ONE

Love at First Sound

Early Musical Environment

Jazz was a street music in a sense, the kind of expression coming out of the black community. When I discovered jazz, it was like going to some part of the world where I hadn't actually studied the language, but finding out that I could understand certain things immediately, that it spoke to me somehow. I knew that I would have to travel a long and rocky road in my endeavor to play jazz, but I felt like I already understood the language.—Curtis Fuller

Precisely when musical development begins is a matter for speculation. It depends on definitions of both music and development. Some consider that the earliest musical conditioning takes place in the womb, where the heartbeat of the mother accompanies her baby's growth. Late in its development the unborn child also responds to sounds outside the womb as they are transmitted through the mother's body, although it is impossible to know how the sounds are transformed in the process or what perception the unborn child has of them. The act of birth itself can be viewed as the newborn's first performance. Raised in the hands of the attendant, its flailing arms and kicking legs comprise its first dance; its expressive cry, its first song.[1]

Once out of the womb, the infant finds itself in a rich auditory world, many of whose elements are not easily differentiatable. Intermittent bird song, episodes of thunder, and the patter of rain melt together, filtering into the infant's immediate setting. Sounds made by machines with their own specialized dialects of pitch and rhythm intermingle with nature's patterns and sometimes impose upon them forcefully. The playful voices of parents periodically assume the foreground within this kaleidophonic array to engage the infant in responsive exchanges. In part, the infant gains a sense of its identity by dis-

covering its own power as a sound producer and manipulator. Stirring on its mattress and extending its reach creates an entertaining counterpoint of escaping air, crinkling plastic sheets, and colliding toys. Vocal cords summon relatives to nurse it or pacify it with their company.

As infants make headway in sorting out the diverse patterns in their surroundings and defining their own relationship to them, they discover other sounds that, although differing from all others, bear a curious relationship to them, at times even mimicking their elements. The new sounds are called music, of course, and their precise characteristics can vary greatly from one part of the world to the next, from one community to the next, from one household to the next, and ultimately from one imagination to the next.

It is within the soundscape of the home and its environs that children develop their early musical sensibilities, learning their culture's definition of music and developing expectations of what music ought to be. Similarly, within the confines of their music community or music culture, children learn the aesthetic boundaries that define differing realms of performance, forming impressions of the most basic attributes of musicianship.

Early Performance Models

In reflecting on their early childhoods, many jazz artists describe the process by which they acquired an initial base of musical knowledge as one of osmosis. They cultivated skills during activities as much social as musical, absorbing models from varied performances—some dramatic, others incidental yet profoundly effective—that attuned them to the fundamental values of African American music. Ronald Shannon Jackson remembers his father's infectious habit of humming the blues "around the house" while carrying out daily routines. Vea Williams's mother sang jazz "all the time" at home; she possessed a beautiful, powerful voice that passed easily through the apartment's screens and resonated throughout the courtyard.

The children of professional musicians receive a particularly intense exposure to performance. Tommy Turrentine fondly recollects his father's "saxophone section" that practiced regularly in their living room. Music literally "surrounded" Turrentine as a child. Lonnie Hillyer also describes much of his early musical education as "environmental"; his older brother "played jazz, and he always had guys in the house fooling around with their instruments." In Barry Harris's Detroit neighborhood, he and his young friends absorbed the intricate rhythms of the "ham bone"; its clever body percussion—slapping movements between the thigh and chest—accompanied improvised texts. Additionally, in the surrounding neighborhood, the "average black family had a piano and at least one family member who could play boogie-woogie." Kenny Barron used to anticipate eagerly the daily arrival of the neighborhood ice peddler, a blues player who routinely availed himself of the Barrons' piano

after delivering the family's ice, fascinating the youngster with his musical prowess. After he left, Barron would try to pick out on the piano "the little melodies and chords" he remembered from the performance.

