

Discontinuity in the Music of Django Reinhardt*

By Ben Givan

Most analytical literature on jazz still places a premium on structural unity. Early writers, such as André Hodeir (1956) and Gunther Schuller (1958), sought to legitimize the music in the eyes of the musicological community by demonstrating its accessibility to traditional formalist interpretation. This methodological orientation persists in much current jazz analysis (e.g., Block 1990; Martin 1996; Larson 1998; Harker 1999). In recent years, however, the formalist view of jazz improvisations as autonomous artifacts, whose aesthetic value stems from their internal coherence, has been challenged on the grounds that it remains as inseparably tied to an inapposite, European ideological heritage as the conservatism it opposes. Ethnomusicologists and "new" musicologists have instead preferred to divert their attention toward jazz's immediate social context—primarily the vernacular culture of black America—and its historic roots in sub-Saharan Africa (Tomlinson 1992; Walser 1995; Floyd 1995). This more humanistic perspective has served to dispel formalism's claims to objectivity.

A compromise can be found between these opposing standpoints by regarding musical structure and social context as inextricably interdependent (Monson 1996:186, 190). But a further possibility that has yet to be considered seriously is that jazz might be subjected to close analysis without necessarily invoking the organicist corollary that the music itself ought, at some level, to exhibit a unified structure. Indeed, as this paper will show, an examination of manifestations of discontinuity, rather than of unity, may offer insight into the creative processes underlying improvised performance.

The improvisations of guitarist Django Reinhardt (1910–1953) provide a fitting case-study, because they often exhibit striking discontinuities. The critic Whitney Balliett recently described Reinhardt's characteristic modus operandi as follows:

Reinhardt might start a medium-tempo ballad with three or four bars of slightly altered melody, played in single notes behind the beat, each phrase graced by his vibrato (almost a tremble), pause for a beat, and go into a brief mock double-time, rest again, drop in an abrupt, massive chord, and release a hissing upward run. Then he'd cut his volume in half and turn into the bridge with a delicate, fern-like single-note variation of the melody, letting his notes linger and

bend and float on his vibrato. Just before the end of the bridge, he would loose another offbeat chord, let it shimmer for three or four beats, work through a humplike arpeggio, lower his volume again, and return to a single-note variation of the original melody and come to rest. (Balliett 2000a:99)

It is this capricious quality of the guitarist's music, vividly captured here by Balliett, that makes it resistant to coherence-seeking formalist readings.

In confronting this seemingly elusive body of work, a useful starting point is an insight originally suggested by Hodeir. In 1962, Hodeir published a short analysis of Reinhardt's solo on the blues "Solid Old Man," a 1939 recording that also featured Rex Stewart, Barney Bigard, and Billy Taylor of the Duke Ellington Orchestra. Hodeir's transcription is reproduced in example 1. The solo lasts for only a single twelve-measure chorus, and Hodeir's commentary concludes with the following insight:

[T]he curious construction of this blues involves three phrases, divided as follows: [measures] 1–3, 4–7, 10–12. What happens between the first beat of the seventh measure and the first beat of the tenth? Does Django stop playing? Not at all; these three measures contain a fairly long phrase, which *does not belong to the solo proper*. It is part of an orchestral "accompaniment" which Django "heard in his head" while playing his improvisation. The "parenthetical" character of this phrase should be apparent to every attentive listener. (Hodeir 1962:188; emphasis in the original)

Hodeir draws attention to a phenomenon that recurs in many of Reinhardt's other recorded improvisations. For instance, an excerpt from Reinhardt's 1946 solo on "Love's Melody" (ex. 2) contains a similarly "parenthetical" passage (m. 7) that, like the phrase described in the quotation above, is suggestive of an accompanimental texture due to its reduced volume and repetitive character. The present article draws some further observations by extrapolating from Hodeir's four-decade-old remarks.

To begin, consider Hodeir's view that the "odd phrase out" in Reinhardt's solo conveys the sense of being an *accompaniment* that is subordinate to the surrounding musical material, and that it furthermore represents the concretization of a musical image that he *heard in his head*. The latter claim is corroborated by the testimony of many improvising musicians. Jazz performers often describe their creative processes in terms of the actualization of musical ideas that are first imagined internally; in some cases they claim consciously to "think ahead," usually by no more than a bar or two.¹

Example 1: "Solid Old Man" (1939). Originally published in *Toward Jazz*, by André Hodeir.
© Grove/Atlantic, Inc., 1962. Used by permission.

Example 2: "Love's Melody" (1946).

But the improviser's mind is not exclusively occupied by images of events that will subsequently be realized as sound. A performer of most mainstream jazz styles is usually guided by a preexisting theme. By prescribing a fixed temporal-harmonic structure (and in many instances a melody, too), the theme dictates a set of creative constraints. Thus jazz improvisers must keep these constraints in mind. Many say that they retain an inner image of the harmonies ("chord changes") while they play, and some use the melody itself as a continual object of reference.² One of this article's basic premises is that discontinuities within a given improvised solo may result from a performer's attentive shifts between different conceptual fields. This premise also underlies the well-known distinction posited by Hodeir himself, whereby "paraphrase improvisation," which is explicitly based on a pre-existing melody, is distinguished from "chorus phrase improvisation," which observes only an established harmonic structure (Hodeir 1956:144). As Lawrence Gushee has noted, one of the deepest foundational assumptions of Hodeir's analytical framework is that the improvisational process is based on "separable levels of mental activity" (1981:158). Other authors have both refined (Kernfeld 1981:17; 1995:131; Martin 1996:34) and questioned (Larson 1999:286) Hodeir's dichotomy; however, this paper does not directly adopt or adapt his scheme. Instead, it proceeds from the same basic supposition that contrasting regions of a musical improvisation may derive from separate elements of the improviser's conceptual model, but ultimately derives some additional hypotheses that are specifically geared toward Reinhardt's music.

Discontinuity between temporally proximate musical events leads Hodeir to claim that one phrase in Reinhardt's performance of "Solid Old Man" "does not belong to the solo proper." The technique of juxtaposing contrasting material has numerous precedents in various musical cultures, and it is often associated with effects such as antiphony, ornamental interpolation, and the illusion of simultaneous progression.³ Differentiation in the domain of any given musical parameter can produce these effects, but they are most readily achieved by the exploitation of timbral and spatial contrasts between two or more different instruments, or groups of instruments. Familiar examples of such practices include the *cori spezzati* of Renaissance Venice, the call-and-response routines of West African and African-diasporic musical traditions, and the discontinuities in certain works of Igor Stravinsky. However, the effect that Hodeir identifies in Reinhardt's blues chorus—conveyed by just one performer, playing a single musical instrument—is also common. Gunther Schuller has drawn an analogy between pianist Earl Hines's use of dynamics and musical texture "to distinguish between primary and secondary material" (1989:280) and the interpolative effects found in various piano works by Chopin and Liszt.

