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Call for papers #4 : Jazz, philosophy and philosophers

- Actualités/News -

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This latest issue of *Epistrophy* suggests interpolating jazz through a specific prism : that of philosophy.

Now, philosophy is a discipline that is characterised not so much by its subject, because that is not restricted to a specific area, but by the very particular way in which it conducts discussion of its subject. Philosophy, by taking throughout its history a suspicious attitude to language in general, and to artistic terminology in particular (what does "playing" music mean ? Do musicians "express themselves" through their art ?, etc.), has made music a fully fledged philosophical issue [1].

As regards jazz, the situation is more complicated, because 20th century philosophers seem to have ignored the subject somewhat and have taken only a slight interest in this emerging aesthetic phenomenon. Philosophy's disenchantment with jazz can be assessed on two levels : firstly the scarcity of philosophical texts devoted to jazz [2], and secondly the harsh treatment reserved for jazz in the few philosophical texts about it [3].

But how can we understand that philosophy and philosophers have remained practically silent about jazz ? Should we conclude that discussions about jazz should be reserved for the "jazz studies" traditionally stamped by a musicological and/or anthropological approach ? Does philosophy not also have a part to play in the various debates that make up the whole that is jazz studies ? And conversely, wouldn't a serious reflection on jazz not allow philosophy to thoroughly overhaul its traditional aesthetic patterns ?

It is these different issues that *Epistrophy* number 4 plans to address, starting from the following three themes :

Philosophers and jazz : the story of a missed opportunity

Apart from the famous criticism by Theodor Adorno, few 20th century philosophers have taken up the challenge of tackling the subject of jazz. And even when it has happened, the encounter sounds like a "missed opportunity" [4]. For while some philosophers have clearly spoken of their affection for jazz (such as Jean-Paul Sartre and Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe), their contributions to the subject are nevertheless meagre and disappointing [5]. Even more astonishing, we may recall the misfortune experienced by Jacques Derrida, who was roundly jeered (not to say humiliated) by the audience when he was invited by Ornette Coleman to join him on stage during his concert at the Cité de la musique in Paris on 1 July 1997. While the saxophonist had forgotten to introduce his guest to the audience (probably thinking he was well enough known in France to need no introduction), Derrida was not able to finish reading the text he had written for the occasion ("Joue - le prénom" [6]), and had to suffer the indignity of leaving the stage pursued by the shouting, whistling and insults of the audience.

So our proposals could include a discussion of the significance of one or all of these successive philosophical failures - without restricting ourselves to Adorno's famous criticism, which has already given rise to a large number of comments.

Effective philosophical concepts for discussing jazz

What this issue of *Epistrophy* has taken an interest in is not simply to observe the failure of jazz philosophy, but also to reflect on what might be effective philosophical concepts for thinking about jazz and its related problems. The notion of "play" in the work of Schiller, "expression" in Hegel, "myth" in Roland Barthes, "structure" in Lévi-Strauss, "aura" in Benjamin, etc. : are these philosophical concepts completely null and void and ineffective for discussing jazz ? Or should they be brought back - even if it alters their meaning - to identify more clearly what is specific about them ?

While the failure of 20th century philosophers to discuss jazz is undeniable, and while the specificity of the aesthetics and history of jazz no doubt means we need to revise the conceptual tools of modern aesthetics, traditional philosophical concepts have probably not yet delivered on all their promises and should now be reintroduced to allow fresh light to be shone on the subject of jazz.

Philosophy and jazz studies : what sort of dialogue ?

The presupposition of this fourth issue of the journal *Epistrophy* is this : a dialogue between philosophy and jazz studies should be possible, and is probably necessary to avoid the risk of isolating jazz in a disciplinary "reserve". But under what conditions could such a dialogue take place ? How could it be started ? And what methods should it use : a conceptual dialogue at the intersection of disciplinary fields, with philosophers using for example their musico-anthropological knowledge about jazz - or vice versa - to add to debate on the subject ? Or a concrete dialogue : an exchange of views between philosophers and jazz studies experts could prove extremely rewarding in many respects.

