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(Re-)Writing Jazz: The Manuscripts of John Coltrane's *A Love Supreme*

Abstract: Jazz is generally viewed as the opposite of a musical genre fixed in a score, thus assuming that manuscripts do not play an important role in jazz history. After an overview of manuscripts in early jazz emphasizing the importance for obtaining copyright, the autograph manuscripts of John Coltrane's *A Love Supreme* are examined. By comparing the different takes of the recording session and a concert registration to these manuscripts and the liner notes of the album, the role of manuscripts in performances is questioned. For the fourth part of *A Love Supreme* it is most likely that in the recording session – in contrast to the concert in Antibes – Coltrane had a manuscript of the so-called poem or prayer in front of him, but this cannot have been any of the extant ones.

Because of its reliance on improvisation, jazz is generally viewed as the opposite of a musical genre fixed in a score. To the best of my knowledge, there is no history of jazz in which any manuscript plays an important role. There are several reasons for this: First, it is variety in the actual performance – due to jazz's emphasis on improvisation – and not the score that is considered as the art of jazz. Second, recordings are traces of musicians as originators of jazz and these recordings are regarded as originals; autograph music manuscripts are only appreciated as devotional objects. Third, notated music, either printed or in manuscript form, is considered only an aid for teaching, learning, analysing (transcriptions of recordings, so-called descriptive notation), or preparing a performance (scores, master rhythm parts, lead sheets, and parts, all types of so-called prescriptive notation).¹ Writing jazz history, therefore, is writing the history of albums and recorded concerts documenting the state of the art in performed jazz. However, there are also valid reasons for Robert Witmer's rejection of this view as the 'common misconception that jazz is an unwritten music'.²

From the perspective of jazz as unwritten music, which must be revisited on the grounds of both ontology and methodology, John Coltrane's major contribu-

1 See Witmer and Finaly 2002, 168: 'prescriptive notation for performance; descriptive notation for the teaching and learning of jazz; and descriptive notation for transcription and analysis'.

2 Witmer and Finaly 2002, 168.

tion to the history of jazz is the release of his album *A Love Supreme* in 1965, the year that has been considered ‘the most revolutionary year in music’.³ The importance of this album has been highlighted by dozens of jazz historians, but almost none of them mentions the existence of an autograph manuscript of *A Love Supreme*.⁴ Since it came to light in 2004,⁵ one page of this manuscript in particular has become iconic, is now in the public domain,⁶ and has even been recently reproduced on the cover of a printed commercial music notebook.⁷ But this manuscript has not been studied in detail,⁸ it has only been adored as a monument, proof of Coltrane’s genius as a composer writing jazz.

1 Acknowledgement: Manuscripts in jazz and in jazz studies

The paradigm of a musical work represented in a score – the conception of music as a written opus, embedded in Western European culture since the early modern period and exported to the United States of America – went unchanged by the emergence of jazz. Beyond the question of how independently jazz developed in terms of its musical structure and performance practice, there is a legal framework which defines rules for obtaining copyright to a work of music. Performance and recording did not replace the score in jazz for one very simple reason: the only way to obtain copyright for a piece of music is the legal deposit of a notated score in the U.S. Copyright Office in Washington, DC.

As David Chevan has pointed out, copyright can be obtained only for a melody and its text, not a chord progression.⁹ Therefore, most of the early copyright deposits of unpublished jazz music ‘consisted of a lead sheet containing only

³ See Jackson 2015.

⁴ See, for example, Parker 2012, 35: ‘there was never a score’ – five years after the publication of reproductions of fols I and II of the music manuscript in Kahn 2007, 125–127. Two pages of the prayer manuscript were first reproduced in Jones 2011, 91–92.

⁵ See Ratcliff 2005.

⁶ The document is available at <https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Datei:A_Love_Supreme.jpg> (accessed on 1 March 2020).

⁷ See the *Cahier de Musique*, Les Éditions du Soleil Rouge, 2020, ISBN-13: 979-8614801847.

⁸ See Kahn 2020, xvii, who, in the introduction to this new edition – in contrast to Kahn 2002 – mentions the manuscripts and even reproduces some pages (xxi), but does not draw conclusions from the manuscript evidence.

