



Jazz in America

Jazz Today • Jazz Tomorrow

I. Jazz Today

- A. Today's jazz artists are basically going in one of three directions: Traditional Mainstream, Contemporary Mainstream, or "Anything Goes."*
1. Traditional Mainstream jazz artists are performing jazz mainly associated with and reflective of Blues, Swing, Bebop, and Hard Bop; in other words, they exclude Free Jazz and Fusion.
 - a. Traditionalists believe that what they play is "real jazz," not the various hybrids and "add-ons" (according to them) that occurred in the 1960s and since; they are also known as "jazz purists."
 - b. Trumpeter **Wynton Marsalis** is at the forefront of this movement; he is an internationally acclaimed musician and has played a major role in the resurgence of "straight-ahead" jazz; he currently serves as Artistic Director for New York's Jazz at Lincoln Center.
 2. Contemporary Mainstream jazz artists are influenced mostly by hard bop sensibilities, but are taking them to a new level.
 - a. Contemporary Mainstream jazz artists use, for the most part, hard bop instrumentation and musical forms.
 - b. However, within the hard bop framework, contemporary mainstream jazz artists continue to push the music forward, e.g., ever increasing their technical proficiency on their instruments, expanding musical harmonies (more difficult and complex chords and chord progressions), employing more rhythmic complexity, and expressing deeper and varied emotions.
 3. "Anything Goes" jazz artists put all kinds of music into the pot and stir it up; these can include but are not limited to:
 - a. all styles of jazz
 - b. classical music (mostly of the 20th and 21st century variety)
 - c. world music (i.e., music from all over the world), especially from South America and Asia
 - d. all styles of blues, rock, R&B, Latin, funk, hip-hop, ska, and popular music
- B. Two important contemporary jazz musicians in the "Anything Goes" camp include:
1. **Robert Glasper** (piano and electric keyboards)
 2. **Ambrose Akinmuisre** (trumpet)
- C. Several contemporary artists "cross over," that is, they can be traditionalists, contemporary mainstream artists, or "anything goes" artists, depending on the context in which they are playing; three great ones today include:
1. **Terri Lyne Carrington** (drums)
 2. **Christian McBride** (bass)
 3. **Chris Potter** (saxophone)
- D. Three of today's most eminent jazz musicians (who have been on the scene since the 1960s when they played with the Miles Davis Quintet) are:
1. **Herbie Hancock** (piano and electric keyboards)
 2. **Wayne Shorter** (saxophone)
 3. **Ron Carter** (bass)
- E. Big bands (17-18 piece ensembles) are here to stay, not so much in the professional ranks (very few professional big bands exist), but in America's schools.
1. There are thousands of middle school, high school, and college/university big bands.
 2. Repertoire consists of all styles of jazz from traditional big band swing to big band arrangements of bebop, cool, hard bop, and fusion. New arrangements are being written and performed all the time (as well as classics from the past).
- F. Besides the traditional "jazz instruments" (saxophone, trumpet, trombone, piano, bass, drums, guitar, and human voice), jazz is increasingly being performed on nontraditional jazz instruments as well, especially violin (an exceptional jazz violinist on the scene today is **Regina Carter**). Today, jazz can also be heard on such "non-jazz" instruments as viola, cello, oboe, bassoon, harmonica, harp, and French Horn.
- G. Women in Jazz
1. In the past, instrumental jazz has been primarily a male dominated art form. However, today more and more women are studying and performing jazz and becoming an integral part of the jazz scene.
 2. One of the top jazz trumpet players on the scene today is **Ingrid Jensen**.

* While jazz is constantly evolving and many of today's jazz musicians are exploring new styles, all styles of jazz (e.g., early jazz, swing, bebop, etc.) are still being performed and recorded today.

3. One of today's few steadily working professional big bands is an all-female group, "Diva."
4. Drummer **Terri Lyne Carrington** was named *DownBeat* magazine's 2020 Jazz Artist of the Year.

H. Vocal Jazz

1. Jazz vocalists have always been an important part of jazz's rich history. Today, vocal jazz is not only important, it is credited with introducing jazz to many who might not otherwise have given jazz a chance. Because there are words, i.e., lyrics, more people can relate to vocal jazz than instrumental jazz.
2. Popular jazz vocalists on the scene today include **Dee Dee Bridgewater**, **Jazzmeia Horn**, **Dianne Reeves**, and **Cécile McLorin Salvant**.

