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Sounds Like Home: Immigrant Musicians on the New York Jazz Scene

By

Ofer Gazit

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

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Committee in charge:

Professor Benjamin Brinner, Chair

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Abstract

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At a time of mass migration and growing xenophobia, what can we learn about the reception, incorporation, and alienation of immigrants in American society from listening to the ways they perform jazz, the ‘national music’ of their new host country? Ethnographies of contemporary migrations emphasize the palpable presence of national borders and social boundaries in the everyday life of immigrants. Ethnomusicological literature on migrant and border musics has focused primarily on the role of music in evoking a sense of home and expressing group identity and solidarity in the face of assimilation. In jazz scholarship, the articulation and crossing of genre boundaries has been tied to jazz as a symbol of national cultural identity, both in the U.S and in jazz scenes around the world. While these works cover important aspects of the relationship between nationalism, immigration and music, the role of jazz in facilitating the crossing of national borders and blurring social boundaries between immigrant and native-born musicians in the U.S. has received relatively little attention to date.

This dissertation investigates these interrelated topics by considering the role of immigrant musicians in the New York Jazz scene from the 1910s to the present. It considers the practices that allow musicians to come to New York and sustain themselves as working musicians as they struggle to maintain legal status in the U.S. It examines the ways immigrant musicians express senses of home and national belonging through jazz but also challenge and critique musical and cultural nationalism. It investigates the ways immigrant musicians use jazz improvisation to navigate and cross social boundaries between themselves and native-born musicians, and analyzes musical interactions that defy simple identity and genre categories. Finally, it calls for research on immigrant music that addresses the fractures in and interconnections of national, ethno-racial and genre categories in immigrant musical life in America.

Grounded in three years of ethnographic fieldwork as an Israeli jazz musician in New York City and based on conversations with fellow immigrants from around the world and native-born musicians, audience members, venue owners, and immigration specialists this project analyzes sound recordings, live performances, and archival material to understand the role of jazz music in facilitating interaction among immigrant musicians and across immigrant communities.

Using contemporary theorizations of political borders and social boundaries suggested by Didier Fassin, Etienne Balibar and Sandro Mezzadra in conjunction with Benjamin Brinner's theory of musical competence, I show that proficiency across several musical genres, particularly jazz and other musical markers of national and ethnic identity are essential to musicians' efforts to maintain legal immigrant status in the U.S. and support themselves and their families as working musicians.

Observing the ways immigrant musicians use jazz to cross national borders, social boundaries and musical genres, as well as to critique received notions of tradition and national identity in music, I call for a move beyond the methodological framing of music as delineating an ethnic community and an uncomplicated symbol of identity. I argue for a conception of immigrant music that considers its role as a tool for interaction across immigrant communities and one that acknowledges the economic, social and political factors involved in maintaining "immigrant musics" as reflections of the home country in ethnic communities within the U.S.

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Acknowledgements

For my fifteenth birthday my friend gave me an audiocassette he had prepared for me. It included an alternate take of John Coltrane's composition Blue Trane, in which he overdubbed himself playing a recorder duet: One of the recorders was stuck in his mouth, the other up in his nostril. We both thought it was hilarious. On the back of the cassette he wrote a dedication in English: See You in NYC. That night, on a dial-up Internet connection, I showed my dad the website for Berklee College of Music in Boston. He looked at the website and asked, "How are you going to pay for it?" "I'll start saving money now, and there are scholarships..." I answered hesitantly. "Forget it," he said, "that's more than what your mom and I make in a year."

When I was twenty, and about to finish my military service in the Israeli Army Jazz Band, my friend and every other musician I knew left for Boston or New York. I stayed in Israel and studied musicology at Tel Aviv University. I first came to visit my friends in the U.S. in 2007. After that visit there was no longer any doubt. I wanted to move there. My dad's question remained as relevant then as it was when I was fifteen. In June 2013, eight years, two degrees, and a six-day train ride later, I moved to New York City.

I want to thank the person who had the answer to my father's question. Without the support, guidance and encouragement of my advisor Ben Brinner, I would not have been able to do any of the things I've done in the last six years. I am grateful for his many readings of this essay, his attention to details and his patience with my endless fountain of typos and grammatical mistakes (which, we both agreed, deserves a dissertation research of its own). I also want to thank the other members of my committee: Jocelyne Guilbault, who guided me through the confusing paths of anthropological and cultural theory and insisted I find my own paths in them as well; Scott Saul, who encouraged me to read beyond my field and made sure I gather the fragments of my writing and make them into a narrative and an argument; George Lewis, whose keen critical eye and ear forced me to consider the broader implications of my project and whose seminar on improvised music at U.C. Berkeley was the first incubator for thinking about the relationship between jazz and immigration.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

[Williamsburg, Brooklyn, October 2015] Anat and I are walking to the M train, on our way to Birdland. She's playing in jazz historian Dan Morgenstern's 86th birthday celebration. We are late, marching down Broadway at a fast pace. "O.K., so you asked all these questions, now it's my turn," she says. "Sure, ask away." "You said you grew up in Ramat Ha Golan? Wow, that's far..." she says with a smile. "Yes, But I went to school in Kfar Blum, right on the Lebanese Border." "You're kidding me! I have family there. Do you know Itay Pearl? He's my Cousin." "Ha! Yeah I think I even had a gig with him a million years ago, a place called "Jacob's Ladder." "Ok, so you're a bassist, who is your Jamaa' (group)? Who do you play with?" "I'm not sure you'll know any of them...you know Uri Gurvich? Nitzan Gavrielli? Yonatan Oleiski? "Yeah, I know them, we haven't played...Who else?" Well...Actually they are good friends of mine but we don't play as often, I play mostly with people I met here...I don't think you'll know them. They all finished Berklee or New School four or five years ago, they're doing sessions, playing around the city...Cornelia, Bar Next Door, 55 Bar... you know, small gigs." "Well I've been here twenty years and I still love doing restaurant gigs! Birdland at 5:30 pm on a Wednesday is not exactly packed...but that's how you meet people. That's how you become a part of the scene. Everyone I know in this city I met from doing small gigs: the Brazilians at Café Wha, the people at Smalls, the Louis Armstrong scene, you just got to not suck and hang out a lot."

This dissertation explores the influence of political borders and social, economic and musical boundaries on immigrant jazz musicians in New York City. The growing literature on music and borders,¹ and research on immigrant communities in ethnomusicology, tend to focus on the ways in which border-crossing challenges and reinforces notions of national and ethnic identity, and how music is used to perform group solidarity and unity in resistance to cultural assimilation among immigrant communities.² In jazz studies, on the other hand, a large body of literature has investigated social boundaries in the U.S., particularly in relation to race and gender, as well as musical boundaries of genre and sound in the African American jazz tradition.³

While these works have been crucial to identifying the multifaceted influence of border regions on music making as well as the influence of social boundaries on jazz, the influence of geopolitical borders and social boundaries on the life of immigrant jazz

¹ See Stokes 1998; Peña 1985; Madrid 2011; Lipsitz 1997.

² See Reyes 1999; Shelemay 1998; Rasmussen 1991; Slobin 1995; Rapport 2014; Zheng 2010; Byrd 2015; Glasser 1995; Hernandez 2012.

³ See Baraka 1963; Becker 1973; Monson 1995a; Fellezs 2011; Porter 2012; Washburne 2008; Ake, Garrett, and Goldmark 2012; DeVaux 1991; Tucker 2001.

musicians has largely been overlooked.⁴ In fact, methodological assumptions about social and political boundaries are embedded so deeply in music studies that they render the music of immigrant jazz musicians almost invisible (or inaudible) to contemporary jazz historiography and ethnomusicology (for a rare counter example see Muller and Benjamin 2011). Without a focused analysis of the ways the crossing of geopolitical borders and social boundaries influences the lives of immigrant jazz musicians, we risk accepting these boundaries as neutral categories rather than structured political mechanisms with real implications for the lives of immigrant musicians.

In this introductory chapter, I will outline contemporary theorizations of the relationship between the proliferation of borders in the post-9/11 era and the articulation of racial, ethnic, gender, class and religious boundaries in the U.S. I then move on to consider the intersection of political borders and social boundaries in the ethnomusicological literature, first by looking at works that deal with music-making in border regions, and second by considering the boundaries that delineate and define ethnic communities in the U.S. In this section I point to the problematics of framing research on immigrant musicians around ethnic communities. Using the ethnic community as the basic unit of analysis in ethnomusicological studies of migrants, I argue, leaves out important aspects of immigrant music-making, and renders the extent of boundary-crossing among immigrants inaudible. Surveying literature on boundaries in jazz, I propose an examination of border and boundary crossing among immigrant jazz musicians.

Following the work of French anthropologist Didier Fassin and political philosophers Étienne Balibar and Sandro Mezzadra (Fassin 2001; Fassin 2010; Fassin 2011; Fassin 2013; Balibar 2002; Balibar 2009; Mezzadra and Neilson 2013) who urge us to look at the intersection of political borders and social boundaries in the study of immigrants, I ask how crossing the political borders of the U.S. and negotiating the social boundaries of race, class, ethnicity, religion, and gender influence the way immigrant musicians contend with constructed musical boundaries of genre, sound and tradition articulated by musicians, the music industry and in contemporary jazz historiographies (DeVeaux 1991; Deveaux 2005; Porter 2012). I use Benjamin Brinner's theory of musical competence and interaction (1995) to investigate the extent to which musical competence can facilitate the crossing of social boundaries between immigrants and native-born in the New York Jazz scene. Can musical competence facilitate the crossing and blurring of national borders, social boundaries and genre categories? How does an

⁴ For a discussion of the term “border region,” see Wilson and Donnan 1998:7–10. In ethnomusicology, see Stokes 1998:263. Importantly, the term is distinct from “frontier” in its political and geographic implications (especially in the American contexts) because it does not assume a directional point of view.

individual immigrant's race and gender affect their acceptance into New-York's jazz scene? Finally, how does the racial and ethnic diversity of the New York jazz scene influence immigrant incorporation?

Geopolitical Borders and Social Boundaries

Didier Fassin has recently argued that borders as external territorial frontiers and boundaries as internal social categorizations reinforce one another (Fassin 2010; Fassin 2011:215). The border is the legal and physical instrument to determine which individuals are allowed admission into a society, while social boundaries are often the informal criteria by which individuals are allowed admission, and determine how they are treated once they enter. In other words, the boundaries that allow or restrict access to political power within a society are those ultimately dictating the nation-state's immigration policy and governmental treatment of immigrants. Fassin uses Foucault's notion of governmentality to analyze how state institutions impose borders and boundaries upon immigrant populations through various policies and procedures such as visa and asylum requests, restrictions on mobility, detention, and deportation. Fassin refers to this as the "biopolitics of otherness," a set of practices and bureaucracies used to control temporal and spatial borders and boundaries, and therefore the freedoms and rights of immigrants (Fassin 2001). Fassin thus suggests that a combined understanding of territorial borders and social boundaries is "indispensable to the understanding of how immigration is governed and experienced" (Fassin 2011:215). Beyond the continued interactions across borders assumed in studies of transnationalism (Kearney 1995), borders are a physical and political instrument in the creation and maintenance of a "national culture." The dominant society uses external borders to prevent outsiders from entering, and regulates the power of immigrants through social boundaries which restrict those already admitted from full citizenship and legal residence (Waldinger and Fitzgerald 2004). Following Fassin's suggestion I wish to consider some of the central currents in the theorization of national borders and social boundaries in contemporary political philosophy in light of the rapid growth in transnational migration in recent decades.

Borders and social boundaries have been theorized separately in the social sciences. While traditionally borders were conceived as territorial limits defining political entities (states) and legal subjects (citizens), in the last three decades social scientists have developed two broad approaches for theorizing borders. On the one hand, as Chris Rumford shows, borders have been contextualized by the idea of the network.

"The network, along with associated ideas of mobilities, flows, fluids and scapes, has become a key metaphor for understanding modern life in a 'world in motion' [...] In the network vision of society, territorial borders are easily transcended by flows and mobilities which take place within globalized circuits of information

and exchange. On this reading, borders remain important [...] because access to networks (and restriction of said access) can act as a bordering mechanism: those not on the network and still existing mainly in a “space of [disconnected] places” are excluded from important circuits of information and economic exchange. [Rumford 2006:155]

Rumford is writing several years before the eruption of the European migrants crisis. This explains why he is less concerned with the intrinsic tensions between societal boundaries and national borders observed by Fassin. For him, Western nations are “networked” — their societies do not have the same boundaries they had previously. They are connected across and beyond the borders of the nation-state. The global south on the other hand, is disconnected and still operates under older geopolitical models as a “space of [relatively isolated] places” rather than a space of networks. While Rumford identifies the changing relationship between the society and the state, he cannot possibly foresee how “the greater freedom to connect with a whole range of others, wherever they might be, who share similar beliefs, fears, and preferences,” can metastasize into a phenomenon like the Islamic State, emanating at least in part from European societies alienation of immigrants.

A second and in some ways overlapping approach has been the theorization of the proliferation of borders. In his work on the anthropology of borderlands, Alvarez (1995) analyzes the U.S.-Mexico border and its theoretical extensions as a geographic region, an area of political influence, a set of practices for governmental control, a mark of economic disparity, a place of friction between cultures, and a set of artifacts in the lives of those who attempt to cross it and live in its midst. More recently, political philosopher Étienne Balibar (Balibar 2009) has argued that a simultaneous process of proliferation and reduction in the number of borders is shaping contemporary theorization of the border. He suggests that borders have become so diffuse that whole countries can now be borderlands; countries that once had borders, such as Italy and Greece, are now borders in themselves. In *Politics and the Other Scene* (2002), Balibar suggests that “Borders are being both multiplied and reduced in their localization and their function, they are being thinned out and doubled [...] the quantitative relation between “border” and “territory” is being inverted” (2002: 220). In other words, we are experiencing a growing disparity in the experience of border between people of different origin, class, nationality, religion, and race. While for some individuals borders become fewer, for others more and more borders are being erected, with more advanced technologies of surveillance and more personalized mechanisms of tracking and detention.

In their book *Border as Method*, Sandro Mezzadra and Brett Neilson argue that while the traditional image of the border is still inscribed onto maps, “discrete sovereign territories separated by lines and marked by different colors,” the legal, cultural, social,

and economic “components of the concept and institution of the border tend to tear apart from the geopolitical line of separation between nation states” (2013:3).

The notion that borders are not merely geographic areas or graphic inscriptions delineating a political space is crucial to my understanding of borders in the everyday experience of immigrants.⁵ The border is neither the fence nor the checkpoint, but the control of government as experienced by immigrants: The imminent possibility of deportation, and the social economic, and cultural practices that this possibility engenders.

The literature on social boundaries is extremely broad. Boundaries have been studied as constructs establishing symbolic differences (for example between class, gender, or race) and producing identities (national, ethnic, or cultural communities) (Lamont & Molnar 2002). Despite the clear connection between geopolitical borders and social boundaries, particularly in the lives of immigrants, they have been kept conceptually distinct. One of the reasons for the distinction between borders and boundaries was to critique earlier anthropological models that took territorial and social boundaries to be one and the same, as a result constituting discrete entities as the object of their inquiry (Wilson & Donnan 1999). In a seminal article, Frederick Barth (1968) questioned the equivalence between ethnicity, culture, and language, and proposed that anthropologists should look at the boundaries between ethnic groups rather than at cultural production used to demonstrate social unity. Barth asked how inclusion and exclusion, recruitment, and ascription influence the boundaries between groups.

Certain aspects of Barth’s influential work echoed the shifting political currents in the U.S., particularly in relation to production of cultural difference. The rise of cultural nationalism and the student movements of the late 1960s sought to demarcate and embrace lines of cultural, physical and ideological difference, rejecting previous ideas about incorporation through cultural assimilation. The focus on the political exclusion of racial minorities, women and LGBTQ has obscured the other part of Barth’s argument, addressing the blurring of boundaries and the conditions for social acceptance (Omi and Winant 2014). Calls for political unity and empowerment among ethnic and racial minorities has reinforced the theoretical equivalence between language, culture, and ethnicity and has made it politically suspect to examine economic, racial, and cultural fragmentation and boundaries within immigrant groups (Glick Schiller 2008).

Recent studies have brought renewed focus to boundaries within and across racial groups (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 2005). One of the more pressing issues among

⁵ For an analysis of borders in the everyday life of immigrants see Jones and Johnson 2014

immigrants is how perceptions of race in the home country are negotiated in relation to perceptions of race in the new society (Lamont and Molnár 2002:175). As Barrett and Roediger (1997) show, immigrants are racialized and become implicated in racial politics in ways that are not familiar to them. Writing about race relations among industrial workers in Chicago during 1920s, they claim that most immigrants “did not arrive with conventional United States attitudes regarding “racial” difference, let alone its significance and political implications in the context of industrial America” (1997:5).

Anthropologist Paul Silverstein (2005) proposed that the racialization of immigrants is embedded in the ways migrants are theorized by the state and in migration scholarship (2005:364). Racialization in Silverstein’s account is not simply the process through which people are categorized along the “color line” (Ong 1996), but rather “indexes the historical transformation of fluid categories of difference into fixed species of otherness” (Silverstein 2005: 364). Racialization is thus imposed upon immigrants as they arrive in a new locale, but it is also lived experience — the process of being racially categorized by the state is in itself “racialization,” but equally important is the process through which immigrants begin to identify as member of a racial group in accord with American societies’ racial taxonomies.

In migration studies, racialization is theorized through two separate models. Sociologists taking the “cultural assimilation” approach (Alba and Nee 2009; Portes and Zhou 1993) have proposed what they call “segmented assimilation,” in which immigrants transition from identification with their immediate ethno-cultural, religious and linguistic group to an eventual incorporation in a larger racial group. Within several generations, they develop a racial perception of themselves according to the social construction of the U.S. and meet with the inequality and racism encountered by all members of their ascribed racial group. Anthropologists holding a multiculturalist approach to immigrant incorporation suggest that ethnic boundaries are maintained within (and in some groups, across) racial groups, where language, religion and cultural traditions are used to both maintain group identity and delineate difference from other groups (Brettell and Hollifield 2014; Kasinitz, Mollenkopf, and Waters 2002). In both models, the racialization of immigrants in America is seen as a “social fact,” rather than as an agentive political act.

For immigrants to identify as part of a racial group, they must accept and understand the meaning of race in the context of American society. Despite growing exposure to the American racial system through popular media and the internet, immigrants arriving from Latin America, the Middle East, China, or India, arrive with drastically different perceptions of race than those prevalent in the U.S. Racialization imposes racial boundaries and forces them to begin to think racially in the terms

prevalent in America. Should Arab Americans identify as “white,” while being repeatedly the target of police harassment, Islamophobia and racism?⁶ Should Pakistani immigrants identify as Asian despite a radically different racial experience than that of East Asian Americans (Kibria 1996)?

In her influential study comparing Cambodian refugees and affluent Chinese businessmen in the San Francisco Bay Area, Aihwa Ong (1996), demonstrated how class is already racialization and coded into certain immigrant nationalities.

The racialization of class, as well as the differential othering of immigrants, constitutes immigrants as the racialized embodiments of different kinds of social capital. [Considering American racial categories one] must acknowledge the internal class, ethnic, and racial stratifications that are both the effect and the product of differential governmentalities working on different populations of newcomers. (Ong et al. 1996:751)

Ong’s critique is crucial to understanding various assumptions made about immigrants in a racially constructed practice like jazz, and why Bourdieu’s classical markers of class such as levels of education, command of language and familiarity with high cultural references are less applicable in the case of immigrant jazz musicians (Bourdieu 2011). As I demonstrate below, because the aesthetic reference point in American jazz valorizes social mobility and the habitus of the African American community, elite cultural institutions such as academic music programs are often perceived as inauthentic. This is despite the fact that many African American musicians today and in the past were academically trained and came from middle class backgrounds (Wilf 2014:55; Jeffri 2003). Immigrant jazz musicians have considerably different experiences depending on their own particular intersection of race and class in the U.S. While those who are highly educated, fluent in English and familiar with American cultural norms are likely to have some advantage, racialization and financial means rather than cultural expressions of class are likely to be the decisive factors.

Ethnomusicology and its Borders

In ethnomusicology, borders have been conceived primarily in relation to their influence on music production in the communities that live beside them. Studies of migrants crossing the border and comparative studies of communities across borders have been less common. Mauro Van Aken’s work on the meaning of *debkeh* dance and music among Palestinian refugees in the Jordan Valley is a particularly strong example of the ways various geopolitical borders and their denial affect music-making in contested

⁶ People of Middle Eastern descent are more likely to be targeted by the police and other government agencies as suspected terrorist threat. See Chowdhury 2015

border spaces. Van Aken articulates the ways contested geopolitics borders between Jordan, the Palestinian West Bank, and Israel create social boundaries reflecting contested moral and religious codes, economic possibilities and political identities (Van Aken 2006).

Dance and music have crossed political borders, survived continuous and present cultural dispossession and displacement of Palestinians in the West Bank, and are diffused and conveyed through different ethnic and class hierarchies. They form a common language where those differences are confronted, negotiated and made visible. (Van Aken 2006:220)

Martin Stokes's analysis of Arabesk music in the Syrian-Turkish border region deals with the troubled historical relationship between Turkey and its southern neighbor Syria, and the influence of this political power balance on both Arabic- and Turkish-speaking residents on the Turkish side of the border. In Stokes's account, the border is a site of control as well as a place marked by linguistic and ideological conflict. Shared listening to popular music alleviates, to some degree, the tensions and friction created by the insecurities and precariousness of life alongside the border (Stokes 1998).

In his studies of musics on the U.S. Mexican border, Manuel Peña (1985; 1996) places an emphasis on the ways the border itself functions as a protagonist in the musical life of Mexicans on both sides of the border. Music, particularly *corridos* and accordion *conjunto* music, serves as a mechanism through which local residents come to terms with the power differentials between themselves and the state, in maintaining cultural identity within the U.S:

Economic, political, and even cultural assimilation may be inevitable for border Mexican Americans, given the reality of their absorption and domination in American life. But the process advances unevenly, slowed or hastened by historically driven factors like the formation of classes, immigration, and enduring interethnic conflict. The culture embodied by conjunto music is one of those factors that inhibit assimilation. The cultural absorption of the Mexican is complex and certainly far from complete, even on the American side of the border. (Peña 1996:222)

Peña's analysis positions the border as a cultural shield. Living on the Texas side of the border exposed Mexican residents to the influence of white American culture, turning them into "immigrants" in their own home. According to Peña, the blurring of social boundaries between Texas-Mexicans and white Texans is affected by the intersection with other social boundaries such as economic status and the arrival of recent immigrants from other regions of Mexico.

Peña's construction of music as a shield against assimilation is typical of the paradigmatic shift from cultural assimilation to multiculturalism that dominated much of the research on immigrants since the 1980s and is still common today (Byrd 2015). According to this model, immigrants use music to protect and defend the social boundaries of the community and to strengthen community solidarity.

Social Boundaries and the Ethnic Community

The construction of music as resistance to assimilation renders extant theoretical frameworks of immigrant musics in American urban centers (such as Shelemay 2012) not readily applicable to a study of immigrants in the New York jazz scene. This is because of several overlapping methodological assumptions regarding the ways in which the population under study is defined.

- 1) Most studies of immigrants focus on immigrants from a single country of origin.
- 2) Studies of immigrants refer to a "community" constructed on the basis of a shared "culture."
- 3) Studies of immigrant musics often rely on musical markers to signify cultural difference, in which the group's cultural background and the music studied are congruent with one another.
- 4) Studies of immigrant music often assume shared racial and religious identity and underemphasize the influence of gender on transnational mobility and the immigrant experience (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2003; Niranjana 2006)
- 5) In contrast to an immigrant community, the notion of "scene" is tied to a particular current locale (whether real or virtual) rather than previous place of origin, although these sometime overlap (Bennett and Peterson 2004; Straw 1991)

In a pioneering study of music in the life of Vietnamese refugees resettled in the U.S. after the Vietnam war, Adelaida Reyes (1999) argued that a wide range of musics were considered "Vietnamese" by the interlocutors in her study. These musics ranged from popular dance forms such as tango and waltz, to *tan nhac* modern Vietnamese music which involves traditional elements (Reyes 1999). Vietnamese musicians performed Western music and dance in public, particularly in contexts where many non-Vietnamese were in attendance, but performed traditional music at private performances within the community. "Western" and popular music served as crucial tools for communication between members of the Vietnamese community and outsiders to the

community, a means to reach beyond the social boundaries of the refugee community and the isolation brought about by the traumatic experience of war. Importantly, dancing the tango and other popular dances was not perceived as “assimilation” by either Reyes or the participants of her study.

Since Reyes’ important study, the role of “Western” musics, and American music in particular, as communicative tools in the lives of immigrant communities has been gravely understudied. The majority of studies on immigrant music in America reflect the rich musical practices immigrants brought with them from their home countries, the transformation of these musics as a result of migration, and the role of music as markers of ethnic identity generative of community building.⁷ British ethnomusicologist John Baily explains that immigrant groups in large multicultural cities such as New York often cling tenaciously to their so-called “traditional musics” to maintain group identity in a multi-ethnic society (Baily 2006:173).

In keeping with a multicultural conception, researchers have emphasized the ways immigrant communities use music to resist cultural assimilation and delineate ethnic boundaries between communities. In her study of Arab Americans in Detroit, Anne Rasmussen (1991) explains that,

The essence of the Arab-American community, and what is natural for this group, is explained here by identifying musical tradition and the social concepts, values, symbols and boundaries that are shared or held by musicians and audiences. Once the boundaries of a musical system have been defined, they may be compared with the older or newer communities, of non-Arab communities, and of Arab communities in different regions. [1991:21]

In Rasmussen’s analysis a clean line of demarcation can be drawn between communities for comparative analysis. The lines Rasmussen draws around the “Arab-American” community, in itself an American category, are precisely the “protective” boundaries of multiculturalism, but they create a false sense of cohesion between Christian, Sunni and Shiite Syrians, Christian, Sunni and Shiite Lebanese, Sunni Egyptians, secular Palestinians and other immigrants whose ethnic and cultural identities are far from coalescing into a single “Arab-American” ethnic community. In this case, music from the Levant is not a defense against the corrupting influence of American cultural assimilation, but a means of communication across families and communities of origin. The next step, in Rasmussen’s definition, in which these interactions lead to a new form

⁷ See C.F Zheng 1993; Slobin 1995; Shelemay 1998; Reyes 1999; Wong 2004; Glasser 1995; Rasmussen 1991; Rapport 2014.

of American ethnic identity, is part of the racialization of immigrants, in which immigrants are first categorized into meta-ethnic categories, and then into one of four possible racial groups (Omi and Winant 2014).

Kay Shelemay (Shelemay 2011; Shelemay 2012) has recently discussed the notion of “musical community” as a methodological prism in light of theoretical challenges to the notion of community in social sciences (Anderson 2006; Hobsbawm and Ranger 2012) and in music studies (Slobin 1993; Straw 1991). Despite these pointed critiques on the problematic fundamental assumptions that underlie the equivalence between community, culture, ethnicity and nation, Shelemay’s methodological focus on Ethiopian immigrants in Washington D.C. already assumes and reaffirms the boundaries of nation, ethnicity, and culture as a cohesive ethnic group. In a footnote, Shelemay acknowledges the diversity of the Ethiopian community but not the problematic assumption that once in the U.S, they become a single immigrant ethnicity.

I focus on Ethiopian people and practices from the central Ethiopian highland plateau who speak Amharic, which was the official national language before the 1974 Ethiopian revolution and continues to be spoken widely both in Ethiopia and in diaspora. These Amharic terms and concepts have been widely disseminated among a wide cross section of the Ethiopian populations, most of whom spoke Amharic in addition to a language associated with their particular ethnic or regional communities. All of the terms discussed here were well-established historically and are today actively perpetuated among Ethiopian immigrants in the American diaspora. (Shelemay 2011:365)

The delineation of American-made ethnic boundaries in ethnomusicological scholarship in an effort to protect immigrants from cultural assimilation has unwittingly reinforced new social boundaries which assume cultural, linguistic, religious and in some cases racial equivalence among immigrants from the same country. Shelemay certainly did not intend to present Ethiopian immigrants as a homogenous group (as the footnote indicates) but in the process of defining the Ethiopian musical community, the extent and significance of popular musics for immigrant interactions with other native-born and immigrant groups was left unexplored.

Martin Stokes’s (1997) discussion of the role of music in the construction of a community’s connection to place illustrates the emphasis on music as cultural difference.

Music is socially meaningful not entirely but largely because it provides a means by which people recognize identities and places, and the boundaries which separate them [...] The insistent evocation of place in Irish balladry heard on juke-boxes in bars amongst migrant communities in the United States is a striking

example, defining a moral and political community in relation to the world in which they find themselves. (1997:3)

For Stokes, the places constructed through music define communities and involve notions of difference and social boundary, but in some cases also provide the means to transcend them: “Migrants and refugees might identify with popular genres produced by the dominant group [...] if it embodies aspiration of participation in urban high life” (1997:18).

Such description underplays the everyday involvement of immigrants with members of other cultural and ethnic groups holding various political, social and cultural positions within a host nation-state. The reality of immigrants’ musical worlds is not limited to religious, folk or popular musics of their homeland or their re-creation in the new locales, but involves a constant negotiation between instruments, musics and memories carried over from the home country with various musics encountered in the host country. Recently, anthropologist Nina Glick-Schiller has criticized the use of the ethnic community as the basic unit of analysis in migration studies. She urges scholars to move beyond “methodological ethnicity,” because it fails to capture the increasing fragmentation of ethnic groups in terms of language, place of origin, legal status, and social stratification and results in the exclusion of non-ethnic forms of social engagement and connection (Glick-Schiller 2008:4). It also assumes that residential segregation of immigrants is equal across different locales. The ethnic enclave, as several scholars have shown, is an important pattern of settlement for some groups, but not everywhere, and not for everyone (Wood 1997; Chacko 2003).

Several scholars have argued that both cultural assimilation models and multiculturalist ones have proven overly simplistic and optimistic with regard to the incorporation of immigrants into a new society.⁸ As Fassin (2013) convincingly shows, cultural assimilation does not attenuate racism and the political construction of ethnic difference and the ostensible embrace of multiculturalism does not undermine the dominance of “nation-state culture” (Povinelli 1998).

In light of these methodological starting points, placing the already highly disputed category “jazz musician” as a lens through which to observe the life of immigrants in New York City may seem to be an analytically untenable position, burdened by too many complications. However, as I argue in the following chapters, listening carefully to the population of foreign-born musicians who arrive in New York to play jazz allows us to hear the boundaries and borders immigrant musicians cross as they establish themselves in the New York scene. Perhaps more importantly, they allow us to

⁸ Cf. Fassin 2011; Schiller and Çağlar 2009; Vertovec, Wessendorf, 2010.

hear the musical bridges these immigrants build across national, racial and ethnic lines in constructing a network that is at once local and global, foreign and native.

While I am careful not to underestimate the radically different paces at which racialization affects the life of immigrants in the U.S., and do not wish to give the impression that jazz “fixes” society’s inequalities, I do contend that to consider only immigrants from a single nation of origin and ethno-racial grouping will render the important crossing of racial and social boundaries invisible rather than highlight them. My aim here is thus to show the various strategies that jazz musicians use to cross the legal borders in the U.S. and the social and musical boundaries of the New York jazz scene, without glossing over the inequalities of American society and the jazz world itself in relation to race, gender, religion and nationality.

Jazz and its boundaries

In the last three decades, a significant body of literature has focused on the boundaries of jazz, with a growing interest in the canonization of jazz as an act of cultural politics. Scott DeVeaux’s important article “Constructing the Jazz Tradition” (DeVeaux 1991) examined the construction of the modernist narrative of jazz as a chain of secession among mostly male, mostly African American individuals that pushed the music towards “artistic freedom,” purportedly ending in the 1960s, when jazz “lost it’s way” (Lipsitz 2004). Others have asserted the political contours of the jazz tradition, identifying the “protective” function of boundaries, but also their exclusions (cf. Gray 2005).

Since DeVeaux’s article, scholars have continued to deconstruct the master narrative of jazz by asserting the importance of community over individuals (Monson 1996; Jackson 2012), of women instrumentalists (Tucker 2001; McGee 2010), of fusion and smooth jazz (Fellezs 2011) and other crucial aspects that have been left out of the master narratives of jazz (Heller 2013). The master jazz narrative, as DeVeaux argues, is produced by elimination through a construction of difference. “Jazz is jazz because it emphasizes musical characteristics that are deemphasized in other forms or because it lacks those elements seen as central to other forms. It is defined through exclusion” (DeVeaux 1991:528). In a later article, titled “Core and Boundaries,” DeVeaux makes this point explicit: “It’s not a matter of what to leave in, but what to leave *out*. History is storytelling. Naturally, any story is a matter of exclusion - deciding what to leave out. It’s a matter of drawing boundaries” (Deveaux 2005:16).

