

**Towards a new (pimped) social role  
for the teacher  
in all of us?**

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# Introduction

Of course, our main purpose is to help students to become the best musicians, performers, educators, even entrepreneurs...

But we also can (and must) help and support our students how to become good citizens

Our students not always know what a Fender Rhodes keyboard is or what E<sup>b</sup> Dorian is...

But do they know or are they aware about the history and origins of our music? And are they aware what unique art forms they are learning?

Many of the societal problems we live today, have already occurred many times in the past decades and centuries. Most prominent, in the history of jazz, pop and other similar music genres, we can find many examples of situations which happened before and are still going wrong today.

Racism, bashing of ethnic groups, not recognizing competences nor degrees, excluding people from different parts of society, sometimes leading to cultural appropriation and more.

Therefor all these 'hidden messages', 'coded language', 'cry outs of abuse', 'misunderstanding', 'wrong behavior' and so much more. From the NAACP to the Underground Railroad and playing only at venues in the so-called Chitlin' Circuit...

**Today I would like to share first, with you, some examples of the past.**

**In the second part of this lecture, I would like to talk about how we can adapt this in all of our lessons, on a daily basis.**

# The 50's

Let's take the 50s.

In 1952 Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker receive both a DownBeat award.

But what about the introduction?



# The 50's

At 00'23

- Leonard Feather: “...In the music business we've been practicing brotherhood for quite a long time now. A man's color, a man's religion doesn't make any difference. I mean, put a horn into his hands, the only thing that counts is his sound.”
- Earl Wilson: “Well, that's what I think, the thing about the DownBeat All American Band it makes it All American because it is with different greats and different... races.”
- Leonard Feather “Absolutely, that's right.”

On YouTube you can find a Chinese version of this tape where this passage is 'canceled'...

## The 50's

After being embraced by overseas audiences, Ella Fitzgerald returned home to the U.S. and was reminded of the prevalent racism she and other Black musicians encountered in the South.

She did an interview with Robbins that he promised would air "all over the world." For reasons unknown, the interview was never broadcast. Snippets of their conversation can be heard for the first time in the new documentary "Ella Fitzgerald: Just One of Those Things":

'Why can't you have a concert? Music is music.' "



# The 50's

**Another example: Terry Pollard with Terry Gibbs.**

**First, she substituted the regular pianist in this quartet, and in the second song, she plays Now's the Time in duo on the same vibraphone with Terry Gibbs.**

