

[Pre-publication final version of article
published online 8 November 2018 in
International Journal of Heritage Studies
DOI: 10.1080/13527258.2018.1544165]

The heritage of slavery in British jazz festivals

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Abstract

This article explores site-specific heritage questions of the contemporary cultural practice of festivals of jazz—a key transatlantic music form—by bringing together three areas for discussion and development: questions of slavery heritage and legacy; the location, built environment and (touristic) offer of the historic city; and the contemporary British jazz festival, its programme and the senses or silences of (historical) situatedness in the festival package. Other artistic forms, cultural practices and festivals are involved in self-reflexive efforts to confront their own pasts; such are discussed as varying processes of the decolonisation of knowledge and culture. This provides the critical and cultural context for consideration of the jazz festival in the Georgian urban centre. Preliminary analysis of relevant jazz festivals' programmes, commissions and concerts leads to interrogating the relationship—of silence, of place—between jazz in Britain, historic or heritage locations and venues, and the degree or lack of understanding of the transatlantic slave trade. The heritage centres clearly associated with the slave trade that also have significant (jazz) festivals referred to include Bristol, Cheltenham, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Hull, Lancaster, Liverpool, London, and Manchester.

Keywords

Transatlantic slave trade, slavery, jazz, festival, music, Britain, decolonisation

Biography

George McKay is Professor of Media Studies at the University of East Anglia, UK, and Arts and Humanities Research Council Leadership Fellow for its Connected Communities Programme (2012-19). His research interests are in popular music from jazz to punk, festivals, alternative culture and media, social movements and cultural politics. Among his books are *Senseless Acts of Beauty: Cultures of Resistance since the Sixties* (Verso, 1996), ed. *DiY Culture: Party & Protest in Nineties Britain* (Verso, 1998), *Glastonbury: A Very English Fair* (Gollancz, 2000), co-ed. with Pete Moser *Community Music: A Handbook* (Russell House, 2004), *Circular Breathing: The Cultural Politics of Jazz in Britain* (Duke UP, 2005), *Radical Gardening: Politics, Idealism & Rebellion in the Garden* (Frances Lincoln, 2011), *Shakin' All Over: Popular Music and Disability* (Michigan UP, 2013), ed. *The Pop Festival: History, Media, Music, Culture* (Bloomsbury, 2015), and, with Emma Webster, *Music From Out There, In Here: 25 Years of London Jazz Festival* (2017). Forthcoming is *The Oxford Handbook of Punk Rock* (Oxford UP), which he is co-editing with Gina Arnold. He has been a member of several EU projects, including Society & Lifestyles (FP6; 2006-08), Rhythm Changes (HERA; 2012-12), and CHIME (Heritage+ JPI; 2015-17). His website is georgemckay.org.

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This article brings together three areas for discussion and development. These are: questions of slavery heritage and legacy; the location, built environment and (touristic) offer of the historic city; and the contemporary British jazz festival, its programme and the senses or silences of (historical) situatedness in the festival package. The article seeks to extend the now established idea of ‘bring[ing] together two phenomena which at first glance are seemingly quite antithetical—slavery and tourism’ (Dann and Seaton 2001, 1), by adding a third, the jazz festival, which shares resonances and complications with each (slavery, jazz and African-American and Black Atlantic experiences; tourism and festival). The work is not concerned with ‘slavery heritage tourism’, but rather with heritage and cultural consumption and production at ‘TAST-related sites’ (TAST = Transatlantic Slave Trade; Yankholmes and McKercher 2015, 234) where the core cultural offer is jazz music, jazz being a transatlantic mode formed through the forced migratory exchanges of slavery and triangulation. This may be dark tourism of the most indirect (or ‘pale’: R. Sharpley, cited in Yankholmes and McKercher 2015, 235) variety—after all, to what extent is it thanatourism to visit a Georgian square to listen to some modern music? Preliminary analysis of relevant jazz festivals’ programmes, commissions and concerts leads to interrogating the relationship—of silence, of place—between jazz in Britain, historic or heritage locations and venues, and the degree or lack of TAST understanding. The heritage centres clearly associated with the slave trade that also have significant (jazz) festivals I refer to include Bristol, Cheltenham, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Hull, Lancaster, Liverpool, London, and Manchester.

In recent years I have spent a good deal of time working closely with jazz festivals in Britain in the role of academic co-researcher and university /public event organiser, including several of those above. I am concerned that the questions I am posing and interrogating may

be uncomfortable ones for some of those, for example, festival directors and organisers who I have come to know and respect for the tireless work they do in facilitating a music scene and supporting creative expression. Such folk have often been (like me) middle-aged white men. I recognise that, in the calm understated words of A.V. Seaton, '[t]he attribution of slavery associations inevitably changes perceptions of families, places and history' (2001, 121). Nonetheless also I do hope to provoke thoughtful disturbance within the communities, places and histories of jazz festivals, and that that disturbance be productive.¹ In recent years other cultural and heritage sites as well as practices in multi-arts festival locations *have* been productively disturbed—from without, from within—and forced or elected to revise their narratives to acknowledge the complexities and discomforts of a TAST past. Historic architecture from stately home to city street, the museum sector, garden history and floriculture, visual arts, theatre, universities—each has engaged or re-engaged with their flawed and complicit past, whether reluctantly, partially, or with serious political commitment. Many of these cultural practices and sites—jewels in the heritage crown today—have direct relationships with the slave trade: slavers' compensation money actually paid for *that* desirable town house in the English Regency quarter, the still-functioning Georgian theatre was funded in part by *that* transatlantic businessman and 'philanthropist', the mahogany for these stylish furnishings *here* came from those forests *there*, the novel flowers and plants in the country house garden were sourced from those islands. Such TAST-heritage is everywhere and inescapable in Britain—and it is everyday in its mundane rather than exceptional presence.

Heritage, silence and cultural intervention

In La Rochelle, a historic slaving port on the Atlantic coast of France, there is 'a building which is in itself a *lieu de mémoire* of slavery, as it was the property of a prominent trader in

the town' (Forsdick 2012, 288). While a plaque in the building's courtyard reminds visitors today of the very building's significance, Charles Forsdick notes that 'the most telling traces of the slave trade are often architectural and engrained in the cityscape' (Forsdick 2012, 288). Yet to achieve the modest state of everyday enlightenment through articulation and knowledge that even an outward-facing plaque may generate has been a struggle to break the powerful silence which, as Christine Chivallon has pointed out,

surrounds the major event in human history that the Atlantic slave trade represents....
Silence and various forms of forgetting have been the distinctive selective mnemonic modes of confronting [it] ... [Such] amnesia about the slave trade and slavery in the European cultural universe [we can think of as entailing] the conscious or unconscious refusal to integrate into the reformulation of a community's past those events that might disturb the necessarily reassuring image that the collectivity constructs for itself. (Chivallon 2001, 347, 350; emphasis added)

