

Jazz Worlds/World Jazz Conference at the University of Chicago

On May 25th and 26th, 2006, the University of Chicago's Franke Institute for the Humanities hosted "Jazz Worlds/World Jazz," a conference that examined the global circulation of jazz. The event, organized by Goffredo Plastino of the University of Newcastle upon Tyne and Travis Jackson and Philip Bohlman, both of the University of Chicago, was the second in a series of three conferences on jazz. The first was held in February 2005 at Newcastle upon Tyne, and the final ethnographic phase will take place in the summer of 2007 in Sardinia. The conferences move towards the publication of a book, also to be entitled "Jazz Worlds/World Jazz," and edited by Bohlman and Plastino.

The Chicago conference brought scholars together to discuss jazz traditions around the world, including such mutually distant locales as Azerbaijan, Colombia, France, Iran, Scandinavia, South Africa and the United States. Many of the presentations offered attendees a view of the jazz worlds that have emerged as musicians fused jazz styles with other traditions. In papers that advanced a variety of thought provoking arguments and theoretical insights, Inna Naroditskaya discussed the fusion of jazz and the *mugam* modal system in Azerbaijan; Claire Levy the incorporation of traditional limping metres in Balkan "ethno-jazz"; and Fabian Holt the fusion of jazz and Scandinavian folk music.

Many of the papers revealed complex trajectories for globalizing jazz, and in doing so provided a productive alternative to simplistic models in which jazz moves from an American center outward to a non-American periphery. For example, one of the musicians mentioned in Ana María Ochoa's paper was Satoshi Takeishi, a Japanese

percussionist who translated traditional Colombian percussion patterns to the drum kit, in the process becoming a central figure in Colombian jazz and popular music. Similarly, Travis Jackson, in an opening keynote address, drew our attention at one moment to Ernest Ranglin's *In Search of the Lost Rhythm* album, on which the Jamaican jazz guitarist collaborated with Senegalese musicians including Baaba Maal and Mansour Seck.

Several of the papers considered jazz in light of issues of representation. Ronald Radano's paper, for example, challenged a prevailing trope in jazz writing; namely, that the non-black audience for jazz and other black musics was epiphenomenal to black music and black music history. He suggested rather that non-black reception, connoisseurship, and fascination--in short, cross-cultural mediation--have been central to black music and its public profile. Richard Middleton, in his keynote address, presented a challenging psychoanalytic interpretation of the early years of jazz, and in particular the important roles that Jewish musicians played in mediating black music to white audiences.

Finally, many of the presentations drew attendees' attention to jazz's reputation for embodying political resistance and advancing progressive or liberating imaginaries. Andy Fry's paper on jazz music during the German occupation of France focused on moments in history that qualified the emancipatory reputation of jazz. In contrast, a particularly vivid video example in Laudan Nooshin's paper on jazz in Iran documented a dramatic moment of liberation for both performers and listeners. Richard Middleton's keynote lecture expressed cautious optimism about the progressive possibilities of jazz. On one hand, his talk identified a problematic history of representation in which black

music mediated black otherness to and for white audiences. On the other hand, he considered how jazz had, through globalization, become music that was rootless but at home everywhere. This homely rootlessness, he seemed to suggest, rendered global jazz a powerfully unassimilable force for social and political change.

Middleton's concerns resonated with the themes suggested by the conference title. Philip Bohlman remarked in a round table discussion that the appellation "World Jazz/Jazz Worlds" located scholarly discussion at the intersection of two conceptions of global jazz. To riff a little upon Bohlman's remarks, on one hand conference presenters examined World Jazz, a powerful, highly capitalized musical force emanating from America. On the other, they considered the multiplicity of Jazz Worlds: unique and at times conflicting understandings of jazz, its visions of the good life, and its emancipatory potential.

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