

## ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: IDEALS, AESTHETICS, AND PRACTICES  
OF PROFESSIONALIZATION IN THE  
TOKYO JAZZ SCENE

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In the early twenty-first century, jazz has a history in Japan of approximately 100 years. In contemporary Tokyo, Japanese musicians demonstrate their right to access jazz performance through a variety of musical and extra-musical techniques. Those accepted as fully professional and authentic artists, or *puro*, gain a special status among their peers, setting them apart from their amateur and part-time counterparts. Drawing on three months of participant-observation in the Tokyo jazz scene, I examine this status of *puro*, its variable definition, the techniques used by musicians to establish themselves as credible jazz performers, and some obstacles to achieving this status. I claim two things: first, aspiring *puro* musicians establish themselves within a jazz tradition through musical references to African American identity and a rhetoric of jazz as universal music. Second, I claim that universalism as a core aesthetic creates additional obstacles to *puro* status for certain musicians in the Tokyo scene.

IDEALS, AESTHETICS, AND PRACTICES OF PROFESSIONALIZATION IN  
THE TOKYO JAZZ SCENE

by

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Thesis submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the  
University of Maryland, College Park, in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts  
2016

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## Note on Translation

Japanese terms are written phonetically using Hepburn romanization. In cases where a Japanese term is borrowed from English, the English equivalent is substituted, except where I have deemed the English and Japanese concepts associated with the word to be different enough to warrant the use of separate terms to avoid confusion. Japanese names are given in the Japanese order, family name first, with the exceptions of Noriko Manabe, Minako Waseda, and Koichi Iwabuchi. Wherever a direct quotation appears, I have included the exact language of the speaker, not a translation.

## Dedication

To Ariela, who has listened to more drafts of this thesis than any other person would have put up with.

## Acknowledgements

This project would not have been possible without the help and guidance of a number of people. Dr. J. Lawrence Witzleben and Dr. Fernando Rios in particular have contributed much of their time and expertise to the planning, execution, and polishing of my M.A. thesis, not to mention their roles as my primary mentors in the field of ethnomusicology. Dr. Nicholas Tochka has also been very generous with his time and suggestions, many of which will no doubt contribute not only to this thesis, but to future research as well. I would also like to thank my parents, Dr. Jane Donawerth and Dr. William A. Scally for their open ears, open minds, skillful and detailed proofreading, and financial support. My colleagues at the University of Maryland, College Park have likewise always been encouraging and generous with their time, freely sharing sources, ideas, and criticism. Sensei Nima Mazhari also has my gratitude for supporting my education and encouraging me to pursue my own personal and professional goals. Finally, I would like to thank Tommy Matsuura, without whom I might never have found my way into jazz in Japan.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

My first experience with jazz in Tokyo was during the Fall of 2011. I had arrived in Japan in July of that year to begin a one-year contract as an assistant language instructor for two high schools in Toyama prefecture through the Japan Exchange Teaching Program. I had decided to apply after about two years of struggling to establish myself as a freelance bassist in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, where I had studied jazz at Temple University. I was encouraged to find a way to play jazz at night and on weekends by both my former Japanese language professor and some of my music instructors, all of whom believed that, once I found my way to Japan, as an American jazz bassist I could be an unmitigated success among Japanese audiences looking for “authentic” American jazz.

Within two months of my arrival, I found my way into a semi-regular performing spot in Toyama City’s Cotton Club, the largest jazz club in the city. In preparation for my first exploratory trip to Tokyo, which I understood to have the biggest jazz scene in Japan, I contacted a jazz pianist from Yokohama who had also studied jazz at Temple University, and he recommended the Saturday night jam sessions at Jazz Spot Intro in Takadanobaba, Tokyo. That Friday night, I took the seven-hour overnight bus ride from Toyama to Tokyo, a trip that would become a monthly, and eventually twice-a-month, practice for me until I finished my teaching contract and spent a final month living in Yokohama and playing at jam sessions in Tokyo almost every night until I returned to the U.S. in August, 2012.

My experience in Tokyo confirmed my teachers' and colleagues' reports of Japan as a place where large—relative to the U.S.—audiences support a thriving jazz scene. Much of what I had been told, however, was either inaccurate or out of date. I had, to some degree, uncritically accepted the stories of other American jazz musicians who claimed that while Japanese people loved listening to jazz, the level of ability of Japanese jazz musicians was much lower than what one could find in the West. My first night at Jazz Spot Intro's all-night Saturday jam session was enough to dispel this assumption. The session was consistently attended by extremely fluent and technically impressive jazz improvisers. I learned that Tokyo was the site of a thriving scene of both consumers and performers of jazz. Part of what I hoped to accomplish when I initially set out to study jazz in Tokyo from an ethnomusicological perspective was to find a more significant place in existing jazz discourse for Tokyo as a site of jazz creation and performance in addition to consumption and economic support.

### Methodology

For this project, I returned to Tokyo with a more specific scholarly focus. From June to August 2015, I lived in the Nakano-shinbashi area of Tokyo, attended jazz jam sessions and performances, played with and engaged in informal conversation with the musicians I met there, and conducted nine formal semi-structured interviews with Tokyo-based jazz musicians. I made audio recordings of the interviews and conducted them in Japanese or English according to the individual musician's preference. These musicians' ages ranged from early 20s to early 60s;

they included both men and women, and were a mixture of professional and amateur musicians, some of whom aspired to become professionals, and some of whom were content to remain amateur practitioners.<sup>1</sup> For more detailed analysis of specific pieces of musical vocabulary, I took note of musical phrases that seemed to draw a reaction from the audience while I was playing or listening at jam sessions, and whenever possible spoke informally with the other musicians present in order to confirm common associations or interpretations. I had initially hoped to record interviews with the manager and owner of Jazz Spot Intro, but due to scheduling difficulties and general reluctance to participate in formal interviews, this proved impossible. Fortunately they were both happy to speak with me informally whenever I attended their jam sessions.

### *Jazz Scholarship in Ethnomusicology and Related Fields*

While there is a substantial body of literature on jazz, including contributions in the forms of music criticism, music theory, literary analysis, history, biography, and historical musicological works, there are relatively few monographs on jazz from an explicitly ethnomusicological perspective. In *Thinking in Jazz: The Infinite Art of Improvisation*, the first book-length ethnomusicological study of jazz, Paul Berliner (1994) discusses the central techniques jazz musicians develop as improvisers, and the multiple paths they may take toward such mastery. He also includes extra-musical factors, such as audience and setting that may influence improvisation. In his

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<sup>1</sup> When I refer to these interviews, I have used the full names of musicians who wished to be identified and withheld names of those who wished to remain anonymous.

epilogue, Berliner claims that jazz improvisation becomes a way of life, taking on spiritual and ideological associations, whose adherents commit to lifelong practice in search of ever-expanding musical and creative facility. This understanding of jazz learning as an ongoing process conducted throughout a musician's career, relying partly on introspective practice but also relying heavily on critical engagement with jazz and a community of likeminded musicians, indicates that jam sessions are particularly effective opportunities for understanding the aesthetic, historical, and symbolic values developed, refined, and transmitted between generations of jazz practitioners.

Harris Berger's 1999 *Metal, Rock, and Jazz: Perception and the Phenomenology of Musical Experience* adopts a phenomenological approach to the study of jazz scenes in Ohio. A phenomenological approach reveals some of the elements of musical performance not readily observable to anyone except the musicians themselves. His discussion of the foregrounding and backgrounding of attention to multiple tasks simultaneously performed demonstrates the value of direct experience and close communication with musicians for a study of performance practices. Using an approach similar to Berger's allows attention to the internal experience of performing music. My participation in regular jam sessions and the countless hours spent socializing with the Tokyo musicians from whom I hoped to learn resemble Berger's approach, as both allow for close experience with musicians and a form of cooperative analysis of the music performed.

Ingrid Monson's 1996 *Saying Something: Jazz Improvisation and Interaction* examines the social construction of meaning in jazz improvisation. Monson suggests

a multi-layered approach to understanding this process, one that includes the creation of the music by the interactions of musicians, the creation of social networks and communities around music performance and listenership, and the variable ideologies and cultural orientations that contribute to the assignation of meaning to particular musical events. She suggests an interactive approach to close musical analysis of jazz, attempting to take into account the interaction—not easily conveyed through transcription—that makes effective improvisation possible. Her approach to cooperative analytic listening influenced my approach. Monson’s use of recordings known to both performer and ethnographer is ideally suited to analyzing intentions and ideal aesthetics in an interactive jazz performance. Participation in jam sessions, while a less controlled and in many ways less focused musical environment, provides a similar opportunity for on-the-spot critical cooperative analysis of performances, and contributes to an analysis that is congruent with insider understandings of musical practices and intention.

In her later book, *Freedom Sounds: Civil Rights Call Out to Jazz and Africa* (2007), Ingrid Monson attempts to explain the influences of the civil rights movement, the cold war, and anticolonialism on jazz between 1950 and 1967, a period that gave birth to some of the idiom’s most celebrated recordings. During this time period, Monson claims, the aesthetics by which future generations of jazz musicians continue to be judged and the symbolic meanings with which the music is still defined were created. She demonstrates how the music came to represent “social progress, self-determination, freedom, excellence, and spirituality” in the surrounding political and racial context of the civil rights movement and African independence

through examination of the often contradictory discourses of musicians seeking to legitimize their own ideological relationships to jazz and establish their place in the complex relationship between African Americans and other races within American society (Monson 2007, 312).

In his 1963 *Blues People: Negro Music in White America*, Amiri Baraka (then LeRoi Jones) previously claimed that jazz is a music linked to African American identity and U.S. racial politics. His sociologically informed jazz history traces the music back to a variety of Southern African American musical practices, and claims that the particular qualities of sound central to authentic jazz performance are derived from the blues. As such jazz, according to Baraka, is a music aesthetically, politically, and socially rooted in African American communities. He does not make essentialist assertions that it can only be performed authentically by African Americans, but explains that jazz performance by white musicians implies willing participation in a counterculture to which black Americans are relegated regardless of their own desires or intentions.

In his book, *Blowin' the Blues Away: Performance and Meaning on the New York Jazz Scene* (2012), Travis Jackson expands on Baraka's idea of a core of blues-based aesthetic values in jazz, claiming that there is an unspoken set of core values in jazz performance that experienced listeners draw on in their evaluations of a performance. He terms these values a "blues aesthetic," and suggests that competent jazz performances employ this blues aesthetic in order to reference the history and pre-history of jazz, as understood by musicians, as an essentially African American musical practice—that is, the core aesthetic values of jazz, "individual sound,

balance, blues feeling, bringing something to the music, letting others bring something, and taking it to the next level,” are derived from the blues and other musical forms that have served as markers of African American identity since the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Jackson 2012, 162).

