

## Inclusivity and Adversity in Jazz Education: A Case Study of Paul Read

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*Abstract: This case study explores the experience, opinion, and practice of Paul Read: jazz musician, professor, administrator, and founder of the University of Toronto’s jazz degree. This case is noteworthy because the participant was an established jazz musician and educator in Canada with administrative experience at one of only seven jazz degree programs in Canada at the time of the study. The purpose of the study was 1) to document the story of this professor/administrator and 2) to explore how his views and experience related to his teaching and administration. A two-tier emergent coding scheme was used on the data, which consisted of three interviews, a week of observations, and an analysis of pedagogical documents. Major themes to emerge included balancing tradition and innovation, ears first, friendliness overcoming opposition, artist/entrepreneurs, and overcoming the geographical dilemma in Canadian jazz education.*

Canadian jazz and jazz musicians have been adequately documented in several texts (Gilmore, 1988, 1989; Ginsberg, 1998; Lees, 1990; Miller, 1982, 1987, 1997, 2001). Comparatively, jazz education, and the educators who facilitate it, has been underrepresented when one reviews texts, theses, dissertations, and refereed publications, with a few notable exceptions (Brenan, 2005; Elliott, 1983, 1984, 1985; Hepner, 2013; Kearns, 2011; Lillos, 2006; Louth, 2004). This article documents the views, practice, and experience of collegiate jazz educator Paul Read, and provides insight into the growing industry of post-secondary jazz studies in Canada.

Read was chosen as a case-study participant as he started one of seven jazz studies degrees offered in Canada in 2005 (Brenan, 2005). He was the founder and Director of Jazz Studies at the University of Toronto from 1991-2007 and became the Director of Graduate Jazz Studies in 2008. He retired in 2009. By all accounts, he was a respected jazz educator, administrator, and performer, and resided in Canada for more than 10 years, meeting the criteria for inclusion in an exploratory and comparative case study (Kearns, 2011). This article will reflect specifically on the case study of Paul Read.

Three question-sets framed the research. 1) What views does Read have regarding pedagogy and how does his teaching support these views? 2) What experiences does Read have in administration and how might his teaching relate to these experiences? 3) What does Read believe is the future of Canadian jazz education and how might his teaching be grounded in these beliefs? Two semi-structured interviews addressed these question-sets. There was a third semi-structured interview after a week of

observations. Questions for the third interview stemmed from the researcher’s journals, allowing for clarification and resolution of apparent discrepancies between theory and practice. Data sources for the two-tier focused coding scheme were field notes, journals, two survey instruments, pedagogical documents (syllabi and published articles) and transcripts from the interviews and the observations. The two researcher-constructed survey instruments were the *Jazz Pedagogy Demographic Data* (Kearns, 2011), which provided the researcher with such details as education and employment, and the *Personal Jazz Pedagogy Scale (PJPS)* (Kearns, 2011). The latter survey consisted of several five-point scales that addressed different aspects of jazz philosophy and pedagogy, topics that arose from the jazz literature. No quantitative analysis was undertaken but the PJPS provided an additional source of data for triangulation. Data was first coded into six predetermined categories that served and was defined by the research questions (and the jazz literature): 1) personal history; 2) jazz pedagogy; 3) administration; 4) future of jazz education; 5) open, as this was an exploratory study; and 6) house keeping, for data of no relevance. Sub-categories were then allowed to emerge through word lists (Merriam, 1998). Additionally, themes and relationships emerged through memos and diagramming.

To obtain data for the analysis, Read was interviewed three times and observed for a week. He completed two researcher-constructed surveys and provided pedagogical documents for analysis. A two-tier qualitative coding scheme was used to analyze the audio transcriptions of the interviews and observations, along with all other data, which allowed categories and themes to emerge (Merriam, 1998). Credibility of these emergent themes, and of the finished manuscript, was strengthened by Read’s checks, and verification was enhanced by the use of an independent coder who analyzed the data separately and compared his results with the primary researcher’s findings.

