

Guerino Mazzola

Paul B. Cherlin

In Collaboration with  
Mathias Rissi and Nathan Kennedy

COMPUTATIONAL MUSIC SCIENCE



# Flow, Gesture, and Spaces

## in Free Jazz

Towards a Theory of Collaboration

Jazz CD "Liquid Bridges"  
included

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# Computational Music Science

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# Flow, Gesture, and Spaces in Free Jazz

Towards a Theory of Collaboration

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Für Christina,  
die immer  
alles gibt

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## Preface

*Let's try to play the music and not the background.*  
Ornette Coleman, liner notes of the LP "Free Jazz" [20]

When I began to create a course on free jazz, the risk of such an enterprise was immediately apparent: I knew that Cecil Taylor had failed to teach such a matter, and that for other, more academic instructors, the topic was still a sort of outlandish adventure. To be clear, we are not talking about teaching improvisation here—a different, and also problematic, matter—rather, we wish to create a scholarly discourse about free jazz as a cultural achievement, and follow its genealogy from the American jazz tradition through its various outbranchings, such as the European and Japanese jazz conceptions and interpretations. We also wish to discuss some of the underlying mechanisms that are extant in free improvisation, things that could be called technical aspects. Such a discourse bears the flavor of a *contradicto in adjecto*: Teaching the unteachable, the very negation of rules, above all those posited by white jazz theorists, and talking about the making of sounds without aiming at so-called factual results and all those intellectual sedimentations: is this not a suicidal topic?

My own endeavors as a free jazz pianist have informed and advanced my conviction that this art has never been theorized in a satisfactory way, not even by Ekkehard Jost in his unequaled, phenomenologically precise pioneering book "Free Jazz" [57]. Many attempts to catch the phenomenon and its rationales have been absorbed by either political, sociological or personality issues, such as in Valerie Wilmer's brilliant treatises "As serious as your life" [110], Philippe Carles and Jean-Louis Comolli's radical sociological essay "Free Jazz Black Power" [13] or Meinrad Buholzer's personality story "Auf der Suche nach Cecil Taylor" [11]. Also most recent publications, such as Howard Mandel's "Miles, Ornette, Cecil" [64] or Phil Freeman's "New York is Now"

[36] show little if any progress in the comprehension of the phenomenon of free jazz.

We are still far from reaching an accord concerning the concept, definition and implications of what is meant by free jazz. Some call it “New Thing”, others prefer “Cosa Nova”, “Great Black Music”, “Out Music”, “Energy Music”, “Nouvelle Gauche” and so forth. The limitations of the concepts connected with such terminology rightly reflect the predominant lack of understanding of what is really happening when this radical method of creativity unfolds. I intentionally use the present tense and not the historical past tense, which refers to the first manifestations of this art in the early nineteen sixties. I do so, since it would not be sufficiently justified to write another book on the merely historical phenomenon of free jazz as it appeared in the context of those socio-political liberation movements.

My motivation for rethinking this art in fact transcends that historical context and elaborates on the art’s universal characteristics as an unprecedented collaborative endeavor that relativizes facticity—the paradigm of the ready-made objects (even in its most sophisticated form of Western cultural heritage) and the deeply engraved principles of an economy that is based upon the commercial exchange of factual objects. The question backing these perspectives is about values, about what makes a cultural achievement a valid thing, a truly human activity, and not just a placeholder for idle consumer transactions.

Free jazz, as a model for collaborative arts, with its momentum of flow in a specific gestural action space it populates, opens a new perspective that is now being addressed by creativity research, e.g. in Keith Sawyer’s concise book on Group Creativity, David Borgo’s work “Sync or Swarm: Improvising Music in a Complex Age” [9] on complex systems associated with free jazz, or Robert Hodson’s detailed account in “Interaction, Improvisation, and Interplay in Jazz” on the structural elements that differentiate free jazz improvisation from traditional jazz practice.

