

Keith Jarrett, Miscegenation & the Rise of the European Sensibility in Jazz in the 1970s

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Abstract: In the 1970s, pianist Keith Jarrett emerged as a major albeit controversial innovator in jazz. He succeeded in making completely improvised solo piano music not only critically acclaimed as a fresh way of blending classical and jazz styles but also popular, particularly with young audiences. This essay examines the moment when Jarrett became an international star, the musical and social circumstances of jazz music immediately before his arrival and how he largely unconsciously exploited those circumstances to make his success possible, and what his accomplishments meant during the 1970s for jazz audiences and for American society at large.

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By the late 1960s, when pianist Keith Jarrett was establishing his international reputation as a professional jazz musician, jazz itself was facing a crisis. The crisis, for both players and critics, was twofold: First, was jazz technically exhausted? That is to say, after the stylistic innovations of the post-World War II generation of artists – like saxophonist Charlie Parker and trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie’s bebop revolution; Jimmy Smith “squabbling” on the Hammond organ;¹ bandleader Sun Ra, saxophonists Ornette Coleman and Albert Ayler, and pianist Cecil Taylor in free, avant-garde jazz music; and Miles Davis and his minions in modal jazz, “freebop,” electric jazz, and jazz-rock – was there anything else that jazz could do? What was left for a saxophonist to achieve after what John Coltrane had done with his instrument? What more could a trumpeter do after Clifford Brown, Miles Davis, and Freddie Hubbard but repeat with variations what these musicians had done? Or as black writers/intellectuals Ralph Ellison and Albert Murray questioned, had jazz even

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progressed after Duke Ellington?² Had not Ellington in fact already done everything that the modernists were claiming was so progressive or free? Since jazz prided itself on the originality of its great soloists, the questions by the end of the 1960s were: Had originality and virtuosity reached its limits in this form of music? Was there anything new to be mined? Was jazz, like so-called classical music, which many felt faced the same problem, dead to its own future, condemned to mere virtuosic variations of its past? Jazz could continue to produce styles and forms of musical fusions, its own type of artistic sectarianism matching the sectarian fury of Protestantism, but had the music reached an endpoint? Protestantism had not really come up with any concept better than the Trinity; was jazz going to come up with anything better than Parker, Ellington, or Louis Armstrong?

As pianist Paul Bley put it in 1974, “If you accept the fact that everything left to be done has *been* done and been done well, then in terms of improvising in the jazz idiom, there are only a few little corners that were overlooked that are still workable.”³ What were these “few little corners”?

The second aspect of the crisis facing jazz was social obsolescence. Was the music still relevant to the audiences that made jazz matter in the past? The answer was not quite no – there were still students and counterculture, antibourgeois-yet-affluent types who enjoyed it – but certainly jazz was tending toward being an art form that was no longer popular, particularly with large swaths of the young.⁴ Indeed, the fact that jazz was considered art music at all posed a problem for a music that had once been played by dance bands and enjoyed a period of astonishing popularity during the big band era.⁵ Swing music may have been a distortion, an aberration, a mistake. Was jazz not supposed to be popular music? Was it not

classified by record companies and record stores as popular music? If jazz ceased to be popular music when it ceased to be primarily dance music, then what did it mean to be art music?⁶ Was jazz now mood music used for background, whether for romance or for film? If jazz artists in the 1960s were striving to be literally as noisy as possible, with ever-increasing experimentation with dissonance, atonality, and, ultimately, electronics, then surely many jazz musicians did not wish their music to be relegated to the background. But inasmuch as it aspired to art, jazz was increasingly becoming an art form that was no longer relevant.

As philosopher Theodor Adorno has pointed out, one of jazz’s strongest claims as the music of the twentieth century was that it was modern, even that it defined the sound, the aesthetic of modernity. Jazz was, above all else, the sound of the new. After all, it was jazz musicians, record companies, and critics who used terms like “progressive jazz” and “modern jazz” to characterize how current, how much in the vanguard, certain styles of jazz after World War II were supposed to be. But with the rise of rock music and its various offshoots, jazz could no longer make that claim of being the most progressive or modern contemporary music. Rock, with its electronic and amplified instrumentation, its anarchist pretensions, its blatant sexuality, was not only literally a bigger noise than jazz, but it was also far more exciting as a performance art, as a visual spectacle. Moreover, as rock – with performers like the Beatles and Bob Dylan – moved away from being a teen dance music (or a dance music at all), it began to challenge jazz on its own turf as a listening music. In short, by the late 1960s, jazz was not, for many, the music of the modern, although it was still trying very hard to be that. As audiences for jazz shrank and venues for playing jazz

disappeared, the question arose: Who needs jazz?

Like other forms of popular music, jazz has long had an internal conflict over commercialism. Ardent fans and many jazz musicians across eras have complained about commercialism ruining the authenticity or essence of jazz, although there has always been disagreement over what exactly made jazz authentic or true to itself. Jazz has had various schools of adherents: some believe that true jazz is Dixieland or New Orleans style; others favor swing and the big band era; while others prefer bebop or cool or soul jazz or the avant-garde. For those who believe that jazz's authenticity rests in a particular era or style, the rest of jazz is simply noise or, worse still, a kind of declension or even decadence. But even as jazz feared the corrupting forces of the market, it desired the social and economic relevance that the market could bring to the music. Jazz musicians wanted not just cult fans but a broadly appreciative audience, people who could understand and enjoy the music for its own sake. This led many older jazz musicians to denigrate rock as technically inferior, inauthentic music and, of course, to dismiss the taste of the audiences who preferred rock and teen pop music. If jazz could not keep a sizable audience, it wanted to keep its status. The fact that jazz was undeniably superior in a technical sense to rock and teen pop music was, for many jazz musicians, a sign of jazz's authenticity as music and its worthiness as an artistic endeavor.

The success of rock music in the 1960s exposed the unstable foundation of contradictions upon which jazz was built and its long struggle to reconcile these contradictions: jazz wanted to be accessible to the market in its immediacy and appeal and yet transcend the market in its technical complexity and moral superiority as uncompromised music. Adorno summed up this problem when he wrote

that jazz's attempt at "the reconciliation of art music and music for common use [*Gebrauchsmusik*], of consumability and 'class,' of closeness to the source and up-to-date success, of discipline and freedom, of production and reproduction" was never honest.⁷ In other words, jazz's attempt at being a synthesis of both popular entertainment and high art always made it inauthentic as a form of music. Jazz musicians would not have expressed it in this way at the end of the 1960s, but it was something that many of them may have intuitively or subconsciously felt. Was jazz reaching its limits because it was too ambitious in trying to be for both the masses and the elite? Was it inherently fraudulent and overly self-conscious in what it had to offer as art?

