

What can everyday aesthetics teach us about jazz practice?

In this chapter I offer some reflections on how two relatively new areas of discourse – namely everyday aesthetics and jazz practice-research – might be conceived of as relating to one another, and what we might learn about jazz practice by applying certain key paradigms found in the discourse on everyday aesthetics to its study. My main area of research is jazz performance and composition, so with this in mind I will identify two themes within the discourse on everyday aesthetics that I believe are directly connected to, or at least resonant of, the way jazz is practiced by its performers. I will then move on to consider how conceiving of connections in this way might be relevant, indeed beneficial, to a contemporary jazz practitioner. I should acknowledge at this early stage that it is not my intention to outline a set of criteria for a generalised and universally applicable ‘everyday aesthetics of jazz’. Instead my objective is to use the discourse on everyday aesthetics to highlight two aspects of jazz performance practice that I will argue are central to understanding how jazz musicians undertake their work.

One of the original principles of everyday aesthetics was to challenge a tendency that developed within Western aesthetics during the twentieth century that understood aesthetics and the philosophy of art as being largely synonymous¹. As a reaction to this view, everyday aesthetics seeks to question the validity of such a narrow reading of aesthetics, and instead seeks to apply its principles to activities and practices that lie beyond the domain of the explicitly artistic.

The discourse on jazz also reveals a complicated relationship with concepts of art where both practitioners and commentators question the extent to which jazz musicians’ practice – both individually and in more general conceptual terms – can, or even should, be seen as a purely artistic endeavour as opposed to something more akin to entertainment or social interaction.² It is not my

¹ See Saito (2015)

² Gloag (2012, 154) observed how the bebop movement of the 1940s introduced the concept of jazz as a self-consciously artistic practice, and that even

intention to deal directly with the art vs. entertainment debate in this article, not least because my main interest is in the relationship between jazz and certain everyday practices. Nevertheless, because it will be of some relevance to my argument later on, it is important to acknowledge the historical context for such a line of questioning. For this reason I would suggest that perhaps it should not be surprising to find a number of parallels between jazz and everyday aesthetics.

Because my intention is to establish a framework for reconceptualising aspects of jazz performance practice and the way it is understood, it is important to first identify some of the key concepts that constitute everyday aesthetics and examine how they are defined and delineated by specialists of the field.

Definitions

One of the more recent debates within what is in and of itself a relatively new area of discourse is concerned with establishing exactly what is meant by the term everyday aesthetics, and negotiating the scope of its applicability to the wide variety of activities in which human beings engage. As I have already mentioned, the initial impulse that drove the emergence of everyday aesthetics as an independent discipline was the desire to refocus attention on aspects of people's lives that twentieth century Western aesthetics had overlooked. However, it has been argued that, on occasion, this approach has caused the discipline to be treated as 'a default third basket for what is not comfortably categorized as fine art or beauty.' (Melchionne, 2013). While the scholar who was cited as using this definition has since refuted the claim (more on this shortly), it is important to recognise the motivation of those who have attempted to define the parameters of everyday aesthetics more specifically, and furthermore the importance to the debate of their having done so.

Melchionne proposed a four-point model that he hoped would 'distinguish everyday aesthetic activities not just from fine art but also practices...[that]...are

contemporary jazz practice continues to move 'between the broad contexts of art and entertainment.'

not really everyday aesthetic practices.’ (ibid.) By doing so he sought to prioritize certain factors that he argued are essential for a universally applicable definition. According to this model, a subject of everyday aesthetics must be an ongoing activity that is commonly occurring as well as typically, but not necessarily, aesthetic. Following these criteria an activity such as cooking would qualify by virtue of the fact it is a regularly occurring, universally practiced human activity. Conversely, the preparation of a traditional holiday meal would not due to its episodic rather than regular occurrence. In other words, according to Melchionne, an everyday aesthetic practice must be one that common and fundamental to quotidian human existence.

