

Ornette Coleman and Harmolodics

by

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ABSTRACT

Ornette Coleman stands as one of the most significant innovators in jazz history. The purpose of my thesis is to show where his innovations came from, how his music functions, and how it impacted other innovators around him. I also delved into the more controversial aspects of his music. At the core of his process was a very personal philosophical and musical theory he invented which he called Harmolodics. Harmolodics was derived from the music of Charlie Parker and Coleman's need to challenge conventional Western music theory in pursuit of providing direct links between music, nature, and humanity. To build a foundation I research Coleman's development prior to his famous debut at the Five Spot, focusing on evidence of a direct connection to Charlie Parker. I examine his use of instruments he played other than his primary use of the alto saxophone. His relationships with the piano, guitar, and the musicians that played them are then examined. I then research his use of the bass and drums, and the musicians that played them, so vital to his music. I follow with documentation of the string quartets, woodwind ensembles, and symphonic work, much of which was never recorded. I conclude with an examination of Coleman's impact on other masters and a discussion of Harmolodics itself, followed by musical analysis.

Having studied with Coleman personally, I hope to bring some clarity to the actual function of his music. I have interviewed Dave Bryant, Denardo Coleman,

and Kenny Wessel. In addition, for five years, I was in the band of guitarist Bern Nix (1947-2017) who played with Coleman from 1975-1987. Though a formal interview with Nix was scheduled before his death in 2017, I had discussed Coleman with Nix many times. My musical analysis includes investigation of Coleman's composition titled "Kathelin Gray," and in Section 1 part 3, my analysis of his improvisation on a Charlie Parker piece titled "Klactoveedsedstene." I hope to show that Coleman's music, while radical at the time, was steeped in a unique logic with the goal of opening doors to deeper levels of human expression, inside the context of seeking a deeper understanding of humanity overall

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Photographer John Rogers introduced me to Ornette Coleman in 2005 and my first acknowledgement must go to him. Like many others, I was instantly diagnosed upon my arrival as someone who would benefit from Harmolodics. I have been using Coleman's tools ever since. The late Bern Nix was essential to this process. Through countless hours of playing, Nix allowed me a safe space to develop my playing through actual Harmolodic practice, and I will forever be indebted to him. Coleman's son Denardo was especially generous, granting me an extensive interview. Prime Time members David Bryant and Kenny Wessel were willing to take me deeper inside Coleman's process. I would like to thank Dr. Henry Martin and Dr. Lewis Porter at Rutgers University for their openness to my researching what many consider an abstract concept, and their aid in deciphering the truth. As Coleman would say, "They're on the case." Finally, I must thank Ornette himself for having such an open door, an open mind, and an open heart. The greatest gift he gave me and so many others is a pathway to our own music.

CONTENTS

Abstract	ii
Acknowledgements.....	iv
SECTION I: BACKGROUND	1
1. The Environment	1
2. Red Connors	10
3. Ornette and Charlie Parker	15
SECTION II: ORNETTE CREATES	28
4. Tenor.....	28
5. Trumpet	35
6. Violin	50
7. Piano	57
8. Guitar	71
9. Bass	84
10. Drums.....	104
11. Chamber and Orchestral Works	116
SECTION III: THEORY	127
12. Other Masters.....	127
13. Harmolodics.....	139

SECTION V: INTERVIEWS-----	150
14. Denardo Coleman -----	150
15: Kenny Wessel -----	177
Transcriptions and Analysis-----	187
16. Kathelin Gray -----	187
Kathelin Gray Lead Sheet from Coleman from David Bryant -----	192
Kathelin Gray A -----	193
Kathelin Gray B -----	194
Kathelin Gray C -----	195
Kathelin Gray D -----	196
Klactoveedsedstene-----	197
Bibliography-----	206
Jazzinstitut Darmstadt Bibliography-----	217
Discography: Commercial Albums -----	279

SECTION I: BACKGROUND

1. The Environment

"You can transcribe a solo, but you can't transcribe an environment." -Ornette Coleman

Ornette Coleman was born at 5am in Fort Worth, Texas at on March 9th, 1930.¹ He was one of four children. Allen Coleman died in the 1940's, and Vera Coleman was killed by a cattle truck when she was seventeen. Truvenza Coleman, also known as Trudy, was a trombonist, vocalist, and sometimes manager for Coleman's earliest jobs in music, such as his first band the Jam Jivers, or backing up the great blues singer Joe Turner for several months when he came through Fort Worth.² She recorded, and one song is available to be heard online today, "Come home, baby," released on the Manco label in 1962 as a 45.³ Coleman's parents were Rosa Rhodes, a seamstress, and Randolph, a mechanic.⁴ Coleman was close to his mother and he respected her perspectives on life. In his earliest days he was supporting the family playing rhythm and blues, but he became unhinged at

¹ Taylor, Art. *Notes and Tones: Musician-to-musician Interviews*. New York: Da Capo Press, 1993. 347.

² Litweiler, John. *Ornette Coleman: A Harmolodic Life*. New York: Da Capo Press, 1994. 21.

³ Glendoras. "Trudy Coleman - Come Home, Baby." YouTube. January 22, 2015. Accessed September 24, 2018. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8rNla9Jo-vk&t=2s>.

⁴ Spellman, A. B. *Four Lives in the Bebop Business*. New York: Limelight Editions, 1994. 83.

the violence he encountered in the clubs. He came home and told his mother that he thought that his music was influencing violence and she responded, “You want these people to pay you for your soul?”⁵ Coleman grew up during this moment and told the story throughout his life. Another story he told was that as a child he was always telling his mother who he was, telling her “I’m Ornette.” She told him that he didn’t have to worry, she knew who he was. She heard his music in the sixties, but it remains unclear what her personal thoughts were about it. Not much is known about Randolph Coleman. Ornette saw a picture of him playing baseball. Rosa said that Randolph could sing and did so around Fort Worth.⁶ Coleman didn’t sing like his father and sister, but he did possess a very vocal sound on alto. Coleman also had a cousin named James Jordan, that he called Jordan. After Coleman died, Jordan wrote about their earliest days together learning saxophone in the first grade. Even then, Coleman felt a strong enough attraction to the horn that he would practice constantly, asking Jordan to practice with him twice in one day. Truvenza gave them a room to play and when it was late, Coleman would wait until the nearby train came through town that would drown out the saxophone. Coleman would be practicing past midnight on a regular basis. By the time he and Jordan left the fifth grade, they were playing as well as the kids in high school. There they formed a band with a trumpet player and a drummer and got work,

⁵ Litweiler, *A Harmolodic Life*, 32.

⁶ Spellman, *Four Lives in the Bebop Business*, 32.

earning money. According to Jordan, Coleman already had, and was developing his own approach to music. In the sixties, Jordan left Texas to be Coleman's manager and during his six years he produced *Skies of America*.⁷ Denardo Coleman, Coleman's son born in 1956 is featured in an interview with the author later in the thesis.

The environment Coleman grew up in was very poor and segregated. He spoke of two experiences with white people that defined the times. On one occasion around 1948, playing in a white establishment lead by his mentor Red Connors, a white patron told him: "It's an honor to shake your hand because you're really a great saxophone player-but you're still a nigger to me." Coleman was forced to remain silent in the exchange, for fear of his life. In a second life threatening incident, a white woman cornered him in the kitchen during an intermission and raised her dress above her head. If a white man were to see them, once again the penalty could have been death.⁸ Coleman experienced the deepest levels of racism when he joined a minstrel troupe in 1949 called "Silas Green from New Orleans." Coleman toured the deep south with what he described as Uncle-Tom type minstrels playing tunes such as "Nacky Sacky." He was fired for teaching

⁷ Coleman, Ornette, performer. *Celebrate Ornette*. Recorded 2016. Denardo Coleman, 2016, Vinyl recording.

⁸ Spellman, A. B., *Four Lives in the Bebop Business*, 94.

the other tenor saxophone player bebop.⁹ Coleman spoke openly about the reality of his environment.

People in Texas, they're so wealthy, it's still like slavery. You had to be a servant. You had to be serving somebody to make some money. When I finished high school, all the kids I knew who'd been to college and came back, they had porter jobs. What's the reason of going to college? That's the reason I didn't go. You got to try and get a job in the colored school system, or that's it. People been teaching there for fifty years, you have to wait for them to die. I didn't come a poor family, I came from a *po'* family. Poorer than poor.¹⁰

After being fired by Green in Natchez Mississippi, Coleman was able to join blues singer Clarence Samuels who needed a tenor player. On a tour of the deep south during autumn of 1949 in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, he had an experience that most musicians never have, the kind of experience that would make most people give up playing music. At a dancehall with a tough crowd, he played some of his own ideas during a blues solo, which stopped the dance. After he was tricked to step outside by a woman, a group of six or seven men delivered a severe beating to Coleman and destroyed his horn. It was so severe that Coleman said they were beating him to death, adding that at the police station afterwards the police told

⁹ Ibid. 95.

¹⁰ Goldberg, Joe. *Jazz Masters of the Fifties*. New York (N.Y.): Da Capo Press, 1983. 233.

him that “if those other niggers didn’t finish him off, they were going to.”¹¹

Coleman had additional experiences with the police, being jailed for having long hair.¹² In Los Angeles he would be stopped by cops in white neighborhoods and told to assemble his horn and play it to prove he was a musician.¹³ He recorded a song called “Police People” on the album *Song X* in 1986, but ironically the song swings with a country type positive feeling, feeding off the syncopation provided by Charlie Haden on bass.

After the beating, Coleman ended up in New Orleans playing with his friend, trumpet player Melvin Lastie. He received a draft notice but was rejected due to a collar-bone injury that didn’t heal right. This old injury saved him from him from the Korean War, which could have prevented his eventual innovations in jazz from ever taking place.¹⁴ Coleman headed back to Fort Worth around this time in the mid 1950’s. Red Connors then hired Coleman to head to Los Angeles with bluesman Pee Wee Crayton. Crayton dispelled the myth that he paid Coleman not to play, insisting that Coleman was a great blues player, and he insisted he play blues, as that’s what he was hired to do. After the band broke up,

¹¹ Berry, Jason, Jonathan Foose, and Tad Jones. *Up from the Cradle of Jazz: New Orleans Music since World War II*. Lafayette: University of Louisiana at Lafayette Press, 2009.

¹² Litweiler, *A Harmolodic Life*, 42.

¹³ Ibid. 45.

¹⁴ Ibid. 29.

Coleman lived in a skid-row hotel called the Morris.¹⁵ Coleman met drummer Ed Blackwell and they starved together, surviving on canned food sent from Rosa in Fort Worth. A low moment for Coleman occurred when Rosa sent him a birthday cake and the other musicians at the Morris not only seized it, they consumed it while Coleman was forced to watch.¹⁶ Coleman ended up renting out the back part of a garage with no heat in exchange for taking care of kids at a nursery. After he wired her for help, Rosa sent him money to return to Fort Worth where he would rejoin Red Connors for the last time. In 1953 Coleman and Blackwell teamed up against poverty again and gave Los Angeles another chance, finding a house in Watts. The key word of this period for Coleman was *rejection*. He and Blackwell couldn't find paying work. Dexter Gordon ordered him off stage when he started playing with his rhythm section when he was late. Coleman went to a jam session at Eric Dolphy's house with Clifford Brown, the same age as Coleman. Coleman threw them off by playing "Donna Lee" but then soloing without the chord changes. Coleman had by this point started believing in his own approach. Dolphy didn't know how to respond to Coleman at first, as they were all studying bebop.¹⁷ Roach and Brown disrespected him further by letting him sit in at a jam session last, then leaving the club when he started playing. The rhythm section then left

¹⁵ Ibid. 42.

¹⁶ Ibid. 42.

¹⁷ Feather, Leonard. "Interview Ornette Coleman." *Downbeat*, July 1981, pp. 16–93.

the stand offering a final humiliation.¹⁸ It would not be the last time Roach would react to Coleman in a negative way.

Coleman did make attempts to make sense of his outsider relationship with the world. He married Jayne Cortez, and they had a son, Denardo Coleman. Cortez was a poet who like Coleman, made her own clothes. After Denardo was born, Ornette was baptized as a Jehovah Witnesses. (He had been baptized as Methodist in his childhood) Coleman resonated with some of their beliefs, such as that no person shall do what they don't want to do forever. The strength of the religion was soon shattered when he was told to go to a colored Jehovah Witness Hall. He was quoted on this experience saying, "I found out that the church needs God just like the people."¹⁹ He stayed with them until he had the fascinating experience of going door to door with the Bible, and when the person opened the door, they were playing one of his records. In that moment, his music became his religion, for better or for worse.²⁰ During this period Coleman famously took a job as an elevator operator at Bullock's department store for two and half years where he could secretly study music theory when there were no riders.²¹ By mid-1958, Cortez and Coleman were separated. Coleman told Nat Hentoff that Cortez told him that

¹⁸ Litweiler, *A Harmolodic Life*, 46.

¹⁹ Ibid. 51.

²⁰ Ulmer, James Blood. *Celebrate Ornette*. Recorded 2016. Vinyl recording.

²¹ Litweiler, *A Harmolodic Life*, 51.

people were saying he was crazy, and it sounded like she might think they were right.²² After recording two albums for Atlantic that would become future classics, *The Shape of Jazz to come* in May 1959 and *Change of the Century* in October 1959, Coleman received an advance from Atlantic and also borrowed money from his loyal bandmates at the time, Don Cherry, Charlie Haden, and Billy Higgins, and made the move to New York City for his legendary debut at the Five Spot where he was heralded as both a genius and a charlatan. After four more albums for Atlantic that would be future classics, *This Is Our Music* in July 1960, *Free Jazz* in December 1960, *Ornette!* in January 1961 and *Ornette On Tenor* in March 1961, Coleman chose to stop performing, at odds with the business side of jazz.²³ In February 1963, on a continued self-imposed exile, he was evicted from his apartment. All of his meager possessions, even horns, were not only placed on the street but were removed by the department of sanitation. He slept in a friend's pottery studio at night and roamed art museums by day. In 1964 he got by the entire year on five hundred dollars, working on a book explaining his music and learning the violin with one he acquired from a pawn shop for fifteen dollars. He referred to this two-year period as "hard and hungry." In an article in Time magazine in January 1965 he spoke about the eviction and added: "There's a lot of insanity in loneliness. I've got to get sane again. If you mop your wounds, it takes away from the depth of your

²² Ibid. 60.

²³ Ibid. 99.

playing.”²⁴ Coleman did eventually find some stability, receiving a Guggenheim fellowship.²⁵ The blues come from life experience, and Coleman spent the formative years of his life on an intimate basis with them. When you’re so broke that you can’t eat, the experience makes an imprint on your soul that never really leaves. Louis Armstrong never forgot about pushing his coal cart all day long and going through the trash for food in his early days in New Orleans. Coleman never forgot the environment of starving, racism, eviction, violence, and widescale rejection of his music. He survived it all on his quest to become himself.

²⁴ "Back from Exile." *Time*, January 22, 1965, 43. Author unknown

²⁵ Litweiler, *A Harmolodic Life*, 123.

2. Red Connors

The tradition of mentorship in jazz was still very much in place in the 1940's, even for an iconoclast like Coleman. By his own accounts, while he had a different way to relate to music seemingly from his very first notes on alto, he still had a lot to learn about music in his early days. While working as a rhythm and blues tenor saxophonist, and having been not yet been exposed to jazz, he was still a serious student, listing several players he studied to John Litweiler.²⁶ Bobby Bradford witnessed Coleman playing Rhythm and Blues tenor and said he was screaming and lying on his back, as was the standard practice.²⁷ Coleman listened to Lynn Hope who played blues for dancing with titles like "Shocking." On this number, Hope plays the traditional fat low Bb honks bouncing to escalatory extreme high register screams that are the trademarks of the rhythm and blues tenor saxophone style.²⁸ Hope also scored a hit with "Tenderly" in 1950 playing the melody straight, with no improvisation, but a huge sound.²⁹ Arnett Cobb was more

²⁶ Litweiler, *A Harmolodic Life*, 31.

²⁷ Ibid. 44.

²⁸ Paultunesmarsh. "Lynn Hope Shocking." YouTube. February 10, 2013. Accessed October 06, 2018. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pcJNjyXnQg>.

²⁹ RAJintheUK. "Lynn Hope Quintet Tenderly 1950." YouTube. July 02, 2012. Accessed October 06, 2018. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X3NcArw6VjY>.

into improvisation inside of a blues context. In 1947 his “Arnett blows for 1300”³⁰ is a good example of music that contains a similar drive to Coleman’s music in the early 50’s at times, as well as a good example of why Cobb was known as the Wild Man of the Tenor Sax. Big Jay McNeely impressed Coleman with the power of one-note riffing and crowd pleasing techniques such as heard on “Nervous Man Nervous” in 1953.³¹ The whole rhythm and blues tenor saxophone style had been created by Illinois Jacquet when he was nineteen in Lionel Hampton’s band, and brought the house down with his solo on “Flying Home,” the first time anyone had honked on record.³² Coleman was making good money for his family playing this style and backing up lots of blues singers when he started to spend time with a tenor and alto man based in Fort Worth named Red Connors. Throughout his life he referred to Connors as a pivotal influence.

Coleman told Art Taylor in the later part of the 1960’s that he first heard Red Connors in 1943, before bebop, when he was thirteen. Why he was called Red remains unknown. I could not locate any pictures or recordings of Connors. Coleman spoke about him with a reverence, calling him the greatest sax player he ever heard in his life. At Connors house the usual method was Connors playing

³⁰ OnlyJazzHQ. "Arnett Cobb - Arnett Blows for 1300." YouTube. January 04, 2013. Accessed October 06, 2018. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Wxyltz5Hwk>.

³¹ "Big Jay McNeely - Nervous Man Nervous - Federal 1953." YouTube. August 02, 2015. Accessed October 06, 2018. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rlrFy6epHTs>.

³² Biography of Illinois Jacquet. Accessed October 06, 2018. https://illinoisjacquetfoundation.org/ijf_biography/.

bop records for Coleman stressing the serious nature of the music as a path away from rock and roll.³³ Coleman was quoted in *Esquire* saying Connors was Sonny Rollins before Sonny Rollins. He added that Connors came from a holy church, and when he went to visit him at his house that became *his* church.³⁴ Coleman went further in deepening the legend, telling A.B. Spellman that Connors was playing was like 1960's Coltrane, but in a gutbucket style.³⁵ Even further, Coleman witnessed what he believed was Connors cutting Lester Young. While passing through Fort Worth, Young encountered Connors on jam session, and instead of constructing ideas on a blues, Young chose to play the same note for forty or fifty bars, and Connors destroyed him.³⁶ Connors may have been local but was known to consume stars. King Curtis, on his way to becoming very popular had reason to fear Connors. Connors would tell him to get off the bandstand, as the heavy guys were coming on.³⁷ Two of Coleman's friends in Fort Worth continued the accolades for Connors. Saxophonist Prince Lasha called him the greatest inspiration in the Southwest. Saxophonist Dewey Redman furthered the Coltrane

³³ Taylor, *Notes and Tones*, 349.

³⁴ Warren, Mark. "Ornette Coleman: What I've Learned." *Esquire*. October 09, 2017. Accessed October 09, 2018. <https://www.esquire.com/entertainment/interviews/a67666/ornette-coleman-interview-0110/>.

³⁵ Spellman, *Four Lives in the Bebop Business*, 90.

³⁶ *Ibid.* 91.

³⁷ Wilmer, Valerie. *As Serious as Your Life: John Coltrane and beyond*. London: Serpents Tail, 1992.

comparison calling him the John Coltrane of the time. Redman described his tone as a Gene Ammons, Wardell Gray, Dexter Gordon type sound. Drummer Charles Moffett played trumpet with Connors. Coleman also mentions a saxophonist named Weldon Haggen that he heard who he believed to be Red's mentor.³⁸

What happened between Coleman and Connors? It seems that this was a rare occasion in Coleman's early days where he was supported by an older musician. Connors was four or five years older than him. When they met, bebop was just becoming popular, and Connors often worked with a band geared towards white audiences. In time, Connors developed a strong bebop fluency and repertoire and introduced Coleman to the music. Coleman said Connors book had every bebop song recorded between 1943-1950, and whenever possible he played with him. Connors was also the first musician to get Coleman to consider the legitimacy of writing music down.³⁹ One of Coleman and Connors meeting places to work on bebop and tenor playing was a jam session held at the Jim Hotel and whorehouse in Fort Worth. It was during a job with Connors playing "Stardust" for a white audience that Coleman had a breakthrough moment, not unlike the one Charlie Parker had, with however, a far different result.⁴⁰

³⁸ Litweiler, *A Harmolodic Life*, 27.

³⁹ Spellman, *Four Lives in the Bebop Business*, 90.

⁴⁰ "His Blues to Be Somebody: Charlie Parker's Early Years." The Critical Flame. January 19, 2014. Accessed March 12, 2019. <http://criticalflame.org/his-blues-to-be-somebody-charlie-parkers-early-years/>.

In that situation, it's like having to know the results of all the changes before you even play them, compacting them all in your mind. So, once I did that, I just literally removed it all and just played.⁴¹

Seventeen-year-old Coleman was fired by the venue for having this experience, despite pleas of "Give em' vanilla!" The dance stopped as people were drawn to listen instead. Connors did not fire Coleman, who continued to work with him whenever possible, through all of 1949. Connors hired Coleman in 1950 as previously mentioned when Bluesman Pee Wee Crayton needed an alto player for a pickup band. After struggling in Los Angeles, Coleman ended up back in Fort Worth where he would play with Connors for the last time. What happened to Red Connors after this period remains unknown, as he joins the ranks of the greats whose sound we may never hear such as Buddy Bolden.

⁴¹ Litweiler, *A Harmolodic Life*, 33.

3. Ornette and Charlie Parker

Charlie Parker and Ornette Coleman will forever be linked in the history of jazz. Parker as the progenitor and architect of bebop and modern jazz, as well as being the consummate master at improvising within the idiom he co-created. Coleman as the man who invented a pathway away from Parker's evolution, that has been accepted as either the final step in jazz where the music became itself, versus the heretical work of a charlatan not to be taken seriously. Today in 2019, Coleman has been accepted and even presented as the "proper Avant-Garde," or in other words, he has been given permission to be a part of jazz history by the establishment attempting to define and own the narrative of jazz history. At the start of a tribute to Coleman at Lincoln Center, saxophonist and arranger Ted Nash called Coleman "both primitive and sophisticated." Wynton Marsalis sanctioned Coleman by saying that his improvisations were based on the blues and is quick to mention that his father Ellis played with Coleman. When Coleman was asked by Nash what he thought of the Jazz at Lincoln Center arrangements of his music he responded, "You can transcribe a solo, but you can't transcribe an environment."⁴² The deeper reality is that Coleman's music began with a

⁴² As told to the author

foundation based on bebop methodology. Coleman revered Parker and told me himself that before he could invent Harmolodics, he had to master Parker's music.

The first place to look at the connection between Parker and Coleman is through their compositional practices. On Coleman's first record *Something Else*, a cautious debut tempered by working with two musicians grounded in tradition, Walter Norris on piano and Don Payne on bass, he played an original composition titled "Jayne," that is a contrafact of the standard "Out Of Nowhere." In the liner notes Coleman told Nat Hentoff that he felt that Charlie Parker had the best diatonic ear in jazz, and Thelonious Monk had the most complete harmonic ear. Coleman may have been referring to Parker's ability to improvise melodically and his uncanny ability to always play notes from the chord at the perfect time and place, even at fast tempos. "Out Of Nowhere" was written by Johnny Green and recorded by Bing Crosby in 1931, and the harmonic progression was popular with jazz musicians such as Fats Navarro and Gigi Gryce. "Jayne" has the same thirty-two bar structure and key as "Out Of Nowhere," as well as the same key, G Major. Coleman switches between eight bars of Latin and Swing with a syncopated, bebop type melody. The piece was a portrait and dedication to Coleman's wife Jayne Cortez and was written five or six years before the recording. Charlie Parker recorded "Out Of Nowhere" in November of 1947 for Dial records as a ballad. Parker briefly engages the melody while focusing on incredible double time runs in one full chorus, before young Miles Davis plays a chorus using the cup mute. Parker gently improvises on the melody on the final eight bars and they end with

Davis holding the note A a minor third above an F-Sharp held out by Parker. The use of a minor third between an alto and trumpet is something Coleman was interested in. On “Jayne,” Walter Norris and Don Payne make some alterations of the original changes that work better with Coleman’s melody. In measure 3 Bb 7 becomes a D7 flat 9 over G to accommodate the melody. In measure seven B-7 becomes Ab major 7 flat 5, though the B-7 would have worked. In measures 13-16 and 24-29 additional chords are added that are implied by the melodic line. During Coleman’s solo on “Jayne” it is clear that he was both aware of the changes and used them as the underlying foundation of his solo.

Compositionally both Parker and Coleman were fond of using the blues form. They were both adept at writing and soloing on music that stemmed from the blues. In Dr. Henry Martin’s forthcoming book on the compositions of Charlie Parker he has identified that, including unrecorded pieces, forty-nine of Parker’s eighty-four pieces were blues, a staggering amount of fifty-eight percent! Dr. Lewis Porter has identified sixteen pieces that Coleman recorded that contain what he called blues Connotations, which in fact is the title of one of Coleman’s greatest recorded blues compositions and solos. Parker could play blues from virtually every perspective. From the slow “Funky Blues” where he follows a Johnny Hodges solo with folk-like preacher blues that morph into classic Parker double time but still with blues expression, to “Blues for Alice” where despite all the substitute chords he retains the blues feeling. Folk like preacher blues expression is a trademark that seems to seep into all of Coleman’s music. Porter has identified

several instances that bear out the Parker-Coleman connection. At a Carnegie Hall concert in 1947, on the last A section of Parker's first chorus of "A Night In Tunisia," Parker releases what could be a Coleman field cry on alto saxophone. Coleman plays a Parker-like solo on "When Will The Blues Leave?" from his first recording *Something Else* without playing any Parker licks. On "Giggin" from Coleman's recording *Tomorrow Is The Question!* Coleman begins the third chorus with a direct Parker line played through the Coleman lens. Coleman would eventually move past Parker's influence where he would climb into raw vocal blues expression such as what we hear on his tune "Ramblin" and the fore mentioned "Blues Connotations."⁴³

In early 1958, Coleman was captured live at the Hillcrest Club in October of 1958 before he recorded *Tomorrow Is the Question* in early 1959. At the Hillcrest, Billy Higgins on drums and Don Cherry on pocket trumpet were present from the first Contemporary session, though Charlie Haden wouldn't formally record with Coleman playing bass until *Shape of Jazz to Come*, recorded in May of 1959 on Atlantic in Hollywood. Of important significance at the Hillcrest, is the presence of pianist Paul Bley. According to the Tom Lord Jazz Discography, the Hillcrest recording was even issued at one point as the *The Fabulous Paul Bley Quintet.*" At

⁴³ Porter, Lewis. "The "Blues Connotation" In Ornette Coleman's Music - And Some General Thoughts On The Relation Of Blues To Jazz." *Annual Review Of Jazz Studies* 1994-95 7 (March 01, 1996): 75-97.

the Hillcrest Coleman played a standard recorded by Parker, “How Deep Is The Ocean,” composed by Irving Berlin, as well as a Parker original mysteriously titled “Klactoveedsedstene.”

On “How Deep Is The Ocean” Coleman does not solo, as the piece features Don Cherry, but he does write an introduction as Parker was known to do such as the famous beginning to Parker’s “Ko-Ko.” Parker recorded “How Deep Is The Ocean” for Dial records in 1947 on December 17th with the classic quintet of Miles Davis, Duke Jordan on piano, Tommy Potter on bass, with the addition of J.J. Johnson on trombone. Parker plays the piece as a ballad and virtually ignores the melody. Coleman’s introduction is approximately ten bars. Although “How Deep Is The Ocean” was written in Eb major and shifts between different major and minor centers, Coleman’s introduction is mostly in F Melodic minor. The focus is a dramatic use of an ascending flat five that occurs twice at the end of a phrase in measures three and eight. I once walked in on Coleman composing at a desk with only a piece of paper and a pencil, dressed like he was going to perform. He was surprised to see me and declared “Start on the flat five!”

Charlie Parker recorded “Embraceable You” by George Gershwin again in 1947 for Dial with the classic quintet. In his famous version, he improvises straight though one chorus before handing it over to Miles Davis with the cup mute. In a three-bar arranged ending Parker harmonizes a reference to the melody with he and Davis playing apart by major and minor thirds and ending on a sustained minor third of E and G. Coleman recorded “Embraceable You” in 1960 for Atlantic

on the album *This Is Our Music*. He composed a dramatic, almost regal seven-bar introduction with Don Cherry playing the trumpet written above the alto as Davis was above Parker, though without the mute. Coleman and Cherry are an octave apart for the first three bars. Bars four and five contain Cherry embellishment while Coleman sustains a C and then a B for four beats. The next four beats Coleman and Cherry are separated by a minor third, a minor third, a major third, a minor third, and then end on half notes separated by a flat five and ending on a flat six. The introduction is repeated at the end of the piece, but Coleman plays his part an octave higher, above the trumpet creating another flat five and ending on a major third. In the beginning Cherry starts the introduction on the tonic of the original recording, G, and Coleman ends on it. Coleman enjoyed disguising who was playing lead and who was playing harmony. During the improvisation Coleman does reference the original melody, but like Parker it is only touched on briefly. Charlie Haden does play the changes at first before they shift into more open interpretation. Coleman is patient and bluesy for the most part, not pursuing the endless invention of Parker. Coleman's version contains both similarity and contrast with the Parker version. In the liner notes to *This Is Our Music* Coleman said that he played "Embraceable You" as a standard, the way standards are played. He also called Charlie Parker the great seer of Modern Jazz.⁴⁴ It is notable that three of these pieces that Parker played and then Coleman played were recorded

⁴⁴ Coleman, Ornette, *Something Else!!! the Music of Ornette Coleman*, Contemporary, 1958.

by Parker in 1947 when Coleman was seventeen and studying bebop, while Parker was in top form at twenty-seven years old. In addition, two of the songs that Coleman claimed defined Bebop were contrafacts. “Donna Lee” based on “Indiana,” and “Little Willie Leaps,” based on “All Gods Chillun Got Rhythm.” “Donna Lee” and “Little Willie Leaps” were both composed by Miles Davis, Coleman giving him far more influence within the movement as a composer rather than just as a participant as Parker’s student. Coleman also considered pianist Bud Powell quintessential within bebop and claimed that Powell’s piece “John’s Abbey” to be the best example of a bebop bridge.⁴⁵

Parker recorded “Klactoveedsedstene” on November 4th, 1947 for Ross Russell’s Dial label. In Russell’s book “Bird Lives!” he explains that Parker wrote the title on the back of a minimum charge card and offered no clues as to its meaning. Dean Benedetti suggested to Russell that it was sound.⁴⁶ Parker recorded the piece with Miles Davis on trumpet, Duke Jordan on piano, Tommy Potter on bass, and Max Roach on drums. Parker based “Klactoveedsedstene” on the changes to Juan Tizol’s “Perdido” in the A section and the bridge appears to be a variation of the bridge of George Gershwin’s “Lady Be Good,” also in Bb, which Parker played famously in 1946 at Jazz at the Philharmonic. The piece begins with an

⁴⁵ Coleman told keyboardist David Bryant (interviewed by the author) about the three pieces and why he felt they defined bebop.

⁴⁶ Russell, Ross. *Bird Lives! The High Life and Hard times of Charlie (Yardbird) Parker*. New York: Da Capo Press, 1996.

introduction that deserves more attention. Parker harmonized the alto a minor third below Davis cup muted trumpet. Fred Parcell's transcription uses chords apparently based on the bass line. The bass is the only thing that saves the intro from harmonic ambiguity as in the famous "Ko-Ko." The melody is played in unison and is more about the Parker syncopation than eighth notes. Parker only takes one solo chorus using his own rhythmic devices that he may have extracted as a reaction to Tizol's original motif, with the tempo increased, bending the piece to his will. During Parker's solo flat fives are casually added in measures 9, 11, 24, and 31. Flat 9's are stitched in on measures 3, 7, 23, 27, 31, and 33. As per his usual method, the notes connect his lines to the notes that define the harmony. Parker uses a Db on a Bb major chord three times before he reaches the bridge. In measure 26, two of Thomas Owens-discovered Parker devices are used.

Looking at Coleman's solo on the same piece at the Hillcrest (see page 197) Coleman and Cherry play the introduction and the melody straight, though Bley is mostly Inaudible. Haden is muffled but he seems to be aware of the form but already following Coleman as his prime directive. Reaching the bridge on the melody at measure 24, Coleman plays phrases as if the changes were taking place, but no harmony is suggested by him or Bley. On the last measure of the bridge, 31, Coleman plays a phrase that Parker would never play and offers no resolution or signpost to the form. At measure 40 Coleman begins the solo suggesting the sound of Parker but without using his devices. In measure 43 he does outline a D minor chord in ascending root position exactly where it should be if he were playing the

piece totally straight. At the first pass through the bridge both Coleman and Bley suggest the form transition and play phrases in time as if changes were taking place, but do not play any actual changes. The key of the piece seems to be more relevant. At D, Coleman suggests Parker using a high long tone during a turnaround. At measure 113 he continues the motif, but changes the pitch, a function of Coleman's language, and not Parker's. Measure 144 sounds like Parker again without a direct reference. During measures 152-159, where a bridge should be, Coleman strings together eighth notes and triplets like Parker but with no implication of harmony. By the time we reach G Coleman doesn't abandon the key of the piece but is now truly concerned with his own ideas more than anything else. At measure 168 we hear a phrase played 4 times that is pure Coleman. Measure 184 contains improvisation that could be related to "Donna Lee." From G to H Coleman may have broken free from changes and form entirely. In measure 235 Coleman plays a phrase and then repeats it a whole step up that is not related to any clear harmony. At letter I we hear Coleman modulate through where the bridge *used* to be using minor thirds as his focus suggesting an entirely new way of thinking. During measures 287-293 at letter J, the note D is the foundation as Coleman seems to explore just how many ways, he can play off one note. In a bold finishing move, Coleman and Cherry play an original transition in unison to set up Paul Bley's solo. Higgins slows to repeat the figure at 8 bars, but Coleman and Cherry miss it, playing it afterwards. Bley suggests movement through a bridge but also uses Coleman's transitional figure as a source of improvisation. The band

eventually lays out giving Bley a solo all by himself. Haden and Higgins try to bring form back to an extent to set up Cherry. Haden is far more aggressive in using the form and changes behind Cherry, but Bley lays out and Cherry seems to suggest playing through a bridge at random times and is mostly playing free. Cherry could play changes but chose not to. Haden follows with a solo continuing to walk in time. His sound and style are present. Coleman returns with more improvisation playing free until Cherry brings back the melody where he thinks it should be but it's clear that Coleman could have continued. Higgins takes the bridge, the melody is restated, and finally the intro is played as a coda with a short free vamp.

Coleman played ideas with beginnings and endings and resolved them melodically. He may have mastered Parker's style as he claimed,⁴⁷ but by this period he had already moved quite far into his own concept, though he was still wrestling with a piano being present. Coleman simply related to music differently than Parker. Parker had a genius level ability to play fluidly through harmonic progressions with incredible accuracy. Coleman did not possess this gift, but rather the ability to construct ideas free of the harmony. Both Parker and Coleman were adept at constructing ideas on their own terms in the environment of fast and very fast tempos. Parker was a master at every tempo he ever encountered.

Coleman also assimilated Charlie Parker to an extent by direct use of Parker's unique rhythm and syncopation, most obvious in Parkers compositions.

⁴⁷ As told to the author

The clearest example is his composition “Bird Food” from the album *Change of the Century* recorded in Hollywood in 1959. In this piece Coleman overtly uses Parkers eighth rest, quarter note, eighth note rhythm most famous as Parkers core rhythmic motif from “Moose the Mooch,” also recorded in California in 1946 for Dial by Parker. Coleman was able to capture the sound of Parker’s music though the composition, based on rhythm changes. The bridge and solo are completely improvised free of changes and any reference to Parker.

Incredibly, the idea of playing free of harmony was presented to Charlie Parker by John T. Fitch in an interview in 1953. Fitch asks if playing without changes is possible using Lennie Tristano as a reference point.

Parker: Those are mostly improvisations, and if you listen closely enough you can find the melody traveling along with any chord structure. Rather than make the melody predominant in the music, with Lennie it’s more or less heard or felt.

Fitch: On “Intuition” they start off with no key or changes.

