

Yusef Lateef's Autophysiopsychic Quest

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Abstract: Yusef Lateef's neologism for jazz was autophysiopsychic, meaning "music from one's physical, mental and spiritual self." Lateef condensed in this term a very considered conception linking the intellectual and the spiritual based in his faith as an Ahmadiyya Muslim and his lifelong commitment to both Western and non-Western intellectual explorations. Lateef's distinctive voice as an improviser is traced with respect to his autophysiopsychic exploration of world instruments including flutes, double reeds, and chordophones, and his friendship with John Coltrane. The two shared a love of spiritual exploration as well as the study of science, physics, symmetry, and mathematics. Lateef's ethnomusicological research on Hausa music in Nigeria, as well as his other writings and visual art, deepen our understanding of him as an artist-scholar who cleared the way for the presence of autophysiopsychic musicians in the academy.

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It is no secret that the use of the word "jazz" to describe the canonic music we associate with Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, Charlie Parker, Miles Davis, and John Coltrane has long been contested. The "J-word," which, according to many, began as sexual slang, has been viewed as a marketing category, a white-perpetuated label to place African American music in a box, and a term that through its voyeuristic association with illicit activities became racially offensive. Duke Ellington found it a category he did not want to be associated with, a feeling shared by musicians across many generations from Charles Mingus and Max Roach to Nicholas Payton and Muhal Richard Abrams. Yusef Lateef was among those who objected to the word.¹ Lateef's word to describe this music was *autophysiopsychic*.

I call my music autophysiopsychic music. This word means music from one's physical, spiritual and mental self: i.e., music from the heart. In other words, my music is a conduit whereby and through which

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Providence may reveal some of the beauties of creation to the ears of those who listen with their ears and their hearts.²

Lateef's word autophysiopsychic crystalizes a deep aesthetic, psychological, and ethical philosophy that lay at the center of his life as a musician, composer, Muslim, writer, visual artist, and professor. In this essay, I first explore Lateef's musical and psychological concept of autophysiopsychic as well as its relationship to Ahmadiyya Islamic understandings of spiritual development through knowledge and religious practice. Islamic ideas linking the physical, intellectual, and spiritual lie at the very center of his neologism, while its musical practice links his vision to compatible Western and African American understandings of acquiring an authentic, warm, and humane musical voice. Lateef wrote about the term autophysiopsychic late in his life, after having led a distinguished career as a bandleader, composer, and sideman.

I then trace Lateef's development of his personal voice and friendship with John Coltrane, as well as his wide-ranging intellectual explorations of music, mathematics, science, philosophy, organology, and his self-taught ethnomusicological study of Hausa flute playing in Nigeria. Throughout his life he pursued education in colleges and universities, including Wayne State University, Manhattan School of Music, and the University of Massachusetts Amherst, while simultaneously engaging deeply in Islamic study through the Ahmadiyya branch of Islam, which he joined in 1948. In 1988, he became a professor at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, part of the Five Colleges, where he taught until his retirement in 2002. Yusef Lateef was a lifelong autodidact who followed his interests to wherever they led. Like John Coltrane,

Max Roach, Charles Mingus, and Charlie Parker, he was an intellectual as well as a musician. Yusef Lateef was an artist-scholar of the kind that academia now welcomes, yet he had to wait until he was sixty-eight years old for his first full-time academic post.³ Lateef's view of the interrelationship between music, intellect, and humane development has much to tell us about why this music still matters.

Yusef Abdul Lateef's deepest discussion of the idea of autophysiopsychic music is found in his essay "The Pleasures of the Voice in Autophysiopsychic Music." Here Lateef attempts to describe the linkage between the character and personality of the musician and the emotional quality of the music created by him or her. Creating autophysiopsychic music, in his view, requires three kinds of voice: the audible voice, the dramatic voice, and the artist's own voice.

