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Visualization in Jazz Improvisation

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VISUALIZATION IN JAZZ IMPROVISATION

By

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Three prominent jazz trumpeters, who cite visual experiences of colors, shapes, contours, or transcription – elements not directly related to the aural information typically described in the improvisational process – were selected and interviewed for this study. Each subject was asked to describe their conscious processes and visual experiences while improvising, with emphasis on personal development, content and musical intent. Additionally, each subject selected a recorded improvised solo to be analyzed and discussed, comparing traditional musical analytical techniques to their corresponding visual experiences. Pedagogical elements related to jazz education and personal practice were also included.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Jazz musicians offer a number of responses to the question "What are you thinking of when you improvise?" or, in more general terms, "How do you improvise?" Those who improvise at a high level often cite processes or organizational techniques that are not specifically tied to the actual sounds produced. These individuals may describe their improvisations or the process as containing certain shapes, textures, or colors; visual, not aural stimuli and ideas.

While these terms are often utilized in the arena of interviews and scholarship, no research exists in which the improviser both realistically describes this process in precise detail and also explains how it may be heard or observed by an audience in performance. How do the musicians themselves implement these ideas and organize them in the course of an improvised solo? Furthermore, how do musicians describe visual stimuli as being directly related to the aural (sound)? Are they truly "seeing" colors or shapes while they are performing?

In a brief personal conversation with the author, jazz trumpeter Terence Blanchard mentioned meeting the late Woody Shaw on a gig. According to Blanchard, Shaw described his approach to improvisation as "seeing" different angles and colors while he soloed. Terence himself said he thought extensively of melodic contours, or shapes, while improvising.

The goal of this study is to better understand the techniques and approaches that constitute "high-level" improvisation. Investigating these processes will shed light on the possible solutions and techniques that elevate jazz improvisations into complex, spontaneous compositional acts with their own abstract and non-aural influences. This analysis is intended to offer insight into how musicians can further develop beyond the "basic" improvisational techniques of chord/scale relationships or "language learning" and develop their improvisational approaches into multi-sensory creative acts.

To address this interesting and enigmatic process, a number of current, high-level jazz improvisers were approached and asked if they implement any of these techniques in their own improvisational process. In an introductory e-mail, the artists were asked to briefly describe their personal approaches to improvisation and to illuminate their development in adopting that approach (i.e. if they have always viewed improvisation in those terms, or if it was a conscious decision to develop that approach). Furthermore, they were asked if the visual elements of the creative musical process were influenced by any outside factors such as other musicians, art forms and artists, or aspects of musical practice.

Based on this collected information, three improvisers, preferably with different backgrounds and improvisational techniques, were interviewed. The interviews were recorded in a manner (audio or audio/visual) agreeable to the subject. To begin, musicians were asked to describe and demonstrate their approaches, and to field any follow up questions or concerns by the observer. Though the interview evolved according to the course of events and statements made by the improviser, a few main points were addressed in every interview:

What means do the improvisers use to organize information related to the improvisational process? Furthermore, if they use techniques related to a visual component of organization, are they using these terms as a means of describing the desired sound, or is there truly a connection between the aural and visual creative process? Meaning, if the improviser describes the aural product as having a visual component, is there a sensory "gray-area" in their view where aural and visual information coexist? If there is a visual component in the "seeing" sense, how do they specifically view the process? Do they organize the information according to music notation, a piano keyboard, the physical performance elements of their instrument, or in a more abstract manner?

How did the subject develop their approach? Have they considered improvisation in this manner for as long as they can remember, or was it the influence of another musician or teacher that directed them to such practices? Perhaps it was a conscious choice and, if so, what factors determined that particular direction? Additionally, how do they utilize this approach clearly in their improvisations?

At this point, the subject was asked to provide the author with a recorded example (improvised solo) that illustrates their visual experience through recollection of the performance or self observation of the creative process. The subject was then asked to explain their approach in musical and analytical terms with the assistance of the interviewer.

What conclusions, if any, do the subjects draw from this approach in terms of larger musical or conscious-related matters? How does this approach allow them to better create or communicate their musical intentions? Does the subject have any feelings on

how this may reflect the mind's processing and organization of information, or on connections between different kinds of sensory information?

Finally, the subjects were given the opportunity to add any information or insight they feel may be pertinent or interesting based on the direction of the interview, discussion, and demonstration.

Ultimately, transcription and analysis of improvised solos only give us a portion of the actual information involved in the improvisational process. This study reveals trends in the actual process itself in addition to the final product. Furthermore, it offers the developing improviser additional options to more effectively organize their approaches and understand at a deeper level the many ways the mind works to organize information and create a structured, unique improvisational approach.

Most existing scholarship compares jazz improvisation to the compositional process. This research covers aspects such as large scale forms, motives, and repeated material. However, no articles or books (to the author's knowledge) offer in-depth coverage of the idea of visualization, and more importantly, research the process according to the improvisers' own words and thoughts. Transcription books covering the improvisers recorded solos also lack this personal insight and analysis is often just an approximation of what the improviser may have been thinking according to the individual analyzing the material.

To understand the approach in the artists' own words, interviews can be useful, although interviews are often undertaken by jazz writers, not fellow musicians. This can create some confusion. In most cases, terms such as "painting with musical colors" or "creating musical shapes" are used as metaphors for the musical performance and not as

descriptions of the musicians' approach or thought process. Additionally, the course of the interview rarely takes a direction into the improvisational process and visualization unless these topics are mentioned directly by the improvisers themselves. However, some interviews and jazz improvisation method books do offer some insight into these thoughts and possible course of action.

This study can serve as a foundational source for understanding the process and perception of musical creation, or temporal composition in the jazz idiom. Understanding the experiences of the improviser and viewing it as a multi-sensory act can offer new avenues of musical understanding, enjoyment, education, and presentation for performers and audiences alike.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

There is limited literature exploring the processes of improvisation through the perspective of the improviser's thoughts or conceptual processes. In his essay "Improvisation: methods and models,[1]" Jeff Pressing explores the process of improvisation predominately through brain processes and learned skills to create a framework of comparison to composition and musical performance. However, the creative and expressive manner in which the performer actually goes about the improvisation is analyzed as a series of time-specific decisions based on options available to the improviser at that time, such as learned harmonic, melodic, or rhythmic musical material. There is no mention of how the improviser may apply a visual stimulus in order to create a sound and how that process may work neurologically.

In the psychology of music text, *Psychological Foundations for Musical Behavior*,[2] improvisation as a process is given a similar treatment. In the related section of composition, prominent composers were interviewed and asked about any organizational standards or themes that formed a compositional process. Visual ideas such as shapes and colors were mentioned by a few subjects, but not applied to the temporal compositional act of improvisation. Jazz composer Maria Schneider mentions

[1] Sloboda, J. ed., *Generative Processes in Music: the pysychology of performance, improvisation, and composition, Improvisation: Method and Model,* by Jeff Pressing (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).
[2] Rudolf Radocy and David Doyle, *Physcological Foundations for Musical Behavior* (Springfield: Charles Thomas, 2003).

the idea of composing with colors in mind and how the improvisations of the members of her band contribute to that effect.[3] Unfortunately, this study offers no insight into the processes of the actual improvisers themselves and whether they are explicitly trying to create colors and if so, in the same way the composer envisions it.

A connection exists between the processes of composition and improvisation in both organization and analysis from the perspective of the creators, although most articles focus on elements that are not related to the visual senses and the ideas of shapes or colors. There are some instances of improvisers expressing their approaches in interviews, such as saxophonist Donny McCaslin who describes briefly his idea of painting different colors in his improvisations and selecting band mates according to the colors he feels they bring to the group.[4] Late jazz trumpeter Woody Shaw expresses his improvisational process and creating "shapes… and harmonic colors" in an interview.[5] While interviews are the best opportunity to understand or better know the artist from their actual words, a problem develops with the interview process itself. It is the opinion of the author that a majority of jazz musician interviews are done by jazz aficionados or critics who have knowledge of the music, but may not have the deeper understanding necessary to ask about the actual process, or delve deeper when enlightening comments surface. Therefore, a number of interviews focus on musical backgrounds, an album in particular, or elements of the music business, rather than the creative process.

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[3] D. McClenaghan, "Maria Schneider: Concert in the Garden"; available from http://www.allaboutjazz.com; Internet (accessed 4 September 2007).
[4] F. Matzner, "Donny McCaslin: On the Way Through", 3 February 2003; available from http://www.allaboutjazz.com; Internet (accessed 4 September 2007).
[5] S. Lake, "Woody Shaw: The Intimidator", October 1976, in *Melody Maker*; available from http:/www.shout.net/~jmh/; Internet (accessed 4 September 2007).

In his jazz method book, *Melodic Structures*,[6] saxophonist and educator Jerry Bergonzi illustrates melodic cells that create shapes according to range and duration that can be used in improvisation. He further explains how these shapes can be altered to create motivic devices and ideas. Guitarist Bill Frisell also cites a similar approach in his instruction on how to expand an improvisational language based on concepts not immediately related to the primary elements of music.[7] These are great instructional tools for developing an improvisational approach. However, there is no explanation as to how these individuals themselves react and employ these techniques in certain situations, or how they view the approaches in a personal sense.

Fortunately, due to the process of searching for subjects to participate in this study and paper, new information is constantly emerging, some of which results in even more exploration into styles of music, or artists themselves who may be able to more clearly illuminate this subject. Based on familiarity with their music, the author is convinced that some musicians employed visualization as a means to improvisation. However, some artists themselves do not necessarily share the view that they improvise with visualization in mind. Many have offered other directions or suggestions pertaining to specific musicians. When jazz trumpeter Dave Douglas was approached, he confirmed an approach rooted in visualization and mentioned guitarist and educator Fred Frith, who has developed an entire musical language based on visual imagery.

The three subjects ultimately selected for the study all have unique visual experiences while improvising and collectively share many similarities and stark differences. While they have experienced visualization in one form or another during the

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[6] Jerry Bergonzi, *Melodic Structures* (Rottenberg N: Advance Music, 1992).
[7] 92. J. Gold, "The Big Bang: Bill Frisell Helps You Unleash and Ever Expanding Universe of Melodic, Textural, and Harmonic Possibilities," *Guitar Player,* December 2002, 98.

improvisational process throughout their musical career, they have never been asked to describe the experience in detail. Consequently, each subject is learning more about their personal process through self-reflection, and new information and thoughts are constantly coming to the forefront. It is the opinion of the subjects and the author that this research can have many long term benefits, ultimately developing to include follow-up discussion in the future, and inclusion of differing instrumentalists and improvisers in a variety of musical styles.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Delimitations

This paper examines the personal improvisational approaches of three individual musicians in the context of visualization as a means of organization and inspiration. Both the author as well as the artist themselves contribute to the paper's descriptions and analysis. Considering that musical analytical terminology is heavily used, the intended reader should have a grasp of concepts related to harmony, melody, rhythm, and form. Furthermore, a general understanding of the jazz idiom and history can be helpful in citing influences and similar works/artists. Although there is some discussion of musical psychology – a psychological aspect that encompasses the artists own perspective on their thought processes and sensory stimulation – a strong background in psychology or the workings of the human brain is not a prerequisite for reading this study.

This study is not intended to be a comprehensive look at visualization in jazz improvisation. Not every approach can be covered, nor is every musician who cites an approach dealing with visualization included in the study. Selection of the artists included in the dissertation follows a few basic premises. Firstly, that the author is familiar enough with the subjects' music and recorded output to declare a certain amount of familiarity or expertise with the material. Secondly, among the artists of interest contacted initially for the study, those included cite visualization as a primary or very important aspect of their improvisational approach and feel comfortable discussing and analyzing those

approaches as a means of organizing an overall process or technique. Finally, of those subjects who cite visual approaches, this study focuses only on the visual elements of shapes, colors, transcriptional elements or other visual terminology that is easily recognized. This limitation is, in the opinion of the author, a good starting point for the reader and scholar/student interested in learning about this approach as it considers stimuli with which the average individual is familiar and deals less with the objective viewpoint of the artist, who may define certain passages of their improvisations in terminology not recognizable or understood by the outside observer. Furthermore, approaches that scrutinize more abstract visual cues may require a certain amount of prior expertise or knowledge not expected of the intended reader.

In order to organize the selected musicians in a manner that demonstrates the differences and similarities of their approaches, the final three subjects were selected according to a few criteria. Firstly, that they all represent different stylistic and artistic approached in the jazz idiom. This includes their developmental background (i.e. the groups or styles they may have first performed or recorded), and their current musical associations. However, all the selected artists must have some degree of performance familiarity and background within the song-based or tonal jazz tradition to accommodate effective comparisons to traditional analysis and each other. Secondly, that the subjects differ in terms of performance generation, which may have affected their instruction, experiences, or early musical influences. Finally, in order to create a common bond of language, and due to the background of the author, the artists are all performers on the same instrument (trumpet). This helps to eliminate or minimize approaches that may be considered instrument specific.

All recorded (i.e. on records/existing recordings) musical examples are selected at the discretion and judgment of the artist on the basis that they best reflect their improvisational approach in the context of visualization. Analysis of these selections are based on the artist's thoughts and by the author, based on the descriptions of the approach by the artist, or through the lens of traditional harmonic, melodic, or rhythmic analysis often applied to jazz improvisational scholarship. Any additional conceptual or specific exercises intended to develop visualization or other musical concepts related is included based on the descriptions of the subject.

Description of Method

The goal of this study is not only to familiarize the reader with the idea of visualization and garner some insight into the processes of advanced improvisers, but also to create groundwork for developing those approaches as a student. As the basis of this information comes from personal interviews and the thoughts of the artists themselves, the paper is organized according to the individual artist, covering each approach on an individual basis.

These three subject chapters introduce the reader to the artist, detailing their personal and musical backgrounds, musical credits, and projects. The first major analytical section is devoted to the improvisational approach. The approach is detailed and explained in the words of the artist, including any conceptual or unifying characteristics that help define it. Any musical or educational influences that may have contributed to the development of the approach are covered as well, including other musicians, teachers, or extra-musical sources. Finally, the artist explains the role of performance and how they employ the approach in a live performance setting, with

particular emphasis on the process according to the spontaneity of live jazz performance and improvisation. This includes any artist thoughts into what they are actually thinking, or in this case "seeing," when they improvise and how visualization may play a role in jazz performance considerations such as interaction, structure/form, harmony, motivic development, and melody.

The third section of the chapter focuses on a recorded improvised solo, cited by the artist as containing elements of their visual experience. This includes a full transcription and analysis of the improvisation in the words of the author, covering both traditional analytical approaches and, most importantly, the subjects recollection of visualization in the act of creating. Further emphasis is placed on any aspects of their described overall visual approach experienced during that particular solo with corresponding musical examples.

The next section focuses on any specific exercises that may have helped the artist develop their visual improvisational approach. This can include any personal habits related to musical practice or self-reflection. As all three subjects are actively involved in jazz education, any exercises prescribed to students that may develop or activate the visual process are explored and described as well.

The final section includes closing remarks and observations of the subjects' approach, including author thoughts on potential for performance, education, and musical appreciation gained through a more thorough understanding of the artists approach. Supplemental materials for each artist contain complete transcriptions of their interviews and transcriptions of their improvisation used for the musical examples section, both of

which also include an audio component. Copies of any pertinent information exchanged through e-mails is also included as a means of reference or insight.

Following each artists individual sections is a chapter examining the commonalities and differences in the approaches and any general conclusions gained through the study that deal with the objective or subjective nature of these approaches. This is organized according to the artist's thoughts, or verbal descriptions and a further analysis of any trends observed through the musical examples. If possible, follow-up sessions with the artist are also included to gain their insight on any commonalities or differences.

The dissertation concludes with transcriptions of the subjects recorded conversations, complete transcriptions of their selected musical work, a bibliography of materials used in research, and all necessary artist consent forms and correspondence.

CHAPTER 4

SUBJECT 1 – TIMOTHY HAGANS

Biography and Musical Background/Credits

Trumpeter Timothy Hagans ("Tim") was born on August 19, 1954 in Dayton, Ohio. His early musical influences came primarily from trumpet players heard in his parents' record collection, including Doc Severinsen, Harry James, and Herb Alpert. He was attracted at a young age to the sound of the trumpet, and recalls being drawn to the vibrancy and timbre of the instrument at sporting and family events. This included a trip to New Orleans where he heard his first major trumpet model, Ray Maldonado, performing with the Mongo Santamaria band. Shortly thereafter, he bought all the records featuring Maldanado and spent time playing along, eventually branching out to include the contemporary rock and roll recordings of Blood, Sweat and Tears, Sly and the Family Stone, and Hugh Maskela (all of whom featured trumpet players and trumpet soloists). The touring Big Bands of Buddy Rich, Stan Kenton, Woody Herman, and Maynard Ferguson were also actively touring throughout the Midwest in the late sixties and early seventies, providing Hagans with additional listening, educational material, and subsequent networking opportunities.

In 1972, Hagans attended Bowling Green University. There were no formal studies in Jazz Performance, so his curriculum focused primarily in music education courses and trumpet lessons in classical literature and orchestral excerpts. However, a

few of his classmates had similar interests in jazz, including Rich Perry and Tom Kirkpatrick. Listening parties and sharing musical interests further developed Hagans' listening habits and influences to include jazz musicians of the Hard Bop and straight-ahead genres – including trumpeters Freddie Hubbard, Woody Shaw, Thad Jones, and Lee Morgan.

During the summer of 1973, Hagans attended a Stan Kenton summer music camp. Kenton was an important figure in the burgeoning jazz education movement, often combining performances and clinics at universities and schools. Hagans developed a friendship with the trumpet section members and fellow Ohio trumpeter John Harner, who would join the band a few months later. In June of 1974, Harner called Hagans and asked if he would be interesting in joining the Orchestra. Hagans left school and toured with the Stan Kenton Orchestra for two and a half years. According to Hagans, he was not the best trumpet player Kenton could've hired, but he was valued for his experimental nature as a soloist. At this point, the orchestra was playing large amounts of modal music. Soloing on single chords or modes for extended periods helped Hagans to develop an improvisational approach that included chromaticism and different vertical and horizontal relationships.

While traveling on the bus in his time touring with the Kenton Orchestra, Hagans developed a "listening lab" approach to learning the approaches of prominent improvisers. He would make tapes of specific musicians, and saturate himself with that artist's recordings – often for weeks or months at a time. This included trumpeters and the music of saxophonists John Coltrane and Sonny Rollins – which further reinforced

Hagans mentally hearing improvisation in a "freer saxophone way,"[8] thus forcing him to improve his technical mastery of the trumpet. He would subsequently work with trumpet guru Bobby Shew to address embouchure issues and playing difficulties associated with the physical demands of playing the trumpet.

Through his unique listening process, Hagans developed a strong affinity for specific trumpet players and their improvisational style, analyzing individual traits in articulation, harmonic language, and phrasing. Hagans maintains that his trumpet influences are a combination of Miles Davis, Freddie Hubbard, Thad Jones, and Woody Shaw. Interestingly, Hagans claims to have rarely transcribed throughout his development. He instead absorbed certain characteristics of improvisational approaches through active listening and assimilation – partnering that with his unique approach and experiences as an improviser.[9]

In 1977, Hagans left the Kenton Orchestra to join the Woody Herman Thundering Herd. He was fired after a month of touring.

> …Woody did not like my playing. I was only on for a month and he fired me, partly because I played with Stan Kenton before and he didn't realize that – but also I was just too weird for Woody...
>
> Even though I was making the changes, but I was just approaching everything from a different melodic way. I figured if [Frank] Tiberi could play the way he plays on Early Autumn, I could play like this on Rhythm Changes. The Saxophone players were allowed to follow that path, but the trumpet was a pretty defined chair – the bebop, melodic, Clifford Brown thing.
>
> Woody kept me on for a month, but he had the habit of holding the microphone up to the horn player's bells while they were soloing so he could announce their names to the audience – a little showbiz thing. But the fact that he disliked my playing and he's holding the microphone just a few feet from my eyes – it's why I started to play with my eyes closed. I couldn't concentrate with him scowling at me.[10]

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[8] Tim Hagans, *Hagans Portrait,* 2008 [on-line] available from http://www.timhagans.com ; Internet, accessed 20 March 2009.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Tim Hagans, interview by author, 15 November 2010, phone conversation recording.

Shortly after leaving the Herman Band, Hagans relocated to Malmo, Sweden and began playing a variety of music, including free jazz, bebop, and instrumental funk with local groups and fellow ex-pats Thad Jones and Ernie Wilkins. Hagans recorded with Thad Jones' ensemble in the early 1980's and developed working relationships in the Scandinavian Peninsula that would later culminate in his appointment as Artistic Director of the Norbotten Big Band (a state funded professional big band located in Lulea, Sweden) in 1996.

He returned to the United States in 1982 and began his involvement in jazz education with teaching positions at the Cincinnati Conservatory of Music and the Berklee College of Music in Boston. Hagans moved to New York City in 1987 and quickly developed relationships with like-minded musicians and composers, including Maria Schneider, Joe Lovano, and Bob Belden.

In 1994, Hagans signed a recording contract with Blue Note Records and has appeared as a leader or co-leader on six albums, including *Audible Architecture*[11] and *Animation-Imagination*,[12] which featured his close working relationship with saxophonist/composer/producer Bob Belden. Belden is notable in the jazz recording world as the reissue producer of Miles Davis' Columbia catalog recordings. Hagans is often compared to Davis in the timbre of his trumpet sound and his approach as an improviser, which, on the surface, contains liberal use of the chromaticism and phrasing evident in Davis' approach from the late 1960's through the 1970's.[13]

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[11] Tim Hagans, *Audible Architecture,* Tim Hagans, trumpet. Blue Note 7243 8 31808 2, [1995]. CD recording.
[12] Tim Hagans, *Animation-Imagination,* Tim Hagans, trumpet. Blue Note 95198. [1999]. CD recording.
[13] Tim Hagans, *Hagans Portrait,* 2008 [on-line] available from http://www.timhagans.com ; Internet, accessed 20 March 2009.

With his appointment as director of the Norbotten Big Band in 1996, Hagans split his time evenly between Europe, leading that group, and New York City, pursuing his personal creative endeavors. He recorded five albums with the Norbotten Big Band, which heavily featured his original compositions and arrangements with additional guest artists. The most recent recording, *The Avatar Sessions*[14] featured guests Peter Erskine, Randy Brecker, Vic Juris, and Rufus Reid. Hagans' composition from that album, "A Box of Connoli," was nominated for a 2011 Grammy Award in the Best Instrumental Composition category.

Hagans stepped down from his position with the Norbotten Big Band in October of 2010 to focus on projects in the United States and re-establish himself in the New York City jazz community. He is currently touring with various groups in promotion of his Grammy nomination and appears frequently as a clinician and guest artist with professional and academic ensembles.

Visualization and the Improvisational Process

Hagans experiences visualization as a combination of varied elements and sources during the improvisational process. The visualization of contours, transcription, and color associations has always been an element of his improvisational process and was not learned or developed over time. However, there are a few physical acts important to activating the visual process, most notably having his eyes closed while improvising, and focusing on the physical "feeling" of playing specific pitches or motives in certain musical situations. Additionally, Hagans feels that in order to fully experience and utilize

[14] Tim Hagans, *The Avatar Sessions,* Tim Hagans, trumpet, and the Norbotten Big Band. Fuzzy Music 017. [2009]. CD recording.

his visual process and truly play what he's seeing, he must feel comfortable with both the physical challenges of playing the trumpet and his musical relationship with the drummer. In his view, developing a rhythmic relationship with the drummer and focusing on specific physical experiences related to trumpet playing assist him in achieving what he describes as his personal "Emotional Harmonic System.[15]"

Hagans states that playing with his eyes closed is an important aspect in not only experiencing visualization, but also in putting forth his musical intent while improvising. Memorizing the material (i.e. Chord Changes, Form, etc.) is a necessary element, as Hagans observes that he tends to improvise where his eyes are currently in reading the music or chord changes that are placed in front of him. Eliminating the physical act of looking at the printed music allows him to visualize further ahead and consequently improvise in a more melodic manner, with longer phrases.

> I tend to improvise where my eyes are, which are always a little bit ahead of the music, because as you read [you're always looking ahead] as your brain interprets what you just saw. So I find that I'm melodically hindered, because I'm only playing into the next bar. I'm not thinking of the whole overall phrase, which may happen to be eight bars, or twelve bars… or whatever phrase I'm in the middle of. I'm playing shorter and it definitely affects the way I play because I'm playing where my eyes are – instead of where the creative cosmos wants to take me.[16]

Although it is an important aspect in his process, Hagans attributes closing his eyes to self-consciousness in his early experiences performing. In his view, he was not playing the trumpet from a physically correct and comfortable standpoint and his neck bulged out while performing. When walking to the front of the Stan Kenton Orchestra to solo, this would elicit a reaction from children and audience members. His subsequent experience soloing under the unhappy gaze of Woody Herman, while touring with his

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[15] Tim Hagans, interview by author, 15 November 2010, phone conversation recording.
[16] Ibid.

Orchestra in the late 1970's, further strengthened his propensity for closing his eyes while improvising.

In addition to being able to visualize further ahead, Hagans maintains that closing his eyes also increases the strengths of his other senses, as he is not being directly visually stimulated. This results in an activation of the abstract visual process and an increased aural awareness that allows him to focus on the rhythmic element provided by the drums.

> I get most of my inspiration from the drums, not so much from the other harmonic instruments, unless again, it's material that I don't know that well. But I've played entire gigs of my music and standard tunes where I was not aware of the piano player and bassist, or guitar player for the entire gig. I basically focus on the drums because that's the rhythm – that's what I don't go through – a trumpet player can only play one note at a time, playing horizontal melodies and I need something to surf over. So for me, it's the drums. The harmonic instruments – of course on a more subtle level I'm absorbing what they're doing, but it's not in my front brain kind of consciousness.[17]

Hagans compares his relationship to the drums and the rhythmic component of performance to other notable jazz instrumentalist and drummer relationships, particularly that of saxophonist John Coltrane and drummer Elvin Jones. In Hagans' opinion, the Coltrane/Jones musical relationship worked well because Jones understood that the constant rhythmic pulse and energy derived from "pounding out the time[18]" was what Coltrane needed musically. For Hagans, a similar rhythmic approach is needed to provide him with the necessary inspiration and energy force to tie into what he describes as his "Emotional Harmonic System[19]" when improvising.

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[17] Tim Hagans, interview by author, 15 November 2010, phone conversation recording.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid.

From an observational standpoint, Hagans' use of chromaticism and harmonic tension while improvising may lead an educated listener to assume that he's actively hearing and considering the performed harmonic aspects by fellow musicians while improvising – or employing his own harmonic framework based on chord substitutions, altered extensions, or other popular approaches employed by accomplished improvisers – to create an "outside" or tension-release harmonic style. However, Hagans states that he is blocking out the harmony performed while improvising and is instead employing his own harmonic system and framework based on emotional states and his own experiences. He is adhering to the basic harmony and the function of where the tonal centers are heading, but it is not in his view derived from the harmony we traditionally derive from the piano and a twelve tone octave. Hagans uses the metaphor of spoken languages to illustrate his approach:

> If we go back to language – language is very limited. The point of language is to describe, in art anyway and literature, human emotion. It's to tell a story, but the story sometimes is just there because you need to tell some kind of story, it's really about decisions, emotions, and how people interact.
>
> With language they say that French and Russian are the most descriptive languages to use as an author, but they're still very limited. If you think of the whole spectrum of human emotion, and you try to describe that in language, forget it. That's the point of being an author or playwright, using language to TRY to describe the human existence.
>
> Well, I look at harmony the same way. We're bound, because of our ears and evolution, to accept half-steps. Other cultures may accept quarter-steps or bending notes. In jazz, we're stuck with chords and harmony that's derived from twelve-tone chromaticism. To truly describe human emotion and existence, we would need a piano with eighth-steps, or sixteenth-steps because we're all so completely crazy in this world and we're trying to describe that.
>
> To me it's very limiting what a piano or guitar player plays because it's a very limiting tool to describe human emotion. So that's what I mean when I hear my own things, it's nothing that an instrument could play – it's emotional descriptions of my life up to that point when I improvise that tell me what notes to play on the trumpet, where I'm stuck to the twelve-tone system.[20]

[20] Tim Hagans, interview by author, 15 November 2010, phone conversation recording.

Hagans describes this emotional system as a combination of physiological effects based on the physical "feeling" of playing specific pitches, as well as pitch functions in specific harmonic situations. This creates a variety of "emotional situations" that can be unique to the harmonic progressions and key of a particular song. For example, different pitches that have the same harmonic functions in different keys can have completely unique emotional qualities partnered with the physical element of what it feels like to play those pitches.

> If you listen to Miles [Davis] play on "Walkin'" – so a blues in F [concert]. He plays the concert Ab above the staff – that's a great note on the trumpet – in the context of being the minor 3rd on a major blues. That #9 sound, it has a lot of emotion spinning in it. It's just incredible, the action in that particular note.
>
> Now the other key we tend to play the blues in is Bb. The concert Db, down in the staff, is the same technical note [in terms of chord relationship], the #9, yet it has nowhere near the same energy on the trumpet as the Ab does when we're playing a blues in F. So people pick keys based on how they feel and how they sound when you play in them. A lot of people play "Alone Together" in C minor, and I have played it in C minor, but I like it much better in D minor – where most people play it. There are certain notes in certain events in that tune that I like to choose – they feel better, they make me feel like playing because I'm involved in the experience up a whole-step.[21]

Conversely, the emotional quality of a pitch can also be dependent on its function in the harmony or tonality of a song. Hagans describes how the same pitch, an Ab, functioning as the #9 or b3 in F, has a different emotional quality and feel than when used in E, where it is enharmonically spelled G# and is functioning as the major third. According to Hagans, when used in E, the G# does not have the same emotional feeling since it is not tied to an interesting harmonic event, though it may physically feel the same to play. In that particular case, Hagans may find himself using the G# to get to the G natural, still outlining the #9 sound, but with an overall different emotional quality. He feels that the "G does not have the same vibrancy; it's not worse, but it just has a

[21] Tim Hagans, interview by author, 19 January 2010, phone conversation recording.

different feel, even though it's a half-step down, functioning in the same way. It's all very specific to each half-step.[22]"

Experiencing direct visual relationships to the organization of pitches and rhythms while improvising is an assortment of concepts unique to Hagans. Although they aren't always directly related, Hagans views every pitch and harmonic emotional relationship as also containing specific color associations and combinations that are viewed in the act of improvising.

> Every Letter in the alphabet, every number, every group of numbers, letters, words, and notes has a color – individual colors. When you combine those colors, sometimes it's a combination of those colors, or one color takes over and dominates the entire word. When I hear you speak, I see colors with the words you are using.
>
> It's the same thing when I'm playing. Certain notes always have the same color, but they may change depending on the register. G# is always kind-of green, but Ab is kind-of maroon. So it depends, if I'm playing over F# minor and I play the G#, it's the green element of that. If I'm playing F minor and play the Ab, that's more of a maroon. F minor in general is kind-of tan. I think these things change too – I don't think F minor was always tan – it might be just for today, or for awhile[23].

Similar to his emotional harmonic system, Hagans' color associations and experiences are unique to specific musical situations and often features mixtures, shadings, and dovetailing of various colors and relationships partnered with the visualization of traditional music notation for pitches and rhythms. The pitch and harmonic colors he describes are transposed to the Bb trumpet key (a whole-step up from concert pitch) and are more closely related to specific chord sounds and qualities than overall tonalities.

For example, when discussing the typical form and harmonic progression of a minor blues, Hagans describes the first four measures of F minor as having an overall tan

[22] Tim Hagans, interview by author, 19 January 2010, phone conversation recording.
[23] Tim Hagans, interview by author, 15 November 2010, phone conversation recording.

quality. However, the iv minor chord (Bb minor) in the fifth measure is not related to tan, nor is the minor ii V turnaround in measures nine and ten, which could be thought of as functioning tonally in F minor.

