



American Music: The Unanswered Question

A Course in Music Appreciation

Lectures by **Jonathan FIELDS** and **Maurizio MANISCALCO**,
musicians and composers

The Adventure of Jazz: A New Identity Shapes Up...Where Is it Going?

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Simmonds: Good evening, and welcome to tonight's lecture entitled "American Music: the Unanswered Question." Tonight, Jonathan Fields and Maurizio Maniscalco will continue the journey through the history of American music with our fourth and final topic of the series: *The Adventure of Jazz: A New Identity Shapes Up...Where Is it Going?*

Let me jump right to the introductions. Mr. Jonathan Fields is a composer, music teacher and lecturer, who graduated first in his class from Mannes College of Music, and then, in 1982, joined David Horowitz Music Associates, where he has been the award-winning composer of hundreds of television and radio spots. He has also composed a variety of musical works spanning multiple genres, including film scores, soundtracks for TV, a mass, hymns and many others. An accomplished guitarist, he has played in several bands including *The Michael Gordon Philharmonic*, *The Glenn Branca Ensemble*, and *The Bay Ridge Band*. In recent years, he has been a frequent lecturer and musical educator, and the author of several publications aimed at introducing new audiences to the world of classical music, including some of the listener's guide in the *Spirto Gentil* series.

Mr. Maurizio Maniscalco has been playing music and writing songs since the age of 10, while studying first and then working in human resources. Though born and raised in Italy, Mr. Maniscalco has been living in New York City with his family since 1994. A self-taught guitarist and percussionist, and a skilled singer and talented song-writer, Mr. Maniscalco throughout the years has developed a deep love for the blues—a music he knows thoroughly and performs in a very passionate way. He has recorded 3 albums with the Bay Ridge Band and one – “Blues and Mercy” – with his friend Jonathan Fields. He is also one of the authors of “Educating through Music” a four-volume series to be released this summer.

And now I hand the floor over to our musicians...

Fields: The reason I'm going to go fast and not talk too much is that Glenn Drewes, my friend who plays the trumpet, has to get down to *Young Frankenstein* on Broadway, so he's really graciously volunteered his time. Glenn has played with the Woody Herman Big Band, Buddy Rich Big Band, and for 25 years he was down at the Village Vanguard. On Monday night they have Big Band Night at the Village Vanguard, which is the classic jazz club in Manhattan, and he was down there for 25 years. He's done numerous studio recordings; you've probably heard them everywhere on every single commercial, film. He's too modest to say these things. An incredible musician and I'm really happy that he's come to share his passion and skill with us tonight.

And then, my dear friend Jack Cavari who I've worked with for 20 years. I seem to always corner him into coming and playing for us, but he seems to enjoy it enough to come down. He's played with Sinatra, Pavarotti, he played with Doc Severinsen, Johnny Carson's band; he joined them when he was 21 years old. I sat at his feet and learned a lot about guitar playing from him over many years, and I'm still learning, and I'll learn some more tonight. Gentlemen...

[Cavari and Drewes play *I Got Rhythm* on guitar and trumpet]

Drewes: Does anyone know the name of that song? It was written by George Gershwin, who was responsible for the major portion of the American Songbook; it was written for a Broadway show and it's called *I Got Rhythm*. So when jazz musicians of the 30s and 40s started to break away from the big band setting, they would take songs like *I Got Rhythm* and they would extrapolate the melody, use the chord changes that were there and put another melody on top and then they would improvise on that song. That's a tune that probably most of you have heard, if not on TV then in the movies, and it was used for this show...

[Theme from *The Flintstones* played on trumpet and guitar]

Drewes: So you all recognize *The Flintstones*. Same underlying chord structure, different melody, and then a different rhythm going on. Now, to do it another way, change the key and move it into a Latin beat, now you have this...

