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INTRODUCTION

The cello has an extensive history, first originating to be used as a western-European musical instrument in the 1660s. The majority of the instrument's history is well-preserved. One can find countless documents on the instrument, famous top players, compositions, instrument creators, and techniques used across the centuries with minimal research efforts. While this documentation is immensely valuable to musicology surrounding the cello, the texts focus only on western-centric views and historical analysis. Cellists have been experimenting with other genres of music since the twentieth century, all of which has remained largely undocumented. One of the most special eras in the history of the cello is its use from the 1950s through the 1970s in jazz music contexts. The underrepresentation of the jazz cello in musicology has resulted in an overall lack of educational programs fostering new cellists learning to play jazz music. This thesis serves to give an introduction to the evolution of jazz cello music in its different forms, focusing on the "Golden Age" occurring from the 1950s to 1970s. The remaining sections of the paper are divided into chronological sections, beginning from the 1910s ending in the modern era. I have selected five top jazz musicians that performed the cello during this aforementioned Golden Age: Fred Katz (1919-2013), Harry Babasin (1921-1988), Oscar Pettiford (1922-1960), Ray Brown (1926-2002), and David Baker (1931-2016). A modern jazz cellist, Erik Friedlander (b. 1960), is discussed in a later section to contrast how the instrument is used in music today.

In addition to the historical events that led up to the cello's present use as an instrument, I also wish to give some background information on the techniques that jazz cellists used and created over time. This paper has the unique opportunity to provide perhaps the first musical

analyses of jazz cello tracks centering around the artist's use of the instrument to perform innovative jazz music. If unfamiliar with the technical terms used by cellists and other string musicians, please refer to the glossary and figures provided in the back of the thesis.

METHODOLOGY

The historical analysis of the jazz cello over time outlined in this thesis comes from a large number of secondary sources, many of which give a few sentences (or maybe a paragraph) of insight. The sources all consist of jazz musicologists summarizing different musical and social trends evident in different jazz styles. While the cello is mentioned as a key instrument in West Coast and Cool Jazz styles, it never became a standard or common instrument to hear in most jazz music. This results in jazz musicologists giving a very cursory view of how the cello was used. *The Jazz Book: From Ragtime to the 21st Century* by Joachim-Ernst Brecht and Gunther Huesmann was especially helpful in giving overviews of different styles of jazz music as well as small descriptions of top bass players (some of which are highlighted in this thesis because of their experimentation on the cello as a secondary instrument). While discussing specific cellists in the 1950s and on, jazz magazine articles and newspapers are used to give background to the highlighted musicians and the public reception of their recordings and musical performances.

In addition to historical secondary sources, I have provided my own analysis of significant recordings. These analyses include comments on the instrumentation of ensembles as a unit, if the cello is used as a solo instrument or not, and the techniques that each cellist utilizes to create their specific timbre. At the end of the thesis, a discography is provided of all of the tracks that I have included personal analyses of.

1910-20s: EARLY STRING JAZZ

Jazz music developed in African-American communities after the Civil War. Brass and percussion instruments were the most accessible due to the socio-economic status of most African Americans and cheaper costs of the cornet, trombone, and drums. However, there were a few examples of the use of string instruments in jazz-like music in its early stages of development. The cello was heard in jazz music as early as around 1916-17 in Circo's Club Coon Orchestra. The band's name ("coon") refers derogatorily to the African American musicians that made up the ensemble. These such band and orchestra titles were common in their day when African American musicians would perform for white audiences. The Orchestra was a string band that moved from the southern United States to London to perform and record.¹ Recordings of their music has been preserved and can be referenced online.

The band is known to be one of the first black string bands. Dan Kildare, a pianist, created the club orchestra that ended up moving to London to play for Circo's Club in 1915.² The group was composed of Dan Kildare (piano), his brother Walter Kildare (cello), George Watters (banjo), Seth Jones (banjo), Joseph Meyers (banjo), John Ricks (bass) and Louis Mitchell (drums). Later, Kildare recruited Ferdie Allen (mandolin), Vance Lowry (banjo) and Sumner Edwards (bass) to join the rest of the band in London. The band represents the beginning of a black American string band tradition that was continued on in later bands such as Dallas String Band.³ The recordings that are available from their time in London feature both sung melodies as well as pure instrumental tracks.

