

John coltrane essay



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This phrase, from the liner notes of “ My Favorite Things” clearly defines Coltrane’s life and his search for the incorporation of his spirituality with his music. John Coltrane was not only an essential contributor to jazz, but also music itself. John Coltrane died thirty-two years ago, on July 17, 1967, at the age of forty. In the years since, his influence has only grown, and the stellar avant-garde saxophonist has become a jazz legend of a stature shared only by Louis Armstrong and Charlie Parker. As an instrumentalist Coltrane was technically and imaginatively equal to both; as a composer he was superior, although he has not received the recognition he deserves for this aspect of his work. In composition he excelled in an astonishing number of forms blues, ballads, spirituals, rhapsodies, elegies, suites, and free-form and cross-cultural works.

The closest contemporary analogy to Coltrane’s relentless search for possibilities was the Beatles’ redefinition of rock from one album to the next. Yet the distance they traveled from conventional hard rock through sitars and Baroque obligatos to Sergeant Pepper psychedelia and the musical shards of Abbey Road seems short by comparison with Coltrane’s journey from hard-bop saxist to daring harmonic and modal improviser to dying prophet speaking in tongues. Asked by a Swedish disc jockey in 1960 if he was trying to “ play what you hear,” he said that he was working off set harmonic devices while experimenting with others of which he was not yet certain.

Although he was trying to “ get the one essential .

. . . the one single line,” he felt forced to play everything, for he was unable to “work what I know down into a more lyrical line” that would be “easily understood.” Coltrane never found the one line.

Nor was he ever to achieve the “more beautiful . . . more lyrical” sound he aspired to. He complicated rather than simplified his art, making it more visceral, raw, and wild. And even to his greatest fans it was anything but easily understood.

In this failure, however, Coltrane contributed far more than he could have in success, for above all, his legacy to his followers is the abiding sense of search, of the musical quest as its own fulfillment. John William Coltrane was born September 23, 1926 in Hamlet, North Carolina to John and Alice Coltrane. Shortly after, he moved to Haig Point, North Carolina to live with his mother’s father, the Reverend Walter Blaire. Walter Blaire would later on be a significant influence on Coltrane’s music and spirituality. Coltrane’s father, a tailor, served to be a source of Coltrane’s interest in music through his father’s ability to play the clarinet, violin, and various other instruments. Furthermore, Coltrane’s mother studied music.

Both of Coltrane’s grandfathers were ministers; and through their worship services, Coltrane began to build his roots. John’s first encounters with music were through his father who played various instruments such as the violin, clarinet and ukulele. Other early influences included the religious music and preaching at his grandfather’s community church. In 1938, his grandfather died and soon after, so did his father. At this time, Coltrane listened to the

radio, which provided him with music by artists that would later become influences for his own music.

These artists included Woody Herman, Lester Young, Johnny Hodges and Artie Shaw.

At the age of 15, Coltrane began playing and studying the E-flat alto horn, the clarinet, and the saxophone at William Penn High School Orchestra, while listening to such artists as Woody Herman, Lester Young, and Thelonious Monk. It was in high school when John had his first girlfriend. John's friend Franklin was interested in one girl, but John stole her away with his music playing. Her name was Dorthea Nelson.

John had many classes with her. He used to whistle phrases to her from his clarinet.

Of course, John got the girl. They were together for about a year until they broke up because she was moving away.

Later in 1943, Coltrane moved to Philadelphia and studied under Mike Guerra at the Granoff Studios and the Ornstein School of Music. Mr. Granoff spoke the following of Coltrane: " Very, very, few students . . .

could do improvisations as this young man did. From the very moment that he learned his instrument, he wanted to revolutionize it." While enrolled in school, Coltrane worked at the local sugar refinery to help pay for debts.

During the occurrence of World War II, Coltrane played with the US Navy Band; and afterwards in 1947, Coltrane returned to Philadelphia and began working around established musicians Jimmy Heath, Howard McGhee, Eddie

“Cleanhead” Vinson, and Joe Webb in local bars and clubs. That same year, Coltrane performed in a show with Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker. As a result of Coltrane’s impressive performance, he landed his first big gig with the Dizzy Gillespie band.

