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ANNA HOEFNAGELS

Progressive Jazz

'Progressive jazz' generally refers to a school of jazz composition and arranging from the mid-1940s to the mid-1950s, though this period could easily be extended back to the late 1930s and on through the late 1950s. Works of this genre were most commonly composed for big band, but were written for smaller ensembles as well. The term is often associated with Stan Kenton and his various big band configurations, as many of the important writers of the genre

were commissioned to write scores for this ensemble. References to the style, however, should be more inclusive.

Progressive jazz developed as the jazz field began to fragment into a variety of styles towards the end of the swing era. It developed parallel to, and along with, bebop (the most important development of the same period), and the distinctions between progressive jazz and cool jazz, West Coast jazz and the Bird Stream are yet to be clearly defined. Consequently, these styles are inter-related and, to various degrees, are mutually influential.

Roots and Emergence

The roots of progressive jazz can ultimately be traced back as far as the 1920s and the 'symphonic jazz' of Paul Whiteman (1890–1967), together with the extended, jazz-influenced works by George Gershwin (1898–1937, for example, *Rhapsody In Blue* (1924)) and Ferde Grofé (1892–1972, for example, *Grand Canyon Suite* (1932)). Whiteman's commissioning of works by Gershwin and Grofé were early attempts to incorporate classical music into jazz. While his experiment was relatively short-lived, its modernist aesthetic set the stage for later experiments and helped to pave the way for the progressive jazz movement's incorporation of a wider compositional vocabulary.

If symphonic jazz contained some elements that would mature into progressive jazz, it was in the swing era, with its reliance on the big band as its primary ensemble, that the composer-arrangers who would be fundamental to progressive jazz first came to prominence. Big bands served as demanding and productive composition and arranging workshops, and many of these writers' compositional ambitions grew along with their experience. In addition, many of these composers and arrangers also had experience and education in the field of Western art music.

The swing era also had its own versions of the 1920s' attempt to fuse jazz and classical music. These can be seen in works written for Artie Shaw (1910–2004) by, among others, Alan Shulman (1915–2002; for example, 'Mood in Question' and 'Rendezvous for Clarinet and Strings' (1949)), and Paul Jordan ('Evensong' [aka 'Dusk'], 1941), as well as Woody Herman's (1913–87) commissioning of a work by Stravinsky (*Ebony Concerto*). But as other swing era composers and arrangers began successfully, and less self-consciously, to incorporate advanced compositional resources into jazz arrangements – as opposed to creating hybrid compositions – they became a more direct influence on the emergence of progressive jazz.

Eddie Sauter (1914–81) was important in this regard. His early pieces for Goodman such as 'Moonlight on the Ganges' (1940) and 'How Deep is the Ocean' (1941) exhibit a harmonic freedom that was rare for the period. Sauter also wrote important works for Red Norvo (1908–99) and Artie Shaw. Norvo's own 'Dance of the Octopus' (1933) is a standout from the swing era in terms of compositional content with its use of a wide harmonic and melodic palette, as well as a free approach to meter.

The Woody Herman band was important in the early stages of progressive jazz, exemplified by Ralph Burns's (1922–2001) four-part *Summer Sequence* (1946), a seminal work in the lineage of progressive jazz. Jimmy Giuffrè (1921–2008), who wrote for Herman during this same period (for example, 'Four Brothers,' 1947), also went on to be an important composer in the genre. George Handy (1920–97) is a crucial figure in the early stages of the movement, and his works for the Boyd Raeburn Orchestra, such as 'Dalvatore Sally,' 'Gray Suede,' 'Special Maid' and 'Hey Look – I'm Dancing' (all 1946), are some of the most influential in the development of progressive jazz.

An interesting example of successfully combining elements of progressive jazz with a highly commercial concept can be found in the works of Gil Evans (1912–88) for Claude Thornhill (1909–65), such as 'Arab Dance' (1946) and 'The Troubadour' (1947), both reworkings of classical themes. Evans's writing had a distinctive harmonic sensibility, and his use of orchestral color was masterful and unique. Evans's style strongly influenced the cool school of writing, exemplified by the 1949 recordings by Capitol, featuring Miles Davis, subsequently issued (1957) as the album *The Birth of the Cool*.

