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Master's recital in jazz pedagogy: A demonstration of proficiency on rhythm section instruments, compositions, and arrangements by Sam Stranz

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MASTER'S RECITAL IN JAZZ PEDAGOGY:
A DEMONSTRATION OF PROFICIENCY ON
RHYTHM SECTION INSTRUMENTS,
COMPOSITIONS, AND ARRANGEMENTS BY SAM STRANZ

An Abstract of a Recital
Submitted
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements of the Degree
Master of Music in Jazz Pedagogy

Sam Stranz
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May 2017

APPROVAL PAGE

This Recital Abstract by: Sam Stranz

Entitled: Master's Recital in Jazz Pedagogy: A Demonstration of Proficiency on Rhythm Section Instruments, Compositions, and Arrangements By Sam Stranz

Has been approved as meeting the thesis requirement for the

Degree of Master of Music Jazz Pedagogy

Date

Christopher Merz, Chair, Thesis Committee

Date

Dr. Anthony Williams, Thesis Committee Member

Date

Dr. Jonathan Schwabe, Thesis Committee Member

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Dr. Kavita R. Dhanwada, Dean, Graduate College

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OVERVIEW

The purpose of this recital is to demonstrate a practical competency in playing techniques on the rhythm section instruments piano, bass, and drum set in addition to presenting arrangements and compositions by the performer. The study of rhythm section instruments provides the solid understanding of jazz rhythm and harmony necessary for any jazz educator endeavoring to provide adequate instruction for his or her students. The study of jazz arranging and composition also aids in instructing students of jazz at any level of proficiency. Although not a complete representation of the studies required of a student studying jazz pedagogy, this recital will showcase many important elements of the educational experience.

PART ONE: PERFORMANCES ON PIANO, BASS, AND DRUM SET

The first half of the recital will consist of performances on piano, bass guitar, and drum set. Competency on rhythm section instruments aids in pedagogy, increasing the educator's ability to address the problems faced by their students in private lessons, small combos, or large ensembles. A working understanding of the roles played by each instrument in the overall texture of a big band or combo also gives the educator the ability to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the ensembles they encounter and give productive feedback.

The first selection on the recital is "Taking a Chance on Love," performed on bass guitar by the recitalist. The song was composed by Vernon Duke and published in 1940, first appearing in the musical *Cabin in the Sky*. The form of the song is AABA, totaling 32 measures in length. Each "A" section remains primarily in the tonic key (E-flat major, in the case of this performance), with a movement to the subdominant (A-flat major) on the bridge. The second half of the bridge, or "B" section, briefly tonicizes the key of G-flat major, a minor third above the tonic key. The arrangement for this recital includes an introduction and coda that expands upon the opening interval of the melody (major second) by using it over a sequence of chord changes that lead to the tonic key. The bass will provide the melody before receding into an accompanying role during the trumpet improvisation.

The role of the bass in the swing style is both rhythmic and harmonic. In a 4/4-swing feel, improvised bass lines must provide the roots of the chord progression each

time the chord changes. This is accomplished by connecting chord roots with quarter notes using diatonic, arpeggiated, and chromatic approaches.¹ Using a combination of these techniques results in an interesting and functional bass line that keeps the listener as well as the other members of the ensemble engaged. A sample bass line for the “A” section of this tune that uses all three types of approaches is illustrated below (Musical Example 1).

The musical example consists of two staves of music in B-flat major. The first staff is divided into three sections: 'Chromatic', 'Diatonic', and 'Arpeggiated'. Above the staff, the following chords are indicated: E^bMAJ⁷, C^{MIN}⁷, F^{MIN}⁷, C⁷, F^{MIN}⁷, B^b⁷, E^bMAJ⁷, and G⁷. The bass line uses quarter notes to connect the roots of these chords, demonstrating chromatic, diatonic, and arpeggiated approaches. The second staff continues the bass line with the following chords: C^{MIN}⁷, F⁷, F^{MIN}⁷, B^b⁷, and E^bMAJ⁷.

