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Stéphane Audard

# Is the Identity Problem a Teaching Problem? Questions about Fusion in Contemporary Jazz Based on Student Projects at the Conservatory in Paris

**Abstract:** The end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s marked the end of the linear path of jazz and its entry into a postmodern paradigm linked to a search for new identities. Indeed, the almost fifty-year period extending to us has been characterized by the absence of the close succession of stylistic evolutions that jazz had known in every decade after its creation. Two major events have, nevertheless, occurred: a massification of jazz teaching, mainly centered on the study of the bebop language, and the development of the Internet, which has changed the modes of musical exchange. Young musicians, born shortly before or after the change of millennium, have grown up with these two realities: on the one hand, an institutionalized and historicized practice of jazz, and on the other, globalized modes of listening. Inscribing themselves in the postmodern paradigm of their time, the students then implement processes of fusion between musical genres whose limits they question. It is, therefore, particularly interesting to analyse their musical approach and their artistic positioning in an attempt to understand the issues at stake in the emerging jazz movement.

**Keywords:** postmodernism, identity, education, futurism, popular genres, traditional music, European classical music

## Introduction

The students of the *Classe Préparatoire à l'Enseignement Supérieur* of the *Conservatoire à Rayonnement Régional de Paris (CRR de Paris)* present, at the end of their two-year training, a creative project. They have a great deal of autonomy in preparing it, with the main constraint being that it must not exceed thirty minutes in length. In 2022, seven students publicly performed their programme during two days, in front of a jury composed of musicians of different generations, active on the French jazz scene, and representatives of the teaching institution. This was an opportunity to question the artistic approach and the creative processes implemented by young artists, trained within the framework of an institutional education and on their way to becoming professionals. As a professor of jazz history and analysis at the CRR of Paris, I taught these students during their first year, for four hours a week. Thus, I questioned their relationship

to history and the way in which they explicitly or implicitly summoned it in their artistic work. At the end of these two days of project presentations, several things struck me. On the one hand, it was the quality and diversity of the programmes presented, in terms of approaches and musical styles. On the other hand, it was the absence of certain historical markers of jazz in the majority (i. e., six out of seven) of the projects presented.

Why do advanced jazz students decide, during the principal assessment of their training, to invoke a wide range of styles and practices, to the exclusion of some of the common codes of jazz,<sup>1</sup> i.e., as it was practised between 1930 and the end of the 1960s and regularly continues to be played today? What does this tell us about their identity as artists under construction, their listening practices, their cultural references, as well as their strategies for integrating their skills into a professional life? More broadly, what does this tell us about the institutional teaching of this music and the historical period in which we are living? The first step will be to define the historical and institutional frameworks within which to consider the processes of fusion and the postmodern logics that constantly redefine identities within the jazz world.<sup>2</sup> Secondly, through the analysis of students' projects and interviews conducted with them for this article, we will attempt to identify the mechanisms of construction of an artistic identity, which operate in a complex network of constraints and artistic, institutional, and professional issues.

## **Fusion: Historical and Institutional Perspectives**

To understand the students' creative issues, it is important first to quickly place the logics of fusion in historical and institutional perspectives.

The processes of fusion are consubstantial to jazz and presided over its genesis: 'the development of jazz music was the result of the complex processes of cultural mixing in the unique nineteenth-century urban environment of New Orleans.'<sup>3</sup> Lawrence Gushee distinguishes two major spheres of musical and cultural influence at work at the time. He calls one the 'Spanish tinge hypothesis' and the other the 'French Opera hypothesis'.<sup>4</sup> The first is related to the statements of the pianist Jelly Roll Morton, who said: 'Of course you got

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1 Cugny, *Analyser le jazz*, 2009, 24–26.

2 Lopes, *The Rise of a Jazz Art World*.

3 Washburne, 'The Clave of Jazz: A Caribbean Contribution to the Rhythmic Foundation of an African-American Music', 59.

4 Gushee, 'The Nineteenth-Century Origins of Jazz', 161.

to have these little tinges of Spanish in it, uh, in order to play real good jazz.<sup>5</sup> This ‘Spanish tinge’ is ‘specifically accounting for the presence in New Orleans of Caribbean or Mexican rhythms.’<sup>6</sup> The Latin influence, and more broadly that of the entire geographical area of the Black Atlantic,<sup>7</sup> was then exercised throughout the history of jazz. The ‘French Opera hypothesis’ refers to the French Opera House, an important cultural institution in New Orleans at the beginning of the 20th century.<sup>8</sup> Morton, decidedly a central player of the time, listened to interpretations of great operatic arias, such as ‘Miserere’ from Verdi’s *Il Trovatore* (1853). He then reinterpreted these themes in a jazz idiom.<sup>9</sup> Jazz and European art music have an ongoing relationship that has evolved over time. The ‘Third Stream,’ a collaboration between John Lewis and Gunther Schuller, aims to create a fusion between jazz and European art music.<sup>10</sup> Contemporary music also exerts an important influence: for instance, serialism for Bill Evans with the theme ‘Twelve Tone Tune,’<sup>11</sup> or the concept of open work and the notion of indeterminacy for John Zorn in his *Game Pieces*.<sup>12</sup> These few examples show that the processes of fusion, which presided over the birth of jazz, have remained at work throughout its history.

The end of the 1960s was obviously an important moment in this history of musical cross-fertilization, and Miles Davis was one of the key exponents. His *Bitches Brew* album,<sup>13</sup> recorded in August 1969, is part of a fusion process initiated by musicians such as saxophonist Steve Marcus and guitarist Larry Coryell.<sup>14</sup> Davis’s stylistic evolution was motivated by several factors: commercial pressure from Clive Davis, the then-president of Columbia Records,<sup>15</sup> Miles’s desire to renew his audience<sup>16</sup> and to change his musical orientation: ‘I wanted to change course, had to change course for me to continue to believe in and love what

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5 Morton, *Transcript of the 1938 Library of Congress Recordings of Jelly Roll Morton*, 104.

6 Gushee, *ibid.*, 161.

7 Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*.

8 Charters, *A Trumpet around the Corner: The Story of New Orleans Jazz*, 19.

9 Morton, *ibid.*, 10–11.

10 Schuller, *Musings: The Musical Worlds of Gunther Schuller*, 114–118.

11 Bill Evans, “Twelve Tone Tune,” *Blue in Green*, Milestones, 1974. For an analysis see: Musso, ‘Using Tone Rows in Jazz Composition Part I’, 14–16.