[trumpet and guitar]

Drewes: So, we go from a basic melody with chord changes, we change the tempo, we change the underlying rhythmic beat, we change the melody, get to another place and it's called bee bop. Usually those bee bop guys from 1945 to 50 played everything very, very fast. It was like a contest to see who could play the fastest. And you had this little structure. If you're doing a math formula, $a^2 + b^2 = c^2$, it never varies, right? So it's the same with these chord changes. You can make alterations, but the basic chord structure that you have to play over is always the same. There are right notes and wrong notes, and you can use passing notes and do improvisation, and you can bring in other songs. You can kind of get a little far out, but you always have to come back to that basic structure. It's like building a house; this is the foundation, the chord structure. So that's all the stuff you can do. Do you have any questions about the stuff that we've done so far? How do Jack and I know how to do this? It's like a language that we learn. There are little riffs and little tricks that we learn, but it's like speaking French; it's like speaking a language. There's a repertoire, like anything else. If you're into art and you know Gothic art, if you know Renaissance, if you know impressionism, there's a language in each one of those. Yes, sir.

Q: When did you start playing music?

Drewes: I started playing music in 1961. Actually my father took me to get piano lessons. I was eight years old and he said, "Don't worry, you go to a party and if you play piano all the girls will be on the piano bench with you." As an eight year old boy that was the last thing I wanted to hear. I wanted to be out playing baseball. "No, Dad! No, Dad!" So I started out with piano, which is a chordal instrument like the guitar, so you can actually play things with ten fingers instead of one note at a time, and I started the trumpet in high school, so it's kind of worked out.

The thing with music, it's like anything else, you have to be versatile. They call you to play at a party and you're under the auspices that they want a jazz thing, and you get there and find out that it's not a jazz thing, they want Latin music or they want Broadway show tunes. So you have to be able to change positions at the drop of a hat. And you have to know the songs.

Cavari: You have to always know the songs. There was a famous guitar player in New York City named Bucky Pizzarelli and when I was about 18 or 19 he gave me some lessons and he said, "Always know the songs and be able to play them in every key you can imagine." You'll be working with an entertainer and you'll know a song and they'll say, "Let's just do it with the voice and the guitar," and you know it in B Flat and the singer wants to sing it in the key of G, so when you improvise, knowing the song allows you to improvise having a clear understanding of the changes.

Q: When I hear jazz musicians improvising together, I always wonder, how do they know when they have to stop, to finish?

Drewes: Music is in phrases, and the standard is a 32-bar phrase which makes a song. Within the 32 bars there's 8-bar phrases and 16-bar phrases, and it's like dancing. When we dance a waltz, how many steps to a beat? 1-2-3, 1-2-3, and music is usually 4 beats, so 1-2-3-4, 1-2-3-4, and they become phrases. A standard phrase is 32 bars. It gets more complicated when you work with different times.

Let's do a slow blues. Everybody knows the blues, right? Let's do the key of F. The blues is a 12-measure long form, and it's broken down into three 4-bar sections, so how they like to say it in the text books, they say call, which is the initial theme, and another call, and then a response.

Cavari: It's like at church, at mass.

Drewes: That's exactly right. It kind of developed back in the South during slavery when the slaves, this was their way of communicating. They had their own code.

[Sings "The sun is shining." Guitar answers.]

Cavari: The blues is like 3 chords.

Q: So you can repeat the pattern as many times as you want?

Drewes: It repeats over and over again.

Q: And who decides when to stop?

Drewes: You stop when you're finished. It's a conversation; when you run out of ideas... Let's do a solo.

[trumpet solo]

That's the end of the phrase and then you start another chorus.

Cavari: Let's do it again. Different chords, same song.

[trumpet solo with guitar]

Drewes: When you play, it's a conversation. Jack's not saying much. I have a big mouth. "You dirty so and so!" It's kind of like that. You're saying something. When you run out of things to say, then you stop, but it's usually at the end of the 12 bars.

We're going to do one more tune. I think you've all heard it; you all know it. Let's see what happens. We don't know what's going to happen, do we?

[sings *What a Wonderful World* by Louis Armstrong]

I see trees of green, red roses too
I see them bloom for me and you
And I think to myself what a wonderful world.

I see skies of blue and clouds of white
The bright blessed day, the dark sacred night
And I think to myself what a wonderful world.

The colors of the rainbow so pretty in the sky
Are also on the faces of people going by
I see friends shaking hands saying how do you do
They're really saying I love you.

I hear babies crying, I watch them grow
They'll learn much more than I'll never know
And I think to myself what a wonderful world
Yes I think to myself what a wonderful world.

