Journal of Jazz Studies vol. 16, no. 2, pp. 199–225 (2025)

From *Women-in-Jazz* to *Gender-and-Jazz:* Jazz Feminisms from 2017 to 2019

Jenna Przybysz

In 2013, the *Washington Post* reported that organizers of the Mary Lou Williams Women in Jazz Festival decided that it was time to change the festival's name.[1] Hosted by the Kennedy Center, this festival featured performances by women bandleaders since its founding in 1996, making it one of the few and early mainstays of the fight for gender equity in jazz in the United States. However, the 2014 edition of the festival was called the "Mary Lou Williams Jazz Festival," conspicuously omitting the word "women" alongside the swift inclusion of an all-male ensemble, bringing the history of the festival as a space that prioritized women bandleaders to a close. Festival officials decided to rebrand the festival because they felt that the word "women" was too limiting and, more importantly, argued that women musicians "proliferated at all levels of jazz" since the establishment of the festival.[2] But what does it mean to "proliferate" from gender? The decision to rebrand was prompted by the festival officials' beliefs that women-centered festivals were no longer necessary to reverse gender disparity in the male-dominated field of jazz. As the officials stated, the word "women" in the title prompted the question, "Is she a great musician or a great *female* musician?"[3]

Despite the removal of the word "women" from the festival's name, officials stressed that the festival would continue to honor Mary Lou Williams, the prolific jazz pianist, composer, and arranger. (Male) jazz pianist Jason Moran, who at the time was serving as an advisor to the Kennedy Center, expressed that, as a musician, he "was inspired by everyone," making specific reference to (female) jazz pianist Geri Allen. Moran urged that it is more important to focus on the legacy of Mary Lou Williams rather than her gender. Besides, she also

[1] For more information on the change, see Adam Bernstein, "Mary Lou Williams Women in Jazz Festival Begins Final Year as Women-only Showcase," *Washington Post*, May 15, 2013, https://www.washingtonpost.com/entertainment/music/mary-lou-williams-women-in-jazz-festival-begins-final-year-as-women-only-showcase/2013/05/15/6a6579ae-b672-11e2-aa9e-a02b765ff0ea_story.html.

[2] Bernstein, "Mary Lou Williams."

[3] Bernstein, "Mary Lou Williams."

mentored *male* musicians throughout the 1940s and '50s, alluded Moran. The author of the *Washington Post* article also interviewed Marian McPartland on the festival's rebranding; the author wrote, quoting McPartland, "'I'm glad the Kennedy Center has finally decided women have reached equality in jazz and across the board,' she said, somewhat caustically. 'I don't understand where that is coming from. I don't see the need to move away from it, and I know plenty of women who need that space to show their music.'"[4]

The rebranding of this festival's name happened over a decade ago.[5] Despite the claims of the organizers, women and non-binary musicians continue to be underrepresented in jazz spaces in the United States, and the ongoing gender disparities have been evident throughout the past decade (2014–2024). At the height of the #MeToo movement and after the 2017 Women's March, performance groups, concert series, and the founding of multiple initiatives such as We Have Voice and the Berklee Institute of Jazz and Gender Justice, emerged to center gender equity in order to ignite cultural changes in jazz spaces. However, a new tendency has emerged within the discourses of these initiatives: the increasingly frequent omission of the word "women" in the marketing and branding of jazz festivals, concert series, and in educational settings. I suggest that the festival officials thought that the inclusion of the word "women" in the festival title proposed what jazz scholar Sherrie Tucker refers to as a "conundrum."[6] What does this discursive change reveal about the landscape of gender equity in jazz institutions?

This article examines a surge in gender activism and advocacy from 2017 to 2019, when differing gender discourses flooded marketing materials within institutionalized jazz spaces in the United States.[7] Extending the scholarship of

---

[4] Bernstein, "Mary Lou Williams."

[5] Despite the revision of the festival's name, the Kennedy Center has prioritized women and non-binary musicians at the Mary Lou Williams Jazz festival throughout Moran's tenure. Additionally, the festival has partnered with Next Jazz Legacy, an apprenticeship fellowship for women and non-binary jazz musicians initiated by New Music USA and the Berklee Institute of Jazz and Gender Justice. See "Mary Lou Williams Jazz Festival 2024," The Kennedy Center, May 27, 2024, https://www.kennedy-center.org/whats-on/explore-by-genre/jazz/2023-2024/mary-lou-williams-jazz-festival-2024/; and "Next Legacy Jazz," New Music USA, May 27, 2024, https://newmusicusa.org/program/next-jazz-legacy/. The future of these programs is unknown, given Jason Moran's July 2025 resignation from the Kennedy Center, as well as the center's recent politicization under the current presidential administration.

[6] Sherrie Tucker, "A Conundrum is a Woman-in-Jazz: Enduring Improvisations on the Categorical Exclusion of Being Included," in *Gender and Identity in Jazz*, ed. Wolfram Knauer (Jazzinstitut Darmstadt, 2016), 241–61.

[7] By institutionalized jazz spaces, I refer to university performance programs, educational groups, and jazz festivals. This article is an extension of my MA thesis advised by Dr. Jessica Swanston

Tucker, I suggest that abandoning the word "women" in these movements indicates a discursive shift that created a new political category: *gender-and-jazz*.[8] In order to better understand individual gender ideologies around this discursive shift for musicians actively engaged in these scenes, I examine three slogans, or tropes, from various institutional settings that circulated around the same time—"Forget about Gender," "The Future is Female," and "Jazz without Patriarchy"—and analyze them alongside written responses by non-male jazz musicians from an anonymous online survey and online ethnography.[9] These slogans are useful frameworks in understanding how non-male musicians from multiple racial backgrounds perceive and navigate the discursive category of *gender-and-jazz*. While each of the slogans are embedded in different feminist ideologies, individual identities, and jazz traditions, I argue that the musicians who mobilize them strive to accomplish the same goal of gender equity in jazz. Together, these slogans create a spectrum of jazz feminisms that mark masculinity in new ways in jazz institutions.

This article is not an ethnographic study of performance spaces, festivals, or organizations for non-male jazz musicians, nor does it consider the music itself. Rather, it demonstrates how musicians articulate what it means to be understood through the category of *gender-and-jazz* and suggests that these slogans are material evidence for how non-male musicians experience and feel popular and academic jazz discourses. I differentiate popular and academic jazz discourses from one another due to the disparities in how each participant responded to issues of gender parity. While academic jazz discourses of the early 2000s in ethno/musicology adhered to the third-wave feminist discursive shift from "women" to "gender," the promotional and marketing materials of conservatories, university performance programs, and jazz festivals appeared not to make this same shift until the mid-2010s.[10] For many non-male musicians, *women-in-jazz* and *gender-and-jazz* discourses often feel forced upon them by journalists, institutions, academics, and other media entities, and often

---

Baker at the University of Chicago. I extend much gratitude for her mentorship and support in this research project.

[8] As I will elaborate, I directly reference Sherrie Tucker's concept of *women-in-jazz* and use her style of wording to examine the category *gender-and-jazz*. See Sherrie Tucker, "A Conundrum is a Woman-in-Jazz."

[9] I use the phrase "non-male musicians" because my survey results yielded responses from musicians who identified their gender in a variety of different ways, where it would be reductive to use language such as "women and non-binary."

[10] See Nichole T. Rustin and Sherrie Tucker, eds, Big Ears: Listening for Gender in Jazz Studies (Duke University Press, 2008); Tracy McMullen, "Jazz Education after 2017: The Berklee Institute of Jazz and Gender Justice and the Pedagogical Lineage," *Jazz & Culture* 4 no. 2 (2021): 30.

oversimplify or misrepresent these musicians' experiences and individual feminist ideologies. Because of this, these musicians feel "marked" by the language used in these spaces and, in some cases, express desire for and belief in an alternative. Moving away from the word "women" poses the possibility of being "unmarked" for many of these musicians.[11] I suggest that these slogans represent the meeting of academic and popular jazz discourses and are only legible through education and performance institutions. An analysis of these slogans not only offers insight into different discursive performances of contemporary feminist movements but also provides new ways of understanding the process of jazz institutionalization.