12 Notably the piece “Cobra” by John Zorn, hat ART, 1984. For an analysis see: Brackett, ‘Some Notes on John Zorn’s Cobra’, 44–75.

13 Miles Davis, *Bitches Brew*, Columbia, 1970.

14 Steve Markus, *Tomorrow Never Knows*, Vortex, 1968.

15 Davis and Troupe, *Miles, the Autobiography*, 297–298.

16 Fellezs, *Birds of Fire: Jazz, Rock, Funk, and the Creation of Fusion*, 66.

I was playing.<sup>17</sup> This is not simply a mixing of different musical aesthetics, in this case jazz, rock and funk, but a meeting of different cultures, each understood as ‘a logic through which ideas about race, gender, and social class are created, debated, and performed through musical sound and discourse.’<sup>18</sup> The question of identities here is central, complex, and goes beyond the musical framework itself. The young musicians who participated in *Bitches Brew* went on to become major figures in the fusion movement, each of them proposing their own articulation of multiple identities: John McLaughlin with the Mahavishnu Orchestra, Chick Corea with Return to Forever, Joe Zawinul and Wayne Shorter with Weather Report, and Herbie Hancock with Headhunters.

### Fusion and the Postmodern Paradigm

If the *Bitches Brew* album represents a major milestone in jazz-rock, the withdrawal of Miles Davis from the scene in 1975 constitutes another, namely ‘the end of a narrative begun around 1900’.<sup>19</sup> Since its beginnings up to this time, the history of jazz has developed ‘through a succession of styles each dominating periods of five to ten years.’<sup>20</sup> From the second part of the 1970s onwards, this is no longer the case: ‘no style dominates anymore’ and indicates ‘the direction of history.’<sup>21</sup> Then ‘the main linear plot does not function anymore’,<sup>22</sup> that is to say a narrative scheme, based on a constant musical evolution associated with the idea of progress that one finds, for example, in André Hodeir.<sup>23</sup> This great structuring narrative is then abandoned or rejected, which constitutes a characteristic attitude of postmodernism<sup>24</sup>. It is seen by some as the end of history, from the point of view of ‘neo-conservative postmodernism’, embodied in particular by Wynton Marsalis. For others, it is an opportunity to question the dominant discourses and the attitude characteristic of ‘post-structuralist postmodernism’,<sup>25</sup> of which John Zorn is one of the major figures. Profound changes then took place in the relationship to musical practice. On the one hand, for the proponents

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17 Davis and Troupe, *ibid.*, 298.

18 Fellezs, *ibid.*, 15.

19 Cugny, ‘La fin d’une intrigue? Pour une nouvelle périodisation de l’histoire du jazz’, 2015., 4

20 *Ibid.*

21 *Ibid.*, 5.

22 *Ibid.*, 14.

23 See for example: Hodeir, *Jazz: Its Evolution and Essence*.

24 Kramer, ‘Beyond Unity: Toward an Understanding of Musical Postmodernism,’ 20–21.

25 Foster, *recordings: Art, Spectacle, Cultural Politics*, 120–135.

of a neo-conservative postmodernism, there was a return to the common jazz practice, namely 'a body of language functioning for a time in a consensual and stable manner'.<sup>26</sup> This includes a set of harmonic, formal, rhythmic, idiomatic, and instrumental elements, as they were generally played from the 1930s to the late 1950s. Common practice, which covers the period from 1930 to the late 1960s, became, in the words of David Baker, the *lingua franca* of contemporary jazz.<sup>27</sup> The forms, swing, extended tonal language, and acoustic instrumentation were progressively challenged in the 1960s, and then abandoned from the end of that decade.<sup>28</sup> On the other hand, the proponents of a postmodernist post-structuralist view strongly questioned the necessity of unity as the basis of the artistic process and its evaluation.<sup>29</sup> It has resulted in two tendencies: 'a mixture of stylistically heterogeneous elements' and 'a new musical relativism'.<sup>30</sup> Fusion, discontinuity, and eclecticism are claimed aesthetically, formally, and sonically, which considerably broadens the musical horizon. John Zorn's 'Speadfreaks'<sup>31</sup> is a perfect example. This taxonomy of postmodern practices between neoconservatives and poststructuralists is essentially schematic<sup>32</sup> and does not sufficiently account for the multitude of situations one encounters in current jazz. Nevertheless, it allows us to identify a dialectic between the two attitudes towards history, which structures contemporary artistic identities. It is to be noted that the individual courses implement strategies which, according to the musical, commercial or institutional logics, place the artists successively in various positions.

### Institutional Perspective

The first jazz schools were created after the Second World War<sup>33</sup>: Schillinger House (which later became the Berklee College of Music), Westlake, and North State University. However, it was not until the end of the 1960s that institutional jazz education developed massively. The Tanglewood Symposium, a conference organized in 1967 in the state of Massachusetts, resulted in a final declaration

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26 Cugny, *Analyser le jazz*, *ibid.*, 25.

27 Prouty, *Knowing Jazz: Community, Pedagogy, and Canon in the Information Age*, 54.

28 *Bitches Brew* is revealing this renunciation of the codes of play in common practice.

29 Kramer, *ibid.*, 20.

30 Cugny, 'La fin d'une intrigue?', *ibid.*, 6.

31 Naked City, "Speadfreaks", *Torture Garden*, Shimy, 1990.

32 Kramer, *ibid.*, 22.

33 It should be noted that the first Frankfurt's Jazz School was established by Matyáš Seiber in 1928. Kajanová, 'The Rock, Pop and Jazz in Contemporary Musicological Studies', 346.

