

Skript Podcast Ready SET Jazz (English translation)

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Episode 1: Women and Gender in Jazz

- Intro -

Selda: Welcome to today's episode! Today we're talking about women and gender in jazz. Jazz is a genre that has traditionally been dominated by men, but women have also played a significant role from the very beginning. Let's dive right into this exciting topic.

Tiara: Jazz is often associated with big male names like Louis Armstrong or Miles Davis. But what role did women play in the early history of jazz?

Selda: Women were part of the jazz scene from the very beginning, especially as singers like Billie Holiday or Ella Fitzgerald. But they also had a significant influence as instrumentalists, like Valaida Snow, who was an outstanding trumpeter. Unfortunately, women were often pushed into the role of the singer, while female instrumentalists had a much harder time asserting themselves.

Emilia: Why was it more difficult for female instrumentalists?

Selda: That was due to deeply rooted gender-specific prejudices. Women were often said to be less musically talented, especially when it came to instruments. As a result, they were given fewer opportunities to perform and received less recognition.

Emilia: Prejudices aside, what other challenges did women face in jazz?

Selda: One of the biggest challenges was access to networks and recording opportunities. Jazz clubs and festivals were almost exclusively dominated by men, and women found it difficult to gain a foothold there. There were also societal expectations that pushed women into their traditional roles, which made it difficult to pursue a serious career as a musician.

Tiara: Julia Hülsmann, an outstanding jazz pianist and lecturer at the Berlin University of Arts, told us in a seminar that she also had to deal with gender-specific competition on stage. One example is that colleagues deliberately held the note longer. She also mentioned that she sometimes wondered whether she was only valued because of her gender and not because of her talent. Have you heard similar stories?

Selda: That's a common thought among female musicians. They are often reduced to their gender and have to prove that they are recognized for their abilities.

Emilia: Another point Julia Hülsmann made was a comment from a colleague of the same age: 'Women just don't groove'. How do female musicians deal with such prejudices?

Selda: Many women respond by focusing on their abilities and proving the opposite through their work. Carla Bley is a creative example. She performed the piece "Boo to You Too" at the Berlin Jazz Festival in 1979 as a reaction to the booing of concertgoers, which was specifically directed at women. She integrated the booing into her piece and turned the criticism into something positive.

Tiara: That's a very creative way of dealing with it. Do you believe that creative responses like this are more common?

Selda: Definitely. Many female musicians use their art to draw attention to prejudices and social injustices. They create space for themselves and other women. Nina Simone, for example, often drew attention to racism and gender injustice in her songs. So, women have not only shaped jazz musically, but also politically and socially.

Emilia: Jazz has changed a lot in recent years. What is the role of women in modern jazz today?

Selda: There are significantly more women developing in the jazz scene, such as Esperanza Spalding and Terri Lyne Carrington. These women not only perform on stage but also produce and lead bands. Festivals and institutions have also begun to pay more active attention to gender equality.

Tiara: Nadine Deventer, who has been the director of "Jazzfest Berlin" since 2018, has placed a strong focus on women and gender-diverse artists. How do you see her influence on the festival?

Selda: Nadine Deventer has made the festival much more diverse. Through her work, she has not only brought more women into the program but also initiated an important discourse on gender equality in jazz. Her commitment shows how important it is to have women in leadership positions in order to bring about real change.

Interview

Selda: In conclusion, it can be said that women have played an important role in jazz from the very beginning and have found their way despite numerous challenges and prejudices. Today, we are experiencing a positive development

towards more equality and diversity in the jazz scene. Female musicians, producers, and festival organizers like Nadine Deventer are helping to create new spaces in which women and gender-diverse artists are equally visible and valued. The fight is not over yet, but every creative response, every ground-breaking performance, and every innovative direction takes us a step further. Jazz today is more diverse and inclusive than it has ever been, and we owe much of that to the commitment and creativity of many inspiring women.