Paul Austerlitz, in *Jazz Consciousness: Music, Race, and Humanity* (2005), discusses jazz as an art form inherently tied to U.S. national identity, a music that has grown from an African base, and a transnational cultural product. Austerlitz notes that jazz culture cannot be considered synonymous with American national culture or with an African American counterculture, nor can it be separated from these formations. It is a product of overlapping and interacting influences and identities. While he associates jazz closely with African American identity, Austerlitz also posits jazz as a cosmopolitan product and network, one that, though it originated in the U.S., now draws members of all nationalities and socio-economic classes.

Assumptions of jazz’s inherent Americanness or African Americanness are not easily cast aside and have served as obstacles to popular acceptance of non-American jazz musicians. E. Taylor Atkins’ *Blue Nippon: Authenticating Jazz in Japan* (2001) is a comprehensive ethnography and history of jazz in Japan from its introduction to the turn of the twenty-first century. It serves to situate the art within the sometimes concerted, sometimes competing discourses of nationalism and cosmopolitanism or internationalization in Japan. Atkins also addresses tropes of racial identity and authenticity in jazz and their effects on Japanese performers. He ultimately suggests that Japanese musicians are only recently beginning to establish themselves as legitimate performers and innovators in the jazz idiom.

Atkins extended his attempt at decentering jazz history and discourse with the anthology *Jazz Planet* (2003). The volume includes essays on the development of jazz around the world, including entries on Cuban performers and composers of jazz in the U.S., jazz in Brazil, jazz in India, and jazz in Russia, among others. Atkins states the purpose of the volume as the promotion of the application of a global perspective to the history of jazz. While acknowledging the music's roots as an African American idiom, Atkins and the contributors to *Jazz Planet* suggest that allowing this association to drown out the contributions of non-African diasporic and non-American jazz musicians would be a disservice to both the musicians and to understandings of the history of the music.

Steven Feld further disrupts an American-centered jazz historical narrative in *Jazz Cosmopolitanism in Accra: Five Musical Years in Ghana* (2012). The unequal power dynamic perpetuated among jazz musicians by such nationalist narratives are made particularly clear in Feld's interviews with and discussion of African jazz drummer, Ghanaba. Ghanaba and Feld criticize a standard narrative in jazz history—both written histories and histories passed on informally between generations of American jazz musicians—that relegates African music and musicians to a pre-historic source of inspiration for the first jazz musicians. Ironically, a narrative that declares jazz to be a genre owing much to West African musical predecessors also serves to declare the irrelevance of contemporary African musicians to jazz, and patronizingly places them in an imagined state of eternal pre-modern simplicity. Feld's book points out how existing narratives in jazz discourse reproduce unequal power relations between the U.S. and Africa. Much like their West African

counterparts, Japanese jazz musicians have struggled to overcome their exclusion from written or oral histories of jazz. Unlike Africa, which figures prominently in origin stories of jazz, Japan is often given no place in jazz historical narratives except as a consumer and source of economic support for American jazz musicians.

*Jazz among the Discourses* (1995), edited by Krin Gabbard, is a collection of essays reimagining scholarly approaches to jazz from a variety of disciplinary and theoretical perspectives. In his introduction to the volume, “The Jazz Canon and Its Consequences,” Gabbard (1995, 1–28) describes jazz as a multi-stream, multi-media discourse perpetuated and transmitted through a variety of mediated forms including jazz performances, recordings, written histories, and stories passed between musicians. History and commercial recordings cannot be accepted as complete and factual records of a time period, but should rather be seen as two of many discursive modes within jazz, all of which interact with and influence one another.

Jed Rasula’s (1995, 134–62) contribution to *Jazz among the Discourses*, “The Media of Memory: The Seductive Menace of Records in Jazz History” further cautions against uncritical acceptance of commercial recordings as faithful records of an era, musician, or style by jazz historians. He claims that this practice has led to a proliferation of linear histories of jazz detailing an evolutionary succession of jazz styles, when in reality most of these styles, though arising at different times, continue to be performed to the present day, interacting with one another, crossing over, and splitting in new directions. He proposes the rhizome, an organism with multiple points of origin, developing and spreading in multiple directions simultaneously, sometimes interacting, sometimes converging, and sometimes diverging, as a more

accurate model for conceptualizing jazz history. Studies such as Atkins's (2001), Feld's (2012), and my own may contribute to such a model, expanding understandings of the multi-site origins and development of a variety of convergent and divergent contemporary jazz practices.

*Jazz in a Japanese Aesthetic, Japanese Jazz in a Blues Aesthetic*

In this project, I will discuss values of professionalization among Tokyo jazz musicians. The concept of an idealized professional status among Tokyo jazz musicians is closely tied to ideas of music as a privileged domain of human expression, one that only an elite few are capable of mastering. Professional musicians in this community must meet a variety of criteria of authenticity, creativity, and craftsmanship beyond simple economic success in order to be accepted as fully professional, or *puro*. In this thesis, I intend to prove two things: first, that contemporary Tokyo jazz musicians establish themselves as contributors to a commonly understood jazz tradition through aesthetic choices stemming from African American musical practices and a rhetoric and understanding of jazz as a universal music, transcending divisions of race, nationality, and culture. Second, I intend to demonstrate how, as this universalism has become a core performance value in the Tokyo jazz community, some musicians who are believed to have an economic advantage due to extra-musical factors that appeal to Japanese audiences' desire for exoticism struggle to break free from a liminal space in which they have achieved all objective markers of a jazz professional or *puro*, yet are not recognized as such by the Tokyo jazz community.

### Outline of Chapters

In chapter two, I will examine in detail the concept of a *puro* (a loan word from the English “pro,” short for “professional”) in the Tokyo jazz scene, a privileged status of complete professionalization and acceptance as authentic by audiences and performers alike. Relying on observations and conversations with musicians of both amateur and professional status, as well as more formal interviews, I describe the prerequisites for a musician aspiring to *puro* status, as well as some of the obstacles or activities that might exclude even a fully self-supporting full-time musician from this status. I discuss the benefits conveyed by this status as well as the obligations that come with it. I also describe how the term itself can be a point of insecurity and a marker of difference for those from outside the Tokyo scene attempting to assimilate and those who are unsure of their status.

In chapter three, I adopt a semiotic approach to explain the construction of meaning in performances at two closely related, but very different, performance venues, Café Cotton Club and Jazz Spot Intro. First, I describe how the spaces themselves and the extra-musical practices surrounding performances at these two jazz clubs contributes to the interactions between audiences and performers, all of whom come with certain expectations and desires. Next, I discuss the significance of musical quotation of canonical jazz recordings as a practice that demonstrates Japanese performers’ fluency with the jazz tradition, positioning themselves as legitimate innovators and contributors to that tradition. I demonstrate this practice in greater detail using four specific musical quotations and describing their implications

and expected reception in the differing contexts of a commercial performance at Café Cotton Club and a jam session at Jazz Spot Intro.

In chapter four, I rely on detailed analysis of my interviews in order to describe the current generation of Tokyo jazz musicians' understanding of jazz as a music that has transcended racial, national, and cultural boundaries to serve as a tool to build further connections in an increasingly global network. Contemporary jazz musicians in Tokyo have rejected the essentialist racial assertions common among previous generations that served to simultaneously bar Japanese people from full participation in jazz and denigrate the African American innovators understood as the music's creators. By adopting a rhetoric of universality, Tokyo jazz musicians symbolically claim a place for themselves in jazz, a practice understood as stemming from the innovations of African American musicians. This outlook is not without its shortcomings, however, and, through the use of a case study of two female musicians, I explain how the concept of a *puro* as a privileged status with certain prerequisites and restrictions interacts with assertions of the universality of jazz to create new obstacles for aspiring jazzwomen.

### Conclusion

Jazz itself is a multi-stream discourse, a hybrid music, and simultaneously one that has been marked by American nationalism to the extent that the associations of jazz with the U.S. have sometimes obscured its origins as an African American music, and as the music of a culturally and ethnically diverse community. While it is not a commercially popular music in the early twenty-first century, it is popular in the

sense that it is known and respected far beyond the place of its birth. Jazz scenes far removed from the United States by space and language, such as that in Tokyo, should not be seen as mere imitations of American ones, which are assumed to be more authentic. They are increasingly connected and potentially influential hubs of jazz practice and innovation. With such a multi-modal, multi-sited means of transmission, production, and re-production, jazz, its history, and understandings of its music and accompanying cultural practices are extremely and increasingly complex. In the hope of promoting its communicative potential, as well as attempting to avoid some of the pitfalls of uncritically accepting overly focused national, spatial, or cultural understandings of jazz, I intend to further complicate this ongoing discussion.

## Chapter 2: Professionalization and Status

### Introduction

“Are you a *puro*?” It is a question I encountered often during my time in Japan, and one that seemed simple at first. Literally translating *puro* to pro, or professional, I initially assumed this was a question of employment, something like asking a new acquaintance, “What do you do for a living?” While being paid to perform music is certainly a defining characteristic of a *puro*, it is not the only one, and in many cases is not the most important one.<sup>1</sup>

Criteria for competency in jazz performance have been thoroughly discussed by Ingrid Monson (1996), Harris Berger (1999), and Travis Jackson (2012). In *Saying Something: Jazz Improvisation and Interaction*, Monson (1996) cooperatively analyzes recordings with her interlocutors in order to understand jazz improvisations as interactive events. She also notes the variable cultural orientations and racial ideologies that have shaped jazz practice, influencing the meanings assigned to musical events. Berger’s (1999) *Metal, Rock, and Jazz: Perception and the Phenomenology of Musical Experience* discusses the shifting layers of attention

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<sup>1</sup> Reliance on existing native discourses, such as my approach to the spectrum of *puro* and *ama* among Tokyo jazz musicians, has been common in ethnomusicology since the 1970s–80s. Sometimes referred to as “ethnoscience” or “ethnotheory,” the approach is partly a reaction against Levi-Strauss’ structuralism. Some applications of this approach to ethnomusicological studies include Hugo Zemp’s (1979, 5–48) “Aspects of ‘Are ‘Are Musical Theory,” Steven Feld’s (1981, 22–47) “Flow Like a Waterfall: The Metaphors of Kaluli Musical Theory,” Eliot Bates’s (2010, 81–105) “Mixing for *Parlak* and Bowing for a *Büyük Ses*: The Aesthetics of Arranged Traditional Music in Turkey,” and Sydney Hutchinson’s (2011, 245–62) “Típico, Folklórico, or Popular? Musical Categories, Place, and Identity in a Transnational Listening Community.”

required of a musician in an interactive jazz performance. These musicians must be capable of focusing on a variety of ongoing processes, including their own personal perceptions of time, physical control of their instruments, the sounds produced by their fellow band members, and to some degree the reaction of the audience. By foregrounding and backgrounding these concerns as situationally appropriate, jazz musicians are able to perform music that is individually and collectively supportive, interactive, and virtuosic. In *Blowin' the Blues Away: Performance and Meaning on the New York Jazz Scene*, Jackson (2012), fully develops the concept of a “blues aesthetic,” which explains how experienced jazz musicians and listeners evaluate jazz performances according to a set of often unspoken aesthetic criteria originating in the blues and other African American musics, learned from listening to recordings and live performances by established performers.

