

Fifth conference

International Network for Artistic Research in Jazz

Places and Spaces

25–27 February 2026

Koninklijk Conservatorium Brussel (Belgium)



BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

Fifth conference International Network for Artistic Research in Jazz ***Places and Spaces***

25–27 February 2026, Koninklijk Conservatorium Brussel (Belgium)

Welcome to the fifth conference of the International Network for Artistic Research in Jazz (INARJ), held for the first time at the Koninklijk Conservatorium Brussel (Erasmus University College) in Belgium. INARJ was established in 2019 in reaction to the increasing relevance of artistic perspectives in the academic discourses in jazz research. The network, its recurring conferences and, since 2025, its publication *ARJAZZ – Journal for Artistic Research in Jazz* provide opportunities for knowledge exchange and connection between artistic jazz researchers worldwide. This edition's conference theme is “places and spaces,” allowing us to reflect on how place and space interact with jazz, the way it is played, and the way we study it. Through four subthemes, various perspectives are addressed that use jazz and/or popular music practice as a mode of critical engagement.

Performance spaces

The legendary venues, clubs and festivals, the NYC loft scene and the Arkestra house in Philadelphia, the ‘bandstand’ and the recording studio. Histories of jazz are also histories of the places where music is made. This strand opens the floor to presentations that explore themes related to performance spaces.

Digital spaces

As we progress through the third decade of the twenty-first century, digital communication assumes an ever more central role in our lives. From the metaphorical—Twitter as the ‘digital town square’—to the literal—Meta’s ‘multiverse’—digital spaces challenge traditional notions of place and the way we interact with them. This strand invites contributions that engage with the meanings of music in digital spaces.

Embodiment

Numerous discourses challenge the once ubiquitous Cartesian distinction between body and mind. Approaches including corporality, embodiment, 4E cognition inform many areas of contemporary enquiry. The types of knowledge produced by artistic research can be characterised by Michael Polyani’s assertion that “we know more than we can tell.” This strand invites contributors to explore the way that artistic research can discursive these types of knowledge by conceptualising the body as a site of research.

Ecological spaces

The rapid acceleration of climate breakdown creates ever more urgency. While many claim that art is useless—or worse, a distraction—in the face of this global crisis, others argue that art should be seen as an indispensable tool in the fight for a new future. As Amitav Ghosh writes, “imagining of possibilities is not, after all, the job of politicians and bureaucrats.” This strand asks contributors to imagine how jazz practice might intersect with sites of ecological importance.

Thank you for joining us. We wish you a rewarding conference, valuable networking opportunities, and an enjoyable time at KCB, in Brussels, and in Belgium.

On behalf of the INARJ steering committee:

- Matthias Heyman (Koninklijk Conservatorium Brussel / Vrije Universiteit Brussel) – conference host
- Sebastian Bailey (doctoral student, University of Toronto / University of the Arts Berlin)
- Andrew Bain (Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama)
- Mike Fletcher (Royal Birmingham Conservatoire)
- Birgitta Flick (independent)
- Monika Herzig (JAM MUSIC LAB Private University for Jazz and Popular Music Vienna)
- Michael Kahr (JAM MUSIC LAB Private University for Jazz and Popular Music Vienna / University of Music and Performing Arts in Graz)

CODE OF CONDUCT: KCB follows the code of conduct of EhB, which can be found via <https://www.erasmushogeschool.be/en/code-conduct-interpersonal-contacts>. While this code pertains mostly interpersonal contacts between staff and students, the general principles regarding transgressive behavior also apply to the conference, whether on- or off-campus, or online, incl. outside of schedule times. Don't hesitate to report to us any behavior you feel uncomfortable with and we will try to assist you to the best of our abilities.

THINK GREEN: This book of abstracts has been made available in PDF-format only for ecological reasons. Please consider this before printing it.

This conference has been made possible with the **support** of:

- Koninklijk Conservatorium Brussel (Erasmus Hogeschool Brussel), especially Kristin Van den Buys, Bart De Nolf, Peter van Marle, Pieterjan Ingels, and Stefaan Guilliams
- Nicolas Kummert (for hosting the Thursday night concert)
- Jazz Station (for hosting the conference participants during the concert)
- the INARJ steering committee
- our job students
- you



Conference schedule

Wednesday 25 February 2026	
18.00-20.00	Registration (Wintertuin)
18.00-20.00	Reception & networking (Wintertuin)
Thursday 26 February 2026	
9.30-10.00	Registration (Room 212)
9.30-10.00	Coffee / tea break (Room 212)
10.00-10.30	Welcome & institutional announcements – Matthias Heyman (conference host, EhB/KCB), Kristin Van den Buys (Head of Research, EhB/KCB), Michael Kahr (INARJ founder, JAM, KuG) (Room 212)
10.30-12.00	<p style="text-align: center;">Room 212 – chair: Matthias Heyman</p> <p>Tom Sykes (Liverpool Hope University): <i>Pedagogy, access and artistic development in extra-curricular jazz practice</i></p> <p>Heli Reimann (Tallinn University): <i>Musical Improvisation and Space: Some Theoretical Observations</i></p> <p>Alexis Cairns (University of York): <i>Nurturing confidence and skill in jazz improvisation: Creating safe spaces for beginner jazz learners</i> (ONLINE)</p>
12.00-13.00	Lunch (Room 212)
13.00-14.30	<p style="text-align: center;">Room 212 – chair: Monika Herzig</p> <p>Filippo Deorsola (Vrije Universiteit Brussel): <i>“Putting Sound to Work” – The Prepared Piano as an epistemic device and a form of cognitive disruption</i></p> <p>Philipp Gerschlauser (Music and Arts University of the City of Vienna): <i>Embodied Microtonality: Listening, Intonation, and Pedagogy in Contemporary Jazz</i></p> <p>Zoran Šćekić (independent): <i>The Art of Spectral Groups</i> (ONLINE)</p>
14.30-15.00	Coffee / tea break (Room 212)