*Free jazz is therefore viewed and investigated as a unique example of collaborative behavior, leading to group creativity and collaborative flow, i.e., to characteristics of a groundbreaking direction of human performance, which is desperately needed in the arts, in management<sup>1</sup>, in computer programming and software design communities, and above all in the research culture. The latter is crucial with regard to interdisciplinary projects and organizations, since it is not possible to perform innovative interdisciplinary research without also changing the fundamentals of scientific behavior from individual and isolated working styles to intense exchange of data, ideas, and engagements.*

We are fully aware that our approach takes not only a musical perspective, but also a new theoretical position on the generic art of collaboration. In so doing, this book opens a discourse that involves cognitive, philosophical, mathematical or psychological threads that may not have been seen in

<sup>1</sup> See [43] for such an approach.

conjunction and may therefore provoke astonishment or even refusal. However, the students' positive response to the free jazz course, from which the present treatise is derived, proves that such a project may perfectly fit in the understanding of unconsumed and inquisitive minds. In this sense I also want to acknowledge the creative discourses, which my class has fostered, the creative experiments in free jazz class rehearsals, and the strong resonance I received from the workshop and CD recording session with the Tetrade group composed of the legendary and deeply grounding Sirone on bass, my long-year companion and omnidirectional percussionist Heinz Geisser, the electronically mazed sky-high trumpeter Jeff Kaiser, and me on grand piano. They have all made it possible to think about free jazz in a more complete way that transcends historical contingencies. The resulting CD "Liquid Bridges" has been included in this book as a proof of concept for the principles of flow, gesture, and collaborative spaces.

My acknowledgments go to my students of the free jazz course, who did contribute to this book by their strong interaction in class and so many inspiring thoughts and comments. I am grateful to one of my most talented and attentive students, Nathan Kennedy, who added a number of textual improvements. My deep gratitude goes to one of the students and now inspired coauthor of the book, Paul B. Cherlin, who is not only a distinguished free jazz drummer, but also carefully reviewed the entire text, added so many improvements and clarifications to my often arcane text, and has written the very last chapter: a young voice for the future. I am also very grateful to the truly encyclopedic jazz expert Mathias Rissi, my long-time musical companion and energetic saxophonist, who brought me back to jazz twenty years ago, who checked the names and dates of the jazz cats and recordings cited in this book, and who added some thoughtful comments, especially on the extension of instrumental techniques.

I am also grateful for a grant-in-aid support of the University of Minnesota, which enabled me to enrich the free jazz course by realistic artistic performances, and in particular to Michael Cherlin, the Founding Director of the University's Interdisciplinary Program in Collaborative Arts, who wisely encouraged me to embark in theoretical and practical aspects of this innovative program. Last but not least, I am pleased to acknowledge the strong and singular support in writing such an advanced treatise by Springer's Science Editor Stefan Goeller.

Minneapolis, August 2008

Guerino Mazzola



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## Part I

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### Getting off Ground

## What Is Free Jazz?

*Jazz is singularly unique in that  
the people who control it are  
thoroughly ignorant of it,  
know nothing about it.*  
Archie Shepp [91]

### 1.1 The Social, and Political, and Musical Origins of the Movement

Although many musical signs of change and progressive saturation of the bebop tradition had been around since the the nineteen-fifties, there is one single event, which can be coined the birthday of the social expression of the free jazz movement, namely the so-called “October revolution”, a concert series that took place during one week early October 1964 at the small Cellar Café in New York’s West Ninety-Sixth Street. The series was initiated by trumpeter, jazz pedagogue, art historian, and painter Bill Dixon.

For the first time a larger public could hear tenor saxophonists Archie Shepp, Albert Ayler, pianist, composer, and conductor Sun Ra, percussionist Milford Graves, and multi-instrumentalist Giuseppe Logan. Dixon had recently founded the *United Nations Jazz Society* and had worked with Shepp’s group *The New York Contemporary Five*. Following a discussion with free jazz pianist Cecil Taylor, he founded the *Jazz Composers Guild*, whose members included Dixon, Shepp, Taylor, pianists Paul and Carla Bley, composer Mike Mantler, alto saxophonist John Tchicai, Sun Ra, trombonist Roswell Rudd. He also founded a Composers Guild Orchestra that did four concerts on a weekly basis at the Contemporary Center near Village Vanguard in December 1964. The guild discussed ideas concerning collective musicians’ contracts, independent recording labels and jazz institutes.

Occasionally, Shepp negotiated with the Impulse label on an individual basis, in order to survive and to feed his four children. The Guild was furious,

and soon the entire initiative was buried (see Robert Lewin's article [62]). Sun Ra sarcastically commented on Carla Bley's membership by the old seamen's legend that "taking a woman on a voyage will sink the ship".