Jazz historian Eric Porter’s contribution to the aptly named *Jazz/Not Jazz*, a volume dedicated to the boundaries of jazz, is similarly focused on these mechanisms of exclusion:

The boundaries of jazz are maintained by calling attention to sub-genres or specific musical projects that some might view as jazz but that can also be seen as lacking some essential property (swing, improvisation, the fusion of African and European devices, spontaneity, sounds from black popular music, accessibility) or containing elements, such as commercial appeal, or sounds that some believe reside more comfortably in other musical genres. For example, jazz fusion is perceived to be “not jazz” because it uses elements from rock and funk such as electric instruments and a different rhythmic basis; the avant-garde *fails the jazz test* for some because it *abandons* swing and other fundamentals; and the neoclassicists are seen as *deficient* because they fail to understand that change is fundamental to the art form. (Porter 2012:17)

That the construction of jazz’s historical narrative is dependent on the delineation of boundaries is clear, but historians’ desire to “defend” jazz from being absorbed into a larger narrative of American popular music requires further interrogation. Are we to inquire who gets to delineate those boundaries? Who gets to defend jazz? Who is positioned on each side of the border, and what are the power differentials and stakes of being included or excluded from “jazz” as a category? How do inclusion and exclusion in *American society*, with regard to race, gender, class and religion, influence passage through the social “checkpoints” or core values associated with jazz as an American national symbol?

Such concerns are inscribed into a U.S. Congress resolution recognizing jazz as a rare and valuable national American treasure:

Whereas jazz has achieved preeminence throughout the world as an indigenous American music and art form, bringing to this country and the world a uniquely American musical synthesis and culture through the African-American experience, is a unifying force, bridging cultural, religious, ethnic and age differences in *our diverse society*, finding its inspiration in the cultures and most personal experiences of the *diverse peoples that constitute our Nation*. Has evolved into a multifaceted art form which continues to birth and nurture new stylistic idioms and *cultural fusions*. Has become a true *international language* adopted by musicians around the world as a music best able to express contemporary realities from a personal perspective. (Text of H.Con.Res. 57 1987)

If jazz is a unifying force, reflective of the diverse people of the U.S, why is its historiography so committed to exclusion? What can explain the gap between jazz historians’ narration through exclusion and the broad congressional vision of jazz as an American cultural symbol?

Philip Bohlman has argued that the “interrelatedness between different communities, regions, and subcultures, often fails to appear in the historiographic models for American music” (Holzapfel and Bohlman 2000:130). In Bohlman’s account, American music histories are based on the binary tension between “elite” and “vernacular” musics, or between the “cosmopolitan” and the “provincial.” The side of the binary that includes “elite” and “cosmopolitan” musics indexes traditions that are grounded in written notation, while “vernacular” or “provincial” traditions are often unscripted and therefore remain outside the purview of historical research. Bohlman argues that current historiographic models are useful for studying one side of the binary – that of elite or cosmopolitan, but folk, ethnic, or religious traditions “fall off the panorama” of American music history because they are unwritten and unconstructed, and therefore “ahistorical.”

Jazz, in all its diversity, can be argued to reside on both sides of the binary. Jazz historians are sensitive to the need to mark territorial boundaries for those whose cultural territory has been repeatedly appropriated, invaded, and exploited. This approach sees jazz as a vernacular expression, what Houston Baker referred to as “arts native or peculiar to a particular country or locale” (Baker 1984:2), and “sonic symbols [that] ‘point’ to a certain physical, social, and cultural compartment” (Ramsey 2013:147). The vernacular is also a political term. Vernacular expression, as Gary Tomlinson argued, “can emphasize its own boundaries, its own range of authority and territorial claims” (Tomlinson 1991:231). It can be used to mark boundaries between “us” and others and keep other modes of thought away, beyond its horizon. The vernacular in this interpretation, expresses a desire to remain dissociated from other modes of expression. The denial of exploitation and plagiarism in jazz has made it necessary to reassert and protect the specificity of its origins and emergence, and its place and lineage as an African American vernacular expression (Monson 1995a; Lewis 1996:93; Gray 2005; Ake 2004).

But jazz is also understood, as Thomas Owens notes, as an international language, a *lingua franca*, “serving as the principal musical language of thousands of jazz musicians. It also affects the ways earlier jazz styles are played, and is *the parent language* of many action jazz (“free jazz”) and fusion players” (Owens 1996:4, emphasis mine). Within a few years of its emergence in the African American urban centers of the south, musicians of diverse national and cultural background referred to it to communicate an assemblage of syncopated dances and rhythms (Atkins 2003). Today, bebop, more commonly known by jazz musicians as “straight-ahead jazz,” is ubiquitous, a core vocabulary in jazz performance programs (Wilf 2014), and the common representation of jazz in film and popular media (Knight 2002). Histories of jazz thus must reconcile two meanings (at least) of jazz and the sociomusical group that it constitutes: the first emphasizing jazz’s role in defining a vernacular expression of an African American sensibility, and the

second its role as a lingua franca used across national boundaries — a cosmopolitan music.

Maintaining the conceptual boundaries described above, American jazz studies generally focus on jazz as either vernacular or cosmopolitan – as an expression of African American identity or of a global musical world, but rarely address the co-existence and confluence of these two conceptions of jazz within the U.S. A few important precedents do exist: Guthrie Ramsey (1996) shows how African American writers of the Harlem renaissance were already debating the vernacular and cosmopolitan dynamics of jazz in the 1920s. On one side were authors such as Langston Hughes and Zora Neale Hurston who emphasized jazz as a Southern vernacular expression, particularly as it relates to the blues and spirituals. On the other side were authors such as W.E.B Du Bois, Alain Locke and J.A. Rogers, who considered these vernacular expressions as a base for creating cosmopolitan, elite music modeled on European classical forms. A third group, not discussed by Ramsey, comprised African American composers and performers who published their own accounts of the vernacular-cosmopolitan debate. W.C. Handy, James Reese Europe, and Jelly Roll Morton saw jazz as simultaneously “vernacular” and “cosmopolitan” precisely because it enabled them to reflect not only the African American South in the North, but also imaginations of the Middle East, the Caribbean and Asia — what anthropologist Pnina Werbner called “vernacular cosmopolitanism” (Werbner 2006). It was the complex dynamics of this perspective that led Amiri Baraka to assert that in the 1920s jazz became the most “cosmopolitan of any Negro music, able to utilize almost any foreign influence within its broader spectrum” (Baraka 1963:92).

The historical debate over jazz’s cosmopolitan and vernacular elements within the African American community figures less prominently in recent writings on the use of jazz as a facilitator of transnational encounters and cosmopolitanism,⁹ or in ethnographic studies of American expatriates in jazz scenes across the globe.¹⁰ Steven Feld argues that jazz cosmopolitanism “is an agency of desire for enlarged spatial participation. That agency plays out in performances and imaginaries of connectedness, detoured and leaped-over pathways storied and traveled from X to Y by way of Z” (Feld 2012:49). While I find Feld’s figurative language compelling and share his critique of the “American nationalist jazz master narrative,” I wish to emphasize that his conception of cosmopolitanism suggests a far more comprehensive ideal for jazz – one that crosses not only political borders but also racial, economic and class boundaries. Jazz in this conception reaches out in all directions – similarly to how it is represented by the U.S. congressional resolution. But in Feld’s account, African American historiography remains

⁹ See Stanyek, 2004; Feld, 2012; Kelley; 2013

¹⁰ See Ake, 2010; Atkins, 2003; Harris, 2002; Lewis, 1995, 2005; McGee, 2011.

just that: Louis Armstrong, John Coltrane and Elvin Jones are points of historical reference for both Feld and his interlocutors.

If, for Houston Baker and other African American thinkers, jazz is a marker of territorial boundaries, for Feld it is a sign of enlarged spaces of participation – a sense of openness, a blurring of borders and boundaries. But because jazz is understood as both a vernacular expression and a lingua franca, musicians and listeners with divergent understandings and even disagreement about what jazz “is” can still use it to communicate with one another.

These two “kinds” of jazz, jazz as a vernacular expression and jazz as a lingua franca, do not operate in separate musical spheres, nor are they segregated clearly by racial, national, or economic boundaries. Musicians of different backgrounds and understandings of jazz interact regularly, adapt to each other’s playing, learn from each other, and criticize and reflect upon the music of their fellow musicians. As jazz education increasingly departs from older models of apprenticeship in favor of structured and standardized instruction in academic institutions, vernacular and cosmopolitan conceptions of jazz clash regularly but also sustain one another in important ways (Wilf 2014).

Several authors have discussed jazz musicians’ ability to identify the sound of a particular musician (Wilf 2010; Feld 2012), to mimic and invoke the sound of other musicians (Murphy, 1990; Vargas, 2008), to discuss music by referring to the sound of other musicians (Davis 2010), and to incorporate a variety of sonic “influences” into their own sound (Jackson 2012:111). Because of these overlapping practices, musicians who perform together inevitably influence each other’s ways of playing. Despite ideological and generational differences, musicians react, borrow, adapt and exchange ideas, sounds and techniques.

Vernacular expressions, whether African American, Japanese or Georgian, indeed mark social boundaries and belonging. But performing music as lingua franca can also mark social boundaries. Speaking with an accent is both a sign of foreignness and a sign of identity; switching “codes” is a sign of multiple competencies. The notion of what is foreign or local thus becomes a question of numbers, time, place and a balance of power. Is Yiddish foreign to Williamsburg? Is Spanish foreign to East Harlem? Is Jamaican Patois foreign to East Flatbush? These languages were once foreign to what we now consider their original locales, dialects marking a different region, a different community, always moving, always in flux.

In the New York jazz scene, the range of expressions a musician feels comfortable with and the range of musical dialects in which one can convincingly perform are rarely limited to a single idiom or to one vernacular expression (Washburne

2012). The sounds of a locale are thus in constant negotiation by the people who live and create them for their day-to-day use. David Bertrand, a Trinidadian reed player living in Brooklyn, explained to me that when he worked with African American saxophonist Antonio Hart, their conversations reflected different understandings of the blues:

From what I was reading about the blues, and why it resonates with people, I wasn't convinced that it was emotionally moving, it sounded like people being overly sentimental, it didn't elicit the same response from me, and I wondered why that was. There was a disconnect from what I read and what I was hearing. Trane changed that a little bit, it became a little clearer when I heard him. He doesn't play a blues scale, he plays a blues sensibility. And this is a problem I articulated to Antonio when I got to Queens College. Because again in the way he [Hart] was reiterating some of the expressions that I had read about all these years, coming from the African American tradition, the spirituals, the vocalizations as a sort of reiterations of their collective experience, how one contends with anguish and pain through music, and he's such a strong advocate of that and I had to tell him, well Antonio, I'm also black, I'm also part of the African diaspora, we also had slavery, in a sense our connection musically to Africa might be, in a way more visceral, and direct to the African American experience in many regards, but we don't deal with anguish that way, we don't emote like that. So it seemed like this underlying sense of wanting to put yourself (in my misconception), in a state of sorrow that [I] couldn't bring myself to. I couldn't put myself into that place. Once I heard Cannonball or Bobby Timmons or someone I could connect with it [more] convincingly. I dig what he's doing, I can feel that, but I can't see myself playing like that. I am totally won over by *him* playing it, but I can't do that, I don't feel that, and when I think about it, I am not compelled to do it. My point of reference was still Trinidad, and in a way what you would call "our blues" within the Afro-Trinidadian folk experience, there are similarities, historically and even emotionally, to what was obtained here, but it's a slightly different color. I think we more go for brown and red, earth and blood, never went to blue. (Bertrand 2013)

Bertrand's analysis of his own "failure to feel" the blues in a way appropriate to a black jazz musician suggests not only a different meaning of jazz, but another kind of racialization in which immigrants feel they are expected to behave according to the codes of a racial group to which they did not until recently belong. Importantly, Caribbean immigrants have to adjust to the codes of behavior within black American culture, and the codes of American society more broadly.

New York as a Global Border City

Most theoretical accounts of New York as an anthropological context categorize it as a global city (Sassen 2001; Low 1996). But as Sassen argues, “the border” in its actual and heuristic sense is disaggregated (Sassen 2007:214). While I do not question New York’s singular position in the global political-economy, I wish to emphasize the potential insight to be gained from viewing New York as a border city (Arreola 1994). Pushing the metaphor even further, I would like to consider the life of immigrants in New York City along the lines articulated by urban designer Lawrence Herzog, namely, as a “transfrontier metropolis,” (Herzog and Sohn 2014).

New York City’s border is not the physical border created by the Atlantic Ocean, nor is it the lines that separate it from its neighbor states New Jersey and Connecticut. There is no single political territory on the other side of that border, but many territories, as many as there are home countries to which immigrants can be deported if they fail to maintain their visa. Nancy Morawetz called this “the invisible border,” which manifests itself through restrictions on travel for non-citizens, through imminent risk of deportation, and the formal and informal economic system built on the restricted freedoms of non-citizens (Morawetz 2007).

The presence of the border is thus enmeshed in the everyday life of immigrants for long periods of time between the day of arrival and a hoped-for future of neutralization, which for many never arrives. The border exists in the balance between maintaining legality and living with the risk of deportation. Anthropologists Thomas Wilson and Hastings Donnan have argued that “borders are contradictory zones of culture and power, where the twin processes of state centralization and national homogenization are disrupted, precisely because most borders are areas of such cultural diversity” (Wilson and Donnan 1998:26). New York City provides an extreme case of cultural diversity, and although cultural homogenization is disrupted if not altogether rejected, the centralizing power of the nation-state maintains a tight grip on the life of immigrants and non-citizens.

In a series of articles beginning in the 1980s, Lawrence Herzog examined urban spaces that develop across national boundaries (Herzog 1991; Herzog 1990; Herzog 1997; Herzog and Sohn 2014). Herzog’s case studies, the San-Diego/Tijuana metropolis along the US Mexico border, Vancouver-Victoria-Seattle along the US Canada border, and the Basel-Mulhouse-Freiburg urban center on the Swiss-French-German border represent cities in which national borders literally cross urban spaces and workers commute to work across those national borders. While Herzog makes a clear distinction between international migrants and commuter workers — the first leave their home country while the latter return to their home (and often, homeland) at the end of the work day — I think that considering the daily crossing in and out of national contexts within

New York City captures a crucial aspect of immigrants' life. The invisible border is represented not only by immigration status, but by the necessity of crossing New York City's internal "national" borders for both *economic and aesthetic purposes*. Immigrants routinely cross into and out of the "U.S." within New York, as well as geographical representations of other "countries" in the city for a variety of economic and social reasons. They also *leave* and return to places they recognize as "home" in the city on a daily basis.

Jazz historian Dan Morgenstern, himself an immigrant from Germany, claims that "the number of players who've come to the U.S. to study and then test the professional waters during the past few decades is legion but only the toughest have made the homeland of jazz their permanent base" (Morgenstern 2000). Morgenstern is referencing both the point of entry and the difficulties of maintaining legal status in the U.S. In recent years, the growing numbers of international students in American post-secondary jazz education (Wilf 2014), the opening of new jazz clubs owned, operated and frequented by foreigners (Jackson 2012:64) and increased quotas for artists and entertainers in the wake of the 1990 immigration act (Peters 1991) have significantly increased the numbers and visibility of immigrant jazz musicians on the New York jazz scene. The number of immigrant jazz musicians in the city is in constant flux, affected by the musicians' ability to survive financially in the highly competitive (and overcrowded) music market, and to keep up with the visa renewal requirements of the Department of Homeland Security.

To give a necessarily rough estimate of the number of immigrant musicians in New-York city I manually counted the number of immigrant performers listed in New York City jazz club advertisements between 2013 and 2016 on the New York City Jazz Record calendar. With around twenty different jazz performances a night, approximately six would have an immigrant headliner or band member. This is proportional to the overall foreign-born population in the city, which is roughly a third. The relative size of this population of musicians is striking considering how little has been written about it in jazz scholarship.¹¹

Travis Jackson suggested that the main difficulty of estimating the number of "jazz" musicians results from the incongruence of the genre category with the diverse work lives of jazz musicians (Jackson 2012). An additional complication arises from the fact musicians perform regularly outside the city while still residing in New York and

¹¹ This rough approximation is based on my own familiarity with the musicians and their background and the availability of data regarding members of the ensemble.

vice versa. Recent studies on the work lives of jazz musicians in New York sponsored by the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), the American Federation of Musicians (AFM), and the Future of Music Foundation (FMC) exclude permanent residents (green card holders) and holders of the O1 visa, the so-called artist visa. Both Jeffri (Jeffri 2003) and the American Federation of Musicians survey (DiCola 2013) discuss at length the methodological challenges of accurately estimating the number of jazz musicians in New York City at any given time. The very use of the term “immigrant” creates considerable complications. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, people born in the United States, Puerto Rico, or other outlying U.S. areas, or born to U.S. citizens abroad, are U.S. citizens. People born in all other locations are foreign-born. New York state population reports consider all foreign-born people who live in New York City to be immigrants (DiNapoli and Bleiwas 2015). I follow these guidelines in identifying “immigrant jazz musicians” in the New York context.

The overwhelming majority of immigrant jazz musicians arrive in the U.S. as students. This is primarily because schools offer the opportunity for entry and extended stay through student visas. Data published by academic institutions located in the New York Metro area suggest that international students enrolled in jazz programs make up around 30% to 40% of the total student population today (Marshal 2012). Among these institutions are The New School for Jazz, Manhattan School Of Music, Julliard School of Music, New York City College, Queens College, and NYU in New York City; State University of New York Purchase and Eastman School of Music in upstate New York, William Paterson University in Wayne, New Jersey, Berklee College of Music and the New England Conservatory in Boston, Massachusetts. Academic institutions offer international students the possibility of auditioning remotely by sending audio and video recordings of their performances, and organize live auditions in various locations around the world in an effort to increase their international student body. This is because international students represent an important income stream for many schools. According to the Institute for International Education, a non-profit organization administering many international students in the U.S, international students alone contributed \$30 billion to the U.S. economy in the 2014-15 academic year (Banks 2015).

It is not unreasonable to assume that jazz musicians who pursue academic studies in the U.S. are those who are financially willing and able to pay the expensive tuition. But college education is often thought of as a necessary condition for pursuing a music career in the U.S., a decision that is often not adequately informed by knowledge of the economic conditions of jazz musicians in the U.S. Moreover, the relatively early award of scholarships at the college admission stage advances the misconception that through college education, improved musical competence will be financially rewarded in the future.

Saxophonist Ayumi Ishito recalled the process obtaining the various visa permits in the first seven years of her stay in the U.S.

F1 was easy to get. I was studying, I was taking lessons with a kind of famous saxophone player in Japan and he wrote me a recommendation letter to Berklee. So I could just get in, very easy. I had to send them a lot of documents like, my financial background, or my school transcripts, but that's it. I had to go the interview in the embassy. And I just told them I'm going to study music and they said, ok. No problem. F1 was very easy. (Ishito 2015)

Students who are finally admitted to higher education programs in New York and Boston meet considerable financial challenges. The stereotype of "rich international students" supported by their parents does not reflect the socio-economic background of the musicians I encountered in my fieldwork. George Mel, a drummer who came to Boston from Georgia in the mid 1990s, recounted his experience of arriving in the U.S.

I was still basically illegal in Holland, and got this big thing to look forward to [a scholarship from Berklee], all indications that I had to wrap it up. I went back to Georgia, sold certain family belongings to get money for tickets, and first month living expenses at Berklee, and did the visa, the American embassy just opened in Tbilisi, and by May of 1996 I was in Boston. I started working at the voice department, hooked up with the rock faculty to gig outside the city, played with a local blues band, that was my bread and butter, different kinds of jobs to support myself, and at night I would transcribe the recordings of the lessons with a dictionary because my English wasn't there. (Mel 2014)

After graduating, musicians on student visas often make use of an "Optional Practical Training" (OPT) period that allows them to extend their stay for an additional year. During that year, they receive and carry an employment authorization card, which allows them to work only within their field of study, that is, only in music-related jobs. Some find work as music teachers, but many work in the unofficial service economy, playing cash gigs in weddings or restaurants to make ends meet.

Saxophonist Ayumi Ishito, quoted above, arrived in New York after graduating from Berklee in 2009. She remembered the process of obtaining the OPT: "I think everyone need to apply to OPT, everyone can get it. I just submit some paper, to somewhere [sic] government, and they send the OPT card, a few weeks later. I could use it as my ID, and it has the expiration date for one year." She remembered her first days after moving to the city:

It's very difficult to get a music job here, it's easier in Tokyo, if you're good. I started to work at a Japanese grocery store, after that I worked at "Something Jazz" for a while [a now defunct jazz club in midtown]. I didn't get a lot of gigs at

first, [but then] I got some gigs, from my friend who played saxophone, and sometimes he can't make it, and he called me as a “sub,” and the bandleader liked me and he kept calling me for the gigs. [Ishito 2015]

The OPT year is often used to prepare a professional portfolio to support a request for an O1 artist visa. This visa recognizes a musician as having “extraordinary abilities” which justify his or her stay for an additional period. Preparing a portfolio and obtaining an O1 visa often entails considerable financial burden in legal fees and extensive clerical work. One musician, who will remain anonymous, recounted:

I had to apply to the O1. A lot of my friends did the same thing. I used a lawyer to help me. I think met her through my friends and I heard she was good at the O1 visa, musical thing, one of the famous ones I think. I had to get a lot of recommendation letters from faculty from Berklee, or other musicians or somebody I know, I got like twenty letters, I talk to people and write them email to ask, I think most of them I just wrote by myself and they signed them. My lawyer sent me a lot of sample letters and I had to show it to my lawyer first and she said “ok, its good.” I had to make a contract with some people or a band I will work with, and also an agreement that show you hired me for the next three years, and we’re going to play in this place, this place, I asked my teachers, it was just fake, no one knows where they are going to play for the next three years.

The average yearly income for American jazz musicians stands at around \$23,300 (DiCola 2013). The additional costs associated with hiring a lawyer and paying the various fees associated with the visa application make the “invisible border” particularly palpable in the everyday life of musicians. Woodwind player David Bertrand, who arrived in New York from Trinidad in 2010 to study at Queens College CUNY, gigged frequently and worked as a music teacher but was at one point forced to sell his secondary instrument -- a bass clarinet -- in order to pay a lawyer to renew his visa (Bertrand 2013).

Once a visa is recommended for approval by DHS, a musician must leave the U.S. and await the final approval by the American embassy in the home country that issues the new entry visa. In this process, the visa portfolio is reevaluated, and at times new supporting documents are requested. Before receiving their final approval, musicians are interviewed to ensure that they meet the requirements of the visa. They are likely to be asked questions in the vein of “have you won a Grammy?” (Ishito 2015) or “I like jazz, if you are such a good musician, how come I haven’t heard of you? (Gurvich 2014).

The O1 visa allows musicians to remain and work in the U.S for up to three years. Obtaining an O1 and renewing it does not lead to permanent residence and a green card,

and in cases where musicians do not prove sufficient progress in their career within a given visa period they are likely to lose their status (Gurvich 2014).

Nowhere is the role of borders as a physical and political instrument in the creation and maintenance of a “national cultural” (Waldinger and Fitzgerald 2004) more evident than in the application process for the O1 visa, where the decision as to who will be welcomed in the U.S and who will be denied or forced to leave depends on an assessment of their contribution to American musical culture. And yet, once admitted, social boundaries continually mark their position as foreign, remind them of their “foreignness” and remake their place of origin according to American categories of race, ethnicity, language and religion.

Readers of this essay may wonder why I do not invest more time in advocating for the success of immigrant musicians in the New York scene, why I do not emphasize the ways immigrant musicians are “different” or “exceptional.” One may also wonder what political issues or musical concepts these musicians are pursuing. What are their artistic dreams and aspirations? In other words, how are these musicians “artists”? These are precisely the questions that the U.S. government is asking its applicants to the O1 artist visa program.

I believe it is important, theoretically and methodologically to resist such tendencies. I am not here to expound about the extraordinary abilities of immigrant musicians. Nor am I here to advocate for elite jazz musicians making elite music. In this essay, I try to resist taking an active role in American “difference-making.” I wish to challenge the expectation that musicians should be “better,” or express stable categories of identity, congruent with their political, racial, ethnic, or sexual identity. In the following chapters my intent is to investigate the negotiation of these social political and economic boundaries among New York immigrant musicians.

Chapter Two examines the influence of immigrants on the New York jazz scene from its early days in the 1920s to the 1940s. Over the past twenty years, a growing body of literature has documented the importance of immigrants, particularly of West Indian and Caribbean origin, to Harlem’s black culture in the 1920s. By contrast, such internationalism has received less attention in studies of jazz in the 1920s. In this chapter I argue that this history of denial and the theoretical construction of immigration as “white” blurred the specificity of the black immigrant musicians’ contributions to jazz and American culture more broadly, and the particular conditions black immigrants had to face upon their arrival to the U.S., incorporating into the American racial system and becoming black in America.

The third chapter examines the sometimes overlapping, but often divergent, political goals of African immigrants and African American jazz musicians in the African

jazz movement in New York in the 1960s. Jazz scholars have focused on the incorporation of sounds, rhythms or instruments from Africa in jazz in the 1950s and 1960s, as well as the political activism of African American jazz musicians in African liberation struggles, particularly the antiapartheid movement. More recently, several scholars have reframed such collaborations as expressions of pan-African ideologies and Black nationalism (Stanyek 2004; Kelley 2012) and pointed out the tensions that arise from unequal relationships between African Americans, Afro-Caribbean and African musicians (Moreno 2004; Feld 2012). In this chapter I argue that some of the key African immigrant musicians in New York in the 1960s saw pan-Africanist projects as an opportunity to educate Americans about the cultures of Africa, whereas African Americans musicians saw performances of black unity as their primary political motivation (a heterogeneous rather homogenous performance of unity, it is important to note). Through archival materials, audio and video recordings from the period and my own conversations with Nigerian drummer Solomon Ilori, who was centrally involved in such projects, I analyze the ways language, voice and rhythm express different political goals for African and African American musicians in the New York African jazz scene of the 1960s.

The fourth chapter examines performances of nationality among contemporary immigrant jazz musicians in New York City. In recent years, a growing number of jazz scholars have documented the rich history of jazz scenes around the globe (Atkins 2003; Bohlman and Plastino 2016). Within the U.S., scholars have emphasized the close relationship between jazz and American nationalism, attempting to map out the ways black, white, Asian and Latino musicians perform racial and ethnic identity through jazz (Baraka 1963; Sandke 2010; Monson 1995a; Wong 2004; Washburne 2002). Considering this literature, I argue that performances of nationality and ethnicity among immigrant jazz musicians are highly context-specific, reflecting fluctuating demands to suppress and express ethnicity and national belonging among immigrants within American multicultural politics and institutions. Through analysis of jazz performances in various contexts, such as nationally-themed jazz festivals, embassies, clubs, and museum concert series, I show that immigrant musicians use their diverse musical skill sets to negotiate their identity in relation to an art world oriented towards multiculturalism and identity politics (Becker 1984).

The fifth chapter examines the ways immigrant musicians use jazz improvisation to create musical spaces in two New York City neighborhoods: Manhattan's Greenwich Village and Jackson Heights, Queens. Ethnomusicologists have argued that immigrant communities use particular musical practices to delineate immigrant social spaces within a multicultural city like New York (Baily 2006; Shelemay 2012; Stokes 1997). Studies in cultural geography have identified the ways jazz scenes and styles are associated with particular urban spaces, such as Harlem in 1930s, 52nd street in the 1950s, and the Lower

East Side in the 1980s (Stump 1998; Becker 2004; Jackson 2012). In contrast, I show that immigrants musicians use musical, discursive and visual strategies to transform physical spaces into immigrant jazz spaces that shift and blur racial, ethnic, national and musical boundaries.

The sixth chapter examines the incorporation of immigrant musicians in a jazz jam session in Brooklyn, New York. Migration scholars define incorporation as a dialectical process in which hosts and immigrants negotiate established social boundaries between "us" and "not us" (Zolberg and Long 1999:8). The social dynamics of jam sessions have been studied by scholars since the 1950s, but the interactions of immigrants and American-born musicians in jazz jam sessions have not been studied.¹² Drawing on my own participation as a bass player in a weekly jam session in Bedford-Stuyvesant Brooklyn, I analyze the influence of race, gender, ethnicity, education and professional affiliation as forming social boundaries between immigrants and hosts. I argue that the presentation of musical competence in the jam session context provides immigrant musicians with the means to cross, blur and shift social boundaries between themselves and their American-born peers and to establish themselves in the New York jazz scene.

The afterword focuses on the relationship between musical boundaries of genres and tradition and the social boundaries of gender. Following my own recent work with cross-dressing jazz singer and guitarist Claudi, and interviews with Cuban pianist Ariacne Trujillo and Israeli clarinetist Anat Cohen, I aim to analyze the way in which my own perspective on this scene as a straight, white, Israeli male bass player has shaped and limited my understanding of the New York immigrant jazz scene.

¹² See Cameron 1954; Becker 1973; Merriam and Mack 1959; Ellison 1964; DeVaux 1999; Mcgee 2011; Nelson 2011; Walker 2010.

Chapter 2: “Cornet Chop Suey,” “Irish Black Bottom,” and Jazz Immigrants in the Harlem Renaissance.

[Bauza]: “Hi” Clark was a trombone player. And he created this band around some Latin musicians, he had about four or five Latin musicians [...] There was another trumpet player, they used to call him Chico, a Puerto Rican trumpet player. And they had a guy by the name of Napoleon, played tenor, from Santo Domingo. He had a West Indian guitar player named Lufu. Practically, everybody was West Indian or Latin or something like that.

[John Roberts]: But was he playing American music?

[Bauza]: Yeah, strictly American music. (Roberts 1998; Bauza 1978)

This chapter examines the influence of immigrants on the New York jazz scene from its early days in the 1920s to the 1940s. In recent years, the importance of immigrants, particularly of West Indian and Caribbean origin to Harlem’s black culture in the 1920s has been gaining increasing attention by cultural theorists and historians (Gilroy 1993; Putnam 2013). In studies of 1920s jazz, such internationalism has received less attention. In his “History of Jazz,” Ted Gioia describes jazz as part of a “second Harlem,” not the Harlem of the cosmopolitan intellectual elite, but what he called the “submerged Harlem of rent parties, speakeasies and slumming” (Gioia 2011:90). Donald Hill, writing about New York Calypso scene in the 1930s, claims the West Indian Community remained “culturally distinct” from their African American neighbors, and does not mention the involvement of Caribbean musicians in jazz. John Storm Roberts, asserts that the development of El Barrio (East Harlem) into a major Latin district and a separate musical market in the late 1920s satisfied “a demand for authenticity, a place for musicians to play undiluted Latin styles, and, perhaps most important, a doorway for innovations from Cuba and other Latin countries” (Roberts 1998:58). In Roberts’s Prohibition Era metaphor, Latin styles in Harlem were “diluted” by musics found around them -- as if a pure version of Latin music ever existed -- but the idea that jazz, Anglo- and Franco- Caribbean, and Latin musical styles were first mixed and only later “purified” has more to do with late twentieth-century identity politics, and less with 1920s musical genealogy and aesthetics.

As in the three examples above, studies of immigrant musics in the U.S. tend to follow a multicultural perspective that emphasizes ethnic and cultural boundaries between groups and the unique musical practices that immigrants brought with them from their homeland. Jazz studies informed by critical race theory focus on intercultural collaboration as representations of Pan-African ideologies and use notions of hybridity, fusion, and unity when considering interracial collaborations between blacks, Latino/a

and Asian American musicians.¹³ The theoretical construction of race and ethnicity in the U.S. thus has created a cleavage between “immigrant” and “jazz.”

This cleavage is exacerbated by two factors. The first consists of early 1920s social theories that align African Americans with “other immigrant groups” in what is sometimes referred to as the “immigrant analogy.” In this analogy, centuries of slavery were neutralized, as if African Americans were but another “foreign” group yet to assimilate to mainstream society. The second approach, developed by African American scholars, is that the African Americans and immigrants (who were then predominantly white) were in an inevitable state of conflict over jobs and resources, a conflict that due to American racism would give the upper hand to lower-class white immigrants over African Americans. Black immigrants were rarely included in this equation.

With the slow decolonization (and re-colonization) of the Caribbean, Latin America and finally Africa, black immigrants of different backgrounds and cultures arrived in the U.S (Berlin 2010). The treatment of all blacks as belonging to a single racial and cultural group, and the positioning of native-born African Americans as strangers in their own land through continued disenfranchisement and racism led to a narrative in which the role of black immigrants in the development of African American music was underrepresented. Without an adequate analysis of black immigrant musicians’ lives and interaction with native-born African Americans, many scholars risk underrepresenting both the diversity of the black American experience, and the contributions of black immigrants to African American culture. The goal of this chapter is to show how the construction of early 20th century immigration as “white” by social theorists and the articulation of theories of cultural assimilation during this period effectively blurred the specific involvement of black immigrant musicians to jazz and American musical culture more broadly.

I will begin by addressing the ways in which mass immigration from Europe in the 1900s gave rise to theories of ethnicity as culture, largely based on the experiences of European immigrants. This includes Italian and Jewish immigrants, which were not considered strictly white in early 20th century race theories (Omi and Winant 2014:13). African Americans scholars attempting to assess the consequences of this mass immigration saw it as a threat to African Americans' access to jobs and resources. I will then discuss the ways the immigration act of 1924 realigned racial relations in the U.S. First, by turning all black Americans (both native and foreign-born) into a single racial group, second, by turning certain nationalities (such as Chinese and Mexican) into races and third, by separating race from nationality, ethnicity and culture among white

¹³ See Stanyek 2004; Washburne 2012; Wong 2004; Fellezs 2007; Roberts 2016.

immigrants. I conclude the chapter with the biographies of six musicians who were instrumental to the success of some of the greatest bands in the early history of jazz, but were omitted from historical accounts of this period in jazz history for reasons that I discuss below.

