

The Dawn of the Jazz Age in the Caribbean: Dance, Consumer Culture, and the Imperial Shape of Modern Entertainment

SERGIO OSPINA ROMERO

Jacobs School of Music, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN, USA

Abstract

After 1917 the word ‘jazz’ disseminated rapidly throughout the world attaining, along the way, a multiplicity of meanings, sometimes related to musical practices from the United States, but often associated with a diverse array of things, objects, ideas, and situations in the worlds of music entertainment, dance, leisure, and fashion. In the Caribbean, this process entailed not only the constitution of jazz as a symbol of social modernity but also revealed a long history of exchanges between the United States and the Caribbean – not to mention the Afrodiasporic origins of jazz. By examining jazz as a by-product and an expression of Caribbean modernity, this article disentangles some of the cultural meanings of the word ‘jazz’ in the Caribbean between 1917 and 1920, considering, ultimately, how imagining jazz as Caribbean was inevitably intertwined with imagining it as modern.

On 19 September 1917, Havana’s newspaper *Diario de la Marina* published an announcement of a ‘Gran Baile’ – or Great Dance – on behalf of ‘Juventud Asturiana’, the youth branch of a mutual society that served the Iberian Spanish community in Cuba. The announcement included the ‘Programa del baile’, that is, a list of the fourteen pieces that the orchestra was meant to perform, in two sets, during the party. More than half of them were ‘danzones’, one of the popular musics that had been dominating the public entertainment sphere and the discursive imagination in Cuba since the late nineteenth century. The rest of the programme comprised two one-steps, two pasodobles, one waltz, and one foxtrot. The name of one of the tunes, a one-step, was ‘The Jazz’ (written just like that, in English), one of the earliest appearances in print – if not the first – of the word ‘jazz’ in Cuba. But before presenting the programme, the announcement set the scene for the party with a grandiloquent description of the modern, elitist, gendered, racialized, and youthful milieu of the event, meant to take place at the lavish Hotel Florida, in downtown Havana: ‘Happiness, a lot of

Email: sospinar@iu.edu

I would like to thank the following people for their support and generous advice as I wrote this piece: Martha Mateus, Graciela Romero, Christopher Miller, Gavin Lee, Alejandro L. Madrid, Fritz Schenker, Anaar Desai-Stephens, Juan Sebastián Ochoa, Carolina Santamaría-Delgado, Federico Ochoa, Stephen Stuempfle, Halina Goldberg, Mark Lomanno, Michael Wimer, Eduardo Herrera, Darren Mueller, and this journal’s anonymous reviewers.

happiness, youth, tropical flowers, women with long eyelashes, black eyes, red lips, “pink” complexion, a happy smile, beautiful as the flowers that adorn the river’s banks; these women with wonderful little wings of a thousand colors will enhance [the elegance of] the dance with their presence over the roses’ candor.’¹

These kind of announcements became progressively common in Havana’s newspapers; many of them featured similar descriptions, repertoires and, sometimes, even the same tunes. That one-step, ‘The Jazz’, soon became a favourite of both orchestras and dancers. But ‘jazz’ was not merely in the name of a catchy tune. As the word ‘jazz’ began to appear with increasing frequency across the city, it came to signify a whole range of meanings – as would also be the case in many other locales around the planet. Indeed, between 1917 and 1921, the word ‘jazz’ disseminated rapidly throughout the world attaining, along the way, a multiplicity of meanings, sometimes related to musical practices from New Orleans, Chicago, New York, and elsewhere in the United States, but quite often also associated with a diverse array of things, objects, ideas, and situations in the worlds of music entertainment, dance, leisure, and fashion. In 1917 Cuba, just as in Mexico, the Dominican Republic, and other places across the Caribbean at the time, the word ‘jazz’ referred in its first iterations, as we will see, to a *modern* dance style, assumed as inherently related to the foxtrot as well as to a wide realm of musical entertainment that included not only foxtrots but also one-steps, two-steps, tangos, waltzes, danzones, and other musics and dances of the era. Soon, however, it was not just about music nor just a new dance craze.

As it summoned an assortment of musics, dance steps, sounds, behaviours, attitudes, perspectives, desires, venues, and situations perceived or construed as ‘modern’, jazz was constituted as a symbol of social modernity. The globalizing ventures of jazz fostered the articulation of diverse ideas, structures of feeling, and cultural practices dealing with modernity in one way or another. In the early twentieth century, jazz was many things and so was modernity. They produced each other and that happened in a transnational scenario. The commodification of jazz as a modern dance was decisive for such symbolic configuration; a process framed and advanced by the leisure entertainment industry across imperial trade networks and by means of sound recordings, piano rolls, sheet music, dance manuals, and eventually radio and cinema. The idea of jazz as a modern dance and as a by-product of consumer culture was, perhaps more than any specific musical features, a defining factor towards shaping jazz and turning it, eventually, into a global phenomenon.

Music was a protagonist in these processes but not just on its own – independent from other social and cultural processes – or within the ideological coordinates of US American exceptionalism that have dominated jazz histories for a long time.² The symbolic

1 ‘Alegría, mucha alegría, juventud, flores tropicales, mujeres de largas pestañas, de ojos negros y de rojos labios, de tez muy rosada, de alegre sonrisa, bellas cual las flores que adornan del río las frescas orillas, estas mujeres con alitas de mil colores, alitas maravillosas, darán realce con su presencia sobre el candor de las rosas.’ *Diario de la Marina*, 19 September 1917, 3.

2 See E. Taylor Atkins, ed., *Jazz Planet* (Jackson, MI: University Press of Mississippi, 2003), xi–xxii; Timothy Brennan, *Secular Devotion: Afro-Latin Music and Imperial Jazz* (London: Verso, 2008), 213–29; Jairo Moreno, ‘Imperial Aurality: Jazz, the Archive, and U.S. Empire’, in *Audible Empire: Music, Global Politics, Critique*, ed. Ronald

configuration of jazz as ‘modern’ in the Caribbean, I believe, took shape at the crossroads of cultural sensibilities that perceived, imagined, and modelled jazz as something foreign and familiar at once – a commercial fad from the United States yet bound, by virtue of old and lasting Afrodiasporic networks, to Caribbean musical parameters. Thus, rather than conceiving jazz as a musical practice originating exclusively within the United States and then exported to the Caribbean, I focus on the various exchanges between the United States and the Caribbean by virtue of which the kind of music that came to be known as jazz in both places was developed. The musical contours of jazz were shaped by means of an Afrodiasporic network that extended throughout the Gulf of Mexico, Cuba, and beyond. Notwithstanding how visible or prominent, New Orleans was but one of the nodes in such a network. The African American musicians that so critically contributed to the sound of jazz in the United States were themselves part of a broader network of cultural currents that sprung out of the African diaspora.³

The global circulation of jazz was foreshadowed by the transnational scope of the African diaspora, and such a footprint of mobility helped shape jazz’s modern condition. It is not only that, as Taylor Atkins puts it, jazz was from the beginning ‘a transgressor of the idea of the nation’ and ‘an agent of globalization’.⁴ By virtue of its transnational circulations, jazz also emerged as an expression of musical modernism. Although it is not common to frame early jazz – or Caribbean dance music for the same matter – as modernist, it grew out of ‘cultural performances . . . that translate[d] modernity into aesthetic terms (modernism)’ just as other musical forms of the early twentieth century more commonly conceived within the umbrella of musical modernisms.⁵ While hegemonic notions of musical modernism from the art music worlds in Europe and North America may have informed the social and artistic milieu in which jazz emerged and thrived, jazz was also an altogether different modernist formation in its own right. Nevertheless, more than in any deliberate agenda of rupture *with* or refashioning *of* an aesthetic past, it was grounded on modernity as a social and everyday experience. It was only by means of its transnational – and eventually global – circulations that jazz’s modern character was truly made audible. Whether a category such as ‘vernacular modernism’ is needed to account for jazz and other musical practices more akin with popular sensibilities than with the art music world is beside the point. But I will address that issue later in this article.

Following Susan Friedman, we can conceive modernity and modernism not as period-specific phenomena or as something developed first in Europe or North America and eventually replicated in other parts of the world. Rather than being the original, normative, or standard modernity, what we often regard as Western modernity is but one kind of modernity

Radano and Tejumola Olaniyan (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016); Sergio Ospina Romero, ‘Jazz Entanglements in the Caribbean’, *Naxos Musicology*, 20 January, 2021.

3 Sergio Ospina Romero, ‘Swinging con sabrosura: Lucho Bermúdez y la era del jazz en el Caribe’, in *Músicas y prácticas sonoras en el Caribe colombiano*, ed. Federico Ochoa Escobar and Juan Sebastián Rojas (Bogotá: Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, 2023); Ospina Romero, ‘Jazz Entanglements in the Caribbean’.

4 Atkins, *Jazz Planet*, xiii.

5 Benjamin Piecut, *Henry Cow: The World Is a Problem* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019), 338.

among many. As Friedman puts it, ‘modernity is a planetary phenomenon across the millennia and is understood as multiple, polycentric, and recurrent instances of transformational rupture and rapid change across the full spectrum of political, economic, cultural, technological, demographic, and military arenas of interlocking societies and civilizations’. And the same goes for modernism, that is, ‘the aesthetic dimension of any given modernity’.⁶ Modernity and modernism can happen – and have indeed happened – in many scenarios beyond Europe and even before 1500. Thus, it is not only that we could potentially conceive of older and younger modernities, but also that ‘the meanings of modernity and modernism are perpetually unsettled, unsettling’.⁷ Rather than implying multiple modernities in isolation or independent from one another, it is more about conceiving a network of modern formations that expands across time and space.

Together, US American exceptionalism and canonical views of musical modernism have built too strong an intellectual fortress, which has prevented us from appreciating the transnational and modernist scope of jazz. The persistence of US American exceptionalism in jazz studies has been a barrier for considering the global arena of jazz outside a framework that establishes US jazz as the norm and ultimately disparages local jazz scenes around the world as inauthentic. In the same way, avant-garde art music composition has loomed so large in the scholarly universe of musical modernisms that it makes it hard to conceive of other musical words as modern or modernist – especially those closer to vernacular traditions or popular entertainment. But when examined according to their own logics, they are.⁸ Thus, while a global perspective on musical modernisms is imperative, it needs to go beyond the efforts to make visible hitherto neglected composers and scenes of contemporary music around the planet – notwithstanding the significance of such efforts. If anything, engaging with globality is an opportunity to question cultural hierarchies, ideological genealogies, and artistic creeds rooted in colonialism and white supremacy. Hence, it is an opportunity to interrogate the canonicity of notions such as modernity and modernism as well as the parochialism of long-standing narratives, such as that of US American exceptionalism. By extension, it might be an opportunity to challenge the canonicity and parochialism of jazz studies. Doing so would certainly be a crucial step towards crafting a cultural history of jazz that does justice to the multiplicity of actors, scenes, and dimensions that have shaped the music but, more importantly, it is another way to resist the legacy of imperialism in our stories. This article is a contribution in that direction.

