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## Parker's mood.

# Emotional atmospheres and musical expressiveness in jazz

### Abstract

*This paper offers an exploratory theoretical attempt to apply the notion of musical atmosphere to the aesthetic experience of jazz as audio-tactile improvisatory music. This helps understand jazz-specific expressiveness, on the one hand, avoiding the reductionism of Levinson's recent proposal and, on the other hand, developing his theory of the musical persona.*

### Keywords

*Musical expressiveness, Aesthetics of atmospheres, Jazz aesthetics.*

## 1. Introduction

The task of this paper looks like an impossible mission. In order to effectively accomplish it, it would be necessary, firstly, to answer the general question of how music can express emotions, secondly, to expand the theoretical field by applying the notion of atmosphere to the musical experience, and, finally, to define, at least with a good approximation, what kind of music jazz music is. Only at this point would it be possible to properly discuss the specific way the notions of mood (or *Stimmung*) and atmosphere may help understand “jazz-specific” expressiveness.

Those three topics – musical expressiveness, aesthetic and musical atmosphere, and jazz definition – have engaged and continue to

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engage the intellectual energy of many musicologists, psychologists, sociologists, and philosophers. I will only briefly introduce these topics, focusing on how they can be productively combined. Through them I will explore how the idea of emotional atmosphere can be applied to the specific expressiveness of jazz.

My point will be that musical expressiveness is influenced by the specific expressive atmosphere of the performing situation and of the social setting, thereby in turn exerting influence on them. Being jazz an audiotactile music largely based on improvisation, performers' moods contribute to shape the artistic expressiveness of music that, on its part, is *transparent* to the feelings performers have while making music. This condition fosters intense affective interactions through music among performers as well as between performers and listeners.

Finally, although rejecting Levinson's view of jazz as not able to expressing negative emotions, I will offer a suggestion for explaining jazz's tendency to express positive emotions and moods and to generate relaxed, cheerful and energetic atmospheres. Moreover, I will argue that one can exploit a theoretical suggestion implicit in Levinson's theory in order to account for the specificity of jazz expressiveness.

## 2. *The question of musical expressiveness*

In the last few decades in philosophy and psychology a lot of ink has been spilled over the relation between music and emotions. From the perspective of philosophy, the question can be put in following terms: there is a broad agreement on the emotional power of music. Various studies have been made that explain how certain music features are responsible for music's power to express emotional states and to emotionally involve listeners. For example, the difference between the listener's expectation of a musical event and their satisfaction or frustration with the actual event may trigger emotions; the exposure to musical rhythm hooks listeners to sound pulse (this phenomenon is called "entrainment"); moreover, music may be a source of emotional contagion, similarly to how weather can induce moods (see Bertinetto 2017b).

Last, but not least, there are linguistic clues about the close relationship between music and the emotional life. The word *Stimmung* (which is the German translation for "mood"), has an interesting musical connotation. *Stimmen* is the word used for "tuning" instruments

and means also “to fit”. A good mood, a good *Stimmung*, is the affective state of someone who is well tuned, or attuned, or in harmony, with a situation. Conversely an instrument may be *verstimmt* (“out of key” or “untuned”) and, analogously, that somebody is *verstimmt* means that they are in a bad mood. Two or more persons *uebereinstimmen* when they agree with each other, like musicians who interact felicitously. Music is thus described in terms also used for referring to emotional life: this, as ancient Greeks thought (see Barker 2005), seems to suggest a privileged link between music and emotional life.

However, although it seems plausible, indeed quite obvious, to link music to emotional life and to describe music in expressive terms, justifying the attribution of expressive predicates to music, by explaining the causes or the reasons of musical expressiveness, is a completely different matter. The reasons for this difficulty in explaining musical expressiveness are mainly four<sup>2</sup>.

1) In the first place, music is not a sentient being; therefore, differently from human beings and animals, it cannot feel the emotions and the moods we say it expresses.