Within the larger community, hymnody at church services, marches at football games, and soul music at social dances contribute further to the children's education, as do concerts in performance halls and informal presentations in parks and at parades. During the thirties, Charli Persip was especially fascinated by a black orphanage's high-stepping marching band that performed jazz and by the swing bands that accompanied stage shows in the intervals between film showings at New York City's renowned Apollo Theatre. Moreover, in some neighborhoods "every corner bistro had a piano, and the pianists were sometimes joined by a bassist and a drummer and, sometimes, a horn player. There was live music all over the community" (MR). Sympathetic club owners in Detroit left their back doors open so that passersby and underage audiences who congregated in the alleyways could sample the music of featured artists. Performers in the "bars, weekend storefronts, and neighborhood jazz clubs" in other cities similarly made a deep impression upon youngsters, as did informal get-togethers by musicians. George Johnson Jr. was enticed by weekly jam sessions conducted in the apartment of his building superintendent.

Music provided by record players, radios, and jukeboxes complements live performances within the general soundscape.[2] People "could listen to jazz all day long" on the jukeboxes of Cleveland's neighborhood restaurants, cafés, and nightclubs in the forties: "You heard this music every place you went" (BB). Since the fifties, television has sometimes featured jazz as well. Record stores also offered places for young enthusiasts to gather and socialize, particularly when the stores provided listening booths for customers to sample the latest albums before deciding whether to buy them.

Some homes of musicians actually "looked like record stores" because the families owned so many recordings; they listened to music "constantly" (DP). In other instances, children participated in an "extended family" that shared and distributed recordings among adults. Patti Bown remembers private records circulating from house to house in the black community of Seattle. In another musician's neighborhood, few could afford records or record players; however, a neighbor whose generous spirit equaled his enormous collection made others welcome in his home. Evenings, everyone met there to listen to jazz.

Record collections of aficionados typically represented a wide range of popular jazz artists, including Louis Armstrong, Bessie Smith, Lester Young, Coleman Hawkins, Louis Jordan, Count Basie, Duke Ellington, Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, Ella Fitzgerald, Sarah Vaughan, Nat King Cole, Horace Silver, Art Blakey, Miles Davis, and John Coltrane. Ronald Shannon Jackson does

not recall hearing the term *jazz* or such idiomatic designations as *New Orleans jazz* or *swing* when he was a youngster. In describing the music of "black dance bands" during the thirties as "jump music," his community simply viewed the music some called jazz as part of the larger family of African American musical traditions. The record collections of black families typically included examples of spirituals, gospel music, boogie-woogie, blues, and rhythm and blues, as well as selections of Western classical music and light popular classics. This discussion of early jazz musical education reminds us that exposure to their own community's music as well as that of the mainstream is one advantage commonly afforded minority children in America.

Musicians reflecting on their impressionable years tell insightful, touching stories of the importance of recordings in their childhoods. Melba Liston often contended with bouts of loneliness at home, for she had no siblings; early in life "music" became her "very dear friend," with the radio its primary vehicle. In another case, operating the record player was one of Kenny Washington's first manual skills. He often spent the day by himself listening to recordings while his father was at work. Family anecdotes attest to his emotional attachment to favorite recordings. As a toddler, Washington had learned to associate the designs on record jackets with their respective sounds. One day, he observed his father misfiling one of his albums. "I couldn't really talk yet," he explains, "but I started going through changes, trying to tell him that he'd put the record in the wrong case." His father was baffled, but his mother "insisted that he check it out. Sure enough, he'd put the record in the wrong case."

On another occasion, when Washington was intensely listening to recordings, his father interrupted him by placing a new one on the turntable. Noticing his son's agitation, he promised that he only intended listening to one cut. The younger Washington became increasingly upset as his father extended his promise, cut by cut on the album's first side, ignoring his son's appeals. When his father turned the disk to begin side two, Washington "went through a temper tantrum and ran down the hall," tripped over his pajamas and hit his mouth on a bed with enough force to knock a tooth up into his gums. "This was all over a record," he muses.

Early Training and Performance Opportunities

As youngsters absorb musical materials from the performances of others, they simultaneously cultivate a few skills in formal settings. The church typically provides children with their first experiences as performers. Vea Williams participated in church choirs that made progressively greater demands upon their members. Music and religion "were always intertwined" in Carmen Lundy's background. She remembers that "all the women from grandmother to granddaughter" sang in church choirs, commonly three to five days a week,

and her mother led a gospel group that met regularly in their home. Lundy attended every rehearsal and performance.

