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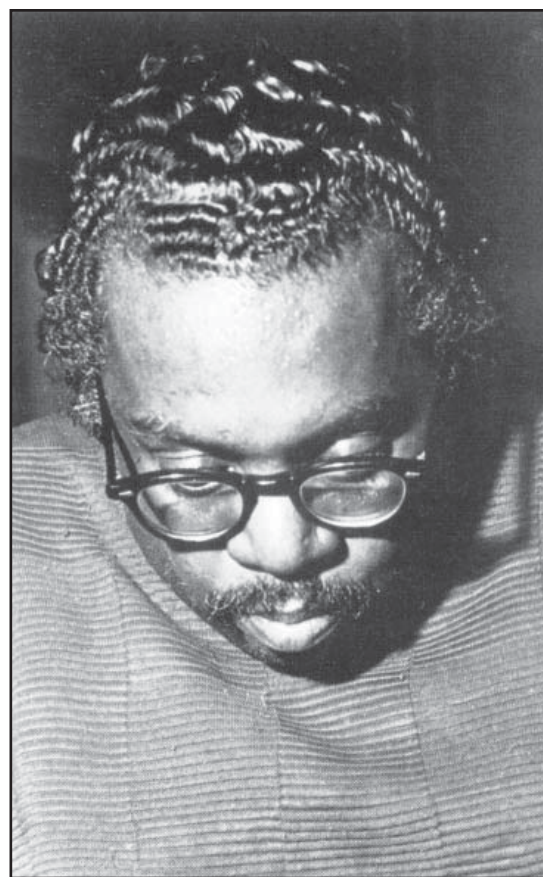
Spring 2010

Brooklyn Rediscovered Cal Massey

By Jeffrey Taylor

With the gleaming towers of the Time Warner Center—Jazz at Lincoln Center’s home since 2004—gazing over midtown Manhattan, and thriving jazz programs at colleges and universities throughout the world firmly in place, it is sometimes difficult to remember when jazz did not play an unquestioned role in the musical academy. Yet it wasn’t until the early 1990s that jazz was well enough entrenched in higher education that scholars could begin looking back over the way the music was integrated into music curricula: Scott DeVeaux’s frequently quoted “Constructing the Jazz Tradition” from 1991 is a prime example.¹ The past thirty years have seen an explosion of published jazz scholarship, with dozens of new books crowding shelves (or websites) every year. The vast majority of these texts are devoted to the work of a single figure, with Duke Ellington and Louis Armstrong leading as popular subjects. But a few scholars, DeVeaux and Ingrid Monson among them, have noted the essential roles of musicians who worked primarily in the shadows, as composers, arrangers, accompanists, and sidepeople. Without these artists, whose contribution often goes completely unacknowledged in history books, jazz would have taken a very different path than the one we trace in our survey courses. Calvin “Cal” Massey (1928-1972), for example, is hardly a household name among jazz enthusiasts. Yet, the trajectory of his career and music, especially during the last decade of his life when he became something of a musical institution in his Brooklyn neighborhood, yields insights into a period when jazz developed particularly strong roots in the political landscapes and urban communities in which it evolved.

A bit of jazz history took place at Brooklyn College on 22 April 2010, when Massey’s complex nine-movement work, *The Black Liberation Movement Suite* (1970), was brought back to Brooklyn, where it was composed and first performed. Massey—known by friends and acquaintances simply as “Folks”—would have been delighted by an audience made up not only of faculty and students, but also members of central Brooklyn’s African American community, many of whom had known him personally. He would have also been proud that two of the dedicatees of his work—his son Taru and daughter India—were in attendance. The occasion took on special importance with the presence of saxophonist, band leader, and activist Fred Ho, who claims the revolutionary spirit of much of Massey’s music as an important influence. Ho is the only scholar to research and write about Massey’s life in detail: “The Damned Don’t Cry: The Life and Music of Calvin Massey” in *Wicked Theory, Naked Practice: A Fred Ho Reader* (University of Minnesota Press, 2009) is, to my knowledge, the only published exploration of Massey’s significance. By studying this chapter, absorbing the



Cal Massey

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Institute News

With the appointment of a new President, Dr. Karen Gould, the reorganization of our school's administrative structure, and a new Performing Arts Center on the horizon, substantial change is coming to Brooklyn College. It seems an appropriate moment for our Institute to take a hard look at its future, while also honoring the long road travelled over the last thirty-nine years. The academic world of 2010 is very different from that of 1971, when the Institute was established; what was then one of only a very few centers devoted to study of music in the U.S. has now been joined by a host of organizations that support the dissemination, performance, and scholarly study of a variety of traditions. In addition, the very phrase "American Music" has come under increasing scrutiny, with the Society for American Music now adopting a wider scope that includes music of Canada, Mexico, and the Caribbean, and other scholars calling for the abolishment of the word "America" as synonymous with "The United States."

It is unlikely we will become an "Institute for United Statesian Music" (HWHISUSM?) but there are certainly many ways we can stake out new claims in what is now a well-trodden expanse of study. Our thoughts have turned increasingly to how we might better celebrate the vibrant city in which we live, while still maintaining an international presence. The next few years will see us sponsoring more events and publications that deal specifically with New York, with a particular emphasis on our home borough of Brooklyn. We can do this without becoming too parochial by acknowledging that we are immersed in a truly global city, whose diverse musical practices connect to people and places beyond our local and national borders.

In many ways, our continuing "Music in Polycultural America" Speaker Series this fall showed how we can showcase scholarship that treats American music as a local, national, and international phenomenon. In March, **Louise Chernosky** gave a fascinating look into how National Public Radio's "RadioVisions" program brought the music of a variety of twentieth-century composers—many prominent on the New York scene—to the attention of a wide audience. Later that month, Dominican-born pianist and ethnomusicologist **Angelina Tallaj** spoke of the continuing influence of the *contradanza* in music of the Americas, featuring works that would have been familiar to many American audiences, such as those by Ernesto Lecuona and Ernesto Nazareth, as well as more obscure pieces from the Dominican Republic and Cuba. Our event in the Central Brooklyn Jazz Consortium's 11th Annual Jazz Festival, "Celebrating Cal Massey," is the topic of my cover piece. I should add that the terrific set played by **Fred Ho and the Afro Asian Music Ensemble** in the second half of the concert gave us a contemporary spin on Massey's revolutionary spirit. Finally, **Ned Sublette** presented an engaging and timely view of the relationship of Haiti's first revolution to a variety of Afro-Caribbean musical traditions, and offered a theoretical framework that uses music to interrogate other aspects of culture—a process he calls "postmamboism" (see <http://boingboing.net/2009/12/15/principles-of-postma.html> for more details).

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Brooklyn Rediscovered Cal Massey (continued)

comments Ho offered at the Brooklyn concert before the *Suite* was performed, and most of all hearing this important work in its entirety, one bears witness to a gifted composer and revolutionary thinker whose name deserves to be better known.

In examining Massey's life and music, three names continually emerge. One is that of the great tenor saxophonist John Coltrane, whom Massey met as a teenager in Philadelphia and who remained a close friend until his death in 1967. In his pre-concert remarks, Ho threw down the gauntlet, challenging scholars to investigate this relationship more closely, but it is difficult to imagine that a friendship with someone as musically obsessed as Coltrane did not have a lasting impact on Massey, and perhaps vice versa. After Coltrane's passing, Massey frequently joined forces with saxophonist, poet, and playwright Archie Shepp; though Shepp was about ten years Massey's junior, the two developed a bond that remained close for the rest of the older man's life. Massey, Coltrane, and Shepp are all linked by the prolific but obscure composer and arranger Romulus Franceschini, who lent his hand to many important jazz projects, such as Coltrane's *Africa/Brass* and Shepp's *Attica Blues*. He maintained with Massey a symbiotic relationship not unlike that of Billy Strayhorn and Duke Ellington. As Franceschini put it, "It is hard to describe exactly how Cal and I worked together. In general, Cal composed the tunes and I did the arrangements and orchestrations. But it was far more intricate than that—we were constantly feeding each other ideas." Massey's widow recalled that the collaboration would often take place over the phone, with Massey singing melodies and ideas, and Franceschini writing them down and orchestrating them. On the whole, as in the case of Ellington and Strayhorn, it was difficult to tell where one musician's contribution ended and the other's began.²

Massey also shared a radical political stance with Shepp and Franceschini (Coltrane was evasive about his political views, so they are difficult to assess). It is impossible to separate his work from the militant arm of the Civil Rights Movement that took shape in the 1960s and 1970s. As Ho has noted, "Titles such as '[Hey Goddamn It], Things Have Got to Change,' 'The Damned Don't Cry,' and 'The Cry of My People' spoke directly to a consciousness of oppression and a politics of liberation."³ In fact, the Black Panthers were a driving force behind Massey's creation (with Franceschini) of *The Black Liberation Movement Suite*. At the first Pan-African Arts Festival in Algiers in 1969 Massey met exiled Panthers leader Eldridge Cleaver who commissioned the *Suite* primarily as a fundraising venture. The work would be

performed at Black Panther benefits three times during Massey's lifetime. Franceschini remained an avowed socialist, and his political views, very much in harmony with Massey's own, no doubt helped make the projects on which both musicians worked such powerful statements.