Parker: There must be a buildup to the key signature and the chords that create the melody.⁴⁸

Parker was open to all music, but the concept of playing free seems to be one he never considered. Coleman attempted to sit in with and meet Parker to show him what he was doing, as revealed in an interview with Leonard Feather in

⁴⁸ Woideck, Carl. *The Charlie Parker Companion: Six Decades of Commentary*. New York: Schirmer Books, 1998.

Downbeat in 1981. He did hear Parker play in person but attempts to play with him never resulted in them getting to play together.

Coleman: I didn't want him (Parker) to hear how I play, I wanted him to hear *what* I was trying to play, because I figured he would understand.⁴⁹

In the end we have evidence that Coleman took bebop seriously, as his mentor Red Connors instructed him to. Before Coleman sought to invent a path to what he believed would set himself free, he sought to understand where he and jazz were at. He practiced the bebop methodology of using contrafacts as we have seen with his piece "Jayne." He studied Charlie Parker's writing and solo style, being influenced by both in his own compositions and improvisation. Perhaps the most striking similarity between Parker and Coleman can be found within their unique gifts within their environments. Within an environment that he himself had an enormous part in creating, Parker possessed a fluidity and dexterity in his improvisations that is almost superhuman in ability. He remains the consummate master of bebop improvisation at all tempos, thriving where most musicians simply cannot venture. Coleman, like Parker, virtually created the environment that he was the master of. Coleman had a deep belief in spontaneous invention, an almost urgent need to create something profound with himself as the primary source. It is here in this self-created realm, that he felt most at home. Coleman's

⁴⁹ Feather, Leonard. "Interview Ornette Coleman." *Downbeat*, July 1981, 16.

legacy is not only how he effected the entire perception of the music, but his ability to do it through composition and improvisation. Both Parker and Coleman practiced the tradition in jazz of studying and learning from those that proceeded them. They were both African-American. They were both master alto saxophonists who at times played tenor saxophone. They were both masters at playing the blues. They were both no strangers to adversity. They both had little to no relationship with their fathers. They were both two of the most significant innovators in jazz. Charlie Parker and Ornette Coleman forever linked.

SECTION II: ORNETTE CREATES

4. Tenor

*"You'll attract some strange women with that horn." -
Ornette Coleman to David Murray*

I asked Ornette in 2005 if he would ever play the tenor saxophone again. I didn't see one in his music room. He said that it was over and didn't elaborate. We've discussed his early years playing rhythm and blues on the horn, and his mentor Red Connors mostly playing tenor. Coleman spoke about the tenor to Joe Goldberg.

The tenor is a rhythm instrument, and the best statements negroes have made about what their soul is have been on tenor. The tenor has that thing, that honk, and you can get to people with it. Sometimes you can be playing tenor, and I'm telling you, the people want to jump across the rail. Especially the Db blues, you can really reach their souls with a Db blues.⁵⁰

Coleman was playing mostly tenor in his early years, when he was getting more extreme reactions and playing more extreme environments. The tenor seems to turn up the volume and raise the intensity of emotions and sexual desire. Perhaps Stanley Crouch said it best.

⁵⁰ Goldberg, *Jazz Masters of the Fifties*, 231-232.

The tenor contains a subtle identity that can be as low down as the killing floor of sweet and erotic facts as it can be altissimo lofty and clean as an archangel's underwear.⁵¹

In March of 1961, Coleman recorded his last album for Atlantic, and one of his most well-known, *Ornette on Tenor*. Don Cherry played pocket trumpet, Ed Blackwell was on drums, and Jimmy Garrison played bass. I examine Garrison more closely later in the thesis. The alto, trumpet, and violin are not present. At no other time did Coleman draw attention to his work on one specific instrument. Atlantic may have asked Coleman to play tenor so they could sell the concept, but that remains unknown. Coleman did make the creative decision to play tenor explicitly this one time. He may have been pursuing a resolution of sorts, by using a horn he played in his early days with his updated and far-reaching conception. After this recording, the bebop front line of saxophone and trumpet would no longer be a primary focus for him. Charlie Parker played tenor when the job called for it, or when it was the only horn available to him, but never made a record as a leader only playing it.

The album begins with "Cross Breeding." Coleman experiments with silence between stating the fast bop line and taking an immediate, completely alone solo for over a full minute. Garrison and Blackwell enter in a very conversational manner before playing time at three minutes. Coleman solos aggressively all the

⁵¹ Crouch, Stanley. "Tale of the Tenor." *The Village Voice*, 16 Apr. 1986, p. 63.

way to seven minutes and twenty seconds. His playing contains grit and blues and he ends with a boppish figure. Cherry stands his ground for two minutes, and after a short drum solo they both solo. Throughout his solo Coleman still has the urgency and yearning, almost pleading that you associate with the alto. The final bop line to close lasts a mere twenty seconds. "Mapa" is next and always looking for a new path, Coleman's arrangement calls for a ninety percent four-way independent group improvisation. With all four members playing separately together, the cohesion occurs in that they all agree to hold their own space. Coleman's tenor is not that different from the alto here. "Enfant" is more traditional in Coleman's world as after the short head, Blackwell and Garrison start walking. Garrison is aggressive with his rubbery sounding swing, seemingly going his own way and very strong in the mix. Coleman plays in time for the most part. Blackwell is very aggressive, seeking and getting interaction with Coleman. As with most of Coleman's bass players, Garrison comes more in to support Don Cherry, who was easier to follow harmonically. Coleman returns for more improvisation before the head returns, based on interaction with Blackwell. "EOS" is next, and on this one you can really hear the pots boil. The opening melody lasts all of fifteen seconds. Coleman is more relaxed and, in the pocket, and he's hooked up more with Garrison. At the opening Coleman cycles through a one, three, four, (or five, seven, one) ascending motif that is infectious. Moving through harmony like this, it could be three different keys or chords, and imbued with blues feeling, this is classic Coleman. In this moment, the tenor comes alive as a unique entity in

Coleman's musical world as he exploits the sound of the instrument. At 1:03 Coleman escapes a pattern with genuine blues tenor expression but without crossing the line into rhythm and blues. Throughout, he and Blackwell have a shared telepathy. At 2:28 Coleman leaves space and Garrison sets up a vamp that he releases at 2:40 creating group interaction that continues a fully realized three-way conversation. Coleman doubles down on blues phrases and Blackwell finishes them. Coleman ends the solo in a perfect transition to Cherry who then leaves off in another direction, but by first picking up right where Coleman left off. "Ecars" continues the success of "EOS" with more speed, and more urgency. Coleman plays strong blues phrases without dropping the tempo. He uses this effect to culminate a group interaction such as at 1:40. "Ecars" is the full realization of the group, the last recorded piece on the record. "Harlem's Manhattan" was an out take from this band and the *Ornette on Tenor* recording that surfaced on *Art of the Improvisors* from Atlantic in 1970, without Coleman's permission. Cherry uses a cup mute. The piece sounds like the other pieces on the original and picks up after "Ecars" with another notch up in speed and urgency. The cup mute is an odd choice in this fiery environment and Cherry plays a short solo. Garrison follows with a thirty second solo that foreshadows his work with Coltrane, displaying that his sound and style were already intact.

Drummer Ronald Shannon Jackson told guitarist Jack DeSalvo that throughout the early seventies Coleman played tenor saxophone during long Prime Time rehearsals but simply didn't want to carry the extra horn to

performances.⁵² Prime Time with Coleman on tenor may have been a different energy entirely that we will never hear unless future unknown recordings surface. Coleman would not return to the tenor again on recordings until 1977 on a duo album titled *Soapsuds*, *Soapsuds* for John Snyder's label Artists House. Coleman took a break from his electric band Prime Time to make a series of acoustic duets with Charlie Haden. On Haden's piece "Human Being" Coleman plays the tenor with all of his alto technique, and the special connection he shared with Haden is on full display. Coleman reaches up into the tenor range as if he was hearing alto. "Sex Spy" is a Coleman ballad, and you can hear the alto inside the tenor. By this point Coleman's horns were simply him, regardless of tuning, range, and sound properties that draw out a particular human response. The music here is all about the relationship of Coleman and Haden. The one difference is how Coleman sings on the closing melody revealing a tenor voice that wasn't heard previously in any of his recorded work. It remains a door he opened, and a room he only stayed in briefly. His gentle nature and vulnerability came through on a horn that as noted previously, could also cause people to jump the rails.

Coleman's last known recorded moment on tenor came ten years later on "Feet Music" from the album *In All Languages*. The album reunited the original Coleman classic quartet with Cherry, Haden, and Higgins. "Feet music" sounds like the quartet dabbling in a Prime Time vibe, but Higgins doesn't surrender to the

⁵² As told to the author by DeSalvo.

funk. Haden is very aggressive, almost playing independently. Coleman is in a very straight blues space in an almost final return to his roots on the horn, completing the cycle and thus achieving a final resolution of his relationship with the horn.

Dewey Redman (1931-2006) grew up in Fort Worth like Coleman, and after a chance meeting in 1965 driving a taxi in San Francisco and picking up Coleman at an airport just back from Japan, he ended up playing with and then joining Coleman's bands on tenor saxophone and recording seven albums.⁵³ Redman was influenced by Coleman's melodic approach more than anything else, and found it daunting to share the stage with him.

Some nights he'd just be on fire, you know? He'd be playing his ass off, and he always took the first solo, and when he got through playing sometimes there would be nothing left to play. He played everything, the bebop, the avant-garde, whatever. And I said, what the hell am I going to do, I play the saxophone too.⁵⁴

Redman continued playing music written and inspired by Coleman recording four albums with the band Old and New Dreams, with Don Cherry, Charlie Haden, and Ed Blackwell from 1976 to 1987. Redman's son Joshua shared the stage with Coleman at the North Sea Jazz Festival in 2010 playing "Lonely

⁵³ "Dewey Redman." The Independent. October 23, 2011. Accessed January 21, 2019. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/obituaries/dewey-redman-414684.html>.

⁵⁴ Litweiler, *A Harmolodic Life*, 129.

Woman.”⁵⁵ Joe Lovano played with Coleman at his Chelsea Loft.⁵⁶ Lovano went too far however at a Coleman European concert, walking onstage and playing without discussing it prior, so that he could be seen playing with him.⁵⁷ David Murray, Ravi Coltrane, Antoine Roney, Branford Marsalis, and Henry Threadgill all joined Coleman on stage in June 2014 at a celebration of his music.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Videoservices, Gilaworks Internet- &. "Ornette Coleman Quartet - North Sea Jazz 2010 (part 1-5)." YouTube. July 05, 2011. Accessed January 21, 2019. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IqAxizXEIrw>.

⁵⁶ Rogers, John. "My Friend, Ornette Coleman." NPR. June 15, 2015. Accessed January 21, 2019. <https://www.npr.org/sections/ablogsupreme/2015/06/15/414007418/my-friend-ornette-coleman>.

⁵⁷ As told to the author.

⁵⁸ Mandel, Howard, Bob Gluck, John Litweiler, and Howard Mandel. "Ornette Honored and Playing in Prospect Park June 2014." Jumper. March 09, 2015. Accessed January 21, 2019. <http://www.artsjournal.com/jazzbeyondjazz/2015/03/ornette-honored-and-playing-in-prospect-park-june-2014.html>.

5. Trumpet

“The saxophone is flawed in that it’s built like a scale. By its very design it leads the person playing it into theory before ideas. Not the trumpet. The trumpet is pure melody.”

Ornette Coleman

It’s important to note that as Coleman instructed me, part of Harmolodics requires that as a horn player, you should play instruments tuned in Bb, Eb, and in concert. The trumpet, alto saxophone, and violin matched his self-requirement. It was during his retreat during 1963-1964 that he studied the trumpet and violin, completely on his own and without any formal training. He formally played trumpet in his return from self-imposed exile in 1965 with three weeks at the Village Vanguard.⁵⁹ Coleman’s use of the trumpet remains one of the most controversial aspects of his career. For many musicians and listeners Coleman’s moves out of bounds were something to be considered, and he was a fantastic alto saxophonist and composer. The expansion to trumpet without formal training, however, was crossing the line. Even today in 2019 people say they’re OK with Coleman, except for the trumpet playing. There also remain Coleman loyalists,

⁵⁹ Litweiler, *A Harmolodic Life*, 110-118.

musicians and others that feel quite the opposite and are genuinely touched by Coleman's work on trumpet. Nevertheless, the Coleman trumpet was derided from the top down. Hearing Coleman in 1968 on "Freeway Express" from the album *The Empty Foxhole* in a blindfold with Leonard Feather, Freddie Hubbard said:

I could have done what Ornette was doing when I was five. Why should a guy study for years -*study*- trumpet, then see a guy come out on trumpet, and he gets a lot of popularity, like this, it doesn't make sense.⁶⁰

Miles Davis is well known for his condemnation of the Coleman trumpet, citing Coleman as being jealous.

Ornette's a jealous kind of dude. Jealous of another musician's success. I don't know what's wrong with him. For him- a sax player- to pick up a trumpet and violin like that and just think he can play them with no kind of training is disrespectful toward all the people that play them well. And then to sit up and pontificate about them when he doesn't know what he's talking about is not cool man.⁶¹

Both Hubbard and Davis felt *disrespected* by Coleman's trumpet work. As a trumpet player myself, I have always had to move past my initial reaction to hearing it. The reality is that without formal training, Coleman often missed notes and had a general instability on the instrument. The core issue is hearing music as a technical act versus hearing it as music. By playing trumpet, Coleman doubled

⁶⁰ Feather, Leonard, and Ira Gitler. *The Encyclopedia of Jazz in the Seventies*. Da Capo press, 1987, 30.

⁶¹ Davis, Miles, and Quincy Troupe. *Miles the Autobiography*. Miles Davis with Quincy Troupe. Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 1989, 250.

down on his personal concept for better or for worse. He made a choice based on his personal beliefs and relationship with music.

Coleman's trumpet playing was formally introduced on record in 1965 at a concert in Croydon England and appears on thirty-one recordings. Coleman never played an entire record on trumpet, except for ironically one of his few appearances as a sideman, on *New And Old Gospel* with Jackie Mclean, which I will fully explore. As Ekkehard Jost explained, the Coleman trumpet started off as a "sound tool" and gradually transitioned to a melody instrument.⁶² The trumpet came close to sharing the stage with the alto on live bootlegs in Europe in the late 60's but eventually took its place as a secondary instrument that would be used on one or two pieces, or as brief interludes in the middle of alto solos. When I studied with Coleman there was a Jupiter brand trumpet in his music room, but I never saw him play it or asked him about it. Over the course of his discography, there are several notable Coleman trumpet moments of musical significance.

At the live Croydon concert, the trumpet's first hearing on record comes on "Falling Stars" with Coleman's trio with David Izenzon on bass and Charles Moffett on drums. After a blistering tempo is established and a violin solo (the violin's first appearance as well) Coleman starts off in the upper register at 3:50 quickly establishing his peculiar articulation and seems to be more focused on trio

⁶² Jost, Ekkehard. *Free Jazz*. Da Capo Press, 1994, 64.

interaction than anything else, and the drums take over at 4:40. At 5:22 he returns again focusing on rhythmic hits until 5:44 when a mournful melodic mood suddenly occurs that Izenzon immediately matches on bow. A melodic phrase launches the trio back into fast swing at 6:11. The drums again take over at 6:32. Coleman never plays a direct conventional solo from beginning to end with the trumpet, as he seems to seek a different relationship between horn and rhythm section, an effective assault on what he believed were the restrictions of role playing. The trumpet makes only one appearance on the record. “Falling Stars” is recorded again on the next two live dates in Europe.

Coleman next plays trumpet on a movie soundtrack he wrote called *Who’s Crazy?* The soundtrack was recorded as Coleman and his trio watched the 1966 film, about insane asylum inmates that escape their confinement and hole up in a deserted Belgian farm house. On “Changes” he opens with trumpet and plays a three-minute solo that vacillates between melodic phrases you might expect on the alto, to rhythmic hits, to other random phrases that sound to me not extracted from his world of melodic ideas. These moments sound like the alto melodic content is knocking on the door but cannot get inside. The issue here is not about Coleman’s ability to play the trumpet, it’s what he’s choosing to do with it. The effect is not unlike someone with different personalities battling for dominance, which certainly works with the theme of the film. In this context, the alto was always the dominant personality that ruled the others. The music also confirms that when the rhythm section is playing this well, the horn player can do just

about anything. When I played my trio recording *Spiritual Power* for Coleman, he said “One of the reasons you sound so good is the high quality of your environment.” On the second LP of *Who’s Crazy?* on “The Poet” Coleman improvises on trumpet from 14:00-19:00, and here is where the criticism from trumpet players would lie. Throughout, Coleman pushes into the upper registers of the horn where the trumpet is especially difficult, and Coleman lacks control. Combined with excessive saliva which creates a gurgling sound effect, the technical effect is someone trying to play something they cannot. The musical effect however could be someone trying to exist on their own terms in a society where they cannot relate. During these five minutes, Coleman asks the listener who is crazy, thus you could say achieving his musical goal. Here we find the kind of music that defines much of the free playing happening today, both in New York City and around the world.

Coleman’s next recording is a live date with his trio, the classic *The Ornette Coleman Trio at the Golden Circle, Stockholm*. On “Snowflakes and Sunshine” he trades with himself on violin and trumpet with Izenzon and Moffett switching the improvised tempo into a different feeling each time. There is no discernable melody present. Izenzon and Moffett play throughout and while Coleman switches instruments, they fill in the space. Coleman charts himself the following course, the timing being the amount of time he spends on the instrument improvising aggressively.

Violin 1:30

Trumpet :40

Violin :40

Trumpet :30

Violin :40

Trumpet :60

Violin:60

Trumpet :60

Violin :60

Listening to the piece one can hear the influence on future musicians Roy Campbell Jr. and William Parker. While Ray Nance played cornet and violin as a double before Coleman, nobody prior had thought to switch back and forth between instruments so rapidly. On this piece the improvisation is extended to include the use of the instruments themselves. Without stating a melody, Coleman advances his idea that would later manifest formally as part of his philosophy of Harmolodics, that the improvisation *is* the melody.

In 1966, Coleman returned to the studio for the first time in four years, now formerly presenting the trumpet and violin on Blue Note with *The Empty Foxhole*. On the title piece, Coleman records one of his most significant moments on the trumpet. With the still controversial decision to have his ten-year-old son Denardo on drums, and Charlie Haden on bass, Coleman plays a short ballad and plays a

melody with no improvisation. The simple melody combined with a march figure from Denardo evokes a haunting feeling that takes the listener right to source of the music's title and conception. Here, Coleman connects the trumpet to brass instrument use in the military as an instrument associated with war. At the same time, he evokes the human tragedy within that reality. In the liner notes, Coleman adds a poem to complete an almost perfect artistic statement.

The empty foxhole
men sleeping in the ground
hoping to escape death
thinking of their children
and loved ones
bury not the soul
in a hole,
whose life has yet
to exist

Coleman also plays a piece titled "Freeway Express" using the trumpet. Like the live material in Europe, this is full bore improvisation but Coleman constructs ideas and uses space very effectively. Denardo and Haden fill in the space. Ornette adds a Harmon mute halfway through the 8-minute piece unexpectedly, then removes it to close, continuing his experiment in sound.

The trumpet was clearly on Coleman's mind during this period. In 1967 he composed and recorded *Forms and Sounds*, a piece for woodwind quintet. In the recording with the Philadelphia Woodwind Quintet, Coleman plays solo trumpet interludes that he says were written, but certainly contain elements of solo improvisation. "Forms and Sounds" contains seven different completely solo interludes that connect a ten-section piece. The interludes are short ranging in length from twenty to ninety seconds. They often sound composed initially before opening up. Section six contains an alto like virtuosity, and section seven is all blues. Coleman only joins the ensemble for the final seconds. He describes the piece as using a technique he devised called improvised reading, allowing for octaves to be selected by the musicians. The piece most often features what sounds like independent movement by the voices, but a commonality and unity in a shared structure. The piece may have had its origin in an international union negotiation between American and British musicians where Coleman agreed to use non "dance" musicians. Regardless, Coleman once again did something that was never done before and took the trumpet to a place it had never been.

Next, we come to one of the most interesting moments of Coleman's career, a call from alto player Jackie McLean to join him on the Blue Note release *New And Old Gospel*, recorded in March of 1967. When I asked him about this date, he told me it meant a great deal to him that McLean called him. Coleman had been ridiculed, vilified, and even condemned by fellow jazz musicians, but McLean not only believed in his contributions as an innovator, but went a step further to

record and collaborate with him. The still remaining controversy is that Coleman played trumpet. Who made this decision, or took responsibility for it? McLean first addressed the issue in the liner notes by Nat Hentoff.

When they heard about the date, a lot of trumpet players asked me why I used Ornette on that instrument. Actually, he was willing to use any of his instruments, but it seemed to me as we talked about the session, that we would complement each other if Ornette focused on trumpet. It's amazing how far Ornette has gone in the last three years on that horn. I'm not about to compare him technically to anybody, because that isn't the point in Ornette's case. The point is how much he plays and the fact that what he plays is entirely him! If you put on a record of Ornette playing trumpet, I could tell immediately that it's him.⁶³

Twenty-three years later, McLean revealed more to Kevin Whitehead in *Downbeat*. He stated that he originally did want a two-alto date for the contrasting styles, but that Coleman was focusing on trumpet. He still liked the recording, but that week he had fights with trumpet players. Lee Morgan said to him "You want a trumpet player? I'm a trumpet player." McLean said it was Coleman's concept that attracted him more than his alto. McLean had a high compliment for Coleman calling him a hero, because he took a stand for something and stood his ground, taking all the pies that were thrown at him."⁶⁴

Musically, Coleman is placed in a different position on the album. McLean called Billy Higgins to play drums who knew Coleman well. Lamont Johnson on piano

⁶³ See Discography: *New and Old Gospel*

⁶⁴ Whitehead, Kevin. "Back On Earth." *Downbeat*, Oct. 1990, pp. 21-22.

and Scott Holt on bass fully supported him in their playing. Coleman is effective on “Lifeline” where McLean plays some of the most intense alto of his career. In a free ballad section of the suite, Coleman has a solo where he discovers a completely new sound using a harmon mute. Coleman’s embouchure is not stable, but the effect draws you into the heart of the sound of the free jazz movement. “Lifeline” ends with a truly haunting free duo between McLean and Coleman. Coleman’s exuberant “Old Gospel” follows, a rollicking piece that stands on its own as a unique piece in the Coleman canon. Coleman also wrote the last piece “Strange as it seems” which Coleman describes as like being in love with someone who doesn’t agree with your philosophy. McLean plays the lead melody and solo and is clearly playing through a set of chord changes. Coleman uses the harmon mute again and plays through the changes. Johnson and Holt support him but listen closely for ways to interact with him by any means. *New and Old Gospel* is the kind of album that needs to be listened to many times to fully digest and remains a singular unique moment in Coleman’s career, the only time he played trumpet exclusively.

Coleman would continue to use the trumpet as an effective supplement to his music overall, though the alto saxophone remained dominant. His use of the horn seemed to have more impact when used less. He led the way on trumpet on “Love Call” from The Blue Note album of the same name with Jimmy Garrison on bass and Elvin Jones on drums less than a year after the death of John Coltrane in 1967, with Dewey Redman on tenor saxophone. Coleman again uses a harmon

mute. He also plays a ballad he originally played with Don Cherry titled “Just For You.” Both Coleman and Cherry were not technical masters of the trumpet, but here the mood and feeling are conveyed as only Coleman could. Garrison accompanies him with improvised arco. In 1968 Coleman recorded a ballad on trumpet titled “Forgotten Children” live in Rome in February released on *The Unprecedented Music Of Ornette Coleman*, with Ed Blackwell on drums and both Haden and Izenzon on bass. Izenzon plays arco and Haden plays pizzicato. After a lovely theme statement and Izenzon solo, Coleman again plugs in the harmon and plays like his work with McLean. Like the trio had done, Blackwell, Haden, and Izenzon continually hand the baton off to each other, continually coming up with new ways to play as a group.

1969 found Coleman recording *Ornette at 12 on Impulse*, this time with Haden, Redman, and Denardo, who was playing with more strength and confidence. As was evident from *The Empty Foxhole*, Denardo had an almost symbiotic rhythmic relationship with his father, able to shadow him extremely closely. Coleman plays trumpet on “Rainbows,” with his established trumpet style, with a solo that contained flashes of the clarity and coherence often conveyed on also saxophone. The next trumpet recording took place at Coleman’s Prince Street Loft on “Let’s Play” from the album *Friends and Neighbors*, with Haden, Redman, and Ed Blackwell behind the kit. Coleman is strong here, leading the band with the trumpet as the dominant voice. He sings with the horn here, loud and in the higher range of the horn.

Fast forward to December 1976 and Coleman recorded two duets on trumpet with Charlie Haden on bass. Many Coleman fans consider these duets to be some of the brightest moments of his career, and perhaps the apex of his work on trumpet. Coleman recorded “The Golden Number” on the album of the same name for Horizon, an album of Haden playing duets with different musicians. The piece is a ballad and speaks to the unique musical bond shared between them. Without drums, it’s clear that Haden could support Coleman like nobody else having such a deep, intrinsic relationship with his process. Coleman’s technique hadn’t changed, but his sound is clearer, and he plays with a vulnerable lyricism. The piece lasts a full twelve and half minutes with the heart-felt melody played at both bookends. In January 1977 on Artists House, Coleman continued the conversation with a full album of duets with Haden on the album *Soap Suds*. He plays trumpet on the final piece, a ballad titled “Some Day.” Coleman is as expressive here as he is in any of his alto ballads. The sound of the music could have only come from him. Again, Haden instinctively knows when to change the tempo, as if they shared one musical mind. Coleman makes his final argument for the trumpet and proves his case here. It was never about the technique, but always about the music itself, and the humanity within.

Coleman’s trumpet would not appear again for a full eight years. In 1985 the trumpet made a brief appearance at the end of an album *Opening the Caravan of Dreams* with Coleman’s free funk fusion unit Prime Time on a track titled “Compute.” His technique is intact, but the different environment doesn’t change

his trumpet style in a short solo. On *Virgin Beauty* in 1987, the trumpet is used sparingly on two tracks. It serves an ensemble function, overdubbed on “3 Wishes,” and again as an overdub improvisation during an alto solo on “Desert Players.” Again in 1987, Coleman was in Hamburg for a reunion concert with Cherry, Haden, and Higgins. On the opening piece “Chanting” Cherry and Coleman both play trumpet, trading a melodic line back and forth in a fascinating contrast of their sounds and styles. The track only lasts two and half minutes, but Coleman again found something artistic to do beyond just he and Cherry both playing the same horn. Coleman continued to use the horn in brief interludes, sometimes during the middle of alto solos as he did on *Sound Grammar* in 2005. The horn was last recorded live in Genoa, Italy in 2010 in this capacity.

Focusing on Coleman’s relationship with the trumpet must of course also include his collaboration with Don Cherry and Bobby Bradford. Cherry will forever be associated with Coleman after starting to play with him in 1958, and then playing on the classic Atlantic albums on pocket cornet. Cherry originally was mentored by Clifford Brown in Los Angeles and was playing straight ahead before he became a student and ally of Coleman.⁶⁵ Cherry plays on fifteen albums with Coleman plus several bootlegs. His playing with him and unique style led him to be the first call trumpet player of the avant-garde period of the sixties. Cherry recorded with every major tenor saxophone player of the period, recording with

⁶⁵ Silsbee, Kirk. “Don Cherry Interview.” *Cadence*, 25 Apr. 1984, pp. 5–11.

John Coltrane, Pharoah Sanders, Albert Ayler, Sonny Rollins, and Archie Shepp.

Bradford had a harder time connecting with Coleman, recording on cornet on two albums that *also* have Cherry, *Broken Shadows*, and *Science Fiction*. Coleman wrote a full symphonic work that featured Bradford called *Sun Suite of San Francisco* that was not recorded.⁶⁶ It is my hope that both Cherry and Bradford will be fully researched.

Coleman also composed for the trumpet, specifically a chamber ensemble piece titled *The Sacred Mind of Johnny Dolphin*, written in honor of John Allen, also known as Johnny Dolphin, who formed and ran the organization Caravan of Dreams.⁶⁷ The piece has been performed at least four times featuring Wilmer Wise in 1974⁶⁸, Wallace Roney, who spent some time with Coleman directly, replacing Don Cherry after his death for a period, in 1984,⁶⁹ Lew Soloff in 1987,⁷⁰ and Seneca

⁶⁶ Litweiler, *a Harmolodic Life*, 130.

⁶⁷ Ibid, 189.

⁶⁸ "Wilmer Wise: Be Sure Brain Is Engaged before Putting Mouthpiece in Gear. *Greenleaf Music - Dave Douglas Jazz Blog and Store*, 4 Jan. 2010, Greenleafmusic.com/wilmer-wise-be-sure-brain-is-engaged-before-putting-mouthpiece-in-gear/.

⁶⁹ Holloway, Keenan. "Wallace Roney - Biography." *Wallace Roney: The Official Site About*, www.wallaceroney.com/bio.php.

⁷⁰ Holland, Bernard. "JAZZ: ORNETTE COLEMAN AT WEILL HALL." *The New York Times*. March 18, 1987. Accessed December 30, 2018. <https://www.nytimes.com/1987/03/18/arts/jazz-ornette-coleman-at-weill-hall.html>.

Black in 2017 after Coleman's death.⁷¹ There has been no formal recording. In addition, trumpeter John Marshall spent time studying with trumpet with Coleman in the 70's.⁷² Trumpeter R.J. Avallone spent three years studying and playing trumpet with Coleman, six to eight hours a day, five days a week, for three years, though they never recorded.⁷³ The author does not consider trumpeter Jordan McLean's trumpet playing on the unauthorized release with Coleman titled *New Vocabulary* relevant to the discussion. On a final note, Coleman also recorded one time with a suona, a kind of wooden oboe with a distinctive loud and high-pitched sound and could possibly be a musette. The piece was called "Buddha Blues" from the album *Love Revolution*, live music recorded in Italy in 1958.⁷⁴

⁷¹ "Lincoln Center Festival: Ornette Coleman's Chamber Music at Stanley H. Kaplan Penthouse." ZEALnyc. May 30, 2017. Accessed December 30, 2018. <https://zealnyc.com/lincoln-center-festival-ornette-colemans-chamber-music-at-stanley-h-kaplan-penthouse/>.

⁷² As told to the author by saxophonist Daniel Carter, who was present.

⁷³ As told to the author by Avallone. I met him at Coleman's Chelsea loft in 2005.

⁷⁴ "Ornette Coleman - Buddha Blues." YouTube. November 17, 2010. Accessed January 03, 2019. www.youtube.com/watch?v=BJePdnUbwc.

6. Violin

During the period Coleman developed his trumpet playing, He undertook teaching himself violin as well. His violin playing remains controversial, but not as much as the trumpet. Coleman's use of the instrument was even further from conventional use to the point that it was difficult to perceive in any standard way. Coleman almost always played the violin with an almost frenetic assault of sound. After he returned from his self-imposed exile and played the Village Vanguard in January 1965, now with the trumpet and violin in tow, Dan Morgenstern from *Downbeat* was present and offered his perspective.

Coleman attacks (there is no better word) the violin with intense concentration. His bowing technique is unorthodox. A rapid, circular arm motion that almost enables him to touch all four strings simultaneously. Coleman rarely plays one string at a time. He produces a cascade of sound, sometimes surprisingly pleasing to the ear, sometimes almost abrasive, but never with the scratchy uncertainty of incompetent violinists. He seems to have tuned the instrument in his own manner.⁷⁵

Coleman provided more insight on his decision to develop the trumpet and violin in the process of his construction of his most well-known symphonic work,

⁷⁵ Litweiler, *A Harmolodic Life*, 113.

Skies of America. Coleman was having trouble with classical musicians playing certain passages. He decided to get a trumpet and violin to see if he could play what he was hearing and would then play parts to show that they were possible. Coleman may have played some bassoon and guitar with this goal in mind but didn't develop on them enough to formerly use them in action. Coleman played bassoon at Avery Fisher Hall in 1978.⁷⁶ He also played it at the Newport Jazz Festival in the mid-seventies as witnessed by saxophonist Tim Price.⁷⁷ No known recordings exist.

Further perspective on the Coleman violin comes from John Litweiler, seeing that Coleman was not just bypassing jazz tradition at this point, but was also moving beyond Western musical traditions overall. Here Coleman could attempt true spontaneous playing, or Coleman as would say, music played without memory. Coleman elaborated that the concern musicians have for proper intonation can restrict you from emotions available to non-tempered instruments.⁷⁸ Coleman told legendary saxophone repair man Robert Romeo that the reason he liked a Bundy stock mouthpiece was that it was both flat and sharp at the same time.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ Ibid, 164.

⁷⁷ As told to the author.

⁷⁸ Ibid, 118.

⁷⁹ As told to the author.

Critic Max Harrison went further in his perception of the Coleman violin:

He sounds less civilized, more complex, showers of notes well up with little conscious supervision. Like Charles Ives and John Cage, the music appears to mirror life's flux rather than subject it to a personal and arbitrary order. Coleman's violin may represent an indeterminacy as drastic as Cage.⁸⁰

Coleman is listed as playing violin on twenty-two recordings in the Tom Lord Jazz Discography. He used it less frequently than the trumpet, and never featured the instrument exclusively. Unlike the trumpet, there are no moments that stand out with melodies written with the instrument in mind. During 1965 the violin was played live in Europe in much the same way as the trumpet from the *Croydon concert*, *Who's Crazy?* and *Live at the Golden Circle* in Stockholm. 1966 brought the official first studio focus on the violin on a piece titled "Sound Gravitation" from *The Empty Foxhole*. In the liner notes Coleman wrote:

Sound Gravitation

Hear a sound-feel a sound

Speak a sound-play a sound,

All the gravitation of

Silence

⁸⁰ Ibid, 118.

After a spacious entry Coleman begins his assault. Within the first two minutes it's impossible not to hear his influence on most violin players engaged in improvisation in 2019. As with his trumpet playing, Coleman's violin gives him a new way to relate to the musicians he is playing with. For seven minutes he engages Denardo and Haden, almost like a game to see how close they can follow him. The improvisation ends abruptly with no reference to a melody or ending, Coleman having dipped his toe into the abyss. In 1968 Coleman featured the violin on "Bells and Chimes" for seven minutes with Denardo and Haden again, along with Dewey Redman on *Ornette at 12* on Impulse. Coleman increases tension by floating in and out of higher ranges, getting Redman to join him in an almost ecstatic but nervous expression. The rhythmic pace is relentless with little or no space except to continue to dare Redman to join him on the outside. Coleman ends the piece by repeating a note several times as a simple way to exit. In 1970, Coleman launched into a violin improvisation with an urgent sustain and zero use of space that sounds like a hoe-down in space over a seventies type groove following a street type choir singing his piece "Friends and Neighbors" from his loft at 131 Prince Street. After an eleven-year break Coleman returned with the violin in Prime Time in 1985 on "Compute" from the album *Opening at the caravan of Dreams*. The violin solo mid-way sounds like an electric model. Prime Time brings an entirely different environment with multiple grooves, but Coleman plays almost entirely the way he's always played it. The effect is startling, and the audience

certainly enjoyed it based on the response audible on the recording. The violin returned to another unique environment in 1985 on “Mob Job” from the album *Song X* with Pat Metheny. Over a relaxed, loping groove, Coleman again plays sawing textures with some unusual simultaneous plucking for a minute and thirty seconds. Metheny stayed out of the way for the most part. He uses the alto to play the opening and closing melody. In 1986 Coleman can be seen playing both violin and trumpet with Prime Time at the Live Under the Sky Festival.⁸¹ In 1987 during the fore mentioned quartet reunion concert The 1987 Hamburg Concert on “The Sphinx” Coleman played an unlisted violin improvisation that Don Cherry floated over with a Harmon mute with a restrained spacious improvisation creating an interesting effect in contrast to the Coleman wall of sound. The moment sounds spontaneous. In 2005 on Coleman’s *Sound Grammar* on “Song X” to close the live concert in Germany at six minutes in, Coleman summons the violin and plays over two bass players, Greg Cohen and Tony Falanga. With Denardo establishing an almost Prime Time type groove, the string players launch into a very aggressive group improvisation. Coleman seems to be soloing on top more than creating a group sound improvisation and the crowd loves it. Closing the concert this way, Coleman appears as a magician who could summon another instrument and play it

⁸¹ LightningTrident. "Ornette Coleman - Dancing In Your Head (live)." YouTube. January 25, 2008. Accessed January 03, 2019. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=72SVNgsO4P4>.

at will. The Coleman violin made its last official appearance on a non-official recording live in Genoa Italy in 2010.

