JOE CHAMBERS: MUSICAL STYLE AND CONCEPT, 1964 – 1973

BY

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DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

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This dissertation discusses the postbob-drumming contributions of percussionist, composer and educator Joe Chambers. The analysis of his musical style and concept will focus on the period between his 1964 recording debut with Freddie Hubbard and his first album as a bandleader in 1973. This period represents a seminal chapter in Chambers’ lengthy career, during which he developed and refined his distinct musical style and innovative concepts of modern jazz drumming. Some of the most significant components of his characteristic drumming style will be discussed and illustrated by detailed analysis and extensive commentary of selected musical performances. This analysis is integral to the understanding of Joe Chambers’ highly diverse musical aesthetics and sublime percussive soundscapes. Perhaps most significantly, the conclusions drawn from the interpretation of analytical observations are supplemented and supported by Chambers’ personal insights, historic anecdotes and critical evaluations, predominately obtained from a series of interviews with the author. The unique perspectives Chambers revealed in these conversations were vital for the validity of this study, as they shed light on a legendary musician whose musical contributions were seminal to the evolution of postbop drumming and the continuing emancipation of the instrument.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

1. 1 Preface

The drummer, multi-instrumentalist, composer and educator Joe Chambers, born on June 25, 1942, is a seminal figure of the musical explorations that propelled the innovative developments of modern jazz drumming during the 1960s. Firmly rooted in the musical conventions of the bebop tradition, his musical versatility and stylistic flexibility reflect the transformational process that bridged the gap between the evolution of the so-called “modern” drummer of the bebop style to the “progressive” and “conceptual” drummer of postbop jazz. As an integral contributor to this process, Chambers pushed and refined the stylistic developments of percussive aesthetics at the threshold between hard bop and avant-garde throughout his career. Specifically, as suggested by the limited timeframe introduced in the title of this work, the years between 1964 and 1973 are of particular importance for the thematic focus of this project. The reason behind focusing on this particular period is based on the fact that on the one hand, the year 1964 marks Chambers’ breakthrough and recording debut as a drummer for a major jazz artist, namely for Freddie Hubbard on his album Breaking Point!. On the other hand, 1973 was the year in which Chambers released his first album as a leader, The Almoravid. Both events signify major milestones during Chambers’ multifaceted career, and simultaneously form a coherent unit that allows for analytical
exploration of Joe Chambers’ drumming that has not been undertaken to this extent yet.

In comparison with more prominently discussed contemporaries such as Elvin Jones and Tony Williams, the relatively small share of historic acknowledgement that his work has received so far strikingly emphasizes the importance of investigating Chambers’ career achievements in detailed analysis. Jones’ and Williams’ much larger public appraisal can be attributed not only to their pivotal, epoch-breaking drumming contributions, but also to the maximized visibility of their work.1 Despite lacking the heightened visibility of Jones’ and Williams’ musical collaborations with arguably the two biggest names of post World War II jazz, John Coltrane and Miles Davis, Chambers was nevertheless a pivotal contributor to the advancement of new concepts that redefined the predominant practices of jazz drumming, especially with regards to the improvisatory ensemble processes of the postbop era and the emancipation of the drum set from its traditional role within the bebop rhythm section.

Beyond his unique musical concepts as a drummer and percussionist, Joe Chambers was also a conservatory-trained composer and contributed significant original compositions to the recording sessions he was involved in as a sideman and leader. In

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1 Elvin Jones’ collaboration with John Coltrane as a member of his quartet between 1960 and 1965 and the resulting stylistic innovations were of quintessential importance to the maturity of jazz drumming during the postbop developments. His work with McCoy Tyner, Wayne Shorter, Joe Henderson and Larry Young, among many others, further manifested his status as one of the premier jazz drummers during this period. Of equal significance were the contributions of Tony Williams, who is primarily associated with Miles Davis and his “second great quintet” from 1963 to 1969. Although he was equally fundamental for the advancement of drumming during the jazz-rock and fusion period in the 1970s, his unparalleled technical virtuosity, range of dynamics and incorporation of rhythmic devices (such as metric manipulations) redefined the boundaries of both jazz drumming and rhythm section interplay. Also during the 1960s, Williams frequently worked with Eric Dolphy, Sam Rivers and most notably Herby Hancock, showcasing different facets of his style and deepening the historic impact of his achievements.
retrospect, the historical significance of his achievements as a drummer reached its apex during the 1960s. During this time, Chambers developed his unique style of postbop drumming while working as a freelance drummer with some of the most highly regarded jazz musicians of the time—including Blue Note artists Wayne Shorter, Bobby Hutcherson, Joe Henderson, Sam Rivers and McCoy Tyner, and last but not least Chick Corea from the Atlantic label. Their contributions to the aesthetic amalgam of musical innovations combined elements of bebop, hard bop and modal jazz, and pushed for new musical territories that led to the vanguard explorations of the evolving avant-garde. The resulting recordings have become milestones of modern jazz, and strongly substantiate the historical significance of Joe Chambers and his contributions to the developments of jazz in the United States since the advent of bebop.

1.2 Purpose of Study

Since his first professional engagements as a drummer in the early 1960s, the eventful career of Joe Chambers spans over a period of over fifty years and counting. His musical contributions extend far and beyond his work as a jazz drummer, ranging from his compositions that were recorded by some of the finest musicians in jazz, to his long-lasting teaching career in a number of America’s most highly-regarded academic institutions and music programs. Against the backdrop of the enormous social changes, the 1960s aesthetically were a highly adventurous and historically revolutionary period for the developments of jazz at large and for the evolution of the rhythm section in particular, with the drum set at its core. For Chambers personally, this eventful decade
was highlighted by his career breakthrough as a jazz drummer, and the subsequent rise to one of the most highly sought-after drummers particularly in the New York jazz scene. Chambers’ signature style of drumming, centered on the continuous flow of percussive statements in response to and expansion of the surrounding musical texture, represents his very personal, unique approach to modern jazz drumming. Consequently, this work is intended to serve as a contribution to the ongoing study of postbob drumming since the 1960s, seeking to specifically illuminate some of the most prominent concepts that define Joe Chambers’ highly expressive, melodic and most importantly, “musical” style of drumming.

How Chambers implements is concepts, specifically how he incorporates melodic phrasing into his playing, and how the perception and manipulation of time and pulse define his concept of musical interactions are key points of this study. This is particularly valuable since his playing has not yet been discussed from an analytical perspective, particularly with regards to transcriptions, and few written accounts of his work have been published (the most prominent of note being the 1999 feature story by Ken Micallef in the *Modern Drummer* magazine, and John Murph’s 2005 article in *JazzTimes*).\(^2\) Subdivided into three main segments, this study provides an extended biographical portrait of Joe Chambers’ career development in Chapter 1, highlighting his professional achievements since the 1960s. Chapter 1 is rounded up by an excursion into his teaching philosophy and a presentation of Chambers’ critical observations.

regarding the business side of music, particularly the social and economic consequences of a changing infrastructure for the development of jazz. Chapter 2 offers an outline of the evolutionary trends that defined the developments of jazz from bebop to hard bop, and up to modal jazz and the postbop aesthetics of the avant-garde. How these developments have shaped and ultimately defined the role of the drummer within these currents from the tradition of the bebop model to modernity of the postbop styles is the underlying theme of Chapter 2, particularly in regard to the actual drumming work of Joe Chambers, as exemplified in the extended music analysis of Chapter 3 and Chapter 4. The study is concluded with Chapter 5, which presents a summary of the most significant results of the research. To establish a balanced perspective between Chambers’ evaluations of historic currents and aesthetic developments that accompanied his career, ample space throughout this study is given to Joe Chambers’ personal insights, historic recollections and aesthetic assessments. The majority of this information was attained by the author himself in a series of interviews conducted with Joe Chambers between August 28 and August 31, 2013. The material gained from these personal conversations offers invaluable perspectives that prove fundamental for the substance and accuracy of the author’s research, transcriptions and conclusions.

1.3 Biographical Portrait of Joe Chambers

The subsequent sections of this chapter present Joe Chamber’s musical biography in detail, from the early beginnings through his highly successful career as one of the most in-demand drummers in the New York jazz scene during the 1960s, up
until his most recent activities as an educator and composer. In particular, it is his highly versatile skillset not only as a drummer, but also as a percussionist, composer, arranger and orchestrator that confers historic significance upon his musical biography, since the combination of his musical skills was not the norm during the formative years of his career, especially in the 1960s. Chapter 1 is concluded with a discussion of Chamber's teaching philosophy, presenting his concept of “jazz as a social history” in the context of the intertwined historic and social currents that shaped the course of jazz, particularly with regards to its African-derived influences.3

1.3.1 Early Years

Joseph Arthur Chambers was born on June 25, 1942, in Stoneacre, Virginia, as one of five children. When Chambers was two years old, the family moved to the Philadelphian suburb, Chester. Although Chambers’ parents were both writers, they were very interested in music and the family often performed music together. In addition to making music with their children, Chambers’ parents possessed an eclectic music collection, consisting of classical music, jazz and contemporary rhythm-and-blues, which further expanded their children’s musical experiences.

I started playing music very early on, always wanted to play the music, find out what made “this” music. We all played instruments, 5 of us. My mother was a writer and singer, my father was a writer, they had creative

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3 Joe Chambers, interview with the author, August 28, 2013. For future reference, the author conducted four interviews with Joe Chambers in Wilmington, NC, between August 28 and August 31, 2013. Unless otherwise noted, all quotes are from this series of interviews.
Chambers gravitated towards drums from an early age, assembling an improvised drum set using kitchen utensils at the age of five. The first drummers who made a significant impression on him were big band drummers who became known to a wider audience performing on the television bandstands, “I used to see Buddy Rich on TV; Gene Krupa used to be on TV in the early 50s, so he was my first idol because I saw him on TV.” But when he was a teenager, musicians who played jazz outside of the aesthetic agreements of the American mainstream caught Chambers’ attention.

Then, when I got to be about 12 [sic], at a friend of mine who had an older brother, I heard Max Roach and Clifford Brown, it sounded like something from Mars, I said “Jesus, what is this.” And he had some Miles Davis, and I said “damn, that is the strangest stuff,” but I was attracted to it. Max and those people, they were not mainstream, they were not on TV, but when I heard it, something connected, I said, “oh, this is something I gotta find out what this is.” At the age of twelve, I knew that I was gonna be searching for this music.

Although he received occasional piano instruction throughout his childhood, it was not until he attended Chester High School that Chambers had to opportunity to begin

4 Chambers, interview, August 28, 2013.
5 Ibid.
6 Ibid.
formal training on the drums and the piano. While in high school, he was a member of the school band and began to study theory and composition. Chambers cited the high quality of music education in the Philadelphia area during the mid 1950s as a positive influence on his musical development:

The schools I grew up in outside of Philly in Chester, during the time that we grew up, were a very fertile environment. The place was rough, but the education was good. We had so many programs in school – marching band, jazz band, dance band, concert band, concert orchestra.⁷

Chambers was also a talented athlete; when he graduated from high school in 1960, he received a scholarship offer to play football at Virginia University. “But I didn’t wanna play anymore American football,” he remembered, “I was attracted to the music.”⁸ His first professional engagement as a drummer occurred in 1960, when Chambers, then 18 years old, toured with the rhythm-and-blues artist Bobby Charles.⁹ Following the tour, Chambers pursued a degree in theory and composition at the Philadelphia Conservatory, and later studied composition at the American University in Washington, D.C., between 1961 and 1963.¹⁰ His attraction to music—particularly composing and arranging—highlighted a passion Chambers had in common with his brother.

I had a brother who died, and he was a “serious” composer in that “classical” field, Steve Chambers. I’ve always been attracted to

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⁷ Micallef, Joe Chambers, 116.
⁸ Chambers, interview, August 28, 2013.
⁹ In 1961, Bobby Charles had a major hit with the single “Tossin’ and Turnin.’
¹⁰ Chambers did not complete his degree at this time; he placed his studies on hold as his active performance career took off. Eventually, he completed his B.A. in composition in 1988 at the State University of New York, SUNY Empire College.
orchestration, I always wanted to learn. And I was learning it in high
school and I learned it in college when I went to study composing. I

In summary, it can be highlighted that the holistic combination of aesthetic
characteristics and social aspects of music played a crucial role during Chambers’
childhood and throughout adolescence, a period during which he had determinedly
pursued the study of music in general and the specialization in jazz in particular.

1.3.2 Beginning of Professional Career and First Major Recording

In addition to the formal study of theory and composition in Washington D.C.,
the city’s jazz scene became the training ground and initial jumping-off point for
Chambers’ career as a jazz drummer. For three years, Chambers performed six nights a
week as the drummer with the JFK Quartet at a venue called Bohemian Caverns, and
occasionally played solo piano on weekends.\footnote{The JFK Quintet, in existence between 1960-1963, included Andrew White (alto saxophone), Walter Booker (bass), Ray Codrington (trumpet), and Harry Kilgo (piano).} The club’s jam sessions and gatherings afforded Chambers the opportunity to become acquainted with many legendary
musicians who came through Washington D.C. to play at the Howard Theatre. The most
significant of these were Miles Davis, John Coltrane, Wayne Shorter, Art Blakey, Freddie
Hubbard and also alto saxophonist Eric Dolphy, with whom Chambers played for several
weeks during a stint at the Bohemian Caverns. Encouraged particularly by Dolphy,
Chambers eventually moved to New York City to pursue a career as a freelance drummer. Shortly after arriving there, he was invited to play with Dolphy in September of 1963 at a concert at the Brooklyn Academy of Music. Dolphy’s ensemble included vibraphonist Bobby Hutcherson, bassist Richard Davis and trumpeter Freddie Hubbard, who were all frequently recording for the Blue Note label by that time. Chambers’ career as a sideman, spurred by the Brooklyn concert, began to take shape when Freddie Hubbard hired him to play on his 1964 album *Breaking Point!*, the first recording session on which Hubbard could use his own working band, rather than an ensemble of studio musicians. The artistic explorations on Hubbard’s album between hard bop imprints and free-form improvisations also provided Chambers with the opportunity to contribute not only as a drummer, but also as a composer. The walking-ballad/slow swing piece “Mirrors”, written in the compositional technique called “mirror writing,” was a piece that Chambers had originally composed as a class assignment when he was studying composition in Washington D.C., and became his first recorded original composition. 13 “Mirror writing” describes a 20th-century technique where either chords or melodies (or both) are compositionally treated in a systematic juxtaposition of musical material that is related by inversion. In the case of “Mirrors,” the melody is

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13 The term “walking ballad” refers to a ballad slightly faster in tempo than a “true” ballad but not as bright as a medium swing. The tempo of “Mirrors” fluctuates between 96 beats-per-minute (henceforth bpm) during the melody and 102 bpm during the solos, partly because the head is played in a half-time feel. See also: Joe Chambers, interview by Jake Feinberg, *KWFM – The Jake Feinberg Show*, podcast audio, March 18, 2012, http://www.jakefeinbergshow.com/2012/03/jfs-63-the-joe-chambers-interview/, accessed December 4, 2013.
juxtaposed between the trumpet and the flute. In support of the album *Breaking Point!*, Chambers subsequently went on a six-week tour with Freddie Hubbard’s group.¹⁴

1.3.3 Blue Note Records and the Jukebox Industry

The music on Freddie Hubbard’s *Breaking Point!*—particularly the eponymous opening track—was highly progressive and stretched the established hard bop conventions of the late 1950s towards the emerging avant-garde. Therein, it reflected Blue Note’s “out of the box” approach to recording and promoting more adventurous music. But simultaneously, the music recorded for Blue Note also had to correspond with the label’s commercial interests. “The people at Blue Note didn’t mind what we were doing,” Chambers remembered, “as long as they could single out a tune from these programs to put on the jukeboxes.”¹⁵ In the liner notes to Hubbard’s *Breaking Point!*, Bob Blumenthal revealed an interesting fact about the records’ programming, which featured two alternate, shortened versions of Hubbard’s “Blue Frenzy” and Chamber’s “Mirrors,” designated for the jukebox play. “These short takes,” Blumenthal points out, “were released on a 45 rpm single, still a common practice in 1964 when jukeboxes were common and jazz could even be found on AM radio in major urban areas.”¹⁶ Blue Note founders and owners Alfred Lions and Francis Wolff had begun recording music in the late 1930s, initially focusing on Blues and Boogie Woogie pianists

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¹⁴ Compare with Micallef, *Joe Chambers*, 110.
¹⁵ Chambers, interview, August 28, 2013.
¹⁶ Bob Blumenthal, liner notes to *Breaking Point!*, Freddie Hubbard, Blue Note Records 7243 5 90845 2 7, CD reissue, 2004.
of the late 1930s and 1940s. “They were basically blues-oriented people,” Chambers emphasized:

They loved jazz. When they started out, they started recording Meade Lux Lewis, the stride pianist, and Albert Ammons [also a pianist]. Every major black jazz musician recorded for Blue Note at one time or another.

Every major one. Believe it.\(^\text{17}\)

But the initial specialization of Blue Note was expanded through the success of the jukeboxes, an important aspect of record distribution in the 1950s into the early 1960s. During this time, the jukeboxes prominently featured the most popular rhythm-and-blues and rock ‘n’ roll records. However, Chambers believes that, at that time, organized crime syndicates like the mafia controlled the jukebox industry, but that its members supposedly had an affinity for jazz.\(^\text{18}\) Consequently, the machines featured a notable amount of jazz, including songs by artists like Horace Silver and Art Blakey’s Jazz Messengers.\(^\text{19}\) Chambers believes those pieces were all composed with the intent to be

\(^{17}\) Chambers, interview, August 28, 2013. Alfred Lion decided to record Meade Lux Lewis and Albert Ammons after he had heard them perform at the second installment of John Hammond’s “From Spirituals to Swing” concert at Carnegie Hall in New York in 1939, the same year Lion established the label. For a brief history of the Blue Note label, refer to Michael Cuscuna, “The Blue Note Story,” in The Blue Note Label: A Discography, Revised and Expanded, Michael Cuscuna and Michel Ruppli, eds. (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2001), xi-xix. For a biographical and historical account of the Blue Note label, see Richard Cook, Blue Note Records: The Biography, 1st U.S. ed. (Boston: Justin, Charles & Co., 2003).


\(^{19}\) Silver’s 1958 recording The Outlaw, despite being a fairly long and rather comprehensive composition, was among the most popular jazz songs played on the jukeboxes. Silver got further involved in the cross-over of musical experiments between jazz, rhythm-and-blues and soul music that became known under the term “soul jazz,” a development significantly promoted by the Blue Note label, and produced a series of genre-defining pieces like Sister Sadie, Senor Blues and The Preacher. See Feinberg, The Joe Chambers Interview, accessed December 4, 2013.
released on the jukeboxes in accordance with Blue Note’s commercial interest.\textsuperscript{20} Many of the Blue Note artists’ recordings on which Chambers played were characteristically a balancing act between artistic freedom and commercial appeal. In this context, Chambers cites two examples that represent Blue Note’s strategic placement of jukebox material on otherwise very avant-garde albums—the modified blues “West 22\textsuperscript{nd} Street Theme” on Bobby Hutcherson’s record \textit{Components} (1965), and Wayne Shorter’s “Tom Thumb” on \textit{Schizophrenia} (1967). These songs, as Chambers put it, were almost in a “plebeian” mode and “had a beat to it and were bluesy,” and therefore provided the label with a possible single to be released for commercial purposes.\textsuperscript{21} Specifically regarding Hutcherson’s \textit{Components}, Chambers remembers the struggle between artistic explorations and mainstream compatibility. Side one featured a fairly “conventional” postbop selection, while the music on side two was entirely composed by Chambers, whose writing at the time was strongly influenced by the concept of free intervallic interplay and 12-tone technique, and particularly by Jimmy Giuffre’s 1963 album \textit{Free Fall}:

\textsuperscript{20} However, Chambers pointed out that he does not want to downplay Silver’s creative inspiration behind them, and regards him—despite his commercial endeavors of writing pieces specifically for jukebox play, as on of the most important composers and arrangers to come out of the hard bop era during the mid-1950s (the overarching style that encompasses the sub-genre of soul jazz). Further illustrating the historic cross-relations between soul jazz with regard to the marketing strategies pursued by the Blue Note label, Chambers cited Cannonball Adderly’s album \textit{Somethin’ Else} from 1958, featuring Miles Davis on trumpet. One of the featured compositions, a blues piece entitled “One for Daddy-O,” Miles Davis can be heard making the comment “This is for you Alfred.” Chambers considers this statement a direct comment towards Alfred Lion, where Davis was pointing out that intended for the jukebox playlist.


For a further investigation of the intertwined relationships between the jukebox industry, the music industry and the commercial orientation with regard to the advent of the 45-rpm single, refer to Michael Fink, \textit{Inside the Music Industry: Creativity, Process and Business}, 2\textsuperscript{nd} ed. (Belmont, CA: Thomas Learning, 1996).

\textsuperscript{21} Feinberg, \textit{The Joe Chambers Interview}, accessed December 4, 2013.
Now, Jimmy Giuffre, he put out a record—I was still living in DC—it was called *Free Fall*, and it had Paul Bley and Steve Swallow, just a trio; they didn’t really need drums. Somehow, that record caught my eye, because Jimmy Giuffre . . . I knew about him, but I was not interested in his music then. It is an excellent record, very interesting in terms of contrapuntal, free . . . almost twelve-tonish, you could say. I had heard that record, and I was studying composition, so it was interesting to me—compositionally—to hear that. That had stuck in my mind, free intervallic play. And I was just out of school, studying twelve-tone technique, so I was utilizing this stuff. 22

Almost inevitably, the resulting album did not prove to be successful in terms of commercial value, despite—or rather because of—its progressive aesthetic spectrum, and therefore lack of mainstream-oriented jukebox material.

I remember—like I told you, Alfred Lion and Frank Wolff and where they really where—I remember the disgust, particularly Frank Wolff, when we were rehearsing this stuff, how disgusted he was looking that day listening to this. Because they wanted something to put on the jukebox. Point of fact is there was nothing on that record to put on a jukebox, either way. They wanted something funky so they could put it on the

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22 Chambers, interview, August 30, 2013.
damn jukebox, and here I am writing this twelve-tone stuff, and they were like “what it this guy doing.”

It is not surprising that during this time, many jazz musicians tried to include a song on their recordings that had the potential to commercially be successful in the jukebox business, despite the fact that most of these songs failed on the market, as Chambers emphasized. Several artists, however, did manage to commercially benefit from catering to the jukebox industry. Lee Morgan’s 1963 recording, *The Sidewinder*, due to its 8/8 boogaloo feel (among other reasons), highlighted the strong connection between jazz and the popular appeal of rhythm-and-blues and Latin-derived styles at the time, a cross-over of genres that Herbie Hancock successfully incorporated into his music during the 1960s, too. The Blue Note label was a forerunner in this trend, but other labels, such as Prestige, were following a similar pattern in producing jazz records that would include at least one selection of a program that could be successfully released on the jukeboxes.

1.3.4 Landmark Recordings during the 1960s: Drummer and Composer with Blue Note Artists

Chambers’ subsequent work with various groundbreaking groups continued on the path of combining postbop elements with the vanguard explorations of the avant-garde, and ultimately established him as one of the premier drummers of the 1960s.

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23 Chambers, interview, August 30, 2013.
25 Examples include Herbie Hancock’s “Watermelon Man” on *Takin’ Off* (Blue Note, 1962) and “Cantaloupe Island” on *Empyrean Isles* (Blue Note, 1964).
The cadre of musicians who worked together on a number of Blue Note recordings can be described as the “unofficial” Blue Note session crew, a notion that Chambers expressed himself:

I met Bobby (Hutcherson) in D.C. when he was with Eric Dolphy. When he came to New York he became part of the crowd. We played in Eric’s band together. We were part of the Blue Note group along with Joe Henderson, Freddie Hubbard, Lee Morgan, Wayne Shorter, Herbie Hancock, Ron Carter, Hank Mobley, McCoy Tyner, and Granchan Moncur.26

The high level of musicianship that was displayed on these Blue Note recordings—particularly in regard to the aesthetic unity and textural coherence of the original arrangements—in combination with the density of the improvisations and highly energetic group-interplay, became a signature trademark for the label.27 Chambers recalled that many people had approached him about the Blue Note recordings he played on and had expressed their admiration for how the groups “would sound as like [sic] you all were working bands.”28 But Chambers also pointed out that during the Blue Note era, there were not actually many working bands: “Herbie had bands, and Freddie [Hubbard]. Joe [Henderson] was sporadic. The Bobby Hutcherson – Harold Land band had steady work.”29

Besides being one of Blue Note’s most prominent session drummers during the 1960s, Chambers himself was only involved in two working bands that were

26 Micallef, Joe Chambers, 112. Aside from those musicians that Chambers mentioned, particularly James Spaulding (flute, alto saxophone) was featured prominently on several Blue Note recording alongside Joe Chambers, including records for Freddie Hubbard, Bobby Hutcherson, Wayne Shorter and McCoy Tyner.
28 Micallef, Joe Chambers, 116.
29 Ibid., 116.
led by Blue Note recording artists, Bobby Hutcherson’s and Joe Henderson’s groups. Chambers elaborated on how the groups achieved this unity of sound and how these recording sessions were conducted:

This is the way the Blue Note did the dates, all the dates that I was on: you go in for about a week’s rehearsal, three, four days, you go in and rehearse in the studio, and you go in and record. And it sounds very, very tight, sounds like a working band. That’s the way they did it. Hence, Chambers attributes the aesthetic coherence and musical quality of the Blue Note recording during the 1960s to the amalgam of supreme level of musicianship and the opportunity of the groups to rehearse in advance of the sessions, which in fact was rather unusual at the time.

30 While Chambers was part of Freddie Hubbard “working band” in 1964 promoting Hubbard’s Breaking Point!, the group that had played the tour was assembled after the initial recording.
31 Feinberg, The Joe Chambers Interview, accessed December 4, 2013. In Nathan Bakkum’s dissertation “Don’t Push, Don’t Pull: Jazz Rhythm Section Interaction and Musical Change,” bassist Richard Davis confirms Joe Chamber’s observations on Blue Note’s rehearsal and recording process:

Alfred has never done anything with anybody unless they rehearsed. And when we would rehearse, we would decide who would take what solo when and how long, sequence, who’s going to solo first, how we’re going to get back to the head. He had sandwiches and drinks so nobody would have to go out to get something to eat. He had a certain control in his sessions, man. And that was a benefit. See Bakkum, 79.

Bakkum points out that this specific recording procedure was not common practice until the late 1950s. Rather, in so-called “blowing sessions,” the focus on improvisations over standards was much more common for the recordings conducted by Blue Note, Prestige and Riverside labels. Since the early 1960s Alfred Lion, in an effort to maintain the labels’ recognition for its high sonic and musical quality, required many groups to assemble for a series of paid rehearsals prior to the recording date, since a large number of the works produced in these recordings were original compositions of complex structure. Therein, Lion achieved a fruitful mix of “control and freedom” that strengthened the musician’s comfort with the arrangements and helped them “crafting satisfying and cohesive improvisations.” Compare Nathan C. Bakkum, “Don’t Push, Don’t Pull: Jazz Rhythm Section Interaction and Musical Change” (PhD diss., The University of Chicago, 2009), 79. http://search.proquest.com/docview/305052709?accountid=14553. “Blowing sessions” was quoted from Jeffery S. McMillan, Delightfullee: the life and music of Lee Morgan (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008), 43.
When recording for Blue Note, Chambers collaborated most frequently with bandleader and vibraphonist Bobby Hutcherson. Chambers played on ten of Hutcherson’s eleven recordings for Blue Note, including *Dialogue* (1965), *Components* (1966), *Happenings* (1966), *Oblique* (1967), *Patterns* (1968) and *Total Eclipse* (1968), *Spiral* (recorded in November 1968, but not released until 1979) and *Medina* (recorded 1969 but released in 1980, later including the program from *Spiral* on a 1998 reissue). These collaborations with Hutcherson produced some of Chambers most significant compositions, and featured prominently on these albums. The free-form improvisation “Dialogue” and the avant-garde hybrid “Oblique” became the title tracks for the corresponding albums. Furthermore, Chambers contributed the waltz “Idle While” to *Dialogue*, and another highly improvisatory piece in “Bi-Sectional” to *Oblique*. For *Components*, Chambers composed half of the recorded pieces, “Movement,” “Juba Dance,” “Air,” and “Pastoral.” In the original format of a long-playing record, these pieces amounted to the complete side two, which is remarkable considering this recording was billed under Bobby Hutcherson’s name.

Chambers further engaged in stylistic eclecticism and asymmetrical meters on Hutcherson’s *Patterns* from 1968. The program included yet another title song by Chambers, the blazing postbop composition “Patterns,” and furthermore the ballad “Irina” and the multi-meter pieces “Nocturnal” and “Ankara.” While *Spiral* and *Medina* were not released until 1979 and 1980, respectively, they form a trio of recordings along

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32 Stanley Cowell, who played piano on the Bobby Hutcherson’s album *Patterns*, hired Chambers to play drums on his record *Brilliant Circles*, originally released in 1969, and worked again with Chambers on *Back to the Beautiful* in 1989.
with *Total Eclipse* (1968) that was highlighted by the collaboration between Bobby Hutcherson and tenor saxophonist Harold Land. Chambers had composed the title tracks for both *Spiral* and *Medina*, and further contributed “Ruth” to the former and “Ungano” to the latter.

Besides Chambers’ musical partnership with Bobby Hutcherson, which significantly highlighted a variety of Chambers’ original compositions, he was also featured on several other landmark recordings for Blue Note during the 1960s. In his own assessment, Chambers expressed favor for some of those recordings, noting that they would highlight his playing best, while others were more highly regarded by the jazz community.

Let’s put it this way: The sessions that I enjoyed myself on and I feel I interpreted well are different from the ones most often named by others. A lot of people talk about sessions that I don’t even like. But Sam Rivers’ *Contours* [1965] is one of my favorites, Bobby Hutcherson’s *Oblique* [1967], Chick Corea’s first session, *Tones For Joan’s Bones* [Atlantic, 1968], *Charles Mingus and Friends in Concert* [1972], Wayne Shorter’s *Etcetera* [1965].

Two selections from the recordings Chambers’ cited as favorites of his, “Etcetera” by Wayne Shorter and “Tones For Joan’s Bones” by Chick Corea, will be part of the discussion of music examples in Chapter 3.

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33 Micallef, *Joe Chambers*, 112.
The musical collaborations with Wayne Shorter certainly marked another milestone in Joe Chambers’ career, even though Chambers did not contribute his own compositions to these recordings. Shorter had been working frequently with Elvin Jones as the drummer for his solo recordings during the 1960s, but chose Chambers to be the featured drummer on four of his mid-sixties Blue Note albums (Shorter recorded a total of thirteen albums during the 1960s), including the aforementioned Etcetera (recorded in 1965, but not released until 1980), The All Seeing Eye (1965), Adam’s Apple (1966) (which featured one of Shorter’s best-known compositions, “Footprints”), and Schizophrenia (1967).34 Chambers also worked on several recordings with pianist Andrew Hill after he had just released his arguably most well-received solo recording, Point of Departure (1964), which featured an all-star group including drummer Tony Williams. On the following album, Andrew Hill’s Andrew!!! (1964) Chambers played drums, and worked with Hill again on Pax (recorded 1965, but not released until 1975), and Compulsion (1966), which is particularly interesting because the group was highlighted by the addition of two hand percussionists, which was a still a novelty for jazz recordings.35 Joe Henderson’s Mode for Joe (1966), and McCoy Tyner’s Tender Moments (1967) also featured slightly larger ensembles, a septet and a nonet, a fact

34 After he had left Art Blakey’s Jazz Messengers in 1964, Shorter most prominently had been associated with Miles Davis and the group that became known at Davis’ “second great quintet.” Simultaneously, he started to advance in his own solo career on the Blue Note label, and produced a series of albums that featured drummer Elvin Jones, namely Night Dreamer, Julu and Speak No Evil, all in 1964. Tony Williams, who was a member of Miles Davis’ quintet between 1963 and 1969, was the drummer on Shorter’s The Soothsayer (1965). Shorter’s “Footprints” is widely known from Miles Davis’ rendition of the song on his recording Miles Smiles (1966).

35 Compulsion featured Renaud Simmons on conga drums and Nadi Quamar on percussion.
that called for a different approach in Chambers’ rhythmic accompaniment in relation to large number of small-group recordings in which he was involved previously.

In terms of historic appreciation, Chambers is well aware that his work as a drummer during the 1960s particularly awarded him the status for which he is primarily recognized today. Considered by many to be an extraordinary session drummer for a plethora of seminal Blue Notes recordings of the 1960s (the most important dates being listed in the previous discussion) he nevertheless emphatically points to his accomplishments as a composer throughout his career, a combination of skills that was rather unusual during the 1960s, since most drummer during that time did produce original compositions or specific arrangements. In this context, he remembered an anecdote from an Eric Dolphy recording session for the album *Out To Lunch*, which took place during February 1964. Despite the fact that Tony Williams was the drummer for this recording, Dolphy nevertheless asked Chambers to join the session and present his composition “Mirrors,” to the group to record it, a tune that Freddie Hubbard would go on to release just a few months later for his album *Breaking Point!.*

Remember a record by Eric Dolphy called *Out To Lunch?* I went to the rehearsal for that. Eric Dolphy told me to come to rehearsal—I wasn’t on it—but he told me to come, and he told me to bring music. And he told me to bring “Mirrors,” which I did. He said “I want you to bring that and I want you to show this to Alfred Lions.” And I did, and I remember Tony, he was in awe. He was in awe of me, coming up there with the music, because there was no drummers doing that. I mean, maybe Max [Roach],
but no other drummers were doing this. To me, it was nothing. I just brought the tune. But Eric was trying to get me in. These people wanted to record me, Blue Note, and I . . . I just didn’t have any drive, business sense, pushing myself. It’s amazing when I think about it. Eric put me in position, Freddie put me in position, they recorded my music, and the CEO’s came to me, and I was like . . . ok . . . and I just forgot about it, amazing.36

The missed opportunity to record as a leader for Blue Note, however, does not negate the fact that Chambers’ recorded many of his own compositions for the label, as previously highlighted. This fact particularly distinguishes Chambers as a well-rounded, highly sophisticated musician whose total body of work goes far and beyond his achievements as a drummer, but characterizes him as musical artist beyond stereotypical demarcations.

1.3.4.1 Recordings with Non-Blue Note Artists

particularly notable among Chambers’ recording credits with artists outside the realm of Blue Note is Chick Corea’s album *Tones for Joan’s Bones*, released by Atlantic Records in 1968. This album, that was later reissued under the name *Inner Space* in 1973 (which besides Chambers also featured two previously unissued songs with Grady Tate on drums, and two performances from a Hubert Laws recording from a previous date), marks pianist Chick Corea’s debut as a leader, and initiated the musical starting

36 Chambers, interview, August 31, 2013.
point to one of the most acclaimed careers in jazz. Jazz producer Michael Cuscuna, who wrote the liner notes to the 1973 compilation *Inner Space*, considered Chambers’ contributions therein to be vastly underrated. “In terms of being a drummer, he was very much overshadowed by Elvin Jones and Tony Williams. But a closer attention to his work reveals that he is one of the most musical drummers you could ever want to hear.”

Hence, the historic significance of this recording that became an essential contribution to the evolution of modern jazz of the 1960s can also be considered a highpoint in Joe Chambers’ early career.

An interesting collaboration between Chambers, Corea and pianist Joe Zawinul unfolded shortly thereafter, when they were all part of Miles Davis’ legendary *In A Silent Way* (1969) recordings. While Tony Williams played drums on the majority of compositions and Jack DeJohnette on several others, two previously unreleased songs from this session that took place between 1968 and 1969 actually featured Joe Chambers playing drums on “The Ghetto Walk” and “Early Minor,” with Corea on piano and Zawinul on organ. Chambers worked again with Zawinul, playing percussion on the 1970 recording *Zawinul*, released on Atlantic in 1971. This recording also included Wayne Shorter on saxophone and Miroslav Vitous on bass, whose 1970 album, *Infinite Search*, featured Joe Chambers on the track “Epilogue.” As pivotal as Chambers’ collaborations on the Blue Note recordings were, his musical collaboration on *Zawinul*

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38 These tracks were part of the 2001 Columbia-release *The Complete In a Silent Way Sessions*.

39 Miroslav Vitous’ *Infinite Search*, originally released on the Embryo label, was re-released on Atlantic in 1972 under the name *Mountain In The Clouds*. On this album, Chambers played drums on the tune, “Cerecka.”
anticipated the formation of the group, Weather Report, since Zawinul, Shorter and Vitous were founding members, and thereby representing another seminal milestone of the postbop developments since the 1960s.

1.3.5 M’Boom

In 1970, Chambers’ mentor, Max Roach, invited him to join forces when Roach assembled M’Boom, an all-star percussion ensemble that originally included Ray Brooks, Omar Clay, Fred King, Ray Mantilla and Warren Smith (adding Kenyatta Abdul-Rahman for the studio recordings). Roach was looking to combine the improvisational essence of African-American musical heritage with an artistic “move into new melodic and harmonic variations.” The group, Roach emphasized, “reflected what we call American music, or jazz if you will – the improvisational thing,” and was conceived with the intention to artistically advance this musical legacy. “Not like Stockhausen, which is wonderful,” as Roach remarked in pointing out his group’s aesthetic direction, “but the way we deal with our music, with Charlie Parker, Duke Ellington, that style of

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Steve Berrios, he is an important cat. He is Puerto-Rican, and he the only Hispanic who could play near authentic jazz drums and the Latin. That is rare breed. He was well versed in all Afro-Cuban, timbales, congas, shekere, bata, all that. And he played jazz drums, that is rare. He’s gone. Maybe even equally as rare is to have a jazz cat who know the vocabulary of the Cuban music. Chambers, interview, August 29, 2013.

42 Ibid.
thing.\footnote{Fox, Max Roach, 79.} Roach had chosen the collective of highly regarded percussionists not only for their superb instrumental skills, but also for their ability to arrange and compose music for M’Boom.\footnote{An explanation for the etymological source and inspirational background of the group’s name can be found of Joe Chambers’ personal website: “M’Boom (pronounced ‘em-boom) has a double meaning: it is an onomatopoeia, or “sound word” that sounds like the object of description, i.e. boom, pow, crack, etc., it is also the name of a secret order of drummers in Northern Senegal.” See “M’Boom,” on Joe Chambers’ official website, accessed August 25, 2013, http://www.josephachambers.com/?page_id=222.} Chambers, who had always admired the wide range of Roach’s musical skills and his diversified artistic endeavors, benefitted from the opportunity to write and arrange music for M’Boom, but also fully immersed himself in the study of mallet and percussion instruments.\footnote{John Murph, “The Big Picture,” JazzTimes - America’s Jazz Magazine, December 10, 2012. http://jazztimes.com/articles/62657-joe-chambers-the-big-picture (accessed February 11, 2013).} His background in piano proved beneficial when Chambers first started to play pitched percussion instruments: “I’m really becoming a considerable mallet player now, I’d think. I didn’t play the mallets before M’Boom. I started with the piano, I’m a pianist from way back, so it was easy, I know the keyboard.”\footnote{Chambers, interview, August 29, 2013.} The ability, ultimately the artistic necessity of all members of M’Boom to play different percussive instruments was fundamental to Roach’s original conception behind the group:

When I first approached CBS [record label] with the idea, they said

“What! Eight guys on drum sets. You gotta be out of your mind!” and I

said, “Well, it’s not drum sets. We’re going to play the total percussion

family, all the mallet instruments—xylophone and marimba and those—
as well as timpani and all the rest.”\footnote{Fox, Max Roach, 79.}
In fact, Chambers and the rest of the group took a one-year sabbatical to develop and rehearse the music and learn the necessary techniques to play the arsenal of percussion instruments required by the complex compositions and involved improvisations: “When we [M’Boom] got together in 1970, we all had to study all of the percussion instruments. That is when I started to get into the vibes. Everybody had to play everything,” Chambers recalled. The group toured and recorded under Max Roach’ leadership until he died in 2007, but Chambers and the remaining veteran members were determined to continue the collective legacy of this unique ensemble. “We put out about four or five records,” Chambers remembered, and points towards the most recent developments concerning the group: “My next project is M’Boom and strings, the percussion and strings, with a bass and a saxophone player, and a double-string quartet.”\(^{49}\)

Simultaneously, he hopes to publish a collection of selected M’Boom scores: “I’m trying to finalize a book of M’Boom compositions, I’m trying to get it reprinted.” Aesthetically, Chambers elaborates, he is looking to investigate new concepts of texture and sound.

> “Now, we explored the mallets, but we haven’t explored the membranes.
> Just membranes, just drums, just the drum sounds, the timpani sound, the sound of the set, minus the cymbals. Just membranes, you

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\(^{49}\) Chambers, interview, August 29, 2013.

Referring to the collaboration of M’Boom with a string quartet, Chambers points to the potential line-up of the group: “M’Boom—whoever is left, and a string quartet of young players from New York, the Publique Quartet. And Ira Coleman on bass, and Craig Handy on reed.” Ibid.
understand, the color of membranes. That’s what I was referring to. And we still haven’t explored that yet.”

The continuous search for new musical territories was not only a characteristic for the combined, artistic efforts of M’Boom, but strongly reflects Chambers’ characteristic aspiration in search for new ways of artistic explorations, a fact that has permeated his whole career.

1.3.6 The 1970s to the Present

When Chambers unexpectedly faced a decline of working opportunities as a drummer at the onset of a new decade, his compositional skills would become increasingly valuable.

As things went on, I found out all of those recordings I was doing in the ’60s, it stopped, it dried up. By the time the ’70s came, it was over. Those dates that I was doing, they weren’t coming in. I’m saying, “Oh, what’s going on, the well is dried up for that.”

Consequently, Chambers started to shift his focus from predominately working as a freelance drummer toward more writing and composing, skills he had developed for years dating back to studying composition at the Philadelphia Conservatory and American University in D.C. Remembering his struggle to secure work during the 1970s,

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50 Chambers, interview, August 29, 2013.
51 Ibid.
52 In reference to his own background as a conservatory-trained musician, Chambers pointed out that many other musician of his era, like Ron Carter, Herbie Hancock, Stanley Cowell or Richard Davis all had conservatory training. At the same time, Chambers criticizes the notion that Wynton Marsalis
Chambers points to the mechanisms of the music business, and how those negatively affected his career. As a leader of his own group, he felt overlooked by clubs because of their preference for ensembles led by horn players or pianists.