which advocated an openness to the teaching of music of all geographical origins and periods, from popular music to the avant-garde.<sup>34</sup> Immediately afterwards, in 1968, the National Association of Jazz Education (NAJE) was founded with the aim of promoting jazz education. The NAJE later became the International Association of Jazz Education (IAJE).<sup>35</sup> During the 1970s and 1980s, jazz education experienced unprecedented growth in the United States and Europe. It is striking to note the concomitance with this crucial moment that marked the end of the linear plot. This may be a coincidence. Nevertheless, it is interesting to consider the overall position of jazz education within the general framework of postmodernism. To a large extent, institutional jazz pedagogy is based on the conventions of bebop and the music of the 1950s and 1960s<sup>36</sup>, i.e., the codes derived from common jazz practice. This has two reasons. First, it is the *lingua franca*, so it seems logical that students learn it first. Second, the language of bebop and its derivative styles can be analysed, explained, categorized, and reproduced,<sup>37</sup> which makes it a practical pedagogical tool to teach and evaluate. The stakes are indeed often concentrated, on the one hand, on the choice of notes in relation to harmonies, and on the other on the rhythmic placement of the soloist in relation to an isochronous pulse, and all this within the framework of a codified language. From this point of view it seems, therefore, that the institutional teaching of jazz is very much part of a neo-conservative postmodernism, as described above. The music education system is frequently criticized for favouring the reproduction of ‘the now-timeless truths of jazz as codified in the first half-century of the music’s recorded existence’.<sup>38</sup> It is not the purpose of this paper to put jazz education on trial, especially since, once again, it does not account for the diversity of pedagogical practices, either historically or geographically. However, educational institutions are not passive observers of history, but actors in the world of jazz. What is taught or ignored (in terms of styles, periods, and practices), the pedagogical methods used, and the values transmitted (explicitly or implicitly) have a major influence on the constitution of students’ musical identities.

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34 Quadros, *Tanglewood II: Summoning the Future of Music Education*, 192.

35 Mark, *Contemporary Music Education*, 186.

36 Nicholson, *Is Jazz Dead? Or Has It Moved to a New Address*, 100–101.

37 Levine, *The Jazz Theory Book*, vii.

38 Ake, ‘After Wynton: Narrating Jazz in the Postmodernist Era’, 79.

## Fusion: Identity Issues

It is now a question of determining how the students of the *Classe Préparatoire à l'Enseignement Supérieur (CPES) of the Conservatoire à Rayonnement Régional de Paris* have set up a personal creative process within an institutional framework. The analysis here is performed at the poietic level<sup>39</sup> and concerns the implementation of the fusion processes. The objects of analysis are on the one hand the scores, the presentation booklets, and the recordings of the performances, and on the other hand the interviews during which the students gave their testimonies on the way they carried out their projects.<sup>40</sup> The goal was to understand what the students' stakes and objectives were in terms of artistic identity and to what extent they were achieved. The aim was also to analyse the articulation between these personal approaches and the institutional framework.

## The Actors: The Institution, the Students

The Jazz Department of the *Conservatoire à Rayonnement Régional de Paris* has more than 40 teachers who provide courses in instrumental and vocal techniques, theory (harmony, writing, history, analysis), and collective practice in small and large groups. Jean-Charles Richard, saxophonist, is in charge of the pedagogical coordination.<sup>41</sup> The Preparatory Class for Higher Education (CPES) is a two-year programme, with a total of approximately 1000 hours of teaching, divided between regular sessions and master classes with internationally renowned artists. The age limit is 27 years. It is a training of excellence that prepares students to present themselves at the entrance exams to higher education institutions, both in France and abroad.<sup>42</sup> At the end of their training, in addition to the assessment of the various scholarly modules, students take two final exams in front of a jury composed of visiting musicians and representatives of the teaching institution. The final exams consists of a repertoire test first, with a list of ten compulsory themes representative of the major currents of jazz (standards, bebop and post-bop, free, and contemporary

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39 Hodson, *Interaction, Improvisation, and Interplay in Jazz*, 14–16.

40 These individual interviews were conducted by me in August and September 2022. The interviews averaged 45 minutes in length. They were recorded with the students' consent.

41 <https://conservatoires.paris.fr/p/3325-enseignants-musique>

42 <https://conservatoires.paris.fr/p/3290-departement-jazz-et-musiques-improvisées>



jazz). The students are accompanied by a professional rhythm section and must play two pieces chosen by the jury from the list. It is their knowledge of the codes of playing and language, as well as their instrumental or vocal mastery, that is evaluated in this case. The second exam is a personal project, according to the following instructions: present a 30-minute performance, with musicians of your choice, of an original music programme (compositions and arrangements) and provide a presentation booklet with a note of intent and the biographies of the orchestra members. For the content, two constraints are imposed: to include a moment of absolute solo of the presenting candidate and a reappropriation of an imposed piece; in this case 'Tom's Diner' by Suzanne Vega. At the end of the exam, there is an exchange between the candidate and the members of the jury. Students are given a great deal of autonomy in preparing for this exams. Each student is accompanied by a tutor, who advises and guides them in the construction of their musical proposal. The rendition of these projects is public.

In June 2022, two vocalists, a violinist, two drummers, a pianist/percussionist, and a saxophonist (of them three female and four male students) presented their personal projects, which were all assessed by the jury. All students have been in the process of professionalization, and most of them entered institutions of higher learning in September 2022. They attended the first year of my jazz history and analysis classes for four hours a week. I, therefore, know them personally. However, I had not intervened in the preparation of the projects, so I first learnt of them during their public presentations. While preparing this article, I proposed to carry out an interview with the students and to share a certain number of elements relating to their work (scores, audio-video documents, bibliographic and discographic references, etc.). Six students (three girls and three boys) accepted, and their projects are currently being analysed. It can be observed that the male/female parity is respected. The interviews were conducted in a semi-directive mode and focused on the following points: artistic influences, methods of preparing the project, the expectations of the exams, feedback on the performance and the jury interview, and possible prospects for further pursuing the project.

### **The Projects**

It is interesting to note that the students' projects cover a very broad musical horizon and each represents a fusion process: Afrofuturism, urban music, neo-soul, Caribbean music, European art music, and free jazz. Each project will be analysed, before developing a synthesis.



**Figure 1.** Visual Grecofuturism

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### Grecofuturism by *Monika Kabasele*

Monika Kabasele, a vocalist of Greek-Congolese origins, has been living in Paris since 2019. She defines her project as *grecofuturisme*, a neologism which ‘describes the search for a mixed identity, which takes shape thanks to the fusion of these two musical traditions,’ i.e., her African and Greek roots.<sup>43</sup> The search for and elaboration of an identity is central and constitutes, in Monika’s words, the heart of her project. The references invoked here are multiple and need to be detailed. Firstly, they are linked to a personal history and, secondly, to Afrofuturism, to which Monika explicitly refers in her note of intent. During the interview, Monika cited the book *Afrofuturism: The World of Black Sci-Fi and Fantasy Culture*,<sup>44</sup> which defines Afrofuturism as a way of reconsidering history and envisioning the future through a black critical, artistic, and aesthetic lens. As the name of the book indicates, technology is also an important element. As a young woman of African descent, Monika is a part of this trend situating

<sup>43</sup> Personal project presentation booklet.

