articulate the complexities of voice and embodiment. Sociocultural and institutional forces in the lives of these singers also externally enforce these conceptions.

Class and racial facets of identity also play a role regarding access to hormones and musical training. A backgrounded facet of white identity that assumes all of the singers present can acquire needed medical or institutional help normalizes a non-people of color identity. I work to point out this issue that is often not articulated through the narratives of the choir members. Richard Dyer has written of the racial imagery of white people by whites themselves and notes that there is an assumption that whites are non-raced. “White people are just people, which is not far off saying that whites are people whereas other colours are something else, is endemic to white culture” (1997: 2). Dyer explains how the power of a disembodied whiteness allows for unquestioned positions of neutrality. Whereas people of color have experience speaking from positions of marginalization, white people, as a cultural, hegemonic race, speak from a privileged position of perceived impartiality (4). This position of whiteness is not maliciously enacted and varies in relation to power differences of class, gender, age, disability, and other factors. Whiteness itself, however, remains neutral. Thus,

when singers narrate their vocal histories, I attempt to add this dimension of identity to remind myself of this racial positioning.

It may be instructive here to consider ideas about multivocality and transvocality as introduced by Katherine Meizel and Dylan Elias Krell, respectively. The suffix "vocality" itself is something Meizel notes "is part and parcel of how we interact with the world around us, of who we think we are" (2011: 267). Meizel goes a step further to explore "multivocality," a concept that describes singers who "habitually perform across styles, genres, cultural contexts, histories, and identities" (forthcoming). Multivocality includes the idea of "negotiating identity through the process of singing with many voices" (forthcoming). When interpreting the behaviors of the voices in TCLA, specifically, there is a wide range of experience across styles, genres, histories, and identities.

Elias Dylan Krell adds to multivocality by eliciting the concept of transvocality to show how "vocal sound can signify within and across vectors of power" (2014: 13). In very simplistic terms, transvocality is a vocality that resists identification with gendered birth assignment. It is important for me to consider the "embodied voice" as it relates to individual singers as well as how those singers come together collectively. Meizel works similarly to apply more abstract ritualistic and literary ideas of multivocality and move it "toward its re-embodiment in the lived experiences of singers who work on and across the fluid borders of identity" (forthcoming). The voices and bodies of TCLA and TGC encompass identities that are ambiguous, and the concepts of multivocality and transvocality are elaborated below in relation to the following narratives; narratives which give us a snapshot of a myriad of ways to consider voice and embodiment.

Trans Chorus of Los Angeles (TCLA)

Erick Lash

Erick has spent most of his life in California and comes from a very musical family. He considers himself fortunate to have a mother who is a classically trained singer. Erick, as a white trans man, has access to such training through both of his parents who met in the Seattle opera. It is important to keep in mind that this training is passed down through parents who had the opportunity to sing opera. People of color, trans identified or otherwise, may not have access to such an opportunity.

Although he is not classically trained himself, his mother is coaching Erick, who approximately three years ago was a soprano but now sings bass baritone in TCLA. Erick iterated how strange this transition was for him: "It's really weird. My high notes now used to be some of my lower notes. It's a completely different sensation. Having a falsetto as a male versus having high notes back before my voice changed… I liken it to learning how to play a 6-string guitar and then someone hands you a 12 string and says 'go…'" (Interview, June 14, 2016). It was back in August 2013 when Erick began to seriously work on his voice. In high school he played clarinet in band rather than performing in choir. Back then

> I didn't sing as much. It was not because I didn't like my voice necessarily, but I was a little self-conscious about my higher notes. I hadn't learned how to use them because they didn't sound like they were supposed to be coming out of me. I avoided using my higher notes… they sounded too high. Not that it sounded like someone else's voice coming out my mouth, but rather, it didn't sound like the right voice coming out of my mouth, I do miss some of those high notes. I miss being able to hit the high note in Bohemian Rhapsody. (Interview, June 14, 2016)

In specifically addressing the voice as his instrument, Erick notes that when he took hormones "the bulk of changes happened in the first six months… after a year to fifteen months, my voice did not lower any further. It's similar to puberty and the voice can only go

so far" (Interview, June 14, 2016). Erick references the more common phenomena of puberty with boys that normally takes place within a few months. Unlike boys assigned male at birth who transition through puberty during formative teen years, however, a trans man's "vocal folds can thicken but cannot become as long as a bio-male's" (Constansis 2008). Additionally, Erick mentioned that in the first six months of taking hormones there were rapid and drastic changes in his speaking voice. But "I was never uncomfortable with the changes" (Interview, June 14, 2016).

Erick works on strengthening his lower range both when practicing and through lessons with his mother. In performances this past year with TCLA the basses and baritones had relatively higher notes, as in the song "True Colors." When singing those parts, "I lose the strength and sometimes even lose a step, maybe a full step worth of low notes off the bottom of my range… so I'm learning how to strengthen those and how to work with my falsetto" (Interview, June 14, 2016).

Trans men have only more recently been given the kind of attention their voices may need during transition. Erick notes that he must work in keeping his lower notes strong. Historically, it was assumed that hormone therapy would sufficiently lower the pitch of trans men particularly regarding speech. Speech therapy has not been a common approach for trans men (Adler and Borsel 2006: 140). For those who sing, Adler and Borsel advise therapists to warn clients that "their pitch range will irreversibly alter consequent to administration of cross-gender hormones. They should also be told that the loss in the high tones might not fully be compensated for by a gain in the lower frequencies and that the change really means a reduction in pitch range—it is not a question of switching over to a lower singing voice"

(144). Although this certainly is a daunting realization, the researchers do explain that proper vocal training during transition is key to maintaining a singing voice.

Alexandros Constansis began researching trans men's singing voices in 2002, and "The Changing Female-to Male (FTM) Voice," is based on Constansis's own personal experience of transition as well as that of research participants with some prior singing experience (2008). Constansis also learned about a loss of singing ability related to FTM singers, but was determined to learn how to best work through voice issues while transitioning. A trained singer for many years before beginning transition, Constansis notes that

> the starting assumption of my research was that I should try to imitate as closely as possible a male adolescent's vocal passage through puberty. The problems that I encountered were seriously aggravated by the fact that my body and subsequently the cartilages of my larynx no longer had that degree of flexibility at the age of 39 (I started on testosterone on 27 March 2003). My advantages were that I possessed an already-trained larynx that was larger than usual, as well as longer and thicker vocal folds than expected… Another essential principle that I had to consider in regard to the hormonal treatment was that the secretion of testosterone in bio-males does not suddenly commence at the highest level. The boy does not turn into a man within six months or a year. The reasons why FTMs usually try to do otherwise are mostly sociological: we need to 'pass', in other words, to live more easily in our acquired gender and everyday environment. Nevertheless, I am not sure that this approach is physiologically best for our bodies. (2008)

Constansis worked with low-levels of testosterone and soft exercises for the voice for a period of one year in order to track the changes in vocal performance. Constansis was meticulous about not straining or pushing the voice during this time of transition. Constansis's vocal range did dramatically change and by 2008 "currently covers a range of almost four octaves" (2008). But the goal was to keep the quality of voice consistent throughout the entire process of transition. This is something Erick's mother is helping him work through. Erick's insight and Constansis's research give us a glimpse into the

complexity of a trans man's singing voice. At times, Constansis notes this complexity as male transvocality.

Constansis's narrative embraces the idea of passing and relates that the trans men in this particular study were indeed attempting to pass. Not all trans individuals who identify as trans men desire this trajectory. Rex Wilde (below) complicates the idea of considering a trans masculine identity when the desire for androgyny and lower doses of testosterone affect voice and embodiment differently. I mention this to bear in mind that the levels of hormones taken over certain lengths of time will affect each individual differently. An example of this can be found in the work of therapists who work with trans vocalists. "The FtM TG/TS singer could show a wide variety of abilities, depending on how long hormones have been taken, how large a dosage has been used, and how the singer has responded to the medication" (Kozan 2006: 381).

Gia Ryan

Although Gia Ryan was assigned male at birth, she believes a female spirit comes to her naturally. She considers herself physically small and notes that her speaking voice has always been fairly high. Gia is half Filipino and half Mexican, identifies as trans, but lives, works, and prefers to be externally identified as a woman. Gia says that "I've never taken hormones, never undergone any surgery, I'm blessed with what I've got. I'm very organic and I understand that there is a binary lifestyle to being organic. If I didn't put any makeup on and put my hair up and changed my outfit, I could be perceived differently. But I'm also an actor and I've told my agent I will play any role… I've always played with characters in general… I'm not confined to being identified as a woman" (Interview, February 1, 2016).

This role-playing attribute has served Gia well throughout her life. She has intentionally worked to fit herself within the confines of a normatively gendered society with mostly positive results. But certain geographic areas of Los Angeles County have their challenges. "Growing up in a Cholo based area of Pacoima I was harassed, not by classmates, but outside in the community. I acted Tomboyish to offset this. I've always been androgynous and been preyed upon by men in general" (Interview, February 1, 2016). Gia's experiences help her empathize with trans people who find it more difficult to be accepted.

Gia believes facets of her trans identity have benefited from a generation of trans people who transitioned later in life, like Jennifer Leitham, but it is certainly a journey quite different from Leitham's. In addition to family support, Gia says that she was

> exposed to trans people at 14, active in rights events, marching, lobbying, and very aware about being outspoken… I know that I've been blessed genetically to have a feminine appearance and voice… I know many are very self-conscious of their trans voices, but my resting voice has always been perceived as feminine… Being aware of gender and its social importance at a very young age, I always pitched my voice depending on the environment… Even though I'm not on hormones, I've been singing for most of my life… When singing high I do have a nasal tone and when low, I use my diaphragm more… Very rarely do I speak in a low range, it only usually comes out if I'm trying to sing low which is actually very comfortable. (Interview February 1, 2016)

Since being in TCLA, Gia has discovered that her voice is sometimes strained when singing high. Although growing up as an alto in the traditional sense of the term, Gia is comfortably a tenor two/baritone, but "when really warmed up I can happily sing very high. TCLA has reminded me that I could easily just be a lower voice but because of the gender stigma, I don't do it. It's definitely a choice to remain in a high range" (2016). Because both her speaking and singing voice is adaptable to different environments, Gia considers her voice to always be in a transition.

Gia's speaking and singing voice help her to retain a feminine presentation, which is exactly how she desires to be interpreted. Gia's experience reminds us that transvocality is not specific to bodies or voices in physical transition. Multivocality includes the idea of "negotiating identity through the process of singing with many voices" (Meizel forthcoming). Gia has adapted her voice and body to fit social situations she deems socially acceptable. She does all of this without hormones or surgery. Importantly for Gia, her feminine presentation is that aspect of her identity she chooses to foreground. In other words, her identity as Gia is something she considers not to be an act even if she is comfortable performing other roles. Simultaneously, the other roles Gia works to maintain benefit her movement through normatively gendered social roles. And even though her identity is sometimes performed relative to normative expectations, interpreting Gia's foregrounded and backgrounded facets of identity demonstrates the possibilities and expressive flexibilities of the voice, embodiment, and identity.

Maggie Mae Pitchlynn

Maggie is white and she was born with a given first name of Louie. She came out as a woman in March of 2015 and uses her and she pronouns. In 1984 at the age of fifteen, a friend gave Maggie a copy of the Slayer album *Haunting the Chapel*. That album sparked a major interest in heavy metal music and became the direction for Maggie's vocal career almost until the time she made a decision to identify as a woman. As a self-taught singer, Maggie says she often threw her voice out performing metal music in a band made up of high school friends. In 2003, she took some voice lessons to learn how to control and create less stress on her vocal folds. "I wanted to not just scream and yell and growl. I wanted to be able

to keep a tune…. I'm not doing that [singing heavy metal] very often anymore. My music preferences have changed along with my persona. I enjoy listening to female singers, rockabilly, and jazz now" (Interview January 31, 2016). Maggie suffered a breakdown in March of 2015. She had suppressed so much of her feminine identity for so long that she "forgot about it... It wasn't until my breakdown where I was basically at the lowest point in my depression. I needed to find out what was the cause of this. Why was I so angry all the time? I didn't care if tomorrow came… not suicidal, just didn't care" (Interview, January 31, 2016). Maggie says that viewing a random video on YouTube of a trans woman who transitioned late in life connected with her. The individual in the video had a full beard that was the cause of much angst in relating her female subjectivity. Maggie empathized with this trans woman and saw a parallel between her life and that of the video's narrator. Maggie downloaded a pdf course that

> tries to help you feminize your voice because I don't like my male voice at all. The chorus is trying to help me find my real voice… I learned through the pdf course different things between men and women's voices: women enunciate well, they talk a little bit quicker. I don't enunciate very well at all, which I'm trying to correct, especially in my singing. I didn't enunciate very well at the beginning of choir, which I'm also trying to correct [in order] to make my voice sound a little bit clearer, crisper. I'm working on it. (Interview, January 31, 2016)

I asked Maggie if she was taking hormones and she told me yes. But trans women who go through puberty before transitioning will usually develop the lower voice characteristics of males. Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) will not alter a trans woman's voice after puberty, thus, voice therapy is often sought after or during HRT for some in order to feminize the voice.

I first spoke with Maggie in January 2016. In a follow-up phone conversation in July 2016, after TCLA's season ended, I asked Maggie about her vocal progress. Maggie

mentioned that over the past eight months of being in TCLA the weekly rehearsals with the choir, as well as a multitude of performance dates, has done more to increase her range than anything else. Maggie still wants to

> sound more feminine in my speech and my tone, my pitch… It will get there in time, I'm not concerned about it as much, and I'm getting more comfortable with everything in my life right now… The choir's mission statement says it all.[33] I'm more comfortable with my voice. I'm more empowered with my voice. I know what my voice can lead to when accompanied by the beautiful singers I'm with… Eight or nine months ago, when we started, I was basically one tone, one pitch, cause I hadn't sung in so many years. (pers. comm., July 1, 2016)

Maggie transitioned vocally as a heavy metal singer to negotiating her voice in TCLA over a relatively short period of time. These are recent vocal changes that have been accompanied by transitions in embodiment. Adult trans women who desire higher speaking and singing voices face significant challenges. Yet, Maggie's range has increased and her voice has changed due to being in TCLA. This is a result of learning how to use the voice more effectively and carefully in a supportive environment.

Maggie's voice has been relative to her identity in ways that demonstrate her attempts at flexibility. The identifications according to Maggie are also, of course, relative to normative ideas about femininity and masculinity. Despite the idea that Maggie's voice transitions on a much smaller scale relative to those of trans men, it is both embodiment and voice where the possibilities and expressive flexibilities of the voice, embodiment, and identity are once again present. The ability to negotiate changes in voice and identity demonstrate and further complicate ideas about voice, embodiment, and identity.

[33] The mission of the Trans Chorus of Los Angeles is to fiercely empower trans, gender non-conforming and intersex people to discover, develop and use their voices to change the ecology. Everywhere.https://www.facebook.com/TransChorusLA/info/?entry_point=page_nav_about_item&tab=page_info

Rex Wilde

Rex identifies as androgynous and agender, which for Rex means a "genderless or a non-binary gender identity" (Interview, January 15, 2016). Rex is also white, was assigned female at birth, and makes use of they pronouns. Rex remembers always being closely attached to an older brother growing up and being a part of everything and anything that older brother experienced. When Rex was around the age of 5 or 6, they remember how the relationship changed when their older brother commented that Rex was no longer welcome to play street hockey with their brother and his friends. A more vivid memory comes from photographs in middle school that depict Rex in progression from an androgynous look toward a more feminine presentation. Rex enjoyed wearing pants, but their mother ordered that dresses become the new norm; something Rex was very consciously uncomfortable with. Rex has been on testosterone for approximately six to eight months, "but on a really low dose. The doctors tried to give me high doses, but I'm not a man and I do not want to look like most trans men want to look. I'm trying to play with that to see what androgyny looks like to me... You have your gender and how you want to identify, and then you have gender expression" (Interview, January 15, 2016).

Over the past year, Rex has slowly unpacked and reflected upon issues faced during their years at Chapman University in Orange County. Rex entered the music program at Chapman as a voice major, but an incompatible relationship with the vocal performance expectations of the music department resulted in a reluctant move to sociology as a major. Rex also experienced "intense stage fright, panic attacks… I had this question, 'are people perceiving me the right way?'" Rex did not have a conscious understanding at the time that the stage fright was related to "gender dysphoria: I was being seen in a certain way and it

didn't feel right" (Interview, January 15, 2016). After the first year at Chapman, attempts to assess Rex's place within the vocal program were disappointing and exhausting to Rex. Comments suggested that there might be something wrong with Rex's voice—"the breath never seems right, the voice doesn't sound right." Instructors at the school suggested "there was something physically wrong with my voice. I went to ear, nose and throat specialists. I was scoped, tried different diets, took different tests. Was it a deviated septum? I got tired of this. Obviously everyone else thinks I should not be a singer. I have stage fright, so 'forget it,' I'll finish with my music minor and do something else" (Interview, January 15, 2016).

