Performance Aspects of the New Orleans Jazz Style: A Guide for Jazz Musicians

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PERFORMANCE ASPECTS OF THE NEW ORLEANS JAZZ STYLE:
A GUIDE FOR JAZZ MUSICIANS

By
Marius Dicpetris

A DOCTORAL ESSAY

Submitted to the Faculty
of the University of Miami
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
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UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI

A doctoral essay submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Musical Arts

PERFORMANCE ASPECTS OF THE NEW ORLEANS JAZZ STYLE:
A GUIDE FOR JAZZ MUSICIANS

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New Orleans jazz is America’s first original art form. It is a shining example of what can be achieved in a multicultural environment. Since the first jazz album was released in 1917, jazz has steadily evolved and changed into an array of substyles. In the process, New Orleans jazz has become more and more distant and less understood. This essay seeks to counter that trend by analyzing and explaining the main performance aspects of the New Orleans jazz style.

The analysis section of this essay will be divided into three parts: improvisation, the roles of the front line instruments, and the roles of the rhythm section instruments. In order to gain insight into the characteristics of the style, eight solos by prominent New Orleans jazz musicians will be transcribed and analyzed. In addition, scholarly articles, books, music scores, and videos will be referenced. Music examples will also be composed by the author. The goal is to provide a guide for jazz musicians seeking to better understand the New Orleans jazz style.
DEDICATION

This essay is dedicated to my mother, Elaine Ferlita Dicpetris, and my father, Aleksandras Napoleanas Dicpetris.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Jazz music is celebrated as America's first original art form. It first appeared in New Orleans in the early part of the twentieth century. Early jazz was fresh and inventive, a result of the interactions of many unique cultures. African Americans and Creoles of color played key roles in the inception of the music.\(^1\) Also, contributing to various degrees were Caribbeans, white southerners, Irish, Italians, Jews, and Sicilians. To understand New Orleans jazz is to understand the dynamic artistic potential of racial integration and cross-cultural cooperation.

This essay is designed to be a guide for jazz musicians seeking to better understand the musical art form known as New Orleans jazz. It is intended to develop an appreciation of New Orleans jazz as an academic interest. It is also meant to be a guide for jazz musicians seeking to authentically reproduce the style. The first chapter contains historical and background information. The second chapter contains a review of related literature and the third contains an explanation of the methods used in the essay. Chapters 4, 5, and 6 seek to answer three key questions about the New Orleans jazz style:

1. What are the musical characteristics of New Orleans jazz improvisation?
2. What are the roles of the front-line instruments?
3. What are the roles of the rhythm section instruments?

Before New Orleans Jazz

During the two decades before New Orleans jazz developed, roughly from 1895 to 1915, ragtime was the most popular and readily accessible style of music in New Orleans. Ragtime began as a piano style featuring syncopation on the weak parts of the beat and was often performed in duple meter (2/4 or 4/4). The right hand of the ragtime pianist played the melody, and the left hand played bass notes on beats 1 and 3 and chords on beats 2 and 4. The form of a typical rag resembled the march of the late 19th century, ABCDAB, with the middle section acting as a trio.²

During its period of popularity, ragtime was available to the public in published piano scores, piano rolls, and at live performances by both professional and nonprofessional pianists. The preeminent performer-composers of the ragtime era included pianists Scott Joplin, James Scott, and Joseph Lamb - collectively termed “the big three.” Ragtime compositions were generally played with “straight eighth” notes. This was largely the result of ragtime composers emulating European art music. They also emulated American classical composers such as New Orleans pianist and composer Louis Moreau Gottschalk (1829-1869). Many ragtime composers sought to create an Afro-American musical art form that was taken seriously.

In the 1910s and 1920s, pianists Jelly Roll Morton and James P. Johnson contributed to the transformation of ragtime to jazz. Morton’s 1920 recording of Scott Joplin’s Maple Leaf Rag contains eighth note and sixteenth note melodic lines performed

with a triplet feel. This can be contrasted with Joplin’s original piano roll which was recorded with straight eighth and sixteenth notes.

Although the piano was the main instrument of ragtime music, the style was eventually adopted by brass bands, small ensembles, minstrel shows, and vaudeville groups. In these settings, the influx of musical instruments allowed for a more varied form of expression to emerge.

The most notable ragtime band was led by cornetist Buddy Bolden. Bolden, like many other New Orleans musicians of the time, was influenced by the marching band tradition. He was also influenced by the gospel music heard in uptown African American Baptist churches. Bolden is credited with adding blues elements to ragtime, including the “triplet” or “swing” feel. “The blues,” in this sense, refers not to the 12 bar blues form, but to a feeling of sadness or melancholia expressed by lowering or bending the flat 3rd, 5th, or 7th scale degrees of a major key. Although there are no known recordings of the Bolden Band extant, Bolden’s style and sound went on to influence many innovative New Orleans jazz musicians including Joe “King” Oliver (the mentor of Louis Armstrong) and Kid Ory.

Ragtime may seem as if it is the lone predecessor of New Orleans jazz. In fact, the formulation of New Orleans jazz resulted from the mixing of many different styles and

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3 Ibid., 110.


the contributions of many different individuals within those styles. As Wynton Marsalis eloquently states:

New Orleans had a great tradition of celebration. Opera, military marching bands, folk music, the blues, different types of church music, ragtime, echoes of traditional African drumming, and all of the dance styles that went with this music could be heard and seen throughout the city. When all of these kinds of music blended into one, jazz was born.7

**New Orleans Jazz**

At first, the lines between ragtime and early jazz were blurred, and the two terms were used interchangeably. The libraries of early New Orleans jazz bands were dominated by “rags” and were played with a swing feel. Sometime in the mid 1910s, the music now known as New Orleans jazz became a distinct musical art form. Stephen Longstreet, in his book *Storyville to Harlem*, offers a fascinating glimpse into jazz’s earliest years:

After Robert E. Lee threw in the towel, many Confederate army bands dumped their instruments in New Orleans pawn shops. Blacks bought the music tools cheaply, began to play with no knowledge of reading music or the proper way to handle slides or valves, so they played the popular ragtime their own way. The sounds in the night over the howls of whores and drunken sailors were the first wah-wah sounds of jazz.8

The ending of the Spanish–American war in 1898 was also an important point in New Orleans jazz history. When the troops returned home from Cuba, many re-entered the Unites States through the port of New Orleans. With them they brought an influx of marching band instruments, which in turn were passed on to local musicians.

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The main factor that distinguished New Orleans jazz from ragtime and other music styles of the time was the rhythmic phenomenon that came to be known as “swing.” Early New Orleans musicians adopted a swing feel by abandoning the precise binary subdivisions found in marches and ragtime.\(^9\) Instead of playing the eighth notes “straight,” the musicians held the notes on the downbeats for the first 2/3rds of the beat and held the notes on the upbeats for the last 1/3rd. However, this was not done with metrical precision; early New Orleans Jazz musicians generally performed their upbeats somewhere in between binary and ternary subdivisions.

The origins of the swing feel may have come from the rhythms found in 6/8 marches. This has not been fully substantiated as marches generally lack syncopation and are interpreted with strict metrical precision. A more likely scenario is that the roots of the swing feel are found in the music of West Africa.\(^10\) In West African drumming, triplet rhythms are common. These rhythms survived in the New World in Afro American and Caribbean folk music. They also survived in the blues and gospel music found in the African American Protestant churches. African American musicians like Buddy Bolden absorbed these sounds and introduced them to ragtime and jazz. This African American contribution to jazz is summed up by jazz educator and musician Chris Kuo:

It is said that jazz consists of European harmony and African rhythm. Perhaps this is an oversimplification, but if true, what separates early jazz from other late nineteenth century popular music like marches and Stephen Foster melodies is the rhythmic aspects alone. To "jazz something up" was not about reharmonizing a tune or playing counter melodies or obbligatos (which were already present in


marching music) but to change the rhythmic inflection of the melody and the rhythmic feel of the rhythm section.11

Another key distinguishing feature of New Orleans jazz was improvisation. Early ragtime and blues musicians did improvise, however the music publishing and recording companies saw little value in it. In addition, the piano rolls needed to match the printed sheet music. Sometime in the early part of the 20th century, horn players began improvising solos. They also began improvising together. The later became known as collective improvisation or New Orleans polyphony, a highly unique element which sets New Orleans jazz apart from all other music styles.

New Orleans polyphony typically begins when one instrument (usually the trumpet) plays the melody or a variation of it. The other instruments (usually the clarinet and trombone) then improvise around that melody in manner that is musically complimentary.12 The improvised polyphony of New Orleans jazz was significantly less predictable than the arranged styles that preceded it. In addition, the use of pentatonics, blues scales, and chord outlining kept it from being discordant. Many people viewed New Orleans jazz as a refreshing break from the quadrills, beguines, marches, and rags to which they were accustomed.