<sup>44</sup> Womack, *Afrofuturism: The World of Black Sci-Fi and Fantasy Culture*.

herself within the issues of racism she has experienced and which have marked her family history. In addition, during her previous university years, she studied new technologies, which she integrated into her project. Finally, Monika claims the graphic dimension of the Afrofuturist movement as an inspiration to visually accompany her project booklet.

We can thus see that Monika's project is structured around a reflection on her own journey, in connection with broader cultural and social references. It is necessary to specify that this project pre-existed the CRR examination, with an original repertoire already partly constituted. Nevertheless, for her performance before the jury, Monika also wrote new pieces. Her ensemble consisted of a pianist, a guitarist, a double bass player, a drummer, and a percussionist. It was, thus, an instrumentation falling under the common jazz practice. In her absolute solo, Monika used loopers, which represent the new technologies. Two pieces are particularly interesting in relation to the general framework of the project. The first one is 'Ouranos', an original composition whose title indicates a link with Greece (from the Greek *ouranos* meaning the sky). It is built on a 9/8 rhythm, typical of the traditional Greek dance of zebeiko (as indicated in the presentation booklet). The second is 'Cimemwe mwe', a Congolese nursery rhyme in the Tshiluba language arranged by Monika.<sup>45</sup> She transcribed a recording of her father singing the melody. The melody is based on a hexatonic scale Bb-C-D-Eb-F-G, which can be considered as containing all the notes (except for A) of the F and Eb triads. The proposed harmonization includes, in fact, a recurrence of the chords of Ebmaj7 and F7sus4, which can be understood as a triad of Eb with a bass of F. In the last four bars, we find the harmonic formula of II V I. At this point, the melody, pentatonic, is harmonized with the fourth, with the drummer singing the second voice. This can be seen as a reference to a pentatonic harmonization in African music.<sup>46</sup> The first eight bars are based on a clave played by the rhythm section, which points to a broader Latin influence. This arrangement is built on a harmonic language characteristic of jazz (rhythm, colours and harmonic sequence) and references to Africa and, more broadly, to the cultural area of the Black Atlantic.

The programme successively presents, in the different pieces, the multiple identities contained in the neologism of grecofuturism (new technologies,

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45 Version played during the playback: [https://youtu.be/f\\_Dqj0FYXvI](https://youtu.be/f_Dqj0FYXvI)

46 Kubik, *Africa and the Blues*.

Greece, Africa, jazz). This can be regarded as one of the constraints induced by the framework of the evaluation, in which Monika felt partly obliged to present many aspects of her musical personality in a reduced time. Above all, it is a manifestation of the eclecticism and discontinuity that characterize fusion processes in a post-structuralist perspective.

The image displays a musical score for the song 'Cimemwe mwe' by Monika Kabasele. The score is divided into three systems, each starting with a measure number (25, 29, and 33) and a key signature change (E, F). Each system includes staves for Voice (Vo.), Guitar (Guit.), Bass, and Piano (Pno.).

**System 1 (Measures 25-28):** Key signature: E-flat major. The vocal line begins with the lyrics 'Ci-mwe-mwe - mwe ci-mwe-mwe - mwe nshi ma\_pan-shi mi-kwi - pi-ki - la ne ka le-ji ku-di'. The guitar and piano parts provide accompaniment with chords: Ebmaj9, F7sus4, Gm7, Dm7, and F7sus4.

**System 2 (Measures 29-32):** Key signature: E-flat major. The vocal line continues with 'wen - da u - ke - ba ku - bi-lon - go bya ku - ya - ku - som - ba'. The guitar and piano parts use chords: Ebmaj9, Gm7, Dm7, F6, F7sus4, and Ebmaj7.

**System 3 (Measures 33-36):** Key signature: F major. The vocal line is mostly rests. The guitar and piano parts use chords: Bbmaj7, Gm7, C7sus4, and Fmaj7.

Figure 2. 'Cimemwe mwe' Score (extract) – Monika Kabasele

### Shooqqa ZZ by Léo Bouloc

Léo Bouloc is a saxophonist. His musical path is divided between jazz, which he studied at our school, and rap, which he discovered as a teenager. This led him to develop in parallel as a jazz instrumentalist, with influences including mainly Dexter Gordon, John Coltrane and Wayne Shorter and, on the other hand, projects as a *beatmaker*, in which he conceives and produces instrumentals with the help of a computer and a digital workstation. The presented project was, therefore, an attempt to merge the two facets of his musical personality. If blending of rap and jazz took place in the 1990s, for example with Guru and his *Jazzmatazz* album,<sup>47</sup> it did not happen, according to Léo, in the current hip hop trends and, particularly, with trap. He suggests several reasons: the recent appearance of these new trends, the tightness of the cultural environments, and musical characteristics that can be seen as antinomic, particularly in terms of rhythm and sound treatment.<sup>48</sup> It is precisely these aspects that he wanted to work on in this project, for which he wrote the music and lyrics. The band with a relatively usual jazz instrumentation – an alto saxophone, a singer, a pianist, a guitarist, a double bass player, and a drummer – did not include a rapper. The rhythmic dimension of the flow was not taken up by the vocalist but, at certain moments, by the instrumentalists. The main objective was to present instrumentals, which Léo usually makes on his computer as a *beatmaker*, this time with musicians on stage. The transposition of the usual modes of elaboration in the home studio towards the performance of improvising instrumentalists constitutes the heart of Léo's project. The reappropriation of 'Tom's Diner' allows a better understanding of these processes.

