

## Asian American Jazz

Asians were imported to the United States during the 1830s, contracted as cheap laborers, and later became willing immigrants in search of work in the 1850s during the California Gold Rush. As the first Asian Americans began to emerge from the growing Asian population, the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 was the first law that prohibited immigration of an entire race.<sup>1</sup> Thus beginning the years of fearing discrimination and deportation. Amnesty for immigrants under false names were not granted until the 1950s and still many feared being deported and kept under their false names through their whole lives. It was not until the 1960s that Asians began collectively fighting for their civil rights and inclusion, particularly in response to the Black Power and anti-Vietnam War movements.<sup>2</sup> Yuji Ichioka, one of the first people to use the term “Asian American,” and along with Richard Aoki who served in the Black Panther Party, helped found the Asian American Political Alliance (AAPA) in 1968. During this time, we also see the rise in African American rights and the need for individualism and expression, resulting in the forming of the AACM in Chicago, Illinois, a group “founded by, led by, and created for African American artists.”<sup>3</sup> In response to the growing Asian American community, activism, and identity, Jon Jang and Francis Wong, also saw a need for individualism and

---

<sup>1</sup> J. Thomas Scharf, “The Farce of the Chinese Exclusion Laws,” Article on Chinese exclusion in the North American Review, Vol. 166, Issue 494 (2016), <[http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp\\_textbook.cfm?smtID=3&psid=4055](http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp_textbook.cfm?smtID=3&psid=4055)> (November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2018).

<sup>2</sup> Daryl Joji Maeda, “The Asian American Movement” (Jun 2016), <<http://oxfordre.com/americanhistory/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780199329175.01.0001/acrefore-9780199329175-e-21>> (November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2018).

<sup>3</sup> Nic Paget-Clarke, “A Conversation with Jon Jang and Francis Wong,” 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Asian Improv, In Motion Magazine (February 1998), <<http://www.inmotionmagazine.com/jjfw1.html>> (November 10<sup>th</sup>, 2018).

expression, and a place to “creating the work, producing it yourself, and trying to have some independence. We didn’t really have a choice because we were excluded and disenfranchised...so we collaborated together to form Asian Improv.”<sup>4</sup> With the newly formed Asian Improv Records or AIR, we see a rise in identity and a place where Asian Americans can share their life experiences, culture, and growth, into self-produced music that allows their own creative control and freedom to be expressive and independent.

Kotoist Miya Masaoka says,

Our music comes from a culture in diaspora. That’s why jazz, which developed out of the African diaspora is so attractive to Asian Americans.<sup>5</sup>

During the Transatlantic Slave Trade we see African Americans embracing the solace of their culture as they are forced out of homes and imprisoned in multiple ways. One of which was a restriction on literacy and having to rely on music that was passed down orally in order to find another means of expression. Music was changed and added frequently as, suffering, hardships, loss, and occasional blessings, needed to be expressed.<sup>6</sup> It became a voice of hope, a passing on of heritage and traditional hymns, and a way to create resonating connections with like-minded people. This music diaspora came out of the discrimination, misunderstandings, and isolation of a specific group of people, and this phenomenon was something Asian Americans could relate to and really

---

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, Paget-Clarke, “A Conversation,”  
<<http://www.inmotionmagazine.com/jjfw1.html>>.

<sup>5</sup> Dave Kaufman, “The Asian Improv: Adventures in Cross Cultural Synthesis,”  
*Perfect Sound Forever* music magazine (August 1998),  
<<http://www.furious.com/perfect/asianimprov.html>> (November 10<sup>th</sup>, 2018).