Thursday 26 February 2026 (continued)	
15.00-16.30	<p>Room 212 – chair: Andrew Bain</p> <p>David Adepegba (University of Pittsburgh): <i>From Sacred Grooves to Digital Streams: Yoruba Rhythmic Legacies in Online Jazz Spaces</i> (ONLINE)</p> <p>Luis Mora Matus (EhB/KCB, VUB): <i>Mapping the Known Territory: A System Inspired by Progressive Metal drummers to Expand Contemporary Jazz Drumming Improvisation and Composition</i></p> <p>Eugene Seow (LASALLE College of the Arts): <i>Pocket as Embodied Space: Reflections from the Bandstand</i></p>
16.30-17.00	Coffee / tea break (Room 212)
17.00-18.00	<p>Room 212 + online – chair: Mike Fletcher</p> <p>Birmingham City University Jazz Studies cluster session (ONLINE)</p>
20.30-22.30	Concert Nicolas Kummert's MOVING SOUNDS (Jazz Station): free entrance, participants are invited to join in (drums, piano & amplifiers present)

Friday 27 February 2026	
9.30-10.00	Coffee / tea break (Room 212)
10.10-10.30	Warm-up / <i>From Self to Space</i> , Sebastian Bailey (University of Toronto) (Room 212)
10.30-12.00	<p>Room 212 – chair: Sebastian Bailey</p> <p>Julia Shved (Sydney Conservatorium of Music): <i>Sounding Resilience: Cultural Diplomacy and Emotional Well-being Among Displaced Ukrainian Musicians</i></p> <p>Ari Poutiainen (University of Helsinki): <i>Silence Hidden by the Music – An Approach to Teaching, Studying and Performing Improvisation in a Small Instrumental Group</i></p> <p>Ellie Martin (Coastal Carolina University): <i>Unraveling: Embodied Strands of Motherhood in Song</i></p>
12.00-13.00	Lunch (Room 212)

Friday 27 February 2026 (continued)	
13.00-14.30	<p>Room 212 – chair: Birgitta Flick</p> <p>Piergiorgio Pirro (EhB/KCB): <i>Encounters at the Crossing – Investigating Jazz Tradition in Dialogue with the Belgian and French Jazz Avant-Garde</i></p> <p>Max Petersen (University of Sidney): <i>Third Stream Music in Europe</i></p> <p>Daniel Blake (John Jay College of Criminal Justice): <i>The Practicing Body: Developing Experimental Techniques in New York’s Improvised Music Scene</i></p>
14.30-15.00	Coffee / tea break (Room 212)
15.00-16.30	<p>Room 212 – chair: Michael Kahr</p> <p>Rik Cornelissen (KULeuven/Orpheus Institute): <i>The performer as a site for reciprocal transformation through home-recordings</i></p> <p>Toby Armstrong (University of West London): <i>Structure, Intention and Language: A Tripartite Model for Interpreting Improvising Composers’ Decisions in Shifting Spaces</i></p> <p>Nicolas Kummert (AP University College/Royal Antwerp Conservatoire): <i>Shared embodiment of an improvised hybrid instrument</i></p>
16.30-17.00	Closing remarks – The conference team (Room 212)
17.00-18.00	INARJ board meeting: all participants welcome! (Room 212)

ABSTRACTS

Thursday 26 February 2026

Tom Sykes (Liverpool Hope University)

Pedagogy, access and artistic development in extra-curricular jazz practice

In the city where I work, Liverpool, there is a thriving grass-roots jazz scene involving a significant number of young musicians, even though there is no music conservatory or university offering a specialist jazz degree. At the city's universities there are students following a range of undergraduate courses in popular and classical music, including my own institution, Liverpool Hope University, where our courses are not genre-specific but non-credit bearing jazz pedagogy is offered via the extra-curricular university big band. As many local schools do not offer opportunities to learn about or play jazz, in recent years I have secured funding to run projects in which groups of secondary school students have been invited to participate in jazz and improvisation workshops and performances involving the big band. These have been targeted at young musicians who would probably not have an opportunity to take part in such activities due to financial or other barriers. In this presentation I will consider the effectiveness of such activities as examples of communities of musical practice (Kenny 2016) in which both undergraduate and secondary school students develop their musical creativity and self-confidence via extra-curricular jazz practice in a safe performance space. Recent examples will be discussed, as well as the question of whether the youthful jazz scene in Liverpool is flourishing despite or because of a lack of formal jazz education in the city.

Tom Sykes is Senior Lecturer in Music Performance at Liverpool Hope University, UK, where his role includes leading undergraduate music, directing the university big band and coordinating PhD students in the Faculty of Creative Arts and Humanities. His current research interests include bowed strings in jazz and jazz in education and the community, and he is active as a violinist and pianist across a range of styles.

Heli Reimann (Tallinn University)

Musical Improvisation and Space: Some Theoretical Observations

How to understand the uniqueness of improvisation in relation to space is the question this paper seeks to address. On the one hand, the concept of affective atmospheres, introduced by Friedlind Riedel, is proposed. This notion does not narrow listening, sound, and musical affect to the idea of perception alone, but directs attention to the mediation of music within the environment and to how this alters the situation in its entirety. On the other hand, the paper introduces the notion of the performative paradigm, which, instead of describing and modelling the world, does things in the world. In line with Bolt, "the performative needs to be understood in terms of the performative force of art, that is, its capacity to effect 'movement' in thought, word and deed in the individual and social sensorium." I argue that music has the power to modulate the nature of space, while at the same time the affordances of the room exert a force that affects the performative act of improvisation itself.