Rex reveals that the music program at Chapman expected specific sounds. "They [Chapman] had this idea across the board; specific sounds they were after. If you didn't have that, or were unable to attain it, then something was wrong. They saw me as female and a soprano" (Interview, January 15, 2016). Rex notes that the program was heavily opera based:

> Because I didn't have the particular sound of a soprano they that were after, and because performing as a soprano gave me huge dysphoria, although I couldn't name it at the time, that is when I struggled. When I was put into female roles in these operas or musical performances, it did not sit right with me, and yet, I still aspired to those things because that's what I thought I was supposed to be doing and who I was supposed to be sounding like, huge dysphoria… in studying voice, I told the teacher I wanted to play pants roles, for example Cherubino [Mozart, *Le nozze di Figaro*]**.** This song, this pants role, it threw her [teacher] off. She was not keen on having me do it and wanted me to do more feminine roles. (Interview, January 15, 2016)

The experience at Chapman was disheartening for Rex, but they rediscovered their passion for singing while interning at a garlic farm shortly after college. Rex sat in with other musicians over a four-month period while working on this farm. The musicians noted that Rex was a great singer and that it was obvious to them that Rex had done this before.

Rex's experience with TCLA is very different than that of their experience at Chapman. Rex notes that TCLA works with "the voices that already exist" rather than attempting to shape a voice according to preconceived ideas about voice according to traditional soprano, alto, tenor, and bass (SATB) standards. Rex says that in a mixed gender choir that is typically SATB they would be an alto.

> As my gender was being perceived, I was considered a mezzo-soprano, but I'm very much a tenor 2… almost a viola range, a tenor range with a much higher passaggio.[34] My chest voice goes up to B (B5) or C (C5) above middle C (C4) and I have a head voice from there up. My passaggio is about a 5th or 6th higher than a typical tenor, however, I sing the same range… I'm building my falsetto. Because of the testosterone my vocal chords are expanding, their thickening, my range has been changing and the way I sing notes is changing. I can hit the same notes as I was before, but my chest voice has changed quite a bit. (Interview, January 15, 2016)

It should be apparent that Rex has a more in-depth understanding of vocal ranges and singing techniques as a result of beginning a vocal program at Chapman University. The musical training Rex received also demonstrates access to university training that may be unavailable or possible for people of color. This is also true regarding the access to hormones and medical intervention. Rex also noted how they been on a lower hormone dose. Although Rex did not specifically mention that they were intentionally attempting to sing androgynously, Rex's vocal range as measured by classical standard categorizations appears to straddle several ranges—encompassing parts of lyric tenor, countertenor, counteralto, and mezzo-soprano. For Rex, this is a tenor 2 range as explained above. Premised on normative assumptions about voice and gender, Rex's singing voice would appear to align quite well with desires for an androgynous and agender identity. Rex's voice straddles a wide range of vocal parameters that do not align with any particular vocal category indicated by traditional music standards. In relation to Rex's voice and Chapman University, Rex's own production

[34] Passaggio is a term used mainly in classical singing to describe the transition area between the vocal registers.

of multivocality left instructors unable to comprehend such a voice. Rex's multivocality demonstrates the flexibility of voice and identity. Getting others to accept such multivocality is a difficult and arduous project. A place within TCLA is at least a starting point for this acceptance.

James Wen

James Wen identifies as Chinese American, a transgender man, and uses he, him, and his pronouns. He explains that he assimilated culturally within a white Northern Virginia neighborhood that included a strong presence of military and governmental employees. James also explains that his parents expected him to work hard, do well in school, and conform to normative gender roles. Affectively, there were signs of identifying differently from what was expected, and James believes that his identity was being suppressed because of his upbringing and environment.

James learns his parts in the choir by listening and imitating other choir members next to him. He describes his voice as a tenor one. But in the early stages of TCLA, choir director Lindsey Deaton was trying to get more people to cover higher parts. Lindsey suggested James attempt alto parts. "I felt I couldn't go that high and I don't feel comfortable with myself if I go higher… it's a little jarring… that was not hip for the psyche, like a dysphoria… it doesn't feel like me" (Interview, April 10, 2016). James has no musical background beyond constantly singing while driving. He is now the operations manager of TCLA and initially joined the choir to simply help with logistics. "I did not intend to be part of the chorus because my voice to me was what gave me away, it was the noticeable thing." During an early TCLA rehearsal, James sat in the back of the choir to sing. The artistic

director of the Gay Men's Chorus of Los Angeles, Joe Nadeau, happened to be in attendance. Joe sat down next to James and both listened to and sang with him. "Joe told me, 'oh, you're a tenor.' When he said that it made me very happy. I wasn't expecting that and it boosted my confidence" (Interview, April 10, 2016). James continued to sing while driving and swears that this contributed to his voice deepening.

For James, a name change, haircut, and suits contributed to easing the feelings of dissociation between a feminine presentation and what James describes as his true self:

> I already always saw myself as a male physical body, and I think that actually helped saved me, even though no one else was seeing it. That's what I mean about my internal life. The person I saw and experienced in my internal life was male, but no one could ever see him, and that's what was killing him. In my day-to-day life he was in the background… I had a very feminine presentation and I tried to be an uber-woman without realizing I was doing it. This cut my true self off to myself. One can say fantasy, but it wasn't fantasy to me. This guy had this outer life as this gender-presenting woman that wore skirt business suits… and then there was an interior life of him seeing himself in that same place with the traditional business suit. (Interview, April 10, 2016)

Occasionally James's internal life would be affirmed through what he says were "things that would be considered stereotypically male, usually having to do with strength—lifting things, fixing something." But those moments were overshadowed by a feminine presentation. James was unaware what was really happening at the time. "At the end of the day, something felt like it was missing. I couldn't figure it out… it was me. I was missing" (Interview, April 10, 2016). The dysphoric feelings began to wane when James began to read about trans people having similar experiences. He also researched online posts of other trans identified people with similar stories and dated a therapist; a woman who James says "guided me as I started to explore what butch was" (Interview, April 10, 2016).

James's experience with his voice and body cannot be neatly separated, something that is similar to many of the singers presented here. Even TCLA's director, in attempts to

diversify the range of the choir by suggesting James sing higher parts, contributed to James's dysphoria. Aligning the voice with an internal subjectivity was important for James. James says that when he began exploring his identity he began to look into "what butch was" (Interview, April 10, 2016). James has not considered SRS yet, and as stated above, notes that presenting as male for him was simply a matter of fashion and hair styling. Gayle Rubin nuances the embodiment and presentation that James can relate to. "Butch is the lesbian vernacular term for women who are more comfortable with masculine gender codes, styles, or identities than with feminine ones" (Rubin 1992: 467).

Voice and Embodiment

An especially intense issue that confronts the bodies and voices of TCLA involves the essentialized ideas about the voice and the body in relation to placement within choral settings. Many of the singers still use binary classifications of male and female in conjunction with traditional vocal parts when discussing their voices and bodies in relation to choral placement. This is understandable since those classifications are the basis for most choral groups. In other words, developing a newer terminology (for example, the use of tenor one and tenor two) in a group such as TCLA is a new phenomenon. Before becoming members of TCLA, some individual singers have dealt with ideas that they "work toward finding that which they supposedly already have… 'The voice' has been made expressive of inviolable self-presence, I-affirming desire, plentitude, anima, the life of survival, a better world" (Davies 2015: 680). But Davies goes on to note "voice belongs." This is what makes voice so powerful and irresistible. "Its fascination inheres in the way it binds us to the things of this world and to nature… voice connects to political ontologies of the here and now,

human relations and our shared materiality today" (681). That shared materiality is more affective in the voices and embodiments of the singers in this choir. Davies also notes that "voices do not only come from bodies or nature; bodies—our very natures—also come from voices" (681). This is the experience of the singers in TCLA. The voices and bodies of TCLA, as articulated by the singers herein, relate their sense of belonging, their notions of embodiment, and how they perceive their identities in relation to their behaviors, bodies, and voices.

The voice is central to how choral members relate their subjectivities and also how they envision themselves in relation to larger projects of identity politics. In *Singing the Classical, Voicing the Modern,* cultural anthropologist Amanda Weidman writes that "modern subjectivity hinges on the notion of voice as a metaphor for self and authenticity… the association of the voice with agency and sincerity is at the heart of notions of the rational subject; the voice in this sense is imagined as referring to, or directly expressive of, an individual interiorized self. On the other hand, such a notion of voice is formed in relation to other voices that come to be labeled in their plurality…" (2006: 7-8). It is precisely the voice as individually and collectively imagined and practiced where the members of TCLA and TGC find empowerment. Each singer articulates their individual agency in relation to their participation in the choirs. They also connect that agency to the wider mission of the choir's political project to empower trans, gender nonconforming, and intersex peoples. In these particular contexts and at this particular historical moment, the voices of these trans identified artists often merge with the larger sociopolitical arena of trans identity politics. This has real consequences for those individuals involved, for the larger LGBT community, and is part of current debates in the United States concerning trans peoples' rights. At the

same time, trans people of color are disproportionally silenced through this larger political project. In empowering the gendered facets of trans identity, racial and class facets of identity are elided, and a trans normative identity emerges as the central political voice for trans people writ large.

Many of the singers also grapple with essentialized ideas about their speaking voices and those ideas cannot be separated from how these singers approach vocal singing techniques. Some of the choir members are concerned about how their voices are perceived in everyday speech. Vocal timbre is the quality of the voice that marks individual bodies in racial and gendered terms. Timbre works paradoxically within our auditory system to identify sound sources, but "it identifies a version of the sources that may not always coincide with the version existing in the physical world" (Fales 2002: 58). Some of the choir members note that their voices betray them, especially when there is a lack of visual identification. Nina Eidsheim questions essentialized ideas about gender and voice through timbre. Eidsheim analyzes Vocaloid, a vocal synthesis software package, which offers users an opportunity to work with specific sounding synthesized voices that are categorized in terms of genre and gender. An early manifestation of the program offered "the world's first virtual" male and female "soul vocalists" (Eidsheim 2009, Vocaloid 2004). Eidsheim looks at the processes that connect audiences with specific vocal sounds that implicate ideas about race and gender. Arguing against essentialized notions of timbre, Eidsheim keenly points out that "vocal timbre is the sound of habitual performance that has *shaped* the physical body" (2009). These ideas concerning timbre become part of the transition work some of the singers work through.

Regarding the formation of gender, Ian Biddle and Freya Jarman-Ivens, in the edited volume *Oh Boy! Masculinities and Popular Music*, note that "all gender formations are results of careful and sustained practice and are thus not simply *formations* but *'per*-formations" (Jarman-Ivens 2007: 5, italics in original). While scholarly work on the voice and the body as important aspects of identity have been theorized in many ways, very few have examined their relationship to trans, genderqueer, or even gender expansive individuals (Barthes 1977, Eidsheim 2009, Wong 2004). More recent exceptions to this include Goldin-Perschbacher 2008, Kostenbaum 1993, Krell 2014, and Meizel (forthcoming).

Roland Barthes writes about finding the body within the voice – "the 'grain' is the body in the voice as it sings," which helps to complicate the idea that the singing voice is within the body (1977). As mentioned earlier, Eidsheim considers how vocal timbre "is not the unmediated sound of an essential body" (2009). Ethnomusicologist Deborah Wong covers identity politics inherent in Asian American musicians and music where their voices and bodies create "an activist response to racialized inequities" (2006: 162). Wong's intervention works through ideas of performance and becoming—the idea that performance empowers and shapes bodies and voices that resist cultural misunderstandings of Asian American performers. For my purposes here, the voices and bodies of TCLA and TGC encompass many of the aforementioned ideas. They are voices and bodies that each has their own individual story. Yet, they collectively work to highlight individual differences in approaching singing and performance. They are collectively responsible to each other even while they embrace individual stories and identities.

Transcendence Gospel Choir (TGC)

Before the formation of TCLA in October 2015 and my involvement in December 2015, I had initially made contact with another choir, the Transcendence Gospel Choir (TGC) of Oakland, CA. They share common goals with TCLA in empowering individual voices in a collectively safe space, but as a gospel choir this group is also invested in experiences of praising a Christian God through voice. On a Sunday in November 2014, I was invited to attend a rehearsal and interview members of TGC. The interviews took place at City of Refuge United Church of Christ (City of Refuge, UCC), which is also where the choir rehearses. My interviewees regularly attended services at City of Refuge, and on this particular day, it was expected that I, too, would be in attendance at the service. After an enthusiastic, and what I would describe in religious terms as a spirit-filled three-hour service, the rehearsal got underway. The choir mostly rehearses and performs with pre-recorded rhythm tracks, and the singing is always done with great enthusiasm and energy. Their singing, praises to God, and choreographed bodily movement from side-to-side is infectious and aligned with traditions of gospel singing and praise. Even though the choir is based at City of Refuge, UCC, where they have historically been a part of worship services since 2001, they also do a fair amount of community outreach. My time spent with TGC was considerably less than that of TCLA, but TGC adds important elements of religion and faith at the crossroads of trans identity that are important to consider.

There are very few choirs in the United States that cater to trans identified individuals, and TGC was one of the first. (Kozan 2006: 405). The choir has a strict policy of admitting only trans identified people to its ranks. Founder of the choir and a former co-director, Ashley Moore, was determined to use music to communicate and bring into

realization the idea that one could "be transgender and self-loving and a person of faith" (Marech 2004). Moore has not been involved with TGC since late 2007, and it is possible that the former founder is busy with other projects and work that did not allow time for TGC (Pacha 2014). The current leader and conductor, Yvonne Evans, keeps the group organized and on track during rehearsals.

In addition to the personal and individual acclamations of faith by the choir members, the choir is aligned with the beliefs of City of Refuge, UCC: "We endeavor to demonstrate that the preconceived notion of a bi-polar, heterosexual, hetero-gendered 'natural order' is not reflected in the nature of God or the ministry of Jesus Christ. In this way we will challenge intolerance and hatred, transcend boundaries and restore hope to our communities."[35] In 2003, the choir sang at a national meeting of the United Church of Christ when the denomination officially welcomed the full participation of transgender people[36] J. Bennett Guess, the executive minister of United Church of Christ local church ministries, credits the senior bishop of City of Refuge, Yvette Flunder, to "advancing issues of transgender inclusion through music," and that Flunder "was able to raise the profile of that issue within our church in ways that talking would not have accomplished" (Banks 2015). For more conservative Christian churches in America, the acceptance of LGBT people is growing, but Flunder notes that this acceptance is often conditional. Flunder advocates for "radical inclusivity" and wishes to extend an "extravagant welcome" to those who feel marginalized in other church settings, welcoming "you and all your baggage for we are here too with all our baggage" (Flunder 2015: 116).

[35] http://www.transfaithonline.org/explore/christian/traditions/black/transcendence_gospel_choir/

[36] http://religionnews.com/2015/03/20/black-lesbian-bishop-yvette-flunder-using-energy-find-peace/

Flunder's advocacy of inclusion is not a new trend, and the idea of the church as a space that welcomes oppressed sexual minorities is not a new phenomena. George Lipsitz's vivid biography of Johnny Otis reveals the ways in which Otis's Landmark Community Church during the 1960s and 70s was all-inclusive, "no one was turned away" (2010: 110). The church, which included gay and lesbian members, practiced and acted upon inclusion where other churches only preached the idea (112-13). Otis's church reflects a wider Black Pentecostal practice that served as a "crucible for democracy and social justice" (109). City of Refuge builds on this practice and also works to bridge understandings among more conservative Christian communities.

The art of gospel singing is also connected to the history of the Black Pentecostal church in the United States. Anthony Heilbut writes about the physical prowess of women gospel singers between 1945 and 1960. Heilbut stresses that the singers were singing to people who were expected to worship God with "soul and body" and because of this, "gospel women allowed themselves physical liberties that might appear shocking. Indeed, the young Mahalia Jackson was considered too physical" (2012: 18). Jackson, as well as many other gospel women, "became the models of gay men" and gospel music is one genre where women are the exemplars for men (19). The preponderance of gay and lesbian gospel singers in the Black and white Pentecostal church are detailed extensively in Heilbut's survey of gospel music.

How do the members of this choir explain their subjectivities in relation to the church both metaphorically and as embodied individuals? Like the church (City of Refuge) itself, TGC has been a place of refuge for its members since its very beginnings. Shared issues relative to trans identity bond the members of the choir to one another. Such issues like

passing, queer identity, access to medical care and health insurance, bullying, and others, are issues trans individuals contend with each day. The members of TGC help each other through such issues. But they also share a faith in God; a God they believe loves them exactly the way they are. Jerimyah, who is white, was born and raised in San Francisco. It took him over eight years to work through what the idea of being genderqueer was all about. He is now taking testosterone, but his voice has not yet changed. Before meeting Jerimyah for the first time, I spoke with him by phone, and I was hearing what I would best describe as a voice sounding in a very high-pitched vocal register, typically interpreted as representative of a woman's voice. Jerimyah says: "I never felt like I was a female, but I didn't know how to express it… until one day someone told me I was genderqueer, and I was like, I am, that's what I am" (Interview, November 9, 2014). Jerimyah began singing with the choir when he was 21 years old; a year after the choir was formed. Jerimyah specifically notes that he cannot speak for anyone else, but relates that "God is a loving God, no matter what…who I am, God still loves me, I can sing and praise Him for that reason" (Interview, November 9, 2014). The choir helps Jerimyah deal with depression: "I don't go out much. So the choir makes me be out there" (Interview, November 9, 2014).