Inspired by Melchionne, Naukkarinen (2013) proposed a model with which he addressed more specifically the question of exactly what is meant by ‘everyday’ in everyday aesthetics, set out in a graphic that gives scope for more nuance than Melchionne’s model permits. For example, he acknowledged that, despite the fact that it is possible to identify some almost universally practiced human activities, on a more personal level ‘every one of us has his or her everyday life’. (ibid.) This is to say that, while there are undoubtedly a number of common activities that all of us undertake on a daily basis, there are others that feature in my life that, although not common to everyone, I would consider as being a part of my everyday. Naukkarinen argued that it is important to recognise the fact that the everyday should to some extent be subject to context. When the context is jazz performance practice, there are undoubtedly some activities that are common to jazz musicians but that would be unlikely to form a routine part of the daily existence of a non-jazz musician. In fact, the principle aims of this article are to identify what these activities might be, to consider how they are understood by jazz musicians, and what the implications of this understanding are for the music they play.

One example cited by Melchionne as he tackled the question of what should be understood to be a ‘common’ activity allows me to highlight a key aspect of my argument. He suggests that ‘finger exercises are only a typical everyday aesthetic activity for pianists. Few of us are pianists. Thus, the daily finger exercises of

pianists are not relevant to everyday aesthetic theory.’ (ibid) Of course, this claim can be justified if the rationale is to limit the definition of everyday aesthetics only to activities that are universal to all human beings. However, a typical musician would most likely consider his or her daily practice routine as one of their most significant everyday aesthetic activities. In fact, it might be considered more unusual to find an example of a musician whose everyday life did not feature some degree of instrumental study or rehearsal.

Leddy (2015) questioned Melchionne’s decision to leave pianistic activities out of the study of the everyday, asking ‘why exclude these activities from the everyday, at least relative to pianists?’ Of course, under certain circumstances a more universally applicable model along the lines of the one outlined by Melchionne would be appropriate. This would depend on the subject of study. However, if the objective is to discover something about the nature of what it means to be a pianist, to insist on such limitations would be counterproductive. To reject what is clearly an integral part of a pianist’s everyday aesthetic experience simply because it is not relevant to that of a non-pianist would be to overlook something important.

It was also Leddy against whom the aforementioned ‘third basket’ criticism was levelled. In defending himself against this claim he cited his own earlier work ‘The Extraordinary in the Ordinary’ (2012). In it he suggested that, following John Dewey – whose philosophy is often seen as an important precursor to modern everyday aesthetics -, artistic and non-artistic experiences are closely linked, and that rather than providing an entirely separate category, everyday experiences can overlap with artistic ones. His counter argument includes the example of an artist in his or her studio, and in reference to this he made the point that, during the act of painting, artistic and non-artistic aesthetics combine. He cited the tactile experience of handling brushes and the way that paints interact on the palette and canvas as examples of how non-artistic aesthetic elements form part of the overall process of painting and concluded that ‘both art aesthetics and everyday aesthetics are harmed if each is treated as isolated from the other.’ (ibid)

Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology develops this theme in apparent agreement with Leddy. He proposed that it is impossible to completely separate artistic and non-artistic elements of an experience because '[c]onsciousness is being toward the thing through the intermediary of the body.' (2014, p.140). In other words, because the artist has a body with which he or she exists in the world, a thought and an act exist as part of the same experience. Nevertheless, in reference to the way jazz musicians understand their experience of playing music, differentiation of artistic and non-artistic elements should not be entirely dismissed. For example, Tuan chose to use the terms 'intellectual' and 'physical' (Quoted in Leddy 2012, p61) to refer to describe these same concepts. However, I find these too resonant of the mind/body split that Merleau-Ponty showed is unstable, and so here I will use the terms 'conceptual' and 'processual'. By defining the concepts in this way it is my intention to highlight the fact that, while it is impossible to fully separate the two in practice, in terms of understanding and conceptualising jazz practice, some of the factors that shape the musician's experience are led by pre-conception and/or theory, and others by the tactile experience of engagement. I will return to expand on this idea below.

To a large extent these arguments fall into the domain of those specialists in the field of everyday aesthetics whose primary concern is with negotiating the boundaries of their discipline. As I have already set out, the subject of the present article is the relationship between everyday aesthetics and the practice of jazz musicians, so it should be acknowledged that what is most relevant to me now are the factors that directly relate to this area. Nevertheless, there are two important repercussions of what we have seen so far that are relevant to my argument.