Drewes: We took you through a little bit of blues; we tried to change gears a little bit. I listen to Jack; Jack listens to me. It's part of the conversation that we have. To do what we do, you have to be proficient on your instrument, and you have to know the song that you're going to play, and then it's a big interaction. It's just like anything else. Part of the thing with the young people today, I have three sons, everything they do has a screen—a television screen, a movie screen, a computer screen, a phone screen—so the interaction with people is not there like it was when we were young.

Cavari: When you're in a studio or in a concert, with all the musicians there you have interaction. For instance, if we played that song again with other musicians he would be inspired to play a better, more unique solo than he did because I may not be changing, but when you have a group with a bass, drums, when you're with other players, they start to change what they're doing; you're listening and you play off just a little nuance in the chord change, a beat, a drum fill. But the way Jonathan and myself create music with the computers and synthesizers, we have only one dimension, so if I'm called in to play a solo on a track that's never changing, the inspiration never changes; it's always the same thing. It's like only having one tie to wear. What Glenn said is very, very important. Music has to be organic. We need people to give and take and play with one another.

Drewes: If anybody's trying to play jazz or improvise, you've got to listen to a lot of music. Take one song and find ten different artists that did that song; listen to ten different versions—fast, slow, female singers, male singers, instrumental singers, Latin—you can't believe that the same song could take on so many vantages.

Fields: Glenn has to go.

Drewes: Thank you, everybody.

Fields: He has to go play for *Young Frankenstein*, so he has to run down so he doesn't miss the first act.

Cavari: I hope that it was meaningful or a learning experience.

Drewes: Sometimes there's no answers to how you do it. Someone asked me, "How do you play a solo?" I cannot explain it to you. I just do it.

Fields: We have time for just three clips. We were going to start with Louis Armstrong, but I think they covered that. Louis Armstrong is really known as the father of modern jazz because he starts saying things out of a big band group improvisation, and he becomes a great virtuosic solo artist. Glenn has inherited Louis's legacy as every trumpet player has. Louis also had that gruff type of singing that he invented with Bing Crosby. Before Americans sang like the Europeans, opera, the operatic voice. It was Armstrong and Bing Crosby who brought a kind of speaking voice which everyone knows American music for.

Remember Glenn mentioned bee bop, these players who really wanted to play as fast as they could and get inside the structures of the chords?

Maniscalco: There's just one thing I want to say. You all just experienced it, as complicated as jazz theoretically may sound to us, when it actually happens, it doesn't look complicated; it looks like a dialogue, a conversation. And we can even understand it. The language appears at first to be unknown, and our friends said what's needed to understand it. I want to share a little story with you. I grew up in Europe, not being familiar at all with jazz. I love music. I love black music, as I already told you if you were here these past few weeks, but I knew nothing about jazz. Not only did I know nothing, but every time I challenged myself, I put a record on and forced myself to listen to it, I would end up feeling really lost, with no point of reference, spaced out, uncomfortable, and I just didn't like it. When I came to the US, I opened up the door again to jazz, first and foremost because somebody loved it dearly and deeply like my friend Jonathan. If my friend loves something, I want to understand what's in there for me. So I get to know something through another. How come this friend of mine with whom I share so much, loves something that I don't understand at all? Take me by the hand and bring me somewhere. So I started listening to the easy stuff, so to speak, what you would call standards, or what you would call stray music—light bulb! And I came to the following realization: all of a sudden I thought of Picasso. I really don't understand much when it comes to painting, but of course I've seen lots of Picasso's, and I just never liked it. It's my immediate reaction. It doesn't ring a bell. Then, at some point I ran into an exhibition of his early drawings, things he had drawn when he was a young teenager, and I was blown away. Fantastic drawings! So I started thinking, okay, what happened is not exactly what I thought. It's not that this man was making up things that are completely incomprehensible, and God only knows where they come from. This man came from a deep understanding of reality, so much so he could represent it in a beautiful way, almost like fantastic pictures, only they were drawings. And then he moved on, he went beyond the appearance of things, which is precisely what they just told us. You learn a song or you know a form, but you don't stop at the appearance of the form or the appearance of the song. You make it your own, you go beyond the appearance, you try to understand and to share a deeper meaning of it. Obviously jazz it's like classical music. There's good stuff, and stuff that's not so good. But this is the key to look at it.