Another choir member, Renee, who identifies as trans and is African American, laments the attention that trans bodies receive and stresses that "it's not about the vessel but about the spirit that lives in that vessel… We spend too much time on this (meaning, trans identity) and less time getting closer to God" (Interview, November 9, 2014). Embodiment for Renee includes a spiritual aspect that goes beyond the materiality of the body. This is something some of the choir members wish others could understand. Like many Christian choirs, TGC wishes to spread God's love through music. They hope that the idea of God's

spirit and love living within them is what will be understood. This is, of course, much more difficult to physically see, but that is the point Renee is conveying.

When gospel singer and gay preacher Carl Bean began his Unity Fellowship of Christ Church in the 1980s, he declared that his calling was to be understood from the perspective of an openly gay cleric. Bean was emphatic about reaching people who were Christian and gay. He argued that this marginalized group "could no longer live under a system of hypocrisy—that is, attend a church that pretended our sexual orientation didn't exist, or worse, attend a church where it was condemned" (2010: 214). Bean's testimony emphasized the abiding love of Jesus as the inclusive force extending grace to everyone (213). The inclusive nature of this gospel is exactly how the singers in TGC and the parishioners of City of Refuge make connections. The individual members of TGC share a love of an entity that they believe accepts them no matter what forms of embodiment they inhabit. For TGC, this shared faith is a powerful testimony to other parishioners, and a faith that ministers to many others marginalized by a mainstream Christian religion that may often refuse to accept gender designations other than male and female.

The choir did not however, have a harmonious beginning. Learning to sing with voices in transition and arguments over wardrobe were only some of the issues that plagued the early formations of TGC (*The Believers* 2006). Similarly to the growing pains that TCLA is now experiencing, TGC's weekly rehearsal schedule helped to overcome many of the musical and relationship issues. At the start, matching pitch with singers unused to performing with other singers was a fundamental goal. A regular rehearsal schedule was partly responsible for improving this issue.

Using music as a conduit, Jerimyah and Renee, as well as other trans identified singers in the choir, have articulated that they share an experience of praising God through voice. This temporary uniting of trans voices is a momentary respite from a gendered world that would attempt to keep them marginalized. For Jerimyah, the experience of singing with the choir creates a space where his identity can be affirmed, and Renee articulates that the choir should be thought of as a spiritual conduit where gendered identities take a back seat to a relationship with God. These are two different stances in relation to two different experiences of singing in this choir and each is a way of validating or backgrounding trans identity for the participants. The choir offers a space for singers to work through facets of both their singing voices and their identities. TGC builds on a history of inclusion established by many Black Pentecostal churches, and some white Pentecostal churches, in accepting marginalized bodies and behaviors that are unwelcome elsewhere. The spiritual work in the lives of the members of TGC adds another dimension of identity and broadens the scope of this topic. This is a ripe area for further exploration and something I would love to research further.

Voice, Visibility and the Trans Chorus of Los Angeles

On January 31st, 2016 I am warmly greeted by Lisa Marchbanks in what appears to be a dance studio at Immanuel Presbyterian Church located in the Koreatown district of Los Angeles. This is the new rehearsal space for TCLA, and Lisa is its organizational wizard, as well as most enthusiastic cheerleader. Lisa's hugs are incredibly powerful and long held. After extending that hug to me, Lisa welcomes each member of the choir similarly as they enter the dance studio's rehearsal space. You get the sense that this is a natural and

affectionate greeting on the part of Lisa, but it is also an important move. Lisa is an extension of one of the goals of this choral group—to embrace, bring together, and empower a diverse group of trans individuals. These individuals embody differences of race, class, age, and of course, a wide spectrum of gender identification.

TCLA, as a newly formed choir, provides an option for voices where none existed before. The choir is a safe and encouraging space for trans, intersex, queer, questioning and gender expansive individuals; a place where voices can be explored and expressed through music. This section of the chapter uses Foucault's concept of heterotopia to argue that feelings of isolation fade when connections are made in both imagined and real spaces of music. This choir accomplishes these connections in several ways. First, the choir is a safe space for its members. Second, choir members imagine public performances as opportunities for reaching other trans individuals and bridging understandings of trans identities. Third, balancing visibility and musicianship is a goal for the director and the choir members, but also one of the choir's biggest challenges.

One way TCLA reduces feelings of isolation for trans individuals is by providing a safe space for its members. It is an intimate space where gender expansive individuals, as well as trans people of color, are welcome. Several choir members have articulated what this means for them. Maggie relates that "the only other place that we're truly safe in is the confines of our own home. To have a safe space away from home just opens up possibilities" (Interview, January 31, 2016). Rex elaborates on one of those possibilities: "What I like about this choir for me personally, especially as someone who doesn't identify in the binary, is that I don't think about whether this is affirming my femininity or masculinity or gender, I just know that I'm allowed to sing where I'm allowed to sing that doesn't have anything to

do with my gender" (Interview, January 15, 2016). Another choir member, Gia, positions herself in relation to others in the choir commenting that "the idea of having a place like this for your voice is already so much for a community because we're constantly being silenced. Walking into that space is beautiful and amazing, but we need to continue to fine-tune the nourishment of those individuals in the choir" (Interview, February 1, 2016). Gia is keenly aware that the voices need to be nurtured so the choir members can become more comfortable with each other. The choir members recognize that they have differences in musical training and abilities, but it is precisely this space that allows them to explore the idea of growing artistically and becoming vocally present.

Heterotopia

The choir's actual physical space for rehearsals is indicative of Foucault's concept of heterotopia. Foucault distinguished two types of spaces, utopias and heterotopias, as sites "endowed with the curious property of being in relation with all the others, but in such a way as to suspend, neutralize, or invert the set of relationships designed, reflected, or mirrored by themselves" (1997: 352). Some of the things that utopias and heterotopias are regarded as being in relation to are dominant social hierarchies, institutions, and social practices. For Foucault, utopias are sites with no real place, and are described as a reversal or radical transformation of society but are "spaces that are by their very essence fundamentally unreal" (352). On the other hand, heterotopias according to Foucault, are defined as follows: "There also exist... real and effective spaces which are outlined in the very institution of society, but which constitute a sort of counter arrangement, of effectively realized utopia, in which… all the other real arrangements that can be found within society, are at one and the same time

represented, challenged, and overturned: a sort of place that lies outside all places and yet is actually localizable" (352).

Margaret Kohn notes that Foucault's concept of heterotopia did not claim that the heterotopia is "a principle of political emancipation, a model of social transformation, or a locus for self-fashioning" (2003: 90-91). For the purposes of this chapter, it is Kohn's further elaboration of Foucault's concept that I wish to consider concerning TCLA. Kohn acknowledges David Harvey's critique of Foucault's concept noting that Harvey suggests that a "position of alterity vis-á-vis the dominant structure does not, by itself, nurture critique, let alone resistance" (Kohn 2003: 91). Kohn offers a more precise concept: "the heterotopia of resistance; a real countersite that inverts and contests economic or social hierarchies. Its function is social transformation rather than escapism, containment, or denial. By challenging the conventions of the dominant society, it can be an important locus of struggle against normalization" (91). Even though part of Kohn's project is to describe the actual physical buildings as "houses of the people" as heterotopic spaces at the end of the nineteenth century, she goes on to explain that these functioned as collective spaces for poverty stricken workers. Because the bourgeois public sphere was founded on keeping its economic status separate, the house of the people was based on the need for "the integration of politics and economics and served as the basis of psychological emancipation" (94).

Do both TCLA and TGC really challenge the conventions of dominant society? I believe they are spaces where trans individuals can flourish, there are obvious ways the choirs are different than more traditional choirs, and they do challenge normalizing aesthetics about singing. The communities of people involved in these choirs who self-identify as trans, queer, gender expansive, or genderless are a community of identities that challenge

normative ideas about choir formation. Even if they utilize the existing language related to voice placement, or choose not to, these communities of singers do alter existing normalized ideas about the ecology of bodies and voices—how those voices and bodies shape identities and how those identities challenge conventional ideas about singing. Whether knowingly or not, public performances by TCLA and TGC present us, at the very least, with differing physical representations of voices and bodies. It could be argued that these choirs do not actually challenge any conventions of dominant society or dominant choral practices, especially if they work with traditional choral language and techniques. All singers go through transition at varying points in their careers. But that is exactly what makes them different. Trans individuals who may be transitioning, especially trans men, are rapidly experiencing issues that might normally take place over months or years of training. These individuals find it difficult to place their voices *and* their identities within other settings. Beyond singing, TGC is resisting binaried gender norms in U.S. Christianity. Both choirs offer a place to express identities where binary ideas of voice can be challenged. The choirs offer individual subjectivities and identities an opportunity to flourish. TCLA and TGC are the heterotopic spaces that offer a place of belonging for the members involved.

While addressing the choir and speaking metaphorically of this safe space as a community, the choir's artistic director, Lindsey Deaton, says that "this is our church, our sanctuary" (Field notes, January 17, 2016). And as a sanctuary that houses a safe haven for the choir members, Lindsey reminds the members that it is not a space for competing identities. The individual choir members come from very diverse backgrounds. White trans people sing alongside trans people of color. An older generation of trans individuals who more recently have embraced living the gender they identify with or have more recently

transitioned, sing next to younger genderqueer and gender expansive individuals. There are real differences in the lived experiences of each of these individuals. Lindsey makes clear that in order for the choir to function as a collective instrument, the voices and individual experiences of each member are not in contention with each other. While directly addressing the choir, Lindsey uses the term trans lateral violence to indicate the idea of inter-group conflict (Field notes, January 31, 2016). Lindsey identifies racially as white, and indicates that this part of her identity comes with certain privileges, but her experience of awkwardness in relation to gender transition complicates those privileges. Lindsey is not advocating that differences be silenced or ignored. On the contrary, as singers get to know each other better, they are encouraged to relate their experiences to each other in a respectful manner. The idea is that there be unity in diversity. The heterotopic space of the choir is intended to mitigate against the chances of trans lateral violence.

Another way TCLA reduces feelings of isolation for these choir members is by imagining public performances as opportunities for reaching other trans individuals and bridging understandings of trans identities. I use the word imagining here because the choir has yet to perform outside of highly supportive audience bases**.** But in my ongoing fieldwork with this choir and other trans identified musicians in Los Angeles and San Francisco, I have learned that this choir, as well as other trans and gender nonconforming musicians, are determined to represent a community that has little public exposure. Lindsey has commented to me that the choir's steering committee discussed whether or not to keep performances of the choir private in order to protect its members (pers. comm., December 11, 2015). Lindsey told the *Beverly Press,* "No. In Los Angeles, our community is trying to create social change so trans people don't feel like they have to extinguish their lives. Somewhere, in a small city,

there could be a kid that needs to see trans folks living their truth and expressing themselves" (Lingenfelter 2015). Each individual who makes a decision to join TCLA is made aware that they will be filmed, asked to do interviews, and that their performances will be recorded. It is also clearly articulated that while their personal stories matter they should never be made to feel uncomfortable or uneasy, or pressured to reveal intimate details of their personal lives.

As a trans woman, Lindsey speaks from experience, and during a rehearsal break, she addresses the choir: "All of us individually know exactly what the ecology is. We live it. Our job is to change it so others that follow don't have to go through the same things" (Field notes, January 17, 2016). The choir had aspirations to work with a prominent agent in Los Angeles, but Lindsey notes the motivations for signing TCLA by this agent were not exactly in-line with the choir's goals. Lindsey says that this particular agent "had in his mind the idea of hearing music like it's never been sung before by people that you've never seen singing it" (Interview, March 23, 2016). Lindsey commented that the agent was, and still is, looking for ideas for a television show regarding TCLA. Lindsey's retort to the agent included the comment that "we're human…we sound like a human choir… we are not quails or geese… and if you close your eyes you can't tell the difference." The agent consented that this was a problem. Lindsey noted the agent was searching for sonic difference, something that would be recognizable by a television audience and that difference in sound needed to be in the form of a professional quality recording of a polished choir (Interview, March 23, 2016). This was frustrating for Lindsey. According to her, the choir has only "been together for minutes. They are not trained singers. To see them is actually it. Seeing is how we get murdered. My voice betrays me" (Interview, March 23, 2016). This is a powerful statement reflecting the social role of the voice. Here Lindsey references the ways in which her own

voice gets labeled male in the absence of a visual body. Lindsey is pointing out the real dangers trans individuals face when their gendered misreading creates confusion or animosity in others.

In referencing the agent they would like to hire, Lindsey explains that this agent's desire to essentialize the choir as markedly different from other choirs is an appropriation of a narrative that always seeks sensationalism regarding trans lives and narratives, especially in popular culture (Interview, March 23, 2016).[37] Thus, a critique is possible against relating TCLA as a heterotopia of resistance that concerns the idea that Lindsey sets forth. The prospective agent who believes that the choir will offer the public a new and dazzling experience works against Lindsey's vision of the choir. As Lindsey stated, "if you close your eyes you can't tell the difference," demonstrates her desire to protect the singers from such a public display of sensationalism (Interview, March 23, 2016). And yet, Lindsey also wishes the choir to be publicly, and therefore visually, prominent. Public exposure is key to the ongoing mission to change the ecology of trans lives. Lindsey's desire for the choir to not be judged in terms of sonic difference is juxtaposed with visual difference. These conflicting views do not necessarily challenge social hierarchies about choral formation, and yet I believe the actual physical bodies and singing voices of TCLA are in the process of providing social transformation. Agreements about the process may be conflicting, but the public exposure of TCLA and TGC present us with voices and bodies that we do not often experience. Training for people to work with such voices and bodies will certainly need to be enacted. Since this is a new and uncharted experience for many involved, this may the beginning of a new performance paradigm. These voices and bodies in performance

[37] Some of these depictions of trans lives and narratives in popular culture are discussed below.

challenge normative assumptions of what constitutes singers' bodies appropriate for performance and the relationship those bodies have with vocal behaviors.

Another aspect of TCLA's mission is to address the very real and somber reality of trans lives lost. Lindsey is heavily invested in addressing the well-being of trans individuals in all segments of society. At the choir's first invite-only fundraiser in West Hollywood in February 2016, Lindsey passionately articulated the tragic suicide of Leelah Alcorn . At the age of 14, Alcorn came out as transgender to her parents who refused to accept her female gender identity. Alcorn's parents eventually removed her from both physical and online social activities. A note left by Alcorn expressed feelings of loneliness and alienation as reasons for committing suicide (Field notes, February 4, 2016). Lindsey actively works to combat those kinds of feelings by allowing time near the end of every rehearsal to make eye contact with, and physically move closer and point to each singer stating: "thank you for who you are and thank you for being here" (Field notes, January 17, 2016).

The poetics of visibility and voice are multi-faceted regarding TCLA. Amanda Weidman notes that thinking about the voice and self-identification "activates a host of culturally salient associations between voice and individuality, authorship, agency, authority, and power" (2015: 232). Lindsey hopes the visibility of this choir will inspire other trans individuals to value their lives and not fear expressing, or giving voice to, their identities. Lisa Marchbanks articulates that this choir will "give trans people a voice they have not had before" (Marchbanks 2015). The individual members also realize that they are more visible and effective as a larger group of singers. The larger group allows the musical voices an opportunity to flourish, even if some of the individual vocalists are still trying to literally place their voices within this collective. Individual singers are still figuring out and working

through the extent of their ranges. At this stage in the choir's history, Lindsey is balancing the emotional development of individual vocalists with skills necessary to improve the group's collective sound. These choir members also want people to see and hear them sing. They hope their visibility will be celebrated as uniquely human, not as an anomaly of voices that will quickly fade. No matter the outcome, the hugs that Marchbanks provides, as well as the physical moves and vocal statements of affirmation by Lindsey, demonstrates a genuine love for these individuals and provides a foundation for acceptance.

Visibility and Musicianship

An issue that concerns the leadership of the newly formed Trans Chorus of Los Angeles is whether the choir will be taken seriously. Ideas about musicianship are interwoven into this dissertation in ways articulated by my research participants. Some of the musicians in this study have specific ideas about what constitutes good performance practice. The trans musicians in this study have differing goals and complex ideas about the dynamics of professionalism and amateurism that take on differing levels of saliency for many of the participants. The musicians don't share the same orientation to performance and the qualities of empowerment in performance contexts. These roles reflect long-standing sociocultural ideas about professional and amateur musicking. Jennifer Leitham's history as a performer is experienced through years of practicing jazz and covers years of playing experience that has culminated in a long-standing professional career. Joe Stevens, a singer-songwriter who self-identifies as a trans man, like Leitham, has also been performing for years and has years of song-writing experience that leaves the perception of his career in-line with that of a

seasoned professional and as a creatively successful musician (Joe's identities and narratives follow this chapter).

Ideas about musicality have a parallel in creativity. Jason Toynbee suggests that creativity involves some form of evaluation. Toynbee considers consumption as a key factor in assessing value, but suggests that it is more geared toward the "social production of value and the accreditation of creativity" (2012: 162). Discussing a wide range of musical creators, Toynbee notes that "their creativity is manifested precisely through post hoc evaluation, a process of diffusion and reception that is cultural in the widest possible sense. The issue cannot be reduced to one of choosing either production or reception as the moment in which cultural value is realized. Rather, *both* count in any analysis of creativity" (162). I suggest that musicality works in a similar way regarding TCLA and TGC. Evaluations made concerning the musicality and professionalism of the choirs are socially produced and reflect the differing ways people construct ideas about value and musicality.

