

AN ANALYSIS OF DAVE HOLLAND'S IMPROVISATIONAL CONSTRUCTS AND THEIR
PEDAGOGICAL APPLICATIONS IN AVANT-GARDE PERFORMANCE

[REDACTED]

Proposal Prepared for the Degree of
DOCTOR OF MUSICAL ARTS

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS
Fall 2018

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Purpose

The purpose of this research is to analyze Dave Holland's performance on the album *Dave Holland/Sam Rivers Vol. 1*¹ with the goal of identifying his improvisational constructs and use these constructs to create a pedagogical guide for bassists to play avant-garde jazz. This study uses a mixed-methods procedure to an analysis of "Waterfall" that focuses on Dave Holland's improvisational constructs that occur in the context of free improvisation with Sam Rivers.

Dave Holland recorded with Miles Davis for two tracks on *Filles de Kilimanjaro*² and was a member of the quintet, later dubbed the "Lost Quintet"³, from July 1968 until September 1970. He recorded his first album as leader entitled *Conference of the Birds*⁴ in 1972 with Sam Rivers, Anthony Braxton, and Barry Altschul. Since then, Holland has appeared on over 170 albums with jazz legends and young talent alike. Holland's achievements were recognized by the National Endowment for the Arts in 2017 when he was awarded the NEA Jazz Masters Fellowship. Though his popularity and success make him renowned among a jazz audience, the recordings from his free period have been largely absent from the scholarly conversation. Holland is representative of the next generation of free jazz musicians, influenced by free jazz from the 1950s and 1960s, and therefore represents a continuation of the artform.⁵ He also offers a unique artistic perspective given his association with Miles during his transition toward the electric period.

With difficulties inherent in the analysis of free improvisation, *Dave Holland/Sam Rivers Vol. 1* provides two explicit benefits. First, bass transcription on older, lower fidelity recordings creates unique challenges when trying to identify pitches, articulations, and rhythmic intricacies. These miniscule details can also be defining characteristics.⁶ The addition of other instruments including drums, piano, or guitar can mask some of the bass tones making accuracy challenging. The first track, "Waterfall", features Sam Rivers playing soprano saxophone which creates a wider pitch space between the two voices. These mitigating factors allow for higher accuracy of transcription. The second reason is the clarity that comes from only two musicians freely improvising together. Motives being woven between the musicians become easy to perceive and allow us to determine either a hierarchical or heterarchical communication

¹ *Dave Holland/Sam Rivers*, recorded on February 18, 1976, master number 28225, released on Improvising Artists Inc. 373843.

² *Filles de Kilimanjaro*, recorded on June 19-21 and September 24, 1968, released on Columbia.

³ The term "Lost Quintet" was first applied in an article by Peter Keepnews.

⁴ *Conference of the Birds*, recorded 1972, released on ECM.

⁵ Dave Roberts, "Dave Holland: A Weekend of Bass," *All About Jazz*, Michael Ricci, 1 May 2001, www.allaboutjazz.com/dave-holland-a-weekend-of-bass-dave-holland-by-dave-roberts.php?page=1.

⁶ Consider the re-articulation of the same note in a different place to allow for subtle pitch deviations. This effect may be used in structured and free improvisation environments.

structure as well as what constructs are being utilized. This allows us to skip the question of where communication is occurring and instead to focus on how it is occurring.

Dave Holland and Sam Rivers worked together in a variety of configurations including Barry Altschul on Rivers's trio albums *Sizzle*⁷ and *The Quest*⁸ or as the duo. When his free improvisations during the 1970s with Sam Rivers were mentioned in an interview, Holland replied:

...It was all open-form improvising. But we did it for eight or nine years. It got to a point where I think a lot of people couldn't tell whether there was written material or not. Because the language and communication that we built up over that time was very clear, I think. At times it sounded like it was written. Things would happen, events would happen that sounded like they were planned or written out.⁹

This duo presents a mature pair of free improvisors with a burgeoning language and highly communicative connection from which to begin an analysis of Holland's constructs in free improvisation.

