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27. I also make an error at precisely the same point in the melodic line, as given in *Charlie Parker and Thematic Improvisation* (43). Since I spell the chord in C<sub>7</sub>, my incorrect notes are C<sub>7</sub>-E<sub>7</sub>-A<sub>7</sub>-D<sub>7</sub>; the correct melody is C<sub>7</sub>-G<sub>7</sub>-A<sub>7</sub>-D<sub>7</sub>. Thanks to João Moreira for pointing this out.
28. There are other transcription errors that I noticed. In Example 28, Parker's well-known "Hootie Blues" solo, m. 5 should have an A<sub>7</sub> chord and m. 7 an E<sub>7</sub> chord (193). In Example 60, the fourth chorus of Hawkins's "Disorder at the Border" solo, there should be a B<sub>7</sub> chord at m. 11 (313). There is an important harmonic error in DeVeaux's transcription of the tune "Little Benny" (a. k. a. "Crazeology") in Example 88 (383): the second chord in m. 5 should be C#7, not C7.
29. See, for example, Susan McClary's *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991.
30. See, for example, Burnham's *Beethoven Hero*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995.

## SAYING SOMETHING

Ingrid Monson, *Saying Something: Jazz Improvisation and Interaction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996, 253 pp., \$39.95; paperback: \$14.95)

Evan Spring

Despite its furtive conquest of world culture, jazz is usually ignored by the cultural studies departments of academia. This situation is slowly changing, but jazz largely remains a self-contained world of craftsmen, fans, and critics, usually claimed at a young age. Ingrid Monson, an assistant professor of music at Washington University, has ventured gamely into the wilderness between jazz and other disciplines. She aims for nothing less than to reconcile jazz studies with recent advances in ethnomusicology, cultural history, anthropology, linguistics, and post-structuralism. *Saying Something* strives to understand "the reciprocal and multilayered relationships among sound, social settings, and cultural politics that affect the meaning of jazz improvisation in twentieth-century American cultural life." (2) The likes of W.E.B. Du Bois, Michel Foucault, and Jaki Byard agreeably commingle on the page, amid elaborate musical notation. Monson is especially interested in the jazz rhythm section. This "view from the bottom of the band" abets her larger purpose, which is to portray jazz as an interactive, face-to-face, consociating form of expression, with a fundamental interdependence of musical roles, and a discursive, allusional, "signifying" sensibility.

Monson is an interdisciplinarian by temperament, but an ethnomusicologist by training. True to fieldwork principles, she studied with the masters (orchestration with Jaki Byard, history and ensemble with Richard Davis, and drums with Michael Carvin), giggered on trumpet, and interviewed leading practitioners, including clarinetist Don Byron; pianists Joanne Brackeen, Sir Roland Hanna, and Michael Weiss; bassists Phil Bowler and Cecil McBee; guitarist/bassist Jerome Harris; and drummers Roy Haynes, Billy Higgins, Ralph Peterson, Jr., and Kenny

Washington. She earnestly discloses how she sat at the bar writing "field notes." She includes a long disclaimer on the potential misrepresentations of interview transcriptions, and tactfully employs nonstandard spellings "when they seem to be used purposefully to signal ethnicity and when failure to include them would detract from intelligibility." (23) One quibble: reflecting her ethnomusicological training, Monson disparages phone interviews, which in my experience can translate relatively well to written form. Telephones, like books, cannot convey body language, so "informants" (as they say in ethnomusicology) are more alert to making words stand on their own.

An ethnomusicological account of the jazz world has few predecessors, and the most inescapable is Paul Berliner's massive 1994 study *Thinking in Jazz*, which Monson calls "the most comprehensive and detailed account of jazz improvisation currently in existence, as well as the most detailed exposition of ethnotheory in ethnomusicology." (4) Both books are grounded in the voice of the musician, and both have an excellent feel for the musician's practical and figurative use of language. Monson, however, is much more in step with intellectual vogue, while Berliner is more the old-fashioned "social scientist," doggedly compiling every scrap of firsthand observation into empirically sound, verifiable generalizations. Sometimes Berliner sounds as if he is explaining jazz to a classroom of extraterrestrials:

Among all the challenges a group faces, one that is extremely subtle yet fundamental to its travels is a feature of group interaction that requires the negotiation of a shared sense of the beat, known, in its most successful realization, as striking a groove. (Berliner, 349)

Monson, in a delicate and indirect critique of her colleague, implies that Berliner relied too heavily on methods "formed from an ethnographic practice centered in relatively homogeneous, nonurban cultural situations, in which a general presumption of cultural coherence and the transparency of representation went unquestioned." (5) This may be a discreet reference to Berliner's acclaimed 1978 study, *The Soul of Mbira: Music and Traditions of the Shona People of Zimbabwe*. In any case, while *Thinking in Jazz* is an indispensable compendium of ethnographic observations, it left the field wide open for Monson to culturally situate jazz within urban, multiethnic, postmodern America.