Ministers of fundamentalist Christian churches sometimes provide congregation members with musical instruments during services or encourage them to perform on instruments brought from home to add color and intensity to the choir's performances. Jimmy Robinson remembers Pentecostal churches in which instrumental performance was as "natural" as singing: "Everybody in the congregation would grab any instrument and play it—tambourines, guitars, banjos, drums, anything." Some churches also offer music instruction and organize small ensembles to accompany services or to provide youngsters with recreation. Art Farmer began his musical development as a brass player with the church's tuba before a cornet became available. Melba Liston made her debut in church as a trombonist; so did Max Roach, as a drummer.

The meaning that such experiences holds for learners became apparent to me when I attended a Holiness church service at the invitation of a jazz musician, a former congregant. Before the service began, a frail boy of seven years propped himself up amid the components of an enormous drum set arranged midway between the pews and the pulpit. As the congregation members sang and swayed—accompanying themselves by syncopated handclapping patterns and a collection of instruments—the child thrashed about on the drum skins, attempting to maintain a steady beat and to perform rhythms that fit the changing musical parts around him. Every eye was upon the young drummer, who beamed with tremendous pride as he performed. What greater inducement for the young musician's development could there have been than the warm approval and affection that the congregation showered upon him as he held center stage in this adult world?

While continuing to cultivate their skills in the nurturing environment of the church, young musicians also attended public schools, where they gained additional experience within various extracurricular performance situations. Moreover, schools commonly offered music appreciation classes devoted to the works of Western classical music composers; instrumental instruction programs typically taught groups of beginners how to read music. Schools also afforded them exciting access to a greater variety of instruments than many had ever seen. Arthur Rhames "hung around the band room" during all his free time in grade school and "fooled with every instrument I could get my hands on." Max Roach "dabbled" with trumpet and clarinet in elementary school as well as learning piano and drums, and Buster Williams studied drums and piano before taking up string bass. Whereas some youngsters cultivated multi-instrumentalist skills over their careers, most explored the band room's diverse options as a prelude to selecting an instrument of specialization.[3]

Factors beyond the control of students sometimes determined their initial

courses. Some adopted the one instrument that had been passed down in the family or that band directors assigned them on the basis of the band's needs, the availability of instruments, or some, perhaps dubious, personal theory about the physical suitability of one instrument or another for a particular student. In other instances, youngsters selected instruments, thereby revealing their early tastes and sensitivities. Logically, an instrument's sound was the most impressive feature for many, although sometimes the physical features of an instrument had important bearing as well. The "beautiful way" the trombone and saxophone "looked in music store windows" immediately attracted Melba Liston and James Moody to their respective instruments. The "personal images" that performers of particular instruments projected in concert inspired others. The first time Curtis Fuller attended a performance by J. J. Johnson, "I fell in love with him," Fuller remembers, "just the way he stood there and played. He looked so elegant" compared to the behavior of other musicians on stage who were "crowd-pleasing."

Having determined the objects of their affections, students sought to convince their parents that they were serious enough about music to warrant their own instruments. Ronald Shannon Jackson convinced his parents of his earnestness and ingenuity by performing for them with a drum set that he fashioned from pots and pans. As parents succumbed to their children's pressure, youngsters become proud possessors of instruments borrowed, rented, or purchased from neighborhood schools, churches, and local music stores.

School bands, orchestras, and choirs allowed musicians to perform a diverse repertory that included marches, tunes from musical theater, and simplified arrangements of selected movements from operas and symphonies. Additionally, "every black school had its swing bands that played stock arrangements," orchestrated versions of jazz pieces that were initially popularized by Erskine Hawkins, Count Basie, and others (DB). Also known as stage bands, these groups performed in school concerts, assembly programs, and occasional dances.