Example 3: "St. Louis Blues" (1937).

The musical score for "St. Louis Blues" (1937) is presented in two systems. The first system shows the original melody in treble clef and the guitar accompaniment in bass clef. The tempo is marked as 1:15 and the key signature is G minor (Gm). The second system continues the melody and guitar accompaniment, with a key signature change to D7 indicated. The score includes various musical notations such as triplets, slurs, and dynamic markings.

And Paul Berliner observes that horn players sometimes give the impression of playing call-and-response figures "with themselves" (1994:195). Charles Hartman even compares certain of Bobby McFerrin's a cappella vocal improvisations with the *style brisé* of J. S. Bach's works for unaccompanied violin or cello (1991:111); both use registral contrast to create the impression of simultaneously unfolding contrapuntal lines. In many instances, such techniques of abrupt discontinuity can be classified accordingly to more than one of the three categories noted above. Thus, while Edward T. Cone interprets the "stratification" of musical ideas in Stravinsky's *Symphonies of Wind Instruments* in terms of the resulting illusion of simultaneous progression that he calls "interlock" (1989:294), Richard Taruskin compares the same work to a responsorial Russian Orthodox religious service (1996:1488). But to date, the work of Cone and others dealing with discontinuity in Western art music has no parallel in the literature on jazz.

The present article makes Reinhardt's various uses of musical discontinuity the basis of a speculative poetics of his improvisational process. Discontinuity will be defined very generally as differentiation in the domain of one or more musical parameters between temporally proximate events. Reinhardt usually creates discontinuities by means of changes in texture—such as alternations between chordal and single-note playing—or through shifts in register or motivic content. These techniques most often suggest ornamental interpolation or the illusion of simultaneous progression. The following selected examples will illustrate that discontinuities are consistently used to reinforce conceptual distinctions.⁴

Example 3 displays an excerpt from Reinhardt's 1937 recording of W. C. Handy's "St. Louis Blues" (the original melody appears above Reinhardt's rendition). When he arrives at the theme's minor-mode "habanera" section midway through his solo, Reinhardt chooses to play the original melody, with a few embellishments. But between each of its phrases he interpolates a flamboyant double-time passage. The familiar melody and the unfamiliar accompaniment are differentiated by register, speed of melodic motion, and also timbre, since the melody is played on the guitar's lower strings. Two contrasting musical ideas alternate, creating the illusion of one instrument playing a melody (bracketed in example 3) while another plays an obbligato.⁵ This example is, however, an exceptional case. More frequently Reinhardt, like many soloists of the swing era, temporarily reverts to the original melody for just a single phrase or two during the course of an extended improvisation.⁶ Example 4, an excerpt from the top of his second chorus on James P. Johnson's "Charleston" (1937), indicates that, at the beginning of the chorus's second eight-bar section

Example 3 (cont.)

14

15

16

17

Gm

G

(mm. 9–12), he interrupts his single-string solo by interjecting a (rhythmically altered) paraphrase of the original melody whose distinct conceptual origin is highlighted through being played in octaves, creating a sharp discontinuity.

Thus melodic paraphrase can be identified as a consistent source of discontinuity in Reinhardt's improvisations. This technique may serve as a cognitive anchor that reminds both listeners, and perhaps, in a confirmatory sense, the performer also, of the ongoing improvisation's underlying thematic derivation. It should be noted that, in Reinhardt's solos, paraphrases of the original melody are often not so unequivocally set off from their surroundings. Instead, they often appear as subtler references in which conceptual distinctions are not reinforced by means of explicit contrasts. Consider, for instance, the guitarist's 1938 improvisation on "Body and Soul," transcribed in example 5. This solo begins in the guitar's upper register with a paraphrase of the melody's opening that inverts its characteristic ascending perfect fifth into a falling fourth (m. 1). In the succeeding measures, however, Reinhardt reverts to a more literal exposition of the melody, a full two octaves lower than at first (mmw. 3ff). Toward the end of the first eight-bar section Reinhardt departs from the melody with a double-time excursion of the sort seen in the "St. Louis Blues" excerpt. Throughout the remainder of the solo, he continually returns to the outline of the written melody; in mm. 9–10, it is isolated from the double-time elaborative gestures, but on other occasions, such as the end of m. 13 (C–A–F), it is integrated seamlessly into improvised material. Example 5 brackets regions substantially based on the original theme. The diminishing level of differentiation between melodic paraphrases and improvised passages found in this solo recalls Conc's concept of "synthesis," the process whereby "diverse elements are brought into closer and closer rela-

Example 4: "Charleston" (1937). CHARLESTON, by Cecil Mack and James P. Johnson. © 1923 (Renewed) Warner Bros. Inc. All Rights Reserved. Used by Permission. WARNER BROS. PUBLICATIONS U.S. INC., Miami, FL 33014.

Original Melody

1:13

Guitar

B $\flat$

D7

C7

3

4

C7

F7

3

7

B $\flat$

F7

B $\flat$

D7

11

G

C7

F

A7

Dm

A7

3

15

D7

F7

Dm

B $\flat$ 7

tion with one another" (1989:295). But Cone's formulation also implies a teleological process, which is not evident in Reinhardt's improvisation. Rather, the melody seems to act as a constant mental guide that occasionally is allowed to reappear in various guises.⁷

Example 5: "Body and Soul" (1938).

A second use of discontinuity in Reinhardt's music is exemplified at the conclusion of his solo on "Body and Soul." Here he creates an abrupt discontinuity by introducing an ascending five-note gesture played in octaves. This gesture (also bracketed in ex. 5) is conceptually separate from the main body of the solo. Its function is to demarcate the formal boundary between the theme's first sixteen measures and the bridge. In fact, Reinhardt played an almost identical figure at the same point in the preceding chorus, while accompanying the previous soloist. These sorts of "structural markers,"⁸ often characterized by octave doubling as in the present example, are a recurrent feature of his work as an accompanist. When similar devices occur in his solo improvisations (often producing disjunct contrasts) they can convey the same functional meanings.

The procedures described above can also be heard in Reinhardt's 1937 improvisation on "The Sheik of Araby" (ex. 6). This solo opens in the guitar's upper register with the beginning of the written melody—the

Example 6: "The Sheik of Araby" (1937).