6 Susan Stanford Friedman, *Planetary Modernisms: Provocations on Modernity across Time* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), xi–x, 4; see Piekut, *Henry Cow*, 387–8.

7 Friedman, *Planetary Modernisms*, 3.

8 On the place of popular, vernacular, and other musical forms often outside the conservatory system within the universe of modernism and avant-gardism before and after the Second World War, see Alejandro L. Madrid, ‘Renovation, Rupture, and Restoration. The Modernist Musical Experience in Latin America’, in *The Modernist World*, ed. Allana Lindgren and Stephen Ross (New York: Routledge, 2015); Piekut, *Henry Cow*, 387–407; Tamara Levitz and Benjamin Piekut, ‘The Vernacular Avant-Garde: A Speculation/Tamara Levitz and Benjamin Piekut’, *ASAP/J* (blog), 3 September 2020, <https://asapjournal.com/the-vernacular-avant-garde-a-speculation-tamara-levitz-and-benjamin-piekut/>.

By digging into newspapers, sound recordings, and other archival vestiges from Havana, Santo Domingo, Mexico City, and Trinidad, in this article I disentangle some of the cultural meanings of the word ‘jazz’ in the Caribbean between 1917 and 1920; that is, before the Jazz Age proper. If towards the end of 1917 the word ‘jazz’ was just making its first appearances in Havana and elsewhere, either as the name of a tune or as a dance fad from other lands, by 1921 it had become a common presence in the newspapers and, considering the extent of its use – from social reports to editorial columns to advertisements and classifieds – in everyday life. If typography could be taken as an index of sociability, a revealing pattern of increasing familiarity comes to light: the quotation marks that invariably enclosed the word ‘jazz’ in almost any iteration in print between 1917 and 1919 became less and less frequent after 1920. Once a foreign presence in a list of tunes for a party, jazz progressively found local niches by virtue of a growing demand for dance instructors, jazz bands, and leisure. However, it is not a straightforward tale of cultural importation or just a matter of frequency or repetition. As much as the word ‘jazz’ and the symbolic baggage that came with it were received as foreign, it also signalled a long history of exchanges between the United States and the Caribbean. Given its imperial standing, the United States inevitably looms large in the international picture of the Jazz Age. Yet the formation of local jazz scenes in various places across the Caribbean since the late 1910s was not a by-product of passive assimilation. It was more about the reinvigoration of long-standing musical parameters vis-à-vis a novel setting – unambiguously transcultural and modern – albeit significantly mediated, as we will see, by the commercial activities of several entertainment businesses from New York City in the arenas of sound recording, player-pianos, music publishing, and dance. Furthermore, as it would also be the case in several places across Latin America, jazz soon came to be entangled in manifold debates about race, morality, modernity, and nationalism.

In the early twentieth century, I argue, jazz was an audible manifestation of modernity and the modern age, that is, of a cultural milieu defined by intersections of capitalism, imperialism – political or otherwise – racial ideologies, new colonial modalities, anti-colonial struggles, mass consumer culture, and rapid global flows of information, people, and commodities. In the Caribbean – including Louisiana and other places in the South of the United States – jazz emerged from these intersections but also pushed them forward. The announcement of that ‘Gran Baile’ in Havana in September 1917 could also be seen as a trace into an otherwise inaccessible cultural experience, one that shows how imagining jazz as Caribbean was intertwined with imagining it as modern. In a certain way, thinking of jazz as ‘modern’ is old news. Early in the day, before any jazz scholar, James P. Johnson issued it as a manifesto: ‘You’ve Got to Be Modernistic’. But now we need to factor in the Caribbean, and not only the Caribbean, but also the myriad of transnational networks, flows, and voyages that shaped modernity in the first place.

This article is organized as four sections. First, I discuss how thinking of New Orleans as part of the Caribbean – rather than within the political realm of the United States – provides a gateway into reframing the origins of jazz at the intersection of Afrodiasporic, Caribbean, and Creole communities. In turn, this is a gateway for exploring the imperial and cultural contours of what I call – following Antonio Benítez Rojo, Amiri Baraka, Susana Friedman, and others –

Caribbean modernity. In the next two sections, devoted respectively to dance and music, I trace the presence of the word ‘jazz’ between September 1917 and June 1920 – mostly through sources in Spanish and with a greater emphasis on Havana. My purpose is to appreciate not only the transnational dimension of jazz but also the various contexts and ways in which it appeared as a marker of social modernity – including issues of race and class as well as the activities of imperially minded corporations and local entrepreneurs in the world of music entertainment. Finally, in the closing segment, I return to the multifaceted character of modernity and jazz, the political contours of US American exceptionalism, and the retreading of history.

The meta-archipelago of the Caribbean

Although crucial processes pertaining to the origins of jazz as a musical form at the turn of the twentieth century took place on US soil, they were directly informed by cultural and musical practices from the Caribbean – not to mention the African diaspora at large.⁹ Considering the range of factors and peoples rooted in the Caribbean that shaped New Orleans society and that nourished jazz in its formative years, authors such as John Storm Roberts, Thomas Fiehrer, Leonardo Acosta, Alejandra Vazquez, Alejandro L. Madrid, Robin Moore, and Christopher Washburne have suggested that early jazz was as Caribbean as it was US American.¹⁰ Just by paying attention to the social history of New Orleans since the early eighteenth century and its cultural configuration up to this day, it is clear that, regardless of its

9 The Caribbean is usually conceived of as a vast geographic and cultural scenario that extends from the Gulf of Mexico to the northern littoral of South America, including not only the so called ‘West Indies’ – that is, all of the islands in the ‘Greater’ and ‘Lesser’ Antilles as well as in the Bahama Archipelago – but also the Caribbean seaside of continental Central America and northern South America. However, more often than not, such a broad picture does not do justice to the social, linguistic, geopolitical, ethnic, and musical diversity of the Caribbean. Thus, some authors insist that it is paramount to specify what region of the Caribbean is being alluded to and the criteria for distinguishing a region from another in the meta-archipelago. Antonio Gaztambide, for example, identifies three ways to conceive of the Caribbean: a) the ‘ethno-historical’ Caribbean (just the ‘West Indies’); b) the ‘geopolitical’ Caribbean (the ‘West Indies’ with Central America and Panama), and c) the ‘Greater’ Caribbean or ‘circum-Caribbean’ (the ‘West Indies’, Mexico, Central America, Panama, and the northern regions of Colombia and Venezuela). More importantly, Gaztambide argues that the Caribbean, as a region, was invented in 1898, in the imperial transition from Europe to the United States. See Antonio Gaztambide, ‘La invención del Caribe a partir de 1898 (las definiciones del Caribe, revisitadas)’, *Jangwa Pana* 5/1 (2006). Considering that the geographical scenario that I examine in this article does not fit precisely with any of the available or conventional categories to fragment the Caribbean region, I either refer to specific places (i.e., Gulf of Mexico, Cuba, the Dominican Republic) or cardinal directions (northern Caribbean). However, I also often embrace just the word ‘Caribbean’ either as a broad geographic/cultural reference for the whole region or to account for cultural or geographical realities that transcend an otherwise circumscribed setting (i.e., the commonalities between places far removed from each other in the meta-archipelago, such as Havana and Trinidad).

10 John Storm Roberts, *The Latin Tinge: The Impact of Latin American Music on the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); Thomas Fiehrer, ‘From Quadrille to Stomp: The Creole Origins of Jazz’, *Popular Music* 10/1 (1991); Leonardo Acosta, *Cubano Be, Cubano Bop: One Hundred Years of Jazz in Cuba* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Books, 2003); Alexandra T. Vazquez, *Listening in Detail: Performances of Cuban Music* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013); Alejandro L. Madrid and Robin Moore, *Danzón: Circum-Caribbean Dialogues in Music and Dance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013); Christopher Washburne, *Latin Jazz: The Other Jazz* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020).

territorial belonging to the United States, New Orleans is part of the Caribbean – as Ana María Ochoa, Timothy Brennan, Nicholas Gebhardt, Ned Sublette, and others have eloquently insisted.¹¹ Thus, engaging with the origins of jazz entails the consideration of a wide, intricate, and diverse cultural scenario that extends as a network across the northern Caribbean, including New Orleans, and that differs in various ways from the rest of the United States. That is the scenario that I have in mind in this article.

Multiple instances and processes contributed to the cross-fertilization of musical practices in New Orleans, Cuba, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, Mexico, and elsewhere in the northern Caribbean. These include confluences of styles and repertoires, a ceaseless flux of composers and performers, shared experiences of slavery, racism, and coloniality, and countless transactions around political, commercial, and musical matters – as Fiehrer, Acosta, Lomanno, Raeburn, Madrid and Moore, and many others have extensively documented.¹² Building on Jelly Roll Morton's famous comment about the 'Latin tinge' without which jazz would not have been possible in the first place, Washburne and Gebhardt have underscored the intercultural character of jazz. Jazz has been, Washburne writes, 'in an "in between" space where peoples from diverse cultures rub up against one another. This is an interstitial space of significance, the space between colonizers and the colonized, black and white, black and creole, European and African, and the Caribbean and the United States.'¹³ Thus, it should be added, an interstitial space essentially modern.

Indeed, while late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century modernity across the Americas was shaped by the incorporation into everyday life of a great assortment of technological and industrial artefacts – from cars to phonographs – as well as of unprecedented cultural practices – including mass-mediated listening – it was still grounded on imperial interventions and colonial relations.¹⁴ New Orleans, Washburne continues, was 'a creolized space' and jazz 'a creolized mode of expression'. But such a creolized environment was wrought at a modern 'confluence of slavery, colonialism, plantation life, postcolonialism, [and] emancipation'.¹⁵ This modern scenario of creolization at the turn of the twentieth century

11 Ana María Ochoa Gautier, 'Nueva Orleáns, la permeable margen norte del Caribe', *Nueva Sociedad* 201 (2006); Brennan, *Secular Devotion*, 213–41; Nicholas Gebhardt, 'When Jazz Was Foreign: Rethinking Jazz History', *Jazzforschung* 44 (2012); Ned Sublette, *The World That Made New Orleans: From Spanish Silver to Congo Square* (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 2008); Washburne, *Latin Jazz*, 37–63; Fiehrer, 'From Quadrille to Stomp', 21–2, 29.