The public school system fostered a "healthy sense of competition" among young artists that contributed to their musical development (RSJ). Junior high school graduates typically attended a central high school where, pitting their skills against those of the best performers from the larger community, they competed for positions in new band organizations. Some programs featured a succession of stage bands starting with more elementary bands and progressing to the most advanced stage band, in which membership was the object of great pride and considerable striving among teenagers. "All-city" and "all-state" honor concert bands, stage bands, orchestras, and solo competitions further motivated serious young musicians.

David Baker stresses the important role that "enlightened high school

band leaders" played in African American communities across the country in developing the sensitivities and abilities of prospective jazz musicians. "Every community had its Walter Dyett," he says, referring to the renowned Chicago music educator who inspired young artists Gene Ammons, Richard Davis, Johnny Griffin, Clifford Jordan, Julian Priester, Harold Ousley, and many others. Similarly, in Indianapolis, Baker's early teacher and band director "also taught the Montgomery brothers, the Hampton boys, Jimmy Spaulding, Virgil Jones, and many others." Although the band leaders did not actually teach improvisation, their sympathy and respect for jazz encouraged students to apply the general skills they had acquired through more formal musical education to their practice of jazz.

Many serious young performers ultimately supplemented their training at school with coaching by relatives at home or in the neighborhood. In Vea Williams's household, her earliest "voice lessons" consisted of singing with her mother and sisters as they all washed dishes after meals and did other household chores. When Max Roach grew up in New York City, "there was always somebody's uncle next door or across the street who had a band, and when they took a break, the kids were allowed to fool with their instruments."

Alternatively, they received private lessons from professional musicians in community music schools and local music stores, where they could study instrumental performance technique, classical music repertory, and, in some instances, elementary music theory and composition. Strongly motivated students commonly learned musical instruments without formal instruction by synthesizing bits of knowledge from commercial method books, other young performers, and their own experimentation. Chuck Israels studied guitar and cello formally, then combined his knowledge of both instruments to teach himself bass. Doc Cheatham received a cornet and a few prepaid lessons as a gift from his father but chose to ignore the instruction in favor of copying the "ad-lib playing" of local jazz musicians. He subsequently learned the C melody saxophone on his own as well.

As a consequence of formal training, instrument selection, and performance participation, youngsters acquired different kinds of knowledge, including musical exercises, tunes, and different parts from band arrangements of compositions. Such knowledge reflected the youngsters' characteristically diverse, polymusical environment, spanning sacred and secular African American and Western classical traditions, among others. As was typical, while still a teenager, pianist Lil Armstrong had not only attained enough proficiency in jazz to be hired by Joe Oliver's Creole Jazz Band but felt confident performing Bach and Chopin during her impromptu meeting with Jelly Roll Morton.[4]

Moreover, such early knowledge commonly assumed different forms of musical representation from student to student. Singers without formal music

education primarily learned their parts in choirs by ear, thinking of them as precise paths of rising and falling pitches, sometimes accompanied by imagined visualizations—graphic representations of their contours and rhythm. Many other self-educated performers also initially learned music by ear, as well as by hand and by instrument: memorizing the sounds of phrases together with their corresponding finger patterns and positions on an instrument. Having, in effect, formulated an internal tablature representation, the student can draw upon its visual and physical imagery to aid the ear in retrieving and rendering a part. Still others underwent successful training in reading and writing music, and they envision sounds in terms of symbols of conventional Western staff notation. Those with the extraordinary aptitudes of perfect pitch and photographic memories can translate sounds into notation almost instantly and store their images.

Attitudes toward the benefits of music literacy differed among youngsters, however. Youths with exceptional memories for sounds could recall pieces after hearing them demonstrated during lessons. A newspaper in Bix Beiderbecke's hometown described his ability at the age of seven to reproduce instantly, in any key, the melody and bass accompaniment to a piece after hearing his mother play the piece just once on the piano. Great artists like Louis Armstrong carried such gifts throughout their careers, evidencing the extraordinary ability to apprehend and remember tunes after a single hearing.[5] Several musicians I interviewed tell of teachers who were surprised indeed when their inability to perform a complex composition revealed that the students had all along resisted learning to read. They had simply pretended to follow the notation. For some of them, the subterfuge had gone on for a year or more.

