

THE INNOVATION AND INFLUENCE OF JAZZ HAPIST

DOROTHY ASHBY (1932-1986)

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Dissertation Prepared for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF MUSICAL ARTS

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS

May 2020

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Betzer, Jennifer J. *The Innovation and Influence of Jazz Harpist Dorothy Ashby (1932-1986)*. Doctor of Musical Arts (Performance), May 2020, 53 pp., 4 appendices, bibliography, 42 titles.

A comparative analysis of the musical transcriptions of Dorothy Ashby with those of her predecessors proves that Ashby was a uniquely powerful and innovative influence on the genre of jazz harp. This dissertation begins with a summative biography of Ashby, following her education in both jazz and classical music through to her career highlights as a performer, arranger and composer. An analysis of Ashby's recordings reveals the development of her groundbreaking musical style throughout her life. This paper also examines Ashby's social activism through musical theatre, especially with regards to combating racism. Next, a brief biography of jazz harp forerunners Casper Reardon and Adele Girard precedes a comparative analysis of Reardon's "Aint' Misbehavin'" with Ashby's "Soft Winds" and a comparative analysis of Girard's "Harp Boogie" with Ashby's "Blues for Mr. K." Finally, myriad examples of current musicians covering and sampling her work confirm the paramount and lasting influence of Dorothy Ashby's music.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

An increasing wave of interest in jazz and improvisation is occurring throughout the harp community. This can be seen internationally through programs like the Lyon and Healy Pop and Jazz Harpfest in Salt Lake City, Utah; the Jazz Harp Foundation's Brazilian Jazz Harp Immersion Program; and Jazz Harp Camp with Park Stickney in Switzerland. Year-round courses of study are also available through the Royal Academy of Music (London), Berklee College of Music (Boston, Massachusetts), and more recently, Milan Conservatoire (Italy). Growing interest in the genre has led to a renewed interest in Dorothy Ashby, one of the most notable pioneers of the jazz harp movement. In 2018 a surge of reviews of Ashby's works and interviews were conducted in celebration of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of her album, *Afro- harping*.<sup>1</sup> Dorothy Ashby, born Dorothy Thomson, was not the first harpist to perform jazz on the harp. Casper Reardon and Adele Girard performed in big band and swing styles before her, in the early 1930s. However, Ashby's performances revealed new capabilities of the instrument in this genre and she is considered by critics to be "the only important bop harpist."<sup>2</sup> Tom Moon, music critic from NPR, stated she "stands as one of the most unjustly under-loved jazz greats of the 1950s."<sup>3</sup>

Ashby, a woman of color, was presented with many obstacles in her career but succeeded nonetheless. Her tireless efforts and innovations helped her to break through many barriers. Ashby arrived on the jazz scene in Detroit after the 1943 race riots and before the 1967 race riots, both of which greatly impacted her life. The invention of the automobile had a

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<sup>1</sup> Brandee Younger and Zeena Parkins. Interviewed by Vivian Host. "Remembering Dorothy Ashby, the Detroit Pioneer Who Introduced the Harp to Jazz," Red Bull Radio, May 22, 2018.

<sup>2</sup> Tom Moon, "Dorothy Ashby and a Harp that Swings," *National Public Radio: Shadow Classics*, November 15, 2006, <https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=6488979>

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

dramatic impact on the demographic of Detroit and the environment in which Ashby was raised. According to Mark Slobin in *Motor City Music*, “the population [of Detroit] doubled from 1910-1920 and just kept doubling.”<sup>4</sup> Immigrants from all over the world poured into the city due to the large number of job opportunities the automotive factories promised. The African American population grew from 40,000 in 1920 to 300,000 by 1950.<sup>5</sup> Detroit’s population skyrocketed to the fourth most-populated city in the United States very quickly. The job and housing demands unfortunately did not match the rapid increase in population. Racial tensions escalated with the fight for jobs and space. African Americans were confined to certain overcrowded neighborhoods and were subjected to violence if they attempted to move out. Ashby grew up in the heart of this conflict, which shaped her childhood. The 1967 riots that occurred blocks away from where Ashby lived would later have a direct impact on Ashby, destroying some of the venues she performed in.<sup>6</sup>

Ashby considered breaking into the jazz scene to be a challenge, stating later in life that it was a “triple burden.”<sup>7</sup> This statement was a reference to the challenges of being African American during a time of extraordinary racial tensions in Detroit, being a female in a male-dominated profession, and striving to incorporate the harp where it was not typically accepted. As Bob Rolontz recognized in the liner notes of *The Fantastic Jazz Harp of Dorothy Ashby*, “To achieve fame as a harpist is not an easy task. To achieve fame as a jazz harpist is infinitely more difficult.”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Mark Slobin, *Motor City Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 3.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>6</sup> Carol McLaughlin, “Jazz Harpist Dorothy Ashby,” *American Harp Journal* vol. 8 no. 4 (1982), 32.

<sup>7</sup> W. Royal Stokes, *Living the Jazz Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 158.

<sup>8</sup> Bob Rolontz, liner note to *The Fantastic Jazz Harp of Dorothy Ashby*, Dorothy Ashby, Atlantic 1447, LP, 1965.

This document provides an overview of Ashby's education, early career, musical theater experience, and late career. In the chapters that follow, Ashby's work is compared with earlier Jazz harpists, Casper Reardon and Adele Girard. Her influence is demonstrated through her active performance career, extensive recording history, comparative analysis of her works, and in popular music today. Analysis of Ashby's music reveals her innovations as a jazz harpist. The use of her music in current covers and samples show that her influence remains prevalent today.

## CHAPTER 2

### EDUCATION

Ashby's first music lessons came from her father, self-taught jazz guitarist Wiley Thomson.<sup>9</sup> In Ashby's eyes, her father was the most significant influence on her abilities as a jazz musician. Ashby stated:

When I took to playing piano, I played the things that I heard and played along with my father who taught me more about harmony and melodic construction than I learned in all my years of high school, college and private study, and sacrificed more time and money than the family could afford for my musical training and instruments.<sup>10</sup>

Thompson toured in a five-piece jazz band for a while, but switched to trucking for a more reliable income to support his family.<sup>11</sup> Thompson supported and funded Dorothy's musical aspirations but did not want her to endure the same profession. Ashby acknowledged, "He didn't want me to end up in the clubs and suffer the hard times that so many of them encountered."<sup>12</sup> As Ashby's professional career developed, however, Thompson continued to be a participant. Ashby later played jobs as a pianist and harpist with her father on guitar and her brother on flute and saxophone.

Ashby first experienced the harp as a student at Cass Technical High School. In an interview with Sally Placksin, Ashby stated that she and the other African American students "hadn't even seen a harp before we got there."<sup>13</sup> Cass Tech was founded in 1907, and has a long history of training incredible musicians. "It was a very special place," according to Ashby,

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<sup>9</sup> Antoinette D. Handy, *Black Women in American Bands and Orchestra* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 1998), 96.

<sup>10</sup> Sally Placksin, *Jazzwomen, 1900 to the Present: Their Words, Lives, and Music* (London: Pluto Press, 1985), 239-243.

<sup>11</sup> McLaughlin, "Jazz Harpist," 32.

<sup>12</sup> Placksin, *Jazzwomen*, 239-243.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.



“because it trained so many: Gerald Wilson; Donald Byrd and I played in the marching band; Kenny Burrell was there for a short time.... But it was terribly exciting in those days, and we were all growing. And there were so many talented players.”<sup>14</sup> Trumpeter Gerald Wilson was a bandleader and educator who wrote arrangements for renowned jazz musicians such as Duke Ellington, Dizzy Gillespie, and Ella Fitzgerald. Trumpeter Donald Byrd was a bebop musician who incorporated funk and soul styles, and worked with John Coltrane, Herbie Hancock, and Thelonious Monk. Finally, jazz guitarist Kenny Burrell was recognized for his musicianship with the National Endowment of the Arts Jazz Master (2005), the highest honor that the United States bestows on jazz musicians. Detroit was full of incredible musicians, and many had their roots at Cass Tech. Ashby was surrounded by these innovators in jazz and inspired by their musicianship.

Clarence Byrn, head of the music department at Cass Tech, initiated the harp program in 1925. He believed that the school “should offer instruction and education in every musical instrument known to mankind, including harp.”<sup>15</sup> It is the longest standing harp program in a secondary school.<sup>16</sup> Laurietta Kenk was chosen in 1925 to become the first harp instructor, but she soon fell ill. Byrn chose Velma Froude (1912-1993) in 1928, the most proficient student at that time, to succeed Kenk as harp instructor. During her 49 years as harp instructor, Velma Froude taught many significant harpists, including Ashby. When Byrn told Froude she would be the instructor of harp, he also told her she would go on vacation to study with harp pedagogue Carlos Salzedo (1885-1961) to gain more experience. She took her teachings to Detroit and went

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<sup>14</sup> Placksin, *Jazzwomen*, 240.

<sup>15</sup> Sue Levytsky, “2017 Eminent Artist Patricia Terry Ross,” *The Kresge Foundation* (Troy: Kresge Foundation, 2017), 34.

<sup>16</sup> Younger and Parkins, “Remembering Dorothy Ashby.”

back every vacation to continue to learn from Salzedo.<sup>17</sup> Ashby was a participant in the school's harp ensemble, which Salzedo was often asked to guest-conduct.

