Everyone's music? Explorations of the democratic ideal in jazz and improvised music

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Background

"Give a big hand to the Instant Composers Pool! Isn't this the definition of a democratic ensemble!" This was the spontaneous and enthusiastic response by emcee John Cavanagh after a joint concert by the improvising orchestras Instant Composers Pool (ICP) and Glasgow Improvisers Orchestra during the eleventh GIOfest in December 2018 (Glasgow), where both of the authors participated as performers.

It was clear given the excitement that accompanied Cavanagh's characterisation of ICP as "democratic", that the use of the word was positively charged. His utterance was an example of a common narrative about jazz and improvised music, illustrated by the fact that an internet search on the keywords "democracy+jazz" gave 11 million hits. Such narratives often construct practices of jazz and improvised music as collaboratively oriented by nature and thus inherently democratic.

However, contrasting stories exist, such as a collaboration between the two jazz pianists Mary Lou Williams and Cecil Taylor in a concert called *Embraced,* that took place in 1977 in Carnegie Hall (New York), accounted for by Ben Givan (2018). The event developed into open conflicts and tensions between the two, displayed through their performance.[1] Givan notes that the meeting between Taylor and Williams "serves as a salutary reminder that jazz's improvisational aesthetics do not inevitably yield the idealized democratic collaboration or egalitarian sociability that many of the music's proponents and advocates have claimed." (p. 399)

While Givan here confirms the prevalence of democratic ideals in jazz and improvised music, the quote warrants a more nuanced investigation of these ideals. Thus, the main purpose of this chapter is to contribute to a critical discussion of the democratic ideals in

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1   This event will be referred to later in our chapter.

jazz and improvised music, by investigating notions of freedom, power, inclusion and exclusion within current performance practices. To exemplify such notions, we give accounts of four different cases from within such practices. These cases are chosen because they all, in different ways, highlight different democratic ideals within their practice, while simultaneously illustrate apparent tensions between such ideals. For the sake of argument, we draw on a theoretical framework where we set out "Socratic" and "Deweyan" notions of and reactions towards democracy.

It should be noted that we discuss jazz and improvised music, and not just jazz. The word "jazz" holds a contested and troublesome etymology, and histories replete with apocrypha. Ted Gioia points out that the oft-repeated (and oft-accepted) story of jazz being "born in the brothel houses" is more akin to sensationalism (Gioia, 2011, p. 29). Instead, historical accounts point to the roles of the church, the popularity of brass bands (Gioia, 2011, p. 29), early jazz musicians' interests in opera, orchestral and chamber music, as well as rags, marches, and parlour music (Lomax, Gushee & Morton 2001, pp. 141–50). Regardless, stories of the "low" nature of jazz remained (Shipton, 2004, pp. 1–3). Various attempts to reframe this particular U.S. black diasporic music-making have been made; such as using the term Great Black Music (Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians n.d.), or the hashtag #BAM (Black American Music), created by trumpeter Nicholas Payton, after a blog post declaring the word jazz as evidence of a colonialist mentality (Payton, 2011). In Britain and Norway, there have been similar turns away from the word, with younger musicians such as Moses Boyd focusing on the mixture of styles within his music (Murray, 2017); the improvising duo Black Top describing their music as Archaic Nubian Step Dub (Edwards, 2014); and Jan Garbarek demarcating the end of jazz at around 1965 (The Norwegian American, 2009). We prefer to use the term jazz to stay connected to the genre's historical connotations, while keeping an awareness of its problematic dimensions. When we use "jazz and improvised music", we point to the connections that jazz has to improvising, while respecting those musicians who improvise, but do not profess a relationship to jazz practices.

Finally, with regard to the theme of this volume; '*The world into music education*', we aim at discussing the implications narratives in performance practices may have for higher jazz education (henceforth HJE). We address the potential reproduction of such narratives in HJE and potential consequences for perceived curriculum for students.

We structure the chapter in the following way: First, we give a brief outline of the major tenets in the views of Socrates and Dewey, contextualised by pointing to the contemporary circumstances they were living under and that may have informed their positions. Second, we

will provide a context for the discussion by giving examples of how democracy is addressed within literature on music education, jazz, and improvisation, respectively, with an emphasis on educational perspectives. Third, we present our four examples from performance practices within jazz and improvised music, before we finally discuss what these examples may contribute to understanding and developing democracy in music education.

Democracy from Socratic and Deweyan positions

The word *democracy* generally points to ways of governing and exercising power, and participating in society. In this section, we will examine the viewpoints of two philosophers whose ideas have occupied a prominent space in the discourse around democracy and education, Socrates (470–399 BC) and John Dewey (1859–1952), respectively.

When considering the genesis of Western democracy, the common starting point is the democracy of Athens, which was critiqued by Socrates in Plato's *The Republic*. Socrates defined the ideal state as one ruled through justice, knowledge, temperance and wisdom. These virtues were only possessed by a few people, and so an elite class of "philosopher-kings" were required. On the other hand, democracy was cast as an unjust form of government. For democracies, people remained lawful, but were driven by both necessary desires (such as eating to live, which is spiritual) and unnecessary desires (such as eating caviar every day, which would be appetitive); these desires were reasoned to have equal weight, and could be held by anyone of any status. This meant that anyone could do or be whatever they wanted (within the rule of law), and rulers did not need to be wise or show prowess in battle (Plato, n.d.). To Socrates, the ability to desire whatever you want (no matter your status) was one of the defining aspects of democracy. This desire for freedom, to do whatever one wanted, would eventually descend into tyranny, as desire moved towards lust. It is worth remembering that this formulation was heavily influenced by Plato's experiences of Athenian democracy and its role in the trial against Socrates. Socrates was accused of corrupting the minds of Athenian youth, and of impiety (Xenophon, I); his constant questioning of officials and leaders had led to the accusation and charge of death. Socrates' own political leanings were towards the oligarchies that ruled Sparta and Crete (Xenophon, IV; Plato, 350 BCE). In particular, Socrates' associations with Sparta (Xenophon, IV:4) were highly problematic for Athens, which had an amnesty with the other city-state and was promoting democracy as a better governing system. Socrates' philosophical project was to induce uncertainty within a supposedly settled political state.