At this moment of identity turbulence and philosophical self-examination, against the backdrop of a supercharged consumer society, one of the major jazz musicians to emerge was Keith Jarrett, whose presence offered solutions to the crisis as well as another set of conflicts.

To be sure, authenticity in jazz was always tied to race. Is jazz black/African American music? The obvious answer would be an emphatic yes. Black American musicians, from Louis Armstrong and Duke Ellington to Charlie Parker and Miles Davis, have been the major innovators in this art form. Black Americans conceived this music and it grew directly out of their culture. On the other hand, the first jazz recording, made in 1916, was "Livery Stable Blues" by the Original Dixieland Jazz Band, a white band. Paul Whiteman's band, one of the most influential in the history of American music and a great purveyor of jazz, was a white band. In fact, one could write a credible stylistic history of jazz from its beginnings to the 1960s spotlighting only its major white performers: the New Orleans Rhythm Kings, Paul Whiteman, Bix Beiderbecke,

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Frankie Trumbauer, Eddie Condon, June Christy, Mildred Bailey, Joe Venuti, Django Reinhardt, Eddie Lang, Harry James, Benny Goodman, Jack Teagarden, Artie Shaw, Stan Kenton, Bill Holman, Charlie Barnett, Woody Herman, Gene Krupa, Chris Connor, Lennie Tristano, Stéphane Grappelli, Jimmy Giuffre, Chet Baker, Bud Shank, Dave Brubeck, George Shearing, Stan Getz, Paul Desmond, Lee Konitz, Louie Bellson, Lee Konitz, Shelly Manne, Shorty Rogers, Bob Brookmeyer, Jim Hall, Gerry Mulligan, Buddy Rich, Gary Burton, Ran Blake, Zoot Sims, Dodo Marmarosa, Bill Evans, Chick Corea, Helen Merrill, Carla Bley, and Steve Swallow, among others. Indeed, whites have always made up a significant portion of jazz's audience, often the majority of the audience (a common observation made today), and whites have always played this music. It can, in fact, be safely said that probably more whites have played this music than blacks, simply because there are many more whites in the United States than blacks. (Certainly, during the swing era, there is no question that there were more white than black swing bands.) One could argue that the roots of jazz are just as much in marching band music, American musical theater, American vaudeville music, and Jewish Klezmer music as they are in African American culture. But while this argument could credibly be made, it is not likely that anyone in jazz criticism or scholarship circles these days would make it.⁸

It has been, however, a common belief among both black and white musicians that blacks were the best players, the most authentic. Whites, at least some of them, may have been superior musicians technically, but blacks played with more soul, more feeling, with more rhythm – so most people thought – because blacks were more authentically in touch with their feelings and emotions, had fewer of the hang-ups of civilized, white, bourgeois

life.⁹ For most of the music's history, audiences considered the jazz listening experience as essentially anti-intellectual. In fairness, people generally come to nearly all forms of music as an anti-intellectual, highly personal, and nonrational experience, but for much of the audience that jazz attracted, jazz intensified these feelings. African American culture, which many people, white and black, saw as being more instinctual than intellectual, had to be the true source for jazz as an aesthetic expression. Whites were simply too intellectual and too inhibited, "too tight-assed," as the expression goes, to be really good jazz players.

By the 1960s, considerable racial tension began to emerge in jazz circles, sparked by the civil rights movement and the growing militancy of African Americans. Black musicians, who felt that the music industry had shortchanged them and awarded white musicians the lion's share of fame and money, began to promote actively the idea that they were superior to white players, that the whites were interlopers, inauthentic, fakes – the greatest perpetrators of art forgery in the history of Western art. In addition, some jazz venues began to favor black musicians, or were thought to, because audiences believed black players were hipper. White critics and many white musicians claimed reverse discrimination, Crow Jim, as it was designated, adumbrating the same charge that would be brought against affirmative action in the 1970s and 1980s, although in this case it was not being made as a question of the black musicians being less qualified but rather that the music should not be politicized in this way.¹⁰ Jazz, in other words, should be colorblind: ironically, another kind of myth that has attached itself to this music over the years in addition to the idea that a jazz performance symbolizes democracy in its structure and organization. These liberal pieties only made racial conflict in the

music in the 1960s more fraught. Eventually, many white critics were denounced by some of the younger, more militant black jazz musicians as writers who did not understand jazz or black people.

This tension, often displayed on the pages of *DownBeat*, the leading American magazine on jazz, did two things: First, the racial rift underscored the sense, especially for young whites, that jazz was mired in the past, fighting the last war. The jazz that would become the most attractive for young audiences in the 1970s would not be black jazz or white jazz but integrated jazz, for which Keith Jarrett would become an important symbol. Second, the racial riff underscored for black and white musicians what most of them already believed, in different ways: that Europe was more receptive to and appreciative of jazz because Europe was a less racially hostile environment; Europe was where an integrated jazz could take form. Since the 1920s, black musicians have traveled to Europe to find that they were much more respected than in the United States, and that jazz seemed more highly regarded. Black American male musicians were also able to more easily enjoy interracial sex. White musicians, too, thought jazz was more respected in Europe, with more enthusiastic audiences. Europeans seemed much more amenable to listening to challenging instrumental music, much more willing to accept jazz as a significant art form. That Europe was the political and intellectual place of origin of philosophical racism, scientific racism, and colonialism, of the idea of the superiority of European culture, of the mythology of so-called classical music, yet could be so seemingly broad-minded about the presence of African American musicians and about jazz, could exhibit such *exceptionalism* in its acceptance of racial and artistic diversity in this regard, is a puzzling contradiction, the exploration of which is beyond the scope of this essay.