<sup>6</sup> Steven Lewis, “Music Crossroads: African American Influence on American Music,”  
*Smithsonian* (September 2016), <<https://music.si.edu/story/musical-crossroads>>  
(December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2018).

push for their voices to be heard, find moments of hope, and a way to create bonds with their people. This was especially during a time where political activism began increasing within the Asian American community due to WWII repercussions on Japanese Americans and anti-Vietnam War sentiments, a time they called the “Asian American Consciousness Movement.” Asian Americans banded together to start the Redress and Reparations movement in 1979 (a redress signed by Reagan to compensate more than 10,000 Japanese Americans who were incarcerated during WWII, formally apologizing and paying out \$20,000 per victim.), the starting of Asian student unions all across colleges and universities throughout the 1970s, the rising and strong support from the East Wind Magazine during the 1980s, the Third World Liberation Front strikes in 1968 (strikes led by ethnic groups demanding change from an education that was Eurocentric and non-diverse), the AAPA and the Red Guard Party members formed the ACC (Asian Community Center) in 1972 to fight wrongful evictions and provide support and healthcare for the elderly, the IWK (I Wor Kuen, “Righteous Harmonious Fists”) in 1969 NYC advocating for solidarity and supporting all people of color, a march and sit down of 10,000 people on May 19<sup>th</sup>, 1975, to City Hall on Broadway Avenue in response to Brooklyn police beating Peter Yew (a Chinese American architectural engineer), and even more organizations and groups of people supporting and fighting for fellow Asian Americans and people of color<sup>7</sup>. We begin seeing the rise in Asian American artists – Jon Jang and Francis Wong recording with James Lewis in 1982, Fred Ho forming the Afro Asian Music Ensemble in 1982 and releasing two LPs, Glenn Horiuchi recording with

---

<sup>7</sup> Daryl Joji Maeda, “The Asian American Movement” (Jun 2016), <<http://oxfordre.com/americanhistory/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780199329175.01.0001/acrefore-9780199329175-e-21>> (November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2018).

Taiji Miyagawa and Leon Alexander in 1988, Mark Izu touring internationally alongside Lewis Jordan through 1987-1988, Miya Masaoka combining the koto with flutist James Newton and percussionist Frank Holder, Jeff Song, Jason Kao Hwang, and many more. Many of these artists already collaborating with African American musicians and people who were apart of the growing AACM. With the Asian American Consciousness Movement, the drive for inclusion, and the rising achievements in Asian Americans in literature, cinema, and graphic arts, we see the beginning of the Asian Improv Movement.

The Asian Improv Movement consists predominantly of artists that are first generation American-born and are much more identifying as American born Asian individuals. I state it in this way because being first generation, they are exposed more to American culture and traditions, but many of them keep Asian traditions passed down through relatives, separated from society and not experienced as a whole country. They speak the language they were raised in, typically an Asian language, but are expected to speak English in schools, work, finding a career, and everyday life things outside of home. As Asian artists in America they are mainly exposed to the popular music in the States and grow a geared affinity towards hip-hop, jazz, blues, soul, etc., which undoubtedly all stem from African American roots. The Asian Improv Movement consists of Asian American artists who strongly resonate from the emotions, traditions, and the need for music as a voice of hope, as it was for African Americans during the Transatlantic Slave Trade. As Vijay Iyer explains from his release of *Architextures* CD,

The music in this collection has emerged from my ongoing efforts to document my life experiences. It depicts what I have learned as a member of the post-colonial, multicultural South Asian diaspora, as a person of color peering in critically from the margins of American mainstream

culture, and as a human with a body, a mind, memories, emotions, and spiritual aspirations. As I am a member of the growing community of first- and second-generation Indians, Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, Afghans, Nepalis, and Sri Lankans in North America, my music should be received as a real outcome of this diverse community. I function not as its official representative, but merely as a single voice – one among millions.<sup>8</sup>

The Asian Improv Movement was a time where people of color collectively came together to support communities that resulted from discrimination, and this culminated in artists of many colors and backgrounds playing, performing, recording, and improvising with one another.

