

**Documenting the Midland Youth Jazz Orchestra 1968 to 1980
through radio-style production**

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Abstract

This practice-based doctoral research project uses a series of radio-style documentary productions to explore the ways in which we investigate, mediate, and interpret the music cultural practices of the past. By focusing on the development of a youth jazz orchestra in the English West Midlands in the 1960s and 1970s, and more generally exploring how we can make the practice of radio documentary a developed and sophisticated research method in itself, I contribute to a number of issues of debate within media and cultural studies about local jazz culture and history. I contend that the radio documentary form can be seen as qualitative research in its own right and use this approach to explore an original way to tackle questions of research that have emerged in what has been called 'The New Jazz Studies'. In particular, I have sought to utilise approaches from oral history and ideas of ethnography from cultural studies and ethnomusicology, combined with ideas from the musicologist, Christopher Small, in the development of a core concept of 'ethnomusicking'.

In surveying the field, I looked at literature from radio and podcast studies, jazz studies and ethnomusicology as well as extant jazz history radio and television documentaries and jazz oral histories. My historical study is researched through archives and interviews. I explore my central proposition through an iterative process of documentary-making and auto-ethnographic reflection, here drawing upon my background as a producer and presenter in community radio. The products of this process are submitted as three radio-style 'drop-ins' or features intended for broadcast on community radio and three podcast-style episodes with a supporting written component to form an integrated thesis.

I found rich detail on the youth jazz orchestra movement in the West Midlands as well as key insights for radio producers on using ideas of oral history, ethnomusicking and story-telling as frames for documentary production.

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Outside the world of academia, I am thankful to a great number of people without whom this study would not have been possible, including past and present radio producers and presenters Paul Kelly and John Hellings.

Central to this study are the valued contributions from many past members of the Midland Youth Jazz Orchestra including former musical director Mike Beaumont, Julian and Steve Arguelles, Sharon Brown, Adrian Bullers, Pete Cater, Clive Fenton, Steve King, the late Ron Moss, Mark Nightingale, Nick Pentelow, Jan Steele, Andrea Vicari, and Charlie Wright. Outside of the immediate MYJO organisation but still important to this study in providing help advice and inspiration were Mike Alexander, Clive Allsopp, Steve Bradley, Vince Neale, Frank Pizzey, Alan Wakeman, Geoff Warren, and George West.

Thank you also to the many who have offered inspiration along the way.

Last, but not least, thank you to my wife, Amy, for helping me through the difficult times (there were a few) and for having the patience and belief to support me throughout this study.

For Amy and Bernard

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Links to Radio-Style Documentaries

My doctoral thesis is made up of two components: a written component presented here; and a series of radio-style documentaries. The thesis can be worked through by starting with the written component or the radio-style documentaries.

If working through the written component links are provided at the point I address each radio-style documentary.

If working through the radio-style documentaries first, the following links can be clicked or copied and pasted to a web browser.

Pre-doctoral radio-style documentaries

Tony Levin Tribute for 102.5 The ‘Bridge (Part One) [52:43] (Musson, 102.5 The ‘Bridge’, 2011)

https://drive.google.com/file/d/10SzljW4h6Ng1sFlxtM7-o4ZHYqXy_aVD/view?usp=sharing**Tony Levin Tribute for 102.5 The ‘Bridge (Part Two)** [57:36] (Musson, 102.5 The ‘Bridge’, 2011)

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/15JvBH2Kq3L0HXkmKR9pgSJWRk8IJ-ikh/view?usp=sharing>**Tony Whyton – Wilkie’s Story** [30:01] (Musson, 2017)

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1mbloccOSzdGAv5EglkSeem_sWX-u1W9D/view?usp=sharing

Doctoral research experiments and radio-style documentaries

Ron Mathewson ‘Fragments’ [05:15; 05:22 and 07:39] (Musson, 2022)

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Yb6FM3WjterMJPOaMENnqvq6yZezifl0/view?usp=sharing>

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1iY12zgyvixBV4uLt27ExZG9jYNnSWN9t/view?usp=sharing>

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1AnF9w-kxQsMkP6Wpvw74NJ0nAp5dfuLa/view?usp=sharing>

Birmingham Jazz Festival for Birmingham Jazz Radio [59:52] (Musson, 2022)

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1AXEZSjXkFhMUQT9pOycdfO-9PD23JVQs/view?usp=sharing>

Tony Levin Tribute for Birmingham Jazz Radio [59:52] (Musson, 2022)

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1W6o20jnMg7H5OoS0Mc78UkjpJf_gYqYX/view?usp=sharing

Youth Jazz Movement in the West Midlands in the 1960s and 1970s -

MYJO Radio-Style documentary [29:52] (Musson, 2023)

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1TvdP9PsDNm18qhbRVjHn4MuAW-U5TVkl/view?usp=sharing>

Youth Jazz Movement in the West Midlands in the 1960s and 1970s – Second iteration (Musson, 2024)

i. Youth and Community Arts ‘Drop-in’ Radio Edit [16:00]

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1dPUjqYNLOhZSSpceQFNfjVjDNE9bLfRf/view?usp=sharing>

ii Youth and Community Arts Podcast Edit [16:38]

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1s2wphQxySbw17LXqzHQMsLDm0Lnb0gOG/view?usp=sharing>

iii Learning Jazz ‘Drop-in’ Radio Edit [19:33]

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1BIrBDFG2IEHDAYG9jXSIrzs48vSsPtvb/view?usp=sharing>

iv. Learning Jazz Podcast Edit [19:57]

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1k8VllzJ35vg8pGvxSIFfwh9G0p32rgM4/view?usp=sharing>

v. Being Involved Diversity ‘Drop-in’ Radio Edit [19:25]

https://drive.google.com/file/d/16ZEU7tslVeLPgz_K8U0r9UsVW1YVBpul/view?usp=sharing

vi. Being Involved Diversity Podcast Edit [20:14]

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Hqiwb5ITWU2SP2FYQmzd2sYC_KyMEytZ/view?usp=sharing

Introduction

This practice-based doctoral research project uses radio-style documentary production to explore the ways in which we investigate, mediate and interpret the music cultural practices of the past. I produced three radio-style documentaries, three “drop-in” radio features, three podcast-style documentaries and an interview experiment as part of my doctoral research, and included an analysis of two that I undertook before I commenced my studies. This work culminated in a radio-style documentary on the Midland Youth Jazz Orchestra (MYJO) from its foundation in the English West Midlands region from the late 1960s and through the 1970s together with the “drop-ins” and podcast-style documentaries also focusing on the MYJO. These productions provide me with the iterative explorations of the ideas within my thesis. Such a methodological approach also allows me to reflexively explore my own role in the production processes involved in the creation of radio-style documentaries.

I present my thesis through this written component along with the material for the twelve audio productions. Links to online files of specific documentaries and features I produced as part of this research can also be found at the point I discuss them in this written component. The thesis can be understood through a number of routes: by reading this written component and listening to each radio-style documentary/feature production as they arise in my thesis; by reading this written component through and then listening to the radio-style documentary/feature productions as the listener feels appropriate; or listening to the radio-style documentary/feature productions and then exploring the background to their production in this written component.

It is with the trepidation of a mature student that I present and defend this thesis under examination. As a voracious radio listener since childhood and having developed a prodigious appetite for jazz from my early teenage years it seemed an almost natural progression to combine my dual passions when the opportunity arose to become the presenter of a weekly jazz radio programme on my local community radio station. More recently, wishing to improve my radio production and presentation skills I undertook an MA degree in Radio and Audio Production. The further knowledge and skills that completing the degree gave me, together with the memories of a short period as a schoolboy attendee at MYJO rehearsals, has motivated me to want to use the former to investigate the latter. I have found it to be a real challenge to adapt my earlier experiences to academic work, especially as I did not undertake a first degree and my MA was

primarily assessed through production. My main aim for personal development has been to adapt my skills as a community radio programme producer, to inform that by debates from an academic world with which I was not previously familiar, and to draw on the new insights this has produced for the wider fields of radio studies and jazz studies which I have explored at BCU.

It has become increasingly clear, though, that my background in local community radio has been an asset for this study. I learnt to make radio-style documentaries by trial and error, driven mainly by my interest to communicate my love of jazz. Reflecting on those experiences at the end of my doctoral studies allows me to see how this open and iterative process of learning enables a more critical engagement with how we document our subjects when we make radio programmes. In this reflection, I call upon Lister, Mitchell, and O'Shea's (2010) discussion of the issue of creative control and independence in BBC, independent and community production sectors along with Franklin's (2009) emphasis of inclusion of 'lay voices' and 'vernacular input' within community radio, and the neglected relationship of this to ideas of oral history, the importance of cultural environment and the critique of traditional hierarchies. Andrew Mall's (2018) observation about the community radio station's role in giving access to the unheard or underrepresented is particularly pertinent here; together with (as radio studies academic Siobhan Stevenson (2019) observes) the contested policy of social gain as a fundamental principle of community radio as defined in a station's statement of key commitments. These principles of community radio align with the historical music practice of local youth jazz orchestras in the 1960s and 1970s and exploring such historically important regional cultural activities are typical of the local content which is a requirement of community radio regulations.

In fact, Mall calls upon the work of musicologist Christopher Small (especially, 1998), in seeing "participating in community radio as a constituent component of musicking" (140). My own thesis owes a considerable debt to Small and, as I explain in more detail below, I adapt his idea of 'musicking' as a central idea to unite the disparate elements of my study and drive my rethinking of radio-style documentary making. First in an article (1995), then in a book (1998) of the same name, Small defines musicking as a verb that refers to the wide range of ways we participate in a music performance, embracing formally playing, but also rehearsing or practicing, or composing and selecting repertoire, and by extension listening or dancing, and support activity that makes performing and listening possible. Small, himself, considered that radio should enable the development of human

relationships through the musicking that it facilitated (1998, 13). This is further emphasised when we consider the consumption of radio as a way of participating in musical life and with the community outreach projects commonly undertaken in the community radio environment, seen by Finnigan (1989) as activities supporting local musical life in urban contexts.

I contend that, as such, community radio can provide an ideal platform for the broadcast of local oral history projects, as a key commitment to support local culture and music by broadcasting content which is relevant to the local community and thus promote community cohesion. My study of the historical music practices of a local youth jazz orchestra exemplifies an approach that emphasises, in the words of Franklin (2009), “the convergence between oral history and radio production as fields of cultural production or aural preservation” (2).

While I specifically focus on the development of youth jazz programmes in the West Midlands in the late 1960s, 1970s and early 1980s, more generally I explore how we can make the practice of radio documentary a developed and sophisticated research method in itself. In doing so, I contribute to two issues of academic debate within media and cultural studies - one about the role of media production as a research tool and one in jazz studies about local jazz culture and history. I build on Makagon and Neumann’s (2008) contention that the radio documentary form can be seen as qualitative research in its own right. and I use this approach to explore an original way to tackle questions of research that have emerged in what has been called ‘The New Jazz Studies’ (see Peretti, 1993, Tucker, 1998 and O’Meally, et al. (eds), 2004 for useful accounts). In particular, I have sought to utilise approaches from oral history and ideas of ethnography from cultural studies and ethnomusicology.

No previous study of the historical music practice of the MYJO has been undertaken. This investigation compliments important work undertaken by fellow scholars regarding the Midlands jazz scene and jazz as a social musical practice (see, for instance Wall and Barber, 2015, Fletcher, 2017, Cravinho, 2020, and Cravinho and Homer, 2020), and it is possibly unique in combining radio production as a vehicle for media and cultural research, applied to jazz history using approaches from oral history and ethnomusicology.

In fact, as I show in Chapter Two, until quite recently, there have been relatively few published histories of jazz in Britain let alone its regions. Many of those that did exist were

either jazz biographies or non-academic chronicles. Furthermore, most of these focus on London with almost no mention being made of the music's history outside the United Kingdom's capital city and specifically the West Midlands regional conurbation and the production and reception of jazz in this region. Often, the literature on British jazz confirmed the view of totalizing narratives with primary material arranged to confirm a predetermined story of innovations and of celebrating native genius. My study of the historical music practices of the nascent youth jazz movement in the West Midlands privileges the voices of the provincial musicians who are so often overlooked in existing histories of jazz, providing a space for previously unheard jazz voices to create an alternative narrative. By alternative narratives, I mean the stories of jazz' past standard tropes of great men, seminal recordings, and major jazz cities.

Coming to academic research late in life, I have often been daunted by how much there has been to learn and how challenging it has been to rethink the things I have taken for granted as a radio programme maker and jazz fan. I demonstrate how my background in radio production, and the communication, organisation, information analysis and research skills I acquired during a lengthy prior career in legal services, serve the aims of this project. This difference of background allows me to provide a fresh perspective on important and well-trodden academic debates.

Aims

My key aims were to use a synthesis of disciplinary approaches, and radio-style documentary as an investigative tool to:

1. provide distinctive insights into one particular neglected localised history of jazz;
2. be innovative and reflexive in methodological approach, utilising my skills as a community radio producer;
3. offer a theoretically-informed alternative to existing mediated histories used in conventional jazz histories and radio-style documentary more generally.

Research Question:

I focused my research through a key research question which embraced the issues of methodology around radio production and mediation and our understanding of one specific historically-located aspect of a local jazz culture, asking:

How can processes of audio production mediate and interpret the historical music practices of the Midland Youth Jazz Orchestra 1968 to 1980?

I answer this question by collecting data by means of making audio recordings, conducting interviews and producing a series of audio documentaries. I make use of sound archives and articles in professional journals and newspapers as well as investigating existing research which crosses disciplinary boundaries. A key constituent of my study is a practice-based autoethnographic methodological approach.

Conceptual framing and synthesised method

I locate this study specifically in media and cultural studies, and in particular the area of radio and audio production, as part of a wider radio studies movement that has become established internationally. This provides clear skills and debates about professional approaches to interview and production practice. I explore these through making radio-style documentaries and features. I use this term to indicate a programme form that emerged in over-the-air sound broadcasting, but which has also, more recently been used for downloadable or streamed online content, often called podcasts. In doing so, I acknowledge that podcast studies is a linked but separate field. In Chapter One I examine the literature surrounding podcasting as both an academic area and research method.

It is to the area of jazz studies that I seek to apply the methods of radio production as a research method. In particular, I contribute to on-going debates about how we should understand historical jazz music practices (see, for instance DeVeaux, 1991 and Gabbard, 1995) and how these are enriched through oral history (see, for instance, Monson, 1996 Peretti, 2001) and archival research (Fitzgerald, 2008). Further, I draw on some key ideas that have been influential in jazz studies to both inform the history of jazz I have constructed and the way I have made the four radio-style documentaries on the Birmingham Jazz Festival, local drummer, Tony Levin, a micro-history of a jazz musician, and the MYJO and ultimately, the three “drop-in” features and three podcast audio pieces also focusing upon the formative years of the MYJO.

I recognise that this is a complex range of fields to draw upon and the dual focus of radio production and jazz history creates a thesis which emphasises breadth not depth within these fields. I also recognise that the key new knowledge lies in both the radio documentaries and features and this written component, and that the written commentary is therefore shorter than a full written thesis. It is certainly a challenge to review the massive range of literature I have dealt with and to not set off to explore each of these very interesting areas. I have not always succeeded, but by focusing on some key conceptual frames and a synthesised method, this written statement of my thesis demonstrates a coherent project created out of diverse literature, methods and traditions.

In broad terms, my work can be represented in Figure 1 below.

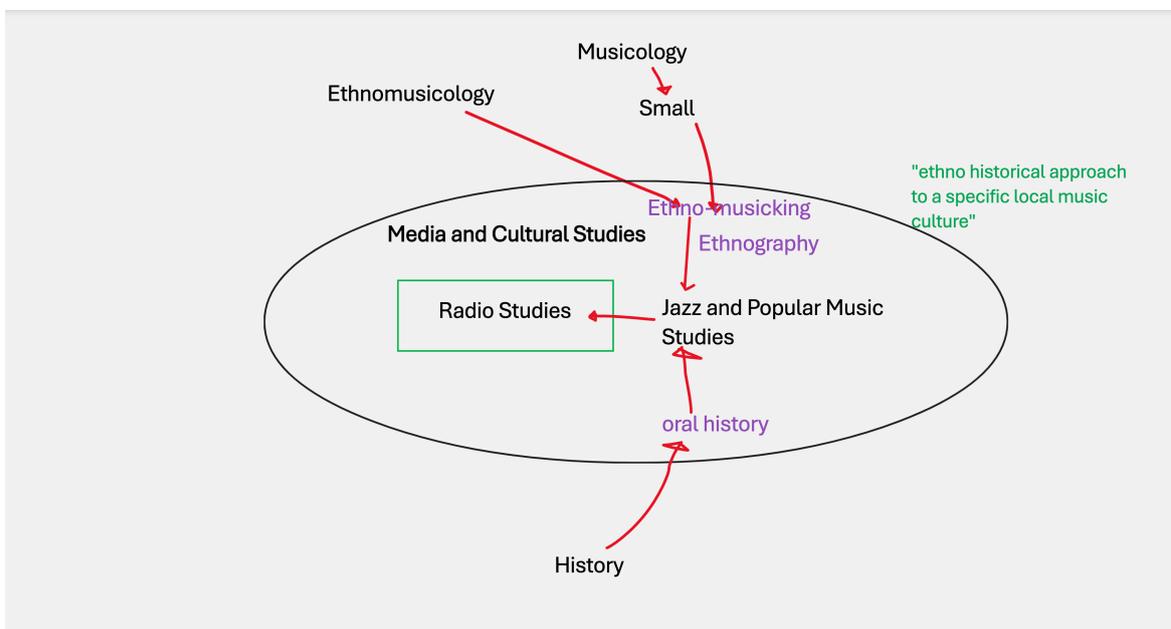


Figure 1: academic fields in which the thesis research is located

My main focus is in radio studies, as a sub-field of media and cultural studies, and particularly the discussions about practice-based research methodology. Specifically, I draw on the theoretical debates and exemplars of practice about using radio production as a research tool rooted in community radio practice.

Because I have focused on making radio documentaries and features about local jazz cultures of the past, I have also drawn upon jazz and popular music studies, and especially the debates about the focus and rendering of historically-located jazz cultures. In addressing the critical issues raised in radio and jazz studies I have sought solutions from history studies around narrative and oral history as a method. In order to deal with the processes of music making and music-making culture, I have broadly drawn on Small's

idea of musicking, synthesised with broad approaches from cultural studies and ethnomusicology of ethnography.

In essence, I seek to produce an ethnographic record of the MYJO over a long decade as a way of learning more about radio as a tool of investigation and as a form of community radio.

In doing so, I contribute to the move to more cross-disciplinary, synthesising research approaches to extending our knowledge. Media historian Kate Lacey (2009) averred to the need to “map a way for radio studies to more readily engage with debates outside the discipline” (2009:21) and advocated that researchers should “produce histories which anchor radio to everyday life” and further promoted “thinking through new avenues of (re) connection with the broader field” (2009:22). As Lacey acknowledges, although scholarly research about radio has increased more recently, the use of radio production as a channel for research remains undeveloped. Combining radio production as a vehicle for research, applied to jazz history using approaches from the fields of oral history and ethnomusicology is part of a wider move to address this relative neglect. To this, I add a commitment to experiment in radio documentary production. By this I mean, exploring possibilities, examining and reflecting on my own practice.

My research is part of a wider commitment to alternative media research. As media studies academic Lei Guo observes “most alternative media research has examined media content and the production process” (2017: 112) and this is fundamental to my study. I extend this notion when I follow popular culture academic, Chris Atton (2007), in using the term ‘alternative media’ to denote media which is “produced outside mainstream media institutions and networks” (18). I note, however, that this is contested by Tanja Bosch (2013). Whilst she concedes that the term “alternative radio” can be used to describe community radio, she argues the term ‘alternative’ suggests a subordinate relationship to mainstream media. I expand on the importance of this for radio studies in chapter one and for jazz studies in chapter two.

From jazz studies, my focus on a local community jazz orchestra is part of a wider attempt to offer new jazz histories, itself based on a critique of existing histories. Lopes maintains that “most jazz histories...are implicated in the jazz art world’s quest to create and maintain a distinct music tradition called jazz and therefore, never move much beyond this narrative

to address the broader contexts of music and culture” (2002: 3). Whilst Lopes’ comments relate to jazz in the USA, they are equally pertinent to studies of jazz in Britain.

Lopes probably had in mind histories like those of Marshall Stearns (1956), or later histories like Gioia (1977), which charted the evolution of the music from ideas of folk art origins through to popular art and finally, high art. Like Lopes, I see jazz as a cultural movement which involves “not only jazz artists” but “also record producers, concert producers, club owners, music critics, magazine publishers and diverse audiences” (2002: 2) which together constituted what Becker (1982) termed “an art world”. Lopes puts it well, in accepting performers ascribed “their own meanings and practices” to jazz music, “others joined them in fashioning the meaning, practice, and success of jazz as an art form” (2).

Following this work, then, in my formulation, ‘jazz culture’ includes the music, its styles, the musicians’ biographies and the culture of its elitist aficionados who attended their hot clubs, wrote and read polished critiques in their newsletters, like *Melody Maker* or *Down Beat*, and who were divided in hostile factions, always fighting for the pureness of the musical style. But it also includes young people who take possession of this music, and the fashion and attitudes linked to it.

The new jazz studies have also provided new ways to deal with the marginalisation of questions of gender in music culture and its history. Key to this has been Nicole Rustin and Sherrie Tucker’s (2008) approach to, in the words of the collections subtitle, ‘listening for gender in jazz studies’, using a nice analogy of jazz player’s ability to listen to jazz history in nuanced ways. This includes excavating the marginalised and infrequently told stories of woman in jazz, through interpretations of gender in literature and film, and the way the dynamics of gender have shaped the making, reception and criticism in jazz culture.

These innovations in both radio studies and jazz studies provide us with the potential for a two-way engagement. Approaches deployed in jazz studies for interviewing and unearthing material from archives can be applied in radio production in a way that enriches the way we interview and make editorial decisions about content material. Equally, jazz history can learn from the dominant practices in radio production and debates about how the past is mediated in the stories of jazz’s past.

The final part of my synthesised approach draws upon ideas common to both cultural studies and ethnomusicology to show how these can be utilised to more fully explore the

historical culture we are trying to understand. While recognising that these ethnographical approaches are most often used to investigate contemporary cultural practices, they have great potential in likewise grasping the culture of the music cultures past, and particularly those very specific to a geographic area, music and time. In particular, the way radio interviews can be rethought as oral histories or ethnographic interviews, and how the material objects of an archive can be treated to reveal things usually accessed through observations in the field.

To achieve this, I deploy a portmanteau concept ‘ethnomusicking’. This aims to first signal my debt to Christopher Small in examining music as ‘a ritual in social space’ (1995), by deploying the anthropological notion of ritual to allow me to gain an understanding of a particular culture or sub-cultural social group. Second, the prefix indicates my explicit extension of his idea into the study of music cultures of the past, and my emphasis on using tools of ethnography derived from cultural studies and ethnomusicology. I use the concept of ‘ethno’ in the broad sense utilised when it is deployed as a prefix in ethnography or ethnomusicology and the way it signals the distinctive cultural dimensions of musical practices. I am not the first to do so, although I developed my own ideas independently of ethnomusicologist, Sandra Kirkwood’s (2010) proposed use of the term ‘ethnomusicking’, and my own model develops more explicitly within key ideas of ritual, myth, identity and relationships. I explain these extensively in Chapter Three.

I am conscious of the way the prefix ethno- has become associated with ideas of ethnicity as a synonym for race. While I do not seek to narrow this to discussions of how concepts of race play out in these cultures, I do touch on the diversity of participation in the MYJO in my discussion in Chapter Seven. Likewise, I have sought to explore matters of gender participation in local jazz orchestras, and particularly the near absence of young women in the MYJO during the period under examination. I have already explicitly published research work in this area (Musson, 2023) which is included as an appendix. Given the demands of time and the challenges of dealing with issues of absence in oral histories, I did not address these in depth in any of the radio-style documentaries and features. There is, though, an important extension project to be done on the way that diversity as an issue of absence or marginalisation can be addressed in histories of jazz, in radio production and in community radio studies.

By extending the ethnographic commitment in cultural studies and ethnomusicology, I undertake an autoethnography of my own radio and audio production work. This is

recognition of my own role in the ethnomusicking process, but also an opportunity to reflect on radio production as a research method.

I am far from the first to draw on ethnographic approaches or ideas from ethnomusicology in the study of jazz culture, which has been a constituent of ethnomusicology since the 1940s, and is apparent in New Jazz Studies work (see, for instance, Monson, 1994, Solis, 2014, and Currie, 2017). Nor are interdisciplinary approaches novel, leading Solis (2014) to aver that “works of jazz scholarship...routinely partake of both ethnographic and historical methods and often aim to elucidate the connections between musical sound itself and music as an active component of a social formation – of race, gender, generational cohort, nation and so on” (n.p.). Ethnographic approaches have also been applied by anthropologist Steven Feld (2012) to jazz cultures, who celebrates storytelling as ethnographic form and allowed his collaborators to speak for themselves about their views of the world and the ways in which they position their music philosophy, both aesthetically, and ethically. I take this approach forward in my study of the historical music practices of the MYJO, emphasizing the voices of the musicians, constructing a historical narrative from their perspectives, as a form of intimate dialogue with the musicians.

Thesis Themes

At a more general level, I argue three core themes, which I exemplify through this thesis:

1. The MYJO of the 1960s and 1970s can be understood as an example of ritualized ethnomusicking in a jazz environment. These rituals build relationships (with the music and with other participants) and construct identities for the participants through myth and metaphor. By emphasising the role of the culture, artifacts and traditions of local jazz scenes and groups, we identify MYJO in the 1960s and 1970s as an object of study, accessible through broadly ethnographic and historical analysis.
2. Interviewing in radio production and jazz history are too often thought of as unproblematic issues of practice. Ideas of oral history are too often neglected in both radio production and jazz histories. Further, the extent to which interviews can be seen as accessing the lived experience of a local culture by both those involved in radio production and jazz history is problematic. I offer some critiques and potential solutions to these matters throughout.

3. Studying the diverse ways of constructing historical narratives, and narrating their key events, in jazz history and radio documentary-making reveals important questions about mediation and story-telling which are central to both the construction of jazz history and the making of radio documentaries and features. The significance of existing dominant stories and the meaning and relevance of archived materials are particularly important for such studies. This includes dealing with visual archive material in radio production and the issue of absences and invisibility in jazz history.

The structure of the written component

Overall, this is a study of jazz regional histories, and my research differs from other jazz histories in that it is built on a theoretically-informed practice-based research method.

I organise the supporting evidence of my thesis in the structure of the written component of the thesis and in the audio files which provide key examples of the radio-style documentaries, features and podcasts I produced during my research.

In the first three chapters, I explore the state of my fields of study through different bodies of literature, as a thesis in respectively: i) radio production as a form of media and cultural study; ii) of jazz history; iii) using the idea of ethnomusicking and methods from cultural studies, and ethnomusicology.

In Chapter One, I set out the various ways in which methods and research from radio studies, and its broader context in media and cultural studies, has informed my own work. I do this by exploring three key areas. Firstly, I discuss radio production within a broader field of media studies, followed by two contextualising reviews of the relationship of radio studies and history and, finally the ways in which my idea of radio-style documentary/feature sits within new form of radio production and distribution.

Chapter Two's focus is on relevant debates in (new) jazz studies. I structure these on three problems of history: for jazz history, for jazz histories of Britain and British jazz in the 1960s and 1970s, and the place of provincial jazz in both of these.

The final review of relevant secondary literature deals with my key idea of 'ethnomusicking' as a concept that can be used to rethink jazz histories. Here I set out a fuller definition of ethnomusicking and the key ideas I draw from Christopher Small's work, reimagined through an ethnographic lens. I then apply this ethnomusicking frame to theoretically establish the factors that this approach should focus on in the historic music

culture practices of the MYJO in the 1960s and 1970s. Finally, I open the scope to discussion to examine the way other scholars have deployed key ideas from ethnomusicology in a jazz history.

Chapters Four and Five, appropriate for a practice-based research study, emphasise the importance of practice in the field by an engagement with selected extant oral histories and mediated documentaries of jazz. These chapters draw upon the engagement with literature in the field set out in the earlier three chapters to frame a discussion of existing practice in the areas I subsequently work in myself as a radio and jazz researcher for this thesis.

Chapter Four discusses how we could approach the radio documentary interview as jazz oral history, and how oral histories and ethnographic interview can capture the ethnomusicking practices within a jazz community. This is followed by some notes on two analyses of two extant oral histories and a reflection on one of my pre-doctoral studies interviews. These are two interviews from the *British Library Oral History of British Jazz* with Charles Chilton (Jim Godbolt, 1989) and Leslie Perowne (Christopher Clarke, 1990), followed by a radio interview I conducted with the author of 'Wilkie's Story: Dominant Histories, Hidden Musicians, and Cosmopolitan Connections in Jazz' (2018), Prof Tony Whyton.

Chapter Five does an equivalent with three mediated documentary jazz histories, one in televisual form – *Jazz Britannia* (BBC, 2005) – and two radio documentaries – *The Definitive History of Jazz in Britain* (Jazz FM, 2021) and my own *Tony Levin* programme (Musson, 2011). Here I explore how two major mediated documentaries of British jazz construct their subject and how I reflect on my own attempts to look at the life of a key member of the jazz scenes in the English Midlands, Britain and Europe.

Chapter Six sets out my synthesis methodology. First, I explore how we can use radio production as a tool of music culture history research. This starts with an exploration of the ways radio production (the activity) and radio productions (the things) can be utilised as research and as more specifically as history research. The chapter then looks in turn at the ways research is conducted in history generally, as oral histories and as ethnomusicological interviews. I then set out my approach to ethnomusicking the past as a way to conceive the way these regional music cultures operate. I finish this chapter with an account of the way I use autoethnography as a method to reflect on my own practice and

how this incrementally changed the way I created histories of jazz culture through radio production.

The final part of the written component of my thesis focuses on some explicit accounts of my findings. The broader evidence of these findings can be found in the audio work. These chapters align with the key answers to my research question.

Chapter Seven specifically sets out my findings as ethnomusicking the historical music practice of the MYJO in the 1960s and 1970s in written form. It does not constitute a script for the radio documentary, but an alternative form of mediation and narration of the history of MYJO during this period, which can be directly compared to the approach taken in the radio-style documentary/feature.

In Chapter Eight, I reflect on the autoethnographic field notes I kept. This sets out the process of research I undertook as I made a series of radio-style documentaries/features/podcasts on different aspects of jazz history. I set out the key ideas I developed and how I applied them in my final documentary on the MYJO. This documentary and the subsequent “drop-in” features and podcasts together constitute the key output of my radio-style production research method.

Chapter Nine generalises my study to make some important points about oral history as radio production practice and new approaches to historical narrative (and narration) in radio histories.

I end with a conclusion in which I reflect on the significance of my findings and suggest where these insights could take research into these matters in the future. This includes some of my own interests for postdoctoral research.

The appendix contains a copy of the article published in *Jazz-Hitz* that emerges from the work on inclusive culture at MYJO I undertook as part of this doctoral research.

Chapter One: Radio Production as Media and Cultural Study

In the introduction I established this practice-based doctoral research project as one that uses radio-style documentary production to explore the ways in which we investigate, mediate and interpret the music cultural practices of the past. This review of extant literature establishes the existing field in which we can understand radio production as a vital research tool within the wider fields of radio studies, itself, part of media studies.

Radio studies developed as a more substantial dimension of media and communication studies in the 1990s. Until this point, as media and communication studies academics Hilmes and Loviglio (2002) make clear, there had been an emphasis on the study of visual media, notably television and film. Fellow media academics Lewis and Booth (1989) present radio as the ‘invisible medium’, and in doing so emphasising a culture, where radio continues, in the absence of pictures, as the blind medium whilst still retaining an individual ability to communicate. Of course, the medium shares some of the qualities with film and literary studies with radio scholarship overlapping other branches of media study, including television. Notwithstanding this, today it is a distinct field which has grown to embrace web-based broadcasting and podcasting.

In this chapter I set out the various ways in which methods and research from radio studies and its broader context in media and cultural studies has informed my own work.

Therefore, I explore three key areas. First, the place of radio production within a broader field of media studies; second, I pre-empt my longer discussion of studies of jazz histories, by making some points about the limitations of radio histories within radio studies; finally, I bring to the fore the development in radio technologies around podcasting which have allowed the sort of academic project I have undertaken here.