Most of the musicians who regularly attended Jazz Spot Intro's jam sessions later in the night demonstrated mastery of jazz performance as an interactive event and drew on musical vocabulary and styles learned from extensive listening to many of the canonic recordings of primarily African American jazz musicians. They fit easily into my own preconceived idea of a young professional jazz musician. They had many years of experience performing. They could play a wide repertoire of standard jazz tunes from memory, and could learn new ones by ear on the spot or sight read lead-sheet arrangements well enough to play unfamiliar songs in a jam session context. They drew on bebop-derived vocabulary similar to what I was taught over the course of a bachelor's degree in jazz performance. Many of them also played paid gigs, at least occasionally. All of the musicians I met in Tokyo fell

somewhere on a continuum between dedicated and skilled amateur practitioners and full-time professionals. As described in Berliner's (1994) *Thinking in Jazz: The Infinite Art of Improvisation*, all of them, including full-time professionals, considered their education and development in jazz as ongoing. They continued to practice individually, listen critically, and participate in jam sessions in order to refine their technical and expressive improvisational abilities. Unlike the world of American jazz, however, in which employment is considered secondary to perceived skill and experience in determining a jazz musician's status, the relationship between professional status, authenticity, and reception among Tokyo jazz musicians is more complex. Only a select few among the musicians I met in Tokyo were referred to as *puro*. When these musicians attended jam sessions, the manager quickly cleared a table for them—while others were expected to fend for themselves or stand—and they were only asked to sit in with other *puro* musicians, often of their own choosing. In interviews, my non-*puro* interlocutors frequently suggested that, while they were happy to talk with me, I would get better or more definitive answers about anything and everything related to the Tokyo jazz scene from the *puro* musicians. *Puro* is a title that conveys a privileged status, setting a musician apart from and above *ama* musicians, or amateurs.

### Defining Puro

Bassist Nakayama Shinji offered the most complete explanation of this mystifying status during a set break at Polkadots, a jazz bar in Shinjuku 3-chome. He explained that being a full-time musician was a prerequisite for recognition as, but not

the defining characteristic of, a *puro*. A real *puro*, according to Nakayama (personal communication, July 15, 2015), is defined not only by the monetary support music provides, but by what he or she can contribute in return. He said a *puro* is generally someone who is able to support him or herself solely through music, which may include performance, teaching, and composing. As a *puro*, Nakayama (personal communication, July 15, 2015) claims he is responsible to the audience, who rely on him for entertainment, to the other musicians in his band, who rely on him to be both a capable ensemble player and a rigorously scrupulous yet savvy businessman who can ensure they are paid fairly for their services, and to the music itself. This final point was more difficult to explain, but Nakayama said that this is what separates an art—in this case music—as a vocation or calling from art as a job.

Another professional bassist, Kanamori Motoi, echoed these sentiments, first asserting that a *puro* cannot have a job outside of music, then complicating this definition by saying that “a professional musician must be a success in two ways. One way is [in a] musical way. The second way is [in] business” (interview, August 5, 2015). By his definition, musical success is defined by both the attitude and commitment of the performers and the valuation of the performance by the audience. In subsequent conversations and interviews, other musicians frequently reaffirmed this idea that while a prerequisite of becoming a *puro* is becoming a full-time, self-supporting professional musician, one must actively contribute something to the community or the tradition in which he or she operates in order to truly be considered *puro*.

In a later conversation with a young jazz pianist at Intro, I tried to test the boundaries of this explanation. She asked what I thought of the performers at Intro, and I told her that I thought the average level of ability was very high, and that most could easily be considered professional-caliber jazz musicians. She responded that a real *puro* had to be better than any of those present at the time. According to her, it is so difficult to support oneself through playing jazz alone that only the absolute best performers could hope to achieve this. Furthermore, *puro* status becomes self-reinforcing, as being a full-time professional musician allows one to focus all of his or her time and energy on honing his or her craft. I asked how Sonny Rollins, who had periodically stopped performing publicly for months or years at a time, fit this definition. She saw no conflict, as Rollins's expressed reason for these sabbaticals was to practice and reconstruct his saxophone playing. I then asked how I would fit into her definition of *puro*. I had a university degree in jazz bass performance, I had spent a few years performing and teaching private lessons full time, I released one commercial CD as a bandleader and performed on another, and I had performed alongside professionals in five major cities on two continents. At the time of our conversation, though, I was not earning any money from performing or teaching music, and I considered myself one of the weaker players among Intro's regulars. She hesitated, but only briefly, before deciding that I was, in fact, still *puro*. According to her, like Sonny Rollins, I could decide at any time to return to being a full-time self-supporting musician.

While such assertions may seem like the result of a naïve misunderstanding of the economics of the music industry, partially relying on a gross overestimation of the

popularity and economic viability of jazz as a full-time pursuit, I believe it is instead an endorsement of music as a privileged domain of expression only fully accessible to the truly exceptional. The belief that such exceptional individuals, through their talent and dedication, are the only jazz musicians who will be successful in monetary terms also expresses a firm belief in the aesthetic judgement of jazz audiences. The willingness to assert that it is not a status that can be lost, once attained, indicates that a *puro*, as commonly understood within this community, is not simply someone who earns his or her income through jazz performance. Rather, a *puro* is someone who expresses a full-time commitment to musical expression and his or her own artistic development. This valorization of musician as an almost spiritual calling requiring total devotion is in some ways similar to romantic archetypes of creators of autonomous art held in the West. A key difference, however, is that while in the West an artist who was unappreciated in his or her own time might be posthumously glorified, in the Tokyo jazz scene the ultimate judge of who has the right to be called *puro* is the contemporary audience, an audience of both trained and untrained jazz musicians and enthusiasts.

### Defining Ama

The term *ama*, like *puro*, cannot be completely understood through its direct translation, “amateur.” In my conversations with Japanese people, I have learned that if someone asks if I *can* do something, I should interpret this to mean that he or she is asking if I can do it *well*. It has been my experience that, in Japanese, claiming one is not very good at something is an expression of modesty, rather than fact. Every

Japanese individual I have ever spoken with who has claimed to be capable, but not very good at, something has subsequently demonstrated a truly impressive level of skill. The same concept can, in some ways, be applied to the term *ama*. Rather than referring to any individual who plays music as a hobby or for his or her own enjoyment, *ama* is more often used to describe someone who has a fairly high level of skill, likely enough to confidently perform in public, and possibly one who has even performed for hire, at least occasionally. As such, most of those attending Intro's jam sessions could be considered *ama*, although I never heard anyone refer directly to a specific individual as such. Because *ama*, though it does not imply lack of skill, is still thought of in terms of what it is not, namely *puro*, it would likely be at least mildly insulting to refer to any specific individual as *ama*. While it came up as a general term, and was sometimes posited as a sort of opposite to *puro*, individuals tended to refer to themselves and others around them as “not *puro*” rather than as “*ama*.”

For a variety of reasons, some active performers in the Tokyo jazz scene do choose to maintain a non-*puro* status. According to bassist Kanamori Motoi (interview, August 5, 2015), while he personally was eager to become a full-time professional jazz musician—during our interview he fondly recalled the day he quit his part-time job at a convenience store—others, even those skilled enough to be considered professional-level performers, prefer the relative financial security of maintaining at least a part-time job outside of music. Still others, in informal conversation, have suggested that while they are skilled enough to become full-time professional musicians, they feel incapable of making truly significant artistic

contributions of their own through jazz. Tied to this concern is the underlying faith in paying audience members as competent judges of musicianship, resulting in a belief that since only the truly exceptional can become *puro*, one must have some unique artistic vision or contribution that sets him or her apart from other aspiring musicians, in addition to a high level of technical competence.

### Complications

*Puro* status carries with it a set of privileges, expectations, and rewards, but also responsibilities and complications. There are a set of—often unspoken—assumptions for *puro* musicians. For those attempting to break into the Tokyo jazz scene from outside, these can be confusing. According to one American jazz saxophonist who relocated to Tokyo approximately five years earlier, the specific meaning of *puro* and its host of unspoken associations can be a source of extreme frustration:

I hate it when people say that, I hate it when people ask me that. I hate it when people ask me “are you a pro?” I just play these melodies. I just play this music. Yeah, I look for as much work as I can get, and I do get work out of it, but I mean I’ve also had times when there’s just... no work available... Do you call yourself a pro when that happens too? I just consider myself a musician, and that’s how I want to survive. I always think it’s a weird question to ask. (D. N., interview, July 15, 2015)

Even for an established performer—at the time of our interview, his primary source of income was live jazz performances, he had been featured on other Tokyo musicians’ albums, and had recently signed a recording contract for his first album as a bandleader—the very question of *puro* status is still a source of insecurity. For a

foreign musician, an inability to understand or accept this commonly applied but rarely discussed or defined classification scheme that has been internalized by those participants who grew up within the Tokyo jazz scene can serve as one more marker of difference, one more obstacle to full assimilation and acceptance, even as U.S. nationality may paradoxically grant a special perceived authenticity to such musicians' performances.

Julian Tanaka, a jazz clarinetist who splits his time between Las Vegas, Rochester, NY, and Tokyo, also expressed some ambivalence toward the question of who could and could not be considered a *puro*. In spite of his sporadic presence in Tokyo, he was well-known among the other young jazz musicians I met. Based on the way other young jazz musicians mentioned him in conversation, both when he was present and when he was not, he was well-liked and well-respected. At jam sessions, he was one of only a few who would be called on to play with *puro* musicians who did not regularly attend. While clearly secure in his own position as a well-respected musician, recognized as professional in the Tokyo jazz community, he also objected to the question of *puro* classification:

That question irritates me to no end... It's not like jazz musicians, or any musician, work for a company... The only people who keep gigs for 20 years work at restaurants that happen to stay in business for 20 years... Yeah professional... I suppose if there was a difference it would be you do work that pays I guess... I don't know, what does that even mean? Because, you know you could be doing nothing and be working toward a grant or toward an education. That doesn't mean they're an amateur. Although, I'm thinking of amateur as having a kind of negative implication. Because people, I think, are usually saying, "do you know what you're doing?" Or "should I respect you?" To me it's just safer to say, yeah I'm a pro musician. (Tanaka, interview, July 18, 2015)

Tanaka recognizes a broad range of activities extending far beyond performance as the domain of a professional musician. He assumes that being termed amateur is not only an expression of non-professional engagement with the music, but also of a shallower engagement with it. An amateur is, by definition, an inferior musician according to the terms of this question. He rejects classification of musicians along a binary of professional and amateur as simplistic and ultimately irrelevant to skill or musicality, more significant factors in his thinking.

