

## **NOTE TO USERS**

**This reproduction is the best copy available.**

UMI<sup>®</sup>



(Re)Gendering Jazz: Women Instrumentalists in Toronto

by

Robin E. Desmeules

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in

Music and Culture

Carleton University  
Ottawa, Ontario

©2010, Robin Desmeules



Library and Archives  
Canada

Published Heritage  
Branch

395 Wellington Street  
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4  
Canada

Bibliothèque et  
Archives Canada

Direction du  
Patrimoine de l'édition

395, rue Wellington  
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4  
Canada

*Your file* *Votre référence*  
ISBN: 978-0-494-71678-6  
*Our file* *Notre référence*  
ISBN: 978-0-494-71678-6

#### NOTICE:

The author has granted a non-exclusive license allowing Library and Archives Canada to reproduce, publish, archive, preserve, conserve, communicate to the public by telecommunication or on the Internet, loan, distribute and sell theses worldwide, for commercial or non-commercial purposes, in microform, paper, electronic and/or any other formats.

The author retains copyright ownership and moral rights in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's permission.

#### AVIS:

L'auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque et Archives Canada de reproduire, publier, archiver, sauvegarder, conserver, transmettre au public par télécommunication ou par l'Internet, prêter, distribuer et vendre des thèses partout dans le monde, à des fins commerciales ou autres, sur support microforme, papier, électronique et/ou autres formats.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur et des droits moraux qui protègent cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

---

In compliance with the Canadian Privacy Act some supporting forms may have been removed from this thesis.

While these forms may be included in the document page count, their removal does not represent any loss of content from the thesis.

Conformément à la loi canadienne sur la protection de la vie privée, quelques formulaires secondaires ont été enlevés de cette thèse.

Bien que ces formulaires aient inclus dans la pagination, il n'y aura aucun contenu manquant.

  
**Canada**

## **Abstract**

This thesis represents a snapshot of the current jazz community in Toronto as viewed by four women instrumentalists who are also veterans of the Toronto jazz scene. Their views offer a window into the ways that gender informs contemporary musical practices, and stand as parts of a larger picture that merits further study. Among the themes and issues I explored with them are: historical accounts of jazz as masculinist discourse; understandings of musical practices based on gender and efforts to include women in jazz; and, understandings of how gender could play a role in the subjectivity of the performer within a musical context. By centering our dialogue, and my analysis thereof, around these themes, I explore how these musicians understand the ways that gender structures and shapes their music.

## Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to thank the musicians I interviewed — Lina Allemano, Tara Davidson, Rosemary Galloway and Nancy Walker — for their interest in my project, and especially for their willingness to take time out of their hectic schedules to discuss their ideas with me.

I would also like to thank my supervisor, Jesse Stewart, for his mindful suggestions, careful criticisms, and his meticulous attention to language during the writing process. Thanks to my committee members James Deaville, Anna Hoefnagels, and Pauline Rankin who contributed considerable time and effort in this thesis on short notice. Thank you for helping me grow.

Several teachers have been crucial in my journey so far, but special mention goes to Pat LaBarbera for helping me find my sound, Charlotte Leonard for convincing me to go back to school, and James McGowan for helping me navigate graduate school. At Carleton, I extend my gratitude to James Deaville for helping me through this degree, and to Anna Hoefnagels for always leaving her door (and ears) open.

Thanks to all of my friends and family who have supported me, by listening, laughing with me, and reminding me that there is indeed life outside of grad school. Special thanks go to my many writing partners whose moral support and keen insights — not to mention fantastic café suggestions — played a crucial role in bringing this thesis to fruition. In that vein, I am indebted to Anita for not only collecting me in Ottawa, but for also being around to prod me through my final revisions. I am grateful to my wonderful partner, Muhammad for not letting me quit and making me have fun (even in Ottawa). Last but not least, I would like to express my profound gratitude to my mother, Linda, whose unwavering support and rapier wit make everything possible.

## Table of Contents

Abstract.....	ii
Acknowledgements .....	iii
Chapter One: Introduction .....	1
Reviewing the Literature on Jazz and Gender.....	2
Finding .....	2
Issues of Representation .....	4
Limits to the Literature.....	11
Framing the Gender(ed) Dialogue: Monson, Tucker and Butler .....	14
Framing the Gender(ed) Dialogue: Conducting Interviews in Toronto .....	22
Preview.....	24
Chapter Two: Experiencing Gender in Jazz Practice .....	26
Foundations: Encouragement in the Wake of the “Old Guard” .....	28
Get Over it Already!.....	34
Things Are Getting Better All the Time? But for Whom? .....	39
Experience Revisited.....	42
Chapter Three: (Un)heard? Gender and Identity Formation in the Space of Improvisation .....	45
Improvisation as a Site for Identity Formation.....	45
Interaction in Music: Improvisation as Conversation.....	50
Searching for Possibilities: Is There Something “Feminine” About Improvisation? Or, the Curse of the “Female Experience” .....	56
(Re)Gendering Possibilities, (Re)Gendering Jazz? .....	68
Chapter Four: Unpacking the Legacy of “All-Girl” Groups.....	70
Can Gender Make a Community? The Curse of the Female Experience, Revisited .....	71
All-girl Groups As a Source of Empowerment: Still Necessary? .....	80
All-Girl Groups: Resisting Novelty .....	91
Chapter Five: Conclusions .....	93
Future Directions (Or, The Ones that Got Away) .....	94
Appendix A: Sample Interview Questions.....	98
Bibliography .....	99

## **Chapter One: Introduction**

This project represents a snapshot of the current jazz community in Toronto as viewed by four women instrumentalists who are also veterans of the Toronto jazz scene: trumpeter Lina Allemano, alto saxophonist Tara Davidson, bassist Rosemary Galloway, and pianist Nancy Walker. The views of these women offer a window into the ways that gender informs contemporary musical practices, but they are not to be taken as being in any way definitive. Instead, they stand as parts of a larger picture that merits further study. This project, then, is also a kind of starting point for a longer term and larger exploration of jazz in Toronto and Canada.

The point of this project was to open a dialogue with several experienced musicians in Toronto's jazz scene about their experiences in jazz with a particular reference to the role they feel gender plays in these experiences. It also serves as a survey of the growing body of works on jazz, gender and improvisation that point to several obstacles women instrumentalists have faced in this predominantly male (and often misogynistic) field. This is particularly important given the fact that the majority of the work on jazz and gender — and women in jazz in particular — has a historical focus and is centred on the United States. Another important aspect of this dialogue involves the ways that these women's experiences intersect (or do not) with my own subjectivity and experiences as a jazz instrumentalist and academic in training. In sum, this thesis examines the complex relationship(s) between gender and jazz in the Toronto jazz scene, focusing on three major themes in particular: 1) the extent to which gender was (or was not) an obstacle throughout; 2) the space of improvisation as a site for community

formation and relational identity formation; and 3) the politics of women playing jazz with an emphasis on all-women groups.

This chapter proceeds in several sections: first, I review the literature on women in jazz, highlighting salient works and how my thesis builds on the insights in these works; second, I detail the theoretical framework I use to examine the contributions of these women to our understandings of jazz and gender in Toronto; third, I discuss the methods I used to conduct my interviews and deal with the results; finally, I provide a breakdown of this work according to the themes in the literature and interviews.

### **Reviewing the Literature on Jazz and Gender**

This study critically engages with a number of important themes in the growing body of work on representations of women in the discourses, academic and otherwise, surrounding jazz. This review has several parts: first, I depict the efforts to find and detail the lives of women making jazz throughout history; then, I examine texts that interrogate issues affecting representations of women making jazz; finally, I discuss the gaps in this growing body of literature, and propose how my thesis project attempts to fill those gaps.

### **Finding**

There are a number of works dedicated to excavating the histories of women making jazz. For the most part, these books take a biographical approach, framed around the issue of finding women in jazz that masculinist histories of the music have omitted. Sally Placksin's *American Women in Jazz: 1900 to the Present, Their Words, Lives, and Music*,

chronicles the lives of women from early jazz to the 1970s.<sup>1</sup> Placksin divides her book by decade, with the biographies of women active within each decade carefully detailed.

*Stormy Weather: The Music and Lives of a Century of Jazzwomen*<sup>2</sup> by Linda Dahl builds on this research in a number of ways. Of note in this book is a section that highlights a few key women in jazz throughout jazz history, as well as a rather extensive glossary of women she encountered in her research. This work also breaks ground because Dahl presents a feminist analysis of issues women faced socially and historically in musical practice several years before the larger scale feminist musicological writings on this subject came into view.<sup>3</sup> *Madame Jazz* by Leslie Gourse, although sometimes superficial in its approach (she tends to replicate the gendered discourse that she is taking issue with), still provides a considerable amount of information on women in jazz.<sup>4</sup> Sherrie Tucker's *Swing Shift* focuses on all-girl bands in the interwar and WWII periods, and details the names of musicians and groups.<sup>5</sup> Wayne Enstice and Janice Stockhouse detail the lives of women active in the scenes at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century in their book *Jazzwomen: Conversations with Twenty-One Musicians*.<sup>6</sup> This is the most detailed exploration of women currently active in jazz in print, and the interviews fill a sizeable

---

<sup>1</sup> Sally Placksin, *Jazzwomen 1900 to the Present: Their Words, Lives, and Music* (London: Pluto Press, 1982).

<sup>2</sup> Linda Dahl, *Stormy Weather: The Music and Lives of a Century of Jazzwomen* (New York: Limelight, 1984).

<sup>3</sup> Susan McClary's *Feminine Endings* came out in 1990, and Marcia Citron's *Gender and Musical Canon in 1989*. Marcia J. Citron, *Gender and the Musical Canon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Susan McClary, *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992).

<sup>4</sup> Leslie Gourse, *Madame Jazz: Contemporary Women Instrumentalists* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

<sup>5</sup> Sherrie Tucker, *Swing Shift: "All-Girl" Bands of the 1940s* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000).

<sup>6</sup> Wayne Enstice and Janis Stockhouse, *Jazzwomen: Conversations with Twenty-One Musicians* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004).

gap in the literature, which tends to focus on resurrecting lost women. It also features one of the most detailed accounts of two Canadian women making jazz.

Concerned with doing more than merely presenting the lives of these musicians, each of these books carefully details the many obstacles and biases that work to marginalize and often omit women from the history of jazz. These works also emphasize that it is important to do more than just list these women for posterity, and that the lives and struggles of these women need to be properly situated in their respective times. Each author tackles this issue in different ways. For example, Leslie Gourse and Linda Dahl both organize their books according to instrument type, which allows them to highlight the particular obstacles resulting from the gendering of instruments in dominant discourses, musical and otherwise, within the jazz world. These issues of representation are discussed in more detail in the next section.

### **Issues of Representation**

The literature on women making jazz identifies a number of overarching issues that affect the way that women are represented with respect to jazz practice including: 1) the ways that the discourse of jazz itself is masculine; 2) the ways in which women are described and presented differently, in historical and media representations, than their male counterparts; and 3) the ways that gendered stereotypes with respect to instrument choice affects how women are represented. Each of these issues affects dominant understandings of women musicians, ranging in scope from how women are described in the media to their marginal existence in the mainstream histories of jazz.

There have been a number of works that explicitly discuss the misogynistic tendencies in jazz discourse.<sup>7</sup> These works discuss how women are excluded from discussions of jazz. Jazz is routinely presented as a male musical practice through the use of gendered language and through the construction of a masculine space in the narratives of jazz which actively works to exclude women from the history of jazz. One of the most important pieces on this subject is the essay by Ingrid Monson, titled “The Problem with White Hipness: Race, Gender, and Cultural Conceptions in Jazz Historical Discourse.”<sup>8</sup> In this essay, Monson details the many ways that a highly racialized and gendered notion of “hipness” in jazz discourse shapes the ways that jazz is understood as predominantly male.<sup>9</sup> Sherrie Tucker also discusses the ways that jazz is constructed as predominantly male in a number of her works. Of note is her article “Big Ears” which discusses how to “listen” for gender and race in jazz historiography.<sup>10</sup> It also very clearly articulates why and how looking for gender in jazz is part of the greater process of deconstructing power in a narrative, for the construction of jazz as a masculine practice affects the ways that women are (mostly not) represented.

---

<sup>7</sup> Ingrid Monson, “The Problem with White Hipness: Race, Gender, and Cultural Conceptions in Jazz Historical Discourse,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 48, 3 (Autumn 1995): 396-422; Sherrie Tucker, “Big Ears: Listening for Gender in Jazz Studies” *Current Musicology* 71 (2002): 375-408; Sherrie Tucker and Nichole T. Rustin, eds., *Big Ears: Listening for Gender in Jazz Studies* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008); Ajay Heble and Gillian Siddall, “Nice Work if You Can Get It: Women in Jazz,” in *Landing on the Wrong Note: Jazz, Dissonance, and Critical Practice* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 141-65; Vickie Willis, “Be-in-tween the Spa[ ]ces: The Location of Women and Subversion in Jazz,” *The Journal of American Culture* 31, 3 (2008): 293-301; Trine Annfelt, “Jazz as Masculine Space.” Kilden Information Centre for Gender Research in Norway, <http://eng.kilden.forskingsradet.no/c52778/nyhet/vis.html?tid=53517>.

<sup>8</sup> Monson, “The Problem with White Hipness.”

<sup>9</sup> There are also many themes and issues involving race and class that are worth unpacking in this paper that lie outside its scope.

<sup>10</sup> Tucker, “Big Ears: Listening for Gender in Jazz Studies.”

Tucker also recently edited a book alongside Nichole T. Rustin, with the same title.<sup>11</sup> This exciting collection of articles covers a wide range of contributions on jazz and gender, ranging from issues in historiography to questions of representation in performance practice. Ajay Heble and Gillian Siddall join in the calls for a female perspective in jazz discourse in *Landing on the Wrong Note*,<sup>12</sup> noting the ways that the masculine spaces of jazz make it very hard for women to find opportunities to perform at jazz festivals and gain recognition in other institutional contexts associated with jazz. This chapter also presents a number of interesting avenues for future research, such as theorizing ways that a “feminine” music could destabilise masculinist discourses. Vickie Willis provides an interesting overview of the tensions women in jazz face with respect to the ways they are often required to perform prescribed gender and race roles in jazz contexts. Based on naturalized hegemonic white male understandings of jazz, these masculinist discourses effectively work to keep women musicians out of dominant histories of the music.<sup>13</sup> Trine Annfelt’s article on jazz in Norway in the 1990s provides a good analysis of the ways that the discourse in jazz historiography is very masculine in character.<sup>14</sup> She also provides an interesting framework, using the writings of Judith Butler, through which to interrogate jazz as a masculinist, heterosexist discourse — a long overdue contribution to the study of gender in jazz. Sherrie Tucker continues the discussion of jazz as a heteronormative discourse in her recent article in *Critical Studies in Improvisation* called “When Did Jazz Go Straight?”<sup>15</sup>

---

<sup>11</sup> Tucker and Rustin, eds., *Big Ears: Listening for Gender in Jazz Studies*.

<sup>12</sup> Heble with Siddall, “Nice Work if You Can Get It.”

<sup>13</sup> Willis, “Be-in-tween the Spa[ ]ces.”

<sup>14</sup> Annfelt, “Jazz as Masculine Space.”

<sup>15</sup> Sherrie Tucker, “When Did Jazz Go Straight? A Queer Question for Jazz Studies,” *Critical Studies in Improvisation* 4, 2 (2008), <http://www.criticalimprov.com/index.php/csieci/article/view/845/1398>.

A side effect of this overly masculinised space involves the language that people use to discuss jazz musicians. Pauline Oliveros discusses the use of language in her piece “Harmonic Anatomy,”<sup>16</sup> where she details how women are described in very different, more sexualised ways than men when writing about their musical output and style of playing. Nichole Rustin explores similar themes within the context of the life and career of Mary Lou Williams in her article “‘Mary Lou Williams Plays Like a Man!’ Gender, Genius, and Difference in Black Music Discourse” for *South Atlantic Quarterly*.<sup>17</sup> Rustin’s article provides an analysis of the many obstacles that Williams overcame throughout her career as an African-American woman in jazz.

Another issue discussed in the literature involves where and how women perform — particularly, if and when they play with other women. All-female groups (or histories or festivals) serve as both a liberating space and a means of containing women as exceptional cases, and this issue of containment is discussed primarily through all-women groups (or festivals). Sherrie Tucker’s work addresses this issue in the greatest detail, although Dahl, Gourse and Placksin all make mention of it to varying degrees. *Swing Shift*, Tucker’s book on all-girl swing bands, tackles the issue of the ways that all-girl groups are both a blessing and a curse for women making jazz because they at once highlight and isolate women. *The Other Side of Nowhere*, a collection of essays put together by Daniel Fischlin and Ajay Heble, contains a number of studies that also deal with this issue.<sup>18</sup> For example, Tucker’s contribution to the anthology, titled “Bordering

---

<sup>16</sup> Pauline Oliveros, “Harmonic Anatomy: Women in Improvisation,” in *The Other Side of Nowhere: Jazz, Improvisation, and Communities in Dialogue*, eds. Daniel Fischlin and Ajay Heble (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2004), 50-70.

<sup>17</sup> Nichole T. Rustin, “‘Mary Lou Williams Plays Like a Man!’ Gender, Genius, and Difference in Black Music Discourse,” *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 104, 3 (Summer 2005): 445-62.

<sup>18</sup> Daniel Fischlin, and Ajay Heble, editors, *The Other Side of Nowhere: Jazz, Improvisation, and Communities in Dialogue* (Middletown: Wesleyan Press, 2004).

on Community,” contemplates just what kind of community the category “women-in-jazz” is.<sup>19</sup> This chapter also raises a number of key problems with the category “women-in-jazz” as a whole, pointing out the fact that gender may not in itself constitute a community, even though this grouping is enforced on these musicians whether they like it or not. Tucker also discusses other means of containment involving the fact that women tend to be presented separately than men, in specialised books and festivals dedicated exclusively to women performers.<sup>20</sup>

Pauline Oliveros, Julie Dawn Smith, and Dana Reason also contributed essays to *The Other Side of Nowhere* that discuss all-women groups, but within the context of free improvisation rather than jazz specifically. Oliveros, through her own experiences and through interviews with other women, explores the view that improvising with other women is an inclusive space that transcends political and social structures in her chapter “Harmonic Anatomy: Women in Improvisation.”<sup>21</sup> Julie Dawn Smith explores how all-women improvising groups like the Feminist Improvising Group (FIG) were also a way for women to fight for space in a predominantly male musicking environment.<sup>22</sup> Smith discusses similar themes through the work of the group *Les Diaboliques* in a later contribution to the edited collection *Big Ears*.<sup>23</sup> In an article for *Critical Studies in Improvisation*, Ellen Waterman crafts a model for how to frame improvising musicians using what she calls a “feminist erotics of improvisation.” Through an analysis of the

---

<sup>19</sup> Sherrie Tucker, “Bordering on Community: Improvising Women Improvising Women-in-Jazz,” in *The Other Side of Nowhere*, 244-67.

