Over the past twenty years, the study of space and place has become a core part of the humanistic disciplines. Scholars studying art through the analytical lens of space and place have generated large bibliographies in diverse fields: anthropology, art history, cultural studies, history, literary studies, and sociology. Musicologists and ethnomusicologists, including jazz scholars, have only recently begun incorporating these ideas into their work. As will become clear, there is a lot of writing about specific jazz places, from nightclubs to cities to nations, but not as much writing that tries to understand exactly how musical sound and its spatial character relate to the places of its sounding.

The Interdisciplinary Analysis of Space and Place

The “spatial turn” in humanistic scholarship of the past several decades is rooted in the work of several key writers spanning critical theory, geography, history, and sociology. French scholars Gaston Bachelard (2014), Michel Foucault (Rabinow 1984), Henri Lefebvre (1991), and Michel de Certeau (1984) have all produced influential writing on space and place, in each case arguing for the necessity of thinking spatially in any analytical endeavor. Building on their work, Edward Casey (1993, 1997), David Harvey (2004, 2006), Doreen Massey (2005), Edward Soja (1989, 1996); Nigel Thrift (2008), and Yi-Fu Tuan (1977, 1979) have written wide-ranging accounts of the nature of space and place in modern life. Despite the diversity of their writing, these scholars all reject any a priori notion of space and place as a fixed background for social life. Space and place, they argue, is not a thing but a process, one inextricably bound up with our basic sense of subjectivity and sociality.

But how do we define space and place? For most writers, space is the more abstract of the two ideas. In much philosophical and geographical writing, space is fixed, the frame in which we record or plan events. David Harvey calls this “absolute space . . . a pre-existing and immovable grid amenable to standardized measurement and open to calculation” (Harvey 2006, 121). In the twentieth century, the broad cultural influence of non-Euclidean geometry and Einstein’s theories of space-time offered a new conceptualization of “relative” space—what seemed fixed and absolute is actually multiple, depending on the positions of the observers and the nature of the thing to be measured. But in both of these understandings, space is still background, and there is little accounting for social life—how people live in, shape, and manage the absolute and relative spaces of their lives. In his influential 1974 book The Production of Space, French philosopher Henri Lefebvre challenged this idea, arguing that any critical engagement with social life...
must confront the multiple spaces of modernity. For Lefebvre a “unitary theory” of space would combine “first, the physical—nature, the Cosmos; secondly, the mental, including logical and formal abstractions; and, thirdly the social.” “In other words,” he writes, “we are concerned with the logico–epistemological space, the space of social practice, the space occupied by sensory phenomena, including products of the imagination such as projects and projections, symbols and utopias” (Lefebvre 1991, 11–12). These terms become the foundation for Lefebvre’s influential “trialectic”: spatial practice, representations of space, and representational space. Although not the first scholar to speak about space as a social product, Lefebvre’s ideas—especially his rich dialectical model analyzing spatial practices and representations—have become the cornerstone of nearly all scholarship since.

Lefebvre’s ideas offer a corrective to the asocial abstractions of earlier ideas of space. But for many scholars, that corrective is not enough; space remains too abstract. For these writers, the word “place” is the best way to build an understanding of the relationship of space to social life (Tuan 1977; Casey 1993; Casey 1997; Cresswell 2015). The most vigorous theorizing of place happens at the intersection of phenomenology and geography. For geographer Yi-Fu Tuan, place is “a unique and complex ensemble—rooted in the past and growing into a future.” It is a “symbol” that calls for “humanistic understanding” (Tuan 1979, 388). As Cresswell concisely puts it, “place at a basic level, is space invested with meaning in the context of power” (Cresswell 2015, 19).

Discussions of space and place imply movement, or at least a tension between stability and instability, fixed positions and unfixed ones. French historian of religion Michel de Certeau provides one of the most influential explorations of this idea. For de Certeau, place is “an instantaneous configuration of positions” implying stability. Space, in contrast, “takes into consideration vectors of direction, velocities, and time variables.” It is “actuated by the ensemble of movements deployed within it. Space occurs as the effect produced by the operations that orient it, situate it, temporalize it, and make it function in a polyvalent unity of conflictual programs or contractual proximities.” In short, de Certeau asserts, “space is a practiced place” and amenable to “tactics” that can disrupt the controlling “strategies” of powerful people, institutions, and ideologies (de Certeau 1984, 117).