The political dimensions of the free jazz movement are described in detail by Philippe Carles and Jean-Louis Comolli [13]. As our focus is not on that historical aspect, we shortly summarize these aspects and refer the reader to loc. cit and also Wilmer's book. The situation with jazz in the early sixties was the impression that this music had been stolen from its mostly black creators by white companies, white intelligentsia, and white organizers. Shepp commented (interview in the DVD [96]) that "Jazz" had become a commercial brand like "Coca Cola". According to him, free jazz was also an attempt to liberate the music and its creative expression from packaged commercialism. In a *Down Beat* interview in 1965 [91], he argued that "jazz is one of the socially and esthetically most significant contributions of America. Some do accept it for what it is: A significant, deep contribution to America—it is against war; against Vietnam; for Cuba; for the liberation of the peoples of the world. This is the nature of jazz. Without having to search very far. Why? Because jazz is itself born from oppression, born from the subjugation of my people." The community of jazz musicians progressively felt miserable and exploited. Ornette Coleman sums this up with his comment [99]: "I am black and a jazzman. As a black and as a jazzman I feel miserable."

The political dimensions and interpretations of free jazz were however not homogeneous. Writer and poet LeRoi Jones, now aka Amiri Baraka, initiated an intellectual reshaping of the cultural theory of jazz within the framework of Black Studies at US universities, stressing the pride and beauty of the black, as described in his book *Blues People* [56], and then supported by Stokely Carmichael's cultural nationalism (his *United Brothers* in Newark). This cultural approach was relativized by the Black Panther Party in that the capitalist exploitation and colonization were understood as the underlying forces of the transformation of jazz into a commercial brand. Rather than Carmichael's slogan: "What counts in our struggle is the culture", the Black Panther Party would radically state that "the power is at the end of a sashiki" (sashiki is Swahili for a long African shirt).

This somewhat marxist perspective is also a point of view shared by Carles and Comolli [13] and argues that black mythology is insufficient to fight capitalist forces. They however also recognize the music-aesthetical revolution of free jazz. The tenor is that the whitened jazz tradition had been casted to typically II-V sequences of chord changes, the blues scheme of  $3 \times 4$  bars, or the  $4 \times 8$  bar song form: A, A, B(ridge), A, and defining standard forms of instrumentation and roles: a rhythm section (piano, bass, drums) comping the soloists' (saxes, trumpets, singers) virtuosic playing in a spirit that mixes the racist black clown caricature with the Western virtuosic (but also somehow clownish) tradition as created by Franz Liszt and Niccolò Paganini. The classical bebop recordings of Charlie Parker (alto sax), Miles Davis (trumpet), Tadd Dameron (piano), and Curley Russell (bass), Max Roach (drums) in 1945 are

excellent examples of such standardized and very short (typically two minutes) background jazz pieces performed by “tamed” black artists, also called “the black of the white”. The atmosphere created by the white aesthetic’s usurpation of jazz is symptomitized by Miles Davis’ 1972 comment to saxophonist Joe Henderson: “No more quarter notes, no more books, jazz. You are fired if you go on with jazz!”

Much more than the contemporary political drive of free jazz, a more universal and more powerful force turned out to nurture its enduring fascination. This impression is beautifully detailed in the still impressive documentary “Imagine the Sound” from 1981 [65], which features a series of performances and retrospective interviews with Taylor, Paul Bley, Dixon and Shepp. The documentary illuminates a multitude of new approaches concerning the deep significance that art has to life, a new way of listening to music, and the uncompromisingly non-commercial approach to creating music and the discovery of the body is at stake. Dixon puts it very markedly: “A jazz musician is a social category.” And Taylor adds: “Music is everything you do in your life.”

There are two exceptional documents that exhibit the influence that the “New Thing” had upon our notions of this thing called “jazz.” The famous *Down Beat* interview with John Coltrane and Eric Dolphy in 1962 [26], where they were asked about where they were heading with their new musical directions, had provoked a number of violent reactions among jazz critics and a thoroughly alienated audience. The second document is a dramatic live confrontation at the German TV, broadcasted in 1967 [37], between two saxophonists’ groups: Peter Brötzmann’s free jazz trio and Klaus Doldinger’s hard bop quartet, and a vehement discussion among six leading jazz critics and jazz producers. Both documents seemed to confirm the judgments of Carles and Comolli that free jazz was intolerable, did literally hurt. Critique had become irrelevant and out of use. The death of jazz was proclaimed (a remarkably recurrent theme). Both documents share the still ongoing and problematic struggle to define free jazz: It is mainly determined by what it is not, a type of “negative theology.” This is a heavy misconception since, as we shall see in the sequel of this book, it is very possible, and ultimately more useful, to characterize free jazz by what it positively *is*. The process of positively characterizing free jazz is still, admittedly, in a very germinal stage, and thus it is not surprising that a number of positive characterizations have emerged only in recent times.