Plato went on to examine politics in other texts, most notably in *The Statesman*; and his student Aristotle critiqued those works in his *Politics*. It is predominantly from *Politics* that the modern conceptions of democracy have been influenced; Aristotle's positioning of democracy as the *least harmful* form of government has over time evolved into many Western societies considering it to be the best. The promotion of democracy has been a major project in the development of educational systems in the Western world. The U.S. philosopher John Dewey wrote several texts centred around the use of education as an *instrument* to foster democracy (Anderson, 2005), and specifically the form of democracy that had formed in the United States. Dewey's educational works were written around the occurrences of both World Wars, and his views on war and the United States' progress in the world at those times reflected his instrumentalism. Although Dewey was critical of the First World War, he saw that the United States could "… welcome whatever revelations of our stupidity and carelessness it brings with it and set about the institution of a more manly and more responsible faith in progress than that in which we have indulged in the past" (Dewey, 1916, p. 312). The war was thus an opportunity to reassess U.S. society, and to stabilize it through education (Snelgrove, 2008). Citizens could develop the habits and dispositions to achieve their fullest potential and participate actively within society (Dewey, 1997 [1916]); and this would ensure obedience to government without the imposition of an external authority (Boone, 2008). But the financial and human cost of the war drove the United States towards a more entrenched isolationist position, and this was a great disappointment to Dewey (Kaiser, 2009; Snelgrove, 2008).

At the beginning of the Second World War, Dewey again sought to advance education as an instrument for democracy. In an essay from 1939 he proposed "creative democracy" as a way of life for individuals, building on an optimistic faith in human nature and in the value of people working together for a better society. "That belief […] means faith in the potentialities of human nature as that nature is exhibited in every human being irrespective of race, color, sex, birth and family, of material or cultural wealth" (Dewey, 1939, p. 2). What the task involves, Dewey claims, "is forever that of creation of a freer and more humane experience in which all share and to which all contribute" (1939, p. 4). Here, Dewey connects democracy to ideals of equity, mutual respect, and freedom on a personal and interpersonal level. The process of realising these ideals is a continuous, active, reciprocal, creative and collaborative one – hence, "a way of life". It is striking that, in the face of an uncertain world, Dewey's main focus was the promotion of democracy to effect a change towards order.

Due to limited space in this chapter, it is difficult to provide full nuance for each of the philosophers' viewpoints. When we position them against each other, it is with the rhetorical purpose to put ideals of democracy in relief by the use of contrast. Dewey's context was

an uncertain world at the beginning of both world wars, and he lived in a country with a high degree of inequity. Thus, his project was to *develop tools for stability* in an uncertain world. Socrates, on the other hand, questioned the divine authority of the Athenian democracy, and aimed to *induce uncertainty and to question a settled state.* Furthermore, while Dewey highlights individual freedom as an ideal state, albeit within the social context of all humans being equally free, Socrates sees individual freedom as opening the gateway to unnecessary desires.

Democracy and music education

With the strong influence of perhaps particularly Dewey on educational philosophy, democracy has been treated as one of the most central purposes of schooling, from his seminal work *Democracy and Education* (Dewey, 1997 [1916]), to recent educational work (see Biesta, 2011). Benedict, Schmidt, Spruce and Woodford (2015) tie democracy to the currently pressing issue of social inclusion, and in their preface to The Oxford Handbook of Social Justice in Music Education, they state:

> The alleviation of inequity, powerlessness, and discrimination has long been the goal, although … the pursuit of social justice in music education implies more than just recognition of difference and allowing for greater diversity and inclusivity in the classroom and other educational spaces. Social justice is a complicated endeavour involving, among other things, adjudication of conflicting values and interests, political action, and a concern for the welfare of the public, but especially of those who have been marginalized or oppressed. (p. xi)

We wish to frame the way democracy in music education has been addressed in mainly two ways. One perspective is how music education practices can become more democratic by raising the question about which genres are included and which are excluded. This has been an important strand in research on informal music learning practices, particularly within popular music (Kallio & Väkevä, 2017). Discourses that justify the inclusion of popular music in music education maintain that a music education that privileges Western classical music is undemocratic in its exclusion of other genres. Inclusion of popular music is seen as particularly important since it is often taken to represent young people's own music culture, frame of reference, and thus, their musical identity. Therefore, excluding "their music" means to exclude them. Although Kallio and Väkevä (2017) argue that this assumption may be seen as essentialising youth culture and problematic in a growing multicultural society, the

main point for our purposes is to note how a quest for a more democratic music education rests on arguments about *inclusion* of different music experiences and identities (Fautley & Daubney, 2018), with an emphasis on the experiences students bring with them from the 'world outside school'. We wish to frame this perspective as 'developing music education through democracy'.