The San Francisco Bay Area was the up and coming place in solidarity for Asian Americans and where the Asian artist scene was truly expanding and prospering. In the 1960s where jazz was booming in San Francisco, having started as early as the 1890s, called “the Harlem of the West,”<sup>9</sup> there were countless clubs with Miles Davis, Dexter Gordon, Dizzy Gillespie, Billie Holiday, and Ella Fitzgerald whom were all seen performing in the city. Fillmore was a popular busy district of music, where in the 1980s was the very place for the new beginning of the San Francisco Jazz Festival. It was no wonder that, yes – Asian Americans in the San Francisco Bay Area had an affinity to the African diaspora, but it was also the music of the time, being drawn to it because of the diversity of people that flocked to the scene, the music that spoke of freedom and

---

<sup>8</sup> Dave Kaufman, “The Asian Improv: Adventures in Cross Cultural Synthesis,” *Perfect Sound Forever* music magazine (August 1998), <<http://www.furious.com/perfect/asianimprov.html>> (November 10<sup>th</sup>, 2018).

<sup>9</sup> Peter Hartlaub, “Our S.F.: ‘Noisy sounds’ of jazz become an institution in the city,” *San Francisco Chronicle* (October 2015), <<https://www.sfchronicle.com/oursf/article/Our-S-F-Noisy-sounds-of-jazz-become-an-6575613.php>> (December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2018).

liberation, and a place where inclusion felt equal and the people felt united. It was in this city that Asian American jazz artists collaborated with famous African American artists, with Jon Jang and Francis Wong being the primary leaders in this collaborative movement. Francis Wong's first composition released in the 1990s was a tribute to Melvin Truss, an unarmed 17-year-old African American boy shot by a San Jose police officer in 1985, taking inspirations from Coltrane, Mingus, and his own experiences with death and music as an expression of release.<sup>10 11</sup> In this track he recorded alongside with Jon Jang, Eddie Moore, and James Lewis. This same quartet played a number of Jon Jang's compositions – *Jang* and *Are You Chinese or Charlie Chan*, but struggled trying to find willing recording companies and taking years for anything to finally release. It was the African American artists that taught Jon Jang and Francis Wong about the importance of expression, identity, and pursuing for an independent space to truly create music. African Americans in the 1960s began starting their own record labels in order to have full control of their own produced music. This inspired Jon Jang and Francis Wong to create a record label for Asian American artists and to have a place that inspired expression, identity, and a space to create and be creative. In 1987 they co-founded AIR, the Asian Improv Records, and released their first record, *The Ballad or the Bullet?* (Another Black Lives Matter work) by the same quartet, Jon Jang, Francis Wong, Eddie Moore, and James Lewis, and in 1988 they created the Asian Improv Arts.

---

<sup>10</sup> Andrew Gilbert, "Celebrating 30 Years of Challenging Music from Asian Improv," *KQED* (May 2017), <<https://www.kqed.org/arts/13214017/celebrating-30-years-of-challenging-music-from-asian-improv>> (December 10<sup>th</sup>, 2018).

<sup>11</sup> Nic Paget-Clarke, "A Conversation with Jon Jang and Francis Wong," 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Asian Improv, In *Motion Magazine* (February 1998), <<http://www.inmotionmagazine.com/jjfw1.html>> (November 10<sup>th</sup>, 2018).

So going back to the success of Asian Improv Records and Asian Improv Arts, let me put it this way: the goal of Asian Improv Records and AIA was never to promote those as (an) organizational record company. The goal was to help develop artists. They're one in the same. AIA is served as a presenter of music and most recently supporting multi-disciplinary arts. ... Francis and I are both Chinese and we've dealt with crisis, we've dealt with disasters, we've had to cut back a little bit but that's part of the cycle. During the 90's we were given opportunities and now we have to create our opportunities.<sup>12</sup>

Jon Jang says this eloquently in the goal of the AIR and the AIA, in supporting Asian artists in performing, producing, and collaborating with others to unite and uplift Asian Americans and people of color.