Case study research on jazz educators and musicians in the United States is uncommon (Berliner, 1994; Mason, 2005; Monson, 1996) and it is especially rare in Canadian studies in jazz (Miller, 1987; Louth 2004). This type of research in music has provided valuable insight into the teaching profession (Cape, 2013; Harrison, 2013; Kraay, 2013) so it is logical to assume that this inquiry would also assist the jazz education community. More common in Canada are articles in professional journals that document interviews about jazz and jazz education. Some articles provide some context for the interview (Carlisle, 2002), while others provide greater analysis and reflection (D’Sousa, 2011; Hamel 2010/2011). There is also literature that offers

pure transcriptions of the interview (Frost, 1998). While there are articles in Canada's professional music journals addressing the health of our nation's jazz education, the number is modest (Lorenzino, 2004; McNeil, 2003). As such, this article addresses the need for more case-study literature in jazz and more jazz education literature in Canada. In addition, this article addresses another gap in the jazz and music education literature: a comparison of theory to practice in music by combining interview and observation data. Three studies that do use this methodology in music education research are Harrison (2013), Brenner and Strand (2013) and Wong (2005).

### Case Study of Paul Read

Read described himself as an educator/musician as one discipline influenced and informed the other. He started teaching to finance his jazz studies at the Berklee College of Music in Boston but quickly acquired a "taste" for jazz education. Over his career, he progressively taught music at the high school, college, and university level. Read taught high school music at York Mills Collegiate Institute in Toronto from 1973-1979. He was hired as a music professor at Humber College in Toronto in 1979, became Program Coordinator in 1982, and eventually became Director of Music at Humber from 1987-1991. He would start the University of Toronto's jazz program in 1991. At the University of Toronto, he taught improvisation, theory, ear training, and jazz pedagogy, and led the 10 O'clock Jazz Orchestra and various jazz combos. The University of Toronto offers a Bachelor of Music, a Master of Music in Jazz Performance, and a Doctor of Musical Arts in Jazz Performance.



Figure 1. Read overseeing the Paul Read Orchestra in its recording of the CD *Arc-en-Ciel*. Thank you to Don Vickery for the photo and the permission to use it.

Read's pedagogy was constantly influenced by new music, interactions with teachers and students, and an empirical method of learning. His teaching was accompanied by an active performing career that included work as a jazz pianist, saxophonist, composer, arranger, and leader of the Paul Read Orchestra. Read believed that jazz educators must be active musicians in order to be credible, authentic, and informed teachers. Additionally, he explained that jazz educators do not have to be virtuoso musicians or nationally recognized composers to be valuable teachers. He explained: "You don't have to be a world-class player to teach this music anymore than Bobby Cox, who's the manager of the Atlanta Braves, needed to be one of the greatest baseball players in the world to be one of the greatest managers that's ever been. . . . He was a really sort of 'b' class pro with all sorts of physical problems but he still comes at baseball from the inside" (P. Read, Interview I, August 14, 2006). For Read, that "inside" knowledge was crucial for jazz

educators; they must have extensive experience as musicians and must remain active as jazz artists.

### Read's jazz pedagogy

Read possessed a progressive and "all-inclusive" philosophy of jazz education. When asked to comment on the "spirit of jazz," he spoke of creativity, innovation, and tradition: "It's a vibrant spirit. There's rebellion in it. There's rule breaking. It's a spirit of discovery, of play. There's a child-like quality/spirit, youthful spirit. It's a respectful spirit. Respects the accomplishments of the past" (Read, Interview I). While jazz has a rich history, Read did not believe the music to be antiquated; it evolves as it fuses and blends with other musical genres. The all-inclusive philosophy was reinforced in the classroom observations as Read included the study of 20<sup>th</sup> century "classical" composers, including Béla Bartók and Igor Stravinsky, and encouraged his students to write in a variety of musical styles.

While some have written about a divide in the jazz community, between those inside and outside academia (Davis, 2003; Javors, 1999-2000; Prouty, 2002), Read emphasized an all-inclusive philosophy where no musician was pigeonholed. He explained that there was "no dividing line" in the profession, providing Bob Brookmeyer as a prime example of a musician who does it all: performs, composes, and teaches (Read, Interview I).

A welcoming and spirited environment was observed in all of Read's classes and rehearsals. Read preferred an "Ears First" pedagogy rather than a theory first practice and emphasized that much of his teaching philosophy emerged through trial and error. He described a lesson he once learned when teaching music to a Grade 11 class at York Mills Collegiate Institute:

My first assignment to them was to learn to play all the major scales and all 12 keys. "(Until) next week, see you later." Very practical and sensible thing to do. I wanted to check them out. Well, what a way to kill peoples' enthusiasm [laughter]. . . . It's not motivational, it's not musical, it's technical, and it's, in effect, teaching a young golfer the grip for a week rather than letting them hit the ball (Read, Interview I).