Then you begin to see how things in term of business are—who’s getting calls, who can take bands into the club. I used to try to get gigs, and I noticed they knew me, but they were shying away from me. They would get a horn player, piano player. Equal name value, but these are the people who were getting the gigs. And I’m saying, “Shit.” Gradually it dawnded on me that I need to emphasize the other aspects of my skills, like the writing and arranging. I started out with “Mirrors,” 1964. It’s a learning process. Early on when I was one of “the” drummers on the scene, the composing it was [sic] secondary in the minds of everyone else.

Even today, right to this very day [. . .]. I talk about the drums, but I’m gonna emphasize other things, orchestration. Once I get to talk about the drums, it becomes more social.53

(particularly) was so exuberantly praised for his musical background in classical training, which essentially was simply a business strategy to “cross over” into different segments of the music market.

Everybody made this big thing about Marsalis when he came. Wynton was set up, his whole thing was set up. “Oh he did this classical stuff with his trumpet etc.,” but people were doing this all along. All the guys went to conservatories, especially in my era, Ron Carter, Herbie, conservatory-trained people, they have studied, but they didn’t learn it there. You don’t learn how to play jazz in a conservatory, I tell you that. You do not. In a conservatory, I tell the students, you can learn how to read a little better, improve your ear, you can orchestrate, but you don’t learn how to play in a conservatory. Stanley Cowell, he went to Oberlin, Richard Davis. It’s not a new thing. I’m not an academic. I put time in certain things, but I don’t call myself an academic. The stuff that I’m putting out, I learned on my own creativity. So this thing with Wynton, he did this classical stuff, and now he is in jazz, “Big deal.” But that’s marketing though, because when you do that you are crossing-over into a different market. Chambers, interview, August 29, 2013.

53 Chambers, interview, August 29, 2013.
Despite these difficulties, Chambers was still able to secure a certain amount of work, although less than in previous years, and was active as a performer during the 1970s and onward. He frequently toured and recorded as a member of M’Boom, played with Charles Mingus on the aforementioned Charles Mingus and Friends in Concert, was a member of the Super Jazz Trio alongside pianist Tommy Flanagan and bassist Reggie Workman, and worked with Chet Baker, Steve Grossman, David Murray and Stanley Cowell and Joe Henderson’s big band, among many others. With the release of The Almoravid in 1973 on the Muse label, Chambers eventually had produced his first record under his own name, which featured four of his originals, including the title track. Cedar Walton, Cecil McBee and Richard Davis were among the collaborators on The Almoravid, and particularly Woody Shaw on trumpet, who Chambers described as “the sequence” with regard to Shaw following in the footsteps of Freddie Hubbard’s musical legacy.

Over a span of more than forty years, Chambers has since recorded seventeen albums as a leader or co-leader, including his most recent work Joe Chambers Moving Pictures Orchestra from 2012, released on Savant Records.


Another interesting collaboration between Chambers and Charles Mingus was Mingus’ “Three Worlds Of Drums” for his 1979 album Me, Myself an Eye. The thirty-minute work particularly highlighted the rhythmic contributions of three drummers, including Joe Chambers and also featured Steve Gadd and Danny Richmond on drums, the latter being a longtime collaborator of Mingus. Recording references cited by Rick Mattingly, "Chambers, Joe," Grove Music Online [Jazz, 2002], accessed October 15, 2013, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/1081000.

55 Chambers, interview, August 31, 2013.
1.4 Teaching Career and Philosophical Background: Jazz – a Social History

For Chambers, the history of the drums and the evolution of the modern drum set are inseparably connected with the history of jazz at large and the social implications in particular that shaped its course. In order to highlight Chambers’ definition of “jazz as a social history,” the following section gives an overview over some of the most significant historical developments that, for Chambers, greatly influenced the evolution of jazz, but are largely neglected in the historic discourse.56

In addition to his career as a drummer and composer, Chambers has also been an active music educator since the late 1960s, having worked in various colleges and universities in the United States, including an 18-year appointment at The New School for Jazz and Contemporary Music in New York City and a 4-year tenure as the first Thomas S. Kenan Distinguished Professor of Jazz in the Department of Music at the University of North Carolina, Wilmington. Chambers’ teaching duties included directing percussion ensembles, teaching improvisational classes, jazz history courses, and seminars in arranging and orchestration. Furthermore, he has traveled the country extensively as a sought-after clinician and speaker at numerous college campuses and conferences, like the annual JEN conference.57 Interestingly enough, Chambers notes that teaching drum set was not among his favorite assignments.

Actually, I don’t like to teach drums, by the way. I don’t. I did it when I came here [UNCW] reluctantly. But part of my instruction in teaching

56 Chambers, interview, August 28, 2013.
57 JEN refers to Jazz Educators Network, an organization that hosts America’s largest annual conference for jazz educators. The JEN conference is the successor of the now defunct IAJE.
“drums,” or what we call the drum set, the multiple percussion instrument, part of my sequence is the study of the rhythms of the hemisphere. You got to learn the Latin rhythms, *rumba, mamb*, *pochanga, guaguanc*o. All drummers have to acquaint themselves with that. Are you familiar with that? Can you play them? In my teaching of the so-called “drums” we get into the history of the set, how it was created, and that is acculturation and syncretism.\(^{58}\)

The reasons for this surprising resentment towards teaching the drums—especially in light of the fact that Chambers built a highly successful career largely due to his achievements as a drummer—are multifaceted. On one hand, Chambers defines jazz as a “blend of musical elements that combines European, African and to some degree American-Indian elements whose intrinsic ingredient is improvisation.”\(^{59}\) Hence, the teaching of the drums goes hand-in-hand with an in-depth exploration of the history of jazz as a continuum. He proposes a jazz curriculum that is divided into two building blocks: the history of jazz from its earliest beginnings (which includes the study of the social and musical implications that shaped the evolution of work songs, minstrelsy, spirituals, songs of the Underground Railroad, ragtime and the Swing era), and a second block that covers jazz from WWII up to the present. More importantly however, Chambers’ historic assessment of the developments that led to the music we call

\(^{58}\) Chambers, interview, August 29, 2013.

\(^{59}\) Chambers, interview, August 28, 2013.
‘jazz’ today in fact starts with examining the indigenous African culture that began in Ancient Egypt and Sudan.\textsuperscript{60}

On the other hand, Chambers expressed the notion that the African side of jazz is neglected, last but not least exemplified by the neglect of the drums. For Chambers, this is ultimately the consequence of a “Eurocentric attitude” that is instilled in “the mindset of the overall culture” that values the classical traditions of Western music over the legacy of roughly one century of jazz.\textsuperscript{61} The neglect of the drums is equally reflected in the struggle many drummers had experienced by the lack of recognition and support from the music business. Chambers points to drummer Tony Williams’ group \textit{Lifetime} that was seminal for the evolution of the fusion style during the 1970s. He argues that Williams, despite being the group’s leader and by many considered to be the epitome of modern jazz drumming (due to, if nothing else, his exposure in Miles Davis’ quintet during the 1960s), was largely ignored by the music industry, which instead pushed the solo career of \textit{Lifetime} guitarist John McLaughlin. “But the drums are not considered as significant, that’s very important. Max Roach, all the drummers who were out there dealt with all of this in many ways,” Chambers concludes.\textsuperscript{62}

Regarding his personal experiences teaching the history of jazz in the academic world, Chambers criticizes that jazz too often is reduced to a series of names, dates and an overall presentation of a seemingly linear narrative where one event almost

\textsuperscript{60} Specifically, Chambers points to the commencement of massive migrations from these regions to western Africa during the eighth century and onward, and emphasizes the importance of understanding the interrelations of the migrations and their influences on the origin of the western-African empires and their social and cultural and transformation after the Islamization, such as the Songhay and the Ghanaian empires. Chambers, interview, August 28, 2013.
\textsuperscript{61} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{62} Ibid.
inevitably led to the next, as if the historic currents where not interconnected by the social context of the past and present. The intellectual discourse with jazz as a “social history” is of paramount significance for Chambers, and simultaneously is the guiding principle for his teaching philosophy.63 “It’s a social study,” Chambers summarizes, “its American history, African-American history, history of recording industry, history of theater, all of that in composite.”64

Expanding on the far-reaching ramifications of the historic origins of jazz since the African migrations, Chambers highlights two terms that, for him, ultimately exemplify the socio-political and spiritual background against which African musical traditions unfolded in the Americas: acculturation and syncretism.65 Acculturation refers to the process of “adaptation” of Africans who were brought to the United States, while syncretism stands for the “diffusion of religions and religious rights,” as Chambers

63 Chambers, interview, August 28, 2013.
64 Ibid.
65 Dena Epstein investigated the musical traditions of “acculturated” African-Americans in the United States before the Civil War. In chronological order starting with the early 1800s, the study documents the “transplantation” of instruments, including counter-evidence against the notion that African drums were not present in the U.S., and explores stylist traits of secular and sacred black folk music. For further explorations, refer to Dena J. Epstein, Sinful Tunes and Spirituals: Black Folk Music to the Civil War, pbk. ed. (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press), 2003.

In this context, the term syncretism is used to denote the fusion of two religions or spiritual beliefs into a new religion or system of cultural and spiritual identity. The Santeria and Candomble religions, and corresponding musical practices, in the Caribbean and Brazil are prime examples of this fusion of African traditions with Catholicism, particularly with regard to the melding of Catholic saints with Orishas of the Western African Yoruba traditions. Bruno Nettl, musicologist and essentially one of the founding fathers of ethnomusicology, refers to syncretism as a process rather than a concept. Nettl points out that while in ethnomusicology, syncretism has also been employed to investigate Middle Eastern and Indian music and the “hybrids” of world music in the late 20th Century, the term most prominently is used describes the fusion of African-derived musical practices in the Americas with the European tradition. Compare with Bruno Nettl, The Study Of Ethnomusicology: Thirty-one Issues And Concepts, 2nd ed. (Urbana: University Of Illinois Press, 2005), 440-441.

points out, particularly with regard to the melding of Catholic traditions with the religious traditions of African origin in the Caribbean and Latin America.\textsuperscript{66} The “slave routes from Africa to the New World,” Chambers highlights, are “extremely important” in order to understand where the abducted African slaves originally came from and where they were brought to in the New World, because the different origins and the different destinations were crucial for the development of the music, and last but not least, the cultural and aesthetic evolution of the drums in the Americas.\textsuperscript{67} The reason why the significance of the slave routes is so crucial to Chambers—especially when considering his standpoint that this issue is perhaps deliberately ignored in jazz pedagogy in the United States—is because the consequences of the these developments ultimately transformed the music on the American continent into the various incarnations of the African-influenced styles existing today. “So for example, in Gridley’s book,” Chambers notes, “he doesn’t deal with Africa, everybody runs from Africa.”\textsuperscript{68} This is a fundamental aspect of his criticism, as Chambers strongly supports the argument that the music of the Caribbean and Brazilian traditions and the evolution of African-American forms of musical expressions are all interconnected by their African heritage, and therefore must be studied in relation to each other.

\textsuperscript{66} Chambers, interview, August 28, 2013.
\textsuperscript{67} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{68} Ibid. Here, Chambers alludes to Mark Gridley’s \textit{Jazz Styles}, which is one of the most frequently used textbooks in jazz survey classes across college campuses throughout the United States. See Mark Gridley, \textit{Jazz Styles: History and Analysis}, 11\textsuperscript{th} ed. (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Pearson, 2011).
A key element for the evaluation of the historic developments on the African-American side, the process of the social and musical evolution Chambers described with “acculturation,” was the formation of black cultural expression at Congo Square in New Orleans in the early 1800s. During the Haitian revolution led by Toussaint Louverture, and particular in the aftermath of Haiti declaring independence in 1804, many white landowners from Haiti had fled to New Orleans, and with them came their slaves and their culture, too. For Chambers, the fact that even Napoleon’s troops failed to penetrate Haiti, which led to the sale of the Louisiana Territory to the U.S., further highlights the tremendous revolutionary spirit that the Haitians were inspired with. He concludes that during the gatherings on Congo Square,

They weren’t just dancing, they were galvanizing the people. And the Haitians were putting this revolutionary spirit into the region [. . .]. It got so bad that [. . .] They said “well look, this is getting to outta hand, we gonna have to ban . . . close down . . . .” They closed down Congo Square and banned drumming. Anybody caught playing drums, you know – like that – they said “no, no, no.”

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69 Chambers, interview, August 28, 2013.
“But,” Chambers stresses, “who was gathering there?” New Orleans was a “polyglot,” he emphasizes, a cultural melting pot that due to its location as a port city on the Mississippi River and the Gulf of Mexico became the gateway for the American westward migration. Chambers specifically points to people from Haiti among the crowds gathering at Congo Square, emphasizing the significance of their presence for the spiritual energy that was unfolding there. Chambers, interview, August 28, 2013. For a summary of the historic developments that happened at Congo Square, refer to with Scott Knowles DeVeaux and Gary Giddins, Jazz (New York: W.W. Norton, 2009), 81.

70 For further details on the influence of the Haitian revolution and its influence on the developments at Congo Square, also refer to DeVeaux and Giddins, Jazz, 81.

71 Chambers, interview, August 28, 2013.
According to Chambers, the demonization of the drums as a threat and their subsequent banning has created the notion that the drum itself is the enemy, a mindset that prevails until this day and is representative for the “Eurocentric” attitude. Most importantly however, Chambers concludes, is the fact that the banning of the drums transformed the psycho-spirituality of African-Americans and their musical practices.

So without the drums, they develop a different psycho-spirituality, culturally, so it becomes more singing. But also the set, the drum set comes out of New Orleans, comes out of the brothels. But that Congo Square situation is very key in the psycho-spirituality for the development of the people and the music. Without those drums, they were not able to call upon their Orishas like the Caribbean people were doing. So that’s a very key thing. Acculturation means the adaptation, the way we find it here in the United States, it’s more acculturation. There is syncretism, but it’s more adaptation. So, those are key issues, that’s musical and a social history. When I’m teaching the history, I start with that.  

The socio-historic background outlined above not only provides a summary of some of the cornerstones on which Chambers’ teaching philosophy is built, but likewise elucidates his growing disinterest in playing the drums as such. Ultimately, the

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72 Chambers, interview, August 28, 2013. Dena Epstein suggests that while the notion that “African dancing in Place Congo was discontinued sometime before the Civil War is undoubtedly correct,” an exact date for the banning of dancing and drumming at Congo Square is debatable. Pointing to the lack of clear evidence, she summarized: “We can hope that additional documents will yet be found to resolve a number of clouded points: the date when dancing was first banned in Place Congo, the date when it was resumed, and the date of its final, permanent discontinuance.” See Epstein, Sinful Tunes and Spirituals, 134-35.

73 Chambers, interview, August 28, 2013.
consequences of what Chambers referred to as “demonization” of the drums and the deeply anchored “Eurocentric attitude” that provided the social foundation for such neglect of African cultural elements, have had profoundly negative impact on the life of jazz musicians in the United States, including – last but not least - Chambers himself. Consequently, the effects have made it particularly difficult for a drummer to find his niche in the music business, even for such an accomplished musician like Joe Chambers. But despite these difficulties and the notion that Chambers has yet not been credited enough for the seminal role he played regarding the further development of postbop drumming, even more so for his musical contributions beyond just drumming, Chapter 1 has outlined a career that has been incredible successful and ultimately has awarded Chambers a place among the elite of America’s jazz musicians, in and in itself yet another chapter of what Chambers referred to as “jazz – a social history.

1.5 Jazz and the Music Industry

For Chambers, the consequences of what he describes as the “Eurocentric attitude,” along with the social realities that resulted from the developments Chambers outlined with acculturation and syncretism, have had various negative implications beyond the neglect of the drums and the misappropriation of the African elements of jazz in Western culture. Chambers points out in particular that the division into genres based on race became an instrumental tool for the music industry to specifically target racially segregated groups and create or abandon “styles” based on market trends.
But you also had segregated radio: white radio played “hit parade” which later became Top 40; black radio played race records. Race records initially came from the 1920s, featured artists like Ma Rainey, Bessie Smith, and blues. Race record music was music for the black audience. But race records died out in the ’20s because of the popularity of the big bands, but re-emerged in the 1940s. Because with the no-dance policy, black people needed to have some dance music.74

Chambers’ reference to the “no dance policy” of the 1940s emphasizes to him one of the most significant—yet often overlooked—social developments behind the materialization of bebop. 75 For Chambers, the emergence of the small jazz ensemble as the centerpiece of performance practice of the modern jazz era was triggered by the levying of the 1944 Federal Cabaret Tax, enforced by the American government on entertainment venues that wanted to retain their dance policy. The consequences for the extremely popular large jazz orchestras and the booming ballroom culture of the Swing Era were devastating, since many of the ballrooms could not afford to pay this tax.

The ballrooms had to pay 30% over and above what the clubs where already paying, in order to keep their dance policy. They couldn’t, and this is what closed the ballrooms and killed the big bands.76

74 Chambers, interview, August 29, 2013.
75 Interestingly enough, neither Grove Music Online, nor Scott DeVeaux’s Jazz or Mark Gridley’s Jazz Styles mention the Federal Cabaret Tax as one of the reasons behind the decline of the dance bands or the consequences of this tax for the emergence of bebop.
76 Chambers, interview, August 29, 2013.
For Chambers, this development significantly contributed to the exodus of jazz from the American mainstream.\textsuperscript{77} Simultaneously, the imposed tax and its consequences also counter-argues the notion that it was the evolution of aesthetic characteristics of modern jazz as an art form—the virtuosic playing and dense texture—that prevented the audience from dancing, when it may in fact have actually been the 30% surtax.\textsuperscript{78}

Conversely, Chambers argues, when the term “race records” was eventually dropped by the music industry after World War II, it allowed record companies to fuse elements of popular African-American styles (particularly what subsequently was referred as rhythm-and-blues) with the music preferred by the white mainstream, thereby creating a new market. Chambers specifically points to radio personality Alan Freed who was instrumental for promoting the cross-over style between rhythm-and-blues and county music that subsequently became known as rock ‘n’ roll: “Freed suggested to get these white artists to cover black rhythm-and-blues tunes from the race records.”\textsuperscript{79} The result was the creation of “the rock ‘n’ roll image and the rock ‘n’ roll artist,” Chambers summarizes. For him, this undermines the notion that “America has an adolescent mentality, Hollywood, flash and glitter,” a statement that significantly illustrates Chambers’ critical reflection upon the modern pop-culture that has


\textsuperscript{78} Also compare with Feinberg, \textit{The Joe Chambers Interview}, accessed December 4, 2013.

\textsuperscript{79} Expanding on the evolution of rock ‘n’ roll, Chambers remarked: Essentially, rock ‘n’ roll is the cover of the rhythm-and-blues, and artists like Hank Williams and Elvis Presley came to prominence as a consequence of this development, covering all of the rhythm-and-blues. That is his how rock ‘n’ roll came to be. The term itself comes from the lyrics of Wynonie Harris’ 1949 song “All She Wants to Do Is Rock.” Chambers, interview, August 29, 2013.
dominated the American musical landscape since the emergence of rock ‘n’ roll.\textsuperscript{80} While this “adolescent mentality” can also be the source of youthful energetic potential, its fusion with the music industry ultimately pushed the commercialization of the market to a level where “marketing and promo is more important than what you’re actually doing, you can see that today,” Chambers concludes.\textsuperscript{81} For him personally, the intertwined circumstances that nurtured the prevailing Eurocentric attitude and subsequently led to the neglect of the drums, in combination with the commercial mechanisms of the market and the unlimited control the music industry seems to exercise over musical arts, has led to his estrangement from the drums: “I’ve very ambivalent feelings now towards drums, about the whole thing and the social aspect. I’m getting away from it, I want to compose.”\textsuperscript{82}

Despite its demise from the American mainstream, jazz still had a considerable support system within the African-American community during the 1950s, particularly because of the urban neighborhood clubs and bars that still featured live jazz, albeit no longer for dancing. As opposed to the limited presence jazz has in the public eye in the 21\textsuperscript{st} Century, jazz was still very visible in American mainstream culture during the 1950s and into the 1960s. Its strong presence on the radio, the distribution of jazz records through the jukebox

\textsuperscript{80} Chambers, interview, August 29, 2013.
\textsuperscript{81} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{82} Ibid.
industry, and the flourishing television market were crucial for jazz’ visibility
during this time, as Chambers emphasizes.\textsuperscript{83}

Those were good times—the ’50s and ’60s were really good times for jazz,
jazz was very visible. You used to see it on TV. The TV shows, the late
night shows, they would have Steve Allen; we’re talking about Steve Allen,
Jack Parr. They would have jazz groups on there; Art Blakey and the
Messengers, Benny Golson. You see jazz groups.\textsuperscript{84}

At the same time, while the rapid expansion of the television market in the
United States helped to temporarily save jazz from fading from the musical
consciousness of the American mainstream, it also was crucial for the
enthronement of rock’ n’ roll on the summit of pop music. And therein lies one
of Chambers’ most severe criticisms of the music industry and the resulting
consequences for the aesthetics of jazz in particular. Specifically, Chambers
directs his critique toward the monotonous and rigid applications of rhythm in
pop music, a fact that he considers almost a mutilation of rhythm, in dramatic
opposition to aesthetic quality and energetic momentum of rhythm in jazz.
Referring to the music presented on the Dick Clark-produced television show,

\textsuperscript{83} David H. Rosenthal assessment of the visibility of jazz supports Chambers’ argument, particularly in
relation to the sale of singles between 1950 and 1970 to bars and jukeboxes, both being “crucial points of
exposure to jazz” during this time. According to Rosenthal, who cites an interview with Michael Cuscana
as his source for this data, Blue Note’s average sale in singles during this time period was “three thousand
to jukebox operators, plus another one or two thousand to individuals in black neighborhoods.”
Simultaneously, the jukeboxes during the 1950s and 1960s “were almost as important a means of
2, 2014).

\textsuperscript{84} Chambers, interview, August 28, 2013.
*American Bandstand,* and the iconic phrase “I’ll give it a 95 because it has a great beat and it’s easy to dance to,” Chambers emphatically remarks: “Rhythmically it is an absolute joke—the stuff doesn’t swing, they don’t even know what swinging is.” For Chambers, this is not only an embodiment of aesthetic degeneration, but it directly affects the musical legacy of the past and present. Reproaching the repercussions of streamlined pop music aesthetics, Chambers concludes: “They’ve set the instrument back 400 years, the drum set. They’ve completely nullified everything that people like Max Roach have done.”

Beyond Chambers’ critique of the music business and the intertwined consequences that the rapidly increasing commercialization had for the cultural advancement and legacy of jazz, another issue has similarly shaped his defiant stance toward American pop culture and the racial divide of the American society. The void caused by the 30% surtax that “killed” the ballrooms ultimately left African-Americans without any mainstream dance music, Chambers argues. Consequently, jazz’s transformation from the anchor of popular music to “becoming like bohemian ‘beatnik’ music,” as Chambers points out, ultimately led to an alienation of jazz from its support system, once firmly rooted in the African-American community. More importantly, however, Chambers points to the irreversible consequences that the urban rebellions of the Civil Rights era had for the detachment of jazz from its social and cultural core, and

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86 Ibid.
87 Ibid.
88 Ibid.
for the African-American community altogether. Violent conflicts like the Watts riots in Los Angeles in 1965, along with similar racial tensions in other American cities during the 1960s, significantly destroyed the social and economic infrastructure of the affected African-American communities. For jazz, the repercussions were devastating: “The riots in the 60s destroyed the infrastructure of the nightlife and club circuit in their own neighborhoods,” Chambers summarizes, and “by the end of the 60s, there were no clubs in the black neighborhood anymore.” Furthermore, educational programs particularly in music and the arts fell victim to the strained budgets of the communities during the aftermath of the 1960s riots. Consequently, teenagers growing up in these areas had to resort to other forms of socio-cultural expression, and hip hop, Chambers believes, filled that vacuum for many youngsters.

These kids didn’t learn essentials of music. They were unconnected to it. They took out instrument programs; they weren’t playing any music in these schools, that’s why they started to create this hip hop, this rapping and rhyme, rhythmic rhyme stuff. And it’s not new; it’s instinctual, because it comes out of the Griots, African storytelling.

Chambers condemns the music industry that for him took advantage of the cultural uprooting of the youth, exploiting whatever trend they deemed commercially most profitable, including hip hop and rock’ n’ roll.

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89 Chambers, interview, August 29, 2013.
90 Ibid.

What they have done is, they—the business people—put the worst elements that comes out of the black neighborhood and pushed it right up front, this gangster rap and all of that stuff. And anything else is pushed back. This is what’s going on . . . rock ‘n’ roll, hip-hop stars, look at it. You put years into studying how to play an instrument, how to orchestrate, for what?!\textsuperscript{91}

The fundamental critique of a system that not only controls the economic infrastructure, but substantially influences the aesthetic developments of music comes full circle here for Chambers, from the Cabaret Tax of the 1940s to rock ‘n’ roll and gangster rap.

But his unambiguous discontent with an industry that favors profit over aesthetics and image over ability further extends to the discrepancy of the distribution of performance royalties through airplay on public radio, an issue that has been controversially debated for decades now. Chambers criticizes the fact that the performance rights groups in the United States, such as BMI, ASCAP or SESAC “don not monitor public radio.”\textsuperscript{92} So far, only songwriters and copyright holders are compensated for their work based on catalog entries, but Chambers—in unison with the proposed Performance Rights Act \textsuperscript{93}—demands a fair compensation that extends to the actual performers responsible for the

\textsuperscript{91} Chambers, interview, August 29, 2013.
\textsuperscript{92} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{93} The Performance Rights Act, originally proposed in 2009, represents the legislative measure that would require FM and AM radio broadcasters to compensate all recordings artists when their music is played on the radio. However, the bill ultimately did not come to a full vote in neither the House – nor the Senate Judiciary Committee. Compare with http://www.riaa.com/newsitem.php?id=7BE7264B-5BC4-C823-777D-73DSB410805A.
product, and not merely its copyright owner and the revenue generated by the radio stations through advertisement.

Ultimately, Chambers’ resolute critique of the music industry, and his ambivalence toward the drums, characterize a complex personality whose many years of dedicated work that created inspiring music were driven by a genuine and incredibly strong passion for music.

When you face all of this, you’re thinking, “Why am I even trying to do this?” it’s got to be that you love music; it gets to that point after a while. So it can’t be about money. The music is a part of me, I was pulled to the music, it was meant to be, a part of me. Almost like “no choice.” It’s like they say, “an instrument picks you.”

Reflecting upon the preceding quote, the narrative of Joe Chambers’ career as outlined in Chapter 1 certainly confirms his self-assessment. The intersections between artistic explorations, monetary necessities, social developments and business realities have influenced Chambers’ career throughout, just like these parameters are constant variables determining the careers for all musicians in Western cultures. Chambers’ critique of the industry and the consequences for musical arts and the individual has clearly emphasized this dichotomy between arts and the music business. “Art and music is in spheres, but then there’s business, Chambers’ states, “neither the twain shall never meet, music and

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94 Chambers, interview, August 29, 2013.
business.”\textsuperscript{95} And yet, the quality and lasting imprint of Chambers’ work stands for itself. A closer look at some of his achievements particularly as a drummer, which is the focus of this study, is intended to provide further insights into the career of this seminal musician.

\textsuperscript{95} Chambers, interview, August 29, 2013.
CHAPTER 2
BACKGROUND

Following the portrait of Chambers’ musical biography, the introduction into his teaching philosophy and an excursion into his critical views on the music industry, this next chapter outlines a selective view on the specific aspects of the musical lineage of jazz between World War II and the apex of the avant-garde style in the 1960s. Conceived as the background to Chapters 3 and 4, Chapter 2 essentially presents highlights of those aesthetic contexts that formed the foundation out of which Chambers’ drumming style has evolved. This period yielded significant musical developments in jazz at large, but was particularly significant in the evolution of the modern drummer. During this time, the role of the drummer evolved from the fierce accompanist of the bebop era to the equal collaborator of the postbop and avant-garde styles. The reconstruction of musical hierarchies during the avant-garde had a radical effect on the work of many of the most important innovators in jazz. Most significant for the research presented herein, this reconstruction resulted in a redefinition of the rhythm section and a drastically increased level of freedom for all members of an ensemble, particularly the drums. For Chambers, as this chapter will show, the element of rhythm was perhaps the most important element of the dawning of the postbop era. The work of Chambers, who had thoroughly studied the drumming masters of the past, especially Max Roach and Philly Joe Jones, reached a highpoint during the 1960s, precisely the time period in which the radical changes of the avant-garde were unfolding.
As exemplified by a number of seminal recordings, some of which will be discussed in detail in Chapter III, Chambers musical contributions, deeply embedded in the aesthetic polarity between tradition and the avant-garde, continued to push forward the evolution of jazz styles, particularly in regard to the liberation of ensemble interplay, and further developed the role of a drummer as an equal creator within the improvisatory ensemble. In relation to the jazz style changes and their impact on Chambers’ career and aesthetic conceptions, Chapter 2 lays the historic foundation for the postbop developments upon which the discussion of Joe Chambers’ drumming style, analyzed in great detail in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4, is based.

2.1 Bebop - The Establishment of an Improvisatory Model

From the initial bebop model to the various hard bop styles, the emergence of modal jazz and asymmetric free-form experiments of the avant-garde, a trend of diversifying approaches towards interactive improvisation emerged as a response to the changing aesthetics. During the bebop era of the 1940s, a new formula for improvisation evolved out of symmetric song forms with tonal harmonic structures that were based predominately on diatonic key relationships. Highlighting the musical transition between the large jazz orchestras and the small groups of the bebop era, particularly with regard to the evolution of repertoire, Chambers points out:

In the big band era, their whole approach to jazz—music in general—was stock. Everything was contained, and they were interested in featuring singers who were singing these Broadway songs. So the main thing with
the big band was to get a hit with a singer. If you think arrangement—you know like a big band arrangement—its contained. When the small band element came in—Charlie Parker and these people—they used to work only uptown, Minton’s, Harlem. Then they started to work downtown in these places, the Angel Room, these are outta Harlem. So they were told to learn more of these standards songs out of the American Songbook. They weren’t told to do that, but it was suggested you’d be better of playing these songs. So that also started the trend to play these songs.

There’s a lot of good songs in that repertoire.96

The compositional basis for improvisation in bebop was threefold; it was formed via the adaptions of Tin Pan Alley songs (and the subsequent advancement of the 32-bar song form), the creation of “contrafacts” of preexisting, popular songs from the evolving canon of the “Great American Songbook” and the incorporation of blues-inspired works.97 The 32-bar form is comprised of an initial 8-measure A-section that introduces

96 Chambers, interview, August 31, 2013.
97 Tin Pan Alley is a reference to the highly popular music that was produced and distributed by the New York-based publishing industry that controlled music publishing and the emerging songwriting industry between the end of the 19th Century to the mid 20th Century (although the Great Depression and the subsequent consequences for the music industry in the United States suggest a decline of the Tin Pan Alley-produced dominance by the 1930s already). The developments that led to rise of and cemented the success of the Tin Pan Alley-economical complex are discussed in great detail by David Suisman, “The Sound of Money: Music, Machines, and Markets, 1890–1925” (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2002). http://search.proquest.com/docview/304791592?accountid=14553.

A contrafact is a common idiomatic form in jazz that is defined by compositions whose melodies are original, but the harmonies are based on a pre-existing chord progression. Those harmonies often were borrowed from popular songs that became standards in the “Great American Songbook” repertoire. Despite being a highly subjective categorization, a large canon of popular songs emerged from the Tin Pan Alley productions, Broadway musicals and Hollywood movies, which eventually became known under the umbrella of “Great American Songbook.” Compositions by Harold Arlen, Jerome Kern, Irving Berlin, Duke Ellington, Johnny Mercer, Cole Porter and the songwriter/lyricist duos of Rodgers and Heart, Rodgers and Hammerstein and, last but not least, George and Ira Gershwin are among the most popular songs of the Great American Songbook. For a critical discussion of the socio-cultural background that strongly
the melody. The A-section is then repeated, leading to a harmonically and melodically contrasting “bridge” section of equal length, while the final phrase is a recapitulation of the A-section, often with variations. Between an initial and final statement of the melody, in the jazz terminology often referred to as “head” or “chorus,” the soloist improvised over the cyclic repetition of a song’s chord progression. In the jazz terminology generally referred to as “changes,” the harmonic structure in bebop was often built on a rapid succession of one or two chords per measure. In reference to George Gershwin’s composition “I Got Rhythm,” the term “rhythm changes” evolved describing the most characteristic harmonic structure in bebop, a slightly abbreviated version of the chorus of Gershwin’s song, whose chord structure provided the most-frequently used harmonic framework for the 32-bar song form. By articulating every beat of the measure, the “walking” line of the bass provided a fundamental sense of rhythmic stability and harmonic contour. In turn, this stability was challenged by a highly syncopated, new style of piano comping which – amongst others – included comping in “block chords” as a form of playing chords in rhythmic unison. The dense harmonic


98 The terms “head” and “chorus” essentially can refer to any melody and the underlying chord structure, regardless of the given format. They may be used synonymously, and will be used henceforth without quotation marks.

99 The “walking” bass is characterized by playing the root of the given chord and, in stepwise and intervallic motion, the harmonic elaboration of the chordal basis. Although its fundamental rhythmic pattern is based on evenly articulated quarter-notes, the distinct and unique qualities of and expanded rhythmic activity beyond quarter-notes are crucial characteristics of a bass players phrasing. “Block chords” refers to a homophonic form of piano accompaniment where both hands move in parallel motion. Spaced
texture was even further solidified through the frequent use of highly energized, bright tempos.

2.2 The Modern Drummer in Bebop

For the drummer, the density of texture required an economic yet energetically engaging approach in order to fulfill his primary role as a timekeeper, while still being able to respond to the energetic arch of a particular musical context. Besides contemporaries such as Kenny Clarke, Big Sid Catlett or a very young Roy Haynes, Max Roach most prominently embodied the quintessential innovator of “modern” jazz drumming, and was the model and mentor for Joe Chambers.

The drum set as we know it started to liberate itself, especially in the 1920s in Kansas City. And Joe Jones was hinting at the modern style that was developed later by Sid Catlett and Kenny Clarke, putting the beat on the cymbal instead of the 4/4 on the bass drum, and developing the independence. And Kenny Clarke was the one before Max [Roach] to hint at freeing up the limbs, the bass drum, putting the emphasis on the ride cymbal, freeing up the left hand [snare] and hi-hat on two and four; coordinated independence, that’s what it is. And then Max [Roach] crystalized it. By doing that, they freed up everything else. Then the bass player no longer had to play tonic and dominant [chords] on [beats] “one”

in wide “voicings” (the vertical distribution of the notes), block chords include melody and harmony simultaneously, a concept that evolved out of the idea to “imitate of the chord voicings of saxophone section.” See Paul F. Berliner, *Thinking in Jazz: The Infinite Art of Improvisation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 133.
and “three.” The piano players could take their left hand out; they could be more creative. Of course we know harmonically what happened.\footnote{Chambers, interview, August 28, 2013.}

Drawing from the approach of shifting the fundamental time-keeping function of the bass drum to a suspended cymbal—an innovation popularized by Kenny Clarke—Roach fully adopted the “swing” pattern of the ride cymbal and the stepped hi-hat on beats two and four as the primary pattern for the percussive articulation of time.\footnote{Originally referred to as “Charleston machine” or “low boy,” the hi-hat machine emerged during the 1920s. Two cymbals were mounted on a stand that held them about one foot above the floor. By stepping onto a pedal that was connected to the stand, the cymbals could be struck together. During the latter part of the 1920s, taller machines evolved that made it possible to also play the cymbals with the sticks. Jo Jones was instrumental in shifting the main time-keeping pulse from the bass drum to the hi-hat, employing a pattern that emphasized a suspended accent on beats 2 and 4. Essentially, this “back beat” was a reinterpretation of the snare drum press roll that drummers used during the ragtime era to play time, “buzzing” the strokes on beats 2 and 4. Kenny Clarke pointed out that his approach to play time on the cymbal was a inspired by not having to play this “buzzed” snare drum beat he referred to as “digging coal.” See Anthony L Brown, "The Development of Modern Jazz Drumset Performance, 1940-1950" (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1997), 104-107. http://search.proquest.com/docview/304340472?accountid=14553. Also, compare with Ira Gitler, Swing to Bop: An Oral History of the Transition in Jazz in the 1940s, pbk. ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 52, and Herlin Riley and Johnny Vidacovich, New Orleans Jazz And Second Line Drumming (Miami: Manhattan Music, 1995), 13.} In this new style of drumming, the legato texture of the cymbal ostinato contrasted with syncopated rhythmic accents between the bass drum and the snare, creating a percussive dialog between the drummer and the soloist that emulated the conversational approach of question and answer. Since the advent of bebop, the concept of an ostinato-figure interpolated with improvised rhythmic responses solidified the standard practice of percussive accompaniment in the jazz idiom. This was generally referred to as “comping,” which is an abbreviation of the word ‘accompaniment’ that is used synonymously to denote accompanying activity from any member of the rhythm section. But despite these innovations, special emphasis on time-keeping and the
preservation of the unity of strict form were still the fundamental cornerstones that were defining a drummer’s responsibilities. Hence, the rhythmic engagement of the drummer primarily was focused on reacting to musical events, rather than spontaneously instigating tension that would break away from the fundamental concept of solo with accompaniment that governed the model of improvisations for the whole ensemble. An essential aspect of a drummer’s musical choices was finding the textural spaces where motivic interplay was appropriate. In the context of motivic improvisation, and due to their natural sonorities, the bass drum was often used to emulate melodic motives with longer values, generally quarter-notes or longer, while the staccato sound of the snare drum corresponded with short note values, such as eighth or sixteenth-notes. Nevertheless, the bass drum still found ample use as a time-keeping device when it was not incorporated into accentuation. In these instances, it was often played with the same static quarter-note pattern as in the earlier style, but dramatically softer and felt rather than actually heard, hence this technique was referred to as “feathering” the bass drum. Drummers of the bebop era moreover reinforced and further developed the significance of the drummer as a soloist, rather than just a timekeeper.

Consistent with the formal structure of a piece—like the 32-bar song form or the

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102 “Dropping bombs” became the linguistic expression of this technique, essentially describing the powerful sound of bass drum accents within the time-flow of the “comping.” A common method to solidify this concept of short and long notes as they apply to the interplay between bass drum and snare is its application to the rhythmic notation of quarter- and eighth-notes in Ted Reed’s instructional text Syncopation. Every note of the given examples that has the value of a quarter-note or longer is assigned to the bass drum; all eighth-notes are to be played on the snare drum. Simultaneously, the swing pattern is to be played on the ride cymbal, while the hi-hat is playing beats two and four. Refer to Ted Reed, Progressive Steps to Syncopation for the Modern Drummer (California: Alfred Publishing Company Inc, 1997).

103 “Feathering” is a term that refers to maintaining the steady pulse of the downbeats on the bass drum, but played so soft that the strokes are rather felt than actually heard.
standard 12-bar blues—drum solos as percussive expressions of motivic phrasing were generally confined to the structural boundaries of the form. Though a short solo as an introductory statement was not out of the realm of possibility, drum solos usually occurred in the context of “trading” alternating solos phrases of equal length, most frequently for four or eight measures, or stretching over one or more full cycles or choruses of the complete form. Max Roach in particular combined technical elements (most importantly snare drum rudiments and their variations) with percussive interpretations of melodic statements, by distributing strokes and motives around the drum set, and manipulating the textural density through applying different subdivisions of the beat and superimposed rhythmic accent schemes. As a soloist, Roach was also a model for Chambers, especially in comparison with the big band era drummers who had made drum solos a popular part of the “show”:

And his [Max Roach] solos. But the focus of the Swing Era drummers—Buddy Rich, Gene Krupa—was the flash. They would do the flash solo, with the stick going high on the single strokes. Gene Krupa really copied Baby Dodds. But the way they were playing the time with the bass drum on all four and the beat on the hi-hat, I never really could get with that.

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104 Similar to melodic scales, drum rudiments are rhythmic patterns and combinations of strokes that constitute a fundamental building block for the instruction and performance of percussion. The sticking refers to the designated assignment of the hands, which hand executes what stroke within the pattern. The rudiments evolved out of the drum practices used for military signaling since the 15th Century. Eventually, an assortment of rudiments became codified as the “26 Standard American Drum Rudiments,” which form the foundation on which other combinations of strokes are based on. See T. Dennis Brown, "Rudiments," Grove Music Online [Jazz, 2002], accessed October 9, 2013, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/1389400.
But when the bebop era came in, it just opened everything up, and Max was the one who crystalized everything out of there for me.\textsuperscript{105} For Chambers, the importance of time and how a drummer creates pulse and melodic shapes, weather in a solo even more so when accompanying, are universal characteristics of drumming, regardless of style. However, the seminal role that Max Roach had played for this process during the bebop era represents a fundamental cornerstone for Chambers’ historic assessment of modern drumming.