While Coleman never played straight melodies on the violin, he would write them for the instrument. His symphonic work *Skies of America* of course contains violin parts. His string quartet piece *Prime Design/Time Design* in 1985 opens with a Coleman melody for violin as clear, haunting, and heartfelt as anything he ever composed. Coleman collaborated with violinist Tom Chiu who assisted Coleman as a self-described musical director for work with strings for 12 years, though they never recorded together.⁸² Coleman composed a violin fantasy specially for his friend Malcolm Goldstein titled “Trinity,” recorded by Goldstein and Jennifer Koh. The piece contains three sections, the last titled swing, and lasts six and half minutes. The music sounds like the Coleman melody that many people always wished he would have always played on violin himself. The music is so well thought out that it could be considered a form of classical perfection, another singular unique moment in Coleman’s career. The music is simply stunning when hearing Koh play the piece with genuine emotional honesty and vulnerability. In this way, Coleman may have planted the seeds for future deepening intimate levels of emotional expression in classical music that have seemed out of reach prior to his arrival. Coleman opened the door to abstract improvisation on the violin inspiring countless musicians on the instrument ever since.

⁸² As told to the author by Mr. Chiu.

At the author's request, violinist and composer Jason Kao Hwang, one of the leading improvisors worldwide on violin for many years now in 2019, provided his thoughts on Coleman's violin.

I am grateful to Ornette for his passionate, life affirming music. As a violinist, I'm inspired by his fantastic imagination and individualism that was rooted in culture and history. Unconcerned with the European classical tradition, he brought the sound of the violin into his personal voice. I think that because he was able to resonate such a cornucopia of overtones within a single note of his alto, he must have enjoyed how easily the violin offered him all the microtonal vibrations between those overtones. As a great blues musician, his horn would sing all the notes and all the notes between the notes. The violin, unimpeded by a Boehm keyboard, must have felt like a great gateway to his infinite harmolodic continuum. I met Ornette in his loft around 1982. He told me how much he enjoyed playing the violin.⁸³

⁸³ As written to the author in March 2019.

7. Piano

Coleman and his relationship with the piano have long been a reference point for understanding his relationship with music overall. Most scholars agree that when he dispatched with it on his second album as a leader for Contemporary *Tomorrow Is The Question!* he took a huge step forward towards his own music, free from the piano establishing chord progressions. On this album, Coleman is not yet playing entirely free harmonically. Red Mitchell and Percy Heath on bass (on different pieces) are playing distinct harmony. The absence of the piano creates more room to move, and on the improvisations, Coleman seems almost restless, knocking on the door to his next album *The Shape of Jazz to Come* on Atlantic where his concept to improvise harmony as well as melody came together. Coleman himself played piano and had a keyboard in his music room when I studied with him. He was recorded playing solo piano in 1971 at Jazz Stage Berlin.⁸⁴ In a 5:30 improvisation, Coleman sounds like he's improvising Thelonious Monk harmony, with occasional right-hand flurries that move from Cecil Taylor type improvising to textures like his violin work.

⁸⁴ Guy, Jazz Video. "Ornette Coleman Solo - Rare!" YouTube. November 28, 2015. Accessed January 03, 2019. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=czS2RlmsGY4&t=324s>.

Research on Coleman and the piano begins with pianist Walter Norris (1931-2011) from Coleman's first album as a leader on Contemporary, *Something Else!!!! The Music Of Ornette Coleman*. At 28 years old, Coleman was still tied to chord changes and playing in environments where the idea of harmonic freedom was not something anyone had fully pursued or was entirely comfortable with. Norris explained what happened on this recording to Ted Gioia:

I read this book that suggested that I was forcing Ornette to play changes on this session. But in fact, this was what we had agreed on at the rehearsals, two or three times a week for six months. For example, we agreed on using "I Got Rhythm" changes-Ornette was used to playing over those changes, and he was able to be very free in that setting. I was listening to what he was doing and opened my comping in response.⁸⁵

Coleman confirmed in the liner notes to the album telling Nat Hentoff how he writes the melodic line first as several different chords can fit any melodic line. Coleman went further saying he preferred new changes on every chorus. On the recording the chords were some of his and some of Norris and Don Payne on bass.⁸⁶ At issue is the practice of comping. How can a pianist provide a harmonic outline or blueprint so organically? Coleman always fought against role playing in his music, and the piano was the first instrument under assault to find a different relationship. Music based on group intuition removed the piano's expected role and function, forcing every pianist to play with Coleman to find a new

⁸⁵ Gioia, Ted. *West Coast Jazz: Modern Jazz in California, 1945-1960*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998.

⁸⁶ Gioia, *West Coast Jazz*, 354.

relationship. They all seem to take a slightly different position. Norris, sitting directly on the line that Coleman was crossing, handles this challenge not only amicably but with a fair amount of strident, committed work. He sounds like he should be there as Coleman was beginning his eventual transition to working without a piano for the majority of his work.

Paul Bley (1932-2016) was next to play piano with Coleman on the *Live at the Hillcrest* recording in 1958. On this live recording Coleman is much more aggressive in his concept. Bley often suggests form and harmonic structure where it would or *should* be, though Coleman is not adhering to strict form. The feeling he and Charlie Haden create is playing as if changes are there, though they are not being played. The music is not an imitation, but like playing with the safety net removed. In Bley's solo on "Klactoveedsedstene" he constructs lines freely that work in the context, at times sounding like Coleman. Haden and Higgins drop out leaving Bley alone where he continues the feeling and seems to veer off into his own song. Bley does suffer during horn solos from poor audio. On Coleman's "The Blessing" both Coleman, Bley, and Haden sound like they're playing Coleman's original changes. After Bley lays out, Coleman ventures outside and Haden walks the line between the original source and organic intuition as only he could. During Cherry's solo, Bley and Haden seem to create new changes before going back to the original ones. On his solo, Bley goes his own way leaving Haden left to hold on to the form, who eventually lays out. Bley starts playing the melody in different

keys to bring everyone back. Bley was not only ready to work with Coleman, he was an ally, co collaborator if not conspirator.

Next in 1959, Coleman was captured at the Lenox School of jazz. On a tight arrangement of Coleman's "The Sphinx" pianist Steve Kuhn (1938-) maintains the opening thirty-two bar rhythm changes structure, but plays modally on the A sections, and plays alternate changes on the bridge. On his solo, Kuhn plays a static, repeated harmony on the bridge, and sounds like Bud Powell comping on the bridge, and does not construct lines. The bass player Larry Ridley plays a loose version of rhythm changes, choosing to follow Kuhn more than Coleman. Coleman next plays on a tune with chord changes that he did not write titled "Inn Tune." He takes a brief solo and plays the changes by pianist Ron Brown, yet still sounds like himself. In a straight-ahead big band arrangement of a piece titled "To Thee, O Asphodel" Coleman solos briefly with pianist David McKay. Coleman plays in harmony and context at the start of his solo, and as he starts to veer off the path, McKay takes what Coleman plays and follows him with it, ready to jump off the cliff with him, another ally who was using a technique Butch Morris taught as part of his live conduction process many years later. On "Blue Grass" Coleman takes four choruses dipping into his rhythm and blues sound, and McKay stays on form, but is a busy player more interested in playing *with* Coleman than for him.

Bill Evans (1929-80) played piano with Coleman on a Gunther Schuller arrangement of Thelonious Monk's "Criss Cross" in December 1960. After Coleman solos for one minute, Evans joins with dissonant out of time comping and even

adds in Monk's "Misterioso." Evans chords do not appear related to Coleman and do not have definitive tonal centers. They could both be playing off the melody simultaneously. Eric Dolphy follows on bass clarinet and he and Coleman briefly play together. Evans expands and tries to comp for Dolphy with irregular and extended dissonant tonal implication. In the end the piece sounds more like Schuller music than Monk or Coleman as they are consumed by the arrangement.

Lamont Johnson (1941-1999) was next in 1967 in the record discussed previously with Jackie McLean *New and Old Gospel*. Next in 1972 Cedar Walton (1934-2013) appeared on Coleman's Columbia album *Science Fiction*. Walton comps on a crowded harmolodic blues titled "Good Girl Blues," a vocal sang by Webster Armstrong with Jim Hall on guitar and even an added woodwind quintet. Walton is more prominent on a ballad vocal featuring Armstrong that Coleman wrote titled "Is It Forever," with the same personal. The piece seems to be fully arranged with Coleman chord changes that Haden and Walton adhere too, but Coleman and Dewey Redman are very free on top of everything happening. Walton fully participates and sounds like himself but is hard to hear and is given little space.

Throughout the 1980's no piano is heard in Coleman's world on recordings. Pianist and keyboardist David Bryant joined Prime Time during the 80's and recorded on *Tone Dialing* in September 1995. Bryant was an avid student of Coleman and was featured to great effect on a piece titled "Kathelin Gray," fully discussed later in the thesis. In a solo opening feature on a keyboard with a piano sound, Bryant plays both the melody and chords in a way that demonstrate he was the first pianist to

fully embrace Coleman's concepts and then apply it the keyboard. With a prodigious technique, Bryant fearlessly finds a way to partially bring the piano back to its supporting original role, but with Coleman's relationship to harmony as a basis. To achieve this, Bryant spent countless hours playing with Coleman, though they did not get to record more often. Bryant continues to play this way today in 2019. I spoke to him about Coleman's relationship with harmony.

Ornette didn't like smooth voice leading. So not only did he not feel a need to practice smooth voice leading by way of theory rules or just by ear resolution, Ornette didn't *like* it, had an aversion to it, wasn't concerned with it, or more likely was interested in what was there if you didn't do it. Sometimes Ornette would simply suggest a triad with a melody note on top and would say he didn't want chord progressions, he wanted sounds.

He never spoke of scale degrees past a 7th and would juxtapose chords with the two guitar players in Prime Time playing different chords at the same time. He would continue his attack in rehearsals asking, "What's a passing tone?" and exclaiming that "There's no such thing." Ornette would say "If I want to go somewhere, I just do, I don't need a connection." He would also say "Chords are just notes. Any two triads have a common tone or are separated by a half step.

Bryant added that in his improvisation, Coleman practiced a fearless modulation based on trust and intuition. He was methodical in working out these musical relationships. There were 20-25 takes of "Tone Dialing" before Coleman was satisfied. He did have rules of what did work and what didn't. He didn't like weak phrases and believed certain intervals had more power. At times Coleman told Bryant that what he was playing was Harmolodic but was weak. To work out these issues, 12-14 hours a day of playing together as a group were required. As mentioned earlier in the chapter on Charlie Parker and Coleman, Coleman also told Bryant that he believed three compositions gave you everything you needed to

know about Bebop. Bryant said that Coleman spoke more about Bud Powell than Thelonious Monk.⁸⁷ In regard to Monk, the author sat with Coleman and listened to a Thelonious Monk birthday radio broadcast on WKCR for several hours without speaking. Peter Katz told the author he saw Monk and Coleman attending a concert together in the early 70's. Finally, photographer Dee Kalea told the author that when she was young, Coleman was seeing her mother and at her house they had a piano. Monk arrived at 3am and woke them all so that he could play it!

Fast forward to 1996, the most significant year of Coleman's career regarding the piano. Coleman recorded two CDs of the same compositions sounding differently, *Three Women* and *Hidden Man* on Harmolodic/Verve. He used the same band, featuring Geri Allen on piano, with Charnett Moffett, the virtuosic son of the drummer Charles Moffett from his great trio, on bass, and Denardo on drums. Allen was given the rare distinction to play with Coleman in this context. She abandons any notion of the piano doing any role playing and plays without trying to dictate or establish any specific harmony. She is not comping in any sense but plays in the ensemble as an equal member as Coleman explained in the liner notes. Allen's playing doesn't sound intrusive or in conflict. Moffett plays with the group with more technique than any previous bass player and doesn't hold back, improvising constantly, but always within the context of

⁸⁷ The author interviewed Dave Bryant by phone in September 2017 following with a live performance in Cambridge, Massachusetts in November 2017

the piece. On “Home Grown” from *Three Woman* Allen enters what might have been a solo but becomes three simultaneous improvisations happening together without Coleman. On the same piece on *Hidden Man*, Moffett walks and Allen constructs lines freely. Coleman’s concept of equality is maintained as his alto feels more like he’s participating than soloing. Allen plays without Coleman for the opening of “Mob Job” and plays for several minutes with Moffett and Denardo playing very aggressively but very differently on both CDs, both times shattering the idea of a role-playing completely. Coleman’s violin appears on “Sound Museum” and the trumpet appears on “Women of The Veil.” Throughout, Allen and Coleman are never engaged in true solos. Coleman took what he was doing during the sixties and pushed it further, while adding the piano into an environment that it hadn’t been prior. Coleman also guested on two fantastic duos with Allen on her own album *Eyes...In The Back Of Your Head*. They played two pieces, “The Eyes Have It,” and “Vertical Flowing,” continuing the exchange they shared during Coleman’s records on a more musically intimate basis. In the duo environment, Allen establishes the melodic space while simultaneously improvising with and without Coleman at the same time.

In the same year Coleman recorded the live album *Colors* with German pianist Joachim Kuhn. He had planned a duo album with a pianist much earlier in 1964 spending three days playing with pianist Jack Wilson, planning to only play

trumpet and violin, but the album never came together.⁸⁸ Kuhn, fourteen years younger than Coleman, met him in Paris in the early nineties. Coleman flew him from Ibiza to New York several times a year, renting a Steinway grand piano. They would play for a whole week, fourteen hours a day. Kuhn combined a system of his own called “diminished-augmented” with Harmolodics. Coleman was quoted as saying “He doesn't come from jazz; he comes from music.” Kuhn was interviewed in 2019.

From 1995 to 2000 I was able to play 16 concerts with Ornette. Before each concert, he wrote ten new songs, which we had worked out and recorded in his Harmolodic studio in Harlem for a whole week. Since he wanted me to supply the, as he called it, cards (sounds) for his melodies, I was directly involved in the composition process. After the concert, these pieces were never played again. Now I am the only one who has all the recordings and the sheet music of the 170 pieces.⁸⁹

For *Colors*, Coleman wrote twelve and recorded eight new compositions for the concert. Throughout the live concert recorded in Kuhn’s hometown of Leipzig, Germany, Coleman and Kuhn often do not directly interact harmonically but are on separate melodic improvisational paths. Kuhn often takes on the role of playing somewhat extended solo sections, as the two-way independence seemed more difficult to sustain. On “Refills” Kuhn used his right and left hands somewhat

⁸⁸ Litweiler, *A Harmolodic Life*, 113.

⁸⁹ ACT Music - In the Spirit of Jazz. “Joachim Kühn.” ACT Music. Accessed February 18, 2019. <https://www.actmusic.com/en/Artists/Joachim-Kuehn/Melodic-Ornette-Coleman/Melodic-Ornette-Coleman-CD/Produkt-Info-Melodic-Ornette-Coleman>.

independent of each other, working on two not completely related ideas at the same time. The trumpet appears for some brief spacious call and response, then after total silence the alto erupts. On “Story Writing” the violin appears. Coleman plays melodically with the nature of the piece as written at times but stays within his usual violin sound methodology. On both instruments he responds differently as Kuhn suggests an entire alternate harmolodic universe. “Night Plans” is a slower and heartfelt ballad with more space than the rest of the music. Kuhn follows Coleman here more, instead of speaking at the same time, though that’s not necessarily a bad thing in Coleman’s world. *Colors* stands as a unique document. Kuhn’s dense, more orchestral approach contrasts Geri Allen’s work. He is also the only person to record a full duo album with Coleman other than Charlie Haden. In February of 2019, Kuhn will release a solo recording of the pieces he used to play with Coleman that were never recorded called *The Melodic Ornette Coleman*.⁹⁰

Beyond *Colors* are more piano players that worked with Coleman but were never recorded. Kenny Barron joined Coleman in 1997 at Lincoln Center, looking for a way into his world. Wallace Roney also played with Coleman in this group.⁹¹ Don Friedman played with Coleman in back in Los Angeles, though the exact time is unclear. Friedman considered Coleman a natural or ear player not interested in

⁹⁰ Ibid

⁹¹ Ginell, Richard S. "Ornette Coleman." *Variety*. July 15, 1997. Accessed January 03, 2019. <https://variety.com/1997/music/reviews/ornette-coleman-1200450526/>.

the intellectual world of chord progressions.⁹² In the mid 50's He spent a week playing with Coleman at club in Vancouver, Canada on a gig that that Don Cherry originally acquired. When pressed by Dr. David Schroeder at NYU about Coleman, Friedman almost seemed agitated by the question. He claimed Walter Norris told him he had to rewrite Colemans music in order to play it and was especially harsh on Denardo's playing. Friedman said Coleman's music was written wrong so he would spend a whole day teaching Cherry the music by ear. A devout practitioner of playing straight Western harmony, he said Coleman wrote weird music and spoke in strange ways adding that "he did what he was capable of."⁹³ In the liner notes to *Soap Suds* Coleman speaks of an all-night session where he played with both Cecil Taylor and Bud Powell switching off at the piano bench, and even mentions playing with Eubie Blake! Regarding Powell we have more evidence from a story that Coleman knocked on his door and said 'Good morning, Mr. Powell. My name is Ornette Coleman. I'm a saxophonist and all my music is based on the intervals and changes of the sevenths in your left hand.'⁹⁴

⁹² ArtistsHouseMusic. "Jazz Pianist Don Friedman on Playing With Ornette Coleman and Chet Baker." YouTube. September 13, 2011. Accessed January 03, 2019. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CZPbv5_qVeo.

⁹³ Studies, NYU Steinhardt Jazz. "Conversations with Don Friedman." YouTube. September 23, 2016. Accessed January 13, 2019. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NRgSqW_VxOA&feature=youtu.be.

⁹⁴ "For Bud Powell's 87th Birthday, A 2004 Bud Powell Homage in Jazziz." Today Is The Question: Ted Panken on Music, Politics and the Arts. June 16, 2014. Accessed January 03, 2019.

Charles Farrell is a boxing promoter and avant-garde piano player known for working with Evan Parker. He became friends with Coleman and attempted collaboration with him but was frustrated by the experience. He wrote openly about his experience online. Farrell takes the unusual perspective of drawing attention to his perception of Coleman's inadequacies, citing difficulty in connecting with him musically. He claims the music often didn't function and that he walked out of a session with bassist Henry Grimes based on the musical tension. Farrell couldn't comprehend Coleman's musical theories but was able to connect when he sought out a more musical human connection through the blues. In an odd experiment Coleman and Farrell attempted to play like a duet record that Farrell did with Evan Parker so that Coleman could explore his own boundaries. Farrell is an unusual person and their friendship displayed Coleman's humbleness and desire to explore his own practice even in his later years.⁹⁵

Ellis Marsalis played with Coleman in his formative days in his 1956, driving Ed Blackwell to New Orleans and spending two months with Coleman.⁹⁶ While

<https://tedpanken.wordpress.com/2011/09/27/for-bud-powells-87th-birthday-a-2004-bud-powell-homage-in-jazziz/>.

⁹⁵ Farrell, Charles, and Charles Farrell. "Playing With Ornette." The Concourse. June 16, 2015. Accessed January 21, 2019. <https://theconcourse.deadspin.com/playing-with-ornette-1711507776>.

⁹⁶ Mandel, Howard. "Reasons to Be Cheerful: Wynton Books Ornette." Jumper. April 28, 2011. Accessed January 21, 2019. https://www.artsjournal.com/jazzbeyondjazz/2009/03/reasons_to_be_cheerful_wynton.html.

trying to adapt to the concept, he recalled a moment where they came together.

Alvin Batiste was also trying his hand at playing piano with Coleman.

Both of us were playing piano. I started a cycle of seventh chords, just moving them up the scale, up the piano chromatically, and Ornette said, "That's it! That's it! Keep playing that!" I didn't really understand what I was doing, but Ornette related to it. I had forsaken the rhythmic responsibilities of the group in favor of trying to play harmonically what Ornette was hearing and trying to hear myself what was going on.⁹⁷

Adam Holzman played probable overdubbed keyboard with Coleman on three tracks on a recording that was made in 2009 titled *New Vocabulary*. The recording was in legal dispute as the Coleman estate was never consulted about the legitimacy of its making. The musical exchange is inconsequential.⁹⁸ Finally, I know three pianists who played with Coleman in his music room in Chelsea, Manhattan in the early 2000's. Dr. Lewis Porter, Casimir Liberski, and Joel Lacardi. Porter met with Coleman several times in his Chelsea loft and used his digital keyboard in his music room.⁹⁹ Liberski spent a great deal of time studying and playing with Coleman during the last decade of his life, but like R.J. Avallone, was a serious student but did not record.¹⁰⁰ Lacardi was present when the author

⁹⁷ Wilmer, Valerie. "'Alvin Batiste and Elvin Marsalis'." *Coda*, June 1980.

⁹⁸ Tsioulcas, Anastasia. "Update: Suit Over Ornette Coleman's 'New Vocabulary' Dismissed." NPR. May 27, 2015. Accessed January 21, 2019. <https://www.npr.org/sections/therecord/2015/05/27/410065414/ornette-coleman-sues-over-new-vocabulary>.

⁹⁹ As told to the author.

¹⁰⁰ As told to the author.

arrived at a Coleman study and practice session in 2005. He seemed to know all of Coleman's music by memory and played with incredible fluency. They clearly had an established musical history and relationship. Finally, pianist Yoichi Uzeki played with Coleman on a session led by bassist Jamaaladeen Tacuma, and said he felt he could play freely and not worry about whether his notes were right or wrong.¹⁰¹ Bobby Zankel told the author that pianist Joanne Brakeen spent time with Coleman in Los Angeles, though it remains unclear what the nature was of their exchange. In all of Coleman's time spent with pianists, he confronted his relationship with harmony in the extreme, no different than a scientist trying to cure a disease. Coleman was in a sense, an experimental music scientist who never stopped looking for evidence of his own musical truth. In playing with pianists, he created an environment within his own musical world where he sought out direct confrontation between himself and the function of sound on multiple levels.

¹⁰¹ As told to the author.

8. Guitar

Coleman's first known collaboration with guitar in his own music first appeared on "Blues Misused" an unissued piece from his self-produced Town Hall Concert in 1962. Written for alto saxophone, guitar, piano, two basses, and drums we only have a review from Bill Coss in *Downbeat* to describe the music. Coss described it as "a sometimes historical, sometimes satirical, sometimes plain funny piece that exhibited the best and worst of rhythm and blues."¹⁰² The pianist, guitarist, and second bassist remain unknown. Coleman explained some of his perspective on guitar to John Litweiler.

Guitar has a very wide overtone. One guitar might sound like ten violins in terms of strength. You know, like in a symphony orchestra two trumpets are equivalent to twenty-four violins. So, when I found that out, well, I'm going to see if I can orchestrate this music that I'm playing and see if I can have a larger sound—and it surely did. So, about 1975 I started orchestrating the same music that I was playing, that I've always written, for the kind of instrumentation that I was using.¹⁰³

Guitarist Jim Hall (1930-2013) was present on "Variants on a Theme of Thelonious Monk (Criss-Cross)" arranged by Gunther Schuller from *Jazz Abstractions* recorded in 1961. In the final minute of the arrangement Hall is

¹⁰² Litweiler, *A Harmolodic Life*, 104.

¹⁰³ Ibid. 157.

present for a group improvisation where Coleman and Eric Dolphy are present. He returned to record two pieces with Coleman on “Good Girl Blues” and “Is It Forever” in September 1972, released in 1982 on Columbia on *Broken Shadows*. His unique sound is present improvising throughout “Good Girl Blues,” though he gets no official solo time. Hall plays a very short introduction and improvises throughout “Is It Forever,” without an arranged solo as well, in a type of precursor to the role of the guitar later in *Prime Time*.

James Blood Ulmer (1940-) truly brought the guitar into Coleman’s musical universe and made a tremendous impact. Ulmer moved to New York City in 1971 and met Coleman through Billy Higgins. Ulmer moved in with Coleman and spent several years studying with him before Coleman formed a quartet with bassist Norris Jones, known as Sirone, and Higgins on drums. Coleman held six months of rehearsals before the group went to Europe. Ulmer went deep into finding a place for the guitar in Harmolodics.

He never had a guitar before me. I was orchestrating his improvised parts as he played them. Instead of setting up sounds for him to play, I would play where he went to. It’s different from following the patterns of chord changes. In Ornette’s music, *the change comes after the phrase*. It allows the soloist to make whatever phrase he wants. I got a chance to solo. I think the guitar worked more with his music than anyone else. I had to learn instant modulation and orchestration, which are now important parts of my conception.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁴ Bourne, Michael. “Ornette’s Interview.” *Downbeat*, 22 Nov. 1973.

He loved that sound that didn't have no changes, didn't have no chords. I dreamt a tuning that didn't have chords and scales to it, and he said, "Oh my God, Blood you just came up with the real Harmolodic transposed notes." We patented the Harmolodic Scale, and the Harmolodic Clef. Harmolodic music isn't free at all. Coleman told me it had to have composition and improvisation.¹⁰⁵

Ulmer's harmolodic tuning for the guitar is a unique creation. In rehearsals, Coleman would call out random and unusual chords to see if Ulmer could keep up. Ulmer dreamed the harmolodic tuning as a solution by tuning all six strings to the same note. Coleman then called out chords that Ulmer could no longer access, so they just started playing and discovered Harmolodic guitar.¹⁰⁶ Ulmer has gone as far as to explain and demonstrate harmolodic tuning on Vimeo. From the bottom up, the A tuning is E A E A A A. The E tuning is E B E E E E.¹⁰⁷

A bootleg of a complete live concert of the Coleman quartet with Ulmer, Sirone, and Higgins on Padua in Italy, 4 May 1974 exists on YouTube.¹⁰⁸ Though

¹⁰⁵ Ulmer, James. "To Be A Harmolodic Player, You Have To Be A Harmolodic Person" Celebrate Ornette! CD Box Set. June 2016.

¹⁰⁶ Himes, Geoffrey. "James 'Blood' Ulmer and Vernon Reid: Harmolodic Blues." JazzTimes. Accessed January 28, 2019. <https://jazztimes.com/features/james-blood-ulmer-and-vernon-reid-harmolodic-blues/>.

¹⁰⁷ "The Unwritten Theory: Guitar Harmolodic." Vimeo. January 27, 2019. Accessed January 28, 2019. <https://vimeo.com/94781026>.

¹⁰⁸ Zechberger, Paul. "Ornette Coleman in Concert Feat. James 'Blood' Ulmer." *YouTube*, YouTube, 23 Apr. 2014, www.youtube.com/watch?v=x54nuTXSEc. Accessed 28 Jan. 2019.

the sound quality is poor, Sirone and Ulmer are audible. Ulmer's approach is startling in its effectiveness as he orchestrates Coleman in a way that only he could achieve and has never been duplicated. At 56 minutes in, Ulmer plays a blues connotated harmolodic solo that lifts the entire group. In 1978 Ulmer was in Germany with Prime Time, in a transitional band with Bern Nix on guitar. Ulmer and Nix play a stunning harmolodic guitar duet At 6:22 on a video of this group on YouTube. In December of 1978 Coleman played the rare role of a sideman in a quartet album led by Ulmer and released on Artists House called *Tales of Captain Black* with Jamaaladeen Tacuma on bass and Denardo on drums. Ornette also produced the record. In a Prime Time type of quartet with simultaneous occurring improvisations, Ulmer becomes the central voice with Coleman recorded on one channel much the way he would have placed one of his two guitars. Coleman's voice and sound are stronger than this position usually calls for. Ulmer is the leader, taking solos with Coleman laying out. Denardo is extremely aggressive, borderline soloing throughout, pushing Tacuma into overdrive. The entire album has a hyper blues laced urgency. Ulmer did not join Prime Time.

Ulmer spoke about some of the more human aspects of having a musical relationship with Coleman.

Well, when you're working with someone close, like the way me and Coleman was, the thought is never what you're doing for each other. The thought is what you're doing for what you're trying to do. Coleman always worked on something specifically and tried to take it to the highest level there is. So, when you get through doing that, you ain't got time to be thinking about influencing somebody. You're trying to finish that

piece of work. The coolest thing he told me (was) that I was a natural harmolodic player. He was one of the persons who could make you feel like what you were doing was so important. That's another thing that I got from Coleman- it's like someone who makes you feel that what you do is good. That's what he done. I think the people that Coleman has been playing with have been changing, not the music. Coleman plays the same music, the same way. The only reason that he sounds different now is because of the people he plays with.¹⁰⁹

Bern Nix (1947-2016) was right out of the Berklee College of music when his father arranged an audition with Coleman in 1975. He joined the original Prime Time with guitarist Charles Ellerbee. Nix had studied traditional jazz guitar, but fully embraced Harmolodics, moving in with Coleman to focus on the process. He was in Prime Time for twelve years from 1975-1987. He recorded with Coleman eight times, often doubling the melody and playing what he saw as improvised counterpoint. Nix still used parts of traditional harmony though he always looked for new ways to open it up. His sound had no pedals or distortion, as he became the bridge between jazz guitar from Charlie Christian to Harmolodics. On *Body Meta*, the second Prime Time album, Nix plays an opening introduction and solo that define what Coleman called the clearest tone of a guitarist for playing Harmolodics, though Nix didn't completely agree.¹¹⁰ In an interview at *All About Jazz*, Nix offered rare insight into Harmolodics from the front line with Coleman.

¹⁰⁹ "JAMES BLOOD ULMER." Miles Davis- The Electric Years- Perfect Sound Forever. Accessed January 28, 2019. <https://www.furious.com/perfect/bloodulmer.html>.

¹¹⁰ As told to the author.

It's a different approach to playing. I listened to Ulmer to see what was going on with Harmolodics and Coleman's sound. I needed to listen to him play. Harmolodics is like playing a standard jazz guitar, but only more contemporary, it's a fresh approach to playing jazz guitar, just a way of looking at music. It's not a system. It's a way of handling the difficulty of dealing with melody, rhythm and harmony by way of utilizing melodic variables. It's exploratory. The harmony doesn't dictate the direction, the melody does. I see it like counterpoint. I said to Ornette that it seemed like counterpoint. He said, 'Well, it's not exactly counterpoint, it's something else.' You shouldn't have to think in terms of the traditional role on your instrument. The guitarist can be thinking like a drummer, or a bassist. You can change at any given minute. It's like an organic kind of music-making. The whole idea is to keep it changing, trying to avoid making it sound too formulaic or predictable. Ornette gave us all these notebooks. We had to write out ideas in the notebooks. I've had these things for years and use them for my own composition.

I listened to some of that music in North Africa when Ornette went there. Sometimes the way the drummers play, something about Prime Time reminds me of the playing in Joujouka, Morocco. I hear that similarity. Ornette spent some time in North Africa hanging out with these guys and playing the music. It's almost like what we were doing is kind of like what they do. There are similarities between how they played and how Prime Time played. It's like everyone is playing a separate melody or a unison but everyone's got... everyone's playing, like, an independent lead.¹¹¹

To me, it's like Zen. There are no exact answers. It's all enigmatic and contradictory. Ornette speaks in puzzles and riddles; you just have to figure it out. It's a metaphysical inquiry into the nature of music. But the whole idea is you can start from whatever your favorite type of music is, and mine is jazz guitar.¹¹²

After Nix left Coleman, he pursued his own music and continued to work with Coleman's ex-wife Jayne Cortez recording a total of seven times. He found it increasingly hard to find work though never gave up, recording a trio record, a solo, and finally forming a dedicated quartet with the author, bassist Francois Grillot, and drummer

¹¹¹ AAJ. "Bern Nix: A History In Harmolodics." *All About Jazz*, 24 Aug. 2009, www.allaboutjazz.com/bern-nix-a-history-in-harmolodics-bern-nix-by-aaj-staff.php?pg=4. Accessed 10 Jan. 2019.

¹¹² Kanzler, George. "Guitarist Enjoys Untying Chords." *The Star-Ledger*, 5 Sept. 1997, pp. 26-26.

Reggie Sylvester in 2010. This group rehearsed weekly and performed more than fifty times including a concert only two days before Nix's death. The author spent many hours on the phone with Nix and was the person who discovered he had died. The Bern Nix quartet recorded one album titled *Negative Capability*. Nix would occasionally play music written by Coleman such as "European Echoes." His written work was influenced by Coleman but the major difference, and what made Nix so unique, is that he applied Harmolodics to a straight-ahead jazz guitar context in a type of coinciding reversal and evolution. Nix would find chords that were derived from a combination of Harmolodics and traditional harmony that had never been heard before and haven't been heard since. When speaking of Harmolodics, Nix would often joke that he was a member of a twelve-step program called Harmolodics anonymous, but that unfortunately, there was no known cure once one had fully engaged the process. Denardo Coleman considered Nix to be a brother, and Nix was booked to play a Prime Time reunion at Lincoln Center scheduled just weeks after his death. The author organized a memorial.¹¹³

Charles Ellerbee joined Coleman with Nix but was coming from a different world. He and Nix formed a partnership of very different perspectives. Of Ellerbee, Nix stated:

¹¹³ O'Haire, Robert. "BERN NIX Memorial 7-8-17 Korean Cultural Center, NYC." YouTube. July 11, 2017. Accessed January 30, 2019. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FD7b8pjaUoM&t=66s>.

Charlie Ellerbee was more of a rock player. He used a lot of things rock guitarists use, like the effects and the pedals. He was listening more to rock than he was to jazz. One thing he told me once he said that the only jazz he's ever been digging was McCoy Tyner because the music McCoy Tyner played reminded him of acid rock!¹¹⁴

Observing a Prime Time rehearsal, writer Howard Mandel noted that Coleman was focused on a point of theory with Ellerbee. Bern Nix was attentive while Ellerbee, who was at that moment missing a job with the disco band Tramps at a record company promo party on a boat in the East River, looked bored.¹¹⁵ Ellerbee recorded eight times with Coleman, and with Nix on every occasion. Robert Palmer reviewed a Prime-Time performance in 1982.

The band includes two guitarists, Charles Ellerbee and Bern Nix, neither of whom plays conventional lead or rhythm guitar. Mr. Ellerbee has been in commercial funk bands and is good at terse scratch-rhythms, but on several tunes from the new album - "Jump Street," "Love Words" - he thickens the texture of the music with boiling, distorted-sounding improvisations that bring Jimi Hendrix to mind. Mr. Nix's guitar is often voiced with Mr. Coleman's alto saxophone for harmony or unison passages; in the improvisations, which are dominated by the saxophone, his principal function seems to be melodic counterpoint.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ AAJ. "Bern Nix: A History In Harmolodics." *All About Jazz*, 24 Aug. 2009, www.allaboutjazz.com/bern-nix-a-history-in-harmolodics-bern-nix-by-aaj-staff.php?pg=4. Accessed 10 Jan. 2019.

¹¹⁵ Mandel, Howard. *Miles, Ornette, Cecil: Jazz beyond Jazz*. London: Routledge, 2015.

¹¹⁶ Palmer, Robert. "ORNETTE COLEMAN'S PROPHETIC JAZZ." *The New York Times*. March 14, 1982. Accessed January 30, 2019. <https://www.nytimes.com/1982/03/14/arts/ornette-coleman-s-prophetic-jazz.html>.

Ellerbe stayed in the Prime-Time family and in 2017 in a reunion concert, two years after Coleman's death, he said it felt like they hadn't missed a day, stating that the occasion was not "oldies but goodies"¹¹⁷

Pat Metheny (1954-) recorded one album with Coleman, *Song X* in 1985 on Geffen Records. He claims the unique position of a guitarist who shared an equal amount of solo space with Coleman much like Don Cherry had on trumpet. Metheny went even further as a contributor and is co-listed in the album credits on four of the eight pieces as composer. Charlie Haden had pushed Coleman for years to collaborate with Metheny who was well-established at the time. He brought Coleman to the Vanguard to hear a trio he was in with Metheny, introduced them, and Coleman and Metheny found they had common ground.¹¹⁸ Metheny was not new to Harmolodics, having recorded and toured with Haden and Dewey Redman, along with Jack DeJohnette on drums on a project titled 80/81 on ECM records during 1980-81.¹¹⁹ In typical Coleman fashion, Metheny and Coleman spent three weeks playing and rehearsing six to twelve hours a day in

¹¹⁷ "'Free Jazz' Visionary Ornette Coleman Is Ready for Prime Time." NBCNews.com. Accessed January 30, 2019. <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/nbcblk/ornette-coleman-jazz-visionary-ready-prime-time-n779871>.