In this chapter I rely on critiques of the “great man” histories of jazz, while borrowing stylistically from those same histories.¹⁴ To reflect this, I have chosen a style of writing that may seem archaic at first, but that reflects the very histories that excluded immigrant jazz musicians. The works of Gunther Schuler, Andre Hodeir and others were set to build a jazz pantheon modeled after the canon of Western classical music composers. As Ralph Ellison poetically explained, a jazz musician rarely plays in solitude; he or she engage in collective musical dialogue with peers, mentors and community. One’s individuality comes out within and against the group. By telling stories of the sidemen and bandleaders who were Louis Armstrong’s, Jelly Roll Morton’s and Dizzy Gillespie’s musical collaborators and interlocutors I hope to point to a dialogic dimension of jazz history that was omitted in the encyclopedic construction of canonical jazz histories. This dialogue also voices the crucial role immigrant musicians in the early New York jazz scene.

The Immigration Act of 1924, Migration Theory in the 1920s

In 1920, at the height of the jazz age, more than two and a half million foreign-born people lived in New York City, roughly half of the city’s population. More than eighty percent arrived from Europe. Of the city’s black population of 200,000, roughly a third was foreign-born, many of Caribbean origin (Putnam 2013:31). Immigrants from Asia, including Chinese, Japanese, Indian and Pacific Islanders amounted to some 7,000 people and new arrivals were largely barred from entering due to the 1882 Chinese and the 1924 Asian Exclusion Act (Campbell and Jung 2006). Restricted by racist renting practices, immigrants of color were confined to specific neighborhoods in New York City. Harlem had a particularly high concentration of African Americans, West Indians and Latin Americans. Jews, Italians, Latinos and a small Chinese community lived primarily in the lower east side and Brooklyn.

On May 26, 1924, the United States Congress approved new legislation designed to stop mass immigration from Europe. The Johnson-Reed Act restricted immigration to the United States to 150,000 persons a year based on a national origin quota system. The quotas were allotted to countries in the same proportion that American citizens traced their origins back to those countries, through their own immigration or the immigration of

¹⁴ C.f Monson 1996; Pond 2003; Kelley 2012.

their forebears. Importantly, For example, the quota from Great Britain, the country allowed the most immigrants, was 65,721. The allotted number for 37 other countries including China, India, Ethiopia, and Morocco was fixed at 100 people per year, designed primarily to accommodate white colonial settlers born in these countries. The complex formulas devised by the Senate Immigration Committee were constructed to achieve the *desired* demographics and racial make-up of the U.S. as conceived by members of the committee. Mae Ngai (Ngai 2004; Ngai 1999) convincingly argued that the 1924 Immigration Act effectively reconstructed American society in terms of race.

The Immigration Act of 1924 comprised a constellation of reconstructed racial categories, in which race and nationality -- concepts that had been loosely conflated since the nineteenth century -- disaggregated and realigned in new and uneven ways. At one level, the new immigration law differentiated Europeans according to nationality and ranked them in a hierarchy of desirability. At another level, the law constructed a white American race, in which persons of European descent shared a common whiteness that made them distinct from those deemed to be not white. Euro-Americans acquired both ethnicities -- that is, nationality-based identities that were presumed to be transformable [ethnicities] -- *and* a racial identity based on whiteness that was presumed to be unchangeable [...] Non-European immigrants -- among them Japanese, Chinese, Mexicans, and Filipinos -- acquired ethnic and racial identities that were one and the same. The racialization of the latter groups' national origins rendered them unalterably foreign and unassimilable to the nation. The Immigration Act of 1924 thus established legal foundations for social processes that would unfold over the next several decades, processes that historians have called, for European immigrants, "becoming American" (or, more precisely, white Americans), while casting Mexicans as illegal aliens and foredooming Asians to permanent foreignness. [Ngai 1999:69–70]

Importantly, the law created social and demographic inequalities that continue to segregate American society today. Not only did it mark European immigrants as “white” upon arrival, it maintained certain aspects of ethno/cultural identity by recognizing their national origin (Russian, German, Irish, Italian etc.) It also turned the nationalities of Chinese and Mexican Americans into racial categories. Finally, it subsumed all black people regardless of nationality or origin in a single ethno-cultural and racial group. Census categories for the 1920 population questionnaire were "W" for white, "B" for black, "Mu" for mulatto, "Ch" for Chinese, "Jp" for Japanese, "In" for American Indian, or "Ot" for other races. By 1930, three new racial categories were added to produce the following options: "W" for white, "Neg" for black, "Mex" for Mexican, "In" for American Indian, "Ch" for Chinese, "Jp" for Japanese, "Fil" for Filipino, "Hin" for Hindu, and "Kor" for Korean (Campbell and Jung 2006).

At the time, two theoretical approaches developed to explain immigrant incorporation into American society. Both were based largely on the experiences of European immigrants. Robert E. Park saw immigrants arriving from Europe as members of “ethnic” and “cultural” collectives en route to assimilation into the American “mainstream” society: White, Anglophone, and Protestant. While Jews and Catholic southern Europeans were not considered strictly white, Park reasoned that through four stages – contact, conflict, accommodation and assimilation – immigrants would eventually adopt WASP cultural values and find their place within the American social hierarchy (Park 1950). Hierarchy and stratification, needless to say, were considered self-evident. Park largely ignored immigrants of African ancestry but rather treated all black people as a single racial group yet to assimilate into American society. In his “race relations cycle,” Park argued that after an initial process of competition and accommodation (i.e., hierarchal stratification), black Americans would assimilate into dominant (white) society. In other words, they would come to accept white dominance in the social hierarchy.

Horace Kallen, himself an immigrant from Poland, rejected Park’s notion of assimilation and advocated what he called cultural pluralism -- eventual democratic acceptance of different immigrant-based cultures in American society (Kallen 1970). Published in 1924, Kallen’s *Culture and Democracy in America* paved the way for what we now celebrate as social-cultural diversity. His metaphor for cultural pluralism in American society was, unfortunately, the symphony orchestra, hardly a symbol of cultural diversity, and his theory largely avoided issues of racial difference or the immigration and incorporation of non-Europeans.

African American scholars further emphasized the dichotomy between immigration and the black population in America. In their 1907 book “The Negro in the South” W.E.B. Du Bois and Booker T. Washington argued that white Americans used immigrants to further exploit African Americans, and to deny them of political power:

The voice that calls foreign immigrants southward today is not single but double. First, the exploiter of common labor wishes to exploit this new labor just as formerly he exploited Negro labor... the second object of the immigration philosopher is to make sure that, when the rights of the laborer come to be recognized in the South, that laborer will be white, and just so far as possible the black laborer will still be forced down below the white laborer until he becomes thoroughly demoralized or extinct... one element remains to be considered, and this is political power. If the black workman is to remain disfranchised while the white native and immigrant not only has the economic defense of the ballot, but the power to use it so as to hem in the Negro competitor, cow and humiliate him and force him to a lower plane, then the Negro will suffer from immigration.

The one thing that is giving the workman a chance is intelligence and political power, and that it is utterly impossible for a moment to suppose that the Negro in the South is going to hold his own in the new competition with immigrants if, on the one hand, the immigrant has access to the best schools of the community and has equal political power with other men to defend his rights and to assert his wishes, while, on the other hand, his black competitor is not only weighed down by past degradation, but has few or no schools and is disfranchised.

(Washington and Du Bois 1907:116–120)

In a 1929 article in *The Crisis*, titled “Immigration Quota,” Du Bois admitted that African Americans had benefited from anti-immigration legislation and argued that white and black immigration had negative effects on African Americans.

Colored America has been silent on the immigration quota controversy for two reasons: First, the stopping of the importing of cheap white labor on any terms has been the economic salvation of American black labor. As usual, we gain only by the hurt of our fellow white serfs, but it is not our fault and whenever these same laborers get a chance they swat us worse than the capitalists. Secondly, we are loath to invite more black folk to a land of color discrimination lest they suffer and lest they make us suffer more as certain foreign dark folk have by frustrating our efforts and misunderstanding our ideals. (Du Bois 1929)

According Du Bois, the relationship between immigrants and African Americans can only be conceived as a competition. Implicit in the essay was a critique of one black immigrant in particular – Jamaican-born Marcus Garvey and his “Back to Africa” movement. In a speech he gave in 1921, Garvey himself made a similar claim regarding immigrants, but emphasized immigration as ultimately white, distancing black immigrants from the disastrous consequences of immigration to African Americans.

If you think that the white man is going to share a part of what he has and give it to you, you make a big mistake. You have enjoyed a portion of what the white man has because the white man was unable to keep it away from you, because he wanted more, and in order to get that more he had to get help to get it, but the time will come when he will have all the help he wants, and that is why this sudden immigration has started to the United States of America at the rate of 15,000 a day — alien white men coming back to the United States of America at the rate of 15,000 a day. Do you know what this means? It means this: That in the next three or four years one-third of the Negro population of the United States of America will be in a similar condition or position as we were in 1913 before the

war. We will be out of jobs, we will be starving we will be living next door to starving and starvation. (Garvey 1995:455)

Black and white scholars, native and foreign-born alike, considered African Americans to be in direct and inevitable conflict with immigrants. While all of them considered immigration to be a predominantly white phenomenon (as numbers concurred), Du Bois was a loud and authoritative voice from the black community who considered black immigrants specifically, and negatively.

Immigration, Racial Segregation and the Music Business

Despite different religions, languages, histories and cultural affinities of people of color, “ethnic” diversity was recognized only within white society. While European immigrants had both “race *and* nationality/ethnicity/culture,” which were separate and malleable, non-Europeans’ race and nationality/culture were seen as one and the same -- culture was in the body, in kinship, and in phenotype.

Dance orchestras in the 1920s were governed by similar racial categories. As long as they remained within their assigned racial category, immigrant musicians could hire and be hired both within and outside of their ethnic and cultural community. With the annexation of Puerto Rico in 1917, many Puerto Rican musicians became not only American citizens, but also “legally” black under the U.S. racial system. They were legally allowed to perform as part of African American orchestras in Harlem clubs and ballrooms (Glasser 1995:52). Orchestras playing Latin American music were also segregated -- Xavier Cugat’s orchestra consisted of white European and white Latin American musicians, whereas the orchestra of Panamanian violinist and bassist Vernon Andrade (born 1902-1966), who played at the famed Renaissance Casino and Alhambra Ballroom in Harlem, and was composed of equal parts West Indian and African American musicians (Putnam 2013:162). Filipino, Japanese and Chinese jazz musicians frequently played together in clubs in Los Angeles, Hawaii, Manila, Shanghai and on cruise ships crossing the pacific ocean (Taylor Atkins 2001; Yoshida 1997).

While the contributions of some immigrant musicians (particularly of Cuban and Puerto Rican origin) were marked by cultural and linguistic difference, many musicians did not mark their music as culturally “Other” and demonstrated remarkable understanding of and competence in African American musical idioms. These musicians used American-sounding band names, such as “Missourians” and “Alabamians,” chose titles such as “Louisiana Swing” and “Saratoga Shout” for their compositions, and adopted American sounding names and nicknames such as “Rod” for Rodriguez, “Ram” for Ramirez, and “Lou” for Luis. This allowed immigrants to cross social boundaries

between themselves and their native-born collaborators, participate in some of the landmark recordings of the era, write arrangements that served as platforms to memorable solos, and lead bands in the legendary theaters and ballrooms of Harlem. Their ability to transverse African-American, Caribbean and Latin musical worlds allowed them to create music that was deeply informed by their experience as immigrants, but also rendered them invisible in the group photo of jazz history. Through the stories of these musicians I hope to unpack the ways in which the development of jazz in America alongside the development of modern sociological theories of race and ethnicity made it particularly difficult to recognize the contributions of immigrant musicians to jazz.

“Cornet Chop Suey”: Nicolas Rodriguez and Alberto Socarras

Nicolas Rodriguez was born in Bohio, Panama on September 10th 1906. A pianist, arranger and composer, Rodriguez appears on several recordings from the 1930s as “Rod” Rodriguez and “Goodwin Rodriques.” On several sources Rodriguez is mistakenly described as Cuban and his birthplace as Havana (Forbes 2015). On others, he is listed as Puerto Rican (Roberts 1998:92).

Rodriguez began playing music at a young age, first playing flute and later picking up the clarinet, saxophone, trombone, and even the banjo as part of his high-school orchestra. He settled on the piano shortly after he began to play with a jazz band visiting Bohio. Rodriguez remembers the life-changing impact of hearing Louis Armstrong’s *Cornet Chop Suey* in his hometown of Bohio, Panama, in the mid-1920s.

What really made up my mind on music was an Okeh record by Mr. Louis Armstrong that had “Cornet Chop Suey” on it. I went with a friend to visit someone and he happened to have this record, and when I heard “Cornet Chop Suey” my mind was made up and I knew what I was going to do with my life . . . I was going to be a musician. I didn’t know what instrument, but I was going to be a musician! So, I organized a little band and called it The Broadway Syncopators... I didn’t even know what that meant! I did all the arrangements myself and eventually I decided I was coming over here [to New York]. (Rodriguez and Wright 1988:87)

Rodriguez arrived in New York on August 7, 1928, staying with a relative who lived in the “Spanish” part of Harlem known as El Barrio, between 110th street and 118th street on Lenox Avenue. He began to frequent the Savoy and Roseland Ballroom, and socialized with some of the local musicians.

Every night I’d go to one of these nightclubs. All I was doing was spending money to hear those guys play for me again. It was a dollar a shot at that time in

late '28 for a drink — any drink — and I got to know the different guys, got to know their names — buy 'em a drink, and got to hear their music, but they didn't know that I knew anything about a piano. (1988:88)

Before long, Rodriguez made his took his first step from an avid listener to a working musician.

Then one night I walked in this place and saw this music on top of the piano. “Symphonic Raps” and I looked at it and it looked easy for me to play and I stood there and started to play it. There was a youngster named Harold Green, he played piano and I used to buy him drinks —he came rushing behind me. “It's you” he said, “you can play the piano?” I said, “No, no, I can't play.” “What you doing then?! if I could read like that I'd join the union!” (1988:89)

By December 1928, four months after his arrival, Rodriguez joined the Musicians Union owing to his remarkable sight-reading abilities, and was touring with Jelly Roll Morton's Red Hot Peppers. He remembers the role his musical competence played, particularly his reading and improvisation abilities, in his social acceptance into the group.

One night in the club, Jelly Roll comes down and says, “you play very well.” “Oh, thank you.” “I want you to go away with me with my big band, the big band that's upstairs.” That was on December 8th 1928. We travelled in Jelly's own railroad car, and all the guys were gambling and laughing and talking and I was supposed to be asleep. And one of the guys said to Jelly, “Who's that guy over there?” and Jelly said, “His name is Rocker Rocker.” and they all laughed. Well we got to York [PA] and I played what I had to play. I remember some of those things there was Red Nichols's “Five Pennies” and some Duke Ellington things. Now Jelly had three sets of books and, after we'd been going a while, [Russell] Procope said, “Get the S Book.” Now I'll tell you what the ‘S Book’ is, it means the ‘Shit Book’ and it's all the hardest things, the things you're not supposed to be able to play, and the first thing they called was “Chicago Breakdown” and it started with a piano solo so I didn't have no time to look it over but, as God is my judge, I just walked through that and everything else they called. After the first time I was improvising and the guys accepted me. I didn't hold nothing against them, they were just testing me out and when you're in a strange country and trying to make friends and so on, you have to accept things the way they are. (1988:91)



Figure 2.1 Nicholas Rodriguez [left at the piano] with the Jelly Roll Morton's Red Hot Peppers RCA/Victor Studios, Trinity Baptist Church, 114 North 5th Street, Camden, New Jersey, July 1929.

Traveling with Morton, Rodriguez recalled a particularly vivid lesson in the American racial system.

This particular day we were supposed to be playing for the black people at a town called Hagerstown in Maryland. We got to the hotel this guy comes down and says, "If you intend to play for the blacks tonight, you have to play for us first." Jelly asked, "How can I play for both of you the same night?" "You play this hotel from seven to eight." Jelly looked at him hard and say, "For how much?" "Listen" the guy threatened, "you better play if you want to play that dance you talking about." Jelly said, "I said for how much?" Jelly carried a 45 and a 38 pistol . . . he always had two of them, and I had my little Spanish automatic. Now by this time I have my hand on my gun and I would have fired it, and Jelly's hand is in his pocket. The man said to him, "Don't you realize you're six miles below the Mason-Dixon line?" "Well, my home is in New Orleans and I guess that's more than six miles below the Mason-Dixon line." I just stood there with my hand on my gun. I didn't know then what this 'Mason-Dixon' line was and I'd never been scared of anything in my life. I began to realize what was going on and I was prepared to stand my ground. I'd seen copies of a magazine called *The Crisis* with pictures of the Klu [sic] Klux Klan, but I hadn't realized quite what they were and thought they were something like the Carnival we had back home, so this was

quite a new experience for me, but I've seen a lot more since, and realized that it was the norm. (1988:91)

After two years with Morton, Rodriguez took the piano seat in the Benny Carter Orchestra, replacing Teddy Wilson. There he met Cuban reed player Alberto Socarras:

Alberto Socarras and I were playing with Benny at the Savoy, and we lived down in 'Spanish Town' and walking home together one day we were saying that if we could get a band that could play Latin music *and* good American music we'd have it made, because we'd have no competition. And we worked on that, and I was writing these good American arrangements. (ibid)

Alberto Socarras was born in Manzanillo, Cuba in 1908. He arrived in New York in the summer of 1927, and quickly established himself as a sought-after clarinetist, saxophonist and flutist. He recorded with several of Clarence Williams' groups from 1927 to 1930, and is credited with recording the first jazz flute solo on "Shooting The Pistol" (Paramount 12517-B Broadway 5023). He played in the Broadway production of *Blackbirds* between 1930 and 1933 and in the Sam Wooding Orchestra.



Figure 2.2 Alberto Socarras [left] with the Clarence Williams Orchestra 1928.

When Benny Carter left for Europe in 1935, Socarras and Rodriguez established their orchestra, playing both "Latin" and "American" musics. Socarras was leading the group. By 1937 they were in residence at the Cotton Club, performing opposite Ellington, Louis Armstrong and Cab Callaway. In 1938, Socarras hired Dizzy Gillespie to play in the band. This was a transformative moment for Gillespie. In his memoir he recalled:

[Socarras] organized a small group [that] went to the Savoy Ballroom. He was [the] house band and he hired me around 1938. I played Maracas and Trumpet with him, and that's how I learn about Clave "rhythm." The experience in Afro-Cuban music I got playing with Socarras was very, very useful for me later on. (Gillespie 2009:86)

Hiring both African American and Latin American musicians, Socarras remembered Dizzy's seamless transitions between American and Latin musics in his performances at the Savoy ballroom.

I want my band to play everything; Spanish music, Brazilian music, Argentine music, Cuban music and American music. [...] to him it was as easy as American music was to me. (Socarras, quoted in Gillespie 2009:87)

In 1937, Rodriguez left Socarras to join the Don Redman orchestra, with whom he stayed until 1941. Among fellow Latin musicians he was remembered as a particularly good jazzman. Mario Bauza recalled, "Rodriguez was more jazz-oriented than anybody else. He played more in the vein of Art Tatum. He was more progressive" (Bauza 1978). In 1961, he received an opportunity to work with the man who had inspired him to become a musician and immigrate to the U.S. some forty years earlier.

[In the 1940s] I worked with some of the other big bands, but when Latin music became popular I spent twenty-four years working at that. Until in 1961, I went out with Louis, and that was the biggest thrill of my career. Here was I, in The Louis Armstrong All-Stars, working with the man who was my idol and who was the cause of me becoming a musician — I told Satch that one night over dinner, that after hearing "Cornet Chop Suey" I had to be a musician. (Rodriguez and Wright 1988:93)

Rodriguez's inspiration to come to the U.S., his encounter with the brutality of American white supremacist racism and his ability cross back and forth between Latin and African American musical contexts represent experiences that are widely shared among immigrant jazz musicians: first, jazz music as a catalyst for migration; second, American racialization as a deeply troubling experience, and third, the need to cross musical and social boundaries in order to make ends meet. In comparison, Rodriguez's friend and fellow countryman, Luis Russell was able to cross not only from Latin music, to New Orleans Jazz, but also spearheaded the new, orchestrated Big Band style of the 1930s.

Playing "Panama": Luis Russell and Louis Armstrong

In 1919, Russell (1902-1963) a young musician from Careening Cay, Panama, became the lucky winner of a lottery, which earned him a fantastical sum of \$3000. In his youth, he had studied guitar, violin, organ and piano and upon winning, he decided to use

the money to relocate with his mother and sister to New Orleans and try his luck as a musician there. Shortly after, he started working and in 1923 was with Albert Nichols' band. By 1925 he was in Chicago, working, recording and touring with King Oliver's Savannah Syncopators, performing with the best New Orleans musicians in Chicago. In 1926, he recorded several sides for Vocalion (1010), under the name "Russell's Hot Six" and for Okeh (8424, 8454) as "Luis Russell and His Heebie Jeebie Stompers" with Barney Bigard on tenor saxophone and Kid Ory on trombone. A prolific arranger and composer, he moved to New York in 1929. He recorded for Okeh as three different groups in one year: "Lou and His Gingersnaps," "Luis Russell and his Burning Eight" and "The Jungle Town Stompers." He established the "Luis Russell Orchestra," with a roster which including Red Allen on trumpet, J.C. Higginbotham on trombone and his former boss, Albert Nichols on clarinet. The rhythm section consisted of bassist Pops Foster, drummer Paul Barbarin and Russell himself at the piano and writing all the arrangements (as he did for King Oliver's band). It also featured the hottest new trumpet player in town, a young man named Louis Armstrong.

The orchestra first backed Armstrong in 1929, by then already the most celebrated jazz musician in the world. Between 1929 and 1934, the band would record more than thirty albums, the bulk of Louis Armstrong's work with a large orchestra. It was not until 1935 that Armstrong took control over the band, making Russell his musical director while removing Russell's name from the band's name. In September 5th 1930, the year he recorded his first album with Armstrong as the front-man, Russell and his band recorded three titles for Okeh records (8849): "Muggin' Lightly," "High Tension" and old tune named "Panama."

"Panama" was written in 1911 by ragtime composer William H. Tyers, and was a favorite among New Orleans musicians. Russell's arrangement took the song's ragtime roots and popular New Orleans arrangement (attributed to Manuel Manetta), charging it with a swinging drive unmatched by most jazz bands at the time. The use of a contrasting woodwind section (instead of collective improvisation) to support Red Allen's remarkable trumpet solo, as well as rhythmic "shouts" between the two groups placed Russell alongside Fletcher Henderson and Duke Ellington as one of the most innovative arrangers of the time. His carefully timed breaks, exposing the propulsive rhythmic engine of Pops Foster and Paul Barbarin behind the band, anticipated the strong four-beat groove that Count Basie and his "All American Rhythm Section" would develop in Kansas City a few years later. Perhaps most admirable in his work was the masterful and seamless transition from the small combo arrangements of the "hot jazz" New Orleans style to a full woodwind and brass section orchestra popular during the early 1930s -- a mastery that is evident both in his arrangements and his career -- as few bandleaders managed to maintain a viable career after the great depression of 1929. For Russell it was the beginning of a thirteen-year collaboration with Armstrong. Armstrong made his last

recordings with the orchestra in 1942 and returned the name and control to Russell. Between 1943 and 1948 Russell recorded seventeen additional albums and played regularly at the Savoy ballroom and Apollo Theater.

Russell's decision to immigrate to the U.S. was motivated by both musical and financial considerations. His early connections with top New Orleans musicians in Storyville, New Orleans' preeminent jazz neighborhood, positioned him as a key figure in early jazz and an astute businessman with an uncommon knack for finding and collaborating with the best musicians around. His ability to write for, manage and run several simultaneous bands of different sizes and styles to fit a variety of performance contexts and dances halls also testifies to his business acumen. Finally, by taking the position of musical director while Armstrong fronted the band, Russell facilitated some of the formative jazz recordings of the 1930s and 1940s, but effectively denied himself any recognition for those landmark recordings.

Swinging with the Fat Man: Bob Ysaguirre and Rupert Cole

Bob Ysaguirre was born in Belize City, Belize in 1897. He began playing tuba fairly late, at the age of 18, performing in a military band during the First World War. In 1922 he moved to New Orleans, where he worked with a fellow veteran of the French 816th Regiment Band, the trumpeter Amos White. The year after, the two moved to New York. There, Ysaguirre made a number of recordings as a tuba player with Armand Piron's orchestra, and began to make a name for himself as solid string bass and tuba player. Elmer Snowden, one of the leading banjo players in New York, recruited him to his band in 1925 (Rye 2003a). In 1927, Ysaguirre recorded with Snowden's band under the leadership of the trombonist Te Roy Williams, releasing two sides for Harmony records. Later he filled the bass seat in Fletcher Henderson's orchestra briefly (from September 1929 until about March 1930) replacing Henderson's regular bass man, Puerto Rican Rafael "Ralph" Escudero (Rye 2003a). In 1931 he began his long association with Don Redman, with whom he made more than eighty records on tuba and double bass over a period of nine years (until 1940). During his tenure in Redman's band, Ysaguirre shared the bandstand with Rupert Cole, who like him, left home at a young age to become a jazz musician in America.

Cole was born in Trinidad, in August 8th 1909 (Rye 2003b). He received his musical education in Barbados, where he first studied clarinet. In 1924 he moved to New York and after teaching himself to play alto saxophone, began to perform professionally. In 1929 he was hired by trombonist Bill Brown, and made his first record for Brunswick records with "Bill Brown and his Brownies," taking a solo on baritone saxophone on "What Kind of Rhythm is That?" (Brunswick 7142). In 1930-1931 he toured with the Horace Henderson Orchestra, led by Fletcher Henderson's brother, where he performed with Ysaguirre for the first time. The two joined Don Redman's orchestra together after

that tour. Cole and Ysaguirre recorded extensively with Redman, and are featured in the short film by Warner Brothers, *Don Redman and his Orchestra* (1934).



Figure 2.3 Bob Ysaguirre (second on the right) and Rupert Cole (fifth on the right) at the Don Redman Orchestra 1934.

Cole left Redman's band to join the Louis Armstrong orchestra, directed by Luis Russell, where he would stay from 1938 to 1944. In 1945 he briefly re-joined Redman before moving again, this time to a band led by Cootie Williams, with whom he stayed till 1950.

Ysaguirre stayed with Redman until 1940 and continued to play in and around New York until the late 1960s, but like Russell and many other veteran musicians, worked mainly outside music. He gave up full-time performing in 1960s but continued to play as a freelance musician. In 1964 he worked regularly with George Wettling's trio in New York.

Ysaguirre and Cole's life-long career in the jazz stemmed from the particular colonial histories of their home countries as well as their ability to adapt to the musical circumstances they encountered in the U.S. and the demands of the American music

industry. Both Trinidad and Belize were part of the Anglophone Caribbean context which provided access, however limited, to musical education and literacy (Putnam 2013). Both were versatile musicians, mastering new instruments to broaden their marketability and appeal to bandleaders throughout their careers. Both began their careers as exponents of the New Orleans style, but as times and tastes changed in the late 1930s both were able to quickly find their place within the new, highly orchestrated, big band style. They were able to do so not by marking themselves as culturally distinct but by bringing their unique backgrounds to bear on the development of jazz as an African American music.

The Missourian: Henry Clark and his Orchestra

Henry [Hi, Hy] Clark Sr. was born in British Guiana (Guyana), in the early 1900s. According to his granddaughter, bassist Kim A. Clarke, he came to America as a teenager and lived with his grandmother in Harlem. He was instrumental in establishing the Harlem Black Musicians Union – The New Amsterdam Musical Association. He played with traveling Vaudeville shows throughout the Midwest and arrived in Chicago in the mid-1920s. There he recorded with Richard M. Jones’s Jazz Wizards in 1926 and 1927. He replaced Kid Ory in Louis Armstrong’s Hot Seven in 1926 and recorded three sides with them, including the popular hit “Irish Black Bottom.”

G5		
1926		
Sat 27th November		
Recording for Okeh/Columbia, Chicago		
LOUIS ARMSTRONG and his HOT FIVE		
Louis Armstrong, cor	Lil Armstrong, pno	
Henry Clark, tbn	Johnny St. Cyr, bjo	
Johnny Dodds, ctt		
9980-A	YOU MADE ME LOVE YOU	Okeh 8447
9981-A	IRISH BLACKBOTTOM	Okeh 8447
9982-A	LEAVE MINE ALONE	Unissued

Figure 2.4 Louis Armstrong Hot Five. ¹⁵

He was later hired by Marlow Hardy and his Alabamians. The group relocated to Harlem in 1929, just a few months before the stock market crash. They recorded two sides for Columbia on the day of the crash – “Georgia Pines” and “Song of the Bayou” (Columbia 2034-D).

¹⁵ Source: Okeh matrix 9981. Irish black bottom / Louis Armstrong ; Hot Five. (2016). *In* Discography of American Historical Recordings. Retrieved August 3, 2016, from http://adp.library.ucsb.edu/index.php/matrix/detail/2000202117/9981-Irish_black_bottom.

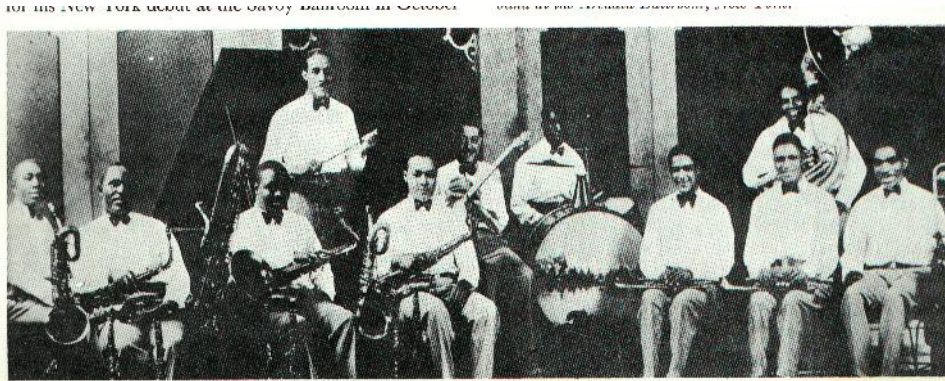


Figure 2.5 The Alabamians At the Savoy Ballroom (1929) Henry Clark on the right.

After the Alabamians had disbanded, he established Hy Clark's Missourians (possibly feeding off the fame of a better-known band named The Missourians that became the Cotton Club Orchestra around that time). The group began to work with singer Adelaide Hall in 1931, and toured with her through the U.S. (Williams 2002:284). In an interview many decades later, Cuban clarinetist and composer Mario Bauza remembered Clark's band in 1931, just before he joined Cab Calloway's band. Bauza did not recall (or may not have known) that Henry Hy/Hi Clark was Guyanese, or why he wanted to base his band around Latin American and Caribbean musicians.

I met Adelaide Hall when she got back here to America, and she worked with us, with Hi Clark and the Missourians. We went to Chicago and different cities to play vaudeville with her [...] Hi Clark was a trombone player. He used to be with the Missourians before. He's from down that way somewhere around there. [...] But he was a man with a good contact, you know what I mean? One of those straight-up men, I guess he had leader connections. And he created this band around some Latin musician so he had about four or five Latin musicians. There was another trumpet player, they used to call him Chico, a Puerto Rican trumpet player. And they had a guy by the name of Napoleon, played tenor, from Santo Domingo. He had a West Indian guitar player named Lufu. Practically everybody was West Indians or Latin or something like that. [Roberts] "But was he playing American music? [Bauza]: Yeah, strictly American music. (Bauza 1978; Roberts 1998:92)

In March 1933, Clark's Missourians were back at the Savoy ballroom playing opposite Fletcher Henderson, Luis Russell and the Savoy Cotton Pickers (Nicholson 2014:30). Contrary to several sources, while Bauza did leave the band in 1933 to join The Cab Calloway Orchestra, the band did not dissolve into Calloway's orchestra but continued to perform. They played Adelaide Hall's "On Lenox Avenue" vaudeville revue in 1933 and were part of "Connie's Hot Chocolates" at the Harlem Opera House in 1935. That year,

Jelly Roll Morton sued Clark for attempting to “steal” a tour gig in Russia. Morton had been negotiating with representatives of the “Russian government” as he called them, for a three-month tour of the Soviet Union. Clark agreed to go along as Morton’s second in command of his troupe, but according to Morton then tried to make his own side deal with the Russian agents (Burrell 1936). Clark’s Missouriians continued to play club gigs in Harlem regularly at least until 1936.

During the 1940s, Clark switched to the upright bass, playing with guitarist Gerald Clark and the Invaders, a group that included Victor Pacheco on fiddle, Albert Morris on piano, and Gregorio Felix on clarinet. He played bass in a concert produced by Alan Lomax titled *Calypso at Midnight*, featuring Lord Invader and Duke of Iron, which was later issued as the Folkways recording *Calypso in New York* (Smithsonian Folkways 40454), on which the band is listed as “Felix and his Internationals” with no individual credits for band members (Hurwitt 2000).

Of the musicians discussed in this chapter, Henry Hi/Hy Clark’s musical career was most marked by struggle and perseverance. He achieved early success as a sideman with Louis Armstrong’s Hot Five and Hot Seven in Chicago, but that success was short lived. Despite his ability to adapt to the changing economic conditions and musical tastes of post-depression era, he took great risks as bandleader, assembling and disbanding several orchestras, often losing his star musicians to more successful or better-paying bands. He wrote arrangements for both musical theater and ballroom dance attempting to cast a wider professional net. Despite a vast network of connections as a leader, he finally decided to give up his leadership position and take a more economically (and perhaps also socially) sustainable position as a Calypso bassist with some of the leading Calypsonians of the 1950s. In this respect, his is a story that captures a sobering aspect of the lives of immigration jazz musicians today and in the past: Even those with the most impressive careers, skills and connections are not always able to muster the resources needed to maintain a viable livelihood as bandleaders.

