

“Come on in North Side, you’re just in time”: Musical-Verbal Performance and the Negotiation of Ethnically Segregated Social Space*

By *T. M. Scruggs*

All about laughter over pain. . . .
A quartet. This singular tenor’s rampages.
Chicago pathfinder strutting on broken glass
and bricks. So much live talk and the advice
of curtains. Pulled over opportunities.
Each a night / a leap year from evolutions
in his speech.

—Sterling Plumpp

Every Monday night in the 1970s and well into the 1980s jazz tenor saxophonist Von Freeman led his quartet, and a later open jam session, at the Enterprise Lounge on Chicago’s African American South Side. Von, at the time in his fifties and early sixties, had matured his style of straight ahead, post-bebop jazz.¹ His place within the jazz scene in Chicago was unparalleled during this period, but it was a reputation that remained localized. As is the case with many community-based jazz musicians, his current hard-won stature only gradually developed in the United States outside of his South Side following—to some extent stemming from an appreciation of his talents in Europe and Japan. This is a distressingly familiar story within jazz, exacerbated in Von’s case by his remaining in Chicago. A move to New York has historically been a necessary step for a jazz musician who aspires to establish a professional career. Von’s oft-stated claim in the 1970s and ’80s, “If I’d had gone to New York I’d be famous by now,” rings true given the recognition he has belatedly received in the last decade. Von’s choice to remain in his hometown meant that his international-caliber musicianship was available to the local jazz community in a manner unlike that of visiting outside performers, such as the high-profile New York-based musicians that regularly played at the legendary Jazz Showcase on the near North Side.

Here I argue that Von’s contribution to the musical community, the African American community at large, and the metropolitan community as a whole, flowed from the unique place of his performances within the musical and social matrix of racially divided Chicago. I address several important elements in this performance-generated experience. These

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revolve around language, music, their interrelationship, and Von's use of both to mediate the ethnically charged social space of the Enterprise Lounge, which itself reflects the greater social space of the city of Chicago. An inquiry into these musical occasions demonstrates (again) that it can be perilous to attempt to divorce musical analysis from its performative and social context. Finally, I present how a central trope of Von's performance is that of a creative continuance of tradition embodied in musical performance.

Music and Social Space

The historically informed social geography of these performances is especially indispensable to understanding their significance. As Philip Bohlman observed on the situation of music, place, and time, "mapping music on the landscape gives the latter a temporal quality while returning a spatial quality to the former" (2001:650).² The sonic environment of a Monday evening in this one part of the city represented a singular spatial and temporal circumstance. The music at the Enterprise could be found nowhere else in the city, neither from live performance nor from published recordings (a point discussed further below).³ Chicago's ethnically divided demographics underlay Von Freeman's musical and verbal performances, so that the location, while always an important part of any musical performance, in this instance was essential to the dynamics of the event itself. These musical occasions created social dynamics distinctive, unfortunately, of the more common social relations that held sway throughout most of the city.

The concept of place can involve and intertwine both geographic and social meanings. In racialized North America, "knowing one's place" connotes socioeconomic aspects of life, such as the constraints on African Americans reflected in employment opportunities and expected forms of social manners toward the white community and power structure. As in other major cities, the "place" of anyone of African descent still maps geographically onto amazingly distinct boundaries for place of residence in Chicago. In 1970s and early 1980s Chicago these boundaries were even more strict, and the Monday evenings with Von Freeman's quartet and the subsequent jam session at the Enterprise Lounge stood out as one of the very few instances where African and European Americans participated together in shared entertainment.⁴ This era encompassed the last years of the reign of Richard J. Daley (not to be confused with his son, Richard M., the current mayor), those of the two Democratic Party Machine mayors that immediately succeeded him, and the beginnings of change with the election of Harold Washington, the city's first black and—just as importantly—first politically progressive and reform-oriented mayor. In the earlier Daley (the elder) Machine Chicago, the nearly all-white police force bla-

tantly enforced an unwritten policy of apartheid. Blacks were allowed to circulate in white neighborhoods as they commuted to some kind of employment (equivalent to holding a South Africa apartheid era work pass), but after work hours African Americans were routinely harassed.⁵ This enforcement of racial division worked on both sides of the city: I can personally attest to how the overwhelmingly white police force patrolling the South Side targeted whites found in the black community. This tactic stemmed both from the more legitimate reason of suspecting drug purchases as well as from a general enforcement of racial separation. As a European American musician in all-black (Haitian-led) bands that played weekend nights in South Side clubs during this same period, I soon learned to protectively place myself behind fellow band members when outside on break along a major street.

The Performative Social Space

The Enterprise Lounge on 75th Street, for all its multiracial exceptionality, had its own demographic divisions on Monday evenings, and indeed an important aspect of these performances was the geography of ethnically-informed social space within the club. Those in attendance were divided between those who came primarily to hear the music, and those who came to experience the music but were also meeting with friends and carrying on conversations. This musically-determined division mapped substantially onto ethnic composition. Often the majority of the first group were whites who, necessarily, had traveled out of their community to the club; at other times, I found myself sitting at the only white-occupied table in the club. However, the second group was exclusively black, many living close enough to walk to the club. In the club as a whole, the ratio of men to women was two to one or better, and women tended to frequent the sit-down half of the audience.