2) This being so, it is not easy to explain how music can refer to emotions. A painting can *depict* and a poem can *describe* emotions: but how can music be related to them? Indeed, many deny that instrumental music is a representational art and, for this reason, assign to it the power of expressing, suggesting or arousing *moods* rather than emotions properly so-called, by means of generating corresponding affective feelings. As Carroll wrote, while “emotions are directed toward particular objects or have intentionality, moods do not” (Carroll 2003: 526). Accordingly, if music is not representational, it cannot refer to the emotions’ intentional objects, but may express and elicit moods, that, differently from emotions, “are objectless and global”, in that they “pervade the area within the perimeter of perception, rather than carving out or shaping its contour, as an emotion does” (Carroll 2003: 528). Moreover, moods, or *Stimmungen*, being less intense than emotions, last longer and are less evanescent. Nonetheless, emotions and moods are not totally separate phenomena<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> I survey the literature on the topic in Bertinetto 2017a.

<sup>3</sup> Moods, in fact, lower the threshold of arousal of certain emotions, and emotions also occur in a mood. If your mood is already agitated, for example, you will easily get angry at something (see Seibert 2016: 132).

3) Once we have distinguished between emotions and moods, however, the question of attributing expressive predicates to music is still obscure. How may we explain the sense in which we listen to music as expressive? One of the most practiced ways to solve this problem since the 18<sup>th</sup> century – particularly in the field of music criticism, but also in philosophy – has been to attribute the expression of emotions and/or moods to composers and performers. However, *expressivism* (as this position has been called) is the target of objections concerning the difference between emotions and moods expressed in the music that is the object of the listener's attention, and the action of expressing emotions on the part of subjects such as composers or performers. Accordingly, musical expressiveness and the real expression of emotions are different phenomena.

4) A traditional answer to the problem we are concerned with has been the view known as *dispositionalism* or *arousalism*. Accordingly, musical expressiveness depends on the emotions and moods music elicits in the listeners. In other words, music is sad if it makes listeners sad. However, although few deny that music arouses emotions or affects in listeners, this is not, *per se*, connected to the expressiveness of music. Music can move or otherwise elicit and arouse emotions and moods without expressing them, and the affective states it elicits in listeners may not be the same as the ones it is heard as expressive of (see Kivy 2002).

The theories philosophers developed in order to overcome these problems are manifold.

a) Some simply deny that music is literally expressive, suggesting that musical expressiveness is indeed only metaphorical.

b) Others claim that music is really expressive, while highlighting the difference between real expression and musical expressiveness. Thus musical expressiveness, they argue, depends on music's shape (or contour, or appearance) being perceptively similar to the shape of human beings' voice and/or behavior under the effect of emotions (this view is known as the *contour theory*).

c) Others, in different ways, often by finding support in research in the fields of psychology and cognitive science, defend a link between music's perceptive and expressive qualities and its disposition to affectively move listeners, and that what listeners feel while – and by

virtue of – listening to music, contributes to acknowledging those expressive qualities<sup>4</sup>.

d) Moreover, the supporters of the so-called *person theory* argue that in attributing expressive qualities to music we imaginatively recognize a “musical person” as expresser of the affective states music is heard to be expressive of.

The *person theory* maintains that, just as the emotional response of an individual to the emotional expression of another person contributes not only to recognizing, but also to generating, the emotion or the mood they express, listeners’ emotional reactions contribute not only to acknowledging music’s expressive properties, but also to shaping them. So, I think, the *person theory* responds to the need to account for the link between musical expressiveness and the ordinary expression of emotions. While admitting (1) that the person imagined (albeit unconsciously) as musical expresser is highly indeterminate, or rather determined only by the emotions or moods music is heard to be expressive of, and (2) that expressiveness cannot be reduced to a simply subjective or psychological phenomenon, since the acknowledgment of its public dimension is required (at least in order to discuss it), this theory seems able to account for the difference between the cold descriptive recognition of expressive (more or less conventional) gestures or shapes and the participatory listening to music as really expressive.