> I'm thinking, okay, if we're playing a blues in F minor, when it goes to the IV chord in the fifth bar, what color is that Bb? Bb to me is usually black. The Bb tonal center is like I'm looking at the word, symbol, and whatever you would call it, like it's written in typewriter ink, black word on white paper. So I'm trying to think that when that happens inside a tan F minor, what is that? Right now, probably thinking about it for the first time ever, it's still black.
>
> So now I'm thinking of a G minor, flat 5 that you may find on the ninth bar of the blues and the C7 that would follow it, they still have their original colors. They're not really shaded by the overall tan. The G is green-ish blue, and the C7 is a whiter cream color.[24]

Although every chord may have a unique color association, Hagans does not view the color experience as lasting for the entire measure of that chord and suddenly changing at the bar line. The blending or changing of colors is often dependent on where in the phrase or measure Hagans begins approaching or establishing the new color or chord change based on what he is playing. In this case, the colors are changing because Hagans begins to think of where he's going, rather than where he may currently be in the form of the song or chord structure. The point of change can be as specific as a particular note in a specific rhythmic location, which can create the blending or dovetailing of differing colors and hues.

Hagans can also alter the color associations with specific chords by purposely involving other tonalities for use in creating musical tension. Using specific structures, such as super-imposed triads over dominant chords, can establish additional colors that may blend with the original chord change/color association or take over completely.

> A lot of times if I'm playing over a G7, I may be thinking E7. just over that G7, playing the E triad. There are types of things you could throw in there, the 13, b9,

[24] Tim Hagans, interview by author, 19 January 2010, phone conversation recording.

> there are a lot of common notes […] I'll find myself getting intricately into another key while I'm playing over another key or chord and there is a blending of those particular colors. If I get really involved in E to the point that I forget about the G, or at least sort-of, that color begins to supersede the original color.[25]

Hagans does not know if this is related to synesthesia, which is a neurological condition where stimulation of one sense (in this case aural) leads to the automatic stimulation or activation of another sense (visual). Although he has experienced this sensory cross-over his entire life, he has only become aware of synesthesia recently. Sound Color Synesthesia does occur in musicians, including composers Franz Liszt and Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov. Hagans does exhibit some typical signs of synesthesia, based on his descriptions of the process, and other traits such as memorization ability, but he has never been tested or observed by a neurologist or scientific expert. Although there are a number of studies on observational or reactionary synesthesia, there is little to no research on temporal creative synesthesia brought about by creating, or in this case, improvising.

In addition to the color associations related to pitches and harmony/tonality, Hagans also visualizes general contours before playing a phrase or melodic line. This is a two-dimensional contour where the vertical axis would signify pitch (low to high) and the horizontal axis would signify duration or time (left to right). This is a commonality between all the subjects in this study when related to two-dimensional visualization, and not surprisingly, corresponds closely to traditional written music notation in terms of function and placement.

Hagans pre-visualizes a phrase that he hasn't performed yet as a general two-dimensional contour in black and white. However, once it is performed, the visual

[25] Tim Hagans, interview by author, 19 January 2010, phone conversation recording.

product is an abstract version of a traditional transcription. The background template is the lines of the staff from notation and a combination of angular contours, specific notes as they are played, all in color and corresponding to the pitch/harmony color combinations that he experiences. In his case, the activation of complete visualization is directly related to the actual performance of the musical phrase, whereas the pre-visualization can be viewed as a general idea or suggestion that is yet to be fully-realized.

Hagans recalls that he's always had these visual experiences as a developing player, particularly the color associations. Because he didn't view it as unique or different from the norm, he never confided his experiences to fellow musicians growing up. This is true of most individuals who experience forms of synesthesia. Hagans recalls being fascinated by clowns as a child, and his parents still have the numerous paintings he made of clowns at a young age, which may have some relationship to his fascination with colors. He also credits his experiences as an only child as an important aspect of his musical introduction and bonding with abstract associations, which may have strengthened the link between music and visualization. For Hagans, being placed in front of his parents stereo at a young age and being exposed to symphonies and the music of Harry James, Dave Brubeck, and Herb Alpert, while having his parents "let his imagination run wild[26]" developed his bond with the abstract.

> I just loved music. I would sit between the two speakers of the console and listen over and over. I think that this is when this whole thing started. I found this bond to the abstract. Music is the most abstract form of art we have, because it's not visual. It's gone – as soon as it's here it's gone.[27]

For Hagans, the visual element in his improvisational approach is always present when he improvises, although he feels that his ability to accurately convey that element

[26] Tim Hagans, interview by author, 15 November 2010, phone conversation recording.
[27] Ibid.

relies heavily on his comfort playing the instrument. It's no coincidence that the recorded instances that he found it particularly present and conveyed effectively were also the instances where he was playing consistently and felt physically strong and secure on the trumpet, with some exceptions. Hagans' album titles additionally hint at his ties between the aural and visual, such as *Animation – Imagination*[28] and *Audible Architecture*.[29]

Musical Examples

Hagans describes the visual experience of contours, transcription, and color associations as always being present in the act of improvising. However, there are certainly performances where everything "clicks" and the visualization is effectively partnered with a strong physical performance on his instrument, allowing him to effectively present his musical intent and convey his unique emotional system. In these cases, particularly effective improvisational performance features visualization, clear musical and emotional intent, various aspects related to tension and release, and more traditional improvisational approaches related to voice leading and pitch choices.

In his recorded performances, Hagans cites two records in particular as displaying all the aforementioned criteria, and a recollection of a strong visual component while improvising. The first record, *Animation – Imagination*,[30] was unique in the manner of which it was recorded – spanning five days in the studio. Hagans and (Bob) Belden were interested in creating sound-scapes and specific musical environments for a traditional jazz quintet with electronic programming and a DJ. The album was recorded with the

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[28] Tim Hagans, *Animation-Imagination,* Tim Hagans, trumpet. Blue Note 95198. [1999]. CD recording.
[29] Tim Hagans, *Audible Architecture,* Tim Hagans, trumpet. Blue Note 7243 8 31808 2, [1995]. CD recording.
[30] Tim Hagans, *Animation-Imagination,* Tim Hagans, trumpet. Blue Note 95198. [1999]. CD recording.

lights off and was very low pressure for a jazz record, which is usually recorded in one or two days with multiple takes of compositions. Hagans and the other band members spent time in the studio and would record when it "felt right" to do so. The title was decided after the session and seemed appropriate for the concept of the album and its connection to visual imagery.

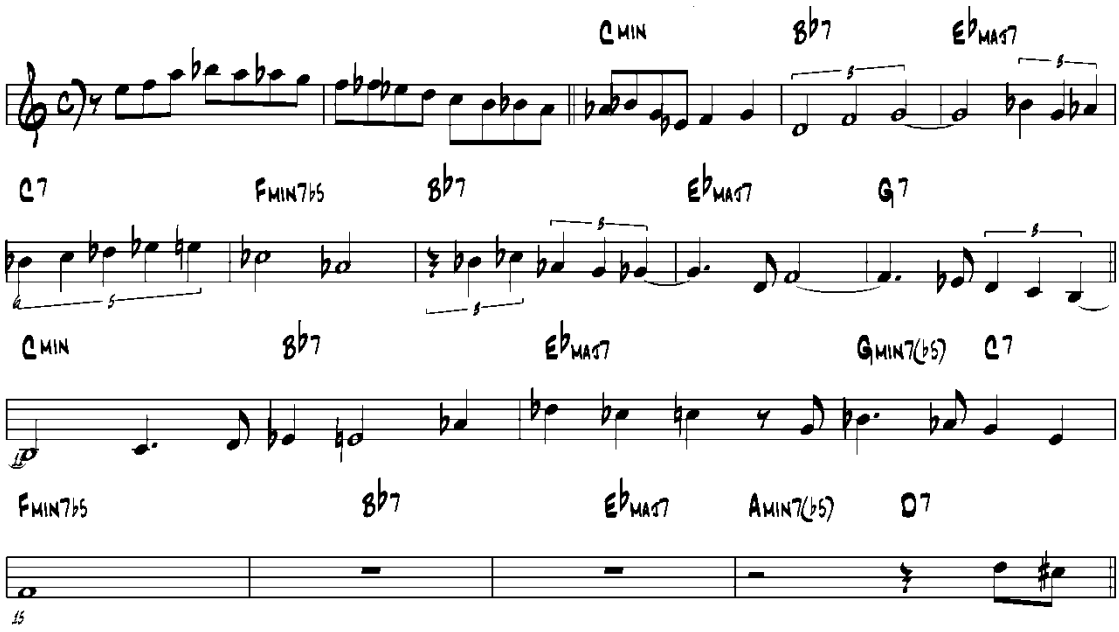
Hagans also cites his previous album as a leader, *Audible Architecture*,[31] as conveying all the necessary elements of effective performance and visualization, although that particular recording was made under very different circumstances and duress. Hagans was recovering from adult chicken-pox and was unable to reschedule the recording session due to the conflicting schedules of drummer Billy Kilson and bassist Larry Grenadier. Although he was practicing while ill, Hagans describes that particular recording as challenging physically. Despite the health complications leading up to the session, the group did rehearse together and play out in preparation for the recording. Hagans recalls a few performances from that recording as having a very strong visual element, including his solo on the opening track of the album, *I Hear A Rhapsody.*

I Hear A Rhapsody is a jazz standard composed by George Fragos, Jack Baker, and Dick Gasparre and was first recorded by the Tommy Dorsey Orchestra in 1941. The composition follows a typical song form of AABA, usually performed in 4/4. Hagans' performance is in a trumpet trio format, with no chordal instruments and is performed at a fast tempo. After freely stating the melody, Hagans performs a two-measure solo break and improvises over the form of the song for five choruses.

[31] Tim Hagans, *Audible Architecture,* Tim Hagans, trumpet. Blue Note 7243 8 31808 2, [1995]. CD recording.

Hagans vividly recalls performing the solo, including some elements related to abstract visualization, emotions, and certain musical elements he was trying to convey effectively through phrasing, note choices, and tension. Hagans had a pre-conceived notion of what the performance should sound and feel like, and feels that it is evident immediately in his solo break and musically what occurs thereafter. Example 4.1 is a transcription of the solo break and the opening phrase for the first A section. For reasons of consistency, all examples and transcripts of Hagans' analysis will be presented in concert pitch, although the transcription and musical concepts were often discussed in the transposed trumpet key (Bb) in the interview process.

Example 4.1 Tim Hagans, I Hear A Rhapsody Solo
mm. 1 – 18, Solo Break, first 16 measures



Hagans describes that his model for this particular performance was Freddie Hubbard's break and solo on "*Without A Song*" from the Album *Hub of Hubbard.* As the first track of the album, Hagans envisioned this particular performance as being immediately and consistently high energy, with a four-feel in the rhythm section and

Hagans establishing an aggressive style with his opening phrase. However, Hagans recalls a "feeling of disappointment[32]" immediately when the rhythm section returns to play in measure three, the top of the form, and the danger of having a pre-conceived notion of what should happen musically.

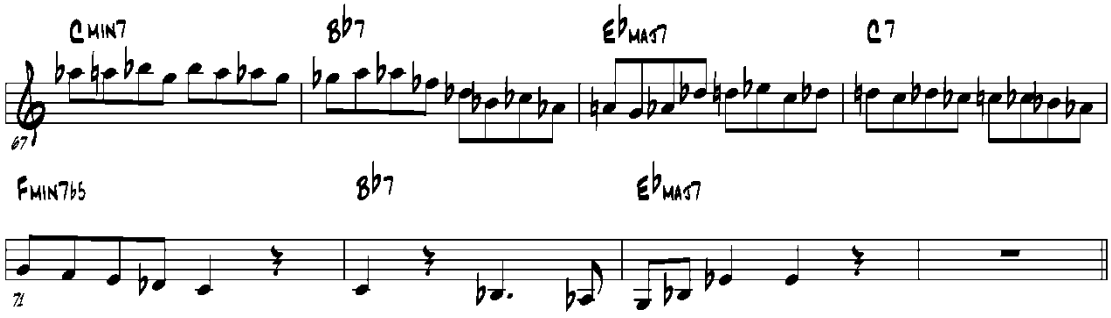
> This was going to be the first thing on the record and I wanted it to be burning the whole way through. So when I played that break, I was hoping that Billy Kilson [drums] would just come in screaming. That break is above the staff, in the upper register… and all of a sudden, Larry Grenadier is playing a two-feel and it was kind-of "spacey." Immediately I had to switch gears, but there was disappointment – within two seconds after the break. I had a pre-conceived notion of what I wanted to happen and that is always dangerous. So I went with what they were doing and it turned out to be fine. Now I can't imagine it being any other way.
>
> I remember thinking that this is going to be the first track on the record and I want it to be like "Without A Song" from the Freddie Hubbard record *Hub of Hubbard*. It's one of the great Freddie Hubbard Records and that Freddie solo is just… So that's the model I had in my head, and it's always dangerous to have a model as well, because it puts you in that frame of mind, and it created disappointment right when I started playing.
>
> So I went with it and I thought, okay I'm not going to try and burn eighth notes over what they're playing, but I'm going to try and play flowing and melodic.[33]

Hagans quickly changes his rhythmic approach in the first measure of the song form – after the two-measure break, opting for a triplet and quarter note feel over the two-feel (half notes) provided by the rhythm section. There are a number of instances in the first two choruses where Hagans begins to play an aggressive eighth note pulse, but ultimately returns to a more lyrical approach. The rhythm section transitions to the four-feel (quarter notes, or walking) at the top of the third chorus and Hagans immediately begins playing longer, linear phrases (Example 4.2). Hagans also describes maintaining balance in phrasing, as this particular phrase begins with chromaticism and harmonic

[32] Tim Hagans, interview by author, 19 January 2010, phone conversation recording.
[33] Ibid.

tension, but is ultimately resolved by arpeggiating the Eb triad and ending on the tonic pitch with a very clear and simple rhythmic motive.

Example 4.2 Tim Hagans, I Hear A Rhapsody Solo
mm. 67 -74, first 8 measures of the third chorus

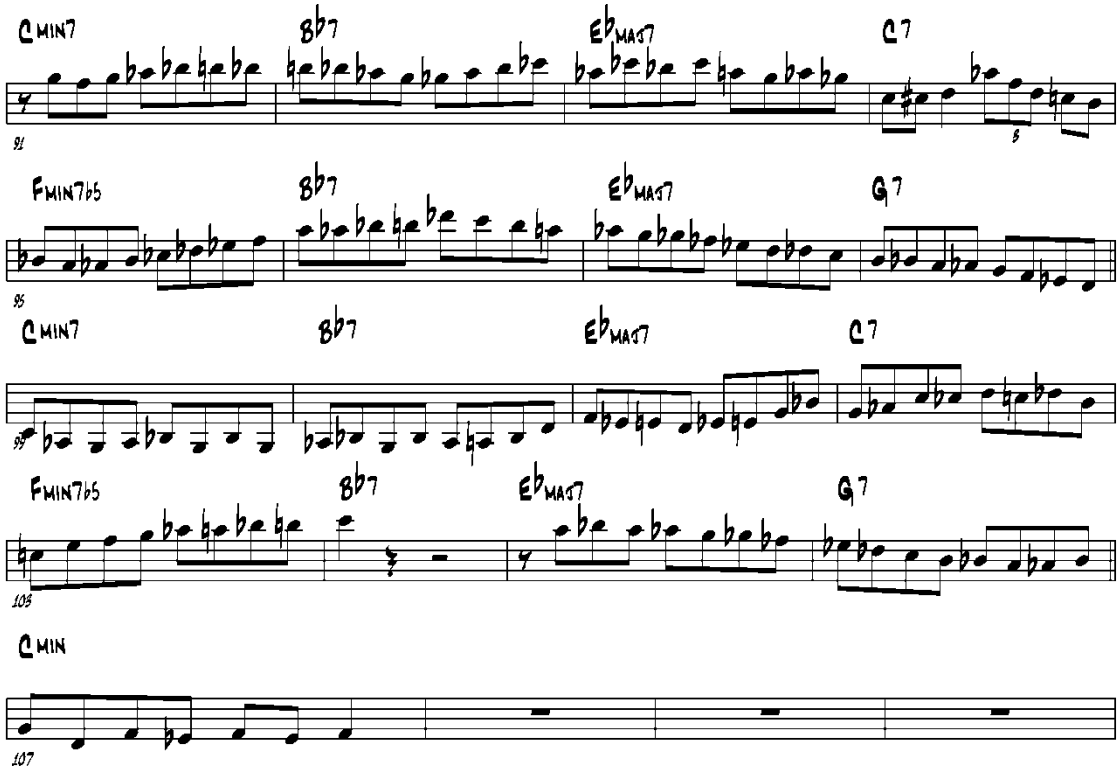


Hagans recalls pre-visualizing general musical contours in two specific areas of this particular performance. Both instances are very long eighth note phrases that span across the natural phrasing tendencies found in the form of the song. Hagans uses long phrases as a device for tension, citing that listeners can often feel the tension of waiting for a wind player to breathe in addition to the tension created by playing across bar lines. According to Hagans, these particular phrases had "such a contour, up and down,[34]" that in addition to visualizing the contour, he also visualized the phrases being transcribed as he played them on staff paper. Examples 4.3 and 4.4 are the two instances of visual transcription and happen in sequence in his improvisation. Example 4.3 is a seventeen measure phrase, beginning on the last A section of the third chorus and continuing to the second A section of the following chorus. Example 4.4 is a thirteen measure phrase beginning halfway through the second A section and continuing through the bridge of the fourth chorus. Both phrases have a very clear contour of linear (up and down) movement, spanning the typical performed range of the trumpet.

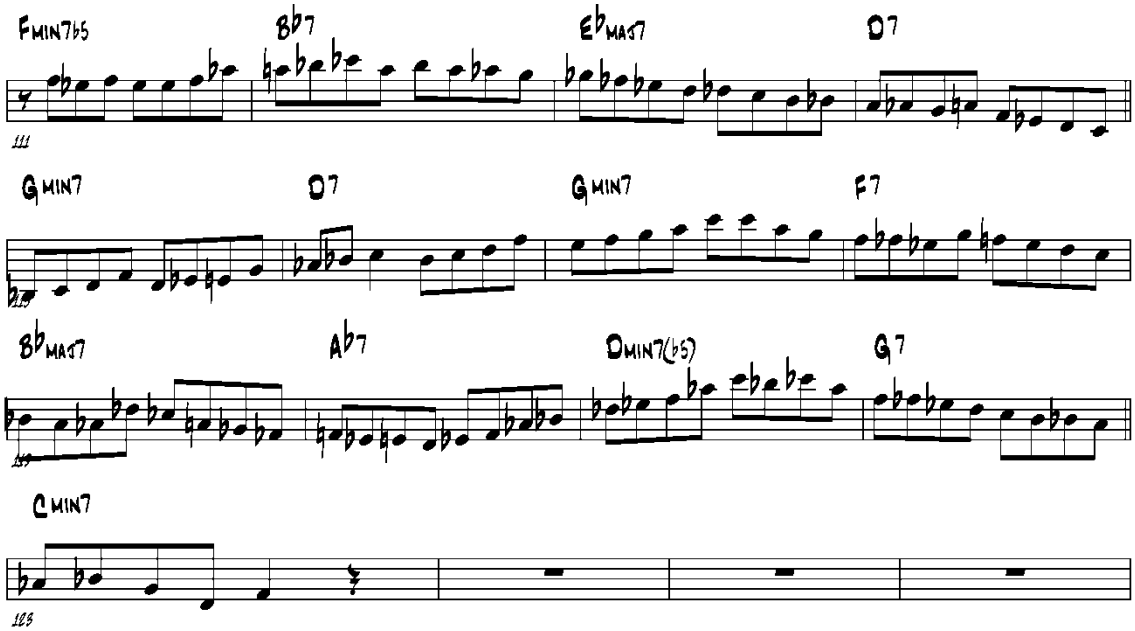
[34] Tim Hagans, interview by author, 19 January 2010, phone conversation recording.

Example 4.3 Tim Hagans, I Hear A Rhapsody Solo

mm. 91 – 107.



Example 4.4 Tim Hagans, I Hear A Rhapsody Solo
mm. 111 – 123.



Observing Hagans' linear phrases, it's clear that he is taking a number of harmonic liberties when improvising in relation to typical chord-scale relationships. Much of this is tied to his "Emotional Harmonic System" in how he treats certain harmonic qualities and specific pitches and their use in specific locations. Chords that have some type of dominant function, for example, tend to feature a number of alterations to the extensions. In the previous example, much of the harmonic content is framed around the contour of the melodic line and how it is internally structured and resolved. However, there are a number of instances where he is clearly outlining specific pitches in rhythmic locations to establish an element of consonance and also frame the tension which may surround it. Example 4.3 and 4.4 both start and end with very consonant chord-scale pitch choices. Example 4.4 features a number of areas where defining chord pitches are played in strong rhythmic or phrasing locations, such as the Bb on beat 1 over The Gmin7 in measure 115, the C on beat 2 over the D7 in the following measure, the clear bebop-mixolydian sound over the F7 in measure 118 and again over the Ab7 in measure 120.

According to Hagans, there are certain harmonic elements in the form of *I Hear A Rhapsody* that he attempts to outline in every chorus that are integral to the sound and structure of the song. Although he may be taking various liberties harmonically, which are still tied to his personal system and visual experience, there are still a number of "sounds" he's trying to outline from a traditional bebop standpoint – the first being the V7 of ii (C7) that occurs in the fourth measure of the A section.

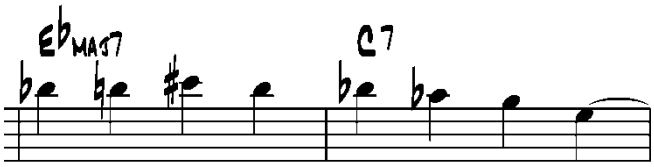
> On a tune like this there are a couple of really important things that I want to point out in every chorus. I take a lot of liberties with the harmony and people may think I'm not coming from the bebop language – there are certain very

> traditional things that I'm kind of a stickler about. So I'm always trying to bring those out in my playing…
>
> In this particular tune, the V of ii – if we're talking about being in Eb [concert] here, or in F in the trumpet key – looking at the top we have C minor, then a ii V to Eb. C minor and Eb are so similar that I want to make sure I land firmly in Eb, playing something very indicative of Eb major. So the next chord is the V of ii, or C7. The chord after that, as a point of reference, I think of being F minor 7 (b5) going to Bb7. To me, that is a very interesting "happening" specific to this tune, where you have a V of ii, and I always try to play the E - the 3rd. This is something I listen for when people play the Blues – because so many people blow off the V of ii. The 3rd [of the V of ii] is the one note that first of all, tells you that you're not on a diatonic vi chord – in this case a C minor chord, but with the 3rd and 7th [of the C7] – the Bb is diatonic to the overall key, the E is not.
>
> By playing the E, that allows you to theoretically add all the wonderful alterations and extensions on a V chord. If you play a Ab on the C7 without playing the E first, it just sounds like you're playing a diatonic note. The ear relates it to the key of Eb, so we're waiting around on the Ab until it resolves to the G on the Eb chord.
>
> If you play the E first, the Ab suddenly sounds like a b13, it sounds like a non-diatonic note to Eb, because it's been made to sound interesting by the E. Of course, you don't have to play the E first, you could play the Ab first and then the E which in retrospect would make the Ab sound interesting.
>
> So on secondary dominants, I always try to get the third in there. You could probably go through all the C7's in here [the transcription] and find an E in many of them. It's the same thing going to the bridge with the D7 altered. A lot of times, I'm likely playing a F# in there.[35]

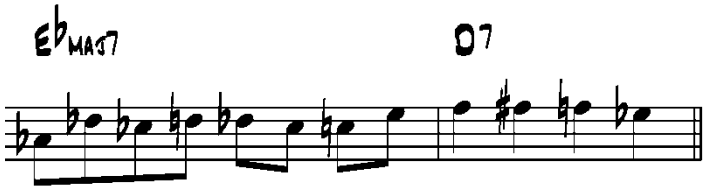
Hagans does in fact play the third of secondary dominant chords often in his performance to clearly outline that function, often times surrounded by altered tones that create harmonic tension. Examples 4.5 and 4.6 are two such instances, with each presentation of the third being partnered with some type of altered extension within the phrase. In Example 4.5, Hagans establishes the 3rd (E) of the C7 on the last beat, playing the b7, b13, and 5th before it. In Example 4.6, Hagans surrounds the 3rd (F#) of the D7 with both alterations of the 9th (#9 and b9).

[35] Tim Hagans, interview by author, 19 January 2010, phone conversation recording.

Example 4.5 Tim Hagans, I Hear A Rhapsody Solo
mm. 29 – 30, First Chorus, Last A Section



Example 4.6 Tim Hagans, I Hear A Rhapsody Solo
mm. 49 -50, Second Chorus, Second A section leading to Bridge



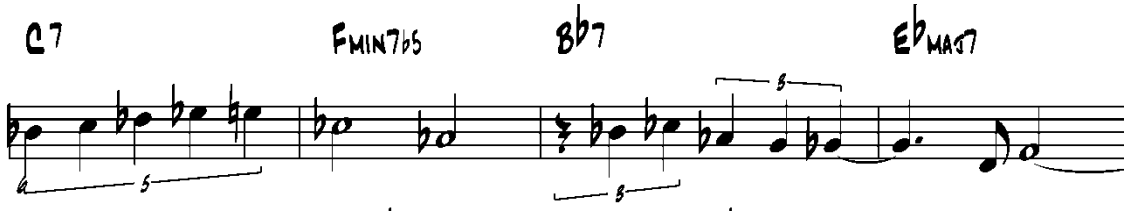
Hagans cites the Fmin7b5 occurring in the measure immediately following the C7 as another important element defining the framework of *I Hear A Rhapsody.* This chord occurs in the fifth measure of the A section and is used as a ii V function to return to tonic, Eb major. In most cases, the ii leading to I tonic is a minor chord, Dorian mode. However, the alteration of the Cb (b5) is a note from the melody of the song, and an important pitch that defines the sound of the composition. Whereas many improvisers opt to play the F minor Dorian sound while improvising over the tune, Hagans feels that it's a necessary element to outline in his improvisational approach, and has a definitive color association with that particular pitch.

> So the F minor b5 is this green-ish, blue-ish F thing that I see and the Cb – the flat keys tend to be darker hued – but the Cb is this brownish-black thing. That's just how I see it. Of course, emotionally and physically – which is different than talking about the colors, although they are related – it feels a certain way to play a Cb in that particular situation.[36]

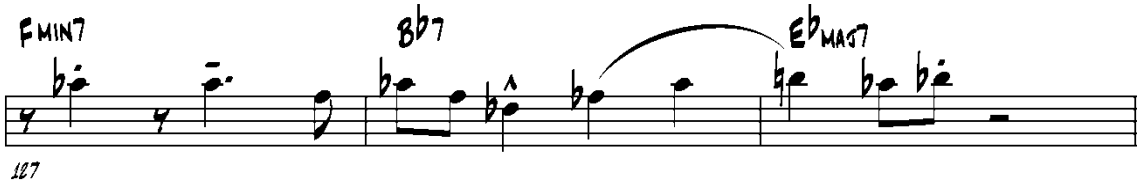
[36] Tim Hagans, interview by author, 19 January 2010, phone conversation recording.

Hagans uses the Cb extensively throughout his performance on the Fmin7b5, but also uses it as an effective tension note, often playing it as a half-step motive against the Bb in the upper register in his linear phrases. Example 4.7 illustrates the use of the third in the secondary dominant function and the Cb over the Fmin7b5 in his opening phrase. Example 4.8 features a delayed instance of the Cb, played as the high point of a melodic phrase over the Eb major. Example 4.9 illustrates the half-step pivoting between the Bb and Cb (B natural) in addition to the use on the Fmin7b5 chord. Example 4.10 is the same phrase from the previous example surrounded by different melodic material. Finally, Example 4.11 features all elements, with the third and altered tones on the C7, use of the Cb, and the half-step pivoting.

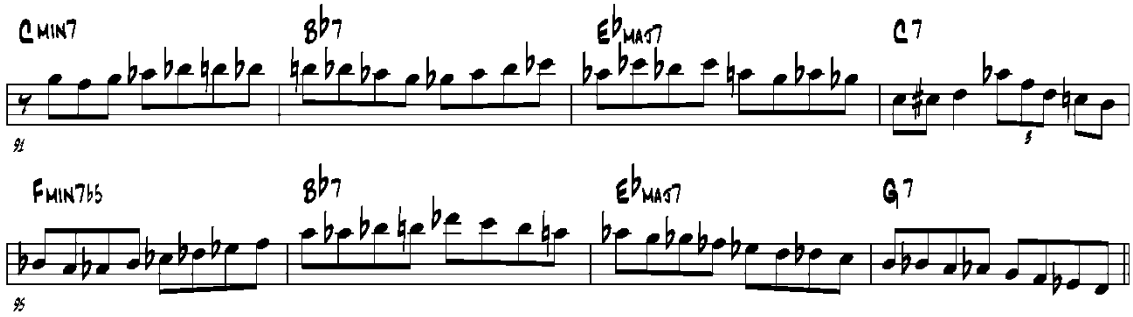
Example 4.7 Tim Hagans, I Hear A Rhapsody Solo
mm. 6 – 9.



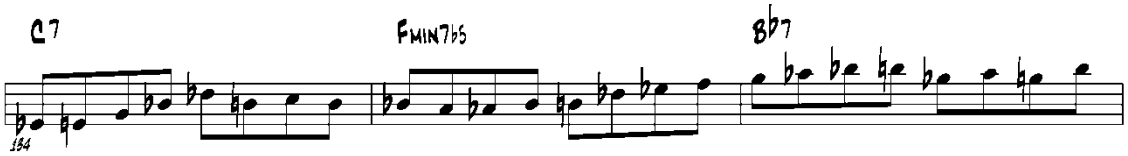
Example 4.8 Tim Hagans, I Hear A Rhapsody Solo
mm. 127 – 129.



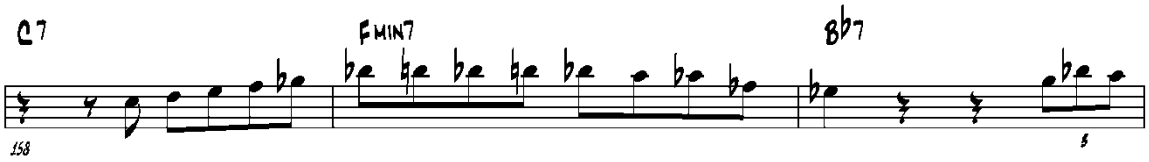
Example 4.9 Tim Hagans, I Hear A Rhapsody Solo
mm. 91 – 98.



Example 4.10 Tim Hagans, I Hear A Rhapsody Solo
mm. 134- 136.



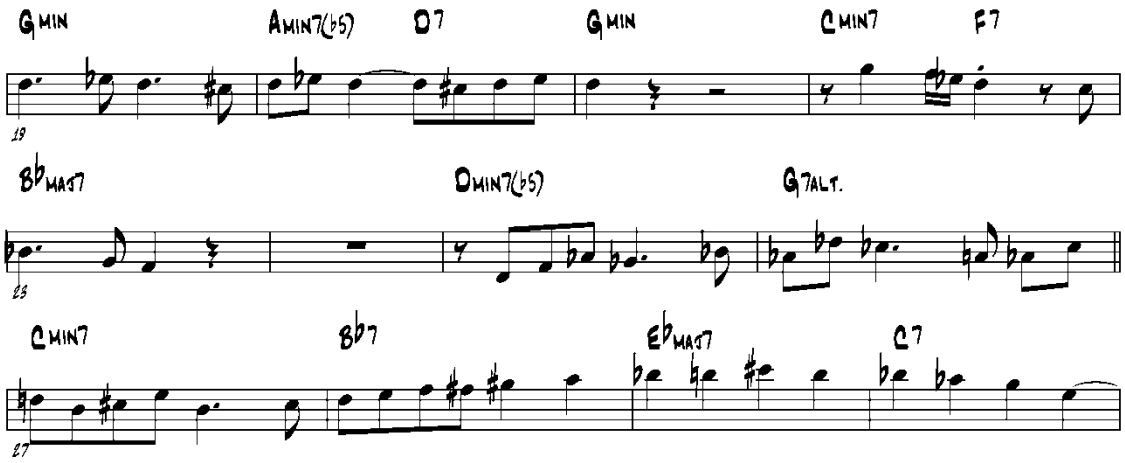
Example 4.11 Tim Hagans, I Hear A Rhapsody Solo
mm. 158 – 160.