The second perspective is when questions are raised to whether certain music making practices may hold particular affordances for helping students learn about democratic values (Karlsen, 2014), and when inclusion of such practices in education is justified on this basis. Again, popular music has commonly been suggested as a genre with inherent qualities that nurture democratic values (Kallio & Väkevä, 2017). According to Allsup (2004), popular culture is associated with cooperation, collaboration and a communal experience, which he claims are central democratic values. Thus, when popular music is used in school, it holds possibilities for taking a student-centred approach and to foster democratic participation. However, suggesting that a particular musical genre inherently affords more democratic opportunities than others, is a problematic position. This view is often presented as a critique of the historical hegemony of Western classical music, but risks instead of replacing one hegemony with another. Other lines of research are less concerned with highlighting which specific kinds of musics that have democratic affordances, and emphasise instead representations of diversity and pluralism in curriculum (Karlsen, 2014; Mantie & Tucker, 2012). This focus may lead to a democratic experience for the individual, such as when Karlsen (2014), drawing on Mouffe (1992, in Karlsen 2014) claims that experiencing democracy in the music classroom "... may happen through giving students opportunities to experience different ways of being; to re-narrate and re-negotiate the self; [and] to explore different possibilities of action …" (Karlsen, 2014, p. 433).

Nevertheless, music education's affordance for social democratic values is salient in the literature. Juntonen, Karlsen, Kuoppamäki, Laes and Muhonen (2014) argue that one of the strengths of music education is to contribute to sustaining and developing culture, and developing identity and social cohesion (p. 252), a goal that reminds us of Dewey's search for tools for creating stability. A seemingly contrasting goal is presented by Hess (2014), whose study of four Canadian elementary music educators addresses potential characteristics of a radical music pedagogy suited for promoting social *change* in terms of anti-colonialism, anti-racism and feminism. This resonates strongly with Socrates' project to unsettle the established. In a similar vein as Hess' objective of contributing to social change, Westerlund and Partti (2018) present an important reminder when stating that "... educational development, cultural change, and inclusion are not a privilege granted only to the West and North" (p. 543). Their study gives an account of how working toward the

global ideal of gender inclusion may require radical activism in a Kathmandu village, even if such activism may counter the right of an ethnic group to practice and preserve their own distinctive culture. Choi (2007) describes how a gradual democratic development on Korea, involving an increased "social and cultural stream … toward more international cooperation that recognized and respected every culture" (Choi, 2007, p.145), led to a more multicultural Korean music education. The emphasis on using music to expose students to experiences of inclusion, identity development, pluralism and diversity, social cohesion or social change, may, in our second perspective, be framed as an instrumentalism similar to a Deweyan position: "developing democracy through music education".

Democracy, jazz and improvisation

One of the clearest examples of attempts of connecting jazz to an ideology of democracy, is the following excerpt from a U.S. jazz education resource for children:

> American democracy was designed from the very beginning around the idea of personal freedom. These key phrases from early American history— "We the People," "E Pluribus Unum" and "A More Perfect Union"—have served as important themes for our nation since its founding. … These ideas are relevant to the world of jazz as well: a group of diverse musicians negotiating in time to create a collective expression that reflects the unique personalities and values of each individual for the good of everyone. The traditions of experimentation and improvisation in jazz resemble the innovative approach of America's democracy in placing so much faith in its people and in striving to invent something new, different, and perhaps, even better. (Poindexter, 2017, p. 7)

This quote contains ideas that stem from Dewey's philosophical works on education and democracy. The desired connection between "democracy as a way of life" (Dewey's creative democracy) and "jazz as a form of democracy" (the quote above) has been used in a number of projects in the U.S. One of the earliest projects was funded by the U.S. State Department itself in 1956. Using Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, Dave Brubeck, and Dizzy Gillespie, the Jazz Ambassadors scheme toured several countries to combat criticism from the Soviet Union about U.S. racial tension and violence. It also served the agenda to promote U.S.-style democracy, using the currency of the music and the popularity of the musicians (*The Jazz Ambassadors*, 2018). The frequent use of jazz as an instrument to promote a democratic ideal echoes Dewey's efforts to use education for the same purpose, as well as aiding a narrative

that promoted a cohesive U.S. national identity. In practice, the presentation of the ideal ran contrary to the experiences of oppression and inequality felt by the black musicians in the United States. Dizzy Gillespie recounted that the State Department had wanted to brief him on what to say before a performance, but he refused (Perrigo, 2017). Armstrong and Brubeck collaborated on a satirical musical called *The Real Ambassadors,* which highlighted the irony of the musicians' status in the U.S. while being asked to expound on the virtues of U.S. equality and democracy (*The Jazz Ambassadors*, 2018).

Improvisation has been framed as particularly suited in music education for promoting what are seen as democratic values, such as equality, equity, autonomy, and the questioning of authorities (Allsup, 2004; Wright & Kanellopoulos, 2010). Within music education research, it has been claimed that since improvising can be accessed by anyone regardless of level, it has the inherent quality of being socially inclusive, a site where participants learn to negotiate and tolerate difference, along with an egalitarian view on participation (MacDonald, Wilson & Miell, 2011; Sawyer, 2007). The democratic ideal is also reinforced by pointing to how improvisation activity both affords individual freedom to express a personal voice, and balances out individual and collective interests (Willox, Heble, Jackson, Walker & Waterman, 2011). Improvising gives distributed control and thus agency to each participant (Johansen, 2014; Johansen, Holdhus, Larsson & MacGlone, 2019; Rose & MacDonald, 2016).

Allsup (2004) ties the democratic potential in popular music directly to its common practice of improvising to create music. Wright and Kanellopoulos (2010) argue for including free improvisation in music teacher education, for its inherent qualities in a democratic sense:

> … improvisation, as a particular type of informal music learning process, has an important role to play in fostering the qualities required of teachers to work with informal pedagogies in music education. Furthermore, we would suggest that such musical experiences might gradually lead to the development of a critical perspective on both music education theories and practices. Improvisation might emerge as a moment and a practice of rupture with linearity of progress … (p. 71)

The authors here connect free improvisation to critical pedagogy, in the sense that improvisation presupposes mutual respect between teacher and student, and for its particular potential to develop student autonomy. Further, they suggest that free improvisation is based on the ability to set rules through interaction 'and not through reference to some universal musical norm' (p. 80). Therefore, using free improvisation as a core content in music education 'is one way in which music education might be linked to emancipation' (p. 80).