Fields: So we just thought to talk about the people who were innovators, those who really brought in the new ideas of jazz, or the concepts of this idea of going deeper. We don't have the time to do Louis Armstrong, but if you go on UTube, you can listen to *West End Blues* and you can hear what Riro is saying, and you can also hear this reference to the blues. This is still music that's coming from some need for meaning that's missing, and these guys really put their hearts into expressing that in the music, and it's captured my imagination.

Regarding my personal training, when I got into jazz and classical music after a lot of rock and roll, I was really griped by these men in different periods of my life. Each one of these men became teachers to me, like Jack was saying. And I learned, I listened to their records, listened to their songs, tried to repeat their notes, their way of going beyond. And I spend months doing this.

Charlie Parker is really the Bach of bee bop. He is an innovator of jazz. In 1945-55 you have these people who just want to play as fast as they can. They're really exploring behind the appearances. This is after World War II. A lot of the black soldiers came back. There's a kind of confidence. They're rebelling against the jazz that came before and the dance music—very, popular, surface oriented stuff, and they want to invent this music that goes deep into the structures...this was called bee bop, the advent of modern jazz, and the father of this is Charlie Parker. This is a tune he wrote called *Hot House*. He's from Kansas City and died in New York of a heroin overdose.

Charlie played saxophone. The primary instruments of jazz are saxophone and trumpet. Charlie played the alto saxophone which is the higher one, like in a choir—alto, tenor, base. There's the tenor sax and the alto sax. Charlie played the alto sax.

His nickname was called the Bird, Yardbird. And there are two stories that my good friend George Lugo told me. One is that he was on a bus traveling to a gig, and he ran over a couple of chickens, and he ran out and picked them up for food, and his buddy say, "Hey Charlie, leave those yard birds alone." The other one is that he practiced ten hours a day in a park in Kansas City, so anyone who is here who wants to be a musician, I don't want to scare you, these guys were practicing. And he would practice so much that people thought he was a bird in the park, so they called him Charlie *Bird* Parker. Unfortunately, he had a bad drug habit.

After Charlie Parker, we're going to talk about Miles Davis who was a young trumpet player from a middle class family from St. Louis. And he got a scholarship to Julliard, but he loved Charlie Parker. He used to ditch Julliard and basically said to Charlie Parker, "Let me be at your feet all the time." He was about 21 years old. So Miles ditched Julliard and became Charlie's main disciple. The story of jazz through the 50s and 60s is Miles Davis. But Charlie is the source. Miles plays trumpet.

Another thing about Charlie Parker, like what Jack said, these guys knew all of the songs and they were professional musicians who played in every type of gig, from concerts to late night blues gigs to Italian weddings, Greek weddings, Jewish weddings—these guys knew everything, every single song in every single key. They were fantastic, fantastic musicians. As good, if not better, than most classical musicians in terms of the command of their instrument and the beauty of tone production. It's the greatest art that Americans have ever given.

Q: And where did the name "jazz" come from?

Fields: Jazz is sex. But I learned the word "event," because you really have to be responding to another person and something happens that you can't plan; it's completely unplanned. The trick to being a musician is to stay out of the way so that something can happen, and so you've got to learn

your instrument. You don't think; you're just open to the event that happens, and anything less than that is kind of stiff. That's why I don't like computerized music. It's not eventful. It is in a certain way because you're waiting for something to happen on the computer, but you're planning what's going to happen with the computer, whereas with another person involved, you have nothing to do with that person's freedom, and that makes a difference.

Maniscalco: As you listen now to this strange music, music you may not be used to, think of what Jack and Glenn told us, think of the story I told you.

Fields: Charlie Parker goes way out. What happens is it's the first time you have an audience of very highly cultured people. There's a big jazz club on 51st Street called Birdland; my father used to go there; Albacete used to go there; this is where the Beatnik poets went; this bebop music is the music that generated Jack Kerouac and Beat poetry. It was thought that this was the only alive thing in art in America in this period. However, there was not so much of an audience, so the jazz guys tried to get the audience back. How did they do that? They tried to bring gospel elements and blues elements and dance elements back. That's called the hard bop era. And one of the people we're going to play is Horace Silver. He's still alive today, and his music is a little bit more approachable.