Many music students enrolled in harp class in order to fulfill their secondary instrument requirement. Although Ashby attempted to play the saxophone and the bass, her father and piano teacher directed her to the harp.<sup>18</sup> During her time at Cass Tech, Ashby was enrolled in harp classes that usually consisted of "about fourteen other girls in the class" who shared five harps and "took turns practicing."<sup>19</sup> Because of Salzedo's influence on her instructor, Ashby was taught his strict classical style. The Salzedo technique is a classical method of playing that focuses on hand position and gestures. The gestures of the Salzedo technique were inspired by the Ukrainian dancer Vaslav Nijinsky (1889-1950). Ashby was very resistant to this traditional training and stated, "I spent all my time wanting to do it my way."<sup>20</sup> Ashby also asserted, "I had to do all my own transcribing for the harp and taught myself how to do the pedaling in jazz."<sup>21</sup> The frequent chromatic movements in jazz make pedaling the greatest challenge for harpists. Because flat, natural, and sharp are played on the same string, the harpist must change a pedal to achieve the half step motion each time the quality of the note is altered. Ashby's ability to conquer this feat on her own established her aptitude for the genre.

Ashby continued her music studies at Wayne State University in 1947 at the age of 17. Froude, Ashby's first instructor also taught harp at Wayne State during this time. An article promoting her first-year scholarship fund recital stated that at the time, she intended to complete

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<sup>17</sup> Patricia Terry Ross, interviewed by Kimberly Rowe, February 1996, *Tech Unique Interview*, Harp Column Vol. 3, Issue 4, Ann Arbor: Diamond Rock Productions, 1996.

<sup>18</sup> Placksin, *Jazzwomen*, 239-243.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Peter Stevens, "Dorothy Ashby brings Jazz harp," *The Windsor Star*, June 30, 1983.

her studies in 1953 with both her bachelor's and master's degrees.<sup>22</sup> She majored in piano and music education, and was proficient enough at piano that she held several recitals to help fund her Wayne State tuition. She performed as the school's choir pianist, studio accompanist, and as the harpist in the Wayne State University Orchestra.<sup>23</sup> She worked as an accompanist for a vocal studio, which provided her the opportunity to advance her own vocal techniques and repertoire. She would put these skills to frequent use later in her career singing with her trio in live performances and recordings.<sup>24</sup> Ashby could not yet afford a harp so she focused on piano during college, although she still favored the harp. She stated, "When I did my graduation recital, I did the Rachmaninoff Concerto. We couldn't afford an orchestra, but my teacher played the second piano part. So I was very proficient as a pianist. Harp I did on my own. Harp I like much more."<sup>25</sup>

Although Ashby's passion for jazz began at a young age, jazz was also one of the only genres African Americans were allowed to play professionally. While Cass Technical High School now enrolls predominantly African American students, this was not the case when Ashby attended. Ashby "made history for herself and her race. She was the only Negro member of the Cass Symphony orchestra" as of 1947.<sup>26</sup> The focus at Cass Tech was meant to be practical for training students for a profession in music. However, when Ashby ended her studies at university, African Americans were not hired in symphonies.

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<sup>22</sup> BeyondRecords, "Not Satisfied with Piano, Also Plays Harp, Sax, Violin," *New York Amsterdam News*, April 17, 1948. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/muycool/2674737723/in/album-72157605517579544/>

<sup>23</sup> Handy, *Black Women in American Bands and Orchestra*, 96.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Placksin, *Jazzwomen*, 239-243.

<sup>26</sup> New York Amsterdam News, "Not Satisfied with Piano, Also Plays Harp, Sax, Violin," *New York Amsterdam News*, April 17, 1948.

Byrn argued that music students must be given skills that would serve them well in pursuing music professionally, observing that only a small minority of music students would receive employment in the Detroit Symphony Orchestra... Byrn believed that his practical music education would offer his students the ability to make a living as musicians.<sup>27</sup>

Although the Detroit Symphony Orchestra employed fourteen Cass Tech alumni by 1954, “none were African American,” stated Mallory Slobin, director of MGM. Slobin added, “That had to wait for the 1960s.”<sup>28</sup> Even as late as 1981, the percentage of African American women in classical orchestras was very low.<sup>29</sup> The prospects for African Americans looking for jobs in music education in Detroit were also slim. Ashby began teaching to fulfill her degree requirements in music education in 1950. According to Wayne State graduating student Charlie Burrell, the head of music for Detroit public schools had told him, “as long as he was head of music in Detroit, there’d never be a black teacher,” only one year before.<sup>30</sup> African American musicians of incredible talent were relegated to club performance.

Ashby completed only three years at Wayne State University. After conducting some classes, she married John Ashby in 1951 and dropped out during her final year of college to work.<sup>31</sup> John and Dorothy were married just before John went off to the Korean War and Dorothy needed to make a living. John Ashby was working as a photographer at the time of the couple’s marriage and had previously spent two years as an army photographer in Germany.<sup>32</sup> Surprisingly, though they had grown up only three blocks apart, they did not meet until both

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<sup>27</sup> Gareth Dylan Smith, *The Routledge Research Companion to Popular Music Education*. (Oxon: Routledge, 2017), 37.

<sup>28</sup> Slobin, *Motor City Music*, 55.

<sup>29</sup> Handy, *Black Women in American Bands and Orchestra*, 96.

<sup>30</sup> Slobin, *Motor City Music*, 58.

<sup>31</sup> Chuck Thurston, “Funfinding: Dorothy Ashby at the Café Gourmet,” *Detroit Free Press*, November 13, 1966.

<sup>32</sup> Ken Bernard, “Her Harp Swings While She Sings,” *Detroit Free Press*, December 4, 1962.

attended Cass Tech.<sup>33</sup> Ashby's first job was at Parks and Recreation.<sup>34</sup> She also worked as a piano accompanist for dance classes until she earned enough money to purchase her own harp.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Thurston, "Funfinding."

<sup>35</sup> W. Kim Heron, "One of the Few Pluck Souls to Play the Harp," *Detroit Free Press*, July 8, 1983.

## CHAPTER 3

### EARLY CAREER

Once she possessed her own harp, Ashby formed the Ashby Trio and began to perform. As newlyweds, Dorothy and John Ashby faced extreme financial hardships in the beginning, especially with the expense of Ashby's new instrument. However, in John Ashby's words, "We couldn't give up, Dorothy has too much to say."<sup>36</sup> Initially, jazz club owners did not grant Dorothy auditions because "they could not believe that they were gonna get anything less than chamber music. The word harp seemed to scare people."<sup>37</sup> Ashby also found that being a woman amplified the struggle to break into the jazz scene. Even late in life, she felt that "women [were] more visible but it [was] still pretty much a man's world."<sup>38</sup> Ashby believed it was not enough for women to reach the same level of performance as her surrounding male counterparts. It was necessary to surpass them to break into the scene. So she played for dances for young people and at colleges to get her name out. Ashby built a reputation through these performances. This allowed her to finally talk with club owners and be given a chance to play. Ashby's trio consisted of drums and bass alongside her harp. She also often sang with the group. When John returned from the war, he took up drums and adapted the stage name "John Tooley" so he could join Ashby on the Bandstand.<sup>39</sup> He began to write arrangements for Dorothy and the trio as well.

The Ashby Trio performed frequently throughout the mid-fifties, sixties, and early seventies. As early as August 3<sup>rd</sup> of 1954, the Ashby Trio's performance at the Joker Club in

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<sup>36</sup> Thurston, "Funfinding."

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Stevens, "Dorothy Ashby Brings Jazz Harp."

<sup>39</sup> Thurston, "Funfinding."

Decatur, Illinois was advertised in *The Decatur Daily Review*.<sup>40</sup> From that point on, the trio saw a tremendous upswing in press promotions. In 1956, the trio performed at the Wal Ha Room at the Garfield Hotel in Detroit. That year they also took to the road playing the Midway Lounge in Pittsburgh, and the Circus Lounge of the Ottawa Hotel in Toronto. While in Toronto, the group also performed at The Colonial and Massey Hall. They even opened for Louis Armstrong (1901-1971) and Woody Herman (1913-1987) at a Masonic Temple back in Detroit in March that year.

In 1957, Ashby kept very busy with live performances at Jack Epps' Bali- Hi Motor Hotel.<sup>41</sup> At this time, the trio consisted of John Williams (1905-1985) on drums and Clarence Sherrill (1924-2013) on bass. Ashby performed both as a soloist and with her trio in the Balinese Room, often playing there every night, especially through the holidays in December.<sup>42</sup> Yet Ashby still managed to produce her first album, *The Jazz Harpist*, that year. Her big break for that first record deal came when the Count Basie band visited Detroit and heard Ashby at a club.<sup>43</sup> Frank Wess (1922-2013), flute-and-sax man with the Basie band, asked Dorothy to come to New York and cut a record along with bass players Wendell Marshall (1920-2002), Eddie Jones (1929-1997), and Ed Thigpen (1930-2010) on drums.<sup>44</sup> The group cut the record in one day with no rehearsal time. Regardless, the album was instantly a huge success.

The first album was recorded under the Regent label and includes four original compositions by Ashby alongside three arrangements of standards. Like most of Ashby's

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<sup>40</sup> "Opening Tonight," *The Decatur Daily Review*, August 3, 1954.

<sup>41</sup> "Supper Clubs: The Song Groups Head Bills," *The Windsor Daily Star*, November 18, 1957.