Given this article’s specific task, I will no longer dwell on the difficulties, and on the advantages, of this proposal (see Bertinetto 2016a and 2017a: 188-203). I will limit myself to considering that one of its most important supporters, Jerrold Levinson, has recently tried to offer an explanation of jazz specific expressiveness (Levinson 2015). His idea is that, due to its stylistic features, jazz is capable of expressing only a limited range of emotions: positive emotions mostly. Later on (§ 5), I will discuss my doubts regarding this thesis and, above all, I will maintain that Levinson seems not to grasp an important “affordance” of his own *person theory* for the understanding of jazz-specific expressiveness.

But first I want to address the question of musical atmospheres. Analytic theories of musical expressiveness generally neglect the at-

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<sup>4</sup> In particular, moods aroused by music should be understood as clusters of feelings often intentionally directed to music and relevant to aesthetic appreciation (Goffin 2014).

mospheric dimension of music. Focusing on jazz, I will try to partially remedy this omission. My proposal is that musical expressiveness is a component, and a very important one, of the character of a musical atmosphere. But what are musical atmospheres?

### 3. *Musical atmospheres*

Atmospheres are mostly conceived of as affective prompts that tend to bring us into an affective state. They are “spatialised feelings: that is to say, they are the specific emotional quality of a given ‘lived space’” (Griffero 2014: 36). As such, they are not merely subjective states, but subjective-objective qualities, generated in and by a specific lived situation perceptively and sensibly experienced. In other words, they are *resonances* of the felt surrounding space in the felt-body. “Perceiving an atmosphere, therefore, means grasping a feeling in the surrounding space” (Griffero 2014: 12).

Ontologically, atmospheres are defined as *quasi-things* that are not static, but dynamic. They are vague, in that their affective dimension escapes a precise conceptual grasping, and they possess a kind of thick and viscous consistency, so that their dynamism can be expressed in terms of flow or flux (rather than in terms of movement: Riedel 2015).

Music contributes to shaping the atmosphere of an environment or of a situation. Music fills the acoustic space of the surrounding environment in different ways – which depend on volume, localization of its source, specific qualities like rhythm, textures, timbre, instrumentations, ambient reverberation and performance setting. Thus, interacting with the natural, cultural and social context in which it is performed, played back or broadcast, music helps generate specific atmospheres.

Musical atmospheres, I contend, are strongly related to music expressiveness, although they are not reducible to music’s power of possessing and displaying expressive qualities. Being ontologically tied to the situation in which they are perceived, musical atmospheres are a result of the resonance of music within and through the surrounding environment. Since the “quasi-existential” involvement of the self in the musical feeling seems to be essential for the experience of music (see Seibert 2016: 233), the modalities of that resonance in turn strongly depend upon specific listening modalities: individual or col-

lective, intentional or unintentional, attentive or inattentive, contemplative or participatory, motionless or in motion, etc.

As for the conceptual and phenomenological distinction between musical atmospherity and musical expressiveness, it may be suggested that it depends, partly, on the music itself, meaning that some music is (more) atmospheric and some music is (more) expressive. Some musical qualities – for instance: texture, volume, sound mass – seem indeed to be more atmospheric in character, while others – paradigmatically melody and harmony – could be described as more typically expressive parameters, rhythm and timbres being a kind of *trait d'union* between them. So, one may be tempted to claim that music based on the mentioned “atmospheric” qualities is *atmospheric music* – which typically results in the production of “quasi-concrete” *soundscapes* – and, as such, is “ontologically” distinguished from *expressive music*, which, analogously, would be music built above all on “expressive” parameters like melody and harmony. Following this line of thought, while conceding that the distinction proposed is rather gradual, one may further claim that *atmospheric music* is rather “objective”, in that it is music that, by means of generating a specific atmospheric<sup>5</sup>, surrounds, overwhelms, envelops, infects, relaxes, excites listeners and, in general, makes listeners resonate with it. In fact, music with these qualities, ordinarily imbued with electronically generated sounds and noises, is also a specific musical genre: atmospheric music or ambient music. On the other hand, one may conceive of *expressive music* as more “subjective”, in the sense that it manifests expressions of emotions with which we interact in listening, emotionally responding to music in a way similar to how we react to people’s gestures.