Keith Jarrett would become the symbol of European support for a new vision of a mixed-race or racially transcendent jazz because he himself *seemed* so racially miscegenated, as a player and as a presence. Many listeners and even fellow musicians thought Jarrett was black or biracial, which, in the United States, amounts to about the same thing. Jarrett wore his wiry hair as an afro, although this alone was not what convinced people like saxophonist Ornette Coleman and arranger Quincy Jones that Jarrett was black.¹¹ It was not uncommon for some white men in the late 1960s and early 1970s to wear their hair puffed out like an afro. For instance, Goldy McJohn, the keyboard player for the famous 1960s rock band Steppenwolf, styled his hair in this way, as did Magic Dick, the harmonica player for the J. Geils Band, another noted rock group of the period. But Jarrett was also known for his gospel-inflected melodies, which appeared to add substance to assumptions that he was black. Jarrett's playing has always been highly rhythmic; indeed, in some reviews of Jarrett's classical music recordings in a leading classical music magazine, Jarrett's rhythmic panache is duly noted, even highlighted.¹² Finally, Jarrett was (and is) an animated performer: crouching, bending, standing, and gesticulating while he played, accenting his playing, and even filling the silences, with his moaning and expressive vocalizations.¹³ (Classical pianist Glenn Gould and jazz pianist Errol Garner were known to hum or occasionally vocalize along with their playing but not nearly to the extent that Jarrett does.) These tendencies seemed histrionic to some, but they also fit with stereotypes of black performers "feeling more" of the music, becoming possessed by the nonintellectual or spiritual aspects of the music. In other words, Jarrett might be said, to use an old-fashioned jazz phrase, "to be getting hot"

when he started gyrating and moaning. It clearly made Jarrett distinctive, whether one liked the gyrations and groans. This combination of factors probably led many of his peers and many in his audiences, especially during the early days of his career, to think that he was black.

The most obvious way for jazz to avoid becoming a marginal music was to appeal to the young. And despite losing a good share of its audience in the 1960s, it must be remembered, first, that jazz was still being played on the radio at this time; second, that jazz was still being featured in movie and television soundtracks; and third, that jazz was still capable of producing commercial hits like pianist Vince Guaraldi's "Cast Your Fate to the Wind," Ramsey Lewis's "The In Crowd," Jimmy Smith's version of "Walk on the Wild Side," Eddie Harris's "Listen Here," Richard "Groove" Holmes's version of "Misty," Hugh Masekela's "Up, Up, and Away," and Herbie Hancock's "Watermelon Man," to name only a few. These jazz hits were enjoyed not only by adults on record and on jazz radio stations, but also by young people who heard them played on top 40 or pop radio, then the main source of music for young people in the United States and parts of Western Europe.

There were also certain jazz bands that appealed to teenagers who thought of themselves as particularly hip. Among those bands were the mid-1960s ensembles of black West Coast drummer Chico Hamilton. Hamilton, who had led an integrated "cool" jazz quintet in the 1950s that featured a cellist, was always interested in being cutting edge. (The cool quintet was featured significantly in the 1957 film *Sweet Smell of Success*, starring Tony Curtis and Burt Lancaster.) Among the young players featured in Hamilton's 1960s bands was electric guitarist Larry Coryell, who would become one of the

leading figures in the jazz-rock revolution of the 1970s. Another was Hungarian guitarist Gabor Szabo, whose tunes "Gypsy 66" and "Lady Gabor" would become popular among college and high school students of the period, both black and white. But the Hamilton band member who developed the largest youthful audience was saxophonist and flutist Charles Lloyd, who wrote "Forest Flower" for Hamilton, but made it wildly popular with his own band's recording in the late 1960s. Lloyd's band played not only in jazz venues but rock palaces like the Fillmore West and the Fillmore East. Trumpeter Miles Davis noticed Lloyd's success when his band shared a bill with Lloyd's at the Village Gate in 1967: "Man, the place was packed," Davis wrote in his autobiography.¹⁴ Lloyd became extremely popular in Europe as well as the United States. His band, for instance, was among the first to play in the Soviet Union. Most important, Lloyd's quartet featured pianist Keith Jarrett. Charles Lloyd was black and Keith Jarrett was white, although he did not quite seem white; and both men were young, playing jazz music that did not seem exactly black or white – just hip and modern (yet accessible). Jarrett's work with Lloyd was a kind of marriage of sensibilities that made it possible for Jarrett to become a change agent for jazz and for how Europe would influence jazz.

About the future of jazz, Paul Bley predicted in 1974 that "in terms of what improvisation is going to be about, there is no other place for it to go, except to electronics."¹⁵ No jazz musician of the period was more associated with electronics and particularly the sound of rock, the music most associated with electronic instruments, than trumpeter Miles Davis, who Chico Hamilton called "jazz's only superstar."¹⁶ Beginning in the late 1960s, Davis introduced electronic instruments in his recordings, at first, just an electronic

piano or electric guitar. But soon, with albums like *In a Silent Way* (1969) and *Bitches Brew* (1970), the latter the most commercially successfully record Davis would release after *Kind of Blue*, Davis was employing several electric keyboardists, an electric guitarist, and an electric bass player. Eventually, Davis would amplify his trumpet as well. Davis had become the father of the jazz-rock movement, regularly playing rock venues with bands featuring a new generation of international musicians of racially diverse backgrounds interested in electronics and rock.

Among those players was Keith Jarrett, whose stay with Davis in the early 1970s was not very long: less than a year between 1970 and 1971. Davis had been after Jarrett to join his band for some time. “The main reason I joined the band was that I didn’t like the band. I liked what Miles was playing very much and I hated the rest of the band playing together,” Jarrett said in an interview in 1974, a few years after he left Davis.¹⁷ Davis’s band spawned most of the major jazz-rock groups of the period: Chick Corea’s Return to Forever, Herbie Hancock’s Headhunters, Weather Report with Joe Zawinul and Wayne Shorter, the Mahavishnu Orchestra with John McLaughlin, and Tony Williams’s Lifetime. Williams, McLaughlin, Shorter, Zawinul, Hancock, and Corea all played with Davis during the late 1960s and early 1970s. At the time, everyone thought electronic music was the way of the future and that rock was the best vehicle not only to use electronic instruments but to make jazz modern again by attracting young people with the sound young people liked. But Davis’s various bands of this period were modern also because they were integrated. Remember how startling and edgy was the debut of the Jimi Hendrix Experience, a trio with two white English musicians, drummer Mitch Mitchell and bassist Noel Redding. And remember how significantly

both the sound and the reception of Hendrix’s band changed when he replaced Mitchell and Redding with Buddy Miles and Billy Cox, both black. White players like McLaughlin, Jarrett, Zawinul, Corea, Dave Holland, Mike Stern, Dave Liebman, and Steve Grossman all played jazz-rock with Davis.

The fact that Davis’s jazz-rock bands featured gifted young white players made it seem that much more cutting edge, while also making it even easier for Davis to cross over to young white rock fans. Davis had already associated with white musicians at critical points in his career: his *Birth of the Cool* recordings in the late 1940s made use of mostly white bands; his collaborations with arranger Gil Evans produced some of his most impressive orchestral albums; and his relationship with pianist Bill Evans was central to one of the most famous albums in post-World War II American jazz, *Kind of Blue* in 1959.