This mutuality is part of atmospheric relations, unifying the materiality of the room and the atmospheric capacities of the music with the experiences of listeners and the musical choices of the musicians. Theoretical discussions are illustrated with empirical material obtained during the research process.

Heli Reimann, Tallinn University, Institute of History, Archaeology and Art History, is an expert in jazz research with a focus on the Cold War/Soviet era and disciplinary intersections between musicology, historiography and cultural studies with 15 peer-reviewed individual articles and the monograph *Tallinn 67 jazz festival: Myths and Memories* published in the Routledge Transnational Studies in Jazz series. In the field of artistic research, She has conducted studies on the relationship between space and improvisation.

Alexis Cairns (University of York)

Nurturing confidence and skill in jazz improvisation: Creating safe spaces for beginner jazz learners

Learning jazz improvisation can occur in various settings, including—but not limited to—playing in school or community bands, transcribing solos, or developing skills at higher education level. What remains unclear is how beginner jazz improvisers learn to improvise, particularly within the formal context of one-to-one lessons. By creating a safe space, instrumental teachers can encourage pupils to explore the concept of jazz improvisation and experiment with their ideas without the pressure of performing in front of others—especially when they fear playing something ‘wrong’ or are unsure what to do. The responsibility to foster this safe environment lies with instrumental tutors, who play a crucial role in nurturing their pupils’ skills and confidence. Providing time and space to implement simple strategies from the outset can empower learners to begin improvising with greater ease. In my presentation, I will share findings from my final PhD study, which involved delivering five jazz improvisation lessons to seven individual participants. These lessons incorporated strategies identified by jazz educators in my earlier research as effective for teaching beginner pupils. The study aims to understand how these strategies are implemented in one-to-one lessons and to demonstrate that they can be simple and accessible for both teacher and pupil. The study addresses two research questions:

1. How do beginner jazz improvisation pupils acquire the knowledge and skills to learn jazz improvisation?
2. How do jazz educators facilitate beginner jazz pupils to learn jazz improvisation?

Alexis Cairns is a UK-based jazz saxophonist, woodwind tutor, and doctoral researcher. She holds a Bachelor’s in Jazz Studies from Leeds College of Music and a Master’s in Music Education: Instrumental and Vocal Teaching from the University of York. Her PhD explores pedagogical strategies for introducing jazz improvisation in one-to-one instrumental lessons with beginner jazz improvisers.

Filippo Deorsola (Vrije Universiteit Brussel)

“Putting Sound to Work” – The Prepared Piano as an epistemic device and a form of cognitive disruption

If music is a form of thought (Nono, 2018), then instruments constitute objects through which this thinking is made. Encoding larger cultural forms of perceiving and organizing sound, instruments entangle with our creative capacities (Patteson, 2015). An epitomical example of such entanglements, the piano and its keyboard layout in equal temperament emerge as a rigid western cultural artifact with unmodifiable intonation. Piano Preparation (PP), a technique altering pitch and timbre with inserted objects, gives us a way to negotiate the limits of the instrument anew. Drawing from my own practice in jazz piano and extended cognition theory (Clark, 1997, 2016), I frame PP as an embodied epistemic device offering a form of knowing through sound. It is an extension of the performer (Magnusson, 2009), materializing cognition as a process unfolding through material interfaces and in-between human and non-human bodies (Sauvagnargues, 2013). PP disrupts the piano’s timbrical unity, foregrounding rhythm as primary formal element. If playing strategies are altered, it follows that listening undergoes similar alterations: Sound offers a different image of thought, with instruments becoming technologies for knowing otherwise. Putting sound to work is not a metaphor: I build PP as an epistemic method that aims to slow down thought through embodiment, highlighting the role of artistic practices in cultivating reflexive investigation (Haas, 2021). Relational and situated (Star Rogers, 2022) artistic research offers an ecological perspective understanding thought through open-ended interactions between body and environment. The ecological crisis poses challenges to our habitual epistemological capacities. I argue that an ethics of knowing can be built through sound: a practice of motion where ‘thinking well is moving well with others’ (Nail, 2020, 188).

Filippo Deorsola is an Italian pianist and composer based in Brussels. Programmatic yet kaleidoscopic, their practice interrogates sound through wood-based piano preparation and musicological research on gamelan and microtonality— spanning solo, ensemble projects, articles publication and compositions for hybrid gamelan ensemble. They co-lead Anaphora and EMBAT, having received multiple international awards and recognitions for the work conducted with the projects.

Philipp Gerschlauser (Music and Arts University of the City of Vienna)

Embodied Microtonality: Listening, Intonation, and Pedagogy in Contemporary Jazz

This performance project is grounded in my doctoral research *Microtonality and Bebop: Investigation of Various Tuning Systems for their Applicability in Bebop* at the Music and Arts University of the City of Vienna (MUK). Rooted in the blues tradition, I explore how microtonal jazz practice functions as an embodied practice, shaping listening habits, deepening intonational awareness, and moving beyond the binary of “in tune” and “out of tune.” The presentation begins with a short introduction situating microtonality within jazz pedagogy. I then offer a lecture-performance on the saxophone, moving from familiar blues-based phrases to versions enriched with microtonal inflections. This direct shift invites the audience to reflect on what changes in their perception, bodily response, and sense of familiarity when pitch is subtly altered.

The exercise mirrors methods I employ in ensemble teaching, where conscious listening becomes the foundation for new awareness. Drawing on qualitative interviews with my students, I present reflections on how these experiences affected them: from sharpening their ear for fine pitch differences, to reshaping their understanding of ear training and theory, to influencing their instrumental technique. Students describe emotional and even physical reactions, revealing how deeply intonation practices engage both psyche and body. By combining live demonstration with empirical voices from my ongoing artistic research, I argue that microtonality exemplifies embodiment in jazz education. It fosters critical listening, expands theoretical frameworks, contributes to the decolonisation of music theory, and highlights the body as a site of musical knowledge. The project points toward future curricular integration and broader research on embodied approaches to improvisation and pedagogy.

