



What do we imply when we talk about listening in jazz?

Considerations and suggestions

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What do we imply when we talk about listening in jazz?

«Listening is **very important** in jazz.»

«Yeah, we **play by ear**»

«Man, she has a strong **inner ear!**»



«I mean, did he listen to me at all?»

1) Listening is skillful behavior evolving in a medium: the music

2) This skill implies a lot of practice: Aural imitation method

Listening in jazz is skillful behavior

- Aural and expressive **know-how**
- **Knowledge!** Not theoretical, but no less valid!
- **Embodied understanding**

Behavior evolving **in the music**.

Implying what?



Listening in the «Jazz Medium»

—so-called traditional jazz:

- Swing & African rhythmic sensibility
- Melody, harmony, equal temperament
- Tunes open to spontaneous variations—improvisation
- Collective musical creation

This medium forms **behavior**

- **Enables & constrains!**



Constraints are **not**
rules!
More like **plastic**,
aural limitations!



Music as «building blocks»?

Nettl, Berliner, Pressing, etc., etc,

- Tones
- Phrases
- Chords
- Bits of sound
- Etc.

Not a good approach! We don't hear bits & pieces. We hear music—musical wholes



How: Qualitative
dimension
—domain of the
ear

The medium evolves in the HOW

- Not reducible to the sequence of notes or sounds actually being played (What)
- **How** more important than What
 - Beat
 - Style—collective and personal
 - Acoustics and musical expectations of **this** unique situation
- Hearing **how** the music **could** be played
- Hearing musical **potentials**

How





Joint
musical
attention

Listening with—and against—others

- Hearing how the other hear
- Indicating how you hear
- Aural dialectic: Response and transformation

Other ways of listening latent in **how** the music is heard and played

- **Musical sense** (French: sens=direction)
- Singular, concrete & general
- Domain of the ear

Possible ways of listening **within** the medium



What about the aural imitation method?

Learning music by aural imitation

—without instrument: singing and clapping along

- Incorporating beat, melody, harmony, style
- Listening **with** the musicians. How did they hear?
- **Process:**
 1. HOW as 1:1 correlation
 2. HOW as other possibilities latent in the music?
- Not tied to this or that motor skill – more general, yet concrete



Learning the Western tonal system
through aural examples—for instance
Jazz

- How music evolves within strictly
systematized constraints
- Aural gravity and flexibility
- Learning how the system is used—
not an abstract model

«Like learning verbal
language»

«**HOW** is **vital** here, too»

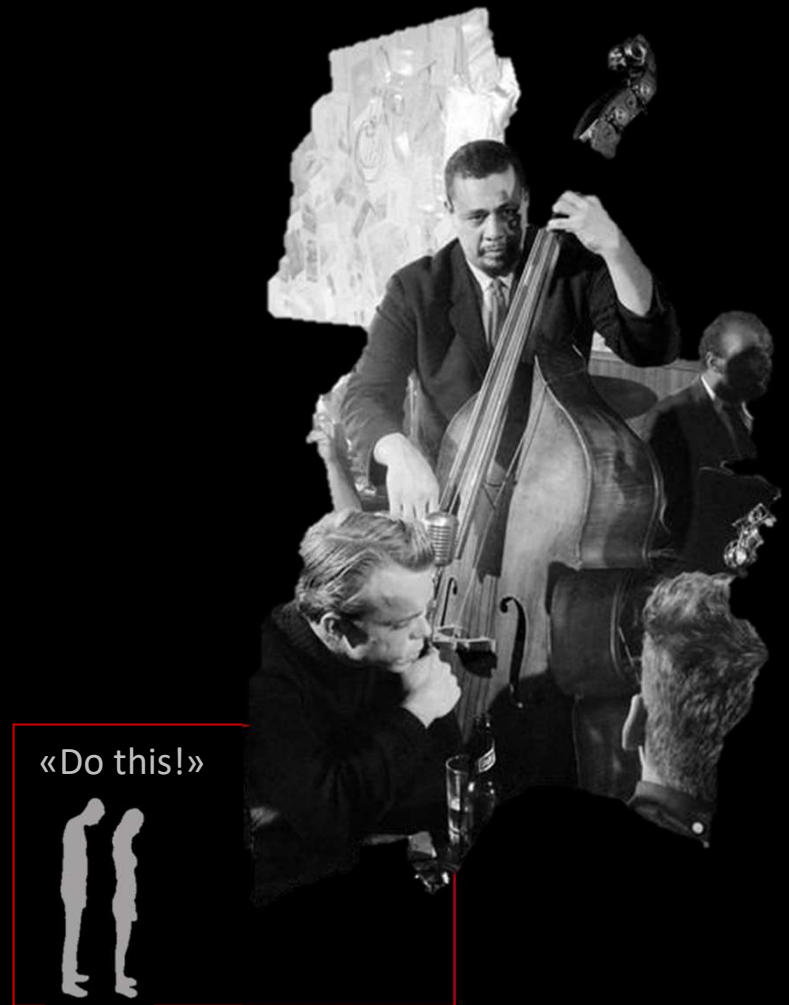


«Grammar learned indirectly»

«...da da di di»



Musical examples are not commands!



Musical examples are **examples of something!**

- Aural question:
 - How do you listen?
 - Constraints in **YOUR** ways of listening?
- Expanding constraints: expanding **how** music can be heard
- Towards new musical media?



Listening in jazz

- Skillful aural behavior
- Mediated activity: Constraints and possibilities
- The medium evolves in the HOW
- Aural imitation method: Expanding how you listen



Thank you for your attention!