¹ Anthony Barnett and Barry Kernfeld, "Cello," *Grove Music Online*. 5 May. 2019.

² Circo's Club Coon Orchestra, Dan & Harvey's Jazz Band, and The Versatile Four. n.d. *The Earliest Black String Bands Vol 2 1917-1919*. Mp3. 2 vols.

³ Circo's Club Coon Orchestra, Dan & Harvey's Jazz Band, and The Versatile Four. n.d. *The Earliest Black String Bands Vol 2 1917-1919*. Mp3. 2 vols.

While not strictly in one jazz style, the music recorded by these emerging black string bands are considered proto-jazz.⁴ This music exhibits qualities and techniques not commonly used for traditional classical music. Classical cellists' primary creation of sound comes from playing arco. Pizzicato techniques are less common and center around creating delicate and ringing notes. A method to create these musical qualities is to use vibrato. This style of pizzicato is greatly valued in classical communities, but not in other genres of music.

The cellist in the group highlights the percussive qualities of his instrument, something that American classical musicians didn't start exploring until modern music extended and developed classical techniques in the 1950s. All of the strings in Circo's Club Coon Orchestra only use pizzicato to create sound. In the recordings, Walter Kildare allows the string to snap against the wood of the instrument without using any vibrato. As emerging jazz styles develop during the 1910s, this aesthetic of a string instrument creating a percussive bass line is established. This trend continues to be heard in jazz styles throughout the twentieth century and into modern jazz styles.

In 1926, the cello was heard again in recordings by Will Marion Cook's Singing Band featuring Ethel Waters.⁵ By this time, jazz styles had fully developed and become a musical tradition. Waters sang blues as well as swing music, regularly performing in clubs for white patrons. When she recorded with Will Marion Cook's orchestra, the ensemble was comprised of a piano, violin, cello, and cornet (although used sparingly). This was unusual for the time as small jazz combos producing similar music usually consisted of piano, bass, cornet (as a more predominant instrument), and drums.

⁴ Anthony Barnett and Barry Kernfeld, "Cello," *Grove Music Online*. 5 May. 2019.

⁵ Anthony Barnett and Barry Kernfeld, "Cello," *Grove Music Online*. 5 May. 2019.

Will Marion Cook's Singing Band uses much more western classical music conventions than Ciro's Club Coon Orchestra. In some of Ethel Water's recordings with the orchestra, "I'm Coming, Virginia," the cellist plays arco throughout both songs rather than using pizzicato.⁶ In addition, the unknown musician uses vibrato and plays a wider range of pitches than Walter Kildare. The higher pitches require the left hand to shift down the neck of the cello. This is a technique that all classical cellists study and try to perfect in order to shift accurately and easily at faster tempos. Although no information on the players in the orchestra remain, analysis of the recorded performances suggest that the cellist was familiar with classical cello techniques as a result of formal training.

⁶ Waters, Ethel, and Will Marion Cook's Singing Orchestra. 1926. *I'm Coming, Virginia*. New York: Columbia Records.

1930-40s: BIG BAND AND BEBOP

Presence of the cello diminished in jazz styles after the 1920s and wasn't reintroduced until thirty years later with the arrival of the cool jazz era. Throughout the 1920s and into the next decade, jazz evolved as a style of music with its own set of aesthetic, stylistic, and technical standards.⁷ All of these criteria would continue to influence and direct the genre's future for decades.

By the 1930s, swing music, a style of jazz, was synonymous with popular music in America. The swing era primarily featured big bands that performed in ballrooms and clubs. Audience members didn't passively sit and listen to music, but engaged in popular dance forms such as the jitterbug, Lindy Hop, and the jive. Fletcher Henderson and Benny Goodman were influential big band leaders during the 1930s until the cool jazz era began in the 1950s. Duke Ellington was another important figure in swing music, his big band music lasted up until his death in 1974.⁸ Due to the large performance venues, musicians needed to be able to project music across a large hall. Big bands consisted of sections of aerophones and percussion instruments, including "2 or 3 trumpets, 1 or 2 trombones, 3 saxophones, and rhythm section."⁹

Due to the need for loud and projecting bands in dance halls, the use of the cello as an instrument for contemporary music faded away in the 1930s. This trend continued until the 1950s when musicians developed a different aesthetic for jazz music that incorporated western classical influences and instruments.