It was out of this moment of crisis, change, and opportunity that Keith Jarrett emerged as a star. But unlike his Davis bandmates, he would renounce electronic instruments and would avoid the jazz-rock movement entirely. On his early opposition to electric music, Jarrett explained,

It’s not going to change because for me it’s the answer. It may not apply to somebody else, although I could go into the philosophical aspects of it and make it almost an objective argument whereby playing electric music is bad for you and bad for people listening, which I do believe. I don’t feel any strong emotional thing about electric music being offensive, and I am certainly not afraid of electric instruments because I think there’s something unknown and vast about them. I don’t think they’re any more vast than a flute, but they give you the feeling that you’re dealing with something vast.¹⁸

Jarrett distinguished himself in the rattle and hum of jazz-rock and amplified jazz by becoming the rather petulant patron saint of acoustic jazz music as concert art music.

Between 1971, when Jarrett recorded his first solo piano record, *Facing You*, for the European record label ECM, and 1976, when *Bop-Be*, nearly the last of his recordings for Impulse! Records, an American label, came out, Jarrett released about twenty-five albums on four different labels – Atlantic, Impulse!, Columbia, and ECM – a staggeringly prolific rate of production, averaging over four albums a year, some of them multi-record sets.¹⁹ What is even more astonishing is that Jarrett performed his own compositions, improvised or written, for nearly all of these records. At this stage in his career, Jarrett rarely, if ever, performed or recorded jazz standards, either tunes from the Great American Songbook or originals by other jazz musicians.²⁰ Normally, no musician would put out this much product in such a short period of time for fear of flooding the market and overexposure. But Jarrett had such a legion of fans, and the recordings were so various – solo piano, piano-drum duets, piano trio, piano quartet, orchestral pieces of “serious music,” pipe organ solos – that Jarrett’s followers were scarcely satisfied. Not all of his fans liked everything he recorded – some of the records are a lot more accessible than others – but his fans were certain of the importance of everything he recorded. Rather than alienate his audience, this variety actually enhanced Jarrett’s standing as a significant artist. *DownBeat*’s review of his “serious music” album *In the Light* (1973) compared Jarrett as a composer to Beethoven.²¹ Even before the 1975 release of Jarrett’s improvised solo piano recital *The Köln Concert* – which would become the most commercially popular and critically celebrated

record of his career – Jarrett was recognized in *DownBeat*’s 1974 annual critics poll as the best pianist in jazz. Elsewhere in the music press, because of his impact as a player, a composer, and a bandleader, he was compared to a young Duke Ellington. There was no question that to a large swath of young jazz fans, or more precisely, young music fans, since many of his ardent admirers were rock devotees, Jarrett was a genius. Many jazz critics, and especially the younger ones, agreed. But not all of Jarrett’s peers were impressed: pianist Horace Silver, in a *DownBeat* “blindfold test” (a feature in which established musicians give their reactions to recordings played for them, without being told who the performers are), did not like the Paul Bley solo piano tune that was played for him, thinking it was Keith Jarrett.²² And in an interview, pianist Oscar Peterson refused to place Jarrett among the top three young jazz pianists currently on the scene. Peterson strongly preferred Herbie Hancock over Jarrett.²³ I believe it was pianist Joe Zawinul, a key member of Miles Davis’s early electric bands, a leading proponent of jazz fusion, and who personally and professionally lived a highly miscegenated life, who thought Jarrett’s anti-electronic music position was reactionary. A younger pianist, Anthony Davis, himself highly regarded at the time, found Jarrett imitative and superficial.²⁴

There is no question that it was Jarrett’s recordings with ECM during this period that shaped his reputation and his career. ECM not only made Jarrett a crossover star with a huge following in Europe – initially, ECM records were more easily accessible in Europe than in the United States – but also established Jarrett as an American jazz star with a European sensibility. It would be hard to call many of Jarrett’s ECM records “jazz” in our conventional understanding of that term. If by jazz we

mean music that “swings,” music that has a driving 4/4 pulse, a groove, something akin to the big band music of Count Basie or a bebop-oriented small group like Art Blakey’s Jazz Messengers, or something like Ahmad Jamal’s or John Bunch’s music, then much of Jarrett’s ECM output of the period was not jazz. If swing was the major characteristic that blacks brought to jazz, then the above examples would have to be considered black jazz, whether played by black or white musicians. And Jarrett was more than capable of playing this sort of straight-ahead jazz. He had, in fact, done a stint with Art Blakey’s Jazz Messengers, and his American recordings with Impulse! and Atlantic were closer to standard jazz or the experimental music associated with the black avant-garde as Jarrett was deeply influenced by Ornette Coleman. (Two of Coleman’s sidemen, bassist Charlie Haden and saxophonist Dewey Redman, played in Jarrett’s Impulse! bands.)

But more than any other single jazz artist, Jarrett legitimized a so-called jazz sound or type of improvisational music that did not swing. Jarrett surely did not create an interest among musicians for jazz without swing: as early as the 1920s there was considerable passion on the part of serious European composers as well as some American jazz players, both black and white, to create a symphonic jazz. After World War II, the Third Stream movement, led by musicians like Gunther Schuller and pianist John Lewis, who formed the Modern Jazz Quartet in the early 1950s and devoted that all-black band to many Third Stream efforts, renewed attempts to marry jazz and classical music. Stan Kenton and many white musicians on the West Coast in the 1950s were quite devoted to highly experimental forms of jazz, blending improvisation with modern atonal Western art music. But probably the single most important figure in the movement

of jazz without swing was pianist Bill Evans, whose impact can be traced to one recording: a six-and-a-half minute solo piano improvisation called “Peace Piece.”

Evans recorded “Peace Piece” in 1958 for his album *Everybody Digs Bill Evans*, one year before joining Miles Davis to record “Kind of Blue,” whose closing track “Flamenco Sketches” was heavily influenced by Evans’s composition. “Peace Piece,” which came about as Evans was rehearsing to play the Comden and Green tune “Some Other Time,” does not swing at all. It is, in fact, quite static, using the opening chords of “Some Other Time” as a repetitive figure over which Evans improvises. If there is any single piece of music that could be used as a possible source for Jarrett’s solo concerts it would be “Peace Piece.” Evans, who was quite capable of playing swinging piano and frequently did, became a highly influential pianist, particularly among white jazz musicians; in fact, during the 1960s, some avant-garde black jazz musicians like saxophonist Archie Shepp harshly criticized Evans as simply being a derivative of Debussy, beloved by white critics because his art music influences validated critics’ own Eurocentric cultural assumptions.²⁵ In the New Age music that arose in the late 1970s and early 1980s, largely inspired by Jarrett’s solo concerts, “Peace Piece” became something of an anthem, recorded, for instance, by popular New Age pianist Liz Story, among others. (Jarrett also became an icon for something called “folk” piano whose leading practitioners are George Winston and Ken Burns documentary film scorer Jacqueline Schwab.)