Firstly, Leddy's call for a more flexible reading of the category boundaries of everyday aesthetic experiences - combined with Naukkarinen's recognition of the fact that the type of activities that can be considered everyday will vary depending on the context - demonstrates that, while there is undoubtedly a place for a universally applicable everyday aesthetics of the type proposed by

Melchionne, scope for flexibility is necessary. This is particularly relevant in respect of the present article, dealing as it does with jazz practice. In the same way that pianistic activities are important relative to the everyday of pianists, the same is true of jazz musicians and their practice. By presenting their arguments in this way, Naukkarinen and Leddy provide me with a precedent for demarcating the limits of my area of study while still allowing me to remain largely faithful to the larger goal of everyday aesthetics, which is to amplify the scope of academic study in order to shed more light on the multiple activities that constitute our lives as human beings.

Secondly, in addition to calling for more flexibility as to the type of activity that can be considered everyday, Leddy also argues for an equally flexible reading of the way the activity is experienced. This is another important concept because it highlights the fact that as well as frequency of occurrence there is also an experiential element to be considered. As a result, while an activity - painting say - might commonly be understood as being outwardly artistic, from the perspective of the artist the situation is more nuanced.

It is these two concepts – frequency of occurrence, and the interplay of conceptual and processual factors of experience – that will form the basis of my investigation. I will examine the extent to which they can be understood as relating to jazz practice and consider the potential benefits of such an understanding.

Frequency and context of occurrence

The extent to which frequency of occurrence should be understood as a defining element of an everyday activity is one of the issues that arise in the debate. Melchionne and Leddy offered differing interpretations on this theme.

Melchionne argued for a very exacting understanding of everyday as meaning something that happens literally every day – i.e. cooking or getting dressed. Leddy refuted this, claiming that even events that do not occur on a strictly daily basis can also be considered as part of everyday aesthetics. To help clarify this difference of opinion I will return to the example of meals. As we saw earlier, for Melchionne, a normal, family evening meal would fall under the remit of everyday aesthetics, but a less frequent meal – a dinner party say – would not. Leddy, on the other hand, would claim that both should qualify, arguing that, while the latter does not occur on a daily basis, it is an aesthetic activity that is neither art nor nature. The question is of two activities that, in the simplest terms, consist of the same process – the preparation and eating of food. The difference is to do with context. The former activity is unlikely to be imbued with any great significance due to its routine nature, whereas the latter is a more formal, ritualised occasion. The issue at stake in this case is not the fundamental activity itself, rather the way the activity is undertaken with specific regard to the significance of occasion, replete with its established set of customs and traditions. In other words, it is a question of how one decides to categorise the activity based on when, where and how it occurs. While Melchionne and Leddy each have their own interpretation as to this issue, it is easy to imagine that a third commentator might also draw a different conclusion again, perhaps arguing that a dinner party and a festive Christmas meal should also be understood in different terms.

In other words, categorising a given activity as undisputedly falling within the remit of everyday aesthetics is contingent on whether one takes its frequency of occurrence as a defining characteristic, and as a consequence the decision is largely a subjective. As I have already acknowledged, my intention is not to propose an everyday aesthetics of jazz and so contributing to this specific aspect of the debate is not directly relevant. Nevertheless, the meal example does allow me to draw a parallel with a similar example from within jazz that I will use to introduce my argument.

Practicing/performing

As the daily meal vs. dinner party issue shows, the meaning of a particular activity can be changed by the context in which it is presented, and I would argue that a very similar set of practices are to be found in jazz.

As he began to conclude the exposition of his model for everyday aesthetics, Melchionne suggested that it should be limited to include only 'the aspects of our lives marked by widely shared, daily routines to which we tend to impart an aesthetic character.' (2013). As we have already seen, he was making reference to a necessarily restrictive understanding of what these 'routines' should be in order to encapsulate human everyday activity in all its forms. Nevertheless, reading these lines I find the language he used to be uncannily resonant of the way that jazz musicians talk about their activity. In particular, the use of the word 'routine' in a jazz context is almost always in reference to the regular instrumental practice sessions that the majority of professional musicians undertake. In fact, the statement could be read as a definition of instrumental practice without the need to alter the wording. After all, what is this type of study if not a widely shared, daily routine of an aesthetic character? As a result, although the same author dismissed 'daily finger exercises' (ibid.) as an acceptable subject for everyday aesthetic study, in the context of my survey in relation to jazz practice I would argue that it is a fundamental consideration.