⁷ Schuller, Gunther. 1989. *The Swing Era: The Development of Jazz, 1930-1945*. Oxford University Press.

⁸ Berendt, Joachim-Ernst, and Gunther Huesmann. 2009. *The Jazz Book: From Ragtime to the 21st Century*. 7th ed. Chicago Review Press.

⁹ Collier, James Lincoln. 2003. "Bands (Jazz)." *Grove Music Online*.

In the 1940s, another style of jazz developed: bebop. Bebop was responsible for jazz music shifting from being strictly dance music to *art music*, music strictly for auditory appreciation and not as functional music. The style of music focused on small ensembles with long solos. Bebop musicians were testing their abilities by playing very fast, virtuosic lines and improvisations. Some famous bebop musicians include Dizzy Gillespie (trumpet), Charlie Parker (saxophone), and Thelonius Monk (piano). By the 1950s, however, another style of jazz developed: cool jazz.

1950s: COOL JAZZ

Cool jazz developed in the late 1940s, and was an established style of music by the 1950s. Coming as a direct response from bebop, jazz artists began to look for new sounds and instruments that would add a variety of new colors to their music. Cool jazz focuses on the tone colors of instruments and simpler melodies. It features more of an emphasis on ensemble playing rather than solos, and has been compared to the mindset of classical chamber groups/musicians.

These ensembles differed greatly from the big bands that predominated dance clubs in the 1930s and 1940s. Cool jazz ensembles consisted of five or six musicians and performed in smaller jazz clubs. Cool jazz was played for fewer people in more intimate venues.

Musically, composition begins to take more of a precedence over improvisation. It also uses more western classical intonation rather than the bending of notes and slides that other jazz can feature. Another trend evident in cool jazz is that musicians were looking to create jazz sounds on non-standard jazz instruments, particularly those that had a western classical tradition/history.¹⁰ Since ensembles performed at smaller venues and didn't need amplification, acoustic and naturally quieter instruments (compared to brass instruments) were experimented with. Among these instruments included oboe, flute, French horn, and cello.

¹⁰Kernfield, Barry Dean. *What to Listen for in Jazz* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 167.

1950-60s: THE 'GOLDEN AGE' OF JAZZ CELLO

As cool jazz created a space for the cello, a surplus of prominent cellists emerged. The proceeding discussion highlights the contributions of the following cellists: Oscar Pettiford (1922-1960), Harry Babasin (1921-1988), Ray Brown (1926-2002), Fred Katz (1919-2013), David Baker (1931-2016). A brief analysis of some key tracks and recording sessions help give insight to musical trends each cellist exhibited during their career. Among all of the cellists, Pettiford, Babasin, and Brown were all vital in the creation of the space jazz cello needed to flourish, and all utilized similar performance techniques.

Oscar Pettiford was a bandleader, bassist, and cellist. He established new jazz bass techniques within bebop music and was known to be able to create tones as if he was “talking” through his instrument.¹¹ In the 1950s, Pettiford began to experiment with amplified cello in bebop contexts.¹² His early performances opened a space for the cello in jazz contexts.¹³ He later recorded with Harry Babasin (discussed later) where they both performed on the cello.

Pettiford used unique practices compared to his colleagues playing jazz cello. He used his previous bass training when playing the cello. He tuned his cello in fourths (E, A, d, g), which is the standard tuning for an upright bass.¹⁴ This differs from the standard cello tuning, which is tuned in fifths (C, G, d, a). This irregular tuning of the instrument led to the development of the piccolo bass, which is similar in size to the cello but tuned and shaped like a regular upright bass.

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¹¹ Brendt, Joachim-Ernst, and Gunther Huesmann. 2009. *The Jazz Book: From Ragtime to the 21st Century*. 7th ed. Chicago Review Press.

¹² Robinson, J. Bradford. "Pettiford, Oscar." *Grove Music Online*. 13 Jan. 2015; Accessed 7 Oct. 2019.