Finally, Hagans uses visual shapes, or structures that are repeated, altered, or slightly modified to create consonance through structure, although they may contain harmonic tension or "wrong notes." In this case, the initial motive may present itself as a vague two-dimensional contour corresponding to the pitch relationships and rhythm as it would appear traditionally notated on staff paper. Although the pitches may be somewhat arbitrary, Hagans does experience some modifying on the fly, particularly if he's trying to play certain pitch groupings to resolve to specific chord tones. In Example 4.12, Hagans plays a specific shape or contour, starting with a diminished triad to clearly

establish the Dmin7b5 sound, but quickly departs by landing on the major third. However, Hagans states that he's not so concerned with the corresponding chords, but rather in playing a melodic contour that will get him to Cmin7 in an interesting way.

Example 4.12 Tim Hagans, I Hear A Rhapsody Solo
mm. 19 – 30.



> Even though I outline the D minor thing before that, I'm not so much thinking, "Okay, I'm playing over Dmin7b5, and then G7 altered." I'm thinking what would be an interesting line or contour that would lead back to C minor. I don't have any predetermined goal that I'm going to play D on beat one of the C minor. That's a decision that's probably made somewhere around beat four of the previous bar. A lot of it is influenced by what I just played – something very tonal on the ii V heading into Bb. I'm still playing legato, not really burning the eighth notes yet. I'm just playing a line with some notes I know are going to be foreign to D minor. Once you get to the G7 altered, everything works, so at that point it's really about playing something interesting to get back to C minor. As soon as I get to C minor, I play one eighth note and I'm out of the tonality again. Again, you can see on that C7, I land right on the E on beat four of that bar, just to emphasize that 3rd again on the V of ii. I'm just trying to be in and out, and not necessarily humorous, but I'm a funny person, so it happens.[37]

Using repeated and modified motives, referred to as sequencing, or patterns in jazz, is an effective way to create consonance through structure, as the ear tends to grasp the similarities in shape and contour, regardless of the consonance related to pitch choice

[37] Tim Hagans, interview by author, 19 January 2010, phone conversation recording.

and chord-scale relationships. Hagans, like a number of prominent improvisers, uses this sequencing to great effect.

Despite initially feeling that the performance didn't meet his expectations, Hagans states that this is one of his strongest recorded solos and contains a number of aspects important to both his improvisational approach and his experience with visualization. Although he feels that the color associations are much more present in the act of actually creating and improvising in the moment, his recollections of certain visual experiences and how they relate to traditional approaches of voice-leading and phrasing are invaluable in understanding his unique approach. Through his effective descriptions of the process, the observer can gain insight as to what is actually happening while he's improvising and how abstract concepts, such as colors, shapes, and contours relate to the musical product that we hear, or read in a transcription.

Exercises for Practice and Development

Hagans' visual experiences, particularly with color association, have been present throughout his career and development as a musician. Therefore, he doesn't prescribe any musical or mental exercises or techniques to develop the color experience to students or fellow improvisers. However, he does talk extensively with developing improvisers and students about exploring the emotional and physical feelings created by certain pitches in certain harmonic situations. If color associations arise from developing those emotional connections, that is a positive side-effect and may help them to strengthen the connection between musical content and emotional events.

While a number of jazz education materials focus on chord-scale relationships, Hagans feels that the physiological effect and situational use of each pitch of that particular scale are not effectively explored and considered by improvisers. Hagans suggests taking a scale typically used over a specific chord and holding each one of the scale pitches, taking the time to really consider how each note feels and sounds and where the student may hear or visualize that note going next in a series of pitches. Furthermore, when using specific scales and chord combinations, one should also consider where certain pitches want to move in certain harmonic progressions. For example, playing a certain pitch quality such as the 13 from the Dorian mode over a minor chord may have different emotional resolution tendencies if the minor chord is part of a ii V I progression, as opposed to part of a minor vamp. Considering these feelings and tendencies are key in developing a personal approach that is still considerate of the jazz tradition, yet makes the improviser a "more sensitive, honest, and true to yourself player.[38]"

This concept also applies to tension pitches, such as altered extensions performed over certain chord structures, and in a more fundamental sense, tension pitches that have a dissonance due to structural elements, such as the fourth degree of the major scale played over the corresponding major seventh chord. This is generally observed as a dissonant note choice due to the half-step "clash" with the major third. An aspiring student or developing improviser should experiment with the dissonant degrees of chord-scale or outside scale relationships in order to internalize and understand why they are dissonant, and what that dissonance feels/sounds like. From a pedagogical viewpoint, this is much different than focusing on the validity of pitch choices based on existing practice.

[38] Tim Hagans, interview by author, 19 January 2010, phone conversation recording.

Hagans also talks extensively about using larger scale musical concepts to create natural tension and release. This includes playing asymmetrically over the form with longer melodic phrases and use of available harmonic tensions over sections of the song or improvisational structures. The key element for Hagans is creating a sense of balance between tension and release in every aspect of his improvisational approach.

> Everything is going towards a resolution at some point. There are two things I can say: If you're always playing out, it becomes boring because the listener and even me as a player, I crave resolution. If you're always playing inside over the diatonic harmony, and you're playing what's expected, that becomes boring too.
>
> It's a combination of the proper amount of tension and release and on a tune like this [I Hear A Rhapsody], it's built in where the preparation is on the subdominant chords and the dominant chords, where something needs to happen. You can see how many more notes are available – on a dominant chord, like I said – every note except the major seventh, and why not throw that in too? On a major I chord, the number of acceptable notes to our ears is somewhat limited – so it's natural to resolve it back to that…
>
> […]Playing over the bar lines is very important and I talk about it with students – to play over the phrase markings. It adds excitement and takes you into new territories emotionally. Of course, if you do that all the time, it also becomes boring. Sometimes you have to just land on one and hook up with the natural phrasing of the tune. Again, it's that balance of tension and release.[39]

As evident in his performance of *I Hear A Rhapsody*, Hagans uses various musical concepts as the basis for creating tension. Certain elements, such as non-tonal pitches outlining secondary functions, should be practiced and internalized in order to clearly portray harmonic functions and possible tensions. Hagans also emphasizes the need to develop a musical language that avoids the over-use of clichés and typical resolutions and tendencies, citing that often times he as a listener can sing along to improvised solos as they are played because they resolve and develop in predictable ways. Ultimately, students should strive to achieve balance between the harmonic concepts of voice-leading from the bebop tradition, and the creative element of

[39] Tim Hagans, interview by author, 19 January 2010, phone conversation recording.

developing a personal "voice." Developing relationships between aural and visual content can assist improvisers in organizing these concepts into meaningful musical material that effectively portrays musical intent.

Other concepts, such as pre-visualizing general contours and developing melodic shapes are effective ways to portray macro ideas related to content, energy, and forward momentum in an improvisation. Practicing these concepts and considering the abstract visual similarities possible in performance can assist improvisers in presenting longer and more meaningful musical phrases, playing in a horizontal melodic manner, and focusing less on the vertical relationships often emphasized in jazz education and early improvisational development. Additionally, visualizing an accurate written notation of what one is currently improvising can be a useful tool in developing musical awareness, particularly in phrasing, rhythm, and pitch choice.

For Hagans, all these factors return to the fundamental concept and general theme that unites his knowledge of traditional musical practices and abstract visualization – individual emotive states and their corresponding musical content. In his opinion, although it is rarely discussed, this is likely an outlook that has unified the improvisational approaches of significant jazz figures:

> I try to bring out questions that they [students] should ask themselves that perhaps you can't really answer verbally, but they are good things to observe about your own playing. I think that needs to be brought out a lot more. That's the way I always thought, but I don't really hear anyone talk about it. I'm sure if you went back and asked these questions to Charlie Parker or Coltrane, they would have different answers, but it would be along the same lines. They are playing from emotion. They are not trying to play "approved" things that are right or wrong, or that will get them through a jury at school. They're just trying to express themselves. How do you express yourself?[40]

[40] Tim Hagans, interview by author, 19 January 2010, phone conversation recording.

Conclusions

A reoccurring theme in examining visualization in improvisation, particularly with the selected subjects of this study, is using the thoughts and approaches of the improviser to examine the process of improvisation. Analysis of transcriptions, which is an extremely useful tool in understanding jazz language, focuses on the product. This is a particularly important distinction in examining the improvisational style of Tim Hagans, whose harmonic substitutions, side-slipping, and long eighth note phrases often don't follow the formulaic approaches taught or observed in a modern inside/outside improvisational approach. Transcribing and examining Hagans' solo on *I Hear A Rhapsody*, for example, would require a great amount of guesswork to decipher what he's intending to portray musically and how that relates to what the listener is hearing.

Although it still requires an amount of abstract thinking, examining Hagans' improvisational approach through the lens of his own descriptions and abstract musical relationships can assist in developing a better understanding of his musical intent and what he's thinking/considering while improvising. The transcription of *I Hear A Rhapsody* has additional meaning and content when you are aware that the improviser may have been visualizing a general contour and used that as a framework for phrasing, or experienced notational transcription with color associations – picking certain pitches because they contain specific emotional qualities in that particular moment at that particular location.

The visual element of Hagans' improvisational process is a unique set of concepts that are based on his experiences in music, and likely come from his personal experiences before and outside of music. Combining those abstract elements and synthesizing them

into his process has allowed him to improvise and create music that is tied directly to the main abstract function of music – to create feeling and elicit an emotional response. As Hagans states, "music is the most abstract form of art we have,[41]" and by examining his relationships between musical material (i.e. pitches, rhythms, and phrases) and the abstract concepts of colors, shapes, contours, etc. we can examine his improvisations accurately at both the situational and meta (or large-scale) levels.

Hagans' experiences with color associations for both harmony and pitches are extremely unique and very specific. As stated earlier, this could be a form of Sound Color Synesthesia, and Hagans would be an interesting case study for a qualified neurological expert as he is experiencing those relationships while creating music in time, not as a listener. Hagans also has the unique ability to change color relationships as he's improvising by super-imposing other musical/color material. Codifying Hagans' approach into technology and media presentation could create new ways to experience live music performances, as those musical associations could be programmed to be presented visually while improvising. This would create another level of interaction for audiences and listeners as they could potentially observe the same (or similar) color associations that the improviser is experiencing at the same time.

Visualizing general contours on a two-dimensional axis with notational transcription while improvising further strengthens the connection between the visual aspect of musical performance (reading music) and corresponding aural performance. Although this concept may seem abstract, it is constantly reinforced through the reading of music and all the subjects of this study experience some form of temporal transcription in their visual improvisational approach.

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[41] Tim Hagans, interview by author, 15 November 2010, phone conversation recording.

Finally, this study has also proved to be a useful exercise in self-reflection for Hagans. Although he has experienced visual and emotional relationships to music his entire life, considering those relationships and finding a way to describe them effectively has illuminated the process for him as well. This is a key component in defending the importance of this study and its usefulness for developing improvisers. Self-reflection and considering what one is actually thinking or experiencing while improvising is a defining concept in how one can present their musical ideas effectively and constructively. By understanding the process, we can further understand how we think and relate to music as an entire sensory experience, and how we may accurately convey our unique experiences to listeners.

CHAPTER 5

SUBJECT 2 – BRIAN LYNCH

Biography and Musical Background/Credits

Trumpeter Brian Lynch was born September 12, 1956 in Urbana, Illinois and grew up in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Lynch initially voiced interest in playing the saxophone after watching the Dick Clark Five performing on the Ed Sullivan Show as a fifth grader. However, the family dentist suggested that Lynch's overbite would be problematic in playing the saxophone, so he chose the trumpet.

Lynch studied initially in the early 1970's with Doug Myers, a trumpeter with the Milwaukee Symphony. Although there was some jazz instruction, the main focus of his study was trumpet technique and exercises intended to develop basic brass fundamentals and skills. In fact, Lynch has consistently studied with orchestral trumpeters and brass pedagogues throughout his career, including William Vachiano, Vincent Penzarella, Mark Gould, and William Fielder.

> When I'm looking for solutions to technical problems I look more towards the classical tradition, even though I'm not someone who practiced the classical repertoire or even solo pieces that much. Conceptually I come more from that direction in terms of how I play the trumpet. What my ideals are in terms of how I want to play the trumpet come from this background.[42]

Lynch stayed in the Milwaukee area, attending the Wisconsin Conservatory of Music, while simultaneously receiving professional training by performing with musicians Buddy Montgomery (vibraphone) and Melvin Rhyne (organ) in local clubs.

[42] Brian Lynch, "A Commitment to Excellence," interview by Todd Erdman, *International Trumpet Guild,* (June 2007); [online] retrieved from http://brianlynchjazz.com; internet (accessed 15 Dec 2010).

Lynch credits the diverse realms of the traditional conservatory experience and the aural skills inherent in working with established jazz musicians as an important combination in his musical development. It was around this time that Lynch also became involved with Afro-Latin/Caribbean Music, performing in Toty Ramos' Milwaukee-based Latin ensemble. Although Lynch is most often cast into the genres of Hardbop and Latin Jazz due to his current musical associations and projects, Lynch also performed in the jazz-rock style of Miles Davis – using effects pedals on his trumpet – and the Avant-Garde styles of Sun Ra and the Art Ensemble of Chicago.[43]

Upon the completion of his studies, and an increasingly lean environment for jazz and trumpet work, Lynch relocated to San Diego in 1980 and spent a year working under the tutelage of Alto Saxophonist Charles McPherson. McPherson introduced Lynch to the pedagogical approach of jazz educator Barry Harris and apprenticed Lynch on the bebop tradition via his experience working with artists like Charles Mingus. Lynch moved to New York City in 1981 and began working with Salsa Bands through friendships he developed with fellow trumpeters Claudio Roditi and Angel Canales, building on his early musical experiences. Through a growing positive reputation, Lynch was soon working with the ensembles of George Russell and Toshiko Akiyoshi in the early 1980's. In 1982, he was recommended to jazz pianist Horace Silver's Ensemble by trumpeter Tom Harrell. Lynch toured and recorded with Silver until 1985, simultaneously working in New York City with the Latin Jazz Ensembles of Angel Canales and Hector LaVoe.

[43] Brian Lynch, Interview by Ted Panken, September 2009, NY Public Library; [online] retrieved from http://brianlynchjazz.com; internet (accessed 15 Dec 2010).

Lynch recorded his first album as a leader, *Peer-Pressure*[44] in 1986 and began his long lasting association with Latin Jazz Pianist Eddie Palmieri in 1987. Drummer and band leader Art Blakey was a frequent listener at Lynch's performances with Palmieri's group in New York City clubs. Lynch was an admirer of Blakey's music and the rich history of his ensembles, and sat in with Blakey's Jazz Messengers a few times when Wynton Marsalis was the trumpeter in the early 1980's. Although the elder statesman by sideman standards (he was 32), Lynch joined the last iteration of Art Blakey and the Jazz Messengers in 1988 and performed with the ensemble until Blakey's death in 1990.

> We were incredibly active. Added to anything I could say about Horace [Silver], with Art I had to play not just consistently, but at 110 percent every night. There was incredible dynamism in the music, so I had to play with a very penetrating and dynamic sound and really had to project my ideas or else I wouldn't have been heard. There was also a healthy competition between the people in the band. Nobody took any prisoners. There were also all of these other trumpet players who wanted your gig, and they made no bones about wanting your chair [laughter]. There's nothing like that now. For me it was a dream come true. I was a little long in the tooth by the time I joined that band, being in my 30s, because it was more of a gig for a younger musician. I came into that gig as a more experienced and veteran player than the usual candidate, but I always felt my career wouldn't be complete unless I had had that experience. It was a very empowering experience because Art had that way of sending that legacy down to you and letting you know that you now had the responsibility of keeping the tradition alive. For me music has changed a lot since then, but the values of that music, as exemplified by the music of Art and Horace, is something that will always be central to my musical life and is a value that should not be lost in jazz music as a whole. It needs to endure without imitation[45].

At this point in his career, Lynch had performed as a member of two of the most important and lasting jazz small groups in history, adding to the lineage of great trumpet sideman who became major leaders in their own right. His career continued to flourish; he joined the Phil Woods quintet in 1992, an ensemble he continues to perform with, and

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[44] Brian Lynch, *Peer-Pressure,* Brian Lynch, trumpet. Criss Cross 1029. [1986]. CD recording.
[45] Brian Lynch, "A Commitment to Excellence," interview by Todd Erdman, *International Trumpet Guild,* (June 2007); [online] retrieved from http://brianlynchjazz.com; internet (accessed 15 Dec 2010).

recorded as a leader on 12 albums and as a sideman on various others. During the 1990's, Lynch's relationship with Eddie Palmieri shifted from performing sideman to collaborator. Lynch served as an arranger, co-composer, and musical director with Palmieri and contributed heavily to Palmieri's *La Perfecta II*[46] and *Ritmo Caliente.*[47] In 1997, Lynch's album *Spheres of Influence*[48] earned a 4-1/2 star review in Downbeat Magazine. The album covered a wide array of musical influences from Lynch's experience in the straight-ahead jazz and Afro-Cuban jazz styles, partnered with his voice as an original composer and arranger.

Although well established as a performer, Lynch returned to school in 1998, earning a Master of Music degree in Composition from New York University in 2001. He continued to develop the *Spheres of Influence* concept, surrounding himself with well-known Pan-American musicians and continuing to compose music for a variety of ensembles. In 2006, his relationship with Eddie Palmieri culminated in the Artistshare album, *Simpatico*[49] which won a Grammy Award for Best Latin Jazz Album of the Year in 2007. His current projects include the "Unsung Heroes" ensemble, which features the compositions of lesser-known jazz trumpeters and the "Latin-Side of" projects with trombonist Conrad Herwig, which re-imagines the classic jazz recordings of Miles Davis, Herbie Hancock, and John Coltrane in a Latin Jazz Context.

In recent years, Lynch has become increasingly active as an educator, currently holding positions at New York University and the North Netherlands Conservatory, and travels extensively as a guest clinician and performing artist at Universities nationwide.

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[46] Eddie Palmieri. *La Perecta II,* Eddie Palmieri, piano. Concord Jazz 2136, [2002]. CD recording.
[47] Eddie Palmieri. *Ritmo Caliente,* Eddie Palmieri, piano. Concord Jazz 2180. [2003]. CD recording.
[48] Brian Lynch, *Spheres of Influnce,* Brian Lynch, trumpet. Sharp Nine 1007, [1997]. CD recording.
[49] Brian Lynch, Eddie Palmieri. *Simpatico,* Brian Lynch, trumpet, and Eddie Palmieri, piano. Artistshare 861302. [2006]. CD recording.

He recently completed a tour of Europe for the U.S. State Department leading the Brian Lynch NYU Afro-Caribbean Jazz Ensemble, a student group that Lynch directs, leads, and performs with.

Visualization and the Improvisational Process

Lynch describes the visual element of his improvisational approach as requiring an initiator, and notes that the initiation exists in a gray area as to the source and manner in which it may be presented. Once the visual process is initiated, it can take on a variety of forms related to visual imagery, such as relationships in a two-dimensional field related closely to music notation, and in some cases adding a third-dimension of depth through use of harmonic relationships. Additionally, abstract shapes and objects can come into the visual framework, initialized by pitch, duration, and rhythm.

Lynch states that the most challenging aspect in describing his personal experience with visualization is defining his role as initiating it as a soloist, or if it is a result of musical interaction. In his words, "There is often confusion between cause and effect.[50]" At the beginning of a solo, Lynch may visualize initial pitch choices and their rhythmic duration, creating an abstract shape existing on a two-dimensional plane. Like Hagans, this is similar to the locative functions observed in traditional musical notation. Pitch relationships and register constitute a vertical axis. However, he may also view vertical relationships not just as pitch location (range), but also their place in the "tonal field[51]" – referring to the pitch(es) location in a field related to mode or scale relationships and selecting those "unordered pitches" based on visual patterns to

[50] Brian Lynch, interview by author, 9 November 2010, phone conversation notes.
[51] Ibid.

construct a melodic phrase. In this case, Lynch uses a metaphor of beads hanging from a necklace:

> If you're thinking vertically, you're probably seeing the pitches that are more or less strung from top to bottom, like the beads on a necklace that are being held from the top and hanging down. They are ordered in a sense, but you're thinking about the patterns that could be created. An arpeggio would be every other bead out and a pentatonic would be certain patterning.[52]

In this particular experience, Lynch is visualizing abstractly to create pitch based "shapes," but is using the framework of a specific mode or scale that has a relationship to what is currently or typically performed in that harmonic situation. Space between pitches is maintained, like leaving the beads of the necklace out, in order to maintain certain structures and create general shapes corresponding to pitches and order.

In describing the movement of time, Lynch views the notes or abstract shapes "unrolling in a forward type of motion, left to right[53]" while he is improvising. Again, when related to a two-dimensional visual model, time and duration would be placed along a horizontal axis, moving left to right, similar to traditional music notation. However, Lynch's model is strikingly more abstract and temporal in nature as he visualizes the notes and rhythms unrolling in real-time, corresponding to what he's actually performing. In his particular experience, these rolls of notes are visualized for Bb trumpet (transposed) and can vary between very detailed and accurate transcription, like traditional written notation, or an abstract combination of contours and shapes with visualized notes.

For Lynch, the concept of music "unrolling" is further evident in the use of double-time. He describes playing melodic lines in double-time as transcending the

[52] Brian Lynch, interview by author, 10 February 2011, phone conversation recording.
[53] Brian Lynch, interview by author, 9 November 2010, phone conversation notes.

individual note choices to instead focus on "visual formulas[54]" of long series of notes, scales, or learned patterns. These "formulas" still unroll while he's performing, but at a faster rate and in larger segments, and are based on typical formations of musical material developed in his own practice or through the assimilation of other improvers' styles. Lynch compares this to observing and internalizing the musical language of specific improvisers. After awhile, the listener or observer can hear where phrases may head next or what may be played next based on familiarity with a particular style.

> It's [the visual formulas] just a longer segment of notes that go together naturally. They may have been at some level rehearsed or put together. I think that everyone gets to some type of typical formations that are typical of their playing. You'll find that when you're transcribing anyone, from Coltrane to Freddie Hubbard, or Kenny Dorham on down. When you transcribe your tenth Kenny Dorham solo, you can almost sing along with the solo, the same thing with Bird [Charlie Parker], because you know that this part usually comes after that part, or something similar.[55]

The rolls of music can also be edited during the process of improvisation based on musical decisions occurring in time. For example, a line may be adjusted to arrive at a certain rhythmic location based on form, phrase endings, or pitch choice.

Describing the initiation or activation of visualization can come from a variety of sources. He finds that he is most often activating the process at the beginning of a solo by consciously visualizing an opening phrase in his improvisation which will serve as a jumping off point for what may musically follow. This is also true for the closing phrase of a solo. Lynch describes this as a visual "flash" and can often be assisted by the use of space (rests) musically. Space can activate visualization by providing Lynch with both general and specific ideas about what to play next – it could be a specific phrase, note, rhythm, or just a general shape related to the range of his instrument.

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[54] Ibid.
[55] Brian Lynch, interview by author, 10 February 2011, phone conversation recording.

The use of space can also create a physical pre-visualization (or "pre-feeling") in which Lynch may experience how it would "feel" to make certain fingering combinations on the trumpet valves before actually performing them. In fact, Lynch describes the entire visual experience as also containing the physical aspect of "visualizing" the exact fingerings he's about to play. There is a strong connection between the aural, visual, and physical aspects of performance which may stem from his approach to practice and musical preparation. Lynch employs musical practice techniques that both combine and isolate the visual, aural, and physical components of improvisation and trumpet performance (to be discussed in detail in Exercises for Practice and Development). These approaches may assist Lynch in his access to the visual connections he's developed with music and make them readily available.

Activation of the visual experience can also be provided by musical content performed by the other musicians Lynch is playing with. Their accompaniment and musical ideas can activate the process and, in turn, be internalized either specifically or abstractly by Lynch as content for his improvisation. The activating material can be harmonic information, such as specific chord voicings, or rhythmic motives. Lynch describes that in his interactions with musicians with acute ears, there can also be an interaction of visual components between individuals.

> [Visual activation can occur by] Something the other musicians are doing. Certainly in the harmonic realm – with the pianist and guitarist, certain types of voicings will activate something in return on my part. When I play with pianists that have absolute pitch, the type [of musicians] who can react very quickly to something that I do, and throw it back at me because they are likely visualizing some sense too. I wonder if they are doing it in those cases. Certain players can stimulate you because you can almost see the acuteness of their own ear. That can definitely be a factor, also rhythmic elements that come from other musicians[56].

[56] Brian Lynch, interview by author, 10 February 2011, phone conversation recording.

Lynch does not tend to improvise with his eyes closed, but does experience an "un-focusing" of the eyes when improvising, which may assist him in "tapping into the mental visual field.[57]" Lynch also experiences a direct visualization when reading chord changes or performing music that is less familiar, which does involve active and focused use of his eyesight. In those cases, Lynch visualizes the music "happening" or being written on the page as he performs, similar to a real time transcription, although it may be more abstract and shape-based as well. In his view, this may actually be the result of visualization already being present in actively reading the printed music. Although it may be less abstract and closer to actual notation, the concept of the music appearing while performing, or "unrolling" is a similar description to the elements of his visual process when improvising with his eyes unfocused.

Perhaps the most unique element in Lynch's visual experience and description of the improvisational process is his ability to visualize abstractly in three dimensions. While a two-dimensional model can be easily related to the visual process of reading music, traditional music notation does not exist in three-dimensions. The ability to associate visual imagery with music – which is intended to be heard – requires abstract and unique thought. To visualize it abstractly in three-dimensions is a particularly interesting experience, especially considering that there are no existing models of comparison or reference.

Lynch describes depth, or a third-dimension in his visual experience to illustrate "playing off-axis.[58]" In his view, there is a certain channel of movement set into the two-dimensional model of pitch (vertical) and time (horizontal) that also includes harmony. In

[57] Ibid.
[58] Brian Lynch, interview by author, 9 November 2010, phone conversation notes.

this case playing the changes, or outlining the harmonic progression that is the underlying framework of the solo, creates a channel along the two-dimensions that the improviser is playing within. Playing "outside," "side-slipping," or any manner that departs the stated harmony or tonality, creates the visual effect of departing from that plane and moving to a side dimension for a period of time, ultimately returning to the original plane if the improviser comes back "inside." Lynch also describes this as having the visual experience of "tilting the tonal plane.[59]" There is still forward momentum, moving overall left to right, due to rhythmic energy and time moving forward, but there is an added ability to leave that two-dimensional plane and play "off-axis," corresponding to how the improviser is addressing the harmonic progression or tonality. Lynch views playing in an "inside" manner as "maintaining a sense of balance[60]" within the two-dimensional stream and staying on a specific axis or plane.

To describe playing "off-axis," Lynch uses the term intertextuality, which is originally a literary term meaning to borrow, reference, or use text from another source. In music and playing "off-axis," Lynch describes intertextuality as the use of other lexicons specific to certain improvisational styles, such as the unique improvisational languages of Freddie Hubbard, John Coltrane, or McCoy Tyner. Lynch describes playing "off-axis" or "side-slipping" as change in musical style that may involve musical texts, not just a device for tension. The use of these specific "texts" creates a conversation between the styles and shifts in musical language that can in turn have a visual component. The "texts" can be translated or abstractly transferred to relationships of different musical shapes and contours specific to that style or language.

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[59] Brian Lynch, interview by author, 10 February 2011, phone conversation recording.
[60] Brian Lynch, interview by author, 9 November 2010, phone conversation notes.

> For me, side-slipping, for instance, is not just a device in itself but also seems to denote for me a change in style. Moving from "inside" to "outside" can feel like moving into a different era. Maybe "intertextuality" wasn't the most precise term to use, but I think it does have a use. I think of the lexicon of Charlie Parker or Fats Navarro as a text, just as I think of the lexicons of Freddie Hubbard, Woody Shaw, McCoy Tyner, "Chocolate" Armenteros and all the other influences as texts. Going from a classic strict bebop lexicon (which I immensely enjoy working within) to a "out" harmonic thing or a Afro Cuban way of rhythmically displacing the note objects is like the traditions conversing or the "texts" talking to each other.[61]

Intertextuality can also apply to sources used outside a particular artistic medium. For Lynch, an interest in Abstract Visual Art coincided with his musical interest in the music of Late Coltrane, and jazz that employed more adventurous harmonic, rhythmic, and sonic uses. In fact, Lynch sees a direct relationship between certain visual works of art and specific musical performances. In his experience, viewing a piece of art by Wassily Kadinsky can create the experience of mentally hearing Coltrane, or vice-versa. Lynch also cites a heavy influence musically and visually from Pablo Picasso, Cubism and the works of non-objective visual artists like Marcel Duchamp. Lynch described Duchamp's "*Nude Descending Staircase*" (Example 5.1) as "fracturing the pictoral frame the same way one would fracture harmony.[62]" The sharp angles and dissolution of perspective in modern art correlates with Lynch's visual description of improvisation in angles, shapes, planes, and dimensions.

[61] Brian Lynch, brianlynchjazz@mac.com , "Follow-up Questions," e-mail to Matthew White, mattwhitemusic@gmail.com, 9 February 2011.
[62] Brian Lynch, interview by author, 9 November 2010, phone conversation notes.

Example 5.1 Marcel Duchamp, Nude Descending Staircase (1912)

Lynch also notes that the initiation of the visual process is more prominent when playing rhythmically, which he feels could be related to his experiences in Latin Music. Playing rhythmic structures that emphasize different divisions of the beat (such as triplets or other types of tuplets) can cause visualization of specific shapes existing on a plane or axis. Playing in a polyrhythmic manner (rhythmically against the basic divisions of the pulse) by using note groupings or accents creates what Lynch describes as "cross-beats[63]" and is described as creating visual "whirling objects" or "geometric shapes[64]" while improvising.

The ability to think abstractly and in three dimensions raises interesting questions when regarding the process and intent of a musical artist when improvising. While a traditional analysis of the product, i.e. a transcription, may lead an educated observer to

[63] Brian Lynch, brianlynchjazz@mac.com , "Follow-up Questions," e-mail to Matthew White, mattwhitemusic@gmail.com, 9 February 2011.
[64] Brian Lynch, interview by author, 9 November 2010, phone conversation notes.

assume that the improviser was using musical intertexuality (such as side-slipping to the same mode a half-step away, or super-imposing the Coltrane Matrix), it is decidedly more challenging to consider it in terms of the performer – who may have been visualizing the music as "off-axis," unrolling, or based on lexicons and corresponding visual shapes. Lynch's ability to both make these relationships, and describe them pertaining to his unique view, allows insight into the process of the improviser experience in the moment of performing. Additionally, improvising with an abstract approach allows Lynch to consider the meta-content of his solo – focusing more on the overall scope and content of what he's trying to present musically, and less on the smaller, specific musical choices.

Musical Examples

For Lynch, the experience of visualization is not necessarily present at all times while improvising, or at least in a conscious, observed manner. However, there are instances where visualization is activated and observed on his part through his development and creation of musical content, or through interaction with fellow musicians. In some cases, the more unique and abstract elements of his visual experience are consciously observed in his solo, including "off-axis" or dimensional relationships based on melodic contour and harmonic use, visual effects created by rhythmic devices, and finally instances of abstract and transcriptional visualization while performing.

Lynch cites one particular recent performance as containing each of these elements, while also being fairly accessible from a traditional analytical standpoint and stylistically contained within the swing and straight-ahead jazz genres. His latest album,

Unsung Heroes,[65] is a three-volume project that is a tribute to under-appreciated trumpeters of the jazz lineage, focusing on their original compositions, or songs written in the style of a specific trumpeter by Lynch himself. While Lynch still has active relationships with record labels/distributors Criss Cross and Artistshare, *Unsung Heroes* was released under his music company, Hollistic MusicWorks, and is only available through digital download. The project features Lynch on trumpet and flugelhorn, with a supporting cast of: Vincent Herring – saxophone, Alex Hoffman – saxophone, Rob Schneiderman – piano, David Wong – bass, Pete Van Nostrand – drums, and Vicente Rivero – congas. Lynch recalls his improvisation on the Charles Tolliver composition, *House of Saud*, from Volume 1 as containing instances of visualization during the improvisational process.

House of Saud was first recorded in trumpeter Charles Tolliver's album *Paper Man*[66] in 1968. The version on *Unsung Heroes* is performed in an up-tempo 4/4 swing style. The composition features a thirty measure form, divided into three distinct sections. The first sixteen measures are performed over an E minor11 vamp. There is a short "bridge" section lasting six measures with descending dominant chords, and a final eight measure section with two four measure phrases featuring a "cross-beat" rhythmic accompaniment in the rhythm section over F major7(#11) and B7alt. Lynch plays the opening solo in the performance, improvising over the form of the composition for three full choruses.