<sup>20</sup> This is also addressed by Siddall and Heble in “Nice Work if You Can Get It.”

<sup>21</sup> Oliveros, “Harmonic Anatomy.”

<sup>22</sup> Julie Dawn Smith, “Playing Like a Girl: The Queer Laughter of the Feminist Improvising Group,” from *The Other Side of Nowhere*, 224-41.

<sup>23</sup> Julie Dawn Smith, “Perverse Hysterics: The Noisy *Cri* of *Les Diaboliques*,” in *Big Ears: Listening for Gender in Jazz Studies*, eds., Sherrie Tucker and Nichole T. Rustin (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008): 180-209.

musical output of Charlotte Hug, Waterman details how this feminist reappropriation of the concept of the erotic can be used to theorise the subversive potential of the music made by creative improvising musicians.<sup>24</sup>

A final issue in the representation of women involves gendered instrument stereotypes. Put simply, certain instruments have been coded over time as male and others female. This has been especially problematic for women making music. Research into these stereotypes forms a large part of the scholarship on women in music as a whole.<sup>25</sup> The discussion of how instruments are gendered comes from a few different approaches to the study of music. A number of works in feminist musicology point to a particular understanding of who may play which instruments according to the accepted roles of women of the time. For example, the collected essays in the anthology *Women Making Music* discuss the various acceptable roles for women in society which frequently extend to musical instrument choice and the range of performance venues available to women performers.<sup>26</sup> Also, there have also been a number of works that discuss the situation of women in orchestras.<sup>27</sup>

Jazz has inherited many of these gendered understandings of instruments, and the effects of these understandings are a highly prevalent theme in the discussion of women

---

<sup>24</sup> Ellen Waterman, "Naked Intimacy: Eroticism, Improvisation and Gender," *Critical Studies in Improvisation* 4, 2 (2008), <http://www.criticalimprov.com/index.php/csieci/article/view/1845/1398>.

<sup>25</sup> Ellen Koskoff, "When Women Play: Musical Instruments and Gender Ideology" in *Voices of Women: Essays in Honour of Violet Archer*, ed., Regula Qureshi (University of Alabama Press, 1996): 97-109; Veronica Doubleday, "Sounds of Power: An Overview of Musical Instruments and Gender" *Ethnomusicology Forum* 17, 1 (2008): 3-39.

<sup>26</sup> Jane Bowers and Judith Tick, *Women Making Music: The Western Art Tradition, 1150-1950* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986).

<sup>27</sup> Douglas W. Myers and Claire Etaugh, "Women Brass Musicians in Major Symphony Orchestras: How Level is the 'Playing' Field?" *International Alliance for Women in Music* 7, 3 (2001): 28-31; William Osborne, "Women in Major Orchestras: An Update," *International Alliance for Women in Music* 7, 3 (2001): 31; Carol Neuls-Bates, "Womens's Orchestras in the United States, 1925-45," from *Women Making Music: The Western Art Tradition, 1150-1950*, eds., Jane Bowers and Judith Tick (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986): 349-69.

making jazz. For the most part, women have been more readily accepted as pianists and singers historically than as horn players, guitar players, bassists, and especially percussionists,<sup>28</sup> and much of the literature chronicling the lives of women making jazz states as much.<sup>29</sup>

Another way that these gendered attitudes are discussed in the literature is in the context of music education. By studying the behaviours of students at various stages in their education, researchers are studying the role that gender plays in the process of jazz education. For instance, when are gendered instrument stereotypes learned? Kathleen McKeage discusses the role gender plays in high school and college jazz ensembles.<sup>30</sup> More specifically, her interviews with both male and female students discovered a link between attitudes towards women in jazz and reduced participation by young women at the post-secondary level. In a related study on gender and jazz education, Erin Wehr-Flowers explores the ways that students learn to improvise in her article “Differences between Male and Female Students’ Confidence, Anxiety, and Attitude toward Learning Jazz Improvisation.”<sup>31</sup> She found that female students were significantly less confident and more anxious than male students when it came to improvising.

These studies point to the ways that the gendering of instruments continues to be enforced and learned in a variety of institutional contexts. Most of the books that deal

---

<sup>28</sup> Sherrie Tucker, “Women,” *The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., vol. 3. Edited by Barry Kernfeld. (London: Macmillan, 2001), *Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxy.library.carleton.ca/subscriber/article/grove/music/J730100>.

<sup>29</sup> For example Dahl, Gourse, Placksin and Tucker make mention of this in each of their books dealt with in this review.

<sup>30</sup> Kathleen M. McKeage, “Gender and Participation in High School and College Instrumental Jazz Ensembles,” *Journal of Research in Music Education* 52, 4 (Winter 2004): 343-56; Kathleen M. McKeage, “Where Are All the Girls? Women in Collegiate Instrumental Jazz,” *Gender, Education, Music and Society* 1 (2002), <http://www.queensu.ca/music/links/gems/past/No.%201/KMarticle.htm>.

<sup>31</sup> Erin Wehr-Flowers, “Differences Between Male and Female Students’ Confidence, Anxiety, and Attitude toward Learning Jazz Improvisation,” *Journal of Research in Music Education* 54, 4 (Winter 2006): 337-349.

with histories of women in jazz also discuss how gendered attitudes about instruments affected them. Linda Dahl details the particular biases and issues that women faced according to their instrument choices, even organizing the central chapters of her book into “vocal” and “instrumental” categories in order to present the particular struggles that result from these specific biases. Leslie Gourse also assembles much of her book *Madame Jazz* according to instrument type, weaving biographies and interviews with detailings of the particular obstacles that each instrument category faced. Moreover, Gourse further divides the instrumental categories, adding strings (bass and guitar), horns, and drummers.<sup>32</sup> She also devotes her seventh chapter to a discussion of the particular difficulties women have had in terms of instrument choice. With a particular focus on early jazz musicians, Sally Placksin’s *Jazzwomen* is likewise careful to account for instrument choices, similarly splitting her work on the 1920s into voice and instrumental.

### **Limits to the Literature**

One of the issues with these histories is that they focus primarily on women in the United States.<sup>33</sup> Until the book *Jazzwomen*, evidence of women making jazz in Canada was restricted to short entries in the glossary sections in Gourse and Dahl’s works — each are only a few sentences in length. Moreover, in the literature on jazz in Canada,<sup>34</sup> women are not very well represented. Like the earlier histories written about jazz in the US, the few women who are mentioned in these works are vocalists and piano players, with the

---

<sup>32</sup> While Gourse does discuss many keyboard players in her book, they do not get their own chapter.

<sup>33</sup> Jazz in Canada in general is overlooked.

<sup>34</sup> Mark Miller, *Jazz in Canada: Fourteen Lives* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982); Mark Miller, *Boogie, Pete & the Senator* (Toronto: Nightwood Editions, 1987); *Such Melodious Racket: The Lost History of Jazz in Canada, 1914-49* (Toronto: Mercury Press, 1997).

exception of Jane Fair, a saxophonist, whose interview with Mark Miller is printed in *Boogie, Pete and the Senator*.<sup>35</sup> To fill this gap, my thesis examines the lives of four women jazz musicians in Toronto, making it a first step in filling this sizeable gap in our knowledge of Canadian jazz.

Another limit to the literature on women and jazz involves its primarily biographical focus. Part of this shortfall results from a dearth of recordings of women, which make it virtually impossible to experience, let alone analyze and discuss, the music of many jazz artists. Sally Placksin identifies this issue in her work on women in early jazz.<sup>36</sup> While telling the histories and biographies of women is a crucial exercise, this emphasis on biography often supplants an analysis of the music itself to a few short sentences (if any all), which is further complicated by the fact that, until recently, most of this research has taken place outside of musicological discourses. Furthermore, this lack of discussion of the music can be attributed to shortcomings in musicological and ethnomusicological approaches to jazz and gender, and not to a shortcoming of the many people who have researched women making jazz. The perspectives presented in my thesis represent an important addition to the scholarship on women making jazz, since one of the themes I present from my interviews involves musical practices.

A similar lacuna exists in the literature on jazz in Canada. While this focus was in many ways pragmatic since much of early jazz in Canada was not recorded,<sup>37</sup> there are some instances where writers have deliberately chosen not to discuss the music. For example, in *Boogie, Pete and the Senator*, Mark Miller states that his book “is based on a

---

<sup>35</sup> Miller, *Boogie, Pete & the Senator*.

<sup>36</sup> Placksin, *Jazzwomen*.

<sup>37</sup> Mark Miller mentions this issue on multiple occasions. See *Boogie, Pete & the Senator*, *Jazz in Canada*, or *Such Melodious Racket* for more of Miller’s discussion of the historiographic issues he faced in his research.

simple premise: that there is more to be said — more that's unique — about the people who play jazz in Canada than about the music as it is played in Canada... There are no truly pressing matters of racial implication or musical innovation."<sup>38</sup> Since the perspectives on improvisation and musical practice presented in this thesis are from Canadian musicians working in Toronto, it also fills a gap in the literature on the music made by musicians in Canada. What is more, these interviews lend insights into how the jazz scene works currently in Toronto.

While insightful, the discourses exploring how to incorporate/theorize women in an improvisatory space, focus primarily on women's free improvising groups. This literature may provide key insights, but a jazz ensemble functions slightly differently from a free improvising group. For one, the music tends to have more of a pre-determined structure than free improvised music — most usually it takes the form of the chord progression and head. The interviews conducted for this project begin to fill these gaps by discussing the space of improvisation with several women who play jazz, as well as their influences and biographies. And while there are many similarities in terms of gender bias for women making jazz or women in free improvising groups (or both), both of these styles of music are also distinct in that they have different histories, stylistic influences, and audiences. Since my thesis focuses on women who improvise primarily in a jazz environment, I will also be contributing to the larger discussion of women and improvisation. Moreover, this thesis contributes to the literature that discusses understandings of improvising in a jazz setting.

A final aspect of the literature that bears mention is the fact that the previous studies on women in jazz, although valuable, are dated. The most recent, *Jazzwomen*, was

---

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 9.

published in 2004. In other words, little exists with respect to the women who are currently active. The musicians featured in the following pages are actively gigging, touring and recording jazz, which makes this thesis an important addition to the literature on jazz in Canada.

### **Framing the Gender(ed) Dialogue: Monson, Tucker and Butler**

The aim of my project is to enter into a dialogue with musicians about their musical practices and to critically examine the ways that gender affects those practices. This discussion incorporates three vantage points: the various bodies of works that theorize aspects of gender and jazz, the views and subjectivities of the women I interviewed, and finally my own subjectivity as both jazz instrumentalist and academic-in-training. These vantage points at once complicate and complement one another in a number of ways throughout this dialogue about jazz and gender. The construction and design of this dialogue is also deeply informed by the works of Ingrid Monson, Sherrie Tucker and Judith Butler. In this section, I detail how the works of each of these scholars contribute to my framing of this dialogue, and discuss the particularities of this dialogue that will be discussed in more detail in later chapters. Then, I examine how certain aspects of my own subjectivity relate to the framing of this thesis.

A crucial component of this dialogue involves the perspectives put forward by the musicians I interviewed. What is more, I examine the ways that vernacular perspectives contest and enrich the existing bodies of theory built on historically-based understandings of women making jazz. In her book *Saying Something*, Ingrid Monson explains the importance of talking to musicians in order to gain insights into jazz as a cultural

practice. Her project was interested in the particular ways that the views of musicians could be relevant in larger discussions of the social and/or cultural issues:

*Saying Something* concentrates on what implications musicians' observations about musical processes may have for the rethinking of musical analysis and cultural interpretation from an interactive point of view, with particular attention to the problems of race and culture. Stressed here is what the perspectives of musicians can contribute to the reshaping of social analysis.<sup>39</sup>

Like Monson, I am interested in the implications of musicians' observations about musical processes and how these observations relate (or not) to the discourses that frame their practices. More specifically, I am interested in the ways that understandings of gender have affected the experiences and practices of these women, as well as their responses to the ongoing research involving gender and jazz (if any). The perspectives presented throughout also present new directions and sites for future ethnomusicological explorations of jazz as a cultural practice.

Another aspect of Monson's work in *Saying Something* that is folded into my framework involves incorporating vernacular perspectives into the discourses of jazz. Monson feels that these perspectives are integral to the understanding of musical processes:

I maintain that the only ethical point of departure for work in jazz studies and ethnomusicology remains the documentation and interpretation of vernacular perspectives, contemporary or historical, no matter how much we must rethink the

---

<sup>39</sup> Ingrid Monson, *Saying Something: Jazz Improvisation and Interaction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 5.

claims we make for them in light of poststructural discussions of representation and the politics of knowing and being.<sup>40</sup>

Following this line of thinking, the views presented in this paper present an important first step in the examination of the claims that have been made in the discourses on women making jazz, because it presents vernacular perspectives on these discourses.

A second key component to framing this dialogue involves turning the works of Sherrie Tucker. Tucker's work focuses almost exclusively on issues relating to jazz and gender, with a particular focus on women making jazz. But Tucker's contributions are not limited to shifting the histories of jazz through the incorporation of women in studies like *Swing Shift*. For example, Tucker's critical engagement with the framing of the discourse around women who make jazz — referred to quite often as “women-in-jazz” — also informs my framework in some key ways. This engagement is particularly explicit in a chapter she wrote in *The Other Side of Nowhere*, “Bordering on Community,” where she investigates and troubles the many layers of meaning that get thrown into the terms used to refer to women making jazz. She highlights the difficulties for women who make jazz in terms of community formation, from both the perspective of the musicians and those who seek to chronicle the lives of these musicians:

I am going to resist the temptation to write nostalgically or romantically about jazz community, even though I love jazz and attest to its social importance in my own life. Rather, I wish to examine seriously a kind of romance and nostalgia for “jazz community” that I find rather seductive but I also want to punch in the nose. I aim to think critically about seduction, a difficult task, and one seldom advocated by the lyrics of jazz standards. Yet I am driven by an urgent longing for

---

<sup>40</sup> Monson, *Saying Something*, 6-7.

alternate takes on one set of jazz communities that I — as a member of various research, listening, and writing communities — have found particularly seductive. I’m talking about that sometimes voluntary, sometimes reluctant, set of imagined jazz communities that we may awkwardly call “women-in-jazz.”<sup>41</sup>

She goes on to discuss the ways that women are lumped together merely because of their gender, which is complicated by the fact that in many instances it was important for women to join forces in order to have their music heard. This is particularly important for the framing of this dialogue, because although I have chosen to write about women making jazz, I will similarly resist the temptation to write nostalgically or romantically about jazz community. And while my work in some ways separates discussions of women making jazz from the larger discussions of jazz by being framed in a project that deals exclusively with the perspectives of women making jazz, the women I interviewed should not be taken to represent a homogenous or cohesive community. Instead, these interviews represent snapshots of a larger community of musicians that involves both men and women.

Tucker’s scholarship also explores the many different ways that gender as a category, as a set of power relations, has affected understandings of jazz and women, and women who make jazz. In terms of how she examines gender, Tucker puts forward the following statement in her article entitled “Big Ears”:

Usually, when I tell people that I’m interested in gender and jazz, they think that means that I am interested in reclaiming the “lost” histories of women who played jazz. And I am. Or in exposing the ways that sexism affects women who play jazz today. And I am. But in addition to these interests, and in part because of them, I

---

<sup>41</sup> Tucker, “Bordering on Community,” 245-6.

am also interested in gender as an analytic category for understanding how power is organized, maintained, and challenged, and how change occurs.<sup>42</sup>

This understanding of gender as an analytic category is crucial for the framing of my project. Like Tucker, I am interested in gender as an analytic category for understanding how power is organized, maintained, and challenged, and how change occurs. From this vantage point my thesis also represents the perspectives of five women (myself included) who make jazz and who negotiate these power structures through their musical practices.

A third crucial component to the framing of this project involves the publications of Judith Butler and her conceptions of “sex” and “gender.” Like Butler, I understand gender to be a category that is constructed, contested and enforced by various social structures. I draw on Butler’s understandings of gender as a category that is constructed and enforced through reiterative acts over time. The gendering of a body is a process that takes time and repetition. This is central to my discussion of the ways that embedded understandings of gender manifest themselves in the discussions I had with these musicians. This process also speaks to how they responded to my questions that sought to assess how these historical processes did or did not affect them.

In terms of the constructedness of gender, Butler has the following to say in her essay “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution”: “...gender is in no way a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts proceede [sic]; rather, it is an identity tenuously constituted in time — an identity instituted through a *stylized repetition of acts*.”<sup>43</sup> This repetition of acts further entrenches understandings of gender, by

---

<sup>42</sup> Tucker, “Big Ears: Listening for Gender in Jazz Studies,” 245.

<sup>43</sup> Judith Butler, “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory,” *Theatre Journal* 40, 4 (December 1988), 519.

naturalising such understandings. This is very important in the reproduction and enforcement of these understandings. Butler elaborates on the scale of this repetition:

The reproduction of the category of gender is enacted on a large political scale, as when women first enter a profession or gain certain rights, or are reconceived in legal or political discourse in significantly new ways. But the more mundane reproduction of gendered identity takes place through the various ways in which bodies are acted in relationship to the deeply entrenched or sedimented expectations of gendered existence.<sup>44</sup>

In other words, the reiterative aspect of performing gender happens at more than just the level of individual. Instead, gender is a process that process also works on a larger socio-political scale.

This thesis explores the various ways that women instrumentalists navigate the highly politicized realm of jazz. Part of this exploration also involves the effects of these deeply sedimented understandings of gender at the different levels that she mentions, which begins with the ways that the women I spoke to tracked the changes in gender roles in the jazz scene in Toronto.