### *Establishing an Aesthetic Tradition*

Ultimately, acceptance as a *puro* by the Tokyo jazz community, including both musicians and non-performing audience members, means acceptance as an authentic performer of and creative contributor to jazz music. The audience's judgement of authenticity, subjective though it may be, influences whether a musician is able to sell tickets and albums, and thus determines whether or not a career in music is financially viable for a given individual. The possibility of being judged authentic within jazz and the possibility of making a creative contribution to jazz both rely on a common understanding of jazz as an ongoing tradition, something into which one may fit and something to which one may contribute. That there are musicians in Tokyo who are undisputedly recognized as *puro* suggests a set of at least approximately agreed-upon aesthetics by which musicians and non-performing audience members judge performances. Multiple musical and extra-musical factors contribute to the recognition—or rejection—of an artist's authenticity. Evaluation of

authenticity within a jazz tradition in the Tokyo scene is often tied to stylistic factors, association with specific places, or the ethnicity of the performer.

Jazz has been present in Japan for approximately 100 years. Since the end of World War II, Japan has frequently been visited by touring American jazz musicians (Atkins 2001). Young professional musicians in Japan grew up listening to the same recordings as their American counterparts. They were preceded by a generation of established professional Japanese jazz performers, including Watanabe Sadao and Akiyoshi Toshiko. An increasing number of Japanese jazz musicians study in or have extended contact with the United States and American musicians. As such, it would be absurd to claim that experienced Japanese jazz listeners use an entirely different set of aesthetic criteria in their understanding of jazz than Americans. It is safe to assume—and the international success of a handful of Japanese jazz performers supports this—that Japanese people who are experienced jazz listeners rely on a set of listening criteria that at least approximates the “blues aesthetic,” suggested by Travis Jackson (2012), that informs the way experienced American audiences and performers relate to jazz. Many musicians, such as guitarist Koyama Michiyuki (interview, July 2, 2015) insist that they are not merely jazz musicians, but musicians more broadly. These assertions may stem from both a desire to avoid being limited and an understanding of the social and aesthetic coding of jazz as an African American musical style: while music is considered universal and a field all human beings have the right to access, jazz is a historically, nationally, and racially marked

product.<sup>2</sup> For most musicians in the Tokyo jazz scene, however, learning to perform jazz is enough for a full-time pursuit. Through a variety of formal and informal institutions, they learn to perform primarily bebop and post-bop styles through a variety of formal and informal educational institutions. Much like jazz students in the U.S., bebop vocabulary and immediate post-bop styles, including hard bop, cool jazz, and some modal jazz, are used as a foundation for aspiring jazz performers. Many professional musicians continue to perform in these idioms, while many others branch out into other subgenres, fusions, and experimental forms.

There are limited opportunities for university-level study of jazz in Japan. Many of the young jazz musicians I met attended a university or technical school in Tokyo based on the reputation of the school's jazz club. Informal institutions, primarily jam sessions, serve an important role in connecting aspiring jazz musicians to experienced performers. Jazz Spot Intro in Takadanobaba serves such a role, and its manager, alto saxophonist Inoue, whose skill has earned him the nickname "God," acts as its primary pedagogue. During jam sessions, he not only leads by example, but also helps musicians who lose the form find their places in the song by pointing to a lead sheet or singing the melody, and occasionally gives less experienced musicians in-depth advice on playing style. He has an extremely fluid technique and an almost encyclopedic knowledge of jazz recordings and standards. While he is clearly capable of playing in modal and other post-bop styles, he relies almost exclusively on bebop and blues vocabulary in jam sessions.

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<sup>2</sup> This is not to say that Koyama is not a multi-talented and multi-genre performer. He is also an accomplished performer of rock and Brazilian music. I only suggest that being seen as an eclectic performer is one route to avoiding accusations of cultural appropriation or inauthentic performance.

Other professionals who attend Intro serve as secondary pedagogues, and many aspiring jazz musicians attend commercial performances by established musicians, approaching these events as an opportunity for learning. Many of the younger established professional musicians and advanced students or aspiring musicians prefer performance styles heavily influenced by 1960s Miles Davis, John Coltrane, and Wayne Shorter recordings. A drummer who regularly attended Intro's jam sessions who had been living in the area for over 40 years confirmed this stylistic preference, saying that, although when he was first exposed to jazz in the 1970s fusion was the most popular style in Japan, more recently there has been a resurgence of more "traditional" or "straight-ahead" bebop and bebop-inflected styles (K. H., interview, July 10, 2015). The apparent progression from bebop to post-bop performing styles in the education of Tokyo jazz musicians, though likely simply a matter of personal taste or the relative age of the performers, closely mirrors my own experience with formal jazz education at Temple University in Philadelphia. As an undergraduate studying jazz performance, although I was encouraged to perform and listen to a variety of subgenres of jazz, all of my formal music theory, ear training, and repertoire instruction drew almost exclusively from bebop.

### *Place and Ethnicity*

In addition to musical style, perceptions of place and race play a related and complex role in establishing or denying a Tokyo jazz musician's *puro* status. Although many young jazz musicians recognize the artificial nature of essentialist constructs of race that have historically contributed to self-marginalization of jazz

made in Japan, some of the effects remain. Electric bassist and composer, L. Y. explained the complex relationship of jazz, nationality, and ethnicity with which his generation of musicians struggles:

When I saw [how] they [American musicians] play, it's simply because... we feel like it's imported music, so they play real, we imitate, I felt... I don't totally care about it recently, because I really love African jazz music and European jazz music and I like other types of music from other countries as well, and jazz is a universal music, that's what I understood, and I don't really care... the race or ethnicity or nationality of the musicians, but the majority of people in Japan who play or listen to jazz music still feel like it's important. That's why if they saw a Western looking guy, or African looking guy at a jam session, they'll think "wow, he's gonna play something... Wow!" If it's normal, even if it's normal, kind of "wow, maybe he's a real musician" or something like that. That mentality is kind of the default setting. Do you know *kakigōri*?<sup>3</sup> I saw [some] very shocking news today. There's actually [a] strawberry flavor, [a] lemon flavor, [and a] melon flavor, but the ingredients are all the same. The fragrance and color are different, but the taste is all the same, but people think that's real strawberry, melon, lemon. I was shocked about it, but it's kind of cheating your brain with this flavor, this color. The same thing is happening with this music in Japan. We are kind of very proud of Watanabe Sadao, and Hiromi, of course, but we are still thinking like we are one wave behind. (Interview, July 10, 2015)

He compares seeing a Western-looking or African American-looking performer's automatic perceived authenticity in the eyes of Japanese jazz audiences to a psychosomatic response in which food coloring changes people's perception of the taste of shaved ice. Through a similar set of assumptions, musicians who have performed or lived in certain locations, particularly New York City, are seen as important to jazz's history and development and may be granted an automatic additional layer of authenticity. Kanamori Motoi (interview, August 5, 2015) expressed a firm belief that the average level of skill of musicians in New York City had to be superior to that in Tokyo, in spite of never having played there, an assertion

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<sup>3</sup> *Kakigōri* (かき氷) is a flavored shaved ice dessert.

that I felt underestimated his own ability. This association with place or the perceived ethnicity of a performer can thus contribute to a higher status in the Tokyo jazz scene for some musicians. It can also serve as an obstacle at times.

“Do you understand *kyaku yose panda*?” Guitarist Asari Fumika (interview, July 28, 2015) and trumpeter Yomida Natsumi (interview, July 28, 2015) suggested the limits of extra-musical associations in contributing to a performer’s *puro* status. They agreed that there are many musicians who attract customers primarily through their image, rather than through their performing. In this instance, the term *kyaku yose panda* refers to an individual who uses such a gimmick to attract listeners.<sup>4</sup> While the two women agreed that there is nothing inherently wrong with using one’s image, background, or another gimmick to attract listeners, such an individual could not really be considered *puro*. Yomida mentioned this as a common consideration in hiring practices for musicians playing in hotel lobbies. Nakayama (interview, August 3, 2015) mentioned the popularity of all-female jazz bands, or *joshi-bando* (女子バンド), as a byproduct of such a preference for consumption of the exotic over honest appreciation of jazz as an expressive art, saying “I think they [the audience] like music, maybe they love music, but... at the same time, they think like, if I watch a pianist, young, cute female is better, right?” From Asari, Yomida, and Nakayama’s point of view, the artist is not at fault, but rather their producers and a hypothetical, uneducated or under-appreciative audience are to blame for exploiting such artists and thereby barring them from *puro* status.

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<sup>4</sup> *Kyaku yose panda*, (客寄せパンダ), literally “customer attracting panda,” refers to the popularity of pandas at the Ueno Zoo in Tokyo. It is assumed that, while the zoo has a lot more to offer than just pandas, the publicity and popularity of that single exhibit has acted as a primary draw for customers.

## Conclusion

Many of the criteria for judging skill in jazz performance among Tokyo musicians are similar to those used in the U.S. As a result of the historical and continuing association of jazz with African American identity among Japanese jazz musicians and listeners and their familiarity with recordings by prominent American jazz musicians, the aesthetics by which members of the Tokyo jazz community evaluate jazz performances approximate those used by experienced American audiences, including those difficult to verbalize values codified in a “blues aesthetic” (Jackson 2012). Tokyo jazz musicians learn primarily bebop and bebop-inflected post-bop styles through a variety of primarily informal institutions, such as jam sessions and university clubs, and these musicians continue to hone their abilities in an ongoing learning process that continues even after they have established themselves as fully professional musicians. Those musicians who are recognized as full-time professionals, as well as authentic and creative artists, are referred to as *puro* and are considered role models deserving of admiration, emulation, and some preferential treatment among musicians.

The ultimate decision as to who is and who is not *puro* is made in collaboration with a paying audience. Tokyo jazz musicians acknowledge that jazz does not have the popularity of pop or rock music, yet their willingness to place the ultimate decision of who is a *puro*, a fully authentic and creative artist, in the hands of a popular audience suggests a certain faith in both the possibility for universal appeal

in their music and the sensitivity of an untrained listener. At the same time, these musicians reserve the right to exclude certain performers from *puro* status in spite of commercial success if their popularity is judged to rely too heavily on non-musical factors, such as appearance or gender. In order to be considered a *puro* in the Tokyo jazz scene, musicians must be able to present themselves as economic and musical successes, fulfilling a set of ethical and artistic responsibilities to their audience, fellow musicians, and the musical tradition of jazz, all without relying excessively on extra-musical factors.