First, I explain the relationship between discourse, slogans, and tropes. Then, I contextualize the discursive shift from *women-in-jazz* to *gender-and-jazz* and how this category relates to contemporary feminist movements. The bulk of this article offers an analysis of three slogans—"Forget about Gender," "The Future is Female," and "Jazz without Patriarchy"—which were (and still are) used by prominent jazz groups that were visibly promoting (or not promoting) the discursive shift from women to gender between 2017 and 2019. My intention is to not articulate the differences between *women-in-jazz* and *gender-and-jazz* or to determine a "correct" way of thinking about gender discourse in jazz institutions. Rather, the stratified reactions to the slogans among survey responses reflect hegemonic representations and perceptions of *gender-and-jazz* rather than the individual musicians themselves. I focus on the formation of these slogans, which are derived from and, consequently, create discursive tropes about gender in jazz spaces.

JAZZ DISCOURSES, SLOGANS, AND TROPES

In order to understand the circulation of these slogans in the context of jazz institutions and how musicians employ them within these spaces, I draw on ethnomusicologist Ingrid Monson's framework of discourse, structure, and practice. Following Foucault, Monson defines discourse as a network of ideas that are most commonly expressed through language and, consequently,

[11] By using the word "marked," I draw on the concept of *markedness* from the discipline of linguistics. In its broadest sense, *markedness* refers to a linguistic element that is more distinctly identified (*marked)* than another element (*unmarked)*. In other words, being *marked* is equivalent to standing out or being considered non-typical whereas *unmarked* is equivalent to being considered standardized, naturalized, or expected. This concept is a helpful analogy because my research operates on (or from) the assumption that the relationship between men, masculinity, and jazz is naturalized within jazz discourses. Consequently, women and non-binary musicians are inherently marked, or stand out in these spaces.

structure knowledge and social relations.[12] For Monson, "nodes of discourse… form networks of ideas that shape the ideological landscape and nature of debate in a particular historical period."[13] Likewise, the slogans at the center of this article act as "nodes of discourse" in the ideological network in which *gender-and-jazz* is founded. In other words, these slogans distill broader ideologies of what it means to be a non-male jazz musician. In an online survey, I asked participants to choose one of three slogans that I selected in order to understand how they interpreted and positioned themselves in relation to broader gender ideologies. Hence, these slogans became tools for understanding how musicians relate to larger gender politics in jazz. When these slogans are read in relation to one another, a new network of ideas unfolds. This new network offers insight into the changing meanings about equity and belonging in jazz spaces, as well as the changing discourse used within these spaces. Consequently, this new network allows the identification and critique of institutionalized hegemonic figures.

Moreover, this new network shows how phrases and sentiments that are widespread in jazz scenes are now present in marketing materials and, hence, commodified. Monson's tripartite framework illuminates how these slogans distill a broader discourse that needs to be read in relation to patriarchal structures and the practice of forming new organizing coalitions, university programs, and relationship with the press and other figures who ultimately end up writing about non-male jazz musicians.[14]

If we "listen" to these slogans, we can also identify gendered tropes about jazz. By tropes, I mean the images, ideas, and stories that circulate about jazz and become repeatable assumptions of the genre, such as "jazz is a masculine practice," "women in jazz are only vocalists," "jazz is a democratic music," or even ideas within the community that evoke a broader history and politics, such as "women in jazz." Ethnomusicologist Juan Diego Díaz argues that tropes become productive sites to interrogate the formation of identity categories because they "retain their centrality in discourse even when disrupted or de-emphasized." "[W]hen musicians push back against a particular trope," continues Díaz, "it remains present as a backdrop for their discourse and practice."[15] The same is true for the century-old trope that men and masculinity are the default of jazz

---

[12] Ingrid Monson, *Freedom Sounds: Civil Rights Call Out to Jazz and Africa* (Oxford University Press, 2007), 23–28.

[13] Monson, *Freedom Sounds,* 24.

[14] For a concise and generative summary of Monson's work see Michael Heller, *Loft Jazz: Improvising New York in the 1970s* (University of California Press, 2017), 11–12.

[15] Juan Diego Díaz, *Africanness in Action: Essentialism and Musical Imaginations of Africa in Brazil* (Oxford University Press, 2021), 29–30.

practices. Based on my research, the relationships between men, masculinity, and jazz are the backdrop against which these tropes play out. These slogans push back against masculinity, albeit to different extents, which in turn contributes to the legibility of jazz as a male dominated genre.

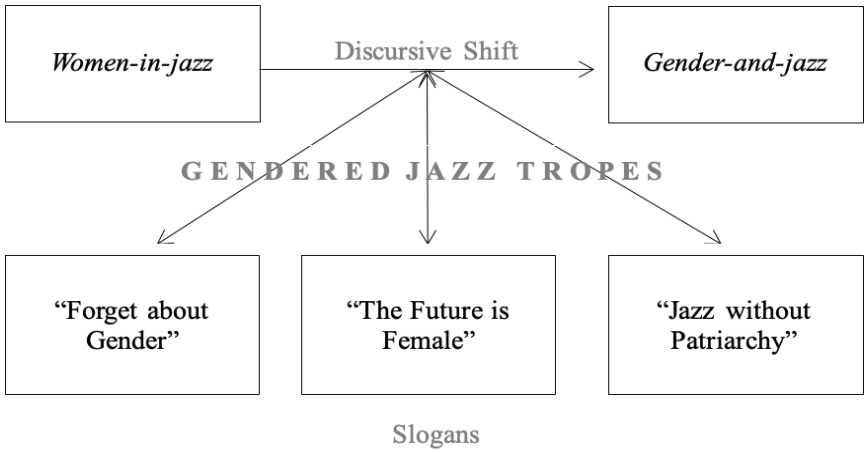

Figure 1. A diagram representing how gendered jazz tropes materialize into slogans, which feed into larger discursive shifts.

The difference between slogans and tropes is that slogans are representative responses to tropes and stand in for larger discursive political positions (see figure 1). In other words, slogans are a response to tropes that are distilled from larger discursive ideologies in the field. They are shorthands for a fuller story told by musicians and institutions in their marketing materials and branding practices. As a result, institutions play a role in creating, maintaining, and critiquing tropes through their use of slogans.

FROM WOMEN-IN-JAZZ TO GENDER-AND-JAZZ

Sherrie Tucker defines the conundrum of *women-in-jazz* as the "repeated pattern of including [women] by setting them apart." This insight provides the grounds for identifying and analyzing the emerging category of *gender-and-jazz*, in which the conundrum of inclusion through isolation persists in a different guise.[16] While many non-male musicians are excited by the emergence of this new category and find promise in this new "rebranding," I suggest that *gender-*

[16] Tucker, "A Conundrum is Woman-in-Jazz," 241.

and-jazz emerges from a similar lineage, if not the same, as *women-in-jazz*. It is a result of women, non-binary, and transgender jazz musicians who grapple with this discursive history by strategically embracing it, trying to dismantle it altogether, or falling somewhere in-between. Additionally, I draw on anthropologist David Valentine's critical ethnography of the category of "transgender," which examines "how these categories ["homosexuality" and "transgender"] do not simply *describe* discrete histories but rather are *productive of* the very phenomena they seem to describe."[17] As Tucker prompts us, the production of these gendered categories and the discourses that they emerge from "are a reminder that gender is rarely, if ever, just about organizing meaning, but about organization of power."[18] If *women-in-jazz* and now *gender-and-jazz* are both discursive categories aimed at addressing the same problem of gender inequity in jazz spaces, how do non-male musicians articulate the limits of *women-in-jazz?*

For percussionist Terri Lyne Carrington, Artistic Director of the Berklee Institute of Jazz and Gender Justice, the removal of the word "women" allows gender issues in jazz cultural practices to become everyone's issue, not just cis-women, non-binary, or transgender musicians:

> I think that's the reason why so many of us shied away from [the phrase] women-and-jazz, Women-and-jazz festivals, [and] women-and-jazz organizations because they feel like a separate community… It feels like segregation in a sense, and I think we understood how important gender equity is, and not just in jazz, but in our community and in our world. We then saw it as something we can support because it's a larger picture. Gender equity is more complete…. It also points to the fact that it's everybody's work. When you just do women-and-jazz, it feels separate and segregated, and men aren't assigned to do the work when it's not presented in the way of gender equity. [Gender equity is] a platform. That's transformational. That's transforming society… and when you have gender equity, that's male and female and non-binary people working together; that's what community is. When you just have women, that points to something that seems like it's just for women.[19]

The emergence of the category of *gender-and-jazz* into popular discourses *does* something. Carrington's statement summarizes a post-second wave critique of

---

[17] David Valentine, *Imagining Transgender: An Ethnography of a Category* (Duke University Press, 2007), 30.