The place of radio production in the origins of UK media studies

Radio production as a research tool is part of the wider terrain of media and communication studies research. Media studies in Britain was established through the ground-breaking work of three key universities in the 1960s. Most broadly influential has been the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at Birmingham University in 1964 (Green, 2013, Schulman, 1993). The Birmingham centre operated at the intersections of literary criticism, sociology, history, and anthropology, with the intention of carrying out

research on areas of popular culture such as chart music, television programmes and advertising. My own study has drawn broadly on the ethnographic and cultural history approaches developed at the centre. One of the early ethnographic studies of specific British examples of communication included an account by media and cultural studies scholar Dorothy Hobson (2007) of the role radio and television played in the lives of British housewives. Although radio was the subject of the first pamphlet (Powell, 1965), published by the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, it has not featured prominently since. Radio and popular music studies academic Professor Tim Wall's doctoral ethnographic study of local music radio in the 1990s, and his subsequent articles, are probably the exception here (Wall, 1999, Wall, 2000, Wall, 2006). Nor did researchers based at the centre use the potential of media production as a research tool.

For approaches based in media production, I take my lead from the ground-breaking emphasis of media as a tool for communication established at Leeds University in 1960s. The university's Centre for Television Research was led by Denis McQuail in the late 1960s and 70s and the emerging School of Communication aligned production studies with more traditional mass communication research¹.

I should also note the contribution of the Centre for Mass Communication and Research at Leicester University in 1966. However, their emphasis on political economy and mass communication theory is outside the approach of this thesis. My work combines the ethnographic and history approaches from Birmingham with the lost thread from Leeds.

It is these insights that informed the definition of radio and radio production that I established in the introduction. There has been considerable technological and institutional innovation in radio in the twenty-first century. These debates often focus in media studies on ideas around podcasting. I return to these ideas later in this chapter. As I note there, though, the very term podcasting is derived from changes in forms of distribution of audio programming and access to that programming, while most of the discussion is actually about the increased democratisation of audio production that new digital technologies have enabled. I adopt media history scholar Kate Lacey's suggestion that "invoking the name of radio efficiently cuts through a swathe of possibilities to register a set of expectations and practices" (Lacey, 2009: 25). Lacey means this in relation to the main focus of radio studies

¹ See <https://www.facebook.com/leedsunimedia/posts/staff-and-students-sadly-note-the-death-of-professor-denis-mcquail-12-april-1935/1200180720087662/>.

as a field, which I aim to extend into radio documentary-style forms of production as a vehicle for research.

Kate Lacey postulated the need to “map a way for radio studies to more readily engage with debates outside the discipline” (21) and advocated that researchers should “produce histories which anchor radio to everyday life” (21) and further promoted “thinking through new avenues of (re) connection with the broader field” (22). She maintained that “it is the very *idea* of radio with which radio studies need to engage to connect with debates beyond the confines of radio studies” (22). By combining radio production as a vehicle for research, applied to jazz history using approaches from oral history and ethnomusicology, I seek to explore such connections.

The field of radio studies has expanded over time. In a later article Lacey concluded that, whilst in 1998 the number of scholarly books about radio were few, over the succeeding ten years the number of such texts had increased, “but it was still just possible to pretend that it was a small and focused enough body of work to have some kind of legitimate overview” (2018: 113). However, the use of radio production as a vehicle for research remains undeveloped. Crucially, for my study, Lacey maintains that “radio” is not just a historical or material artefact but is, at root, an intellectual artefact” and that the same might be true for radio studies. She argues that “intellectually, philosophically, politically and pedagogically, there is (also) a danger in too much specialisation, in too much fragmentation” and that we may “separate ourselves off from broader currents of debate” and considered the field of radio studies to then to be “open, expansive, multi-disciplinary and engaged; a field that matters” (122).

I have also taken inspiration from ethnomusicologist Tom Western, who argues that “histories of radio and ethnomusicology are bound up together: that ethnomusicology is radiophonic and radio is ethnomusicological” and “radio...is an ethnographic site” (2018: 255). The notions of both Lacey and Western are important here. I deploy them to support the challenge that I have set myself: to investigating how processes of radio production, as a vehicle for research, can enable me to explore how documentaries mediate and interpret the historical music practices of an aspect of jazz in the West Midlands in the 1960s and 1970s. Western draws together a selection of articles to “present a picture of what ethnomusicologies of radio might look and sound like”. I aim to extend this further, combining an autoethnography of radio production processes with an ethnomusicology of local jazz.

Radio studies has provided us with some insights into radio documentaries, their audiences and the role of community radio with other radio institutions and production processes.

Radio documentaries have an important democratic function in the way they can represent ordinary people, tell important stories about our society and get listeners to identify with contributors. Following film-maker John Grierson, I see 'documentary' as "the creative treatment of actuality" (1966:13). For radio, actuality being the sounds captured by a microphone and the 'creative treatment' through which these sounds are shaped to tell a story. Initially the only forum for audio documentary was broadcast radio. With the advent of internet streaming, podcasting and other forms of digital distribution, these radio-style documentaries can be accessed in a much wider range of ways than over-the-air broadcasting. As a form, the producers of these radio-style documentaries have taken inspiration from journalism, non-fiction, fiction, poetry, music, film and other expressive arts.

The first radio documentaries were often scripted and performed by actors. For a maker of radio documentaries about music cultures, it is interesting that an early use of 'actuality' is found in 'Radio Ballads' by Charles Parker, Ewan McColl and Peggy Seeger (1958-1964) a mix of music and storytelling bringing the voices of 'real people' to the air. Radio features had an identifiable BBC 'house sound' and tied to the organisation's Reithian aim to inform and educate, in contrast to in the USA where documentaries were more akin to journalism. Madsen (2006) points to a late 1960s "renaissance in the art of documentary and feature production in radio, especially from within the major public broadcasters" anticipating "a radio new wave, a new art of wild sound recording freed from script and studio and made possible by the advent of portable recorders (and) microphones" (189).

Elsewhere, Dann (2014) examined the "opportunities that have been opened up for writers and producers of radio drama through the development of online and downloadable audio" and explores "the possibilities offered to writers by working outside conventional radio networks" (141).

Journalism studies academic Mia Lindgren noted that "journalism academics ...face the challenge of having their journalism practice recognised as academic research". Her dissertation "presents a model of how journalism practitioner-academics can present their in-depth journalistic practice in ways that make clear its standing as legitimate academic research" (2011, 3)

Oral historian Siobhan McHugh did much to address the dearth of academic literature when, in 2013, she founded the online journal. *RadioDoc Review* with the aim of developing “critical theory of the radio documentary/feature form and define production and research excellence in this under-researched field” (McHugh, 2014:23). The journal’s editorial board included both scholars and practitioners, evidencing its aim to “fill a gap in scholarship and bridge the traditional divide between industry and academy” and advocated assisting “scholar-practitioners if works which meet the emerging criteria for excellence in the form can be recognised as practice-based academic research” (p.31)

Makagon and Gould (2016) “critically examine audio documentary at the intersections of urban storytelling, community-based learning, and urban communication pedagogy”, arguing “that audio documentary is both a research method and a mode of storytelling production (p.1263)

Radio academic Sam Coley notes that “previous inquiries into radio documentary production have focused on public service models of broadcasting” and also acknowledges that such studies “often view the subject from a journalistic agenda”, whilst Coley’s dissertation “considers the practice of freelance radio producers creating music documentaries for commercial audiences” (2017: v).

Other texts, tend to privilege the ‘how-to’ guide style. See for example McNerney (2001) writing for radio guide, Beaman (2006) documentary programme-making and (2011) interviewing for radio documentary, Hand and Traynor (2011) produced a radio drama handbook touching on the history of radio drama and providing an in-depth practical guide to the genre. Pierson and Bauwens (2015) produced a wide-ranging, “interdisciplinary and international” look at then “current developments in television and radio broadcasting on the level of regulation and policy, industries and economics, production and content, and audience and consumption practices”

Radio audience research can be traced back to Beville (1940) and the study of socio-economic stratification of radio audiences. O’Sullivan and Lewis (2006) provided a useful overview of existing research on radio audiences, concluding that more qualitative audience research was required to gain “an adequate understanding of the role of radio in everyday life” (178). They suggested two different approaches to studying the radio audience. Firstly, “the researcher can focus on the whole picture of radio listening” deploying “ethnographic methods” and allowing “a picture of how listeners listen to radio”

to emerge and revealing “that audiences have both a general relationship with radio and specific relationships with different genres or formats” (179). Secondly, to “include an audience perspective within a wider study of a particular genre, or a particular radio text” (179).

McHugh notes that podcasting was fostering a “new, more informal genre of audio narrative feature centred on a strong relationship between host and listener with content that is ‘talkier’ and less crafted” (2016:65).

Dowling and Miller (2019) observed that the rise in podcasting resulted in “programming aimed at sustaining audience attention” through the creation of “absorbing nonfiction through transparent journalism featuring self-reflexive narrative” (2019:167)

As I have stated, whilst the number of podcasts has grown significantly, relatively few have garnered large audiences with podcast producers more successfully catering to microcommunities through extremely niche content. Hannah McGregor (2022) notes that the podcast’s “ability to engage communities is enhanced by some of the defining characteristics of podcast aesthetics, namely their parasocial intimacy. Compared with radio, podcasts are less likely to adhere to professional production standards, and podcasters tend to be less formal...than radio hosts are” and McGregor maintains that “the creation of podcasts that speak directly with and from the perspective of communities drives listenership within those communities” (1).

Andrew Dubber (2013) points out that “digital and online radio can assemble audiences that are dispersed in time and space, though this can introduce not only challenges but also opportunities” (168)

Community Radio

One of the distinctive features of community radio is the active participation by audience members in production processes. Makagon and Neumann (2009) cite “citizen storytelling as a way to tap into community assets” and further consider “the types of citizen storytelling...that can be adopted by qualitative researchers” (54). In doing so, they define a citizen storyteller as “anyone who wants to create a documentary about historical or contemporary life”. Their concept is “based in the idea of democratizing the means of representing interests, issues, experiences, and the concerns of people who do not have access to media but have stories they want to tell” (55).

My background in local community radio provided a training ground for my radio-style documentaries and a way to communicate my love of jazz. Community radio also shares many of the values of 1960s and 1970s local youth jazz orchestras that I explore in this research, and such historically important regional cultural activities are typical of the local content which is a requirement of community radio regulations.

Volunteers and workers in community radio are not impeded by many mainstream broadcasting regulations. The issue of creative control and independence in BBC, independent and community production sector have been addressed by Lister, Mitchell, and O'Shea's (2010) and Franklin's (2009) emphasises on 'lay voices' and 'vernacular input' within community radio have guided my approach. In particular, I demonstrate their value for oral history and the critique of traditional hierarchies. This less formal environment has permitted a wider creative freedom for community radio practitioners to become more creative in their work (see for example Resonance FM). I also draw on Andrew Mall's (2018) observation about access to the unheard or underrepresented together with Siobhan Stevenson's (2019) exploration of the contested policy of social gain. Mall makes an argument for "participating in community radio as a constituent component of Christopher Small's idea of "musicking" (140). The key commitment of community radio to support local culture and music can be achieved through the broadcast of local oral history, and the promotion of community cohesion by the broadcast of content relevant to that community. As I have already noted, local youth jazz orchestras are exemplars of this.

John Downing (1984) saw the classic alternative media formats as being print and broadcast, although "setting the agenda for subsequent studies" (19). His later work recognised the expanding range of media forms. There are many studies which examine the role of community radio as a means of information dissemination. For example, Attuh and Kankham (2022) conducted a study into how community radio is used for sustainable rural development in Ghana, Fombad and Jiyane (2016) investigated the role of two community radio stations regarding rural development and the dissemination of information to women listeners in South Africa. Community radio academic Tanja Bosch (2014) has undertaken extensive work regarding community radio, much of it surrounding the development of the media in developing countries. She notes that the "term alternative radio" is used to describe community radio "in Latin America and the United States". She also notes that "while used widely, the term 'alternative' suggests its own lesser

relationship to dominant media” (428). Bosch suggests going forward research should be about the stations themselves and cites, for example, the study of “community radio audiences, both quantitatively and qualitatively” and “stations’ use of new media technologies, with particular references to issues of citizenship and political activism” (436).

Atton (2007) notes that the broader term “alternative media” is used to signify that which is “produced outside mainstream media institutions and networks” and that such media is often produced “by amateurs who typically have little or no training or professional qualifications” (18). He was referring specifically to journalists but as he acknowledges, his remarks are equally applicable to radio and television stations and therefore to community radio volunteers who, “as citizens, as members of communities, as activists or fans” work to represent “the interests, views and needs of underrepresented groups in society” (18). Atton asserts that “relatively little attention has been paid to alternative media that deal with popular culture” (22).

Tim Wall (2000) draws our attention to the way UK regulation of British commercial radio has resulted in the “marginalization of concepts of community broadcasting” (180). His other work on US college radio stations (2007), explores their output and organisation “as offering an alternative in music radio to the for-profit stations that dominate the airwaves”. Here, ‘alternative’ is characterised by stations use of “different forms of music programming” extending “well beyond the scope of indie rock” a genre of music with which the college stations had become synonymous, “and that the current notions of alternativeness utilised by station staff have their roots in the development of the sector from the 1920s onwards”

In contrast, Pinto (2024) noted both “the possibilities and challenges that community radio in India is encountering in its endeavour to become an alternative medium” (1). I touch on diversity as an issue of absence or marginalisation and suggest the possibility of an extension project which can be addressed in community radio studies. Here, I cite Gatua, Patten and Brown’s (2010) study focusing on the role of the Feminist International Radio Endeavour (FIRE) “in empowering disenfranchised women in the developing countries” (164). Work has also been carried out in relation to audience research, see for instance Order, Phillips, O’Mahony and Sturgess (2021). However, an examination of academic journals, including the *Journal of Radio and Audio Media* and *The Radio Journal* reveals that studies regarding the use of community radio as an academic research tool are

neglected and it is to this that I address my research study, whilst also facilitating what Makagon and Neumann (2009) term “citizen storytelling” (61).

Dubber (2013) maintains that “radio by and for communities of different kinds has been a strong thread, in particular throughout the recent history of radio (169), and points out that community radio “is the place from which the disruptive challenge to the formulas, monolithic structures and conventions of radio will emerge. Community radio – and particularly small community radio – is a space where new ways of making media are attempted, experiments are tried, and the economics and regulatory frameworks are more enabling and nurturing to these kinds of practices” (174).

Radio studies has done much so far. Again, Lacey found “research in the field to be international, interdisciplinary and intermedial, and well placed to engage in the most pressing political and theoretical questions about contemporary media and communication” (2018:109). Engaging with a wide range of studies, for example: technology, production, programming, genres, and audiences, “from past, present and future, from the margins and the mainstream, local and global, deploying methods from across the arts and social sciences and drawing on theories and traditions from across the disciplines” (112). I apply these ideas to offer an original way to engage with the history of British jazz.

An aside on radio studies and history

Radio studies has been primarily focused on the study of radio history. However, the subject itself, like broader media studies, has not been attentive enough to questions of history-writing which have emerged from history as a subject discipline. Media historian James Curran (2002) points to, amongst other things, an emphasis on technology as a determining factor in the development of the media along with the ‘mediacentric’ nature of media histories. The tendency to be ‘mediacentric’ includes the isolation of media from each other and a predisposition to chart the development of aspects privileged by the wider media study. Curran’s more general observations seem to be at work in radio histories, with questions of technology to the fore and issues of programming seen as most significant. More generally, writers have noted the propensity of history to be built around ‘great men’, rather than cultural processes (see, for instance, White, 1948).

By example, one of the first British radio histories in the UK was produced by an early BBC employee, Arthur Burrows who authored a “behind the scenes” account of “what is happening every evening in the broadcasting studio and transmitting station” (1924: ix,x), and is preoccupied with studio and transmission technology. The founder and first general manager of the BBC, John Reith produced a book the same year which traced the BBC’s development of programming (Reith, 1924). By the 1930s the emphasis moved away from publications concerned with the technical nature of radio and began to include staff member’s memoirs (see, for instance, Sieveking 1934), and ‘behind-the-scenes’ looks at Broadcasting House (Eckersley, 1946). The 1950’s saw a further work by a broadcasting professional Maurice Gorham (1952). These are, though, often framed with a notion that it is individuals, rather than institutions which determine what happens in radio. It is in the 1960s and 1970s that historian Asa Briggs produced his seminal five-part history of broadcasting in the United Kingdom (1961, 1965, 1970, 1979), and broadcaster Derek Parker authored a further BBC history with a focus on programming (1977). Briggs himself is committed to social and economic history, but John Reith is seen as a towering ‘great man’ figure within the narrative.

Notwithstanding this activity, as radio academic Guy Starkey has noted what he sees as essential qualities of the medium as “variously described as the ‘forgotten’ ‘invisible’, ‘secondary’, ‘blind’ and even ‘Cinderella’ medium (2012: 845), a statement that is reinforced by fellow radio academics Shingler and Wieringa (1998). The sociologist Tom Burns produced what we would now see as the first media and cultural studies ethnography of the BBC involving interviewing some two hundred BBC staff members (1977). Works in the 1980s by radio scholars Stephen Barnard (1989), Andrew Crisell (1986) and social historians Paddy Scannell and David Cardiff (1991) can all be seen as ensuring a place for radio studies within the now established field of media studies. It was not until the beginning of the twenty-first century, though, that the scope of the literature surrounding radio studies widened still further. The familiar topic of radio history is amply covered in scholarly books and articles from radio studies academic Sean Street (2002) and Starkey (2004).

In all this work, though, the role of music in radio broadcasting is neglected. While musicologist Theodor Adorno (1945) considered the musical content of radio, this important area of sound broadcasting is missing from most major studies. Specialised material on music selection, scheduling, and regulation came from radio scholars Jody

Berland (1993), David Hendy, (2000) and Wall; (2000; 2005). Given this, the role of jazz in the BBC has been the subject of a number of studies. This reflects that jazz and radio emerged together and through the 1920s and 1930s ripened as cultural forms. Much of the literature on British jazz on radio focuses on the BBC as the institution dominating broadcasting. Scholars including Catherine Parsonage (2005) and Wall (2017) (Wall, 2025~; forthcoming) investigate jazz on BBC radio in terms of its early history, with debates often surrounding defining jazz for broadcast purposes and where to place it within the schedules. Other studies, for example, from popular music scholar Cristina Baade (2012) focus on a wider study of the BBC's popular music broadcasting, including jazz, of the early 1940s.

Although Baade, Parsonage and Wall provide a useful overview of post-war jazz broadcasting, this privileges BBC output. Wall's (2018) broader study of jazz on radio looks specifically at the 1970s as a time when radio began championing the new British jazz. He highlights "important radio commissions for leading British composers" but, like all of the work cited here, makes no reference to the work of regional musicians. He does acknowledge that "jazz was equally well served by the new commercial local stations" (71) noting their legal obligation to include two hours of jazz broadcasting each week, but makes no mention of regional BBC, which is an aspect of local jazz culture that I touch on later in this thesis.

As I will show later, these tropes of radio history, and their omissions, are also to be found in histories of jazz, including those that focus on British jazz. More specifically, radio studies has generated surprisingly few attempts to use radio production as a vehicle for research of radio or any other areas of cultural history. This neglect of the creative and institutional forms of radio production to investigate the wider music cultures in which UK radio operated is a missed opportunity.

More recent radio studies have increasingly focused on the emerging new forms of radio production and distribution. These provide a range of production possibilities which have been afforded by twenty-first century technological innovations. I return to look at these as a vehicle for research into other subjects, but first I swiftly set out how they overcome the access limitations of earlier stages of radio production which was formerly restricted to major radio organisations like the BBC and regulated commercial stations.

New form of radio production and distribution

It is not only in the field of radio studies that we can get insights into the possibilities of radio-style documentary-making as a practice-based methodology. Podcast studies have explored ways in which substantial technological changes have resulted in a whole range of new platforms for making and sharing radio-like programming, the key focus of published research has been on what has been termed ‘podcasting’. Llinares et al. (2018) considered podcasting to be both a delivery system and a medium. However, this needs some unpicking.

The term is a portmanteau word combining the name for new listening technologies and with the name for older forms of distribution associated with over-the-air radio transmission: Pod(~~road~~)casting. Of course, both the listening experience and the distribution form are based on new technologies, and the portmanteau word seems to signal a move from a broad listening experience to a narrow, individual one. In many ways, therefore, ‘podcasting’ reflects the characteristic form of over-the-air radio, even if it uses different technologies. Both radio and podcasting share the characteristics of an auditory experience distributed over a wide area in a process that has traditionally been termed ‘broadcasting’. It is important to recognise other developments, especially in music streaming, which operate on models derived from music radio (see, for instance, Wall, 2016). However, these lie outside the scope of this research.

However, the significance for this project of these new forms of programme-making, distribution and access lies in the increased access to the means of radio documentary-style production. These technologies enable anyone with recording equipment to create an audio programme on their computer and to distribute it with ease across the internet. It has created a form of media programming aligned to and complementary to traditional over-the-air radio, sharing many of its production practices, and so formally and sonically influenced by it.

Early journalistic reporting of the new phenomena likened podcasting to radio as a framing tool to enable readers to understand this new contrivance. Studies by radio and podcasting academic Richard Berry (2006); radio and T.V broadcasting academic Enrico Menduni (2007) and radio and podcasting scholar Toni Sellas, (2012) also privileged the relationship between podcasting and radio, with (Sterne et al., 2008) perceiving it as a new form of broadcasting. Lacey acknowledges the “debates about the ‘edges’ of radio” and

notes “the various arguments about whether ‘internet radio’ or ‘podcasting’ are ‘really’ radio” (2009: 4). However, simply because podcasts might *sound* like radio, it does not necessarily mean that they always *are* radio. The methods of creation and distribution are quite often different.

It is the accessibility of the applications used to capture and consume the content which have driven the popularity of the ‘podcast’ medium. Furthermore, the lack of mediating factors including producers, editors, and the corporate policies of traditional radio stations allow podcasters freedom in the way that they produce their work and, importantly for my study, a concomitant freedom for participants to tell their stories the way that they want to without the necessity to follow editor or radio station guidelines. Podcast maker and academic Siobhan McHugh has highlighted the “strong host-listener connection” and the ability of the podcast to “harness the intimacy and authenticity that can be conveyed by the human voice” (2017: 104)

This makes the radio-like production enabled by the technological changes collectively termed podcasting an ideal medium for experimentation in form. By experimentation in this context, I mean a process of exploration and of the creation of ‘trial-and-error’ productions on an iterative basis. Here, I cite sound studies academic Daniel Gilfillan who points out that “radio can be a device for communication and a medium for artistic practice and experimentation (2009:xiii). It is this challenge that I have taken on in this research. In particular it allows the exploration of ideas from oral history and ethnomusicology to be integrated into a practice-based media and cultural studies investigation as a way to explore jazz history.

For podcasting, the expansion of affordable recording technology, and the lack of industry restrictions, have resulted in a rapid growth of the medium, with 4.4 million podcasts reached in 2025². However, a relatively small percentage of these were capable of drawing large audiences

Academic, podcaster and co-director of the Amplify Podcast Network, Hannah McGregor (2022) considers that “the huge range of podcast genres, alongside the broad spectrum of production quality, means that podcasts remain a multifaceted medium – and the scholarship about them is similarly multifaceted. Media studies scholars are interested in questions of what defines podcasting...whereas those looking at podcast genres are more

² <https://podcastindustryinsights.com/>

interested in exploring how podcasting has generated a space for new forms of sound-based storytelling” Importantly for my study, McGregor notes that “scholars have...begun to theorize podcasting through the act of producing podcasts themselves” pointing “to how the study of podcasting has the potential to transform not just *what* scholars study but also *how* scholars do their work” (1).

Furthermore, in terms of scholarly podcasting, the medium itself, has grown over the last decade. Anthropologist Ian M. Cook (2023) explores what academic podcasting is and what it could be. He interrogates what podcasting does to academic knowledge but he also includes the technical and conceptual skills required to produce academic podcasts.

Biewen and Dilworth (2017) provide a comprehensive survey of the field of audio documentary work, including podcast documentary and Llinares, Fox and Berry (2018) provide ‘the first comprehensive interdisciplinary collection of academic research exploring the definition, status, practices and implications of podcasting through a media and cultural studies lens’.

Spinelli and Dann (2019) undertake interviews with podcast producers and with executives at the BBC and other institutions together with case studies and audience research to “uncover new approaches to speaking, to reportage, to engaging listeners, to telling stories” (2019: xi)

However, as with radio, the texts concerning podcasting often privilege ‘how-to’ guides, for example Geoghan and Klass (2007; 2008), Shumway, (2017), Hethmon (2018) and Cockburn (2022). Jessica Abel (2015) presents a behind the scenes graphic narrative survey of narrative radio shows.

Other writers have discussed the possibility of using podcasting as a tool for popularising history. Historian Dom Tromans’ work is particularly stimulating. Although both broadcasters and academics have used podcasting in this way, as Tromans avers, scholarship surrounding its use in this manner is not plentiful. Tromans’ work remains a useful touchstone for my study, though. His aims were to capture the character and potential of the medium of podcasting for disseminating ‘public history’. Whilst engaging with public historians he also considered how podcasting might benefit scholarship in general. In terms of history podcasts, Tromans noted an engagement “with the subject in varied ways: the history discussion group; narrative-based history; extemporaneous monologue modelled on talk radio” (2016: 7). However, he noted “scholars within the

academy have generally been slow to harness its potential” (7) leading me to conclude that it is a method ripe for the dissemination of the output of academic research. I align myself with Tromans’ assertion that “podcasts can contribute to knowledge in their own right” (9). In Tromans’ words the medium of podcasting allows “for innovative ways of ‘doing history’ that can complement, rather than replace, the written historical work” (11). This thesis will expose the worth of using audio texts in the academic world as an alternative to the written word to research production process and form and to distribute findings. As Tromans explains, (a) “rationale of public history is to maximise the presence of history in the public sphere” (9) and like Tromans I see a medium with the potential to reach many thousands of listeners as ample justification for applying the mechanism of podcasting to the dissemination of (oral) history”.

At the heart of these approaches to radio-style programme making is something important for innovative ways of ‘doing history’. This is the ability to share the voices of those who were part of the making of that history. That is true whether they are actually distributed as podcasts or as community radio over-the-air broadcasts. Most often in history these are referred to as oral histories but, for the radio or podcast producer, these are interviews. I return to this issue first in my exploration of extant oral histories of jazz in Chapter Five, and then Chapter Six in my discussion of methods but, for now, it is sufficient to establish the key themes in the existing literature on the interview within media production and academia. These establish a foundation for radio studies approaches to apply to producing documentaries of jazz histories. As I have started to show, writing history is itself a contested area, and just as histories of British radio have reproduced totalising and great man narratives, the same has been the case in studies of jazz history. In respect to a music which emerged within the United States of America, there are further ‘problems’ that are apparent in a music which quickly gained an international form and following. Yet studies have too long been dominated by an interest in the US, or even when looking beyond, to the capital cities of other nations. This noticeably reflects the cultural hierarchies that community radio has tried to both interrogate and to provide alternatives in organisation and programming. It is, therefore to the debates about what makes a good jazz history that I now turn in the next chapter.

Chapter Two: Jazz History

In Chapter One I placed my radio production practice-based research project within the field of radio studies within media studies. This chapter sets the context of my project as an investigation of jazz history within broader disciplines of jazz studies and cultural studies. As I outlined in the introduction my aim has been to use radio documentary-style production techniques to address a number of issues which have arisen in jazz histories.

In essence, I seek to use alternative radio documentary practices to present an alternative story of jazz' past. By alternative jazz histories I mean the stories of jazz' past standard tropes of great men, seminal recordings, and major jazz cities like New York and London.

It is to these issues that I now turn. I structure the chapter around three problems of jazz studies that I have aimed to address in my documentary. I refer to these as the problem of jazz history; the problem of jazz history in Britain; the problem of provincial jazz.

The problem of jazz history

Jazz scholar Scott DeVeaux has argued that an 'official' version of the jazz tradition had "taken hold" with general agreement upon the defining features of styles, innovators and recordings (1991: 525). The history of jazz is often documented by reference to the stylistic changes which have occurred in almost every decade. Jazz history has been defined by the principal actors: musicians, critics and members of the music industry.

DeVeaux challenged the established history of jazz that had dominated the discourse and foreshadowed the emergence of 'New Jazz Studies' in the 1990s bringing a new type of interdisciplinary scholarship that still challenges and revises existing perspectives on jazz. For instance, by employing methodologies from fields such as cultural and critical theory, jazz and its history is capable of being contested and exposed to new critical perspectives and interpretations. These methodologies later integrated with approaches from the broader field of popular music research, for example cannon formation (Gabbard, 1995); ethnomusicology (Berliner, 1994; (Monson, 2009); and critical historiography (DeVeaux, 1997)

Expanding upon DeVeaux's 'defining features' and differentiating the "jazz" style from that of "swing", cultural studies researcher Bernard Gendron (1993) noted the New Orleans-style revivalists of the late 1930s appropriated the word "jazz" for themselves. However, they agreed with the exponents of "swing" that the essential constituents of

“jazz” were collective improvisation coupled with “melodies, rhythms, phrasings, and timbres...primarily derived from African-American sources” (134). Critics, musicians and academics were broadly in agreement with Gendron regarding the antecedents of the music. Jazz broadcaster Peter Clayton and musician and music critic Peter Gammond acknowledged “an Afro-American background” with the genre becoming “the dominating voice of popular music” (1986: 122). Musician and educator Graham Collier concurred, whilst maintaining that “jazz is not...synonymous with ‘pop’ - although it was once the popular music of the world...drawn mainly from what are known as Afro-American sources”. (1975: ix) However, as Wall asserts that:

while musical styles designated as jazz have always related strongly to the African-American tradition, the place of jazz in popular music is complex...It was in the postwar years that jazz...became marginalised from the mainstream of popular music" with “this new form...marked by the idea of the heroic artist who dies for his art after being met by indifference from the world of commerce” (2013: 44).

Wall also highlights jazz music practice with an “emphasis on performance; improvisation; (and) collective music-making" together with ideas and assumptions of “interdependence and community; reaffirmation; (and) redefinition” (35). This is a thread that weaves throughout this study of the historic music practice of a youth jazz organisation in the West Midlands.

Despite the considerable role of recordings and others in conceiving views on jazz history, historians have been inclined to abstain from theorising the actual standing and purpose of these artifacts that together epitomise the primary evidence about jazz music. As Jazz scholar Jed Rasula makes clear, “With jazz there are only two kinds of documents: recordings, and testimony (either written or transcribed from oral report)”. (1995: 143) and he draws attention to the “perennial irony that we trace the legacy of an improvised music by listening to “definitive” performances on records”. (144). As jazz writer, broadcaster and musician Brian Priestley points out, the danger here is “the convenient...assumption that as soon as x made his first record, the world of jazz took immediate notice and amended its musical habits accordingly. (1988: ix) and in doing so playing to the trope of the jazz ‘genius’ and ignoring the also-rans of the music.

Nonetheless, as noted by musicologist and jazz scholar Darren Mueller (2024), recordings have continuing importance for both the musician and the musicologist in permitting access to earlier styles of performance and providing creative inspiration to new generations of musicians. It seems all too easy to rely upon the jazz canon as a way of

understanding the history of jazz. By focusing my attention on jazz in the English West Midlands in the 1970s, and upon an amateur youth jazz orchestra, I am working on jazz music-making that sits outside this tradition and canon.

Gabbard notes that “the term ‘the jazz canon’ was something of an oxymoron” and that “the creation of a jazz canon...is as self-defeating as it is inevitable” (1995: 2-3) He highlights an irony with this critical framing of jazz, because “the music almost from the beginning has placed itself at odds with the canonising language of high culture” (1-2). Instead, Gabbard argues for a move away from perceiving jazz history based upon the work of the jazz ‘genius’ towards an approach informed by cultural historians.

In more recent years, we have seen the development of jazz studies with:

...the conviction that...knowing about jazz and its cultural settings is part of what it means to be an educated woman or man in our time” leading to the pursuit “through dialogues between participants from a wide variety of disciplinary perspectives, (of) new methods of studying the history of jazz, its social contexts and broad cultural ramifications (O’Meally et al., 2004: 1-3).