In research from Charles Tumlinson, constructs are defined as: "underlying, imagined mechanisms that make up the component parts of a theory in jazz improvisation performance."¹⁰ In this study, the term constructs will specifically refer to techniques that Dave Holland uses in his free improvisation to navigate the broad musical categories of melody, rhythm, form, and energy in a setting that replaces the axis of harmonic structure with an axis of total implicit communication.

The absence of traditional harmonic guidelines in free improvisation will make the pedagogical presentation of Dave Holland's constructs much different than typical pedagogical aids. Pedagogical resources for bassists are primarily centered around technical exercises, patterns, scales, theory, and/or styles. Larry Ousley provides an extensive list of pedagogical materials for the instrument in his dissertation, some of which may have technical uses in the idiom of free improvisation, but none contain meaningful guides to free improvisation.¹¹ The role of the bass is strongly associated with a rhythmic/harmonic paradigm and the removal of this structure makes pedagogical material less commercially viable. My research aims to provide groups of constructs derived from Dave Holland's improvisations and interactions that can aid bassists who are uncomfortable outside of their traditional rhythm section roles.

⁷ *Sizzle*, recorded 1975, released on Impulse!.

⁸ *The Quest*, recorded 1976, released on Tomato.

⁹ Dave Roberts, "Dave Holland: A Weekend of Bass," *All About Jazz*, Michael Ricci, 1 May 2001, www.allaboutjazz.com/dave-holland-a-weekend-of-bass-dave-holland-by-dave-roberts.php?page=1.

¹⁰ Charles D. Tumlinson, "Theoretical constructs of jazz improvisation performance." PhD diss., University of North Texas, 1991.

¹¹ Larry James Ousley, Jr. "Solo Techniques for Unaccompanied Pizzicato Jazz Double Bass," Order No. 3306737, University of Miami, 2008.

State of the Research

Ekkehard Jost's book entitled *Free Jazz* is the seminal analytical writing on the "The New Thing."¹² It includes style portraits of influential free jazz artists including Charles Mingus, Ornette Coleman, John Coltrane, Cecil Taylor, Archie Shepp, and others using a variety of analytical methods including electro-acoustic graphs, visual representations of sonic events, and transcription. Each portrait includes analysis of social, historiographical, and musical characteristics of the artist. In her dissertation "Analyzing Free Jazz," Lynette Westendorf discusses Ornette Coleman's "Lonely Woman", John Coltrane's "India", and Cecil Taylor's *Indent* – "Second Layer" from a self-described perspective of an artist.¹³ The analyses contained are narrower than Jost's and exemplify a more focused analysis. Keith Waters also pursues a comprehensive analysis of the music of Miles' second great quintet in *Studio Recordings of Miles Davis: 1965-68*, which, among other things, explores the erosions between structured jazz and free jazz that occurred through the recording evolution of the group.¹⁴ Through numerous transcriptions, Schenkerian graphs, mapping, and tables, Waters creates a compelling analytical narrative of their artistic progression.

Three other comparable dissertations include Larry Ousley's "Solo Techniques for Unaccompanied Pizzicato Jazz Double Bass"¹⁵, Robert Bowen's "Function and Meaning in Reprise"¹⁶, and Robert Sabin's "Gary Peacock: Analysis of Progressive Double Bass Improvisation 1963-1965"¹⁷. Larry Ousley notes that "published repertoire for unaccompanied jazz double bass is virtually non-existent," and "pedagogical and instructional materials are also insufficient." He creates his own pedagogical framework that includes chapters on Double Stop, Single-Note Accompaniment, and Harmonics with technical and theoretical explanations. Demonstrative recordings, solos, original arrangements, and transcriptions are present to show validity.

In Bowen's "Function and Meaning in Reprise," the author seeks further meaning in the head-solo-head form that dominates the jazz performance tradition. Through three case studies (Miles Davis's album *In a Silent Way*, Debussy's *Gigues*, and Dave Holland's composition "Prime Directive"), Bowen

¹² Ekkehard Jost. *Free Jazz*. New York: De Capo Press, 1974.