Another important component to this exploration involves examining gender as an individual act:

Gender is an act which has been rehearsed, much as a script survives the particular actors who make use of it, but which requires individual actors in order to be actualized and reproduced as reality once again. The complex components

---

<sup>44</sup> Butler, "Performative Acts," 524.

that go into an act must be distinguished in order to understand the kind of acting in concert and acting in accord which acting one's gender invariably is.<sup>45</sup>

In other words, people learn and adopt a series of components that enable them to act out their gender. The source of these characteristics involves the larger processes in society whereby others enact gender according to entrenched understandings. In jazz, many of these entrenched understandings are thought of as "masculine," but recent research has also pointed to the ways in which there could be alternative gendered subjectivities that have been repressed by a "masculinist" discourse.<sup>46</sup> Keeping in mind the active, reiterative aspects of gender that act at both an individual and collective level (cultural, societal, national, racial, etc.), these "masculinist" attributes should be understood as collection of embedded and/or contested assumptions, and not an essentially fixed and/or biological state.<sup>47</sup>

In her article "Jazz as Masculine Space," Trine Annfelt explains the connection between jazz and hegemonic masculinity:

I have stated here that jazz today to a great extent is produced as a hegemonic masculine project. At the same time, the connection between jazz and hegemonic masculinity is a discursive manoeuvre which marginalises participants to whom such attributes are not ascribed, namely women and homosexual men. Because the sociocultural categories, under which the categories of female or male jazz musician belong, are *constructed*, these participants can also negotiate and

---

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 526.

<sup>46</sup> Arguably, most of the literature on gender and jazz is presenting some form of this argument, but some particularly vociferous examples include Tucker's "When Did Jazz Go Straight?" or Siddall and Heble's chapter in *Landing on the Wrong Note*.

<sup>47</sup> Of course, the same holds for references to "feminine."

possibly change the category's meanings. However, because the category also incorporates *hegemonic* masculinity, it is resistant to attack.<sup>48</sup>

Annfelt's nuanced argument for the ways that jazz is a hegemonically masculine discourse resonates with much of the scholarship discussing jazz practice with a particular emphasis on the subjectivities of women — and more recently on queer subjectivities as well. Throughout the course of this thesis, references to the “masculinist” tendencies in jazz practices should be understood within the context of the discursive manoeuvre described above. Part of this thesis, then, involves looking at the entrenched understandings of gender in jazz and incorporating the particular understandings of the women I interviewed into the fold of these understandings.

The final crucial component involves the ways that my own subjectivity shapes how I conceive of the roles of gender in jazz. Also being a jazz instrumentalist, I have had similar experiences to many other women instrumentalists. What is more, my experiences as a performing jazz musician grant me unique insights into musical practices and traditions. That being said, I do not take my experience to be definitive, or more/less important than the experiences of the women I interviewed. I present my subjectivity as a musician in large part to make explicit my own subject position with respect to this thesis. In some cases this involves putting forward a view that may diverge from that of either the literature or the musicians interviewed, but again this should not be seen as a declaration that the view I disagree with is false: it is merely different. Furthermore, my own experiences as a female instrumentalist provide me with a particular vantage point that many other academics studying women making jazz do not have — which definitely helped me when designing and framing the interviews. I attended

---

<sup>48</sup> Annfelt, “Jazz as Masculine Space.”

Humber College for jazz performance from 1999-2001, participating in a number of ensembles. While living in Toronto I took advantage of the active jazz scene, attending as many performances and jams as I could. Since my time in Toronto I have continued to perform in a variety of musical contexts, ranging from my own jazz groups to theatre music to playing with the Sudbury Symphony Orchestra. My particular vantage point also differs from that of the women I interviewed in significant ways. Unlike them, I am not currently performing full-time, having chosen instead to train in academia. In this way, my position as academic and performer places me in a space between these two perspectives.

### **Framing the Gender(ed) Dialogue: Conducting Interviews in Toronto**

Before delving into the particularities of my interview methodology, I will provide some rationale with respect to my choice of location for my fieldwork. Toronto is the focus of this project for a number of reasons. Toronto boasts one of the biggest and most well-established jazz scenes (if not the biggest) in Canada, and hosts a number of jazz festivals throughout the year including not only the TD Toronto Jazz Festival, but also the Beaches International Jazz Festival, and the Distillery Jazz Festival. This was important in order to make sure that there was enough of a critical mass of musicians from which to draw. Toronto is also home to three post-secondary institutions that all grant degrees in Jazz Performance: York University, the University of Toronto, and Humber College. A former student at Humber College, I am familiar with the city and many of the musicians and the venues there. During the time I lived in Toronto, I had the opportunity to see and hear performances of most of the people I asked to participate in this study. Moreover,

my familiarity with the scene was also helpful in my hunt to look for gigs and events that had jazz groups with women in them. This familiarity also means that I am aware of the music of most of the people with whom the musicians I interviewed collaborate with in the city. In many cases these other musicians were friends and/or former teachers.

Thankfully, there are too many women making jazz in Toronto to confine them all to a single study. In order to whittle down the number to a manageable level, I chose to interview women performers who have been active in the Toronto jazz scene for at least ten years: trumpeter Lina Allemano, alto saxophonist Tara Davidson, bassist Rosemary Galloway, and pianist Nancy Walker.<sup>49</sup> This choice should not be seen as privileging these women merely because of their years on the scene; rather, these women are in a better position to describe the ways that things have changed over the course of the past decade or more. The range in age of these artists also spanned several decades, which introduces a multi-generational perspective that I felt was integral in evaluating whether or not things were improving for women in the scene.

Since I was arranging interviews with artists in a different city, the women I hoped to speak to were contacted by email, in most cases via the email address provided on their websites. All of the respondents to my request expressed interest in the project, although only half of the women I contacted consented to interview. Most of them asked for the questions in advance.<sup>50</sup> Since I contacted them through email, I suspect that this was a way to test me out. I gladly provided a list of potential guiding questions for them to peruse. All of the respondents wished to know if I was also a musician before speaking to me.

---

<sup>49</sup> One respondent, Rosemary Galloway, is a forty-year veteran of the Toronto jazz scene.

<sup>50</sup> Ingrid Monson made the same observation when speaking of her fieldwork in *Saying Something*, 17-8.

I spent a week in Toronto, interviewing each musician who consented to an interview. We agreed on a location and time for each interview that best fit into their busy lives: Each interview took place in a café and lasted about an hour. While I had prepared a series of questions for the interviews, I did not necessarily use them, choosing instead to go with what the person I was interviewing was interested in (see Appendix A for a list of sample questions). In many instances, the questions I had developed did not apply. I knew that this was a possibility, however, so I was prepared to push certain themes and let go of others. My main goal in the construction of the interview questions was to have each person respond freely to a number of key themes in the literature in women on jazz as well as speak about their careers and musical practice. While there were certain themes that were discussed in each interview, each musician was encouraged to speak on issues that they felt were relevant.

### **Preview**

This thesis builds on the existing literature on women making jazz by dialogically examining several themes related to women in jazz. Among the themes and issues I discussed with my respondents are: historical accounts of jazz as masculinist discourse; understandings of musical practices based on gender and efforts to include women in jazz; and understandings of how gender could play a role in the subjectivity of the performer within a musical context. By centering our dialogue and my analysis thereof around these themes, I explore how these musicians understand the ways that gender structures and shapes their music.

In Chapter Two, I discuss the experiences of four female instrumentalists with respect to gender bias within the jazz scene. Chapter Three explores the spaces of improvisation as a site for community formation and relational identity formation. Chapter Four explores the politics of women playing jazz with a particular focus on all-women groups. In the concluding chapter I put forward a number of themes that the women represented in this project felt were important. These themes involve questions about issues of race, the institutionalisation of jazz education, and ways that the Toronto jazz scene has changed.

## Chapter Two: Experiencing Gender in Jazz Practice

Asking about “the status of women in jazz” seems straightforward enough: what is it like for women instrumentalists today? How was it for them in their respective beginnings? On the surface, such questions seem like a reasonable starting point. But these questions, while necessary, can be problematic in that they run the risk of eclipsing any discussion of the music that women jazz musicians make. In this chapter, I explore the multi-faceted attitudes of the musicians I spoke to with respect to gender struggles detailed in the historical accounts of women making jazz. Furthermore, I relate how each musician felt their gender was not an obstacle for them in their careers.

Each musician I interviewed expressed a deep insight into the history of women in jazz and contextualized their own experiences with respect to the historical (and ongoing) struggles of women making jazz. The term “experience” in this context warrants clarification. In her discussion of the concept of “Experience,”<sup>51</sup> Joan Wallach Scott cautions that taking experience as evidence and accepting it uncritically is problematic: “The project of making experience visible precludes analysis of the workings of this system and of its historicity; instead it reproduces its terms.”<sup>52</sup> Scott argues that historians need to critically engage with these experiences:

This entails focusing on processes of identity production, insisting on the discursive nature of “experience” and to the politics of its construction.

Experience is at once always already an interpretation *and* is in need of

---

<sup>51</sup> Joan W. Scott, “Experience,” in *Feminists Theorize the Political*, eds., Judith Butler and Joan Scott (New York: Routledge, 1992), 22-40.

<sup>52</sup> Scott, “Experience,” 25.

interpretation. What counts as experience is neither self-evident nor straightforward; it is always contested always therefore political.<sup>53</sup>

From this standpoint, the experiences presented in here (and following chapters) are particular interpretations of a larger network of social and political circumstances. These experiences are in themselves interpretations, which means that further investigations of their social circumstances also lends insights into the politics of the construction of their interpretations. Put another way, each particular set of experiences related by the instrumentalists I interviewed is in turn contextualised with respect to the ongoing discourses involving women making jazz. This way of contextualizing experience is a narrative strategy adopted by Sherrie Tucker in her groundbreaking work on jazz and gender in *Swing Shift*, a book dedicated to the lives of musicians in “all-girl” groups in the 1940s and 1950s:<sup>54</sup>

If, however, we think of oral histories as events in themselves rather than as clear channels to the “true story,” then we can begin to see how they relate to specific contexts. A woman who repeatedly insists “we were real musicians,” is baffling to the feminist historian until she or he understands that the narrator is pushing against powerful structures of discourse, commodification, and practice that greatly affected how she was seen, how she saw herself, and what she had to prove in order to live her life and do her job.<sup>55</sup>

From this point of view, the experiences of my informants must at once be brought forward as distinct, and also critically assessed in terms of the social and political

---

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 37.

<sup>54</sup> The term “all-girl” will be used for the purposes of this thesis to refer to groups that consist of women, as detailed by Sherrie Tucker in *Swing Shift*, 2.

<sup>55</sup> Tucker, *Swing Shift*, 26-7.

contexts in which they are embedded. More specifically, the range of experiences related in this chapter will be analyzed with respect to masculinist tendencies in jazz. What are their experiences saying about these “powerful structures of discourse, commodification, and practice” that have affected how they have been seen, how they see themselves, and what they have had to prove in order to make a living as professional musicians?<sup>56</sup> I am also interested in the things that they do not say about their experiences as women jazz players. Through a discussion of whether or not these women experienced any overt discrimination because of their gender, their experiences reveal an optimistic future for women making jazz. This optimism, however, is tempered by their keen awareness that women instrumentalists are still in the minority, and that not every woman has had the same opportunities that they have enjoyed.

### **Foundations: Encouragement in the Wake of the “Old Guard”**

Part of this exploration of their experiences involves uncovering what it was like for them as they began their studies in music and jazz. First, what were the early experiences of these women? Did they face similar obstacles and issues? Did they face any issues at all? Exploring the respective beginnings of the four musicians I interviewed brings insight into the attitudes toward women musicians that they encountered. This is historically significant, considering the historical accounts of the difficulties of women making jazz.<sup>57</sup> Looking at their early experiences in jazz also lays the groundwork to track potential changes in attitudes toward women making jazz today, which is particularly

---

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 26-7.

<sup>57</sup> While women have been participating in jazz since its beginnings in the late nineteenth century, there has often been considerable resistance to women.

important given the fact that there have been many efforts to change the circumstances of women making jazz.<sup>58</sup> By exploring the range of their experiences, I examine the varying ways that gender has affected their careers, and whether or not the efforts undertaken to change the circumstances for women making jazz — not to mention changes in attitudes about women overall — impacted their particular journeys.

Although Allemano, Davidson, Galloway, and Walker are all active in the current jazz scene in Toronto, they have had quite different careers that span over four decades. As a result, age was a definite factor in their responses with respect to whether or not they experienced any overt discrimination. Having performed professionally for over forty years, bassist Rosemary Galloway did experience a more tumultuous beginning in her musical career. Originally from Toronto, she began her performing career in the 1960s, on the cusp of the women's movement, playing in a diverse array of pop, classical and jazz settings including television, radio and theatre. She also studied composition for a number of years, in both jazz (with Ted Moses) and classical (with Dr. Sam Dolin), and also conducting with conductor and violinist Eugene Kash. Some of her composition credits include a number of commissioned works (jointly with jazz saxophonist Jim Galloway), such as "A Dance to the Music of Time" an original work for big band performed as part of a tribute to Duke Ellington that took place in June of 2000. She has recorded and released five albums, many of which include her own arrangements.<sup>59</sup> Her most current project, the Rosemary Galloway/Jane Fair Quintet, had just finished recording their second album at the time of the interview. Reflecting on her early career, Galloway recalls:

---

<sup>58</sup> These efforts, like *Sisters in Jazz*, are discussed in more detail in Chapter Four.

<sup>59</sup> <http://www.rosemarygalloway.com/>.

For anyone over the age of forty — especially if they ran into people who are now over the age of eighty but back then they would have been in their forties so pretty much in their prime — they were very discouraging and found it difficult to work with women in those days. So there were people who weren't that way, there were supportive people but they were more likely to be in the minority...It's hard to be a good player anyway, it's hard to maintain your confidence, feel that you are improving that there's somewhere to go, all those things. And then to have people discourage you for reasons that have nothing to do with your playing, although they try to make it look like it was something to do with your playing. So then you've got to sort that out too, you know? Because of course when you're young unless you're hugely more accomplished than all of the people around you, then you're obviously not going to be as good as lots of others, and it's hard to keep going if you're discouraged at that point. So that definitely was the case forty years ago.<sup>60</sup>

In this description of her early career, Galloway points to being discouraged by an older generation of musicians — the people who were roughly forty years her senior. She explains how those disparaging attitudes further complicated the process of learning and growing as a musician, stating that since it was difficult in itself to be a good player, having to sort out gender discrimination on top of everything else was another obstacle that women had to get around. But Galloway was also careful to point out that while there were people who were discouraging, she was able to forge a career path and find those who encouraged and supported her. She continues:

---

<sup>60</sup> Rosemary Galloway, interview with the author, January 27, 2010.

There were people who encouraged me so I can't say it was all bad, you know? And some prominent people who encouraged me, so probably not. I probably had a similar experience to almost anyone else even though on the face of it you could say that given the musical culture that jazz music at the time that I would have less opportunities and so on. And maybe I did, of course you just don't know that.<sup>61</sup>

Galloway is careful to note that it was not all doom and gloom, and that she was able to find encouragement and support as a young musician despite the obstacles she faced at that time.

Like Rosemary Galloway, pianist Nancy Walker also found that she was encouraged to play during her formative years, but she too experienced resistance from some segments of the older generation. A graduate of the Humber Music program in the 1970s, Walker has had a long and diverse performing career in a number of different genres. She has also recorded five albums as leader,<sup>62</sup> and many more as a side person. Her recordings also feature her own compositions.<sup>63</sup> She also currently teaches at Humber College. Walker was one of few women at Humber while she was a student there, and is one of the few non-vocalist teachers at Humber today. When asked if she had felt that there were times that her gender was an issue when she was in school, Walker related the following:

[I]n high school no, in college I actually did have quite a memorable sort of — actually more than one now that I think of it — incident. But I just kind of, I'm a

---

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> *Invitation* (1997), *Luminosity* (2000), *Levitation* (2003), *When She Dreams* (2004), and *Need Another* (2006). All of these albums were released independently.

<sup>63</sup> <http://nancywalkerjazz.com/>.

strong enough personality that if I think something's unjust I just kind of make it known that I'm not pleased. And so, for example there was this situation when I was a student at Humber, we're talking this was quite a while ago, this was like I went there from 75-78, so this was, you know, I think things are way different now. I mean it's just, night and day as far as having some of that old guard, you know, like they were all the old guard back then and the way that a lot of the male professors thought they were just coming out of a different time as far as just male — female relations and as far as what they felt their responsibilities were I think as educators you know?<sup>64</sup>

Walker felt that while she did experience bias because of her gender when she was in school, she did not experience it from everywhere. Instead, it was an old guard, a group from a previous generation with different understandings, who questioned her abilities because of her gender. Walker related one incident from when she was in college that is worth quoting at length:

And so my first year at Humber I was put into an ensemble, [and it was] accompanying the accordion ensemble. And it was quite frankly pretty dreadful, and I was really disappointed 'cause I wanted to play, I wanted to play jazz and this thing was not really playing. It was jazz versions that had been jazz treatments of tunes arranged for this accordion ensemble and it was a big drag. And I didn't have any fun. And then but I thought okay I'll just go through this and whatever. And there was no question of me being suitable for certain things I think, on a certain level. I got the keyboard scholarship every year that I was there and so on. But yeah, [in] second year at Humber I was really looking forward to

---

<sup>64</sup> Nancy Walker, interview with the author, February 1, 2010.

actually getting to play with some people and mix it up and then I got assigned accompanying the choir. And then I went whoa wait a minute! This is pissing me off. So I actually went to one of the teachers. He wasn't in charge of deciding who goes in what ensemble, but I brought it up to him at some social kind of mix up event, where students and teachers are hanging out. And I just said this is not good and I said blahdy blah who's playing in the D band, for example, I'm as good as he is. And why doesn't he accompany the choir? And literally what was said to me at that time, was "Oh Nancy you know I mean I know that that's true it's not about your abilities we have to just consider the fact that you know, when you leave here you're gonna meet some nice guy and you're gonna get married and you're gonna settle down. You're gonna forget about this music thing, I mean it's gonna be a nice pastime but these guys are gonna have to graduate from here and they're gonna have to have something to do. We gotta make sure that they're in good shape to go out there and make a living, you know?" And I said "No, this is not true." Like, I mean I am married now, but I said at the time: "I'm not gonna get married; I'm not interested. I want to play. That's what I want to do." And he said "are you sure?" And I said "yeah!" And so I think I had stirred the pot there. So at mid semester that year I got put into that D band, for example and then the next year I was in the Big Band B band. So it was like I just had to stick to my guns and kind of go wait a second. And at the time, there were very few female — I'm trying to think, as far as instrumentalists at Humber went, there were the accordionists I mean there's no accordion program there anymore, but there was at the time, cause it was a major accordion guy teaching at Humber somehow.