Conclusion

In this chapter I argued that two factors contributed to the absence of black immigrant musicians from jazz histories. The first were social theories that constructed all blacks in America as belonging to the same ethno-cultural group. This conception suggested that if immigrants changed their names, lost their accents, and became indistinguishable from native-born, they would become fully integrated in African American society. Many Caribbean musicians followed suit, actively performing similarity to their African American colleagues. As a result, musicians who did not perform cultural difference became invisible, despite their participation in crucial moments in the development of the music. The second reason for the disappearance of black immigrants from the early history of jazz was the conception, promoted by African American scholars, of

immigration as white and in direct competition with and harmful to African American goals. As the stories I share here testify, such characterizations may seem like common sense, but they do not reflect the realities of the segregated music industry of the 1920s. Black immigrants and native born-musicians were frequently collaborating, learning from each other and creating new opportunities for employment. Where competitive situations emerged — and as the frequent cutting contests and “battle of bands” remind us, Harlem was indeed a highly competitive place — they were won (and lost) through challenges of musical competence and ingenuity, not pre-existing biases and privileges. In the next chapter, I will discuss the ways in which the construction of race as ethnicity conflicted with the political motivations of African immigrants and African American jazz musicians in the African jazz scene in New York in the 1960s.

Chapter 3: African Drums, American Dreams – Missed Education and Pan Africanism in 1960s jazz

[September 25th 2014] *Hello? Is this Mr. Gazit?* I didn't recognize the voice. *This is Solomon Ilori, my son told me you were looking for me.* A day earlier I had left a rather confused message for a Virginia-based IT specialist named David Ilori. I was hoping he might be related to the man I was looking for, the Nigerian drummer, composer and singer Solomon Ilori. By that time, I had gathered roughly two dozen mentions of Ilori in American newspapers beginning in 1961, but these were cut off in late 1964. The numerous mentions of Ilori in secondary literature referred back to the same period.¹⁶ Writers celebrated Ilori's music; historian Robin Kelley even referred to him as "the great percussionist and singer from Nigeria" (Kelley 2012:38). Yet I could not find a single mention of him after 1964. But there he was, alive and well, and living in Richmond.

Introduction

This chapter examines the sometimes overlapping, but often divergent, political goals of African immigrants and African American jazz musicians in the African jazz movement of the 1960s. Jazz scholars have focused on the incorporation of sounds, rhythms or instruments from Africa in jazz in the 1950s and 1960s, as well as the political activism of African American jazz musicians in African liberation struggles, particularly the antiapartheid movement.¹⁷ More recently, several scholars have reframed such collaborations as expressions of pan-African ideologies and Black nationalism (Stanyek 2004; Kelley 2012) and pointed out the tensions that arise from unequal relationships between African Americans, Afro-Caribbean and African musicians (Moreno 2004; Feld 2012).

While these works are essential to understanding the political climate among African American musicians in the late 1950s and 1960s, they underrepresent the different political strategies and goals of African Americans and African immigrants in their musical collaborations, often presenting a utopian and one-sided vision of these collaborations, commensurate with a pan-African vision of unity. While the political aims of African and African American musicians did overlap to some degree, I argue that African immigrants saw pan-Africanist projects as an opportunity to educate Americans about specific aspects of their own cultures, whereas African Americans tended to see performances of pluralist black unity as the primary political motivation. Through

¹⁶ See Kelley 2012; Monson 2007a; Fosler-Lussier 2015; Veal 2000; Falola and Childs 2005

¹⁷ Weinstein 1992; Monson 2007a; Monson 2001; Monson 1995b; Porter 2012

archival materials, audio and video recordings from the period and my own conversations with Solomon Ilori, I analyze the ways language, voice and rhythm express different political goals for African and African American musicians in African jazz scene of the 1960s.

I will begin by describing the changing political climate that led to pan-African musical collaborations in the 1960s. I will then discuss the role of immigrant African musicians as bearers of cultural knowledge in the New York dance scene beginning in 1930s, and situate Nigerian percussionist Solomon Ilori's work within a series of Pan-Africanist projects in New York in the early 1960s. Lastly, I will analyze several moments in which the educational politics of African immigrants contrasted with Pan-Africanist and Black Nationalist politics of their African American collaborators.

Cultural Nationalism and Calls for Unity

The late 1950s and early 1960s marked a shift in African American politics. As civil disobedience, sit-ins and marches were met with extreme brutality across the south, voices in the civil rights movement began to call for the use of more drastic means to achieve freedom and equality. The pan-African movement that had begun in the early twentieth century was gaining considerable appeal among African American students and intellectuals.

The early history of the modern Pan African movement dates back to 1900, when some of the most notable black intellectuals and political figures from the U.S., West Indies, and Africa met in London to devise a shared strategy for ending the injustices perpetrated against people African descent. The first Pan-African conference included W.E.B. Du Bois, Henry Sylvester-Williams, Dadabhai Naoroji, John Archer and Henry Francis Downing. With the change in global powers in the wake of the first world war, additional meetings were held in Paris (1919), London (1921, 1923) and New York (1927) with the expressed aim of ending colonial rule, stopping racial discrimination, and securing human rights and equality of economic opportunity to all people of African descent. Historians Arthur Alfonso Schomburg and Carter G. Woodson were also crucial in advancing the cause of the movement.

The writings of these intellectuals and those of younger political thinkers such as Franz Fanon (Fanon 1961), George Padmore (Padmore 1971) Colin Legum (Legum 1965), and Malcolm X were earning growing support among the African American left. A crucial ideological aspect of pan-Africanism in America was a call for political and cultural unity among all Africans both continental and in the diaspora. In a letter from

Accra, Ghana, in April 1964, Malcolm X expressed the need for political and cultural unity among people of African descent:

It is time for all African-Americans to become an integral part of the world's Pan-Africanists, and even though we might remain in America physically while fighting for the benefits the Constitution guarantees us, we must “return” to Africa philosophically and culturally and develop a working unity in the framework of Pan-Africanism. (Malcolm X and Breitman 1965:63)

Political historian Ron Walters suggests that in the early 1960s, young African Americans were involved in a “re-examination of old attitudes towards the blackness of their identity that simultaneously raised questions of the African source of their cultural heritage” (Walters 1997:55). Walters is quick to admit that despite the growing interest of African Americans in African history, culture and politics, the interactions and intersections of African and African Americans were not without tension, and at times “fraught with guilt, unanswerable questions, false arrogance, and much sheer misunderstanding” (1997:56). Musicians, needless to say, were not immune to such misunderstandings.

From Jazz to Africa via the Caribbean

African American musicians have been writing “African-themed” jazz compositions since the late 1890s but it was not until the early 1950s that such compositions took on distinct political overtones (Weinstein 1992). It was then that African American jazz musicians began to write compositions that referenced political events in Africa and often conjured Africa through a variety of sonic means. In particular, the use of hand-drums, bells, and chanting became prominent as sounded invocations of Africa. While at first Afro-Caribbean musicians were central to these African-themed projects, African musician became increasingly significant toward the beginning of the 1960s (Monson 2007a:134). Ingrid Monson suggests that in addition to the advocacy work of Paul Robeson, the State Department jazz tours to Africa, and news reports about current events in African politics, African and Afro-Caribbean immigrants in New York were crucial to the development of the so-called African jazz scene of 1960s, personalizing the connection between the civil rights struggle in the U.S. and anticolonial struggles in Africa (Monson 2007b:108).

Between 1950 and 1970, hundreds of jazz performances and recordings involved references to Africa in both name and sound and involved Afro-Caribbean and African American musicians. Artists such as Yusef Lateef, Randy Weston, and Art Blakey became especially noted for their incorporation of African elements in their music. The

growing interest in Africa was sparked in part by jazz musicians' interest in Islam, beginning in the 1940s, primarily through the Ahmadiyya sect and the teachings of the Nation of Islam (Chase 2010). In 1946, an Antiguan trumpet player for the Dizzy Gillespie orchestra named Talib Ahmad Dawud (birth name Alfonso Nelson Rainey, stage name Al Barrymore) encouraged members of the orchestra to convert to Islam. Dawud's ideas spread quickly among jazz musicians and by the early 1950s more than two hundred jazz musicians had converted to Islam (Kelley 2012:95).

Equally important as sources for information about African music and religion were African dance troupes. The first group of African dancers and musicians to arrive voluntarily in the U.S. came in the 1920s to participate in the World Fair exhibitions in Chicago and New York. Composer and choreographer Asadata Dafora from Sierra Leone and drummer Momodu Johnson from Nigeria became highly recognized through their stage productions of African dance on Broadway and in Harlem theaters in the 1930s and 1940s (DeFrantz 2002). Others, such as Haitian drummer Alphonso Cimber and Nigerian drummers Prince Efrom Odok and Moses Mianns, worked primarily as performers and teachers and were virtually unknown outside the New York dance scene.

Moses Mianns was born in the Niger Delta region to Urhobo parents. He arrived in the U.S. in 1934 to perform at the Chicago World's Fair and moved to New York later that year (Lindfors 1999:146). Soon after, he became involved in the city's dance community, performing extensively with Asadata Defora, Pearl Primus and Katherine Dunham (Olatunji and Akiwowo 2005). His primary impact on the jazz world was as a teacher of African drums and rhythms to a younger generation of African American percussionists, among them James Hawthorn known as "Chief" Bey and Thomas "Taiwo" DuVall. In 1947, he performed with Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie in a series of benefit concerts for African students in New York sponsored by the African Academy of Arts and Research (AAAR). Gillespie later stated that it was through these concerts that he and Parker discovered their true identity (Gillespie 2009:290). In 1953, jazz drummer Art Blakey recorded an all-percussion composition titled "Message from Kenya" inspired by the Mau Mau Uprisings and a story Moses Mianns told him. However, in a later performance of the composition documented on the album *Ritual*, Blakey omitted mention of Mianns as an inspiration, claiming that he had heard the story during his visit to Africa in 1946 (Kelley 2012:16). Mianns's teaching may also have inspired additional musical elements Blakey used, bending the skin of the snare drum with his elbow to create a "talking" effect, but these influences are harder to establish.

Prince Efrom Odok was born in 1890 in the Calabar region in Southern Nigeria. He learned to play and make drums under his father's tutelage and arrived in the U.S. in the 1920s. Shortly after, he opened "Africa House," a small center in Harlem where he

taught African music and dance. Africa House became a cornerstone of the African dance community in America, providing both rehearsal space and lodging for young dancers. In the 1930s he established his own group, The Efrom Odok Calabar dancers, and performed in various venues and dance festivals around New York. In the 1950s he taught drumming workshops in public schools in Bedford-Stuyvesant and Harlem. While he was originally opposed to collaboration between jazz and African drumming, claiming that swing was “nothing but an imitation of native African music,” in 1945, he teamed up with trumpeter Frankie Newton and pianist Ray Parker to participate in an African and jazz dance program choreographed by dancer Mura Dehn. In an interview with the Pittsburgh *Courier*, he stated that his main objective was to teach African Americans “the music and dances of their forefathers” (Kelley 2012:14).

A second group of African musicians arrived after World War II, with the growing involvement of the U.S in Africa. Among them were Ghanaian drummer Guy Warren, and Nigerian drummers Babatunde Olatunji and Solomon Ilori. Warren was born in 1923 in Accra, Ghana. He began playing the trap drum set at a young age, studying the recordings of American jazz drummers played in coffee shops around Accra. In the 1930s he joined one of the most celebrated High Life groups in Gold Coast, E.T. Mensah’s Accra Rhythmic Orchestra. In 1943, Warren enlisted in the Office of Strategic Services, a branch of the U.S. Army (and forerunner of the CIA) operating in Accra. After a brief training period in Chicago, he returned to Accra and began working as a journalist while supplying intelligence to the OSS. In 1944, he was discharged from the Army and began working as a disc jockey, broadcasting jazz programs for the Gold Coast Broadcasting Service, and later for the British Broadcasting Company, becoming the first African to do so.

In 1954, after a brief marriage to an American nurse in Liberia, he moved to the U.S. to pursue a career as a musician. He first traveled to Chicago, and began to work with Gene Esposito’s group, where he was the only black musician in an otherwise Italian and Jewish group of musicians. In 1957, Warren recorded his first album, “Africa Speaks, America Answers,” with the Red Saunders Orchestra, directed by Esposito. The ambitious goal of the album was to combine traditional African rhythms and chants with African popular music and jazz. Unfortunately, Warren’s style of West African drumming was not immediately accepted by his peers and the audience. He later noted that audiences expected him to drum in a familiar Afro-Cuban style, and found his African style of drumming strange (Kelley 2012:23). Similarly, Ingrid Monson has pointed out that “although African musicians played an important role in making jazz musicians aware of the richness of African musics, the most famous African projects of the 1950s and early 1960s “were often realized through the participation of Afro-Caribbean musicians” (Monson 2007a:134). While African Americans were certainly aware of the richness of African drumming, it seems that the sounds of Afro-Cuban

drumming had a more immediate appeal. In his 2005 conversation with Steven Feld, Warren explained the tensions he felt about performing his music in the U.S:

I was too African for the jazz people, for the African Americans who really didn't want to bend their Bebop in the direction of my music. They wanted me to be a fake Afro-Cuban, because Dizzy Gillespie was doing his Afro-Cuban thing with his Bebop. How could I be [Cuban percussionists] Chano Pozo or Candido? They weren't African and their music was not African, but what they played was African-sounding enough for the Bebop people. I was too African, because I told the truth about all this fake-African drumming by so-called jazz and folk musicians like Olatunji. [...] the music on [Olatunji's] record was played by African American and Caribbean musicians who were mixing up all sorts of things. That's why I called him a false prophet who let himself and Africa be exploited. (Feld 2012:59)

Born in the village of Ajido-Badagry in south-west Nigeria in 1927, Babatunde Olatunji began his education at the Baptist Academy in Lagos, but received most of his musical education at home. As a youth he drummed with the theatrical troupe of Hubert Ogunde, whose work combined music, dance, and theater (Monson 2007b). He came to the United States in 1950 on a Rotary scholarship to attend Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia. Olatunji's motivations for pursuing African music in America offer a striking indication of the divergent political goals of pan-African collaborations of the 1950s. When he arrived in the U.S., much of Olatunji's energy was devoted to countering stereotypes about Africa in the African American community. Addressing congregations in Atlanta, he countered pervasive myths about African "savagery" and "backwardness." It was this mission that led Olatunji to pick up the drum again and intersperse his frequent lectures with the rhythms and songs of his homeland (Kelley 2012:33). At Morehouse, Olatunji started a musical troupe to promote awareness of African cultures among his fellow students. In 1954, after finishing his B.A., he moved to New York to begin doctoral studies in public administration at New York University and continued to perform music. He was unable to obtain funding to do his research in Nigeria and left the program after four years.

While in New York, Olatunji organized a small percussion and dance group that received growing attention from jazz musicians and choreographers alike. The group was named Drums of Passion and consisted mainly of African American dancers and singers, with three drummers in addition to Olatunji. The drummers were students of Moses Mianns: Chief Bey, Thomas Taiwo DuVall, and Jamaican-born Roger Sanders, known as "Montego Joe" (after his hometown of Montego Bay). In 1958, a successful collaboration with the Radio City Symphony Orchestra titled "African Drum Fantasy" received rave reviews, earning Olatunji and his ensemble appearances on the Today Show, the Ed Sullivan Show, and the popular game show To Tell the Truth.

Following the successful performance were also magazine features, touring invitations and a recording contract from Columbia Records (Olatunji and Akiwowo 2005). Olatunji recorded his debut album, “Drums of Passion” for Columbia in 1959, which proved to be an enormous success. Although it sold at least two hundred thousand copies, Olatunji had signed a contract that denied him royalties. In the 1960s he collaborated with musicians in the highest echelons of jazz, including Randy Weston (*Uhuru Africa*, 1960), Max Roach (*We Insist!* 1960), Herbie Mann (*The Common Ground*, 1961), Kai Winding (*The Incredible Kai Winding Trombones*, 1960), and Cannonball Adderley (*African Waltz*, 1961). He also collaborated but did not record with John Coltrane, Yusef Lateef, Freddie Hubbard and Sonny Rollins. For many of these musicians Olatunji provided a sense of direct connection to African music. This role is particularly notable in his musical collaborations with Max Roach.

In 1960, Olatunji, Roach, Abbey Lincoln and others recorded one of the most powerful musical and political statements of the era – *We Insist! The Freedom Now Suite*. The album was a political protest through and through, from the cover art featuring students at a lunch counter sit-in, to Oscar Brown Jr.’s potent poetry about slavery, abolition and apartheid South Africa. In the fourth part of the suite, titled “All Africa,” Olatunji’s political and spiritual role is played out most clearly. According to Ingrid Monson (Monson 2001) the original plan Oscar Brown Jr. devised for the suite was to write a long work that would “tell the story of the African drum from Africa up to contemporary times.” Several musicians were contemplating similar projects at the time, possibly anticipating the 1963 centennial celebrations of the Emancipation Proclamation (Monson 2001). “All Africa” was originally intended to begin the work, followed by “Driva’ Man,” depicting conditions under slavery, and “Freedom Day,” celebrating the Emancipation Proclamation. Africa in this plan began rather than ended the work. The proposed chronological development of the piece was eventually reversed in solidarity with African nationalism and the urgency of the civil rights struggle. The piece’s political affinity with Black Nationalism was a cause of dispute between Roach and Oscar Brown Jr., who eventually did not participate in the final recordings. Brown told Monson, “Max thought that Malcolm X had a better solution than Martin Luther King. That was the end of our dispute at the time, which was a very serious one. So that whole collaboration was aborted and at that point it was never completed —although it was pretty near completion when we fell out” (Monson 2001:2).

The final result was an impressive realization of Malcolm X's call for African unity. In the opening recitation of “All Africa,” written by Brown, Abbey Lincoln powerfully captures African Americans’ desire to recover a shared cultural history of Africa: “The beat has a rich and magnificent history,” she declaims, “full of adventure, excitement, and mystery.” Olatunji and Lincoln engage in dialogue that expresses this political affinity, but also captures some of the misunderstandings between African

American and African musicians. While Lincoln recites the names of various African nations, Olatunji recites Yoruba Proverbs. In the liner note, Nat Hentoff states that:

All Africa connotes both the growing interest of American Negroes in the present and future of Africa and also their new pride in Africa's past and their own pre-American heritage. In this collaboration, [...] it was Olatunji who set the polyrhythmic directions. It is his voice answering Abby [sic] Lincoln in the introduction. She chants the names of African tribes. In answer, Olatunji relates a saying of each tribe concerning freedom – generally in his own Yoruba dialect. [Hentoff, 1960]

Olatunji's recitation of proverbs in Yoruba, among the most prized and valued aspects of Yoruba cultural heritage, is a potent political moment. Often requiring an interpretation for their tongue-in-cheek word play, and sarcasm, Olatunji's proverbs are rendered into sonic markers of Africa through his voice. For American listeners, their precise meaning shifts between "freedom" as a subject matter, various African languages associated with the groups Lincoln names, and Olatunji's native Yoruba. After the opening statement, Olatunji, Roach, Ray Mantilla and Thomas DuVall play an extended percussion section, a "chronological" development of the beat, from a seven-stroke Agogo bell pattern to the drum kit solo by Roach towards the second half of the piece. *All Africa*, then, captures not only the aspiration for political unity, but some of the misunderstandings that accompanied it. Among them was the placing of contemporary African music as a "historical" moment in the development of African American music.

The Missed Education of Solomon Ilori

Olatunji's countryman, Solomon Ilori, was equally determined to educate audiences about the sophistication of Yoruba culture. Ilori was born to Nigerian parents in the village of Nsawam, Gold Coast (Ghana) in 1934. He moved to Lagos (Nigeria) after his mother passed away in 1945. He studied voice, drums, flute, and music theory in school and completed a high-school diploma in music. He also participated in various choirs and popular music groups in Lagos. In 1958, he arrived in the U.S as a photography student at the New York School of Photography. While in New York he began to work as a drummer and dancer with Pearl Primus and with Haitian choreographer Jean Leon Destine. In 1961, Ilori started his own dance group, the Ilori Dancers, composed of African, Caribbean and African American drummers and dancers including Nigerians James Folmai, Adetundi Joda, Jamaican drummer Roger Sanders (a.k.a. Montego Joe), percussionists Taiwo Duval, James Hawthorne, (a.k.a. "Chief" Bey,) and the dancers Akwasiba and Afida Derby, Shiniqua Bequwa and Charles Moore. Bassist Ahmed Abdul Malik was also a frequent collaborator of Ilori's.

Within a year of their debut performance at the Nigerian Student Union annual dance (celebrating Nigerian Independence), the Ilori Dancers performed before the United Nations General Assembly, participated in a gala concert for the visit of Nigeria's first prime minister Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, and took part in the African Research Foundation's fund-raising concerts. The group received critical acclaim for their music and dance performances. Between 1962 and 1964, they toured extensively to colleges and theaters along the east coast, including Washington D.C., Philadelphia, New Haven and Boston and major New York jazz venues -- Birdland, the Apollo Theater and the Village Gate. In 1964 the group recorded an educational television show for the National Educational Television (NET) titled "Music of Africa."

Shortly after our initial phone conversation, sitting in his small living room in Richmond, Virginia, Ilori recounted to me the events described in one of the newspaper clips I had found at the Schomburg Museum in Harlem. A concert review, "Nigerian Drummer Pulls Crowd To Feet With Joy" of May 8th 1964, opened with the following statement "President Johnson should have been at Howard University's Auditorium last night, he would have gotten novel ideas for his campaign."

We performed at Howard University. It was during the tenure of President Johnson, so I think that was '64. He was about to be reelected, so during the concert I demonstrated how the talking-drum talks. I decided to choose a wording that Americans would understand easily. Since this was the campaign season, I used an example that demonstrates how Nigerian musicians are so powerful and influential in the decision making of who is to be the president. So I said, on the talking drum, I repeated the word first that "ema di bo fo mi ni ko kha Johnson nike mu" Which means "do not cast your vote to anybody else but President Johnson." So the whole audience went into big laughter and great applause. Then I demonstrated it on the drum. And while I speak with it on the drum, I then started to repeat it in the ways they were repeating it [in Nigeria] and my drummers joined me and make it effective how it would sound if it were in Nigeria, so we started doing "ema di bo fo mi ni ko kha Johnson nike mu" [singing repeats]. [Ilori 2014]

When I first saw the article, I was astonished by the political implications of the statement Ilori made. Just three weeks earlier, on April 3rd 1964, Malcolm X gave his famous "Ballot or the Bullet" speech at the Cory Methodist Church in Cleveland, casting doubt on the sincerity of LBJ, a Southern Democrat, to pass the civil rights act. Here was a group of young black men and women, performing music that itself was a political statement, in a historically black college a mile away from Congress.

Later that day, Ilori shared with me essays he wrote while studying music at Columbia University with ethnomusicologist Willard Rhodes. Among those was an essay Ilori wrote in 1964, framing the use of drums, particularly the talking-drum, within Yoruba politics.

In modern political campaigns among the Yoruba people, the professional musicians' role has become very important. Their services have been used by political leaders against their opponents during election periods. In this respect the musicians' role in political campaigns is more than the "band wagon" campaign device in America, because the drummers understand the people and can exploit the emotion of the people. Professional musicians have incited people to riots through the political slogans they play on their instruments, which have direct communicative power with the people. It talks to them and they react consciously or unconsciously to it. (Ilori 1964)

In his performance, Ilori was not simply demonstrating "how the talking drum talks," but creating an educational demonstration of the sophisticated and crucial role of music in Yoruba politics. In a later interview with Joseph Gains, Ilori emphasizes that the talking drum is not an innocuous musical instrument, but a powerful political tool:

The talking drums are instruments that belong to the people. They are in essence the voice of the people. Through the use of the talking drum one can talk (verbalize) to people and arouse their emotions. A case in point was during the independence era (late 1950s, early 1960s) in Nigeria, the British government had to ban [sic] the use of talking drums because during the course of political campaigns, the instruments were used to incite people to action. The talking drum played an important role in gaining independence for Nigeria due to its effectiveness to communicate directly to the people. (Gains 1989:29)

The political potential of drums, however, seemed to depend crucially on the audience's ability to interpret the semantic properties of the words the drum mimicked. Ilori's decision to translate his drum slogan to English in order to clarify its meaning emphasized his desire to educate listeners about Yoruba culture, perhaps at the expense of a general performance of African unity. Later in our conversation, Ilori explained why he thought the political potential of the drum in the U.S. was limited.

Many [American] people try to play the drum, but there is a limit to what they can do if they don't speak the language, because the language is tonal, the drum imitates the words, whatever I said in voice the drum imitates it closely. People can understand what the drum is saying, that's how it works. Although the drum

doesn't produce any phonemes, the sounds, the words that the drum imitates are so popular [in Nigeria] that whenever the drummer strikes it people know exactly what the drum is saying. The drummer can call your name with it and you will know that drummer is trying to call you. [Ilori 2014]

While Ilori's band members may not have shared his decision to endorse Lyndon Johnson for president, his own political goal was to demonstrate the power of drummers in Yoruba society, even at the expense of pan-African political unity of the sort endorsed by Malcolm X (and presumably by some members of Ilori's group). In his demonstration, Ilori was not challenging Malcolm X's critique of the Democratic Party, but his political priorities were elsewhere.

* * *

In 1963 Ilori signed a two-album contract with Blue Note Records. His first recording, *African High Life*, was commercially unsuccessful and he was offered to opt out of the contract. He decided to continue and record his second album in 1964, featuring Alvin Jones, Bob Crenshaw, Donald Byrd, and Hubert Laws. Both albums were re-mastered and reissued in 2006, and have enjoyed belated commercial success among DJs and record collectors.

Ilori's collaboration with jazz drummer Art Blakey on the 1962 album the *African Beat* demonstrates the complicated relationship between African and African American musicians in pan-African projects. In Nat Hentoff's liner notes to the album, Blakey expresses his desire to create a unified conception of the music, and particularly of the drum:

This is the first time I have been able to use so many African drummers along with American jazzmen. This is really an ensemble, not a cutting contest. I am convinced that these performances show that it is possible to blend African American rhythm without strain or self-consciousness [...] This meeting of two continents shows how wide is the range of emotions that is possible to draw from the drums. It is in this area that African musicians are so capable. They get inside the instrument and inside themselves so that they do much more than create rhythms. In America, the drum was considered a bastard instrument for much too long a time. Jazz has helped to indicate how expressive drums can be, and now, this combination of jazz and African practices makes especially clear that the drum can be an instrument of unusual beauty [...] Now I know that I'm going to have to add African drummers to my regular band. [Blakey, cited in Hentoff, 1962]

Ilori, on the other hand, is quoted complimenting Blakey for his efforts to study African music, but the tone of his words seems condescending, as a teacher complimenting a student.

Blakey was able to make this fusion succeed because the fusion already exists in him. He has listened by now to a great many African recordings, and has heard as many African drummers as he could in live performances. The basic period of absorption is over. These African rhythms are inside him now. And in this album, he has shown new ways in which African and American musicians can enrich each other [...] I cannot emphasize too much how sincere Blakey is about bridging our cultures, and accordingly, I can understand why this album is so important to him in the body of his work. Certainly African rhythms in general are more complicated than the usual jazz pulsation up to now, but as we have demonstrated here there's a basic bond between the two approaches and this mixture of rhythms can become an exceptionally challenging base over which jazz musicians can improvise. (Ilori cited in Hentoff 1962)

Ilori's value judgment of jazz as compared to African drumming traditions is perhaps tactless, but by claiming the sophistication of African drumming, he divulges an anxiety of being portrayed as the "before" side of African American history. This anxiety is not unfounded. In at least one pan-African anthological project, developed by Harry Belafonte in 1961, Ilori's group was asked to perform contemporary music to mark a historical period in African American music.

Harry Belafonte wanted to do a study of various groups of music that contributed to current day American music. So he invited me to record some of the songs. So I brought into the program three songs. One was "aja aja o", another was "killem fo babi," [meaning] "what do you think of the king" [which appears on the album as *Oba Oba Homage to a King*] and the third one was actually suggested to me by my wife. This is like a work song: "isha kela ke she?" what work does an axe do? [Which appears in the recording as "ake"] "isha kela keshe - ake" the chorus is "ake." "ake" is axe. And then I will ask "isha kela keshe?" and they will say "Ake!" What work does an axe do? Ojojuma laki agi "every day the axe splices wood." It's a question and answer type of a song. And that was the third song that was given to the anthology. The "ake" song was linked to American slave songs, to American prisoner songs. Like, *hom* [makes a sound] like the sound of breaking the rocks or something. [Ilori 2014]

The album *Long Road to Freedom* was recorded between 1961 and 1971, but released only in 2001. Ilori's performance was among the first recordings for the project and is

uncredited and misattributed in the album liner notes. In a 2001 NPR interview with Bob Edwards, celebrating the long awaited release of the album, Belafonte makes clear that he indeed intended Ilori's group performances as representation of African American history before slavery: "The artists featured in the beginning of the collection came from places like Ghana and Nigeria. What we tried to do was to show through the music the great diversity of the ... west coast of Africa, just at the time that slavery stepped in and interrupted all of that" (Belafonte and Edwards 2001).

Slavery and colonialism had a devastating effect on Africans on both sides of the Atlantic, but it did not stop Yoruba music making altogether. Ilori's efforts to educate listeners about contemporary Yoruba culture, through his performances, articles, and even an attempt to raise money to establish a Yoruba cultural center in Harlem, were sometimes at odds with a more unified and general view of erased history of Africa, as represented in pan-African musical projects. Jason Stanyek's assertion that pan-African collaborations "do not efface difference but [...] embrace it through an enactment of a highly complex notion of unity" (Stanyek 2004:112) seems to avoid the complex dynamic created when contemporary music of one culture is presented as the erased history of another. This tension is quite possibly what made Art Blakey eventually disavow the combination of jazz and African music. Some ten years after his recording with Ilori, Blakey told drummer Art Taylor that "Jazz is known all over the world as an American musical art form and that's it. No America, No jazz. I've seen people trying to connect it to other countries, for instance to Africa, but it doesn't have a damn thing to do with Africa" (cited in Monson 1995:329).

While Blakey's assertion is as contentious today as it was in the 1970s, it is a provocative critique of the Afrocentric musical projects pursued by many jazz musicians at the time (Weinstein 1992; Gluck 2012). My own understanding is that Blakey wanted to undercover a certain overlooked aspect in Pan-African projects of the 1960s -- that the political and economic power imbalance between African musicians and U.S. record producers and performing artists meant that these musical projects were in fact American projects in which "Africa" was cast to play a role rather than a collaboration and co-production between equal partners.

Epilogue: An American dream deferred

In this chapter I have argued that the collaborations between African-American, Caribbean and African musicians in the 1960s, were not simply motivated by political affinity associated with Black Nationalism and Pan Africanism, but represent the intersection of different political motivations during the 1960s. While African-Americans sought to learn about African cultures in order to recover the history of their ancestors, and to perform pan-African solidarity and unity, African immigrants were eager to educate listeners about the complexity and sophistication of African music, and to counter the biased notions of primitivism and exoticism associated with the music.

In an ironic twist of events, it was education that forced Ilori to return to Nigeria in 1965, and it was education that allowed Ilori to return to the U.S. in 1984. The Rockefeller Fellowship Ilori received through Willard Rhodes's recommendation ultimately prevented him from completing his Bachelor degree at Columbia University and forced him to return to Nigeria. Receiving the fellowship changed Ilori's immigration status Ilori from an "F" student visa, which was valid for the duration of his studies, to an exchange student or "J" status, which was limited to two years and included a two-year "home requirement." The condition was that after two years, Ilori would return to Nigeria to teach – forcing him to end his studies one year before he could complete his degree. After his initial encounter with an immigration judge, Ilori was not willing to risk defaulting on his agreement with the Rockefeller Foundation.

Four years earlier, in 1961, Ilori's wife Rosalind had joined him in New York. She became an important member of his dance company, contributing songs to the repertoire as well as choreography. Their eldest daughter Toya was born in Brooklyn in 1963 and received American citizenship. Rosalind and Toya returned to Nigeria in September 1964 to introduce the new baby to her proud grandparents. A month later, when his visa expired, Ilori also left the U.S. to conduct research on Yoruba retentions in the music of Trinidad and Brazil. After several months in the field he returned Nigeria in 1965.

Despite efforts to fulfill the educational mission entrusted to him by the Rockefeller scholarship, Ilori was unable to secure a teaching job in Nigeria without a completed B.A. He maintained a close correspondence with Prof. Rhodes, who attempted to find a graduate program that would accept Ilori as a student and African music instructor. Ilori had to decline two such offers, from U.C. Berkeley and Newport College,

because the scholarships required that his wife and daughter would stay in Nigeria, a condition with which he was not willing to comply.¹⁸

Ilori finally returned to the U.S. in 1985 through a complicated set of circumstances, once again attesting to the far-reaching influence of the student visa program. His return came not through his own admission to an academic program, but through that of his daughter. In 1982, Ilori's eldest daughter Toya was accepted to Long Island College in Brooklyn to study pharmacy. As a U.S. citizen, she did not have to depend on the school to administer her entry and visa. Returning for a visit after her first year, Toya convinced her parents that her younger siblings, David and Grace would also benefit from American education just as she and her father did, and it would be safer for them to live away from the political turmoil in Nigeria, where the government had been recently overturned in a military coup d'état. The Iloris had been able to set some money aside for their children's education during the Nigerian oil boom of the 1970s. Despite some concerns, they decided to send both of their younger children -- Grace, who was about to begin college, and David, who was to begin high school -- to study in the U.S. Mr. Ilori later compared his experiences with those of his children: "It was not easy for the children alone to be there. They needed moral guidance. They were working, going to school, like I did some years back, but I was a grown up, I got to the United States at twenty-four, and they got to the United States still teenagers."

