

## Gender & Jazz Education Roundtable *Introduction*

Rebeca Muñoz-García

Jazz institutions were first established in the U.S. in the 1940s, at which time the formalization of jazz learning sparked debates about the potential artificiality of formal education and its impact on the divide between professional and academic spheres.<sup>1</sup> Prior to their introduction into the academy, jazz learning processes were traditionally informal, relying on mentor-apprentice dynamics, active concert attendance, aural transcription of recordings, and participation in informal performance settings like jam sessions<sup>2</sup>, spaces where anyone other than straight-presenting cisgender men often encounter significant difficulties. By the 1980s, jazz institutions became increasingly important and central learning spaces for contemporary jazz musicians worldwide. Despite the growth of jazz education opportunities, women and gender minorities have continued to face considerable challenges within institutional spaces.

Recent research underscores jazz educational institutions as crucial sites for analyzing early structural barriers to gender and diversity and for enacting more inclusive practices.<sup>3</sup> Informed by fourth-wave global feminism, feminist and

---

<sup>1</sup> Ken Prouty, “Jazz Education: Historical and Critical Perspectives,” in *The Routledge Companion to Jazz Studies*, ed. Nicholas Gebhardt, Nichole Rustin-Paschal and Tony Whyton (Routledge, 2019); Pinheiro, “Past, Present and Future Jazz”; Tony Whyton, “Birth of the School: Discursive Methodologies in Jazz Education,” *Music Education Research* 8 no. 1 (2006): 65-81.

<sup>2</sup> Ricardo N. Pinheiro, “Past, Present and Future Jazz,” *International Review of the Aesthetics and Sociology of Music* 54, no. 2 (2023): 269-298; Daniel Murphy, “Jazz Studies in American Schools and Colleges: A Brief History,” *Jazz Educator Journal* 26 (1994), 34-38; Paul F. Berliner, *Thinking in Jazz: The Infinite Art of Improvisation* (University of Chicago Press, 1994).

<sup>3</sup> Tracy McMullen, “The College Jazz Program as Tradition Making: Establishing a New Lineage in Jazz,” *Women and Music: A Journal of Gender and Culture* 27 (2023): 32-50; Paula G. Broughton, “(Re)Imagining Jazz Education through the Lens of Black Feminist Pedagogy,” *Women and Music: A Journal of Gender and Culture* 27 (2023): 51-61; Dan DiPiero, “Race, Gender, and Jazz School: Chord-Scale Theory as White Masculine Technology,” *Jazz and Culture* 6 no.1 (2023): 52-77; Rebeca Muñoz-García, “Professional Trajectories of Women in Jazz: A Qualitative Research in Spain and the United States” (PhD diss., University Carlos III of Madrid, 2023); Clare Hall and Robert Burke, “Negotiating Hegemonic Masculinity in Australian Tertiary Jazz Education,” in *The Routledge Companion to Jazz and Gender*, ed. James Reddan, Monika Herzig and Michael Kahr (Routledge, 2022), 336-347; Marie Buscatto,

gender studies have critically examined these institutions, sparking vital debates on universal access and human rights in education. These analyses, supported by findings and practical examples, contribute to a critical interrogation of educational institutions as “reproducers of social inequality,”<sup>4</sup> particularly with regard to patriarchal jazz cultures. The persistent underrepresentation of women—encompassing students and educators, notably within specific instrumental disciplines and composition—coupled with impediments to their access and career progression, complexities in the learning and development of improvisation, and the persistent need for safer environments that protect women and girls from harassment and sexual abuse, constitutes significant issues requiring further scholarly and institutional attention.

Furthermore, we need to consider that jazz, originating in the United States, has long transcended geographical boundaries to become a transnational artistic expression. This multi-sited and multi-form phenomenon was not merely created and subsequently exported, but rather, as some scholars argue, “invented in the process of being disseminated.”<sup>5</sup> The analysis of jazz as a transnational sociocultural practice inevitably raises crucial questions about educational institutions and practices: Do transnational jazz education spaces perpetuate exclusion and gender inequality, or are they fostering inclusive and safe environments? What challenges arise when analyzing transnational jazz cultures through a still-developing jazz studies framework, particularly from gender and feminist perspectives? What gender equality and diversity challenges are evident in contemporary debates, such as those spurred by Berklee’s Institute of Jazz and Gender Justice? Do transnational contexts offer significant opportunities to transform increasingly popular musical institutions through specific research and practical initiatives? Do these contexts provide adequate resources and support for implementing safer and more inclusive educational environments for all?

This issue offers a three-paper “roundtable” on gender and jazz education. The contributions to the roundtable engage with several of the questions posed above by addressing local issues with global resonance. Consequently, it provides

---

*Women in Jazz: Musicality, Femininity, Marginalization* (Routledge, 2022); Tracy McMullen, “Jazz Education after 2017: The Berklee Institute of Jazz and Gender Justice and the Pedagogical Lineage,” *Jazz and Culture* 4, no. 2 (2021); Eric Teichman, “Pedagogy of Discrimination: Instrumental Jazz Education,” *Music Education Research* 22, no. 2 (2020): 201-213.

<sup>4</sup> Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron, *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture* (Sage, 1990).

<sup>5</sup> Bruce Johnson, “The Jazz Diaspora,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Jazz*, ed. Mervyn Cooke, and David Horn (Cambridge University Press, 2003), 39.

a necessary space—a room of one’s own<sup>6</sup>—for reflecting on educational environments within transnational jazz contexts.

Beatriz Nunes explores how, beyond individual choice, gender structures significantly influence young Portuguese students’ musical preferences and performance in academic settings. In “‘If Girls Don’t Want to Study Jazz, We Can’t Force Them’: An Ethnography of Gender Balance in a Jazz School,” Nunes employs qualitative data analysis to address key issues for deconstructing traditional gender roles and ideas of jazz authenticity in educational spaces.

Offering a reflective call to action, Dave Wilson’s “Restorative Approaches in Jazz Education: Structural Initiatives for Cultivating Safe and Supportive Environments” proposes practical strategies for safer, more supportive learning through restorative care ethics and community building, strategies applicable to both educational and professional practice. Examining the challenges of implementing more inclusive practices at the New Zealand School of Music, Wilson demonstrates how educators’ agency in educational settings can shift structural dynamics.

Finally, through the testimonies of two women whose pedagogical practices challenge oppressive power hierarchies, Ulagh Williams and Nishlyn Ramanna’s article, “Towards an Inclusive Jazz Pedagogy: Lessons from Post-Apartheid South Africa,” reveals significant changes in South African tertiary jazz education. Williams and Ramanna’s insights provide a foundation for future research, identifying critical challenges to patriarchal structures in transnational education institutions facing support barriers and limited institutional awareness of gender inequalities and the need for diversity.

---

<sup>6</sup> To borrow a phrase from Virginia Woolf (Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One’s Own* (Penguin Books Ltd, 2004 [1929])).