Massey paid heavy dues for his adventurous music and ideology, as did many of his contemporaries. According to his widow, an altercation with an executive at Blue Note Records resulted in his being blacklisted (or, as Ho put it, "whitelisted") from major recording companies. As a result, only one album was recorded under his name, *Blues to Coltrane* (Candid, recorded 1961, released 1987).⁴ The instrumentation is of a typical hard bop quintet, with addition of Julius Watkins on French horn (both he and pianist Patti Brown were members of Quincy Jones's orchestra at the time). Jimmy Garrison, a foundational member of Coltrane's great quartet of the 1960s, is featured on bass, while the underrated tenor saxophonist Hugh Brodie provides superb solos. Several of the tunes exist in more famous recordings by other artists: "Bakai" by both Coltrane and Shepp, "These Are Soulful Days" by Lee Morgan, and "Father and Son" by Freddie Hubbard. Massey himself emerges as a distinctive musical personality on trumpet. Lacking the virtuosity of Hubbard or the ebullience of Morgan, he is an introverted player with a deep feeling for the blues and a sound that occasionally evokes Clark Terry, but with frequent use of falls—short, fading glissandos at the ends of notes. Though the album suffers from sporadic intonation problems, exacerbated by a dreadfully out-of-tune piano, it does make one wish that there were more performances by Massey on disc.

Massey's struggles with the primarily white-run music business did force him to seek imaginative ways to promote his music and that of his associates. Especially from the mid-1960s until his death, it was these promotional tactics that made Folks, according to trombonist Charles Stephens, "the musical presence and center in Brooklyn."⁵ He began to organize and produce his own concerts with the help of his family; his wife Charlotte served as accountant and his daughter India as secretary. Massey convinced black business-owners to invest in his efforts, which were primarily benefits for local organizations or, in one instance, for the building of a community playground in his neighborhood. One two-day event even featured a performance of *A Love Supreme* by Coltrane's quartet, with the saxophonist reading the prayer that serves as the basis for

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Michael Salim Washington conducting Massey's *Black Liberation Movement Suite*
Photo courtesy of John Ricosolli

A Homegoing Service for the King of Pop

In 1989, as Elizabeth Taylor gave Michael Jackson the third annual Soul Train Heritage Award for outstanding career achievements, she made a simple and bold pronouncement: Jackson, she said, was “the true King of pop, rock, and soul.” Twenty years later, at the 7 July 2009 memorial service for Jackson in Los Angeles, Berry Gordy closed his farewell remarks by upping the ante: “The King of Pop is not big enough for him. I think he is simply the greatest entertainer that ever lived.” The sold-out Staples Center erupted into a thunderous standing ovation.

Many of us will always remember where we were when Jackson died on 25 June 2009. It was a warm summer day in Brooklyn and I was heading to the Women in Hip-Hop Culture Unite event at NYU. Dozens of artists were being honored including rapper Monie Love, DJ Jazzy Joyce and b-girl Rokafella. As I walked to catch the C train into Manhattan at the Kingston-Throop station, I did my usual Twitter check-in. Just before I crossed Atlantic Avenue, the border between Crown Heights and Bed-Stuy in Brooklyn, I read a TMZ tweet that Jackson was dead. TMZ is known for celebrity gossip and Hollywood rumors but before I dismissed the tweet, I heard a Jackson tune blaring from one passing vehicle, and then another. The urban buzz confirmed the news. Sound systems from every passing 4x4, sporty sedan, and “hooptie” (a well-worn Cadillac) were blasting Jackson’s classic hits—“Billie Jean,” “Stop the Love You Save,” and “Don’t Stop ‘Til You Get Enough.” Word of mouth was upgraded from person-to-person transmission to block-to-block mobile broadcasts blasting tributes from Hot 97 or WBLS radio, personally programmed CD changers, or even cassette decks. Brooklynites had gotten into their cars and trucks to tell the world Michael was gone.

Just as I reached the corner of Kingston and Fulton, three-and-a-half blocks from my apartment, a second confirmation came from a teenager sitting with a friend on the stoop of his apartment building. In a glib and unaffected way, just loud enough for anyone passing by to hear, he said, “the King of Pop is dead.” I was stunned. This was the passing of a musical genius; a one-man cultural revolution in sound, embodiment, dance, identity, marketing, fashion, and iconography (e.g., the white glove, socks, and high-water pants). In his masterful music videos, Jackson created a soundscape of significance over and over again for fans of all ages and nations. His legacy lives on in the viral phenomenon he sparked on YouTube including remixes, flash mobs, the best from Bucharest and Stockholm,

or the elaborate karaoke choreography performed by high-security inmates at the Cebu Provincial Detention and Rehabilitation Centre in the Philippines.

Life in Brooklyn remained a sonic Internet of Jackson’s music throughout the summer culminating with Spike Lee’s birthday celebration for the King of Pop on 29 August 2009. People outside New York City cannot fully appreciate the communal energy generated during Brooklyn summers by DJs, drummers, salsa, house, and hip-hop dancers, street vendors, fashion designers, filmmakers, choreographers, photographers, and DIY music festival-goers attending Afro-Punk events. Summer is marked



Michael Jackson in rehearsal shortly before his death
Michael Jackson's *This Is It* (2009), film still

by the Soul Summit Music Festival, a weekly series of outdoor dance jams at Fort Greene Park drawing hundreds of twenty- to fifty-year-olds from the tri-state area. Lee wanted to host Jackson’s birthday party there, but when the word got out it had to be moved to the larger Prospect Park. Many black folks in Brooklyn intend to preserve and protect cultural events like the Soul Summit from the kinds of mainstream assimilation and incorporation that had people thinking that Jackson or hip-hop culture was no longer “black.” Even though some questioned his ethnic adherence given the mystery around changes to his facial features and pigmentation, in death Jackson’s legacy was undeniably attributed to a musical blackness. The televised memorial service came closest to expressing the power of a black ritual like the Soul Summit to a mass audience beyond the social commons of black neighborhoods.

As an ethnomusicologist, I had a special connection to Jackson’s music. In my book *The Games Black Girls Play: Learning the Ropes from Double-Dutch To Hip-Hop* (New York University Press, 2006), I used his 1972 cover of Bobby O’Day’s 1958 hit “Rockin’ Robin” to show the dialogic sampling relationship from the 1930s to the 1990s between black girls’ handclapping game-songs and cheers and the commercial recordings of black male artists. “Rockin’ Robin” continues to be a popular game-song where four girls face-off and coordinate bridge structures with their handclapping gestures while singing “Tweet. Tweet. Tweedly-dee.”

I was a little embarrassed to admit that I only owned two vinyl albums by Jackson—*Off the Wall* and *Thriller*—during his lifetime. I also grew up in D.C. and I have never visited the Washington Monument. Still, the first record I ever purchased

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A Homegoing Service (continued)

with my allowance was a 45 rpm by the Jackson 5. It was 1969 and I was seven. I paid less than a dollar for it at the Waxie Maxie record chain in the metro suburb of Rockville, Maryland. I sat in my room and played the single “I Want You Back” incessantly on my little toy record player, along with The Osmonds’s “One Bad Apple.”