ECM sold and popularized this sound through its hundreds of recordings of musicians, mostly European and mostly white – from American guitarist Ralph Towner to English saxophonist John Surman to German bassist Eberhard Weber to Israeli pianist Anat Fort – who do not

swing. Jarrett, as a kind of miscegenated presence, in effect legitimated white jazz as something that does not swing but that is just as much jazz as its black counterpart.²⁶ The fact that there was such ambiguity about Jarrett's race and that he performed this type of music through a European record company may have had much to do with his success. There was something about this music coming from Europe that gave it a certain gravitas and something about this music coming from someone whom many people thought was black.

Jarrett's solo piano concerts are the most important and the most popular recordings of his ECM output, and *The Köln Concert* is the milestone. It has sold about four million copies, more than any other recording of solo piano music of any type. Musicologist and musician Peter Elsdon has written an entire book on *The Köln Concert*, and I refer you to it for details about the recording's importance in the history of both American and European music.²⁷ The work has clearly been suggestive to me and some of the assertions I have made in this essay. *The Köln Concert* was the follow-up to Jarrett's highly acclaimed *Solo Concerts: Bremen/Lausanne*, a three-record set spanning two concerts released in 1973. *The Köln Concert* was followed by a ten-record set of solo performances from Japan released in 1978 called *The Sun Bear Concerts*, which despite its cost, indeed, the sheer audacity of releasing ten records of solo piano playing, became a bestseller. When the set was released, *Rolling Stone*, in the illustration accompanying its review, pictured Jarrett as Mozart. (Ironically, the review itself was largely negative.)²⁸ Jarrett's solo concerts have changed over time, but the general content is the same: with no preconceived notions or ideas, Jarrett simply improvises music. In the solo recordings of the 1970s and 1980s, these improvisations usually

took the shape of long blocks of uninterrupted playing, sometimes punctuated by moments of dissonance and atonal modernism, but usually quite accessible with attractive and melodic (in a strangely old-fashioned way) folk- and gospel-like themes bubbling up in Jarrett's current of sound. Jarrett was stunningly capable of combining the modern with the nostalgic, perhaps better than any other performer in jazz, what was referred to in the 1970s as Jarrett's "homesick lyricism."²⁹ To young audiences, the solo concerts sounded fresh, highly rhythmic, and poignant, with a visibly agitated young person playing the piano as if possessed by his own music. With the solo concerts, Jarrett became, in many respects, a sort of jazz-like version of Franz Liszt. Jarrett played with such brio that no one could accuse jazz-without-swing of being feckless.³⁰

Jarrett's solo concerts did three things that significantly changed our understanding of jazz: Jarrett made jazz-without-swing a legitimate force in jazz performance, a movement in European jazz that made European jazz a force in the global jazz market starting in the 1970s. Second, Jarrett made solo piano playing commercially viable by showing that there was a considerable audience for it. Many jazz musicians shied away from solo jazz recordings either because they felt uncomfortable playing without the support of other players or because they thought the public considered such recordings "dinner music." (Bassist Charles Mingus put out the solo piano record *Mingus Plays Piano* in 1963 because he felt more jazz pianists should be playing solo piano as a test of their ingenuity and stamina. "All I can say is that if a bass player can attempt what I've done here, by myself, some of the other musicians who are full-time pianists ought to at least consider practicing more," Mingus said about this recording.)³¹ Jarrett

proved that the public was willing to take such records seriously and, as a result, the record companies flooded the market with solo piano records, some good, many bad. The advantage for the record company was that solo piano records were cheap to make. They required only a competent pianist and a well-tuned piano. But the rise of the solo piano record in the 1970s and 1980s also did much to turn young jazz audiences away from electronic instruments and jazz-rock and to accept jazz as an acoustic art, much in same way audiences accepted classical music. This occurred before trumpeter Wynton Marsalis came on the scene as a major force; he is often and I think wrongly given credit for this turn in jazz music.³² If anything, Marsalis was following the retromodernist movement that Jarrett had started. Third, Jarrett made the marriage between classical and jazz more viable than had any other jazz musician before him: not by trying to blend classical and jazz in his playing and composing, although he did do this with varying measures of success, but by marrying jazz and classical music together as a seamless, common sensibility of acoustic art. Jarrett gave jazz a true feeling of being concert hall music, not simply because it was being played in a concert hall, but because of the stature of the performer and the sacred act of his performance. In short, Jarrett did much to solidify jazz's reputation as, to use an old-fashioned term, a middlebrow art that validated both the middlebrow critics and audiences who adored him. It was jazz that made you feel good and listening to it was elevating, good *for* you. Jarrett momentarily solved some issues pressing jazz in the late 1960s, but ultimately, because he was white, he could not become jazz's hero or redeemer. He did not intentionally pose as a black, but once his audience came to recognize his whiteness in the late 1970s, he had in some ways reinscribed the problem

of authenticity coupled with the notion of privilege. Was being white an advantage for Jarrett that explains his success? Did Jarrett wind up reaffirming jazz as a white music? Is Jarrett somehow fraudulent because he is white? Did Jarrett become self-conscious of his race as Marsalis grew in popularity and was acclaimed the savior of jazz in the 1980s and 1990s, which led to his conflicts with the trumpeter? (Both Marsalis and Jarrett would be accused of being reactionaries, of misunderstanding what jazz represented. Jarrett, in the 1970s at least, wanted jazz performance to have the aura of classical music and the classical music experience; Marsalis wanted jazz music itself to be considered classical music: for Ellington, Armstrong, and Parker to be the equivalents of Mozart, Bach, and Brahms and for their music to be endlessly honored and performed. Jarrett was a synthesizer; Marsalis a consolidator and canon builder. For those who disliked either of these approaches, jazz was contrarily a tradition and that impulse that abhors tradition. Jazz does not seek middle-class respectability; it is essentially something oppositional to the middle class.)