This split in the audience fit the bipartite physical layout of the club. The Enterprise was once a storefront. A low stage ran along the windows which were covered with heavy curtains. The need to cover the windows nicely provided the musicians with drapery for a backdrop. The rest of the area was a large square, divided down the middle with a long bar that formed a "T" with the stage. This center bar naturally separated the patrons into two sections. The entry door was off to one side at the end of the windows and the stage—to the right from the musicians' point of view (stage right). There was never a cover charge at the club and patrons entered and positioned themselves at their own will. The half of the club where the door was located consisted of a series of formica tables built out from the wall surrounded with chairs. Since the patrons who chose to sit in this part of the club were principally motivated to come for the music, I am labeling this half of the room the "fans" side, for ease of reference. On

the other side of the club (stage left), another bar, parallel to the center one, had been built into the far wall. There were a few small tables in this half, but most seats were stools placed along one of the bars. Local blacks that came mostly for social interaction went to this half of the club, which I'll refer to as the "locals" side.

From the knee-high stage at the end of the central bar the quartet actually faced toward the middle bar itself, which, in effect, positioned themselves in a neutral position vis-à-vis the two sides of the club. Von habitually sat on the edge of exactly the middle of the stage. However, as this placement effectively put him facing the end of the bar not too far away, both he and the other musicians usually angled themselves to slightly favor the "fans" section. Here everyone sat around tables and attention, for the most part, focused on the band. The environment was that of a community bar with working-class clientele. The band dressed casually; only bassist David Ship often wore a suit. The band members' clothes may seem inconsequential, but their visual appearance marked the distinct nature of a community-based, participatory performance as against a more formalized engagement—e.g., at a downtown club with cover charge. There were no table reservations, though the first table as one entered, the one nearest the band, I dubbed "the critics' table" because of the frequent presence there of (white) jazz critic and writer John Litweiler and small record label owner Chuck Nessa, who recorded Von during this time (Freeman 1975).

There was an operative dichotomy between the loudness of conversations in the "locals" section—which during the evening competed to various degrees with the music—and the careful "in the ear" conversations and respectful audience listening-mode of the "fans" part of the club. Audience involvement ranged across a continuum from those passionately engaged and carefully attentive to the musical performance (mostly but not exclusively found on the "fans" half of the club) to those who had come primarily to drink and socialize and for whom the music for much of the evening was, as a jazz musician once put it to Paul Berliner, "like the wallpaper" (Berliner 1994:457). This division melted away to a great extent when pieces ended and applause signaled the beginning of the other key part of the performance, Von's verbal play, which was usually addressed to both halves of the club, and therefore to all of those present. Von spoke through a microphone linked to a small amplifier placed in the middle of stage just behind him and in front of the drums. Singers also used the microphone, but when the quartet played, Von either switched the microphone off or pointed it toward the bass player. Von remarked to me how playing on the South Side means that one must master the ability to forcefully project sound from his tenor saxophone while still controlling the desired timbre on the instrument.

The position of the club's only entry off to the side of the stage forced everyone coming in to face the crowd already there and pass by the band in order to make their way to either section. This is an important element of the social geography of the club, as the funneling of new patrons across the front of the stage allowed Von the opportunity to greet them in one manner or another. If the band was between numbers (as in the example given below), Von had the greatest opportunity to initiate some commentary based upon the recent entrant, broadcast throughout the club via the small amplifier. If the rest of the band was playing, he usually gave a loud but unamplified salutation; when actually on the saxophone he rarely modified the musical content but nodded his greeting.

Although the Enterprise Lounge hosted a variety of other attractions on other nights of the week, its economic dependence on the packed house on Monday nights was so strong that an extended absence by Von on a rare out-of-town tour drove it into bankruptcy in the late 1980s. It is now a church. The data for the analysis presented below comes from my regular attendance through the last half of the 1970s and into the early 1980s. While I never sat in at the club, my engagement with the jazz scene throughout Chicago, as well as my recruitment into Haitian bands, led to my friendship with non-Haitian black horn players, several of whom sat in at one time or another. I got to know another set of musicians who went to and sometimes were able to sit in at the Enterprise upon my return to finish my undergraduate degree at the nearly all-black Chicago State University. Without realizing it, my notes and many conversations with the musicians and patrons of all types at the club presaged my eventual entry into formal graduate education in 1981. Graduate school required a move out of Chicago to Austin, Texas. When I returned to Chicago during Christmas and summer breaks in the early 1980s, I asked Von if I could record with my hand-held cassette recorder and its somewhat laughable add-on stereo microphone. Von cheerfully consented upon hearing how I was homesick for this part of Chicago for which there was nothing similar in South Texas; he also correctly judged that such a small apparatus in that pre-digital era could not record at a level of commercial viability.