Sounds with audible voice give us the sense of a sound coming from the whole being of the musician – ; and they touch us – they seem to give us energy, or a sensation, rather than requiring energy to listen.⁴

To this he contrasts with "inaudible voice," or a person whose concern with other things, such as technique, may stand in the way of communicating his or her humanity.

Valid presenters use their technique, only to project their character, their vast array of experiences, thoughts, feelings, concerns and ideas that are entombed in their brain's memory – and more than that – I will say: they speak with their heart.⁵

The musician who successfully creates an audible voice has the ability to "transform the events of their mind and heart into sound," a process that he says is "not unlike elegant rational scientists – they only operate with deeply different

grammars." The heart, as Lateef notes, is "the seat of the intellect."⁶

When "the sound of the music seems to tell us what kind of person is playing" the autophysiopsychic musician has achieved a dramatic voice. The listener is drawn closer to the personality of the musician, who seems to project a character responsible for the sound. Throughout this essay, Lateef takes Lester Young as an example of what he means by his autophysiopsychic ideal. "When listening to his music," he noted, "your ear will tell you that his character was warm and sensitive."⁷

For Lateef, the development of one's own voice was an achieved (rather than natural) quality that linked the exploration of musical craft to the development of personal character. He explained Lester Young's musical voice as follows:

He could treat notes so as to indicate assurance, by rapidly dropping the pitch, or indicate incompleteness by leveling the pitch in a manner which would suggest continuation, or when he thought it appropriate he would avoid traditional tones, by applying innovative fingerings, whereby he produced a new genre of sound textures. In conjunction with the sound textures that he introduced let me say that: as a tone language uses changes in pitch to indicate differences in the meanings of words – Lester used changes of texture, pitch and nuance, tempered by his immaterial self, to indicate differences in feelings or to put the audience into a certain frame of mind. . . . He never sounded as though he was confronted with an ambivalence in deciding what was central to his message – always convincing, authentic, and the logos, the proof, or apparent proof of his artistry was always there, provided by the sound of his music itself, nurtured by the gentle soul that he was.⁸

Lester Young served as a model for Yusef Lateef's own tenor playing, as can

be heard in "Yusef's Mood" from 1957.⁹ As we will see, Lateef's own development of his personal voice can be charted through his exploration of the flute, the oboe, and non-Western instruments of many kinds.

In joining the Ahmadiyya Movement in 1948, Lateef entered an Islamic community that had attracted many other musicians of the bebop era, including Art Blakey, Ahmad Jamal, Dakota Staton, Sahib Shihab, and Idrees Sulieman, among others. The Ahmadi practice an inclusive multiracial form of Islam that stresses finding peace by following the path of God (Allah) and Islamic education.¹⁰ In the 1920s, members of the Ahmadiyya Movement published the first English translation of the Qur'an available in the United States. Although their first proselytizer, Mufti Muhammad Sadiq, intended to proselytize among all U.S. ethnic groups, his own problems as a South Asian in Jim Crow America led him to concentrate on African Americans. The Ahmadi in their early years were closely allied with Marcus Garvey's United Negro Improvement Association, but their insistence that whites as well as African Americans were welcome in their community put them at odds with other Islamic groups supporting black nationalism. The Ahmadi, because they believe their founder Mirza Ghulam Ahmad to be the Mahdi sent to reform Islam to its true meaning, are considered to be heretics and non-Muslims by many mainstream Muslim sects, despite their full observance of the pillars of Islam and practices of Islamic education.¹¹

In Islam, Yusef Lateef found a path of intensive study, as well as ethical and spiritual development that guided his life. Through the Ahmadiyya movement he studied the Qur'an, the Arabic language, as well as the deeds and sayings of the

Prophet Muhammad. A distinguishing feature of Islam to Lateef was its commitment to education, something that he emphasized in his 1975 doctoral dissertation.

In the light of commandments of the Quran and the traditions, the Muslims, at all times, retained learning and its diffusion a distinctive feature of their social life, as if it were an article of Faith with them. The culture and civilization of Islam is based on education.¹²

The dissertation compared Western and Islamic philosophies of education, and illustrated Lateef's wide reading in both education literatures.