12 Fiehrer, 'From Quadrille to Stomp', 26–33; Acosta, *Cubano Be, Cubano Bop*, 1–15; Mark Lomanno, 'Topics on Afro-Cuban Jazz in the United States' (Master's thesis, Rutgers, State University of New Jersey, 2007), 34–51; Bruce Boyd Raeburn, 'Beyond the "Spanish Tinge": Hispanics and Latinos in Early New Orleans Jazz', in *Eurojazzland: Jazz and European Sources, Dynamics, and Contexts*, ed. Luca Cerchiari, Laurent Cugny, and Franz Kerschbaumer (Lebanon, NH: Northeastern University Press, 2012); Madrid and Moore, *Danzón*, 117–31; Washburne, *Latin Jazz*, 37–63.

13 Washburne, *Latin Jazz*, 8–9; Gebhardt, 'When Jazz Was Foreign', 185–9.

14 See Santiago Castro-Gómez, *Tejidos oníricos: movilidad, capitalismo y biopolítica en Bogotá, 1910–1930* (Bogotá: Editorial Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, 2009); Gary Cross and Robert Proctor, *Packaged Pleasures. How Technology and Marketing Revolutionized Desire* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014); Jonathan Sterne, *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003).

15 Washburne, *Latin Jazz*, 9.

– a kind of creolized modernity – would establish the conditions that would not only set in motion the original development of the kind of music that came to be known as ‘jazz’ but that would inform its subsequent developments throughout the twentieth century. Creolization here is not merely a metaphor to explain the confluence of multiple cultural constituencies. It underscores the predominance of creole identities in Louisiana and the Caribbean since the eighteenth century and particularly during the years leading into the emergence of jazz. The ‘creole’ category, broadly understood as a cultural formation at the intersection of Spanish and French colonial societies, encompassed a wide range of racial and ethnic identities for people of African, ‘Latin’ (read Hispanic, French, Sicilian), and Native American heritage. If jazz, as Fiehrer writes, ‘is a metaphor for New Orleans’ social history’, modern creole culture was the ‘agent’ and ‘the catalytic variable’ that made it possible.¹⁶

This framing carries two powerful implications. On the one hand, the idea of Blackness, so central in jazz history, comes to be refashioned. Rather than the white vs Black binary that has dominated jazz discourses and historiography in the United States, it is about Blackness as it accounts for the experience and identities of African Americans in the United States as well as of Blacks, mulattos, creoles, mestizos, and other people of colour in Latin America and the Caribbean. On the other hand, it allows for a wider cultural geography pertaining the formation and dissemination of jazz in the early twentieth century; a cultural geography that spans across the Americas, which Antonio Benítez Rojo originally framed as the meta-archipelago of the Caribbean and that Washburne recently reframed as a hemispheric ‘black archipelago’.¹⁷ Nevertheless, while Washburne focuses on the creolized space of New York City, as it has been a critical node in the development of Latin jazz, I focus on the creolized space of the northern Caribbean – with a few excursions to other places in the wider circum-Caribbean. Benítez Rojo’s framing of the Caribbean and its cultural history is especially meaningful here:

[A]s a meta-archipelago [the Caribbean] has the virtue of having neither a boundary nor a center. Thus the Caribbean flows outward past the limits of its own sea with a vengeance, and its *ultima Thule* may be found on the outskirts of Bombay, near the low and murmuring shores of Gambia, in a Cantonese tavern of circa 1850, at a Balinese temple, in an old Bristol pub, in a commercial warehouse in Bordeaux at the time of Colbert, in a windmill beside de Zuider Zee, at a café in a barrio of Manhattan, in the existential *saudade* of an old Portuguese lyric.¹⁸

The Caribbean, as a cultural space, was made out of globalization and has shaped the course of globalization – although the same could be said about modernity and jazz. That is, in a sense, what lies behind Benítez Rojo’s profound idea of ‘the repeating island’: the extent to

16 Fiehrer, ‘From Quadrille to Stomp’, 27, 36; see Gebhardt, ‘When Jazz Was Foreign’, 188–95; Michaeline A. Crichlow and Patricia Northover, *Globalization and the Post-Creole Imagination: Notes on Fleeing the Plantation* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009); Madrid and Moore, *Danzón*, 117–31.

17 Antonio Benítez Rojo, *The Repeating Island: The Caribbean and the Postmodern Perspective* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1992); Washburne, *Latin Jazz*, 9–10.

18 Benítez Rojo, *The Repeating Island*, 4.

which the Caribbean experience followed suit on the connecting character of other archipelagos and meta-archipelagos and, in turn, became a paradigm of circulation and connectivity. What gets repeated, he writes, are ‘tropisms, in series; movements in approximate direction’.¹⁹ The Caribbean is not merely a geographical space; it is a social formation produced amid the flows of imperial colonialism and the raptures of capitalism. Between the sixteenth and the nineteenth centuries, European powers created and set in motion a coordinated system of exploitation and extraction in the Caribbean, just as – and in tandem with – their colonial interventions elsewhere across the Americas. Benítez Rojo describes that system as an assemblage of different colonial ‘machines’, each one with a specific purpose, including, for instance, the efficient extraction and transatlantic transportation of gold, silver, and a plethora of other natural resources. Thus, the ‘plantation machine’ alone helped produce, on the one hand, millions of enslaved people from Africa and thousands of imported workers from Southeast Asia, and, on the other hand, mercantile and industrial capitalism, third-world underdevelopment, enclave societies, new forms of imperialism and, ultimately, modernity.²⁰

The Caribbean keeps repeating but each copy is different, in a fashion that resonates with Amiri Baraka’s notion of the *changing same* – an idea eventually taken up by Paul Gilroy to account, precisely, for the rhizomatic happening of the African diaspora throughout the Atlantic Ocean.²¹ But the social formation of the Caribbean – just as Gilroy and Myriam Chancy remind us – is not exclusively a by-product of coloniality. It has also been a transcultural process, and so has been globalization. The Caribbean has been a historical community defined by cultural parameters in flux since long before colonization even if enhanced by colonization. Its character and condition as a ‘middle passage’ between Europe, Africa, and the Americas is not just a testimony of material and immaterial transits but of fluid identities and hybridity, that is, processes of ethnic, racial, and cultural formation in constant motion.²² That is the cultural scenario and those are the historical processes out of which, I believe, jazz came into being.

Framing the Caribbean as a Black archipelago or as a meta-archipelago is crucial to underscore the circulations that have defined everyday life in the Caribbean for a long time, and which have also shaped a particular kind of Caribbean modernity. As Ifeona Fulani and Jessica Baker brilliantly explain, the ‘archipelagic’ character of the Caribbean accounts for the ways in which the sea serves as much for separating as for connecting islands, and thus, for the dynamic flow of peoples, objects, musics, ideas, and cultural practices. ‘[T]he sea’, Fulani writes, ‘has been the vector that linked the arcing islands and their clusters of

19 Benítez Rojo, *The Repeating Island*, 4.

20 Benítez Rojo, *The Repeating Island*, 5–10; Gaztambide, ‘La invención del Caribe’, 2–10.

21 Amiri Baraka, *Black Music* (New York: W. Morrow, 1967), 176–207; Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), xi, 101, 122, 198; Paul Gilroy, ‘Sounds Authentic: Black Music, Ethnicity, and the Challenge of a Changing Same’, *Black Music Research Journal* 11/2 (1991).

22 Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, 17; Myriam Chancy, *Autochthonomies. Transnationalism, Testimony, and Transmission in the African Diaspora* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2020); see Antonio García de León Griego, *El mar de los deseos: el Caribe hispano musical: historia y contrapunto* (Mexico City: Siglo Veintiuno, 2002).

population in a ceaseless flux'.²³ Unlike the ontological fixity often ascribed to the continents and against the perception of islands as isolated places, 'archipelagic thinking' emphasizes the connecting, relational, and mobile nature of island-to-island assemblages.²⁴ The globalizing, repeating, fluid, mobile, and circulating character of the Caribbean, I think, created the condition of possibility for an autonomous sense of modernity – a Caribbean modernity – in the vein of Antonio Benítez Rojo's frame of mind. The tale of how the word 'jazz' found a home in Havana in the late 1910s – or of the Jazz Age in the Caribbean more broadly – is but one instance in a long history of Caribbean circulations and Caribbean modernity.

While Caribbean modernity and jazz modernism should be conceived in relation to each other and according to their own cultural logics, they can also be portrayed in dialogue *with* and within the context of more conventional understandings of historical modernity and musical modernism. There are not all-encompassing criteria to account for modernist experiences in Latin America and the Caribbean. But as Alejandro L. Madrid shows, a 'great variety of aesthetic projects' in the last two centuries can certainly be framed as modernist, with varying degrees of alignment or disconnect with Western/European modernism.²⁵ These include an eclectic panorama of musical enterprises based on the renovation of, the rupture with, or the restoration of certain traditions, whether local or foreign, academic or popular.²⁶ The kind of musical practices that I will examine in the next sections of this article could be deemed as modernist according to this model but that is not the only way to account for them.

Categories such as Global Musical Modernisms or Friedman's notion of Planetary Modernisms are convenient, but their purpose cannot merely be making room for other modernities or modernisms – namely, alternative or peripheral. That would only legitimize, once more, Western modernity as normative while deeming all those other modernities and modernisms, ultimately, as 'anomalies'. On the contrary, what globality or planetarity allows for is breaking away with canonical and hierarchical perspectives regarding modernism and framing modernity 'beyond the contemporary and the now'.²⁷ For me, then, Caribbean modernity is not a shorthand for an alternative, non-normative modernity but a way to understanding the Caribbean in its own terms. Still, I also find Benjamin Piekut's notion of 'vernacular modernism' appealing and aligned with many of the things that I have said so far about jazz, modernity, and the Caribbean. For Piekut, building on the work of Miriam Hansen, it accounts for 'mass-produced, mass-mediated and mass-consumed modernism', the kind of music that 'does not often ring out in concert halls. One experiences it in

23 Ifeona Fulani, ed., *Archipelagos of Sound: Transnational Caribbeanities, Women and Music* (Kingston, Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press, 2012), 2–3.

24 Jessica Baker, 'Small Islands, Large Radio: Archipelagic Listening in the Caribbean', in *Contemporary Archipelagic Thinking. Towards New Comparative Methodologies and Disciplinary Formations*, ed. Michele Stephens and Yolanda Martínez-San Miguel (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2020), 391–3.

25 Madrid, 'Renovation, Rupture, and Restoration', 409.

26 Madrid, 'Renovation, Rupture, and Restoration', 410–16; see Miriam Hansen, 'The Mass Production of the Senses: Classical Cinema as Vernacular Modernism', *Modernism/Modernity* 6/2 (1999).