2.3 Hard Bop – Drawing From the Tradition

During the formation of the various stylistic incarnations of hard bop preceding the bebop era, the role of the drummer since the mid 1950 essentially was still aligned with the same fundamental principals that applied to drumming in the predominately small-group oriented bebop style. “I like a lot of drummers out of that period. I like Art Blakey, Haynes,” Chambers remarked, but points to the significance Roach acquired not only as a drummer, but as a very eclectic musician with broad artistic interests, and certainly as a drummer who was composing: “But to me Max is the one, because he is the model. He was always doing things that I admired. He was doing things with choruses, even way back then. He was writing tunes, this was the guy.”\textsuperscript{106} The significance of Max Roach’s artistic and social influence on Chambers’ development as an artist and person can’t be underestimated. Particularly the strong social and political implications that characterized many of Roach’s works - perhaps most prominently his

\textsuperscript{105} Chambers, interview, August 28, 2013.
\textsuperscript{106} Ibid.
Freedom Now Suite from 1960 - had a strong impact on Chambers. Emphasizing the importance of the specific dedication of these works with regards to the Civil Rights Movement in the United States and to the struggle for empowerment and independence in Africa, Chambers considers these tendencies in Roach’s work equally as important as his drumming contributions.\textsuperscript{107}

Partially a reaction against the art-music impulse of bebop on the one hand, and also in opposition to the European-influenced “chamber jazz” approach of the Cool- and West Coast styles on the other, hard bop grew out of the urban black ghettos [in one or more cities?] of the 1950s. In an attempt to “recapture the roots of jazz in gospel and blues, while extending its ambition in the realm of arts, politic and spirituality,” the first major protagonists of hard bop, mostly born between the 1920s to 1930s, transformed hard bop from its specific musical and sociological context into a “movement” that was revitalizing African-American traditions, and breaking grounds for freedom and equality they sought in “older idioms of black spirituality.”\textsuperscript{108} This “hard” driving offshoot of bebop was darker in timbre, incorporated more elements of the African American music tradition[s] and produced a growing number of original compositions.\textsuperscript{109}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[107] Compare with Feinberg, The Joe Chambers Interview, accessed December 4, 2013.
\item[108] Compare with Scott Saul, introduction to Freedom Is, Freedom Ain’t: Jazz and the Making of the Sixties. (Cambridge, Mass. : Harvard University Press, 2003), 2. In the phrase “hard bop movement” itself lies the implication of the genre’s weight and magnitude for the social context in which it was created: hard bop grew out of and drew its popularity from the urban black ghettos of the 1950s, and at the same time, it sonically represented the challenge for cultural power embodied it simultaneous awakening of the Civil Rights Movement. Art Blakey and The Jazz Messengers, Sonny Rollins, Miles Davis and John Coltrane were among the most prominent musicians and bandleader who shaped the hard bop developments.
\item[109] Pianist Horace Silver, alto-saxophonist Cannonball Adderley and organist Jimmy Smith were among the “borderline” artists who embraced the fusion of jazz with stylistic traits of the music of the African-American tradition popular in the mid 1950s. Examples include Horace Silver’s “The Preacher” (1955), “Senor Blues” (1957), Nat Adderley’s “The Jive Samba” (1963) and “Work Song” (1960), Joe Zawinul’s “Mercy, Mercy, Mercy” (1966), or Jimmy Smith’s “Midnight Special” (1961). Their music was strongly
\end{footnotes}
employment of harmonic structures reminiscent of church and gospel music, blues-derived melodic motives and inflections of pitch manipulations signaled some of the most prominent aesthetic directions jazz had taken during the formation of hard bop. Furthermore, in the case of its subgenre soul jazz, the rhythmically more static, backbeat-driven accompaniment was clearly inspired by the relentless energy of rhythm-and-blues practices. The artist who perhaps best epitomized the high-energy style of hard bop was drummer Art Blakey and the hard-driving, intensive music of his group, *Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers*. Albeit incorporating many gospel and blues characteristics, his group was still deeply rooted in the bebop tradition, but distinguished itself through the increased use of original compositions and, from a melodic standpoint, in constructing improvisational lines that were distinct from the canonic repertoire of Charlie Parker’s and Dizzy Gillespie’s groundbreaking works of the bebop era. The energy of his groups was relentless, emphatically driven by Blakey’s dark and shimmering cymbal sound in combination with his slightly forward-pushing phrasing and penetrating aggressiveness of the stepped hi-hat figure on beats 2 and 4. His accompaniment style often was fairly loud in relation to the overall texture, and the

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influenced by urban blues and rhythm-and-blues, and furthermore was drawing from gospel-like characteristics and Latin American music. Ultimately, some of their music was geared toward, and actually had, a strong popular appeal, which was important in keeping jazz alive in the jukeboxes of the “ghetto” and on the radio. See David H. Rosenthal, *Hard Bop: Jazz and Black Music, 1955-1965*, pbk. ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 22-23.

110 The term rhythm-and-blues was created in the music industry during the late 1940s as a replacement for the commercially applied label “race records,” with the intent to target the African American market with a politically correct, yet unambiguous product. See also Howard Rye, *Rhythm-and-blues*, *Grove Music Online* [Jazz, 2002], accessed February 2014, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/l676400.
muscular backbeats particularly in shuffle-feels, along with the dramatic press rolls he used as a lead-in to a soloist became some of his trademark drumming features.\footnote{From the large number of recordings Blakey has done as the leader of The Jazz Messengers, some of the albums that highlight Blakey’s characteristic drumming style during the hard bop era are \textit{A Night at Birdland, Vol. 1} (1954), \textit{Moanin’} (1958) and \textit{Free for All} (1964).}

For Chambers, however, who certainly was influenced by Art Blakey’s powerful drumming style, one of the most influential drummers coming out of the hard bop era was Philly Joe Jones, who is perhaps best remembered for his work with Miles Davis and his quintet that often is simply referred to as Davis’ “first great quintet.”\footnote{Particularly the series of four albums Davis and his “first great quintet” recorded for the Prestige label in 1956, including \textit{Cookin’}, (1957) \textit{Relaxin’}, (1957) \textit{Workin’}, (1959) \textit{Steamin’}, (1961) highlight quintessential characteristics of this groups’ sound and overall aesthetics. For additional information and references to further materials on Miles Davis’ “first great quintet,” see also DeVeaux and Giddins, \textit{Jazz}, 374-375.} Chambers highlights the “looseness” of Jones’ playing, in combination with the “Detroit-style” bass playing of Paul Chambers, as the paramount characteristic of this rhythmic unit that formed the backbone of Miles Davis “first great quintet:

But the thing that took me to Philly [Joe Jones] were [sic] the recordings when he was with Miles Davis’ group. Those were just hip, sounded great. Another thing about that too is the development of the bass. You have to look at recording techniques and the double bass development and the drumming simultaneously. Those groups had Paul Chambers as a bassist, and that developed that Detroit-style, which was Oscar Pettiford first. The long tones on the bass, that’s the key to the groove, that’s really where the groove is, it’s in the bass. That music that Philly Joe Jones was with—that early Miles Davis group—that was the stuff that made me notice him. That music and those grooves, I could feel the looseness and
fluidity in it, as opposed to Max Roach’s groups with Clifford Brown; Max, Brownie and George Morrow and those cats. It was good but it didn’t have the same feel as that Philly Joe Jones thing. I heard that right away. That’s what drew me to Philly and those groups.113

2.4 Modal Jazz and the Emancipation of Rhythm

The most dramatic changes in improvisational interplay, however, were inspired by the developments that challenged the tried and tested status quo of the harmonic grid of the confinements of the popular songform, and the homophonic texture manifested during the bebop era characterized by the underlying concept of solo with accompaniment. The advent of modal jazz during the latter part of the 1950s most significantly initiated these emerging transformations. For Chambers, particularly the drumming styles of Roy Haynes, Elvin Jones and the younger generation that followed reflected these changes on the drum set. Chambers particularly highlights Haynes’ concept of incorporating the hi-hat as an independent voice into the percussive texture as significant. Combined with the expanded use of the bass drum, a technique he refers to as “dancing,” the conversational dialog between all four limbs in a continuously evolving flow of motivic ideas defined the characteristics of the “modern” style, perfected by drummers like Haynes and Elvin Jones.114

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113 Chambers, interview, August 28, 2013.
114 Nicknamed “Snap Crackle” for his crisp and rapid snare drum “comping,” Haynes first became known while playing with Charlie Parker during the late 1940s and early 1950s. Subsequently, he worked with many major jazz artists throughout his career, and perhaps is best known for his idiosyncratic, highly colorful and conversational drumming on Chick Corea’s trio recording from 1968, Now He Sings, Now He Sobs. Interestingly, he was Elvin Jones’ substitute in John Coltrane’s quartet during the early- to mid-
Of course Roy Haynes, he was playing what we called “Skip To My Lou” skip beats, skip time, ride . . . you know, around, hi-hat loose, not [beats] “2” and “4” all the time, hi-hat like another drum, skip it, dancing on the bass drum. Bass drum is the most important part of the kit. The bass drum is the biggest drum; it gives the bottom. Most young cats don’t know how to dance on the bass drum. In the old era it was always on all four beats, that’s where they were. But the be-boppers of course they freed the bass drum up. And then even more so, when we get into Elvin and Haynes, and us people following, you use it like it’s another drum. The bass drum can keep your pulse up, and you have a conversation between your bass drum and the snare, between the ride. The conversation . . . that’s the essence of it. [. . .] When you’re trying to analyze it, it gets funny.\textsuperscript{115}

Nonetheless, the ongoing technical and aesthetic developments were a consequence of the progressive changes in the creation and perception of the music that fundamentally changed the direction of jazz during the late 1950s, and were of superior importance over the evolution of specific drumming techniques in and of themselves. After all, it was the evolving music that inevitably challenged musicians to develop new concepts and technical approaches, and not vice versa. At the forefront of these changes, Miles Davis was one of the first major jazz musicians during this period to explore the

\textsuperscript{115} Chambers, interview, August 29, 2013.
harmonic approach of modality by combining George Russell’s “Lydian Chromatic Concept” with the symmetric structure of the 32-bar songform.¹¹⁶ This musical concept was characterized by the slower harmonic rhythm of the chord changes, and drew its harmonic content from a linear approach defined melodically by one particular mode or scale, or the utilization and superimposition of several modes targeting different key centers, specifically during longer sections that each featured a characteristic mode.¹¹⁷ The non-tonal nature of this concept and the possibility for tonal ambiguity and suspended functionality opened up new opportunities for creating melodic and harmonic structures in the compositional process and improvisations. No longer were the harmonic progression and the resolution of melodic lines the guiding principle, but the creative treatment of the scale-derived melodies moved into the foreground of the texture.¹¹⁸ Conversely, the modal concept ultimately freed up the formal organization in jazz from the confinements of the 32-bar songform or the 12-bar blues. The aesthetic impact of modal jazz and the ensuing innovations ultimately led to a redefinition of the rhythm section and the improvisatory guidelines that determined the hierarchy upon

¹¹⁶ Compositions like Miles Davis’ “Milestones” (1958) and “So What” (1959), John Coltrane’s “Impressions,” (particularly the live version recorded 1961 at the Village Vanguard New York), and Herbie Hancock’s “Maiden Voyage” (1965) structurally were based on the symmetry of the 32-bar, AABA songform, and featured the reduced chordal structures as the launching pad for the modal improvisation. Jazz educator, composer and arranger Ron Miller categorizes these types of compositions as “modal simple.” Compare with Ron Miller, Modal jazz composition & harmony, vol.1 (Rottenburg: Advance Music, 1996), 9.
¹¹⁷ In his work from 1953, George Russell’s Lydian Chromatic Concept of Tonal Organization Volume One: The Art and Science of Tonal Gravity, Russell theorized a new approach to harmony in which chords were substituted with scales. His concept was based on the idea to create more melodic interest by superimposing scales over each other and exploring the relationships between them, essentially abandoning the concept of major and minor key relations as the overarching tonal complex. See also DeVeaux and Giddins, Jazz, 364-65.
¹¹⁸ DeVeaux fittingly describes the struggle for aesthetic revitalization during the transition from the bebop model to the concept of modality by emphasizing: “The liberating innovations of Charlie Parker now loomed as an unavoidable and endlessly limited model.” [is this quote from a different source than the citation that follow? If so, cite it too?] Compare with DeVeaux and Giddins, Jazz, 377.
which jazz had been built since the bebop era. The rhythm section as a unit of
accompanists with specifically assigned solo opportunities predetermined by the
harmonic structure and the homophonic texture was transformed by a new musical
approach that embraced the rhythm section as an entity of equal contributors. This
interactive collaboration allowed for a newfound freedom; each rhythm section
member was continuously engaged in the spontaneously creation of new sounds and
musical shapes of a wider, more extreme dynamics.

Chambers specifically highlights the extended improvisations on John Coltrane’s
composition “Impressions” as a formative example of the modal postbop style.¹¹⁹

“No those cuts that ‘Trane did, “Impressions,” there was nothing before that was anything
like that. Maybe the guys could play like that, Bird and everybody, but nobody did it,
especially on record.”¹²⁰ He points to the evolution of the solo since the swing bands and
emphasized the impact Coltrane’s extended improvisations had on the scene New York
during the 1960s:

Getting back to the ’40s and the bebop era—prior to that—the soloist in
a big band only played maybe eight bars, maybe half a chorus, that was it.
They might have done stuff in jam sessions, the most you ever played in
the big band era on a solo was half a chorus, eight, sixteen bars. But Bird

¹¹⁹ Miles Davis’ quintet recording, The Complete Live Plucked Nickel (1965) is another paramount example
of this “stream-of-consciousness” playing that was explored and which exhibited an unprecedented level
of rhythmic elasticity, in which the relationship of “lead” and “support” was completely redefined. Davis
“2nd Great Quintet” musically redefined the boundaries between structure and freedom.
An analytical study of this group, including full-score transcriptions and discussions of several highly
influential performances, as well as interviews, can be found at Todd F. Coolman, “The Miles Davis
Quintet of the Mid-1960s: Synthesis of Improvisational and Compositional Elements” (PhD diss., New York
¹²⁰ Chambers, interview, August 30, 2013.
started this long-playing stuff. They [the be-boppers] started that trend. But they still weren’t putting that on records, they were still making the three to four minute record. But this stuff that ‘Trane put out, and Sonny Rollins, that was the beginning of putting these long cuts on records. That was still fresh in mind of everybody, “Chasin’ The Trane,” “Impressions.”\textsuperscript{121}

Bassist Jimmy Garrison, Chambers notes, was highly important for the momentum Coltrane’s group created during their improvisations. Even more critical, according to Chambers, was the thematic connection of the improvisation with the song’s harmonic foundation itself.

I tell you, who was really prominent in that group was Jimmy Garrison. Matter of fact, Ron Carter paid tribute to Garrison. He could pick up a lot of what Jimmy Garrison was doing. If you go back, listen to what Jimmy Garrison was doing. You take “Impressions,” which really is sixteen-bar phrases; one sixteen, and then two eight-bar phrases, Dorian mode, it goes up a half-step for eight bars, it goes down a half-step, that[']s the form. The thing about that is that throughout the improvisation, you can hear the song, even when it gets to its most atonal. I can still hear the song, I can hear the mode throughout, you never lose it.\textsuperscript{122}

But for Chambers the perhaps most signifying characteristic of a new conception of improvisation was the element of rhythm. The multi-instrumentalist and music

\textsuperscript{121} Chambers, interview, August 30, 2013.
\textsuperscript{122} Ibid.
scholar Andrew White (who was the saxophone player for the JKF Quintet during Chamber’s three-year collaboration with the group at the Bohemian Caverns in D.C.) had transcribed a vast number of Coltrane’s solos, and had shared the insights he gained from analyzing those transcriptions with Chambers. ¹²³ Emphatically underlining White’s suggestion that rhythm—rather than harmonic considerations and melodic resolutions—was the driving force behind the solos on compositions like the blues “Chasin’ The Trane” (1961) or the modal “Impressions” (1961), Chambers points to his own experience playing this type of postbop, modal jazz. ¹²⁴ The fact that Chambers was in the forefront of musicians whose creative instincts and artistic explorations were paramount for the creation of this style, fundamentally substantiates his assertion:

> He [Andy White] said when Coltrane was playing “Impressions,” or “Chasin’ the Trane,” he wasn’t thinking theoretically, “Oh, I’m gonna play a 13th chord here.” You know what was driving him? The rhythm! The rhythmic force. He didn’t have to think about the theory, he was thinking about the rhythm, keeping the rhythm. If he played the rhythm right, the theory would be there. It’s the rhythmic force; it’s not theoretical when you’re doing it. Now, I don’t know what he was thinking, but I know how that style goes; you’re thinking rhythmic, you’re thinking to keep the rhythm going. You’re not thinking about “I’m gonna play a 13th chord


¹²⁴ Particularly noteworthy are Coltrane’s recording of “Impressions” from the Newport ’63 album, and the version of ‘Chasin’ The Trane” from the box set The Complete Village Vanguard Recordings.
here, or an 11th here.” I’ll vouch for that statement. Today, nobody is trying to play like that anymore, nobody.\textsuperscript{125}

Reflecting on his own work, Chambers affirms “So these tunes, like [Wayne Shorter’s] “Schizophrenia” and McCoy’s \textit{Tender Moments} – “Mode to John,” that \textit{sic} were tendencies in that area.”\textsuperscript{126} The James Spaulding composition, “Kryptonite,” on Wayne Shorter’s \textit{Schizophrenia} exemplifies the fluid and highly energetic improvisations that Chambers referred to as “bashing.”\textsuperscript{127} The tunes’ incredibly simplistic structures are based on an 8-measure theme in A♭ Lydian that commences and concludes an open-form improvisation, also over A♭ Lydian. During the solos, sections of fast swing in ‘4’ alternate with elastic pulsations over implied time, creating a texture of dense soundscapes in which the lines between a solo and collective improvisation are constantly challenged.\textsuperscript{128} “If you noticed, “Chambers summarized, nobody plays like that anymore, ‘bashing’ as we call it.”\textsuperscript{129}

2.5 The Avant-Garde and the Deconstruction of the Tradition

Experiments with modality and the subsequent evolution of new forms of rhythmic interaction led to a gradual breakdown of tonal and structural boundaries. Simultaneously, an even more radical approach emerged in New York City, often

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{125} Chambers, interview, August 30, 2013.
\item \textsuperscript{126} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{127} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{128} “Swinging in ‘4’ refers to the rhythmic ensemble-playing in which the bass line “walks” and the ride cymbal rhythm, despite variations, strongly reflects the standard ride pattern and the quarter-note pulse.
\item \textsuperscript{129} Chambers, interview, August 30, 2013.
\end{itemize}
referred to synonymously as “free jazz,” “avant-garde,” or “New Thing.” The term “free jazz” was coined in allusion to Ornette Coleman’s album entitled *Free Jazz* (1961). The subtitle of this radical yet highly influential recording, “A Collective Improvisation,” highlights the aesthetic concept behind it, featuring two quartets improvising simultaneously in free form. Freddie Hubbard and Eric Dolphy—the first two noted musicians with whom Chambers played after arriving in New York—participated in Coleman’s recording. Dolphy’s ability to play in such a way that it was both informed by the tradition and stretched beyond its boundaries stands out to Chambers.

When I got to New York in the early sixties, when the so-called “free jazz thing” was taking off, Ornette Coleman, Cecil Taylor, those were the forefront people. Eric Dolphy was like us, like what we were trying to be. Eric was very broad, even though his improvisations were way out [there]. I was more interested in learning and playing ‘Trane, Miles, straight-ahead, Max [Roach].

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131 The collective improvisations, however, did contain elements of musical organization and structural markers reminiscent of “traditional” jazz arrangements. Solos were ordered in succession and a series of short horn fanfares were pre-composed, but the musicians were free to comment and engage freely with the “soloist,” if that term even applies in such a free improvisatory context. See also DeVeaux and Giddins, *Jazz*, 411.

The overarching designation *avant-garde* was essentially a term to describe the artistic expressions of the deconstructionist movement that influenced not only music, but all of the arts, including literature and film. A radical response to the musical conventions of bebop and its subsequent stylistic advancements, the progressive developments of the avant-garde sparked the evolution of a style that favored the spontaneity of collective improvisation over “restrictive” elements of formal organization, pulsating rhythms, harmony and melody. Likewise, manipulations of instrumental timbres to create sounds that resembled the voice rather distinct pitches from the Western tonal system, or the distortion of timbres became characteristic elements of this style.

Besides Ornette Coleman and John Coltrane, many other musicians were instrumental for the developments that also divided the American jazz audience in enthusiastic supporters or bitter opponents entangled in an often highly controversial debate, particularly under consideration of the current social unrest and the struggle for equality during the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s. Among those musicians were Cecil Taylor, Albert Ayler, Archie Shepp, Sun Ra, the Art Ensemble of Chicago and Pharaoh Sanders, to name a few. Chambers remembers Pharaoh Sanders as another example of an avant-garde musician who could also play “inside,” while Archie Shepp at the time was struggling with playing “straight chords.”

>You gotta remember the times, we were in the so-called avant-garde era, and there are a lot of forms of avant-garde that were taking place. Of course we have Ornette Coleman and his disciples, and Archie Shepp and those people. Now, Pharaoh Sanders—we used to call him Little Rock—
he could play inside, really could play straight chords. He gradually went out. When I first met him, he was playing chords, straight, like ‘Trane. Archie Shepp couldn’t, but he’s trying to do it now. So you had these different avenues of people trying to play free.³³³

The evolutionary trends illustrated in the previous discussion, from the bebop era to avant-garde, highlight two crucial components that likewise are intrinsic characteristics of the analysis of selected drum-transcriptions in the following chapter. Specifically, these developments emphasize that music is not a linear process where one development (may it be a style or an instrumental techniques) almost inevitably leads to the next, nor are they disconnected from the social climate that surrounds them. Most importantly however, they show that the conceptual changes are not simply a result of the advancement of technical and theoretical facilities, but are inseparably linked to the music from which they evolve. The evolution of musical aesthetics and instrumental techniques is a circular process of continuous creation and recycling, from the microscopic level of technical components to the observation of large-scale characteristics such as the musical development of a dramatic arch or the ensemble interplay. How this circular process transpires in the drumming of Joe Chambers is the subject of the ensuing discussion.

³³³ Chambers, interview, August 30, 2013
Chamber did in fact play on several albums released by Archie Shepp. Amongst those was a live recording from July 1965, a concert that also featured John Coltrane’s “classic” quartet and was released in 1966 as New Thing at Newport.
Chapter 3 focuses on an introductory discussion of Joe Chambers’ drumming—specifically examining Joe Chambers’ cymbal phrasing—and is subsequently extended to include his melodic phrasing. Six selected musical examples serve as the point of departure for the analysis, and were chosen based on different tempos and stylistic traits, in order to highlight the variety, yet consistency, of Chambers’ unique conceptual approaches.

3.1 The Drumming Styles of Joe Chambers: Bridging the Gap - Reshaping the Tradition

Between the aesthetic and conceptual polarities of the supporting role of the drummer primarily as a timekeeper, and the creative expressiveness of collective improvisation and group interplay, lies a historic development that originated within the evolutionary trends of the postwar jazz ensembles, as the previously discussed transformations have highlighted. The relatively simpler textures of both the big bands and less dense small-group bebop ensembles were based on solos with accompaniment, whereas the harmonic and melodic liberations introduced by modal jazz, in combination with the polyphony of the radical musical “freedom” of the avant-garde, inspired a new form of jazz that incorporated elements of both. Similarly, Joe Chambers’ drumming evolved out of a synthesis of traditional elements and progressive experimentation that transformed into a mature style during the historic and aesthetic currents of the avant-
garde. The stylistic shift from the “modern” drummer of the bebop revolution during the 1940s, towards the “progressive” drummer of the postbop era, redefined the predominant practice towards a new conceptualization of accompaniment, soloing, group interaction and timbral characteristics.

The group of musicians with whom Chambers was associated during the 1960s—from Freddie Hubbard to Wayne Shorter, Chick Corea and Bobby Hutcherson—shared the practice of reshaping the bebop tradition instead of abandoning it, including the fusion of jazz with other musics, and furthermore incorporating the idea of what Chambers describes as “rhythms of the hemisphere,” particularly Latin rhythms. For him, the drummer Pete La Roca, although notoriously overlooked, personified the link between tradition and modernity and the percussive fusion of Latin and jazz styles:

There is a drummer, Pete La Roca, he is not a big name outside, but he is the link between Roy Haynes and Elvin Jones, and before Tony Williams, before all of us, me, Jack [DeJohnette], all of us guys who came up in my period. He was a black American, his name is really Pete Sims, but he changed his name to La Roca because he played Latin music in Latin bands. He played timbales in Latin bands. He brought the real Afro-Cuban to the drum set, and he understood this thing about the circle.

La Roca’s incorporation of rhythms that originated from Afro-Cuban traditions and applying them in the jazz practice, and his ability to “sustain” pulse over “implied” time (a feature that became seminal for the ensemble playing of the evolving postbop styles

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134 Chambers, interview, August 29, 2013.
135 Ibid.
during the 1960s), were crucial components that informed Chambers’ assessment.\textsuperscript{136}

However, from all the drummers who were active in the New York scene at the time, Chambers considers Tony Williams and himself as the most significant representatives of the newly evolving style. The significant emancipation of the drummer’ role was clearly a result of the aesthetic changes of during this time, when the boundaries between spontaneous freedom and structural organization were redrawn to accommodate the new concept of equality between all members of an ensemble.

Of course, Tony [Williams] was on the scene, but Jack DeJohnette, he came later, he wasn’t in New York yet; he was not on the scene yet. I would have to say that the “young drummers of note” had to be Tony Williams and myself at that time. Because Elvin [Jones], he was established, and Max [Roach] and all these other people. I never really thought about it when I was doing it [. . .].\textsuperscript{137}

\footnote{136 La Roca’s playing on the tune “Minor Apprehension” of the 1959 Jackie McLean album New Soil was already foreshadowing some of the stylistic changes, the “new soil” to change the direction of postbop drumming. The up-tempo swing is based upon an AABA 32-bar formal structure, and La Roca is playing straight-ahead time over a walking feel in ‘4’ and block chord piano comping. During his solo, however, he breaks away from the bebop-informed style of drumming and creates a totally abstract percussive landscape of shapes, colors and sounds. By the sheer length of over 2 minutes, this solo is a statement in itself for radical changes to come. The rhythmic figures and motifs he strings together clearly show his vocabulary was informed by Max Roach’s soloing, but the abstract context La Roca creates with it is absolutely different. La Roca solos in free, rubato time, his phrases don’t adhere to the standard phrase length of 4 or 8 measures and are rhythmically extremely elastic until the final section when he reintroduces the original pulse to cue the band back in. Some of extremely fluid, “free” solos of Tony Williams, like his solo on Miles Davis’ “Agitation” from the 1965 album E.S.P. clearly represent a continuation of La Roca’s groundbreaking solo concept.}

\footnote{137 Chambers, interview, August 31, 2013.}
3.2 The Ride Cymbal and the Rhythmic Grid

Large-scale developments such as these shifting aesthetic currents should not overshadow the significance of the fundamental building blocks that shaped the evolution of jazz drumming at the core of the rhythmic activity. When examining Joe Chambers and his role as a drummer who exemplified the highlighted aesthetic changes with regard to the traditional and the modern style, one must start with an analytical observation of the most fundamental yet individual component of time-playing in jazz, the phrasing of the ride cymbal. Conceptions of rhythmic phrasing have been a subject of considerable study in jazz scholarship, but the perspectives discussed here with regard to cymbal phrasing and its nuanced interpretations have not been fully articulated. In the section that follows, a look at visual representations of various cymbal phrasings and the underlying subdivisions is aimed at specifically highlighting the interrelation between notation on the one hand, and phrasing in relation to tempo on the other.

The rhythmic grid that forms the basis for the “swing-feel” in jazz is based on a ternary subdivision of the beat, three eighth-notes triplets per quarter-note. One of the most distinctive sounds in jazz, perhaps rivaled only by the pulse of the walking bass and the formulaic ii-V-i chord progression is the ride cymbal pattern, the standard drum pattern to mark and move the time with its characteristic legato sound. In accordance with the rhythmic grid, the “jazz ride” pattern is based on a triplet subdivision of the quarter-note pulse, emphasizing the “swung” eighth-notes between the first and third
triplet partial, and omitting the inner triplet of triplet grid. However, the idea of a rhythmic grid based on triplets that defines the fundamental components of swing is as much an intellectual construct, as it simply is a tool to define what might not even be definable. As drummer Bob Moses has pointed out in his instructional book “Drum Wisdom,” the internal subdivision of the grid into triplets has a tendency to slow the tempo down. Hence, Moses prefers to define the rhythmic structure of a measure subdivided in eight eighth-notes, as opposed to twelve eighth-notes, an approach he refers to as “the 8/8 concept.” The basis for this concept is the interpretation of eights-notes as “rounded” eights-notes, which can also be described with the more common use of the term “swung” eights-notes. Ultimately, Moses concept does not negate the idea of a triplet subdivision, but rather enhances it, emphasizing the fluidity of the rhythmic grid. After all, it is the combination of an implied subdivision with the very unique and highly individual interpretations of beat structures that defines a jazz musician’s sound, including drummers and all other musicians.

The first measure of the following example shows the swing pattern written in relation to the triplet grid, highlighting the textural characteristic of long and short notes that fundamentally define the figure. However, given the fact that in drum set notation it is practically never written this way, the next two measures represent two “standard”

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138 John Riley devised several fundamental exercise intended to understand the concept behind the “swung” eighth-note feel. See John Riley, The Art of Bop Drumming (New York: Manhattan Music, 1994), 8-9.

139 For slower tempos, Moses acknowledges the triplet grid as a valid subdivision. However, he emphasizes the paramount significance of the “syncopated march” as fundamental to American music, which in turn is based on the concept of eight eights-notes as the subdivision: “The American music called jazz, and almost all other American music, comes from one basic source: the syncopated march.” See Bob Moses and Rick Mattingly, Drum Wisdom (Cedar Grove, N.J.: Modern Drummer Publications, 1984), 10-11.
notations for this pattern. The last measure in particular, written with quarter- and even eighth-notes, exemplifies the most transparent and most frequently used way to notate the swing pattern, albeit expecting the reader to imply the “swung” eighth-triplet grid. Unless otherwise noted, all transcribed examples in this text are written using even eighth-notes.

**Figure 3.1 The Swing Pattern**

![Diagram of the Swing Pattern]

The most significant aspect with regard to phrasing is the ratio between the longer first note of the cymbal pattern, and the shorter “skip” note right before the next beat impulse.\(^{140}\) The ratio between these notes depends on the stylistic character of a composition, the tempo, and first and foremost on the individual phrasing of the drummer in accordance with the rhythmic phrasing of the bass line.\(^{141}\) Perhaps the only observable fact that allows for a generalized statement with regard to the relationship of “swing” ratio, phrasing and tempo, is that the faster the tempo gets, the phrasing “flattens-out” and the subdivision evolves into even eighth-notes (usually starting around \(J = 300\)).\(^{142}\)

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\(^{140}\) The designation “skip” note is a reference to John Riley’s terminology, explored in his instructional book *John Riley, Beyond Bop Drumming* (Miami: Manhattan Music, 1997), 8.

\(^{141}\) Similarly, Jack DeJohnette and Charlie Perry suggest that the interpretation of the cymbal beat depends on “the individual drummer and the tempo in which the rhythms are played.” Refer to DeJohnette and Perry, *The Art of Modern Jazz Drumming: Multi-Directional Technique*, special ed. (North Bellmore N.Y.: Drum Center Publication, 1989), 13.

\(^{142}\) In a rhythmic analysis of selected melodic phrases and solos by Miles Davis, John Coltrane and other jazz musician, musicologist and saxophonist Fernando Benadon has analyzed the “beat upbeat ratio”
Figure 3.2 Uptempo Swing Pattern in Even Eighths

For all other tempos, ranging from ballads to medium-swing and medium-up tempos, the phrasing of the “swing” ratio can vary significantly. In the “medium” tempo range, the cymbal rhythm is often interpreted as evenly spaced triplets, or can be played using a smaller rhythmic grid that places the skip note closer to the beat, like a dotted eighth plus sixteenth-note or the first and fifth notes of a sextuplet. In slower tempos, the interpretation often includes an even smaller grid, using a double-dotted eighth plus 32nd note.\(^{143}\) The example shows the rhythmic interpretations of the ride cymbal pattern in ascending order with regard to the subdivision.

Figure 3.3 Variations of the Swing Pattern

between subsequent eighth-notes. While Benandon did not specifically analyze the “beat upbeat ratio” of drummer’s ride cymbal phrasing, his findings are nevertheless interesting to note. According to his study, the “swing” ratio does not necessarily decrease at an increased tempo, nor does it increase at a slower tempo:

With the polar opposite exceptions that (a) soloists iron out their eighths at very fast tempos, and (b) 12/8-feel is more commonly associated with slower tempos, there seems to be no systematic interdependence between tempo and subdivision ratios. It is especially important to stress that slower tempos do not necessarily yield higher BURs [...]


Most importantly, however, is the fact these different interpretations of the swing pattern are not the consequence of an abrupt, clear-cut switch from one grid to the next, but they visually highlight that all attempts of notating these rhythms are essentially an approximation of the gesture and are subject to the individuality of each musician.

Particularly the tighter phrasing in slower tempos, thus the closer placement of the skip note in proximity to the subsequent downbeat, often suggests an upcoming increase of rhythmic activity or signals to a transition into a double-time feel, which is a common practice in jazz. Furthermore, the interpretations of the cymbal rhythm are not static, but can vary within the course of a musical phrase.  

3.3 Joe Chambers’ Cymbal Phrasing

The different, highly individual representations of ride cymbal phrasings are not a development of the 1960s, but were fundamental to the rhythmic interpretations in jazz at least since the advent of bebop. Consequently, the cymbal phrasing and its individual character highlights an aspect of Joe Chambers drumming that is not only unique to his personal style, but represents an stylistic trademark by which many of the “classic” jazz drummers can be identified with.

My most identifiable thing is the cymbal ride beat. I came up listening to the bebop cats, Max [Roach] and Philly Joe [Jones]. Philly Joe—I payed very close attention to the way he phrased on the cymbal—and Elvin. I

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145 In the introduction to his “classic” instructional book for jazz drummers from 1948, Jim Chapin highlights the different variations and valuations of eight-notes phrasings in relation to the time signature, tempo and style. See Jim Chapin, *Advanced Techniques for the Modern Drummer* (New York: Chapin, 2002), 3A.
always tried to have a loose cymbal stroke. When I was playing jazz time, straight-ahead time, I was always trying to get a sound like Philly Joe and Elvin Jones. I was always trying to capture their cymbal beat, trying to make it feel loose, to give the bass player some room.¹⁴⁶

Perhaps the most recognizable characteristic of Joe Chambers’ ride cymbal phrasing is the strong quarter-note pulse that anchors his cymbal rhythms. This texturally defines his style during the 1960s as being centered around a top-heavy, cymbal-driven approach. In all of the musical examples that are discussed during the following analysis of his drumming style, the gravity of the quarter-note is the fundamental element that permeates his playing throughout all rhythmic layers regardless of the stylistic diversity, whether experimental postbop or straight-ahead swing. But the pulse of the quarter note is characterized by a delicate gravity with which it guides Chambers’ percussive textures, light and bouncy. More importantly, Chambers does not rely on the stepped hi-hat as a fundamental timekeeper and sonic focal point to the same extent as the preceding generation of bebop and hard bop drummers had done, such as Max Roach and particularly Art Blakey. Especially in comparison with Blakey, who had a very strong backbeat on the hi-hat and simultaneously accented beats 2 and 4 on the ride cymbal, Chambers puts less weight on the backbeat in favor of creating a time-feel of equally articulated quarter-notes on the ride cymbal. In this context, a deviation from accenting beats 2 and 4 and the incorporation of the hi-hat into the rhythmic flow is not only a conceptual but also a sonic distinction, because the emphasis on the backbeat was a

¹⁴⁶ Chambers, interview, August 29, 2013.
textural reminiscence of the aesthetics of the swing era. These transformations, developing hand in hand with the evolution of technical concepts, sounds and aesthetics in general, were last but not least reflected in the increase of original compositions and a departure from the American songbook repertoire during the postbop developments of the 1960s.

While Chambers emphasizes the quarter-note in his ride cymbal phrasing and deemphasizes beats 2 and 4 on the hi-hat, one characteristic element that is omnipresent in his time-playing, especially in a straight-ahead swing setting, is the slight accent he gives the eight-note on the “and of 2” or the “and of 4” when comping with his snare drum.