One Evening

The following is a chronological overview of a typical Monday evening performance. Von and his quartet have brought in their instruments and equipment and are ready to begin by around 8:30 p.m. The band begins playing to a fairly sparse crowd in both halves of the club. What I, only half in jest, named the "critics' table" is usually one of the first places to receive guests. European Americans tended to arrive within the first hour of the band's performance, so the fully seated, mixed-race "fans" side of the club

often filled up before the exclusively black locals' half of the club. The band plays intact (i.e., with no guest musicians sitting in) for around one and a half to two hours. It is a long set, but the pace between numbers is leisurely and the time between the pieces is increasingly filled with Von's own verbal performance. By the end of the quartet's set, between around 10:00 and 11:00 p.m., the club is relatively full from a steady stream of entries by the door just off the side of the stage. As the evening progresses, a growing number of the entrants will be men carrying an instrument case with them. The sound level, especially from the side of the club filled with African American locals, incrementally rises throughout the evening.

After Von's extended set, the evening enters a qualitatively new phase. The quartet has fulfilled its obligation and presented the artistry of each of its members, with a special emphasis on Von's own contributions. From this point on, the focus moves to other members of the community. Singers are usually the first to perform. This allows Von to continue playing, filling in solos along with "Young" John Young, the pianist. As the number of singers Von authorizes becomes exhausted, the rhythm section (piano, bass, and drums) will back up other horn players who sit in. Von is always in control of who is invited to perform on stage and how long they can stay. Most guest performers sing or play one number; Von's invitation to do another one depends to a great degree on the performance of the first one. Throughout these guest performances Von uses his own microphone to introduce each number, talk on any number of subjects, and engage in dialogue with various members of the audience.

As the evening wears on, more and more musicians will sit in. Some nights the horn players waiting to play will form a line snaking into the black "locals" half of the club, and each will take several choruses of a standard blues. Von's playing is the principal draw for the evening for everyone, but the "critics" really only come to hear Von and his quartet and usually depart at this point. Eventually all of the band will step down to be replaced by younger aspirants or guest musicians in attendance that night. White patrons, almost all of whom face a long drive back to the North Side, usually depart around this time. Most arrived early on during the quartet's playing and have already spent several hours in the club. It should be noted as well that late in the evening the club scene gradually takes on more of the characteristics of a bar scene. The presence of whites becomes slightly more tenuous as the structure for the special multiracial event begins to dissipate. The musical level gradually declines as the night wears on: the earlier a guest musician is allowed to perform on stage, the more prestige Von has bestowed upon that player. The crowd gradually thins out, dropping dramatically after the last call for alcohol by the bar, and the doors close in the early morning hours.

Analytical Perspectives

There is some audio documentation left of these Monday nights. The band made a few reel-to-reel tape recordings of themselves—none at a commercial level of production—capturing the music for their own keeping. These remain the property of the musicians and have never been published or circulated. The quality of musical reproduction on my own cassette recordings falls even shorter of commercial production standards, but they have the advantage of covering the entire performance. I wanted to capture the full context and, unlike the musicians, did not shut off the recorder between numbers. Recordings of the music would be sufficient to pursue a traditional musicological analysis and could supply enough material for the standard music review. However, Von's total performance was not only a virtuoso musical display but also a verbal one as well, and through both he presided over an important social event involving two distinct communities that rarely engaged with one another. It was in this greater context that meanings and values were played out, with Von taking a key role in this heightened arena of social negotiation.

Outside of these special recordings, the closest one can approach the music of these performances is through the several albums of Von backed by differing lineups of supporting musicians that were released during the time the *Enterprise* was still open. Of course, these are all studio recordings done in a controlled environment somewhere in downtown Chicago. Even in the muffled, alienating surroundings of a carpeted studio room, master musicians like Von and his sidemen can to a large degree reproduce the intimacy and power that is typically generated by the charge of a live audience. But a long-standing challenge in music studies is to move beyond an exclusive reliance upon the text, which in this case means the musical material found in the grooves of the record or on a CD. Von's style during this period is captured on studio tape, but even a text-centered analysis needs to take the performance context into account. For example, there was a strong difference in musical style between the setting on the South Side and the occasional appearance of Von and his quartet in clubs on the white North Side. The music material differs, for in North Side clubs the quartet tended to improvise more in the style of late-1960s and 1970s innovators. Von and his group judged—mostly correctly—that this avant-garde, or “outside,” approach would be one that the white audience probably was conscious of and measured jazz competence by.

The quieter, more “sterile” environment of an almost all-white club also deprives Von of one of his main functions at the *Enterprise Lounge*, that of a community-grounded host and commentator. Thus, too narrow of a focus on the musical text denies the import of the social context that informed the music as well as the full performance of Von Freeman, a

display that not only encompassed musical skill but verbal skill as well. John Blacking (1973) has pointed out the indispensable role of all participants in a musical occasion, but perhaps, as Don Brenneis (1990) and others have noted, the dynamic between musicians and audiences has been relatively neglected due to the subdued response expected of audiences in the European classical tradition. Even within the two music journals that serve as principal outlets for jazz scholarship (the *Annual Review of Jazz Studies* and the *Black Music Research Journal*), the performance context remains part of generalized descriptions of historical moments, or appears in often insightful, yet anecdotal accounts from interviewed performers.⁶ Most writing on actual jazz performance remains descriptions in fiction, though even in this body of literature sustained (re)creations are surprisingly few.⁷