Despite his first big gig, Coltrane lived his next few years in depression, drugs, and alcohol; however, he gathered the strength to seek rehabilitation. He later converted to Islam and got his life together. In 1950-1951, he continued to work with Dizzy in Dizzys sextet.

Life was back to normal for Coltrane, but Coltrane reverted back to using drugs and eventually lost his job. He then joined the Earl Bostic Band and later began to work with Johnny Hodges, Jimmy Smith, and Bud Powell. Recognizing his addiction, Hodges recommended that Coltrane get professional guidance.

The marriage of Coltrane in 1955 to Naima provided a special someone in his life. He came to wide notice in 1955 in the now legendary Miles Davis Quintet and was immediately acknowledged as an original or an oddity. Critics who in Coltrane’s last years all but waved banners to show their devotion to him were among those casting stones for much of his career. At first many urged Davis to fire the weird tenor, but when, in April of 1957, after a year and a half with the quintet, Coltrane left or was dropped (the truth remains unclear), the reason seems to have been indulgence not in stylistic extremism but in heroin and alcohol, problems he conquered that same year. The controversy had to do not only with his harmonic experimentation, on which Dexter Gordon was initially the chief influence,

but with the speed (to some, purely chaotic) of his playing and the jaggedness (to some, unmusical) of his phrasing. All three characteristics were intensified in 1957 during several months with Thelonious Monk at the Five Spot, after which he rejoined Davis, who was now experimenting with sparser chord changes, and became fully involved in what Ira Gitler, in *Down Beat*, called the “sheets of sound” approach.

This technique of runs so rapid as to make the notes virtually indistinguishable seems itself to have been a by-product of Coltrane’s harmonic exploration.

Coltrane spoke of playing the same chord three or four different ways within a measure or overlapping chords before the change, advancing further the investigation of upper harmonic intervals begun by Charlie Parker and the boppers. Attempting to articulate so many harmonic variants before the change, Coltrane was necessarily led to preternatural velocity and occasionally to asymmetrical subdivision of the beat. Despite Davis’s suggestion that Coltrane could trim his twenty-seven or twenty-eight choruses if he tried taking the saxophone out of his mouth, Coltrane’s attempt “to explore all the avenues” made him the perfect stylistic complement to Davis, with his cooler style, which featured sustained blue notes and brief cascades of sixteenths almost willfully retreating into silence, and also Monk, with his spare and unpredictable chords and clusters.

Davis, characteristically, paid the tersest homage, when, on being told that his music was so complex that it required five saxophonists, he replied that he’d once had Coltrane. In the late fifties Coltrane released a number of

sessions for Prestige (and, more notably, Blue Train and Giant Steps for Blue Note and Atlantic respectively) in which he was the nominal bandleader. The only album John Coltrane recorded for Blue Note as a leader turned out to be one of his most rewarding statements, not to mention a highlight of Blue Note's recording history. Coltrane didn't stay in pure "hard bop" territory very long. He would soon after return to Miles Davis' group to pursue modal-based jazz and continue on to explore Eastern motifs and free jazz. At the time of this recording, he was working in Thelonious Monk's legendary Five Spot quartet.

The frontline of Coltrane, trumpeter Lee Morgan, and trombonist Curtis Fuller is a hard bop fan's dream. Pianist Kenny Drew supplies the blues and funk elements while Davis stalwarts Paul Chambers and Philly Joe Jones anchor the rhythm section. The opening blues of the title track shows just how far Coltrane had come since he began his first stint with Miles two years earlier.

Even the simplest of blues structures provided enough room for Coltrane's harmonic curiosity, his searing emotional flurries, and his "sheets of sound" approach.

The buoyant original "Moment's Notice" offers especially exuberant solos from all three hornmen plus a terrific arco (bowed) solo from Chambers. The fast blues "Locomotion" displays the leader's ability to mix jarring, seemingly off-key moans into a coherent blues progression. You can hear the difference between Coltrane's ideas and the equally compelling but less adventurous solos from Morgan and Fuller. Despite all of the sharp, piercing tones elsewhere, Coltrane proves he can handle a ballad ("I'm Old

Fashioned”) with the utmost tenderness. Blue Train represents the best opportunity to hear Coltrane in a true, blowing-session context.