¹³ Brendt, Joachim-Ernst, and Gunther Huesmann. 2009. *The Jazz Book: From Ragtime to the 21st Century*. 7th ed. Chicago Review Press.

¹⁴ Bergmann. A Guide to Pedagogical Resources for Improvisation on Violin, Viola, Cello, and Bass, 2.

¹⁵ Shipton, Alyn, "Piccolo bass (jazz)." *Grove Music Online*. 5 May. 2019.

His “Cello Again” track from his EP *Cello Again / Sonny Boy* (1952), features Pettiford playing the melody using pizzicato. The instrumentation of the track includes piano, drums, and bass. The overall effect of these instruments is to create quiet accompaniment that blends evenly but remains in the background to keep the focus on the cello’s melody.

Harry Babasin is considered to be the first jazz cellist for his extensive performances and recordings. Babasin grew up playing the cello and bass in the 1930s and 1940s. After successful recordings playing bass in New York for Benny Goodman in the 1940s, he transitioned to playing the cello with ensembles in Los Angeles. He introduced pizzicato during this time and promoted the cello as a jazz instrument. During this time, he created a music label with Roy Harte called Nocturne Records. They titled a series of recordings “Jazz in Hollywood” which represented and defined West Coast Jazz of the time.¹⁶ In 1956 he formed the group *Harry Babasin and the Jazz Pickers* and recorded the album by the same name in 1957. He is also remembered today for “(fusing) Latin sound with American jazz” which made lasting effects to the development of cool jazz.¹⁷

In his album, *Harry Babasin and the Jazz Pickers, With Special Guest Star Terry Gibbs* (1957), Babasin performs melodic lines using pizzicato. In the third track, “Basin Street Blues”, the upright bassist, Ben Tucker, plays a traditional ‘walking’ bass line. This frees Babasin to just be able to play the melody on the cello and perform improvisation with the group. Although the techniques Babasin uses are similar to Tucker’s, the cello is able to distinguish itself from the rest of the group in this way.

¹⁶ Babasin, Von. 2004. “The Legacy of Jazz in Hollywood.” *International Musician* 102 (3): 23.

¹⁷ Jinbashian, Ishkhan. 2007. “Rediscovering the Miracle of West Coast Jazz.” *Armenian Reporter*, 2007.

Ray Brown was known for his rhythmic drive and melodic bass lines through the 1950s and beyond. He has played with jazz icons such as Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker.¹⁸ His style was greatly influenced by Jimmy Blanton, who was the first jazz bassist to create long, melodic lines and add ornaments to walking bass lines.¹⁹

His *Jazz Cello* (1960) album highlights sweet, singing melodies performed on the cello. All of the tracks are performed pizzicato, following the old bassist tradition. Brown's approach to making music on the cello is similar to the bass. His music is unique because he seems to perform with larger ensembles, despite performing pizzicato, which is a more subdued tone. With a wind section of trumpet, french horn, trombones, and occasionally reed instruments (select tracks) and rhythm section of piano, drums, and double bass, this ensemble is one of the largest to feature a jazz cellist. Despite the number of instruments, the pizzicato melody seems to float over the other instruments.

Fred Katz and David Baker built upon what was becoming a standard of jazz cello playing. Instead of strictly using pizzicato techniques, they performed arco melodies and solo improvisations.

Fred Katz began studying classical cello from an early age. In his home city of Brooklyn, he had the chance to hear Duke Ellington and his musicians. From then on, he was invested in redefining the limits of what the cello was capable of in jazz music.²⁰ In the 1950s, he worked with Chico Hamilton's quintet, adding repertoire to the west coast style.

¹⁸ Chevan, David. "Brown, Ray(mond Matthews)." *Grove Music Online*. 4 Oct. 2012; Accessed 9 Oct. 2019.

¹⁹ Brendt, Joachim-Ernst, and Gunther Huesmann. 2009. *The Jazz Book: From Ragtime to the 21st Century*. 7th ed. Chicago Review Press.

²⁰ Carpenter, Kenneth. 2003. "Play It!: Music & Musicians - Cool Katz." *Strings* 18 (3): 42–44.