**Example 3.1** Frequently Used Comping Figure with Accents

```
\begin{music}
\begin{staff}
\phrse{\quad \frac{8}{4} \quad \frac{8}{4} \quad \frac{8}{4}}
\end{staff}
\end{music}
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This may seem like a minor detail, particularly when considering that this rhythmic accent is just one variation of seemingly endless possibilities of comping ideas. But given the high frequency of occurrences, this comping figure almost resembles a reflex, which allows for an alternative interpretation. In comparison with the ride cymbal playing of Elvin Jones, whose characteristic cymbal rhythm was phrased around an accent of the skip note, the “and of 2” and the “and of 4,” Chambers incorporated this accent scheme into his own phrasing by playing it on the snare, without having to change the quarter-note emphasis of the cymbal. The rhythmic effect of both phrasings is similar, as they
create a subtle yet noticeable “hump” in the horizontal perception of the time flow, anticipating the following downbeat.\textsuperscript{147} However, while Elvin Jones’ realization of this rhythmic accent on the cymbal seems to be a result of the characteristic triplet-grid of his phrasing, Chambers’ utilization of the same idea on the snare, underneath the steady pulse of his quarter-note driven cymbal phrasing, rather appears to function as a connective link between the rhythmic pulses of the cymbal. From the large-scale perspective of pulse and its fundamental manipulations, Chambers’ emphasis of the quarter-note with the ride cymbal and the slight accent of the snare on the skip note can be interpreted in two ways. The resulting pattern can simultaneously serve as a tool to keep the time “in the pocket” while continuing to support the forward momentum of the pulse. Or it can also be heard as an accentuation of beats 2 and 4 on the cymbal, further emphasized by the hi-hat, with a tendency to first and foremost push the time forward.

3.3.1 Melodic Phrasing and the Cymbal Beat

Equally important for the definition and analytical study of phrasing in the context of time-playing is the fact that it is not limited to the rhythmic placement of the strokes of a specific cymbal pattern that creates the time-feel, but likewise extends to the “melodic” shape of the ride cymbal beat and its interplay with the hi-hat, snare and

\textsuperscript{147} Riley highlights this rhythmic “hump” as the most characteristic aspect of Jones’ cymbal playing. This highly individual phrasing became a trademark of Jones’ playing and is frequently emphasized with regard to the uniqueness of Jones’ style. Refer to John Riley, \textit{The Jazz Drummer’s Workshop: Advanced Concepts for Musical Development} (Cedar Grove, NJ: Modern Drummer Publications, 2004), 41.
When Chambers deviates from the standard pattern, allowing the cymbal to follow or embellish the rhythmic contour of a melodic motif, his phrasing embodies a rhythmic representation of musical *Gestalt*, whose texture is defined by the combination of the proximity of strokes in relation to each other, and the melodic contour of the cymbal pattern in relation to all other moving parts. The ensuing discussion of analytical observations of Chambers’ melodic phrasing will highlight how he embeds this fundamental building block of jazz drumming into the musical texture of postbop jazz. Accordingly, several examples representing different stylistic and conceptual models emphasize how the various interpretations of the cymbal beat are inseparably interconnected with the concept of melodic phrasing.

3.3.2 “Mirrors”

Chambers’ phrasing on “Mirrors,” one of his own original compositions that he contributed to Freddie Hubbards’ *Breaking Point!* (1964), exemplifies the importance of consistency, particularly in the context of intertwined time-feels. Though the frequency of the quarter-note pulse is fixed, slightly fluctuating within the range of a slow swing/walking ballad between $\downarrow = 96$ to 102, the rhythm section implies a half-time

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148 Discussing the musical flow of “the cymbal line” in conjunction with rhythmic “punctuations,” Jack DeJohnette and Charlie Perry emphasize that “cymbal rhythms are often played as part of the rhythms that are divided between the cymbal, snare, bass drum and hi-hat.” DeJohnette and Perry, *The Art of Modern Jazz Drumming*, 12.

149 The term *Gestalt*, the German word for “shape,” evolved out of the intellectual discourse of the early 1900s that aimed at the creation of an analytical description of the psychology of music. Defining various principles that embody *Gestalt*, one of which is rhythm, “Gestalt psychologists claimed that perception aims at finding good ‘figures’ (patterns, Gestalts), and that the whole is more than the sum of its parts.” Refer to Diana Deutsch, et al. “Psychology of music, §I: History ” *Grove Music Online*, accessed November 4, 2013, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/42574pg1.
feeling or broken ‘2’-feel during the melody, while in the solo section, the group combines a walking ‘4’ with the broken ‘2’-feel. Chambers, providing a steady yet breathing pulse that adds gravity to the airy texture without confining it, generally emphasizes the quarter-note and “swings” the eighth-notes based on a triplet grid, which is in accordance with the eight-note phrasing of the bass line. The fact that Chambers actually uses brushes on the snare throughout the whole tune (except for mallets at the final tag) does not change his approach to the phrasing, albeit the sound is obviously more legato than a cymbal. During the course of the piece, the rhythm section never fully commits to a swing in ‘4,’ thus creating a rhythmic polarity between the occasionally implied walking-feel and the ornamented, broken ‘2’-feel. Likewise, the piano comping that often utilizes arpeggiated voicings in quarter-note triplets over the regular pulse, further intensifies the contrast between a half-time feel and a slow ‘4,’ since the quarter-note triplets sound like eighth-note triplets whenever the rhythm sections emphasizes the half-time feel. The polarity between these seemingly opposing time-feels rhythmically reflects the melodic concept behind the composition. The two intertwined yet juxtaposed melodic lines of the trumpet and the flute during the melody create a contrapuntal texture that has forward momentum despite the relatively slow tempo. Chambers consistent eighth-note phrasing based on triplets retains this movement, providing an important level of stability for the flow of the pulse that allows the whole piece to rhythmically expand and contract without sacrificing momentum.
3.3.3 “Man From Tanganyika”

Consistency is paramount for the establishment of a time-feel that provides stability yet also forward momentum, regardless of the tempo or stylistic character of a piece. On McCoy Tyner’s “Man From Tanganyika” from Tender Moments (1967), Chambers’ cymbal phrasing highlights this consistency under different musical circumstances. Here, Chambers applies two different time-feels, but shapes each with a different phrasing. The melody of the piece is based on an Afro-Cuban 12/8 feel at about $\frac{1}{4} = 144$. In correspondence with the Afro-Cuban feel, Chambers plays a groove-pattern that is derived from one of the most popular 12/8 rhythms from the Yoruba tradition, a pattern that “naturally” is phrased in triplets.\(^{150}\)

Example 3.2 “Man From Tanganyika” 12/8 Groove

The solo section is built on the cyclical repetition of 8 measures in G minor, followed by an 8-measure chord progression. During the G minor section, Chambers retains the 12/8 groove, but when the chords begin to move through the progression in the second part of the solo section, the rhythm section switches to a straight-ahead time-feel. Instead of phrasing the cymbal beat in the “wider” triplet subdivision adhering to the 12/8 pattern, Chambers consistently phrases the ride cymbal slightly tighter, the skip note being

\(^{150}\)“Naturally” refers to Western music conception of beat subdivisions that are governed by barlines, which is contrary to the conception of time line patterns in West-African music. This pattern however, as applied to the drum set, is a variation of one of the rhythms that Chambers uses as examples for Yoruba 12/8 patterns. See appendix for his personal transcriptions of a variety of these rhythms.
closer to a sixteenth-note than an eighth-note triplet from the ensuing downbeat. This creates the effect of a stronger quarter-note pulse, which helps to stabilize the texture with regard to more unsettling rhythmic quality of the alternating 12/8 groove.\footnote{In order to determine the phrasing and its underlying subdivision, one approach is to play eight-notes with one hand and softly fill in the subdivision with the other hand, for example triplets or sixteenth-notes. This method works best for tempos between medium (120 bpm) to medium-up (220 bpm).}

According to Chambers, phrasing in triplets, more specifically the integration of African-derived rhythms and rhythmic concepts into the jazz context, is one of the seminal innovations that Elvin Jones introduced to jazz drumming. Jones’ “one instrument” concept, particularly in the context of time playing, was built on the idea of creating phrases that are based on the full triplet-grid, including the “inner” triplet partial, and incorporating all limbs into the rhythmic flow.\footnote{John Riley further explores Jones’ “one instrument” concept, adding analytical commentary and presenting exercises that expand on the development of rhythmic phrases stressing the inner partial of the triplet grid. See Riley, \textit{The Jazz Drummer's Workshop}, 41.} Similar to Chambers style, Jones was spreading the “time” around the drum set to create his signature triplet flow. “But I was trying to make sure that I didn’t sound like Elvin Jones, even though I liked him,” Chambers emphasized, pointing out that “I wanted to try to do things that were not suggestive of Elvin Jones.”\footnote{Chambers, interview, August 30, 2013.} Jones’ triplet-derived time playing was a unique concept that, according to Chambers, had not been incorporated by other prominent drummers.
such as Max Roach, Art Blakey of Philly Joe to the same extend as Jones had developed it.\textsuperscript{154}

He [Elvin Jones] had the bembe, the triplets, he was playing that from the beginning. It’s just what he felt. I heard it right away. You know when you hear something and you like it? Just talking about swinging now, as soon as I heard him—and this is over Max [Roach]—just for this point, now Max overall is my . . . but just for swinging, Elvin is good. He’s got the beat for me, as soon as I heard it. And he always was playing with that triplet . . . . But Roy Haynes too, but his is small, it’s not so pronounced, but he plays with the triplets, too. Even Max, he never played like that. Art Blakey didn’t play like that, either. Philly [Joe Jones] never played with that [triplet subdivision] . . . . Well those are the terms we use in Western music. You would never go to an African and say, “Oh, you’re playing triplets.” They don’t think triplets. They think something else. So I use that same concept. Even though everybody has analyzed Elvin Jones, “Oh, he plays the triplets and the 12/8.” I prefer to call it the bembe, which is the term they use in Afro-Cuban [music] for the triplet feeling. It’s just the way he feels the time, that’s why this is important. [. . .] Those rhythms, like the bembe, they come from rituals, dances, and ceremonies.

\textsuperscript{154} Some of the recordings that highlight Elvin Jones’ approach are Wayne Shorter \textit{Juju} (1964), McCoy Tyner The \textit{Real McCoy} (1967) and perhaps most significantly his work with John Coltrane’s quartet on albums likes \textit{Crescent} (1964).
It’s passed around. [. . .] Cadomble is a Brazilian form of Yoruba. It’s all interrelated.\textsuperscript{155}

More importantly however, Chambers points out that the idea of a “triplet” subdivision of the beat ultimately is a Western concept imposed on the African origin of rhythmic cells such as the “bembe.”\textsuperscript{156} This rhythmic pattern, usually notated in 6/8 time signature as opposed to 12/8, represents one variation of many different incarnations of African “time-line” patterns, which originated predominately along the Guinea Coast and western Africa. Essentially, these patterns represent rhythmic ostinatos characterized by an asymmetric internal accent scheme, and are a fundamental building block that governs the music and corresponding dances of these regions.\textsuperscript{157} The bembe patterns’ connection with the swing rhythm is derived from the interchangeability of the eighth-notes in either duple or triple subdivision. Hence, two measures of duple 6/8 can be transferred into one measure of ternary 4/4, albeit reinterpreting the quarter-note as a dotted quarter-note, while the eight-notes remain constant.

\textsuperscript{155} Chambers, interview, August 31, 2013.

\textsuperscript{156} The word “bembe” is actually the term for ritual gatherings to worship Orisha-god in song and dance of Afro-Cuban Santeria traditions, and also refers to a specific drum that is used in these practices. Refer to Marian Teresa Velez, \textit{Drumming for the Gods: The Life and Times of Felipe Garcia Villamil, santero, palero, and abakua} (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000), 127-29 and 159-61.

The rhythmic pattern also known as bembe is only one of the rhythms used in these ritual ceremonies. Its evolution is often associated with the music and dance traditions of the Ghanaian Ewe tribe. This pattern perhaps is the most popularized version of African time-line patterns in the Western hemisphere. In one of the earliest notational representations, master drummer Desmond K. Tay referred to the pattern as the “Standard Pattern.” Refer to A. M. Jones, \textit{Studies in African Music} (London: Oxford University Press, 1978), 53.

\textsuperscript{157} However, Royal Hartigan points out in his exhaustive study of African and West-African rhythms that the nature of time-line pattern defies the standardized Western methods of analyzing and intellectually defining them. “There may thus be more than one starting point and beat series underlying a given rhythm or group of rhythms in a given piece: the number, placement and subdivision of beats may exist in more than one form, or at least be perceived in more than one way.” Royal James Hartigan, “Blood Drum Spirit: Drum Languages of West Africa, African-America, Native America, Central Java, and South India” (PhD diss., Wesleyan University, 1986), 175.

Rhythms such as the bembe can be found in Afro-Cuban as well as Brazilian music, but paradoxically, are largely absent, with the exception of New Orleans, in the most influential African-American musical tradition in the United States, the blues.\footnote{Gerhard Kubik has analytically discussed related aspects of African time-line patterns and their possible influence on the African-American tradition in Gerhard Kubik, \textit{Africa and the Blues} (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1999), 63. Further details on Kubik’s three hypotheses that elaborate his theory on the absence of time-line pattern specifically in the Blues can be found at: Georges Collinet, “Africa And the Blues: An Interview with Gerhard Kubik,” \textit{Hip Deep Afropop Wordwide}, accessed October 27, 2013, http://www.afropop.org/wp/8638/africa-and-the-blues-an-interview-with-gerhard-kubik/.

3.3.4 “Chief Crazy Horse”

Chamber’s adaptation of a similar concept as the Elvin Jones triplet-feel can be heard on Wayne Shorter’s “Chief Crazy Horse” from \textit{Adam’s Apple} (1966). The AABA tune again is a medium swing at $\frac{1}{4} = 140$, whose rhythmic accompaniment is shaped around the “Charleston” figure, a dotted quarter-note followed by an eighth-note tied to a long note. Chambers incorporates this figure into his time playing, orchestrating a groove-like two-bar pattern around the drum set that incorporates the full triplet grid. Reminiscent of Elvin Jones’ concept, Chambers’ playing here is slightly less aggressive in character and sonically more controlled, reflecting the overall mood of the piece that is
rather reserved.\textsuperscript{159} The example illustrates two sample rhythms that Chambers uses as the basis for variations.

**Example 3.3 “Chief Crazy Horse” Basic Groove Variations**

During the two ensuing solo-choruses of the tenor saxophone, the rhythm section continues to emphasize the Charleston-figure that has already shaped the rhythmic contour of the accompaniment behind the melody. Chambers adheres to the triplet-based groove throughout the tenor solo, never playing straight time in ‘4.’ The only time a walking feeling unfolds briefly occurs in the final A-section of the first tenor chorus, when the bass deviates from the broken-‘2’ Charleston-based figure and starts to walk in ‘4’ until the beginning of the next solo chorus. However, Chambers does not respond to this textural change by playing straight-ahead time, but instead uses the Charleston-figure as a launching point for multiple variations based on triplet motifs, as shown in the first of the following two examples. He utilizes this concept throughout the tenor solo, as the second sample-phrase highlights, which occurs at the beginning of the tenor’s second solo chorus.

\textsuperscript{159} Chambers’ “less aggressive” adaptation is a reference specifically in comparison with Elvin Jones’ triplet phrasing in similar musical environments, in this case e medium-swing. Compare with “Your Lady” on John Coltrane’s *Live at Birdland* (1963), “Punjab” on Joe Henderson’s *In’n Out* (1964), or “Monk’s Dream” on Larry Young’s *Unity* (1965).
Example 3.4 “Chief Crazy Horse” Comping Variations of Charleston Figure with Triplets Around The Drums

As the improvisation approaches the piano solo at the 2:57.61 time marker, Chambers switches gears, abandons the Charleston-figure and starts playing the triplet-based time-feel predominately driven by the cymbal, rather than the groove that incorporated the whole drum set into the triplet flow. The cymbal sound creates a lighter texture and a natural decrescendo which functions as the percussive segue bleeding into the first A-section of the piano solo.

Example 3.5 “Chief Crazy Horse” Triplet-Based Time Feel With Cymbals Variations

For the second A-section, Chambers uses an idea, or rather rhythmic device, which has a fairly dramatic effect on the textural density and the listener’s perception. Based on the paradiddle-diddle drum rudiment that uses the sticking RLRRL, Chambers subdivides
this figure into sixteenth-notes and orchestrates it between the cymbal and the snare, emphasizing the first and third note of each rhythmic cell with a bass drum and hi-hat.\textsuperscript{160}

\textbf{Example 3.6} “Chief Crazy Horse” Paradiddle-Diddle Orchestration

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{example3.6.png}
\end{center}

When the paradiddle-diddle is used in a duple subdivision, the way Chambers utilizes it here, the rudiments form a motif that is three quarter-notes in length, implying a phrase of “three” within the 4/4 time signature.\textsuperscript{161} Not only does it sound like a change of time signature from 4/4 to 3/4, but due to the subdivision of sixteenth-notes and the internal 6-note grouping, the implied time appears to be in a faster pulse, since the phrase of three eighth-notes momentarily functions as three quarter-notes.\textsuperscript{162}

\textsuperscript{160} To orchestrate the rudiments around a drum set has become a standard practice amongst drummers to create fills and time-playing variations. See also T. Dennis Brown, "Rudiments," \textit{Grove Music Online} [Jazz, 2002], accessed October 9, 2013, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/J389400.

\textsuperscript{161} The paradiddle-diddle can essentially be implied over any subdivision, but perhaps the most standard applications of this rudiment use binary or ternary subdivision.

\textsuperscript{162} The same rudiment can be applied, albeit for a different purpose, to create a polyrhythmic contour while simultaneously helping to relive physical relief when playing extremely fast tempos. Instead of sixteenth-notes, John Riley demonstrates this concept using a subdivision of even eight-notes that uses the same foot pattern as Chambers employs to superimpose the three-beat phrase in the transcribed example. See Riley, \textit{The Jazz Drummer’s Workshop}, 16.
Implying 3/4 over 4/4 is a polyrhythmic device Chambers uses frequently to change the density of the texture and create the illusion of a new tempo or alternative time signature. Ultimately, the concept of “implied time” is fundamental to Joe Chambers’ drumming style, highlighted in detailed analysis in many of the transcribed examples throughout this text. An interesting aspect of the example above is the literal occurrence of one measure of 3/4 at the end of the phrase that ends with a strong accent by the piano on beat 1 of the ensuing 4/4 measure. Here, the piano ends the phrase of implied 3/4 prematurely, while Chambers finishes the phrase in the “correct” place, which is now beat 2 of the actual 4/4 time signature. However, the flow of the time is not impacted at all, in fact it is barely audible.

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163 For further explorations of “time-stretching” tools, including applications for different tempos and time signatures, refer to Riley, *Beyond Bob Drumming*, 32 – 43.
Echoing Chambers’ “time-stretching” device at the beginning of the bridge during his second solo chorus, pianist Herbie Hancock starts playing a repeated voicing that rhythmically creates a four-note grouping implied over quarter-note triplets.

**Example 3.8 “Chief Crazy Horse” Herbie Hancock “6 Over 4” Piano Comping Pattern**

The repetition of this polyrhythmic pattern, referred to as “6 over 4” (given that in a 4/4 time signature, six quarter-note triplets constitute one measure of 4/4), creates the impression of a faster tempo in which the quarter-note triplet temporarily appears to be the new quarter-note. Furthermore, Hancock starts his figure which consists of three rhythmic attacks followed by a rest, on beat 4, offsetting his whole phrase from the original beat impulses, which becomes apparent when he changes the chord on the last triplet partial of measure four, instead of accenting the following downbeat. By itself, Hancock’s pattern is reminiscent of the “Abakwa” rhythm, which suggests a reference to the previously discussed integration of African rhythmic concepts that have fundamentally influenced African-American music, and jazz in particular.

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165 The rhythmic pattern referred to as “Abakwa” (or “Abakua”) originated as a rhythmic accompaniment of ceremonial music and dances in the West-African Yoruba-tradition. Imported by slaves via the practice of the Santeria religion, it found entrance into the rhythmic canon of Afro-Cuban music, where the
Simultaneously, Chambers responds to Hancock’s quarter-note triplet motif with a linear pattern also based on eighth-notes triplets. However, Chambers extends the motif to an eighth-note grouping moving across the triplet ratio, marked with the dotted bracket, and orchestrates the figure around the drum set. Leading into the final A-section of the piano solo chorus, he resolves this phrase back to the ornamented triplet time-feel that outlines the almost omnipresent Charleston figure.

**Example 3.9 “Chief Crazy Horse” Superimposed Pattern of Grouping of Eight Eighth-Note Triplets Around The Drums**

3.3.5 “Toy Tune”

A final example for Chambers’ time-playing in a medium-swing setting, taken from the Wayne Shorter composition “Toy Tune” from Shorter’s 1965 album *Etcetera*, confirms the already stated notion that his ride cymbal phrasing, particularly in a specific tempo range, frequently implies a sixteenth-note subdivision. “Toy Tune,” approximately around $\downarrow = 146$, is based on an AABA format built on 8-measure sections, except for a 4-measure bridge, and conveys a very clean, almost “tidy” ambiance. This impression is particularly due to the very traditional hierarchy of the assigned roles within the ensemble. The melodic phrasing of the soloist strongly adheres to the formal boundaries of the composition, in large part due to the dense harmonic structure.\(^{166}\) The rhythm section deliberately supports the overall sense of stability providing a moving but very constant time-feel in total support of the soloist; the bass is walking in ‘4’ throughout the tenor saxophone and piano solo, while the piano is comping in rhythmically sparse block chords behind the tenor solo. The notion of stability and straight-ahead time is equally supported by Chambers, who stays within the vicinity of the standard ride cymbal pattern and beats 2 and 4 on the hi-hat as the foundation for his comping. His cymbal beat, however, highlights his very individual phrasing, as he consistently plays the skip note fairly close to the beat, phrased a little more widely than the third triplet partial, closer to a dotted eighth followed by a sixteenth-note.

Particularly during the piano solo, starting at 4:01.40, his slightly sixteenth-notes-

\(^{166}\) Similarly, Michael Cuscana remarks about the fairly traditional characteristic of the improvisation: “The tenor solo kicks off with a pinched variation of the theme and stays very much in the theme and variation mode of the development.” Refer to Michael Cuscana, liner notes to *Et Cetera*, Wayne Shorter, Blue Note Records CDP 8335812, CD, 1995.
derived phrasing becomes very apparent in his time-playing. When Chambers refers to his phrasing in “straight-ahead” time as “trying the give the bass player some room,” it becomes apparent that the closer proximity of the skip note to the downbeat in turn creates a wider proximity from the downbeat to the next skip note, hence it provides more space for the quarter-note of the walking bass line. However, considering that the phrasing naturally does fluctuate, in part because of the comping between the snare and bass drum that often utilizes a triplet grid, the analytical discussion of cymbal phrasing is speculative to a certain extent. But based on the overall auditory impression of his cymbal phrasing, the consistency with which Chambers applies his deviation from the triplet grid supports the outlined assessment.

3.3.6 “A Shade of Jade”

Concluding the two-pronged approach formulated at the onset of the discussion of Chambers’ cymbal phrasing, an analytical focus of the microstructure of beat placement on the level of subdivisions cannot be separated from the melodic flow Chambers creates particularly with his cymbal phrasing. Particularly Chambers’ playing during the melody of Joe Henderson’s “A Shade of Jade” from the 1966 album Mode For Joe is an excellent example for Chambers’ ability to carve a highly distinct percussive texture out of the melodic contour of the musical texture, highlighting how inseparably intertwined his drumming is with the surrounding music. Structurally, Joe Henderson’s “A Shade of Jade” is a based on a 12-bar A-section with a 16-measure bridge, arranged in the format AABA. The fairly stagnant harmony and repetitive melody of the A-section
is characterized by a dark, crunchy timbre, which is due to the chromatically altered
harmony moving in half- and whole-step root motion. The unsettling character of the
chromatic harmony is further intensified by the highly syncopated rhythmic grid that
pervades all levels of the musical texture. Together, harmony and rhythm create an
extremely dense atmosphere, heightened by the brisk tempo of \( \text{♩} = 266 \). Harmonized by
trumpet, tenor saxophone and trombone and in rhythmic unison with the bass line, the
melody is based on a repeated phrase that stretched over the duration of six quarter-
notes during the first 4 measures of the A-section, marked by the solid bracket.\(^{167}\)
Interestingly enough, there is no piano throughout the A-section, but instead, the
vibraphone plays a descending figure of a perfect fourth that is rhythmically based on a
dotted half-note phrase. However, the figure is offset from the downbeat by one eight-
ote, but coincides with a strong drum accent, which in turn outlines a figure based on
cells of three eighth-notes that constitute the drum pattern that stretches over three
quarter notes, outlined by the solid and the dotted bracket.

\(^{167}\) In the ensuing music examples of “A Shade of Jade” the harmonized parts for trumpet, tenor
saxophone and trombone are written in concert pitch.
Example 3.10 “A Shade of Jade” mm. 1-4 of First A-Section Full Score

Given the tempo and the syncopated character of the melody, the accented eighth-note upbeats of the drums in unison with the vibraphone will most likely be perceived as downbeats. Either beats 1 and 3 or 2 and 4 are possible, disguising the actual frequency of the pulse by alluding to a slower shuffle feel. During the following 4 bars of the A-section, the interconnected phrases of impulses of groups of “three” are broken up and gives way to full-ensemble hits played in unison.

Example 3.11 “A Shade of Jade” mm. 5-8 of First A-Section Full Score
Similarly, the final 4 measures of the A-section are characterized by sustained ensemble figures, but Chambers revisits the concept of phrasing in “three.” This time however, he superimposed a literal phrase of 3/4 over 4/4, marked with the solid bracket.

**Example 3.12** “A Shade of Jade” mm. 9-12 of First A-Section Full Score

![Example 3.12](image)

When the A-section is repeated, Chambers virtually plays the same rhythmic patterns, which applies also to the final statement of ‘A’ after the bridge and the re-statement of the complete head after the solo sections. The highly interlocked parts and the consistency by which the whole ensemble presents the A-section underlines the through-composed character of the orchestration.

During the bridge however, the accumulated tension of the syncopated interplay is released when the rhythm section switches to a walking-feel in ‘4.’ Substituting for the vibraphone, the piano enters comping in block-chords, while the tonality shifts from C minor to B♭ minor. In the context of straight-ahead time playing, Chambers’
previously highlighted emphasis of the quarter note, in conjunction with a slight
accentuation of the skip note on the snare, is particularly evident when the musical
texture requires an element of stability, exemplified in the bridge section. Here, the ride
cymbal and its subsequent variations are phrased with a slight lean towards a tighter
skip note, and fundamentally support the walking-pulse in accordance with the bass line.
Simultaneously, Chambers de-emphasizes the time-keeping function of the hi-hat,
before he outlines the melody with strongly accented ensemble hits during the final 8
measures of the bridge.

Example 3.13 “A Shade of Jade” Comping During First Bridge-Section

Consequently, the concept of tension and release and the contrasting interplay
of activity and stability that characterize Chambers’ drumming in the chorus of “A Shade
of Jade” likewise are defining elements of his time-playing throughout the ensuing
improvisations over the AABA solo format. The following examples, transcribed from the
first and second solo chorus of the tenor saxophone, exemplify these characteristics of
Chambers’ time playing not only in regard to the discussed composition, but constitute
his approach to comping that is prominent in many of the 1960s recordings of comparable stylistic and aesthetic *Gestalt*.

From the very onset of the first tenor chorus, Chambers’ rhythmic accompaniment is focused on stabilizing the quarter-note pulse, with a slight emphasis on beat 4.

**Example 3.14 “A Shade of Jade” Comping in First A-Section of First Tenor Chorus**

It is not until the second A-section that Chambers incorporates the hi-hat consistently on beats 2 and 4. In anticipation of the approaching bridge, Chambers begins to imply short phrases of 3/4 on the ride cymbal (marked with the solid bracket in Example X). Furthermore, he embellishes the 3/4 phrasing by integrating the bass drum into the comping. Together, the successive addition of sounds and implied phrases create a subtle but constantly rising crescendo.
Similarly, implying phrases of 3/4 on the cymbal is characteristic for Chambers’ time-playing during the first 8 measures of the bridge. During the second eight measures however, Chambers and the whole rhythm section revisit the rhythmic contour of the ensemble hits from the initial statement of the bridge. Marked with the dotted bracket, the rhythm section accents the Charleston-figure in unison. It is noteworthy that Chambers abandons the hi-hat on beats 2 and 4 during those hits, while the bass drum is used in a much more prominent role. This is a tendency in Chambers’ playing that can be observed frequently during sections of heightened rhythmic and dynamic activity, as highlighted in the following example. The reduced role of the hi-hat and the expansion of the bass drum’s role during dynamic high points is certainly not a matter of coordination, but a conscious decision to channel the energy towards the rhythmic “target points.”

168 Resembling energetic key areas, “target points” provide the dramatic shape to the musical texture. Chambers’ phrasing, similar to Jon Riley’s discussion of this concept, fundamentally is geared towards these energetic high points. Compare with Riley, *Beyond Bop Drumming*, 20.
Analogous to the ensemble hits in the bridge, the final A-section of the first tenor chorus is characterized by a rhythmic restatement of previous material. Here, Chambers starts the section with an almost exact duplicate of the syncopated pattern he introduced during the melody, followed by several phrases of 3/4 on the cymbal (marked with solid brackets in Example 3.17). Interestingly, for the very first time throughout the whole piece up to this point, Chambers actually plays the standard ride pattern at measure 7 and 8, marked with the dotted bracket. Looking at the overall textural development of the first solo chorus, the dynamic arch that characterized the individual sections is equally defining the first chorus as a whole. The fact that Chambers held back the forward momentum of the full ride pattern until the very end of the first tenor chorus, underlined by a strong 2 and 4 pulse on the hi-hat, highlights the developmental quality
of his playing. His comping simultaneously reflects the target points of the composition and is shaped in consonance with the dramaturgical arch of the soloist.

**Example 3.17** “A Shade of Jade” Comping in Final A-Section of First Tenor Chorus

During the course of the tenor’s ensuing two solo choruses, the energetic level of the improvisation continuously rises toward its highpoint, which is reached in the third chorus. Chambers further intensifies his comping accordingly. Particularly in contrast to the first solo chorus, his comping figures evolve in density and dynamics. In the transition between the final 4 measures of the second chorus and the first A-section of the third chorus, the contrast between dense comping and the incorporation of textural target points is particularly eminent. In response to a rising scale by the tenor, Chambers breaks his time-playing and reinforces the rhythmic character of the melodic motif by accenting its strong beats. Again, Chambers abandons the hi-hat during the transition, which does not affect the momentum of the pulse at all, last but not least because the piano keeps comping and the bass continuous his walking pattern.
When the level of intensity reaches its climax in the final A-section of the third chorus, the aggressiveness of Chambers’ comping peaks, too. He plays his ride patterns mostly on the bell of the cymbal, whose sharper sound in combination with strong accents on the snare cuts through the whole texture and adds an increased level of assertiveness to his phrasing. During the initial three measures of the section, Chambers briefly revisits the implication of 3/4 phrases over the 4/4, marked with the solid bracket, and incorporates the Charleston figure into the rhythmic accentuation, outlined by the dotted-bracket, before a decrescendo over the final 4 measures segues into the ensuing trumpet solo. Consistent with his previous orchestrations, Chambers leaves out the hi-hat during this moment of heightened rhythmic activity.
Example 3.19 “A Shade of Jade” Comping in Final A-Section of Third Tenor Chorus

The musicality that permeates the transcribed examples of Chambers’ drumming reflects his holistic approach to the instrument. Fundamentally rooted in the tradition of the bebop innovators, his playing always mirrors the musical contour of a compositions’ harmonic and rhythmic interdependence. In this context, playing piano and mallet instruments is certainly a beneficiary skill that Chambers has developed that allowed him to understand the underlying musical components of a piece. But even more so, Chambers emphasizes that learning to play the pieces on piano enabled him to creatively engage in the musical dialogue without sounding repetitive:

   I always tried to play the piece. [. . .] Play the composition, whatever the flavor. If you do that, you will never repeat yourself. [. . .] When I recorded all those records I would always get the piano chart and learn the tunes. I could play them on the piano. So I was really inside the songs, I knew what was happening. In this kind of music you do repeat yourself; everybody has licks they play over and over again. But I always made a
conscious effort to approach each piece as an entity in itself, as a story in itself.\textsuperscript{169}

3.3.7 “Straight Up and Down”

Similar to the head of “A Shade of Jade,” the close relation between Chambers’ drumming and the rhythmic contour of melodic phrases likewise is a distinct characteristic of Corea’s “Straight Up and Down” from his 1968 album \textit{Tones for Joan’s Bones}. With regard to this album, Corea’s recording debut as a leader, Chambers notes, “We do a lot of stuff in that. We [with Chick Corea] worked together; we were playing in Blue Mitchell’s band. We were down the same kind of way like we did on Blue Note. We did maybe a couple of cuts, 2 or 3 the most, and then hear it and say ‘ok.’”\textsuperscript{170} The symbiotically interwoven texture between piano, bass, and drums is already exemplified in the 4-measure motif of the opening phrase of the A-section. Based upon four dotted quarter-notes, this rhythmic cell forms the framework upon which the motivic contour for each instrument is built.

\textbf{Figure 3.5} “Straight Up and Down” Basic Rhythmic Motif of Opening Phrase

\begin{center}
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{figure35}
\end{center}

Played at a rapid speed of approximately $\frac{\text{♩}}{\text{♩}} = 292$, Chambers’ phrasing “flattens out,” and his eighth-notes become even eighths. Particularly the combination between the

\textsuperscript{169} Quoted in Micallef, \textit{Joe Chambers}, 111.
\textsuperscript{170} Chambers, interview, August 30, 2013.
high register of the piano and the shimmering sound of the cymbals that predominately characterize Chambers orchestration create a delicate, almost sparkling-sounding yet driving texture. Due to the fact that the bass only plays every other note of the rhythmic cell, the lower register does not overpower the top-heavy quality of piano and drums, but instead accentuates it. The dotted-bracket outlines the dotted quarter-note cell, broken down by Chambers’ orchestration into smaller groups of three eighth-notes.

**Example 3.20 “Straight Up and Down” mm. 1-8 of First A-Section Full Score**
While the piano part and the rhythmic outline of the bass are the same each time that the 4-measure phrase is played (with the exception of its restatement after the key change to F minor during the head), Chambers varies his orchestration of the cell pattern without deviating from the overall contour of the rhythmic cell pattern.

**Example 3.21** “Straight Up and Down” Comping Variations During Restatements of 4-Measure Phrase of A-Section

Many of the previously discussed examples of Joe Chambers’ phrasing and comping ideas (particular in comparison with the up-tempo “A Shade of Jade”) are characteristic for this piece, too. Considering the even brighter tempo of “Straight Up and Down,” Chambers’ counters the risk of cluttering up the texture with less activity on the level of the eighth-notes, which are the primary subdivision, given the rapid pulse. Consequently, the ride cymbal guides Chambers’ phrasing, while he employs comping ideas on bass, snare and hi-hat to accentuate the motivic contour. The following examples are transcribed from the first and second piano solo chorus, which immediately follows the
head. Implying a phrase of 3/4 on the cymbal (denoted with the solid bracket), and the reduced role of the hi-hat (particularly as a timekeeper), are once again characteristic features of Chambers’ comping during these passages. Despite the rhythmic activity in the interplay between piano and drums, or rather because of it, the bass walks throughout the presented examples.

**Example 3.22 “Straight Up and Down” Comping during mm. 1-24 of First Piano Chorus**

Between the first and second solo chorus, pianist Chick Corea develops a dotted half-note phrase in the left hand that is divided into rhythmic accents of long and short
dotted quarter-notes, superimposing a rhythmic phrase that can either be heard as a slower 4/4 or an implied 3/4 over the 4/4. Chambers responds to this phrase by also implying a 3/4 pattern. Despite the underlying walking bass, the aural perception of the pulse is severely obscured by the interplay of piano and drums, particularly when Corea starts his superimposed 3/4 phrase three measures before the next solo chorus on beat 3, overlapping his implied phrase with the actual form. After Corea anticipates the downbeat of the next section with a change in his left hand voicing on beat 4 (which is in accordance with the 3/4 phrasing), the orientation of form and pulse temporarily is completely distorted.

Example 3.23 “Straight Up and Down” Comping mm. 25-32 of First Piano Chorus and mm. 1-8 of Second Piano Chorus
During the continuation of the second piano chorus, Chambers increases the density of his comping, last but not least triggered by the interplay with the piano in the transition between the two choruses. Driven by continuously phrasing the ride cymbal in perpetual variations and interspersed with 3/4 fragments, the activity of the “dancing” bass drum and more involved snare drum figures are particularly indicative of the rising energy level in Chambers’ time-playing, while the hi-hat in this section is only used for accentuations, and not as a timekeeper.
Example 3.24 “Straight Up and Down” Comping mm. 9-32 of Second Piano Chorus

The continuously rising energetic level of the ensemble interplay in the following choruses eventually prompts Chambers to momentarily abandon his time-playing in favor of filling out the texture with a combination of rolls and hits, partly in unison with the piano. Coming out of an extended phrase of implied 3/4 during the F-Dorian section of the second trumpet chorus at the 3:44.06 time marker, Chambers condenses the time with fills mostly based on eighth-note triplet, only to stretch out the perception of the pulse by quarter-note triplets in the A- and F-Mixolydian sections. Despite the fact that the bass walks in 4 throughout, Chambers’ elastic drumming creates a strong
sensation of distorted, almost suspended time during this brief but highly fluent interruption of his time-playing.

**Example 3.25 “Straight Up and Down” Comping mm. 1-24 of Second Trumpet Chorus**

Of particular interest during the continuation of the trumpet solo, specifically in the third chorus, is Chambers’ orchestration of the paradiddle-diddle rudiment around the drums.
Figure 3.6 Paradiddle-Diddle Rudiment

The implied phrase of 3/4 that starts at the 4:26.64 time-marker during the F-Mixolydian section is subsequently transformed into an orchestrated figure of continuous eighth-notes that is divided in half by the underlying substructure of alternating bass drum and splashed hi-hat.

Example 3.26 “Straight Up and Down” Orchestration of Paradiddle-Diddle Rudiment Around The Drums

While the ratio of the eight-note subdivision does not change (♩ = ♪), the perceived aural effect suggests a slower tempo, as the dotted-quarter notes are temporarily reinterpreted as just quarter notes.

Figure 3.7 Metric Modulation: Dotted Quarter-Note of Implied 3/4 = Quarter Note

Essentially, Chambers uses the same idea as in the previously illustrated example of “Chief Crazy Horse,” which is based on the orchestration of the same rudiment around the drums, but the musical effect of both phrases is actually the opposite. This is due to the fact that the underlying subdivisions are different, since Chambers used sixteenth-
notes that implied a faster tempo in “Chief Crazy Horse.” This double implication (of an implied time signature and an implied tempo change) is an important musical quality of this particular superimposition, highlighting a rhythmic device Chambers uses frequently throughout his playing, a fact that the analytical discussion of the transcribed examples in the sections 3.4 and 3.5. will illustrate in greater detail. Furthermore, the figures marked with the solid bracket starting at the 4:26.64 marker likewise are variations of implied 3/4, but they do not have the same dramatic effect as the paradiddle-diddle orchestrations. These phrases, based on a standard 3/4 time-playing pattern shown in Figure 3.8, function as ornamentations of the 4/4, rather than as a fully grown superimposition of a conflicting time signature.

**Figure 3.8** Standard Time Playing Pattern in ¾

However, they do set up the subsequent paradiddle-diddle orchestration, characterizing a seamless segue between 4/4 comping, 3/4 phrasing and the temporal illusion of a slower tempo. The resulting percussive stream is extremely fluent and provides rhythmic interest without overloading the texture with too many notes. Instead, Chambers’ clear and distinct rhythmic phrasing is perhaps one of the most intriguing trademarks of his drumming style.
Example 3.27 “Straight Up and Down” Comping mm. 9-32 of Second Trumpet Chorus and mm. 1-22 of Third Trumpet Chorus
Summarizing the discussion presented in Chapter 3, the analysis of Chambers’ cymbal phrasing and its interrelation with his melodic phrasing provided an initial examination of the intricacies of his postbop drumming styles. The discussed music examples were chosen to allow for broad perspective of his work from within the postbop idiom of the 1960s, and ultimately led to several fundamental observations:

1. The strong quarter-note pulse of Chambers’ cymbal phrasing is one of the most recognizable characteristics of his cymbal-driven drumming;
2. The concept of implying the time is a fundamental cornerstone particularly of his time-playing;
3. The musical Gestalt of his various interpretations of the cymbal beat is inseparably interconnected with textural flow of his melodic phrasing. His phrasing is reinforcing the dramatic arch of the texture, embellishing it or combining both in order to carve out the rhythmic contour of the composite texture or even interpret specific melodic motif;
4. The contrasting interplay between activity and stability highlights his playing throughout all presented examples.
Further deepening the analytical perspectives of Chambers’ drumming, the discussion of phrasing now segues into an extended investigation of aesthetic and conceptual trademarks highlighted in the recordings of “Breaking Point” (1964) and “Indian Song” (1965). According to Chambers himself, both compositions feature some of his finest drumming contributions from the 1960s. As many examples will show, Chambers’ playing on these selections represents a continuation and expansion of the previously identified musical concepts that permeate his playing throughout all discussed recordings featured in Chapter 3. Of paramount significance for the discussion of the analyzed musical examples are the concepts of “sustaining pulse” and “playing in a circle.” Vertical layering, combined with horizontally shaped melodic phrases, are the aesthetic building blocks that form the foundation upon which Chambers’ highly idiosyncratic, postbop drumming style is built. Accordingly, Chapter 4 is designated toward the illustrated investigation of these concepts.

4.1 At the Crossroads - *Breaking Point!*

When Freddie Hubbard’s landmark album *Breaking Point!* was recorded and released in 1964, it clearly represented the “Zeitgeist” of aesthetic explorations of the

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171 Chambers, interview, August 28, 2013.
1960s. Hubbard and many other jazz musicians—like Miles Davis (who established his career already during the mid-1940s as a key contributor to the development of bebop), or John Coltrane and Wayne Shorter (particularly in regard to their recordings during the formation of hard bop)—all artistically engaged with the evolving avant-garde and embraced the creative opportunities it provided. Among trumpet players though, Freddy Hubbard was unrivalled in his technical facility, according to Chambers:

I tell you about Freddie Hubbard. In those days, no trumpet player was playing as technical as him. He was what they say, “He’s playing a lot of shit.” That is, more technical, pyrotechnical than anybody; Dizzy [Gillespie], Miles [Davis], any player that was on the scene. I mean, it wasn’t Miles. Of course, Miles was really visible.

At the crossroad between traditional and modern approaches, Hubbard wanted to discover new musical territories and push group interactions toward more spontaneity and expressive freedom. With regard to the musicians who recorded the album with him, Hubbard emphasized, “I dig the young guys who are trying to push ahead,” and offered his artistic vision behind the music they created for Breaking Point!:

“[...] We’re trying to say something different. Not because it is different, but because jazz, like the world, has to progress.” The group that Hubbard had assembled for the recording

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173 Miles Davis and his “Second Great Quintet” and John Coltrane’s “Classic Quartet” have been at the forefront of postbop developments in the 1960s, just as Wayne Shorter’s solo career was with Blue Note.
174 Chambers, interview, August 31, 2013.
175 Hubbard is quoted in: Leonard Feather, original liner notes to Breaking Point!, Freddie Hubbard, Blue Note Records 7243 5 90845 2 7, CD reissue, 2004.
session (consisting of James Spaulding (alto sax, flute), Ronnie Mathews (piano), Eddie Khan (bass), Hubbard himself on trumpet and Chambers on drums) had been working together for several weeks prior to the studio date. It was in fact Hubbard’s first record date under his own leadership where he was able to use “his” band as opposed to sidemen.\footnote{In this context, Leonard Feather referred to the session as a “turning point in Freddie Hubbard’s career.” See Leonard Feather, original liner notes to \textit{Breaking Point!}, Freddie Hubbard, Blue Note Records 7243 5 90845 2 7, CD reissue, 2004.} \footnote{Chambers, interview, August 28, 2013.} “You have to realize,” Chambers pointed out with regard to the circumstances leading up to the session, “that record was made after about six weeks of touring as a working band, we were out there working, we were [tight] like ‘this.’”\footnote{Chambers, interview, August 28, 2013.} For Chambers, who had been acquainted with Hubbard since his years in D.C. while playing at the Bohemian Caverns, this recording was the initial stepping stone to his career in New York City, and particularly advanced his status in regard to working for the Blue Note label.