Released 10 August 1979 just months after I graduated from high school, *Off the Wall* was probably the first LP I ever bought. Now Jackson’s music lives on in covers by various artists on my iPod. One is a funky straight-ahead cover of “I Can’t Help It” by one of my favorite jazz vocalists, Gretchen Parlato, the 2004 winner of the Thelonious Monk Jazz Competition. The version is a duet with guitar and beatboxing by the amazing Lionel Loueke (<http://www.gretchenparlato.com>). Jackson continues to inspire complex rhythmic articulations as musicians emulate his off-beat syncopations and interjections vocally and instrumentally.

Jackson’s Los Angeles memorial service resonated with the ritual experiences of my youth outside Washington, D.C. By age sixteen I had attended a white Catholic, black Methodist, black Baptist, and black Pentecostal church as either a singer or congregant. What struck me most about Jackson’s memorial service was the international mediation of a ritual I only knew outside mainstream media. Consider the number of people witnessing the event. MSNBC.com reported that 1.6 million fans registered online for the chance at one of the 17,500 available tickets. According to the *NY Daily News*, thirty-one million people accessed the live broadcast via major networks and cable television and almost forty million viewers watched online. In fact, more people viewed Jackson’s memorial than the funeral of Princess Di and the inauguration of Barack Obama combined. The nation and the world had not witnessed the ritual of a “homegoing” service in honor of a black man or woman of such magnitude since Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s funeral was televised on 9 April 1968.

In many black churches, a “homegoing” is a funeral celebrating the soul’s return to Christ. How fitting that the legendary gospel singer Andraé Crouch and his choir from the Church of God in Christ (COGIC) opened Jackson’s memorial with his classic song “Soon and Very Soon (We are Going to See the King).” Composed in 1976, this three-verse anthem is known by nearly every black choir. Churchgoers know this song references a homegoing but the majority of the secular, non-black audience might think the song was playing off a double entendre—a common trope in black expressive culture: soon and very soon we are going to see the “King of Pop.” Of course, both operate simultaneously. In this multivalent moment the black Christian ritual of a homegoing service is transformed into a non-denominational, secular, and universal event, while the vocal expression creates a shroud for the intimate communal memory invoked for congregants of the black church. If people thought Jackson wasn’t black enough before the service, this

colored the occasion. For me, the service felt just like home, like family, like a declaration that Jackson was African American for all the world to see. I was thrilled to witness the stylized oratory from the moguls of Motown and many others who never forgot Jackson was a black son, a black brother, a black man and a father and, of course, much, much more than his skin color(s) to the world.

Another moment that resonated was the humorous testimony of basketball legend Magic Johnson, who appeared in the video “Remember the Time” directed by John Singleton, airing 2 Feb 1992 on Fox, MTV, and BET, with its Teddy Riley new-jack swing beat. Johnson made connections that others might casually dismiss. “I truly believe Jackson made me a better basketball player as I watched him become the greatest entertainer ever.” Johnson’s facial expression, his body language, and his vernacular speech signalled entry into that culturally intimate space where blackness could live openly before forty million viewers. He added an anecdote about eating a bucket of Kentucky Fried Chicken with Jackson at his ranch saying, “That made my day! It was the greatest moment of my life.” In an instant, a stereotype—eating fried chicken—became a banner of cultural unity and pride and no one dared question it aloud at a memorial service. Johnson was speaking into and from a network of conversations that African Americans still deploy despite structural racism on and off the basketball court and stage; conversations that often only take place in the comforts of our homes and mansions.

It was inspiring to hear both Berry Gordy and Smokey Robinson (nicknamed by an uncle because of his light-colored skin so he would never forget he was black) eulogize about Jackson’s rendition of “Who’s Lovin’ You.” I loved not just what Robinson said but *how* he said it. The more he spoke, the more he intensified and reiterated certain words to relive his initial reaction to Jackson’s soulfulness:

I heard it! (halting emphatically) This boy couldn't possibly be ten years old. ...I did not believe that someone that young could have such feeling // 'n' soul // 'n' // KNOW. He had a lotta KNOW. // He had to KNOW something to sing a song like dat. // It was wonderful though, as a songwriter, man, tha's-a-dream-come-true to have somebody sing one of your songs like dat.

So often it seems that any trace of black speech is sanitized in transcription. Following the memorial, I saw tweets and transcripts that erased any signs of how Robinson actually expressed his sentiments. It’s not just the copyrightable notes in the melody, but the articulated affect of soulfulness, the slurs in pitch, and the dialect that signals black musical difference. It’s complicated for non-blacks to encode black dialects in writing about such events for fear of being labeled “racist” or perhaps fear of articulating the supposed “illiteracy” of vernacular speech. But at the memorial these signs of difference mattered.

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Haitian Vodou in the Aftermath

Brooklyn and the surrounding New York Metropolitan area are currently home to the largest Haitian population outside of the Caribbean Island: by some estimates nearly half a million. The borough's soundscape has been enriched over the past four decades with the influx of some of Haiti's most talented musicians. Only steps from the Brooklyn College campus one can hear the most popular *konpa* dance music, *mizik rasin* (roots music), and cutting edge creole rap. Chanted songs and roiling drum rhythms honoring the African *lwa* (spirits) emanate from basement *Vodou* ceremonies across the surrounding Flatbush neighborhood. Come spring traditional *Rara* bands with their hocketing *vaksins* (single-note bamboo trumpets) and *kònes* (pressed zinc trumpets) celebrate in Prospect Park. Haitian pop and *Rara* bands have become a strong presence in Brooklyn's Labor Day Carnival, an event originally dominated by calypso singers and steel bands from the English-speaking West Indies.

The January 12th earthquake that killed nearly a quarter of a million inhabitants of Haiti's capital city, Port-au-Prince, hit Brooklyn's Haitian community particularly hard. The disaster shook every aspect of Haitian life, including music making. To assess developments in the quake's aftermath, I sat down with ethnomusicologist Dr. Lois Wilcken and Haitian-born master drummer Frisner Augustin, who had recently returned from a two-week visit to Haiti. For nearly three decades Wilcken and Augustin have been deeply involved in studying, documenting, and teaching traditional *Vodou* dance and drumming in New York and in Haiti. Their performance ensemble, La Troupe Makandal, has traveled the world performing staged interpretations of Haitian *Vodou*, *Rara*, and Carnival music. We began by discussing their initial reactions upon arriving in Haiti in mid-March, and what sorts of music they did and did not hear.

FA: I was so relieved to finally hear the voice of my friend Diabolo on the phone a few days after the quake, reporting that my family had all survived. But when we arrived in Haiti, nearly two months later, it was shocking. The whole city was down, still rubble everywhere! In my old neighborhood, Ruelle Gabelis, where I used to hang and first started to play the drums, many of the houses were flat down. My sister's house was still standing, but she was afraid to sleep in it, we spent our nights in a tent in her front yard. But one night I woke up around 2 a.m. and heard some *Rara* pass by—they were drumming and singing to "*An dekonm*," which means "In the ruins" in Creole. So that brought some happiness in all the misery, hearing

the drums and *vaksins*, knowing that some people felt strong enough to put the *Rara* out.

While such spontaneous music making was not uncommon, Wilcken explained the fate of more official music festivities.

LW: Not surprisingly all the official music events surrounding Carnival and Easter were canceled, which of course hurt the Carnival and *Rara* bands who in the recent years have become dependent on government and corporate support. The Carnival bands would normally come out every Sunday after January 6 (Three Kings Day), culminating in a big three day celebration just prior to Ash Wednesday. They came out the Sunday before the quake, but that was it—no Carnival!

Next I asked Augustin about the present state of Vodou in Haiti.

FA: Well, in normal times *Vodou* ceremonies would go on all over the city, but at first we didn't hear about any—everyone was still trying to get themselves together with shelter, food, as so on. But then one of my friends, a *manbo* (*Vodou* priestess) and singer named Sò Anne Annette Auguste, invited us to this rehearsal of the *rasin* group she leads. And the whole thing spontaneously turned into a ceremony.

They went through the whole ritual order, where you go from nation to nation; they drummed and sang *Vodou* songs for the different *lwa*, and people got up and danced. And finally at the end they pulled out these huge pots of food, and served it up, just like at a ceremony.

LW: And one day we traveled to the nearby town of Carrefour (*Kalfou* in Haitian Creole), which had been the actual epicenter of the quake, and we started drumming and dancing with some friends. And these other people came along and invited us to a nearby temple where there was a full-blown *Vodou* ceremony going on. It was so packed we couldn't get inside. So some things were definitely starting to happen.