¹¹⁸ Haden, Charlie, and Josef Woodard. *Conversations with Charlie Haden*. Silman-James Press, 2016, 79.

¹¹⁹ Pareles, Jon. "JAZZ'S ODD COUPLE JOIN FORCES TO MAKE SPLENDID MELODY." The New York Times. April 20, 1986. Accessed February 04, 2019. <https://www.nytimes.com/1986/04/20/arts/jazz-s-odd-couple-join-forces-to-make-splendid-melody.html>.

preparation, attempting to invent a new vocabulary.¹²⁰ After recording the band on *Song X*, Coleman, Metheny, Haden, DeJohnette, and Denardo Coleman played at the Caravan of Dreams on New Year's Eve under the name Endangered Species, Coleman wearing a purple cowboy hat and a blue suit. A tour commenced in the Spring of 1986 consisting of varying combinations of the group with Denardo playing very strongly as a full member of the ensemble.¹²¹ Looking closely at the album, Metheny, while taking suggestions from Coleman, added additional chords that he felt were substantial enough that he took credit, notably on "Kathelin Gray." In a fakebook he published of his own music, on "Kathelin Gray" Metheny added the notation "Chords by Pat Metheny." A full analysis of this piece is included in the thesis. In the liner notes to a 2005 twentieth anniversary release of the album Metheny wrote:

This release includes two pieces where I contributed some more conventional blowing changes for us to play on the improvised sections to go with Ornette's great melodies, how rare and beautiful to hear Ornette play on structures like that.

As it will be examined, Coleman may have re-recorded Kathelin Gray in 1995 with his own chord structure to reestablish his authorship of this tender ballad-like piece. Regardless of this, Metheny was inspired by being able to collaborate with Coleman. In conversation with Haden and Josef Woodward he said:

To me, the most inspiring thing about Ornette is that he's somebody who's dedicated his whole musical life to defining his own language and making up his own

¹²⁰ "Lyle Mays / Pat Metheny - Interviews With Lyle Mays And Pat Metheny." Discogs. January 01, 1986. Accessed February 04, 2019. <https://www.discogs.com/Lyle-Mays-Pat-Metheny-Interviews-With-Lyle-Mays-And-Pat-Metheny/release/1545687>.

¹²¹ Litweiler, *A Harmolodic Life*, 190.

way of hearing. He's the only musician I can think of who has a complete musical universe at his fingertips at all times. He made up his own language, his own everything.¹²²

Song X opens with Haden playing a country-swing vibe that only he could create. The melody of "Police People" is then played in unison with Coleman and Metheny who has a processor that makes his sound voice like, and similar to Coleman. DeJohnette and Denardo on drums both fill up lots of space without getting in each other's way, while Haden grounds the entire ensemble. Metheny takes the first solo instantly demonstrating his ability to construct ideas and swing in his own unique way in a harmolodic environment. Coleman switches up "Song X" from playing heads with solos to full on full ensemble improvisation. Denardo's electronic drum processing adds an additional unique sound. The music on the record is more swing based than the funkiness happening in *Prime Time*. Nix told the author he was taken aback by Coleman's use of Metheny since he played in a similar manner and had been with Coleman for ten years when *Song X* was made. To make matters worse, Nix found out about the recording not from Coleman, but from the press. Reviews were positive, mostly focusing on Metheny's ability to adapt. The guitar would never again receive such a prominent role in role in Coleman's world. James Blood Ulmer had given Coleman a harmolodic environment but did not solo extensively. Metheny, by way of star power, and having a genuine gift for

¹²² Haden, Charlie, and Josef Woodard. *Conversations with Charlie Haden*. Silman-James Press, 2016.

improvising in a communicable way with large audiences, stands unique in Coleman's relationship with the guitar, participating more as an equal soloist.

In the fall of 1986 guitarist Chris Rosenberg found a message on his answering machine asking him if he would be interested in auditioning for Prime Time. At the audition in Harlem, only Coleman was present. When asked to play anything he wished, Rosenberg, who studied classical guitar played a movement from the J. S. Bach cello suite and Coleman improvised over it. This was a moment Coleman recreated with Prime Time on his 1995 recording *Tone Dialing* titled "Bach Prelude." After beating out a few remaining guitarists, Rosenberg joined Prime Time with his friend Kenny Wessel, whom he had recommended to Coleman. Rosenberg spoke about rehearsals for *Tone Dialing* with Michael Stephens.

Ornette had by this time built his studio on 125th street over the Metro Train Station, on the sixth floor of the building. For that recording, it took place over a fairly long period of time, and the recording sessions themselves were really long, like fifteen hours. There may have been fifteen versions of each song recorded. There were enough versions of each track to be their own albums. Early on the rehearsals were so long that you really had to put away a chunk of your life to make that commitment. A rehearsal was kind of a laboratory for the kind of music he wanted to make.¹²³

Kenny Wessel played guitar with Coleman from 1988-2000. Wessel and tabla player Badal Roy joined Coleman on the same day and have been close collaborators ever since. Wessel and Roy opened up a Prime Time concert

¹²³ Stephens, Michael. *Experiencing Ornette Coleman*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017, 88-89.

available on YouTube in 1991 in Lugano playing duo.¹²⁴ Wessel was touring with Arthur Prysock when he got the call to audition after the recommendation of his friend Chris Rosenberg. As Wessel explains in the interview later in the thesis, he was permanently changed from the experience in what he feels was a positive way. Wessel is very active in 2019 as both a player and educator in New York City.

¹²⁴ Crownpropeller. "Ornette Coleman Prime Time Lugano 1991 (1/3)." *YouTube*, YouTube, 11 June 2015, www.youtube.com/watch?v=dHYFIXftopw. Accessed 10 Feb. 2019.

9. Bass

The bass in Coleman's world was vital and was almost always present throughout Coleman's entire career and discography. Jimmy Blanton and Charles Mingus had taken steps to free the bass from the role of harmonic and rhythmic support, but as early as 1958 Coleman and Charlie Haden were engaged in a new level of freedom for the instrument in jazz, in a more participatory and improvisational role. At least twenty different bass players crossed paths with Coleman. Charlie Haden and David Izenzon recorded with him more than more than any others, and from 1967-69 both of them were with him. Like the piano, every musician playing bass with Coleman looked for their own way inside, and almost every one that played with Coleman developed a personal approach.

In 1958's *Live At The Hillcrest*, Charlie Haden (1937-2014) had already begun to digest Coleman's approach and was supporting Coleman's step outside of form and traditional chord progressions with Paul Bley also adapting. Haden was present on the famous Coleman album in 1959, *The Shape of Jazz to Come* where Coleman's concept had taken shape into a new form of music. From the very first notes of Haden's bass on Coleman's standard "Lonely Woman" it's not a bass being heard, it's Haden playing his bass. Who he is and what he's playing are more relevant than the responsibility of the bass. Haden still took on the responsibility

of the harmonic gap, and even saw himself as taking over the role of the piano.

Haden explained his relationship to Josef Woodward.

I actually am glad, in a way, that we didn't have a pianist, because it gave me an opportunity to take that role, and I learned a lot from it. I had to play the chords for everyone. I thought that way for myself too, because I'm really a harmony person. I would make sure to lay them down for everyone. I need to hear the harmony man, If I can't hear the harmony, it's just not the same.¹²⁵

Haden didn't just lay down the harmony however, he added the element of swing, rhythmic interaction, and would respond to who was playing in distinct personal ways. A great example is how Haden handles the transition between Coleman and Cherry solos on "Congeniality" from *The Shape Of Jazz to Come*. Haden supports Cherry in a very different way as Cherry is more inclined to stay in certain harmonic areas and modulate less. At the core of Haden's craft is his ability to listen on an extremely deep level and then play in a way that compliments the soloist so effectively, almost instantly in a continual state of open renewal. In 2011 Haden reflected on his formative years with Coleman to Don Heckman.

There's a record we made with Paul Bley called *The Fabulous Paul Bley Quintet at the Hillcrest*. And we're playing tunes like "Klactoveedsedstene," and all those songs with chord changes. And Ornette is playing all the changes. You can hear them. And, man, he used to play chord changes with us all the time. We did it all by ear. At first when we were playing and improvising, we kind of followed the pattern of the song, sometimes. Then, when we got to New York, Ornette wasn't playing on the song patterns, like the bridge and the interlude and stuff like that. He would just play. And that's when I started just following him and playing the

¹²⁵ Haden, Woodward. *Conversations with Charlie Haden*, 19.

chord changes that he was playing on-the-spot new chord structures made up according to how he felt at any given moment. And Cherry was kind of playing like that, too, so Billy and I kind of followed it. The truth is that when we had first met, we were kind of all hearing that way already. We just happened to be at the right place at the right time, all together, to make this thing happen. And it just kept getting better and better.¹²⁶

The contradiction remains in that Coleman moved further and further away playing changes in a conventional way that can be followed. Chords are easier to follow in Coleman's compositions. In improvisations he might play three chords in one bar that don't voice-lead anywhere. Haden's gift was being able to follow Coleman that closely and play in way that made it work. He was the anchor, the tether, and that line that astronauts hold onto when they spacewalk so that they don't drift off into outer space. The primary source Haden and Izenzon used was the melody. As Stephen Rush theorized, the bass line was a result of the melody, and the melody was source code for all musical events, harmonic or contrapuntal. Many composition teachers believe the harmony should be written first when composing. Coleman wrote the melody first. He practiced motivic generation with no regard to tonal hierarchy, and Haden was able to join him on the never-ending adventure.¹²⁷

¹²⁶ Heckman, Don. "Charlie Haden: Everything Man." *JazzTimes*. Accessed January 14, 2019. <https://jazztimes.com/features/charlie-haden-everything-man/>.

¹²⁷ Rush, Stephen. *Free Jazz, Harmolodics, and Ornette Coleman*. New York, NY: Routledge, 2017.

Haden was with Coleman on the next three classic albums on Atlantic before being derailed by a heroin addiction. He returned in 1966 to join Coleman on Blue Note with young Denardo, after a six-year hiatus. Coleman then brought Haden into his trio with Izenzon and Moffett through 1967, with Blackwell replacing Moffett in 1968. Haden recorded with Coleman seven more times before a five-year break in 1971. In 1977 they collaborated as a duo to incredible effect as previously discussed on *Soap Suds* and on “The Golden Number” in the most crystal-clear demonstration of their musical rapport. Eight years later Haden joined Coleman with Pat Metheny to great effect on *Song X*. See the chapter on “Kathelin Gray” for more analysis. The opening of “Police People” from the album features Haden’s unique country blues rhythmic feel and sound. Haden was on a reunion of *The Shape Of Jazz To Come* quartet on the album *In All Languages* in 1987 and was on two more live recordings with the same group again in 1987, and then recorded with Coleman for the last time in 1990. Why Haden didn’t record with Coleman during the last fifteen years of Coleman’s life remains unclear, perhaps they had said everything that needed to be said by this point. Haden owns a unique place in the history of the bass as a master of the instrument and as a key member of Coleman’s inner circle. The musical relationship they shared, based on intuition and trust, remains the benchmark example of Harmolodics, and of the

role the bass plays within. They still played together, as evidenced on YouTube at the North Sea Jazz Festival in 2010 on “Turnaround.”¹²⁸

Before we reach David Izenzon it’s important to examine the bass players that preceded him. Don Payne (1933-2017) played with Coleman in Los Angeles and was a supporter and advocate. Payne got Downbeat to listen to a test pressing of *Something Else!!!!* He also got the Modern Jazz Quartet to listen to Coleman, two important connections. On his one early recording with Coleman, Payne played straight changes, and participated in a lot of preparation and rehearsal for the date. On his solo on “The Blessing” the changes are very clear. Red Mitchell (1927-1992) was an established and respected bop bassist in Los Angeles. Mitchell was a reference to Lester Koenig at Contemporary to consider Coleman as a composer. He was bassist on three pieces on Coleman’s second Contemporary album *Tomorrow Is The Question!* He attempted to adapt to Coleman notably on “Lorraine” though he sounds tentative trying to hold on to the melody and changes during improvisations. On Coleman’s classic blues “Turnaround” Mitchell is the first soloist. In a solo lasting until 3:43 he effectively uses space though continues playing straight time, opening considerably midway through the solo. On “Endless” Mitchell plays it straight though with a slightly elastic, rubbery feel.

¹²⁸ Videoservices, Gilaworks Internet- &. "Ornette Coleman Quartet - North Sea Jazz 2010 (part 4-5)." YouTube. July 05, 2011. Accessed January 18, 2019. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zSVMGoY-Dvs>.

Coleman and Cherry felt he wasn't working, and they drove to San Francisco to persuade Percy Heath (1923-2005) to finish the date. The group does sound more relaxed with Heath on the final six tracks. Heath is more agreeable to the concept, less fearful, and trusted Coleman and Cherry more than the structure. Coleman is breaking free on "Mind and Time." Cherry was also recording with a Pakistani pocket trumpet for the first time. Heath was thirty-six to Coleman's twenty-nine and established with the Modern Jazz Quartet. His support was both musical and personal.¹²⁹

Scott LaFaro (1936-1961) replaced Haden in Coleman's working quartet on Haden's recommendation in January 1961 while Haden left to confront his addiction. LaFaro recorded with Coleman three times before his tragic death in July of the same year in a car accident at only twenty-five years old. LaFaro had also been Haden's roommate in Los Angeles. On December 20th, 1960, LaFaro was present with both his boss Bill Evans and Coleman under the baton of Gunther Schuller recording "Variants on a theme by Thelonious Monk." The very next day LaFaro and Haden played together on Coleman's seminal double quartet *Free Jazz* on December 21st of December of 1960, each finding their own space and having solo features while the other bassist provided support along with drummers Billy Higgins and Ed Blackwell. The bass solos are separated by a brief ensemble

¹²⁹ Litweiler, *A Harmolodic Life*, 65-66.

moment. LaFaro is somewhat of a mythical figure from playing a central role in Bill Evans trio starting in 1959 and his short tenure with Coleman. Coleman said, “He felt superior not only to Negroes, but to whites as well.” LaFaro would complain to Haden that he would never be good enough.¹³⁰ He was a brilliant technician who played more ornamental than integral, freeing Coleman to work more with Ed Blackwell on drums to great effect on the album *Ornette!* recorded in January 1961. LaFaro has an incredible solo ending “WRU” where he sounds more influenced by Coleman’s horn playing than any other bassist. The solo sounds reactionary to the environment, a withheld amount of tension being released. LaFaro had the rare distinction of recording a piece named for him by Coleman titled “The Alchemy of Scott LaFaro,” that was released in 1970 by Atlantic from unreleased sessions without Coleman’s input or authorization on an album they titled *The Art Of The Improvisors*. The piece is extremely fast, and Coleman is on fire. Ironically LaFaro does not solo, though he maintains a burning 4/4 improvised line throughout. On “C & D” LaFaro opens with an arco solo displaying a classical sensibility, though not the unabashed virtuosity that would later arrive from Izenzon. His solo contains a vocal and exploratory nature and seems to short. He died in July of 1961, though Coleman had replaced him by March with Jimmy Garrison to record *Ornette on Tenor*.

¹³⁰ Litweiler, *A Harmolodic Life*, 97.

Jimmy Garrison (1934-1976), recorded three albums with Coleman, before and after his trio with Izenzon and Moffett. He also appears on one unreleased piece from *Ornette on Tenor* that was released on *The Art of the Improvisors* titled "Harlem's Manhattan." Garrison's sound and musical personality that people associate from his work with John Coltrane were already present on *Ornette on Tenor*. He worked with drummer Ed Blackwell's aggressive interaction without any issues and created a space of support, that also contained great group interaction. He did, however, have a personal struggle with Coleman's ideas.

With Ornette I learned how to resolve notes instead of chords. Ornette writes phrases the way he feels them; If it comes out 3 and a half bars then that's it. His playing sometimes leaves you hanging the same way, he leaves you wanting more, leaves you thinking 'Is there more to come?' But it just means it's the end of the phrase and he's moved on.... He said, 'Well, James, just play, and listen, of course, and if there's anything you want to do, just ask. 'You can only go so far in his music without knowing about it, and one night I just exploded.¹³¹

Garrison did just that at the Five Spot, stopping the band and telling them they were all crazy in front of a packed house. Garrison left to join John Coltrane with Coleman's blessing and respect of his musical beliefs¹³² Garrison returned to record twice with Coleman for Blue Note in April and May of 1968 after Coltrane's tragic passing in July of 1967. He was joined by his partner with Coltrane, Elvin Jones on drums, and tenor saxophonist Dewey Redman from Fort Worth. These

¹³¹ Heckman, Don. "Jimmy Garrison." *Downbeat*, March 9, 1967.

¹³² Spellman, *Four Lives in the Bebop Business*, 145.

two records, *New York is Now*, and *Love Call* are extraordinary in witnessing the power of drummer Elvin Jones, to be discussed in the following chapter. Critics were at a loss in reviewing these albums feeling Garrison was somehow out of place. Garrison simply plays himself on these sessions picking up where he left off and as he continued to find his own unique way to relate to the music. Group interaction was at a high level. Garrison and Jones switch up everything as much as Izenzon and Moffett did in their own way, building on their shared experience with Coltrane. Criticism of Garrison not following Coleman calls into question Coleman's own penchant to free the bass from role-playing. Garrison chose to follow Coleman more rhythmically than harmonically, perhaps still having the issue of not knowing exactly what harmony Coleman was playing. When he does walk in time it does feel almost like a release. When Garrison begins playing during Coleman improvisations in his own style, such as on "Airborne" from *Love Call*, or on "The Garden of Souls" from *New York is Now!* he is not only effective, but his honesty and strength of musical personality are tenets from the highest levels of the book of Harmolodics.

David Izenzon (1932-1979) was one of Coleman's greatest bass players, recording fourteen albums with him, and a member of the trio that some musicians today consider Coleman's greatest band. Izenzon played with the NBC orchestra and had classical technique and was a master of the bow. In a 1966 documentary from the filming of the soundtrack to *Who's Crazy?* Izenzon said he refused to sign a contract with NBC because that would in effect turn

him into a slave, as conductors force allegiance to them before the music. With Coleman, the music came first. Inside the trio, Izenzon spoke of the audience being first, but that they did have a devilish thing happening inside the group to one up each other through improvisation. Izenzon also spoke of staying inside the group for love of Coleman and Moffett though he had dreams of disappearing from the scene entirely. The documentary also has a clip of Coleman playing piano almost like Cecil Taylor in order to tune his violin.¹³³ Through 1965 Izenzon played on important Coleman albums. *Live at Town Hall*, *The Croydon concert*, *The Chappaqua Suite*, and *Who's Crazy?* In 1965 Coleman's *The Ornette Coleman Trio at the Golden Circle* in Stockholm contained examples of some of Izenzon's best work with Coleman. Thom Jurek noted that no matter Coleman went, Izenzon was there at exactly the same time with an uncanny sense of counterpoint, and he often changed the harmonic mode by force, with either stunning arco or pizzicato work.¹³⁴ Izenzon plays an incredible arco solo on Coleman's ballad "Dawn" containing deep emotional expression as he also conveyed at Town Hall on Coleman's "Sadness." Coleman next had both Izenzon and Haden together on five live recordings through 1968. In February of 1968 two sets of Coleman with them

¹³³ NoteVerticali, Redazione. "Ornette Coleman Trio Performing The Soundtrack 1966 DVD Quality." YouTube. June 16, 2015. Accessed January 14, 2019. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GzoboHzKOGU>.

¹³⁴ Jurek, Thom. "At the "Golden Circle" Stockholm, Vol. 1 - Ornette Coleman Trio, Ornette Coleman | Songs, Reviews, Credits." AllMusic. Accessed January 14, 2019. <https://www.allmusic.com/album/at-the-golden-circle-stockholm-vol-1-mw0000216128>.

and Ed Blackwell were recorded in Italy that are available on a CD release titled *Ornette Coleman Quartet The Love Revolution*. On the first CD on “Lonely Woman,” it’s clear that Haden is playing pizzicato, and Izenzon arco, their two specialties in collaboration. This effect works especially well on Coleman’s ballad that he performs on trumpet titled “Forgotten Children” where Izenzon doubles the melody on arco while Haden strums. Haden then continues in support of an Izenzon arco solo.

The next bassist to work with Coleman was Norris “Sirone” Jones (1940-2009). YouTube has one clip of this incredible band with Billy Higgins and James “Blood” Ulmer playing incredible Harmolodic guitar on Coleman’s piece “Theme From A Symphony”. Sirone’s strong sound and personality are not easily heard, but his presence in the group is felt. Close-ups show both his eyes rolling to the back of his head in total surrender to the music. Sirone found the perfect balance of suggested role-playing by improvising with his own sound and style in this somewhat lost Coleman band.¹³⁵

Coleman heard of a nineteen-year-old electric bassist from Philadelphia named Rudy McDaniel from Miles Davis Guitarist Reggie Lucas and Davis percussionist James Mtume. In 1975 he invited him to come rehearse the early concept for Coleman’s famous electric band Prime Time. After a month of

¹³⁵ P3ximus. “Ornette Coleman - Rome, Music Inn 1975.” *YouTube*, YouTube, 24 Nov. 2013, www.youtube.com/watch?v=FIY8puv3-tw.

rehearsing, McDaniel, now named Jamaaladeen Tacuma went to France with Coleman and ended up rehearsing for four months. Tacuma recorded on both *Dancing In Your Head* and *Body Meta* in 1975. As soon as “Theme From A Symphony” begins on “Dancing In Your Head” Tacuma, on electric bass, plays high uneven lines that converse with Coleman providing a melodic counterpoint that sounds brand new and unique in Coleman’s world. Tacuma at times plays the melody and modulates through several keys on his own. He also contributed to a seventies sound. In December 1978 he recorded with Coleman on an album by Guitarist James “Blood” Ulmer. In 1979 Tacuma recorded with Coleman on *Of Human Feelings*. Coleman had two guitarists and two drummers with Tacuma in the center almost playing like a third guitar, very prominent in the mix. With the different environment and electric bass Tacuma had by this point redefined the bass in Coleman’s music. He improvised constantly in a very free manner, providing just enough bass conceptually, though he is often freer than Coleman himself, swirling around, stalking him. Tacuma next recorded with Coleman in 1985 on a live concert titled *Opening The Caravan Of Dreams*. Here Coleman added second bassist Al MacDowell, who provided a counterweight of sorts to Tacuma while making Coleman’s music denser and more complicated. MacDowell slaps the bass more and with less room to operate, Tacuma slowed down somewhat as Prime Time swelled to a living orchestral mass of four electric lines intertwining while Coleman floated on top. On “Compute” Coleman and Tacuma have an

extreme duet with Coleman sawing away at the violin. In *Downbeat*, Tacuma explained his take on two bassists.

That was Ornette's plan, to make me freer. He could see that he created a monster and that I'm not going to be satisfied unless he opened other doors for me. So, the other bassist was added. Ornette paved a new way for me to play and not get in his way or anyone's way, and still express what I wanted to communicate and still be part of the organization.¹³⁶

Tacuma's next recording with Coleman came in 1978 titled *In all Languages*, a double LP with the original quartet and Prime Time on separate LP's. "Story Tellers" opens with a Tacuma and MacDowell duet improvising on the melody. MacDowell plays in a more ensemble fashion keeping the group together while Tacuma improvises. Fast forward to 2010 and Tacuma produced a tribute album with Coleman present titled *For the Love of Ornette*. Tacuma picked up where he left off with Coleman playing free, but with more extreme melodicism. The album opens with Coleman instructing the band saying "Fellas, forget the notes and get to the idea." "Movement one" begins with a touching duet with Tacuma and Coleman, one that sounds almost like a private session from Coleman's music room in his Chelsea loft. In notes to the album, Tacuma revealed that at one point in his life, a spiritual path he was on caused him to consider stopping playing music. Coleman traveled to Philadelphia and met with Tacuma's mother, pleading

¹³⁶ Tinder, Cliff. "Electric Bass in the Harmolodic Pocket." *Downbeat*, Apr. 1982, pp. 19-71.

with her to urge him to rejoin music. Tacuma did, and on the album, he expresses gratitude and Love for Coleman.¹³⁷

In 1987 Coleman recorded *Virgin Beauty* with MacDowell and Chris Walker on bass. Walker was more conservative, and MacDowell slapped more aggressively on the date, filling some of the space previously held by Tacuma. MacDowell had more history with Coleman, first meeting him at only seventeen years old and appearing with him in 1976 at a live concert at Lincoln Centers Avery Fisher Hall.¹³⁸ “Honeymooners” features both bass players, Walker having a very fluid style and great technique. Both play a guitar-based style influenced from Jaco Pastorius and Stanley Clarke. MacDowell performed live with Coleman and recorded with him on *Tone Dialing* in 1995, a Prime Time album influenced by Hip Hop and Funk. Brad Jones also played bass on the album, his only documented work with Coleman. He played acoustic bass within all the electronics and opens “When Will I See You Again” with solo bass, then walking in time when the melody starts in a kind of quartet-Prime Time reverse methodology. The piece fades out unexpectedly halfway through. MacDowell played with Coleman on his last record, live in Genoa in 2010 on electric bass in tandem with Tony Falanga on acoustic bass. That same year they both played with Coleman at the North Sea

¹³⁷ “For The Love of Ornette.” *Atom*, Jamaaladeenmusic.com/album/36564/for-the-love-of-ornette.

¹³⁸ “Al MacDowell.” The City Boys Allstars. October 14, 2015. Accessed January 18, 2019. <http://www.thecityboysallstars.com/the-musicians/al-macdowell/>.

Festival with MacDowell representing Prime Time in a continued type of acoustic electric juxtaposition. MacDowell plays aggressive non-jazz rhythms, doubling the melody with Coleman and doesn't hold back.¹³⁹

Barre Phillips (1934-) crossed plays with Coleman as early as 1958 in Sausalito, California and said Coleman was already trying to impart the ideas of Harmolodics to other musicians, many of who were confused by it. In 1962 Coleman sat in with Phillips but then asked him why he was still playing "school music," which led Phillips to break up the group and move to New York City. In 1975 Phillips got the call to sub for Haden at the Bologna jazz festival in Italy and held his own. In 1991 Phillips was asked by Coleman to record with him on the *Naked Lunch* movie soundtrack with Howard Shore. Phillips recalled that at one-point Coleman was asked to re-record a solo over the orchestra by Howard Shore because he was playing sharp. Coleman then played completely in the tempered scale, and then said to Shore: "You might like that, but that's not me, and it's not interesting."¹⁴⁰ The seven trio selections that Coleman composed for Phillips and Denardo were very effective. Phillips had an extremely personal sound and personal rhythm. His forward momentum, slightly different from both Ornette

¹³⁹ Videoservices, Gilaworks Internet- &. "Ornette Coleman Quartet - North Sea Jazz 2010 (part 3-5)." YouTube. July 05, 2011. Accessed January 18, 2019. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kaQHB3i3RzU>.

¹⁴⁰ Phillips, Barre. "Ornette Coleman 1930-2015: Barre Phillips - The Wire." The Wire Magazine - Adventures In Modern Music. Accessed January 20, 2019. https://www.thewire.co.uk/in-writing/essays/ornette-coleman-1930-2015_barre-phillips.

and Denardo, created an interesting effect. “Intersong” is a tender ballad that is almost a duo with Coleman and Phillips. “Writeman” opens with aggressive bowing from Phillips who switches to pizzicato for extremely fast improvisation. Phillips interacts with both Coleman’s simultaneously and sometimes modulates *before* Coleman.

I first met Charnett Moffett (1967-) at Coleman’s Chelsea loft in 2005. Besides the musical exchange and my witnessing that Moffett had completely absorbed Coleman’s process, I was struck by Coleman’s looking at him, then reaching out to grab him and hug him. Moffett is the son of Charles Moffett from Coleman’s great trio during the sixties. Charnett possesses an incredible virtuosic technique. He recorded two albums in 1996 in Harlem with Coleman, the fore mentioned *Three Women* and *Hidden Man* with pianist Geri Allen and Denardo. When asked about the role of the bass in Coleman’s world Moffett said:

I was rehearsing with Ornette once and I asked him, ‘What’s the bass part?’ and he said, ‘You’re already playing the bass; now play the *idea*.’ When you improvise, it’s all about the idea. And you’re always discovering new ways to approach that idea.¹⁴¹

On *Hidden Man* and *Three Women*, Moffett begins “What reason” playing the melody on solo bass altering his sound on each take. Moffett is like Tacuma in

¹⁴¹ Randall, Mac. "Charnett Moffett - On Loss, Love & Vibrational Healing." JazzTimes. Accessed January 20, 2019. <https://jazztimes.com/departments/overdue-ovation/charnett-moffett-overdue-ovation/>.

his ability to play just enough in a supporting role but play mostly free, with an endless string of ideas in conversation with Coleman, Allen, and Denardo all at the same time. The differences being the acoustic bass, acoustic bass technique, and the more jazz-based environment. Moffett doesn't provide a walking bass line for a sustained period, preferring to play ideas in reaction to the music. On "European Echoes" from *Three Women*, Moffett's plays incredible pizzicato improvisation while Allen and Ornette play the melody in a stunning display of speed and dexterity.

Greg Cohen (1953-), known for his work with John Zorn and Woody Allen, handled the pizzicato bass roll on Coleman's Pulitzer Prize winning release *Sound Grammar* in 2005. Cohen's strategy was to construct a fast-up-tempo bass line throughout the record while Tony Falanga was free to soar with improvisations on his bow. The defined territorial strategy and boundaries worked. In 2006 at Carnegie hall, Coleman attempted adding Al MacDowell on electric as a third bassist with mixed results.¹⁴² Cohen and Falanga are featured together on *Sound Grammar* on a ballad titled "Once Only" that works extraordinarily well. Cohen left Coleman to focus on Zorn's Masada and was the person that introduced

¹⁴² Ratliff, Ben. "A Three-Bass Happening at Carnegie Hall." *The New York Times*, 19 June 2006, www.nytimes.com/2006/06/19/arts/music/19orne.html. Accessed 20 Jan. 2019.

photographer John Rogers to Coleman, which led to my meeting him. Falanga auditioned for Coleman in 2002.

Ornette started auditioning classical bassists. As he said at the time, 'I don't want anyone with a jazz influence—I want a new set of ideas.' He happened to audition my friend John Feeney, the Principal Bassist for the Orchestra of St. Luke's. John played a solo bass piece at his audition, and Ornette was very impressed. Then Ornette asked him to play free on the spot—any tempo, any key, whatever he wanted. But Feeney wasn't comfortable doing that; he didn't have a jazz background, and he didn't really know who Ornette was. John just couldn't hang with the free thing, but he told Ornette, 'I know somebody who would be perfect for this.' I came in the next day and nailed the audition. "Ornette said, 'Just play,' and I was like, 'Yeah, let's go!' And he dug that. He asked me to join the band, and from there it was an ongoing process of studying his concept and working it out on the bandstand."¹⁴³

Coleman's last official recording in 2010, a live concert in Genoa Italy had Falanga and MacDowell both playing bass. Like he did with Cohen, Falanga claimed the bow territory while MacDowell on electric bass played chords and melodies like he did with Prime Time. Falanga spoke about his musical relationship with MacDowell.

We're not looking to out-do each other, we're looking to complement each other to make the music stronger. Ornette wants you to come up with new stuff all the time, and he wants it to happen on the bandstand, not in the practice room. That's where the ideas have to emerge—from the tune, from the audience, from us. And he wants each of your spontaneous ideas to trigger another new idea. If you play something that really works and you take that same idea to a concert the next day, Ornette will do everything he can to destroy it. It may have happened so well the night before—the audience is going nuts and everything—but he won't

¹⁴³ Milkowski, Bill. "Tony Falanga & Al MacDowell, Ornette Coleman's Two-Bass Tandem." BassPlayer.com. December 01, 2010. Accessed January 20, 2019. <https://www.bassplayer.com/artists/tony-falanga-amp-al-macdowell-ornette-colemans-two-bass-andem>.

want to repeat that idea. He'll say, 'I was hoping that you guys would find something better ... because it exists.' That's what's so special about him. He wants to keep it fresh, happening, and in-the-moment all of the time. In Ornette's band, you have to keep making it better—no ifs, ands, or buts.¹⁴⁴

In seeking out any other bassists to play with Coleman, Art Davis played with Coleman in a second attempt at a double quartet that was never recorded. Buster Williams subbed for Charlie Haden on occasion.¹⁴⁵ Christian McBride played with Coleman when he sat in with Sonny Rollins at the Beacon theatre in September 2010.¹⁴⁶ I have also witnessed bassist Hilliard Greene play with Coleman at his Chelsea loft. Greene went to study with Coleman on five occasions.¹⁴⁷ There are undoubtedly others that crossed path with Coleman, including Shayna Dulberger, again initiated by John Rogers.¹⁴⁸ The bass held a unique place in Coleman's music. With the eventual absence of the piano in most situations, the bass was the only connection to Coleman's approach to using harmony with another musician. Every person that took the space had to work with Coleman to

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Litweiler, *A Harmolodic Life*, 164.

¹⁴⁶ Carroll, Christopher. "The Singular Sound of Sonny Rollins." *The New York Review of Books*. Accessed January 20, 2019. <https://www.nybooks.com/daily/2012/08/10/sonny-rollins-singular-sound/>.

¹⁴⁷ As told to the author.

¹⁴⁸ Rogers, John. "My Friend, Ornette Coleman." *NPR*, NPR, 15 June 2015, www.npr.org/sections/ablogsupreme/2015/06/15/414007418/my-friend-ornette-coleman. Accessed 21 Jan. 2019.

find out how they could be themselves in Coleman's world. While Haden will always be known for a profound connection, David Izenzon, Sirone, Jamaaladeen Tacuma, Al MacDowell, Barre Phillips, Charnett Moffett, and Tony Falanga all shared a special musical and human exchange with Ornette Coleman.

10. Drums

Having examined Coleman's bass players, we have already begun to examine the drummers he played with as the bass and drums are so bonded. The striking difference is that there are far fewer musicians that held down this unique chair, with four specific drummers that are on the majority of Coleman's discography. Billy Higgins, Ed Blackwell, Charles Moffett, and Denardo Coleman adapted their own styles to embrace Coleman's concept more than any others.

Billy Higgins (1936-2001) was the first drummer to record with Coleman, and was a member of what people call the classic Coleman quartet with Don Cherry and Charlie Haden. Higgins is on thirteen Coleman recordings with Coleman, the majority with Charlie Haden on bass. Los Angeles was pivotal in the development of Coleman's long-term musical relationships, and that's where he met Higgins. Like Haden and Cherry, Higgins was into bebop, but willing to explore the new compositions and idea of improvisation presented by Coleman, six years his senior. Higgins plays the straight man on Coleman's first recording *Something Else!!* that was very thoroughly rehearsed by Coleman. His melodic ensemble playing on "The Blessing" and hitting on an arranged 4th beat on the super-fast "Chippie," stand out. Higgins was playing the role and swinging, though

Coleman would eventually attempt to get drummers to abandon form and role-playing. His eventual goal for them became to “just be the drums.”¹⁴⁹ On Coleman’s third record on Atlantic, *The Shape Of Jazz To Come*, Higgins sound is intrinsic to the music’s success, notably on the classic “Lonely Woman.” On the famous Coleman piece, Higgins plays a super-imposed double time that coincides with Haden playing a far slower melodic motif. The juxtaposition reveals a new way for the rhythm section to play. On “Congeniality” Higgins still plays melodic ensemble hits and swings when Haden walks, but the horn and bass are up front, both musically and dynamically. In 1960, while playing at the Five Spot, Higgins had his cabaret card revoked leading to a seven-year period playing without Coleman.¹⁵⁰ Higgins played a lot of hard bop during this period, leading to the call from Jackie McLean and reunion with Coleman on *Old and New Gospel* in 1967. In an environment where McLean was stepping out and Coleman was stepping in, Higgins became the glue, working with bassist Scott Holt to hold it all together. Higgins old gospel beat on “Old Gospel” is infectious. As he did with the bass, Coleman used two drummers combining Higgins with Ed Blackwell both live and in the studio on the records *Free Jazz*, *Broken Shadows*, and *Science Fiction*. Higgins always maintained the classic sound from “The Shape Of Jazz To Come” on future recordings with Coleman, with a fast light touch on the cymbals still

¹⁴⁹ As told to the author.

¹⁵⁰ Litweiler, *A Harmolodic Life*, 81.

allowing the bass and horns to play up front on *In All Languages* in 1987. On classic quartet reunion concerts in 1987 and 1990 Higgins sounds louder, possibly a result of the recording and the live situations. Higgins told Val Wilmer "You're not supposed to rape the drums; you make love to them as far as I'm concerned."¹⁵¹ Higgins will forever hold a place in Coleman's music. As a master of hard bop as well, he appears on more than seven-hundred recordings!