Jazz historian and broadcaster Alyn Shipton (2001) concurs with Gabbard when he urges wariness in framing jazz history only in terms of mythology and whilst Rasula acknowledged that “tension between legend and fact is central to jazz” (1995:134), he also asks “what of the status of recordings? Are they truth or fiction?” (135) Is a recording from the 1920s “a conduit” allowing us to hear “how the music really sounded, or is it an obstacle?” (1995: 135). Rasula’s interest was in “what and how recordings testify” in terms of history (1995: 135). The caveat here being, as Priestley has suggested, critics and historians are “only writing about what has been recorded, implying that this was the only jazz worth writing about” (1988: ix).

Popular music scholar David Horn claimed that “among the many historical accounts of jazz, it is above all the discographies that convey most graphically and emphatically just how extensively performed and how diverse jazz has been since it arrived on the public scene in 1916-17”. (2002: 9). Whilst the relationship between the music industry and jazz has undoubtedly been essential in allowing the music to establish an identity, there is a conflict between the record as promotor of interest in the music and as a controller of the direction in which the music should go. It is no surprise, therefore, that jazz history is so often painted as a site for individual expression revolving around the honouring of legendary performers.

The multidisciplinary nature of new jazz studies allows for contributions from other fields to be entertained. One strand of research considers the significance of scenes, or sub-cultures, as a model for academic research on the production, performance, and reception of popular music. The focus being upon situations where performers, support facilities, and fans, come together to collectively create music for their own enjoyment.

Anthropologist Ruth Finnigan (1989) social anthropologist Sara Cohen (1991); musician and academic Helen Southall (2015); and popular music historian Michael Brocken (2016) have all investigated aspects of regional music scenes in Britain and I refer to their work later in this chapter.

However, these studies make no direct comment on the relationship of the music to questions of ethnicity and gender. These are commonplace absences in the earlier literature of British jazz histories and although, as I note elsewhere in this chapter and in Chapter Five, scholars have sought to rectify this omission, these important issues from cultural studies and jazz studies, are things that I address in my own study of the historic music practices of the youth orchestra in the West Midlands in the 1960s and 1970s.

Jazz studies has grown with and contributed to the oral history movement whilst moving from the informal interview to a scholarly undertaking. Once an amateur pursuit, over time, the key aspects of jazz oral history, including interviewing, archiving, preservation methods and the means of presentation have become aligned with the standards of trained oral historians. Culture and music historian Burton Peretti drew attention to “the intimate relationship between jazz music and oral testimony...rooted in African American cultural traditions” (2001: 583) and spawning the “as-told-to” autobiographies and later the jazz interview anthologies of oral histories, for instance Shapiro and Hentoff (2012) and Taylor (1977) contributed a series of ‘musician-to-musician interviews’ and in Britain photographer Val Wilmer (1977) also made a valuable contribution to the literature of jazz oral history. Later still, Ben Sidran’s “directed conversations” (1992) brought an academic rigour to his subject by providing a take on the oral history tradition from the perspective of a musician and educator.

Peretti observed that “While the traditional jazz interview is more casual in its method and limited in its goals, more formal jazz history projects have been undertaken, and they offer richer and more methodically crafted resources for scholars”. (2001: 586). I write further about the differing techniques involved in interviewing for oral history and for radio documentary in Chapters Three and Four.

As I indicated in the introduction, new jazz studies have also addressed the neglect and marginalisation of gender, led by the contributors to Hairston, Rustin and Tucker's (2008) important collection. Kristin McGee's contribution to that collection, along with her other studies of historically-located women's jazz groups have made a significant contribution to examining these hidden aspects of jazz history (McGee, 2011; 2015). This itself has stimulated more contemporary studies by, for example, Sarah Raine, of the continued marginalisation of women within jazz performances and the attempts in the Keychanges project to change the participation of women in key British jazz festivals (Raine, 2019, Raine et al., 2019, Strong and Raine, 2019). As an adjunct to my own doctoral research, I have also explored these areas within the MYJO, noting the lack of diversity during the long decade of the 1970s as "'100% White, 100% Male" (?), presenting at the Documenting Jazz conference and publishing the results of the research in an international journal (Musson, 2022; 2023).

The problem of jazz histories of Britain and British jazz in the 1960s and 1970s

The emphasis on early written histories of jazz was on American jazz. Possibly the earliest important texts about jazz in Britain were provided in music-lover Robert Mendl (1927) and S.R. Nelson (1934), following in the footsteps of fellow European commentators, Alfred Baresel's *Das Jazz-Buch* (Leipzig, 1925) and André Schaeffner and André Cœuroy's *Le Jazz* (Paris, 1926). It was not until the 1950s that, the jazz journalist and historian, E.J. Hobsbawm, writing under the pseudonym of Francis Newton, authored a book "about one of the most remarkable cultural phenomena of our century", opining that "jazz in society is what this book is about" (1958: 1) yet not abandoning the totalizing narrative of jazz 'genius' and 'hero' that had previously been established.

The key comprehensive examination of jazz in Britain was provided by writer and historian Jim Godbolt (1986; 1989). He makes clear that the music coming from America could not be disassociated with events in Britain. He includes aspects of British culture, such as the press and the BBC to provide a background against which the playing of jazz and jazz appreciation evolved. He also refers to the less enlightened racial attitudes of the time. However, most of these narratives in Godbolt's books focus on London, there being almost no mention of the music's history outside the UK's capital city and more specifically in the West Midlands conurbation and the production and reception of jazz in this region throughout the 1960s and 1970s. Subsequent publications have lengthened the

period of study, and extended into other areas of Britain, even if they keep a London focus. They include discussions of then contemporary scenes like Ian Carr's *Music Outside Carr* (1973), or histories beyond Godbolt's 1970 cut-off point, including Wickes (1999) and Heining (2012). The volume of academic works in this field has increased, notably with book-length studies by McKay (2005); Parsonage (2005); Moore (2007); and Toynbee et al. (2014). The latter includes an interesting study of jazz in Cardiff. I examine the extant literature on British provincial jazz later in this chapter. The change of emphasis advanced by the new jazz studies scholars was furthered in Britain by media studies scholar George McKay with his investigation of the "cultural politics of jazz in Britain" and "the ways the cultures of jazz have been used or understood by musicians, critics, and enthusiasts...in British social and political realms" (2005: p.x). It is this thread about jazz, its cultural settings and interdisciplinary discourse that is weaved throughout my study of the origins and historic music practices of the MYJO. In McKay's words, I aim "to focus on a specific geographical and cultural cluster of dialogues" (2005: p.x).

Subsequent studies, including Wickes, (1999); Shipton, (2001); and Heining, (2012), have all argued that the 1960s and 1970s was a period when jazz in the UK developed a distinctly British character to its sound. Jazz historian David Boulton maintains that "there was, very little in the way of British jazz, as the purist understands the term, before 1943. But it is indefensible, sticking even to the narrowest terms of reference, to claim that there was none at all". Boulton was writing about jazz *in* Britain and points out that "there is a lot of difference between that and British jazz" and he maintains that "there was before the '40s, nothing in the jazz line that was distinctively British" (1958: ix). However, this is problematic, as it is difficult to define precisely what characteristics of the music make it sound 'British'. Parsonage (2005) postulates a contrary proposition arguing that 'British jazz' can be identified as far back as the 1930s.

Nevertheless, the stories of British jazz most often locate the music of the 1960s within what is seen as a time of innovation within British culture more generally and, according to musicologist Irene Morra "In the 1960s...music established itself as a dominant signifier of contemporary British identity and cultural accomplishment" and she "identifies two dominant, conflicting constructions around popular music: music as the voice of an indigenous English 'folk', and music as the voice of a re-emergent British Empire" (2013: i) Wall and Long recognise that the 2005 BBC documentary *Jazz Britannia* "explicitly proposes that jazz in the United Kingdom took on qualities that could be understood as

distinctly British” (2009: 149). In their own words “the way that (the *Jazz Britannia* series) produces a totalizing narrative in which the primary material is ordered to tell a predetermined story about innovations and an identifiably British form of jazz” (145). They go on to argue that the series “speaks to a celebratory story of native genius” (159) and cite jazz writer Richard Williams’ (2005) critique of *Jazz Britannia*, as arguing that there was “no such thing as a native sound” and that “the very best of British jazz seldom shows any sign of overt “Britishness”, or of any other distinctive sound or attitude” (2009: 149-150).

Subsequently, musician and researcher Tom Sykes considered the notion of “Britishness” in British jazz and argued that we should:

...acknowledge and celebrate the innovative approach of many musicians of this period working in Britain, some of whom may have consciously been searching for something different from an American be-bop/postbop (or even free jazz) sound, while being cautious about claiming the existence of definable Britishness in their music” (2017: 188).

He goes on to claim that while “some of the innovatory aspects of the music contained ‘Britishness’ in a cultural sense, being directly influenced by British culture...their jazz cannot be completely separated from its American ancestry” (188).

Almost to reinforce Sykes’ point, the narrator of *Jazz Britannia*, referring to the jazz of the 1960s and early 1970s states that: “out of all the musical fashion and turmoil of the sixties and early seventies, British jazz had emerged with not one voice but many” (2005). This assertion has veracity when considering the work of the likes of Michael Garrick, Stan Tracey, Mike Westbrook, Michael Gibbs and John Surman, all of whom have (or had) distinctly individual voices but no one individual could be said to have alone laid claim to a ‘British sound’, thus supporting Sykes’ assertion regarding “the innovative approach of many musicians of this period”.

In identifying a particularly British form of jazz, Wall and Long note that *Jazz Britannia* cites pianist Stan Tracey’s *Jazz Suite Inspired by Dylan Thomas’ Under Milk Wood* (1965) as “the pivotal moment” (2009: 150). However, it seems all too convenient to ascribe ‘originality’ to the inspiration provided by one of the nation’s best-known poets, who, interestingly decried any notion of ‘Welshness’ in his poetry and the oft-mentioned sound of Bobby Wellins’ saxophone tone evoking the sound of the pipes of his youth in Scotland. The significance since accorded this recording seems surprising as the musicians involved simply treated the event as just another recording session. This is an opinion confirmed by

Terrence Stamp's narration in the *Jazz Britannia* series when he says that "Stan Tracey and Bobby Wellins had stumbled upon the future of British jazz".

As I have made clear, my study privileges the voices of provincial musicians who are so often overlooked in subsisting histories of jazz and, in the terms of independent scholar Hillary Moore established "a space for previously unheard jazz voices to create an alternative narrative of Britishness" (2017: 5). Interestingly, Moore cites as examples the English trumpeter and cornetist Ken Colyer, Jamaican saxophonist Joe Harriott and the all-black big band Jazz Warriors. The latter two having also been given pride of place in *Jazz Britannia* and, like the BBC documentary, Moore privileges London-based musicians over those based elsewhere.

While the *Jazz Britannia* narrator rather despondently states "by the late 1970s no one was listening", perhaps it is more accurate to say that it was the mass media (possibly with the exception of radio) that was no longer listening. The musicians working in the modern jazz arena at the time continued to ply their trade, forming musician-owned record labels independently of the major labels. Cadillac, Ogun and Steam were just three of several catering for the modern jazz market, whilst others catered for the more mainstream and traditional areas of the music.

Indeed, in the twenty first-century, the record industry has been pivotal in restoring interest in British modern jazz of the period beginning with a compilation CD of music from the earlier period, released by DJ and radio presenter Gilles Peterson *Impressed* (2002). This was followed by reissues from the likes of Neil Ardley (2006) and Canadian-born, but long time UK resident, Kenny Wheeler (2010) featured on an album by the John Dankworth Orchestra. The major-owned Decca label has issued a further compilation of jazz from the period 1965-1972. Add to all of this activity the increasing propensity of musicians to make available their own private archive material, much of it now being released on the fledgling not-for-profit Jazz in Britain label. It will though, come as no surprise that almost all of this activity centres upon the work of the 'jazz greats' of the period and upon London as the centre of British jazz culture.

In terms of regional activity, there is one label having a focus on music outside the United Kingdom's capital city: Jazzman Records released two compilation CDs, the first being of particular relevance to this study. *A New Life* (2015) comprises "private, independent and

youth jazz in Great Britain 1966-1990” with a second volume released in 2018 covering “independent and regional jazz in Great Britain 1968-1988”.

The problem of provincial jazz

As I have already shown, research into British regional jazz is scarce. However, it is not an empty area of study and there is much to draw upon in the work that has been done.

Southall’s doctoral thesis utilises the tools of oral history in collecting personal memories of jazz, dance bands and big bands in and around Chester between the 1930s and 1970s in revealing “a subjective ‘player’s eye view’ of the Chester music scene during the period” (2015: 6). She contextualises this study by employing local and historical sources. Inspired by research into local music by Finnegan (1989) and Cohen (1991), Southall enhances her oral history research methods by deploying ideas from other disciplines, including geography, economics, and sociology to enrich her work and in so doing acknowledging that earlier work in popular music and jazz studies had privileged familiar names and places.

Finnigan (1989) also influences my own approach. She was involved in music as both a consumer and participant, although her objects of study were amateur operatic societies, brass bands, rock groups, church choirs and a classical orchestra in the English town of Milton Keynes in the early 1980s. The same approach to uncovering the structure of the unrecognised practices of local music-making can be transferred to a history of jazz in the English West Midlands. As I have previously noted and as Finnigan avers, in playing to the trope of the jazz ‘genius’ we underestimate the activities of these regional musicians.

Like Southall and fellow anthropologist Finnigan, Sara Cohen (1991) is interested in music’s performing rituals, its symbolic occupation of local territory and organisation of social ties, gathering data from systematic observation of and conversation with local rock bands in Liverpool between 1985-1986.

My study of the DIY music practices of the MYJO has similarities with the studies undertaken by both Finnigan and Cohen. For example, I focus on young individuals and groups operating at grassroots level. At this early stage in their careers, many of my participants did not consider themselves to be either amateurs or professionals, but notwithstanding this, they invested energy and commitment in their music-making. A collaborative environment was reported by participants with some also noting a competitive atmosphere.

Finnigan and Cohen provided major anthropological contributions to the empirical study of popular music and youth, both bringing to the forefront and describing events and practices that were widely taken for granted in their social and cultural contexts, to the extent that they were rendered invisible to insiders and outsiders alike. In *Hidden Musicians* (1989) Finnigan argued that local musicians took their practices for granted, to the extent that they themselves may be unaware of other forms of music-making taking place simultaneously, leading her to conclude that amateur music activity was ‘hidden’, but not secret.

Similarly, Brocken focused on Liverpool when he produced his histories of that city’s popular music scenes during the period between the 1930s and 1970s. He addressed ‘scenes’ involving dance bands, traditional jazz, folk music, country and western, and rhythm and blues including looking at “partially hidden key places and individuals”, maintaining that “oral histories can challenge the conventional historiographies of the...self-appointed elite” (2010: 81)

I draw attention here to two studies which have extended such approaches to a local jazz scene, both focused on Birmingham. Wall and Barber (2015) highlight the social geography and politics of the places and people in the city. Although they look at twenty-first century jazz, and at graduates of university jazz programmes, their emphasis echoes and explicitly applies many of the approaches of Cohen, Finnegan and Southall to a practical study of jazz culture in the major city of the English West Midlands. Cravinho and Homer examine “fragments of a local jazz scene through photographs” (2020: 1). Ethnomusicologist, Cravinho, undertook semi-structured interviews with participants and Homer, a freelance photographer, undertook photographic sessions. These photographs allowed the participants to be viewed as people and not simply as musicians illuminating “how musicians view themselves, the local jazz scene, and how they negotiate their lives while expanding their music” (2)

The three problems in jazz history that I have summarised in this chapter have informed my own approach to producing a history of a localised jazz community in the English West Midlands. They provide cautionary insights about the dangers of relying on standard approaches together with ideas to develop in new jazz histories. They helped me structure the approaches I took in reflecting upon the way I ordered my earlier programme on British jazz drummer Tony Levin; and the development of my doctoral research productions based upon my interview with British jazz bass player Ron Mathewson; on the

Birmingham Jazz Festival, and further work on Tony Levin; the interview with jazz studies professor, Tony Whyton; as well as the MYJO radio-style documentary and the subsequent iteration producing “drop-in” radio features and podcasts.

However, as I have set out in the introduction, I have tried to avoid the totalising and great men narratives, and the marginalisation of British regional jazz, not just through the subject of my documentary but also by using a developed idea of music culture by applying the idea of ethnomusicking. I now turn to a detailed discussion of the way this idea emerges from the application of Christopher Small’s idea of musicking, and the ethnographic concerns of cultural studies and ethnomusicology.

Chapter Three: Ethnomusicking

In Chapter Two I touched on the multidisciplinary nature of ‘The New Jazz Studies’ in allowing for the widening of the focus of investigation to incorporate ideas and notions from other fields, particularly employing approaches from oral history and ideas of ethnography from cultural studies and ethnomusicology. In this chapter I investigate the value of applying a specific approach that allows us to focus on activity in jazz music cultures. I investigate two key areas. First, I explore the portmanteau concept of ‘ethnomusicking’ which, as I established in the introduction, both signals my debt to musicologist Christopher Small (1996) and extends it to the study of music cultures of the past and links it to analytical tools derived from cultural studies ethnography and ethnomusicology. These provide particularly valuable resources to highlight a method for examining the music practices of the MYJO as a ‘ritual in social space’. Secondly, I examine how key ideas from ethnomusicology may be deployed in the creation of a jazz history.

Ethnomusicking

I am not the first to use the idea of ethnomusicking. Ethnomusicologist Sandra Kirkwood’s (2010) research “revealed that people have had varying levels of access and engagement in music making that is related to their music heritage and culture”, and arguing that there was “no suitable terminology to describe this active cultural engagement”, and thus proposed the term ‘ethnomusicking’ (2010: 1).

As Kirkwood explains:

when ‘ethno’ is added to ‘musicking’ the term can refer to how people engage with music in a way that is meaningful and relevant to the socio-cultural situation, place, and people’s values and beliefs. Ethnomusicking can relate to people’s own ethnic heritage and culture, or it could refer to active engagement with the music heritage and culture of a particular place – perhaps the place where they live, work or play. ‘Ethno’ introduces the concept of meaning and the emotional social and spiritual aspects of musicking that I contend may be related to well-being (2010: 2).

By emphasising a verb form of music as Small does, I am ensuring my documentary history of a youth jazz orchestra does not fall foul of the problems with jazz histories I identified in Chapter Two, and I pick up on the positive work I reviewed in that chapter from Finnegan (1989), Cohen (1991), Southall (2015), Wall and Barber (2015) and

Cravinho and Homer (2020). To different extents all these studies use a concept of ethnomusic, although this is most explicitly apparent in Cravinho's contribution. Specifically, I see ethnomusic as the distinctive cultural dimensions of musical practices as used across ethnomusicology and popular music studies that draw on cultural studies.

I employ approaches to the study of post-war youth subcultures derived from sociological inquiry and employing methods of investigation associated with ethnographic anthropology and associated with what is called 'The Birmingham School'. Covering research approaches developed at the Birmingham University's Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) (see Andrews 2020). In undertaking this investigation of the MYJO, I conceive of youth orchestras as a sub-set of a larger 'parent' culture and which whilst smaller, more localised, and differentiated in terms of structure, shares some common attributes. Of course, a youth orchestra has a 'parent' culture in terms of a wider world of British jazz culture, as well as the direct parental roles of the adults running the orchestras. In adopting such an approach, I note the criticisms of the Centre's emphasis upon class, an exclusion of women's perspectives and a portrayal of marginalised youth cultures as being engaged in conflict with a restrictive parental culture and this is something which is echoed as late as 2005 with the *Jazz Britannia* television series to which I refer in detail in Chapter Five. I have explicitly addressed these in my study even though they are issues of absence rather than presence in the youth orchestra ethnomusicking.

'Jazz culture', paraphrasing historian Anton Tantner (1994: 22), includes the music, its styles, and musicians. Their ethnomusicking activities are identified in the literature as including attending clubs, writing and reading specialist press, and defining what jazz is, sometimes from a factional position. In setting these ideas of a jazz culture in the wider context of ethnographic approaches, I use the rest of this chapter to discuss, first, how Small's idea can be applied to the music culture of youth jazz orchestras of the past; and second, how some key ideas from anthropology can be deployed in making a new approach to jazz history.

Ethnomusicking the historical music practice of the Midland Youth Jazz Orchestra 1960-1980

In undertaking this study of the early years of the MYJO I have deployed some of the ideas of Christopher Small in support of his notion of ‘musicking’ and in so doing present my own hybrid theory of ‘ethnomusicking’ the historical music practice of the MYJO in the 1960s and 1970s. The musical performance of the MYJO, like any other kind of “artistic” performance:

requires of its participants a physical and social setting, a mode of dress and behaviour that is not merely specific to itself but is also as appropriate as possible to the occasion and to the felt identity of those taking part”. (1998: 109).

Small suggests, with his focus on classical music, that the:

musical works that are performed in the concert hall are...stories that we tell ourselves about ourselves and...partake of the notion of myth” and that “in taking part in their performance...we are exploring, affirming and celebrating concepts of relationships that we feel to be desirable. (93).

Small goes on to consider the “nature of myth and ritual and their relation to those activities we call the arts” and it is these “related concepts: ritual, myth, metaphor, art – and emotion” that I have applied in investigating the historic music practice of the MYJO. Small points out that these concepts are “all concerned with relationships, with the ways in which we relate to one another (and) to the various social groups to which we belong”. (94). I apply these as methodological frames, discussing them further in Chapter Six as method and Chapter Seven as findings about the Orchestra.

In Chapter Eight I set out the results of the youth orchestra's cultural practices in terms of several of Small's key ideas. These include the music-making that Small calls artistic performance, by reference to:

- 1) Two forms of relationships:
 - the relationship between the sounds that the musicians are making, both of their own initiative and under direction.
 - the relationship between those that are taking part in music-making.
- 2) Ritual - applied as a form of organized behaviour empowering musicians to affirm, explore and celebrate their ideas of how they relate to the organization and each other. When shared, these ideas can define a community and can be expressed as:
 - Affirmation of community – “This is who we are”.
 - Exploration – trying on of identities to see who we think we are.
 - Celebration – recognised in the knowledge of an identity not only possessed but also shared with others.

In enacting the ritual, relationships are formed between the musicians, allowing them to learn about the relationships whilst experiencing them. They can explore, affirm, and celebrate the relationship by becoming emotionally involved in their actions. This emotional involvement allows the musicians to feel at one with the relationship(s) created by the ritual.

Small is particularly eloquent in his particular take on ritual and it is worth quoting his words directly:

ritual can be thought of in two ways...the first is that to take part in a ritual is to explore, to affirm, and to celebrate the participants' concept of the relationships of their world, or of part of it...it takes place in the language...of gesture...secondly, ritual can be seen as the acting- out of a myth...a story that tells how things came to relate as they do, and thus how they properly *ought* to relate

All musicking is serious musicking...and all musical events must ultimately be judged on their ritual efficacy, on the subtlety and comprehensiveness with which they empower those taking part to explore, affirm, and celebrate their ideas of ideal relationships. Within each tradition, each style, there will be some performances where this is done well and others in which it is done badly. Only those who take the time to immerse themselves in the tradition, which means the community, will be able to know which is which (Small, 1996: 12).

A musical performance is a ritual whose relationships mirror, and allow us to explore, the relationships of our world as we image them ideally to be (8).

In the enactment of ritual it is the *making*, the *wearing*, the *exhibiting* the *dancing*, the *playing*, the *singing*, in a word the *performing* that is valued, not the objects themselves. They are of value only in so far as they serve the ritual purpose (6).

As Small has made plain, those who live on the margins of society invent their own rituals to keep alive a sense of who they are, where they belong and what they think the relationships of the world ought to be and to pass on that sense to a new generation.

Equipped with Small's concept of musicking it is possible to deal with music in its full social-cultural significance. In this respect, music is not simply a collection of specifically musical practices but also a community of practice that affirms our social habits and helps us to transcend these habits through exploring and celebrating new relationships. Rather than taking music as something that people do, Small suggests that it is one of the most important ways of living as a human being, comparable to verbal communication.

'Communities of practice' may be employed as a means of looking at the notion of taking part through making music together and as a mechanism for establishing points of identification. Such communities provide an interdisciplinary analytical framework capable of examining how joint enterprises that are built and experienced through relationships of mutual engagement gradually produce a shared repertoire.

A band of musicians can be considered a community of practice, as it is a group characterised by practices that reflect both the pursuit of a joint enterprise - that of making music - and the attendant social relations that derive from people working together towards a common end, as well as the shared repertoire developing from this pursuit. Communities of practice are about learning, being together developing identities and being human. For educational theorist Etienne Wenger-Trayner, communities of practice were "groups of people who share a concern or passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly" (2015:2). Wenger-Trayner saw members of the communities of practice as not simply a community of people with a shared interest, but as practitioners developing "a shared repertoire of resources: experiences, stories, tools, ways of addressing recurring problems- in short a shared practice" (2). From an ethnomusical perspective, a community of practice can be interpreted as 'making music together'.

Here, the focus is on performativity and reception; an activity through which we bond with one another and by which we explore our environment and our own identities in relation to a group. Music is also a community of practice that allows the exploration and celebration of new relationships. We can see this in anthropologist Robert Stebbins' notion that the 'jazz community' is a space where the jazz musician's task is "to create jazz rather than define it" (1964: 10).

Small has been remarkably influential in a range of studies beyond the western classical music traditions of musicking that he mapped out and into radio. For instance, Popular music scholar and ethnomusicologist Andrew Mall (2018) argues that participating in community radio is a constituent component of musicking, especially in capitalist contexts, in which listeners are often reduced to mere consumers of instead of active participants in musical life. What matters for Small is that radio enables the development of human relationships through the musicking it facilitates, what matters for Finnigan (2007: 113) is that radio provides a constituent component of local music's infrastructure upon which community can be built.

Radio serves as a productive site of ethnomusicological study in its capacities as mediator, disseminator, and disciplinary mouthpiece. Radio broadcasters work in collaboration with ethnomusicologists commissioning, archiving, and broadcasting field recordings, but there are few ethnomusicologies of radio. Western argues that "histories of radio and ethnomusicology are bound up together" and views radio as "an ethnographic site" (2018: 255). Ethnomusicological recordings allow for the possibility of 'spectacular' broadcasts. (Pellizzi, 1968) and ethnomusicological fieldwork has been financed by broadcasters (Arnberg, 1997) and (Reigle, 2008) which Western contends has informed the contents of field recordings and sound archives. Western is at pains to stress that "radio and ethnomusicology have always existed in imbrication" (2018: 260) and cites radio producers working as field recordists and public ethnomusicologists.

Importantly for this study, Western credits ethnomusicologist Philip Bohlman with the assertion that "radio plays an active role in producing sonic citizenships, in the sense of articulating which voices get into the nation and which do not (Bohlman, 2001: 6)

Ethnomusicologist Lonan O'Briain drew on "archival records, radio guides and interview data" to uncover the story of the first all-Vietnamese ensemble to appear regularly on Radio Hanoi, often performing live on air to a radio audience across French Indochina, thus exemplifying "how radio was used to amplify the reach of vernacular forms of musical cosmopolitanism" (2018: 265).

Fellow ethnomusicologist Lucy Duran, whilst referring specifically to CD production, points out that an academic producing "non-print output such as an audio music production soon discovers that text-based publication remains the medium that is most privileged in research evaluation, even in the field of music and ethnomusicology"

(2011:245). It's a proposition of my own research project that radio production needs to take its place with print output as a key vehicle for research investigation and dissemination.

Deploying key ideas from ethnomusicology in a jazz history

As I have shown in the previous chapter, the interview has been the traditional method by which jazz journalists and historians gather research material. More recently the oral history document has grown to be recognised as a tool allowing for musicians to be able to tell a more nuanced story of their histories. Whilst oral historian Chris Clark recalls the oft recounted trope where “historians have applied western criteria to the music by lavishing extravagant praise on the few at the expense of the many by establishing a pantheon of heroes and masterpieces” (1990: 66), he also notes photographer and writer Val Wilmer as “holding the belief that ‘stories’ of the lesser-known musicians’ are ‘just as interesting, often more so, than those of the people who usually get all of the coverage’”. (1990:71)

Works of jazz scholarship from across musicological disciplines regularly employ methods from ethnography and history and often seek to map out the connections between musical sound and music as a constituent of, for example, race, gender and nation. Whilst ethnomusicologist Gabriel Solis asserts that “it was relatively easy to delineate jazz scholarship into historical, ethnographic, and theoretical camps”, now “historians are nearly as likely to interview musicians as are ethnographers, and with the “new musicological turn” we are all as likely to be interested in what jazz musicians and fans think about what they are doing in making and listening to music as we are in what, where, when, and how they have done so” (2014: 1). (See, for example, Cravinho and Homer, 2020).

Whilst many ethnomusicologists conduct fieldwork and write about the ethnographic present, historians of popular music, work with the recordings, manuscripts, and publications to be found in libraries and archives. However, more typically, ethnomusicology concerns itself with ‘modern music history’ which is written from the perspective of ‘historical ethnomusicology’, with the study beginning in the ‘ethnographic present’. In the words of ethnomusicologist Timothy Rice, the researcher “excavate(s) the past to illuminate the present life of a musical tradition, and they show how people in the culture construct their own music histories” (2014:48).

It is probably in fellow ethnomusicologist Steven Feld's (2012) work that we find the strongest link to a worked-out example of musicking. His work included elements of memoir, biography, history and ethnography in recording a story of experimental jazz in Ghana which pushed existing boundaries and genre definitions. He did this by allowing his participants to speak for themselves, whilst himself occupying the multiple roles of documentary film maker, jazz performer, music producer and anthropologist. For Feld it was important to foster a cooperative relationship with the musicians to build a unique dialogue with them.

Bohlman viewed ethnographic fieldwork as a means of permitting the ethnomusicologist to differentiate the many different histories produced by various ways of remembering and "render the voices of the past audible in different ways" (2008:256). He claimed that musical practices were frequently central to identity and the knowledge of self, especially when groups must make the decisions necessary for coherent performance together, relying upon a shared knowledge making performance possible. Thus, we understand how music has historically served as a means of knowing the past.

Following Bohlman, there are three aspects of the past which can be informed by ethnomusicology:

- The material objects that were created in the past that are capable of being analysed.
- The relationship of oral histories to the past.
- The relationship of the researcher to this past.

For this study, examining the historical music practices of the regional youth jazz movement, these are key considerations.

The advent of fieldwork as a research method in the social sciences, with fieldnotes, accounts of participant observation and comprehensive ethnographies, allowed the scholar to make contact with the present, providing a framework for the narratives reported by the fieldworker.

Bohlman designates a space of 'boundaries' within which cultures locate themselves. The culture within these boundary spaces "becomes fluid, ephemeral and contested". History ceases to be "what happened" and being capable of being repeatedly voiced. History becomes a disputed space where "fragments of the past remain in the everyday of the present" (2008:249). with these fragments arising from different types of remembering. These boundaries become the 'field' - "a space allowing one to experience and represent

musical practices that are not simply inscriptions of the historical past or aural events of the immediate present” (249).

Ethnomusicologist David Borgo (2010) in aligning himself with Bohlman, considered that musickers continually engage with boundaries, and musicking across societies and cultures serves to mediate interactions with other people and to establish self-identity in relationship to a group. Such boundaries are capable of change and are semi-permeable, allowing for ‘border-crossing’ where musicians, individuals or groups integrate different stylistic elements into their music or across regional or cultural boundaries. A further type of boundary may be in respect of the racist, sexist and historicist tropes that may stereotype the practices and identities of musicians or restrict ways in which their careers or music might develop.

For a jazz performance, engaging with boundaries may be observed in the interactions between the musicians and their instruments, between the musicians themselves, between musicians and a shared history or tradition and between musicians and audience members and listeners.

The study of jazz has been a constituent of ethnomusicology since the 1940s. As I have said, and show in chapter two, jazz studies are increasingly interdisciplinary, which “allows for a broader conversation to take place between jazz scholars of various sorts and between scholars and practitioners” (Solis, 2014:1).

The roots of a jazz ethnomusicology are located in the USA with an article by anthropologist and ethnomusicologist Richard Waterman (1948) and later, with passing references to the music by anthropologist Alan Merriam (1955:32) and journalist and author Ed Cray (1961: 10) However, it was not until the 1980s that jazz began to be treated as a primary area of study. Beyond this point, Solis credits Berliner (1994) as contributing “the first full-length monograph in the discipline focused solely on jazz” (2014: 1) and signposting the route for future academic texts, for example, ethnomusicologists Ingrid Monson (1996) and latterly, Travis Jackson (2012).