That *Down Beat* interview with Coltrane and Dolphy took place shortly after the famous televised Baden-Baden concert in Germany of the Coltrane quintet (featuring Dolphy, pianist McCoy Tyner, Reggie Workman on bass, and Elvin Jones on drums) in December 1961. *Down Beat*’s associate editor John Tynan in November 1961 had reported “I listened to a horrifying demonstration of what appears to be a growing anti-jazz trend exemplified by those foremost proponents (Coltrane and Dolphy) of what is termed *avant garde* music. I heard a good rhythm section (...) go to waste behind the nihilistic exercises of the two horns. (...) Coltrane and Dolphy seem intent on delib-

erately destroying (swing). (...) They seem bent on pursuing an anarchistic course in their music that can but be termed anti-jazz.”

The thoroughly negative term “anti-jazz” was interiorized in Leonard Feather’s critical essays on the “New Thing”. As could be predicted, the passionate and evenly split reactions from readers to both Tynan’s and Feather’s judgments came immediately—the holy war was once again declared. In that interview, Coltrane was first confronted with a prototypical question: Why are the solos so extended, why is their playing so endless, without that standardized length as (implicitly presupposed) known from chorus routines? Isn’t there any editing, any discipline akin to the type of editing employed by writers, that aims to prevent musical redundancies and general boredom? Evidently these critics had never heard about the surrealist *écriture automatique*, and about Mallarmé’s *Le livre*, that impossible futuristic project of writing the book of books, which would encompass all possible variants of writing, and even less had they heard about the French *nouveau roman*, whose authors, Natalie Sarraute or Alain Robbe-Grillet had discovered the hypnotic force of a language that was just unfolding according to its own resonant dialectic. This was a literature without background function: It did not have to tell any story, any given narrative of the “real world”, but was just evolving according to its immanent needs and forces. Coltrane answered that question that these performances were long “because all the soloists try to explore all the avenues that the tune offers. They try to use all their resources in their solos. Everybody has quite a bit to work on. Like when I’m playing, there are certain things I try to get done and so does Eric and McCoy Tyner. By the time we finish, the song is spread out over a pretty long time.”

Dolphy responded in an equally unexpected way, when asked whether he was imitating birds in his improvisations: “At home I used to play, and the birds always used to whistle with me. I would stop what I was working on and play with the birds.” He did not care whether this was valid in jazz. He had learned to use quarter tones from the birds, he just went on into new sound spaces, whether jazz standards admitted it or not.

Coltrane concludes that interview with the remark “there are a lot of things we try now that we never tried before.” They were in fact opening huge spaces of sounds, textures, and existential dimensions never thought of before. It becomes evident here that the positive expansion was an artistic necessity that, at the same time, served as the only solution to an overly routinized dead-end of a commercial ready-made music.

The second key document testifying the difficulty to handle free jazz in a positive way is that German television broadcast with Brötzmann being catechized by jazz experts in a way which reminds us of an interrogation during the holy inquisition. Doldinger is the nice guy who defends the classical education, his playing Mozart and similar good old traditionals before embarking on a disciplined study of jazz. Then, there is Brötzmann, who had to respond to everything the judges objected to in his music, including their critique of his musical “butchery,” which struck the judges as a chaotic discourse similar to a



traffic jam, that had no objective status and no logic whatsoever. Brötzmann is completely open and as such is quite vulnerable: Asked about this system of making music, he answers that he is the system. Asked about whether he shouldn't try to first learn the techniques taught at the conservatory, he responds that he could do so, but only if needed. He obstinately negates the needs for these ready-made techniques, and criticizes standard jazz players like Doldinger in that they never thought about their role in society. He is asked to play a blues, but he refuses. Doldinger however, now getting visible angry, when asked to play some free jazz sounds, blows them from his horn, then switches to the piano, sweeps away a bunch of keyboard clusters, and then concludes that there is just no quality whatsoever behind that free jazz. Brötzmann was at least mature enough not to perform a similar parody of Doldinger's square and streamlined musical style, which he could have done.

