"Our subcultural shit-music": Dutch jazz, representation, and cultural politics
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"Our Subcultural Shit-Music": Dutch Jazz, Representation, and Cultural Politics

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Faculteit der Geesteswetenschappen

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Preface

—This is not *dulce de leche*.
—But it is *made* with *dulce the leche*.
—That’s what I am saying; this is not *dulce de leche*.

During my research I regularly thought back to my conversation with an Argentinian friend over dinner in Amsterdam. As a desert, the chef had made her a creamy pudding based on *dulce de leche*, the sweet milky delight from her homeland. While I considered the making of the desert a friendly, welcoming gesture, expressing both an interest in my friend’s cultural background as well as an eagerness to explore its potential, my guest’s rather reserved and defensive response surprised me.

From the start of my research, I regularly gave lectures on the topic of postwar jazz in the Netherlands. Outside the lecture-room and the conference hall, my audience tended to consist of mostly jazz aficionados, dedicated to the music they grew up with—and not seldom with an impressive memory for fact and detail. Focusing on the socio-cultural implications of jazz and addressing the music in relation to issues of identity formation, canonization and myth, I received an array of responses, varying from “What a refreshing approach” to “And you actually get paid to do this?” On one particular occasion a woman in the audience, after introducing herself as a regular visitor of improvised music workshops in the 1970s, remarked how she felt that my observations “denigrated” the achievements of the musicians back in those days. Although offending anyone was the least of my intentions (and generally speaking, my lectures were not understood as such), the remark exemplifies the reluctance and even disappointment felt by some of the listeners, usually eye-witnesses of the music and the events discussed. To them, I realized, the story of jazz was the story of their youth—a flirt with the past made of romanticized anecdotes, heroes and tragedies. Revealing a sense of ownership—ironically of a music that entered the Netherlands as an American immigrant—the discontent expressed how these listeners found it at least a little awkward to hear their stories told from the perspective of an academic female born in 1981 and, all right then, a jazz saxophonist.
Besides interesting questions of ownership and legitimacy—who has the right to speak about what?—the reluctant response of both the listeners as well as my Argentinian friend, gave me insight into the function of stories and memory in constructing cultural identity and processes of identification. Memories, the collected stories of our lives, are a threshold to other places, whether bringing back childhood years, nights spent in jazz clubs, teenage affairs, or family dinners. Besides shaping how we see the world, these stories create a sense of belonging and connect us to a certain time or place. They constitute our cultural identity, as listeners locate themselves in music. The mere fact that I discussed the music that had sat comfortably within their memories, forced these listeners to reflect on those memories, and on how they see themselves.

I realize now that alternative readings of the cultural practices past and present, albeit in the form of an academic lecture or a creamy pudding, can be perceived as an act of appropriation, violating much-cherished memories and the sense of belonging that goes with it. I am fully aware of these sentiments and I can only hope that my research will offer new perspectives on what has been said and done, adding to the stories rather than crushing them.
Acknowledgements

This PhD would not have been here without the great support of my supervisors Walter van de Leur and Tony Whyton, who warmheartedly invited me into the academic world and generously shared their knowledge of the field. I could not have expected that thanks to them my research would travel as far as Switzerland and China, not to mention Guelph. I felt particularly well-taken care after by Walter, whose generosity—or strategic vision, perhaps?—went as far as asking his daughter Floor to babysit my son. All in all, I could not have wished for a more supporting, committed, and fun supervisor. I would also like to express my gratitude to the members of my doctorate committee: John Gennari, Henkjan Honing, Susanne Janssen, Julia Kursell and Barbara Titus. Thank you for investing time and for providing interesting and valuable feedback. I feel proud and honoured that you have accepted to be on my committee.

My gratitude goes to HERA, the (former) Huizinga Institute for Cultural History, the Amsterdam School for Cultural Analysis, and the University of Amsterdam, for funding and supporting my research. I would also like to thank the Rhythm Changes team, for introducing me into the unexpected range of sides, sights, and sounds of collaborative research. In particular I am grateful to George McKay and Nick Gebhardt, for their advice and encouragements. It was—and is—such a pleasure working with you.

Further, I would like to thank my colleagues at the Musicology Department of the University of Amsterdam, with a special thanks to my “roommate” Vincent van den Bijlaard (sorry for killing the plant) and Maarten “Ko Ko” Beirens. David Beiles was of particular support, helping me translate some of the work. Further, this thesis would not have looked the same without the Dutch Jazz Archive, especially Ditmer Weertman and Jan Brouwer, who not only helped me to find my way through the archive, but whose invitations to lectures, radio programs and television shows allowed me to discuss my research with a wider audience.