[18] Sherrie Tucker, "Bordering on Community: Improvising Women," in *The Other Side of Nowhere: Jazz, Improvisation, and Communities in Dialogue,* ed. Daniel Fischlin and Ajay Heble (Wesleyan University Press, 2004), 259.

[19] Terri Lyne Carrington, phone interview with the author, April 17, 2019.

women-centered advocacy by calling out how it tends to be implicitly separatist. Her use of the term "segregation" points to how *women-in-jazz* can be considered a category on the periphery, and the use of "gender" brings this inclusionary work to the center. Hence, discussions about gender issues in jazz must move beyond creating spaces for women, they must also dismantle patriarchal structures embedded in jazz culture and history that continue to relegate and marginalize women's creative practices and intellectual labor.[20] As an emergent category, *gender-and-jazz* strives to shift the focus from individual people to systems of power, most notably patriarchy, that have gone unmarked within previous jazz discourses.

THREE SLOGANS OF *GENDER-AND-JAZZ*

The slogans "Forget about Gender," "The Future is Female," and "Jazz without Patriarchy" form the core of my survey because: 1) they emerged around the same time (2017-2018); and 2) they were created by musicians who have received significant recognition in mainstream jazz: they are each award winners, active educators, and frequently perform at major festivals and concert venues. These slogans were not the only ones in circulation during this period, and these musicians and the organizations they represent were not alone in supporting gender equity in jazz spaces between 2017 and 2019. Instead, these slogans are representative of a much larger movement.[21] "Forget about Gender," "The Future is Female," and "Jazz without Patriarchy" demonstrate how musicians utilize their own personal branding and marketing to advocate for gender equity in jazz.

The shared emergence of these slogans ultimately demonstrates how waves of feminism overlap with one another in feminist movements. However, while

---

[20] For more on the history of overlooked contributions of Black women artists, see Daphne A. Brooks, *Liner Notes for the Revolution: The Intellectual Life of Black Feminist Sound* (Harvard University Press, 2021).

[21] For example, assumingly riffing off of the "Young Lions" branding of the 1980s, "lioness" also emerged in gender and jazz branding during this time. "Young Lions" referred to almost exclusively male musicians, like Wynton Marsalis, who were a part of the movement to revitalize bebop and hard bop performance traditions in the 1980s. In 2020, Camille Thurman's mentorship program, "Haven Hang," mobilized the term "Young Lioness." Additionally, in 2018, the all-women "Lioness™ Collective" formed in New York City. For more information, see "Lioness™,"*Convergence Arts,* accessed June 24, 2025, https://convergencearts.org/lioness/; "The Haven Hang with Camille Thurman: Young Lioness Q&A/Advice Hour," *Camille Thurman*, accessed June 24, 2025, https://www.camillethurmanmusic.com/thehavenhang; Will Smith, "Jazz 101: Jazz Lions," *Downbeat,* accessed June 24, 2025, https://downbeat.com/S=0/site/jazz-101/P17.

feminist wave theory provides a framework and timeline to contextualize these slogans with one another, it also significantly oversimplifies feminist movements. Proposing the concept of "waveless feminism," feminist scholar Alison Dahl Crossley identifies how utilizing non-reductionist language plays a vital role "to rethink and open up different avenues to explain feminism… 'wavelessness' does not mean lack of momentum or complete harmony. It allows us to think carefully about movement continuity—and how and where movements persist over time."[22] These slogans propose that *gender-and-jazz* is a waveless feminism movement. Reading these slogans in conversation with one another rather than in competition illustrates the complexity of feminist movements. While jazz spaces are only a microcosm of today's society, "listening" to these slogans extends greatly from the field and offers new insights into how feminist ideologies are circulated and mobilized within branding and marketing materials in larger movements. In the words of Carrington, "It's not just jazz without patriarchy. We are looking for a society without patriarchy."[23]

As a jazz saxophonist myself, I circulated an anonymous survey within online communities of which I am a part. In the survey, I collected demographic data of the musicians by requesting the following information: gender, age range, race, sexual orientation, whether the respondent graduated or was enrolled in a university music program, and primary instrument. Aside from the category of age range, the fields in this survey were text boxes so that participants had no restrictions in expressing how they identify themselves. The survey then listed the three slogans, asking respondents to select the closest one that represented their own ideologies of gender. The data from an "optional" text box, which invited respondents to explain why they selected the slogan that they did, is most important to this analysis. Analyzing how these musicians perceived each of the slogans offers insight into how musicians who perform and teach not only leverage discourses to communicate their own practices and beliefs, but also to uphold the institutionalization of jazz within the United States.

The twenty-six total survey respondents overwhelmingly identified as white, at 77% (20 respondents), which reinforces previous research about gender and jazz and reveals how whiteness prevails in institutionalized jazz spaces.[24]

---

[22] Alison Dahl Crossley, *Finding Feminism: Millennial Activists and the Unfinished Gender Revolution* (New York University Press, 2017), 159.

[23] Terri Lyne Carrington, phone interview with the author, April 17, 2019.

[24] This unsurprising result aligns with jazz studies scholar Yoko Suzuki's research on the intersection of gender and race from the perspective of women saxophonists. Through ethnographic interviews, Suzuki identifies how gender and race become inseparable when discussing experiences of jazz performance. The responses from women saxophonists were informed by their own racial identities and the ways in which they understood the relationship

Additionally, there were four Asian identifying participants, one Black identifying participant, and one participant who wrote "Latinx if I were to choose an ethnicity (human is my race)."[25] While 81% of respondents identified themselves as cisgender women, respondents also identified as non-binary, transgender female, and genderqueer. The identity category with the largest variety of responses was sexual orientation. Half of the respondents (13) identified as heterosexual, while the other half identified as the following: asexual (2); bisexual (6); bi-questioning (1); homosexual (1); pansexual (1); queer (2). When asked to choose a slogan that they most identified with, six respondents chose "Forget about Gender" (23%), eight chose "The Future is Female" (31%), and twelve respondents chose "Jazz without Patriarchy" (46%). For the remainder of the article, I elaborate on the origins of the three slogans in the order from least favorable to most favorable and discuss how survey respondents engaged with them.

"Forget about Gender"

"Forget about Gender" appears within the marketing and promotional materials of Artemis, an international and intergenerational all-women jazz supergroup established by American pianist Renee Rosnes in 2018.[26] The collective's origin story provides the foundation for understanding the meaning behind "Forget about Gender," as Artemis first performed under the name "Woman to Woman" for a European International Women's Day Celebration in 2017. After the

---

between Blackness and authenticity in jazz performance practices. Despite the prominent presence of race found within the interview responses, Suzuki questions why there are fewer African American women jazz saxophonists than white and Asian women saxophonists. See Yoko Suzuki, "Two Strikes and the Double Negative: The Intersections of Gender and Race in the Cases of Female Jazz Saxophonist," *Black Music Research Journal* 33, no. 2 (2013): 209–10. See also Tracey McMullen, "The College Jazz Program as Tradition Making: Establishing a New Lineage in Jazz," *Women and Music* 27 (2023): 32–50. To understand the role of whiteness in the survey results, I would need more data. While my data *might* suggest that white non-male musicians hold the privilege to determine if they want their gender to be unmarked or marked in jazz spaces (in comparison to non-white musicians who are already racially marked), the survey responses from non-white musicians do not fully support this claim.