Example 6 (cont.)

Example 6 (cont.) is a musical score in G major, 4/4 time. It consists of three staves. The first staff (measures 30-32) features a melodic line with a triplet of eighth notes (B4, B4, B4) and a half note (G4). The second staff (measures 33-35) is labeled "Second chorus" and features a melodic line with a half note (B4), a quarter note (A4), and a half note (G4). The third staff (measures 36-38) features a melodic line with a half note (B4), a quarter note (A4), and a half note (G4). The score includes various musical notations such as treble clef, key signature, time signature, and various note values and rests.

familiar ascending neighbor-note motion. But after just two measures Reinhardt skips abruptly down to his instrument's lowest octave for almost all of the first chorus, departing entirely from the original tune. The upper register is not "reactivated," so to speak, until three measures into the second chorus (m. 35); this is accomplished not by another disjunct register shift, but by one of Reinhardt's trademark chromatic scales, an especially conspicuous means of traversing the divide between low and high. Another striking moment of discontinuity during this excerpt is the seven-note motive, played in octaves, that briefly interrupts the lower-register activity (mm. 22-24). There are at least two plausible ways to account for this interjection. In its highlighting of an E $\flat$ -D neighbor-note relationship, it recalls the original melody's climactic moment ("You'll rule this land . . ."), but due to its location within the form—slightly "too early"—it would be considered an anticipatory paraphrase. Alternatively, it may function as a structural marker of the sort described in the previous example, since it occurs at the end of an eight-measure formal unit.

In addition to melodic paraphrases and structural markers, a third explanation for discontinuity in Reinhardt's music is the interpretation originally suggested by Hodeir in his commentary on "Solid Old Man": the interpolation of accompanimental material. A clear example of this technique is heard on Reinhardt's 1937 recording of "Japanese Sandman." The performance features members of the Dicky Wells Orchestra, with a rhythm section consisting of Reinhardt's guitar plus Dick Fullbright and Bill Beason on bass and drums, respectively. This makes for a fairly thin musical texture when the guitarist solos, so he compensates by strumming chords between phrases of his habitual single-string melodic improvisation (ex. 7). This example strongly supports Hodeir's hypothesis that, while

Example 7: "Japanese Sandman" (1937).

Example 7: "Japanese Sandman" (1937) is a musical score in G major, 4/4 time. It consists of ten staves, each representing a measure of music. The score includes various musical notations such as treble clef, key signature, time signature, and various note values and rests. The first staff (measure 1) is marked with a tempo of 131 and a time signature of 4/4. The score includes various musical notations such as treble clef, key signature, time signature, and various note values and rests. The score includes various musical notations such as treble clef, key signature, time signature, and various note values and rests.

Example 7 (cont.)

improvising, Reinhardt's mind might be occupied by not only a fixed referent in the form of his theme's melodic and harmonic model, but moreover by an associated accompanimental "background" texture.⁹ In addition to thickening the music's texture, the realization of this conceptual background in the form of repetitive, ostinato-like patterns can also prevent a loss of momentum during lulls between phrases belonging to the musical foreground. The effect is of simultaneous progression: the background material remains conceptually present even when aurally absent.¹⁰

Reinhardt was adept at switching swiftly between background-type rhythmic figures, melodic paraphrases, and straightforward "foreground" improvisation, even at very fast tempos. This facility is evident during the opening of his 1935 solo on "I've Had My Moments" (ex. 8). The solo's first five measures contain a reiterated eighth-note G4, followed by a series of strummed chords. This passage contrasts starkly with the material that follows (mm. 5–9).¹¹ It seems strongly accompanimental in character simply by virtue of its pitch-repetitiveness, even during the very beginning, which contains no chordal playing. At m. 5, Reinhardt abruptly shifts to the principal melody (shown above the transcription), with a few embellishments, and it is not until five measures later that he begins truly to improvise melodic lines for the first time (mm. 10ff).

Following from this interpretation, the series of eighth-notes in mm. 32–36 could be identified as another accompaniment-like passage. This reading is admittedly more tenuous than the previous one, because while this second passage is also fairly repetitive, (and, like the earlier passage has a heightened sense of momentum due to the cross-rhythms produced by accenting every third note), Reinhardt introduces several other pitches after beginning with only E4. Nonetheless, with the exception of the final B4s (m. 36), this passage's melodic profile is markedly different from that of the preceding measures.¹² Repetitive figures of this sort may additionally carry a function as intellectual-labor-saving devices; they enable the

Example 8: "I've Had My Moments" (1935). *I'VE HAD MY MOMENTS*, by Gus Kahn and Walter Donaldson. © 1934 (Renewed) EMI Robbins Catalog Inc. and Donaldson Music Co. All rights outside the U.S. controlled by EMI Robbins Catalog, Inc. All Rights Reserved. Used by Permission, WARNER BROS. PUBLICATIONS U.S. INC., Miami, FL. 33014.

Example 8 (cont.)