However, despite being heuristically useful, this distinction between atmospheric and expressive music may be too rigid, if it does not account for the contribution of the context to the atmospheric and expressive dimension of music. The expressive and the atmospheric characters of music depend to a large extent on the pragmatic condition of the musical experience in terms of listening context, as well as of the use we make of music (see Bertinetto 2017b). Moreover, the expressive and the atmospheric characters of the musical experience interact reciprocally. Environmental atmospheres constrain,

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<sup>5</sup> The literature about ambient music and soundscapes is huge and I cannot survey it here.

and at the same time afford, a certain musical expressiveness and, in turn, expressive music may be used for generating a particular atmosphere (of relaxation, terror, suspense, etc.) as it is the case with movie soundtracks, but also in many everyday uses of music<sup>6</sup>.

More specifically, moods aroused in listeners by music as well as the emotional states music is heard to be expressive of are components of the musical and, generally, of the affective atmosphere resounding in an environment. Hence, although the affective relation with musical expressiveness may be explained in terms of interaction with an imagined musical *persona* as expresser of the musical moods, musical expressiveness is not reducible to felt subjective states. So my point is this: the imaginative emotional interaction with a musical *persona* may become part of a musical atmosphere, in the same way an emotional interaction between real persons may become a constituent of an atmosphere, as spatialized feeling affectively perceived<sup>7</sup>.

In a live performance situation, musical environmental resonance may also interact with the sound sources, inasmuch as the atmosphere generated by music may affectively feedback to the performers, who feel the affective atmosphere of the performing situation. Therefore, the expressiveness of the music performed may be influenced by performers' *real* moods that resonate with the surrounding environment and can in turn contribute to shaping the general emotional atmosphere of the performing situation. Hence, not only listeners who perceive the musical atmosphere are affectively and corporeally involved in the affective situation generated by music (in interaction with the surrounding environment); performers too are involved in that way, and this involvement contributes to the affective and expressive qualities of the music played. In this sense, I think that *expressivism* had a point after all.

This seems to explain, at least partly, not only the slight differences between performances of the same musical piece, but also the different atmospheric qualities of different musical genres and styles, as well as the relative aptness of certain settings for specific kinds of music. The physical space of the performance and the social situation that it favors are responsible for the specific atmosphere that has an effect on musical production and listening. Indeed, a concert hall

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<sup>6</sup> Consider for example the contribution of the music listened to by headphones for modulating the atmosphere of a train journey.

<sup>7</sup> For the inter-subjective constitution of atmosphere see Julmi 2017.



usually fits very well with symphonic music; the hall of a conservatory is generally perfect for chamber music; a salon works well for a piano concert, while Gregorian chant requires the spaces of a cathedral; a stadium is a space suitable for rock, and a club is the perfect setting for jazz, and even if a town square or a theater can work for a jazz festival, it is not the same (quasi-)thing. This depends, I venture, from the interaction among the atmospheric qualities of a specific setting and the characteristic stylistic features of a musical practice, although the final expressive, affective and atmospheric results will also obviously depend on the specificities of the music played, of the performers involved, of the listeners, and of the social and spatio-temporal conditions of the performance.

The time has come to apply the reflections made so far to jazz. But still another preliminary question should be answered. And the question is what is jazz?