Balancing visibility as gendered bodies and aurality in musicianship is a goal for the director and the choir members, but also one of the choir's biggest challenges. James Wen, the operations manager of TCLA and whose narrative is discussed above, commented to me that people visually see trans first before they hear the choir, noting that "with a cisgendered choir gender is invisible" (pers. comm., December 11, 2015). The statement has real implications for trans people despite the ways in which gender cannot be dismissed visually, or aurally, no matter what the choral group. But Wen highlights the problem with taking the choir seriously from a visual and musical standpoint. Weidman asks a helpful question in this regard: "How are voices performed in relation to bodies? Just as singers 'place' their voices in varying ways inside their bodies and vocal tracts, they also construct an association

between the vocal sound they are producing and the image they project, a project that may be more or less self-conscious but is never simply 'natural'" (Weidman 2015: 235-36). Weidman's work on playback singers in the popular film industries of India disrupts "expected relationships between sound and image, voice and body, and person and presence helping to constitute other, less familiar ways of conceiving of voice and subjectivity" (241).

TCLA is in contrast to the history of perceived professionalism found with Jennifer Leitham and Joe Stevens. TCLA has a mix of experienced singers. The group's most immediate importance is providing a safe space for trans individuals. At least initially, during the choir's early formation, the idea of a safe space meant a place where these singers could feel welcome and work through their differing stages of voice production. Musicianship, while certainly important, is currently a secondary concern for many of the choir members. The choir's director, Lindsey Deaton, is keenly aware of this distinction, and yet is working diligently to improve the level of vocal quality. Lindsey is helping the singers in TCLA develop voices as they are currently experienced and in whatever stage of development they are situated. For the purposes of this choir and those voices currently participating, Lindsey designates vocal positions according to ranges classified as tenor 1, tenor 2, baritone, and bass. The majority of voices happens to land in those ranges since trans men often desire to lower their voices and can do so with hormones. As mentioned earlier, hormones work differently with trans women, and their voices tend to stay within a range they established during puberty. This is not to suggest that these voices cannot be changed and developed. But Lindsey makes clear that wherever a voice is situated at the moment, and it is a singer's desire to sing in this choir, then she will find a place for that voice.

This is slightly different than a trans identified choir in Boston, Massachusetts—the Butterfly Music Transgender Chorus—that initially worked with trans individuals to alter how their voices sounded to be more in line with their gender identity. This choir's director, Sandi Hammond, provides speech training with weekly rehearsals and helps singers to connect with outside experts (Binkley 2015, Hobson and Young 2015). Lindsey is also aware that outside perspectives, even those of allies, will evaluate TCLA on their musical abilities. My intent is not to justify or suggest one type of performance practice is more valued than another. The point is to allow the participants the opportunity to relate their positions and their performance practices. Ultimately, TCLA and TGC have much to show us about the fluidity and complexity of gendered voices and bodies. Some of the singers relate their voices and bodies in binary terms, some make androgynous claims, and others remain ambiguous about their identifications.

Choir member Rikki Chunn is concerned that people don't believe trans people can sing (Interview, January 31, 2016). In a gesture that suggests the influence of drag performance, both Maggie and Rikki are concerned that people not conflate ideas about trans identity and drag performers. Individual choir members are passionately encouraged to express themselves however they choose across a wide spectrum of gender identification and affiliation. It should be obvious that this is a celebrated aspect of being in this choir if you are a choir member. Even though the choir has yet to perform outside of highly supportive environments, it cannot be understated that this choir, as articulated by each member, is an option that did not exist for them before.

Lindsey was very candid about the difficult set of musical challenges involving TCLA. These challenges came to a head and left her emotionally drained after the private

fundraising performance in West Hollywood for the choir on February 4, 2016. Lindsey received feedback about that performance from a prominent member of the Gay Men's Chorus of Los Angeles (Interview, March 23, 2016). The comments addressed the choir in average terms, noting that they did not sing all together and did not sing on pitch. The remarks left Lindsey very upset at the time, and she was very animated in relating the story to me: "Of course they don't sing all together. Of course they don't sing in tune. Is that what this is all about? As an artistic director, I and my ego reacted to that because I'm watching people measure, judge, and value us strictly as a chorus, so of course we're going to get judged" (Interview, March 23, 2016). Lindsey takes this very seriously and it should be obvious that she is well aware of the choir's abilities and limitations. "We have people who cannot match pitch in this chorus and we hear them" (Interview, March 23, 2016). Lindsey is balancing the quality of the choir's voices with a desire to be all-inclusive.

During a choir rehearsal at this time, Lindsey asked the choir for input on this issue. She noted how unhappy she was about the comments made by others and her frustrations with improving the choir. It was a very emotional experience for Lindsey and TCLA. The choir noted that they were motivated to do better whenever Lindsey called them out on pitch issues or when asked to listen well to each other. After a week away from Los Angeles, Lindsey returned, apologized for bringing the drama of the following week into the choir rehearsal space, and immediately began teaching the choir members fundamentals about pitch, rhythm, and how to move from one point to another musically while listening to each other (Field notes, January 31, 2016). When Lindsey references the idea that GMCLA members are judging the choir strictly on choral terms, her anger is directed to those who seem to have forgotten how important GMCLA was for the LGBT community when it was

formed in 1979. Lindsey reminds the choir often that an important mission for TCLA is to be visible in order to change the ecology of trans lives for the better while simultaneously learning to love their voices.

Musically, the ranges of individual voices must be taken into account in order for choral works to be performed. Some of the trans men who may be currently taking testosterone have experienced radical changes in their voice ranges and timbre. One former melody singer in a soprano range is challenged by reading bass clef but enjoys the challenge nonetheless. The choir's distribution is bass, baritone, tenor one and tenor two, a distribution that Gia Ryan exclaims makes this choir more like a gay men's choir (Interview February 1, 2016). Lindsey is working with singers to balance their vocal desires with the needs of the larger ensemble. Of course, Lindsey's goal is to produce excellence in execution, musicality, dynamic contrast, syllabic pronunciation, and sound.

The tensions between visibility and voice may appear as a burden for some of the choir members, and yet, they can be productive. Elias Dylan Krell's concept of transvocality gives some insight into this phenomenon:

> Voice intervenes in the affect-identity construction because vocal phenomena play with identification. Not all women have voices that are heard as 'female,' nor are all men recognizable as 'male.' Many trans people do not medically transition, and, of those who do, some trans men still have voices that are heard as feminine; some women have 'baritone' voices. Voice spills over these categories, amplifying an excess that it cannot contain. The visual cannot contain this excess either, and yet, in my experience, we are more patient, more open, and less demanding of a graspable Truth when we encounter sexual or racial ambiguity through the ear rather than the eye. (2014: 36-37)

What Krell suggests is that in the absence of a visual, the voice is more easily accepted as ambiguous. Ambiguity perceivably fades when there is no distinct disjuncture between body and voice. In other words, bodies that align visually and sound sonically with the perceived,

binaried formations of identity are perceived as male or female. Visual bodies and voices that do not easily align within binary standards of male and female are not easily accepted or understood as ambiguous. Historically, they were more likely to be pathologized as incorrectly formed or abnormal. Part of the prospective agent's search for sonic and visual difference with TCLA may suggest an attempt to find ambiguity in a choral setting. And yet, Lindsey also tells me that her voice garners responses of "sir" when in phone conversations (Interview, March 23, 2016). Thus, even with the absence of a visual, the voice can still be misrepresented. Krell's assertion that "voice spills over these categories, amplifying an excess that it cannot contain" is an adequate way to describe the ways in which the voices and bodies of TCLA and TGC encompass identities that are indeed ambiguous (2014: 37).

TCLA is creating the conditions for social transformation whether or not they are successful outside of this rehearsal space. Lindsey has remarked on several occasions that this choir is making history. The choir's intent is to change the ecology of trans lives. The lingering effects of trans lives in popular culture that mark those lives as tragic, unlivable, and delusional are depicted in films such as *The Crying Game* and *Boys Don't Cry*, as well as past episodes of sensationalist TV shows such as *Geraldo* and *Jerry Springer*. Popular cultural stars like Laverne Cox, Janet Mock, and Caitlyn Jenner are beginning to challenge those depictions, but their lives do not reflect the realities of life for the members of TCLA. TCLA embodies a myriad of differences as a heterotopic space, challenging the conventions of gendered society, the make-up of traditional choirs, and the abilities of the voice.

Although Foucault did not claim that the heterotopia would be a major site of resistance, he did conclude his lecture provocatively suggesting that "in civilizations where [heterotopia] is lacking, dreams dry up, adventure is replaced by espionage, and privateers by

the police" (1997: 356). As a heterotopia of resistance, the choir offers connections for both real and imagined spaces of music. It is a real, safe space for choir members. The choir imagines public performances as opportunities for reaching other trans individuals and for bridging understandings of trans identities. And finally, balancing visibility and musicianship is both a goal and challenge for the director and the choir members. Rex articulates what others in the choir feel about the reality of this heterotopic space. TCLA is a "space where you really feel like you can live authentically and have other people around you be ok with that and get it" (Interview, January 15, 2016). Rex's comment on living authentically suggests an ability to have a living environment that does not judge, classify, label, or otherwise pigeonhole trans identities or nonconforming gender identities. Being in a space encompassing a community of trans, genderqueer, non-conforming, nonbinary, genderless identities is a starting place for acceptance.

Chapter 5 Transformations: Americana Music, Queer Communities, and Joe Stevens

Joe Stevens describes the music he composes and performs as roots, country, Americana, indie-roots, indie-folk, and singer-songwriter music. This chapter opens with some brief historical ideas about some of these genres and looks at the sociopolitical, racial, and gendered discourses that accompany them in order to situate Joe and his identity within its framework. The histories and discourses of these genre categorizations tend to have essentialist notions of identities—artists and audiences are presumed to be mostly white, working class, and heteronormative. Americana, a more recent category, retains ideas of American roots music including the latter identity categories, but is considered popular with young, urban fans who do not necessarily recognize the history of roots music. The normative assumptions of identity within Americana and country music offer effective and potent musical arenas where trans identified and queer artists offer alternatives to those assumptions (Goldin-Perschbacher 2015: 776). There is a wide array of scholarship that traces the essentialized history of identity construction in country music genres (Bufwack and Oermann 1993, Filene 2000, Holt 2007, McCusker and Pecknold 2004, Miller 2010, Russell 2010). There is also a growing amount of work that explores the more complex constructions of identity in those genres (Ching 2003, Farmelo 2001, Aaron Fox 2004, Pamela Fox 2009, Hubbs 2014, Miller 2010).

Many of the people who perform and listen to these genres tend to place a higher value on a tacit connection between the singers and a song's meaning. Not all country artists are writing their own material of course, but many do, and fans connect with these artists and

their songs in ways that are perceived as relative to their own life-experiences. As singer-songwriters, the artists compose material that is perceived as opportune material for expressions of self-identity. This resonates quite strongly with fans that happen to be queer and trans identified. Some of Joe Stevens's fans most favored songs detail Joe's personal life. This particular aspect of singing and musical composition makes sense within the singer-songwriter genre, where Joe is perceived as both singer and songwriter. This has important implications for trans and queer identified artists, their fans, and the communities they associate with because such performances offer ways to work through complex ideas about the self in relation to communities oppressed and marginalized by normative standards of performance (Goldin-Perschbacher 2013: 477-78). Like Goldin-Perschbacher, I too find David Román's ideas about queer performance and self-representation in theatrical work compelling and apropos to Joe and other queer singer-songwriters.

> Autobiography is perhaps the most immediately understood form of queer self-representation, and it is also part of a larger collective and ongoing revisionist history. Its premise is generally based on a certain political investment in visibility… the categories 'gay,' 'lesbian,' and 'queer' are themselves dynamic, subject to the shifting historical forces that help shape these terms and subject to the personal histories that mark any queer individual's life. Queer solo artists can't help but bring this mix into their performances, animating their work within the context of the larger culture and history in which they live. (Román and Hughes 1998: 4-5)

The chapter also takes a brief historical journey through a few artists who are not the standard bearers of American folk/roots music to demonstrate an alternative history of embodiment and musical performance. Although those artists work within the historical contexts of their time, their contributions to the music help to frame ideas about identity, performance, and embodiment that set the stage for Joe Stevens and other trans and queer-identified artists.

The chapter asks how and why Joe makes decisions regarding his music and identity. What choices, beliefs, desires, and perceptions does he articulate about musical performance and song writing? How does Joe's story relate to other trans narratives? Unlike Jennifer Leitham, Joe's past, upbringing, and musical career suggest a genderqueer trajectory, yet, the issues involved with trans embodiment between both Joe and Jennifer do have similarities. At times, Joe narrates his identity relative to both queer and trans affiliations.[38]

Joe's narrative is then discussed in relation to what he brings to the singer-songwriter genre as a queer identified artist. Joe particularly identifies with women singer-songwriters but also references the work of "vulnerable" male performers like the Avett Brothers. The ways in which masculinity and vulnerability frame Joe's identity are juxtaposed with his female gender assignment at birth. What masculinity entails moves beyond a binaried concept of the term. Judith Halberstam's *Female Masculinity* reminds us that "masculinity must not and cannot and should not reduce down to the male body and its effects" (1998: 1). Halberstam's study of how masculinity is constructed politically, socially, and culturally shows why it is important to include female and other forms of masculinities in any discussion of masculinity. Joe's identities and multivocalities are sonically represented through recordings of his pre-transition singing voice, which is currently in circulation along with other solo and group projects recorded post-transition.

I then consider voice and embodiment specifically involving Joe's identity and music. Joe's story is obviously very different than Jennifer Leitham's and is unique in its own way. I

[38] In this chapter, I regard queer as a larger identity category encompassing an array of bodies and behaviors that regard both sexual orientation and gender identity as potentially fluid. Most often, I mean queer identity to encompass the broadest sense of that term. Joe self-identifies as queer as well as trans and embraces the term queer to signify his connection to the larger community of queer-identified people.

continue to look at the ways in which Joe's lived experience of voice and embodiment add to the discussions from the latter chapter. Joe's narrative recounts how he handled his own transitional period and how music composition and performance played a key role through that process. Also, both the speaking and singing voice related to trans identified people is examined in more detail.

American Folk Music

Before discussing the more recent Americana genre, it will help to frame Americana's ties and perceptions of its sound to the rural aesthetics of American folk music. The historical discourses and perceived boundaries of American folk music in the Southern area of the United States include fabricated notions of Anglo-American and white identity. This construction of folk music involved a great deal of appropriation of other musics often through violence. American folk music's historical myth of a strong Anglo-American and white identity is persistently recounted. Yet, a nuanced look into performers who crossed those boundaries helps to break down some of the broad generalizations made about this music's racial and gendered discourse.

In order to focus the representations of musical practices described in this chapter, I will use American folk music broadly to designate old time, bluegrass, roots, and traditional country music, and Americana music. When I employ the use of American folk, it is its *perception* as rural, simple, and tied to a sentimental past that is important. But my usage of the term echoes the understanding that Karl Hagstrom Miller carefully researches in *Segregating Sound*. Miller demonstrates the early 1900s mingling of the supposed rural roots of folk music and more commercial music endeavors such as Tin Pan Alley (2010: 9). Miller

looks at folklore as an intellectual project that formulated ideas about this music in academic settings (8). Miller believes that "the preponderance of commercial music in the South before, during, and after the great wave of southern song collecting by folklorists suggests that 'folk music' was a framework placed on an existing, complex musical culture, a model that did little to describe the musical complexity on the ground" (8-9). Miller's historical alternative argues for a much more give and take between commercialized forms of music in the South, including minstrelsy, and what became known as folk music. The genre itself moved into urban areas in the 1950s and 60s and is no longer physically relegated to regionally rural areas, but its perception as a music that evokes nostalgia, simpler times, and rural living still resonates today. Thus, although I employ the term American folk music, it comes with the understanding that it is much more complicated than its perceived meaning. I believe Miller's perspective points to the intersectional cross-boundary experiences of race, class, and gender in relation to folk music's past.

The music's cultural characteristics were once imagined as rural, white, poor, working-class, and backward thinking. Karen Linn relates a nuanced history of folk culture, the field of folklore, and the term "folk" itself. Linn traces the use of the term by upper classes to signify the rural working class. Importantly, in relation to the "bourgeois interest in the 'folkness' of Appalachian whites…many of these people were profoundly attracted to the otherness of the Anglo-American experience as lived in the Southern mountains" (Linn 1991: 128-29). The country music industry and many country artists have capitalized on this historical normative and constructed representation of American folk music.

Although country music organizations like the Country Music Association of America (CMA) target cosmopolitan audiences, resonances of the simplicity of country

living is portrayed through the images and lifestyles of American folk and country music practitioners and fans. The complicated ways that working-class culture remains embedded in the commercialization of country music continues to increase its fan base (CMA, Pecknold 2007: 238). Nostalgia for rural spaces and simpler times were exemplified in the American folk music of the Carter Family. The music and the family's public standing in the 1930s and 1940s stood for wholesome country values where men were simple folk and women were natural women. Tony Russell colorfully writes that The Carter Family was a "rock of old values around which fashion and progress bobbed and ducked without avail" (Russell 2010: 65).

