

---

Jazz as a Metaphor for Organizing in the 21st Century

Author(s): Mary Jo Hatch

Source: *Organization Science*, Vol. 9, No. 5, Special Issue: Jazz Improvisation and Organizing (Sep. - Oct., 1998), pp. 556-557

Published by: [INFORMS](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2640293>

Accessed: 30/11/2010 15:23

---

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>. JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at <http://www.jstor.org/action/showPublisher?publisherCode=informs>.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).



INFORMS is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Organization Science*.

---

# *The Vancouver Academy of Management Jazz Symposium*

---

## Jazz as a Metaphor for Organizing in the 21st Century

Mary Jo Hatch

*Cranfield University, Cranfield, Bedford, MK43 0AL England*

---

**MARY JO HATCH** Good evening and welcome. We're here tonight to listen to some jazz. I'd like to introduce our band to you and let you know that that quiet little tune you just heard was *Sonny Side* by Sonny Stitt and our marvelous band this evening is comprised of a number of very interesting folks, one of which some of you may already know. His name is Frank Barrett and he is my co-organizer.

Frank is on the keyboard. Renee Worst—here with us from Vancouver—is on the bass. Doug Conner—formerly from Sacramento, California and now from Copenhagen—on the drums. And featuring, of course, on the saxophone the man you've all been waiting to hear, Ken Peplowski. Ken will be playing clarinet later as well. I'd like to tell you a little bit about Ken so you can appreciate how fortunate we are to have him with us tonight. Ken has played with a number of very famous musicians starting with the Tommy Dorsey band, where Frank and Ken met. He's also played with Benny Goodman's band, while Benny was still alive; Leon Redbone; Rosemary Clooney; the American Jazz Orchestra; and he's presently working with Mel Tormé. He's under contract with Concord records. He has 10 albums out, the most notable of

which is called "The Natural Touch." Those of you looking for Christmas gifts should write this down. "The Natural Touch" is very special in that it helped to promote Ken in Europe which resulted in his winning the German equivalent of the Grammy Award (I'm not going to try to say that in German.), but two years ago he won that award for the best jazz record of the year. So this is not a lightweight player we've got with us tonight. I hope you all appreciate how wonderful it is to have him with us and we thank you Ken.

Now to do the most important part; I'm going to have to read this because there is a very long list of names. There are many, many people whom we want to thank. Not the least of which are the Academy Divisions who have supported this project; this was an expensive proposition. As you already know, this symposium is jointly sponsored by OMT, MOC, OB and ODC. And we are very, very appreciative for the support that they have given us. In particular, I would like to recognize Alan Meyer, Janet Dukerich, Sue Ashford, and David Cooperrider, who were the leaders of those groups this year. So thank you all very much.



Reprinted with permission. Copyright © 1998 Doug Conner

The Copenhagen Business School has most graciously agreed to pick up what the other folks couldn't pay for, so we want to recognize them as well. That's my home institution. And then finally, I would like to single out three people whose efforts have really made this come about and I mean in the nitty-gritty sense of being here all day today and for weeks previously making all the details work out. Alan Meyer has been after this all year long, and I think that without Alan we couldn't have even conceived of doing this project. Steve Havlovic has been on-site arranging this for several days, if not months, and Steve handled so many headaches we lost count. Brad Reid from Clark Audio Visual has been extraordinarily generous. Brad is responsible for the sound system. We didn't have enough money for a sound system, and Brad had lots of lucrative alternative possibilities, so I think we should thank Brad for his tremendous generosity and support of our project.

Now, on to us. Our program this evening is a little improvisational itself. We're going to try to share some ideas that the group of us, including Karl Weick, Bill Pasmore, Frank Barrett, and myself have been thinking about for several years now. What we want to do is talk about the 21st century organization in the context of the jazz metaphor for organizing. And let me begin by explaining why we make this association. If you look at the list of characteristics that are associated with the 21st century organization, you find concepts like flexible, adaptable, responsive to the environment, loose boundaries, minimal hierarchy. When you look at the list for a second, if you're interested in jazz, you recognize that all of those ideas could as easily be associated with a jazz band as a 21st century organization. And so the idea of comparing these two worlds seems like a sensible one; one which we would like to pursue with you tonight.

We believe that the use of metaphor is a very powerful way to enhance understanding. And when we use a metaphor, we feel that it's most responsible, necessary even, to push that metaphor to its fullest. A good metaphor analysis assumes that if two things, like jazz and organizing, are related in one way, they will be related in other ways as well. Much use of metaphor in organization studies never gets beyond acknowledging a single aspect of a metaphoric association. For instance, many people have remarked on the similarities between organizing and jazz improvisation, but have not carried the comparison much beyond that single association. What we'd like to do tonight is push on that metaphor a great deal, and then extend it even more beyond academic discussion into musical experience, which we will do with the help of our jazz musicians. We hope that we can entertain you, help you learn something new about jazz, and inspire you to think about organizations and organizing processes in a different way. So we're going to work this metaphor in two directions. We're going to work on learning about jazz, and we're going to work on inspiring organization theory and organizational practice.

So that's what we're about this evening. First, Frank will provide some brief comments to give you a feel for what jazz music is all about in a structural sense; we'll have about a five minute primer on that. Then Karl will be playing the head, shall we say, followed by Bill. Bill's going to talk about research and development firms and innovation. Ken's going to talk to us about what it feels like to do improvisation and what he thinks about while he's improvising. And then, if there's any time left, I'll follow up with a few ideas linking postmodernism and jazz and try to make an ending. So that's our program for this evening, and now I'll turn it over to Frank. Thanks very much for joining us tonight.



Reprinted with permission. Copyright © 1998 Doug Conner