#### 4. *What is jazz?*

Attempts to answer this question appeal to elements of history and sociology, to the tradition of the artistic practice, its main representatives and its institutions, and to specific musical qualities as well as aesthetic properties (see Feige 2014; Béthune 2008). Yet, against recent attempts to offer a classificatory definition of jazz (see Brown, Goldblatt, Gracyk 2018), Hagberg is right in saying that jazz “resists the straitjacket of definitional essence; instead it displays a number of definitionally significant features, but not in such a categorically clear way that any one emerges as necessary and sufficient” (2002: 193). We can pick up some typical features of jazz, but with the caveat that neither singularly nor jointly they provide an essential definition of jazz. The most important features, generally acknowledged as jazz-typical, are the following:

- 1) work-indeterminacy: differently from compositions of the Western classical music, the nature of jazz pieces is, generally, minimally defined, fluid and open.
- 2) Swing: a propulsive rhythmic “feel” generated by the musical interaction between the performers and consisting in a kind of coexistence of tension and relaxation.
- 3) improvisation: the ability to invent music while, and by means of, performing.

- 4) Typical instrumentation (drums and saxophone being paradigmatic of jazz).
- 5) The interaction between performers.
- 6) Certain kinds of musical forms typical of the blues tradition (calls and response; end-repeating, etc.).
- 7) Certain kinds of materials like melodic off-notes, harmonic altered chords, spiky rhythmic displacements, distorted sonorities.

These features are not always present in jazz. There can be jazz without swing and without improvisation, there is jazz made with non-typical jazz instrumentation, there are determined jazz works, there is jazz without interactions between musicians in real time (obviously enough in the case of solo performance). So the aforementioned features may be at most considered as symptoms of jazz<sup>8</sup>.

Yet, one aspect seems to be not negotiable. Jazz is tightly linked to bodily motion and dance. In this regard, Brown, Goldblatt and Gracyk are right in stating that “[a]ny account of jazz that isolates sounds from bodies is seriously incomplete” (2018: 11).

That being the case, then, the most reliable musicological theory of jazz has been elaborated in Italy by ethnomusicologist Vincenzo Caporaletti. In a nutshell, Caporaletti (2005; 2014) claims that jazz is a kind of *audiotactile* music, i.e., music in which the performance is not mediated visually, by the score, but, rather, by musicians’ performing bodies, their movements, their interactions, their affectivity and their personal and physical relation with their musical instruments. Swing and groove are musical phenomena related with this non-visual, but physical, mediality of oral music and, consequently, with the primacy of the performance on the work.

However, unlike audiotactile music of an exclusive oral kind, jazz was made possible as a specific field of musical practices by the technology of audio sound recording and reproduction. Recordings allowed an imitative way of learning, the evolution of personal styles and a wide and fast diffusion of musical results. Therefore, far from hindering improvisatory performance, recordings made its development possible in the direction of what Caporaletti happily called “neo-auratic coding”. If the recording has led, as Walter Benjamin suggests (Benjamin 2008), to the technical repeatability and the disappearance of the *aura* emanating from the uniqueness of the art-

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<sup>8</sup> I use this term in the same sense in which he speaks of “symptoms of the aesthetic” (see Goodman 1976).

work, instead in the context of improvisational practices, by means of crystalizing *unique* improvised performances, otherwise unrepeatable, it fostered the evolution of highly defined expressive personal styles – unlike what happens in exclusively oral musical traditions based on the primacy of the community and of ritual processes.

Hence, jazz may be understood as a kind of audiotactile music that, although highly prizing the communitarian sense of collective practices and traditions, instead of suppressing artistic inventiveness, managed to combine improvisation – in other musical practices limited to repetition and variation of patterns – and creative personal artistic self-expression.

##### 5. *In the mood for jazz. Jazz expressiveness and emotional atmospheres*

As I wrote above (§ 2), Jerrold Levinson recently defended the idea that some emotions “are resistant to expression in the jazz idiom” (Levinson 2015: 136) and that jazz expressiveness is limited to positive emotions: high energy positive emotions and moods, like joy, exuberance, love, and lust. Although there are some counterexamples, Levinson argues that this is not enough to deny that the jazz repertoire is typically connected to a positive expressiveness and not inclined to negative emotions and moods, especially the strong or high energy ones (as he calls them) like rage, fear, despair, grief and anger. Hence, jazz expressing low energy negative emotions or moods (pain, sorrow, anxiety) or, still worst, the already mentioned high energy negative ones will “very likely” not “sound like jazz” (Levinson 2015: 137-8). Therefore, Levinson claims that the expressive range of classical music is wider than the one of jazz; jazz is expressively limited, but this limitation, he argues, is not an aesthetic fault: rather, it defines jazz specific aesthetic style. And allegedly happily so: indeed, he concludes, the specific expressiveness of each musical genre safeguards the “expressive diversity of music as a whole” (Levinson 2015: 142).