This place I worked in D.C., the Caverns, we were the house band. Jazz was very visible at that time; it’s not visible like it was then. it is definitely out of the mainstream today. They had the Howard Theatre in D.C., and they had shows coming in and everybody would come down, Miles [Davis], Cannonball [Adderley], ‘Trane [Coltrane]. There were coming down to the Caverns where we were. So I was meetin’ all these cats, and they was telling me, “You gotta come to New York, come to New York.” Eventually I did, so I already kinda knew people, and I kinda fell into the Blue Note via Freddie Hubbard, when he broke away from Art Blakey and
started a band, we made that record, *Breaking Point!*. Just like over night I was getting these calls, “Do a record date here,” I was recording so much, it was unbelievable. [. . .] Especially *Breaking Point!* and the Wayne Shorter things, they were way out; we were doing some way out stuff.

But not only was this recording Chambers’ introduction into the realm of first-call drummers of the New York scene of the 1960s, it essentially summarizes Chambers’ significance with regard to the two most distinctive characteristics of his artistic accomplishments: it highlights Chambers as a drummer who was one of the most important innovators of this era, and it showcases his prolific skills as composer (exemplified in “Mirrors” which was an essential contribution to the record’s program).

Regarding his drumming style that is featured throughout the record and most prominently on the title track “Breaking Point,” Chambers pointed toward his early days in New York City and recalled that his technique in relation to Hubbard’s fast and agile trumpet playing had actually diminished since he had arrived in New York in 1963.

After I lived in D.C. and [was] working at the Cavern six nights a week for three years, my drum chops were very high. But when I got to New York I scuffled around for a little bit, [. . .] and whatever chops I had went down. When I finally got a call from Freddie Hubbard that was when he was playing extremely fast tempos. When I got on the gig and he was playing fast, I actually couldn’t play [mimics uptempo cymbal beat]. [. . .] Literally,
I couldn’t play like the way Max [Roach] plays fast, and not at that time. I could, but then my chops were down.\textsuperscript{179}

4.2 Breaking the Time: Of Pulsating Music

To adjust to the challenges that Hubbard’s music presented, Chambers changed his approach to playing the drums in this particular musical situation, but, as he recalled, “I accidentally stumbled upon playing like that […] I didn’t analyze it or nothing.”\textsuperscript{180}

During the ensuing process, however, he developed a way of playing that evolved into arguably the most recognizable aspect of his postbop style of drumming, his “so-called style” as he referred to it, which he developed while working with Hubbard.\textsuperscript{181} Instead of having to play the standard ride cymbal pattern, he experimented with alternative ways to create a percussive flow that would balance the challenges of tempo and precise execution, yet provide a strong rhythmic support that allowed for interactive spontaneity and most importantly, would still “swing.”

I still don’t think you should have to play that way [standard ride pattern], but instead of playing that way, I started breaking the time up. Breaking it up around the drums, but it [the time] was still there. And when I heard it back. I said, “This is all right, this is ok.” That’s really what happened. Imply the time around the set. That’s what that [drumming] is on

\textsuperscript{179} Chambers, interview, August 28, 2013.  
\textsuperscript{180} Chambers, interview, August 31, 2013.  
\textsuperscript{181} Chambers, interview, August 29, 2013.
Breaking Point! “ [. . . ] So, especially on the fast tempos, to keep from having to play the [standard ride pattern], I was breaking up the time.  

The approach, which Chambers refers to here as “breaking the time,” is characterized by the distribution of patterns and improvised figures around the drum set and the superimposition of various metric accent schemes over the existing time signature. While any beat-subdivision is possible, the rhythmic grid that primarily constitutes the foundation for Chamber’s playing specifically on the composition “Breaking Point” is based on eighth-notes. The sonic structure is achieved by incorporating all four limbs into the rhythmic flow, a concept that expands upon the more “traditional” style of playing coming out of the bebop era as popularized by Max Roach and others, where the improvised interaction was mainly created between the snare and the bass drum. One of the most vital innovations of postbop drumming of the 1960s—the concept of “broken-time feel”—has been absorbed and further developed by generations of drummers playing postbop idioms. Roy Haynes was one of the earliest innovators of playing in this style that aesthetically corresponded with the expanded role of the rhythm section as a reaction to aesthetic developments of postbop styles, particularly modal jazz and the avant-garde. A syncopated cymbal line, complemented by a bass drum that would either follow the general rhythmic outline of the cymbal or play in counterpoint, and interwoven variations of hi-hat and snare are fundamental building blocks of this style. For Chambers, fellow drummer Roy Haynes was highly significant for the developments of postbop drumming:

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182 Chambers, interview, August 28, 2013.
There wasn’t a lot of focus on Roy Haynes, back in those days. He was overshadowed by Max Roach and even Art Blakey. But style-wise, Roy was playing really modern. I always considered him like a miniature Elvin Jones. He was playing the triplet and playing loose. Roy never played the hi-hat on two and four all the time, he was playing around the set, had the “skip” ride cymbal even way back then, it just wasn’t pushed out there like with Elvin.\textsuperscript{183}

Essentially, the responsibility of time-keeping was delegated to all members of the rhythm section equally, which not only created more responsibility for everybody, but also fostered multiple possibilities of creative interaction.\textsuperscript{184} Joe Chambers’ concept of “implying the time around the set,” is a seminal contribution toward this development of freed rhythmic activity and improvisatory interaction. Based on a four-voice independence and interdependence between the cymbal, bass drum, snare and/or toms and hi-hat, it represents a combination of vertical layering and horizontal, melodic phrases between the hands and the feet.\textsuperscript{185} While it is crucial in this style to be able to precisely execute several rhythmic cells simultaneously, with an emphasis on coordination, it is equally important to recognize the melodic shapes that the seemingly

\textsuperscript{183} Chambers, interview, August 28, 2013.

\textsuperscript{184} Compare with Riley, Beyond Bop Drumming, 7.

\textsuperscript{185} For further explorations and instructional methods on postbop drumming refer to Riley, Beyond Bop Drumming, Riley, The Jazz Drummer’s Workshop, and DeJohnette, and Perry, The art of modern jazz drumming. Marvin Dahlgren’s book “4-Way Coordination,” originally published in 1963, specifically addresses practice routines to develop total independence on the drum set. The exercises are based on sets of stickings (combination of strokes) that are then distributed around the drum set in all four voices, very similar to the approach Chamber’s described as “breaking the time.” See Marvin Dahlgren and Elliot Fine, 4-way Coordination: A Method Book For The Development Of Complete Independence On A Drum Set (Miami, FL: Henry Adler, 1991).
independent rhythms create in relation to each other. The aesthetic quality of
interdependence in this regard is particularly important when analyzing the drumming
style of Joe Chambers, because the combination of the linear structure in his playing
(notes that are played in succession) and layered notes (which are played
simultaneously), are forming interwoven rhythmic structures that disguise the actual
time, and yet create a sensation of constant movement. Most importantly, however,
is the fact that Chambers’ concept is based on the perception of “time” as a musical
entity that is “implied” rather than strictly stated. Playing “pulse” rather than “time”
fundamentally characterizes his approach, and is exemplified in his analogy of pulse
viewed as a rubber band. The pulse, in Chambers conception, is elastic and can be
stretched towards the front- or backside of the beat in order to manipulate time from
the perspective of pulling or pushing the rhythmic sensation of a flexible pulse.

A drummer does not play time; he plays pulse, that’s a difference. There’s
a difference between time and pulse. Time is a metronome, pulse is
something else. A good demonstration is to imagine a rubber band, you
hold it in one spot a pull it and stretch it out away from where you hold it.
The base of the band stays in the center, you push it and pull it out.

While Chambers’ style of “broken-time playing” crystalized during the 1960s, a similar concept later
became popular under the term “linear” drumming. Referring to both grooves and fills, this style of
playing is generally more associated with the “fusion” styles that emerged during the 1970s. One of the
first drummers and educators who promoted this style of playing, particularly evident in his published
method books, was Gary Chaffee. The “linear phrasing concept,” as Chaffee referred to it, is based on
creating rhythmic interest by playing notes successively, instead of simultaneously. Similar to the
approach Chambers developed, the notes are grouped in various subdivisions of 3,4,5,6 or 7 notes based
on a grid of sixteenth-notes or triplets, for example, and distributed around the drum set. Drummers like
Steve Gadd, David Garibaldi or Vinnie Colaiuta, among many others, have been associated with this
concept at various stages during their careers. Compare with Gary Chaffee, *Linear Time Playing: Funk &
That’s the same as playing up on the beat, pushing the beat, the beat is not going anywhere, but you’re stretching it, that’s the pulse, you’re playing pulse. You take a rubber band and you can pull it backwards, that’s playing behind. This is what a drummer plays, he plays pulse, he does not play time. If you’re playing time, you’re not playing. Between that and the stroke of the bass, the bass is extremely important, that creates the pulse. That’s the difference between pulse and time, and you wanna play pulse, you don’t wanna play time.¹⁸⁷

4.3 Playing in a “Circle”: A Concept of Sounds and Phrases

The aesthetic conception of flexible yet definitive parameters of pulse—essentially the aural and physical sensation of a pulse that breathes and is stable simultaneously—is of paramount interest to the investigation of Joe Chambers’ drumming. Transferring the coordinates of pulse to the drum set, Chambers illustrates the idea of playing in a circle by describing motions that follow the shape of a circle as a way to achieve the physical realization of playing pulse in a flowing, never-ending continuum. This approach to playing the drums is a model that, as Chambers emphasized, has been adopted by many of the drummers of the postbop era, starting with Roy Haynes and Elvin Jones.

¹⁸⁷ Chambers, interview, August 29, 2013.

In Chambers’ teaching experience, the idea of playing rhythms based on an elastic pulse, as opposed the literal conception of time as a stringing-together of metronomic, steady beats, has proved to be a difficult concept to convey at times: “The hardest thing in teaching students anywhere, anywhere in the world that I’ve encountered, you run into students who have good technique, know some theory, but when it come to playing the rhythm that’s where they’re stuck. They don’t know where the beat is, they don’t understand.” Ibid.
But then, it’s a concept, too. It’s the concept of playing in a circle, to keep the flow, instead of being boxed up. You wanna flow in a circle, you can play any rhythm in a circle that will fit. As long as you know where “one” is, that is “one” in the form, and you define that [. . .].

Now, the circle, [. . .] the circle in rhythm is playing in a rhythm that could be in any time signature; three, four, five, anything. It’s a circle, it continuous, it goes around and around. There is a way of playing on the drum set itself that is literally in a circle, you’re playing around the set. The circle of rhythm is something that most of the modern drummers attempted to do or did. When I say modern, I’m talking from Roy Haynes and Elvin Jones onward, up to the day.

However, the concept of a circle is not an exclusive trademark of drumming in postbop jazz styles, but is fundamental to all percussive styles of jazz drumming that are defined by the pulse as the common denominator of the rhythmic organization (as opposed to the abstract and rhythmically free soundscapes of the avant-garde that were defined by a pointillistic texture and not pulse). To further illustrate the aesthetic properties of playing in a circle, Chambers interlinks the concept with the rhythmic model of the Afro-Cuban clave. The term “clave,” the Spanish word for “key,” defines the primary rhythmic orientation that Afro-Cuban music is centered around. The clave constitutes a rhythmically syncopated skeleton that is formed by a two-bar phrase that can start on

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188 Chambers, interview, August 28, 2013.
189 Chambers, interview, August 29, 2013.
either the first or second measure of the pattern, while the harmony, melody, all rhythms and improvisations have to be in sync with the rhythmic model.\footnote{There are two types of clave, referred to as son-clave and rhumba-clave, which are originally derived from the 6/8 clave pattern that was introduced to Cuban music through the musical idioms of the West-African Yoruba tribes and their religious practices. Different forms of 6/8 rhythms exist in Cuba that are based on the Yoruba-origins, like the Bembe or the Abakwa, and similar patterns can be found in the music of other parts of Latin America, too, for example in the Brazilian-based religion Candomble and the music associated with it. For a further investigation of rhythms in Afro-Cuban music and the various applications of clave, refer to Frank Malabe and Bob Weiner, \textit{Afro-Cuban Rhythms for Drumset} (New York: Manhattan Music, 1990).}

When the rhythmic flow is interrupted—because one or several of the musical components are rhythmically not shaped according the direction of the clave—the music is “out of clave,” as Chambers referred to it, or in jazz terminology, it does not “swing.” But Chambers emphasized that “you cannot talk swing,” when trying to analyze the aesthetic characteristics of music that boasts a propulsive momentum or “swing” or music that thrives on the subtleties of a laid-back, relaxed quality. Ultimately, as Chambers concluded, swing is “something that is felt, it is an understanding, it’s a feeling, it is not to be analyzed verbally.”\footnote{Chambers, interview, August 29, 2013.} Despite the problematic classification of what constitutes “swinging” across the boundaries of genre, one crucial aspect that Chambers points to is the awareness of the larger picture with regard to the defining factors that determine rhythmic momentum. In Afro-Cuban music, when broken down to the core of accentuations of strong and weak beats within a measure, the emphasis is on beats 1 and 3, while in jazz, the strong beats are felt on the “backbeat,” that falls on beats 2 and 4. This is crucial insofar as that the drummer’s “duties,” as Chambers describes them, are always to keep the momentum of the music going, and therefore, one needs to be
fully aware and “in sync” with the different elements that characterize the specific rhythmic elements of various musical styles.

It’s hard to explain what the circle is [. . .]. You ever play your instrument and you start to feel funny? The rhythms are boxed up; it doesn’t swing, they gets boxed up either from what somebody else is doing or what you’re doing. The reason why it gets boxed up is because you’re out of “clave.” That’s a Latin term actually for swinging. When you’re not swinging that means you’re out of clave. [. . .] When you’re playing pulsated music—that’s music that has a definitive pulse—we’re talking about the clave. The clave in jazz is “2” and “4,” that’s where we feel it. Here is the funny thing about it. In Afro-Cuban music, the guaguanco and all, their accent is really on “1” and “3.” When you’re playing pulsated music—as opposed to abstract-free—then you gotta keep the time going all the time. You have to keep it up, keep the pulsation up, the momentum, the drive. You gotta lot of things to do without overpowering everything else - I’m talking accompanying. But you have to keep the motion going, the feeling, the drive; these are the drummer’s duties. To do this, you have to keep everything moving.192

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192 Chambers, interview, August 29, 2013.
4.4 Extended Analysis of “Breaking Point”

On the Freddie Hubbard’s composition, “Breaking Point” (recorded and released on May 7, 1964), Joe Chambers’ playing masterfully exemplifies his “signature style” of highly syncopated, rhythmic interaction between all limbs, creating a melodic flow of percussive statements. His drumming constantly propels the rhythmic momentum and is deeply entrenched in the collectively agreed upon pulse as the building block for “implied” time that defines the interactions among all members of the rhythm section. Framed by a prestissimo horn call outlining A major—which introduces the tune and concludes it—the song begins with a brief group-improvisation over A-Phrygian, featuring a call-and-response dialogue between trumpet and alto saxophone. From the start, the rhythm section sets the tone for what is to come during the extended improvisations by playing in a collective pulse over the original tempo of approximately \( \downarrow = 220 \text{ bpm} \), implying the time without overtly stating it. In this musical context, all members of the rhythm section are equally responsible for keeping the time, which is of paramount significance for ensemble improvisation when playing “pulsating music.” Throughout “Breaking Point,” the rhythm section is in constant dialogue with each other in an ever evolving musical exchange. The piano is predominately comping in a highly syncopated block-chord style that produces a very pointillistic texture. Similarly, the obscuring of clear markers of the pulse, such as an accented beat 1 resolving a

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194 “Beats per minute” usually abbreviated with “BPM,” defines the relationship of constant rhythmic units to clock time.
preceding phrase, is intensified by rhythmic comping patterns that often anticipate
downbeats and constantly extend phrases across the barline. In response to the textural
activity around him, the bass player engages with the rhythm section members with
highly syncopated, contrapunctal lines. This style of bass playing is similar to the
ornamented or decorated “2-feel” style of Scott Lafaro, particular when considering the
rhythmic and melodic liberation Lafaro brought to the modern evolution of bass playing
that is omnipresent in the implied time-feel of “Breaking Point.”

Embedded in the highly active interplay between all instruments, Chambers’
conceptual realization of implied time crystallizes when he starts to superimpose
various figures of alternative phrase lengths over the 4/4. The longest of these motifs
stretches over six quarter-notes in length and is repeated twice (see Example 4.1).

Example 4.1 “Breaking Point” Superimposed Figure over Six Quarter-Notes

Subsequently, Chambers breaks down this figure into smaller segments of three-quarter
notes in length. The first of the two segments in the following passage is an exact copy
of the first half of the initial six-beat pattern, while the second motif is a separate
orchestration (see Example 4.2).
Marked with the short dotted brackets in the Example 4.3, Chambers creates several variations of these motivic figures that seamlessly move in and out of each other, forging a rhythmic amalgam of theme and variation in superimposed phrases of 3/4 that significantly shapes his drumming throughout “Breaking Point.” The stepped hi-hat and the way he incorporates it into the rhythmic flow is an integral part of Chambers’ “circular” phrasing. Most importantly, he utilizes the hi-hat to create a second layer of three-note groupings of eighth-notes within the implied 3/4 phrases, as this subtle accent equally divides a motif of three quarter-notes. Hence, the internal pulse of a dotted quarter-note within 3/4 permeates the subsequent passage, highlighted by the small arrows, and is almost omnipresent throughout his drumming in this piece. Furthermore, a defining element for Chambers’ phrasing (apparent in this and all subsequent excerpts of “Breaking Point”), is the fact that the phrases Chambers is constantly superimposing can start on any downbeat within the measure. Hence, the fluent character and flexible starting points for these motifs and their variations highlight Chambers’ concept of “playing in a circle” in particularly illustrative fashion. To create the “circle,” Chambers almost exclusively employs a continuous stream of eighth-notes as the primary subdivision, a fact that provides a fundamental stability to his phrasing. At this rate of the pulse, the actual tempo of the eighth-note subdivision is at a
comfortable speed that mechanically works well for eighth-notes as rhythmic building blocks of the melodic flow of the phrases (as can be seen in Example 4.3).

**Example 4.3** “Breaking Point” Broken-Time Playing After Introductory Horn Call

It is interesting to note that even when Chambers does not actually play the hi-hat at its “designated” position in the phrase, the accent-scheme of 3-note groups is still implied, clearly highlighting the conceptual approach behind Chambers’ drumming. From a listener’s auditory perspective, the consequences of the two simultaneous phrases that overlap the original pulse can be heard in multiple ways. On the one hand, superimposing 3 over 4 obscures the original tempo by suggesting a 3/4 time signature. But when Chambers puts a slight emphasis on the fourth eighth-note of each phrase with the hi-hat, he creates the effect that the tempo of the implied time would appear to be slower than the pulse of the original time signature, as the listener likely will perceive the succession of the 3-note grouping as the ternary subdivision of the implied time, and its impulses as the downbeats. Essentially, this is the same concept of rhythmic beat manipulation as previously highlighted in the discussion of “Straight Up
and Down,” a superimposed cross-rhythm that is based on $\frac{1}{4} = \frac{1}{4}$. On the other hand—and musically this is the most dramatic effect especially when considering the brisk tempo—Chambers’ phrasing distorts the aural orientation. At this rate of the pulse, and in combination with the highly syncopated interwoven piano and bass parts, it is difficult for the listener to even hear the pulse at all, let alone relate the superimposed phrasings of the drums to the overarching pulse that unifies the rhythm section. Therefore, the highlighted reinterpretation of the quarter-note might not be aurally perceived as such in the previous example, due to the lack of repetition that would aurally reinforce the superimposed pulse. However, as the discussion of subsequent passages will highlight, this rhythmic effect comes to the foreground of the texture more prominently when Chambers repeats a specific pattern that employs the three eighth-note subdivision over an extended period of time.

The ensuing statement of the melody unfolds in contrast to the elastic fluidity of the opening section with its darker timbre in the Phrygian mode. Here, the melody consists of a repeated Calypso-inspired theme that is eight measures in length, which harmonically shifts to the key of A major, while the rhythmic feel reflects the Latin-tinged Calypso character that is emphasizing beats one and three.\(^\text{195}\) Chambers now plays a groove that is based on the habanera rhythm, and the bass line reflects this rhythm with a combination of half notes and interspersed anticipations on the “+” of

\(^{195}\) Calypso is a musical genre that originated mainly in Trinidad and evolved out of the Carnival tradition celebrated on this Caribbean island. Due to this cultural practice, it similar to the Brazilian samba, which is also heavily associated with carnival, and emphasizes downbeats as the rhythmic anchor. An earlier example of a Calypso-adaptation in a jazz composition is Sonny Rollins’ “St. Thomas” from the 1956 album *Saxophone Colossus*. Citation recording Drummer Max Roach plays a groove that is very similar to Chambers’ version of a Calypso beat, and is one of the earliest recorded examples of this particular rhythm played in a jazz context.
beat 2 and the “+” of beat 4. As opposed the 2-bar pattern of the clave, the rhythmic framework of the habanera is based on only one measure that is characterized by an unsymmetrical accent-structure of 3+3+2 of eighth-notes in duple subdivision.\(^{196}\)

**Figure 4.1** Habanera Figure

Chambers incorporates the rhythmic outline of the habanera throughout his accompanying groove, and reinforces the rhythmic stability with an accented bass drum on beat 1 of a two-bar phrase (see Example 4.4).\(^ {197}\)

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\(^{196}\) The irregular accents are the fundamental characteristic for the clave pattern and the habanera, while the habanera is perhaps the most widely spread rhythmic cell used in the various styles that form what is often referred to as “Latin Jazz.” See Barry Kernfeld, "Latin jazz," *Grove Music Online [Jazz*, 2002], accessed October 10, 2013, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/J259700.

\(^{197}\) In this context, the term “groove” designates a repeated pattern of rhythmic accompaniment on the drum set. Alternatively, it is often used to describe the positive connotations of music that “grooves” in relation to it being very danceable or other favorable properties music can have. In its highly subjective assessment, the term is very similar to music that supposedly “swings.” Compare with Barry Kernfeld, "Groove (i)," *Grove Music Online *[Jazz, 2002], accessed October 10, 2013, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/J582400.
Example 4.4 “Breaking Point” Calypso-Groove in mm. 1-16 of First Chorus

Following the initial statement of the melody, the trumpet solo commences with an improvisation over two harmonic progressions of the Calypso section. Piano and bass are still accompanying in the Calypso-inspired Latin feel, but Chambers, instead of maintaining the rhythmic stability of the Latin-groove, immediately engages in the broken time-feel. Employing similar motifs and variations he used during the opening section, Chambers superimposes one distinct 3/4 figures over the 4/4, whose two main applications of the figure are shown below.

Example 4.5 Variations of Implied 3/4 Figures in Improvisation After First Chorus
Further reducing these phrases of 3/4 to its essential rhythmic core, the cell for all subsequent variations ultimately is shaped around the cymbal figure of a quarter-note followed by two eighth-notes.

**Figure 4.2** Rhythmic Core Figure of Implied 3/4 Phrases

![Rhythmic Core Figure](image)

By combining smaller rhythmic cells into larger units, these motifs temporarily create patterns through repetition, therein providing an underlying level of stability. But due to the fact that Chambers continuously varies the figures, and frequently implies a second layer of dotted quarter-notes within an constant stream of eight-notes, the percussive texture never settles into any predictable format that would give a clear audible relation the original pulse. Furthermore, the perception of the pulse is constantly destabilized by the highly syncopated ensemble interplay that challenges the balance of the composite texture. In summary, these patterns and their variations conceptually fulfill the same function, creating tension and rhythmic contrast by obscuring the “time,” without compromising the momentum of the pulse, a substantial concept that permeates Chambers’ drumming throughout “Breaking Point.”
After soloing over the Calypso-feel, the trumpet improvises over an open modal section that shifts back and forth between A Phrygian, followed on cue by an open improvisation over a B♭ tonality. In the following example, Chambers uses the same concept of motivic repetition and variation, now predominately superimposing phrases that span over six quarter-notes. This phrase can be broken down into smaller rhythmic cells that are based on groups of four eighth-notes.

Example 4.7 “Breaking Point” Superimposed Figure of Six Quarter-Notes
The long phrase evolves out of a smaller, three quarter-note motif, formed by two single strokes and a four-note cell that subsequently starts off the six-beat phrase using a slightly different orchestration.

**Example 4.8 “Breaking Point” Superimposed Figure of Three Quarter-Notes**

The stepped hi-hat has an important function in this context, as previously highlighted. Chambers often uses it as a substitute for the bass drum, particularly when subdividing longer motifs into groups of three eighth-notes, creating an alternating phrase between the hi-hat and the bass drum. Furthermore, an exemplary model for the realization of theme and variation can be observed in the final system of the following example, outlined with a long dotted bracket (Example 4.9). Here, two variations of the initial six quarter-note figure further highlight how Chambers redevelops the melodic contour of his phrasing by using small rhythmic cells to create contrasting material. On the few occasions when Chambers temporarily breaks away from the wave-like texture of the broken-time playing, he generally tends to mark a new section of the improvisation by playing heavily accented downbeats. These hits, highlighted by the downbeat at the 1:32.42 time marker, provide a brief rhythmic orientation in the maze of the intertwined texture and momentarily add a vertical exclamation point to the otherwise very horizontal rhythmic structure.
In the next example, transcribed from the continuation of the trumpet solo over the modal framework of A Phrygian and B♭, Chambers again incorporates theme-and-variation-derived figures into his rhythmic phrasing. Here, Chambers uses a small motif that repeats throughout almost the entire ensuing section.

Example 4.10 “Breaking Point” Three Eighth-Notes Fragment

When Chambers places two single strokes in front of the cell figure and adds a bass drum following it, this rhythmic cell expands into a 3/4 motif, forming a pattern of bass drum and hi-hat alternating in groups of three eighth-notes.
Because of the multiple repetitions of the figure, the bass drum temporarily could be perceived as beats 1 and 3, while the alternating hi-hat would suggest beats 2 and 4. Similar to previous examples, the superimposed metrical structure implies a slower tempo than the actual pulse, temporarily redefining the value of the dotted quarter-note as the quarter-note. However, the placement of the hi-hat and bass drum within this predominately linear phrase, notes played in successive order rather than simultaneously, increases the aural disorientation in relation to the original pulse. Hence, the listener might not hear the implied cross-rhythm between hi-hat and bass drum as temporary downbeats. In relation to the superimposed 12/8 triplet grid, they sound like upbeats on the third triplet partial. The final snare drum fill of sixteenth-notes resolves this brief rhythmic illusion, but it turns the perception of the tempo completely upside-down, sounding like the fill is played in a much faster tempo.
Continuing his previous approach, Chambers combines small fragments into larger motifs, superimposing 3/4 phrases over 4/4 through extended repetitions. The predominant motif Chambers uses in the following passage is orchestrated in exactly the same way as the idea presented at the 1:16.19 time marker. As opposed to the previous example, here the superimposed cross-rhythm between alternating hi-hat and bass drum does in fact suggest downbeats based on ♪ = ♩

Example 4.13 “Breaking Point” Superimposed Phrase Suggesting Dotted Quarter Note = Quarter Note
The implied 3/4 phrasing and the variations derived from it, marked with the long dotted bracket in Example 4.14, once again create motivic stability through repetition and simultaneously add rhythmic contrast through variation. Interspersed with smaller rhythmic fragments, which are also built upon groups of three eighth-notes and marked with the small arrows, these phrases further highlight how three-note groupings form the nucleus of the rhythmic vocabulary in the following example and throughout this piece. Interestingly enough, the isolated measures of 5/4 and 6/4 in the following two examples show that in a formally open—yet extremely dense—improvisation, bar lines are sometimes flexible. In this texture, the horizontal stream of motivic development attains a new level of improvisatory freedom, as opposed to the vertical gravity of dense harmonic progressions. This is especially eminent in the fact Chambers and all members of the ensemble often phrase their lines detached from structural markers such as bar lines or the “traditional” phrase length of 4 or 8 measures.
The oftentimes fairly repetitive nature of Chambers’ drumming almost seems paradoxical in comparison with the highly elastic, borderline-“free” improvisations of the whole ensemble that characterizes the trumpet solo and all ensuing solos. But ultimately, the combination of repeated figures in conjunction with implied 3/4 time highlights a double concept. The repetition of motivic ideas adds a crucial level of stability to the texture, while the conflicting accent-schemes of the cross-rhythms

Example 4.14 “Breaking Point” Broken-Time Playing With Theme and Variation During Trumpet Solo

2:03.50 Trumpet Solo cont./ Pulse
simultaneously distort the aural perception of the pulse. Quite literally, the amalgam of Chambers’ drumming, in unison with the fierce character of the improvisations, establishes a musical texture that is strung to its “breaking point.”

The following four longer examples of transcribed material further highlight the omnipresent contrast between theme and variation, repetition and improvisation in Joe Chambers’ playing on “Breaking Point.” Expanding on the previously highlighted concepts, it is important to present some of the transcribed examples in larger, cohesive units, in order to emphasize the gradual development of various patterns and their variations, marked with solid and dotted brackets, respectively (see Examples 4.16, 4.19, 4.20 and 4.21). These larger segments specifically highlight how Chambers enters and exits these extended phrases, and how he utilizes rhythmic ideas built on short fragments and develops them into larger motifs. Ultimately, improvisation is never absolutely spontaneous, but a combination of internalized gestures systematically linked with ideas that are less formulaic and more instinctive.

The ensuing section is transcribed from the continuation of the trumpet solo over the pulsation between the tonalities of A Phrygian and B♭, immediately following the previous example. Particularly characteristic are two very similar phrases of implied 3/4. Due to the orchestration of the cymbal line and particularly the hi-hat and beat 2 of the figure, the aural perception is different from previous examples where the hi-hat was evenly dividing the phrase, suggesting a momentarily redefinition of the quarter-note pulse. Here, the patterns sound like a true 3/4 with the quarter-note moving at the same speed.
Example 4.15 “Breaking Point” Implied Phrases of “True” 3/4

At the time marker 2:47.62, however, the contour of the bass line subdivides the 3/4 phrasing temporarily by adding an additional rhythmic layer based on dotted quarter-notes. Texturally, the bass now functions in the same way as the hi-hat in previous examples, implying a slower tempo in 4/4, based on the eighth-note subdivision as the pivot note.
Example 4.16 “Breaking Point” Broken-Time Playing During Final Section of Trumpet Solo over Pulse

2:30.72 Trumpet Solo cont.

2:47.62 Dotted Quarter-Note Figure in Bass starts

Bass figure ends

3:02.11 Transition back to Head

Horns
The ensuing saxophone solo follows the structural format of the previous improvisation, starting with a solo over the Calypso chord progression that consequently leads to the alternating modal improvisations between A Phrygian and B♭. Consistent with the previous examples, Chambers frequently employs varying 3/4 patterns. The two main motifs emphasize a “true” 3/4, but the slightly accented snare on the “and of 2” in both figures continuous the undercurrent of the duple substructure.

Example 4.17 “Breaking Point” Implied Phrases of 3/4

At the 4:12.24 time marker in Example 4.19, Chambers starts the extensive repetition of a pattern see Example 4.18) that evolved out of the rhythmic idea he developed after the previous double barline. The ensuing pattern marks the most extensive repetition of a particular phrase up to this point.

Example 4.18 “Breaking Point” Superimposed Phrase of Three Quarter-Notes in Extensive Repetition
Example 4.19 “Breaking Point” Broken-Time Playing During Saxophone Solo over Pulse

3:39.85 Sax Solo cont./Pulse

3:55.25

4:00.90

4:12.24

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The final segment of the alto solo reaches the energetic highpoint of the improvisations during the transition between alto and piano solo, highlighted by the extended drum fill in the last two systems of the following example. Coming out of the fills, particular noteworthy is the constant stream of eighth-notes on the cymbal that momentarily characterizes Chambers’ phrasing. Given the tempo, it is certainly a technical challenge to be able to execute this pattern with one hand, as opposed to an alternate sticking.

**Example 4.20** “Breaking Point” Broken-Time Playing During End of Saxophone Solo With Stream of Eights-Notes on Cymbal

Instead of revisiting the melody and the subsequent improvisation over the harmonic chord progression of the Calypso section, the following piano solo
harmonically stays within the framework of the open A Phrygian and B♭ tonalities, while
Chambers continuous to break up the time and imply phrases of three eighth-notes
(marked with dotted bracket) and three quarter-notes (marked with the solid bracket)
over the pulsating texture.

Example 4.21 “Breaking Point” Broken-Time Playing During Piano Solo Over Pulse

Throughout the course of the piece, the motifs highlighted in the previous
examples and their subsequent variations continuously form the rhythmic vocabulary
based on theme and variation. Particularly the paradiddle-diddle orchestrations, whose
implied substructure of groupings of three (either as quarter-notes or eighth-notes which often occur simultaneously), represent a core element of the rhythmic vocabulary Chambers utilizes during the improvisations. In the larger context, his drumming is a response to the dense activity that defines the texture of the piece. The closely interlocked improvisations within the ensemble, particularly during the trumpet and alto saxophone solo, consistently show a high-energy dialog whose two alternating modal tonalities and open formal structure provide the necessary freedom to engage in extended improvisations. In contrast, when the quintet becomes a trio during the piano solo, the texture naturally thins out, which transforms the rhythm section into a “Bill Evans-esque” group. The texture is still dense, but the nuances of the “conversational” interplay and dynamic amplitude are more audible, while the dramatic effects of question-and-answer and tension-and-release (in comparison to the “high octane” trumpet and alto solos), become more discernable. An example of the shifting textural transformations can be heard roughly halfway into the piano solo, when both bass and drums are smoothing out the texture by establishing a walking pulse between the bass line and the ride cymbal. This momentary shift is brief, but when the almost agitated texture seemingly relaxes into a “walking 4″ feel, the effect is nonetheless dramatic. This

\[198\] At the end of the 1950s, Bill Evans and his trio (with bassist Scott Lafaro and drummer Paul Motian) was seminal for loosening the improvisatory concept of the rhythm section inherited from the bebop era. Their highly interactive, symbiotic interplay of the trio redefined and ultimately emancipated the role of improvised ensemble play at the dawn of the approaching avant-garde. While the pulse was still stated fairly distinct, the “conversational” approach to improvising as a trio foreshadowed the concepts of “implied time,” particularly evident on the *Sunday at the Village Vanguard* recordings from 1961. For further analytical discussion of improvisatory interplay in the Bill Evans Trio, refer to Donald L. Wilner, “Interactive jazz improvisation in the Bill Evans Trio (1959-1961): A stylistic study for advanced double bass performance” (A Doctoral Essay, University of Miami, 1995).
brief textural change is particularly significant since this brief section is the literally the only time throughout the whole piece where the rhythm section actually swings in ‘4’.

**Example 4.22** “Breaking Point” Textural Shift From Broken Time-Playing to Walking Feel During Piano Solo

With regard to the texture, this short passage is approached and left gradually, the result of a momentary consensus to allow the preeminent tension of the rhythmic flow to settle into a straight-ahead swing feeling, before the bass breaks away from the walking line and moves back into the syncopated counterpoint again. In turn, Chambers responds by gradually disbanding the regular ride cymbal pattern and breaking up the
time again. Now, he is not using repeated motifs, but solidifies the texture by
improvising rhythmic motifs between all limbs. The stepped hi-hat, highlighted by the
dotted bracket (see example 4.23), is used as a stepping-stone to start an extended
phrase of 3-note groupings subdivided by eighth-notes.

**Example 4.23** “Breaking Point” Segue From Walking Feel Back To Broken-Time Feel
During Piano Solo

Alternating segments of tension and release are characteristic for the piano solo, which
reaches its longest stretch of rhythmic continuity immediately following the previous
section, before the trio bursts into its most intense level of interaction that ultimately
gives way to the bass solo. In the following example (4.24), Chambers first uses a literal
3/4 pattern over the *alla breve* time signature (“literal” because it is not augmented by
an internal dotted quarter-note pulse, but the ride cymbal pattern and placement of the
hi-hat on beat 2 of the implied 3/4 clearly emphasizes the superimposed waltz). The
actual length of passage of implied time, which stretches over 18 measures, further manifests the aural impression of 3/4. But coming out of the superimposed waltz, the tension builds quickly, highlighted by the piano that starts a cross-rhythm pattern based on the continuous repetition of a dotted quarter-note figure. The dotted bracket in the example rhythmically marks the piano’s phrasing, while the solid bracket highlights the larger structure of Chambers’ 3/4 patterns encompassing the cross-rhythm of the piano.¹⁹⁹ The implied 3/4 ride cymbal pattern is constant element, until the rhythm section breaks the time and Chambers’ sixteenth-notes’ roll, continuing the cross-rhythm pattern, leads into the bass solo.

¹⁹⁹ The use of a cross-rhythm here is essentially the same as implying a 3/4 time with 4/4 or cut-time, and is defined by the subdivision of beats in contradiction to the accent structure or metric pulse of the existing time signature. See Grove Music Online s.v. “Cross-rhythm,” accessed October 13, 2013, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/06882.
Before the final statement of the horn and a concluding cadence in A major bring the song to a closure, bass and drums engage in a free-form improvisation of pointillist and repetitive segments.\(^{200}\) Chambers plays short, explosive figures around the drum set,

\(^{200}\) In the liner note to the 2004 Rudy Van Gelder reissue of *Breaking Point!*, Bob Blumenthal praises the aesthetic “coherence” of this performance, particularly with regard to the other “free” musical experiments of the time. “While the title track leavens the more spontaneous stretches with a spry
colors the texture with cymbal rolls and rhythmically engages in a texture that is pointillistic and abstract. The pulse is suspended until Chambers starts a repetitive figure that evolved out of the improvised dialogue. The basic idea works with a group of 7 notes, subdivided into eight-notes with the superimposed accent scheme 1+1+1+1+1+2. Chambers uses the resulting pattern to create a melodic motif between snare and cymbal that is constantly repeated and intensified by a gradually rising crescendo. Given the repetitive nature and the absence of any reference to the original time signature, it is not superimposed over the cut-time. However, the frequency of the eight-notes subdivision is similar the tempo of the original pulse.

**Example 4.25** “Breaking Point” Repeated Figure With Seven-Note Grouping

Putting all previously discussed examples of Chambers’ drumming style and his characteristic phrasing on “Breaking Point” into the context of conceptual realization, it becomes evident that when Chambers alludes to the “circle” as a way of playing drums in “pulsating music,” he was referring to a concept that combines preconceived elements, its variations and improvised segments into a continuous process of Calypso melody. The quintet maintains a high level of creativity throughout, and generates an overall coherence on the title track absent from many “free” performances of the period.” See Bob Blumenthal, liner notes to *Breaking Point!*, Freddie Hubbard, Blue Note Records 7243 5 90845 2 7, CD reissue, 2004.
horizontal and vertical manipulation or confirmation of the underlying pulse. In “Breaking Point,” the ideas are generally based on eighth-notes as the overarching subdivision, often developing out of an initial motif that subsequently evolves into a larger figure. When this figure is repeated and becomes a pattern, it reinforces the sensation of an alternative time signature (in the case of “Breaking Point,” exclusively phrases of implied 3/4). In summary, twelve distinct patterns crystalized from the intertwined maze of Chamber’s time-playing that reinforce the analytical observations attained throughout the discussed transcriptions. The first five motifs are all using the hi-hat on the fourth eighth-note of the pattern, pointing toward a temporary reinterpretation of the pulse of \( \cdot = \cdot \)

**Example 4.26** “Breaking Point” Five Patterns of Implied 3/4 Accentuating the Dotted Quarter Note

The next five motifs reinforce the perception of a literal 3/4 pattern, denoted by the hi-hat on beat 2 of the phrase.

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201 Jack DeJohnette explained a very similar concept of “broken-time playing” in relation to Chambers’ idea of playing “in a circle.” DeJohnette referred to his concept as “washing machine time,” and compared the development of musical phrases with the circular motion of clothes in a washer and dryer. During each rotation, “the clothes never fall to the bottom of the chamber at the same point in the rotation,” as John Riley summarized DeJohnette’s concept. Similarly, “ideas can fall anywhere in the phrase, just as the laundry can fall at any point in the machine’s rotation, without disruption the musical flow.” See Riley, *Beyond Bop Drumming*, 21.
Example 4.27 “Breaking Point” Five Patterns of Implied 3/4 Emphasizing a “True” 3/4

The final two patterns are juxtaposed variations of previous motifs.

Example 4.28 “Breaking Point” Two Patterns of Implied 3/4 in Juxtaposed Variations

In accordance with the previously emphasized observation from the opening section of “Breaking Point,” the starting point for all these patterns could fall on any downbeat within the measure. Virtually as a “natural” consequence of the fluid phrasing, the motivic patterns consistently are extended across the bar lines, as they follow or embellish the contour of the improvisatory texture. This highlights an evolutionary process of spontaneous improvisation that is drawn in part from preconceived formulaic vocabulary, but most importantly, is created in the context of the musical interaction between the rhythm section and all members of the ensemble. In this aesthetic environment, bar lines as formal markers of the musical organization are oftentimes

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202 In the context of phrasing and various starting points for the patterns Chambers creates, it is noteworthy that he never juxtaposed the longer figures on the level of their smallest subdivision, another common practice in jazz drumming where an idea is exactly repeated, but offset by an eighth-note, for example. But considering the sheer speed of the pulse, juxtaposing phrases by eighth-notes instead of quarter-notes would add a level of syncopation that would jeopardize the rhythmic momentum.
simply a means to an end, particularly in the analytical process as they help to define
the large-scale developments of the musical phrasing by breaking them down into
smaller units. Consequently, all members of the ensemble simultaneously must feel the
pulse as the common denominator that, beside the harmonic structure, unifies the
texture. When the time during the group improvisations is implied to a level as
interwoven and often abstract as in “Breaking Point,” the responsibility of everyone in
the ensemble to keep the pulse “alive” become an essential cornerstone for the music
to not collapse under the lack of “stated” time and formal structure. Given the
complexity and yet energetic creativity of the improvisations throughout all
performances on *Breaking Point!*, the notion Bob Blumenthal expressed in his liner
notes to the 2004 reissue that Chamber’s “individuality” and his “sense of balance
between free and flow rivaled that of Tony Williams” is not only a statement of
acknowledgement, but highlights what is arguably Chambers’ biggest contribution to
the development of modern drumming since the 1960s.\(^{203}\)

With regard to the surrounding circumstances in the aftermath of the *Breaking
Point!* recording session, Chambers revealed an interesting historical anecdote. As
Chambers had pointed out frequently, even during the 1960s, let alone today, there
were not many “working bands” that toured the country as a group and recorded
albums together. But Freddie Hubbard and the group he assembled for a six-week tour
and the subsequent recording of *Breaking Point!* had created some positive momentum
and were facing the possibility for more work as a result of their collaboration. However,

\(^{203}\) Compare at Bob Blumenthal, liner notes to *Breaking Point!,* Freddie Hubbard, Blue Note Records 7243
the rhythm section around Chambers, Eddie Khan and Ron Mathews was able to secure an engagement as a trio in the meantime, while shortly thereafter, Hubbard had an opportunity to bring the group back together. But because of the rhythm sections previous obligation, the group could not reunite, and subsequently, lost its “flow” as Chambers referred to it:

One thing about that—when I think about that group and that *Breaking Point!* record—we were really tight. But I look back at that, what happened was we had a little period of work and then there was a gap, there was no work. So myself, the bass player Eddie Khan and Ron Mathews [piano], as a trio we got a job at a club uptown. It was one of those long gigs, and we kinda messed up the group, because Freddie got some work, and we weren’t able to come. It interfered with the flow that we had. I remember Freddie saying that. It messed up our development as a group. But we had to do it; we had to get some work.²⁰⁴