Musical Example 1

In addition to defining the harmonic progression, the bass also provides a rhythmic foundation for the ensemble. Emphasizing beats two and four in the swing style reinforces the rhythm of the hi-hat, creating a pocket for the rest of the players to rely on. For swing tunes such as “Taking a Chance on Love,” the sound of an acoustic bass is ideal, but can be emulated on the electric bass by pulling the strings closer to the neck rather than near the bridge, as the strings have less tension towards the middle of

¹ For more information on constructing walking bass lines, consult Steve Houghton’s *A Guide for the Modern Rhythm Section*.

the instrument. This technique adds depth to the sound of the electric bass and gives the performer a greater ability to accent beats two and four appropriately.

The second selection on the program is “Laura,” composed by David Raksin for the motion picture of the same name. Raksin supposedly wrote the melody after his wife left him and the song was only incorporated into the film after shooting had been completed.² Its haunting melody and interesting chord progression made it the perfect theme song for the *film noir*, and became instantly popular among both the general public and jazz musicians. Big bands such as those led by Duke Ellington, Glenn Miller, and Harry James recorded “Laura,” along with the small groups of Dave Brubeck, Gerry Mulligan, Charlie Parker, and others.³ The form of “Laura” consists of 32 measures organized into an ABAC structure. Although the song is in C major, it begins with a ii-V harmonic progression in G major and then proceeds to move down by whole step, moving through the keys of F major and E-flat major. The tonic key is only heard in the last eight measures of the song.

Although originally written as a ballad, “Laura” will be performed as a bossa nova for this recital. The bossa nova is a slow Brazilian style that is characterized by romantic melodies, soft dynamics, and a gentle rhythmic sway⁴, making it an ideal vehicle for a new spin on this old, lyrical melody. For this performance, the melody will be played by the bass followed by a trumpet improvisation.

² Ted Goia, *The Jazz Standards* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012). 228-230.

³ Ibid.

⁴ James Dreier, *Latin Jazz Guide* (Milwaukee: Hal Leonard, 2015). 106.

In the bossa nova style, the role of the bass is both harmonic and rhythmic. Roots are played on the downbeats as new chords are introduced, and fifths are often used to embellish chords lasting for longer periods of time. Chromatic, diatonic, and arpeggiated approaches used in walking bass lines can also be used in this context. A sample bass line for a section of this tune is provided below (Musical Example 2).

Chromatic

Diatonic

13 A MIN⁷ D⁷ G MAJ⁷

17 G MIN⁷ C⁷ F MAJ⁷

Arpeggiated

Musical Example 2

The rhythm played by the bass in the bossa nova style lines up with the rhythm of the bass drum (which consists of a dotted quarter note, followed by an eighth note, followed by a dotted quarter, etc.), creating a solid pulse that propels the music forward. In this style, the performer may opt to play the electric bass closer to the bridge to achieve increased definition and crisp articulation.

The first song on the piano portion of the recital is “All the Things You Are,” written by Jerome Kern. The song made its first appearance in the unsuccessful 1939

musical *Very Warm for May*.⁵ The form of this tune consists of 36 measures characterized by root movement in fourths. The first eight measures are transposed down a perfect fourth during the second eight measures and the middle section moves through the keys of G major and E major—both relatively far from the tonic key of A-flat major.

Although this song was originally written in 4/4, it will be performed in 3/4 for this recital. Since the written melody for “All the Things You Are” is rhythmically simple, consisting of mostly whole notes, half notes, and quarter notes, adapting it to work in 3/4 is very straightforward. The introduction made popular by Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie in their 1945 recording of the standard has been adapted to work in the new time signature as notated below (original first, then adapted version—Musical Examples 4 and 5).



Musical Example 4 (Original Introduction)

⁵ Ted Goia, *The Jazz Standards* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012). 15-17.

pedal tone, giving the sense of movement and stasis simultaneously.⁶ During the middle section, the pedal point is moved down a whole step to D flat for the first four measures before releasing into four measures of moving chords that lead back to the E flat pedal for the last “A” section. The tension and release created over the course of the arrangement follows the lyrics of the song even though the arrangement does not include a vocalist. The lyrics are provided below, annotated with their place in the form of the song.