18 G Eb7 Am

21 D7 G Eb

24 Am D7 G7

27 C

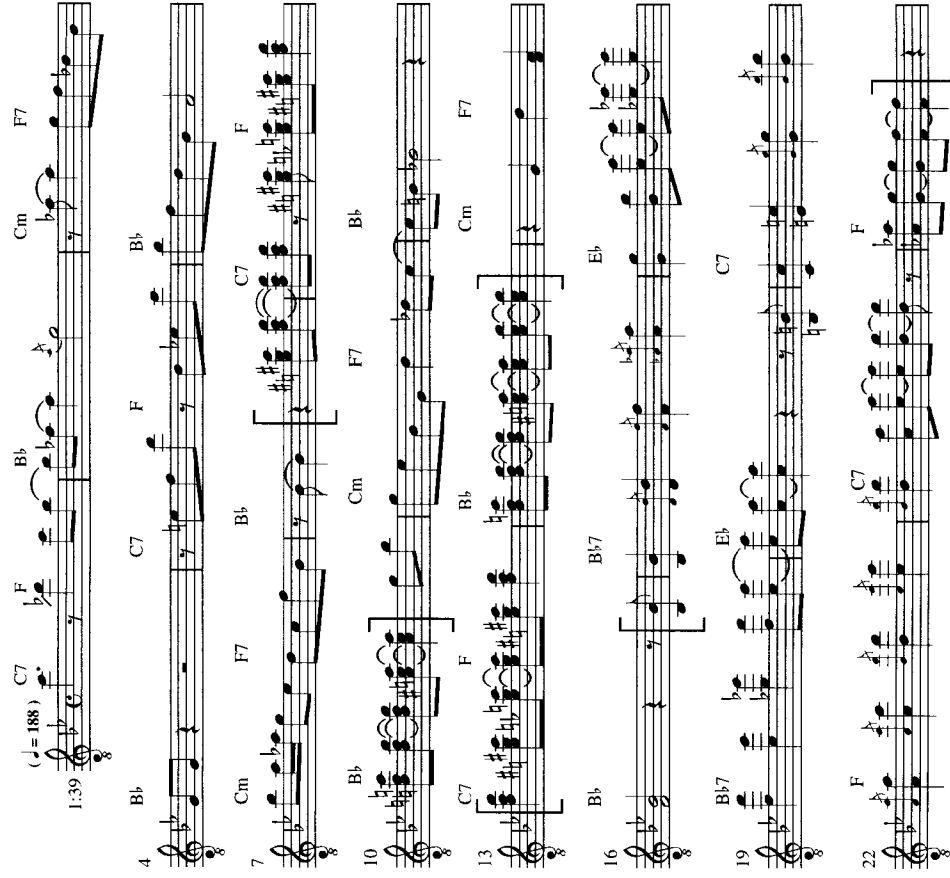
30 A7 Eb D7 G

33 D7 G Second chorus Eb7

Example 8 (cont.)

The musical score is for the song "The Rose Tree" in G major. It consists of two systems of music. The first system contains measures 36 through 45, and the second system contains measures 46 through 50. The guitar accompaniment is written in G major and includes various chords: Am, D7, G, E7, Am, G7, C, A7, and E7. The vocal melody is written in a single line and includes a triplet in measure 39. The score is in 4/4 time and features a key signature of one sharp (F#).

Example 9: "Jeepers Creepers" (1939).



self-contained motivic development, as occurs in a comparatively lengthy excursion toward the background during Reinhardt's 1939 solo on "H.C.Q. Strut." This simple theme features a repetitive bass line that descends chromatically from 4 through 3, underpinning a II-V-I harmonic progression. The melody and bass line of the tune's A-section are shown in example 11. (The bass player on the recording generally plays this bass line with little variation.) Two measures into his solo's second chorus (m. 6 in example 12), Reinhardt switches abruptly from an elaborate arpeggiated foreground melody to a figure derived from this underlying bass line.¹³ At first, the bass pitches are doubled an octave higher, with Reinhardt

soloist to "keep things going" while allowing him an extra second or two to gather inspiration for more involved activity.

In the previous two examples, the designation of certain musical material as part of an improvisation's background has been largely predicated on its exhibiting a relatively homogeneous character. A musical accompaniment can, however, be distinguishable from a primary melody without being comparatively repetitive. The irregular comping of a pianist, or the sporadic interjections by a drummer on a snare or bass drum, are often integral elements of an interactive jazz rhythm section as it supports an improvising soloist. In the context of a larger ensemble, such as the big bands of the Swing Era, a soloist may be accompanied by instrumental backgrounds, or riffs. And in Reinhardt's music one finds instances of musical discontinuity resulting from the insertion of riff-like material within a single-note solo. This represents an additional sort of discontinuous practice; it may be considered a secondary type of background-oriented technique.

Reinhardt often juxtaposes short, riff-like fragments against monophonic melodies, usually with symmetrical metric groupings. This technique is illustrated in example 9, from his 1939 recording of "Jeepers Creepers." In the ninth measure of his second improvised chorus, the guitarist introduces a two-measure phrase featuring three-part chords. The chords are answered by a single-note melody. A variant of the chordal passage follows, and is in turn succeeded by an entirely different single-note phrase (mm. 13–16). The cumulative result is reminiscent of the sort of call-and-response effects frequently heard in big band arrangements, when a soloist alternates with a larger ensemble.

Big band arrangements of the Swing Era often feature short riff-like ensemble passages at the beginning of a chorus, or other significant formal division, creating a sort of musical punctuation during an improvised solo. In the same way, Reinhardt tends to interject brief riff-like statements, generally two or four measures in duration and played in chords or octaves, at the beginning of a formal section. Example 10, an excerpt from his 1949 solo on Irving Berlin's "Marie," indicates one such instance (mm. 9–12), played in octaves at the top of a new chorus. Passages such as this may also function as structural markers. However, they differ from the more common instances of such devices in that they usually *begin* on or around the downbeat of a new formal unit, whereas more explicit structural markers tend to *end* approximately on (or slightly before) the crucial downbeat.

Before proceeding further, it is worth noting that in certain cases background material, differentiated from its surroundings by register, texture, or motivic content, may not necessarily function only as a contrasting supplement to the foreground. For instance, it can occasionally be the site of

Example 10: “Marie” (1949).

also adding another note a minor seventh above each bass-doubling note. The resultant motive, which is in sharp contrast to all that precedes it, is soon transformed into a three-note ascending gesture that is developed over the next ten measures. Then, just as abruptly, Reinhardt reverts to foreground mode (m. 16), giving the impression of having more or less resumed where he left off. During this interlude, which is clearly inspired by the tune's bass line and out of character with the surrounding upper-register melodic activity, Reinhardt remains creatively involved with the solo's background long enough to endow it with a degree of variety, rather than treating it as comparatively homogeneous (in the manner of examples 7 and 8).

Together, the foregoing examples suggest the following hypothesis: discontinuous regions of Reinhardt's improvisations may be manifestations of different strata of his subjective consciousness. His predominant mode of creative performance involves the production of novel melodic material. But this foregrounded, primary material is conceived with reference to a harmonic scheme that ordinarily supports a melody. From time to time, this melody—usually consigned to Reinhardt's inner consciousness—is made explicit, often in a way that sets it off from the surrounding passages. Furthermore, Reinhardt also appears to sustain an inner image of the passing harmonies in the form of a repetitive rhythmic ostinato.¹⁴ This

Example 11: "H.C.Q. Surut" (1939), melody and bass line (first 8 measures only). *H.C.Q. Surut*, by Django Reinhardt. Copyright © 1967 by Publications Francis Day S.A. This arrangement Copyright © 2002 by Publications Francis Day S.A. All Rights in the U.S.A. and Canada Controlled by Jewel Music Publishing Co., Inc. International Copyright Secured. All Rights Reserved. Used by Permission.

The 'Guitar' part is written on a single staff in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). It consists of two systems of four measures each. The first system contains the following notes: G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), and C5 (quarter). The second system contains: D5 (quarter), E5 (quarter), F#5 (quarter), and G5 (quarter). The third system contains: A5 (quarter), B5 (quarter), C6 (quarter), and D6 (quarter). The fourth system contains: E6 (quarter), F#6 (quarter), G6 (quarter), and A6 (quarter). Chord symbols A7, D7, G, and A7 are placed above the first four measures respectively. The notation includes various accidentals and ties to indicate the specific voicings for the guitar.