Continuing the comparison I would also suggest that the relationship between the daily meal and the dinner party meal should also be taken into consideration. For example, one might expect there to be little or no social pressure to be exerted on the preparation of a normal dinner. However, when the presence of guests is anticipated this situation changes. A consequence of this would be that the way the person preparing the meal understands the situation would also change. The choice of dishes to be served is likely to be informed by the chef's previous experience in the kitchen and, whereas he or she might be tempted to try out a new, perhaps challenging, recipe on a weeknight safe in the knowledge that failure – be it under- or over-cooked food for example – would not be overly disastrous, the stakes are raised when serving food to company. This could result

in him or her taking the precautionary step of trialling the proposed menu on a prior occasion, or alternatively choosing to serve a tried and trusted dish that has been successfully prepared on a number of previous occasions. In other words, the chef's understanding of the two types of meal is based on their experience of both. My argument is that, irrespective of whether one considers one or both to be everyday activities, one cannot be fully understood without making reference to the other.

Turning back to jazz we find a very similar set of activities – practicing and performing. As in the case of meal preparation, the fundamental activity of 'food preparation' is the same in both instances– in the case of jazz we could define it as 'playing music'. However, once again the content and context of the activity vary. In the case of the former one would normally expect the activity to consist of largely preparatory concerns – the development of technique, learning new repertoire. The latter would be centred on the presentation of musical material in a public space.

As in the case between daily and occasional meals, a clear and definitive category boundary between practicing and performing cannot be drawn. Their subjective nature would make doing so problematic at best, and once the disparate individual opinions of musicians were taken into consideration, the task would become all but impossible. Fortunately however, my objective is neither to argue the case in favour of categorisation nor to present a case for the inclusion of these activities in an everyday aesthetics of jazz. Of course, that is not to say that identifying such areas is an important step. Nevertheless, as I outlined earlier, my intention with this article is to demonstrate how understanding and managing the relationship between these two factors in respect of a individual jazz performance methodology is a highly subjective, yet fundamental part of jazz practice. Furthermore, by drawing on the discourse of everyday aesthetics I will argue that, in order to successfully perform jazz, it is incumbent on every jazz musician to conceptualise their own understanding of this relationship. With this in mind I will now proceed to examine what I consider to be the reasons that

make this type of conceptual engagement a prerequisite for successful jazz performance practice.

Improvisation

In his example of the pianist's finger exercises Melchionne makes no specific reference to the style or genre of music that the pianist performs. In fact, the point he made was in reference to the fact that not all people are pianists, and so – as long as everyday aesthetics is understood to apply only to universally practiced human activities - questions of pianism should not be included. However, I have already established that, when the subject of study is the everyday aesthetic lives of musicians, a strong case can be argued for expanding the parameters to include these finger exercises. In which case, does the question of genre then become more important? Possibly, although it could be argued that instrumental practice of some sort normally features in the daily lives of musicians who perform in any number of styles, and so perhaps even then the question of genre might not be particularly relevant. Nevertheless, as one focuses more closely on a specific style of music making, some more specialised techniques and methodologies emerge. In the case of jazz, perhaps the most notable of these is the extensive use of improvisation.

Understanding improvisation

It might initially seem like the concepts of practicing and improvising are mutually incompatible. Most dictionary definitions of the verb 'to improvise' describe an activity that is undertaken without preparation or planning³, and as a result the idea of preparing for improvisation might well seem contradictory. However, ontologies of improvisation are regularly proposed and hotly debated by both scholars and practitioners – a fact that suggests that the issue is not quite so clear-cut. This extensive literature is available elsewhere and so I will not delve further at this point, suffice it to say for now that the question of the extent

³ See, for example:

<http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/improvisation>

to which improvisation can or should be prepared is very much subjective in nature.⁴ Furthermore, it is usually acknowledged that in reality, jazz improvisation rarely - if ever - occurs without any type of preparation whatsoever.⁵ Nevertheless, this is not to say that such questions are not relevant to my investigation at this point. On the contrary, I have already commented that the very fact that it is such a subjective question forms the basis of my argument.