What’ll I do when you are far away and I am blue? What’ll I do? (A)
 What’ll I do when I’m wondering who is kissing you? What’ll I do? (A)
 What’ll I do with just a photograph to tell my troubles to? (B)
 When I’m alone with only dreams of you that won’t come true, what’ll I do? (A)

Each stanza concludes with the same question, which is reflected in the continuous pedal that obscures the pure, diatonic sound of the melody. The longing, sadness, and uneasy nervousness present in the lyrics are all magnified by the reharmonization, allowing for a greater personal connection for the performer to the music. The arrangement will begin with the entire melody performed in a rubato style by piano, followed by an improvised flugelhorn solo. After the solo, the flugelhorn will return to the “B” section to play the last half of the melody to conclude the song.

The first song that will feature the recitalist’s proficiency on the drum set will be “I’ll Remember April.” It was written by Gene de Paul and made its first appearance in

⁶ For more information about reharmonization using slash chords and pedal points, refer to *The Jazz Theory Book*, by Mark Levine, pages 310-311 and 344.

1942 as part of an Abbott and Costello comedy entitled *Ride 'Em Cowboy*.⁷ For this performance, it will be played in a medium swing style.

The form of this tune consists of 48 measures organized as ABA. The first four measures stay in G major (the tonic key), but then move to the parallel minor for the second four measures, ending in an eight-measure diatonic progression leading back to G major. The “B “ section features an eight-measure tonicization of B-flat major followed by a ii-V progression in the tonic key and a ii-V in E major (VI, in the key of G major). This diverse harmonic progression makes “I’ll Remember April” an exciting vehicle for jazz musicians.

The role of the drum set in swing music is to lock the time in with the rest of the rhythm section while providing complementary improvised rhythms that interact with what the melodic instruments are playing, during both statements of the melody and solos. Time is kept primarily with the hi-hat on beats two and four and the ride cymbal playing a swing pattern or, depending on the tempo, just quarter notes.⁸ A basic swing pattern is shown in Musical Example 6.

⁷ Ted Goia, *The Jazz Standards* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012). 188-189.

⁸ For more information concerning swing drumming, consult *The Art of Bop Drumming* by John Riley.



Musical Example 6⁹

Interjections played on the snare, bass drum, or other parts of the drum set are used to build phrases and spark rhythmic interest. The drummer must always be aware of what is going on during the performance and adjust his or her volume and activity level to effectively support the rest of the ensemble.

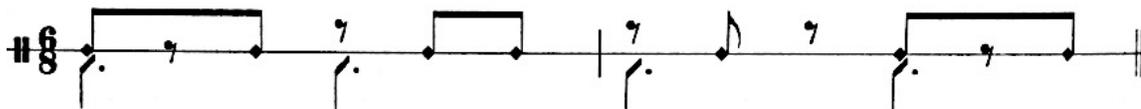
The second song performed featuring the performer's skills on drum set is "Invitation," written by Bronislau Kaper. Its first appearance occurred in the 1950 film *A Life of Her Own*, but received little attention due to the movie's failure at the box office. It was used again in 1952 for a film of the same name (*Invitation*), but didn't appeal to the mass audiences due to its harmonic complexity.¹⁰ However, jazz musicians added the song to their canon due to the wide range of improvisational possibilities. *Invitation* has a 48-measure form with each of the 12 chromatic pitches being used as a chord root at least once. Five minor keys are tonicized over the course of the progression (C, E-flat, B, A, and G).

For this recital, "Invitation" will be performed in a 12/8 Afro Cuban style with a double-time swing played on the "B" sections. The Afro Cuban pulse provides a sense of

⁹ John Riley, *The Art of Bop Drumming* (Los Angeles: Manhattan Music, 1994). 7.

¹⁰ Ted Goia, *The Jazz Standards* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012). 201-202.

duple and triple meter occurring simultaneously, which complements the rhythm of the melody. The rhythmic layering is apparent in the combination of the Bembe bell pattern played on the ride cymbal and the dotted quarter notes played by the hi hat (shown in Musical Example 7 below).¹¹ The double time swing feel played on the “B” section provides contrast and moves the melody along, keeping the listeners and performers engaged.



Musical Example 7¹²

¹¹ James Dreier, *Latin Jazz Guide* (Milwaukee: Hal Leonard, 2015). 62.