The question I posed at the start of this essay – “Who needs jazz?” – returns in the end. Jazz might be defined as an instrumental music characterized by significant moments of improvisation, that is not attempting to be recognizably commercial, that a sizable segment of the public and the critics feel is emotionally exciting enough to offer new and fresh ways to engage music itself and our own identities. But *who* made the music, how we see that person in relation to the social and political contexts of our time, is equally important. Jarrett, in the 1970s, made a number of people “need” jazz in how he approached making piano, or in a larger sense, keyboard music. (In some respects, his success may have been possible, in part, because he played the piano, an instrument

that has a special, mythologized place in Western art-making.) Inasmuch as Jarrett's audience became devotees, listening to his music, particularly the solo concerts, as if they were a religious experience, something transcendent, Jarrett became both a preacher and a therapist.³³

As Elsdon points out, Jarrett made jazz a truly trans-Atlantic phenomenon, opening new and young audiences throughout Europe to the music.³⁴ But perhaps Jarrett did something more. He made a European-sounding jazz something hip and even profound for audiences. Perhaps he made it easier for a considerable segment

of whites to find their way into jazz and their place in it without imitating blacks. But of course this is all complicated by the fact that he sometimes sounded like a black player and that he was, for a time, thought to be black. Nonetheless, Jarrett the American validated Europe through his jazz. Drummer Chico Hamilton once said, "There is virtually nothing new about music. We are still playing the European School."³⁵ Jarrett's approach to jazz may remind us that we Americans, both black and white, despite our independence, never really, for good and for ill, escaped Europe after all.

ENDNOTES

¹ Squabbling is an approach to organ playing using Errol Garner's piano technique.

² See Albert Murray and John F. Callahan, eds., *Trading Twelves: The Selected Letters of Ralph Ellison and Albert Murray* (New York: The Modern Library, 2000).

"I finally saw that Chico Hamilton with his mannerisms and that poor, evil, lost little Miles Davis, who on this occasion sounded like he just couldn't get it together. Nor did Coltrane help with his badly executed velocity exercises. These cats have gotten lost, man. They're trying to get hold to something by fucking up the blues, but some of them don't even know the difference between a blues and a spiritual—as was the case of Horace Silver who went wanging away like a slightly drunken gospel group after announcing a blues. . . . Taste was an item conspicuously missing from most of the performances, once again I could see that there's simply nothing worse than a half-educated Mose unless it's a Mose jazz-modernist who's convinced himself that he's a genius, maybe the next Beethoven, or at least Bartok, and who's certain that he's the only Mose jazzman who had heard the classics or attended a conservatory. . . . These little fellows are scrambling around trying to get something new; Duke is *the* master of a bunch of masters and when the little boys hear him come on they know that they'll never be more than a bunch of little masturbators and they don't want to think about it." Ellison's letter to Murray on attending the 1958 Newport Jazz Festival, *ibid.*, 193–194 (emphasis Ellison).

"By and large, I'm afraid that too many of these cats, some of whom have real potential, get so carried away with being MODERN and EXPERIMENTAL and SERIOUS that they not only forget what jazz is they don't even remember what music is supposed to do anymore. . . . Anyway, Duke and Count are still the bands to hear these days. They have assimilated about as much of the so-called Modern as will probably last anyway, and they still have the old identity and the old drive. A master is a goddamned MASTER, man. It's just as true now as it ever was: when you start fucking around with that goddamned Duke Ellington, you're subject to have yourself a new asshole cut." Murray's letter to Ellison, *ibid.*, 155.

Ellison's dislike of the modernist and progressive turn in jazz after World War II and his distrust of sociology explains why he so disparagingly reviewed poet/playwright/critic LeRoi Jones's study of black music, *Blues People* (1963) in Ralph Ellison, "Blues People," in *Shadow and Act* (New York: Vintage, 1965), 247–258. Jones was a modernist and his book was highly sociological.

³ "Focus on Paul Bley," *DownBeat*, January 1974.

⁴ Jazz's biggest breakthrough with the young during the 1960s was not with college students or young adults but rather with children through the success of jazz pianist Vince Guaraldi's

soundtracks for the Charlie Brown (*Peanuts*) television specials, starting with *A Charlie Brown Christmas* in 1965. See Gerald Early, “How Innocence Became Cool: Vince Guaraldi, Peanuts, and How Jazz Momentarily Captured Childhood,” in *The Peanuts Papers: Charlie Brown, Snoopy & the Gang, and the Meaning of Life*, ed. Andrew Blauner (New York: Library of America, Fall 2019).

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⁵ Standard histories of jazz discuss this transformation at length; one important study devoted entirely to the transformation itself is Paul Lopes, *The Rise of a Jazz Art World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), esp. chap. 4 and 5.

⁶ Note that big bands like Ellington’s, Count Basie’s, Woody Herman’s, and others still played dance gigs well into the 1960s. For instance, in the 1964 film, *The Pleasure Seekers*, Count Basie’s band is featured playing dance music for young swingers. *Get Yourself a College Girl* (1964) features college students dancing to a jazz band. And Cal Tjader’s band performs to a dancing audience in the 1968 film *For Singles Only*. There are several other such moments in films of the 1960s.

⁷ Theodor W. Adorno, “Farewell to Jazz,” in *Essays on Music*, ed. Richard Leppert, trans. Susan H. Gillespie (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 498. “The elements of jazz in which immediacy seems to be present, the seemingly improvisational moments—of which syncopation is designated as its elemental form—are added in their naked externality to the standardized commodity character in order to mask it—without, however, gaining power over it for a second. Through its intentions, whether that of appealing to an elevated ‘style,’ individual taste, or even individual spontaneity, jazz wants to improve its marketability and veil its own commodity character which, in keeping with one of the fundamental contradictions of the system, would jeopardize its own success if it were to appear on the market undisguised.” Theodor W. Adorno, “On Jazz,” in *Essays on Music*, 473.

⁸ A book on the history of the white jazz musician has been written. Richard M. Sudhalter, *Lost Chords: White Musicians and Their Contributions to Jazz, 1915–1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999). It is a worthy study, although the subject matter deserved a more coherent, better edited narrative.

⁹ Noted novelist Ralph Ellison, who was also a jazz critic and had ambitions as a youth of becoming a professional musician and composer, said this about the creative relationship of black and white musicians as he understood them growing up in the Midwest in the 1920s:

“This argument about who did what and who influenced whom imposes racial considerations which don’t belong to discussions of culture. In those days when a musician was learning his instrument and trying to develop his own style he listened to any musician who had something to offer, who excited him; they weren’t fighting the race problem but assimilating styles and techniques. The Ellington sidemen interviewed by Stanley Dance mention a number of white jazzmen who influenced their styles. It was the music, the style, the ability to execute that was important. If a white musician sounded good; if he had the facility with his instrument you took what you could use—just as they took what they could use from us. Jazz is Afro-American in origin, but it’s more American than some folks want to admit.” Ron Welburn, “Ralph Ellison’s Territorial Vantage,” in *Conversations with Ralph Ellison*, ed. Maryemma Graham and Amritjit Singh (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1995), 310.