And so there were the accordionists and there were some vocalists and there were myself and another couple of pianists and as far as instrumentalists other than the pianists and accordionists, like it was a while later after I was there before some started to show up. Colleen [Allen], a saxophonist who was a few years after me and so on.<sup>65</sup>

She went on to emphasize that this pattern of discrimination came from her teachers, “the educators who were basically coming out of another era,” adding that “it wasn’t coming from, you know, the players, or my peers at the school or whatever.”<sup>66</sup> In some ways the notion of an “old guard” that is a primary source of gender bias is encouraging because it implies that the situation should have improved for women jazz musicians, at least in Toronto. It also means that although there were obstacles for her to overcome, she had the support of her peers and was able to find likeminded musicians of both genders to perform with. That said, the fact that she had to fight to be placed in a better ensemble because of the chauvinistic views of at least one male teacher points to the history of gender discrimination, both systemic and otherwise, in jazz circles.

### **Get Over it Already!**

Nearly twenty years after Nancy Walker’s experiences with the “old guard” at Humber College, trumpeter Lina Allemano and saxophonist Tara Davidson had different experiences over the course of their post-secondary educations at the University of Toronto. Allemano graduated from the University of Toronto in the mid nineties shortly before Davidson began her studies. Given the size of the program, they had many of the

---

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

same faculty for a large portion of their classes. Neither Davidson nor Allemano felt that they were actively discouraged or obstructed from studying jazz. They were, however, quite aware that that things were not always this way and that other women their age may not have had the same experiences that they did. In this section, I discuss their views of the role(s) that gender played — or did not play — in their more recent experiences. I argue that their particular journeys do not signal that the fight for gender equality within the world of jazz is over, that instead their journeys should serve as models for the success as future women musicians.

Tara Davidson has had an active performing and recording career to date, including two albums as leader — the latest one, *Code Breaking* (2006) was nominated for a Juno award — as well as an album as co-leader in the Davidson/Murley/Braid Quartet in 2008. She has also toured in a number of groups both nationally and internationally.<sup>67</sup> When asked about her experiences learning to play jazz and whether she faced any discrimination, Davidson replied:

Actually no. The way my journey worked out, it wasn't an issue. I know it can be an issue for other people, it depends on who they were born to and who their teachers were, and their friends were. It really can be circumstantial like that. But I had really supportive parents and really supportive teachers and friends. So when I was good at something it wasn't like "oh wow you play saxophone and you're a girl." It was like "that's great you're doing well in music, good for you." So that was pretty much it. In school, when I first got there, I didn't realize how, I mean U of T is a really small music program, which is actually what I really liked about it. It was a great learning environment because of how concentrated it was. I

---

<sup>67</sup> <http://www.taradavidson.ca/>.

recognized the ratio was pretty off, like males to females, but I already kind of knew that about the field of work. That, you know, historically, most of the women involved with jazz music were vocalists, and there were some, you know, pioneer instrumentalists already and so they had sorta broken the ground, I think. So it was already becoming less and less of an issue. And people, at least to my face, treated me like I was just another student. Another person, learning, so it was okay.<sup>68</sup>

Davidson notes that women were still in the minority while she was a student, but she attributes it to the field of work, noting that women musicians before her had already broken the ground.<sup>69</sup> Moreover, the way that Davidson contextualises her experiences is worthy of note. The “circumstantial” character that she ascribes to the journey of learning to make jazz comprises a myriad of instances where a musician may, or may not, be supported because of their gender. Davidson did not experience any discrimination, but her awareness of this variability also points to the fact that other women may not be as fortunate. This awareness becomes clearer in the next excerpt of our interview, when Davidson also mentions that she is quite aware how it is not like this for everyone, and posits that in the United States it was quite different. In this excerpt she elaborates on her knowledge of the experiences of others south of the border:

Even hearing about how — this is second hand — but how some girls going through the post secondary schools there sort of met up with a little bit of friction, like being doubted of their ability because they’re girls. It happens; I didn’t get that, where I was. My friends, my contemporaries — they didn’t get that. The fact

---

<sup>68</sup> Tara Davidson, interview with the author, January 28, 2010.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

that I heard about some of that, you know, [gave] cause for pause...I think down there women maybe have to fight for their place a little harder.<sup>70</sup>

She also discusses how this knowledge of the ways that women instrumentalists were/are treated in jazz circles can foster doubt within oneself. Davidson, however, takes her experiences at face value:

I've heard other stories, historical stories, and that plus contemporary stories about negative experiences because you happen to be a woman, and so I've considered maybe they think I'm good because I'm a girl, [that] I'm good for a girl. But I think maybe anybody in a minority situation can speak to that? You hope that people are blind to the difference, but who knows?<sup>71</sup>

This comment about anxiety over whether or not people's responses were genuine does not undermine the fact that Davidson feels that the situation has changed and that she had positive experiences. Rather, her anxiety should serve as a reminder that young women still face considerable obstacles when embarking on a career as a jazz instrumentalist.

This view is reflected in her comment about gender becoming less of an issue: "And then okay yeah, you're making it an issue, because it still is, that's the thing. And I mean that's why you're writing the paper about it too. It is still a bit of a novelty, but it is like with every year that passes less and less."<sup>72</sup> Davidson felt that even though women in jazz were still in a minority situation — a comment that also denotes an awareness of ongoing power dynamics in jazz practice —, things were changing for the better.

Having begun my studies at the same time as Tara Davidson in the late 1990s, albeit at Humber College, I never experienced any overt discrimination, either. That

---

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

being said, I was definitely in a minority situation similar to Davidson's.<sup>73</sup> From the beginning of my experiences in jazz, I was made aware that women had historically had to fight to be acknowledged as jazz musicians, but that things were slowly changing — and that sometimes people still felt women were not able to make jazz. I had a number of role models when I was learning to play and began gigging, and many of them were women.

Like Davidson, Lina Allemano feels that she did not face obstacles to her musical development based on her gender, though she too is keenly aware that many women have had — and continue to have — different experiences. Allemano has performed on over thirty recordings, including three recordings with her jazz group the Lina Allemano Four, which features her own compositions. Among her many achievements, she recently performed at the Festival of New Trumpet Music (FONT) in New York City this year.<sup>74</sup> On whether or not she faced any overt discrimination she had the following to say: “Not really, that’s the interesting thing. I’ve actually been interviewed by people before about gender issues and that sort of thing, and I sorta think that people are disappointed because I actually don’t have any bad stories.”<sup>75</sup> The mention of disappointment is interesting — but should not be taken as a cue to portray journalistic and/or academic explorations into gender and jazz as witch hunts. Instead, I think this disappointment is more of a signal of the complexity of the situation. The fact that someone would be surprised by a lack of struggle is striking. In many ways, her response points to the long history of

---

<sup>73</sup> For example, in my cohort there were three other jazz saxophonists who were women (out of ten or so total for my year), with about eight or nine women who played sax in total. I also remember one bassist in my year, and one guitarist. In my second year there was a total of three women bassists, one drummer, one guitarist (who did not finish), and maybe six or seven brass players (two trombonists; the rest played trumpet).

<sup>74</sup> This performance is discussed in a future chapter. For more information about her career check out her website: <http://www.linaallemano.com/index.html>.

<sup>75</sup> Lina Allemano, interview with the author, January 26, 2010.

discrimination towards women instrumentalists, against which her experiences seem exceptional. Like Davidson, Allemano credits the struggles of previous generations of women musicians for the relative ease of her experiences.

I think the older generation had a lot of problems maybe they you know, they must have given us this space to do our thing. So I guess the problems that I've had were so insignificant that I either laughed them off, or it didn't really affect me, or things I maybe wasn't aware of, maybe. Nobody ever said anything to my face.<sup>76</sup>

Both Allemano and Davidson display an acute awareness of how their experiences compare to others. Both women note that they were able to learn jazz without facing major incidences of discrimination, thanks to the struggles of women before them (like Rosemary Galloway and Nancy Walker) who broke the ground. They are also quite aware that the situation is not the same for all women, which Davidson expressed, for example, in her discussion of contemporary struggles in the United States. Given the ongoing minority situation of women in jazz, Davidson and Allemano and other women of their generation are still breaking ground.

### **Things Are Getting Better All the Time? But for Whom?**

Another aspect of my informants' experiences that I will discuss involves how they see things for other women in the jazz scene, for younger women musicians in particular. In this section, I discuss what seemed to be the consensus among the women that I interviewed tracked improvements for women making jazz, and the fact that despite their

---

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

varied backgrounds, they saw an increasing number of women playing jazz. For example, Rosemary Galloway had the following to say:

In the jazz field there were very, very few of them [women] and there was considerable suspicion surrounding a woman player. I think that's changed. I would say generally that any person under the age of forty would be unfamiliar with that attitude. There are probably still pockets of it around but mostly younger people have a different attitude, younger players. And there are many more women players so it's become much more of a norm.<sup>77</sup>

She even suggests that those who continue to question the abilities of women musicians do so because they do not have the skills themselves: "I think there's still, even young ones around, odd people, but they generally have social problems of other kinds anyway. I mean, their male peers don't specially want to be around them, and that sort of thing. So you know, they maybe focus on women as a kind of a scapegoat."<sup>78</sup> Put another way, Galloway felt strongly that attitudes had changed with respect to women making jazz and that any residual resistance came from people using gender as a scapegoat because they were petty and/or jealous.

For Nancy Walker, the situation of women making jazz is in the midst of a major shift. She remarked that more and more women were coming up through the ranks undertaking studies in jazz performance:

You know what? I still think that this is gonna really open wide up. Like for example, at Humber now, there's a lot of crazy good young female musicians. I mean it's just the numbers coming out of the high schools and what have you are

---

<sup>77</sup> Galloway, 2010.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

so much greater, they come in it's just a gradual process, right? More and more of them feel like there's no reason why they couldn't do this, they want to do it, they enjoy it, and as I said before with the musicians, if somebody can play they want to play with that person.<sup>79</sup>

Of note in her statement is the fact that Walker implies there is strength in numbers; that as more women get into the ranks, even more women will in turn take up the profession.

In our talks about women making jazz, Tara Davidson also observed that things were changing, and it was different for young women now than even for her and I, who were beginning our studies less than twenty years ago. She explains:

A girl who's choosing their career path now, like, it's different than like you or I, right? 'Cause you're thirty it sounded like from the math? Me too, so when we were choosing what to do and what instrument like... Thank goodness it was then and people didn't say no you're a girl you're gonna play flute! But twenty years before that would have happened or even ten years before. It's interesting.<sup>80</sup>

Everyone I interviewed commented on the gradual improvement of the conditions for women jazz musicians — in educational settings and on the bandstand — over the course of several decades. Allemano summarizes: “even if it's kind of gradual, which it inevitably has to be, I think it's positive. I think there are lots of valid ways of going about this kind of issue and I think it's all good.”<sup>81</sup>

---

<sup>79</sup> Walker, 2010.

<sup>80</sup> Davidson, 2010.

<sup>81</sup> Allemano, 2010.

It is encouraging that everyone noted that things were getting better for women making jazz. Although I think that things have indeed improved, my own experiences as a woman jazz player suggest that there are still areas for improvement.

What is more, the notion that an increased number of women in jazz programs means that the situation is necessarily improving for them is problematic. While it is doubtless a sign of change that there are more women coming through the ranks, this increase in numbers may not point to an actual change in attitudes towards women making jazz. Examinations of the spaces that these young women occupy in post-secondary jazz programs point to many structural aspects of the institutionalisation of jazz as being gendered (and misogynistic).<sup>82</sup> Moreover, these young women could be admitted to jazz programs, but subject to the same biases that Walker was exposed to. In many larger programs, like Humber, not everyone is placed in an ensemble, since there may be more musicians than spaces. What is the proportion of women who do not advance to an ensemble? *Which* ensembles are they in? Who do they study with? The women I interviewed are lucky, and even though their experiences may reflect those of more and more women in jazz, many continue to face resistance because of their gender.

### **Experience Revisited**

Returning to Joan Wallach Scott's discussion of "experience," it seems that the experiences of these four musicians complicate received understandings of women jazz musicians' experience in a number of different ways. While Rosemary Galloway's story matches those of other women making jazz in her generation, she was a trailblazer for

---

<sup>82</sup> A more detailed discussion the gendering of jazz education lies outside the scope of this paper. For some initial explorations see McKeage, "Where Are All the Girls?"; "Gender and Participation in High School and College Instrumental Jazz Ensembles."

young women in jazz in Toronto. Nancy Walker similarly broke ground at Humber College, being one of a few instrumentalists in her program. Their narratives fit more comfortably with what we would expect, given the growing body of work that seeks to find and contextualize the lives of women throughout jazz history. But what Lina Allemano, Tara Davidson, Rosemary Galloway and Nancy Walker had to say about the current scene did not match up with the main historical narratives on women making jazz. For example, Davidson and Allemano did not feel that their gender was an obstacle or an issue, and they were encouraged by the changes that Walker and Galloway observed. Their shared sense of progress was tempered by an awareness of the fact that while circumstances are good for them and for more and more women, there are still battles to be fought and won. In particular, their knowledge of other negative experiences in the wake of people (like me) searching for stories about the struggles of women musicians, suggests that their relative journeys are still rare. From this perspective, the journeys of women like Allemano and Davidson are also breaking ground for future generations of jazz musicians.

The fact that there was a consensus that things are changing for the better disrupts the image of women being pushed out of jazz. However, this disruption is not an erasure of the often ongoing struggles; instead, these encouraging experiences show that efforts to change how women instrumentalists are viewed in jazz are working. What is more, it points to the highly variable nature of jazz practice from place to place. Returning to Sherrie Tucker's warning against nostalgic interpretations of jazz communities, I am also "driven by an urgent longing for alternate takes on one set of jazz communities."<sup>83</sup> The roles of women are changing—they are being subverted, reinvented, re-appropriated by

---

<sup>83</sup> Tucker, "Bordering on Community," 245-6.

women making jazz. This chapter detailed the experiences of Allemano, Davidson, Galloway and Walker, in light of these changing roles. In the following chapter, I examine the space of improvisation as an emancipatory site for relational identity formation, and the ways that gender weaves into this space.

### **Chapter Three: (Un)heard? Gender and Identity Formation in the Space of Improvisation**

I contend that improvisation is a dynamic and relational site for identity formation and that the series of relations in an improvising group between the musicians constitutes its own community.<sup>84</sup> In this chapter, I explore how the space of improvisation is conceived of by the women instrumentalists introduced in Chapter Two. More specifically, I explore how the women I spoke to put forward the space of improvisation as at once interactive, emancipatory, and devoid of power relations along lines of gender, race or class. Their conceptions of the space of improvisation contribute to the growing number of accounts of women improvisers.

This chapter will proceed in several parts: first, I detail the ways that these musicians describe the space of improvisation, focusing on the recurrent metaphor of improvisation as conversation; then, I explore how gender may or may not function within this space, affecting the relationship between the improvising musicians; finally, I explore whether or not it is desirable, or even possible, to hear gender in improvisation.

#### **Improvisation as a Site for Identity Formation**

The act of improvising creates an interesting space for identity formation because it is a site for both musical expression and relational identity formation through that music. In her article “Navigable Structures and Transforming Mirrors: Improvisation and Interactivity,” Dana Reason explains the ways through which the act of improvisation and the identities of the performers are enmeshed in societal relations:

---

<sup>84</sup> See Christopher Small, *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1998).

Improvisation allows performers to reveal themselves, to share their embodied experiences. If the relationship between life and music is, as I and others in this book posit, an intimate one, then the improviser exposes the flux of relational creation within the materiality of his or her own existential context, located specifically in space and time. How improvisers play inevitably interacts with how they live, even for those improvisers who approach music as a self-referential musical practice that has no relationship to musicians or to the world in which they live.<sup>85</sup>

In other words, improvisation blends the subjectivity of the performer with the music they make. Improvisation should also be understood as an active process, wherein the subjectivities of the performers who are improvising interact as dynamically as the music they make. In his book *Landing on the Wrong Note*, Ajay Heble also describes improvisation in a similar vein when he states that “improvisation might be more productively understood in the context of contemporary theoretical accounts of identity formation as a social, dialogic and constructed process.”<sup>86</sup> Improvisation is a social process because it involves other people, dialogic because it also depends on the input of other people, and finally constructed because of the relative agency each musician has to present themselves through their music.

The intensely interactive nature of a group of improvising musicians creates a dynamic space where identities are related and contested. There have been some exciting explorations into the implications of improvisation as a site for identity formation. The discourses of improvising musicians themselves have figured prominently in recent

---

<sup>85</sup> Dana Reason, “Navigable Structures and Transforming Mirrors: Improvisation and Interactivity,” in *The Other Side of Nowhere*, 78.

<sup>86</sup> Heble, *Landing on the Wrong Note*, 95.

writing on improvisation and identity formation. The discourses involving women improvisers have focussed primarily on free improvising groups as opposed to improvisation in a jazz context. There are many differences between these two types of improvisation, stemming from differences in the ways that the music is made. For example, free improvisation tends to rely less on previously agreed upon musical structures (such as composed melodies and prescriptive sets of chord changes) than most forms of jazz. Furthermore, improvisation is a very important part of making jazz, but not all jazz involves improvisation. Also, while free improvisation may share some history with jazz, not all (or even most, for that matter) free improvisation should be understood as a part of a jazz tradition. Their respective histories are different, their scenes are different, and the views of many of the musicians are different. Nevertheless, I contend that a shared potential for identity formation exists within both idioms, since the musicians who are improvising are still relating aspects of their identities through the musical ideas that they express. Therefore, despite the fact that there are differences between both forms of improvising, there is still a potential for similarities between the narratives relayed by free improvising women and women jazz musicians discussing the act of improvising in a jazz context.

In recent discourses on jazz as a musical practice, the importance of drawing from personal narratives about the interactive nature of improvising in a jazz setting tends to be highlighted. Drawing on the work of Paul Berliner, Ingrid Monson discusses these complexities as follows:

Paul Berliner's monumental *Thinking in Jazz* (1994) has demonstrated beyond any doubt the centrality of the musical perspectives of professional jazz musicians

in rethinking our understanding of improvisation. Berliner describes how jazz musicians acquire and develop improvisational expertise through interaction with an ever-changing community of musicians functioning as a learning environment a musical process that defies explanation by traditional musical analyses of self-contained works.<sup>87</sup>

In *Landing on the Wrong Note*, Ajay Heble also takes up this perspective, advocating jazz autobiography as an important vehicle for self-representation by musicians, and as a significant object of analysis for researchers interested in processes of identity formation *vis-a-vis* improvisation. He writes:

What interests me here, in part, is the extent to which the theoretical implications of improvisation as cultural practice and social organization might provide a point of entry into contemporary accounts of identity formation and subjectivity. I want to suggest that jazz autobiography offers a unique and compelling site for such a consideration. These self-representational narratives told by musicians who are themselves well versed in improvisatory artistic practices offer new ways to think about identity production. Indeed, autobiography itself needs to be understood in the context of precisely the kinds of struggles for access to self-representation and identity formation that, as I've argued throughout this book, ought to inform any understanding of jazz.<sup>88</sup>

I take a similar position in this chapter, only with a particular focus on how gender could play a role in this process. I also explore the ways that an improvising group, a type of community in itself, could be subject to the same power dynamics — including those that

---

<sup>87</sup> Monson, *Saying Something*, 73.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 92.

occur along gender lines — that occur in other communities. Where is gender within the space of jazz improvisation? What does gender mean in this space?