The symbiosis between bandleaders and composer-arrangers was a crucial relationship in the development of progressive jazz. Some leaders, Stan Kenton for example, actively commissioned a wide range of important composers, such as Pete Rugolo (b. 1915), Bob Graettinger (1923–57), Gerry Mulligan (1927–96), Bill Russo (1928–2003), Shorty Rogers (1924–94) and Johnny Richards (1911–68), specifically to stretch the boundaries of jazz writing. Others, such as Boyd Raeburn (1913–66), found themselves at the forefront of the development of the genre when writers such as George Handy and Johnny Mandel (b. 1925) began contributing exciting and progressive arrangements and compositions, and were wise enough to appreciate and foster these composers' talents and abilities.

Stan Kenton played a major role in the development of the movement. Outstanding examples from this orchestra, among many others, include Pete Rugolo's

works such as 'Conflict' and 'Mirage' (1950), Bob Graettinger's 'Thermopylae' (1947) and *City of Glass* (1951), Bill Holman's (b. 1927) 'Invention for Guitar and Trumpet' (1952) and Bill Russo's 'Improvisation' (1951).

It should be noted that the bands discussed in this entry are primarily white bands from this period, though some were integrated at times (for example, Boyd Raeburn, Charlie Barnett, Benny Goodman and Artie Shaw). African-American big bands during this same period were of course performing their own exciting, groundbreaking compositions and arrangements. Duke Ellington and Billy Strayhorn set the standard for jazz composition and orchestration, and Ellington's three-movement extended work, *Black, Brown and Beige* (1943) holds a crucial place in the lineage of jazz composition. Count Basie is generally considered to have led the hardest-swinging big band, and one of his most prolific arrangers was Neal Hefti (b. 1922), who also composed and arranged for Kenton. Jimmy Mundy's (1907–83) 'Futile Frustration' (1947), written for Basie, would have fit into any progressive jazz band's repertoire. Following his work with the bands of Billy Eckstine and Earl Hines, Dizzy Gillespie's short-lived bebop-influenced big band employed such important progressive writers as Chico O'Farrill (1921–2001), George Russell (b. 1923), Gil Fuller (1920–94) and Tadd Dameron (1917–65). In addition, important jazz composers such as Charles Mingus (1922–79) and J.J. Johnson (1924–2001) were members of this progressive jazz community in terms of their compositional output, yet they are generally not associated with the bands typically linked to the movement.

While the music of these African-American bands and composers was every bit as progressive, the progressive jazz bands and composers have traditionally been given their own sub-genre. The reasons for this have been little discussed, perhaps because the question reaches deeply into controversial issues regarding race and cultural influences. That the category is drawn along racial lines is unfortunate, however, and does not do justice to any of the composers or bands, as many of these writers and organizations were, in their own way, striving to break down racial barriers, though perhaps with limited success. That being said, the term has survived, and does have a generally accepted connotation, as well as associated bands, writers and repertoire, as suggested above.

Common Characteristics

Progressive jazz encompasses a variety of styles and involves both the arrangement of standard tunes

and original compositions. Because of its breadth, the term defies attempts to define it, but there are characteristics that are common to works in this genre. Perhaps the most important concept is that the writers in this style broadened the compositional and orchestrational palette of jazz, largely through their incorporation of techniques that are more commonly associated with classical music than with jazz. The notion of extended composition, and the incorporation of advanced compositional resources such as centrality in place of tonality, atonality, metrical sophistication and experimentation with form are all elements that are borrowed from the classical tradition. Another crucial defining characteristic is the expansion of instrumentation to include, among other instruments, woodwinds, horn, tuba, strings, harp and a variety of percussion. Improvisation is often incorporated, though its role is smaller than in other jazz styles.

George Handy's composition 'The Bloos' (1946) is one of the most successful compositions of the genre, exemplifying the use of virtually all of the techniques listed above. The work was written for standard big band plus a small chamber orchestra. In place of a song format, the work employs a number of themes in a variety of tempos and meters. Three percussionists play a battery of percussion instruments including timpani, xylophone and razzler, and the standard drum kit is eschewed. In addition, celeste and harp make important contributions. Though not atonal, the work does not have a key, and juxtaposed triads and polytonality are important harmonic elements. The work, though just under five minutes in length, has the feeling of a longer composition.