The 2000s have introduced further studies of jazz in ethnomusicology with some including an historical element and some studies looking at the familiar trope surrounding the music of canonical figures and recordings from jazz’s past. (Pond, 2005) and (Solis, 2009) Solis sees these also as oral histories “and both engage...with the ...field of memory studies” (2014:3) He also recalls Merriam’s “basic premise of ethnomusicology...that work in the

discipline could - and should - show the ways that music in culture is made up of mutually interfacing feedback loops between the domains of sound, concept, and behaviour” (1964:35). Whilst I have concentrated on texts emanating mostly from North America, in chapter two I have written about the contribution of British scholars to jazz studies and ethnomusicology, (see for example Finnigan, (2007); (Cohen, 2007).

In terms of this study of the music practice of the youth jazz orchestra in the West Midlands in the 1960s and 1970s the focal point of ethnography is on exploring participant’s experiences, to gain an understanding of the roles of musicians within their larger culture, how they make music and what meanings they assign to music. I have previously mentioned the principal research techniques that are commonly employed by ethnomusicologists when undertaking fieldwork, including participant observation and interviewing. These methods are often supplemented with the making of field notes, corresponding with participants, and creating audio recordings and may be further complimented by deploying elements of historical musicology including undertaking archival research.

Often, ethnomusicologists immerse themselves in the culture of which they are writing by learning to play or sing the music that they are studying to allow them to gain a greater knowledge of a musical practice. However, musical acuity is not always a prerequisite. Extending Rice’s definition of what it means to be “musical” being “the capacity of humans to create, perform, organize cognitively, react physically and emotionally to, and interpret the meanings of humanly organized sounds.” (2014: 1) and adopting the notion of musicking postulated by Small that to music is to “take part, in any capacity, in a musical performance, whether by performing, by listening, by rehearsing or practicing, by providing material for performance (what is called composition) or by dancing” (1998: 9) it is possible to open the field of ethnomusicology to those who may not previously have been included.

My own approach, even before this doctoral research, was to involve myself in radio programme making, including making jazz radio programmes for 102.5 The ‘Bridge and Birmingham Jazz Radio community radio stations. As I have argued earlier, this activity is specifically one of ethnomusicking. By focusing on the cultural, the active verb of music-making as a broad, collective activity, we match a research strategy and a form of community-orientated radio to a musical practice which is itself a working culture.

In writing these three initial chapters, drawing on a systematic understanding of radio studies, jazz history and ethnographic approaches, I have not only shown the similarities of debates about the limitations of existing research, but also the potential that a synthesised research method can be created out of these disciplines. Before going on to detail the way I developed my own approach in Chapter Six, I pause to explore the outcomes of media histories of British jazz and existing examples of oral histories of British jazz in Chapters Four and Five.

Chapter Four: Extant Oral Jazz Histories

I have already located my practice-based research work within radio studies and jazz studies in Chapters One and Two. In the last chapter, I set out how I have applied ideas from musicology, cultural studies and ethnomusicology to ensure my history focuses on social practice and avoids the problems that have beset traditional jazz histories. The challenge, though, is to make these broad theoretical ideas into practical approaches to radio production.

Like most radio documentarians I have used interview as one of my key methods of production. However, as will be apparent in my reflexive autoethnography in Chapter Eight, and in the iterative documentaries, I have approached radio interviewing informed by more academic issues of ethnographic interview and traditions of oral history. As I briefly indicated in Chapter Two, oral histories represented a key phase in jazz historiography and there is a substantial body of work in print and audio form available. In this chapter I focus on oral histories that are accessible as audio recordings. One of the most valuable aspects of the audio oral histories for this study is that they provide access to both the questions asked and the disposition of the oral historian, as well as the answers of the interview subjects.

I start this chapter with an overview of discussions about the role of oral histories and ethnographic interview in capturing what I have termed ethnomusicking in different contexts. I follow this by a discussion of how we might reimagine the radio documentary interview as jazz oral history or ethnographic interview. Finally, I review two oral histories that form part of the British Library's *An Oral history of Jazz in Britain* collection. I focus specifically on the interviews with key BBC jazz programme makers, Charles Chilton (interviewed by Jim Godbault, 1989) and Leslie Perowne (interviewed by Christopher Clarke, 1990)¹, applying a range of issues raised by my earlier discussions. I complete this part of the chapter with a reflection on my own interview with Prof Tony Whyton² for a documentary I undertook before the commencement of my doctoral studies. This

¹ These interviews are usually available at the British Library website, but are not currently available. A link to them can be found in the list of oral histories in the forward matter.

² Author of 'Wilkie's Story: Dominant Histories, Hidden Musicians, and Cosmopolitan Connections in Jazz' (2018)

constitutes the first of my reflexive pieces on my place in the practice work which forms the core of this research project.

Oral histories and ethnographic interview to capture jazz ethnomusicking

Since the mid-1960s the collection of oral testimony as an ancillary technique of historical study has expanded rapidly. Examples from jazz studies and histories include, in America, The William Ransom Hogan Jazz Archive at Tulane University and The Institute of Jazz Studies at Rutgers State University of New Jersey, who both hold extensive oral history interview tapes. Whilst in Britain the British Library National Sound Archive is home to the *Oral History of Jazz in Britain* collection and the *Women in Jazz Archive* (formerly known as The Women's Jazz Archive) houses the *Women in Jazz Oral History Collection*.

There are differences between informal interviews and oral histories. Issues concerning the preparation, questions to be asked, and the ultimate form of the interview all define whether the interview constitutes an oral history. As Peretti has argued, “since they are primarily advocates of the music, interviewers in the jazz community rarely challenge musicians to dig deeper into their thoughts and experiences” (2001: 585) and crucially, “they rarely analyse critically the circumstances surrounding their interviews and the veracity of the musicians’ statements” (2001: 585) and thus they lack the necessary academic rigour. There is a distinction between the jazz interview and jazz oral history projects that are more formal in structure and are undertaken and housed in academic institutions and thus are available for use by subsequent scholars. In Peretti’s words “historians should be drawn to the phenomenology of jazz oral histories becauseinterviews with musicians have long been as central to the jazz community as the music itself” (2001: 593).

However, there are a number of sceptical voices raising criticisms of the oral historian. These include the accusation that the medium “cannot rank with an authentic diary, with a contemporary stock report, or with an eyewitness account transcribed on the day of the event” (Bornet, 1955: 244). As Southall avers, such histories will be “laden with quantities of factual errors, confusions, and ideological or other forms of bias” (2015: 11) leading historians to be suspicious of the accounts “in favour of apparently more objective archival material” (2015: 11) leading to useful material being missed. She proposes “a form of historical enquiry which, rather than ignoring these issues, makes a positive virtue of them;

that is, oral history.” (2015: 11). I maintain that in some cases, oral testimony can be more accurate and detailed than written testimony.

Oral historians Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (2006) support Southall’s contention, arguing that oral history has given a voice to aspects of historical experience which might be missing from other sources and cite ‘domestic work or family life’ as examples, to which I consider should be added an examination of the processes of jazz performance in the West Midlands.

Jazz is primarily an oral tradition. In place of written texts, reliance is placed upon participant’s memories together with sound recordings. The genesis of jazz oral history lay with Alan Lomax who, in 1938, approached pianist Jelly Roll Morton to record his recollections together with musical illustrations for the Library of Congress.

Early historians lacked a formal training in oral history techniques and conducted interviews on a more casual basis. Subsequently, two genres of jazz writing evolved from these more informal interviews: autobiographies and the compendium of musicians’ recollections. Jazz critics later developed the jazz interview anthology, for example Shapiro and Hentoff (1955) and later Sidran (1992) who, as a musician, radio presenter and academic himself, was able, via his ‘directed conversations’ to interrogate his subjects from the viewpoint of an insider. The 1970s saw a resurgence of the autobiographical genre and over time, literature became bolstered by filmed interviews with musicians, Bach (1994) and Burns (2000). Director Ken Burns’ epic nineteen-hour television documentary included interviews with musicians, critics, and historians. Although his work has merit, by relying on the content of past informal interviews and enthusiast’s literature it is also guilty of following the ‘great men’ trope. Jazz is a collective endeavour and yet all too often, historians praise the few at the expense of the many thus establishing a hierarchy of stars and masterworks. This reliance upon the retelling of history via LP recordings and interviews reveals little that is new. Oral history, by giving voice to those who may otherwise have been forgotten, allows for the possibility of a more nuanced story to be told. I explained in Chapter Two how jazz studies had grown with and contributed to the oral history movement. In Britain valuable oral histories texts had been produced by Wilmer, (1977) Pearson, (2004) and Horne (2004).

Oral history as a method of historical research has allowed the experiences of people and groups who may otherwise have remained hidden from history to be acknowledged. In my

study of the youth jazz movement in the West Midlands, I am uncovering not so much a 'hidden' history, but rather an 'overlooked' history, in the sense that their voices have been bypassed in many of the academic texts that currently exist. Hearing the human voice allows for an additional layer of context to be revealed that otherwise would have been undiscovered by a reliance upon written transcripts alone.

My investigation into the musical practices of former members of the MYJO takes the form of a community oral history project. Whilst such initiatives typically take place with a group of people who live in a defined locale, historian Linda Shopes sees "community" as also referring to a "shared social identity" (2002: 588) and thus, I consider erstwhile members of the MYJO 'community' as falling within this definition. However, as Shopes acknowledges, it is perfectly possible to combine these two meanings of the term and in so doing I focus on former Orchestra member's experience in the West Midlands region.

These histories are subjective as they are personal accounts and reflect the personal opinions of participants. Whilst I use oral history interviews as a primary source, I deploy archival research methods to verify information to produce an objective narrative of events or a comprehensive history of a place.

Yet developmental psychologist, Robert Atkinson cautions that "an interview is not a conversation" (1998: 32). An interview is often more structured with a clear beginning and should allow for the asking of questions in greater detail than would normally be the case in a conversation. He continues "An interview has a mode of its own that allows for, on the one hand, far greater depth and, on the other, an explanation of the obvious" (1998: 32).

By contrast, anthropologist and ethnographic researcher James Spradley identified the ethnographic interview as a sharing "many features with the 'friendly conversation'" which might take place between people who have known each other for many years and who may share a common interest and "into which the researcher slowly introduces new elements to assist informants to respond as informants". (2016: 58)

Atkinson believes that "an individual life, and the role it plays in the larger community is best understood through story" (1998: 7) and what is in effect a 'life story'. This invites a discussion of what constitutes an oral history and what constitutes a life story. Atkinson contends that the difference resides in the scope and emphasis, with an oral history focusing on a specific aspect of a person's life, perhaps their working life and recollections of specific events, issue, time, or place. When the oral interview extended beyond this to

encompass a person's entire life, we are in the realms of a life story. In Atkinson's view "the life history and life story are very similar in their approach and what they cover, but the specific information sought, and the final product can be very different" (1998: 4). In my study, the life story offers a way of understanding "not only one life across time but how individual lives interact with the whole" (1998: 4)

Spradley asserts that the life story interview has evolved from oral history, life history and other ethnographic approaches and has long been a primary research method of anthropological fieldwork. In some instances, the life histories may be edited by the researcher, whilst others are presented in the form that they were originally recorded. As Atkinson avers, a life story may take many forms including "a factual form, a metaphorical form, a poetic form, or any other creatively expressive form" (1998: 8). Importantly, therefore for my study, I contend that this can include audio documentary form. However, he imposes the caveat that "what is important is that the life story be told in the form, shape, and style that is most comfortable to the person telling it". (1998: 8)

Where traditional histories tell second-hand accounts and generally focus on the important people and the big cities, oral histories provide an opportunity to obtain a first-hand account from the ordinary person in the provinces.

The radio documentary interview as jazz oral history

My own background as a radio interviewer, alerts me to the differences in approach between professional programme makers and oral historians, and forces me to confront the expectations to conform to certain radio conventions. Collecting audio data for an oral history project requires a different approach and is often a more intimate form of interview, more akin to a conversation. Away from the sometimes-intimidating environment of a radio studio, the interview may be undertaken in the more familiar surroundings of the participant's home where the participant may feel more comfortable and thus allowing for the possibility of unexpected details being revealed. Radio professionals, though, view the interview in practical terms, requiring that it fits within an established radio documentary format. Radio production and journalism academic Jim Beaman maintains that the "subject matter is usually topical and production techniques can emphasise a journalistic or, as in some features, an imagination-led approach" (2011: 20)

Oral history is well-suited to integration within radio documentary production. This raises the question of why there is not more oral history on radio. I suggest that the reasons are

numerous: possibly because staff are trained as journalists and not oral historians, the radio presenter works to strict deadlines and budgets, time is not available for a potentially lengthy review of oral testimony, sound quality may be inadequate, and journalists may find it easier to undertake their own interviewing, using quality equipment and asking specific questions relevant to the project. “Radio producers work with action, sensation, emotion, and audio presence as their palette, the oral historian with objectivity and verisimilitude. Both pursue truth on different roads” (Dunaway, 1984: 83). McHugh agrees, proposing that “the genres of oral history and long-form radio journalism have intersecting characteristics.....and that each genre can benefit the other”. (2010: 6)

However, there are challenges inherent in transferring oral histories to the radio medium. One conundrum is how to make what is a personal and intimate communication into an impersonal and public piece of radio. Some speakers may not accede to the airwaves, some speaking styles may be considered too mannered to use. In terms of editing, pauses of more than a few seconds may be shortened, possibly affecting the emotional or dramatic effect of the audio. In striving to produce a compelling radio narrative, sections of talk may be transposed. A perennial difficulty is how to convey the often deep emotion of an intimate interview to a mass audience. Yet, “when the physical and aesthetic qualities of voice are married to powerful substantive content, the effect can be mesmerising” (McHugh 2012: 189) and she concludes that “oral history on radio can achieve one of the disciplines defining aims, to connect past and present lives” (2012: 206).

I have shown a clear link between oral history and radio studies and shown how oral history is such an appropriate medium for radio. I now draw a link between oral history and jazz studies, which has “grown up with - and has contributed to – the oral history movement.” (Peretti, 2001: 582)

On television the *Jazz Britannia* (2005) series and on radio the ten-part series *The Definitive History of Jazz in Britain* (2021) used extensive interviews as key to their production. I examine some examples of radio and television documentary programming in Chapter Five. In what follows here, though, I focus on a critical review of existing jazz oral histories and some critical reflection on my own audio production interviewing.

A Critical Review of the British Library's An Oral history of Jazz in Britain

Charles Chilton interviewed by Jim Godbolt on 29 June 1989.

[Chilton-Charles-5-of-5--Oral-history-of-Jazz-in-Br \(1\).mp3](#)

Charles Chilton MBE was a British presenter, writer and producer who worked on BBC Radio. He wrote and produced the 1950s radio serial *Journey into Space*. He left school at the age of fourteen and shortly thereafter joined the BBC as a messenger boy. He later became an assistant in the BBC gramophone library. He developed a passion for jazz and in 1937 formed the BBC Boys' Jazz Band. He presented his own radio shows, *Swing Time* and *Radio Rhythm Club*.

Jim Godbolt was a British jazz writer and historian. He is best known for his two volume History of Jazz in Britain. Volume one covering the period 1919-1950 and volume two covering the period 1950-1970.

The form of the interview is akin to that of a friendly conversation. However, contrary to Spradley's advice to only raise occasional questions, Godbolt regularly inserts himself into the conversation, sometimes asking questions in the form of prompts to steer the conversation in the direction that he requires and at other time inserting his own opinions and thoughts, which do not always advance the conversation. This does not take the form of either a media style interview or an ethnographic style, although it is certainly a conversation between friends, Godbolt is knowledgeable about his subject and is keen to let Chilton know this, which is something which it is easy to fall into. He clearly does not accept Atkinson's suggestion to remove himself as far as possible from the conversation and does not always allow Chilton to tell his story entirely in his own words. This is a speech only piece with no music or sound utilised to enhance it. Nevertheless, it does provide a valuable insight into jazz of the period discussed even if not conforming to the standard format of an oral history interview.

Leslie Perowne interviewed on 23 February 1990 by Christopher Clark

[Perowne-Leslie-4-of-4-Oral-history-of-jazz-in-Brit \(1\).mp3](#)

Leslie Perowne was the BBC's Head of Popular Record Programmes. In 1946 he produced *Down Your Way* which involved playing popular music combined with short interviews with members of the public. The programme became a great success with cultural historian

Professor Jeffrey Richards arguing that it portrayed a ‘heritage Britain’, intent on preserving the past.

This is an example of a well-produced oral history interview. The interviewer confines himself to asking largely pertinent questions, usually deployed to keep the interview focused. Perowne uses personal archival material as prompts to remind him of key events. This interview has the attributes of an oral history interview, previously mentioned, as distinct from a media interview. The questions asked by the interviewer are relevant to the conversation and prompt revelations from Perowne. Here Perowne is left to his own devices and uses archival material to remind himself of events of the past, resulting in a focused oral history interview producing fresh insights.

A reflexive critical review of my own interviewing of Professor Tony Whyton on Going out on a Limb: Wilkie’s Story

This is one of my own radio productions undertaken prior to the commencement of this PhD thesis. Here, Tony Whyton, Professor of Jazz Studies at Birmingham City University:

examines the relationship between established traditions and hidden histories to explore ways in which local musicians play a part in creating, informing, and disrupting dominant narratives. Drawing on the family archive as a basis for discussing the complexity of jazz histories and the role that hidden musicians play in the ecologies of jazz. Wilkie’s story points to the need both to unearth ‘other’ stories of local musicians – the hidden histories that don’t always form part of official narratives but that can breathe new life into an established discourse – and to think about relationships and connections between individuals and collectives, the past and the present, and the local and the global. (2018: 1)

The ‘raw’ audio was recorded in the studio at Birmingham City University. The introduction and music were added in post-production. In terms of style, I instinctively followed Spradley’s suggestion to conduct the interview in the form of a friendly conversation. The interview discussed the information to be obtained from a personal family archive of a musician who was relatively unknown and did not feature in the extant histories of jazz in Britain.

I view the interviewer’s main role as a listener and in post-production ensuring that the presentation of the story was kept in the words of the person telling the story and creating a first-person narrative, removing myself as far as possible from the text. As I have also indicated, in following Atkinson in removing synthesising elements from the fields of media and ethnographic interviewing I create a hybrid form of radio interviewing. This

interview works equally well as academic text and as a ‘conventional’ piece specifically created for radio, largely due to the engaging personality of the interviewee.

Whyton draws extensively on visual archival material in telling his story and the challenge here is to make the invisible visible. Utilizing two of the codes of radio language: words, and noting specifically the tone of voice of the interviewee in communicating meaning; and music with the well-chosen and appropriate pieces of music helping to bring to life ‘Wilkie’s Story’. Here also, Whyton is successful in adopting the notion of ‘transcodification’ put forward by Crisell (1994: 146). Like Whyton, I will be exposing the ‘hidden histories’ of jazz musicians but in the West Midlands region, and moving beyond the notion that history is made by the actions of great men, to construct a micro-history of provincial jazz ethnomusicking.

I continue this discussion of producing mediated documentary histories in the next chapter as the second examination of extant production practices. If we understand oral histories as radio interviews as a stage of data collection, making a documentary is the equivalent of constructing a narrative in which to share the history. There is a long history of broadcast media documentary making and jazz past has been a topic for a number of landmark series. With my focus on British jazz in mind, I first discuss the literature on radio documentary practice before examining a television and a radio documentary of British jazz history, before reflecting on one of my own radio programmes which use interview to explore the past of one of the significant musicians of post-war British jazz.

Chapter Five: Extant mediated documentaries

Using the production of radio-style documentaries as a research method to explore jazz histories requires not only a familiarity with the literature from radio studies and jazz studies, but it must also involve attention to existing mediated histories. In this chapter exploring extant practice in using television and radio as a vehicle for research in jazz history, I now apply some of the ideas, principles and methods of enquiry discussed in the preceding part of this thesis to a review of some existing radio and television documentaries.

Mediating British Jazz

Film and media studies scholars Richard Kilborn and John Izod have argued that:

The task of the documentarist is not only to record reality but also to give the recorded material a form that allows the resultant film or programme to speak to its audience in a language that can be readily understood. The documentarist collects, frames and edits the material in such a way as to change it from a mere record of actuality into a form which we can refer to as ‘documentary discourse’ (1997: 4).

The emphasis placed on ‘recording reality’, constructing accessible texts and producing a ‘documentary discourse’ by Kilborn and Izod, neatly sum up the way I have approached my own documentary making through the period of my research. I examine the way that interviews have been utilised in ‘recording reality’, the problems and challenges of producing accessible texts, and the solutions which may be found in a research-orientated ‘documentary discourse’.

In what follows in this chapter, I critically review the way that documentary makers have constructed histories of British jazz and how they can relate to the ideas I have set out in Chapters Two to Four. Specifically, the degree to which the documentaries can be seen to reproduce the problems of jazz history or the solutions which have been developed; the degree to which they draw on implicit ideas of jazz culture and the practices I have called ethnomusicking; and the extent to which the methods of interview used to produce the documentary reflect the best practice of oral history or ethnography.

First, I examine the television documentary *Jazz Britannia* and specifically how it deals with documenting the jazz of the 1960s and 1970s. Then I consider the radio documentary *The Definitive History of Jazz in Britain* and look at how it approaches similar themes, before setting out how ideas from both documentaries may be employed to inform my own practice-based research. Finally, I examine one of my own radio productions examining

the life and work of jazz drummer Tony Levin that I produced before the start of my doctoral research.

Mediated documentaries

The roots of television documentary-making dealing with popular music history can be traced back to TV film director Tony Palmer's 17-part series *All You Need is Love: The Story of Popular Music*, which was broadcast on ITV in 1977 and ran until 1980. Written and directed by Palmer, the series covered many popular music genres, including jazz, swing, blues and ragtime. The fifteen-hour documentary included specially filmed interviews, archival footage and music 'experts' who wrote essays which formed the basis of the narration for each part. Interestingly, Palmer deploys the tropes of music histories Tim Wall (2013) has argued constitute the default way of telling the story of pop's past: jazz is presented as being as the voice of the people and of individual genius; at the cultural margins; as rooted in earlier musics; and develops through dramatic disruptions (3-11).

The American documentarian, Ken Burns, also applied his distinctive approach to examining American cultural life, applying his stylistic method to his 2001 series *Jazz*. This was itself a major undertaking consisting of twelve two-hour episodes structured chronologically with each episode devoted to a decade in the development of the music and intended to introduce a general audience to the legends of jazz. The PBS publicity surrounding the series noted that *Jazz* was "not simply a chronicle of musical fact" but "raises questions about race and class, art and commerce, virtuosity and collaboration, the individual and the community, the confluence of cultures and the universality of experience". It was, though, Palmer's documentary techniques which provided the template for subsequent UK music documentary series including, *Jazz Britannia* (2005). While there is a substantial body of literature on the controversies surrounding Burns' *Jazz*, both the focus and style of *Jazz Britannia* make it more relevant for study here.

Jazz Britannia

Jazz Britannia is a three-part UK produced BBC television documentary tracing the development of jazz in post-war Britain. Originally transmitted in 2005 on the digital arts and culture channel BBC Four, it was later re-broadcast on several occasions, including on the BBC terrestrial channel BBC Two. The documentary was described by the BBC as

“a...landmark series...which also reflects the enormous social changes of the post-war period” (BBC, 2005).

At the time of its initial broadcast, *Jazz Britannia* was the first television history of British jazz and built upon the foundations established by the extant published material, some of which I have written about in Chapter Two. However, this was not the first jazz documentary to be televised. *Jazz Britannia* had a similar remit to Burns’ *Jazz* but with the lens sharply focused on jazz in Britain and with less of an emphasis on questions of race.

Whilst *Jazz* is structured to provide an overview of the whole era, it devotes less than one episode to the period 1960-2000 and largely focuses on the demise of the innovators cited in earlier episodes. According to PBS International’s publicity material “during the ‘60s, jazz is in trouble...; jazz is searching for relevance”. Interestingly, ten years later, in the words of the narrator of *Jazz Britannia*, “by the late 1970s no one was listening. The challenge for the next generation was simply to be heard”. In contrast to *Jazz*, *Jazz Britannia* gives over most of its airtime to an examination of the music from the immediate post-war period and including the early years of the twenty-first century. The centrepiece of the series is the positioning of Stan Tracey’s 1965 album *Jazz Suite inspired by Dylan Thomas’ ‘Under Milk Wood’* at both the end of the first episode and the opening of the second episode and as such marking the point at which jazz in Britain became distinctively British. Much is made of this supposed ‘Britishness’ throughout the series. I discuss the notion of the ‘Britishness’ of jazz in Britain (which in the context of the *Jazz Britannia* series ultimately remains unresolved) in Chapter Two. However, my study is concerned not so much with the notion itself but how it was reflected on a regional scale, and whilst *Jazz Britannia* largely privileges the great men (and not women) of a jazz scene located largely around the country’s capital city, I am concerned with lesser-known provincial musicians.

Jazz Britannia does hint at a level of ethnographic study of the social interactions, behaviours, and perceptions that occur within groups, organisations, and communities on the British jazz scene. The interviews themselves provide rich holistic insights into people’s views and actions, and the documentary makers do a good job at articulating the sights and sounds of the locations that they inhabit. Through the collection of detailed observations and interviews the series aimed to get inside the way each group of people sees the world.

The second episode of the series directly aligns with the period of my own study. The artists covered mirror to some extent those highlighted by Ian Carr (1973) in offering a useful overview of contemporary jazz in Britain in the 1960s and 1970s. For Carr, these are musicians of the ‘music outside’ generation, and they had been neglected in earlier histories like Godbolt’s (1989). *Jazz Britannia* is more significantly framed with reference to larger social, political, economic, and political factors of the time, and we can see similar emphasis in both McKay (2005) and Heining (2012), while it’s constructed very differently.

For *Jazz Britannia*, not only is the way that key events are structured to tell the story important, but equally the way in which that story is communicated. This is achieved with various forms of narration: the voice-over supplied by the narrator; the first-person testimony of the various interviewees; the music, and archival images, (often from the BBCs own archives) all assembled to present a coherent narrative. The music and images are the primary materials and the bespoke interviews and voice-over frame this material.

As Wall and Long (2009) point out, the documentary series uses a totalising narrative which seeks to organise the material into a cohesive whole dominated by the meanings anchored by the narration. As they indicate much of the archive material used in the documentary series at least raises questions for that dominant narrative. There is certainly little space in this narrative for the story of jazz in the English West Midlands, or any UK region beyond London. It is noticeable in *Jazz Britannia* that there is little direct comment on the relationship of jazz to questions of ethnicity, and the participants are uniformly men. The absence is commonplace in British jazz histories, something sociologist and independent researcher Jason Toynbee (2013) Parsonage and Dyson (2007), and Moore (2007) amongst others have sought to rectify. While this research (and much of the published research on British jazz history I cited in chapter two) is contemporary with, or later than the production phase of the *Jazz Britannia* documentary, these are important issues established in cultural studies since the 1970s and jazz studies since the 1990s.

In organising the material of my research to tell the story of jazz in the English West Midlands in the late 1960s and 1970s, I have followed ideas of oral history in using the point of view of the participants to define the narrative. This is very different from the way that the producers of *Jazz Britannia* worked, where the material, including interviews, is subordinated to a predetermined narrative. Part of my aim, then, was to construct a history

of an area of jazz activity in the West Midlands which has been hitherto overlooked, and bringing to the fore the people who operate at the margins of the music. I explicitly address questions of absence as they relate to women and black Britons in the work of the youth jazz orchestra in the region. I also reflect on the degree to which the opportunity to work outside the institutional constraints of established BBC practices and expectations, and the opportunity of my doctoral studies to immerse myself in critical thinking, changes the way I work as a documentarian.

Wall and Long's analysis can also be used to set out what I see as the imperatives of jazz history documentary making:

- A desire to make programmes which open up narrative possibilities.
- Interrogate the meanings of the archive material, rather than deploy it for a pre-determined story.
- Start with the assumption that culture does not just happen and history is not obvious. (2011:524).

Viewed alongside work from Wicks (1999); jazz historian Stuart Nicholson (2005); (2014) and Moore (2007) *Jazz Britannia* is a valuable contribution to British jazz historiography elements of which inform my own radio documentary practice, but it also raises a series of useful questions that allow us to rethink how we can document the localised past of British jazz.

The Definitive History of Jazz in Britain

Described as “a landmark series celebrating 100 years of jazz in Britain, by charting the history of the genre from the eve of the 1920s to the present day”, *The Definitive History of Jazz in Britain* took a chronological view of the music, focusing “on every era and unsung heroes and heroines of jazz” and implying an investigation of the ‘Britishness’ of the style¹. The series, presented by journalist, news reader, radio and tv presenter, Clive Myrie, comprised ten episodes, each devoted to a decade in the history of the music and presented as a primer to jazz in Britain. It was broadcast on Jazz FM, a digital radio station (also available online at jazzfm.com), between 4 April and 6 June 2021 between 9-10pm. The series was created with the aid of an Audio Content Fund grant supported by the UK

¹ <https://www.audiocontentfund.org.uk/projects/the-definitive-guide-to-jazz-in-britain/>

Government and allowing funding for independent radio producers to create high quality, public service content for UK commercial and community radio.

Contributors to the series included musicians, writers, historians, academics, a broadcaster, a music promoter, a journalist, and a photographer and were either part of the jazz scene or had links with those who were. Publicity material for the series proclaimed that it “puts the music in the social and political context of its time” and includes “the story of black people in Britain and how they faced many challenges including...racism over the decades” reflecting “the story of the changing face of society and culture over the past 100 years”². It is significant, therefore, that the series is narrated by a presenter of British-Jamaican origin.

This series also works on some levels as an ethnographic study of the jazz scene, providing insights into people’s views and actions. The documentary does provide access to the voices of the musicians involved in jazz in Britain, through the collection of detailed observations and interviews. It offers the point of view of its subjects and with added contributions from ‘jazz commentators’.

However, it also presents a totalising history of jazz in Britain in the twentieth and early twenty-first century. Yet where *Jazz Britannia* fails to address issues of race in any depth, there is no such omission here and the music is viewed in its social, economic, and political context. The material is presented in a chronological order to represent a coherent narrative.

It builds on existing jazz texts, rectifying some of the omissions of printed histories and offers questions for further debate, for example around the ‘Britishness’ of jazz in Britain. It assembles and presents materials in a mode familiar from the earlier radio documentaries and, with the exception of how it handles the archival video material, shares some of the presentation techniques common to radio. Again, like *Jazz Britannia*, *The Definitive History of Jazz* sits comfortably alongside the work of, for example, Parsonage (2005) and Clark (1990) in complementing the existing texts of British jazz historiography.

² <https://www.audiocontentfund.org.uk/projects/the-definitive-guide-to-jazz-in-britain/>

Reflecting on my own mediated documentaries

Tony Levin

This is a radio programme I made before the start of my doctoral research. It is a pre-recorded, 'as-live' episode of a longer-running community radio jazz radio show, but aimed to document the contribution of drummer, Tony Levin, a key local musician to British jazz culture following the announcement of his death. The interview element consists of an amiable discussion between the presenter (acting as the programme's anchor) and an academic 'expert' (Tim Wall, Professor of Radio and Popular Music Studies) who had recently been working with Levin on an audio-visual oral history of his life's work. This is the first and, thus far, only lengthy radio feature regarding this important regional musician who was an important figure not only locally but also nationally and internationally, thus treading a middle path between the 'hidden' and the 'exposed' histories of jazz in Britain.

Rather than, as in the case of *Jazz Britannia*, focusing on a history of jazz in Britain from the middle of the twentieth century and into the early twenty-first century, or a totalizing history of jazz in the United Kingdom from its inception until the present century as presented in *The Definitive History of jazz in Britain*, this radio documentary/feature explores the life of one musician who was central to British jazz in the 1960s and 1970s, playing on some of that period's defining recordings, and yet was not featured in either of the aforementioned documentaries. Although born in Shropshire and returning there in the latter years of his life, Levin spent many years living and working in Birmingham and used the city as a base from which to fulfil his many national and international playing engagements. He was also a tutor at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire, and is remembered each year with the presentation of the Tony Levin Drum Prize which acknowledges his championing of successive new generations of musicians.