The booklet specified: 'Our piece, composed of several parts, was voluntarily composed on computer, first as a beat, before being adapted to the sextet formation.' One notices in the very presentation of the score the significance of the drum rhythm, placed in the second position and entirely written out, which is relatively unusual in the common jazz practice. Precisely, this rhythmic pattern and the key piece of the drill movement was taken from 'Dior' (2020) by an American rapper known as Pop Smoke. The difficulty encountered by Léo was that his drummer did not strictly maintain the rhythmic pattern throughout the performance. This is a question of playing codes: the amount of freedom left to the instrumentalists in the interpretation is greater in jazz than in other contemporary music genres, and what happens during the performance takes

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47 Guru, *Jazzmatazz (An Experimental Fusion of Hip Hop and Jazz)*, Chrysalis, 1995.

48 Personal project presentation booklet.

precedence over respect for the initial score. This, in part, contradicts the aesthetics of some music, including drill, based on a given and repeated beat, as indicated in the score with ‘beat by Léo Bouloc’. As mentioned in the booklet, it is then the role of the singer who is central in this fusion process: ‘the sample effect (with its temporal distortions) is reproduced by the voice, without any effect.’ Again, it is a transposition of a practice realized with digital tools towards a performance. The temporal distortions evoked are mainly simulations of delay and reverse reverb, that is the inversion of the emission of the sound with the attack being situated last, carried out live with the voice (but also with the saxophone).

Accomp **Tom's Diner (Is Closed for Renovation)** Beat by Leo Bouloc

$\text{♩} = 146$  A G7sus4(b9)

Electric Guitar G7sus4(b9)

Drumset pizz. slight fall always on long notes

Contrabass

6 G7sus4(b9)

Gu G7sus4(b9)

Dr

Cb

10 (E♭Δ7(b5)) E♭9(add11)

Gu (E♭Δ7(b5)) E♭9(add11)

Dr

Cb pizz.

14 E♭Δ7(b5)(9) D♭Δ7(b5) E♭Δ7(b5)(9) D♭Δ7 G♭ | F5

Gu E♭Δ7(b5)(9) D♭Δ7(b5) E♭Δ7(b5)(9) D♭Δ7 G♭ | F5

Dr TACET (no 3)

Cb

Figure 3. ‘Tom’s Diner’ score (extract) – Léo Bouloc

In the example of ‘Tom’s Diner’, we can see to what extent the creative recording practices, which Vincenzo Caporaletti calls the secondary neo-auratic codification,<sup>49</sup> have a direct influence on the way of conceiving the performance: from the reproduction of effects to a profound modification of the codes of play. Moreover, Bouloc claims a juxtaposition of several music styles, through a process of collage. However, the eclecticism is not presented in a successive way in different pieces but simultaneously in the same composition. In ‘Tom’s Diner’, we see it, for instance, with the juxtaposition of the drill rhythm and the harmonies characteristic of 1960s modal jazz language (Phrygian and Lydian colours). One can notice that the piece incorporates only a jazz harmonic dimension. The question raised by the project is not to know whether this collage process does or does not result in jazz – a discussion that is beyond issue – but to determine in which network of diffusion a project of this type can find its place: jazz or rap? This is the problem that Léo has to solve in order to continue to develop his music in a professional context.

### *Blue by Ilana Bensemhoun*

The question of artistic positioning also arises for the singer Ilana Bensemhoun. She entered the Conservatory at the age of four, playing the viola, and later, when she began to study jazz, devoted herself to singing. Her project is part of a ‘Neo-Jazz/Soul aesthetic’<sup>50</sup> with a claimed pop influence. Bensemhoun’s career path thus includes classical instrumental music (with instrumental practice), jazz, and popular music; these three genres are taught in France in separate pedagogical departments (classical, jazz and popular). Ilana is now placed in an intermediate position between the latter two aesthetics: jazz and popular music. Her project allows her to question on the one hand the institutional separations regarding musical practices and influences and on the other hand students’ expectations of institutional teaching. The voice is a central element with an instrumentation including three female singers, a double bass player/singer, a guitarist, a pianist, and a drummer. This group represents a traditional vocal jazz ensemble, from the Double Six to Manhattan Transfer, with many harmonized passages. The influence of pop music is, according to Ilana, present in the verse/chorus form and the use of triads, while jazz is manifested in the improvisation and the use of enriched chords. We find that jazz is centered on the notion of harmony, which

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49 Caporaletti, ‘Neo Auratic Encoding: Phenomenological Framework and Operational Patterns’, 247–248.

50 Personal project presentation booklet.

can be explained by the importance that harmony courses have in jazz curricula in general. Through the analysis of two extracts, the introduction and the coda, from Bensemhoun's composition 'Panique à bord'<sup>51</sup> one can understand the working processes of creation in this project. The introduction has the form of AABA, with an irregular build of five bars in section A and four bars in the B. The piano and voice are alone until the entrance of the chorus in the last A. The melody is built on the Aeolian C mode with two moving degrees, G-Gb and B-Bb, and is characterized by large intervals, especially in the opening motif (major seventh, augmented fourth). The harmonization contains many enriched chords (Aeolian with major seventh, Lydian, Phrygian, and altered) as well as cadential movements (II-V conclusive of A, cycle of fifths on B). The melody is often a tension note on these harmonies (e.g., the minor ninth on the F7 chord). The melodic and harmonic language as well as the form place this introduction in common post-bebop practice. It should be noted that it is not repeated in the rest of the piece, which includes a long piano solo over a bass ostinato in G in 12/8 metre.

A change of the meter to 7/8 occurs in the coda on a 4+3 clave played by the piano. The bass line is written on the descending tetrachord (C-Bb-Ab-G), a formula frequently used in many learnt and popular styles. The homorhythmic harmonization of the voices is triadic (C-, Bb, F-/Ab, B+, B°), which creates a contrast with the enriched harmonies of the introduction. These elements are part of the stylistic dimension of popular music. The piece is thus constructed on a series of rhythmic and harmonic breaks and the evocation of different aesthetic universes. It is fully representative of the aesthetics of the discontinuity evoked previously.

The fact that this project, like the others, was appraised by the jury shows that the fusion between jazz and pop is today part of the jazz field and also accepted by the institution. It is more the individual training paths that can pose a problem. The system of specialized music education in France makes a distinction between jazz and popular music, which forces some students to make choices in their orientation and to position themselves clearly in one of these genres.

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51 Version played during the playback.