But Wilcken worried that certain religious factions in Haiti were using the tragedy of the earthquake to stir up opposition to Vodou.

LW: You see religious tensions in Haiti have been rising in recent years with all these Christian fundamentalists coming in who love to condemn *Vodou* as a religion based on black magic! Then you have Pat Robertson preaching that the quake may well have been



*La Troupe Makandal performing at Sogetsu Hall, Tokyo, July 2007
Photo by Shinji Takehara*

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Haitian Vodou (continued)

God's retribution on the Haitian people because their *Vodou* priest Boukman supposedly made a pact with the Devil 200 years ago to free his people from French enslavement. There was this real ugly incident, just before we arrived, at Cité Soleil—a poor neighborhood in the north of Port-au-Prince. They were trying to have a ceremony in honor of the dead. A Haitian fundamentalist pastor came in with some group he had rounded up—and there were rumors he had paid someone to do this—and they came in throwing rocks. The police were called in to restore order, but after they left the thugs came back and started burning things. Everybody in Port-au-Prince had heard about this. And the day we left Haiti there was a ceremony, and the police were out there, making sure everything was okay.

I asked Wilcken if she had seen some of the recent commentary in the New York Times and Wall Street Journal that portrayed Vodou as an obstacle to progress in Haiti.

LW: Oh yes, I'm familiar with this argument, misguided as it may be. *New York Times* columnist David Brooks claimed *Vodou* envisions life as "capricious," which in turn discourages planning and responsibility. Brooks was quoting Lawrence Harrison who stated in the *Wall Street Journal* that *Vodou* was an African spirit-based religion that "is without ethical content." In his book, *The Central Liberal Truth* (Oxford, 2006), Harrison portrays *Vodou* as an impediment to progress because it discourages initiative, rationality, and education. It's incorrigible that such noted contemporary writers could fall back on these sorts of nineteenth-century racial arguments. Their narrative of Haitian underdevelopment completely ignores centuries of slavery, colonialism, and occupation by Europe and the United States—talk about blaming the victim! And they simply have very little understanding of what *Vodou* is about. Yes, it is a spirit-based religion, but so is Christianity! And for that matter, there are many elements of Catholicism within the system of *Vodou* belief and practice.

FA: That's right, these people have no idea what they are talking about. You see the whole idea of *Vodou* is to understand and balance different kinds of spirits. You have to invite and satisfy all of them—the cool *Rada* spirits and the hot *Petwo*—because each kind of spirit has its own power and protection. You don't have to be afraid of the hot ones that some people confuse with evil. And to say *Vodou* is a religion without ethics is crazy. *Vodou* saved my life when I was young. I grew up in a very poor neighborhood. I have a picture of the Mardi Gras band I organized when I was a teenager, and in the picture you see all my "fans" surrounding me. Only a couple are still alive. The *Vodou* spirits gave me knowledge about how to live in harmony with other human beings. When I traveled and made some money, I came back and shared with others in my neighborhood, like we did on our trip last month. The spirits taught me to share things.

LW: The ramifications of these post-quake attacks on *Vodou* are tremendously troubling for those of us involved in cultural preservation. At some point in the recovery Haitians will have to consider

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Isaac Goldberg: Assessing Agency in American Music Biography

Isaac Goldberg's foundational account, *George Gershwin: A Study in American Music* (Simon and Schuster, 1931), continues to govern both the scholarship and reception of one of our country's most celebrated composers. "Perhaps more than any other single source," note the editors of the recently published Gershwin reader, "[Goldberg's] biography provides a timeless period glimpse of Gershwin during his lifetime, a uniquely valuable document given its dependence on the composer's own thoughts about his life and music that are contained in the letters exchanged between the author and composer."¹ All subsequent biographers—from David Ewen (1943) to Howard Pollack (2007)—have drawn on Goldberg's contemporary account, from its narratives of Gershwin's childhood to the roughly twenty pages of quotations attributed to Gershwin himself. Over the years, Goldberg has been supplemented, but not supplanted.

But who was Isaac Goldberg? In the Gershwin literature, if elements of Goldberg's own biography emerge at all, one finds allusions to his standing as a Harvard professor or his authorship of an earlier book on Tin Pan Alley, but little else. The paucity of knowledge on Goldberg is surprising given current scholarship's continued reliance on his work. Goldberg's correspondence and published writings reveal how the author's childhood, training, and vision for American music affected his narrative construction of Gershwin. Probing Goldberg's biography and musical ideology provide insight into his promotion of Gershwin at the same time as it forces a critical reconsideration of his book's place in the historiography of the composer.

Isaac Goldberg's ultimate vision of American music was directly influenced by his late-nineteenth and early twentieth-century Boston upbringing. The Goldberg family lived on Lowell Street in the city's West End, a now-defunct working-class neighborhood then populated by Jewish and Italian immigrant families. His preference for municipal band concerts and Gilbert and Sullivan highlights the noticeable absence of the Boston Symphony Orchestra and other so-called "highbrow" entertainments during his adolescence. He recalled that "the first music I wrote was inspired immediately by the orchestras at the burlesque houses. I had composed a great deal as an adolescent, mostly for the piano, which in a very crude manner I had taught myself."²

In light of his later assessment of Gershwin, it is worth noting that the core of Goldberg's musical training took place outside of formal educational systems. During his second year of high school in 1904, Goldberg played hooky for an entire month having "conceived a violent distaste for [his] studies." He continues:

What was I doing during that month? It was a busman's holiday. I was chiefly at the Public Library, studying harmony and counterpoint in the silences of the music room. Had I been caught at the time, I should have been doubly denounced as a wayward and undisciplined child. In sober fact I was intensely purposive and excessively disciplined, as any one will recognize if he is at all acquainted with the unnecessary rigors of counterpoint.³

Goldberg hoped to attend the New England Conservatory of Music upon graduation from high school; however, his Russian-immigrant father forbade his eldest son from becoming a musician. Instead, with the assistance of academic scholarships, Goldberg enrolled at Harvard during the fall of 1907. There he became a comparative literature major, completing a thesis on the theater of Spanish- and Portuguese-America. He graduated *summa cum laude* in 1910 and remained at Harvard where, only two years later, he earned a Ph.D. in romance languages and literature.

While Goldberg would eventually lecture for two semesters at Harvard in the 1930s—which is where his professor status originates—he found public speaking unfulfilling and uncomfortable. Shortly after completing his graduate studies, Goldberg became a freelance writer for the *Boston Evening Transcript*. Throughout WWI, he published bi-weekly essays covering a wide range of cultural topics from abroad including art, architecture, literature, poetry, theater, and music. Since he never left the United States and rarely ventured beyond New England, his coverage of foreign cultural events and figures during this time relied heavily on work appearing in European- and South American-language journals. His staggering facility with foreign languages—he knew at least eight by this point in his life—allowed him to establish an "armchair" working method that he followed for the remainder of this career. Despite the fact that he largely relied on source material provided by others, Goldberg's insightful interpretation of this information made unfamiliar and otherwise inaccessible subjects available and relevant to his readership. This approach continued as his criticism attained national circulation in the mid-1920s, particularly with respect to his writings on musical modernism.

In the debate that surrounded the role of jazz in American classical composition, Goldberg emerged in opposition to critics such as Paul Rosenfeld who famously quipped: "American music is not jazz. Jazz is not music."⁴ From Goldberg's point of view, the incorporation of jazz in contemporary composition, "actually educated the public. Educated, that is, in a physical as well as a musical



Isaac Goldberg, 1934

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Isaac Goldberg (continued)

sense. It has accustomed the popular ear to rhythmic intricacy, to a certain amount of contrapuntal and polyphonic involution, to shifts of key, even to harmonic modernism.”⁵ To this end, Goldberg saw popular music as a valuable tool of mediation in helping the American public adjust to modernist innovations. Much in the same way that he interpreted foreign-language culture and texts to WWI-era readers of the *Boston Evening Transcript*, Goldberg used his interwar writings on music to decipher unfamiliar aspects of contemporary composition. At the same time as he educated his readers, Goldberg revealed his own hopes for American Music. He felt strongly that only a musician raised in the vernacular tradition would properly introduce jazz into classical composition.