Historically, the instrumentation of a New Orleans jazz ensemble has been trumpet, trombone, clarinet, piano, banjo/guitar, string bass/tuba, and drum set. This lineup is similar to the lineups used in New Orleans marching bands. In addition, the musical roles of the instruments are similar in both types of ensembles.

11 Chris Kuo, e-mail message to author, March 22, 2016.

Although this is the standard lineup of a New Orleans jazz ensemble, like many tenets of jazz performance, this is a loose convention. Taking some liberties with instrumentation is a longstanding acceptable practice that does not diminish the authenticity of the music. For example, Louis Armstrong's *Hot Five* recordings contain no bass or drums.\(^\text{13}\) Those roles were instead covered by the piano and banjo.\(^\text{14}\) The essential keys to achieving the New Orleans jazz sound are not found in the amount and types of instruments, but rather in the style of improvising, the feel of the rhythm section, the interpretation of the melody, and in the selection of repertoire.

### Etymology/Classification

Jazz is a word that has come to represent a plethora of music styles. The first printed usage of the word “jazz” comes from a San Francisco sportswriter in 1913 describing the “spirited liveliness” shown by baseball players.\(^\text{15}\) A few years later, small ensembles from New Orleans playing lively, syncopated dance music began using the term “jass” in their names.\(^\text{16}\) The exact origins of the words “Jass” and “Jazz” are not fully understood. Research has shown that the terms do not have African origins.

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\(^\text{13}\) Louis Armstrong, *The Hot Fives and Hot Sevens Vol. 3*, recorded in 1927, Columbia, 44422, CD.

\(^\text{14}\) In this case, the bass and drums may have been omitted due to limitations in recording technology. Regardless of the reason, this recording and others set a precedent that authentic New Orleans jazz can be produced by ensembles of varying sizes and instrumentations.


\(^\text{16}\) Ibid.
One of the earliest known appearances of the word “jass” was in 1916 when Johnny Stein titled his band, Steins Dixie Jass Band.\textsuperscript{17} In 1917, the first jazz album recorded and released was by the Original Dixieland Jass Band.\textsuperscript{18} An interesting theory on how the word “jass” came to be used to describe the new style of music comes from saxophonist Garvin Bushell (1902-1991). In his book Jazz from the Beginning, Bushell states that:

They said that the French had brought the perfume industry with them to New Orleans and the oil of jasmine was a popular ingredient locally. To add it to a perfume was called "jassing it up." The strong scent was popular in the red light district, where a working girl might approach a prospective customer and say "Is jass on your mind tonight young fellow?" The term had become synonymous with erotic activity and came to be applied to the music as well.\textsuperscript{19}

Around 1918, bands in New Orleans and other cities dropped the term “Jass,” and began describing themselves as “Jazz” bands. The reason for changing from “ss” to “zz” is not entirely understood. It may be an issue of phonetic spelling: according to Cambridge Dictionaries Online, the pronunciation of the word “jasmine” is “Jazz-min.”\textsuperscript{20}

Since jazz’s inception in the mid-1910s, the music has steadily evolved and changed. Those developments introduced a variety of genres as well as the challenge of categorizing them. The term “New Orleans jazz” can refer to syncopated dance music of 1920’s New Orleans or to an interrelated group of New Orleans performance styles.


\textsuperscript{18} Original Dixieland Jass Band, Dixie Jass Band One Step, recorded in 1917, Victor Records, 18255, CD.

\textsuperscript{19} Garvin Bushell, Jazz from the Beginning (Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 1998), 28.

spanning many decades.\textsuperscript{21} Jazz historian and author Loren Schoenberg eloquently describes the difficulty in classifying jazz: “To breakdown as protean an art form as jazz into a series of ‘varieties’ makes for a daunting challenge. Every attempt to define a particular school is almost at once subverted by the similarities to music that came before and music that came after.”\textsuperscript{22}

The original style of jazz from New Orleans may be referred to by several different names. The term “Traditional jazz” was originally used to distinguish it from the swing style that developed in the 1930s.\textsuperscript{23,24} Traditional jazz is also the term given to post-1940’s bands specializing in recreating the early New Orleans jazz sound. In Britain, since the 1950s, the most prevalent term used to describe New Orleans jazz has been “Trad jazz.” The term “Dixieland jazz” is primarily used to describe traditional jazz bands composed mainly of white musicians. Bands with primarily African American members generally do not identify with this term. This is possibly due to the fact that the southeast region of the United States, also known as Dixie, was home to the largest concentration of slaves in the country.

Early New Orleans jazz, after migrating north to Chicago, came to be known as “Hot jazz.” It received this name because it adopted a more energetic and upbeat quality,


\textsuperscript{24} During the swing era, jazz was thought to be the music of the previous historical period; it was thought that swing had replaced jazz.
a reflection of the fast-paced nature of Chicago. Chicago area dancers also preferred a more upbeat dance music. Nearly a century later, starting in the 2010s, New Orleans style jazz bands sprouting up in New York City were being referred to by the same name.25

“Early jazz” and “Classic jazz” are yet more names used to refer to New Orleans jazz. To avoid confusion, this study will use the term “New Orleans jazz” when referring to the style of jazz that developed specifically in early twentieth century New Orleans.

**Repertoire**

The term “early jazz standard” generally refers to songs written for ragtime bands or jazz bands from the late 19th century through the mid-1930s. Many compositions of the same era that were written for Broadway shows or Hollywood films were later adopted by jazz bands and subsequently called “jazz standards.” Early jazz standards can also be referred to as “Dixieland standards.” “When the Saints Go Marching In” is probably the most recognizable early jazz standard.

Big band compositions written in the swing era (1935-1946), such as “In the Mood,” often do not fit into the New Orleans jazz construct. Post 1935 jazz compositions are generally written with a four-beat bass line, wherein New Orleans jazz and ragtime compositions are generally written with a two-beat bass line. The four beat bass line is also found in jazz standards written in the bebop era and beyond. This does not mean that all repertoire for New Orleans jazz bands must predate 1935. Many tunes written after 1935 can be performed in the New Orleans jazz style.

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In the late 1940s and 1950s there was a resurgence of New Orleans jazz. During that period, many New Orleans jazz songs were composed that have since become standards. These include “Do You Know What it Means to Miss New Orleans,” written by Eddie DeLange and Louis Alter in 1946, and “Bourbon Street Parade,” composed by Paul Barbarin in 1955. The main thing to consider when selecting a jazz standard from after 1935 is whether or not it resembles the early jazz standards harmonically and melodically. This is explained further in chapters 4, 5, and 6.

The majority of early jazz standards have been published in song books. The Creole Jazz Band, contains nearly 200 songs composed before 1923.26 The Real Dixieland Book contains 379 pages of Dixieland/New Orleans jazz standards27 and The Firehouse Jazz Band: Commercial Dixieland Fake Book, contains over 500 New Orleans jazz songs.28 Other books, such as Dixieland Jazz Standards are out of print but available online in pdf form.29

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Current State of New Orleans Jazz

A lot of people write off this kind of jazz as antiquated, but the truth of the matter is it’s still pop music. Twenties music has those qualities...a connection with basic human emotion. All the music we play is basic, structure-wise, chord-change-wise. And it gives us an ability to reach all people.  

New Orleans trombonist Jon Ramm, 2013

New Orleans jazz has traveled far and wide since its inception in the early 20th century. In the 1950s Louis Armstrong and his All-Stars toured internationally, spreading the music to Europe, Asia, Africa, and South America. Europeans have historically been receptive to New Orleans jazz, hosting several international “Dixieland” festivals each year.

Currently, New Orleans jazz is performed at a wide variety of venues throughout Europe, the United States, and other parts of the world. In Europe, there are nearly sixty active New Orleans style jazz bands. Among them are The Dixieland Crackerjacks, based in the Netherlands, The Crooktown Jazz Band, based in Belgium, Sac à Pulses, based in France, and The New Orleans Feetwarmers, based in Germany.

In the United States, New Orleans jazz can be heard from coast to coast. In New Orleans, The Dukes of Dixieland maintain an active performance schedule. The Preservation Hall Jazz band actively tours the U.S., and groups like The Hot Jazz

---

30 Friedwald.


Jumpers regularly perform throughout the New York City area.\textsuperscript{33,34} In addition to maintaining active performance schedules, many of these bands regularly record and release new music.