**PANIQUE A BORD**  
(PROJET BLEU)

LILI FONDREUSE

INTRO - SOLO PIANO      DUO PIANO/VOX - BISBITO

LEAD

CHOEUR 1

CHOEUR 2

GUIT

PIANO

CENTREBASSE

BATTERIE

2

ESTRE/AIRANCE  
C<sub>6</sub>M<sub>7</sub>CE<sub>7</sub>CE<sub>7</sub>    #m<sub>7</sub>(F<sub>7</sub>)    F<sub>7</sub>(D)    D<sup>7</sup>acc    #m<sub>7</sub>(F<sub>7</sub>)/G    C<sub>6</sub>M<sub>7</sub>CE<sub>7</sub>

SAIVE VON LEAD / APESES  
C<sub>6</sub>M<sub>7</sub>CE<sub>7</sub>CE<sub>7</sub>    #m<sub>7</sub>(F<sub>7</sub>)    F<sub>7</sub>(D)    D<sup>7</sup>acc    #m<sub>7</sub>(F<sub>7</sub>)/G    C<sub>6</sub>M<sub>7</sub>CE<sub>7</sub>

AVANCE  
C<sub>6</sub>M<sub>7</sub>CE<sub>7</sub>CE<sub>7</sub>    #m<sub>7</sub>(F<sub>7</sub>)    F<sub>7</sub>(D)    D<sup>7</sup>acc    #m<sub>7</sub>(F<sub>7</sub>)/G    C<sub>6</sub>M<sub>7</sub>CE<sub>7</sub>

MALLORES / AIRANCE  
C<sub>6</sub>M<sub>7</sub>CE<sub>7</sub>CE<sub>7</sub>    #m<sub>7</sub>(F<sub>7</sub>)    F<sub>7</sub>(D)    D<sup>7</sup>acc    #m<sub>7</sub>(F<sub>7</sub>)/G    C<sub>6</sub>M<sub>7</sub>CE<sub>7</sub>

ESTRE/AIRANCE  
C<sub>6</sub>M<sub>7</sub>CE<sub>7</sub>CE<sub>7</sub>    #m<sub>7</sub>(F<sub>7</sub>)    F<sub>7</sub>(D)    D<sup>7</sup>acc    #m<sub>7</sub>(F<sub>7</sub>)/G    C<sub>6</sub>M<sub>7</sub>CE<sub>7</sub>

SAIVE VON  
C<sub>6</sub>M<sub>7</sub>CE<sub>7</sub>CE<sub>7</sub>    #m<sub>7</sub>(F<sub>7</sub>)    F<sub>7</sub>(D)    D<sup>7</sup>acc    #m<sub>7</sub>(F<sub>7</sub>)/G    C<sub>6</sub>M<sub>7</sub>CE<sub>7</sub>

ESTRE/AIRANCE  
C<sub>6</sub>M<sub>7</sub>CE<sub>7</sub>CE<sub>7</sub>    #m<sub>7</sub>(F<sub>7</sub>)    F<sub>7</sub>(D)    D<sup>7</sup>acc    #m<sub>7</sub>(F<sub>7</sub>)/G    C<sub>6</sub>M<sub>7</sub>CE<sub>7</sub>

SAIVE VON  
C<sub>6</sub>M<sub>7</sub>CE<sub>7</sub>CE<sub>7</sub>    #m<sub>7</sub>(F<sub>7</sub>)    F<sub>7</sub>(D)    D<sup>7</sup>acc    #m<sub>7</sub>(F<sub>7</sub>)/G    C<sub>6</sub>M<sub>7</sub>CE<sub>7</sub>

PANIQUE A BORD - PROJET BLEU

Figure 4. 'Panic on Board' score (introduction) – Ilana Bensemhoun

6

49 CODA 1) PIANO SEUL 2) LIÈGES EN 4+3 ENTRETIEN 3) LIÈGES VOIX 1/2 + CLAPS - FAIRE MONTER AD LIB

PLUS EFF EN 7

DOUBLE À LA VOIX

CYRALE SUR LE 1ER TEMPS / PLUS ENTREE EN MÊME TEMPS QUE LA GUITARE

PANIQUE À BORD - PROTET BLEU

Figure 5. ‘Panique à bord’ score (coda) – Ilana Bensemhoun

### Velvet Pocket by Arlet Feuillard

Arlet Feuillard grew up in Guadeloupe, where he learnt piano and percussion. He arrived in Paris at the age of thirteen to study classical piano at the CRR and later at the Royal Conservatory of Brussels. In parallel, he discovered jazz and explored traditional Caribbean music and salsa. There seems to be a diversity of aesthetics and musical practices in Feuillard’s music. He joined the Jazz Department of the CRR as a pianist and decided to present his personal project with the group Velvet Pocket, where he usually plays percussion. For the occasion, he wrote an original programme in which he had to integrate himself as a pianist, as the orchestra already had another pianist. The rhythm section (two pianos, electric bass, drums) is, therefore, original from this point of view and reminds us of the multiple of keyboards in Miles Davis’s orchestras from the end of the 1960s. The wind section is composed of a tenor saxophonist, a trumpeter, and a trombonist. For the last piece, studied here, two saxophonists (soprano and baritone), and a mellophone are added. In the presentation booklet, the musical references range from the Brecker Brothers, emblematic musicians of jazz-rock, to current groups such as Ghost Note, a band that emerged from Snarky Puppy. The project

**Thème 3**  
♩. = 110 E7maj7#9 D97#9#9 F-7 G7alt

17 Tromp. Sib  
Sax. S.  
Tbn.  
Pia.  
Pia.  
B. él.

21 Cmaj7 Bb7#9 Abmaj7#9 A7#9  
Cmaj7 Bb7#9 Abmaj7#9 A7#9  
Cmaj7 Bb7#9 Abmaj7#9 A7#9  
Cmaj7 Bb7#9 Abmaj7#9 A7#9  
Cmaj7 Bb7#9 Abmaj7#9 A7#9

5

Figure 6. '5 Minutes Chrono' score (extracts) – Arlet Feuillard

expressly claims to be jazz fusion in a historical perspective, from the 1970s to the present. Caribbean music, especially the Latin rhythms, is also very evident.