It is particularly interesting, then, that in 1927 Goldberg initially declared Aaron Copland—and not Gershwin—the “young man who seems to hold out the greatest hopes for a jazz that shall be music as well.”⁶ Correspondence in the Goldberg Collection housed at the New York Public Library reveals Goldberg’s preparation for this article. Since Copland remained relatively unknown at the time, Goldberg not only asked the composer for copies of his scores, but also for suggestions on published writings on his music, which remained scarce. Copland obliged both requests in a letter dated 7 February 1927, directing Goldberg to the writings of Paul Rosenfeld in the *Dial*. In particular he drew attention to a February 1926 review of *Music for the Theatre* in which Rosenfeld declared Copland’s use of popular music to be “ironic” and “barbaric,” ultimately reinforcing the close connection Copland maintained with the contemporary European-music scene even as he developed a personal idiom representative of a new American tradition.⁷

Not surprisingly, Goldberg’s subsequent article in *American Mercury* takes a markedly different view. He highlights the ways in which jazz dominates the music of Copland who wrote, “not as an adopted tongue, but in the only language that he knows. ... [He] weaves it into his writing as naturally as one employs the rhythms and accents of one’s childhood.”⁸ This nicely aligned with Goldberg’s vision of an American music arising from its vernacular roots. However, upon reading the published article, Copland sent the following, rather gruff response to Goldberg:

If I advanced any criticism it would be that in spite of everything you say I am afraid the general impression is given that you are treating a jazz composer, which we both know is not true. The point is, that from my standpoint, as the first article to be devoted to my work as a whole, it rather overstresses the jazz element. It is very possible that (to all outward appearances) I am now finished with jazz, but I can’t consider this a tragedy since I feel I was a composer before jazz and remain a composer without its aid. I’m sure you sense this too. But I’m not so sure about the readers of the Mercury. Not that they matter, of course—but *we* must be clear on this point.⁹

Copland leaves little doubt that he preferred Rosenfeld’s perspective, which framed the composer as incorporating popular music

sparingly and from the top-down point of view of a classically trained composer. Following this communication, Goldberg decisively backed away from both Copland and his music.

Two years later, in June 1929, Goldberg met Gershwin for the first time backstage at Symphony Hall following the Boston premiere of *An American in Paris*. He reported that it was one of those typical “green-room introductions; the celebrity shakes your hands, murmurs that he is pleased to meet you, and then proceeds at once to forget you. Why shouldn’t he? As for Gershwin, I knew him thoroughly before I met him; knew, that is, his music, from the first days to the present moment.”¹⁰ It was a happy coincidence that Gershwin and Goldberg met when they did. Goldberg needed someone to champion and Gershwin needed a biographer. With a *Rhapsody*, a *Concerto*, a *Tone Poem*, and more than a dozen musicals under his belt, Gershwin’s celebrity and reputation were on the rise. A few months after their introduction in 1929, a series of extensive profile articles on Gershwin was arranged for publication in the *Ladies’ Home Journal*. Appearing in the spring of 1931, these represented the first in-depth consideration of Gershwin and subsequently formed the basis for the biography published later that year. Although we do not know the extent to which the composer was familiar with Goldberg’s writings prior to this time, his selection of Goldberg was particularly judicious. Both in his biography and beyond, Goldberg became an ardent promoter of Gershwin’s music, not only communicating the spirit of his compositions but demonstrating their musical value through analysis.

Gershwin was an appealing subject to Goldberg, and the two appear to have had much in common. Goldberg’s narrative portrayal of Gershwin’s youth emphasizes the intriguing parallels to his own childhood. Like Goldberg, Gershwin was born into a Jewish immigrant family and spent his youth playing in the rough-and-tumble streets of an urban working-class neighborhood; both discovered music on their own while playing hooky from school; both received their musical educations outside a traditional pedagogical setting. The difference, of course, is that while Gershwin was allowed to pursue his musical ambitions, Goldberg was not.

A large part of Goldberg’s assessment of Gershwin in the realm of American composition relies on portraying his musical intuition as natural and his abilities as self-taught. The cumulative effect of these and other biographical tidbits bequeathed longstanding conceptions of the composer—particularly images of Gershwin as naïve and unlearned—that have influenced both reception and scholarship. Although Howard Pollack’s recent biography demonstrates that such views of the composer have somewhat dissipated, other Goldbergian emendations remain unchallenged; namely, the quotations attributed to Gershwin himself.

As mentioned previously, scholars value Goldberg’s book for its reliance on the author’s extended conversations and correspondence with Gershwin—that is, for material that has been treated as primary source. However, evidence of significant direct collaboration between the two men remains scant. Only twelve letters from

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Jazz Visions

Three recent books offer fruitful pathways for insuring the health of jazz criticism and historiography. Amiri Baraka's *Digging: The Afro-American Soul of American Classical Music* (University of California, 2009) and Nat Hentoff's *At the Jazz Band Ball: Sixty Years on the Jazz Scene* (University of California Press, 2010) present collections of essays and critical reviews by two esteemed veteran jazz writers. Robin D.G. Kelley's *Thelonious Monk: The Life and Times of an American Original* (Free Press, 2009) is a long awaited, definitive biography of one of America's most enigmatic musical geniuses.

Amiri Baraka is arguably the most prominent and provocative commentator on revolutionary black music, particularly jazz. His most influential work, *Blues People* (1963), was the first—and 40 years later remains perhaps the most important—book-length study of the music by an African American writer. Baraka is the leading light of the school of jazz criticism that gains its sense of history from W.E.B. DuBois's elegant essays in *The Souls of Black Folk*, its class analysis from Sidney Finkelstein, its cultural analysis from Larry Neal, and enjoys contemporary expression from voices like Kalamu Ya Salaam. The publication of *Digging* is all the more important since this line of criticism has taken second place to the more mainstream wing of jazz writing whose roots are also in DuBois, but whose body flowed through the magisterial pens of Ralph Ellison and Albert Murray, and which finds its flowering in contemporary critics such as Stanley Crouch. Theirs is a line of reasoning that holds Baraka's Marxist and Black Nationalist leanings in suspicion, and is dismissive of the Black Arts Movement he helped to ignite. Reading *Digging* reveals Baraka's most important strength, his versatility. He is an iconic figure not only as music critic, but as essayist, dramatist, political activist, as a father of the Black Arts Movement, and most importantly a jazz poet who can play the dozens as well as anyone.

Baraka's voice dances throughout *Digging*, juxtaposing poetic word play with searing insight into the music and its meanings, championing many of the important artists of our age who are all but ignored by the professional jazz critics. He writes not only of the universally acknowledged giants, the John Coltranes, Billie Holidays, and Duke Ellingtons, but also about left-of-center heroic figures who are not yet quite iconic, such as Fred Hopkins, Oliver Lake, Andrew Cyrille, Don Pullen, and Amina Claudine Myers. Baraka's analyses not only point towards what we should be listening for in the music, but also describe what is wrong, unjust, and unhip about our social and cultural reality. His political engagement is as a revolutionary and hence his music criticism

can be nearly as sharp as the music itself. Also, Baraka's analysis of American culture is much less celebratory than the dominant strain of jazz writing; seeing black music as a revolutionary act, he is interested in the underbelly of the American experiment and also its relationship to the rest of the world. For example, his essay, "The American Popular Song," connects the Harlem Renaissance to the 1917 Russian revolution, Negritude from Africa and the West Indies, Negrismo from Latin America, and Indigisme from Haiti. In the same essay Baraka explores the impact of Louis Armstrong and Bessie Smith on national culture in relation to the relative lack of freedom they experienced as African Americans.



Thelonious Monk Expo 1967
Photo courtesy of Library and Archives Canada

Nat Hentoff's *At the Jazz Band Ball* represents an entirely different tradition in jazz criticism. While Baraka is a revolutionary, Hentoff is a libertarian. As such he is more concerned with protecting the constitutional rights of Americans and the sanctity of the Bill of Rights than he is about fundamental contradictions that lie at the heart of American civilization. Like Baraka, Hentoff has a long history as one of our leading jazz critics. Rather than reading aesthetics as a continuing political history of the music, Hentoff celebrates the life lessons he learned through decades of listening and personal friendships he enjoyed with many great musicians.

His involvement with jazz has taken many guises over the years, including his work with Candid Records, where he produced two of the most influential recordings in the history of the music: *Charles Mingus Presents Charles Mingus* (1960), where the words to Mingus's political protest masterpiece, "Fables of Faubus," finally saw the light of day; and Max Roach's *We Insist! Max Roach's Freedom Now Suite* (1960), banned in apartheid South Africa probably because of Roach's "Tears for Johannesburg."