It is with this in mind that we solemnly invite musicologists, anthropologists, sociologists, and all the disciplines connected with jazz to acquire this issue of *Epistrophy* to confront their area of speciality with philosophers and philosophy. Let us hope then that the dialogue can finally open.

Submission Process

The deadline for proposal submission is 01 September 2018. Proposals should be sent to the following address : epistrophy@epistrophy.fr

Proposals must include :

- **A title**
- **A proposal for an article of about 3000 signs**
- **A brief bibliography**
- **A short bio-bibliography of the author**

The editorial committee of the review will select the proposals and inform their authors by October 01, 2018.

If the proposal is accepted, authors undertake to send their complete article no later than January 1, 2019 for publication in June 2019. The articles will be double-blind peer reviewed by the reading committee.

An exceptional scientific committee will be convened for this issue, composed of a reviewer from the scientific committee of Epistrophy and a philosopher who will be chosen according to the perspective of the article.

Expected articles are 30,000 signs maximum (spaces, notes and bibliography not included) and may include photos, music and / or videos in separate files according to the standards set out in the guideline.

[1] Here are some examples : Plato, *The Republic*, books III, VII and X ; Rousseau, *Dictionnaire de la musique* (1767), Nietzsche, *Le Gai savoir* §372, *Le cas Wagner* (1888) ; Schopenhauer, *Le monde comme volonté et comme représentation* book III ; Vladimir Jankélévitch, *La musique et l'ineffable* (1961)... and more recently : Francis Wolff, *Pourquoi la musique ?* (2015) ; Bernard Sève, *L'altération musicale (ou ce que la musique apprend au philosophe)* (2002), Jean-Luc Nancy, *A l'écoute* (2002), Peter Szendy, *Écoute : une histoire de nos oreilles* (2001) et *Membres fantômes : des corps musiciens* (2002), etc.

[2] Here is a first reason for astonishment : no mention of the word "jazz" in the main works of Bataille, Merleau-Ponty, Foucault, Deleuze, etc. These philosophers who have left their mark on the 20th century and who are contemporaries of the emergence of jazz, took no interest either in

the aesthetic aspect of jazz, nor in its political significance - even though the latter gave rise to some heated debates in the 1960s and 1970s in French intellectual circles.

[3] Here of course we are reminded of the very famous criticism of jazz by Adorno - in *Abschied vom Jazz* (1933), *Über jazz* (1936), and finally *Mode intemporelle* (1953). Adorno's relationship with jazz has given rise to numerous comments, and especially in France in Christian Béthune's book *Adorno et le jazz : analyse d'un déni esthétique*, (Paris, Klincksieck, 2003).

[4] To take up Pierre Sauvanet's comment in his article "Jazz et philosophie en France", in *La catastrophe apprivoisée. Regards sur le jazz en France*, texts collected by Vincent Cotro, Laurent Cugny and Philippe Gumpłowicz, "Jazz en France" (Paris, 2013, p. 161).

[5] As shown by the famous and much commented-on words of Jean-Paul Sartre : "Jazz is like bananas - it must be consumed on the spot", in " *Nick's Bar, New York City*", published for the first time in *America, cahiers de liaison culturelle France-Amérique-Latinité*, n°5, special issue "Jazz 47 ", edited by Pierre Seghers (Intercontinentale du Livre, May 1947, p. 11.). The case of Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe is different, because while his writing about jazz is entirely serious, it is still interesting to note that he has produced very few articles on this subject which affected and moved him deeply (See the comments of Jean-Luc Nancy in an interview to appear in *Epistrophy* n°4).

[6] "La langue de l'autre", Ornette Coleman and Jacques Derrida, in *Les Inrockuptibles* n°115, 20 August -2 September 1997, pp.37-43.