Example 12: “H.C.Q. Strut” (1939).

[illegible]

accompanimental background is sometimes made explicit as well, often with functional implications—such as to provide structural markers, to create riff-like exchanges, to supplement a sparse musical accompaniment, or to keep the music going while he gathers inspiration.

While clear-cut discontinuities can be heard in a significant portion of Reinhardt's recorded solos, they are not the norm. It is more common for less explicit discontinuities to arise within improvised material, all of which appear to be "primary" in character (along the lines of "Body and Soul" (ex. 5), where melodic paraphrase and "pure" improvisation were less sharply differentiated). But even in these more typical scenarios, it may be possible to discern the same sorts of conceptual distinctions. To illustrate, this paper concludes with some remarks on two complete solos, both of which contain relatively few explicit contrasts. These performances were recorded just a day apart in 1946, and, coincidentally, are both improvisations on themes by George Gershwin: "Liza" and "Embraceable You."

Example 13 is a transcription of Reinhardt's solo on "Liza," divided among three separate staves. Above these staves, a fourth staff displays the melody as originally published. The lowermost staff contains musical material belonging to the "background level" of the performance. The middle staff is reserved for all passages that paraphrase the written melody at approximately its original location in the piece's form. The top staff of the transcription holds everything else, which is to say all "foreground" musical material with no explicit connection to the original melody.

Example 13 highlights several noteworthy features of the solo. First, note that a four-measure melodic paraphrase appears at the beginning of the final A-section of this AABA form during all three of Reinhardt's choruses (mm. 29, 61, and 93). Each of these paraphrases begins with a G4 that dovetails with a preceding melodic line. In the first chorus (mm. 27–28), the linear progression C–B–A precedes the paraphrase, and in the third chorus another descent, from E $\flat$, is heard (m. 92); in the second chorus an ascending chromatic scale culminates with the same pitch, G (mm. 59–60). These references to the theme's original melody function as a consistent means of punctuation within this solo.

The transcription also indicates that six different background ostinato figures occur during Reinhardt's solo on "Liza" (mm. 9–12, 45–48, 66–71, 75–77, 90–92, and 98–100). The third of these (mm. 66–71) straddles the initial downbeat of a new thirty-two-bar chorus, thus de-emphasizing this formal boundary. (This procedure counteracts the strong periodicity of much of the remainder of the solo, which is heavily based on four-bar phrases.) In contrast, the beginning of Reinhardt's second chorus (m. 37) is marked by an emphatic four-measure riff-like pattern, played in octaves.

Example 13: "Liza" (1946). *LIZA* (All The Clouds'll Roll Away), by George Gershwin, Ira Gershwin, and Gus Kahn. © 1929 (Renewed) WB Music Corp. Rights for Extended Renewal Term in U.S. controlled by WB Music Corp. and Gilbert Keyes Music. All Rights outside the U.S. controlled by EMI Robbins Catalog, Inc. All Rights Reserved. Used by Permission. WARNER BROS. PUBLICATIONS U.S. INC., Miami, FL 33014.

Example 13 (cont.)

This musical score continues from the previous page. It features five staves: P.M., F., Midy., B., and a second P.M. staff. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The F. staff contains a complex melodic line with many triplets and sixteenth notes. Chord symbols are placed below the F. staff: C, F, C7, Gm, Am, E7, Am, and C. Measure numbers 13, 20, and 26 are indicated. The P.M. staff has a simple bass line. The other staves (Midy., B., and the second P.M.) are mostly empty, with some notes in the second P.M. staff.

Example 13 (cont.)

This musical score continues from the previous page. It features five staves: P.M., F., Midy., B., and a second P.M. staff. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The F. staff contains a complex melodic line with many triplets and sixteenth notes. Chord symbols are placed below the F. staff: C, F, C7, Gm, Am, E7, Am, and C. Measure numbers 13, 20, and 26 are indicated. The P.M. staff has a simple bass line. The other staves (Midy., B., and the second P.M.) are mostly empty, with some notes in the second P.M. staff.

Example 13 (cont.)

Measures 38-44. The score is in 3/4 time. The piano accompaniment (P.M.) includes chords: F, C7, Dm, Am, Em, and F. The vocal line (F.) includes a triplet of eighth notes in measure 44. The bass line (B.) and middle line (Midy.) are mostly rests.

Example 13 (cont.)

Measures 50-56. The score is in 3/4 time. The piano accompaniment (P.M.) includes chords: Em, Am, Dm, C, G7, Am, E7, and Am. The vocal line (F.) includes a triplet of eighth notes in measure 50 and a triplet of eighth notes in measure 56. The bass line (B.) and middle line (Midy.) are mostly rests.

Example 13 (cont.)

Example 13 (cont.)

These observations are suggestive when viewed from the perspective of recent work on the cognitive psychology of musical improvisation by Ed Sarath. Sarath has posited a model of the improvising musician's mental processes that regards spontaneous creation as arising from "cognitive event cycles" (1996:8–12). Each cognitive event cycle consists of a performer's reception of perceptual data (stemming from both external sounds¹⁵ and the silent inner presence of the theme), and subsequent selection of a strategy for continuing the improvisation. The higher the frequency of these cognitive event cycles, the better able he will be to execute fresh strategies, conceived "in the moment." Conversely, the slower their frequency, the more likely he is to use repetition, or pre-established material, whether it be drawn from his own repertoire of melodic formulas, or from elements of the theme itself.¹⁶ Sarath's model has loose parallels with the remarks of saxophonist Lee Konitz, who has described his own improvisatory process in terms of a series of conceptual "levels" ranging from non-creative replication of a theme, through increasing degrees of embellishment, to "the creation of wholly new melodies" (quoted in Balliett 1996:485). The perspectives of Sarath and Konitz suggest that it may be possible to assign hypothetical "creative levels" to different passages from Reinhardt's solo on "Liza." Repetitive background material may indicate a relatively low creative level—a slow rate of cognitive event cycles, in Sarath's terms. Embellished, or otherwise slightly modified, expressions of the pre-existent melody imply a somewhat greater creative level, and original, spontaneously conceived material of comparative complexity may represent a still higher level of cognitive activity.¹⁷