¹² Ibid.

PART TWO: OCTET AND QUINTET PERFORMANCES

The first song featuring an octet (four horns in addition to piano, guitar, bass, and drum set) is an arrangement of the Richard Rodgers song “Blue Moon.” Originally written for the film *Hollywood Party* in 1934, this song did not take on its final form until undergoing several revisions by Rodgers and his lyricist, Lorenz Hart.¹³ “Blue Moon” features a 32 measure, AABA form that stays around E-flat major with a tonicization of G-flat major in the second half of the bridge section. For this arrangement, a variety of textures are used including unison passages, countermelodies, harmonic couplings, and four-part harmony. A harmonized soli passage is used as an interlude between the solo section and the last statement of the melody, giving the arrangement a big band flavor. The introduction and coda sections are based loosely on the theme and overall structure of Claude Debussy’s “Clair de lune.” The guitar plays the main melody of “Clair de lune” during the introduction, harmonized by an alternation between D-flat major and E major, the two main key areas Debussy used in his composition. During the coda section, the four horns layer the main motive as a background figure for an improvised guitar solo.

Throughout the arrangement, and particularly in the soli passage, a variety of four-part voicing techniques are used in order to imply more complex harmonies. Using notes from the upper structures of tertian chords such as ninths, elevenths, and thirteenths adds richness to the texture, making it sound as if denser harmonies are

¹³ Ted Goia, *The Jazz Standards* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012). 40-42.

present. A mixture of chromatic and diatonic approaches are used throughout the arrangement to emulate the sounds of the big band era, also to provide tension and release points to the harmonized melody.¹⁴ Musical Example 7 provides a brief sample of the four-part writing used throughout the arrangement. All four parts have been condensed into one staff for ease of viewing.



Musical Example 7

The second octet arrangement of the recital is “La Vie en Rose.” Written by French singer Edith Piaf in 1945, this song has been recorded countless times by artists of all genres. Originally, “La Vie en Rose” was written as a ballad, but will be performed as a samba for this recital. The introduction of the arrangement features a two-chord vamp that alternates between E major and A major, resolving to A-flat major when the melody begins. The original chord progression, which is largely static and diatonic, was altered chromatically in this arrangement in order to accentuate the overall descending line of the melody.

¹⁴ For more information about four-horn voicing techniques, consult Gary Lindsay’s *Jazz Arranging Techniques*, pages 83-107.

The trumpet and trombone parts both call for bucket mute, which softens the overall tone of the arrangement and allows the brass instruments to blend well with the alto and tenor saxophones. The melody is split between the four instruments with very light accompaniment to preserve the original aesthetic of the song. Harmonized passages are only used at critical points in the arrangement, such as before and after the bridge section and in the coda. During the last statement of the melody, the final bars modulate from A-flat major to B major. The same final measures are then repeated in D-flat major to bring the arrangement to a close.

The first tune written for quintet is an original composition called “Because Plants Don’t Talk Back.” It is a heavily reharmonized contrafact¹⁵ on the chord progression to the standard “You’d Be So Nice to Come Home To,” featuring a melody that is through-composed, apart from the first four measures, which are repeated in the second half of the form. The introduction consists of a vamp that alternates between Gmin(maj7) and Ebmin(maj7) over a D pedal in the bass. This vamp continues for the first four measures of the melody before moving to a bass line that descends by whole step, inspired by Coltrane’s three tonic reharmonization system,¹⁶ illustrated in Musical Example 8. This reharmonization technique is used in a more obvious fashion later in the

¹⁵ A contrafact is an original melody written over a preexisting chord progression.

¹⁶ Coltrane’s three-tonic system results from splitting the octave into three equal pieces, ex. C, E, Ab. Each key area can be preceded by its dominant, creating an interesting way to reharmonized standard chord progressions. For a more detailed description, see *The Jazz Theory Book* by Mark Levine, pages 355-370.

arrangement where a ii-V progression in E-flat is harmonized over a B-flat pedal as seen in Musical Example 9.

Musical Example 8 shows a melodic line in E-flat major. The notes are B \flat , C, D, E \flat , E, F, G, A \flat . The chords indicated above the staff are B MIN^9 , A MIN^9 , G MAJ^7 , F MIN^7 , E \flat MAJ^7 / D, C MIN^7 , and /B \flat .