While he reaches the heights of hard bop, you can also sense that he was eager to expand beyond its limitations. He would certainly do so in the near future. It was really after leaving Davis for the second time, in 1960, shortly after a European tour, that he came into his own as a creative as well as an interpretive force. His first recording session as leader after the break, on October 21, 1960, produced “ My Favorite Things,” an astonishing fourteen-minute reinterpretation, or overhaul, of the saccharine show tune, which thrilled jazz fans with its Oriental modalism and Atlantic executives with its unexpected commercial success.

In it Coltrane revived the straight soprano sax (whose only previous master in jazz had been Sidney Bechet), and in so doing led a generation of young musicians, from Wayne Shorter to Keith Jarrett to Jon Gibson, to explore the instrument. The work remained Coltrane’s signature piece until his death (of liver disease) despite bizarre stylistic metamorphoses in the next five and a half years.

Coltrane signed with Impulse Records in April of 1961 and the next month began rehearsing and playing the long studio sessions for *Africa/Brass*, a large-band experiment with arrangements by his close friend Eric Dolphy. This was in part an extension of the modal experimentation in which he had been involved with Davis in the late fifties, notably on the landmark *Kind of Blue*. The modal style replaced chordal progressions as the basis for

improvisation, with a slower harmonic rhythm and patterns of intervals corresponding only vaguely to traditional major and minor scales.

The modal approach proved to be the modulation from bop to free jazz, as is clear in Coltrane's revolutionary use of a single mode throughout "Africa," the piece that takes up all of side one of the album. Just as his prolonged modal solos were emulated by rock guitarists (the Grateful Dead, the Byrds of "Eight Miles High," the unlamented Iron Butterfly, and others), so the astonishing variety Coltrane superimposed on that single F was, according to the composer Steve Reich, a significant, if ostensibly an unlikely, influence on the development of minimalism. The originator of minimalism, La Monte Young, acknowledges the influence of Coltrane's "My Favorite Things" on his use of rapid permutations and combinations of pitches on soprano sax to simulate chords as sustained tones. From the start, and especially from the opening notes of Coltrane's solo, which bursts forth like a tribal summons, "Africa" is the aural equivalent of a journey upriver. The elemental force of this polyrhythmic modalism was unknown in the popular music that came before it.

Coltrane experimented with two bassists – a hint of wilder things to come, as he sought progressively to submerge himself in rhythm. He was later to employ congas, bata, various other Latin and African percussion instruments, and, incredibly, two drummers – incredibly insofar as Coltrane already had, in Elvin Jones, the most overpowering drummer in jazz. The addition of Rashied Ali to the drum corps, in November of 1965, made for a short-lived collaboration or, rather, competition between Jones and Ali; a disgruntled Jones left the Coltrane band in March of 1966 to join Duke Ellington's. But it

was the culmination of Coltrane's search for the rhythmic equivalent of the oceanic feeling of visionary experience.

Having employed the gifted accompanists McCoy Tyner and Jimmy Garrison during the years of the "classic quartet" (late 1961 to mid-1965), Coltrane tended to subordinate them, preferring that his accompanists play spare wide-interval chords and a solid rather than showy bass, which would permit him a maximum of flexibility as a soloist.

Coltrane would often take long solos accompanied only by his drummer, and in his penultimate recording session, which produced the posthumous *Interstellar Space*, he is supported only by Ali. Solo sax against drums (against may be all too accurate a word to describe Coltrane's concert duets with the almost maniacal Jones) was Coltrane's conception of naked music, the lone voice crying not in the wilderness but from some primordial chaos. His music evokes not only the jungle but all that existed before the jungle. Coltrane's spiritual concerns led him to a study of Indian music, some elements of which are present in the album *Africa/Brass* and more of which are in the cut from the album *Impressions* titled "India," which was recorded in November of 1961.