One can thus view Reinhardt's performance of "Liza" as fluctuating between different creative levels. For instance, after beginning with an eight-measure passage of relatively complex melodic invention, the first instance of background material (mm. 9–12) implies a momentary period of reduced creative activity whose repetitive pitch-content enables Reinhardt to devote more of his mental resources to protentions of the forthcoming foregrounded material that begins at m. 13. The remainder of the improvisation can be interpreted along similar lines. In this particular solo, the frequent recurrence of certain melodic patterns with only minor variations (compare, for example, mm. 19–20 with mm. 35–36, or mm. 41–42 with mm. 49–50) suggests that these may derive from Reinhardt's personal vocabulary of melodic formulas. Alternatively, these sorts of comparatively fixed melodic ideas may be specific to this occasion, and as such may either have been prepared beforehand, or invented in the course of the performance. Irrespective of their actual derivation, their recurrence suggests a creative level somewhat beneath that of non-repeated foregrounded passages, such as the diverse material introduced at the beginning of each chorus'

The musical score for Example 13 (cont.) is presented in two systems. Each system contains a piano (P.M.) staff and a vocal (Midy.) staff. The piano part includes harmonic analysis with chord symbols: C, G7, Dm, Am, Em, F, C7, and Cm. The vocal part features a melodic line with various ornaments and phrasing. The score is divided into two measures, with measure numbers 88 and 94 indicated. The key signature is one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 4/4.

Example 13 (cont.)

bridge (mm. 21, 53, and 85), whose uniqueness implies a more truly spontaneous conceptual origin. Ultimately, these sorts of speculative judgments would be enhanced by a knowledge of the guitarist's customary formulaic vocabulary.

(A significant difference in orientation between Sarath and Konitz ought to be raised. Sarath construes his model of the improvisational process as a value hierarchy: a higher rate of cognitive event cycles implies a greater "creative potential," and is thus regarded as a "creative goal" (1996:8–9). To the contrary, Konitz takes the view that "no one level is more important than any other" (quoted in Balliett 1996:485). The latter position seems more reasonable; conjectures about creative cognition need not be linked to value judgments. Therefore, in the present context, to speak of "higher" or "lower" creative levels carries no further implications as to preferability or worth.)

Reinhardt is reported to have learned the theme "Embraceable You" only a few days prior to recording the solo transcribed in example 14 (Peters 1999:20). Like his solo on "Liza," Reinhardt's improvisation on "Embraceable You" contains relatively few explicit discontinuities. In this performance the guitarist plays an explicit paraphrase of the final phrase of Gershwin's melody at the close of each of his two choruses (mm. 33–35 and 65–67). As in the previous example, these invocations of the improvisation's familiar melodic subject function as a sort of rhetorical punctuation. In addition, "Embraceable You" contains an extended ten-measure digression that begins just prior to the start of the second chorus (m. 35). This repetitive passage, which consists primarily of reiterations of first the pitch E $\flat$ and then C $\sharp$, belongs to the conceptual "background"; it bears little direct resemblance to the neighboring regions, and has the effect of intensifying the music's groove.

Somewhat more tenuous is the proposition that the C–D–E $\flat$ scale-segments at the beginning of Reinhardt's first chorus, and in several other locations, are subtle melodic paraphrases. These rhythmic diminutions of the melody's familiar initial ascending gesture ("Embrace me") are entirely integrated into the surrounding material, and not at all highlighted by disjunct contrasts. However, the guitarist only employs them in approximately the same locations as the passages from Gershwin's melody to which they bear a resemblance (most explicitly toward the beginning of the solo); this is the primary basis for the proposed reading.¹⁸

Finally, it should be acknowledged that example 14, like the previous example, assigns a substantial proportion of the solo to the conceptual "foreground," and that, again, knowledge of Reinhardt's habitual melodic formulas would provide a context for determining how he integrates pre-existent (i.e., either the original melody or his own formulas) and

Example 14: "Embraceable You" (1946). *EMBRACEABLE YOU*, by George Gershwin and Ira Gershwin. © 1930 (Renewed) WB Music Corp. All Rights Reserved. Used by Permission, WARNER BROS. PUBLICATIONS U.S. INC., Miami, FL 33014.

Example 14 (cont.)

Example 14 (cont.)

Example 14 (cont.)

Example 14 (cont.)

The musical score for 'The Rose Tree' is presented in a system of eight staves. The top four staves are for vocal parts: Soprano (S), Alto (A), Tenor (T), and Bass (B). The bottom four staves are for piano accompaniment: Right Hand (RH) and Left Hand (LH). The key signature is B-flat major (two flats), and the time signature is 4/4. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and accidentals. Chord symbols (Bb, F7, Cm, Bb7) are placed below the piano staves. The system is numbered 42 at the beginning and 47 at the end.

62

P.M. F. Midy. B.

G7 Cm F7 Fm Bb7 Eb Bb7

Example 14 (cont.)

57

P.M. F. Midy. B.

Fm Bb Eb Eb7 Ab

52

P.M. F. Midy. B.

Bb7 Eb Eb° Fm Bb

Example 14 (cont.)

spontaneously conceived material. If Reinhardt's solo on "Embraceable You" is viewed from the perspective suggested by Sarath and Konitz, one can speculate that the improvisation begins at a creative level which fluctuates between fragmentary expressions of Gershwin's melody and contributions of the guitarist's own. Then, midway through the solo, the performer takes a short "break"—a period of reduced creative activity which is manifested by the "background" passage that begins his second chorus. This enables him to prepare for another burst of higher level cognitive activity, which predominates for the remainder of the solo.

This paper has suggested that the radically discontinuous character of Reinhardt's music need not represent solely a methodological obstacle to be either surmounted or circumvented, but may be worth considering in and of itself. (Conversely, questions regarding structural unity have been largely bypassed.¹⁹) But the above framework's applicability to the work of other jazz improvisers is not self-evident. While it would be all too easy to carry out the sort of "dissection" performed here upon "Liza" and "Embraceable You" on many different improvised jazz solos by other musicians, this seems liable to lead to highly arbitrary parsings. In the final pair of examples, the interpretation of discontinuities as signaling the performer's mental shifts of attention between "foreground" improvisation, melodic paraphrases, and repetitive "background" patterns can only be justified on the grounds that one finds, elsewhere in Reinhardt's oeuvre, much more clear-cut evidence pointing to a tendency to "think this way."