Philipp Gerschlaue is a German saxophonist, composer, and artistic researcher based in Vienna and Berlin. Internationally recognized for pioneering microtonality in jazz, he developed a groundbreaking 128-tone octave practice for both saxophone performance and composition. He teaches at MUK Vienna and Hochschule Osnabrück, and his doctoral project explores microtonality in bebop.

Zoran Scekić (independent)

The Art of Spectral Groups

Musical harmony, as we know today draws its roots from 3 basic major triads – tonic, subdominant and dominant. This structure of musical harmony is not invented by a man but discovered by a man because it simply comes from the physical structure of the ton with integer harmonics. Tones with irrational harmonics are mostly used as dissonant effects like tubular bells are used in orchestral scores for example. Or a completely new kind of music is produced by the use of instruments with irrational harmonics where the main subject is not the harmony but rhythm, like in traditional music of some parts of Indonesia called Gamelan for example. I believe that there a completely new type of musical harmony based on irrational harmonics. This is a presentation of an exhaustive study that I did in order to create a practical method for writing microtonal consonant (in broader sense) music for specially selected 36 Tibetan singing bowls. The method consists of 9 steps and it can be applied to absolutely any type of sound but I created it especially for tones with random irrational harmonics.

The steps of the method are listed below:

- step 1# - spectral analyses
- step 2# - table of harmonics
- step 3# - mathematical comparison
- step 4# - all unis and near unis connections
- step 5# - unis and near unis harmonic compatibility
- step 6# - all unis centralized groups & scales
- step 7# - all unis and near unis centralized groups & scales
- step 8# - group selection and 12 tone scales construction, tuning and notation
- step 9# - mutual tones within each pair of selected twelve-tone scales and individual singing bowls

Zoran Scekcic: Winner of 1998 Bruxelles Stipendium for student of the year, 2004 Croatian Theatre Award for best dance performance for composition & interpretation, 2009 Porin for the Jazz song of the year for arrangement, 2015 Winner of the Croatian Composer Society contest “International” for CD *Just Music*, 2016 Winner of the ‘3rd Annual European Big band Composer Competition’ in Copenhagen for "Sphinx Avenue", 2018 Ethno music Award Franjo Kuhac for arrangement and composition "Harmony of dissonance".

David Adepegba (University of Pittsburgh)

From Sacred Grooves to Digital Streams: Yoruba Rhythmic Legacies in Online Jazz Spaces

This paper explores how Yoruba rhythmic traditions circulate and evolve within digital jazz spaces, framing online platforms as new venues for improvisation and transcultural dialogue. As streaming, social media, and online teaching reshape musical engagement, Yoruba-inspired rhythms, once rooted in ritual and sacred contexts, migrate into jazz drumming, improvisation, and education through digital means. Case studies include online drum tutorials, YouTube performance archives, and global livestream jam sessions that demonstrate the adaptation of Yoruba grooves on the drumset. Methodologically, I combine digital ethnography with analysis of online performances and teaching content to examine how musicians apply Yoruba rhythmic principles in algorithmically curated environments. The paper argues that digital platforms extend Yoruba rhythmic legacies across geographic and cultural boundaries while recontextualizing them within new modes of participation, circulation, and commodification. These “digital bandstands” not only challenge traditional ideas of jazz space but also reshape diasporic musical memory, allowing Yoruba knowledge systems to resonate within global jazz communities. Ultimately, this research highlights the opportunities and challenges of digital environments as spaces for cultural preservation, improvisation, and innovation.

David Adepegba is a drummer, ethnomusicologist, and PhD student in Jazz Studies at the University of Pittsburgh. His artistic research bridges Yoruba drumming traditions and jazz improvisation, exploring embodiment, rhythm, and cultural memory. As both performer and scholar, he investigates how African rhythmic practices have shaped contemporary jazz performance spaces.

Luis Mora Matus (Koninklijk Conservatorium Brussel, Vrije Universiteit Brussel)

Mapping the Known Territory: A System Inspired by Progressive Metal drummers to Expand Contemporary Jazz Drumming Improvisation and Composition.

Jazz drummers’ phrasing approach around the drum kit is often by extrapolating snare drum rudiments to the full set. This can take the form of combining rudiments into a phrase, or distributing one rudiment across different drums. Other approaches, however, remain less explored—particularly those that use rhythmic subdivision, lineal distributions, and physical motion as their source of inspiration. By contrast, progressive metal drummers such as Virgil Donati and Matt Garstka often build phrasing systems around these ideas, creating symmetrical structures that enable fluid movement across the kit in any direction.

In doing so, they map their sets as interconnected spaces and embody these systems physically, making the body itself the medium for freedom of motion and phrasing. In this performance project, I will present a system I have developed, inspired by progressive metal drummers, to expand the phrasing possibilities of contemporary jazz drummers. I will begin by outlining existing methods for moving around the kit in both jazz and metal traditions, before introducing my system: (1) distinguishing between rhythmic subdivisions, groupings, and combinations; (2) explaining the core rules; (3) demonstrating movement pathways across the kit; and (4) applying these ideas at both micro and macro levels. Through live examples and recordings, I will show how I have integrated this system into my own practice, particularly in soloing. Lastly, by playing alongside a colleague, I will demonstrate how I have used this system for thematic improvisation and composition, specifically by using points (1) and (4). The aim is to offer jazz drummers new tools to broaden their phrasing vocabulary, while also suggesting ways other instrumentalists might adapt the system to their own practices and compositions.