However, as we pointed out in the introduction, there are counter-perspectives to take into account. Several studies show that jazz and improvised music practices may not be as collectively oriented nor promoting individual agency and inclusion to the degree that the democratic ideal implies. Music education scholar Jennie Henley recalls an episode where she as an 18-year-old participated in a multicultural music project based on improvisation, resulting in her walking out of the room thinking she would never want to improvise again, and feeling "like a complete idiot because [she] couldn't improvise" (Henley, 2018, n.p.). Henley argues that since improvisation activity can clearly be both negatively transformative as well as positively, it is not the music per se that contains this power but the pedagogy and/or the socio-cultural environment. For example, MacGlone (2019) showed how tools for improvisation taught to preschool children could be used by some children to exclude or create hierarchies among other children in the group. Turning to jazz, the Norwegian sociologist Trine Annfelt (2003) found that narratives about the ideal jazz musician corresponded with masculine stereotypes featuring competitive individuality, risk-taking and independence. She and other scholars claim that gendered discourses create a masculine hegemony within jazz and improvised music, which excludes women from identifying as jazz musicians, and thus from participating in jazz and improvised music practices (Tucker, 1998; Annfelt, 2003; Oliveros, 2004; Macdonald & Wilson, 2006). Dana Reason Myers (2002) noted that "the insufficient documentation and dissemination of the work of experimental women inevitably leads to the perception that women are simply not part of the field of experimental improvisation" (p. 2). Myers indicated that the formation of canons within improvised music are "co-created" by musicians, scholars, festival and concert programmers, and the general media (p. 12); and that the cumulative effect of these agents in forming male-dominated canons contributed to what Myers termed "the myth of absence". Myers contends that "musical articulations created by women improvisors are not always familiar, welcomed, or identified with by other colleagues (both male and female)", and that this relative invisibility was perpetuated by lack of coverage in media or scholarly discourse (p. 80). McKeage (2014) found that a lack of female role models was a major source for why female jazz students did not think of jazz performance as a career aspiration. Tucker (2004) reiterates that narratives about experiences of the jazz community from female perspectives often contain stories of exclusion and marginalization, for example when female musicians "were not asked to be in the records of the men with whom they worked and jammed" (p. 244). Stereotyping of women in jazz has been addressed as another reason for why women choose to not pursue a jazz performance career (Gould 1992), such as when stereotype threat (the fear of confirming a negative stereotype) leads to withdrawal from performing situations and gaining experience (Wehr, 2015), and this leads to lack of self-efficacy (Wehr, 2015).

Thus, it is clear that ideals of social inclusion, equity and collaboration should not be taken for granted as naturalised qualities of jazz and improvised music. In the following four cases, we explore how democratic ideals are discursively reproduced and whether a quest for a democratic "flat structure" can reveal tensions between musicians, and musicians and audiences: tensions which paradoxically could engender situations of alienation, exclusivity, and confrontation.

Four cases: scrutinising democratic ideals in jazz and improvised music

As we saw in the previous section, a focus on inclusion of musical diversity in music education research has led to a shift in emphasis from learning in formal contexts to informal ones. This emphasis has largely involved looking at professional musicians' learning trajectories 'outside school' (see Berliner, 1994; Green, 2002), and how social configurations and cultural value systems from professional performance practices for which these musicians have aspired have shaped these trajectories. Therefore, when scholars make the case for recontextualising performance practices in music education for the purpose of strengthening democracy and participation in communities of practices 'outside school', it is important to take a closer look at the ideologies such practices perpetuate.

In this section we will briefly present four cases of performers in practices of jazz and improvised music, either with the performer as the primary source, or through second-hand sources. These are: the Norwegian singer Sidsel Endresen; the Canadian sound-singer Paul Dutton as presented in a paper written by Chris Tonelli (and in this case presentation, we treat the interpretive voice of the author as the main case); the British drummer Eddie Prévost; and the duo performance with U.S. pianists Mary Lou Williams and Cecil Taylor. We have selected the cases for the ways they present themselves as proponents for ideals relevant for a discussion of democracy, such as equal participation, inclusion or exclusion of voices or expressions, and freedom. For all of the four cases we have further found tensions, inconsistencies or discrepancies connected to these ideals, each in their different way. Therefore, the cases serve as looking glasses for investigating negations of the democratic ideals in jazz and improvised music. Not the least, three of the four cases are directly or indirectly connected to music education, in the sense that Endresen, Prévost, Williams, and Taylor have or have had teaching practices or created educational tools.

Sidsel Endresen: trust and the total democracy

Sidsel Endresen is a Norwegian vocalist, composer and lyricist, and has been a significant voice on the Norwegian and international music scenes for more than 35 years. She is considered a central performer and trendsetter within vocal improvised music. For the last fifteen years she has worked within free improvisation. She currently holds a position as a professor at the Norwegian Academy of Music. Here, she has taught jazz vocals since 1993, and contributed in establishing a mandatory, genre-free improvisation course.