¹⁰ Pianist Bill Evans, one of the most noted white musicians of this period, had this response to the suggestion of jazz being black music in a 1976 *DownBeat* interview:

“There’s a sense of the hurt child in the people who want to make this only a black music. They haven’t had much so they want to make jazz 100% black. Historically, I suppose, the black impetus was primarily responsible for the growth of jazz, but if a white jazz artist comes through, it’s just another human being who has grown up loving jazz and playing jazz and can contribute to jazz. It’s sad because all that attitude does is to turn that prejudicial thing right around. It makes me a bit angry. I want more responsibility among black people and black musicians to be accurate and to be spiritually intelligent about humanity. Let the historians sort out whether it’s 67.2 percent black influenced or 97 percent. To say only black people can play jazz is just as dangerous as saying only white people are intelligent or anything else like that.”

When pressed by the interviewer who clarified that he meant to ask about whether blacks were the true innovators in jazz, Evans continued:

“An innovator. That’s even more ridiculous. . . . But to say only black musicians can be innovative is so utterly ridiculous I can hardly consider the question. To be a human being is to have creative potential, and where this is realized is a matter of what a person commits himself to and is dedicated to. White, yellow, black, green or whatever, a person who loves and dedicates himself to jazz music can be creative, depending on his talent and commitment.” Len Lyons, “New Intuitions: Bill Evans,” *DownBeat*, March 1976, 36.

Needless to say, these remarks were controversial at the time (which is why *DownBeat*’s editor used some of them as pull quotes) and, if anything, would be more controversial today. But this underscores as well that the ambiguity surrounding Jarrett’s race was helpful to Jarrett until this ambiguity was largely cleared up by the 1990s, particularly when Jarrett’s feud with trumpeter Wynton Marsalis became something of an item in jazz circles. The racial dimensions of that feud were immediately apparent. See Gerald Early, “White Noise and White Knights: Some Thoughts on Race, Jazz, and the White Jazz Musician,” in *Jazz: A History of America’s Music*, ed. Geoffrey C. Ward and Ken Burns (New York: Alfred Knopf, 2000), 324–331. That essay juxtaposed bandleader Stan Kenton and Jarrett as two particular white career possibilities in jazz: one who absolutely refuses to “go native” in defense of whiteness in jazz and the other who “goes native” in a way that seems to transcend race.

- ¹¹ For Ornette Coleman’s belief that Jarrett is black, see “Interview with Jazz Pianist Keith Jarrett,” *Fresh Air with Terry Gross*, September 11, 2000. Quincy Jones expressed his belief that Jarrett is black in a conversation he had with me in May 2008 during the occasion of his visit to Washington University in St. Louis to receive a honorary degree.

Two near-contemporaries of Jarrett’s—guitarist Kenny Burrell and saxophonist Jackie McLean—represented racial ambiguity of another sort: they were light-skinned African Americans who could have passed for white but who identified as black and played almost exclusively with black musicians and in a style that audiences considered black. I remember some of my black childhood friends thinking that these musicians were white and being informed in no uncertain terms by the black adults around us that they were not. Jarrett has played with black musicians during his career but has not gone out of his way to do so. In the three regular working bands he has had over his career—the American quartet, the European quartet, and the “Standards Trio”—two of the musicians were black: drummer Jack DeJohnette and saxophonist Dewey Redman.

Jarrett also never identified himself as “going native” as did Austrian pianist Joe Zawinul, who made a point of saying in interviews in the 1970s that he was interracially married, that he had biracial children, that he enjoyed being around black people and black musicians, and that he enjoyed being mistaken for being black. “When I was with Cannonball’s [Adderley] band, I stayed in this one house in Florida with this little old [black] lady about 75. And she never knew that I wasn’t black. I always had a tan and looked kinda funny, you know—“That light-skinned boy sure is nice!”” Quoted in Conrad Silvert, “Joe Zawinul: Wayfaring Genius,” *DownBeat*, June 1978. Also see, Conrad Silvert, “Joe Zawinul: Wayfaring Genius, Part II,” *DownBeat*, June 1978; and Ray Townley, “The Mysterious Travellings of an Austrian Mogul,” *DownBeat*, January 1975. Jarrett was never interracially married, nor ever presented himself as an insider among blacks. Therefore, the belief that he was black was based solely on his appearance and the charisma of his piano playing. In this regard, it can be said that those who believed him to be black, *wanted* him to be black.

By the way, in photographer Valerie Wilmer’s *The Face of Black Music* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1976), a collection of her photos of black musicians, is a photo of Jarrett performing in a recording studio. The book has no page numbers but the photo is opposed one of saxophonist Coleman Hawkins and appears toward the end of the book. Surely, it was instances such as this that led many people to think that Jarrett was black.

- ¹² See a review of Keith Jarrett’s recording of Bach’s “The Well-Tempered Clavier, Book 2,” *Gramophone*, September 1991; and “Collection: Bach’s Goldberg Variations,” *Gramophone*, October

1996, which features brief comments on Jarrett's recording of the Variations. On the whole, Jarrett's classical recordings have generally been well-reviewed in classical music publications like *Gramophone*. The most scathing attack against Jarrett in *Gramophone* appeared in a review of a solo recording by American composer and improviser Alvin Curran in which the reviewer called the solo performances for which Jarrett had become famous "anaemic [sic] vamps and arpeggios with which [he has] managed to persuade gullible audiences he was touching the divine when, in fact, he was manipulatively deploying melodic hooks and tried-and-tested harmonic sequences all designed to push the right emotional buttons." *Gramophone*, June 2011.

¹³ Some of this theatricality may have been Jarrett coming to grips physically with the piano. Bill Evans notes: "The piano is very mechanical and you're separated from it physically. You can only control it by touching it, striking it, and pushing a key down. Playing a wind or a stringed instrument is so much more expressive and so much more vocal because of its contact with the player." Lyons, "New Intuitions."

¹⁴ Miles Davis with Quincy Troupe, *Miles: The Autobiography* (New York: Touchstone Books, 1990), 291.

¹⁵ "Focus on Paul Bley," *DownBeat*, January 1974.

¹⁶ Gregg Hall, "Miles: Today's Most Influential Contemporary Musician," *DownBeat*, July 1974.