Although Lynch visualizes in the transposed Bb key for trumpet, all musical examples will be presented and discussed in concert pitch. Like Hagans, Lynch also

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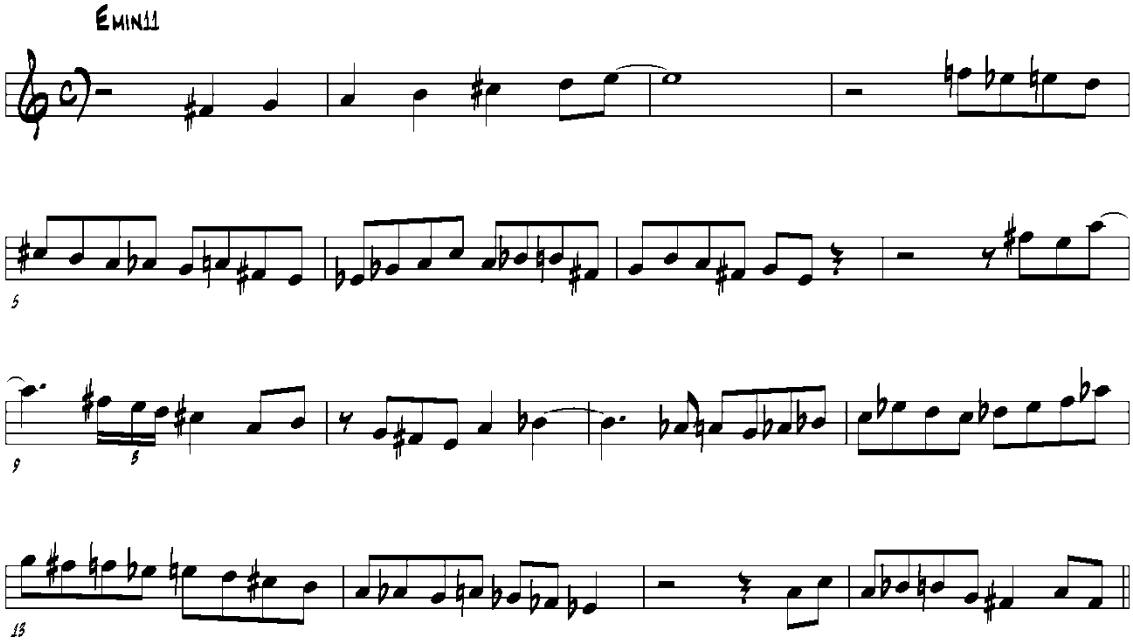
[65] Brian Lynch, *Unsung Heroes, Vol. 1,* Brian Lynch, trumpet. Hollistic MusicWorks. [2010]. Digital Download

[66] Charles Tolliver, *Paper Man,* Charles Tolliver, trumpet. Freedom Jazz, 148990. [1968]. Vinyl Record.

described the musical aspects of the transcription and solo in the Bb key during interviews. Direct quotes will be modified in the analysis of this particular performance to reflect concert pitch, but will remain in their original form in the interview transcription section of the appendix.

Example 5.2 is Lynch's opening phrase from *House of Saud* and features a few components of his improvisational approach and the subsequent visual relationships. There is a slight break or space between the previous statement of the melody and Lynch's opening motive, which is an ascending quarter note line outlining the corresponding Dorian Mode of E minor11. Lynch recalls that space is often useful in helping him to visualize his opening phrase – on what note it will start, the general contour, and the physical-visual component of visualizing the particular fingerings for that phrase.

Example 5.2 Brian Lynch, House of Saud Solo
mm. 1-16



With the exception of some chromaticism for voice-leading and enclosures, Lynch is fairly consistent in outlining the E Dorian (minor) sound for the first ten measures, while also hinting at melodic structures that would be tonally related, such as the Eb diminished structure (or B7b9 starting from the third) in measure six. The first instance of side-slipping or leaving the E minor modal sound occurs in measure ten on beat four, emphasized by the Bb, or b5 in relation to the current chord. Lynch feels that by landing on that particular pitch as a tension and playing a durational accent, he is initiating a corresponding visual element related to the three-dimensional experience of playing "off-axis." Although the melodic material following that durational pitch (Bb) could be traditionally analyzed as outlining a Bb7 and Eb7 (a half-step and tri-tone shift away respectively), Lynch experiences the harmonic and melodic tension visually.

> I'm thinking more Bb7 there [sings the line], then more of a short Eb7, eventually getting back to the E minor through a couple of chromatic turns. I think that's a good place to discuss, because I think you could find a number of different places in my solo where I would use that sort of strategy of emphasizing something more or less a half-step up from a certain important or preceding pitch. I think that is something that I do experience inside my head visually as some kind of tilting of the tonic plane.[67]

Playing in an outside key or mode, or "side-slipping" has the visual effect of tilting the tonic plane, or involving a third dimension abstractly in space for Lynch. Although the "text" may be derived from a learned musical pattern or approach (either developed through practice or by involving the musical language of a specific improviser), the musical information is ultimately translated and experienced abstractly in contours, shapes, and dimensional relationships. This allows Lynch to discuss and analyze content through traditional musical approaches related to aural information, but also through abstract experience.

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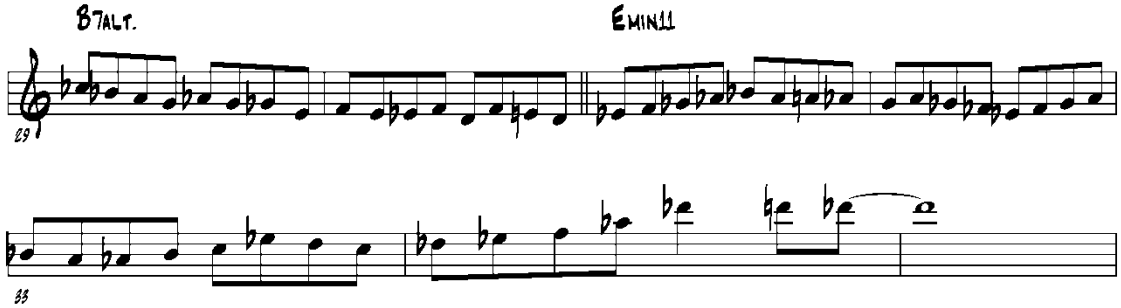
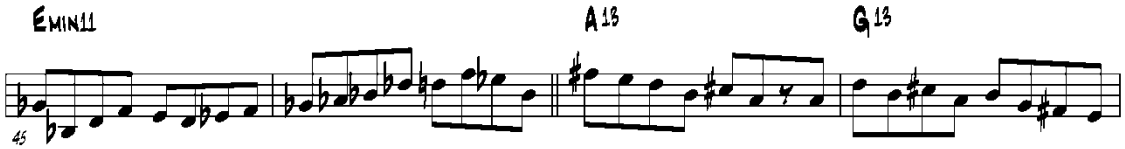
[67] Brian Lynch, interview by author, 10 February 2011, phone conversation recording.

Lynch employs “off-axis” harmonic relationships in a variety of locations throughout his solo. In Example 5.3, Lynch begins his second chorus by oscillating between Eb and E minor over the E minor11 chord and subsequently employing the same harmonic relationships as the earlier example, outlining Bb7 and Eb7 displaced rhythmically. In this particular instance, the activation is not brought on by a durational tension, but rather the strong voice leading to set up each alteration. Lynch uses a similar device in Example 5.4, outlining the oscillating half-step relationship (Eb minor against E minor) again to lead into the six measure “bridge” section. Both examples illustrate common side-slipping approaches that are experienced by Lynch as abstract dimensional visualizations, similar to his descriptions of abstract art that shifts perspective or fractures the pictorial framework.

Example 5.3 Brian Lynch, House of Saud Solo
mm. 29- 35



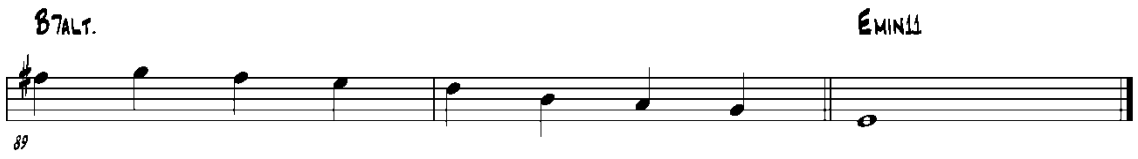
Example 5.4 Brian Lynch, House of Saud Solo
mm. 45 -48



One typical rhythmic aspect of Lynch's improvisational approach not found in this particular solo is use of triplets or other odd numbered rhythmic groupings to create geometric shapes in his visualized field. In his opinion, this particular type of composition doesn't necessarily warrant that approach as Lynch wants to "keep the swing and drive going.[68]" He achieves this largely by using long eighth note passages, quarter notes, and some syncopation. Phrases with quarter notes placed on the downbeats occur throughout this solo and allow Lynch to emphasize the pulse and keep his time-feel grounded. Similar to the opening of his solo, Lynch also ends his solo with downbeat quarter notes (Example 5.5), this time in a descending contour. He feels that specific visualization of how he begins and ends his solo is an important part of his process and occurs regularly when improvising.

> I think going into quarter notes gives the ear a little breathing space and emphasizes the time more. Sometimes when you're playing these long eighth note lines and chromatically, you have to be careful that there isn't some drift in your time feel. I think playing the quarter notes can allow you to stay grounded... I'll often have a visualization of the first phrase of my solo. It's important to have something very precise in mind for what you first play. I think this is also true for the last thing you play, or how you finish your solo. I definitely have the sort-of flash before I start playing – notice that there is a small pause [on the *House of Saud* solo] and that may be space to consider that. It might be a small indication to myself that I'll start playing quarter notes and see where that leads me.[69]

Example 5.5 Brian Lynch, House of Saud Solo
mm. 89-90

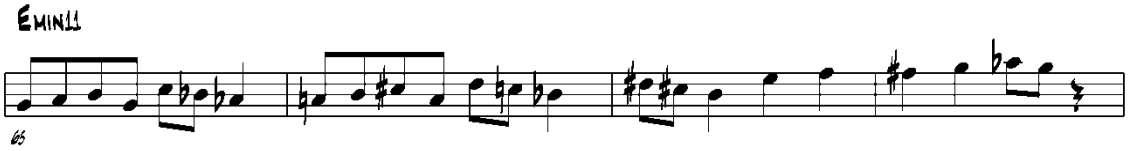


[68] Brian Lynch, interview by author, 10 February 2011, phone conversation recording.
[69] Ibid.

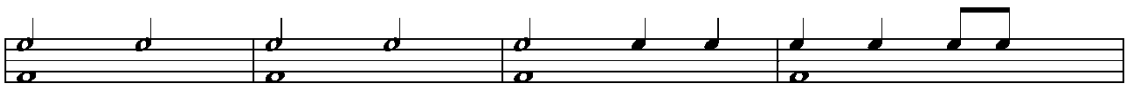
Although Lynch does not use triplets to break up the time, there are specific rhythmic devices used in this solo that correspond to visual imagery. In the third chorus of his solo, Lynch outlines three note groupings, ascending in half-steps and creating a cross-beat through accents of half-notes against the general whole note pulse. The first three pitches of the corresponding keys (G, Ab, A, Bb, and B) appear in two different configurations of order, creating a "cell" of five half-notes with corresponding melodic shapes. Lynch then continues up in half steps every beat, with ascending chromatic quarter notes and ends the phrase with two eighth notes. Lynch describes this rhythmic effect visually as "tightening up the circle" or "closing up" against the rhythmic pulse. Example 5.6 is the corresponding musical passage and reinforces Lynch's description of the visual experience. Example 5.7 is a rhythmic template illustrating the cell accents against the basic pulse.

> There is kind of a "closing up" type of effect there [sings line]. So there is that effect that you're tightening up the circle... I'm also going up in half-steps, then the half-step motion tightens up at the level of the quarter note, instead of the half note at the end of the phrase. So I'm going up in half steps every two beats, then at the end I'm literally going up half-steps every beat.[70]

Example 5.6 Brian Lynch, House of Saud Solo
mm. 65- 68



Example 5.7 Rhythmic cross-beats through accents and half-step motion

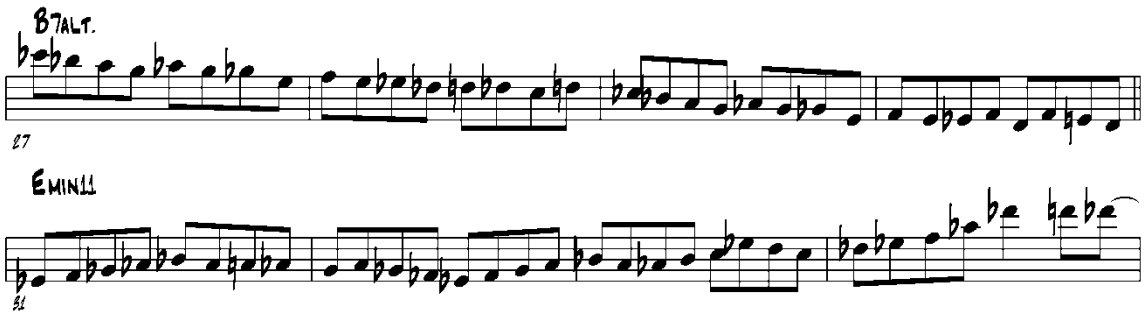


[70] Brian Lynch, interview by author, 10 February 2011, phone conversation recording.

Finally, Lynch experiences the "unrolling" of notes, left to right, in the longer chromatic eighth note lines found throughout the solo. In these particular musical situations, the notes are appearing visually as he's playing them and can be a combination of specific transcription and abstract notation. Lynch feels that this particular performance features an "approach tone and enclosure type of style, [that is] composed of fairly conjunct intervals, nothing too intervallic.[71]" This style may have a corresponding "text" relationship in Lynch's visual experience that is translated to a particular type of shape and contour. For example, improvising in this particular text or lexicon may have a different visual component than the style of Woody Shaw or McCoy Tyner. Example 5.8 is a long eighth note line, beginning on the last four measures of the first chorus and continuing into the second chorus. This particular passage features a large amount of chromaticism and enclosures, outlining a descending D fully diminished structure over the B7alt. on beats one and three. The figure in the first measure is repeated down the octave in the third measure and there is additionally a close relationship between measures two and four. Although Lynch lands on an Eb on beat one against the E minor11, he plays such a strong bebop enclosure leading up to that pitch that the resolution feels natural. Again, this harmonic tension prepares or activates the "tilting of the tonal plane" or "off-axis" experience visually.

[71] Brian Lynch, interview by author, 10 February 2011, phone conversation recording.

Example 5.8 Brian Lynch, House of Saud Solo
mm. 27 - 34



Although it is difficult to isolate a singular performance as including all the aspects of one's improvisational style, Lynch's solo on *House of Saud* does feature a number of unique visually-oriented musical approaches and experiences. His recollection of the performance and ability to discuss the solo within the frameworks of typical musical analysis and abstract visual relationships is valuable in further understanding his improvisational process. Making the connection between harmonic devices and three-dimensional planes/angles, visual shapes and effects related to rhythms and accents, and real-time notational or abstract transcription are each important processes in translating musical "texts" and learned material into meaningful, artistic musical content.

Exercises for Practice and Development

Self reflection and analysis can often be a useful tool in practice for both developing and established jazz improvisers. Lynch feels that this particular study has already influenced the way that he uses and considers visualization when improvising, as he is more mindful of how he uses it in his personal performance and practice habits. Since Lynch is an active educator, this self reflection has allowed him to also consider how he may pass along techniques related to visualization to his students in an effective manner. In his

case, and for all the subjects of this study, being consciously aware of the process has already influenced how each improviser experiences visualization and how they may develop it further.

> [...]I think that consciously getting into this is a good study to see if you can use it more mindfully in your practice and playing. I'm doing that – this is very interesting to me in an intermediate basis, seeing if I can work on visualization techniques in my own practice and pass that along to my students.[72]

Lynch cites using specific mental practice techniques that may further enhance his connection between the aural, visual, and physical aspects of his improvisational experience, creating a sensory cross-over through inclusion and exclusion of those particular elements. Lynch refers to practicing without his instrument, often on airplanes or in similar situations while traveling, as "mental playing" or "silent practice.[73]" In this approach, Lynch is simultaneously visualizing certain notes, musical passages, or learned "texts" while singing the corresponding pitches and physically making the fingerings with his right hand (the hand responsible for pressing the valves on the trumpet). Lynch may implement all three approaches to establish and reinforce the connections between each sensory experience, or in some cases, take one element away to focus on a specific aspect. For example, Lynch may eliminate the tapping of valve combinations and only focus on the aural/visual relationship, or eliminate singing to isolate the physical and visual components.

> So you can practice off the instrument in three steps. You can sing the lines and tap out the finger combinations with your right hand on a surface. Sometimes I'll do it on the knuckles of my other hand. Then you can do the same thing without singing, and then without the tapping. So you're hearing or visualizing notes in your head and you're also mentally making the fingerings. Now each note has a fingering associated with it. An example would be hearing a chromatic

[72] Brian Lynch, interview by author, 10 February 2011, phone conversation recording.
[73] Ibid.

> scale in your head and visualize all the corresponding fingerings as you hear the notes mentally. It's a great exercise.[74]

It's possible that these practice strategies are an integral factor in Lynch's improvisational approach and experiences with visualization. His descriptions of "notes unrolling on a spool,[75]" the pre-visualization of physical trumpet fingerings, notes ordered in the tonal field, and various other experiences combining musical material with visual elements, may have been developed or reinforced by practice. The culmination of all these experiences during the improvisational process may be a direct result of Lynch establishing those relationships in mental and physical practice.

In addition to creating connections between the sensory experiences related to performing, this type of mental practice may also assist Lynch or the developing improviser to further think and create abstractly. Just as the correlations between visual and aural experiences require abstract thought, so do recreating the creative process and physical/mental elements of performing on one's instrument without actually doing so. Mental practice can be viewed as a tool to develop strategies related to visualization, assisting the performer in activating a thought process or experience that is not necessarily a component of the primary element - sound. Thinking about music and the process of improvisation and visualization may in turn develop that connection and create the abstract relationships.

Keeping this in mind, Lynch's individual correlations related to visualization and improvisation can be viewed as developed relationships between differing sensory experiences. For example, the component of a specific improvisational style, or what Lynch refers to as "texts," may be developed through a combination of sound, physical,

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[74] Brian Lynch, interview by author, 10 February 2011, phone conversation recording.
[75] Brian Lynch, interview by author, 9 November 2010, phone conversation notes.

and visual elements that begin to all inter-relate - perhaps through transcription, emulation, or active analytical listening. Whether through actual instrumental practice or mental practice strategies, focusing on one element of a particular text may in turn activate the corresponding experiences, or "feels" in the other senses. Consequently, listening and internalizing the improvisational style of Freddie Hubbard may create corresponding specific or abstract visual elements, which in turn could also have a pre-visualization related to physical fingering combinations.

Additionally, one interested in exploring visual relationships to the improvisational process can use Lynch's experiences as potential activating factors. This includes developing connections between visual and musical materials, such as abstract art and the music of Late Coltrane. Furthermore, examining Lynch's associations between side-slipping and "off-axis" dimensional relationships, rhythmic devices and visual effects, and shapes based on pitch and durational values or placement on a tonal field can create similar or new associations for improvisers, particularly when used in practice and thought strategies. Associating abstract shapes or "texts" for styles and approaches can help improvisers to make more general stylistic shifts and use material in a more cohesive and unifying way while soloing. Although Lynch isn't certain yet how he uses visualization to get across his overall musical intent, he does feel that it may assist in grouping musical ideas and components into a better overall picture. How it may be utilized in practice and the act of improvising in the future may change as well, based on his consideration and awareness of it through the study.

> It's [visualization] definitely a part of grouping things into larger units and you can ultimately put those together to achieve the overall design or tell the overall story of a solo. Past that, I'm not sure how much I can say is really conscious. I think what is interesting is that you are taking people that use this and through this

> study creating more awareness, you could examine what happens then. It would be interesting to see some follow-ups on this later on.[76]

Conclusions

Given his current musical endeavors and past associations, Brian Lynch could be considered the most traditional subject of this study when examining his improvisational approach. His mastery of the jazz language and its use in the bebop, straight-ahead, and Latin Jazz genres has made him incredibly desirable as a sideman and leader on various recordings and projects, in addition to his strong fundamentals and performance skills as a trumpeter. His own work on recordings such as *Unsung Heroes*,[77] *Spheres of Influence*,[78] and *Tribute to the Trumpet Masters*[79] illustrates his ability to emulate the approaches of prominent improvisers and perform masterfully in a variety of musical styles. His improvisations demonstrate a concise and logical approach, particularly when analyzed and examined through the lens of traditional harmonic, rhythmic, and melodic approaches.

The connections Lynch is able to make between concise musical ideas and abstract experiences related to visualization is an integral part of this study. For example, his use of "side-slipping" through the clear presentation of specific chord qualities and patterns can be examined through listening and analysis of the printed transcription. His description of these concise musical ideas as visual experiences in three-dimensions while improvising offers an additional layer of understanding to the process and

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[76] Brian Lynch, interview by author, 10 February 2011, phone conversation recording.
[77] Brian Lynch, *Unsung Heroes, Vol. 1,* Brian Lynch, trumpet. Hollistic MusicWorks. [2010]. Digital Download.
[78] Brian Lynch, *Spheres of Influence,* Brian Lynch, trumpet. Sharp Nine 1007, [1997]. CD recording.
[79] Brian Lynch, *Tribute to the Trumpet Masters,* Brian Lynch, trumpet. Sharp Nine Records 1017. [2000]. CD recording.

individual element inherit in musical creativity and perception. Just as Tim Hagans' descriptions of the experience of improvising on *I Hear A Rhapsody* give the listener or observer new information to consider while listening, Lynch's descriptions of the improvisational process may alter perceptions while listening to his approaches, or the improvisational approaches of others. For musicians of all levels, this may influence or alter how they experience or organize (practice) the improvisational process as well.

Lynch's visualizations are a combination of unique experiences that have been developed through his musical background, interests, and personal reflections of the process. An interest in abstract art and the extreme angles, contours, and dimensional manipulation often found in the works of Picasso, Kadinsky, and Duchamp have had an influence on Lynch's visual experience, creating a cross-over of musical and visual materials for use in the creative process. Lynch's vast understanding of specific improvisational styles and the abstract visualization of those styles as texts, with specific shapes related to two-dimensional properties of pitch (vertical) and duration (horizontal), is a unique and effective way to organize musical material in an abstract and creative way. The assimilation of styles through transcription and active listening into abstract visual forms presents possible approaches for improvisers on how to organize and effectively use learned musical material. Finally, Lynch's mental practice and the inclusion of aural, visual, and physical elements related to the performance of music may have further strengthened or developed his visual experiences and the ability to activate them during the improvisational process.

Lynch's descriptions of visual elements are easily compared to the musical content in his solos. Three-dimensional tilting or depth is created through harmonic

tension and plane-ing. Geometric Shapes or “whirly” objects are created through rhythmic devices that set up cross-beats against the pulse, through accents and often through additional harmonic material. Long eighth-note passages are often visualized as unrolling note-by-note from a spool, or in formulas in double-time or faster situations. This is comparable to the experience of reading music in large segments, based on the visual familiarity of certain musical patterns, such as scales or arpeggios. The music is often observed in larger segments, not as individual notes ordered randomly. Like Hagans, the transcriptional element of the visual experience in real-time is likely re-enforced and developed through the actual reading of music and the connection between the visual and aural already being present.

In addition to creating pedagogical approaches related to improvisation and organizing concepts, Lynch’s experiences can also offer unique opportunities in to how improvisation and jazz performance may be presented and enjoyed by a growing culture of multi-sensory and multi-media musical consumers. Adding a visual element to performance, programmed into computer algorithms to recognize certain musical gestures such as playing “off-axis,” could create a new experience for music audiences and performers. A visual representation that organizes the musical material according to Lynch’s experiences could in turn display his improvisation real-time in two-dimensional shapes, or even in three-dimensions for instances of side-slipping or departing the stated harmonic framework. In essence, this could be similar to a three-dimensional video game where the improviser is controlling the visual element of performance with their musical choices. This is a concept the author is already exploring with the assistance of

technology and observational algorithms already in use with projects like Shimon (an improvising marimba playing robot developed at the Georgia Institute of Technology).

As Lynch stated, considering the role of visualization and its importance in improvisation may in turn strengthen its role and activation during the process, allowing Lynch to use it in new ways or more readily activate it. Self-reflection and understanding of the process can improve musical performance, education, and presentation.

CHAPTER 6

SUBJECT 3 – JASON PALMER

Biography and Musical Background/Credits

Trumpeter Jason Palmer was born February 14, 1979 in High Point, North Carolina. Palmer's parents were not professional musicians, although music was an important element in their household growing up. Palmer's father was a self-taught guitarist who played by ear and didn't read music, but is credited with giving Palmer "his ear[80]" for music. Some of Palmer's earliest memories of involvement with music include putting records on his father's phonograph and "scratching them like a DJ[81]" as a child. His family also played music for listening with records and radio broadcasts on Saturday mornings, providing Palmer with a rich environment for music appreciation and involvement.

Palmer began playing the cornet in sixth grade through the band program at his public school, but didn't take music very seriously until a few years later, when he learned that he had an acute affinity for music and hearing consonance and dissonance through playing along with the radio.

> I started playing the trumpet in sixth grade. There was a band program at my school. I initially started out on cornet. I wasn't really serious about it at first, it was more of a novelty to me. Then one summer, I was home and I turned on the radio and I tried to make music along with the songs on the radio. I realized that the notes I played weren't really sounding right to my ears, so I figured some of the songs out and I realized that there was more than one or two major scales. So I ended up learning all of my scales by ear. I believe this was the summer of my

[80] Jason Palmer, interview by author, 9 March 2011, phone conversation recording.
[81] Ibid.

> seventh or eighth grade year. So a little time had passed since the sixth grade before I really started to sit down and figure the instrument out on my own.[82]

Palmer is from the same home town as saxophonist John Coltrane and geographical region as numerous other jazz greats, including Dizzy Gillespie and Thelonius Monk. During High School, Palmer was invited to attend a local summer music camp dedicated to Coltrane. Through his involvement with that particular camp, he was invited to audition at a local music school that operated after typical school hours called the Greensboro Music Academy. Palmer began attending the music school three days a week during his junior year of high school, and received private instruction in addition to being involved in both classical and jazz groups. At this point, Palmer began to become serious about music and dedicating himself to the practice needed to become successful. Palmer also points to a particular moment that inspired him to commit to a career in music and his involvement with jazz.

> I remember riding home from a rehearsal from the Music Academy for the combo I was in and the piano player had "Study in Brown." He played the track of Clifford playing Cherokee and I thought to myself, "is that a trumpet? How could he make a trumpet sound like that?" So that's what I wanted to do in life. I think that was the turning point for me.[83]

It was also around this time period that Palmer discovered that he possessed absolute pitch. He recalls being in the school band room with his friend sitting at the piano, playing pitches and asking Palmer to play them back to him. Palmer played them back accurately every time. When his friend explained that this was not typical, Palmer realized for the first time that he had a unique musical ability. Until that point, he had never considered absolute pitch to be something that only a small number of individuals involved in music possessed.

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[82] Jason Palmer, interview by author, 9 March 2011, phone conversation recording.
[83] Ibid.

With the guidance of his trumpet teacher, Palmer considered continuing his studies in music at the collegiate level. He had interests in both jazz and classical music and his instructor suggested he apply to institutions recognized as strong for both fields that also employed well-known trumpet pedagogues. Palmer only applied to two colleges, putting together materials and audition materials for Center College in Kentucky and the New England Conservatory in Boston. Vince DiMartino was the trumpet professor at Center College and was well-known and respected for having an very balanced and effective approach to playing and teaching both jazz and classical trumpet. However, Center College did not offer music scholarships, and although Palmer qualified for an academic scholarship there, he decided to attend the New England Conservatory.

NEC offered Palmer a jazz scholarship and employed Boston Symphony principal trumpeter Charlie Schuetler on staff, although Palmer ultimately did not audition for the classical performance program. Living in a metropolitan area partnered with the creative energy of having two major musical institutions within a few city blocks of each other (the other institution being the Berklee College of Music), were deciding factors in Palmer's decision to attend NEC for his undergraduate music studies.

Palmer quickly became involved in the NEC jazz program, and recalls two experiences in his first few weeks as a freshman music student as influential and motivating. The first being a performance with jazz saxophonist and composer Benny Golson, and the other performing with the NEC wind ensemble as a jazz soloist under the direction of Gunther Schuler.

Given the vibrant music scene in Boston and its proximity to New York City, Palmer quickly became involved in the professional jazz scene and developed relationships with a number of contemporary and important jazz performers. Upon his arrival to Boston, Palmer began sitting in at Wally's Jazz Cafe, a historical landmark in downtown Boston and an important performance venue for jazz artists. His association with the club continued to develop and Palmer's quintet has now been serving as the house band at Wally's for the past nine years. During this time, Palmer also developed his compositional skills, writing for various ensembles and receiving commissions for original works, such as a suite based on a Sudoku puzzle. Groups led by Palmer have also been featured in a number of National Venues and Jazz Clubs in the past few years.

Palmer has additionally developed into an in-demand sideman for other prominent artists. In 2004, Palmer joined alto saxophonist Greg Osby's quintet and traveled internationally with the group until 2006. In 2007, Downbeat Magazine included Palmer as one of the "Top 25 trumpeters of the future" and in 2009, he earned first place in the Carmine Caruso International Jazz Trumpet Competition. Along the way, Palmer has also performed with Roy Haynes, Herbie Hancock, Wynton Marsalis and the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra, Kurt Rosenwinkel, Ravi Coltrane, Geri Allen, Common, Roy Hargrove, and various others. He currently tours as a member of alto saxophonist Grace Kelly's Quintet and Matana Robert's Mississippi Moonchild.

Palmer released *Songbook*,[84] his debut record, in 2008. The album exclusively featured his original compositions in addition to guest performances by saxophonists Greg Osby and Ravi Coltrane. The album garnered positive press and reviews from a

[84] Jason Palmer, *Songbook,* Jason Palmer, trumpet. Ayva, [2008]. CD.

number of national critics. Jason's follow-up album in 2010, entitled *Nothing To Hide*,[85] featured his working group from Wally's Cafe, which includes: Michael Thomas, Greg Duncan, Lee Fish, and Lim Yang. Palmer has already recorded his second record for the Steeplechase label, which will be released later this year and features Mark Turner on saxophone and Kendrick Scott on drums.

In 2009, Palmer was approached by film maker Damien Chazelle to act as a lead in *Guy and Madeline on a Park Bench*. The film and Palmer's role as a jazz trumpeter received a number of glowing reviews and awards at the Tribeca, Greece and Bratislava film festivals and screenings in a number of national film markets.

Despite his busy schedule as performer and actor, Palmer is also heavily involved in teaching and has held positions at the New School of Jazz and Contemporary Music in New York City and currently teaches at the Berklee College of Music, The Preparatory Division of NEC, the Mission Hill School, and Aquinas College Music Camp.

Visualization and the Improvisational Process

Palmer experiences visualization during the improvisational process as complete transcription, including what is currently being played by his fellow performers, and a pre-visualization in which he "sees" what he is about to play fully notated in its entirety. He also experiences some color associations based on specific pitch relationships to harmony (in terms of function or degree of tension) and overall color palettes related to the composition itself, particularly in the beginning of performance. His approach is largely shaped by unique musical talents, his experiences as a student of jazz, and his

[85] Jason Palmer, *Nothing To Hide,* Jason Palmer, trumpet. Steeplechase, [2010]. CD.

interests in other art forms and acts involving physical human movement, such as dance and sports.

Palmer cites his early experiences in transcribing solos in college as the primary basis for his visual process while improvising. Palmer has absolute pitch, and can visualize music notated "going from beginning to end like a score[86]" when listening to a piece of music. In his case, a heavy amount of transcription created a visual component that when paired with absolute pitch, allows him to create a connection between the sound and "feel" of certain passages, with what it would look like transcribed on staff paper. Palmer summarizes his visualization experience as follows:

> I think it relates to the transcription part of development and what I've come to do now. I think that when I was learning the language to this music, I spent a lot of time transcribing solos and I would actually learn it by ear first – then I would write it down. For some reason, I was able to connect what it looked like on paper to what it sounded like and felt like in my playing – having the instrument in my hands.
>
> So whenever I improvise, I try to relate what those notes look like interval wise on paper and how it would feel, and how I could relate that to what I was trying to play – like in the playing of Kenny Dorham. If I was trying to imitate somebody, I would try to relate that to their playing by looking at it on paper.[87]

Palmer realized early with absolute pitch that he could instantly play back performed pitches or phrases, but his experience transcribing assisted him in developing his visual approach and strengthened his interest in improvisation and jazz in general. Transcribing and physically writing down the music helped Palmer to understand how certain performers phrased or played in different musical situations and helped him make the connection in internalizing the language and style of jazz.