The other elements of the documentary consist of pre-recorded segments comprising personal reminiscences in the form of first-hand experiences. BBC projects, for example *The Century Speaks* and *My Century* have made use of this type of material with the presenter introducing the clips with a cue explaining what the listener is about to hear. This form of radio feature can legitimately include the additional audio material of interviews, to tell a multi-layered story, including elements from the pre-existing audio-visual oral history and can be a stand-alone item.

Levin's musicking provides insights into a wider hidden local history and, I now recognise, I was attempting to bring together primary ethnographic material, especially Levin's music, with insights from someone who had recently worked with Levin in trying to tell the musician's story from his own perspective. In style, the programme contains elements of the oral history interview and radio documentary feature. The primary material consists of the various pieces of music selected to show the breadth of jazz music within which Levin worked, together with interview clips from the pre-existing audio-visual oral history to which I refer above.

This radio project was undertaken before I commenced this PhD study. I describe my approach to interviewing Tim Wall as instinctive and following an innate format that I had developed over my time spent listening to and absorbing radio documentaries and applying this knowledge when interviewing previous guests on my radio programme. I have had no training in interview techniques. Although intuitive, I would now describe my approach to this audio tribute as using "an unstructured interview as narrative inquiry" (Gillham, 2007: 47) style of interviewing. I have described this as 'unstructured' but there must be some form of loose organisation in producing any form of interview. In this case I was governed only by a chronological examination of highlights from Levin's career. I wanted to deal with the topic with sensitivity and I achieved this approaching the interview in the manner of what I would now term a "friendly conversation" (Spradley, 1979, 55). Feedback following the broadcast confirmed this with reports of listeners being moved to tears. The interviewer/interviewee relationship between myself and Tim Wall acts as a bridge to the other elements of the documentary; personal testimony from Levin (in the form of archival clips from the audio-visual documentary); contributions from those who knew him and the musical examples, with each adding a distinct layer to the overall tribute. Listening back, I consider that the piece comes across as a sensitive and informative tribute to a musician who was an important member of not only the regional jazz scene but also nationally and internationally.

In terms of the historiography of jazz, this piece contains valuable insights, particularly in the contributions from Levin as a regionally-based musician, working internationally. It is a factually grounded discourse on jazz and its development but on a local level where *Jazz Britannia* and *The Definitive History of Jazz* look at the music from a UK-wide perspective. It represents a move away from the notion that history is made by the actions of great men. In Levin's own contributions the feature tries to tell us what really happened

in history although his reminiscences are not tested by way of evaluation or other means of data interpretation, which may be an avenue still to be explored to allow us to establish what happened, when and where.

Having established the state of the field through a survey of its literature and some key oral histories and mediated documentaries on British jazz culture, I next turn my attention to the developed method I used in my primary doctoral research. It is necessary to cover some ground as my approach draws upon collecting material, producing a history, making a documentary and reflecting on the production process.

Chapter Six: Doing Radio Production as Music Culture History Research

So far, I have established a corpus of literature and practice on which my research practice is based. In Chapter One, I set out the radio studies context that informs my approach to practice-based research based in radio documentary. In Chapter Two, I addressed the range of problems highlighted in jazz studies that relate to such a critically-informed historical study of jazz cultures and, in Chapter Three, how the idea of ethnomusicking could be deployed to deal with these problems. Chapters Four and Five explored the strengths and weaknesses of existing practice in oral histories and television and radio documentary histories, and the degree to which they can research the ethnomusicking of local jazz cultures as ways to inform my own approach.

This chapter sets out the details of the practice research methodology I use for investigating and disseminating insights into local jazz history. At the core of my study is a practice-based, auto-ethnographic methodological approach. In many ways I am exploring how we make the practice of radio documentary a developed and sophisticated research method in itself. As I set out in the introduction, I have chosen this approach as a way of building on my skills as a radio producer; to offer a theoretically informed alternative to existing mediated histories that are so often deployed in radio documentaries, as well as to provide distinctive insights into one particular neglected localised history of jazz.

I have broken down my practice-based approach into five parts:

- a) I conducted a number of interviews with musicians active in the West Midlands as members of the MYJO in the late 1960s and through the 1970s. I drew on approaches to oral history and semi-structured interviewing to inform this work.
- b) I used archives to research the historical jazz cultures in the West Midlands from 1960 to 1980. I drew on best practice in archive and historical research to inform a written history.
- c) I selected music that articulated the cultural meaning of jazz culture in the West Midlands from 1960 to 1980. I used ideas from ethnomusicology to inform this selection of music.
- d) I produced a series of radio-style documentary features and podcasts building on the interviews, history and music I had selected in a), b), and c). I drew on ideas of narratology in mediated histories.

- e) I generated an autoethnographic study of my own radio practice and iterative investigation of my production practices.

It is worth reiterating here that I follow the ethnography scholars Daniel Makagon and Mark Neumann's (2009) contention that the radio documentary form can be seen as qualitative fieldwork practice in its own right. Such a notion has been a template for my research and in particular my exploration of questions of research that have surfaced in what has been termed 'The New Jazz Studies'. Such a methodological approach, therefore, allows me to reflexively explore my own role in the production process involved in the creation of radio documentaries.

In addition, my methodology includes collecting data by means of making audio recordings, conducting interviews, and producing a series of audio documentaries. I made use of historical interview transcripts, sound archives and articles in professional journals and newspapers as well as investigating existing research which crosses disciplinary boundaries. This archive work reveals content to be used in radio documentary histories but also processes of data discovery that need to be discussed. These are fundamentally qualitative methods organised within a practice-based approach to research. I seek to understand my object of study not through collecting numerical data, but capturing meaningful qualities through interviews, archived documents, and music and other audio to understand concepts, opinions, or experiences to generate new ideas for research. This method permits flexibility and freedom in terms of structure and order. A practice-based approach to my research provides ample opportunity for detailed self-reflection. In deploying this approach, I therefore, utilised an iterative approach to my production work. In doing so, I acknowledge the work of radio and popular music academic Sam Coley whose research takes an iterative practice-based approach to radio documentary making. He uses a model of instinctive, intermediary, and reflexive stages of the production work, which are close to my own (Coley (2018)).

Following independent researcher Linda Candy (2006), we can discuss my work in terms of *practice-based* and *practice-led* research approaches. Adopting Candy's approach to practice-based research my audio artifacts constitute creative outcomes which demonstrate originality and a contribution to knowledge and this written component of my research describes the context and significance of my claims. The primary focus of practice-led research is to advance knowledge about practice, or to advance knowledge within practice.

Whilst the results may be described fully in text without the inclusion of creative work, such research includes practice as an integral part of its method.

As I stated in the introduction, I focus on a combination of these approaches. So, I present my iterative documentaries component of the thesis as the results of a *practice-based* research method and this written component as the result of a *practice-led* approach. So, the radio-style documentaries are a creative artifact that demonstrate new knowledge about interviewing and narrative in documentary production. The written component presents my research into the radio production processes which leads to a new understanding of radio production of interviews and storyline, and about ways to explore jazz history through the voices of its participants and their stories.

It is, then, difficult to separate these approaches entirely in this doctoral research. I consider that in attempting to make the practice of radio documentary into a research method in itself, I privilege a practice-based approach. However, I also adopt Candy's description of practice-led investigation as the analysis of practice through literature reviews (along with existing practice of documentary making and oral history), replacing my own work, examined through autoethnographic reflection in place of Candy's suggested interviews with research participants. I have also supported this investigation through a substantial amount of theoretical and contextualising material in the form of a written exegesis to "relate the development and nature of the artifact to understandings about creative process" (Candy, 2006:9).

I use the combination of the production element of this study with theoretical analysis to build academic rigour. This is consolidated in the way I deploy iterative production work combined with interviews, archival research and autoethnography.

Part of my solution is to work in an interdisciplinary way across media production processes and more traditional academic research-informed methods. I conceived of this methodological approach schematically as follows:

Radio documentary processes	Academic research-informed method	Areas of originality
Interview subjects	Oral history (semi-structured interviews)	Offers distinctive insights into one particular neglected localised history of jazz.
Research factual context	Archival research (documents and records)	
Incorporate music/actuality	Cultural Studies/Ethnomusicology	
Edit	Narrative/Story (narratology/mediated histories)	Offers an alternative mediated history.
The practitioner reflects	Autoethnography	Offers insights into iterative researcher practice.

Figure 2: Comparison of media production processes and more traditional academic research-informed methods

Taking each of my methods one at a time, I set out the research for this doctoral project and the best-practice which informed my work.

Radio production(s) as research (and as history research)

A cornerstone of this study is the interrogation of my production practice through an ongoing series of radio-style documentary features. The repetition of processes of audio production across these documentaries has allowed me to test theories and consider new approaches to my radio production processes.

An examination of my earlier radio productions and those completed during the progress of this study exemplify this process, allowing me to study variations in my approach to radio production and with the production artifacts ultimately submitted as part of this study constituting the apex of my endeavours. I selected a documentary feature that I produced prior to the commencement of this study to provide a benchmark against which to judge my subsequent work. Reflecting upon this work outside the confines of the usual radio production environment allowed me to identify practices which were the product of intuition. I critically identified strengths and weaknesses in my production work to focus on areas for improvement and development. Important here is Schon's (2016) analysis of reflective practice as a method of informing my reflexive investigation. It has become clear to me that much of my own practice consists of "intuitive knowing in the midst of

action” and applying this intuition to “cope with the unique, uncertain and conflicted situations of practice” (viii-xi).

Historic Research

Archives

I have consulted publicly accessible archives such as the National Jazz Archive, the British Library Sound Archive (Oral Histories of British Jazz), BBC Genome Project, regional and national newspapers, and the British Newspaper Archive, together with information available from Birmingham City University Arts Design and Media Archive. The Media Archive for Central England (MACE) contains some video of the MYJO. Furthermore, some interview participants kindly shared with me items from their personal archives. I initially utilised the archival material to gain valuable background information relating to the establishment of the youth jazz movement, which formed the basis for my initial enquiry allowing me to formulate supplemental questions to pose with my participants. As the study progressed, I used archival material as a means of ratifying information disclosed by my participants and for providing supplemental information in terms of photographs and reviews.

However, most of my data has been collected from memories of regional musicians with the aim of obtaining information which is not available in any other single archive. I used this information to establish how the jazz music scene in the West Midlands worked from the perspective of those working within it.

Sound Archives

I consulted the British Library Sounds website and the collections held by the BBC Archive Radio Collection to explore both the style and content of the oral histories held. As I have discussed in Chapter Four, many of the extant histories were both deficient in terms of their style and in their content and I could find no material directly relating to my own object of study.

It has not been possible to locate the original sound recordings of these programmes. Whilst BBC Genome was useful in collecting historical data of programming on the nationally syndicated programmes, very few of which featured musicians from the West

Midlands region, it was less helpful in establishing details of regional programming on BBC local radio and, of course, information of programming on Independent Local Radio was non-existent on the Genome site. The relative absence of data regarding regional BBC and Independent Local Radio programming is an issue worthy of further future investigation and would constitute a valuable addition to the forthcoming work of my fellow scholar Tim Wall.

Whilst not a sound archive, The British Newspaper Archive proved invaluable in locating this material. For example, I discovered that the first jazz programme on BBC Radio Birmingham was '*Jazz Club*' broadcast between 6.0 pm and 6.45 pm on Monday 27 January 1975. The content of this programme is unknown. The programme was superseded by '*Jazztime*' which was first broadcast on 9 November 1977 and which programme marked the seventh year of broadcasting for BBC Radio Birmingham. *The Stage in Television Today*¹ revealed that the show was intended to "reflect the local jazz scene and encourage listeners to attend live jazz concerts in the area". (The Stage in Television Today, 1977) However, rather confusingly, in the first programme, presenter Mike Beaumont is noted as being in conversation with two former members of the Count Basie Orchestra. Later, in 1979, the *Rugley Times*² described the programme as including "all kinds of jazz" and "also features tapes recorded by groups playing local gigs in the West Midlands".

In November 1978 Independent Local Radio in the West Midlands made tentative steps into jazz broadcasting when BRMB presented '*Jazz Notes*' which was a 15-minute insert into an arts-based programme and ran until October 1979. In November 1979 a stand-alone jazz programme '*Kelly's Eye*' was introduced and ran until mid-1983 and included music from concerts by and interviews with regional performers.

The following section explains the use of interviewing within my practice-based methodology. I distinguish between interviews as oral histories and as ethnomusicological interviews. I make clear the advantages and disadvantages of utilising interviewing as a research tool and explain how my interviews have been used within this study.

Interviews as oral histories and as ethnomusicological interviews

¹ 'Ten Years of Local Radio' (1977) *The Stage in Television Today*, 3 November, p. 15

² (1979) 'All that Jazz', *Rugley Times*, 16 June, p. 16

I covered a lot of the issues related to oral history and interviewing in Chapter Five. Beyond these more general points, this section deals with the specificities of my own approach that builds on this earlier discussion.

The use of unstructured interviews allows for a degree of spontaneity in content and structure to underpin my interaction with my participants. I combine elements from several types of unstructured interviews, in-depth interviews, narratives and oral histories. Whilst the interviews were undertaken on a non-probability sampling basis, I relied upon my own expertise in the selection of the participants based upon my own knowledge and judgement regarding who had a valuable story to tell, whilst always being mindful that my preconceived notions should not influence my work.

Southall maintains that “the past is automatically made into history by those who experience it”. (2012:11). She acknowledges that such histories will be “laden with quantities of factual errors, confusions, and ideological or other forms of bias”, leading historians to mistrust such accounts “in favour of apparently more objective archive material”. Southall maintains that such an approach can result in useful material being missed. Her solution is “a form of historical enquiry which, rather than ignoring these issues, makes a positive virtue of them; that is oral history” (11). I use oral history interviews as a primary source. However, such interviews must always be personal accounts reflecting the personal opinions of the participants and are therefore subjective. I have used archival research methods to verify information to produce an objective narrative of events or a comprehensive history of a place.

Southall mentions the fallibility of memory and its distrust by researchers as an historical source. However, oral history as a method of historical research has allowed the experiences of people and groups who may otherwise have remained hidden from history to be acknowledged. But I maintain that, rather than ‘hidden histories’ I am uncovering ‘overlooked histories’ in the sense that such voices have been bypassed in many of the academic texts that currently exist. Perks and Thompson (2006) argue that oral history has given a voice to aspects of historical experience which might be missing from other sources and cite ‘domestic work or family life’ as examples, to which I contend should be added jazz performance in the West Midlands.

In terms of this study of the establishment of the MYJO, it was merely ten years prior to the time frame that I establish for my enquiry that the relationship between popular music

and youth culture took a critical turn. In the 1950s Britain was undergoing a post-war economic boom and youth was perceived as a new consumer market with popular music constituting a fundamental object of cultural consumption. Subculture as a conceptual tool for framing understandings of youth is a recurring theme in studies of popular music and youth culture. As I have previously explained, in Birmingham during the 1970s and 1980s the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies reinforced subcultures as an essential part of youth studies, many of which included strong connections to music. I also brought into question the Centre's emphasis on class and with the exclusion of women's perspectives. In terms of jazz culture, the ongoing marginalisation of women continues.

As I have previously asserted, significant anthropological contributions to the empirical study of popular music and youth have emanated from Finnigan (1989) and Cohen (1991) and like these scholars, I have focused on young individuals and groups at a grassroots level.

In my radio production interviews, I followed Richie who maintains that the research methodology of oral history "has to be systematic, comprehensive and narrative" (1994:19) and by doing so aligns himself with the fundamental principal of the rigour of academic research. It is these qualities that I brought to my participant interviews. I am well placed to undertake this study as I have a thorough knowledge of what I want to ascertain and extract from my participants. I rely upon the technical skills and experience acquired in my radio production work to carry this out.

Collecting audio data for an oral history project requires a slightly different approach to that of radio interviewer and is often more time consuming. This type of interviewing will probably only be attempted for special projects where the funding and staffing allows. I contend that interviewing for oral history is a more intimate form of interviewing and should not feel like an interview. This is the approach that I adopted with my own project participants. Rather than being carried out in a radio studio, the interview is generally undertaken in the participant's home in a familiar situation where the participant will feel comfortable, and it is carried out at a slower pace. Collecting material in this way can be liberating and reveal perhaps unexpected details.

Ethnomusicking the past

Many scholars have attempted to define ethnomusicology. Merriam looks at the field from an anthropological point of view as “the study of music in culture”. (1960, 1964) Herndon and McLeod (1982) build upon Merriam in defining the field as:

...the study of the music either past or present, of all who participate in music as creators, performers or hearers of sound patterns; taking into account all factors which lead to a better understanding of this particular type of creative, human display (1982:17).

Ethnomusicologist Timothy Rice maintains that “ethnomusicologists argue that listeners and others who participate as patrons, organisers, producers, and sound engineers should be considered musicians, and that they deserve to be studied as seriously as performers and composers” (2014: 81) This is a thread that runs through my study and is supported by musicologist Christopher Small for whom the ‘music’ of ethnomusicology is “not a *thing*, but an *activity*, something that people do” (1998:2). However, if as Small contends, “there is no such thing as music” seeking to ascertain the meaning of music is to “ask a question that has no possible answer” (1998: 3).

Small coins the term ‘musicking’ as the present participle of the verb *to music* and sets out this definition:

To music is to take part, in any capacity, in a musical performance, whether by performing, by listening, by rehearsing or practicing, by providing material for performance (what is called composing) or by dancing (1998: 9).

Small proffered the possibility of extending the definition to include, amongst others, “those who take the tickets at the door, ‘roadies’ and cleaners” as they too are all contributing to the nature of the event that is a musical performance”. He considers “that to pay attention in any way to a musical performance, including a recorded performance, is to music”. (1998:9) I contend that Small’s definition can be extended still further to encompass the processes of both radio production and presentation, thus allowing me to justify my own place in this study. Furthermore, as Rice encourages “ethnomusicologists (to) take seriously and document the role of important figures in a tradition, of average musicians (as distinct from the ‘geniuses’) and even listeners, fans, producers, patrons and club owners” (1998:81).

As Small analyses ‘musicking’ with his object of study being a symphony concert, I applied his approach to my own analysis of the historic music practices of the Midland

Youth Jazz Orchestra, which I presented as a hybrid form of ‘ethnomusicking’. In doing so, I employed approaches from cultural studies ethnography and ethnomusicology. I also expand the allegiance in cultural studies and ethnomusicology deployed in my practice-based research audio production, to the reflexivity of the ethnomusicologist in explicitly undertaking an autoethnography of my own radio and audio production work.

Furthermore, my study has a synergy with Bohlman’s study of Jewish musical practices in the Austrian province of Burgenland. My “experience in the field” is as a concert-goer over many years and latterly presenting and producing jazz radio programmes, rather than Small’s assumed musician. My experience does allow me to “place myself in the spaces where (jazz) communities have been, where (jazz) music has been heard” (2008:254). It is my contention that the roles of radio practitioner and researcher in this practice-based study cannot be separated with each being equally important and providing a unique position from which to undertake research.

As I have made clear, at the core of ethnomusicology is a focus upon the study of groups of people and the role, meaning and practice of music within these groups and communities which are defined by geography, and I study the MYJO as a collective located in the West Midlands region. Nevertheless, when conducting research, it becomes impossible to exclude the study of the individuals who together constitute this group. Here, I studied individual musicians who, in the process of creating new individual identities, knit themselves into newly encountered social formations. It became clear that whilst many of these individuals could be seen as exceptional performers, my work also highlighted their individual agency and difference. Having a deep understanding of the music together with a limited personal involvement with the youth orchestra from many years previously, I was able to bring a level of knowledge and empathy to the interviews. However, I was also aware not to impose my own preconceptions on my interviewees.

I adopted a semi-structured interview approach to interviewing which allowed me to formulate core questions related to my study whilst also allowing the flexibility for new directions to be opened up during each interview. Only one interview with saxophonist Alan Wakeman was conducted in a conventional face-to-face style for which I used two microphones attached to a Tascam DR-40 Linear PCM Recorder. The remaining interviews were undertaken online via the Zoom videoconferencing platform.

Studies have explored the use of information and communication technologies for conducting research, but few have explored both researcher and participant perspectives on the use of web and videoconferencing platforms. Data is also lacking on the benefits and challenges of using Zoom as a data collection method. I considered the feasibility and acceptability of using Zoom to collect qualitative interview data.

Although I experienced occasional technical difficulties, the most important being the variable sound quality which became a particular issue when editing and normalizing the various clips deployed in the audio pieces, generally interviewing via Zoom was satisfactory. I found it relatively easy to use, cost and time effective. It opened up the possibility of interviewing participants who were geographically dispersed. A further key advantage is Zoom's ability to record and store sessions securely without relying on third-party software. Real-time encryption of meetings is an important security feature for sensitive data collection and the ability to backup recordings both to online remote server networks or local computer drives, allows for secure sharing for the purposes of collaboration.

In terms of challenges, in using the platform, the main issues concerned establishing and maintaining call connection and audio or video reliability and quality.

I am mindful of the caveats surrounding non-face-to-face interviewing which I have alluded to in Chapter Three. The literature relating to the ease of establishing rapport with participants using videoconferencing technology reveals some disagreement. It has been suggested that it may be more challenging to do so using online platforms when compared to face-to-face interviewing (Carter, 2011). By way of comparison, studies have found that participants using Skype built rapport more quickly than face-to-face participants (Deakin & Wakefield, 2014; Tuttas, 2015). Digital literacy and the need to work collaboratively to troubleshoot technical issues can, in fact, offer new opportunities for rapport building. Furthermore, there is always the possibility of engaging with practice sessions with participants to develop videoconferencing skills prior to undertaking the interview. I am conscious too of considering areas around accessibility, inclusion and equality as not everyone might have equal access to these digital tools. Furthermore, the non-verbal cues and eye contact of face-to-face interviews may be missed.

However, there were distinct advantages to carrying out Zoom interviews, especially for a part-time student. For example, the sessions were less time consuming, as there was no

travel involved, it was possible to record both audio and video content, and the Zoom conferencing initial time limited of 40 minutes allowed me to stay focused and work efficiently.

Whilst I explored how we make the practice of radio documentary a developed and sophisticated research method in itself; I accept that my approach has certain limitations. I have previously acknowledged the lack of academic investigations relating to the study of jazz in the West Midlands and specifically the evolution of youth jazz in the region.

In utilising the radio documentary as a vehicle for academic research I am breaking new ground. McHugh has noted the relative scarcity of radio documentary scholarship and attributes this to the medium's "invisibility and ephemerality" (McHugh, 2014:23).

In undertaking these interviews, I am aware that my interviewee's responses may not always be reliable, due to mis-remembering events, misunderstandings, or misinterpreting questions. Furthermore, respondents may provide the answers that they think I want to hear and do not disclose their true opinions. To some extent these issues can be mitigated by careful phrasing of research questions. My instinctive approach to radio production has to some extent been beneficial as I work free of the many conventions of radio. I learned my craft almost by a process of osmosis, resulting from my many years of radio listening. This was supplemented with minimal technical training in how to 'run the desk'.

Autoethnography

The deployment of autoethnography as a research tool utilised in conjunction with my iterative investigations was fundamental in capturing the nuances of insights gained from critically observing my performance as a radio documentary producer and presenter.

I use Kolb's (1976) Learning Style Inventory Model to provide a foundation for understanding experiential learning and is a method that I adopt in my own radio production processes, and it is an effective method of seeking to improve my own practice. As I detail in Chapter Eight, employ an accommodating learning style whilst applying both concrete experience and active experimentation to learn and process information (Muro and Terry, 2007) and preferring active involvement in concrete situations (Sugarman, 1985). Using Kolb was particularly useful in reflecting on my radio production work methods before I started the doctoral research.

My use of a combination of iterative production, interviews, archival research and auto-ethnographic methods to add academic rigour to this practice-based research. This approach seeks to describe and systematically analyse personal experience to understand cultural experience. (Ellis, 2004). This approach challenges more traditional ways of doing research and representing others (Spry, 2001) and treats research as a political, socially-just and socially conscious act (Adams & Holman Jones, 2008) and thus utilising elements from autobiography and ethnography to do and write auto-ethnography.

The motivation for scholars to turn to autoethnography lay in the fact that they wished to “concentrate on ways of producing meaningful, accessible and evocative research grounded in personal experience...that would sensitise readers...to experiences shrouded in silence” (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2011: 274). Autoethnography acknowledges and accommodates subjectivity, emotionality and the researcher’s influence on research rather than hiding these matters or assuming that they don’t exist. Autoethnography can “open up a wider lens on the world, eschewing ridged definitions of what constitutes meaningful and useful research”. (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, (275).

As a method, autoethnography combines characteristics of autobiography and ethnography. In writing an autobiography, the author retrospectively and selectively writes about past experiences. When researchers do ethnography, they study a culture’s relational practices, common values and beliefs and shared experiences with the purpose of helping insiders and outsiders better understand the culture.

In employing this method, I am alert to the criticisms that auto-ethnographic studies may be considered “narcissistic” (Lindgren, 2011:99) or have an “excessive focus on self in isolation from others” (Chang, 2008: 54). The notion of such studies being of insufficient academic rigour and integrity are also recurring concerns.

This auto-ethnographic study takes the form of what Ellis, Adams and Bochner term a ‘reflexive, dyadic interview’ where, although the focus is on the participant and her or his story, the words, thoughts and feelings of the researcher are also considered, e.g., personal motivation for doing a project, knowledge of the topics discussed, emotional responses to an interview, and ways in which the interview may have been changed by the process of interviewing. Even though the researcher’s experience isn’t the main focus, personal reflection adds context and layers to the story being told about participants (2011: 278).

By interrogating the radio production processes involved in the practice-based element of this study, I was able to examine my own practice as a radio documentary feature producer and reflect upon my performance to conclude how these processes mediated and interpreted the historic music practices of the youth jazz movement in the West Midlands in the 1960s and 1970s.

I deploy autoethnography to allow me to “shift from participant observation to the observation of the participant” (Tedlock, 2000:455). In doing so, my intention was, in Wall’s words “to acknowledge the inextricable link between the personal and the cultural and to make room for non-traditional forms of enquiry and expression” (Wall, 2006: 146). I analysed the production process involved in my own work to show how these changed during the years prior to and during the period of this study.

My auto-ethnographic approach employs self-reflection and a continuous process of critical evaluation to observe and record my practice during the production of the four audio pieces. The interview element involved speaking to musicians to gain an understanding of what it meant to be a budding jazz musician in the West Midlands in the 1970s.

This mixed-method approach has allowed for the triangulation of my analysis. Here, I followed Hammersley and Atkinson (1993) who consider triangulation as being a practical way to check “one set of data sources by collecting data from others”. (Hammersley and Atkinson, (231) As I have previously explained, to complement my work, I draw on methods from the fields of oral history, ethnomusicology and archival research.

As I have made plain, I have hitherto considered the processes involved in my production work as being instinctive. In now reflecting on my work, I adopt Schon’s (2016) notion of ‘reflection-in-practice’. In maintaining an iterative approach, it is important not to lose sight of the intent of the project and continually question the rigour of my project.

This chapter has discussed how practice-based methodology can usefully be applied to research in the field of radio documentary production and its application as a self-contained research method. As I have said, the practice-based approach deployed here utilised iterative production processes, ethnomusicological and auto-ethnographic investigation, and interviews with regional jazz practitioners, all underpinned with archival research, as a means of collecting data. These techniques provided a structure to enable me to answer the question of how processes of audio production mediate and interpret the

historic musical practices of the MYJO in the 1960s and 1970s. I have addressed some of the strengths and weaknesses of my approach and I am confident that the use of mixed methods that I have described add sufficient rigour to my study. I noted some potential ethical issues and the need for me to take an objective stance in capturing and analysing data.

It was my intention to show how radio documentary production carefully allied to some of the techniques employed in the collection of oral histories can be a fruitful method for gaining a deeper understanding of regional youth jazz practice. I acknowledge that there is a paucity of academic research surrounding radio documentaries featuring regional jazz and that the extant documentaries largely featured the 'great men' of the music and are generally UK-wide features, taking their inspiration from earlier wider ranging radio and television documentaries.

Finally, it is also important to reflect upon the ethical issues appertaining to this aspect of my study. This is something that I considered prior to commencing this study and is an ongoing consideration whilst conducting and reporting my research. I employ the guidelines suggested by Birmingham City University for good research practice which outline the ethical principles underpinning the conduct of university researchers.

A cornerstone of ethical research practice involving human participants or personal data is the principle of informed consent. After identifying potential participants and prior to substantive research being commenced, each was provided by email with a Participant Information Form together with a Consent Form. The former containing a detailed overview of the project, research question and the research aims. It also explained why the participant had been chosen, their responsibilities, the benefits of taking part and any possible disadvantages to taking part. The document also explains that all information gathered will be stored securely in accordance with the terms of the Data Protection Act (2018). I also provided a link to the BCU Research Privacy Policy and details of the BCU complaints procedure.

One issue here is that of contributor anonymity. I explained in the Participant Information Form that it may not be possible for participants to remain anonymous due to the nature of the research and some of the methods of dissemination. Specifically, in research outputs, including radio broadcasts, podcasts or other online forms of audio production, websites, blogs, research papers and presentations as the impact of their contribution may be lost.

However, where a participant did wish to remain anonymous, where possible, any data collected would be shared in an anonymised form. Where this was not possible, that participant's data would not be included in the research output and would be destroyed. With this exception all other data collected from participants would be retained for future research projects. At this point, it was still possible for potential participants to withdraw from the project. Each contributor was invited to sign a Consent Form, which, inter alia, required contributors to confirm that they were happy for their identity to be disclosed in project output. Although it is perfectly acceptable in academic work for participants to remain anonymous, in the documentaries, I considered it important to be able to identify participants, both to establish their credibility to be involved in the research and to emphasise the value and importance of their comments. My participants were regional musicians many of whom are known in their locality and others who have established a career on national and international stages. Relatively few of my contributors are quoted in written text in this study as I rely upon their oral contributions contained within my radio-style audio productions which form the centrepiece of my research.

In the following chapter I bring together my practice-based research and the presentation of my findings. These interrogate the instinctive, intermediary, and reflexive stages of the production work which is at the centre of this research project. I begin with a critical analysis of the historic music practice of the MYJO 1960-1980.

Chapter Seven: The Music Practice of the Midland Youth Jazz Orchestra

The next three chapters are built around my two distinct areas of research: one a history of specific local jazz ethnomusicking; and a second looking at how we can use radio-style production as a vehicle to both undertake and disseminate research. Together they represent a written account of my findings, and combined with the radio-style documentaries, they constitute the full outcomes of my doctoral research.

In this chapter, I outline the things I discovered about the music practice of the MYJO between 1968 and 1980. While this written chapter draws on the same data as my final radio-style documentary, it is valuable to present this history in a written form, partly so it can be directly compared with the radio-style documentary, and partly so that it can be disseminated in an additional medium. This also allows me to demonstrate the different forms of written histories that emerge from the approach based upon practices rooted in radio-style production. Following, in Chapter Eight, I use autoethnography to reflect on my practices as a radio producer turning the data on this history into a radio-style documentary. There, I aim to bring out the nuances of the radio production process that are not necessarily apparent in the finished documentary pieces themselves. Reading it should provide details of my decision-making processes and production practices. Finally, in Chapter Nine, I draw on these experiences of researching history through radio production to set out some arguments about using oral history and cultural story-telling as radio production practice more generally.

Of course, these three activities of history research and writing, radio production practice research, and developing approaches on oral history and cultural story-telling within radio production have been something I have done simultaneously, and they support, explain and extend the audio of my radio-style documentaries as my full thesis.

A cultural history of the music practice of the Midland Youth Jazz Orchestra 1968-1980

The roots of the MYJO can be traced back to London and the National Youth Jazz Orchestra which had its origins as a rehearsal band evolving from the Youth Jazz Association formed in 1967 by school-teacher Bill Ashton and assisted by fellow teacher Pat Evans. Originally the London Schools Jazz Orchestra, it later became the London Youth Jazz Orchestra. A second Orchestra was formed under the leadership of Pat Evans.