Appropriate to the broader analysis required are perspectives on performance studies related to language and music (for an overview, see Baumann and Briggs 1990, and Feld and Fox 1994). This body of theory originally developed from studies of linguistic anthropology and the ethnography of speaking (Baumann and Sherzer 1974; Hymes 1974) and soon became applied within ethnomusicology to musical performance (Herndon and McLeod 1979; Béhague 1984; Quereshi 1987). Especially relevant here are the concepts of framing pioneered by Erving Goffman (1974). Von's talking between songs is not useless banter to fill up time while the band catches its breath, but commentary that Von employs to frame the musical numbers with historical and socially informed references, as discussed below. The series of discreet musical pieces generates a space in which Von's discourse functions in a manner that Gregory Bateson (1972) refers to as the keying of parts of a performance that heightens the meaning for the community. To better understand how these impact music as part of an emergent performance co-constructed with verbal display and audience interaction, I turn to a closer examination of several performances.

Signifying and Significance

A crucial feature of Von's discourse between songs is humor that references the racial situation in the country, with the club as an immediate example. This commentary is an important element in framing the music before and after it. An example of this kind of joking or teasing is his greeting to a couple or group of whites just entering from the nearby door: "Come on in North Side, you're just in time." The public verbal imprimatur of ethnicity acknowledges the racial diversity of the club, as opposed to a strategy of blurring ethnic differences. And in highly-segregated Chicago, ethnicity can be assigned with a geographic label, for

the odds are high that a European American probably does reside on the North Side. An analysis of any of these jokes by themselves deprives them of their impact within the interracial context in which they were used. The bounded context lends a degree of safety to the telling of these jokes that might otherwise appear inappropriate. A central concern here is that sharing in laughter is a way of entering a circle, of finding acceptance. When he directed humor directly at the white patrons in a way they can participate in, Von, and by extension the rest of the black community in the club, invited them to feel a part of the "circle" of the South Side. Through the vehicle of verbal play Von is able to refer to the contradictions between the groups in a non-antagonistic way. In one of the most highly segregated cities in a racially divided society, Von's humor helped to relax two different groups who so rarely occupied the same space in a social setting with entertainment. Such a move highlighted the shared musical aesthetic that was responsible for bringing the two groups together.

Particular to this context is that the subordinated group was host to members of the dominant one. Part of the meaning of Von's humor for the black community present in the club flowed from its demonstrating a certain level of control over phenomena in the face of which many in the community in actuality felt powerless. Von has the ability to verbally identify a problem and couch it in a manner that induces those trapped by it to laugh at it. This is a powerful tool that imparts a feeling of strength to his audience and prevents them from feeling totally overwhelmed by these problems. For the whites present, there were at least two aspects to Von's joking "at their expense." Although already indicated by their very presence in the middle of the black community, their laughter at Von's type of humor indicated their lack of a rigid identification with the dominant white power structure, even if they inherently continued to enjoy certain advantages from it. Second, it showed they could tolerate being put in a minority situation themselves and be "ribbed," or teased about it. As part of an overall context that reaffirms African American values for the black community, the participation of the whites in this performance of humorous verbal play contributed to an understanding of the position of the black community in white-dominated America. This dynamic paralleled the musical participation of whites in the musical jam session. Like Von's verbal commentary, the terms of musical participation were determined by Von and other black musicians. Likewise, both modes of performance, musical and verbal, affirmed the value of African American culture.

Von also reinforces the solidarity of the black community through his mode of verbal expression. In his commentary, Von almost constantly employs figures of speech particular to the African American idiom. This strengthens the solidarity of the black community and has a particular

role to play in relation to the whites in attendance. The cues Von employs are particular to black expression, which applies both to verbal and musical keying, as well as to certain gestures that accompany them.⁸ Von's rhetorical forms include an archetypal use of signifying, defined by Claudia Mitchell-Kerman as "the recognition and attribution of some implicit content or function which is obscured by the surface content or function" (1972:317-18; also see Gates 1988). Culture specificity is particularly important at the Enterprise as there are members of two different groups present. The particular selection of European Americans in attendance on the South Side for the most part understood and appreciated Von's and others' non-"standard" (i.e., non-white) style of speech. These white enthusiasts of black music have, to varying degrees, accumulated a working knowledge of African American speech style and would anticipate it to be a part of the evening's experience in similar fashion to their expectation of the music's content. The European Americans' linguistic and cultural competence are crucial for Von's verbal performance. An important part of Von's message was ethnic inclusion and cooperation, a position substantiated by the physical presence of whites able to comprehend and participate in black cultural expression. In addition, Von's humor drew upon ethnic difference and stereotyping which in part depended upon the whites in attendance as human material symbolic of the white establishment in general. Von's joking in this area would have been awkward, and not furthered his goal of a message of racial inclusion, if the whites present could not understand Von's teasing and join in sharing the humor with the blacks in the club.

