

## THE FIGURE OF SHAMAN AS THE POTENTIAL MODEL OF LEADER IN MUSIC AND MUSICAL EDUCATION

**Magda Bałajewicz**

Akademia Ignatianum in Cracow, Poland

**Abstract.** Shaman is an individual, gifted with plenty of unusual skills - the medium between two worlds, human and the external one. Being a leader and healer, shaman is master for the younger entrants, leading them through the difficult initiation process and preparing them to independent work on their potential in the future. With time shamanism became a sort of the cultural model associated with pop-culture: a path of the artistic and spiritual transformation, a form of opposition for excluded communities, a type of common experience of art and a prototype of the figure of leader. The consciousness of the existence of this kind of artistic and psychological model and the possibility of its use in art could be the key element in young artist's music educational process, based on the intimate relation between the student and the master, especially in jazz music genre. In this context extremely important is informal and non-formal education - lasting for the whole life, it allows the artist to develop their individual personality and sensitivity on every level of existence. In this perspective the figure of shaman - first entrant, later leader - could be a valuable and useful educational model.

**Keywords:** lifelong learning, informal and non-formal music education, music and spirituality, shamanism, the figure of shaman, jazz music and education, pop-culture, jazz, sociomusicology.

### Introduction

Speaking about jazz in the 60s there used to be a metaphor that jazz (such as funk, grunge or rock) is a „way of living”, being related to every level of human existence. Artists were creating specific communities with the independent, inner organizational structure. At the time the educational process was based on the model of self-directed learning, collective informal learning or it was a sort of informal educational process related with the relationship between the master and the student. The formal, institutionalized education was only a further part of the learning process. Furthermore, it could be helpless and even disturbing... Focusing on the process of „learning” and informal education (according to Jarvis, Livingston, Eco) and turning to the phenomenon of shamanism and its relation to jazz music (insufficiently analyzed in the literature) I would like to present the analogy of these two cultural areas, which allows - in my opinion - to create the model of shaman - understood as the potential model of leader and

performer. Its use in music education would, in my point of view, contribute to more effective and comprehensive development of individual.

### **Musical education, learning and shamanism: around concept**

The phenomenon of education, just like the phenomenon of shamanism, brings a lot of difficulties, because of its amorphism and the lack of precise semantic boundary lines, allowing one to put both of these terms in a lot of semantic contexts. Depending on interpretation education could be the conscious or the unconscious activity - planned or incidental, institutionalised or individual, but most of all a kind of pervasive. The attempt to define the category of education in main discourse is usually brought to two concepts: the „teaching” and especially the „learning” process, which - taking many forms and determined by cultural, sociological, personal and biographical factors - becomes the very important realm of exploration for researchers. However, not every process of learning is considered education. Furthermore, when the figure of teacher is absolutely needed in the process of teaching, it is not necessary in the process of learning. Learning could be a very individualized, inner-manoeuvrability and intentional process - previously planned and directed to achieve certain results and skills. According to Peter Jarvis (Jarvis, 1995), education could be defined as the intentional, planned and well-organized process of learning, which - including the ability of understanding, connected with the consciousness and unconsciousness - is a typical human activity (according to Wittgenstein): steady, leading to universal transformation of the learning person through the wide experience on various areas of social activity and permanent modifications in one's emotional, physical and cognitive sphere (Muszyński, 2014).

In this point it is justified and necessary to mention the concept of Penelope Peterson, who presents the phenomenon of education in four basic elements, such as: the well-organized content (which could be so-called „study programme”), methods (by means of which student gains knowledge), the person taking the lessons in a very precise system of learning and previously stated aims and results that student is supposed to achieve. Much like Jarvis, but in more narrow context, Peterson notices how important the planned learning process is. The author emphasises that the consequence of this specific process ought to be student's awareness of aims, methods and content one uses and new skills acquisition. These new abilities, according to American author, ought to be transmitted by the outsider - the teacher, the master or the leader - in the appropriate way.