Fortunately, despite her wariness of traditional musicological techniques, Monson unapologetically makes ample use of music transcrip-

tions. (The layman can skim the hard parts without undue panic or resentment, though it would certainly help to understand some basic terms like "interval" or "pedal point.") The transcriptions are intricate yet easy to parse, deftly situated within the text, and well annotated, including record label, catalog number, date, location, and personnel. (Gunther Schuller's publisher and others have avoided such details, fearing copyright fees.) A practical and succinct notation key includes symbols for shakes, scoops, slides, "ghost notes," and notes played ahead or behind the beat. Since the focus is on group interaction, multiple instruments are lined up on parallel staves, with clear drum notation sometimes placed *between* the bassist and soloist.

In the second chapter, we hear straight from the musicians on the inner workings of the jazz rhythm section. They switch from technical shoptalk to images of waves, 'gravy, and bathtub soaking, and Monson keeps jauntily apace with hardly a whiff of academic slumming. She is especially interested in their most linguistic, social, and interactive metaphors. Musicians stress the importance of listening, responding, and learning to anticipate each other's actions. Terms like "grooving" are applied interrelationally, rather than to individuals. Monson's focus on interaction is meant to counter the influence of certain classically oriented jazz theorists, particularly Gunther Schuller. As she warns, "musicians' discussions of the higher levels of improvisational achievement frequently emphasize time and ensemble responsiveness as the relevant framework rather than, for example, large-scale tonal organization." (29) Certainly Schuller in particular has judged jazz by classical standards, decontextualizing jazz pieces into autonomous works of Art, and overemphasizing thematic continuity, execution, and large-scale structural organicism at the expense of interactive and emergent aesthetic virtues. Schuller even exults in declaring that his armchair record rankings are based purely on "objective" criteria.

Reading this chapter, I often found myself nodding or murmuring in recognition as some aurally familiar aspect of rhythm section work was formulated on the page. Examples include the way bassists drop down an octave before leaving the bridge, or how piano comping would make rhythmic sense even without the soloist. Piano comping is linked both to big band orchestrations and the drummer's left hand; Michael Carvin then brings it full circle, commenting "I really feel my left hand is more brass . . . like in a big band, the brass section is playing the shout parts." (58) Monson elicits one pithy quote after another, like Carvin's advice to drummers: produce "something floating and something solid," and "give the

band one limb." (55) The following excerpt demonstrates her own knowledge as a working musician:

The basic harmonic function of the pedal point is fundamentally the same as that articulated by theorists of Western classical music: prolongation of a principal chord, often for purposes of emphasizing an impending cadence or new section of a work. . . . In jazz improvisation, however, pedal points also have interactional and rhythmic implications that contrast greatly with those of their classical counterparts. When a bass player initiates a pedal point, he or she signals a range of musical possibilities to the rest of the ensemble. The pianist and soloist can deviate more freely from the written harmonic progression while playing over a pedal. The drummer is temporarily freed from coordinating with the walking bass and may choose to play in a more active, soloistic manner. . . . the pedal point can also support the rhythm section in a much wider variety of musical situations. Pedal points can be used to differentiate the B section in an AABA form, for example. They may be played in rhythmic ostinatos that set up temporary metric modulations, such as those achieved by the legendary Miles Davis rhythm section, which included Ron Carter, Tony Williams, and Herbie Hancock. They may help cue the top of a chorus to musicians who have lost their place in the time cycle. Pedal points have also been an important resource for jazz composers interested in extending structural frameworks for improvisation beyond the traditional chorus-structured form. (35-37)

(More quibbles. Stressing the commonalities of African-American musics, Monson implies that jazz has a 12/8 feel with quarter notes subdivided into thirds of equal duration, when, as she knows, quarter-note subdivisions in jazz are highly varied, flexible, and asymmetric. She may also exaggerate the timekeeping responsibility of the drummer at the expense of the bassist.)

Monson states, hyperbolically, that "The drummer is generally the member of the band most underrated by the audience and least discussed in the jazz historical and analytical literature." (51) Of all the instrumentalists, the drummer is perhaps the most important focal point for the interactive ideals which she believes jazz scholars have overlooked. A little too convenient, then, for the jazz drummer to seem so unappreciated, contrary to my concertgoing experience. A little too convenient, also, that the section on the "The Soloist" is so undeveloped. This sense of selective convenience in service to her thesis becomes more pronounced as the book progresses.