On the other hand, some felt limited without written musical representation and, as early as grade school, invented personal notation systems or adapted those of instrument instruction manuals to assist them in recalling pieces. Melba Liston "wrote down tunes remembered from church and simple popular tunes" by assigning each pitch a different number according to her own construction of a seven-pitch scale. She vividly recalls puzzling over how to reconcile the chromatic pitches of tunes with her system—"sitting out on the back porch trying to figure out 'that's not a 4 and it's not a 5, but it's somewhere in between.'" Lonnie Hillyer "gave each trumpet valve a number" and recorded the sequence of valve combinations that produced the pitches of simple melodies. Some youngsters also approximated the rhythms of pieces within their notational schemes through varied spacing arrangements on the page. Others avoided the difficulties inherent in such practices and supplied the rhythms from memory during performances. Ultimately, different mixtures of representation colored each student's distinct world of musical imagination, whether engaged in remembering, performing, or inventing pieces.

The Benefits of Cultural Milieu in Shaping Musical Development

Training received within the overlapping religious and secular musical domains enabled many learners to experiment with African American music performance at the same time as they gained control over instruments: re-creating, if only on an elementary level, the sounds with which they had become intimate. They shaped melodies according to such models as a relative's habit of humming the blues, fellow students' renditions of soul music on the school bus, and patterns heard on household jazz recordings. They comfortably placed intricate figures within a framework of rhythm and meter absorbed through a succession of popular dances fashionable among their schoolmates and the handclapping patterns that accompanied hymns. They endeavored to imitate harmonic structures that reappeared in a local peddler's impromptu performance, in the improvisations overheard at the apartment manager's weekly jam sessions, and in the organist's accompaniment to religious services. "Like most black musicians," Dizzy Gillespie explains, "much of my early inspiration, especially with rhythm and harmonies, came from the church."[6]

Moreover, they explored other musical implications of the church service, a complex, integrated model for performance derived from the testimonial cries of ministers and worshippers engaged in vocal exchanges, spirited sermons that stand tantalizingly on the border between speech and song, and the soulful musical interludes that enhance the service's emotional intensity and its message. Max Roach explains that, in church, young musicians were judged on the basis of "their abilities to stir the congregation's feelings" rather than on the basis of "their technical proficiency" alone. The emotional intensity of performances at black "hallelujah possession churches," where hymns build to "fantastic climaxes" over forty-five minutes until "sinners shout and preach," epitomizes this value (LD). Don Pate first "heard talk about that spiritual feeling" from his mother in church. When he asked "why some of the old ladies would get up and have fits and scream and holler," she answered that "they were feeling the spirit, the spirit being Jesus Christ or the Holy Ghost." Pate elaborates,

> The spirit would also be something that would be transmitted by the minister if he was an eloquent speaker. He could summon it with his message. Often times, it would also be the choir or the soloist in the choir, and occasionally, when the organ player or the piano player would be hot, it was like having Ray Charles in church. To me, that's where the spirituality comes in. If the music has spirit, you can feel it. If it's without feeling or without meaning, deep inner meaning, then it's spiritless.

Churches that encourage ecstatic singing, handclapping, and animated physical movement in the service of religious devotion hold inestimable value for young musicians in the congregation. These practices cultivate an expressive freedom in performance that is absent from churches where notions of dignified worship restrict movement and repress emotion. Nevertheless, musicians whose religious backgrounds are more moderate find the music of fundamentalist churches compelling. Many recall visiting such churches or tuning in to weekend radio broadcasts of such services and spending occasional mornings or evenings on the street outside these churches in their neighborhoods, listening to the performances, thereby expanding the range of their early musical influences.[7] Nat Adderley describes the "Gregorian chant style" of music heard in his own Episcopal church, as well as the lasting "musical impressions" generated by the "sanctified kind of feeling" of the Tabernacle Baptist Church "across the street." He goes on to say that "what one hears in his formative stages has a tendency to affect him. . . . [It] cause[s] you eventually to play what you play, the way you play it, with a particular feeling."[8]