**And you know and feel that this is exceptional for those days...**



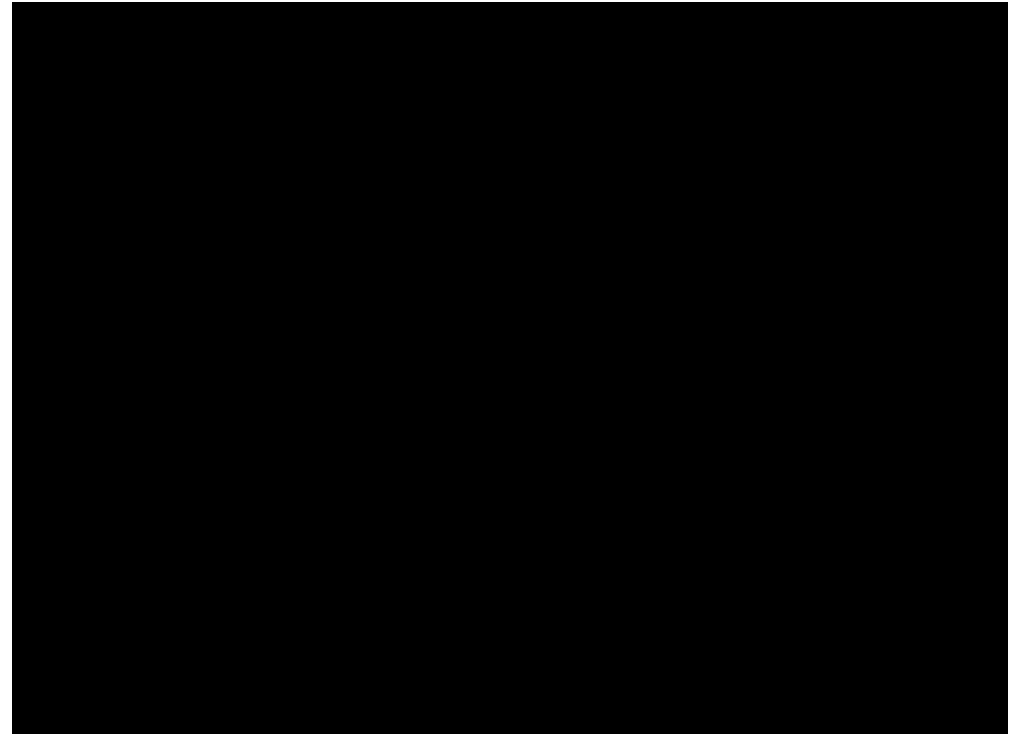


# The 70's

Let's make a leap to the 70s, after the Civil Rights Movement.

Looking at the trailer of the 1970 movie **Watermelon Man**, directed by Melvin Van Peebles, with Godfrey Cambridge starting with a whiteface act...

Listen how the music style changes...



# The 70's

From this period, I can share my own story: in **1977** I went to **Berklee College of Music** for a **13-week Summer Course**...

**"I guess no problem, he's from Europe".**

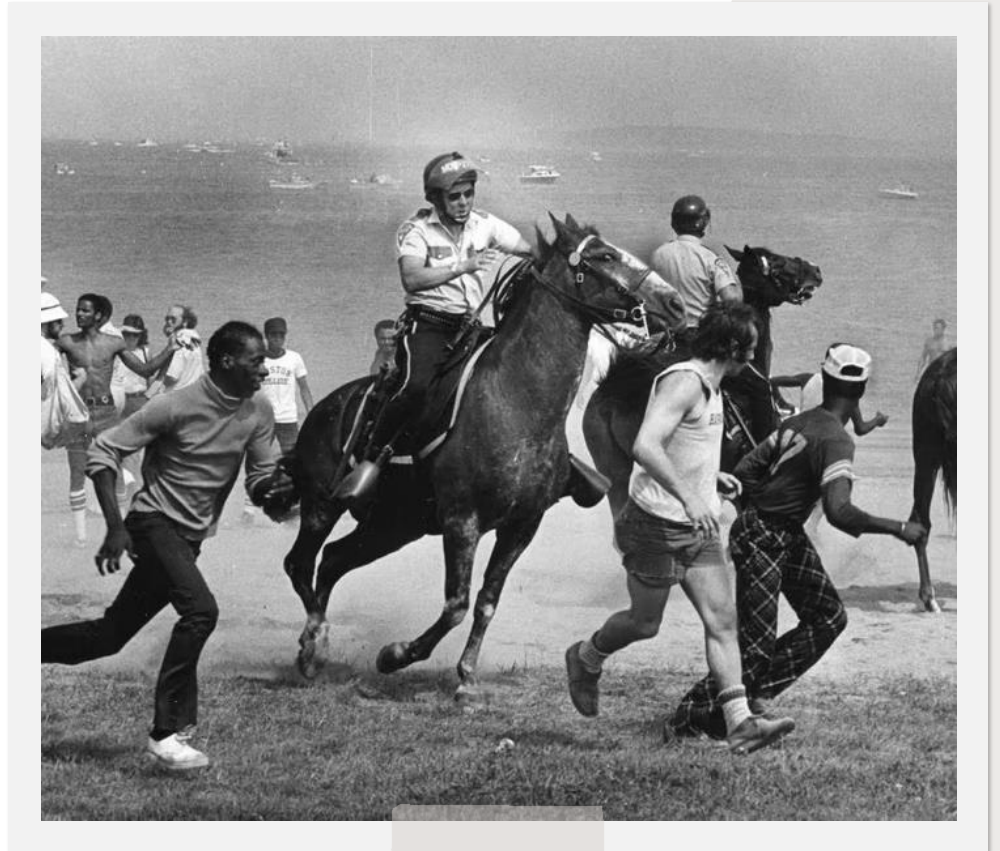
**My first impression of Berklee...**



# The 70's

By the way, that same summer, ...