Luis Mora Matus is a Chilean/Dutch drummer and composer based in the Netherlands. Besides being very active in the European jazz scene, Luis is currently pursuing a PhD in the Arts at the Koninklijk Conservatorium Brussel and the Vrije Universiteit Brussel. His research project is about expanding the possibilities for contemporary jazz drums improvisation through the adaptation of techniques and concepts from progressive metal music.

Eugene Seow (LASALLE College of the Arts, Singapore Raffles Music College)

Pocket as Embodied Space: Reflections from the Bandstand

This presentation considers the jazz pocket as something musicians inhabit rather than merely count. Drawing on autoethnographic reflections across bass, drums, and keyboards, I explore how groove arises from physical gestures, bodily weight, and shared movement. On bass, I don't think of plucking; I feel the string being pushed by the weight of my elbow. On drums, the backbeat thickens when I press the stick into the head; the ride cymbal's "ting" snaps from the fingers and wrist. These actions are more than mechanics: they establish the ground where time feels stable. On keyboard, the gestures are smaller, and my experience shifts—I hover in a bird's-eye mental space, observing how the band locks together. Embodiment also appears in the ensemble around me. With less experienced singers, I watch their foot taps; when they become anxious and hurried, I know I must adjust. With seasoned players, intention is visible—a head tilt or glance can signal a passing reharmonization before it arrives. The pocket isn't just heard but seen and felt between bodies. By treating groove as embodied place-making, this talk links instrumental technique, perception, and interaction. It suggests that what holds a jazz ensemble together isn't only sound but also the shared physicality of its members—weight, breath, gesture, and attention—all converging into the lived space of time-feel.

Eugene Seow (DME, Liberty University) is a Singapore-based multi-instrumentalist, educator, and researcher. He is a lecturer at LASALLE College of the Arts and Singapore Raffles Music College, with a focus on ensemble fluency, groove pedagogy, and creative health. He is a Fellow of the RSA and actively contributes to international music education journals.

Birmingham City University Jazz Studies cluster

Info to follow.

The Jazz Studies cluster at Birmingham City University is composed of interdisciplinary researchers, practitioners and promoters working primarily within Royal Birmingham Conservatoire, Birmingham Centre for Media and Cultural Research, and external contexts. The cluster seeks to engage in international partnerships with universities and non-academic organisations across Europe, the United States, Australia, South America, and the Asian Pacific region.

Their aim is to place jazz in the context of major cultural transformations in order to critically, and imaginatively break down the barriers between how we think about music and how we think about its relationship to the arts, culture, society, politics, and history more broadly.

The cluster regularly co-ordinates international jazz events and publications, including the Rhythm Changes and Documenting Jazz conferences, and the Routledge Transnational Studies in Jazz book series.



BIRMINGHAM CITY
University

Concert: Moving Sounds – Nicolas Kummert @ Jazz Station

Thursday 26 February 2026 marks the first edition of **Moving Sounds**, Nicolas Kummert's residency dedicated to improvisation and electroacoustic interaction. For this opening night, the Belgian saxophonist and electronic artist invites **INARJ** to the **Jazz Station** for an engaging, hands-on evening of sonic experimentation.

After a short solo set of saxophone and electronics, conference participants are invited to join Nicolas on stage for electroacoustic duo improvisations. Letting the interaction emerge without predefined framework, each participant plays their instrument while Nicolas modulates and transforms the sound in real time. These improvised encounters will then open into conversations between musicians and audience, reflecting on Nicolas's artistic research into electronic modulation, collaborative improvisation, and what these practices mean today—for performers and listeners alike.

Free entrance for all conference participants.

Bring your instruments (drums, piano, and amplifiers are present).

Location: Jazz Station, Chaussée de Louvain 193a–195, 1210 Saint-Josse-ten-Noode (Brussels)

<https://club.jazzstation.be/en/practical-information/contact-access/>



Friday 27 February 2026

Sebastian Bailey (University of Toronto)

From Self to Space: Explorations of Listening, Awareness, and Artistic Citizenship

Rooted in concepts from Paulo Freire (1970), Pauline Oliveros (2005), and David Ake (2002), this interactive presentation explores consciousness of mind and body, listening, care for oneself and others, and spontaneity within a collaborative framework. Together, we will explore how to listen to and shape our selves and the experience of the room in which we find ourselves—physically and relationally—to hold space for new possibilities and for one another. Our physical being can serve as a source of inspiration, capable of expressing depth and meaning in musical artistry (Ake 2002). Granting ourselves permission to move within the space can unlock deeper connections to our environment and to others, fostering ease, authenticity, and awareness.

The workshop will begin with exercises inspired by Pauline Oliveros, inviting participants to explore individual and collective consciousness through breathing, deep listening, and movement. We will then explore the physical properties of the room through a guided, open-ended meandering, encountering varied constellations and relational configurations. Rather than entering the space preoccupied with whether it will serve our intended purposes, participants are invited to reconsider the idea of purpose itself—allowing meaning to emerge from the realities of the room, rather than imposing a supposed ideal atmosphere.

Exercises will progressively focus on releasing tension and awakening self and collective awareness, incorporating sonic interactions and culminating in small-group dialogue. Participants will reflect on how these experiences relate to self-expression, community engagement, and well-being. The underlying ethos of this sequence is grounded in a disposition of love—toward oneself and one's fellow participants—reflecting the idea that love fuels creation and re-creation and is therefore a fundamental element of genuine dialogue (Freire 1970).

We may be familiar with the saying “read the room” —in this workshop, participants are invited to go further: to first ‘read’ themselves, and then the room—the space and relationships in which they find themselves.