¹⁷ Bob Palmer, "The Inner Octaves of Keith Jarrett," *DownBeat*, October 1974.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ For Impulse!, see *Fort Yawuh* (1973), *Backhand* (1974), *Death and the Flower* (1974), *Treasure Island* (1974), *Shades* (1975), *Mysteries* (1975), *Byablue* (1976), and *Bop-Be* (1976). For Columbia, see *Expectations* (1972). For Atlantic, see *Birth* (1971), *The Mourning of a Star* (1971), and *El Juicio* (1971). For ECM, see *Facing You* (1971), *Ruta and Daitya* (1971), *Solo Concerts: Bremen/Lausanne* (1973), *In the Light* (1973), *Belonging* (1974), *The Köln Concert* (1975), *Luminessence* (1975), *Arbour Zena* (1975), *The Survivors' Suite* (1976), *Staircase* (1976), *Eyes of the Heart* (1976), *Hymns/Spheres* (1976), and *Sun Bear Concerts* (1976). Another point to be made about this density of recording activity is the idea of repeatability, which Peter Elsdon writes about in his book, *Keith Jarrett's The Köln Concert* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012). In particular, Elsdon explores questions of Jarrett's repeating musical ideas in connection with the *The Köln Concert's* "myth," if you will, of being pure spontaneous originality. Jarrett would claim in his liner notes to *Bremen/Lausanne* that nothing is ever repeated in his solo concerts. And certainly in the first eight or so years of his recording career, virtually nothing was repeated on any of his records, as if he were intent on building a reputation as a musician whose output was like one big live concert, or whose mind was so fertile that he did not return to anything, so wondrous was his nonrepeatability. Of course, the truth about the solo concerts was that material, particularly in the encores, was repeated. Also, Jarrett's solo performance as a concept developed a sound, a style, and a set of habits that became repeatable. If one listens to Jarrett's solo concerts over the course of his career, certain types of figures, chords, and rhythms are used over and over; in some instances, he comes perilously close to playing something he played before. His own limits and inclinations, and his preferences and avoidances dictate this as they would for any musician.

²⁰ The fact that Jarrett did not perform the traditional jazz repertoire at this time does not mean that he did not know it. "During his time as a bar-room pianist in Boston in the 1960s, Jarrett had learned as many songs as possible, and had built up a large repertoire of standard tunes." Ian Carr, *Keith Jarrett: The Man and His Music* (New York: Da Capo, 1992), 145.

²¹ "I think the direction that Jarrett has taken is as revolutionary as the one Beethoven introduced." "Review of *In the Light*," *DownBeat*, May 1974.

²² "Blindfold Test: Horace Silver," *DownBeat*, February 1975.

²³ Len Lyons, "Oscar Peterson: Piano Worship," *DownBeat*, December 1975.

²⁴ Francis Davis, "Anthony Davis: New Music Traditionalist," *DownBeat*, January 1982.

- ²⁵ For more on black musicians, especially Charles Mingus and Shepp, and their battles with the white critical establishment of jazz, see Eric Porter, *What is this Thing Called Jazz? African American Musicians as Artists, Critics, and Activists* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), esp. chap. 3 and 5.
- ²⁶ Consider this remark by Joe Zawinul that endorses the mythology of the superiority of the hybrid: “Did you know there was a lot of African influence on Europe, classical music, in the old days? I mean Beethoven was a half-breed, you know. Friedrich Gulda told me this, and he’s one of the great Beethoven interpreters. He said it is proven that Beethoven’s grandfather was a blackman [sic] from Africa. And Beethoven was also Germanic. This mixture is what makes it.” Ray Townley, “Joe Zawinul: The Mysterious Travelings of an Austrian Mogul,” *DownBeat*, January 1975.
- ²⁷ Elsdon, *Keith Jarrett’s The Köln Concert*.
- ²⁸ Bob Blumenthal, “Keith Jarrett’s Ego Trip: Ten LPs!” *Rolling Stone*, March 1979. “Actually, the pianist’s claim that music flows of its own will through his black receptiveness is just another variation on the New Narcissism.”
- ²⁹ There has always been an element of nostalgia associated with Jarrett’s music by marketers. Consider, for instance, the cover and title of his early trio album, *Somewhere Before* (1968), which features tunes called “New Rag” and “Old Rag,” and where the group played occasionally like an old-fashioned jazz band. On the album *El Juicio* (recorded 1971, released 1975), there is an old-styled-like performance called “Pardon My Rags.” On the 2007 album *My Foolish Heart*, Jarrett’s trio performs two Fats Waller’s songs, “Ain’t Misbehavin’” and “Honkeysuckle Rose,” almost as a parody of a swing-era small combo.
- ³⁰ Early on, some critics challenged Jarrett’s claim that the solo concerts were something experimental in jazz or contemporary music:
- “And what was so experimental about a pianist giving a recital? It could be the fact that classical pianists do not usually improvise but interpret somebody else’s music, and jazz pianists almost never play solo (i.e. without rhythm accompaniment) for an entire evening. The experimental quality of [Jarrett’s] venture fits the first case more readily than the second, for he, at least by virtue of the kind of music he made in the course of the discussed event, rarely answered the description of a jazzman. And once we disassociate him from jazz, we would be permitted to regard him as a generously endowed musician who revives the lost art of ‘classical’ improvisation—one that could have come about some hundred years ago.” Ilhan Mimaroglu, “Keith Jarrett Mercer Arts Center, New York City,” *DownBeat*, January 1973.
- ³¹ Nat Hentoff, liner notes to Charles Mingus, *Mingus Plays Piano*, Impulse!, 1963.
- ³² The other musician, a contemporary of Jarrett, who was important in the turn from electronics and rock, was pianist McCoy Tyner, who recorded extensively during the 1970s. Tyner made his name as a member of saxophonist John Coltrane’s band in the 1960s and Coltrane himself was probably the most lionized and influential jazz musician of the 1960s. Interestingly, Tyner won more *DownBeat* readers’ polls and critics’ polls in the 1970s as “Best Pianist” than Jarrett did. He also won more of these polls during this decade for “Jazzman of the Year” than Jarrett. Jarrett’s thoughts in the 1970s on Coltrane’s importance are noteworthy:
- “One thing I can say is that Coltrane’s influence after he died was very negative, mostly because he couldn’t control it any more. He didn’t intend there to be a big gap, he intended that there be more space for everyone to do what they should do. That’s what his music represents to me, that there is a much greater potential than anyone thought before for a human being and an instrument.” Bob Palmer, “The Inner Octaves of Keith Jarrett,” *DownBeat*, October 1974.
- ³³ See Neil Leonard, *Jazz: Myth and Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987) for his discussion of the cult-nature of various schools or approaches to jazz and how the successful jazz performer often speaks with the authority and charisma of a shaman. See also the classic study, Philip Rieff, *The Triumph of the Therapeutic: Uses of Faith after Freud* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966).
- ³⁴ Elsdon, *Keith Jarrett’s The Köln Concert*, chap. 1 and 2.
- ³⁵ “Youthful Time: An Interview with Chico Hamilton,” *DownBeat*, March 1971.