27 Friedman, *Planetary Modernisms*, 144–5; see Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar, ed., *Alternative Modernities* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001).

nightclubs, bars, DIY venues, dance halls, and improvised spaces such as church basements, cinemas, town halls, lofts, community centers, and various converted outdoor facilities. Above all and most importantly, one listens to it on the radio, the stereo, or the computer.²⁸ Rather than registering lesser aesthetic value than 'elite' or art music forms, the 'vernacular' signals popular sensibilities, broader accessibility, embeddedness in mass media, 'local adaptability', everyday life, familiarity, relatability, entertainment, orality, aurality, bodily engagement, spontaneity, and larger audiences.²⁹

Now it is time to delve into a host of dance venues in Havana, Santo Domingo, Mexico City, and Trinidad in the late 1910s. Examining the early history of the word 'jazz' in the Caribbean is a way to show that jazz is much more than what jazz historiography has made of it in the United States. But it is also a way to disentangle a small segment in the historical production of Caribbean modernity.

Dancing 'The Jazz'

Despite the consolidation of musical scenes in the United States and abroad under the umbrella of 'jazz' through the 1920s – including the profusion of jazz bands around the world and the very idea of 'the Jazz Age' – the word 'jazz' congregated multiple meanings and music styles. As an idea, 'jazz' gathered a cohesive symbolic universe of night dance and modern entertainment associated with a seemingly distinct kind of ensemble that included a drum kit along with any combination of piano, banjo, guitar, bass, violin, and wind instruments. More often than not, the expression 'to jazz' meant simply 'to dance'. In fact, before jazz was consistently configured in any way as music, or while it was being configured as such, it was often regarded as a dance, even a dance step, to be danced to the music of one-step, two-step, foxtrot, ragtime, and other 'modern' musics of the late 1910s and early 1920s. As music, however, the word 'jazz', especially in its international ventures, summoned a rather eclectic array of sound events, from the New Orleans style of King Oliver, Louis Armstrong, or Jelly Roll Morton to the imperial pop of Tin Pan Alley and Paul Whiteman to almost any popular and dance music around the world fashioned according to the visual and symbolic imaginary of the jazz band. Sometimes the word 'jazz' also meant just the drum kit or the special sound effects played with the drum kit or other percussion instruments; by extension, it could be a way to describe almost anything that sounded new, chaotic, or noisy. And it was even a kind of musical cadence or tag: 5–6–5–1.³⁰ Jazz was, indeed, many things, all of them related in one way or another with modernity – in its vernacular sense – and with dancing scenes.

28 Piekut, *Henry Cow*, 393, 401; see Hansen, 'The Mass Production of the Senses'.

29 Piekut, *Henry Cow*, 390–404; Karl Hagstrom Miller, *Segregating Sound: Inventing Folk and Pop Music in the Age of Jim Crow* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 55–78.

30 Frederick Schenker, 'Empire of Syncopation: Music, Race, and Labor in Colonial Asia's Jazz Age' (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2016), 25–6; Bruce Johnson, *Jazz Diaspora: Music and Globalisation* (New York: Routledge, 2019), 44–8; Elijah Wald, *How the Beatles Destroyed Rock 'n' Roll: An Alternative History of American Popular Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 71–83.

The ‘Great Dance’ in Havana with which I opened this article, and which included a one-step named ‘The Jazz’, was announced to take place on 20 September 1917. By then, the word ‘jazz’ was beginning to gain international traction.³¹ On 23 December, another ‘Great Dance’ was announced in Havana’s *Diario de la Marina* on behalf of the same youth organization behind the September party. This time the venue was the ballroom of the Antiguo Ateneo, a prominent building located at Prado and Neptuno, also in downtown Havana. Along with ten danzones, two pasodobles, one foxtrot, and one waltz, the dance programme included two one-steps, one of those being, again, ‘The Jazz’.³² As a matter of fact, this tune was the only repeat from the September party. One week later, on 29 December, the newspaper *El Mundo* announced another dance to take place for New Year’s Eve, featuring a similar repertoire, which included, one more time, that one-step ‘The Jazz’.³³ This time, the newspaper also mentioned the name of the orchestra in charge of the performance: La Orquesta de Corbacho, an ensemble led by the cornetist Domingo Corbacho and known for its danzones, some of which it had recorded for Victor in 1911.³⁴ ‘The Jazz’ was included in the dance programme of at least two more parties in the first semester of 1918, both featuring Corbacho’s orchestra and sponsored by the Asociación de Dependientes del Comercio de la Habana, a trade organization that owned one of the biggest and most outstanding buildings – or ‘palaces’ – in the city at the time; first, in the last week of February and then in the

31 As far as the scholarship on the matter seems to go, the word ‘jazz’ (i.e., already spelt with ‘zz’) appeared for the first time in print in *Los Angeles Times* on 2 April 1912, in relation to a baseball game. With the title of ‘Ben’s Jazz Curve’, the column referred to a quote from a pitcher who described a ball as a ‘jazz ball because it wobbles you and you simply can’t do anything with it’. The word ‘jazz’ appears again in 1913 in a newspaper in San Francisco, also talking about baseball. At some point between 1913 and 1915, the word began to be used in Chicago in relation to the music played by incoming musicians from New Orleans, and by 1917 its use was more or less widespread in newspapers across the United States. The earliest mentions of the word ‘jazz’ in New Orleans are from 1916 (following its use elsewhere), and most ‘early jazz’ musicians from New Orleans, including Sidney Bechet and Louis Armstrong, said that the word was not used in New Orleans in the years prior to 1917. There have been many debates regarding the origins and the meanings of the word ‘jazz’, especially in relation to the English-speaking world and concerning the United States. One of the first comprehensive accounts of such historiography, up until the late 1960s, was an article by Merriam and Garner. Notwithstanding its thoroughness and all-inclusive approach, their article – just as most of the jazz histories written in the last century – is fraught with the idea of jazz as a predominantly US phenomenon. See Lawrence Gushee, *Pioneers of Jazz: The Story of the Creole Band* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 299; Lewis Porter, ‘Where Did “Jazz”, the Word, Come From? Follow a Trail of Clues, in Deep Dive with Lewis Porter’, *WBGO*, 26 February 2018, www.wbgo.org/music/2018-02-26/where-did-jazz-the-word-come-from-follow-a-trail-of-clues-in-deep-dive-with-lewis-porter; Alan Merriam and Fradley Garner, ‘Jazz – The Word’, *Ethnomusicology* 12/3 (1968); Wald, *How the Beatles Destroyed Rock ‘n’ Roll*, 25–8, 56–9.

32 *Diario de la Marina*, 23 December 1917, 14.

33 *El Mundo*, 29 December 1917, 10.

34 Cristóbal Díaz Ayala, *Cuba canta y baila. Encyclopedic Discography of Cuban Music, 1898–1925*, 2 vols. (Miami: Florida International University, 2002), <https://latinpop.fiu.edu/contentsv1.html>; *Discography of American Historical Recordings*, s.v. ‘Orquesta Carbacho’, <https://adp.library.ucsb.edu/names/335206> (accessed 4 October 2021). La Orquesta de Corbacho is also mentioned in another publication, *Revista La Montaña*, also in relation to a musical programme (at lunch) in which it performed in November 1917 (p. 14) for ‘Juventud Montañesa’, another mutual society of the Iberian-Spanish community in Havana. The same publication refers to a danzón named precisely ‘Juventud Montañesa’, probably a composition by Corbacho.

first week of May.³⁵ Just like in the other events, this already conspicuous tune was entangled with – or somewhat escorted by – danzones, waltzes, foxtrots, pasodobles, and other one-steps.

A legitimate and tough question, of course, is what did this one-step, ‘The Jazz’, sound like? While the possibilities in terms of arrangements and interpretations in 1917 Havana are maybe vast, there are at least two clues to imagine it sonically, each pointing to a whole different direction. To begin with, there was indeed a one-step named ‘The Jazz’ – or ‘The Jass’ – in the United States, of which there is a recording from 1917 made for Edison by the Jaudas’ Society Orchestra.³⁶ ‘The Jass’ was an instrumental piece derived from the popular Tin Pan Alley song ‘Hong Kong’ – known also as ‘The Chinese Love Song’ – written by Richard Pascoe (lyrics) and Hans von Holstein and Alma Sanders (music), published by Leo Feist in New York in 1916.³⁷ The song is about ‘a boy from old Hong Kong’ who ‘sings the whole night long’, yearning to return to his homeland for his honeymoon. Orientalist references, as we will continue to see, were a common ingredient – another sign that the foreign and global nature of jazz was also what made people imagine it to be modern. While the cylinder recording of ‘The Jass’ conveys more of a marching band type of performance than a dancing groove, a straightforward rendition of the piano score would do a bit more justice to the dancing-like fashion of Holstein and Sanders’ one-step.³⁸

The second clue towards tracing the sonority of the Domingo Corbacho orchestra’s rendition of ‘The Jazz’ is less literal and requires more imagination, but it might be more productive for pondering the affinity between the sound of jazz in New Orleans and the rest of the northern Caribbean. On the one hand, it entails the consideration of other pieces from the United States that could have either been the direct source *for* or informed the making *of* the Cuban version of ‘The Jazz’. One of those pieces could have been ‘Dixie Jazz Band One-Step’, recorded on 26 February 1917 by the Original Dixieland Jazz Band for Victor, in New York, and most likely available in Havana later that year.³⁹ The Original Dixieland Jazz Band was a group of five white musicians from New Orleans, usually credited with having stirred a jazz craze in New York and various places in the United States during 1917, and then in England, continental Europe, and elsewhere in the following few years – having contributed also to the international dissemination of the word ‘jazz’.⁴⁰

35 *Diario de la Marina*, 22 February 1918, 5, and 1 May 1918, 5; *El Mundo*, 2 May 1918, 10.

36 ‘The “jass” one-step’, *Alexandria Digital Research Library*, Cylinder Audio Archive (Cylinder 5504), University of California in Santa Barbara, www.alexandria.ucsb.edu/lib/ark:/48907/f3w95822 (accessed 4 October 2021).

37 Richard W. Pascoe, Hans von Holstein, and Alma M. Sanders, ‘Hong Kong’, music score (1916). *Digital Commons Connecticut College*, <https://digitalcommons.conncoll.edu/sheetmusic/594/>.

38 There was also a one-step titled ‘1920’ by Herman Darewski and labelled as ‘jazz one-step’: www.youtube.com/watch?v=FQaBhXg-kME.

39 Harry O. Brunn, *The Story of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1960), 65–8. The recordings were made on 26 February 1917, and released a week later, on 7 March. The recordings were featured in a Victor catalogue of new records on 17 March and in a general Victor catalogue in November.