Echoing de Certeau, David Harvey coins the term “relational space” to convey a similar idea: in relational space, processes “define their own spatial frame” (Harvey 2006, 123). But in all these different conceptualizations—Tuan’s notion of place, de Certeau’s polyvalent and conflictual “space,” and Harvey’s “relational space”—the emphasis is on dynamic, fluid complexity. Place (or space) operates through “constant and reiterative practice,” its contingent character defined by context (Cresswell 2015, 70). This is what Marc Augé calls “anthropological space,” the dynamic and fluid space of “identity, of relations, and of history” (Augé 1995, 52).

The body of work considering music in these terms is rapidly growing. A 2011 short essay by Robert Fink, part of a Colloquy in the Journal of American Musico logical Society, argues for a spatial turn in musicology. Fink references the pioneering work of other music studies scholars such as Tricia Rose, Murray Forman, and Adam Krims, each of whom have written monographs focusing on the urban spaces of post-industrial popular American music (Rose 1994; Forman 2002; Krims 2007). A spatial turn has also been a driving force in historical studies of American and European “art” music, often fusing with a new strand of spatially oriented work under the banner of ecocriticism and eco-musicology (Allen 2011). Books by Daniel M. Grimley (2006), Denise Von Glahn (2009), and Georgina Born (2013) look closely at the ways historical compositional practices evoke real and imagined spaces and places. There has been a similar spatial turn in ethnomusicology, starting with Martin Stokes’s influential collection, Ethnicity, Identity, and Music: The Musical Construction of Place (1994) and continuing with writing by Thomas Turino (1993), Marina Peterson (2010), and Fiona Magowan and Louise Wrazen (2013). Because it is so deeply indebted to theoretical models outside of musicology, spatial music studies continue to be deeply
interdisciplinary with contributions from anthropology, geography, sociology, and history. In the rest of the chapter, I use “space” for more theoretical or abstract discussions, and “place” when writing about particular locations.

**Jazz Scenes: City and Country**

Although not always theorized, jazz scholarship and criticism have from their beginnings been attentive to the places of the music: where it was developed, practiced, recorded, and performed. As sociologist Howard Becker writes, referring to his own experiences playing the music, the specifics of jazz performance such as repertoire and style are often “completely dictated by the circumstances of the places” one plays in (Becker 2004). Most scholarly discussions of jazz places begin in the complicated transnational and multicultural city that was turn of the twentieth-century New Orleans. From some of the earliest jazz writing to more recent historical accounts, critics and scholars have emphasized the unique city as the catalyst that triggered the stylistic and generic fusions that forged the music (Sargeant 1938; Schuller 1986; Walser 1999; Brothers 2007; Charters 2008; Hersch 2008; Charters 2008; Raeburn 2009; Raimondi 2012; Suhadolnik 2016).

A growing body of scholarship has expanded our geographical understanding of the historical development of the music by focusing on other US cities and states, from the well-known centers of jazz popularity—Kansas City (Russell 1973; Pearson 1994; Driggs, Frank, and Chuck Haddix 2005), Chicago (Kenney 1993), New York (DeVeaux 1999; Chevigny 2005; Burke 2008; Stewart 2007; Jackson 2012; Greenland 2016; Heller 2017), and Los Angeles (Bryant, et al., 1998; Gioia 1998; Pastras 2001; Isoardi 2006)—to the less well-known historical jazz communities of Boston (Klotz 2016), Detroit (Bjorn and Gallert 2001), Indianapolis (Balensuela 2014), and Newark (Kukla 2002).

For many historians, the history of jazz is also the history of the city in twentieth-century America (Ostransky 1978; Peretti 1992; Philips 2013). Travis Jackson writes that “the development of jazz . . . was not simply a function of developments in musical style; it was also a function of developments in the use of urban space” (Jackson 2012, 4). Eric Lott’s influential article, “Double V, Double-Time: Bebop’s Politics of Style,” describes the emergent bebop style as an aesthetic of speed and displacement that modeled itself on the black urban experience (Lott 1998, 461). In *Come In and Hear the Truth*, Patrick Burke narrows the focus down to a single and centrally important musical street, New York’s 52nd St., during the 1940s and 1950s.

But as recent scholarship demonstrates, jazz has always existed outside the city, shaped by other geographic and cultural forces. The focus on cities, in addition to a deeper, often unacknowledged “center-periphery” metaphor of cultural history, has made the idea of “rural jazz” seem nonsensical (Washburne 2012). In *Jazz on the Road: Don Albert’s Musical Life* (2001) and *Big Band Jazz in Black West Virginia 1930–1943* (2012), Christopher Wilkinson documents how jazz developed and thrived in places on the seeming periphery of urban musical life. In his book *Jazz Matters: Sound, Place and Time Since Bebop* (2010), David Ake offers a general critique of jazz scholarship’s urban bias, focusing on a counter-tradition anchored in rural and suburban life. Surveying the early work of pianist Keith Jarrett, guitarist Pat Metheny, and keyboardist Lyle Mays, Ake traces the emergence of a “pastoral jazz” in the late 1960s and 1970s.