David Ilori recalled the difficulties of growing up in Brooklyn:

I was twelve years old when I came to The States, and started high school. So it was just trying to survive, of course the culture shock, and all that stuff, even though my dad really tried to prepare us, it was a culture shock, coming to New York, but we adjusted. Then my parents came and when they came it really brought a better stability for us. [Ilori 2014]

In her first visit to the U.S. after more than twenty years, Rosalind Ilori realized that Brooklyn was very different from how she remembered it, "[our] time in New York, is not something that I can... things were getting rough and the building where we lived and the neighborhood turned to be something else, drugs, drug dealing, and the police came to that particular building, that area, twenty-four hours a day, you see them patrolling up and down the stairs."

¹⁸ Such requirements may seem astonishing today, but alumni and faculty at U.C. Berkeley confirmed to me that such conditions for admission were not unheard of for international students with families, persisting as late as the 1980s.

Mrs. Ilori's short visit to see her children became a permanent relocation. Through her daughter's citizenship and the priority of family unification in the immigration act of 1990 (Peters 1991), both Rosalind and Solomon, who joined her several months later, were able to obtain temporary resident status. At first, the middle-aged couple had to work menial labor to make ends meet. Ilori found a job as a security guard, and Rosalind took various house-keeping and caregiving jobs. Ilori eventually found a job as administrator at the "School for Accelerated Learning" in Harlem in 1986 and worked there until the school declared bankruptcy in the early 1990s. Ilori himself was able to return to school and complete his B.A. in 1991 at New York City College.

Chapter 4: “Cronpios Sin Fama:” Nationalism, Migrancy, and Exile in Immigrant Jazz Performances.

[October 30th 2014] Mariano Gil, an Argentinian flautist and painter invited me to hear his trio perform a show at the Argentinian Consulate General. The trio, with Leo Genovese on piano and Lautaro Burgos on drums, both from Argentina, played Gil’s original compositions as well as arrangements of Argentinian folk songs. The concert was billed as a “Jazz Concert” on the consulate promotional material, and was entitled “Cronpios Sin Fama,” an allusion to Argentinian author and jazz aficionado Julio Cortázar’s short story collection “Historias de cronopios y de famas” [The Histories of Cronopios and the Fames]. On the wall behind the band were colorfully painted faces of Dizzy Gillespie and Thelonious Monk, part of Gil’s series of jazz portraits. Over the past year and a half I’ve heard Gil, Genovese and Burgos play in various musical contexts in the city, and even played with them on a couple of occasions, but I never heard any of them give such an overtly Argentinian performance. It seemed like the perfect way to represent Argentinian jazz musicians in New York City. A bit too perfect perhaps. I’ve seen Gil masterfully perform bebop, Balkan music, free jazz and Brazilian music. There was nothing disingenuous about this particular performance – it was as if playing at this particular room required a national kind of music, Argentinian jazz. But to represent these musicians only as “Argentinian jazz” musicians meant that I gave more weight to their performance of national difference than to musical projects that would represent them as Argentinian jazz musicians.

Introduction

This chapter examines performances of nationality among immigrant jazz musicians in New York City. In recent years, a growing number of jazz scholars have documented the rich history of jazz scenes around the globe (Atkins 2003; Bohlman and Plastino 2016). Within the U.S., others have emphasized the close relationship between jazz and American nationalism, attempting to map out the ways black, white, Asian and Latino musicians perform racial and ethnic identity through jazz.¹⁹ In New York City, a minority-majority city and an important center for the jazz world,²⁰ global and local perceptions of race, nation and ethnicity clash daily, forging new identities and entrenching old ones.²¹ While jazz scholars have demonstrated the crucial ways in which jazz performances express American national politics, and the global reach of these expressions (Monson 2007b; Bohlman and Plastino 2016), these studies underplay how deeply embedded performances of nationality are in the political economy of jazz. This

¹⁹ See Baraka 1963; Sandke 2010; Monson 1995a; Wong 2004; Washburne 2002

²⁰ See McGee 2011; Greenland 2007; Jackson 2012

²¹ See Clifford 1997; Vertovec 2011

leads to a narrative which assumes that immigrant musicians “naturally” perform their cultural identity upon their arrival in the U.S., in order to distinguish themselves from and “avoid” competition with American musicians rather than make strategic aesthetic, economic, and political choices about how, when, and whether to express cultural and national identity in their music.

Drawing on the sociology of boundaries (Lamont and Molnár 2002) and the anthropology of borders (Alvarez 1995) as well as interviews and ethnographic participation, I argue that performances of nationality and ethnicity among immigrant jazz musicians are highly context-specific, reflecting fluctuating demands to suppress and express ethnicity and national belonging among immigrants within American multicultural politics and institutions. I show that immigrant musicians use their diverse musical skill sets to negotiate their identity in relation to an art world routed for and through multiculturalism and identity politics (Becker 1984). I begin by taking stock of the literature on global jazz as a counter literature to the American nationalist jazz literature. I then move on to discuss studies that focus on performances of ethnic and racial identity among non-black American musicians. Finally, I present various case studies that demonstrate the ways in which immigrant musicians develop specific skill sets that allow them to perform nationality, while showing that the development of such skills is motivated by aesthetic considerations, commercial circumstances and the political economy of the jazz world. I conclude the chapter with an analysis of several performances that contest assumptions about the meaning of home for immigrant jazz performances.

Global Jazz

At particular moments in history, jazz’s political meanings and aesthetics have developed independently from but in dialogue with American global interventionism. In Europe, the music was seen as a subversive, anti-hegemonic expression against totalitarian and colonial governments -- listening and playing jazz was anti-Nazi, anti-fascist, and anti-Stalinist. S. Frederick Starr’s study of jazz in Russia, Michael Kater’s work on jazz as a form of protest in Nazi Germany (Kater 2003), and Jeffery Jackson and Tom Perchard’s work on jazz in pre- and post-World War II France all interrogate the specific political meaning of jazz in these countries (Perchard 2015; Jackson 2003). Gwen Ansell Chatradari Devroop and others have studied the role of jazz in the fight against the South African apartheid regime, and in mobilizing racial solidarity (Ansell 2005; Muller and Benjamin 2011; Schadeberg 2007; Devroop and Walton 2007).

A second strain in the literature complicates the construction of jazz as a music of resistance and liberation. E. Taylor Atkins’s landmark book on jazz in Japan (Atkins 2001) and Richie Quirino’s study of jazz in the Philippines (Quirino 2008) stress jazz as a symbol of American economic and political colonialism and occupation. Most recently,

Bohlman and Plastino's edited volume on jazz in a global perspective attempts to map and reconcile the many narratives of liberation and occupation associated with jazz as a global phenomenon (2016). In short, the meaning of jazz in the global context thus crucially depends on the perception of American involvement in these locales, and the circumstances that brought jazz there.

New Yorkism and Nationalism

In these various histories, New York City is marked as a pivot of global jazz circuits. The conception of New York as the link between American and global jazz dates as far back as Jamaican-born writer J.A. Rogers's famous essay "Jazz at Home" (Rogers 1925). Kirsten McGee's recent study of jazz "star circuits" in the Netherlands, Robin Kelley's work on African and African American transnational connections, and Carol Muller's work with Sathima Bea Benjamin all emphasize New York as the place where American and global jazz meet (McGee 2011; Muller and Benjamin 2011; Kelley 2012).

Scott DeVeaux's (2005) examination of boundaries constructed around jazz and national identity claims that nationality is a key aspect of the "core" jazz narrative: "Jazz is American; it's not European or African," he writes. "For years, I implicitly believed in this dichotomy. I am an American, and I saw in jazz a summation of all the social forces that went into the building of my nation" (Deveaux 2005:23). Similarly critiquing American jazz nationalism, E. Taylor Atkins argues that,

Practically all jazz discourse rests on the premise of American exceptionalism, the dogmatic conviction that "democracy, individualism, and social mobility, civil society, free enterprise, ingenuity and inventiveness, and material well-being" are peculiarly American traits. Rather than viewing frontier expansion, settler colonialism, slavery, immigration, industrialization, and cultural hybridization as transnational processes, many assume they are uniquely American. (Atkins 2003:xiii)

Emphasizing the idea of American exceptionalism in jazz, by contrast, Jerome Harris suggests that jazz musicians from other countries "naturally" express the music of their birthplace:

For musicians and audiences in non-American cultures, jazz must almost inevitably be considered a process. First, because members of these communities naturally bring their own musical and cultural backgrounds to bear on the music they make, market, and listen to; and, second, because their distance from the music's home base is such that it is impractical (if not quixotic) to build a local aesthetic on the approval of canon-makers in the United States [...] Thus it is not

surprising that members of these communities search for an essence in jazz that is separate from any living relationship with jazz definers in America. (Harris 2004:121–122)

Harris's assertion may seem anachronistic in today's highly interconnected and globalized world, but it should be understood in relation to statements made by European jazz musicians during the 1960s and 1970s, wishing to detach themselves from the "restrictive" influence of African American aesthetic criteria, according to which they felt helplessly inferior. George Lewis argues that European musicians sought to liberate themselves from comparison to African American musicians, but in an ironic turn, created their "own" cultural nationalism deeply influenced by the ideas circulating among African American musicians' at the time. "[T]he creative European musician has ceased to imitate American musicians. He ceased to compete with him in areas – above all in swing and in the field of black traditions – in which he cannot catch him" (Berendt, cited in Lewis 2004).

David Ake's discussion of nationalism and transnationalism among American jazz musicians in Paris makes clear that for American musicians, "difference" is more than simply a question of distance from the source (Ake 2004). He defines two dominant groups among the musicians he studied. The first group is *Americanists*, who believe that "those born in the U.S. enjoy certain cultural, historical, perhaps even biological advantages and claims to jazz authenticity" (Ake 2004:163). Ake also refers to a subgroup, the *African-Americanist* identity, which reflects the notion that "only *black* Americans play the best, or most authentic, jazz." On the other side are "*universalists*," who "make no special claims of authenticity due to the circumstances of nationality or ethnicity." Following Ingrid Monson, Ake is quick to mention that this seemingly all-inclusive stance of the universalist can carry racial undertones: White musicians may adopt universalist rhetoric as a way to counter an African-Americanist position regarding jazz, understating the central role of African Americans in the creation and development of jazz to preserve their legitimacy (Monson 1995a).

The political divide between Americanists and universalists becomes ever more pressing within the U.S., where there's social -- but no geographical -- distance. In his article "Songs of the Unsung: The Darby Hicks History of Jazz," cultural historian George Lipsitz claims that while valid in principle, the "Americanist" stance reduces the expressive potentialities of jazz:

It is not incorrect to view jazz as a quintessential expression of U.S. national identity, as an art form that emerged from contacts between European and African musical traditions on the North American continent. But the added prestige that

jazz seems to acquire from its association with celebratory nationalism comes at the expense of appreciating jazz's capacity to create identities far more fluid and flexible than the citizen-subject of the nation state. [Lipsitz 2004:13]

In a recent book dedicated to “Jazz and its Borders,” historian Eric Porter explains the various elements that influence incorporation of musical Others in jazz historiography:

The very ontology of jazz as a historically grounded practice is based on choices of how to incorporate or distinguish one's project from particular elements of jazz and its musical others [...] the incorporation of musical others is a long-standing component in the creation of jazz [...] musicians make value judgments about where in history one finds musical others worth incorporating. (Porter 2012:17)

Jazz's “musical others,” according to Porter, are not people, but rather “elements,” genres, musical instruments, practices, and repertoire. For Porter, much like the previous scholarship discussed, national boundaries give rise to equally bounded national jazz genres. There is Japanese jazz, which at one point is more influenced by American jazz and at a later point rejects this influence, and there's South African jazz, which at one point “incorporates elements of U.S. based modern jazz into South African jazz” but later abandons it to preserve its own musical language (2012:21). The incorporation of musical others (elements) by musical others (immigrant musicians in the U.S.) remains largely outside of Porter's discussion of inclusion and exclusion, and in the process demonstrates his point.

The debates about jazz's position as African American or “indigenous” American music is centered around the construction of a jazz canon (Early 1991; Gray 2005). Scholars of Asian-American and Latin American music have argued that these debates marginalize American musicians who were neither black nor white from jazz's historical narrative (Wong 2004; Fellezs 2007; Washburne 2012; Hernandez 2012). In his article, “Latin Jazz: The Other Jazz,” Christopher Washburne (2002) discusses the omission of Latin musicians from jazz historiography. He argues that the separation between “Latin jazz,” African American jazz and white jazz groups was the result of cultural segregation in the recording industry. While most musicians were similarly versed in performing jazz and Latin music, Latin musicians recorded only Latin music, African American recorded only “jazz.” The margins of this argument are wide and gray, because white and, later, African American musicians recorded Afro-Cuban and Brazilian music with little qualms about cultural ownership. Latin musicians, on the other hand, as I argued in the second chapter, were rarely recognized as swing and bebop musicians despite the fact that they participated in the performance of those musical styles.

In her book *Speak it Louder*, Deborah Wong (Wong 2004) listens to jazz improvisation through an Asian American racial identity. Her primary interlocutors are

members of the San Francisco-based Asian Improv aRts organization. Born in the U.S. and coming of age during the civil rights era, the musicians in Wong's study were deeply influenced by African American cultural nationalism in the early 1970s, but unlike their European counterparts, embraced this influence. Within the discourse of identity politics, they sought to create music that would give voice to their unique experience as Asian Americans. Like "Latin" musicians, this meant a performance of cultural difference – through language, instruments, and stylistic forms. Wong does not discuss immigrant jazz musicians. Her discussion of first generation immigrants, primarily Cambodian, Laotians, and Vietnamese is focused on traditional musics of South-East Asia. This construction implies that contribution to jazz continues to be perceived as birthright, achieved not by first generation immigrants but only by those born in America.

Focusing on the marginality of Asian American jazz musicians in his essay "Silenced but Not Silent" (Fellezs 2007), Kevin Fellezs puts forward a definition of "Asian American Jazz" suggested by ethnomusicologist and drummer Anthony Brown: "Jazz produced with an Asian American sensibility, played by Asian Americans, reflecting the Asian American experience, involving traditional instruments as well as traditional approaches to them. The use of traditional instruments and approaches must be malleable or open enough to really start to incorporate and take on other influences-in this case, jazz" (Brown, cited in Fellezs 2007:81). Despite that fact that Brown's groups have almost always been multi-racial and multi-ethnic, even as they promote a strong Asian American political identity, this definition reinforces assumptions about musical and cultural identity. According to Brown and Fellezs, to play "real" jazz, Asian Americans must play "their own" jazz, marking it with elements that clearly indicate their own claims for cultural heritage.

In a prevailing view, American jazz as an unmarked category is either black or white, not Asian American. In a biographical essay about composer and bandleader Toshiko Akiyoshi, Fellezs carefully traces the changes in Akiyoshi's musical output, from her focus on bebop performance in Japan and the U.S. in the 1950s and 1960s, to her "mature" period when she infused Japanese elements in her compositions for Big Band in the 1970s. While Fellezs explicates the national, racial and gender boundaries that Akiyoshi had to cross to become a jazz musician in the U.S., he continues to argue that beyond a representation of "Japanese-American-ness," Akiyoshi's music "represents a personal acknowledgement that she will always be, in some way, an outsider, or an alien, to her adopted culture of jazz" (Fellezs 2010:55). In some ways, the focus on Akiyoshi's "infusion" of jazz and Japanese music, a small fragment of her overall musical output in a sixty-year career, creates a narrative in which her extensive work in straight-ahead jazz, Latin and Brazilian music are diminished, thus implicitly contributing to her construction as an outsider to jazz.

Tamar Barzel's study of Jewish American identity in the New York "Downtown scene" (2004) demonstrates that the rise of multiculturalism and identity politics in the 1990s motivated Jewish musicians involved in experimental music and jazz to look for inspiration and compositional material in Jewish liturgy, Klezmer music and other musical resources of the Jewish Ashkenazi tradition. As in Wong's study, the majority of musicians in Barzel's work were not immigrants themselves but third and fourth generation descendants of Jewish immigrants from Europe and Russia. Like Latin and Asian American music, Jewish musical material marked ethnicity, while improvised and avant-garde practices marked a modern American identity.

The disconnect between global jazz studies and American jazz identity studies parallels the disconnect between the social boundary literature (Lamont and Molnár 2002) and the anthropology of borders (Alvarez 1995). This echoes Fassin's claim that borders and social boundaries are tightly related to the ways immigrants are racialized (Fassin 2011:214). As I show below, the relationship between social boundaries and national borders is both reinforced and creatively challenged in performances by immigrant jazz musicians.

Performing Nationality: Mariano Gil at the Argentinian Consulate

Mariano Gil's performance at the Argentinian embassy was not unusual. Many immigrant musicians elicit the help of their home country consulate in New York. From sponsorships and subsidy of international tours to participation in national jazz festivals in New York, most national jazz events receive financial support from governmental organizations (Dakari 2015; Oakes 2003).

The musical repertoire, title, and personnel Gil chose for the concert were not coincidental, nor were they a "natural" expression of his national identity. In order to receive the support of the Consulate General for the concert, Gil had to recruit Argentinian musicians, play Argentinian music and frame his concert as a tribute to an Argentinian cultural icon. In other words, to perform nationality in jazz is a required skill, part of a highly sophisticated improvisational and compositional vocabulary musicians develop expressly for such performances.

In a later conversation, Gil explained that the great Argentinian author and jazz critic Julio Cortázar has been an important influence on his music and art, not simply because much of Cortázar's writings deals with the lives of Argentinean expatriates but also because jazz holds a prominent place in the lives of his protagonists. The name Cronopios was initially used by Cortázar in a Louis Armstrong concert review entitled

“*Louis, Enormísimo Cronopio*”(Cortázar 1952). “Sin Fama,” refers to the character Famas (“fames”), but can also be interpreted ironically, as in “jazz musicians without fame.” While Argentinian music, ranging from the tangos of Ciriaco Ortiz to the songs of Atahualpa Yupanqui and the rock music of Luis Alberto Spinetta, has left an indelible mark on Gil’s musical development it was jazz that brought him to the U.S., and made the most profound impact on his life:

I love jazz. This was the main reason I came to this country. It is difficult to explain why, words are always limited to explain something that is best understood from pure sound: The African polyrhythms, the spontaneity that allows interpersonal chemistry between individuals, harmonic richness and the variety of expressions that emerged in its short history. Sound! Beautiful sounds from Elvin Jones’ drums, Monk and McCoy Tyner’s piano, Coltrane’s saxophone, Miles’ trumpet, they have changed me and affected my worldview. In that sense my portraits also serve as a tribute and acknowledgement. [Gil 2014]

Gil’s commitment to jazz is modeled on both his literary and musical heroes. Like Cortázar, who attempted to improvise his prose on the life and music of Charlie Parker, (García 2003) many of Gil’s compositions and paintings are about jazz musicians and their legacy. Part of that legacy is the ability to adapt to a particular musical context, to create in response to a specific room, both aesthetically and commercially. It requires the ability to be an *Argentinian jazz* musician as well as an *Argentinian jazz musician*.

[October 2013], Antonio Ciacca is about to begin playing “The More I See You” with his sextet at Dizzy’s Club Coca Cola at Lincoln Center. The concert is part of Italian Jazz Days, which Ciacca produces for the Italian Cultural Institute. “You know who wrote this next song?” Ciacca asks the audience. “His name was Salvatore Guaragna... he was coming from Calabria!”

Guaragna, better known by the name Harry Warren, was born in Brooklyn, in 1893 to an Italian immigrant family (Ferriano 1988). His father, Antonio Guaragna, changed the family name to Warren to ease the family’s incorporation into American society. For Ciacca himself, who was born in Germany and raised in Italy, Warren’s hidden Italian heritage, his “roots” were more significant than the composer’s specific place of birth. You can be born in Brooklyn and still be from “Calabria.” In his introduction of the famous standard, Ciacca actively turns the standard into an *Italian jazz* standard, again emphasizing Warren’s national, ethnic difference, which exists not in the music, title or melody, but in the packaging of Warren as Guaragna. As the producer of Italian Jazz Days, Ciacca is masterfully representing both sides of the multicultural economy in which ethnic institutions, immigrant associations, and governmental entities sponsor

festivals as part of their public cultural programs (Rapport 2014:16). Concert halls, jazz clubs, churches, museums and outdoor venues are temporarily transformed into “immigrant jazz” venues as part of this nationalization of jazz.

In July 2013, I attended a performance at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, sponsored by the Israeli Consulate General. The headliner was Israeli-born saxophonist Uri Gurvich. Other members of the band were Asen Doykin and Peter Slavov from Bulgaria and Francisco Mela from Cuba. After playing several original compositions from his latest album, the quartet played an arrangement of an Israeli song, “Ahuvati Livnat Tzavar” by Russian-Israeli composer Sasha Argov. The slow rubato melody echoed in the large hall, reverberating loudly from a badly operated P.A system. Only slightly louder were the clinking plates in the museum’s cafeteria and the chatter of heedless visitors. The normally quiet lobby of the museum was a cacophonous mess of open chords, crashing cymbals, and one long and complicated melody. Gurvich cued a groove in 3/4. Things were coming into place – somewhere between Israel, Russia, Bulgaria and Cuba.

The performance at the Philadelphia Museum of Art included both original compositions from Gurvich’s latest album, BabEl, and Uri’s arrangements of songs by Sasha Argov, who grew up in Russia and immigrated to Palestine in 1934.²² Argov has singular importance in developing the Israeli popular song and is well respected by Israeli musicians for his complex harmonic concepts and for straddling the gap between western classical music and Israeli popular songs. The concert series promoted “Israeli jazz,” within the context of a government-sponsored concert series at the municipal art museum. Gurvich has prepared arrangements of Argov’s compositions expressly for such occasions. He frequently perform Argov’s compositions in contexts that were sponsored or funded by Jewish and Israeli organizations. These performance occasions often demanded that he hire Israeli musicians. In the Philadelphia concert, Gurvich hired his regular rhythm section with Asen Doykin substituting for Leo Genovese on piano. Because Doykin rarely played this arrangement with Gurvich and the noise level at the museum made musical communication almost impossible the performance of “Israeliness” with Argov’s counterintuitive melodies proved much more challenging than any of them expected.

²² The contested territory of Palestine was under a British mandate until the outbreak of Israel’s War of Independence and the Palestinian Nakba in 1948.

Performing Migrancy: Legal Aliens at Taller Latino Americano

[June 2013] *Leo Genovese invited me to his birthday party at El Taller Latino Americano in the upper West Side of Manhattan. There was no sign to indicate a venue, only a white glass door. I entered, walking up the stairs to the second floor. The walls of the stairway were adorned, floor to ceiling, with paintings, flyers and posters in Spanish and English. As I walked into the large room, to my right was a large assortment of musical instruments: a piano, several keyboards, an electric guitar, two upright basses and an electric one, a cello, various hand drums and percussion instruments, a drum kit, a long row of woodwinds, flutes, saxophones of various registers, trombones and trumpets resting on stands. There were close to thirty different instruments on stage.*

After offering his toast to the many guests who filled the room, Leo sat at the piano. Argentinian drummer Franco Pinna took his place at a modified drum set which included a Bombo Leguero instead of the floor tomtom. Argentinian singer Sofia Rei (Koutsovitis) approached the front of the stage, adjusting her multi-effect routed microphone, checking the volume, quickly flipping between presets. Exchanging a quick look with Genovese, who was already playing an introduction, she began to sing "El Silbador," a 6/8 zamba by Argentinian composer Gustavo "Cuchi" Leguizamón. Manipulating her voice, she distorted, looped and sustained certain sounds while using the multi-effect to improvise new melodies on top of them. Rising from their seats in the front row, three Uruguayan Candombe drummers, Arturo Prendez, Sergio Camaran, Claudio Altesor, playing low (piano), medium (repique) and small (chico) drums respectively, joined in. Drum sticks in their right hands, they softly struck a clave on the side of the drum. Genovese reached far to his left on a small Korg synthesizer, playing heavy bass lines and interjecting fast melodic lines and chopped chords on the piano with his right. After the second verse, Argentinian flautist Mariano Gil and Israeli saxophonist Uri Gurvich joined in, adding rapid high lines in unison on piccolo and soprano saxophone over the percussion, synthesizers and electronically modified voice. The melodic and harmonic instruments faded out, the percussion instruments held a steady groove. Genovese stood up and lifted a huge "piano" drum from behind the piano. The rhythm intensified. A dancer got on stage, then another, then another. The audience shouted encouragement, rising from their seats. The room began to move, listeners becoming performers, performers becoming dancers, clapping, singing, smiling. By the time the evening ended, many more instruments would be added to the stage, and everyone in attendance, including myself, would play, sing and dance. When the music ended some two hours later, I was embraced by the crowd of musicians around me. Shaking hands, hugging and exchanging complements: "We should play together, we should play together some time."



Figure 4.1 Franco Pinna's drum set

“Legal Aliens,” as I later learned the group was called, is a rotating ensemble of musicians, assembled and orchestrated by and around Genovese. The Legal Aliens’ performances often involve dense, thickly textured harmonies, infectious grooves, furiously improvised solos, and spectacular, virtuosic melodic failures. Taking inspiration from the various vocabularies of the participating musicians, including free improvisation (used as composed melodic material), Balkan melodies and rhythms, and Afro-Latin grooves from Brazil, Argentina, and Uruguay, Genovese’s Legal Aliens turn performances of nationality into a heaving musical mess. The participating musicians jokingly describe the music through various metaphors of public humiliation, all intended to reflect the extreme difficulty of executing the music with the eventual release as a big dance party (Gurvich 2014). Using the very skills that allow them to perform in free and straight ahead jazz contexts, traditional wedding music and highly complex new music scores, the Aliens dismantle the conceptual separation between these performance occasions. These are musical skill sets, not separate national identities.

The woodwind and string sections, consisting fairly regularly of Dan Blake, Uri Gurvich and Mariano Gil on saxophones and flutes, Entcho Todorov on violin and Agustin Uriburu on cello, struggle to keep the tangle of musical threads together. At a first listening, they could sound like the playful melodies of a Bulgarian Hora, but soon enough, through a musical bait and switch, something goes astray. Unlike the Hora, the melodies don’t repeat themselves but continue to change, ever permuting in new directions, never landing on a strong downbeat. During the performance of a particularly challenging composition, Blake or Gurvich will quickly remove his hand from the saxophone, giving a sudden poke to the score in front of them to mark their position – desperately trying to stay in unison. Genovese, guiding the group, insistently plays the

angular melody on the Korg synthesizer, pushing forward, onward, marking the way for the other melodic instruments. With his left hand, he punctuates thickly textured chords and clusters on Fender Rhodes, leading and conducting the rhythm section. Barely visible to the audience behind the front row of musicians, Italian bassist Francesco Marocci, Macedonian Tapan drummer Aleksandar Petrov, Georgian drummer George Mel and the three Uruguayan Candombe players hold on to Genovese's groove. Soon enough, when the endless melodic line comes to an abrupt close, the drums will take over, continuing the percussive clashing of meters and traditions.

El Taller Latino Americano, where I first saw Legal Aliens, is a community center located on 99th street between Broadway and Amsterdam Avenue. El Taller (The Workshop) is dedicated to the promotion and conservation of Latin American culture in New York and to bridging the gap between Latin Americans and North Americans through art, dance and music. While the Latin American presence is undoubtedly dominant, the range of musics and languages I heard in the course of the evening extended far beyond Latin American musics and languages. It charted a uniquely New York immigrant experience, clearly referenced in the name "Legal Aliens." In a following concert on July 9th 2015, Legal Aliens performed at Bard College as part of Argentina's Independence Day celebration. The concert was billed as "An evening of Latino Art and Culture" featuring Genovese's "prolific brand of contemporary Latin Jazz." But the mix of themes, rhythms, and influences was as eclectic as always.

In what ways are Legal Aliens representing "Latin American culture"? In what sense are Genovese and Legal Aliens making Latin jazz? Or even Argentinian jazz for that matter? It is at these moments -- when a Tapan drum is playing Clave and a Candombe drum is playing Hora -- that the gaps between the economic practices of multiculturalism and the musics that accompany them create sonic ironies and paradoxes, much like Genovese's intentionally failing unisons and polyrhythmic, polynational grooves. Legal Aliens sonically juxtapose musical markers of nationality to challenge performances of ethnicity and national identity in jazz. They foreground issues of power connecting national borders, social boundaries, and musical categories, but also demonstrate their malleability and their creative potential. To be a Legal Alien is to navigate between identities, between borders, between categories of musical belonging.

Remembering Arauco in Whynot Jazz

[July 2014] I am at a show at Whynot Jazz Room, a small cellar club in the West Village. The room is packed. I lean my back against the glass door as I hold my audio recorder high in the air. The back of the room is crowded with musicians. Leading the band is Francisco “Pancho” Molina, one of the most successful Chilean musicians of the 1990s as a member of the band “Los Tres,” who has been playing jazz in the city for almost twenty years. We’ve played together at several house sessions, and I always appreciate his wise advice about “making” it in the scene: “It takes ten years, man,” he would say. “Once you have the sound, now it’s only a matter of time.” On bass was Peter Slavov from Bulgaria, who received his green card just a month earlier, after fifteen years in New York. On Fender Rhodes and keyboards was Leo Genovese, Uri Gurvich from Israel was playing saxophone, Oscar Peñas from Spain was playing guitar. Singing and playing a second guitar was Pancho’s compatriot, Chilean guitarist and vocalist Camila Meza.

The group had already performed several of Molina’s original compositions before one song, a rendition of Violetta Parra’s “Arauco Tiene Una Pena,” captivated the audience completely. Parra’s legacy as one of Chile’s most important folk singers and originators of Chilean nueva canción loomed large over the small club, packed with South American musicians and listeners. Meza’s voice, performing Parra’s 6/8 cueca protest against subjugation of indigenous Mapuche people of Chile, cut through the thick textures produced on bass, Fender Rhodes and guitar. On acoustic guitar, Parra’s signature instrument, Meza played chopped high chords, octaves, and tremolos, exposing only fragments of her hard-earned and impressive technical ability as a jazz guitarist. At the end of the second verse, Genovese began his solo. The Fender Rhodes keyboard was plugged into a distortion effect, creating a sharp, fuzzy timbre. Fast lines were running in and (mostly) out of the harmony, pushing, creating a dense mass of sound. The solo ended, and the dynamics were lowered to a new starting point. A hand reached from behind and gave something to Camila. It was Slavov’s. He was returning the song’s music chart.

Arauco is the historic homeland of the indigenous Mapuche people of Chile and was a site of war for centuries. But the song is also a critique of modern Chile, calling its people to reconnect with their roots, to listen to the cry of the land beyond the noise of modernity. What does it mean for Chileans in New York to sing for Arauco, for the forgotten homeland of the Mapuche?

Arauco tiene una pena Arauco is filled with pain,
Que no la puedo callar, That cannot be silenced,

Son injusticias de siglos There are injustices of centuries
Que todos ven aplicar, Committed for all to see
Nadie le ha puesto remedio No one has tried to remedy
Pudiendolo remediar. Having the power to heal,
Levántate, Huenchullan. Rise up, Huenchullan.

Un día llega de lejos One day from far away comes
Huescufo conquistador, The conqueror Huescufo
buscando monañas de oro Looking for mountains of gold
que el indio nunca buscó. That the Indian never looked for.
Al indio le basta el oro The Indian is content with the gold
que le relumbra del sol. That shines from the sun.
Levántate, Curimón. Rise up, Curimón

By drumming and singing about Arauco, both Molina and Meza sonically mark their identity as “Chilean jazz” musicians in New York. What is the role of other musicians in this context? What identities do they express? Despite the fact that he had never played and perhaps heard the song before, after two verses and a keyboard solo, Slavov had already committed the song to memory. This is how, quite matter-of-factly, a landmark of Chile’s history has found its way into the hands and ears of a Bulgarian jazz bassist. This is a moment of higher musical learning, where a song saturated with cultural meaning and history of Arauco is placed in front of musicians who cannot fully grasp it in all its significance, and yet contribute immensely to its performance.

Perhaps more than any other club in Manhattan, Whynot Jazz captured, if only for a brief moment, the immigrant jazz scene in New York. Located at the heart of Manhattan’s preeminent “jazz neighborhood,” Greenwich Village (Jackson 2012:52), it continually challenged national borders and social boundaries by placing together immigrants and natives of diverse cultures and legal statuses in close musical and social relationships. The musicians performing at Whynot attribute this to the collaborative work of Macedonian-born Aleksandar Petrov and African American Solanje Burnette, the booking managers for Whynot (Gurvich 2014). Gathering a tightly knit community of musicians around the club, organizing jam sessions, concert series and curated collaborations, the two helped realize musicians’ potential to shift from performances as “immigrant jazz” musicians to performances as immigrant “jazz musicians.” In doing so, both diversified the audiences that attended Whynot Jazz and the very notion of immigrant music.