**Jazz in Education**

In the second half of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, jazz ensemble classes began to be offered at high schools and universities. In 1960, there were roughly 5,000 high school jazz bands.\textsuperscript{35} By 1970, that number had risen to nearly 15,000.\textsuperscript{36} In the 1960s several American universities began offering degrees in Jazz Studies. The number of universities with these programs has risen steadily since. In 1972, there were fifteen post-secondary jazz programs; in 2015 there was over one hundred and twenty.\textsuperscript{37} A surprising feature of these programs is that they generally do not offer courses in New Orleans jazz performance.\textsuperscript{38}

New Orleans jazz is not completely absent from the curriculum of jazz studies programs. Most jazz history and jazz appreciation courses have a set amount of time dedicated to early jazz. In these classes, students are exposed to some of the important


\textsuperscript{36} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid.

early jazz recordings. What is missing from most of these programs, however, is material explaining the technical aspects of New Orleans jazz.

Need for Study

Knowledge of New Orleans jazz is an essential part of understanding the roots of American music. It is the style of music that led to swing, rhythm and blues, and rock-n-roll. It also influenced the composers of Tin Pan Alley and Broadway. New Orleans jazz is to modern pop what renaissance music is to classical. Furthermore, it is the responsibility of civilizations to pass on their cultures to future generations.

There are many benefits to studying and performing jazz. In the article, “Why Jazz Education?,” Dave Liebman, Professor at The Manhattan School of Music, states, “the most important lesson learned in jazz playing is how to cooperate and work within a group situation while maintaining and exploring individuality.” Jerry Tolson, who teaches Jazz Studies at The University of Louisville, states in his article, “Why Teach Jazz?,” “Jazz provides a convenient vehicle for the exploration of the historical and sociological context of America’s growth and development.” These two articles, along with others, help highlight the need to study, perform, and teach New Orleans jazz.

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**Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this study is to analyze and explain the main performance aspects of New Orleans jazz. The intended audience is jazz musicians seeking to better understand the style. The analytical sections of this essay appear in chapters 4, 5, and 6. These chapters will cover improvisation, the roles of the front-line instruments, and the roles of the rhythm section instruments. The end goal is to create a guide for jazz musicians seeking to better understand the New Orleans jazz style.

**Summary**

Much has been written about the history of music in New Orleans from the 1910s and 1920s. What is lacking from the literature is material focusing on the performance aspects of the music. This study seeks to fill that void by analyzing and explaining the three main elements of New Orleans jazz: improvisation, the roles of the front-line instruments, and the roles of the rhythm section instruments. The aim is to provide a guide for performing non-arranged, early jazz standards in the New Orleans jazz style.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature describing how New Orleans jazz came to be an American art form is readily available in the form of scholarly articles, books, and other publications. These resources were of great benefit in understanding the historical background of New Orleans jazz. Literature describing the technical aspects of New Orleans jazz was harder to come by. The majority of this material does not go into detail about how to accurately perform the style. To make up for this lack of material, historical New Orleans jazz recordings were studied and analyzed.

For defining music related terms, *Grove Music Online* proved to be an excellent resource. Most entries are signed by the authors and larger entries contain bibliographies. This resource was helpful in exploring the etymology of the word “Jazz” and researching the characteristics of various music styles and instruments. Jazz historians Alyn Shipton, Lawrence Gushee, and Gene Anderson are contributors.

In researching the early development of New Orleans jazz, Alan C. Turley’s study, *The Ecological and Social Determinants of the Production of Dixieland Jazz in New Orleans*, provided useful information. Turley examined the various ethnic groups of New Orleans and investigated how they contributed to the production of New Orleans jazz.

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Similar in scope to Turley’s study is Lawrence Gushee’s, *The Nineteenth Century Origins of Jazz*. In this study, Gushee looked at the various prevailing theories concerning the inception of New Orleans jazz. Gushee’s study, along with Turley’s, was useful in understanding the background of early New Orleans jazz. Frank Tiro’s, *Jazz: A History*, was useful for gathering historical information about early, pioneering New Orleans jazz musicians. It was also helpful in determining which jazz musicians should be selected for transcribing.

In researching the characteristics of New Orleans jazz improvisation, several recordings were studied. These include works from New Orleans jazz’s first decades of popularity, the 1910s and 1920s, and from its renaissance in the 1950s and 1960s. The early recordings studied were: *Bix and Tram* (1927) by Bix Beiderbecke and Frankie Trumbauer, *Dixie Jass Band One Step* (1917) by the Original Dixieland Jass Band, *Louis Armstrong and King Oliver* (1923) by Louis Armstrong and King Oliver, and *The Hot Fives and Hot Sevens Vol. 3* (1927) by Louis Armstrong. The later recordings studied were, *Al Hirt Swingin’ Dixie at Dan’s Pier 600 in New Orleans Vol. 2* (1959), by


47 Bix Beiderbecke and Frankie Trumbauer, *Bix and Tram*, recorded in 1927, JSP Records, 913, CD.


49 Louis Armstrong and King Oliver, *Louis Armstrong and King Oliver*, Recorded in 1923, Milestone, 47017-2, CD.

50 Louis Armstrong, *The Hot Fives and Hot Sevens Vol. 3*, recorded in 1927, Columbia, 44422, CD.
Al Hirt, *Jazz Ultimate* (1958) by Bobby Hackett and Jack Teagarden, and *Louis and the Dukes of Dixieland* (1960) by The Dukes of Dixieland.\(^{51,52,53}\) These recordings were also used to gain information about New Orleans polyphony and the roles of the individual instruments.

In addition to studying recordings, the author used books, doctoral dissertations, videos, and music scores to gain insight into the technical characteristics of New Orleans jazz. *Jazz Pedagogy: The Jazz Educator’s Handbook and Resource Guide*, by Richard Dunscomb and Willie Hill Jr., includes descriptions of the roles of the individual instruments within the small jazz ensemble.\(^{54}\) Although this work is not intended for early jazz instruction, it did provide useful insights. David J. Kosmyna’s doctoral essay, “What Ya Want Me To Do?: A Guide to Playing Jazz Trumpet/Cornet in the New Orleans Style,” offered insights into the role of the trumpet/cornet within the New Orleans jazz ensemble.\(^{55}\) Although heavily anecdotal, this essay did provide useful information about the style of early jazz trumpet/cornet players.

“The Role of the Tuba in Early Jazz Music from 1917 to the Present: A Historical, Pedagogical, and Aural Perspective,” by Thomas Bough, offers a valuable look at the

\(^{51}\) Al Hirt, *Al Hirt Swingin’ Dixie at Dan’s Pier 600 in New Orleans Vol. 2*, recorded in 1959, Audio Fidelity, 5878, LP.

\(^{52}\) Bobby Hackett and Jack Teagarden, *Jazz Ultimate*, recorded in 1958, Capitol Records, T933, LP.

\(^{53}\) Dukes of Dixieland, *Louis and the Dukes of Dixieland*, recorded in 1960, Audio Fidelity, 5924, CD.


function of the tuba in early jazz.\textsuperscript{56} This doctoral essay includes annotated transcriptions of tuba parts from selected early jazz recordings and was useful in understanding the role of the tuba in early jazz.

In the online video, \textit{History of the Drum Set Part 5, 1917; New Orleans Style Drumming}, Tony Sbarbaro demonstrates the techniques employed by early New Orleans jazz drummers.\textsuperscript{57} \textit{Collective Improvisation in New Orleans Jazz}, an online video by Evan Christopher, demonstrates New Orleans style polyphony.\textsuperscript{58} This video and others were helpful in determining the roles of the trumpet, clarinet, and trombone in New Orleans jazz.

Several music scores were referenced and studied during the writing of this essay. These include marches by John Philip Sousa and rags by Scott Joplin. The scores were accessed on line via the IMSLP website (International Music Score Library Project).\textsuperscript{59} To gain an understanding of the harmony used in early jazz standards, several song books were referenced. These include, \textit{The Firehouse Jazz Band}, and \textit{The Creole Jazz Band}.\textsuperscript{60,61} Together, they contain over 800 examples of early jazz harmony.

\begin{flushright}
\footnotesize
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{56} Thomas Bough, “The Role of the Tuba in Early Jazz Music from 1917 to the Present: A Historical, Pedagogical, and Aural Perspective” (D.M.A. Essay, Arizona State University, 1998).
\item \textsuperscript{58} “Collective Improvisation in New Orleans Jazz,” Evan Christopher, accessed February 10, 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EadpcjMB_2s.
\end{itemize}
\end{flushright}
Summary

The literature describing how New Orleans jazz came to be is vast. There is, however, a lack of material concerning the performance aspects of the music. In order to make up for this, sound recordings were studied and analyzed. In addition, scholarly articles, books, videos, and music scores were studied and referenced.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This essay is designed to be a guide for jazz musicians seeking to better understand the New Orleans jazz style. This will be achieved through exploration and analysis of the three main components of the music: improvisation, the roles of the front-line instruments, and the roles of the rhythm section instruments. These topics are covered in chapters 4, 5, and 6, respectively. It should be noted that the author is a regular performer of this style of music and has taught New Orleans Jazz performance classes at the college level. This past experience was used in explaining the inner workings of New Orleans jazz as well as in coming up with the music examples found in chapters 4, 5, and 6.