<sup>42</sup> "Balinese Room," *The Windsor Daily Star*, November 4, 1957.

<sup>43</sup> McLaughlin, "Jazz Harpist," 32.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

albums, she contributed as a bandleader and a soloist in addition to composing and arranging. Ed Thigpen is credited as the album's sole drummer while the bass is split between Eddie Jones and Wendell Marshall. Jones covered the tunes "Thou Swell," "Stella by Starlight," "Aeolian Groove," and "Quietude." The album opens with the tune "Thou Swell" by Richard Rogers from the 1927 musical "A Connecticut Yankee." The following tune is "Stella by Starlight" by Victor Young from the 1944 movie *The Uninvited*. Unlike "Thou Swell," where Ashby traded solos with Frank Wess, Ashby is the feature throughout this tune. In her intro sustained bass notes accompany Ashby before the first statement of the chorus. Flute later joins the sustained accompaniment along with bass and soft brushwork in the drums. Ashby's playing contains many stacked arpeggios that are more common in her earlier recordings. The cover "Dancing on the Ceiling," also by Richard Rogers is featured on the album. The tune was originally written for the 1930 musical "Ever Green," but was again featured by jazz singer Ella Fitzgerald on the Nat "King" Cole show on November 11, 1957. The tune opens with a rare bass feature, the longest of only two on the album. Here the bass takes the melody accompanied by only harp. A cross-placing harp chord technique is used in the introduction. Later in the tune, drums shift the group to a more upbeat tempo. The groups slow build from duet, to trio, to quartet, increases ever slightly when Ashby softly sings along with her improvisation. Although her vocals are not truly featured as a separate voice within the ensemble until much later, she can also be heard accompanying her improvisations in "Aeolian Groove," and "Spicy."

The final four pieces on the record are all Ashby original compositions. Two title names of Ashby's originals are taken from the first two pieces ("Lamentation" and "Quietude") of the popular 1917 set, *Five Preludes for Harp Alone* by Carlos Salzedo. Ashby would have known the pieces well from her time studying with Velma Froude because Froude regularly studied with



Salzedo. Although no harmonic connection appears obvious within the tunes, another connection with his teaching can be seen in “Aeolian Groove.” While many tunes make use of Aeolian mode, it is only within “Aeolian Groove” that Ashby features glissandi as part of her solo, which Salzedo printed in his *Modern Study of the Harp* (1919) as the technique, *Eolian flux*. “Aeolian Groove” begins with a harp and drum introduction followed by flute and harp taking the melody of the first chorus in unison accompanied by a walking bass line and more delicate brush technique in the drums. The tune also contains sections of call and response between flute and harp and at the end of the tune between unison flute and harp and drums. Ashby’s next original track, “Quietude,” begins with flute and harp taking the A theme without an introduction. The flute and harp alternate statements of the melody with added improvisations accompanied by the common ride pattern in the drums with high hat on beats two and four. The ride pattern occurs frequently throughout the album. One distinctive feature in the harp part is the double glissandi ending the tune, also taken from the *Modern Study*. Ashby’s tune “Spicy” is the only tune on the album where the ensemble begins together. Ashby begins her improvisation by comping her accompaniment under her melody. “Spicy” is also the only tune to feature a brief bass solo improvisation after the flute. “Lamentation,” the final track on the album, opens with a flute pickup to the addition of harp and an interesting conga accompaniment. The conga sound adds a contrasting timbre and is not used on any other track within the album.

Ashby’s next two albums, both released the following year, would also be performed with Frank Wess. This time Herman Wright (b. 1930) joined the group on bass and continued to record with Ashby for three more albums. The drummer Arthur Taylor (1929-1995) recorded for

*Hip Harp* while Roy Haynes (b. 1925), also a drummer, recorded *In a Minor Groove*. *Hip Harp* was later re-released as *The Best of Dorothy Ashby* by Prestige Records.<sup>45</sup>

*Hip Harp*, was recorded in March 21<sup>st</sup> 1958 on the label Prestige. The opening track, “Pawky,” is one of Ashby’s three original compositions on the album. “Pawky” is the showing of a sly sense of humor. This is just what Ashby portrays in her improvisations quote from Bizet’s Opera “Carmen.” Here she plays the opening of the most popular aria in the opera, the “Habanera.” The piece opens with the harp, bass and drum trio, and the flute later enters on the bridge to the first solo section. Ashby’s next original composition included in this album is a major key blues titled “Back Talk.” Ashby word painted the title with constant call and response between flute and harp in the solo sections. The piece also includes a pedal slide solo section. Her final original on the album, “Jollity,” is a bebop tune that shows off Ashby’s agility with fast improvisations that include complex rhythms and pedal slides. The style of this tune was certainly new for harp and she conquered the challenge successfully. The album also contains two more Richard Rogers covers, “Moonlight in Vermont” and “There’s a Small Hotel.” In the cover “Charmaine,” Ashby opens with a challenging double arpeggio pattern. Later she accompanies her melody with a section of connected ascending and descending glissandi in which the chord changes can be heard throughout. This is another classical feature of her style, like the stacked arpeggios, which characterizes her earlier style.

The next Album Ashby recorded in September of 1958 is *In a Minor Groove* on the New Jazz label, named because all tunes on the album are written in a minor key. The album contains the Ashby original compositions “Rascality” and “It’s a Minor thing.” The later contains the harmonic material of the *Pescetti Sonata in C minor* transcribed for harp by Carlos Salzedo in

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<sup>45</sup> McLaughlin, “Jazz Harpist,” 32.

1931. Here the opening of the movement is played using the same notes with a different rhythm. Though classical elements are still heard with Ashby's flowing rolled arpeggios, more succinct guitar-like lines can be found on this album.

In 1958, Ashby remained an active performer during the production of these albums. She performed at the White House Café and Cocktail lounge in Detroit. The trio also returned to the Wal Ha Room at the Garfield Hotel in Detroit in 1959 and in 1960 began their regular appearances at the Minor Key Espresso Coffee House. In the same year, she began her long history of performing with Jimmy Clark's orchestra on Detroit radio station WJR.<sup>46</sup>

1961 contained the production of two more albums for Ashby along with performances at the Ford Auditorium and a long stint of performances at The Drome in Detroit. The Albums *Dorothy Ashby* and *Soft Winds / The Swinging Harp of Dorothy Ashby* were recorded just one week apart on August 8<sup>th</sup> and August 15-16 respectively though in different studios and cities. The album *Dorothy Ashby* was recorded with Dorothy's husband, John Ashby, on drums and Herman Wright on bass in Chicago. In *Soft Winds* Dorothy performs with Terry Pollard (1931-2009) on piano and vibraphone, Herman Wright and Jimmy Cobb (b. 1929) on drums in New York.

The album contains two original Ashby tracks, "John R" and "Booze." In "John R," Ashby arranged her pedals so that neighboring strings create enharmonic notes. Repeated notes are challenging on harp because replacing the same note quickly creates a buzzing quality and muffles the sound. Ashby's enharmonic usage allows repetition to be a part of the melody without stopping the sound. She used the enharmonic A flat and G sharp to begin the melody, as

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<sup>46</sup> "Listeners," *The Detroit Free Press*, December 17, 1960.

well as E flat and D sharp. Both original compositions from the album incorporate pedal slide notes into the melody.

By 1962, Dorothy was performing constantly on the Detroit public radio station WJR. She was actively “playing harp in Jimmy Clark’s Orchestra for the Jack Harris show on WJR, rendering a folk song a day plus working in the orchestra for ‘Guest House,’ Bud Guest’s program on the same station.”<sup>47</sup> She also received Downbeat’s ‘Critics and Readers’ award that year.<sup>48</sup> The Trio continued to perform at the Drome Lounge nightly. It was also during this year that music producer Richard Evans (1932-2014) saw Dorothy perform for the first time at a show featuring Ella Fitzgerald in New York.<sup>49</sup> Evans later decided to sign Ashby after hearing the Trio again in 1966 when he came to Detroit to hear jazz singer and guitarist Frank D’Rone. It was during this year that Chess Records released a reissue of the album *Dorothy Ashby* as *I Love Dorothy Ashby*.<sup>50</sup> This was the first in a series of reissues of records by the label Chess called *I Love Jazz on Chess*. The series replaced the original album artwork with images of Caucasian women. It was no coincidence that Evans encouraged Ashby to focus on funk and soul in her next three albums. When asked what inspired Evans to take Dorothy’s music in this direction, Evans states, “I wanted things to be very black.”<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Barnard, “After Dark.”

<sup>48</sup> Herb Boyd, “Jazz Harpist and Composer Dorothy Ashby,” *New York Amsterdam News*, June 14, 2018.

<sup>49</sup> Richard Evans, interviewed by David Ma and Dan Ubick, “Soul Conductor: Bassist-turned-arranger Richard Evans put the soul in Cadel Records,” *Waxpoetics*, Issue 34. (2009), 72.

<sup>50</sup> Dick Fijnheer, cover designer of *I love Dorothy Ashby*, Dorothy Ashby, Chess PAR S-500, LP, 1966.

<sup>51</sup> Evans interview, “Soul Conductor,” 72.