Katz was recording as a jazz cellist at the same time as Babasin. He might have gained less popularity than Babasin because he, among other classically trained cellists, flew under the radar because they hadn't gotten a following of fans from previous recordings and performances on bass.²¹

Due to his classical training, Katz utilizes much more classical techniques than the previously mentioned cellists. Katz largely expanded arco techniques in his recordings. Most jazz cellists that have a history of performing on upright bass only exhibit traditional pizzicato lines that bassists are most familiar with. In the recording "Feeling the Blues" from his album *Fred Katz and his Jammers* (1959), the cello and bass perform three stanzas of an opening melody with pizzicato. Electric bass, muted trumpet and vibraphone each get a section to play their improvisations, respectively. However, when it becomes Katz's turn to perform an improvisation, he only performs arco.

Katz was one of the few cellists that took advantage of the bow in jazz contexts. Slides between notes are much more audible. Katz also uses the natural weight of the bow in order to create swinging lines and emphasize certain notes (which differs from the classical approach to bowing that promotes unnoticeable bow changes). Although Katz doesn't play in the classical style, his sounds are smooth and even.

David Baker was primarily a trombonist, but following a car accident in his twenties, switched to play the cello. He has performed with artists such as Maynard Ferguson, Quincy Jones, George Russell, John Montgomery, and Lionel Hampton.²² Baker is also known for his contributions to jazz education, some of his career highlights include serving as president for the

²¹ Shoemaker, Bill. 2000. "Cello Talk: Top Jazz Players." *Strings*, June 2000.

²² Crain, Timothy M. "Baker, David." *Grove Music Online*. 4 Oct. 2012; Accessed 11 Oct. 2019.

International Association of Jazz Education and Pulitzer Prize and Grammy nominations. He has composed many works, including jazz pieces and third-stream classical music as well.

Baker is featured on *Eastern Man Alone* (1967), which saxophonist Charles Tyler recorded as his second album after studying from Baker at Indiana University. The complete group instrumentation consists of alto saxophone, cello, and two bassists. The absence of more typical “rhythm” instruments (piano, vibraphone, drums) allow the saxophone to shine. These recordings differ from other discussed tracks because the cello doesn’t take the center stage. Baker’s role on the track “Cha-Lacy’s Out East” is in the supportive background, until he has an arco solo after six minutes in. This solo sounds vastly different from Katz’s arco solos discussed earlier. Both Baker and Tyler achieved a style that has a harsh and sometimes biting sound. Baker seems to draw from bebop characteristics rather than the cool jazz approach of Katz. After the solo, Baker plays arco for the rest of the piece, entwining new ideas and elaborations with Tyler’s playing.

Through the extensive performances and recordings of these cellists, the 1950s and 1960s became the “Golden Era” of jazz cello. However, despite the number of prominent jazz cellists during the 1950s, not all musicians saw the instrument as a viable option because of their African-American heritage. Below are two examples of musicians who were convinced to play upright bass instead of the cello in order to be successful musicians.

Ron Carter began playing classical cello in 1947 when he was ten years old. In the next several years, he faced racial discrimination and barriers to becoming a professional cellist. He changed to playing classical upright bass in 1954. He became more interested in jazz music overtime and began to perform and record with Chico Hamilton, Herbie Hancock, and Miles

Davis throughout the late 1950 and 1960s. Although discouraged to play the cello, Carter went on to develop the piccolo bass. This instrument has a smaller wood body and thinner strings than a traditional upright bass to make the pitch range higher. Today, he is the most recorded jazz bassist in history.

Charles Mingus was also discouraged from playing the cello as a young man. He grew up playing the cello and was an accomplished junior musician, he performed with the Los Angeles Junior Philharmonic and later played in his senior school orchestra when he was fourteen. Despite his potential on the instrument, Buddy Collette, a friend of Mingus, suggested that he swap out his cello for a bass. Collette's argument focused on race, that classical music was only a viable career for whites but that jazz was a style of music that African Americans could make a living off of.²³ Mingus then switched to upright bass, which he centered his career around playing.

Both of these examples show why on some levels jazz cello was so uncommon for so long. As financial stability is often a concern for musicians, it is understandable that many want to pursue a path that will be accessible to them.

²³ Santoro, Gene. 2001. *Myself When I Am Real: The Life and Music of Charles Mingus*. Oxford University Press.