> I think through learning to transcribe and learning how people phrase piqued my interest, and I don't think it would have piqued my interest if I didn't transcribe. A lot of great players don't transcribe that much – many are just very

[86] Jason Palmer, interview by author, 4 January 2011, phone conversation recording.
[87] Ibid.

> natural and have a very musical mind. I had to work much harder, because I don't think I was as talented as a lot of players I listened to. I've had to put in a lot of work and I was able to develop through that.[88]

Although Palmer performs on a Bb Trumpet, he visualizes all music heard in concert pitch, non-transposed. This may be due to his background as a performer and student, as he didn't learn about transposing instruments until attending college. Prior to that, he was given music in concert pitch, and continues to write all his music to be performed in concert pitch. When visualizing, all the music is fully notated, with exact pitches, rhythmic notation, and bar lines. Palmer does not visualize key signatures, and instead visualizes accidentals. He feels that this is a more effective approach, since so much of the music he plays (and most compositions in the modern jazz genre) tends to modulate every few bars to new key centers. Much of Palmer's original music and the music he performs with others are in mixed meter (9/4, 7/4, etc.). In visualizing those phrase elements and bar lines, Palmer sees the meters in their full length. For example, a measure of 7/4 is visualized as a full bar of 7, not a combination of 4 and 3.

While Palmer has the ability to transfer the aural information derived from listening to music into a visualized transcribed and notated score, fully realized on staff paper, he can also pre-visualize what he is about to play during the improvisational process in its entirety. While improvising, Palmer often visualizes what he's about to play from beginning to end, as if he's reading a transcription and merely looking ahead to see what will happen next. In his experience, the musical setting and the other musicians he's performing with can affect the source and format of the visual process. In some cases, he may visualize the phrase he's about to play in its entirety, particularly in those cases where he is trying to establish the narrative and direction of his solo, which happens more

[88] Jason Palmer, interview by author, 4 January 2011, phone conversation recording.

often with groups he's leading. When performing as a sideman, in a more group member role, or with certain types of players, Palmer describes the visualization as "unfolding" and being less pre-defined as he becomes more reactionary to the musical gestures performed by others. In those cases, the phrase may be pre-visualized entirely, but have the option of changing or modifying, depending on what he hears and chooses to use as content for his solo.

> I think it also depends on who I'm playing with. If I'm playing with people who have really large ears and they interact – then I usually see it as it unfolds. In those cases, I'm usually a more reactionary player, where I'll play something that complements what I heard in terms of somebody comping for me – if it's a really interesting trio, or whoever I'm playing with […] If I'm playing with a group of people and I'm more in the leader role – if it's my band – I usually see what is going to happen beforehand and further along.
>
> I usually play from a standpoint of trying to make everyone sound better in my group. I'm trying to bring out things that they've never really played – or maybe never thought of this chord or voicing. I'm trying to do that without playing it and telling them to play that way. So I think I usually see it unfold as I'm playing with a looser group. I think it's a little more structured when I'm playing with my group and my tunes.[89]

In describing interaction while performing, Palmer also will pick up on certain musical gestures played by his fellow performers while improvising. These gestures may appear notated as well in his visualized notation, and are particularly strong if they are musical ideas that are super-imposed over the typical chord structure, form, or rhythmic feel. Palmer describes the visualized ideas of other performers as creating a picture into their mind. When notated in his visual field, Palmer may gain insight into what the other person may be thinking or considering in terms of "shapes, pictures, or colors.[90]"

In a general sense, Palmer describes the experience of visualizing while improvising as having a notated, transcriptional element. Sometimes that visualization

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[89] Jason Palmer, interview by author, 4 January 2011, phone conversation recording.
[90] Ibid.

can be very specific and pre-determined, although in other instances it may be created through more abstract sources. However, Palmer cites that what he wants to start with and how/where he wants to resolve within a phrase tend to be very clear while improvising, and he wants to make sure that those choices line up in some way with the rhythm section. He tends to see all elements of note choice, rhythm, and phrasing of both his playing and those around him all involved in his "conscious space.[91]"

Palmer also experiences some visualization related to color, and how certain types of sounds may create color combinations that are combined with the notated element of his process. He describes visualizing a song as a blank canvas. As soon as notes and rhythms are added, the piece begins to develop a color palette, the same way a painter adds color to the canvas. However, the specific colors are much stronger at the beginning of a performance, and tend to blur as a piece of music develops. Rhythm and tempo are also important considerations, as slower tunes and ballads tend to create stronger color visualization, with "darker colors and more pigment.[92]"

Palmer feels that color associations can also be viewed in pitch relationships to specific chords, particularly if the pitch played in a melody or melodic line isn't a member of the chord's scale relationship. Palmer uses this extensively in his composing, writing melodies paired with chords that don't have direct relationships with each other in terms of consonance or chord tones (3rds, 7ths, etc.). He cites the composing and improvisational style of Booker Little as being an important influence, as someone who "wasn't afraid of dissonance.[93]" For Palmer, exploring the different type of color

[91] Jason Palmer, interview by author, 9 March 2011, phone conversation recording.
[92] Jason Palmer, interview by author, 4 January 2011, phone conversation recording.
[93] Ibid.

combinations in playing non-chord tones is an attractive element of improvisation, as he's always looking for new possibilities and combinations.

As transcription developed Palmer's approach in emulating what it would look like visually notated to play like certain performers, the color associations he describes in certain pitches to underlying chord structures also developed from listening and transcribing specific improvisers. Transcribing and examining the approaches of musicians like John Coltrane and McCoy Tyner expanded the possibilities of what could be performed while Palmer improvised, and in turn, expand the possibilities for color and tension. Early in his development, Palmer was more concerned in playing "inside" – playing musical language derived from the bebop and hardbop eras where improvisers were playing in a manner through chord scale relationships and voice leading to accurately outline the compositions chord structure. Hearing other prominent improvisers who displayed harmonic dissonance and rhythmic tension allowed Palmer to embrace their approaches and synthesize it into his own, expanding his palette of color and visual material to draw upon. Palmer describes how the "inside" approach may have been limiting, but having more color and musical ideas available requires musical responsibility:

> It was definitely something that held me down, because I think about it in terms of being a canvas and the notes I had available to me were a certain number. Before, I had a certain number, but as I started to really listen, the box I was creating in became bigger, in addition to the number of colors I had.
>
> I think it's a blessing and a curse because if I didn't have the discipline to really focus on how I wanted to approach a song, improvisation wise – I would feel like I could just play anything. You can just play anything, but you still need to make it relate to something – to someone in the band, someone in the audience, to yourself, something you heard before […]
>
> On the other hand, if you do have that discipline, the world is your playing field. You can really draw from anything. You can look at someone's face and try to play based on what their face looks like, or what you hear your drummer do on

> their snare drum. It's something I really had to work on and it's something I'm still working on.[94]

In fact, Palmer tends to use the visual metaphors of painting and colors extensively when describing the improvisational process. This includes not only his descriptions of his experience, but also in describing the observed approaches of other improvisers and techniques he may use with students to expand their creative and improvisational language.

Like both Hagans and Lynch, Palmer also describes the convergence of aural and visual experiences in music and the creative process as including a physical element related specifically to performing on the trumpet. While he may see a phrase transcribed in his "visual space" before he is going to perform it, there may be some limitations in the execution of that idea based on the current state of his body or "chops." In addition to the pre-physical experience of "feeling" what it will be like to play certain valve combinations, Palmer describes that there is also a pre-visualization involved in preparing his body for what it will need to do to execute the pre-visualized musical content.

> That is definitely there [visualizing valve combinations]. Also there is a feeling related to the amount of compression and what my torso is going to have to feel like in order to execute what I mean to play. With me, I have a thing where my legs go up and down – I don't know how to quite describe it... But in order to play a phrase that may start in the upper register and for that to be executed in time, I may have to bend my legs a little more or not.[95]

Palmer utilizes a number of musical and non-musical sources in his experience with visualizing notated music while improvising. The source can be something as abstract as a person's face. Palmer also cites other materials and art forms as being important influences on his improvisational approach and the sensory cross-over in

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[94] Jason Palmer, interview by author, 4 January 2011, phone conversation recording.
[95] Jason Palmer, interview by author, 9 March 2011, phone conversation recording.

visualizing. Abstract art and specifically the art of Salvador Dali is an influencing factor, as are other forms of visual art, like sculpture. Palmer is also fascinated by athletics, dance, and the physical movement of people and how that may relate to musical gestures and ideas. In particular, he cites ballet, basketball, and boxing. During the interview process, Palmer recalled a story regarding saxophonist Wayne Shorter and his experience performing with trumpeter Miles Davis. Davis trained extensively as a boxer throughout his career.

> I remember auditioning for the Monk Institute about, I don't know – it must have been about 11 years ago, and Wayne Shorter was on the panel. He told me that when he joined Miles' [Davis] band, Miles told him, "You always have to play like a boxer. You have to know when to throw your punches and know when to dodge." Going back and listening to him solo, like the *Plugged Nickel*[96] Stuff, it just confirms what he may have been thinking about. The way he would play his phrases – a staggered approach, where he would play a lot here, then rest a lot and let Tony [Williams] cook a bit on his cymbal.
>
> It's the same thing with Miles. They say that Miles was sick there, but his playing was boxer-like. He had these bursts of energy and then these down times in the songs. I could put on that record and then put on a Manny Paquio or Mohammed Ali fight and see the approaches. You know, just hearing them improvise and they really don't have to play a melody, but just to see the jabs and punches, the hits on the snare – It's definitely an art form in itself to hear that.[97]

Palmer has similar experiences of hearing music while viewing other forms of visual stimulation, such as basketball and dance, although the experience isn't quite as strong since there are often more aural sounds associated with viewing it (such as commentators, an organ playing, or crowd noise) that can be distracting. The experience tends to be much stronger with visual arts, which is often viewed in a more controlled, quiet environment. Palmer says that he has always been the type of person "who

[96] Miles Davis, *Live at the Plugged Nickel,* Miles Davis, trumpet, CBS/Sony 25AP1 [1965]. CD recordings.
[97] Jason Palmer, interview by author, 4 January 2011, phone conversation recording.

wondered what things could be. What would that sound like? What would Van Gogh sound like if he was a musician?[98]"

Musical Examples

As previously discussed, Palmer's visual experience while improvising can present itself in a variety of both abstract and specific ways, including the source material that formulates musical ideas and decisions. Transcriptional elements, visually notated on staff paper, occur when specific musical ideas stand out and are internalized by Palmer. Additionally, he may see complete phrases notated in their entirety, or in segments and decide on the fly whether to execute them in time or alter them during the process of performing. In the most vivid cases of his visual process, Palmer can take musical information from a variety of external and internal sources, translating them to specific musical ideas and motives for use in his improvisation.

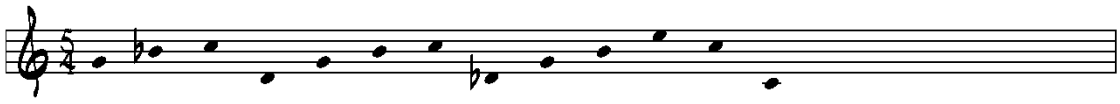
Palmer records all his performances, and has amassed a large collection of live recordings of his quintets weekly gig at Wally's Jazz Cafe, in addition to his studio albums and various other performances as an ensemble member. To discuss the visual process as reflected in recorded works, Palmer selected a recent performance of his composition *Abu Abed,* recorded with his working quintet on January 28, 2011, live at Wally's. In Palmer's view, this particular performance featured a number of aspects related to his visual process and experience while improvising. Additionally, there is an intriguing balance of visual components, with musical ideas coming from the audience, fellow band members, and his own personal experience – all translated to a visual imagery for use while performing. Given the nature of the composition and Palmer's

[98] Jason Palmer, interview by author, 4 January 2011, phone conversation recording.

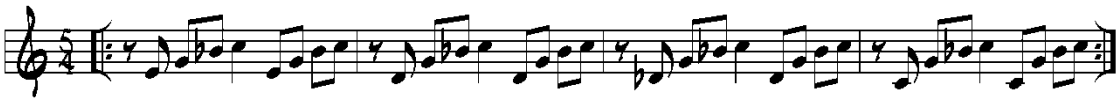
individual performance, there are also a number of interesting elements related to motivic development, rhythmic claves, eighth note lines and contours, and interaction within the ensemble.

Abu Abed is based on 4 measure vamp, performed in 5/4 and featuring a descending harmonic progression that is the basis for three differing, cued solo sections. Each of these three sections features the same basic chord progression, but modulated into the keys of F, A, and Db – creating an augmented relationship between each solo section. The composition begins with a call and response between Palmer and the Ensemble out of time. Palmer plays each individual pitch in the series (Example 6.1), which is then repeated by the guitar and saxophone before continuing to the next pitch The pitches E-G-Bb-C are the basis for a rhythmic ostinato that sets up the tempo and feel for the tune (Example 6.2). The guitarist performs this ostinato with variations, using the same basic shape modulated for the three differing tonal centers. The trumpet and saxophone play corresponding melodic figures over each section, mostly in a sustained style in contrast to the active rhythmic figures performed by the guitar and drums. The composition also features a number of different rhythmic claves (Example 6.3) to define the 5/4 feel that is performed by the ensemble as whole and used extensively by the soloists.

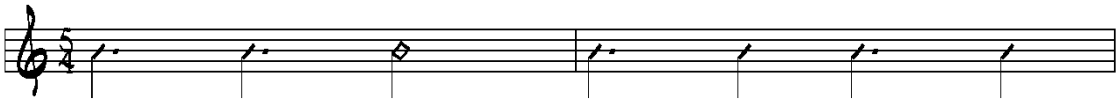
Example 6.1 Jason Palmer, Abu Abed Opening Call and Response Pitches



Example 6.2 Jason Palmer, Abu Abed Opening Guitar Ostinato



Example 6.3 Jason Palmer, Abu Abed Rhythmic Claves



After the statement and repeat of all three sections, guitarist Greg Duncan takes the first solo, performed over the four-measure vamp section. Each measure in the vamp has a corresponding chord change, creating a descending movement of Fmaj7 – Emin7b5 – Eb7sus – Db7, although the solo sections are largely "free" harmonically over a descending bass vamp. Duncan improvises over this progression and vamp before cueing the next section, which is the same repeated four measure phrase, modulated up a major 3rd. This in turn cues Palmer for the beginning of his solo, and the process is repeated to set-up Michael Thomas' alto saxophone solo, performed in Db.

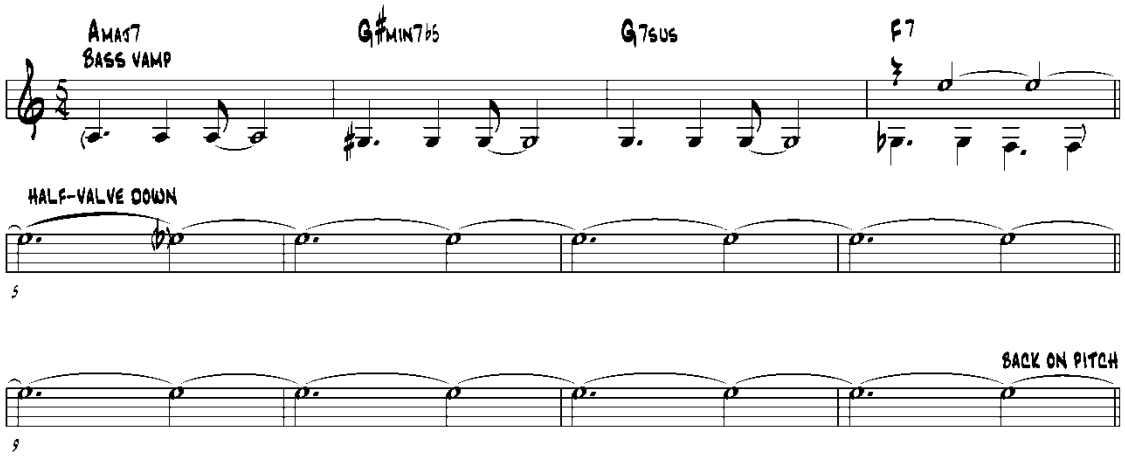
Palmer improvises on the repeated four measure vamp 60 times, which equates to nearly six minutes of improvising. Throughout the course of the solo, he uses a number of devices related to visual imagery and thematic development, including using material from audience cheering and interaction with the guitar comping. Since Palmer composes and visualizes in concert pitch, all musical examples and discussions of his solo are presented in concert pitch.

Palmer begins his solo with a sustained E on top of the staff, that he bends down and back into pitch for the first 10 measures of his improvisation (Example 6.4). He

establishes this particular motive for use throughout the early portion of his solo, using the same device on a number of pitches, including C#, low E, A, and D, all of which are related to the tonal center of A. While there is certainly a motivic element at play, the genesis of this particular pitch and device was presented by the a cheer from an audience member at the conclusion of the guitar solo. The pitch "jumped out" to Palmer and appeared notated in his visual process on staff paper.

> I remember in the beginning, after the guitar solo, someone in the crowd had a pretty resonant cheer that was on the same note that I started my solo on. I remember trying to match that and I just started to play with that tone that came from whoever that person was. It seemed to be very tonal and it was in the key of the song. I remember seeing just a big blur of people in the audience and I had the sound come at me from the audience. Usually there is a lot of noise at the club [Wally's Jazz Cafe in Boston]. I don't know if you've ever been there, but it's a really small place and people are usually packed in there pretty tight. A lot of times when we play there, you have to battle the elements of their conversations coming at you. In this particular case, there was an actual note that came through right at the onset of the cheering, or it could have been the first thing that my ears wanted to hear. So I think I set things off from there.[99]

Example 6.4 Jason Palmer, Abu Abed Solo
mm. 1-12



Palmer also describes this particular performance as a having a strong reactionary and consequently interactive feel based on the comping of guitarist Greg Duncan.

[99] Jason Palmer, interview by author, 9 March 2011, phone conversation recording.

Duncan departs the harmonic structure of the solo section almost immediately in his comping, favoring what Palmer describes as "cascading chords,[100]" or chord structures in which the pitches are presented rhythmically and often out of order, creating ascending, descending, or unique shapes through the presentation of harmonic material. Duncan's accompaniment is also viewed visually notated on staff paper, and Palmer describes using that material as the basis to create a musical conversation together, often taking certain elements and elaborating on them, or as a basis for new thematic material.

> For this particular solo, I ended up going more with what the guitar player was playing. He kind of guided me through just by playing the cascading chords that weren't in the changes. So I ended up playing more in terms of reacting to what he was playing, and spring-boarding from that [...] I see what he's playing. When he plays like that, it kind-of conjures up images in my mind that kind of cause me to play in a different way. It's like we're painting a picture together and he may paint something and I'm trying to paint something that complements what he's doing, rather than just mimicking him. I think that's what I tried to do in this case. There are some cases where I mimic him more to a degree, especially when he plays actual lines during the comping - like ideas instead of just the strumming of a chord.[101]

Palmer uses the cascading effect in a number of instances throughout his solo to create a similar rhythmic and melodic shape, complimenting the guitar comping. Much of this material is also developed motivically and slightly altered to create musical interest and cohesion. In Example 6.5, Palmer uses the top note of Duncan's previous harmonic comp as a starting point, adding quick descending triplets to mimic the cascading effect. Later in his improvisation, Palmer spends a considerable amount of time developing a similar cascading rhythmic effect, slightly altering the initial phrase of F#-A-B-C# with both pitch alterations and rhythmic displacement (Example 6.6).

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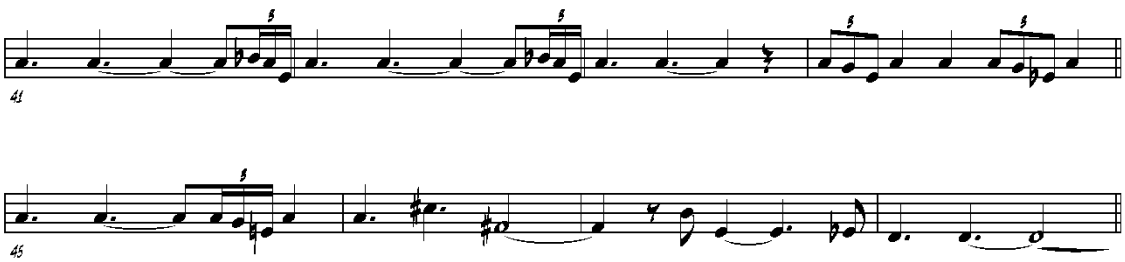
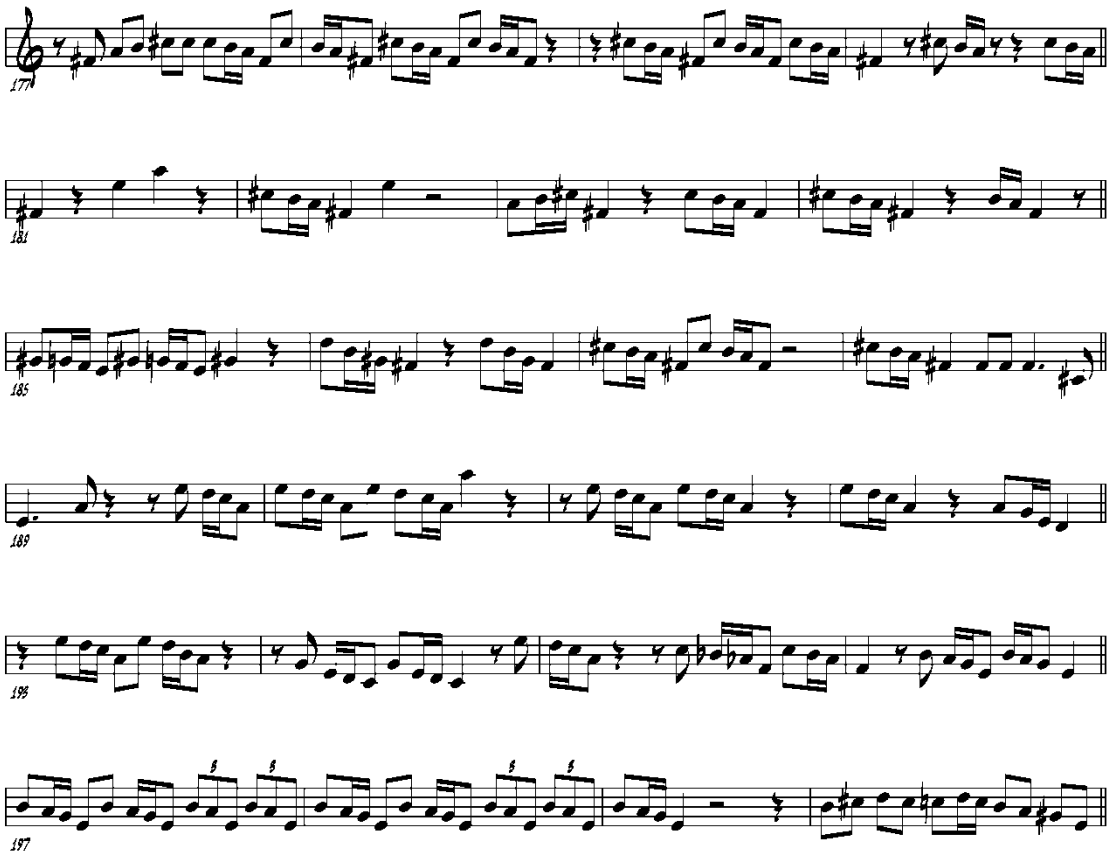
[100] Jason Palmer, interview by author, 9 March 2011, phone conversation recording.
[101] Ibid.

Example 6.5 Jason Palmer, Abu Abed Solo
mm. 41-48



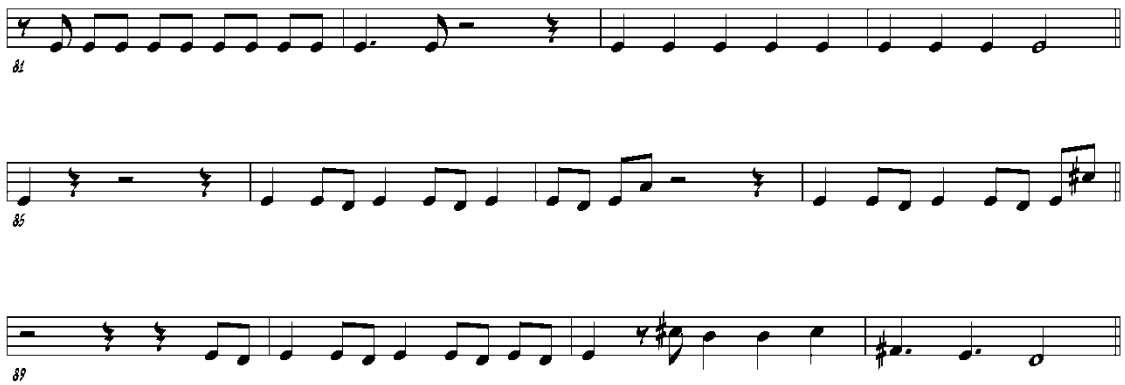
Example 6.6 Jason Palmer, Abu Abed Solo
mm. 177-200



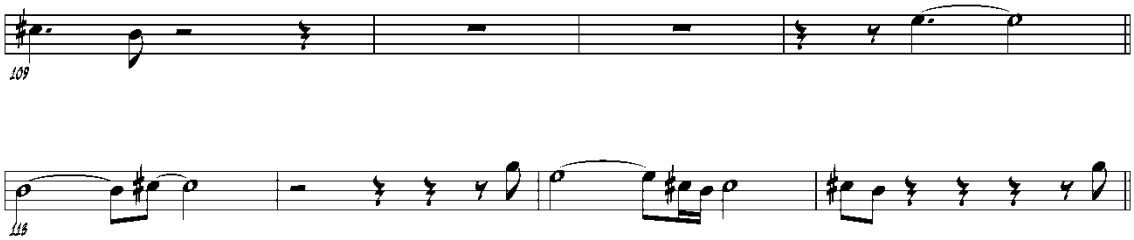
Palmer also uses other musical elements derived from the accompaniment for use in establishing content in his improvisation. For Example, a single line repeated comp on the pitches A and E in measures 73-78 by Duncan is consequently visualized by Palmer and used as the basis for his solo in measures 81-92. Palmer mimics the rhythmic pattern

on E, using it in a number of permutations and quoting *Surrey with the Fringe on Top* (Example 6.7). In other instances, Palmer may use the actual notes used in a chord voicing to create a melodic phrase. In Example 6.8, Palmer repeats the top three notes of Duncan's previous voicing (B, C#, E) in a different order.

Example 6.7 Jason Palmer, Abu Abed Solo
mm. 81-92



Example 6.8 Jason Palmer, Abu Abed Solo
mm. 109-116



As evidenced in the previous examples, visualization also plays a role in assisting Palmer to develop motives, whether through the process of repetition and modifying, or in motive retention that may be used throughout a solo as a unifying element. Bent notes and certain melodic shapes or rhythmic patterns occur throughout the solo. Thematic development and retention is something that Palmer has consciously addressed in his

practice and performance, and has been reinforced by mentors Benny Golson and John McNeil as a necessary component of the improvisational process.

> I think it's [motivic development] along the lines of painting something that someone could recognize. So you end up re-tracing the lines to make the form of what you're drawing more accessible. I guess I can make that parallel. I can say that I learned the most about that from John McNeil. I remember doing a promotion, going from my first year to my second year and I kept all of the comments that they made about my playing and I remember him saying to use more motives in my playing. In the fall of that year, when Benny Golson came, he told a story about using repetition and how he related it to pigeons – feeding pigeons and shooing them away. He was in the park one day and he had fed the pigeons, throwing some breadcrumbs down. He shooed the pigeons away, so they flew away and then they came back, and then he shooed them again so they flew away and then came back again. When he tried to shoo them a third time, they just stayed. So that effect only lasted a limited amount of time.
> So he told us, you need to not play motives too much, or repeat the same idea, you need to switch it up and maybe change the rhythm within that phrase to change it up a little bit. So I carried that and McNeil's advice with me.[102]

Palmer compares altering musical content for use in developing themes to memorizing phone numbers, repeating number segments and then changing one of the values to alter the motive slightly, yet keeping it recognizable. These number values could be assigned to the pitches themselves or in relation to specific tonalities, modes, or chord-scale relationships. Again, the visual element of Palmer's experience assists him in maintaining and organizing these structures.

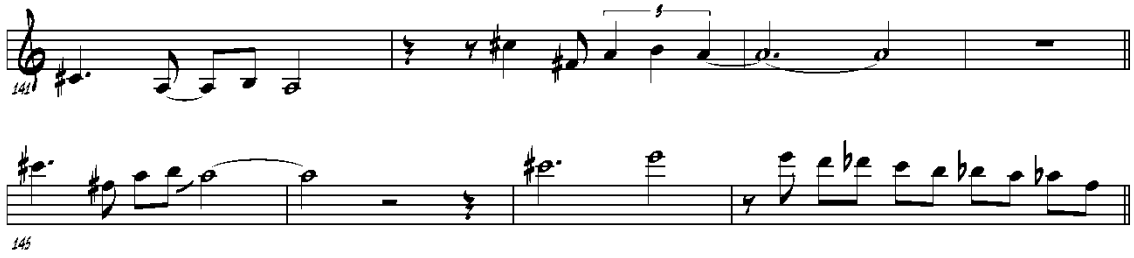
> You know, I tell people a lot of times that I tend to think of things in numbers as well. So it's a little like the idea of having a phone number and you play that phone number or melodic code. So for example 1235, and then changing the last number of it. So you're switching one element of that out for something else.
> I haven't really spent too much time sitting down and practicing it, as opposed to working on that organically with a group. I try and let that whole idea come to me.[103]

In many cases, Palmer will use octaves to repeat phrases, either verbatim or with some type of slight variation with the inclusion of an additional pitch, or rhythmic variety

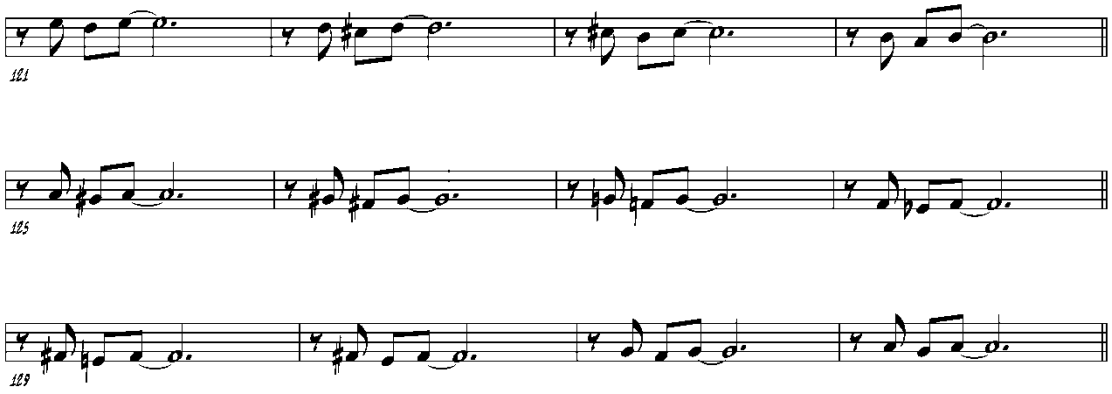
[102] Jason Palmer, interview by author, 9 March 2011, phone conversation recording.
[103] Ibid.

(Example 6.9). In other cases, the motive shape and rhythm may be repeated with a completely different set of pitches (Examples 6.10 and 6.11). This type of melodic retention can be challenging to adhere to and present in a way that strikes a balance between interest and over-use of repetition, yet Palmer utilizes this to great effect in his solo, allowing him to develop ideas and energy in a more deliberate manner.

