



Conference “Vision, Perception, Friction: How Jazz Became Art and Attack(ed) – A Transatlantic Dialogue,” November 8-9, 2013, at the Heidelberg Center for American Studies

On November 8 and 9, 2013, the renowned “Enjoy Jazz” Festival returned to the HCA. Starting on Friday afternoon, scholars, artists, and journalists met at the Curt and Heidemarie Engelhorn Palais to explore how the image of jazz had changed on both sides of the Atlantic during the last six decades. Which formats of presentation in journalism and academics seem to be adequate for the genre today? How do artists deal with the changing forms of production and reception? And to what extent can they determine the discussion about and the reception of their works? The workshop marked several anniversaries of transatlantic Jazz milestones: In 1953, Joachim-Ernst Behrendt’s *Das Jazzbuch* was published, the *Spiegel* ran cover stories on Stan Kenton and Ella Fitzgerald, and the “world’s biggest jazz concert,” Norman Granz’s “Jazz at the Philharmonic” toured Germany. Conceptionalized and convened by Dr. Christian Bröcking, the workshop was supported by the “Innovationsfonds Kunst” of the state of Baden-Württemberg and the Friends of Enjoy Jazz.

In the first afternoon session, Arne Reimer, jazz photographer and author from Leipzig, and Götz Bühler, jazz journalist from Hamburg, discussed transatlantic encounters in jazz. Arne Reimer gave the audience in the Stucco insights into the making of his highly acclaimed volume *American Jazz Heroes*, which had just come out a few months earlier. Sometimes he just knocked on the doors of jazz greats like Cecil Taylor and did not leave until the wee hours because his hosts felt that he truly valued their music. Götz Bühler’s talk seconded the notion that many American Jazz legends feel more respected in Europe than in their own country and in his talk also revisited some European Jazz legends.

The workshop continued on Saturday morning with a talk by Bernd Ostendorf (Ludwig-Maximilians Universität München), who gave a very personal account of growing up with Jazz in 1950s Germany. Facilitated by the programs of the Voice of America (a product of the same agency that funded American Studies programs at German universities), Jazz served as the “musical wetlands” of the discipline. Yet, it also symbolized the rift in U.S. domestic and

foreign policy, pointing to the Jim Crow South on the one hand and freedom and subversive power on the other. Listening to those programs indeed often was subversive, as the majority of (West) Germans accepted American politics but rejected American culture. Kurt Ellenberger (Grand Valley State University) brought Ostendorf's line of argument to the present, pointing out that they were both "born analog," and that Jazz faced new challenges and opportunities in a digital world. According to Ellenberger, Jazz received its status as a counterculture by creating an "outsider attitude," which might not be effective anymore in the digital world with its seemingly endless choices.

In his keynote lecture, Herman S. Gray (University of California, Santa Cruz) asked the question "What counts as Jazz?" He recounted the disputes over style, genre, and commercialization that have characterized this debate for decades and pointed out that the vision of the music and its cultural position were at stake. In his opinion, the history of Jazz is not necessarily a narrative of progress but rather one of multiple and heterogeneous practices. Gray cited the dispute over programs like "Jazz at the Library of Congress" or Ken Burns' documentary series "Jazz" as examples. Establishing a "Jazz canon" marginalized and excluded some fields. Gray considers Jazz a cultural marker and the social capital of cities, a source of value that is more cultural than economic.

The last session on Saturday morning returned to transatlantic encounters in Jazz. Olivier Senn (Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts) revisited a central place for those encounters, the Willisau Jazz Festival, according to Keith Jarrett "one of the best places for music in the world." From its inception, the presence of U.S. musicians added greatly to the status of the festival. Jürgen Arndt (University of Music and Performing Arts Mannheim) then looked at the influence of Thelonious Monk on European Jazz. Irene Schweizer, Alexander Schlippenbach and Willem Mengelberg, for example, started musical dialogues with U.S. performers and Monk in particular. The repetition and hesitation that are hallmarks of Monk's music thus found their way across the Atlantic.

In the afternoon, the workshop met in the Atrium for a sound lecture by Michael Wollny, hailed by many critics as one of the greatest young talents in German Jazz. The lecture demonstrated how Wollny listens to music. He presented pieces from his "sound library" and showed how "his music" comes together from pieces by Prince, Björg, and Schubert. The "projection of ideas" is then installed on top of songs that finally come together in an "alchemy" of mixing, reloading, and exploring to create something new.

The workshop concluded with a second session on Jazz and cultural change. Christine Merkel

(UNESCO) spoke about globalization and Jazz, and Rainer Kern, director of the Enjoy Jazz Festival, looked back on 15 years of Enjoy Jazz, on a European festival of an American art form and its program politics, challenges and goals. This workshop continued the transatlantic jazz dialogue established at the HCA in 2012 and was once more a venue intellectual curiosity and musical zest felt equally at home.