*Saying Something* gently dismantles a comforting, intuitive notion: that music has a direct line to emotion, bypassing the reductive and profaning medium of speech. In our subliminal shorthand, words are refer-

ential and music is emotional. Jazz musicians themselves claim music is uniquely uninterpretable through a filter of language ("if you gotta ask, you'll never know"). Yet the same musicians, describing their own work, call most frequently on metaphors of conversation and storytelling: having something to "say," developing a "voice," or identifying a player by his "phrasing" or a "signature" lick. They also compare jazz to a "language," with its native and nonnative speakers. Monson skillfully unravels these perplexities, describing how jazz is analogous to language, even when verbal renderings of the music can only seem puny and frail. Her analysis is less syntactic than sociocultural; that is, she is less concerned with the jazz idiom as an integrated system (as if we were studying a foreign language), than with how jazz is like talking, listening, responding, managing relationships, and sharing experiences. Monson is not saying jazz always sounds like people conversing. Even the most intense, nonverbal emotions expressed in jazz can be "discursive," or language-like, in the sense of being not just amorphous globs of sentiment, but culturally situated performative gestures, with their own intrinsic power of metaphor, allusion, and commentary.

Monson looks at black speech patterns and their musical analogues, including conversational turn-taking, verbal jousting ("From an African American perspective, the essence of a 'cool' or 'hip' response includes reacting with poise and balance to these potentially unsettling verbal teases and challenges" [88]), call-and-response patterns, the alternation of fixed and variable phrases, and the function of repetition in "creating a participatory musical framework against which highly idiosyncratic and innovative improvisation can take place." (89) She also examines the historic affinity of African Americans for "indirect modes of discourse" and "cultural code-switching," drawing parallels in the work of W.E.B. DuBois ("double consciousness"), Henry Louis Gates, Jr. ("signifying"), and Mikhail Bakhtin ("internal dialogism").

"Signifying" is the most useful term here, referring broadly to the performative, dialogic production of multiple meanings through gesture, allusion, improvisation, and signalings of ethnicity (in contrast to strictly transparent, denotative meanings abstracted from the people producing them and the circumstances of exchange). The individual jazz soloist can harbor many voices, since "signifying as an aesthetic developed from interactive, participatory, turn-taking games and genres that are multiply authored." (87) Alert to the potential misuse of these ideas, Monson insists that an African-American signifying aesthetic need not imply an insincere, conflicted, superficial, unoriginal, or otherwise inauthentic self. Rather, signifying entails social insight and relatedness; a healthy respect for complexity, contingency, incongruity, and

ambiguity; a transformative sense of identity; and a talent for improvisation, plasticity of expression, irony, distortion, parody, playfulness, witty repartee, quotation, appropriation, and recontextualization. If signifying is in itself an art, questions like "Is bebop's transformation of Tin Pan Alley songs ironic or sincere?" seem beside the point. In relation to standard tunes, jazz players transcend the tension between critical distance and complicity. Since jazz is in many ways a self-contained, running commentary on itself, signifying always connects players past and present. A trumpeter who picks up a Harmon mute has no choice but to signify on Miles Davis, consciously or not, and Davis's ghost signifies right back.

Folding several of her themes together, Monson proposes a new addition to academic dialect: "intermusicality," meaning, "how music functions in a relational or discursive rather than an absolute manner." Its literary analogue, "intertextuality," has been applied to music, with limited success.

Though her premise—emphasizing the discursive, interrelational, signifying and emergent nature of jazz—is sound, Monson has a tendency to overinflate her thesis, selectively pruning the most convenient evidence available. Often all that's needed is a dash of restraint in light of varying interpretations.

First of all, Monson tries too hard to make jazz into a subset of sociable, face-to-face communication: "Good jazz improvisation is sociable and interactive just like a conversation; a good player communicates with the other players in the band. If this doesn't happen, it's not good jazz." (84) With sleight of hand, Monson has conflated an essential operating guideline (practitioners should listen carefully to their bandmates) with abstract criteria for artistic success (jazz is good to the degree that it is sociable and interactive). Of course these things can't be neatly autonomized, but, to the extent they can, neither should be strictly limited to the sociable and interactive. Aspiring musicians are well advised to listen carefully to their bandmates, but if Charlie Parker charges ahead, oblivious to his desperate accompanists, that in itself can be artistically compelling. Conversely, a soloist can respond intimately to other bandmembers while expressing a feeling of social remoteness. With Sonny Rollins, for example, I sometimes perceive an independent, introspective, or solitary quality, expressed with an aura of soliloquy rather than face-to-face interaction, even when he is extremely responsive to accompaniment.

Monson is missing a common intuitive feeling that the jazz soloist is—well, alone. Jazz has an undeniable individualist streak. When it comes time to solo, the spotlight is on you to stand or fall, no matter how good your accompanists are. This is hardly mentioned in the book, which hews

to rhythm section work and contains only a cursory account of the soloist's unique role. Monson also conveniently ignores jazz's long and valued history of solo performance.