## CHAPTER 4

### INFLUENCE THROUGH MUSICAL THEATER

A turning point in both Dorothy and John Ashby's career came with the establishment of the Aid to the Creative Arts (ACA) in 1962.<sup>52</sup> In October of that year, Ashby played harp, piano, sang and danced at the Art Institute of Detroit in a performance hosted by the ACA. The Aid to the Creative Arts is an organization started by the Ashby's to fund arts scholarships. It is around this time that the couple began to prepare for one of the ACA's biggest endeavors; the Ashby's formed the Ashby Theater Company.

After the establishment of ACA, the Ashby's first theater productions did not come to fruition for five years. During this time period, the Ashby Trio remained active, giving local performances at Mister Sam Lounge and The Cobo Arena in Detroit in 1963 and 1964. On August 28<sup>th</sup> of 1965, Dorothy Ashby appeared on Johnny Carson's "Tonight Show" in New York. At this time she was performing with her trio nightly at the Café Gourmet in Detroit where a musical fountain entertained guests by reacting to the sound of their music.<sup>53</sup> Her next album, *The Fantastic Harp of Dorothy Ashby* was also released in 1965. The album features Grady Tate (1932-2017) on drums, Willie Bobo (1934-1983) on percussion, and Richard Evans on bass.<sup>54</sup> In addition four trombones are featured, played by Jimmy Cleveland (1926-2008), Quentin Jackson (1909-1976), Sonny Russo (1929-2013), and Tony Studd (b.1938).<sup>55</sup> On December 18, 1965, the first of a regular column of record review articles written by Dorothy Ashby was published in the

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<sup>52</sup> Barnard, "After Dark."

<sup>53</sup> Thurston, "Funfinding."

<sup>54</sup> Rolontz, liner note to *The Fanatastic Jazz Harp of Dorothy Ashby*.

<sup>55</sup> Rolontz, liner note to *The Fanatastic Jazz Harp of Dorothy Ashby*.

Detroit Free Press. She was also at this time featured on WCHD FM of Dayton, Ohio and the radio program Nightside on WYDD FM of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania alongside Frank Sinatra.<sup>56</sup>

In 1967, the Ashby Players put on four different musicals within a three-year span. The Ashby Theater Company was the epitome of Dorothy Ashby's tireless grit and dedication. The group became increasingly important to her and her husband because it demanded social change through music during the turmoil of the 1967 race riots. Having an all-African-American cast was not common in this time period. John Ashby believed this casting was not only the key to social change, but it was providential. In John's words:

I can pick people off the street and say 'you're going to be an actor' because black people have to act all their lives to survive. They have to live a façade...The Negro has survived by acting. The Indian in America didn't act, and he lost. He got annihilated. If the black man didn't act, he wouldn't be here today. You have to put on an Academy Award performance every day.<sup>57</sup>

Although they were musical comedies, each production was politically charged to expose the hardships of life in the ghetto. The theatre troupe frequently experienced sellout success. As acclaimed in the Detroit Free Press, "In only 18 months it has become the dominant Negro theatrical troupe in the city."<sup>58</sup> With each musical they produced, John wrote the book and Dorothy wrote the music.

The group's first production, *3-6-*, later *3-6-9*, starred Dorothy Ashby in her first acting role.<sup>59</sup> In addition to acting and singing in the show, Dorothy wrote the 13 songs that make up

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<sup>56</sup> Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, "Highlights on Radio," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, June 4, 1966.

<sup>57</sup> Blaik Kirby, "The Play's Their Thing: John and Dorothy Ashby Present Detroit Ghetto Life as Black Theater," *Detroit Free Press*, October 27, 1968.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Thurston, "The Night Scene: Being Born Right Here, An All-Negro Musical," *Detroit Free Press*, March 18, 1967.

the soundtrack.<sup>60</sup> The show *3-6-* touched on a wide range of sensitive social issues including welfare, sexism, and abortion.<sup>61</sup> John Ashby believed that the media misinterpreted Negro life.

Of the theater company, he said:

We're trying to show Negro life as it is... We're trying to make something real, something that a Negro can see and say, 'Yeah, that's the way it is.' The stuff that you see on TV, the soap operas, the family shows, they just haven't got anything to do with Negro life. They're unbelievable.<sup>62</sup>

The Ashbys sought to bring theatre to their community because they believed most African Americans had never been to the theater. John also believed that they never had any reason to identify with theater because it did not address the issues that they dealt with in their daily lives. This was the motivation for the story of *3-6-*. The story reveals “Negro life revolving around a beauty shop that doubled as a numbers joint,” which was an illegal underground gambling operation common in low-income working class communities that collected bets and paid out winners if they guessed the correct three-digit numbers.<sup>63</sup> The three-digit numbers were based on the daily horse races. The investment in the practice laid the groundwork for legal state lotteries.<sup>64</sup> Characters in the story struggled over their dream numbers, and gave much more money than what they got back. The title of the musical itself is a dream number of the numbers racket. The opening eight-day run of the production in March of 1967 experienced enough success to encourage the Ashbys to take up an invitation to bring the show to Washington, DC the following July. Ernie Hudson, later famous for his role in *Ghost Busters*, acted in the Artists

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<sup>60</sup> Ellen Goodman, “Birth of a Musical: ‘We’re Trying to Show Negro Life as It Really Is,’” An All- Negro Musical,” *The Detroit Free Press*, March 22, 1967.

<sup>61</sup> Younger and Parkins, “Remembering Dorothy Ashby.”

<sup>62</sup> Goodman, “Birth of a Musical.”

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Bridget Davis, Interviewed by Dana Cronin and Barrie Hardyman, January 26, 2019, “Who Ran the Numbers Racket? Mom,” *National Public Radio*, <https://www.npr.org/2019/01/26/688818257/who-ran-the-numbers-racket-mom>

Production version.<sup>65</sup> Ashby's Trio was featured in the interludes of this production. She played both the harp and piano for the soundtrack.

*The Choice* followed the production 3-6-. The comedic musical featured a poor single pregnant girl named Blanche in a "black housing project in the middle of the American welfare system."<sup>66</sup> Other characters included an array of "games-playing-hustlers, pimps and others living by scheme or by fate off the system."<sup>67</sup> The score consisted of 23 songs, all Ashby original compositions. Ashby later reused some of the musical material to perform the tunes "Flighty" and "Essence of Sapphire" with her trio outside of the production.<sup>68</sup> The production first opened at the Vest Pocket Theatre in Detroit and later the Dexter Theatre in Detroit and the Toronto Workshop Productions Theatre in Toronto, Canada. In addition to writing the score, Dorothy is featured in the first few numbers "One of These Mornings" and "Chant 1 and 2."<sup>69</sup> The main social issue addressed through the heroine's perspective was that of a mother reliant on *Aid to Dependent Children* (ADC).<sup>70</sup> Initially the Title IV law *Aid to Dependent Children* of the Social Security Act of 1935 proposed by the U.S. Children's Bureau intended to "provide federal grants to help the states maintain their mothers' aid law that had been passed in 40 states between 1910 and 1920."<sup>71</sup> However, a provision in the law was created to reduce those eligible, "particularly, to inhibit coverage of 'illegitimate' children and children of color."<sup>72</sup> The show extended its run

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<sup>65</sup> Younger and Parkins, "Remembering Dorothy Ashby."

<sup>66</sup> Lawrence DeVine, "Detroiter's Small but Earnest Play Opens Vest Pocket," *Detroit Free Press*, March 31, 1972.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Thurston, "Dorothy Ashby is Back Home with a New Trio," *Detroit Free Press*, September 25, 1969.

<sup>69</sup> Thurston, "The Night Scene."

<sup>70</sup> Devine, "Ashby's Second Show at the Vest Pocket: Musical '3-6-9' Not the Right Number," *Detroit Free Press*, June 16, 1972.

<sup>71</sup> VCU Libraries, "Social Welfare History Project," *VCU Libraries*, February 26, 2018, <https://socialwelfare.library.vcu.edu/public-welfare/aid-to-dependent-children-the-legal-history/>

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.



at the Dexter Theatre twice in June of 1967.<sup>73</sup> It is no surprise that during this time period racial tensions were at a peak, soon to boil over into the riots that broke out one month after this show's extended run. Although Dorothy Ashby made recordings of the performances, none are available to the public. However, there are at least two compositions recorded on her albums from her musical *The Choice*. "Life has its Trails" was recorded on *Afro Harping* (1968) and "Cause I Need It" was recorded on *Dorothy's Harp* (1969).<sup>74</sup>

Interrupting the Ashby's productivity in theatre, the race riots broke out on July 23<sup>rd</sup> of 1967. Eighty-five African Americans were arrested at a police raid of the *Blind Pig*, an illegal after-hours club on 12<sup>th</sup> street in Detroit.<sup>75</sup> The establishment was hosting a party for several veterans recently returned from the Vietnam War. As a crowd of residents watched the arrest, a struggle between community and police broke out and what followed was one of the most violent and destructive riots in the United States history.<sup>76</sup> The rioting and looting that followed lasted for five days, leaving 43 dead and nearly 1,400 buildings burned.<sup>77</sup> The Dexter theatre, where the Ashbys had just ended a long performance streak of *The Choice* the previous month, was among the many buildings damaged. That March they reopened the abandoned theatre after quickly renovating it "with plaster, paint, and a batch of seat covers."<sup>78</sup> Dexter was a symbol for bringing an African American musical troupe into being and its destruction ignited Ashby into action on its behalf. She was passionate about having this theater reopened and wrote to implore

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<sup>73</sup> Jack Graver, "2 More Weeks for Musical," *Detroit Free Press*, June 16, 1967.