40 Brunn, *The Story of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band*, 51–139; Porter, ‘Where Did “Jazz”, the Word, Come From?’ On New Year’s Eve, to welcome 1918, while Corbacho’s orchestra was performing that one-step ‘The Jazz’ in Havana, 2,000 miles north, in Belfast, Maine, McKeen’s Orchestra was playing a one-step called ‘The Jazz Band’ in a local event. Most

Notwithstanding the dynamics of white appropriation of early jazz on the part of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band, and the extent to which their popularity was heightened by the sound recording industry at the expense of circumventing vibrant jazz scenes led by African American performers in New Orleans, California, and Chicago, their sound was much closer to the style of Cuban orchestras than that of the Jaudas' Society Orchestra – even if it was Holstein and Sanders' tune which they were meant to play.⁴¹ Alejandro Madrid and Robin Moore have extensively documented the musical entanglements between Cuban *danzón* and New Orleans's music during the years prior to the consolidation of early jazz.⁴² Thus, the music of the *danzones* that Corbacho's orchestra played at those dance parties in Havana in 1917 and 1918 might also be indicative of the way in which they could have performed not only a one-step such as 'The Jazz' but also any of the waltzes, foxtrots, and other one-steps in the programmes.⁴³ Although the overall configuration of Cuban and New Orleans music at the time would appear to be quite different – especially when comparing the recordings made by Domingo Corbacho's orchestra with those by the Original Dixieland Jazz Band or any other creole jazz band in New Orleans for the same matter – certain musical parameters point, on the contrary, to a common ground. These include, as Madrid and Moore have also shown, the instrumentation, the pervasiveness of melodic simultaneity and polyphonic improvisation, and, more importantly, the centrality of dancing grooves.

Indeed, in Louisiana, Cuba, and elsewhere in the circum-Caribbean at the time, it was primarily about dancing. Announcements, classifieds, and columns about parties, concerts, dance lessons, or social matters pertaining the new fashion of 'jazz' – always in relation to the foxtrot and other 'modern' dances – proliferated in newspapers across Havana, Santo Domingo, and Mexico City between 1917 and 1920. For instance, a long article in Havana's *El Mundo* by Carmela Nieto de Herrera, on 15 December 1917, and presented as a 'lectura del hogar' – or family reading – was devoted to the issue of 'how to dance the jazz' (Figure 1).⁴⁴ It begins by reporting how jazz took New York by storm that winter, referring to the craze that followed the performances and recordings of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band earlier that year; also, how jazz had gained acceptance even in elite circles, so much so that it was 'the last word of what is new and gracious', although dance teachers in New York recommended jazz 'as a spicy but innocent note in the dance programme for night parties'.

likely, it was a rendition of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band's tune, given the increasing popularity of the band and its recordings in those days. See *The Republican Journal* [Belfast, Maine], 3 January 1918, 3.

41 Another interesting one-step to consider would be W. Benton Overstreet's 'That 'Jazz' Dance', recorded by W. C. Handy's Orchestra in New York for Columbia on 21 September 1917 (two days after the first party in Havana), and which was publicized with the subtitle: 'The jazz dance everybody is crazy 'bout'. See *Discography of American Historical Recordings*, s.v. 'Columbia matrix 77367. That 'jazz' dance / Handy's Orchestra', https://adp.library.ucsb.edu/index.php/matrix/detail/2000025149/77367-That_jazz_dance (accessed 6 October 2021).

42 Madrid and Moore, *Danzón*, 117–49.

43 An interesting example to consider could be 'El encanto', a *danzón* recorded by Corbacho's orchestra for Victor in Havana, in 1911; https://adp.library.ucsb.edu/index.php/matrix/detail/600002224/H-56-El_encanto (accessed 19 June 2023).

44 Carmela Nieto de Herrera, 'Lectura del hogar. Como bailar el jazz. Descripción de la última novedad en cuestiones de baile', *El Mundo*, 15 December 1917, 4.

Lectura del Hogar

COMO BAILAR EL JAZZ

Descripción de la última novedad en
cuestiones de baile



Figure 1 ['How to Dance the Jazz'], *El Mundo*, 15 December 1917.

And that is probably how and why a one-step like 'The Jazz' was recurrently included in dance parties in Havana in those days.

While Nieto de Herrera's piece was clearly meant to introduce – and in a way demystify – jazz dancing, it also exoticized jazz as a foreign fad: an 'extravagant' dance, 'the latest

expression of [US] American Fox Trot', and one of the four most popular dances of the season. The other three were, as determined in a conference of dance teachers in the United States, the 'Chinese Toddle', the 'Ramble' – that Nieto de Herrera believed to be 'a pleasant combination of one-step, fox trot, and waltz' – and the tango. Presenting jazz as a subset of the foxtrot was, as we mentioned before, quite common. An announcement by a 'Dancing casino' published in Mexico City's *El Universal* in April 1918, for example, introduced jazz almost in the same way Nieto de Herrera did four months before in Havana: 'the most elegant dance that is becoming a sensation in New York's high-society ballrooms. The Jazz is the latest derivative of the Fox Trot, more animated, more enthusiastic, and more elegant than the first, because its rhythm makes the dancers shine in all their amplitude, grace, and kindness.'⁴⁵ Curiously, unlike the United States at the time, where the words 'jazz' and 'ragtime' were often used almost interchangeably, in Caribbean newspapers between 1917 and 1920 the word 'ragtime' hardly ever appeared in relation to 'jazz', unless it was in the name of a particular tune.⁴⁶

For Nieto de Herrera, it was clear that jazz, the dance, was the creation of a single individual, Oscar Duryea, a well-known dancer, choreographer, and dance instructor in New York at the time, who had contributed in 1914 to the standardization and popularization of the steps for the foxtrot and who apparently invented a new dance in 1916: the 'two-two'.⁴⁷ Thus, the intricate set of dancing instructions that Nieto de Herrera presented in Spanish to her readers in Havana came from a set of instructions published previously in English by Duryea. All things considered, following the steps seems to make evident that jazz dance – as prescribed by Duryea and amplified by Nieto de Herrera – was bounded within the stylistic realm of foxtrot, tango, waltz, one-step, two-step, and other 'society dances' of the 1910s. While the specificity and sophistication of the instructions reminds us, in a way, of much older society dances – such as the *contradance* – they also point to social parameters defined by Victorian and bourgeois sensibilities:

Walk slowly during three steps in the line of direction, starting with the left foot. Stop on the third step, balancing the weight of the body [bending?] over the left foot; count long 'one, two, three,' which should account for six [beats] in the music. Quickly bring the right foot next to the left foot, put the left foot forward and change the step so that it falls over the right foot. Count two and four. Repeat the last two steps starting with the right foot and stopping over the right foot when giving the third step forward and count two. Advance with the left foot and stop for an instant.
(1). Cross the right foot behind the left foot, closing suddenly to find the step of the

45 '[E]l jazz, elegantísimo baile que está haciendo furor en los salones de alta sociedad neoyorkinos. El jazz es el último derivado del Fox Trot, más animado, más entusiasta y más elegante que el primero, pues su ritmo hace lucir, en toda su amplitud, la gracia y la gentileza de los bailadores.' *El Universal*, 17 April 1918, 8. The 'Dancing casino' parties, announced as 'recepciones' and 'bailes de etiqueta' were to take place at the business's salons, located at 'Casa No. 12 de la calle San Juan de Letrán'.

46 See Wald, *How the Beatles Destroyed Rock 'n' Roll*, 49–59.

47 'Oscar Duryea,' in Sonny Watson's *Street Swing* website: www.streetswing.com/histmai2/d2durya1.htm (accessed 13 August 2022); *The Northeastern Reporter*, vol. 90, 4 January–22 March 1910, 1019, 1141.

left foot and change the weight of the body over this [the left foot] and (2) move forward with the right foot and stop for an instant as you did before (3), use the left foot to find the right foot quickly, advance towards the right and change the weight of the body, and count (4).⁴⁸

These are just the first few lines of a two-part section devoted to the particulars of jazz dancing in a long article meant, again, as a family reading and, presumably, as a guide for domestic practice. Other instructions, further down in the guide, included ‘advance with the right foot diagonally towards the front, and [move] to the side to join up the left foot to the right foot’ and ‘make half a turn to the left with a waltz step, i.e., move forward with the left foot and turn to the left’. Thus, it comes as no surprise that jazz dancing was also featured as a spectacle in some social events. On 20 May 1919, for instance, *El Mundo* publicized another dance party sponsored by Sociedades Españolas and Juventud Asturiana that would include a dance demonstration of ‘The Inner Ci[r]cle Toddle’ by ‘the teacher, señor Manuel Rizzo and his beautiful companion, the distinguished señorita Ana María Relañó’, a dance number that probably resembled those commonly presented by Vernon and Irene Castle in New York.⁴⁹ Among the various pieces to be performed that night by the ‘orquesta del profesor Barba’ there was one named simply ‘Jazz’, a foxtrot.⁵⁰ The word ‘jazz’ would accrue many other meanings, but always grounded in modern entertainment and related, in one way or another, to the dance floor.

Playing jazz, or the transnational shape of consumer culture

While introducing jazz as a dance, Duryea, but voiced in Havana by Carmen Nieto de Herrera, stated: ‘This dance is a Fox Trot but with a rhythm somewhat strange and different from the Fox Trot . . . it is much slower.’⁵¹ But Nieto de Herrera also described jazz as ‘today’s

48 ‘Camine durante tres pasos despacio en la línea de dirección, empezando con el pie izquierdo. En el tercer paso deténgase balanceando el peso del cuerpo sobre el pie izquierdo, cuente uno, dos, tres, largos, lo que vale seis en la música. Aproxime pronto el pie derecho al izquierdo, adelante el pie izquierdo, y cambie el paso para que caiga sobre el pie derecho. Cuente dos y cuatro. Repita los dos pasos anteriores comenzando con el pie derecho y deteniéndose sobre el pie derecho al dar el tercer paso hacia adelante, y cuente dos. Salga con el pie izquierdo y deténgase por un instante. (1). Cruce el pie derecho detrás del izquierdo, cerrando de pronto para encontrar el paso del pie izquierdo y cambie el peso del cuerpo sobre éste y (2) salga con el pie derecho hacia adelante y deténgase por un instante como antes (3), una el pie izquierdo para encontrar el derecho pronto, adelante hacia la derecha y cambie el peso del cuerpo, y cuente (4).’ Nieto de Herrera, ‘Lectura del hogar. Como bailar el jazz’, *El Mundo*, 15 December 1917, 4.

49 See ‘Los Castle: estrellas del baile y del disco’, in Marina Cañardo, *Fábricas de músicas: comienzos de la industria discográfica en la Argentina (1919–1930)* (Buenos Aires: Gourmet Musical Ediciones, 2017), 190–5; H. C. Potter, dir. *The Story of Vernon and Irene Castle* (RKO Radio Pictures, 1939).