It was Ashton's ambition to establish youth bands around the country and by the early 1970s had built a network of bands in the regions including Stockport, Manchester, Oxford, Bournemouth and Birmingham. Ashton brought the Orchestra to the Midlands Arts Centre (MAC) in Birmingham for a performance and workshop in August 1967. In September 1968 the newly formed MYJO, under the leadership of trumpeter and musical arranger Dennis Darlow performed at a festival at the MAC and as reported in *Melody Maker*, the orchestra shared the evening concert with performances by the Graham Collier Dozen, the Mike Westbrook Concert Band and American blues pianist and singer "Champion Jack" Dupree. (1968). A review of the concert proclaimed that the MYJO had "in a remarkably short space of time, reached a good standard of proficiency with an outstanding young alto player in 17-year-old Jan Steel¹." (*Melody Maker*, 1968). With other commitments, Darlow was unable to continue working with MYJO and, after a period of hiatus, In May 1970, MYJO reformed under the leadership of trumpeter Mike Beaumont. The Orchestra's first public appearance under Beaumont's leadership was at the outdoor theatre at MAC on 31 August 1970. Honing their skills with regular rehearsals and public concerts, they recorded their first album, *The Midland Youth Jazz Orchestra* (1973) which included guest appearances from regional professional musicians who were also deployed as guest tutors from time to time. Further albums featured Kenny Baker, John Dankworth and others. Whilst this study ends at the start of the 1980s, the MYJO continues to go from strength to strength and this year celebrated its Covid-19 delayed 50th Anniversary.

Whilst the Orchestra was christened the Midland Youth Jazz Orchestra, it drew most of its members from the West Midlands conurbation. The West Midlands region comprises the counties of Herefordshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire, and Worcestershire. The region has seven cities, Coventry, Hereford, Lichfield, Stoke-on-Trent, Wolverhampton, Worcester and Birmingham. Somewhat confusingly, the conurbation shares its name with the smaller West Midlands metropolitan county, with its largest settlement being the city of Birmingham with Coventry and Wolverhampton following together with Solihull and Sutton Coldfield. The county is predominantly urban and today is the second most populous county in England after Greater London. The county was

¹ Bird, C. (1968) 'Birmingham' *Melody Maker*, 7 September, p6

established in 1974 following local government reorganisation but the area has long been established as an important centre for commerce and industry.



Figure 3: Geographic location and extent of the English West Midlands²

In studying the evolution of the MYJO, it is important to note that this was not the only youth jazz orchestra which was active in the region. Of most note are the Walsall Jazz Orchestra (formerly the Walsall Youth Jazz Orchestra) who were established in 1975, and the Stourbridge Youth Swing Band who were established in 1982. Some of the student musicians were common to both of these orchestras. I have chosen to study the MYJO as

² https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:West_Midlands_County.png

this was the most successful of the regional orchestras, but this is not to say that the others are not worthy of subsequent investigation.

Studying the MYJO is a particularly revealing way to explore how ethno-historical approaches can be used to understand a specific local music culture.

Treating the cultural history of the MYJO in the 1960s and 70s as activities of ethnomusicking must start with a recognition that, like all jazz cultures, it occupied a disputed terrain somewhere between high and low culture, sometimes located as ‘folk’ or ‘community’ music, at other times as ‘popular’ or ‘art music’. By this I mean as a music culture practice that is conducted as a ‘ritual in social space’ (Small, 1995). In part, or at times, therefore the youth orchestra’s cultural practices sit firmly in the domain of what Christopher Small terms artistic performance. The musical performance of the MYJO, like any other kind of “artistic” performance:

requires of its participants a physical and social setting, a mode of dress and behaviour that is not merely specific to itself but is also as appropriate as possible to the occasion and to the felt identity of those taking part. (Small, 1998:109)

Small’s related concepts of ritual, myth, metaphor, art and emotion can be easily applied to practices that are similar to those he himself examined in art-music, but as I show here, they can equally be applied to other aspects of MYJO’s ethnomusicking.

As Small makes clear, these concepts are “concerned with relationships, with the ways in which we relate to one another (and) to the various social groups to which we belong” (1998: 94). The rituals of the MYJO organisation allow the musicians to affirm, explore and celebrate their ideas of how they relate to the Orchestra and to each other, to define a community exploring identities to articulate who they think they are, recognising an identity not only possessed, but shared with others, leading to the communal affirmation “this is who we are”. In this MYJO members build relationships between the musical sounds they make – both of their own initiative and under direction – and relationships between those who partake in the music-making. As for all jazz, the MYJO operates as a marginal art-form in which its participants invent their own rituals to keep alive a sense of who they are, where they belong and what they think the relationships of the world ought to be and to convey that sense to a new generation.

It is in the voices of those who were involved in the MYJO that we can hear their stories redolent with important relationships to music and each other, and to those who led the orchestra and mentored a new generation of musicians. These aspects of ethnomusicking

are rooted in the music cultural tradition of jazz that emerged in the second decade of the twentieth century, and reflects the balances of power that determines which cultural forms carry authority. The youth jazz orchestra movement as a whole, depends upon negotiations between text (the jazz performance) and context (the physical and cultural space within which it is situated). In whichever category jazz is located, it retains the practice of improvisation, an integral part of a jazz performance. Despite its influence in the twentieth century, improvisation, and therefore, jazz, has been accorded minor aesthetic significance in relation to the art-music tradition. Thus, the marginalised music of jazz is distinguished from art-music and its evolution during the last century. This marginalisation reflects tensions between the elitist centralisation of cultural power and a form of mass enfranchisement achieved through the production (and reproduction) of music through aural and technological channels and thus bypassing the score-based aesthetics that serve modernism leading to the privileging of particular artistic myths – the shaping genius (the composer) handing down the work of art.

Transgenerational mentorship

However, the relationships, rituals and myths of the MYJO are also rooted in wider practices of education and other youth orchestras, including other jazz orchestras. The MYJO is based upon the work of a key group of, in the words of musicologist Katherine Williams (2013: 187), “transgenerational mentors” (187) who pass on information. This was itself a hallmark of the early jazz, allowing for the transmission of “learning from the experience and abilities of older musicians”. Nevertheless, this informal educational setting of earlier jazz – where musicians met to play and study the repertoire – gave way to more formally organised forms of jazz education with the establishment of a degree programme at Leeds College of Music in 1965 and the growth of summer schools under the auspices of, amongst others, the London Schools Jazz Orchestra. This model was carried forward in other areas of the Country.

In the West Midlands, initially trumpeter Dennis Darlow, in his capacity as the Musical Director of the fledging MYJO and his successor, fellow trumpeter Mike Beaumont, provided valuable opportunities for the youngsters joining the MYJO to experience jazz performance and improvisation. As Williams reminds us, “the idea of a jazz mentor is a recurring theme in jazz history”. With players and listeners living near each other, an environment was engendered where older, more established musicians acted as guides for succeeding generations. The West Midlands’ region of Walsall had a rich source of

peripatetic music teachers who shared a passion for their subject and a belief that children should learn both to play and appreciate music. Former MYJO saxophonist Sharon Brown, who joined the MYJO organisation in 1975 at the age of fifteen (and whose daughter, Sophia has recently completed her last engagement after ten years with the MYJO), recalled trumpeter and music teacher Roger Siviter being a mentor to many music students with several from her school, Joseph Leckie Secondary in Walsall, joining the MYJO because of his direct encouragement.

Fellow saxophonist Charlie Wright joined the MYJO in the early 1970s and credits Mike Lennon, Musical Director of the MYJO second band as being a particularly helpful mentor, recalling that he was “hugely patient and took us through the nursery slopes of playing arrangements and getting some sort of band out of it. A prodigious, selfless effort really”. In addition to Joseph Leckie School, Queen Mary’s High School also had some accomplished peripatetic teachers. Wright saw these as providing a good musical grounding and offering something different to straight classical music and a good way of learning in a safe environment and recalled teachers putting a lot of effort into these learning situations.

Trombonist Mark Nightingale acknowledges a peripatetic brass teacher at his school as encouraging him to take up the instrument. Nightingale went on to take private lessons from Fred Mercer, a veteran of the British dance band scene and it was his stories about his exploits which gave him the jazz bug.

I thought he was absolutely everything that a teacher should be and I was going to try to do whatever he suggested. He talked about MYJO and that was when I decided that I was going to give that a go.

Independently of the MYJO, Roger Siviter and Clive Allsopp ran improvisation workshops at the MAC in Edgbaston. Nightingale recalled that “Clive gently encouraged all the newbies to have a go and there was no looking back after that”.

Jan Steele became interested in jazz initially by hearing his relative’s collection of jazz and blues 78rpm recordings. A teacher at school suggested that he take up the flute, implying that it was an easy instrument to learn to play. Christmas gifts from Steel’s parents of two LPs by Stan Getz and Charlie Parker sealed things for him.

Similarly, for Charlie Wright it was hearing jazz on the radio which inspired him to take up the saxophone. Originally self-taught, Wright was later encouraged to attend the MYJO

rehearsals at MAC where he met other musicians from schools from around Birmingham and more specifically Walsall.

Acts of exploration and Acts of affirmation of community

In a personal interview saxophonist Alan Wakeman expressed his enthusiasm to join the London Youth Jazz Orchestra 'B' band as he saw it as being more "progressive" than the 'A' band and "Cutting edge" "It wasn't worth playing unless it was something new that hadn't been done before...that's where you met the *real* musicians".

Whilst in Birmingham, fellow saxophonist Nick Pentelow joined his school's wind band and later, the wind band at the recently opened MAC. This led on to him taking part in pianist Johnny Patrick's improvisation sessions which took place on a Monday night also at MAC. Small jazz concerts were subsequently organised with guests including Don Rendell and Ian Carr, Danny Moss and Mike Westbrook being invited to play with the students.

Later, Mike Beaumont arranged Summer Schools at MAC where a group of the local jazz-influenced professional musicians with teaching experience were enlisted to undertake classes with budding musicians.

Drummer Pete Cater's moment of epiphany came when he saw the MYJO play a concert at his school. Most importantly for him was to find that there were other young people who felt the same way about music as he did.

Saxophonist Nick Pentelow found that playing small gigs at the MAC in the presence of invited guests, who were often established musicians from the London jazz scene was a great influence upon him.

In learning the art, coming together and exploring music making contexts, assembling as an orchestra, rehearsing, donning the band T-shirts, performing public concerts and recording albums, members of the MYJO organisation take part in rituals. Pentelow credits Birmingham musician Hugh Roberson along with London Youth Jazz Orchestra (LYJO) leader Bill Ashton with helping to organise the earliest version of the MYJO and they arranged jam sessions with some of the same London-based more established musicians who were often billeted with the Birmingham students whilst in the area.

Public performance was a culmination and recognition of the work that Musical Director and band members had put in to rehearsing their chosen musical material. It was the

MYJO's second Musical Director, Mike Beamont who was responsible for the design and production of the MYJO band T-shirts, worn on concert performances, together with music stands bearing the same logo, both of which affirmed the band members' attachment to a community but also clearly proclaimed "this is who we are" and celebrated an identity both possessed and shared with others, including their audiences. Affirmation and celebration of community was also expressed with the LP releases by the MYJO, with the initial release featuring original regional band mentors Mike Burney, Brian Newton and Roger Siviter.

The art world of what is commonly termed 'serious' music has been arranged around the compositional 'works' and their performance in formal concert settings and the identification of a 'cannon' of 'masterworks' produced by the great composers. A by-product of this is the concomitant marginalisation of improvisation, as a gift apparently bestowed upon a small number of exceptional individuals. However, if we consider the number and variety of musical cultures where improvisation is a normal element, the notion that improvisational ability is a gift endowed to a few extraordinary performers can be seen as a myth.

Confirmatory myths

In Small's words, "to take part in a ritual is to act out a myth". (1998: 95). Myths explain how relationships come to be as they are. They deal with the 'heroic acts' of the 'great men' which in turn provide models for human behaviour and set the foundations for all social and cultural institutions. The 'heroic acts' of the 'great men' is a persistent trope of jazz studies.

Jan Steele tells of receiving Christmas gifts from his parents of two LPs by Stan Getz and Charlie Parker which sealed his future path in music. Charlie Wright recalls first hearing jazz on the car radio on journeys with his father, citing albums by Gerry Mulligan and Jimmy Witherspoon as particularly inspirational, and albums that he still returns to.

The early repertoire of the MYJO included 'classics' from the big band repertoire such as 'Cute' from Count Basie. The conventional big band formation and appearance on stage including traditional style music stands also confirmed the existing social order.

In his assertion that the LYJO 'B' band was more "progressive", Alan Wakeman is referring to the repertoire breaking away from the tradition to play contemporary material from young British arrangers and composers. Nick Pentelow agrees when he says that it was good to have music and arrangements specifically written for the first edition of the

MYJO by their leader Dennis Darlow. Some years later, Julian Arguelles, who joined the MYJO organisation in 1976, almost simultaneously was playing with the Walsall Youth Jazz Orchestra (WYJO) and enjoyed playing in this ensemble more partly due to their different repertoire.

Diversity

Looking back to the early days of the LYJO in the late 1960s, saxophonist Alan Wakeman recalled refugees from South Africa joining the band including drummer Selwyn Lissack and bass player Cecil Ferrer, both white South Africans. Ferrer was required to black up to be able to play with the black musicians in Johannesburg.

At the same time in the West Midlands, saxophonist Jan Steele, who was a founder member of the MYJO under Denis Darlow's leadership, in a personal interview on Zoom recollected:

It was 100% white, 100% male and I do remember that girl-friends used to come along and sit and listen or do their knitting. I always thought it was ridiculous at the time. I did not understand why there were no girls in the Orchestra.

This contradicts a contemporary newspaper piece from 1968 indicating that there were in fact two female band members. The Zoom interview with former MYJO saxophonist Charlie Wright reveals that some five years later the mix was "possibly 70% male and 30% female." In terms of racial diversity,

It was 90% to 95% white. There were very few black or coloured guys coming through. There were a handful. A little while later after me a few came through from under the auspices of Andy Hamilton to some extent. Some of his family came through the band and people who had been helped or inspired by him. But it was stupidly 90% white, easy, I would have said.

Pete Cater remembers:

To have been around music in the West Midlands at the end of the 70s and the beginning of the 80s in that way was a forward-looking time because in the world of pop music there was all the great 2-Tone stuff that was going on with bands like 'The Specials' and 'The Selector' and 'The Beat' and 'UB-40' and quite a number of others where nobody gave a damn about what colour you were...and people were just making music together for a sense of common purpose and that was equally representative of MYJO where there were a number of people of a BAME background, male and female and nobody cared. Nobody was looking at that then. It was just about the music and getting together and playing together and finding common ground that way.

By the early 1970s Mike Beaumont "couldn't care less" about gender balance and welcomed anyone who wanted to come along and play regardless of gender and race.

Reasons given for the gender imbalance included the perception that females would not be attracted to the competitive, sometimes macho environment and the fear of risk-taking in terms of the act of improvisation.

However, from the data that I have collected clearly both males and females felt equal trepidation when taking their first improvised solos. Nonetheless, the ensuing years saw an increase in the number of females joining the Orchestra.

Julian Arguelles having joined the MYJO in 1976 quickly worked his way into the first band and shortly thereafter the National Youth Jazz Orchestra. Around this time, he also played with John Hughes' WYJO and whilst he acknowledges that this was not necessarily the best of the bands, he enjoyed working in the ensemble more. This was partly due to their more contemporary 'European' repertoire. In an interview via Zoom, in Arguelles' opinion:

I would say, and I've got to say it was less macho than the other bands, which is a thing, especially back then in the jazz scene. There were mostly men in the bands and there was a certain competitive thing, but there was also a certain macho thing about it...But the Walsall Youth Jazz Orchestra, approximately 50% of the band were female.

A Birmingham Post newspaper feature in 1980 in the Women's Post section makes no specific reference to the girls in the Orchestra yet the accompanying image places them front and centre of the shot and towards the rear there is a sole male of ethnic origin.

Although my interviewees suggested they would have been welcomed, relatively few musicians of colour joined the MYJO. One participant suggested that this was because they had their own music scenes and had little interest in the music that the orchestra played.

It is often claimed that women in jazz are frequently vocalists with female instrumentalists being uncommon. This statement is not as true as it once was. There is, however, still a gender imbalance in the jazz and improvised music scene. A promoter may assert that there aren't enough female artists to achieve balanced programming. Promoters only want to book the best acts and it's their music not their gender that matters. They pass the responsibility to the conservatoires who can only work with the applications they receive, and they only accept the best applicants and won't offer places to less deserving people just because they are women. Is it an issue for the schools to address? How can they encourage girls to take up instruments and feel an enthusiasm for jazz when conservatoires,

promoters and venues are not perceived as welcoming environments or somewhere where they can flourish?

Youth jazz education seeks to address the gender imbalance observed at higher education level and possibly beyond and to prepare young musicians with the skills and knowledge needed to succeed in these environments.

Mark Nightingale maintained that by the early 1980s “there were quite a few girls in the band” and remembered Jamaican saxophonist Andy Hamilton’s son Grahame playing lead trumpet with the band. “Thinking about it now, there was an element of diversity, but I don’t think it was probably truly reflective of society in Birmingham at the time”.

This written history covers some of the material I used in my radio-style documentary, but it is presented here as a self-standing account of the MYJO and the cultural practices through which they operated. It is also offered as a point of comparison to the radio-style documentary, the production processes for which inevitably build a different historical narrative and a different history, even though the material utilised has been the same. This written component now turns to my autoethnographic reflections on the process of radio programme production I went through and, in the final chapter, what I found about interviews and narrative through this process.

Chapter Eight: Autoethnography

In this chapter, I bring together my practice-based research with the presentation of my findings. I do this through the reflective process of studying myself as a radio-style documentary producer who has taken advantage of the opportunities provided by community radio and new technologies to first master radio production, and then, in my doctoral research, apply them as a research method to the study of local jazz history. Autoethnography combines autobiography and ethnography as a method of both examining what we do and writing up a reflective, theoretically-informed account of what we did.

I draw on the principles I have set out in previous chapters: from Chapter One, radio production as a method from radio studies and its broader context in media and cultural studies and an increased democratisation of audio production enabled by the new digital technologies. In reflecting I also recognise the importance of my development as a radio-style documentary producer within community radio. These forms of radio not only provide opportunities for people without radio profession backgrounds to broadcast, they also allow a more open space to experiment and try new approaches. It is this spirit that I brought to my research and to this autoethnographic reflection.

In reflecting on my own practice as a radio-style documentary producer, I echo Schon (2016), in considering that a mastery of our practice allowed the practitioner to simultaneously monitor and adapt their approach, perhaps even intuitively (or instinctually). This contrasts sharply with the novice practitioner (that I once was), who adheres to rules and procedures and applies these unquestioningly.

I have divided the music documentaries for this autoethnographic study into four categories based upon Kolb's (1976) four-stage experiential learning cycle which focuses on:

1. Concrete experience - where I undertook initial radio documentary productions.
2. Reflective observation of the new experience - where I review the initial experience.
3. Abstract conceptualization - where I draw conclusions from my reflection.
4. Active experimentation - where I undertake further radio documentary productions using my conclusions.

Kolb's (1976) Learning Style Inventory Model provides a foundation for understanding experiential learning and is a method which I adopt in my own radio production processes, and it is an effective method of seeking to improve my own practice. Kolb developed the method of measuring and validating the various learning styles associated with experiential learning. Kolb identified four learning styles: diverging, assimilating, converging, and accommodating. Criticisms levelled at the inventory include its low reliability, questionable validity, and low predictive powers. There is also the assumption that an individual may possess only one learning style. Kolb's Experiential Learning Model also employs four learning modes: concrete experience (feeling), reflective observation (watching), abstract conceptualisation (thinking) and active experimentation (doing).

Here I employ an accommodating learning style whilst applying both concrete experience and active experimentation to learn and process information (Muro and Terry, 2007) and preferring active involvement in concrete situations (Sugarman, 1985). Using Kolb as part of my autoethnographic method has helped me understand more clearly my radio production work methods. As I have worked through my doctoral research, I came to see that I make decisions more on intuition than logic and prefer setting goals and working in teams in order to accomplish tasks (Kolb and Kolb, 2005).

I utilise Kolb's learning cycle to interrogate the production stages involved in completion of these documentaries with the learning cycle designed to emphasise reflective observation. This autoethnographic account links directly to the following documentaries that are at the centre of my practice-based research.

Tony Levin – radio feature tribute (Musson, 102.5 The 'Bridge', 2011 part one [52:43], part two [57:36])

Ron Mathewson – oral history in three 'fragments' (Musson, 2022: [05:15; 05:22 and 07:39])

Birmingham International Jazz Festival (Musson, Birmingham Jazz Radio, 2022: [59:52])

Tony Levin – documentary radio feature deploying the tools of archival research (Musson, Birmingham Jazz Radio, 2022: [59:54])

'Going out on a Limb: Wilkie's Story' - oral history highlighting the work of one of the academics in the jazz cluster at BCU (Musson, 2017 [30:01])

Youth Jazz Movement in the West Midlands in the 1960s and 1970s (Musson, 2023 [29:52]) radio produced oral history/ethnomusicology feature as an alternative means of academic research.

Youth Jazz Movement in the West Midlands in the 1960s and 1970s – Second iteration (Musson, 2024)

- i. *MAC, Youth and Community Arts – acts of exploration and acts of affirmation of community – ‘drop-in’ radio documentary feature edit [16:00]*
- ii. *MAC, Youth and Community Arts – acts of exploration and acts of affirmation of community – Podcast edit [16:38]*
- iii. *Learning jazz – Transgenerational Mentorship – ‘drop-in’ radio documentary feature edit [19:33]*
- iv. *Learning jazz – Transgenerational Mentorship – Podcast edit [19:57]*
- v. *Being Involved - Diversity – ‘drop-in’ radio documentary feature edit [19:25]*
- vi. *Being Involved – Diversity – Podcast edit [20:14]*

These documentaries allow me to uncover a narrative of discovery, capturing the multiplicity of processes involved in shaping my work as a radio producer and presenter. I begin by exploring my initial ‘instinctual’ documentary work on *Tony Levin* (Musson, 2011). I follow this with an analysis of my ‘intermediary’ documentary projects, *Ron Mathewson Tribute* (Musson, 2022) *Birmingham International Jazz Festival* (Musson, 2022) and an up-dated *Tony Levin* feature (Musson, 2022) made utilising some of the tools and skills acquired during the course of this investigation and intended as an oral history feature rather than a documentary feature specifically made for radio. ‘Wilkie’s Story’ (Musson, 2017) was an oral hidden-history project undertaken prior to the commencement of this Ph.D. project. The documentaries culminate with two iterations of *Youth Jazz Movement in the West Midlands in the 1960s and 1970s* (Musson, 2023: 2024). The first iteration constitutes the final radio-like piece of work that I have produced as a ‘reflexive’ radio producer putting into action what I have learned from undertaking the earlier projects. The second iteration deploys some of the same material with extra material added from the original interviews and builds upon the earlier radio-like piece in providing further ‘reflexive’ audio in the form of three ‘drop-in’ radio documentary features and three podcasts, each being more explicitly aligned to points made in this written component of my thesis.

My practice-based research is measured against a theoretical framework, established in the previous chapters, which utilises iterative production research, autoethnography and interviews with musicians. My findings draw from a range of archival materials to counter a lack of studies in the field, and to encompass a wide range of contrasting academic and practitioner perspectives.

Tony Levin

Part One:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/10SzIjW4h6Ng1sFlxtM7-o4ZHYqXy_aVD/view?usp=sharing

Part Two:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/15JvBH2Kq3L0HXkmKR9pgSJWRk8IJ-ikh/view?usp=sharing>

Concrete production experience

Here I explain my experience of producing my first radio documentary and recall my thoughts at the time.

This two-hour production was created for broadcast on the community radio station Black Country Radio in 2011. The feature was designed as a tribute to this British jazz drummer who, for a large part of his life, lived in Birmingham and died in 2011 at the age of 71.

The production work was executed with no intention that it would later be used as the basis of academic investigation and my reflections, therefore, have been considered retrospectively. This exercise has provided a benchmark for my future music documentary practice. Unlike some of the future projects which were conceived and produced within an environment of academic investigation, this first documentary can be seen as a ‘pure’ example of my production work in a community radio context and provides a point of reference against which I consider my subsequent documentary features.

Project Overview – Here I set out the background of the documentary to provide a context for the work itself. The idea for the project was prompted by the death of one-time Birmingham based drummer Tony Levin on 3 February 2011 and was produced as a tribute to a musician who, although spending much of his life based in Birmingham, was active not only regionally but also nationally and internationally. Although a major well-respected musician on the British jazz scene, no prior major appraisal of his career had been attempted by way of radio documentary. The feature was produced for broadcast on Black Country Radio, a community radio station (at the time known as 102.5 The ‘Bridge’) and was aired between 8-10pm on 20 June 2011. At the time of broadcast, I was a volunteer radio presenter producing jazz programmes. As a long-time jazz fan and one-time budding musician, I was aware of Levin’s importance on the regional and national jazz scene and sadly his death provided an opportunity to produce a tribute to acknowledge his achievements.

Reflective observation – Here I think about the experience and reflect upon it. My reflection includes my feelings and links to my skills, knowledge, and prior experience.

Thinking back to the first days of my radio presentation work, I considered that much of it was innate or intuitive. But much of what was undertaken subconsciously in my mind was the product of many years listening to radio and hearing how programmes were presented. In many ways it was the presenter and how they presented that was as important to me as the music that they were playing. The same is true of my radio production work, having absorbed how radio documentary features are constructed. This has proved to be very useful as I have deployed these learned techniques in my radio documentary production work consistently. It is also detrimental as it is difficult to clear these techniques from my mind when working creatively.

Whilst instinctively I felt that I could create the perfect radio programme I lacked the technical skills. Having received some basic training in how to operate the studio equipment and playout system in the radio station and spending a few weeks shadowing a presenter, I was given the chance to present my own show. I honed my skills live on air over a period of a few weeks. I created a format for myself and followed it and every subsequent week was a fresh iteration of the formula. Speaking on air seemed to come relatively easily as I subconsciously drew upon the years of prior listening experience. Again, I created a pattern of language that was comfortable for me, and each week followed a similar format.

I had been undertaking ‘live’ studio interviews with musicians for some time, however, this was to be the first time that I had produced a documentary feature designed to fill a two-hour programme slot. Up until this point my radio work happened live in real time with very little time to think and plan each programme in detail. With this project I allowed myself the luxury of time. At the outset I had no thoughts of a time scale and the piece evolved organically. However, during the production process I became aware of a Tony Levin tribute concert which was to be held locally and was to be a spectacular event. I decided that I would have the completed feature ready for broadcast during the week following the concert. This also allowed me to gain publicity by having the programme announced at the concert. My decision did apply pressure on those who were completing the editing to have everything completed in time.

For this feature, my live on-air role was simply to introduce the feature, which had been pre-recorded and edited to fit the two-hour available time slot. My initial plan was to invite a colleague of Levin's into the studio to co-present the programme with me and stimulate conversation between the pre-recorded tributes and selected musical examples of Levin's work. However, rather than a musician I decided that I would like to invite a media commentator to join me. By a rather circuitous route I located Tim Wall, then Professor of Radio and Popular Music Studies at Birmingham City University and he kindly agreed to participate. Using my knowledge of jazz, I selected contributors and asked them to record their remote audio 'tributes' which they did often using mobile phone technology. Audio quality varied greatly and presented a challenge in equalising the sound of the various clips in post-production following my editing of the 'tributes'. Rather than Prof. Wall coming to the Black Country Radio studios for a 'live' programme, where I would be in a familiar environment 'running the desk' and presenting the programme, it was decided to pre-record the programme in studios at Birmingham City University with a dedicated producer assigned to the programme. I was immediately working in an unfamiliar environment and working as part of a team rather than alone which presented a new challenge. However, being free to simply concentrate on the programme content alone and not concern myself with running the desk was an unaccustomed luxury. I had prepared a minimal script to act as a prompt and containing details of the recordings to be used. It was important to me that the programme sound as 'natural' and unscripted as possible. We recorded the 'links' between the contributors and music. Later the whole was assembled at BCU by an editor, who tried as far as possible to match the differing audio volumes of the various sound clips as I did not possess the skills to do this myself to a professional standard. The resulting feature was to be broadcast in my regular weekly slot and therefore to my regular audience which had been built up over several years. This was not a commercial project and as it was produced for a community radio station, a characteristic of which is that services are not provided primarily for the financial gain of the individuals involved, there was no pressure or intention to generate potential revenue. Thus, it was a labour of love made purely for my own enjoyment and that of my intended regular radio audience. Content, other than that from Prof. Wall and myself, was created remotely by contributors and emailed to me as mp3 files and downloaded to my computer hard drive. Most of the music samples were drawn from my own collection. Music licencing was not an issue as this came under the auspices of the licences under which 102.3 The 'Bridge operated. There was no pressure to secure a 'commission' as the vehicle for transmission was my own

radio programme over which I had total control in terms of production and editorial content. In this respect I was my own commissioner. The radio station management relied entirely upon my judgement in assessing whether the programme material would be successful and provide a memorable programme. Feedback received from listeners following the broadcast confirmed its success. Having an existing listener base in this respect is an advantage rather than pitching an entirely new concept. My track record as a radio presenter and now producer allowed me to establish my credentials. Legislation governing community radio stations requires that the output of a typical community radio station achieves a balance between music and speech output. Typically, this will equate to around 70% music and 30% speech. The ratio between music and speech for this feature exceeded this requirement with much of the music played being faded out as I judged that the speech element was more important than the music which the listener could locate elsewhere. This feature was included as part of the radio station's specialist shows where presenters will usually have complete control over their playlist. It also fulfils the requirement to involve, engage and support the local community as the subject was a local musician. Whilst producing the programme I became aware that Birmingham City University were independently working on an oral history of Tony Levin which involved a series of audio-visual interviews covering elements of his life and career. I was permitted access to the audio files from this history (which is available at tonylevin.org) and the clips that I selected were important in allowing listeners to hear part of the story told in Tony's own words, thus bringing the feature to life and also highlighting more personal areas of his life and giving a flavour of his personality. This was the first time that I had incorporated archival material in a radio production, having never previously considered such a possibility. Other than this, no further use of archival material was made.

The music used was carefully selected by Prof. Wall and me. Some pieces were chosen to acknowledge important milestones in Levin's career. The positioning of the music was important as it allowed the overall production to have a sense of pacing, whilst at the same time it was equally important to assemble the music in a broadly chronological order to mirror the way in which the feature was initially conceived and constructed. All the music was copyright and covered by the station's licensing agreements. An editorial decision was made to only include short illustrative clips of most of the music tracks to allow more time for the 'story' to unfold. The programme was subsequently made available online via www.tonylevin.org where each piece of music was played in its entirety. As I reflect now,

perhaps the copyright music should have been removed fully to make the programme legally accessible via the website. However, this would defeat part of the object of putting the programme online, the other objective was to make the programme available to a wider potential audience. The absence of music would have been a serious detriment to the online iteration of the programme.

As a producer I consider that I am required to have a detailed accurate understanding of my audience to enable me to create contents which will engage my audience. Over a period of many years prior to the production of this documentary I had built a following for my jazz programmes, both regionally and online and this, to some extent, gave me a feeling for what content they would engage with. I had an ongoing relationship with listeners as I knew many of them, seeing them at concerts and gaining valuable feedback from them and via the Facebook page that I set up to promote my programmes. Listener statistics produced by the radio station also confirmed this. My radio series formed part of a specialist music strand, and it is only necessary for me to be aware of what I perceive to be a jazz programme's targeted demographic, and not the station demographic as a whole, which is somewhat different and more wide-ranging. Thus, I can justify the inclusion of this documentary in the programming schedule.

Community Radio operates in part with funding from advertisers, akin to commercial radio. It was necessary to create six distinct sections to fit within the advertising schedule. This was an advantage, as I was able to divide the audio into 'chapters.' This resulted in the creation of six mp3 clips burned to CD for ease of playout through the radio studio equipment. I had a degree of flexibility, as I controlled when the ads played out, but each section was timed at 17-18 minutes, thus allowing for four sets of advertising breaks and additionally, two news bulletins. As I have said, this editing work was carried out by an in-house team at BCU.

Production practices – As stated, my production work for this project was undertaken without any expectation of it forming the basis of an academic analysis. I adopt four subcategories to assist in my analysis: interviewing, editing, the use of music and presentation.

It would usually be necessary to undertake extensive research, before starting on the project. Here, however, I relied almost entirely upon my own knowledge. I submitted emails to potential contributors, all of whom I would now consider to be primary sources.