Even a rocky relationship between Sara Dougherty Carter and A.P. Carter did not alter these perceptions. Sara separated from A.P. during the family's heyday, which created internal tensions, but that separation was kept private. The familial image and what it represented was sustained. The imagery of the Carter Family as a stable fixture during the crisis of the Great Depression worked well with nationalist ideas about aiding the economic security and welfare of the family. "Whatever the enigma, whatever the turmoil, that image, presented to an America in crisis was home, hearth, family, and religion" (Bufwack and Oermann 1993: 58). Family oriented music groups prospered during the 1920s and early 30s. Women who performed in families upheld a traditional social order, "and record companies wanted to stick with their successful 'family' formula" (69). This patriarchal history of American folk music left little room for boundary-crossing artists and certainly no artists during this time period would be considered trans identified. But there were some artists (as there are in many genres of music) who worked within the confines of this historical context that did offer alternatives. It is these alternative artists, often not taken seriously by

mainstream audiences, who grow specific audiences apart from the mainstream—artists who lead us eventually to communities that embrace alternative music performances. This is true in Joe's case as with many queer performers. Joe understands this very well; even though he, like other alternatively embodied artists, desire to reach wider audiences.

It was the crossing antics of performer Lotta Crabtree (Charlotte Mignon Crabtree) that was an attraction for upper and middle-class women of the 1880s. A popular New York theater performer during the late 1860s and 1870s, Lotta became famous for playing children's roles and became an accomplished banjo player. All of what I would call her personal attributes include Karen Linn's assessment of Lotta as "rule breaker," "boundary crosser," and "male impersonator" (Linn 1991: 30). Bufwack and Oermann explain that Lotta "became a boisterous, vivacious hoyden, full of rambunctious tomboy charm. Hers was a very physical act. Lotta threw her legs about, showed her petticoats, and rolled around wildly" (1993: 29). Being from California, we can add to these attributes an East Coast's imagination of Lotta as someone who hailed from a "land that was free of the constraints of settled society," allowing her a freedom "to act out new feminine behaviors" (Linn 1991: 30). Lotta's banjo performances and boundary crossings inspired other upper and middle-class women. Yet, for Lotta, understanding her persona as a "rule breaker" and "boundary crosser" is historically contextualized by the banjo's marginalization. Popular cultural representations of the banjo from the late 1800s into the very early 1900s placed the banjo "in the hands of those who are not allowed the weighty business of running society: blacks, theater people, young women, and college boys" (Linn 1991: 36). The point here is to note that Lotta represents an alternative performance model for women wishing to "redefine upper- and middle-class feminine behavior" (31). Lotta's performative identity inspired a class of

women whose identities were greatly shaped by patriarchal standards. Joe likewise offers trans men and other queer identified fans an affirmation of identity they do not often experience elsewhere. His performances and constant visibility via social media continues to inspire, and prompting Sicily Skye to declare that Joe "continues be a mentor and a motivating trans-celebrity that provides hope and guidance purely by his presence" (Skye 2010).

Other female rubes of this era—Rose Melville, The Cherry Sisters, Mommie Gray, Ada Jones, Elviry Weaver, and others—working in taverns, circuses, vaudeville, on recordings and as early film stars, are colorfully portrayed in Bufwack and Oermann's history of women country artists (1993: 31-49). Vaudeville's time frame was in close proximity to American folk music and the Carter Family era. Vesta Tilley, whose real name was Matilda Ball, was a male impersonator known as "The London Idol" during the early 1900s who had several successful tours of the United States. Tilley's fame was earned in British music hall performances, but she also appeared at leading vaudeville houses in many US cities. F. Michael Moore informs us that Tilley's "male illusions proved so convincing that she received love letters from young women and the most peculiar love letters from men" (1994: 51). Considering the historical context of Tilley's time, and to keep her stage and personal life separated, she felt it necessary to reinforce her femininity. Moore quotes Tilley from an article where she dismisses female masculinity: "'I rejoice in the realization that my tastes are decidedly womanly, for I cannot stand the masculine woman"' (Moore 1994: 51).[39] This gendered form of impersonation allows us to complicate ideas about the

[39] Judith Halberstam nuances ideas about female masculinity noting that "in alternative models of gender variation, female masculinity is not simply the opposite of female femininity, nor is it a female version of male masculinity" (1998: 29). Halberstam takes an in-depth look at manifestations of

popularity and decorum of the vaudeville genre. The letters written to Tilley from men and women, as well as Tilley's stage and public personas, present a more complicated and nuanced look at gendered relationships during this era.

There are other women artists from other eras also covered by Bufwack and Oermann who greatly impacted country music—Lulu Belle Cooper, Patsy Montana, Judy Canova, Dale Evans, Rosalie Allen, Kitty Wells, Patsy Cline, Loretta Lynn, Dolly Parton, Emmylou Harris, Kathy Mattea, and k.d. lang, to name a few. Most of these women continued to work within the confines of a patriarchal society, but they also found ways to self-represent and reach thousands of listeners who connected with these artists' identities. In popular music, the artist/fan relationship matters. Simon Frith has noted a quality of this relationship writing that "people do not idolize singers because they wish to be them but because these singers seem able, somehow, to make available their own feelings—it is as if we get to know ourselves via the music" (2007: 266).

k.d. lang opened up spaces for queer identities and communities by posing a direct challenge to country and pop music's traditional conventions of heterosexual femininity. lang's voice, which Zoe Sherinian describes as "low alto," won a 1993 Grammy award in the Best Female Pop Vocalist category (2001: 108). Sherinian notes that when this vocal range is combined with "imitations of male vocal personas and male drag as well as a variety of seductive timbres, she [lang] challenges the hegemonic female gender ideology and regime of compulsive heterosexuality ascribed to the category Best Female Vocalist" (109). lang successfully reached mainstream popularity while simultaneously remaining connected to a queer subculture. lang's lyrics and videos "contain codes from her lesbian subculture that

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female masculinity and the ways in which it contributes to notions of masculinity that is legible "where and when it leaves the white male middle-class body" (2).

allow her to be herself by enacting a butch subjectivity that communicates with her lesbian culture while playing with, but still surviving in, the mainstream" (108). It is important to consider these early boundary-crossing artists as a reminder that the history of American folk music was not solely patriarchal and wholesome via depictions of the Carter family. It is also demonstrates other ways audiences and fans connected with these artists in ways that complicate the seemingly staid identifications of the genres.

Americana Music

A brief and nuanced look at the mainstream Americana genre helps to frame how queer identified artists appropriate its supposed staid qualities. I single out this particular genre because the wide range of artists under its umbrella complicates and contributes to its ambiguous character. The genre is often defined in opposition to mainstream country, as something personal and anti-commercial, which fits with the singer-songwriting work of queer artists. Yet, it is very much a marketed brand, and like country music, Americana is perceived as reproducing and encompassing identity norms. The genre can perceivably be subdivided into categories of alt-Americana and alt-indie folk, but I am more interested in its overarching ideas as the category of Americana. The next few paragraphs demonstrate how the genre is framed within popular culture.

Fabian Holt's *Genre in Popular Music* describes Americana music as "an acoustic sound" that "plays with national mythologies and the opposition to mainstream pop," yet it is contemporary with "hip young musicians—'citybillies'—who essentially play rock music or rock-influenced country music" (2007: 45-46). This is music mostly catering to white people living in urban areas. Holt's work on genre is not centered on issues of race, class, or gender,

but rather considers a popular music genre as a "distinctive cultural web of production, circulation, and signification" (2). Holt does provide some historical backdrop on the emergence of this particular genre. With roots in punk and in the "outlaw country music of the 1970s," Americana "is still a vague term…" and the "categories of American roots music and Americana overlap" (46). The Americana genre, according to Holt, is perceived to embody part of a pure American sound (41). Holt ties the genre's beginnings to the music found in the film *O Brother Where Art Thou?* (2000) and a four-part PBS documentary series entitled *American Roots Music* (2001). He describes the series as "a light and rosy history that caters to a nonspecialist, white, middle-class audience who wants to enjoy the music together with positive images of their past" (39). Holt describes the effect the music in these films had on reviving American roots music.

The Americana Music Association (AMA) website defines Americana music in this way: "Americana is contemporary music that incorporates elements of various American roots music styles, including country, roots-rock, folk, bluegrass, R&B and blues, resulting in a distinctive roots-oriented sound that lives in a world apart from the pure forms of the genres upon which it may draw. While acoustic instruments are often present and vital, Americana also often uses a full electric band" (AMA "What is Americana Music?"). The "pure forms" of genres that Americana draws upon are not explained making it difficult to imagine how the sound of this music both derives from and dwells aside those genres. Problems of authenticity creep into the organization's agenda: "The Americana Music Association (AMA) is a professional trade organization whose mission is to advocate for the authentic voice of Americana Roots Music around the world" (AMA "About"). Americana is both genre and brand, and none of the promotion of the music does much to change the

perceptions of American folk or country music, especially concerning its racial and gendered make-up. The AMA is, however, making strides to change the gendered make-up of its AmericanaFest—the industry's annual conference and music showcase in Nashville, TN. This event brings together industry professionals, artists, and fans for five days of educational panels, seminars, and music performances. The organization is making a conscious effort to increase the participation of women in this event. But trans artists, queer artists and artists of color who wish to identify with the musical attributes of Americana are conspicuously absent and must develop their own audience bases and venues without the support of the Nashville organization.

Let us look at lesbian artist Ashleigh Flynn's appropriation of the Americana genre's ideology: "I'm calling it GAY-MERICANA! Americana music (which is a pretty straight genre) made by a gay person. Americana is a mix of country, roots, bluegrass, folk, rock, blues….a mutt of a genre which is uniquely American" (capitalization in original) (Beck 2013). The appropriation of "gay-mericana" seems all the more poignant when juxtaposed with Liz Feldman's humorous assessment of labeling: "The 'gay marriage' issue is on the ballot in Arizona, California, and Florida. Personally, I am very excited about 'gay marriage', or as I like to call it, 'marriage'. Because I had lunch this afternoon, I didn't have 'gay lunch'. And I parked my car, I didn't 'gay park' it" (Feldman 2008). Despite Feldman's play on straight forward labeling, events like Another Country, Luscious Queer Music Festival, Portland Queer Music Festival, and the Fresh Meat Festival highlight the work of queer identified artists in order to market to a very different community. Gay country music, transgender jazz music, lesbian Latin music, TransAmericana music; if such categories existed, would they serve to further marginalize musical practice? Or might artists

appropriate them as categories of identity that highlight differences within the music? My experience with Jennifer Leitham at OutBeat: America's First Queer Jazz Festival worked toward the former idea. The objectification of jazz music as a serious art form that transcends identity categories is a discourse about the music that continues to be circulated. Yet, individual identities are still referenced in terms of the great men of jazz.[40]

If we come back to David Román's comments about queer solo performance and the idea that "queer people know well that identities are dynamic and contingent," then an appropriation of such hypothetical categories may not seem so far fetched (1998: 5). This is how Shana Goldin-Perschbacher frames the work of queer artists within the Americana genre and uses the "invented analytical category transAmericana" to discuss queer gender performance as a "queer politics and a genre-bending that allow not just for insider trans and queer musical collaboration, but also for interaction with circles of cisgender and straight musicians who play similar music…" (Goldin-Perschbacher 2015: 776). While I appreciate this designation, I will continue to reference the music performed by Joe and other queer identified artists as Americana, American roots, and singer-songwriter music; labels the artists themselves choose.

The Americana genre is perceived as down-to-earth music and an alternative option in relation to country music's more commercialized mainstream. Americana musician Jack Ingram says that the genre "is just about truth-tellers." For Ingram, the artists of Americana reveal that "there are some truths in the world that we all experience, and we can be honest about it" (Horton 2016). This idea works well with singer-songwriters in queer communities. And the interactions between queer, trans, and non-trans musicians are amiable. There are

[40] See Chapter 1 and Chapter 3 of this dissertation for this history and its relationship to Jennifer Leitham.

problems with inclusion in events like AmericanaFest when the organizers have the power to decide who and what makes up Americana. Trans and queer identified artists as well as artists of color are not a part of this particular branding of Americana.[41] Thus, these artists must find alternative performance events and spaces that do not have the marketing and financial backing of the AMA. One of the groups that Joe Stevens initially performed with, Coyote Grace, acknowledges that they perform traditional country and Americana music.[42]

My point here is that the AMA's attempts to advocate for Americana's "authentic voice" do not consider the representations of the music practiced by queer musicians. So why would this matter? When an organization makes huge profits on its conferences and festivals and attempts to be a voice for authentic Americana Roots Music, where does this leave the queer artists or communities that also exemplify this music? Again, Román is in instructive: "Queer solo performance comes out of a sense of community and thus helps inform and shape our understanding of identity and community. Queer solo performers trouble the comfort of community even as they invest in it" (1998: 5-6). Troubling the comfort of community is evident in the ways queer performers play with normative frameworks of time and family. Those normative frameworks form the basis of the AMA leaving no room for queer performance. It could be argued that queer performances are more inclusive and, at times, offer the formation of new social identities (Román 1998: 6).

Is it possible that I am making too much of the Americana brand? This is obviously not a new issue in the world of musical practice. But there are different dynamics involved in

[41] Kandia Crazy Horse claims that "the work of Black Americana musicians has been reaching new levels of popularity and influence" by looking at fourteen artists who exemplify that label. But there is still a marked absence in people of color associated with this genre category. Kandia Crazy Horse, "14 Artists Proving Black Americana is Real," *Paste Quarterly*, April 6, 2017. https://www.pastemagazine.com/articles/2017/04/15-artists-proving-black-americana-is-real.html

[42] http://www.coyotegrace.com/fr_home.cfm

different genres of music. I highlight the work of the AMA to demonstrate that the branding of the music represents one kind of market share—a very wide and broad market at that. The bands that exemplify the Americana brand are an eclectic mix of artists—Alison Krauss, Delta Rae, Old Crow Medicine Show, Jack Ingram, The Lumineers, Margo Price, Bonnie Raitt, The Milk Carton Kids to name a few. These artists have vastly different roots music styles—country, roots rock, folk, bluegrass, rhythm and blues, blues—but their contemporary take on those styles identifies them as Americana, or alternative country, where fans and the artists themselves see the music as different from mainstream country music. This idea about Americana music can also be applied to groups such as Indigo Girls, Girlyman, Ashleigh Flynn, Namoli Brennet, Humble Tripe, Eli Conley, Ryan Cassatta, Ben Wallace, and Coyote Grace, who are not represented under the AMA's branding scheme. And the latter musicians and bands cater to their own subcultural communities. Spaces where gays, lesbians, transgender, transsexual, non-trans, butch, femme, and a host of other nonnormative gender associative people make connections through the musical narratives weaved by these artists. These are important communities in and of themselves where queer identities and associations are brought together. Joe Stevens as well as other queer artists and their communities offer self-represented alternatives to decades of what is perceived as American folk music. They are, at the same time, queering what Americana is perceived to be according to the AMA definition and they disrupt the "timeless authenticity" implicit in Holt's assessment of the genre (2007: 39).

Judith Halberstam's book, *In a Queer Time & Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives*, discusses how queer subcultural music can sometimes function as an archive that bridges generations and presents a different way to theorize the heteronormative

trajectory of adolescence to adulthood (2005: 161). Halberstam's understanding of queer time and space helps to frame the ways in which trans and queer musicians and their fans create communities. Queer time is used to explain "those specific models of temporality that emerge within postmodernism once one leaves the temporal frames of bourgeois reproduction and family, longevity, risk/safety, and inheritance" (2005: 6). Queer space refers to "the place-making practices within postmodernism in which queer people engage and it also describes the new understandings of space enabled by the production of queer counterpublics" (6). Below I trace ways that Joe Stevens's life exemplifies these ideas.

Joe Stevens

How are some of the attributes of Lotta Crabtree's performance art and that of other rubes listed above comparable with that of Americana artist Joe Stevens? As a rule breaker and boundary crosser some of Joe's music reflects how his queer identity has shaped much of his music. Joe's upbringing informs his songwriting in profound ways, and fans relate to his music and performances in ways that reflect their own queer identities. He is also a present day Californian, a state that still harbors images and representations of people who live unrestrained lives. The composer, guitarist, banjoist, bassist, and vocalist was assigned female at birth. Joe's childhood included aspects of Gender Dysphoria. Joe, similarly to Jennifer Leitham, had moments in his life when his specific take on the world did not line up with others around him. In his adolescent years, Joe's gender disorientation manifested itself in conflicting ideas about femininity and masculinity. Failed attempts by others to get him to accept normative ideas of femininity were contrasted with his own attraction to "hyper-masculine stuff – tools and cowboy boots" (Interview, July 30, 2014). Yet, accompanying

and complicating this disassociation of femininity is a form of female socialization where Joe admits that he was never discouraged from hiding his emotions as a child. In an interview with Sue Kerr, founder and editor of Pittsburgh Lesbian Correspondents, Stevens explained that he feels "deep solidarity with folks who were socialized female, and have immense gratitude for the older generation of women's rights activists" (in Kerr 2016). Joe says that unlike the male songwriting peers he knows, his own musical influences include Indigo Girls and other women singer-songwriters. Joe related to me how this affects his own songwriting: "no one ever told me I shouldn't cry, no one ever told me that I should hide my feelings. If anything they encouraged it, so I have very different socialization in my head, and I feel like I see it in my writing. I don't know if it's obvious to other people, but I feel like I notice it" (Interview, July 30, 2014). Thus, part of Joe's identity involves an interpretive stance with women that is different from other male-identified musicians.