The individualism of jazz is even quite compatible with Western images of the artist as an obsessive, socially marginal, genius figure. Monson, criticizing Gunther Schuller, writes:

The values [Schuller] cites—expressive fervor, artistic commitment, structural logic, virtuosity—are all criteria derived from ideas of German romanticism and modernism about absolute and autonomous music and the artist as genius. Ethnomusicologists have long remarked that these supposedly "timeless" artistic values actually articulate a culturally specific notion of musical art, not an objective, universal framework. (134)

Fair enough, but it sounds as if jazz, German romanticism, and modernism may have something in common. Monson drops the subject, however, so the insinuation is that "expressive fervor, artistic commitment, structural logic, and virtuosity" are not highly prized among jazz musicians. As she knows, this is hardly the case.

Even within the parameters of sociability and interaction, Monson can be too selective. For example, metaphors of "conversation" are emphasized much more than "storytelling," even though both are equally invoked by musicians. Perhaps this is an inadvertent byproduct of her focus on the rhythm section, rather than the soloist. However, I suspect she just prefers the more interactive metaphor. Titrating the book "Telling a Story," an equally apt description of jazz improvisation, might have seemed too individualistic to be of service to her thesis. Another example is her selective emphasis on the verb "groove," as opposed to the more common term "swing." Again, "grooving" better reflects the imperatives of the rhythm section, but references to "swinging" might have been ignored only because they applied more to individuals.

Monson's general presentation of jazz is, for the most part, historically static. Given time and space constraints, Monson cannot be expected to add a historical dimension to every generalization made in the book. The problem is not the ahistorical mode of presentation itself, but the ways it can be tacitly manipulated. All the musicians interviewed (except for Byard) are currently active, and are thus more likely to emphasize current standards. For example, Monson's subjects aspire to "never playing what you practiced," whereas a player from an older generation might see nothing wrong with playing variations on the same solo night after night. Monson only mentions the modern ideal, perhaps because "never playing what you

practiced" better reinforces her chosen models of interaction and conversation. When convenient, the ahistoric mode allows current axioms to surreptitiously represent all jazz.

Similarly, saying what jazz "is" always runs the risk of tacitly implying what other musics "aren't." As Gates himself made clear, the concept of "signifying" can be more a distinction of degree than kind. Monson is usually on top of this problem, noting for instance that eighteenth-century European observers frequently discussed the conversational and rhetorical aspects of classical music. However, some of her broader formulations of the jazz aesthetic—e.g., "the crucial point is that the iconic moment is not simply resemblance but a transformation of the thing resembled" (127)—could apply to just about anyone's artistic methods.

This problem is compounded when literary terms are transplanted into the realm of music. For instance, Monson borrows the phrase "repetition with a signal difference" from Gates, who was writing primarily about black literature and speech patterns. However, music in general may simply embody the principle of "repetition with a signal difference" more than language does. Music is always repeating things with signal differences. Thus the term probably distinguishes "black" from "white" speech patterns better than it does Louis Armstrong from Bach, whose "Inventions" are a brilliant realization of the general principle.

In fact, Monson might be highlighting the socially interactive aspects of jazz simply because in some ways they are easier to write about. Jazz at its most conversational and signifying is relatively compatible with written language, and written language is the medium of books, and books are what professors have to write. Berliner noticed a wider range of metaphors used by musicians to describe jazz performance, perhaps because his aim was to document jazz culture more than theorize about it. Many of these metaphors—notably journeying, exploration, channeling, trance, grace, soul, and heroism—can't be grouped neatly under the heading of "signifying" or "sociable, face-to-face interaction." I don't, however, envy the jazz theorist who first tries to tackle these concepts. Many emotional and sensory comparisons—such as Carvin's rather self-contained image of soaking in the bathtub—also cannot be subsumed within the social and allusional.

As for ethnotheory, Monson never makes jazz a simple expression of "blackness." She takes an admirable stand against "an essentialized notion of cultural identity or racial experience," noting that "ethnic identi-

ties, skin colors, class stratification, and musical identities do not map neatly onto one another." (8) (Or, as Henry Threadgill once said, "It's a mutt world, and I'm going for the big mutt.") Jazz musicians are not culturally isolated, but rather, tied to "transnational webs of economics, politics, media, travel, and musical exchange." (192–93) At the same time, Monson stresses the fundamental black leadership role in jazz, as well as the underlying commonalities of African-American and African diasporic musics. Jazz and Yoruba music, for example, share "a simultaneous articulation of social and musical space, and the emergent musical shapes and social events have an intensely interpersonal quality." (194) On the whole, Monson strikes a judicious balance on these touchy issues, as in this look at "color-blind" rhetoric and its uses:

Universalist and ethnically assertive points of view, it must be emphasized, often coexist in the same person and are best conceived as discourses upon which musicians draw in particular interactive contexts. An individual speaking to an interlocutor who underplays the role of African American culture in the music, for example, might choose to respond with ethnically assertive comments. In a context in which something closer to racial harmony prevails, a musician might choose to invoke a more universalistic rhetoric. . . . Since whiteness tends to be a sign of inauthenticity within the world of jazz, the appeals of white musicians to universalistic rhetoric can be perceived as power plays rather than genuine expressions of universal brotherhood. If jazz is one of the few cultural activities in which being African American is evaluated as "better" or more "authentic" than being non-African American, a white musician's appeal to a colorblind rhetoric might cloak a move to minimize the black cultural advantage by "lowering" an assertive African American musician from his or her pedestal to a more "equal" playing field. It is this use of colorblind rhetoric that often provokes African Americans to take more extreme positions on ethnic particularity. (202–203)

Still, Monson's ethnic distinctions are sometimes a little too crude, as in this suggestion that whites are uncomfortable with playfulness and ambiguity:

The presumption that indirect, multisided, and metaphorical modes of speaking require less development of the mind reflects a Western cultural ideology about language that prefers the nonambiguous and non-playful delineation of ideas in intellectual discourse as well as the separation of these ideas from emotions. (92)

This is especially ironic because she herself sometimes sounds like Chris Rock parodying a nerdy white anthropologist:

Interjections from congregants such as "Tell it," "That's right!," "Uh-huh," and "So true!" have direct counterparts in the frequently heard responses of jazz audience members to memorable passages of improvisation: "Yeah!," "Um-huh," and "Right." Composer Olly Wilson (1990) has suggested calling such passages *soul focal points*, a term that underscores the connection between musical climaxes and African American ideas of spirituality. These soul focal points somehow manage to project attitude and feeling in a way that set them apart from less inspired moments. (95-96)

Monson also makes the mistake of dichotomizing African American community and white egotism. She does acknowledge that the jazz life is "fiercely competitive," but also has a weakness for homilies in praise of togetherness, e.g., "The importance of human personality and individuality is conveyed through metaphors that unify sound and the human beings who make the sound through collaborative musical activity." (93) In isolation, this kind of feel-good boosterism is perfectly harmless. The problem is that it is situated within a passage distinguishing African American and "Western" aesthetic sensibilities. The bland insinuation is that African Americans care more about "the importance of human personality."

Sometimes her tone becomes too labored and defensive, to the point of sounding patronizing:

"I always speak in parables," Carvin added, because it "helps for people to understand" (Carvin 1992). There is nothing inarticulate or analytically vague about these statements; metaphorical images are in many cases more communicative than ordinary analytical language. (93)

The appreciation of humor in the African American tradition often conflicts with the preference in Western classical music for more "serious" means of musical expression. In jazz, humor and artistic seriousness are not incompatible. (124)

or cloying:

The relationships between interactive performance and intermusical associations are not merely "in the head" but also in the heart and the body. They are part of the process by which communities grow out of the social activities and emotions of real people. (180)

If Monson's readers don't already know that metaphor can be communicative, humor is not antithetical to art, and jazz musicians are not fake people, there's no helping them.

Monson can also be too lax in equating "white" with the American "mainstream," as in this sentence:

I explore musical references and allusions . . . for their use of transformative resources in African American musical practices to invert, challenge, and often triumph over the ordinary hegemony of mainstream white aesthetic values. [8]

Monson should keep in mind Albert Murray's 1970 axiom that "the mainstream is not white but mulatto." Or, as Ralph Ellison wrote in his 1964 review of "Blues People," by Leroi Jones (Amiri Baraka):

. . . the most authoritative rendering of America in music is that of American Negroes. For as I see it, from the days of their introduction into the colonies, Negroes have taken, with the ruthlessness of those without articulate investments in cultural styles, whatever they could of European music, making of it that which would, when blended with the cultural tendencies inherited from Africa, express their own sense of life, while rejecting the rest. . . . white Americans have been walking Negro walks, talking Negro-flavored talk (and prizing it when spoken by Southern belles), dancing Negro dances and singing Negro melodies far too long to talk of a "mainstream" of American culture to which they're alien. (Ellison, 285-6)

Monson, however, is not particularly interested in broadening ethnic categories to demonstrate how jazz expresses Americanness. To Africans or Europeans, jazz can seem like the very embodiment of the American strut, or the American ideals of democracy and personal reinvention, as partially defined by African Americans. A foreigner might even, in a way, hear what is distinctly "American" about African-American particularism. To give an esoteric example, Americans historically have been particularly fond of defining tradition through pantheons of male icons. Thus for jazz musicians and fans, Armstrong and Parker in some way occupy the same mental compartments that Americans use to store Washington and Lincoln. However, exploring common national folkways is not fashionable these days, and such speculations are not to be found here.