- Outro -

Episode 2: Race: Jazz and its history

- Intro -

Tiara: Hello and welcome to the second episode of our podcast series. In this episode, we'll be diving into the history of jazz and how festivals with international attention have dealt with this history, or perhaps not dealt with it properly. Just like in the previous episode, we've focused heavily on the Jazzfest Berlin. But I won't give too much away just yet. Let's jump right in.

Selda: Jazz

Emilia: A big word

Tiara: Exactly. Before I studied music, I always associated jazz music with improvisation. A well-known saying: "In jazz, there are no wrong notes."

Selda: That's not the first time we've heard that.

Emilia: But what exactly is jazz, then?

Tiara: Let's ask our fellow students from the jazz department:

Interview

Tiara: So, how does the question of its development history stand?

Interview

Tiara: Thank you to our fellow students and friends. Now, we should finally uncover the mystery behind the origins of jazz. Let's summarize it briefly:

Emilia: Yes, I'll start: The first form of jazz, known as New Orleans Jazz, developed around 1900 in New Orleans, as the name suggests, and was influenced by many different musical styles.

Tiara: Yes, on the one hand, there were European influences. But since jazz was primarily an output of the African American community, it was also heavily influenced by pre-existing musical styles from Africa, which were brought to America through colonialism and slavery. Let's take a closer look at that. Both French and Spanish slave owners banned their slaves from dancing, which also included music, especially the heavily percussive kinds. The music and dance were not just pastimes; they were partly religious rituals, partly messages that were meant to offer comfort or hope. To mask the "soul" of the music, they had to adapt it to European elements. For example, they drew heavily on French marches and Spanish dance styles. This led to styles like Congo, Tango, Rhumba, and Samba, but also the styles that laid the foundation for jazz. We've linked a track in our podcast playlist where these influences are very noticeable.

Selda: Jazz is generally understood as a freer type of music. That seems totally paradoxical, given its origins.

Tiara: Yes, absolutely paradoxical. When you think about the fact that jazz is celebrated worldwide as a symbol of freedom and artistic innovation, yet its development was closely tied to racism, segregation, and severe oppression. To highlight the severity of this entrenched racism: the oppression was protected and legitimized by laws. A key example here: the Jim Crow laws. If you want to read more about this, we've included our sources in the podcast description.

Selda: Back to jazz. The music developed in a context of oppression and became music of hope and resistance.

Tiara: That's a good way to summarize it. Martin Luther King described it similarly in the first program booklet for the Berlin Jazz Festival in 1964 (huge time jump, by the way) in the foreword. Here's a short quote from it:

"It has strengthened us with its powerful rhythm when courage began to fail. It has calmed us with its rich harmonies when spirits began to lag."

Tiara: In line with this, I've left my Top 5 Empowerment Songs in our podcast playlist.

Emilia: You mentioned the Berlin Jazz Festival earlier. Maybe we should talk a bit more about that.

Tiara: Yes, definitely.

Emilia: The Berlin Jazz Festival, originally known as the "Berliner Jazztage", was founded in 1964 and is one of the oldest and most prestigious jazz festivals in Europe.

Tiara: The idea to establish the festival emerged from the cultural revival of West Berlin after the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961. At that time, West Berlin was striving to establish itself as an international cultural hub, and jazz, as a music form representing freedom and creativity, was a perfect fit.

Selda: Exactly. In the first program booklet, Joachim Ernst-Behrendt, co-founder of the Berlin Jazz Festival, wrote that Berlin was a city with freedom-related issues, and that's precisely why it was an ideal location for a jazz festival. Jazz, after all, is a music form that symbolizes freedom.

Tiara: Yes, that's so important and true. This ties in nicely with the central issue of this podcast episode, which I mentioned at the beginning: the responsibility that comes with understanding the history of jazz. As a festival with a large audience and international attention, there's a responsibility to acknowledge and highlight the origins of jazz. This was our first research focus on festival studies. Our podcast series was actually developed as part of a musicology seminar at the Berlin University of the Arts.

Emilia: You can find more about this in the program for this year's Berlin Jazz Festival.

Selda: Enough about that. Back to the first Berlin Jazz Festival and focusing on how the origins of jazz were addressed at the time. Was there even much awareness of it? Probably not in terms of values, right?