[25] Survey respondent, March 1, 2019.

[26] In 2018 and 2019, the primary members of Artemis included Renee Rosnes, piano; Ingrid Jensen, trumpet; Anat Cohen, clarinet; Melissa Aldana, tenor saxophone; Cecile McLorin Salvant, vocals; Noriko Ueda, bass; and Allison Miller, drums. Each member had varying and independent perspectives on navigating gender related issues in jazz. See Christian McBride and Artemis, "Women in Jazz? For Artemis, It's Bigger Than a Cause," *Jazz Night in America,* produced by NPR, podcast, mp3 audio, November 22, 2018, https://www.npr.org/2018/11/21/669962702/women-in-jazz-for-artemis-its-bigger-than-a-cause.

performance, Rosnes shared that she felt empowered by performing as a member of an all-women collective. Upon returning to the United States, she independently decided to keep the group active—with no support from an institution—and renamed the group to Artemis after the Greek goddess associated with hunting, the wilderness, and childbirth.[27]

Although Rosnes states that she feels empowered to play with an all-women supergroup, her words reveal that she feels *dis*empowered when jazz critics and marketers highlight the gender of the group. In interviews, Rosnes consistently speaks out about how jazz critics and the press represent all-women bands differently compared to her male colleagues in marketing materials. For example, in an interview with Christian McBride, Rosnes states:

> I would love to come to the time where somebody would look at Artemis and just look at them as a band without actually having to mention "oh, it's an all-women band" or "it's an all-female band," you know? Especially in the press materials leading up to any given concert…. If you leave [gender] out, [marketers] want to put it in because to them, that's their selling point, and I'm sure it (the move away from gendered language) will happen many years from now. I don't think we're there yet.[28]

Rosnes's persistence to make Artemis *just* a jazz group, instead of a *female* jazz group, reveals her understanding that male musicians have the privilege of being unmarked in jazz marketing and branding. Her decision to rename the supergroup Artemis and use "Forget about Gender" in the collective's biography is an implicit critique of the previous name Woman to Woman. In the context of feminist wave theory, the renaming of Artemis is an example of replacing second wave feminist vocabulary ("women") with third wave vocabulary ("gender"). However, "Forget about Gender" also implies post-feminist aspirations since Rosnes and other members of the group repeatedly used the phrase that jazz, or music in general, "transcends gender."[29] Non-reductionist language, like "Forget about Gender," allows room for the dynamic and, at times,

---

[27] Lutz Phillip, "Rosnes Leads Collective in New York Debut," *Downbeat*, March 26, 2018, https://downbeat.com/news/detail/rosnes-woman-to-woman-makes-new-york-debut.

[28] McBride and Artemis, "Women in Jazz?" 51:00.

[29] See Willard Jenkins, "Jazz Audience Development: The Gender Factor," March 26, 2014, *New Music USA*, https://newmusicusa.org/nmbx/jazz-audience-development-the-gender-factor/; Nikolas Fotakis, "Melissa Aldana: "Music Transcends Genders and Cultures," *Australian Jazz*, November 8, 2018, https://australianjazz.net/2018/11/melissa-aldana-music-transcends-genders-cultures/; George W. Harris, "Renee Rosnes: Kinds of Piano Love," *Jazz Weekly*, May 1, 2023, https://jazzweekly.com/2023/05/renee-rosnes-interrview/; Ted Panken, "Renee Rosnes Reaching for a New Level," *Jazz Times,* June 15, 2024, https://jazztimes.com/features/profiles/renee-rosnes-reaching-for-a-new-level/

paradoxical relationships that non-male musicians have with feminism. The strategies in which Rosnes negotiates her own identity in relation and reference to larger feminist movements and histories illustrate how any social movement experiences variations within itself.[30] The review of Artemis's New York debut, while still performing under the name Woman to Woman, illustrates how Rosnes anticipated and responded to gender discourses determined by the jazz press:

> Renee Rosnes—the pianist and musical director of the all-female, all-star septet Woman to Woman—consistently has asserted that the group was not formed to make a political statement. At the same time, she has acknowledged that the group was properly labeled as feminist by virtue of its gender identity within the world of jazz, which remains, in no small measure, a male preserve.[31]

This review of Artemis reveals how all-women jazz groups are assumed to be inherently political and, therefore, constantly marked. For example, Rosnes refutes the notion that the formation of the collective was in response to the #MeToo Movement, which separates Artemis from several all-women collectives that emerged during this time. "Forget about Gender" exposes how non-male musicians who desire to be represented as *just* jazz musicians must constantly fight back against assumptions that portray them as purposefully making a feminist statement, even if the individual members of the group support feminist ideologies. This slogan is complex. Non-male musicians are not granted the assumption that their music is nonpolitical and must instead insist that their music and performances are only about the music. By asserting that Artemis's membership is not a political statement through their marketing, Rosnes strategically reconfigures current jazz discourses to push against the trope that all-women jazz groups are political.

The second half of the concert review indicates a complicated twist. Although Rosnes denies any political motivations behind the founding of Artemis, she affirms that the collective is indeed feminist. By strategically navigating jazz tropes about gender, collectives like Artemis question if all feminist-affiliated groups need to make a political statement or cultivate meaning beyond the music. The individual feminist identities of the members of Artemis challenge common gendered tropes and, additionally, expose the amount of discursive labor that non-male jazz musicians must undertake to become unmarked as *just* a jazz group.

---

[30] Crossley, *Finding Feminism*, 181.
[31] Phillip, "Rosnes Leads Collective in New York Debut."

Compared to the other slogans within the survey, "Forget about Gender" was the most controversial slogan among respondents. "Forget about Gender" should not be read as "Forget about Women," which, in some cases, was how survey respondents understood this slogan. One white, ciswoman respondent stated, "I think it's more useful to put the emphasis on how great women are, rather than saying gender doesn't matter. Women are at too much of a disadvantage to just forget gender; it's not working."[32] Another white, ciswoman equated "Forget about Gender" to the concept of "color blindness," or not "seeing" race, while another stated that "to forget gender connotes a careless tone."[33] For these musicians, their gender is something that they want marked, whether it is for strategic purposes, such as to emphasize the skill of women, or to create new discourses for the inclusion of, as one respondent wrote, "jazz musicians who don't identify as a heterosexual male."[34]

For a handful of survey respondents, "Forget about Gender" asked why we need to forget about gender in jazz spaces. This slogan calls attention to who has the privilege of having their gender forgotten, or better, unmarked, in jazz marketing materials. Collectives such as Artemis demonstrate that no number of awards, amount of touring, or quantity of albums allows non-male musicians in the United States to achieve the status of being unmarked in jazz spaces. The desire to be unmarked is a strong feeling among jazz musicians, as seen throughout the survey responses. Along these lines, some responses conveyed a belief in meritocracy. As one white, ciswoman wrote, "I prefer to focus on the music and let the music speak for itself."[35] This explanation separates gender from the music and places musical capabilities first; it could also be read as a longing to be an unmarked musician. Others proposed new slogans inspired by the language of "Forget about Gender." For example, a white, transgender female respondent wrote that "Forget about Gender" was "the closest to 'forget the constraints of identity.' What I would like to see there would be more like, 'celebrate identity, ignore boxes.'"[36] Another white, non-binary musician wrote that "gender is categorized too often, and it should not determine someone's success."[37] These two responses perceived the use of the word "gender" as a category or discursive parameter rather than in direct reference to individual musicians themselves.