In a chapter titled “Nice Work if you Can Get it,” which is dedicated to an exploration of gender in jazz discourses, Ajay Heble and Gillian Siddall ask: “In what ways might the very language of jazz (both the musical conventions within which it operates and the discourses that are produced about it) be said to be gendered? To what extent and in what ways, we’d like to ask, are women performers of jazz and creative improvised music engaged in fostering new models for thinking about gender?”<sup>89</sup> These are complex questions to answer without tumbling into the morass of understandings of “male” or “female” as somehow being essential or fundamental, a difficulty that Heble and Siddall address:

Our consideration of the ways in which music has been gendered is certainly not meant to imply that particular musical styles possess intrinsically masculine or feminine characteristics. Rather, gendering in music, we’d like to suggest, is the product of culturally prescribed roles, assumptions, and expectations, and the kinds of institutional power and legitimacy that reinforce and get ideologically attached to them.<sup>90</sup>

Building on this idea, I would like to explore how my informants viewed the role of gender in the space of improvisation, focusing in particular on how they perceive “gender” as a concept and as a set of social relations.

---

<sup>89</sup> Heble with Siddall, “Nice Work if You Can Get it,” *Landing on the Wrong Note*, 142.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 147-8.

### **Interaction in Music: Improvisation as Conversation**

One of the crucial aspects of improvisation as a musical practice is interaction. Paul Berliner discusses this in considerable detail in *Thinking in Jazz*, as does Ingrid Monson in *Saying Something*.<sup>91</sup> Monson unpacks different metaphors and tropes that musicians use to describe improvisatory musical practices including the metaphor of conversation. This metaphor also came up in the ethnographic research undertaken by Berliner, which Monson also credits: “Berliner found that many musicians used the metaphor of conversation to describe aspects of the improvisational process, as have I. In fact, several metaphors about language and music appeared in the interview material I compiled from my discussions with musicians.”<sup>92</sup> Also of interest is the importance that Monson places on metaphors about language within the space of improvisation and within the language the musicians used to discuss it. She continues: “on one level, the image of conversation has structural affinities with interactive improvisational process; on another, the stylistic and affective aspects of conversation raise the issue of music and cultural style.”<sup>93</sup> In other words, Monson argues that in order to properly theorize the space of improvisation in a cultural context, the ways that musicians discuss this space are a necessary starting point:

The informal, sociable, and metaphorical modes of speaking about music favored by the many jazz musicians challenge traditional presumptions about both the nature of the musical object and the definition of musical analysis...I argue here that meaningful theorizing about jazz improvisation at the level of the ensemble

---

<sup>91</sup> See Paul Berliner, *Thinking in Jazz: The Infinite Art of Improvisation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994); and Monson, *Saying Something*.

<sup>92</sup> Monson, *Saying Something*, 73.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*

must take the interactive, collaborative context of musical invention as a point of departure.<sup>94</sup>

Initially, when discussing the space of improvisation I asked the four musicians I spoke with how they understood the space of improvisation. While all of the women agreed that jazz improvisation is much like a conversation, they all related slightly different understandings of how the conversational aspects of jazz improvisation unfold. In this section, I will examine their views on the interactivity of musical improvisation within a jazz context.

Lina Allemano stressed the importance that she places on interactivity in her work, and how this connectivity with other musicians goes beyond the metaphor of conversation. She explains:

That's the way I like to improvise: definitely [in a] very interactive way so it is a very intimate thing...I guess a conversation...it's more than a conversation, that's how I like to do [it]. I've definitely been in situations where it wasn't the case and then I get frustrated because if I don't feel like the other improvisers are responding or interacting the way I'd like to, then it doesn't work for me. But I really get off on that, on that really intimate kind of connection with other musicians. And it can be hard to find, actually. To find people who, you know, are simpatico or whatever you want to say. I mean it's like finding friends, I guess. You know — finding people who you want to hang out with and you click with and stuff. You can't just be friends with everybody.<sup>95</sup>

---

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 74.

<sup>95</sup> Allemano, 2010.

The emphasis on responsiveness in this interview excerpt underlines the importance of communication between the musicians in the musical process. It also speaks to a need for some kind of interchange, or dialogue — but one that is “more than a conversation.” This interchange is so important to the musical process that she likens the connection between musicians to a connection between friends. Allemano is comfortable improvising in many different musical contexts, ranging from big bands like NOJO or the Dave McMurdo Orchestra, to free improvising collectives, to her own jazz groups like the Lina Allemano Four. Much of her work fuses elements of jazz and free improvised music,<sup>96</sup> although she makes a distinction between jazz and the freer groups that she plays in:

I play in a couple of different sort of styles, so I do play like really purely improvised music and then I play some jazz too. And sometimes I sort of [have] the two things going at the same time. But I assume that’s what you meant by improvising. But I also play in jazz settings where there’s not as much [pauses] I mean there is interaction, but it’s not on the same level. It’s not as intimate I guess. But there’s still [pauses] I still need to have, I need to feel like we’re all in it together when we’re playing. And there are definitely some people who don’t think that way. It’s more of a Jamey Aebersold vibe [pauses] I’m not one of those kind of players that can just barrel through and just say like: here’s my solo, you can transcribe it and it’s a beautiful thing just in itself. My solo will be a group effort. So if you don’t hear the rhythm section or whoever else is playing while

---

<sup>96</sup> Allemano is part of a diverse array of musical projects. She currently leads a jazz group called the Lina Allemano Four, as well as a free improvising group called “N.” She also performs in a significant number of other groups, ranging from big band to free improvisation to contemporary jazz to roots to rock and is a member of AIMT, the Association of Improvising Musicians, Toronto. See [www.linaallemano.com](http://www.linaallemano.com) for a sampling of some of the many different groups (and styles) that she plays with.

I'm playing you're not going to get the whole deal, because what I play had everything to do with what everyone else was playing.<sup>97</sup>

While she suggests that improvising in a jazz setting can be less interactive than in free improvisation settings, she emphasizes the importance of interactivity and responsiveness in both. Her mode of improvisation in jazz contexts is still intensely relational and communal. Given her background in groups that play free improvised music, it also makes sense that she would be in tune with the other members of the group while she improvises in a more traditional jazz context. This is evidenced by the fact that she regards her own trumpet solos as a group effort, an idea that resonates with my own experiences as a jazz improviser. From this standpoint the ability to both hear and relate musical ideas is integral.

Tara Davidson agreed that the space of improvisation is conversational, but with a slight distinction to Allemano's description. For Davidson, it was important to note that each individual had to be competent:

Definitely conversational. I mean everyone's independent. A conversation will go this way, or that way, but the integrity of the conversation relies on the fact that each individual is competent and strong and listening to everybody else. So yeah. I feel maybe in like social settings it's like you hope that you come off as well read or articulate or thoughtful so the same thing is approached in music, like studied and open to what's going on and interactive.<sup>98</sup>

In addition to technical competence and musical thoughtfulness, Davidson stresses the interactive and social dimensions of jazz improvisation. She clearly places an emphasis

---

<sup>97</sup> Allemano, 2010.

<sup>98</sup> Davidson, 2010.

on the importance of the individual in that each member has to be “competent and strong,” but she also states that all of the musicians must be “listening to everybody else.” From this standpoint, the space of improvisation depends greatly on a congregation of individuals who are not only strong improvisers in their own right, but also listen and respond to the actions in the collective. The privileging of the individual contribution does not detract from the role of the other members; instead it merely reinforces the importance of the contribution from each member.

Rosemary Galloway views the space of improvisation through her role as a bassist. In contrast to the others who framed their responses in terms of contributing and listening, Galloway feels that offering support to the soloist is crucial in this space:

While I’m improvising or working in a jazz group, I’m trying to support someone else. Trying to support the person who’s soloing, I’m trying to fit in with the other players. And yeah that’s definitely a conversation. I think an equal conversation, because if anybody’s weak then it makes it difficult. And then in the soloistic part just go for it, and it’s their job to support.<sup>99</sup>

Galloway’s use of the term “equal” also bears mention, in that it underscores the belief that each musician has an equally important role to play in the group with respect to listening and responding to and supporting the other musicians. This privileging of the ensemble is articulated in the following excerpt from our conversation:

I mean everyone needs to contribute and I’m sure you’ve had the experience of playing with players where someone’s not really up to it and it derails. [pauses] It doesn’t make it impossible but it does derail maybe what you could do if you were in a different circumstance. On the other hand, someone who does what they

---

<sup>99</sup> Galloway, 2010.

do well is still a good person to play with, even if they're not the, you know, zenith of improvisatory skills, sometimes a person who's not trying to do everything all at once is a better person to work with. So different circumstances can work, and yeah I think and different voices are fun to work with, and I think it should be as equal as it can be.<sup>100</sup>

The importance of relationality, of openness to dialogue in improvisation, stems not only from her valorization of support in a jazz group. It also originates in this idea of jazz as a conversation, as a relational environment of equality. What is more, contributing to the collective through the music outstrips individual virtuosity in this space, which further reinforces the importance of relationality, of a conversation, in improvisation.

My discussion with Nancy Walker about the space of improvisation was brief, but highly intriguing. She envisioned two layers to the space, where “it is a conversation and an exchange of ideas, and on some other level kind of almost metaphysical I think, like just a chemical connection.”<sup>101</sup> Walker’s succinct postulation of a metaphysical connection between the musicians is apt, since musicians are relating ideas and feelings and thoughts through a learned set of musical practices, although precisely what they are relating of their selves is not as tangible as a verbal or written dialogue. The only certainty in this space is that it is highly dependent on the group members’ ability to relate their selves through the musical environment while also maintaining a fruitful context for the other musicians to do the same. This notion of a metaphysical connection also has interesting implications for future work in the theorization of the space of improvisation.

---

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Walker, 2010.

So far, the majority of my discussion has focussed on the elements or characteristics of the space of improvisation: interacting, contributing equally, supporting, listening, responding. Walker's idea that there exists some form of metaphysical connection between improvisers seems to be referring to even less tangible aspects of this space, including the processes of articulating and relating our own subjectivities through music in interactive conversation. In the following section, I explore some of possible roles that gender plays in that conversation.

### **Searching for Possibilities: Is There Something “Feminine” About Improvisation? Or, the Curse of the “Female Experience”**

A couple of years ago while teaching women's studies classes at a smallish, delightful liberal arts college, I inherited a course from the 1970s that was still on the books as “The Female Experience.” “Hello, class” I used to say when I walked in the room. “Is anyone having a female experience?”

—Sherrie Tucker<sup>102</sup>

A significant portion of my thesis is informed by my ongoing attempts to reconcile the tensions between my academic background in feminist musicology and my subjectivity as a musician. Many of the scholarly sources that I draw upon are sources that, as a performer, I was initially reluctant to accept (and there are some that I still do not). It was only through critical reflection on my own experiences that I was able to see the potential merit to certain lines of academic inquiry.

One issue that I have grappled with in particular involves the incorporation of gender into my understanding of, and discussions of, improvisation. Only recently have I admitted that there could be something “feminine” about my musical output and only

---

<sup>102</sup> Tucker, “Bordering on Community,” 264.

with the caveat that my understanding of “feminine” is not essential or fixed. Any feminine qualities in my music making cannot be easily teased out or reduced to a particular phrase, gesture, or lick in my musical vocabulary. In other words, I am ready to admit that my gender informs my approach to music making, but I am less convinced that gender is necessarily a *findable* trait in my craft. When designing my interviews, I took to heart Siddall and Heble’s call to investigate whether or not there is space for a feminine subjectivity in jazz. But I was also keenly aware of the risk of essentializing feminine subjectivity, which varies tremendously from musician to musician as it does from person to person. My approach was to pose the idea of gender as an open question, asking these instrumentalists if they thought there was a space for gender in improvisation. Is there something unique about working with people of the same gender, in this case with other women? Is there a gendered sound? This is not about “hearing” gender as much as it is about being willing to hear gender.

The responses articulated in the interviews made me remember how long it took me to accept the possibility that one’s gender informs her creative practice. In the paragraphs that follow, I weave together the musicians’ responses to my questions about gender in the space of improvisation with the theory that brought me to this space. These musicians may not have had much to say about the female experience in improvisation; however, they did present some interesting views on exactly how people related to one another with respect while improvising.

In *The Other Side of Nowhere*, noted composer, improviser, and theorist Pauline Oliveros wrote a thought-provoking chapter titled “Harmonic Anatomy” about working with other women improvisers in free improvising communities. She details her own

experiences as a performer of improvised music, as well as the experiences of a number of women improvisers including India Cooke, Dana Reason, Susie Ibarra, Monique Buzzarté, emphasising the ways that improvising with other women can be an emancipatory practice. Although Oliveros is speaking about free improvisation specifically, her insights are applicable to improvisation in a jazz context as well, given the similarities between the two improvisatory forms:

Improvising with women brings about a feeling of kinship, collaboration and cooperative listening. The music is about inclusion rather than exclusion. There is less emphasis on technical mastery and more concern for sounds weaving into shared textures. I feel that I have been heard and included in consciousness as a collaborator rather than regarded as an intrusive competitor.<sup>103</sup>

Oliveros chronicles her own experiences within the predominantly male environment of improvisation, and describes her journey to seek out other women with whom to improvise. For Oliveros, working with other women has fostered a sense of community. She goes on to suggest that improvisation can be an emancipatory space for women, as evidenced by this concluding paragraph to the chapter:

As the gift of improvisation enters into society, and the life of women, I believe that paradigms will shift. Those who have never experienced power in their being, can know and discover this, and have a voice to speak for themselves without hesitation or reserve. So, the next time you hand a woman a rattle, a drum, tambourine or just invite her to make a sound, remember that you are enabling her to make choices and changes in her life by learning to be in the moment. To be *who* she really is, instead of *what* someone else has demanded that she be. May

---

<sup>103</sup> Oliveros, "Harmonic Anatomy," 55.

the spirit of freedom embraced by the art of improvisation change the world from one that confines to one that offers choices.<sup>104</sup>

Based on my own experiences as an improvising musician, I am not completely convinced that women are emancipated through improvisation in the ways that she puts forward. Still, Oliveros' compelling essay on the emancipatory potential of improvisation has led me to consider the possibility that other women improvisers feel this way and that the potential exists for improvisation to function similarly in other idiomatic contexts including jazz. This potential is especially important given the ways that improvising musicians' subjectivities are related in this incredibly intimate space. Granted, some of Oliveros' views might be related to the particularities of the dynamics of free improvisation, and I am by no means implying that improvising in a jazz context is exactly the same. However, the work of Oliveros and other writers who discuss the experiences of women in feminist improvising groups,<sup>105</sup> and the emancipatory potential that those groups offer, expose a serious lack of discussion about the transformative possibilities for women improvisers within jazz contexts.

Referring to the potentially emancipatory qualities of improvisation, I asked my informants whether or not they felt playing with other women was in any way different than playing with men. None of them felt that there was any difference. For them, personality differences and playing styles were the two main factors in how players related. Also, when I asked them if gender made a difference, they were unanimous in their belief that making music was an emancipatory space for *everyone* involved.

---

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 70.

<sup>105</sup> Like, for example, Julie Dawn Smith's chapter on FIG, "Playing Like a Girl: The Queer Laughter of the Feminist Improvising Group," from *The Other Side of Nowhere*, 224-41.

For example, Nancy Walker felt that relations within a jazz group were affected more by personality types than gender (or race, class or age for that matter), even though people may use gendered metaphors to describe that behaviour. She explains:

I don't know, I think it's more about personality types, truly. That's what my experience has been. If you want to look at the stereotypes of male and female and passive and aggressive, sensitive and insensitive and all this type of thing. Personally I've had experiences working with a woman leader who's really aggressive or really difficult. Likewise, I've had the opposite. I've worked with men who were very bull headed and determined or want their way and others who were really flexible and generous and very sensitive and the playing experience with one another. It's been the whole gamut. From my point of view it has been more about personality types.<sup>106</sup>

For Walker it was more than just personalities in the mix that mattered in the space of improvisation. In the following excerpt, she elaborates on how the space of improvisation is also a site where race and gender do not matter:

That to me is the coolest thing ever. When musicians are playing in that situation when the music is happening everything else melts away. And the musicians never ever care about the package the person comes in. Ever. Ever. If the music that comes out of that person moves them, the package never matters unless the focus for putting together that musical ensemble is not purely musical. Unless there's some sort of commercial aspect to it. You know, or gimmicky aspect to it then sure, obviously at times peoples' packages can come into play.<sup>107</sup>

---

<sup>106</sup> Walker, 2010.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

For Walker, this commercial aspect would be the only situation where something other than musical style or personality would come in. And these commercial aspects would involve something like the look or style of the group or some other form of marketing tactic.<sup>108</sup>

Rosemary Galloway also felt that it was playing style that mattered in terms of relating in an ensemble, as opposed to the idea that there could be something particular about playing with women. I wondered if her early struggles because of her gender might have given her a similar perspective to that of Oliveros, especially considering that Galloway has often opted to work with other women, like her thirty-year history of playing with saxophonist Jane Fair.<sup>109</sup> I asked her “whether or not there is a difference between improvising with men or women or men and women. Is that even anywhere on your radar in terms of making music? Do you find it different?”<sup>110</sup>

Oh god no. I wouldn't say so at all. No. Not at all. If there was any, anything in my mind that was different is that there are maybe more male players that I admire just because there's more of them working in a group that's full of great players can be intimidating. It's exhilarating at the same time [that] it's intimidating.<sup>111</sup>

For Galloway, then, gender does not appear to be a factor in how people relate in this space. Instead, it was playing ability that mattered most. This view stands in sharp contrast to some of the things that Galloway put forward about how other people felt about playing with women at certain points in her career:

---

<sup>108</sup> Walker and the other musicians I interviewed viewed all-women groups as one such marketing tactic. This will be discussed in the next chapter.

<sup>109</sup> I discuss Galloway's work with Jane Fair in the next chapter.