The final theme, in 12/8 metre, of the '5 Minutes Chrono' project demonstrates the Latin influences. The first 8-bar segment is based on four 'two eighth note-and-rest' patterns played in rhythmic unison by a piano and the bass. This creates a polyrhythm between the four ternary beats of 12/8 and the three four-eighth-note patterns. In the next four bars, this polyrhythm is developed into an eighth-note piano cell and a quarter-note bass line. In addition, we observe the integration of the two keyboards with – besides the rhythmic role already mentioned – a melodic role, with the theme doubled by a piano and a synthesizer. The rhythmic section occupies the foreground of the arrangement, which constitutes one of the stylistic markers of jazz rock. The winds have an accompanying role, with riffs played in unison. We are finally in a non-functional harmony, with enriched chords.

Another piece, 'Patatras', also reveals the group's creative process. Here, Arlet was inspired by 'Le cyclopathe' (The cyclopathe),<sup>52</sup> a composition for a big band by Pierre Bertrand, professor of jazz arrangement at the CRR. It is the final piece of his programme, and the number of band members is increased with the addition of three new winds.<sup>53</sup> It begins with a long, rubato contrapuntal passage, ending at bar 26. The main theme is played in unison and octave, doubling by the saxophones (soprano, tenor and baritone), with a harmonized three-part accompaniment. It is thus a piece by section and by instrumental family characteristic of the techniques usually used in a big band. The rhythm section ensures a groove in G- and punctuates the brass markings. The claimed influence of the Brecker Brothers is present here.

In these two excerpts, we find codes of writing, instrumentation and playing typical of jazz rock as a historical style and as it is also commonly practiced today. We find ourselves in a process of fusion referenced in the history of jazz. Feuillard finds the necessary space to develop the different musical and cultural facets of his artistic identity. The Latin references in this project remind us of the 'Spanish tinge' hypothesis mentioned above.

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52 Paris Jazz Big Band, "Le Cyclopathe", *Paris 24h*, Cristal Records, 2004. <https://youtu.be/jtZMum6xjMc>

53 The French horn indicated in the score is replaced by a mellophone on the day of the concert.

4

26 **B**  $\text{♩} = 130$

Sax. S.

Sax. T.

Sax. Bar.

Tromp. Sib.

Cor Fa

6 impro solo

Tbn.

Pia.

G-7 %

B. d.

G-7 %

5

34 **C**

Sax. S.

Sax. T.

Sax. Bar.

Tromp. Sib.

Cor Fa

Tbn.

Pia.

F-7 Bb7 Ab7#11 Ebmaj#11

Ab7#11

B. d.

F-7 Bb7 Ab7#11

Figure 7. 'Patatras' score (excerpts) – Arlet Feulliard

*Nana by Lisa Murcia*

After completing a classical curriculum, the violinist Lisa Murcia joined Johan Renard's jazz violin class, which opened for her new areas of musical expression. It is improvisation, more than jazz as a historicized aesthetic, that attracts Murcia. Her project, 'Nana', provided the opportunity to link her different practices: playing in a string quartet, composing, and improvisation. The fusion process in 'Nana' integrates not only classical music but also traditional oriental music, notably through the presence of another violinist in the orchestra who specializes in this kind of music. There are, thus, complex articulations between writing and orality on the one hand, and fixation and improvisation on the other. However, this written repertoire was partly presented orally. The instrumentation consisted of a string quartet and a rhythm section. Since Lisa, for fear of a sound imbalance, did not initially include the piano into the score, her late decision to integrate it had consequences on the writing of the piano parts. The musical references to European art music were mainly Gabriel Fauré and Hector Berlioz. For jazz, the drummers that Lisa quotes first: Jojo Mayer and Tony Allen. This influence was claimed in the writing, and the affirmation of the rhythmic role held by the quartet.

Murcia's project was given its title from the piece 'Nana', which contains a rhythmically characteristic passage with alternating three and four-beat measures. Each three-beat bar contains a triplet motif on the first beat, while each four-beat bar is played exclusively on binary sixteenth-note flows (except for the last two eighth notes in bar 30, which anticipate the next bar). It is thus a writing of above all rhythmic based on an alternation of rhythmic decompositions. The whole passage is played in unison by the quartet, the piano, and the drums. On the one hand, this passage can work with the quartet alone, without the reinforcement of the rhythm section. On the other hand, whilst the rhythmic discourse is complex, the melodic and harmonic dimensions borrow from the codes of common jazz practice, with a melody built on the B Dorian mode and the B minor chord.<sup>54</sup> Here, it is again the harmony that evokes jazz.

The reappropriation of Suzanne Vega's piece gives the opportunity to develop the project's musical approach.

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54 The second segment E7/B can be quoted as B-6.

The image shows a musical score extract for 'Nana' by Lisa Murcia. The score is written for a chamber ensemble consisting of Violin 1, Violin 2, Alto, Viola, Piano, Cello, and Bass. The music is in 5/8 time and features a complex rhythmic structure with interspersed breathing in three-beat measures. The score includes various musical notations such as triplets, slurs, and dynamic markings. The piano part includes chord voicings for Bm, E7/B, and Bm. The cello part includes chord voicings for Bm, E7/B, and Bm. The bass part includes chord voicings for Bm3, E7/B, and Bm3. The score is numbered 59 at the beginning and 5 at the end.

**Figure 8.** 'Nana' score (extract) – Lisa Murcia

The rhythmic dimension is present in the 5/8 meter, interspersed with breathing in three-beat measures. The drums, which are not indicated in the score, enter at the B mark, which shows the privileged status of these instruments. The contrapuntal technique highlights all the quartet members, with a notable sharing of the theme between the violin and the cello in the introduction. The alternation between the pizzicato and the bowing allows for the creation of several sound levels. The harmonic dimension is also developed during the introduction with voicings in fourths and displacements of minor chords (B-, F-, Eb-). There is a successful fusion of a pop piece, the writing techniques of learnt music, a modal jazz harmonic language, and a groove on an asymmetrical metric. Among its multiple dimensions, this project brings us back to the 'French Opera hypothesis' suggested by Lawrence Gushee.

## Tom's Diner

Suzanne Verga

**A**  $\text{♩} = 200$

Violin I  
Violin II  
Viola  
Violoncello  
Piano

**B**  $\text{♩} = 240$

Pia.