Sebastian Bailey (M.Mus., G.D.P., Schulich School of Music, McGill University) is a saxophonist, improviser, composer, and educator from Montreal. His discography includes *Silhouettes of Silence* (Fresko Music, 2012), *Love Song for the Nation* (Vineyard Records, 2016), and *Ensemble de Magnac* (self-released, 2018). From 2017 to 2020, Sebastian collaborated with pianist Jean-Michel Pilc on the Improvisation Workshop Project (IWP), coordinating collective improvisation sessions and analyzing participant responses. He later developed his most experimental approaches to improvisation in collaboration with acclaimed Canadian improviser and drummer Nick Fraser. Recognized for his composing by the International Society of Jazz Arrangers and Composers (University of Northern Colorado, 2018), Sebastian also presented his doctoral research on improvisation at the NARJ Conference (Vienna, 2024) and currently lectures at the Berlin University of the Arts (Universität der Künste Berlin; Studium Generale & Jazz Institut Berlin).

Julia Shved (Sydney Conservatorium of Music)

Sounding Resilience: Cultural Diplomacy and Emotional Well-being Among Displaced Ukrainian Musicians

The Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 triggered the largest refugee crisis in Europe since World War II, forcing millions of Ukrainians, including musicians, into exile. This paper investigates how displaced Ukrainian jazz musicians navigate the “places and spaces” of displacement, using music as a tool of cultural diplomacy, resistance, and emotional resilience. The research draws on soft power theory (Nye 1990), Berry’s acculturation framework (1997), and recent resilience studies (Vargová et al. 2024; Clark 2023). Methodologically, it combines reflexive autoethnography with qualitative interviews conducted in 2025 with six displaced Ukrainian musicians living in the UK, Israel, Canada, Switzerland, and the United States. My position as a displaced Ukrainian musician informs the study, situating it at the intersection of lived experience and ethnographic analysis. Findings demonstrate that Ukrainian musicians act as informal cultural diplomats, using performance to mobilise solidarity and preserve identity. Music becomes an emotional anchor, sustaining well-being and enabling adaptation to new contexts, yet structural barriers such as precarious funding, visa restrictions, and limited institutional support persist (Hellström 2023; Noy et al. 2024; Steinbach 2024). The paper also reflects on practice-led initiatives in exile, including VoiceMova vocal workshops and the Heartland concert of Ukrainian poetry and song, which illustrate how displaced musicians create spaces of cultural continuity and advocacy. Situating these practices within the broader theme of “places and spaces,” the study argues that exile itself becomes a fragile but generative site where music operates as both survival strategy and political activism.

Julia Shved is a Ukrainian jazz vocalist, composer, educator, and researcher based in Sydney. She completed a Master of Music Studies at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music (2025). Her work explores displacement, resilience, and cultural diplomacy, including practice-led initiatives such as VoiceMova.

Ari Poutiainen (University of Helsinki)

Silence Hidden by the Music – An Approach to Teaching, Studying and Performing: Improvisation in a Small Instrumental Group

Recently improvisation has been re-established in many curricula of classical music performance programs. Through improvisation aspects of interpretation and presence, for example, can be enhanced. There is, however, a need for competent study materials. Since Stevens’ *Search & Reflect* (1985) relatively few progressive materials for teaching improvisation in small instrumental groups have been published and/or widely disseminated. Within my artistic and artist pedagogical work, I have designed and tested an approach for studying and performing instrumental small group improvisation. I have worked for and with this approach both with students of classical music performance and established professional improvising instrumentalists for several years. Results of the latter were published by Farther-Out trio on its album *Tuo* already in 2009. A summary of the approach will be published in *Snow Lit Rev 15* anthology in October 2025.

According to my extensive artistic and pedagogical experience, I have produced an approach that grants a fast and inspiring embodiment of fundamental skills (e.g. listening, presence and performing) in small group improvisation. My presentation begins with an introduction of the approach. I then discuss how it can be employed both for pedagogical purposes and as a framework for professional performance construction. Next, I demonstrate the approach in short live performances with 2 to 3 voluntary conference delegates that I wish to find. My approach forms the core in my publication project that strives to collect and summarize valid pedagogical materials for instrumental small group improvisation. This publication carries a working title "Silence Hidden by the Music."

Ari Poutiainen works as an Associate Professor of Music Education and Vice Dean at the University of Helsinki. He researches extended reality, music education, improvisation, jazz pedagogy and violin. He is also a contemporary jazz composer, violinist and violist. He has performed across Europe, led various ensembles and symphony orchestras. He appears on over 40 albums.

Ellie Martin (Coastal Carolina University)

Unraveling: Embodied Strands of Motherhood in Song

This performance presentation explores the embodied knowledge of motherhood through original compositions from *Morning Glories*, a jazz-influenced singer-songwriter album that reflects on the physical, emotional, and spiritual dimensions of becoming a mother. Drawing on lived experience and artistic research, each composition investigates motherhood as a site of transformation—a reshaping of identity, body, and voice. I argue that songwriting and improvisation offer tools for accessing and articulating forms of knowing that are deeply somatic and often overlooked in academic discourse. The project's central metaphor—the morning glory vine—evokes the entangled chaos and beauty of early motherhood. Songs like "Unraveling," which imagines the placenta as a strand in the tapestry of humanity, and "Shattered Shadow," a portrait of postpartum exhaustion, offer sonic meditations on how the maternal body carries memory, rupture, and renewal. The voice itself—its breath, resonance, and vulnerability—functions as a site of maternal knowledge production. In this 20-minute performance, I will present a selection of compositions and briefly introduce each as a lens into my process of composing from and through the maternal body. The performance will be followed by a 10-minute discussion on embodiment as both subject and method in artistic research. Positioned within the Embodiment strand, this project speaks to artistic ways of knowing and the potential of jazz-informed songwriting as a mode of critical engagement with motherhood, gender, and identity.

Ellie Martin is a jazz vocalist, composer, and Assistant Professor of Voice at Coastal Carolina University. Her work explores the intersection of motherhood and creative practice. Her latest album *Morning Glories* draws on embodied experiences to express the joys, challenges, and transformations of becoming a mother through song.