One of the difficulties I face when surveying the ways that jazz musicians tackle the issue of mediating between practicing and performing is that the musicians themselves do not commonly discuss their work in such terms. Indeed, it could be argued that the very act of articulating such questions in an explicitly academic context such as this is very much the result of western philosophical traditions of problematizing and discursivising ostensibly non-academic practices, and perhaps consequently should have little to do with jazz. In reference to this last point I note that it is my intention to demonstrate how methodological conceptualisation is in fact a long-standing part of jazz performance practice, albeit while recognising that it is not commonly couched in such terms. However, while jazz musicians do not commonly explain their process of conceptualisation, there are some exceptions. Prominent examples include the saxophonists Lee Konitz and Steve Lacy, both of whom have spoken at length about the way they develop and reflect on their performance methodologies.

Konitz's discourse is especially valuable, in particular because of the fact that, in addition being very explicit in outlining the way he conceptualises his own approach to music making, he is also open in critiquing those of other prominent jazz performers. As such he provides me with a useful framework for outlining the issues that are at stake here. He identifies three types of approach - the 'professional performance', the compositional approach, and intuitive improvisation. With the first the performer has 'a routine that wows the audience' (Hamilton, 102) and relies on largely preconceived material. The

⁴ Adorno's 'On Jazz' (2002, 470) is a good introduction to this debate.

⁵ I will expand on this point shortly

second is a slightly more nuanced approach that, rather than using prepared routines, relies on a vocabulary of phrases. Konitz explains how Charlie Parker 'conceived of these great phrases, and fit them together in the most logical way.' (103). The final category contains those musicians for whom 'improvising means coming in with a completely clean slate from the first note. (103).

I will stop short of subscribing to Konitz's three-point model - such a subjective point of view would be as difficult to defend as Melchionne's four-point version of everyday aesthetics. Once again, the scope for variation from musician to musician in both conceptual and practical terms would make the demarcation of clear category boundaries essentially impossible, and that is without accounting for the complexity of the debate regarding the extent to which performance of prepared material can be understood as a type of improvisation.⁶ Nevertheless, to the extent that it indicates the importance of the decision that each jazz musician must take as to exactly how they will balance the prepared and improvised aspects of their performance practice, Konitz's categorization is a useful starting point. It shows that, based on their individual artistic criteria, a jazz musician will decide to either prepare more or less in the practice room, a decision that will have an inevitable effect on the music that they later perform. Hal Galper echoed this sentiment in reference to how musicians learn to play jazz. He claimed that each 'student should be exposed to multiple approaches to the theory and practice of playing jazz, making their own choices of what concepts fit their individual ways of playing.' (2003, 9)

This last statement is fundamental to my argument. Galper is a highly respected and experienced jazz performer and educator, so to find him explicitly referencing the importance of this type of conceptualisation on the part of student jazz musicians locates the concept as a key component of successful jazz practice. We have already seen in the discourse on everyday aesthetics that one of the talking points is on the extent to which regular and occasional activities can be accepted as forming part of the everyday and, by extension, the way that each of these activities is understood as a consequence. What Konitz and Galper

⁶ For more on this see Benson (2003)

reveal is that the same issue is present in the discourse on jazz practice, and moreover, that as well as being pertinent to the academic discourse on jazz, it is also a central concern for the music's practitioners.

In this section I have shown that examining frequency of occurrence as it relates to everyday aesthetics can lead us to a better understanding of the practical application of a similar concept in jazz. I will now move on to examine the second of the themes I identified – that of the relationship between conceptual and processual factors of experience.

Experiencing practice or practicing experience?

In her book about on instrumental practicing Bruser (1997) wrote about the effect of watching Yehudi Menuhin conduct an orchestra. In her description she focused particularly on his 'regal presence' (44). In fact, Bruser's recollection of this concert serves as an introduction to an entire chapter on techniques that we as musicians can use to 'cultivate our own presence.' (45) While perhaps it is not a characteristic that is unique to musical performance, the concept 'presence', of being in the moment, is a central factor. However, we might be tempted to ask why presence, an ostensibly non-artistic concept, should be quite such a valuable attribute for a musician to possess? To begin to answer this I will first turn to look more closely at a series of exercises that Bruser proposes as a way for musicians to develop presence.