However, as learning is the individual and unitary process (it could be spontaneous and intuitive as well), education is strongly situated in the social context, being based on the relationship between the student and the outside world one lives in. This statement bring us to the reflection on the sociocultural roots of

the phenomenon of learning process, that reaches back to ancient cultures being connected with individual and collective experiences (Przybylska, 2014). Speaking about education, it is necessary to emphasize that **learning process** (in the context of Jarvis and Peterson) is well known from the centuries, being deeply connected with the phenomenon of culture understood as the set of organized and schematic answers to the material and sociological condition of human life, which creates another set of traditions, rules, rituals, models and ideas that are heritated from the past and collectively re-worked by every generation. According to Jonathan Gottfried Herder (Ibidem.), the process of individualization is a part of the culture, which is a dynamic and transformative phenomenon. Self-learning has always been and still is a sort of sociological process determined by life experience and one's social environment as well. Culture and education are strongly related to each other. In the various forms of learning and teaching the condition of the reality is reflected - peoples beliefs, ideas, concerns, models' and traditions' change, ways of communication, personal relations and various forms of collective unconsciousness.

It could be said that the central point of education is the figure of student-entrant, who is supposed to achieve certain abilities through the process of learning with supervisor or with the self-directed learning or collective informal learning, that David Livingstone is writing about (Livingstone, 2001). The author divides education into three types, such as **formal**, **non-formal** and **informal education**. At the same time Livingstone allows one to create the area of learning where self-directed learning is taking the form of informal education - planned but not enforced and obligated way of student's individual self-development process, monitored by the supervisor. This type of intentional self-learning is very important in musical education as well, creating the new perspectives for self-development, especially in the area of individualized and cultural determined jazz music, that is the main axis of this article.

Livingstone seems to presents the perfect area for the musical education, especially jazz music education and the learning process of artist - a performer, musical virtuoso and aware leader. However, speaking about musical education, it is important to notice that classical music education is mostly organized in formal (institutionalized process of studying music with the master-teacher in relation to official study programme) and non-formal education (private lessons, scholars or workshops, supervised by master-teacher in relation to official study programme etc.). When it comes to jazz music education and the artists connected with popular music scene the learning process looks differently. Formal and non-formal forms of education are not satisfying enough - based on the classical and European educational tradition and devided of sociocultural context of the genre they might be even damaging. Speaking about jazz music we need to remember that jazz was born and it was evolving in the area of crisis and racial and social

tension. According to many artists, this context is the key element in this music even now. Furthermore, analyzing the phenomenon of musical education, therefore the process of learning and teaching, we need to take into account that the main aim in this area is development of the specific potential and extraordinary abilities of the individual in order to release one's personality and sensitivity and give one the precise methods that would be helpful in self-directed development in the future.

Here comes the question if there are any other alternative ways and models of developing and shaping the figure of individual and of an artist, that are different from the formal and non-formal education? In brief, isn't it the ancient tradition where the process of learning, including the universal transformation of human being on every level of the existence (spiritual, emotional, physical, spiritual) has left us some useful solutions - the individual and the collective one, based on the relationship between the master and the learner? Maybe it would be helpful to analyze some of the artists' practices and concepts, therefore it will be possible to notice a new (however well-known for the centuries) path to constitute artist's identity as the performer and the leader? The artist, who could become a master for one's band and audience as well, showing up cultural roots of certain genre of music and helping to understand it better. This actually seems to be the area where ancient traditions and practices, so-called **shamanism**, had a chance (and still have) to combine with pop-culture and be transferred into the area of art, becoming a path that allows one to reach the individual voice and identity, and creating something like the cultural model of shaman-performer and shaman-teacher.

### **The figure of shaman and pop-culture: in the area of reconstruction and reinterpretation of the model**

Similar to the term of education, the phenomenon of so-called **shamanism** - in main literature defying usually religious and magical practices of Siberian and North American tribes - brings a lot of difficulties as well, because of the variety of its interpretations. Heterogeneous, various, rooted in certain folklore it co-exists with different forms of religion and magic, connected with trans and ecstasy, such as: syncretic religions or Tibetan Buddhism. It is said - according to Andrzej Szyjewski - that the fundament of shamanism is a specific religious experience so-called trans, ecstasy, visitation or shamanic state of consciousness, that defines a states of prophet's afflatus, visions, possessions and mediumism and that is related to the particular practices and behaviours, such as: dance, meditation or repeating mantra (Szyjewski, 2005). The aim of the shamanic magical religious practices is to communicate with the external world, crossing the visible dimension – with the woof spirits, ancestors and deities – and to create

the spiritual bond acting for the community, not only for personal salvation. The key figure, which „experience” all these altered states of consciousness is shaman - the master of ecstasy (Eliade, 2011) - whose main attributes are handcrafted shamanic drum and shamanic outfit wealthy decorated (different for every tribe and culture).