Piergiorgio Pirro (Koninklijk Conservatorium Brussel)

Encounters at the Crossing: Investigating Jazz Tradition in Dialogue with the Belgian and French Jazz Avant-Garde

Jazz musicians' relationship with the past is a central question of study and debate among jazz scholars, performers, and lovers. It has been proposed (McMullen 2016, 2017) that, within jazz practice, different epistemological understandings of tradition and musical reuse are at work, one of them being "repetition with a signal difference": re-use of musical ideas that does not function as tribute, parody, or stylistic fusion, but instead builds a relationship with the past that allows for continuous change, without the need for "preservation". A conflict can then be observed between these understandings of the past and postmodern attitudes that have marked jazz culture since the late 1970s (Cugny 2019). The aim of my project "Encounters at the Crossing" is to observe and reflect upon these conflicting epistemologies of the past through artistic research. I achieve this by setting up an experimental laboratory that allows the passing of embodied and situated knowledge between different generations of musicians, the participants being: a conservatory ensemble of students; a group of guest musicians chosen among bandleaders in Belgium and France; and the researcher, who acts as a coach for the student band and as a moderator for the shared activities. The research revolves around a series of sessions (the Encounters), each centered on a theme collectively devised by the participants, where musicians play, narrate, discuss, listen together, create. These sessions leave a trace consisting of curated audio documentation. "Encounters at the Crossing" are conversations at the junction between tradition and modernity. The project uses jazz practice to collectively gain understanding about our shared musical culture, and to illuminate the relationship between the past and the future of a geographical community that has been creating some of the most influential and adventurous European jazz.

Piergiorgio Pirro is a jazz pianist, composer and artistic researcher. He has recently published the album *Fold/Unfold/Refold*, in which he uses abstractions coming from spectral music with an emphasis on improvisation. He is currently Assistant Researcher at the Koninklijk Conservatorium Brussel and recently defended his PhD at Vrije Universiteit Brussel in jazz music.

Max Petersen (University of Sydney)

Third Stream Music in Europe

Third Stream music, coined by Gunther Schuller in 1957 as a synthesis of Jazz and Western Art Music, unfolded in a parallel genesis in Europe with a varied reception history. In European discourses, Third-Stream Music was freighted differently than in the U.S. as critics worked to fit it into longstanding European discourses of class, labour, and aesthetics, perhaps most notable in the quarrel between Theodore W. Adorno and Joachim-Ernst Berendt on the nature and boundaries of jazz and art music (or E-Musik). Third-Stream music served Berendt's pursuance of a modernist progression of jazz towards concert music, revealing how Third-Stream music in Europe was charged with classist expectations.

This paper will explore my artistic research findings by presenting my recent compositional work for string quartet and jazz piano trio. By mapping out the discursive landscape of Third Stream Music in Europe and drawing from historic examples, I will address the challenges of performing this music in jazz clubs vs. concert halls today and the peculiar expectations of the space's respective audiences.

Max Petersen is a German Australian composer-pianist based in Switzerland. His music appears on multiple albums and forms a confluence between modern jazz and contemporary Western arts music. Max is a doctoral candidate in composition at the University of Sydney researching "Third Stream Music", a term initially describing a synthesis of jazz and classical music. He has worked as an educator at multiple music institutions.

Daniel Blake (John Jay College of Criminal Justice)

The Practicing Body: Developing Experimental Techniques in New York's Improvised Music Scene

This study explores how and why an improviser makes musical decisions, and how the act of practicing helps determine those decisions. Through interviews conducted with New York-based experimental improvisers, the presentation looks at how musicians decide what to practice, and how their practice leads to the cultivation of an individual theory or "body of knowledge". An improviser's theory relates both to previous knowledge and idiomatic training, but also to the discovery of alternatives that become known through practice. To develop new techniques outside of what is known, improvisers rely on an embodied knowledge of "what feels right". The literal body becomes the guide for such a knowledge, which is revealed in the interviews through three broad metaphors relating to bodily experience. First, musicians see practice as the discovery of resonance between instrument and body so that their instrument becomes an extension of their unique identity or "voice". Second, the discovery of alternative techniques is made possible through an attitude of exploration where improvisers see themselves as mobile, able to move fluidly across distinct musical genres and modes of playing. Finally, improvisers practice in order to coexist within aesthetic spaces that are co-created with others. The study concludes by looking at improvising collectives and the creation of intersubjective practices, which are predicated on the ability to understand and respond to the experience of others.

Daniel Blake, a saxophonist and composer, performs regularly in New York's jazz and contemporary music scenes. He is Assistant Professor at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, the recipient of New York Foundation for the Arts fellowship, and has toured internationally with Esperanza Spalding, Anthony Braxton, Julian Lage and many others.

Rik Cornelissen (KULeuven / Orpheus Institute)

The performer as a site for reciprocal transformation through home-recordings

The polyphonic left-hand system 'free-bass' is undervalued in jazz and improvised music on the accordion. By transforming piano approaches and techniques to the accordion the free-bass becomes essential for its execution. This presentation aims to share an essential method within my PhD-project; home-recordings as a way to transform the harmonic language of the accordionist. At the core of my project, I 'copy' piano excerpts step by step to the accordion through home-recordings, while questioning its performability and musical impact. Subsequently, when the boundaries of copying are reached, these approaches are rethought through the scope of common practices on the accordion. A transformation of the harmonic language takes place as the unconventional and traditional approaches merge. The act of recording is two-folded; as a performer I tend to execute the excerpt at the best of my possibilities for musical analysis at a later stage—which is an outward action—while simultaneously I tend to question what it bodily means to perform a certain approach—which is an inward action. How does it feel? Has any discomfort a cause in a lack of experience or is there an instrumental reason? How adaptive can I operate within this approach? How uniformly can I perform a certain texture and how do different musical layers within a texture interact with each other? Home-recordings become a kind of laboratory in which my own body as performer is at its core and reciprocally transforms as well as being transformed through new harmonic approaches.