Again, from my own knowledge, I began to assemble appropriate music tracks, only later including the audio from the BCU oral history project. All of this was instinctive work and influenced by many years of prior radio listening where I had absorbed styles of broadcasting, almost by a process of osmosis. No written timeline was employed to mark out plot highlights – this was again instinctive, and I preferred to allow the form of the documentary to be dictated by the contributor's content. Various interview segments were arranged and then rearranged to see how best they would work, but the intention was always to follow a chronological order based upon highlights of Levin's career in music.

Interviewing – Interviews were the key points of the documentary and a vital production element. Almost all interviews were remote in the sense that I simply asked contributors to talk about (and record) their memories of Levin. There were no detailed questions. I simply asked for contributor's memories which were then emailed to me as mp3 or wav files and were assembled later. Little content editing was required.

Where in-person interviews were undertaken, I used a Tascam DR40 handheld portable audio recorder and using the machine's internal microphone. This was my own equipment. As I have mentioned, consistency of sound was an issue as most of the audio tributes were recorded by contributors using their own facilities – often simply recorded via mobile phone apps. These inconsistencies were addressed in the postproduction phase. Editing of the audio clips was undertaken once all raw material had been gathered.

Editing – Editing was something of a joint enterprise, not undertaken by me but outsourced to a production company associated with BCU who equalised the volume between the various interview clips and assembled the documentary in accordance with my instructions. I had previously planned the order of the contributions to tell a chronological story of Levin's life and work. Narration and conversation with Tim Wall signposted how each segment was to be put together and the spoken word elements were assembled accordingly. I always had a picture in my mind of what I wanted to achieve in terms of the final product, and as it was framed as a memorial tribute, I wanted to simply allow the contributors to speak and not to pursue any other topics. The narrative was self-selecting.

Whilst the radio station had a clear sound, style and listener demographic which influenced the daytime output, the specialist programming in the evenings allowed for the possibility to depart from this to some extent and allowed for an element of creativity to be deployed. Each specialist show had its own demographic as distinct from one that was station wide.

However, this was always to be kept within the confines of the news bulletins, advertising breaks and station idents, all of which can be carefully deployed to allow the overall documentary to breathe and as a form of punctuation, whilst also to some extent retaining the station's style. Keeping in mind the regular advertising breaks it was necessary to build up the tension towards the end of each section and 'tease' ahead to the next section to keep the listener's interest. Despite this, I consider that if the listener's attention is caught within the first five minutes of a programme they will remain throughout its duration. There was no requirement for the programme to be blended with the station's regular programming other than in terms of station idents and placing of advertising and news breaks.

I was anxious that the tribute should not be simply a list of facts as it would have been if I had been presenting solo and without any contributor content. I wanted to avoid a journalistic approach and instinctively used the techniques that I had heard previously during many years of radio listening in creating what I thought a music documentary feature should be.

Music – The music was carefully chosen to illustrate some of the musical highlights in the career of the musician. However, it was not of paramount importance but conveyed extra meaning and context to the documentary and atmosphere. It was relegated to a secondary position by focusing on contributor's recollections of the environment that created or influenced the music.

Any script notes were compiled after the interviews and programme format had been established. I tried to link the contributions together in such a way as not to need presenter/narrator to add a great deal of additional information. I considered that the intimacy of some contributor's presentations and the poignancy of what they were saying would be adversely affected by intrusion of the presenter.

Abstract conceptualization

At this point I interrogate the ways that I have learned from this experience and analyse and explain my reflection. I focus on the meaning of my reflection and other possibilities. I acknowledge both things that went well, and those that didn't. I identify areas for further exploration.

Weaknesses and limitations – I fulfilled my ambition to produce my first radio feature and have it broadcast. Subsequently having it embedded on the tonylevin.org website was an

outcome that I had not anticipated. I received positive feedback from listeners with one report of a listener being brought to tears.

As I have said my radio production and presentation practice is largely instinctive and I have stated how this can be seen as both a positive and a negative as it is difficult to depart from radio production conventions. It does, however, provide a benchmark against which to measure my subsequent progress during the period of this thesis.

My intention was for the feature to sound as natural and relaxed as possible. It was recorded 'as live' and with a script which only consisted of prompts and details of the music played. I remember feeling very nervous working in an unfamiliar environment with new colleagues and there were almost inevitably 'fluffs' in my delivery. In hindsight, I should have prepared a more detailed script and yet doing so would have resulted in an unnatural delivery. Listeners to community radio stations appreciate that presenters are volunteers and so are more willing to forgive 'fluffs.'

At this point in my career, I had very little experience of audio editing and a limited knowledge of sound production and balancing and therefore the decision was made to use the services of an independent production company to complete the post-production work and they dealt with levelling the audio between the various sound clips and other issues. Since this point I have enhanced my own skills in this respect attaining an MA in Radio and Audio Production and now undertake all this work myself.

Active experimentation – Here I put my learning into practice. I translate my analysis and explanation into plans and actions for the future. Goals that I set are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and targeted. From here, I create further radio productions based upon this learning and taking me back to the initial stage in an iterative process.

Conclusion – In my retrospective autoethnographic observations I point out details of the production and presentation practices in the 'real world' context of a broadcast on community radio. I utilise first-hand observations in my capacity as a radio practitioner. I provided the context for the production project, how the project was conceived and to be broadcast, sitting within the specialist programming strand of the radio station, bearing in mind that there was no necessity for a commissioning pitch as I had total control of the production and presentation process. I explained my instinctual approach to broadcasting and 'pre' and 'post' production work with due deference to the external production company who did much of the final post-production work.

The proliferation of inexpensive digital production equipment and easily available online technologies combined with the skills acquired whilst completing an MA in Radio and Audio Production have enabled me to produce subsequent radio documentaries gathering material autonomously and allowing me to conceptualise and complete projects which would previously have required a team of radio professionals. I employed these skills to produce the radio and other audio artifacts detailed above and now move on analyse these to allow me to track my progress as a radio producer on an ongoing basis and ultimately to show how processes of audio production can mediate and interpret the history of jazz in the West Midlands in the 1960s and 1970s.

As I have previously said, reflective practice can be understood as the process of learning through and from experience and moving towards gaining new insights of self and or practice (Boud, et al., 1985; Boyd and Fales, 1983; Mezirow, 1981; Jarvis, 1992). In order to be truly reflective requires an examination of assumptions of everyday practice and requires that I am self-aware and able to critically evaluate my own responses to practice situations. The aim is to recapture practice experiences and consider them to gain new understandings and so improve future practice. As I have previously acknowledged, it is possible to question the extent to which a researcher should focus upon themselves as individuals rather than the broader social context and in understanding this form of solitary introspection, I aim to avoid what is sometimes perceived as self-indulgent navel-gazing. Also, as I have previously averred, in a busy professional environment it is often difficult to apply reflective practice in a meaningful way.

In interrogating the reflective production stages involved in the completion of these music documentaries, I defer to Dewey's proposition that we "think the problem out" moving towards the formulation of hypotheses in trial-and-error reflective situations and then use these to plan action, testing out my ideas. Furthermore, in my interrogation I apply Schon's notion of reflection-on-action to assess my production work and endeavour to apply his notion of reflection-in-action to the work undertaken during the production of my more recent production work. The reflective processes applied to my initial work allow me to gain insight which informs my subsequent work.

Ron Mathewson

Project overview – This was a further project undertaken with no thought of academic research. Double bass player Ron Mathewson became a friend, firstly via initial contact on

Facebook and subsequently during lengthy telephone conversations over a period of some years. Ron became a regular listener to my radio programmes and often used to phone in with comments. Occasionally he was happy to chat live on air over the telephone without any form of pre-planning. He was keen for us to meet in person but ultimately, he found this a difficult process and would call on the day we were due to meet to cancel arrangements. In March 2015 I was in London on another assignment and found that I had spare time and not being far from Ron's home I decided to pay him a visit. He was pleased to see me, greeted me very warmly and invited me in. We chatted for a while, and I found Ron to be in a relaxed and seemingly happy mood. As I had my Tascam recorder with me, I asked Ron if he would be happy for me to record our conversation. He readily agreed and so I pressed record and continued our conversation. This was simply a relaxed conversation between friends. I had no immediate intention of using the conversation as part of a radio broadcast. I had no pre-prepared questions or planned agenda. The whole event was spontaneous.

Production processes – As this was not an interview for radio broadcast purposes, the usual preparations and conventions were not observed. My evolving plan at the time was to treat this as a way for Ron to gain confidence and that I would return to capture a more formally structured interview at a later stage. This did not happen. Some six years later, as part of my academic work, I was examining ways in which oral history interviews might be refashioned to form radio documentary features and my thoughts turned to our conversation. To form a traditional radio documentary, it was clear that I would need to observe some of the radio conventions by adding narration to provide context to the recording. During the intervening period, Ron had died, becoming a victim of the Covid-19 pandemic, and I decided to create a miniature tribute to him, but using almost entirely his own words, as distinct from the Levin tribute which largely utilised the words of others. I had only around thirty minutes of audio to work with and the sound quality of much of this, whilst being acceptable for the purposes of an oral history, was lacking the required quality for a radio broadcast. I constructed a series of three 'jazz fragments' each of approximately five minutes in duration and which I anticipated might form the basis for a longer documentary feature with further new material added. Music is used to illustrate Mathewson's comments and as chapter breaks as new topics are introduced into the conversation. Archival material was used in a very limited way, eliciting information from LP sleeve notes and from the memoirs of a fellow musician who knew Ron well.

Fragment 1

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Yb6FM3WjterMJPOaMENnqvq6yZezifl0/view?usp=sharing>

This begins with my narration providing a short overview of the artist's life to set the scene. I used music featuring Ron as a 'bed' underneath my narration. As context, my introduction links Ron to his occasional contributions to my radio programme by referring to his telephone calls and to a particular instance when he called in to express his appreciation of a fellow bassist who was a guest that night and it was a measure of Ron's stature that it was my guest who was astounded when Ron called in and having the chance to speak to him (a further layer of oral history). I use archival material in a limited way to provide some biographical background. My intention was to use this 'fragment' as an introduction to 'fragments 2 and 3' and Ron does not feature in this section.

Fragment 2

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1iY12zgyvixBV4uLt27ExZG9jYNnSWN9t/view?usp=sharing>

After a short, narrated introduction to set the scene, Ron recounts highlights from his life and career. Limited archival material has been deployed in support of the 'story'

Fragment 3

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1AnF9w-kxQsMkP6Wpvw74NJ0nAp5dfuLa/view?usp=sharing>

A further narrated introduction leads into Ron recalling joining Tubby Hayes and links into Hayes' lengthy introduction to Ron on stage some months after joining his quartet to add atmosphere, followed by a lengthy live atmospheric piece of music from the Hayes' quartet. Ron concludes the piece by saying he was with the band until Hayes died in 1973.

Interviewing – Rather than an in interview, I term this as an organic conversation between friends, wide-ranging, as any regular conversation would be and similarly without a pre-defined format. I used my Tascam DR-40 hand-held portable recorder to capture the conversation which involved me sitting close to Ron to elicit the best audio quality. I remember thinking that I wasn't sure if what I was capturing would be suitable audio content, but that it would be a wonderful recording purely for my own archive.

Editing – As I have said, the recording was made with no intention of broadcast nor with the thought that it would provide oral history content for an academic project. However, during this PhD study I revisited it to see if it was possible to make what is essentially an oral history into a radio feature. The result was an eleven minute ‘test piece’. As is common in any conversation the audio is peppered with affirmations, laughs and other noises from me and my first challenge was to edit these out which I did reasonably successfully. Any difficult editing was disguised with the use of music clips. My aim is always to create a form of monologue and thus I endeavour to edit myself out of the recording. I selected a clip that discussed Ron’s involvement with Tubby Hayes as I imagined that this would be of interest to a listener and was his most well-known association and one that he was clearly proud of.

This was an interesting exercise in adapting what was essentially an oral history interview for radio broadcast and here I began to see the differences which lay chiefly in the editing process. I was mindful that the sense and meaning of the original oral history should not be changed but felt that work was required to adhere to the conventions of radio documentary production.

Music – Music selection was linked to Ron’s recollections so as to allow the listener a flavour of Ron’s playing.

Fragment 1

Scottish folk music from Shetland is employed to evoke Ron’s heritage and is used as a ‘bed’ to the narration. The music bed changes to align with comments in the narration and then merges into a bass solo which is described as “immense”.

Fragment 2

The music here was chosen to echo Ron’s recollections of living in a flat below a fellow musician and spending afternoons practicing together and features Ron performing with his neighbour.

Weaknesses and limitations – I had only around thirty minutes of audio to work with and the sound quality of much of this, whilst being acceptable for the purposes of an oral history, was lacking the required quality for a radio broadcast.

As is common in any conversation the audio is peppered with affirmations, laughs and other noises from me and my first challenge was to edit these out which I did reasonably successfully.

This begins with my narration providing a short overview of the artist's life to set the scene. I used music featuring Ron as a 'bed' underneath my narration.

The audio was recorded with no pre-planning and intended only as a personal archive for my own enjoyment. It was not until sometime after Ron's death, in 2020, that I decided to produce a tribute, in the form of short 'fragments' as experiments in how an oral history might be converted to form a radio documentary feature. The audio quality was far from broadcast quality and required some post-production editing and manipulation to create something that was listenable from a raw audio 30-minute conversation. As stated, it was necessary to edit out my own questions and interjections to aid the flow of the piece. I generally work this way in my radio documentary features. In hindsight, I would have used the music as more of a bed to disguise the changes in audio level during the conversation and background noise. The music in 'fragment 3' is too lengthy, but was used as a filler, as I had limited material available to me.

Conclusions – In my retrospective autoethnographic observations I point out details of the production and presentation practices in the collection of material for an oral history project. I utilise first-hand observations in my capacity as an oral historian.

This was an instinctive process as I had received no training as an oral historian. In its naked form the audio works well as an oral history.

In fashioning the oral history to form a radio production suitable for broadcast, I again used an instinctual approach bringing to bear, almost by a process of osmosis, my many years listening to radio music documentaries and features. My digital production equipment and Adobe Audition DAW enabled me to produce these exploratory 'fragments' quite quickly and whilst I acknowledge that the finished audio quality is far from perfect (as may often be the case with oral history recordings) it shows that it is possible to fashion what is primarily an oral history recording into an engaging radio feature.

Birmingham Jazz Festival – feature using oral history techniques for Birmingham Jazz Radio

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1AXEZSjXkFhMUQT9pOycdfO-9PD23JVQs/view?usp=sharing>

Project overview – This was a first attempt at creating a radio documentary feature using the tools of oral history. It was created in 2022 and during the Covid-19 pandemic which presented difficulties in gathering face-to-face interview content. It was produced using archival material located from online sources and supplemented with appropriate music clips. The documentary was intended to be one of a planned series of programmes titled ‘Jazz 0121’ for a proposed online jazz radio station for Birmingham. There was no production budget and I absorbed the minimal costs. The series of programmes were planned to be a co-production with my Supervisor Dr. Pedro Cravinho, Keeper of the Archives at Birmingham City University. The series logo was produced by photographer and graphic designer Brian Homer. The feature was timed to fit a one-hour time slot.

Production processes – ‘Jazz 0121’ was a proposed series of radio programmes co-produced by me and Pedro Cravinho which celebrated the past and present of jazz in Birmingham. The programmes were publicised as presenting sonic *fragments* of the local scene. This music has long been firmly established in Britain’s cultural diversity, reflecting and responding to specific social and political conditions over the past century. However, its history in Britain’s ‘second city’ remains underappreciated.

The script for the programme was prepared with the use of archival material found online. The music bed under the narration was provided by musicians previously featured in the festival. Narration was recorded in my home studio using Adobe Audition software. Archive clips describe both the problems putting on the festival during a pandemic and also recalling the seeds of the festival and music from an early festival patron.

Due to Covid-induced restrictions, the production work was undertaken online. Youtube videos were sourced and downloaded as an alternative to specifically recorded material. A narration was scripted and used in conjunction with carefully chosen music clips which represented acts who had appeared at the festival over previous years. Archive information regarding past performances and reviews were located online using *Melody Maker* listings

Whilst national and international performers are featured, the stress is on the local musicians who have supported the festival over the years.

Programme and station idents were included as standard practice, although the format was never discussed with station representatives, who left me to my own devices entirely.

Introductory music from Birmingham musician Soweto Kinch.

Interviewing – No interviewing was undertaken for this project due to the difficulties presented by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Editing – Music, narration, and archival clips were carefully edited to produce a coherent and informative story.

Music – Music was fundamental to this project as it focused on a jazz festival as distinct from a documentary featuring a musician – music not the musician. Music was carefully selected from a chronological inspection of past festival programmes and featured many festival headliners (as well as regional musicians). Music consists of longer clips of music, some recorded live at the festival to give a flavour of the atmosphere as visual representations are not available on radio. Music was selected to provide variety of performers, tempos and genres. Many of the music pieces were played in full as would be expected on a radio documentary, whilst maintaining the music bed under most of my narration. Some tracks were faded due to restrictions on the length of the programme.

Weaknesses and limitations – I would have preferred to include bespoke interviews with past performers and with the festival director, fans, and staff volunteers.

Working alone in my home studio lacked atmosphere and affected my sometimes low- key and earnest delivery. I produced several iterations which I discussed with my co-producer for valuable feedback allowing me to improve editing and presentation. Pacing was a little slow due to my slow and deliberate narration.

In rendering the completed audio there seemed to be a glitch which caused the audio to fluctuate from time to time which negatively affected the enjoyment of the programme.

As this was not an interview for radio broadcast purposes, the usual preparations and conventions were not observed.

Conclusions – Given the limitations imposed by the advent of the Covid-19 pandemic, this was a project that was well produced using alternative means of production, chiefly my home studio and adobe audition DAW. I was able to source online archival material with guidance from my co-producer and music was drawn from my own collection. This was a valuable first exercise in working almost entirely independently. However, this was also

difficult for me as I had no one immediately on hand to check audio levels and give feedback on the tone and style of my narration, however, my co-producer proved valuable in doing this remotely. Moving forward I would aim to improve further my audio recording and editing skills which will involve examining in more detail the capabilities of the powerful adobe audition DAW. I am happy that the completed radio production successfully blended elements both from radio broadcasting and oral history and archival investigation to produce an entertaining programme.

Tony Levin – documentary radio feature deploying the tools of archival research for Birmingham Jazz Radio

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1W6o20jnMg7H5OoS0Mc78UkjpJf_gYqYX/view?usp=sharing

I include this documentary radio feature as a contrast to the documentary tribute detailed above. The previous iteration of the documentary in 2011 was produced in a traditional radio documentary format, deploying the techniques of radio production, and including bespoke recorded contributions from various contributors. This iteration was to be an exercise in using archive material to construct a sixty-minute feature for a proposed new online jazz radio station for Birmingham.

Project Overview – This was a second attempt at producing a radio documentary feature using some of the methods of archival research. On this occasion, although a co-production with Pedro Cravinho, Pedro was less involved in the research process. This was to be the second programme in the planned ‘Jazz 0121’ series for a proposed new online radio station for Birmingham dedicated to jazz. This presented the opportunity to combine academic research with real time broadcasting. Unfortunately, the station didn’t get off the ground.

Production Processes – Once again, this project was to take the form of a tribute to this jazz drummer who died in 2011. I was already in contact with Levin’s widow, and she kindly emailed to me several newspaper clippings to supplement my own knowledge. Further online searches revealed more relevant information. Once more, this was to be a chronological appraisal of Levin’s wide-ranging career in music. My own music collection contained a wide selection of music featuring Levin and so music selection was not difficult.

Interviewing – No interviewing was undertaken for this project.

Editing – As with the Birmingham Jazz Festival project, this project was undertaken during the period of the Covid-19 pandemic and my ability to conduct external research was severely limited and I was required to investigate alternative sources. All material was gathered online and assembled with my narration which was based upon my archival research and recorded in my home studio using a RodeCaster Pro Podcast Production Studio and edited using adobe audio digital audio workstation.

Music – The opening music is a generic piece intended as a theme tune to the series of radio documentaries and is a performance by Birmingham born musician Soweto Kinch. The following piece of music works well as a ‘curtain raiser’ to the documentary as it opens with Levin’s drumming as featured on a track by the Tubby Hayes Quartet ‘Second City Steamer’ which is a nod both to the fact that Levin’s home base for many years was Birmingham (the United Kingdom’s ‘second city’) and to possibly his most prominent musical association with Tubby Hayes. It also works well as a device to gain the listener’s attention and as a ‘signpost’ of what is to follow.

I decided to add a music bed under my narration both to mask certain technical limitations in the recording process and to add a measure of pace throughout the documentary. The musical examples are arranged chronologically to illustrate key milestones in Levin’s career and to mirror the narration and add emphasis. The music was deployed to demonstrate Levin’s wide musicianship and I made an editorial decision to include only extracts from each piece of music, as I considered that the narration of the ‘hidden history’ of this musician was more important than the music itself, which, for the most part was readily available to hear elsewhere.

Weaknesses and limitations – Working remotely in my home studio whilst convenient meant that I did not have the possibility of sharing ideas with colleagues on an immediate basis. I produced several iterations which I submitted electronically to my co-producer, Pedro Cravinho for his valuable feedback. We together planned the format of the documentary and jointly selected the music examples. I am used to working at greater length on this type of production and more time would have allowed for a more wide-ranging appraisal of Levin’s career. In the event, being limited to 60 minutes was a benefit as it forced me to work in a more concise way even if sometimes making more difficult editorial decisions as to what to include and what to omit.

Conclusion – Notwithstanding the shortcomings that I have mentioned, the completed documentary feature stands up well as a tribute to a musician, whilst not hidden in the accepted sense worked on the fringes of the regional, national and international jazz scene for many years.

‘Going out on a Limb: Wilkie’s Story’ - oral history highlighting the work of one of the academics in the jazz cluster at BCU

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1mbloccOSzdGAv5EglkSeem_sWX-u1W9D/view?usp=sharing

Project Overview – I described this project in Chapter Four and include it here as an example of a piece of my own production work which was undertaken prior to the commencement of this PhD thesis. The purpose was to allow me to gain some understanding of academic thinking at PhD level and to create a showcase for the current work of some of the academics in the jazz cluster at BCU.

Production Processes – The audio was recorded in the studio at Birmingham City University and the introduction and music were added in post-production working in my home studio with the Adobe Audition DAW.

Interviewing – As this interview was undertaken prior to the commencement of my PhD studies, I relied upon my pre-existing skills as a radio presenter and working instinctively, I tackled the interview in the manner of a friendly interview, a style of interviewing that I have since found to be advocated by Spradley as I have previously discussed.

Editing – Very minimal post-production editing was required. I edited out my own voice to enable the piece to flow more easily, added a generic introduction which was intended for use in the other episodes of this series. The musical illustrations were agreed with my participant and inserted subsequently. All editing work and sound equalisation etc was carried out in my home studio using the Adobe Audition DAW.

Music – The music was selected by my interviewee prior to the recording session and I positioned the music extracts most appropriately to illustrate the conversation.

Weaknesses and Limitations – Given the opportunity to research the subject matter beforehand may have allowed me to ask some more incisive questions. But not having done so gave the piece an added layer as I was discovering this hidden history along with the listener. It is a source of some irony to me now that I follow Spradley’s interpretation of an ethnographic interview as sharing some of the features of a friendly conversation when my preferred mode of working is to edit out my own questioning or keep

questioning to a minimum in order not to disrupt the flow of the interviewee's recollections.

Conclusion – This audio works well on two levels. Firstly, as I have said it was created to highlight the work of one of the academics working in the jazz research cluster at BCU and as such it works perfectly. Secondly, and in hindsight, I am now aware that it also works very well as an example of a hidden history by giving a voice to a hitherto overlooked area of history expressed in the form of a radio-style audio production.

Youth Jazz Movement in the West Midlands in the 1960s and 1970s

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Tvdp9PsDNm18qhbRVjHn4MuAW-U5TVkI/view?usp=sharing>

Project Overview – This project was intended to represent the culmination of the series of iterative audio productions analysed above. It demonstrated the two-way engagement that I described in the introduction in deploying approaches from jazz studies for interviewing and unearthing material from archives and applying them in radio production so as to enrich the manner in which we interview and make editorial decisions about content material. Equally, it demonstrated how jazz history can learn from the dominant practices in radio production and debates about how the past is mediated in the stories of jazz's past. In deploying notions from both cultural studies and ethnomusicology I have shown how it is possible to more fully understand the culture that I am investigating and my innovative approach offers a theoretically informed alternative to existing mediated jazz histories and permits distinctive insights into this neglected localised history of youth jazz in the British West Midlands in the 1960s and 1970s. Since producing this project, I have identified some potential weaknesses and omissions and have therefore created a second iteration which is described later in this chapter.

Production Processes – The project took the form of a record of the formation of the Midland Youth Jazz Orchestra (MYJO). The Orchestra as we know it today was formed in 1970, however no definitive study of its formation and early years has ever been produced. This radio-style documentary traces the roots of the Orchestra to 1960's London with the establishment of the London Schools Jazz Association and the London Youth Jazz Orchestra who were soon undertaking concerts and workshops in various parts of the country including Birmingham.

Interviewing – Opportunities for in-person interviewing were limited due, in part, to the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic and many participants were unable or unwilling to be interviewed in person. With the exception of one early interview with saxophonist Alan Wakeman, which was carried out face-to-face, using a hand-held Tascam DR-40 Linear PCM recorder and two independent microphones, all other interviews were conducted online via Zoom video conferencing. For me this had distinct advantages in terms of time saved travelling to interviews and was less intrusive for participants. Zoom is free for personal use but has a time limit of 40 minutes for each call. This was helpful as it forced me to be concise in my interviewing and this was also appreciated by participants. Zoom

allows for both video and audio to be recorded, although I made clear to participants that only the audio would be deployed in the project. Nonetheless, it was beneficial to be able to make eye-to-eye contact with my participants. I have noted in Chapter Four the scepticism surrounding the utilisation of oral histories as a method of academic enquiry extending both to the style of interview and its academic rigour. However, as I have also made plain, jazz is primarily an oral tradition, relying upon its participant's memories to bring forth recollections from the past, and with its genesis stretching as far back as the late 1930s with the work of ethnomusicologist Alan Lomax.

Editing – Very quickly during the recoding process, repeating themes became apparent and therefore when editing each participant's contribution, I labelled sections of speech with the topic that they were talking about. I could then easily place the various contributions together to enable me to compare and contrast comments and more easily assemble them to form a coherent audio artifact. None of the participant's contributions were changed and editing was kept to a bare minimum. It was important to me to retain the context and contribution of each participant exactly as they had made it.

Music

The music, although important to illustrate both the sound of the orchestra and their instrumental proficiency was kept to a minimum with only two pieces of music being deployed throughout the whole of the documentary.

Weaknesses and Limitations – Throughout this radio-style documentary feature, I have been aware of the perceived limitations placed on interviews which are conducted other than face-to-face. In Chapter Four I discussed the differences between informal interviews and oral histories and the suggestion that interviewers involved in the jazz community are not sufficiently impartial leading to interviews lacking sufficient academic rigour. However, this is counterbalanced by the view that interviews with musicians are as central to the jazz community as the music. I have also kept in mind Southall's cautioning that such oral histories may be prone to containing factual errors and inaccuracies and I have sought to eliminate these wherever possible by cross-referencing facts and verifying them by means of archival research.

Conclusions – This radio-style documentary piece has achieved my aim of giving a voice to aspects of historical experience missing from other sources. I have shown that oral history as a method of historical research combined with archival research and with processes of

audio production has allowed for the experiences of people and groups who may otherwise have remained hidden from history to be elucidated. As I have previously made clear, my intention in this study was to draw attention to voices of regional musicians who have been bypassed in many of the academic texts currently existing and by hearing the human voice I allow for an additional layer of context to be revealed which would otherwise have been undiscovered by relying on more traditional written transcripts alone.

Youth Jazz Movement in the West Midlands in the 1960s and 1970s – Second iteration
(Musson 2024)

Project Overview

The second iteration of this project represented a more focused and expanded production utilising additional audio material which was not deployed in the first iteration. As before, the project demonstrated the two-way engagement that I described in the introduction, deploying approaches from jazz studies for interviewing and unearthing material from archives and deploying them in radio production thus enriching the manner in which we interview and make critical editorial decisions about content material.

In producing an authoritative narration, I was conscious of the need to follow my commitment to let the voices of my participants speak for themselves without disruption and the authoritative skill here is in the editing of the participant's voices in this second iteration.

The key difference is in terms of format. Rather than one 30-minute production envisaged as a radio-style documentary, I produced three smaller, 20-minute pieces of audio which are more explicitly linked to ideas explored in this written element of my thesis. Thus, developing three themes;

- i. Acts of exploration and acts of affirmation of community
- ii. Transgenerational mentorship
- iii. Diversity

The resultant audio pieces were titled:

- i. Youth and Community Arts 'Drop-in' Radio Edit

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1dPUjqYNLOhZSSpceQFNfjVjDNE9bLfRf/view?usp=sharing>

- ii. Youth and Community Arts Podcast Edit

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1s2wphQxySbwl7LXqzHQMsLDm0Lnb0gOG/view?usp=sharing>

iii Learning Jazz ‘Drop-in’ Radio Edit

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1BIrBDFG2IEHDAYG9jXSrzs48vSsPtvb/view?usp=sharing>

iv. Learning Jazz Podcast Edit

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1k8VllzJ35vg8pGvxSIFfwh9G0p32rgM4/view?usp=sharing>

v. Being Involved Diversity ‘Drop-in’ Radio Edit

https://drive.google.com/file/d/16ZEU7tslVeLPgz_K8U0r9UsVW1YVBpul/view?usp=sharing

vi. Being Involved Diversity Podcast Edit

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Hqiw5ITWU2SP2FYQmzd2sYC_KyMEytZ/view?usp=sharing

I have produced two versions of each audio piece, the first intended to be a ‘drop-in’ to a longer two- hour community radio programme and the second intended as a series of three podcasts

Production Processes

The production processes for the community radio ‘drop-ins’ were broadly similar to the process for the first iteration except that I recorded a bespoke introduction in the style of a typical radio feature again linking to the written element of this thesis. I also allowed more time for music examples, as I felt that this was a possible weakness of the first iteration. Contributors were names and I also included a music ‘stab’ to act as a chapter start/ending. For the podcast version, I created a further bespoke introduction explaining the contents of the podcast, naming the contributors and posing a question to hook the listener in. This was reinforced by the inclusion of very short clips from the contributors, again designed to grab the listener’s attention. I also created an ending for both versions crediting the music played and signposting the next episode.

Interviewing

The same comments apply here as in respect of the first iteration.

Editing

The process of editing followed the same format for the previous iteration.

Music

The revised format creating three 20-minute artifacts allowed more time for lengthier pieces of music to be included. The pieces benefit from this greatly.

Weaknesses and Limitations

The same comments apply for this iteration as for the first.

Conclusions

I reiterate the comments made in respect of the earlier iteration. I consider this second iteration to more coherently achieve my aim of producing a focused documentary/feature drawing attention to voices of regional musicians who have been bypassed in many of the academic texts currently existing and by hearing the human voice I allow for an additional layer of context to be revealed which would otherwise have been undiscovered by relying on more traditional written transcripts alone.

Taken together, these oral history/ethnomusicology audio artifacts show a process of experimentation, exploration and evolution culminating in the features focusing on the MYJO which I exhibit as an alternative means of academic research.

Chapter Nine: Oral History and Story-telling as Radio Production Practice

This practice-based doctoral research project uses radio-style documentary production to explore the ways in which we investigate, mediate, and interpret the music cultural practices of the past. I positioned radio production as a research tool as part of the wider landscape of media and communication studies research and I have contributed to countering criticisms that radio production as a research vehicle lacks academic rigour by aligning myself with Lacey's idea of radio as "an intellectual artifact". Further, by following Lacey's advocacy for radio studies to engage with debates more overtly outside the discipline and imagine new routes to connect with fields beyond radio studies, I have explored such connections by using radio production as a vehicle for research into jazz history, using approaches from oral history, jazz studies, cultural studies and ethnomusicology. Central to this has been the way that radio producers can adopt practices of oral history in their work, especially in a community radio context. Likewise, a more critical engagement with historical narrative aligns perfectly with the community radio ethos of rebalancing access and power in broadcasting.