Despite all these drawbacks, Monson, by example rather than exhortation, affirms an important principle: any scholar of jazz history should have

a decent understanding of how African Americans interact. This understanding is almost impossible without extensive social contact. Though she doesn't mention it directly, *Saying Something* holds an important integrative message.

Monson spotlights four musical examples, all of which "employ musical allusion in one form or another to communicate the ironic play of difference." (127) Her concept of "allusion" is broad: "almost any musical detail or composite thereof, could convey a reference, as long as a community of interpreters can recognize the continuity." (127) Still, Monson has already focused too narrowly on "the ironic play of difference." This problem reaches its nadir in her analysis of John Coltrane's 1960 studio recording of "My Favorite Things."

Apparently Monson was tipped by Henry Louis Gates, Jr., whom she quotes:

Repeating a form and then inverting it through a process of variation is central to jazz—a stellar example is John Coltrane's rendition of "My Favorite Things," compared to Julie Andrews's vapid version. Resemblance thus can be evoked cleverly by dissemblance. (Gates 1984, 291) (107)

Monson first clarifies that Julie Andrews's alleged vapidness took place five years *after* Coltrane's recording. Coltrane was given the sheet music by a song plugger for the Broadway version of *The Sound of Music*, which had been in production for about a year, with Mary Martin in the lead role. When Coltrane made the recording, he almost certainly hadn't heard any previous performance of the song.

Monson thoroughly details Coltrane's structural transformation of the song. The original has an AAAB chorus structure, with 16 bars per section. The lyrics of the A sections list pleasant things to think about ("Raindrops on roses and whiskers on kittens," etc.), and the lyrics of the B section advise the listener to recount such things when times are rough. Coltrane stretches the performance into one huge 13:41-minute chorus, waiting almost to the end before arriving at the B section. The solos are built not on the tune's original chord structure, as is customary, but on long polyrhythmic vamps, with a 6/8 feel and a bass tonic pedal point.

Monson diplomatically states that the original version of "My Favorite Things" is "appropriate to the musical theater context for which it is intended" (115) and that African-American versions of show tunes "are not 'better' inherently but relative to a particular aesthetic." (115) She also says

she cannot speak for Coltrane or impute his intentions, adding that the degree of irony perceived in Coltrane's rendition will depend on the listener's frame of reference. This is disingenuous. With no evidence whatsoever, Monson clearly infers throughout that Coltrane's version is a conscious, ironic reversal of a corny tune. She never even mentions that in the musical, the "sentimental" lyrics are sung to children.

In his 1998 Coltrane biography (published after Monson's book), Lewis Porter writes of "My Favorite Things":

People often make the mistake of assuming that Coltrane wanted to dress this song up because he must have thought it was silly. Quite the opposite; Coltrane was under no pressure to record such a song. In fact, he told [Francois] Postif, "Lots of people imagine wrongly that 'My Favorite Things' is one of my compositions; I would have loved to have written it, but it's by Rodgers and Hammerstein." (Porter, 182)

In fairness to Monson, Coltrane didn't say much on the subject, and the Postif interview was available only in French (Coltrane's exact words are unknown, since Porter is translating a translation). She continues:

Since the lyrics would have been on the sheet music the song plugger brought to the quartet, Coltrane would have been well aware of the emphasis on white things in the lyric—girls in white dress, snowflakes on eyelashes, silver white winters, cream-colored ponies. In 1960—a year of tremendous escalation in the Civil Rights movement and a time of growing politicization of the jazz community—there was certainly the possibility that Coltrane looked upon the lyrics with an ironic eye. Even if he didn't, however, the potential for an ironic interpretation on the part of his listeners and fellow musicians is clearly present. (118)

Monson forgot to include "schnitzel with *noodles*," which are clearly of a white hue. She also fails to mention the possibility that Julie Andrews, in the movie version of "My Favorite Things," is signifying on John Coltrane's 25-minute live renditions. Andrews may have been troubled by the way Coltrane dwells so long on the A sections, thus overemphasizing pleasant things. Even if she was not, however, the potential for an ironic interpretation on the part of her listeners and fellow musicians is clearly present.

Monson then states:

Another possible inversion has to do with Coltrane's version beating the European American musical standards at their own game, and this is where the



idea of irony at a cultural level becomes important. Coltrane's quartet turns a musical theater tune upside down by playing with it, transforming it, and turning it into a vehicle for the expression of an African American-based sensibility that even many non-African Americans prefer to the original. In so doing, it invokes some of the standards of European classical music against European American musical theater songs. The simple setting of the Broadway version of "My Favorite Things" works well within the context for which it was intended. . . . Under the evaluative standards of Western classical music, however, the tune and arrangement would perhaps be described as "unsophisticated," "simple," or "too obvious." By contrast, the four-part contrapuntal texture generated by the musicians in the Coltrane quartet is certainly "more complex" than that of the Broadway version when measured by these standards. . . . Jazz musicians, in this sense, are able to invoke selectively some of the hegemonic standards of Western classical music in their favor. (119–120)