These types of valuations demonstrate the problematic lack of a common language, and thus dialogue, between standard jazz and free jazz. Unfortunately, such deficits served to obscure the positive attributes of this new music. Three hundred years ago, such an attempt would have led the holy inquisition to have Brötzmann and his crew be burned at the stake.

## 1.2 A Provisional Positive Characterization

The dramatic truth of the preceding facts is that free jazz, and also the ongoing "new" free jazz, which is reported in Phil Freeman's book [36] or theorized in David Borgo's complex systematic approach [9], and which is also this book's author's musical life, is still not provided with a positive characterization. This is a poor service to the phenomenon since it not only stigmatizes its protagonists, it also hinders the access to those positive forces, which every free jazz musician is a living part of. We are now going to propose a provisional characterization of free jazz in terms of positive attributes. We do so with the full consciousness that this statement needs to be proved, to be filled with evidence in all the required details; this book is chiefly concerned with expounding these proofs. The book could effectively be viewed as an extended proof of the following "theorem":

**Theorem 1** *A provisional positive characterization of free jazz:*

- *Free jazz is that jazz, where the musicians take their full responsibility of what is being played.*
- *They do not delegate whatsoever to given templates and therefore also have to negotiate (while playing) with their fellow players every single item they bring into play.*
- *The musicians do not follow an a priori type of script; they generate the music as if partaking in a dynamic and sophisticated game.*
- *This game's rules are incessantly being generated and/or recycled: the musicians make them, bring them to birth and let them vanish.*

- *In such a game in the making, the performers are necessarily constantly shaping the body of musical time.*
- *If the game is successful, a new, specific, quality emerges: the flow of a distributed identity.*

According to this thesis, free jazz is not an art where “anything goes”; on the contrary, it has very severe criteria of quality, but they are categorically different from the traditional ones.

## Jazz in Transition

*All of a sudden it became obvious  
that the battlefronts had reversed themselves  
under the onslaught of Free Jazz:  
under the impact of this music  
even the most experimental serial,  
aleatoric and electronic works,  
now, belongs into the fixed world of the establishment.*

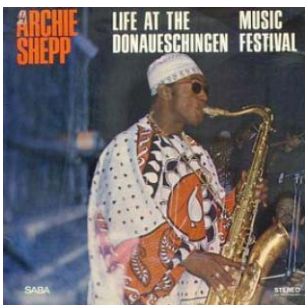
Joachim Ernst Berendt,  
liner notes to Archie Shepp's LP  
*Life at the Donaueschingen Music Festival* [92]

### 2.1 Archie Shepp's Outside Performance at the Donaueschingen Musiktage 1967

Archie Shepp's memorable three-hour concert on October 21, 1967, at the famous *Donaueschingen Musiktage* (released as LP [92], part I: 22:00, part II: 21:45 (figure 2.1) was entitled *One for the Trane*, referring to 'the father of them all' John Coltrane, who had passed away from liver cancer in July. Shepp's exquisite quintet featured trombonists Roswell Rudd and Grachan Moncur, Jimmy Garrison on bass, and drummer Beaver Harris. Shepp appeared in traditional African dress and provoked a thorough shock not only to the New Music establishment (as stated by the German Jazz expert Joachim Ernst Berendt—see our catchword above), but also to the festival organizer Heinrich Strobel.

The shock can easily be described and explained. This musically elite band transgressed such a huge space of music, after Garrison's typically flamenco-styled solo intro through Cuban rumba rhythms to a singularly melting interpretation of Jonny Mandel's standard "The Shadow of your smile", but always played from outside the traditions, namely dissolving these ready-made forms into wild and explosive free magma, unaccompanied reed

excursions and crashes of traded rhythmic walls. This “playing the tradition from outside” drove hundreds of square audience members crazy, to the extent that they actually left the concert hall. They returned only when the sublime explosions faded out and the band seamlessly transitioned into beautiful jazz traditions. This was the point of no return: Shepp proved that there is an infinite space outside those tiny bourgeois houses of predefined movements, of clichés and traffic rules. This was also what probably shocked many so-called avant-garde representatives: It was as if a huge volcano had opened its steaming throat and shown the abyss of never-imagined musical landscapes.