The same month saw the birth of "Spiritual," featuring exotic and otherworldly solos by Coltrane on soprano sax and Dolphy on bass clarinet. Recorded at the Village Vanguard, the piece made clear, if any doubts remained, that Coltrane was attempting to raise jazz from the saloons to the heavens. No jazzman had attempted so overtly to offer his work as a form of religious expression. If Ornette Coleman was, as some have argued, the

seminal stylistic force in sixties avant-garde jazz, Coltrane's Eastern imports were the main influence on the East-West "fusion" in the jazz and rock of the late sixties and afterward.

In his use of jazz as prayer and meditation Coltrane was beyond all doubt the principal spiritual force in music.

This is further evident in "Alabama," a riveting elegy for the victims of the infamous Sunday-morning church bombing in Birmingham in 1963. Here, as in the early version of his most famous ballad, "Naima," Coltrane is as spare in phrasing as he is bleak in tone. That tone, criticized by many as hard-edged and emotionally impoverished, is inseparable from Coltrane's achievement, conveying as it does a sense of absolute purity through the abnegation of sentimentality. Sonny Rollins, the contemporary tenor most admired by Coltrane, always had a richer tone, and Coltrane himself said of the mellifluous Stan Getz, "Let's face it we'd all sound like that if we could." Despite these frequent and generous tributes, Coltrane's aim was different, as is clear in his revival of the soprano sax.

Rather than lushness he sought clarity and incisiveness. As with pre-nineteenth-century string players, the rare vibrato was dramatic ornamentation. Coltrane's religious dedication, which as much as his music made him a role model, especially but by no means exclusively among young blacks, is clearest of all in the album titled *A Love Supreme*, recorded in late 1964 with Tyner, Jones, and Garrison. In 1964, John William Coltrane revealed to the world his concept of spirituality in the form of what would soon be a world-renowned and multi-award-winning suite, "A Love Supreme.

” Coltrane’s concept fused music and religion. It entailed the expression of music as a form of praise to God. Also, Coltrane borrowed musical and religious techniques from the Hindu and West African traditions. “ A Love Supreme” (music and text) was the result of a seven- year development in which Coltrane sought a closer relationship with God. Part of this closer relationship involved Coltrane’s understanding of himself as a child of God.

Though Coltrane was raised in a household dominated by Christianity, and he professed to be a Christian for the majority of his life, he became dissatisfied with his personal relationship with God and felt that it could and should be intensified. Not for the faint of heart, Coltrane’s master work offers a complete synthesis of his musical ability and his religious belief. Building on a modal-jazz foundation, he adds elements of Eastern music and free jazz while his tenor searches and soars and screams and yelps and slithers. His horn is merely a conduit: The music comes directly from his heart and soul, a stunning example of music as pure emotion.

He unleashes torrents of notes, intense and pained at times, celebratory and defiant at others. His tenor knows no limits, yet never seems too far removed from Earth. The droning “ Acknowledgment” opens the four-part suite and is followed by “ Resolution.” Despite its name, “ Resolution” begins with a tense melody from Coltrane before McCoy Tyner’s brilliant piano solo, which is filled with passionate harmonic invention and breathtaking right-hand flurries.

Drummer Elvin Jones supplies the fuel for the excursion: His fiery and urgent polyrhythms inspire the leader to great heights. Following Tyner, Coltrane

returns with angular, jagged statements featuring short bursts, squeals, and moans that bristle with energy. “Pursuance” opens with a Jones solo before Tyner borrows from Coltrane’s frenzied attack. Tyner’s left pounds out a series of dramatic, seemingly unrelated chords while his right scurries across the keys. Coltrane then sprays notes like a machine gun, firing off in a million directions.

Somehow, it never sounds frivolous—each squawk has passion, each note has meaning. Finally, on the closing “Psalm,” he seems to have found what he’s been searching for.

“Psalm” is the uneasy calm after the storm, a tenuous peace, but peace nonetheless. The album appeared in early 1965 to great popular and critical acclaim and remains generally acknowledged as Coltrane’s masterpiece.