1970s TO THE PRESENT

Jazz musicians have always been motivated to create and discover new sounds and techniques. As the twentieth century developed technological advances, it seemed like electronic instruments and music were to dominate the future of jazz.²⁴ However, the oversupply of sounds and musical possibilities from electronics proved to hinder individuality and musicianship that some jazz artists value.²⁵

With the new development of technology, acoustic instruments slowly became less common for performances. There are few jazz string players left. Erik Friedlander is an example of a cellist who still carries on the jazz cello tradition.

Erik Friedlander is a prominent composer and cellist in New York City. Friedlander was born in 1960, when the cello was still present in the cool jazz community. He grew up learning classical cello, but began to adapt his technique and education to fit avante-garde music and jazz styles in the 1980s. He has been able to perform with musicians such as John Zorn, Dave Douglas and Courtney Love.

Friedlander recorded *Broken Arm Trio* (2008) with Trevor Dunn (bass) and Mike Sarin (drums). Friedlander clearly uses western classical melody and harmony innovations in the music. His performance in “Spinning Plates” is all strictly pizzicato with interludes of melody and accompaniment. Because the instrumentation of pitched instruments only includes Dunn and Friedlander, the cello takes on an important role being the highest pitch instrument (and therefore the first instrument people most naturally hear).

²⁴ Berendt, Joachim-Ernst, and Gunther Huesmann. 2009. *The Jazz Book: From Ragtime to the 21st Century*. 7th ed. Chicago Review Press.

²⁵ Berendt, Joachim-Ernst, and Gunther Huesmann. 2009. *The Jazz Book: From Ragtime to the 21st Century*. 7th ed. Chicago Review Press.

Another way that jazz cello is still being created is through Friedlander's album *Oscalypto* (2015). The album is dedicated to Oscar Pettiford and all of the tracks are recordings of Friedlander performing Pettiford's compositions.

The jazz cello tradition is also carried on through jazz string educational programs at the collegiate level. Today, there are many collegiate programs across the New England territory of the United States. Although these programs do promote learning jazz cello, these programs can be very expensive and competitive to get into. Most students who enter are already classically trained at their string instrument, which can end up hindering a musician's ability to play jazz rather than help.

Learning to play jazz cello coming from a classical background is much harder than many students realize because the classical training they have received works against them. In order to begin learning jazz on a string instrument, students must learn to play in keys with many flats (usually string instruments prefer keys with sharps instead), jazz bowing/phrasing, slide shifting techniques, variation in vibrato, and the ability to improvise and solo over chord changes. These techniques rarely, if ever, are present in classical training. This is perhaps why so many of the jazz cellists from the 1950s began as jazz bassists and not classically trained cellists.

These programs have made jazz cello more accessible, but overall, the instrument still lacks a wide audience.

CONCLUSION

The cello is an extremely versatile instrument and has been used in a variety of different musical styles. One of the most interesting and unique periods of its history is in the 1950s and 1960s when it was established as a jazz instrument. Jazz cellists during this time not only made the instrument more popular, but also expanded cello techniques in order to create specific timbres. This paper serves to give readers new insight into the cello and how it was and is used in jazz styles. However, this is just an introductory overview and musical analysis. Looking forward, I hope that more literature comes out on other jazz cellists and the new techniques and styles these musicians perform today.

Access to jazz cello education has increased over the past few decades, but it remains largely in only one area of the United States (the New England Territory). More young musicians would be able to explore this amazing niche of music if there were more developed programs across the US and beyond. I believe more literature and educational programs on jazz cello is the only way to keep this tradition alive for future generations.

GLOSSARY

<i>arco</i>	The stringed instrument should be played with the bow.
<i>pizzicato</i>	The stringed instrument should be plucked with the fingers, rather than bowed.
<i>shift</i>	To move the left hand up and down the fingerboard to reach a different hand position or pitch.
<i>tempo</i>	The speed at which music is/should be performed.
<i>timbre</i>	The quality of a musical sound or voice separate from its pitch or intensity; tone color.
<i>vibrato</i>	A musical effect a musician adds, composed of a regular and repeating change of pitch. For stringed instruments, a musician will add a wobbling motion to the finger used to stop the string by moving the finger slightly up and down the fingerboard.

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