The Asian Improv Records was an organization that supported Asian musicians all throughout the U.S. They helped support the Asian American Jazz Festival (the AAJF) that began in 1981, held in San Francisco on Kearny Street, an event that gained so many supporters that the AIR hosted another festival in Chicago. The AIR released its second album *Next Step*, in 1988, composed by Glenn Horiuchi with M'Chaka Uba, Taiji Miyagawa, Leon Alexander, Samoa Koria, Francis Wong, and Ayanna Hobson.<sup>13</sup> On the second track within the album, *Dreamwaters*, sung and led by Ayanna Hobson, you hear Horiuchi begin with a piano intro, making references to Asian melodies, techniques, and scales. Right before going into a more melodic line, he plays several chords and very popularly in Asian music is the technique to tremolo and in this case on the piano, he emulates the pipa, which is a four-stringed Chinese musical instrument, and this

---

<sup>12</sup> Dmae Roberts, "Jon Jang, Jazz Pianist, Interview," *Crossing East Archive* (December 2005), <<http://www.crossingeast.org/crossingeastarchive/2017/03/27/jon-jang-interview/>> (December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2018).

<sup>13</sup> Glenn Horiuchi, *Dreamwaters*, from Glenn Horiuchi – *Next Step*, Asian Improv Records (1988), Vinyl, LP, Album.

technique to tremolo is very often seen in Asian movies to show suspense or giving foresight that something is about to happen, here, Ayanna Hobson beginning to sing. In this song Horiuchi talks about a city and “seeing beyond its’ shores, seeing open doors, and where hope burns bright,” many of Horiuchi’s music was tied to his political activism with the Asian American community,<sup>14</sup> and this song sung beautifully by Ayanna Hobson talks of imagining a place from a dream that is a hopeful place and where open doors are available and a beautiful sight is seen everywhere.<sup>15</sup> Through the AIR we hear a new genre of music being formed, branched from African American jazz but evolved and influenced into its own category of Asian American jazz.

In 1989 the AIR released *Never Give Up!* by Jon Jang and the Pan Asian Arkestra. In this album Jang introduces the Taiko drums into these jazz songs titled *Reparations Now!*, *Let Us Not Forget*, and a rendition of *A Night In Tunisia*, the first two are immediate responses to the Redress and Reparations movement, and the third is an interesting approach to showcasing Asian American jazz. In *Reparations Now!* in the middle of the track we hear it break off into a taiko drumming solo with yelling and shouting, the very techniques that are used in traditional taiko drumming, but being put into a new jazz setting and slightly reformed to do so.<sup>16</sup> With the AIR steadily releasing and supporting more and more Asian jazz artists, we start seeing a stronger influence of

---

<sup>14</sup> Brian Philips, “Glenn Horiuchi: Atonal Energy Music,” *Perfect Sound Forever* music magazine (May 2001), <<http://www.furious.com/perfect/glennhoriuchi.html>> (December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2018).

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, Glenn Horiuchi, *Dreamwaters*, (1988).

<sup>16</sup> Jon Jang and Pan Asian Arkestra, *Third Movement: Reparations Now!*, from Jon Jang and Pan Asian Arkestra – *Never Give Up!*, Asian Improv Records (1989), CD, Album.



Asian cultures and the representation of political activism, identity, and the need for a voice.

A large referenced work by Jon Jang and the Pan Asian Arkestra is the album *Tiananmen!* released in 1993 by record label Soul Note.<sup>17</sup> The third track *Great Wall Gold Mountain*, starts off with Taiko drumming and the familiar yelling/shouting which immediately follows with Asian-inspired melodies utilizing pentatonic scales but still keeping jazz intonations and harmonies. In this instrumentation he uses the Chinese zither, which is a traditional Chinese plucked string instrument with 16 or more strings and movable bridges. In *I Feel The Thunder In My Heart*<sup>18</sup> we hear the zither accompanying the flute and allowing them to freely express and choose their intonations.<sup>19</sup> He also writes for the suona a Chinese double-reed instrument played very fanfare and trumpet like, but now into this jazz setting, frequently acting as a woodwind instrument and sometimes blending into the trumpet and brass section. Many of the tracks within this album showcase Asian American jazz much more prominently in instrumentation but of course in the composition itself. Jon Jang specifically finds moments to bring the Chinese instruments into the spotlight, but also allowing beautiful moments of pure jazz intonation and melding two different genre instruments together

---

<sup>17</sup> Jon Jang and The Pan-Asian Arkestra, *Great Wall Gold Mountain*, from Jon Jang and The Pan-Asian Arkestra – *Tiananmen!*, Soul Note (1993), CD, Album.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, Jon Jang and The Pan-Asian Arkestra, *I Feel The Thunder In My Heart*, Soul Note (1993), CD, Album.