Although Joe admits that he can easily pass as a man, he prefers to self identify as queer: "It's so much more of an umbrella term for many of the LGBTQ experience, but some people don't know what that means. Sometimes they think that means I'm a gay man, which I don't necessarily identify with. But not alluding to my transness also feels disingenuous. It depends on who I'm talking to" (Interview, July 30, 2014). When it comes to presenting his identity to audiences, Joe admits feeling ambivalent. In 2013, when asked if he ever tires of explaining his identity in public settings, Joe's response to interviewer Josh Klipp reminds us that his music represents another way to envision audiences and communities.

> Klipp: Do you ever get tired of coming out? Stevens: No. These days I'm much more a musician who happens to be trans, but I feel very misrepresented when folks assume I'm a straight bio-guy—that is very much not my story. I'm queer cultured and queer identified, and I feel like my songwriting makes much more sense in that context. Mentioning that I'm trans is also not such a big deal to me anymore, not

> much more different that telling people I'm an Aries. When framed that way, other people feel like it isn't such a big deal either. (Klipp 2013)

Despite Joe's juxtaposition of trans identity and astrology, people do not necessarily act as though being trans is a simple matter. Joe knows this, of course, as much as he articulates how important his queer identity is to his music.

Joe does work to put people at ease when discussing his identity. At almost every performance, he outs himself for members of the audience who may not be aware of his trans identity and performs a signature song, "A Guy Named Joe," that he characterizes as his "tranthem" (Interview, July 30, 2014). Joe told me that people really do like to discuss many different things relative to his identity as a musician, and he doesn't "feel put upon" in explaining his trans identity. But there are mixed feelings:

> I don't feel like I'm doing something extra by talking about my trans experience. It's just my life. It's just me—a person talking about my life. I am aware that sometimes without the context of knowing that I'm trans, I have to explain certain things first to people who don't know before I can speak freely, which is mainly the only annoying part. Like, if everyone knew already I could just tell all my jokes without prefacing them. Then it would be fun. (Interview, July 30, 2014)

Joe's association of queer identity breaks rules of society that still retain the convictions of gender binaries, and he, as well as other trans individuals, complicate what the gender binaries of male and female have to offer. Joe's queer upbringing, as we will see below, is infused with layers of what it means to be feminine or masculine. His multiple and layered ideas about masculinity and femininity are one way queer individuals make sense of their world. Joe's ambivalence also demonstrates the ongoing issue of having to negotiate gender binaries. Despite the explosion of trans identity in popular culture, engaging new people or new communities in everyday life as a trans individual still carries elements of identity risk.

I believe Joe's boundary crossing potential is manifested in his musical performance practices. While Joe currently spends a majority of his time traversing the United States doing solo work, at one time he performed with a self-described traditional country/Americana trio, Coyote Grace, that complicates images of America's cultural, folk heritage. Amy Ray of the Indigo Girls notes that "Coyote Grace plays with the heart of traditional country and Americana music, but tells their stories with a bold twist. They write heartwrenching [sic] melodies and make such textured harmonies that I find myself enraptured and taken by their timelessness of song."[43] Joe was not alone in crossing boundaries. Ingrid Elizabeth sang and provided the musical foundation of the trio by performing on acoustic bass. Like Joe, Elizabeth is open to educating audiences about her identity. She identifies as a feminine lesbian: "I put [who I am] out there and hopefully I will be the face of femme, I will be the face of lesbian, I will be the face of a folk musician, and somebody else might see that…and that might inspire them" (Houstoun 2010). There is a community of queer fans who readily identify with this music. After recording four CDs by 2014, the group decided to part ways and work on solo projects.

When he writes, sings, and performs—either as a solo artist or formerly with Coyote Grace—Joe's life of transition and his trans identity are portrayed and revealed. This is rich song-making material for Joe's musical self-representation and its autobiographical nature resonates with queer fans and contributes to queer archive making. Narrative storytelling has an immense history in American folk music. While storytelling, as part of Joe's musical narration, is compatible with folk music style, the combination of trans identity and American folk music are not. No matter how you distinguish the genres in their mainstream forms—American folk, old time, bluegrass, traditional country, roots, alternative,

[43] See http://www.coyotegrace.com/ and http://katewolfmusicfestival.com/coyote-grace/

Americana—heterosexuality is most assuredly taken for granted. Popular mainstream narratives of this music can imply or ignore heterosexual references, or they can flaunt and dissect heterosexual relations. Joe steps across and cuts through heterosexuality's boundary markers when he performs songs like "Daughterson"—a narrative informed by the title itself (Coyote Grace 2010). Part of he lyrics exemplify his position as indicated by the song's title:

I'm obviously a man
But I sit down on the can
I get shots in the leg by my lady's helping hand
My scars run across my chest
Dr. Brownstein is the best
And ain't no one can make me wear a dress

I have chose my consequence
I've chosen my name
And I can be your Daughterson
'Cause they're one and the same

Joe also affectively connects with his audience, an audience that adores this particular song. "Daughterson" creates a challenge to the temporal time frame of reproductive and family life. Suggesting that one human being can be both daughter and son inserts an alternative to normative constructions of childhood, adolescence, and what it might mean for parenthood.

Joe's song offers a counter to these normative constructions that Halberstam refers to as a "time of reproduction," something "ruled by a biological clock for women and strict bourgeois rules of respectability and scheduling for married couples" (2005: 5). Children are, at least in Western cultures, directed to adulthood "from the dangerous and unruly period of adolescence as a desired process of maturation," and family life is desirable when it exemplifies "long periods of stability" (Halberstam 2005: 4). While Halberstam discusses female masculinity elsewhere and how masculinity is not the exclusive property of men (Halberstam 1998), Ian Biddle and Freya Jarman-Ivens consider that masculinity is partially

dependent on constructions of boyhood. In looking at boy bands as cultural icons, Biddle and Jarman-Ivens, editors of *Oh Boy! Masculinities and Popular Music*, position the artists as individuals who straddle lines between childhood and adulthood, maintaining visual elements of androgyny, which is an embodiment that "disrupts the binarisms of sex and gender and upsets the structures of desire that are based on such binarisms" (2007: 6). The editors discuss how the boys of the boy bands operate in "homosocial spaces" where their heterosexuality is "tenuous… and this—combined with the boys' thoroughgoing borderline operations—is why boy bands are embroiled in slippages between discourses of effeminacy and homosexuality" (6). Biddle and Jarman-Ivens do not discuss what happens when boys of boy bands become older, but they do discuss the inherent problems facing definitions of masculinity and its relationship to femininity. These ideas displace more staid descriptions of adolescent life.

By surface appearances alone, Joe, as visibly white, able-bodied, and masculine, easily passes as male and fits comfortably within perceived notions about masculine presentations of this music. But Joe prefers to complicate this surface appearance of masculinity through his explanations of song-writing influences and his connections to queer artists within these genres. Joe's voice also bears a history of alcohol and smoking abuses that reveal an invisible disability further complicating notions of able-bodiedness. Without diminishing the importance of how trans identities are marginalized, it is important to recognize that certain privileges are afforded to lighter-skinned, Caucasian people whether trans identified or not. Bryant Keith Alexander helpfully details the idea of performing whiteness utilizing Judith Butler's theory of performativity. "The performance of Whiteness is a self-reifying practice, a practice that sustains the ability to name and conversely not to be

named and the power to speak without being chastised while in the process of chastising others" (Alexander 2004: 649). In Alexander's critique of how the performance of Whiteness sustains the project of White Studies, he notes that "Whiteness has to be acknowledged as something that is performative, something that does something in the world, or at least in the moment of its engagement. It has to be something that is linked with access, the social construction of power, worth and value—that leads to the (dare I say it) practice of privilege" (650). In some ways, this notion of privilege can be extended to explain Joe's identity in relation to trans normativity. That is the idea that white, middle class trans subjectivity elides the voices of trans people of color (Snorton and Haritaworn 2013). By looking into the ways white, trans and queer activists and scholars make use of deceased trans people of color to advocate for all trans identities, Snorton and Haritaworn demonstrate how "the circulation of trans people of color in their afterlife accrues value to a newly professionalizing and institutionalizing class of experts whose lives could not be further removed from those they are professing to help" (2013: 74). It is important to keep in mind this framing of the white, trans normative subject in order to situate the racial and class advantages these artists may have over trans people of color. Due to the construction and continued maintenance of American folk and Americana music as white and heteronormative, it is not difficult to realize that there is a lack of people of color as artists and fans within these genres; especially queer and trans identified people of color. Joe is aware of this distinction and part of his narrative below brings this into perspective.

Voice and Embodiment

Judith Peraino asks: "Must the singing voice play by the same rules as the speaking voice? Must it bear the indelible mark of a binary gender system? Could the singing voice perhaps offer an escape from that system?" (2007: 63). Peraino discusses the singer Sylvester's voice noting that whether singing in falsetto or with a "deep rich baritone" voice, Sylvester's singing voice "confounds the gender binary from either pole…his vocal breaks sound the moments when gender itself breaks down," and "we begin to wonder whether the categories 'male' and 'female' can even be applied" (63). It is difficult to imagine when and where those categories might never have an influence on how people judge or asses any voice, but Peraino's ideas are important. Although Joe's voice is not performed vocally the same way as Sylvester's, I would argue that Joe does a similar work in conjunction with his voice and his identity in performance and through his songs. The recent release of some of Joe's pre-transition recordings demonstrates the extent to which his voice has traveled the gender spectrum.

It is significant that Joe references The Indigo Girls as a major influence. Joe and Coyote Grace have opened for The Indigo Girls on a couple of occasions. Joe listened to many women singer-songwriters when he was a teen as well as blues and rock music. His parents loved jazz and singers such as James Taylor, Joni Mitchell, and Paul Simon. Mitchell's album *Night Ride Home* was a family favorite. There was lots of choral music to listen to also, and he says he was always encouraged to sing. Both parents were professional studio singers in Los Angeles during the 1970s, thus Joe began singing when he was very young. Joe's mother received her Master's in Choral Conducting and specialized in medieval music. She also conducted children's choirs and has been conducting the Sacramento

Children's Chorus since 1993. Joe, and his two brothers, sang in some of the choirs led by their mother. Songwriting was also encouraged, which Joe started doing when he was 15.

I asked Joe to describe his relationship with his voice when he was a teenager:

> I sang and there was a real cathartic-ness to it, especially when I started to write my own stuff. I was struggling a lot with depression and anxiety and I wasn't entirely knowledgeable about why I was upset, but I was just not doing very well. Singing was a release and a coping mechanism. I just liked the feeling of it. I didn't particularly like hearing it recorded… When I first started hearing it when I was 16 or 17 up until 22, which is when I started transitioning, I noticed that I didn't care to listen to it. It kind of made me uncomfortable… but singing for singing's sake was why I did it. It wasn't until it (his voice) started to change that I got more interested in listening to it recorded and it bothered me less. (Interview, February 2, 2016)

Although Joe was uncomfortable hearing a recorded pre-transition voice, the act of singing itself becomes an important stress reliever. At a time when adolescent experiences, behaviors, emotions, and attitudes may create depressive feelings, Joe's singing and songwriting provided a coping mechanism. This emotional purging was important.

Although Joe has fond memories of the music circulating within his family, Joe's depression and anxiety were related to other issues within his family as well as a state of disquiet over his own identity. Joe tells me that his father had "a vocal thing where he basically lost the use of his voice about fifteen to twenty years ago, which affected both his speaking and singing voice" (Interview, February 2, 2016). His father's loss was due in part to substance addiction and a physical disability. Joe also has two brothers, one a year older and the other six years younger. Joe says that his younger brother is married and eventually wants to have children, something his parents are grateful for "because it's [having children] probably not going to be me." In referencing his older brother, Joe jokingly refers to himself as the "oldest competent child… The interesting thing from my world, he's [older brother] gay and extremely effeminate. We grew up these kids – I was this dudely little girl and he

was this girly little dude. Everybody knew who we were whether they were friends with us or not, usually not" (Interview, February 2, 2016). Joe mentions that both he and his brother were bullied for their queer affiliated identities. Even though singing and songwriting provided some release from these familial issues, Joe fondly remembers that the relationship with his older brother provided a sense of belonging despite their differences. "I had a buddy with strange gender stuff… At least there was somebody else that had a weird gender expression. Even though we weren't very similar, he loved decorating and girly stuff. I wasn't into any of that, but there was some solidarity there" (Interview, February 2, 2016).

All of these dynamics contributed to Joe's own struggle with alcohol, and he found himself failing in school. But music provided an important outlet:

> I had just turned fifteen. Things were blowing up with my family. I just started on guitar; got kicked out of a different program; landed in this girl's school and wrote my first song in this girl's program. No phone, TV… Everything was organized. Nothing sharp. No radio. I became the de facto radio. I had a three-quarter-size guitar, which I played all day long. I remembered songs from the radio or made up other songs. That's where it really started, in isolation, no media distraction. I went to classes in this new program for troubled girls. We were all crazy and wild. People would have their favorite songs, which I played every day. (Interview, February, 2 2016)

Despite the uncertainty of Joe's ability to comprehend his identity, the combination of singing and songwriting was an important pleasure that connected him with others. There was a "need to sing for 'self' to create self-identity and to enable a sense of self-belonging" (Hellier 2013: 17). That enabling of self-belonging also makes possible connections with others.

Wayne Kostenbaum writes colorfully that "puberty can kill the choirboy's voice; but in most cases, singing begins after puberty, and so puberty casts its gruesome, enchanted shadow over all subsequent vocalizations" (1993: 166). Joe experienced a different form of

puberty involving the use of hormones much later in life when he was around twenty-two. When his voice and body were going through transition, Joe took a year off from performing live. Ingrid Elizabeth of Coyote Grace and Joe continued to privately play music together, and Joe made money working during the day. In addition to dealing with doctors involving his transition, Joe says that it took a "good eight months for my voice to drop and find some kind of consistency.[44] Within those eight months I worked a lot, then came home and played songs by myself or with Ingrid. The keys dropped all over the place. We did one show in the middle of those eight months and I had to drop everything a half step the day of the show" (Interview, February 2, 2016). I asked Joe how he managed to work with these rapid changes in his voice and what it meant to be singing in different vocal registers:

> It was muscle memory, and my larynx knowing where the scale was. So now it was just slightly in a different place. I never had to vocally search for a note because so much of the muscle memory was there. I just had to sing through it, and that is what I tell anyone who comes to me asking for voice stuff. That's important. You have to learn to sing through it. It may sound silly and awkward where it may have been natural before, but it's a shift. (Interview, February 2, 2016)

The importance of singing through transition has been crucial for Joe and other trans men who are undergoing Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT).[45] Joe pointed out that cartilage in a person's larynx stops growing sometime after puberty. (Rubbelke 1999).[46]

> For Female-to-Male people, you want that voice box to grow if you want the voice to drop so that your vocal cords can lengthen. But if you start after those growth plates [cartilage and the voice box] are already done growing, the [voice] box is only going to get so big, so your cords can only get so long. For guys who transitioned in their thirties or later, their range shrinks and they can't get it back. They get hoarse easily,

[44] This is a similar experience that Erick Lash related to me in the preceding chapter of this dissertation. See Chapter 4.

[45] See notes related to the work of Alex Constansis from Chapter 4

[46] "Cartilage is a flexible but strong supportive connective tissue... The most abundant type is hyaline, found as supportive tissues in the nose, ears, trachea, larynx, and smaller respiratory tubes." (Donald Rubbelke D. A.) http://www.mhhe.com/biosci/ap/histology_mh/cartilag.html

get breathy, and lose their voice. (Interview, February 2, 2016)

Joe notes that those who sing before their vocal cords have stopped growing have much better results. But like Joe himself, singing through the transition period is crucial to working through the vocal changes that do take place.

When it comes to the speaking voice, voice therapy involving trans women that aims to raise their speaking fundamental frequency is more commonly practiced than that of voice therapy for trans men. Only recently has work with trans individuals on masculinizing the voice been taken more seriously, yet studies are still lagging in this area behind that of trans women. The idea that exogenous androgen hormones—the most common being testosterone—will automatically lower a person's voice unproblematically leaves unattended the personal experiences and desires of trans men as well as complications that may arise. In a study that does discuss this lowering of the voice, Davies, Papp, and Antoni point out that "there is substantial evidence that androgens in adolescent cismen, ciswomen with hyperandrogenism (excessive production and/or secretion of androgens in women) and MtF clients who went through adolescence as males not only lower the SFF [speaking fundamental frequency], but they do so permanently. The change in SFF is interpreted to be caused by the increase of vocal fold mass with possible contribution from vocal fold stiffness as well" (2015: 144).[47] But the same authors note that trans men at the outset of testosterone therapy have common questions regarding the changes that will take place to their voices,

[47] "Androgens are responsible for the irreversible changes that occur in the male larynx at puberty, resulting in an adult voice that is approximately one octave lower than that of a child. Anatomically, there is an increase in the anteroposterior length of the thyroid cartilage and the thyroid ala enlarges to produce a more prominent notch, resulting in an 'Adam's apple.' The vocal chords lengthen and become more rounded, the epithelium thickens and forms three distinct layers, laryngeal mucus becomes more viscous, the arytenoids grow, the thyroarytenoid ligaments become thicker, and the cricothyroid muscle broadens" See Mai Thy Truong and Edward J. Damrose in *Textbook of Laryngology,* 2007: 443.

such as "(a) how soon the changes are noticeable, (b) how low their SFF may reach, (c) how long it takes for the mean fundamental frequency to reach its lowest and settle, and (d) how their singing voice might be impacted by the changes" (2015: 143).