⁹ See Chevan 1997, 240.

the melody'.¹⁰ Chevan distinguishes between three types of manuscripts: single line melodies (lead sheets), single line melodies with text underlaid (lead sheets with text), and fully realised (but unorchestrated) scores (piano scores).¹¹ In his case study of the copyright deposits of Louis Armstrong,¹² concentrating on sixteen manuscripts in four different hands, Chevan identifies the first three hands as those of Armstrong himself, his wife Lillian Hardin Armstrong, and Paul Barbarin. The fourth hand has not yet been identified.¹³ When comparing the dates of the copyright deposit and the recording, Chevan distinguishes between prescriptive and descriptive manuscripts and assumes that the latter are transcriptions of the recorded music.¹⁴

When comparing the keys of the manuscripts and the recordings, Chevan singles out some pieces that, in the manuscripts, are notated a whole tone above sounding pitch on the recordings, concluding from that difference that 'it might be possible that these manuscripts were initially used as performance sketches or even as parts' for B♭ trumpet.¹⁵ What Chevan does not do is interrelate all this information and consider the material evidence of the manuscripts.

The only piano score in the collection studied by Chevan is *Don't Forget to Mess Around*, likewise the only manuscript in the hand of Paul Barbarin, listed as a co-author.¹⁶ Evidence for the descriptive character of the manuscripts in this collection can be found in all the manuscripts written by hand D, all submitted after their respective recordings. Moreover, the latter are the only manuscripts that add basic harmonic indications to the melody.¹⁷ All manuscripts written by the composer himself and his wife are lead sheets, only a few of which contain lyrics. In most of the manuscripts, the melody is notated a whole tone higher than it sounds on the recordings. Because there is no evidence that those manuscripts handed in for copyright after the recording differ from the others, I consider all of Armstrong's copyright deposits to have originally been parts and therefore

¹⁰ Chevan 1997, 246. He provides a list of 85 composers and their copyright deposits in Appendix F, 490–520.

¹¹ See Chevan 1997, 247–248.

¹² See also Chevan 2001/2002.

¹³ See Chevan 1997, 273–274.

¹⁴ See Chevan 1997, 266.

¹⁵ Chevan 1997, 272.

¹⁶ See the reproduction in Chevan 1997, 474–475.

¹⁷ *Heah Me Talkin' to Ya'*, *Muggles*, and *Knockin' a Jug*, see Chevan 1997, 274 and the reproductions on 480, 483, and 482.

prescriptive manuscripts.¹⁸ In the case of the unrecorded *Papa What You Are Trying To Do To Me*, one can assume the same. The copyright deposit of *Yes! I'm in the Barrel* is missing¹⁹ and I doubt the recording refers to the same version as that notated as *I Am in the Barrel, Who Don't Like it?*. Those songs, co-authored by Armstrong and Hardin, have not been notated as trumpet parts; *Coal Cart Blues* is at the voice's sounding pitch and in the case of *When You Leave Me Alone*, which was not recorded, one can assume the same. The only exceptions are *Gully Low Blues* and *Gut Bucket Blues*. For the first one, the manuscript is notated a minor third higher than it sounds on the recording and was submitted for copyright only after the recording was made. Chevan speculates that it is either a descriptive manuscript or that the composer (identified by Chevan as Armstrong) 'based this manuscript more on how the piece was being played at the time of copyright in late November of 1927 than on its recorded performance'.²⁰ Chevan considers the lead sheet of the latter a descriptive manuscript;²¹ it is in the same key as the recording. More significant than variants between the lead sheet and the recording is the fact that *Gut Bucket Blues* is the only one of Armstrong's copyright deposits written on music paper, identifying, at the bottom, Clarence Williams Music Publishing Co. as the copyright holder.²² One can extrapolate from this that the company commissioned this manuscript for copyright deposit.

Apart from Chevan's general study of notated music in early jazz,²³ only a few case studies focus on manuscripts in jazz, for example, on manuscripts of Duke Ellington,²⁴ Fats Waller,²⁵ Charlie Parker,²⁶ and those used for Miles Davis's

18 This includes *Weather Bird Rag* (Armstrong's first composition that was recorded as well as copyrighted; see Chevan 1997, 293), a manuscript considered by Chevan 1997, 282, as descriptive. In my view, the designation of the second ending with a fermata (reproduced in Chevan 1997, 486) invalidates this hypothesis.