---

[32] Survey respondent, March 14, 2019.
[33] Survey respondent, March 1, 2019 and Survey respondent, March 14, 2019.
[34] Survey respondent, March 2, 2019.
[35] Survey respondent, March 6, 2019.
[36] Survey respondent, March 1, 2019.
[37] Survey respondent, March 2, 2019.

Returning to the opening anecdote about the renaming of the Mary Lou Williams Jazz Festival, one can assume that Rosnes would agree that the removal of the word "women" from the name is a symbolic contribution to the ongoing process of creating gender equity in jazz spaces. Although slogans like "Forget about Gender" suggest that the Kennedy Center is on the right track with the removal of the word "women," Rosnes also claims that gender equity in jazz has not been reached yet. The revision of festival names does not indicate that institutionalized jazz spaces have reached a state of gender equity but rather reveals how institutions are at the beginning stages of recognizing and confronting issues of gender.[38] As one white, ciswoman, who selected the "The Future is Female" wrote, "'Forget about gender' is an ideal slogan, but I'm not ready for it because gender-related issues still hinder me. I do not yet have a strong enough relationship with music to be able to ignore the existence of gender-related issues."[39] The post-feminist language of "Forget about Gender" is enticing, and this response frames it as a goal for jazz cultural practices. At first glance, "Forget about Gender" may appear to push back against both *women-in-jazz* and *gender-and-jazz*; however, its presence in marketing materials reveals how masculinity is the backdrop of jazz history and performance practices. While the word "gender" offers pathways to critique patriarchy that exists in jazz cultural practices, the absence of the word "women" was negatively felt by several survey respondents, revealing a tension between "women" and "gender."

"The Future is Female"

Despite the decrease of the word "women" from jazz marketing in *gender-and-jazz*, some non-male musicians continue to utilize branding that centers women, including "The Future is Female." This slogan is associated with New York-based tenor saxophonist Roxy Coss, founder of the Women in Jazz Organization (WIJO).[40] The slogan is both the title of her 2017 album and a common hashtag

[38] This observation aligns with Kimberly Hannon Teal's argument that the presence of women jazz figures like Mary Lou Williams does not indicate that jazz culture has reached a point of diversity but rather shows how institutions and musicians are at the beginning stages of addressing issues of gender inequality in jazz spaces. See Kimberly Hannon Teal, "Mary Lou Williams as Apology: Jazz, History, and Institutional Sexism in the Twenty-First Century," *Jazz & Culture* 2 (2019): 20.

[39] Survey respondent, March 14, 2019.

[40] It is important to note that Roxy Coss did not invent this slogan. "The Future is Female" originated in the 1970s and, in its second wave feminist context, was associated with lesbian separatist movements. It was not until the 2010s that the slogan entered mainstream discourses when promoted by Hillary Clinton during her 2016 presidential campaign. See Katie Mettler,

she used on her personal social media profiles. WIJO offers a range of support for non-male musicians, from mentorship programs to concert series. Mobilizing second-wave feminist (or women-centric) language, WIJO's Instagram account commonly used hashtags such as #womeninjazz, #womenpower, and #femalejazzmusicians during this time. Despite the use of "women" and "female" throughout WIJO's marketing and branding, the organization is committed to serving both women and non-binary musicians.[41]

Coss's 2017 album, *The Future is Female*, which includes track titles like "#MeToo," "Mr. President," and "Nasty Women Grab Back," reflects the political climate by openly confronting issues of gender-based violence following the 2016 US presidential election. Despite the title, this album was not recorded by an all-women group. According to interviews, Coss reflected on the album personnel and whether she should record with an all-women lineup. In the end, she decided to record with the musicians she regularly collaborates with, in which pianist Miki Yamanaka was the only other woman. Coss's pause when deciding on the album's personnel renders how, again, an all-women jazz group is a visible trope that conveys a political gesture—even when it is not used. Additionally, her choice of personnel points to a myriad of ethical decisions non-male musicians navigate while creating an album or musical group.[42] Coss's final personnel decision has the potential to be interpreted as an echo of Carrington's words: that gender equality in jazz is everybody's work. Or it could also reflect that the network of musicians that Coss performs with is largely comprised of male musicians.

Regardless of the gender of the musicians on the record, the symbolic imagery that Coss selected to promote the album upholds her decision to make it an overtly political and gendered statement. On the cover, Coss is featured wearing camouflage army pants with her soprano saxophone slung over her shoulder and a tenor saxophone at her side. Behind her is the silhouette of the Brooklyn Bridge in front of the New York skyline, grounding listeners in an urban US setting which relates to Coss's assertions that the 2017 Women's March inspired the album. The camouflage apparel insinuates that Coss is going to war. As one critic described it, Coss's appearance on the album cover verged on "woman-

"Hillary Clinton just said It, but 'The Future is Female' began as a 1970s Lesbian Separatist Slogan," *Washington Post*, February 8. 2017.

[41] "Welcome to Women in Jazz Organization," *Women in Jazz Organization*, accessed March 1, 2018, https://wearewijo.org/.

[42] For another example of the tensions that women jazz musicians encounter in diverse hiring practices, see Teal, "Mary Lou Williams as Apology," 19–20.

warrior."[43] In other promotional materials, Coss appears in a dress where one half of the garment is in red and white stripes and the other half is a rich navy blue with small white stars signifying the American flag. Taking these patterns, colors, and symbols together, Coss demands for her gender to be marked as a woman jazz saxophonist in the United States. As a musician, she is not afraid to be associated with gender politics.

The Future is Female (2017) received a wide range of responses from jazz critics. In some instances, reviews made analogies between the 1960s Black Civil Rights Movement and 2010s feminism, and specifically to Max Roach and Abbey Lincoln's monumental *We Insist!* (1960), which gained recognition during the Civil Rights Movement.[44] In addition to Max Roach, critics listed Coss among other (male) jazz musicians who are remembered for combining music and politics, such as Charles Mingus and Art Blakey, even though their music is associated with the fight for racial equality. By situating Coss's album in conversation with *We Insist!* and other jazz musicians who centered (racial) politics in their music, reviewers reminded audiences that jazz was and will always be political music and placed Coss's album within this history.

Two critics paired *The Future is Female* with Coss's other recent album release, *Chasing the Unicorn* (2017). These reviewers tended to put the two albums at odds with one another, even though Coss communicated in interviews that many of the themes that inspired *Chasing the Unicorn* related to her experiences of being a woman in jazz. As Coss explains, the themes from *Chasing the Unicorn* grew into *The Future is Female*.[45] While most reviews of *The Future is Female* praised Coss for her overt performance of feminist politics, one reviewer questioned if the music itself reflected the gendered political imagery and the song titles. Another reviewer from the *New York City Jazz Record* stated that "if anyone expected the music to be equally angry, [they] will be surprised."[46] This review ends by stating that "[in] a way, *The Future is Female* demonstrates the political limitations of instrumental music; you'd never be able to guess these

---

[43] Phil Freeman, "Chasing the Unicorn | The Future is Female: Roxy Coss (Posi-Tone)," *The New York City Jazz Record* (April 2018): 30.

[44] See Paul Rauch, "Roxy Coss: The Future is Female," *All About Jazz,* March 23, 2018, https://www.allaboutjazz.com/the-future-is-female-roxy-coss-posi-tone-records-review-by-paul-rauch; Mark Myers, "Roxy Coss is Empowering Women with her Potently Political Jazz," Jazz.FM91, April 5, 2019, https://jazz.fm/roxy-coss-is-empowering-women-with-her-potently-political-jazz/; and Richard B. Kamins, "Music for the 21st Century (Posi-Tone Records Edition)," *Step Tempest*, March 21, 2018, https://steptempest.blogspot.com/2018/03/music-for-21st-century-posi-tone.html?m=1.