Let's break this down. Classical people think classical music is more sophisticated, thus better, than Broadway show tunes. Jazz players transform Broadway show tunes into more sophisticated music. Thus jazz musicians are "beating the European American musical standards at their own game." There's a good point in there somewhere, but Coltrane's "My Favorite Things" is not the place for it. Maybe Coltrane just liked the song. Besides, if he was interested in upstaging classical music, a better example would be his composition "Giant Steps," with its frenetic chord changes, multiple tonal resolutions, and unrelenting virtuosic demands—especially given the recent finding that Coltrane adopted the theme from the preface of a classical exercise book. Long, harmonically static vamps are hardly "beating the European American musical standards at their own game."

In short, portraying Coltrane's "My Favorite Things" as a kind of knowing, ironic commentary on hegemonic "Western" standards has much more to do with scholarship in the 1990s than anything Coltrane actually played.

Monson's other musical examples are much more insightful and relevant. Eric Dolphy and Jaki Byard's performance of "Parkeriana" with the Charles Mingus group (1964) has a demonstrable sense of "intertextual irony"; Dolphy ventures "out there" over rhythm changes, while Byard provides mock big band riffs. Rahsaan Roland Kirk's "Rip, Rig and Panic" (1965) signifies humorously on the French-American composer Edgar Varèse.

Monson's exposition of the Jaki Byard Quartet's "Bass-ment Blues" alone consumes 37 pages, and anyone looking for fresh approaches to

jazz theory and analysis should examine it. (The recording is from 1965, with George Tucker, bass, Alan Dawson, drums, and Joe Farrell, flute. The composition, by Byard and Tucker, was originally released on *The Jaki Byard Quartet Live! Vol. 2*, Prestige PR-7477.) All instruments are transcribed for the first thirteen choruses, and through patient, line-by-line analysis, Monson brings the emergent, "intermusical" virtues of jazz wonderfully to life. Byard alludes all over the jazz map, including dissonant parodies of big band orchestration and a quote from Mingus's "Fables of Faubus." When Tucker gets lost in the form, Monson explains precisely how Byard and Dawson cue him back in. Interaction among all players is stressed, not just the binary relationships between the soloist and accompanists.

Once again, however, Monson's emphasis on Byard (who appears on three of her four musical examples) is too selective and convenient in advancing her broader claims. Byard's playing is particularly allusional, pan-historic, parodying, and dialogic; you might say he was "post-modern" before the word was coined. Other jazz musicians are different. Dolphy, Kirk and Byard have a well-developed sense of "intertextual irony." Others don't. Even within her analysis of "Bass-ment Blues," dialogism in itself tacitly becomes a proxy for "groove"—hardly an airtight correlation. Monson is quite candid about her agenda, admitting she picked "Bass-ment Blues" because it "embodied so well the interactive musical playfulness that I was interested in getting musicians to talk about." (138) She should also have chosen less ready-made targets.

Monson detours extensively into the arcane world of linguistic anthropology, drawing mostly on the theories of Michael Silverstein. (Readers put off by terms like "metapragmatic indexicals" can safely skim the hard parts.) Traditional linguistics were "designed to describe only the referential function of language," but meanings are also conveyed in context-dependent, or "pragmatic" ways, so that listeners will interpret the same referential statements quite differently. Silverstein is not saying simply that the social context of language is important. These "pragmatic" elements socially cohere over time, becoming systematized in ways analogous to grammatical structures themselves. These higher-order pragmatic functions are termed "metapragmatic." We tend to see the referential function of language as structural, and the pragmatic function as contextual—but these functions are in fact reciprocally foundational. A grammatical speech pattern, for example, could just as easily be

viewed as the “context” of a metapragmatic social “structure.” Monson then returns to music:

In music, the traditional objects of analysis have been the parameters of musical sound most amenable to Western notation—pitch, rhythm, counterpoint, harmony—and their combinations, relations of inclusion, structural properties, and architectonic shapes. These features of musical structure and the categories in which they have been analyzed in the most widely known schools of music theory, I would argue, are epistemologically analogous to the referential function about which Silverstein speaks. They are those features of a musical text that lend themselves most readily to segmental formalization, analytic systematization, abstraction from context, and structural analysis. (187–88)

Improvisational modes of music making highlight the pragmatic aspects of music most visibly, for what is crucial in the creative process is that improvisers in differentiated musical roles continuously monitor and react to the metapragmatic, pragmatic, and formal aspects of performance. While music theory has bequeathed to us extremely complicated means of approaching the resultant musical scores and work-internal relationships, including the measurement and mapping of all kinds of musical spaces . . . this essential interactive component of improvisation, with its emergent musical shapes and historical as well as socially constructive dimensions, has not been an object of theoretical inquiry. (190)

This subject alone could fill several books, and Monson admits that “Silverstein’s terminology would not be necessary if we had a vocabulary in music that recognized the complexity and simultaneity of contextual issues in music.” (190–91) Sometimes Monson seems to be floundering in interdisciplinary no-man’s land, heroically attempting to reconcile specialized vocabularies. Still, someone at least has made a good beginning, and these necessarily speculative and exploratory passages are highly recommended to anyone willing to risk a severe case of intellectual vertigo.