Silence has echoed resoundingly around the public topic. Derrick R. Brooms has noted that, '[i]n many mainstream [American] museums, slavery has suffered from silences, social forgetting, and collective amnesia' (2011, 521). In their discussion of dissonant heritage sites, Aaron Yankholmes and Bob McKercher go further, writing of '*centuries of silence and collective amnesia*' around the slave trade (2015, 233; emphasis added). Of the heritage sector in Britain, Madge Dresser could write not that many years ago that '[t]he relation between exploitation and gentility [was] ... airbrushed,' as were 'the links between trade and consumption, between brutality and innovation, between go-getting avarice and gentrified social improvement' (Dresser 2000, 22, 23). Such 'airbrushing' is a social process, which is arguably altogether more agentic and therefore mutable than the state of silence might first

appear to be. But, of course there have been major changes in the two decades since the likes of Dresser and Chivallon were writing, in terms of public knowledge, as well as museological practice and research. One influential initiative, the millennial UNESCO Slave Route Project launched in 1994, aimed ‘[t]o put an end to the silence surrounding the tragedy of the slave trade and slavery by contributing to a better understanding of its deep-seated causes, its implications, and its forms of operation through multidisciplinary research’ (quoted in Araujo 2010, 156). We would probably wish now to ‘frame the institution of slavery and the experience of enslavement within the tropes of survival, resistance, and achievement’ (Brooms 2011, 512), say, rather than UNESCO’s ‘tragedy’; nonetheless the Slave Route Project helped mark a shift in thinking and practice engendered by intellectuals, activists and radical artists across the spheres.

Today cultural and historical dialogues are ongoing in many sectors (for critical surveys see 1807 Commemorated website, Smith *et al* 2011, Donington, Hanley and Moody 2016a). Different fields of cultural practice have actively intervened in, and drawn creatively on, the legacies of slavery in site-specific and located work, in order to fill the silences and revise the air-brushed narratives. In the field of visual arts, for instance, one striking site-specific piece is Lubaina Himid’s installation *Swallow Hard: The Lancaster Dinner Service* (2007), which consisted of a series of old patterned plates and dishes overpainted in acrylic with images of black slave-servants, caricatures of local slave-traders, scenes of Georgian life or West African textiles, and more. Himid placed her dinner service in the keynote dining room of Lancaster’s Judges’ Lodgings Museum, which is fully furnished in Caribbean mahogany. For Himid this piece was ‘an intervention, a mapping and an excavation ... a fragile monument to an invisible engine working for nothing in an amazingly greedy machine’ (Himid 2007; see also Rice 2010, 74-77). Graham Fagen’s site-specific art

installation, ‘The slave’s lament’, is notable because of its central use of music, both classical (strings) and popular (folk, reggae). Fagen’s audio-visual installation of the Scottish poet Robert Burns’s song ‘The slave’s lament’ (originally published in 1792) is a collaboration with composer Sally Beamish, cinematographer Holger Mohaupt, reggae producer Adrian Sherwood and singer Ghetto Priest. Four screens with accompanying minimal speakers show contrasting film of a 14mins 30secs setting of the song for white classical musicians from the Scottish Ensemble and the black British reggae singer Priest. First shown at the 2015 Venice Biennale in the 17th century Palazzo Fontana—in part, Fagen has explained, as a comment on Venice’s own position as an early slave trade centre (British Council 2015)—it was displayed also at the 2017 Edinburgh Festival in the Scottish National Portrait Gallery. Here the music was allowed to float through to other rooms, where (gallery-goers viewing) artworks of important figures in Scottish national history were lightly disturbed by reggae sounds and Priest’s surprisingly delicate rendering of Burns’s haunting minor-major melody. The dub echo itself echoed.

In England, the west-facing ports of Liverpool, Bristol and Lancaster were, in descending order of scale, leading civic participants in the transatlantic slave trade, while London as the economic and maritime capital also played a significant role, second only to Liverpool (Casbeard 2010, 145; on Liverpool’s dominance see Morgan 2007). Not only urban development but also the building of new as well as renovation of existing country houses and estates around Bristol and Lancaster was funded by ‘slave-derived wealth’ (see Dresser 2000, 35-39; Elder 2007, 132-33). These are notable not least because ‘the acquisition of country houses was not only about social transformation but also about the transformation of self’—from tradesman to aristocrat, for instance (Dresser 2000, 40). More broadly, the slave trade ‘is acknowledged as a major driver of the Industrial Revolution’ and

had significant impact *across* geography and society: it ‘underpinned the emerging role of a British mercantile elite, but [also] profits were reinvested by the landed interest in estates and country houses, and ... subaltern groups ... also benefited—not only mariners, but also weavers, miners, metallurgists, and food producers’ (Gwyn 2012, 300). So, we now know for example that ‘[w]hole regions are often misrepresented, with industrial sites such as Birmingham, England, being neglected in accounts of slavery, despite possessing a history that has been shaped by multiple diasporic legacies’ (Casbeard 2010, 149; see also Green 2008 for ways in which Birmingham’s ‘industrial history is entangled in dominant narratives of empire and slavery’: 190), just as we now understand more of ‘the interconnectedness that exists between histories of slavery, slave-grown cotton and Manchester’s industrial and economic growth’ in the 19th century (Poulter 2011, 35).

Thus we can see that in the past one or two decades ‘the memorial landscapes of ... port cities with connections to the transatlantic slave trade have [begun to be] powerfully altered by the inclusion of monuments, plaques, museums, heritage trails, and public art works that call attention to and commemorate the trade in human cargo and the exploitation of forced labour’ (Rice and Kardux 2012, 246). But this, in the centuries-long practice and centuries-old history of transatlantic slavery, is all very new. After all, Celeste-Marie Bernier and Judie Newman remind us that, ‘[a]s recently as 1988 ... the managing director of Heritage Projects Ltd. dismissed the very idea of a Museum of Slavery as unacceptable to the British public. He had rejected outright a proposal to build one’ (2008, 135). (In 2007, of course, the International Slavery Museum in Liverpool opened.) A recent BBC Radio 4 programme featured a conversation between the poet laureate of Bristol, Miles Chambers, and artistic director of the Georgian Bristol Old Vic theatre, Tom Morris. Recorded on the

theatre stage, the two discussed on national radio their city's ambivalence around a cultural responsibility to engage, which, as Morris put it,

includes being brave about the city's relationship with the transatlantic slave trade because we can't avoid it. Some of the people who invested in the building of this theatre made money in the transatlantic slave trade...

Chambers: [T]he majority of people, probably black and white, mainly white, didn't actually know the impact of slavery.... The money which came from slavery ... led to innovation which has built Bristol, built Liverpool, built London.... (Walker 2017)

Colston Hall, the publicly-owned Bristol concert hall and a major venue for live popular music concerts and festivals, is in the process of being renamed to remove direct association with Edward Colston, the 17th century local philanthropist whose enormous fortune derived from the transatlantic slave trade. Colston is widely commemorated around Bristol, with over 40 streets, buildings, events, societies, artworks and organisations carrying his name (Countering Colston website). Over the past two decades some artists and musicians and fans, including notably since 1998 the leading Bristol band Massive Attack (Chivallon 2001, 35), have boycotted the venue due to its name's association with slavery, and as part of its refurbishment the concert hall is indeed to be renamed—in direct response to the 'campaign to decolonise Bristol' (Countering Colston website).

