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JAZZ IN (EASTERN) EUROPE: FREEDOM AND OWNERSHIP[1]

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What does freedom have to do with music? This is no arbitrary question, but, rather, touches upon one of the themes that lie at the heart of *Jazz from Socialist Realism to Postmodernism*. The theme of freedom appears in many of the chapters that constitute this book, and its appearance should not be surprising. Jazz situated historically between socialist realism and postmodernism in the Eastern Bloc is jazz situated during the Cold War: that is the broader global context against which most of these chapters play out. And few ideas could be more essential to the Cold War than freedom or its absence.

Musicology, for much of its history, was scarcely interested in the relation between music and freedom. This is not true of music itself, of course: from Beethoven's *Fidelio* to The Who's *I'm Free*, to mention only two obvious examples from a restricted time period, music has engaged with the idea of freedom as one of the essential expressions of being human. But musicology? Not so much. For much of the history of musicology, its practitioners concerned themselves with establishing chronologies, studying scores and sketches, the production of critical editions, style analysis, and the comprehension and interpretation of abstract musical structures. This is essential work, and it has provided a foundation for understanding the tremendously complex history and practice of music. But music can also be understood from other perspectives, including its relation to social history, intellectual history, and politics.

Since the 1980s, musicology has been increasingly concerned with these other perspectives, as are the editors and contributors to this volume. Decades after radical changes in other humanistic fields, music scholars began to critique musicology's focus on aesthetic autonomy and the related canon of European *ernste Musik* and tried to understand music using the tools of feminist theory, critical theory, structuralism and deconstruction, postmodernism, postcolonialism, and pop culture studies. But such approaches were really nothing new (though they were in fact given the name "new musicology" at the time by

[1] Yvetta Kajanová, Gertrud Pickhan, Rüdiger Ritter (Eds.). (2016). *Jazz from Socialist Realism to Postmodernism* (Jazz under State Socialism, vol. 5). Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 308 pp.

musicologists in North America and the United Kingdom). There had always been music scholars interested in observing music from a broader social perspective. The (West) German musicologist Carl Dahlhaus (1928-1989) is one outstanding example. But Dahlhaus was himself influenced by another German thinker who was unrivaled in his ability to relate music to broader social theory: Theodor W. Adorno.

Adorno may not have been a musicologist per se, but he was a brilliant musician—a pianist, composer, critic, music philosopher, theorist, and author of a foundational text on music sociology. In fact, Adorno was the author of many foundational texts: he was a remarkably prolific writer, and no less than half of his texts are centrally concerned with music. Adorno's writings on music are relevant here because he, too, was interested in the idea of freedom and its absence, and he believed music could function as a vehicle for the realization of true subjective freedom. His assessment of music, his judgments of what is good or bad, depended on—almost exclusively—his opinion about whether a particular composition, style, or genre expressed and enabled subjective freedom or whether it hindered and even purposefully prevented that freedom.

Among musicians, Adorno is also known for his infamously disparaging writings on jazz—or, more properly speaking, light entertainment music, which he mistakenly gave the name "jazz". Thus there is at least a little cognitive dissonance when one reads about jazz musicians describing the freedom of their music in the same terms Adorno would have used for the *ernste Musik* he most liked. In the contribution to this book by Jan Blüml, for example, titled "The Jazz Section and its Influence on the Development of Regional Cultures in Czechoslovakia before 1989: the Music Scene in Olomouc," we read that membership in the Jazz Section "represented a nonconformist oppositional mentality," and jazz itself was seen as a kind of "free-thinking music in an unfree period." Adorno would have described the contemporary art music he valued in the same way: the only good music for Adorno was that which embodied a critical resistance to the existing order and preserved the freedom of subjective expression at a time when subjectivity was either crushed by totalitarianism or consumed by capitalism. Adorno believed the music of Arnold Schoenberg and his students sometimes achieved this resistance; he also believed that any popular (or even serious) music that relied on standardized forms and conventions (as, indeed, most jazz does) could never assert subjective freedom against the oppression of conformism.

It seems, however, that jazz musicians in socialist countries did not subscribe to this, and we find the proof in this book. Jazz is equated with freedom by numerous musicians represented in these pages. In Gabriel Bianchi's contribution "Who Best Knows What Jazz Is? The Legacy of Ľubomír Tamaškovič, a Unique Slovak Jazzman in Post-Modern Times," we learn that the idea of freedom was essential to Tamaškovič's understanding of jazz, and Miroslav Zahradník's essay "Jazz Personalities after the Downfall of the Iron Curtain: Matúš Jakabčic and His Contribution to Slovak Jazz" shows that domestic audiences also perceived jazz as oppositional culture. Rüdiger Ritter's contribution, "Broadcasting Jazz into the Eastern Bloc – Cold War Weapon or Cultural Exchange? The Example of Willis Conover," goes yet further, arguing that "there is no description of jazz or the social role of jazz without the notion of freedom."

Ritter's interest in the social role of jazz is an example of how this volume is informed by an approach to music scholarship that embraces social history, intellectual history, and

politics. Conover himself cannot be considered apart from these, as the title of Ritter's contribution makes clear. Conover was the host of a Voice of America program titled "Music USA – Jazz Hour," which began in 1955 and ran for over 40 years. This program formed an educational foundation for many jazz musicians in the Eastern Bloc, and Conover made many visits to the eastern side of the Iron Curtain. His name appears throughout this book in the reminiscences of many jazz musicians, and it was an excellent idea to include an essay devoted to his work in this volume. But the book is also valuable in that it does not restrict itself to social or political history. The papers it contains reflect many other perspectives and respect the breadth of possible approaches to music scholarship.

Luca Cerchiari's contribution, "Valaida Snow: The First Multi-Instrumentalist between American and Europe," features excellent historical writing, for example, while Márton Szegedi's "Hungarian Free Jazz: Compositional and Improvisational Structures in the Music of György Szabados, as Exemplified in 'The Wedding'," presents detailed musical analysis. A brilliant critical essay can be found in the contribution of Igor Pietraszewski titled "Strategies of Domination or Ways of Differentiation from Rivals in the Jazz Field." Pietraszewski combines a highly theoretical approach with exemplary objective criticism, and packages it all in very good writing. Finally, essays by Yvetta Kajanová, such as "Jazz Artists in the Former Czechoslovak Socialist Republic and Their Conflicts with the Socialist Ideology," among others, provide a very good sense of music in Czech and Slovak lands.

But the whole book goes beyond Czech and Slovak lands to consider many other European countries. Yet in all these countries one encouters similar ideas and concerns about jazz—not only the idea that jazz is a symbol of freedom, but also the desire of seemingly every individual nation in Europe to make its own claim to jazz. This theme is never explicitly stated as a central idea to the book, but its emergance is unmistakeable: every nation, it seems, claims to have a jazz that is their own and an essential part of their identity; none seem satisfied with the idea that jazz is a uniquely American music. Just *why* European nations want to have ownership of jazz is a question that is not answered by the book as a whole (though Pietraszewski, in his analysis, asks and answers the question for Poland with his exemplary objective criticism). So we may ask ourselves the question and try to formulate our own responses. There are likely many answers—for different people, in different cultures, at different times. But if jazz is equated with freedom, and freedom is something worth possessing, then it is no surprise that every nation would like their own share of it.

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