Shaman is one of the most important figures, that takes a huge role in a social and spiritual life of the community, being the healer, the medium between the human and the external world, the messenger of the ancestors whose souls one leads to the other world. Shaman is the individual gifted with the special skills and the abilities one cannot resist and reject; sometimes considered the incarnation of previous shaman or one of the ancestors. Very often the function of shaman comes together with the role of hungan, magician, the head of the community, but the predisposition to trans and controlled states of ecstasy makes one really extraordinary. Furthermore, shaman's aim is to contact with the world of gods and ancestors and serve the community in order to protect and unify its members (Ibidem.).

What is the most interesting, shaman is going through the spiritual path to one's destiny from the state so-called shamanic illness (recognition of the shamanic gift) through the traditional process of initiation and shamanic training, supervised by other experienced and respected shaman, who helps the entrant in developing one's potential and „power” and getting new skills and abilities that would lead one to the self-directed shamanic practice and status of leader. Shamanic state might be the part of the family heritage or the individual life choice (just like in North American tribes), therefore the time of initiation and training becomes the form of self-directed learning and searching for a master. Sometimes young entrant is trained by elder shaman in the group of other young learners (f.e. in tribes of Caribbians) and taxing with the series of traditional rituals. In this perspective it might be said that the future shaman is included in the organized and reworked with traditional system, learning shamanic songs, structures of the rituals, ancient techniques of ecstasy and techniques of building and playing on the drum. Analyzing the works of famous researchers such as: Eliade, Campbell, Deren, Pentikainen or Szyjewski) it is obvious that shamanic techniques of ecstasy and trans are present in nearly every part of the world: in Asia, Tibet, Haiti and in Africa, that is very meaningful in relation to jazz music. According to Włodzimierz Szturc (Szturc, 2014), who defines shaman as the very first actor and performer, we should wonder if the figure of shaman was not a prototype of the spiritual leader - the teacher who created the first methods and techniques providing the learner with organized and planned system of education, transforming the individual on every possible level. The process of learning seems to be the specific combination of self-directed learning and informal education: the entrant is individually searching for the master, who - becoming one's

supervisor and teacher - leads one through the process of initiation into the world of shamanic craft.

The huge variety of magical and religious practices brings a lot of definitions of the term of shamanism, however the most flexible one is presented by Piers Vitebsky, who understands shamanism as a form of a not-institutionalised spirituality free from dogmas that leaves a space for the individual creativity (Vitebsky, 1996).

According to Vitebsky's concept it is possible to consider shamanism in the perspective of the cultural model, that is in-written in the collective unconsciousness, which - being a cultural and human heritage - was transformed with time and transferred into pop-culture and area of art, inspiring some artists. Therefore, the figure of shaman could be understood in the categories of Jung's archetype and - just like Anima, Animus or Shadow archetypes - it has its own representation: the certain image, the description recognizable for everyone intuitively (Jung, 1993). Considering the figure of shaman in these categories, the transposition of the shamanic image and shamanic ritual structures by the performers into area of art seems to be very possible. One of the example could be Jay Kay (the leader of Jamiroquai), whose fantastic, indian hat inspired by Irokee culture and use of polirhythmic funk structures taken from the rythms of West African rituals and South American *clave* rythm, made him strongly recognizable. The next example might be rock guitar player, Slash, whose image (dark glasses, cigarette and high, black cylinder) is definitely inspired by the figure of Haitian *loa* - Baron Samedi, just like the image of Miles Davis (especially in the 70s).