In Scotland there have been similar developments in terms of the revision of history and the popular acknowledgement of its place in the slave trade; for example, Michael Morris shows 'Glasgow has now begun, however unevenly, to redress its prolonged amnesia ... and to dispel the smoky mists which have long obscured the enslaved peoples on whose backs the

colonial wealth of Georgian Glasgow flourished’ (2016, 196). For Morris, a key impetus was the XX Commonwealth Games held in the city in 2014: with ‘the arrival of so many Caribbean athletes with Scottish surnames ... [t]hat year saw a variety of projects converge to push slavery more prominently into Glasgow’s public sphere’ (2016, 197, 196). In 2018, the University of Glasgow published a report on how it ‘benefitted from racial slavery and the profits it generated’ via historic ‘slavery-tainted gifts’ the university had received (Mullen and Newman 2018, 7, 11), with recommendations including reparations planned.

Yet, while in the view of the contemporary artist SuAndi ‘[t]here is not a bank, stately home, gallery or museum from the 18th and early 19th century whose initial investment is not *tainted by the slave trade*’ (2011, 39; emphasis added), at the same time the touristic offer of heritage civic centres often still emphasises the pleasurable experiences of the historic architecture they contain. For instance, current official tourism websites for Lancaster invite visitors to stroll ‘along St George’s Quay, marvelling at the Georgian architecture which lines the banks of the River Lune’ (Visit Lancashire), and describe it as ‘a city where the past sits comfortably with the present. Splendid stone façades hark back to its heyday as a Georgian port’ (Visit Lancaster). On a page entitled ‘Regency Splendour—Life & Times’ the Visit Cheltenham website informs prospective tourists about the many attractions of ‘a town designed specifically for leisure and pleasure’, in particular its ‘outstanding’, ‘magnificent’, ‘exquisite’ buildings and gardens. The page concludes: ‘for a fun and unique insight into the history of Cheltenham why not take a “Cheltenham Promenaders” guided historical tour where a colourful character from the town’s past will lead you on a journey exploring Cheltenham’s fascinating past’ (Visit Cheltenham). In some sectors, then, ‘splendid’ and ‘exquisite’ silence seems still to remain a dominant or preferred mode of (dis)engagement.

The transatlantic musical culture of jazz

Music understands silence very well indeed. For silence, in a musical context, is both one of the core constituent parts of the pulse, the bit between the beat, the rest or pause between the notes, and the crime against music, its absence or degree zero. It is fundamental. Also, one feels that the crashing and clashing musical sounds that jazz often makes, or is heard making by its critics, ought to be able to contribute in some way to a cultural expression of ‘dissonant heritage’. But to clarify the critical terrain: this is not about jazz music’s direct responses to, explorations of or attempts to capture or present in sonic form some aspect of the experience of transatlantic slavery or the middle passage or its perceived resonance or relevance still in Britain today. Of course these exist, in particular as part of the compositional repertoire of black British musicians, and it is worth pausing here because such works do constitute an important if relatively small field. They include, for example, the Jazz Warriors’ ‘In reference to our forefathers’ fathers’ dreams’ (written by Courtney Pine, 1987)—an important statement of diasporic identity from a key recording of the pivotal black British big band in the 1980s jazz boom—or their *Afropeans* album (2008) from its title onwards. The sleeve notes to *Afropeans* explain that the music was ‘[r]ecorded live ... to commemorate the ABOLITION OF THE SLAVE TRADE by the british house of parliament 25th march 1807’ (Jazz Warriors 2008; typography original); one piece on it reprises the lyric from the Warriors’ ‘In reference to our forefathers’ fathers’ dreams’, 30 years on—a black tradition, self-made. There are individual pieces by saxophonists Soweto Kinch (‘Equiano’s tears’, 2003), Pine again (‘Toussaint L’Ouverture, 2009; ‘Samuel Sharpe’, 2012), and Shabaka Hutchings (several compositions on Sons of Kemet’s 2018 album *Your Queen is a Reptile* pay tribute to important black female figures, such as ‘My queen is Harriet Tubman’ and ‘My

queen is Nanny of the Maroons’). Hutchings has articulated how his music itself signifies, explaining the ‘frenetic pace’ of ‘My queen is Harriet Tubman’ thus:

I just had the image of someone escaping slavery, escaping being in bondage. The feeling of having someone go, ‘If you go down that road, if you meet me at this location, you can be free’. How does that person run? What’s the energy that person puts into actually getting from point A to point B? That person is going to really put all their energy into getting to that place at that time. (Hutchings 2018)

Other ambitious responses include pianist Julian Joseph’s 2007 jazz opera *Bridgetower: A Fable of 1807* (of which further below), and arguably even the transatlantic repertoire more generally of bassist Gary Crosby’s Jazz Jamaica band. Grand Union Orchestra’s 2018 show *Uncharted Crossings* takes as its starting point the 70th anniversary of the arrival of the Windrush generation of Caribbean migrants to the UK, but placed that within ‘the history of African migration’, celebrating especially ‘music [which] has developed into an extraordinary legacy’ of survival of the transatlantic slave trade (GUO 2018). Bandleader Tony Haynes maps the musical diaspora: ‘*Uncharted Crossings* begins with an instrumental piece based on a Yoruba chant that itself had been transported, from Nigeria to Cuba’, and then would be played in the UK (Haynes 2018). One of the most interesting in terms of the site-specificity question of this article is double bassist Larry Bartley’s 2014 suite ‘Blackboy Hill’ which, by its very title, is a situated piece. According to Ian Mann, in his review of the album of which it is ‘the centrepiece’, ‘Blackboy Hill’

originally formed part of Bartley’s 2006 Cheltenham Jazz Festival [premiere]. Named after a notorious thoroughfare in Bristol it’s a three-part suite that reflects Bartley’s

Jamaican roots and serves as a kind of protest through musical allegory against the iniquities of the slave trade. (Mann 2014)

The composition includes a section in which drummer Rod Youngs uses thick metal chains—‘the ironware of slavery’, in James Walvin’s term (2017, chapter 10)—as hand percussion: shaking them, and dropping them on to cymbals (see Bartley 2015); such an act, of making music from chains, may stand as a gesture of sonic reclamation. Youngs told me that ‘For me they represent pain, suffering, brutality, oppression, bondage, resistance, fortitude, strength.... The portion of the suite where I use the chains also represents the stages of the enslaved African’s experience ... capturing, the middle passage, etc’ (personal communication, 5 October 2018). Collectively these compositions, performances and recordings are socially and sometimes musically important contributions to expressing and exploring the Black Atlantic directly in the British jazz subject.² But my core interest here is *site-specific*, about some specific locations of jazz music in performance rather than primarily the music’s composition—at a festival in a heritage civic centre or a concert in a heritage building of TAST-related significance. This seeks to extend our understanding of the relations between place, music and heritage, moving from the site-specific heritage strategies of popular music (Roberts and Cohen 2014, Brandellero and Janssen 2014) to active ways in which music can function to interrogate the heritages of place.