A key teaching of Islam is that the path to spiritual development arrives not only through faith, but also through reason. According to Mirza Ghulam Ahmad,

The Quran has adopted two methods for the understanding of God. First, the method whereby human reason is strengthened and illumined for the purpose of setting forth reasons in support of the existence of God, and thus saves a person from falling into error.¹³

In *The Philosophy of the Teachings of Islam*, a central text for the Ahmadis, Ahmad explains over several chapters the process of evolving from the human being's "natural condition of barbarity to a moral state, and then to lift him from that state to the limitless ocean of spirituality."¹⁴ Key to transforming natural conditions into moral qualities is the acquisition of knowledge through reason. According to Ahmad, the Qur'an contains reasoned arguments for the existence of God that will persuade rather than coerce the penitent to follow the path of Islam. Acquiring knowledge leads to spiritual practice and its transformation into embodied knowledge.

These verses indicate that there is no virtue in the knowledge that is confined to

the mind and heart. True knowledge is that which emerges from the mind and regulates and trains all the limbs, and manifests in practice all the store of memory. Thus knowledge is strengthened and fostered through its impress being imposed on all the limbs by practical experience. No type of knowledge, however elementary, arrives at its climax without practice.

Here we see how Yusef Lateef's succinct definition of autophysiopsychic music as "music from one's physical, mental and spiritual self" includes in one word the process of spiritual development advocated by his religion. The final stage of spiritual development taught by the Ahmadis arises from arriving at the level in which a person can converse with God.

The cleansing water which removes all doubt, that mirror through which that Supreme Being can be seen, is converse with the Divine that I have just mentioned. Let him whose soul seeks the truth arise and search. I tell you truly that if souls are charged with true seeking and hearts develop true thirst, people would search for that way and would seek that path.¹⁵

Lateef's widow Ayesha Lateef stressed that, in Islam, reason and faith are one, but added that many Muslims don't understand that. Her own explanation notes that "the *work* of God, which is the creation, and the *word* of God, which is the revelation, should sync together." She also emphasized that "Yusef was not just a statistical Muslim. He absorbed the teachings and he made them his own."¹⁶ Throughout his life, these Islamic teachings guided Lateef's quest for knowledge and spiritual and musical development. Knowledge and reason provided the fulcrum through which he moved between his religious community, the professional world of music, and the academic scene of colleges and universities.

Yusef Lateef began achieving his own distinctive voice in autophysio-psyche music in 1950s Detroit. In many ways, he pioneered a non-Western sensibility to improvisational exploration, characterized by the use of world instruments that would be taken up more broadly in the 1960s by partisans of the avant-garde. Although Lateef, who had been known as Bill Evans before his conversion to Islam, had met considerable success as a tenor saxophonist in Chicago and New York in the late 1940s, where he had worked with Eugene Wright and Dizzy Gillespie, his wife Sadie's ill health made him return to Detroit in 1951. Detroit's thriving jazz scene included musicians like Milt Jackson, Curtis Fuller, Barry Harris, Kenny Burrell, Elvin Jones, and Betty Carter. Although Lateef had a strong and confident tenor sax sound, Kenny Burrell encouraged him to add the flute and to study music theory and composition at places like the Larry Teal School of Music and Wayne State University. At the former, Lateef encountered the Schillinger system, a highly abstract and mathematical approach to thinking through rhythm, periodicity, and permutation. At the latter, he studied classical music, including Arnold Schoenberg and his serial methods of composition. In addition to flute, Lateef began studying oboe and exploring a variety of non-Western instruments.¹⁷

Detroit in the 1950s was home to a large Arab population. Lateef not only met co-religionists but discovered instruments from the Arab world through friends and at a Syrian spice store in the Eastern Market section of Detroit. These instruments included the argol, a double reed instrument, and the rebab, a string instrument.¹⁸ Ayesha Lateef explained his interest in world instruments:

I think a lot of it had to do with being an Ahmadi. Meeting Ahmadis from around

the world, particularly India or Asia and then later Africa. And then also you know, the recitation of the Qur'an you know, which in Arabic has a melody to it. I kind of feel like eventually it would have happened anyway whether he was a Muslim or not, but being Muslim fed it.¹⁹

In 1957 he lived in the Ahmadiyya mosque in Detroit where he served as its imam and developed a curriculum for Islamic instruction for children and adults.²⁰ That same year he recorded *Jazz Moods*, an album featuring for the first time these new instruments. "Metaphor" opens with a Middle Eastern sounding argol solo, accompanied by the rebab, which is followed by a more orthodox instrumentation featuring Lateef on flute and Curtis Fuller on trombone. The rhythm section included Hugh Lawson on piano, Ernie Farrow on bass and rebab, Louis Hayes on drums, and Doug Watkins on percussion.

Lateef sought to break the mold in his ensemble sound through the instruments of other cultures. He began doing research at the public library on the instruments of Japan, China, Africa, and India. He also began making his own flutes, such as the pneumatic bamboo flute. Lateef through his interest in organology and cultural variety was becoming his own self-taught ethnomusicologist.

In following the development of Lateef's particular voice, it is clear that he was particularly drawn to the timbral variety made possible through playing multiple instruments. Although some of his compositions sounded non-Western, Lateef's musical language was deeply rooted in the blues, jazz, and bebop, whose expressive sensibility he had developed on the tenor saxophone, which he also continued to play. On the flute and oboe, Lateef seemed to be able to inflect his melodies in new directions, as can be heard on

his extraordinary performance of “Oboe Blues” in 1959.²¹

Lateef moved back to New York in 1960, where he began working with Lonnie Hillyer, Charles Mingus, Babatunde Olatunji, and Cannonball Adderley, and became a first call for recording sessions. Shortly thereafter he was able to buy a home in Teaneck, New Jersey, where he moved with his family. He toured internationally with Adderley, including Europe and Japan. Lateef played swinging straight-ahead tenor in the group, but Adderley also featured him on flute, oboe, and even bamboo flute. Although he clearly could have continued a mainstream jazz career in the top groups of the day, Lateef’s quest for his personal voice led him deeper into his world music explorations.

On the album *Eastern Sounds* from 1961, Lateef added the Chinese globular flute, an instrument resembling an ocarina. After reading about this ancient instrument (also known as the *xun*) he searched for one in New York’s Chinatown. “The Plum Blossom” opens with an extended solo on the globular flute made up of four notes (A3, C#4, D4, E4) and accompanied by the rebab. His gradual development of a three-note riff-like theme, varied through embellishment and subtle rhythmic variation, showcases the appealing low register of the globular flute, the soft but swinging articulations of Lateef, and his ability to captivate with minimal materials. Joe Goldberg, who wrote the liner notes for the album, seemed not to know quite what to say about the Eastern references on the album and its unusual instrumentation, so he talked about the two pieces from film soundtracks and the straight-ahead tenor ballad “Don’t Blame Me” before tackling the oboe solo on “Blues for the Orient” and the globular flute. On this album, Lateef’s sonic experiments were balanced by straight-ahead pieces likely to appeal to any jazz fan.

In 1963, Impulse! allowed Lateef to record an album called *Jazz ’Round the World*, on which he played a variety of instruments and featured a selection of folk songs from around the world, including “The Volga Rhythm Song,” a Japanese folk song called “Ringo Oiwake,” and his own beautiful flute feature “Utopia.” In his autobiography, Lateef talks about the mixed reception he received.

While many have told me how much they enjoyed the Arabic and Asian mix of the album we created – Richard Williams (trumpet), Hugh Lawson (piano), and Lex Humphries (drums) – others have rejected it, feeling it’s not what they expected. Some were reluctant to accept it, but humanity is that way; there are divisions. I remember using an Indian drone instrument on a piece called “Chandra” and a doctor called me from Milwaukee. He was outraged that I did that as though I had violated something, transgressed a cardinal sin.²²

Lateef’s commitment to his artistic direction, in other words, cost him in some corners of the jazz world.