Critical Reception

Common criticisms of progressive jazz are that it is pretentious, does not swing, is overly dense and does not manage to conflate successfully its artistic and commercial ambitions. This criticism, at least in part, perhaps stems from the fact that the compositional style of the genre is often associated with the Western art music tradition, as opposed to being perceived as rooted in the blues. This is partially responsible for both a negative reaction (for example, the music does not swing and the writing is pretentious) and a positive one (a broadening of compositional elements furthers the art of jazz composition). The criticism is understandable, as reconciling the roots of jazz and the incorporation of compositional resources associated with contemporary Western art music has been the greatest challenge for composers in this style, and the successes and failures of this style both reflect

the composers' efforts to reconcile and incorporate their experiences that range from the academy to the school of one-night stands. In addition, because jazz is more associated with improvisation than composition, progressive jazz's emphasis on the latter, often at the expense of the former, is sometimes perceived as a negative.

For these reasons, among others, progressive jazz has traditionally been marginalized within the jazz field. The bands that were performing it were doing so in the declining years of the big bands, so it was not particularly viable commercially, and even the most successful bands were relatively short-lived. Out of necessity, bands mixed the more progressive compositions into a larger repertoire that included more commercially oriented music. In fact, it is safe to say that this music has generally been more popular with musicians than with the general public.

While this music has compositional ambition that stretches or perhaps exceeds the genre of jazz, it is certainly jazz-based, and swing is generally an essential element. In the hands of technically proficient players that do not possess the experience to make this music swing as intended, it can become stiff and consequently may sound overblown in its ambition and pompous. In the hands of the bands that it was written for, however, progressive jazz composition was a powerful and important music that advanced the field of jazz composition. Many composers and arrangers from this movement had great influence on popular culture, as writers such as Hei, Rugolo, Burns, J.J. Johnson and Johnny Mandel went on to set the standard for film and television scoring, and dominated Hollywood writing for decades. Writers associated with this genre also led the way into today's music world where the term 'crossover' has a positive connotation.

The influence of progressive jazz can be seen today in composers of various generations. The long-established composer-trombonist Bob Brookmeyer (b. 1929), a veteran of many progressive jazz bands, carries on the tradition by writing extended works for large, mixed ensembles. Maria Schneider (b. 1960) maintains her own large jazz ensemble for which she composes colorful, extended compositions. By defying categorization, both of these composers, along with many others, continue to expand the notion of progressive jazz.

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Psychedelic Rock, see *Psychedelic Rock (Volume XII, International)*

Punk, see *Punk (Volume XII, International)*

Quebradita and Technobanda

The term quebradita ('little break') refers to a dance style associated with technobanda (tecnobanda in Spanish), a modernized version of a regional Mexican

banda style, 'banda sinaloense,' named after the state of Sinaloa in which it originated. Technobanda was created in Guadalajara, state of Jalisco, and popularized in Los Angeles, California, in the early 1990s among recent Mexican and Central American immigrants. The music-dance phenomenon was also fueled by large numbers of Mexican-American residents who felt alienated by California's conservative politics and anti-immigrant rhetoric prevalent at the time. The basic quebradita step is based on a two-step pattern consisting of rocking back and forth between the left and the right foot in time with the bass and percussion. Dancers may combine the basic pattern with a variety of turns, spins and breaks. Quebradita's characteristic gesture, as the dance's name suggests, is the 'little break' in which the male dancer dips his partner with a sudden but controlled movement into a backward bend. For fast-paced pieces that are not danced as a pair, skilled dancers perform highly complex footwork, borrowing from traditional Mexican dance steps such as the zapateado, a heel and toe stepping dance, and from ballet folklórico (staged folkloric dances). Quebradita combines various dance styles from different regions of Mexico, in particular from the North and Northwest, with simplified steps and gestures from folklórico dances and with steps from contemporary popular Latin dances such as cumbia and salsa.

In the mid-1980s a grupo version of the acoustic banda sinaloense was recorded by Fonorama, a recording studio in Guadalajara. This fusion became known as technobanda or simply banda (consisting of electric bass, keyboard synthesizer, saxophone, trumpets, drums and vocalist). In 1992, after working out a US distribution agreement with the Mexican label MCM with whom the leading technobanda from Jalisco, Banda Machos, had signed, Fonovisa Records released the group's first albums north of the border. Based on the growing number of sales hits, Billboard declared 1993 as 'the banda year.' Carried and supported by large numbers of recent immigrants from Mexico and Central America, the 'banda movement' that swept Southern California quickly spread to other parts of the United States and back to Mexico.

Like other dance crazes, the quebradita came along with a characteristic style of dress: the vaquero (cowboy) attire. The pioneering technobanda ensemble, Vaquero's Musical, was also trendsetting in matters of clothing. The nine 'cowboys' appeared on the cover of their first cassette (Vaquero's Musical, 1985) dressed in a plain, dark-brown, three-piece suit, white shirt,