Musical Example 8

Musical Example 9 shows a melodic line in E-flat major. The notes are B \flat , C, D, E \flat , E, F, G, A \flat . The chords indicated above the staff are F MIN^7 /B \flat , F $\sharp 7$ /B \flat , B/B \flat , D 7 /B \flat , G MAJ^7 /B \flat , B $\flat 13$ (b9), and E \flat MAJ^7 .

Musical Example 9

The final resolution to E-flat major is delayed by one measure due to the tonicization of B major and G major. These three key areas split the octave into thirds, adding a more complex harmony to a typical ii-V progression. The addition of the B \flat pedal in the bass adds more tension to the progression, emphasizing the release to E-flat major at the end of the phrase. The four measures following this reharmonization are the only measures that remain unaltered from the original progression, containing a tonicization of both the major key and the relative minor.

The second tune on this recital performed by quintet is an original ballad titled “That Night on the Bridge.” The form and aesthetic of this tune is based loosely on Horace Silver’s composition “Peace,” consisting of a ten-measure form and floating melody. The composition features the use of polychords, particularly two major seventh chords separated by half step. The Dbmaj7/Dmaj7 chord creates four major seventh intervals, creating a wide range of melodic possibilities. The sound is meant to emulate the feeling and image of walking across a bridge at night while a slow but steady stream of cars pass on the highway below. Both environments (the bridge and the highway) have their own sense of peace, but when placed in juxtaposition create a sense of nervous energy.

The introduction for this tune is meant to emulate the sounds of the night—always changing, but with a sense of stability. The alto sax, flugelhorn, and bass freely improvise slow moving lines on a given set of pitches, creating improvised ambient harmony on which the guitar improvises lightly. The drum set is out of time and atmospheric in nature until the performers agree to start the melody, which is played in time. The trumpet and alto sax play the melody in unison, but out of phase, further emphasizing the uneasiness of the polychordal accompaniment.

The final piece performed on the recital is an original composition titled “Windows.” This tune features a 32-measure AABA form played over a light rock groove. Each “A” section features an ostinato that alternates between Ebmin9 and Dbmaj9 with a melody that is entirely diatonic. The bridge section provides a contrast to the static

“A” sections via increased harmonic activity and a less active groove in the rhythm section. The trumpet solo begins with just bass as an accompaniment, freeing up the harmonic possibilities for the soloist and providing space for rhythmic improvisation. By the time the alto solo starts, the groove has been reestablished and the song ends after the bridge rather than a return to the “A” section.

This recital will demonstrate a variety of skills developed throughout the course of study at the University of Northern Iowa applied to a performance setting. These skills have created a strong foundation in jazz practice and education that will be used beyond the recital hall.

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School of Music
University of Northern Iowa

presents

Sam Stranz, Alto/Tenor Saxophone, Piano, Bass, Drums
In a Graduate Recital

assisted by:

Metro Lyle, trumpet/flugelhorn
Gerardo Gomez, alto/tenor saxophone
Seth Nordin, trombone
Andrew Teutsch, piano
Ryan Garmoe, trumpet
Tanner O'Connor, guitar
Clayton Ryan, bass
Patrick Cunningham, drums

In partial fulfillment of the requirement
for the Master of Music degree in Jazz Pedagogy
From the Studio of Chris Merz

Taking a Chance on Love	Vernon Duke (1903-1969) arr. Stranz
Laura	David Raksin (1912-2004)
All the Things You Are	Jerome Kern (1885-1945) arr. Stranz
What'll I Do	Irving Berlin (1888-1989) arr. Stranz
I'll Remember April	Gene de Paul (1919-1988)
Invitation	Bronislaw Kaper (1902-1983)
Blue Moon	Richard Rodgers (1902-1979) arr. Stranz
La Vie en Rose	Edith Piaf (1915-1963) arr. Stranz
Because Plants Don't Talk Back	Sam Stranz (b. 1991)
That Night on the Bridge	Sam Stranz (b. 1991)
Windows	Sam Stranz (b. 1991)