50 *El Mundo*, 20 May 1919, 10.

51 ‘Este baile es un Fox Trot pero con un ritmo algo extraño y diferente del Fox Trot . . . es mucho más despacio.’ *El Mundo*, 15 December 1917, 4. It is interesting to note how this perception of jazz as ‘slower’ in comparison to the foxtrot contradicts a common tale in the historiography of early jazz, namely that audiences perceived the music as ‘fast’ and hence the name ‘jazz’, which some have believed to derive from either a local slang or a word in an African language that meant ‘speed’, ‘speed up’, or simply ‘fast’. See Merriam and Garner, ‘Jazz – The Word’, 381; Ken Burns, dir.,

most nervous music' and a 'strange music' with which 'happiness is born, vibrates, and prevails'. She went on to say that the music to which 'the jazz' was supposed to be danced was called 'crazy cadenza', and that it was available in New York. While no recording or sheet music under that name appears to exist in any available discographies or databases, an article from 18 November 1917, in New York's *American* used that expression when talking about the music of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band:

The peculiar, somewhat discordant melody is said to be produced by tuning each of the instruments at a different pitch; and to end some of the strains they occasionally play [with] what we have termed a crazy cadenza.⁵²

As a matter of fact, although Nieto de Herrera did not mention the Original Dixieland Jazz Band, some portions in her article, scattered in different places, were a literal translation from that article, published one month prior in New York. Likewise, when describing the instrumentation to play 'the jazz', she ultimately portrays the usual format of early creole bands in New Orleans, Los Angeles, Chicago, New York City, and elsewhere in the United States – including the Original Dixieland Jazz Band: 'the music for this dance is made with piano, cornet, trombone, clarinet, and drums'.⁵³ This format, as Madrid and Moore have established, was in many regards similar to the instrumental configuration of danzón orchestras in Cuba at the time; the kind of ensembles that, as we have seen, were the main attractions in the several dance parties publicized during those years and which played – along with a profuse collection of danzones – a variety of foxtrots, one-steps, two-steps, waltzes, pasodobles, and other danceable musics related, in the dance-scape of the era, to jazz.⁵⁴ Rather than implying a direct or simple diffusion of musical parameters from the United States to the Caribbean, this commonality in matters of instrumentation was grounded in the Afrodiasporic character of both kind of ensembles, the shared colonial legacies of Louisiana and Cuba (i.e., military brass bands as the basis of popular ensembles since the nineteenth century), and the increasing relevance of these instruments for the music cultures of the circum-Caribbean.⁵⁵

Further south in the Caribbean, this instrumental format and the perception of jazz as modern and 'crazy' music also appears in relation to other early mentions of the word

Jazz (PBS, 2001), episode 1. It should also be noted, however, that even if sharing at some point the 'jazz' label, the music of New Orleans and most of the foxtrots (or society dances in general) played in New York City were quite different – as we have seen in this article.

52 Brunn, *The Story of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band*, 108–9; see Richard Lawn, *Experiencing Jazz*, 2nd edn (New York: Routledge, 2013), 83–5.

53 *El Mundo*, 15 December 1917, 4; Gushee, *Pioneers of Jazz*; Brunn, *The Story of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band*.

54 Madrid and Moore, *Danzón*, 131–45. Nieto de Herrera's article ends with a mention of Alfredito Rodríguez, who, she said, 'might be playing jazz music in Havana's "Jacht Club"'. The database of the *Discography of American Historical Recordings* includes a composer 'A. Rodríguez' whose music was recorded by Don Aspiazu in 1931.

55 Katherine Brucher and Suzel Ana Reily, eds., *Brass Bands of the World: Militarism, Colonial Legacies, and Local Music Making* (New York: Routledge, 2016); Ronald Radano and Tejumola Olaniyan, eds., *Audible Empire: Music, Global Politics, Critique* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), 5; Fiehrer, 'From Quadrille to Stomp', 26–30; Ospina Romero, 'Jazz Entanglements in the Caribbean'.

'jazz'. On 21 November 1919, the Hotel McKinney in Trinidad 'presented a gala scene, the occasion being the introduction of Jazz music to local society' – as reported by *The Argos* the following day.⁵⁶ The event began with a series of pieces clearly not regarded as jazz, including 'a sweet waltz' performed by the famous ensemble lead by George R. L. Baillie's (aka Lovey), a few songs rendered in operatic style, an instrumental piece by a string quartet, and a comedic song.⁵⁷ 'Then came the Jazz', and the description of the scene is revealing in many respects, beginning with the answer to the question of 'What is Jazz?':

It is music – crazy, tumultuous music that is played in perfect syncopated harmony. Do you understand it? It is the tango à la Bedlam, as was invented to make the soldier forget the terrors of the trench feet. That's the music. The Jazz instruments, as played last night by Lovey and Lovey alone, are not too numerous to mention: bass drum, slide trombone, syren [*sic*], klaxon castanets which are wooden instruments hollowed out and worked together with the tambourine, Chinese cymbals, ordinary foot cymbals made of brass, and lastly, rattles. This conglomeration of instruments was worked with marvelous dexterity by Lovey while his well-known band with Mr. Palmer at the piano made the rafters ring and roar with rapture at the ripping riotous Jazz. The feet of men and maiden went shooting to and fro; and while many danced everybody voted the function from beginning to end a magnificent success.⁵⁸

If for Carmen Nieto de Herrera and the writer of New York's *American* the 'crazy' aspect of jazz was, to begin with, a melodic issue, resulting from an outrageous way to tune the instruments and to thread the various lines and sounds, for the chronicler of the party at the Hotel McKinney in Trinidad it was an all-encompassing condition throughout the scene, from the music being played to the dance floor. The word 'condition' here is not innocent. Indeed, jazz is described as 'the tango à la Bedlam', a direct reference to either psychiatric hospitals in general or to the Bethlem Royal Hospital (aka Saint Mary of Bethlehem), an old and famous hospital for the mentally ill in London. Still, tango – an inseparable companion of foxtrot in the realm of social dance at least since 1913 – appears as the known musical reference jazz could be compared with, or which it deviated from. Furthermore, Lovey's 'marvelous dexterity' with such a 'conglomeration of [mostly percussion] instruments' seems to point towards another defining feature of jazz, especially in its transnational ventures in the early 1920s and that I briefly mentioned a few pages ago: the playing of unexpected, noisy, and 'chaotic' sound

⁵⁶ "Jazz" at Hotel McKinney', *The Argos*, 22 November 1919, 5.

⁵⁷ Lovey's band toured the United States in 1912 under the name of Trinidad Dance Orchestra and made recordings for Victor and Columbia that came out as Lovey's Trinidad String Band. Following on the commercial success of Lovey's Band records, Victor sent a recording expedition to Trinidad in the summer of 1914. See John Cowley, *Carnival, Canboulay and Calypso: Traditions in the Making* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 183–5; Sergio Ospina Romero, 'Recording Studios on Tour: Traveling Ventures at the Dawn of the Music Industry', in *Phonographic Encounters: Mapping Transnational Cultures of Sound, 1890–1945*, ed. Eva Moreda Rodríguez and Elodie A. Roy (London: Routledge, 2021), 26.

⁵⁸ *The Argos*, 22 November 1919, 5.

effects. Probably that was also what another writer meant the year before when writing that '[a] special orchestra never heard in Mexico, because of the originality of its instruments, will mark the cadences of this new danceable [jazz]'.⁵⁹

The reporter writing for *The Argos* did not mention any particulars about Lovey's band 'jazz' repertoire. It would not be surprising that calypso and other local dance musics were included along with foxtrots, tangos, one-steps, and the like, just as it was being the case in Havana with danzones and, eventually, with *sones*, *guajiras*, *puntos cubanos*, and other musics featured by Cuban sextets.⁶⁰ But it was not only dance orchestras, hotels or dance venues. In US-occupied Dominican Republic, jazz-labelled selections were part of public concerts. In December 1917, for example, the US Navy Band performed in Santo Domingo 'Hawaiian Butterfly', a tune presented as a 'Fox Trot Jazz' – the instrumental version of a song by Billy Baskette – as well as waltzes, marches, overtures, and classical music selections.⁶¹ Two years later, also in Santo Domingo, the Banda de la Guardia Nacional Dominicana (or Band of the Dominican National Guard) played a concert at the Parque Independencia. Along with marches, polkas, and opera selections, the programme included 'Barnyard Blues', a 'Jazz Foxtrot' composed by Nick LaRocca, trumpeter and leader of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band.⁶²

Taken together, all these accounts point towards an intriguing tension regarding the portrayal of musical modernisms – as discussed earlier in this article. On the one hand, the depictions of jazz as unruly, frenzied, disruptive, and somewhat experimental (i.e., 'crazy cadenza', 'tango à la Bedlam', 'chaotic' sound effects with the drums), seemed to be aligned with some of the aesthetic expectations of Western musical modernisms at the time. On the other hand, the social standing of jazz as popular entertainment and its entanglement with popular music scenes – such as those of danzón and calypso – rather than with academic circles of art music composition, challenged prevalent notions of musical modernism and revealed how the spread of consumer culture and the rise of jazz scenes were often two sides of the same coin.

While music is a regular transgressor of national boundaries and musicking propels transnational exchanges of all kinds, consumer culture and the voracity of music entrepreneurship played a crucial role in the constitution and consolidation of jazz scenes in the United States, the Caribbean, and beyond. To begin with, the novelty of the 'jazz' craze provided a profitable opportunity for US businesses in the player-piano and recording industries, especially as they were making big strides to expand their operations to Latin America and the Caribbean.⁶³ By

59 *El Universal*, 17 April 1918, 8.

60 See 'Reseña social', *El Mundo*, 16 May 1920, 6.

61 *Listin Diario*, 26 December 1917, 1.

62 *Listin Diario*, 29 October 1919, 6. The Original Dixieland Jazz Band recorded 'Barnyard Blues' for Aeolian-Vocalion on 7 August 1917 (in New York), and then for Columbia on 16 April 1919 (in London). It was the same tune it had recorded under the title of 'Livery Stable Blues' for Victor on 26 February 1917 (in New York). See *Discography of American Historical Recordings*; www.youtube.com/watch?v=qcAhHnnIB1Y (Aeolian) and www.youtube.com/watch?v=5WojNaU4-ki (Victor) (accessed 15 August 2022).

63 Sergio Ospina Romero, 'Ghosts in the Machine and Other Tales around a "Marvelous Invention": Player-Pianos in Latin America in the Early Twentieth Century', *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 72/1 (2019); Ospina Romero, 'Recording Studios on Tour'.