¹³ Lynette Westendorf. "Analyzing Free Jazz." Order No. 9504701, University of Washington, 1994.

¹⁴ Keith Waters. *The Studio Recordings of the Miles Davis Quintet, 1965-68*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.

¹⁵ Larry James Ousley, Jr. "Solo Techniques for Unaccompanied Pizzicato Jazz Double Bass," Order No. 3306737, University of Miami, 2008. Page 5.

¹⁶ Robert Eric Bowen. "Function and Meaning in Reprise." Order No. 3021965, Princeton University, 2001.

¹⁷ Robert W Sabin. "Gary Peacock: Analysis of Progressive Double Bass Improvisation 1963-1965." Order No. 3682319, New York University, 2015.

seeks to determine justification for reprise in his aptly-termed “reprise reflex” conundrum. While he claims design similarity between Miles’ “It’s About that Time” and Holland’s “Prime Directive”, it may be that Dave Holland proves a convenient thread between two approaches to the AXA form of his content.

Robert Sabin’s dissertation, “Gary Peacock: Analysis of Progressive Double Bass Improvisation 1963-1965” illustrates a compelling picture of Gary Peacock’s artistic output throughout the 60s as a bass player and collaborator. Sabin draws specific, innovative criteria that Gary Peacock exemplifies in the performances during this period from sources compiled from Hodson¹⁸, Litweiler¹⁹, Bley²⁰, Meehan²¹, and Jost^{22,23}. Gary Peacock recorded with Bill Evans and Albert Ayler during this period which requires a comprehensive analytical framework that can illustrate his techniques in tonal and non-tonal contexts; Sabin uses a mixed-methods investigation relying on formal musical analysis in addition to “an ethnographic inquiry consisting of interviews conducted with Gary Peacock”.²⁴

My research differs from the formerly mentioned research in these three ways: First, Dave Holland’s years of activity as a leader/co-leader began in the 1970s, after his period with Miles Davis, and after the first wave of free jazz artists of the 1960’s. The decade brought significant changes to avant-garde accessibility with the move towards jazz fusion, the growing loft-scene of New York, and business changes²⁵ in record labels. Second, my research is concerned with improvisational constructs from Holland’s performance with Sam Rivers. The duo setting enables the listener to easily identify melodic, rhythmic, and/or energetic relationships between two freely improvised parts. Third, this research is also pedagogical in nature, oriented towards bassists where a departure from structured traditional roles leaves the bassist vulnerable to the new demands of avant-garde music. My analysis of the “Waterfalls” on *Dave Holland/Sam Rivers Vol. 1* will build on previous ethnographic and musical analyses of free jazz to create a set of pedagogical constructs specific to the bass.

Method

This research will be conducted using a mixed methods procedure. Mixed methods investigations, as described by Creswell, “could neutralize or cancel the biases of other [purely qualitative or

¹⁸ Robert Hodson. *Interaction, Improvisation, and Interplay in Jazz*. 1st ed. Routledge, 2007. Print.

¹⁹ John Litweiler. *Ornette Coleman*. Da Capo Press, 1994. Print.

²⁰ Paul Bley and David Lee. *Stopping time: Paul Bley and the transformation of jazz*. Véhicule Press, 1999.

²¹ Norman Meehan. “After the Melody: Paul Bley and Jazz Piano After Ornette Coleman.” *Annual Review of Jazz Studies* (2002): 1285–1116. Print.

²² Ekkehard Jost. *Free Jazz*. New York: De Capo Press, 1974.

²³ Robert W Sabin. "Gary Peacock: Analysis of Progressive Double Bass Improvisation 1963-1965." Order No. 3682319, New York University, 2015, pages 4-5.

²⁴ Sabin, 7.