During the 1950s, Lateef also developed a deep friendship with John Coltrane. In notes in his personal papers, he created a timeline of his friendship with Coltrane. He first heard of him in 1946 and then met him for the first time at the Click Club in Philadelphia during a rehearsal with Jimmy Heath in 1949. When he returned to New York to record in 1956, he saw John Coltrane with Miles Davis at the Cafe Bohemia in the Village. In 1957, while recording with Savoy, he visited Coltrane on 103rd Street and they practiced together. Coltrane sometimes played Detroit, as he did in 1958 with Miles Davis’s group, and they saw each other. When Lateef and his family moved back to New York in 1960, he got together with Coltrane more frequently, even sitting in with him once at the Village Gate. They were both

deeply interested in symmetry, science, and religion and had similarly gentle personalities. In 1961, Coltrane gave Lateef a birthday present of a mandala-like diagram tracing multiple levels of symmetry in an expanded circle of fifths. Lateef included this in the opening of his *Respository of Scales and Melodic Patterns* in 1981, itself bearing witness to his own fascinations with symmetries, cycles, and scales from around the world.²³ Near the end of Coltrane's life, Lateef, Babatunde Olatunji, and Coltrane were planning to give a concert at Avery Fisher Hall in 1968, as well as collaborate on developing a family-oriented musical recreation center.²⁴

There has long been speculation as to whether John Coltrane was a Muslim. The prayer in *A Love Supreme*, with its decided emphasis on a singular God, thankfulness, and mercy, is in keeping with the monotheism of Islam and, for some, resembles the words of the Al-Fatiha, the first surah of the Qur'an.²⁵ It is also compatible with the Vedanta Hindu idea of the One, which became a larger part of his spiritual interests after meeting Alice Coltrane in 1963. According to Ayesha Lateef, some Ahmadiis have claimed that Coltrane was an Ahmadi, but she notes that there is no record of him ever having joined the community. His first wife Naima was a Muslim, but she was not an Ahmadi. Ayesha Lateef, who mentioned how often her husband talked of Coltrane, thinks that the two may have had conversations about Islam and hears in *A Love Supreme* an "anthem for the one God according to Islam." She concludes that Coltrane "wasn't against Islam."²⁶

In the broadest sense, Lateef's interest in global musical instruments was also political. His Muslim faith and knowledge of the presence of Islam around the globe may have first opened his ears to the sounds of the Middle East, Africa, India, and Asia, but the 1950s were also a

key decade in the independence of African nations and a broader African-Asian alliance against colonialism. Islam itself was associated with an anticolonialist perspective on the African continent. Lateef showed his awareness of the African freedom struggle in his participation on Randy Weston's *Uhuru Africa* album in 1960 and Art Blakey's album *African Beat* in 1962. Here, Africans, jazz musicians, Latinx musicians, and Muslims collaborated on a pan-African sound that appeared just as the newly emerging African nations were joining the United Nations and sending diplomatic delegations to New York. On *African Beat*, Lateef played with Nigerian percussionist Solomon Ilori, Art Blakey, Chief Bey, Ahmed Abdul-Malik, Curtis Fuller, and several others. Lateef's beautiful flute sound can be heard on "Ero Ti Nr'ojeje."²⁷

Other autopsiopsychic musicians were also demonstrating global awareness in their music. John Coltrane's *Africa* album, for example, was released just days before Lateef recorded the *Eastern Sounds Album*; Max Roach's *We Insist! Freedom Now Suite* in 1960 had invoked Africa with Babatunde Olatunji's drumming on "Africa"; and bassist Ahmed Abdul Malik played the oud in the piece "Tears from Johannesburg" on his 1959 album *East Meets West*. Coltrane's recording of "India" in 1963 gestured East and by 1965 on the album *Kulu Se Mama* Coltrane began including instruments like hand percussion and shakers that went beyond standard jazz instrumentation. Exploring African instruments, in particular, was embraced by musicians interested in black power and cultural nationalism.²⁸