Read learned that bombarding the students with theory and technique decreased their motivation and creativity, much like a young golfer practicing her grip and swing for a day, while the ball sits untouched on the tee.<sup>i</sup> Read found it beneficial and rewarding for jazz students to learn melodies by ear and to learn jazz style and nuance by listening to a variety of live and recorded music. This aural focus was evident during his big band rehearsal also, as he instructed the students to treat the bass as a harmonic anchor for tuning purposes. Read warned that if the brass and wind players attempted to tune to each other, they would be trying to hit a moving target, or what Read called "pitch chasing."<sup>ii</sup>

A colorful and witty raconteur, Read used metaphors for clarity and emphasis. In one such instance, he explained to the big band that their overall sound should be balanced and unified, much like homogenized milk:

Articulation is good but the balance is not. What it is, is melody heavy . . . like the cream has risen and the thin stuff is at the bottom. Oh, you don't even know what I'm talking about. Do you? Used to get milk bottles delivered and the milk bottles would come and at the top, you would get the cream . . . So that would be cream and that would be milk [indicating with his hands at different levels]. That was the high-tech days,

right? That's the expression "the cream rises to the top." So, anyway, at the moment I would just like to have a homogenized sound, if you don't mind. Let's milk this (P. Read, 10 O'clock Jazz Orchestra rehearsal, November 23, 2006).

In addition, these metaphors added an element of humor to the rehearsals and bolstered the congenial environment.



Figure 2. Paul Read rehearsing the 10 O'clock Jazz Orchestra. One hand is held up to indicate his intention to start, while the other counts off the band. This shot provides a partial view of the square big band formation, with Read at its center. The band was sight-reading, and recording, a new composition by Mike McClennan. The picture lacks clarity as it was extracted from a videotape of the rehearsal on November 23, 2006. All media is used with the written consent of Paul Read and the students.

An animated conductor, Read used his hands, arms, and body to communicate accents and musical climaxes. He rehearsed the big band from the middle of a square formation, with each side consisting of the sax, trombone, trumpet, and rhythm sections. From a seated position on top of a riser, he actively led the band. He rocked, swayed, and twisted, and, at times, rose from his seat to emphasize an accent or musical climax. By smoothly raising his arms to indicate a crescendo or swiftly lowering them for a "judo chop" accent, Read resembled a master of tai chi. A few short statements may summarize this section and help retain what has been learned about Read's jazz pedagogy: a balance of innovation and tradition, an all-inclusive jazz community, learning by trial and error, Ears First, and moving like a tai chi master.

### *Read's experience in jazz administration*

The story of jazz studies at the University of Toronto is one of endurance, development, and eventual success. In the summer of 1991, Read had an enormous task: to prepare the curriculum and syllabi and hire the division's staff. While the Dean had already prepared a skeletal curriculum based on McGill University's jazz program, Read took the program in a direction that reflected 1) his vision of jazz education, 2) his experience directing music at Humber College, and 3) his familiarity with the music program at Berklee College of Music in Boston, MA.

Initially, some members of the music faculty objected to the jazz program. At times, this produced a hostile climate for Read. There were even instances of outright prejudice towards jazz students,<sup>iii</sup> a threat to cancel the jazz history course,<sup>iv</sup> and an administrative motion to terminate jazz studies altogether (P. Read, Interview II, August 14, 2006; P. Read, personal communication, July 27, 2012). After the initial four-year start-up in 1996, the jazz division was underfunded and understaffed in the School of Music, with only Read and Phil Nimmons as full-time professors.

Despite these challenges, Read stated that the division's "friendliness and openness" led to positive relationships with faculty members in the other music divisions, which ultimately benefited jazz studies.

But my contact with my colleagues has been .. I have to be really, really emphatic about this .. my contact with my colleagues has been fantastic. I've had a lot of support from people in music education and musicology and theory and history. There's been a lot of support. And not just me. Phil's very gregarious as you know as well. I get along really well with people. We weren't manipulative. We're just being ourselves. But I think just the nature of our friendliness and openness really made a big difference in helping to break down barriers. And serving on a committee was a good chance when things would come up and discussions would start, I'd be talking like I am now ... and with passion about music as music and they'd be saying you're not just a 4/4, swing guy. You're not just a bebopper. You're a musician and one of us. And we're putting a face on jazz rather than just it being this ... un-caged animal or caged animal down in the basement somewhere (Read, Interview II).