However, the strongest inspiration could be noticed among Afro American jazz artists in the 60s and the 70s, for whom shamanism become a path of the spiritual transformation and the form of constituting the collective identity of the race, a kind of exemplification of the „back to the roots” movement. We need to remember that jazz was born in the area of crisis and racial conflict. Connected with the category of community, the history of slavery and colonisation and later, with racial segregation in the USA - considered by Black American people as the outcome of slavery – jazz, by the evolution of its musical language, has always been showing up the air of the reality, starting from *negro spirituals*, through „aggressive” and „hot” *be-bop* of the 40s to *new black music* in the 60's, with the great artist such as Miles Davis, John Coltrane, Theleoniou Monk, Herbie Hancock, Ornette Coleman or Wayne Shorter. Therefore, in the 60s artist are searching for new forms of expression, which might be a next step in the evolution of jazz musical language. On the one hand they are fascinated by new technologies, on the other hand they try to find the way to make jazz another voice of racial heritage and dignity in the sociocultural discourse. Jazz starts to be the voice of the revolution leaded by Martin Luther King or Malcolm X.

The solution turns out to be the return to the multicultural and syncretic roots of jazz music and bringing back its fundamental function of integrating the discriminated community, for example slaves' *negro spirituals* and *work songs* based on the collective participation or, mentioned by Andrzej Schmidt (Schmidt, 1988) dynamic voodoo rituals, frightening colonizers, that took place on plantations and New Orlean's Congo Square.

It is needed to emphasise that in the 60s there was a time of cultural change and deconstruction of modern models and worldview. In the work from the 1962 Umberto Eco says that modern art is based on the category of disorder - the positive and „prolific” disorder, that is the opposition of the traditional order, that the modern man of the West used to identify with the objective world structure. Nowadays, when this category was deconstructed because of the evolution of historical dialectics, methodical doubt and variable expository models, the only thing that is left for art is to accept the size of it and try to form it into something. The concept of „open structure” - understood by Umberto Eco as the open structure, dynamic and mobile, synthesizes the fundamental change in artists' way of thinking: art, culture and science are not linear and evolutionary anymore, being the processing of postmodern concept of the, „rhizome”. This change of art's conceptualization strongly affects jazz artists' works: (1) music starts to be composed differently than in the past, (2) improvisation takes the main role, being the equivalent of artistic individuality, (3) past tonal system is depleted. It could be said that artists, searching for a different forms of expression, are trying to revitalize jazz musical language and start from the „zero point”. All the efforts are concentrated on individual potential development, in opposition to mainstream system. This kind of openness to new musical and performing concepts allows artist to express one's non-musical ideas in the act of organizing the musical material. This way of thinking is presented by Miles Davis and John Coltrane., whose experiments are an attempt to transfer ancient, ethnic (mainly African and Native American) shamanic structures and figures into musical material and jazz live performance.

Very interesting is the case of John Coltrane who is trying to transfer the figure of shaman and shamanic seance (Ascending and Descending, magical flight etc.) to his personal performing practices and the working process with the band (classic jazz quartet). The instrument becomes the shamans voice and the body (connecting the external world and the community), while the band is taking the role of the shamanic drum. Trane's quartet (or quintet) becomes the exemplification of the figure of shaman - the messenger of the external world of spirits and dieties; the live performance starts to be a collective quasi-religious experience of sacrum, that musician was talking about in many interviews, considering himself the leader and healer (DeVito, 2017).

The very similar concept of collective work could be noticed in Miles Davis's practices, who turns to technology and ethnic spirituality at the same time in the late 60s and the 70s (best example: *Bitches Brew*, 1970). The trumpeter is experimenting with trans rhythms, polirhythmic structures (strongly inspired by voodoo musical tradition and Yoruba rituals) overtaking the models of open structure and collective improvisation, that he tries to work out with his band. Analyzing Miles's works and biography the Haitian possessive cult voodoo influences and inspires him a lot these days. It could be said that Davis starts to transfer the structure of voodoo ritual into the musical material (re-structuralization of the songs, incorporating Nikolay Slonimsky's tonal system etc.). One can see that he uses the image of hungan as well - live performances start to be a sort of ritual, led by the musician, a form of collective experience. Analogical shamanic inspirations could be found in work of two pianists: Keith Jarrett's work (G. Gurdzjew's philosophy) or Herbie Hancock and his band Mwandishi when the concert used to be a spiritual seance connected with chanting and collective meditation while playing (Hancock, 2015).

Certainly, it is possible to find more examples of this kind of artistic practices. However the consciousness of existing this kind of practices is not common, therefore the influence of the „shamanic” model on young students work is minimum. Finally, the most important thing in the examples mentioned above is the fact, that this kind of model could be very helpful on a lot of levels: artist are re-working it again, creating their own artistic path of self-development in the performative, social and individual levels.