19 See Chevan 1997, 264.

20 Chevan 1997, 291.

21 See Chevan 1997, 282.

22 See the reproduction in Chevan 1997, 479.

23 Chevan 1997. On the musical literacy of early jazz musicians see also Chevan 2001/2002.

24 See van de Leur 2017, 157–176.

25 Machlin 1994 gives an inventory of Waller's manuscripts in the Institute of Jazz Studies, Rutgers University, Newark, NJ, including a few reproductions. Apart from some parts for *Spreadin' Rhythm Around* the manuscripts are vocal scores, piano scores, piano scores with only the melodic line leaving the second stave empty, and sketches in Waller's hand.

26 See Martin 2018.

nonet.²⁷ Most of these manuscripts codify music for larger ensembles and will not be considered here in detail. Ellington, however, is a good example of the difference between the narrative of jazz as an oral practice and the common use of written artefacts. The composer and bandleader publicly stated that he did not care about his manuscripts, claiming that he gave them away and ‘people wrap[ed] their lunches in them’.²⁸ In reality, however, he has kept most of his manuscripts, which constitute today 4.7 cubic metres of material, in 470 archival boxes, housed in Archives Center, National Museum of American History (Smithsonian Institution).²⁹ Walter van de Leur gives as an example a description of the manuscript of *I Never Felt this Way Before*.³⁰ It is a compressed (or condensed) score that served as the model for the copyists who were writing out parts for the members of Ellington’s big band. Neither the vocal part nor the rhythm section are included in this score which, moreover, is in concert notation and lacks any indications of articulation or dynamics. All these details were added later in the rehearsals, where the parts were edited; van de Leur calls this ‘bandstand editing’³¹. Ellington notated the basic structure of the arrangement and there are examples in which he reworked the original compressed scores for later performances by revising the manuscripts (e.g. adding parts for his growing ensemble).³²

In the case of Parker, both manuscripts for copyright deposit, now in the Library of Congress, and individual parts³³ thought to have been used in a recording session have survived. Out of 90 copyright deposits only four manuscripts are from Parker’s own hand.³⁴ Henry Martin assumes that the individual trumpet parts of *Swedish Schnapps* and *Back Home Blues*³⁵ were used in the recording session on 8 August 1951. He points out that there are no corrections and assumes on that basis that the parts might have been recopied from earlier

27 For a discussion see Sultanof 2011, where he writes that, apart from *Deception*, for which ‘a two-stave piano manuscript that is a condensed score including all of the instrumental parts from bars 1 through 59’ survives (Sultanof 2011, 210) only parts are extant; no reproductions are provided.

28 Van de Leur 2017, 174–175.

29 See van de Leur 2017, 164.

30 See van de Leur 2017, 168.

31 Van de Leur 2017, 173.

32 See van de Leur 2017, 173.

33 Institute of Jazz Studies, Rutgers University, Newark, NJ.

34 See Martin 2018, 1.6.

35 Institute of Jazz Studies, Rutgers University, Newark, NJ. See Martin 2018, note 6.

manuscripts.³⁶ However, in contrast to Armstrong, there is a significant difference between manuscripts that served as parts and those that were prepared to serve as copyright deposits (the reproduction of *Bill's Bounce* given identifies it as a master rhythm part).

When it comes to a systematic survey of the jazz manuscript culture, apart from scores and parts similar to Western European art music,³⁷ more specific types of manuscripts to be mentioned are lead sheets and master rhythm parts. Both provide all the musicians engaged in a performance with the same musical information – as in a score – from which every musician extracts and/or adds what is needed to play his/her part. In general, none of these manuscripts provide an outline of the ‘overall form, structure, and organization of the performance’ regarding the ‘order, number, and length of choruses and improvised solos.’³⁸ But this is exactly the intent of Coltrane’s manuscript for *A Love Supreme*.

2 Resolution: The manuscripts of *A Love Supreme*

What today is kept in the Archives Center, National Museum of American History (Smithsonian Institution), in Washington, DC, as manuscripts of *A Love Supreme* is a folder containing three music folios and four text folios, which I will refer to as the music manuscript (with folio numbers) and the prayer manuscript (with page numbers).³⁹ All the folios – perhaps with the exception of fol. III which may have been written between the recording sessions and the album’s release – must have been written before 9 December 1964, but there is no internal evidence to suggest that they had been completed in ‘early September 1964,’ as Ashley Kahn claims.⁴⁰ Only the story of Coltrane coming down the stairs in their home ‘like Moses coming down from the mountain’ after finishing the composition, as told by Coltrane’s wife Alice,⁴¹ suggests this dating. The sole

³⁶ See Martin 2018, 1.5.