Ed Blackwell (1929-1992) played on nineteen recordings with Coleman, and they shared a deep history. They met in 1949 in New Orleans.

When I heard Ornette for the first time, I felt the happiness he generates. That was one of the main things I loved about his playing. It was so free, although he had so many terrible experiences behind him because of the way he played. I couldn't understand why people couldn't hear it.¹⁵²

In 1953 when Coleman tried Los Angeles for a second time, he roomed with Blackwell in Watts when they were both extremely broke. Ellis Marsalis mentioned a moment when Blackwell turned a song around on a thirty-two-bar structure, which stopped Coleman from finishing his phrase. Coleman stopped the group and suggested that his phrase was more important than the form- a key harmolodic and Coleman moment.¹⁵³ Marsalis believed that the Blackwell-

¹⁵¹ Fordham, John. "Obituary: Billy Higgins." *The Guardian*. May 07, 2001. Accessed January 21, 2019. www.theguardian.com/news/2001/may/07/guardianobituaries.johnfordham.

¹⁵² Litweiler, *A Harmolodic Life*, 38.

¹⁵³ Wilmer, *As Serious as Your Life: John Coltrane and beyond*, 60.

Coleman connection was so strong that no other rhythm section players were necessary when they played together.

The things Blackwell and Ornette did together accentuate a certain kind of rhythmic importance and rhythmic emphasis that was in Ornette's music. Their teaming was sufficient without other rhythm section players. The harmony that comes from the piano, bass, or guitar, was not necessary¹⁵⁴

Blackwell believed Coleman was trying to escape four-beat measures and that his own experiments in time-keeping helped them both break free.¹⁵⁵ His debut recording with Coleman came in 1960 replacing Higgins on *This Is Our Music*. Blackwell interacts with the group in a much different way, breaking rolls, leaving phrases unresolved, and most noticeably, interacting with Coleman by shadowing almost every note he plays, sometimes even finishing his phrase for him. Blackwell's playing completely changes the dynamics of Coleman's music in this way, moving the drums from role-playing to active participation in the improvisation, a true Coleman innovation. Coleman's album *Ornette!* on Atlantic in 1961 contains a piece titled "T & T" where a melody is only used to introduce a long Blackwell solo, in a complete feature for the drums. On "Proof Readers" Blackwell almost replaces the bass played by Scott LaFaro as the instrument primarily interacting with Coleman, forcing LaFaro into role playing. Blackwell was very strong throughout this album, one of the highlights of his playing career with

¹⁵⁴ Ibid. 62.

¹⁵⁵ Litweiler, *A Harmolodic Life*, 46-47.

Coleman. In 1961 Blackwell played on the fore-mentioned *Ornette on Tenor* and was more comfortable and aggressive in the environment, than bassist Jimmy Garrison. Besides the joint work with Higgins, Blackwell continued to work with Coleman into the early 1970's. He fought with kidney problems for most of his life and died in 1992. Coleman's *Free Jazz* on Atlantic with Higgins in the left channel and Blackwell on the right channel is the ultimate example of their contrasting styles in Coleman's world. Higgins light and fast cymbals alongside Blackwell's popping and rolling toms and snare have been a future clinic for drummers on how to work together ever since.

Incredibly, a surfaced bootleg cassette recording of a Coleman rehearsal of the band from the late sixties with both Haden and Izenzon on bass, contains several directives from Coleman to Blackwell. Even after years of collaboration, Coleman continues to try and break Blackwell free from role-playing. The following are from Coleman to Blackwell.

We're conditioned to sound like we're going somewhere rather than being where we are.

You played that idea like you had to play another idea behind it.

Whatever you play, see if you get a feeling that the bass or saxophone cause you to take an idea to a certain place rhythmically to you thinking that you have to complete it.

You're doing what I told you to avoid doing.

Blackwell: Play without thinking I have to complete it?

Coleman asks the bass players to not play 2 5 1 progressions and asks all of them not to be the background, calling them to reach for stone presence, even if they feel he's crazy.¹⁵⁶

Charles Moffett (1929-1997) went back the furthest with Coleman, all the way back to High School in Fort Worth. Moffett also played trumpet and played in a band with Coleman and Prince Lasha in high school called The Jam Jivers. Coleman was his best man and played at his wedding in 1953. In 1961 he moved to New York City to work with Coleman's new band with Jimmy Garrison and Bobby Bradford. Coleman had tried Pete LaRoca and Roy Haynes before settling on Moffett, and after several weeks of rehearsal they played the Five Spot.¹⁵⁷ Garrison was replaced by Izenzon and Bradford left in frustration because Coleman would work sporadically and turn down jobs unless the money was correct, leading to the Ornette Coleman Trio. Their first big concert was the famous self-produced Town Hall, released on ESP in 1962. Moffett's natural relationship to music was rooted more in swing. He and Izenzon would set up transitions with or without Coleman, and his drive brought Coleman slightly into more grounded improvisation on alto saxophone. At Town Hall they were starting to develop their group sound and relationship, with Izenzon's bow deep in the mix. After Coleman's sabbatical, he

¹⁵⁶ Music, We Should Share. "Ornette Coleman Rehearsal." YouTube. June 11, 2018. Accessed January 21, 2019. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=39CMBYFGkas&t=9s>.

¹⁵⁷ Litweiler, *A Harmolodic Life*, 101.

reformed the trio to be featured on *The Chappaqua Suite* in 1965. For some listeners, Coleman has never had as much swing in his music as on this recording, reacting to Moffett's driving momentum. Moffett traveled to Europe for the Croydon concert, live recordings at the Tivoli and in Paris before working on another soundtrack with Coleman titled *Who's Crazy?* There's a telling moment in a documentary of the making of *Who's crazy?* when Moffett becomes angry with the producer and Coleman gets him to relax.¹⁵⁸ The famous Golden Circle concert in Sweden was next. Along the way Moffett and Izenzon took stronger positions within the trio moving far from role playing, but still swinging, and Izenzon sometimes improvising aggressively. Eventually in 1967 Haden joined. Coleman then added Blackwell. With the drums covered, Moffett returned to trumpet and added vibraphone. Moffett was fired without explanation, though he felt it might be due to so much doubling, and not playing the drums. He returned to public school teaching and still played music.¹⁵⁹ He recorded with Coleman nine times. He also had five children that became musicians, including Charnett on bass, and Cody on drums whom the author played with at jam sessions that Moffett ran at the Blue Note in New York City in the early 90's. Moffett had me improvise with

¹⁵⁸ NoteVerticali, Redazione. "Ornette Coleman Trio Performing The Soundtrack 1966 DVD Quality." YouTube. June 16, 2015. Accessed January 22, 2019. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GzoboHzKOGU&t=858s>.

¹⁵⁹ Litweiler, *A Harmolodic Life*, 125-126.

only him on drums playing very aggressively and explained that when it's just drums and a horn, that's when you *go for it*.

Denardo Coleman (1956-) ties Ed Blackwell, recording with Coleman nineteen times. Ornette's decision to record with Denardo on *The Empty Foxhole* at ten years old remains controversial. My full interview with him is included in the thesis. Ornette doubled down on his own philosophy when he chose to record with his ten-year-old son. He liked that Denardo was free of trying to please any critics and was too young to have any political agenda. Charlie Haden played bass and took more control over the tempo. Critic Pete Welding felt that Denardo's playing worked well, and he was responsive to his father's playing. Freddie Hubbard said the music sounded like a little kid fooling around.¹⁶⁰ Close listening shows that Denardo listened to and worked with his father quite well, and he contributes to the conversation musically as an important part of the group. He's not role-playing, or imitating. The blueprint of his future style was already present. His semi-broken march on the title tune contributes to the mood and the visual. Throughout the recording, while it's clear that the music was rehearsed, he made his own musical decisions. As he grew older Denardo strengthened his concept, recording on *Ornette at 12* in 1968, and *Crisis* in 1969. A ten-year span then took place during which he took over more managerial tasks before he returned on *Of Human Feelings* in 1979 making him the only drummer to play in both Coleman's

¹⁶⁰ Litweiler, *A Harmolodic Life*, 121.

acoustic and electric music. Denardo's concept works especially well in the Prime Time environment. In 1985 Coleman's string quartet with Denardo titled *Prime Design / Time Design* stands out. He plays very aggressively almost continually, making the piece sound like no other string quartet before or since. His thick and multi-textured playing suggested multiple time signatures and a unique technique and sound on the drums that is entirely original. One of his unique skills that I have experienced in person, is to create the feeling of unusual tempos and time signatures without explicitly playing them. I've heard Coleman play in a way that suggests possibly the fastest tempo of all time, but at a dynamic where you can still play over it in any time. 1985 also saw the release of Coleman's collaboration with guitarist Pat Metheny on *Song X* on which Denardo and Jack DeJohnette both play drums. Coleman played at times on a processed kit that played other sounds such as a horse whinnying or a woman's ecstatic moan as heard on "Compute." Both drummers together create a wall of sound. "Endangered Species" takes the wall of percussive sound to the extreme, with urgent crashing sonic waves that never crest. From 1987-1988 Denardo shared the Prime-Time drum chair with Calvin Weston, who Coleman had started working with when Weston was nineteen. On the record *In All Languages*," Denardo plays a groove that could work fine in any eighties pop or rock song, giving the music the sound of the period in which it was made, possibly one of Coleman's goals. Later in 1995 Denardo gives the music a nineties feel, including a hip-hop orientation on "Search For Life." In 1996 Denardo was the only drummer in the quartet with Geri Allen and Charnett Moffett on

Sound Museum: Three Women, and *Sound Museum: Hidden man*. These two recordings may be the best example of his craft on the drums as an equal ensemble member where he is entirely himself, notably with the fast but light cymbal touch and the rolling toms. “City Living” is a good example, as well as Denardo’s opening solo on “Stopwatch.” Denardo’s final triumph is being the only drummer on the Pulitzer Prize winning *Sound Grammar* in 2005. Working with the ensemble or shadowing his father, his propulsion of the two-bass ensemble is in perfect balance. The first piece “Jordan” displays the super-tempo described earlier. Denardo is the definitive harmolodic drummer. He reflected on his father after his death in a very open piece titled “My Father Was Deep.”

I spent a long time playing with my father, recording, traveling, managing, fighting, endlessly laughing, and going from one exhilarating experience to another. You had to be immersed in Ornette World to realize this wasn’t merely his music — this was how he thought, how he lived. Back in the day we would go real late at night to his favorite Chinese restaurant, at 21 Mott Street, and he would order ten dishes even though there were only four of us. He liked to have lots of different dishes to taste and then to mix together. That’s right, even our dinners were Harmolodic. And forget about giving away the extra food to a homeless person – Dad would see a homeless person on the way home and invite him to sleep at his house.

I started managing my father’s career in the 80’s, in my mid-20s. I had been out of college for a few years and playing with him. My father would enjoy a great run of activity and success and then shut it all down for a while, frustrated yet again by the music business. He always felt taken advantage of by managers, promoters, record companies. Finally, I couldn’t sit by and watch the endless cycle of boom and bust any longer. One day I just said, “Let me manage you. You won’t have to stop and wonder if you are being ripped off.” He said okay, and for the next 30 years we did our best to turn ideas into projects.

My father was deep, meaning his way of thinking and intuition could not be tracked. But he always seemed to bring new insight, new logic to whatever he was contemplating. The sound of his horn reflected this depth, the depth of the

emotion of the raw soul. His concepts so advanced, so intellectual, yet his expression so human, so direct. He created and spoke his own language. For some his music was too complicated, too abstract, nothing to grab on to, just too out there. For others it was utterly profound because it spoke directly to the brain and to the soul simultaneously. As he would say, "It's about life. You can't kill life." He was obsessed with expressing life through sound. He went into its properties as scientists had explored genomes, discovering DNA. He called his science Harmolodic. Open thinking, equality, freedom, the pursuit of ideas, helping others all included. He would say, "It's about being as human as possible."¹⁶¹

Elvin Jones's (1927-2004) two records with Coleman on Blue Note, *New York Is Now* and *Love Call* in 1968 are a testament to his power. Even in an environment created by Coleman, Jones has tremendous influence on the music by way of his musical personality. He adapts to Coleman's compositions and concept on his own terms, and his high energy causes Coleman to raise his own playing level and urgency. "Round Trip," "Airborne," and "Check-Out Time" are all good examples where Jones up-tempo polyrhythms constantly boil over in wonderful tandem with Jimmy Garrison. During his improvisations Coleman is not leading Jones, rather he is adapting to where Jones takes him.

Ronald Shannon Jackson (1940-2013) also made two records with Coleman, having much the same effect as Jones, where his personality almost dominates the music, now with Prime Time. *Dancing In Your Head* and *Body Meta* from the mid-seventies are *all* Jackson. His Texas Blues based rhythms define the two albums.

¹⁶¹ "My Father Was Deep by Denardo Coleman." Ornette Coleman. Accessed January 22, 2019. www.ornettecoleman.com/father-deep-denardo-coleman/.

Like so many others in Coleman's universe, he came up in Fort Worth Texas.

Guitarist Jack DeSalvo who played with Jackson told the author that Coleman encouraged Jackson to play flute to compose, which Jackson did, embracing Harmolodics on his own terms. In an interview, Jackson revealed how he beat out seventeen other drummers auditioning for Coleman.

When I met Ornette that Sunday, he had already tried out seventeen drummers. The problem he was having was that he had this nineteen-year-old kid from Philadelphia playing electric bass. He was wanting to go electric. I had been practicing Buddhism and my attitude had changed a hell of a lot. I was trying to make everything positive and not dwell in the negative. What happened with the other drummers, because he told me, was after they got through playing, they all enjoyed playing with Ornette, but they would tell him that he needed to get an upright bass player and so he would never call them back. And when I went around there, he left us in the loft, Bern Nix, Jamaaladeen, and myself. He left us for about four hours, and he came back and asked Jamaaladeen and Bern how it was, and they said it was beautiful and so that is how I got the gig.¹⁶²

Ed Blackwell and Denardo both stand as the drummers that spent the most time with Coleman, both masters of Harmolodic rhythm with their own musical identities. Drummers had a unique power in Coleman's world, free of harmony, free from form, and free of role-playing to be who they truly were. Giving drummers that much space could be dangerous, but Coleman often had *two* drummers and still made it work. Like Denardo said, he had it all figured out.

¹⁶² "FIRESIDE CHAT WITH: RONALD SHANNON JACKSON." Interviews. Accessed January 22, 2019. <https://www.jazzweekly.com/1999/03/fireside-chat-with-ronald-shannon-jackson/>.

11. Chamber and Orchestral Works

Coleman told John Litweiler that he had been trying to write classical music since 1950, but also added he did it to challenge the image of him as illiterate.¹⁶³ In December 1962 Coleman self-produced a concert at Town Hall that was released on the ESP label. For this concert he premiered his new trio with David Izenzon and Charles Moffett and had a string quartet perform a nine-minute piece titled “Dedication to Poets and Writers.” The piece starts in minor and ends in major and contains no detectable improvisation.¹⁶⁴ The ensemble works through several different sections flawlessly, with slight variations of tempo and mood owing more to European models than Coleman’s innovations in jazz. In the end, Coleman proves his case of literacy to his critics. The poets and writers were a clique of people that gathered at his New York City club appearances.¹⁶⁵ Regarding the ESP label, when I asked Coleman about the owner of the label Bernard Stollman, he called him an assassin.

¹⁶³ Litweiler, *A Harmolodic Life*, 104.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid. 105.

¹⁶⁵ Wilson, Peter Niklas. *Ornette Coleman: His Life and Music*. Berkeley Hills, 2000, 136.

Coleman's next orchestral work was for many on his most successful, *Chappaqua Suite*, recorded in June of 1965. Coleman was considering a move to Europe when a young filmmaker named Conrad Rooks offered him a five-figure sum to compose and record a soundtrack for his new movie *Chappaqua*. Though described as supposedly hesitant at first in the liner notes by Rafi Zabor from the unauthorized and edited release on CBS, Coleman accepted and spent three days in the studio with eleven classical musicians and arranger Joseph Tekula. It remains unclear what role Tekula played, though he may have been the conductor, as Coleman solos on alto through the entire eighty recorded minutes.¹⁶⁶ Rooks declined not to use the music citing it as "too beautiful" and instead commissioned and used music by Ravi Shankar. When the movie was released it was a flop and soon sank into the abyss. What makes *Chappaqua* unique in Coleman's amongst Coleman's orchestral work is the full inclusion of his trio, operating at full power. Moffett is aggressive enough that the ensemble is almost pushed to the back, though they stand their ground. The two groups almost appear to be separate at times with the trio improvising and *swinging*, for long stretches. The exact ensemble instrumentation remains unknown, but flute, clarinet, oboe, horn, trumpet and violin can be heard. The ensemble is *tutti* playing short passages and holding out dramatic and dissonant chords where they are most effective at entrances. Part one opens dramatically and moves into medium tempo free swing.

¹⁶⁶ Litweiler, *A Harmolodic Life*, 113-114.

Part two begins with a blues connotation with the ensemble bringing in Coleman voiced chords. Part three contains more aggressive free playing. Part four has a definitive tempo increase with the ensemble playing big band hits and chords. Two short improvisations arise from tenor saxophonist Pharoah Sanders towards the close of the piece with an oboe solo and Coleman solo between them. Sanders plays briefly, almost coming from an ensemble function, but clearly is himself.¹⁶⁷ Coleman joins the ensemble in sustained pitches before they close the piece alone in a possible foreshadowing to the future *Skies of America*. On YouTube recently, an additional two hours of music from “Chappaqua” have been released, presumably the material removed by CBS.¹⁶⁸ The additional material features additional percussion from Moffett and more dissonant attempts at ensemble interaction that may have planted the seeds for William Parker’s Little Huey Music Orchestra far in the future.

The very next month Coleman was in Croydon England, recording “Forms and Sounds” for a Woodwind quintet. Coleman was forced to compose to compose a classical piece in order to be reclassified as a concert artist in order to appease a British quota system. In two weeks, he composed the 10-movement piece for the Virtuoso ensemble, this time without the trumpet interludes discussed earlier in

¹⁶⁷ Wilson, *Ornette Coleman: His Life and Music*, 139-140.

¹⁶⁸ Yates, Jorge. "Ornette Coleman Chappaqua Suite (Full Album/Reissue)." YouTube. December 08, 2017. Accessed February 18, 2019. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NBKxSwPtyg4>.

the 1965 recording. The music sounds like an atonal collective playing hopscotch. There is no detectable motif in the piece which produces the feeling of a sustained and controlled group improvisation, with virtually no tempo change. The individual voices are all treated as equals that operate individually with two voices at a time working together. Beginning and endings are vague. All these factors are Coleman's intention. In 1967 Coleman received the prestigious Guggenheim fellowship for composition which led to the rerecording of "Forms and Sounds" mentioned earlier with the trumpet interludes for RCA.¹⁶⁹ Coleman followed with the twenty-minute-long "Saints and Soldiers" with the Chamber Symphony of Philadelphia string quartet. The inspiration came from Coleman visiting churches in Rome in 1965 and discovering that the remains of both saints and soldiers were placed in jars. The piece contains an emotional urgency and maintains the unresolved dissonance derived from Coleman's Harmolodic theory. The equality suggested by the final resting place of saints and soldiers corresponds with how he viewed the different parts of music being from the same source with no need for separation by sound classification. Like any scientist, Coleman's chamber works are attempts to prove his theory, or perhaps the validity of it and or the process of its creation. The four voices work together and more closely than the woodwind quartet, applying more natural function based on range. Also recorded was "Space Flight," a turbulent, up-tempo piece that was a short three minutes and forty

¹⁶⁹ Wilson, *Ornette Coleman: His Life and Music*, 154-155.

seconds. Coleman was pleased with the performance by the quartet and how they were not totally restricted by the page. It's unclear how much freedom the musicians had. The opening sounds like a spacewalk or UFO sighting, but the tempo increases slightly suggesting what could have happened had Coleman orchestrated his work from his quartets with Don Cherry, though this door was never opened. What may have been missing was Coleman himself. In May 1967, Coleman composed and performed his first symphonic work, *Inventions of Symphonic Poems* at the UCLA Jazz Festival. The piece was conducted by clarinetist John Carter and Coleman played alto saxophone. Shockingly, no recording exists.¹⁷⁰ In August of 1968, Coleman premiered *Sun Suite of San Francisco* for a thirty-five-piece orchestra, and quartet with soloist Bobby Bradford. Only short clips of the orchestral segments have survived in Shirley Clarke's documentary on Coleman in 1986 *Made In America*.¹⁷¹

Coleman's journey with a large symphonic ensemble would reach an apex in April 1972 in London when he recorded *Skies of America* with the London Symphony Orchestra for Columbia Records. The piece was conducted by David Measham. Coleman plays alto on six of the twenty-one tracks, broken up from the original piece by Columbia to attempt radio accessibility. Coleman was forced to name all the tracks after the recording. The late alto saxophonist William Connell

¹⁷⁰ Litweiler, *A Harmolodic Life*, 124.

¹⁷¹ Ibid. 130.

was the copyist and had a difficult time working with Coleman on the music.¹⁷²

Coleman's cousin James Jordan and Paul Myers from CBS were the producers. The British Musicians Union again blocked Coleman's quartet from playing, but Coleman's solo moments with the eighty-five-piece orchestra may have been a blessing in disguise. His emotional vulnerability within the symphony is striking, unlike anything ever heard before. The use of the drums is key to the sound of the music. Coleman had classical timpani with tom toms on the left and a traditional jazz kit on the right.¹⁷³ The album was done with two rehearsals and reported difficulty from the musicians being challenged with a new concept, as well as Columbia not willing to fund the project properly. Two months after the recording, the piece was performed at the Newport Jazz Festival in New York City by the American Symphony Orchestra with Leon Thompson conducting and included Coleman's quartet. The performance had an additional ten minutes than the edited forty-minute release. Coleman had a clear inspiration for the piece, spending the night on a Crow Indian Reservation in Montana and participating in sacred rites. To Coleman, the sky had witnessed everything ever done in America, and was a place of true natural equality, where nobody owns territory.¹⁷⁴

Coleman's heartfelt liner notes suggest that if the sky can do it, then so can we.

¹⁷² As told to the author.

¹⁷³ Wilson, *Ornette Coleman: His Life and Music*, 189.

¹⁷⁴ Litweiler, *A Harmolodic Life*, 141.

While acknowledging the tragic past and reality of American culture, he seems to believe in an evolutionary narrative. Coleman introduced the idea of Harmolodics in the notes. Reviews of the piece range from “dangerous and rewarding”¹⁷⁵ to “another grand mess, generously and boldly conceived but stifled by the grim playing of the LSO.”¹⁷⁶ Musically it’s interesting to hear “The Good Life” which later became “Schoolwork,” before it became “Dancing In Your Head.” “All Of My Life,” a beautiful vocal from *Science Fiction* recorded in 1971, becomes haunted when expanded into a harmolodic symphony. At times Coleman’s titles validate the track separation. “Love Life” pitches his alto alone struggling against the cosmic force and weight of love. “The Military” contains war like posture. “Sunday in America” feels like a cumulative ending, grand in scope, and a unification of Coleman’s concept including a musical resolution on his own terms. The long alto solo on “The Men Who Live In The White House” is beautiful and lyrical, making it difficult to unite with the frenetic opening. Overall, the music throughout is an evolution of all his chamber and string music up to that point.

Coleman next performed, but did not document, a piece for trumpet, percussion, and strings in 1974 titled *The Sacred Mind Of Johnny Dolphin*, as mentioned in the chapter on Coleman and the trumpet. The piece was written for

¹⁷⁵ Jurek, Thom. “Skies of America - Ornette Coleman | Songs, Reviews, Credits.” *AllMusic*, www.allmusic.com/album/skies-of-america-mw0000061385.

¹⁷⁶ Cook, Richard. *The Penguin Guide to Jazz Recordings*. Penguin Books, 1994, 277.

Coleman's friend Johnny Allen, leader of the group that formed and operated the cultural center called Caravan of Dreams.¹⁷⁷ An arrangement of the score now exists for college ensembles to perform.¹⁷⁸ As mentioned earlier, the piece has been performed at least four times, but has yet to be recorded. In 1985, Coleman composed and recorded *Prime Design, Time Design*, his last string quartet, in honor of Buckminster Fuller at a live concert. Coleman offered advice to listeners that conventional listening won't get you far in listening to this piece. The piece was performed by the Gregory Gelman Ensemble and begins with a heartfelt passing around of the phrase that is the same notes as the song "Moon River." Coleman had an architecture-like approach to his improvisational strategy on the piece. After a delicate opening, Denardo joins in and is very aggressive until the end of the piece, sounding like water that has instantly boiled. As Coleman suggested, trying to follow the individual lines proves difficult, while listening to the song as a mass entity can also be challenging to some. Coleman's arrangement calls for each musician to play in different time signatures at the same time. To close, the strings stop playing in the order that they started. Coleman attempts to replace harmonization with humanization.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁷ Litweiler, *A Harmolodic Life*, 189.

¹⁷⁸ "Lincoln Center Festival: Ornette Coleman's Chamber Music at Stanley H. Kaplan Penthouse." ZEALnyc. May 30, 2017. Accessed December 30, 2018. <https://zealnyc.com/lincoln-center-festival-ornette-colemans-chamber-music-at-stanley-h-kaplan-penthouse/>.

¹⁷⁹ Wilson, *Ornette Coleman: His Life and Music*, 209-211.

In January 1987, the Kronos string quartet performed Coleman's "In Honor of NASA and Planetary Soloist" with guest Oboist Joseph Celli. The New York Times review described short, jazz-based movements. Movement one contrasted frenetic string scraping with a calm swing from Celli. In additional contrast, Celli also used an Indian instrument called the mukhaveena with aggressive vocal effects that held attention.¹⁸⁰ In 1989 Coleman composed the never recorded *Freedom Symbol* for a large string and wind ensemble with the assistance of violinist Tom Chiu. *Freedom Symbol* was performed in Battery Park New York City in the shadow of the statue of Liberty in 2000 and was reviewed by the Chicago Tribune providing insight into the piece. The work was a tribute to the ideals of the French Revolution and performed by a 20-member Harmolodic Chamber ensemble containing timpani, strings, and winds. Howard Reich described blocks of sound, long extended solos, waves of dissonance, and long sinuous melodies, complete with a bold symphonic unified climactic finish.¹⁸¹

In 1991 Howard Shore asked Coleman to collaborate with him on the soundtrack to *Naked Lunch*, a science fiction thriller. Shore composed and co-composed the music and conducted the seventy-seven-member London

¹⁸⁰ Crutchfield, Will. "Concert: Kronos Quartet at Weill Hall." *The New York Times*, 18 Jan. 1987.

¹⁸¹ Reich, Howard. "ORNETTE COLEMAN MAINSTREAM SENSATION: HOW TIMES HAVE CHANGED." *Chicago Tribune*. August 28, 2018. Accessed January 13, 2019. <https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/ct-xpm-2000-06-05-0006060055-story.html>.

Philharmonic. In the liner notes, Coleman explains that the music is Harmolodic going into technical detail, seemingly having achieved a type of validation of his theory by its successful work in action through collaboration. Coleman solos at length over the orchestra backdrops and is inspired throughout. As stated earlier, the orchestra is offset by a Coleman trio with Denardo and bassist Barre Phillips to great effect. Coleman wrote new music for the trio. The Master Musicians of Joujouka make an appearance as well, superimposed on Shore's orchestral textures.¹⁸² Coleman displayed the deeper levels of his alto virtuosity throughout the soundtrack. His agility on the trio's "Bugpowder," naked emotion on the ballad "Intersong," and his playing over Shore's Mujahaddin" stand out. In 2017 at a Coleman celebration at Lincoln Center, *Naked Lunch* was revisited with Denardo, Charnett Moffett, Ravi Coltrane on tenor and Henry Threadgill on alto. *Forms and Sounds* was performed, as well as *In Honor of NASA and the Planetary Soloists* for string quartet and oboe.¹⁸³

Finally, we reach Coleman's dream symphonic work that unfortunately was never realized. Truly epic in scope, we are only left with Coleman's description. The title is *The Oldest Language*. The piece was comprised of several ideas. It would be written for one hundred twenty-five people, two from each of the United

¹⁸² Wilson, *Ornette Coleman: His Life and Music*, 226.

¹⁸³ Russonello, Giovanni. "Ornette Coleman's Innovations Are Celebrated at Lincoln Center." *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 17 July 2017, www.nytimes.com/2017/07/17/arts/music/ornette-coleman-lincoln-center.html.

States.¹⁸⁴ He wanted to use excerpts from as many different linguistics as possible, using all different tongues.¹⁸⁵ Coleman also wanted one person from twenty-two different world cultures, the number being denoted with numerological and mystical power as he was taught by the Crow Indians. The piece would be two to three hours long.¹⁸⁶ The Third World had to be included, and the greatest challenge: all the musicians must live together for six months and reconcile all cultural and linguistic differences before seeing the score.¹⁸⁷ Producer and musician John Snyder has seen the first page of the score, and every note is in a different color.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁴ Feather, Leonard. "Interview Ornette Coleman." *Downbeat*, July 1981, pp. 16–93.

¹⁸⁵ Mandel, Howard. "Ornette Coleman The Creator As Harmolodic Magician." *Downbeat*, 5 Oct. 1978, pp. 17–56.

¹⁸⁶ Rockwell, John. *All American Music Composition in the Late Twentieth Century*. New York, NY: Da Capo Press, 1997.

¹⁸⁷ Davis, Francis. *Jazz and Its Discontents: A Francis David Reader*. Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 2004.

¹⁸⁸ Coleman, Ornette, performer. *Celebrate Ornette*. Recorded 2016. Denardo Coleman, 2016, Vinyl recording.

SECTION III: THEORY

12. Other Masters

Coleman had definitive impact on several of his contemporaries. Miles Davis criticized him but was undeniably influenced by his work. John Coltrane openly embraced Coleman and studied with him. Sonny Rollins formed a similar band that adapted Coleman's concepts. Jackie McLean recorded with Coleman in the previously discussed *New And Old Gospel*. Roy Eldridge said in a well-known rebuke of Coleman, "I listened to him high and I listened to him cold sober. I even played with him. I think he's jiving, baby."¹⁸⁹ Charles Mingus, with a complicated relationship to the avant-garde, was unhinged by Coleman to a degree. Max Roach assaulted Coleman. Archie Shepp said of Coleman: "Call Ornette the shepherd and Cecil the seer," and also added "His tunes have about them the aura of a square dance telescoped through the barrel of a machine gun."¹⁹⁰ Wayne Shorter added that Coleman was one of his favorite astronauts.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁹ Litweiler, *A Harmolodic Life*, 82.

¹⁹⁰ Jost, *Free Jazz*, 56.

¹⁹¹ Weiner, Natalie. "Wayne Shorter Remembers Ornette Coleman: 'One of My Favorite Astronauts'." *Billboard*. June 12, 2015. Accessed February 10, 2019. <https://www.billboard.com/articles/news/6598047/wayne-shorter-ornette-coleman-obituary-memorial-remembers-homage>.

In the Miles Davis autobiography, Davis stated that in 1960, a new black alto saxophonist named Ornette Coleman came and just turned the whole jazz world around.¹⁹² Davis not only heard Coleman at the Five Spot but sat in several times.¹⁹³ Davis wasn't impressed with the playing but considered Coleman's liberation from form and structure to be important.¹⁹⁴ The Davis quintet with Herbie Hancock, Wayne Shorter, Ron Carter, and Tony Williams contains this influence. Most people however point to a famous rebuke of Coleman when Davis said "Hell, just listen to what he writes and how he plays. If you're talking psychologically, the man is all screwed up inside."¹⁹⁵ Davis also felt that the "New Thing" designation of the avant-garde was an attempt by white critics to quickly own something that they weren't able to understand.¹⁹⁶ Davis came to slowly open to Coleman. He compared one of his compositional techniques as going back as far as Bach, that music could be played three or four different ways, independently of each other.¹⁹⁷ Davis's *On the Corner* contains the influence of Coleman's Prime

¹⁹² Davis, *Miles The Autobiography*, 249.

¹⁹³ Ibid. 250.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid. 251.

¹⁹⁵ "Factbox: Quotes by and about Saxophonist Ornette Coleman." Reuters. June 11, 2015. Accessed February 10, 2019. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-people-ornettecoleman-factbox/factbox-quotes-by-and-about-saxophonist-ornette-coleman-idUSKBN0OR23220150611>.

¹⁹⁶ Davis, *Miles The Autobiography*, 251.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid. 322.

Time. Coleman also wrote music for Davis on occasion¹⁹⁸, though it doesn't appear to have been recorded. Coleman's manager Neil Blyden told the author he witnessed Davis at Coleman's loft trying out different tunes that Coleman had written, offering to buy the ones he liked with Coleman declining.¹⁹⁹ Davis wanted to have a public perception of his relationship with Coleman while at the same time incorporating ideas he could work with. When Coleman was asked about Davis in 1991 shortly after his death, his response contained a broad scope.

Miles was one of the first improvisors that had such an individual personality (musically and humanly) and philosophy, that because he was born in America, his concept of himself existed because there was a country called America that allowed him to be that way.²⁰⁰

John Coltrane was a humble man and profoundly interested in the deeper realities of music. When Coleman arrived in New York, Coltrane heard something that he felt he could directly apply in his own personal quest. Charlie Haden said that at the Five Spot "Coltrane used to come hear us every night. He would grab Ornette by the arm as soon after we got off and they would go off into the night talking about music."²⁰¹ Coleman also came to see Coltrane perform and talk to

¹⁹⁸ Litweiler, *A Harmolodic Life*, 125.

¹⁹⁹ As told to the author by Blyden, now deceased.

²⁰⁰ Sobol, Aaron. "Ornette Coleman Discusses Alan Hovhaness and Miles Davis - 1991." YouTube. August 30, 2016. Accessed February 10, 2019. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=thHlj3_oqHw.

²⁰¹ Palmer, Robert. "'Charlie Haden's Creed'." *Downbeat*, July 20, 1972.

him between sets.²⁰² Coltrane sat in with Coleman during this period and said “I would like to make a record with Ornette Coleman. I’ve only played with him one time in my life; I went to hear him in a club, and he asked me to join him. We played two pieces-exactly twelve-minutes-but I think this was definitely the most intense moment of my life!”²⁰³ Coltrane was very open to Coleman’s music, as documented by Dr. Lewis Porter. On Coleman, Coltrane spoke very highly.

I Love him. I’m following his lead. He’s done a lot to open my eyes to what can be done. I feel indebted to him. When he came along, I was so far into Giant Steps chords that I didn’t know where I was going to go next. I don’t know if I would have thought about just abandoning the chord system or not. I probably wouldn’t have thought of that at all. And he came along doing it, and I heard it, I said “Well, that must be the answer.” Since we have a piano, we have to consider it, and that accounts for the modes that we play, but that’s going to get monotonous after a while, so there probably will be some songs in the future that were going to play, just as Ornette does, with no accompaniment from the piano at all. Maybe on the melody, but as far as the solo, no accompaniment.²⁰⁴

Coltrane also told Tsujimoto in Japan that Coleman was a great leader, and that a leader was a great thing to be.”²⁰⁵ During Coleman’s self-exile in the early sixties, he emerged to sit in with Coltrane at the Half-Note in February 1964,

²⁰² Porter, Lewis. *John Coltrane: His Life and Music*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2008. 176.

²⁰³ Porter, *John Coltrane: His Life and Music*, 204.

²⁰⁴ Ibid. 203.

²⁰⁵ DeVito, Chris, and John Coltrane. *Coltrane on Coltrane: The John Coltrane Interviews*. Chicago, IL: Chicago Review Press, 2012.

playing trumpet, and in January, 1965 he almost joined Coltrane's band, stopped only by an opening slot at the Vanguard.²⁰⁶

By 1965, Coltrane had moved on from pre-arranged chord progressions. Coleman spoke about his exchange with Coltrane noting that Coltrane was interested in non-chordal playing.²⁰⁷ Coltrane had, by the time he heard Coleman, extended and mastered the use of chords in jazz beyond what anyone else had previously thought possible. Martin Williams witnessed Coltrane in observation of a Coleman rehearsal as early as 1961 with Jimmy Garrison on bass.²⁰⁸ Coleman told the author that after Coltrane died, he received a letter thanking him with money included for lessons, and that after receiving the letter he spent several days crying. Coltrane had experimented as early as the summer of 1960, a year after *Giant Steps* on the record *The Avant-Garde* with Don Cherry, Charlie Haden or Percy Heath, and Ed Blackwell, but was still hesitant at walking away from chordal playing completely. With his classic quartet, it was not uncommon for pianist McCoy Tyner to lay out at times during solos. "Chasing the Trane" from *Live at Village Vanguard* is a great example of extended improvisation with no piano support or restriction. Coltrane would go even further than Coleman on his duet album *Interstellar Space* with drummer Rashied Ali, removing the bass and leaving

²⁰⁶ Porter, *John Coltrane: His Life and Music*, 204.