Because Read and Nimmons actively engaged faculty in meetings, in the halls, and at social functions, they were able to build strong relationships with other music divisions. In doing so, they changed people's perceptions of jazz and jazz musicians. While jazz studies struggled initially, the program would gain acceptance in the School of Music. Read summarized the value and respect given to the jazz division over the years: "Early on zero, one out of ten. Now, I would say that it's up in the eight range – eight to nine. Maybe even ten" (Read, Interview II).

To be a strong conversationalist means that you must also be a good listener, and Read *was* receptive to new ideas. He constantly conversed with faculty and students to refine the jazz division. One student's recommendation was that the ensembles should perform in club-like venues and this led to the University of Toronto's jazz nights at the Rex Hotel, Jazz and Blues Bar. New ideas could also come from guest artists, like Kenny Wheeler and Renee Rosnes, who Read emphasized: "Changed the school. They do so just through personal contact and the things they say" (Read, Interview I).



Figure 3. Paul Read teaching the Jazz and Traditional Materials Class on November 21, 2006. Read is commenting on one of the student compositions performed by the class that day. Picture was extracted from a videotape of the rehearsal and is used with the written consent of Read and the students.

Articulating his vision of an ideal jazz curriculum, Read stated that jazz skills and knowledge, such as theory and history, should be taught sequentially and should be reinforced in all jazz classes. Also of note was Read's conception of historical performance practice, and how it could be compared to driving a car (Read, Interview I); students need to be aware of what is in the rear view mirror (jazz performance tradition), they need



to check and react to what is happening in the side mirrors (contemporary music practice), but they should always keep their gaze straight ahead “on where things are going artistically” (P. Read, personal communication, July 27, 2012). Lastly, Read emphasized that applied study in the jazz curriculum (and the technical mastery obtained through such study) is indispensable.

In order to be able to express yourself, you need to have the instrument out of the way. The instrument needs to become a non-issue. When I listen to Oscar Peterson .. See I’m thinking of some of the technically highly accomplished musicians that we had in the past. There’s Oscar Peterson, Charlie Parker, John Coltrane, Chris Potter, Elvin Jones, on and on and on .. All the masters. You watch them play on videos, go hear them live, if they’re still alive .. You realize the instrument is of no consequence at all (Read, Interview I).

Read believed that for one to be truly free as a jazz improviser, he or she must not be limited by the technical demands of the instrument. If “the instrument is of no consequence,” it is merely a conduit for your musical ideas.<sup>v</sup>

For Read, the goal of jazz education was to produce versatile “artist/entrepreneurs” with practical skills and first-hand experience in the jazz community. He explained: “We’re basically teaching people who are pursuing careers that are parallel to freelance journalists, or painters, or authors. . . . They’re going to be entrepreneurial. They’re going to have their own self-run business” (Read, Interview II). To best prepare students, the University of Toronto’s jazz curriculum ensured that students were proficient sight-readers, seasoned public performers, and “connected” musicians that interacted with faculty, students, and guest artists. The following statements summarize Read’s administrative views and experience: U of T jazz launched in 1991, friendliness overcoming opposition, receptive to change and new ideas, jazz is like driving a car, technical mastery, and artist/entrepreneurs.

#### *Read’s views on the future of jazz education*

To move towards an ideal future for jazz education in Canada, Read recommended that we address the greatest challenge in Canada – our geography. Canada’s population is dispersed along a vast border with the USA. To compensate for this dispersion, Read viewed that Canadian jazz education requires stronger provincial leadership, at least one jazz degree in each province, and a more structured and collaborative network nationally.

We need more jazz programs so that local students don’t have to travel as far as they have to. Schools in Vancouver, Montreal, and Toronto have an advantage in that they’re in large urban centers where there’s a bigger jazz scene and, so, will naturally attract students from other areas. But we’re limited to the number of students we can take. It’s always been bothersome to me when we’ve

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turned down a student that plays well and is serious. And, yet, it seems to happen. And in the long run, I would hope that jazz education, music education, gets healthy enough that we have at least one major jazz degree offered in every province (Read, Interview II).