In an interview for a master's thesis in 2009, Endresen expresses her view on improvised music as

> a very democratic music, a feature that has appealed to me all the way. That you create the potential guidelines together, and that this to a very large degree is about trust. You have to trust the ones you play with and that is a musical climate I prefer over all others. … The closest I get to a sort of overarching idea or objective for working with improvised music is about the total democracy. (Berge, 2009, p. 46; our translation from Norwegian)

The notion of freedom is commonly connected to democracy (at least in a Deweyan sense), and in an interview from July 2014 with the Norwegian newspaper Aftenposten, Endresen explains her notion of freedom in improvised music:

> I have one musical rule, and that is that there are no taboos. Even free improvisation is full of conventions, you're not supposed to play pure melodies, or enter rhythmical patterns. But that is a pity, because the world is tonal and rhythmical. (Ørstavik, 2014; our translation from Norwegian)

Endresen elaborates on a performer's freedom in stating that there are natural musical forms that have the potential to be repeated on instinct when improvising, and that it is this instinctual and automatic process that she tries to avoid in her work. She does this by "setting up parameters for form, [forcing] myself into other frameworks for form" (Berge, 2009, p. 35). This development of her practice could have come from her inspiration from the composer John Cage. In Backer's (2010) thesis, Endresen refers to Cage's comments about improvisation as often not having enough structure (2010, pp. 131–132). She says that Cage believed that artistic choices are reduced to "a question of people's taste, and therefore disgusting to him" (p. 131). Furthermore, Endresen finds Cage's favouring of principles of indeterminacy for organising music inspiring: "to let [s]omething different [and] totally neutral in a way … organise the music for you." (p. 132)

The example from Endresen's practising may be seen as contrasting with what she stated in the interview with Aftenposten, where her one musical rule was to have no taboos. When explaining how she practises, we saw that she sets up external constraints that can neutralise the subjective; her own habits. In this way, one may say that she treats the personal and individual as taboos that must be avoided. This treatment is reflected in how she describes her teaching practice. Endresen posits that there are differences in students having a jazz background from those who do not:

> I notice it in the sense that I think there is quite a lot you have to make people [with a jazz background] unlearn. Of genre defined habits, bad habits and fixed solutions, including form-wise. But at the same time, people who have a jazz background also have a great strength because they have worked so much with improvisation and with the problem of improvisation; idea development, interactional issues, so there you have an advantage. So it's always two-partite. (Berge 2009, pp. 28–29)

When Endresen talks about democracy in improvised music, we saw that she connects it with mutual trust among each member of a group. This may tie in with Dewey's notion of interpersonal responsibility for humans to release each other's expressive potential. However, the common democratic notion of freedom is problematic in her account. We may interpret Endresen in the sense that freedom means personal expression without limits, or "lawless desire", to borrow from Socrates. To Endresen, this gives permission to follow routine habits. Despite her claim to have no taboos, it seems as if she perceives subjective taste as a taboo that restricts creativity, which must be neutralised by various forms of external constraints. These constraints are tools for limiting the powerful (and unwanted) force of habit, and for creating expressive possibilities.

A question is how these contrasting values (no taboos versus inserting taboos as a tool for creating possibilities) are negotiated in encounters with students. If the musical language students bring with them to an improvisation class is constituted by their previous learning experiences within a particular genre, then these experiences are their basis for self-expression and thus personal voice (Johansen, 2014). Such a perspective may be seen as contrasting to the democratic ideal of treating all voices with equal value, if "unlearning" in this context means to inhibit expression and "remove" what has been learned. Nevertheless, Endresen's position is a reminder that constraints of subjective impulses may contribute to expressive development. In a democratic perspective, they may also serve to regulate and balance the presence of different individual voices in collective interplay.

Paul Dutton, Chris Tonelli and ableist reception of soundsinging

Chris Tonelli (2016) also refers to the treatment of taboos in his paper on the reception of (sound)singing by audiences. The subject of his paper is Paul Dutton, who coined the term soundsinging in the mid-late 1990s. The term marked Dutton's shift from working in a mixed musical and literary context to a more musical one, referring to musical, improvisational, non-verbal orality. He also uses the term "oral sound art" ("'A sound bursts out of me,'" 2014, n.p.).

Chris Tonelli recounts a performance by Dutton in 2014, centring on the reactions of three audience members. Tonelli interprets some of their reactions as negative valuations, describing the laughter of a young woman as "punitive". Using theoretical frameworks from disability studies, Tonelli understands these valuations "as attempts to restore a symbolic order violated by soundsinging" (Tonelli, 2016, p. 4). Following ideas from Bill Hughes, he positions these attempts at restoration as ableist; an invalidating of those perceived as disabled. This invalidation (which Hughes defines as a "deficit of credibility") stems from a modernistic formulation of binaries between present and past, human and animal, living and dead, subject and Other. Tonelli presents the idea that modernity generates hierarchies of privilege and value: "… the racist, ableist, and self-legitimising mentalities it gives rise to naturalize their privilege by appealing to elements in this network of confused binaries" (2016, p. 5).

He then provides some examples of ableist language in another response to Dutton's work, such as when an audience member stated "I thought you were dying." Tonelli interprets this "as another way of saying 'I am only used to hearing this category of sound when I encounter someone in pain'" (2016, p. 6). Through further examples, Chris Tonelli concludes that these responses from listeners are rooted in "the exclusionary logic of modernity" (2016, p. 12) and poses a challenge to other singers: "If our vocal practices are subtly reinforcing ableist ideals, we might be doing important work by choosing, now and then, to defy expectation" (2016, p. 13).