Yusef Lateef's strong interest in acquiring Western education and credentials also continued. After undertaking his first pilgrimage to Mecca in early 1966, he returned to New York and enrolled in the

Manhattan School of Music where, by 1969, he had received his bachelor's degree in flute performance and a master's degree in music education. For Lateef, Islamic education and Western education were twin paths that he undertook simultaneously. He enjoyed studying not only the flute under former New York Philharmonic flutist John Wummer, but also taking courses in literature and art history. By 1971, Lateef was teaching music theory at the Borough of Manhattan Community College (BMCC), while also enrolled in courses at the New School in philosophy and symbolic logic. Among his students were Albert Heath and Kenny Barron.

While teaching at BMCC, he began a doctoral program in education at the University of Massachusetts Amherst under the mentorship of music theorist and pianist Roland Wiggins. His dissertation "An Overview of Western and Islamic Education" explains to an English speaking audience the principles of Qur'anic study and scholarship in dialogue and comparison with Western writers on education – including Thomas Jefferson, Karl Jaspers, Immanuel Kant, Bertrand Russell, Jean Piaget, and John Dewey – finding points where Islamic and Western views converge and diverge. Just before he received his Ed.D., and one day before he became eligible for tenure, Lateef learned that BMCC had terminated him – an action that smacks of an administrative manipulation all too common in educational institutions at the time. In the 1970s, jazz programs were not valued, their instructors usually served in the lower ranks of the administrative hierarchy, and African Americans were particularly vulnerable to being dropped. Lateef mused in his autobiography: "Despite being in possession of three post-graduate degrees, I was without a teaching position."²⁹

So he went on the road. Between 1975 and 1980, he took his band and family

around the world: England, Denmark, Norway, Pakistan, India, Ghana, Egypt, and Tunisia. During these years he added writing short stories to his long list of interests and began working on the scales and exercises that would become his famous *Repository of Scales and Melodic Patterns*, published in 1981. He spent the next four years as a senior research fellow at the Center for Nigeria Cultural Studies at Ahmadu Bello University in Zaria, Nigeria, one of the original Hausa city-states and home to Nigeria's largest university. The Hausa are among the most prominent West African Muslim groups. He researched the Sarewa flute, played by Fulani herdsmen; taught research methodology to cultural officers at the Center for Nigeria Cultural Studies; and studied African music and drama. The fruit of this research was a book he coauthored with Ziky Kofoworola (a Nigerian dramatist) called *Hausa Performing Arts and Music*, published in 1987. The book is a serious piece of ethnomusicological research including interviews with Hausa herdsman, transcriptions, and organological diagrams of Hausa instruments. Lateef and Kofoworola had been commissioned by Nigeria's Minister of Culture to produce the book, and I think that the Society for Ethnomusicology should formally recognize Yusef Lateef's contribution to our field.³⁰

Lateef's *In Nigeria*, an album recorded in Lagos in 1983 with Hausa, Yoruba, and Tiv drummers, presents what he calls a hybrid suite of dance pieces accompanied by traditional drummers, which include reference not only to African life, but Jamaica (on "Mu Omi") and Indian raga with drone (on "Lalit").³¹ "Curved Space-time" features Lateef performing a call and response with himself on tenor and flute accompanied by traditional drums, including a talking drum. Quoting physicist Fritjof Capra on the elasticity of time

in Einstein's curved universe in the liner notes, Lateef thematizes a familiar ascending arpeggiated passage from John Coltrane's "Giant Steps" solo and responds on the flute to his tenor. The result is a kind of African "Giant Steps" accompanied by a warm, low-toned, resonant groove.