April 1919, for example, QRS was already promoting piano rolls in Havana such as ‘Ching Chong Jazz One Step’, among other ‘rolls with words in English’, for \$1.25 apiece.⁶⁴ And at least since May 1919 ‘jazz’ records were available and widely publicized in newspapers in Havana and elsewhere across the northern Caribbean. On 21 May 1919, the music store of M. Humara had a full-page ad in *El Mundo* boasting of a ‘Splendid collection of “Victor” records, recently received’. Alongside with the heavily promoted records by Caruso, Ruffo, Tetrizzini, Sagi Barba, and other celebrities in Victor’s upscale Red Seal label, a good number of foxtrots, one-steps, tangos, schottisches, and pasodobles were part of the long list, including two recordings by the Original Dixieland Jazz Band (introduced as *Dixieland Jazz Banda*): ‘Sensation Rag. One Step’ and ‘Bluin’ the Blues. Fox Trot’.⁶⁵ Two months later, capitalizing on the recent developments in the war front in Europe, the same business of M. Humara encouraged its clientele with this call to celebrate and buy dance records – almost a premonition of the hedonistic modernity of the roaring twenties: ‘Peace has been signed at last! The world [being] free of the concerns of the war, is in the psychological moment to unleash unreservedly its enthusiasm’ (Figure 2).⁶⁶

By 1920 the advertisement of ‘jazz’ and other dance records was much more intense. The business of Frank Robins Co. in Havana, for example, publicized on 8 April ‘the trendy dance in “Columbia” records’ with the question ‘Do you have it yet?’ – alluding to a collection of thirty-two schottisches ‘admirably played’ along with ‘the most *modern* One-steps and Fox-trots by the best “Jazz” orchestras of the United States’.⁶⁷ The same ad appeared almost every day between then and 19 April in either or both *El Mundo* and *Diario de la Marina*. But it was not only about records and piano rolls. As dancing ‘the jazz’ grew in popularity so did taking jazz dancing lessons. On 26 September 1918, a classified posted by the High Life Palace in Mexico’s *El Universal* offered dance classes every weekday: Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Fridays between 7:00pm and 10:00pm for general styles, and Thursdays, from 8:00pm to 12:00pm, for the modern dances in fashion – a session ‘enlivened by the Jazz orchestra “León Drums”’. Personalized dance lessons, however, were available every day.⁶⁸

Ads and classifieds offering dance lessons also proliferated in Havana’s newspapers, especially since February 1920. H. E. Stanley, for instance, ‘an expert [US] American teacher’ who

64 *Diario de la Marina*, 2 April 1919, 15. The same ad appeared also on 5 April. ‘Ching Chong’, a composition by Lee S. Roberts that in many ways resembles Holstein and Sanders’ one-step ‘The Jazz’, was recorded by Prince’s Band for Columbia, in New York, on 24 May 1917, and by (Fred) Van Eps Trio for Victor on 13 August 1917, also in New York. The recordings are available at *Discography of American Historical Recordings*, s.v. ‘Columbia matrix 49212. Ching chong / Prince’s Band,’ and ‘Victor matrix B-20501. Ching-chong / Van Eps Trio’, https://adp.library.ucsb.edu/index.php/matrix/detail/2000143565/49212-Ching_chong and <https://adp.library.ucsb.edu/index.php/matrix/detail/700005588/B-20501-Ching-chong> (accessed 16 August 2022).

65 *El Mundo*, 21 May 1919, 11. Very similar ads and records listing by the same local business on 22 May, 1 June, 11 June, 18 and July. The same two tunes by the Original Dixieland Jazz Band were still being promoted in May 1920.

66 ‘La paz se ha firmado al fin! El mundo, libre de las inquietudes de la guerra, está en el momento psicológico de dar rienda suelta a su entusiasmo’, *El Mundo*, 18 July 1919, 12.

67 *Diario de la Marina*, 8 April 1920, 22, emphasis mine.

68 *El Universal*, 26 September 1918, 7.



Figure 3 [W. Portalis's Dance Academy], *Diario de la Marina*, 18 March 1920.

repeatedly for the next few days (Figure 3).⁷⁰ The dance academy of the 'Cuban Prince' (Príncipe Cubano) boasted that he was 'the only ballroom teacher who has danced before the King of Spain, [and] awarded in Vienna, Paris, Bucarest, Barcelona, Havana'. Besides jazz, one-step, foxtrot, waltz, and tango, their list included 'Boston, Scottish, [and] Horse Trot'.⁷¹ Several classifieds presented the same incentives – foreign or internationally seasoned teachers, group and individual lessons, daily or almost daily sessions – and even the same tariffs: either \$5 per week (if in a group class) or \$3 daily (for a private class). Almost invariably, 'jazz' was part of the menu, accompanied not only by foxtrot, one-step, tango, waltz, schottische, and danzón, but also sometimes by pasodobles and other 'Spanish dances'.⁷²

'Jazz' generated a condition of opportunity for many businesses – from imperially minded corporations such as the Victor Talking Machine Company to local dance instructors and academies – and was sustained by the novel and unmistakably modern scenario of consumer culture. As De Grazia, Jacobson, myself, and others have shown, more than records, phonographs, cars, vacuum cleaners, Gillette razors, Hollywood films, and maybe anything else, the main export of the United States in the early twentieth century was consumer culture.⁷³ The cultural dispositions of the African diaspora made it so that some of the sonorities, rhythms, and dancing vibes of jazz felt already familiar in the Caribbean, but consumer culture brought forth an unprecedented set of social practices. Jazz was listened to, played, and danced, but it was primarily consumed. Sometimes, in fact, it was consumed literally as was the case with the \$1 'jazz cocktail' sold at the Hotel McKinney in Trinidad, and which the main ingredient 'was half a pint of dry sparkling champagne of purest vintage. Gee Whizz!! Jazz!'⁷⁴

The growing popularity of 'jazz' did not prevent the rise of social anxieties of various sorts – or it was precisely its appeal which triggered some of those anxieties. Carmen Nieto de Herrera, the writer of the long article about 'how to dance the jazz' discussed previously, was also in charge of a regular section in the same newspaper: 'Contestaciones' – or

70 *Diario de la Marina*, 18 March 1920, 4 and 5; *El Mundo*, 18 March 1920, 3; 19 March 1920, 3; 20 March 1920, 3; and 23 March 1920, 9.

71 *El Mundo*, 4 April 1920, 7.

72 *Diario de la Marina*, 25 April 1920, 10; 26 April 1920, 14; 27 April 1920, 4; 30 April 1920, 9; 4 May 1920, 9; and 6 May 1920, 9. *El Mundo*, 29 April 1920, 11; 30 April 1920, 18; 4 May 1920, 20; and 5 May 1920, 14.

73 See Victoria De Grazia, *Irresistible Empire: America's Advance through Twentieth-Century Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005); Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Barbarian Virtues: The United States Encounters Foreign Peoples at Home and Abroad, 1876–1917* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2001); Cross and Proctor, *Packaged Pleasures*; Sergio Ospina Romero, *Fonógrafos ambulantes. Música y globalización en las expediciones de la Victor Talking Machine Company por América Latina y el Caribe, 1903–1926* (Buenos Aires: Gourmet Musical, 2023).

74 *The Argos*, 22 November 1919, 5.

‘Responses’ – in which she answered questions from the readers about all kinds of things – from medicine to history to literature to romance to weather to music and more. On 7 September 1918, she answered one about the new fad of jazz. Unlike the uncompromising celebration of cosmopolitanism in the article from nine months ago, this time Nieto de Herrera expressed her reservations unapologetically on moral grounds: ‘The Fox dance in vogue is called “jazz” but it is not really a decent thing, just as the [recent] fad of dancing having one’s head resting on the partner’s forehead.’⁷⁵ A year and a half later, someone writing on behalf of E. Bernard – a famous Russian-French dance instructor visiting Cuba – penned in a long article in the same newspaper: “Jazz”, that embryonic and syncopated product that couples dance by joining their chests together, must be expelled as soon as possible through the last and least honorable of the doors.’⁷⁶ That had been, reportedly, the verdict of the US National Association of Dance Teachers. Bernard and his colleagues’ outrage was directed primarily at the ‘shimmy’, that ‘brother of jazz-band’s music’, ‘a depraved son of the dance’, and ‘nothing less than a Bolshevik descendant of the goddess Terpsichore’. Therefore, as Bernard urged, it was imperative to ‘approve in every community special anti-shimmy and anti-jazz ordinances and to designate an inspector commissioned to chase both blunders’ – a sign that his allusion to communism was not an innocent metaphor.

Nieto de Herrera’s reservations and Bernard’s prejudices epitomize the flipside of the hedonistic modernity heralded by jazz in the Caribbean. But they were also an anticipation of the kind of moral anxieties and racial prejudices that would become common throughout Latin America and the Caribbean in the years to come as the Jazz Age settled in the region.⁷⁷ Furthermore, in more than one way, they are a symptom of the cultural appropriation of Black musics and dances on the part of the entertainment industry and of social sectors defined either by whiteness or whitening aspirations. The national and international popularity of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band at the dawn of the Jazz Age was just one of the first signs of such a trend. As Elijah Wald explains, ‘[m]ost of the earliest bands to whom the word “jazz” (or “jass”) was applied [in the United States] seem to have been white, and although one can easily argue that the jazz craze was just a white discovery of music that had already been played by black musicians and danced to by black dancers for at least a decade, that does not change the fact that the word was instituted as part of that white craze’.⁷⁸ Notwithstanding the breadth of racial identities that participated of the early jazz craze in the

75 ‘El baile fox de moda se llama “Jazz” pero no es muy decente que se diga, lo mismo que la moda de bailar con la cabeza apoyada en las sienes del compañero.’ See ‘Contestaciones a cargo de la señora Carmela Nieto de Herrera’, *El Mundo*, 7 September 1918, 9.

76 ‘Ese producto embrionario y sincopado del “jazz” que se baila juntando sus pechos las parejas, debe ser expulsado con la mayor prontitud posible por la última y menos honorable de las puertas.’ ‘El Nuevo Baile: Shimmy por el Prof. E. Bernard’, *El Mundo*, 14 March 1920, 5.

77 See Jason Borge, *Tropical Riffs: Latin America and the Politics of Jazz* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018); J. de la Luz León, ‘El charleston es una pesadilla satánica. Descoyuntamiento incomprensible sin arte ni ritmo’, *Mundo al día* [Bogotá], c. 1928, 18.