<sup>74</sup> BeyondRecords, "The Ashby Players (John and Dorothy): From the former musical estate of Dorothy Ashby," *flickr*, June 19, 2008, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/muycool/2594573334/in/album-72157605712829795/>

<sup>75</sup> History.com editors, "History: 1967 Detroit Riots," *A & E Television Networks*, June 10, 2019, <https://www.history.com/topics/1960s/1967-detroit-riots>

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Goodman, "Birth of a Musical."

support for the theater group.<sup>79</sup> She wrote that the performing troupe's work was "an asset to the inner-city community" and began one letter with the provocative question, "You want to know why Negroes riot?" Additionally, she increased efforts to fundraise for the Aid to the Creative Arts.<sup>80</sup> By August 18, 1967 the organization received enough support to announce a new run of *The Choice* at the Dexter Theatre sponsored by the *Protestant Community Services*.<sup>81</sup>

The riots had other impacts on the future of the Ashby Troupe. Initially, when opening the first show at Dexter Theatre in March of 1967, the Ashbys had a different plan for their third musical. They succeeded in reviving the Dexter, and initially planned to perform their third show there. However, in the aftermath of the riots, they reconsidered and sought instead to perform on "neutral territory" outside of the ghetto.<sup>82</sup> The move drew a larger number of white audience members. On September 5<sup>th</sup>, 1968, the Ashbys took their next show on the road to Toronto, risking six thousand dollars to try their luck in a completely different community. The location was not the only thing impacted by the riots. The story and name of the next show also changed. When renovating the Dexter, the Ashbys, in an interview with the *Detroit Free Press*, discussed a third show called *Flag Outside My Window*, "a comedy about a jazz musician who goes berserk."<sup>83</sup> The plan for this show was never executed. Instead the Ashby's third musical produced was *The Game*. Regardless of the shift, the next show was a huge success. The premise of *The Game* as described by John Ashby is "to con someone so slickly he doesn't realize it."<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> BeyondRecords, "The Ashby Players (John and Dorothy): From the former musical estate of Dorothy Ashby," *flickr*, March 2, 2009, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/muycool/3324032829/in/album-72157605712829795/>

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Detroit Free Press, "Ashby Musical Starts New Run," *Detroit Free Press*, August 18, 1967.

<sup>82</sup> Kirby, "The Play's Their Thing."

<sup>83</sup> Goodman, "Birth of a Musical."

<sup>84</sup> Kirby, "The Play's Their Thing."

He wanted to show that a person could truly change character for any given situation to survive. The show experienced sellout success in its first run. Blaik Kirby of the *Detroit Free Press* asserted, “Their musical preaches uplift, progress, and peace, reform rather than rebellion.”<sup>85</sup>

Although writing a musical comedy, the Ashbys strongly believed the production to be a critical part in a more serious movement. John Ashby stated, “There’s no doubt we are in a revolution. We all have to participate, but there are all kinds of ways to do it... you have to have people who can sit down and talk together the way we are. Maybe we act as a liaison.”<sup>86</sup>

The Ashbys were striving not only to change the way their community was viewed and treated but also to make change within their community. The hero on the ghetto streets, according to John, was not the pimp but “has to be something that doesn’t eat each other up.”<sup>87</sup> For the Ashbys, their primary solution was through theatre. John adds that “it’s only through education, and theatre is a form of education, that ghetto values can be changed.”<sup>88</sup> Optimistically, John Ashby conferred, “societies can live together harmoniously if each person respects each other person’s character as a human being.”

The Ashbys produced one more musical before uprooting from the Detroit theatre scene. This move was unexpected for them as they made ambitious plans for a future in Detroit. The Ashbys hosted an announcement party for the Aid to Creative Arts at Café Gourmet coinciding closely with their fourth show, *The Duffers*, which played on February 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> of 1970. Here they announced their plans to “build a new theatre in Detroit.” Chuck Thurston reported with confidence: “What John and Dorothy Ashby say they will, they do. Plans are for ten plays a

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

year.”<sup>89</sup> Little has been published regarding the final musical comedy aside from a program that shows that the production premiered at the Detroit Institute of the Arts and sales benefited the Detroit Public Library. The Ashbys theatre endeavor lasted six years from 1967 through 1972. A harsh review in June of 1972 denounced the resurgence of the show 3-6-9 for its lack of quality jokes, plot, and professionalism. Shortly after the production ended, the Ashbys moved to California in the early 1970s.<sup>90</sup> Here, John worked in television while Dorothy began to establish herself on the west coast as a studio musician.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Thurston, “Busy Playwright Gerry Raad In Town for a Reunion,” *Detroit Free Press*, February 26, 1970.

<sup>90</sup> DeVine, “Ashby’s Second Show.”

<sup>91</sup> Placksin, *Jazzwomen*, 239-243.

## CHAPTER 5

### LATE CAREER

Dorothy Ashby composed the scores for four productions but still performed frequently outside of musical theatre. 1967 included solo and trio performances at the Hotel Pontchartrian and St. Regis Hotel. In addition to the theatre shows and regular concerts, Ashby begins to publish her own column of reviews in the *Detroit Free Press* called “Dorothy Ashby on Records.” In December of 1967, she was also featured in television on Channel 2’s “Mike Douglas Show.”<sup>92</sup>

Ashby’s next Album, *Afro-Harping*, was produced in Chicago by Richard Evans in February of 1968. Evans wrote the arrangements and conducted the ensemble, which collaborated with guitarist Paul Upchurch (b. 1941).<sup>93</sup> Ashby’s local performances included Grosse Pointe Unitarian Church and St. Paul’s Episcopal Church with world instruments.<sup>94</sup> She was known to play on a koto, a Japanese stringed instrument, and sing in different languages, including Japanese.<sup>95</sup> The trio performed a “Jazz- Modern, Cool and New” program at Richard Branch Library also in Detroit. The Ashby Players theatre troupe made frequent appearances in the press at this time as they performed in both Detroit and Canada. Dorothy was still featured in radio regularly and appeared again on television in an episode dedicated to her called “People in Jazz: Dorothy Ashby, Jazz.” The Tallahassee television station WFSU NET 30 ran the program on April 30<sup>th</sup> 1968.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Detroit Free Press, “Your Guide to TV,” *Detroit Free Press*, December 11, 1967.

<sup>93</sup> Del Shields, liner notes to *Afro-Harping*, Dorothy Ashby, Cadet, LPS-809, LP, 1968.

<sup>94</sup> Detroit Free Press, “Our Concert Week,” *Detroit Free Press*, October 20, 1968.

<sup>95</sup> Thurston, “Funfinding.”

<sup>96</sup> The Tallahassee Democrat, “TV Guide,” *The Tallahassee Democrat*, April 28, 1968.

Richard Evans produced Ashby's next album, *Dorothy's Harp*, in 1969. The Album features Odell Brown (1940-2011) on piano and Lenny Druss (1929-1990) on flute and oboe. In August, Dorothy performed at a new venue, Mr. F's Beef and Bourbon, where, she was backed by her husband on drums and Clarence Sherrill on bass.<sup>97</sup> After a stint of performances at Mr. F's, Dorothy returned to performing with a new trio at the Café Gourmet after a period of respite in 1968. She was at that time accompanied by Doug Hammond (b. 1942) on drums and Dick Bellen (b.1939?) on bass and performed three nights a week for three shows each night.<sup>98</sup> Also during 1969, Prestige re-released *In a Minor Groove* as *Dorothy Ashby Plays for Beautiful People*. Meanwhile, throughout the 60s Ashby hosted a jazz discussion radio series twice a week for four hours called "The Lab." The show ran for five years.

Dorothy Ashby's television special *People In Jazz: Dorothy Ashby* was picked up by numerous stations in 1970. It was aired all across the United States including but not limited to UNC 4 (North Carolina), WKNO 10 (Tennessee), WTIU 30 (Indiana), BRC 13 (Pennsylvania), KSEE 24 (California), and KINN 12 (Iowa). During that year, Dorothy's album *The Rubaiyat of Dorothy Ashby* was released. This was the third and final album produced by Richard Evans, which took a dramatic turn by adding Eastern influences to her jazz funk fusion style. This is the only album to feature Ashby on vocals and also koto. While most of Ashby's albums contained a mix of arrangements and original compositions, *The Rubaiyat* is the only album consisting exclusively of Ashby originals. Lenny Druss joined her for this recording on flute, oboe, and piccolo, Cliff Davis (1933-2014) on alto Sax, Stu Katz (b.1937) on vibraphone, Cash McCall (1941- 2019) on guitar, and Ed Green (b.1939?) on violin. The kalimba, an African idiophone

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<sup>97</sup> Thurston, "Chuck Thurston Recommends," *Detroit Free Press*, August 17, 1969.

<sup>98</sup> Detroit Free Press, "Detroiter's Choice," *Detroit Free Press*, October 26, 1969.

that requires the performer to pluck metal tines, which vibrate to create a fluid percussive sound, was played by Stu and Fred Katz (1919-2013) on the album. Ashby used a variety of vocal styles and the words of Persian poet Omar Khayyam throughout the album. During 1970 Ashby also performed at the University of Detroit building with Ronnie Dyson (1950-1990) and Dennis Coffee (b.1940), the Ibo Cultural Center, and for a large benefit concert at the Detroit Institute of the Arts. The Ibo are one of the largest ethnic groups in Africa native to Nigeria. All proceeds from her performance at the Institute were donated to save the Orchestra Hall in Detroit, which had been scheduled to be demolished.