**Jazz as Mobility**

Despite its longstanding association with specific American places, from its beginnings, jazz has always been on the move, transmitted by touring musicians, soldiers, tourists, and recordings (Shack 2001; Kenney 2005). In his survey of the music’s history, Alyn Shipton traces these early movements of jazz across the globe, examining the influence of late nineteenth- and early
Andrew Berish

twentieth-century traveling African American performers on European musicians. And where American musicians did not travel, recordings acted as proxy ambassadors, introducing audiences to new African American-derived musical styles (Shipton 2007; Cerchiari 2012). Writing about Louis Armstrong, Charles H. Garrett explores how the trumpeter’s music “sounded” migration, specifically the Great Migration, a demographic movement that brought millions of African Americans from the South to the North. Garrett identifies the ways recordings such as “Gully Low Blues” integrated Southern musical practices with Northern ones, offering a sonic embodiment of the real-world negotiations black Southerners had to make in the North. Garrett’s chapter is a reminder that the articulation of place to music (and vice versa) is not necessarily a one-to-one relationship, but rather a relationship among multiple places.

But the spread of jazz is more than simply the story of traveling musicians or media dissemination; it is a story of nationalism and globalism writ large—of the ways cultural works have supported and also challenged twentieth-century nationalist movements. As many recent scholars have argued, jazz was always already “international,” created from transnational movements across the Black Atlantic and beyond (Roberts 1979; Floyd 1997; Atkins 2001; Garrett 2008; Von Eschen 2004, 2009; Toynbee, Tackley, and Doffman 2016; Evans 2016). As E. Taylor Atkins writes, the journey of jazz around the globe “helped shape a burgeoning global consciousness that coexisted, if uneasily, with the rampant nationalisms that made that century so violent.” The music’s “global consciousness,” however, remained in tension with other powerful “affiliations based on notions of nation, region, gender, ideology, or class” (Atkins 2003, xxi). Jazz today, as Stuart Nicholson writes in Jazz and Culture in a Global Age, is a truly global phenomenon, often thoroughly integrated into local and national musical cultures in Africa, Asia, Europe, and North and South America (Nicholson 2014, x).

Although journalists have been writing about the spread of jazz across the globe for decades now, it wasn’t until the 1970s and 1980s that scholars produced extended, critical English-language studies of jazz in places other than the United States (for example, see Bisset 1987; Berendt 1975, 1984; Goddard 1979; Roberts 1979; Starr 1983; Godbolt 1984). Recent jazz writing on this topic has focused on the tensions between the local and global, the intimate and the general. In their introduction to Jazz Worlds/World Jazz (2016), Philip V. Bohlman and Goffredo Plastino point to jazz’s paradoxical evocation of place: “Jazz clings relentlessly to place—the jam session, the scene, the city, the nation. Yet jazz also moves fluidly and fluently to other places—up the Mississippi River or across the Atlantic to the entrepôts of exile.” For musicians, this paradox is felt at the level of performance. Improvising musicians, Bohlman and Plastino write, “turn inward, enclosing themselves in a world they selectively inhabit,” even as they reach out and embrace “networks of musical practices conjoined by a willingness to accept a unifying ontology of jazz” (Bohlman and Plastino 2016, 1, 6). Ethnomusicologist Paul Austerlitz echoes this idea in his notion of “jazz consciousness,” a mode of social-musical engagement that creates a global “virtual space where we can confront, learn from, and even heal the contradictions resulting from social rupture” (Austerlitz 2005, xvi). Steven Feld’s recent book Jazz Cosmopolitanism: Five Musical Years in Ghana offers a rich, ethnographic exploration of the complex ways American jazz has developed outside the USA. Through encounters with a range of Ghanaian musicians and artists, Feld explores what he calls a “vernacular cosmopolitanism”—a “cosmopolitanism from below.” His book offers a look at the especially rich dynamics of Afro-Diasporic music returning to Africa—how “the performance of jazz in Africa, and Africa in jazz . . . relate[s] to the anthropology of globalism and cosmopolitanism” (Feld 2012, 4). As this very brief survey shows, any comprehensive accounting of jazz, whether inside or outside the borders of the United States, must sensitively account for the music’s historical mobility, its remarkable ability to move from place to place. Recognizing jazz’s “inherent transnationalism,” scholars must “investigate situated, localized communities alongside moving, global ones” (Braggs 2016, 7, 124).
Space and Place in Jazz