### *Chapter 3: Quotations and Japanese Performers in a Jazz Tradition*

#### Introduction

At the exit from Takadanobaba station onto Waseda-dori, the street is packed with people in their late teens and early twenties. The proximity of Waseda University and several vocational schools means the street's restaurants, bars, arcades, and all-night karaoke boxes are frequented by local students, and the neighborhood remains brightly-lit and bustling with activity late into the night during the week and non-stop on weekends. The Takadanobaba neighborhood of Tokyo, Japan—colloquially known among the younger crowd as “Baba”—is home to the Café Cotton Club, a four-floor jazz club featuring several performances a week by established local, national, and touring foreign jazz musicians. Across the street, marked by a small, black and white sign easily lost among those for other stores in the building, is Jazz Spot Intro, a cramped basement bar devoted to jazz jam sessions—sessions that, according to their website, have the expressed motto of “smokin’, drinkin’, never thinkin’” (Jazz Spot Intro 2015). Although the physical space, type of performance, and overall atmosphere of the two clubs differ significantly, they do have some things in common. The two clubs are owned by the same man, nearly all of the regular participants in Jazz Spot Intro’s jam sessions also frequent Café Cotton Club, and many of the younger musicians who began their

careers performing on off-nights at Café Cotton Club were hand-picked from the regular participants in Intro's sessions.

In performances in these two jazz clubs, performers and audiences socially construct meaning by exploiting common pre-existing associations. By comparing typical performances at Café Cotton Club and Jazz Spot Intro, I will demonstrate how the goals and expectations of those attending these venues differ, and how these differences inform the choices of musicians in performance. Next, in an analysis relying on Thomas Turino's (1999, 221–55; 2014, 185–221) application of Peircean semiotics to music, I will discuss four specific musical quotations and their use in these two contexts.<sup>1</sup> Jackson (2012) suggested the potentials of a semiotic approach to detailed analysis of jazz performance, but few scholars have yet attempted it. I claim that, among Japanese jazz musicians, overt musical references to African American identity are given special attention. These references, including quotations, are often chosen consciously, especially when performing for other jazz musicians, in order to establish performers' fluency and authenticity within a tradition defined by a "blues aesthetic," as suggested by Travis Jackson (2012), an often unspoken performance sensibility held by experienced jazz performers and listeners. According to E. Taylor Atkins's 2001 *Blue Nippon*, Japanese jazz musicians find themselves under additional pressure to establish authenticity as jazz performers due to common understandings of jazz as a tradition to which Japanese racial and national identities have made no significant contributions. Thus in order to establish their authenticity

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<sup>1</sup> I rely on Turino's interpretation because, as Turino (2014, 187) stated, his "goals for working with Peirce's writings over the last thirty years have not been to simply explicate his theories, but rather to build in original ways on his general approach and concepts for ethnomusicological work... Peirce had little to say about music or artistic practice and he did not explore the sign types most involved in this realm of experience in any great depth."

for Japanese audiences, Japanese jazz performers often include more overt references to the jazz tradition—and thus African American identity—in a performance than might be expected of American performers. This is one of several tactics used by Japanese musicians in establishing themselves as performers of musics closely associated with a foreign nationality or cultural identity. Noriko Manabe's 2013 article on Japanese hip-hop DJs and Carolyn S. Stevens's 2008 discussion of Japanese rock and pop performers provide examples of similar and diverse paths to legitimacy employed by Japanese musicians in other genres. I expect that this discussion will contribute to a more complex understanding of the construction and transmission of meaning in racially and nationally marked cultural forms that have spread beyond their places of origin, like jazz.

### *Café Cotton Club*

Seating on the bottom floor (seen in Figure 3.1), where major performances are held at Café Cotton Club, typically begins at 6:30 or 7:00 pm, and the performance begins approximately one hour later. The stage, raised one-and-a-half feet from the ground, and large enough to hold an eight- or nine-piece band comfortably, sits at one end of the room. On the right is a grand piano. Performances are typically three sets and last between three and four hours. The club is decorated in red and gold and luxuriously furnished, with several tables—most of which require a reservation well in advance for national or internationally known acts—usually occupied by men and women in their forties and older wearing relatively formal evening wear. These attendees eat and drink throughout the performance and talk

freely during set breaks. Younger attendees, many of them students and aspiring jazz musicians themselves, slowly work through one or two drinks—generally either beer or ginger ale—sitting or standing at the bar, where they can benefit from the commentary and analysis of the owner, a long-time jazz drummer.



Figure 3.1. Café Cotton Club main stage (<http://tb.cafecottonclub.com/floor/>)

These two distinct groups within the audience come with different expectations and goals in attending performances. Older, non-musician members of the audience likely enjoy the opportunity to display their taste and style through their demonstration of familiarity with jazz and their dress and conduct, but their primary reason for attending is to be entertained. The luxuriously ornamented and expansive performance space itself represents wealth and sophistication, enhancing the status of these patrons. The younger, aspiring jazz musicians certainly hope to be entertained as well, but their main reason for attending performances at Café Cotton Club is to observe and learn performance practices from already successful musicians.

In a successful performance at Café Cotton Club, musicians must cater to these two groups simultaneously. The non-musicians in attendance are seen as

professional musicians' primary source of income, and their expectation of entertainment is therefore paramount. However, the performers are aware that the musicians in attendance are their current or potential colleagues, and by ignoring their aesthetic preferences, performers risk alienating potential bandleaders and cutting themselves off from a collaborative and supportive community. Audience members with less experience in jazz expect, above all, a show. Those well-versed in the jazz tradition, however, are less impressed by technical displays than they are by the performers' fluency in jazz. This means that performers must attempt to display both physical mastery of their instruments and conceptual mastery of jazz, giving a performance that is technically impressive and innovative while continuing to reference the jazz tradition as collectively understood by the other musicians in the audience.

### *Jazz Spot Intro*

Jazz Spot Intro's jam sessions begin around 6:00 pm every day except Mondays and Fridays. During my time in Tokyo, the club would usually be empty at this time except for the house band, often only a bassist and a pianist, and as most of the musicians knew me as a bassist, a regular, and a researcher—and, I like to think, as a friend—we would sit together at the bar talking until more people arrived to play and listen. On Sundays and Tuesdays, the house band often consists of a bassist and a pianist, usually young, full-time professional musicians who had previously studied as informal apprentices of Intro's manager, alto saxophonist Inoue, whose skill has earned him the nickname "God" among Intro's regular clientele. On Wednesdays,

Thursdays, and Saturdays, Inoue himself leads the house band, often with one of his current apprentices. By 8:00 pm, the club is usually filled. The entire room (seen below in Figure 3.2) can only comfortably hold about 18 people, although Saturday nights often see 30 or more stuffed in, shoulder-to-shoulder.



Figure 3.2. Jazz Spot Intro interior, author playing bass, photograph by Sayaka Tominaga

Inoue, or one of the house band members when he is not present, keeps a list of players and their instruments to ensure an appropriate combination of musicians on each song, as well as giving each participant a chance to play. Occasionally, a customer comes just to listen, but the vast majority come to play. Sundays through Thursdays at around 11:30, a member of the house band announces “all-us,” and every musician present plays the final song of the night together. During Saturday’s

all-night session, the “all-us” begins around 4:30 on Sunday morning, often continuing for an hour or more, and concludes with Inoue calling out introductions for those tough or stubborn enough to have remained, playing, drinking, and talking for the entire 12 hours. In the early hours of the jam session, a few jazz hobbyists who play for their own enjoyment, often coming to the music later in life, are present, but around 10:00 pm, they begin to clear out, to be replaced by a crowd that is, on average, both younger and more experienced as musicians.

After 10:00 pm, almost everyone in attendance at Intro is a professional jazz musician, an aspiring professional, or recognized by the others present as a professional-caliber amateur musician. Because there is—at least in their relationship with jazz—a relatively homogenous group in attendance, the goals and expectations of those attending the Intro sessions are somewhat more uniform than those of Café Cotton Club’s patrons. There is no need for performers to attempt to appeal to a variety of commercial and artistic sensibilities simultaneously. They are jazz musicians playing for themselves and for other jazz musicians. They play for fun, for reputation, and for their own continued artistic development. However, in order to build their reputations among their fellow musicians, they still must compete for attention. Here, innovative improvisations and displays of insider knowledge trump physical virtuosity. Maintaining cohesion with a group that may have never performed together is, however, a prerequisite, so musicians are limited in their ability to depart from standard melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic forms. Therefore, in order to appeal to their fellow musicians, they are more likely to rely on musical

quotations, using references to canonical recordings in order to draw attention and establish familiarity with a common tradition.

### Quotations

Re-appropriation of musical material has been a major component of jazz practice throughout its history: it is a music with a standard repertoire of hundreds of songs, largely drawn from Broadway musicals and Tin Pan Alley tunes. These songs are transformed as they are used by jazz ensembles as vehicles for the spontaneous creation of a new musical product. In this way, meaning in jazz performance relies heavily on the exploitation of indices, signs related to their objects due to mutual occurrence (Turino 1999, 227). Jazz listeners' reception and interpretation of a performance relies on their individual, unique experiences. Experienced jazz performers become familiar with certain common indices and create meaningful improvisations through exploitation or subversion of their audiences' learned associations and expectations. The practice of quotation that I am referring to is not used to transform the original product, but rather to reference a tradition and establish the current performance as a continuation of that self-referential tradition. Specific quotations act as icons, signs that directly resemble their objects, of particular performances and recordings (Turino 1999, 226). These icons may then index the jazz tradition in general, a particular instrument, or a particular performer. They often act in more than one of these ways simultaneously.

In many ways, the Tokyo jazz scene is comparable to those of many large cities in the U.S.: it is a major metropolitan area, served by a variety of live music

venues. There are many aspiring young jazz musicians, some conservatory-trained, some apprenticed or self-taught, as well as some jazz veterans native to the Tokyo scene. Much like New York City, Tokyo is also a prime destination for young musicians from other parts of the country who want to embark on performance careers. It is also home to a fair number of foreign-born, long-term resident musicians. Furthermore, due to a long-standing political and economic relationship with the U.S., many Tokyo-based Japanese musicians have studied jazz in the U.S., and thanks to the international recording industry and music download services, aspiring Japanese jazz musicians have access to the same canonical recordings used as texts in the instruction of American musicians. Due to the close associations of jazz with an African American racial and national identity, however, and the mythological status of New York City, imagined as perpetually distant and exotic in the collective imaginary of Japanese jazz musicians, performers in the Tokyo jazz scene are in some ways under greater pressure to establish themselves as authentic within a musical tradition seen as inherently foreign. As a result, musical quotations of specific well-known recordings and performers take on a special significance in Tokyo as overt references to a commonly-understood jazz tradition.

The musical phrase shown in figure 3.3, often used by jazz musicians of any instrument in their solos, indexes the jazz tradition in general.