In this, Tonelli reflects Dewey's (1939) ideal of democracy creating "a freer and more humane experience" (p. 4). But here, we will shift focus from how soundsingers are received in Tonelli's account, to how he constructs the audience members. Tonelli presents the listeners as displaying ableism rather than aesthetic preference:

> Listeners who fail to hear intention and control in the abstract vocal work of a singer/poet like Paul Dutton, who hear only their anxiety telling them that this is death, this is meaningless, this is animalistic, are likely also listeners used to using voices to prop up their own ableist sense of superiority, listeners whose ontological insecurity drives aspects of their musical judgment. (2016, p. 12)

The audience's experiences and knowledges are not brought to bear with relation to the situation of performance. Nor was there any record of an attempt on Dutton's behalf to invite potentially alienated audiences into his world of sung sounds. This presents another ableist ideal in Tonelli's text: The intelligence and knowledge of the soundsingers are privileged over the experience of the audience. Put together with his brief and predominantly physical descriptions of the listeners, the effect is a potential dehumanisation. This, as quoted in Tonelli (2016, pp. 5–6), resembles what Hughes describes as "the tendency embedded in the 'civilising process' to incrementally deride the value of … difference and promote a sanitised norm of human behaviour". There is little room for *difference* in Tonelli's ideal audience behaviour in the reception of soundsinging. In addition to this, his call as a soundsinger himself for other singers to "defy expectation" by working with sound-singing is an attempt to (self-)legitimise the practice of sound-singing, while simultaneously maintaining the modernistic binary by Othering it.

Prévost: perceptions of equality in non-hierarchical structures

Eddie Prévost is an English percussionist, and founder and member of the AMM improvisation group, formed in 1965. He is also known as an improvisation educator and author. Although Prévost does not use the word democracy as such in the following excerpts, he reinforces principles we may associate with the democratic ideal in improvised music in several ways.

In an interview with George McKay (2005) Prévost says: "[I]n general political terms, I continue to believe in values outside of individualism … It has always been about collective playing, engaging with an audience, and building something! The way you do things is important—if the civil society can't be seen in the very music you make then the music is bogus" (McKay, 2005, n.p.). Furthermore, he explains how his weekly workshops in London over a three years' time have had attendees from "at least twenty different nationalities", and yet, this has never led to problems with musical communication. He claims that "National and or ethnic identity is of no importance to me at all" (McKay, 2005, n.p.).

Firstly, he frames the values of improvising as collective engaging and creating, while at the same time he discards individuality, pointing to the ideal of a "flat structure" that characterises democratic or decentralised organisational design (Handy, 1985, pp. 309–12). Secondly, he evokes the ideal of "colour-blindness", and the trope that "we are all equal". Both of these are performed in and through music making itself. One third dimension of democracy is when he points to the society outside improvised music-making, in that "the way you do things" in music should be reflection of issues at stake or ideal states in the society.

In Prévost's essay *The Discourse of the Dysfunctional Drummer* (Prévost, 2004)*,* he recalls that it was "the otherness" (2004, p. 355) of jazz that attracted him to the music, as well as its flexibility to invite people in: "You could sense the playfulness and the developmental possibilities with a specific piece and thereafter in the general form itself. It was living" (p. 355). Prévost further highlights the positive social features of improvised music, such as its affordance for collaboration and problem solving (2004, p. 354). For Prévost, music making in AMM involved indulging in the process of exploration and "searching for sounds" as his fellow member Cornelius Cardew put it: "an experiment in a non-hierarchical musical structure" (Cardew, 1971; quoted in Prévost, 2004, p. 357).

As with our previous case of soundsinger Paul Dutton, encounters with audiences were not always encouraging, in Prévost's experience. AMM's performances in its early years would often result in angry and dismissive reactions from audiences, situations that according to Prévost required the musicians to "be strong, convinced, mentally" (McKay, 2005, n.p.).

Despite a strong faith, Prévost admits in his essay from 2004 to be disappointed that ideals he finds in jazz and improvised music seem to have been declining. He admits feeling marginalised as a musician, that his work has not been understood properly, and thus, that his music over the years has been excluded. Improvised music requires dialogue, trust, generosity and *"*attempts at 'collaborative assonance'*"* he claims, and continues: *"*although, paradoxically, it appears that most of the rest of the world interprets these activities as willful acts of 'dissonance'*"* (Prévost, 2004, p. 357). Prévost is clear about how improvised music carries ideals with political significance, as when he states: "... we are all too enmeshed in the capitalist trick of treating each other as commercially exploitable units to do justice to the ways in which improvised music invokes the ideals of collaborative dissonance*"* (2004, p. 366).

In the interview with George McKay, Prévost is asked about the gender imbalance in British improvised music, and whether its male dominance is significant to him. Prévost responds by explaining why the musicians involved in AMM were all men. He stated that the women in the scene "were more involved in the feminist movement than in improvisation, and we would have felt that it would have been playing at politics. Also, AMM was quite a fierce, no-holds-barred experience, and it needed a strong personality to impact on the music. There were very few women musicians around then who could have done that" (McKay, 2005, n.p.).

From this, Prévost implies that while there are some valid political battles interlinked with improvised music, others (like feminism) are not. But just as interesting is that Prévost repeats his view on what it takes to operate in the hostile social context surrounding improvised music, such as being able to confidently resist an unappreciative audience. He suggests

that a musician has to be mentally strong, and that there were no women around at the time who had this capacity. This perspective disregards musicians such as pianist Irene Schweitzer (Smith, 2004, p. 230) and vocalist Maggie Nichols (McKay, 2003; para. 24), who have stated that their presence within the burgeoning improvised music scene in the 1960s and 1970s have been subsumed, ignored or erased. Nichols has spoken about the issues women faced in the male-dominated scene of that time, highlighting one episode where a male musician "complained about 'these women who can't play their instruments, etc.'". Nichols rationalises that the male musicians "felt threatened by our irreverent approach to technique and tradition" (McKay, 2003, para. 24).