The appreciation for impassioned musical expression carries over into the secular world of "musical situations . . . like the gospel pop field." Don Pate notes that the record store where he worked in Chicago "used to sell Savoy gospel pop records featuring groups like the Mighty Sounds of Joy right alongside the jazz records." Countless jazz performers also merge sacred and secular musical elements in their creations. Pate adds that the religious poem and chanted refrain on John Coltrane's album *A Love Supreme* served as a bridge between religious and secular music for some devout listeners who were generally mistrustful of the latter's social values. "My mother was amazed that a jazz musician would feel this way about God, and, she said, 'Well, he must have been all right if he felt this way.' I mean this was before she even heard the record! So I mean the cover of the album, everything else, prompted her to get into the music and listen to it." Altogether, the youngsters' early base of musical knowledge and its multilayered cultural associations provided solid ground for their specialized study of jazz.

The varied and subtle ways in which a music culture actually shapes the sensibilities and skills of its members are not always apparent to the members themselves until they encounter individuals whose backgrounds differ from their own. When young black musicians first encountered white audiences who, to their surprise, clapped to the "wrong beat" when listening to jazz, the musicians perceived an alien scheme of rhythmic organization imposed upon the music by the outsiders. Similarly, an African American singer recalled the occasion when a white, classically trained pianist substituted for her gospel choir's accompanist. After an introduction to the choir, the pianist asked the director for her "music." The director explained that they did not use "sheet music" and that the pianist should take the liberty to improvise her part in

relation to the choir's. Taken aback, she replied apologetically that, "[without] music," she was unable to accompany them. She had never before faced such artistic demands. The choir members were equally astonished by the pianist's remark, never having met a musician who was dependent upon written music.

As these situations suggest, children who grow up around improvisers regard improvisation as a skill within the realm of their own possible development. In the absence of this experience, many view improvisation as beyond their ability. Moreover, music teachers in the schools can encourage the early inclinations of talented youngsters to embellish compositions assigned during lessons and improvise their own pieces, or they can inhibit such inclinations. Stories of the early abilities of prospective jazz artists to improvise within the diverse styles and structural forms of classical music, rock, polkas, and marches are common.[9]

Because of cultural differences that have generally distinguished white and black American communities in the past, the capacity for jazz improvisation and other musical skills has, at times, been confused with the benefits of different training and subject to racial stereotyping. Even though Red Rodney and his white peers played in swing bands in high school, they thought that improvising was something special that only the "black guys" did well. In contrast, the white players were the good readers, the good section players. It was an important turning point in Rodney's view of his own potential to become an improviser when Dizzy Gillespie took a personal interest in him and initiated his association with Charlie Parker.

Different Paths of Commitment

In the face of the diverse musical options around them, learners decide to pursue jazz for reasons that are as different as their ultimate individual contributions to the field. Many prospective players are simply overwhelmed when they first hear jazz. The circumstances surrounding such encounters remain as vivid in the memories of performers as does the music's dramatic impact. For them, it was love at first sound. The bands at the Apollo Theatre "mesmerized" Charli Persip as a child; he walked around "in a cloud" after performances and "daydreamed" about them during school. Gary Bartz was stunned by the beauty and power of a Charlie Parker recording. The music made him euphoric, intoxicating him with the notion that "I just had to play that." This determination to play like Parker came even before Bartz had discerned which instrument it was that Parker was playing. Buster Williams was captivated by Oscar Pettiford's "intensely moving, personal sound" on recordings, an expressive representation of the person behind the music that revealed even "the sound of his thumb sliding up and down the neck of the bass."

This intimate identification with great artists can have an effect similar to religious conversion, in many instances transcending cultural boundaries.