I feel warm-hearted about the generous welcome I received of musicians, journalists and jazz fans alike. You not only shared your stories and visions on music and life, but often kindly invited me into your private homes, sharing kitchen tables, dinners, coffee, wine, and laughter: Han Bennink, Pieter Boersma, Susanna von Canon, Ate van Delden,
Frans Elsen (+), Leo Cuypers, Ruud van Dijk, Bob de Groot, Hans Koert (+), Boudewijn Leeuwenberg, Willem van Manen, Herman Openneer, Ad van ’t Veer, and Bert Vuijsje. During the years I worked on my dissertation, I also received unexpected support from friends whom I had not seen for a long time, including Martine Dokman, Maarten Bronts and Martijn Loonen. I am looking forward to catching up with all my family and friends, who I got to see less and less throughout this project: Renée, Boudewijn, Paul, Silke, Ben, Tessa, Jenny, Sven, Tjerk Jan, Tamar, Marike, Arjan, and Double Espresso (Floortje, Babette, Annette). I am sorry for all the missed music, laughter, and beers. My many hours of research and travel would simply have been impossible without the generous help and support of my parents-in-law Ko and Corry van Drongelen and my parents Ton and Thelma. Finally, I am delighted that I have shared this trajectory with my beloved ones, Herb and our sons Noes and Jip, by far the most beautiful outcomes of these PhD years.

List of abbreviations

AVRO Algemene Vereniging Radio Omroep (General Broadcasting Association)
BEVEM Beweging voor de Vernieuwing van de Muziekpraktijk (Movement for the Renewal of Musical Practice)
BIM Beroepsvereniging voor Improviserende Musici (Improvising Musicians’ Union)
CRM Cultuur, Recreatie en Maatschappelijk Werk (Culture, Recreation and Social Service)
DB Down Beat Magazine
FNM Festival Nieuwe Muziek (New Music Festival)
FPK Fonds Podiumkunsten
ICP Instant Composers Pool
JOC Jazz Orchestra of the Concertgebouw
JM Jeugd en Muziek Nederland (Youth and Music the Netherlands)
JMZ Jeugd en Muziek Zeeland (Youth and Music Zeeland)
NCRV Nederlandse Christelijke Radio Vereniging (Dutch Christian Radio Association)
OKW Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap (Education, Arts and Sciences)
SJN Stichting Jazz in Nederland (Foundation for Jazz in the Netherlands)
SJIN Stichting Jazz en Geïmproviseerde Muziek in Nederland (Foundation for Jazz in the Netherlands)
VARA Verenigde Arbeiders Radio Amateurs (Workers’ Association of Radio Makers)
VPRO Vrijzinnig Protestantse Radio Omroep (Liberal Protestant Radio Broadcasting)
WBK Willem Breuker Kollektief

*Instruments*

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<tr>
<th>Abbr.</th>
<th>Instrument</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>as</td>
<td>alto saxophone</td>
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<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>double bass</td>
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<td>bcl</td>
<td>bass clarinet</td>
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<td>bs</td>
<td>baritone saxophone</td>
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<td>cl</td>
<td>clarinet</td>
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<td>com</td>
<td>composition</td>
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<td>cornet</td>
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<td>drums</td>
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<td>piano</td>
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<td>soprano saxophone</td>
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<td>trumpet</td>
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<td>ts</td>
<td>tenor saxophone</td>
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<td>tb</td>
<td>trombone</td>
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<td>vc</td>
<td>vocals</td>
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*Preliminary notes*

*Publications.* Earlier versions of some material within this thesis have been published in academic journals as follows: Material from Chapter Six was published in “Alles kon en alles mocht. Reconstructie Zeeland Suite.” *Jazz Bulletin* 91 (2014), 34-41; sections of Chapter One appeared in “Common Ground: 1970s Improvised Music as Part of a Cross-genre Dutch Ensemble Culture.” *Jazz Research Journal* 5.1/5.2 (2012), 123-141. Throughout the book, I have used material from my master’s thesis “Jazzpracticum: Over de institutionalisering van jazz in Nederland (2007).”
Translation. Translations are mine unless otherwise indicated. In a number of cases, I have given the original with the source reference, to be of service of those who read Dutch. I hope that opening up these sources to the non-Dutch reader adds to the value of this study.