Figure 3.3. A phrase of unknown origin often quoted in jazz solos

Although it was, at one point, performed and recorded by a specific artist on a specific album, there is no consensus among jazz musicians as to who the artist was or on which album it first appeared. I first heard it played by Paul Chambers on the 1957 album, *Red Garland's Piano*, but have subsequently heard many other musicians play the phrase. While it functions as an icon of a particular album and an index of a particular performer for me, it does not elicit the same association from others. Although the specific origin is uncertain, it is widely acknowledged as a quotation *from somewhere*. Through a process of innovation, reproduction, and forgetting, such musical phrases become detached from their original associations and come to serve as pieces of standard musical vocabulary and non-specific references to jazz tradition. Musicians often included this and other such phrases in their improvised solos at both Intro and Café Cotton Club. Those experienced in jazz were likely to recognize the intentional reference to a shared history, while the less-experienced were unlikely to take any special notice of the phrase, making it a relatively safe choice.

The phrase shown in Figure 3.4 is commonly associated with the double bass and bassist Scott LaFaro.



Figure 3.4. A phrase commonly associated with Scott LaFaro

The interval of a third is easy to play and transpose or reproduce diatonically in a variety of positions on the top two strings of the bass, so this phrase and similar ones

are a popular way for bassists to quickly move from a low to a very high register. It is also sometimes reversed to move down an octave or more from a high register, and it is frequently altered rhythmically as well. The speed with which a wide range can be covered using such phrases make them common choices for bassists in commercial performances like those at Café Cotton Club. Because the phrase, for many musicians, overtly indexes a specific artist, overuse of it might seem derivative to experienced jazz listeners. I heard this and similar phrases frequently at both Intro and Café Cotton Club, but musicians often put more effort into altering it rhythmically when performing at Intro, so as to take advantage of the phrase's semiotic and technical advantages while avoiding accusations of unoriginality.

The phrase below (Figure 3.5) is a specific reference to the song “I’ll Close My Eyes” from Blue Mitchell’s 1960 album, *Blue’s Moods*.



Figure 3.5. Blue Mitchell playing “I’ll Close My Eyes”

It serves as an icon of the recording and the song and an index of its performer and his instrument, the trumpet. An extended quotation like this, if employed at all in a commercial setting, is played solely for the benefit of musicians present. If used repeatedly, it can leave a musician open to accusations of being derivative. Its relative obscurity means that the quotation can serve as a particularly potent marker of insider knowledge. “I’ll Close My Eyes” was a favorite of trumpet players at Intro, but I never heard the song performed in non-jam session contexts. When I

played this phrase during a solo on the song “I’ll Close My Eyes,” I drew approving nods from the others at Intro (although I had thought it was something of a joke).

This final quotation (Figure 3.6) is the opening phrase of John Coltrane’s 1965 album *A Love Supreme*. The only time I have heard it played live was at Intro by three saxophonists.



Figure 3.6. Opening of John Coltrane’s *A Love Supreme*

It is an icon of a specific recording and a rarely performed composition with a special status among jazz musicians that causes this quotation to act as an extremely powerful index of a particular performer and instrument. As such, it has little value as a demonstration of insider knowledge for other musicians. Because many non-performers may recognize it as well, it is generally not played for other musicians. While some easily recognizable quotations are used to great effect in performances for non-musician audiences, due to the perceived density and abstractness of the original material, this particular quotation is also generally not considered appropriate for commercial club performances. In this case, Inoue appeared to play it—according to my and others at the bar’s interpretation—as a joke at the expense of the tenor saxophonist sharing the stage with him at the time, implying that the younger musician was trying too hard to sound like his hero, Coltrane. The other two saxophonists, however, picked up the reference, responding with their own quotations of *A Love Supreme*. Ultimately, the rhythm section dropped out and the three

saxophonists continued into an a-metric improvisation until finally allowing the piece to dissolve into harmonically unresolved silence. The end was greeted by wry smiles and laughter from the others present.

### Conclusion

Through a complex series of musical choices, jazz musicians strive to spontaneously create highly affective music. In the context of a commercial performance, they attempt to create music that is exciting, and thereby affective, for an audience that is assumed to have less knowledge of jazz tradition and vocabulary than the performers. By entertaining these audiences, musicians ensure that customers will attend future performances, increase their chances of repeat bookings at the same venue, and demonstrate effective performance practices for aspiring professional musicians who are present. One of the primary methods through which jazz musicians adapt and develop their own personal performing styles, as well as contribute to the tradition as a whole, is through participation in jam sessions where they are able to engage with a community of like-minded musicians in trying out new musical concepts and critiquing one another's performances. In addition to their pedagogical value, I have suggested that in a Japanese jam session a primary goal of a performance is establishing fluency in the jazz tradition—understood as racially African American—through techniques, including quotations, that musically reference a jazz tradition held together by a “blues aesthetic.”

Striving to be accepted by their peers as legitimate performers within an idiom commonly understood as indexing African American identity, Tokyo jazz musicians

put a special emphasis on musical quotations from canonical recordings within this commonly understood tradition. In the context of the Tokyo jazz scene, these quotations help to establish a performer's fluency within a tradition that is in some ways seen as incompatible with his or her national and ethnic identity.

As jazz musicians attempt to accommodate the varied, and sometimes conflicting, desires of their listeners, they make a series of musical choices based on the assumed knowledge of the audience. The previous experiences of listeners interact with these sounds in order to create meaning. The more frequent use of quotations, and particularly obscure ones, at Jazz Spot Intro's jam sessions illuminates one way in which Japanese jazz musicians seek to establish their expertise through performances of high semiotic density. Furthermore, this use of quotations illustrates that a self-referential tradition in jazz performance, central to aesthetic valuations of jazz in the U.S., is given special attention in performances by and for Japanese jazz musicians. Further study of the specific understandings of these references and the meanings produced among participants in jam sessions like Intro's, as well as among listeners at commercial venues such as Café Cotton Club, might demonstrate the ways in which a set of core values and associative meanings have been transmitted internationally and how these values and meanings have been subsequently transformed to better suit a new place, people, and time.

## Chapter 4: Liminal Space in an Aesthetic of Universality

### Introduction

Since the end of World War II, Tokyo jazz audiences have been known as enthusiastic supporters of touring African American jazz musicians (Atkins 2001). In the early twenty-first century, Tokyo is home to a thriving jazz scene. Yet it remains marginal in both international and domestic estimations of jazz history and contemporary jazz production. This status can prove an obstacle to Tokyo-based jazz musicians in their attempts to win over both domestic and international audiences that understand jazz as a music linked to American nationality and African American racial identity. Previously, Japanese jazz musicians often relied on close association with American musicians or long-term residence in the U.S. (Atkins 2001). Kanamori Motoi's (interview, August 5, 2015) remarks about New York City indicate that for many Tokyo musicians, residence in New York City remains a potent marker of authenticity.

Japanese musicians performing in a variety of imported musical styles have faced similar obstacles to establishing their own authenticity within their chosen idiom. Noriko Manabe (2013, 25–50), in her article “Representing Japan: ‘National’ Style among Japanese Hip-Hop DJs,” discusses some of the methods Japanese hip-hop DJs have used to succeed in international competitions. Initially seen by many

Japanese and foreign audiences alike as somehow incapable of producing authentic hip-hop performances, these musicians ultimately found acceptance through a form of self-exoticization. Rather than imagining their practice as transcending national boundaries, Japanese DJs like DJ Krush established themselves as authentic performers through inclusion of sounds associated with traditional Japanese music, like the *shakuhachi*. If performing only for Japanese audiences, these sounds might not have been included, as hip-hop would appeal to these listeners for its international and youthful associations, but for an international audience exaggerated sonic markers of Japanese ethnicity are received as indications of greater originality and authenticity.

Similarly, in *Japanese Popular Music: Culture, Authenticity and Power*, Carolyn S. Stevens (2007) describes the ease with which performers from the margins of Japan, particularly the Ryukyu Islands, have come to be seen as the most authentic creators of Japanese national forms of popular music. According to Stevens, performers from the Ryukyu Islands, generally heavily marginalized in Japanese national discourse, are thought of as particularly authentic pop and rock performers due to both their separation from Tokyo and other major urban centers of Japanese popular culture and their proximity to U.S. military bases. These musicians' interaction with U.S. military initially suggests a longer and deeper understanding of American cultural forms, like rock and roll, to mainland Japanese audiences more removed from contact with Americans. At the same time, their distance from Honshu, the largest island of Japan, and major metropolises like Tokyo and Osaka affords Ryukyuan musicians an image of being more authentically Japanese.

Drawing on urban Japanese audiences' essentialist notions of marginal locations as isolated from the fast pace, international contact, and evolution of the large population centers, these marginal locations are seen as fixed in time and social development, thereby representing an earlier, more purely Japanese culture in the popular imagination. In this sense, according to Stevens, Japanese pop musicians from the Ryukyu Islands, like Orange Range, have positioned themselves as both cosmopolitans and authentic performers through their close contact with Americans and American popular art forms, and authentic bearers of a Japanese tradition through a form of nationally internal self-exoticization.

Michelle Bigenho (2012) and Minako Waseda (2013, 187–213) present further examples of Japanese adoption of foreign musics. In *Intimate Distance: Andean Music in Japan*, Bigenho (2012) discusses Japanese tours by Bolivian musicians performing Andean music and Japanese fans and performers of Andean music. These Japanese performers of Andean music make vague references to an imagined common indigenous ancestry, positioning themselves as authentic by linking themselves racially to the original performers of the music they play. In “Gospel Music in Japan: Transplantation and Localization of African American Religious Singing,” Waseda (2013, 187–213) describes the rhetoric by which non-Christian Japanese gospel singers justify their participation in a Christian musical tradition. These singers, in spite of some mixed feelings about singing gospel music, ultimately rely on a flexible interpretation of Christianity, suggesting that the awe inspired by a Christian god and the awe inspired by a vague sense of a god or god-

like entity are similar enough to allow non-Christian Japanese singers to authentically and sincerely participate in gospel performances.

Even Japanese composers of Western classical music, a music consistently touted as universal, have faced similar insecurities regarding their place as producers within an imported tradition. According to Bonnie Wade's 2014 *Composing Japanese Musical Modernity*, these composers have often positioned themselves as relevant through flexibility in the specific genres and idioms in which they compose. Their work includes music ranging from school songs for music pedagogy to experimental concert compositions to film music. Wade suggests that in spite of a nearly 150-year presence in Japan—Western music was imported and adopted as part of Japanese public education during the Meiji Restoration in the late nineteenth century—these composers are only now beginning to overcome doubts regarding their place as composers in a Western idiom. It is ironic that Western classical music is so often touted as a pure art and universal music, yet extending that universality to include Japanese composers has been a 150-year process.