<sup>110</sup> Galloway, 2010.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

At one time they could get away I think focusing on something. I certainly had it. [pauses] I had experiences where I was told that I would no longer be hired by a certain person because he had been told by his boss that they didn't want any women in the band. I mean those kinds of things, right out in front, which you wouldn't be allowed to do now. But you know, so, it wasn't a very good gig anyway. But it did matter to me at the time. I mean I was trying to make a living but I realized it was just kind of one of those ridiculous rules that somebody thought up because they were concerned about something. You know?<sup>112</sup>

Again, these experiences relate more to larger societal attitudes about women making jazz than the space of the group itself (although separating the two is often problematic). This statement about how it used to be for women jazz players stand as a contrast to the contemporary attitudes that these women have about improvisation and the place of gender therein.

When I asked Tara Davidson about whether the space of improvisation held any sort of emancipatory potential for women musicians, she stated that “it is an even playing field, true. It’s about the conversational skills. It goes back to that, so...yeah. While you’re playing it’s ideally blind.”<sup>113</sup> As much as I respect Davidson’s work and her opinions on music, I am inclined to raise questions about the metaphor of blindness with respect to the space of improvisation, for it suggests that difference is something to ignore or avoid seeing rather than something to celebrate. Moreover, her suggestion that improvising is “ideally blind” implicitly acknowledges that there are still instances where gender or race matter in society — just not while making music. This is consistent with

---

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Davidson, 2010.

the fact that Davidson was fully aware of historical and ongoing struggles for women making jazz.

When I asked Lina Allemano about improvisation as a space for gender solidarity and emancipation, it gave her pause. She also expressed her reluctance at having gender mapped onto this space:

LA Wow, I should read some of that. I don't know if I improvise with a lot of women. You're making me think. Like, you know, in the pure improvised music, whatever you want to call it [pauses] You know I haven't noticed that to be any [pauses] I would be hesitant to say that [the way] people improvise as being gendered. That would be a bit odd.

RD that's not a goal?

LA [laughs] I mean, I don't know. Somebody could certainly try to do that.<sup>114</sup>

That Allemano seems not have improvised with many women is telling in and of itself. It is interesting too, that the idea of improvisation as a site for gender solidarity had not really occurred to her. This is understandable given the fact that she has not experienced much (if any) resistance to her playing because of her gender. Her comments also point to the ongoing male dominance of these musical spaces, since she also has not improvised with many women.

All of the musicians I interviewed felt that gender roles/understandings/attitudes had very little to do with their space of improvisation. This stands in sharp contrast with Oliveros' suggestion that women's improvising groups could be a site for women to empower themselves, but it does not necessarily contradict it. Instead, the women I spoke to felt that this space was in many ways emancipatory for everyone. Their reluctance to

---

<sup>114</sup> Allemano, 2010.

acknowledge gender's roles that gender plays in improvisation seemingly stems from their shared belief that the space of improvisation is beyond discrimination. This reluctance also suggests that they still see gender as something that is a negative source of discrimination in society generally, and part of me cannot help but see this as a problematic removal of difference that points to the ongoing struggles. Davidson's proposal that the space is "ideally blind" or Walker's firm statement that the package the musician comes in does not matter when the music is good, point to the fact that power asymmetries still exist with respect to gender (and race and class and age), for it is only by being blind to these things (or insisting these aspects of identity do not matter) that people are equal. Difference, in this sense, would also mean inequality. Without discounting that there is this emancipatory potential that they point to, insisting that differences do not matter still erases the subjectivity of those who do not fit the (still) male-dominated spaces of improvisation. I would argue that in order for improvisation to be a truly emancipatory space, musicians must move away from ideals of music-making communities that are predicated on notions of sameness. Until being different is accepted, structures of power cannot be challenged. This refusal of gender, of difference, also really highlights how sedimented and entrenched woman-as-other still is in jazz practice.

This erasure of difference in the space of improvisation also translated to our discussion of whether or not one's gender could be expressed through music. As previously mentioned, the idea that my gender is tangibly audible in some way is not one I am particularly enamoured with. However, the concept of jazz as a highly — or even exclusively — masculine sounding space is even less appealing.<sup>115</sup> The musicians I

---

<sup>115</sup> See Monson's essay "White Hipness" and "Nice Work if You Can Get It" by Siddall and Heble, or Annfeldt or Willis for more on the gendering of this space.

interviewed shared my reservations about hearing gender in their music. When pondering the role of gender in her improvisation, Lina Allemano states “It’s just sound.”<sup>116</sup> Similar sentiments were expressed by the other informants. For example, Nancy Walker stated “I don’t hear a man or a woman...I mean you couldn’t possibly attribute any stereotypical sounds coming out from [Geri Allen], like she doesn’t sound like a woman. She sounds like an amazing pianist and a fearless improviser.”<sup>117</sup> This refusal to hear gender in improvisation, or for it to be heard in a gendered way, is both a relief and a source of concern. From the standpoint of an improvising musician, I am happy that these musicians share my reluctance to ascribe a particular gender to improvising. Moreover, through these discussions, we get a clear sense that it is the process of making music that matters over everything else within the space of improvisation. That being said, given the history of jazz as a hegemonically masculinist discourse, I cannot shake the feeling that on some levels we/I might be refusing the admittance of gender into this space because the idea of the “feminine” is still taboo on some level.<sup>118</sup> However, these musicians are not necessarily trying to erase their femininity and become more masculine in order to conform to dominant discourses surrounding jazz. Instead, this resistance to “the gender question” can be seen as a trenchant challenge to *a priori* mappings of maleness or femaleness onto their playing.

One place where gender was permitted, however, was in more general conversations about music. Although at first this may seem like a contradiction, a distinction was drawn between the use of gendered stereotypes to describe something and

---

<sup>116</sup> Allemano, 2010.

<sup>117</sup> Walker, 2010.

<sup>118</sup> The same holds true for queerness. For some interesting initial explorations into the queering of jazz studies, see Annfelt, “Jazz as Masculine Space,” and Tucker, “When Did Jazz go Straight?”

the actual gendering of musical practice. In some ways it could also be seen as a reappropriation of gendered stereotypes that tend to portray men as strong, women as weak etc., into descriptive categories that a number of women used to describe music. They were also careful to point out that these descriptions were not hierarchical; sounding “feminine” was no better or worse than sounding “masculine,” just different. The use of gendered metaphors in this way undergirds their understanding of gender not as something inherent or essential or fixed, but as socially constructed and maintained.

In my discussion with Tara Davidson, she described how she used gendered metaphors to describe types and sounds in jazz, but that these sounds were not limited to either gender.

Sometimes I do label certain types of improv styles as “testosteroney” but I think women are capable of playing them. And “estogeny.” If you think of ECM type music, like Kenny Wheeler or something; something’s sort of gentle or esoteric about that sound. And I mean it’s all men creating it, except for Norma Winston, singing, but I guess because it’s like a gentler way about it, and it has you could label I guess the gentler — it’s still heavy jazz — but there’s gentler aspects to it — as “estrogeny.” And then the testosteroney I would label as, like hard bop, like athletic jazz improvising, like Scott Alexander on tenor or even Coltrane to a certain extent, you know it’s just like really powerful, doesn’t let up, almost assaulting — that’s not to mean that it’s offensive or less good.<sup>119</sup>

This discussion of “testosteroney” and “estrogeny” jazz demonstrates how Davidson has reappropriated gendered language in her understandings of music. When discussing gendered metaphors with Nancy Walker, we discussed whether the gendering of

---

<sup>119</sup> Davidson, 2010.

language used to describe musicians was good or bad. In particular, Walker felt that in some ways the use of certain gendered metaphors could be a sign of acceptance for women:

I hear people say all the time “balls to the wall” whether it’s a woman playing or a man playing. [laughs] It’s like, I don’t have any personally, but I appreciate where it’s coming from. And I’m not offended by gender specific terminology that happens to be male. If anything, I actually find it sort of reaffirming, because of the lineage of the music and the fact that it was so male dominated [pauses] and that when adjectives or terms like that are used to describe women, a woman’s playing, or some performance involving women, actually it’s inclusive I find. It’s not offensive, it’s something that is actually inclusive of women and everybody on the stage.<sup>120</sup>

It might seem a little strange that Walker would find male-oriented gendered language — like “playing with balls” — to be a form of acceptance. However, given her knowledge of the history of jazz and the changes that she tracked in terms of the roles of women in jazz, I contend that this is an interesting reappropriation of the use of gendered metaphors. It also suggests that, while our attitudes towards women making jazz have changed, that the language we use to discuss musicians has not. Walker’s turn of phrase “happens to be male” also demonstrates a separation of these gendered metaphors from fixed understandings of “male” or “female.” Moreover, this pattern of discourse shows how these women have reappropriated gendered language with respect to their musical practices.

---

<sup>120</sup> Walker, 2010.

### **(Re)Gendering Possibilities, (Re)Gendering Jazz?**

Thankfully, nobody (myself included) viewed the art of jazz improvisation as an articulation of some sort of essentialized “female experience.” Like in previous accounts of musicians’ views of improvisation, all four musicians agreed that the process of jazz improvisation is interactive and like a conversation. These women emphasised the importance of listening and contributing to the collective for their improvisations. They also suggested that this space was special in that the music mattered more between musicians than issues of gender or race. What mattered most were the relationships between the musicians involved as articulated through sound, which also gives an emancipatory character to the space of improvisation. Some of them suggested that gender did not have a place in that space, which stands in contrast to the emancipatory potential that Oliveros finds through improvising with other women.

Returning to Butler’s understandings of gender and sex to be active, constructed processes, the views of these women present a rather complex understanding of how gender operates in their musical practices. And while their reluctance to admit gender into the discussion of their musical output revealed resistance to deeply entrenched understandings of jazz as a hegemonically masculine preserve, their reappropriation of gendered metaphors in the discussion of musical practices demonstrates an active subversion and re-purposing of gendered understandings.

This chapter is by no means a definitive answer to the question of whether or not there is room for gendered subjectivities that are not “male” in instrumental jazz. Instead, it provides an overview of several contemporary women jazz musicians’ attitudes towards gender in improvisation with a view of taking a small step towards

understanding more fully the complex relationship(s) between subject position and music making. The next chapter elaborates on this issue by exploring the idea of community in/through improvisation within the context of “all-girl” groups.

## Chapter Four: Unpacking the Legacy of “All-Girl” Groups

In this chapter, I address the category of “women-in-jazz” through a discussion of the contemporary relevance of “all-girl groups.” There is a long history of all-girl groups being at once politically subversive to male hegemony, while also being trivialised as a highly commercialised venture. For this reason, the women who work in these groups must navigate the tricky discursive terrain that appropriates their musical output to either one of these ends, assuming that having women in a jazz group is either a political statement or a marketing tool, or both. Moreover, it is nearly impossible to be female and a jazz musician without confronting these ideas head-on.

There are two main themes in this discussion: the first relates to whether the women I interviewed feel that playing with other women musicians places them in some kind of ghetto with respect to the dominant discourses surrounding jazz, or that all-girl groups constitute a politicised space that actively resists those discourses. The second main theme in this discussion relates to whether or not they feel that all-girl groups are still politically useful. In examining these issues, I am indebted to the work of Sherrie Tucker who writes about the category “woman-in-jazz”:

The power of women-in-jazz is not its ability to celebrate the contribution of women musicians, patiently jamming without reward, but rather its role as the bane of women-on-the-edge-of-jazz, who, often irritated by being racked into devalued or hidden or tired musical spaces, have improvised, and continue to

improvise, within and against this long and winding margin in all kinds of creative ways — often in ways designed to obliterate it.<sup>121</sup>

In the previous chapter, I described the ways in which the women I spoke to felt that gender did not play a role in their improvisations. This seemingly refutes the idea that there is some kind of musical connection — inherent or otherwise — between women improvisers. However, all of the women I interviewed felt that all-girl groups were still useful within a certain political context. What is more, while specific “all-girl” ventures were met with some trepidation, playing with other women was not. For example, three of the women I interviewed played in the same group, the collaborative Jane Fair/Rosemary Galloway Quintet.<sup>122</sup>

### **Can Gender Make a Community? The Curse of the Female Experience, Revisited**

Another interesting facet of this discussion involves whether or not women making jazz form a particular community. The assumption that there is some kind of inherent connection between women musicians merely because they are all women is deeply essentialist and problematic; however, this should not be taken to mean that there is no possibility of creating a feeling of community — and possibly even empowerment — when women perform together in a group and work toward a common goal. Once again, Sherrie Tucker brings this idea to light, in the following excerpt from her contribution to *The Other Side of Nowhere*:

---

<sup>121</sup> Tucker, “Bordering on Community,” 246.

<sup>122</sup> Jane Fair plays saxophones, Rosemary Galloway bass, Lina Allemano trumpet, Nancy Walker piano, and Nick Fraser is their current drummer. They have released one album together and were just finishing up in studio for the second album at the time I interviewed them. For more information please see <http://www.rosemarygalloway.com>.

If one is an improvising woman, how does one balance annoyance with women-in-jazz as a limiting and nonsensical professional trap, with gender-based mutual support based common experiences with other women who play jazz? These other improvising women may or may not share anything with you other than the fact that they are often tracked into women-in-jazz gigs and otherwise slip the mind of jazz job central. Yet, if women play jazz no differently than men, it follows that some women will appreciate each other's musical ideas, just as jazz players of any sex sometimes do and sometimes don't share musical interests. And isn't mutual support also a kind of community? It does seem hasty to throw out the possibility of jazz community that is conscious of women's particular experiences of gender constructions.<sup>123</sup>

As with my discussion of improvisation in the previous chapter, my unpacking of all-girl groups *vis-a-vis* the musicians I interviewed is partially inspired by "the possibility of a jazz community that is conscious of women's particular experiences of gender constructions."<sup>124</sup> In this chapter I also want to pay particular attention to the politics involved in all-girl groups as a model of community formation based on gender solidarity.

### **External Forces: Gender as Ghetto, Gender as Marketing Tool**

One historical legacy of all-girl groups involves the practice and perception of them as commercial ventures. Groups such as The International Sweethearts of Rhythm, Prairie

---

<sup>123</sup> Tucker, "Bordering on Community," 247.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*

View Co-Eds, and The Darlings of Rhythm Orchestra,<sup>125</sup> were highly popular in the Swing Era, with all-girl swing bands touring the US and abroad.<sup>126</sup> While interest in such ventures has waned considerably, all-girl groups have persisted as a potentially lucrative commercial venture.

When in conversation with Rosemary Galloway, we touched on the commercial aspects of all-girl groups. Galloway has performed in a number of all-girl groups throughout her career, including The Swing Sisters (also featuring longtime musical collaborator Jane Fair) and Velvet Glove (a collaboration with Stacy Rowles). In this excerpt Galloway discusses some of the commercial aspects to playing in these groups:

There was this sort of commercial aura to it...I always worked with people whose playing I liked, but sometimes we had more women in the group than we would have chosen maybe for a commercial reason. And that was part of getting the gig. But I think that people's fascination with all-women groups has died-down somewhat, I'm happy to say. So the pressure isn't there anymore and I think that's all to the good.<sup>127</sup>

Galloway's relief with respect to the waning commercial interest in these types of groups is in some ways a response to the ghettoization of groups with women in them — especially considering the commercialisation (and subsequent trivialisation) of these ensembles.<sup>128</sup> This sentiment comes through more clearly in the following excerpt from the interview where she discusses a particular experience in one such venture:

---

<sup>125</sup> For more examples, see Tucker, *Swing Shift*.

<sup>126</sup> All-girl bands had been around for much longer, but the complexities of the labour shortage during WWII and the sudden "appearance" of women in the workforce to help the war effort brought about a particular interest in them. See Tucker, *Swing Shift*, for a detailed discussion of labour practices during WWII.

<sup>127</sup> Galloway, 2010.

<sup>128</sup> See, for example, Tucker's discussion of groups like the Hour of Charm Orchestra in *Swing Shift*.

Another thing that I did a lot of over the years was play in groups that had a preponderance of women players in it. The first one I was in was really basically a commercial venture. There was a booker who wanted an all-female band, and we put together the band because he offered us a gig. And we were playing music that we were unfamiliar with, it wasn't our bag at all and we weren't very good at it and we got an absolutely terrible review the very first night we played. So you know there's a bit of chauvinism going on there too, that they come to the very first night that we play and then say "this is the very worst thing I've ever seen."<sup>129</sup>

In this excerpt, Galloway touches on aspects of the trivialisation through her reference to the chauvinism she saw in the people who went to the one gig of this commercial venture and passed a judgement on the musicians. This judgement, this "bit of chauvinism" that Galloway points to stems from the fact that women musicians — especially women in all-girl bands — must constantly prove themselves as musicians. Tucker explains: "although all-girl bands usually played the same swing standards with the same instrumentation as men's bands and many women musicians had extensive training and experience, women's burden to prove that they were real musicians constituted a constant, additional part of the job."<sup>130</sup> Several decades after the height of these swing bands, the burden lingers. For example, in *Swing Shift*, Tucker cites an article in the *Los Angeles Times* from 1996 about the band DIVA: "the members of diva, the all-female big band that kicks off the Playboy Jazz Festival on Saturday, are out to blow a hole in the stereotype that women can't play," which prompted the following grim response from

---

<sup>129</sup> Galloway, 2010.

<sup>130</sup> Sherrie Tucker, *Swing Shift*, 56.

Tucker: “One wonders if this is a stereotype through which one can blow a hole.”<sup>131</sup> Recent press about women in jazz festivals continues this narrative: in 2008, Cathy Riches wrote about women breaking ground at the Art of Jazz festival that year in Toronto which featured “Women in Jazz” for two days.<sup>132</sup> The constant burden for women musicians to prove themselves is further complicated by the fact that assembling a group based purely on gender can often mean that the people doing the gig, while competent musicians, might be playing music that they are not used to or even familiar with. This is deeply problematic when viewed in combination with the chauvinism that questions the abilities of women musicians, since these groups are sometimes the first ensemble contexts in which the women are seen by a wider audience. The burden also explains the reluctance of many women musicians to play in groups with other women, in that they hope to sidestep the spectacle of such groups by avoiding them altogether.

But the ways that gender is used as a marketing tool are not necessarily restricted to all-girl groups. In her discussion of the contemporary applications and uses for all-girl groups in jazz, Walker pointed to “external forces” that would necessitate forming an all-girl group. She states:

Addressing the concept of all women groups: I think that can come from women musicians themselves. And that can come from external forces, right? Like, festival promoters, or other types whose gig it is to kind of make some kind of

---

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., 57. For the full newspaper article see Zan Stewart, “All-Female Band Diva Breaking Stereotypes,” *The Los Angeles Times*, July 16, 1995, [http://articles.latimes.com/1995-06-16/entertainment/ca-13837\\_1\\_big-band](http://articles.latimes.com/1995-06-16/entertainment/ca-13837_1_big-band).

