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Negotiating “A Blues Riff”: Listening for Django Reinhardt’s Place in American Jazz

Andrew Berish

The career of Django Reinhardt (1910–1953) raises complex problems for historians of American jazz. Born in Belgium, the Manouche gypsy guitarist lived most of his life in Paris.¹ Reinhardt became perhaps the most famous practitioner of imported American jazz in Europe during the 1930s and 1940s, traveling and performing constantly through major cities of Western Europe. Discovering the music through recordings and the live performances of expatriated white and black American musicians, the guitarist soon began playing and recording with other European musicians who were equally enamored with this exotic cultural import. He also played frequently with the many African American jazz musicians living in Paris at the time, including celebrated players like violinist Eddie South and tenor saxophonist Coleman Hawkins.² His musical style though was not just a copy of the records and live performances he heard; it was a wildly original mixture of American jazz, popular French musical genres like musette and chanson, and the eclectic sounds of his Manouche upbringing.³

For all his admiration of American jazz and its musicians, Reinhardt only visited the United States once, on a difficult tour in 1946 with the Duke Ellington Orchestra. Contrary to his expectations, he was not received with accolades and throngs of adoring fans but, rather, with the harsh realities of dance band touring. Disappointed and frustrated, even despite the positive reception by audiences at two of the most

¹ The Manouche, a subgroup centered in France but extending into Germany as well as other parts of Europe, is part of a very diffuse Rom, or more colloquially “gypsy,” culture. Scholarly opinion now holds that the Roma peoples, despite their wide geographical spread today, originated as a cohesive ethnic group in the northern part of what is today India. For reasons still unclear, the community was dispersed throughout the European and Asian continents around the tenth century, AD. Much of this scholarly hypothesis rests on the linguistic similarities between the basic outline of the Rom language—manifested in many regional dialects—and Sanskrit and Hindi. Carol Silverman, “Rom (Gypsy) Music,” vol. 8, *Garland Encyclopedia of World Music, Europe* (New York: Garland Publishing, 2000), 270–272, 288–289. See also Patrick Williams, *Django* (Marseille, France: Éditions Parenthèses, 1998), 8.

² Reinhardt first heard Eddie South in Cannes in 1931. Michael Dregni, *Django: The Life and Music of a Gypsy Legend* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 50. For a detailed account of Django’s first musical encounter with Hawkins—a 1935 live performance and recording session—see *ibid.*, 104–106.

³ Didier Roussin’s article, “Les Tsiganes, le musette, la guitare et le banjo,” from *Études Tsigane*, provides an excellent discussion of the musette genre and the special role of the banjo—which is as important to the music as the accordion, the instrument most popularly associated with the style. Didier Roussin, “Les Tsiganes, le musette, la guitare et le banjo,” *Études Tsigane* 3 (1994): 134–145. In his monograph on Django, Patrick Williams provides another brief discussion of musette as well as chanson and Manouche gypsy music. Williams, *Django*, 21–29.

prestigious concert halls in the U.S. (New York City's Carnegie Hall and Chicago's Civic Opera House), Reinhardt abandoned a potential life and career in the States for his home city of Paris.⁴ He never returned to America. From the early 1950s until his death a few years later, the guitarist lived in Samois-sur-Seine, just south of Paris. This village is now home to an annual festival in his honor.⁵

How do we position such a figure in existing jazz history narrative models? Does his almost exclusively European career matter in such evaluations? Because jazz has been so closely tied with the United States and the African American experience, Reinhardt's career also raises important questions about the relationship between music and place.⁶ How exactly does geography—or a more abstract “sense of place”—matter in the historiography and analysis of jazz?⁷ Can we hear place in music?

⁴ For an account of Reinhardt's positive reception by audiences in Chicago and New York, see Dregni, *Django*, 217, 220.

⁵ Accounts of Django's trip to the U.S. are retold in almost all the significant literature on the guitarist. Besides a handful of English language sources, a great deal of the literature on Django is in French. Full-length biographies and studies of Django available in English include Dregni, *Django*, and Charles Delaunay, *Django Reinhardt* (London: Cassell, 1961; repr. New York: Da Capo, n.d.). There is also a large and growing body of commercial pedagogical material available for learning to play like Django or in the gypsy-jazz style: *Django Reinhardt*, ed. Stan Ayeroff (New York: Consolidated Music Publishing, 1978); Stan Ayeroff, *The Music of Django Reinhardt* (Pacific, MO: Mel Bay Publications, 2002); *Django Reinhardt Anthology*, ed. Mike Peters (Milwaukee, WI: Hal Leonard, n.d.); and Ian Cruickshank, *The Guitar Style of Django Reinhardt and the Gypsies* (Reading, UK: Woodcote, 1982). In French, the list of biographies and studies is larger. Books include: Alain Antonietto and Francois Billard, *Django Reinhardt: Rythmes futurs* (France: Librairie Arthème Fayard, 2004); Marc-Édouard Nabe, *Nuage* (Paris: Le Dilettante, 1993); Roger Spautz, *Django Reinhardt: Mythe et réalité*, trans. from German by Brunolf Epple (Luxembourg: RTL Edition, 1983); and Williams, *Django*. Significant journal and periodical articles include: Michel-Claude Jalard, “Django et l'école tsigane du jazz,” *Cahiers du jazz* 1 (1959): 54–73; and Yves Salgues, “La Légende de Django Reinhardt,” *Jazz Magazine* 33–41 (January–September 1958), available online at <http://jazzmagazine.com/Vies/portraits/djangoreinhardt> (accessed September 29, 2003).

⁶ Following the usage of humanistic geographers and cultural theorists, I differentiate “space” from “place.” Space is the more abstract of the two terms, denoting an array of related notions that range from the mapping of specific locations on the earth's surface (e.g., Paris, France) to the description of any kind of field of activity, often with some determined boundaries (like the space of a baseball diamond). Place is the more familiar word. It is used commonly in day-to-day speech as the way to talk about the many particular spaces of our lives, and the places we imbue with social meanings. I reserve the term space for the more theoretical parts of my discussion because it is an awkward term when discussing the specificities of our lived experience. However, it is a very useful term when talking about the interactions between more abstract and generalized concepts such as music and identity. For example, I am concerned with Reinhardt's sense of place—how he existed in and related to the particular and meaningful spaces of his life. A comprehensive essay defining space is in David Harvey, *Spaces of Global Capitalism: A Theory of Uneven Geographical Development* (New York: Verso, 2006), 119–148. Edward C. Relph's *Place and Placelessness* (London: Pion, 1976) is a classic statement defining place as locales imbued with human meaning.

⁷ Scholars have examined the role of geography in music history and analysis with greater attention in recent years. Some recent monographs in musicology and ethnomusicology that deal in some aspect or another with these issues include: John Connell and Chris Gibson, *Soundtracks: Popular Music, Identity, and Place* (New York: Routledge, 2003); Murray Forman, *The Hood Comes First: Race, Space, and Place in Rap and Hip-Hop* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2002); Daniel Hertz, *Music in European Capitals: The Galant Style, 1720–1780* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2003); Robert L. Kendrick, *The Sounds of Milan, 1585–1650* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); Adam Krims, *Music and Urban Geography* (New York: Routledge, 2007); *The Place of Music*, eds. Andrew Leyshon, David Matless, and George Revill (New York: Guilford Press, 1998); *Ethnicity, Identity, and Music: The Musical Construction of Place*, ed. Martin Stokes (Providence, RI: Berg, 1994); Denise Von Glahn, *The Sounds of Place: Music and the American Cultural Landscape* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2003); and Christopher Wilkinson, *Jazz on the Road: Don Albert's Musical Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press and Center for Black Music Research, 2001).

Reinhardt's 1946 U.S. tour with the Ellington band was a profoundly disruptive experience for the guitarist. Far from friends and family and alienated by American language and culture, Reinhardt never adjusted. In Reinhardt's American encounter with one of the preeminent jazz bands of the era—musicians he admired enormously—we can discern a conflict that embraces musical as well as cultural differences. Through a close examination of "A Blues Riff," which was captured on record during that difficult 1946 tour, I will explain how we can hear in this performance not only a musical negotiation between the Manouche guitarist and the Ellington band, but a spatial negotiation as well.

In their imperfect musical conversation, we can delineate what the French philosopher Henri Lefebvre called different "representational spaces." In this term, Lefebvre captures the notion of imaginative transformations of lived spatial experience. By analyzing Reinhardt's fraught musical performance with Duke Ellington's orchestra—a figure and a band that were both central forces in the development of jazz—we hear a conversation, not just about what notes to play and how to play them, but about the different ways to occupy the spaces of our lives. Shaped by his nomadic Manouche background and his social position straddling Rom and gadjé (non-gypsy) European society, Reinhardt developed a highly idiosyncratic musical style that featured far less interaction with accompanying musicians than would typically be heard in the performances of his American counterparts. In his playing, Reinhardt aggressively insisted on particular musical choices such as tempo, key, and harmonic support, and his approach to soloing was dense with melodic and harmonic material that filled the musical space. Although he would take and develop musical cues (such as melodic motives), from those around him, he rarely left equal time and space for his colleagues to do the same. In this sense, Reinhardt both commandeered musical space and insisted on its specific contours. This model of musical interaction stood in sharp contrast to the practices of the Ellington band. As the orchestra's chief composer, Ellington drew liberally on the compositional ideas of his musicians, incorporating them into his ever-evolving works. This back and forth between bandleader and band made their musical works fluid and profoundly dialogical. We hear in the Ellington oeuvre the traces of many musical voices, with all being participants in the complex creation of the musical recordings and concert performances.

Reinhardt's attempts to control the specific musical parameters of the performance were part of a larger need to determine the specific social relationships established between the performing musicians. In this way, the guitarist imposed his own sense of place on the performance—he created a representational space that expressed a larger lived experience of spatial practices and spatial orders, one often at odds with the Ellington orchestra's. Looking at Reinhardt's music this way provides a new understanding of the guitarist's position in American jazz history. Reinhardt was both an insider and an outsider to what Ellington himself once called "The City of Jazz." The guitarist was musically adept and virtuosic, but he was also shaped by a fundamentally different cultural-spatial experience than Ellington and his musicians.

Confronting American Places

In the years prior to 1946, Django Reinhardt had many opportunities to meet, talk, jam, and record with traveling or expatriated American musicians, including Ellington in 1939.⁸ That said, his only contact with American jazz musicians *in* the United States was during his 1946 visit. Arriving on October 29, Reinhardt spent just over a month touring with the Ellington band; together they played 21 cities including the two high-profile concerts in Chicago and New York. When the tour ended in Detroit on December 7, Reinhardt returned to New York City to play engagements at the upscale Henry Hudson Hotel and the Café Society Uptown (the latter with a band led by clarinetist Edmond Hall). With his work at the Café Society completed, and the guitarist increasingly lonely for his family and friends, Reinhardt returned to France on February 6, 1947.⁹ No studio recordings were made during this trip to the U.S., as the musicians' union rules forbade it. The only recorded trace of his visit is a single recording of one Ellington concert held at Chicago's Civic Opera House on November 10, 1946.¹⁰ Most of this engagement was devoted to the Ellington band itself; Reinhardt's performance came toward the end of the set.¹¹ With minimal support from the orchestra, Reinhardt performs lengthy improvisatory solos on three tunes—"A Blues Riff," "Ride, Red, Ride," and "Honeysuckle Rose"—as well as his "Improvisation #2," a solo piece written by the guitarist.

The music recorded that night with the Ellington band captures the guitarist in both a radically strange situation and a performance context that was unique in his life. Reinhardt was in an unfamiliar place (Chicago), with unfamiliar musical partners (a large jazz orchestra), and using a new instrument (an American-made electric guitar and not his beloved Selmer-Maccaferri acoustic). The guitar playing on the recording is, by and large, familiar Reinhardt, and thus full of his idiosyncratic solo devices (tremolos, diminished-scale runs, chordal outbursts). From this perspective, we hear an interesting moment in Reinhardt's musical development, one that is a bridge from his largely acoustic recordings of the 1930s to his "modern jazz" electric recordings of the late 1940s and 1950s.¹² However, this recording also contains something far more valuable: it provides a unique and especially vivid example of Django confronting profound cultural and geographic dislocation. In less extreme situations, the outlines of particular cultural ideas and values can be hard to discern. It is more challenging to hear the particularities of Reinhardt's worldview in his European recordings with his like-minded Parisian colleagues than in the music he made in the United States with the Ellington band where the

⁸ Dregni, *Django*, 148–149.