Hentoff understands the music as the best of the American spirit, and while he acknowledges the centrality of black culture in jazz, he sees the music as something that mirrors the ideals of a color-blind political culture in the post-Civil Rights era. Thus, for instance, he is at his best when describing the Jewish soul of the important African American pianist Willie "The Lion" Smith, the beautiful artistry of the iconoclast clarinetist Pee Wee Russell, or the profundity of Wynton Marsalis's jazz pedagogy. He, like Marsalis and the wing of jazz criticism of which he is a part, also considers jazz a force of bourgeois democracy, and lionizes the inclusion of jazz in the cultural opposition to both the Stalinist and the Nazi regimes. The good will, intelligence, and insider's status is evident everywhere in Hentoff's jazz writings, but for this reviewer so is the lack of revolutionary understanding. Thus Hentoff presents incidents of Crow Jim (the apparent chauvinism

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In a Cold Sweat: *Soul Power*

The last scene in director Jeffrey Levy-Hinte's *Soul Power* (2008; released on DVD by Sony Pictures, 2010) belongs to James Brown, who asks that they "turn out the lights and call some more blackness." Brown in fact bookends the film, as it starts with the call and response between Brown and his band as a prelude to his song "Soul Power." Although Brown gets center stage, in reality he's just one of the players in a fascinating, beautifully produced film that took a generation to release. But it was certainly worth the wait.

Soul Power is a documentary of a 1974 music festival held in Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of the Congo). Originally scheduled as a companion to the "Rumble in the Jungle" heavyweight championship boxing match between reigning champ George Foreman and Muhammad Ali, the festival had to proceed on its own when Foreman suffered a cut while training and the fight was postponed for six weeks. Zaire '74, as the event was officially called, was the brainchild of American record producer Stuart Levine and South African musician Hugh Masekela, whom Levine met while both were students at the Manhattan School of Music.

Soul Power is a complement to the previously released film *When We Were Kings* (1996; released on DVD by Universal Studios, 2002). With seven film crews at his disposal, producer Leon Gast was able to compile 125 hours of documentary footage. Levy-Hinte then took on the task of carving a festival film from the extensive material edited out of *Kings*. The two films work well when viewed in tandem, with *Soul Power* focusing on the concert and *Kings* highlighting the boxing match.

The roster of performers in the film reads like a who's who of African American popular music: James Brown, the Spinners, the Crusaders, Sister Sledge, B.B. King, Bill Withers, Manu Dibango, Celia Cruz and the Fania All Stars, and conga player Big Black (Danny Ray). Joining them are African musicians Miriam Makeba, OK Jazz, and Orchestra Afrisa. The Pointer Sisters also performed, but are not featured.

Zaire '74 was meant to encourage cross-cultural connections between artists, a goal that had mixed results. Soul singer Bill Withers felt the primarily French-speaking audience responded best to the Fania All Stars, James Brown, and acts with elaborate stage shows. This is unfortunate, as Withers's riveting performance of "Hope She'll Be Happier" is caught in extreme close-up, his sweat-drenched face a study of the concentration that clearly reveals his effort. Similarly, B.B. King's performance of one of his signature tunes, "The Thrill is Gone," shows a focused, yet amiable King, who appraises his own performance with the humble quip "I hope I didn't sound too bad."

Indeed, the film carefully balances musical performances, the subplot of the struggle just to pull everything together, and a series of intriguing behind-the-scenes shots. Levy-Hinte's *verité* narrative masterfully weaves together vignettes that give a fuller view of what the experience must have been like and captures both the mundane and extraordinary. Manu Dibango's stroll through a village while playing, drawing a gaggle of children and villagers in his wake is presented alongside impromptu jam sessions on the plane ride over with the Fania All Stars and B.B. King all playing together (inspiring the ever charismatic Celia Cruz to keep time with a shoe on the plane's overhead bin) and a Zairian market scene where master conguero Ray Barretto captivates a crowd of onlookers.



Bill Withers
Courtesy of Sony Corporation

With the exception of Brown, most of the musical acts only have one song (sometimes partial) in the film. This may disappoint some, since there is ample raw footage. Indicative of the wealth of material are the extant Leon Gast-directed films of the performances of B.B. King (*B.B. King: Sweet Sixteen*, 1974); the Fania All Stars (*Live in Africa*; *Celia Cruz: Fania All Stars in Africa*, both 1974); and the Pointer Sisters (*Pointer Sisters: All Night Long*, 1974), most of which are available on DVD. Fortunately, Levy-Hinte told the *New York Times*'s Jon Pareles in a 2009 interview that there are plans

for new releases of the individual performances and that there is likely enough material for another film. Unfortunately, there are no immediate plans for a CD release—a process likely complicated by the difficulty and expense of securing music rights—though a box set with extras would certainly be a welcome addition, especially considering that concert audio releases are currently limited to an out-of-print Fania All Stars CD (*Live in Africa*, 1994).

Soul Power indeed captures most of the subjects in their prime. B.B. King, for instance, was in the middle of a career resurgence after the early 1960s lull that most blues musicians suffered; the Fania All Stars and Celia Cruz show why they captivated audiences nearly anywhere they performed; and James Brown's band displays the tight coordination that made them famous. Even Muhammad Ali (who recorded his own spoken word album and another with Sam Cooke) is captured at perhaps his most triumphant: coming back from a boxing ban (resulting from his refusal to serve in Vietnam) to beat George Foreman, whom many thought was unbeatable. Unfortunately, none of that would last long: Brown's career declined a few years later, Fania's popularity faded in the late 1970s, and Ali was never the same after a punishing 1976 win over Joe Frazier.

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Jazz Visions

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of some African Americans about their “ownership” of the music) as though they are as prevalent or as important as the Jim Crow practices that remain significant throughout the industry, post-racial rhetoric notwithstanding. As a libertarian and champion of American liberalism, the musicians that Hentoff reveres mostly made their reputations during the Depression and early Civil Rights era. *At the Jazz Band Ball* includes pieces about such figures as Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, Artie Shaw, Art Davis, Frank Sinatra, and Anita O’ Day. Hentoff is interested in the current scene, but mostly the venerable survivors, Clark Terry, Frank Foster, Quincy Jones, Marian McPartland, or the official voice of jazz, Winton Marsalis, rather than the risk-taking, controversial upstarts who would be the aesthetic equivalents of Coltrane in the 1950s and 1960s.

Robin D.G. Kelley’s *Thelonious Monk* is a labor of love conducted over many years. Kelley is a leading figure in what is now known as the new jazz studies. This school of jazz scholars is distinguished by its insistence upon foregrounding the socioeconomic and cultural history in which the music is embedded, and also its willingness to explore the connections between jazz and other disciplines, including literature, architecture, law, dance, and spirituality. The work is the most thoroughly researched and insightful chronicle of Monk’s life and cultural significance to date, clearing up much of the misinformation surrounding Monk without attempting to solve the mystery that is at the heart of his persona and artistry. Quite simply, Kelley’s biography represents a new standard of jazz historiography. Kelley is not only a premier historian of black social, economic, and cultural life, but also an amateur musician in the best sense of that term. He plays the piano and combines his vast historical knowledge of the music with on-the-ground investigations of many of the most vital contemporary music scenes. Added to this, Robin Kelley is a hipster, a man who knows vernacular African American culture and who can appreciate the significance of myriad gestures and expressions that give character and nuance to the life and times of one of jazz’s greatest geniuses. It must have been the recognition of this abundance of gifts, and the obvious integrity and love that guided their use, that led the Monk family to open their hearts and doors to Kelley, affording him access to the archival and human Monk that no other scholar has enjoyed.

Thanks to Kelley, we have a greater understanding of the relationships among Monk’s personal life, musical career, and the variegated cultural scenes of his home city and country. The book also offers a fuller picture of what Monk’s family meant to him and how it shaped him as a man and musician. Kelley goes beyond the usual trope of Monk the taciturn musical genius with a sensationalized relationship to the Baroness Pannonica “Nica” de Koenigswarter, and dismisses once and for all the idiot savant taint that surrounded past depictions. The biography reveals a Monk who cares about political events, who loves deeply and romantically, who is Uncle Bubba, who engages the world in multiple ways, who is an adroit gamesman in pool, ping pong, basketball, cards, and who has ex-

traordinary methods for learning and shaping his music. In short, we finally see a human Thelonious Monk, not an artist defined by his eccentricity or his bouts of mental illness, but a man full of promises and gifts as well as foibles and missteps.