³⁷ See, for example, van de Leur 2017, 166: ‘Ellington not only *could* work as his European classical colleagues, he most often *did*’.

³⁸ Witmer and Finaly 2002, 169.

³⁹ The manuscript can be viewed at <<https://sova.si.edu/record/NMAH.AC.0903?s=0&n=10&t=C&q=coltrane&i=0>> (accessed on 29 Feb. 2020), the collection is numbered AC.0903. Reproductions are given in the booklet for the so-called ‘super deluxe CD edition’ Coltrane 2015, 9–14.

⁴⁰ See Kahn 2020, xvii.

⁴¹ Alice Coltrane, interviewed by Branford Marsalis 2004, as reported by Whyton 2013, 26.

internal evidence for dating is a note on fol. II^v, ‘buy reeds in S. F’. The Coltrane quartet played in the San Francisco Jazz Workshop on 6–18 October 1964,⁴² therefore we can reasonably assume that this note was written prior to 6 October 1964.

2.1 Music manuscript

Coltrane used commercial staff paper, Passantino Number 9, with eighteen printed staves and eight printed barlines only on the recto (the verso is blank), paper designed for big band arrangements. The use of this kind of paper is a mission statement qualifying *A Love Supreme* as a ‘composition’, as the entry of the title in the respective printed rubric in the upper left corner on fol. I^r states. The use of such paper for sketching a composition is unusual. Even more unusual is that, in comparison to the amount of text, the number of notes written on the staves is fairly small. Coltrane entered the page number in the upper right corner, but ‘I’ is both the first and the only numbered page; the entire work fits on one page (I consider the verso and the two additional folios paratexts).

The format and number of staves show Coltrane’s ambitions in creating a composition for a group larger than the line-up of his contemporaneous so-called classic quartet (including McCoy Tyner, Jimmy Garrison, and Elvin Jones). On the top of fol. I^r he indicated the designated instrumentation of the piece, the ‘horns’⁴³ including ‘tenor saxophone | one other horn’ and the ‘rhythmn [sic] section’ comprised of ‘piano | trap drum | 2 bass | 2 conga | 1 tymbal’. Obviously, this is not the scoring of his classic quartet which recorded *A Love Supreme*, but is closer to the line-up used in the recording session on 10 December 1964 in which Archie Shepp (tenor saxophone) and Art Davis (bass) joined the quartet – but this session was not included in the album.

A significant difference between Coltrane’s indications in the manuscript and both recording sessions is the Afro-Cuban percussion. Neither congas nor a timbale were used but – in addition to the drum set⁴⁴ (trap drum) – gong and timpani. Coltrane only began including additional percussion players in 1965.⁴⁵

⁴² As discussed by Porter, DeVito, Wild, Fujioka, and Schmalzer 2008, 308.

⁴³ The transcriptions from Coltrane’s manuscripts given here ignore Coltrane’s use of capital letters almost throughout.

⁴⁴ For the use of the various instruments in Part I see Porter 1985, 607.

⁴⁵ On this see Kahn 2020, 255–284. In Coltrane’s last live recording, at the Olatunji African Cultural Center in Harlem, NYC, 23 April 1967, the lineup included Algie Dewitt playing a bata drum; see Whyton 2013, 92–93, where a photo from the session is included.

The entire manuscript contains only four short passages in musical notation, none of which use clefs to indicate the absolute pitches:

- (1) the ‘horn opening,’ providing only unrhythmicized pitches to be read in treble clef with transposition for tenor saxophone. The series of notes (b₅, b₄, e₅, f₅, b₄, e₅, b₅, b₄, e₅, f₅), with their harmonies indicated by the chord symbol ‘E_b’, is not so much a melodic theme – the opening Coltrane played in the recording⁴⁶ uses the same pitches, but in different order – but an evocation of the pitch set of one of the quartet’s favourite tunes, *My Favorite Things*;⁴⁷
- (2) the ‘primary rhythmic [sic] motif’ (quaver, bar line, crotchet, two quavers, crotchet rest, quaver rest, etc.);
- (3) the ‘bass + piano’ riff (the so-called *A Love Supreme* motif), according to the final work to be read in treble clef; and
- (4) the ‘voices concert key’ for the *A Love Supreme* motif according to the final work to be read in treble-clef, transposed for tenor saxophone.