**Fig. 2.1.** Archie Shepp in Donaueschingen. © [113]

probably would have been less polite.” But the political aspect is not the essence of this new approach, it is more that Shepp had played the tradition from outside, demonstrating the light of a new universe. It is not by case that Krzysztof Penderecki, who had attended Alexander von Schlippenbach’s also free *Globe Unity Orchestra* performance at the same festival, was so overwhelmed that he asked to write a composition for *Globe Unity*.

Berendt closes his liner notes with this anecdote: “During the first Donaueschingen Musikfest in 1921, Richard Strauss approached Hindemith with a slight reproach: ‘Why do you compose atonally? You’ve got talent!’ Almost the same remark was made 46 years later by a Shepp shock victim: ‘Why does he have to play all that new stuff? He’s got all it takes to do anything that came before.’ Hindemith had this answer for his distinguished critic. ‘Herr Professor’, he said, ‘you go ahead and make your music, and I’ll do mine.’ In 1967, the year of the Newark riots, Archie Shepp’s reply to the above question

## 2.2 John Coltrane’s *A Love Supreme*—Opening the Modal Game

Three years before Shepp shocked his audience in Donaueschingen, on December 9, 1964, John Coltrane’s *A Love Supreme* recording [21] had set the endpoint to the modal approach to jazz improvisation profiled by Miles Davis [57], which had liberated the tonics from the major-minor tyranny. This recording was not free jazz in the sense of neglecting all rules of harmony, melody or rhythm, but it demonstrated the limits of these traditions and perhaps also first steps towards new freedoms, which were later made more explicit in Coltrane’s seminal *Ascension* [22].

We shall focus our discussion on those aspects of the composition, which point to new spaces, and which show where and how Coltrane’s concept was an endpoint of the modal tradition. For a thorough analysis of *A Love Supreme*, we refer to Lewis Porter’s brilliant essay [84]. The recording is with Coltrane’s

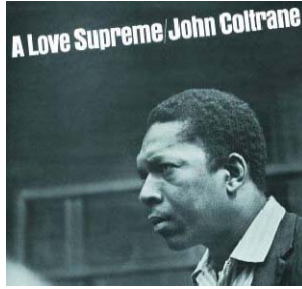
classical quartet: McCoy Tyner on piano, Jimmy Garrison on bass, and Elvin Jones on drums. The piece has four parts which are structured by four minor modes, as shown in the following table:

Part	Duration	Form	mode
Acknowledgment	7:43	prelude, free form, with song ending	<i>F</i> minor
Resolution	7:18	increasing tension, standard, 3 × 8 measures	<i>E<sub>b</sub></i> minor
Pursuance	10:43	fastest section, drum intro, 12 measure blues scheme	<i>B<sub>b</sub></i> minor
Psalm	7:03	postlude, free poetical form, bass intro	<i>C</i> minor

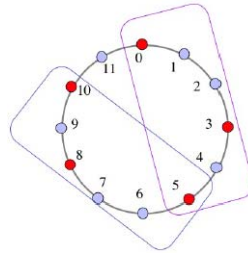
The scalar arrangement can be derived from the basic pentatonic cell  $P = \{5, 8, 10, 0, 3\}$  shown in figure 2.3 (as usual, pitch classes are encoded with  $c \sim 0, c_{\sharp} \sim 1$ , etc.). This cell is the union of two isomorphic three-element parts,  $M = \{5, 8, 10\}$  and its fifth transposition  $T^7M = \{0, 3, 5\}$ . The piece's basic motif  $B = f - a_b - f - b_b$  for the lyric "A-love-su-preme" is built from  $P$  as a succession of a minor third  $f, a_b$ , and the fourth  $f, b_b$ . It is remarkable that this pairing  $3 \mapsto 5$  is precisely the pairing of the consonance 3 with the dissonance 5 (!) under the autocomplementarity symmetry  $T^2 \cdot 5$  in the mathematical theory of counterpoint [69, chapter 30]. Coltrane could not have known this, but it remains an objective fact that he just relates the critical fourth dissonance with its corresponding consonance in this melodic unit.

When representing this pitch class set as a succession of fourth (under a fourth multiplication isomorphism  $T^t \cdot 5$ ), it appears as a chromatic set of five points. This set has three extensions to chromatic sets of seven tones as shown in the left part of figure 2.4. These three correspond to the diatonic scales of ionian (minor) modes at tonics  $f, b_b$ , and  $c$ . This yields three of the four modes englobing the composition's four parts. The *E<sub>b</sub>* minor scale of the second part (resolution) resolves the problem of completing the three scales to a symmetric configuration, as shown in the right part of figure 2.4.