1971 brought continued airtime for Ashby's special *People in Jazz*, played on stations KTXT 5 (Texas), WTVS 56 (Michigan), WKRC 12 and KIMT 3 (Iowa). Ashby was featured on the WWJ-TV 14 (Michigan) television show *Profiles in Black*. In addition to 1971 performances at the Ibo Cultural Center, Grosse Pointe Unitarian Church, Detroit Public library for the Auto parts convention, and the National Arts Council in Washington, Ashby performed as a soloist for the American Harp Society Conference in Bloomington.<sup>99</sup> However, her most significant local performance that year occurred at Motown's Sterling Ball party.<sup>100</sup> At the "Gordy Manor" 700 guests enjoyed various entertainment from every room including Ashby's Trio in the drawing room.<sup>101</sup>

A new television special *Fine and Mellow* featuring Ashby aired in Michigan and Canada in 1972. Her *People in Jazz* segment continued to air on KCWY 13 (Wyoming), WKNO 10 (Arkansas), WCET 48 (Ohio) and KWSU 10 (Washington). Ashby's tune "Just Had to Tell

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<sup>99</sup> Thurston, "A Warm Evening of Music With Harpist Dorothy Ashby," *Detroit Free Press*, June 14, 1971.

<sup>100</sup> Jerry M. Flint, "Motown Fete Aids Fund for Grants," *The Morning Call* (Allentown) reprint from the New York Times, April 27, 1971.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

Somebody” aired on the Empire State Radio Network.<sup>102</sup> 1972 also marked the final year of the Ashby’s theatre productions with performances at the Vest Pocket Theatre. In addition to giving concerts at the Chamberton and Holiday Inn, the Ashby Trio performed for the program “To Honor our Women” on May 7th. This program was a final drive for Shirley Chisholm’s (1924-2005) presidential campaign, which also featured civil-rights activist Rosa Parks (1913-2005). Also in 1972, John Ashby moved to California, to be joined by Dorothy Ashby one year later. As Heron put it, Ashby “gave up Jazz and Detroit for Los Angeles and Studio work.”<sup>103</sup> Although she did not truly quit playing jazz, she did find a much more profitable living in the studios.

As Ashby still aired on the *People in Jazz* special, her first appearance on the west coast occurred for a performance at West Hollywood Park alongside harpist Stella Castellucci (b. 1930) on October 21<sup>st</sup> of 1973.<sup>104</sup> She was featured on the radio show *Directions in Jazz* on WJLK (New Jersey) in 1973 and 1974. In 1974 Ashby also “brought the house down” singing and playing the harp with the group “The New Christy Minstrels” in Las Vegas.<sup>105</sup> In Fort Collins, Colorado, she performed her original works at the triennial conference of the international music fraternity Delta Omicron.<sup>106</sup>

By 1975, Ashby’s professional life shifted. At that time she toured regularly with *The New Christy Minstrels* group performing in Ohio, Iowa, New Hampshire, New York, Michigan, and across Texas. Her worldwide recognition grew as her records began to sell in Australia.<sup>107</sup> She was again featured on television, WJBK 2 (Michigan), aired on the radio station WJZZ

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<sup>102</sup> Democrat and Chronicle, “Radio Highlights,” *Democrat and Chronicle* (Rochester), August 25, 1972.

<sup>103</sup> Heron, “One of the Few.”

<sup>104</sup> The Los Angeles Times, “Next Sunday,” *The Los Angeles Times*, October 14, 1973.

<sup>105</sup> Don H. Peterson, “New Christy Minstrels please at opening show,” *Las Vegas Optic*, October 14, 1974.

<sup>106</sup> Chris Conkling, “Music Sessions Open Thursday,” *Fort Collins Coloradoan*, August 6, 1974.

<sup>107</sup> The Age Melbourne, “Jazz,” *DISCURIO*, July 10, 1975.



(Michigan) and finally on Los Angeles station 104 FM.<sup>108</sup> She began club performances in Los Angeles as well at The Times Restaurant. Most crucial to her new career path was her studio work. Her career as a studio musician kicked off in Los Angeles when she was featured in the release of Van Perkins album *Invitation to Paradise* produced by Tone Poet Productions.<sup>109</sup> Dorothy returned to Detroit in July of 1976 to perform in a weeklong Homecoming music series held at the Masonic Temple. She was aired on WIAN-FM radio of Indiana and performed at the Playboy Club's Playroom in Los Angeles.

Studio work continued for Ashby, and she was featured in the tune "Portrait of Jennie" on Freddie Hubbard's (1938-2008) album *Bundle of Joy*, released in 1977.<sup>110</sup> She played the only accompaniment on the tune and performed the work with him publicly as well at the Roxy in Los Angeles. In 1978 Dorothy performed with flutist Hubert Law at another Los Angeles venue, Chandler Pavilion.<sup>111</sup> In July of 1978, Ashby was featured on Johnny Mathis' (b. 1935) and Deniece Williams's (b. 1951) album *That's What Friends Are For* produced by Columbia. Ashby again returned to Detroit to perform a series of concerts for Jazz at the Institute in April and May of 1979 at the Detroit Institute of Art. Earth, Wind, and Fire released their ninth album, *I Am* in June of 1979 with Ashby and the Emotions featured in the group's backup orchestra.<sup>112</sup> A long stretch of performances for the Ashby Trio began in late 1980 through 1982 at Pasquale's in Malibu. Also in 1980, Ashby was heavily featured on Norman Connors' album *Take It To the Limit*.<sup>113</sup> Orion released an album on chamber music by William H. Henderson on which Ashby

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<sup>108</sup> The Los Angeles Times, "Listen Today," *The Los Angeles Times*, September 29, 1975.

<sup>109</sup> James Meade, "Van Perkins to Perform at Jackson Church," *Clarion-Ledger* (Jackson) September 3, 1975.

<sup>110</sup> Leonard Feather, "Hubbard, Ali of the Horn, at Roxy," *Los Angeles Times*, December 29, 1977.

<sup>111</sup> Feather, "Vaughan, Laws in Jazz Weekend," *Los Angeles Times*, March 6, 1978.

<sup>112</sup> Jack Burke, "The Wax Works," *Stevens Point Journal*, August 29, 1979.

<sup>113</sup> Hugh Wyatt, "Those Unseen, Unsung Studio Heroes," *Daily News* (New York), October 3, 1980,

was also featured in 1981.<sup>114</sup> In September of that year, she was interviewed on Los Angeles radio station KFAC for a “Luncheon at the Music Center” series.<sup>115</sup> In 1982, Ashby was invited to play Detroit’s *Kool Jazz Festival*.<sup>116</sup> Ashby returned again to Detroit for the *Jazz at the Institute* series at the Detroit Institute of Art in 1983.<sup>117</sup> She was also teaching jazz improvisation privately to a limited number of students at that time.<sup>118</sup>

The following year Ashby released her final two albums. Both *Django/ Misty* and *Concierto de Aranjuez* are solo albums containing Ashby’s own arrangements and one original composition, “Blues for Mr. K.” Also in 1984, Ashby performed in the student union of the Cal State end of year celebration in May where she also returned to perform in September.<sup>119</sup> In Detroit, she returned to perform at the “Michelob Jazz in the Park Weekend” event at Palmer Park.<sup>120</sup> She was also being featured on the radio show “Jazz-Solilque” on CBOF- FM.<sup>121</sup> In 1985 Ashby records “So Many Rivers” by Bobby Womack.<sup>122</sup> At the height of her popularity, with her work continuously aired on radio, Ashby died of cancer at the age of 54 in April of 1986. To further illustrate Ashby’s influence on the genre of jazz harp, comparisons of her music are made with the music of her predecessors Casper Reardon and Adele Girard.

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<sup>114</sup> Lawrence Minton, “Albums: Alla Breve,” *The Los Angeles Times*, April 12, 1981.

<sup>115</sup> Los Angeles Times, “Radio Highlights,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 10, 1981.

<sup>116</sup> Thurston, “Show Bits,” *Detroit Free Press*, May 11, 1982.

<sup>117</sup> Peter Stevens, “DIA Jazz Series Starts Tonight,” *The Windsor Star* (Ontario), May 13, 1983.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> The Los Angeles Times, “Cal State Los Angeles Plans End-of-Year Celebration,” *The Los Angeles Times*, May 17, 1984.

<sup>120</sup> Detroit Free Press, “Heavenly Jazz,” *Detroit Free Press*, July 9, 1984.

<sup>121</sup> The Ottawa Citizen, “Radio,” *The Ottawa Citizen*, April 26, 1984.

<sup>122</sup> Jack Burke, “The Wax Works,” *Stevens Point Journal*, December 31, 1985.