⁹ A concise summary of Reinhardt's time in America can be seen in *ibid.*, 208–228.

¹⁰ The recording made that night was released commercially in 1994 through the efforts of Ellington's son, Mercer, and is available on Duke Ellington, *The Great Chicago Concerts*, MusicMasters 01612–65110-2, 1994, compact disc.

¹¹ This is based on the assumption that the MusicMasters commercial recording of the event follows the actual plan of the concert. The liner notes by jazz scholar Stanley Dance are unclear on this point.

¹² For coverage of Django's electric guitar-bebop period, see Benjamin Marx Givan, *Django Reinhardt's Style and Improvisation Process* (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 2003), 266–314, and Dregni, *Django*, 201–202, 229–268.

confrontation of differing values—musical and otherwise—was so intense and concentrated.

Reinhardt's peripatetic life and complex cultural and political identity gave him a very fluid sense of place; he developed a remarkable ability to transform unfamiliar spaces into "places"—locales imbued with subjective meanings.¹³ On this recording, however, we hear the difficulty he had in transforming the new spaces of America. In the years leading up to his American tour, Reinhardt's life unfolded in a fairly circumscribed Western European geography: anchored in Paris and its environs, Django had toured through various French cities and regions, spending many summers in the south of the country playing music and traveling with Manouche caravans. Musical tours also brought him briefly to Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Spain, Belgium, and the Netherlands. In 1938 and 1939, Reinhardt, along with the Hot Club de France, took two multiple-month tours through Great Britain, and they also managed a stint in London in between to record.¹⁴ But in his 1946 travels to the United States, which was the wellspring for his adopted musical style, Reinhardt moved a step beyond the boundaries he could comfortably negotiate.

Although his previous European travels had exposed Reinhardt to very different cultural experiences, Paris and his Manouche family and friends were all relatively close by, and usually just a train ride away. But in the United States, despite his work with American musicians and his time in Great Britain, the guitarist was confronted with a situation that was complicated by a unique combination of linguistic and cultural barriers along with the absence of his wife, brother, and Manouche friends.¹⁵ As Michael Dregni puts it, "It was probably one of the few extended periods in his life when he was alone for more than several *hours* of time. He was cut off from his family by distance, separated from his newfound African American bandmates by language, and distanced from American society by his own Romany and French background."¹⁶

Of course, Reinhardt's life in Paris and Europe had its own barriers and complexities—as a Manouche gypsy, Reinhardt spent his life balancing his Manouche heritage with his Belgian-French identity. But in the United States, Reinhardt could not even find stability in those familiar instabilities. This radical dislocation makes the guitarist's recordings in the United States unusual in his oeuvre; they reveal him to be working out new coping skills and new cultural negotiations; they show a musician literally and metaphorically out-of-place.¹⁷ The fraught musical conversation Reinhardt has with the Ellington band is best understood as a conflict between

¹³ Relph, *Place and Placelessness*, 42–43.

¹⁴ Tours and travels of Reinhardt are documented in Dregni, *Django*, Williams, *Django*, Antonietto, *Django Reinhardt*, and Delaunay, *Django Reinhardt*.

¹⁵ Dregni, *Django*, 215.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 226–227.

¹⁷ In his book *Out of Place*, geographer Tim Cresswell makes a compelling argument for the necessary interrelationship between the linguistic usage of place metaphors and geographical experience. Identity and behavior is intimately connected to a "normative geography." Transgressing this normative geography positions oneself out-of-place in spatial and societal terms. Tim Cresswell, *Out of Place: Geography, Ideology, and Transgression* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 3–10.

personal and musical identities that were shaped by different experiences of geography.¹⁸

Although the biographical and analytical writing on Reinhardt has provided some of the background to this 1946 American tour, these accounts have not provided any in-depth discussion of the music making itself, and that is where this valuable 1946 recording becomes most useful. While the recording captures several brilliant moments of musical convergence and empathy, the performance reveals a consistent musical *tension* between the participants. There is an audible sense of Reinhardt pushing outward beyond the boundaries of the musical partnership.¹⁹ Reinhardt's non-integration into the Ellington band's charts, his insistence on the particular harmonic and melodic territory he wished to travel, his penchant for interrupting solo lines with rapid, melodically disjunct lines that often slip outside the underlying harmony, his dense use of melodic ornamentation, and his idiosyncratic and highly elastic rhythmic phrasing, all assert an individuality at odds with the musical integration that was so characteristic and central to the personal contributions and roles of the musicians in the Ellington orchestra.²⁰ Reinhardt works hard to transform his space both literally (i.e., the actual sonic event in the concert hall) and metaphorically (i.e., the particular arrangement of musical elements) into a familiar place with certain recognizable and comfortable characteristics.

Despite its under-theorization in the literature, the role of geography has always been central to jazz historiography, connected as it is to an important discourse on the "American" nature of the music. Jazz researchers have produced a substantial body of work that examines the music's roots both in the nation at large and also in particular American cities and regions.²¹ But many recent writers have challenged this

¹⁸ Some writers have noted the many similarities between the social position of African Americans in the United States in the first half of the twentieth century and the social position of Manouche gypsies in Western Europe—both were maligned minority groups, forcefully removed and dispersed from their native lands; and both adopted music as a powerful cultural tool to improve social cohesion, assert a unique and proud ethnic identity, and enter the surrounding mainstream culture. But as Michael Jalard and Patrick Williams convincingly argue, there are many significant differences in the historical and cultural development of both groups that make them very distinct from each other. Both writers suggest that if not for Reinhardt, the Manouche might never have absorbed jazz as an essential part of their music making. Williams, *Django*, 8–16; Jalard, "Django et l'école tsigane du jazz," 55–56.

¹⁹ For a thorough exploration of this persistent metaphor in the discourse of jazz musicians see, Ingrid Monson, *Saying Something: Jazz Improvisation and Interaction* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 73–96.

²⁰ Most major writing on Ellington, both scholarly and journalistic, discusses this particular characteristic of the band—i.e., the group's special sound, and its blending of very idiosyncratic instrumental voices into a cohesive sounding ensemble. In his book, *The Swing Era*, Gunther Schuller states this idea succinctly: "A unique musical partnership, truly unprecedented in the history of Western music, developed in which a major composer forged a musical style and concept which, though totally original and individual, nevertheless consistently incorporated and integrated the no less original musical ideas of his players." Gunther Schuller, *The Swing Era* (New York: Oxford, 1980), 48.

²¹ Recent U.S. city and regional studies of jazz include: Thomas Brothers, *Louis Armstrong's New Orleans* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2007); *Central Avenue Sounds: Jazz in Los Angeles*, eds. Clora Bryant, et al. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); Frank Driggs and Chuck Haddix, *Kansas City: From Ragtime to Bebop, a History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); Steven L. Isoardi, *The Dark Tree: Jazz and the Community Arts in Los Angeles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006); William Kenney, *Chicago Jazz: A Cultural History, 1904–1930* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); Alex Stewart, *Making the Scene: Contemporary New York City Big Band Jazz* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007); Scott Yanow, *Jazz: A Regional Exploration* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2006).

ethnocentric approach, as well as the often-made assertion that jazz is peculiarly American. In his introduction to the 2003 edited collection, *Jazz Planet*, historian E. Taylor Atkins incisively critiques the notion that jazz is the necessary byproduct of an exceptional American history and culture, or what the author James Lincoln Collier once termed the “inevitability of American jazz.”²² The music, Atkins points out, “though certainly born on U.S. soil, was both product and instigator of early twentieth-century processes and trends that were global in scope.” Moreover, as Atkins argues, jazz has posed a consistent challenge to static, essentialized ideas of the nation-state.²³

With its mixture of Afro-diasporic elements (some of them direct from that continent via the slave trade, and others arriving through Latin-America) and European musical practices, jazz was, in a sense, “globalized” from the beginning as a music born of large-scale, international demographic movements and technological developments.²⁴ From its inception, the music was being transmitted well beyond the borders of the United States. The modernizing forces that produced an increasingly global capitalist world—colonialism, industrialization, urbanization, and technological innovation—also provided the engine for the development and diffusion of jazz. Two of the most stable elements of a radically unstable twentieth-century—war and market capitalism—provided two especially powerful channels of diffusion. While the famous African American bandleader James Reese Europe’s proto-jazz military band impressed postwar French audiences in 1917, other Europeans could hear similar sounds on records brought over from the United States.²⁵ Nonetheless, there remains a strong belief—and a convincing argument—for a coherent jazz practice and

²² The phrase, “The inevitability of American Jazz,” is the title of an essay by jazz historian James Lincoln Collier in his collection, *Jazz: The American Theme Song* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993). For a critique of this idea, see the introduction to *Jazz Planet*, ed. E. Taylor Atkins (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2003), xi–xxvii. Over the past several decades there has been a growing English-language bibliography on jazz in countries other than United States. Whether focusing on history or current-day practice, these books and articles address the complex ways jazz has been absorbed, defined, and redefined. Recent monographs include: E. Taylor Atkins, *Blue Nippon: Authenticating Jazz in Japan* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001); William Minor, *Unzipped Souls: A Jazz Journey Through the Soviet Union* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995); Uta G. Poiger, *Jazz, Rock, and Rebels: Cold War Politics and American Culture in a Divided Germany* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); Frederick S. Starr, *Red and Hot: The Fate of Jazz in the Soviet Union*, rev. ed. (New York: Limelight, 1994); and Kevin Whitehead, *New Dutch Swing* (New York: Billboard Books, 1998). The bibliography of Atkins, *Jazz Planet*, contains additional bibliographical listings of relevant journal and periodical articles.

²³ Atkins, *Jazz Planet*, xiii.

²⁴ *Ibid.* The details of this fusion have been amply documented in the literature on jazz and black American music. For a general survey on the source and development of African American music, including jazz, see Samuel A. Floyd, Jr., *The Power of Black Music: Interpreting Its History from Africa to the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995). For the impact of Latin American music and musicians on jazz, see John Storm Roberts, *The Latin Tinge: The Impact of Latin American Music on the United States*, 2d ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

²⁵ A primary source account of James Reese Europe in post-World War I France is seen in “A Negro Explains ‘Jazz,’” in *Keeping Time: Readings in Jazz History*, ed. Robert Walser (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 12–14. Jeffrey Jackson provides a detailed survey of the appearance of jazz in Paris in *Making Jazz French* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 13–33. For an example of early twentieth-century writing reflecting on the commercial diffusion of ragtime, jazz, and Tin Pan Alley songs around the globe, see “Jazzing Around the Globe,” in Walser, *Keeping Time*, 25–31.

tradition, even if the unifying principle does not involve America.²⁶ Clearly non-American jazz musicians like Django Reinhardt shared many strong affinities in terms of musical practice with American musicians, and these connections were deep enough to allow highly successful musical encounters. (Reinhardt, for instance, made over one hundred recordings with traveling or expatriated musicians.²⁷) Thus, it still makes scholarly sense to try to understand Reinhardt's relationship to other jazz musicians, particularly the American musicians who so profoundly influenced him.

In the literature on the guitarist, Reinhardt is presented and celebrated in a somewhat schizophrenic manner as both one of the greatest jazz guitarists and soloists ever—and part of the long continuum of jazz history—and as a total original, *sui generis*, who established his own completely new musical style, “gypsy jazz” (sometimes also referred to as “Manouche swing”).²⁸ For instance, in their description of Reinhardt, the authors of his entry in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* acknowledge the guitarist's “unique,” “deeply personal,” and “essentially romantic” solo style that was formed from his gypsy “cultural patrimony,” but they still unhesitatingly categorize him as the “first outstanding European jazz musician.”²⁹ Writing in the 1980s, Roger Spautz presents a similar formula that describes Reinhardt as both generically unclassifiable and arguably the greatest jazz guitarist of all time.³⁰ Such complex sentiments are also common in the instructional books and transcription collections dedicated to the guitarist. In his first book of Reinhardt transcriptions, jazz guitarist and educator Stan Ayeroff writes of the guitarist's “universal” appeal, an attractiveness that Ayeroff suggests has crossed genre boundaries and influenced both rock guitarists (like Peter Frampton and Carlos Santana) as well as classical guitarists (such as John Williams). Yet Ayeroff also places Reinhardt indisputably in the “jazz” tradition: “If Reinhardt were alive today, he too [along with Stéphane Grappelli] would most certainly be a force in the future development of jazz.”³¹ Likewise, the back cover

²⁶ For a recent perspective on this topic, see the author's interview with jazz pianist Aaron Goldberg: Andrew Berish, “Dissections and Intersections of the Jazz Scene: An Interview with Aaron Goldberg,” *ECHO: A Music-Centered Journal* 5 (Spring 2003), <http://www.echo.ucla.edu/Volume5-Issue1/berish/index.html> (accessed October 1, 2009).

