

The Realization Of Transcription 110 New Coltrane Solos?

The Works Of John Coltrane Volumes 11 & 12

By Andrew N. White, III



On September 23, 1994, I released for public consumption, *The Works of John Coltrane, Volumes 11 and 12, 110 New Transcriptions of John Coltrane* improvised saxophone solos. This new collection is also labeled "The Connoisseur's Series." I use this subtitle because the bulk of this material has minimal commercial value, although it is extremely rich in high artistic and historical importance. Thus, for those John Coltrane buffs who are curious to see, by way of musical manuscript, what he sounded like at various stages of his career when he was not sufficiently recorded, here is some supplemental material for your perusal. Here are some of the highlights in this new set of Coltrane transcriptions.

Solo Numbers

422

Cherokee (1946), probably the earliest known recording of John Coltrane.

440-443

Four solos from the summer of 1957 *Five Spot* engagement with Thelonious Monk in New York City.

451-459

Nine solos from Coltrane's last tour with Miles Davis in Europe in March and April of 1960.

461-474

All (to my knowledge) of the remaining recorded titles from the historic Village Vanguard date, November 1st to the 3rd, 1961, and a couple of others.

475-479

Five solos from Coltrane's first two concerts as a leader in Europe performed in Paris, France at the "Theatre De Olympia" on November 18, 1961.

480-485, 488-499, 504-516

Thirty-one solos from "live" European concert performances.

500-503

Four solos recorded with drummer Roy Haynes, including the famous *Impressions* from the 1963 Newport Jazz Festival (#500).

513

A fourteen minute, twenty-nine chorus Coltrane solo on *Impressions*. I don't know its origin for sure (unidentified source), but I'm guessing it was in Stuttgart around 1963. Some of the most incredible Coltrane music I've ever been privy to.

525-528

All four solos from the famous "bootleg" *A Love Supreme* suite performed at the Antibes Festival in Juan Les Pins, France on July 26, 1965.

530

The solo on *Crescent* from Coltrane's only tour of Japan performed at Shinjuku Kosei Nenkin Hall in Tokyo, on July 11, 1966.

531

The opening statement on *Ogunde* performed at the Olatunji Center for African Culture in New York City on May 23, 1967, two months before John Coltrane passed away on July 17, 1967

A couple of issues arose throughout this two-year project working session:

1. The bulk of this material

was transcribed from sources marred with extremely questionable fidelity. Therefore, I afforded myself the prerogative of the slightly edited context in some cases. Unlike the first ten volumes of my Coltrane transcriptions, which are unedited, I felt with the experience of producing the previous four hundred twenty-one solos, that I could afford a "slight license" in making certain judgements as to what Mr. Coltrane actually played in certain cases. The number of these instances is minimal, but I felt I had to state my purported case just for the historical record. Thus, the tag, "slightly edited."

2. One point kept raising its head over and over again, and that was the "slightly editorial" point of what Mr. Coltrane played versus what Mr. Coltrane "sounded like he played" and/or what I wanted to hear Mr. Coltrane play. Thus, the title of this article is "The Realization of Tran-

scription” as the stage setting for this little item which I’m sure you’ll get a big kick out of.

However, after reading this piece you can still rest assured that I did my best to remain objective in my work throughout this new set of Coltrane transcriptions. Please feel free to write me for a list of the new solos and other information related to this project.

Now, on a lighter note, here’s a quaint little Andrew White/John Coltrane story. Coltrane recorded his tune, *Traneing In* on August 23, 1957, for the Prestige Record Company. The recording was widely heralded for its bluesy/groove feeling and long form: A-12 bars, A-12 bars, B-8 bars, and A-12 bars. Coltrane also recorded *Traneing In* in an up-tempo version titled *Locomotion* one month later on September 15, 1957. It’s included on his *Blue Train* recording (Blue Note BST81577).

In 1977, I released transcriptions of two live versions of *Traneing In*: WJC#409 from Stockholm, November 19, 1962, and WJC#415 from Stockholm, October 22, 1963. Both versions are played at different tempi from the original studio recorded version made in 1957. #409 is a fast-up-groove tempo and #415 is a slower bluesy tempo.

Now, in 1994, I have released still another version that is in between the other two live versions, tempo-wise, that is. WJC#492, also from November 19, 1962, and also performed in Stockholm, Sweden, completes the *Live-Traneing In Trilogy*. We now have, in addition to the original 1957 version, three tempi for *Traneing In*: slow (#415), groove (#492), and faster (#409). This, sets the stage for me to tell you a little story about one of my deepest and darkest secrets. Ready? Here it ‘tis!

The Bridge to Chorus Number Two

From my earliest encounters with the music of John Coltrane back in 1957, I have been transfixed by his sound, regardless of the period or stage in his development. Throughout his career, before and since his passing, I have always had the secret desire to hear Mr. John Coltrane play a “sequence” a half-step lower. A se-

quence is a repetition of a musical phrase at another pitch, usually a half-step (chromatically) or a whole step (diatonically) above or below the original pitch.

For some reason, to me, Coltrane had the ideal sound to play a sequence. Thus, I have waited for more than thirty years to hear that almighty repeating of an idea on different scale steps as only a master player such as Mr. John Coltrane would and/or could do.