18

Figure 9. 'Tom's Diner' score (extracts) – Lisa Murcia



Forme :  
 ABC x2  
 CBA  
 Free environ 30sec  
 Solo Echanges Sax-Tpt  
 ABC sans points d'orgue

**Fantomas**

Loup Godfroy

♩ = 250

**A** 1st time

Piano

5

*A* maj7(#11)

9 **B**

*F#*/F

14 **C**

*B* maj7(#11)

© Focus Pocus

Figure 10. 'Fantomas' lead sheet – Loup Godfroy

### Loup Godfroy's *Focus Pocus*

The Focus Pocus group exists outside of the Conservatory and operates in a collective manner. For the event, the drummer Loup Godfroy conceived and directed an original programme. Since Godfroy's project is evidently within the claimed jazz heritage – in this case that of Ornette Coleman and Eric Dolphy, musicians who represent the main linear path mentioned previously – his is the last to be analysed. This pianoless quartet refers to Coleman's and Cherry's formations, and their legacy is reflected in the instrumentation: trumpet, alto saxophone, double bass, and drums. The absence of a harmonic instrument allows for greater freedom in improvisation, which is at the heart of this project. Indeed, the compositions serve as a starting point for a collective construction during the performance, which, above all, privileges interactions. The scores presented in my paper have, therefore, a low degree of prescriptiveness. These elements place Focus Pocus in a post-free practice, and the theme 'Fantomas' is part of such an approach.

Unlike the previous music examples, Figure 10 shows only a lead sheet (not a score). The chords are almost absent and not played by a harmonic instrument. The unison theme, the chromaticism, the disjointed movements, and the fermata are elements in an aesthetic close to Ornette Coleman, to whom this piece pays tribute. The very fast tempo is a fast swing. Godfroy's group is the only one that has employed a swing pulse in its repertoire. However, in this piece it is only in its historical rhythmic dimension that jazz invoked, not as a harmonic quality (as with the other projects). Finally, the piece unfolds on a theme-solo-theme form. It is also the only project adopting this type of form; here again characteristic of the historical common practice. However, it should be noted that this common practice is rendered in a free perspective, which precisely challenges it. The solos do not develop on the harmonic grid of the theme (the grid is, in fact, absent) but on a 'time no changes' approach, that is an accompaniment of the rhythmic section (walking bass of the double bassist and drive of the drummer) without harmonies or predefined cycles.

The question that arises is one of fusion. If all the previous projects are part of fusion processes, what about this one? The references invoked are not only historical but also contemporary, in the first place those of Steve Lehmann. Nonetheless, as the following example shows, the rhythmic approach is very different.

The 'Le chat Miaulee' theme, written by the group's saxophonist Liam Szymonik, manifests, with its strong rhythmic challenge, a contemporary aesthetic. In part A, we find a superposition of dotted quarter note flows and

Piano

### Le chat Miaulee

L.S

**A** ♩ = 120

3

6

9

13 2nd time only **B**

16

Figure 11. ‘The Meowing Cat’ lead sheet – Liam Szymonik

a complex clave, whose decomposition in sixteenth notes is indicated. We can see that the use of the swing playing code in a rhythmic repertoire that has considerably expanded since Steve Coleman (another influence of the group) is one of the possibilities. This can be seen as a consequence of the virtual availability of the entirety of all recorded music, which now replaces the linear tradition,<sup>55</sup> and from which present-day musicians can draw according to their projects, themes, and improvisation approaches. This relationship to history is also a part of the postmodern perspective of relativism and eclecticism, of time temporal. Furthermore, it is a process of developed fusion within the field of jazz, between periods sometimes distant, but echoing each other.

## Conclusion

The analysed students' projects show that the processes of fusion are at work in each of them, and each time in a different way. The spectrum has expanded well beyond the 'Spanish tinge' and 'French Opera House' hypotheses: popular genres (pop, rap), music from different geographical areas (Africa, the Caribbean, the Mediterranean area other European ethnic regions<sup>56</sup>), and European classical music. All these young artists place themselves in a postmodern poststructuralist perspective, with great freedom to juxtapose and, sometimes, to put into conflict different aesthetics and diverse modes of musical elaboration (orality, writing, phonography, computer assisted music). One notices that jazz is then almost only invoked in its harmonic dimension (usual harmonic cadences and enriched harmonies), and not in the codes of common practice, in particular the swing and the theme-solo-theme form. Harmony as the identity referent to jazz features is certainly due to the fact that this important discipline is included in institutional curricula. As for the absence of historical, rhythmic, and formal playing codes, the answer lies more in the nature of the personal project test, in which they are asked to present an original artistic proposal reflecting their identity.

For the most part, students construct their art worlds outside school in the affairs of everyday life. They compose their art worlds of acculturated aesthetic values, art objects, art making techniques, and codes for identifying and valuing art.<sup>57</sup>

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55 Shipton, *A New History of Jazz*, 875.

56 Kajanová, 'World Music, Flamenco, Klezmer and Traditional Folk Music', 26.

57 Cary, *Critical Art Pedagogy: Foundations for Postmodern Art Education*, 13.

The privileged moment of project presentation allows the students to import into the institution the external values on which they build their artistic identities. Students sometimes view this space as an opportunity to challenge an established pedagogical order. It is, in fact, the result of a long process of negotiation between them, the teaching team, and the institution, which extends over the whole period of their training.<sup>58</sup> If they regard the institution, rightly or wrongly, in whole or in part, as the repository and guardian of a neoconservative postmodernism, they then present themselves as the bearers of a poststructuralist postmodernism. They then question the values on which the discourses and pedagogical contents are usually created and the elaboration of a canon of legitimated practices and works, which are for the most part situated in the historical period of 1930–1960, that is to precisely say that of the common practice of jazz. During this unique project presentation moment, mandated by the institution itself, the processes of fusion between all their musical influences are a means of contesting the institution as much as affirming their developing artistic identities. This is the very objective of the artistic training that the students receive at the CRR of Paris. Their personal projects are opportunities to question, implicitly or explicitly, the models transmitted by the institutional teaching of jazz, the evolution of the modes of musical elaboration of the new generations and, more broadly, jazz in the making, which, in the words of Sidney Bechet, has been since its beginnings a lost thing in the process of finding itself. Hence, one can only be delighted by the diversity of the artistic proposals presented and be pleased that the educational institutions, which are usually criticized for their formative role, are the place where new artistic identities are developed. Let us hope that they will continue in creating these young artists' careers.

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<sup>58</sup> Prouty, *ibid.*, 69.

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