[music plays]

Fields: That's Horace Silver and that music was trying to make jazz approachable again. This is 1959. Now you already have Elvis Presley. Rock and Roll is coming in so the black audience is beginning to be drawn towards pop music and away from jazz. This is trying to get them to come back. At the same time, a bunch of white guys in New York who are coming together.

Miles Davis is the most important jazz person, and the name of his greatest album is *Kind of Blue*. And Miles Davis really wanted three things for his life: He wanted to be really famous, he wanted to have lots of money, and he loved melody; he loved the American standard. Although everyone was trying to get inside the chord changes, what was being given up was the melody. People were beginning to get a little too detached from experience. And Miles said, "No, let's bring melody back." And also it became much more approachable for a white audience, and to be very famous he had to be able to sell to everyone. This album, also in 1959, is part of this movement against the bop that Charlie Parker was talking about. The tune I was going to play is called *So What* by Miles Davis and John Coltrane is a young saxophonist who is playing with Miles in this period. This period goes to 1959. In 1960 a new guy comes on the stage; his name is Ornette Coleman, and Ornette wanted to abolish everything about playing changes, no music, called free jazz. When he came in, Miles went to see him, and some of the other jazz men, and they thought he sucked. They thought he was terrible. They said, "It's not music." They couldn't believe it and they really rebelled against this guy, Ornette Coleman who was doing what you'd call a very free type of music.

So in 1959 you have this type of music—Miles Davis, *Kind of Blue*. And in 1960, someone comes in and demolishes every form of structure, and kind of says, there's no more relationship between us. Just let me play, and you play, and let someone else play, and whatever happens becomes music. But remember what Jack said. You have to know a lot about what the songs are; there's something you have to follow, and then you can be free. He was saying, "No."

Maniscalco: It's also getting late, but I want to underline something that Jonathan brought up because we're also at the end of our series here. We can answer a question that's still lingering and it doesn't seem to get answered. If you think of the experience tonight—two jazz players improvising, building on their knowledge, understanding of things, and on the personal work that each of them put into

music, we had the opportunity to listen to a very intense and light, at the same time, conversation between two human beings, talking through instruments, talking through music, responding to each other. The question being posed by an instrument, getting answered by the other guy who poses another question...and so the journey goes on.

What I think of Ornette Coleman or that kind of development of American music, is that it mirrors life. When you lose track of the people you belong to, when you lose track of your tradition and you just try to set yourself free from it, you also lose the possibility to interact, to communicate with others. So you just happen to be, and you make up reality according to what you feel, and it doesn't really matter.

You should hear stories from Jack about Ornette Coleman. Sometimes their bands are big, and they have to replace some musicians at the very last minute. So one of the stories that Jack tells is that this guy was called to fill in for some absent musician, playing for Ornette Coleman. He's very excited. He's playing with a big shot. He gets his folder with the music, he opens it, there's a title there, and it's all white. There's no music; there's nothing written, and he's so puzzled by that fact that he turns to the guy next to him, the cello player, who is reading the newspaper while waiting for the show to get started. "There's no music," he tells the cello player. The cello player answers, "It doesn't matter." And then he goes to the second tune, another title, and there's nothing there. "But there must be something wrong." He answers again, "No, it doesn't matter." But it matters! It matters where you are, what you are, where you come from, because that's the only possible point of departure to pose your own question and to possibly take a step ahead. That's how people grow. Think of the journey, the music we just heard from 59 and 60, and the people who played here with us. Think of Vaneese and the spirituals, the blues, the cry of the blues, Dvořák and the way he looked at what was going on in the United States, and how he came up with another form, another expression of the same cry rooted in what he had found here, and how Ives developed his own question, the bleeding question, how folk music unfolded, embracing everything that was there and trying to tackle reality—the same thing that these jazz guys did. And so the question is: What's next? Not only in terms of what you're going to do.

Fields: The last tune we'll play is by John Coltrane, who I told you was a saxophonist with Miles Davis. So the two things that you can look up on UTube are *So What*, by Miles Davis, and the last thing, so you hear how absolutely beautiful jazz can be, is by Lee Morgan whose friend died in a car crash, a brilliant young trumpet player named Clifford Brown; he died at 21 in a car crash. The name of the song is *I Remember Clifford*, and if you go on UTube, look for Lee Morgan. It's the height of what we talked about regarding jazz, human expression in jazz.