In the chapter subtitled 'Settle down in your environment' she instructs the student to 'mentally scan your body from head to toe to notice places where you're tense', (47) and to pay attention to 'the texture of the breath, the solidness of your body on the seat, and the air, the light, and the sounds around you enter the foreground of your awareness' (48). Read out of context there is nothing in these descriptions that would indicate that they refer directly to music. In fact, they seem more akin to something like mindfulness meditation, a fact that Bruser herself acknowledged. Nevertheless, she soon followed this up with an invitation to 'see what kind of music you make when you feel comfortable and

settled in your own body.’ (50) Having encouraged the student to become more intensely aware of their bodily sensations, she then brought musical considerations back into the frame. In other words, Bruser’s exercises for cultivating presence are specifically designed to allow the student to mediate between musical and non-musical considerations - to account for extra-musical aesthetic factors that are related to playing an instrument. This is reminiscent of the type of interplay between intellectual and physical aesthetic experience that Leddy cited. Returning to the artist in his or her studio, we see the same process at work, that ‘in the process of making a work of art, the artist...may be subconsciously aware of the dynamics of the relationship between different parts of his or her body while painting...’ (2013) Once again, the intellectual and the physical combine.

Bruser’s book is not aimed at jazz musicians specifically, but examples of similar types of exercises can also be found among the literature on jazz performance practice. Steve Lacy’s conceptually oriented saxophone study book *Findings* (1994) is a particularly good example of this. Consider the following:

‘For example, low B to low C. Stay on these two notes. Rock slowly back and forth for a long time.... 10 minutes, 20 minutes, one hour, 2 hours, a week? After about 40 minutes you will no longer be bored. Keep it up until you start to hallucinate. The half step will become enormous! You will become very tiny.... Now, when you leave this space and go back to the rest of the horn, everything has changed, and your perception has altered.’ (61)

Lacy’s exercise is interesting in the way that it seems to both invert and expand on those proposed by Bruser. Rather than dealing with conceptual and processual factors independently, Lacy encouraged musicians to use a musical fragment, in this case a semitone interval, as a way of moving the focus of the experience between the former to the latter. This is especially relevant to jazz – a predominantly improvised music - because of the extent to which the performer is responsible for making creative decisions regarding the content of the music being performed. When a musician makes note choices in the moment of

performance, they will inevitably be influenced as much by the way it feels as its theoretical relationship with the preceding notes. As we will see, the fact that the two factors combine to form a musical performance experience suggests that both must also be accounted for in the development of a performance methodology. In respect of this fact Merleau-Ponty's claim that a 'movement is learned when a body has understood it, that is, when it has incorporated it into its "world"' (ibid. p.140) is significant. I would argue that what both Bruser and Lacy identified are strategies by which the student musician can lead their body to incorporate a movement into its world. Lacy in particular highlights the importance of the move from 'conceptual' – the theoretical understanding of a semitone interval – to the 'processual' – the multi-faceted way that the body perceives it. I will return to elaborate on this point shortly, but first I will examine a similar example from my own performance practice.

D sharp/E flat

I predominantly perform on the alto saxophone, and as such the majority of my experience as an improviser has been on this instrument. As is perhaps the case with many musicians, there are certain notes or groups of notes on the instrument that I find especially satisfying to play.⁷ For me, one such note is middle D sharp/E flat. When I have warmed up and have a good reed on I very much relish playing this note. On one level my enjoyment comes from the fact that, played well, on the alto it sounds round and full-bodied in a way that, at least to my ears, is particularly representative of the instrument. In this respect, when I play the note, a part of my experience is informed by a theoretical conception of what an alto saxophone should sound like. In addition, the harmonic context is also an influencing factor. For example, when played as the minor third of a C minor chord, the note has a different meaning that when it is played as the major third of a B seventh chord.