<sup>19</sup> AAJ Staff, "Jon Jang: Tianamen!" *All About Jazz* (May 2002), <<https://www.allaboutjazz.com/tiananmen-jon-jang-soul-note-review-by-aa-j-staff.php>> (December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2018).

whether to play jazz harmonies, a pentatonic melody, or a back and forth of solos and accompaniment.

Fred Ho a Chinese American baritone saxophonist originally born in Palo Alto moved to the East Coast and like Jon Jang and Francis Wong was a leading musician for the Asian American jazz world. He knew and played with many of the musicians previously mentioned and collaborated multiple times with Jon Jang and Francis Wong in the AIR, but was predominantly based in Brooklyn, New York City, New York. Fred Ho was a huge supporter in heading the AIR but broke away from them to eventually be more active in the LRS (I Wor Kuen/League of Revolutionary Struggle).<sup>20</sup> Fred Ho also had ambitions in creating “Afro Asian new American multicultural music,” using unique Asian and American/Eurocentric instrumentations. He made conscious artistic decisions incorporating Asian traditional structures or approaches within this new wave of Afro-Asian American music.<sup>21</sup> With this in mind Fred Ho began writing music in multiple genres and settings, testing and experimenting where this cross-cultural music could work and synthesize to something great. He wrote Chinese operas, more avant-garde music, collaborated with Asian American poets and writers, film scores, ballets, and other theatrical works. He was, “An anti-discrimination activist, he often incorporated politically charged messages (at times in Mandarin) into his recordings, which generally

---

<sup>20</sup> Fred Ho, “Beyond Asian American Jazz” *Leonardo Music Journal*, Vol. 7 (1999), <<https://aaww.org/beyond-asian-american-jazz-fred-ho/>> (December 10<sup>th</sup>, 2018).

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, Fred Ho, “Beyond Asian American Jazz” (1999), <<https://aaww.org/beyond-asian-american-jazz-fred-ho/>> (December 10<sup>th</sup>, 2018).

aligned with the avant-garde.”<sup>22</sup> Through being commissioned to write for a television series called *Journey To The West*, he formed The Monkey Orchestra, which was a culmination of knowledge he learned from many of his experimenting in instrumentation, techniques, sounds, and a large inspiration by the works of the Sun Ra Arkestra.

The Monkey Orchestra was a revolutionary ensemble that combined traditional Asian instruments, including the sona, erhu, and trained Chinese vocalists, with the more usual American/Eurocentric instruments.<sup>23</sup> In 1996 he composed and released *Monkey: Part One* by Fred Ho and The Monkey Orchestra, and in 1997 *Monkey: Part Two*.<sup>24</sup> *Part One* opens tensely with a vamp using traditional Asian instruments and brass underneath setting the scene for the dramatic music. It moves into a more familiar sound as you hear saxophones and trombones building up to a chord, then having a pipa come in with a beautiful solo and this back and forth continuing until the brass and drums enter, transitioning the mood entirely into a big band sound. In *Monkey: Part Two Overture/The Journey Begins*, you can hear all the instruments being used with the erhu and sona playing brash timbres that set the tone of tension and suspense, and about halfway into the track Fred Ho moves to using a saxophone ensemble reflecting more of Coltrane

---

<sup>22</sup> Jeff Tamarkin, “Fred Ho, Musician, Composer and Activist, Dies at 56” *JazzTimes*, (April 2014), <https://jazztimes.com/features/tributes-and-obituaries/fred-ho-musician-composer-and-activist-dies-at-56/> (December 8<sup>th</sup>, 2019).

<sup>23</sup> Ron Welburn, “Fred Ho and the Monkey Orchestra: *Monkey: Part Two*”, *JazzTimes* (December 1997), <https://jazztimes.com/reviews/albums/fred-ho-and-the-monkey-orchestra-monkey-part-two/> (December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2018).