Other indications for the ensemble are written out. For example, at the end of the piece, Coltrane indicates ‘attempt to reach transcendent level with orchestra’, ‘rising harmonies to a level of blissful stability at end’, ‘all paths lead to God’, and ‘last chord to sound like the final chord of Alabama’. In the album, this final directive has been achieved by adding an overdub.⁴⁸

In addition to the musical notation, the manuscript offers a map of the process and formal structure of *A Love Supreme*. In the recorded album there are four parts, numbered I to IV, the first including ‘voices chanting motif in E_bmi “A Love Supreme” two male’ and ‘motif played in all keys together’, the second in ‘blues form’, and the last as a ‘musical recitation of prayer [marginal note] <entitled “A Love Supreme”> by horn in Cmi’. But there are significant differences between the tonal plan here and in the recorded album.⁴⁹ Part I, which (after the introduction in E minor) is in F minor on the recording, was originally intended – according to the manuscript – to be in E_b minor. Part II, recorded in

⁴⁶ See the transcription in Coltrane c. 2000.

⁴⁷ See Whyton 2013, 17. This is not the place to discuss the reason for alluding to Richard Rogers’ and Oscar Hammerstein’s *My Favorite Things*, which Coltrane had recorded in 1960 on the album of the same name, but I would suggest that the unconventional postulant Maria, protagonist of the musical *The Sound of Music* from which this song has been taken, is a mirror of Coltrane’s own spirituality, despite the different religious traditions from which Maria von Trapp and Coltrane came.

⁴⁸ See Kahn 2020, 188–190 and the undubbed version on Coltrane 2015, disc 2, track 5.

⁴⁹ On the album’s tonal plan see Porter 1985, 605.

E♭ minor, was originally intended to be in B♭ minor. The same holds true for the sequence of solos. At the end of Part II, the manuscript contains the indication 'bass move into solo', with which the third part should begin. On the recording, however, there is no bass solo at the end of Part II and Part III begins with a drum solo.

In contrast to the first folio, the second folio's recto is almost exclusively devoted to music. The connection with *A Love Supreme* is not indicated in the rubric 'composition' in the upper left, but by the title written in the middle of the page, perhaps added after the music was notated. I consider it a page of sketches elaborating two of the sections from fol. I'. Picking up the *A Love Supreme* motif also found on fol. I', the repetition of this motif is notated not at the same pitch but a third lower, offering a starting point for the indication 'move in all keys' (fol. I') here specified as 'move in all 12 keys'. But the aim of repeating the motif a minor third lower is not to indicate tonal progression, it is to show the motif's treatment as a two-part canon between the 'tenor [saxophone]' and an 'other instrument'. Surprisingly, this idea of a strictly imitative treatment of the motif was not realised in the extant takes of the second recording session,⁵⁰ nor has it been mentioned in any analysis of *A Love Supreme*. In addition to the treatment of the motif, Coltrane indicated the 'rhythm' of Part I and its key: 'start + end in E♭ concert minor'. Furthermore, what has been indicated on fol. I' as 'horn melody' in Part II, without any indication of what this melody might be, is described here as 'melody tenor'. It is the entire theme to the eight-bar blues form, repeated multiple times on the recording, written here with two different endings (the second indicated as 'II').

What connects fols I and II is not so much the content of the rectos, but that of the versos. The first line of text on fol. II^v is the beginning of the poem 'A Love Supreme' published in the album's liner notes; the text on fol. I^v is its conclusion.

The third folio contains neither parts of the musical composition nor of the poem. It is, rather, a first draft of Coltrane's introductory text for the album's liner notes, beginning on fol. III^r (used in portrait format) and continuing on the lower half of fol. III^r (now used in landscape format). This folio had been used before – the music and the chord symbols written in the upper half of fol. III^r have nothing to do with *A Love Supreme* – and was recycled for drafting the liner notes. This manuscript did not serve as a master copy for publication of the liner notes in the album, but is only a first draft. To give just one example: the title of the introduction in the liner notes is 'dear listener'; however, in the manuscript, the opening salutation is 'dear reader'.