In a sense, though, it is stylistically as much a summation as a new direction, for its modalism and incantatory style recall “Spiritual,” “India,” and the world-weary lyricism of his preceding and still underrated album, *Crescent*. Within months, Coltrane was to shift his emphasis from incantation to the freer-form glossolalia of his last period—a transition evident in a European concert performance of *A Love Supreme* in mid-1965. *Meditations*, recorded a year after *A Love Supreme*, is the finest creation of the late Coltrane, and possibly of any Coltrane. It may never be as accessible as *A Love Supreme*, but it is the more revolutionary and compelling work. While some of the creations of Coltrane’s last two years are all but amorphous, *Meditations* succeeds not only for the transcendental force it shares with *A Love Supreme* but by virtue of the contrasts among the shamanistic frenzy of

Coltrane and fellow tenor Pharoah Sanders in the opening movement “The Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost” and elsewhere, the sense of stoic resignation and perseverance in the solos of Garrison and Tyner, and the repeated, spiraling phrases of yearning in Coltrane’s “Love” and the concluding “Serenity.” This unity, encompassing radical stylistic and affective diversity, is the unique feature of *Meditations*, even in relation to its Ur-version for quartet, which has an additional and quite obtrusive movement.

Nothing that came after *Meditations* approached it in structural complexity and subtlety. These may be the missing ingredients in the music of Coltrane’s final period.

The drummer Elvin Jones said, “Only poets can understand it,” though maybe only mystics could, for until his final album Coltrane seemingly forsook lyricism for an unfettered quest for ecstasy. The results remain virtually indescribable, and they forestall criticism with the furious directness of their energy. Yet, their effect depends more on the abandonment of rationality, which most listeners achieve only intermittently if at all. In fact, it may be the listener himself who is abandoned, for it seems clear that Coltrane is no longer primarily concerned with a human audience.

His final recording of “My Favorite Things” and “Naima,” at the Village Vanguard in 1966, uses the musical texts as springboards to visionary rhapsody almost, in fact, as pretexts. All songs become virtually interchangeable, and there is really no point any longer in requests. The only favorite thing he is playing about now is salvation. Coltrane’s second wife,

Alice, who had by then replaced Tyner as the group's pianist, has remarked, "Some of his latest works aren't musical compositions." This may be their glory and their limitation, the latter progressively more evident in the uninspired emulation by the so-called "Coltrane machines" who followed the last footsteps of the master, and also in the current dismissal of free jazz as a dead end by both jazz mainstreamers and the experimental composer Anthony Davis.

The last album that Coltrane recorded was *Expression*, in February and March of 1967.

The album has an aura of twilight, of limbo, particularly in the piece "To Be," in which Coltrane and Sanders play spectral flute and piccolo respectively. The sixteen ametrical minutes of "To Be," which could readily have added to its title the second part of Hamlet's question, are as eerie as any in music. The most striking characteristic of the album is its sense of consummation, which is clear in the abandonment of developmental structure and often bar divisions, and in the phantasmal rather than propulsive lines that pervade the work. There had always been in Coltrane a profound tension between the pure virtuosity of his elongated phrases and the high sustained cries or eloquent rests that followed. The cries, wails, and shrieks remain in *Expression* but they are subsumed by the hard-won simplicity that predominates in the album the lyricism not of "the one essential" line he had sought seven years earlier and never found but one born of courageous resignation.

Pater said that all art aspires to the condition of music. Coltrane seems to suggest here that music in turn aspires to the condition of silence. Those who criticize Coltrane's virtuosic profusion are of the same party as those who found Van Gogh's canvases "too full of paint" a criticism Henry Miller once compared to the dismissal of a mystic as "too full of God."

In Coltrane, sound often discordant, chaotic, almost unbearable—became the spiritual form of the man, an identification perhaps possible only with a wind instrument, with which the player is of necessity fused more intimately than with strings or percussion. This physical intimacy was all the more intense for his characteristically tight embouchure, the preternatural duration and complexity of his phrases, and his increasing use of overblowing techniques.