Conclusion: Melissa Aldana at Birdland

[March 2016] I went to meet Nitzan at Kitano jazz, a small jazz club on the first floor of the Kitano Hotel in Midtown. I was late and only managed to hear the last few seconds of his gig with Valentina Marino, an Italian jazz singer. Hearing our conversation in Hebrew, the amused bartender cracked a dry joke: "This is America! You should speak Spanish!" We headed out to the rainy street, taking a quick cab across town to catch the tail end of Chilean saxophonist Melissa Aldana's CD release show at Birdland. Nitzan often plays with the group in their quartet format, but the album and this performance feature only the trio, with Pablo Menares on bass and Jochen Rueckert on drums.

We picked up our tickets at the door and sat at the bar, doing our best to remain inconspicuous. Aldana leaned toward the microphone to introduce the next song. "This next song is called 'Back Home,' and its dedicated to Sonny Rollins...well the whole album is dedicated to Sonny Rollins, and this is the title piece." "Home" she continued, 'doesn't mean Chile in this case, it means the first time I heard Sonny Rollins.'

At the end of the show I went to say hello to Melissa and congratulate her on the new CD. She and her manager were talking to a journalist and promoter about the new project. After I introduced myself, the journalist recognized me and asked, "so what ever happen to those Bulgarian musicians you promised for my global jazz column? We never had Bulgarians."

In this chapter, I have argued that the performance of nationality among immigrant jazz musicians in New York is neither a natural nor a neutral expression of their identity. The artistry and musical competence of immigrant jazz musicians in New York allows them to submit themselves fully to the innermost private cultural moments of their fellow musicians, African Americans, Cuban, Balkan, Chilean, and become a part of them for the duration of a song, and perhaps long after it. The ability to move from one to the other, to perform one's own "nationally" at one moment, and perform another in the next, is at the heart of the immigrant jazz musical expression.

This ability is directly related to immigrant jazz musicians' engagement with cultural institutions as resources of public exposure and income. Performances in governmental institutions (such as an embassy) or an immigrant cultural center come with an obligation: they require the construction of a set of musical markers that communicate to insiders and outsider the national identity of the performer. This entails verbally prefacing a song with a comment on its relationship to the home country, playing a cover of a renowned national composer or a famous folk song, applying specific dance rhythms, melodic lines, timbres and instruments associated with the

national tradition, and even wearing traditional costumes. Few *immigrant jazz* concerts will include all of these devices. But some will require the construction of a program geared towards expression of national markers, and even a nationally homogenous ensemble of musicians.

As Melissa Aldana's performance at Birdland demonstrates, an immigrant *jazz performance* can easily have none of these markers, and even play on the audience's expectations that an immigrant's musical home is always the home country. In their performance of *Back Home*, Aldana, Menares, and German-born Jochen Rueckert demonstrate that for an immigrant jazz musicians home can equally be the music of Sonny Rollins, McCoy Tyner, Violeta Parra or Salvatore Guaragna.

The nationalist jazz discourse and the emerging global jazz literature may suggest that immigrant jazz musicians perform national markers of identity in order to distinguish themselves from American musicians, developing their own aesthetic criteria that allow them to avoid competition with the exceptional "swing" or "blues" of American musicians. But all of the musicians mentioned in this study are hired regularly by white American and African American musicians to perform straight ahead jazz. The notion that playing jazz is a national or racial birthright, rather than a musical competency that is situated in a particular scene and requires life-long study and dedication, may be politically justified, but it fails to hear the seamless transition between *immigrant jazz* music and immigrant *jazz music* that is the daily bread (and butter) of many of New York's musicians today.

Chapter 5: From Jazz Street to International Avenue: Immigrants musicians making place

[May 2014] I walk into Terraza 7, an immigrant musicians' hub in Jackson Heights, Queens. John Benitez is sitting above my head on an alleviated metal platform. The sound of his bass reverberates through the Terraza as if a train or an earthquake is coming. Cow-bells holding clave, timbal, conga. A trumpet player and keyboardist trading lines: higher and louder, higher and louder. The PA system is pushed to its limits. A sharp feedback pierces the ears. Benitez begins to sing, getting the audience to respond to his call "Es Como Fue!" The people answer his call; "Es como fue!" He repeats the phrase again, setting up a steady vamp. The people answer "Es como fue!" He begins to improvise syllables, words, his voice rising over the chanting crowd. "Es como fue!"²³

Introduction:

This chapter examines the ways immigrant musicians use jazz improvisation to create musical spaces in two New York City neighborhoods: Manhattan's Greenwich Village and Jackson Heights, Queens. Ethnomusicologists have argued that immigrant communities use particular musical practices to delineate immigrant social spaces within a multicultural city like New York (Baily 2006; Shelemay 2012). Studies in cultural geography have identified the ways jazz scenes and styles are associated with particular urban spaces, such as Harlem in 1930s, 52nd Street in the 1950s, and the Lower East Side in the 1980s (Stump 1998; Becker 2004; Jackson 2012). These works cover important ground, but they regard jazz and immigrant musics as mutually exclusive, thus overlooking one of New York's unique musical phenomenon: its immigrant jazz spaces and the ways in which they allow immigrants to interact across musical boundaries. Drawing on my ethnographic research as a performing musician and through conversations with musicians, audience members and venue owners, I show that immigrant musicians use musical, discursive and visual strategies to transform physical spaces into immigrant jazz spaces that extend beyond a single immigrant community.

²³ Benitez is performing a *sonero*, an improvisational vocal practice in which the singer introduces lines of extemporaneous text that rhyme with the lyrics of the chorus. The musicians in the band and the audience sing the choruses. The noise level at the Terraza made the transcription of the lyrics in the recording almost impossible. After consulting several Puerto Rican musicians I have settled on the text "*Es como fue*," a common poetic form which translates roughly as "*It's like it was*."

Immigrant Communities and Place-Making:

Cultural geographer Joseph Wood (1997) coined the term “place making” to describe the ways Vietnamese Americans in Northern Virginia invest places with “novel meanings” by appropriating and reconfiguring spaces for economic, social, and cultural purposes (1997: 58). Following Wood, Elizabeth Chacko (2003) suggests that in order to maintain their community across larger suburban areas in Maryland, Washington D.C and Virginia, Ethiopian immigrants create “ethnic places” that serve as meeting places for the community. Chacko defines ethnic places as “home or representations of home to various immigrant groups, infused with social meaning and cultural and emotional associations.” (2003:25) Ethnic places are thus made distinct from their environment through markers of identity and difference, either through the physical assembly of people or through symbolic representations of the community.

Following Chacko’s study, Kay Shelemay (2012) calls for a new evaluation of the construction of urban ethnic communities in ethnomusicology. Shelemay looks at ways in which music has been instrumental in shaping cultural places in the Ethiopian community in Washington D.C. Drawing on Chacko, she constructs a typology of “ethnic” places, including four categories:

- Ethnic institutions: Churches, civic and political organizations, etc.)
- Sociocommerscapes: Ethnic businesses that provide goods and meeting places)
- Ethnic Arenas or Transient Ethnic Places (spaces used repeatedly by a given community, but lacking permanent ethnic markers)
- Intangible Ethnic Places: Internet sites, radio and television stations, musical recordings, etc.)

Surprisingly, both Chacko and Shelemay do not include private homes or apartments (whether owned or rented) as a category in their analysis, despite the fact that private residences often hold a special meaning as ethnic meeting places that extends beyond their immediate residents, particularly during religious holidays, celebrations and bereavement. In fact, Chacko claims that similarly to “many other recent immigrant groups, residences occupied by Ethiopian immigrants in the Washington metropolitan area are lacking in visual ethnic markers. Even in urban and suburban neighborhoods where they live in relatively larger numbers, it is [...] difficult to identify Ethiopian homes” (2003:30). While Chacko focuses on the influence of ethnic markers on the physical landscape, the assertion in the quote above is true only if one observes the home from the outside. To the list of potential “ethnic places” (whether institutional, commercial or transient) I am thus adding private homes. As I discuss below, much of the

jazz music performed in New York daily is played in the homes and studios of musicians rather than in public venues.

Second, I would like to complicate the role “ethnic” places play in immigrant musicians’ life. As Chacko’s study shows, ethnic places represent the ethnic community, a sense of home and familiarity to the immigrant. However, as I argued in the previous chapters, for immigrant jazz musicians, relationships between music and national, ethnic and racial identity are constantly shifting, adapted to the places and contexts in which they perform. While an “ethnic place” connects members of an immigrant community who share a place of origin, a “scene,” connects people through shared expressive practice. What then, would an “immigrant jazz scene” mean?

At this stage, it is important to clarify the notion of “scene,” both in its popular music usage, and in the sense suggested by theater scholar Sabine Haenni (2008), as an “immigrant scene.” Following the work of Will Straw, Barry Shank and others, I understand scene as a social network connected to specific forms of cultural expression. A scene gives a sense of identity and the means for individuals to connect to one another. A scene may endure in one form or another for many years but it is malleable, inviting acts of innovation and change. A scene in many ways functions as a spatial and social “home” to an expressive practice (Straw 1991; Shank 2011). For Haenni, an immigrant scene represents the public culture of an immigrant group. A set of visual and sonic representations used by immigrant group to mark their own spaces in the urban landscape, as well as a stereotypical image used in theatrical and cinematic depictions of immigrant enclaves. These can include grocery stores, newspapers, restaurants, musical performances, and other signifiers of cultural identity (2008:16–17). The immigrant jazz scene in New York shares aspects with both these definitions, but also extends beyond them. In particular, as I argued in the previous chapter, its expressive practice (broadly defined as “jazz”) can encompass an overlap of immigrant expressions, sonic, verbal and visual.

Clarinetist Anat Cohen explained to me the multiple senses of “home” she experiences in various scenes in the city and their relationship to particular venues:

Where there’s a scene, in the city, I think it’s really fun, because that became my home, the Brazilian scene, for a while, because I knew where to go, it’s like I know I can go to Smalls, and I will meet people there now [that I know]. The people I will meet there today are not the same people I met fifteen years ago, but there’s always the jama’a (group) that’s hanging, and a kind of a home, and it’s funny because people that go every day to the office, they don’t have it, they don’t say, “It’s Tuesday night, I can go there, I’ll probably find one of my friends

there.” If they don’t make a plan with someone, they won’t see anyone in the evening, and we are at home alone every day, and I don’t need to make a plan with anyone, now that’s also a thing, a different perspective, I can just know, tonight I’ll go to the Vanguard, and I’ll find people there that I know, I’ll go to Smalls and I’ll find people I know, so the Brazilian scene really became my home for a long while. [Cohen 2015]

I thus wish to emphasize here that while ethnic places of the kind Chacko refers to represent an important aspect of the immigrant experience in New York, they reflect only one of several kinds of “homes” and may represent home to people who are not members of the ethnic community.

Jazz Places

A number of studies focus specifically on the way jazz music constructs communities around places. Studying the cultural geography of bebop, Roger Stump (1998) argues that in the 1940s, clubs in Harlem such as Minton’s Playhouse and Monroe’s Uptown served as creative laboratories for a small community of like-minded jazz players. But it wasn’t until modern jazz was performed in Midtown clubs on 52nd Street, such as the Five Spot, Onyx and Three Stooges --- outside of the Harlem community -- that it received the exposure (i.e., the audience) it needed to become a full-fledged musical revolution in jazz. Stump’s argument is compelling, but it underplays the importance of musicians *as* audiences. The fact that jazz musicians were frequently on the road together, touring the nation with dance orchestras and big bands before returning to their homes in New York. These groups of musicians spread the word of bebop to cities across the country, where it was picked up by other jazz musicians, if not immediately by the public audience. In this sense the bus or train car were a musical “scene” on the move, spreading the word of bebop across the nation.

Sociologist Howard Becker (2004) was one of the young mid-western musicians influenced by bebop during its early days. As a pianist playing Chicago bars, brothels and Bar-Mitzvahs, Becker observed a relationship between particular “jazz places,” which he defines as a “physical space and also as a social and economic arrangement and the kind of music jazz musicians perform in it” (2004:20). Big band jazz was often played in hotel ballrooms with hotel guests as the main audience, while bebop was often played to a small group of jazz fans, many of them musicians themselves, in clubs and bars (2004: 21). Becker is less specific about the social boundaries of jazz places, specifically the way racially segregated clubs created separate scenes with only partially overlapping aesthetic values (Monson 1995a).

Paul Berliner (1994) acknowledges that jazz musicians perform in a large variety of settings including “concert halls, dance halls, churches, nightclubs, restaurants, circuses and in “general business” jobs such as weddings and Bar-Mitzvahs,” (1994:288) but the lion's share of his discussion is devoted to club settings, with few comparisons to other potential contexts. Most relevant to the relationship between music, community, and place is his conversation with saxophonist Lou Donaldson.

Recently in Europe, I found out right away that the audience wanted a lot of swing music, and I just played a little touch of bebop. In the early days when Club Bohemia in New York was going, I knew I could stretch out and play “Cherokee” and stuff like that all night. When I played in Harlem, I would stick to the blues and more funky stuff. (Berliner 1994:458)

Donaldson’s emphasis on the relationship between place, audience and musical style reflects different aspects of his own musical background in relation to each location. Bebop is tied to Greenwich Village, funk and soul jazz relates to Harlem, and swing relates Europe. Each place represents a musical skill set, as well as different kinds of interactions with local listeners. All this is to say that what one plays in a given context reflects an interaction between the musician’s skill set, the place in which he performs, and the audience that attends the performance. And these can be radically different from one another.

Finally, Michael Heller's work on the Lower East Side loft jazz scene in the 1970s (2012) shows that African American musicians were able to make a place for their music by creating collective organizations and establishing privately owned multipurpose spaces in which to live, work and curate their own concerts: “The lofts’ identity as mixed-use living and working spaces already blurs the boundaries between home, office and public venue [...]. The lofts could use strategic markers of domesticity in order to foreground their liminal position between home and nightclub” (Heller 2012:11).

Domesticity is a socially marked attribute – the home of one family may include family pictures, while another may include religious icons or modernist paintings. The loft scene provides a striking example of how a community of musicians can associate a music venue with a real and metaphorical home. It emphasizes musicians’ ability to make a place for their music by repurposing existing spaces, physically creating new performance venues and organizing concerts, but more importantly, it shows how musics become identified with the kind of spaces in which they are performed.

In what follows, I analyze the ways immigrant jazz musicians transform their own apartments, socio-commercial spaces and temporary locations into “immigrant jazz places” in two neighborhoods — Manhattan’s Greenwich Village, and Jackson Heights Queens — where multiple senses of “home” align and intersect.

Busking In Greenwich Village

[November 2015] *On a rainy Sunday morning, around 9:30 am, I head out to the Delancey F station in the Lower East Side of Manhattan. My small battery-powered amp is stuffed into a backpack, and the bass wheels forward in its cart, maneuvering between paddles and potholes. The Delancey is our favorite place to busk in the winter. On the weekends, the low train traffic and frequent delays keep people on the platform for up to fifteen minutes, a captive audience, if there ever was one. It also has a large waiting hall, a few benches, a bathroom and a small kiosk. Almost like a real venue. And payment is sometimes better – on a good Sunday, Federico and I would make around sixty dollars each. Stepping slowly down the stairs from the J to the F platform, I hear the sounds I dread the most. I was already too late. A singer and guitarist took our spot, playing R&B covers to the satisfied crowd. Trying to be minimally distracting, I asked the guitarist how long he thought they would be there, “At least three hours” he said quickly, continuing to play without missing a beat. A couple of minutes later, Federico arrived, looking disheveled and slightly disappointed. “Where should we go?” he asks. We took the train to West 4 Station in Greenwich Village. More people, more train traffic, less room and a lot of signs obstructing the audience's view. We crammed ourselves into the train, waiting for the doors to reopen at West 4 and pour out the mass of people. We took our gear two floors up to the A platform. A lone trumpet player was playing next to the entry, leaning against the railing. On the other side -- close to the exit -- another group was beginning to set up. A train passed, completely submerging us in the sound of its engine and squawking breaks. “What shall we do?” I asked Federico when the noise finally stopped, “I feel bad playing over him.” “It’s not like anyone can hear anything in this noise,” he said. “And there’s the other band over there. Someone else will play over him if we don’t.” STAND CLEAR OF THE CLOSING DOORS PLEASE! The automated subway announcer implored. A single bell rang, the doors closed, and once again, we were immersed in a sea of noise.*

Greenwich Village holds a unique place in American music history. From the early days of Café Society, the first racially integrated jazz club in the U.S., through the folk revival and anti-war protests of the 1960s, to the Village Peoples’ disco and the LGBTQ rights movement. Today, the sites of these revolutionary music histories are

memorialized in dozens of venues, restaurants and cafes, attracting tourists and affluent residents to the neighborhood.

There's a transient yet permanent presence of jazz in the Village. To the many musicians who perform here regularly it is the epicenter. They arrive to teach at one of the academic music programs in the neighborhood, play a restaurant gig, or participate in one of several nightly jam sessions. In addition to a lively stream of tourists flocking to the neighborhood year-round, the presence of two academic jazz programs in Greenwich Village – the New School for Jazz and New York University's Jazz Studies program — also contributes to a steady supply of enthusiastic performers and listeners for the neighborhood's jazz venues.

For immigrant musicians, especially during the summer, when teaching gigs are scarce, busking in one of the city's tourist-packed parks or commuter subways provides important additional income. While busking is a subject of interest for researchers in various fields, including anthropology, performance studies, and tourism studies (Tanenbaum 1995; Kaul 2013; Bywater 2007; Oakes and Warnaby 2011) busking has received little attention from jazz scholars.

Busking sessions are commonly initiated by one principal musician who functions as a bandleader and performs various tasks, both musical and related to the business aspect of the performance, including booking the musicians, collecting tip money and verbally interacting with the audience. This organizational model is particularly appropriate for jazz because it engages a rotating cast of musicians who share a wide core repertoire, rather than a stable band.

In some cases, a particular busking spot becomes associated with the musicians who perform there regularly. The southern corner of Washington Square Park has been associated with Japanese trumpet player Ryo Sasaki for over six years. By returning to the park early on most summer days and playing a regular schedule (roughly from 11am to 5pm) Ryo quite literally made a place for himself and the extensive network of musicians who have performed there with him over the years. Originally from Tokyo, Ryo arrived in New York in 2006, after graduating from Berklee College of Music in the late 1990s. He has since released three albums as a leader and performed at some of the best venues in city, including the Blue Note and Apollo Theater. Despite the fact that he holds regular restaurant gigs four nights a week and on Sundays, Ryo continues to busk in the mornings, intermittently working as much as fifteen hours a day.

Ryo creates a space for busking in several ways: First, by mediating the music to the uninitiated (and at times, uninterested) audience; second by demarcating the

boundaries and borders of the stage; and finally by defining the area where bystanders become audience members, and are expected to donate a tip. The creation of a performance space begins with the presence of musical instruments, but playing a musical instrument in the subway or outdoors does not in itself indicate a public performance.

Jazz performance in the busking context is unique in the sense that musicians neither assume nor expect an informed audience. Performers are thus consciously presenting an image of jazz as seen in popular media available to a wide share of the public, particularly through period films. As such, dress is an important marker of jazz in busking. Ryo will sometimes adopt visual representations of jazz “hipsterisms,” through vintage clothing, using suspenders, a fedora hat, sunglasses, Hawaii shirts, perhaps even a bowtie or necktie. He’ll use jazz slang, vocal announcements, and other verbal practices, including using the term “cat” in the introduction of band members to give the audience the sense that they are experiencing an “authentic” jazz performance. It is important to clarify that use of “jazzy” attire and slang are not inauthentic either. They are however, a way to mark the place as a “jazz place.” In this sense, they are no different than marking a “loft club” as a domestic residence, or a restaurant as an “ethnic” restaurant.

Repertoire selection is equally important in demarcating the space of the performance. When the prospective audience is in motion (for example, crossing through a park), a familiar tune, a virtuosic saxophone display, or an infectious groove, can bring them to a halt. Once the first few would-be-audience members stop to listen, others will join. Ryo’s choice of repertoire thus capitalizes on mass familiarity, danceable grooves and virtuosic display to physically mark the boundaries of the space as the range within which one can hear those elements.

After Ryo has played the melody of the tune and has taken the first solo, he walks around with his own CDs for sale, a tip-bag or a hat, and collects money from the listening audience. This practice reflects jazz performance practice, in which soloists take turns. Once a bassist or a drummer take a solo, the horn player (who is not restricted by her instrument) can walk around and collect tips. This ritualized circular walk around the audience effectively marks the perimeter of the performance and also indicates a socio-commercial space, implicitly saying, “if you stand beyond this point you are entering a performance space as an audience member and expected to contribute a tip to the musicians.” Some leaders prefer waiting until the song is played in full, and only then initiate a repeating “vamp” with the drum and bass to collect money from the audience while music is played. Ryo makes his tip round during or at the end of every song, attempting to remember who already gave a few dollars in the previous song and who only recently became a part of the audience.

Busking underground, in the city's subway system, offers a stark contrast to performing outdoors. Jazz busking is concentrated in main transportation hubs, where several lines intersect, often close to main tourist attractions of the city. These are located almost exclusively in Manhattan. Major stations, such as Herald Square (leading to the Empire State Building), West 4 Station in Greenwich Village, Union Square, 34th Penn Station, Times Square, and 59th street Columbus Square are most likely to offer some variety of jazz during the day or night.

The unique acoustics of the station and tunnels -- the low hum, high squeals of the passing trains and the changing flows of human traffic through the day -- can make a typical subway busking session seem a very loud, intense and difficult affair. In some ways it certainly is, but the subway is also an extremely forgiving musical environment, presenting multiple challenges and benefits to musicians. The extreme reverberation and the constant hum of the train influence the musicians' own perception of their instruments, masking certain elements of sound, while grotesquely exaggerating others. The echoes of a short high pitch may last long after it was played, while a long low note may drown immediately in the mechanical background hum. But the subway is also extremely forgiving musical environment. It gives a warm, sustained sound to even the most muted trumpet and makes every bass note sound roughly in tune.

Subway busking offers a tradeoff between the amount of exposure you receive and the number of trains that pass by, between the volume of people and the sheer noise drowning out any musical sound. During the morning rush hour, stations connecting several lines become a truly Chaplinesque scene, with swarms of people shooting through the doors at two-minute intervals. Those very same stations are a busker's goldmine during the weekend, when train traffic is reduced to once every ten minutes and tourists and shoppers are out and about. Solos become longer, ballads are suddenly an option and there might be time for a bass solo. It is for this reason that buskers, unlike anyone else, are always happy about train delays. The captive audience has little else to do except to listen to some jazz, and truly appreciate the musical time passer.

For buskers, small gestures, which are generally avoided in the subway, such as eye contact, a head nod, or a smile, become powerful means of communication. At times it seems that the audience itself is aware of the implicit contest between musicians and trains, and cheers for the "human" team. "This was a nightmare of a commute, but you made it a little better!" a young woman in a business suit said, boarding the train on her way to work. A few feet away, an elderly couple began to dance to a familiar tune. Children stare intently from a distance, in awe at the strange encounter underground, and cherish the opportunity to approach and put a dollar or a tiny handful of dimes in the tip box.

In the subway there's no circular walk because of the limited time for each song and the frequent circulation of listeners. When the train announces its arrival from a distance, most musicians will "head-out," playing the final melody of the song, letting the noise of the approaching train mix with listeners' applause, and inaudibly shouting some final words of farewell and safe travels before the train comes to a halt.

A busking session requires stamina: playing for stretches of four or five hours is a joy some musicians may experience in weddings or a particularly bad restaurant gig, but the get-paid-as-you-go system of busking means you are being evaluated moment to moment; no tired bartender will slip an envelope into your hand at the end of the evening. But busking is also highly tolerant to a short playlist. Out of the hundreds of people that may have heard you in a single session, few stay for more than a couple of songs. Busking is the time when new repertoire is practiced or when old songs are repeated to conserve mental energy. You always have another chance to do better.

And then there are those listeners who stay, letting their train leave the station without them, just to hear one more song, one more solo, perhaps take a picture or video to share online with their friends. Few things are more rewarding in the spectrum between the swarm of people rushing up the stairs and those that resist, holding on to the music until the next train.

When musicians make place for themselves within a subway station, a constant movement of people is both an asset and a risk. Musicians must choose a location that should shield them and their instruments from the mass of passengers passing through. A staircase, a wall, railing or even just a support beam will reduce the chance that an absent-minded traveler will ram into you while in a hurry to catch the train. An insecure location in a busy station may cause damage that will take several good busking sessions to cover the cost of instrument repair. Some stations have particularly convenient spots for playing music -- a good open space, perhaps a bench or two.

Musicians performing in the subway maintain a delicate etiquette with one another. Most platforms can only sustain one busking band at a time, both financially and sonically. Those that arrive too early take the risk of a low commuter turnout, spending the first hours of their morning without making any money. Those that arrive too late risk moving from one occupied station to the next until they find an open spot to dock. With the added baggage of musical equipment and heavy passenger traffic this can turn into an exhausting and wasteful way to spend an afternoon.

Most musicians who arrive at a station already occupied by a busker will attempt to inquire how long they expect to stay there, deciding whether to wait them out or to move to another place based on the response. Some will wait patiently until a fellow busker has finished, support as an audience and even share a tune (but never the tips). On

the other hand, an inept musician playing in a prime busking location in the subway may garner hostile looks from buskers waiting to take over the spot, implicitly accusing him of squandering the money to be made in that spot when he should have stayed home to practice.

The noise, commotion and changing circumstances of the subway make busking in the subway a deliberate act of place making. Finding an available and financially rewarding station with a good balance of train to human traffic requires a musician to study the subway, to become familiar with its sonic environment and carve out a space within it.

Considering busking locations in light of Chacko's notion of an "ethnic arena," which "provides a temporary location for the convergence of the ethnic community [but] [a]t the end of its period of community use, all ethnic markers are erased so that it reverts to neutral space" (2003:35-6), a busking spot is an "arena" in the sense that it becomes, temporarily, a meeting place for immigrant musicians who perform there, and for those who stop by to sit in, listen and chat. But unlike ethnic arenas, busking locations are marked by jazz as an American cultural and musical phenomenon rather than through performances of ethnic difference. In order to convincingly "play" a jazz musician for an uninitiated audience, jazz musicians develop a set of performative skills -- visual, discursive and musical -- congruent with a popular media image of jazz. Ryo's spot in Washington Square Park is maintained through his proficiency in dressing, speaking and playing to audiences' preconceived notion of a New York jazz musician.

Being Radically Jewish at the Village Vanguard

[September 7th 2014] The Uri Gurvich Quartet, with Leo Genovese, Peter Slavov and Francisco Mela, played the closing show of "Angels at the Vanguard," a week-long celebration of John Zorn's music at the legendary club. As I walked down 7th Avenue towards the familiar red door, I saw Kate, Uri's wife, standing in line. I joined her and three of her friends. Uri and Kate married several months before the show and as we were standing, friends and fellow musicians came to congratulate her for the big occasion, constantly referring to both the wedding and the Vanguard performance. At some point, with more and more people arriving, the line began to coil around itself and stretch around the corner, a visual representation of Gurvich's success – the show was sold out.

Our tickets were waiting at the door, and we were lucky to catch a seat just a few feet away from the stage. On the wall around us were pictures of the musicians who had made this venue legendary: Rollins, Coltrane, Monk, Bill Evans. I began to test myself; can I recognize the pictures of all of the musicians on the wall? Would I have recognized

them if instead of pictures, there were sounds? Each look triggered a memory of a song, a solo, a piano intro. Would Uri's sound become this recognizable some day? Would a quick glimpse at a picture be enough to conjure Uri's playing in listeners' mind?

When Israeli-born saxophonist Uri Gurvich received his first invitation to perform with his quartet at the Village Vanguard, where John Coltrane, Sonny Rollins and many others had made music history, it was a special occasion for him and his group. The Village Vanguard is the oldest remaining club in Greenwich Village, a musical “home” for generations of musicians. But to receive the invitation in this “home” of jazz, Gurvich had to play along particular musical contours of New York multicultural politics.

Part of a week of performances dedicated to Zorn's new work Masada Book III, Uri's booking depended on various factors. As a recording artist for John Zorn's label, *Tzadik*, and his Radical Jewish Culture imprint, Gurvich was first invited to perform a concert at the New York City Town Hall on March 19, 2014. The concert featured twenty different ensembles performing the premiere of Zorn's new composition cycle, “Masada Book III: The Book Beriah.” Deborah Gordon, the owner of the Vanguard (daughter of the late Max Gordon, a Jewish immigrant born in Minsk, Belarus in 1903, who passed away in 1978), was in the audience at Zorn's Town Hall concert. While he has been a fixture in the New York scene since the late 1970s, Zorn had never performed at the Vanguard before. Gordon decided that it was time for Zorn's music to be featured in the famous club. Zorn and Gordon, who have known each other since high school, came up with a unique presentation for Zorn's music: a kind of residency that would mirror the booking practices of Zorn's own club, The Stone. Rather than playing with his own group, “Angels at the Vanguard,” as it was titled, allowed Zorn to become the Vanguard's “booking manager” for a week, choosing his favorite groups to perform his new composition cycle on various nights, with Zorn performing occasionally on alto saxophone as a guest.

Established in the mid-1990s, Zorn's imprint “Radical Jewish Culture” was a part of a multicultural strategy to promote “Great Jewish Music,” a tongue-in-cheek reference to the AACM's motto “Great Black Music” (Zorn 2006). Gurvich released two albums with the label, *The Storyteller* in 2009 and *BabEl* in 2013. Both albums reference Israeli and Jewish themes in both sounds and text. For Gurvich, Zorn's label presented an opportunity to distribute his music. This meant clearly marking his music as Jewish, rather than emphasizing, for example, the influence of Cannonball Adderley and John Coltrane on his playing, or the equally important musical influence of Mela, Slavov and Genovese, hailing from Cuba, Bulgaria and Argentina respectively. Gurvich's second album “BabEl” frames the multinational background of his quartet within a Jewish

context by recounting the biblical story of Babylon, where according to the Jewish myth the world's plurality of languages was ordained as punishment from God.

When Zorn requested Uri to perform the show, he gave him a list of about fifteen compositions from which to choose. Some were sketches, others had only a melody; some were suspiciously simple while others incredibly complex. None of them resembled Gurvich's original style of composition, with its infectious bass lines and drum grooves so well suited to Slavov and Mela's playing. Zorn's pieces were fragmented, broken, erratic. Zorn disapproved of any changes to his music. From this small selection of charts, Gurvich had to choose those most suitable for arranging for his quartet, knowing their strengths, and ones that would allow him to communicate his own sound and aesthetics.

As the performance began, it was clear that Gurvich's arrangements of Zorn's compositions required flawless communication. Using his saxophone as a baton, he cued each new part, pointing to timed and untimed sections, odd and even time signatures. Genovese, sitting on the left side of the stage, looked intently at Gurvich for musical instructions, making sure not to miss any move while glancing quickly at the chart in front of him. Slavov and Mela, relying on years of collaboration (as part of Joe Lovano's and Kenny Barron's groups, among others), seemed more focused on listening to each other than on following the chart. On "Qafsiel," a ballad alternating irregularly between a 4/4 ostinato and a 5/4 groove, the quartet demonstrated the importance of their familiarity with each other's playing, particularly when performing relatively unfamiliar music. Gurvich cued the intro, signaling the opening meter, 4/4. Slavov, following with a repeating bass line, entered at the half-measure rather than playing in unison, creating a polyrhythmic feel. In these few bars, the downbeat of the measure was unclear. Did Slavov come in late? Was this part of Gurvich's arrangement? As the ballad entered its main melodic section, changing the time signature to 5/4 their familiarity became evident -- there was no mistake. Knowing Gurvich's use of ostinato bass lines, the musicians were able to communicate this ambiguity to the audience. Genovese, taking the first solo, manipulated the scalar melody, chopping it up and inserting sweeping passages between melody fragments. Mela, his snare and tom-tom tuned a fourth and a fifth above the floor tom-tom, superimposed various subdivisions and little drum melodies over the groove. As the performance unfolded, a constant question remained open -- would Zorn come up to the stage? Standing at the back of the room, wearing his famous tallit katan under his shirt, Zorn was listening intently, sometimes closing his eyes and other times looking straight at band.

Gurvich's relationship with Zorn is important to his development as a leader and it is inextricably linked to his Jewish identity. Without Zorn's support and without his

assurance of the quality of Gurvich's music to booking managers, radio broadcasters and jazz critics, Gurvich's music would not have received as wide a listenership as it deservedly achieved. By performing pieces from Zorn's "Book of Angels," with their Hebrew "sounding" names and their association with Jewish mysticism, Gurvich became another actor in Zorn's larger Jewish multicultural project. Zorn's wearing of a *Tallit Katan* -- the undergarment of orthodox Jewish men, visible due to long tassels hanging below the hem of the shirt -- is another visual aspect of. But what do these Jewish markers mean to Gurvich?

For any jazz musician, the first Village Vanguard performance is an important event in one's musical career, because of the legendary performances that took place there and the meaning that generations of jazz musicians, journalists and audiences have invested in it. In order to enter the hallowed triangle hall of the Village Vanguard, Gurvich had to walk through the door that Zorn's "Jewish" compositions had opened for him, so to speak.