50 As evidence I refer the reader to the six takes in the CD-set Coltrane 2015, disc 2, tracks 6–11.

2.2 Prayer manuscript

There is one more manuscript to consider, consisting of four folios (written not on staff paper, but on single side blank notebook paper), that contains a copy of the poem. It shows variants compared to both the first draft of the poem in the music manuscript and the printed version in the album's liner notes. The first page is numbered on the top; the only other numbered page is page 3. This page was written with a different pen (one with black ink instead of blue) and it therefore seems to have been inserted only after the other three pages were completed, suggesting that the entire section from 'God loves | May I be acceptable in thy sight' to 'To whom all praise is due. Praise God' may be a later addition.

I am not certain that the word 'poem' is an accurate classification of Coltrane's text. In the liner notes for the album, the fourth part of the music is called 'psalm' by Coltrane,⁵¹ a title that is in keeping with the poem's structure as a series of religious verses, but, from a purely literary point of view, I prefer to label it a 'prayer', as Coltrane himself does on fol. I' of the music manuscript. In the introductory portion of the liner notes (as well as on fol. I'), he hints that the final part of the recording is based on the prayer: 'The last part is a musical narration of the theme, "A LOVE SUPREME" which is written in the context'.⁵² This is not the first time that Coltrane modelled his instrumental music on texts.⁵³ Coltrane might have copied the final version – and also a pre-final version lacking page 3 – of the prayer from the first draft on fols I' and II' of the music manuscript. Although these drafts look more like a series of random jottings (see, for example, fol. II', which includes a drawing and the 'buy reeds in S. F.' memo) than aligned text, they have been copied in exactly the same sequence as the one found in the music manuscript. Taking this into account raises the question of the source from which Coltrane copied the passages missing on fols I' and II'. One possible explanation is that there was one more folio, now absent, originally placed between fols I and II. This folio might have resembled the other three and contained on its verso the text passages (except, perhaps, those on page 3 of the prayer manuscript) missing between those on fols II' (ending with 'It is merciful. Thank you God') and I' (beginning with 'I've seen God + I've seen

⁵¹ See the liner notes of the album in Coltrane 2015.

⁵² John Coltrane: Dear Listener, liner notes to the album, quoted after Coltrane 2015.

⁵³ Coltrane stated that *Wise One*, *Lonnie's Lament*, and *The Drum Thing* are also based on poems; see Michel Delorme and Claude Lenissois, 'Je ne peux pas aller plus loin', in *Jazz Hot*, September 1965, quoted in Kahn 2020, 117.

devils ungodly'). What may have been written on its recto – if anything – is unclear. It might have been sketches similar to those on fol. II^r for one of the other Parts of *A Love Supreme*.

3 Pursuance: Tracing music manuscripts in performances

Tony Whyton has pointed out that there are two competing narratives concerning the making of *A Love Supreme*; the narrative of a John Coltrane composition, in which the complete work was pre-determined prior to the recording sessions, versus the narrative of improvisation in which the classic quartet collectively gave birth to *A Love Supreme* in the recording session.⁵⁴ The construction of a binary opposition of composition versus improvisation, shared by both narratives, is by no means appropriate for jazz in the 1960s.⁵⁵ What is of interest here is the question if and how music manuscripts may have been used in the three performances of *A Love Supreme*; the recording sessions on 9 and 10 December 1964 and the only live performance of the entire work on 26 July 1965.⁵⁶

There is no photographic documentation of the recording session on 9 December 1964. Evidence for the question of the presence of manuscripts in the studio comes from an interview conducted by Ashley Kahn with pianist McCoy Tyner, but Tyner's statements do not align with the extant manuscripts. On the one hand, he states that the whole session was 'an on-the-spot improvisation, honestly approached music',⁵⁷ and that the instructions for Elvin Jones and Jimmy Garrison had been given orally.⁵⁸ But a possible explanation for the different keys occurring in Part I in the manuscript (E $\flat$ minor) and the recording (F minor) is that the bassline Tyner had to play in the first part had been presented to Garrison with the help of a manuscript. In this manuscript, the *A Love Supreme* motif would have been transposed for tenor saxophone and notated in treble clef (as seen on fol. I^r of the music manuscript – not at the

⁵⁴ See Whyton 2013, 21–28.