Clearly then jazz music feels it has something significant to bring to the debate. We see that jazz was formed in, through, or out of the experience of the transatlantic slave trade; it is the sonicity and creative practice of the Black Atlantic, forging a music that has gone on to have global impact. Influential histories of the music confirm this: chapter one of Ted Gioia’s *The History of Jazz* opens with a section entitled ‘The Africanization of American

music' (2011, 3); chapter one of Alyn Shipton's *A New History of Jazz* opens with a section entitled 'The music of the plantations' (2002, 15). In the TAST context, it is a music relevant in origin and important in influence. Citing folk music, work songs and sea shanties, Rice makes the familiar point that '[j]azz is not the first musical form to have transatlantic resonance, but only one in a tradition stretching back to the slave trade and onwards to ... rap music' (2010, 147). One might also insert here, according to taste, the blues, rumba, tango, calypso or reggae, and arguably all rock and roll ever, to illustrate and confirm the extraordinary, forceful and endless creative sonic invention of the Black Atlantic.

It should also be noted that few of the other cultural interventions cited above—art, heritage, theatre, and so on—have an essential and repeated cultural politics of liberation such as jazz music claims, via musical characteristics like its central practice of improvisation, or its tradition as an activist music of social and political engagement. In Rice's view it is jazz's improvisatory impulse especially that sets it apart, not (only) for its extraordinary and enduring musical challenges and expressive possibilities, but also because, as one might say, *improv improves*, sort of. For '[i]t is this evanescent mode in improvised music that is used to work against absence, to encode the remembrance which works to reinstitute presence ... while simultaneously, of course, the music by its own immediate disappearance "in the air" expresses the quality of loss' (Rice 2010, 129). Presence and loss: jazz is a dramatising form, not only 'in constant dialogue both diachronically and synchronically' (Rice 2010, 113), but playing out that dialogue through improvisation before our ears, revealing through live performance.

As for jazz's social and political engagement, this is as varied as its significant role in the African-American civil rights movement or as 'secret sonic weapon' (see Belair 1955) of

freedom during the Cold War. We can think of James Baldwin here, writing in the *New Edinburgh Review* in 1979, and mixing tenses to underline the historical present, that jazz ‘began in captivity.... This music begins on the auction-block’ (1979, 329, 330). Jazz remains significant today, and positioned still in a social frame. It is the first music form recognised with an annual celebration by the United Nations, for instance. Since 2012, International Jazz Day has marked the place of jazz in the world’s cultural calendar. According to Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO at the time, ‘Jazz makes the most of the world’s diversity, effortlessly crossing borders and bringing people together.... *From its roots in slavery*, this music has raised a passionate voice against all forms of oppression. It speaks a language of freedom that is meaningful to all cultures’ (Bokova 2012; emphasis added). As the widely cut and pasted text for all events of the official descriptor puts it, each year on 30 April International Jazz Day ‘brings together communities, schools, artists, historians, academics, and jazz enthusiasts all over the world to celebrate and *learn about jazz and its roots*, future and impact; raise awareness of the need for intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding; and reinforce international cooperation and communication’ (Jazz Day website; emphasis added). Here for UNESCO and the United Nations itself, in one strategic contemporary figuration of jazz as global sound and social ideal, we are explicitly invited to ‘learn about jazz and its roots’—that is, the music’s significance is understood in direct relation to its transatlantic origins and history: not just jazz, but *jazz and its roots*.

Further, unlike jazz, few if any of the above cultural interventions have spoken this ‘language of freedom’ so loudly to and creatively drawn from the new black social experience forged in the middle passage. And arguably no other expression has been so energetically, restlessly and creatively innovative as the new music that came from that experience: jazz did not exist before, even could not have existed without, slavery. This

problematic was captured extraordinarily by the African-American saxophonist and composer Oliver Nelson, who proclaimed in a 1975 *downbeat* feature:

The fact that slaves were brought to this country and the slave songs emerged ... it's almost like giving signals. The field song, the spiritual, and before long you have American jazz that developed out of all of this. *And you know, thank God for slavery, because otherwise, I guess, jazz wouldn't have happened at all.* (quoted in Palmer 1990, 11; emphasis original)

What was produced was a startlingly new form of sound and rhythm, dance and method of playing—described by the new musical word, ‘jazz’—which was a foundation of the ‘planetary force’ (Paul Gilroy, cited in McKay 2005, 3) that is black popular music today. Even if contemporary jazz ‘is freighted with historic significance; its every note ... a conscious reference to something that has been played before’ (Lewis 2017), this characteristic, which could be thought of as a heritage identity, is viewed as an aspect not of the redundancy of jazz but of its creative retrospection.

Yet, jazz is a modern music not even really invented in the 18th and 19th centuries, the first jazz recordings were made in 1917, while the jazz festival broadly speaking is a form of cultural gathering invented *after* the Second World War (McKay 2018)—and, unlike opera houses, Georgian theatres and assembly rooms, say, jazz has few long-surviving performance spaces in the form of historic buildings. Jazz itself does not go that far back, and both as a music form *and* a music form centred on improvisation, it has intangibility as a central (heritage) feature.³ Even so, in a gesture connecting contemporary music with historic slavery double bassist and African-American activist Larry Ridley has spoken of ‘roots’ and ‘fruits’,

about ‘the importance of the African roots and the lineage of the African American jazz legacy that has produced the global jazz fruits’ (Ridley 2011). The minor movement Ridley is involved in, called Juneteenth Jazz, has in recent years been active in marking and celebrating the links between jazz music and emancipation. As its website puts it:

Juneteenth is a landmark in history, a celebration of freedom and the end of enslavement in America [on June 19 each year]. Juneteenth Jazz is dedicated to the preservation of the unique aesthetic expression of freedom through jazz, and the spiritual essence of a people whose lives continue to be the creative catalyst of the roots of all America’s music. (Juneteenth Jazz website)

One might think that a music like jazz, so centred on articulating a ‘language of freedom’, as UNESCO put it, could be a sufficiently powerful sonic marker of its own origins to be able to stand alone as a reflexive cultural critique of the historic oppressive systems and structures it was formed through and in opposition to. Thus, in being played, jazz is always bearing the trace memory. By extension, any jazz festival in any location would or could contain the sounds of such a reflexive critique. After all, as Charles Hersch has pointed out about 1960s African-American ‘free jazz’, ‘the music did more than represent [socially] what existed; it contained an alternative vision [of how to live] as well’ (Hersch 1995, 100). Yet Hersch goes on to note that any reality of jazz community working as social culture exists at most in ‘incomplete form’ (1995, 101). Music, it seems, may not be enough on its own: the critical process of re-sounding a place involves more than simply sound. Where the jazz festival has site-specific links to complicity in the transatlantic slave trade, and especially where those links are seen as ones of privilege and property, and *compellingly* where the links are actively silenced or ignored in the local event itself, then jazz can reach for *all* its

cultures—including even jazz studies—to enhance its resonances. This is an enriching not reductive experience.