The edited volume *Voice Therapy For the Transgender/Transsexual Client*, introduced in Chapter 4 of this dissertation, is mainly concerned with voice feminization and masculinization. The editors assume that "voice feminization and masculinization are voice and communication changes that the client hopes to achieve to match the new chosen gender" (Adler and Mordaunt 2006: xviii). Anita Kozan is one of the few therapists who works with singers that are trans identified. Kozan suggests that "rehabilitation of the speaking voice normally precedes rehabilitation of the singing voice… Therapy for the FtM TG/TS singer who is exploring a new vocal range previously unavailable to him focuses on conditioning the voice. Therapy for an FtM singer who has injured his voice focuses on reconditioning his voice. If the FtM singer has had a lengthy period of vocal rest from singing because of a vocal injury, his voice is viewed as being deconditioned and the reconditioning process must be done with even greater care" (2006: 377-78). This work of rehabilitating and reconditioning the voice still fits within the framework of voice feminization and masculinization. There is an assumption of an *a priori* voice that can be strived for—a voice that best matches ideals of masculine or feminine embodiment. What happens with voices *and* identities that do not strive for feminization or masculinization? And like identities, voices, and bodies, can changes be productively imagined?

The study mentioned above by Davies, Papp and Antoni also takes into account desires of individuals who wish to make congruent inner senses of self with that of outer expression (2015: 117). But they also cite sources that demonstrate some trans individuals

desire to keep their voices fluid. As scientist, scholar, and therapist, respectively, the authors take a nuanced look into this phenomenon. The authors cite two studies (Papp 2011a and Zimman 2012) they suggest shows that "many transgender men view gender as a continuum and they are often comfortable with (a) moving in general toward a more masculine, as opposed to unambiguously masculine, self-representation and (b) keeping their vocal gender fluid and adjusting features of it to circumstances, which may even call for demasculinizing vocal descriptors" (2015: 143). Zimman's study, specifically, looks at how "transmasculine individuals do not engage in across-the-board masculinization, but rather bring together acoustic characteristics acquired from disparate sources in order to construct phonetic styles that reflect their complex affiliations with manhood, maleness, and masculinity" (Zimman 2012: iii-iv). Complexity is the important part of identity here. Literally speaking, Joe's complexity is less visible or auditory. Instead, he publicly chooses to reveal his identity through his music, performances, social media, and interviews. Joe, who can pass outwardly as male, chooses to make known his trans identification. His voice is also within a passable masculine range, yet he is quick to self-identify as trans. Listeners hearing Joe for the first time may not hear these distinctions. Visually they may not see distinctions. Both voice and body may appear unambiguously masculine, but his insistence on trans identity through songs and performance practice reveals an embracing of both masculine and feminine traits, which for Joe, also reveals a connection to queer culture and trans identity. In stating that Joe embraces both feminine and masculine traits, I want to be clear I mean this as a broad spectrum of traits that moves beyond the normative meanings associated with feminine and masculine.

Dylan Elias Krell worked with Joe for several years and describes Joe's live voice as

having a hoarse-like quality. Joe struggled with smoking and drinking especially during his teenage and early adult years. Krell applies the concept of "noise" to relate that "jitter, shimmer, breathiness, and hoarseness constitute some of the 'irregular' sound waves of noise" (2014: 184). Krell uses "noise" to suggest that which is not normal in relation to communication disorders (183-84). It is interesting that Joe has just recently released his "Pre-Joe, 2004, pre-Coyote Grace, I wasn't even very folky yet!" recordings entitled *The Waterclock* (Stevens, Caitlin 2015). I was not able to ask Joe about this set of recordings, but before this release, Joe recorded the Bob Dylan tune, "Don't Think Twice, It's All Right" on Coyote Grace's album *Buck Naked* in his "pre-Joe" voice (Coyote Grace 2010). The contrast in vocal pitch, sound, and timbre is dramatic. Joe says he was 19 years old and wanted to credit the song to his old name, Caitlin, but decided not to. "Most people think it's Ingrid. People don't get it right away. On my album that's coming out soon, I put in a reworked piece that's kind of a mashup of some old and some new voices and I'm crediting my old name on that" (Interview, July 30, 2014). Joe's release of *The Waterclock* reveals some of his vocal quality at a different stage of his life (Stevens, Caitlin 2015).

What Krell has pointed out, and is in some ways supported by the work of the preceding therapists, is that "the construct of a true voice before anything has happened to it emerges as just that: a construct against which to compare and pathologize other sounds" (2014: 185). It is important to point out that singers' voices and their vocal cords change throughout their entire lives and that this is not relegated to singers who are trans identified. Hormonal changes, no less for the adolescent voice or a voice undergoing HRT (Hormone Replacement Therapy), can have adverse effects on people's voices. Changes due to increased levels of testosterone are more dramatically obvious, something that takes place

during puberty for many people assigned male at birth.

For boys between the ages of 12 and 15 who love to sing, it is only recently that new programs are catering to the rapid changes in their vocal transformations due to puberty. Choral directors in middle and high school programs have not always understood how to handle the onset of puberty in male-embodied people. Kevin Fox, the founder and director of the Pacific Boychoir Academy, states that constant monitoring of boys' voices includes "finding where their voices sit, putting them on a part that matches the notes they can sing comfortably, then checking in monthly… We often ask certain guys not to sing certain notes so they're not straining their voice" (Veltman 2011: 17). Although not as dramatic as that of the latter conditions with adolescent boys, "the female voice does undergo cyclic changes with the menstrual cycle" (Kadakia et al. 2013: 571). Certain difficulty in singing higher notes can be related to the time just prior to the menstrual cycle—Premenstrual Syndrome or PMS (572). These brief examples serve to highlight that vocal transition and change is not relegated to the trans body alone. The hormonal environment within the human body affects all of our voices since "the larynx is extremely responsive to sex hormones—androgens, progesterone, and estrogen" (Kadakia et al. 2013: 571). What Joe did for himself, and what new choir directors are doing for adolescent boys, is to sing through the transitions; being mindful of, or being guided carefully through, the places where vocal limits have been reached. In these cases, transitions in voice are undergoing changes that are coupled with changes in embodiment. The hormonal changes taking place within the human bodies of adolescent boys, women, trans men or trans women, reveal that changes to voice and embodiment are not unique to trans men alone.

Opening Space for Embodiment and Identity

In concluding this chapter, I want to bring the focus back to Americana music and Joe Stevens's voice and embodiment. Joe is part of a continuation of American folk music as a singer-songwriter who is trans identified. He, along with a host of others—Lucas Silveira, Indigo Girls, Girlyman, Ashleigh Flynn, Namoli Brennet, Humble Tripe, Eli Conley, Ryan Cassatta, Ben Wallace, Coyote Grace, and more—demonstrate music performances that open up space for underrepresented forms of embodiment and identity. The Americana Music Association's attempts to advocate for roots music in the United States ends up leaving unchallenged the genre's mainstream constituents—white, able-bodied, middle-class, urban people. There is little motivation to disrupt these affiliations. The absence of gender and racial diversity by the AMA leaves unchallenged ideas that the artists and fans can be recognized beyond its perceived affinity with mostly white and male performers. Very few artists, like the Indigo Girls and Sarah Potenza for example, are afforded time and space as performers at AmericanaFest (although this is slowly changing)—the association's annual music festival and conference that takes place in Nashville, TN. Sarah Potenza has mixed feelings about her own place within the genre. As a performer who loves Bette Midler, Potenza brings a certain amount of flamboyance and camp to her performances: "What I naturally do is big. So that sometimes has made me feel like an outcast. That type of thing is frowned on in Americana sometimes, because they do have so many serious artists" (Hight 2016).

Some of the latter artists who are less represented do have spaces that cater to their musical and embodied identities. A website dedicated to queer country music events includes the Gay Ole Opry, which began in 2011, Queer Country Quarterly, and Queer Country West.

Joe is part of this musical legacy of queer identified artists who also make-up what is American folk and Americana music. This is also a community of artists that know and often perform with each other. As a community of performers they participate in what Marlon M. Bailey describes as "a form of cultural labor," which is "one way to withstand and creatively respond to the sociocultural and economic forms of exclusion that they experience" (2013: 632). Creating performance spaces that are inclusive of queer identified performers is one way to combat the exclusionist nature of larger performance spaces that tend to cater to the more "serious artists" described by Potenza. Joe mentions the importance of this idea: "Just to know you have a community, amazes me, sometimes these people don't go out much… To have this space for them is very moving for me. And it's easy for me, being normative, white, I pass and I have non-queer fans. So many people have someone they know and never had a way to celebrate them and who they are or were. Being supportive to queer experience is meaningful" (Interview, July 30, 2014). While Judith Peraino's earlier hope that gender binaries might find an escape through the singing voice of Sylvester, Joe's vocal range alone does not effectively make a similar move. But gaining a more nuanced understanding of Joe's voice and embodiment reveal the limits those categories impose on bodies and what they are capable of doing.

Joe's voice and embodiment brings hope to singers who may just be beginning HRT, especially trans men. His own experience of singing through transition, both bodily transition and vocal transition, is something Joe offers any singer seeking advice or help.[48] Joe also acknowledges privileges that queer people of color (QPOC) do not possess. It is here where the intervention of a trans of color critique demonstrates how a trans normative subjectivity is

[48] This exact experience has been recently documented in film with a friend of Joe's, Ben Wallace. See *Real Boy*, 2016, Shaleece Haas director, Independent Television Service (ITVS).

constructed at the expense of people of color. In some situations, Joe is aware that his visual able-bodiedness as a white male makes it easier to navigate his everyday world. But the invisible dynamics of substance abuse dampen that assessment. As a habitual vice that Joe continues to battle, he acknowledges the toll this issue has had on his singing voice. The sound of gritty hoarseness that endears many of his fans also functions as a frustration for Joe. When he drinks he is aware that his voice suffers and it is something he continues to struggle with (Interview, February 2, 2016). But I wish to end this chapter with Joe's assessment of what he believes he is contributing to ideas about voice, embodiment, and Americana music:

> I'd like my music and my presence in the music world to contribute to a more detailed expression of human existence. Something sticks out to me. There has only been true-recorded history of trans experience that doesn't go back very far. It's more recent for it to be known and celebrated. That's really neat…. Sometimes I have non-queer, non-trans people, especially guys, come up to me saying in high school they had long hair and people thought they were a girl. That was a real cross-gender identity experience that no one would know about them now. I can speak to trans experience, but to male experience it's gender in a different way… Gender isn't just plain or boring, even cisgender. People's genders are like snowflakes. Everybody has their own mix of skills and likes and dislikes. Femininity has traditionally been perceived as the easier gender to explore non-traditional things, where the male is kind of more rigid, if I help loosen that up at all, that would be cool. (Interview, July 30, 2014)

The career of an artist such as Joe Stevens highlights the importance of his identity to people who identify as trans and queer. Joe's multivocality, and multiple gendered affiliations demonstrate the ways in which human experience is complex and never straightforward. And as mentioned in the introduction to this dissertation, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick enlightens us on one of the things that "queer" can refer to: "the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone's gender, of anyone's sexuality aren't made (or can't

be made) to signify monolithically" (1993: 8). That signification is very meaningful to others who refuse normative gender binaries and traditional histories of sexuality, mainly heterosexuality. That signification can also be nuanced further to remind us that Joe's career is aided by his outward appearance as a white, male-embodied performer. That helps to keep in perspective the ongoing struggles QPOC face in all facets of life. Thus, in highlighting Joe's voice and embodiment, his identity can be regarded both as an identity that opens up possibilities for others as well as an identity that encompasses both advantages and disadvantages in relation to trans people of color and able-bodiedness. Thus, Joe encompasses multifaceted and multidimensional levels of identity, similarly to all of us, yet these identities need our focus and foregrounding to aid us in understanding how identity cannot be monolithically determined.

Chapter 6 Some Conclusions

The complex of identities and subjectivities inherent in the trans musicians in this dissertation demonstrate the ways in which their music-making mediates, creates, influences, articulates, or is articulated by, gender- and sexuality-based identities. The individual narratives of the people herein reveal the different ways in which trans identified artists think about their subjectivity and how performance contributes to individual subjectivities and identities. All of us have a variety of intersections of identity making up our individual selves that are complex and varied. Self-identification is also formed through intersubjective experience and is a process of socialization. Thus, the opening chapter revealed the importance of relating Jennifer Leitham's identity to her experiences of gendered binarisms. The importance of situating Jennifer within the paradigm of gender binaries was to show how her embodied subjectivity relied on her bodily history. Gayle Salamon articulates this idea relevant to the subjectivities of all individuals through phenomenology: "Anything that I might do with my body, any action that I perform with it, any way that I inhabit it requires legibility only in the context of all my body's previous actions, positions, and modes of being" (2010: 78). That is the historicity of the body that each one of us, not just trans identified individuals, must contend with in our daily lives.

At the same time, embodiment makes our bodies very real and present to us in everyday lived experience. This is evident again through the phenomenological concept of perception: "'Perception,' Edmund Husserl writes, 'is related only to the *present*. But this *present* is always meant as having an endless *past* behind it and an open *future* before it'" (Husserl in Salamon 2010: 78, italics in Salamon). Future possibilities also encompass what

we know of Jennifer's identity. In other words, her identity points to possibilities we cannot know in advance. Jennifer's lived experience cannot be ultimately determined by gender binaries and it must be regarded through her own experiences of embodiment. It is undeniably true that Jennifer has a body, and she manifests a gender identity (whether that be a female or trans identity by her own accounts) but neither having a body nor a gender identity is sufficient to be determined by the other. Jennifer's embodied identity, as well as many of the participants' embodied identities within this dissertation, shows us how the body and subjectivity are "situated at materiality's threshold of possibility rather than caught within a materiality that is at its core constricted, constrictive, and determining" (Salamon 2010: 92). Her identity has embraced past, present, and future bodily experiences even if, at times, she has related those experiences in more binary terms. Jennifer moved through transition having past experience in male embodiment and what that meant for her career was substantial. Simultaneously, the ongoing feelings and notions of female embodiment were ever present and acted upon while a male presentation of embodiment allowed a career to flourish. There is no end result here where an embodied being comes to some kind of final state that fits neatly within normative gender ideologies. What Jennifer's life demonstrates is a bodily-lived experience that exceeds ideologies of gender. Jennifer's multidimensional identity forms a "gestalt— a complex whole in which the various parts color and inform one another" (Berger and Del Negro 2004: 146). The same is true of many of the participants found in this dissertation.

Returning the focus to musical performance, Jennifer's musical life revolves around the latter idea of inhabiting a body that is not solely determined by normative gender ideologies. Jennifer has often articulated her desire that people stop attenuating her trans

identity over that of her musicianship. She is quick to note with disdain the publications that highlight her trans identity and finds pleasure in rare articles that consistently focus on her music. But being trans identified means there are inscribed and implied meanings associated with that identity. Jenifer is also very aware of this, of course, and the desire for others to focus on her music first is obviously not unique to Jennifer alone. That is an ideal that many musicians aspire to, but attempts to parcel out music as an autonomous aesthetic object ultimately fail. Articulating that desire is proof that an issue of identity exists, and in reality, identity must be negotiated with the implied and inscribed meanings that accompany a particular identity. In this way, being trans identified hardly frees you from gender. Jennifer is also aware of this, and her music and musical performances articulate these aspects of her identity very well. "Split Brain," "The Altered Blues," and "Keni's Song" are a few examples of musical compositions that create, and are articulated by, trans identity. Abby, a fan of Jennifer's mentioned in Chapter 2, discussed her own subjectivity related to the song "Split Brain" by suggesting, "being split may not be unhealthy" (pers. comm., June 27, 2014). There are multiple dimensions of identity at work here. Jennifer's own explanations of these song titles, as well as the numerous narratives she weaves about her identity at performances, demonstrate the complexity of her subjectivity and identity. Despite her desires that a discussion about her music and identity focus on the music first and foremost, both the music and her identity help us grasp the possibility of embodiments and behaviors that are not completely determined by normative gendered ideologies.