Improvisation

The improvisational style of New Orleans jazz varies in many ways from contemporary styles of improvising. Chapter 4 of this study is dedicated to an explanation of New Orleans jazz improvisation. In order to identify the unique characteristics of the style, eight solos performed by prominent New Orleans jazz musicians were transcribed and analyzed. These solos were selected from the albums listed on pages 17-18. They include, “Struttin’ With Some Barbeque” by Louis Armstrong, “Singin’ the Blues,” by Bix Beiderbecke, “Canal Street Blues” by Johnny Dodds, “Singin’ the Blues” by Frankie Trumbauer, “Sunday” by Jack Teagarden, “Struttin’ With Some Barbeque” by Kid Ory, “South” by Rich Matteson, and “South” by Louis Armstrong (scat solo).
The analysis of the solos was divided into three categories: melody, harmony, and rhythm. The technical aspects analyzed include arpeggiated/linear movement, intervallic relationships, note choices within chord progression, swing feel, and use of rhythmic motifs. The author looked for similarities among these eight solo transcriptions. In addition, books, doctoral essays, music scores, and other publications were referenced.

**Transcription Procedure**

The eight selected solos were transcribed in real time from digital recordings published on the *You Tube* website. The notes, inflections, and articulations were transcribed directly into *Finale 2013* software. Occasionally, to help clarify a difficult passage, the speeds of the recordings were reduced by one half using the settings found on the video control panel.

**Roles of the Front Line Instruments**

The front line instruments of a typical New Orleans jazz ensemble are trumpet, clarinet, and trombone. Chapter 5 of this study is dedicated to an analysis of the roles of these three instruments. Also included is an analysis of the front-line’s collective improvisation, also known as New Orleans polyphony.

In order to gain an understanding of the roles of the front-line instruments, sound recordings, videos, and jazz standards were analyzed. The goal was to determine the functions of these instruments for the purpose of real-time performance applications. The performance aspects analyzed were: melodic interpretation, use of space, counter melody performance, harmonizations, and style.
The polyphony was examined by transcribing and analyzing excerpts from Al Hirt’s recording of “Darktown Strutters Ball.” The technical aspects examined were roles of voices, rhythmic strata, and counterpoint. The author also composed examples demonstrating the roles of the instruments and referenced other sources.

Roles of the Rhythm Section Instruments

Chapter 6 is dedicated to an analysis of the roles of the rhythm section instruments. These instruments, historically, have been string bass/tuba, piano, banjo/guitar, and drum set. Music scores, sound recordings, and videos were analyzed in order to determine what functions these instruments have within the ensemble. The music scores analyzed include “The Entertainer” and “Original Rags” by Scott Joplin and “The Thunderer” by John Philip Sousa. The author also composed examples demonstrating the roles of the instruments, and referenced other material.

The analysis of the piano and banjo/guitar includes chord voicings, rhythm, and comping style. The analysis of the string bass/tuba includes note choices within chord progression, rhythmic placement of notes, and harmonic patterns. The analysis of the drums includes high-hat, snare drum, bass drum, and cymbals usage.

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62 Al Hirt, *Al Hirt Swingin’ Dixie at Dan’s Pier 600 in New Orleans Vol. 2*, recorded in 1959, Audio Fidelity, 5878, LP.


Summary

The purpose of this study is to create a guide for jazz musicians seeking to better understand the New Orleans jazz style. In order to gain an understanding of the inner workings of New Orleans jazz, sound recordings, music scores, videos, and other materials were studied and analyzed.

The author transcribed and analyzed eight solos performed by prominent New Orleans jazz musicians. These solos, along with other material, contributed towards defining the musical characteristics of New Orleans jazz improvisation. The roles of the front line and rhythm section instruments were also defined by analysis of music scores, sound recordings, videos, and other publications.
CHAPTER 4

IMPROVISATION

The improvisational style of New Orleans jazz varies in many ways from contemporary styles of improvising. This chapter seeks to identify and highlight those differences by analyzing eight transcribed New Orleans jazz solos. In addition, related literature and music scores will be referenced.

The chapter will be divided into three categories: melody, harmony, and rhythm. The technical aspects to be analyzed include arpeggiated/linear movement, intervallic relationships, note choices within chord progression, swing feel, and use of rhythmic motifs. Understanding these musical elements will help the reader to better understand New Orleans jazz improvisation.

Melody

New Orleans jazz improvisation developed out of a variety of music performance styles in the early part of the 20th century. The most important influence was ragtime. Many ragtime melodies are characterized by arpeggated figures. This can be seen in the main theme of Scott Joplin’s 1898 composition, “Original Rags” (Example 4.1).

Example 4.1. “Original Rags,” mm. 8-10.
Remnants of the arpeggiated ragtime style can be heard in New Orleans jazz solos. The opening line of Louis Armstrong’s 1927 cornet solo on “Struttin’ With Some Barbeque,” is built around an embellished version of an Ab6 arpeggio (Example 4.2).

Example 4.2. “Struttin’ With Some Barbeque,” Ab Arpeggio, mm. 1-3.

This example also contains a 6 to b3 tritone, which is a favorite of New Orleans jazz musicians. Given that the majority of the intervals in the phrase are larger than a major second, the overall contour can be described as arpeggiated. This can be contrasted with the more stepwise motion of bebop, which is considered linear.

The use of arpeggios can also be heard in Bix Beiderbecke's cornet solo on “Singin’ the Blues.” In this example, Beiderbecke moves in half steps before and after the arpeggiation. This adds a brief, but balancing effect to the up and down movement of the arpeggio. (Example 4.3).

Example 4.3. “Singin’ the Blues,” Eb6 Arpeggio, mm. 8-9.

The above two examples by Armstrong and Beiderbecke also demonstrate the use of the major blues scale (12♭33561). Melodic lines based off of the major blues scale and lines emphasizing the b3 of the key are found throughout the transcribed solos.
In the example below, Beiderbecke demonstrates the use of repetition after playing an arpeggiated line. The repeated notes serve as a resolution to the cadence of the arpeggio (Example 4.4).

Example 4.4. “Singin’ the Blues,” Use of Repetition, mm. 18-19.

Jack Teagarden’s 1957 trombone solo on the recording “Sunday,” illustrates that even after the advent of the bebop style, New Orleans jazz improvisers retained the use of arpeggiation (along with other devices such as the blues and pentatonic scales). In a span of four measures, Teagarden outlines three arpeggios: F9, B♭7, and B♭6 (Example 4.5).

Example 4.5. “Sunday,” Arpeggios, mm. 6-9.

Some of the arpeggiated lines in this example are also embellished with neighbor tones.

Teagarden also balances the use of arpeggiated lines with linear phrases. In mm. 10-12, Teagarden plays a phrase with a primarily linear contour (Example 4.6).

Example 4.6. “Sunday,” Linear Contour, mm. 10-12.
Analysis of the selected solos reveals that the ratio of linear to arpeggiated lines varies from player to player. Some players, such as Armstrong, tend to play more arpeggio based phrases (Example 4.7) and others tend to intermix the two.


Harmony

The most commonly used chords in New Orleans jazz are triads: major, minor, augmented, and diminished as well as dominant 7th and minor 7th chords. Major 7th chords are rarely used. Dominant chords with altered 9ths, 11ths, or 13ths are generally not used. Occasionally, dominant chords with altered 5ths or chords with natural 6ths, 9ths, 11ths, and 13ths, are used.

Examining the harmonic material of the eight selected solos reveals a fairly consistent diatonic style of improvising. The performers generally build their melodic material off of the major and minor arpeggios associated with the chords. The only major exceptions to this is the use of blue notes (lowered 3rd, 5th, and 7th scale degrees of major triads and dominant 7th chords) and the occasional use of non-harmonic passing tones.
The use of diatonic harmony, coupled with the use of chord outlining and pentatonics (five note scales), makes New Orleans jazz improvisation less complex than bebop, which uses altered upper extensions and more scalar material. (See Appendix B for examples of scales and chords used by New Orleans jazz improvisers). When playing scalar based lines, there are more notes available within a given measure (Example 4.8).

Example 4.8. C7 Arpeggio and C Bebop Scale Comparison

The analyzed solos also reveal a tendency towards harmonically simple phrasing.

In “Struttin’ With Some Barbeque,” trombonist Kid Ory plays a musical phrase using only the thirds of the chords (with pick up note) (Example 4.9).

Example 4.9. “Struttin’ With Some Barbeque,” Thirds of Chords, mm. 9-11.

In the same solo, Ory plays a phrase using only two notes, the 9th’s, and 11th’s of the B♭7 (with pick up notes) (Example 4.10).