What follows is an example that demonstrates the type of verbal play involved. This night was the Monday that fell closest to New Year's Eve in 1982. While Von paused in his commentary between songs, the black woman who regularly attends and takes Polaroid portraits of patrons for a fee enters the club. Right behind her a white male jazz fan comes in alone. As the "flicks lady" (as she was known) crosses by the front of the stage, she loudly addresses the entire club: "Happy New Year's everybody." Her loud statement draws the club's attention and several people automatically respond back. The white fan, a few steps behind her, now finds himself the focus of much of the audience's attention, and more meekly echoes the same greeting. Von then provides one of his grandiose, hyper-compliments. Von often employs inflated titles in a complimentary yet comical manner to announce musicians sitting in who clearly will never move beyond local community recognition. In this case, he uses an exaggerated title to play with racial and class status. Gesturing toward the white patron, he announces broadly: "the president of United Steel." He wouldn't say this of a black person; it jokingly mediates the class differences inter-

twined with ethnicity. At the time, the steel plants were still functioning and employed many black South Side residents. After a couple of "beats" during which much of the club has looked up to look at this new white arrival, the Polaroid woman chimes in with the warning, "You'll get him lynched." Everyone laughs: the racial divisions have been conflated with a common class identification opposed to a corporate magnate, a role Von has cast the white patron into. Von recovers and announces, "He didn't bring his checkbook with him or nothing, he ain't worried 'bout nothin'." He adds to the white patron, "That's why I'm laughing, you're safe, baby, you're under my protective custody." The white male, standing a little nervously in the spotlight as he looks for an open table, good naturedly responds, "Thank you sir. I'm a South Sider too, you know." This particular white patron confirmed to me later that he lived in Hyde Park, the white and mixed-race University of Chicago enclave several miles east on Lake Michigan. Von nods and says, "That's right. If you have any trouble you just tell 'em you know Von Freeman . . . (pause) . . . and then *run!* Run as fast as you can!" Even though he states it in a joking manner, Von's joke is part of his offer of protection to this and other white fans who have traveled to the club. Perhaps exactly because in various ways Von made his concern so explicit, neither I nor anyone I knew who went to the Enterprise experienced or heard of a racially-based incident taking place at the club. In fact, there were very few altercations of any kind that took place during these evenings. During the same time period, I heard of and experienced threats on the street made by others not involved with the club, just as Von recognized that the social mediation he can offer ends at the doors of the Enterprise. However, the strength of the role Von projected as emcee for the evening helped to create a feeling of encompassing community within the club that tended to ameliorate contentiousness (of any kind) among the patrons.

The Interplay of Speech, Music, Performers, and Audience

The nature of Von's twining of verbal and musical performance presents a rich area for the exploration of relationships of similarity and difference between speech and music, two separate yet linked modes of communication. We expect that words can be strategically employed to influence and direct audiences. While there certainly are many examples of this in Von's verbal performance, there are many in the group's musical performance as well. For example, the choice of songs helps determine the mood of the audience.

Von has related to me the basic musician strategy I have seen him employ of "working" an audience through repertoire. Though fundamental to the overarching construction of a musical occasion, scholarly attention

is wanting in this area (see Diaz Diaz 1998 for a fruitful exception). This tactic relates to the different phases of a night's performance. For example, during the early part of the evening the quartet concentrated on driving, up-tempo numbers with an emphasis on extended improvisations. At this point in the evening the club is only beginning to fill up and such a repertoire choice helps to fill it with energetic sounds. It is an opportunity to delve into the most complex improvisations of the evening at a time when both the seated audience, which is most attentive to this aspect of the music, has already arrived and the other half of the club's relatively low conversational sound level allows for a more unobstructed hearing of the music. I would also point out that although some drinks help to loosen up the players and audience alike, at this early point in the evening the volume of alcohol consumption was still relatively low, so that both the players and the audience were best disposed to the demands of the type of improvisation during this period of the performance.

As the club gradually filled up toward the middle of the evening, Von deliberately chose slow ballads as a way of lowering the volume of conversation within the club. These ballads highlighted the contrast between the prevailing quiet attentiveness of the seated half of the club and the boisterous other half given over to locals. Such a tactic left the loudest talkers standing out and thus worked to lower their decibel level, for at least the duration of the ballad. The last part of the performance, when musicians began to sit in and sometimes completely replaced the original band, usually revolved around medium tempo, well known standards and blues pieces. The familiarity of this repertoire served several purposes: it was the most likely to be known by the musicians sitting in; it offered a similar template against which their talents could be judged; and the familiarity of the repertoire fit the *communitas* that developed around the now extended family of "the band," extended from the participation of the various musicians that came to the club to jam that evening. Also, the accumulated alcohol content at this point in the evening moved the audience toward a desire for familiar repertoire and, toward the very end of the evening, emotive music that could carry over the incrementally increased volume of conversation throughout the club.