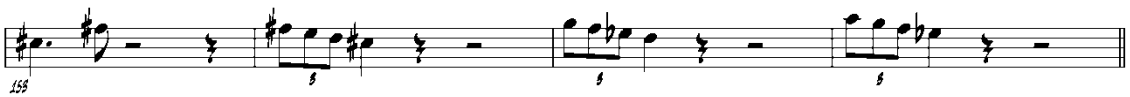
Example 6.9 Jason Palmer, Abu Abed Solo
mm. 141-148



Example 6.10 Jason Palmer, Abu Abed Solo
mm. 121-132



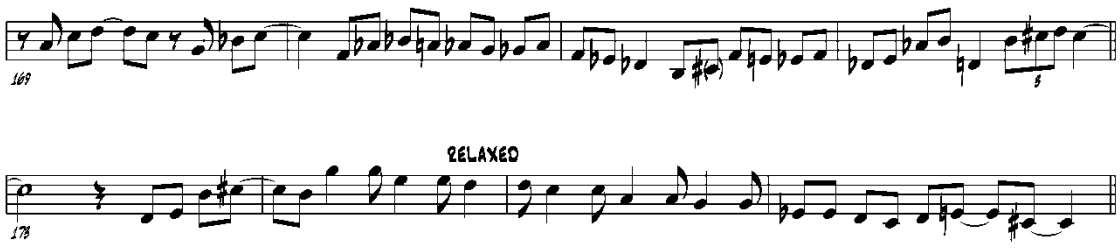
Example 6.11 Jason Palmer, Abu Abed Solo
mm. 153-156



Finally, Palmer visualizes eighth-note lines as being pre-visualized in their entirety or with the beginning and ending components before he actually plays them. Like much of the content of his solo, the genesis of these visually-oriented ideas can come from either internal or external musical sources and are presented in a manner derived from his transcriptional experience. In Example 6.12, Palmer uses a short motive, repeated down a whole-step and continuing with a eighth-note line outlining Db7 before shifting back up a whole-step, ultimately playing a melodic figure that lines back up rhythmically and tonally with the rhythm section (playing around the tonality of A7). This type of phrase has a visual element that can alter on the fly to sync up with the rhythm section and where Palmer wants to ultimately resolve.

> Most of the time I do see it [the phrase visualized in its entirety] before I play it. Sometimes my body or my chops won't allow me to fully execute what I was meaning to play. I think what I see mostly is what I want to start with and what I want to resolve my phrase to. I think those are the two things that are most clear. I always try to line those up with what the rhythm section is playing – so if I want to float over the time, I want to resolve the phrase rhythmically with them. So I tend to see the notes, rhythm, and phrasing both with them and in my own conscious space.[104]

Example 6.12 Jason Palmer, Abu Abed Solo
mm. 169-176



Ultimately, Palmers visual experience allows him to organize and develop his solo in very logical and musical manner. At a total of 240 measures, Palmer shows an

[104] Jason Palmer, interview by author, 9 March 2011, phone conversation recording.

incredible amount of patience and compositional thinking in the presentation of his musical ideas, creating interest and excitement in a deliberate and mature manner. Although there are some process-oriented similarities between Palmer's approach and those of Hagans and Lynch, he uses them to different effect in his solo. The ability to create corresponding visual elements to musical ideas while improvising allows Palmer to retain and internalize certain musical gestures, regardless of the source. Furthermore, the visual process and ability to "see" the music notated allows Palmer to make stronger relationships between musical ideas and the execution of them in time, eliminating what he describes as the "bridge" between what one may visualize or hear in their conscious space and presenting that material on their instrument.

Exercises for Practice and Development

Jason Palmer, like the other subjects of this study, is actively involved in jazz education. Although his visual process in the act of improvising is related to a unique collection of skills and experiences, he does suggest a number of possible approaches and exercises derived from his own practice that may assist developing improvisers in activating the visual process and grasping advanced ideas related to jazz performance.

One approach is to limit what musical materials one can use while improvising and focusing on the visual element of what those materials or aspects may look like on paper or visualized abstractly. For Palmer, all the major components of music: melody, harmony, and rhythm, can be isolated in the improvisational process to force students to address those aspects or isolate specific issues.

> What I like to do is give students an idea of one thing that they can only work on. So I'll say we can only use quarter note triplets or only triplets in any rhythmic format - so half note, quarter note, or eighth note triplets. That's all they can use rhythmically and put on a play-along and have them improvise with that in mind. Or I'll say that they can only use the interval of a fifth or the notes from a C major pentatonic and a F# major pentatonic. So they end up having a limited number of colors that they can paint with. I've found that it helps them see notes and rhythms exclusively in their creative mind.[105]

By focusing on specific elements that may be used in improvisation, Palmer finds that students can reinforce the visual element of picturing those specific pitches or rhythms in their mind, strengthening the connection between what they hear and what it may look like before or during performance. Palmer also uses a similar approach when working with student ensembles. As demonstrated in *Abu Abed*, Palmer composes and performs frequently in mixed meters, which is also becoming increasingly used in modern jazz performance. To tackle improvising effectively in mixed meters, Palmer will use the visual element of "seeing" beats taken away in measures and how that may alter the feel and melody of familiar material.

> I think as far as playing in odd time signatures - recently I've had some of my ensembles take a tune like "All The Things You Are" and I'll have them look at the chart and visualize every other measure in 3/4 – so we're going to do it in seven. I'll have them interpret the melody as if they are going to have a beat taken away in every other bar.[106]

Palmer also uses an approach he learned through working with jazz pedagogue and trumpeter John McNeil that involves "intervallic modes." In this exercise, two intervals are selected that are not close to each other and are the basis for creating melodies and pitch groups for use in improvisation. This is in effect a way to create new melodic patterns. Patterns are used by a number of improvisers in jazz performance as they create consonance through maintaining and repeating certain musical structures,

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[105] Jason Palmer, interview by author, 9 March 2011, phone conversation recording.
[106] Ibid.

although the specific pitches may not always be consonant in terms of chord-scale relationships. Palmer describes improvising freely, with no pre-determined form or structure using the intervallic modes, before gradually adding the element of structure through basic song forms like the blues.

> I work on intervallic modes. I'm not sure if I mentioned it before, but I got this idea from John McNeil. You take two intervals and improvise using only those intervals. So we would start out by taking two intervals that aren't too far apart, but aren't too close together. So I wouldn't do a half-step and whole-step or a minor and major seventh. I'd probably start off with a fifth and a whole-step and sit down and purely improvise with no changes in mind, and then do the same thing in the context of a blues or a modal tune. Then I would focus on what I call target notes, which are the notes that you start on and the notes that you want to finish on. So I've worked on that quite a bit and I relayed that to some of my more advanced students and some of them have taken it and run with it.[107]

Finally, Palmer describes using specific exercises and approaches learned from his transcription studies and extensive listening to develop pitch specific color combinations for use in his improvisational approach, and educating students to color possibilities. One exercise is to view every key center simultaneously as three tonal centers, using the augmented system attributed to John Coltrane and the Coltrane Matrix (most notably found in his composition Giant Steps) – for example, viewing the tonal center of C major as E major and G# major simultaneously. Another approach is to view minor chords as Dorian modes a half-step apart, an approach utilized by McCoy Tyner and various others in the jazz tradition. In this case Eb and E dorian modes/scales would be playable over a Eb minor chord. This approach is often referred to as pivoting, or "side-slipping" as two of the pitches from the Eb Dorian mode – the Gb and Dd – are also pitches in the E Dorian mode (enharmonically F# and C#) .

[107] Jason Palmer, interview by author, 9 March 2011, phone conversation recording.

Although many of Palmer's pedagogical approaches can also be found in other educational materials and in the performance styles of other jazz artists, a defining characteristic for Palmer is using the techniques to establish and strengthen the visual connections between written music and sound. In his experience, these connections have allowed him to more readily access specific approaches and use them in a meaningful way while improvising. Furthermore, Palmer's background as a student of music involved a heavy amount of transcription and writing music, which allowed him to further create the connection between aural sounds and visualize what that may look like on paper.

Like all the subjects in this study, the ability to engage other senses while performing can help to establish the connection between musical intent and executing those ideas effectively. In each case, the prescription of specific exercises for practice are in fact addressing redundancy and repetition of developing musical skills through involvement of multiple senses. Combining the elements of sound, abstract or specific visual experience, and the body's memory of what it feels like to play certain musical gestures, is a way of involving the entire body and mind in the improvisational experience.

Conclusions

Jason Palmer is a unique inclusion to this study for a number of reasons. He is the only subject who has absolute pitch and consequently visualizes music in concert pitch, not transposed to the key of Bb for his instrument. Additionally, the experience of absolute pitch has been affected by his studies and heavy amount of transcription early in his development. This has created a unique experience in which he visualizes everything

he hears notated on staff paper. This is an amazing gift, but can also be considered as a creative challenge. How does one deal with such easy access to all the musical material that is being performed and available in their consciousness? For Palmer, although he could hear and visualize all the performed elements, the connection to playing in a style indicative of the jazz tradition and developing the selectivity of what to play in specific situations required a connection to what jazz artists would play and correspondingly, what that looked like notated on staff paper.

As Palmer describes, when everything is available, it requires a certain amount of responsibility to still relate it to something, whether that be an abstract experience, or musical structures, forms, and conventions viewed important in jazz performance. Additionally, an amount of balance is required in the synthesis and use of all the available materials, such as pre-visualization of complete phrases and the ability to also see accompaniment notated accurately.

Palmer's improvisational style could be described as logical, inventive, clever, and compositional as the visual process assists him in organizing musical material, interacting with all the elements that surround him, retaining information, and providing him with a great amount of freedom to create abstractly and from learned sources. The styles of certain improvisers have a corresponding visual element derived from transcription, similar to the "lexicons" described by Brian Lynch. Musical ideas can appear pre-visualized and fully realized if Palmer is creating the narrative of his solo, but the musical gestures of others can appear as well in his visual space. Colors and the metaphor of painting a picture are important elements in Palmer's experience and can affect his musical decisions and content. Musical inspiration and a corresponding visual

element can also come from a variety of sources, many of which are not related to music, like boxing, modern art, and movement.

Palmer's improvisation on *Abu Abed* features a number of visual components presented from a variety of sources, including the screams of audience members, cascading chordal accompaniment, and rhythmic devices. The visual experience also allows Palmer to retain musical gestures and themes that can be elaborated upon or returned to throughout a solo. Motives can be viewed as numbered patterns that are slightly modified to create interest, and melodic phrases can be modified on the fly to resolve harmonically or rhythmically with the accompanying performers.

Palmer feels that visualization helps him in getting his musical intent across in that he can readily access and execute what his mind may see and want him to perform. In this way, he is providing listeners and his audience an accurate picture of what he really wants to say musically. Finding a way to make that connection embodies what improvising and expressing yourself as an artist are truly about.

> I'd say that if you have that connection where you see something and you can relate it to an audience, I think it's that much more rewarding to my musical psyche. I always tell my students that the master's have eliminated the bridge [or barrier] between what they hear in their heads and what comes out of their instrument. If you can eliminate that bridge, that is something that will allow you to never feel like you're at a loss for ideas. I think that I'm always trying to get to that point, and being on that continuum to eliminate that bridge is something that keeps me going.[108]

[108] Jason Palmer, interview by author, 9 March 2011, phone conversation recording.

CHAPTER 7

SUBJECT COMMONALITIES AND DIFFERENCES

Overview

Tim Hagans, Brian Lynch, and Jason Palmer are unique trumpeters and jazz artists coming from varied personal and musical backgrounds. Although Hagans and Lynch are considered of the same musical generation, they have experienced and demonstrated divergent career paths and musical associations. Consequently, they are viewed by their peers as different stylistically and creatively. Lynch is considered a stylist, comfortable playing in a variety of styles and firmly schooled in the approaches of the jazz trumpet lineage, melding various influences into an individual, yet recognizable performance style. Hagans, on the other hand, is often described as having an unconventional approach, still based in the tonal jazz tradition, but often compared to Miles Davis and appreciated for his ability to sound like himself in any musical situation. Palmer is twenty-five years their junior, and has truly grown and matured in the jazz educational system, while at the same time interacting with influential contemporary jazz performers and developing abstract and forward-thinking performance approaches.

To the educated ear, each subject of this study is immediately discernable from the others in their improvisational approach. However, what unifies each and is an important element in their inclusion in this research is their familiarity and involvement with jazz performed with a tonal and formal framework, derived from the mainstream jazz tradition. While elements of their visual experience during improvisation may

contain abstract descriptions and relationships, it is still viewed and described through the lens of the song-forms, tonal harmony, and rhythmic feel most clearly observed and analyzed in traditional jazz scholarship.

Considering this, each artist is operating to some degree from a familiar and shared musical background which can be observed by analyzing segments of their musical examples. Each demonstrates common musical concepts often emphasized in a mature improvisational approach, including: bebop-derived voice leading, thematic development, quoting (of the composition's melody and outside sources), rhythmic variety, and harmonic interest created through side-slipping or structures derived through patterns and melodic shapes.

There is also similarity among the subjects in describing how these elements are processed or present themselves in a visual experience. Each artist describes the visualization of notes or phrases as having some type of relationship to notated music. Hagans describes the transcription of notes, colors, and contours set against the backdrop of staff paper while improvising. In some cases, he may see long eighth-note lines transcribed in their entirety as he's performing them. Lynch describes a similar experience in the unrolling of notes and visual patterns as he performs them. Palmer, with the assistance of absolute pitch, pre-visualizes fully notated phrases before he play them, in addition to seeing both his and others musical ideas transcribed in time during performance. Since the visual element of reading music is so present in the musical development and expectations of contemporary musicians, it's not entirely surprising that these types of relationships and experiences develop. Reading new music, exercises, method books, or reading unfamiliar music on the bandstand have become increasingly

more prevalent in music performance, whereas a performer from another time period or stylistic background may have more experiences playing from memory. Palmer describes his connection to written music as being a direct result of transcribing specific performers, which developed a connection on what could be played in certain musical situations and how that may appear notated on staff paper.

While reading chord changes, Lynch describes a similar effect of seeing the music on the page as it's played. Hagans tries to avoid reading chord changes when possible, as he finds it may limit what he can perform musically due to the constraints of how far he can physically see ahead. Both Hagans and Lynch have some element of eliminating the direct visual sense while improvising, particularly when performing on familiar material. Hagans closes his eyes and Lynch describes an un-focusing of the eyes, where they roll back slightly, although his eyes may not be completely closed. Palmer performs with his eyes open, but memorization does play a role in his process as well, particularly with his quintet, which tends to perform his original compositions.

Hagans and Lynch also visualize pitches transposed for Bb trumpet, a whole-step up from concert pitch. This is likely a result of reinforcement through reading transposed trumpet music throughout their careers, developing that specific association between sound and the visual element of the transposed pitch on paper. Palmer visualizes in concert pitch and, not surprisingly, is the only subject who also has absolute pitch. Additionally, Palmer did have early experiences playing concert pitch music and became familiar with transposition later in his musical development.

A surprising by-product of this research has also been the inclusion of a physical element, specific to trumpet performance, that is experienced in addition to the visual

connection each subject has with aural information. Hagans extensively discusses the physical component and corresponding specific emotional event created by playing certain pitches in specific musical situations. For him, these physical-emotional events have a relationship to the colors he experiences and creates while improvising. Lynch describes a pre-visualization or pre-feeling of what it will feel like to play certain fingering combinations before he plays them, partnered with a corresponding visual element. Palmer describes a similar experience to Lynch, including the amount of compression or bodily tension that may be required to execute the musical phrases he pre-visualizes and intends to play. Furthermore, in describing practice exercises and strategies to develop visualization while improvising, each subject cited examples of approaches that purposely connect aural, visual, and physical elements.

Brian Lynch describes the playing style or language of specific improvisers as lexicons or texts that have corresponding abstract shapes and can be played against each other in the improvisational process. This creates a corresponding visual element of shape vs. shape in Lynch's experience that can be used to create musical content. Palmer's experience of visualizing complete notated musical segments, learned from transcribing and writing solos of prominent jazz improvisers is a similar effect. Both are using materials of others in order to inform their decision making in time while performing. Lynch refers to this use of other sources as "intertextuality.[109]" On the other hand, Hagans' internalizing of jazz language and conventional uses came largely from focused, intense listening. For him, the process of improvising through use of learned materials is more internal and often abstract.

[109] Brian Lynch, interview by author, 9 November 2010, phone conversation notes.

Each Subject experiences some type of modification or involvement in their visual process due to interaction with outside sources. Hagans describes often tuning out harmonic (or comping) instruments during improvisation to focus on his internal "Emotional Harmonic System.[110]" However, his involvement with the rhythmic element and energy derived from the drums is an important element in allowing him to fully access and utilize the visual process. Based on their descriptions, Lynch and Palmer tend to involve more outside sources in their approaches. Lynch describes particularly interesting harmonic comps or rhythmic cross-beats as creating a corresponding visual shape that he can use while improvising, giving him a view of the "acuteness of one's ears[111]." Palmer can visualize musical material performed by others notated in his conscious space and use that material for new content or development of themes. Additionally, as evidenced in his use of cheers from the audience, Palmer can also use sources outside the performing group for content in his solos.

In describing non-musical visual sources that have influences their visual experience, both Lynch and Palmer cite an interest in abstract visual art. Furthermore, both described the experience of sensory cross-over, where viewing a piece of art may have the secondary experience of hearing a newly created or specific type of music, and vice-versa. Hagans doesn't describe any direct involvement or interest in visual arts, but does recall painting extensively as a child and being fascinated by the vibrant colors of clowns, which is an intriguing parallel given his color-based visual experience. Palmer also describes a connection between athletic or artistic movement of individuals and how that may have a corresponding musical element. He has particular interest in boxing,

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[110] Tim Hagans, interview by author, 15 November 2010, phone conversation recording.
[111] Brian Lynch, interview by author, 10 February 2011, phone conversation recording.

basketball, and ballet. Hagans has also worked in performing improvised and composed music with various creative dance groups in Europe and nationally, often improvising musically with their improvised movement.

In describing the differences among Hagans, Lynch, and Palmer, each has at least one element of their visual experience while improvising that is particularly unique and created through their distinctive backgrounds and experiences as musicians and individuals. However abstract or incredibly specific these approaches may be, each has the ability to relate the experience to musical content and describe it such a way that observing the process and learning about it may in turn allow others to incorporate it into their improvisational approach.

Hagans' unique element is his ability to visualize all musical relationships as having corresponding color associations. These are incredibly specific, with each considered chord change or tonality having specific colors with pitch super-impositions containing a different color in different instances. Although this may be the result of a neurological condition known as sound-color synesthesia, Hagans additionally relates the experience to emotional and physical feelings created by performing certain pitches or phrases in certain musical situations. Furthermore, the majority of information or research on synesthesia is based on reactions to performed music – a passive or reactionary experience. Hagans is particularly unique in that he can alter his experience of color associations by super-imposing other harmonic structures or tonalities while playing. While Palmer also uses color-based descriptions extensively, there is no evidence based on his descriptions to conclude that he is viewing every pitch-harmonic relationship as containing specific color associations. In his case, it is more a

metaphorical description to describe harmonic tension or non-conventional tonal relationships.

Lynch, like Hagans, views general contours related to the two-dimensional visual model most identifiable with reading western, notated music. The vertical axis constitutes pitch (range) or what Lynch describes as a "tonal field.[112]" The horizontal axis is duration and time. This model can vary in specificity to include starting and ending pitches, or complete notated phrases. However, Lynch's experience of viewing the improvisational process visually as containing three-dimensions is what makes his process unique and different from the other two subjects. Lynch's descriptions of playing harmonically "outside" as having a corresponding "tilt of the tonic plane[113]" is an interesting, visually created relationship to describe departing the observed harmonic progression. In his case, "side-slipping" actually denotes the visual experience of shifting to another dimension, or playing "off-axis.[114]" According to Lynch, this may be a direct result of a simultaneous interest in abstract art that deconstructed visual perspective and jazz that employed certain harmonic devices to create tension and musical interest.

Whereas Hagans and Lynch may experience general visual elements that are approximations of internal ideas or external musical sources, Palmer's visual experience is very specific. A combination of absolute pitch and transcription of various jazz artists has created a unique visual experience for Palmer of seeing all musical elements transcribed and notated in their entirety while improvising. This includes the ability to see complete phrases pre-transcribed in their entirety before he performs them, which may be

[112] Brian Lynch, interview by author, 10 February 2011, phone conversation recording.
[113] Ibid.
[114] Brian Lynch, interview by author, 9 November 2010, phone conversation notes.

modified or abandoned on the fly. Palmer's experience can also include the musical gestures of other musicians and outside sources that may have some musical effect – all of which can be translated into his visual space for use. While this creates an amazing amount of possibility – Palmer is able to effectively have everything at his disposal – it also creates a musical responsibility to use that information in a logical and musical manner.

Concluding Remarks

This research is effectively the first of its kind to examine the process of visualization as used by prominent improvisers and present that material using traditional musical terms. There maintains a challenge in comparing an abstract description or experience of an individual and relating that to a reader using accessible language and musical descriptions. However, the insightful nature of the subjects and their ability to describe their experiences has been invaluable in understanding and conveying what visualization during the creative act of improvisation actually means and involves. The basis of this research and document will act as a springboard to include other potential instrumentalists and approaches. Furthermore, as evidenced in their individual chapters, each subject has experienced a change or modification of their visual experience through the act of discussing and describing it. At the time of concluding this research, each subject has mentioned stronger visual experiences that are already altering their improvisational approach and awareness.

This research serves not only to document and further understand this unique experience, but can offer peripheral influences related to jazz education and new performance presentations that incorporate visual media based on the artists approaches.

At a time when audiences have an expectation to be stimulated both visually and aurally in entertainment and art, these approaches partnered with technological advances can create new ways to experience the creative element of jazz improvisation. Awareness of these three unique experiences can assist improvisers in presenting their musical intent in a meta-content manner, organizing musical ideas and implementing creativity through the assistance and involvement of other senses. Ideally, this can give musicians performing in multiple genres additional tools to create artistic statements true to their musical intentions and relate to their audiences in a meaningful manner.

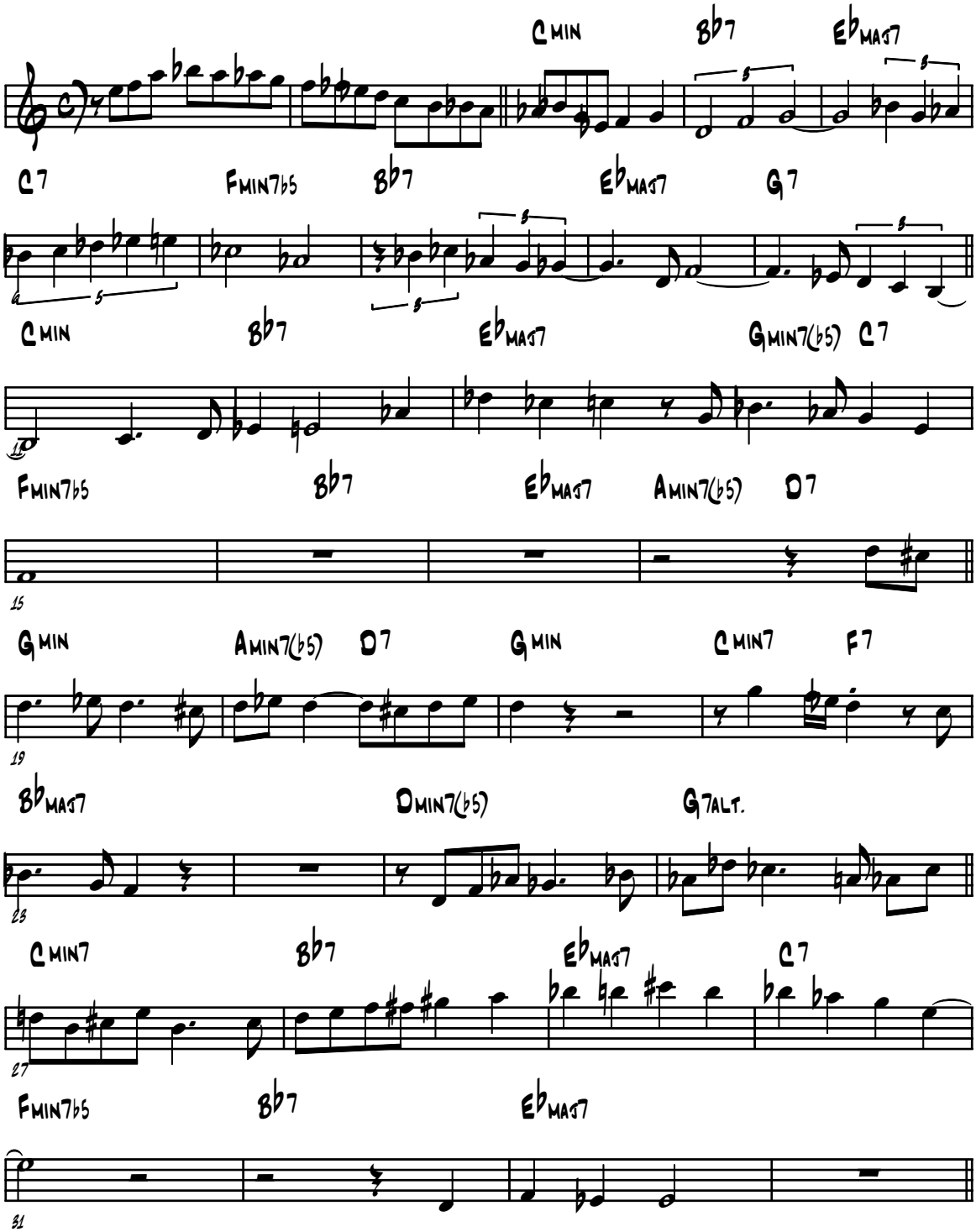
APPENDIX A

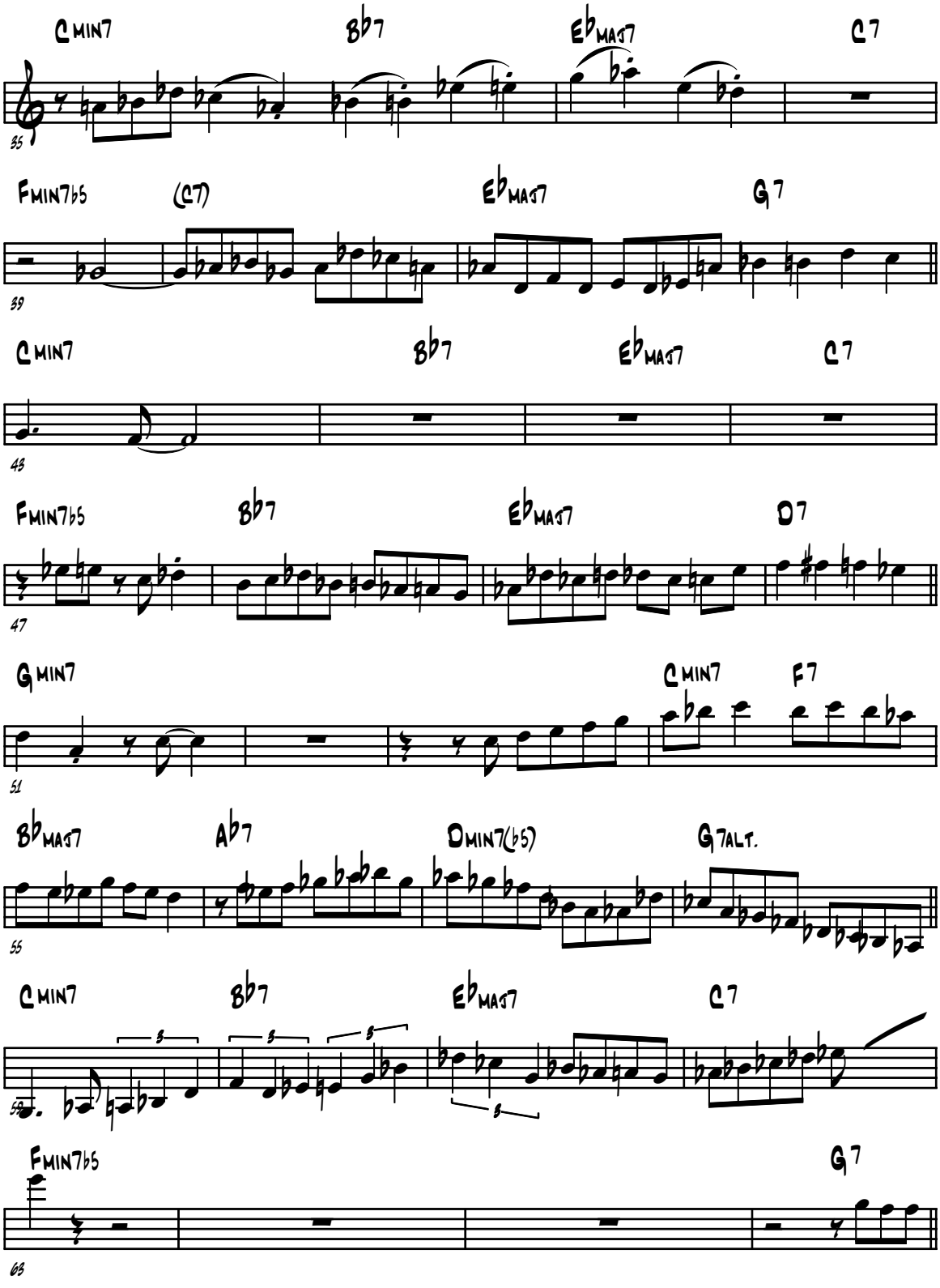
Musical Transcriptions

Tim Hagans' Solo on "I Hear A Rhapsody"