[45] J. Poet, "Q&A with Roxy Coss: Seeking a Unique Voice," *Downbeat Magazine*, March 23, 2018, https://downbeat.com/news/detail/qa-with-roxy-coss-pursuing-a-unique-voice.

[46] Freeman, "Chasing the Unicorn," 30.

pieces' titles just by listening to them. But they sound great. Coss deserves attention."[47] The critic's expectation that political music sounds angry reflects a longstanding jazz trope, which associates anger, politics, and masculinity.[48]

While the music itself is not part of my analysis, this particular review shows the multiple levels of discourse that women musicians must navigate. Even with the overtly feminist and political symbolism that Coss conveys by the track titles and on the album cover, the music itself is questioned. Comparing the reception of Coss's *The Future is Female* to Artemis exemplifies a conundrum of *gender-and-jazz*. Anything performed by an all-women group like Artemis is perceived as political. But despite Coss's overtly claiming feminist politics, critics questioned whether the music and her playing sounded political enough. While these musicians negotiate gendered discourses differently from one another, understanding the multiple ways in which non-male musicians navigate jazz tropes uncovers the complex understanding of larger systemic issues that institutionalized jazz spaces rely upon.

"The Future is Female" was the only slogan where a clear pattern emerged among respondents: "The Future is Female" was only selected by white respondents who identified as ciswomen. These respondents expressed great care for keeping women-centric language for the movement. For instance, one white, ciswoman respondent stated:

> I know Roxy Coss and am involved with her mentorship program, so I really believe in and support what she stands for. Hearing her album *The Future is Female* inspired me immensely; I wanted to be as badass as her. Her slogan is most meaningful to me because it makes me feel like I am part of a movement of innovators.[49]

For this respondent, the words "female" or "women" are not limiting. Similarly, she also recognized this slogan as representative of a movement among musicians. As the second most selected slogan, the circulation of "The Future is Female" reveals that there are women who care about their gender and want to be marked for various reasons. Like Marian McPartland's remarks about the Mary Lou Williams Jazz Festival, these survey respondents would likely find the inclusion of the word "women" in the title of jazz festivals helpful for their performance careers.

---

[47] Freeman, "Chasing the Unicorn," 30.
[48] See Nichole Rustin-Paschal, *The Kind of Man I am: Jazzmasculinty and the World of Charles Mingus Jr.* (Wesleyan University Press, 2017).
[49] Survey respondent, March 14, 2019.

The primary critique of this slogan by respondents was that the use of the word "female" did not include musicians who identified as non-binary and trans in addition to members of the LGBTQ+ communities. Although WIJO includes non-binary individuals in their mission statement, survey respondents understood *women-in-jazz* and women-centric language like this slogan to cater to musicians who identify as white ciswomen. While race was never explicitly mentioned in the survey responses, second-wave feminism has long been critiqued as prioritizing white women and ignoring the needs and desires of women of color, as well as LGBTQ+ women.[50] While *gender-and-jazz* (rather than *women-in-jazz)* is gaining more popularity, some musicians continue to value their identity as women. Their investment to be marked as such contributes to the category of *gender-and-jazz* and, accordingly, plays a part in sustaining this broader movement.

"Jazz without Patriarchy"

"Jazz without Patriarchy," the slogan selected by the most survey participants, is prominently featured in the marketing and promotional materials of Berklee's Institute of Jazz and Gender Justice (JGJ). Established in the fall of 2018 by Artistic Director Terri Lyne Carrington and led by Managing Director and ethnomusicologist Aja Burrell Wood, JGJ is a multidisciplinary institute with the goal to ensure gender equality within jazz cultural practices at large.[51] In addition to hosting panels and various collaborations with renowned activists and scholars (such as Angela Davis and Farah Jasmine Griffin), JGJ also offers new frameworks for musical mentorship and performance opportunities such as concert series and jam sessions. The slogan "Jazz without Patriarchy" diverges from the individual feminist identities that ground "Forget about Gender" and "The Future is Female" because of its institutional identity with the Berklee School of Music. While numerous jazz scholars and musicians were well aware of the presence and persistence of patriarchy in jazz cultural practices, "Jazz without Patriarchy" presents fresh, generative language to institutionalized spaces that had previously exhausted *women-in-jazz* tropes. Utilizing third wave feminist discourse, the slogan targets patriarchy (the system) instead of individuals (non-male musicians). Along with their slogan, JGJ has an

[50] For more on the relationship between white supremacy and feminism, see Rafia Zakaria, *Against White Feminism: Notes on Disruption* (W.W. Norton & Company, 2021).

[51] At the time of my ethnographic research, JGJ was just in its beginning stages. Since then, the institute has received significant scholarly attention. See especially *Women & Music,* volume 27 (2023). This article focuses on JGJ in relation to other gendered discourses about jazz during the time of its emergence.

interdisciplinary and intersectional approach to jazz education, in which the organization fosters collaborations with scholars and artists from within and outside of performance studies and centers Black feminist pedagogies.[52] This approach distinguishes the institute from other secondary education jazz programs and initiatives. JGJ is an innovative space that bridges both academic and popular jazz discourses and represents the experiences of both scholars and musicians.

As Artistic Director, Carrington is vocal about the isolation that the word "women" generates. Consequently, the branding for the institute strategically avoided using it.[53] This decision was discussed on a panel in August 2018, in which Carrington was joined by Berklee School of Music Dean Ron Savage, saxophonist Tia Fuller, ethnomusicologist Ingrid Monson, and saxophonist Nicole McCabe. During this panel presentation, Carrington shared the origin of JGJ's name:

> On that panel was Angela Davis, and I remember she was helping me with the title. [We wanted it] to have the most impactful title that we could without saying "women and jazz" because you know it's really moving past that binary of male and female in jazz… it's not even cool anymore, you know, to say "women and jazz."[54]

Carrington's advocacy about the branding behind Jazz and Gender Justice explicitly illustrates how feminist movements must constantly reinvent themselves in order to remain "cool" or relevant. Language is key: If participants consider the language of a social movement irrelevant, the movement will lose momentum.[55] Similarly, the post-feminist language of "Forget about Gender" resists women-centric language, and categories of gender more broadly, by directly speaking out against jazz critics. Taking into account the multiple implications of "cool," *gender-and-jazz* rebrands itself away from *women-in-jazz* to keep up to date with current intellectual trends and extends an attitude of enlightenment and progress. Staying "cool" also implies novelty, which aids in marketing.

The responses of those who selected "Jazz without Patriarchy" echoed Carrington's statement that it isn't cool anymore to say, "women and jazz." For instance, a white ciswoman respondent shared that "'Jazz without Patriarchy'

---

[52] See Paula Grissom Broughton, "(Re)Imaging Jazz Education through the Lens of Black Feminist Pedagogy," *Women and Music 27* (2023): 51–61.
[53] Terri Lyne Carrington, phone interview with the author, April 17, 2019.
[54] 50 GBH, "Gender and Jazz," filmed August 14, 2018, in Cambridge, MA, WGBH Jazz 24/7 video, 1:09:46. https://www.wgbh.org/music/jazz/2018-08-14/gender-and-jazz.
[55] Crossley, *Finding Feminism*, 165.

appears as less of an *attack* or a message geared towards women only and more of an invitation to move to a new era of interaction and respect between all jazz musicians."[56] Her use of the word "attack" reveals how some non-male jazz musicians prefer to move away from the word "women," sharing similar sentiments to the responses of participants who selected "Forget about Gender." This is yet another response that demonstrates a desire to be unmarked in jazz spaces. Her statement about how the slogan is an invitation to "all jazz musicians" illustrates how it is everyone's responsibility to dismantle patriarchal structures in jazz spaces. Simply put, "Jazz without Patriarchy" acknowledges how all musicians are marked because patriarchy affects everyone. Naming and labeling the patriarchal culture of jazz practices, especially in institutional spaces, forces everyone to recognize that there is no unmarked position. Following Carrington's words, in order to imagine "Jazz without Patriarchy," everyone must be on board.