But since we have the CD, fate would have it that we're going to listen to a thing called *Love Supreme* by John Coltrane. This is the last direction that jazz went in, and this was a spiritual direction. A lot of these musicians died because of drug abuse, some escaped by finding spirituality, eastern spirituality, because that's what was in fashion at the time, and John Coltrane wrote an album called *Love Supreme*, and to me, John Coltrane has the most achingly sad tone, almost equivalent to Beethoven's violin concerto, this aching cry. You hear it in the first breath that he takes, and I think the first time I heard it, when I was a little older, it just drew me in. I remember being at a party with a bunch of jazz guys after a gig, and I remember they were all partying really hard, and they put this thing on, and this was long before I had any faith, and when I heard it, I just listened to the entire thing from beginning to end, and I couldn't believe what it was, and it was calling me to something. It's a long story, but this was an event for me. I'm going to play part of the first movement which is called *Acknowledgment*. John Coltrane can't maintain this, and he ends up going the route of Ornette Coleman and dies. He's not able to live with what I think he discovered, but I think he was looking for something, for someone. I think he was looking for someone. And I think his cry, a lot of people think that this tenor sax embodies the entire cry we've been talking about. This is called *Love Supreme*, and you'll hear the

bass, like a chant of love supreme. That's what he was looking for. He was pretty simple about it. I guess he just didn't meet the right people. [music plays] This is 1964, New York.

The question that Riro asked: Where is it going? I think music goes where the culture goes. So you heard these two guys playing where two people communicating means a lot. Having community means a lot. Not being by yourself, alone, like you heard John Coltrane. That's what I related to. He was so out there and alone with his question. How could he be out there and alone with his question and not do drugs? How? How could he be alone with his question that burns inside him? You see, the spirituals, the slave community, they were together; they built something together. I think what's left is a hope that culture can begin again. It's not that the question is answered. The question does need an answer, but that answer is not just between me and the answer to the question. I don't want to be alone with that question, and I don't want to be alone with the answer either. I'm a musician. I don't use words, really. But you have to have a place where that question can thrive and not kill you.

Maniscalco: Yes, because the key will always be sadness. Do you remember from the first lesson? "Sadness is the desire for an absent good." The question remains unanswered. But look, we went a long way, and people in this nation kept looking, searching for their destiny, destination, direction to go. I'm certain that Glenn, Jack, Vaneese came here happy to do it and somehow being helped to understand the value of what they've been given because it's true that the question or the lack of it is determined by the common mentality. I don't think that Glenn has many chances, as he did tonight, to share not only his playing but also his memories, his love for what he's been doing for so many years, because you experience a correspondence. You come over here and find 40 people who somehow are struck by what's been given to you, and so you understand that despite the fact that music out there seems to be so different from what you hold dear, and seems to be so empty with respect to this search for an absent good, you as a musician understand that that's the driving force, and that's what makes your creativity explode. It's the awareness of what you are that makes you creative, the knowledge of what you've been given. So that's our task. That's our task in our daily life. It's not only true for musicians. It's true whatever your job is. You go to work as a bookkeeper or as a medical doctor, and there's a way to do it according to the world, and there's a way to do it in which you're sad because you understand that you're called to something infinite, but there's something missing at the same time. That's what makes the adventure of "the unanswered question" a journey and not the end of a search.

Simmonds: Thank you, Jonathan and Riro for this wonderful series!

If you want to receive information about Crossroads' activities and upcoming events, please feel free to leave your contact information at the table outside this room. Also, in order to defray the expenses of this seminar, we invite you to consider a free will donation either by cash or by check which you can place in the box at the exit.

Our next Crossroads' event is a concert with commentary by Ms. Linda Finnegan Lott, violinist, and Mr. Christopher Vath, pianist, entitled *Talking Music: Life and Death in Mozart, Schubert and Chopin* on Saturday, June 28th at 8 pm in The Actor's Chapel at Saint Malachy's Church, located here in Manhattan at 239 West 49th Street. We hope to see you there!

Thank you and have a good evening!