When he returned to Western Massachusetts in 1985, Lateef focused on composing, which led to the recording of *Little Symphony* in 1987, an album on which he played all instruments. Producer Nesuhi Ertegun helped arrange an Atlantic contract for the record and it won a Grammy in the New Age category in 1988. Finally, that same year, the University of Massachusetts hired Lateef as an associate professor of music. He was sixty-eight by then but went on to teach for fourteen years and was named a Five College Distinguished Professor of Music. While there, Lateef not only taught but started a record company called YAL, composed, wrote novels, and completed hundreds of visual artworks.³² His student Michael Didonna, a photographer and musician, created a short film in honor of Lateef called *The Gentle Giant*, in which he can be heard talking about some of his educational philosophy.³³ Michael Dessen, a trombonist, composer, and former student of Lateef, wrote the introduction

to Yusef Lateef's *Song Book*, offering insight into the kind of effect he had on his students.

The range and breadth of Lateef's musical travels is astonishing, but what is most inspiring to me is something else, something more difficult to explain. He brings an overarching, singularly intense mindset to all of his projects, using all the possible tools at his disposal – scientific and intuitive, old and new, individual and collective, distant and close to home – to probe the nature of his feelings and thoughts. As a student, I marveled at the ease with which he flowed among different approaches to making music, different states of consciousness. While working within technically complex frameworks, he is always able to keep his ears and imagination open to new possibilities, to unexpected directions that the material might generate.³⁴

Yusef Lateef's autopsiopsychic quest, fusing intellectual, physical, and spiritual development, reminds us of the long dedication of musicians to knowledge of multiple kinds.³⁵ Since the bebop era, jazz artists have viewed themselves as both an intelligentsia and a spiritual community devoted to musical exploration. Few artists have more thoroughly theorized the connection between the two than Yusef Lateef.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ For an overview of this debate, see Nicholas Payton, "On Why Jazz Isn't Cool Anymore," November 27, 2011, <https://nicholaspayton.wordpress.com/2011/11/27/on-why-jazz-isnt-cool-anymore>; Terry Teachout, "When Jazz Was a Dirty Word," *The Wall Street Journal*, March 8, 2013, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424127887324582804578344330801433790>; and Ivan Hewett, "Abdullah Ibrahim Interview: 'I Don't Like the Word Jazz,'" *The Telegraph*, November 14, 2017, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/music/interviews/abdullah-ibrahim-interview-dont-like-word-jazz>.
- ² Yusef Lateef, "Reflections on the Social Relevance of Black Improvised Music," keynote lecture for the symposium "Lost in Diversity – A Transatlantic Dialogue on the Social Relevance of Jazz," Heidelberg Center for American Studies, Heidelberg University, Heidelberg, Germany, November 8–9, 2012. I thank Ayesha Lateef for sharing the text with me.