This example shows that even though jazz groups during the mid-1960s could still find work in clubs for extended periods of time, the opportunities—not infinite by any means in the first place—had to be seized as soon as they arose. In contrast, Chambers refers to one of his first club engagements shortly after he arrived in New York in 1963:

When I came to New York, one of the first jobs I had was at the old Five Spot and I was there six weeks, that’s almost like working at the post office. It was with Cedar Walton. It’s almost unbelievable; I wish they

²⁰⁴ Chambers, interview, August 31, 2013.
could get back to that. But that’s the way you went, you worked in places and you stayed there for long periods of time.\(^{205}\)

Chambers ascribes the decline of the jazz clubs, particularly in the urban black neighborhoods, to the riots of the 1960s. The devastating consequences the riots had for the infrastructure in the black communities not only eliminated the clubs, as Chambers points out, but ultimately led to the disconnection of jazz from the African-American community itself.

But then the riots in the ’60s in most of the big cities, it began in 1964. First the [Los Angeles] Watts riots, Newark, Philly. Those riots destroyed the black infrastructure of the cities. That’s what killed the clubs. Jazz itself is disconnected from the community, from black folks. Black people don’t support jazz. They used to, but they don’t now. If you go to New York and you look who is in the audience, it’s gonna be 90% white and oriental. Black people are disconnected. And this happened after the riots. The riots in the ’60s destroyed the infrastructure of the nightlife and club circuit in their own neighborhoods. By the end of the ’60s, there were no clubs in the black neighborhoods anymore.\(^{206}\)

4.4. The “Real” Avant-Garde

In spite of the difficulties that Chambers described that he and the cadre of young, groundbreaking jazz musicians in New York he worked with had to face in the

\(^{205}\) Chambers, interview, August 28, 2013.

\(^{206}\) Chambers, interview, August 29, 2013.
1960s, the scene still provided enough opportunities to establish lasting careers. “We knew in New York at that time there was enough space for everybody,” Chambers remarked, particularly referring to the various sub-genres associated with the jazz culture of the 1960s.207 “The avant-garde people had their scene downtown in the Village, the mainstream cats, there was still mainstream Basie-style they had, then the Miles Davis style, we had our scene, everybody had their little scene.”208 The term “avant-garde” deserves special attention in this context, since Chambers and his collaborators where creating a new branch of jazz at the “cutting edge” of improvised music during the 1960s postbop era in the United States. Yet, Chambers emphasized, “We never thought about avant-garde or nothing like that. [...] Nobody was thinking about that, that was the furthest thing, I wasn’t thinking about anything like that.”209 More importantly, however, Chambers points out that for him, the most important aspect that was in fact separating those who were considered to be the avant-garde at the time, and those who actually defined it, was the ability to combine the historic past with the challenges of refining the advancement of jazz. In a conversation Chambers had with jazz critic Stanley Crouch, the writer endorsed the musical explorations of Chambers and company during the 1960s as the “real” avant-garde.210 When asked

207 Chambers, interview, August 28, 2013.
208 Ibid.
209 Ibid.
210 In his 1984 essay “Andrew Hill’s Alternative Avant-Garde” Crouch had already legitimized Blue Note’s avant-garde adventures, exemplified in the label’s releases of a series of recordings lead by Andrew Hill since 1963. Crouch, who since the mid-1980s has become an outspoken critic of the free jazz movement, originally was closely associated with the free jazz scene himself, particularly when living and performing as a drummer in New York during the 1970s. Crouch attributed Hill with “perhaps the richest range and originality then associated with the avant-garde,” but simultaneously dismissed, albeit peculating specifics, an unidentified group of free jazz musicians outside the realm of Blue Note’s avant-garde collective: “But Hill’s avant-garde had nothing to do with that of those jazzmen who knew less about music than they did
about his personal assessment of the “avant-garde” of the 1960s, its main practitioners and the implied aesthetic connotations, Chambers concluded:

I don’t remember saying anything disparagingly about those cats that were doing the out-thing, the Albert Aylers, John Tchicais. But one thing that Stanley Crouch said stuck with me. He said, “The avant-garde was really what you guys were doing, not those cats [. . .]. You could hear the tradition in your cats’ playing.” We could swing, we could play time, you could hear the chords. In other words, the people I was working with, Herbie Hancock, Bobby Hutcherson, Joe Henderson, we could get jobs on Broadway if they came to us. Point of fact, I did work some shows up in the Catskills. I backed some big-time singers. Those cats couldn’t do that; they couldn’t get no work like that. All they could do was what they were doing, the Archie Shepp’s and the cats. Archie has changed though. That’s the big difference. We were very broad. Matter of fact, Richard Davis was doing all kinds of stuff, symphony, everything. You could hear in our

about the gullibility of their bohemian audience or those writers looking for something new to praise.” What had set Hill’s music apart, according to Crouch, was his “connection to the tradition,” and the element of swing that was vividly apparent in his music and brought life by Hill and his collaborators, while avoiding the predictability of the jazz performance practice of earlier jazz styles. “Reinterpreting” the historic legacy, as opposed to “avoiding” it, is Crouch’s main argument in Hill’s favor that highlights albums such as *Point of Departure* (1964), and is also prominent in some of Joe Chamber’s recordings with Andrew Hill. “Andrew!” with John Gilmore, Davis, and Joe Chambers, brought a new sense of control to free playing, according to Crouch, while the use of percussion and ethnic influences on *Compulsion* opened up new avenues for fusing jazz and world musics. Refer to Stanley Crouch, “Andrew Hill's Alternative Avant-Garde,” in *Considering genius: writings on jazz* (New York: Basic Civitas Books, 2006), 116. Conversely, Crouch became known as an outspoken supporter of trumpeter Wynton Marsalis’ “Neoclassicism” movement, which initially manifested itself through the establishment of “Jazz at Lincoln Center” in 1993. See Anthony Barnett and Barry Kernfeld, “Crouch, Stanley,” *Grove Music Online* [Jazz, 2002], accessed October 15, 2013, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/J107100.
records there was a thread, we we’re swinging, which is what those cats had a hard time. We could swing, we could play blues, and you could hear the [chord] changes in everything we were doing, we were stretching out a little bit.\footnote{Chambers, interview, August 28, 2013.}

When assessing the historic contributions of himself and the core of musicians he was associated with since the 1960s, the ability to play both “inside” and “outside” of the almost set-in-stone performance practice of “modern” jazz since the advent of bebop is one of the fundamental beliefs that characterizes Chambers’ artistic contention.

4.5 Extended Analysis of “Indian Song”

Wayne Shorter’s album, \textit{Etcetera}, was recorded on June 14, 1965, just a little over one year after Freddie Hubbard’s \textit{Breaking Point!}. The record, however, was not released by Blue Note until 1980, and, as Stacia Proefrock points out, “It is hard to imagine why Blue Note might have chosen to shelve the album, as it shows Shorter in a very favorable light with an incredibly responsive rhythm section....”\footnote{See Proefrock, Stacia. “Et Cetera – Wayne Shorter.” All Music Guide. Accessed October 14, 2013. http://www.allmusic.com/album/et-cetera-mw0000177021.} According to Chambers himself, the record overall best represents his playing, next to Sam Rivers’ \textit{Contours}. The record marked the first time that Chambers and Shorter had worked together for the Blue Note label, and simultaneously it was the starting point for a vital collaboration between the two that also included pianist Herbie Hancock. Chambers and Hancock were forming the core of the rhythm section for Shorter’s subsequent Blue
Note recordings *The All Seeing Eye, Adam’s Apple* and *Schizophrenia*. The quartet recording *Etcetera* was completed by bassist Cecil McBee, who worked again with Chambers shortly thereafter on Andrew Hill’s *Compulsion* in October of 1965, and was the bassist of choice for Chambers’ first album as a leader, the 1973 Muse-label release *The Almoravid*. The production process of *Etcetera* was similar to most of the recording sessions Chambers did for Blue Note artists. Before settling on a definitive version, the group was recording several takes of each composition, and in-between, they were re-listening to the current version to discuss what improvements could be made. “When I’m thinking about *Adam’s Apple, Etcetera* and all that,” Chambers remarked with regard to the two Wayne Shorter albums, “is that I wanted to make it more exciting, fill it up more, to give more of an orchestral backdrop to what was happening.”

Particularly the Wayne Shorter composition, “Indian Song” (the final song of the album, highlights some intriguing examples of Chamber’s idiosyncratic, highly progressive drumming.” Against the hypnotic backdrop of a continuously played bass ostinato in a 5/4 time signature, built upon a two-measure figure in which each measure is subdivided by an accent scheme of 3+2, the tune’s modal layout is based on a C tonality that loosely pivots between Cm(♭6) and C Lydian. The use of odd time signatures other than the 3/4 jazz waltzes was not entirely new in the realm of jazz, but the combination of the static bass ostinato, in contrast to the extremely open harmonic

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213 Chambers, interview, August 30, 2013.
214 Michael Cuscana in the liner notes of the 1980 release remarks: “‘Indian Song’ has to be one of the most cooking examples of 5/4 time.” Michael Cuscana, liner notes to *Et Cetera*, Wayne Shorter, Blue Note Records CDP 8335812, CD, 1995.
conception, created an aesthetically unique texture for the improvisation. The bass ostinato opens the piece, at approximately $\frac{3}{4} = 190$ beats per minute, before the band enters and establishes the somber mood that defines the aesthetic character of the piece throughout. The gloomy sound carries a subliminal energy, as the piano shifts back and forth with arpeggiated chords between Cm($\flat 6$) and C Lydian, while a lyrical line on the saxophone leads into the initial statement of the melody. Between the understated introduction and the extreme dynamic peaks reached at various points during the course of the piece, the intuitive dynamic contour becomes a distinguishing feature of this performance. The melody is based upon a 6-measure motif that is completed by an improvised phrase of various lengths. Interestingly enough, after the first two statements of the melodic line that can be considered the “head,” the motif is transposed up a major third and again up an octave from the initial pitch at the following two reoccurrences before returning to the final statement of the melody in the original octave. The melodic transpositions create a dynamically rising shape in the overall texture, which corresponds with a gradual increase in intensity by the whole band. Similarly, the return to the initial octave continues a natural decrescendo when the piece returns to the head after the bass solo. In terms of the overall structure of the

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215 Paul Desmond’s “Take Five” (from the 1959 Dave Brubeck album *Time Out*) is perhaps the most well-known jazz piece composed in 5/4. While not modal, it also featured an ostinato figure that gave this tune its highly distinctive characteristic. Citation recording Max Roach had explored odd time signatures, particularly the 3/4 jazz, waltz [jazz, waltz is unclear] as a drummer and composer since the 1950s. On his album *Jazz in 3/4 Time* from 1957, Roach’s record showcases not just his drumming on a program exclusively dedicated to musical treatment of the 3/4 time signature, but also features two pieces written by Roach, “Blues Waltz” and “Little Folks.” Compare with Olly Wilson and Barry Kernfeld, ”Roach, Max,” *Grove Music Online* [Jazz, 2002], accessed October 21, 2013, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/1381400.
piece, the melodic statements are interspersed with an interlude that marks energetic target points. Based on a tenor saxophone motif outlining the 3+2 rhythmic grid, the interlude leads into an open tenor solo the first two times it occurs, both times built from the same motivic material. The third interlude rhythmically uses the same 3+2 figure but melodically varies, thus creating an arch-shaped line that spearheads the energetically densest moment of the whole piece. The fourth interlude is essentially an extension of the previous one, but based on the original material, before the rhythm section segues into the piano solo. Up until this point, that bass ostinato has been repeated without variation. During the bass solo that follows the piano improvisation, Chambers adheres to the time flow and carries forward the continuous pulse, marking the 3+2 scheme with a bass drum on beats 1 and 4.

Chambers’ drumming on “Indian Song” must be analyzed in context with the bass ostinato, to which Chambers responds with a twofold approach. One the one hand, he deepens the hypnotic characteristic of the ostinato by playing a time-feel that outlines the 3+2 subdivision of the 5/4 time signature. The sample rhythm represents a basic outline of time-playing pattern that Chambers utilizes whenever he is actively reinforcing the stability of the pulse.

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216 The deeply interwoven improvisations between the “soloist” and the “accompaniment” blur the lines between them, creating a texture of almost collective improvisation. In the liner notes to *Et Cetera*, Michael Cuscana points out that “the tenor sax solo becomes almost a saxophone-piano duet with Herbie active and empathetic contributions behind Wayne. And his piano solo is equally inspired with Chambers gracefully soloing under the first section, relying on the bass line to anchor the proceedings.” Michael Cuscana, liner notes to *Et Cetera*, Wayne Shorter, Blue Note Records CDP 8335812, CD, 1995.
**Example 4.29** “Indian Song” Basic Patterns in 5/4

On the other hand, Chambers uses the steadiness of the bass ostinato as a launching pad for various rhythmic phrases that superimpose conflicting accent schemes over the existing 5/4. The first elaborate deviation from the time-pattern occurs in the fifth measure of the first interlude that is setting up the tenor saxophone solo (see Example 4.31). Similarly to “Breaking Point,” Chambers develops smaller motifs into larger phrases and superimposes these patterns over the existing pulse. The predominant motivic cell he uses to create a variety of extended patterns is a fragmentation of the standard ride pattern.

**Figure 4.3** “Indian Song” Motivic Cell Figure

The time marker at 1:51.35 in Example 4.31 indicates where Chambers starts to evolve this cell into a phrase spanning over three quarter-notes, marked with the dotted bracket. But instead of “implying” a meter change through multiple repetition of the figure in “three” without redefining the actual note value of the pulse, Chambers uses the eighth-note subdivision as the pivot note to temporarily redefine the quarter-note
as a dotted quarter-note, creating a superimposed “metric modulation.”\textsuperscript{217} The effect is unilateral, however, since the bass is still playing the ostinato in the original pulse, which could also support the argument that Chambers is superimposing a cross-rhythm instead of a metric modulation.\textsuperscript{218} The audible “illusion” correlates to a 4/4 shuffle-feel suggesting a slower tempo than the original pulse in 5/4. The solid brackets at the modulation marker $\downarrow = \downarrow$ at measure four in Example 4.31 illustrate the superimposed 4/4, which in essence can also be viewed as a 12/8 since the value of the eighth-note stays the same, but the grouping changes from two notes to three notes per beat. The rhythmic illusion is only brief, and leads back to a 3-beat phrase (see example 4.30) that settles into an implied 3/4 because Chambers chooses a motif that is three quarter-note long and repeats the motif multiple times. Again, the note value of $\downarrow = \downarrow$ stays consistent, but the grouping changes back to two eighth-notes per beat.

**Example 4.30 “Indian Song” Implied Pattern of 3/4**

\textsuperscript{217} The subdivision common in both the “old” and the “new” tempo functions as the pivot note, which redefines the frequency of the durational units, in this case from two-to-three units per beat. The designation of two or more simultaneous tempos or “proportional tempo changes” with the term “metric modulation” was introduced by conductor and critic Richard Goldman in his 1951 analysis of Elliot Carter’s Cello, and subsequently expanded in his essay “The Music of Elliot Carter.” Quoted in David Schiff, *The Music Of Elliott Carter, 2nd ed.* (Ithaca, N.Y. : Cornell University Press, 1998), 23 and 41.

\textsuperscript{218} In the musical context of small-group improvisation as discussed here, the boundaries between a metric modulation and a cross-rhythm pattern are difficult to define. On the one hand, the listener’s perception is likely to hear the implied drum pattern as the new pulse over the continuous bass ostinato because of the dominant sound of the higher register of the drums. On the other hand, the texture change is temporary and only implemented by the drums, as opposed to the full ensemble shifting to a new tempo based on a common durational unit.
The alternating foot pattern between the splashed hi-hat and the bass drum subdivides the phrase of three quarter-notes into an additional phrase of three eighth-notes that moves within the larger “three,” which could be heard as the downbeats of a dotted quarter-note subdivision, as well. Starting at the 2:29.50 time marker in Example 4:31, Chambers abandons the implied 3/4 phrases and starts to work his way back to the previous metric modulation, marked with the dotted-bracket. The alternating foot pattern between the hi-hat and the bass functions as a transition back to \( \underline{\underline{\text{♩}}} = \underline{\underline{\text{♩}}} \), which fully unfolds at 2:34.24 when the stepped hi-hat outlines the implied pulse. The solid bracket highlights that the phrasing of the implied new pulse is offset from the phrasing of the original pulse. The downbeat of the implied 4/4 actually falls on an upbeat, which is further emphasized when Chambers starts to accent the snare with an implied backbeat before the whole section resolves back to the interlude, signaled by an eighth-note piano arpeggio. The implied 4/4 phrase even bleeds into the first measure of the interlude, before Chambers starts playing the rhythmic figure of the interlude in unison with the tenor saxophone. As opposed to “Breaking Point,” where the fluidity of the texture made it difficult to even aurally detect the pulse, here the original pulse is always present audibly due to the underlying bass ostinato. Nevertheless, the rhythmic orientation from the listener’s perspective is distorted significantly, which is further intensified by the fact that the superimposed phrases move constantly across bar lines and are offset from the bass ostinato and the gravity of downbeats. The rhythmic tension Chambers creates by employing this metrical illusion adds a dramatic impulse to the already open conception of the piece harmonically and formally.
Example 4.31 “Indian Song” Metric Modulations Between $\frac{3}{4}$ and $\frac{2}{4}$

1:51.35

2:05.53

2:29.50

2:42.04

2:51.30 Piano Arpeggio starts

2:54.34 Sax Interlude
During the transitional tenor saxophone improvision between the fourth statement of the melody and the third interlude, Chambers stretches the elasticity of the pulse once again by employing two different variations of implied time. Coming out of a section of stable 5/4 time-playing, he superimposes the pulse of the quarter-note triplet over the 5/4, transforming it momentarily into the new quarter-note. He is already setting up the idea two measures before the metric modulation comes into full effect, unfolding in the illusion of a seemingly faster swing in 4/4 stretching over four measures of 5/4. After returning to the original value of the quarter-note, he stays true to the subdivision of two eighth-notes per beat, but phrases them in groups of eight which equals four quarter-notes, implying a 4/4 within the 5/4, before he resolves the phrase with a return to a 5/4 time-pattern.

Example 4.32 “Indian Song” Superimposition of Implied Quarter-Note Triplets Over Pulse
In between the subsequent third and fourth interlude, the latter eventually transitioning to the piano solo, Chambers solidifies the texture by employing an orchestrated rudiment, a concept he frequently utilizes using different subdivisions. During the send-off after the third interlude, he splits an inverted paradiddle-diddle between the ride cymbal and the snare. The sticking for this inverted rudiment is RLLRLR, while the standard sticking is RLRRLL. Essentially, the duple subdivision of the inverted paradiddle-diddle rudiment uses the same sticking as the ternary subdivision of the swing pattern, as Chambers’ pattern is a 3-note subdivision that generates a 4/4 pulse over the 5/4.

Figure 4.4 “Indian Song” Inverted Paradiddle-Diddle Orchestration

The rhythmic effect creates the illusion of a fast swing in 4/4 that moves across the 5/4 time signature.\(^{219}\)

\(^{219}\) The technical designation for this figure then would be defined as 4 over 3 in 5/4. In his instructional book, John Riley utilizes the exact same pattern and sticking as an example for creating a “faster feeling” by employing a rhythm based on dotted eight-notes. Riley, Beyond Bop Drumming, 36.

In his instructional book *Rhythmic Illusions*, drummer Gavin Harrison explores the concepts that govern and further develop metric modulations and superimposed cross-rhythms and their applications on the drum set. He distinguishes between the state of mind of the performer who creates the “illusion,” which Harrison labels as the “A-status,” and the hearing sensation of the listener who perceives the textural change as a tempo shift, referred to as “B-status.” Compare with Gavin Harrison, *Rhythmic Illusions* (Miami, FL: Warner Bros. 1996), 12.
The idea of superimposing a paradiddle-diddle based on sixteenth-notes over the existing pulse essentially and audibly has the same effect as the superimposition of quarter-note triplets. They both create the illusion of the tempo speeding up, although the rate of the pulse remains constant. The difference lies in the speed of the implied time itself, as the duple subdivision based on sixteenth-notes suggests a faster tempo than the ternary subdivision of the quarter-note triplets.\(^{220}\)

During the opening section of the ensuing piano solo, still accentuated by the continuous bass ostinato, Chambers completely abandons any time-playing pattern in favor of creating percussive textures that are characterized by colors and shapes. Rhythmically elastic, highly fluid rolls around the drum set and the cymbals in contrast to pointillistic accentuations are interspersed with repeated motifs, marked with a solid bracket denoting a phrase of 3-note groupings in sixteenth-notes, an offbeat-figure and a final phrase of a 3-note subdivision based on eighth-notes. To create the elasticity of

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the rolls and fill-ins, Chambers combines figures built on eighth-notes, eighth-note triplets and sixteenth-notes, whose dramatic effect is enhanced by the rests that outline the motivic flow of the phrases. Chambers and Hancock essentially engage in a dialogue between drums and piano where the boundaries of lead and support are completely macerated, before Chambers returns to a time-feel in support of the bass line that signals the textural change to “traditional” format of piano solo with accompaniment.

Example 4.34 “Indian Song” Elastic Percussive Textures During Beginning of Piano Solo
During the latter half of the piano solo, Chambers returns to a time-feel that stabilizes the texture, before an arpeggiated piano figure of repeated eighth-notes initiates the transition into the bass solo (see Example 4.36). Chambers responds to this textural change by developing an extended phrase through the repetition of a small motif himself. This rhythmic cell is derived from a linear figure that spans over three quarter-notes. Also built upon successive eighth-notes, Chambers’ phrase starts in exact unison with the arpeggiated piano figure and gradually increases in volume. Interestingly enough, Chambers’ six-eighth-notes-phrase conflicts with the piano arpeggio that is formed by a four-eighth-note motif, therein creating a rhythmic layering of simultaneous but offset phrases. The solid bracket in the Example 4.35 outlines the exact repetition of the figure as presented Example 4.36, while the dotted brackets in Example 4.36 shows slight variations in orchestration.
Example 4.35 “Indian Song” Extended Repetition of Linear Figure in Even Eighth

In terms of rhythmic phrasing, both drums and piano now employ “even” eighth-notes as opposed to “swung” eighth-notes, and retain this deviation from the ternary phrasing throughout this transitional section that eventually leads into the bass solo. The linear characteristic of the repeated motif is also reflected in the two linear motifs at the end of the example, marked with the dotted bracket. By contrast, Chambers reintroduces another phrase grouped in units of three eighth-notes, starting at the 7:11.81 time marker and outlined with the solid bracket. Here, the notes that create the subdivision phrasing are stacked vertically, rather than moving successively.
Example 4.36 “Indian Song” Linear and Layered Figures at End of Piano Solo

The combination of Joe Chambers’ rhythmic creativity, paired with his imperturbable awareness of the pulse, enabled him to seemingly effortless navigate
between the “traditional” demarcations of form and “swing” and the radical change of texture facilitated by the “avant-garde” experiments with free form and gradually dissolving harmonic formulas. His concept of playing in a “circle,” literally in regard to rhythmic distribution of sounds and in terms of developing phrases detached from formal markers (such as bar lines) is highlighted in many of the analyzed examples presented in this chapter.

As the music evolved, likewise the creative liberties and responsibilities for the individual members of the ensemble and particularly for the rhythm section grew into a new role. The developments in jazz of the 1960s challenged the performance practice handed down from the bebop era, because it required all musicians to feel and interpret the music with a “collective pulse.” Joe Chambers’ ability to “sustain” pulse in a musical setting where the hierarchy between support and lead is constantly subject to spontaneous negotiations was not something he had learned while playing with the JFK Quintet for six nights a week over three years, as Chambers points out.

Learning how to play creatively on the drums in the jazz rhythm section is a hands-on thing, it’s an apprenticeship thing. Which is why I say it’s not a thing that you can get to the essence of in a school. You’re not gonna

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221 Specifically with regard to the rhythm section, Nathan Bakkum examined the improvised interactions within an ensemble. In his analysis of Miles Davis’ “So What” from a 1964 live performance, Bakkum describes the groups’ elastic interaction with “collective pulse,” a musical characteristic that is a crucial cornerstone for the 1960s postbop developments. Describing the improvisational approach if Davis’ group, Bakkum emphasizes: “Collectively, the Davis quintet developed a freewheeling system within which they fluidly negotiated form and rhythm. […] the group builds complex cross-rhythms and continually obscures interior formal signposts through phrasing.” Similarly to the analysis of Chambers’ playing in regards the musical developments that brought it into existence, Bakkum points to drummer Tony Williams and his masterful absorbance of the “collective pulse” into his playing: “[...] his idiosyncratic phrasing against the grain of the established meter and tempo challenges the collective metric structure.” Refer to Nathan C. Bakkum, “Don't Push, Don't Pull,” 61-63.

learn anything from playing in school, you have to play with other people, with better people, more experienced people. That’s why it’s an apprenticeship situation. I worked in a club in D.C., six nights a week for three years. But I didn’t learn how to play in a rhythm section from that job. Now, that’s strange, isn’t it? The people that I was playing with they were all competent, just as competent as I was. But I couldn’t learn anything from that group. I didn’t start to learn until I got the New York when I played with Ron Carter and these folks. Ron Carter used to tell me, “Man, you’re playing behind the beat.” I thought I was on the beat, but I was behind the beat. Because I didn’t understand pulse, I didn’t understand how to sustain pulse. I had to learn that on the job.222

This may sound like a contradiction particularly in relation to the generally implied understanding that performing frequently will eventually lead to the acquisition of all skills necessary to become a “legitimate” drummer. However, Chambers’ emphasis on the fact that, in order to really “understand” what pulse is and how to interact creatively, his plentiful and intense collaborations especially within the New York jazz scene during the 1960s not only is a testimony to the legendary vitality of the postbop jazz scene, but defines Chambers as a lifelong learner, perhaps his most important achievement.

222 Chambers, interview, August 29, 2013.
CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

5.1 The Fusion of Tradition and Modernity

Reflecting upon the career of Joe Chambers, this study has specifically examined his drumming contributions during the 1960s in three segments: a detailed biography, followed by a historic evaluation of aesthetic developments in jazz, and an analytical discussion of transcribed musical examples. Interwoven with his personal perspectives and evaluations, a diverse portrait emerged of not only an extremely skilled and highly versatile musician, but also of a man whose musical contributions, particularly with regards to the art of jazz drumming, helped to equally push the envelope and preserve the tradition of jazz as one of America’s most valuable cultural expressions. Ultimately, the interdependence between the aesthetic “tradition” of bebop and the “modernity” of the avant-garde emerged as a reoccurring theme throughout this study, illuminated by Chambers’ work as a reflection of the musical and aesthetic developments, especially of the postbop period. For Chambers, the emancipation of rhythm in general, and the liberation of the rhythm section in particular, is one of the most important musical innovations of this era. This development is exemplified substantially in Chambers’ drumming, as Chapter 3 has discussed in great detail.
5.2 Five Cornerstones of Style and Concept

In summary, five fundamental characteristics emerged from the combination of interview material and transcriptions that represent the cornerstones of Joe Chambers’ drumming style:

1. **Musicality**: Chambers playing strongly reflects a particular composition and the interactions of its harmonic and rhythmic signature;

2. **Melodic phrasing**: often simultaneously, his cymbal-driven comping approach embodies a reflection, ornamentation or counterpart to a given melodic shape, the textural density and dynamic arch of a soloist or the direction of the ensemble;

3. **Playing and sustaining pulse, not time**: Chambers’ playing has completely absorbed the concept of an elastic pulse as opposed to playing time. Depending on the aesthetic direction of a piece, the pulse is flexible like a rubber band that can be manipulated, pushed, pulled, or interpreted in a true or quasi-rubato style. Sustaining pulse while superimposing phrases of conflicting accent schemes over the existing time signature or phrasing in melodic shapes according to the dramatic flow are trademarks of his style;

4. **Playing in a circle**: as adapted by many of the leading drummers of the postbop generation, this concept is an integral part of playing pulsating music. Chambers’ drumming is fundamentally based on this conceptual approach of combining small motifs into larger phrases, which almost literally move around in a circular motion between all parts of the drum set. The continuous development of theme and variation, repetition and improvisation are omnipresent components here, and the independence as well as interdependence of all limbs characterizes this approach; and
5. The study of the rhythms of the hemisphere: for Chambers, learning and interpreting world rhythms, specifically Latin rhythms, is an integral part of percussive training and aesthetics. This relates not only to the study of rhythms, but also to the social history out of which these rhythms and the music they are embedded in emerged.

5.3 Further Explorations

Despite the specifically defined findings of the research, a reflective examination of the contributions of any musician who has as complex of a biography, body of work and intellectual vision as Joe Chambers can never be complete. For the purpose of this study, the focus was predominately on his drumming contributions during the postbop era of the 1960s. Much more could be researched and highlighted about his career achievements, may it be a comparison of his drumming style with the work of other prominent postbop drummers, or an in-depth look at his compositions, orchestrations and arrangements. But aside from any further musical explorations, one of the most characteristic aspects about Joe Chambers is his multidimensional approach to the history of jazz and the impact of the music industry, as introduced in Chapter 1.

Chambers emphasized the seminal importance of the study of all social developments that influenced the creation and advancements of jazz. Furthermore, he criticized the underrepresentation or outright neglect of various African-derived elements found in jazz. The various strains of the social history of jazz and the inextricable nature of the links between the arts and the society represent further components of Joe Chambers’ diverse intellectual as well as emotional contention with jazz as a social and aesthetic
phenomenon. In its entirety, they offer a wealth of additional possibilities to further investigate this extraordinary artist and the music that has shaped his eventful career.
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August 28, 2013

CS: What made you leave New York and move to Wilmington, NC, and what are the differences between living in the city for many years, and now down here?

JC: As you get older, of course, you want it to be a little easier. When I came down here and I worked and I got that position, and I had the money, you know, from the . . . The living is easier, much easier, almost like the song says, “summertime and the living is easy.” And the problem with New York always has been – but you don’t realize until you get out of it when you get older – New York is too vertical; it’s a vertical city. They have nowhere to go, the only place they have is up, higher and higher. I envision New York . . . You see those sci-fi movies where they’re travelling in the air? That’s what’s New York’s going to be. It’s gonna be like that. They have nowhere to go but up, there’s no space on the ground. Down here it’s horizontal. New York is vertical man. It’s vertical and it’s congested, which is a result of a neurosis there, because you’re fighting for your space all the time. On the ground, you’re fighting for your space, literally. New York is too expensive. When you’re young, it doesn’t matter, you know. Of course there’s a lot going on there you know. There’s nothing going on over here [Wilmington, NC], they have stuff but . . . But still, you got space, it’s easier, you can relax. That’s the difference, that’s a major difference.

So, I have a house down here, my wife and me. When the job ended, I said, “well you know, let’s relax for a minute.” I’m getting a little antsy, getting to feel like I want tp leave here. I have some idea; I’m not going back to New York. New York is too expensive. The major there, he made a statement some years ago… What is going on in the large cities in the United States is gentrification and moving poor people out. For example: there are people who have lived in buildings, apartments for twenty-thirty years in New
York City. All of a sudden, the owner of that particular building decides to turn the
apartments into co-ops. Not only in the city of New York, but all the major cities,
Chicago, San Francisco, LA, Philly. Apartments are going for a million dollars, million and
a half. We sold our apartment just before we came down here for half a million. So in
other words, when the owner of the building says, “ok, I’m going to go co-op,” they give
the existing tenant their first choice. Now, most of these people don’t have a million
dollars. They cannot put you out in New York, but they can move you. They’re moving
them to places like Rockaway, that’s out in the suburbs, Queens. This is the trend in all
of the cities, is to make it unaffordable for poor people. They turn these apartments into
c-co-ops and they’re selling them for millions of dollars. This is the trend, basically. I mean,
there’s always people, medium income people, and there’s poor people, there’s always
gonna be that, everywhere. They’re making it so it’s unaffordable for them to live there.
You’ve heard of these small apartments, kitchenettes, one room, they’re going for like
fifteen hundred a month, that’s the trend. So when I wanted some excitement, gonna
go hear some music, see some theater, I can just take a plane, it takes an hours.

**CS:** When you first came to New York, what was the vibe then?

**JC:** When I came to New York, we’re talking about 1963. I was twenty-one years old. I
was just exited, it didn’t matter, I was just exited to be there. I lived in Washington DC
for 3 years. I got out of high school in 1960. I was raised-up outside Philadelphia,
Chester. At that time, Chester had a very good . . . the arts were premier; the education
was tremendous in Chester that I had. It was time when the secondary schools had put a
great emphasis on the arts, music, dance, everything. And the trend was what they
called “rent an instrument.” You couldn’t afford an instrument; you could rent an
instrument on a monthly basis. All the little kids where getting instruments. They
weren’t gonna play them, but it was available to them. My thing was athletics and music.
I played ball, football, American football, track, running, basketball, and music. We had
school bands in grade school, middle school and high school. All kind of bands, marching
band, concert band, jazz band, that was what was going on, that was the emphasis, and
I took advantage of it. When got out of high school, when I graduated in 1960, I was a
good enough athlete I could have gone on an athletic scholarship to Virginia University. I
was already playing in bands in school, rhythm and blues and that type of stuff. And the
coach was ready to get me hooked up with Virginia University as a ball player. I was
actually done, I didn’t wanna play anymore ball. But the music was pulling me you know,
I wanted to find out about the music.

I went to the Philadelphia Conservatory for one year, then I moved to
Washington DC and I stayed there. Well I actually went on the road with a rhythm and
blues group, and landed in DC, I liked DC, and I stayed there from ’60 to ’63. Worked at
one place called the Bohemian Caverns, which still exists, worked there six nights a
week, and I studied composition at American University. I was always interested in that,
that’s like my . . . In DC, I met a lot of people.

You have to understand the times, you know, if you’re dealing with “jazz” per se.
Those were good times for jazz, matter of fact excellent times, even though with the
encroachment of rock ‘n’ roll, the establishment of “rock.” Those were good times. The ‘50s and ‘60s were really good times for jazz, jazz was very visible. You used to see it on TV. The TV shows, the late night shows, they would have Steve Allen; we’re talking about Steve Allen, Jack Parr. They were way before these people they have now; you know the late night TV. They would have jazz groups on there; Art Blakey and the Messengers, Benny Golson. You see jazz groups. One thing that is extremely important as to the visibility of jazz was the jukebox industry. The jukebox industry, you know what that is, you know what a jukebox is? I have to ask a young . . .

One of my duties here as a so-called distinguished professor, well I taught privately, I had ensembles, and I taught history, so-called jazz history. I’m a big history . . . history is my thing’, that’s my real . . . matter of fact I’m gonna actually do a history of jazz book. But my emphasis in jazz history is on the social history of it, which none of the books . . . This guy Gridley, he has the monopoly, but what can I say until I get a book out. One thing in understanding the so-called jazz history . . . You see, as opposed to now, jazz is not that visible, comparatively speaking; it’s not visible like it used to be.

One of the primary reasons for the great visibility of jazz in ‘50s and early ‘60s was the jukebox industry. The jukebox industry was actually controlled by the “mob,” the mob liked jazz. The jukebox industry very was important for the great visibility of jazz until early ‘60s, it was paramount for the direction of jazz, and it was controlled by the mob. The mob liked jazz. When I was a teenager in mid- to late 1950s, we would go to sandwich shops in Philly and eat the steaks. Every table would have a jukebox on it. You would have a big jukebox, and every table would have a jukebox. Those jukeboxes, not only were they filled with the current rhythm-and-blues, it was filled with jazz, filled with jazz. Everybody: Miles, Horace Silver, everything. They had jazz on the jukebox.

The record company Blue Note – the founders were two Germans, Alfred Lion and Frank Wolf – they were basically blues-oriented people. They loved jazz. When they started out, they started recording Meade Lux Lewis, the stride pianist, Albert Ammons. Every major black jazz musician recorded for Blue Note at one time or another. Every major one. Believe it. Now, here’s the story with them. They didn’t care really what you played, as long as you put something on the program they could pull out and put on the jukebox. Consequently, people programmed their album, they made sure they put something on there that could be . . . Well I give you an example; you remember a record called Somethin Else, Cannonball, Miles Davis? If you remember carefully, “One For Daddy-O” that was the song... Miles said, “yea this is for you, Alfred.” That was specifically for them to pull out so they could put it on the jukebox. That was it. Consequently, what happened was, in that time, that period in the ‘50s and into the ‘60s, every jazz musician that were recording they would cater their program, they’d make sure, they would say, “oh well listen, I gotta get a tune on there, so we get can get a hit.” 90% of the songs were not hits. In other words, it was fake. It was like jazz musicians trying to be funky, fake rhythm-and bluesish type songs. Every now and then somebody would hit, like Lee Morgan, “Sidewinder,” Herbie Hancock, he had “Watermelon Man,” he had a couple of them. He was successful, but most of the cats it wasn’t hitting because it was fake, you could hear it in their playing. I’ve had friends ask me “why
don’t you . . . why don’t you do . . . ?” I couldn’t do that, because it would be fake if I tried to be funky, you could hear it, you could hear the insincerity in it, you got do what is you, what you feel. So what I’m saying is that the jukebox industry was very paramount in directing the jazz at the time. And consequently, you remember Ahmad Jamal, you ever heard of a tune called Poinciana? That was a hit. It was an instrumental hit. Teenagers in the ’50s knew that song because it was a hit, it was a hit on the jukebox, and it was a hit around. And that’s a big difference. The jukebox industry died out towards the end of the 1960s. That’s very paramount in understanding . . . . The Gridley book, he don’t even touch on that. Well, I mean it’s easy for me to sit here talk about; I don’t have a book out. Once I get a book out, you know . . . . You need a publisher; it’s hard to get your stuff published. When I was teaching here, I did not use the Gridley book. I set it aside. My book for students to and get was Leroi Jones Blues People. That was the book of choice.

CS: Why are you specifically using that book?

JC: Well first of all, it’s a social history of jazz. Mainly that, and it’s widely published, it’s published by major publishing concern, so it’s available. And that book came out in ‘63. That’s the book of choice for me, because it’s a social history. The thing is, jazz for me is much more than a series of names and dates, it’s a social study: its American history, African-American history, history of recording industry, history of theater, all of that in composite. So for example, in Gridley’s book, he doesn’t deal with Africa, everybody runs from Africa. Major issue in history of jazz for me, and the social history is acculturation and syncretism, its extremely important. When I came here, they said “we want you do to a couple things, lets present you in concerts,” so I got some guys from New York and I played, and then they said “we want to put you up and do some lectures.” So my first lecture was “jazz – a social history part one.”

So, what you could call “slave routes” from Africa to the New World, that’s extremely important. In other words, the African people that went to the Caribbean area were basically from Yoruba land/ Nigeria, some Congo. The Africans that went to Brazil, they were mostly from Mozambique and Angola; the African people that went to the States are from Gambia, Ghana and Nigeria. So, why is this important? This is very important to understand acculturation and syncretism.

Let’s deal with syncretism. You know what syncretism means? That’s diffusion, diffusion of religions and religious rights. When the so-called Latin-Catholic colonizers – we’re talking about the Spanish, Portuguese and to some degree French – when they decided to get into the slave trade . . . . First of all, the Spanish and Portuguese specifically, they were already familiar with the African people as a result of the Middle Ages. With the Moors, which was a joint Arab-African venture into Spain, they had that connection already. And with the French, but maybe not as much though. As opposed to the British and the Protestants.

Now, the Spanish and Portuguese, when they got into the trade and they the procured those people from the Yoruba land and Congo and brought them here, the African people that came to places like Cuba, Puerto Rico, Haiti, they fused, they saw a
resemblance of their own Yoruba religion with the hierarchy of saints that was very similar to Catholicism. That’s the basis of Santeria, really is replacing their gods with catholic saints, and that’s essentially what Santeria is. It’s a lot of other things, but that’s basically what it is, and that’s what syncretism is. That’s not to say that... before I researched a little, I used to think “well, they let them play.” No, they didn’t want them to play the drums, either; they didn’t want them to play the conga drums and stuff. They were a little more laissez et fair than the British were. But what they did, those people in the Cuban... they replaced, they played on boxes and stuff. But more importantly, they fused their religion, they were able to fuse their own religion with Catholicism and maintain... That’s the basic difference, and that’s why that music is the way it is. Now, another theory, false assumption is that “oh the African people in the North America didn’t have drums.” It’s not true, no, they had drums. African drums were found as far north as New York in the 17th Century. But this is a major issue, which is why New Orleans... The importance of New Orleans, why New Orleans?

Because New Orleans was a polyglot, it was where everything met, a lot of cultures and people. It was the port city for the westward migration of Americans who were going west of the Mississippi. New Orleans was the drop-off point where things were shipped and where they were sent out. You had all the people there. First it was the Spanish, then the French, then the French again, then the English, the Indians, the so-called American Indians and Africans all these people where “clamped up” there like that, meeting there.

A very important event in the history of America as well as the history of jazz is of course a place called Congo Square. Some of the teachers over at the school haven’t even heard off, and Gridley doesn’t deal with it. Extremely important, people don’t know. First of all, Congo Square was an open-air arena, where the powers at be at that time when the influx... and they were bringing in the Africans... They let them... “ok, y’all gonna go dance in Congo Square, you can hang out in Congo Square, dance, do whatever you want.” So, Congo Square became this gathering place, but who was gathering there? A lot of Caribbean people, and specifically Haitians who were in the midst of their revolution with the French. And the French, they could not penetrate the beaches of Haiti. This is before 1803.

The heyday of Congo Square was the 1700s, from the mid 1700s on. And then this migration of all these people; people from the Caribbean, Martinique, Haiti coming in there. And they just weren’t dancing. They were galvanizing the people. And the Haitians were putting this revolutionary spirit into the region, and of course Voodoo, which is big in New Orleans to this very day. All of this was being invested into Congo Square. It was a meeting place. It got so bad that... I mean “bad,” that is for... at that time, whoever... must have been just before the French... this thing between the Spanish and French in that territory... They said “well look, this is getting to outta hand, we gonna have to ban... close down...” They closed down Congo Square and banned drumming. Anybody caught playing drums, you know – like that – they said “no, no, no.”

That’s very key. That’s a very key point in the development of the African-American side, on the African-North American side. So without the drums, they develop
a different psycho-spirituality, culturally, so it becomes more singing. But also the set, the drum set comes out of New Orleans, comes out of the brothels. But that Congo Square situation is very key in the psycho-spirituality for the development of the people and the music. Without those drums, they were not able to call upon their Orishas like the Caribbean people were doing. So that’s a very key thing. Acculturation means the adaptation. The way we find it here in the United States it’s more acculturation. There is syncretism, but it’s more adaptation. So, those are key issues, that’s musical and a social history. When I’m teaching the history, I start with that.