²⁵ John G Rodwan. "Sam Rivers: Remembering the Forgotten." *African American Review* 47, no. 4 (2014): 530.

quantitative] methods.”²⁶ Mixed methods, also known as quantitative and qualitative method, multimethod, or mixed methodology is more than collecting qualitative and quantitative data; it hinges on using both approaches to create the study. This combination will prevent extreme analytical conclusions from occurring with details derived from the interview with Dave Holland and, conversely, apply a lens for interpretation of ethnographic data from the interview and relevant historical/ethnographic literature. The study will progress in a sequential explanatory design as presented by Creswell and interpreted in the figure below²⁷:

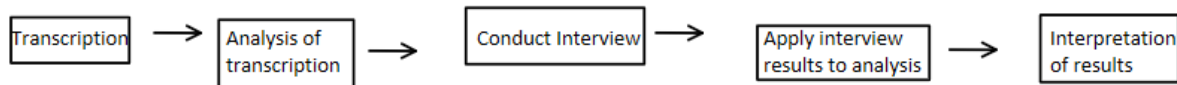


Figure 1.1 Sequential Explanatory Design translated to the study.

Music analysis will be limited to a transcription of “Waterfall” on *Dave Holland/Sam Rivers Vol. 1* and analyzed through systems including common practice jazz theory²⁸, George Russell’s *Lydian Chromatic Concept of Tonal Organization*²⁹, pitch-class set transformations³⁰, and musical forces³¹. Steve Larson’s applications of Schenkerian analysis to technical and artistic figurations in jazz will provide additional visual representation of constructs. The categorical headings will be melodic, rhythmic, formal, and energy. Each category has potential applications in the piece locally and broadly. Furthermore, each category can be investigated from a perspective of hierarchical or heterarchical communication between Dave Holland and Sam Rivers. All categories (melodic, rhythmic, formal, and energy) may also be contextually analyzed with one another as analysis develops and questions develop. Interviews with Dave Holland will take place during the transcription and analysis of the piece to provide appropriate qualitative context and ethnographic details.

Sample Interview Questions

1. What were the influences that shaped your interests in the free improvisation?
 - a. How did that evolve through your time with Miles and into your creative period in the 1970s?
2. How did you learn to improvise in a free context? Duos? Trios?
 - a. How did you learn to coexist in free improvisation?

²⁶ John W. Creswell and J. David Creswell. 2018. *Research design: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Page 14.

²⁷ Creswell, 209.

²⁸ Mark Levine. *The Jazz Theory Book*. Petaluma, CA: Sher Music, 1995.

²⁹ George Russell. 1964. *The Lydian chromatic concept of tonal organization for improvisation: for all instruments*. Cambridge, MA: Concept Pub. Co.

³⁰ Steven Block. "Pitch-Class Transformation in Free Jazz." *Music Theory Spectrum* 12, no. 2 (1990): 181-202.

³¹ Larson, Steve. "Musical Forces, Melodic Expectation, and Jazz Melody." *Music Perception* 19/iii (2002): 351-385.

3. How would you describe your musical relationship with Sam Rivers?
 - a. How do you describe your communication with him on a musical level?
4. What concepts are you considering when you approach free improvisation?
 - a. How did that evolve over time?
5. Do you believe free improvisation is misunderstood? By students? Audiences? Teachers?
 - a. How do you teach others to improvise in a free context?

Chapter Headings

Chapter 1: Justifications for a formal organization of analyzed constructs

- I. Introduce the formal organization of “Waterfalls”
- II. Present evidence for timestamp delineations
 - a. Evidence through analysis
 - b. Incorporate perspective of interviewee (Dave Holland)

Chapter 2: Application of constructs in sequence in relation to form

- I. Justifications for melodic, rhythmic, energetic, and formal categories for constructs.
- II. 0:00-1:40
 - a. Analysis of Holland’s constructs; considering arco timbre and melodic statements with dyad consonances.
- III. 1:40-5:05
 - a. Analysis of Holland’s constructs; considering technique change to pizzicato and the intensified energy via rhythmic activities.
- IV. 5:05-5:30
 - a. Analysis of Holland’s constructs; considering transitional material to the sax solo
- V. 5:30-6:34
 - a. Sam Rivers solo statement.
- VI. 6:34-7:00
 - a. Analysis of Holland’s constructs; considering the transitional material out of the sax solo.
- VII. 7:00-8:23
 - a. Analysis of Holland’s constructs; considering the energy and how it is projected with irregularity in the bass melody.
- VIII. 8:23-9:13
 - a. Analysis of Holland’s constructs; considering the energy and how it is projected with regularity in the bass melody.
- IX. 9:13-9:58