Picture from the Boston Globe, "[45 years ago, Black protesters tried to desegregate Carson Beach](#)", D. Pan (July 13, 2020)



# More positive news

So many terrible stories to tell... so close to our times and still happening these days.

But there is also more positive news: seldom we encounter so many examples of such a diverse and inclusive background as in both our songs, standards, theory and practical domain of jazz and pop.

From Jay Zee to Dave Brubeck, from Charlie 'Bird' Parker to Lil Nas X', from Miles Davis to Jennifer Lopez and so many more.

We should make this more visual and audible during our classes, this way creating more awareness about this unique situation. And tell this story on and on to the whole society, our students,...

A close-up photograph of a person's hand holding a dark blue pen, poised to write on a document. The document is slightly out of focus, showing some text and a table-like structure. The right edge of the document is torn, creating a jagged white border that separates the image from the white background of the slide.

## **More positive news**

**Telling the full story, not only in history lessons, but also in ensemble and individual instrument lessons, by extension and ideally in all lessons and domains, will help us better prepare our students for the ever-changing (and repetitive) society.**

**Knowing the past, is knowing the future.**

# Some thoughts:

*Without the influence of blues, jazz, funk, hip-hop, Afro-beats and other cultural contributions from the people and diaspora of Africa, what would you have? “Folk music?” he mused, with a laugh. “Yodeling?”*

**Yinka Shonibare**



[An Artist Pushes Back Against Cultural Colonialism](#), By Laura van Straaten, NY Times, 19 October 2023

Image: Mr. Shonibare's "Abstract Spiritual VII" (2023), illustrates his use of fabrics, color and images of African ritual masks. Credit...The artist and James Cohan Gallery, New York. Photo by Dan Bradica

# Tell the full story

For many styles, recordings, songs we should give the correct information, telling the whole story.

About Miles Davis' recording 'My Funny Valentine' at the Philharmonic Hall at Lincoln Center...

Or about Yvette Marie Stevens, better known as...



# Tell the full story

You can find literally examples for any lesson situation...

Jazz & Pop Songs written by African-American and Latin-American Songwriters and many others

Examples for Ear Training, Modes, Secondary Dominant Chords, and Tri-Tone Substitutions, Contrafacts, ...

- *Need a Picardy Third? **ASA** (Djavan)*
- *Melodic motives based primarily on the Lydian scale? **Inner Urge** (Joe Henderson)*
- *#IVm<sup>7b5</sup> application? **Love On Top** (Beyoncé)*