²⁰⁷ Ibid. 204.

²⁰⁸ Ibid. 204.

him alone in a duo with drums, one of his favorite environments, with the right drummer.

Sonny Rollins was open to Coleman's innovations incorporated on his own terms. In a 1962 blindfold test with Leonard Feather he responded to hearing Coleman play a Coleman piece titled "Folk Tale" on Atlantic.

I'm in favor of Ornette and many of the things he has done. He does possess the basic elements that go to make up a jazz artist. A rhythmic drive. Qualities you can find in everybody since Louis Armstrong, all the good guys. I can still see in his figures a certain quality that was exemplified by Bird. Everybody says Ornette's playing sounds weird or so forth. But Ornette has the basic jazz essentials, drive and the rhythm. Rhythm is the most necessary part, the prerequisite, the positive element. But of course, harmony is the negative through which the positive must exert itself.²⁰⁹

Rollins and Coleman went as far back as during Coleman's earlier days in Los Angeles. Rollins sought him out, as he told Scott Spencer.

When I used to go out to L.A. back then, there was something I could do you couldn't do today, says Rollins. I'd drive my car out toward Malibu, park it on the side of the road, and go down to the beach to practice. I invited Ornette to come with me and we'd play, just the two of us standing in the sand, putting our sound out over the ocean. I really liked what he was doing. A lot of the established musicians didn't like his playing, they were doing things like walking out on him, but I liked him.²¹⁰

²⁰⁹ Feather, Leonard. *The Encyclopedia of Jazz in the Sixties*. New York: Horizon Press, 1966.

²¹⁰ Spencer, Scott, and Scott Spencer. "Ornette Coleman: The Outsider." *Rolling Stone*. June 25, 2018. Accessed February 11, 2019. <https://www.rollingstone.com/music/music-news/ornette-coleman-the-outsider-193373/>.

Rollins was inspired enough by Coleman that he hired Billy Higgins and Don Cherry, and wanted Charlie Haden, for a tour in Europe after Coleman finished a run at the Village Gate in 1961.²¹¹ Rollins album *Our Man in Jazz* was a result of the band he formed with Henry Grimes playing bass. Many bootlegs of this group survive. Rollins embraced the open harmony but chose to continue to use form and some of his usual repertoire, resulting in a unique group that was a result of Coleman's influence. Rollins thrived in this environment though he often maintained a tonal center and didn't modulate as freely as Coleman. He spoke highly of Don Cherry as an original voice, who suffered criticism for his technique but was in possession of a great musical mind.²¹² Rollins always played with a controlled openness in his playing from this point forward in his career. The two titans famously reconvened in 2010 at a concert celebrating Rollins birthday at the Beacon theater with Christian McBride on bass and Roy Haynes on drums on Rollins "Sonnymoon for Two." Though Coleman's entry is delayed, once he enters, he kept the exchange going for fifteen minutes, Rollins openly responding to Coleman's singing lyricism and free modulation.²¹³ The New Yorker described the happy moment as Matisse and Picasso trying to agree on a line.²¹⁴

²¹¹ Haden, Woodard. *Conversations with Charlie Haden*, 23.

²¹² Guy, Jazz Video. "Sonny Rollins and Don Cherry." YouTube. December 06, 2013. Accessed February 11, 2019. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=srweoZlla0o>.

²¹³ Dixiefeet. "Sonny Rollins & Ornette Coleman - Sonnymoon For Two (Live 2010)." YouTube. February 07, 2012. Accessed February 11, 2019. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WhXlwdkcLc4&t=5s>.

Charles Mingus was an innovator and experimenter in jazz in his own right, open to avant-garde jazz practice on his own terms. In October 1960 on his album *Charles Mingus presents Charles Mingus* on “What Love?” the music is borderline free playing with Coleman’s friend Eric Dolphy on bass clarinet playing beyond conventional harmony into pure vocal expression of emotions not commonly expressed in jazz. Mingus had issues with Coleman’s technique, but he couldn’t deny that there was a necessary crossing of boundaries taking place. I again turn to Leonard Feather’s Blindfold Test in Downbeat taken in April 1960. Feather didn’t play Coleman, but Mingus wanted to speak about him anyway. The question remains, how much did Coleman influence the music he recorded that October with Dolphy?

You didn’t play anything by Ornette Coleman. I’ll comment on him anyway. Now, I don’t care if he doesn’t like me, but anyway, one-night Symphony Sid was playing a whole lot of stuff, and then he put on an Ornette Coleman record.

Now, he is really an old-fashioned alto player. He’s not as modern as Bird. He plays in C and F and G and B Flat only; he does not play in all the keys. Basically, you can hit a pedal point C all the time, and it’ll have some relationship to what he’s playing.

Now aside from the fact that I doubt he can even play a C scale in whole notes—tied whole notes, a couple of bars apiece—in tune, the fact remains that his notes and lines are so fresh. So, when Symphony Sid played his record, it made everything else he was playing, even my own record that he played, sound terrible.

²¹⁴ Remnick, David, and David Remnick. “Ornette Coleman and a Joyful Funeral.” *The New Yorker*. June 19, 2017. Accessed February 11, 2019. <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/culture-desk/ornette-coleman-and-a-joyful-funeral>.

I'm not saying everybody's going to have to play like Coleman. But they're going to have to stop copying Bird. Nobody can play Bird right yet but him. Now what would Fats Navarro and J.J. have played like if they'd never heard Bird? Or even Dizzy? Would he still play like Roy Eldridge? Anyway, when they put Coleman's record on, the only record they could have put on behind it would have been Bird.

It doesn't matter about the key he's playing in—he's got a percussion sound, like a cat on a whole lot of bongos. He's brought a thing in—it's not new. I won't say who started it, but whoever started it, people overlooked it. It's like not having anything to do with what's around you and being right in your own world. You can't put your finger on what he's doing.

It's like organized disorganization or playing wrong right. And it gets to you emotionally, like a drummer. That's what Coleman means to me.²¹⁵

A photo of Charles Mingus at his Newport Rebels festival shows Coleman on stage with Mingus, Kenny Dorham, and Max Roach. What were they playing? Available evidence is that Mingus and Coleman alternated sets,²¹⁶ and that extended jam sessions took place with Mingus or Coleman taking the lead.²¹⁷ The photo has them all playing together with Mingus looking at Coleman, but it remains another event where no recording exists as of 2019. Mingus was present at the Five Spot in a well-known story by Charlie Haden that he looked over at the bar while setting up, and Charlie Mingus, Ray Brown, Percy Heath, and Paul

²¹⁵ Blindfold Test | Charles Mingus: The Official Site." Charles Mingus The Official Site. Accessed February 11, 2019. <http://mingusmingusmingus.com/mingus/blindfold-test>.

²¹⁶ Monson, Ingrid Tolia. *Freedom Sounds: Civil Rights Call out to Jazz and Africa*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010, 184.

²¹⁷ Wein, George, and Nate Chinen. *Myself among Others*: Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2004, 195.

Chambers were all there waiting to hear how he approached Coleman's music.²¹⁸ Mingus wrote an article in *Downbeat* titled "An Open Letter to the Avant-Garde" though he didn't mention Coleman in the article, taking issues in general with free players who didn't have the skill to play chord changes, suggesting that an Avant-Grade album by Duke Ellington, Mingus, Clark Terry, and Thad Jones, players who could play chord changes playing free would be the most valid innovation.²¹⁹ Bern Nix told the author that while he was living with Coleman, Mingus called Coleman in the middle of the night to confront him on his trumpet playing saying "Mother Fucker- who told you could play the trumpet?"

Despite the negative criticism they received initiating the bebop revolution, both Dizzy Gillespie and Max Roach were initially very hostile towards Coleman, Roach going as far as violence. Both of them eventually came to accept Coleman with Roach embracing the avant-Garde in the extreme. Coleman told the author of an event where he and Gillespie were booked at the same venue. Coleman played the first set. During the intermission, tenor saxophonist James Moody approached Coleman for lessons, impressed with the music he heard. Gillespie overheard the interaction and intervened, forbidding him from studying with Coleman, and in front of him, told Moody that Coleman was a charlatan. A decade later however,

²¹⁸ "Charlie Haden on His First Time Playing at the Five Spot." NEA. June 15, 2015. Accessed February 11, 2019. <https://www.arts.gov/audio/charlie-haden-his-first-time-playing-five-spot>.

²¹⁹ Ideologic - Stephen O'Malley - News. Accessed February 11, 2019. http://www.ideologic.org/news/view/charles_open_letter_to_the_avant_garde.

Gillespie told Leonard Feather that he had played with Miles Davis quintet with Herbie Hancock and Tony Williams, and that it reminded him of Ornette Coleman. As ever with Gillespie, he just needed to hear the harmony.

It reminded me so much of Ornette Coleman. I never listened to him much at this point. But when Bernard Stollman gave me one of his Town Hall concerts, I was alone when I put on the record, and I could follow the chords he was playing. It was difficult stuff, very complex and highly enjoyable. And that's when I really started listening closely to what he was doing.²²⁰

Roach initially walked of the bandstand when Coleman tried to sit in in Los Angeles.²²¹ Coleman told the author that Roach attacked him in the bathroom the Five Spot and punched him in the mouth. In 1960 in France during an interview and asked about the spirit of his music, without a piano, Roach said "We're trying to assimilate the talent of the individuals of the group, and from this try to evolve a style where we have something exclusive with ourselves."²²² Roach was also working without a piano and may have felt competitive about the idea of playing without it. Whatever hostility Roach may have had from Coleman's perceived threat to end his way of life, he ended up recording with Anthony Braxton, Archie

²²⁰ Feather, *The Encyclopedia of Jazz in the Seventies*, 33.

²²¹ Feather, Leonard. "Interview Ornette Coleman." *Downbeat*, July 1981, pp. 16–93.

²²² "Jazz Improvisers." *Katie Couric - You Can Watch #GenderRevolution Right Here*, www.facebook.com/JazzImprovisers/videos/1000392320071453/. Accessed 11 Feb. 2019.

Shepp, and Cecil Taylor, and even convinced Gillespie to record a record of them improvising freely!²²³

Albert Ayler admired Coleman's business practices,²²⁴ though he didn't speak about his music. When the author asked Coleman about Ayler, he became visibly upset and said that if Ayler had come to study with him as they discussed, that Coleman would have straightened out everything, and in fact may have been able to save his life. We have previously discussed Eric Dolphy who also came to embrace and record with Coleman. When asked by the author about Dolphy and the album *Free Jazz*, Coleman said he told Dolphy to bring whatever horn he wanted, and Dolphy chose the bass clarinet. As previously discussed, Jackie McLean collaborated with Coleman playing trumpet on his album *New And Old Gospel*.

²²³ "Max Roach and Dizzy Gillespie - Max Dizzy, Paris (1990)." Something Else! December 28, 2016. Accessed February 25, 2019. <http://somethingelsereviews.com/2007/07/30/max-roach-and-dizzy-gillespie-max-dizzy-paris-1990/>.

²²⁴ ZOUMHANE, Fayçal. "Albert Ayler Interview -Sonny Rollins, Ornette Coleman Et John Coltrane." YouTube. May 24, 2011. Accessed February 11, 2019. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a6RWMHVwKhk>.

13. Harmolodics

Coleman's identifying his philosophy with a term he devised first appeared in the liner notes to *Skies Of America* in 1972, as Coleman announced a book called *The Harmolodic Theory*. He doesn't mention that he's the author, or that he had been working on the book since his self-imposed exile from 1963-64. Today in 2019, the book remains unpublished, however Denardo Coleman has plans to have it edited and formally released.²²⁵ Three attempts have been made at translating Harmolodics on to the page to a degree. Michael Cogswell wrote his dissertation titled *Melodic Organization In Four Solos By Ornette Coleman* in 1989. Nathan A. Frink wrote his dissertation in 2012 titled *Dancing In His Head: The Evolution Of Ornette Coleman's Music and Compositional Philosophy*. Stephen Rush wrote a book titled *Free Jazz, Harmolodics, and Ornette Coleman*. All three seek evidence of rules, or laws that might define Harmolodics as a dialect that can be learned and spoken such as bebop, or George Russell's Lydian Chromatic Concept. Frink, for example, states that a tenet of Harmolodics includes the practice of polymodality,

²²⁵ As told to the author.

that a lead soloist could change the key of a piece.²²⁶ Keys were not relevant to Coleman in composition or improvisation as a core function. The idea is what mattered. Cogswell got closer stating that while Coleman's principal innovation is the abandonment of a pre-determined harmonic progression as the scaffolding for a group improvisation, his melodic motives occasionally imply harmonic progressions or delineate cadential formulae.²²⁷ In analysis of Coleman's music he examined rhythm and pitch sequence, contour, repetition, and motivic chain association in an attempt to read his mind and diagnose his form of hearing. The effect is like performing exploratory brain surgery on a melody. The difficulty remains for all scholars interested in Coleman's work in that he did not seek validation. His goal was to prove himself on first his own scientific terms, and later to broaden his scope to examine the function of humanity. Harmolodics does have rules, but Coleman's goal in using and teaching it was not to create a separate dialect in jazz that separates a musician from the other dialects. His goal was to set musicians free to relate to music in what he saw as a more natural way. The idea's that Coleman define as part of his creed are those that allow a musician to find or create a pathway to himself. He has tried to explain this process hundreds of

²²⁶ Frink, Nathan A. "DANCING IN HIS HEAD: THE EVOLUTION OF ORNETTE COLEMAN'S MUSIC AND COMPOSITIONAL PHILOSOPHY." November 16, 2015. Accessed April 04, 2019. www.d-scholarship.pitt.edu/27686/1/NFdissfullPittrev2.pdf, 95.

²²⁷ Cogswell, Michael. "Melodic Organization in Four Solos by Ornette Coleman." Digital Library. March 09, 2015. Accessed April 09, 2019. <https://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc501207/>, 15.

different ways over the years. Those who have applied his process to their own musical practice all have different interpretations, because they have all experienced different results, being different people.

I feel it best to begin with my own experience. The moment I met Coleman, he asked me to play. I played an improvisation of a piece I wrote that was an extension of his piece “Dancing In Your Head.” What I didn’t know was that in under thirty seconds, I had been diagnosed, with the result that Harmolodics could help me figure myself out. Coleman offered that I could return at any time for this exchange. I learned that no scheduling would be possible. If I felt it was time to go, I would, and if Coleman was home, then it was supposed to happen. I returned shortly after this and when the elevator door to his loft opened, he said “You got me!” The first day, or session was all conversation of philosophy for several hours. I leaned one of Coleman’s favorite riddles, designed to help people view a new perspective. The question is “What’s the tonic, or root note, of a chord in the key of F?” Most people try, the root, then the third, seventh, fifth, or flat fifth, before folding. The answer defines the entire concept:

You. You’re the tonic.

To offer my own translation, this means that the feeling you have, and the sound that comes out of you is the root, or center of what’s happening when you play music and improvise. As throughout Coleman’s hundreds of ways to see what

he is pointing out, the challenge is to see music as a human act, more than something based on the intellect. It is assumed that the intellect is already understood. Once you know what the root is, you are not beholden to it. Playing this way calls for intuition, trust of yourself, and others, all very human things. Whatever rule that you present based in traditional musical theory, Coleman almost always had an alternate view.

In Western musical theory transposition, different instruments are pitched in different keys. Violins play in C concert, trumpets are in Bb, and alto saxophones are pitched in Eb. In this way, a C on Violin, is a D on trumpet, and an A on the alto saxophone. Coleman is quick to ask; how can a sound be classified as three different notes? By calling attention to the instability behind the theory, Coleman is asking to see notes as *sounds* before their classification. Human beings that listen to music respond to the sound and the feeling. In jazz, the audience is never informed of the key, progression, or form. Coleman took this idea a step further to offer me a harmolodic rule as a horn player, questioning where my Eb instrument was. It was during this period that I took up the alto clarinet. Coleman opened the door to a horn I was already very curious about. In practice however, we had conflict in that I had two Bb instruments. One day while playing music, he took my bass clarinet and placed it in another room and handed me my trumpet. He felt the trumpet was my natural voice. He held the instrument in high regard and pointed out the flaw of the saxophone: The saxophone is built like a scale, and

thus leads the player directly into theory. The trumpet escapes the connotation and is pure melody.

In Coleman's next application of Harmolodics to my playing, I reached the apex of my experience with him, one that changed me forever. Bassist Charnett Moffett came over and we were improvising a duo when Coleman stopped us.

You didn't resolve your idea.

Moffett offered an example. For me, this was a huge confrontation, because at that time I was simply not aware of or concerned with idea of resolution. Resolution could be as simple as ending with a major or minor third interval, or what might be a chord resolution from wherever I was at. The theory wasn't as important as that what I played was coherent on some level. It had to sound like it made musical sense, regardless of theory. I learned how idea resolution is really sourced in the way the human ear works. Idea resolution became the core issue between us, and he would stop me playing whenever I fell into this self-created trap. At one point, Coleman seemed agitated when I attempted a Johnny Hodges type glissando the length of a fifth. While I thought he would be impressed, the opposite result was achieved, and he asked, "How can have an idea if you don't speak with words?" Coleman stopped me a third time and said "I know what you sound like, and now you're playing like somebody else. Why would you play like someone that wasn't you?" This was a serious and unexpected problem to him, and

I offered no solution. I eventually understood the answer, which was that I was trying keep up with Moffett! Coleman may have offered a path away from conventional harmonic thinking, but he still expected musicians to use functional musical language. I soon had the epiphany that in Harmolodics, while harmony was no longer a prison of sorts, there were other aspects of music used in jazz that became even more important. Melody was elevated in status just as much as harmony was reduced. At this point, constructing harmonically free melodic ideas that resolved, became my core process and I spent several years developing it, checking in with Coleman. At one point I started playing all microtones and he said “I’m telling you that you’ve found a new way to play. Stop proving it and start using it.”

A key part of Harmolodics is that musical relationships are human relationships first. Charlie Haden is the supreme example of this. Haden naturally adapted to Coleman’s concept, and then resolved to support him in practice perhaps more than any other musician. Coleman trusted Haden, and together their shared intuition speaks to the kind of human understanding that can one can sense between, say, Billie Holiday and Lester Young. Coleman became emotional when I asked him about drummer Ed Blackwell and he explained that the problem I had wouldn’t exist for him with Blackwell, because he could finish Coleman’s phrases and even resolve his ideas. Throughout his life, Coleman sought to get bass players and drummers to abandon any role-playing responsibility, and to replace it with their human responsibility. I played a Charles Gayle trio record for

Coleman who said, “Well, he certainly wasn’t waiting for anyone to tell him what to do.”

Coleman’s Harmolodic process also pushed the envelope in other more abstract areas. He observed: “I see you have a sexual relationship with your horn.” Sex was a popular topic with Coleman, and he often would relate music to male and female dynamics. It was through discussions with him that I started a large ensemble of an equal amount of men and women seeking a new balance of energy. Coleman also had Greg Osby over for a pre-interview and immediately after sitting down, stated a belief and asked him a question at the same time.

The major is white, and the minor is black. Isn’t that so? Do you agree?

Coleman attached philosophy and spiritual concepts more and more as he became older. In our last conversation by phone, I called him demoralized from having been forced into a foot-messenger job out of desperation. He quickly turned the conversation into looking at broad spiritual and musical concepts and said that sound, and the soul, are eternal.

I’ll shift now to more evidence of the functions of Harmolodics through musicians that played with Coleman. In the earliest explorations of the process, Coleman himself wrote an essay in *Downbeat*, taking quite a scientific approach.

What is Harmolodics? Harmolodics is the use of the physical and mental of one’s own logic made into an expression of sound to bring about the musical sensation of unison executed by a single person or with a group. Harmony, melody, speed, rhythm, time, and phrases all have equal position in the results

that come from the placing and spacing of ideas. This is the motive and action of Harmolodics.²²⁸

Coleman wrote an additional essay about Harmolodics for a book title *Free Spirits, The Insurgent Imagination*.

Harmolodics can be used in almost any kind of expression. You can think Harmolodically, you can write fiction and poetry in Harmolodic. Harmolodics allows a person to use a multiplicity of elements to express more than one direction. The greatest freedom in Harmolodics is human instinct.²²⁹

Don Cherry is of course a vital source on Harmolodics as one of Coleman's closest and well-known collaborators.

Harmolodics is a profound system based on developing your ears along with your technical proficiency on your instrument. In the early days people felt that we didn't really know our instruments, that we were just playing anything. But Harmolodics is based on a system of notation. We have to know the chord structure perfectly, know all the possible intervals, and *then* play around it. The system gives you the freedom to phrase differently each time you play a song.²³⁰

Returning to electric bassist Jamaaladen Tacauma, he was asked about how Coleman approached harmony in *Prime Time*, providing another perspective and continuing to dispel the myth that chords were irrelevant in Harmolodics.

²²⁸ Coleman, Ornette. "Prime Time for Harmolodics." *Downbeat*, July 1983, 54-55.

²²⁹ "Harmolodic-Higher Instinct: Something to think about" Buhle, Paul. *Free Spirits: Annals of the Insurgent Imagination*. San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1982.

²³⁰ Silvert, Conrad. "Old and New Dreams." *Downbeat*, June 1980, 17-19.

There is a certain melody that is played. We might play it in harmony or individually. From the melody we go into compositional structure. We set up bridges constantly, and we actually go through the whole maze of chordal structure in music, period. Ornette might have one person play I-V, a C to a G, and have another person play C, Eb, and Bb, which can still hook up musically. He shows us different ways chords can hook up; it's incredible, he's like a wizard because he'll show you so many ways to combine chords. Ornette got me in a raw stage and what he did was just create a monster. He says I'm the master of the sequence ²³¹

In 1990, Howard Mandel spoke to three additional Prime Time members.

Keyboardist David Bryant, the great tabla player Badal Roy, and bassist Al MacDowell about playing in a Harmolodic band.

Bryant: Ornette's not getting rid of the soloist, he's getting rid of the accompanist by elevating the role to the soloist's height.

Roy: Ornette wants me to never play the same thing more than four times. I can get a groove going, but he says, 'I'm always changing; keep playing so I can keep playing around you.' For Ornette, 30 seconds of the same thing is too long.

MacDowell (who started playing with Coleman right out of high school in 1975): Harmolodics is music *before* it's orchestrated. Jazz is live composing on the spot; Harmolodics is that, but even with a melody, it's not what you can play according to somebody else. If Ornette plays a C, he may be in C Major, but maybe C minor, or F; and he might be playing any of the three clefs. Harmolodics is my interpretation of what his playing possibilities are.²³²

Finally, I return to Coleman for more of his ideas concerning himself and Harmolodics. Howard Mandel had a unique connection with Coleman, and

²³¹ Tinder, Cliff. "Electric Bass in the Harmolodic Pocket." *Downbeat*, April 1982, 19-21.

²³² Mandel, Howard. "Ornette Coleman's Prime Time Primeval Update." *Downbeat*, November 1990, 30-31.

believed Coleman had two ideas as strong as commandments: the primacy of the individual, and the possibility of a perfect world modeled on musical rapport. He got unique responses from Coleman over the years.

The rhythm and sound are like a man and a woman, they have to get along with one another or else they'll start to fight.²³³

We can all play together, and if we all play with honesty, full attention, and freedom, the music will coalesce as it would.²³⁴

I always tell people I think of myself as a composer who plays.²³⁵

The melody can be the bass line, the modulation line, the melody, or the second or third part. That's how I see Harmolodics. You can take any melody, and use it as a bass line, or a second part, or as a lead, or as a rhythm. I do it in all the music I play. Melody is only unison, it's not melody. Melody is only unison, but there are as many unisons as there are stars in the sky.²³⁶

Coleman told Bill Kohlhasse.

I'm very scientific about the way I approach writing and playing. I'm always investigating different kinds of musical concepts, keys and ways to cue them, and usually my melodies, my unisons, come out of that. I've searched for those things

²³³ Mandel, Howard. "Ornette Coleman The Creator As Harmolodic Magician." *Downbeat*, October 78, 17-56.

²³⁴ Ibid.

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ Mandel, Howard. "The Color Of Music." *Downbeat*, August 1987, 17-19.

that you can't hear, that you have to know. That's one of the reasons that Harmolodics has been so useful in my way of dealing with musicians and music.²³⁷

Pianist and educator Dr. Lewis Porter held a workshop with Coleman for his students at Brandeis University. Coleman had the following instructions for his ensemble, which resulted in interesting results.²³⁸

Bass: play whole steps

Trumpet: play only 4ths

Alto: play only half steps

Piano: play only thirds

One day when I was studying with Ornette, it was just the two of us. He played alto saxophone and I played alto clarinet. We played for about forty minutes. On several occasions we were playing together, and both ended up playing extended sound in the upper, very vocal ranges of the instruments. On two or three moments we ended up holding out the same pitches, literal unisons. Afterward's Coleman looked at me and said, "There's really nothing better than that in life."

The unison.

²³⁷ Kohlhaase, Bill. "Coleman Classics." *LA Weekly*, July 1988.

²³⁸ As told to the author.

SECTION V: INTERVIEWS

14. Denardo Coleman

Denardo Coleman is of course Coleman's only son, first discussed in my chapter on Coleman and the drums. Besides being the living master of Harmolodic drums, he remains his father's number one supporter and the caretaker of his legacy since his death on June 11th, 2015. In the interview we speak about his current activity teaching Harmolodics worldwide through connections he made between both of his parents. He still uses Ornette's loft in Chelsea to rehearse music and conduct business related to Ornette. While I was studying with Ornette, I never met Denardo. We first met at Sam Ash music where I worked during the day selling trumpets and saxophones after Ornette's death. When tenor saxophonist Joshua Redman left behind sheet music for a concert of Ornette's music from the soundtrack to *Naked Lunch* at the store on 34th St, management at Sam Ash music contacted me at Michiko Studios (where I currently work), not knowing who the music belonged to but believing that I would. I then called Bern Nix to acquire Denardo's telephone number to tell him I had the music, and Denardo and I agreed to meet. Shortly after this in May 2017, I discovered Nix in his room, also in Chelsea, dead from a heart attack. I immediately contacted Denardo who considered him a brother. A year later I reached out to Denardo for the interview, which then took place in May 2018 at Ornette's loft. This was the

same loft that I studied with Ornette in, and we were in the same music room, or laboratory that we had played in. Ornette's many paintings and library were exactly as I remembered, with the addition of the actual telephone from the cover of *Tone Dialing* placed nearby near where we sat.

Matt Lavelle: So, Bern talked about Ornette and Harmolodics a lot. And then of course, almost a year today we found out that Bern had moved on. Since then, I've started seeking more Harmolodics knowledge from different sources. I've been talking to Kenny Wessel about "Kathelin Gray." Kenny Wessel sent me his lead sheet from the rehearsals. Then I met Dave Bryant and he sent me his lead sheets. Then I found Pat Metheny had a real book and he had his version. There was an author named Steven Rush who did a book and he had another one. Plus, online a saxophone player named James Mahone did a transcription, So, now I had five different versions of it to try to put it together, and I'm still trying to put it together.

Denardo Coleman: Damn. Man. So, how different were the versions?

ML: They were all different. And some of the guys took hardcore positions about what certain things were. Some of them I agreed with, some of them I didn't. The key was in question. The more I investigated it, I think what I learned is that maybe Ornette intentionally created something elusive? Kenny said he would change the chords anyway. Finding out that he was dictating chords to the guys was something for me. I think a lot of people decided what they think

Ornette's music is, or what Harmolodics is, or they've decided to put a label or a style on it, but they don't really know what it is and it's misunderstood.

DC: So, the fact that he was dictating chords might not go along with?

ML: Yeah. Some musicians I've spoken with thought you could just play. But I would really like to talk about your musical world.

DC: (Coleman spoke at length here without any questions) Yeah, yeah. But before we do that, just what you touched upon in terms of having those different versions of "Kathelin Gray," and none of them is not necessarily the definitive one or the one that's supposed to be right. Because if you listen to it, people will just say, "Okay. Well, it's a pretty understandable melody." But then you've hit on something that's so central, meaning you can't lock it into a key or just a chord progression or structure that easily fits into something. And which is an interesting thing when my father would write a song. And I remember another musician, they had been working together on something. My father wrote a song and the other person put some chords to it. So, he felt he was a co-writer with the song until my father really explained to him, "Well, those chords can change all the time. The next performance, we might change those chords." So, not coming at it from that place when you just lock into the formality of that, compared to the information of the idea. It's the idea. And that's the problem with the ... Well, not what we'll call a problem, but it's ... When you try to create a theory to match the information. If somebody puts some information, you create a theory, so you can teach this theory, and somehow become the authority on that information, creating work for

yourself and institutionalizing stuff. When that person that came up with the idea, they didn't say, "Well, okay. This is a sub-dominant of this and I'm going to move it to the this or that." No. Somebody came by later and fitted into their knowledge. And they may be limited. Their knowledge could be limited. But now you're bound by their limitations. That gets fossilized and passed around as if that's the thing. But then, somebody comes along and reveals that, "Well, that was just an idea. Your whole thing is just an idea." It's like somebody stepping outside the room and maybe figuring out they're not the only world. There're other worlds. And yet, like you're saying, when you were talking about how that B is a D, that just totally shifted this whole perception. Then you question everything at that point, because your thing is built on, "This is what it is." That's the beauty of my father and the way he just thinks. He doesn't come at it with a mindset of things stop, that where they stop is that absolute place where they can go. Because now, he's getting into the sound. He's just really getting into the properties of sound. Because obviously, around the world different cultures treat sounds in different ways.

DC: So, why is it for us in this fixed system and for these other folks, they can use it for a different purpose, and it doesn't involve any of the scales that we know or any ... It's sound, so sound, nobody can contain it. And nobody can contain how it activates you. It's energy. So, he's looking at it from going into the properties of it.

DC: And so now, if sound can energize and activate it, emotion, or if it can activate healing cells in the body, or has all these powers to it, why would you then try to regulate it to some container and then have everybody's ideas just come from that container? And so, I don't think he was trying to bring everybody's attention to the fact that there was a container.

DC: I think he was just his own thinker and was just thinking of beyond that anyway. And since his medium was jazz and saxophone, he was in that territory where it was contrast to what had been agreed upon. Then the idea that somebody's going against that became a focus. But he wasn't going against it. He was already outside and saw the other possibilities.

DC: And so, he was already passed it. But you could be out of sync then. The rest of the world as we know, they've all agreed on something. And you don't agree with ... It's not that you don't agree with what they agreed upon. You don't agree that it should even be an agreement. You know what I mean?

DC: So, you're just not participating in that whole line of thinking, because you realize there's this expansion of ideas and ways of thinking. And people have proven it, because whether you believe it works for you. If it was an absolute, that same thing would have to apply to everybody. But it doesn't apply to everybody.

DC: If you believe frogs are God, frogs are God. You know what I mean? If you believe frogs are not God ... But it works for you. If that believe, whatever your belief is, works for you, get you through, powers you, gives you energy, gives you that strength. And so, how are you to somebody else, "That doesn't exist?"

DC: How can you say what exists and what doesn't exist? What works, what doesn't work? And so, then you don't have those kinds of limitations, now you're exploring. So, that's really what it's about. You are exploring. And then, you're able to ... When you're open, you're able to make connections to other things that ... And it wasn't his music.

DC: This is just how he is. He would just put it on his plate. He would put different combinations of food together that you wouldn't normally think go together. So, that's why I'm saying that's just how he was in general. And that would create a new taste. And some things he would just like. He might, instead of when people mix iced tea and lemonade. That kind of thing.

DC: So, that was his thing. He would mix that kind of thing up. And that would be what he would dream, or something like that. And so, it's like the ... So, James Blood Ulmer. We put this Ornette tribute out that celebrated Ornette, and they had liner notes for different people.

DC: And so, Blood wrote a liner note. And really, what he was saying was, he was talking about Harmolodics. He said the title of it was, "To be a Harmolodic player you have to be a Harmolodic person." And that's really what it meant. It wasn't about a music thing. It's really about the openness of the universe and being open to the universe.

DC: And the fact that the universe is ... There's so much more to it. There's so much more there. And so, I'm sure when you talk about my father, you've got a lot of just that, the philosophy of ... And he had his own language. So, he made

what he saw was good music ... And when he talks about the unison, he's really talking about melody, what people call melody. But he calls it unison and things like that.

DC: And then, when we would rehearse, and we'd play something, he would pull the guys and say, "Okay. Well, what key was that in?" So, when you talk about the key, everybody had a different answer. But it wasn't because he wanted it to be elusive. It was revealing itself that there's many answers. It doesn't have to be one answer. That's the whole. It doesn't have to be one answer. It can be many answers. That's why it can be many versions. But now, what if you're playing all those keys? Now your ideas it's like wow. And all those clefs. So, now those clefs open up all those other sounds.

DC: That's why if you've got the four clefs and you run stuff through the different clefs, or you're thinking about it through a different clef and you're playing something else, it takes you. It's like a device that takes you out of having a set mindset. And you've now super imposed other things. And once you hear some super imposed ideas, that wakes another part of your senses up. And so, now your ideas are traveling in a different place. And so, I think Harmolodics in terms of musical theory, it's like a device to get a person into a different space so they can think in a more expanded way so that ... Because it's hard. It's hard if you think of scale and chords in a way. If it's lined up in a way. No, you can have great ideas and sound really great and all that. But now, if you don't line them up, if you don't line

them up then what can happen? But it's like, "How do you not line them up?" It's like if you get a plate of food and you warm it up, because that's automatic.

DC: It's like, "Alright, I've got to warm my food up." But now, okay. Well. What if somebody says, "Alright, you've got four things on your plate. Just warm two things up to this temperature. Warm these other things up and not at all. Then you get them back together, mix them together." Now you've got a whole totally different experience of what you think that is or what it isn't.

DC: But it changes your perceptions to a degree to maybe now you don't treat it as just a routine. Maybe you taste something else. Maybe that taste now takes you to like, "Oh, wow. You know what? I've got to look at food differently now." So, to me Harmolodic theory and Harmolodic. Like Kenny, like all of us. We've been just giving hundreds and hundreds, if not, thousands of lessons, how to get to all these places.

DC: And with him, he will play what he's talking about. But you've got to ... Like you're saying, it takes a while to really absorb it and for it to really line up, so you can translate it to yourself. Because, like I say, he's got his own language. He's so advanced in what he's figured out that sometimes when he's speaking, he's speaking from his perspective that he sees clear as day. Maybe the other person doesn't see it as clearly, so he'll try to demonstrate that. And so, yeah, it's interesting. So, I'm going to try to do what you're talking about, meaning I've got to, you know. So, he wanted to put this all together like in the book. And he's written that book, but he's written it 200 different times. So, we're going to try to

put that book together. But I think the way you went about it in terms like the "Kathelin Gray," is a really good way to talk to other musicians about it, because particularly like you said, the theory guys are guys who really are tuned into all the aspects of writing and listening. And they can analyze it. And then given the information of, "Okay. Well, look at it differently."

DC: If you're analyzing it not from that perspective but in a different way, what could you get out of it? And the thing is, it just makes sense no matter how you look at it. Meaning, it's just an idea. And now, if you boil it down to it being an idea, then you can accept it. It doesn't have to fit anything.

DC: You can accept it. It's an idea. So now, he would ... It's like Song X is a melody. But now, if you put that melody in front of somebody to play, it doesn't sound like a standard melody. It sounds like an idea. So, that's one of the reasons why he really, I think liked to play that song, because it clearly is an idea. But it's a melody.

DC: And that idea then when you get passed that melody should lead you to other ideas, because it's the ... The melody is just like the opening. And if you can make your improvisations sound stronger than that melody, that's what he's striving for. So, he'll play a song and play a melody. And again, he'll hear that melody in his improvisation.

DC: Not necessarily the notes to that melody, but how that idea of that melody relates to his ideas that came after that. And to me, that's where it's at. That's where it's at. That's all he ever talked about, were ideas. Now he was able if

he wanted to, to make the melody and the ideas, and let's just call it more conventional, he could do that. When he improvised, clearly, he was improvising in that direction. So, he could line it up that way if he chose to and make it clear. Or he'd go on a deeper level.