In addition to the selection of repertoire, the musical improvisation itself is embedded in an interaction with the audience that evokes varying responses from the audience. The verbal and musical performances do not follow a prescribed text or score, but rather in both cases draw upon forms and models in a process of recreating material recognizable by the all participants. The interaction between musicians and audience is part of the creative process.⁹ This emergent, unfolding quality is especially crucial for analyzing essentially oral traditions, which both Von's verbal and

musical performance are part of. Take, for instance, the compositional process that guides the recreation of the verbal and musical material of the performance. Perhaps because the two forms of expression exist within oral tradition within the same cultural group, there are formulas common to both; one example is given below.¹⁰ Just as some of the tactics of repertoire selection noted above are hardly unique to the Enterprise Lounge or even limited to jazz performance, so too did Von's improvisations draw upon conventions widely used and long established within straight ahead, or mainstream jazz.¹¹

One example is the use of quotes, the reproduction of a distinguishable portion of the main melodic line from a standard in the jazz repertoire. Sometimes the reference can be direct and specific. For example, while improvising on a ballad known for its romantic lyrics one can drop a quote from another ballad also known for the romantic content of its verses. It is even possible to reference the exact phrase in the lyrics with a specific part of the melody. But it is a stretch for audiences to make such an association and decipher the lyrical reference, and such a literal quotation is rarely employed. Most commonly a musical quote carries no lyric-specific reference with it at all: the quote is employed and admired for the musical appropriateness of its placement within the improvisation. In addition, the quote demonstrates the musician's—and concomitantly, by their acknowledgment, the audience's—in-depth knowledge of the body of music that all participants identify with.

Such musical quotes are occasionally used in studio recordings, but they are employed more frequently in audience performance contexts. Von himself employs many more quotes in live performance than in a studio setting, something in conversation with me he attributed to the immediacy of audience reaction. As it simultaneously signals both an achievement of a certain level of improvisatory competency as well as a statement of broader knowledge of the music, the ability to intelligently insert a quote practically became a regular expectation of younger players invited to sit in with Von's band. As Ingrid Monson points out, a quotation can also resemble verbal signifying in its combination of sameness and transformation through reinterpretation and the move into a new musical context (1996:127). Such an intra-referential treatment of musical material also emphasizes the wholeness of the repertoire over the uniqueness of a given composition. These embedded allusions to the corpus of mainstream jazz parallel and underline other aspects of integrity and continuity of tradition discussed further below.

Another example is the move from melodic strings of improvisation to strong statements of held notes. At the beginning of a phrase, the instrumentalist or singer strongly attacks and holds a pitch, characteristically a

blue note, at a volume higher than before. This usually signals an incremental increase of intensity in the performance. The band builds rhythmic activity underneath and around the held note and often slightly increases the overall volume. Understandably, use of such a held note is especially common for blues numbers, most often well into the improvisation. It marks a new phase in the improvisation that builds in intensity until the musician finishes either their solo or the song itself. The held notes themselves, and the repetitive, sometimes "honking" musical statements that often follow them, when successfully done with an emotive impact, elicit some kind of response from the audience. In fact, Von uses this part of his improvisation, especially later in the evening, as a tactic to engage the half of the bar with locals more given over to conversation than the fully-seated other half. In this sense these held notes are the other side of the coin of employing quiet ballads: the "ratcheting up" of the musical volume and intensity overwhelms the audience's conversations and diverts their focus toward the musical performance. Conversations are interrupted as shouts of encouragement ring out.

Here the division between the two sides of the bar presents a new challenge to the seated, usually majority white half of the audience. Throughout the evening, the attentiveness of this half of the bar privileges the music over their own private conversations, which are often carefully held to a lower volume that will not compete with the music. However, in the later part of the evening when the music moves into a mode, such as the playing of long, held notes, where some kind of vocalized response is most appropriate, the seated, mostly white audience is usually too reticent to play the necessary role of a more interactive audience. It is the all-black, "local" side of the bar, whose conversation has competed with the music for most of the evening, that responds with shouts such as "Go ahead" or simply "Yeah." The musician often follows up the audience response with either another long, held note, or a short phrase or series of phrases that opens up another space for audience response. Now having garnered the audience's attention, as well as moving the music into a plane where strong musical statements are the norm, the musician chooses either to move back into a general improvisational style or continue building this more emotive style that relies to a great degree on rhythmic placement of short phrases. Often I have seen Von turn his body toward the all-black half of the bar during such moments, recognizing the verbalized contributions from the local community and entering into an interchange with them. This part of the evening offered opportunities for engagement with the half of the club whose conversations the band sometimes found distracting earlier in the performance. During blues numbers toward the end of the evening, musicians sometimes moved these held notes into a call and response pattern with the audience, where a short musical

phrase or single note trades off with several repeated audience shouts of encouragement.

This interplay between musicians' musical "shouts" and audience members' literal verbal shouts highlights the similarity and potential overlay of these two communicative modes. African American declamatory speech in particular has received some scholarly attention for its relation to music (Floyd 1991; Hartman 1991). A well known example is the gradual move of a preacher's highly intonational sermon into musical phrases, underscored by the organist, that eventually moves fully into a song for the congregation (Titon 1988). Such commonality of verbal and musical patterning makes it problematic to distinguish between when the preacher has stopped "talking" and is now "singing." Within the *Enterprise*, some of Von's repeated spoken comments when he holds forth between musical numbers function in a manner similar to formulas used in musical improvisation, such as the short phrases mentioned above. Several of these repeated comments often approximate musical "riffs" or phrases in their tonal structure.