Overall, those who selected "Jazz without Patriarchy" tended to write the most detailed responses for why they selected this slogan. For example, a Latinx genderqueer respondent shared:

> The first slogan ("The Future is Female") has had some positive impact in recent movements. But, in the end, the reality is that it still excludes the wide spectrum of non-cis and queer identities. I don't think we should gravitate to binary slogans and assume that every person will feel visible in that and/or identify with generalized, often cis-gendered labels. The second slogan ("Forget about Gender") can have some negative setbacks for trans and non-cis people who actually care a great deal that their gender identity be recognized and given equal protection. So, although gender roles and the systemic issues of unequal gender violence in a construct are the real problems (which is why I chose ["Jazz without Patriarchy"]), gender identity is still valuable and meaningful to many people, especially to people within the LGBTQ+ community.[57]

This response demonstrates their desire for gender to be marked, albeit more evenly. Furthermore, it reveals how discourses of *gender-and-jazz* encompass social identities beyond gender. Non-male musicians desired the inclusivity offered by this slogan because it makes space for other identities (such as sexuality and race) in addition to gender. The inclusion of identities beyond gender was also addressed by an Asian ciswoman respondent:

---

[56] Survey respondent, July 7, 2019, emphasis my own.
[57] Survey respondent, March 1, 2019.

> Jazz has been seen as a primarily male-dominant field. The first two slogans ("Forget about Gender" and "The Future is Female") really don't fight the cause in a tangible way. The whole idea is to make jazz as accessible to anyone regardless of gender identity/sexual orientation. To imply that the future is female would exclude a huge majority of the LGBTQ+ community. And to "forget gender" connotes a careless tone. We want to start a movement, not just simply forget it. Patriarchy has been the underlying issue of jazz. The first two are merely microcosms of the real issue at hand.[58]

For this respondent, "Jazz without Patriarchy" is thought of as a conceptual space that allows the possibility for embracing discussions around sexuality that are also heavily censored and determined by patriarchal environments.[59] While the identity category of race was not directly addressed by any of the respondents, five out of the six non-white survey respondents selected "Jazz without Patriarchy."[60] "Jazz without Patriarchy" holds multiple identities and reflects the institute's mission, which centers Black feminist praxis and non-reductionist language. The slogan's inclusive language facilitates conversations about changing the cultural practices of jazz at large.

EMBRACING THE WAVELESSNESS

While it might be tempting to deem a "correct" slogan, I urge readers to embrace how these slogans emerged at the same historical moment, and each received some amount of support from respondents. The coexistence of "Forget about Gender," "The Future is Female," and "Jazz without Patriarchy" reveals how the language of second, third, and post-feminist waves continues to be present in *gender-and-jazz*. Embracing the wavelessness of *gender-and-jazz* provides a more accurate understanding of the diverse ideologies located within this feminist movement, despite all three slogans marking the backdrop of masculinity and patriarchy in jazz. In sum, embracing the wavelessness of *gender-and-jazz* is the best practice to keep the movement going. A wavelessness framework allows for disagreement and dissatisfied reactions towards a unified discourse to describe the movement.

---

[58] Survey respondent, March 14, 2019.

[59] For more scholarship that address the hegemonic relationship between jazz and heterosexuality, see Sherrie Tucker, "When Did Jazz go Straight?: A Queer Question for Jazz Studies." *Critical Studies in Improvisation* 4, 2 (2008): 1–18; Destiny Meadows, "Beyond a Lush Life: Representation and Performativity at America's [Only] Queer Jazz Festival," *Jazz & Culture* 5 no. 2 (2022): 49-64.

[60] The other respondent selected "Forget about Gender."

Despite their participation in the survey, a handful of respondents pushed back against the slogans. For example, a Black ciswoman respondent who selected "Jazz without Patriarchy" began her response by writing, "They all sound cheesy, but they have important meanings. Jazz without patriarchy applies to me most in my present life."[61] Utilizing the word "cheesy" acknowledges the marketing and branding orientation of slogans. "Cheesy" can also point to how all three waves of feminist language fail to sound "cool." Similarly, a white ciswoman who selected "The Future is Female" began her response with "I don't really like any of them, but I [tell] students that the future is NOT female, that the NOW is female."[62] Whether considered cheesy or unlikeable, the same hesitance towards *women-in-jazz* reappears within *gender-and-jazz*.

Dissatisfaction with the language that describes this movement is inescapable. Despite their diverging perspectives and ideologies of gender politics, these three slogans share a common goal of changing jazz cultural practices and discourses at large. Further, the interview responses reflect how individuals use these slogans to navigate jazz discourses. The unfortunate (and pessimistic) theme these slogans share is how gender advocacy, whether it uses women-centric or non-reductionist language, continues to invoke a hegemonic figure in institutionalized jazz spaces (i.e., the heterosexual, white, cisman). This conclusion can be seen by the majority of respondents' desire to move away from the word "women" and, hence, mark masculinity within jazz spaces. Any slogan that resists default masculine dominance will continue to conjure it up, reaffirming its central position in jazz cultural practices. Institutional support is necessary to sustain the movement. While the three slogans discussed in this article emerge from very different types of institutions, each of them relies on branding to make themselves marketable. It is important to give our attention to how the words of these musicians are transformed into these brands and engage with the more in-depth meanings that are embedded within them. Analyzing these slogans in marketing and branding, and those who take them up, become markers of accountability over time. Ultimately, these slogans are reminders of how the feminist movement is a "stalled revolution," and the tactics, including the language, used within the movement change over time to re-ignite the movement toward change.[63]

---

[61] Survey respondent, March 1, 2019.
[62] Survey respondent, March 1, 2019.
[63] Crossley, *Finding Feminism*, 14-17.

CODA: JAZZ AND CUPCAKES

In March 2022, I opened an email promoting an event titled "Jazz Girls Day." Not only was I surprised by the word "girl" in the title given recent discussions of gender and jazz, but I was also taken aback by the font. Differing from the organization's other promotional material, the title font for this event conveys handwritten letters. With each letter unaligned with the next, the words collectively drift to the upper-right corner of the page. The first association that I made with this font choice was crayons and children's developing handwriting. The font color likewise suggested very young children: "Jazz" was spelled in a vibrant orange followed by "girls" in a bright pink and "day" in lime green. Despite using "girls" in the title and imagery associated with very young girls at that, the event was open to middle and high school female, female-identified, *and* gender non-conforming musicians both instrumentalists and vocalists. (There is a lot to be said about the grouping of "gender non-conforming" individuals into events labeled for "girls" and branding that amplifies female stereotypes [e.g., pink]; however, there is no room to address this within the limits of this article.) While the schedule resembled that of a typical educational jazz event, the key point of frustration for me was the "cupcake break." I thought to myself: *why couldn't they just write the word "break"? You can serve cupcakes, but just write "break*." The use of "girls" in the title, paired with a crayon font and the inclusion of a scheduled "cupcake break," absolutely infantilized what was intended to be an educational event.

This critique is by no means directed toward the people that organized and attended this event. In fact, I have heard a handful of positive experiences about this event and its director and founder of the organization. More often than not, branding and marketing decisions are not the responsibility of the musicians and educators who are employed by these organizations. However, as I have demonstrated in this article, the words that organizations use matter. While the marketing decisions of this event might appear to disrupt patriarchal structures (e.g., why *shouldn't* "jazz" be written in pink crayon font? Why *shouldn't* jazz educational events have a cupcake break? Why can't jazz be *fun*?), they continue to reinforce dominant jazz discourses of patriarchy in institutions through the separation of non-male and male musicians. For many musicians, these spaces curate their first encounter with hegemonic jazz discourses. A "Jazz Girls Day" can only exist in relation to patriarchy.