What is interesting, the consequence of this kind of perspective of jazz in the 60s and 70s was the transfer of traditional model into jazz music society structure and work in general. It became a sort of community and jazz itself became the language of initiation with its clear function and social context. The complex process of becoming a jazz musician seemed to be similar to the initiation process, including self-directed learning of the certain skills and individual searching for the master-teacher. It is necessary to say that formal education was dominated by European educational models and it was out of reach for majority of Afro American musicians, because of the racial segregation. However, the progressive jazz society was created mostly by Black artists and it took a form of hermetic community, creating its own structures, psychological models that one need to be initiated in. Therefore, the educational process of young artists was a form of self- directed learning and collective informal learning.

In this context it is not difficult to notice the analogy between jazz musician learning and initiation process in ancient communities: (1) We can speak about so-called acknowledgement and individual searching for talent, considering the gift, something external that „comes from the outside”. (2) We will not find here literally understood initiation, however it seems to be present in numerous acts



that a young musician is required to perform to be accepted to the community, such as: testing one's skills and personality on jam session (a collective and spontaneous performing and improvising), that was the pass to be accepted by the community. (3) The process of self-directed learning the instrumental techniques was based on searching for the master, who would spontaneously lead the entrant through all the levels and the „programme” (jazz standards). This function was fulfilled by working as an apprentice with other appreciated leader: just like Miles Davis working with Charlie Parker at the beginning, who finally became the master for Hancock, Coltrane or Wayne Shorter.

To conclude, the fundament of jazz musician's self-directed learning was the relation of the master and the learner - intentional, based on certain methods, content and aims, that Peterson is writing about. On the other hand, it is difficult to omit the fact, that jazz music was a kind of lifelong journey, filled with episodes and changes that Jarvis is speaking about - it contributed to comprehensive development of individual in the real-life perspective, determining various transformation in one's lifestyle and mentality. Both collective performances at Village Vanguard, Minton's Playhouse, Blue Note, Birdland, testing on jam session and common joint drug doing or spiritual seances (meditation and chanting before or during the concerts) were integral parts of initiation, that I have mentioned above. The main result of these acts was the transformation of young entrant into strong, capable and charismatic artist - performer, whose personality had a chance to be developed enough to make one the leader for the next generations, one's band and the audience, which at the same time participate in the process of learning (spontaneously and intentionally), being taught the essence of jazz by the leader with its social, cultural and ethnic senses taken into account.

### **Summary**

Nowadays, musical education including jazz music and popular music education is almost completely formalized. The most important institutions, such as Berklee College of Music and Julliard School of Music, create study programs and methods of learning and teaching, that are imported to other schools and seats of learning, becoming a kind of official study programs. Jazz was systematized in imitation of classical music forming a masterful system based on widely respected and obligated dogmas (f.e. methods of B. Stoloff, J. Abersold, M. Levin). The initial reaction of euphoria in the 80s and the 90s, accompanying the elite status that jazz was finally brought to, started to melt into doubt and reflection... Today it seems that jazz was shorn of the fundamental category of freedom, inner-maneuvrability and collective way of learning in everyday life, that was proper to this musical genre in the middle of the last century, creating artist with the lack of this inner-maneuvrability and individual character. Therefore, bringing awareness to the analogy between the phenomenon of so-called shamanism (neoshamanism) and jazz music (and some of the important jazz artists' works) and taking into account the sociocultural background of this genre I would like to emphasize the need of the reinterpretation of jazz music from the perspective of the artists' inspirations and cultural

practices, presented in this essay. Including these aspects in educational discourse (f.e. jazz history, philosophy in jazz music etc.) would bring, in my opinion, the very important knowledge and new perspective to young generation and contribute to increase one's potential in performance and composition. In addition, I would like to notice the presence of the possible alternative educational path, which could be: (1) implementation of the model of shaman-leader/teacher and focusing on the intimate relation between the student and the master, that could even take the form of arte-therapy (individual mentoring); (2) return to the collective informal learning in the reality, out of institutions. The use of the model presented in the article would open music education to new possibilities in the area of „learning” and „teaching”, which main aim - to my point of view - is to evolve the individuality and independence in one's artistic activities.

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**Netografia:**

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