²⁷ These musical encounters are available on the four-CD collection from Definitive Records, *Django Reinhardt and His American Friends: Complete Sessions*, Definitive Records DRCD 11167, 2000, compact disc.

²⁸ The terms “gypsy jazz,” “gypsy swing,” and “Manouche jazz” are strewn all over the literature on the guitarist, and these terms are often used interchangeably to refer to the same phenomenon—i.e., jazz played in the Django-style. For example, Benjamin Givan discusses “gypsy jazz” as a distinct subgenre of jazz. Givan, *Django Reinhardt's Style*, 3. Patrick Williams surveys various terms for this Django-inspired musical style. These include “l'ecole tsigane du jazz” (“gypsy school of jazz”), “jazz Gitan” (“gypsy jazz”), “guitar manouche” (“Manouche guitar”), and “jazz manouche” (“Manouche jazz”). Williams, *Django*, 137, 111–140. Michael Dregni devotes the final chapter of his biography to outlining “gypsy jazz” in the post-Django era. Dregni, *Django*, 269–278. The London-based company Rough Guide produced a compact disc in 2004 titled *The Rough Guide to Gypsy Swing* which features recordings by Django and his followers, many of whom are from Manouche backgrounds. The liner notes also use the term “Manouche swing.” *The Rough Guide to Gypsy Swing*, World Music Network in association with Rough Guides, London 2005, RGNET 1138, compact disc.

²⁹ Michael James and Howard Rye, “Django Reinhardt (Jean-Baptiste),” *Grove Music Online/The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz*, <http://www.grovemusic.com> (accessed July 15, 2006).

³⁰ Spautz, *Mythe et réalité*, 29–31, 140.

³¹ *Django Reinhardt*, ed. Stan Ayeroff (New York: Consolidated Music Publishing, 1978), 4.

of a 2004 compact disc compilation of “Gypsy Jazz” on *The Rough Guide* label asserts that this genre was “Forged by the work of Django Reinhardt—arguably the finest jazz guitarist of all time.”³² An underlying confusion pervades these assessments. Rather than try to understand his unique position in jazz, writers on Reinhardt simply assert that he was everything all at once, regardless of any contradictions—“universal” but specifically European (or Manouche); a jazz musician steeped in tradition, but also unprecedented and original.

In his 2005 book, *Jazz Consciousness: Music, Race, and Humanity*, the music scholar Paul Austerlitz provides a useful way to reconceptualize the place of foreign musicians in American jazz. His ideas are particularly relevant to the case of Django Reinhardt because they help to extricate us from the confusions of past writers. For Austerlitz, jazz’s “holistic aesthetic” and “its propensity to incorporate any and all outside elements” makes the music a potent transnational force of “utopian universalism.” The experience of this music—of “jazz consciousness”—creates in its listeners and musicians “a virtual space where we can confront, learn from, and even heal the contradictions resulting from social rupture.” This “ineffable” musical consciousness—while “mak[ing] us aware and mindful in ways that nonmusical experience does not”—is still inextricably tied to material life, and has the special power “to unite things that are separated in nonmusical reality.” Duke Ellington, for instance, could freely incorporate sounds and techniques from European art music into Afro-diasporic music despite racial segregation and racism designed to keep blacks and whites apart.³³

Austerlitz’s ideas are similar to George Lewis’s concept of an “Afrological” musical orientation, a system of musical beliefs and behaviors that exemplify a particular musical “logic.”³⁴ According to Lewis, an Afrological orientation values many characteristics: musical spontaneity dialectically shaped by valuing history and the present desire for innovation; musical freedom shaped through study and discipline (although there is disagreement among Afrological practitioners); and personalized musical statements that tell particular and unique “stories.” Both Austerlitz’s and Lewis’s ideas hold onto the historical and ethnic specificity of jazz’s origin in African American history and culture, while positing a flexible and culturally adaptable philosophical and artistic orientation transferable to peoples geographically or culturally removed from a black American experience. Both authors provide interesting starting points for understanding the connections between musical sounds and real-world places. But their ideas do not thoroughly make the connection to concrete, lived experience. Austerlitz’s musical consciousness and Lewis’s “Afrological” orientation can generate “virtual spaces” that address but also reconfigure real-world places and their concomitant social relationships, but they still do not fully account for the very real places of historical experience. As E. Taylor Atkins astutely points out, the new musical reality created through

³² Back cover liner notes of *The Rough Guide to Gypsy Swing*.

³³ Paul Austerlitz, *Jazz Consciousness: Music, Race, and Humanity* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2005), xiii, xvi.

³⁴ George E. Lewis, “Improvised Music after 1950: Afrological and Eurological Perspectives,” in *The Other Side of Nowhere: Jazz Improvisation, and Communities in Dialogue*, eds. Daniel Fischlin and Ajay Heble (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2004), 131–162.

performance or listening can only “temporarily dislodge other, more primary affiliations based on notions of nation, region, gender, or class.”³⁵ This is not to rule out the power of music’s “virtual space” to bring change to non-musical experience, only to insist that the two realms are inextricably connected and never separable from one another.

The story of Reinhardt’s life is of special historiographical importance precisely because it forces issues of real—not just virtual—places to the center of jazz inquiry. A thorough understanding of Django Reinhardt and his relationship to jazz requires attention to the lived experience of place, and the day-to-day negotiation of the spaces of our lives—our neighborhoods, towns, cities, and nation-states. To employ a common (but still useful) trope, Reinhardt and the Ellington Orchestra are having a particularly energetic and fraught musical “conversation,” a complex discussion involving competing musical priorities. Much jazz writing on what the ethnomusicologist Ingrid Monson terms the “interactive collaborative context of musical invention” has focused on the positive aspects of the musical-social process, and most specifically on like-minded musicians gathering together to negotiate a complex but shared musical experience that expresses both individuality and community.³⁶ Sometimes, though, the relationships established are tense, the music making uneasy, and the communications troubled. These “negative” collaborative contexts are just as valuable for study as their positive counterparts.³⁷

A careful dissection of Reinhardt’s performance with the Ellington band that night in Chicago reveals a “conversation,” a musical relationship, of contrasting aesthetic and social priorities. In everyday interactions, when they are confused by someone else’s speech, many Americans will often colloquially say that they do not know “where” the other person is coming from. Seeking an understanding of this particular musical conversation will provide new perspectives on “where” Reinhardt was coming from. The values being explored in this Chicago performance were in part the result of contrasting spatial experiences translated and transformed into music. To borrow one of the metaphors from Ellington’s autobiography, *Music Is My Mistress*, Reinhardt is best understood as a visitor through the “City of Jazz,” not an ensconced inhabitant.

³⁵ In a slightly different context, Atkins echoes Austerlitz’s language, describing jazz as a mode of “global consciousness” that historically provided “moments and spaces in which it was possible for peoples around the world to imagine they were participating in a cultural movement and a historical trajectory that transcended national boundaries.” Atkins, *Jazz Planet*, xxi.

³⁶ Monson, *Saying Something*, 74. Monson devotes extensive space in chapter five to a detailed analysis of a performance that vividly illustrates the complex musical give-and-take involved in a contemporary mainstream jazz performance. At one point, soloist (bassist George Tucker) and rhythm section (pianist Jaki Byard and drummer Alan Dawson) fall out of formal alignment (Tucker jumps six beats ahead of the twelve-bar blues form). Through careful listening, pianist and drummer manage to adjust to the “mistake” and rejoin the soloist. Monson, *Saying Something*, 137–174.

³⁷ In his epic ethnography, *Thinking in Jazz*, Paul Berliner provides a good deal of discussion regarding the reality of musical and social conflicts in jazz groups. He highlights the tension between views of jazz that emphasize individual freedom versus those that focus on group cooperation. Berliner’s ethnographic evidence demonstrates that both ideas are central to post-bebop jazz practice and that a resolution to this tension is effected in a wide variety of ways. Nevertheless, Berliner only addresses historical aspects in passing and does not provide a detailed musical analysis to demonstrate examples of sustained musical conflicts in performance. Paul Berliner, *Thinking in Jazz: The Infinite Art of Improvisation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 348–446.

The guitarist's place in jazz history is a complex one, and its elucidation requires more than redefinitions or historiographical space-clearing. Reinhardt's "jazz consciousness" was real but was the product of very different experiences of geography. While only a full ethnography of Reinhardt's Manouche life can provide a complete picture of his cultural experiences, this essay will demonstrate how musical analysis can uncover conflicting spatial experiences in music.

Between Musical and Lived Space

Many scholars have described music as an art of and about time, as the "temporal ordering of tones ... exploited for musical perception."³⁸ But musical experience also has a spatial component.³⁹ Even when writing specifically about music's temporality, scholars inevitably reach for spatial metaphors.⁴⁰ For instance, melodies are short or long and can climb and descend scales. By extension, musical pitch is perceived as occupying higher and lower spaces, and melodies can appear in the background or foreground. Furthermore, sound waves are physical phenomena that surround and interact with our bodies.⁴¹ Spatiality in music is more than rhetorical, and it is registered in musical practice in a variety of ways. First, there are the many semantically charged musical choices performers make. This can be seen, for instance, in the particular chord sequences, ornamental techniques, and melodic choices that—in their particular historical contexts—signify to musicians and listeners geographic locales or more general spatial ideas through powerful cultural associative links (for example, a clarinet's shrill, rising tone can imitate a police or fire engine siren).⁴² Music can also signify spatial experience through homology where a musical structure can match a social-geographic structure.⁴³ For example, in the

³⁸ Philip Alpers, "Musical Time," and "Music as an Art of Time," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 38 (1980): 409. For another broad survey of the historical discourse on music as a temporal art see, Raymond Monelle, *The Sense of Music: Semiotic Essays* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 81–114.

³⁹ Most work on musical space is focused on the relationships and movements of internal musical phenomena such as notes, chords, and rhythms. For two influential discussions of this sense of musical space, see: Robert Morgan, "Musical Time/Musical Space," *Critical Inquiry* 6 (Spring 1980): 527–538; and Robert Cogan and Pozzi Escott, "Musical Space," in *Sonic Design: The Nature of Sound and Music* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1976), 15–85.

⁴⁰ Alpers, "Musical Time," 409. For an excellent discussion of the connection between metaphorical ways of speaking and writing about music and cognitive and bodily experience see, Mark L. Johnson and Steve Larson, "'Something in the Way She Moves': Metaphors of Musical Motion," *Metaphor and Symbol* 18 (2003): 63–84.

⁴¹ Recent work in psychology is bolstering a long-held notion in that discipline that musical perception is spatially coded. See Pascale Lidji, et al., "Spatial Associations for Musical Stimuli: A Piano in the Head?," *Journal of Experimental Psychology, Human Perception and Performance* 33 (2007): 1189–1207; and Elana Rusconi, et al., "Spatial Representation of Pitch Height: The SMARC Effect," *Cognition* 99 (2006): 113–129. For a view on the spatial perception of background and foreground musical structures, see Eero Tarasti, *A Theory of Musical Semiotics* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994), 77–97.

⁴² Such a gesture can be heard in the introduction of Artie Shaw's 1939 recording of "Traffic Jam," available on Artie Shaw, *Artie Shaw: The Centennial Collection*, Bluebird/BMG 82876 60092–2, 2004, compact disc.

⁴³ The most recent example of this kind of argument in musicology is Von Glahn's survey of musical representations of place in nineteenth- and twentieth-century American music, *The Sounds of Place*. In a series of discrete musical case studies, Von Glahn argues that formal musical procedures—for instance, the nature and density of harmonic activity or the manipulation of tonal goals—can suggest through analogy real American places (e.g., the Housatonic River, the Grand Canyon, New York City, or the deserts of the American West).

recording with Ellington, Reinhardt aggressively marks out the musical space that he desires by insisting on specific musical parameters such as major triads or sixth chords rather than dominant sevenths. This need to make an unfamiliar environment familiar, structurally echoes the real life spatial transformations he made to the physical places he found himself in (e.g., apartments, hotel rooms, and gypsy caravans).

