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Mr. Martian

Music History

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I first started playing piano when I was around four or five. I remember my dad buying a big Yamaha Clavinova and packing it into the house. I was so young and un-experienced all I could do was bang on the piano. For the first year or two all I could do was play Mary Had a Little Lamb. Some people believed I would never progress and I should just stop. I eventually began getting piano lessons and started out with classical music. I was so influenced by R&B that I soon strayed away from classical music. I remember at the recitals all the kids would come up to the piano to play their Mozart, Beethoven, or Bach pieces and then I would come up playing some Marvin Gaye, Earth Wind and Fire, or Temptations. Everybody would be so surprised, but they would love it. All that to say is that if I knew what I knew today I would have never stopped learning classical music. One of my favorite genres of music is jazz. I love the sound and the feel it gives me. To all the different chord structures to the improvising. There was a point where I wasn't developing as a jazz pianist or even a pianist at all. I didn't have all the basics down such as knowing all my scales and the different types of scales, or even building basic chords. Since I began taking piano lesson and studying classical music with Dr. Kim and Kentucky State University I know for a fact that not only have I become a better classical musician, but better at all the genres I play.

Educational intuitions play a big role in a musician's development. One thing they do is provide training in the interpretation of Western classical music literature, instrument

performance, theory, and compositions I feel as though these tools are vital to any musician life no matter what genre you want to succeed in. From the earliest beginning of jazz some of the most influential artist have studied classical music and acquired technical skills from teachers with conservatory and academic backgrounds. Jelly Roll Morton a jazz and ragtime pianist, is known as one the first notable jazz arrangers. It is said that in New Orleans Morton and other fellow musicians would attend concerts at the French Opera House. It is also said that they would also emerge themselves in compositions of composers such as Verdi, Massenet, Donizetti. It is said that values associated with Western Classical music provides the basis for contention among jazz players This really opened my eyes because for me I feel as though listening to jazz music will help me be a better jazz musician, but listening to genres from where these composers compose is also vital. It is said that the vocabulary of a jazz artists should be excerpts of jazz pieces, popular songs, Western classical compositions, and compositions from other musical traditions that appeal to a soloist.

Anthony Braxton an American composer and instrumentalist. Braxton doesn't consider himself a jazz musician. There was all so time he was not accepted by the jazz community because he studied non jazz artist such as John Cage who is an American music theorist, composers, and writer. He known for using instruments in a non-standard way. In an album entitled *Three Compositions of the New Jazz* Braxton's approach had a lot in common with the 1960's classical avant-garde world of composers such as John Cage. Braxton said he once used to call himself a jazz musician, but other jazz musicians said he wasn't. So, he said if he called himself a classical musician he could play whatever he wanted including jazz. Doing so Braxton was giving the name "White Negro" because his music exercised critics and had a lack of

conformity to African-American stereotypes. I think this is horrible that people felt this was about him all because his music was different and he studied classical composers.

When I think about jazz I think about music where I am able to express myself something like a conversation. When learning how to improvise on different pieces my professors would always tell me to have a conversation. I think what they meant by that was that sometimes I would bang on the piano during real smooth songs. That would be equivalent to yelling in a conversation. It is said that in European classical music two of the important people are the composer and the conductor as opposed to jazz where everyone has the opportunity to express themselves in their own musical personalities.

I've learnt so much on reading about all these different types of musicians and how they studied. What I have taken away from is it to not be one dimensional when studying your favorite genre. Music is so universal and you can take away something from almost anybody. At one point in time the jazz world attempted to enshrine blackness and confine it within one definition, but jazz is so much more than. I know for a fact that since began getting classically trained I have become a better musician through all the genres I play.