

*Len Lyons*

*presents*

## **4 Jazz Classes — A Tribute to *Black History Month***

**Zoom Webinars; Feb. 1, 8, 15, 22; 7:30-9:00 p.m. (EST)**

**Class 1: The Ultimate Protest Music - The Medium Is the Message**

**Class 2: Black Keys / White Keys: Focus on the Dave Brubeck Quartet and Erroll Garner**

**Class 3: John Coltrane, the Spiritual Seeker**

**Class 4: Jazz Tunes: Compositions By and For Jazz Musicians**

*See the next page for further description of each class.*

Each class will combine the instructor's take on the historical period and on the music that jazz musicians cultivated in response to America's challenging environment. Len curates the most exemplary music related to the themes of the course, and he shares memorable audio and videos of performances & taped conversations with the musicians. Where appropriate, Len illustrates some of the musical points at the piano. Chat plus Q & A, of course.

**COST: Select classes individually (\$10 ea.) or sign up for four for \$35**

**Classes will be recorded — if you miss one, you can access the recording.**

**Email me ([lenlyons@comcast.net](mailto:lenlyons@comcast.net)) to sign up and reserve a spot.**

**No payment necessary at this time. (*Fee is per computer access, not per person.*)**



## 4 Jazz Classes : A Tribute to Jazz History Month

### Class One: The Ultimate Protest Music - The Medium Is the Message

Jazz musicians have protested, ridiculed, and bemoaned racial bigotry and inequality through their music. Indeed, the music itself — its sound and its methods — carries the message within it. We will examine jazz that is intended as a response to racial animus. For examples, Billie Holiday's iconic "Strange Fruit" about lynchings in the South (music and lyrics by a Russian Jew), John Coltrane performing the chant-like "Alabama" about the infamous church bombing in Birmingham AL in 1963. We will also listen closely to the music of Duke Ellington, Charles Mingus, Nina Simone, Sonny Rollins and others who offered musical testimony to the oppression of black Americans in a "free" country. We'll discover and understand how the music itself embodies — in the way it is played — protest, freedom and sometimes an angry edge.

### Class Two: Black Keys / White Keys: The Dave Brubeck Quartet and Erroll Garner

During the 1950s, black and white jazz musicians were living out the consequences of two Americas, divided by race. While we enjoy their best performances, we will also discover and hear in their music how Brubeck and Garner developed into unique, iconic pianists while they represented their own sides of the racial barrier. We'll also listen to other pianists who highlight the effects of racial division in American society. In this context, we will listen to other "Black Keys" of the period (Bud Powell, Red Garland, Oscar Peterson) and "White Keys" (Andre Previn, Stan Kenton, Dave McKenna and Bill Evans). While racial inequities saturated the music business as well, the main focus in this class is on how the social environment helps shape the kind of jazz that came out of it.

### Class Three: John Coltrane, the Spiritual Seeker.

Among the many jazz innovators since 1960, no one has had a more profound influence on jazz than John Coltrane. (There are several close seconds, but Coltrane rises above even a pantheon of the greatest players.) His role in jazz was that of a spiritual seeker. In the sound he produces on his tenor sax, one can hear purpose, intensity, and often a single point of focus, as much like a meditation as an

improvisation. Coltrane's music points to a higher aim than "song." His playing can be as simple and insistent as a chant and as complex (in the words of one critic) as "sheets of sound." We will listen to his greatest album-length work, "A Love Supreme" as well as the playing he explored with Miles Davis and others during the 1950s. When Coltrane died in 1967 just short of his 41st birthday, he left a legacy that still nourishes and uplifts jazz improvising 60 years later.

#### Class Four: Jazz Tunes: Repertoire By and For Improvising Musicians

Jazz is about the way music is played, how a composition is treated -- not *what* that composition is, or what it was intended to be. Much of jazz repertoire comes from show tunes and popular culture repurposed by the improviser, who makes it his own through how he plays the original material, and how he uses it as a springboard for improvisation. But some jazz repertoire comes from music intended to be played by and improvised upon by jazz musicians (Charlie Parkers "Donna Lee" or Monk's "Well, You Needn't" and dozens more). What makes a composition a "jazz tune."? We will be listening to the great compositions that have become "classics" of jazz, that all jazz players must learn. We will be listening to the compositions of Duke Ellington, Charlie Parker, Thelonious Monk, Miles Davis, Charles Mingus and others, uncovering what is unique about each tune that elevates it to one of the classics of jazz repertoire.

Please email me if you have questions. See page 1 for how to reserve a place in the class.

Thanks for reading to the end!

Len

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