There is a third way to register spatial experience in music and that is through the *relationships* established between musicians (and listeners) in the act of creating music, or what Christopher Small has termed “musicking.”⁴⁴ These inter-musician social relationships are creative transformations of non-musical social relationships that are grounded in the real experiences of different places. In the emotionally-charged environment of music performance, musicians can strengthen or modify their relationships with other players. Through sound and even body movement, performers can demand behaviors and attitudes from other musicians (e.g., attention, cooperation, defiance, and so forth). Music is a way of knowing, recreating, and changing human ideas and experiences of the many components of social life, including—and most importantly for my discussion—spatial ideas and experiences.⁴⁵

In my analysis of Reinhardt’s performance with the Ellington band, I will argue for homological relationships between musical structures and non-musical structures. But I will also insist that space in music is more than metaphorical, and that it is a domain of experience not separable from other domains of human experience. The relationships created in the course of performance are part and parcel of a total life. If spatial experience can shape interpersonal relationships in day-to-day life, it most certainly can shape relationships between musicians on stage.

To get at the specificities of these connections between lived geography and music, and to further grasp all the ways spatial experience is registered in music (e.g., musical signs, homological relationships, and music as social process), it is useful to introduce Henri Lefebvre’s idea of “representational spaces.” In his 1974 book, *The Production of Space*, Lefebvre attempted a theorization of space in social life. Arguing against *a priori* understandings inherited from the Enlightenment, Lefebvre asserted that space is socially produced, and the result of the combination of our mundane day-to-day movements, the routes and paths laid down by planners, architects, and governments, and the imaginative transformations we (as individuals and communities) make of this spatial order. For Lefebvre, socially produced space is composed of three interrelated components: (1) perceived space, which is the result of “spatial practices” (our day-to-day movements); (2) conceived space, which is the result of “representations of space” (routes and paths laid down by others); and, finally, (3) lived space, which is the result of “representational spaces” (the imaginative transformation of the previous two categories).

⁴⁴ Christopher Small has coined the term “musicking”—the present participle of the verb “to music”—because it avoids reification: music is not a thing but an activity. As performers, listeners, and dancers, we are all participating in, and responsible for, the creation of music (albeit in very different ways). Christopher Small, *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1998), 8–10.

⁴⁵ For a detailed discussion of music as the creation and exploration of social relationships, see *ibid.*, 183–200.

Lefebvre's third category is key. As he argues, the lived experience of place is a mode of being that meaningfully interprets the previous two categories while producing a new, third idea. He specifically contends that representational space is "space as directly lived through its associated images and symbols, and hence the space of 'inhabitants' and 'users'." For Lefebvre, this space is also "dominated—hence passively experienced—space which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate. It overlays physical space, making symbolic use of its objects," and in turn creates "more or less coherent systems of non-verbal symbols and signs."⁴⁶ Representational spaces connect spatial practices and planned spatial structures with the artistic and mental representations and understandings of these experiences. Through its manipulation of cultural materials into new, symbolic forms, art is a representational space *par excellence*.⁴⁷ Although Lefebvre spends only a little time on the subject of music, this field is seen to be another representational space. He notably argues that music orders and transforms sounds into meaningful, socially experienced structures that symbolically make sense of life's perceived and conceived spaces.⁴⁸

Lefebvre's theories allow us to convincingly link a variety of spatial components of music—such as the physical arrangement of musicians, the physical space filled by sound waves of various frequencies, and the more metaphorical space enacted in formal musical structures—to the real spaces of our lives, and by extension to other non-spatial forms of social life. Musical performance is an arena of activity where the perceived and conceived spaces cannot only be represented in a metaphorical way but can also be analyzed, restructured, and even reconfigured. As the sociologist (and Lefebvre translator) Rob Shields points out, this representational space has a revolutionary potential to resolve the contradictions of our historically conditioned spatial experience and to free us from forms of domination, thereby helping us to reach our potential as "total" beings in the world.⁴⁹ In certain circumstances, music's own spatiality can challenge imposed conceptual spatial orders and even refine our very idea of spatial limits and freedoms. But before we can make judgments about the possible transformative power of any representational space, it is necessary to go into some music in detail to try to demonstrate exactly how musical materials imaginatively transform perceived and conceived spatial practices. As suggested, Django Reinhardt's

⁴⁶ Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, 39.

⁴⁷ In his discussion of the Chavin of the Peruvian Andes, Lefebvre specifically includes "art works" as examples of representational spaces: "There have been societies—the Chavin of the Peruvian Andes are a case in point—whose representation of space is attested to by the plans of their temples and palaces, while their representational spaces appear in their art works, writing-systems, fabrics, and so on." *Ibid.*, 43.

⁴⁸ Lefebvre's few mentions of music are provocative and tantalizingly short. Following a discussion of the Renaissance town, Lefebvre specifically includes music in its "spatial code" (Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, 48). Later, he confirms the role of music and other "non-verbal signifying sets" in his theoretical project in a passage that attacks the limitations of critical theories overly reliant on the analysis of language and "discourse" (*ibid.*, 61–62). Lefebvre's most detailed discussion of music comes significantly later in his book, in a digression from his larger topic of absolute versus abstract space. This discussion concerns the triumph of a visual spatial order over earlier spatial orders. According to Lefebvre, during the eighteenth-century, "music was in command. It was the pilot of the arts." As a non-verbal spatial system, music, particularly the concept of harmony, challenged an encroaching, dominating "visual-geometric" spatial order (*ibid.*, 284–285).

⁴⁹ Shields, *Lefebvre*, 165.

performance in Chicago with the Duke Ellington Orchestra is an especially good example in which to delineate a particular musician's representational space.

The Musical and Lived Spaces of "A Blues Riff"

The war years were a paradoxical time for Reinhardt, as they were both life threatening and musically and financial successful. While the difficulties of this period restricted Reinhardt's European touring, thus limiting him to engagements in Paris and Belgium, the guitarist's professional career nonetheless thrived. Reinhardt played regular gigs around Paris, where he developed new musical associates, and wrote and recorded music.⁵⁰ The guitarist's star was ascendant, and he found himself suddenly monetarily flush. Reinhardt welcomed this success, but was not blind to the danger he faced under the Nazi occupation (during the war approximately 600,000 of his fellow Roma were exterminated by the Nazi regime and its collaborators). After embarking on several failed attempts to escape into neutral Switzerland in 1943 and 1944, Reinhardt returned to Paris with his family to hopefully wait out the end of the war.⁵¹ With the Allied liberation of Paris in August 1944, peace came as well as an influx of foreign troops, especially American ones. Reinhardt's excited reception by American GIs encouraged him in his belief of his growing international fame.⁵² It also renewed in him a desire to visit the United States, and an opportunity soon materialized when a British agent from the William Morris Agency approached the guitarist with an invitation to join Ellington in the U.S.⁵³

Bypassing his current manager, Charles Delanauy, Reinhardt organized the trip directly with the William Morris Agency, which was then Ellington's publicist and management. The guitarist arrived in the U.S. on October 29, 1946.⁵⁴ Compared with postwar Paris and its deprivations and political uncertainty, New York was an economic juggernaut bustling with people and energy: skyscrapers crowded the horizon, trucks and buses clogged the streets, and people flew about the city in a hectic dance of business and leisure. The U.S. economy was booming from wartime spending, and for the recently arrived guitarist, it must have seemed unreal. He would get a first-hand taste of this speed when he experienced the itinerary laid out for his tour with Ellington: twenty-one cities in just over a month.

Filled with fantasies of record deals and movie contracts, Reinhardt packed lightly. He did not bring a suitcase and, even more surprisingly, a guitar. He was confident that

⁵⁰ Dregni, *Django*, 154–187. Many of the recordings were not reproduced and sold due to wartime rationing.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 154, 183–187. Django's behavior during World War II and the Nazi occupation of Belgium and France is still not entirely clear and remains controversial. A documentary by Jamie Kastner made for the Canadian Broadcasting Network (broadcast in the U.S. on the Sundance cable channel in 2006) ends with the unsettling suggestion that Django, rather than a hero to the Roma community, was partially complicit in the Nazi's mass extermination of the Roma through his silence and accommodation to the German occupation. *Djangomania!*, directed by Jamie Kastner, Sundance Channel and Cave 7 Productions, 2005.

⁵² Dregni, *Django*, 188–195.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 206.

⁵⁴ For several similar accounts of Django's American tour, see: Delanauy, *Django Reinhardt*, 130–141; Dregni, *Django*, 208–228; Williams, *Django*, 82–85.

a superlative instrument would be provided for him. When no magnanimous manufacturer stepped forward, Reinhardt was forced to find one. It is not clear who ultimately provided an instrument, but he finally acquired a Gibson hollow-body fitted with a pickup.⁵⁵ Reinhardt had played an electric guitar before, but preferred his acoustic Selmer with its distinctive bright attack. However, in light of the large venues they would be playing, an electric guitar—with its more reliable and manageable volume controls—made much more sense than an acoustic instrument that would likely have to be amplified through a microphone or some patched-together pickup system. As Alain Atonietto points out, on his tour, Reinhardt played in venues that were substantially larger than those he played in Europe. For example, the hall he played in Kansas City could accommodate nearly 3,000 dancers.⁵⁶

While his dreams of conquering America quickly soured, the trip provided many musical highpoints and generated some good press.⁵⁷ Reinhardt's normal nonchalance, combined with a rapidly accelerating disappointment at his American reception, made coordination with the Ellington Orchestra especially difficult. On top of this, Reinhardt spoke almost no English, and communication was limited to hand gestures and sporadic, halting responses in French and English. No charts were written to incorporate Reinhardt into the fabric of the group, and a choice was made to feature the guitarist with the band's rhythm section and some very minimal backing figures by the horns and reeds. A famous anecdote, repeated in several sources, summarizes the working relationship between the great American jazz band and the foreigner. Asked what he wanted to play, Reinhardt purportedly responded, "I follow. You start."⁵⁸ The ad hoc feeling of the partnership was reinforced by the inability of Ellington's management to add Reinhardt's name to all the publicity materials. Some audiences—for instance, the one in Cleveland on November 4—were surprised at the guest appearance of this European jazz musician. Ellington says he even played with this situation, and frequently brought the guitarist out, had him start playing, and then let audiences

⁵⁵ While Les Paul and others were experimenting with the construction of solid-body electric guitars around this time, commercially-available guitars in 1946 were hollow-bodied instruments fitted with magnetic pick-ups. Because of their large, hollow internal cavities and thin soundboards, these electrified guitars often produced undesirable electrical feedback resonance at even moderate volumes when played through an amplifier. The solid-bodied instrument (first sold commercially in 1948) would create a purer, longer sustaining electrically amplified tone. See Tony Bacon, "Guitar," *The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz*, ed. Barry Kernfeld (London: MacMillan Press, 1988; repr. New York: St. Martin, 1995), 458–459. For a succinct account of the early electric guitar, see also Steve Waksman, *Instruments of Desire: The Electric Guitar and the Shaping of Musical Experience* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 19–20.

⁵⁶ Dregni, *Django*, 211–212. Also see Atonietto and Billard, *Rythmes futurs*, 284.

⁵⁷ And there was also some bad press. The second night of the Ellington Orchestra's Carnegie Hall show, Django failed to show up on time, arriving just before the concert was scheduled to end. Rushing on stage, the disheveled Reinhardt was introduced by a flummoxed Ellington. Tuning his guitar as the rhythm section began to play, Django played his usual set and finished to "thunderous applause." Reviews of the concert in the press were mixed with several outright negative ones. Writing in *Melody Maker*, prominent jazz critic Leonard Feather was unimpressed with Django's playing, and he suggested that Reinhardt could not hold his own against his American contemporaries like Oscar Moore, Mary Osborne, and Barney Kessel. Dregni, *Django*, 221–222.