One reason why this evidence readily lends itself to this interpretation is that the guitar, like all rhythm-section instruments, is conventionally played in very different ways at different times—for instance depending on whether the performer is soloing (playing single-note lines) or accompanying (strumming chords)—and these associations persist in other contexts. But improvised discontinuities that imply a process of shifting between different psychological strata can be associated with any instrument. In addition to Berliner's account, cited above, of horn players who periodically play call-and-response-type figures "with themselves," the critic Gary Giddins has noted Louis Armstrong's ability to create an "illusion of self-accompaniment" through the use of obbligato-like interpolations while singing (Giddins 1988:127). And the tenor saxophonist Sonny Rollins has stated intriguingly, "There are times when I feel like a one-man orchestra, where I had to be my own rhythm section and all the other parts of the band" (quoted in Nisenson 2000:116). These examples raise the possibility that Reinhardt's specific uses of musical discontinuity may not be unique to him alone, and that the framework set forth here may yet have broader applications.

Appendix: Discography

Title	Matrix No.	Recording Date	Currently Available Release†
"Body and Soul" (Green-Heyman)	CL 6716-1	May 31, 1938	<i>Django With His American Friends</i> (DRG 8493)
"Charleston" (Mack-Johnson)	OLA 1703-1	April 21, 1937	<i>The Complete Django Reinhardt and Quintet of the Hot Club of France Swing/HMV Sessions, 1936-1948</i> (Mosaic MD6-190)
"Embraceable You" (Gershwin-Gershwin)	OEF 27-1	January 31, 1946	<i>The Complete Django Reinhardt . . .</i> (Mosaic MD6-190)
"H.C.Q. Strut" (Reinhardt-Grappelli)	DR 3862-1	August 25, 1939	<i>Parisian Swing: Django Reinhardt and Stéphane Grappelli with the Quintet of the Hot Club of France</i> (AVID AMSC 648)
"I've Had My Moments" (Kahn-Donaldson)	P 77538	September, 1935	<i>Django Reinhardt, Quintet of the Hot Club of France: First Recordings!</i> (Prestige OJCCD-1895-2 (P-7614))
"Japanese Sandman" (Whiting-Egan)	OLA 1889-1	July 7, 1937	<i>Django With His American Friends</i> (DRG 8493)
"Jeepers Creepers" (Warren-Mercer)	CA 4968-1/ 211PP	March 21, 1939	<i>Parisian Swing . . .</i> (AVID AMSC 648)
"Liza" (Gershwin)	DR 10029-1	February 1, 1946	<i>Django Reinhardt and Stéphane Grappelli with the Quintet of the Hot Club of France: Souvenirs</i> (London 820 591-2)
"Love's Melody" (Reinhardt)	DR 10026-1	February 1, 1946	<i>Django Reinhardt and Stéphane Grappelli . . .</i> (London 820 591-2)
"Marie" (Berlin)	CW 38	Jan./Feb., 1949	<i>Djangology '49</i> (Bluebird 9988-2-RB)
"The Sheik of Araby" (Smith-Wheeler-Snyder)	OLA 1837-1	April 27, 1937	<i>The Complete Django Reinhardt . . .</i> (Mosaic MD6-190)
"Solid Old Man" (Stewart)	OSW 67-1	April 5, 1939	<i>Django With His American Friends</i> (DRG 8493)
"St. Louis Blues" (Handy)	OLA 1952-1	September 9, 1937	<i>The Complete Django Reinhardt . . .</i> (Mosaic MD6-190)

† Many tracks are available on other compilations in addition to those listed here.

Notes

* I would like to thank Ramon Sayendra, Patrick McCreless, Robert P. Morgan, and Michael Friedmann for their comments on earlier drafts of this paper. A version was presented at the Annual Meeting of the Society for Music Theory in Philadelphia, Penn., November 2001.

1. For example, clarinetist Pee Wee Russell states, "I usually think about four bars ahead what I'm going to play"; flugelhorn player Art Farmer observes "I rarely know what I'm going to do in a solo more than a measure or two ahead"; and tenor saxophonist Warne Marsh claims "My mind works ahead a bar or two" (Balliett 1996:138, 447, 492).

2. For instance, vibraphonist Milt Jackson attests that "I keep the melody in mind. I always remember the melody and then I have something to fall back on when I get lost" (Balliett 1996:308). Pianist Hank Jones states that "you think about the chord pattern—not each chord—and you think about the melody" (Balliett 2000b:837).

3. One could, of course, add to this list by including phenomena such as the "moment form" codified in the writings of Karlheinz Stockhausen (for a summary, see Kramer 1978), or various postmodern "collage" techniques. Even the Romantic (or modernist) notion of organicism can be conceived in dialectical terms, for example, as the synthesis of contrasting ideas (see Cherlin 2000).

4. On all but three of the recordings discussed in this essay Reinhardt is accompanied by members of the Quintet of the Hot Club of France. Personnel varies, but the Quintet's rhythm section always consists of two guitars and a double bass. The three exceptions are the previously mentioned performance of "Solid Old Man," accompanied by Billy Taylor (bass) and Barney Bigard (drums); "Japanese Sandman," accompanied by Dick Fullbright (bass) and Bill Beason (drums); and "Marie," accompanied by Gianni Safred (piano), Carlo Recori (bass), and Aurelio de Carolis (drums).

5. On several of Reinhardt's other recordings, analogous interchanges occur between two different instruments. For instance, on "Studio 24" (April 16, 1942; matrix 16192) Reinhardt interpolates guitar "fills" between melodic phrases played by pianist Ivon de Bie.

6. In fact, there are remarkably few recordings on which Reinhardt plays, in recognizable form, a melody that is not his own for a period of more than about four measures without interruption.

7. A strict, practically viable definition of melodic paraphrase in jazz improvisation has eluded jazz scholars for reasons illustrated by example 5: performers often utilize paraphrase very freely (for a brief discussion of this issue, see Williams 1997–98). For instance, Harker (1999:58ff) cites Louis Armstrong's diminishing differentiation between melodic paraphrases and arpeggiated, harmonically-oriented improvised melodies as a feature of the trumpeter's stylistic evolution during the mid-to-late 1920s.

8. This term is used by Berliner (1994:626 and *passim*).

9. Musical accompaniments, in a variety of genres, are often characterized by the repetition of short musical units. In the terminology of Gestalt psychology,

repetitive accompaniments constitute a "ground" against which a listener can individuate a foregrounded melodic "figure."

10. I should emphasize that in this paper the terms "foreground" and "background" ought not be confused with the same terms as used in Schenkerian theory.

11. Here it should be acknowledged that the analytical perspective taken in this paper generally privileges the parameter of pitch above rhythm. That is, passages of music are often contrasted on the basis of differing pitch-complexity, even though they may not be so readily distinguished with respect to rhythm (or, for that matter, timbre, dynamics, and so forth). This bias is clearly open to question.