When Howard Levy first heard John Coltrane, he had the inexplicable experience that he was hearing himself singing, as if he had known Coltrane's music all his life. Similarly dramatic was the experience of one young Japanese musician who, adjusting with difficulty to the loss of his sister, heard a Coltrane concert in Japan. Disarmed by the performance, he returned alone to his apartment and wept into the night. Rising at dawn from a restless sleep, he interpreted the experience as a sign that he was to become Coltrane's musical disciple.[10]

The pursuit of jazz is not always as visceral or direct for youngsters. Their commitment to the music sometimes reflects a variety of considerations, from the precise artistic challenges of jazz to such fluid issues as the personal identity of individual musicians and their relationship to society. Fred Hersch abandoned his early career as a classical pianist because he tired of the tradition's preoccupation with "the purely technical aspects of performance" and with the masterworks of composers. In contrast, jazz offered him the prospect of creating his own music. While touring the country with renowned soul bands, Keith Copeland became similarly discouraged by their lack of creativity. "The guys often wanted me to play just like the drummers on the records," he bemoaned, "instead of making up my own parts." Akira Tana became bored with the limitations rock bands placed upon collective improvisation; he found jazz to be "more sophisticated, more musical, more expressive."

Within the artists' own community, family and peer approval offers additional inducements. George Johnson Jr. remembers the pleasure that family friends displayed when hearing him sing jazz tunes from his father's record collection. They were touched and amused by the sight of a young boy performing their generation's music. "It's natural to want to be like your father when you grow up," Johnson reflects. Harold Ousley explains his decision to become a jazz saxophonist in terms of the warm relationship he developed with a favorite uncle who invited him to listen to Jimmie Lunceford recordings. The first instrument his uncle taught him to recognize on recordings, when Ousley was but six years old, was the saxophone. For the children of musicians, opportunity to meet leading artists intensifies the children's early involvement with jazz. Don Pate was thrilled the night his father, jazz bassist Johnny Pate, brought members of the Basie band home to join his family for dinner. One of the high points of Wynton Marsalis's childhood was the occasion when his father, pianist Ellis Marsalis, seated him between Al Hirt and Miles Davis at a New Orleans nightclub. The renowned figures had come to honor the elder Marsalis by hearing his band perform.

Economic incentives are also significant for performers, especially during crests in the waves of jazz's popularity. Regardless of cultural background, many players come from poor families in which each child feels a responsibility for contributing to the household income.[11] Those who evidence musical

talent early begin playing professionally at the first opportunity. Conventional occupational role models viewed with great pride in particular communities can have the effect of channeling the talents of youngsters. In more adverse terms, patterns of job discrimination can also direct youngsters toward a musical career. When Curtis Fuller was a child, there were limited career opportunities for African Americans. Not everyone could be a sports hero like Jackie Robinson or Willie Mays, Fuller explains, so he took one of the other routes and became a jazz musician. Art Davis adds that racial barriers commonly discouraged talented black musicians of his and earlier generations from pursuing careers in Western classical music. Thus, for many, jazz held out the prospect of bettering their economic and social circumstances. The opportunity to travel with road bands and to see the world was an added attraction, one that took on special meaning for those who were ambitious to escape from the stifling confines of a small town's bigotry.[12]

Special aptitude for jazz provides young performers with an identity among their peers, a matter of considerable priority for teenagers. In Ronald Shannon Jackson's town, all the students were known for "what they could do." One person was "the greatest baseball player"; another "the greatest actor"; and Jackson "the greatest drummer." Sometimes musical skill compensates for the early shyness of youngsters. By enabling him "to play jazz at parties and be accepted by everyone," Walter Bishop Jr.'s ability "opened up a whole new world socially."

If in some communities jazz performance is a vehicle for social acceptance, in others—or in subgroups within them—it is a symbol of rebellion, a musical emblem distinguishing individuals from their contemporaries or from their parents. Don Pate's attraction to jazz reflected his rejection of black middle-class social values. In contrast to his peers, whose party socials included "Motown records and a lot of dancing," Pate, who was "never concerned with the crowd," used to sit on the floor on pillows in dimly lit rooms and listen to jazz. The music served likewise as a symbol for white performers' rebellion against middle-class values. Bobby Rogovin recalled troubled teenaged years aggravated by the tense family relationships in his household's cramped quarters. It was only within the world of sound created by his jazz recordings that he could preserve any sense of privacy. Within this world, he regarded the artists as "close friends" who spoke to him in a deeply personal language that eluded family members around him.