- a. Analysis of Holland's constructs; considering the structural interlude that occurs after the building intensity of 7:00-9:13.
- X. 9:58-11:39
 - a. Analysis of Holland's constructs; considering the consequence of the energy build and interlude.
- XI. 11:39-13:13
 - a. Analysis of Holland's constructs; considering the bass solo.
- XII. 13:13-15:00
 - a. Analysis of Holland's constructs; considering the transition from the bass solo to a folksy melodic statement with accompaniment.
- XIII. 15:00-16:38
 - a. Analysis of Holland's constructs; considering the evolution from the gentle, folk-like melody to its climax.
- XIV. 16:38-17:08
 - a. Analysis of Holland's constructs

Chapter 3: Pedagogical Guidelines for performing Free Jazz/Avant-Garde as a bassist

- I. Through the insights gained from analytical analysis of Dave Holland's performance on "Waterfalls," I will present a basic guide which presents how he manipulated melody, rhythm, energy, and form through certain constructs.
 - a. Communication through music will be essential in interpreting this data.
- II. Provide context of how these methods of improvisations were learned by Dave Holland and how they appear in ethnographic texts.

Conclusion

This research is meant to extract improvisational constructs from Dave Holland's playing in free improvisation to create a pedagogical framework to assist bassists improvise more effectively when playing free jazz or avant-garde music. This research can be used to continue the scholarly discussion on analysis in free improvisation styles as well as the improvement of pedagogical aids from the scholarly perspective. Research that involves the output of Dave Holland and Sam Rivers in an analytical or ethnographic context can also benefit from the interviews and analysis.

Appendix

- I. Full text interviews
- II. Entirety of transcription

Bibliography

- Bley, Paul, and David Lee. *Stopping time: Paul Bley and the transformation of jazz*. Véhicule Press, 1999.
- Block, Steven. "'Bemsha Swing': The Transformation of a Bebop Classic to Free Jazz." *Music Theory Spectrum* 19, no. 2 (1997): 206-31. doi:10.2307/745754.
- Block, Steven. "Pitch-Class Transformation in Free Jazz." *Music Theory Spectrum* 12, no. 2 (1990): 181-202. doi:10.2307/746167.
- Borgo, David. "Free Jazz in the Classroom: An Ecological Approach to Music Education." *Jazz Perspectives* 1, no. 1 (2007): 61-88. doi:10.1080/17494060601061030.
- Bowen, Robert Eric. "Function and Meaning in Reprise." Order No. 3021965, Princeton University, 2001.
<https://libproxy.library.unt.edu/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/251107898?accountid=7113>.
- Creswell, John W., and J. David Creswell. 2018. *Research design: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Sage Publications, Inc, 2009. Print.
- Cogswell, Michael Bruce. "Melodic Organization in Four Solos by Ornette Coleman." Order No. 1338025, University of North Texas, 1989.
<https://libproxy.library.unt.edu/login?url=https://libproxy.library.unt.edu:2165/docview/193906873?accountid=7113>.
- Eldson, P. S. "Keith Jarrett's Solo Concerts and the Aesthetics of Free Improvisation from 1960-1973. (BL: DXN044244)." Order No. U137615, University of Southampton (United Kingdom), 2001.
<https://libproxy.library.unt.edu/login?url=https://libproxy.library.unt.edu:2165/docview/301584121?accountid=7113>.
- Hickey, Maud, Kimberly Ankney, Daniel Healy, and Donna Gallo. 2016. "The effects of group free improvisation instruction on improvisation achievement and improvisation confidence." *Music Education Research* 18, no. 2: 127-141.
- Hodson, Robert Dean. *Interaction and Improvisation: Group Interplay in Jazz Performance*. 2000. Dissertation. University of Wisconsin – Madison.
- Hodson, Robert. *Interaction, Improvisation, and Interplay in Jazz*. 1st ed. Routledge, 2007. Print.
- Jost, Ekkehard. *Free Jazz*. New York: De Capo Press, 1974.
- Larson, Steve. *Analyzing jazz: a Schenkerian approach*. Hillsdale, N.Y.: Pendragon. 2009.
- Larson, Steve. "Composition versus Improvisation?" *Journal of Music Theory* 49, no. 2 (2005): 241-75.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/27639400>.