DC: The thing about the other musicians who can play complicated things, which is great and sounds really great, but his complicated things were more like he's just his own super computer. It wasn't complicated in a musicianship sort of way. Complicated in terms of ideas being super imposed over other idea, being super imposed over other ideas, and being able to do that in micro seconds.

DC: So, it's like, "Okay." So, that's why he's hard to figure out, because you can't. You can't. Because he wasn't following in any chord thing or something, you can't figure out his roadmap. But his roadmap is clear, but you just can't figure it out. But it's clear. And that's the good thing about it, because you're not thinking of it as a map anymore. You're not thinking of it as a map. You're thinking of it as, he's creating destinations as he goes. Creating destinations as you go. So, now you're not bound by the math, the environment, any structural thing in terms of what's already there. That's what makes it an idea. And now, you're taking that thing. But there's a lot in there, Matt. The things that you're trying to figure out are what kind of things?

ML: I feel like after the time I spent with Bern, I got closer and closer to trying to create in that space that you just described. And at the same time, at Rutgers I've gone through jazz history step by step. And in the beginning, for a

while I was a totally straight guy, but I really wasn't. I was just looking at the liner notes to Sound Museum and he was saying that the way that people use style is that it's like a punishment of free will. And I have, for most of my musical life, been a slave to stylistic perceptions. In the notes Ornette said, "Sound or music has been a slave to styles." And so, Harmolodics for me is basically, was freedom. The word you just said I really like, is unbound. Like it's okay for you to be who you really are. For me, that's beyond profound. It's like a spiritual thing. It's like letting people attach themselves to their own soul.

ML: And whatever that is, it's okay. But not only that. From Ornette I felt that's what he's asking you to do. He's not asking you to follow in a specific set of rules but come out and play who you are outside of that context. So, for me I'm coming around full circle to Harmolodics. People want to put styles on me, but I'm operating from a place where I'm just being who I am. But I don't think I would have got there if I didn't cross paths with him, for him to encourage that kind of thing. You know?

DC: Yeah. But now, why do you think it exists in a sense of it gets taught that way? The way it gets taught?

ML: And that could be institutionalization. Jazz education is such a big thing. It seems to have a need to self-validate and self-reinforce. I'm on the periphery though, new to it.

DC: So, do you think, is it more than one school of thought, or is it pretty much uniform at this point?

ML: It's so interesting because in seeing the video that you made, I'm starting to think that the whole thing is shifting on some levels. The video that you just made in Cuba to me is not just a subtle movement. It's like a real tectonic shift to bring those two worlds together. The musicians I cross paths with in their 20s, more and more of them that I'm encountering, is they're looking for a way out of the slave to style thing. It's hard for them because there's so much judgment that goes down. I mean, Jazz Lincoln Center has this thing called the Essentially Ellington competition that they do. That's not just surface or psychological, it is hard core judgment. They have set of laws. I've been dying to ask you what you thought about The jazz Lincoln Center Orchestra playing Ornette just a few days ago. As someone who's trying to be outside of styles, I really ... I had a hard time with it. I saw one set, and I kept thinking what Ornette would think about this. They said that they did it one time, and Ornette was there. Wynton told the audience that, "Well, Ornette said ..." Then he goes, "We can't tell you what Ornette said." He was about to say something that Ornette said, then he decided not to, so I don't know what it was. (Author's note: This ended up that Coleman told arranger Ted Nash that "You can transcribe a solo, but you can't transcribe an environment".)

ML: They were on this clinic vibe. To me, it was on stage in the process of trying to take Ornette and now put him into a box. They seemed to be suggesting that he was cool with their level of. But here they are trying to deliver a lecture explaining this is what Ornette's music was like, and then they have their

arrangements. To me, they did these long intricate arrangements, and then they would try to blow. To me, they were all missing. Everybody was missing the point. They seemed to be in that place, this place where a lot of people go where they think that if you're in an open space that you can just go anywhere, say anything. You can just disregard everything and just play some random stuff. There was no search for ideas. There was no urgent need to come up with a new melodic idea. There was no search for that idea that's coming from you that you can really feel, that kind of in-the-moment urgent kind of thing.

DC: Yeah.

ML: I had heard about something like this before with when they did a concert with Wayne Shorter. I wasn't there, but someone that I know was there, and he said Wayne didn't look like he was into it because it seemed like they were literally putting him into the museum. They were literally taking him ... He's still alive, and they're trying to put his bust up on the shelf. What you just did in Cuba, this one of the things I wanted to talk to you about, I looked at your discography today, and I was checking it out. I mean, of course people associate you with Ornette of course, you're his son. You've been in his band for decades, but your mom, Jayne Cortez, I'm looking at your discography and the video, you did one of your mom's tunes, "I See Chano Pozo", and brought the Latin thing up. It all came together. You've got young people, you got a cross cultural thing going on. You got women involved ... there's a woman on percussion, there's a woman on flute ... dancers. Then the rapper comes out, and he's rapping in Spanish. The question I

wanted to ask you was he doing his own thing, or was he taking your mom's words and doing them in Spanish, or a combination of both?

DC: Well, what happened ... He was doing a take off her words. Originally, I was ... There's a good friend of my mother in Cuba who is the national poet of Cuba named Nancy Morejón ... a woman similar to my mother, and they're really close friends. I was going to have Nancy do the poem and the rapper responding to the poem. But then, kind of like how our weather was this winter where the winter was ... never went away ... it was unusually cold out in Cuba this winter. Everybody down there was sick this winter, so she got sick. We were rehearsing with her and brought the rapper in. She ended up not doing it because she got sick. By that time, we had been rehearsing and rehearsing, and he had it. He had the vibe ... you know what I mean. He was inside the poem. I said, "Let's just go with it." It wasn't those words, but it was the spirit of what she was talking about, in terms of just Cuba, Chano Pozo today and honoring the whole thing and going forward.

DC: That's what I'm saying, man. It was ... For me ... You're right, and you hear it, merging all that stuff, all my ... this who I am ... and try to keep going forward. That's what it's about.

ML: I mean, maybe what Ornette is calling for is inevitable. The boundaries between everybody ... maybe they must come down somehow, because in my group that's what it's all about. I've got everybody. I've got a rapper in there, and I've got big-time multi-generational ... I've got 19 to 65. Culture thing is mixed up, the sex thing is mixed up.

DC: Well, the thing is I don't think it's just about everybody playing their personal sound, because I think there's also progress when you are playing it, but you actually are delving in or chasing your own concept of what that is, which takes it away from this randomness. That's the things ... Some people think everybody can just play what they want and play together ... they just go this random freedom of sound. It's okay ... that's okay. But my father, day after day, is in there studying the properties and how those properties relate to one another ... those molecules, get into the DNA of it and really ... as a science. He's, every day, studying it, and you move this to there and how that affects this over here, you shift that around to there. He's constantly been writing new things. We come in and rehearse, he's got a whole new set of songs to play based on what he was doing the night before. We'll do that, we'll play. He'll listen to that, and he'll write something else the next day, but it's all in that study and search that he's going somewhere with it. It's not about just ... There's nothing wrong with freely playing, but that's not what he was doing. It sounded free because it wasn't the conventional. Because it wasn't conventional, it didn't sound like the conventional, so it sounded random. The fact that he let other people have the freedom to have their own voice made it sound even more random to those folks who were more conventional, but he was coming from his own concept.

DC: I think people should explore their own concepts. Then when they do that, you hear more depth to what they're doing because then it's ... like I said, those ideas. Ideas mean that there's something behind it. There's something

behind it. Using music for some purpose, it's for some purpose. That could be just to feel good or move and dance, or reflection. When you talk about something like rap and jazz and all that ... I mean, it's all one thing. To try to make it not, we get into the social aspect and the commercial aspects of it.

DC: Unfortunately, the state of black folks today is not very good, and that music reflects what that is today. In 1940s, that blues reflected what it was then. It's just a reflection of what it is. It's not a ... whether what it is has been imposed or whether that's closer. 1960s, black people ... It was ... The pride was able to emerge more. You had strong voices reflecting lots of different information and people being able to make their own statements more and more.

DC: Now, this is my own personal reflection. But by the time that became too powerful, then black society was inundated with crack. That is what we're living with today, because I can't think of anything more powerful than when a person starts killing their own parents for five dollars or whatever. When it turns you into that, and now the children, grandchildren of that, of course ... then added upon that, the institutions that promote that. Now everything got turned on its head.

DC: What you hear reflected in rap is that it glorifies you being in the gutter. The more gutter you are, the more glorified you are, in terms of what's commercially pushed. That is true. I mean, the reflection ... That's not a reflection of black people. That's a reflection of the condition they've been put in and psychologically contorted into, but that's what it is. It's really a matter of

conscious. Consciousness got too strong coming up 40, 50, 60 ... all the way back to the 70s, 80s. It got too strong and too threatening, and people get that conscious. Anything to crush that is what has happened since, and what gets promoted to the masses is that contorted image now.

ML: Yeah.

DC: Let's talk about that. I hate to say jazz is not that much further away from that. Jazz got so super advanced ... super advanced ... and that came from black culture and what it produced, in terms of how you had to survive. It's like soul food ... take the scraps and create incredible nourishment. You take the instruments, you take what you know, and you create something that's really advanced, never been here before. Now they call it jazz. Where it was in 1950 doesn't mean that's where it ... That was just how it was exploding. It was exploding all this time, then it got cut off. It got cut off because it was too advanced. What if it hadn't got cut off for these past 50 years? Well, it would have maybe outdated what they call classical music. It was a threat to all of that, so it got cut off. The growth was cut. Somebody else can now take ownership of it and use it how they want, in the same way that black culture can be destroyed on a certain level so other people can take ownership of it and use it how they want.

That's just consciousness. That's why I'm saying ... You were talking about my mother and other folks who are understanding that level. That's the level of the game. That's what I'm saying. But if you're bottled up into the limitations of the

prescribed thinking, you just can't see the bigger picture. The picture is just so much bigger than all of that.

DC: That's the thing. It goes ... Like you said, it goes so far back. When you get to people and talk to people who are really knowledgeable, they'll tell you something that's related so far back so you understand really close to what the genesis of the thinking and thought process is. Then you start to really understand the layers of it ... you're not just reacting on the surface. Even if that surface is 100 years ... I'm talking about 500 or 1,000 years ... People understand how the society formed, because the way the society formed is still how we are today. Understanding how society formed and this move to that, then you start to understand really how we got where we are and who we are.

ML: I was also thinking about you and Bern in both groups, Prime Time and Fire-spitters, and both groups existing at the same time. I know you spoke about Bern a little bit. For a certain period of time, you were in both bands together. It's really the same energy, because it wasn't like ... It really wasn't like two different experiences. It was the same experience.

ML: Yeah.

DC: Yeah. I mean, the thing ... My mother, she really wanted that exact same thing. That's the thing about harmolodics and now having all of that territory over there to work with. That means your ideas can flow ... you're really breathing fire. That's exactly what she wanted.

ML: Would you say she was also Harmolodic?

DC: Oh, yeah.

DC: Well, I think the thing is there's a lot of people who are Harmolodic.

You are Harmolodic.

ML: Yeah. Thank you.

DC: Yeah. No, that's the thing about it. That person may not call themselves that, but those people who really are in expanded universe ... That's all it is. That's all harmolodics is, is expanded universe. You're harmolodic. I mean, that's how my father would explain what that energy is.

DC: There's lots of Harmolodic people. Cecil Taylor wouldn't call his music Harmolodic ... I would call it Harmolodic. We're just talking about from a philosophical point of view, it's not from a theoretical point of view. It's the fact that he's in an expanded place ... his universe is way expanded. He was able to get to ideas and play the way he played, which ... It's just him. It's him, but he knew exactly what he was doing. He could play something for hours. It wouldn't repeat itself, but he could play that same thing again if he wanted to. He had concept. He had his concept. The way he played, and the sound became a healing sound. I mean, I could see him as the leader of some community. When they needed to have certain things bring things to another level of understanding, they could have him play and that would happen.

DC: That's what my father would call that ... and my mother. That's the one thing about great artists, so to speak, is they're usually great because they've expanded things. They've somehow expanded how you can hear things or their

writing or their voice, their way of thinking. They keep expanding where we're at as people. He calls that energy Harmolodic.

DC: My mother is ... Then you have those types of people who are really looking to expand, they're on a mission to expand. That's one of the harder things to do as an artist, if you consider an abstract artist. You're on a hard mission.

DC: I mean, it's an easy mission and a hard one, easy in the sense that you're on your own mission, you're not trying to ... you're not worried about being judged by some other people's conditions, so that's good. But then you have to really challenge yourself. You have to really challenge yourself to ... so you can see that thing and you're able to manipulate that thing. It's very interesting.

ML: Man, I keep looking at your drums. I wanted to ask you about ... In realms of the drums themselves and harmolodics, were there certain things that Ornette ... Anything harmolodic or anything drum specific ... You have your own sound universe.

DC: Well, you know what, he brought me up in a totally Harmolodic way.

ML: Right.

DC: You know? So, I was interested in drums and always liked his drummers and always watched them. Took some drum lessons, but then we started playing together. He said, "Alright, you're another instrument. Don't worry about the role of the drums. You know ... We are equal soloists."

ML: Right.

DC: So, alright, I'm eight years old.

ML: Right.

DC: So that's how I approached it. You know, now, obviously, in terms of ... the drums having that rhythmic role, he said, "Yeah, the drums have that rhythmic role. But you can keep a pulse by what you're playing. You don't have to keep time to keep a pulse". That's the key right there.

ML: Yeah.

DC: You know, and you can still keep a pulse in terms of that aspect of the drums. You know? But you can do it by any ideas what you play, how you play it, your approach. It's different ways to do it, without it just being strictly a time thing. You know. Nothing wrong with being time as part of it. But you're not bound by that, where you have to ... You know what that's like. You're the train and that's the track you're on. You're just on that track, regardless. You know, you're not worried about ... You got to stay on that track. If you know where you're going, then you just know where you're going. You don't have to worry about the train being on the track. You know where you're going. And you can hear it, like when he plays, it's all there. I mean the tempo, swing, it's all there. You know. And if he wanted to break that up into something else, he would break it up into something else. And it had its own tempo and swing. You know, so. But just because that's the way I came up, I assumed that's how you're supposed to play the drums. You know. So yeah, for me, if I play with somebody, I'm naturally going to start playing with them. As opposed to maybe just holding the tempo, keeping

time. It's just how I hear it. And so, without really knowing it, I just came up in a harmolodic way- of learning the instrument.

DC: But then, I didn't work as hard as he worked. I mean, he worked so hard. So even though he's going into the properties of sound, you're going into that, but you're also a master of playing your instrument. because to me that it's an instrument. You know what I mean? Instrument meaning, it's a tool to get you some place. It's a tool you're using. You know what I mean? You always say don't let the instrument play you, you know? And so, that's what it is, it's an instrument. And so, you use that instrument to get to where you're trying to get to. So, the drums, they're just an instrument now.

DC: One thing nice about the drums though, because that's probably one of the most ancient musical devices. People used it for so many different things. It's like, going to Cuba. You know. The nice thing about it is, being in a really different culture. It's just a good thing to experience, being in a different culture. Seeing how the musicians respond in that video. It's like, you've given them ... Like we were saying, they now find themselves in the environment, and you're playing with them, and they can just be.

ML: And they seem to be really happy. The positivity is palpable in the video.

DC: You know? They're really happy to be there. To be in that situation.

ML: They're free of all that you have to do this, you have to do that.

DC: Yeah, yeah. I know. I think, you know, that's the reason why I had to be there a lot. Because, if you don't experience that thing, there's no way for you to know it.

ML: Yeah.

DC: You know. You've got to experience. Like, if you hadn't been in here with my father, someone can tell you about it on paper, or you can read about it, but when you experience it, it then is possible. Then that world that somebody's talking about, you're in that world now all of a sudden. Or you're outside of your normal thing, and your eyes are now more open, or your senses are more open to things. And so, yeah that was good. Because, they were open to come on the journey, so to speak. And it opened more and more as we played, so the more open it became. You know. So that okay, they didn't have to stay locked in to something, you know. And then we could now have conversations, and it can move around the room, and we can come back. So, they absorbed it, you know. They absorbed it, in terms of just the Harmolodic, you know, sort of, energy. So, that's what I'm kind of, interested in doing with that. I'm going to go to some other places, and just start Harmolodic bands.

ML: Yeah!

DC: You know? Cause ...

ML: Almost like an ambassador. You set up Harmolodics in different parts of the world.

DC: Exactly. You got to get that energy. That energies got to go. And then, even Cuba, you know. It's not like, do that and then leave, I'm going to be going back and forth there, keeping it ongoing, you know. Ongoing. In the meanwhile, like I said, I'm trying to take this harmolodic, all these lessons, and put it into some sort of format. So that people can get into it, you know. And really, it's just a device, you know, to open the door and let you see that, you know, you're just in a room. It's just a device to get you out the room.

ML: Yeah.

DC: You know, it's not like you have to play like him, or sound like him, or be a jazz musician, you know. It's just a device to get you out the norm. But it's got lots of ways to try to get you out of that norm. It's hard to get out the norm you know.

ML: Yeah.

DC: But, you know, it's a way to maybe help find the door, to open the door. And like, okay, that means there's something else. Just the fact that there's a door. You know because, when you think this is the whole world, this is the whole world.

ML: Yeah.

DC: So, I'm going to try to provide something ...

ML: It really feels like it's the logical next step. Like, for, you know, for the philosophy, for it to open up and be spread out around the world.

DC: Yeah, yeah. Because it's just unlocking that energy. You know. And then where it goes is where it goes. You know. It's like, if everybody is now weighed down with the same thing, we got to start to unlock that thing, you know. And let that energy out, because jazz, I don't think it was meant to be what it has become.

ML: Yeah.

DC: You know. It was something that was just growing. I mean, that was where it was at that time, that person came with their energy, and they took that sound, and that way of doing things, and moved it. Then that person moved it. Then that person moved it. You know? So, it's moving. Wasn't meant to just get chopped, and then institutionalized. You know, it got chopped because it got too powerful. It was getting too powerful. You know, consciousness of black people in the USA got chopped because it was getting too powerful.

ML: It's like a friend of mine told me, whoever controls Africa, controls the world.

DC: Mm-hmm (affirmative)-

ML: Right? And, my wife is from Zimbabwe and I spent a few weeks in South Africa and Zimbabwe at the turn of the year. And, I saw a choice, like the South African segregation thing is so deep.

ML: And I wonder, I'm real curious now about the musicians that I met in ... The African musicians that I've met, how much they'd be open to harmolodics.

DC: I have a way to find out. I'm going to Senegal.

ML: (laughing) Alright!

DC: I'm going to start band over there. I'm going to hit Senegal first, Nigeria, Ghana, South Africa, Ethiopia. But we'll start with Senegal. Yeah, yeah.

ML: Cool.

DC: Yeah. And you know, I met some musicians. Because my mother has a house there.

ML: In Senegal?

DC: In Senegal. She has a house there. And so, I haven't been in a little while. But when I went ... You know, I met some musicians the last time, which was a few years ago. Then I played with some musicians over here who came for a program.

ML: In regard to your own craft, we only played together that one time at Bern's memorial.

DC: Yeah, yeah. Well. And that comes from my father's and my mother's energy.

Matt Lavelle: Yeah.

DC: Being just, those type of people. Where it was just, real.

ML: Yeah.

DC: You know, you know. And, in that way, so natural and free flowing. So, it's like, you know, you can be easy going, and intense at the same time.

ML: There was one time, I was a foot messenger, when I was studying with Ornette, and I got so demoralized. I was out on the streets, grinding. And it was

raining, I was just having the worst day... And I was like, "You know what, I got to find some way to ... I need to change direction because I'm going really dark. So, I just stopped, and I just called Ornette on the phone. I didn't even know what I was going to talk about. Right away, he got into deep spirituality and he said, "The soul is eternal".

DC: So, that was just his normal way of going, you know? And so, but as you reach for something, and you get there, that makes you want to keep going. That's the thing, you know, that's the push, you know. And that's a good thing. Yeah, because, you know, then you start having a conversation with yourself, and then that expands to other people, and you know, that's that movement, that's that movement.

15: Kenny Wessel

Kenny Wessel was previously mentioned in my discussion of the guitar in Harmolodics. Wessel teaches where I work at Michiko rehearsal studios in Times Square, New York City. Our conversations quickly became centered around Ornette after I told him I worked with Bern Nix and asked him about Coleman's great piece "Kathelin Gray." As I was closing the section on the guitar, he offered to discuss Harmolodics by phone. We had the interview on the evening of February 5th, 2018. Wessel was very generous with his perspective and took me deep into the laboratory with Coleman. Prime Time has been largely misunderstood, and Wessel shows how it was the most harmolodic of all of Coleman's projects.

Matt Lavelle: So Prime time collaborated with Pat Metheny?

Kenny Wessel: Yes, in 1988 at the Montreux Jazz Festival. Metheny was the guest artist at the festival so he was sitting in with different bands. It was after Song X. Metheny wanted to sit in with the band.

ML: How did you and Chris feel about Metheny sitting in?

KW: I'm a fan so I was cool with it. Metheny had a lot of equipment

ML: Did Prime Time have roadies?

KW: There were three guys that helped set up and run the show and work the monitors.

ML: So, you were with Ornette for 12 years 1988 to 2000. You guys performed *Skies of America* with Prime Time.

KW: Yes, We did that several times.

ML: I know of one bootleg of one of these performances. Prime Time played through the entire Symphony or interludes or?

KW: It was orchestrated. Ornette got together with John Giordano. A conductor from Texas with the Houston Symphony. They figured out how to have us play with the orchestra. There were times when we played ourselves, other times the Orchestra played by themselves, and sometimes the orchestra held out chords and we would be blowing over that. Ornette put some thought into it. It's a great piece. It was a lot of stuff from the original recording, but he worked in new material for Prime Time. Tunes like "Compute" and "Spelling the Alphabet."

ML: I was watching a prime-time concert in Lugano and in the third part there was an extremely fast tempo for you and Chris to play over. It sounded like it might have been very difficult to play lines at that speed.

KW: I would shed that Melody at home like crazy with the metronome. I would get it to where I think Ornette would want it. Then as soon as I got it in rehearsal, he would want it to be much faster.

ML: Beyond the metronome.

KW: I would try to execute the notes. Like Ornette or like the saxophone. I tried to play the pitches that he wrote, and Chris started doing these gestures, running his hands up the strings fast and down doing a gestural approximation of

what the line was. To be honest with you I think Chris got closer to the spirit of the song than I did. I was always way behind Ornette. He was always faster. Chris had the shape of it. It was sort of like hearing Don Cherry. The quartet with Don Cherry was playing while I was in Prime Time, where we did a couple of tunes with them and when we were on the same bill. I went to some rehearsals just to check out that quartet with Charlie and Billy and Don. I remember one-time Ornette had this new music, typical Ornette with fast sinewy lines. They were trying to pull it together as a new tune. Ornette said, "Hey Don, let me hear you play that melody by yourself." Don played it, and it sounded terrible. He was missing notes and flubbing. Ornette said, "Okay let's play it together again." They played it again and Don's chops were not in good shape. He had problems with drugs and his health and stuff. But the way he was playing, he was hitting all the right gestures at the right time. When they played together it sounded really great. It sounded like the old records, though by himself it didn't sound good at all. It was an interesting lesson for me. It wasn't always about the pitches and the right articulation, it was more about the feeling, the shape, and the gestures.

ML: Ornette didn't give him a hard time, interesting. In 70s Prime Time Bern was the melody guy and Ellerbee was like a rock and disco guy. At the Prime Time reunion Lincoln Center, it looked like Denardo booked the two different Prime Times. The Bern version seemed to have a 70s vibe and you guys had an 80's and 90's thing. Did you and Chris choose your own territory or did Ornette try to steer you into different positions like Bern and Ellerbee?

KW: He did that occasionally. He would give one of us chords to play, or I want you to play this rhythmic figure, lock in with this person, and the other person he might give a countermelody, or he would play the melody with him. Chris was more the Rhythm guy and I was the Counterpoint Melody guy. After rehearsing with the 70s guys it really seems that they were coming from an R&B place. Our Prime Time was more jazz, more interaction and less funky. We were more abstract. it's just a feeling I had after hanging out with both Prime Times. Those guys are so funky.

ML: So, you and Badal Roy joined Prime Time on the same day.

Wessel: True, we started a band writing music together back then, and still play together. I was still playing straight-ahead jazz on the side too when Prime Time wasn't working. I would be running to a gig at the 55 bar after an 8-hour rehearsal with Ornette. I would say, okay that's the other side of the brain I have to access now.

ML: I heard about Marathon rehearsals with Ornette from Bern.

KW: 6 to 8 hours, but Al McDowell was in both Prime Times and he said what he did in the second Prime Time was nothing compared to what he did during the first. Ornette would hire a chef so that they wouldn't even have to leave. They wouldn't break, the chef would be cooking while they were playing. 12 or 13 hours was typical. I would be in the studio nine or ten hours. I would get there at 12 or 1 and we would finish at 10. The call would be for noon, and maybe one or two guys would get started. At least 7 hours was not unusual. The chef

happened with the old group. Those guys even lived together in Paris for 6 months, rehearsing the whole time.

ML: When I was studying with Ornette, he told me to quit all the bands I was in and move in. That's when I blinked, and I couldn't do it. Those intensives that you guys experienced, I only experienced about six or seven of those.

KW: You got the vibe. The rehearsals were like classes, you're in school with Ornette. He might be talking about why a half-step is really a fifth. What is an A and B? You would say it's a whole step. He would say no, it's a flat fifth. What's the fifth of D? (A) What's the minor third of A-flat? (B) What's D and A flat? (flat five!)

KW: He would work these intervallic relationships. I wouldn't take him serious at first, but he kept doing that for years with us. He'd say what's E and F, you would say a half step, he would say no it's a sixth. At a certain point, I thought I would either lose my mind or figure out a way to understand this. I wanted to find some sense in this, he's serious about this. One of the things he would say, he would quote Buckminster Fuller, "If you think there's such a thing as up and down your living in the Dark Ages." A and B is a whole step, but A is also the fifth of D, A is also the seventh of B, the second of A. It also has all these properties and relationships. If you don't see those relationships, you just limit your understanding of A and B as a whole step, and you're losing some possible connections and information that you can use in your playing. Ornette heard this stuff and understood it intellectually, all these different references. When I hear A and B maybe I can use a D and A flat chord. It gives you other information and

other pathways. One of the things that I feel is important in understanding harmolodics is that Ornette was always trying to generate more information from the information that was there. More relationships from the simple relationships. He never spoke about anything more complicated than the intervals from 1 to 8. Major Minor triads, Seventh chords, Major scales. He never talked about altered scales or half whole diminished or a flat 13. He used simple pieces of things and put them together in very unusual ways. That's why he liked playing over Prime Time because there was so much information. there was so much information that we were presenting all the time with all of these people playing simultaneously, Ornette was just floating over the top synthesizing our lines into his own stuff.

One time I told Ornette that I really enjoyed a concert by the quartet, and he said, "yeah that's just tombstoning." The promoters wanted him to do stuff from the old days. Nobody liked Prime Time. We were expensive, We were a loud group, dissonant, the critics didn't like us, the promoters didn't like us. Some people did, but I think a lot of people preferred the acoustic quartet. He wanted to play with Prime Time, that was his concept. All that counter information happening at the same time. His ear was pretty incredible. He could hear stuff and generate lines based on what we were playing. I could always hear it. He just picked up that line or that motive.

ML: I heard Haden say he couldn't get Ornette away from Prime Time. Do You consider yourself Harmolodic today?

KW: Definitely. He opened my ears up. He opened my approach to music up. The way I write. The way I lead a band. The way I think and listen. He had a big impact on me. I'm grateful. He knocked me out of my comfort zone for a long time.

ML: Bern had this running joke about Harmolodics anonymous.

KW: Yeah, when we met, he said welcome to Harmolodics anonymous. Bern had a complicated relationship with Prime Time.

ML: Bern Described a type of psychological warfare, that sometimes bordered on manipulation. So how did Prime Time reach a conclusion?

KW: I never really knew that it was over. We were touring like crazy in the beginning. Three weeks in Europe. Three weeks in the states. As time went on the tours became shorter. A long tour would be a week. He became more selective about what he was accepting. We were never finished, we just stopped working. We were still part of the family. I still feel like I'm part of this Harmolodic family.

ML: Do you have students in Harmolodics?

KW: Some. I've done a bunch of workshops, some in Europe. I'll force it on some of my straight-ahead students.

ML: I started my chapter on Ornette and the guitar with Blood.

KW: He made a Harmolodic guitar chart if I can find it.

ML: *Song X* is like bomb in the middle.

KW: I think it's a great record, Metheny was an Ornette fan. He had his triadic thing. One thing though, Pat said he wrote the chords, but they sound like

Ornette chords. I was around Ornette enough to know how he put chords together, and how he puts his tunes together. It's possible that he may have suggested a couple of things if Ornette was reading the chords off, but then I could have said the same thing. There were a couple times I would say hey Ornette how about a B-flat there? He wouldn't come in with the chords written. He would have a melody and compose a chord progression there, so I would imagine that's what happened on "Kathelin Gray."

ML: The live version of "Kathelin Gray" that I heard you guys play was totally different from any other version I've heard.

KW: He would change things and change chords from rehearsal to the next. He wasn't married to it.

ML: This has been extraordinarily helpful, I really appreciate this Kenny.

SECTION V: Conclusion

One of the goals in writing my thesis has been to challenge the idea that Ornette Coleman did not know what he was doing. Suspicious of the rules of Western harmony as a teenager, Coleman spent his entire life investigating how music and sound function from his perspective, the way he heard music. All evidence shows that Coleman may have spent more time playing in search of answers than any other jazz musician. The evidence also shows that he knew exactly what he was doing. He didn't find his voice and then speak it for the rest of his life. His entire life was a musical vision quest. He was never content to just find and then document the answers to his questions through music. There were always more questions to ask and answer, always new music to find and play, just around the corner. Composing was intrinsic to his process, and evidence shows he spent a great deal of time writing as well. Over and over, from recording to concert, he continually searched for the musically unknown. In his later years I witnessed him pick up the alto saxophone on several occasions and try to improvise something completely new with a great deal of conviction, as if he were on stage at the Five Spot with Miles Davis and John Coltrane in the front row. Ornette was still going for it after decades years of doing just that. When he wasn't playing music, the search into the unknown continued as he would endlessly

question and discuss the mysteries of life, constantly in awe of birth, death, love, and sex and how all of it related to music. His process came to be called Harmolodics as I have shown. In time Coleman's process became more and more a spiritual practice. His honesty, fearlessness, and humble dedication to his own identity changed the jazz world forever. Coleman didn't invent the term free jazz, but his arrival in New York and the attention he received opened the doors that countless musicians have gone through ever since. Today in 2019 there are hundreds, maybe thousands of serious musicians that are engaged in committed improvisation, especially in New York City. All of them exist by way of Coleman's successful mission as the great metaphysical inventor in jazz history. Coleman knew he would find things in his quest, and he knew how to look. Along the way he formed key alliances with musician's that became pillars in his story. Don Cherry, Charlie Haden, David Izenzon, Charnett Moffett, Jamaaladeen Tacuma, Billy Higgins, Ed Blackwell, Charles Moffett, Bern Nix, Kenny Wessel, and Denardo Coleman will forever be known for their part in Coleman's story. A story that didn't just change music but changed the world. Ornette Coleman's music will continue to change lives for centuries to come.

TRANSCRIPTIONS AND ANALYSIS

16. Kathelin Gray

“Kathelin Gray” was recorded on the album *Song X* released in December of 1985. It was recorded again by Ornette in 1995 with Prime Time on the album *Tone Dialing*. It’s been recorded as many as nine times by others, as a type of Harmolodic ballad. Coleman doesn’t solo but repeats the melody a second time for Pat Metheny to solo over. Kenny Wessel who played the piece with Coleman and provided insight, provided me with a copy of his personal lead sheet with chords dictated to him from Coleman, please see page 193. I also used Pat Metheny’s transcription from his personal facebook as well as a transcription I found online by James Mahone and a fourth transcription by Stephen Rush. I debated with Rush over the key of the piece. I transcribed Charlie Haden’s bass line.

Key points that I discovered through analysis:

1- Coleman played his music based on knowledge of Western harmony and a simultaneous need to not be bound by established rules. He said that what he really wanted more than anything was to be able to play whatever he felt without having to worry about whether it was right or wrong.

2- Ornette does use conventional harmony to an extent, on his own terms. Sound and idea resolution are practiced, but proper voice leading is irrelevant.

4-He wants the music to be in a constant state of becoming and give the listener just enough to hold on to.

5- “Kathelin Gray” works based on the strength of the ideas delivered with emotional expression. Metheny and Haden are essential to this. I will discuss the use of chords throughout. Metheny and Haden used them, while Ornette and the melody were the core focus. Metheny adds chords, and Haden outlines chords using roots and 5ths. I have broken the piece down into four sections. Please see pages 192-195.

Section A (8 bars)

1- A 2-5-1 progression in A Major begins the piece and Ornette told Stephen Rush there was a 2-5-1 present. It is only a starting point. An A Maj chord returns in measure 6.

2- At the end of measure 5, Metheny adds a C Maj chord that Haden uses on both choruses.

3- The melody in measures 6 and 7 are direct outlines of minor chords. While Ornette told Kenny there was an A Maj at measure 7, both Metheny and

Haden play C#-, which is also in the melody. Kenny said that while these chords were the ones Ornette gave them, he would change them all the time and in 3 months they might be told 3 different chords.

4-. Kenny also said the piece is more about the movement of a 4th and section A measures 2, 4, 5, and 6 move up a 4th

Section B (8 bars)

1- In measure 7 Metheny plays F#-7b5 B7 and E- in place of Coleman's G-

2- Measures 2-4 have more 4th movement

3-In measures 1-4 Haden uses Coleman's chords and in measures 5-8 he uses the Metheny chords.

3- Measures 2 and 3 are a whole step apart

4- Ornette frequently uses the third of the chord as the melody note. See measures 2,3, 4 and 5

5- Section B is 3 ideas strung together

Section C (10 bars)

- 1- In measures 4-10 the melody is an outline of the Coleman chords
- 2-Measures 1-4 Haden plays both the Ornette and Metheny chords
- 3-In measures 9 and 10 Metheny adds rising 4th's (Eb7 and F) Is he trying to resolve the harmony to end the section?

Section D (7 bars)

- 1-In Measures 1 and 2 Haden uses the Metheny chords
- 2- In measures 5 and 6 Metheny adds chords to connect the melodic phrases using the melody note as a b5 in 5 and a +5 in 6.
- 3- 4th movement continues in bars 1 3 and 4.
- 4- Measures 5-7 use Chord function II V III V I
- 5- the 33-bar piece that started in A ends in Ab

Previously discussed pianist and keyboardist Dave Bryant recorded a second version of "Kathelin Gray." He toured with Prime Time for five years before *Tone Dialing* was recorded in Harlem. Their collaboration on the piece began with Coleman handing him the lead sheet and telling him it was his feature. They

rehearsed the piece at Coleman's Rivington St studio in the Bowery, when writer Kathlin Gray herself arrived, who was in a relationship with Johnny Dolphin.

Bryant believes the reason Ornette chose to re-record the piece after the version with Pat Metheny on *Song X* was that Metheny was taking composer co-credit for adding the chords that he included in the Pat Metheny fakebook.

Coleman wrote out a new lead sheet and told Dave that he wanted to work out the changes, and they spent several days working on the composition as a duo before the full band rehearsal. By recording without Metheny present, Bryant believes Coleman reclaimed the tune. He would change the chords at any given time, confirmed by Kenny Wessel and Bern Nix. Bryant's lead sheet contains the notes dictated to bassist Al MacDowell, encircled above the measures. Of further interest is that on the Coleman-Bryant lead sheet all three clefs are listed, including the Harmolodic clef. Bryant's lead sheet has all half notes with bar lines separating melodic episodes without rests, serving as a guide or blueprint to learn the tune by playing it. Bryant suggested that the guitar parts might have completely different rhythmic notation.

Kathelin Gray Lead Sheet from Coleman from David Bryant

Gmail - (no subject)

<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/?ui=2&ik=87072807c2&power=OnN...>

Handwritten musical notation for "Kathelin Gray" by David Bryant. The notation is written on ten staves, with the first staff containing the title and composer's name. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and accidentals, along with handwritten annotations and circled letters (A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, J, K, L, M, N, O, P, Q, R, S, T, U, V, W, X, Y, Z) indicating specific musical elements or sections. The notation is written in a style that suggests it is a lead sheet, with a focus on the melody and harmony.