Both Ryo's performances in the Washington Square Park and Gurvich's performance at the Village Vanguard required that they "dress up" musically to meet the expectations of their audiences. Whereas the uninitiated audience of the park expected a popular representation of "authentic jazz," the audience at "Angels at the Vanguard" was divided between those who expected a performance of Zorn's "Radical Jewish" music and those who expected Gurvich's rhythmically sweeping quartet (and perhaps a few listeners who had no knowledge of either Zorn or Gurvich). In both contexts, creating "radical" or "authentic" musical spaces was a matter of obtaining the skill sets to musically mark them as such. The extent to which these spaces and sounds feel like "home" is equally a matter of time and practice as it is a matter of national, ethnic or religious identity.

House sessions in Jackson Heights

[September 2014] *I get off the 7 Train at the 82nd Street stop, carefully stepping down from the elevated platform, trying to orient myself towards 34th avenue. Karina Colis, a drummer and singer from Mexico who has been living in Jackson Heights since 2006, invited me to a session at her house. Walking upstairs, I could hear some furious scales practiced on soprano saxophone on the second floor. A bassist was bowing long notes on the third. Karina's room, set up with a single bed to leave room for her drum kit and a keyboard, allows her to practice, compose and host sessions. We talked about her upcoming trip to Chennai, India where she teaches drums at Swarnabhoomi Academy of Music. When I asked her how she came to teach in India, she told that Prasanna Ramaswamy, a Carnatic/jazz/rock guitarist who plays regularly at Terraza, invited her to teach there. She's been going there in the spring semester for the last two years.*

Hailed as one of the most diverse communities in the world, Jackson Heights is home to some 100,000 residents. Two thirds of them are foreign-born, representing 160 different languages. Bounded by the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway on the west, the Grand Central Expressway on the north, Junction Boulevard on the east, and Roosevelt Avenue on the south, it was not originally intended to be the tower of Babel it is today. Jews and African Americans were banned from living in the neighborhood until the late 1940s and 1960s respectively. As consequence, “The Queens Jazz Trail,” a promotional tourist map of the homes of legendary jazz musicians who lived in the borough, takes a conspicuous detour around Jackson Heights, moving quickly to Louis Armstrong’s home in the adjacent Corona neighborhood. In the 1950s, with the suburbanization of New York, real estate prices in the area began to drop, attracting artists and entertainers to the neighborhood, among them a large LGBTQ community. After the enactment of the 1965 immigration act, immigrants from dozens of Asian and Latin American nations arrived in the neighborhood, including large Ecuadorian, Colombian, Mexican, Bangladeshi, Chinese, Indian, Dominican, Peruvian, Pakistani and Filipino communities, but with no single group dominating. The 7 train, running above Roosevelt Avenue, is the lifeline of the neighborhood. Cutting through the skyline and dominating the soundscape, it is sometimes referred to as the “international express,” taking local commuters to and from Midtown Manhattan to a day’s work and bringing tourists and patrons to the neighborhood’s restaurants and bars.

The session at Colis’s house was a completely ordinary affair. Private homes have served as performance venues since the beginning of the New York jazz scene, from the Harlem “rent parties” of the 1920s to the Downtown “loft jazz” scene of the 1970s (Heller 2013; Early 1991). It is safe to speculate that the majority of jazz music performed daily in New York is played in the homes of jazz musicians, in small apartments, basements, studios, and rehearsal rooms in what is generally referred to as “house sessions.” While our trio sessions were not conceived as “Latin jazz sessions,” Colis’s desire to work on her own compositions required that I expand my knowledge and competence to realize her compositions. When playing Karina’s original compositions, she requested that I play the specific *tumbao* line, a ternary rhythm with an emphasis on the second and third beat. She took the time to instruct me on what she was after. Our interaction across specific musical competencies was communicated and mediated initially through jazz vocabulary, and later through the terminology she used to describe the rhythm.

Leonor Falcon, a violinist and Jackson Heights resident originally from Venezuela, organized a reading session with Trinidadian flautist David Bertrand, Japanese saxophonist Ayumi Ishito, native New Yorker Carter Bales on drums and myself on bass. Leonor brought several of her compositions for us to read at the session.

One of the pieces, a fast 5/8 tune called “Merenguito,” was a particular challenge for all of us. Leonor was using her violin to strum the rhythm traditionally played on the *cuatro* (a small string instrument), and played the angular melody of the tune, but the complex harmony and harmonic rhythm of the fast tune sent us back over and over to the beginning of the piece, analyzing the problems with the groove and the relationship between the written music and the sounded result. By bringing her own charts to the session, Falcon created a space where a Venezuelan *merengue*, played on violin, is spoken through jazz. Jazz is the musical lingua franca through which Falcon could communicate to us her composition with varying degrees of success and translation.

These sessions, at which Colis and Falcon chose to rehearse their compositions in their own homes, were not meant as a simple expression of Mexican or Venezuelan ethnic difference. They were intended to reduce musical difference through practice -- to ensure that the rest of the ensemble had the ability to play these compositions in future performances. In doing so, they created a musical space in which national markers were inextricably linked to jazz as a familiar musical discourse, not yet a “home,” but the repurposing of familiar materials to build foundations for an immigrant musical meeting place.

In both cases we did not rehearse in preparation for a specific gig, but to workshop the composition and develop the skills needed to perform it. Indeed, I was not called to perform with Colis or Falcon at their next gigs. When I heard Colis’ regular trio perform the composition several weeks later, their musical conversation afforded the freedom of communication of “native speakers” of the music, freedom of the sort I could not hope to achieve in such a short time. However, comparing the version we performed with that performed by Colis’ trio I was happily surprised by how much information the two of us were able to communicate, through jazz, in the short time we had to rehearse the composition.

Jazz and Immigrant Folk at Terraza 7

[January 2015] On the border between Elmhurst and Jackson-Heights, just past the small Plaza at the intersection of Gleane Street and Roosevelt Avenue, Freddy Castiblanco is renovating again. The owner of Terraza 7, Castiblanco moved to New York from Colombia in 2000. He opened the Terraza two years later, in June 2002 and has been building it ever since. The two-level bar, with its iron “Terraza” hanging above the heads of patrons, attracts mostly local working-class men and women in their twenties, thirties, and forties. On most nights, a live band is playing on the upper level. Freddy promotes the bar as a “Jazz & Immigrant Folk” venue, with the ambiguity of the terms jazz, immigrant, and folk serving to accommodate the variety of musics performed at the Terraza. The sounds of Afro-Peruvian Jazz, Carnatic Rock, or Moroccan Gnawa are equally likely to fill the room along with lively chatter, and clinking glasses.

When I started my place, I tried to do something that many people would share. I noticed that the people tend to be from the Colombian community. And at some point they tried to separate from other cultures. I noticed that people from Colombia started saying that ‘Oh, our place is getting everyday more Mexicans, or Ecuadorian,’ and that wasn’t the concept that I wanted here. So I started bringing live music from Mexico, from Veracruz (Son Jarocho), and the people from Colombia, Ecuador, from other cultures, start [to] admire expressions from Mexico. Also brought music from Peru, *cajon peruano*. Through different musical expressions, the people begin to value the diversity and real value of each culture. (Castiblanco 2016)

Edward Perez, a Texas-born jazz bassist who lives a few blocks away remembers that night vividly.

I did get to hear music from Veracruz at Terraza, and I heard it there for the first time. One of the cool things about this group is that it will set up on the floor, not on stage but on the ground floor, and I remember one of these nights they played until really late, and it just kind of turned into a jam session, and they said you know the strings of the *leona* [a guitar-like instrument from Veracruz] are tuned in fours, you could play it, and he just handed me this thing and I just played with them, a little bit just one vamp, but that was a really cool experience. (Perez 2016)

Perez’s use of jazz vocabulary such as “jam session” and “vamp” to explain his interactions with the musicians playing *son jarocho* suggests that his own way of understanding the interactions is grounded in his background as a jazz musician. Castiblanco quickly realized that jazz was the language musicians at Terraza use to interact across different musical traditions. As early as 2003, Castiblanco began to curate ensembles that use jazz as an aesthetic and conceptual framework, avoiding nostalgic representations of “home” and creating music that is deeply rooted in the diversity of New York’s musical cultures, including free jazz, bebop and big bands.

I wanted something that would help us to dialogue among cultures, something that we can find in this community, meaning New York. I thought jazz would be really good, and also bring “acoustic memories” to that new culture. Jazz is also very malleable, I admire the plasticity of jazz. You can express your memories, your cultural acoustic memories through jazz very well. (Castiblanco 2016)

In our conversation, Perez mentioned Castiblanco’s role in facilitating his own musical encounters and creating new acoustic memories.

I've been playing at Terraza for almost ten years. Freddy has introduced me to different musicians there who played different styles, he encouraged certain Colombian musicians to call me for their gigs, and there were certain styles that I played for the first time through that. We used to play a lot of Afro-Peruvian music mixed with jazz. For example, Freddy put together a group for Javier Ruibal, a Spanish singer songwriter with some flamenco influence. I played bass in that group, Manuel Valera on Piano, Ludwig Alfonso played drums, Yosvany Terry on saxophone. The guy didn't usually have saxophone on his gigs. That was Freddy's idea. (Perez 2016)

Castiblanco's decision to create dialogue between immigrant communities through jazz is hardly trivial. The initial protests of patrons from the Colombian community suggest that he was willing to risk alienating some of his regular customers in order to create a more broadly inclusive environment. As Chacko observes, immigrant-owned restaurants often serve as informal and intimate meeting places for the surrounding community (Chacko 2003, Brettell 2008). Carving out a space for jazz, or any other musical culture within an immigrant community hub can be difficult to negotiate when patrons interpret it as an intrusion or threat to the community's intimate cultural space. In fact, social boundaries can be difficult to negotiate even in an immigrant community hub dedicated to jazz.

Until fairly recently, Tomi Jazz, a music bar and restaurant in Midtown Manhattan, was a membership club that served only Japanese patrons (Tchou 2016). While the owner, Ken Mukohata, is increasingly booking more non-Japanese headliners, the diversity of musicians performing at Tomi Jazz resulted from the hiring practices of the musicians rather than the owner. As an example, for a performance in December 2013, guitarist Yusuke Yamanouchi hired Chilean drummer Rodrigo Racabarran, Swedish bass player Lars Ekman, Japanese tenor player Yuto Mitomi and Israeli pianist Nitzan Gavrieli. Today about a third of the performers at Tomi Jazz are non-Japanese.

Castiblanco's continuous work on the Terraza as an immigrant jazz and folk venue is unique in its promotion of diversity through music. Castiblanco's explicit use of jazz to create new musical sensibilities and sense of home draws from multiple past memories and present experiences in New York, rather than single ethnicity or country of origin. In this sense, it challenges the emphasis on difference in multicultural politics.

Conclusion: Immigrant Jazz Places

Immigrant jazz musicians invest meaning in private homes, city parks, subway stations, jazz clubs, community centers and concert halls. They return to them regularly to play, work and socialize, thereby turning them into representations of "home" to the immigrant jazz scene. While not all of these locations fit neatly into Elizabeth Chacko's definition of "ethnic places" or Howard Becker's definition of "jazz places" (2004), they

share aspects of both through the ongoing and active place making of immigrant jazz musicians.

The music played in these immigrant jazz places is never a simple reflection of “ethnic identity” or of “jazz identity” but a complex intersection of musical skills, the identities of the musicians and listening audience, and the meanings they ascribe to a particular venue or space. Immigrant jazz musicians create places that are at once a “home” to shared creative practices, and are therefore a musical scene, but those creative practices also function as ethnic markers for certain communities, and become a meeting place for immigrants, making them ethnic places. In this sense, they are shaped by one’s membership in an ethnic community just as it is by daily interactions with individuals outside of the community. For immigrant jazz musicians, a social and musical sense of “home,” is not always congruent with a sense of racial or ethnic identification.

Chapter 6: Sound at First Sight: Jam Sessions and Immigrants in Brooklyn, New York

[April 2014] I walk down Nostrand Avenue towards Vodou Bar, a Haitian-American nightclub on the corner of Halsey and Nostrand. On Monday nights this small neighborhood joint hosts a jam session led by the “Common Quartet”: Seth Trachy on tenor saxophone, Alex Wyatt on drums, Pablo Menares on bass and Nitzan Gavrieli on piano -- two Americans, a Chilean and an Israeli. Tables are lined up along the outside wall amidst the cars and human traffic of Nostrand Avenue. Familiar sounds hit me as I walk in. My eyes slowly adjust to the dim lights. The place is still empty. A couple is sitting at the bar with their backs to the band, chatting amongst themselves. Trachy nods to say hello. The others are playing, wrapped up in the music. Maya, the bartender, extends her hand to greet me “How you doin’? What can I get you?” I sit at the bar to watch the band’s opening set. Tucked in a small niche at the front of the room, the band discusses the next song, a Miles Davis tune? A ballad? A B-flat blues? They play the song “as is,” allowing it to lead them in different directions, without having to decide much in advance. The first set comes to an end and the band takes a short break. Trachy, the saxophonist, announces that the second set will be opened for a jam session. More musicians trickle inside. I recognize some: Juliata, an Argentine saxophonist, Mark, a bass player from Toronto. Others I see for the first time. “Ofer!” Pablo says as he walks over to the bar “It’s nice to see new faces!” he adds jokingly. “How are you man? You want to play?”

This chapter examines the incorporation of immigrant musicians in a jazz jam session in Brooklyn, New York. Migration scholars define incorporation as a dialectical process in which hosts and immigrants negotiate established social boundaries between “us” and “not us” (Zolberg and Long 1999:8). Scholars have studied the social dynamics of jam sessions since the 1950s,²⁴ but the interactions of immigrants and American-born musicians in jazz jam session have rarely been studied. Drawing on ethnographic participation as a bass player in a weekly jam session in Brooklyn, New York, I analyze the influence of race, gender, ethnicity, education and professional affiliation as social boundaries between immigrants and hosts. I argue that the presentation of musical competence in the jam session context provides immigrant musicians with means to cross, blur, and shift social boundaries between themselves and their American-born peers and to establish themselves in the New York jazz scene.

²⁴ See Cameron 1954; Becker 1973; Merriam and Mack 1959; Ellison 1964; DeVeaux 1999; Mcgee 2011; Nelson 2011; Walker 2010.

Incorporation

In migration studies, incorporation denotes the negotiation of social boundaries. French sociologists Michele Lamont and Virag Molnar suggested that boundaries can be conceived as belonging to two categories. The first are symbolic boundaries, “conceptual distinctions made by social actors to categorize objects, people [and] practices. They are tools by which individuals and groups struggle over and come to agree upon definitions of reality” (Lamont and Molnár 2002:168). Social boundaries, according to Lamont and Molnar, are symbolic boundaries that became so widely accepted in a particular society that they are seen as “objective,” sometimes used to justify patterns of “social exclusion or class and racial segregation” (2002:169).

Sociologists Aristide Zolberg and Long Litt Woon define incorporation as “a dialectical process in which hosts and immigrants negotiate established social boundaries between “us” and “not us” (Zolberg and Long 1999). They analyze how religion and language are used to construct such boundaries, and identify three kinds of boundary negotiation between newcomers and hosts: individual crossing of boundaries, blurring of boundaries, and shifting of boundaries. While boundary crossing entails some acquisition of the host society’s language, food, clothing and music, blurring and shifting boundaries require more structural and institutional changes in the host society (1999:9).

Writing about twentieth-century European immigration to the American West coast, historian Elliot Barkan and his colleagues conceive of incorporation as actions taken by individual immigrants and their families in order to become closer to the host society:

Incorporation involves individuals engaging in increasing circles of contact and interaction with the host society, beginning with the workplace and continuing into a range of informal and less structured encounters in venues such as neighborhoods, schools, sport and recreation facilities, and religious institutions. In its advanced stages incorporation may include membership in non-ethnic organizations, citizenship and suffrage, and possibly social interactions that transcend group boundaries, such as dating and out-marriage. (Barkan, Diner, and Kraut 2007:15)

Sociologists Richard Alba and Victor Nee point to the diversity of incorporation experiences in the United States, affected primarily by racial constructions, religion and socio-economic conditions (Alba and Nee 2009). Segmented assimilation, which suggests that immigrants incorporate into a host-group of similar racial, religious and socio-economic status, is a theoretical concept coined by sociologists Alejandro Portes

and Min Zhou to capture the diversity of incorporation processes of different immigrant groups in the U.S (Portes and Zhou 1993).

Importantly, in a city like New York, where one out of three adults is a first-generation immigrant and two out of three adults are either first or second-generation immigrants, the “host” society is itself a composite society of immigrants (Foner 2013). Sociologists Philip Kasinitz, John Mollenkopf and Mary Waters claim that in New York City, the incorporation of immigrants is influenced by the long history of immigration to the city and the dominance of ethnic minorities in the city’s institutions and political life (Kasinitz, Mollenkopf, and Waters 2002). Immigrants in New York enter a composite host society, made up primarily of immigrants and children of immigrants, a “minority majority city.”

As a resident of Bushwick, a predominantly Latino neighborhood in north Brooklyn, my inability to speak Spanish has considerable influence on my interactions with friends, neighbors and local business owners. In many cases, my companions switch to English or translate their conversations to accommodate me. In my company, my friends kept their exchanges in Spanish brief, to no more than a few words, all the while encouraging me to learn Spanish. Similarly, when an Israeli friend visited me in my home, we would keep our Hebrew exchanges to a minimum so as not to alienate my roommates. Despite our different experiences of incorporation, one common aspect we share is our move from a relatively strong connection with (and dependency on) one’s own ethnic community to an increasing connection and interaction with individuals outside of the community. Clearly, intersecting processes of incorporation entail individual crossing of social boundaries but they also involve a willingness to accommodate such crossings.

Jam Sessions: Beyond Insiders and Outsiders

Historically, jam sessions allowed some crossing of social boundaries. In 1930s, in the backrooms of Harlem nightclubs, in hotel rooms and in private apartments, black and white musicians performed together without the social and legal repercussions of American social and legal segregation (Monson 1995a). The possibility of crossing the racial line was unidirectional, available only to white musicians entering predominantly black spaces. While black musicians did not completely exclude white musicians from jam sessions, they made use of competition to establish the criteria for entering jam sessions. Through tests of musical competence, jam sessions became gateways into a close-knit community of African American musicians (Ellison 1964:212).

In “cutting contests,” competitive trading of musical ideas, African American musicians raised the level of musical competence required for acceptance (Walker 2010). By making the music faster, longer and more harmonically, rhythmically, and physically challenging, African American musicians made sure only the best musicians participated in their jam sessions. By making the music more difficult, they were able to “get rid of [...] inept playing and make room for the real musicians, whether white or black” (Ellison 1964:212).

Jam sessions have since been a fruitful field for scholars interested in the social dynamics of inclusion and exclusion. Sociologist Howard Becker discussed jam sessions in his pioneering study of marginality in American society (Becker 1973). In his study of Bebop, Scott DeVeaux, historicizes the growing public acceptance of jazz in 1940s for commercial representations of jam sessions as the most “authentic” jazz event (DeVeaux 1999). More recently, Dana Gooley suggested that the exclusionary attitude towards the audience valorized in these early representations of jam sessions prevents them from being truly democratic and participatory (Gooley 2011).

A second line of inquiry has focused on the social dynamics of musicians participating in jam sessions. Alan Merriam and Raymond Mack emphasized the camaraderie and mentorship that characterize jam sessions (Merriam and Mack 1959). Writing in the late 1950s, Bruce Lippincott attempted to capture the collective decision making process and the unspoken codes and conventions of the session, from song selection to the order of solos (Lippincott 1958:116). Others, such as trumpet player Rex Stewart, have highlighted the competitive nature of interactions between established and up-and-coming musicians. In his book *Jazz Masters of the Thirties*, Stewart observes that the Rhythm Club in Harlem was a typical locale for an initial assessment of a recent arrival, or what he calls “the process of elimination” (Stewart 1972:144). When newcomers entered the club with their instrument they would be invited to play with one of the piano players who was usually there. In the meantime, other musicians would be called to provide competition. If a newcomer was deemed sufficiently skillful, he was invited to sit in with the club’s house band.

There are few scholarly accounts of the importance of jam session for musicians arriving at new locales. Sociologist William Cameron describes this situation in abstract terms, without referring to the location of the jam session or the origin of the recently arrived musician.

A jazzman new to the group usually accompanies a sponsor who considers him acceptable and introduces him to the boys. They ask where he has worked, whom

he knows, and if he knows a certain little spaghetti house in "L. A.," in a general effort to discover mutual friends and background. With more reserve the same treatment is accorded the jazzman who drops in uninvited. If he gives the right answers he may be asked to sit-in, that is, to replace one of the men then playing. [Cameron 1954:178]

In their inquiries regarding the background of the musician, the local musicians in Cameron's example are delineating a social boundary. The musician is allowed to participate only if he "gives the right answers" regarding his musical and professional background. We do not know the consequences of giving the wrong answers or what would be the content of a "wrong" biography, but it seems that crossing that social boundary by dropping in uninvited to a jam session is permissible, so long as the musician demonstrates adequate musical knowledge and ability:

[The musician] is asked what he would like to play and perhaps in what key. His choice is a password, for to establish himself properly in their eyes he must choose one of about a thousand "standard" jam tunes, for each of which there are only a few traditional keys. Should he name some tune which is unaccepted, he will be told curtly, "We don't know it." (A lie!) "Let's play "Rose Room." This being the case, he had better play "Rose Room," or whatever, in their key, and play it well. [Cameron 1954:180]

Cameron's description sets up the group of musicians as almost a single entity, "speaking," "lying" and "knowing" as a collective and not as individuals, rhetorically marking the social boundary between those "in the know" and those who are new to the scene.

In his essay, "Golden Age, Times Past," Ralph Ellison famously called jam sessions "the jazzman's true academy" (Ellison 1964:208). For recently arrived musicians, jam sessions are indeed an important educational experience. They are a place to try out new ideas, learn new tunes, or experiment with new harmonies. As George Lewis recounts, jam sessions in Chicago had an "explicitly experimental atmosphere [where] musicians explored the contours, borders, and possibilities of the bebop language" (Lewis 2008:18)

Yet another important educational aspect of jam session is that they teach outsiders how to use musical competence to mitigate a sense of alienation. As clarinetist Anat Cohen explained to me, attending a jam session teaches you "how to hang" (Cohen 2015). Ellison recalls that in jam sessions at Minton's Playhouse in Harlem, players new to the scene got a chance for recognition and an opportunity to test their improvisational

skill and physical endurance in competition with established musicians. He mentions, for example, that “it was here [at Minton’s] that [British pianist] George Shearing played on his first night in the United States,” but says little else of immigrant jazz musicians who performed at the club (Ellison 1964:208). Discussing musicians visiting the club at the time of his writing (1959), Ellison suggests that jam sessions at Minton’s might actually be more important for foreign musicians than for Americans:

Dutchmen and Swedes, Italians and Frenchmen, German and Belgians, and even Japanese [...] they study the discs on which the [bebop] revolution is preserved. Such young men (many of them excellent musicians in the highest European tradition) find in the music made at Minton’s a fuller freedom of self-realization [...] they come, fresh off the boats and planes, bringing their [...] startlingly innocent European faces [...] perhaps Minton’s has more meaning to European jazz fans than to Americans. [Ellison 1964:205–206]

In his romanticized account, Ellison shows appreciation for European musicians’ commitment to jazz, but he considers them primarily as tourists, pilgrims or fans, rather than aspiring jazz musicians. He does not mention Latin American musicians in his description although many of them performed in Harlem clubs and would presumably participate in jam sessions as well (Bauza 1978).

For Ellison, the jam session is the “true academy” in yet another sense, contrasted with academic music institutions and tied to the role of jazz in African American history. In Ellison’s day, jam sessions were a place where veteran musicians schooled a younger generation in the folklore of the art form and its political and social significance. While the African American legacy of jazz continues to be central to immigrant musicians’ lives through stories, anecdotes and rigorous study of recordings, today, as Eitan Wilf shows, immigrant musicians are more likely to learn about the broader political and social meanings of jazz through books and formal academic training than in jam sessions (Wilf 2014:100).

These historical accounts align with more recent studies of exclusion and inclusion in jam sessions. Anthropologist João H. Costa Vargas writes that in the jam sessions at the “World Stage” in Los Angeles, the majority of participants are African American, but “white, Latino and Asian American as well as musicians from China, Indonesia, Japan, Sweden, Denmark, England, Canada, Australia, Russia, Brazil, Poland, Israel, South Africa, Mexico, Cuba, Argentina, Italy, Spain, France, Germany, Colombia, Haiti, and from various U.S. states appeared at the venue during the time of [his] research” (2010:323). Vargas, who plays bass and immigrated to the U.S from Brazil,

sees exclusion and openness as related primarily to racial (and gender) boundaries and an “ethic of openness” among some of the African American musicians attending the session. While he claims that as a black Brazilian he was only a “relative” insider to the group because he is not African American, he nonetheless considers himself an insider. His Brazilian identity did not exclude him from incorporating into the group. In fact, his ethnographic anecdotes from the jam session are written in the first person plural, similarly to the group speech presented by Cameron.

He [Billy Higgins] set up the tempo for "A Night in Tunisia" and cued the rest of us to come in. Just relax, he said. So we did, in spite of the furious pace. He nodded in appreciation and reassurance. We were doing fine, and began to settle in the changing grooves, alternating between an Afro-Cuban feel and a fast-paced hard bop. [Costa Vargas 2010:320]

While some immigrant musicians purposefully frequent jam sessions with a large African American contingent, such as the Tuesday night Evolution sessions at the Zinc Bar in Greenwich Village, the rationale for attending is grounded in a desire to interact with a particular group of contemporary musicians and not with some putatively “true” African American context. At Vodou bar, immigrant musicians are similarly seeking interaction with a particularly diverse group of peers, but not necessarily the approval of the largely African American audience.

Benjamin Brinner defines musical competence as “[i]ndividualized mastery of the array of interrelated skills and knowledge that is required of a musician within a particular tradition or musical community [...] and in accordance with the demands and possibilities of general and specific cultural social and musical conditions” (Brinner 1995:28). Reframing Brinner’s definition of musical competence, I propose that individualized mastery of musical skills and knowledge can serve as credentials for acceptance into a socio-musical community such as a jam session. Furthermore, I argue that skills and knowledge developed by immigrant musicians in widely divergent cultural and musical contexts can be adapted over time to meet the specific requirements of a musical community or socio-musical group. The shared repertoire and techniques of jazz as a musical lingua franca are crucial to this process.

What attracts immigrant musicians to jam sessions is the potential to harness their musical competence to cross social boundaries between themselves and local jazz musicians. But this immediately raises further questions. How does musical competence affect the crossing and blurring of social boundaries between immigrants and hosts? Can musical competence facilitate the crossing of any social boundary or are some boundaries

impenetrable? At what point do the social boundaries of the jam session begin to blur? How does an individual immigrant's race and gender affect their acceptance into the group? Finally, how does the ethnic diversity of the group influence immigrant incorporation?

Vodou Bar, Bed-Stuy, and frontiers of race and gender

Freddie, a conguero in his sixties, is sitting close to the stage, clutching his drum between his legs. His hands tap the skin of the drum ever so slightly, making no sound. It's still early, the house band is playing its opening set. Fabio, an Italian architect, is sitting next to me. He looks intently at the band, then at Freddie, then back at the band. Leaning over, he asks, "When is the black guy going to play?" compressing all his expectations of American jazz into a single sentence. "When they open up the session," I answer briefly, fully aware that he does not possess the background knowledge to make sense of my answer. "Why don't they want him to play with them?"

The Vodou bar is located at the heart of Bedford-Stuyvesant, or "Bed-Stuy," a historically black neighborhood undergoing rapid processes of reinvestment and gentrification (Wilder 2013). Gentrification, generally suggesting changing demographics and rising real estate prices in the region, naturally affects the regular clientele of the Vodou Bar, but it has its own characteristics here (Atkinson 2005; DeSena 2009; Freeman 2006). Most of the customers who come to Vodou are African American, men and women in their twenties, thirties and forties, sharply dressed, part of Bed-Stuy's growing black middle class. Carlton Brown, an African American architect and urban designer who arrived in the neighborhood from Mississippi in the early 1980s, describes the people of the neighborhood as "mostly civil servants, teachers, lawyers and business owners, extended families living side by side" (Brown 2014).

The neighborhood is still home to the largest African-American community in the city, but a growing number of Caribbean and African immigrants are now calling Bed-Stuy home. Called the "Islanders of Bed-Stuy" by Paula Marshall more than thirty years ago, today Caribbean and African immigrants are an important demographic in Bed-Stuy, and make up a significant part of the black community here (Marshall 1985).

Immigration affects music in Bed-Stuy in several ways. In the 1960s, clubs such as the Blue Coronet and the East featured local jazz luminaries Slide Hampton, Freddie Hubbard, Max Roach, Randy Weston and Wes Montgomery. Since the 1980s, the growing number of immigrants from the Caribbean and Africa has diversified the live music offerings of neighborhood, producing local hip hop masters such as Jamaican-

American Christopher Wallace (a.k.a. Notorious B.I.G) and Trevor Smith Jr. (a.k.a. Busta Rhymes), and reverberating Reggae, Soca, Reggaeton, and Afro-pop from cars, storefronts and family barbecues.

In Bed-Stuy, borders between local and foreign are becoming increasingly blurred. In 2004, historian Robin Kelley chose to emphasize local businesses and venues organized through the Central Brooklyn Jazz Consortium (CBJC), and the involvement of churches and educational institutions in promoting jazz in the neighborhood (Kelley 2004). In the last decade, the growing diversity of the local audiences and performing musicians is increasingly reflected in CBJC's programs. Artists such as Napoleon Revels-Bey plays Caribbean arrangements of well-known jazz compositions, and Eddy Bourjolly's group Mozayik blends jazz with Afro-Haitian rhythms and plays tributes to John Coltrane and Thelonious Monk (Evening Jazz with the Central Brooklyn Jazz Consortium 2014). These performances are a part of an ongoing incorporation process in the neighborhood, a blurring of social boundaries between the African American and Caribbean community. They reflect acceptance by the African American community of Caribbean immigrants, but they are also an assertion of specific dual cultural identities – in this case, Haitian-American.

At the Haitian-American-owned Vodou Bar, which derives its name from the Haitian religious practice, patterns of incorporation can be found both in the music and in the menu. "American" dishes like mac & cheese, turkey sliders and grits are served alongside Creole coconut shrimps, vegetarian empanadas, and Teriyaki chicken wings. The music, too, is a compound of "Americanisms" and the diverse backgrounds of the DJs and bands performing: Reggae Thursdays, Soca Fridays and R&B Sundays. Mondays are jazz night at Vodou Bar.

Despite its location in a predominantly African American neighborhood, the jam session at Vodou bar attracts only a small number of black musicians. Most of the regularly participants are white, with smaller numbers of Latino and Asian musicians. I asked David Bertrand—a Trinidadian flautist who attended the session regularly for a while but later stopped showing up—why he wasn't coming there anymore. David brought to my attention that as a flautist he felt he wasn't welcome. I found that very curious, and very intriguing. "You mean you are discriminated as a flautist?" "Yes" he said, "I mean, it just didn't feel particularly friendly."

Seth Trachy, a member of the house band and a strong influence on the social dynamic of the session, agrees that few black musicians participate in the Vodou session, but that there was not much he could do about it beyond inviting people to participate. "Why would any of George's friends come to Vodou? They have their gigs on Mondays.

They're making money. George wouldn't have come here either if it wasn't literally across the street from his house." Trachy is referring to George Burton, an African American pianist who attends the session regularly. Burton has been featured on numerous albums and tours regularly with established musicians, personifying for Trachy the kind of people he wished would attend the session in greater numbers.

Unfortunately, not all musicians can be young and successful. Freddie, the conga player mentioned above, was in his sixties, one of the few black musicians coming to the session regularly at the time of my research. Forty years senior to most of the musicians attending, Freddie would arrive early and sit close to the stage for most of the evening. He would engage in brief conversations, greet the musicians he recognized and shake hands with members of the house band but for the most part would listen intently and play. Playing conga, a percussion instrument used in Afro-Cuban music, positioned Freddie in an auxiliary position, outside of the rotation of regular "kit" drummers. This meant he did not need to alternate with anyone or ask permission to play. On several evenings, Freddie was asked by a member of the house band to refrain from playing on every song. While it is true that no other musician in the session plays on *every* song, musical convention and aesthetic judgment are used here to mark and reinforce social boundaries. In the competitive tradition of the "cutting session," it was considered acceptable for a house band member to "cut off" an inept player in order "to make room for the real musicians." At Vodou, it was considered acceptable for a house band member to ask Freddie to stop playing. Musical competence is often a vital social armor. It may seem fairly simple at first for a musician of color to cross the racial and social lines of the session, but it is difficult to do so without the protective coating of musical competence. As I demonstrate next, in the male-dominated space of a jam session musical competence alone does not always provide sufficient protection.

Women are a minority at the Vodou Bar jam session. On a given Monday night anywhere from one to eight women participate in the session, many of them pianists, but also singers, saxophonists, drummers and bass players. The majority of women attending are immigrants, primarily from Japan and South Korea, with smaller numbers of American-born, Latin American and European participants. Ayumi Ishito, a Japanese saxophonist and Berklee graduate, shared with me the particular concerns and challenges she experienced while attending the Vodou session.

Ishito: I went to the jam session for a while to meet people or to listen to other people and play there. I would always go with my roommates because it's very late at night, and I am a woman, so I don't really feel safe by myself to go there. And the drunk drunk people, like to talk to me [imitating a drunk man's voice]: "you sound great...you can practice with me, come over to my place" something

like that. So I couldn't really trust if they want to be my friend, or talk to me just because I'm a woman.