(Jazz) festival as site of contestation and silence

Do you remember the days of slavery?

Burning Spear, 'Slavery days' (1975)

But why should jazz at the site-specific event of festival be particularised in this field? Let us now consider ways in which festivals, and specifically jazz festivals, have and have not confronted and contested the heritage of slavery that surrounds them. In a west African context, connections between festival and the memorialisation of slavery were already being made in the relatively early practice of memorialisation. In 1966, a few years after independence, President Léopold Sedar Senghor of Senegal hosted the first World Festival of Negro Arts and Culture in the capital, Dakar. Ana Lucia Araujo explains that '[t]he festival had significant repercussions in Europe and the Americas, contributing to develop and promote [Senegal's] Gorée Island and its Slave House not only as a site of memory of the Atlantic slave trade, but also as a tourist destination' (Araujo 2010, 149-150). As it happens, there was limited African-American jazz presence at the festival—Duke Ellington's big band notwithstanding. But nothing too experimental let alone free, no Miles, Monk, Mingus, or Ornette, for example, would be invited and paid to attend by the US organising committee (chaired by a white American) as its country's representatives. '[I]t is likely that the State Department made sure that no black radical artist would attend the festival, for fear that the wind of independence in Africa would provide further ammunition to the Civil Rights

movement' back home, argues H el ene Neveu Kringelbach (2016, 79). Even the event's privileging of culture was itself attacked, for its lack of engagement with economy or social change, its perceived lack of challenge to enduring imperial power. South African poet Keorapatse Kgositsile, exiled from apartheid, 'found the objectives of the Festival to be a sham.... For Kgositsile, the Festival was a poor attempt by Senghor and other "Westernized" Africans to *dialogue* with the "racist maniacs" who dominated the world' (Ratcliff 2014, 178-179). Despite the considerable flaws and critiques, I still want to argue that the idea of cultural festival as site of transatlantic contestation and memorialisation was born; arguably, it was a productive failure. Subsequent editions of the World Festival were held in Lagos, Nigeria in 1977 and back to Dakar in 2010. A more radical festival, the Pan-African Cultural Festival, was organised in Algiers, Algeria in 1969 (with an anniversary edition in 2009). This featured more jazz, and more experimental jazz. Saxophonist Archie Shepp, for instance, played with Algerian and Touareg musicians, and proclaimed to the audience: 'We are still black, and we have come back.... Jazz is a black power! Jazz is an African power! Jazz is an African music!' (quoted in McGregor 2016, 213). For Elizabeth Vihlen McGregor, in Algiers

American artists made it clear to festival-goers that jazz could be used and appreciated to reflect their own political causes, and that the music was not at its core linked to Europeans or to white Americans. Instead, jazz came to be framed as an anti-imperial music connected to the cause of human liberation. (2016, 213-214)

In what are undeniably more modest ways, at UK sites of slave trade, festival has been an intermittent but important site of contestation of history and the refiguration of heritage. For instance, the 1996 Festival of the Sea was intended as an international

celebration of the city of Bristol's maritime past, which became marked by levels of contestation from numerous local constituencies. A key critical response to the festival was the organisation of an 'anti-festival,' from a grassroots and DIY perspective—the carnival carnivalised. Such countering is a not uncommon strategy: radical musicians responded to what they saw as their poor treatment by the Newport Jazz Festival by organising in 1960 an 'anti-festival' (Gabbard 2016, 65); one jazz worker and musician critical of London Jazz Festival's perceived dominance of the British scene—'jazz mafia'—went on in 2015 to establish the Brighton Alternative Jazz Festival (Webster and McKay 2017, 88-89). Thus festivals can dialogise reflexively. Bristol's Festival of the Sea

prompted debate and protests about the appropriateness of promoting a 'white' maritime heritage and identity for a contemporary multi-cultural city—particularly given the event's scant acknowledgement of Bristol's significant roles in slavery and imperialism. An 'Anti-Festival of the Sea' was staged by local multi-cultural arts groups on the eve of the event. Meanwhile, throughout the site fly-posters highlighted Bristol's historical complicity with the slave-trade, and pop group Massive Attack complained on the live television coverage about the partial histories presented at the festival. (Atkinson and Laurier 1998, 203)

In 2007, across the UK well over 200 events were organised marking the bicentenary of the abolition of the slave trade, with a national narrative presenting Britain's moral authority and global leadership—due to the significant part played in abolition by the English politician William Wilberforce—through which historical awareness was interwoven with a strand of self-congratulation (see Smith *et al* 2011). A new museum was announced (Liverpool), a refurbishment of an existing museum (Hull), and a new major exhibition (Bristol) and gallery

(London), each focused on slavery, the local and global perspectives, abolition and emancipation. Linked with this heritage industry practice, informing and critiquing it and learning from it, was an expanding field of scholarship around transatlantic slave trade studies. Perhaps as a result of the problematic consciousness-raising that many experienced via their critical engagement with the 2007 bicentenary events across the UK, festivals began to take note of their location with greater thought. So, Jeff Adams, writing in the context of Liverpool's 2010 Biennale multi-arts festival, has argued for the *impossibility of disengagement*, culture never silent or invisible about its historical setting but always sonic and present. In Adams's view, the site-specificity that a festival embraces means that the artist

cannot help but be caught in the larger historical and political position; the here and now of this particular space, international in a multicultural, multi-ethnic sense.... Liverpool's rich ethnic diversity..., its past great wealth from trading overseas, substantially from slavery, and its present social inequalities, all pervade the visual discourse of the city, and therefore of any art that is produced within. (2010, 224-225)

On the other side of the country, Hull Freedom Festival today offers another way in which a contemporary multi-arts festival in Britain can be informed by its own setting, and that setting's history. A key part of the badging or branding of this festival is its location and its historical connection with the slave trade, or rather with the dominant national celebratory narrative of abolition.