Example 4.10. “Struttin’ With Some Barbeque,” 9th’s and 11th’s, mm. 12-14.
Another musical device found frequently throughout the transcribed solos is the use of blue notes. Blue notes in New Orleans jazz are sometimes lowered or raised to the point of microtonal dissonance. Johnny Dodds, in his solo on “Canal Street Blues,” slowly raises and lowers the flatted 3rd scale degree in the key of F (Example 4.11).

Example 4.11. “Canal Street Blues,” Blue Notes, mm. 1-4.

\[
\begin{array}{c}
F \\
\end{array}
\]

Dodds also plays a common New Orleans jazz motif in this solo, the 6 to $\flat 3$ tritone.

Blue notes are not always performed with special inflections. In Louis Armstrong’s scat solo on “South,” he sings the tritone (flatted 5th) of F minor with no special treatment (Example 4.12).

Example 4.12. “South” Tritone, mm. 5-6.

\[
\begin{array}{c}
C7 \\
Fm \\
\text{Tritone}
\end{array}
\]

The B$\flat$ in this example serves as a non-harmonic blue note. In the same solo, Armstrong sings a pentatonic pattern over Eb (Example 4.13).

Example 4.13. “South,” Pentatonic Pattern, mm. 3-4.
Rhythm

The two main rhythmic elements found throughout the transcribed solos are syncopation and swing. The syncopation in New Orleans jazz comes from ragtime music, and the swing feel comes from the blues and the southern black church.

Rich Matteson exemplifies the use of syncopation and swing in his helicon solo on “South” (Example 4.14). 66


\[\text{Example 4.14. “South,” Syncopation, mm. 1-4.}\]

Matteson starts the phrase on the upbeat of beat one (mm. 1) with an accented \(F^b\). He then continues to use syncopation by resting on the downbeats at several points in the phrase, while articulating notes on the upbeats.

Many of the phrases in the transcribed solos also start and end on the downbeats. This can be seen in the c-melody saxophone solo by Frankie Trumbauer on “Singing the Blues” (Example 4.15). This example also contains a triplet figure in mm. 10, a commonly used device in early New Orleans jazz.

Example 4.15. “Singin the Blues,” Downbeat Phrases, mm. 10-13.

66 The helicon is the predecessor of the Sousaphone.
Rhythmic analysis of the transcribed solos reveals a tendency towards one to two measure phrases. These phrases tend to start rhythmically complex, using eighth notes or eighth note triplets, and end rhythmically simple, using quarter notes, half notes, or rests. This can be seen in the phrase played by Bix Beiderbecke in “Singin the Blues” (Example 4.16).

![Example 4.16. “Singin the Blues,” Rhythmic Phrasing, mm. 21-23.](image1)

This can be contrasted with the more eighth note based and scalar, three to four measure phrases found in bebop (Example 4.17). (Example composed by the author).

![Example 4.17. Eighth Note Based Bebop Line.](image2)

**Summary**

The eight solos analyzed in this chapter revealed many of the musical characteristics used in New Orleans jazz improvisation. One of the main elements is the use of arpeggiation. The analysis showed that the arpeggiated lines are often embellished and intermixed with linear material. The solos also revealed the use of blue notes. Often, but not always, the blues notes are lowered or raised to the point of microtonal dissonance.
The solos also revealed the diatonic nature of New Orleans jazz improvisation. The performers generally build their melodic material off of the major and minor arpeggios associated with the chords. Natural 9ths, 11ths, and 13ths are used, but altered upper extensions generally are not. The performers also use the major and minor blues scales as well as pentatonics. Syncopation and swing are the most common rhythmic elements found in the solos. In addition, the phrases are generally one to two measures in length and tend to start with eighth notes and end with quarter notes, half notes, and rests.
CHAPTER 5

ROLES OF THE FRONT LINE INSTRUMENTS

The front line instruments of a typical New Orleans Jazz ensemble are trumpet/cornet, clarinet, and trombone. This lineup was established in the mid-1910s as jazz was developing. Its roots can be traced to 19th century marching bands. The front line instruments are essentially reductions of the larger sections of the marching band. The trumpet represents the high brass, the trombone represents the low brass, and the clarinet represents the woodwinds. The musical functions of the instruments also carried over from marching band music. The acoustical properties of these three instruments allow them to perform together while maintaining their own distinct personalities.

Although the trumpet, trombone, and clarinet are the most common front line instruments, it is not necessary to have this exact line up. For example, a soprano saxophone may be substituted for the clarinet, as was done by Sidney Bechet, or instruments may be omitted. When the alto, tenor, and baritone saxophones became popular during the swing era, they started to be used in New Orleans jazz.

While these types of alterations are not uncommon, they do alter the sound of the ensemble. Saxophones, with their metallic timbres, may clash with the brassy sounds of the trumpet and trombone. Omitting any of the front line instruments diminishes the improvisatory impact of the group.

Using three front line instruments achieves the greatest sense of balance within the ensemble. This is true because of the improvisatory nature of the style and the independent movements of the voices. Any more than three voices improvising at the same time could be confusing to the listener. The listener must also feel the beat of the
rhythm section. One well-known exception to this rule is the addition of a second trumpet or cornet. In the 1920s King Oliver used Louis Armstrong on second cornet in his Creole Jazz Band.\textsuperscript{67} This four instrument line up worked well because Armstrong and Oliver primarily played together in thirds, which was aided by Armstrong’s perfect pitch. The human ear tends to perceive instruments of a similar timbre, moving in a similar direction, as one unit.\textsuperscript{68} Because of this, King Oliver’s front line functioned in a similar way to groups with three horns. This chapter will examine the roles of the front line instruments through analysis of melodic and polyphonic material.

**Melody**

A primary function of the front line is to perform the melodies of the songs, although occasionally the piano and banjo/guitar are used. This is assuming the ensemble is performing non-arranged lead sheets from New Orleans jazz song books (see appendix D).

Historically, the trumpet has performed the melody in New Orleans jazz ensembles. The trumpet’s range, approximately E3 to C6 in concert pitch, brassy timbre, and ability to project make it ideal for the job. However, there is no steadfast rule stating that this must always be the case. Any of the front line instruments or their substitutes can do so. In addition, it is common for one instrument to play the “A” sections of an AABA tune, while another plays the bridge. It is also common for the rhythm section to

\textsuperscript{67} Louis Armstrong, *Louis Armstrong and King Oliver*, recorded in 1923, Milestone, 47017-2, CD.

introduce the melody by performing the last 4 or 8 bars of the tune, with the piano or banjo stating the melody, improvising, or comping.

Regardless of whether it is the trumpet, trombone, or clarinet performing the melody, there are several important aspects to consider. The first pertains to rhythmic feel. In general, the swing feel used in modern jazz styles is also used in New Orleans jazz. This is taking into account that the swing feels of modern jazz artists often vary. Although some performers in the first few decades of jazz performed their eighth notes somewhere in between straight and swing—a relic of ragtime—contemporary New Orleans jazz performers generally swing their eighth notes.

The best way that musicians can develop a swing feel is by listening to jazz recordings. They also develop swing feels by listening to and performing live jazz. Appendix C of this essay includes a bibliography of essential New Orleans jazz recordings.

The second important aspect in performing the melody pertains to note and phrase durations. In New Orleans jazz, space is needed in between melody notes and phrases in order to allow the other instruments to be heard. This is a particularly important aspect of New Orleans polyphony. The space may or may not be written into a song. New Orleans jazz standards tend to lend themselves to the style and need little altering. Performing other jazz standards may require creating space. There are several ways in which this can be done.

The most obvious way of creating space within a melody is by shortening the lengths of certain notes or phrases. It is up to the performer to decide how to achieve this
without jeopardizing the integrity of the melody. This technique can make it possible to perform a variety of jazz standards in the New Orleans jazz style.

An example of a jazz standard that can be altered to fit the New Orleans jazz style is “Body and Soul.” Notice that in the opening line, there is little space for other instruments to play. (Example 5.1).


As is typical with ballads, the notes are generally held out for their full written values. Creating space in the melody at ballad tempo would create unusually large gaps. To solve this problem, the tempo is increased by 40 bpm. This allows notes and phrases to be shortened without creating too much space (Example 5.2).


In addition, the new faster tempo adds a liveliness that is characteristic of New Orleans jazz.

The melody can also be arranged so that the notes and corresponding chords receive twice their original values (A technique pioneered by saxophonist Coleman Hawkins) (Example 5.3).
In this approach the tempo remains at the faster speed while certain notes and phrases are shortened to add space. The end result is a less hurried feel to the melody, space for the other instruments, and a spirited feel in the rhythm section.

The melody of an early jazz standard is rarely performed exactly as written. In addition to shortening certain notes and phrases, there are many other musical devices used to enhance or alter a melody. In general, these devices fall into the category of melodic embellishments.

