

Artistic Research and ‘Play’ in Jazz Education: Influential Precursors and Current Institutional Perspectives

When jazz became an academic field of artistic practice and research (in Europe first established at the current University of Music and Performing Arts in Graz, Austria in 1965), the availability of literature on pedagogical, theoretical and analytical models in jazz was limited. The pioneering jazz lecturers, who were primarily self-taught jazz practitioners, were required to improvise some of their academic teaching strategies; part of it was the development of experimental and collaborative playing situations in order to share artistic expertise with students – in the classroom, in private sessions, as well as in public concerts.

In parallel, the tacit knowledge of professional jazz musicians was gradually explicated and distributed in the form of speculative and pedagogical jazz theories. The first landmark publication in the field appeared in 1953 with Georg Russell's *The Lydian Chromatic Concept for Tonal Organisation*. Subsequent publications of jazz theories by authors such as John Mehegan (1959), Jerry Coker (1964), David Baker (1969/1974), and Bill Dobbins (1986) had a significant impact on the development of academic jazz education and entailed a growing body of related literature. All of these influential publications are based on the authors' reflection of their own artistic practices, their positions within the collective practices of the jazz scene, as well as on theoretical concepts derived from the European tradition in music theory.

This paper discusses influential precursors of artistic research in the history of academic jazz and explores the epistemological dimension of 'playing' in the teaching of and research on the jazz tradition. The study draws from a larger artistic research project on identity in the history of jazz in the city of Graz and considers the context of current institutional frameworks in a speculative outlook on potential future research. In a short artistic performance on piano, the presenter demonstrates results from his exploration of embodied knowledge in the artistic practice of the pioneering jazz lecturers in Graz and their impact on the current improvisatory practice.

Relation to the questions listed in the Call (150 words)

The paper discusses influential speculative and pedagogical jazz theories as precursors of artistic research, which have informed the development of jazz education. By doing so, the paper proposes arguments for the historical interrelation of various modes of artistic research and the teaching of jazz at institutions of Higher Music Education such as the Institute for Jazz in Graz. The paper presents historical examples of 'playing' as a synonym for both, the experimentation and artistic practice in relation to the development of educational perspectives in jazz. By presenting results of the artistic research project "Jazz & the City: Identity of a Capital of Jazz" (2011-2013, funded by the Austrian Science Fund FWF), the presenter's piano performance represents a case study of interrelated aspects in playing, teaching, historic jazz research and artistic research.



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biography (150 words)

Michael Kahr is a jazz pianist, composer/arranger, musicologist and artistic researcher, currently employed as Senior Lecturer and postdoctoral researcher at the Institute for Jazz and the Institute for Jazz Research University of Music and Performing Arts in Graz, Austria. He has also lectured at universities in Vienna, Salzburg and Sydney. His publications comprise the recently published monograph *Jazz & the City: Jazz in Graz von 1965 bis 2015*, various book chapters, articles, CDs and musical scores. He is currently preparing the edited volume *Artistic Practice as Research in Jazz and Popular Music – Positions, Theories, Methods*. He composed for big band, string ensembles, choir and jazz groups and performed at festivals and in jazz clubs across the globe.