Point of fact is that my jazz history actually starts back in Africa, I go all the way back to Egypt. That is disconnected. But that’s very connected, that’s where I start. The people from West Africa actually they come from the Sudan, they come from Egypt. They left there, and settled those Songhay’s and the Ghanaian empires in the Middle Ages, 8th, 9th, 10th Century. It’s all connected, as far as I’m concerned.

And then, you know you have the slave trade. The thing about it, there was slavery in Africa and they enslaved each other. I have no qualms . . . . I used to have qualms talking about the Atlantic slave trade, but . . . . The African people themselves and the Arabs have had more slavery than the Europeans. I don’t think much of Islam personally, that is because I know the history of it.

What happened to Africa, a caste system was put into place in Africa when the so-called Arabs . . . . I just capsulize Islam. When it came on the scene . . . the so-called prophet Mohammad basically was telling those people they had gotten away from their tradition. They are from the lineage of Abraham too; Abraham is the patriarch of the Arab and the so-called Jew, Hebrew. It’s just that Hagar had her Ishmael and went out, and she found a well and was able to survive. Hence the Ishmaelites, who are the Arabs. But they got away from home . . . they forgot it, and so Mohammed was bringing them back to that. That’s in a capsulized point, that’s what it is, “look folks, this is where we come from, we come outta this, we come outta that.” When they started to proselytize . . . .

Islam is a twofold situation. I look at it really it’s more socio-political, because not only did he unite the tribes, but it was the last remnants of the Roman Empire. But the Roman Empire in the 5th, 6th, 7th Century, still controlled the Mediterranean. They wanted to gather the people so they could kick out the Romans who still controlled the trade routes, and it was the last days of the Roman Empire, that was behind it, too. But when the so-called Arabs, when they started to spread, they went across to Africa . . . the thing about it, it’s tricky, because you got a lot of dark Arabs, a lot of really black Arabs. When they went across to Africa, the Africans they fought them. When they got their foot in the door – so to speak – they planted, they put the seed in there. Then the decedents, the North Africans who became Islamic, they turned on the Africans. It’s almost like a . . . there’s a guy I have studied with, he used this . . . this is like a parable; it’s like someone turning on his or her mother. You’re turning on your mother, when you – the offspring of the Arabs instilled in North Africa – he became . . . instead of siding with his mother, he sided with these interlopers. And he turned on the African. That’s part of the process why we’re here today, and it’s still going on in Sudan, Mauretania. Because they made war against the “non-believers,” the people who didn’t
accept Islam, they had more slaves than the Europeans combined; they set it up for the Europeans.

These are the issues. So when I deal with jazz history, just on the music side, I deal with that, Western Africa and then the migrations. It’s very important, acculturation and syncretism. You have to understand how, why this music it is the way it is. There is a connection with people form the Caribbean and North America.

CS: I remember a term that you used was ‘Eurocentric,” when we talked on the phone. I’m not sure if its an attitude or . . .

JC: Basically, education in so-called Western society, in general, America and Europe, is basically . . . we’ll deal with America since America is offspring of Europe, it’s “Eurocentric.” That is to say that everything – I don’t care what it is, in this case music – everything starts with the Greeks and Romans. That’s what Euro-centricity is. And, in my talks in history, I dealt with that.

In this culture, we play instruments, saxes, trumpets, guitar, piano, and even drums. Drums are less susceptible, but you’re still susceptible to the Euro . . . We study scales, etudes, whatever, but where do they come from? They come from the Greek modes, which were crystalized by the Romans. The Romans took the Greek modes and crystalized them, really set them up. Point of fact is, most of your forms, your large forms today in Western music, the symphony, oratorio, concerto, comes out of the original Roman Mass, which was basically enactments of biblical history put to music. Pope Gregory, he set up the written scalar system that we deal with today. It was the Romans who crystalized the Greek modes. This is the basis of the tonal system written and aural that we deal with in the West. Of course there were other systems, but those are not central to the educational system that we deal with.

And when you’re dealing with jazz, you have to define jazz. My definition of jazz is basically, it’s a very generic definition, and it is a blend of musical elements that combines European, African, and in some degree Native American Indian elements whose intrinsic ingredient is that of improvisation. Now that is a very basic, very generic definition.

So, what I’m basically doing is kinda laying out my very first lectures in my history course. I deal with this, and I deal with this whole thing about the Greek modes. And that’s what it is, this is the basis of the tonal system we deal with as Western music progressed from the Roman Mass, polyphony etc etc. Now, there are other tonal systems. The African people had tonal systems. The ancient Egyptians had music; nobody knows what it sounded liked. When they were building the Pyramids, nobody knows what the music was. I have a recording of an oud, and I’d say “if you really wanna get some idea of what Ancient Egyptian... you listen to the Sudanese oud (lute) and the Ethiopian and/ or Senegalese Cora. That’ll give you some idea, you know, there’s no recordings.” So I play this music, and then I go into the scalar systems.

Now here is something that people . . . I start defining, since blues is the defining element in jazz, when you start talking about jazz. Blues, it is an African retention. The scale of the blues actually combines major and minor. See, in Western music the
combining of major and minor it doesn’t occur until the 20th Century, in 20th Century composition. Prior to that, you’re either in a major mode or in a minor mode. The Blues scale combines major and minor, this is a fact. I have this music from Mauretania that I play, and if you listen to that you swear you’re listening to blues. So these are things that I set up initially. The timbre . . . see, Blues is an African retention, the blues as a form was developed here in the States. But the timbre of it comes from Africa, there’s no doubt about it.

But, when you’re talking about jazz, you have to talk . . . because jazz is a blend; it is a combination, as cultures come together and mix. “Jass,” J-A-S-S, the term itself, there’s some questions as to where that term comes form. But it was a term that was designated, that was put on to what the people were doing at Congo Square. Jass becomes Jazz, and it has a sexual connotation, “jazz me baby, fuck me.”

And Blues People and Leroi [Jones] deals with this, before he was Baraka. He does get into all that stuff socialy, that’s why I use his book. Other books don’t even deal with it; they start with Louis Armstrong . . . . The Gridley book is the same. Now, its quite funny when I went and talked to Gridley, when I saw him out there in Atlanta [JEN Conference 2013] he showed me he was quite aware of all these things I’m saying, it surprised me. But for some reason, he does not put this in his books [. . .] those books are more for musicians. The other thing is, when I taught history here, it was open enrollment [. . .] you can’t be technical with them you can’t be talking about music, chords and all that stuff. So it has to have a social context. But he [Gridley] was quite aware of these things.

CS: Speaking of Baraka, or Leroi Jones, he always seems to take – in that book [Blues People] pretty strong arguments, for or against . . . and what I find interesting, I read in an interview where somebody asked you “what do you think about free jazz and the avant-garde?” I know this was one of the points in Baraka’s book. And then you mentioned Stanley Crouch, [. . .] you said “we were the real avant-garde.”

JC: At that time, that was the furthest thing . . . I never even thought anything like that until Stanley Crouch said that. When I got to New York in the early sixties, when the so-called “free jazz thing” was taken of, Ornette Coleman, Cecil Taylor, those were the forefront people. Eric Dolphy was like us, like what we were trying to be. Eric was very broad, even though his improvisations were way out. I was more interested in learning and playing ‘Trane, Miles, straight-ahead, Max [Roach]. You know Jimmy Giuffre? I knew Jimmy Giuffre, but he was a “nobody.” But he put out a very interesting record around that time called Free Fall. Himself, Steve Swallow, Paul Bley, just a trio. Excellent record. It was free. The thing about it that was interesting . . . because see I was studying composition at that time, and I was familiar with atonality and all of that . . . . it was a very interesting record [. . .]. I have met . . . when I was in DC, playing at the Caverns . . . .

CS: Was that the standard? Because you said six nights a week, the house band. JFK?
JC: Yea, six nights a week, that was the way it want back then, JFK quintet. When I came to New York, at that time groups would get a gig in a club, they’d be there for like three, four, five, six weeks. One of the first jobs I had was at the old Five Spot and I was there six weeks, that’s almost like working at the post office. It was with Cedar Walton. It’s almost unbelievable; I wish they could get back to that. But that’s the way you went, you worked in places and you stayed there for long periods of time.

This place I worked in D.C., the Caverns, we were the house band. Jazz was very visible at that time; it’s not visible like it was then. It is definitely out of the mainstream today. They had the Howard Theatre in D.C., and they had shows coming in and everybody would come down, Miles [Davis], Cannonball [Adderley], ‘Trane [Coltrane]. They were coming down to the Caverns where we were. So I was meetin’ all these cats, and they was telling me, “you gotta come to New York, come to New York.” Eventually I did, so I already kinda knew people, and I kinda fell into the Blue Note via Freddie Hubbard, when he broke away from Art Blakey and started a band, we made that record *Breaking Point*. Just like over night I was getting these calls, “do a record date here,” I was recording so much, it was unbelievable.

CS: That’s a fantastic record. You have a fantastic tune on that, also. I can’t believe this is ’64! It sounds like somebody did that yesterday.

JC: A lot of people say that. Some of those songs, I go back and hear, listen to, especially *Breaking Point* and the Wayne Shorter things. They were way out; we were doing some way out stuff. *Etcetera* is one of my favorite records, plus Sam Rivers *Contours*. I mean, favorite for me, listening to myself.

So the point is . . . we never thought about avant-garde or nothing like that. We knew in New York at that time there was enough space for everybody. The avant-garde people had their scene downtown in the Village, the mainstream cats, there was still mainstream Basie-style they had, then the Miles Davis style, we had our scene, everybody had their little scene. I don’t remember saying anything disparagingly about those cats that were doing the out-thing, the Albert Ayler, John Tchicais. But one thing that Stanley Crouch said stuck with me. He said, “the avant-garde was really what you guys were doing, not those cats [. . .]. You could hear the tradition in your cats’ playing.” We could swing, we could play time, you could hear the chords.

In other words, the people I was working with, Herbie Hancock, Bobby Hutcherson, Joe Henderson, we could get jobs on Broadway if they came to us. Point of fact, I did work some shows up in the Catskills. I backed some big-time singers. Those cats couldn’t do that; they couldn’t get no work like that. All they could do was what they were doing, the Archie Shepps and the cats. Archie has changed though. That’s the big difference. We were very broad. Matter of fact, Richard Davis was doing all kinds of stuff, symphony, everything. You could hear in our records there was a thread, we were swinging, which is what those cats had a hard time. We could swing, we could play blues, and you could hear the [chord] changes in everything we were doing, we were stretching out a little bit. That’s what he meant. I never thought about it, until he said that, but that is true.
CS: Did he say that to you in person?

JC: He said that to me, and he said that fairly recent, not way back then. Nobody was thinking about that, that was the furthest thing, I wasn’t thinking about anything like that.

CS: He [Crouch] said something similar and mentioned you in book that he wrote from ’06, “Considering Genius: writings on Jazz.” And in that, he has a short paragraph on Andrew Hill. And he talks about him, and his band before you played with him – [the band] with Tony Williams – and then the band that you were in. And he said basically the same thing what you just said – like – that was the legitimate avant-garde – if you want to call it like that.

JC: Yea, right. Nobody was thinking about that. I wouldn’t, that was the furthest thing . . . I wasn’t thinking about anything like that. The way it was really like – I think about Etcetera [Wayne Shorter] – that record specifically – all records – we’d sit and make a cut and then sit and listen back and say, [. . .] “oh, that’s boring, I’m gonna do this.” So we make another cut, and then listen and say, “Hm, that’s all right, I think I’m trying this next time.” That’s what it was [. . .]. “I can try some different stuff, let me try some different time stuff, switch the gears or some stuff.” And then we go back and make another cut, and say “oh that’s a little better” and then hearing again and say, “oh I think I try something else.”

CS: I don’t if know there are many drummers who have contributed that much as composers to records they were on, especially since you were that young.

JC: I was very lucky to be able to that, it’s amazing they “allowed” me to do that, so to speak. We didn’t even think about it. With Bobby, I would bring in a tune, boom, they tried it. But I have been writing a long time at that point. Because I wrote that tune, “Mirrors” back in D.C. when I was studying. It was supposed to be an example of mirror writing, juxtaposing the two melodies. Hubbard heard that, “oh man this is god, we’ll record this.” I recorded it again later as a swing tune [. . .]. I was doing it back then.

CS: When I hear you play – from a drummer’s perspective now – what is so interesting how everything fall in and out of each other. For example “Breaking Point,” it sounds like that. The pulse is still moving, and it’s all so interconnected, all the different limbs. People didn’t really play like that before . . . .

JC: Well I tell you one thing . . . yea . . . and Hubbard even has said that too before he passed: “Man, that Breaking Point. “You have to realize, that record was made after about six weeks of touring as a working band, we were out there working, we were [tight] like “this.” And the point of fact is that most of the Blue Note records, that’s the way it went. They sounded like working bands, but a lot of those records were not working bands. But they sounded like that, because we would go and rehearse for a
week, just before you record. And “boom,” by the time we went in it sounded like we’ve playing forever. That’s the way the Blue Note went. Most of the recordings those days, we rehearsed for a whole week, about three to four days, and then go in there and record. That’s why it sounded like that. We had been playing that music for . . . we went out on the road, had some gigs, it was about six weeks of work, and went in . . . and recorded.

After I lived in D.C. and [was] working at the Cavern six nights a week for three years, my drum chops were very high. But when I got to New York, I scuffled around for a little bit, […] and whatever chops I had went down. When I finally got a call from Freddie Hubbard that was when he was playing extremely fast tempos. When I got on the gig and he was playing fast, I actually couldn’t play [mimics uptempo ride cymbal beat]. I still don’t think you should have to play that way, but instead of playing that way, I started breaking the time up. Breaking it up around the drums, but it [the time] was still there. And when I heard it back, I said, “This is all right, this is ok.” That’s really what happened. Imply the time around the set. That’s what that [drumming] is on “Breaking Point,” […]

So, especially on the fast tempos, to keep from having to play the [mimics the standard ride pattern], I was breaking up the time. But then, it’s a concept, too. It’s the concept of playing in a circle, to keep the flow, instead of being boxed up. You wanna flow in a circle, you can play any rhythm in a circle that will fit. As long as you know where “one” is, that is “one” in the form, and you define that […].

Tony, of course he was with Miles, that’s more visibility. But, there’s a lot with this drum stuff, people don’t know […]. Towards his end, he was getting psychiatric help. He had problems. His issues – besides other personal things – were based on who he was. Are you familiar with the Lifetime group? That was a very important group. As far as I am concerned, that was the beginning of the so-called fusion. Of course everybody says “Miles,” but Miles had the bigger name, but that [Lifetime] was really the beginning of fusion. But the “industry” focused on [his guitar player] John McLaughlin, they pushed him right up-front. That really was what set him off, but he didn’t know, he didn’t understand [about the business].

The drums in this culture specifically, those issues are instilled in the mindset of the overall culture, and it has a lot to do with the Eurocentric attitude. Even to this very day, and it is very strange as percussive as most of pop music and rock is, still, the drums are considered as something that is not as significant as somebody playing the piano, saxophone, trumpet or composing. Which is what I do, I do all of that. But the drums are not considered as significant, that’s very important. Max Roach, all the drummers who were out there, dealt with all of this in many ways.

CS: You’ve been connected with Max Roach for a long time.

JC: Oh yea. For me, he was like my model. He was like my mentor . . . Yea Tony was under treatment, whatever that means, psychiatric. He’s dealing with these issues, same issues that all percussionists and drummers deal with. Even Max [Roach]. Max was like my model. I liked – when we talk about the modern era now – Kenny Clarke . . .
Actually, Joe Jones was hinting at the modern style in the ’30s. You have to understand how the drum set came about. America in general – and in the South in particular – has a very strong marching band tradition. New Orleans was central to the development of “jazz,” but it wasn’t the only place. St. Louis, which is where Scott Joplin is from, Kansas City and other places in the Southwest. See, when you deal with jazz history . . .

My curriculum in jazz history is in two sections; jazz from the beginning to WWII, and WWII to the present. I deal with Africa, Ancient Egypt and the African migrations — very important - and the different migrations to the “Western” hemisphere, and the mindset of those folks who went to the various regions. This is even before you get to the door of jazz. And the focus is on acculturation, which deals with the U.S., since jazz was developed mostly in the U.S. But before you get to jazz, you have to go through work songs, minstrelsy – which was very important – spirituals and gospel, ragtime, and then you get to jazz. But those are very significant social situations and musical situations that you have to deal with.

What they tried to do here [UNCW] was, “do the jazz history in one semester, boom.” And this is cultural imperialism, that’s what you’re dealing with. When you study at a conservatory, you got about six to seven sequences of music history [. . .]. But they say, “you can do the jazz in one semester.” But you really need two semesters for jazz, as far as I’m concerned.

You know, in the dealing with the drums specifically, it’s very important, key . . . like I said, the acculturation-syncretism elements [. . .]. The theory is that the African people here in North America didn’t have drums, which is not true. And then you’re dealing with syncretism and acculturation in Congo Square, and the absence of any type of hand drumming.

The development of the drum set comes out of the marching bands. Joe Jones told me they had so many marching bands in New Orleans, they used to call them off the street. When Storyville developed in the 1890s, they wanted to have some music there, and it started with the piano players, like Jell Roll Morton. And then they brought in the bands from the street. But drums, they couldn’t bring in. The set comes from the marching drums, with the clash cymbals, the bass drum and the snare. They just set is down, it’s like the one-man band thing; bass drum on the floor, snare on a stand, put the cymbals on an eight-inch stand. That is the concept of the set; you get rid of three to four people. Joe Jones told me the drummers on the early records played much more than what you hear, because on those recordings, they were not able to discern. If you examine early jazz drumming, there is not much you can even hear, let alone get. But basically, it’s coming off of the ragtime rhythm, which is a “two way pocky way.” That’s a New Orleans street beat from the Mardi Gras Indians. And the Africans mixed in with the American Indian tribes of the area, especially Seminoles. Today, you have decedents of these blacks who mixed with those Native Americans, and they’re called the Mardi Brass Indians. They make up elaborate costumes and march in the parades. It’s a long tradition, going back to the 1600s. “Two way pocky way” is a syncopated rhythm with the bass drum and snare; it was the basic rhythmic beat in the parades. There is really no indication of it recording-wise because of that [poor recording technique], but the drum set as we know it started to liberate itself, especially in the 1920s in Kansas City.
And Joe Jones was hinting at the modern style that was developed later by Sid Catlett and Kenny Clarke, putting the beat on the cymbal instead of the 4/4 on the bass drum, and developing the independence. And Kenny Clarke was the one before Max [Roach] to hint at freeing up the limbs, the bass drum, putting the emphasis on the ride cymbal, freeing up the left hand [snare] and hi-hat on two and four; coordinated independence, that’s what it is. And then Max [Roach] crystalized it. By doing that, they freed up everything else. Then the bass player no longer had to play tonic and dominant [chords] on [beats] “one” and “three.” The piano players could take their left hand out; they could be more creative. Of course we know harmonically what happened.

I like a lot of drummers out of that period. I like Art Blakey, Roy Haynes, but to me, Max is the one, because he is the model. He was always doing things that I admired. He was doing things with choruses, even way back then. He was writing tunes, this was the guy. And his [Max Roach] solos. But the focus of the Swing era drummers – Buddy Rich, Gene Krupa – was the flash. They would do the flash solo, with the stick going high on the single strokes. Gene Krupa really copied Baby Dodds. But the way they were playing the time with the bass drum on all four and the beat on the hi-hat, I never really could get with that. But when the bebop era came in, it just opened everything up, and Max was the one who crystalized everything out of there for me. I like Art [Blakey] . . . I like some things Art was doing; I like Roy [Haynes], and then Philly [Joe Jones]. But Max [Roach] was the one, for me Max was the one.

CS: When you talk about Roy Haynes, Art Blakey or Philly Joe Jones, what specifically did attract you to them, or did you take away from listening to them?

92.12.75 JC: I knew about Roy Haynes, but there wasn’t a lot of focus on Roy Haynes, back in those days. He was overshadowed by Max Roach and even Art Blakey. But style-wise, Roy was playing really modern. I always considered him like a miniature Elvin Jones. He was playing the triplet and playing loose. Roy never played the hi-hat on two and four all the time, he was playing around the set, had the “skip” ride cymbal even way back then, it just wasn’t pushed out there like with Elvin. But the thing that took me to Philly [Joe Jones] were the recordings when he was with Miles Davis’ group. Those were just hip, sounded great.

Another thing about that too is the development of the bass. You have to look at recording techniques and the double bass development and the drumming simultaneously. Those groups had Paul Chambers as a bassist, and that developed that Detroit-style, which was Oscar Pettiford first. The long tones on the bass, that’s the key to the groove, that’s really where the groove is, it’s in the bass. That music that Philly Joe Jones was with – that early Miles Davis group – that was the stuff that made me notice him. That music and those grooves, I could feel the looseness and fluidity in it, as opposed to Max Roach’s groups with Clifford Brown; Max, Brownie and George Morrow and those cats. It was good, but it didn’t have the same feel as that Philly Joe Jones thing. I heard that right away. That’s what drew me to Philly and those groups. And of course, Elvin comes on the scene with that stuff with ‘Trane [Coltrane]. Elvin just opened the drums up, but Roy Haynes was playing that kind of style before then, but it wasn’t as big.
But the fact is, I don’t really like to play drums no more, I don’t like to play behind people. Most of the people I’d like to play with are not even here on the scene. I’m not interested in playing drums no more. Not that way, for a lot of reasons. I got a lot to say about that.

August 29, 2013

CS: How was your experience teaching jazz history here in the college?

JC: The class was an open enrollment elective. [. . .] My class wasn’t easy, they had to do a lot of work, they had to write papers . . . When we get into the . . . These kids don’t have a clue, and even the musicians don’t have a clue. When I mean a clue . . . the musicians are probably vaguely familiar with the Gridley book, so they are a little more interested. [. . .] The thing that keeps their interest – for one – they have to do work; they have to write two papers. They have to review a music event; jazz, but a lot of derivatives [. . .]. In other words, I say, “you gotta write a paper,” what I call a reaction paper to jazz and related idioms. They gotta go to a black church, a jazz event, but you can also go to a rhythm-and-blues, you should go to rock ‘n’ roll. Because rock ‘n’ roll is jazz – I show them that – reggae, hip hop, all of those things are related. The paper consists of what you’re learning in class related to what you’re seeing. And then the exams and stuff.

CS: You said rock ‘n’ roll and how its related to jazz, and I’m also thinking of race records and those developments . . .

JC: Well let me ask you a question now, did you study jazz history over there in Illinois?

CS: Yes.

JC: Did you use the Gridley book?

CS: No.

JC: Ok, that’s as far as I will go. Rock ‘n’ roll . . . I had a sequence in my history course, and this was the second part of the history, which was from WW2 to the present, and it goes like this . . . At the end of the swing period . . . the transitions with the swing era; At the end of the swing era, a 30% surtax – which was a government mandate – was levied on ballrooms, baseball, football, concerts, opera etc. to create more revenue and a family-friendly image. The ballrooms had to pay 30% over and above what the clubs where already paying, in order to keep their dance policy. They couldn’t, and this is what closed the ballrooms and killed the big bands. Most of the big bands had to resort
to small bands in the 1940s – even Benny Goodman, Count Basie, Duke Ellington – and this development ushered into the small band era [...] Charlie Parker and the bebop era was in part a rebellion against the big bands.

But you also had segregated radio; white radio played “hit parade” which later became Top 40, black radio played race records. Race record music initially came from the 1920s, featured artists like Ma Rainey, Bessie Smith, and blues. Race record music was music for the black audience. But race records died out in the ’20s because of the popularity of the big bands, but re-emerged in the 1940s. Because with the no-dance policy, black people needed to have some dance music. Race records in the ’40s was particularly popular in Kansas City. Artists like Wynonie Harris, Amos Milburn, Louis Jordan and his Tympani Five, playing jump blues, which is closely related to jazz. In the ’40s, some business people – amongst them Alan Freed – suggested that if they could create white artists to cover the race record industry, they could create a whole new idiom, and called it rock ‘n’ roll. By the end of the ’40s, they got rid of the race record term and called it rhythm-and-blues. Essentially, rock ‘n’ roll is the cover of the rhythm-and-blues, and artists like Hank Williams and Elvis Presley came to prominence as a consequence of this development, covering all of the rhythm-and-blues. That is how rock ‘n’ roll came to be. The term itself comes from the lyrics of Wynonie Harris’ 1949 song “All She Wants to Do Is Rock, Rock ‘n’ Roll.” All the divisions in American popular music developed in the ’40s. At that time, jazz was in the mainstream, jazz was at the forefront in the Swing Era. Jazz was a total entertainment package. By the time those divisions came – during the bebop era – jazz was pushed further out of the mainstream, but still had a strong support system though. These are the direct results of what is going on today in the music business. You cannot disconnect anything. It’s all interrelated. The so-called Swing Era was as big as what rock ‘n’ roll was at that time, maybe even bigger. What they called the Swing Era was when jazz was a total entertainment package. They played in these big ballrooms; it was a big variety show. They had big bands, dance, MC [master of ceremonies], singers, comedians. It was a variety show. It was a total entertainment package.

The Kansas City era is very important, it was extremely important. Kansas City was a wide-open town. The U.S. was under the edict of prohibition in the 1920s, no drinking, except for bootleg. But in Kansas City, they served liquor out in the open. They sold dope, everything. It was a wide-open town as a result of Tom Pendergast, who was a corrupt mayor, ran a corrupt regime. Kansas City was a hangout for the gangsters. This is where Basie and Bennie Moten flourished, and this is where Bird became a dope addict at seventeen, because he had an accident and was put in the hospital, and was injected with morphine. But you could buy morphine across the counter. This is why my course is called “jazz - a social history.” You can’t just study the chords and this and that, no. You have to realize what Bird did had such a profound influence. The musicians wanted to be like Bird, so they took dope. There was a big heroin epidemic in the ’40s. A lot of the musicians took dope because Bird was a dope addict. You gotta know this, you have to understand what’s going on. This is what I taught in the class. Bird was a dope addict because he became a dope addict in the hospital.
CS: You talked about Tony Williams and the music business. Originally, I had asked you about playing drums in a circle.

JC: Ok, we get into the aesthetics now . . . . Actually, I don’t like to teach drums, by the way. I don’t. I did it when I came here [UNCW] reluctantly. But part of my instruction in teaching “drums” – or what we call the drum set, or the multiple percussion instrument – part of my sequence is the study of the rhythms of the hemisphere. You got to learn the Latin rhythms, rumba, mambo, bochanga, guaguancó. All drummers have to acquaint themselves with that. Are you familiar with that? Can you play them? In my teaching of the so-called drums, we get into the history of the set, how it was created, and that is acculturation and syncretism.

CS: How did you originally study these rhythms, came across them?

JC: I always have had an inclination to them; I’ve always felt that, even when I was little. There was a big mambo craze in the States in the ’50s, very commercial mambo, the dance mambo, and it was really very popular. Dizzy Gillespie had started the fusion of jazz and Afro-Cuban. That music is Afro-Cuban. There’s a batucada which is Brazilian, that’s a different clave, the batucada and the samba, that’s a “rock-a-two.” Because a lot of musicians, they say, “OK, I want some Latin.” They don’t know even what they’re talking about. They say, “Give me eight bars of Latin.” “What do you mean Latin? What kind of Latin you’re talking about, there’s a lot of Latin.” Most of what they’re talking about is Afro-Cuban music, comes out of Cuba. As far as jazz, Dizzy Gillespie is the one who brought the Afro-Cuban to jazz; Machito brought jazz to the Afro-Cuban. Dizzy Gillespie and Chano Pozo; that was the wedding back there in the ’40s. Chano Pozo is from Cuba, he brought those rhythms, and Dizzy started incorporating them. He was the first to incorporate those rhythms into the real jazz. I was always attracted to that music.

I started playing clubs really early, but when I wasn’t playing – as a teenager – we used to go to dances. You had to do a lot of dances when you went to the dance; the mambo, cha-cha, and we had a dance called the “bop,” and ballroom. I always had an affinity for those rhythms, and I always tried to play like that. And when I got to New York and met the authentic people, Steve Berrios and Ray Mantilla, they really showed me really how to play in the right clave [. . .]. I was always attracted to that music.

The thing is, if you study the jazz drums, the drummers in the ’40s really freed the instrument, Max [Roach]. And you have to realize, when Dizzy Gillespie brought in Chano Pozo, whoever was playing drums, they had to develop a Latin way of playing drums. If you study jazz drums from the ’40s on, you have Max, Art Blakey, Philly Joe Jones, Elvin Jones, the pioneers of that era. Max and Clifford, they didn’t delve so much into Latin. But then when you get to Coltrane, Sonny Rollins, Horace Silver – a very important composer – you start to see and hear Latin-inflected arrangements, especially with Sonny Rollins, Horace Silver, Coltrane, and of course Elvin [Jones]. There is a drummer, Pete La Roca, he is not a big name outside, but he is the link between Roy Haynes and Elvin Jones, and before Tony Williams, before all of us, me, Jack [DeJohnnette], all of us guys who came up in my period. He was a black American, his
name is really Pete Sims, but he changed his name to La Roca because he played Latin music in Latin bands. He played timbales in Latin bands. He brought the real Afro-Cuban to the drum set, and he understood this thing about the circle.

It’s hard to explain what the circle is [. . .]. You ever play your instrument and you start to feel funny? The rhythms are boxed up; it doesn’t swing. They get boxed up either from what somebody else is doing or what you’re doing. The reason why it gets boxed up is because you’re out of “clave.” That’s a Latin term actually for swinging. When you’re not swinging that means you’re out of clave. Now, the circle – if you’re at a certain level you would know what the circle is, but apparently you’re not – the circle in rhythm is playing in a rhythm that could be in any time signature; three, four, five, anything. It’s a circle, it continuous, it goes around and around. There is a way of playing on the drum set itself that is literally in a circle, you’re playing around the set. The circle of rhythm is something that most of the modern drummers attempted to do or did. When I say modern, I’m talking from Roy Haynes and Elvin Jones onward, up to the day.

Some things you can’t talk about. I always had that dilemma, especially when I was teaching here. You hear about swinging, but you cannot talk swing, it is a thing that cannot be verbalized. It is something that is felt, it is an understanding, it’s a feeling. It is not to be analyzed verbally.

**CS:** You mentioned in an interview on M’Boom, you’re more interested in the drums than the cymbals; you would like to go more into drums. However, on all these recordings that I hear, especially the cymbal phrasing is very . . .

**JC:** I think what that meant was, as it related . . . you’re familiar with M’Boom? We’ve put out about four or five records, as a matter of fact I’m trying to finalize a book of M’Boom compositions. I’m trying to get it reprinted [. . .]. Now, we explored the mallets, but we haven’t explored membranes. Just membranes, just drums, just drum sounds, the timpani sound, the sound of the set, minus the cymbals. Just membranes, you understand, the color of membranes. That’s what I was referring to. And we still haven’t done that yet.

**CS:** And what about your cymbal phrasing?

**JC:** My most identifiable thing is the cymbal ride beat. I came up listening to the bebop cats, Max and Philly Joe. Philly Joe – I payed very close attention to the way he phrased on the cymbal – and Elvin. I always tried to have a loose cymbal stroke. When I was playing jazz time, straight-ahead time, I was always trying to get a sound like Philly Joe and Elvin Jones. I was always trying to capture their cymbal beat, trying to make it feel loose, to give the bass player some room.

A drummer does not play time; he plays pulse, that’s a difference. There’s a difference between time and pulse. Time is a metronome. Pulse is something else. A good demonstration is to imagine a rubber band. You hold it in one spot a pull it and stretch it out away from where you hold it. The base of the band stays in the center, you push it and pull it out. That’s the same as playing up on the beat, “pushing the beat.”
The beat is not going anywhere, but you’re stretching it. That’s the pulse. You’re playing pulse. You take a rubber band and you can pull it backwards, that’s “playing behind.” This is what a drummer plays, he plays pulse; he does not play time. If you’re playing time, you’re not playing. Between that and the stroke of the [upright] bass, the bass is extremely important, that creates the pulse. That’s the difference between pulse and time, and you wanna play pulse, you don’t wanna play time.

The hardest thing in teaching students anywhere – anywhere in the world that I’ve encountered – you run into students who have good technique, know some theory, but when it come to playing the rhythm, that’s where they’re stuck. They don’t know where the beat is, they don’t understand.

When I was playing jazz time, straight-ahead time, I was always trying to get a sound like Philly [Joe Jones]. I like Max for one . . . but see for swinging its Philly, I always tired to get a sound like Philly Joe and Elvin Jones. Between those two, I was always trying to capture their cymbal beat. I always was trying to make it feel loose, to give the bass player some room [. . .].

I’ve very ambivalent feelings now towards drums, about the whole thing and the social aspect. I’m getting away from it, I wanna compose and stuff. But these current beats you hear, the rock beats etc., I hate that. I don’t even wanna play drums behind it, because of all the stuff. I won’t play it, and I couldn’t play it [. . .]. There was a young drummer in Atlanta – Sonny Emory – making about $20.000 a week to work with Madonna or some stuff, he could retire after that. If one of those people asked me to play drums, I couldn’t do it. I can’t play one beat over and over. I cannot. I could, but I can’t, I wouldn’t do it.

CS: How has the music business changed in the last, say forty years maybe, or even going back, since the demise of the big bands, the things that go on until now, major corporations . . .

JC: This is a topic that could be a book. It could be a whole course of study in school [. . .]. We’ll go back to the demise of the Swing Era and the introduction of the “modern” jazz bebop era. All these things are tied in. This is the most revolutionary period in American music, from swing to modern into the ’40s.

The 30% surtax was very critical in setting up the divisions. As a result of the surtax, you had the creation of the small groups, the bebop era – which wasn’t that popular when it hit – by the way. The reemergence of the race record industry, the creation of rhythm-and-blues, and then rock ‘n’ roll off of race records. What you’re having here is the creation of the kind of “matinee” idol, the Elvis Presley thing. And the term itself, rock ‘n’ roll, is a term that comes from the blues. It’s probably always has been this way, marketing and promo is more important than what you’re actually doing, you can see that today. But, jazz per se, moved out of the mainstream during the ’40s and the bebop era. It was gradually moving out of the mainstream eye of the public. The re-creation of race records – which later became rhythm-and-blues – was grabbing up most of the black market. Then the creation of the rock ‘n’ roll was taking the white market.
One of the big reasons for this “melding” so to speak, as Alan Freed had suggested, was to find a way to end the segregated radio. Race records was for primarily black audiences, and the white artists and radio was playing the hit parade, which later became Top 40. Freer suggested to get these white artists to cover black rhythm-and-blues tunes from the race records, and “we’ll end the segregated radio.” And they did, ended the segregated radio, and they created the rock ‘n’ roll image and the rock ‘n’ roll artist.

Jazz was gradually moving out of the mainstream, but jazz still had a strong support system because of the neighborhood clubs and bars. Those existed in all cities, but mostly in industrial cities. If you ever get an old downbeat magazine, they used to list who was playing where and when. All your major cities, Chicago, Detroit, Philly, D.C., Kansas City, St. Louis. They had four, five, six clubs where you would hop around and do the circuit. Plus you had neighborhood clubs and bars within the black neighborhoods that presented jazz. This was in the ‘50s; jazz still had a strong support system. You could work, because of these neighborhood clubs and bars. Now, with the media pushing these emerging rock ‘n’ roll stars, the most popular music with the black people was doo-wop singing groups. Plus you had Little Richard, Fats Domino, and Ray Charles was coming on.

Jazz was becoming like bohemian “beatnik” music. Jazz was pushed back out of the mainstream, but still had a strong presence. When I was a teenager in the ‘50s, jazz was still out there, on these TV shows, jukebox industry. It was very prominent, also over the air, FM radio, AM radio. By the end of the ‘50s into the ‘60s, when they started pushing these guys – Beatles and all that stuff, those cats coming from over there – gradually and gradually it . . . . Of course the jukebox industry died, but still had a strong presence in the ‘60s, the ‘70s, but it was being further and further pushed out of the mainstream of American popular taste. That showed what we have today. America has an adolescent mentality, Hollywood, flash and glitter, it has always been that way. Today, people know jazz, you have jazz artists, you have so-called names, and festivals, but its not as big as Lady Gaga and all that stuff, they don’t do arenas [. . .].

CS: The people that you studied from – who you learned from, who you emulated and what you incorporated into your own playing, and the people that you played with – how did this whole development come about?

JC: I graduated from high school in 1960. I could have gone on to be an athlete; I was offered an athletic scholarship to play for Virginia University. But I didn’t wanna play anymore American football. I was attracted to the music. I started playing music very early on, always wanted to play the music, find out what made “this” music.

See, to give you another idea; when I was young, my mother and father, we all played instruments, [there was] five of us. My mother was a writer and singer, my father was a writer. They had creative instincts, but they couldn’t nurture them. But they brought all of the music home when I was little. I remember listening to Lester Young, Lionel Hampton. But here is the thing: I used to see Buddy Rich on TV, Gene Krupa used to be on TV in the early ’50s, so he was my first idol because I saw him on TV.
Then, when I got to be about twelve, at a friend of mine who had an older brother, I heard Max Roach and Clifford Brown. It sounded like something from Mars, I said, “Jesus, what is this.” And he had some Miles Davis, and I said, “damn, that is the strangest stuff,” but I was attracted to it. Max [Roach] and those people, they were not in the mainstream, they were not on TV, but when I heard it, something connected, I said, “oh, this is something I gotta find out what this is.” At the age of twelve, I knew that I was gonna be searching for this music.

When I got out of high school I always had aspirations. I had a brother who died, and he was a “serious” composer in that “classical” field, Steve Chambers. I’ve always been attracted to orchestration. I always wanted to learn. And I was learning it in high school and I learned in college when I went to study composing. I always wanted to find out what made this jazz music tick. So I went to do that. And I landed in D.C. and I studied, met all of the cats, and they all encouraged me to come to New York. Eric Dolphy was the first “noted” musician I played with, and I start getting all these calls.

At that time, I was very young and excited, I was just glad to be on the scene. To give you an example of how un-business-like I was: Blue Note records asked me when I was about twenty-two years old, they saw something, they said, “You want a record date? Bring some tunes in, I think we can do . . . .” I didn’t even follow up on it, because I was content to just be playing along as a sideman. It’s amazing. As things went on, I found out all of those recordings I was doing in the ‘60s, it stopped, it dried up. By the time the ’70s came, it was over. Those dates that I was doing, they weren’t coming in. I’m saying, “Oh, what’s going on, the well is dried up for that.” Then you begin to see how things in term of business are—who’s getting calls, who can take bands into the club. I used to try to get gigs, and I noticed they knew me, but they were shying away from me. They would get a horn player, piano player. Equal name value, but these are the people who were getting the gigs. And I’m saying, “Shit.” Gradually, it dawned on me that I need to emphasize the other aspects of my skills, like the writing and arranging. I started out with “Mirrors,” 1964. It’s a learning process.

CS: Not only were you one of “the” drummers on the scene, but also a composer.

JC: Early on when I was one of “the” drummers on the scene, the composing it was secondary in the minds of everyone else. Even today; right to this very day [. . .]. I talk about the drums, but I’m gonna emphasize other things, orchestration. Once I get to talk about the drums, it becomes more social.

CS: When you think back, were there other people, too, who were conservatory-trained musicians?

JC: Everybody made this big thing about Marsalis when he came. Wynton was set up; his whole thing was set up. “Oh he did this classical stuff with his trumpet etc.” but people were doing this all along. All the guys went to conservatories, especially in my era, Ron Carter, Herbie [Hancock], conservatory-trained people. They have studied, but they didn’t learn it there. You don’t learn how to play jazz in a conservatory, I tell you that.
You don’t learn how to play jazz in a conservatory. You do not. In a conservatory, I tell the students, you can learn how to read a little better, improve your ear, you can orchestrate, but you don’t learn how to play in a conservatory. Stanley Cowell, he went to Oberlin, Richard Davis. It’s not a new thing. I’m not an academic. I put time in certain things, but I don’t call myself an academic. The stuff that I’m putting out, I learned on my own creativity. So this thing with Wynton, he did this classical stuff, and now he is in jazz, “big deal.” But that’s marketing though, because when you do that you are crossing-over into a different market. Art and music is in spheres, but then there’s business. Neither the twain shall never meet, music and business. The music business is a very low-integrity business. [. . .].

Just look at the scene, look at popular music, its various idioms, look at hip-hop. Here’s how hip-hop developed; hip-hop is not new. The essence of hip-hop really goes back to storytelling. These people were writers. One positive that hip-hop has done is drawing people’s attention to poetry. It developed out of the black community. But then the riots in the ’60s in most of the big cities, it began in 1964. First the [Los Angeles] Watts riots, Newark, Philly. Those riots destroyed the black infrastructure of the cities. That’s what killed the clubs. Jazz itself is disconnected from the community, from black folks. Black people don’t support jazz. They used to, but they don’t now. If you go to New York and you look who is in the audience, it’s gonna be 90% white and oriental. Black people are disconnected. And this happened after the riots. The riots in the ’60s destroyed the infrastructure of the nightlife and club circuit in their own neighborhoods. By the end of the ’60s, there were no clubs in the black neighborhood anymore.

For those young people that came up in the ’70s, also in the inner cities, arts programs were the first to go. They were the first thing they cut; music, art, etc. These kids didn’t learn essentials of music. They were unconnected to it. They took out instrument programs; they weren’t playing any music in these schools, that’s why they started to create this hip-hop, this rapping and rhyme, rhythmic rhyme stuff. And it’s not new; it’s instinctual, because it comes out of the Griots, African storytelling. There was hip-hop records back in the ’50s. What they have done is, they – the business people – put the worst elements that comes out of the black neighborhood and pushed it right up front, this gangster rap and all of that shit. And anything else is pushed back.

This is what’s going on . . . rock ‘n’ roll, hip-hop stars, look at it. You put years into studying how to play an instrument, how to orchestrate, for what?! [. . .] I put my time into learning the music, and I’m not gonna be making that kinda money, I’m not gonna be doing that, I’m not gonna be out there like that. No so-called jazz star is gonna get to that, they’re not gonna allow it. That is the industry, that is the people who control media, marketing, they are the ones that can make or break, determine weather you gonna do it. There’s a running joke they have, about the Polish jazz musician. You’re supposed to say, “what is it?” - “He got in it for the money!” You can make money, you can do things, you can get by, but never think that you’re going to be . . . Even the record industry . . . what records? There are no stores. The internet, downloading, everything is mp3. They’ve closed the retail stores.
CS: I bought a lot of music on iTunes that you’re on, for several hundred dollars. None of those have liner notes, like information; who are the people, who is playing, what was going on during the recording. There are quotes from you, from Chick Corea, from everybody on these liner notes by real good writers that I’m not getting, except for I paid for it [. . .].