<sup>24</sup> Fred Ho and The Monkey Orchestra, “*Monkey’s Origin*”, from *Fred Ho and The Monkey Orchestra – Monkey: Part One*, Koch Jazz (1996), CD, Album.

utilizing jazz harmonies and techniques.<sup>25</sup> This interlocking of cultures is extremely apparent in these two albums and Fred Ho composes deliberate conversations between instruments to spotlight the different genres being presented. The highlights in the tracks are when the conversations begin colliding into a full ensemble with a unique new timbre and sound being created.

As the struggle for inclusion diminished and the scene for popular music started changing, the Asian American Consciousness movement began to die down and the need for hope and a voice decreased. Asian Americans began to move on as discrimination decreased, public figures were responding to their marches and activism, and we, as Asian Americans began to grow complacent and comfortable. Jon Jang, Francis Wong, Glenn Horiuchi, Fred Ho, Miya Masaoka, and Vijay Iyer became less apparent but continued to be active in the music world and in Asian American cross cultured music. Miya Masaoka started to experiment with electronics and electroacoustic works, playing live performances with the Japanese koto, and utilizing and finding new techniques in playing the koto especially in electronic settings.<sup>26</sup> Vijay Iyer combines electronics, jazz, rock and South Asian techniques and experiences into his music, while being an active speaker on the South Asian American diaspora.<sup>27</sup> Tatsu Aoki a Japanese American very active in the Chicago jazz scene, is constantly finding new ways to incorporate a

---

<sup>25</sup> Fred Ho and The Monkey Orchestra, "Overture/The Journey Begins", from Fred Ho and The Monkey Orchestra – *Monkey: Part Two*, Koch Jazz (1997), CD, Album.

<sup>26</sup> Guillermo Gómez-Peña, "Dangerous Border Crossers", Routledge (2000).

<sup>27</sup> Jesse Leaneagh, "Vijay Iyer's Venn Diagram: Community, Politics, and Activism", *WALKER* (February 2012), <<https://walkerart.org/magazine/vijay-iyer-activism-politics-das-racist-bjork-meredith-monk>> (December 14<sup>th</sup>, 2018).

Japanese American styled taiko drumming into the American/Eurocentric music scene.<sup>28</sup> Jason Kao Hwang, a Chinese American Violinist finds new ways to improvise on the violin in the jazz world. He is also a composer who focused on creating a scenery/environment and is known for his chamber opera *The Floating Box: A Story In Chinatown* and uses extended techniques when combining jazz, classical, and Chinese instruments.<sup>29</sup>

I do maintain that the Asian American-ness of an artistic work lies in more than content, and is rooted and linked to cultural traditions and forms. Along with expressing aspects of the “Asian American experience,” the music itself would draw from or reflect aspects of traditional Asian music influences. Yo-Yo Ma is a cellist who happens to be Chinese and Asian American, not a Chinese/Asian American musician. ... While Asian American music may very well be cross-cultural, we in the “Asian American jazz” movement saw as the focus of our music and cultural work to help catalyze Asian American consciousness about our oppression and need to struggle for liberation. The very identity and term “Asian American” in our sobriquet “Asian American jazz or music” is a political signifier.<sup>30</sup>

Today there are fewer Asian American artists who are creating music representing liberation and acceptance toward the purpose of bringing awareness to past and present-day oppression of Asian American community. One reason is the lack of conversations about Asian American history and how it is not included in the education curriculum. However, the main factor is the complacency for many Asian Americans fitting into

---

<sup>28</sup> Deborah Wong, “Asian American Improvisation in Chicago: Tatsu Aoki and the ‘New’ Japanese American Taiko”, *Critical Studies in Improvisation* (2006), <<https://www.criticalimprov.com/index.php/csieci/article/view/50/91>> (December 14<sup>th</sup>, 2018).

<sup>29</sup> Jason Kao Hwang, “full-bio”, <<https://www.jasonkaohwang.com/full-bio>> (December 14<sup>th</sup>, 2018).