⁵⁸ A primary source account of this is in "Jazz by Django," *Newsweek*, November 18, 1946. For a similar account, though without the exact words ("I follow. You start"), see "Django Music," *Time*, November 18, 1946. This story is repeated in Dregni, *Django*, 217, and Williams, *Django*, 82.

gradually make sense of the mysterious soloist who was nearly invisible on the dark stage.⁵⁹

While most of the tour with Ellington was not recorded, the climactic performance at New York's Carnegie Hall was captured on record, though this performance transcription is notably missing Reinhardt's performance with the band. Thus, the only surviving document of the guitarist's U.S. tour with Ellington is the aforementioned Chicago recording, which was made secretly by Dr. John Steiner, who was a chemist, jazz aficionado, and co-owner of the local Steiner-Davis record label. According to Michael Dregni, Steiner made arrangements with some of the ushers at Chicago's Civic Opera House to allow him to set up his bulky record-cutting machine before the event. Steiner managed to capture one entire concert—the afternoon show on November 10, 1946—from the tour's series of shows at the Opera House.⁶⁰ Of the four numbers that Reinhardt played with the band at this concert, only three included the entire orchestra. Along with "Ride, Red, Ride"—a lesser-known tune from Ellington's repertory—and Fats Waller's and Andy Razaf's 1929 standard, "Honeysuckle Rose," it was only logical to fill out the remaining spot with a blues, that *lingua franca* of jazz. On the 1994 commercial release of this transcription recording, this blues performance is labeled simply "A Blues Riff."

As a cornerstone of jazz practice, the blues has been a resilient template for the aesthetic statements of musicians with widely varying styles.⁶¹ The blues, like jazz, is difficult to define, but consists historically of an array of key musical parameters that performers have favored: blues notes and scales, familiar melodic shapes, timbral manipulations, "vocalized timbres," and deliberate, stylized rhythmic displacements.⁶² Jazz musicians, since the music's emergence, have liberally drawn on the blues as a source of musical materials and practices. Early in the very first episode of Ken Burn's *Jazz* documentary series (2000), the trumpeter Wynton Marsalis discusses the centrality of the blues to the dialogic nature of jazz practice. "The real power of jazz and the innovation of jazz," Marsalis explains, "is that a group of people can come together and create art—improvised art—and can negotiate their agendas with each other, and that negotiation is the art." Marsalis additionally describes the communal importance of these jazz-blues negotiations:

I go to Milwaukee tomorrow and there would be three musicians—I walk in a bar at 2:30 in the morning, and say, uh, "What do you want to play, man?" "Let's play some

⁵⁹ Stuart Nicholson, *Reminiscing in Tempo: A Portrait of Duke Ellington* (Boston, MA: Northern University Press, 1999), 266–267.

⁶⁰ Dregni, *Django*, 217–218.

⁶¹ The birth of jazz coincides roughly with the codification of the blues through commercial sheet music and recordings into its distinctive harmonic layout of I, IV, and V chords spread out over twelve measures. Ragtime sheet music from the early twentieth century provides some of the most convincing evidence for the solidification of the form in the years surrounding 1900. For information about dating the twelve-bar blues form, see: Barry Kernfeld and Allan F. Moore, "Blues Progression," in *Grove Music Online* (Oxford Music Online), ed. Laura Macy (accessed April 4, 2007); and Alyn Shipton, *A New History of Jazz* (New York: Continuum, 2001), 41–42.

⁶² Scott DeVeaux, *The Birth of Bebop: A Social and Musical History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 81.

blues.” Well, all three of us, all four us, are going to start playing.... Everybody will just start comping and playing and listening ... [Y]ou never know what they’re going to do. So, that’s our art. The four of us can now have a dialogue, we can have a conversation, we can speak to each other in the language of music.⁶³

In a film series that spends surprisingly little time discussing the actual mechanisms of musical activity, Marsalis’s comments here are refreshing insightful. In emphasizing negotiation and dialogue—the “negotiation is the art”—the trumpeter highlights jazz performance as something fluid and changeable. As Marsalis points out, even in the most spontaneous of jam sessions and with such a widely-known form as the blues, the players involved need to agree on the tempo, key, and harmonic materials, as well as more amorphous issues like style—as he notes, “you never know what they’re going to do.” When Reinhardt toured with Ellington in 1946, there was much negotiation, musical and otherwise. This was a fraught situation for Reinhardt, who had developed his style in groups that featured significantly less improvised interaction between soloist and rhythm section.⁶⁴

While the 1994 CD release credits “A Blues Riff” to Duke Ellington, the performance is not based on any kind of precomposed “song” per se—there is neither a head nor clearly delineated parts or sections (with the exception, arguably, of some of the backup horn lines that enter toward the end). Instead, the performance involves the filling out of a basic 12-bar blues in Db. With so few pre-established parameters, the musicians had to make many decisions in real-time—a situation made more complex by Reinhardt’s instruction that when they start, he will follow.⁶⁵ Over the 12-bar blues chord cycle, Reinhardt’s solo spans ten improvised choruses. At the piano, Ellington begins with a solo, eight-bar introduction.⁶⁶ The rest of the rhythm section—bassist Oscar Pettiford and drummer Sonny Greer—quietly joins in at almost the last moment. To mark the beginning of the blues cycle proper, Ellington punches a tonic chord on the downbeat and, with horns and reeds silent, Reinhardt enters in the second measure playing a short riff that serves as an impromptu head. However, in this context, this material functions as much more than just a riff—it is also a signal of Reinhardt’s musical direction and priorities to Ellington, Pettiford, Greer, and the rest of the band. It stakes out musical terrain and articulates boundaries that will organize their mutual excursion.

⁶³ *Jazz: A Film by Ken Burns*, DVD, episode 1 (“Gumbo”) (PBS Paramount, 2004). This quotation is heard at about 00:41.

⁶⁴ Ben Givan, “Django Reinhardt’s ‘I’ll See You in My Dreams,’” *Annual Review of Jazz Studies* 12 (2002): 41–42.

⁶⁵ The MusicMasters compact disc recording is actually somewhere between the keys of C and Db. While many of the Ellington band’s most famous blues recordings are in C (for instance, “C-Jam Blues” from 1941), a reader for this article made a convincing case for the attribution of Db. First, the key of “Blues Riff” matches another tune from the concert “Things Ain’t What They Used to Be,” a song the band most often played in Db. Second, Reinhardt’s solo guitar piece on the same recording, “Improvisation #2,” is pitched a half-step higher than “A Blues Riff.” Not only did he record this number in D, but the solo piece employs open strings (particularly A and D). Finally, during the live Chicago 1946 performance, Django hits open strings, and if you tune a guitar to those strings, “A Blues Riff” is in Db.

⁶⁶ The Steiner recording fades into Ellington’s introduction, so it is difficult to determine its exact length. The six full measures that are audible strongly suggest a conventional eight-bar introduction.

In the conventions of jazz today, the first chord of a 12-bar blues is most often a tonic chord voiced with a flatted seventh (in the manner of a dominant seventh harmony), though early jazz and blues recordings feature a variety of initial harmonic approaches. For example, some early tunes begin on a simple tonic triad and then move to the flatted-seventh voicing in the fourth measure.⁶⁷ Another common variation is the interpolation of a IV⁷ chord into the second measure of the 12-bar cycle. Blues practice in jazz has always been flexible, and simple triads can be extended and enhanced with non-triadic tones such as 6ths and 9ths. In fact, by the 1930s, jazz was more and more defined by harmonies that extended beyond the triad.⁶⁸ The question of how to set the opening bars of the blues, then, was one of the first choices that Reinhardt had to make. The guitarist's opening riff is immediately striking because it prominently features the major 3rd and the major 7th of the tonic chord: an F and a C (see Example 1 at 1₂).⁶⁹ Rather than affirm a familiar blues tonality with its characteristic mixture of flat and natural 3rds, 5ths, and 7ths, the guitarist's opening riff suggests instead a strong diatonic orientation. The C is especially significant because it is the major seventh degree of the tonic key of Db. In one reading of this first melodic statement, the C is merely an ornament to Bb, and part of a hammer-on,⁷⁰ triplet-figure. But the major-seventh scale degree, which is used as the highest note in the phrase, gives Reinhardt's first melodic statement a striking profile that is at odds with prevailing blues conventions. Even if ornamental, the prominent C is a bold, idiosyncratic choice that announces a particular on-the-spot approach to blues harmony.

For contrast, consider Example 2, which offers a brief transcription of the Ellington-clarinetist Jimmy Hamilton soloing over the first four bars of "Beale Street Blues," which is also a major-key, 12-bar blues performance (in Bb) that was recorded earlier

⁶⁷ Mark Levine, *The Jazz Theory Book* (Petaluma, CA: Sher Music Co., 1995), 219–223. Listening through some 1920s recordings one can hear a variety of approaches to the first chord in the first measure of the blues progression. For example, guitarist Lonnie Johnson, an important figure who played in both 1920s blues and jazz bands, demonstrates a variety of approaches on his early recordings. In a duet with singer Victoria Spivey, "Toothache Blues—Part I" (1928), Johnson and band begin the blues with dominant sevenths, while another track from a year earlier, "Steppin' On the Blues," features triads. This topic clearly deserves further study. Both tracks are part of the compilation, Lonnie Johnson, *Steppin' On the Blues*, Columbia/CBS Records CK46221, 1990, compact disc.

⁶⁸ Surprisingly, I have not found many discussions of this tendency in early jazz toward seventh chords and diatonic (and, to a lesser extent, chromatic) chord extensions. In his classic 1938 study, *Jazz: Hot and Hybrid*, Winthrop Sargeant provides a detailed discussion of the "bewildering mixture of idioms and influences" in "jazz harmonizations," and he further notes this propensity toward seventh chords (as opposed to triads) and chromatic harmonic movement. Winthrop Sargeant, *Jazz: Hot and Hybrid* (1938; repr. New York: Da Capo, 1975), 190–210. In his 1962 doctoral dissertation, L. Allen Pyke discusses at length harmonic practice in early jazz. He specifically notes the use of diatonic extensions, and most notably the addition of the major-sixth scale degree to tonic and subdominant chords. L. Allen Pyke, II, *Jazz, 1920–1927: An Analytical Study* (Ph.D. diss., State University of Iowa, 1962), 63–64, 69.

⁶⁹ To refer to specific measures of Reinhardt's solo in my transcriptions, I use the following system: numerals indicate the chorus number—the statement of the melody is chorus number 1— and subscripts show specific measures within that chorus. For example, measure five of the first chorus of the blues would be notated as 1₅.

⁷⁰ On a guitar, a hammer-on is a playing technique that involves the sounding of a note by sharply "hammering" down a fretting-hand finger on the fretboard (i.e., without simultaneously plucking the string with a finger from the other hand or a plectrum).

1st chorus

D^b D^b7

5 G^b7 D^b

9 $E^b\text{min}7$ A^b7 D^b

2nd chorus

5

9

3rd chorus

5

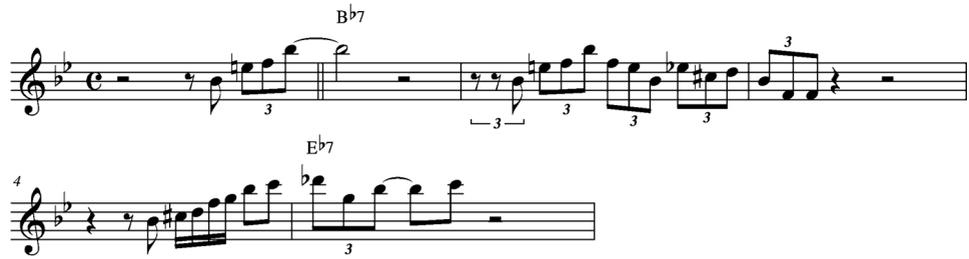
9

4th chorus

Example 1 First three choruses and the opening to the fourth of “A Blues Riff,” at concert pitch. Transcribed by the author.

that very same concert.⁷¹ Here, Hamilton chooses a more bluesy approach that brings to the foreground not just the flat-3rd/natural-3rd ambiguity (i.e., D^b and D in B^b major), but also the blues idiom’s colorful flat-5th/natural-5th tension (i.e., F^b and F). Significantly, Hamilton also avoids playing any kind of seventh scale degree, as he

⁷¹ “Beale Street Blues” is also available on the two-compact-disc set—Duke Ellington, *The Great Chicago Concerts*—that features Reinhardt’s playing.