Author: So you go with other people, you stay safe with other people?

Ishito: Yeah I try to ignore them, but some of them really play good! Good musicians! Still, I try not to be too close. After being there for a couple weeks I could tell which is which. I also met some friends, Carter, those people. I've seen some other women there, you know, Melissa Aldana, she was there a lot of times, and Chelsea. It wasn't only me so...

Author: So you would go more if there were more women playing?

Ishito: Yeah or if it was earlier, people wouldn't get so drunk. (Ishito 2015)

The social boundaries of the jam session can be tricky to negotiate for women attending for the first time. In her work on women's big-bands in 1940s, Sherrie Tucker states that she was surprised to learn that women were "welcomed at after-hours jam sessions." (Tucker 1999:71) She was "astonished to hear that the burden of proving to men that women musicians can "really play" [can be] presented [...] as an occasion for fun, rather than as a perpetual nuisance" (ibid). But as Ishito mentioned in our conversations, a generally welcoming environment can sometimes turn into an arena for unwanted sexual advances, particularly with increased alcohol consumption in the late hours of the night. Women attending the session to increase their involvement in the scene and establish themselves as professional musicians are crossing into a male-dominated space, requiring them to discern between wanted collegial and professional attentions and unwanted sexual intentions under a professional guise, including invitations for mutual practice sessions, gigs, and professional collaborations.

Unfortunately, such behavior is rampant in New York City jam sessions. Because of its stable core of attendees, among them a growing number of female musicians, the Vodou bar is a relatively safe environment. As Ishito explained, attending the session regularly helped her become familiar with the musicians attending and develop friendships and musical collaborations. As I discuss next, musical competence is crucial for blurring not only gender boundaries, but ethnic, educational, and professional boundaries as well.

Hangs and Socio-Musical Groups

I was sitting outside chatting with Gavrieli when Menares called me inside to play. Nelson, a drummer from Chile who'd been coming to Vodou often, sat at the drums. There were only one or two pianists that evening and no one approached the keyboard. We waited for a while to see if one of the pianists would sit in, but eventually decided to just start playing. One of the tenor players called "Countdown," John Coltrane's fast and harmonically challenging tune. I gasped and took the challenge... "yeah, let's do it. I

need to look at it for a second though.” For some reason, I always accepted these “suicide” offers. I took out my phone and looked at the chord changes in the “Real Book” app one last time before we started. The saxophonist snapped his fingers “Clack!” We were off. I held it down in the first choruses the best I could, as fast as I could. Just looping the changes, again and again. The saxophonist standing next to me seemed fine with what I was playing, we knew where we were and I marked the beginning of each chorus clearly. After a few minutes, while the tenor guy was taking a solo, Gavrieli came and sat in at the piano. What a relief to have someone else to carry the harmony with me – a humanitarian aid. I wasn’t sure how long I’d be able to keep going at this pace without losing my place and confusing everyone. Eventually things started to fall into place. I was still frantically trying to keep the harmony together, but at least I wasn’t alone. Trachy, who was listening in the back, stepped forward and picked up his saxophone. That was a good sign. Gavrieli was there to help, but Trachy wouldn’t have risked a rhythm section he didn’t think would hold, especially not on “Countdown.” At the end of the song, he walked over and said “nice quarter note, man.” That didn’t happen often, and it felt surprisingly good.

To understand how musical competence can be used to blur social boundaries, I begin by inquiring what constitutes a social boundary in the context of the Vodou session. In general, musicians in the session develop social and professional networks through three main sources: the first is “the home group” that is, musicians with whom one grew up or went to high school, the second group is the “college group” with whom one attended jazz school or college, and the third group is the “New York group” of musicians, with whom one has played or worked in the New York context. Musicians who have lived in additional locations might develop additional group affiliations in these locales as well. Because of New York’s unique status as a hub among jazz musicians many musicians have active professional and social relationships with members of one or more of these socio-musical groups while living in the city (Greenland 2007; McGee 2011).

For immigrant jazz musicians, the home group refers to musicians from the same country or region of origin rather than the hometown. My own home group, for example, was developed mainly during my service in the Israeli Defense Force jazz band while living in Tel-Aviv, Israel’s cultural capital. Many of the musicians I played with back then relocated to New York or Boston for college, creating their college group while there. Of those, approximately thirty still reside and perform in New York City today and we meet on various musical and social occasions. Through members of my home group I came to know, work and collaborate with other Israeli musicians I did not know while living in Israel and they became members of my home group as well.

Through interaction with my home group I came to know non-Israeli members of their college group. While I was not initially part of that milieu, some of my home group's college group members eventually became part of my New York group. Connections within the New York group are often contingent upon active and frequent interactions, while membership of the two other groups is less sensitive to location or relocation. Haim Peskoff, an Israeli drummer who did not attend a college-level jazz program, explained to me that he feels the connections made between graduates of the same college are often stronger and last longer than the musical connections he was making through his New York group, despite his extensive playing with a fairly regular group of musicians.

The Vodou jam session is one occasion where such socio-musical groups meet, interact and sometimes converge. Members of the Common Quartet invite their own (but sometimes overlapping) groups of musician friends to participate in the session. Gavrieli and Wyatt are alumni of the New School jazz program and are likely to invite people from that milieu; Trachy and Menares met when Trachy lived in Chile and have many contacts in common; Menares and Gavrieli's home groups of Chilean and Israeli musicians are also frequent attendees of the session.

Language is the first and most evident social marker in the session. At Vodou Bar, conversations in several different languages, particularly Spanish, Hebrew, Japanese and heavily accented English are common. While most conversations both on and off the stage are in English, musicians will switch to their native language when all participants in a conversation share the same native language. Switching back to English often suggests an acknowledgement that one of the participants does not speak the language and requires the conversing parties to verbally accommodate and welcome him or her into the conversation. While speaking one's native language is an important way of establishing connections within one's home group, sharing the experience of speaking English *as a second language* allows musicians in a session to bond outside of their ethnic/linguistic community. Emphasizing one's own accent, jokingly mimicking a fellow musician's accent, or sharing linguistic misunderstandings provides a means for foreign-born musicians to engage across social boundaries.

Ethnic identity, particularly among compatriots, constitutes another important boundary in the session. Musicians of the same "home group" often arrive at the session together and often (but not exclusively) interact with each other. One way in which musicians cross these ethnic boundaries is by referring to them explicitly, by pointing to a fellow musician's affiliation to a specific social group. On several occasions, after I introduced myself, a fellow participant would inquire where I was from. When I mentioned that I was from Israel, they proceeded to name the Israeli musicians they have

played with (members of their college or New York groups), mentioned Israeli musicians they appreciate, or told me about their last visit to Israel on a trip or tour. Demonstrating knowledge of fellow musicians' ethnicity was a way of acknowledging and communicating across ethnic differences.

Academic programs are becoming increasingly common in the training of contemporary jazz musicians (Wilf 2014). Not surprisingly, college education has profound socio-economic implications for immigrant musicians attending the session. As I discuss in the first chapter, academic institutions hold a critical position as visa sponsors and conduits of initial arrival in the U.S, as well as gatekeepers, as they decide whom to admit. Many of the academic jazz programs in the New York and Boston area are private institutions with high tuition fees. Public institutions are more affordable but charge high admission fees from out-of-state and international students. While institutions offer some financial aid, in the form of work-study programs and merit scholarships, college graduates must still raise or borrow substantial sums to finance their education out of pocket (Marshall 2012).

Affiliations created between musicians during their studies are an important factor in crossing social boundaries between native-born and immigrant musicians. Participation in school ensembles, for example, facilitates friendships and continued musical collaboration, sometimes long after graduation. Gavrieli, the house band pianist, attended the New School jazz program. His experiences there introduced him to a diverse group of both foreign and native-born musicians, who became his college group, among them house band drummer Alex Wyatt.

The third social boundary at Vodou bar is the New York socio-musical group. Belonging to a particular group of musicians through professional interactions asserts an unspoken structural hierarchy. The twin questions "where" and "with whom are you playing?" explicates one's professional standing in the scene. Depending on their judgment of one's peers and collaborators, musicians will gage a musician's abilities. Most importantly, a New York group is the socio-musical network immigrant musicians are trying to construct by going to jam sessions. It is the very group into which they are trying to incorporate.

When I first arrived at the Vodou session, before anyone there heard me play, I was accepted as a peer by members of my home group, many of them well established in the New York scene. Musicians who did not yet know me well misattributed my home group as my New York group, which placed me on a higher plane than my actual standing in the scene merited. In fact, at the time my New York group did not yet exist, since I had not yet developed any professional associations at that stage. My associations with

established Israeli musicians introduced me to other musicians and eventually helped me develop my own New York group, but they could not come in the place of demonstrated musical competence.

Because of the importance of professional associations to social acceptance, musicians are likely to mention not only those musicians with whom they played most frequently but also those most respected and esteemed by other musicians. Venues and gigs similarly indicate prestige and standing in the scene. When Trachy responded in our conversation to my question regarding the number of black musicians attending the session his answer reflected precisely this hierarchal construction of the scene: “Why would George’s friends come here? They have gigs, they are making money.” He was actually referring to the absence of George Burton’s New York group who are predominantly African-American, not to black musicians in general.

A fourth and rarely acknowledged symbolic boundary relates to one’s choice of instrument. To put it bluntly, musicians who sing or play instruments outside of the six core instruments of jazz, that is trumpet, saxophone, trombone, piano, bass and drums, and to some extent guitar, are accepted into the session with some reservation. Freddie, the conga player discussed above, was not only outside of any of the social groups in the session, but was playing an instrument that was only provisionally acceptable by the house band. Conversely, Itay Kris, a flute player from Israel who went to New School, was always a welcome presence at the session, because of his high musical competence and also because he belongs to three socio-musical groups associated with the session. Instruments, in short, have a profound influence on one’s ability to comply with the musical requirements of the Vodou session, however Kris's network connections and competence were sufficient to override the outsider status of his instrument.

By now it should be clear that along with race and gender, each group affiliation has a corollary question and social or symbolic boundary associated with it. “What instrument do you play?” “Where are you from?” “Where did you go to school?” and “Where and with whom have you played?” are all questions likely to be asked by a member of the house band, and affect the experience of the participant in the session.

The boundaries these questions delineate may all be crossed by demonstrating high-level musical competence, and blurred by attending the session over time, eventually becoming a close collaborator with members of the Vodou session. However, they do not completely disappear. During the time of my research, several immigrant musicians became closely involved with members of the house band as participants, collaborators and even substitutes in the house band. The question remains, what happens when you are not affiliated with any of the musicians in the session? What happens when

one is facing all the social and symbolic boundaries of the session, including gender, race and musical instrument?

The Art and Practice of the Newcomer

On his first night at Vodou, Pavle Jovanovich, a Croatian guitarist who studied in Austria, played on every tune he knew, trying to demonstrate his wide knowledge of standards. He heard of the session through Rale Micic, a Serbian guitarist who's been living in New York for many years. He said he wasn't too interested in playing the standard jazz repertoire, but felt he had to play standards well in order to meet other musicians. I also learned that he was a fan of John Zorn and Israeli bassist Avishai Cohen and that we have a mutual acquaintance, Eran Har Even, a guitarist based in Amsterdam with whom I played in the IDF jazz band.

Most of the immigrant newcomers I spoke with during the time of my research heard of the Vodou session through musicians they met at other jam sessions and gigs. They often mentioned similar goals for attending the session: A desire to become involved musically in the Vodou bar scene and to meet other musicians through it. However, their ways of achieving these goals differed considerably. Several first-time attendees decided to explicitly showcase their virtuosity, calling particularly difficult tunes at cutthroat tempo in an effort to impress other musicians, both on stage and off.

Other musicians who attended the session for the first time during my research preferred a different approach. Some kept to themselves at first, listening to other musicians performing and assessing their abilities. In most cases, this was not a sign of lesser musical abilities or hesitation, but rather of experience; evaluating the social and musical norms of the session before participating. In his first night at the session, drummer Shareef Taher chose to sit in the back and listen to the band "to see what the vibe was like." He did not introduce himself to Alex, the house band drummer, until the very last song. Instead, he preferred to listen to the various groups, engage in conversation with fellow musicians and mostly keep to himself. Similarly, Jay Heo, a Korean pianist, sat by herself without sitting in on several tunes before she decided to play. When she finally joined in, it was with a solid bass player and drummer she found to be compelling. By listening and studying the session and its participants before playing, she orchestrated the situation to complement her playing.

The house band decides which of the participants will perform on each song. Their decision is based on the number of players present for each instrument, the order in which they arrive and the preferences of the musicians themselves. There are also other,

less obvious factors. Members of the same social group, for example, often arrive together and prefer playing together in the same ensemble. A low attendance of pianists may reward (or burden) a pianist with playing several songs in a row. In cases where the house band has a special interest in one or more of the musicians participating, the quartet will suspend the “first come first play” order and take the stage to perform a tune--often with someone from the house band’s “New York group.”

Once the participants for a specific band are selected, the group will convene to choose a song to perform. The process requires a quick negotiation among the players; the presence of an audience waiting to hear the band adds an element of urgency to the decision, particularly for newcomers who have a stake in choosing an appropriate song to demonstrate their musical competence. As they negotiate which song to perform, newcomers must balance their own knowledge and experience with those of other participants.²⁵

While anyone can propose a song, a newcomer will often be asked what he or she would like to play. This is a gesture of courtesy but also a moment of evaluation. The particular choice of song is an important indicator of taste, influence and in some cases overall competence. A newcomer suggesting a tune that is considered part of the amateur jazz musician’s repertoire will risk marking him or herself as an amateur. Numerous tunes in this category, including “Blue Bossa,” “Cantaloupe Island” and “Autumn Leaves,” are rarely played at the Vodou jam session and are likely to be declined by other participants. Conversely, suggesting a challenging composition by a renowned African American musician, for example, Cedar Walton’s *Bolivia*, indicates knowledge that is highly appreciated at the Vodou session context.

Accepting a song has to do with the musical roles each instrument performs in the jazz context. Most commonly, the decision is made between the horn player (or players) responsible for the melody, and the bassist and pianist responsible for the harmony. Drummers often have less of a say in choosing a song due to the nature of their instrument. For a newcomer, declining a song is a loaded issue. While not knowing an “obscure” tune is acceptable (and these are less likely to be suggested), a limited knowledge of the repertoire may hinder a newcomer’s effort to become accepted into the session. Eitan Wilf discusses the time and effort jazz students spend creating and playing musical games that help them commit to memory both the titles and musical content of

²⁵ For a discussion of similar situation in a Javanese gamelan context where a lead musician's choice of repertoire is based on his assessment of others musicians' competence see Brinner 1995:170–171. For a discussion of repertoire selection and knowledge in a jam session context see Doffman 2011; Doffman 2013.

tunes. As Wilf notes, these games have an important social purpose as well (Wilf 2014:189).

Despite the loaded implications of knowing the repertoire, some blind spots about the specifics of the song may be acceptable; in response to a song suggested by the guitarist or pianist, a horn player can say, "I haven't played this in a long time, can you take the head? I'll follow you." At this moment the pianist may agree to play the melody, or ask the horn player to suggest a different tune. The same situation is not possible for a bass player who must know (or figure out) the song's harmony completely and cannot defer this responsibility to a different member of the band. In its most limited format, the repertoire of the jam session is thus limited to the shared number of tunes the bass player and pianist in a particular setting can perform with confidence (Wilf 2014:214).

Newcomers are sometimes confronted not only by particular songs they are not familiar with but also by ways of playing they are not accustomed to; horn players that just start playing without calling the name of the tune; drummers that superimpose various polyrhythms on the beat; pianists that scold a guitarist for accompanying during their solo, singers that request a song to be transposed on a moment's notice. The various social and musical norms and accepted behaviors of the session take time and repeated participation to learn.

Vibing

An Argentine singer and her fellow guitarist chose to play "You'd Be So Nice To Come Home To." The singer knew the song well but the guitarist who accompanied her was playing it for the first time, reading the chord changes off his phone. When the singer marked the speed of the song, she counted the tempo twice as fast as she intended to sing it. I realized what she meant and slowed down to half the speed. The guitarist was confused, unable to figure out the rate in which he was supposed to move from one chord to the next. He looked at me, as if saying "what's going on?" I responded verbally marking the move to a new section in the form "going to the B part." That was not a good solution. The transition between chords was still not clear to him. I then switched to mentioning the names of the chords, one by one, as I was playing them. Trying to communicate my position confused me as well, and on several chords I played a wrong chord tone or played out of tune. I was getting piercing looks from the drummer. Because of the instability of the song, none of the horn players present wanted to take a solo. The awkwardness continued for a long minute before the singer decided to sing the head in an arbitrary location in the form. I reset my position and returned to the top. The guitarist did the same. This time we played a whole chorus of the song with the proper harmonic rhythm. It was done -- what a relief.

Playing with an unfamiliar musician affects the ability of a musician to communicate and demonstrate their musical ability. Even an experienced newcomer who is matched to perform with less proficient musicians will find it difficult to communicate ideas freely and perform their best. In case of a mistake or confusion, an experienced player who was teamed up with an unstable ensemble will be engaged primarily in bluntly articulating their position in the song's harmony.

A mistake can frustrate even the most experienced musician (Monson 1996:133). Responses to such an event depend on the personality and mood of the musician. They range from mild to harsh, from a surprised or stern look to a highly offensive verbal attack. Musicians refer to this as "vibing," as in "giving a bad vibe." Vibing is an active scolding of a musician during a performance and on stage, by musical, gestural, and verbal means. It is a way to indicate to a musician that they are messing up or are otherwise out of line. It is also among the first idioms newcomers learn upon arriving on the scene.

The most common reason for vibing is loudness. Drummers are frequent offenders, but any instrument can be too loud in certain musical contexts and to certain ears. Initial vibing is usually expressed through stern, piercing looks. A vibing musician may express their discontent musically through loud and rigid playing accompanied by facial expression and hand gestures. Finally, yelling over the music can express an even harsher level of disapproval.

Because newcomers desire to impress other musicians, jam sessions are prone to long soloing and overplaying. While this is sometimes expressed in the literature positively as "stretching out," long solos often attract negative responses from other members of the band and are also a common reason for vibing. Andrew, an English pianist, recounted the feeling of being "trapped in the song" while a saxophonist was taking a long and loud solo which lasted over ten minutes, "I should have just gotten up and left but I couldn't get myself to do it. It was horrible. I'll never play with that guy again." Saxophonist Dan Blake remembered a traumatic jam session when he was younger in which he played with some older respectable musicians. Eager to demonstrate his abilities, he stretched his solo too long. After a few minutes, the musicians had enough, and they stopped playing completely, leaving him alone on the stage.

Vibing can happen to the most experienced musicians and in the most welcoming of jam sessions. Although musical competence reduces the likelihood of vibing, even friends and frequent collaborators "vibe" each other from time to time when they engage in musical dispute. For newcomers to Vodou, being vibed during a performance by the

musicians from whom they ultimately seek approval is a difficult experience, a clear delineation of a social boundary.

Conclusion: Jam Sessions as Sites of Incorporation

Throughout this chapter, I have argued that the jam session at Vodou bar is a site of incorporation for immigrant musicians, yet I have continually introduced borders and boundaries that restrict, delay and hinder this incorporation. Boundaries, as James Clifford reminds us, are not only places of control, but also places of contact where identities are made and remade.²⁶ Through sustained contact and interaction between host and immigrant musicians of different gender, race, class, and national origin, the jam session can turn strangers into musical collaborators.

Musical competence and sustained contact do not fix society's exclusions and inequalities. Despite the inclusive stance of the house band and majority of participants, race and gender construct different experiences for musicians attending the session. Linguistic and ethnic affiliations sometime contribute to a sense of belonging, but they can also create senses of isolation and alienation. The experience of college education can bring people together, but it does not close the gaps between musicians of different means and economic backgrounds. Finally, professional affiliations in the New York scene can produce unspoken hierarchies, making some musicians feel welcome and others unwanted.

Despite its hidden exclusions and hierarchies, the Vodou session privileges incorporation precisely because it generates personal contact that would not be otherwise available. It requires no invitation, no prior familiarity with any participant, and no affiliation with any particular group. It includes participants of different racial, gender and ethnic groups and facilitates interactions across racial, gender, and ethnic lines. Most importantly, it privileges musical competence, a set of learned skills, over other markers of social belonging.

Afterword: Jazz Boundaries in a Border City

Federico, Raimundo, and I are playing a wedding gig in Bed-Stuy. I went to meet the couple, Lasse and Larry, a few nights before the wedding to coordinate the event. It was definitely a negotiation. Lasse saw the three of us busking at the Delancey Street subway stop and decided to book us for his wedding. He was very impressed by the music, but also by our appearance: We were wearing our usual performance costumes – Federico was dressed as Claudi, with her flapper make-up and pink floral dress, Raimundo was wearing his blue MTA construction worker overalls with a yellow neon vest, and I was in my white button shirt, suspenders and brown bear mask.

In our meeting, I was explaining our repertoire to Lasse and Larry: about half would be jazz standards -- “Somewhere Over the Rainbow,” “My Baby Just Cares for Me” “After Hours,” the musical equivalents of appetizers. The other half would be original songs written by Claudi -- “Roaches in My Hair,” “Last Chance at Love,” “Take Me Tie Me.” Our repertoire had all the “core” elements of jazz -- swinging rhythms, bluesy melodies, improvisation, harmonic complexity -- and yet somehow it was not quite that.

“So how many of you are gay?” Larry quipped. “Well, none” I said. “What about Claudi?” “She is a straight woman” “Sorry, I’m kind of a gay nationalist, these things are important, how does she identify?” “She identifies as a woman.” I said. “Does she work?” Larry asked. “You mean, as a prostitute? No, she’s a singer and a guitarist.” “So, it’s just a performance?” “Well, if I follow what you’re asking, Fede is dressed as Claudi when we rehearse too, so it’s not just for shows. “Okay, I see. And you’re going to wear the bear mask?” “Yes.” “Okay, good”

I want to conclude this essay by reflecting on some of the social and musical boundaries that I experienced towards the end of my three years of fieldwork in New York. In my last six months of research I began working with Puerto Rican guitarist and vocalist Federico Ausbery and Chilean-Palestinian drummer Raimundo Atal.

For most of the time we worked together, we did not concern ourselves with genre definitions, but as the months passed it became clear that our listeners were concerned with genre boundaries. We would frequently be asked, “What kind of music is this?” “What do you call this genre?” One of the listeners captioned a video of us he took with the extended word “Notquitesurewhatmusicgenre ville.” Ausbery, reflecting this unease with the lack of definition, messaged me on one occasion: “I’m still trying to figure out what to tell people when they ask me what we do, how about free jazz, is that taken?” These questions indicated something important: I was now playing music that did not sit comfortably within the boundaries of jazz, even though I was playing the same notes, rhythms, songs and forms and taking similar solos. Our performance created a different feel, attracted a different audience, and opened up new work possibilities.

The costumes certainly had something to do with it. Listeners were reacting to us differently – they were happy, smiling, even amused. I’ve heard several ensembles that used costumes in performances, including Legal Aliens, but this was somehow different, it was coming from a different place.

There was also the issue of gender. Unlike the majority of jazz shows I’ve seen in the city, our shows did not have a majority male audience. Jazz performances with a female headliner and even all-women ensembles still have a majority male audience, but not our shows. This was also the first time we had a substantial number of LGBTQ listeners attending our shows. During my time in New York several musicians commented about the scarcity of openly gay men and women in the jazz scene. As Sherrie Tucker shows, queer performances were relegated outside the boundaries of jazz for as long as there has been jazz. This boundary, she explains is “a straight line that [marks] the hyper-hetero-masculinity of jazz performance and black masculinity, and a division of labor by which men play in the band and women perform their bodies as sexual objects” (Tucker 2008:7). Federico attributed the difference to the fact that we are getting more visual artists and performance artists and less self-described jazz musicians to come to our shows. We were also receiving more bookings to perform in performance art spaces and gallery openings. Coincidentally, the reason we did not know what genre we were playing is precisely because such queer performances were removed from jazz history. As Amber Clifford shows in her dissertation *Queering the Inferno*, gender binarism and the existence of drag clubs were all but erased from jazz historiography (Clifford 2007). They were marked as not jazz: as entertainment, popular songs, musical theater or any other attribute that would threaten the heterosexuality and masculinity of jazz.



Figure 7.1 Pinc Louds at West 4 Station, April 2016

A recent conversation with Grammy-nominated pianist, singer and composer Ariacne Trujillo, highlighted the limitations of my perspective on the immigrant jazz scene in New York. In particular, my identity as a white, secular, Israeli, straight male, and jazz bass player has made some aspects of the scene accessible to me while leaving others out of reach.

[December, 2015, Guantanamera restaurant, midtown Manhattan] *Ariacne Trujillo trio is taking a break between sets in their biweekly gig at Guantanamera, a Cuban restaurant in Midtown. After a few minutes of attending to technical problems in the PA, we sit down at a table adjacent to the stage to talk about her experiences as a musician in New York.*

Trujillo: I was born in Cuba, in Havana. I came [here] in 2002, when I was twenty years old. I came to the city on a composition scholarship. Do you know Tropicana club [in Havana]? I worked there for two years, so that made me be a little bit more into the popular music. I played a little bit of [jazz] there but nothing like what I do now. I was going to study, but I came here and I was by

myself, so it was really hard and I couldn't make it to school. I wanted to [continue] my career as a classical pianist, but Latin and classical pianists don't really [mix] so I started working with Pedrito Martinez. I played with Johnny Pacheco, played with Paquito Rivera, I sang with Paul Simon. I do Cuban music, but I have a big thing for gospel music and jazz. (Trujillo 2015)

My interview with Trujillo was somewhat strange at first. It felt a bit more distant than many of the other interviews I did. She was one of the few musicians I interviewed for the project that I did not play with or know personally. I played with her band-mate Karina Colis and knew trombone player Reut Regev from Israel, and she knew I was friends with Cuban drummer Francisco Mela, but our meeting was essentially an encounter between strangers. There was another thing, a musical boundary. She played Cuban music almost exclusively. I've never spent much time learning *tumbao*. I picked up some bass lines from listening to recordings, had a few xeroxed copies of lines, but I never mastered it fully – it remained a beautiful foreign language to me.

During the fieldwork for this project I was trying to interview people who were playing outside of their traditional musics, outside of their community. I also interviewed people who had a strong commitment, if not active engagement with straight-ahead jazz in one way or another. But of course, in framing the project that way, I was the one being exclusionary. I was making assumptions about what is or is not jazz, drawing the lines between American jazz, Cuban jazz, Cuban jazz in America, and so forth. Why was it so much easier for me to communicate with people who have heard me play? Who trusted that I “knew what I was talking about” based on my playing?

As our conversation progressed, it became clear to me that we are not part of separate scenes: I was the one drawing the boundaries between Cuban music and jazz. We knew the same people, struggled with challenges relating to family, relationships, employment; we were living on different sides of the same scene. There was no actual separation between the music Trujillo was playing every Wednesday in Guantanamo and the music I was playing in bars in Brooklyn. It was reflective of her choices and possibilities in life, similarly to the way my music reflected my own choices and possibilities.

Trujillo was in a long relationship with percussionist Pedrito Martinez and is currently raising their son. They separated last year. As we discussed her experiences in New York, the intersection of her music career and romantic and family life were inseparable. She “went solo,” left the quartet but was also recovering from a break up, and raising a child as a single mother.

Trujillo: Everything that I've done, I did it by myself. Nobody helped me. I wasn't lucky at all. My first piano, I had it for three years from the period I was here, and it was a horrible Casio, that was missing a key, and I paid 60 dollars for

it. I didn't have a family [here] and I was in the Pedrito Martinez group for ten years, and I grew up a lot with them. I think that we all grew up together. I went solo a year ago and I am working with a band of girls called Coco Mama, we are pre-nominated for Grammy, hopefully we will get nominated, I got nominated last year with the Pedrito Martinez group so it was a great experience, I never thought in my life, that I would go to the Grammys, and I am working on my own project with my Trio, and I am working with Quintet.

Author: From your experience, how is it being a woman in the scene?

Ariacne: I feel like at the beginning, it's a little awkward. Because, they [men] don't trust you, there's like "she's a girl," you know... I think that once they see you are able to do what they do too, I'm telling you, I am a single mother, so that's a big thing, right? You just carry this stuff and do everything by yourself, they respect you and they kind of take you like another musician, like another man. We're friends, but you do have to set up the line, and the respect, that's the first thing. Because once they got that, they got that. I am a musician, and they respect that. You get used to being with men. (Trujillo 2015)

When I spoke to clarinetist Anat Cohen, a few weeks later, similar questions about gender, tradition, and genre boundaries came up, but they seemed somehow to be starker:

To be a woman in this field is a very thin line, you have to be very careful. It's a fine line between being "not nice," between being "o.k., nice" and being a "bitch." Now when it comes from a different musician, a flirt now and then ... obviously today I am more a woman than a girl like I was ten years ago. Part of that is to know how to deal with these situations. If it's coming from a soundman, there's no problem, you can ignore it, if it comes from one of the musicians in your ensemble, or in a festival, especially older people, they have no filter. Now what do you do in that situation? It's very awkward. You don't want to embarrass them in front of everyone, but if they cross the line, sometimes there's no choice and you have to put your foot down and say, "ok man, we are all professionals here, back the fuck off." In this case being Israeli is helpful, because I have no problem saying, "Dude, this is unacceptable, goodbye." But someone else can say "she's a bitch," suddenly, you lose the gig, you lose your respect, people start treating you differently, so it's a very thin line. (Cohen 2015)

For Cohen, an important source of information on how to negotiate unprofessional behavior and deal with various challenges women face in the jazz world was through her experiences in the all-women big band the DIVA Orchestra. Demarcating a gender boundary around the band's roster allowed Cohen and her band mates to interact with each other and learn from shared experiences and challenges:

I think that the fact that I played with the DIVA jazz orchestra really helped me. Because I was worried: “How would I walk at night with the saxophone on me? Someone will rob me, someone will steal it.” Obviously that can still happen today, but meeting all these girls from DIVA made me realize it’s possible. I made a rule for myself: after midnight, if I have my instruments, I don’t take the subway. Some people drink two beers and take the subway home, so I decided I won’t drink a beer and I’ll take a cab and feel safe that I don’t have to walk from the train home. That was a physical thing that really bothered me – as a woman – how to deal with the physical aspects. (Cohen 2015)

As with gender boundaries, Cohen finds ways to cross boundaries between genres, particularly between jazz and other traditions. This is inseparable from her experience of New York:

The thing I love about New York, is that there were days that I would do two or three gigs a day, going to meet the guys at one pm with in Columbus Square, open the banjo case and busk some New Orleans jazz in the street, and go from there to play a small gig with DIVA Orchestra in some concert from six to seven, and then go play with the Choro ensemble and New York is one of the only places where you can do that. (ibid)

For Cohen, traversing three or four musical worlds a day, was not simply a matter of omnivorous musical curiosity, it had important practical reasons. First among them was surviving New York’s harsh competition while making the rent:

Some people will say “I only want to play jazz from the early 1960s, and that’s it. That’s what I like, that’s what I am interested in, and when I don’t do that, I go slice salami at the deli. Because I don’t want to play anything else except that.” Now, that’s great, to focus on one thing and do it really well, and of course I’m not talking about, that’s an example for someone who is just getting started in New York, because New York is a tough city [literally: slaughters its own inhabitants], and until you reach the level where you’re super professional and you work all the time and they hire you because they need someone who can do that 1960s thing and you are the best. Period. But it takes a while [literarily: it takes a second] to get to New York and be the best. I think openness to the music, the fact that I could read music – we haven’t gotten to the Colombian scene, and the Argentinian music, Venezuelan music, all of Latin America, we talked a bit about Brazil but there are whole things that led me in many different directions. (ibid.)

Cohen's daily musical border-crossings came to impact both her compositional process and her relationship with her audience. I find that they encapsulate so much of what this research project has set out to explore.

I was always in several bands, at every given moment I played in two or three projects, with different people, because I always wanted to. From the Latin scene, to the Brazilian scene, to jazz there's always something, and of course every now and then there's an Israeli gig, the consulate, there's always something. In my music, with my quartet, it all comes out. There are all these influences, but it's all New York... I am one of those people that always liked to do many different things, the music has no boundaries. Music is music. It's not for us to define what it is. It's for critics and people who want to sell it. (ibid.)

Reflecting on my conversations with Claudi, Trujillo, and Cohen, I cannot help but wonder about the degree to which the exclusionary historiography (and ethnography) of jazz is the result of a preoccupation with stable categories; labels, taxonomies, and boundaries. But jazz is equally invested in breaking boundaries -- in transgressing, trespassing, and in heroic acts of refusal to comply with established norms. Both of those modes of interaction are inadequate to represent the kinds of creative engagements that immigrant musicians have with the boundaries they face. Claudi, Trujillo and Cohen, in my understanding are not interested in breaking the boundaries of the jazz, or in challenging its gender norms. They are interesting quite simply in finding ways to make *their* music. An amalgam of the experiences, sounds, people, and places they lived through and with. Like the many thousands of immigrants crossing borders around the world in this very moment, they can neither afford to stay where they are, nor are they interested in breaking the walls that obstruct them on their way. Rather, they develop skills to get past them, to navigate around them, to skip over them. They dig tunnels, climb ladders and jump fences. They see the footsteps of musicians that came before them and learn from them, adjusting their moves to the new conditions formed in the landscape the time that passed.

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