Kathelin Gray A

Kathelin Gray A

♩ = 60

The musical score is written for a piano in 4/4 time, with a tempo of 60 beats per minute. It consists of two systems, each with a treble and bass staff. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The first system contains measures 1 through 4. Measure 1: Treble has a quarter note D4 (F#), bass has a whole rest. Measure 2: Treble has a quarter note E4 (F#), bass has a half note D3 (F#). Measure 3: Treble has an eighth note D4 (F#), an eighth note C4 (F#), and a quarter note B3 (F#), all beamed together with a '3' below; bass has a half note A3 (F#). Measure 4: Treble has a quarter note A3 (F#), bass has a half note G3 (F#). The second system contains measures 5 through 8. Measure 5: Treble has an eighth note G3 (F#), an eighth note F3 (F#), and a quarter note E3 (F#), all beamed together with a '3' below; bass has a half note D3 (F#). Measure 6: Treble has a quarter note D3 (F#), bass has a half note C3 (F#). Measure 7: Treble has a quarter note C3 (F#), bass has a half note B2 (F#). Measure 8: Treble has a quarter note B2 (F#), bass has a half note A2 (F#).

Kathelin Gray B

Kathelin Gray B

♩ = 60

Musical score for Kathelin Gray B, measures 1-9. The score is written for piano in 4/4 time, with a tempo of 60 beats per minute. The key signature is one sharp (F#). The score consists of three systems of two staves each (treble and bass clef). Measures 1-4 are marked with fingerings 1-4. Measures 5-8 are marked with fingerings 5-8. Measure 9 is marked with a fingering of 9. The score includes various musical notations such as eighth notes, quarter notes, and half notes, as well as slurs and ties.

Kathelin Gray C

Kathelin Gray C

♩ = 60

The musical score is written for a piano in 4/4 time, with a tempo of 60 beats per minute. It consists of three systems of two staves each (treble and bass clef). The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The first system contains measures 1-4. Measure 1: Treble has a half note B-flat, a quarter note G, and a half note F; Bass has a half note B-flat, a quarter note G, and a half note F. Measure 2: Treble has a half note B-flat, a quarter note G, and a half note F; Bass has a half note B-flat, a quarter note G, and a half note F. Measure 3: Treble has a half note B-flat, a quarter note G, and a half note F; Bass has a half note B-flat, a quarter note G, and a half note F. Measure 4: Treble has a half note B-flat, a quarter note G, and a half note F; Bass has a half note B-flat, a quarter note G, and a half note F. The second system contains measures 5-8. Measure 5: Treble has a half note B-flat, a quarter note G, and a half note F; Bass has a half note B-flat, a quarter note G, and a half note F. Measure 6: Treble has a half note B-flat, a quarter note G, and a half note F; Bass has a half note B-flat, a quarter note G, and a half note F. Measure 7: Treble has a half note B-flat, a quarter note G, and a half note F; Bass has a half note B-flat, a quarter note G, and a half note F. Measure 8: Treble has a half note B-flat, a quarter note G, and a half note F; Bass has a half note B-flat, a quarter note G, and a half note F. The third system contains measures 9-10. Measure 9: Treble has a half note B-flat, a quarter note G, and a half note F; Bass has a half note B-flat, a quarter note G, and a half note F. Measure 10: Treble has a half note B-flat, a quarter note G, and a half note F; Bass has a half note B-flat, a quarter note G, and a half note F.

Kathelin Gray D

Kathelin Gray D

$\text{♩} = 60$

The musical score is written for a piano in 4/4 time with a tempo of 60 beats per minute. It consists of two systems of two staves each. The first system contains measures 1 through 4, and the second system contains measures 5 through 7. Measure numbers 1-7 are placed above the first staff of each system. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The melody in the treble staff features eighth and sixteenth notes, often beamed together, with some triplets indicated by a '3' and a bracket. The bass staff provides a harmonic accompaniment with eighth and sixteenth notes, also featuring triplets. Measure 7 ends with a double bar line.

Klactoveedsedstene

SCORE

KLACTOVEEDSEDSTENEAS PLAYED BY
ORNETTE COLEMANCOMPOSED BY CHARLIE PARKER
TRANSCRIBED BY CHRISTOPHER W. PALMERFAST SWING $\text{♩} = 300$

INTRO (SAX HARMONY)

The musical score for "Klactoveedsedstene" is written for saxophone in 4/4 time, key of B-flat major. The tempo is marked as "FAST SWING" with a quarter note equal to 300 beats per minute. The score begins with an "INTRO (SAX HARMONY)" section. The main melody is marked with a "4" and a circled "A" labeled "HEAD". The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and fingerings (e.g., 1, 2, 3). The score is divided into measures, with measure numbers 6, 14, 19, 23, 27, 32, and 37 indicated. The score ends with a circled "B" labeled "Solo".

2

KLACTOVEEDSEDSTENE

42

47

52

57

61

65

70

75

©

KLACTOVEEDSEDSTENE

3

80

85

90

94

98

102

109

115

*PITCH SHARP

*PITCH FLAT

*DRAGGING

4

KLACTOVEEDSEDSTENE

Musical score for Klactoveedstedstene, measures 120-153. The score is written in treble clef with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The melody features various rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. Trills are indicated by a '3' above the notes. A fermata is placed over a note in measure 131. The score is divided into measures 120, 124, 129, 134, 138, 143, 149, and 153.

Measures 120-123: Trills and eighth notes.

Measures 124-128: Trills and eighth notes.

Measures 129-133: Trills and eighth notes.

Measures 134-137: Trills and eighth notes.

Measures 138-142: Trills and eighth notes.

Measures 143-148: Trills and eighth notes.

Measures 149-152: Trills and eighth notes.

Measure 153: Trills and eighth notes.

KLACTOVEEDSEDSTENE

5

157

(RHYTHMIC APPROXIMATION)

162

167

173

178

183

188

192

6

KLACTOVEEDSEDSTENE

197

203

208

214

220

225

230

236

(G)

DRAGGING

DRAGGING

(H)

TWO BEATS GET DROPPED (POSSIBLY EARLIER)

'OR THEY AREN'T DROPPED AND THE BAND JUST SWITCHES UP THE FEEL RANDOMLY

KLACTOVEEDSEDSTENE

7



KLACTOVEEDSEDSTENE

9



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Coleman, Ornette (as * b: 9. Mar. 1930, Fort Worth/TX [New Grove; rororo; Reclam; Dictionnaire 1995; MusicHound] {alt. date: 19. Mar. 1930, Fort Worth/TX [Feather 1960; Companion; Dictionnaire 1988; Rough Guide]} {alt. date: 19. Mar. 1931, Fort Worth/TX [Litweiler 1992; Wulff: Diary of Jazz, 1996]}; d: 11. Jun. 2015, New York; Lexikon: Feather [1960]; Companion [1987]; New Grove [1988, 2001]; rororo [1988]; Reclam [1989]; Dictionnaire [1988, 1995]; MusikHound [1999]; Rough Guide [1999]; vertical file: Ornette COLEMAN [1965, 1992, 1994-1995, 1997-1998, 2000-2001, 2003-2004, 2006])

Coleman, Ornette (b Fort Worth, 9 March 1930). American saxophonist and composer, father of Denardo Coleman. --- 1. Life. --- He began playing alto saxophone at the age of 14 but not long afterwards changed to the tenor instrument. His early professional work with a variety of southwestern rhythm-and-blues and carnival bands seems to have been in a traditional idiom, but in 1948 he began to develop a style predominantly influenced by Charlie Parker. Wherever he tried to introduce some of his more personal and innovative ideas he met with hostility, both from audiences and from musicians. While touring the Gulf Coast with a rhythm-and-blues group he played a radical solo at a dance and afterwards was assaulted; his tenor saxophone was destroyed and he then acquired an alto saxophone. In 1949 he spent six months in New Orleans and worked mostly at nonmusical jobs while rehearsing his original new style; at this time he met Ed Blackwell. Coleman then returned to Fort Worth, after which he went to Los Angeles with Pee Wee Crayton's rhythm-and-blues band (late 1949). While employed as an elevator operator in Los Angeles he studied (on his own) harmony and theory textbooks and gradually evolved a radically new concept and style, seemingly from a combination of musical intuition born of southwestern country blues and folk forms and his misreadings - or highly personal interpretations - of the theoretical texts. --- From 1951 Coleman was again associated with Blackwell, and in summer 1956 the two men formed the American Jazz Quintet with the saxophonist Harold Battiste, Alvin Batiste, and Ellis Marsalis. At the same time he rehearsed with two drummers (Blackwell and Billy Higgins) and with the Jazz Messiahs, a bop group including Higgins and Don Cherry; in August 1957, with James Clay as the group's saxophonist, the Jazz Messiahs performed some of Coleman's compositions in Vancouver. At some point after April 1958 Coleman and Cherry replaced Dave Pike in Paul Bley's group (with Charlie Haden and Higgins) at the Hillcrest Club in Los Angeles; a concert recording of that quintet exists from the autumn of that same year. Playing an as yet unacceptable form of free jazz, the group was fired soon thereafter. --- While working sporadically at the Hillcrest and elsewhere, Coleman eventually came to the attention of Red Mitchell and later Percy Heath of the Modern Jazz Quartet. His first studio recording (for Contemporary in 1958) reveals that his style and sound were, in essence, fully formed at that time. The following year Bley moved to New York and Coleman took over his group, thus forming the classic quartet with Cherry, Haden, and Higgins. At the instigation of John Lewis the quartet began, in Hollywood, a series of recordings for Atlantic, the first two of which were entitled "The Shape of Jazz to Come" (which included Coleman's compositions "Lonely Woman" and "Congeniality"; May 1959) and "Change of the Century" (with "Ramblin'" and "Free"; October 1959). These recordings, which occasioned worldwide controversy, revealed Coleman performing in a style freed from most of the conventions of modern jazz. In between the making of these first two albums for Atlantic, Lewis also arranged for Coleman (and his partner Cherry) to attend the Lenox (Massachusetts) School of Jazz in August 1959. There followed engagements with the quartet at the Five Spot nightclub in New York (from mid-November 1959, with Blackwell replacing Higgins in spring 1960) and further albums for Atlantic; "Free Jazz" (made on 21 December 1960) for double jazz quartet, a 37-minute sustained collective improvisation, was undoubtedly the single most important influence on avant-garde jazz in the ensuing decade. On another recording, "Jazz Abstractions" (made earlier the same week), Coleman is heard in a variety of more structured pieces, among them Gunther Schuller's serial work "Abstraction" for alto saxophone, string quartet, two double basses, guitar, and percussion. --- Touring and New York club dates continued through 1961, but with many changes in personnel: Haden gave way to Scott LaFaro (September 1960), Jimmy Garrison (by March 1961), and David Izenzon (October 1961, when Garrison joined John Coltrane), and Bobby Bradford and Charles Moffett replaced Cherry and Blackwell (mid-summer 1961); Bradford left soon afterwards, and the group continued as a trio. In 1962, after only occasional work, notably a concert he produced himself at Town Hall involving his trio, a blues group, and a string quartet (21 December 1962), Coleman retired temporarily from performing in public, primarily to teach himself trumpet and violin. His unorthodox

treatment of these instruments on his return to public life early in 1965 provoked even more controversy and led to numerous denunciations of his work by a number of influential American jazz musicians, including Miles Davis and Charles Mingus. However, Coleman was well received in Europe during his first tour with the trio there in 1965, giving a major impetus to the burgeoning European avant-garde jazz movement. In the mid- and late 1960s he also became interested in extended, through-composed works for larger ensembles, and produced among other pieces "Forms and Sounds for Wind Quintet" (1965, recorded in England by the Virtuoso Ensemble, 1965, Pol. 623246-7) and "Skies of America", a 21-movement suite for symphony orchestra (1972). --- A film of the trio, made in 1966, was released around 1988 as the video "David, Moffett, and Ornette". In 1967, with the addition of Haden, the group toured as a quartet incorporating two double bass players; Blackwell and then Higgins replaced Moffett in that quartet briefly in August 1967. Izenzon left the group around the beginning of 1968, to be replaced by Haden, and Dewey Redman joined during the same period, again making a quartet; from spring 1969 to 1973 Blackwell rejoined the quartet for touring and recording, though at times Coleman struggled for work in these years. By the early 1970s his influence had waned considerably, while John Coltrane's dominance of saxophone styles had correspondingly spread. As Coleman turned increasingly to more abstract and mechanical compositional techniques (as in "Skies of America"), his playing lost some of its earlier emotional intensity and rhythmic vitality. But a visit to Morocco in 1972 and the gradual influence (especially rhythmic) of certain popular rock, funk, and fusion styles seemed to have revitalized his ensemble performances, a direction clearly discernible in his powerful electric band Prime Time, founded in 1975. This group first recorded in France in the same year as a quintet, with two electric guitarists, an electric bass guitarist, and a drummer, but thereafter it usually worked as a sextet, with a second drummer; Haden joined on double bass for the group's performance at the Newport Jazz Festival New York in 1978, but not for its European tour later that year. In the 1980s the band performed and recorded as a septet with two guitarists, two bass guitarists, and two drummers, all amplified. Prime Time's repertory has drawn on the various musical styles that have influenced Coleman (including Moroccan music, jazz-rock, and free-jazz improvisation). Coleman's own playing, however, a fascinating and basically inimitable amalgam of blues and modal, atonal, and microtonal music, remains unchanged. --- From the 1960s Coleman was often joined by his son, Denardo Coleman, in concerts and recordings. Although in the 1980s he performed in public only intermittently, the recording "Song X" (1985) and a tour (1986), both made with Pat Metheny, brought him and his music a degree of attention he had not enjoyed for some years. A film, "Ornette: Made in America", directed by Shirley Clarke and compiled from footage made in the 1960s and the early 1980s, was released in 1984, and two concerts entitled "Ornette Coleman Celebration" took place at the Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall in 1987; the works performed were "Notes Talking", for solo mandolin (1986), "The Sacred Mind of Johnny Dolphin", for chamber ensemble (1984), "Time Design", for amplified string quartet and electric drum set (1983), "Trinity", for solo violin (1986), and "In Honor of NASA and Planetary Soloist", for oboe, english horn, mukhavīnā, and string quartet (1986). --- Prime Time remained active through the 1980s, and around 1989 Chris Rosenberg, who was classically trained, became one of its two electric guitarists; Coleman's student David Bryant, a keyboard player, replaced one of the two electric bass guitarists (setting the precedent for Coleman's use of piano in his future groups); and instead of utilizing two conventional drum sets, Coleman employed Badal Roy, on tabl&amac;, as the group's second percussionist. Prime Time continued with this instrumentation until 1995, at which point the leader reinstated the two bass guitarists. In 1987 Coleman participated in reunions of the American Jazz Quintet and his own quartet (with Cherry, Haden, and Blackwell) at the Ed Blackwell Music Festival. That same year Prime Time and the free-jazz quartet (but with Higgins rather than Blackwell) took part in the recording of a double album, "In All Languages". The resulting tracks offer fascinating contrasts, as the radical electric group and the formerly radical acoustic quartet (now sounding in its own way "classic") interpret in their own distinctive ways a number of the same titles, composed by Coleman. This same quartet gave a concert in Los Angeles in September 1990. --- In 1994 Coleman formed his acoustic New Quartet, consisting of Geri Allen (piano), Charnett Moffett (double bass), and Denardo Coleman (drums). Following the practice heard on "In All Languages", and to underscore still further the importance of improvisation in Coleman's work, the New Quartet recorded two albums consisting mainly of the same collection of titles, but of course offering substantially different renderings ("Sound Museum: Hidden Man" and "Sound Museum: Three Women", both c1994). By this time Coleman had come to be widely recognized as one of the giants of jazz - not just through critical acclaim, which had been a factor for decades, but through the emergence of a widespread audience for his work. A five-year "genius" award from the MacArthur Foundation which he received in 1994 helped to support his unceasingly creative projects, and the North Sea Jazz Festival presented him with its

International Bird Award; this was a remarkable indicator, because the award had previously gone to players who were equally famous and deserving but stylistically rather more conventional. --- Around this time Coleman founded his own record production company and label, Harmolodic. He recorded as a guest soloist with Yoch'ko Seffer (November 1995) and in duos with Allen (late 1995 or early 1996) and Rolf Kühn (1997), and toured and recorded in a duo with Joachim Kühn (1996-7). In July 1997 the Lincoln Center played host to a series of concerts by Coleman: his "Skies of America", incorporating a symphony orchestra and Prime Time; a performance by a trio (with Haden and Higgins) and a quintet (with the addition of Wallace Roney and Kenny Barron); and a theatrical presentation in which Prime Time were supported by contortionists, fire-swallowers, dancers, and a video collage. In summer 1998 he appeared at the Umbria festival in Italy in a somewhat different quartet, comprising Lee Konitz, Haden, and Higgins.

--- 2. Musical style. --- Coleman's music cannot be understood solely in terms of the concept that has generally prevailed since the late 1920s - that jazz is primarily a form of expression for a virtuoso soloist. It is conceived essentially as an ensemble music; founded on traditional roots, it makes consistent use of spontaneous collective interplay at the most intimate and intricate levels. This accounts for its extraordinary unpredictability, freedom, and flexibility. Coleman's improvisations are highly mobile in tonality, rhythmic continuity, and form; they liberated the jazz solo both from an adherence to predetermined harmonic "changes" and a subservience to melodic variation. They also abandon traditional chorus and phrase structure, reinterpreting jazz rhythm, beat, and swing along freer, nonsymmetrical lines. Although it appeared to many to be incoherent and atonal, Coleman's playing was (and remains) essentially modal in concept, rooted in older, simpler black folk idioms - in particular a raw blues feeling. His wailing saxophone sound (produced in his early years on a plastic instrument) is never far removed from the plaintive human voice of African-American musical folklore. This essentially lyric approach, best heard on *Lonely Woman* (1959) and *Sex Spy* (1977), is linked to his "horizontal" concept of improvisation, a tendency explored earlier by such players as Lester Young and Miles Davis (in his post-bop modal style). Released from a strict adherence to harmonic functions and conventional form and phrase patterns, Coleman's solos are intrinsically linear, evolving in a sometimes fragmented musical discourse (ex.1). His improvisations at fast tempos are marked by flurries of notes, or gliding, swooping, and at times bursting phrases, played with great intensity and conviction. Occasionally his work seems burdened by the overuse of sequential patterning. But it is the strength of conviction of his playing (especially when aided by like-minded colleagues such as Cherry, Haden, and Higgins) that produces a sense of the inevitable in Coleman's art. Technically Coleman plays as much "from his fingers" as by ear, an approach frequently resulting in nontempered intonation and unique tone-colors. These effects are even more noticeable in his less convincing performances on trumpet and violin, although even on these instruments Coleman can sometimes produce compelling improvisations by sheer instinct and musical energy. --- Coleman's style has changed little since the early 1960s. Whether he is working in Moroccan musical traditions, in atonal, classically oriented works or, indeed, in rock- or funk-influenced idioms, his playing seems, in both sound and substance, to be capable at once of dominating and being assimilated by its surroundings. --- From the mid-1970s Coleman has espoused a theory which he calls "harmolodic." It is apparently based on the reiteration in varied clefs and "keys" of the same musical materials (lines, themes, melodies), thus producing a simplistic organum-like "polyphony," principally in unrelieved parallel motion. It is not clear, however, how this theory functions in Coleman's own improvisatory style (see also Harmolodic theory). He is also noted for his use of obscure, often contradictory, epigrams. Some observers see in these the "philosophical" analogues to his musical theories and concepts. Similarly, his notation of his own compositions - of which he has written several hundred - is imprecise, gestural, and in a sense graphic, leaving the performer free to give individual and differing interpretations. --- Coleman opened up unprecedented musical vistas for jazz, the wider implications of which have been explored in detail by his many imitators. From the 1980s onwards his compositional style, his group sounds (in both the electric and the acoustic settings), and his highly personalized saxophone playing have been enormously influential. --- Oral history material in NjR. --- SELECTED RECORDINGS: --- "Something Else!!!! The Music of Ornette Coleman" (1958, Cont. 3551); "Tomorrow is the Question! The New Music of Ornette Coleman" (1959, Cont. 3569); "The Shape of Jazz to Come" (1959, Atl. 1317), incl. *"Congeniality"; *"Lonely Woman"; "Change of the Century" (1959, Atl. 1327), incl. *"Free"; *"Ramblin'"; "Twins" (1959-61, Atl. 1588), incl. "First Take"; "This is our Music" (1960, Atl. 1353); "Free Jazz" (1960, Atl. 1364); "Jazz Abstractions" (1960, Atl. 1365); "Ornette!" (1961, Atl. 1378); "Ornette on Tenor2" (1961, Atl. 1394); "Town Hall, 1962" (1962, ESP 1006), incl. *"A Dedication to Poets and Writers"; "The Ornette Coleman Trio at the Golden Circle", i-ii (1965, BN 84224-5); "The Empty Foxhole" (1966, BN 84246); "Saints and Soldiers" (1967, RCA LSC2982); "Ornette at 12" (1968, Imp. 9178); "Crisis" (1969, Imp. 9187)

"Science Fiction" (1971, Col. KC31061); "Broken Shadows" (1971-2, Col. FC38029); "Skies of America" (1972, Col. KC31562); "Dancing in your Head" (1975, A&M Hor. 722); "Body Meta" (1975, AH 1); "Soapsuds" (1977, AH 6), incl. "Sex Spy" [duos with C. Haden]; "Of Human Feelings" (1979, Ant. 2001); "Ornette and Prime Time: Opening the Caravan of Dreams" (1985, Caravan of Dreams 85001); with P. Metheny: "Song X" (1985, Geffen 24096); "In All Languages" (1987, Caravan of Dreams 85008), incl. "Cloning", "Mother of the Veil", "Peace Warriors", "Space Church", "Virgin Beauty" (1988, Portrait RK44301), incl. "Honeymooners"; "Sound Museum: Hidden Man" (c1994, Harmolodic 314-531657-2); "Sound Museum: Three Women" (c1994, Harmolodic 314-531914-2); "Tone Dialing" (c1995, Harmolodic 314-527483-2). --- [Gunther Schuller & Barry Kernfeld, in: The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz, 2nd edition, London 2001]

Coleman, Ornette (as, comp, Id, ts, tp, v), geb. 9.3.1930 Fort Worth, Texas. Ihm gehe es um die Umsetzung von Ideen im Verhältnis zu musikalischen Verläufen, so hat Ornette Coleman sein radikales improvisatorisches Konzept wiederholt erläutert, das 1959/60, als der Revolutionär mit seinem Plastiksaxophon die Szene betrat, äußerst kontroverse Diskussionen auslöste. Die Stellungnahmen reichten von totaler Verurteilung - des Instrumentalisten, weniger des Komponisten - aufgrund "mangelnder Technik", "falscher Rhythmik, Harmonik, Intonation" etc. bis hin zu so eindeutigen Äußerungen wie: "das einzig wirklich Neue seit Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie und Thelonious Monk" (John Lewis); "sein Spiel hat eine tiefe innere Logik" (Gunther Schuller); "er macht irgendetwas mit seinen Stücken, das einen nicht nur die Melodielinie, sondern gleichzeitig unzählige Durchführungsmöglichkeiten hören lässt" (Shelly Manne); "seine Musik klingt wie organisierte Unordnung oder wie falsch richtig spielen" (Charles Mingus). "Ein ausgesprochener Meister, ein Mann, der eine Tradition aufgenommen und die Musik stets mit Qualität und Klasse vorangetrieben hat", resümierte Kollege Phil Woods 1986 in einem Blindtest. Alexander von Schlippenbach bekannte 1981: "Heute weiß ich, dass die ersten Takte seines Albums ›Free Jazz‹ all das schon enthielten, was als Free Jazz kommen sollte, sogar in seiner extremsten Form." Der Musikschriftsteller Ben Sidran meint: Coleman "wurde gewissermaßen gerade durch seinen zeitweiligen Abstand von der schwarzen Tradition zu einer ihrer überragenden Figuren", die dem Prinzip der Vokalisierung durch Forderungen wie "rhythmische Muster sollten sich am natürlichen Atem orientieren" oder "Ideen werden in Tonarten ausgedrückt, nicht Tonarten in Ideen" zu neuem Leben verhelfen hätten. All diese Einschätzungen, die negativen wie die positiven, stimmen, und sie bestätigen Colemans Absicht, zwar ein Improvisator sein zu wollen, dabei aber nicht wie die Bop-Musiker von Tin Pan Alley-Strukturen abzuweichen. "Wenn ich einem Akkordschema folge, kann ich mein Solo auch gleich schreiben. [...] Lasst uns die Musik spielen, nicht den Back-ground", betonte der Saxophonist, der rhythmische, harmonische und melodische Gegebenheiten des Jazz nicht etwa wie John Coltrane von innen heraus gesprengt, sondern in seinem fragmentarischen "liedhaften Spiel" (Red Mitchell) gar nicht erst verwendet hat. Coleman - vor allem der Free Jazz-Pionier - denkt also von vornherein nicht in bausteinartigen Viertaktperioden, sondern lässt seine Stücke ihre eigene Form finden und spinnt dann volksliedhaft einfache Melodien tonartfrei oder locker auf ein tonales Zentrum bezogen in asymmetrischen, melodisch aber konsequenten, rhythmisch nicht determinierten, sondern determinierenden Phrasen fort. Seinen herb singenden Ton unterwirft er, der melodischen Charakteristik folgend, gewissen Schwankungen, die - über den gängigen Stilmittelkatalog hinaus - zum Viertelson-System tendieren und übrigens auch Karlheinz Stockhausens Bewunderung herausgefordert haben. 1972 taucht in den Liner Notes zu "Skies Of America" erstmals der Begriff "Harmolodics" auf, mit dem Coleman sein - allerdings zuvor schon im Wesentlichen ausgebildetes Konzept umschreibt. Da seine seit Jahren geplante Publikation zu diesem Thema noch nicht erschienen ist, kann nur aus der Musik selbst, aus seinen oft geheimnisvollen Äußerungen und Berichten von Mitmusikern erahnt werden, dass es sich dabei eher um eine Philosophie und Psychologie des Zusammenspiels denn um eine Musiktheorie handelt. Coleman: "Es ist eine Art Sprache über Sprachen, eine Farbe über Fabeln." Sein Sohn, der Schlagzeuger Denardo Coleman: "Man kann Dinge machen, die nach den Maßstäben der Musiktheorie merkwürdig sind, und doch kann das Ohr dabei dasselbe Gefühl von Auflösung und Ordnung haben." Eine entscheidende Rolle spielt dabei die Intervallik, die sich nicht auf eine Harmonik bezieht, sondern eine solche erzeugt und den Ausgangspunkt für eine homo- oder eine polyphon geführte Mehrstimmigkeit bildet. Coleman weist dazu beispielsweise darauf hin, "dass man jede Melodie nehmen und daraus eine Basslinie machen kann. Oder eine zweite Stimme. Oder eine Führungsstimme. Oder eine Rhythmusstimme." Peter Niklas Wilson, der in seinem Buch "Ornette Coleman" (Oreos, 1989) den Erkenntnisstand über das Mysterium Harmolodics festhält, warnt: "Die Kriterien europäischer Musiktheorie sind auf Colemans Musikdenken schwerlich anwendbar. Seine harmolodische Theorie bezieht ihre

Originalität gerade aus der Umdeutung und Neuordnung des Vokabulars und der Syntax europäischer Musik - und solche Umdeutung des Vorgefundenen ist ja ein Grundzug afroamerikanischer Kreativität, wie sie sich im Jazz seit seinen Anfängen ausdrückt." Ihren Zauber entfaltet Colemans Musik auch ohne Klärung des theoretischen Ansatzes. David Sanborn betonte, vor seinem inneren Auge tauchten texanische Landschaften auf, sobald er diese Musik höre, und Archie Shepp bescheinigt Colemans im Spannungsfeld zwischen melodischem Ausdruckswillen, Blues-Verwurzelung und Abstraktionsdrang angesiedelten Stücken "die Aura eines Volkstanzes, der durch den Lauf eines Maschinengewehrs angepeilt wird". Viele seiner Kompositionen, vor allem die Ballade "Lonely Woman" und schnelle Stücke, die der Altsaxophonist Anfang der sechziger Jahre, oft in atemberaubendem Unisono mit dem Trompeter Don Cherry, vorgestellt hat, sind Standards geworden. Pat Metheny sagt, Colemans Kompositionen weckten in ihm "den Wunsch, etwas anderes zu spielen als das, was ich normalerweise spiele - eine Qualität, die man nicht in vielen Stücken findet". Platten wie "The Shape Of Jazz To Come" (1959) oder vor allem "Free Jazz" (1960), auf der er sein Konzept im größeren Rahmen eines Doppelquartetts und unter stärkerer Hinwendung zur Kollektivimprovisation realisiert, markieren Meilensteine der jüngeren Jazzgeschichte. Colemans spätere Versuche mit Trompete oder Violine sind eher als Erweiterung der Klangwerkzeuge denn als eigenständige instrumentalistische Beiträge zu bewerten. Als "Vater auch des späteren Punk-Jazz" etikettiert, begann Ornette Coleman Ende der siebziger Jahre mit Partnern wie Shannon Jackson und "Blood" Ulmer sein Konzept in einen seitdem modifizierten Funk- Rock-Zusammenhang zu stellen, der sich neben klanglicher Sophistication vor allem durch eine Differenzierung und Aufbrechung starrer Rock-Jazz-Klischees auszeichnete. --- Als Vierzehnjähriger hatte er autodidaktisch Altsaxophon gelernt und zwei Jahre später das Tenor hinzugenommen. Nach Auftritten mit lokalen Rhythm & Blues-Gruppen in Fort Worth und einem kurzen Aufenthalt in New Orleans lebte Ornette Coleman von 1952 bis 1959 als Fahrstuhlführer in Los Angeles, trieb Privatstudien und experimentierte ab 1957 mit Don Cherry, Ed Blackwell und anderen avantgardistisch gesinnten Kollegen. Schon 1958 kam es zu ersten Aufnahmen, die aber später erst veröffentlicht wurden, darunter mit Red Mitchell, von und mit Paul Bley, dann "Something Else" mit Don Cherry und Walter Norris und "Tomorrow Is The Question" (1959). Der Durchbruch für Coleman und sein Quartett mit Don Cherry, Charlie Haden und Billy Higgins (bzw. später wieder Ed Blackwell) kam 1959 mit einem Vertrag von Atlantic Records und einem spektakulären Auftritt im New Yorker Five Spot. Es folgten Festival-Gastspiele und eine Reihe von Platten-einspielungen, darunter "The Shape Of Jazz To Come" - mit den Titeln "Congeniality" und "Lonely Woman, Change Of The Century" und "Ornette" mit Scott LaFaro, dann "Twins", "Art Of The Improvisors", "This Is Our Music" sowie "Free Jazz". In der Folgezeit lebte Coleman dann - abgesehen von wenigen Auftritten wie einem Town Hall-Konzert (1962) - relativ zurückgezogen, verbesserte seine Technik, lernte zudem auch Geige und Trompete und besuchte mehrmals Europa. David Izenzon (b) und Charles Moffett (dr) waren - später allerdings im Wechsel mit Charlie Haden, Ed Blackwell oder Ornette Colemans Sohn Denardo - die Mitglieder seines 1965 neu gegründeten Trios, das durch Dewey Redman zum Quartett erweitert wurde. Der Avantgardist machte nun wieder Schlagzeilen: 1965 Präsenz auf europäischen Festivals und Aufnahme eines "Bläserquintetts" in England, 1966 Jazzmusiker des Jahres im "Down Beat". Poll und diverse andere Auszeichnungen, 1967 erster Jazzmusiker mit einem Kompositionsauftrag der Guggenheim- Stiftung und Konzertveranstalter auf eigenes Risiko in London mit Yoko Ono, 1969 Wahl in die "Down Beat"-Hall of Fame und Reunion mit Don Cherry. Platten dieser Phase, so "At The Golden Circle" (1965) und "The Empty Foxhole" (1966) oder 1968 "New York Is Now" und "Love Call" fanden ebenso hervorragende Aufnahme wie "Crisis" (1969) mit Don Cherry. In den siebziger Jahren schraubte Coleman seine Aktivitäten bis auf die kompositorischen wieder etwas zurück. 1970 erschien "Friends And Neighbours" mit Musikern, die der Saxophonist unterstützt hat; es folgten "O.C." und das Duett- Album "Closeness" mit Charlie Haden und dann erst fünf Jahre später die 1973 aufgenommene Platte "Dancing In Your Head", eine Afro-Rock-Collage. Als problematisch erwies sich die Aufführung seines sinfonischen Werkes "Skies Of America" 1972 mit dem London Symphony Orchestra; eine revidierte Aufführung folgte 1983 in Fort Worth. Trotz reduzierter Konzerttätigkeit war Coleman, der 1972 längere Zeit in Marokko weilte, auf europäischen Festivals und mehrmals auch beim Newport Festival präsent, so 1971, 1972 und 1978, als er sowohl mit früheren Partnern wie Don Cherry oder Dewey Redman als auch mit seiner neuen, Rock-orientierten Electric-Gruppe Prime Time mit zwei Gitarristen und zunächst Shannon Jackson sowie Denardo Coleman als Drummern auftrat. Daneben spielte er Ende der siebziger Jahre gelegentlich mit dem von ihm entdeckten Gitarristen "Blood" Ulmer und Fred Williams (b) und arbeitete an einer groß angelegten Komposition für 125 Musiker mit dem Titel "The Oldest Language". Mit Prime Time nahm Coleman 1980 das Digital-Album "Fashion Face" auf, gefolgt u.a. von "Time Design" (1985), "Virgin Beauty" (1988) und "Tone Dialing" (1994) sowie - mit Prime Time und

Quartett - "In All Languages" (1987). Ende der siebziger Jahre waren auch einige Platten mit älterem Material erschienen, darunter "Soapsuds" mit 1977 aufgenommenen Duos mit Charlie Haden und "Body Meta" (1976, Paris). Coleman gab 1981 im New Yorker Public Theater die ersten Konzerte seit Jahren, trat mit dem inzwischen umbesetzten Doppel-Trio Prime Time beim Kool Festival und in der Folge auch bei zahlreichen weiteren Festivals auf, darunter Moers (1981), Los Angeles (1982), Northsea (1983), München (1984) und Hartford, England (1985). Sein 1979 aufgenommenes Album "Of Human Feelings" wurde beim "Down Beat"-Poll 1982 "Record of the Year". 1984 führte Mercer Ellington bei einem Tribute to Ellington-Konzert Kompositionen Ornette Colemans auf, 1986 lief der Film "Ornette: Made In America" eine Woche lang im Public Theater New York. Mit der 1985 aufgenommenen LP "Song X" mit Pat Metheny (g), Charlie Haden (b), Jack DeJohnette und Denardo Coleman (dr) stand Coleman 1986 inmitten eines dritten Comebacks. Der mit Preisen, Kompositionsaufträgen und Poll-Siegen überhäufte Neuerer arbeitete in den neunziger Jahren parallel mit der mehrfach umbesetzten Gruppe Prime Time und seinem Quartett, dem zeitweise Geri Allen (p) und zumeist Charnett Moffett (b) und Denardo Coleman (dr) angehörten, so auch auf der 1997 von den "Down Beat"-Kritikern zum Album des Jahres gekürten CD "Sound Museum Hidden Man". Kompositionen Colemans wurden u.a. vom Kronos Quartet und vom London Philharmonia Orchestra (1992 Filmmusik "Naked Lunch") aufgenommen. Hervorzuheben sind zudem die Musik zum Film "Philadelphia" und die Ballett-Komposition "Architecture In Motion". Auf der 1997 veröffentlichten CD "Colors: Live From Leipzig" ist Joachim Kühn sein Duo-Partner. Seit dem Jahr 2000 sind seine klassischen Alben und bislang unveröffentlichte Aufnahmen in Serien auf CD erschienen. 1997 stand der Pionier im Mittelpunkt von Konzerten im Lincoln Center, 1998 auch des Umbria Jazz Festival und 2000 von Konzerten anlässlich seines 70. Geburtstages in New York, Washington, Philadelphia und Boston. Neben den Biographien von Barry McRae und Peter Niklas Wilson erschien 1992 bei Quartet Books, London, "Ornette Coleman - The Harmolodic Life" von John Litweiler. --- [Martin Kunzler, in: ro-ro-ro Jazz Lexikon, Reinbek bei Hamburg 2001]

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