JC: The digital legislation is just getting into place, the people who monitor for royalties. I just put my catalog together, so I can have it digitally sent to the monitoring. Where does that $0.99 [per download on iTunes] go, who does it go to, how to I get it. I’m just finding out a way. There are these groups, the music reports that do digital monitoring, like SoundExchange. You’re buying my tunes on iTunes, how do I get royalties for this? This is the dilemma [. . .]. There’s another group called RightsFlow. They send me these reports, and the royalties are a joke, they don’t accumulate enough that I can even get a check. I got one decent check from SoundExchange two years ago, everything else has been so low, like twenty-five dollars, they don’t even send a check. These are the things [. . .].

JC: What is your angle on this thesis?

CS: It’s from a performance perspective, [. . .] from a drummers’ perspective, but also looking at it from the rhythm section; all the aspects that create aesthetic.

JC: Learning how to play creatively on the drums in the jazz rhythm section is a hands-on thing; it’s an apprenticeship thing. Which is why I say it’s not a thing that you can get to the essence of in a school. You’re not gonna learn anything from playing in school, you have to play with other people, with better people, more experienced people. That’s why it’s an apprenticeship situation. I worked in a club in D.C., six nights a week for three years. But I didn’t learn how to play in a rhythm section from that job. Now, that’s strange, isn’t it? The people that I was playing with they were all competent, just as competent as I was. But I couldn’t learn anything from that group. I didn’t start to learn until I got to New York when I played with Ron Carter and these folks. Ron Carter used to tell me, “Man you’re playing behind the beat.” I thought I was on the beat, but I was behind the beat. Because I didn’t understand pulse, I didn’t understand how to sustain pulse. I had to learn that on the job. When I worked with McCoy Tyner I learned how to really play swing. Coltrane’s group, you know who is the driving force of that group? People say Elvin Jones, but really, McCoy Tyner was the driving force of that group. When I worked with McCoy, Tender Moments, I really learned how to swing hard and sustain. When I worked with him on clubs, he could pull you along with him. He could overpower a drummer. I really learned how to play from playing with McCoy Tyner. That’s one, and when I worked with Bobby Hutcherson, Harold Land, Joe Henderson. Those things I learned on the spot, you had to like “do or die.”

When I came to my so-called style when I worked with Hubbard, he was playing the extremely fast rhythms and in order to keep up, I had to break up the time. When I heard it I said, “oh, that’s not bad.” It was extremely fast [mimics uptempo ride cymbal
beat] and rather than playing the ride pattern, I was breaking up the time around the drums. My style came about in that way.

**CS.** You kind of have both; you have a very hard swing pulse, but you also have this “round-and-round” of all the different voices go in and out of each other [. . .]. Another example is the way you solo sometimes. You mentioned Pete La Roca. There’s a 1959 recording, *New Soil* with Jackie McLean. He plays a solo that’s “sound and color.” And then I hear you just a couple years later, and sometimes you can hear clearly “Max Roach-style,” but other times you hear sound and color. And people haven’t played like that before, it seems. And that’s so unique about yourself and everybody in that scene.

**JC:** Well yea, people who did that on a record, it might have been a record that was completely abstract, no time. But then they would come in and “boom” [time]. I hate to use these old clichés “underrated,” but Pete La Roca was something. He was always trying to play a Latin feel on the set, even if it was straight 4/4. You could hear it in his playing.

Of course Roy Haynes, he was playing what we called “Skip To My Lou,” skip beats, skip time, ride . . . you know, around, hi-hat loose, not [beats] “2” and “4” all the time. Hi-hat like another drum, skip it, dancing on the bass drum. Bass drum is the most important of the kit. The bass drum is the biggest drum; it gives the bottom. Most young cats don’t know how to dance on the bass drum. In the old era it was always on all four beats, that’s where they were. But the be-boppers, of course they freed the bass drum up. And then even more so, when we get into Elvin and Haynes and us people following, you use it like it’s another drum. The bass drum can keep your pulse up, and you have a conversation between your bass drum and the snare, between the ride. The conversation . . . that’s the essence of it.

**CS:** Did you develop a series of workouts for yourself when you played in that style, how you can incorporate all the limbs and elements, the circular . . . ?

**JC:** Well the thing is, when you’re trying to analyze it, it gets funny. When you’re playing pulsated music – that’s music that has a definitive pulse – we’re talking about the clave. The clave in jazz is “2” and “4,” that’s where we feel it. Here is the funny thing about it. In Afro-Cuban music, the guaguancó and all, their accent is really on “1” and “3” [mimics cascara pattern]. When you’re playing pulsated music – as opposed to abstract-free – then you gotta keep the time going all the time. You have to keep it up, keep the pulsation up, the momentum, the drive. You got a lot of things to do without overpowering everything else - I’m talking accompanying. But you have to keep the motion going, the feeling, the drive; these are the drummer’s duties. To do this, you have to keep everything moving. Here’s the funny thing about it; when you’re playing as a “sideman,” in pretty much any situation, as a drummer, as a sideman, you gonna be subjected to what people want. People say, “give me a little more hi-hat, give me a little more cymbal, give me a little more of this, I want you to do this.” When you’re working as a sideman, you have to do that, or else they get somebody else.
Now, of course at this point in time, I do what I want. I do what I wanna play. I don’t even take jobs anymore as a drummer for people. I play my own stuff. So somebody calls me, [I say] “I’m gonna do what I want, you know that.” But if “you” get a call, you got to do what the people ask you to do. But for me, at this point, if somebody happens to call me, “I want you to play some drums,” [. . .]. “Don’t say nothing to me, you say nothing to me, I’m gonna do whatever I want I to do.” It’s understood. You understand what I’m saying? Whatever I want do to do within the given . . . I’ll do. There’s nothing you can say to me at this point. You understand what I’m saying? I do whatever I want. You can do whatever you want. That’s where it is right now.

CS: I think there is very few people – in the ranks where you are, who have that kind of history – who can do what they want, very few.

JC: Right. But this is one thing; playing that instrument you have to learn how to accompany. If you’re a working percussionist – drummer that is – looking to work and you’re not generating your own work as a leader, then you need to learn how to accompany. That’s an art in itself, to be an accompanist in a lot of different situations. I’ve worked with singers, like Gloria Lynne, Damita Jo, Carmen McRae, backing these people. So if you’re doing those things, and you work and you get a call from this one and this. When I was a sideman, you had to cater to people’s tastes. So, I’m no longer interested in playing the drums behind anybody, let alone cater to anybody’s taste. But I moved out, I’m into the realm of composing now, composer and orchestrator.

CS: What’s your next project?

JC: My next project is M’Boom and strings, the percussion and strings, with a bass and a saxophone player, and a double-string quartet.

CS: And the people in that group will be from the New York/ D.C. area?

JC: Maybe from the New York area, and M’Boom – whoever is left – and a string quartet of young players in New York, [called] Publique Quartet. And Ira Coleman on bass, and Craig Handy on reeds [. . .].

JC: I’m trying to think of a topic for JEN [Jazz Educators Network], and I was gonna have Barrios. Steve Berrios, he is an important cat. He is Puerto-Rican, and he is the only Hispanic who could play near authentic jazz drums and the Latin. That is rare breed. He was well versed in all Afro-Cuban [percussion instruments, like] timbales, congas, shekere, bata, all that. And he played jazz drums, that is rare. He’s gone. Maybe even equally as rare is to have a jazz cat who knows the vocabulary of the Cuban music. That’s what I was gonna talk about and present to the JEN people in Dallas. Maybe I get Bobby Sanabria to do it [. . .]. In 2001, I did a talk on drummer as composer at IAJE [jazz conference].
CS: Did you do some film scoring?

JC: I’ve never done a thing for film. I did some small films, but I wish I could get a hookup. That’s a very political scene there. [. . .]. Terence Blanchard, trumpet player from New Orleans, he got hooked up with Spike Lee. But the film music industry is a very political, very cliché thing. See, another thing about the music business . . . If you asked the average person, “what great arranger is there,” the answer is Quincy Jones. Everybody knows Quincy Jones. He is very skilled, but he is not the cat. I bet you people never heard of Thad Jones, Sly [Lionel] Hampton, Frank Foster, Oliver Nelson. These are people that Quincy idolized. He couldn’t carry their jockstrap as a composer and arranger, but everybody knows Quincy Jones, because he got off into the commercial stuff.

CS: Michael Jackson.

JC: Yea, that stuff. But he [Quincy] was off into it way before then.

CS: Frank Sinatra At The Sands.

JC: Quincy is cool, but he couldn’t carry these other guys’ jockstraps. This is the stuff, see, but if you asked a person they never heard of those guys. That’s the stuff I’m talking about.

CS: That’s the music business.

JC: Absolutely [. . .]. Somebody has to bring you in; you have to have the right personality. For example, Monk or Miles, or any of those people, Mingus, they could never get into this stuff. They don’t have the right personality. That’s the other part of this stuff [. . .].

CS: Did you ever sit down and transcribe?

JC: No, not literally, not in writing.

CS: You learned it? You memorized it?

JC: If there was something I wanted, I get it. I hear it. Like everybody, I’ve taken a lot of stuff. But I just hear it [. . .]. I’m really becoming a considerable mallet player now, I’d think.

CS: Did you play mallets before M’Boom?

JC: No. I started with the piano, I’m a pianist from way back, so it was easy, I know the keyboard [. . .].
They wanna hear me talk about drums [at the upcoming workshop at USC]. When I talk about drums, I get off into this stuff. I can’t help it, because it’s all connected, and drummers get the shaft.

CS: You can say: it’s neglected [the drums]?

JC: It’s neglected? Yes, it’s very neglected, very much so, especially when it comes to business. Ginger Baker had a HBO documentary. He’s an interesting dude; he’s really into jazz. He was talking about the same thing. Nobody is interested in publishing the drum solos, although you can. They’re more interested in publishing a song; you can get publishing rights from a song. But that’s the Eurocentric [attitude] my friend.

CS: It’s my folks [the Europeans].

JC: That’s right, your folks, that’s what it is. It’s a prevailing attitude. It’s pervasive in the music industry. The record companies are interested in songwriters, singers, arrangers, composers.

CS: It’s almost ironic that the “beat” is so important to the music, except for its completely disregarded. And anything that deviates from a steady beat is even more disregarded.

JC: Absolutely, that’s the irony of it. That’s why I said “let me start composing and arranging more,” because half of this stuff is garbage, I can write better that half of these people, and I know more, so let me get on this side and show them. Let alone, talk about the pop world. That is complete garbage, mostly. Those people don’t know anything [. . .]. In Dick Clark’s show American Bandstand in the 1950s, they featured all the rock ‘n’ roll and pop music and they got the kids, and they would say, “oh it’s got a nice beat, easy to dance to.” It’s so redundant, to the point of beyond boredom. I’m speaking total music now. Rhythmically, it is an absolute joke. The stuff doesn’t swing, they don’t even know what swinging is. They’ve set the instrument back 400 years, the drum set. They’ve completely nullified everything that people like Max Roach have done. That’s out. “This” sound is out [mimics swing pattern], this timbre is out. The timbre that’s in is [mimics pop backbeat], and variations of that. It’s out of the realm of . . . it’s not the sound that is heard. They don’t want that.

CS: It’s out of the aesthetic conception.

JC: Yea, absolutely.

CS: The longer you cater people a certain kind of music and aesthetic, the more they want it. [They] grow up with it, and never knew anything different.
JC: They’re being fed this twenty-four hours a day in the media. Here is the other thing you have to know, especially when you gonna be composing, what we call jazz. It’s limited to NPR stations and college radio, public radio. First of all, that’s a limited audience right there. And here’s the kicker: the performance rights groups that we have – BMI, ASCAP, SESAC – they do not monitor public radio. I repeat: they do not monitor public radio. In order to get royalties as a jazz composer, you have to have a sub-publisher. That is an organization that monitors your stuff worldwide. My sub-publisher is Engine Records in Germany. The radio in Europe – unless it has changed – is socialized, you could hear a Shostakovich symphony, and then you might hear Miles Davis. They monitor everything. Over here, they don’t monitor public radio, so you don’t get a royalty. This is the way you get a royalty from either one of those: you have what they call a “guarantee.” They give you a guarantee based on their catalog, based on the accumulative works that’s have been logged. These NPR and public radio stations, at the end of the fiscal term, monitor all the play. They take the money, then they divvy it up. And then ASCAP gives you a guarantee, a check that they give you and it varies according to the catalog. But that’s all you gonna get. Anything else that comes in is gonna be subtracted from that guarantee. That is what they do. I get a guarantee every year of x amount, my guarantee is $1500. It’s depending plays, and depending on your overall catalog, weather it’s played or not. The reason why they give that is because they don’t monitor public radio. So if you happen to have something that’s gonna come in, you do get royalties – like BMI – it’s gonna be deducted from that guarantee.

You’re not gonna get [money] unless you get into the real pop world, you have a popular hit. Herbie gets these tunes; through the years he’s had these hits. That’s substantial money because it branches off out of jazz and it branches off into pop music, pop sales, so he can get money. That’s the way it works. That’s why a lot of cats were trying to play something they could put on the jukebox. But that is no more. I tell you this: even on NPR and public radio stations, what’s gonna get played on the existing radio will be a four minute cut, four and change. Anything over six, forget it. Even on NPR, because they have program directors. Now, you can do that, if your arranging and composing is creative enough. You can be creative within four to five minutes. That’s the situation. I made sure when I was teaching here [UNCW] – here were kids who were writing, arranging – I made sure they had this information.

When you face all of this, you’re thinking, “Why am I even trying to do this?” It’s got to be that you love music; it gets to that point after a while. So it can’t be about money. The music is a part of me, I was pulled to the music, it was meant to be, a part of me. Almost like “no choice.” It’s like they say, “an instrument picks you.”

You know the New School in New York? I taught there. The New School is this peculiar place. I had a student who was a pretty good drummer, but his parents pulled him out of it. He said “they [the parents] suggested that I wouldn’t be living a good life.” He was scared. These kids they are all scared. When I mean, “scared,” they just don’t. Here is the difference, between teaching in a place like this town [Wilmington], maybe even out there in Illinois. These kids, the people that do it New York. Particularly the New School, they sell the city – you should see the brochure – and then the faculty. If you want a special teacher – for example – they’re gonna get
them for you. If you wanna study with Johnny McLaughlin, they go get Johnny McLaughlin for you and put his name on the brochure. This is what attracts these students. So these students that come to New York are very ramped up, they wanna play more, they wanna impress. As opposed to here, these kids. Most of them [here] don’t wanna play, they maybe wanna teach. Like I told this guy who was here, Tucker, he’s gone now. I told him, “the difference if you were in New York, there be maybe 50 students like you, wherein here there’s gonna be maybe one that stands out.” Good player, he plays, reads, plays everything. You may get three or four students, the rest is so so. Then, you get double majors [. . .]. They don’t wanna play. They have a mild interest in music – there’s no music industry in this town – and they’re scared to death by New York. So that’s the difference. In New York, students think they gonna be some star, they’re ready. The students there are better. They are better students [. . .].

**August 30, 2013**

**CS:** Let’s talk about the postbop period, [audio cut off from recording].

**JC:** Those cuts that ’Trane [Coltrane] did, “Impressions,” there was nothing before that was anything like that. Maybe the guys could play like that, Bird [Charlie Parker] and everybody, but nobody did it, especially on record. Getting back to the ‘40s and the bebop era – prior to that – the soloist in a big band only played maybe eight bars, maybe half a chorus, that was it. They might have done stuff in jam sessions, but the most you ever played in the big band era on a solo was half a chorus, eight, sixteen bars. But Bird started this long-playing stuff. They [the be-boppers] started that trend. But they still weren’t putting that on records, they were still making the three to four minute record. But this stuff that ’Trane put out, and Sonny Rollins, that was the beginning of putting these long cuts on records. That was still fresh in the mind of everybody, “Chasin’ The Trane,” “Impressions.” So these tunes, like “Schizophrenia” and McCoy’s *Tender Moments* - “Mode to John,” that were tendencies in that area. But I was trying to make sure that I didn’t sound like Elvin Jones, even though I liked him. I wanted to try to do things that were not suggestive of Elvin Jones. If you noticed, nobody plays like that anymore, “bashing,” as we call it. But Herbie [Hancock], Ron [Carter] and all, they were well aware of that style of playing.

**CS:** When you hear groups play like that, and you try to find out what is it that they are doing, how they are doing that . . . . Then you listen to the drummer, and how the bass sits with that, how the piano sits with that. It is interesting because it’s really large-scale structure, but in order to learn how to do it, somebody has to break it down into small units, so that you can kind of understand what is it that somebody did.

**JC:** Well I tell you, not a lot is said in referring to that Coltrane group. A lot of the young cats may have heard the records, but have never seen Coltrane’s group live. I tell you,
who was really prominent in that group was Jimmy Garrison. Matter of fact, Ron Carter paid tribute to Garrison. He could pick up a lot of what Jimmy Garrison was doing. If you go back, listen to what Jimmy Garrison was doing. You take “Impressions,” which really is sixteen-bar phrases; one sixteen, and then two eight-bar phrases, Dorian mode, it goes up a half-step for eight bars, it goes down a half-step, that’s the form. The thing about that is that throughout the improvisation, you can hear the song, even when it gets to its most atonal. I can still hear the song, I can hear the mode throughout, you never loose it.

Here’s another thing. There’s a guy named Andy White, he plays classical oboe and jazz saxophone. He’s intro transcribing, he’s wrote out all of ‘Trane’s stuff, like Coltrane’s solos. He said when Coltrane was playing “Impressions” or “Chasin’ the Trane,” he wasn’t thinking theoretically, “Oh I’m gonna play a 13th chord here.” You know what was driving him? The rhythm! The rhythmic force. He didn’t have to think about the theory. He was thinking about the rhythm, keeping the rhythm. If he played the rhythm right, the theory would be there. It’s the rhythmic force; it’s not theoretical when you’re doing it. Now, I don’t know what he was thinking, but I know how that style goes; you’re thinking rhythmic, you’re thinking to keep the rhythm going. You’re not thinking about “I’m gonna play a 13th chord here, or an 11th here.” I’ll vouch for that statement. Today, nobody is trying to play like that anymore, nobody.

**CS:** That shows pretty drastically how the roles in the rhythm sections have changed since the ’40s, coming out of bebop. And then in your generation, where this becomes such a new sound, and the different concept of playing it.

**JC:** Well I mean – if you’re speaking about today – nobody is trying to play like that anymore. Here’s another thing, let me tell you. I have a couple theories; I think they are very sound. During the ’60s and then getting towards the late ’60s when the so-called fusion came on the scene, everybody was talking about “swing is dead.” Here’s the thing; you couldn’t find people to swing like that, like on “Impressions.” In my opinion, Tony William’s Lifetime was the start of fusion. He didn’t get full credit for it, if any credit at all. But Miles’ [Davis] move to fusion, it was pure business. He’d went to see Sly and the Family Stone, and the show he went to somewhere in California, it was sold out, he had the crowd, they went crazy. He looked at that and said, “I’m gonna start doing this, I wanna get this kinda crowd.” He openly said, “I wanna see if I can make this kind of money, I wanna make the money that the Rolling Stones make.” Of course he could never do that. It was purely monetary. But the fact is that the hard swing, people couldn’t do. You couldn’t get the rhythm section people to do it. It’s much easier to play in the 8/8 [mimics groove]. That’s easy.

**CS:** As opposed to swing.

**JC:** Absolutely. See, they really didn’t get the sound right, all that stuff like *Bitches Brew.* In my opinion, they didn’t have the right sound yet. The drums were still tinny – I’m talking about myself – when I try to play that. We were still playing cymbals, and Jack
was playing cymbals. I did a couple of cuts on *In A Silent Way*, they just released it. I was still into playing cymbals, swing. They didn’t really want a swing sound. What they wanted was a rock ‘n’ roll drummer, a rock ‘n’ roll sound, a real fat sound, with a big fat bass drum. They finally go the sound right when Weather Report came on the scene, and then Miles’ later cuts, they finally got the sound right, right bass lines and stuff. Because the electrical instruments — the electric piano and that stuff — were still being developed. They didn’t have the synth. Matter of fact, the original synthesizer is the B3 organ and the way Larry Young used it. That group Lifetime, the records they made didn’t do justice. That group sounded like something from Mars. You had to have seen that, that stuff was like something from Mars, I’m telling you. There were no synthesizers yet, but he [Larry Young] was way out there man, with the sounds that you can get from the organ stops. And Tony was playing heavy, and McLaughlin . . . it was a way-out group. And at the time of *Bitches Brew*, it’s still tinny. They were using electric piano, the [Fender] Rhodes, and Jack [DeJohnette] still had jazz drums. He was playing with this small bass drum, and it is very tinny sounding. What they really wanted was the big fat sound of a funk drummer. They finally got it together.

**CS:** During the ‘60s, were you playing a bebop kit?

**JC:** Yea, eighteen inch, twenty at the most. Not two tom-tom . . . one tom-tom [rack tom], cymbal. It was like a bop kit, like a swing kit. Jack [DeJohnette], they all were doing it. But those real rock ‘n’ roll cats, drummers, they didn’t have no musicality. But that’s the sound that they wanted though. All the jazz drummers, Tony was still playing eighteen inch, we were all playing the small kit.

**CS:** It’s interesting when you try to analyze that — anybody who transcribes — then you’re doing something that comes after the fact [. . .]. It only has value it seems — I wonder what your opinion is on that — if you take little bits of something that somebody did and you understand the context in which it happened, and then you can maybe take something . . . . Like, you hardly ever play licks. But sometimes you can hear a “true” rudimental kind of thing. I give you an example, on Wayne Shorter’s “Chief Crazy Horse,” in the piano solo. It starts to brew, intensity comes, and you play a paradiddle-diddle between the cymbal and the snare. To analyze it like that is one thing [. . .]. I wonder if you have developed these devices systematically or in a response?

**JC:** Speaking specifically of that particular record — and even a lot of the records I did for Blue Note in those days — we play a cut, and the Rudy [van Gelder] played it back, we sit and listen, and he said, “I don’t like that,” or someone says, “let’s do another cut, I’m gonna try something.” That’s the way it went. And usually it was around the idea that you listen to everything and you listen to yourself and you say, “I don’t like that what I’m doing right there, I could fill in a little more.” The main thing when I’m thinking about [Wayne Shorter’s] *Adam’s Apple, Etcetera* and all that, is that I wanted to make it more exciting, fill it up more, to give more of an orchestral backdrop to what was happening. “If I did there, this there, this will make it sound better.” That’s the way I was
going about it, and that’s what we did it. We’d sit and listen and say, “let’s do another on one.” And then we throw some stuff in there, you hear that, “that’s better,” and then “oh let’s do another one, I think I’m gonna throw some stuff in there.” That’s the way it went. All those records we made in those days, we weren’t thinking about the time, the four-minute cut, that was not in play. But now everything is “we gotta cut this down, make sure we get it down to four, four-and-a-half.” That’s it, you compartmentalize everything. We weren’t thinking like that. Those cuts are sometimes ten minutes, eleven. That’s the big difference.

CS: When you think back on that [. . .], I read a comment of yours where you talked about Components [Bobby Hutcherson], and you said it was a little . . .

JC: Components, that’s a strange record, because one side is really mainstream, and then . . . We see, you do things when you’re young. When you’re a young person in general, there’s immaturity. I was a kid just out of college, literally I was. I had studied composition, I was thinking of using a lot of that stuff I had studied, pointillism, twelve-tone, I was like a little kid. And I tell you a little secret; I don’t tell to many people this. The record company people [Blue Note] liked me, because I had already proved that I could swing – all of that stuff – I could write melodies. But I don’t think they really wanted to do those tunes on Components, but I made them do it. Literally, made them do it. Of course, Ron [Carter] and everybody, they knew me, they were with me, but I literally forced everybody – Alfred Lions, everybody – sitting there. I forced them to record that stuff. I literally told them, “if we don’t record this man, we ain’t gonna play shit,” something like that. And that’s really immature. But I put it on everybody, and we did it, they did it. The thing about it . . . that music had no commercial validity at all, they couldn’t sell it. Even though it was interesting, along with the kind of free . . . But see that’s the difference between the free . . . Those guys they couldn’t do an album like that, they didn’t have the skill to do an album with one side mainstream, another side . . . could not do that. Even writing like that – that’s fine to write like that – but that’s not a good idea to do that if you’re trying to sell records. That’s what I mean by immaturity, and that’s what that is. Although it had some moments in it [. . .]. Dialogue [Bobby Hutcherson] is almost the same thing [. . .]. That was almost scholastic, schoolboyish.

You gotta remember the times, we were in the so-called avant-garde era, and there are a lot of forms of avant-garde that were taking place. Of course, we have Ornette Coleman and his disciples, and Archie Shepp and those people. Now, Pharoa Sanders – we used to call him Little Rock – he could play inside, really could play straight chords. He gradually went out. When I first met him, he was playing chords – straight – like ‘Trane. Archie Shepp couldn’t, but he’s trying to do it now. So you had these different avenues of people trying to play free. Now, Jimmy Giuffre, he put out a record – I was still living in DC – it was called Free Fall, and it had Paul Bley and Steve Swallow. Just a trio, they didn’t really need drums. Somehow, that record caught my eye, because Jimmy Giuffre . . . I knew about him, but I was not interested in his music then. It is an excellent record, very interesting in terms of contrapuntal, free . . . almost twelve-tonish,
you could say. I had heard that record, and I was studying composition, so it was interesting to me – compositionally – to hear that. That had stuck in my mind, free intervallic play. And I was just out of school, studying twelve-tone technique, so I was utilizing this stuff. And I applied it to . . . it was amazing. I remember – like I told you, Alfred Lion and Frank Wolff and where they really where – I remember the disgust – particularly Frank Wolff – when we were rehearsing this stuff, how disgusted he was looking that day listening to this. Because they wanted something to put on the jukebox. Point of fact is there was nothing on that record to put on a jukebox, either way. They wanted something funky so they could put it on the damn jukebox, and here I am writing this twelve-tone stuff, and they were like, “what it this guy doing.”

CS: I wonder how the charts look like for that [music]. Some of this – I can hear – is written out, you probably gave pretty specific directions. Other stuff . . . open.

JC: Well, I laid it out like a regular score; sax, trumpet, piano, bass. I didn’t write a part for myself. I wrote it out, it had this moving counterpoint. The funny part about it is that even Tony Williams was trying to do some of that himself. He put out a little record called Spring for Blue Note, and it was a similar kind of thing. We were young; we were trying to find different things to do.

CS: Interesting times, because musically, they did stick. Everybody – including me – goes back to these records and listens to that [. . .]. But times have changed so radically, in every aspect [. . .]. I wonder if you would have ever thought at that time how radically commercialized this time is that we’re living in.

JC: It is a stretch for me, especially growing in the time that I . . . No, I would not have though it would have gotten to this point. No, I would have not. Now mind you, there’s still jazz festivals. A guy just told me he just came back from Rhode Island, Newport. There’s Chicago. But for me, I wouldn’t have imagined how out-of the mainstream jazz per se is. And how far out of it is from black people, and how disconnected – generally speaking – jazz is today. I would have never thought it would be like this. But it is. [. . .] See I got Marsalis to come down here in 2009 [UNCW], and I got Chick [Corea] down here. Tones For Joan’s Bones, you gotta get that one.

CS: When you look back at your legacy . . . to me it’s one of those records that sounds as it was done yesterday [. . .], absolutely fantastic.

JC: We do a lot of stuff in that. We worked together; we were with the Blue Mitchell band.

CS: There is a lot of “ensemble pulse” going on, like on the song “Litha.” You go through the choruses, and instead of going every time through the 6/8, sometime you’re swinging in double-time through that whole section. And everybody is right with it;
everybody is on the same page. And these extended, long cymbal rolls. It’s really cool because it’s obviously through the form all the time, but it stretches the boundaries of meter really nice.

JC:. Yea, I remember that song. We were down the same kind of way like we did on Blue Note. We did maybe a couple of cuts – two or three at the most – and then hear it and say “ok,” . . . .

CS: You mentioned you were always intrigued by Latin rhythms. For example, this groove that you’re playing during the head of “Litha,” [. . .] today this is the model the way you and other people interpreted the 12/8. But at the time when you played it, you didn’t have these models like we have them now, where you can go back to and listen.

JC: Yea. It’s good you brought that up, because I thought about the subject that I’m going to present to JEN. Actually, what I had in mind anyway was the flow between jazz drums and Afro-Cuban/ Latin drums, and the connection and the ability to move in and out of those idioms. That’s what I wanted to do anyway with Steve Berrios . . . . That’s too academic, but acculturation and syncretism, socially that’s what that’s all about, really.

August 31, 2013

CS: How was your experience playing in Europe, and Germany, did they have good players?

JC: The problem in Europe, it was always rhythm players, drummers. A good American drummer could go to Europe and really clean up. They had drummers, but they liked the way the Americans played drums.

CS: What’s the difference between how the Americans play the drums and the Germans?

JC: The one thing that happened was the free jazz movement in the ’70s. Germany developed a free jazz movement. The American players were going there, living, getting the best jobs. So the French set up a rule, if you were coming to work in France as an American – even if you had a group – you had to have a certain amount of French players in the band [. . .]. In Germany, I don’t think they did that, but what they did was they started some kind of a union, banded together. Jazz-wise, the Americans were getting all the play, so they said, “we’re gonna set up our own concerts, festivals.” And they started a German free jazz movement. [. . .].
**CS:** Ekkhard Jost, he wrote a book, it’s called *Free Jazz*, it’s a pretty standard piece of literature from that period [. . .]. When you talk about playing pulse [. . .], he calls it “energy time.” [. . .] Others call it “collective time,” [. . .].

**JC:** Yea, it’s implied. It’s not defined, it’s not stated. It’s implied. The thing about the German free jazz movement, they focused on their own players, they pushed that [. . .]. And, they were trying to breaking away from “Ami” jazz [American jazz]. Form-wise, you got the blues, but a lot of the jazz – the tunes, the compositions – are based off of a very important element called “the Great American Songbook.” You know what that is? Cole Porter, Jerome Kern, Irving Berlin, Gershwin, Duke Ellington, too. That is something that is uniquely American. The structures are still European, but the thirty-two bar songform is very unique; it’s uniquely American to American Music Theater, Broadway, shows. There’s a whole litany of material in that vein, which is the basis for a lot of jazz. That was specifically what the Germany wanted to rebel against. They played it, but they didn’t wanna play these tunes, “Stella By Starlight”. . . .

**CS:** You said that to me before, how the people in your scene could play “in” and “out.” [. . .] I think, eliminating the American Songbook, [. . .] it overlooks the fact that people like yourself and the people you played with – many Americans – came up through that. And where you are in ’64 with Freddie Hubbard is [the result of] a development from where you started playing standards. And I think that should not be overlooked.

**JC:** Absolutely. And the other part about that, too, going back a little earlier . . . In the big band era, their whole approach to jazz – music in general – was stock. Everything was contained, and they were interested in featuring singers who were singing these Broadway songs. So the main thing with the big band was to get a hit with a singer. If you think arrangement – you know like a big band arrangement – its contained. When the small band element came in – Charlie Parker and these people – they used to work only uptown, Minton’s, Harlem. Then they started to work downtown in these places, the Angel Room, these are outta Harlem. So they were told to learn more of these standards songs out of the American Songbook. They weren’t told to do that, but it was suggested you’d be better of playing these songs. So that also started the trend to play these songs. There’s a lot of good songs in that repertoire.

**CS:** When you were playing at the Caverns, what was the music that you played there, standards, originals?

**JC:** That was an interesting job. Walter Booker [bass] – he has since died – he came to New York after I did. The other guys . . . Andrew White [saxophone], he’s still in DC, Ray Codrington [trumpet], and a piano player, he was a local [Harry Killgo]. We had that job six nights a week for three years. We weren’t experienced players, but we were very tight as a group. Every week, we had to change our repertoire, every week we would learn five new tunes. Andy White was doing most of the arranging, and we were doing jazz tunes, we would take tunes the guys had written, a lot of Coltrane stuff, we would
take standards, even popular songs. It was amazing; to keep that job, every week we had to show a different repertoire. We had a very large repertoire, and we learned five new arrangements every week. We did a lot of West Side Story, those kinda Broadway tunes. And we covered a lot of the popular jazz tunes. You ever watch these late night TV shows with the house band? [...] We had to function like that and present a different repertoire every week.

**CS:** And then you would play from — say — seven p.m. to midnight?

**JC:** We would start at about nine p.m. and finish around two a.m. Three a.m. on the weekend. In those days, the sets were forty-twenty; forty on and twenty minutes off. And that was pretty much everywhere. It was like that in New York. You do forty and twenty. So you work that up and you play like five sets a night, that’s a lot of music. When I got to New York, you see, you’d get a job in a club for like six weeks. I worked at the Five Spot for six weeks. I worked uptown in Harlem in Minton’s for the whole summer of 1964. The whole summer — three months — with one band. In Harlem, you played to four a.m. in the morning, so we had to do four to six sets, forty on, twenty off. Even though it seems short, but compared to now, you only do two hour-long sets, but we had to go deep into the night. One of those guys took drugs; they [the musicians] were there from nine p.m. to four a.m. in the morning.

**CS:** There is a “school” right there, having to play so much music.

**JC:** Oh yea. The name of the group was J.F.K. Quintet, for John F. Kennedy, who was the president then. That’s what they called us. And like I said, the people that would come in and see us, a lot of the professionals from New York, as well as people from D.C. We had uniforms in those days. The dress code in general was that you had to have a dark suit and dark tie, white shirt. We had like five different suits; we would change from night to night. And when I came to New York, it was the same thing. When I worked with Freddie Hubbard, we had uniforms. We had jackets. That went out around ‘64 to ‘65, with the freedom movement. So much stuff going on, and you had the beatniks, so this whole thing of wearing jackets just went out. It affected the musicians, and they could wear what they wanted to wear. It kind of went bizarre, because a lot of the guys really got raggedy. You could wear anything you want to wear on the stand, different colors, different suits, didn’t have to math. I remember from around ‘65 through the ’70s, I didn’t have a suit. If I had a suit I never wore it. No jackets, no suits, just fancy shirts.

**CS:** During those years — the JFK years — did you still play more traditional?

**JC:** During the J.F.K. days, everything was swing. Of course in those days, I didn’t really know that much about rhythm. I liked Latin rhythms, but we weren’t playing a lot of Latin. The group as a whole — and I — didn’t really know about rhumba, the guaguanco. I know I liked it, but I didn’t know how to play it. What was popular at that time — ‘60 -
’61, was the bossa nova, by way of Stan Getz. When he went to Brazil and hooked up with Astrud Gilberto . . . . I later found out that bossa nova was really a very watered-down, commercial version of the samba, of the real batucada rhythm. Really very lame compared to that. But everybody was popping on the bossa nova kick. We played a few things, but I didn’t know anything about that stuff, rhumba, guaguanco, until I came to New York. It was either swing, straight ahead, a few 6/8 things. We were rhythmically limited. We recorded though. We recorded for the riverside label; Cannonball Adderly recorded us.

Of course, Coltrane’s group was really very strong at that time, and of course Miles’ group. It was the tale end of the group he had with Jimmy Cobb, Paul Chambers, Wynton Kelly – the transitional period between Philly Joe and when Tony Williams joined the band –. He joined the band when I got to New York in ’63, everybody was talking about this new young drummer.

**CS:** Have you seen him play when he was still young?

**JC:** I did see him play. He came to town with Jackie McLean.

**CS:** Did you like it?

**JC:** Yea, I really liked what he was doing.

**CS:** If you were to compare your own style with his – not so much as in “style” – but with regards to the innovations, or how you [both] approached the music?

**JC:** Tony had the great advantage to work with Miles Davis and that group. To play that kind of music night in and night out with Herbie [Hancock], Wayne [Shorter] and Ron [Carter], to be creative and all like that, that’s tremendous to have that situation. But I was working when I got there. I worked with Eric Dolphy. I worked with Freddie Hubbard. I tell you about Freddie Hubbard. In those days, no trumpet player was playing as technical as him. He was what they say, “he’s playing a lot of shit.” That is, more technical, pyrotechnical than anybody; Dizzy [Gillespie], Miles [Davis], any player that was on the scene. I mean, it wasn’t Miles. Of course, Miles was really visible. One thing about that—when I think about that group and that *Breaking Point* record—we were really tight. But I look back at that, what happened was we had a little period of work and then there was a gap, there was no work. So myself, the bass player Eddie Khan and Ron Mathews [piano], as a trio we got a job at a club uptown. It was one of those long gigs, and we kinda messed up the group, because Freddie got some work, and we weren’t able to come. It interfered with the flow that we had. I remember Freddie saying that. It messed up our development as a group. But we had to do it; we had to get some work.

**CS:** It is interesting that on the first record that you did as a leader – *The Almoravid* – Woody Shaw is on that. And it seemed to be like, “ok, there was Freddie Hubbard” and
then there was nobody close to that. And then Woody Shaw comes, and you play with him.

**JC:** Yea, right. Well he was on the scene too. But he hadn’t started making a lot of record yet, he wasn’t that known. But that’s the sequence. But getting back to Tony: I look at myself, I would say that he had that distinct advantage of working with Miles steadily and making records. Well, I was doing the same thing. Remember a record by Eric Dolphy called *Out To Lunch?* I went to the rehearsal for that. Eric Dolphy told me to come to rehearsal – I wasn’t on it – but he told me to come, and he told me to bring music. And he told me to bring “Mirrors,” which I did. He said, “I want you to bring that and I want you to show this to Alfred Lions.” And I did, and I remember Tony [Williams], he was in awe. He was in awe of me, coming up there with the music. Because there were no drummers doing that. I mean, maybe Max [Roach], but no other drummers were doing this. To me, it was nothing. I just brought the tune. But Eric was trying to get me in. These people wanted to record me, Blue Note, and I . . . I just didn’t have any drive, business sense, pushing myself. It’s amazing when I think about it. Eric put me in position, Freddie put me in position, they recorded my music, and the CEO’s came to me, and I was like . . . ok . . . and I just forgot about it, amazing.

**CS:** It’s probably difficult to have everything, being on the artistic side and having your [drum] “chops” together and playing all the time. And at the same time, driving the “business truck,” doing everything at the same time.

**JC:** Yes. Of course, Tony [Williams] was on the scene, but Jack DeJohnette, he came later. He wasn’t in New York yet; he was not on the scene yet. I would have to say that the “young drummers of note” had to be Tony Williams and myself at that time. Because Elvin [Jones], he was established, and Max [Roach] and all these other people. I never really thought about it when I was doing it [. . .].

**JC:** Did you look at these? [points to two pages of Afro-Cuban grooves and Brazilian grooves, both specifically for the drum set]. These are authentic African rhythms [. . .]. I transcribed them from what guys showed me. These are the rhythms the cats showed me, Berrios [taps cascara pattern on table]. All of these develop great independence.

**CS:** I thought it was interesting when you mentioned Elvin Jones, and how he had the bembe rhythm in his playing, the “triplet” grid.

**JC:** That’s his natural feeling. He had the bembe, the triplets, he was playing that from the beginning. It’s just what he felt. I heard it right away. You know when you hear something and you like it? Just talking about swinging now, as soon as I heard him – and this is over Max – just for this point, now Max overall is my . . . but just for swinging, Elvin is good. He’s got the beat for me, as soon as I heard it. And he always was playing with that triplet . . . . But Roy Haynes too, but his is small, it’s not so pronounced, but he
plays with the triplets, too. Even Max, he never played like that. Art Blakey didn’t play like that, either. Philly never played with that . . . .

CS: It’s hard to describe that. Triplet subdivision, internally . . . .

JC: Well those are the terms we use in Western music. You would never go to an African and say, “Oh, you’re playing triplets.” They don’t think triplets. They think something else. So I use that same concept. Even though everybody has analyzed Elvin Jones, “oh he plays the triplets and the 12/8.” I prefer to call it the bembe, which is the term they use in Afro-Cuban [music] for the triplet feeling. It’s just the way he feels the time, that’s why this is important [taps different 12/8 grooves on the table]

CS: I have heard the exact same rhythm as the [standard] Afro-Cuban 12/8 in Brazilian music, too. When you talk about syncretism in these [orisha] cultures, rhythms are passed around.

JC: Those rhythms, like the bembe, they come from rituals, dances, and ceremonies. It’s passed around.

CS: That’s why you say, “everything is connected.” It’s a cultural thing.

JC: Absolutely. For example, cadomble is a Brazilian form of Yoruba. It’s all interrelated. [points to Brazilian batucada rhythms on the transcribed page, taps on table]

CS: [. . . ] Your personal style, particularly on “Breaking Point,” how did that come about? [presents some transcribed examples of “Breaking Point”]

JC: I accidentally stumbled upon playing like that. Rather than playing the ride pattern, I broke it up.

CS: Would you say that is your “signature” style?

JC: Well, then – at that time – yes, it was my signature style; I guess you can say that.

CS: In the John Riley books, he did something like that. He transcribed some parts, and then found groups of three, groups of five, split between the feet and hands. Like you were talking about, breaking up the time. To find little cells in there [in these phrases], so when you try to play like this, you can develop your own ideas, melodic [phrases]. To me, this sounds very horizontal at times. Later, people call that “linear” playing.

JC: Yes, you can say that. I know I was what we call “scuffling.” Hubbard was playing very fast. Everything was like that. I just said, “well man, I just break it up.” I didn’t analyze it or nothing. Literally, I couldn’t play like the way Max [Roach] plays fast
[mimics uptempo ride cymbal], and not at that time. I could, but then my chops were down. And it was working. I heard it and I said, “oh man, that ain’t bad.”

**CS:** Did people come to you right away and say what you did there was good [on “Breaking Point”]?

**JC:** Yea, oh yea. As recently as in the ’80s and ’90s people where talking about this record, how ahead it was [. . .]. That period was something. I look back at it, and the things that were happening, it was a good time for jazz. Today, there are musicians and artists who are working now; they have a lot of new young guys. But jazz is not in the forefront now. It’s not in the ears; it’s not in the air like it was. It’s not in the air. That’s the difference. Back then it was [. . .].

**CS:** Today, playing opportunities are so limited, you have to scramble for gigs that don’t even pay [. . .]. And what you said – going through a three-year period of playing six nights a week – nobody has that anymore.

**JC:** I tell you, you can go across this country and count on one hand a six-night-a-week venue. Outside of New York, it probably doesn’t exist. We had six nights a week still at Village Vanguard New York, the Blue Note. Dizzy’s Coca Cola, they’ve cut down to three [nights a week]. The six-nights-a-week gigs, it’s a thing of the past. Different times. [. . .] Inner space, the inside, the soul, it’s being taken out. It’s the age that we’re living in. I resist all that stuff, I tell you. You have to have a computer if you want to live [. . .]. What they’ve done with the instrument. Tossed it over . . . these rhythms, the so-called beats, I don’t even wanna be associated with the drums. That’s literally how I feel. Even when I was playing rhythm-and-blues, I could never play a beat over and over. I don’t feel it. To me, that’s machine-like. Matter of fact, you can get a drum machine; most of that stuff is drum machine anyway.
"Breaking Point" by Freddie Hubbard on *Breaking Point!* (1964)
“Indian Song” by Wayne Shorter on *Etcetera* (1965)

Indian Song

-concert-

\[ \text{Pno/ drums in} \]
\[ \text{Bass Intro} \]
\[ \text{Cm}^{(6)} \text{ arp} \]
\[ \text{C lyd} \text{ arp} \]

\[ \text{Tnr in} \]
\[ \text{Cm}^{(6)} \text{ lyd} \]

\[ \text{Time/ bass ostinato} \]
\[ 4x \]

\[ \text{Melody} \]
\[ \text{Pno pivots loosely from } \text{Cm}^{(6)} - \text{C lyd} \]

\[ \text{1.} \]

\[ \text{2.} \text{ trill ad lib} \]

\[ \text{3.} \]

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Interlude III

No solo/ R.S. plays time

Interlude IV

Ad Lib Trill on D
Ad Lib Trill on G
Improvis freely

No solo/ R.S. plays time

C\m^{(50)} \text{arp}
C lyd \text{arp}
C\m^{(50)} \text{arp}
C lyd \text{arp}

Piano Solo / Open
Bass Solo / Open

Bass Ostinato w/ light Pno & Dr Comp
to D.S. al Fine
“Mirrors” by Joe Chambers on *Breaking Point!* (1964)