Research also contradicts Prévost's perception, as we indicated in the section *Democracy, jazz and improvisation.* Yet, even with the apparent omission of women in the history of improvised music and the subsequent and parallel issues within music education, Prévost claims to be surprised at how long it is taking women to enter the field: "After all, there seem to be so many particular practices— 'operational qualities'—in collective improvisation that reflect feminine aspirations. What I mean here is that part of the music-making process is the development of a social relationship between the musicians, and for women coming to the music that is an attractive element to them" (McKay, 2005, n.p.).

When Prévost speaks of an ideal of improvised music, he emphasises social responsibility and collaborative work. However, a distinctly opposing narrative is apparent when he is talking from a personal perspective. The on-going absence of women in his groups is justified by naturalised descriptions of "fit" and "unfit" personalities. Women are essentialised as mentally weak (as opposed to strong), and as only attracted to the social and collective. Paradoxically, these latter values are emphasised by Prévost, even while he uses gender stereotyping as justification for exclusion.

Mary Lou Williams and Cecil Taylor: a confrontational embrace

While Mary Lou Williams had mostly negative feelings for the so-called "avant-garde" field in which the younger pianist was a major proponent, Cecil Taylor's admiration for Williams had begun while he was a music student in the 1950s (Edwards, 2017, p. 163). When he approached her in 1975, Williams was intially sceptical, but was eventually convinced that Taylor's interest was genuine. She launched the idea of presenting a concert with them together, for which Taylor came up with the title, *Embraced.* The concert was set for 17th April 1977 at Carnegie Hall. In writing about the event for Village Voice, Gary Giddins expected the concert to be "doubly innovative for bringing together two great keyboard artists in a program of duets, and for dramatizing the enduring values in the jazz-piano tradition." (Dahl, 2000, n.p.)

According to Williams (Dahl, 2000) they agreed that the first half of the concert they would perform her newly written arrangements of spirituals, whereas for the second half they would employ Taylor's approach: "When Cecil is doing his things, I'll start moving in his direction. I'll play free and then I'll jump back to swinging" (Dahl, 2000, n.p.)*,* Williams recalled. But before the concert started, tensions were beginning to emerge. In Taylor's view, Williams refused to play his music "the way he wanted it heard" (Dahl, 2000, n.p.).

An example of this can be heard when listening to the first five minutes of "Ayizan" (Williams & Taylor, 1977) from the second half of the concert. The theme takes the form of stimulus and feedback; Taylor plays the main figure while Williams interjects with double-handed chordal figurations. This lasts until approximately 1:25 after which Taylor begins to play formulaic, structured transpositions and progressions to move away from the base key of E minor. Meanwhile, Williams at first maintains the key of the piece infusing percussive playing with blues inflections. She then changes modality with Taylor (2:12), and mimics Taylor's rhythmic patterns (2:20-3:42). But during that time, Taylor appears to be playing a new progression (tonality: C-D♭-C-D♭-E♭, twice; then E-F-E-F-A♭-A-B♭-B). He then forms a truncated variation of this progression before returning to a restatement of the main theme (5:20), and a variation of that unit.

Taylor is thus working with structures that either he may not have communicated to Williams beforehand, or that Williams refused to play. Reviewers described the concert more as a contest than collaboration, and in a later letter to Taylor, Williams referred to the event as a battlefield (Dahl, 2000). Audiences' and listeners' receptions of the concert and the recorded album release, reinforce this view. However, opinions on which pianist was victorious differ, with comments either lauding Taylor's talent as a pianist who "buried" Williams, or finding fault with Taylor for not working with Williams for mutual benefit.

In an attempt of reconciliation, Williams wrote a letter to Taylor, saying that "Cecil, the spirituals were the most important factor of the concert (strength), to achieve success playing from the heart, inspiring new concepts for the second half … You will … agree that being angry you created monotony, corruption, and noise. … I still love you." (Dahl, 2000, n.p.) But there was little doubt about the anger and tensions between the two. In a discussion of the concert and the conflicting ideologies who came to be displayed, Ben Givan (2018) frames Williams' conception of jazz as communitarian, where jazz and improvised music is related to formal traditions that were reaffirmed by and born within the Afro-American community. In this sense, Williams echoes Dewey's conception of a democracy where members have shared values and work to contribute to a more humane experience. Taylor is framed as more of an individualist; although he acknowledged the existence of

Afro-American communities, he did not feel he had to represent the values of those communities – as a member of the community, he could choose and interrogate those values. In a sense, this follows a more Socratic reaction to democracy.

Cross-case analysis and summary

When turning to philosophy as well as politics, we find disparate, and in some ways even contradictory meanings of democracy. This is evident if we look at Dewey's socially oriented democracy which emphasises solidarity, and equal individual freedom for all as long as that freedom serves a shared purpose. Socrates' notion of democracy sets "free will" in terms of unlimited and "unnecessary" desires, which can be regarded as individualist tendencies in human beings. In a Socratic view, total freedom to follow individual desires is close to anarchy, which we may see as potentially leading to a survival of the fittest and *hidden* hierarchies.

The four examples we have used all display contradictions in the use of democratic ideals. The notion of freedom as a common denominator of democracy is often presented as inherently good. However, the duality embedded in the notion of freedom, from respective Socratic and Deweyan positions, is represented in several examples. To Prevóst, freedom means liberation, rebellion, and "breaking out" of conventions and expectations. This also corresponds to Tonelli in his attempt to show how singers can defy ableist expectations of what singing is about, and what we interpret as promoting the Deweyan democratic ideal of an expanded scope of freedom of human expression. In the Endresen case, freedom has the potential to lead to routine, laziness and boredom, or unnecessary desires from a Socratic perspective. Such desires should be restricted to promote creativity. Contrary to this, Endresen also proposes a musician's freedom to do whatever they want, in her statement about having no taboos. To Endresen, democracy is connected to mutual trust, which aligns with a Deweyan ideal. To establish such trust, a sense of inclusion and equal value needs to be ensured for all the participants involved. The case of Cecil Taylor and Mary Lou Williams shows in particular that improvised music should not be seen as an open and inviting space where all voices are given an equal scope by default. It can also have the character of a battlefield, where fights over prestige and positions are being musically performed.