Tiara: Yes, exactly. Let's look at 1964. The first program booklet for the Berlin Jazz Festival begins with words from Martin Luther King, the key figure of the U.S. civil rights movement. We already played a quote from him earlier. It seems

well thought out, and there's a sense that they were aware of the history, at least in some way.

Emilia/Selda: BUT –

Tiara: But exactly, to your question about whether there was an awareness of this or, as you half-rhetorically put it, the values or value system at the time. I can only play you the following quote, which is found at the very beginning of the program booklet: *“There are [N-word] and slaves and [N-word] slaves all over the world. But nowhere did jazz happen. Only here in my country. Jazz is not particularly African. Rabbis in the synagogue and [Z-word] sound more like jazz than anything in Africa ... If Charlie Parker had been born in China, he would also have become a great musician there (...)”* To return to the earlier quote from Joachim Ernst-Berendt. He wrote, *“The encounter between the [N-word] and the white world is a central theme of the 1964 Berlin Festival Weeks.”* This is what he was getting at with that sentence, that Berlin now has a special significance in the context of freedom.

Emilia: He draws these parallels to the “Freedom Movement of Jazz Musicians”, as Berendt writes, but in reality, it's the freedom movement of the African American population. Well, that would probably have been too – I don't know – too political for the situation, where accuracy didn't play as big a role as it should have.

Tiara: So just to quickly recap, because there were a lot of quotes: On one hand, we have the history of how this music developed and how important it was for this large, oppressed group of people. On the other hand, we have a white European man who seems to recognize this but somehow distorts the context to justify his festival.

Selda: Yes, the encounter between Black and white is often mentioned in the program, but it's not meant as a praiseworthy intention to break down racial barriers.

Tiara: Yes, it's a bit misleading. You could mistakenly interpret it as an exchange between like-minded and, most importantly, "equal" people when you hear the term "encounter between Black and white." But just six years earlier, we had the last human zoo at the World's Fair in Brussels. Racism was still deeply ingrained

in people's minds at that time. So, to answer our question: was there awareness of the history? Yes, but it was meaningless. And just a brief text-related note: I think this sense of superiority becomes quite clear in other parts of Berendt's text as well.

Emilia: Yes, if you continue reading Berendt's text, you really start to see what he was getting at.

Selda: Maybe let's briefly move away from the program booklet and talk about the live Jazzfest: The location was the Berlin Philharmonic, which isn't exactly where you'd expect to find jazz.

Tiara/Emilia: Yeah, more the type of music we three come from.

Selda: But the audience was also different. Emilia, I think you'll talk about that in the next episode, but yes, it was a completely different setting. A setting that also shows that they weren't really aware of the responsibility of the history.

Tiara: Exactly. We looked at the piano workshops from 1965. Several piano trios performed there, including the Bill Evans Trio. It was quite interesting to see - two white musicians and one Black musician. In our seminar, we noticed how striking it was that the camera barely focused on the Black musician during his solos, and we noticed it again when re-watching it before recording this podcast. For you, the listener, we've linked the video, so feel free to watch it yourself.

Selda: Now we've talked quite a bit about the first Jazzfest Berlin. How did things look later on?

Tiara: It was generally harder to find new information on this topic in the other early program booklets, probably because these topics didn't get the attention back then that they do today—or need to. Ihno von Hasselt, who worked as the production manager at Jazzfest for a long time, published a book in 2004 about 40 years of Jazzfest. It was quite interesting, as various people talked about different periods and how the festival was shaped by its artistic directors. Before the current artistic director, there had been nine directors, and it was always a man running the festival. The development history was never really addressed before.

Emilia: That was a big time leap from 1964 to 2004 - 40 years. And it's another huge leap to the current leadership. When would you say they started to take responsibility for the development history?

Tiara: Yeah, it's a long time span, but I would say that responsibility for the history was only really taken in 2018.

Selda: In 2018, the Jazzfest Berlin was led for the first time by a woman, Nadin Deventer.