⁵⁵ See Whyton 2013, 39–40.

⁵⁶ McCoy Tyner reports – in an interview with Ashley Kahn – that the quartet 'had played some of the music in the clubs before we recorded it', Kahn 2020, 139. There is a bootleg recording of the third part made by Frank Tiberi on 18 September 1964, in Pep's Musical Bar in Philadelphia; see Kahn 2020, 157–158.

⁵⁷ Kahn 2020, 138.

⁵⁸ See Kahn 2020, 138.

beginning of Part I but only later – so presumably not this manuscript). Garrison would have read and played it in exactly the key in which it had been notated if one does not take into account the transposition resulting when played by a tenor saxophone – in F minor, and the other musicians would have taken up this key. On the other hand, Tyner himself claims that when Coltrane provided him with a manuscript, ‘He’d write down the symbols to a set of very basic chords – B-flat, B-natural, E, just regular chords’.⁵⁹ If Coltrane in fact had written down some chords for Tyner intended to be played in *A Love Supreme*, he could not have copied them from the extant manuscripts, which do not show any chord progression resembling that mentioned by Tyner. Coltrane might have written these chords from memory but Tyner’s statement seems to have no connection at all with this work: Within *A Love Supreme*, the progression B $\flat$ -B-E does not occur, nor does Tyner play any ‘regular chords’ at the beginning but, rather, chords built on superimposed fourths.⁶⁰ This leads me to wonder if Tyner’s story about the manuscript dedicated to him is trustworthy. The subtext of his statement is more about who in the quartet was musically literate and his place in the hierarchy, and about the role of the leader as composer. In this narrative, the manuscript is the highest award which can be given from the leader to a member of his combo; no wonder that Tyner claims it for himself. Moreover, if Coltrane had only written ‘regular chords’ it would have been only Tyner creating the extraordinary harmonic texture.

The recording session on 10 December 1964 was documented by photographer Chuck Stewart. Some of the published pictures – which could only be taken as witnesses if it is to believe that they document the session and are not staged – show music manuscripts on music stands and in Coltrane’s hands, highlighting his role as a composer. It seems that Coltrane and Archie Shepp had two music stands in front of them – one photograph shows Coltrane pointing to Shepp’s part⁶¹ – but none of the musicians of the rhythm section had done so. Furthermore, there are pictures showing Coltrane close to a music stand, writing on a manuscript displayed on it,⁶² with a manuscript in his hands that he is showing Garrison. The latter manuscript is definitely not one of the extant manuscripts because, unlike them, it is in portrait format.⁶³ Judging from the

⁵⁹ Kahn 2020, 138.

⁶⁰ See Porter 1985, 606–607.

⁶¹ The photographs are reproduced in Kahn 2020, 191 and 204.

⁶² See Kahn 2020, 198–199. This manuscript was certainly not intended for Tyner, as Kahn suggests, because Davis and Garrison are looking at the manuscript.

⁶³ See Kahn 2020, 140.

published photos, all the manuscripts on the music stands are in landscape format, as are the extant music manuscripts. But it is unlikely that these are the ones displayed on the music stands. For example, on fol. II' Coltrane sketched the beginning of the interaction between the two saxophones at the end of Part I. The basic idea of this sketch is a strict canon between the two voices, both repeating the *A Love Supreme* motif in the first instance a third lower, the second voice starting with a distance of two crotchets. Neither the strict canon, nor the sequence a third lower have been realised in any of the extant takes. One could imagine that Coltrane had sketched a different and more elaborate version of the interaction of the two 'horns' (which he only adumbrated on fol. II') in a manuscript no longer extant. But the remaining tapes from the recording session do not prove this hypothesis, because all the takes of this passage are different. In the four extant complete takes of Part I, the idea of the imitative treatment of the *A Love Supreme* motif has been realised three times (takes 1, 4, and 6 – the exception is take 2⁶⁴), but always in different ways, so it is unlikely that there was an entirely notated version of the antiphonal, call-and-response-like interaction of the two saxophones.