Levinson’s view of jazz expressiveness is not convincing. The reason of this is, firstly, that in order to defend his thesis he is forced to define in too-rigid terms what jazz is and is not. In this way, he takes some performances and albums undoubtedly considered as jazz (for instance Miles Davis’ *Bitches brew* and Coltrane’s *Transition*) as lying on the border between jazz and non-jazz, which is quite odd.

Secondly, Levinson seems to think that emotions and moods expressed by music are ready awaiting a musical style apt to express them adequately. But this is a misconception of musical emotions and expressiveness. Music rather shapes emotional expressiveness and does not simply forge the exterior form of already existing emotional states. Hence, different musical styles and practices shape emotions and moods differently, thereby producing different ways of artistic articulations of the emotional life. The intense and at the same time relaxed feeling transmitted by jazz is not only the mark of a specific way to express a wide range of ready-made emotions, but also the manifestation of a specific way to affectively perceive and feel music, thereby generating *musical emotions*.

However, there is a way to be more charitable about Levinson's view, after all. Levinson's point may be justified, if understood as meaning that, even when jazz music expresses a melancholic or sad emotion, there is typically a kind of evolution that positively resolves the sadness or the melancholy of the musical situation; and when rage or anger is expressed, there is often a development toward moods that manifest proudness or self-consciousness. As if the mere fact of being able to express musically the negative mood to a listener, establishing the condition for communication, if not completely re-establishing a positive general atmosphere, offers a kind of redemption of the negative mood, a positive way out of the difficulties and injustices of existence. In the majority of the best jazz performances of a sad or melancholic or angry stripe, no self-commiseration is expressed, but rather the attempt or the effort of finding a solution, escaping the difficult situation and communicating with others. One may further venture that this influence of the mere fact of musically expressing a mood on the quality of the mood expressed may depend on improvisation, which often implies quickly solving problems that emerge out of the musical performance and searching for collaborative interactions, without basking in the difficulty of the moment, perhaps transforming the normativity of the musical context (see Bertinetto 2016c). As critical cultural jazz studies suggest (see Heble 2000; Fischlin, Heble 2004; Béthune 2008), jazz's commitment to improvisation and experimentation as creative practice may in turn originate from the precariousness of the historical existential condition of the musicians, who had to find ways of escaping hard situations, creatively producing, if provisionally, a kind of sense for their lives, and communicating it. So, after all, this could be a way to explain jazz's tendency to a positive expressiveness,

while avoiding Levinson's rigid definitional verdict according to which music expressing negative emotions cannot be considered as jazz.

Yet, thirdly, if this hypothesis is plausible, then, as I have previously mentioned, it is clear that Levinson's account of jazz expressiveness does not exploit an important theoretical possibility offered by his own *person theory* of musical expressiveness.

The point is that jazz, as audiotactile music based on the creativity of highly defined personal styles, is closely connected to the performance situation, the musicians' bodies, their physical interaction with their instruments<sup>9</sup> and their reciprocal interactions with fellow performers. This implies a very close link between musical expressiveness and what we can call the development of the musician's expressive personality in the very moment of the performance (as well as in the course of an artistic career). In a way, the music performed in jazz is so affectively and corporeally tied to performers that it is right to say that musical expressiveness is *transparent* to performers' moods while making music, at least inasmuch as those moods are articulated by means of expressing them musically<sup>10</sup>.