## CHAPTER 6

### A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF CASPER'S REARDON'S "AIN'T MISBEHAVIN' "

Casper Reardon (1907-1941) is credited as the first jazz harpist due to his recordings for the movie *You're a Sweetheart* in 1937, and earlier performances with the Paul Whiteman (1890-1967) Orchestra. He worked with Whiteman as well as Jack Teagarden (1905-1964) and the 3Ts from 1934-1936. Although self-trained in jazz, Reardon studied classical harp with Carlos Salzedo, whose method was also imparted to Dorothy Ashby through Velma Froude.<sup>123</sup> Reardon also wrote and performed a Cadenza for the opening of George Gershwin Radio as well as a sequence in the Rogers show "I married an Angel."<sup>124</sup>

The music yielded by Ashby and Reardon varies greatly. While neither published their music, Ashby's output of recordings overwhelms Reardon's. Reardon is featured on only five recordings and does not have original music available for transcription. He is most known for "Ain't Misbehavin, " a harp solo featured in the film *You're a Sweetheart*. Thomas "Fats" Waller and Harry Brooks wrote this song in 1929 for the Broadway show *Connie's Hot Chocolates*. The song is transcribed for comparative analysis with Dorothy Ashby's solo in "Soft Winds" (1961).<sup>125</sup> While many of Ashby's solos adequately demonstrate her innovative style, "Soft Winds" was selected for its extended techniques and rhythmic variety. To analyze Reardon's style, comparisons must be made between the transcription of his arrangement and the original version.

The two arrangements contain different instrumentation with the harp solo serving different functions within each ensemble. Reardon's solo is softly accompanied by an almost

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<sup>123</sup> Roslyn Rensch, *Harps and Harpists* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), 282-283.

<sup>124</sup> "Casper Reardon," *The American Harp Journal*, Vol. 4, No. 4, reprint from *Harp News*, (1974): 3-4.

<sup>125</sup> Appendix A and Appendix B

unnoticeable drum ride pattern while he exclusively covers both the melody and harmony. Ashby's harp, conversely, interacts with a quartet of drums, bass and xylophone. Drums and a walking bass line accompany this transcribed solo section. At the end of this transcribed section, Ashby hands off the solo to a xylophone improvisation where she comps the chord changes throughout. Reardon's arrangement functions primarily as a stand-alone prearranged solo while Ashby's improvisation is immersed in the constant communication of an ensemble. In her recording, the call-and-response melodic figures, the trading of solos and unison choruses are the epitome of jazz.

While both pieces use a swing rhythm, Ashby's work contains more rhythmic variety in both her melodic improvisation and accompanying chords. Ashby muffles the strings to create sharp staccato notes at the ends of short phrases in measures 8 and 28 of her solo. In measures 14 and 16, the melodic staccato provides contrast to the succeeding call-and-response melodic figures that elongate the flat 7 in measure 18 and the 5th in measure 19. Ashby's "Soft Winds" solo also contains phrase entrances on beats 2, 4 and even the pickup to beat 2, thereby creating syncopation with the accompaniment. The rests between short phrases in her solo vary in lengths and give a more unpredictable feel to the improvisation. In Reardon's "Ain't Misbehavin" the first trill emphasizes beat two, a pattern recurring frequently in the melody, and thus provides the most rhythmic variety the piece has to offer. While Reardon swings his eighth notes, the downbeat is never neglected. This gives a very regular feel to his solo. In Ashby's accompanying chords, she typically lets rolled chords resonate; to accentuate harmonic changes, except in measure 26. Here the accompanying chord is cut short. This staccato quickly mutes the brief phrase so that the softer extended technique that follows is more audible. Reardon rarely strays

from bass pedal tones on 1 and 3 with chords on 2 and 4. This accompanying “oom-pah” pattern is the commonly heard in ragtime music.

Reardon does not exclusively follow the chord progression of the original “Ain’t Misbehaving.” Although beginning in the same key and moving from the same C major chord in the first measure to the D minor chord in measures 2, Reardon creates a chromatic bass line, smoothing out the connection between the two. This chromatic ascending bass was also used in ragtime music. He makes this alteration by beginning on the root of the chord rather than the original chord progression’s inversion. He further emphasizes the chromatic bass line with pedal slides from measure 1 to 2 and again at the beginning of the B section. The D flat in the bass in measure 1 is used as a third inversion of a E minor 7 chord for a chromatic ascension between the two measures rather than using the original’s A7. Similarly, in the second measure he continues the chromatic bass line with a D sharp minor chord, which shares two common tones with the original arrangement’s G7. Reardon repeats the alterations of the first measure when the first melodic figure returns in measure 5. In measures 9 and 13 the function of the D flat changes to a suspension within the A chord. At the return of the chorus in measure 25, Reardon adds the C to the chord changing the D flats function to a flat 9th. Neither alteration reverts to the original version’s chord progression but provides more harmonic variety. In each case, the D flat creates an altered chord common in jazz. Reardon uses a quartal chord, or stacked intervals of a fourth, in measure 24. Quartal chords have been used by classical composers like Claude Debussy (1862-1918), but are also common in jazz. Miles Davis used them in the popular modal tune, “So What.”

Ashby also used a suspension in measure 8 of the “Soft winds” solo. Here the A suspension is added to the E chord. Ashby does not always bring out the chord structure in this

solo, as her focus is primarily melodic. She does, however, bring out the Dominant 7<sup>th</sup> chord in measures 10 and 11. She also used a B flat quartal chord in measure 24.

Although covering an original, Reardon does not always stick to the original melody but adds to it. This treatment of a tune is standard in jazz performance. Reardon turns the first three notes of the melody into a turn. This could also be seen as the first two notes of the melody with a lower mordent added to the third note. However, the ornamentation ends on the lower note giving it more emphasis than the original melody note, C. He uses this same method in the first three measures as the melodic sequence ascends and again when the pattern repeats in measures 5, 6, 9, 13, 25, and 29. This treatment of the melody delineates the classical style. In contrast, at the end of the first phrase in measure 4, Reardon adds two pedal slides so that the melodic line continues to descend two half steps lower than the original. He similarly alters the melodic line in half step intervals with pedal slides in measures 9, 10, 11, 13, 25, 26, and 29. The technique of pedal slides allowing the harpist to bend the pitch a half step higher or lower is used in the melody by both harpists frequently. This pitch bending is the harps version of the blue note in jazz. The end of Reardon's second phrase leaves room for improvisation as the original lead sheet ends this phrase with a single note held for two measures. Here he is given more freedom to show off his improvisational style. In measure 7 he adds a syncopated descending melodic line and ends the phrase with an 8<sup>th</sup> note call-and-response accompaniment pattern spanning over 3 octaves of the harp. In this pattern, in measure 8, the left hand repeats the right hand motive one octave lower. The pattern is returned to the right hand in the original octave, and ends with a leap to an octave in a higher range of the harp. This repetition in his improvisation imitates the constantly repeating "oom-pah" treatment of the chord progression. Reardon transitions back to the first theme in measure 23 with an inverse "oom-pah" pattern switching the bass pedal tones

to 2 and 4 with the chords on 1 and 3. The following measure replicates the 8<sup>th</sup> note chord pattern used in measure 8. These two measures consist of a melody in the original that Reardon does not use.

The treatment of the melody differs drastically between Ashby and Reardon. While Reardon's melody remains primarily within one octave range throughout, Ashby uses a much larger range of 4 octaves for her melodic improvisation. She outlines the A minor 7 chord in arpeggio form twice in her melodic improvisation, once descending in measure 11, and once ascending in measure 21. Many chromatic changes are emphasized with the pedal slide technique. This can be seen in the opening melody of measure 1 as well as measures 4, 13, 15, 25, and 27. In addition to the pedal slides, Ashby also incorporates the extended harp techniques of *pres de la table* (playing low on the strings, close to the soundboard) and *son ongles* (playing with the fingernails). Her melody begins to descend after it reaches its highest point in measure 23. As it descends it changes technique to *pres de la table* in measure 27. This technique is used to create a different quality of sound, closer to that of a guitar. After two measures, the melody descends again and Ashby further renders the pitch with the *son ongles* technique. The last two measures of her solo return to regular playing position with the fingers in the center of the strings. An important aspect of jazz vocabulary employed by Ashby with her melody is outlining a different chord in the improvisation than the accompaniment. This is demonstrated clearly in measure 11 where the accompanying G Dominant 7<sup>th</sup> chord is improvised over with an outline of the A minor 7 chord. The technique is again seen in measures 22 and 23 where she immediately follows the accompanying F major chord with outlining the C major chord. Development of the melody is another jazz technique Ashby implements in measures 5 through 8 of her

improvisation. The introduction, prior to her solo entrance used a repeated opening bass melody of A-G-C. She expands on this melodic material.

Ashby's solo in "Soft Winds" shows much more innovation for the harp in jazz with its rhythmic variety, broad melodic range, and development of melodic figures. Outlining chords in the melody that contrast the accompanying chord progression is also an innovative technique that was not likely heard on harp previously. Ashby and Reardon also use a swing rhythm, altered chord tones, and pedal slides. However, Reardon's chromatic ascending bass line, "oompha" accompaniment and classical turn treatment of the melody are not innovative for his time period. While Casper was the first to translate these ideas to the harp, Ashby's style was more innovative for the genre.



## CHAPTER 7

### A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF ADELE GIRARD'S "HARP BOOGIE"

After Reardon, Adele Girard (1913-1993) was the next renowned harpist to arrive on the jazz harp scene. Born into a family of musicians, Girard was introduced to the harp by her father, Leon Girard, a conductor and violinist.<sup>126</sup> He brought her to WBZ Springfield Broadcasting Symphony to meet the harpist in his orchestra with whom she began to study. After graduating high school, Adele took her first jazz big band job with Harry Sosnik's group in 1934. She performed with CBS radio at this time. Later in New York she performed with the Three T's just after Casper Reardon left the group. She went on to perform with Joe Marsala's (1907-1978) group and soon married Joe Marsala in 1937. During her career she had the opportunity to sit in on jam sessions with Frank Sinatra and Duke Ellington. Adele recorded with Bobby Gordon on the Dixieland album *Warm and Sentimental* (1963) and later on *Don't Let It End* (1992).