<sup>30</sup> Fred Ho, “Beyond Asian American Jazz” *Leonardo Music Journal*, Vol. 7 (1999), <<https://aaww.org/beyond-asian-american-jazz-fred-ho/>> (December 10<sup>th</sup>, 2018).

society as the quiet model minority. In my own experience, a great deal of Asian Americans aim for a life of constant comfort and peace, avoiding problems or disputes that arise. In order for Asian Americans to find their own label in American society, we must rewrite our diaspora and find a new need to define who Asian Americans are. One thing I find that is important is to acknowledge, learn, and listen to the music that was created during a much harsher time for the rising Asian American community.

Discrimination today is not as harsh or obvious, but we are still people of color, and people of color as a whole are constantly demarginalized. As artists it is hard to say we are compelled to write music containing Asian traditional forms and techniques when growing up and learning our art, that practice was never taught or even an influence on us. But I believe it is crucial if you identify as an Asian American activist, spokesperson, or influencer, that you must learn and understand the past, and that includes techniques, forms, traditions, culture, and truly understanding what it means to be both Asian and American. For all Asian Americans, history is the first step in understanding identity and stepping forward to strengthen, uplift, and represent a community. With the knowledge of how and why the AIR (Asian Improv Records) came to be and what the Asian American diaspora was in the 1960s to the early 2000s, it contributes in the necessary understanding of the Asian American identity. An identity that allows embracing culture, sharing life experiences, and growing, into new ways of music, art, discussion, and a truer freedom to be one's self.

## Bibliography

- AAJ Staff, “Jon Jang: Tianamen!”, *All About Jazz* (May 2002), <<https://www.allaboutjazz.com/tianamen-jon-jiang-soul-note-review-by-aa-j-staff.php>> (December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2018).
- Discogs, “Asian Improv Records”, (1987), <[https://www.discogs.com/label/32751-Asian-Improv-Records?sort=year&sort\\_order=](https://www.discogs.com/label/32751-Asian-Improv-Records?sort=year&sort_order=)> (November 10<sup>th</sup>, 2018).
- Fukushima, Gary, “Asian American Jazz: A Personal and Historical Retrospective”, (October 2009), <<http://garyfukushima.net/?p=27>> (November 10<sup>th</sup>, 2018).
- Gilbert, Andrew, “Celebrating 30 Years of Challenging Music from Asian Improv”, *KQED* (May 2017), <<https://www.kqed.org/arts/13214017/celebrating-30-years-of-challenging-music-from-asian-improv>> (December 10<sup>th</sup>, 2018).
- Gómez-Peña, Guillermo, “Dangerous Border Crossers”, Routledge (2000).
- Hartlaub, Peter, “Our S.F.: ‘Noisy sounds’ of jazz become an institution in the city”, *San Francisco Chronicle* (October 2015), <<https://www.sfchronicle.com/oursf/article/Our-S-F-Noisy-sounds-of-jazz-become-an-6575613.php>> (December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2018).
- Ho, Fred, “Beyond Asian American Jazz” *Leonardo Music Journal*, Vol. 7 (1999), <<https://aaww.org/beyond-asian-american-jazz-fred-ho/>> (December 10<sup>th</sup>, 2018).
- Ho, Fred and The Monkey Orchestra, “Monkey’s Origin”, from Fred Ho and The Monkey Orchestra – *Monkey: Part One*, Kock Jazz (1996), CD, Album.
- Ho, Fred and The Monkey Orchestra, “Overture/The Journey Begins”, from Fred Ho and The Monkey Orchestra – *Monkey: Part Two*, Koch Jazz (1997), CD, Album.
- Horiuchi, Glenn, *Dreamwaters*, from Glenn Horiuchi – *Next Step*, Asian Improv Records (1988), Vinyl, LP, Album.
- Jang, Jon and Pan Asian Arkestra, *Third Movement: Reparations Now!*, from Jon Jang and Pan Asian Arkestra – *Never Give Up!*, Asian Improv Records (1989), CD, Album.
- Jang, Jon and Pan Asian Arkestra, *Third Movement: Reparations Now!*, from Jon Jang and Pan Asian Arkestra – *Never Give Up!*, Asian Improv Records (1989), CD, Album.
- Kajikawa, Loren, “Asian Improv Records”, *Oxford Music* (2012), <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-1002227353>> (November 10<sup>th</sup>, 2018).
- Kao Hwang, Jason, “full-bio”, <<https://www.jasonkaohwang.com/full-bio>> (December 14<sup>th</sup>, 2018).