In the introduction, we quoted Givan (2018), stating that the improvisational aesthetics of jazz may not yield the democratic ideals often advocated, in reference to the duo concert with Cecil Taylor and Mary Lou Williams. "Egalitarian sociability" (Givan, 2018, p. 399)

has shown to be difficult in our four cases. For example, in Endresen's case, students with mostly jazz experience had to *unlearn* these experiences, and thus despite her claim to have no taboos, taboos are invoked in her devaluing of some types of voices. In Tonelli's attempt to expand the scope for human expression, we suggest that he instead runs the risk of reinforcing what he means to defy; namely privileging some kinds of experiences over others, and thus, the ableist ideal reversed. Both cases hold the possible interpretation that some positions or experiences are privileged over others, which leads to exclusion and contrasts the democratic ideal of equity. Eddie Prevóst's attempts to position himself come across as inconsistent from the perspective of democracy. On one hand he evokes ideals of artists taking political and social responsibility and collaboration; on the other hand, he minimizes the presence of feminist movements in improvised music, and the absence of women in his ensembles and workshops is justified by naturalising, gendering, and privileging individualist personal traits. While he expresses experiences of being excluded, he risks coming across as an exclusionary voice.

Discussion

Although this chapter has mainly dealt with experiences from musicians in their respective performance practices, the interfaces towards higher education are many. Firstly, despite the fact that several discourses on jazz and improvised music education reinforce an existing dichotomy between "the school" and "the street", i.e. formal and informal learning in jazz (Prouty, 2006; Wilf, 2014), research also shows that narratives about the informal are idealised and thus reproduced *within* formal educational frameworks because the informal is considered more authentic (Johansen, 2014; Zandén, 2010). It is fair to assume that norms and values, as well as *conflicting values,* from performance practice are brought "in" to schools, both because narratives told about jazz history and jazz musician narratives form an important teaching content, and because many of the teachers in Higher Jazz Education are central figures on the jazz performance scene, and thus, they are active participants in the cultures that produce such value systems.

Secondly, the problems we have addressed in all four cases relate to education directly or indirectly, as we have pointed to educational situations in- and outside the school. Sidsel Endresen explicitly referred her teaching of students in higher music education. Eddie Prévost is a long time workshop lecturer, and we can assume that his ideals and ideas about improvised music are explicitly or implicitly conveyed to workshop attendees. To Mary Lou Williams, every performance was seen as educative toward an audience, where she

wanted to convey her perspective on jazz by presenting to her central historical elements of jazz, such as spirituals, blues, and bebop (Provost, 2019). In Tonelli's article, he may be interpreted as one who knows something the audience does not, and thus, they need to learn to understand and accept soundsinging. In all instances, the speakers can be interpreted as believing that they hold superior knowledge or values, attempted to be transmitted to students, other musicians, or audiences.

We have provided examples of how the democratic narrative is repeated in a number of accounts of jazz and improvisation within education, despite examples of gendered hegemony, implicit power hierarchies, exclusion and negative learning experiences. To the degree that performance cultures influence educational cultures, as suggested above, it is important to ask if hierarchical power structures, whether hidden or not, are reproduced within the educational institution. If they go unquestioned and unchallenged, jazz education may produce a hidden curriculum and double binds for jazz students; on one level they may learn that all aesthetic voices are equal, but on another they experience that some are more equal than others.

Tracey Nicholls (2012) suggests that in order to work for inclusion of all voices, a pluralist approach to music aesthetics is needed. This depends on what she with reference to Latour calls "a culture of negotiation" (2012, p. 67). Nicholls does not advocate a naive relativism "that allows everyone their opinion but forecloses any possibility of debate over those opinions" (2012, p. 75). Instead, negotiation involves the will to modify one's own aesthetic preferences, and may lead to a pluralist expansion: "Any consensus that is achieved through a process like this … will have to combine elements of multiple views in the construction it produces" (2012, p. 68). To Nicholls, improvised music is "our richest exemplar of pluralism …" (2012, p. 71), and in taking this position where pluralism may be seen as a democratic value, we may align her with the general narrative of improvised music as by nature democratic. As we have shown, this essentialising view is not always correct – which is not to say that jazz, improvised music, and jazz education are without potential in a pluralist and democratic respect.

However, despite the impression given by the commonly used trope of "peace and democracy", democracy is not necessarily peaceful. If we base an understanding of democracy on the premise that all voices are equally valuable, then attempts of dialogue and negotiation will inevitably lead to tensions and conflicts. The case of Taylor and Williams may prove wrong the ideal of jazz as "collaboration and egalitarian sociability", but it may serve as a perfect example of democracy at work. It was an attempt to allow and tolerate different voices, and came to display the conflicts that perhaps had to arise.

Education is potentially and at its best an arena for enlightenment, critical thinking and democracy in the sense of equal access to opportunity and to be heard. Applying a pluralist position in higher jazz education means to acknowledge that students (as well as audiences and fellow musicians) enter a shared space with different references and preferences. It is therefore necessary to address these power battles and experiences of exclusion and alienation in historical and contemporary narratives about jazz performance cultures. Instead of presenting hierarchical models of what can sometimes be reduced to a matter of taste, we suggest that proponents of Higher Jazz Education this way show an acceptance for multiple views and present a readiness to modify their aesthetics, in its creation of a space for negotiation.

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