Oral History

Oral history, by giving voice to those who may otherwise have been forgotten, allows for the possibility of a more nuanced story of the past to be told. I explained in Chapter Two how jazz studies had grown with, and contributed to, the oral history movement. Oral history as a method of historical research has permitted the experiences of people and groups who may otherwise have remained hidden from history to be acknowledged. In my study of the youth jazz movement in the West Midlands, I am uncovering not so much a 'hidden' history, but rather an '*overlooked*' history, in the sense that their voices have been bypassed in many of the academic texts that currently exist. Hearing the human voice allows for an additional layer of context to be revealed that otherwise would have been undiscovered by a reliance upon written transcripts alone.

In arguing for an investigation into the musical practices of former members of the MYJO as a community oral history project of people with a shared geographical and "social identity" (Shopes, 2002: 588), these histories are subjective as they are personal accounts and reflect the personal opinions of participants. Whilst I use oral history interviews as a

primary source, I deploy archival research methods to verify information to produce an objective narrative of events or a comprehensive history of a place.

I have mentioned previously the technological changes that have taken place allowing for a range of new platforms to be established for making and sharing radio-like programming. Here, specifically I have in mind podcasting. The significance for this project of these new forms of programme-making, distribution and access lies in the increased access to the means of radio documentary-style production. Thus, anyone with recording equipment now has the ability to create an audio programme on their computer and to distribute it with ease across the internet and thus creating a form of media programming akin to traditional over-the-air radio. The radio-like production enabled by the technological advances that I have mentioned provide an ideal forum for experimentation in form. More specifically, it allowed me to explore ideas from oral history and ethnomusicology to be integrated into this practice-based media and cultural studies investigation as a way to explore jazz history. More specifically, in Chapter One I cited historian Dom Tromans' analysis of the use of podcasting as a tool for popularising history, and noted the relative dearth of scholarship regarding its use in this way. As I have shown, this thesis highlights the value of utilising audio texts in academia as an alternative to the written word to research production processes and to form and distribute findings.

At the heart of innovative ways of 'doing history' is the ability to share the voices of those who were part of the making of that history. Most often in history these are referred to as oral histories, however, for the radio or podcast producer, these are interviews. My radio-style documentary celebrating the establishment of the Midland Youth Jazz Orchestra which is documented in Chapter Eight exemplifies the sharing of these voices.

Radio documentary studies is a relatively new area of academic study. In 2013 Siobhan McHugh founded the online journal, *RadioDoc Review* with the aim of advancing critical engagement with the radio documentary/feature form and further to exemplify production and research quality. Much of what has been written in the field is by radio producers themselves engaged in reflecting on their practice or by scholars focusing on significant producers and their output.

As I have previously shown, McHugh (2012) has examined the personal narrative/oral history framework for documentary production. Biewen and Dilworth (2010) produced an anthology of reflections from radio documentary makers regarding their practice which

included the work of investigative journalists, feature-makers and ethnographers. They all “use sound to tell true stories artfully” (5)

Radio Production Practice, Music Culture and Cultural Memory

This PhD study was motivated in part by a desire to develop my practice as a radio producer and presenter. I had previously achieved this to some extent in terms of the practicalities by undertaking a Masters’ degree in radio and audio production. This reinforced the technical dimension of my work and equipped me to concentrate on the formal production processes. These skills were to be my guides, or my “theories-in-use” (Schon and Argyris, 1974). These guides are somewhat nebulous as they are deployed tacitly rather than consciously.

In Chapter Eight, I described my own work as being undertaken instinctively. I had little formal training in radio presentation and none in radio production until the point of undertaking my Masters’ degree. My learning was by a process of osmosis gained over a period of many years listening to radio to the point that what the presenters were saying was almost more important than the music that they were playing. Therefore, my own practice was governed by habitual patterns and ways of being absorbed over the years and later allied to the conventions of radio station rules and procedures. To improve therefore I must observe and understand my “theories-in-use” and do so in tandem with my “espoused theories” resulting in a hybrid form of action in practice.

Prior to undertaking this study my practice in radio presentation and production has been in community radio. Community radio operates largely free of the conventions of ‘traditional’ commercial and BBC radio and, apart from observing the legalities common to all forms of radio broadcasting, together with the breaks for advertising and news broadcasts, as the presenter of an evening ‘specialist’ programme I was given total freedom in how I presented my weekly two-hour programmes.

The real constraints were self-imposed in terms of the lack of preparation time. I soon found that inviting a guest to fill a two-hour radio slot with entertaining and engaging conversation was difficult. There were a few occasions when the conversation dried up and I resorted to my own CD collection. The solution was to ask guests invited into the studio on a live basis to bring along a selection of music that inspired them to perform together with their own music if available. Little preparation was required from me. I specifically

asked interviewees not to disclose their list of music in advance. I was therefore able to share the “sound of surprise” just as my listeners may when discovering new music. This happened often.

As Belfi, Karlan and Tranel make clear, “music is strongly intertwined with memories - ...hearing a song from the past can transport you back in time, triggering the sights, sounds, and feelings of a specific event” and they went on to show “that music...effectively evokes autobiographical memories” (2015: 979).

Here, I am referring to Anderson’s “practices of ‘intentional remembering’ in which music is explicitly used to aid the ‘remembering of something’” (Anderson, 2004: 4). Repeatedly, this was confirmed by my interviewees, many of whom reported that they enjoyed the process.

Okiji (2017) asserts that, “storytelling has proved to be a useful metaphor in jazz commentary and analysis. Within such literature it is invariably solos, portrayed as discrete cultural articles, that ‘tell a story’ through their adherence to internal coherence and logic” (2017: 70). Although, in Okiji’s words “To ‘tell a story’, and particularly to ‘tell *your* story’, is the well-worn advice for building a successful jazz solo” (2017: 71), I contend that it is equally applicable to the musician describing his or her oral history.

In many ways my interviewees’ contributions might be considered anecdotes rather than fully fledged oral histories. Whyton makes the point that “as a fundamental part of jazz as social practice, anecdote remains relatively untouched in terms of critical appraisal” (2004:117). My work aims to also assist in opening up the discourse critically. I also accept Whyton’s contention that “anecdote should be regarded as problematic both historically and for the historian, as it has the capability of blurring the distinction between primary and secondary source material” (117).

In the context of my earlier radio programmes, my primary motive was entertainment, the anecdote, here providing an entertaining story. As Whyton says anecdote “is an essential and often engaging part of the jazz discourse. At its best, anecdote has the power to introduce people to the music and its history” and “especially in its oral form, has a greater immediacy than biography or autobiography in that it is consumed as an unmediated narrative, divorced from editorial control and reflective accounts” (119).

However, Whyton provides a caveat when he says that “(w)ithin this context, anecdote should be regarded as problematic both historically and for the historian, as it has the

capability of blurring the distinction between primary and secondary source material”

(117). Despite his reservations, Whyton concludes with the:

recognition that anecdote plays a crucial role in the way both jazz history and practice develops should encourage us to place anecdote to the forefront of a critical jazz discourse. By moving jazz anecdote from the margins of jazz to the centre of study, readers and practitioners of jazz can gain a heightened critical awareness anecdote and its historical function, previous implicit ideological power can be made explicit and its full historical and political potential realised. Indeed, the next time somebody has a tale to tell, perhaps we will consider that we are hearing more than an entertaining story, we are bearing full witness to a jazz history in the making (131-132).

Whilst Whyton examines the function of the jazz anecdote though the context of film, recording, literature and spoken word, I extend this to processes of radio production to show how ubiquitous the use of anecdote is.

In my subsequent academic work, I carry Whyton’s notion forward that “when used as testimony, jazz anecdotes function primarily to support the recounting of historical events in the lives of significant musicians” (126).

My early documentary style productions were produced by reference to what I had previously heard on radio. Often, I would have only a superficial knowledge of my subject and these documentaries would take the form of either a tribute following a death or an appreciation of the achievements of an underappreciated musician. Again, I wanted to experience the surprise of my listeners in discovering something new about my subject and it was important to me to communicate this to listeners.

In the case of a valedictory tribute, I ask participants for their memories of my subject and to recall key events in the lives of that person. In the case of an appreciation of a living musician, I will ask that musician to provide a condensed life story in entirely their own words – as I have little in-depth knowledge of their achievements or work - and then ask contributors to add their own recollections in a similar way to doing a death tribute. In both cases, music is used to illustrate what the participants are talking about and is often selected after the event. Unlike the live radio interview, it does not drive the conversation. It can act as punctuation between participants and often short clips as distinct from the complete piece of music are used, as to me the storytelling is more important than the music, which is often readily available to listeners from other sources.

Storytelling in Radio Production Practice

My more recent radio-like documentaries, combine my original motive of entertainment with that of seeking to be academically rigorous. Spradley identified the ethnographic interview as sharing “many features with the ‘friendly conversation’” which might take place between people who have known each other for many years and who may share a common interest and “into which the researcher slowly introduces new elements to assist informants to respond as informants” (2016: 58). Atkinson believes that “an individual life, and the role it plays in the larger community is best understood through story” (1998: 7) and what is in effect a ‘life story’. This invites a discussion of what constitutes an oral history and what constitutes a life story. Atkinson contends that the difference resides in the scope and emphasis, with an oral history focusing on a specific aspect of a person’s life, perhaps their working life and recollections of specific events, issue, time, or place. When the oral interview extended beyond this to encompass a person’s entire life, we are in the realms of a life story. In Atkinson’s view “the life history and life story are very similar in their approach and what they cover, but the specific information sought, and the final product can be very different” (1998: 4). In my study, the life story offers a way of understanding “not only one life across time but how individual lives interact with the whole” (1998: 4)

In most of my pre-recorded work I seek to remove myself from the conversation as far as possible, seeing my role more as a facilitator of conversation. I know sufficient about the music in general terms to show the participant that I am interested but I am keen for the story to be told in their own words so do not ask many questions.

Like Spradley, I contend that the life story interview has evolved from oral history, life history and other ethnographic approaches and has long been a primary research method of anthropological fieldwork. In some instances, the life histories may be edited by the researcher, whilst others are presented in the form that they were originally recorded.

As Atkinson avers, a life story may take many forms including “a factual form, a metaphorical form, a poetic form, or any other creatively expressive form” (1998: 8). Importantly therefore, for my study, I contend that this can include audio documentary form. However, he imposes the caveat that “what is important is that the life story be told in the form, shape, and style that is most comfortable to the person telling it” (1998: 8). This is advice that I have kept in mind in producing my later radio-style documentaries.

Where traditional histories tell second-hand accounts and generally focus on the important people and the big cities, oral histories provide an opportunity to obtain a first-hand account from the ordinary person in the provinces.

Jazz is primarily an oral tradition and as I have mentioned, the genesis of jazz oral history lay with Alan Lomax who, in 1938, approached pianist Jelly Roll Morton to record his recollections together with musical illustrations for the Library of Congress. His approach may be contrasted with the form of the radio documentary, in which Beaman maintains the “subject matter is usually topical and production techniques can emphasise a journalistic, or, as in some features, an imagination-led approach” (2011: 20). McHugh agrees, proposing that “the genres of oral history and long-form radio journalism have intersecting characteristics...and that each genre can benefit the other” (2010: 6). McHugh concludes that “oral history on radio can achieve one of the discipline’s defining aims, to connect past and present lives” (2012: 206). Again, this is a notion that I have kept in mind in my own work.

My approach is largely similar to that adopted before undertaking this doctoral investigation, except that I now introduce archival material such as reviews of concerts, pre-existing interviews, newspaper articles, and record reviews, for my own background information gathering, and to allow me to produce a few questions about topics that are of particular interest or upon which clarification is required. This enables a deeper and richer investigation into my subject. And provides inspiration for music choices to be included.

In Chapter Four I examined a selection of audio documentaries which have treated oral history with varying degrees of success. And show how adopting a friendly conversational approach does not always work. I show how such an approach that I adopt myself can work well often removing myself from the conversation in the post-production process. The reflexive critical reviews of the Charles Chilton and Leslie Perowne interviews compare and contrast how this can be done. I carry this forward into my own work and provide the examples of Wilkie’s Story and my examination of the historic music practice of the MYJO as examples of this.

These histories are subjective as they are personal accounts and reflect the personal opinions of participants. Whilst I use oral history interviews as a primary source, I deploy archival research methods to verify information to produce an objective narrative of events or a comprehensive history of a place.

In this thesis I have approached interviewing informed by the academic issues of ethnographic interview and traditions of oral history which I detailed in Chapter Four. I have shown academic support for the assertion that oral history has given a voice to aspects of historical experience which might be missing from other sources. I have also shown how it might be possible to reimagine the radio documentary interview as jazz oral history or ethnographic interview, to go beyond the use of oral histories as a key phase in jazz historiography, to bring the voices of musicians into an existing narrative. As a radio documentarian, I rely upon the interview as a key method of production, and I have explained my approach to interviewing in detail in my reflexive autoethnography and in the production of the iterative documentaries. While there are shortcomings of the medium, and I have shown that there are differences between informal interviews and oral histories, I have explored the ways in which the jazz interview, and jazz oral history projects that are more formal in structure, can be productive for radio programme making.

Conclusions

This doctoral research project focuses on two connected pieces of research: one about the history of local jazz practices, exemplified by the MYJO; and the second looking at how radio-style production can be used as a vehicle to both undertake and disseminate research.

In presenting my findings, I separated these into three specific areas:

- The things that I discovered about the historic music practice of the MYJO 1968 and 1980.
- The use of autoethnography to reflect on my practices as a radio-style documentary producer.
- My experience of researching history through radio production to allow me to set out some arguments about using oral history and cultural story-telling as radio production practice more generally.

To reach these conclusions, I utilised a practice-based methodology deploying radio-style documentary production to explore the ways in which we investigate, mediate, and interpret the music cultural practices of the past. I produced four radio-style documentaries during the period of this study, together with a further two documentaries undertaken before its commencement. These documentaries together provided me with the iterative explorations of the ideas within my thesis and culminated with a documentary about the establishment and early years of the MYJO.

This methodological approach allowed me to reflexively explore my own role in the production processes involved in the creation of radio-style documentaries. Here I must express my debt to the opportunities provided to me by community radio which has allowed the possibility for listeners to become broadcasters, producers, programmers and station managers. My own experience as a producer and presenter of specialist programming within a community radio culture has seen the relaxing of editorial control and institutional protocols otherwise prominent in mainstream radio production environments. This less formal environment has permitted a wider creative freedom for community radio practitioners to become more creative in their work (see for example Resonance FM).

I used my study of the MYJO as a vehicle for investigating how we can make the practice of radio production a developed and sophisticated research method in itself by taking

methods from media and cultural research and applying them to jazz history deploying approaches from oral history and ethnomusicology.

What I found out

Midland Youth Jazz Orchestra between 1968 and 1980

This part of my research project focused upon the history of local jazz practices as exemplified by the MYJO. Chapter Seven outlines the things that I discovered about the historic music practice of the Orchestra during the period from 1968 to 1980. In addition to the practice-based autoethnographic study which forms the core of this study, my methodology included collecting data by means of making audio recordings, conducting interviews and producing a series of case studies and audio documentaries. Here I made use of historical interviews transcripts, sound archives and articles in professional journals and newspapers. This archive work has revealed content to be used in radio documentary productions.

I undertook a series of semi-structured interviews with my object of study being musicians active in the West Midlands as members of the MYJO organisation in the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s. Drawing upon approaches from oral history supplemented by archival research surrounding the historical jazz cultures in the West Midlands from 1968 to 1980. In producing this radio-style documentary and the “drop-ins” for community radio broadcasts and podcasts which together form the second iteration I drew upon ideas of narratology in mediated histories.

I have sought to understand my object of study by capturing meaningful qualities through these interviews, archived documents, music, and other audio to understand concepts, opinions, and experiences and to generate further new ideas for research.

I found that deploying a mix of unstructured and semi-structured interviews allowed for a degree of spontaneity both in terms of content and structure and this underpinned my interactions with my participants and resulted in obtaining richer content. I study the MYJO as a collective located in the West Midlands. By deploying ideas from ethnomusicology, I study the Orchestra as a group of people, and the role, meaning, and practice of music within this group or community defined by their geography. In doing so I focus upon the individual musicians who, in the process of creating new individual identities, knit themselves into newly encountered social formations. During my work it

became clear that whilst many of these individuals could be seen as exceptional performers, I also highlighted their individual agency and difference.

In terms of the MYJO itself, my study revealed its origins in what I have termed the youth jazz movement in London in the 1960s. A strong theme throughout the study was the notion of transgenerational mentorship, starting with regional workshops under the leadership of Bill Ashton who originated the London Youth Jazz Orchestra and later with not only the original leaders of the MYJO, Dennis Darlow and Mike Beaumont but continuing with workshops at which jazz inclined local musicians would coach the budding musicians. This in itself was a hallmark of the early jazz, allowing for the transmission of learning from the older musicians. The more informal educational setting of earlier jazz, where musicians met to play and study the repertoire, ultimately gave way to more formally organised forms of jazz education, for example with the establishment of a degree programme at Leeds College of Music in 1965 and yet the growth of summer schools under the auspices of, for instance, the London Schools Jazz Orchestra, as I have shown, allowed for the transmission of inter-generational knowledge. In the West Midlands this was exemplified by the enthusiasm and knowledge of a number of peripatetic music teachers.

Investigation of issues of diversity revealed that whilst there was a willingness to include musicians from other ethnic backgrounds and, indeed, they would have been positively welcomed into the MYJO organisation, the ethnic balance of the orchestra did not truly represent the ethnic make-up of the population of Britain's second city. In terms of gender equality, whilst there were females in the orchestra's ranks from an early point, this did not accord with the recollections of at least one participant who maintained that the orchestra was 100% male.

Autoethnography

I selected a practice-based autoethnographic approach to my research as it allowed ample opportunity for detailed self-reflection and in deploying this approach, I used an iterative approach to my production work. This reflection takes the form of an autoethnography which is innovative in that it offers insights into iterative researcher practice.

This research tool method used in combination with my iterative investigations was fundamental in capturing the nuances of insights gained from critically observing my performance as a radio documentary producer and presenter and enabled me to explore

how we make the practice of radio documentary a developed and sophisticated research method in itself. I selected this approach as a way of building on my skills as a radio producer to offer a theoretically informed alternative to existing mediated histories.

I study myself as a radio-style documentary producer who took advantage of the opportunities provided by community radio and new technologies to first master radio production and then in my doctoral research apply them to as a research method to the study of local jazz history.

Autoethnography combines autobiography and ethnography as a method of both examining what we do and writing up a reflective theoretically-informed account of what I did.

Community radio offered me the opportunity to develop as a radio documentary producer. This type of radio provides opportunities for people without radio profession backgrounds to broadcast and also offer a less restricted space in which to experiment and try new approaches and it is this spirit that I brought to my research and to my autoethnographic reflection.

In reflecting upon my own practice as a radio producer I see that I have moved from being a novice practitioner, adhering to rules and procedures which I applied unquestioningly to acquiring a mastery of my practice which as Schon (2016) observed allowed me to monitor and adapt my approach in what I see as an intuitive or instinctual way. My autoethnographic account allowed me to utilise Kolb's (1984) four-stage experiential learning cycle to interrogate the production stages involved in the completion of the radio-style documentaries at the core of my practice-based research. In doing so I was able to uncover the processes involved in shaping my work as a radio producer and presenter.

I began by exploring my initial 'instinctual' documentary work on *Tony Levin* (Musson, 2011). I followed this with an analysis of my 'intermediary' documentary projects, *Ron Mathewson Tribute*, (Musson, 2023) *Birmingham International Jazz Festival* (Musson, 2023) and an up-dated *Tony Levin* feature (Musson, 2023) all of which were made utilising some of the tools and skills acquired during the course of this investigation. In particular, the later *Tony Levin* feature was intended as an oral history feature rather than a documentary feature specifically made for radio. 'Wilkie's Story' (Musson, 2017) was an oral hidden-history project undertaken prior to the commencement of this Ph.D. project. Finally, *Youth Jazz Movement in the West Midlands 1960s and 1970s* (Musson, 2023;

2024) which constitutes the final radio-like work that I have produced as a 'reflexive' radio producer putting into action what I have learned from undertaking the earlier projects.

Taken together the ideas from ethnomusicology, oral history and archives which I have detailed throughout this study have enabled me to produce an original feature exploring the ways that we investigate, mediate and interpret the music cultural practices of the past exemplified by the production of a more balanced and informed radio-style documentary about the historic music practices involved in the establishment and early years of the Midland Youth Jazz Orchestra than otherwise would have been the case in using traditional radio production techniques. I have shown radio production to be an important research tool within the wider fields of radio studies, itself a part of media studies.

My experience researching oral history for radio.

Throughout this production-based doctoral research project I have positioned radio production as a research tool as part of the wider landscape of media and communication studies research and have drawn attention to media historian Kate Lacey's contention that radio studies should engage with debates outside that field and to find new avenues to connect with those fields. Following Lacey's lead, I have worked to combine radio production as a vehicle for research and applied it to jazz studies but deploying approaches from oral history and ethnomusicology.

Whilst I have noted that to use radio production as a research vehicle is to leave myself exposed to the criticism that such a technique is lacking in academic rigour, I maintain that the benefits inherent in bringing radio production techniques to oral history allows me to give a voice to those people and groups who may otherwise have remained forgotten. Aligning oral history techniques, in this case in the form of a community oral history, with radio production techniques and jazz studies, which itself has a rich oral history as I have shown receives support from both Lacey and Tom Western. As I have made clear, hearing a human voice recount these histories has allowed an additional layer of context to be revealed which would have remained hidden by reliance upon written transcripts alone.

I have mentioned previously the technological changes that have taken place allowing for a range of new platforms to be established for making and sharing radio-like programming, more specifically podcasting, such that today anyone with recording equipment now has the ability to create an audio programme on their computer and to distribute it with ease across the internet and thus creating a form of media programming akin to traditional over-

the-air radio. These technological advances provide an ideal forum for experimentation in form. More specifically, it allowed me to explore ideas from oral history and ethnomusicology to be integrated into this practice-based media and cultural studies investigation as a way to explore jazz history. Again, this view is supported elsewhere (Tromans, 2016). As I have shown, this thesis highlights the value of utilising audio texts in academia as an alternative to the written word to research production processes and to form and distribute findings.

At the heart of innovative ways of ‘doing history’ is the ability to share the voices of those who were part of the making of that history. Most often in history these are referred to as oral histories, however, for the radio or podcast producer, these are interviews. My radio-style documentary celebrating the establishment of the MYJO which is documented in chapter eight exemplifies the sharing of these voices.

What is the significance of this work?

As I noted in the introduction, the community radio model, offers a forum for “the inclusion of ‘lay voices’ and ‘vernacular input’ in radio broadcasting and will be charted as a measure of the democratization of radio” (Franklin 2009: npn). Andrew Mall has noted that community radio stations are “united by an objective broadcast content not being heard (or otherwise underrepresented) on the airwaves” (2018: 140). Indeed, social gain is a fundamental principle of community radio and is defined in a station’s statement of key commitments. I have acknowledged Siobhan Stevenson’s statement that the interpretation and implementation of the ‘social gain’ policy is a matter for further consideration in terms of, for example, “lobbying government to financially support an audience study to establish impact” (2018:230), thus highlighting the cultural and social benefits the model provides to communities, in changing the radio landscape. These principles of community radio align with my study of the historic music practice of a local youth jazz orchestra in the 1960s and 1970s and emphasises the regional content which is a requirement of community radio regulations.

Mall further asserts that “community radio is not just programming produced *by* a community...but also radio programming produced *for* a community, which includes listeners, volunteers and musicians (2018: 140). In these terms, therefore, community radio can be seen as a further component of ‘musicking’, a view which is supported by Mall who sees “participating in community radio as a constituent component of musicking” (2018:

140). Small (1998; 13) considered that radio should enable the development of human relationships through the musicking that it facilitated. This is further emphasised when we consider the consumption of radio as a way of participating in musical life and with the community outreach projects commonly undertaken in the community radio environment, seen as activities supporting local musical life in urban contexts (Finnigan, 1989).

Along with a key commitment to support local culture and music, a further commitment may often be to promote community cohesion in broadcasting content which is relevant to the local community, and I contend that as such community radio can provide an ideal platform for the broadcast of local oral history projects and here, I include my study of the historic music practices of a local youth jazz orchestra. Thus, I exemplify “the convergence between oral history and radio production as fields of cultural production or aural preservation” (Franklin 2009: 2).

I have detailed my progress producing five specific radio-style documentary projects and reflected upon these and the further two projects undertaken before the commencement of this study. Through this investigation I was able to move from my position, initially, as an ‘instinctive’ radio presenter and producer, working tacitly, but taking advantage of the opportunities afforded to me in the community radio environment which allowed for a certain amount of experimentation and subsequently my prior university studies in radio and audio production, which expanded my skills further. Thereafter, I moved on to a more exploratory stage which enabled me to refine ideas and skills previously acquired and incorporate ideas from researching history and taking ideas from ethnomusicology, oral history and other fields of enquiry to produce the new documentaries. Finally, I embarked upon a reflective stage which allowed me to employ the knowledge that I had acquired from the previous projects created in the exploratory stage to produce the last of the five focusing on the MYJO organisation (in two iterations) which enabled me to offer a theoretically informed alternative to existing mediated histories often deployed in radio documentaries and further to provide distinctive insights into one specific neglected localised history of jazz.

In many ways I explore how we make the practice of radio documentary a developed and sophisticated research method in itself. Here, I built upon the notion put forward by Makagon and Neumann (2009) that the radio documentary form can be regarded as qualitative fieldwork practice in its own right. I deployed this notion as a template for my own research. I have shown that such a methodological approach allows me to reflexively

explore my own role in the production process involved in the creation of radio documentaries.

The use of a practice-based methodology was chosen to address a lack of scholarship examining the combining of radio production as a vehicle for media and cultural research, applied to jazz history using approaches from oral history and ethnomusicology. Here demonstrating Lacey's suggestion in deploying radio studies to "engage with debates outside the discipline" (2009: 21).

In Chapter One I undertook a survey of the literature in the field of radio production to show how we can understand it as a research tool within the wider field of radio studies, itself part of media and cultural studies. In doing so I explored three key areas. Firstly, the place of radio production within the broader field of media studies; secondly, I noted some of the limitations of radio histories within radio studies, and thirdly, I highlighted the developments in radio technologies associated with podcasting which allowed this project to be undertaken.

Jazz and radio emerged together and through the 1920s and 1930s ripened as cultural forms. Much of the literature on British jazz on radio focuses on the BBC as the institution dominating broadcasting. Scholars including Parsonage (2005) and Wall (2017) (Wall, 2024) investigate jazz on BBC radio in terms of its early history, with debates often surrounding defining jazz for broadcast purposes and where to place it within the schedules. Other studies, for example, from Cristina Baade (2012) focus on a wider study of the BBC's popular music broadcasting, including jazz, of the early 1940s. In assembling this overview of post-war jazz broadcasting, I note that much of the literature makes scant reference to the work of regional musicians in championing the new British jazz, choosing instead to focus on "important radio commissions for leading British composers" (Wall, 2018: 71). These omissions were also reflected in the histories of jazz which focused on the British variant.

The radio technologies associated with podcasting, are a key element in this study as they enable anyone with recording equipment and a computer to create and distribute it across the internet with ease. The result is a form of media programming akin to and complementary of traditional over-the-air radio, with production practices which are common to both. The lack of mediating factors, for example, producers and editors and freedom from the corporate policies of traditional radio stations providing an ideal forum

for experimentation, more specifically for me, allowing the exploration of ideas from oral history and ethnomusicology to be integrated into a practice-based media and cultural studies investigation as a way to explore jazz history, allowing podcast producers freedom in the way that they work. For example, for the purpose of producing oral histories, the freedom for participants to tell their stories the way that they want to without any requirement to follow editor or radio station guidelines. Something that also applies in the environment of the community radio station. In doing so, McHugh has highlighted the “strong host-listener connection” and the ability of the podcast to “harness the intimacy and authenticity that can be conveyed by the human voice” (2018: 104). At the heart of these innovative ways of doing history is the ability to share the voices of those who were part of the making of that history.

The key themes in the existing literature on the interview within media production and academia are discussed in Chapter Four wherein I state that I approach interviewing informed by academic issues of ethnographic interview allied to traditions of oral history. I established in Chapter Two that oral histories represented a key phase in jazz historiography and I have referred to the substantial body of work that is available both in print and audio form. Furthermore, in Chapter Four, I discuss how we might reimagine the radio documentary interview as jazz oral history or ethnographic interview and provide examples of contrasting styles of interviewing taken from the British Library’s *An Oral History of Jazz in Britain* collection together with a reflection on some of my own interviewing for documentary and which constitutes a reflexive piece on my place in the practice work which forms the core of this research project.

I address the scepticism surrounding the value of oral history as academic research and whilst I accept that such histories may be subject to factual errors and bias, oral history can make a virtue of them, and I maintain that oral testimony can in some cases be more accurate and detailed than written testimony. This is supported by both Southall (2015: 11) and Perks and Thompson (2006) accepting that oral history has given voice to aspects of historical experience that might be missing from other sources.

Further Work and Impact

My practice-based doctoral research project which utilised radio-style documentary production to explore the ways in which we investigate, mediate, and interpret the music cultural practices of the past, raises valuable indicators for further future work. These build upon the findings set out in Chapters Seven, Eight and Nine of this written component, and fall within two distinct areas of research; firstly, a history of specific local jazz ethnomusicking, and secondly, an examination of how we can use radio-style production as a vehicle to both undertake and disseminate research.

Community-based jazz

As I discussed in Chapter Seven, whilst the centrepiece of my thesis is a study of the evolution of the MYJO, it is important to note this was not the only youth jazz orchestra which was active in the region. The Walsall Jazz Orchestra (formerly the Walsall Youth Jazz Orchestra), were prominent in the region, even sharing some of the same musicians. Other youth orchestras in the West Midlands region include, for example the Notebenders Big Band, Sandwell Youth Jazz Orchestra, and Worcestershire Youth Jazz Orchestra. Each of these institutions are worthy of investigation in ascertaining the part that they (and other orchestras) played in uncovering the story of youth jazz education in the region prior to the rise of formal jazz education. As I have said, the relationships, rituals, and myths of the MYJO are, in part, rooted in the wider practices of education and based upon the work of a key group of “transgenerational mentors” passing on information. Again, there is work to do here in documenting aspects of this informal educational setting. Furthermore, whilst this study touches on questions of diversity, there are more questions to be resolved, particularly regarding questions of ethnicity as my own previously published work makes plain.

Documentary-making in community radio

The community radio environment was instrumental in allowing me to develop my creative endeavours. Free, to some extent, from the restrictions imposed by the institutional broadcasters and with the flexibility inherent in the specialist music programming strands of community radio. In this environment we have an ideal forum for experimentation and creative expression. The DIY ethos inherent in community radio allows members of the community to tell their own stories, thus becoming agents in the creative process. The technological advances that I have mentioned previously now permit

those who have been excluded from the ‘story’ to have the opportunity to have their voices heard. Whilst a DIY approach to documentary-making is not available to all, particularly for more complex media production, there are opportunities for collaboration in what documentary and digital cultures academic Prof. Mandy Rose (2014) has termed “the concept of DIWO (do-it-with-others)” and as Rose goes on to state “A co-creative, DIWO approach to documentary provides a progressive reworking of documentary’s historic role in the public sphere, as an open space for dialogue and a stage for the performance of citizenship” (203). I have provided an example of this in my first Tony Levin documentary and is a line of enquiry which is capable of further refinement in future projects.

Whilst there is much research around community radio and podcasting, little attention has been paid to how we should undertake it. I offer this as one proposition.

Radio production in the academic environment

I have positioned radio production as a research tool, being part of a landscape of media and communication studies research. I have countered the criticism that radio production as a research vehicle lacks academic rigour by aligning myself with Kate Lacey’s notion of radio as “an intellectual artifact”. Here I reinforce Lacey’s proposition of advocating for radio studies to engage with debates outside the discipline and connect with fields beyond radio studies. In this doctoral research study. I have highlighted some of the possibilities and have paved the way for engagement in other fields.

Additionally, during the progress of this doctoral research project I undertook some work examining local jazz radio programming. I ultimately excluded this work from the final text to allow for a more focused study. However, this is a fertile area for future research complementing and adding to the body of work in this area so far produced by Tim Wall (2024) on jazz on the BBC and jazz on radio in US and UK (Wall, 2018).

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