# OLD TOWN ROAD

DAFT HILL & TATSCH REMIX



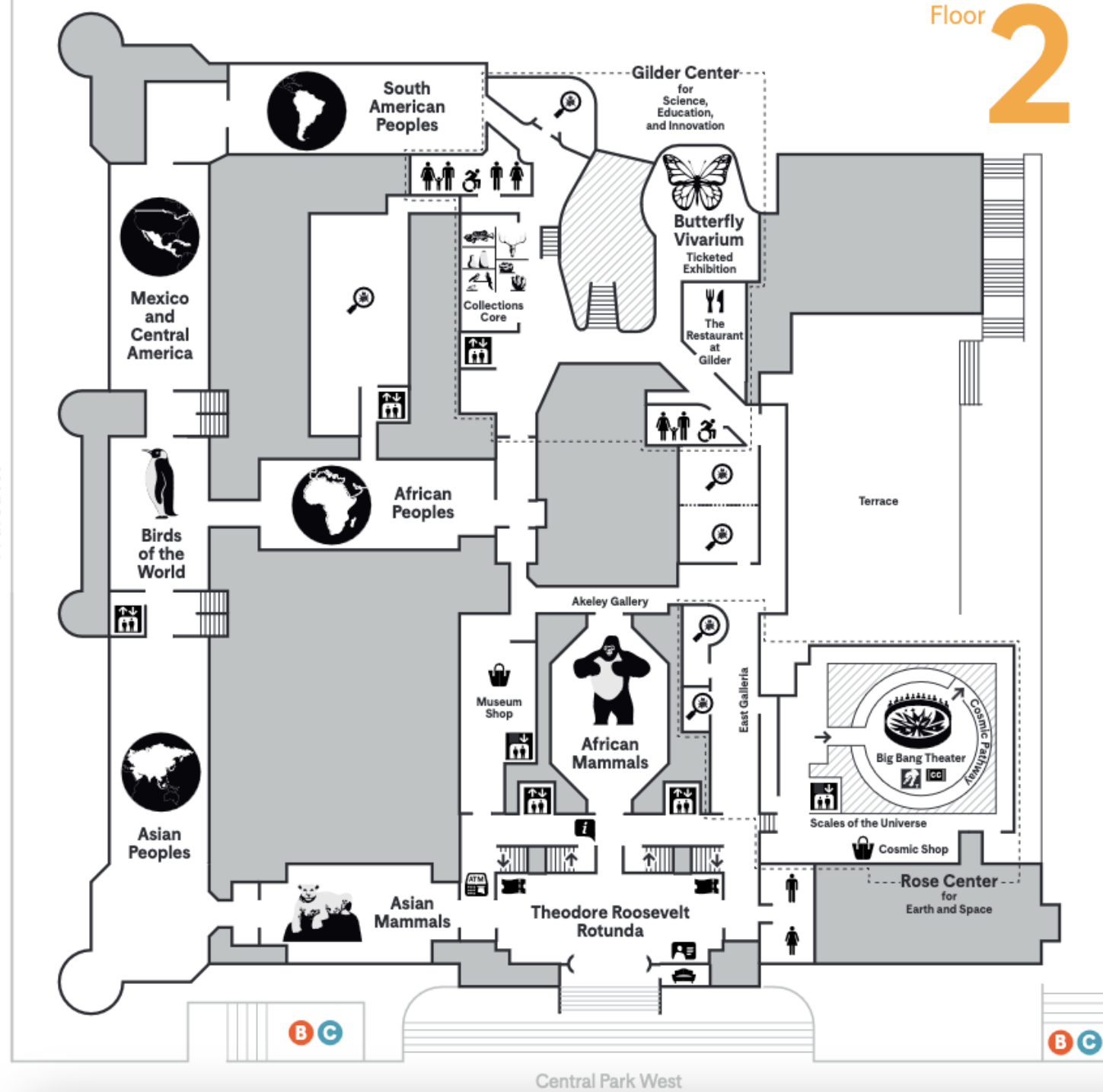
And of course, you will be still encountering people not willing to make a comparison between Mozart's '*Non piu andrai*' and for instance Lil Nas X '*Old Town Road*' but with some good arguments, even this is possible.

Tell the full story (if available)

How many times did I get examples of such a diverse background in my whole 'career' as a student?

Experiencing a 'shock' I had after a visit of the Natural History Museum in New York last November...

An exhibition hall, completely for 'peoples', not civilizations





## Some thoughts:

**Again, let's make our Music Theory, Ensemble and Instrument courses more representative of MUSIC, in the broadest sense possible.**

**And let's make them less monochromatic. That, too.**

# Some final thoughts

Another "Shock" experience recently at the JEN conference in New Orleans, where I heard these words from a Princeton teacher, recalling a conversation between two African-American students:

1 "Are you going to the jazz concert tonight'?"

2 "No. That's white men's music"

As quoted by Trineice Robinson-Martin teaching vocal jazz at Princeton

There is still a long road... But everything helps.

## Some final thoughts

Hopefully one day we will have a diverse student & teacher population in HME, just like in real society. Here I can say, that in the 1980s, I started the first Jazz curriculum in Belgium, as a private school. Although the tuition fee was much higher than our students pay nowadays at the conservatoire, I had a much more diverse student population. One student coming even specially from Nigeria, but also Belgians from Italian, Greek, Turkish, Moroccan background. And now, I don't see them in my classroom.

The start of this lecture was: our main purpose is to help students to become the best musicians, performers, educators, even entrepreneurs... maybe we should also think again about our entrance exams, already hampering the possibilities to enter HME for so many talented student/candidates...

Thanks for listening!

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