In *Recentering Globalization: Popular Culture and Japanese Transnationalism*, Koichi Iwabuchi (2002) suggests that Japan's success as an exporter of cultural products is due to a national—and in some ways nationalist—aesthetic of *mukokuseki*, or “nationlessness.” According to Iwabuchi, Japanese popular cultural products have succeeded in international markets due to their marketing as universally appealing. Since it is no secret that these are in fact Japanese products, they are able to become popular in foreign markets through downplaying their associations with Japan while simultaneously promoting the nation

and the idea of Japan as a modern capitalist power. This suggestion of universality in the aesthetics of Japanese popular culture could also contribute to the popularity of jazz, hip-hop, and Western-inflected pop music in Japanese domestic markets.

In describing their place in a jazz tradition, Tokyo musicians often invoke a rhetoric of jazz as a universal music. It is similar to the universalism that often accompanies Western classical music, but unlike classical music, which was imported along with a rhetoric of universality, Japanese jazz musicians initially understood jazz as a racially and nationally specific music, and only later attached a rhetoric of universality to it. Contemporary Tokyo musicians recognize jazz's origins as a product of African American innovators and almost universally cite African American jazz musicians active in the 1940s-1960s as their biggest influences, but claim that the music itself is now beyond any particular race or nationality. Alternatively, some Tokyo jazz musicians claim themselves as musicians, more broadly, rather than accepting the label of "jazz musician." In both cases, these musicians have referred to jazz's potential for building transnational, cross-cultural relationships, suggesting a desire to participate in a jazz community that transcends existing national, racial, and cultural boundaries.

By espousing an understanding of jazz as a music—or themselves as musicians—not confined by racial, national, or cultural categories, Tokyo jazz musicians apply a *mukokuseki* aesthetic to the music they create. While this aesthetic has the potential to carve a place for Japanese jazz performers as creators on both domestic and international stages, some musicians find themselves in a liminal state as a result of conflict between this universalist rhetoric and their own identities as

perceived by their audiences. Women are thought to have an edge in drawing paying audiences to jazz performances, but reliance on such an extra-musical factor to ensure financial success as a jazz performer is in direct contradiction with ideals of universality applied to jazz. If musicians are perceived by others in the Tokyo jazz community as being successful due to their gender, nationality, or race, they may be excluded from *puro* status, regardless of financial success or performing skill.

#### Mukokuseki and Bringing Something Japanese to Jazz

Many jazz musicians in Tokyo cite an ideal of their music as a practice that transcends national and cultural distinctions. Several even suggest that jazz practice can contribute to establishing world peace. On its surface, this sounds like a common, if idealistic, notion related to the emotive power of music, but this assertion indicates both a belief in jazz as a universal music and a desire to participate more fully in transnational networks, a desire for cosmopolitanism in the sense of an imagined world citizenship.

When I first met guitarist Koyama Michiyuki, he asked how I intended to learn about jazz in Japan. I told him that I planned to talk to people. He nodded approvingly and exclaimed “exactly!” Later, when I interviewed him at Teishaba in Saitama, on the outskirts of Tokyo, he explained that he prized the music he plays as a means of interaction. Although he was mostly playing jazz at the time I met him, he objected to being classified as a jazz musician, preferring to simply call himself a musician. He claimed that, like religion, while music takes many unique forms, each with its own set of idiomatic practices and sounds, there is some core characteristic to

all genres that is more important than the details that separate individual styles, and it was this universal aspect that he was most interested in (Koyama, interview, July 2, 2015). Certainly, his own career has spanned a breadth of genres. A professional since the age of 16, he performed briefly with a rock band in his home town in Nagano prefecture, even appearing periodically on local television, before moving to Yokohama, where he began to learn jazz and Brazilian music, including bossa nova and *música popular brasileira*. Since that time, he has visited Brazil and the U.S., performing with local musicians in both cases (Koyama, interview, July 2, 2015).

During our interview, Koyama explained that he thinks jazz's greatest strength is that, as an improvised music with a common repertoire and vocabulary, it can be used to forge connections between individuals. He described his experiences in the U.S. and Brazil as positive, because, in spite of his inability to speak fluent English or Portuguese, he was able to perform easily with the musicians he met. Based on these experiences, he is hopeful that his own career and continued performance in jazz can contribute in some small way to a more peaceful world (Koyama, interview, July 2, 2015). While this is far from claiming jazz or even music as a universal language, there is clearly a broad focus to Koyama's thinking about himself and his music. Being labeled as a musician in any individual genre strikes him as too restrictive, and he claims jazz in particular as an activity well-suited to overcoming language barriers in establishing interpersonal connections. As both a musician and a jazz musician, he positions himself as a socially progressive world citizen, rejecting genre and national classifications as overly restrictive.

L.Y. (interview, July 10, 2015), an electric bassist and a composer with aspirations of creating new fusions of jazz and traditional Japanese music, echoed Koyama's ideas about jazz as a tool for establishing transnational and interpersonal connections, saying "I really wish jazz music to be an opportunity to connect people internationally." The bassist/composer explained that he understood jazz as an increasingly transnational practice with a history that continues to mark it as a racially and nationally coded music:

If you know really deeply the origins of jazz music, or music in general, it's totally international. It's like food. You can develop anything. If you have garlic and tomato from South America you can make great pasta sauce. Music has great international possibilities. But we only have very limited understanding of the... we deeply rely on very few translated informational resources, so we are even more biased because of that. But I understood that it's very multicultural music, but I have to remind [myself] each time, because all the pictures are just black musicians. Which I like. We all like it. Even if it's black musicians, they all have different backgrounds, if it's Caribbean, or French, or from West Africa, like Yoruba, or anything. Yeah that's a problem in this. They call it as "black culture," but black culture is not just one thing. It's [a] totally multi-ethnic culture. (L.Y., interview, July 10, 2015)

He acknowledges the importance of African American performers in jazz, while at the same time rejecting the very concept of a unified "black culture" as simplistic. His emphasis on the multicultural, transnational origins of jazz has the additional effect of positioning Japanese performance and composition in jazz as a continuation of, rather than a departure from, a long tradition.

He went on to describe his hopes for the future of Japanese society:

I actually mentioned that if you name a country like the Philippines or Malaysia, they actually have to use English very heavily because they are struggling to express their presence in the global market. But fortunately and unfortunately, Japan has been having a good economic presence in the world without the English language. That's good but

really bad, because we sometimes have a really narrow mindset, so... a multilingual environment is definitely what I wish to have in the future Japan because... simply, we will enrich the culture. History shows it. History proves it. One other factor is that... I hope people in Japan kind of get over with feeling a disadvantage without having [an] American music background, without having [a] European, you know, Western language background. We feel disadvantaged, because simply, we love things imported. [If] we have familiarity with language, if we have familiarity with Western culture, we can probably identify what music really is, what culture really is. (L.Y., interview, July 10, 2015)

His desire for a multilingual and, by implication, multicultural Japan could be seen as an expansion of a *mukokuseki* aesthetic applied to the whole of Japanese social life. He references a love for imported things common to Japanese consumers, but implies a desire to actively participate in imported cultural practices, rather than passively consuming them as imported products. For musicians like this one, jazz, as a transnational, multi-cultural, multi-racial practice, can play a part in bringing Japan into greater dialogue with other nations and supporting multiculturalism within Japanese society.

Nakayama Shinji explained that a shift in Japanese opinions about jazz as a nationally and racially specific music to a more universal form of human expression occurred relatively recently:

I think elder Japanese musicians... they're all kind of racist. They're racist. They think black people [are] the top... human being[s] to play jazz... Their muscle, their blood, their height, everything. Black people [are] the top of the hierarchy. And maybe next is white American, not British, *American*. And they think Japanese people [are] way, like *way*, in the bottom of that hierarchy. So they have a kind of complex to play jazz as Japanese [people]. But I think my generation is more open minded, because... not only because I spent a year in Colorado and made some American friends, so yeah, that's a huge experience to play music with guys from other countries. I think... the best thing about music is, if you play with someone you

can be friends with them, even though they're from the U.S., from black culture, from white culture, and I was from Osaka, and we can play music and we can be friends. And in jazz you don't have to rehearse too much, you can just play F blues in this tempo and you can be friends... I don't say something negative about the blood, and the tribe maybe. Because some people are saying... I mean some old jazz musicians in Japan say black people have the better muscle and longer arms and longer fingers so they get a better sound compared to Asian people. I think it's rude to their heroes. Because... Charlie Parker, Ray Brown, Oscar Peterson, [if people say] they're great because they're black, that means they're ignoring their efforts to be great musician[s], like... the hours and hours [of practice] every day. So I don't talk like, I'm not great because I'm Japanese, it just depends on how much effort each one makes. (Nakayama, interview, August 3, 2015)

Nakayama considers the essentialist notions of African American identity used by previous generations of Japanese jazz musicians to situate jazz as a racially and nationally exotic music insulting to both Japanese jazz musicians and to the same African American innovators they were seeking to emulate. He also cites the importance of jazz as a means of building cross-cultural, transnational interpersonal connections and notes the importance of his own experience playing in the U.S. and with American musicians.

While this assertion of jazz's place as a transnational and trans-cultural practice is similar to those of Koyama and L.Y., Nakayama (interview, August 3, 2015) also insisted that while jazz is a practice and a community that has transcended its historical racial and national associations, any individual performer's identity would necessarily affect the music he or she plays, and he wondered "if musician[s] should appeal only [with] their music, or appeal more as a human being: their origin, their culture, should have a huge influence on their music." This stated impossibility and undesirability of effacing all evidence of a performer's specific identity from a

performance, as well as Japanese musicians' reliance on overt musical references to famous African American performers in establishing their place in a jazz tradition understood as stemming from African American innovation, seem to directly contradict arguments for the universality of jazz. However, given my interlocutors' objections to simplistic views of a unified African American culture or race, it might be more accurately interpreted as a symbolic elevation of the status of African Americans among a generation of Japanese jazz musicians. Previous generations, according to Nakayama, were "racist" in their belief that their heroes were racially advantaged, undervaluing the hours of hard work they put into honing their craft, while younger Tokyo jazz musicians attempt to de-exoticize canonical African American jazz performers, understanding them as creatively exceptional—through hard work rather than inborn talent—but equal and fully human participants in a music that is coming to be conceived of as a means of human, more than national or racial, expression.

#### Joshi-bando and Liminality

A rhetoric of the universality of jazz and its power to bridge national, cultural, and racial boundaries, stemming from a *mukokuseki* aesthetic, establishes Japanese musicians as creative agents with full right to access a jazz tradition historically understood as specific to African American identity. As such, in the Tokyo jazz scene a musician cannot be considered to have achieved complete mastery of the jazz idiom—and thus cannot be considered a *puro*—if his or her appeal relies too heavily on specific identity categories. Women who play jazz in Tokyo, capable of drawing

audiences based on gender or their appearance, are seen as at least partially violating this universalist aesthetic. While female musicians are not automatically excluded from *puro* status, they face additional pressure in establishing themselves as artists, rather than mere gimmicks.