Traneing In became my fantasy piece of music for this sequence to happen on. The A sections are 12-bar blues in B-flat. The “bridge,” “B,” or middle section chord structure was A-flat 7, A-flat 7, G7, G7, G-flat 7, G-flat 7, F7, F7. This “bridge” lent itself beautifully to great sequential ideas with its downward harmonic motion. *Traneing In* has stuck with me ever since the very first time I heard it back in 1958 at the tender age of sixteen. It has stayed in the back of my mind all of these years as something I’d love to hear John Coltrane play a sequence on. But, deep down inside me, I’ve always had to face a bold fact. I knew all along that Trane would never play a sequence. He wasn’t that kind of an improviser. John Coltrane was an illusionist, a musical magician. He was the kind of player that could and would make you think you had heard him play something up until the time you actually saw a transcription of it. And even then, after seeing the difference in what he played and what you thought he played, you could even imagine hearing him chuckle while saying, “I got ‘cha.”

Trane could play little things that would have you walking around singing them for days at a time and you’d never realize that they were counterfeit until you saw them written down somewhere months later.

Even I, with my infinite wisdom, abundant gifts of genius, and outstanding good looks, have had the uncanny ability to transcribe at least one improviser’s solo up to eight straight measures without hearing the music. But for John Coltrane, neither then nor now, could I ever predict more than two notes that Mr. Coltrane would play in succession. The man just didn’t think or play like anybody

else, that’s all.

It was as if by design, he was creating ideas that were the antithesis of musical logic as we know it and/or himself. In other words, in his quest for uniqueness and individuality, he was playing against himself. Thus, he always sounded “right,” but not necessarily “correct.”

At my young age of sixteen years, I used to listen to Coltrane records waiting and imagining my great sequence coming, but it never came. Trane had too much creative ingenuity for that kind of predictable simplicity. He knew there was much more artistic mileage in playing an image of a phrase than there was in performing the real idea, so you never heard him play the “real thing.” I’d break out laughing and sometimes I’d even pick up my own saxophone and play “it” the way I wanted “it” to be, all the while laughing at the idea of how ridiculous and absurd what I was doing actually was!

Well anyway, on November 19, 1962, John Coltrane “did it” just for me in the solo now numbered #492. He played a sequence on “the bridge to chorus number two” of *Traneing In*. You should have heard it. It was so beautiful. Through his instrument, the tenor saxophone, he pontificated as he spoke directly to me: “This is for Andrew White in Washington, D.C., the one saxophone player/musician who can appreciate the beauty of the sequence with all of its vocal qualities and operatic proclivities as stated by Guiseppi Verdi in his *Te Deum* (Hymn of Praise). This is for you, Andrew, even though you won’t hear it until twenty-five years after I’m deceased. When you do encounter it, know that I played it just for you. All the best to you in your life and work. I am John Coltrane and this is November 19, 1962 in Stockholm, Sweden, the second concert of the evening.”

So, sure enough, in December of 1992, While I was compiling the work tapes for this new series of Coltrane transcriptions, I came across this tape of a concert in Stockholm that listed a performance of *Traneing In*. I knew I hadn’t heard it before, so I decided to give it a hearing. With great curiosity and anticipation, I sat there with my ears wide open.

There it was. The grooving McCoy Tyner piano solo leading up to the hip Jimmy Garrison plucked and bowed bass solo and then, here he came, my hero John Coltrane. It was just like the good old days when I used to hear Trane play at Abart's Lounge on 9th Street Northwest in Washington, D.C. playing all of that fantastic saxophone in 1962. Read my book about Coltrane's music, *Trane 'n Me* (\$11, \$15 non-USA) for a full account of those days.

Anyway, back to *Traneing In*. I sat back and listened intently to the first chorus of Trane's great solo. Then he started the second chorus: twelve great bars, twelve more great bars, and then it came and hit me like a bolt of lightening: the bridge to chorus number two, with my sequence. It was unbelievable! I was ecstatic as I sat there and cried with joy. It had happened. My dream had come true after nearly thirty-five years of waiting. I had heard a sequence played by John Coltrane! I let the tune finish all the while I was sitting there with glazed eyes like a kid at Christmas time. What a Christmas present, right? And it was December, 1992. My life and love had been fulfilled some thirty-five years after I had experienced my first dream of hearing Mr. Coltrane play a sequence. Goodness gracious, what a thrill!

Well, on March 24, 1993, I sat down to complete and realize my dream. That's the day I transcribed my Coltrane solo number #492 *Tranein' In*. It was a great day in my life after thirty-five years as I eagerly awaited to see the transcription of the "the bridge to chorus number two." Seeing is believing.

Now, being that y'all are seasoned Andrew White readers, you've probably guessed by now that I've got one heavy punch line for ya, right? Right! So, here 'tis! It twern't no sequence at all. No! It sounded like one! Mr. Coltrane had gotten me again. I broke out laughing, hysterically. I even went academic like some high browed theorist. As I continued to "bust out laffin' " I tried all kinds of stuff to "make dat bridge be just right" for me, but it just wouldn't work. I analyzed, rationalized, theorized, and even fantasized again my "pure" Coltrane sequence, but it just weren't dere. Poor laughin' me. After thirty-five

years of waiting, all I could come up with was Ha! Ha! Ha!

But, what was there in that "bridge to chorus number two" was the typical wry humor of who I thought and still think is the greatest contributor to the linguistic aspect of jazz improvisation, John Coltrane. And with the expression on his face that is housed on the cover of his album, *Trane's First Ride*, Oberon 5100, John Coltrane again spoke directly to me in his own musical and magical way, while chuckling, "I got cha again, Andrew, but it was still for you."

Now another punch line may still be in the wings. As for the Verdi piece, *Te Deum*, it is one of the most beautiful pieces of music I've ever played in my life and it has a pure sequence in it, I think, but I haven't heard this piece since I played it on the English horn in a full symphony orchestra at Tanglewood back in 1963 or 1966. I can't remember which year. That's the punch line! After nearly thirty years, was it a pure sequence? Did I think it was? Did I hope it was? Or was Guiseppi Verdi chanting from his grave, "I got cha, too, Andrew!"

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