Changing self-perceptions also mark changes in the musical tastes of performers. Emily Remler initially loved to play rock, regarding it as "good-time partying music." In her mid-teens, however, she abandoned it for jazz, which, as epitomized by Pat Martino's work, she viewed as "introverted and serious." Remler wanted to become "that serious about music." Wynton Marsalis also traces his professional interest in jazz to his early teens, when he "questioned

everything about life" and became especially concerned with political and social issues integral to African American history. Although Marsalis had attained proficiency as a classical musician, the jazz tradition held increasing attraction for him because of "culture heroes like Charlie Parker" with whom he felt a special identification.[13]

A dynamic tension between musical and extramusical issues sometimes permeates the learning programs of reflective students working through difficult periods of personal growth, changing social awareness, and self-definition. Arthur Rhames grew up in a home where he felt torn between the cultural values represented by African American music on the one hand and Western classical music on the other. As an exceptionally gifted child, he received private piano training. Early church schooling and influences within his extended family reinforced the personal esteem he developed for classical music. Rhames adopted this preference so thoroughly that whenever his mother played rhythm and blues recordings at home, he would retreat to his bedroom with an obvious display of disdain and spend the time playing classical music recordings, miming the conductor's role as he listened.

When Rhames was later transferred into the public school system, however, his musical tastes and prodigious talents so isolated him from his peers that he led a relatively solitary existence. Ironically, the loneliness Rhames suffered eventually led him to identify with the mournful sounds of the blues. Enlarging the scope of his education, he adopted B. B. King as a musical model and began learning the guitar. After acquiring a fundamental technique, Rhames performed in teenage soul bands, eventually finding a place for himself among his contemporaries. Rhames's increasing proficiency as a blues guitarist laid the foundation for his eventual interest in jazz rock, or fusion music. He adopted John McLaughlin as his next mentor and continued to grapple with larger questions of personal identity. For several years he patterned not only his performance style after McLaughlin but his lifestyle as well, looking briefly into Indian spiritualism before joining a religious group with similar interests, an attachment he maintained for several years.

These combined involvements prepared the way for Rhames's discovery of John Coltrane. Identifying immediately with Coltrane's "Eastern orientation, musically and spiritually," Rhames had the "profound revelation" that Coltrane's music comprised the culmination of everything he had studied over his career. Subsequently, Rhames took up the saxophone and devoted himself to learning jazz, which he had come to appreciate on its own terms. In the years to follow, his concerts would feature Rhames on guitar, piano, and saxophone and as vocalist, his then current preoccupation. The biographical details of Rhames's story find parallels in the lives of other extraordinarily talented aspiring musicians and highlight the delicate interplay between social and musical

factors that can influence the interests, tastes, and knowledge of learners, ultimately shaping their interpretations of jazz.

As implied above, an appreciation for the role of cultural milieu in the development of improvisers would not be complete without considering their exposure to the diverse fabric of America's music culture and the particular demography of the villages, towns, and cities where improvisers grew up. Population and immediate musical environment vary from one part of the country to the next. In some cases, they may be distinctive and relatively uniform, but they are as often pluralistic, representing different kinds of ethnic mixtures. Within discrete locales, the character of musical knowledge is itself constantly subject to change. Innovative individuals produce new musical models, supplementing or supplanting older ones. New ideas transform the general soundscape as they pass through permeable community borders. Furthermore, differences in values and knowledge can distinguish particular neighborhoods and households, thereby influencing the chosen learning models and precise performance practices of their members. Even within households, the absorption of musical knowledge is a relative matter, varying with the talents of individuals, whose discovery of the importance of jazz occurs at different stages in their education.

Though aspiring artists may follow different paths initially, arriving at a commitment to jazz along direct or circuitous routes, they ultimately face the same basic challenge: to acquire the specialized knowledge upon which advanced jazz performance depends. Precisely how to pursue such knowledge is not always apparent to new enthusiasts. Traditionally, jazz musicians have learned without the kind of support provided by formal educational systems. There have been no schools or universities to teach improvisers their skills; few textbooks to aid them. Master musicians, however, did not develop their skills in a vacuum. They learned within their own professional community—the jazz community.