From "Audible Architecture" - Blue Note 7243 8 31808 2 - 1995

Hagans - tpt , Billy Kilson - Drums, Larry Grenadier - Bass

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Bb7
Eb maj7
C7
35
Fmin7b5
(C7)
Eb maj7
G7
39
Cmin7
Bb7
Eb maj7
C7
43
Fmin7b5
Bb7
Eb maj7
D7
47
Gmin7
Cmin7
F7
51
Bb maj7
Ab7
Dmin7(b5)
G7alt.
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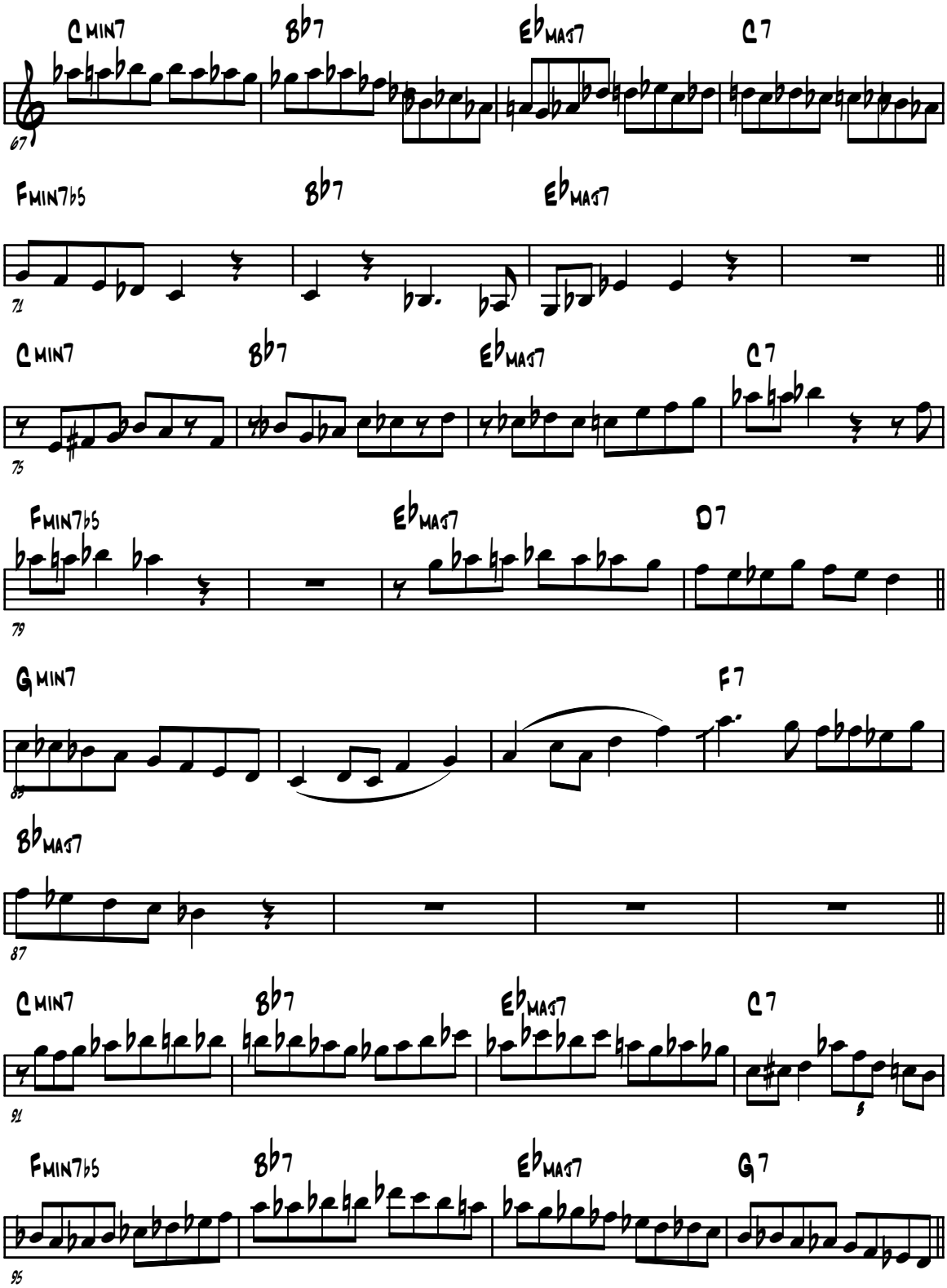
Cmin7
Bb7
Eb maj7
C7
59
Fmin7b5
G7
63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Bb7
Eb maj7
C7
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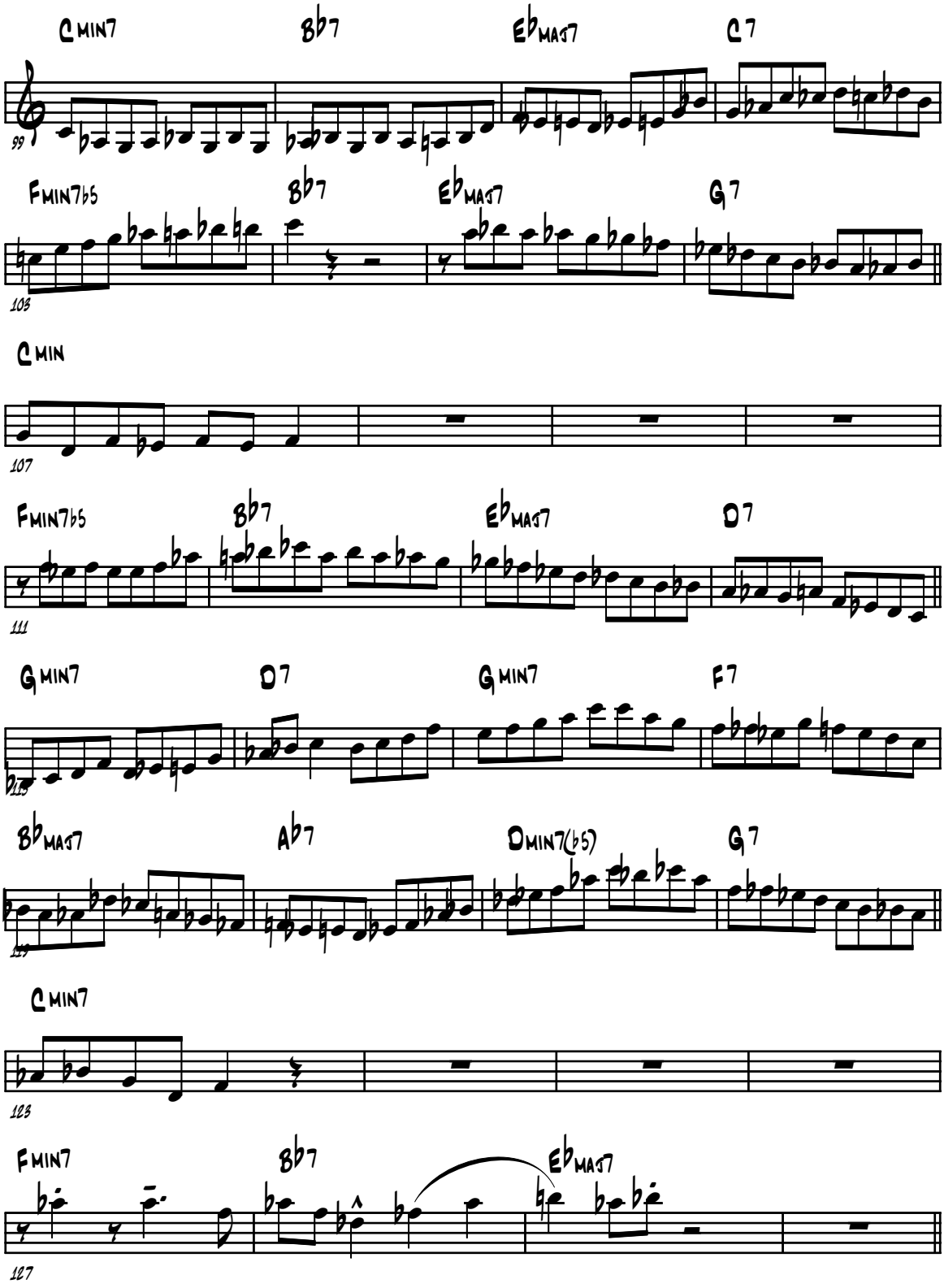
Fmin7b5
Bb7
Eb maj7
71
Cmin7
Bb7
Eb maj7
C7
75
Fmin7b5
Eb maj7
D7
79
Gmin7
F7
83
Bb maj7
87
Cmin7
Bb7
Eb maj7
C7
91
Fmin7b5
Bb7
Eb maj7
G7
95


Cmin7
Bb7
Eb maj7
C7
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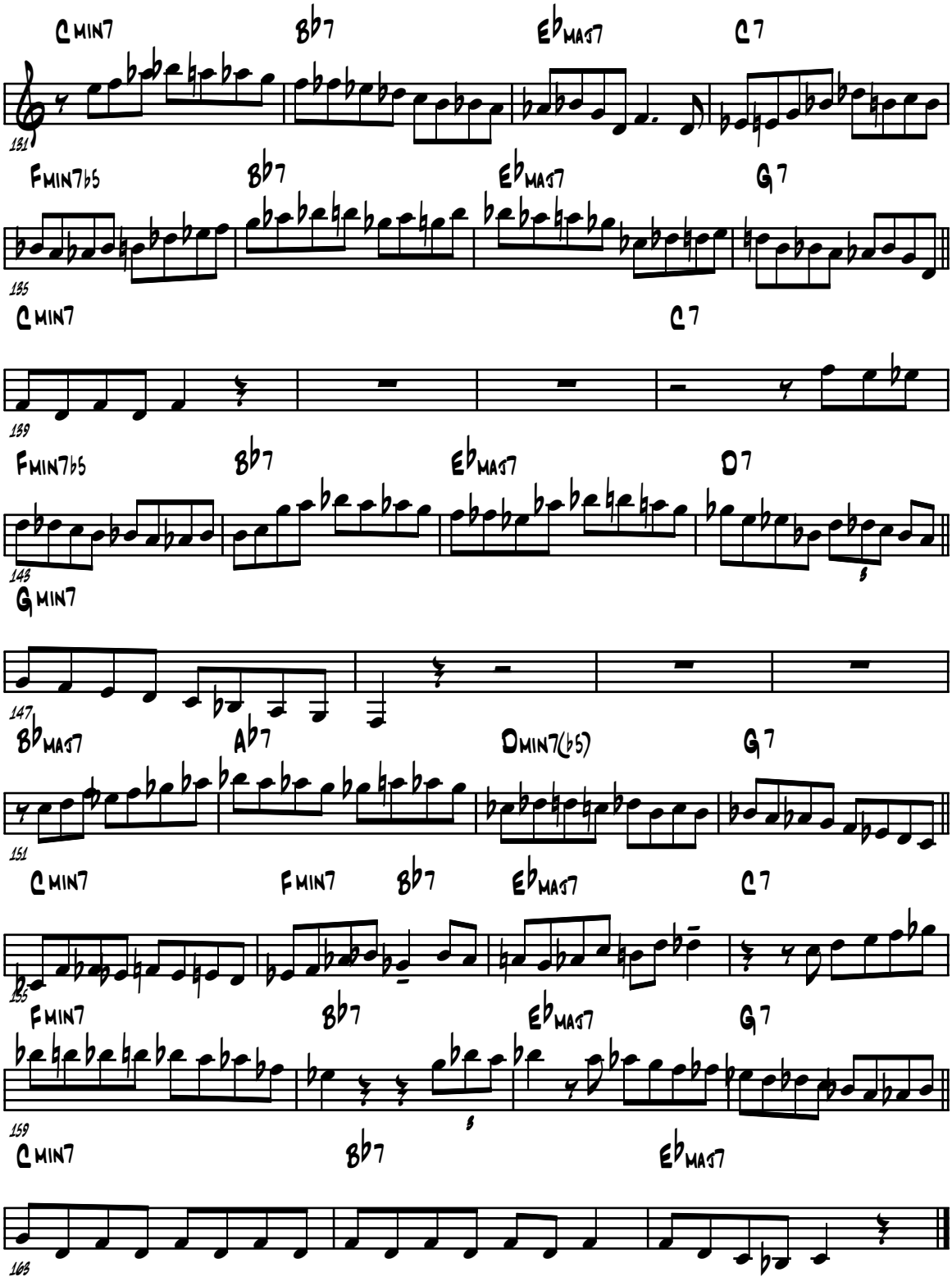
Fmin7b5
Bb7
Eb maj7
G7
103
Cmin
107
Fmin7b5
Bb7
Eb maj7
D7
111
Gmin7
D7
Gmin7
F7
115
Bb maj7
Ab7
Dmin7(b5)
G7
119
Cmin7
123
Fmin7
Bb7
Eb maj7
127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C7
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Fmin7
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G7
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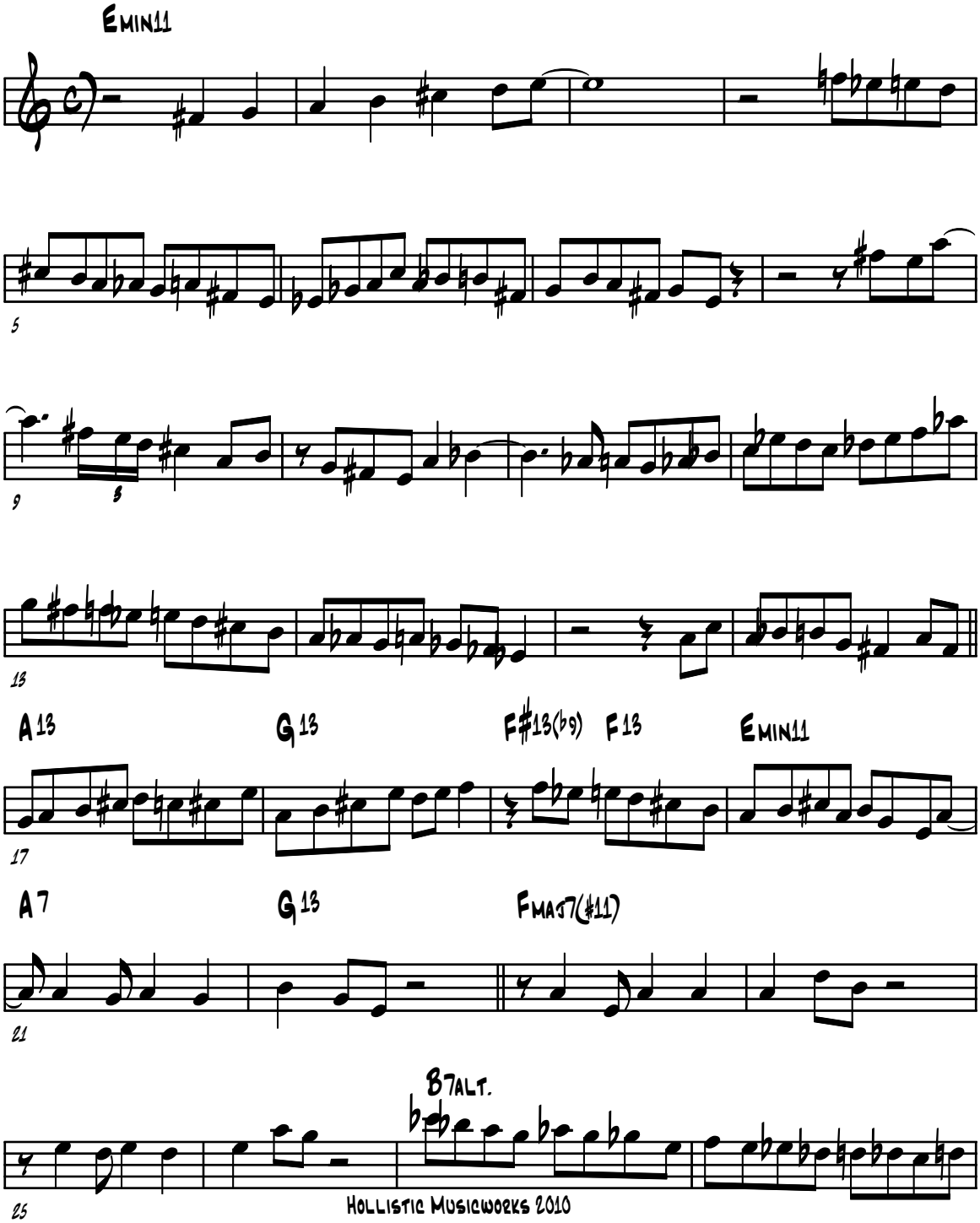
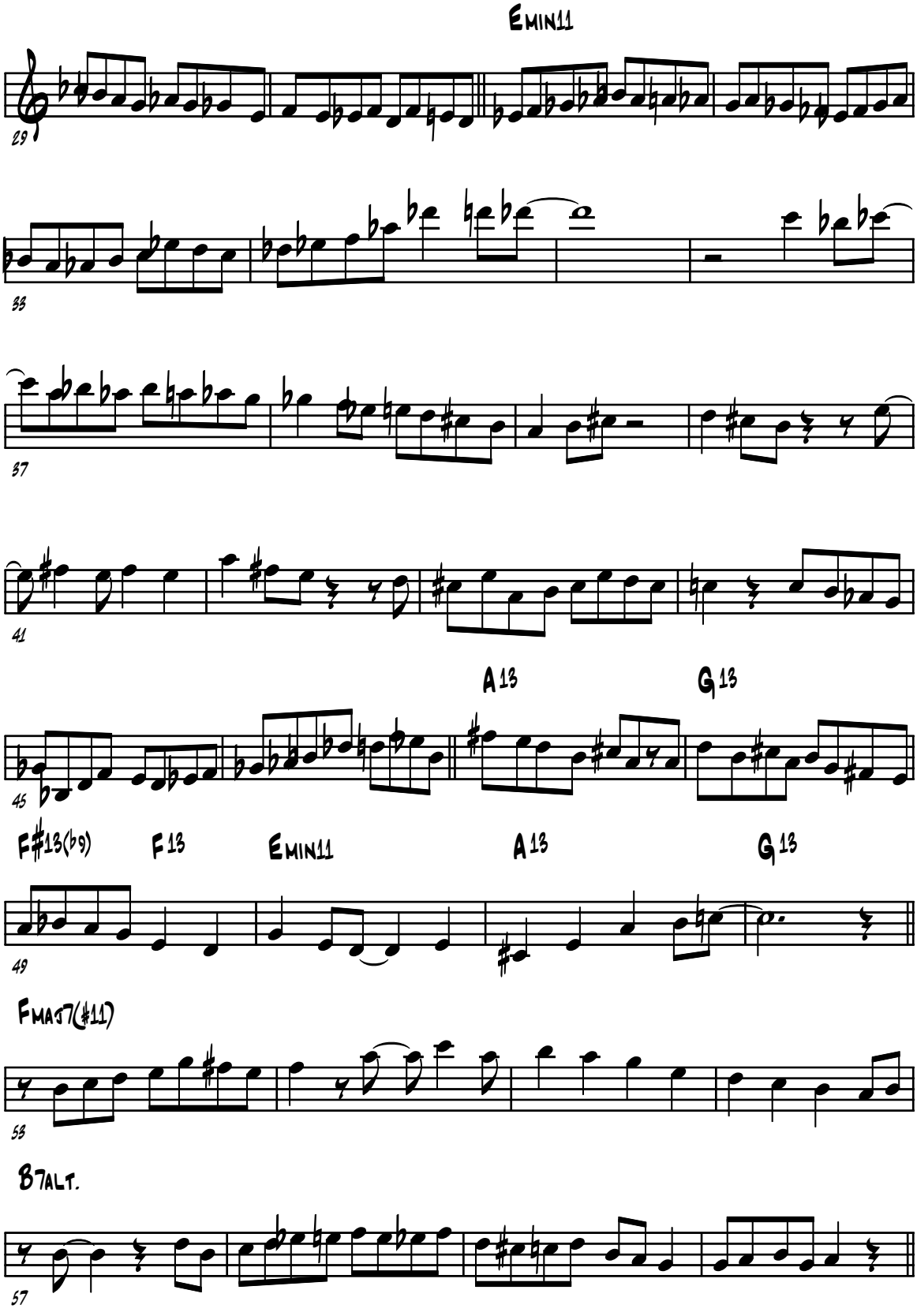
Cmin7
Bb7
Eb maj7
163

Brian Lynch's solo on "House of Saud"

from "Unsung Heroes" - Hollistic Musicworks

Lynch - tpt, Vincent Herring - Alto Sax, Rob Scheiderman - Piano, David Wong - Bass, Pete Von Nostrand - Drums

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Fmaj7(#11)
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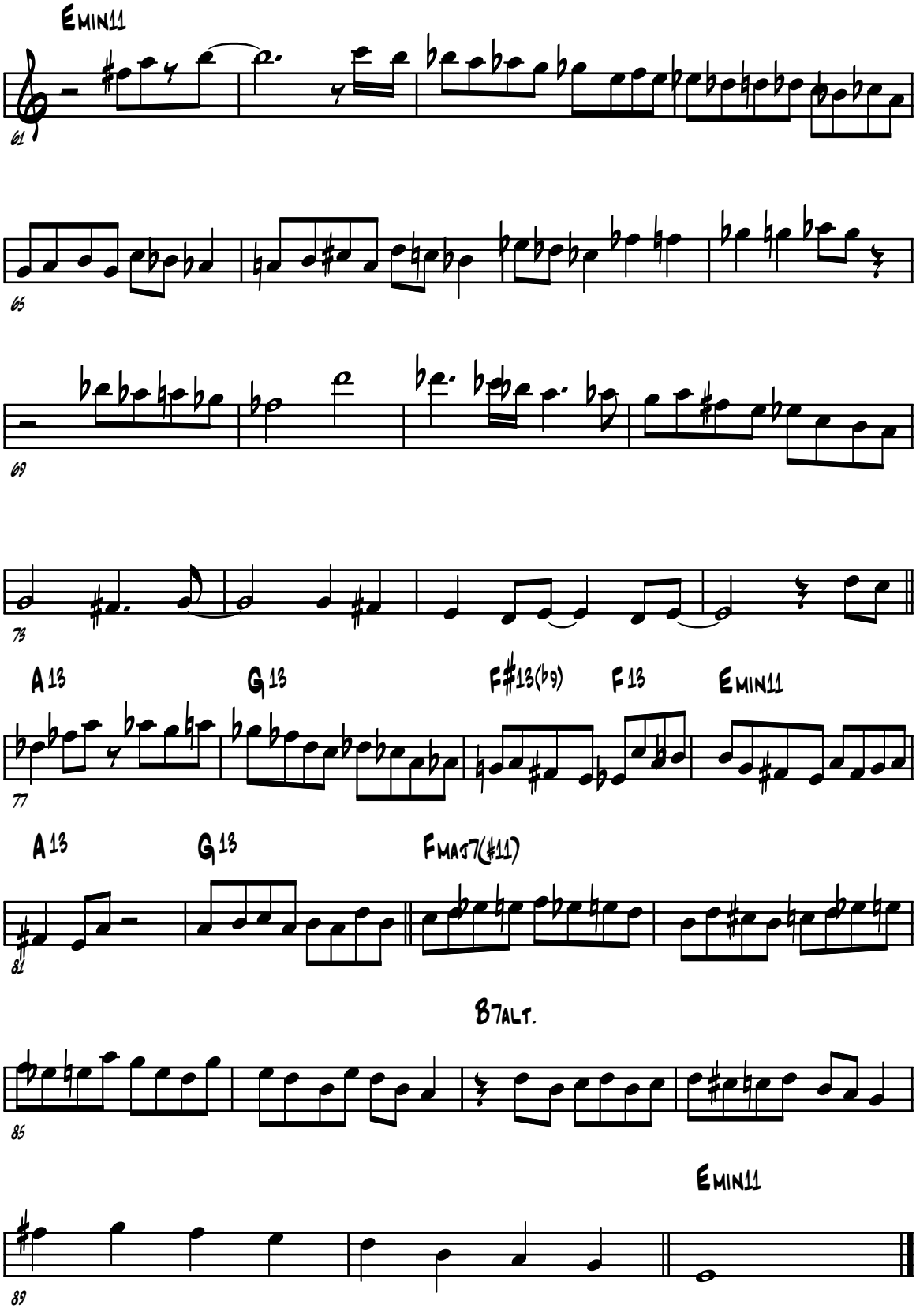
B7alt.
57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F#13(b9)
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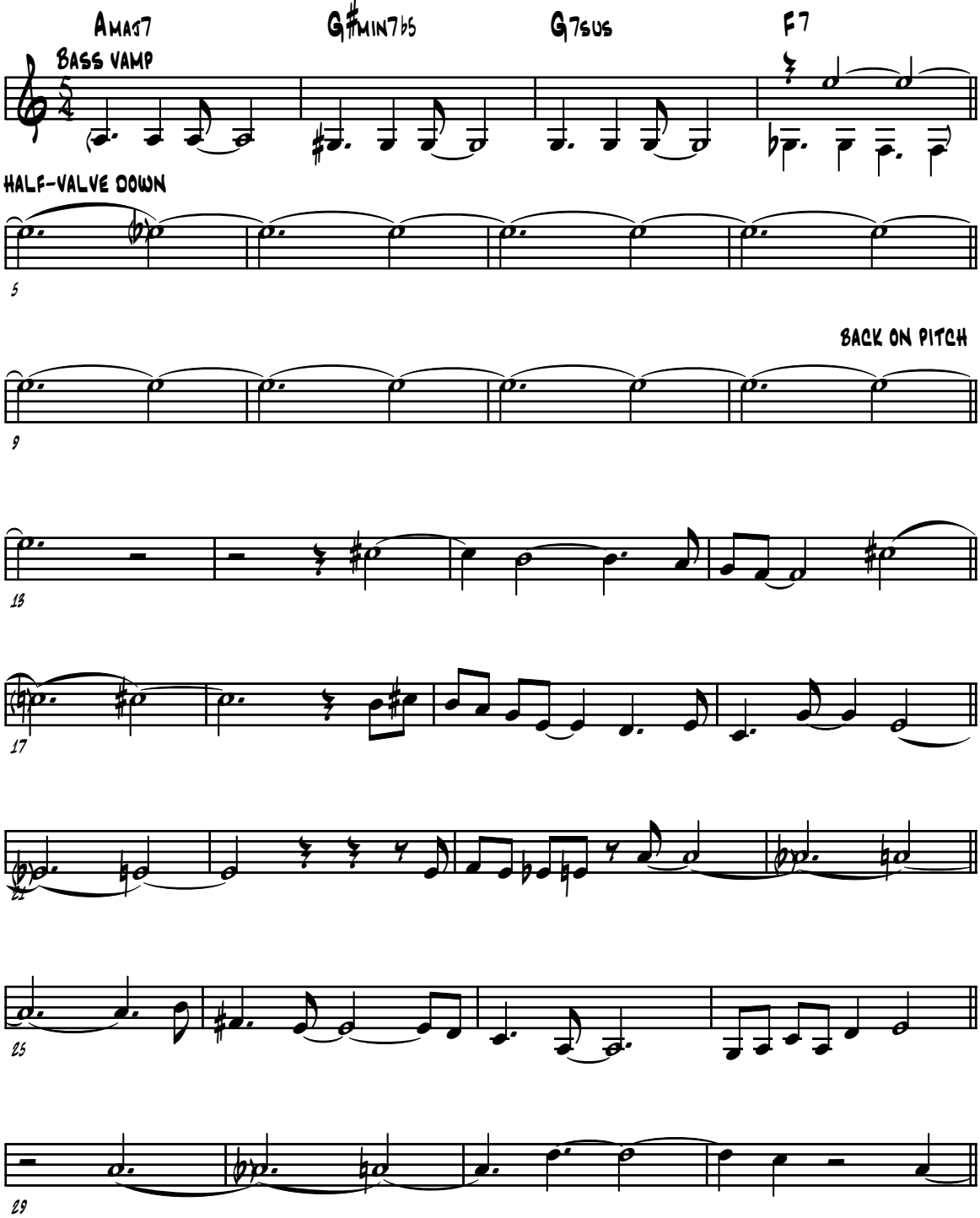
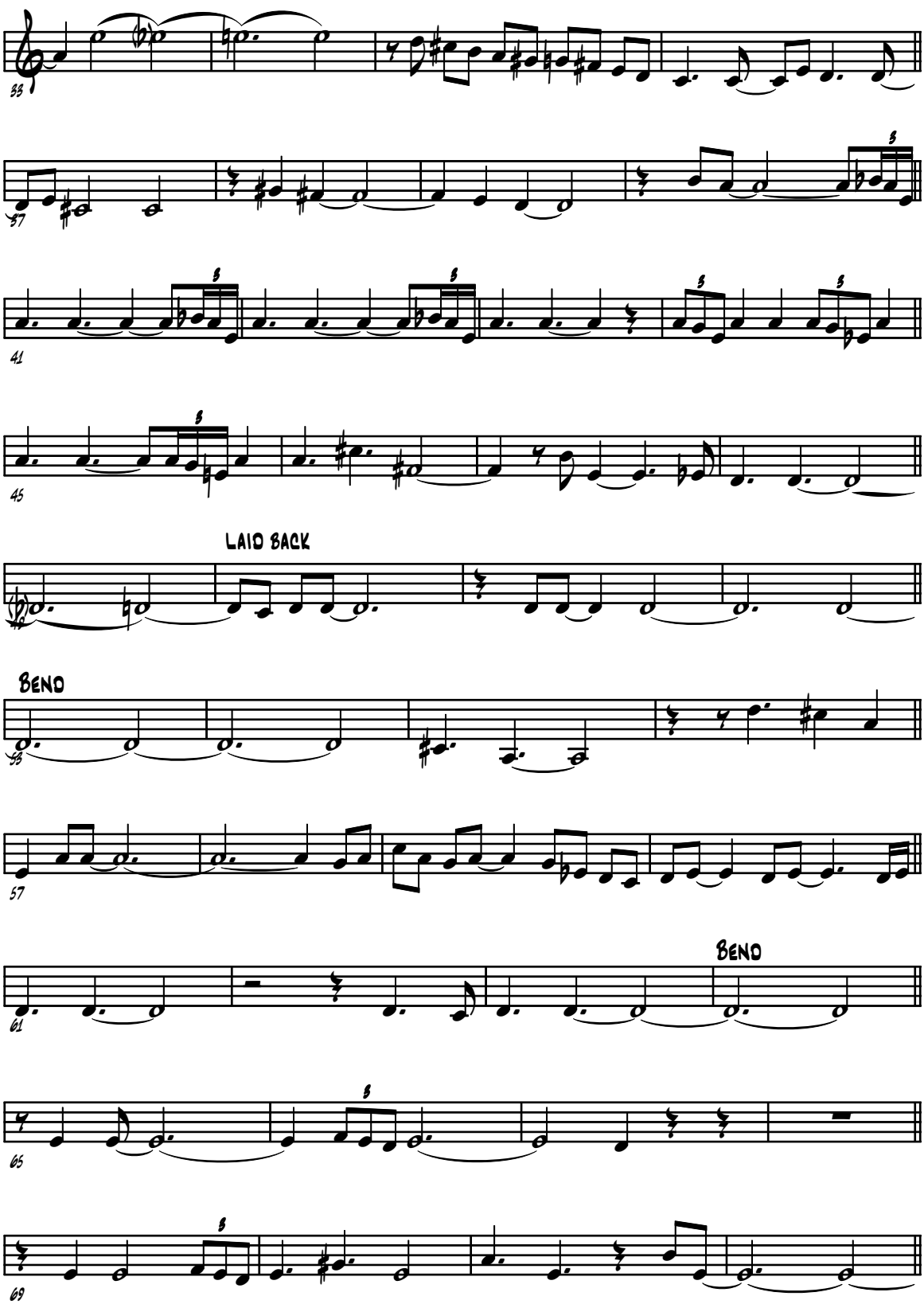
A13
G13
Fmaj7(#11)
81
B7alt.
85
Emin11
89

Jason Palmer's Solo on"Abu Abed"

Live at Wally's - January 28, 2011 Jason Palmer - trumpet,
Michael Thomas - Alto Saxophone,Greg Duncan - Guitar, Lim Yang - Bass, Lee Fish -drums