In chapter 3, I took the ideas of being split regarding subjectivity and identity and looked at Jennifer's career in jazz music. I noted that jazz artists are resistant to any labeling of a subcategory that attaches "queer," "gay," or "LGBT" as a prefix to the main category of

"jazz." A discussion related to this idea took place at OutBeat: America's First Queer Jazz Festival in September 2014, an event at which I performed with Jennifer. The hope of a biannual festival has not materialized since this first in jazz history. Jazz historians have historically contributed to leaving out gay and lesbian identities in jazz, as I noted with the music's tendency toward the great men of jazz in Chapter 2. In 1994, Gary Burton "outed" himself as a gay man and explained that during his earlier career there was secrecy around gay identity and jazz that he felt the need to consistently police in relation to his own identity.[49] Fred Hersch wrote an open letter published by *JazzTimes* to the organizers of OutBeat praising their efforts on being inclusive with an array of LGBT performers in jazz, but he also commented on the music and the identifying category of queer: "Though I have been 'out' in the jazz community since the 1980's, I do not play 'gay jazz' – if there were such a thing. And I certainly do not self-identify as 'queer'" (Hersch 2014). The question whether the music has within in it any gay aesthetics continues to be a question posed more specifically to jazz musicians who identify as LGBTQ performers. The answer is usually an emphatic "no," unless lyrical content references LGBTQ identities, as is the case with Jennifer's music. A question as to whether the music demonstrates any heterosexual aesthetics is never asked of jazz artists.

Ian Biddle and Freya Jarman-Ivens nuance the kind of thinking that attempts to attach gender to sound:

> No 'absolute' gendered-ness can be ascribed to any single musical gesture or moment, be it a form, melodic gesture, a cadence, the choice of instrument, or any other piece of aural information presented to the listener. Rather, sonic gestures *become* codified, having gendered meanings ascribed to them over a period of time

[49]Burton explains the difficulties of grappling with his identity as a jazz artist utilizing a kind of role reversal from Jennifer Leitham's claim of identity as a jazz musician who happens to be trans identified. Burton's YouTube interview is titled: "Vibraphonist Gary Burton: 'A Gay Guy Who Happens to be a Jazz Musician.'" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uP5hPmiKvJI

> and generated through discursive networks, and those meanings are mutable according to the cultural, historical, and musical context of those gestures, and the subsequent contexts into which they are constantly reinscribed. (2007: 10-11)

Despite this, there is an assumption that LGBTQ jazz performers will have some kind of insider knowledge about gendered aesthetics in the music.

There were several positive issues that arose from the more inclusive nature of the event as mentioned by Hersch. The idea itself was well intentioned and resulted in more exposure for a few artists such as Jennifer, Patricia Barber, Andrew D'Angelo and Dena DeRose. It also highlighted the idea that it is perfectly acceptable to be LGBT identified and celebrated in this genre of music. One paradox for Jennifer is the continued attempts to reach a wider and more diverse audience. Performing far from Los Angeles in Philadelphia does little to increase an audience base, and Jennifer is concerned that it may also pigeonhole an artist as only queer identified. That may be part of the issue in resisting a queer jazz label. Queer identified artists performing Americana music work in similar ways to grow their audiences and communities. The difference is that the Americana artists have more opportunities to perform for queer sponsored events. Jazz artists who are LGBTQ identified struggle to find support. It is also significant that Americana artists are singer-songwriters who compose music and lyrics that connect to audience members in ways differently from instrumental music.

Jennifer Leitham's music, by her own admission, is, for the most part, not aesthetically trans identified ("The Altered Blues" being an exception—see Chapter 3 of this dissertation). It is helpful to be aware of Jennifer's history in order to relate how her music applies to her identity. But, as explained above, this life history is exactly what Jennifer provides in many of her musical performances, interviews, and events she chooses to

perform or participate in. Many of her fans are LGBTQ, genderqueer, genderless or non-binary, androgynous, and trans identified. Such an artist does open up possibilities and space for other marginalized artists in the jazz world. In this sense, the queer community (I use queer community to encompass the broadest sense of the term) is being opened up to jazz music despite the desire of some of its artists to claim that those identities should not have an impact on the music's aesthetics or labeling.

In some ways, I believe Jennifer inspires trans and non-trans individuals alike to embrace the inevitable changes that take place in one's life. It is in the process of *becoming* where identities and subjectivities are always in flux. The idea that there will be a final destination, although romantic and something that appears grounded in nature, is not really sustainable. Looking at all of the different facets of Jennifer's identity gives us insight into how trans lives might affect all of us. I consider myself blessed to be working with such an amazing musician. At the same time, I am amazed at her resiliency and tenacity when it comes to negotiating her career. Despite the work that "Split Brain" does to illuminate for Jennifer her gendered duality, for others, the song, as well as Jennifer's performances, allow for an expression of diverse subjectivities, offering an inspiration to lives that embrace a state of becoming.

To be clear, I am not suggesting that Jennifer Leitham is queering jazz music. I want to resist such a notion because I believe Jennifer has thrived in a market arena that is unique to her. I do not mean to suggest thriving financially, but rather, Jennifer is a unique individual who has, for the time being, inspired other trans identified and queer identified musicians and fans whether they are supporters of jazz or not. Many fans who are at first aware of and wish to support Jennifer's trans identity, end up becoming fans of the music.

Jennifer's embodiment of trans identity oversteps the normative embodied identity of jazz and extends that identity to include others who are positioned outside of jazz music's normatively perceived community. Of course, Jennifer is not alone in this endeavor as evidenced by the artists present at OutBeat, but because there are various facets of multidimensional identity spanning both past and present, and pointing to the future, Jennifer allows us a glimpse of possibilities within jazz and identity that allows us to regard a state of *becoming* rather than *being*.

In Chapter 4, I considered what it means to sing with voices in transition. Some of the singers' narratives enlighten us on voices in transition and include narratives of belonging. All of them reveal complex relationships between voice, body, subjectivity, identity, and interpersonal relationships with others. In discussing how bodies and voices navigate the effects of hormones, sing through transition, or utilize a perceived flexibility without transitioning, the narratives in the chapter exemplified the ideas of multivocality and transvocality.

Some of the trans identified singers in TCLA who identify as trans men presented us with the issue of transitioning and the idea of puberty through the use of testosterone. Attempting to keep the quality of a voice consistent through the transitioning process was coupled with ideas about passing. But other trans men still have voices that are heard as feminine and some trans women still have voices heard as masculine. Importantly, transvocality and multivocality is not specific to bodies or voices in transition. Each of the singers presented in Chapter 4, as well as Jennifer and Joe Stevens, provide us with ideas about negotiating identity and subjectivity while singing and speaking with many different voices. Jennifer has always had a higher singing voice she believed aided her in securing

rock gigs early in her musical career. As Elias Dylan Krell noted, voice amplifies "an excess that it cannot contain" (2014). The ambiguous quality of these voices undermines a categorical labeling of them as feminine or masculine. For some of the singers, their embodied states undermine an ability to categorize them as female or male. For some of the singers, the ambiguous nature of embodiment coupled with ambiguous voices scrambles identity categories and is something we must pay attention to. But the chapter also noted how some of the singers in both TCLA and TGC continually referenced feminine and masculine attributes in order to make sense of their identities.

Another aspect of the chapter discussed how the voice as individually and collectively imagined and practiced provides empowerment for members of TCLA and TGC. Each singer articulates their individual agency in relation to their participation in the choirs. For TGC, the individual singers share a love of an entity they believe accepts them no matter what forms of embodiment they encompass. It is in a relationship with God and each other where the singers find acceptance and belonging, and the relationship with God is something they share together. Differently from TGC, TCLA's shared space as a marginalized group is one aspect of community that binds this choir. The choir as a group is also transitioning from rehearsals to public performances. Foucault's concept of heterotopia was discussed to argue that feelings of isolation fade when connections are made in both imagined and real spaces of musicking.

The chapter discussed some differences in ideas between sonic and visual presentation that undergird TCLA's public performances. Some promoters are looking for a sensationalist choral presentation both sonically and visually, while the choir director, Lindsey, desires that the choir not be judged in terms of sonic difference. Lindsey is very

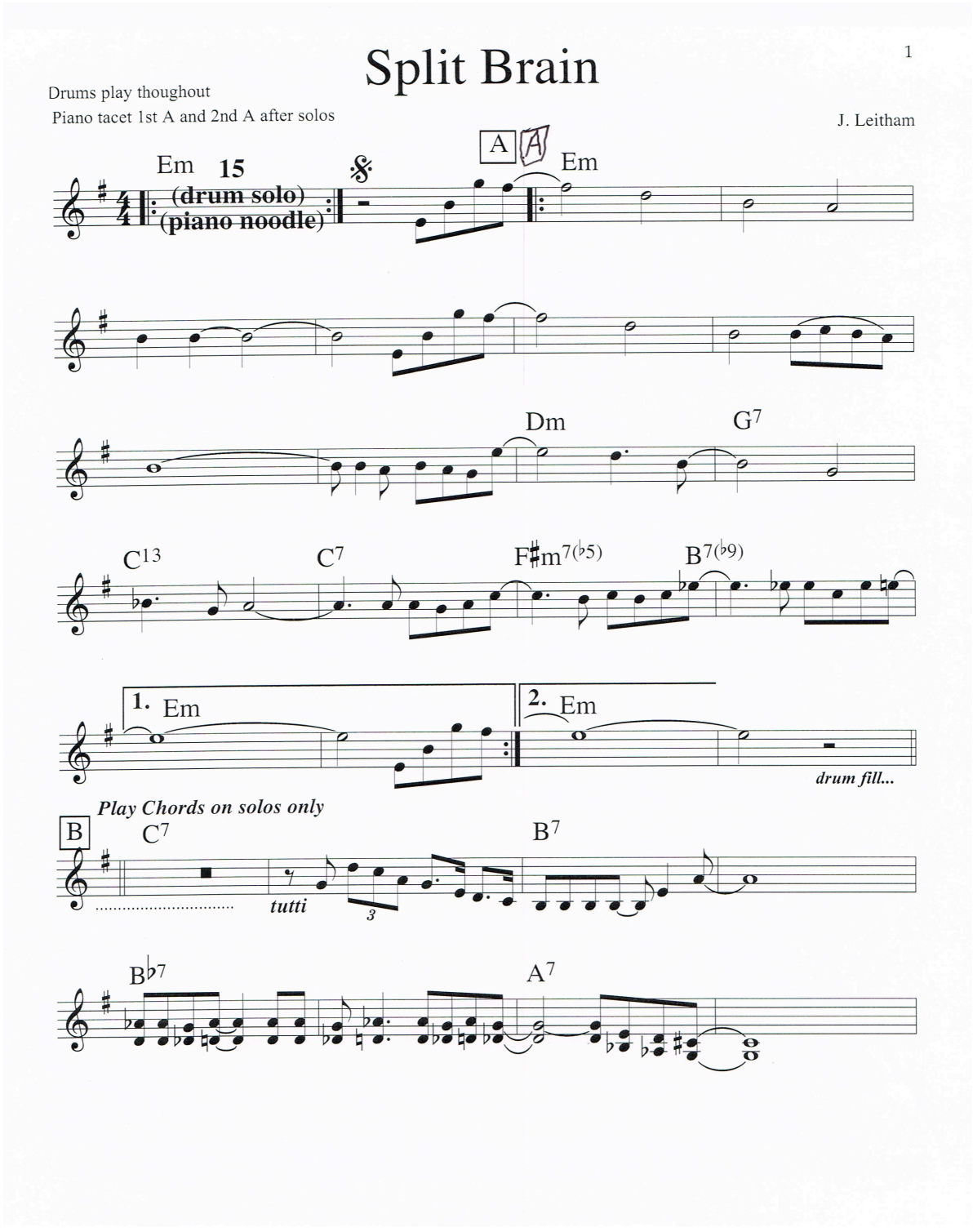
aware of visually embodied differences and that is something celebrated. What TCLA and TGC present us with are voices and bodies that many of us may not often experience. I believe the actual physical bodies and singing voices of TCLA, as well as other newly forming choral groups in the United States embracing trans identified singers, are in the process of providing social transformation, especially in contributing to a new performance paradigm in choral history.

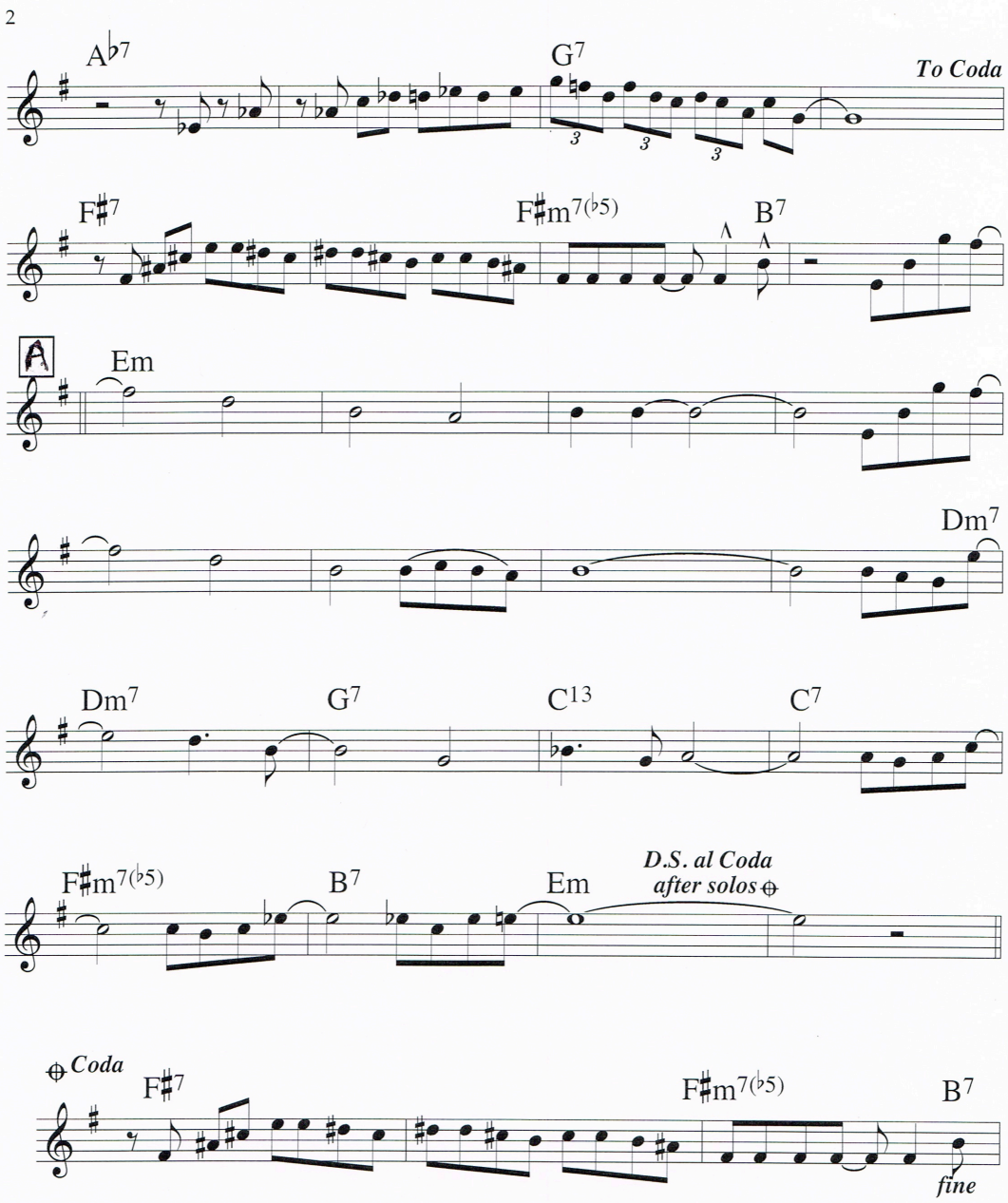
In the fifth chapter of the dissertation, voice, embodiment, trans masculinity, and genre were examined through country/Americana artist Joe Stevens. As a trans man, Joe's ability to pass as male-embodied is complicated by his association of trans identity. Genre, voice, embodiment, disability, and transition all contribute to the ways in which masculinity and vulnerability frame Joe's identity, and they are juxtaposed with his female assignment at birth. The absence of gender and racial diversity by the Americana Music Association leaves unchallenged ideas that the artists and fans can be recognized beyond its perceived affinity with mostly white and male performers. Joe and other queer identified artists alternatively shape the normative assumptions about gendered performance in Americana music and explore alternative identities through musical performance. Thus, in highlighting Joe's voice and embodiment, his identity can be regarded both as an identity that opens up possibilities for others as well as an identity that encompasses both advantages and disadvantages in relation to trans people of color and able-bodiedness, respectively. Joe's voice and embodiment brings hope to singers who may be just starting HRT (hormone replacement therapy), especially trans men. His own experience of singing through transition, both bodily and vocally, is something Joe offers any singer seeking advice or help. Joe's history of multivocality as well as his multiple gendered affiliations demonstrates the complexity of

human experience and identity.

Sharing performances of trans identity involves a thinking through of bodies and behaviors, where gender identity as multiplicitous, varied, and diverse, is always in relation, contention, or collusion with sociopolitical and cultural forces that control those bodies and behaviors. By asking why these artists do what they do, their embodied life experiences make it possible to share performances of trans identity. In turn, the music these artists make and perform allows us a much deeper look into the complex and interrelated nature of subjectivity, identity, embodiment, musicking and gender.

Appendix A: "Split Brain"




2
A♭7
G7
To Coda
F♯7
F♯m7(♭5)
B7
A
Em
Dm7
Dm7
G7
C13
C7
F♯m7(♭5)
B7
Em
D.S. al Coda
after solos
Coda
F♯7
F♯m7(♭5)
B7
fine

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