Freedom Festival is the lasting legacy of the Wilberforce 2007 campaign, which celebrated the bicentenary of the abolition of the slave trade, led by Hull-born MP

William Wilberforce in 1807.... Numerous events and activities were held in Hull and around the world in 2007, highlighting issues of slavery and emancipation that are still hugely relevant today. Afterwards, it was agreed that a one-off anniversary event wasn't enough; that Wilberforce's legacy needed to be celebrated in Hull every year. Freedom Festival was born in Hull in 2008. (HFF website)

In fact here too there was significant contestation, as Geoffrey Cubitt *et al* have noted. 'Many African and African-Caribbean members of British society were', they write, 'deeply suspicious of a commemoration which they regarded as a "Wilberfest"—a government sponsored official' event (Cubitt, Smith and Wilson 2011, 5). Activists at the time spoke of the 'Wilberforce' (see Andrews 2015) as part of the dehistoricised confirmation of a national white saviour narrative (Agbetu 2011). The 2007 bicentenary events across the UK, though they did spark major rethinking and new practice in key areas around heritage and museology (Smith *et al* 2011), were widely critiqued:

The history of enslavement has been viewed backwards, through the history of its abolition, and that history in turn not as a complex story involving slave resistance and economic causation, but as a story of the heroic moral efforts of a mainly white, mainly male and mainly British abolitionist movement. (Cubitt, Smith and Wilson 2011, 3; emphasis added)

Although the official year-long programme for the bicentenary events did include a small number of concerts, notably from the reggae and orchestral musical worlds (DCLG 2007), the 1807 Commemorated project website, listing and reviewing the public events, contains surprisingly little musical content, and no reviews of live concerts (1807

Commemorated). It is as though transatlantic sonicities were either barely sounded through the year or barely recorded in the critical documentation—if the latter, this may be a symptom of live music’s presumed intangibility. Yet at the same time, in terms specifically of transatlantic festival and jazz music, the 2007 bicentenary celebrations were noteworthy. That year’s Notting Hill Carnival, for example, its history in London traceable to 1959 (McKay 2015) and the influence of the transatlantic migrants from the Caribbean to the UK of the Windrush generation, took the anniversary as its theme, under the slogan Set All Free (Tibbles 2008, 299). ‘Using the Notting Hill Carnival as a platform for the commemoration of slavery makes sense because of its rootedness in a specific Caribbean, mostly Trinidadian, resistance against the institution of slavery,’ Barbara Korte and Eva Ulrike Pirker have argued (2011, 123-124). A special series funded by Arts Council England under the title Passage of Music: Marking the Bicentenary of the Abolition of the Slave Trade Act featured the co-commission and national tour of pianist Julian Joseph’s ‘jazz opera’ *Bridgetower: A Fable of 1807*, that told the story of early black classical violinist and composer George Bridgetower (c. 1780-1860), as well as a set of commissions and performances at that year’s London Jazz Festival. These included a new multi-media work by vibraphonist Orphy Robinson called *Routes Through Roots* (surely echoing Gilroy) which, as the festival programme put it, ‘respond[ed] to the journeys of our ancestors from slavery into emancipation’ (LJF 2007, 13), a show featuring jazz soloists with London Community Gospel Choir, *Roll Jordan Roll*, ‘tell[ing] the story of the Fisk Jubilee Singers, a group of freed slaves from Tennessee, who became the first African-American singers to be heard in Britain’ in the 1870s (LJF 2007, 30), and an evening of music, spoken word and performance around notions of ‘free[dom] today’ curated by DJ and film-maker Don Letts (LJF 2007, 32). On its establishment in 1993, London Jazz Festival sought to reflect upon London’s status as a global city and post-imperial centre of multicultural identities and expressions (see Webster

and McKay 2017), a position which continues today: jazz critic John Lewis found significant political expression at the 2017 festival, even if ‘the politics

are ambiguous. These aren’t straightforward protest songs or civil rights anthems but complex compositions that incite debate on slavery and incarceration, migration and displacement, culture and identity—yet do so without the band members using words themselves. It’s the kind of aesthetic ‘sonic politics’ that you hear constantly in various forms ... this year. (Lewis 2017)

The 2007 set of London Jazz Festival commissions and shows was co-produced with Dune Music, then the leading black jazz and music education company in London. Badged through the 2007 jazz festival programme as part of the Passage of Music series, and featuring primarily black British musicians and artists, together this set stands as a major jazz festival creative and critical response to the capital city and the country itself’s foundational role in the slave trade.

Yet out of an annual number of between around 100 and 200 jazz festivals across the country (Webster and McKay 2015, 170), the concerts and events in the 2007 edition of London Jazz Festival, related to a few jazz commissions connected more broadly with the Bicentenary of Abolition celebrations, appear a modest achievement. Even if we restrict our gaze to simply those annual festivals held in civic centres associated with (or founded on) historic slave trade economy—which would include slave trade ports London, Bristol, Liverpool and Lancaster, but also places like Cheltenham and Manchester, of course, Edinburgh and Glasgow too—it appears at most a modest, one-off intervention from the jazz festival community, drawing on a temporary funding stream. And besides, by virtue of the 2007 concerts and commissions being bicentenary events, they are also part of ‘the recurrent

sleight of hand whereby the history of slavery becomes the history of abolitionism' (Forsdick 2012, 282; see also Waterton 2011). The jazz festival is rarely ideology-free, even or especially when at its most expensively exclusive or culturally unadventurous. For example, often at UK jazz festivals there is an imported cultural politics of race which has an African-American frame of reference. In recent years I think of headline concerts at, for instance, Cheltenham 2014—the black British saxophonist Denys Baptiste's revived Martin Luther King Jr. big band suite and multi-media project, *Now's the Time... Let Freedom Ring*—or London 2016—featuring African-American trumpeter Terence Blanchard's Black Lives Matter project, *Breathless*, or rapper Chuck D exploring Langston Hughes's jazz poetry. Of course such concerts function to present urgent social questions in acknowledgement of, say, the music's links with African-American civil rights history, a further (masculine) transatlantic dialogue around diasporic experiences—these are *jazz* concerts, after all—but might there also be an element of temporal and/or spatial distanciation in that and, more worryingly I think, an argument that a focus on *over there* distracts from *over here*? The Baptiste big band's concert was a tremendous event, and marked the revival and extension of the piece originally commissioned by Cheltenham Jazz Festival a decade earlier. Performers had family backgrounds rooted in diaspora and Britishness—from Saint Lucia, Jamaica, Ethiopia, for instance—and accompanying footage projected overhead showed urban Britain. But the dominant African-American political and cultural frame—around MLK and saxophonist John Coltrane—precluded much engagement with or even awareness of the profound resonance of the performance location. It was held in Cheltenham Town Hall (address, clue: Imperial Gardens), an Edwardian building which replaced the original Georgian Assembly Room in the town. The interweaving of the commercial institution of slavery, historic urban development, contemporary constructions of heritage, and the carnivalesque practice and potential of the jazz festival, invites or demands questions.