This is the case even when musicians, as it usually happens in standard jazz, are interpreting, and responding to, the expressive and atmospheric affordances provided by a certain tune. The expressive and atmospheric character of the tune is a key component of the actual quality of the situation in which the musical performance takes place and to which the musicians' musical affective expression participates.

In this sense, while listening to music and recognizing its expressiveness can be generally conceived of as an imaginative relation with a musical *persona*, listening to audiotactile improvised music involves

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<sup>9</sup> See Cochrane, according to whom "the physical act of performance must contribute to the emotional state felt by the performer. Were the instrument not to a degree resistant to the intentions of the musician, their emotional state would be different. As such, these pleasures are not incidental to the act of expression. If the performer is engaging in a Collingwoodian act of creative self-expression [...] the physical interaction with the instrument will also shape that mental state expressed by the performer in the musical event. In these circumstances, then, we should recognize that the instrument is not merely a means to the end of realizing some pre-existing expressive sentiment, but a vital part of shaping expressive content from the beginning" (2013: 77).

<sup>10</sup> Seibert (2016: 249-59) interestingly discusses the impact of the musicians' feelings upon the expressiveness of the music they make. See Bertinetto 2016a, 2016b.

a kind of interactive relation with performers' expressive life and, especially, with the moods embodied and manifested in the music they invent while performing. Listeners of a live jazz performance are involved in a kind of personal relationship with the musicians, since the music they play is the result of a spontaneous invention and interaction and a manifestation of their artistic personality. Therefore, here there is no need to imagine a musical person: the performers are the *personae* expressing themselves in the music they are making here and now.

As I have argued elsewhere (Bertinetto 2016a, 2016b), the *person theory* offers an explanation for the expressiveness of music not improvised here and now (as it probably always was in the origins of music: see Ferand 1938). Hence, so conceived, the imagined *musical persona* turns out to be a kind of *ersatz* of improvisers expressing themselves in and through their music, interacting with each other and with the performing situation. In other words, when musicians do not limit themselves to conveying music invented by others, the musical *persona* is here and now, in front of the listeners and directly perceived by them (or through the mediation of a recording).

I do not defend the odd theory that improvised music is a *creatio ex nihilo*. On the contrary, it is based on aesthetic and performative traditions, on stylistic formulas, and on a long instrumental training. Yet, all this does not contradict the idea that the moment of performance constitutes the expressive articulation of artistic personalities. On the contrary, it supports it.

One could argue that, if this is the case, it also applies to Western classical not improvised music. In a certain sense, this view is right. Even interpreters of classical music articulate expressive personalities in their performances. This, I think, scores a point in favor of (performative) *expressivism*. However, interpreters of this kind of compositions are bound by the visual medium of the written score and by the norm of obedience to the musical work. Instead, the peculiarity of the jazz practice is that the articulation of a personal creative expressiveness is linked not so much to the visual medium of the score (which is of course an important tool also in this practice, but lacks the prescriptive function of the score of a classical musical work), but to the audiotactile body medium. This also entails a more intense and immediate affective involvement of the listener who participates, thanks to and through the music, to the performers' articulation of their artistic mood.

This intense affective and interactive relationship between performers and listeners, in and through the music generated in an audiotactile way in a specific situation, along with the personal stylistic features elaborated by musicians, is, I suggest, the key element of the specificity of jazz expressiveness and of the emotional atmospheres jazz generates.

This point needs, however, some clarification. It may seem that, in my account, almost exclusively the simple affective interaction between musicians and listeners is important for explaining jazz expressiveness, while jazz atmospheric experience is of secondary relevance. But this is not so. Riedel (2015: 103) observes that atmospheres have, in general, a haptic quality. The experience of an atmosphere is multi-sensorial, but, most importantly, involves the felt body, shaping its affectivity. Hence, audiotactile music seems to be particularly and directly apt to participate at the specific ultra-subjective atmospheric quality of a situation. It seems directly involved in the affective generation and modulation of an ultra-subjectively felt atmosphere. It is sensitive and receptive music (at least potentially) able to grasp, and to creatively and expressively exploit, the productive affordances of the affective atmosphere that resonates in an environment.