A melodic embellishment is a note, series of notes, or inflection added to a melody. Types of embellishments include diatonic and chromatic passing tones, arpeggiations, improvisations, appoggiaturas, bended notes, glissandi, and vibrato. These embellishments are generally improvised by the performer and serve to keep the music fresh and interesting. They are also an important part of an individual’s style and contribute to the spontaneous feel of the music.

There are numerous New Orleans jazz recordings that exemplify the use of melodic embellishments. Compare mm. 5-8 of the original melody to “After You’ve Gone,” (Example 5.4), to the version performed by trombonist Vic Dickenson (Example 5.5). Dickenson uses several embellishment devices to color the melody, such as repetition, improvisation, delay, and arpeggiation.
Example 5.4. “After You’ve Gone,” mm. 5-8.

Example 5.5. “After You’ve Gone,” Embellished Version, mm. 5-8.

The devices used by Dickenson represent only a small fraction of the melodic devices available to the performer.

**New Orleans Polyphony**

One of the most audible aspects of New Orleans jazz is the collective improvisation of the front line. This collective improvisation, also known as New Orleans polyphony, is created when one instrument (usually the trumpet) plays the melody or a variation of it and the other instruments improvise around that melody (usually the clarinet and trombone). The trombone generally improvises in a register below the melody, while the clarinet generally improvises in a register above it. These informal register assignments correspond to those used in marching band compositions.

New Orleans polyphony is largely an aural tradition which developed out of marching band conventions. Jazz musicians have historically acquired the style by playing with other musicians, listening to live performances, and listening to recordings and the radio when available. (Appendix C contains a list of recommended New Orleans jazz recordings).
It is helpful to think of New Orleans polyphony as a conversation between three individuals. Each person has something to say and is eager to say it. But, if everyone speaks at the same time, the dialogue becomes incoherent. An intelligible conversation is dependent upon listening and speaking at the right moment. New Orleans polyphony, like a verbal conversation, is not scripted. There will always be a level of unpredictability and at times the voices will overlap. This is part of what makes New Orleans polyphony, and sometimes conversations, interesting and spontaneous.

Examining relevant recordings and literature reveals insights into the inner workings of New Orleans polyphony. The recording—“Darktown Strutters' Ball,” featuring Al Hirt on trumpet, Harold Cooper on clarinet, and Bob Havens on trombone—offers useful examples of how the three instruments work together in a polyphonic setting. In mm. 1-2, the trumpet plays an embellished version of the melody, the clarinet plays eighth note based lines, and the trombone plays quarter notes or rests (Example 5.6).


\[\text{Example 5.6. “The Darktown Strutters' Ball,” Polyphony, mm. 1-3.}\]

\[\text{Example 5.6. “The Darktown Strutters' Ball,” Polyphony, mm. 1-3.}\]

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69 Al Hirt, Al Hirt Swingin’ Dixie at Dan’s Pier 600 in New Orleans Vol. 2, recorded in 1959, Audio Fidelity, 5878, LP.
This example shows that while two instruments are playing eighth note based lines, the third plays lines containing notes of longer durations or rests. This two to one ratio is found throughout the polyphonic sections of the recording and is not instrument specific.

The recording also shows that the two non-melody instruments often take turns playing eighth note based lines. In mm. 3-6, the eighth note line alternates between the clarinet and trombone (Example 5.7).

Example 5.7. “The Darktown Strutters' Ball,” Eighth Note Line Alternation, mm. 3-6.

Achieving a successful level of interplay requires that the musicians listen and react to each other. Eventually musicians performing this style develop an intuitive sense for it. The back and forth in this example occurs primarily between the clarinet and trombone because the trumpet is locked into the general structure of the melody.

In order to perform New Orleans polyphony, an understanding of the roles of the front line instruments is needed. The roles of the trumpet, clarinet, and trombone are explained further in the following sections.
**Trumpet**

The trumpet, as previously mentioned, often plays the melody or an embellished version of it. It can also improvise freely with the clarinet and trombone during shout choruses or on the last chorus of a song. When improvising with the clarinet and trombone, the trumpet generally plays phrases that allow space for the other instruments to be heard.

Historically, the trumpet has been responsible for the musical direction of the ensemble. As the carrier of the melody, it sets the tone and character of the music. This role follows naturally from the tendency of the trumpet to project over the rest of the band. The most notable New Orleans jazz trumpeters/cornetists, such as Buddy Bolden, Louis Armstrong, and Joe “King” Oliver, played with great confidence and leadership. This can be contrasted with the more mellow styles of some of the later trumpeters such as Miles Davis and Chet Baker. One of the most important responsibilities of the New Orleans trumpet player is to play the lead line of the music while maintaining a high level of energy.

**Clarinet**

Clarinetist Evan Christopher, in *Collective Improvisation in New Orleans Jazz*, a video produced by Jazz at Lincoln Center's Jazz Academy, explains that the clarinet traditionally uses arpeggios as a foundation for building melodic material. An example

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of this is demonstrated alongside the melody of “Body and Soul” (clarinet line composed by the author) (Example 5.8).


Arpeggiating the chords is also a way for the clarinet to create counter melodies. The arpeggios complement the melody by outlining the chords over which the melody is based. They also add a sense of forward momentum. To avoid repetition, the arpeggios can be shaped into phrases using voice leading. These phrases can then be resolved into notes of longer durations or rests. Leaving space at the ends of phrases is also important for the clarinetist as it offers the chance for the other instruments to be heard. The idea of creating space in the melody also applies to countermelodies.

In addition to the use of arpeggiation, New Orleans jazz clarinetists sometimes harmonize the melody with the trumpet in 3rds. This is generally done in combination with improvisation. For example, the clarinet may start a melodic line harmonizing with the trumpet and then branch off into improvisation towards the end of the phrase. It is up to the performer to decide when to harmonize, if at all, and when to improvise. The clarinetist also embellishes melodic lines. Two commonly used devices are ascending
runs and sustained notes in the upper register. These devices add excitement, tension, and variance to the polyphony.

Trombone

The style of trombone playing most commonly associated with New Orleans jazz is called “tailgate.” The name derives from early 20th century New Orleans when bands played on advertising wagons. In order to have enough room to play, the trombonist had to ride on the wagon’s tailgate.

The most distinguishable characteristic of the tailgate style is the glissando. The glissando in tailgate trombone playing is used to link the end of one phrase to the beginning of the next. The glissandi often start on the tonic of the V and end on the tonic of the I. An example of this can be seen alongside the melody of “When the Saints Go Marching In” (Example 5.9). (Trombone line composed by the author).

Example 5.9. “When the Saints Go Marching In,” Tailgate Style, mm. 1-4.

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In addition, the glissandi typically start on the second beat of the measure before the new phrase and end on the downbeat of the new phrase.

The tailgate style is also characterized by the performance of quarter notes on beats 1 and 3 and rests on beats 2 and 4. The root of the chord is usually performed on beat 1 and the V of the chord is usually performed on beat 3. To avoid monotony, trombonists often enhance this technique with voice leading, improvisation, and embellishments (Example 5.10). (Trombone line composed by the author).

Example 5.10. “When the Saints Go Marching In,” Tailgate Style Variation, mm. 2-5.

There is no steadfast rule stating that the trombonist must perform in the tailgate style; they are permitted to and often do improvise freely. However, the tailgate style is particularly useful when the front line becomes mobile, such as when marching or parading around without the rhythm section. In this situation, the trombonist performs the role of the bass and lays the harmonic and rhythmic foundation for the other horns.

Melodic embellishments are also used in the tailgate style. The most common are growls, falls, smears, rips, and bended blue notes.

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74 The movement away from the tailgate style and towards a more free improvisational style was facilitated in part by trombonist Kid Ory.
Summary

The front line instruments of a typical New Orleans Jazz ensemble are trumpet, clarinet, and trombone. The primary functions of the front line are to perform the melodies of the songs, to improvise collectively, also known as New Orleans polyphony, and to improvise solos. Although the trumpet normally plays the melody, any of the front line instruments can do so. An important factor in performing the melody is creating space for the other instruments. This can be done by shortening the lengths of notes or phrases.

New Orleans polyphony is created when one instrument plays the melody and the other instruments improvise around that melody. The trumpet normally plays the lead voice and is responsible for the musical direction of the ensemble. The clarinet typically plays arpeggio based counter melodies and the trombone plays the tailgate style consisting of glissandi, quarter notes on beats 1 and 3, and improvisation.
CHAPTER 6

ROLES OF THE RHYTHM SECTION INSTRUMENTS

The rhythm section instruments in a typical New Orleans style jazz ensemble are piano, guitar/banjo, string bass/tuba, and drums. Not all of these instruments are needed in order to achieve the New Orleans jazz sound. For example, if the piano or guitar is providing the chordal harmonies, the banjo may not be needed or vice versa. If there is a banjo in the rhythm section, its percussive, time-keeping qualities can take the place of the drums; likewise, if there is a guitarist or pianist present, their lower ends can take the place of the string bass or tuba. There are no rules dictating the number or types of instruments that can be used. However, what should be considered is whether the harmony, bass, and rhythm are represented.