Larson, Steve. "Musical Forces, Melodic Expectation, and Jazz Melody." *Music Perception* 19/iii (2002): 351-385. Accessed October 25, 2016. doi: 10.1525/mp.2002.19.3.351.

Litweiler, John. *Ornette Coleman*. Da Capo Press, 1994. Print.

Levine, Mark. *The Jazz Theory Book*. Petaluma, CA: Sher Music, 1995.

Meehan, Norman. "After the Melody: Paul Bley and Jazz Piano After Ornette Coleman." *Annual Review of Jazz Studies* (2002): 1285-1116. Print.

Ousley, Larry James, Jr. "Solo Techniques for Unaccompanied Pizzicato Jazz Double Bass." Order No. 3306737, University of Miami, 2008.
<https://libproxy.library.unt.edu/login?url=https://libproxy.library.unt.edu:2165/docview/304570004?accountid=7113>.

Roberts, Dave. "Dave Holland: A Weekend of Bass." *All About Jazz*, Michael Ricci, 1 May 2001, www.allaboutjazz.com/dave-holland-a-weekend-of-bass-dave-holland-by-dave-roberts.php?page=1.

Rodwan, John G. "Sam Rivers: Remembering the Forgotten." *African American Review* 47, no. 4 (2014): 523-35. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24589838>.

Russell, George. *The Lydian chromatic concept of tonal organization for improvisation: for all instruments*. Cambridge, MA: Concept Pub. Co, 1964. Print.

Sabin, Robert W. "Gary Peacock: Analysis of Progressive Double Bass Improvisation 1963-1965." Order No. 3682319, New York University, 2015.
<https://libproxy.library.unt.edu/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/1657429095?accountid=7113>.

Shadduck, Anthony. "Charlie Haden, Scott LaFaro, and Harmolodics: Bass Styles in Ornette Coleman's 'Free Jazz'." Order No. 1437809, California State University, Long Beach, 2006.
<https://libproxy.library.unt.edu/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/304910219?accountid=7113>.

Terefenko, Dariusz. "Keith Jarrett's Transformation of Standard Tunes." Order No. 3143408, University of Rochester, Eastman School of Music, 2004.
<https://libproxy.library.unt.edu/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/305050495?accountid=7113>.

Tumlinson, Charles D. "Theoretical constructs of jazz improvisation performance." PhD diss., University of North Texas, 1991.

William Kirk Bares. "Transatlanticism as Dutch National Spectacle: Universalism and Postpolitics at the North Sea Jazz Festival." *American Music* 33, no. 3 (2015): 345-374. <https://muse.jhu.edu/> (accessed April 3, 2018).

Waters, Keith. *The Studio Recordings of the Miles Davis Quintet, 1965-68*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Westendorf, Lynette. "Analyzing Free Jazz." Order No. 9504701, University of Washington, 1994.
<https://libproxy.library.unt.edu/login?url=https://libproxy.library.unt.edu:2165/docview/304130888?accountid=7113>.

Discography

Davis, Miles. *Filles De Kilimanjaro*. Miles Davis Quintet. Columbia, 1968, CD.

Holland, Dave. *Conference of the Birds*. ECM, 1972, CD.

Holland, Dave; and Sam Rivers. *Dave Holland/Sam Rivers*. Improvising Artists Inc. 373843, Master 28225, February 18, 1976.

Rivers, Sam. *Sizzle*. Impulse!, 1975, CD.

Rivers, Sam. *The Quest*. Tomato, 1976, CD.