— Michael Salim Washington
Brooklyn College

Haitian Vodou

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how best to restore and preserve their cultural traditions—their art, music, dance, and so forth. Will there be a concerted effort from the government and the official church to discourage the practice of *Vodou* and the preservation of the rich trove of African-derived music and dance associated with the religion, all in the name of progress and development? That is a frightening prospect! Haitians and the various relief agencies have to give serious thought as to how the country is to go about preserving its traditional arts.

I asked what sorts of musical activities are happening back in Brooklyn’s Haitian community.

FA: We—La Troupe Makandal—have been very busy playing for fund raisers for quake relief. We’ve played before all sorts of audiences—Frank London of the Klezmatiks even invited me to perform with his group for a fundraiser in a synagogue. People have been very generous. There are a few ceremonies planned for Brooklyn and Long Island this coming month, and the *Rara* bands and drummers in Prospect Park are starting up with the good weather. And there is still plenty of interest in traditional drumming—between my classes at Hunter College and two local Brooklyn schools I have about thirty students. So there is plenty of action here.

LW: And La Troupe Makandal is putting together two new programs this year—one, by the way, funded by the National Endowment for the Arts and the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, the other by the Puffin Foundation and, hopefully, the Department of Cultural Affairs. The first, *Haiti Drum and Dance*, will be a staged presentation of the drumming, song, and dance associated with traditional *Vodou*, *Rara*, and Carnival rituals. An important component of the project will be video documentation of the music and dance, much of which is vanishing. A second venture, *The Drum and the Seed*, will be a theatrical presentation about the environmental destruction and reforestation efforts in Haiti, as told through the voices of the *Vodou* spirits. These are the creative sorts of heritage projects we hope to encourage, both here and in Haiti.

FA: It’s been a very hard time for Haitian musicians, and for all Haitians. But the drum is the heart of *Vodou*, and no one can wipe

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Haitian Vodou

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away the drum or the spirits, they're too strong a force. Like our friend, the Haitian *manbo* Marie Michelle said so simply, "Yo pa kapab rete Vodou!"—"They can't stop Vodou!" Just the thought of killing spirit is ridiculous. You see in *Vodou* we have a spirit of the drum named *Ountò*. In the ritual order, *Ountò* is right up there on the top, along with *Legba*, who opens all doors, *Danbala* the life force—all of the most important spirits. *Ountò* is the heart-beat of the universe. No earthquake can stop that. And that's how we know that *Vodou*, especially the drum, is the music of life—it will heal Haiti and make a better future for Haitians and their children everywhere.

—R.A.

Institute News

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We are delighted that members of our Board continue to maintain international presences. Congratulations go particularly to **Tania León**, who was inducted into the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in mid-May. And despite a variety of academic and professional commitments, our staff continues to pursue important independent research projects: this fall, for example, the University of Illinois Press will publish Senior Research Associate **Ray Allen**'s *Gone to the Country: The New Lost City Ramblers and the Folk Music Revival* as part of its Music in American Life series. **Stephanie Jensen-Moulton** is at work on her edition of Miriam Gideon's 1958 opera *Fortunato*, due out in 2012 as part of A-R Editions's *Recent Researches in American Music Series*. In January, she presented her work on muteness in Menotti's *The Medium* at the CUNY Graduate Center's Symposium on Music and Disability. And this past May **Michael Salim Washington** delivered a lecture titled "Twentieth-Century Aesthetic Rebellion: The Revolutionary Implications of African American Music" for the American University in Beirut. He also performed to enthusiastic audiences at Beirut's Razz'zz Jazz Club.

This past winter our thoughts turned to former Institute Research Assistant **K. Robert Schwarz**, as we marked the tenth year of his passing. Many of us still fondly remember Rob here at the Institute, an immensely talented writer and scholar and cordial colleague, who at forty-two was lost much too soon. Those who did not know him personally probably encountered his work in the *New York Times*, *Musical America*, and many other publications, as well as through his most significant scholarly legacy, the book *Minimalists* (Phaedon Press, 1996). Please see our website for more detail about Rob's remarkable career. Our thoughts are with his mother Patricia, as she confronts what must be a painful anniversary.

Institute News

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Finally, we were all thrilled to hear on 30 March of the birth of twins to former Institute Director **Ellie Hisama** and her husband Anton Vishio. All four are doing fine. Welcome to the world, Hana and Liam!

—J.T.

Brooklyn Rediscovered Cal Massey

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the work's final movement, as well as an appearance by Thelonious Monk. Though money was always scarce, Massey's efforts to maintain artistic and economic control of his ventures places his career squarely within the goals of the Black Arts Movement. And Massey's dedication to community-based artistic endeavors made his Crown Heights home something of a community center, with Folks providing guidance and musical instruction to a host of young musicians in the neighborhood.

Massey and Franceschini finished the *Suite* in 1970 (Franceschini revised it in 1986) and it remains Massey's most ambitious work. The piece has never been commercially recorded, though some of the movements do exist on other recordings: "The Damned Don't Cry," though not included on the original LP of Coltrane's influential *Africa/Brass* (1961), was featured in a 1980s reissue. The "Prayer" movement that opens the *Suite* was recorded by Shepp on his *The Cry of My People* album of 1972, though with an extended improvisatory section (over a Latin groove) not heard in the *Suite*. The piece has only been heard in its entirety three times since Massey's death, under the guidance of Fred Ho and Massey's son Zane. With Michael Salim Washington as director, the Brooklyn College Big Band's recent performance of the *Suite* included special guests baritone saxophonist Ben Barsen and bassist Hakim Jami, the latter a veteran of Massey's own group. Washington used Franceschini's 1986 revision as a point of departure, but made some intriguing alterations without endangering the integrity of the work. For example, many of the important lead trombone lines were given to the superb Barsen, whose confident playing grounded much of the piece, and vocalists were incorporated into two sections of the work, most notably "Babylon (for the U.S.A.)." Here Akosua Gyebi's blood-curdling screams fit perfectly with the loosely-controlled mayhem of more than six pages of blank measures simply marked "improvise freely," evoking Abbey Lincoln's famous shrieks on Max Roach's *We Insist! Freedom Now Suite* (1960).

In his opening remarks, Ho noted how Massey served as a "unifying presence" for the confusing sea of jazz styles being championed in the 1960s, from the avant-garde improvisations of Sun Ra to the more "straight-ahead" bop of Freddie Hubbard. The *Suite* is proof of Massey's efforts: one hears complex, winding

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Brooklyn Rediscovered Cal Massey

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melodies combined with free “blowing” sections for soloists, and memorable riff-based grooves contrasted with the most ethereal free improvisation. In one movement—“The Peaceful Warrior (for Martin Luther King)”—improvisation is completely absent; the section is entirely homophonic and completely scored out, bringing to mind a chromatic twist on Ellington’s coloristic harmony, and stressing more than anything a sense of unity and peace. At the close of the final movement, “Back to Africa (for Marcus Garvey),” one senses not only that a varied musical journey has been undertaken, but that a strong message has been conveyed, sometimes subtly, sometimes overtly. And this message is truly revolutionary, though carried to the audience through a joyful celebration of the endless diversity of African American music. It is revolutionary, in Ho’s words, “not simply in what it politically claims or supports or exhorts, but because the music is soulful, glorious, magnificent, transcendent, calls into question the forces of dehumanization, and confronts those forces with the power of human soul, spirit, and beauty.”⁶

Notes

¹ Scott DeVeaux, “Constructing the Jazz Tradition: Jazz Historiography,” *Black American Literature Forum* 25, no. 3 (Autumn, 1991): 525.

² Fred Ho, *Wicked Theory, Naked Practice: A Fred Ho Reader* (University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 135; Fred Ho, comments at “Celebrating Cal Massey,” Brooklyn College, 22 April 2010.

³ Ho, *Wicked Theory*, 129.

⁴ Ho, comments.

⁵ Quoted in Ho, *Wicked Theory*, 137.

⁶ Ho, comments.

