

Danish Modernity, *rytmisk musik*, and the Film *Danmark*

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Drawing upon Danish composer Bernhard Christensen's music and scholarship, and interviews with his contemporaries and students, this paper explores confluences of African American jazz and Danish modern identity, particularly as revealed by Christensen's collaboration with filmmaker Poul Henningsen on *Danmark* (1935). The film meaningfully juxtaposes Christensen's jazz compositions against iconic rural and urban scenes of Denmark.

Most scholarship on European musics and culture reinforces a narrow musical canon and overlooks the vast contributions of black peoples, their cultures, and musical practices in shaping modern Europe. However, as Paul Gilroy argues, narrow and one-way conceptions of flows between Africa and the Americas should be replaced by a larger unit of analysis, the "Black Atlantic," in order "to produce an explicitly transnational and intercultural" research perspective (*Black Atlantic*, 1993). Emphasizing the importance of black musical practices within global flows across northern Europe, I argue for the discursive power of African American jazz as an essential component of Danish identity.

In adopting African American rooted jazz as Danish expression, Christensen ties the music of *Danmark* to a varied landscape of Danes' work and leisure. The film's images and sound in conjunction profoundly signify "modern times," re-imagining a globally-connected Denmark in an industrial present, while encompassing a Danish agrarian past.

Associate Professor at the University of Tennessee, Leslie Gay holds a Ph.D. in ethnomusicology from Columbia University. He has published articles and reviews on American music and culture in the journals *Ethnomusicology*, *American Music*, and *World of Music*. He also co-edited *Music and Technoculture* (Wesleyan University Press) with Rene T.A. Lysloff, which examines relationships among music, culture, and technology. In other areas of his research, Dr. Gay focuses on indie rock musicians in New York City and music publishing in the 19th-century United States. Currently, he is investigating the reception of African American music in Denmark, an historical and ethnographic project begun with a Fulbright Scholar grant in 2002.

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