With all the focus on the geography of jazz, its specific locales, and its frequent movements across the US and the globe, scholars have been less consistent in their attempts to understand the relation between musical sound, spatiality, and the social. The most promising avenues for research are those that pursue a “critical phenomenology of the musical or sonic orchestration of public and private experience, in all its social-spatial dimensions” (Born 2013, 26). What is needed is a sonic phenomenology of place that is balanced by a Lefebvrian critical analysis of social and institutional space. In this way musical sound—as practice and performance—is understood as fully part of the story of jazz places. If jazz is made meaningful through its emplacement in the world, can you hear place in jazz? And can what you hear have a different relationship to where you are hearing it?

The Spatial Imaginary

In my own writing I have tried to describe the complex ways we can hear place in musical sound (Berish 2009, 2012). For example, I discuss the music of swing era bandleader Charlie Barnet and his obsessive need for travel. This urge to wander the country—despite its difficulties, Barnet loved touring with his orchestra—had an analog in his desire to cross America’s “color line.” During the 1940s, Barnet’s band was frequently touted in the jazz press as the “blackest white band of all” (Simon 1939). Drawing heavily on the sounds of African American jazz orchestras, especially those led by Count Basie and Duke Ellington, Barnet’s recordings from the 1940s—performances such as “Pompton Turnpike,” “Skyliner,” and “Drop Me Off in Harlem”—evoked specific places with a self-consciously interracial musical style: a white band explicitly adopting the hot style widely associated with the black bands of the time. But my account represents only a beginning: there is much more work to be done in developing a “critical phenomenology” of Barnet’s life and music, an accounting that can fully account for all its “social-spatial” meanings. The bandleader’s literal and figurative travels were premised on a much deeper social historical phenomenon: the “racialization” of place by government and citizens. To really comprehend the bandleader’s career and music, we must understand the ways he attempted to negotiate different “spatial imaginaries,” one white and one black (Lipsitz 2011, 5).

The “white spatial imaginary,” rooted in the history of European conquest of North America, “idealizes ‘pure’ and homogenous spaces, controlled environments, and predictable patterns of design and behavior.” In addition, “the white spatial imaginary views space primarily as a locus for the generation of exchange value.” In contrast, the black spatial imaginary offers a different understanding of the “scale, scope, and stakes of place and space” by emphasizing a different “moral geography” of “differentiated space” that “privilege[s] use value over exchange value, sociality over selfishness, and inclusion over exclusion” (Lipsitz 2011, 29–30, 51, 61–63).

The values of the black spatial imaginary were manifested not only with the material transformations of segregated American spaces (such as the transformation of a black barber shop into a center of political organizing) but also in the creations of African American expressive culture. George Lipsitz gives the example of the young Louis Armstrong who was able to move freely through segregated New Orleans by marching in the city’s many parades. The parade not only allowed black musicians such as Armstrong to move more easily through normally off-limits neighborhoods, but also brought black music and dance to the white parts of town (Lipsitz 2011, 63).

The idea of racialized “spatial imaginaries” provides a more nuanced way to conceptualize Charlie Barnet’s place in the segregated world of 1940s dance band jazz: his orchestra represented a mixing of spatial imaginaries. Barnet’s musical shifts through the era—from “sweet” to “hot,” white to black—were attempts to reconcile two deeply rooted and opposed spatial imaginaries, a white one that celebrated movement as an American birthright and a black one, that, excluded
from this understanding, sought other means of making life hopeful and free. Like gears that rotate independently and at different speeds, Barnet’s music reflected a “differential” experience of place. His band’s music could sound one spatial experience while working within the confines of another (or vice versa). The result is something more complicated than I originally described and points to some new directions in the study of jazz spaces and places.

But to really understand the differential nature of these musical spaces—the ways the phenomenological experience of music interacted with the physical places of performance—we need to look at the Barnet Orchestra “on location” and interacting with specific historical places. In the chapter on the 1940s from his autobiography *Those Swinging Years* (Barnet 1992), Barnet provides two exemplary examples of such interactions. The first involved a 1942 “riot” of African American fans at a blacks-only concert at Washington DC’s Griffith Stadium. The second event from a year later involved a tense but ultimately peaceful performance that occurred at a whites-only performance at the Eastwood Gardens in Detroit.