12. Though it is difficult to tell conclusively from the recording, I suspect that both of these passages are actually played by alternating three strokes on an open string with three stopped notes on the adjacent lower string.

13. I interpret this as a "background" figure because of its direct connection with the theme's harmonic model (specifically, its bass progression), though it clearly does not exhibit the sort of ostinato-like figuration that I have suggested is more typical of background material in Reinhardt's music.

14. Like many of this article's speculations, this claim is clearly not verifiable. Still, like my conjectures that Reinhardt may sustain a mental image of a theme's melody and harmonic structure while improvising, it is somewhat corroborated by the accounts of other performers. For instance, in a masterclass at the University of New Hampshire, Durham, in the spring of 1992, the jazz pianist John Bunch commented that, when playing up-tempo unaccompanied improvisations, he would often imagine a drummer accompanying him. This is akin to the "repetitive rhythmic ostinato" about which I hypothesize here, though of course a drum accompaniment, unlike a guitar's, lacks pitch (and, unlike Bunch, Reinhardt is playing with accompaniment).

15. "External sounds" can include the preceding improvised melody, as well as the contributions of other members of the ensemble, or even, more rarely, sounds originating outside of the ensemble altogether. The latter sorts of interactive phenomena (which are fundamental to Monson 1996) are not addressed in this paper. Indeed, in comparison to the post-World War II jazz styles that are Monson's primary focus, Reinhardt's Swing Era improvisations (particularly those with the Quintet of the Hot Club of France) appear to involve far less musical interaction of an explicit nature.

16. This statement represents my own oversimplification of Sarath's account; it is conceivable that a repetitive passage might well indicate a higher rate of cognitive event cycles, should the performer constantly be evading a continuation that would, in context, be a more routine possibility (see Sarath 1996:11).

17. Again, this general hypothesis is drawn only loosely from both Sarath's detailed framework and Konitz's far briefer, and comparatively metaphorical, remarks.

18. Some minor additional observations: the figure in m. 16 that introduces a new four-measure unit is here classified as a structural marker due to its similarity with other such figures that Reinhardt sometimes employed when accompanying others, such as can be heard on "Echoes of France," from the same recording

session (January 31, 1946; matrix OEF 28-1). Also, the figure in m. 28 is assigned to the conceptual background solely because of its soft dynamic level, such that it suggests an embellished "echo" of the preceding B $\flat$ -E $\flat$ motive that invokes the original melody.

19. A close analysis of Reinhardt's improvisations that focused on issues of structural unity might well yield interesting insights, but such questions have (intentionally) not been a concern of this article.

References

- Balliett, Whitney. 1996. *American Musicians II: Seventy-two Portraits in Jazz*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- . 2000a. Seeing Music. *New Yorker* (September 11): 98–100. Reprinted in Balliett (2000b:854–58).
- . 2000b. *Collected Works: A Journal of Jazz, 1954–2000*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Berliner, Paul. 1994. *Thinking in Jazz: The Infinite Art of Improvisation*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Block, Steven. 1990. Pitch-Class Transformation in Free Jazz. *Music Theory Spectrum* 12: 181–202.
- Cherlin, Michael. 2000. Dialectical Opposition in Schoenberg's Music and Thought. *Music Theory Spectrum* 22: 157–76.
- Cone, Edward T. 1989. Stravinsky: The Progress of a Method. In *Music: A View from Delft: Selected Essays*, edited by Robert P. Morgan, 293–301. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Floyd, Samuel A., Jr. 1995. *The Power of Black Music: Interpreting Its History from Africa to the United States*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Giddins, Gary. 1988. *Satchmo*. New York: Dolphin.
- Gushee, Lawrence. 1981. Lester Young's "Shoeshine Boy." In *Report of the Twelfth Congress, Berkeley 1977*, International Musicological Society. Edited by Daniel Heartz and Bonnie Wade, 151–69. Kassel: Bärenreiter.
- Harker, Brian. 1999. "Telling a Story": Louis Armstrong and Coherence in Early Jazz. *Current Musicology*, no. 63: 46–83.
- Hartman, Charles O. 1991. *Jazz Text: Voice and Improvisation in Poetry, Jazz, and Song*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Hodeir, André. 1956. *Jazz: Its Evolution and Essence*. Translated by David Noakes. New York: Grove Press.
- . 1962 *Toward Jazz*. Translated by Noel Burch. New York: Grove Press.
- Kernfeld, Barry. 1981. *Adderley, Coltrane, and Davis at the Twilight of Bebop: The Search for Melodic Coherence (1958–59)*. Ph.D. diss., Cornell University.
- . 1995. *What to Listen For in Jazz*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press.
- Kramer, Jonathan. 1978. Moment Form in Twentieth-Century Music. *Musical Quarterly* 64: 177–94.
- Larson, Steve. 1998. Schenkerian Analysis of Modern Jazz. *Music Theory Spectrum* 20: 209–41.
- . 1999. Swing and Motive in Three Performances by Oscar Peterson. *Journal of Music Theory* 43: 283–314.
- Martin, Henry. 1996. *Charlie Parker and Thematic Improvisation*. Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press.
- Monson, Ingrid. 1996. *Saying Something: Jazz Improvisation and Interaction*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Nisenson, Eric. 2000. *Open Sky: Sonny Rollins and His World of Improvisation*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Peters, Mike. 1999. Liner notes to *The Complete Django Reinhardt and Quintet of the Hot Club of France Suing/HMV Sessions, 1936–1948*. Mosaic MD6-190.
- Sarath, Ed. 1996. A New Look at Improvisation. *Journal of Music Theory* 40: 1–38.
- Schuller, Gunther. 1958. Sonny Rollins and the Challenge of Thematic Improvisation. *Jazz Review* (November): 6–11. Reprinted in *Musings: The Musical Worlds of Gunther Schuller* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 86–97.
- . 1989. *The Swing Era: The Development of Jazz, 1930–1945*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Taruskin, Richard. 1996. *Stravinsky and the Russian Traditions: A Biography of the Works Through Mavra*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Tomlinson, Gary. 1992. Cultural Dialogics and Jazz: A White Historian Signifies. In *Disciplining Music*, edited by Katherine Bergeron and Philip V. Bohlman, 64–94. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Williams, J. Kent. 1997–98. Authors' Responses to Forte's Questions. *Annual Review of Jazz Studies* 9: 104–5.
- Walser, Robert. 1995. Out of Notes: Signification, Interpretation, and the Problem of Miles Davis. In *Jazz Among the Discourses*, edited by Krin Gabbard, 165–88. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press.