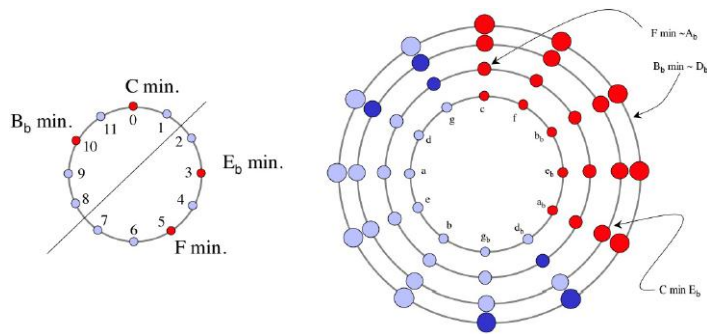
Also, Coltrane's introduction in the beginning of the first part shows a pregnant symmetry construction in that the pentatonic cell  $P$  with tonic  $f$  has a scale symmetry  $T^8 \cdot -1$  (inversion at e), whereas the material of his introduction is the pentatonic scale  $\{4, 6, 9, 11, 1\}$  with symmetry  $T^{10} \cdot -1$



**Fig. 2.2.** John Coltrane *A Love Supreme*. © [114]



**Fig. 2.3.** The pentatonic cell in *A Love Supreme* with its two shift-related three-element charts.



**Fig. 2.4.** Right: The three modes extending the pentatonic cell  $P$ , as shown in a fourth transformation. Left: The completion of the three scales by the fourth one ( $E_b$  minor) “resolves” the “symmetry problem” set up by first the three scales derived from the extension process.

(inversion at the former tonic  $f$ ) and tonic  $e$  (symmetry axis of the former scale). So tonics and symmetry axes ( $f, e$ ) of the basic scale are exchanged to ( $e, f$ ) for the intro scale.

All this looks like a delicate, not necessarily conscious game (this is the normal situation with ingenious compositions: the creative instinct may be guiding extraordinary and objectively traceable creations), with modal structures, and also a strategy of systematic extension of pentatonic cellular scales that are in turn generated from a motivic three-tone third-fourth cell to diatonic scales, yielding the variational sequence of extensions *germinal motif*  $\rightarrow$  *pentatonic scale(s)*  $\rightarrow$  *diatonic scales*.

If these constructions suggest that Coltrane is seeking extensions of known (modal) structures, the last section of the first movement (*Acknowledgment*) is a dramatic completion of this search for extension. It shows the dramatic reduction of the compositional display to the very kernel, namely the basic motif  $B$  associated with the three element part  $M$ . Coltrane now plays all twelve transpositions of  $B$  without any deeper strategy being visible (some sequences are related by fourth distances). The total of 28 variants of transposed motives is shown in figure 2.5.

This is not only a negative statement in that the basic harmonic framing by fourth or fifth successions is broken, but also a positive one, in that the basic motivic cell is an autonomous structural unit that need not be grounded in a global harmonic framework. It is a sort of demonstration that music can also be created without terrestrial harmonic gravitation, music of space that uniquely relies on an autonomous motivic cell. We shall see in the discussion of Ornette Coleman’s *Free Jazz* recording that this motivic perspective is an important germ for the development of the gestural aspect of free jazz.

