

# current musicology

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## *Editor's Preface*

The increased presence of jazz studies at universities and cultural institutions in the United States and abroad has brought with it a recognition of how diffuse the community of those who research and write about jazz has become. Whether this “family” of jazz scholars—both in and outside of academia—is a dysfunctional one, as Ken Burns would have us believe, or simply one that exhibits the sometimes perplexing yet more often insightful idiosyncrasy of a Thelonious Monk solo is a matter of conjecture. Undeniable, however, is the fact that at the present moment the methodological scope of jazz scholarship has expanded to an unprecedented degree.

In many ways, seeds for the growth of jazz studies at Columbia University were sown during Mark Tucker's professorship in Columbia's Music Department (1987–97). Professor Tucker, whose rigorous, sensitive, and eminently musical scholarship on jazz and other American musics set a standard for the field and inspired jazz researchers worldwide, died on December 6, 2000. It is to his memory that this special issue of *Current Musicology* is dedicated.

This issue is decidedly interdisciplinary insofar as it includes contributions from scholars working across a spectrum of academic fields, as well as work by those who approach jazz as journalists or as independent researchers. The choice to identify the topic of this issue as “jazz studies,” rather than simply “jazz,” was a deliberate one. Scholarship on the music, its practitioners, and the contexts in which jazz is produced and engaged is no less rich or compelling than the discourse on jazz discourse and the questions the music continues to provoke. The unique historiographic challenges of a music that is barely a century old—or younger, if viewed from the perspective of jazz recordings—and the latent “consequences” of constructing its canon, as Krin Gabbard has put it, have prompted many to interrogate the narrative strategies employed in rendering the music's past. Most of the articles and reviews featured in this issue have in some way or another taken on this challenge by reconsidering under documented, if familiar, figures—for example, Von Freeman, Rudy Van Gelder, and Lee Morgan—by rethinking configurations of and approaches to the field of jazz studies, and by reminding us of the still emergent, living qualities of jazz so often obscured, ironically, by jazz studies itself.

The study of jazz remains wide-open, in large part because of the far-reaching influence of jazz itself, both as a musical and cultural phenomenon. This issue of *Current Musicology* seeks to demonstrate some of the range and diversity of those who have made jazz and its attendant discourse their object of contemplation and study, while honoring one of jazz's most respected scholars.

—MJB