Let me develop this one example of Cheltenham Jazz Festival. I choose Cheltenham as a case study for two reasons.⁴ First, the current setting of the bulk of the festival is very clearly demarcated within one impressive key heritage space of the Georgian town. Second, it is *not* the typical slave trade port, such as a Liverpool, Bristol or Lancaster—so using it will illustrate the wider reach and legacy of TAST-related activities across the UK in a non-maritime context. The festival is held each year in a pleasing public square in Cheltenham, Montpellier Gardens, which is overlooked on three sides by elegant terraces of late Georgian-era townhouses and detached villas. The fourth has primarily shops and restaurants, mostly 18th and early 19th century too. With a big top, numerous marquees and tents, a free open-air stage, street food sellers and bars, flags and colourful temporary signage, and using the park’s own green credentials—its picnic lawn and mature trees—Montpellier Gardens is wonderfully transformed into a greenfield jazz site in the middle of a historic town. Music bleeds from one stage to the next, bounces off house fronts across the road, is softened by the trees in early leaf. All are welcome.⁵ 20-25 buildings around and in this park alone are listed—protected and recognised as of historic interest on a government-maintained register—including several whole terraces as single listings, and the entire district is part of Cheltenham’s central conservation area (Cheltenham BC website). Where did the finance come from for such urban development in the 18th and 19th centuries? Partly from the exploitation of the spa waters, which attracted new health tourists including royalty. It came from slavery, too. For historically charting ‘the impact of enslavement’ across Britain, an outstanding resource is available today. The prosopographical research project Legacies of British Slave-Ownership (LBSO website) has a fully searchable database of the 19th century records of the government-awarded financial compensation to slave-owners as a result of the Abolition of Slavery Act, 1833, that followed the earlier abolition of the slave trade in 1807.⁶ From 1833, British slave-owners across the majority of the empire were compensated for

each enslaved person emancipated (partially) by the act. The total sum of compensation generated and distributed by the government, £20m, was 40% of the national budget—and equivalent in 2018 to £16-17bn (Olusoga 2018). To clarify: there were no reparations for the enslaved themselves, their families or communities. The government's financial commitment was so large that, transferred into long-term gilts in order to manage it, the interest on the 1833 compensation was finally paid off only in the year 2015 (Olusoga 2018). A search on the LBSO database for 'Cheltenham' at the time of writing (February 2018) revealed 119 entries for 55 individuals. A further search focused on addresses of Cheltenham-based slave and plantation owners, and merchants, around Montpellier Gardens, the location of today's jazz festival. Here are the results.

- In 1832 Thomas Bell, medical doctor and slave-owner, was awarded government compensation of £8,219 16s 8d for 159 enslaved people on Aberdeen plantation in Demerara, British Guiana (now part of Guyana). His home residence for the claim was 2 Montpellier Grove, Cheltenham (<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/claim/view/7092>).
- In 1836, merchant Henry Bromfield was involved in an application for compensation of £3,421 16s 4d for 64 enslaved people on Spring Garden plantation, British Guiana, which was contested by others also claiming ownership and ultimately unsuccessful. His address: 8 Montpellier Terrace, Cheltenham (<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/2146630953>). (In Bromfield's story, one can glimpse the competitive legal scramble for money involved.)
- When he made his will in 1814, Francis Workman 'of Barbados' and a 'mortgagee of enslaved people in Jamaica' gave his address as 2 Montpellier Parade, Cheltenham (<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/2146652727>).

- Other compensation claimants and families lived nearby, within a road or two, or a few minutes' walk:
 - William Attwick Hamer (Endragt and Mon Repos plantation, Demerara—Lansdown Crescent, Cheltenham).
 - Richard Quarrell, jr. (Phoenix plantation, Jamaica—Oxford House, Bath Road, Cheltenham).
 - Elizabeth Mary Alleyne (owner of Greggs estate, Barbados—Lansdown Terrace, Cheltenham).
 - Edward Kendall (Springfield estate, Dominica—Lansdown Crescent, Cheltenham).

From this snapshot we can see that the very space in which the festival takes place yearly—Montpellier Gardens—is profoundly implicated in historic transatlantic slavery, and the ownership privilege and exclusive aesthetic appeal of the surrounding and nearby heritage buildings form the fabric and backdrop to the festival's pleasures. These buildings, their transatlantic meanings, should be too close for comfort, I feel, yet a kind of silence among all the music on offer is enduring. The festival is *contained* by its setting, by its setting's history and origins, and jazz, that transatlantic music of identity, social justice (sometimes revolution), emancipation and irruptive celebration, is diminished at the very time—during its own festival—when it ought to be bursting with righteous life, energetic questioning, joyful or sombre criticality. *Jazz becomes the sound of suppress*. For Cheltenham, can we also say, read Bristol, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Lancaster and Other Jazz Festivals?

On occasion, jazz festivals and events have intervened and engaged with their historical settings in the kinds of considered site-specific ways that other cultural practices from visual arts to museology have done much more of. For example, at Manchester Jazz

Festival in 2017, a new music and performance commission by a local musician entitled ‘Cottonopolis’ at least sought to acknowledge the historical roots and connections of the concert setting and sound, a site-specific piece in an old mill. It was ‘to explore iconic aspects of Manchester’s colourful past’, the event copy unimpressively explained, continuing in a series of clunking transatlantic connections:

Manchester’s cotton industry was inextricably linked to the slave trade, which in turn shaped the history of jazz. The mechanical sounds of mill machines were the soundtrack to many people’s working lives during the 19th century. A hundred years later, the innovators of house and techno music sought to create music that echoed factory life in Detroit and Chicago. Manchester’s party scene became a focal point for this music in the late 1980s and 1990s. (MJF website, 2017)

More thoughtfully, the Lancaster-based alt-jazz band Deep Cabaret have what they describe as their ‘signature song’, ‘Samboo’, and in a 2018 ‘slow tour’ funded by Jazz North played a set including that song in the Reading Room at Sunderland Point, Lancashire. This is a small, now private building in a fairly wild and remote location, on the estuary of the River Lune into Morecambe Bay, which is cut off by the tide twice daily. The tiny Georgian hamlet of Sunderland Point, resting today in the shade of a nuclear power station, is connected to the Lancaster slave trade in two ways. First, 18th century Lancaster-based merchants built properties here so they could have early sight of their ships coming home after long circumatlantic and transatlantic journeys. Second, Sunderland Point contains ‘Sambo’s grave’, a ‘remarkable and ... virtually unique gravesite of an African boy’ who died there in 1736 on arrival in England from the West Indies (Rice 2010, 34; see also Rice 2003, 214). The grave location is isolated, solitary and unconsecrated. Alan Rice is a local academic working on cultures of the black Atlantic, slavery and memorialisation, who is also a member

of the board of Lancaster Jazz Festival (the band's clarinettist Matt Robinson is the festival's artistic director). In an email correspondence, Deep Cabaret bandleader Steve Lewis told me the genesis of his song.

Our song 'Samboo',... is indeed connected to all those things—Lancaster history, transatlantic slave trade, Sunderland Point, jazz. It began when Alan Rice challenged me to make a song out of his book [*Creating Memorials, Building Identities*]. I found in it a quotation from an article about Samboo's grave in the *Lonsdale Magazine* of 1822 and set those old words to music. (personal communication, 30 January, 2 March 2018)

The music makes a minor lament, empty except for several mostly lower-register instruments playing drones and simple repeated figures—cello, bass clarinet, bagpipe (Deep Cabaret 2017). Lewis sings the words from 1822 that tell the story of the arrival and sudden death of Sambo 80 years earlier; a second male voice, deeper, performs wordless throat-singing, unutterances perhaps to catch Sambo/Sambo's bewilderment about, as the magazine describes it, 'his ignorance of the language' on arrival in England (quoted in Rice 2010, 34). Interweaving site-specific work, creative music-making, lyrical curiosity, local knowledge informed by specialist academic research, Deep Cabaret present a melancholic offering in which jazz speaks to, about, within and against Lancaster's dominant local history of place which might prefer to tell 'its tale of civic pride through mercantile adventure' (rather than 'frantic and murderous' exploitation) (Rice 2010, 32-33). Playing *this* song in *this* location may be a sonic act of what Rice calls 'guerrilla memorialisation' (2010, 13-16), which moves and provokes in equal measure, though the music is more lament than *militaire*. Its dialogism

of wordy and wordless singing voices is simultaneously referential and intangible, and seems to play between the two.