<sup>132</sup> Cathy Riches, “Women Making Jazz Inroads,” *Women’s Post* (June 17, 2008), <http://www.womenspost.ca/articles/music/women-making-jazz-inroads>.

gimmick or some kind of catchy reason other than the music itself for people to come out.<sup>133</sup>

Walker also discussed how she saw gender being used as a marketing tool. She elaborates:

I think concert promoters and festival promoters and so on have a certain kind of mandate to have a program that's full of variety. So from that point of view, then, the woman saxophone player leader — they are probably only going to have one of those on their roster just because it's a way of categorizing, and they're probably only gonna have one choral group from Africa too. Since two of those would [not be] be optimal programming, right? It's...less and less about gender. Although I think at one time...there was more of that going on. But so from the point of view of the people who organize gigs you know, and their responsibility it is to draw people to these events they're just going to want to mix things up. And from that point of view, if certain women don't get included part of that is just, it's just package, you know? Like being a woman instrumentalist ends up being a package just as being a whole bunch of, you know, young men of colour in suits doing a certain kind of music, you know? It could be as a package but I don't think of that as being positive or negative inasmuch as, like I say they're just trying to create variety. So they're gonna have a mixture of things and, you know.<sup>134</sup>

For Walker, it would seem that gender as a marketing category is not necessarily a nefarious plot; instead, like so many other aspects of life under capitalism, it is just

---

<sup>133</sup> Walker, 2010.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

business. Sometimes people are looking to present an image to attract people. She touches on this theme again, when she discusses marketing and whether or not she was accepted in a band because of her gender, with the club owners (not the musicians) actually taking issue with her being there because of the look they were going for in the club. This perhaps does not strike Walker as being a specific instance of gender discrimination because it is so seemingly superficial. She explains in the following anecdote:

One case was a restaurant/club owner, and it was as much to do with the fact that I was white and female as it was that I was female. If I had been white and male or black and female I would have been okay. This particular club was going for a particular vibe and look, and who the musicians were that came in and subbed and so they were actually saying, you know don't bother calling this person anymore to the leader. I was told this, right?! They weren't crazy about this person or that person because of the way they looked. And as far as me, I know it was because I was not super young, and not either a woman of colour or sort of looking ethnic or exotic in some way, and yeah it being all those three things together made the package less viable to them as far as the image they were trying to create. So that was one incident that was in the nineties. But it wasn't about the musicians' choice, it was about the guy that ran the club and him trying to create this vibe that was this kind of downtown thing and totally stereotypical representation of what these jazz musicians were supposed to look like and imposing it on the

leader ...and also thinking what his customers might be interested in seeing. He could be dead wrong, you know?<sup>135</sup>

Through this anecdote we see how Walker could understand the marketing categories as not necessarily being representative of larger nefarious purposes. In this case, the club owner's vision of what the group should look like dictated who was in the band. That being said, I am less convinced than Walker that there is no bias in such an understanding of gender as a gimmick. If gender is "just" a marketing category, then why is there only room for one female bandleader at a festival? Why did Walker have to look "ethnic" or "exotic"? What is more, a marketing category relegates women into a fixed space; they become token elements to be contained in a token festival slot.<sup>136</sup> Finally, this pattern also means that male musicians are still the norm, with women instrumentalists still put forward as a gimmick like the all-girl groups that Tucker has documented. Despite the optimism that there is much less gender bias today, I fear that this notion of gender as a marketing tool points to a persistent and perhaps embedded belief that women are still novelties in the jazz world.

Implying that gender is merely a marketing tool also depoliticises "the market," which is also highly problematic. Heble and Siddall chronicle their struggles in organizing a jazz festival that focused on women musicians without tumbling into the trap of gender as gimmick in "Nice Work if you Can Get it." Confronted by the ways that the marketing and programming aspects of their "Women in Jazz" themed festival were deeply political (not to mention hegemonically masculine), through their own experiences they illustrate the politics involved in this programming. With respect to their

---

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> This is not unlike the "world music" slot that an African choir might be forced into.

intentions for the festival, they suggested that every aspect of planning this festival was politically charged:

While on the one hand, we hoped as festival organizers to redress some of these inequalities, on the other hand, we also became acutely aware of ways in which we might unintentionally exacerbate them. We have been forced to recognize our role as participants in how the history of women in jazz unfolds: depending on what context, ticket prices, marketing strategies, and so on, our interventions worked to configure and represent the role of women in jazz in particular ways. In other words, we were not simply presenting the music in a neutral or disinterested way (nor could we); instead we were fashioning a narrative around the role of women in jazz, a narrative that was inflected by our own biases, predispositions, and ideologies.<sup>137</sup>

At every turn in their planning they encountered another issue with respect to gender bias in jazz, including marketing agencies that “wanted to take advantage of the opportunity to represent women on posters in a sexually suggestive way that they felt would have mass appeal.”<sup>138</sup> Moreover, they posit that even the act of planning a festival full of women musicians “is itself a gesture which runs the risk of invoking expectations and possibly stereotypes about female performers.”<sup>139</sup> These issues involved, in large part, attitudes about women making jazz that were based on market-driven understandings of women as novelties in the genre, which comes through when they remark on the general expectation that their festival would feature jazz women singing and playing the piano: “while we didn’t choose this theme as an explicit marketing strategy, we were certainly aware of the

---

<sup>137</sup> Heble and Siddall, “Nice Work if You Can Get It,” 161.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, 160

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, 161

extent to which it would likely work in our favour by drawing audiences to our festival. Female singers, in particular, continue to be cherished in the popular imagination.”<sup>140</sup> Steeped in and shaped by the very ideologies and politics that shape our understandings of society, marketing strategies are simply not neutral, no matter how superficial or reflective they may be.

### **All-girl Groups As a Source of Empowerment: Still Necessary?**

Not all of the reasons for forming all-girl groups were/are commercial. In many cases — particularly closer to the beginning of the twentieth century — this was often the only option for musicians who wanted to perform professionally.<sup>141</sup> But as Gourse and Dahl note in their histories of women making jazz, in the wake of the second “wave” of the women’s movement, groups and festivals were put together to promote awareness about women making jazz.<sup>142</sup> These groups also had the potential for being spaces where women could feel empowered and safe, which also ties in to the ideas that Oliveros put forward in her compelling discussion of playing with other women.

Julie Dawn Smith writes about the Feminist Improvising Group (FIG) which was formed by Maggie Nicols and Lindsay Cooper in the 1970s in order to not only create a space for women to perform and listen to improvised music, but also to break into male dominated spaces and reclaim these spaces of improvisation on their own terms:

The opportunity to play for women audiences became an opportunity to reconfigure the relationship between spectacle and spectator apart from the typical

---

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

<sup>141</sup> That being said, women have been performing throughout the history of jazz, going as far back as ragtime and vaudeville. For more information on the lives of women in the early jazz years see Sally Placksin, *American Women in Jazz*.

<sup>142</sup> Dahl, *Stormy Weather*, 183-92; Gourse, *Madame Jazz*.

scenario of masculine desire that constructed improvised music as heterosexual, positioned women musicians as spectacles for the masculine gaze and/or assumed that women on and off the bandstand were either wives, girlfriends, or groupies. Instead, improvising on their own terms was a chance for women to foreground *their* bodies and *their* sounds for the pleasure of other women. If women in the audience were not particularly fluent in deciphering the codes of free improvisation, their fluency with the all-too-familiar tropes of the female body and women's precarious position to sound and spectacle was indeed proficient.<sup>143</sup>

In jazz, there have been a number of similar — albeit often less politically charged — initiatives to create spaces for women including DIVA and Maiden Voyage. DIVA is a big band, led by drummer Sherrie Maricle in New York City, that began in 1992.<sup>144</sup> The group Maiden Voyage, led by saxophonist Ann Patterson, has received much critical attention.<sup>145</sup> Other initiatives are more locally based, like those of Cobi Narita, a longstanding promoter and supporter of jazz in New York, who founded the Universal Jazz Coalition in the 1970s (which hosted the New York Women's Jazz Festival), and later the International Women in Jazz organization which focus their efforts in New York City.<sup>146</sup> There have also been larger scale initiatives like the Kansas City Women's Jazz Festival (1976-86), the Mary Lou Williams Women in Jazz Festival (1996- ), and the

<sup>143</sup> Julie Dawn Smith, "Playing Like a Girl: The Queer Laughter of the Feminist Improvising Group," in *The Other Side of Nowhere*, 240.

<sup>144</sup> For a complete history of the group, as well as a list of the many musicians who have been involved in the ensemble, see <http://www.divajazz.com/about.html>. See also Gourse, *Stormy Weather*, 3-6.

<sup>145</sup> See Dahl, *Stormy Weather*; Gourse, *Madame Jazz*; and Placksin, *American Women in Jazz*.

<sup>146</sup> The former organization also hosts the New York City Women's Jazz Festival, which features women musicians at a number of venues throughout the city. Unfortunately, little information about this organization exists. For excerpts of interviews with Narita, see Dahl, *Stormy Weather*, 187-8; Gourse, *Madame Jazz*, 60-5. For more recent information on Narita's contributions to the jazz scene, see Celeste Sunderland, "Cobi Narita's 80<sup>th</sup> Birthday," *All About Jazz*, <http://www.allaboutjazz.com/php/article.php?id=20894>; "Harlem Speaks," <http://www.jazzmuseumharlem.org/archive.php?id=307>; Ron Scott, "Cobi Swings on 76," <http://www.jazzhouse.org/library/index.php3?read=scott3>. For information on the International Women in Jazz, see <http://www.internationalwomeninjazz.com/>.

Sisters in Jazz Program run by IAJE (1998-2008). Given this history of creating spaces to foster and encourage the musical output of women, I felt it important to hear whether or not my informants felt that these projects were still relevant.

My discussion with Nancy Walker about the contemporary relevance of all-girl groups began with reasons for forming them. She felt that these groups were formed for a number of commercial and political reasons. In this particular excerpt she discusses these motivations from the bandleader's point of view:

I think when it does come from women themselves, I think it can be for a couple of reasons. I think it can be comfort level. I've played in one instrumental group over the years where there's one male in the band, the drummer, and everybody else is female and there was pretty much a conscious effort on the part of the women who lead the group — at least one of them, I think — to have it be pretty much female just because one of the women in fact has said that, you know, because she felt safer or it would be less judgemental. Sort of stereotypical kind of concerns about machoism or whatever on the part of some potential male [band members]. Whatever you want to call it.<sup>147</sup>

While Walker may not feel that she needs to create safe spaces for women jazz players through the formation of all- (or primarily-) women groups anymore, she acknowledges that there are still women who do need these spaces. Recalling the ideas I developed through Oliveros' work in the previous chapter about improvising groups and community formation, this idea of creating a space without stereotypical male attitudes also points to ongoing instances of resistance to women musicians (whether real or perceived).

---

<sup>147</sup> Walker, 2010.

Walker also participated in some politically active groups throughout her career. For example, she performed in The Parachute Club, a popular collective of musicians from Toronto that was most active in the 1980s.<sup>148</sup> The Parachute Club was politically active and concerned about social inequalities, particularly with respect to gender.

Walker explains:

For a while I was working in the Parachute Club, a group in the 80s that was political and you know, it was with women and lesbians and making statements about both of those groups being disenfranchised and bringing to life the fact that yeah these woman here can play the conga drums and you know this woman can play the guitar and so on and so that was like a conscious political move to show that women can be strong and can do these things. And can also play with men, and keep up as it were [be]cause there were men in that band. I think even now at this time there's less and less need for that kind [of thing].<sup>149</sup>

Again, while she did see the need for these kinds of political musical projects in the past, she did not feel that they are necessarily still needed. She continues, discussing women bandleaders and the politics of hiring other women:

Depending on one's sort of political bent, I think some women who are leaders would choose to include women in their band consciously rather than think solely about the musicianship or the combination of musicianship and comradeship that you have. Some women would still choose to consciously include women because of the desire to expose people to women's musicianship and so on. But I think

---

<sup>148</sup> Although they may not be a jazz group, it was the group that she spoke of that she felt best captured the political work being done by women making music. For a brief history of The Parachute Club, see <http://thecanadianencyclopedia.com/index.cfm?PgNm=TCE&Params=U1ARTU0002715>.

<sup>149</sup> Walker, 2010.

there's less of [a] need for that for one thing, and there's less, there's just less of that [kind of] inequity, it appears.<sup>150</sup>

In other words, Walker does not see the need to hire women for political reasons to be as necessary as it once was, which is consistent with her view that circumstances for women learning jazz had changed.

Lina Allemano has also participated in some all-girl groups, but has become increasingly wary of the venture, doing it less and less. When I asked her whether or not she participated in such ensembles, she had the following to say:

I've been a little bit careful about that kind of thing. Sort of one of the approaches I think I decided at one point to take, because I was getting asked to do a lot of things, you know women in this or all women bands or whatever. And I did do a little bit of that, and at some point I decided that I didn't really want to be involved in that way. I thought that the best way for me to be a feminist, or to be a good role model is just to be doing my thing, and not having to wave a sign. I didn't want to be some kind of ghettoized thing, like I didn't want to just play with women. I want play with great musicians, and that's all I ever wanted to be was a musician. And I hate when people look at me and see a woman. I want them to close their eyes and listen to the music. Who cares if you are a woman or a man? But anyway, the women's festivals and stuff I mean some of them. I guess it depends on the angle, who's organizing it, what's behind it. Like, I've definitely participated in some, and there's actually something coming up called the International Women's Brass Conference and I'm going to be participating in that, as a featured artist and I'm really happy and excited about that. And my band

---

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

is excited about it, and we're going to be playing in it, and the rest of my band are not women. They are excited to be there too.<sup>151</sup>

For Allemano, her participation in these initiatives depended on who was organizing the event and why, because she did not want to be trapped in some kind of “ghettoized thing.” What is more, she discusses how she feels that she can best be a feminist — which is to be out there and making music with great musicians, regardless of their gender. Allemano does not think that playing with other women is necessarily a “ghettoized thing”; in fact she plays in a number of groups that have women in them, like the Jane Fair-Rosemary Galloway quintet. The key thing to note in these contexts is that in these groups she is being chosen as a musician, and does not feel like she is being chosen solely for her gender. Finally, her comments about the excitement of her male band mates to playing at the international women’s brass conference point to the fact that they are sensitive to the struggles women making jazz have had to face, and supportive of efforts that seek to help promote awareness about women. In addition, these comments may be taken as evidence that there may well be a shift taking place with regard to the perception of gender in jazz circles for they suggest that the members of Allemano’s band do not perceive gender to be strictly a women’s issue. This would be a very welcome change indeed

When I asked if she had issues playing with other women, she had the following to say:

No, not really. I mean you have to ask Rose[mary Galloway] and Jane [Fair] about that with their group, because I know that there are four women in the band, and five people in the band so and I know that’s somewhat unusual when it’s not

---

<sup>151</sup> Allemano, 2010.

done on purpose, but I mean you hear what they have to say about that. I mean they didn't ask me to be in the band because I'm a woman, I'm pretty certain about that. So I like that angle, like it just happens. And actually Ingrid and I did a gig at the Ford in New York, and I remember Dave Douglas hired us and said "I don't want this to be a woman band. I want you to know that this is not a woman thing. I want you and I want Ingrid [Jensen] together, because you guys will sound great together and be wonderful." And of course there will be this underlying thing where it's obviously there's two women trumpet players and it's a bit unusual—still — these days. But I like how he made it not a point of being [about women]. He didn't advertise it as that. I like that angle.<sup>152</sup>

Having Dave Douglas say that he was not hiring them to cash in on the women-in-jazz marketing ploy is both encouraging and cause for concern. It is encouraging, because it displays a respect and sensitivity to the ongoing politics involving women being marketed in jazz; it is cause for concern, because Douglas felt the need to say that in the first place, which points to the ongoing power dynamics with respect to the trivialisation of women making jazz.

Allemano's perspectives also highlight some of the issues raised by Walker. For one, her decision whether or not she would participate in a group that was all women depended on the intent of the organizers of the group and/or performance. Seeking to avoid having her music trivialised, Allemano has avoided groups that she felt were hiring her to fill some kind of gender quota and instead tried to focus on playing with really great musicians regardless of their gender.

---

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

My conversation with Tara Davidson about all-girl groups began with a discussion of her participation in the Sisters in Jazz program. Sisters in Jazz was an initiative put forward by the International Association of Jazz Educators (IAJE) that existed from 1998-2008.<sup>153</sup> Young women in jazz programs at the post-secondary level across North America would be nominated, and of those nominees a quintet would be selected that would then have the opportunity to not only play together at a number of venues internationally, but also to receive some mentorship and guidance from a number of successful women jazz musicians. Several of the musicians I interviewed mentioned this project as a positive space to help young women. Tara Davidson won a spot in the group in the 2001 competition. For Davidson this program was an instance where an all-girl group was a positive space. In our discussion of the contemporary relevance of all-girl groups she described the Sisters as follows:

I made some amazing links. I think they will be lifelong friendships out of that band. And we formed, a couple of us, the year that I happened to get in that program there were three Canadians, so the three of us, and so we formed our own band. So it was three women — we got a guy on drums. But it was still like women banding together. But we were friends.<sup>154</sup>

This positive experience contrasts with how she views all-girl groups at present. Here, Davidson is discussing how she approaches playing in such groups. For Davidson, there is potential for this kind of group to be a positive experience, but there were some aspects

---

<sup>153</sup> The IAJE is now defunct after going bankrupt in 2008, which is why the program has been discontinued. However, there is a website that is still maintained (by the former director of the program) that chronicles the women in the program: <http://katchie.com/sij/sistersinjazz.html>.

<sup>154</sup> Davidson, 2010.

of all-girl groups that make her a little reluctant to play in them today. She explains her reluctance in the following excerpt:

You know, as I'm getting older and I'm thinking about it in more and more different ways, I pause on it. Not offended, but pause on it and I can definitely come up with issues about it. When I was coming out of school, I was in Sisters in Jazz and it was all-women, so we're excluding men, but it's like to promote us and to lift us up and to help us, and it was completely positive and not to exclude anyone. But yeah there's like a novelty about it, which kind of in some ways takes away. It's a tough thing. I mean, what makes me pause about it now is I guess maybe just perspective from my husband too, like, putting an all-Asian band together to promote them and help them go further. That kind of thing is a positive attention but it's kind of awkward, when you're excluding anybody in any way. So I have cause for pause about it now, though when people ask me to be part of something for work and it happens to be all female, it's like well, I like to play, and I want to play with anybody who can play and wants to play. And getting money is good. So I know female jazz musician friends who avoid it completely, just avoid it at all costs, and I understand why. Because I am pausing about it more, I think about it more.<sup>155</sup>

For Davidson, the intentions behind the group also mattered. Groups like the Sisters in Jazz, which sought to promote women and be positive were seen as acceptable experiences, but they were also awkward because they excluded people. Like with Allemano and Walker, the intentions behind the group mattered to her, and despite the

---

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

fact that it gave Davidson “cause for pause,” she was not wary of playing with other women in general.