The whole spectrum of Coltrane's music the world-weary melancholy and transcendental yearning that ultimately recall Bach more than Parker, the jungle calls and glossolalic shrieks, the whirlwind runs and spare elegies for murdered children and a murderous planet is at root merely a suffering man's breath. The quality of that music reminds us that the root of the word inspiration is "breathing upon." There are several things that are worth noting about John Coltrane. One of them being his nickname "Train". There are many explanations how it came into life, however, it has never been determined how exactly he got his nickname. It is known that Trane was given his nickname through an unknown person Many people have analyzed his nickname and they find it very fitting.

Here's how the metaphor of a train fits his life. He was a man in control of himself (similar to the conductor of a train). He was always conscious of

where came his roots or his heritage (a train has a starting point and a destination). He was self-disciplined and built his power and strength step by step (similar to how a train's speed increases as it moves along over time). He gradually increased his speed through enhancing his thoughts and his music.

Even though there were some rough spots along the way, he made it safely to his destination and in good condition (sometimes the train ride is little bumpy or we get lost along the way, but in the end we get there safe and sound).

Many people question whether it is true that Coltrane had problems with teeth. It is true. John's teeth gave him a lot of trouble. His teeth problems came from eating too much sweet foods. He hated dentists, and he never went to them. There was one time he did go see a dentist.

It took almost everyone in the office to hold him down when the drill got near. The down side was that his teeth problems made it hard for him to play some nights. Playing an instrument with bad teeth is a feat within itself. Instead of going to a dentist like he should have, John would drink or use drugs to dull the pain down. Coltrane's contribution to Jazz cannot be described briefly. John Coltrane was unique in the way he approached music, and he broke many musical barriers during his lifetime.

Coltrane's influence continues through today. John Coltrane's contribution to jazz was enormous, and each new generation of musicians will greatly be affected by what Coltrane and other jazz musicians have done so that they too may have an impact on jazz history. Jazz is a music of continuity, not

repetition. There is continuity and progress. In an interview with Nat Hentoff, Coltrane stated the following: “ There is never any end . .

. . There are always new sounds to imagine, new feeling to get at. And always there is the need to keep purifying these feelings and sounds so that we can really see what we’ve discovered in its pure state.

So that we can see more and more clearly what we are. In that way, we can give to those who listen the essence, the best of what we are.” The continuity of Coltrane’s influence has been carried into present day. Coltrane’s works have been increasingly used by acclaimed directors. His works can be heard in Spike Lee’s “ Mo’ Better Blues” and Oliver Stone’s “ The Doors.

” This renewed interest can be attributed to the social and aesthetic concerns addressed by Coltrane and his music. In 1986, to honor the immense impact of Coltrane in both jazz and America, the Philadelphia Historic Commission designated Coltrane’s home on 33rd Street a historic building and a marker was erected on July 17, 1990 by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission. Later in 1984, seven Philadelphia women formed the John W. Coltrane Cultural Society and incorporation took place in 1985.

The society’s major goals are the following: To develop and present workshops and other activities that will help young children achieve self-esteem and experience self-expression through the arts and culture. To make the cultural contributions of African Americans more visible and

accessible to Philadelphia communities, especially through the techniques of storytelling and music.

To inspire the preservation and study of jazz and its origins. To keep alive the memory of the life and works of John W.

Coltrane The society also conducts lectures about John W. Coltrane and his life. Talks and video presentations on the life and works of Coltrane are given in the Coltrane home as well as in other facilities. Tours are conducted in the home which displays some memorabilia of the musician. Then on September 18, 1995, the United States Post Office issued a stamp bearing the picture of John Coltrane. And now more than 40 years later, labels have created the start of the sax giant's career, with boxed sets, rare tapes and historic material, so that his memory and music will still live.

Some more interesting facts from the life of John Coltrane, that are not very well known to general public, are worth, attention, too. Raisins and butter-rum lifesavers had replaced more insidious chemicals by the time he came into his own with Miles; and you could still hear his debt to Dexter Gordon between what came to be called his "sheets of sound." In 1960, an interviewer for Swedish radio asked what he thought about critics calling his music "aggressive." The answer came in his gentle voice: "Maybe it sounds angry because I'm trying to play so many things at one time.