Example 2 Jimmy Hamilton's use of "blues" notes—"flat 3rd" (Db/C#) and flat 5th (E-natural)—on "Beale Street Blues" from Chicago Civic Opera House concert.

instead plays a sixth scale degree, G (though, the horn and reeds play a backing line that includes a prominent flat-7th that strongly suggests a Bb⁷ tonic chord).⁷² Hamilton's rhythmic manipulations are just as important as these note choices. The clarinetist dramatically tugs at the underlying 4/4 rhythm, deliberately stretching—and shortening—the space between the triplets and eighth notes. Reinhardt, on the other hand, phrases his first statement squarely on the beat, avoiding what Scott DeVeaux calls the "elusive, floating rhythmic quality" of the blues idiom.⁷³ Here Hamilton chooses to emphasize the tonal and rhythmic ambiguity of the blues, thereby suggesting in his rhythmically stretched, quasi-pentatonic melody a more modal and "bluesy" approach to negotiating the chord changes. These choices by Hamilton and Reinhardt have nothing to do with analytical judgments of correctness or authenticity, they are simply choices made in the course of performance. These choices, though, intimately shape subsequent musical events.

In only a few seconds, and with just six notes, Reinhardt has "said" an enormous amount, and he begins a musical conversation in a manner of his choosing. The non-blues, diatonic sound of his initial statement (as well as in his choice not to go to IV⁷ in bar two) suggests the guitarist's non-jazz influences, such as French *musette* and *chanson*, Roma musical styles, and European art music. But those C-naturals he plays, as well as their rhythmic articulation, also state parameters for a musical conversation. The guitarist has staked out significant musical terrain and set some interesting boundaries for the performance. Significantly, Ellington will avoid flatted-7ths in the first

⁷² Specific identification of the "blues scale" varies widely in the scholarly literature. In jazz pedagogical literature, the minor pentatonic is closely related to the "blues scale." For these writers and musicians, the blues scale differs by one note: a "passing note" between scale degrees 4 and 5. However, because of the small difference—an optional chromatic interpolation—the two scales are often discussed together. For an example of an author who distinguishes between the six-note "blues scale" and the minor pentatonic (while still emphasizing their very close relationship), see Levine, *Jazz Theory Book*, 230–236. In the scholarly literature, the blues scale has been discussed in a variety of ways since the 1930s. For a sample of viewpoints and positions, see: Samuel B. Charters, *The Bluesmen: The Story and the Music of the Men Who Made the Blues* (New York: Oak Publications, 1967), 29–30; Sargeant, *Jazz: Hot and Hybrid*, 160; Gunther Schuller, *Early Jazz: Its Roots and Musical Development* (1968; repr. New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 43–54; Gerhard Kubik, *Africa and the Blues* (Jackson, MS: University of Mississippi, 1999), 118–145; and Jeff Todd Titon, *Early Downhome Blues: A Musical and Cultural Analysis* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1977), 154–165.

⁷³ DeVeaux, *Birth of Bebop*, 81.

measures of each chorus (presumably because those Cb's would create a too-pungent dissonance with Reinhardt's C-naturals). Rather than play dominant seventh chords, Ellington plays triads or major-sixth chords (though admittedly the low fidelity of the recording makes it difficult to hear all harmonies with full clarity), saving the I⁷ chord for m. 4 as a strong push into the IV chord.

But the guitarist's first musical statement does even more: it establishes a strong idiosyncratic musical presence. With just one musical gesture, the guitarist has, in effect, imposed his sonic world, with its own musical priorities and preferences, onto the sound world of his musical colleagues. In subsequent choruses, the guitarist returns again and again to those C-naturals, spinning out new variations on this riff, with all its harmonic and melodic implications (see instances in Example 1 at 2₁₋₂ and 3₁₋₂). And when Reinhardt departs from those C-naturals, he does so on his own instigation and on his own terms. For example, though Reinhardt does touch on the flatted-7th of the tonic in 1₄ (Example 1), the first unequivocal blues gesture comes at the very end of the first chorus, squeezed into the last two measures. Here Reinhardt bends by half-step into a Cb and then follows it with a triplet figure that alternates between Fb and F. Through this approach, Reinhardt now introduces the tonal, timbral, and rhythmic world of the blues. A short while later, Reinhardt opens his fourth chorus with a series of rhythmically precise, chromatically-connected triads that strongly suggest an underlying dominant-seventh sound (see Example 1 at 4₁₋₂). Rather than waiting (as in the previous cycles), Reinhardt now dramatically opens a chorus with musical material that strongly suggests a more traditional blues melodic, if not rhythmic, orientation. As with those previous C-naturals, Reinhardt is calling the musical shots here and dictating the harmonic framework as well as any deviations from it. Reinhardt evokes the blues at his instigation and on his terms.

This emphasis on C-naturals, as opposed to Cbs (the flat-7th of the tonic Db and a "blue" note), is part of a larger—and often very dramatic—tension in Reinhardt's playing between triadic diatonicism and a richer seventh-chord chromaticism. Interestingly, one of the starkest examples of this tension in Reinhardt's style is found on a 1937 recording that Reinhardt made of Duke Ellington's tune, "In Sentimental Mood." This recording was made two years before the two met in Paris, and nine years before Reinhardt's U.S. tour. Recorded with the Quintette du Hot Club de France, the song features a striking solo-guitar introduction performed by Reinhardt (see Example 3). Unlike the body of the song, which features conventional, jazz ballad-style playing by Reinhardt and violinist Grappelli, the introduction is distinctly separate.⁷⁴ Avoiding the highly ornamented, dense melodic runs, and explosive chords he employs elsewhere, this introduction features primarily a string of parallel first-inversion triads. The exclusively chordal playing here is overwhelmingly triadic and diatonic, and it presents a sharp contrast to the richly-ornamented, chromatically-enhanced lines that Reinhardt plays in the chorus of the song.

⁷⁴ While the introduction is harmonically and rhythmically marked as distinct and separate from the main song, there is a connection to the tune's melody in the upper voices of the chords in the first two measures. This connection was insightfully pointed out by one of this article's reviewers.



Example 3 Introduction to “In a Sentimental Mood,” from Benjamin Givan, *Django Reinhardt's Style and Improvisational Process* (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 2003), 250.

This diatonic/chromatic tension evident throughout Reinhardt's playing has a close cousin in another of the guitarist's favored melodic devices: his frequent but brief digressions outside the stated key. This approach can be found throughout his playing in the 1946 Chicago concert recording. This sort of “side-slipping,” or “outside” playing, is a kind of extreme form of the chromaticism common in Reinhardt's playing.⁷⁵ At 2₂₋₃ of Example 1, Reinhardt plays three very brief sixteenth-note phrases that each descend a half-step. The middle phrase, Ebb-Gbb-Ebb-Bb (enharmonically D-E-D-Bb), features two notes outside the Db key and not otherwise explainable as blues notes. This very brief chromatic melodic sequence enables Reinhardt to “side-slip” outside the key, thereby creating a logical but still highly dissonant melody. Later in his ninth chorus (see Example 4 at 9₈₋₉), Reinhardt negotiates the transition from the ii⁷ to the V⁷ by playing another melodic sequence that, through a similar chromatic logic, slips briefly outside, and then back inside, the key (Example 4). The arpeggiated triads—Bb minor, B diminished, C diminished, Db minor, and Db major—are cleverly connected with half-steps giving the phrase order and logic even as it moves outside the tonic key area. Dissonant playing, like these side-slipping gestures, is not uncommon in Reinhardt's recorded music from around this time and later.⁷⁶ However, such “outside” playing was not common in the Ellington Orchestra, though the band's leader was fond of introducing abrupt statements of strikingly dissonant materials at the piano and in his arrangements.⁷⁷ Reinhardt's “side-slipping” gestures

⁷⁵ The term “side-slipping” is a relatively common term in the jazz literature, and particularly in pedagogical materials. Sometimes a synonym for “outside” playing, it often indicates a more narrow type of melodic improvisation, one where the improviser briefly ventures just outside the stated chord or underlying tonality, thereby “slipping” into a neighboring key (as opposed to more a sustained solo “outside” the underlying harmonies). Often such “side-slipping” is resolved when the improviser returns to the stated or understood harmony. For example, an arpeggiation of a Db⁷ chord over an D⁷ chord, or a running of a Db-major scale against a D-major scale, are kinds of side-slipping. For a good example of this practice in context, see Tracey Heavner, “Woodshed Solo: Michael Brecker's Side-Slipping Tenor Saxophone Solo on ‘Delta City Blues,’” *Down Beat*, March 2006, 90–91.

⁷⁶ Benjamin Givan provides a detailed analysis of Reinhardt's experimental use of dissonance in both the years after 1946 and his return to Europe. Givan, *Django's Style*, 290–294.

⁷⁷ In his exhaustive analysis of the Ellington Orchestra in the 1930s and 1940s, Gunther Schuller frequently discusses Ellington's approach to dissonance in arranging. For one example, see Schuller's analysis of the Ellington band's famous recording of “Daybreak Express.” Schuller, *The Swing Era*, 61–63, 46–157.

The image shows two staves of musical notation in 12/8 time. The first staff begins with a D^b chord. The melody starts with a quarter rest, followed by a quarter note D^b , and then a series of eighth notes: F^b , G^b , A^b , B^b , C^b , D^b , E^b , F^b , G^b , A^b , B^b , C^b , D^b . A bracket is placed under the notes F^b through C^b . Above the staff, a $E^b \text{min}7$ chord is indicated. The second staff begins with an A^b7 chord. The melody continues with eighth notes: D^b , E^b , F^b , G^b , A^b , B^b , C^b , D^b , E^b , F^b , G^b , A^b , B^b , C^b , D^b . A triplet of eighth notes (D^b , E^b , F^b) is marked with a '3' below it. The staff ends with a quarter rest and a D^b chord.

Example 4 Example of Reinhardt’s melodic “side-slipping” (bracketed) from “A Blues Riff,” 9₈₋₁₂.

are part of a larger pattern of self-assertion and of marking boundaries between himself and his musical cohorts.

Listening closely to the recording of “A Blues Riff,” it is clear that it takes the Ellington rhythm section nearly two choruses to adjust to Reinhardt’s style and approach to the blues. Beyond establishing complex issues like melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic preferences, the band and its guest soloist must decide the very basic issue of even *when* a soloist should begin. Reinhardt’s “You start, I follow” framework creates an ambiguous and paradoxical situation. The band must begin the music, thus making all sorts of musical decisions regarding tempo, chords, and rhythmic feel. Yet the song is intended to be a showcase for the soloist. Reinhardt is in the difficult position of being both leader and follower.

The recording of “A Blues Riff” fades in midway through the second measure of the 8-bar introduction by Ellington, Pettiford, and Greer. Ellington’s aforementioned tonic downbeat chord sends an unequivocal message: this is bar one of the blues form. Reinhardt enters though in the middle of bar two, a choice that presents an interesting, off-kilter start which precludes the use of a common IV-chord substitution in that second bar. This “late” start also suggests that Reinhardt’s entrance might be heard as the first measure of the blues form. Possibly to clear up any confusion and make sure that the guitarist is in the same place as the band, Ellington strikes a very loud I^7 chord on the upbeat to m. 4, which also offers a musical preparation for the move to the subdominant in m. 5. This act is a clear sign to everyone that the subdominant approaches, a key structural point in the 12-bar form.

Ellington holds his preparatory I^7 chord for all of m. 4 before resolving it to the subdominant (G^b7) in m. 5. Meanwhile, Reinhardt makes his second phrase statement in mm. 4–5. This passage offers a melody that answers the first riff phrase, but it includes a chromatic adjustment to ostensibly match the move to the subdominant (F-natural to F^b). While the first statement matches the tonic harmony, the second could fit into either tonic or dominant harmonies (in the tonic, the F^b becomes a flat-3rd, a blues note, and in the subdominant, the same note becomes the flat-7th). But the similarity between the two phrases—each has the basic structure of two eighth-notes, a triplet, and four eighth-notes—suggests that Reinhardt was aiming for an idiomatic blues call-and-response-type gesture where a melody is stated in the tonic then repeated with

variation in the subdominant. But the gesture really only anticipates the subdominant, hovering as it does ambiguously between the transition from tonic to subdominant. Under certain performing circumstances, Reinhardt's second melodic statement could lead to confusion. Ellington's prominent I^7 harmony (a chord struck just prior to Reinhardt's second phrase) is clearly designed to avoid such confusion. Reinhardt received this "message," but his slightly off-kilter opening has introduced a formal ambiguity that will have to be worked out.