Conclusion: behind the beat

From this initial survey, with some important exceptions, there is not that much evidence of informed reflection at TAST-related jazz festival locations in Britain, especially, as we have briefly seen, compared with interventions and disruptions from other cultural forms (visual art, museology, academic writing, theatre and performance, and so on). I call for further research in the field, which can be informed by and, one hopes, contribute to our understanding of two pressing contemporary issues: transnational migration and mobility, and the decolonisation of knowledge and culture. Is it a good idea for jazz festivals located in sites of historic slavery to think of (more) engagement with their heritage, which is often enough a heritage that surrounds them, shapes them in their daily urban psychogeography, and which is even employed or embraced by them, as their concert venues, their touristic offer? I think so, and I call for that too from our imaginative and committed festival directors and programmers. In my view such festivals come under the ambit of what Jessica Adams has called ‘postslavery tourist economies’, after all (quoted in Rice and Kardux 2012, 247). Can we use jazz to bridge ‘that vast expanse of water between yesterday and tomorrow’, in artist Lubaina Himid’s rich and resonant phrasing (quoted in Rice 2010, 25)? Perhaps we can, yes. After all, that is where it came from. That is what I thought it was for.⁷ How many times do TAST-related British jazz festivals ask the same question, to remember, mark, disturb? In what ought to be the seasonal high point of a local jazz culture—the Georgian city’s annual jazz festival, say—the festival can seem incapable of meeting or even unwilling to meet the

music's historic demands and identity, and current presence, which involves addressing and challenging its own host city's historic identity and touristic present. There is celebration over criticality, when there could be both. Jazz could learn from reggae music here, if it wanted to—which may go some way to explaining the position of an artist like Courtney Pine at the centre of musical explorations of transatlantic history: Pine played in London's reggae bands before he made it as a jazz musician. While it can be argued that the celebrated music may contain inherent elements of criticality *per se* (improvisation as liberation, jazz as a freedom music), and thus any jazz festival is always already a cultural space and time for a certain level of social justice, this is inadequate in the very specific context of TAST-related festival locations. Such festival settings carry *and* impose a heavy weight; their elegant urban fabric is seductive and sellable; they can hide their inhuman history in their heritage very well; yet they require considered and reflexive unpacking. As we have seen among the many recent and continuing cultural interventions around TAST heritage sites in Britain, other arts festivals now speak of the *impossibility of disengagement* from their locations. However, broadly speaking, the festival of jazz, despite the music's own transatlantic formation, its Black Atlantic resonances, its liberatory claims around improvisation, its proud radical history, its innovative impulses, remains ... behind the beat. That is surprising.

Acknowledgements

I owe thanks to Prof Alan Rice, Prof Charles Forsdick, Prof Tony Whyton, Dr Gina Arnold, the Cultural Heritage in Improvised Music in Europe (CHIME) project team, Dr Emma Webster from our Impact of Festivals project, musicians Steve Lewis and Rod Youngs,

Emily Jones of Cheltenham Jazz Festival, and members of the wonderful AHRC Reggae Research Network which it was a privilege to be involved in through 2017. Some of this work was presented at a seminar for Film, Television and Media colleagues and research students at University of East Anglia in October 2017, and I thank them for comments too. Also I am grateful to members of the Jazz Research Network mailing list for responding to my query about transatlantic slavery and British jazz, including Peter Eldson, Vic Hobson, Anton Hunter, and Dave Laing. Please note: any/all errors of fact, judgement or criticality in this article are mine alone.

Notes

1. After all, jazz festivals *can* think of themselves as activist spaces in other contexts. For example, in 2018 both Manchester and Cheltenham Jazz Festivals were founder organisations in an EU-funded social justice and cultural diversity campaign, Keychange, which aims to increase to a 50:50 gender balance the amount of female talent appearing at European music festivals (Keychange website).

2. While I acknowledge the argument of Katie Donington *et al* that '[t]he history of British slavery and its abolition is ... not "black history." It is everyone's history' (Donington, Hanley and Moody 2016b, 2), it is striking that almost all of the works cited here are associated with black musicians: the topic remains strongly racially-centred. Factoring in that the 2006 *Value of Jazz in Britain* report found only 5% of UK jazz musicians were of BAME

background (Riley and Laing 2006, 34-35), may suggest also that it is a topic relatively regularly turned and returned to by that constituency.

3. It is worth noting that, in some museums today in the United States, one of the key ways in which slavery is presented and exhibited is through a focus on intangible heritage, on ‘identify[ing] dances, narratives, music, language patterns, and spiritual beliefs as the most distinctive cultural achievements and survivals of enslavement. Textual sources [then] explain that African and American cultural practices melded together to establish a new African-American culture’ (Brooms 2011, 519).

4. And I qualify my choice by reminding readers that Cheltenham has, as we have seen, through its new music commissions and premieres, sometimes in fact supported jazz that explores social questions of transatlantic heritage and identity: the examples discussed above of Larry Bartley’s ‘Blackboy Hill’ and Denys Baptiste’s MLK projects confirm this.

5. All may be welcome, but not all welcome the festival: ‘Cheltenham Jazz Festival is “living hell” for Montpellier residents’ was one 2017 local press headline: ‘drumming is keeping neighbours awake at night’. Perhaps ironically, the heritage fabric itself presents an issue: ‘Due to most of the housing being listed, [owners] are unable to install double glazing, which means the music can be heard very loudly’ (Squires 2017).

6. The database provides an extraordinary window into both the geographical spread and the types of legacy the £20m compensation money resulted in, including the ‘physical legacies’ of urban development and country houses, and the ‘cultural legacies’ of libraries, painting

collections and the philanthropic establishment of cultural institutions such as theatres and assembly rooms.

7. Really, though, or am I in danger of becoming an overclaiming jazz scholar? In ‘Slavery days’, that 1975 classic Jah history lesson in reggae form from Burning Spear, at the very height of his musical power, transcendent mystery and social vision— the song and singer as fiery attack—Spear and his band ask the question 28 times: ‘Do you remember the days of slavery?’ The original album recording is 3mins 27 secs long; that’s the same question in one pop song asked on average every 7.4 seconds. Does Burning Spear, as well as Ghetto Priest earlier, suggest that we must go to reggae, a Jamaican form embraced and developed by black British musicians, as a transatlantic music other than jazz for the urgent presentation of transatlantic history?

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