You see, I have a whole bag of things I'm trying to acclimate my ear to hear. I'm not familiar enough with them to play one single line so I try them all. I'm trying to work through to the essential." Whitney Balliet wrote in The New Yorker: "People said they heard the dark nights of the Negro in Coltrane's

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wildest music, but what they really heard was a heroic and unique lyrical voice at the mercy of its own power.

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His explosive combination of spiritual energy and intellectual prowess went beyond success and even beyond music into the metaphysical. He studied Eastern religions, Islam, the Torah. He read books about mathematics, personal improvement, van Gogh, African history and yoga. His record collection included African, early English, Greek and Indian music.

Adding seven bars in E minor and 23 in E major to “ My Favorite Things” and playing it for 45 minutes made it sound more like a raga than a Rodgers and Hammerstein waltz. (This was several years before the Beatles went Indian on “ Norwegian Wood.”) He named one of his children Ravi. Improvisation was his vehicle for a search for self-knowledge, unity and the holy spirit. It led him to the Hindu concept of Om, which he defined as “ the first vibration – that sound, that spirit which sets everything else into being.

” The longer he played, the more you wanted to hear.

Once after a 30-minute solo accompanied by the surging time of Elvin Jones, McCoy Tyner’s insistent chords and Jimmy Garrison’s muscular bass, Coltrane was driven to fall on his knees by the intensity of it all. A large baldheaded man wearing only a loin cloth ran up to the stage, raised his arms and shouted: “ Col-trane!” The audience rose and shouted with him “ Col-trane! Col-trane!” People kissed his hand as he walked out. He disliked being restricted by any sort of rules whatsoever. He told Wayne Shorter that

he was trying to learn how to start in the middle of a sentence and move in both directions at the same time.

About Schoenberg's 12-note system, he said: "Damn the rules. It's the feeling that counts. You play all 12 notes anyway." He had not worn underwear since he was 18, and he once wore a pair of stylish but uncomfortable new shoes only long enough to show to his mother. ("Damn the rules.") Musicians called him "an angel" and "a saint."

"Freddie Hubbard said he felt "kind" when he was around him.

The New York Daily News said he had "the future coming out of his horn." He enjoyed putting around the 12-room house he bought in Huntington, New York in 1965. (The "constant vibration" in the ground in Manhattan had bothered him.) "In music it's the little things that count," he said. "Like the way you build a house.

You get all the little important things together and the whole thing will stand up." When not working he went to bed before 11 and awoke early to take care of his garden. He heard music in his dreams. Shopping with his wife, Alice, he would practice his flute in the supermarket. By this time, he was grossing \$200,000 a year, a lot of money in the sixties.

His houses in Philadelphia and New York were owned by Coltrane Realty. He drove a Jaguar. But he was not content with obvious rewards, he moved into a new "joke" phase with free-form musicians like Pharoah Sanders, Rashid Ali, Eric Dolphy and his wife Alice, a pianist. The audience requested "

Summertime” and “ But Not For Me,” old friends begged him to bring his music back inside.

In 1966, toward the end of a three-hour “ tune,” Jimmy Garrison, the only member of the original quartet left, picked up his bass and walked off the stage. “ You know, that’s going to cost you a hundred dollars,” Coltrane told him later. Garrison said it didn’t matter because he could not figure out what was going on and wanted to leave anyway. “ James, I understand,” Coltrane said. “ It’s difficult for me too. But I can’t do any more than what I’m doing.

“ John William Coltrane was a very hard working musician. He would practice ten to twelve hours a day, besides a number of performances that included a tour of Japan during the summer. It was just after returning from Japan that he died prematurely on July 17, 1967. The cause of death was liver cancer but it was probably a combination of overworking and alcohol. Coltrane remains the most influential jazz musician of the past 40 years. His expeditions on tenor saxophone stand as testament to his unbridled emotion and curiosity.

The country has not produced a greater musician.