The similarity is also apparent when viewed from the angle of music's potential relation to speech intonation. Several times Von has taken a single note, or short descending phrase, and "spat it out" on the saxophone, treating it as if it were a verbal phrase said with emphasis for effect. These examples of "grunting" a declamation on the saxophone, or "talking" with the instrument occurred during pieces in slow tempo which are more conducive to Von's indexing speech patterns with his performance.¹² Later in the same evening described above, when he was about to signal for the final ending of a ballad, he instead drew the band to an abrupt halt with such a "grunt," a loud note in the low register that trailed off into a sliding, descending phrase. Two more followed, as if Von was trying to get over a hump; the drummer tried to follow with a cymbal crash each time. After the first musical grunt Von mumbled "Ah shucks," then after the next, with a twinkle in his eye, "That feels good," clearly referencing the release of such an outburst. He then signaled the band and they took the tune out. These parts of the performance highlight the structural similarities of music and speech, specifically the parallelism of their poetic indexicality which can create a synergistic relationship.

Of course, being music, the level of communication is limited: no music will be able to deliver information on a sustained basis at the higher semantico-referential level, i.e., that of language. But music's indexical communicative level can carry the variety of emotional messages that Von evokes throughout the performance. While speech is constantly being produced to communicate, the live production of music by its own nature draws attention to itself and sets it apart from ordinary expression. While we might be practically surrounded in a public environment of reproduced

music, the actual live production of music is almost always an indicator of some level of framed performance: we do not walk around playing music all day. However we do use words throughout the day and a special framing is necessary to present their meaning in a heightened context. Such a framed interaction as the example of Von Freeman at the Enterprise demonstrates how the two modes of communication—speech and music—can be mutually reinforcing and that a full consideration of the performance context of one necessitates consideration of the other.

Facing Past and Future

Von Freeman stood before the audience at the Enterprise Lounge within the logic of African American experience, as a representative symbol of the expressive culture of the community and its continuity with the past. Though to a lesser degree in recent years, jazz musicians have historically been recognized as cultural heroes within sectors of black America, masters in an art that expresses the values of the community and has gained the respect and admiration of the dominant European American culture. Von Freeman follows in the footsteps of nationally-recognized tenor saxophone masters, from Coleman Hawkins and Lester Young, to Dexter Gordon, up to his contemporary, Johnny Griffin. Although Monday evenings at the Enterprise are centered on the music, a total environment is created that celebrates African American identity and reinforces the values of the community.

An appeal to tradition can be seen on several levels. First, Von made verbal references throughout the evening to past musicians, former patrons of the club, and past events that lent a sense of continuity that linked those performances with other past ones. These references often spanned decades and embraced nationally-known jazz musicians who are identified with New York City, wherever their place of origin. This commentary, so directly complementing the music, placed the Enterprise performances within an historical continuum where jazz is viewed as a broad symbol of African American identity and the club's patrons conceptualized as part of a greater community. Second, the music itself was within a well-established tradition, and in a style that dates back to the late 1940s. The continued recreation of this style of straight ahead, post-bebop jazz—or what Von often terms “hardcore jazz”—is a statement of tradition.¹³ Von keyed this reference by repeatedly noting the composer or performer who made a song famous, situating the quartet along a continuum of black cultural expression. As a dynamic tradition, the music has never remained unchanged or immutable, yet its practitioners have decidedly carved out a stylistic space that essentially shows little response to the various currents in circulation in or out of African American musical life. The members of the Enterprise community, particularly the artists, were under

no illusions as to the commercial potential of this style of music, virtually absent from any radio exposure. If anything, the less-than-lucrative commercial aspect of the music fortified the feelings of community and allegiance generated from these musical performances. Von often referred to this celebration of music's intangible power and import when he dedicated a piece "to the cause."¹⁴

On a third, structural level, the evening showed the vitality of this tradition with the sitting in of younger musicians in the later part. Here, Von physically stepped aside—yet the music continued. Von, as emcee and clearly the arbitrator of an aspiring musician's entry onto the Enterprise stage, made multiple references to this aspect of the performance. The part of the evening when musicians began to sit in was usually announced with Von stating, "I'm gonna bring up my horses now," meaning the apprentices he takes credit for mentoring. He often made a jokingly reference to such a claim by introducing a musician: "I raised this man myself since he was this tall," holding his hand down to his knees. The message is that the new generation will preserve the tradition, that current values and means of ethnic identification will not die out. As more and more younger musicians replaced the original quartet through the evening, the audience was given a window onto the future, one that demonstrated the strength and perseverance of their cultural traditions.

An important final point in this regard is that Von Freeman's conception of this tradition was one of inclusiveness, which encompassed ethnicity as well as gender (he always encouraged female singers and the rare instrumentalist). His stance these evenings was one of an embracing humanity. White musicians were always welcomed into the jam sessions, and over time more came with their instruments. In this respect, "the cause" was one of universal appeal and suffrage.¹⁵

A Concluding Statement

Short bursts of sorrow
for the joy, sermons
emit over silenced glasses.