⁷ Bob Brookmeyer referred to "vanilla fudge" areas in every instrument that give instant gratification from their historical reference.' (Hamilton, 108) While it is more likely that he was referring to reliance on cliché rather than physical aesthetic experience, the clear sensory overtones of the metaphor are suggestive of a similar concept.

However, my experience of playing this note is informed by more than simply conceptual factors. The D sharp/E flat is played by closing almost all of the keys of the saxophone, and consequently when I play it, I do so by pressing down with all but one of my ten fingers - a movement that makes my grip on the instrument more secure than for other notes. The result of this combination of factors is that part of my experience of the note is as a powerful one, on both a conceptual and processual level. Individually either one of these factors would give the playing of the D sharp/E flat an aesthetic character, but combined they create a yet more complex aesthetic experience. Added to this is the fact that playing the note causes the instrument to vibrate in a unique way, a sensation that I find especially agreeable. This pleasurable sensation, when added to the aforementioned factors, serves to make my aesthetic experience almost synesthetic in that it causes me to experience the note on an auditory-physical level. Although I experience each note of the saxophone as a different combination of elements, they do not all stand out to me in such a way. Nevertheless, what this shows is the depth of experience available to the musician is formed of many overlapping aesthetic experiences, as Merleau-Ponty described.

The interplay of conceptual and processual factors as part of musical instrumentalism can lead to complex aesthetic experiences on the part of the musician. The result of this is that when a jazz musician improvises, these complex experiences will have an impact on the musical structure of their improvisations. The D sharp/E flat example provides me with a case in point. As I have described, my relationship with this note on the alto saxophone is complex and elusive. However, what is also important to note here is that the balance of the two factors - the impact each has on the other - is not always the same every time I play the note. That is to say, there will be times that I play it because it makes melodic sense to do so in that context. In this case conceptual factors exert a stronger influence on my decision making process than the processual and - while I might find the sensation of playing the D sharp/E flat agreeable -

the latter effect is secondary. However, there are also occasions when I play it precisely because the sensation is agreeable.

While the above is an admittedly reductive survey of all the combinations of conceptual and processual factors, the D sharp/E flat example lends support to the proposed applicability of everyday aesthetics to jazz. I would argue that recognition of this complexity of experience is in itself worthy of consideration by jazz practice-as-researchers for performance reasons – see how Lacy's interval exercise hints at the creative scope of exploring the extreme experiential limits of instrumentalism. However, I would also suggest that acknowledging the potential for such a combination of experiences to shape the course of an improvisation might also have an impact in terms of musicological analysis.

In the previous section I argued that a key component of successful jazz practice is the way a musician conceptualises the balance between practicing and performing as part of their performance methodology. I will now go on to show how understanding the conceptual/processual factors in jazz performance practice might be treated in the same way.

Conceptualising experience

In reference to an everyday experience such as drinking a cup of coffee, Irvin explained how 'when done with full attention to the feel of the cup in one's hands, the rim of the cup touching one's lower lip, and the sensation of the coffee in the mouth and going down the throat', the experience can become much more intense than it normally would be (Quoted in Leddy, 2012, p.59). In other words, by reconceptualising one's engagement with an activity, the way the activity is experienced can be significantly altered. As I noted above, I find this example to be very much resonant of the aforementioned exercises laid out by Bruser and Lacy. In both cases, the musician is encouraged to focus attention away from the purely conceptual and onto the processual aspects of musical performance, the implication being that performance practice that does not give pay sufficient heed to processual factors is somewhat deficient. Konitz makes reference to this

concept as he defended himself against criticisms of being too cerebral as a performer, stating that 'If what I play were intellectual it would have to be all premeditated and it isn't.' (Hamilton, 29) In further reference to this fact Konitz also defended his erstwhile mentor Lennie Tristano's 'distinction between feeling, which is necessary, and "emotion" (emoting), a distraction from the really felt music.' (28).⁸

Clearly, there is an acknowledgement on the part of musicians that establishing a satisfactory balance between conceptual and processual factors is of significant value. However, the question still remains, why should awareness of these bodily sensations be important at all? We saw earlier how Bruser clearly felt that Menuhin's 'presence' made an important contribution to his mastery of orchestral conducting. Why should this be? Saito's survey of everyday aesthetics in the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (2015) includes a section dedicated to the problem of how to account for the inherent difficulty of talking about aesthetic experience. In reference to Dewey's concept of an experience, she points out that 'it becomes a challenge to facilitate a critical discourse to determine whether or not one is truly having an experience.' This is important because it raises the question of how to quantify such aesthetic experience. For example, is it possible to debate whether a given activity provided an experience that was 'truly aesthetic or whether it provided a rich or only mediocre aesthetic experience?' In other words, how can we discuss the quality of experience?