I. Cultural Implications of Jazz Today

1. Today, jazz and jazz artists represent the diversity of America, diversity of the world.
 - a. In today's world, we have traditionalists, mainstreamers, and "anything goes" types of people.
 - b. Jazz is better for its diversity, and so is America, and so is the world.
 - c. As time goes on, diversity is increasingly accepted and cherished.
 - d. It has been said that diversity is America's most defining characteristic.
2. Today, jazz education is increasingly important in America's schools.
 - a. The study of jazz is increasingly important in American history, society, and culture.
 - b. Jazz is found in classes of all levels from elementary school to college.
 - c. It is now possible to earn a bachelors, masters, and even a doctoral degree in jazz studies in many of America's most prestigious universities.
 - d. Organizations such as Jazz at Lincoln Center and the Herbie Hancock Institute of Jazz have national jazz outreach programs that bring jazz into schools throughout the world, both live and via the Internet.
3. Jazz Publications
 - a. Today there are literally thousands of books and videos (DVDs) available about jazz: everything from biographies about all the great musicians in jazz history to "how to" method books about every component of jazz imaginable (e.g., instrumental technique, improvisation, arranging, etc.).
 - b. The four leading jazz magazines are *DownBeat*, *JazzTimes*, *JAZZIZ*, and *JAZZed*.

II. The Future of Jazz*

- A. Jazz, like the people, society, and cultures it reflects, is always evolving. While no one can predict with certainty where jazz is headed, jazz in the future is likely to include the following scenarios:
 1. Traditional, straight-ahead, and contemporary mainstream jazz will continue to prosper. Up-and-coming young jazz musicians, inspired and influenced by blues, swing, bebop, and hard bop, will continue to push the musical envelope within the traditional acoustic jazz combo setting.
 2. Big bands (i.e., 17-18 piece jazz ensembles) will continue to be prevalent in our nation's middle schools, high schools, colleges, and universities. Repertoire will consist of jazz classics from the past as well as new compositions and arrangements that will continue to be written in the future.
 3. New styles of jazz will increasingly include more 20th and 21st century classical music and world music. The line between jazz and improvised contemporary classical and world music may blur to the point where there is no longer a noticeable difference. This style of jazz will be difficult to label – rather than being called jazz, it might simply be called improvised music.
 4. New styles of jazz will increasingly incorporate technology. Computers and electronic instruments that we have not yet imagined will become part of jazz's future. Technology will increasingly allow people to create jazz (or at least a jazz-like music) without ever having to learn how to play a musical instrument.
- B. Jazz will be recorded and listened to on formats we have not yet imagined.
 1. Just as 78 rpm shellac records replaced player piano rolls, 33 rpm vinyl records replaced 78 rpm shellac records, 8-track and cassette tapes replaced vinyl records; compact discs (CDs) replaced tapes, MP3s replaced CDs, and streaming is replacing MP3s, jazz will be listened to on new formats not yet invented.
 2. Jazz will become easier and easier for the consumer to obtain via the Internet (and whatever's next).
- C. Cultural Implications of Tomorrow's Jazz
 1. Jazz will increasingly become a fixture in American schools at all levels from elementary school through college.
 - a. An increasing number of schools will offer jazz ensembles for credit.
 - b. Jazz will be introduced to and performed by even younger children (the trend has already begun as more elementary and middle schools add jazz bands to their music curricula).
 - c. Jazz history, an integral component of American history and culture, will increasingly become a major area of study in American history and social studies classes.
 2. As more young people learn about jazz – its musical elements, rich history, and cultural implications – jazz will reach an even wider audience.

* While jazz continues to evolve and many new styles are yet to be invented, all styles of jazz (e.g., early jazz, swing, bebop, etc.) will continue to be performed and recorded.

- a. Since jazz speaks to the human condition and to people's hearts, it will increasingly be performed, listened to, enjoyed, analyzed, debated, and studied throughout the world.
- b. Jazz will continue to serve as a reminder that differences between people are a good thing and, if channeled properly, can lead to a much greater good.