Apart from her two albums, Adele also recorded the tune "Harp Boogie" by the Adele Girard Trio with Rush Holden in 1946. Although the Bobby Gordon albums are a more recent representation of Girard's playing, they were not selected for transcription because they remain in the early Dixieland style. They also do not showcase Girard's playing as much as "Harp Boogie." This recording is preserved as part of the series *Jazz on Screen* by David Meeker (b. 1935).<sup>127</sup> This piece is transcribed for comparative analysis with Dorothy Ashby's original "Blues for Mr. K" from the album *Django/Misty* (1984).<sup>128</sup> Although a large time gap exists between the pieces, Adele Girard does not simultaneously accompany her melodic

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<sup>126</sup> Carrol McLaughlin, "On the Lighter Side: The Jazz Harp of Adele Girard," *The American Harp Journal*, Vol. 9 No. 4, (Winter 1984): 30-31.

<sup>127</sup> Adele Girard, "Adele Girard Trio- 'Harp Boogie'- original 'video' (soundie)," YouTube harp boogie, Filmed in 1946, Youtube Video, 2:33, Posted September 15, 2009, <https://youtu.be/tNtkSzow0FY>

<sup>128</sup> Appendix C and Appendix D

improvisations in any other recordings as Ashby does in the “Blues for Mr. K.” Girard’s recorded albums with Bobby Gordon include piano in their accompaniment, which covers the chord changes when Girard solos. These recordings demonstrate Girard’s ability to trade solos and function within a small jazz ensemble.

The harmony of “Harp Boogie” consists of a repetitive bass pattern. Like that of Casper Reardon’s “Ain’t Misbehavin,” the accompaniment has an “oom-pah” pattern with emphasis on beats 1 and 3 which remains consistent throughout the piece with exception of Girard’s change of rhythm in the solo break from measure 27 through 30. The style of the lesser stressed beats 2 and 4 shifts between 2 different patterns. The first begins with a swinging eighth note pickup into the same chord. This pattern is used for the majority of the piece. The second style arpeggiates the chord as a pickup to beats 2 and 4. As there is little variation in the bass style and the 12-bar blues harmonic progression used, the piece has a very straightforward predictable feel. This differs greatly from Ashby’s work. In “Blues for Mr. K,” Ashby begins with a syncopated bass pattern, which starts on the offbeat but alternates every other measure with emphasizing the downbeat. This bass pattern does not remain consistent throughout but switches to a walking bass line in measures 16-24. The key center is also much less consistent than Girard. Although it seems to be in Bb major, Eb major is also sometimes tonicized with a dominant chord as in measure 3-4.

Melodically, Girard is repetitive. She emphasizes two notes per measure with a pickup pattern. In each measure, the same emphasized downbeat note is repeated for the first verse of the 12-bar blues. The emphasized notes are almost always the very predictable tonic and dominant. In the next verse, the emphasized melodic notes descend a third or a fourth in each measure, still frequently emphasizing the tonic and 5<sup>th</sup> scale degree, until the first solo break. The

solo breaks do not provide any new material melodically or harmonically but simply outline the chord progression. Ashby's melody, conversely, offers a wider variety of tonality. While emphasizing the Bb tonic for the first few measures, tonic is not brought out again until measure 27. Instead, her melody sporadically emphasizes scale degrees 5, 3, 7, 6, 4, and even chromatic alterations. This inconsistency gives the impression of improvisation very dissimilar to Girard's planned and predictable feel.

The rhythm of the two works follows the same expectation of contrast as the melody and harmony. Girard uses consistent repetitive patterns, while Ashby provides much more variety. In the melody, Girard incorporates a pedal slide pickup into a triplet as a short motif that is repeated frequently making up most of the main theme. This repetition continues through the first verse of the 12-bar blues pattern and returns in measures 32 and 37. It can also be heard returning frequently throughout the remainder of the piece. The solo break in measure 27 provides brief rhythmic variety. Girard uses quarter-note triplets in this solo. Ashby uses syncopation in the melody as well as the bass. Each new melodic idea seems to begin on a different beat. While the melody begins on the downbeat in measures 1 and 3, the next idea begins on the and of beat two in measure five. The next melodic motive in measures 8, 9 and 10 begins on the and of beat one. These unpredictable entrances continue to change throughout the piece, giving an erratic feel very typical of improvised music. Just as in the "Soft Winds" solo, Ashby varies the duration of the melodic notes in "Blues for Mr. K" by using short staccatos in measures 2, 14, 17, 20, 27, 29 and 30.

The variety of rhythm and harmony in "Blues for Mr. K" was not heard on the harp from Casper Reardon or Adele Girard. Ashby offers new ideas that starkly contrast the predictability

of “Harp Boogie.” While “Harp Boogie” swings, its constant repetition of harmony and rhythmic patterns are not improvised.

## CHAPTER 8

### CONCLUSION

Although Casper Reardon and Adele Girard preceded Dorothy Ashby in the genre of jazz harp, Ashby's improvisatory style was innovative for harp playing in the 1950s. Her harmonic choices, alterations and agility diminished the construct that jazz and harp are not compatible due to the challenges of the pedals. Ashby experienced a successful career as both a bandleader and as an assisting band member in many prominent artists recordings such as Earth, Wind and Fire, Louis Armstrong, Stevie Wonder, Barry Manilow, Diana Ross, Freddie Hubbard, Natalie Cole, and the Emotions. Her plethora of albums as bandleader exhibits a wide variety of styles. Her innovation was apparent in her ability to constantly push the harp into new genres. Ashby's work in musical theater strove to reach social change and addressed issues relevant to this day.

Unlike Reardon and Girard, Ashby's influence is apparent through those who strive to imitate her. Ashby has left the harp community a unique legacy of arrangements and original compositions with complex harmonies that continually entice current harpists. Jazz harpist Brandee Younger frequently performs covers of Ashby's original music and has even produced a cover of Ashby's tune, "Games," on her most recent album *Soul Awakening* (2019). In 2018 current jazz harpist Alina Bzhezhinska, took on the project of covering her work as well. She performed the entire Ashby album, *Afro-harping* in London at Kings Place Hall in February last year.

Her music also continues to reach new genres through the artists who sample her work. Current popular Hip-hop artists, like Drake frequently imbed Ashby's playing as the backing track for their rap. Drake used samples of Ashby's "The Windmills of Your Mind" in his recent song "Final Fantasy" (2018). Hip-hop beatbox and rap artist, Rahzel, also sampled her. He used

the same Ashby arrangement as Drake in his song, “All I Know” (1999). The record producer and rapper J Dilla has used Ashby’s music. “Dancing in the Dark” is used for his tune “Ash Rock” (1996). He has also used her “The Moving Finger” in his work “1 for the Treble and 2 for the Bass” (2005). Jinsang is a low-profile beatmaker who uses Ashby’s music frequently in his calmer hip-hop style releases. He used Ashby’s “Amor Em Paz” harp solo in his song, “Affection” (2016). An indie artist, Monsune, took Ashby’s music into new territory with his tune of blended samples, “Nothing in Return” (2017). Well beyond her life span, Ashby’s music has continued to fuse with new genres and styles.

The quality of Ashby’s work combined with her efforts to create social change through music has made her an icon. The influence of her music stretched beyond that of her predecessors, Reardon and Girard. Ashby’s work will continue to influence popular music and developing jazz harpists will continue to imitate her. In an effort to conquer the complex harmonies and agility needed to perform jazz on the harp, Ashby will remain a leading resource for emerging jazz harp programs world-wide.

## APPENDIX A

“AIN’T MISBEHAVIN’” ARRANGED BY CASPER REARDON

Harp

# Ain't Misbehavin'

Thomas "Fats" Waller and Harry Brookes

Arr. Casper Reardon

Transcr. Jennifer Betzer

Swing! ♩ = ♩<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>

Harp

Hp.

Hp.

Hp.

Hp.

Hp.

Transitions to  
St. Louis Blues

©2019



APPENDIX B

“SOFT WINDS” BY DOROTHY ASHBY

## Soft Winds

Dorothy Ashby  
Transcr. Jennifer Betzer

[illegible]

©2019

## APPENDIX C

### “HARP BOOGIE” BY THE ADELE GIRARD TRIO

Harp

## Harp Boogie

Adele Girard Trio  
Transcr. Jennifer Betzer

Swing!  $\text{♩} = \text{♩} \text{ } \text{♩} \text{ } \text{♩}$

Hp.

Hp.

Hp.

Hp.

Hp.

Hp.

Continues

©2019

APPENDIX D

“BLUES FOR MR. K” BY DOROTHY ASHBY

## Blues for Mr. K

Dorothy Ashby  
Transcr. Jennifer Betzer

Swing! ♩ = ♩<sup>3</sup>

Hp.

6

7

8

9

10

11

pedal slide

12

13

14

15

16

17

3

pedal slide

18

19

20

21

22

3

pedal slide

23

24

8<sup>va</sup>

25

26

27

8<sup>va</sup>

28

8<sup>va</sup>

29

30

3

Continues

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