The bandleader presents these events as unconnected, but the two stories are remarkable for the similar ways they describe the segregated geography of the era’s commercial music. The events that unfolded at Griffith Stadium were rooted in bad planning. The invited bands, Barnet’s and Louis Armstrong’s, were set up on the field, but a contingent of on-field listeners obscured the view from fans in the stands. The inadequate sound system only exacerbated the problem. When someone threw a bottle onto the field, the crowds surged forward. Police, aided by servicemen in the crowd, were unable to quell the growing chaos. The concert promoters soon cut the music and lights, shutting the event down. Police arrested sixteen and another six were taken a local hospital. More than just another example of fanatical jitterbuggers venting youthful energy, the event represented the consequences of the nation’s racialized understandings of place. At one point, trying to manage the situation, master of ceremonies Willie Bryant pleaded with the crowd, “This is the first time our race has ever been able to get Griffith Stadium for an affair of this sort. Let’s not make it the last time” (*Variety* 1942). The inadequacies of the place were connected to a much deeper set of restrictions on where and how blacks could publicly congregate. It is not hard to see the “riot” as a protest against such large-scale restrictions on the black use of public space.

Barnet’s second anecdote recalls events at an all-white concert in Detroit’s Eastwood Gardens. The concert happened in the immediate aftermath of the city’s devastating “race riots” (Barnet remembers “bodies floating in the Detroit River”). The bandleader was nervous about the gig, especially because he had two black trumpeters in the band, Peanuts Holland and Al Killian. In spite of the tension and the “heavily armed riot squads,” the concert was a great success. “Every time Peanuts or Al dropped a mute or hit a loud clam,” Barnet writes, “the people would cheer. Peanuts and Al could do nothing wrong so far as that audience was concerned.” (Barnet 1992, 119–120)

His quick gloss on the events of 1943 only hint at its true scale: the multi-day conflict was among the most violent, racially motivated urban crises in modern American history. Believed to have started after a fight between whites and blacks on Belle Isle, a park in the Detroit River, the uprising by Detroit’s African Americans was fed by years of housing and work discrimination, intensified by the migration of thousands of black workers into the city’s booming wartime economy. Fed by white police inaction, the exceptionally violent clashes lasted for two days until thousands of federal troops arrived and restored order. Thirty-four people were killed, twenty-five of them African American, and hundreds more were injured. Most of the property damaged occurred in the black neighborhood of Paradise Valley (Capeci and Wilkerson 1990). With this in mind, the bandleader’s anecdote takes on a much more ominous tone. The audience’s reaction to Barnet’s integrated band had enormous stakes with the very real possibility of violence.

Both anecdotes show how deeply race informed the places of 1940s music making, and how any understanding of Barnet’s music must take into account the dynamics of these racialized spaces. These stories also emphasize the way music and place generate feeling—both stories...
are suffused with affect, a complex mix of excitement, fear, uncertainty, and comradery. As Gregory Seigworth and Melissa Gregg write, “Affect arises in the midst of in-between-ness: in the capacities to act and be acted upon . . . affect is found in those intensities that pass body to body” (Gregg and Seigworth 2010, 1). In both anecdotes, Barnet vividly describes how the venues were charged with intense feeling and a palpable sense of bodies and minds aligned, of force, intensity, and direction. These feelings were formed at the intersection of race, music, and place. Both the unrest at Griffith Stadium and the interracial embrace at Eastwood Gardens show how thoroughly experiences of place and music were fused with ideologies of race and social structures of power. What deserves greater scholarly exploration is a more refined account of this complicated interrelationship between sound, listener, and place. In particular, what was the nature of the new, contingent musical-social places created through musical performance? How did the music create a sense of belonging to that place? And how did different spatial imaginaries interact with musical performance to create what Nigel Thrift calls “spatial affect” (Thrift 2008)?

From the nightclub to the concert hall, from New Orleans to New York City—jazz has been more than the soundtrack to twentieth- and twenty-first-century modern life; it has been a spatial force on par with other social forces, shaping our fundamental ideas and experiences of modern life. Older historiographical habits tying certain jazz styles to certain locales—Chicago or New Orleans Jazz—needs to give way to an understanding of jazz as itself a spatial practice, a practice that shaped listeners’ ideas about, and feelings for, the geography of their daily lives.

Note
1. The events of 1943 were cataclysmic for Detroit. The complex history of that event and its place in the city is still being debated. For a recent accounting of the scholarship, see Capeci, Jr. and Martha Wilkerson (2009).

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Andrew Berish


Space and Place in Jazz