Homegoing Service

(continued)

In my reading, Robinson calls attention to the importance of making a song one’s own. Think about it. “Who’s Lovin’ You” was penned by Robinson and recorded by The Miracles in 1960. By 1969, Jackson led the song with his brothers backing him. It was the end of an era of white groups covering black hits; Jackson’s rendition was a game changer. The conviction of his commitment to soul singing at such a young age proved that children are no less expressive or knowing than adults. Children are capable of passionate expression and desire. Jackson exemplified a shift in consciousness that we still have not wholly embraced in young people.

During the memorial, Congresswoman Sheila Jackson-Lee, representing the Congressional Black Caucus, eulogized on the transcendent American story represented by the Jackson family. She also reminded mourners of Jackson’s innocence and linked his life to the story of the Good Samaritan “fighting the good fight.” As a vocalist, the love of Jackson the musician was pal-

pable to me when Mariah Carey began to sing. Ordinarily an unflappable songbird, she seemed to lose her voice in the opening lines of “I’ll Be There.” That’s when I broke down, sobbing alone in front of my TV screen. I began to realize just how much of an impact Jackson had on my life not only as a scholar attentive to musical blackness in its many manifestations, but as a black woman, singer, and human being. By now, we all should be able to testify that “blackness”—musical or not—is not simply about skin color. Race may be a pigment of our imagination, but musical blackness is alive in a-many a-people because of the international transmission of the blues, pop, rock, and soul, and now house, hip-hop, crunk, go-go, and all manner of funky dances. We can now embrace what was and is musically black about Jackson’s body of work. He represented qualities that lie far beyond the clichés of gender, blackness, or the bureaucracy of “mess,” as Reverend Al Sharpton put it, that habitually blocked Jackson’s innocent message of love and healing through his performance and philanthropy. In his homiletic style of black preaching, steeped in reiterative cadences that act as calls to different refrains, Rev. Sharpton brought it all home when he said:

*I want his three children to know
Wa’n’t nothin’ **strange** about yo’ daddy.
It was **strange** what yo’ daddy had to deal with, but he dealt
widdit.” [Standing applause for over 30 seconds]
He dealt widdit anyway. He dealt widdit **for us!**
So some came today, Mrs. Jackson, to say goodbye to Michael.
I came to say thank you.
Thank you because you never stopped.
Thank you because you never gave up.
Thank you cuz’ you never gave out.
Thank you cuz’ you tore down our divisions.
Thank you because you eradicated barriers.
Thank you cuz’ you gave us hope.
Thank you Michael!
Thank you Michael!
Thank you Michael!*

Rev. Sharpton left the stage before any acknowledgement. The significance of an abrupt end to this kind of preaching is to leave congregants dealing with the power of the sermon—and themselves, not the preacher. Many white folks tell me they don’t like Rev. Sharpton. I think they can’t get beyond his black performative tactics to grasp his broader agenda of human rights that transcends strict matters of race. Jackson, on the other hand, taught us to celebrate blackness and to move beyond it. He did this intentionally and unintentionally, through both his musical acts and his non-musical performance of social identity. And while all this may seem like a paradox, I have begun to realize that life’s greatest lessons often defy intuition. Thank you, Michael.

—Kyra D. Gaunt
Baruch College, CUNY

Isaac Goldberg

(continued)

Gershwin to Goldberg survive in Harvard's Houghton library and little of the information provided therein finds its way into the book's twenty pages of quotations.

Goldberg prepared his manuscript for the biography in much the same way as his early *Transcript* articles, collecting information about his subject from the comfort of his home in Boston. Although the two met in person at least twice while the book was in process, much of the interviewing was actually conducted by a New York-based research assistant named John McCauley. We know little about McCauley's role other than Edward Jablonski and Lawrence Stewart's claim that he spoke more with George's brother Ira than with the composer himself. What is more, since technology precluded the recording of these conversations, it seems that McCauley and Goldberg had to reproduce Gershwin's statements either from their own notes or memory.

We may never be able to assess the degree to which the quotations appearing in Goldberg's book reflect what Gershwin actually said; however, there is evidence that Goldberg provided certain modifications, injecting a bit of dramatic license in service of a more compelling narrative. The effect of such alterations becomes apparent when comparing the aforementioned *Ladies Home Journal* articles with Goldberg's published biography. Quotations attributed to Gershwin in the magazine were altered, either slightly or extensively, when they subsequently appeared in the book. Some changes affected biographical data. For example, Gershwin's telling of his discovery of music with little Maxie Rosenzweig (later violinist Max Rosen), expands from a paragraph to a page in the book, introducing new tales of treacherous truancy and torrential downpours. Other alterations had to do with musical-historical issues. These include changes within a frequently quoted passage on the genesis of *Rhapsody in Blue*, which reframe our understanding of Gershwin's compositional process—not a small consideration when regarding the history of the *Rhapsody*.

My intention here is not to undermine Goldberg's efforts, for his book on Gershwin accomplishes its stated goal to "set down... data, even trivialities, that otherwise might be quickly lost to the eventual biographer."¹¹ Additionally, in Goldberg's own inimitable way, this biography eloquently expresses Gershwin's contributions to American music through insightful and witty criticism, providing a vivid snapshot of a life in progress.

At the same time, this portrait was ultimately Goldberg's. Gershwin may have signed off on the final project—he certainly had nothing to lose in the process—but Goldberg controlled the narrative direction of the book and chose *how* to portray the composer. Goldberg's own biography contains previously unacknowledged aspects of agency which emerge in his book on Gershwin. From his depiction of the composer's childhood to the analysis of his music, all parts are in service to his ground-up vision of American music—even if that meant fudging a quotation here or there. In conclusion, I recast the question posed initially: To what degree has our uncritical acceptance of Isaac Goldberg framed our subsequent understanding and assessment of Gershwin and his music? The answer to that

question requires re-thinking a significant section of scholarship on this foundational American composer.

—Ryan Raul Bañagale
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Notes

¹ Robert Wyatt and John Andrew Johnson, eds., *The George Gershwin Reader* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), xiv.

² Isaac Goldberg, "A Boston Boyhood," *American Mercury* 17, no. 67 (July 1929): 360.

³ Isaac Goldberg, "Three Moral Moments" *American Mercury* 19, no. 73 (January 1930): 102.

⁴ Paul Rosenfeld, *An Hour With American Music* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1929), 11.

⁵ Isaac Goldberg, "The Lower Learning" *American Mercury* 5, no. 18 (June 1925): 158.

⁶ Carol Oja briefly raises this issue in "Gershwin and American Modernists of the 1920s," *The Musical Quarterly* 78, no. 4 (Winter 1994): 658. Originally in Isaac Goldberg, "Aaron Copland and His Jazz," *American Mercury* 12, no. 45 (September 1927): 63. Emphasis added.

⁷ Paul Rosenfeld, "Musical Chronicle" *The Dial* 80, no. 2 (February 1926): 175.

⁸ Isaac Goldberg, "Aaron Copland and His Jazz," *American Mercury* 12, no. 45 (September 1927): 64.

⁹ Letter from Copland to Isaac Goldberg, 15 September [1927], Isaac Goldberg Papers, MSS. & Archive Section, N.Y.P.L. Underline original. Reprinted by permission of The Aaron Copland Fund for Music, Inc., copyright owner.

¹⁰ Isaac Goldberg, "In the World of Books," *American Freeman*, July 1929.

¹¹ Isaac Goldberg, *George Gershwin: A Study in American Music* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1931), 1.

In a Cold Sweat: *Soul Power*

(continued)

None of the above seems to matter in *Soul Power*, however, and when Brown enters the stage in a sequined jumpsuit emblazoned with his initials on the collar and "G.F.O.S." (Godfather of Soul) across the waist, the crowd erupts as he and his band display their legendary precision and the cameras catch it all in painstaking detail. A rare behind-the-scenes backstage shot during the end credits shows as close a look as one will ever see of the man behind the persona. Brown, in the dressing room after the performance and spent from the effort of being the self-billed hardest working man in show business, towels off in relative isolation.

Soul Power is an important contribution to the growing body of documented concert footage from the 1970s, including *Soul to Soul*, which covers a similar 1971 concert in Accra, Ghana, and *Wattstax* (both 2004). While there could be more extras to the DVD, what's included is beautifully edited and the sound is impeccably mastered. Perhaps the only criticism one could have is that there isn't more. If we are lucky, even that complaint will soon be remedied.

—Hank Williams
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Michael Joseph Jackson, the "King of Pop"
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