Rosemary Galloway also discussed the Sisters in Jazz program in our discussion of all-girl groups, citing it as an important opportunity for young musicians. She felt that the program “has offered really good opportunities to a number of Canadians. It was kind of like equal opportunity type hiring. I think that was really helpful. I think that really helps to give women players more encouragement.”<sup>156</sup> As previously noted, Galloway has played in a number of all-girl groups throughout her career, and here she details some of her experiences in the Kansas City Women’s Jazz Festival:

And we did go and play the women’s jazz festival in Kansas City and met Stacy Rowles in Kansas City. Is that where I met her? I met her in Wichita because Clark Terry had an all-girl — it really was an all-girl band because most of them were high school students — but I met Stacy in Wichita in 1973 or something. And then we did the Kansas City Women’s Jazz Festival. Because we were playing a traditional style of music we needed a trumpet — which there wasn’t here. And Stacy came and played and she was absolutely great at it. And it wasn’t really her bag. She was really good, though. And a long association with Stacy came out of that and some other recordings so the opportunity really has moved some things forward for those of us who participated. Even though it was focused on women. So it was a good thing.<sup>157</sup>

---

<sup>156</sup> Galloway, 2010.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

This long association with Stacy Rowles resulted in the formation of the group Velvet Glove, which released two albums<sup>158</sup> and played many festivals across Canada in the 1990s, playing a mix of standards and their own compositions. Like Walker and Allemano, Galloway also explained that she felt that the need for these groups was dying down, mainly because of the changes in attitudes about women making jazz. Galloway explains:

Yeah, well certainly then you know as I say I do think things have changed a lot, so that kind of specific thing, I mean it's not going anymore I think. The women's jazz festival in Kansas City isn't happening anymore. Again I think audiences are no longer fascinated, the women don't need the opportunities in the same way. All of the things that were there and caused those women to put on that festival have perhaps dissipated and that's great. They all probably had a hand in making it happen and that's good.<sup>159</sup>

Galloway suggests that the groups were successful in their aims, which is why they are beginning to disappear. Her comments also point to the fact that all of the musicians involved in these initiatives — Galloway included — also had a hand in changing the circumstances for women making jazz. It was through their efforts that women have the mobility in jazz that they do today, and it will be thanks to the continued efforts of these groundbreakers and other younger musicians (both male and female) that conditions will continue to improve.

---

<sup>158</sup> *Round One* in 1992 and *Coming Out Swinging* in 1993, both released by FishHorn Music. The albums also featured Jane Fair on saxophones/flute, Jill McCarron on piano, and Sherrie Maricle on drums.

<sup>159</sup> Galloway, 2010.

### **All-Girl Groups: Resisting Novelty**

I have always felt it important to play with other women. In fact, I have made a point to play with them as often as possible. But I also am rather tired of the novelty factor that is associated with being a woman instrumentalist — not to mention playing in a jazz group with more than one woman. A particularly frustrating experience in this respect happened while I was a student at Humber College. For one of my in-class performances, I had a all female group perform with me, which was more of random convergence than political statement. There were far fewer rhythm section players than horn players, and juggling performance schedules and rehearsal times made finding people to perform a tricky endeavour. I had played with the members of my group in different circumstances, but never all together. The first question/comment we received after our performance (from a male student — I was the only woman in the class) was whether I was some kind of feminist for having an all-girl group. The fact that having a group that happened to be all women was automatically seen as a political statement at once indicates some kind of awareness with respect to women groups, and also points to the fact that some people automatically see women musicians performing together as a politicized action. This experience, for me, also brings to light many of the issues that the women I interviewed grapple with in their professional careers when they play with other women, not because they fear everyone will assume that they are either trying to make an extra buck or political statement, but because *some* people still will. Sadly, playing with other women is still not quite “normal.”

While my informants all perceived that all-girl groups had done (and still do) some important political work, many of them felt that it was becoming less and less

necessary. In a sense, this view is consistent with their views on gender bias in jazz presented in Chapter Two. The women I interviewed also expressed reluctance to participate in all-women groups that are more interested in using gender as a marketing tool. Thankfully, none of the women I interviewed felt that playing with other women is, in itself, a problem. Instead, their concerns about playing in these more commercially-based groups stem from a desire to ensure that their musical output is not trivialised. Given the history of all-girl groups being regarded on the one hand as a gimmick and on the other as a political statement, the views of my informants with respect to the contemporary relevance of these groups should not be a surprise. That said, their wariness about the idea of a modern all-girl group as a political statement also suggests that the contemporary jazz community may still not be as unbiased as they think it is.

## Chapter Five: Conclusions

Inspired by my own experiences as a jazz performer, this thesis examined the experiences and attitudes of four contemporary women jazz musicians with respect to three major themes: whether or not gender was made an obstacle throughout their careers; the space of improvisation as a site for community formation and relational identity formation; and the politics of women playing jazz with a particular focus on all-women groups. Through interviews Lina Allemano, Tara Davidson, Rosemary Galloway, and Nancy Walker, I have sought to understand the ways that gender structures and shapes their music, and that of women in jazz more generally. Chapter Two of this thesis examined the experiences of the women I interviewed *vis-a-vis* those of women throughout jazz history, detailing the different ways that their particular experiences were (or were not) affected by gender bias. Chapter Three discussed the possibility of performing and hearing gender within the space of jazz improvisation, and Chapter Four discussed the legacy of all-girl groups and the relevance of such groups today.

Within and between these chapters are a number of recurring themes. For one, each musician felt strongly that there had been significant changes that have made it easier for women performing jazz today. A second intriguing theme, closely related to this, was that gender bias did not come from their fellow musicians, but instead from people and institutional frameworks outside their music making groups (concert goers, club owners, festival promoters, etc.). Third, they felt that jazz improvisation creates a space where differences — including those, like gender, that are a source of

discrimination in other contexts — do not matter. These themes highlight the complexities of ongoing struggles to dismantle hegemonically male conceptions of jazz.

### **Future Directions (Or, The Ones that Got Away)**

This thesis has made a number of contributions to the discourses on gender in jazz practice which point to future directions in research. For example, future research on jazz and gender in Canada should explore the perspectives of women musicians from a greater variety of scenes both within Toronto and also in different Canadian cities. Each of the women I interviewed lives and works in Toronto. Although these women experienced little gender bias in their professional careers, this may not be the case everywhere (which they acknowledged). Future explorations into the lives of women instrumentalists, both in Toronto and other scenes, would provide more insights into how and why circumstances are changing for women making jazz — or how and why they have not.

The discussion of improvisation in Chapter Three also opens up some new lines of inquiry. Building on research that has been done with respect to women in free improvisation, I examined the potential for improvisation to be an emancipatory space of relational identity formation for women improvisers in a jazz context. Future explorations could focus on the similarities and differences between these two musical genres (and related scenes), and shed insights on how gender conceptions are performed and related in these musical spaces. More research on how women making jazz understand the ways subjectivity is articulated and expressed through improvisation is also in order, as well as explorations into how other forms of difference are related, performed, celebrated — or silenced — in and through musical improvisation.

My discussion of the contemporary relevance of all-girl groups in Chapter Four contributes to understandings of community formation and gender. Part of this discussion involves how gender may or may not be a source of community in a musical setting. The “professional trap” of all-girl groups has been re-appropriated by many women as a rallying point in the fight against the misogyny in jazz. While the musicians I interviewed did not feel that these types of communities were necessary anymore, this may not be the case for everyone. Future research could explore some of the groups that still exist — for example, La Big Band in Ottawa — and their reasoning for banding together.

A variety of additional themes that merit future study exceeded the scope of this particular project. One of the bigger questions that remain involves discussions of race as it relates to, and intersects with, discussions of gender in jazz in Canada. Interestingly, we did speak about race in my interviews, but not in relation to gender. There was a consensus that race was something that we should be exploring in jazz. Some, like Davidson, even felt that it was a more productive space for academics to focus our attentions, since gender issues were on the wane. It also strikes me that in my search for veteran instrumentalists in the Toronto jazz scene, most of the women I came across were white, and all of the women who agreed to interview with me were white. When I was a student at Humber, I was often surprised that most of the other musicians around me were also white — both at school and at gigs. My younger self did not think much of this occurrence, most likely because I was only beginning to think critically about how race structured my daily life and the spaces I occupied. It also strikes me that many of the documented histories of jazz making in Canada present a rather whitewashed recounting, with only a few stories of Black Canadian musicians, or tales of African-American

musicians touring the provinces.<sup>160</sup> However, the subject of race relations within jazz in Canada, and their intersection with gender politics, is beyond the scope of the present essay. Suffice it to say that I harbour a deep suspicion that the Canadian jazz scene is rife with multiple power imbalances that play out along various lines of difference, including gender and race.<sup>161</sup>

Another important issue involves the institutionalisation of jazz and how gender plays out in various institutional contexts including festivals and educational settings. Some work has been done in this regard. For example, Kathleen McKeage has discussed the effects of gendered educational processes on young women in jazz programs.<sup>162</sup> Given the fact that there seems to be more and more women coming up through the ranks according to Nancy Walker and others, a critical examination of where these young women are and what they are doing is crucial. Considering that in a program the size of Humber College's jazz program, not everyone plays in an ensemble each term, it would be instructive to find out the proportion of women who get into ensembles relative to the number of women in the program. Even more importantly, what kinds of ensembles are they playing in? Keeping Walker's experience with the accordion ensemble in mind, it is quite possible that young women may still be facing the same fate. While I touched on this briefly in Chapter Four, there also needs to be a critical examination of the gendered make-up of the faculty. How many women are on faculty at these schools? Which

---

<sup>160</sup> See the following works by Mark Miller: *Boogie, Pete & the Senator*; *Jazz in Canada: Fourteen Lives*; *The Miller Companion to Jazz in Canada and Canadians in Jazz*.

<sup>161</sup> Andrew Scott has done some work on in this regard. See "Community as a Site of Jazz Pedagogy: Exploring Toronto's Jam Sessions from 1956-1962," *International Association for Jazz Education Yearbook 2008*.

<sup>162</sup> McKeage, "Gender and Participation in High School and College Instrumental Jazz Ensembles."

courses are they teaching? How do the experiences of current students compare to the experiences of the women I spoke to?

One thing that is not contained in these pages is a coherent view. While some of the responses by these musicians were similar, each person presented a unique standpoint which was heavily influenced by their particular experiences. A snapshot of the current jazz community in Toronto, these experiences opened a dialogue about some of the ways that gender and jazz intersect. This dialogue also highlights a number of fruitful lines of future inquiry. By centering this dialogue, and my analysis thereof, around these themes, I explored how four musicians understand the ways that gender structures and shapes their music.

**Appendix A: Sample Interview Questions**

1. Who were your musical influences?
2. Were you aware of other women who played your instrument? Did any of these women influence your music?
3. Do you think that your gender has had an impact on how people interpret your playing?
4. Do you think that your gender has had an impact on your career? Why or why not?
5. Are there times where you feel that you are treated differently by other musicians (male or female) because of your gender?
  - a. Are there times where you feel that you are treated differently by audience members (male or female) because of your gender? Why or why not?
  - b. Are there times where you feel that you are treated differently by people in the media (male or female) because of your gender?
6. Do you think it is harder to be a woman and a jazz musician overall? Why or why not?
7. Do you think it is harder to be a woman and a (player of a certain instrument)? Why or why not?
8. There seem to be more women in jazz today than before. Do you think that things have changed for women? How?
9. How do you feel about festivals that feature women in jazz? Would you play/have you played in one? Do you think they help promote women? Why or why not?

## Bibliography

- Allemano, Lina. Interview with the author. January 26, 2010.
- Annfelt, Trine. "Jazz as Masculine Space." Kilden Information Centre for Gender Research in Norway. <http://eng.kilden.forskningsradet.no/c52778/nyhet/vi s.html?tid=53517>.
- Berliner, Paul. *Thinking in Jazz: The Infinite Art of Improvisation*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994.
- Bowers, Jane and Tick, Judith. *Women Making Music: The Western Art Tradition, 1150-1950*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986.
- Butler, Judith. "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory." *Theatre Journal* 40, 4 (December 1988): 519-31.
- Citron, Marcia J. *Gender and the Musical Canon*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.
- Dahl, Linda. *Stormy Weather*. New York: Limelight, 1996.
- DeVeaux, Scott. "Constructing the Jazz Tradition: Jazz Historiography" *Black American Literature Forum* 25, 3 (Autumn, 1991): 525-560
- Davidson, Tara. Interview with the author. January 28, 2010.
- Doubleday, Veronica. "Sounds of Power: An Overview of Musical Instruments and Gender." *Ethnomusicology Forum* 17, 1 (2008): 3-39.
- Enstice, Wayne, and Stockhouse, Janis. *Jazzwomen: Conversations with Twenty-One Musicians*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004.
- Eros, John. "Instrument Selection and Gender Stereotypes: A Review of Recent Literature." *Update: Applications of Research in Music Education* 27, 1 (2008): 57-64.
- Faulkner, Anne. "Does Jazz Put the Sin in Syncopation?" *Ladies Home Journal*. Aug., 1921: 16-34. 15 May 2005. <http://faculty.pittstate.edu/~knichols/syncopate.html>.
- Fischlin, Daniel and Heble, Ajay, eds. *The Other Side of Nowhere: Jazz, Improvisation, and Communities in Dialogue*. Middletown: Wesleyan Press, 2004.
- Gabbard, Krin. "Signifyin(g) the Phallus: Mo' Better Blues and Representations of the Jazz Trumpet." *Representing Jazz*. Ed. Krin Gabbard. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995. 104-130.
- Galloway, Rosemary. Interview with author. January 27, 2010.

- Gibson, Will. "Material Culture and Embodied Action: Sociological Notes on the Examination of Musical Instruments in Jazz Improvisation." *Sociological Review* 54, 1 (2006): 171-87.
- Gourse, Leslie. *Madame Jazz: Contemporary Women Instrumentalists*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.
- Heble, Ajay. *Landing on the Wrong Note: Jazz, Dissonance and Critical Practice*. New York: Routledge, 2000.
- Koskoff, Ellen. "When Women Play: Musical Instruments and Gender Ideology" in *Voices of Women: Essays in Honour of Violet Archer*, edited by Regula Qureshi (University of Alabama Press, 1996). 97-109.
- McClary, Susan. *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992.
- McKeage, Kathleen M. "Gender and Participation in High School and College Instrumental Jazz Ensembles." *Journal of Research in Music Education* 52, 4 (Winter 2004): 343-56.
- Miller, Mark. *Boogie, Pete & the Senator*. Toronto: Nightwood Editions, 1987.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Jazz in Canada: Fourteen Lives*. Toronto: Nightwood Editions, 1988.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Miller Companion to Jazz in Canada and Canadians in Jazz*. Toronto: Mercury Press, 2001.
- Monson, Ingrid. *Saying Something: Jazz Improvisation and Interaction*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1996.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Problem with White Hipness: Race, Gender, and Cultural Conceptions in Jazz Historical Discourse." *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 48, 3 (Autumn, 1995): 396-422
- Myers, Douglas W., and Etaugh, Claire. "Women Brass Musicians in Major Symphony Orchestras: How Level is the 'Playing' Field?" *International Alliance for Women in Music* 7, 3 (2001): 28-31.
- Neuls-Bates, Carol. "Womens's Orchestras in the united States, 1925-45." *Women Making Music: The Western Art Tradition, 1150-1950*, edited by Jane Bowers and Judith Tick. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986. 349-69.
- Osborne, William. "Women in Major Orchestras: An Update" *International Alliance for Women in Music* 7, 3 (2001): 31.

- Placksin, Sally. *American Women in Jazz: 1900 to the Present, Their Words, Lives, and Music*. London: Wideview Books, 1982.
- Prouty, Kenneth E. "A History of Jazz Education: A Critical Reassessment." *Journal of Historical Research in Music Education* 26 (April 2005): 79-100.
- Ritches, Cathie. "Women Making Jazz Inroads." *Women's Post* June 20, 2008. <http://www.womenspost.ca/articles/music/women-making-jazz-inroads>.
- Rustin, Nichole T. "'Mary Lou Williams Plays Like a Man!' Gender, Genius, and Difference in Black Music Discourse." *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 104, 3 (Summer 2005): 445-62.
- Rustin, Nichole T. and Tucker, Sherrie, eds. *Big Ears: Listening for Gender in Jazz Studies*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2008.
- Scott, Joan W. "Experience." *Feminists Theorize the Political*. Edited by Judith Butler and Joan W. Scott. 22-40. New York: Routledge, 1992.
- Scott, Andrew. "Community as a Site of Jazz Pedagogy: Exploring Toronto's Jam Sessions from 1956-1962," *International Association for Jazz Education Yearbook* 2008.
- Small, Christopher. *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1998.
- Tucker, Sherrie. "Big Ears: Listening for Gender in Jazz Studies." *Current Musicology*, 71 (2002): 375-408.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Swing Shift: "All-Girl" Bands of the 1940s*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2000.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "When did Jazz go Straight? A Queer Question for Jazz Studies." *Critical Studies in Improvisation* 4, 2 (2008). <http://www.criticalimprov.com/index.php/csieci/article/view/850/1411>.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Women." *The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Vol. 3. Edited by Barry Kernfeld. London: Macmillan, 2001. *Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxy.library.carleton.ca/subscriber/article/grove/music/J730100>.
- Walker, Nancy. Interview with the author. February 1, 2010.
- Waterman, Ellen. "Naked Intimacy: Eroticism, Improvisation and Gender." *Critical Studies in Improvisation* 4, 2 (2008). <http://www.criticalimprov.com/index.php/csieci/article/view/845/1398>.

- Wehr-Flowers, Erin. "Differences Between Male and Female Students' Confidence, Anxiety, and Attitude toward Learning Jazz Improvisation." *Journal of Research in Music Education* 54, 4 (Winter 2006): 337-349.
- Williams, Linda F. "Reflexive Ethnography: An Ethnomusicologist's Experience as a Jazz Musician in Zimbabwe." *Black Music Research Journal* 25, 1-2 (Fall 2005): 155-165.
- Willis, Vickie. "Be-in-tween the Spa[ces]: The Location of Women and Subversion in Jazz." *The Journal of American Culture* 31, 3 (2008): 293-301.