Kaufman, Dave, “The Asian Improv: Adventures in Cross Cultural Synthesis”, *Perfect Sound Forever* music magazine (August 1998), <<http://www.furious.com/perfect/asianimprov.html>> (November 10<sup>th</sup>, 2018).

Leaneagh, Jesse, “Vijay Iyer’s Venn Diagram: Community, Politics, and Activism”, *WALKER* (February 2012), <<https://walkerart.org/magazine/vijay-iyer-activism-politics-das-racist-bjork-meredith-monk>> (December 14<sup>th</sup>, 2018).

Lewis, Steven, “Music Crossroads: African American Influence on American Music”, *Smithsonian* (September 2016), <<https://music.si.edu/story/musical-crossroads>> (December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2018).

M. Asai, Susan, “Cultural Politics: The African American Connection in Asian American Jazz-based Music”, *University Of Texas Press, Asian Music*, Vol. 36, No. 1, pp. 87-108 (2005), <[https://www.jstor.org/stable/4098505?seq=1#metadata\\_info\\_tab\\_contents](https://www.jstor.org/stable/4098505?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents)> (November 10<sup>th</sup>, 2018).

Maeda, Daryl Joji, “The Asian American Movement” (Jun 2016), <<http://oxfordre.com/americanhistory/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780199329175.001.0001/acrefore-9780199329175-e-21>> (November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2018).

Paget-Clarke, Nic, “A Conversation with Jon Jang and Francis Wong”, 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Asian Improv, *In Motion Magazine* (February 1998), <<http://www.inmotionmagazine.com/jjfw1.html>> (November 10<sup>th</sup>, 2018).

Philips, Brian, “Glenn Horiuchi: Atonal Energy Music”, *Perfect Sound Forever* music magazine (May 2001), <<http://www.furious.com/perfect/glennhoriuchi.html>> (December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2018).

Roberts, Dmae, “Jon Jang, Jazz Pianist, Interview”, *Crossing East Archive* (December 2005), <<http://www.crossingeast.org/crossingeastarchive/2017/03/27/jon-jang-interview/>> (December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2018).

Scharf, J. Thomas, “The Farce of the Chinese Exclusion Laws”, *North American Review*, Vol. 166, Issue 494 (2016), <[http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp\\_textbook.cfm?smtID=3&psid=4055](http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp_textbook.cfm?smtID=3&psid=4055)> (November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2018).

Tamarkin, Jeff, “Fred Ho, Musician, Composer and Activist, Dies at 56” *JazzTimes*, (April 2014), <https://jazztimes.com/features/tributes-and-obituaries/fred-ho-musician-composer-and-activist-dies-at-56/> (December 8<sup>th</sup>, 2019).

Welburn, Ron, “Fred Ho and the Monkey Orchestra: Monkey: Part Two”, *JazzTimes* (December 1997), <https://jazztimes.com/reviews/albums/fred-ho-and-the-monkey-orchestra-monkey-part-two/> (December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2018).



Wong-Aoki, Brenda and Izu, Mark, “The San Francisco Asian American Jazz Festival” *First Voice* (2017), <<http://www.firstvoice.org/asian-american-jazz-festival/>> (December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2018).

Wong, Deborah, “Asian American Improvisation in Chicago: Tatsu Aoki and the ‘New’ Japanese American Taiko”, *Critical Studies in Improvisation* (2006), <<https://www.criticalimprov.com/index.php/csieci/article/view/50/91>> (December 14<sup>th</sup>, 2018).