For jazz education to remain healthy in Canada, Read emphasized that it must be equally valued and funded within Canadian post-secondary music departments. Jazz studies should be an integral part of any student’s musical education from elementary school to university. “It [jazz music and musicians] belongs there along with the study of everybody else that we commonly think of as indispensable. You would not construct a music curriculum without including Bach. And I don’t think you should have a music curriculum designed without jazz” (Read, Interview II). For Read, this is especially important for those training to be music teachers, as their training affects the jazz education of the next generation of students. “That’s a challenge .. educating teachers to the point where they can recognize quality repertoire and being able to sort the wheat from the chaff and not let the publishers decide and the retailers decide what it is that they should be buying and playing and teaching their kids” (Read, Interview II). Read challenged Canada and Canadian teacher/musicians to continue building the nation’s jazz education network. While stating that change was needed for Canada’s jazz education, Read was optimistic and enthused about the nation’s future. The second interview ended with an apropos statement: “A lot of ideas and a lot of enthusiastic people involved. So I am optimistic, but it’s not going to be fast. C’est tout” (Read, Interview II).

The following statements summarize Read’s views on the future of jazz education in Canada: compensation for dispersion, degree per province, national network, and equal value and funding for jazz education.

#### *Possible applications to music education*

Read admitted that he was a life-long student, learning from his mistakes and changing his pedagogy as he matured as a teacher. This is noteworthy as educators rely on certain methods and curricula and over time, these routines may become unhealthy pedagogical plateaus. Another life-long adventure for Read was his career as a musician. It may not be enough to have past experience as a performer. To complement and inform one’s pedagogy, teachers (at all levels) would benefit from a musical life outside the school.

Read viewed himself as an educator/musician and this dual career was time intensive. If an educator adds to this mix parenting, commuting, sports, hobbies (or, for the casual labor force in post-secondary education, teaching positions at various schools and a variety of jobs) . . . it becomes overwhelming. Time constraints make it hard to excel in many areas. As an educator, choose one, maybe two foci, and be proud that you are succeeding in these areas.

When envisioning jazz, Read spoke of “creativity, innovation, and tradition.” This balanced idea was mirrored in his all-inclusive philosophy of jazz education and observations also supported this fusion or harmony. Educators might look at their curriculum (and administrators at their programs) and see if there is a philosophy that drives decisions and a general theme that guides content. Without a unifying philosophy in education, classes and programs are like sailboats without rudders, lacking a direction or ultimate destination.

Lastly, I would like to note that Read and the jazz program

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struggled to find acceptance at the University of Toronto. Their story is not unique (Kearns, 2011; Mason, 2005). The best that can be taken away from this story, and others, is that persistence, patience, and political parlance can weather the storm.

#### Author's reflection

Paul Read displayed great passion when discussing the importance of jazz education for all music students and when recounting the shaky start to jazz education at the University of Toronto. He also displayed a reflective and easy-going persona in the classroom. Passion and intellect; heart and mind. It may be a jump but young jazz musicians struggle to balance these two sides in improvisation. Some literature criticizes jazz education for producing musicians who lack heart or individuality in improvisation (Davis, 2002; Louth, 2004; Prouty, 2002). While Read acknowledged this criticism and emphasized aural learning himself, he also worked to create an all-inclusive environment where all learners, learning styles, musicians, and musical styles were welcome. This is something that I can appreciate as a lover of both jazz and rap<sup>vi</sup> and someone who continues to learn jazz anyway he can.

#### Notes

- <sup>i</sup> Read is an avid golfer and now spends a great deal of time in Florida where he can practice his swing year around.
- <sup>ii</sup> The author implemented this tip with the After Hours Big Band (Newmarket, ON). Comment from the lead trumpet player: "Why didn't you tell us this earlier?"
- <sup>iii</sup> A blind trumpet audition for the symphony orchestra (mid 1990s) resulted in the selection of a jazz performance major. However, once his major was identified, the offer to join the symphony was revoked.
- <sup>iv</sup> As there was no class devoted to the history of the violin or the piano, the head of musicology argued that there was no reason to continue offering a class devoted to the history of jazz. After a half-hour debate, it was agreed that the history of jazz *would* be offered – every other year.
- <sup>v</sup> This is no small feat and a task that some musicians may spend a lifetime trying to achieve.
- <sup>vi</sup> Historically rap refers to the music and hip hop to the culture, which stems from the importance of the MC, the DJ, b-boying, and graffiti art.

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