Is it possible that the 'presence' felt by Bruser at the Menuhin concert was in some way a manifestation of the quality of the conductor's experience? As Saito pointed out, while it is possible to 'meaningfully debate the aesthetic merit of a

⁸ I see a connection here to Kant's distinction between 'the agreeable' and 'the beautiful' in art. Leddy explores this distinction in more detail, pointing out how Kant identified a type of activity that, while similar in function to an artistic act, is 'done... "for the entertainment of the moment" and is not "a lasting matter"' (2012, 31). I read Konitz's comments as referring to a version of this distinction. Although limited space prevents me from investigating this further here, Konitz's stance provides a good example of a musician who has identified the intellectual/physical paradigm and sought to resolve its associated conceptual subjectivity as it relates to their performance practice.

painting...it is difficult to imagine an equivalent discussion of my experience of bodily engagement when executing brush ink painting.' (2015) That is to say, it is possible to talk about the product, but less so the experience itself. However, I would argue that if I were to observe two painters painting, one dissatisfied and distracted and the other revelling in the sensory experience of brush on canvas, I would be able to tell the difference. I would also argue that the same is perhaps true of music, and that as a result, what Bruser calls a musician's 'presence' could also be defined as their having found the ideal balance between the artistic and non-artistic within their practice. In this way, music becomes a way of discursivising experience.

Referring back to Merleau-Ponty's concept of a body's 'world' might help us to understand why a musician's 'presence' should be so powerful. Perhaps what she saw when she watched Menuhin was a conductor whose body, in Merleau-Ponty's terms, 'understood' the movements that it was making. This could in turn provide a justification of Konitz's choice to differentiate between 'emoting' and 'feeling'. While he did not say as much himself, I understand the concept of 'emoting' to refer to a musician who, to some degree, recognises the importance of the processual components of music making – and furthermore that the success, or otherwise, of their performance is likely to be assessed according to these criteria – but whose experience is not 'truly aesthetic' on a conceptual-processual level. While the judgement of a musician's quality of experience will always be highly subjective, I would argue that at the very least, understanding this aspect of musical performance practice in terms of embodied understanding could add another parameter to critical discourse on the subject.

Conclusion

Melchionne argued that everyday aesthetics 'represents a particular way that the aesthetic exists outside of conventional forms of artistic expression,' and that it 'concerns our recurring, daily routines rather than episodic events or projects.' However, what I have shown in this article is that, in the case of jazz performance practice, there is an interrelationship between different types of

aesthetic activity, and furthermore, that the conceptualisation of a successful jazz methodology is contingent on having critically engaged with the questions it raises.

I have examined two pairs of ostensibly different aesthetic paradigms – practicing/performing and conceptual/processual – and have shown that, far from being distinct, each has a significant effect on the other on both theoretical and practical levels. Furthermore, I have shown that, in addition to being of academic interest, the issues presented are also of unavoidable importance to practitioners. To do so I have drawn on two important concepts from the discourse on everyday aesthetics, demonstrating how this wide-ranging area of critical study can be of relevance to ostensibly unrelated areas.

I will conclude by answering the question I posed in this chapter's title. Everyday aesthetics can teach us the importance of individual methodological conceptualisation to the practicing jazz musician. It shows us how, regardless of the conclusions reached, certain questions must be asked and answered. How will I choose to balance the relationship between practicing and performing in my methodology? Am I really 'present' when I play? What am I trying to communicate with my music? And how?

These questions reach to the very heart of musical expression. My work as a practice-researcher in jazz has motivated me over the last four years to critically question and examine the way I understand and engage with my music making. What I have learned from everyday aesthetics is that perhaps this type of reflexive engagement is more a part of the history of jazz practice than I initially realised.

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