Von

A

Free

man quilts longings into blankets. Roads for an
other day.

—Sterling Plumpp¹⁶

The examination above of Monday evenings at Chicago's Enterprise Lounge in the 1970s and 1980s illustrates how no musical performance is

limited to the musical material alone: all production of music is impacted by both the many aspects of the performance context as well as the wider web of social engagement that informs aesthetic creation and participation. The analysis of Von Freeman's use of music and speech shows how these distinct modes can intersect in their emotive and performative design. Further, this convergence allows for the mutual reinforcement of these two modes' communicative power. Von's synergistic musical and verbal performance helped to create what folklorist Roger Abrahams has termed an "enactment," a "cultural event in which community members come together to participate and employ their deepest signs and symbols of the repertoire of expression" (1977:80). In this sense, the musical artistry of Von Freeman is only one part of a total experience, a social "enactment" of some of the community's deepest meanings and interrelationships. Immediate circumstances and interaction, together with the cultural history each participant brings with them will determine the meanings generated during such a heightened experience. During the time frame considered here, this history mapped onto racially determined demographics both reflected and, to some extent, superceded within the Enterprise Lounge. Musical performance can, indeed, "define and shape particular geographical and material space" (Cohen 1998:277): in this case, a space within a club that generated both a celebration of African American cultural expression, and a window onto an optimistic future for ethnically-conflicted Chicago.

Notes

* I would like to thank Paul Berliner, Amanda Minks, Laura Graham, and the journal's anonymous readers for helpful suggestions on earlier versions of this article.

1. Here I refer to Earl Lavon Freeman, Sr. (b. 1922) as "Von," the name by which he is commonly addressed even by musicians meeting him for the first time. He is also known by the nickname "Vonski," a reference to his part-Polish heritage. This European element of Von's heritage has never factored into the "one drop" (of African descent) racial alignment, Chicago being the city with the largest Polish population outside of Warsaw notwithstanding. Some biographical information on Von is available in Martin (1975), Corbett (2001), and Hazell and Kernfeld (2002).

2. Music's power to evoke place has come under increasingly scrutiny within ethnomusicology (Stokes 1994; Feld 1996), popular music studies (Lipsitz 1994), and an intersecting interest in cultural geography (Leyshon, Matless, and Revill 1998).

3. The recently released recording *Live at the Dakota* includes some of Von's introductions from a 1996 concert in St. Paul, Minnesota (Freeman 2001). Even though his spoken sections are short and taken from the context of a predomi-

nantly white, more formal performance date, this album is one of the very few commercial recordings of jazz that contains some of the verbal performance of the musicians.

4. Other multiracial musical venues included two internationally famous blues clubs further north on the South Side that also usually included white patrons, coincidentally on Monday evenings as well.

5. North Side Chicago is a broad area that encompassed several exceptions to the preponderantly European American population, for example, the area known as Uptown, a mostly poor North Side community (where I lived at the time) that was and remains the most integrated community in the city.

6. The two closest exceptions in these journals are Paul Rinzler's notes on interaction between jazz performers (1988) and Ralph Eastman's consideration of performance demands on blues lyrics (1988).

7. Examples in literature range from James Baldwin's "Sonny's Blues" (1957) to Jack Fuller's recent depiction of a rhythm and blues-cum-jazz venue (2000).

8. See Maryliena Morgan (1994) for an overview of literature on African American English.

9. Regula Quereshi's performance analysis of interaction between musician and audience in Sufi music offers an insightful cross-cultural example of similar dynamics in the role of the audience (1986). Also see Sawyer (1996) for a model of improvisation designed to accommodate both musical and verbal performance that attempts to include practice and process.

10. Perlman and Greenblatt (1981) offer an example of an earlier structural approach toward language and jazz. See Monson (1996:73-96) for further discussion of issues of language and its metaphoric and semiotic relation to music within the context of jazz improvisation. A recent study by Heble (2000:89-116) goes as far as to suggest links between improvisation and the written discourse of jazz musicians' autobiographies.

11. Among several works that discuss the conventions of this style among New York-based musicians is Berliner (1994).

12. I use the term "index" within the framework of Peirce's semiotic trichotomy of signs (Peirce 1960).

13. "Hardcore jazz" is the label he continued to use when recently interviewed for a *Down Beat* feature article (Corbett 2001:26).

14. Von first adopted this naming of "the cause" after he heard it used by Fats Waller, a friend of his father (personal communication).

15. In fact, by the 1990s a national upswing of interest in jazz began to overtake that in the black community, and in recent years European American musicians have been just as likely as African American ones to appear at the New Apartment Lounge, the South Side locale where Von continues to host a jam session. Von and other black jazz musicians now face the problematic that the continuance of mainstream jazz is increasingly passing into white hands. Although the issue is beyond the scope of this article, it should be noted that this contemporary national phenomena complicates the music's earlier embodiment of cultural continuity for the African American community.

16. The poetry at the beginning and end of this article is excerpted from *Hornman* (pp. 29 and 69–70, respectively). The book is based upon the experience of its author, Chicago African American poet Sterling Plumpp, at the Enterprise beginning in 1981.

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