

connotations, the announcements sometimes serve to set up the punchline of a joke (12).

## 5.4 Prototypical Contents and Musicians

Of course, there is no definitive formula for jazz performances on TikTok, although some typical patterns can be identified based on corpus analysis. Particularly popular are versions of jazz standards from the Great American Songbook repertoire, first recorded between the 1930s and 1950s and largely written by *white*, male American songwriters. On TikTok, these songs are usually sung and played by relatively young *white* women in their early twenties, although there are more male musicians in the defined top one hundred. Musicians tend to perform in a domestic setting, filming themselves in selfie mode, and vocal performances are more popular than instrumental music. Almost all musicians sing songs in English, which is obviously their native language. Text layers are regularly used, while verbal announcements are rather atypical, as long as the musical performance and not the humorous connotation is in the foreground.

According to the corpus analysis, the following musicians can be described as prototypical for jazz on TikTok, as they are represented several times in the top one hundred, singing comparatively old jazz standards, and having at least a six-digit number of followers, i.e. a comparatively large reach: Ricky Rosen (@rickyrosen), Stacey Ryan (@staceyryanmusic), Laufey (@laufey), Rachel Chiu (@rachelchiu1), Ebony Loren (@ebonylorenmusic), Sam Ambers (@sam\_ambers), Stella Cole (@stellakcole) and Erny Nunez (@young\_crooner). If we take a closer look at their profile pages, it becomes evident that the focus on singing jazz standards from the Great American Songbook repertoire dating from the early twentieth century to the 1950s is a defining factor for the style of their performances on TikTok. For example, almost all of them have uploaded their own version (sometimes even several versions) of the two songs that, according to the corpus analysis, are the most popular: “Fly Me to the Moon” (1954) and “It’s Been a Long, Long Time” (1945). That is to say, the jazz musicians who are the most popular on TikTok also perform the songs that enjoy the greatest popularity on the platform. This is not only true for the two songs mentioned above, but also for “La Vie en Rose” (1947) and “L-O-V-E” (1964), for example. This gives the impression that popularity on TikTok also depends, at least to some extent, on the choice of a specific musical repertoire.

The specific facet of jazz represented by the aforementioned songs is not directly related to the canonized jazz repertoire or to musicians that have typically been presented as the standard for jazz in journalism, academia, and music documentaries for decades. The music of so-called “jazz icons” (Whyton 2010) such as Charlie Parker, Miles Davis and John Coltrane is completely absent. Songs such as “La Vie en Rose,” a signature tune of the chanson singer Édith Piaf, and “L-O-V-E,” composed by Bert Kaempfert and Milt Gabler, would probably not be described or recognized as jazz by many jazz fans and musicians. However, in the context of a short-form video platform that is highly interactive and encourages imitation, it is evident that such songs will gain popularity. It can be reasonably assumed that the majority of people would consider these songs to be more catchy, more singable, and more accessible than the music of jazz icons. It is likely that such songs are more conducive to attracting attention on TikTok than the virtuoso improvisations and harmonically complex compositions that are typically highly valued in jazz circles. These compositions often span several minutes and lack particularly catchy melodies. It can thus be posited that the functional logic or affordances of the platform exert a considerable influence on musicians’ selection of musical repertoire.

Some of the most prominent jazz musicians on TikTok are relatively young *white* women who conform to conventional standards of beauty. While they occasionally perform solo on guitar or piano, it can be assumed that the majority of them are perceived as singers. The results of the corpus analysis indicate that jazz instrumentalists are typically less prominent on TikTok. It is unsurprising that stereotypes related to gender and *race* also play a significant role on TikTok, as digital platforms are suspected of perpetuating certain cultural hegemonies (see chapter 3.3). Therefore, it seems that not only the selection of a highly specific repertoire, but also a particular appearance and physiognomy is of paramount importance for success on TikTok.

The analysis of the corpus reveals a striking homogeneity in the representation of jazz on TikTok. It is notable that certain canonized aspects of jazz are also prominently represented on the platform. Most notably, this concerns a certain North American centrality typical of jazz discourses, largely due to the dominance of the Great American Songbook repertoire. Nevertheless, this may not be regarded as the definitive measure of jazz in academic circles. Concurrently, young female vocalists appear to be acquiring a notable degree of visibility, despite the fact that this group of musicians is frequently excluded from conventional jazz historical narratives. It would seem that a tension between the perpetuation and renegotiation of jazz-specific conventions and stereo-

types is arising in the jazz popularity peaks on TikTok. In order to examine and contextualize these findings in greater depth, further qualitative empirical steps are necessary.

## 5.5 Interviews and Conversational Analysis

The corpus analysis facilitated the identification of the specific types of jazz-related content that are particularly popular on TikTok. However, the question of why this content is so successful on the platform remains unanswered. As outlined in chapter 3.7, qualitative research on the production logics of successful TikTok creators represents a suitable approach to gaining a deeper understanding of the platform-specific processes of popularization. In light of the secrecy that pervades platform companies and their sporadic bans on research projects that delve into specific platform logics (see Eriksson et al., 2019), it is logical to conclude that researchers cannot expect to acquire direct insights into the operational mechanics of algorithmic systems or the mechanisms through which specific platforms gain traction. One fruitful avenue of inquiry is to engage in close discourse with content creators who have achieved notable success on TikTok over an extended period. It would seem reasonable to suggest that such cultural workers have persistently and assiduously grappled with the logics of the platforms, amassed a portfolio of viral videos, and formulated well-defined notions about the logics of popularization in the context of platforms, shaped by their direct experience. Consequently, they possess a unique blend of specialized knowledge and experience that is typically beyond the reach of outsiders, including researchers.

For this reason, interviews were conducted with jazz musicians who have achieved notable success on TikTok. Subsequent to the corpus analysis, and in light of prior research on TikTok cultures, a number of specific inquiries emerged that were explored during the interviews. The following questions are of paramount importance to the research project: What are the key strategies for achieving and maintaining success in the realm of jazz on TikTok? How can jazz be effectively conveyed within the confines of a short-form video format? Which specific jazz repertoires and musical styles are particularly well-suited or ill-suited for presentation on TikTok? How should jazz musicians portray themselves on TikTok? Are there different requirements for female and male musicians, or for *white* creators and BIPOC? Additionally, it would be enlightening to understand the perspectives of musicians regarding the functioning