- ³ I am thinking in particular of the professorships of George Lewis at Columbia University and Vijay Iyer at Harvard University.
- ⁴ Yusef A. Lateef, “The Pleasures of Voice in Autophysiopsychic Music” (undated), <https://yuseflateef.com/literature/essays>.
- ⁵ Ibid.
- ⁶ Ibid.
- ⁷ Ibid.
- ⁸ Ibid.
- ⁹ Yusef Lateef, “Yusef’s Mood,” on *Jazz Mood*, Savoy, 1957. The track can be heard on YouTube at <https://youtu.be/SMVslFUIxOA> (accessed January 29, 2019).
- ¹⁰ Members of this community refer to themselves as “Ahmadis.” The religion itself is known as the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community or the Ahmadiyya Movement.
- ¹¹ A brief overview of the Ahmadiyya Movement can be found in Ingrid Monson, “Art Blakey’s African Diaspora,” in *The African Diaspora: A Musical Perspective*, ed. Ingrid Monson (New York: Garland Press, 2000), 337–338. A more comprehensive account of the Ahmadis and their intersections with other African American Muslim groups can be found in Patrick D. Bowen, *A History of Conversion to Islam in the United States, Volume 2: The African American Islamic Renaissance, 1920–1975* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2017). Pakistan, a traditional center of Ahmadi activity, declared Ahmadis legally non-Muslim, which led to their migration to other locations. The current headquarters of the Ahmadis is in London. See Al Islam, “Ahmadiyya Muslim Community,” <https://www.alislam.org/library/ahmadiyya-muslim-community> (accessed Jan 22, 2019).
- ¹² Yusef Lateef, “An Overview of Western and Islamic Education” (Ed.D. diss., University of Massachusetts, 1975), 10.
- ¹³ Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, *The Philosophy of the Teachings of Islam*, trans. Sir Muhammad Zafulla Khan (London: Islam International Publications, 2017), 86–87. I thank Ayesha Lateef for giving me a copy of this book.
- ¹⁴ Ibid., 24.
- ¹⁵ Ibid., 198.
- ¹⁶ Author interview with Ayesha Lateef, January 9, 2019, Shutesbury, Massachusetts. I thank Ayesha Lateef for meeting with me and sharing her observations and archival documents.
- ¹⁷ Biographical information, unless otherwise indicated, is drawn from Yusef Lateef and Herb Boyd, *The Gentle Giant: The Autobiography of Yusef Lateef* (Irvington, N.J.: Morton Books, 2006).
- ¹⁸ There are many romanized spellings for the argol, including *arghul* and *arghool*. I use the spelling that appears on Lateef’s albums.
- ¹⁹ Author interview with Ayesha Lateef, January 9, 2019, Shutesbury, Massachusetts.
- ²⁰ Yusef Lateef, “An Overview of Western and Islamic Education,” 7.
- ²¹ Yusef Lateef, “Oboe Blues,” on *The Dreamer*, Savoy, 1959. Yusef Lateef, oboe; Terry Pollard, piano; William Austin, bass; Frank Grant, percussion.
- ²² Lateef and Boyd, *The Gentle Giant*.
- ²³ Yusef Lateef, *Respository of Scales and Musical Patterns* (Amherst, Mass.: FANA Music, 1981). Physicist Stephon Alexander explains the multiple symmetries in Coltrane’s diagram in *The Jazz of Physics* (New York: Basic Books, 2016), 222–226.
- ²⁴ Yusef Lateef, Coltrane timeline, personal papers. I thank Ayesha Lateef for sharing these documents with me.

- ²⁵ Coltrane's poem begins: "I will do all I can to be worthy of Thee O Lord. It all has to do with it. Thank you God. Peace. There is none other." John Coltrane, liner notes to *A Love Supreme*, Impulse!, 1964. The Al-Fatiha begins: "In the Name of God, the Lord of Mercy, the Giver of Mercy. Praise belongs to God, Lord of the worlds, the Lord of Mercy, Master of the Day of Judgement. It is You we Worship; it is You we ask for help." *The Qur'an*, trans. M. A. S. Abdel Haleem (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).
- ²⁶ Author interview with Ayesha Lateef, January 9, 2019, Shutesbury, Massachusetts.
- ²⁷ Art Blakey, *The African Beat*, Blue Note, 1962.
- ²⁸ I discuss this interconnection in chapter six of my book *Freedom Sounds: Civil Rights Call Out to Jazz and Africa* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).
- ²⁹ Lateef and Boyd, *The Gentle Giant*.
- ³⁰ Ziky Kofoworola and Yusef Lateef, "Hausa Performing Arts and Music," *Nigeria Magazine*, 1987.
- ³¹ Yusef Lateef, *In Nigeria*, YAL, 1983.
- ³² A major exhibit of Lateef's artworks titled *Yusef Lateef: Towards the Unknown* was held at the Trinosophes Cafe in Detroit in 2015.
- ³³ Michael Didonna, *The Gentle Giant* [film], <http://michaeldidonna.com/film/2016/9/22/the-gentle-giant>.
- ³⁴ Michael Dessen, preface to *Yusef Lateef Song Book* (Amherst, Mass.: FANA Music/YAL, 2005).
- ³⁵ For a rich description of the wide variety of learning philosophies in jazz, see Paul F. Berliner, *Thinking in Jazz: The Infinite Art of Improvisation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).