Before the piano, banjo/guitar, string bass/tuba, and drums were used in New Orleans jazz ensembles, they were commonly found in ragtime bands, marching bands, and other ensembles. The piano, which was largely a solo instrument in the ragtime era, became a regular member of the larger early jazz ensembles (during indoor performances). Before the banjo was used in New Orleans jazz, it was used by plantation slaves, and later on, by minstrel musicians. The origins of the banjo have been traced to West Africa where there are more than 60 banjo-like plucked string instruments including the akonting and xalam.75 Many musicologists suggest that the banjo came to America with slaves.76

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76 Ibid.
The drums and tuba of New Orleans jazz trace their roots to 19th century marching bands. The tuba represents the sousaphone section and the drums represent the percussion section. The sousaphone, invented by march music composer and bandleader John Phillip Sousa, is a type of tuba that wraps around the body for the purpose of mobility. As bands moved indoors, many tubists began playing upright bass.

In New Orleans marching bands, the percussion section was often comprised of at least two musicians: one on bass drum with mounted cymbal and one on snare drum. With the invention of the bass drum pedal in 1909, a single drummer could perform on bass drum, snare drum, and cymbal while seated (also the cowbell, woodblock, and other percussive devices). This collection of percussion instruments designed to be played by one individual became known as a trap set or drum set.

A musical device occasionally performed by the rhythm section is known as “stop time.” Stop time is an accompaniment pattern with short, accented quarter notes on the beats 2 and 4 and rests on beats 1 and 3. An alternate version involves playing short, accented notes on beats 1, 2, and 3, while resting on beat 4. The major function of the rhythm section is to provide the harmonic and rhythmic foundation for the ensemble. The bass instrument—the tuba or string bass—generally provides the roots and fifths of the chords. The chordal instruments—the piano, banjo, or guitar—provide the intervallic harmonies above the bass notes as indicated by the chord symbols. The drums provide the rhythm, tempo, and along with the bass instrument, dictate the style of the music.

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This chapter will examine the roles of the rhythm section instruments in New Orleans jazz.

**Tuba/String Bass**

The origins of the New Orleans jazz bass style can be traced to 19th century marches and ragtime compositions. In these styles, the bass notes regularly appear on the strong beats (1 and 3). This can be seen in “The Thunderer” by John Philip Sousa (Example 6.1), and in “The Entertainer” by Scott Joplin (Example 6.2). (Examples arranged by the author).


The placement of the bass notes in marches and rags carried over to New Orleans jazz and later received the name “two-beat.” In the two-beat style, the bass typically plays the
root of the chord on beat 1 and the V of the chord on beat 3. This can be seen in the bass line performed by Bob Coquille on “The Darktown Strutters' Ball” (Example 6.3).


Performing the roots and fifths on beats 1 and 3 generally applies to measures with only one chord change. For measures with two chord changes, the root of the first chord is played on beat 1 and the root of the second chord is played on beat 3. The performer also has the option of playing chord tones or passing tones on beats 2 and 4 and does not always have to perform the I and V on beats 1 and 3 respectively.

One of the benefits of the two-beat style is that it allows space for the other instruments to be heard, primarily on beats 2 and 4. This is especially helpful when the front line instruments are playing together.

A variation of the two-beat style available to stringed bass instruments is the “slap” technique. This involves “pulling” a string away from the fretboard with two or three fingers of the right hand and “slapping” the strings with the same hand on the return. An example of this technique has been composed by the author using the first two measures of “When the Saints Go Marching In” (Example 6.4).

Example 6.4. Slap Bass Technique.
The strings are generally pulled up on beats 1 and 3 and slapped on beats 2 and 4, on the lower end of the fretboard. This technique produces percussive hits on beats 2 and 4 and is useful in the absence of a drummer. If the strings are pulled up with enough force, when they release, they strike the fretboard with a “snap.” The snaps generally occur on the same beats as the pulls (1 and 3).

The bass does not always have to play in a two-beat pattern. New Orleans jazz bass and tuba players often alternate between two-beat and four-beat styles. This can be seen in the bass line performed by Rich Matteson on “South” (Example 6.5).

Example 6.5. “South,” Two-Beat and Four-Beat Alternation, mm. 5-8.

In addition, some modern performers play a four-beat pattern for entire choruses at a time, usually over solo sections.

Whether performing a two-beat or four-beat style, the bass instrument generally plays diatonically, with the exception of the occasional chromatic passing tone. In addition, the bass primarily plays quarter note based lines on the downbeats. The timing of the notes is also very important as the bass is the primary timekeeper of the ensemble. To avoid rhythmic monotony, many performers occasionally use eighth note pick up notes before a measure.

**Piano**

Like the tuba, the piano style of New Orleans jazz can be traced to ragtime music and marches. In ragtime, the solo pianist would perform the bass and chords with the left
hand, while playing the melody with the right. In New Orleans jazz, the melody is performed by the front line instruments, thereby freeing up the pianist's right hand.

When the pianist is comping, the left hand often plays the roots and fifths of the chords in octaves on beats 1 and 3 respectively (in the bass register) and the right hand plays the upper harmonies including thirds, fifths, sevenths, and any upper extensions on beats 2 and 4. This can be seen in the arrangement of “Potato Head Blues” by Paul Evans (Example 6.6).


![Chords](image)

The pianist may also voice the complete chords on the downbeats of each measure with accented, staccato articulation. (Example 6.7).

Example 6.7. “Potato Head Blues,” Quarter Note Comping Pattern, mm. 1-2.

![Chords](image)
In this example, the Evans voicings to “Potato Head Blues” have been rearranged by the author. This style of comping creates a steady rhythmic pulse useful in the absence of a banjo or guitarist. This can also supplement the rhythm of the banjo or guitarist.

There is no rule stating that the pianist must perform one of the above mentioned comping styles. The pianist may engage in a more rhythmically free style of comping. In addition, for the purpose of variation, the pianist may choose to alternate between styles. When improvising, some pianists revert to the older ragtime style, performing bass notes and chords in the left hand, while improvising with the right.

Given that many of the chords in New Orleans jazz standards are triads, the piano generally tends to include the roots in its voicings. To not do so would create a thin sounding accompaniment. In general, New Orleans jazz piano players play diatonically. Altered upper extensions, such as b9, #9, #11, and b13 are generally not used, except during solos as blue notes. Major chords with ♭7’s are rarely used as well. Unaltered upper extensions, including 9’s, 11’s, and 13’s are acceptable in New Orleans jazz.

**Banjo/Guitar**

Before being used in New Orleans jazz ensembles, the banjo and guitar were used for accompaniment purposes in a variety of settings, including vaudeville, minstrelsy, folk music, and ragtime. The rules of harmony that apply to the piano also apply to the banjo and guitar. Altered upper extensions are generally not used. Unaltered extensions are acceptable and the roots of the chords are generally included in voicings.

A common type of banjo used in New Orleans jazz is the 4 string tenor. The traditional 4 string tenor banjo tuning is CGDA, from bottom string to top. Tuning the
strings in 5ths in this manner allows for open and resonant voicings. The author has composed a set of voicings over the first four measures of “Potato Head Blues” as an example (Example 6.8).


An alternative tuning method is DGBE, from bottom string to top. This is also known as “Chicago style” or “guitar tuned.” In this style, the strings of the banjo are tuned as if they are the top four strings of a standard 6 string guitar. The voicings from the previous example have been rearranged by the author to fit a DGBE tuned 4 string tenor banjo (Example 6.9).


The benefit of this tuning style is that it allows guitar players to more easily switch to banjo. Conversely, in the early days of New Orleans jazz, banjo players wanting to play guitar would tune their guitars like banjos.\(^{78}\)

Traditionally, New Orleans jazz banjo and guitar players play accented, staccato, quarter note voicings on the downbeats. This rhythmic pattern is a hallmark of the New Orleans jazz style.

\(^{78}\) Jorge Gomez Abrante, e-mail message to author, April 27, 2016.
Orleans jazz sound. In order to achieve the staccato sound, some performers ease up on the pressure of the strings with the left hand immediately after each down stroke, although the fingers do remain lightly touching the strings. This, in effect, mutes the strings shortly after the chord is sounded. To avoid monotony, performers occasionally break up the steady stream of quarter notes with eighth note patterns. These rhythmic patterns are artifacts from ragtime music. (Example 6.10). (Example composed by the author).

Example 6.10. “Potato Head Blues,” Eighth-Note Comping Patterns, mm. 1-4.