Emilia: Yes. The theme for 2018 was "Creative Border Crossings and Collective Visions." It was a very diverse program in every sense - featuring many different artists and formats like installations, panels, and not just the traditional concert series.

Tiara: Exactly. But to finally breathe a sigh of relief: The festival also focused on the Afro-American origins of jazz in 2018, 54 years after its founding.

Tiara: 2018 seemed to be a year of transformation for the Jazzfest Berlin, with new policies including "Diversity and International Structures," which is the term used by Jazzfest and the "Berliner Festspiele". This also includes initiatives like "Key Change" and "The Many."

Selda: The Many?

Tiara: Yes. Racism is still a very current issue. Cultural institutions and activists from the arts and culture sectors came together to form the solidarity network "The Many" as a response to increasing racist, extremist, and discriminatory trends in society, which is extremely important.

Emilia: There are also general resources, as found on the website of the "Berliner Festspiele", for reporting or addressing any form of discrimination witnessed or experienced. That's a significant step forward.

Selda/Emilia: How do these resources actually work? Our listeners might be interested in hearing more about this.

Tiara: Nadin also spoke about it herself, so let's listen to that.

Interview

Tiara: Thank you again to Nadin for this conversation. We'll share more excerpts from it in our final episode.

Emilia: So, background covered, and how the Jazzfest has dealt with these issues in the past and present.

Selda: And the future?

Tiara: Wishes, dreams, hopes. I have a dream...

that this knowledge has sparked something in you, perhaps ideas are bubbling up about what more can be done, not just to be informed but to be active and outspoken. It made me wonder how the audience could be more actively involved in the historical reappraisal. Not just receiving input like in our podcast, but actually taking part in it and how this could be integrated more into educational institutions, especially here at the UdK. We'll leave you a comment section or a survey link with open text where you can share your ideas, suggestions, differences of opinion, or anything else. We look forward to hearing from you.

And that brings us to the end of this episode. We hope you enjoyed it. In the next episode, we'll delve into music and privilege, featuring many interview excerpts with the current artistic director, and it will actually be our final episode of this little trilogy.

So, make sure to tune in again when we say:

ALL: READY, SET, JAZZ!

- Outro -

Episode 3: Class: Music and Privileges

- Intro -

Emilia: In this episode, we are talking about music and privilege and, above all, what can be done to make live music, especially jazz, accessible to a more diverse audience than is currently the case. Tickets for live concerts can quickly become quite expensive, and many people can't afford them, making it extremely difficult for them to access this part of culture.

Tiara: Just as musical education is a privilege in itself. Finding access to music at all, to jazz ...

Emilia: Yes, exactly. It's actually the case that around 30 percent of young people from higher-income households earning over 30,000 euros net a year receive paid music lessons, for example, singing lessons, and only 8 percent from households with a lower income of less than 15,000 euros.

Selda: So, it actually becomes even more important that there are initiatives that have this on their radar, or rather are realizing it, and, as a consequence, are working to break down financial barriers for participating in music projects and attending music festivals. What options are there exactly?

Emilia: Community tickets are one option. People with fewer financial resources can get a ticket for a music festival very cheaply or free of charge. This is financed by partners or contributions from people who have more money, even with no proof required.

We found out about even more options when we spoke with Nadin Deventer, the director of "Jazzfest Berlin". For Nadin, it is important to appeal to an audience as diverse as possible and, above all, to young people.

Selda: It's amazing how things have changed ... The first "Berlin Jazzfest" program booklet we looked at in the seminar ... Everyone in suits, everything super posh, jazz is brought into the Berlin Philharmonic and marketed to the educated middle class ...

Emilia: Yes, exactly, and of course, a lot has happened over time. Especially under the leadership of Nadin Deventer. There are new campaigns that are understandable even if you don't already have a lot of prior knowledge. There are very different venues, not just the "Festspielhaus". There are also

workshops for children in urban areas, for example, in Moabit this autumn.
Now we hear from Nadin herself about her work and why the program for
children and young people is particularly important.

Interview

- Outro -