After the move to the subdominant, Reinhardt continues through the second four-bar section of the blues with some long ornamented lines that again emphasize the tonic major-7th scale degree (C-natural over the Db chords). Reinhardt finishes his first chorus with some bluesy phrases that stress the flat-3rd and flat-7th (Eb and Bb, respectively) of the tonic, and a clear V-I melodic gesture in m. 12. However, echoing the ambiguous placement of his first call-and-response phrase, Reinhardt ends his first chorus on beat 3 of m. 12. In sharp contrast to later choruses where the guitarist will leave ample space—often a whole measure—between the end of one chorus and the beginning of the next, here he fills the chorus up until almost the very last moment. This abrupt ending, while not technically "wrong," again opens the possibility of formal confusion. In fact, most of the chorus (with the exception of the first two phrases) avoids the common blues call-and-response performance trope where, for example, a singer fills two bars with lyrics and an instrumentalist responds with two bars of music. Whether Reinhardt is deliberately playing with these conventions is not clear, though this oddly phrased ending to his first chorus creates formal uncertainty in the second.

When Reinhardt begins his second chorus on the first offbeat with a chromatic phrase that begins on the third scale degree of the tonic (F), the effect seems to almost elide the choruses together. This is not an uncommon solo technique; in this performance, however, it is awkward. During the first measures of the second chorus, it sounds as if Ellington (and maybe even Pettiford and Greer) is not completely sure where Reinhardt is in the blues form. In m. 2 of the second chorus, Ellington again punches a strong chord on the upbeat—a gesture almost identical to what he played in m. 3 of the first chorus where it was meant as a lead-in to the subdominant. Here the signal is too early. These two "signal" chords are slightly different but each is meant to function in the same way (i.e., as a lead-in to the IV harmony).

After a few tentative follow-ups, Ellington and company go into a holding pattern, and wait for a cue from the guitarist that might signal where he is in the blues form. At beat 3 of m. 5, there is an audible "ah!"—most likely the voice of Ellington himself after realizing exactly where Django is. Now formally re-aligned, Ellington, Pettiford, and Greer confidently begin the final four measures of the second chorus. In sharp contrast to the guitarist's concluding phrase in the first chorus, the ending to the second really does sound like a conclusion: rather than pushing right up against the final beat of the form, Reinhardt propels his last phrase into m. 9, concluding on the last upbeat of m. 10. That last note lingers into m. 12 of the cycle, allowing the rhythm section to propel the soloist into the next chorus. The near musical mishap is perhaps the strongest indication of the unsure musical interaction going on: it is the Ellington band that must

not only adjust to the soloist but also literally find him in the form. Given the forcefulness of Reinhardt’s melodic statements, his original musical directive to Ellington when they first met (i.e., “You Play. I’ll follow”) is reversed: you will follow what I will play.⁷⁸ Figure 1 offers a summary of the formal confusion audible in the second chorus.

By the third chorus, everyone is together formally and harmonically, and the rest of the performance unfolds with no noticeable conflicts. In fact, Reinhardt clearly settles in, and the third chorus begins with a wave of notes, a blistering sixteenth-note sequence that elaborates on his original “riff,” with those prominent C-naturals (see Example 1 at 3₁).⁷⁹ By the seventh chorus, the guitarist reaches a kind of climax. Opening with a double-time statement and a stop-time accompaniment from the band, Reinhardt spins out one of the fastest, most harmonically- and rhythmically-adventurous solo lines yet (see Example 5). The most interesting part of the line is the material played in 7₂, which involves a strikingly dissonant phrase, and another example of Reinhardt’s

Django Reinhardt (guitar) begins the blues form with the Ellington downbeat following the pianist’s brief introduction (likely 8 measures long, but the recording fades in). Reinhardt keeps to this count, following a conventional 12-bar, major-key blues form:

Measure	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Chord	I			17	IV		I		ii	V	I		I			17	IV		I		ii	V	I	

Duke Ellington (piano) starts with Reinhardt but somewhere toward the end of the first chorus (m. 8 or m. 9) Ellington appears to lose him:

Measure	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
Chord	I			17	IV		I						I	17(?)	(IV?)		*					ii	V	I	

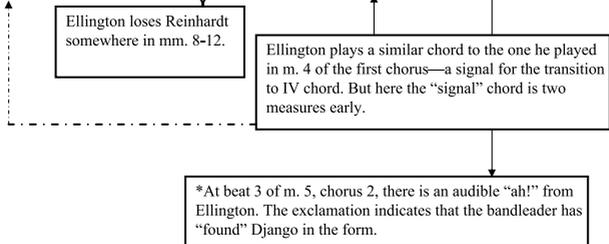


Figure 1 First two choruses of “A Blues Riff” as played by Reinhardt (top) and Ellington (bottom). Rhythm section introduction is not shown.

⁷⁸ In *Saying Something*, Ingrid Monson discusses at length a more extreme case of formal disorientation during a jazz performance (cf. note 36 in this article). Like Ellington and his colleagues, the musicians in Monson’s illustration choose to follow the soloist rather than continue, unsuccessfully, to bring the soloist back into formal alignment. There is, however, a difference: the performance Monson describes is based on a mutual agreement of collective music making that each musician shares in the creation of the musical experience. With Django, that mutuality has been attenuated, I believe, to a greater degree, and the balance of power—through sheer force of musical will—has been dramatically shifted in favor of the soloist.

⁷⁹ This was a common Django lick. See Dan Lambert, “Django’s Blues,” in *The Guitar in Jazz: An Anthology*, ed. James Sallis (Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 73. In his dissertation, Givan provides a remarkable and detailed typology of patterns in Django’s playing. The pattern in question falls under Givan’s category of “superformulas.” Givan identifies over twenty-four occurrences in his nearly 200 transcriptions of recorded Django solos. Givan, *Django’s Style*, 176, 185, 194.

Example 5 “A Blues Riff”, 7₁₋₅.

penchant for “side-slipping” briefly outside the underlying harmony (here Reinhardt is generating arpeggios and melodies from inside a D^7 chord, which lies a half-step above the tonic).

What really makes this phrase especially dramatic is the convergence of several factors: the speed of Reinhardt’s execution, its harmonic interest, and his rhythmic confidence. The phrase is timed perfectly to finish on the second beat of m. 5, which marks the shift to the subdominant and the second four-bar section of the chorus. On Steiner’s recording, you can even hear the Ellington band members’ individual exclamations of amazement at the guest soloist’s confidence and virtuosity. Reinhardt seems to energize the band with his blast of dissonant sixteenth notes, and then the opening of the following chorus, 8₁₋₄, offers yet another exciting moment of musical convergence as drummer Sonny Greer picks up on a series of the guitarist’s syncopated chords and matches them with simultaneous accents on the snare and bass drums. In striking juxtaposition with the opening of the performance, the last chorus features Reinhardt playing octaves in bluesy melodic and rhythmic counterpoint to the backing lines of the horns and reeds. These moments that balance individual virtuosity and collective music-making are highly prized by jazz musicians and listeners. But getting to this place, as we have seen, required a lot of work by the all the musicians involved. Reinhardt had to transform a foreign space to something more familiar and manageable before he could engage in a more mutual interaction. Through an insistence on certain very particular musical parameters, the guitarist sonically remade his surroundings.

Yet, even at its most interactive, Reinhardt’s playing always displays an insistent and obsessive assertion of musical presence, as he works hard in the performance to highlight his idiosyncrasies. The guitarist uses several tactics to do this. His extremely virtuosic scalar patterns (e.g., the neighbor-note, sixteenth-note sequence that opens the third chorus) are exciting, and in the context of guitar playing at that time, such devices are highly unusual and daring. This virtuosity speaks to the uniqueness of the soloist, as gestures designed to elicit reactions (such as “only Django could play that!”). Reinhardt also favors an opulent approach to ornamenting individual notes.⁸⁰

⁸⁰ In jazz improvisation, the idea of ornamentation is, on closer scrutiny, actually quite complex, but for the purposes of this essay I will adopt—with some reservations—the idea articulated by Givan that in Django’s solos there are underlying melodic formulae, especially arpeggios of chords, that are realized in various ways. See *ibid.*, 162–163.

His most dramatic uses of ornamentation—the kinds of musical gesture that speak to his insistent assertion of presence—are generally very rapid relative to the surrounding notes, and these gestures are used to intensify their surrounding material. These ornaments often suggest various types of mordents, turns, and trills. Reinhardt also favored idiomatic guitar techniques like slides, string bends, and octave doubling—all of which are scattered in quantity throughout “A Blues Riff.” The last five measures of the third chorus (see Example 1 at 3₈₋₁₂) show just how much Reinhardt infused his solos with these types of melodic decorations: measures 3₆, 3₈, and 3₉ all feature rapid triplets that are used as lower, neighbor-note ornaments. In addition, m. 9 has a brief glissando on beat 4, m. 10 has another decorative sixteenth-note triplet, and m. 11 features another sixteenth-note, neighbor-note figure. Such intense uses of highly embellished melodic lines contrast sharply with the less-decorated lines of his musical idols like Louis Armstrong and Coleman Hawkins.⁸¹ For listeners of a certain awareness (and, of course, it is pure conjecture to presume what mix of listeners types were in the Chicago Opera House audience), such ornamentation might perhaps point to a generalized sound-image of gypsy music or a more general racial Other.⁸² But even without grasping this type of an associative link, such intensely decorated melodies are indicative of a strong musical personality—they allow Reinhardt to fill even more of the musical space, to cram that much more of himself into each measure. By doing this, Reinhardt is insisting on a relationship between performers that emphasizes a protected individuality rather than a more open give-and-take “conversation” between musicians.

Through a combination of these small and large musical gestures, Reinhardt transforms the musical space of “A Blues Riff.” By insisting on C-naturals rather than C-flats, the guitarist demands a certain way of playing the blues that emphasizes a diatonic orientation in the first four measures. This blues, he is saying, will be tonally different in flavor than the other blues that the Ellington band would play that night. But more than simply establishing the initial harmonic terrain, Reinhardt, through his departure and return to the C-naturals and his interjections of other rhythmic and timbral blues conventions, dictates the overall balance in the performance between diatonicism and chromaticism, blues and non-blues sound worlds. What results is a

⁸¹ In *Early Jazz*, Schuller provides a lengthy discussion of Armstrong’s solo style along with many transcriptions. Armstrong often used vibrato and grace notes but nothing approaching the density of Django’s turns and mordents. In his monograph, *The Birth of Bebop*, Scott DeVeaux amply documents Hawkins’s harmonic approach to improvisation, which involves the dense use of arpeggios. To best hear the contrast between Django’s highly-embellished melodies and his American models, listen to Armstrong’s introductory statement and solo on his famous *West End Blues* (1927) and Hawkins’s multiple-chorus solo on his 1938 recording of “Body and Soul.” Both recordings are widely commercially available. See Schuller, *Early Jazz*, 89–133; and Scott DeVeaux, *The Birth of Bebop*, 72–115.

⁸² For concise survey of specific musical signifying practices of racial Others, see Derek B. Scott, “Orientalism and Musical Style,” *The Musical Quarterly* 82 (Summer 1998), 326–327. As Scott points out, Orientalist signifiers in Western music are not meant “to imitate but to represent” through “culturally learned” patterns. The specific Other that is being referenced is contingent on the performance, its context, and other associated musical signs. Hearing Django as “gypsy” depends on a number of related phenomena. It might be plausible for at least some in the audience that night in Chicago to have heard certain musical events, especially the intensive ornamentation, as sounding “gypsy.”

performance more in line with Reinhardt's approach to jazz than that of Ellington or his fellow musicians.

In the early measures, other musical negotiations take place that set still more aspects of the unfolding performance. The guitarist makes his first melodic statement in m. 2 of the first chorus, thereby eliminating the possibility of a substitute IV chord. His melodically dense, highly-ornamented style fills the musical space, and his odd phrasing, especially early on, creates formal ambiguities. In the musical negotiation between the guitarist and the Ellington band establishing the initial parameters of the blues, we hear conflict and an audible uneasiness. But even when everything is settled (definitively by the third chorus), Reinhardt is running the show by dictating changes to the very parameters he set—for instance, by dramatically departing from his diatonic C-naturals and slipping inside, and then subsequently outside, the specific underlying chords.