A Love Supreme as an entire work (sometimes called a suite) was performed only once by Coltrane and his quartet in concert, on 26 July 1965 in Antibes. The photographs documenting this concert do not show music stands in front of the musicians,⁶⁵ thus no manuscripts were used in the performance. Evidence for the reinvention of *A Love Supreme* as a memorized work can be found throughout the performance.⁶⁶ To give just one example: after the introduction, it is not the bass player, but Coltrane who first intones the *A Love Supreme* motif, feeding Jimmy Garrison his part in order to remind him of what had been introduced to him in the studio recording session the year before. Garrison has no opportunity to begin playing the motif himself and when he tries to join the group he fails initially, entering on a downbeat rather than an upbeat.

4 Psalm: Reading out the prayer manuscript

There is no doubt that Coltrane's plan to recite his *A Love Supreme* prayer instrumentally in the fourth part was realised in the recording session on

⁶⁴ See the six takes in Coltrane 2015, disc 2, tracks 6, 7, 9, and 11.

⁶⁵ See the photo in Whyton 2016, 209.

⁶⁶ Coltrane 2015, disc 3.

9 December 1964. Lewis Porter gives a detailed analysis of the interrelation between the prayer and the music.⁶⁷ But Porter does not mention any manuscripts because they only came to light twenty years after the publication of his article. Moreover, Porter does not consider the reference point of Coltrane's performance, the question of whether he remembered the prayer by heart or read it. Porter states that 'the concert version of "Psalm" differs significantly [...] because it does not follow the poem at all.'⁶⁸ Taking into account the fact that Coltrane and his musicians did not use any manuscripts in this live performance in Antibes, it is plausible that Coltrane did not play the recorded studio solo based on the memorized prayer,⁶⁹ because he could have done the same in the concert successfully, too. But if there was a manuscript in the recording session, which one was it? While Porter states that there are 'words apparently omitted from the recording',⁷⁰ it is more likely that the manuscript Coltrane used had readings that differed from the liner notes given in the album. But it is clear that Coltrane did not read from any of the extant manuscripts. Comparing Porter's transcription of lines 57–62⁷¹ to the prayer manuscript, it becomes clear that the passage 'It's true. Blessed be his name' is missing in the prayer manuscript,⁷² but was played by Coltrane. In the music manuscript not only this passage but also the following, 'Thank you God', do not appear. The same is true for line 22, from which 'Thank you God' is missing in both the prayer manuscript and the music manuscript, but was played by Coltrane.⁷³ So Coltrane might have had a manuscript at hand which was closer to the readings in the liner notes than to those in the prayer manuscript. On the other hand, lines 9 and 10 in the liner notes are played in reverse order in the performance,⁷⁴ which is the order in which they occur in the prayer manuscript.

These facts suggest that, in contrast to the studio session, in concert, Coltrane neither had a manuscript of the prayer at hand nor had memorized it. What he plays in the fourth part is an evocation of a recitation of an unspecified text.⁷⁵ We do not know if Coltrane had already decided to play *A Love Supreme*

⁶⁷ See Porter 1985, 613–619.

⁶⁸ Porter 1985, 619.

⁶⁹ As posited by Kahn 2020, xx.

⁷⁰ Porter 1985, 615.

⁷¹ See Porter 1985, 618.

⁷² On the differences between the prayer manuscript and the liner notes see also Jones 2011, 90–96.

⁷³ See Porter 1985, 614, and Coltrane c. 2000, 21.

⁷⁴ See Porter 1985, 614.

⁷⁵ See Porter 1985, 601.

in Antibes when the quartet embarked for Europe but it is doubtful, because he apparently did not take a manuscript of the prayer with him in order to recite from it. Or, to reframe the theory: If we reduce all performances of *A Love Supreme* to their lowest common denominator,⁷⁶ a literal musical recitation of the prayer as indicated in the music manuscript on fol. I' cannot be considered a mandatory element of the work.

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76 On 29 August 1973 – six years after Coltrane's death and shortly after the release of the album *Love Devotion Surrender* by Carlos Santana and John McLaughlin on 20 July 1973, which includes *A Love Supreme* (Part I) as the opening track – a 'sheet' of *A Love Supreme* was given to the United States Copyright Office obtaining copyright for *A Love Supreme* as number EU429308 <<https://lccn.loc.gov/2019562053>> (accessed on 18 March 2020), cf. *Catalog of Copyright Entries*, 2234. Unfortunately due to the closure of the Library of Congress, Washington, this manuscript is not accessible since March 2020.

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