I began this article with a case study that shows the erasure of the word "women" from a jazz festival title and ended it with one that shows the use of the word "girl" in the title of an educational event for middle and high schoolers. Being in jazz spaces today requires us to engage with discourses, slogans, and

tropes of gender (and identity categories more broadly) to better understand how institutions shape perceptions of individuals. This moment means that we must think less about changing names and more about why we chose those names in the first place. The emergence of the category of *gender-and-jazz* has shown us that we are all marked now.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bernstein, Adam. "Mary Lou Williams Women in Jazz Festival Begins Final Year as Women-only Showcase." *Washington Post*, May 15, 2013. https://www.washingtonpost.com/entertainment/music/mary-lou-williams-women-in-jazz-festival-begins-final-year-as-women-only-showcase/2013/05/15/6a6579ae-b672-11e2-aa9e-a02b765ff0ea_story.html.

Brooks, Daphne A. *Liner Notes for the Revolution: The Intellectual Life of Black Feminist Sound*. Harvard University Press, 2021.

Broughton, Paula Grissom. "(Re)Imaging Jazz Education through the Lens of Black Feminist Pedagogy." *Women and Music* 27 (2023): 51–61.

Convergence Arts. "Lioness™." Accessed June 23, 2025. https://convergencearts.org/lioness/.

Crossley, Alison Dahl. *Finding Feminism: Millennial Activists and the Unfinished Gender Revolution*. New York: University Press, 2017.

Díaz, Juan Diego. *Africanness in Action: Essentialism and Musical Imaginations of African in Brazil.* Oxford University Press, 2021.

Freeman, Phil. "Chasing the Unicorn | The Future is Female: Roxy Coss (Posi-Tone)." *The New York City Jazz Record* (April 2018).

Fotakis, Nikolas. "Melissa Aldana: "Music Transcends Genders and Cultures." Australian Jazz. November 8, 2018. https://australianjazz.net/2018/11/melissa-aldana-music-transcends-genders-cultures/.

Harris. George W. "Renee Rosnes: Kinds of Piano Love." *Jazz Weekly*. May 1, 2023. https://jazzweekly.com/2023/05/renee-rosnes-interrview/.

Heller, Michael C. *Loft Jazz: Improvising New York in the 1970s*. University of California Press, 2017.

Lutz, Phillip. "Rosnes Leads Collective in New York Debut." *Downbeat*. March 26, 2018. https://downbeat.com/news/detail/rosnes-woman-to-woman-makes-new-york-debut.

Jenkins. Willard. "Jazz Audience Development: The Gender Factor." New Music USA. March 26, 2014. https://newmusicusa.org/nmbx/jazz-audience-development-the-gender-factor/.

Kamins, Richard B. "Music for the 21st Century (Posi-Tone Records Edition)." Step Tempest. March 21, 2018. https://steptempest.blogspot.com/2018/03/music-for-21st-century-posi-tone.html?m=1.

Klotz, Kelsey. *Dave Brubeck and the Performance of Whiteness.* Oxford University Press, 2022.

Meadows, Destiny. "Beyond a Lush Life: Representation and Performativity at America's [Only] Queer Jazz Festival," *Jazz & Culture* 5 no. 2 (2022): 49-64.

McBride, Christian and Artemis. "Women in Jazz? For Artemis, It's Bigger than a Cause." NPR, *Jazz Night in America*. November 22, 2018, Podcast, MP3 audio, 1:00:43. https://www.npr.org/2018/11/21/669962702/women-in-jazz-for-artemis-its-bigger-than-a-cause.

McMullen, Tracy. "Jazz Education after 2017: The Berklee Institute of Jazz and Gender Justice and the Pedagogical Lineage." *Jazz & Culture* 4, no. 2 (2021): 27–55.

McMullen, Tracy. "The College Jazz Program as Tradition Making: Establishing a New Lineage in Jazz." *Women and Music* 27 (2023): 32–50.

Monson, Ingrid. "The Problem with White Hipness: Race, Gender, and Cultural Conceptions in Jazz Historical Discourse." *Journal of the*

American Musicological Society 48, no. 3 (1995): 396–422.

Monson, Ingrid. *Freedom Sounds: Civil Rights Call out to Jazz and Africa.* Oxford University Press, 2010.

Myers, Mark. "Roxy Coss is Empowering Women with her Potently Political Jazz." Jazz.FM91. April 5, 2019. https://jazz.fm/roxy-coss-is-empowering-women-with-her-potently-political-jazz/.

Panken. Ted. "Renee Rosnes Reaching for a New Level." *Jazz Times.* June 15, 2024. https://jazztimes.com/features/profiles/renee-rosnes-reaching-for-a-new-level/.

Poet, J. "Q&A with Roxy Coss: Seeking a Unique Voice." *Downbeat*. March 23, 2018. https://downbeat.com/news/detail/qa-with-roxy-coss-pursuing-a-unique-voice.

Rauch, Paul. "Roxy Coss: The Future is Female." All About Jazz. March 23, 2018. https://www.allaboutjazz.com/the-future-is-female-roxy-coss-posi-tone-records-review-by-paul-rauch.

Rustin, Nichole T., and Sherrie Tucker, eds. *Big Ears: Listening for Gender in Jazz Studies*. Duke University Press, 2008.

Rustin-Paschal, Nichole. *The Kind of Man I Am: Jazz Masculinity and the World of Charles Mingus Jr.* Wesleyan University Press, 2017.

Smith, Will. "Jazz 101: Young Lions." *Downbeat*. June 24, 2025. https://downbeat.com/S=0/site/jazz-101/P17.

Suzuki, Yoko. "Two Strikes and the Double Negative: The Intersections of Gender and Race in the Cases of Female Jazz Saxophonists." *Black Music Research Journal* 33, no. 2 (2013): 207–26.

Teal, Kimberly Hannon. "Mary Lou Williams as Apology: Jazz, History, and Institutional Sexism in the Twenty-First Century." *Jazz & Culture* 2 (2019): 1–26.

Thurman, Camille. "The Haven Hang with Camille Thurman." Accessed June 24, 2025. https://www.camillethurmanmusic.com/thehavenhang

Tucker, Sherrie. *Swing Shift: "All-Girl" Bands of the 1940s*. Duke University Press, 2000.

Tucker, Sherrie. "Bordering on Community: Improvising Women Improvising Women-in-Jazz." In *The Other Side of Nowhere: Jazz, Improvisation, and Communities in Dialogue*, edited by Daniel Fischlin and Ajay Heble. Wesleyan University Press, 2004.

Tucker, Sherrie. "When Did Jazz go Straight?: A Queer Question for Jazz Studies." *Critical Studies in Improvisation* 4, no. 2 (2008): 1–18.

Tucker, Sherrie. "A Conundrum is a Woman-in-Jazz: Enduring Improvisations on the Categorical Exclusion of Being Included." In *Gender and Identity in Jazz*, edited by Wolfram Knauer. Darmstadt Studies in Jazz Research 14. Jazzinstitut Darmstadt, 2016.

Valentine, David. *Imagining Transgender: An Ethnography of a Category*. University Press, 2007.

WGBH. "Gender and Jazz." Filmed August 14, 2018, in Cambridge, MA. WGBH Jazz 24/7 video, 1:09:46. https://www.wgbh.org/music/jazz/2018-08-14/gender-and-jazz.

Women in Jazz Organization. "Welcome to Women in Jazz Organization." Accessed March 1, 2018. https://wearewijo.org/about/.

Zakaria, Rafia. *Against White Feminism: Notes on Disruption*. W.W. Norton & Company, 2021.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jenna Przybysz is a PhD candidate in Ethnomusicology at Stanford University. She earned degrees from the University of Chicago and DePaul University. She extends much gratitude to Jessica Swanston Baker, Denise Gill, Heather Hadlock, Michael Kinney, Sarah Wells Kaufman, the anonymous reviewer, and the editorial team at the *Journal of Jazz Studies* who provided feedback and edits on the many iterations and versions of this article.