78 Wald, *How the Beatles Destroyed Rock 'n' Roll*, 28.

Caribbean, such a craze was also informed by a whitening framework and by the whitening aspirations of local elites.⁷⁹

Bernard and his associates' call to police dancing practices and to 'purge public dancing . . . of all vulgarity and degradation' – a call fraught with racial overtones – can be read also as yet another anticipation of the kind of interventions that, in the musical realm, bandleaders such as Paul Whiteman would make a few years later. The repercussions of such interventions would certainly reverberate and be felt all over the world during the Jazz Age and beyond.⁸⁰

Early jazz, modernity, and the retreading of tradition

Since the late 1910s, jazz became a pervasive phenomenon on a global scale. Notwithstanding the popular appeal of the various musics and dances associated in one way or another with the 'jazz' label, the widespread dissemination of jazz was contingent upon the political power and visibility of the United States at the time. As Frederick Schenker eloquently puts it, the US empire was a force of domination as well as 'a medium of possibility in the production of multiple social forums and fields', jazz included.⁸¹ Rather than something created exclusively in the United States and then exported to the world, jazz sprouted out of Afrodiasporic cultural networks that extended through various nodes across the Gulf of Mexico and the northern Caribbean. However, its early circulations took place throughout imperial webs dominated by the United States and according to ideas of modernity shaped significantly by US consumer culture.

Many of the musical parameters that would eventually make New Orleans jazz a distinct musical form had been around and in the making for a long time in the Caribbean before the turn of the twentieth century. What was certainly new in the 1910s with the commodification of jazz as a miscellaneous collection of musics and dances was the way in which it was wrapped up in an intricate ethos of modernity, hedonism, white appropriation, and sometimes either elitism or exoticism. Between 1917 and 1920 in the Caribbean, the idea of jazz seems to have emerged as an entanglement of unmistakable foreign elements – including dance steps, repertoires, social behaviours, and even the word 'jazz' itself – with vernacular sensibilities in matters of music and dance that made jazz feel as something already somewhat familiar. As the Jazz Age would unfold in the United States in the next decade, so it would in the Caribbean and elsewhere, sometimes along the same aesthetic and racial coordinates and sometimes on seemingly distinct grounds – yet always intricately related. In the United States and eventually in the Caribbean and elsewhere, the label 'jazz', more than the sound of jazz,

79 See Madrid and Moore, *Danzón*, 75–116; Borge, *Tropical Riffs*, 3–11; Frances R. Aparicio, *Listening to Salsa: Gender, Latin Popular Music, and Puerto Rican Cultures* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1998), 13–33.

80 See Philip Bohlman and Goffredo Plastino, eds., *Jazz Worlds, World Jazz* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016); Atkins, *Jazz Planet*; Julian Ruesga Bono, ed., *Jazz en español: derivas hispanoamericanas* (Xalapa, Mexico: Universidad Veracruzana, 2013); Berenice Corti, *Jazz Argentino: La música 'negra' del país 'blanco'* (Buenos Aires: Gourmet Musical, 2015); Johnson, *Jazz Diaspora*; Borge, *Tropical Riffs*.

81 Schenker, 'Empire of Syncopation', 7; see Frederick Schenker, "'A Circuit Tour of the Globe": "Hiawatha" and the Double-Stake of Imperial Pop', *Journal of the Society for American Music* 13/1 (2019).

was what first stirred dance crazes; musical and unique cultural formations, however, would soon follow suit.

Although many of the written vestiges examined in this article indicate that the ideas about what jazz was – or was supposed to be – were significantly informed by the perspective of society dancing and dance instructors in New York City, the musicality of the ensembles playing ‘the jazz’ in Havana was Caribbean, that is, much more akin to the style of creole bands in New Orleans than of dance society orchestras in New York City. Thus, rather than entailing necessarily a further departure from early jazz in New Orleans, the development of jazz scenes in the Caribbean since 1917 shows, in my view, a revitalization of the Afrodiasporic character of jazz. It might not be much of a surprise, then, to read what the reporter of the party at the Hotel McKinney had to say about the new life of jazz in the Caribbean: ‘Jazz reigned in England and the States for many months. In the former country he is now unhappily dead, to be born again, however, in music loving Trinidad.’⁸²

At the end of the 1910s, modernity and modernism in the Caribbean were defined and shaped by an entanglement of ideas, social practices, cultural parameters, aesthetic projects, material scenarios, local and transnational tendencies, and circulations of multiple kinds. Rather than being dictated by European, North American, or ‘Western’ standards, Caribbean modernity in the early twentieth century took place at the intersection of old, new, newer, repurposed, or wholly unprecedented historical settings, inevitably knotted into a broader scenario of increasingly global modernity and yet fashioned according to local cultural practices, ideas, and parameters. Such historical settings included everyday practices of social distinction, industrial capitalism, consumer culture, political and commercial imperialism, sound reproduction technologies, (neo)colonial and decolonial moves, unremitting processes of musical hybridity, nocturnal entertainment, fashion trends, intense advertisement, the defiance of social norms and expectations about gender, the category of leisure time, and more. Jazz was a protagonist in this scenario, both a by-product and an expression of Caribbean modernity.

Dismantling US American exceptionalism in jazz studies is a difficult endeavour, yet one worth pursuing. Several authors before me have insisted on the Caribbean origins of jazz and a few others have underscored the significance of jazz within the imperial agenda of the United States.⁸³ Yet the idea of jazz as quintessentially ‘American’ persists – with ‘American’ here also implying the symbolic erasure of the rest of the continent.⁸⁴ The reasons for this are more political than intellectual or aesthetic. Jazz has captivated musicians and audiences around the world, but its international reputation has also been contingent upon the imperial standing of the United States. Just as European imperialism set the stage for the ‘universal’ character of classical music over three centuries ago, US imperialism in the

82 *The Argos*, 22 November 1919, 5.

83 For references, see notes 2, 10, 11, and 12. See also Frederick Schenker, ‘Listening for Empire in Transnational Jazz Studies’, in *The Routledge Companion to Jazz Studies*, ed. Nicholas Gebhardt, Nichole Rustin-Paschal, and Tony Whyton (New York: Routledge, 2019); Penny Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows Up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004).

84 Eduardo Herrera, ‘This Is (Not) America(n Music)’, *American Music* 40/4 (2022).

early twentieth century played a key role not only in the globalization of jazz but also in its consolidation as a modern referent of musical respectability; all this, of course, according to the symbolic coordinates of US American exceptionalism. It is not only that the celebration of jazz as US American music has ensued at the expense of obliterating its Caribbean roots, engaging with the African past only selectively for aesthetic or political convenience, and invigorating old fantasies pertaining the manifest destiny of the United States. A canonical narrative of jazz history – spread in a plethora of books, infamous documentaries such as Ken Burns’s *Jazz*, and pedagogical tenets about the ‘right way’ to play it – has also derived in stylistic hierarchies that set US jazz and US musicians as the standard and everything and everybody else as imitations or imitators, in a never-ending game of catching up, regardless of how influential they have actually been for the development of jazz, even in the United States.⁸⁵ By exploring the dawn of the Jazz Age in the Caribbean, this article has been an attempt towards correcting those narratives.

Building once more on Susan Friedman’s ideas, we can posit that modernity and modernism can be found anywhere in the world and at different moments in history. Thus, Caribbean modernity can be described as a unique formation in the sense that it developed out of archipelagic circulations in matters of culture and coloniality, but it also happened in relation to other modernities. Early jazz, as a social and cultural paradigm, was developed, on the one hand, via negotiations, transactions, and circulations of various sorts, and on the other, by virtue of modalities of modern entertainment crafted in the United States – particularly in New York City and through music entertainment businesses on the East Coast – but re-signified in the Caribbean; re-signified as the imperial ventures of these businesses helped shape an unmistakably modern panorama of jazz dancing, jazz tunes, and jazz bands. Despite how linguistic, sonic, and discursive references in the arena of ‘jazz’ were inextricably related to the United States and to US ideals of modernity, jazz in the Caribbean would be rather different from jazz in the United States. And so would be the Jazz Age.

Jazz – or modernity for the same matter – was a product of coloniality and imperialism as much as it was a transcultural phenomenon. The musical unevenness of global jazz in the early twentieth century is only mirrored by the economical and geopolitical asymmetries that informed its transnational expansion. As Friedman so eloquently puts it:

Modernity is divergent, discrepant, fissured . . . Modernity affects different peoples differently, unevenly. Modernity contains overlapping, contesting modernities. No matter its claims of universalism, modernity is never the same, uniform, or whole. It diverges from itself in its very constitution. Not only the result of accelerating ruptures, modernity emerges from ruptures within: its fissures crack open the contradictions of expanding and contracting possibilities of rapid change. Just think of the slaveowner and the slave – they are part of the same modernity but are situated differently within it . . . Modernity might enhance the prospects of elites and retard those

85 Sergio Ospina Romero, ‘El jazz de Estados Unidos y los otros jazz’, *BanRep Cultural* (blog), 6 December 2022, www.banrepultural.org/noticias/el-jazz-de-estados-unidos-y-los-otros-jazz.

whom the society marginalizes. The effects of modernity are uneven. The world split open can produce new freedoms, new slaveries, new lives, new deaths, all at once or in sequence.⁸⁶

Jazz, as an expression of Caribbean modernity, happened at the intersection of Western and non-Western modernisms as the region continued to wrestle with the aftermath of European and North American colonialism, and the African diaspora continued to thrust every social and cultural process. The ‘modern’ character of jazz was construed on the basis of the interaction between old and new forms of imperialism as well as old and new cultural parameters – not to mention local and foreign elements. More often than not, making something new entails a re-making – or renovating – of something old, as when retreading a tire (a practice far more common in Latin America and the Caribbean than in the United States). Modernity is no different. Modernity produces tradition to separate itself from the past, but it is often made out of a retreading of tradition. As I have discussed elsewhere, modernity in Latin America and the Caribbean has not been a straightforward tale of superseding traditional ways, but an ongoing collision of values, cultural practices, and temporalities. It has been more a matter of negotiation *between* and refashioning *of* old and new paradigms. Artefacts and practices become ‘traditional’ only as new standards and performances of modernity gain cultural legitimacy.⁸⁷

I said before that jazz felt somewhat familiar in the Caribbean, but the same could be said maybe about modernity and music at large. I would like to imagine a timeless voice in the archipelago uttering something along the lines of ‘we’ve been through this before, only that now they call it jazz’. The Caribbean has been a scenario of circulations for a long time. These circulations shaped the cultural contours of Caribbean modernity, but their effects reverberated globally. The planetary dimensions of jazz set before us a puzzling scenery of sounds, projects, ideologies, and characters that we are just beginning to disentangle.

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86 Friedman, *Planetary Modernisms*, 172–3.

87 Ospina Romero, ‘Ghosts in the Machine’, 35; see Friedman, *Planetary Modernisms*, 156; Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1996); Madrid, ‘Renovation, Rupture, and Restoration’.

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