The guitarist's insistence on transforming the abstract musical space is parallel to the physical transformations he effected on the apartments, hotel rooms, automobiles, and other spaces he found himself during his European travels. In her classic 1973 study of urban life, *A World of Strangers*, sociologist Lyn Lofland wrote in-depth about this ability to bring and reshape the spaces around us. For Lofland, it is groups of individuals that bring their spaces with them through the city, remaking public spaces into something more familiar and, at least psychologically, safer. Groups can create a mobile "home territory." But Reinhardt, traveling alone, was able to effect similar kinds of changes, and such an act—according to Lofland—is a very difficult thing to accomplish.⁸³ By drawing on his Rom heritage in his day-to-day living, Reinhardt was able to reshape the very character of the places he went. The biographical literature on the guitarist contains many examples of this. For instance, Django biographer Charles Delaunay recounts how, despite the changes brought on by increasing fame and money in the early 1930s, Reinhardt and his wife Naguine remained "gypsies to the core": "Whether it was a hotel room or the most luxurious mansion[,] their residence was swiftly transformed into a camping-ground. Everything was turned upside down, as though they were set recreating the atmosphere of the caravan they had known from birth."⁸⁴ In 1946, after the cessation of the war, Reinhardt, Naguine, and their son Babik traveled to London to visit Stéphanie Grappelli. As organized by Delaunay, Reinhardt and his family were "moved into a plush apartment in the same hotel [as Grappelli]. The rooms immediately looked like a Romany encampment with 18-month-old Babik running wild, ringing all the hotel bells that beckoned the staff."⁸⁵ The literature on Reinhardt recounts dozens of similar anecdotes.⁸⁶

The structural relationship between Reinhardt's shaping of musical space and non-musical space is one manner of "hearing" spatial experience. But the relationship between musical activity and other activities is not easily separable as they are each

⁸³ Lyn H. Lofland, *A World of Strangers: Order and Action in Urban Public Spaces* (Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press, 1973), 118–139. A special thanks to Gordon Haramaki for directing me to this useful book.

⁸⁴ Delaunay, *Django Reinhardt*, 15.

⁸⁵ Dregni, *Django*, 197.

⁸⁶ For another account of this aspect of Django's personality, see Spautz, *Mythe et réalité*, 17–18, 24.

aspects of a total experience. As Lefebvre insists, spatial activity in one domain of human activity is manifested in other domains. The representational space of music is an imaginative reworking of the other spatial dimensions of modern life: the spatial practice of lived space and the conceived spaces of “representations of space.” The manipulation of abstract musical materials are manifestations of spatial experiences and ideas imported from other realms of human activity in close, dialectical tension with each other.

Following Christopher Small, one useful way of seeing these specific connections between different spheres of life is to conceptualize all music making as a process of establishing relationships among performers and listeners. The relationships Reinhardt establishes onstage between himself and his fellow musicians are the same order of relationships the guitarist established between himself and others offstage. Reinhardt developed a strong individualism nurtured from both his life as a Manouche in a hostile gadjé world and his unique position straddling Roma and mainstream European cultures. The spaces of Reinhardt’s life were important and needed to be protected and defended. He brought this attitude to his jazz playing in Europe with the Hot Club, and he subsequently brought that value system to America and to the Duke Ellington Orchestra. Thus, onstage in the U.S., we hear in his music-making a preoccupation that permeated his life. Reinhardt’s representational space was part and parcel of his larger spatial experience of real bodies moving through physical spaces.

The core conflict here is not simply between one musician (Reinhardt) with an aggressively individualistic style, but a larger conflict between Reinhardt’s representational space and the Ellington’s band’s differently structured one. As noted, the normal operating aesthetic of the Ellington Orchestra was characterized by a significantly higher degree of musical and personal negotiations. The geographical reality of Ellington’s life was shared by his fellow musicians, and together the band created a musical synthesis that reflected their own spatial experiences. Ellington and his orchestra were more widely traveled than most other American musicians (and non-musicians) and the representational spaces they constructed were responses to their unique situation. They were, I believe, preoccupied above all with imaginatively transforming American geography, and with creating new, non-racist American places that could encompass the band’s rich geographical backgrounds.⁸⁷ By contrast, Reinhardt was responding to very different spatial experiences of modern life—and, most specifically, his experience as a relatively nomadic Manouche gypsy who was required to tenaciously stake out and hold onto his own space in a distrustful, frequently hostile, Western European society. In the end, Reinhardt achieved the transformation of the musical space of the Civic Opera’s House, but once the concert was over, he found himself unable to effect the same change on other unfamiliar American spaces he needed to live in. As his two surviving letters reveal, the tour was difficult, and the

⁸⁷ A full treatment of this idea is available in my dissertation chapter on the Duke Ellington Orchestra of the mid to late 1940s, “A Traveling Laboratory of Place: Looking for Home on the Road with the Duke Ellington Orchestra,” in Andrew Berish, *Swinging Transcontinental: Modernity, Race, and Place in American Dance Band Music, 1930 to 1946* (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 2005), 180–241.

guitarist often felt lonely and homesick for Paris and his Rom community of family and friends.⁸⁸

Historiographical Revisions: Traveling Through “The City of Jazz”

In his 1973 autobiography, *Music Is My Mistress*, Ellington writes a witty, typically self-deprecating, and very provocative passage describing his own dislocated musical life. This passage offers another statement (this time in prose rather than music) of a representational space. Ellington's anecdote provides an imaginative transformation of a particular experience of geography. Rather than locating himself in a particular city, state, or nation, Ellington situates himself in “The City of Jazz,” which he describes as “a place in which certain people live. Some are on their way out, while many others are on their way in. Some are rushing to get there, but others appear reluctant and are cautious in their approach.” According to Ellington, “There are those who work for the city (the players), those who work at the city (the analysts), and those who just enjoy it (these are my people).” He continues:

This City of Jazz does not have any specific geographical location. It is anywhere and everywhere, wherever you can hear the sound, and it makes you do like this—you know! Europe, Asia, North and South America, the world digs this burg—Digsville, Gonesville, Swingersville, and Wailingstown. There are no city limits, no city ordinances, no policemen, no fire department, but come rain or come shine, drought or flood, I think I'll stay here in this scene, with these cats because almost everybody seems to dig what they're talking about, or putting down.⁸⁹

Ellington's City of Jazz provides an alternative approach to conceptualizing jazz history. In this spatialized presentation of jazz, one can move through the music's history as if it were a series of physical markers, and thus experience the music's past and present simultaneously. This description has the advantage of focusing our attention on the simultaneous influences and cross-influences that have animated jazz history—i.e., the synchronic relationships that have created for Ellington a coherent tradition and an artistic utopia amidst the uncertainties and cruelties of daily life, especially for African Americans in the United States. Living in this City of Jazz, all of the music's history is “present” in both past influences and living musicians: “In the city's public square, you find statues of heroes. Some are of those who built the walls, like Buddy Bolden and King Oliver.... Some are of those who fought to save the city, like Fletcher Henderson and Paul Whiteman.” In the concert halls “where they play the masterworks, are statues of some of the great ones who long defended the walls, like Bechet, Armstrong, and Hawk.”⁹⁰

As one of the creators of this place, Ellington is generous in bestowing citizenship. He includes blacks and whites, including much-maligned figures like Paul Whiteman, the great white popularizer of the music in the 1920s. For all his inclusiveness (Ellington

⁸⁸ Dregni, *Django*, 222–223.

⁸⁹ Duke Ellington, *Music Is My Mistress* (New York: Doubleday, 1973; reprint, New York: Da Capo, n.d.), 130.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 129.

was famously judicious in his assessments of fellow musicians), the act of creating an imaginary geography of jazz necessarily means creating certain boundaries. There are insiders and outsiders, those who live in the city and those that pass through it. His modesty aside (he claims he just visits regularly), Ellington never just inhabited this city, he helped built it.

Ellington does not mention Reinhardt in this “City of Jazz” passage, but the guitarist does make brief appearances elsewhere in his memoirs as a “citizen of Paris ... a very dear friend ... and among the few great inimitables of our music.’ These comments offer a seemingly unambiguous embrace of the guitarist.⁹¹ That said, despite his renowned tact, Ellington does leave Reinhardt out of his jazz city. While certainly not malicious or disrespectful, this seeming oversight is nonetheless very telling, and it suggests again that Reinhardt occupies an unusual position in the lives (and minds) of American jazz musicians. In *Music Is My Mistress*, Reinhardt is paradoxically both a marginal and central figure in jazz. Despite being called one of the “few great inimitables of our music” (even though he was a “citizen of Paris”), he appears in the book only once. It is a provocative indication of the guitarist’s position in the bandleader’s spatial imagination.

If Ellington overlooks Reinhardt in his “City of Jazz,” Reinhardt himself would be uncomfortable in such a static, American-centered, gadjé place. Looking at his behavior as a whole, from the music to his offstage behavior and preoccupations, Reinhardt is best understood as a tourist through Ellington’s imagined jazz metropolis. In other words, he is strong, independent, whole to himself, but at a basic level still alienated from the Ellington project. I believe Reinhardt understood himself to be playing an American music. He idolized the jazz musicians he first heard on record in Frenchman Emile Savitry’s apartment, and this initial connection to the music notably included performances by Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, and Sidney Bechet.⁹² Like Ellington and his fellow musicians, Reinhardt too had to puzzle out the relationship between his various identities. However, unlike Ellington and his bandmates, Reinhardt felt himself to be an outsider in America. As demonstrated above though, careful analysis can reveal how the specific contours of such “negative” or conflictual musical conversations can point to different social-geographical positions.

While there is a danger in using a single detailed example to generalize about a long and varied career, this unusual American encounter between the gypsy musician and the Ellington Orchestra provides an especially compelling example of the issues involved in making sense of the guitarist as part of an American-originated jazz tradition. Reinhardt’s peripheral location in jazz histories is not simply a matter of inadequate or American-centric jazz narratives, and the effort to insert him coherently into

⁹¹ Ibid., 141: “Among those I think of as citizens of Paris was Django Reinhardt, a very dear friend of mine, and one whom I regard as among the few great inimitables of our music. I had him on a concert tour with me in 1946, so that I could enjoy him more. He was not billed because he was booked after the tour had been sold and the advertising was out. I always said that Django was a great believer, because a believer is an optimist who thinks of tomorrow, and one of Django’s favorite sayings was, “Tomorrow, maybe ...”

⁹² For two similar versions of the story of Django’s first encounter with American jazz in the apartment of Emile Savitry, see Delaunay, *Django Reinhardt*, 46–49, and Dregni, *Django*, 52–55.

existing (or newly constructed) histories has proved inadequate so far. Reinhardt was both, and at the same time, an *insider* and *outsider*—musically and geographically—and he was a traveler through the American jazz landscape. Rather than trying to rewrite a jazz narrative that will embrace Reinhardt in terms of his musical contributions, we need a critical reorientation that can make better sense of his conflicted insider/outsider status musically, geographically, and culturally. The conclusion that place matters in jazz, and musicology more generally, though, is not to deny Austerlitz's notion of "jazz consciousness." I am not suggesting that outsiders can never play like insiders, nor that only cultural insiders can get the whole picture. Rather, I am arguing that the lived experience of geography produces differing musical practices that complicate and enrich musical interaction, thereby making this activity that much more complicated an experience, and one that can juxtapose radically different representational spaces. To place Reinhardt in jazz historiography requires recognition that his "jazz consciousness" (or "Afrological" orientation) was complicated by a very different experience of twentieth-century geography.

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Abstract

While perhaps the most famous and adept practitioner of American jazz in Europe during the 1930s and 1940s, the Manouche gypsy guitarist Django Reinhardt was an outsider—both culturally and geographically—to American jazz. For this reason, scholars have had difficulty "placing" him securely in American jazz history. Reinhardt only visited the United States once, in 1946, as a guest of the Duke Ellington Orchestra. A recording made during that tour, "A Blues Riff," presents the listener with a complex musical negotiation of contrasting musical and cultural values. What we hear in this performance is not just a debate over what notes to play when, but over what philosopher Henri Lefebvre calls "representational spaces," or the imaginative, symbolic transformations of lived spatial experience. This essay argues that the task of locating Reinhardt in jazz history requires a new theoretical appreciation for the material importance of space and place in the shaping of musical performance.