I interviewed guitarist Asari Fumika and trumpet player Yomida Natsumi at a tiny jazz club called Big River (seen below in Figure 4.1) in the Higashi Nakano area of Tokyo. The two were playing with a *joshi-bando* (all-female band) billed as “Girls band, Hard Bop” on the website and the sign posted outside advertising the night’s performance. There was a strict no-noise policy during sets, which were 30 minutes, with 15 minute breaks. All drink orders had to be placed during set breaks, and during the performance all cell phones were silenced and all talking ceased. During the set breaks, the owner, a short, square-faced man with glasses, who wore a light straw-fiber cowboy hat, put on YouTube instrumental jazz playlists. The room opened directly onto the lively street filled with tiny restaurants and music venues, and when the door opened the jumble of sound from the street flooded into the jazz club. The informal dress of the owner, noise from the street, and pictures of swimsuit models pasted to the walls of the unisex restroom seemed to conflict with the air of formality and reverence the strict policy of silence during sets seemed intended to convey. Furthermore, advertising the band as “Girls band, Hard Bop”—a name I later learned was the bar owner’s and not the musicians’ idea—seemed like overt pandering that belied the respect the owner seemed to genuinely have for the music these women performed.



Figure 4.1. Big River interior and owner (<http://www.bigjazzriver.com/st/nd.html>)

Asari and Yomida (interview, July 28, 2015) agreed that a jazz musician who became popular and financially successful because of her appearance could not really be considered a *puro*. Asari quickly followed up by explaining that there was nothing inherently wrong with a woman relying on her appearance to draw a crowd or earn a living, but it was certainly not what she wanted for herself. Asari did not consider herself *puro* at the time of our interview, but hoped to become one. Yomida was a less experienced performer, so her denial of *puro* status was less surprising than Asari, who was a full-time self-supporting jazz musician and had participated in multiple successful national tours (Asari and Yomida, interview, July 28, 2015). I might dismiss this as simple modesty, had I not spoken to multiple male jazz musicians with less impressive performing credentials who readily identified themselves as *puro*. Neither of these musicians felt they had been the target of any

specific discrimination, but they certainly recognized the possibility for marginalization or unwarranted dismissal of female performers, and, as Yomida (interview, July 28, 2015) explained, it is difficult for anyone in such a position of possible marginalization to ever determine for certain whether or not he or she is the target of discrimination, as asking directly would be likely to offend and would not necessarily result in a truthful answer anyway.

At the time of our interview, Asari occupied a liminal state between casual participation in jazz and full professionalization and acknowledgement of creative legitimacy. Because she is still in the fairly early stages of her career as a jazz guitarist, and she has never experienced overt discrimination, it would be unreasonable to claim that she is the target of any intentional oppression. But the fact remains that any male musician I met with performing credentials and technical abilities on a par with hers would not hesitate to classify himself as *puro*, and many in the Tokyo scene claim this status with much less experience. While she was hesitant to label herself as *puro* in the summer of 2015, through continued practice and artistic development and careful and conscious avoidance of self-promotion styles that could label her a mere *kyaku yose panda*, Asari may overcome her liminal status and be recognized as a fully professional, authentic, and legitimate artist in the Tokyo jazz scene.

### Conclusion

In order to break free from restrictive, essentialist ideas common among previous generations of Japanese jazz musicians and listeners, young Tokyo jazz

musicians espouse a rhetoric of the universality of their music. Some of these claims apply specifically to individual musicians, who assert that they are musicians, more broadly, and not just jazz musicians. Others acknowledge the African American origins of jazz, but claim that it is now a universal music. All of these musicians suggest that as a practice, jazz is a powerful means of forging new interpersonal connections, helping a community united by jazz practice transcend national, cultural, and racial boundaries in spite of language barriers. This emphasis on universality— itself more a generational shift in attitude than in material practice—put in dialogue with ideals for a *puro* musician has implications for the way professional jazz musicians are expected to present themselves. It is seen as natural that a performing musician should reference the history of his or her music, and thus musical allusions to recordings by African American jazz musicians are accepted, but individual performers are expected to avoid relying too heavily on personal identities seen as unique or exotic if they wish to achieve *puro* status in the Tokyo jazz scene.

Tokyo jazz musicians believe it is desirable to bring one's own personal background and identity to jazz performance as a source of creative inspiration, as Kanamori Motoi (interview, August 5, 2015) explained, a *puro* is a success in music and a success in business, and the business success must stem from the musical success. In other words, musicians who are deemed to have achieved popularity by relying primarily on factors other than their creative skill in performance are not considered *puro* and are afforded a lower tier of respect. Female jazz musicians in particular are thus left to navigate additional obstacles to full acceptance as professionals in the Tokyo jazz community.

## Chapter 5: Conclusion

Musicians active in the Tokyo jazz scene establish themselves as legitimate and authentic contributors to a jazz tradition through musical practices that iconically and indexically link their music to canonic recordings by primarily African American performers and extra-musical aesthetics of professionalism that rely partly on a concept of jazz as a universal music, transcending national, cultural, and racial boundaries. Japan has long been defined first by its appreciation of jazz, rather than its production or active contribution to jazz, in popular and historical discourse. Both Western and Japanese audiences and performers have often denied the authenticity of Japanese jazz musicians. In spite of their marginal place in jazz discourse and history, many Tokyo jazz musicians have established themselves as professionals and artists within a thriving local scene. In the early twenty-first century, recent generations of professional Tokyo jazz musicians have come to understand their music as a universal practice, open to contributions from anyone sufficiently inspired and dedicated. Yet this rhetoric of universality as a central ideal of jazz performance practice and professionalism can have the effect of excluding musicians for whom some exotic identifier obscures the status of “*puro*,” or professional musician. This is a prestigious status assigned to full-time professionals who are acknowledged as having the appropriate skills and attitude, and approach jazz as an expressive medium and as a business. Tokyo jazzwomen face additional obstacles to acceptance as *puro*.

It is clear that members of the Tokyo jazz scene recognize jazz as an American creation, and particularly an African American creation. Contemporary Tokyo jazz performers have learned from the same jazz recordings as their American counterparts and perform in a way that includes much individual variation and some self-consciously emphasized references to the African American origins of the music, but ultimately can be seen as compatible with a “blues aesthetic” (Jackson 2012). With only a few exceptions, however, Japanese jazz musicians have been given little attention in any of the multiple modes of jazz discourse. There are notable exceptions, such as E. Taylor Atkins’s 2001 *Blue Nippon: Authenticating Jazz in Japan*, or William Minor’s 2004 travelogue, *Jazz Journeys to Japan: The Heart Within*, yet jazz in Japan remains under-examined.

This phenomenon is not unique to Japan, nor is it unique to jazz. Derek Pardue’s publications on Brazilian hip-hop are further examples of studies of a musical practice that has remained stubbornly attached to U.S. nationality in spite of the existence of thriving scenes around the world. In “Making Territorial Claims: Brazilian Hip Hop and the Socio-Geographical Dynamics of *Periferia*,” Pardue (2010, 48–71) explains that Brazilian hip-hop artists establish their authenticity through identification with marginality as both an ideological and spatial construct. While the specific associations are different, Japanese jazz musicians rely on a similar associative process in establishing themselves within the jazz tradition, often understood as African American.

I have attempted to shed some light on the path Tokyo jazz musicians take to legitimizing themselves as performers. In Chapter Two, I explain that in order to be

accepted as *puro*, a prestigious acknowledgement of professionalization and artistry, these musicians must prove that they are able to achieve popular and commercial success while still being viewed by their colleagues and commercial audiences in the Tokyo jazz scene as remaining within a jazz tradition. In Chapter Three, I examine one way in which *puro* and aspiring *puro* Tokyo jazz musicians construct meaningful performances by exploiting indices of a commonly understood jazz tradition, positioning themselves as authentic innovators within a music commonly understood as tied to African American national and racial identity. In Chapter Four, I interpret my interlocutors' descriptions of jazz as a universal music and a practice uniquely suited for developing transnational connections. Their understanding of jazz as a universal music—an understanding they contrast with essentialist notions held by previous generations of Japanese jazz musicians and listeners—places Tokyo in jazz discourse as a viable site of original contributions to a jazz tradition. In interaction with a concept of a *puro* that demands universality as an aesthetic in jazz performance, this universalist rhetoric also creates additional obstacles between female performers and *puro* status in jazz.

Understanding how musicians in the Tokyo jazz scene conceptualize professional musicianship, the jazz tradition, and their place in it is only an entry point into a greater understanding of that community, and raises a host of new questions. Future study might focus on the efforts of musicians to compose new music that fuses Japanese folk music and jazz. Like other fully modern, industrialized, and technologically advanced nations, Japan is home to a variety of people with diverse experiences. I met several musicians who came from small

towns in rural areas to Tokyo in order to chase dreams of becoming jazz musicians. What presence does jazz play outside the big cities? What role does the Tokyo jazz scene play in the imaginations of rural Japanese people, and how do concepts of nation and race fit into these imaginings? Ultimately, it seems fitting that in order to understand the Tokyo jazz community more fully, future studies will ultimately have to stretch beyond the borders of Tokyo and even Japan, as Tokyo jazz musicians already think of themselves as participants in a transnational practice and community. The Tokyo scene, and in fact all of Japan, may be underrepresented sites of the production of jazz, but knowledge of these sites of production is only a beginning.

In spite of the growing scholarly understanding of jazz as a multi-sited practice—or multiplicity of practices—potentially influential sites outside the United States are often given little attention, and when they are, they are most commonly referred to only in their relation to the U.S. This has been the case with Tokyo. Yet my experiences with the Tokyo jazz scene have pointed out clearly some of the ways that jazz discourse remains stubbornly tied to American nationalism and essentialist constructions of race. Tokyo jazz musicians no longer accept these ideological barriers to their participation as inherent or natural to the music. They actively repurpose jazz as a means for building international relationships and see jazz performances as a possible site for friendly interaction that circumvents the barriers and power differentials between individuals and communities with different languages and cultures. By including these musicians in an understanding of jazz as a music that has expanded far beyond its birthplace in African American communities, Western jazz musicians and scholars may find new viewpoints, new criticisms of

restrictive nationalist and racial ideologies, and new ways around them. Further study of sites of production often relegated to the margins of jazz history may eventually contribute to more nuanced understandings of the international relationships, products, practices, and imaginings that constitute a spreading transnational jazz network. It is my hope that such a decentering of jazz will not only lead to a greater understanding of the worldwide impact of the music, but also prove liberating to jazz practitioners—including musicians, historians, critics, scholars, and listeners—wherever jazz has spread.

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