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In this style, the down beats are performed with down strokes, and the up beats are performed with up strokes.
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**Drum Set**

Many of the drum patterns used in New Orleans jazz can be traced to 19th century marching band music. In these marches, the bass drum hits often occurred on the strong beats (1 and 3), and the snare drum rolls often occurred on the weak beats (2 and 4). The march “El Capitan,” composed by John Philip Sousa, offers a clear example of this style (Example 6.11).
Example 6.11. “El Capitan,” Drum Pattern, mm. 76-79.

New Orleans jazz drumming retained the placement of the bass drum and snare drum hits on the strong and weak parts of the beats. (Example 6.12). (Example arranged by the author).


Modern New Orleans jazz drummers include a high hat hit with the foot pedal on beats 2 and 4. In addition, they sometimes choose to abandon the march feel and play quarter notes on the ride cymbal and snare drum hits on beats 2 and 4 (usually over a solo section). For stylistic variation, some performers occasionally play rhythmic patterns on the woodblock or on the rim of the snare drum (Example 6.13). (Example arranged by the author).


Besides playing rhythmic patterns, the role of the New Orleans jazz drummer is to keep the momentum of the music going and to enhance it with fills and improvised lines.
Summary

The rhythm section instruments of a typical New Orleans style jazz ensemble include: piano, banjo/guitar, string bass/tuba, and drums. These instruments regularly appear in various combinations. The functions of these instruments may shift depending on performance context or availability. The most important factor in the rhythm section is whether or not the harmony, bass, and rhythm are represented.

The bass instrument typically plays the root of the chord on beat 1 and the fifth of the chord on beat 3. The piano often plays the root and fifth of the chord in octaves on beats 1 and 3 with the left hand and the upper harmonies on beats 2 and 4 with the right hand. The banjo/guitar plays accented, staccato quarter note voicings on the downbeats. The standard New Orleans style drum pattern includes bass drum hits on beats 1 and 3 and snare drum rolls and high hat foot pedal hits on beats 2 and 4.

Conclusion

New Orleans jazz is a truly unique musical art form. Its inception dramatically changed the course of popular music in the United States and abroad. It is important for a well-learned and cultured society to have some understanding of what New Orleans jazz is. It is also important for jazz musicians to have an understanding of the New Orleans jazz style. It is the hope of the author that this essay contributes to the preservation and continuation of New Orleans jazz. Through further study and awareness, New Orleans jazz can be not just a relic of the past, but a viable musical art form today.


Armstrong, Louis. Louis Armstrong and King Oliver. Recorded in 1923, Milestone, 47017-2, CD.


Dukes of Dixieland. Louis and the Dukes of Dixieland. Recorded in 1960, Audio Fidelity, 5924, CD.


Hackett, Bobby and Jack Teagarden. *Jazz Ultimate*. Recorded in 1958, Capitol Records, T933, LP.


Hirt, Al. *Al Hirt Swingin’ Dixie at Dan’s Pier 600 in New Orleans Vol. 2*. Recorded in 1959, Audio Fidelity, 5878, LP.


Longstreet, Stephen. *Storyville to Harlem*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press,
1986.


Trumbauer, Frankie and Bix Beiderbecke. *Bix & Tram*. Recorded in 1927, JSP Records, 913, CD.

APPENDIX A

Eight Selected Transcriptions
Singin' The Blues
Trumpet Solo by Bix Beiderbecke

J. Russel Robinson, Con Conrad, Sam M. Lewis, and Joe Young

Swing
\[ \frac{\text{4}}{\text{4}} \] = 130
(1:01)

\( \text{Fm7} \quad \text{Bb7} \quad \text{Eb} \quad \text{Eb}\text{7} \)

\( \text{Bb7} \quad \text{Eb} \)

\( \text{G7} \quad \text{C7} \)

\( \text{F7} \quad \text{Cm7} \quad \text{F7} \quad \text{Bb7} \quad \text{Eb}\text{7} \)

\( \text{Fm7} \quad \text{Bb7} \quad \text{Eb} \quad \text{D7} \quad \text{Eb}\text{7} \)

\( \text{C7} \quad \text{Fm} \)

\( \text{Fm7} \quad \text{C7} \quad \text{Gb7} \quad \text{Eb} \quad \text{3} \quad \text{3} \quad \text{C7} \)

\( \text{F7} \quad \text{Bb7} \quad \text{Eb} \)
Singin' The Blues
C- Melody Saxophone Solo by Frankie Trumbauer

J. Russel Robinson, Con Conrad,
Sam M. Lewis, and Joe Young

Swing \( \frac{4}{4} = 130 \)

(0:06)

\[ \frac{\text{B}_{b}7}{\text{F}_{m}7} \text{ B}_{b7} \text{ E}_{b6} \text{ E}_{b0} \]

6

\[ \frac{\text{B}_{b}7}{\text{E}_{b0}} \]

10

\[ \frac{\text{G}_{b}7}{\text{C}_{7}} \]

14

\[ \frac{\text{F}_{7}}{\text{C}_{m7} \text{ F}_{7} \text{ B}_{b7}} \]

18

\[ \frac{\text{F}_{m7} \text{ B}_{b7} \text{ E}_{b0}}{\text{D}_{b} \text{ E}_{b0}} \]

22

\[ \frac{\text{C}_{7}}{\text{F}_{m}} \]

26

\[ \frac{\text{F}_{m7} \text{ C}_{0} \text{ G}_{b0} \text{ E}_{b0} \text{ C}_{7}}{\text{F}_{7} \text{ B}_{b7} \text{ E}_{b0}} \]

30
South
Helicon Solo by Rich Matteson
Bennie Moten

Swing  \( \frac{1}{4} = 114 \)

(2:40)

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{B7} & \quad \text{Bb7} & \quad \text{B7} & \quad \text{Eb} & \quad \text{Bb7} & \quad \text{Eb} & \quad \text{D7} & \quad \text{D7} \\
\text{C7} & \quad \text{Fm} & \quad \text{Bb7} & \quad \text{Eb} \\
\end{align*}
\]
South
Scat Solo by Louis Armstrong

Bennie Moten

Swing \( \frac{1}{1} = 114 \)

(1:33)

\[ \text{B7 Bb\#9 Bb7 Eb7 Bb7 D7 Db7} \]

\[ \text{C7 Fm Bb7 Eb} \]
Struttin' With Some Barbeque
Trumpet Solo by Louis Armstrong

Lillian Hardin Armstrong
and Don Raye

Swing $\frac{\text{d}}{\text{d}} = 194$
(1:33)
Struttin' With Some Barbeque
Trombone Solo by Kid Ory

Lillian Hardin Armstrong
and Don Raye
Sunday
Trombone Solo by Jack Teagarden

Swing \( \frac{3}{4} = 172 \)

\((0:49)\)

\[ \text{F7} \quad \text{Bb7} \quad \text{Bb7} \quad \text{E5} \quad \text{E5}\# \quad \text{Bb7} \quad \text{C7} \]

\[ \text{F7} \quad \text{Bb7} \quad \text{E5} \quad \text{E5}\# \quad \text{Bb7} \quad \text{F7} \quad \text{Bb7} \]

\[ \text{E5} \quad \text{E5}\# \quad \text{Bb7} \quad \text{C7} \]

\[ \text{F7} \quad \text{Bb7} \]

\[ \text{E5} \quad \text{E5}\# \quad \text{Bb7} \quad \text{C7} \]

\[ \text{F7} \quad \text{Bb7} \quad \text{E5} \]

\[ \text{F7} \quad \text{Bb7} \quad \text{E5} \]
APPENDIX B

Examples of Scales and Chords
New Orleans Jazz Improvisation Scales
With Associated Chords

C Major Blues  C,  C7,  Cmaj7,  A7

C Minor Blues  Cm,  Cm7,  Cm6,  F7

C Major Pentatonic  C,  C6,  C7,  Cmaj7

C Minor Pentatonic  Cm,  Cm7
APPENDIX C

Supplemental Recordings


Bechet, Sidney. *The Best of Sidney Bechet*. Recorded in 1944, Blue Note, CDP 2438 28891 20, CD.


Hackett, Bobby and Jack Teagarden. *Jazz Ultimate*. Recorded in 1958, Capitol Records, T933, LP.

Hirt, Al. *Al Hirt Swingin’ Dixie at Dan’s Pier 600 in New Orleans Vol. 2*. Recorded in 1959, Audio Fidelity, 5878, LP.

Hackett, Bobby and Jack Teagarden. *Jazz Ultimate*. Recorded in 1958, Capitol Records, T933, LP.


Trumbauer, Frankie and Bix Beiderbecke. *Bix & Tram*. Recorded in 1927, JSP Records, 913, CD.
APPENDIX C

Supplemental Repertoire