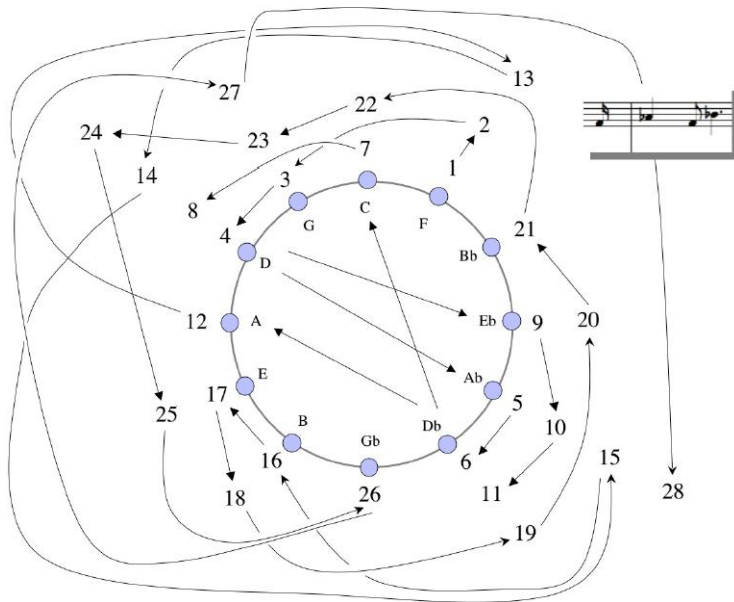


Fig. 2.5. The path of 28 transpositions of the motivic cell *B*.

### 2.3 Cecil Taylor and Buell Neidlinger: *The Complete Candid Recordings*—Conflicting Time

These recordings at Nola's Penthouse Sound Studio in New York City took place on October 12, 13, 1960, and on January 9, 10, 1961 and features Cecil Taylor, Archie Shepp, Buell Neidlinger on bass, and Denis Charles on drums (see figure 2.6). They are available on four CDs [102]. According to Nat Hentoff's liner notes, he had met Taylor and became familiar with his innovative ideas about the dimensions of time while being a student of the New England Conservatory in 1951. During a singular seven-week gig at New York's Five Spot in 1957, Taylor was already so advanced that musicians hearing him left disturbed, and Taylor was forced to work day jobs as short-order cook or dishwasher. He then had to practice alone and create a virtual audience. Later, he stressed the importance of communicating with oneself, but it must have been during these hard times that he invented and developed that attitude: "I have to believe I'm communicating to somebody, I have to keep contact going." This attitude however



Fig. 2.6. Cecil Taylor's group of *The Complete Candid Recordings*. © [115]

was essential, as Hentoff adds Taylor's conclusion: "Obviously, music saved my life."

Out of this historically precious collection, we want to consider take 28, the second of three consecutive takes of Taylor's composition "Air." This take captures and showcases the imminent dissolution of four-bar-oriented time frames. After a 20-second metrically disciplined drum intro, Taylor's one-minute solo intro breaks all bar-oriented metrical regularities, presenting bursts of rhythmical taaah-taah-ta-ta units alternating with lyrical, non-metrical time shards (we learned this beautiful wording from Michael Cherlin's inspiring book [17]). Taylor's innovative approach to time and composition struck the traditional landscape of jazz with the power and impetuosity of a meteor. It is followed by the full group's traditional play, having Shepp quoting Escamillo's aria from *Carmen*, Neidlinger walking, and Charles keeping the four-four timing. Taylor is inserting himself in a charmingly traditional comping style. At minute 3:16, Taylor follows Shepp's solo with a then already intriguing technique of extremely fast melodic threads, here and there interrupted by those dissonant chord clusters, which later were developed to the famous two-handed high-speed sequences of typically 10 hits per second. Although these garlands fit in the bar frame defined by Charles, one senses the deep contradiction between the tayloresque gestures and the rigid time frames of the jazz tradition.

Taylor is contained by his group's traditional approach as a dancer would be contained by chains in a tiny prison. At minute 6:02 the dialog between the piano and drums initiates a musical call-and-response sequence where the musicians trade four-bar units. This sequence is highly musical, but nevertheless leaves one with the impression that implicit in Taylor's responses is the sentiment "Look, this is how I would answer you if I were one of your species." In turn, the answers of Charles are somehow funny transfigurations of Taylor's far-ahead shapes back into the dominant drum language of metrically subdivided, but still entirely framed sets of gestures. The piece soon fades out, one hears Taylor saying "all right... one more for me" at the end of the piece (minute 8:30). He would have needed not one more piece, but other time sculptors: the drummers Sunny Murray or Andrew Cyrille. We will return later to the subject of overhauling the shaping of time and bar structure.

## 2.4 Bill Evans: Gestural Dialogs with Scott LaFaro in *Autumn Leaves*

Pianist Bill Evans, the "Chopin of jazz piano", was not only an extremely intelligent creator of seamless harmonic transitions (quite the opposite of the not less intelligent Thelonious Monk), but also a dialogical improviser of supreme sensitivity. His duo recordings with guitarist Jim Hall, specifically *Undercurrent* and *Intermodulation*, showcase one of the finest jazz dialogs on



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