Rik Cornelissen is an accordionist and composer, with a training in classical music, Argentinian tango, jazz, pop and Latin-jazz. He is lecturer at the Jazz & Pop department at ArtEZ University of the Arts (NL) and is currently a PhD candidate at Leuven University, associated with the Orpheus Institute.

Toby Armstrong (University of West London)

Structure, Intention and Language: A Tripartite Model for Interpreting Improvising Composers' Decisions in Shifting Spaces

This presentation explores improvisation leading to composition as a process where musical decisions are guided by intention. The improvising composer is understood not as working within fixed structures, but as continuously redefining them through intentional action (Anscombe, 2000, §5). This model fills a gap in scholarship that often prioritises structure or language while neglecting intention. This research proposes a novel lens for analysing such decisions. This intentional lens is then used to view findings from a series of improvisation-as-composition experiments, showing how this new approach can help to reveal insights into the intentional choices of improvising composers. Viewed in this way, *places and spaces* are not neutral backdrops but shifting environments that shape and are shaped by improvisational practice. Structures are infinite in scope, emerging and dissolving in relation to both temporal flow and environmental conditions, from traditional influence to shifting audiences and socio-political contexts. Improvisational decisions can thus be understood as an embodied negotiation of these dynamic conditions.

This presentation will explore a new model through which to analyse these decisions. This tripartite model of *structure*, *intention*, and *language* situates decision-making as a convergence of an improviser's aim (intention), the element they seek to affect (structure), and the linguistic tools they employ (language). I demonstrate how I applied this theoretical model using an "improvisation as research" approach (Cobussen, 2021) that incorporated a series of improvisation-as-composition experiments and share these new compositions, alongside performer interviews and annotated scores. In doing so, this research demonstrates how individual composers can craft musical meaning through intentional choices.

Toby Armstrong is a jazz guitarist and PhD student at the University of West London (London College of Music). An active performer and composer, his PhD research explores how improvising composers use intentional decision making to shape and reshape musical structures through their creative choices.

Nicolas Kummert (Royal Antwerp Conservatoire)

Shared embodiment of an improvised hybrid instrument.

What happens when improvising musicians meet their digital shadow and it shows its own personality? Electronically manipulating in real-time the sound of musicians improvising on their acoustic instruments, I explore the intersubjectivity, the empathy that can occur, and compare it to a 'traditional' duo situation. This specific setup allows for an interesting co-embodiment of the hybrid instrument that emerges. It raises questions and proposes answers regarding collaborative improvisation and the interaction between human and non human actants, as it amplifies to the extreme the co-agency over the sound which is at play in any (duo) improvisation. It will potentially lead us to discuss improvisation within Deleuze's notion of Assemblage, how this setup could contribute to our understanding of De Assis work concept and Cobussen's FMI theory and (enactivist) arts based research. I propose to perform duo improvisations with one or two participants of the conference who will discover my research and my setup at that very moment. After the improvisations, we will take a few minutes to share and discuss our 'active' experiences before opening the Q&A moment. Over 30 experiments with students of various backgrounds, convinced me of the pedagogical potential of this process when it comes to teaching and facilitating improvisation. My hypothesis is that the shared control over the sound promotes co-embodiment and an enactivist approach over brain-focused cognition and self-censorship in the search for technical perfection. The distancing from the instrument appears to be reinforced by the poetic, metaphorical dimension induced by the electronic modulation.

(Note: Nicolas also hosts the **Moving Sounds** concert at Jazz Station on 26 February 2026.)

Nicolas Kummert, a Belgian jazz saxophonist, electronic artist, composer, researcher, educator..., has always shown curiosity, versatility and openness to all styles of music. He played and recorded with artists such as Lionel Loueke, Jeff Ballard, Pierre van Dormael, Jef Neve, Diederik Wissels, Slowly Rolling Camera, Alexi Tuomarila... The proposal for the conference is the subject of a research project at the Royal Antwerp Conservatoire (2024–26).

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Locations

- Koninklijk Conservatorium Brussel – **Campus Kaai**: Nijverheidskaai 170, 1070 Anderlecht (Brussels)
 - Wintertuin is on the ground floor (“student restaurant”) of building C
 - Room 212 is on the second floor (“jazz floor”) of building C.
- **Jazz Station**: Chaussée de Louvain 193a–195, 1210 Saint-Josse-ten-Noode (Brussels), <https://club.jazzstation.be/en/practical-information/contact-access/>

Mobility

Please check Google Maps (or another navigation app). Additional info can be found on the EhB website but is only available in Dutch (though maps are added for clarity, see below):

- https://www.erasmushogeschool.be/sites/ehb/files/inline-files/20250820_Bereikbaarheidsfiche_campus%20kaai.pdf
- <https://www.erasmushogeschool.be/sites/ehb/files/inline-files/Kaai-tekst.pdf>

Public transport in Brussels is available via:

- STIB/MIVB: <https://www.stib-mivb.be/home> (bus, tram, metro)
- NMBS/SNCB: <https://www.belgiantrain.be/en/> (train)
- De Lijn: <https://www.delijn.be/en/> (bus)

Useful information

- **Shop**: the nearest supermarket (food, drinks, basic goods...) is **Lidl**, Chaussée de Mons 301, 1070 Anderlecht (8h30–20h).
- **Pharmacy**: In Belgium, medicines can only be bought at a pharmacy. The nearest pharmacy is **Pharmacie l'Olivier**, Square Albert 1er 3, 1070 Anderlecht (9h–19h).
- **Emergency**: Call **112** for any medical, police or fire department emergency.
- **Internet**: EhB uses **Eduroam**.