Monson’s tangle with poststructuralism is on firmer ground, because she has a relatively straightforward point to make. The first principles of poststructuralism and ethnography, it seems, are fundamentally at odds. In the teachings of Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida, “The biggest ‘sin’ . . . is to suppose that some ‘originary,’ undivided, essential self (or objective reality) exists outside of . . . systems of signification or discourse.” (206) Poststructuralists distrust the speaking subject and vernacular belief; ethnographers document little else. Ethnomusicologists should be especially miffed, since poststructuralists have made language

the “general model of relationality,” barring music from any chance to constitute or precede “discourse.” Monson admirably transcends this duel altogether:

. . . there is simply no reason to imagine that engaging with what someone says (or plays) is any less significant from a social constructionist (and representational) point of view than engaging with the theoretical and ideological speculations of Foucault or Derrida. In other words, I question the opposition between social constructionism and lived experience that is frequently drawn (or presumed) in deconstructionist cultural interpretation. . . . Interdisciplinary work on music and popular culture cannot afford to pretend that sound is not an active participant in the shaping of cultural meaning and human subjectivities, however peculiar its phenomenological discursivity might be and however much music is simultaneously involved with other overlapping discourses, such as those of gender, race, and class. (210–11)

In the end, *Saying Something* considerably broadens our perspectives on jazz—no small achievement. In a much-needed counterweight to the formalist bias of Gunther Schuller and others, Monson has illuminated the comparatively neglected aesthetics of conversation, social interaction, interdependence, allusion, metaphor, irony, signifying, emergence, and gesture. *Saying Something* should be widely discussed among jazz theorists. They should simply be warned not to let their range of responses to the music be constricted. Too often Monson, openly or backhandedly, tries to stuff jazz into her own theoretical suitcase. Jazz is about “sociable, face-to-face interaction” and many other things. Jazz can express the “ironic play of difference,” or, “I have a toothache.” Jazz musicians value large-scale structure and spontaneous signifying, technical virtuosity and distortive plasticity, posterity and the bathtub. The jazz artist is socially intertwined, on the African model, and socially marginal, on the Western model, and neither. Jazz represents ego and selflessness, irony and earnestness, highbrow culture and ephemeral entertainment, autonomous art and emanations of life in progress. Jazz is huge, and jazz has once again run circles around its analysts.

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## BOOK REVIEWS

Peter Pettinger, *Bill Evans: How My Heart Sings* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998, 320 pp., \$35; paperback: \$15.95)

Reviewed by Robert W. Wason

Where were you, and what were you doing, when you first heard Bill Evans? Evans's friend Gene Lees has written that "it is a commonplace of psychology that people remember very precisely the circumstances in which they learned of certain historic events—for Americans, the death of John F. Kennedy. . . . A great many musicians . . . recall with comparable vividness their discovery of Bill Evans."<sup>1</sup> To those of a certain age—old enough to have heard, and to remember, jazz piano-playing before Bill Evans's arrival on the scene (and before his style was quickly taken up by legions of Bill Evans impersonators)—these words have great resonance. The late Peter Pettinger, author of the book under review, was certainly one of them.<sup>2</sup>

My first reaction to Evans was disquiet: as a young high-school jazz pianist at the beginning of the 1960s, I was one of the many that found his playing on *Kind of Blue* too understated and "unswinging." But his unique approach to the instrument drew me in nevertheless, and I quickly went on to steep myself in his playing. I must admit, however, that *Sunday at the Village Vanguard* was the highpoint for me;<sup>3</sup> though it is one of the touchstones of my career (and is no less moving to me now in its CD reissue), when Bill Evans moved on to Verve, I moved on to different musical interests, only to return occasionally to the fold. On the other side of the Atlantic, Pettinger, a classical pianist of my age, reacted more strongly, and, to judge from this book, remained an Evans-devotee to the end: "[Evans] sounded like a classical pianist, and yet he was playing jazz. I was captured there and then—the archetypal pivotal moment. The concept of the 'Bill Evans sound' instantly enshrined and distilled what I had always hoped to hear." (ix)

The years of our discovery were years when jazz changed rapidly, continually, and profoundly. In the summer of 1963, fresh out of high school, I was doing a steady quartet gig on the Cape, and my young colleagues and