Jazz music expresses affectively the musicians' (artistic) moods sensibly impacting on the listeners' moods. A hint of jazz musicians' emotional involvement in the music they produce, and of its relevance for the specific atmosphere of jazz as specific spatialized feeling objectively perceived, is found in the titles of some famous jazz standards (which are themselves often the result of successful improvisations): Yusuf Latef's *Jazz mood*, Duke Ellington's *Mood indigo*, *A sentimental mood*, and *I am in the mood for love*, Thelonious Monk's *Monk's mood*, Charlie Parker's and Dizzy Gillespie's *Dizzy atmosphere* and, as displayed in my article's title, Bird's *Parker's mood*. Moods' expression is often conveyed in the form of musical conversations, dialogues or monologues, as often stated by musicians themselves (see Berliner 1994) and as nicely explained by Kraut (2005) as one of the most relevant contributions of jazz to aesthetics.

Generally speaking, music is a powerful means of communication and communicability is probably the anthropological origin of music (see Wallin, Merker, Brown 2000; Malloch, Trevarthen 2009; Miell, MacDonald, Hargreaves 2005; Koelsch 2014). Whether we produce music together, or listen to music, we articulate and coordinate

communicative actions and we build human relationships (see Small 1998). In improvised jazz music, characterized by swing and groove, the feeling of participating in shaping a form of commonality, coordinating with the musical flow and getting involved in the atmosphere of the situation, is a big part of the aesthetic experience of music. All this explains why a jazz café is the environment that best fits with the aesthetic requirements of jazz listening. It makes possible a kind of intimate relation between musicians and audience and favors audience's performative impact on the course of the performance and on its expressive and atmospheric character.

However, one may object that this account of musical-atmospheric dimension of jazz expressiveness exaggerates the relevance of the live experience of this music, neglecting the fact that, as it happens with all kind of music, nowadays the most common way to experience jazz is by means of playback of recordings. And by listening to recordings, so the objection may go forward, music is detached from the spatio-temporal conditions and situations of its production, as well as from the instruments that produced it, and, more importantly, from the performers and their live-bodies: listeners are not in direct touch with musicians. So how can one argue in this case that the direct affective contact with the performers' mood is an essential component of the expressiveness of the music and of the dizzy or sentimental atmosphere of a jazz performance?

My answer is that recordings, as distinct from scores, still transmit at least a part of the audiotactile qualities of this music, and this is the reason why, as previously mentioned, recordings provide a relevant contribution to the jazz tradition (see Cook 2013). And this happens also in the case of music originally produced not in a live setting but in a studio. Through the mediation of recordings, the audiotactile mediality of jazz is transmitted and perceived. Hence, listeners may feel themselves in touch with the performers, through the expressive shapes of the music they hear, although the performers are not physically present.

This feeling may occur, to different degrees, with all kind of music; but it is more vivid and intense in the case of audiotactile music, where the music, which is creatively generated by the felt body of the musicians in interaction with a performing situation, embodies and transmits the affective feelings of their producers (see Iyer 2016).

Moreover, while listening to musical recordings, listeners' moods, which are shaped also by virtue of the heard music, cannot have an



impact on the musical improvisational performance, I venture that they can still color, as it were, its perception (as it happens with other musical genres), consequently contributing to modulating the felt atmosphere produced by the interaction between the music and the environment in which it resonates.

## 6. Conclusion

I am aware that what I have suggested in this paper would deserve to be explored further, in a more detailed and extensive manner. However, I am convinced that the idea of applying the notion of atmosphere to jazz, as a special kind of audiotactile music, as well as the thesis that there is a significant connection between musical expressiveness and the improvisers' moods are plausible. I therefore hope that other studies will develop these ideas by investigating the relationship between atmospheres, moods and musical expressiveness in reference to musical genres within or outside the jazz tradition.

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