Trans. Matthew White

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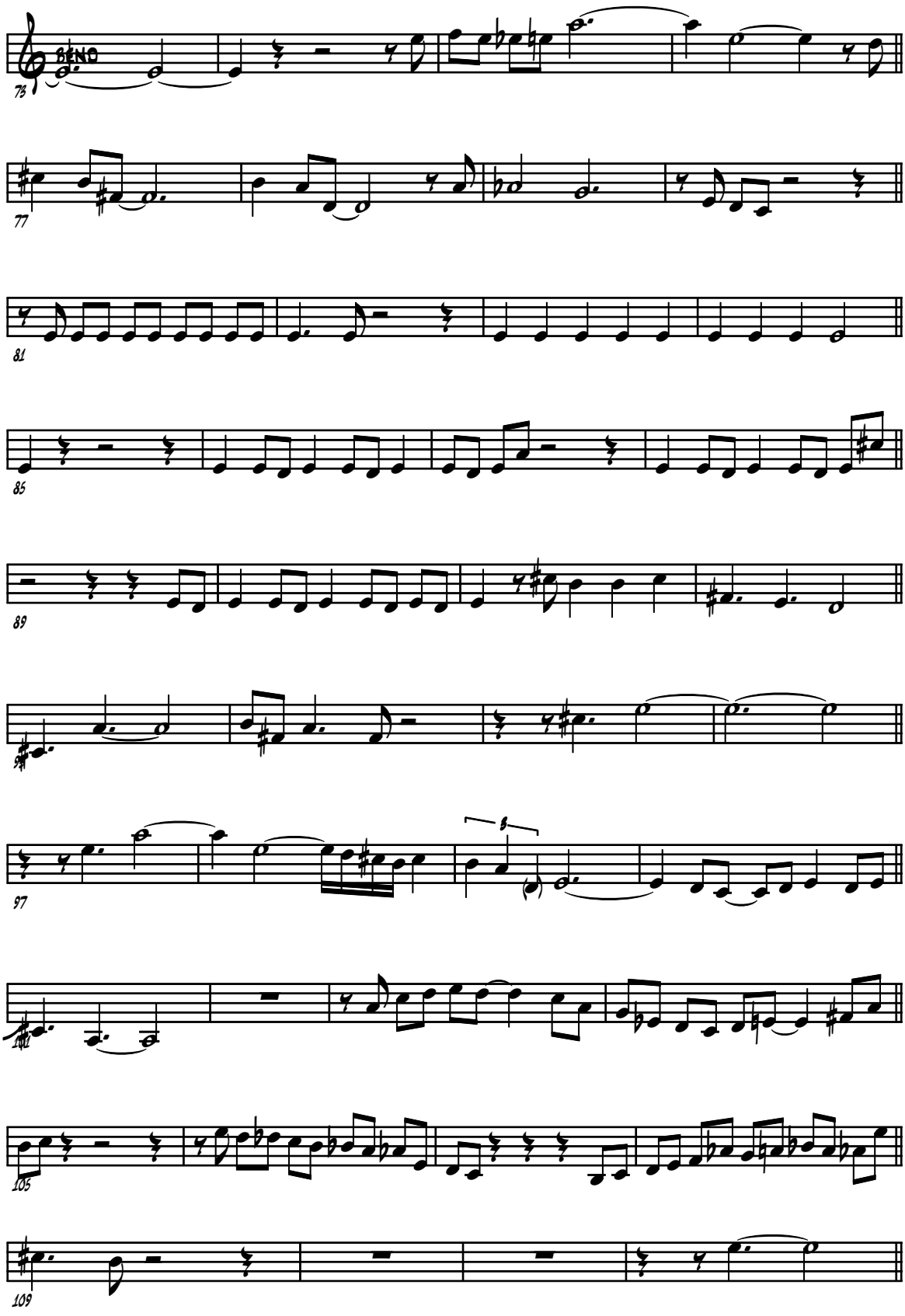
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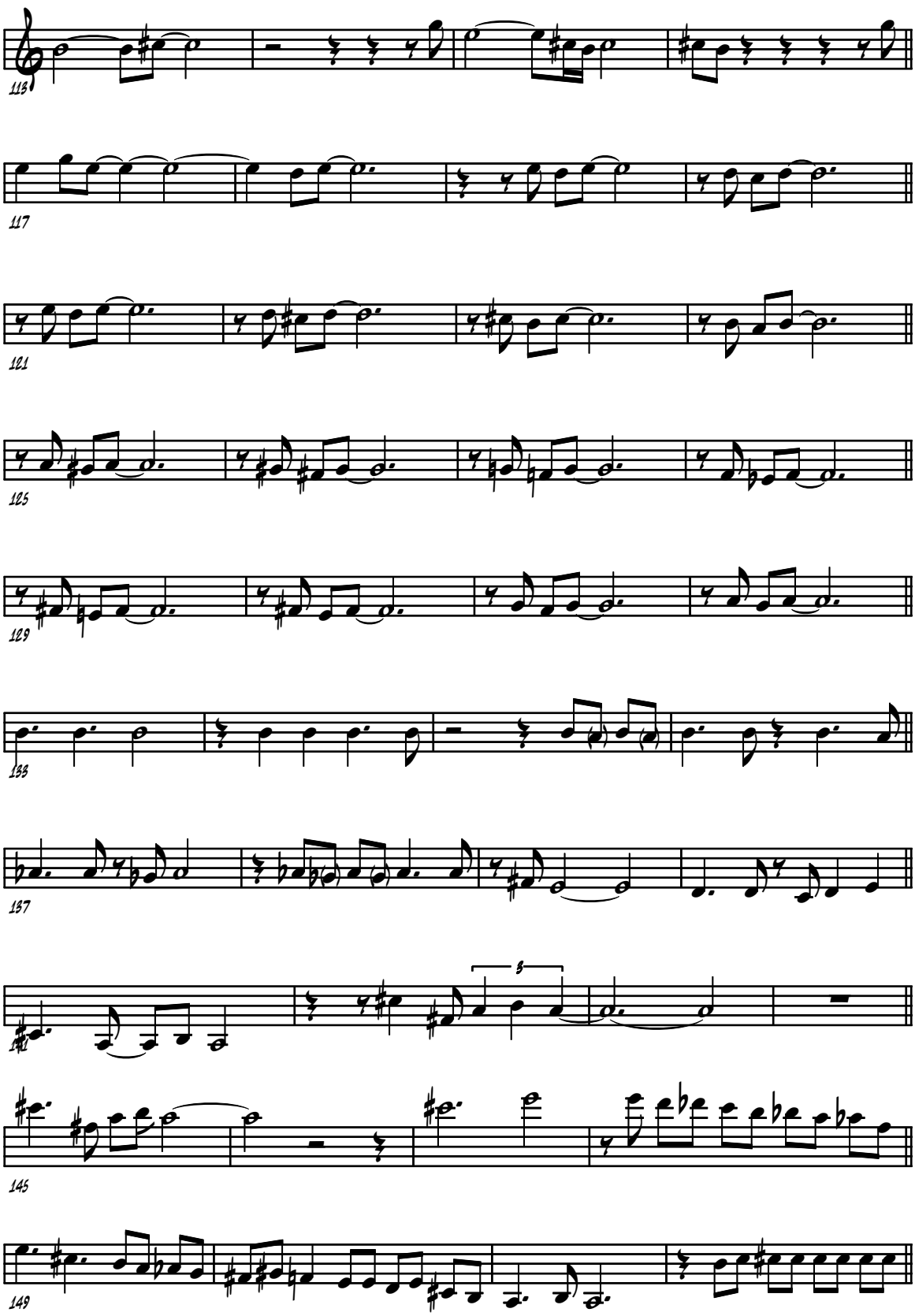
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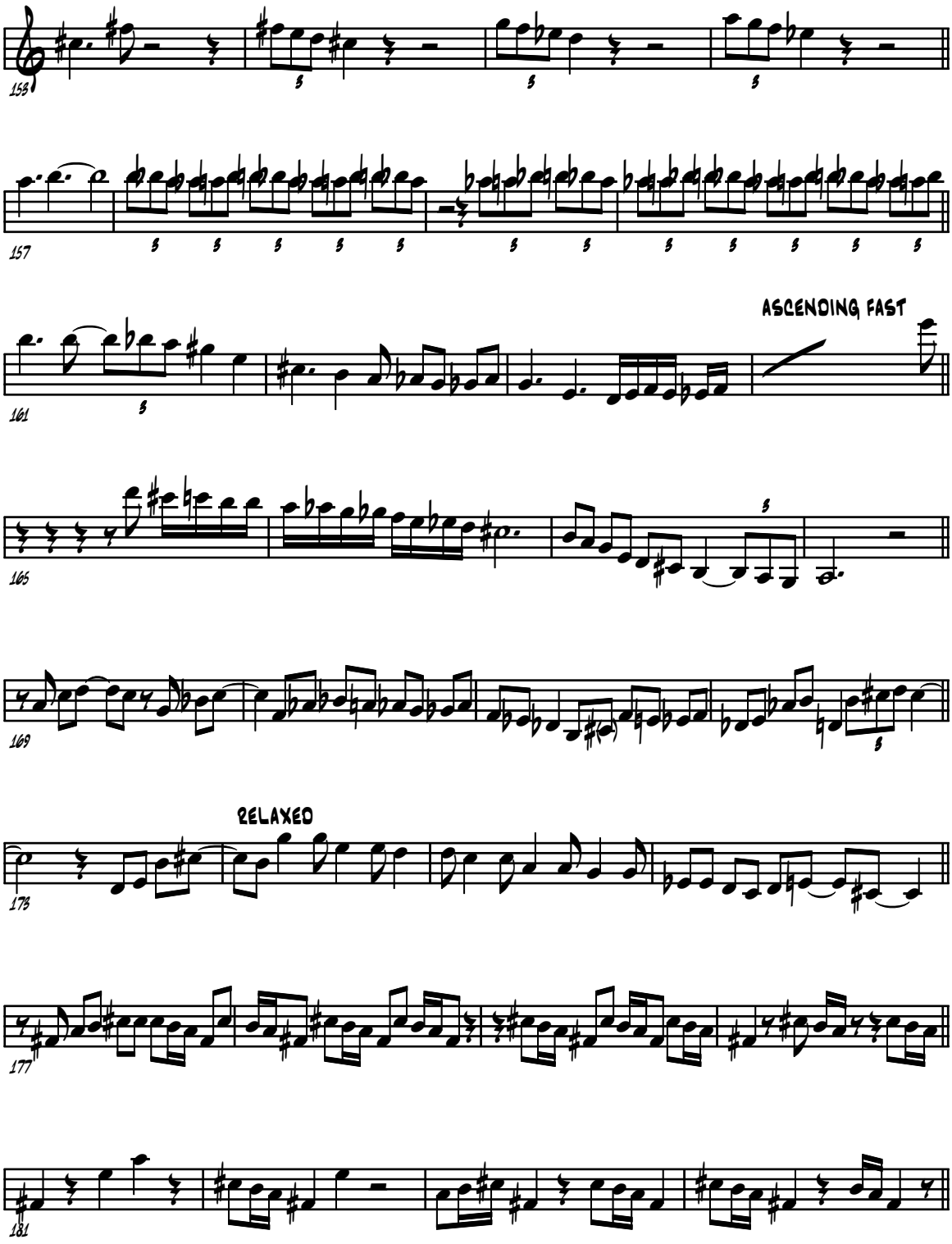
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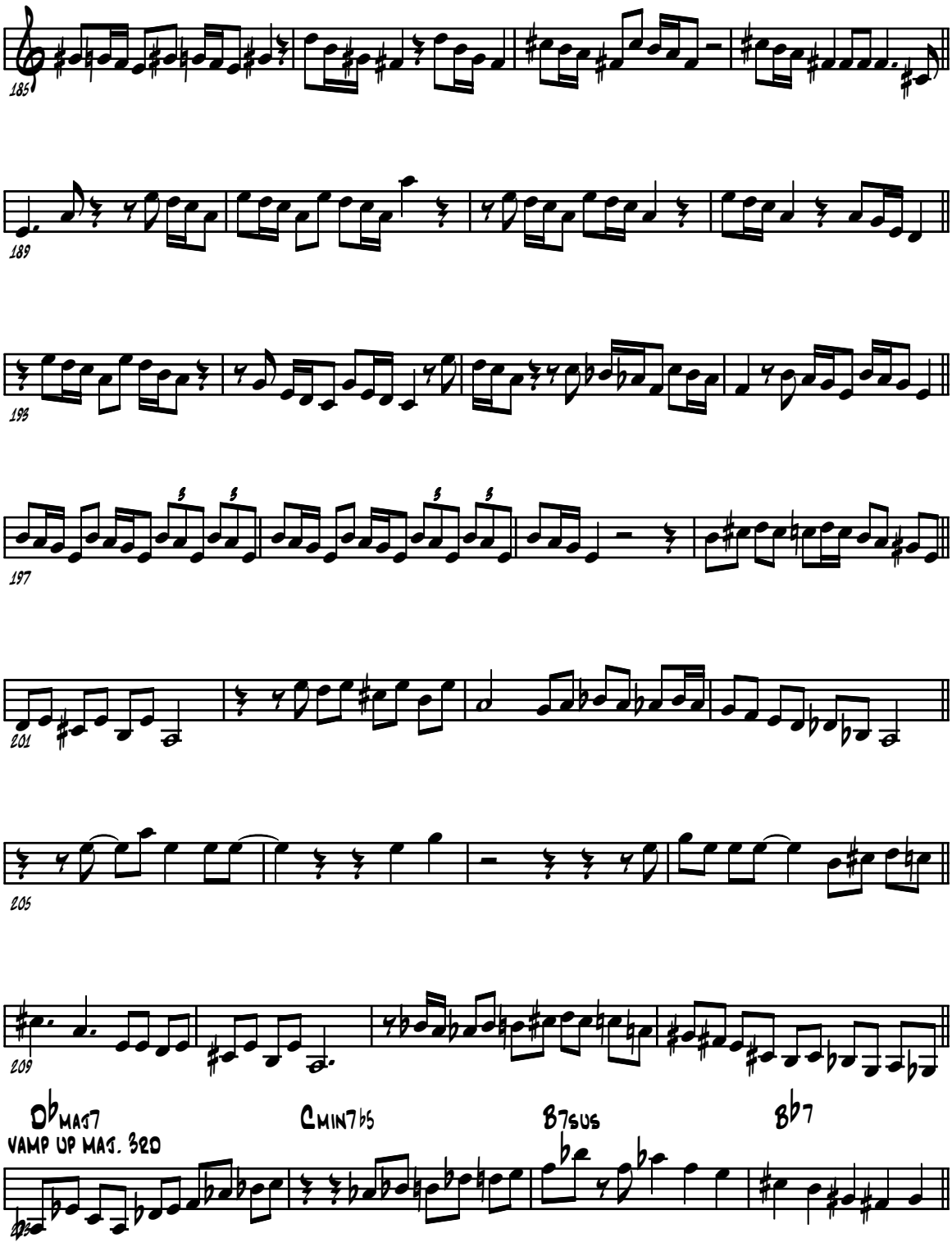
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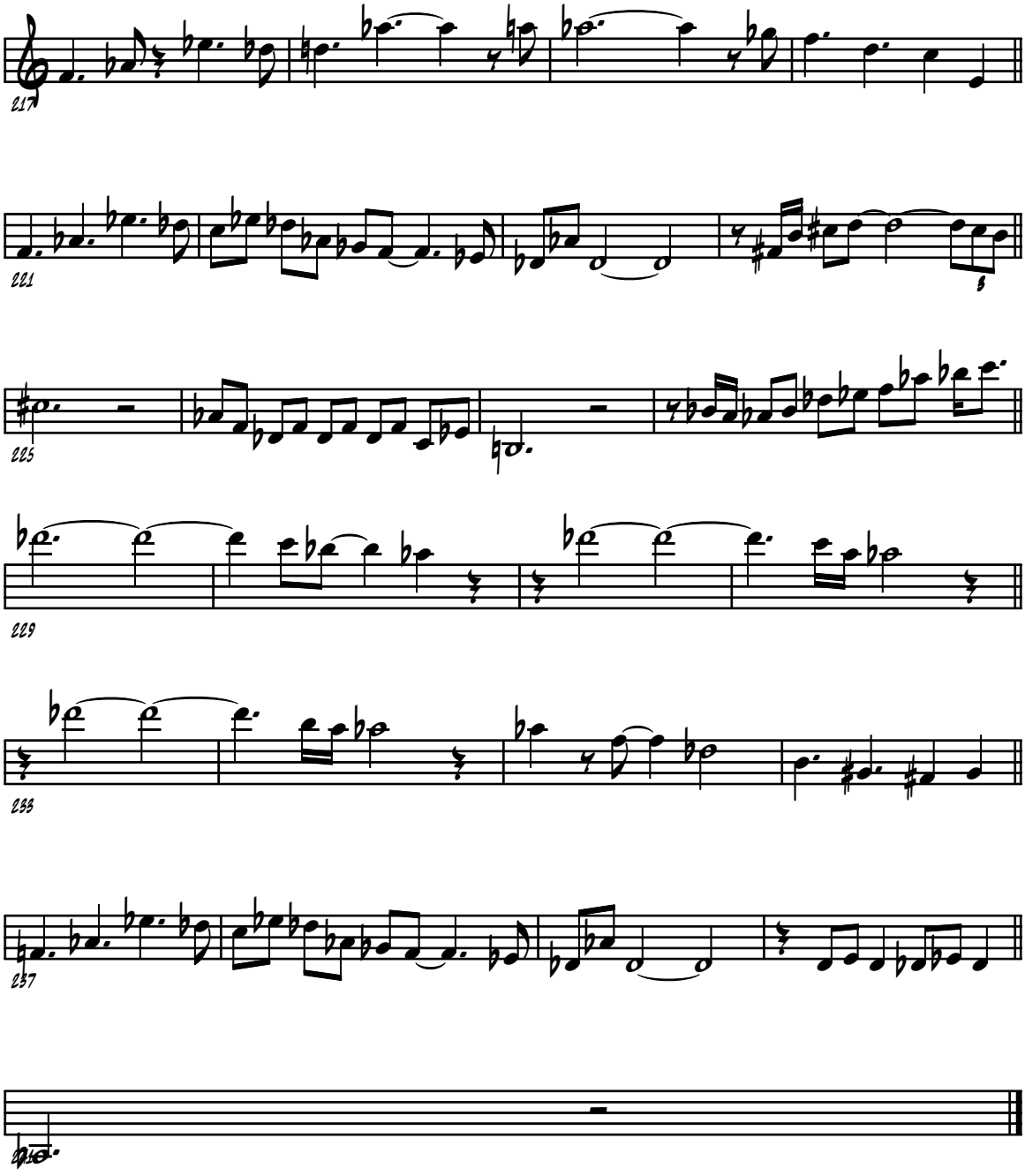
VAMP UP MAJ. 320
Cmin7b5
B7sus
Bb7



APPENDIX B

Interview Transcripts

Phone Interview with Tim Hagans - November 15, 2010

MW: So you were talking about playing with your eyes closed…

TH: Right, when I was with Stan Kenton starting in 1974 for about four years, I'd come out and play solos and my neck kind of bulges out when I play. My early trumpet teachers talked more about music than how to actually play the trumpet so I picked up some bad habits and my neck puffed out really big at that time. I'd come out and play a solo with Stan's band and people in the front row would be shocked, like they saw the Elephant Man with his neck puffing out. I always noticed that is bothered me because there was this reaction to how I looked physically while I was playing the trumpet, especially doing clinics in the afternoon – kids sitting in front row will laugh at anything. So I noticed that, but when I got on Woody (Herman)'s band – Woody did not like my playing. I was only on for a month and he fired me, partly because I played with Stan Kenton before and he didn't realize that – but also I was just too weird for Woody.

MW: sure…

TH: Even though I was making the changes, but I was just approaching everything from a different melodic way. I figured if (Frank) Tiberi could play the way he plays on Early Autumn, I could play like this on Rhythm Changes. The Saxophone players were allowed to follow that path, but the trumpet was a pretty defined chair – the bebop, melodic, Clifford Brown thing.

Woody kept me on for a month, but he had the habit of holding the microphone up to the horn player's bells while they were soloing so he could announce their names to the audience – a little showbiz thing. But the fact that he disliked my playing and he's

holding the microphone just a few feet from my eyes – it's why I started to play with my eyes closed. I couldn't concentrate with him scowling at me.

MW: (laughs)

TH: So it's a humorous little introduction, but ever since then, unless I have to read – and I try to avoid doing this – unless I have to read chord changes, I play with my eyes closed. A lot of times I'm in a situation where it's original music and there are a couple of rehearsals for a recording or concert, and even in those situations I try to get as much as I can memorized.

I tend to play or think melodically – when I say play, I mean improvise. I tend to improvise where my eyes are, which are always a little bit ahead of the music, because as you read…

MW: You're always looking ahead...

TH: As your brain interprets what you just saw. So I find that I'm melodically hindered, because I'm only playing into the next bar. I'm not thinking of the whole overall phrase, which may happen to be eight bars, or twelve bars… or whatever phrase I'm in the middle of. I'm playing shorter and it definitely affects the way I play because I'm playing where my eyes are – instead of where the creative cosmos wants to take me.

So I try to get everything memorized as quickly as possible and of course, playing standards or stuff that I know already – it's not an issue, you know?

MW: Sure

MW: So do you feel that playing with your eyes closed allows the visual element of improvising to come more into play?

TH: Well yeah, I think it does a couple of things.

First of all, because I'm not directly visually stimulated, it increases the strength of the other senses – specifically audibly. Because I can tune into the drums – I get most of my inspiration from the drums, not so much from the other harmonic instruments, unless again, it's material that I don't know that well. But I've played entire gigs of my music and standard tunes where I was not aware of the piano player and bassist, or guitar player for the entire gig. I basically focus on the drums because that's the rhythm – that's what I don't go through – a trumpet player can only play one note at a time, playing horizontal melodies and I need something to surf over. So for me, it's the drums.

The harmonic instruments – of course on a more subtle level I'm absorbing what they're doing, but it's not in my "front brain" kind of consciousness.

MW: Do you think that may be surprising to people? I think many people would hear your playing and think it's coming from a very advanced harmonic place – but you're more focused on the rhythmic component.

TH: Well no, the reason I block out the harmony is that (laughs) I have my own stuff going on.

MW: Okay.

TH: So that I am adhering to harmony and where things are going, but they're not defined by the harmony that we derive from piano with twelve keys in the octave. It's more of an emotional harmony.

If we go back to language – language is very limited. The point of language is to describe, in art anyway and literature, human emotion. It's to tell a story, but the story sometimes is just there because you need to tell some kind of story, it's really about decisions, emotions, and how people interact.

With language they say that French and Russian are the most descriptive languages to use as an author, but they're still very limited. If you think of the whole spectrum of human emotion, and you try to describe that in language, forget it. That's the point of being an author or playwright, using language to TRY to describe the human existence.

Well, I look at harmony the same way. We're bound, because of our ears and evolution, to accept half-steps. Other cultures may accept quarter-steps or bending notes. In jazz, we're stuck with chords and harmony that's derived from twelve-tone chromaticism. To truly describe human emotion and existence, we would need a piano with eighth-steps, or sixteenth-steps because we're all so completely crazy in this world and we're trying to describe that.

To me it's very limiting what a piano or guitar player plays because it's a very limiting tool to describe human emotion. So that's what I mean when I hear my own things, it's nothing that an instrument could play – it's emotional descriptions of my life up to that point when I improvise that tell me what notes to play on the trumpet, where I'm stuck to the twelve-tone system.

So when I have my eyes closed, I can hone in on that thing. If I'm listening to anything, it's the drums. I'm listening with my ears, but that is hooked up to this emotional harmonic system that I'm involved in and that dictates what I should play. There is definitely along with that, an energy force, which is why I hook in with the drums – that rhythmic energy thing.

This is why Coltrane went through so many drummers before we settled on Elvin (Jones). He knew from listening to Elvin that he was the cat for him, because Elvin never went to brushes on the seventh chorus, or dropped out, or thought "You know, I think it would be

great if we went into double-time". Elvin said "What's the tempo? I'll see you at the end, wherever that is" and he just pounded out the time. That's what I need too. So many drummers today are "cymbalists", and this is not a criticism – I just know what I need to give me inspiration. I don't think I'm a natural born trumpet player. It's always been a struggle, and I'm always trying to play things I can't – but if I'm playing with a drummer who's really laying it out there, it makes it easier to hook into this emotional harmonic area.

MW: So it's freeing you up so you can get to that "place"?

TH: Right, and I always joke that the piano player and bassist are only on the gig for the benefit of the audience, since they're not hooked into what I'm hearing. They don't like to hear that, but I tell them "It's only a joke, it's only a joke, you're still getting paid".

MW: So in terms of getting into this emotional state and this harmonic system you have in your head, does this correspond in your visualization to anything we would describe as specifically visual, such as shapes, contours, or colors?

TH: Definitely. Every Letter in the alphabet, every number, every group of numbers, letters, words, and notes has a color – individual colors. When you combine those colors, sometimes it's a combination of those colors, or one color takes over and dominates the entire word. When I hear you speak, I see colors with the words you are using.

It's the same thing when I'm playing. Certain notes always have the same color, but they may change depending on the register. G# is always kind-of green, but Ab is kind-of maroon. So it depends, if I'm playing over F# minor and I play the G#, it's the green element of that. If I'm playing F minor and play the Ab, that's more of a maroon. F minor

in general is kind-of tan. I think these things change too – I don't think F minor was always tan – it might be just for today, or for awhile.

MW: That's fascinating.

TH: So there's colors, and I also see contours. It's as though there is a transcription – in a very abstract way. I see a contour, which points to where I want to play – the line or direction – but I haven't played it yet, so it's not designated in exact notes. But after I play it, it's as though it suddenly becomes music paper.

MW: Oh wow – so you're saying in a preparatory sense there may be a general framework, but after you play it, it is something that is fully formed and notated?

TH: I don't see it as complete notation, but I see the lines on the staff and I see a combination of angular contours and notes … which have colors.

It's funny though – the contour that I see before it is played doesn't have a color – it's just black – maybe because it's not realized yet, it's just a direction.

MW: Okay, so do you feel that once you play it, the colors are assigned to it?

TH: Yes, and in part the exact notes on lines of music paper.

MW: Now, I'm not an expert on it, but is this some form of synesthesia?

TH: I just heard that word about three weeks ago, for the first time. I was talking to a singer in Sweden, and we were discussing this type of stuff. (She had mentioned it) and I said, "Stop, what is that?" She told me her version of what that is, but I'm not sure.

MW: My understanding is that it's a brain/neurological thing where people associate sound with color – something like an impulse cross-over in the brain. I've heard that Scriabin had it. However, the fascinating part is that if you take different people from different parts of the world and play the same music for them, they have the same color

experiences - Even though they may have different social/ cultural backgrounds and musical interests.

TH: Wow – that's interesting. I need to read more about it. It's funny that I had this conversation about two weeks ago, and I got your e-mail around the same time.

MW: Well, in terms of your background and development as a player – has it always been this way (thinking of improvisation in these abstract visual terms)?

TH: I think so. It's hard to think back because I didn't think about it as anything different back then. I never asked the people I was playing with, "Hey, do you see colors?" So for me, I did (see colors) and I didn't think about how it might relate to someone else. Again, I think so…

I'm an only child, so I grew up in my own fantasy world, as an only child would happen to do – because there are no brothers or sisters to run interference. So I've always been a day-dreamer and I let my imagination run wild.

MW: So even thought that was always present, do you think there was anything else in your life growing up that may have influenced you – such as other forms of fine art?

TH: No, nothing out of the ordinary when I was a kid. In fact, my Dad has these paintings I did when I was eight or nine years old of clowns. When you're eight or nine, who doesn't love clowns?

MW: (laughs) Well, you either love them or you're terrified by them.

TH: Yeah – right. There are a bit sinister, but I don't remember being scared by them – but they do have a lot of color in them. Of course, this is before video games and anything besides three channels on the TV, so I think many kids painted, or built model airplanes, or that kind of thing.

So I never thought anything was out of the ordinary or special in the way I was. But Music to me, and when I started to really listen to music – my parents played all kinds of records – very simple, Herb Alpert in the early sixties, Harry James, Dave Brubeck, Symphonic Music – I just loved music. I would sit between the two speakers on the console and listen over and over and over. I think that is when this whole thing started; I found this bond to the abstract.

Music is the most abstract form of art we have, because it's not visual. It's gone – as soon as it's here it's gone. That's why it's so important to have music in the schools and why we need to have some kind of relationship with music. I doesn't matter what you're listening to. Of course, the more involved it is, or more thought provoking it is – the more you'll get out of it – but it's still an abstract thing.

MW: That's one of the reasons I'm so interested in this topic. There is some research about how this may play into composition. However, what is so unique about improvisation is that it's in the moment, but that moment passes.

TH: Exactly.

MW: So you don't have the time to examine it – you're making these decisions, or having these experiences and then they're gone.

TH: Right – exactly. In the composing I do, I try to keep it in the moment as well. I used to hang out with Thad Jones quite a bit when we both lived in Scandinavia. I went to his house one day and he showed me the room where he writes – which just had a table with score paper – and this is in the late seventies – with some pencils and erasers and that was it, no piano. He said that he just visualized it, and he had so much experience that he

really didn't need a piano. He would run downstairs to check things once in awhile (on the piano).

He said that if he was writing a lead line, he would have the chord progression written – and Thad worked primarily in song forms (32 measures, twelve bar blues, vamps, etc.), he didn't really work in through-composed until the very end. So he had the chord progression on the score paper and he would say "Okay, I'm going to write a lead line for the shout chorus, what would I improvise right now?" and then he would write that down as quickly as he could.

MW: Wow.

TH: You can hear it in his writing - that it's all coming from his improvisational language. He would maybe go back and edit it to make it more practical – if what he wrote was perhaps not a perfect lead line for the shout chorus or saxophones. However, the basic core of that line came from his improvisational language.

MW: Did you ever talk (to Thad) about the improvisational process? I remember discussing this topic with Jon Faddis a couple of years ago, and he mentioned that Thad told him (Faddis) that he would visualize an entire chorus of what he was going to play before he actually played it.

TH: (Laughs). Well, I never actually talked to Thad about that, but it wouldn't surprise me that he would have a general framework of what he was going to play, but still keeping it improvised. I heard him play a million times, and I never really heard him repeat anything. I'm sure there were phrases he played in certain spots, but he was one of the most "improvising" guys I've ever heard.

MW: Do you feel that visualization helps you to truly improvise in the context that one of the challenges we face as improvisers is avoiding repeating ourselves or "licks" that we may go back to on a regular basis?

TH: Yeah, and I don't see anything wrong with repeating oneself, as long as it's your own language. You listen to (John) Coltrane and you can tell he's got a germ of an idea – they used to accuse him of practicing on the bandstand and my answer to that is: what's wrong with that? You could hear him playing certain phrases over and over – sometimes exactly the same or slightly changing them. So I don't think there is something wrong with repeating yourself if it's your own stuff. The thing that gets me is that there are so many people out there now that are playing other people's language or the generic, watered-down, approved language and I don't hear all that much individuality. So that bugs me a little bit – even if they're improvising, I can sing along with it as they're playing it. That's no fun.

MW: Well it's based on all these patterns that we've heard many times, so we can recognize where they're heading.

TH: Exactly, and the importance now it to play correctly, not to be an individual and put a statement out there for society to ponder. There is a huge difference.

MW: Do you feel the visual aspect is always present when you play, or is it something you have to get to? If it is present regularly, can you recall any specific performances, such as recordings, where the visual aspect was strongly present and you could tap into it?

TH: Well, I think it's always present, and I'm always just fighting the horn. It may sound weird to say that, but I have to feel physically comfortable to play the way I want to play.

Much of that has to do with how much I've been playing. For example, now I haven't played in a week, I had incredible chops a week ago – I did a couple of concerts in Helsinki. I got home, and there is a ton of mail after a month on the road and there are a million of things to deal with.

If I was going to play today, I wouldn't have that same ability I had just a week ago. So it depends on the sporadic playing world that I exist in anyways – it depends on that and several things. The visual thing always happens from the very beginning.

I think a recording where it happened throughout was Animation/Imagination on Blue Note.

MW: Yeah, I like that recording.

TH: That was the Animation – Imagination. We came up with the title after we recorded it, but that was why that title happened. We basically recorded it with the lights out – just some mood lighting and we had a studio lockout for five days, so when it felt right, we could just go in and play. Everything was based on sound-scapes and creating environments and that type of thing.

The record I did before that was Audible Architecture, which was a trumpet trio record – it was really hard. This is another one of those things, but I had chicken-pox like a month before from my kids. It was going around and I called my mother and asked if I had ever had chicken-pox because if not, I was going to check into a hotel. She said oh yeah, you had chicken-pox, no problem.

MW: And you didn't…

TH: Like I said, I'm an only child and I had suspected I hadn't had it, but she was so sure. So I had it really bad. Adult chicken-pox is nothing to mess around with. It took me forever to recover.

So I was fighting the horn on that (recording – Audible Architecture) because I just couldn't play. I couldn't cancel the date because Larry Grenadier (bass) and Billy Kilson (drums) were booked solid for the next couple of months and there was a timetable, so I said okay, we'll just go in and do it.

There were some things on that recording as well that really clicked: I Hear A Rhapsody, and the duet I do with Larry on You Don't Know What Love Is. (Bob) Belden's tune Blues in My Neighborhood – there were some spots in there that felt really good too.

MW: Tim I really appreciate you discussing this material with me, it's been really fascinating.

TH: It's been a pleasure.

Phone Interview with Tim Hagans (#2) - January 19, 2011

MW: I've worked on setting it up over the phone, but I'd like to take a listen to your solo on "I Hear A Rhapsody" from Audible Architecture and see if for the purposes of analysis and since you've been playing along with my transcription, if you have any memories or thought pertaining to the color associations.

TH: I remember playing the solo vividly, and I'm sure there were color associations and other things going on, but I only remember a couple of sensations of visualizations from that experience, and now when I listen to it, I'm really just listening to it. The visualization happens more in the actual act of doing it… But we can talk about that when we get there…

MW: Great, let's start with the first follow-up question that I wrote. When we were discussing notes, chords, and tonal centers in your visualization process, I remember you stating that sometimes you saw colors or contours, but sometimes it could be a combination of actual notes notated on the staff paper. Do you see that in concert pitch or transposed for Bb (trumpet)?

TH: I see it in Bb.

MW: Interesting. When we were talking about visualization and colors – for example, you described F minor as having a tan quality, are you thinking of that that particular chord or key center as also being transposed for a Bb instrument?

TH: Yes, exactly – I exist in the Bb world. I've never played much piano, so my mindset is thinking in Bb.

MW: Since you're also a composer, do you visualize composition in Bb as well, or is that a separate process?

TH: A lot of compositions start off or from things, or types of things I like to play. For example, the tune "Audible Architecture", that tune in itself was more like – if I were to improvise with angles and intervals that would represent perhaps the architecture of the city or some structure, or even something more abstract… I think about how I would describe this song with my main tool, which is the trumpet – I will think in Bb.

If I play it on the horn, or course I play it over and over, so it morphs and I develop it and then I enter it into the score in concert pitch. If we're talking technically about Finale (music notation software), I'll enter it in with no key signature. Everything has no key signature, even if I'm working in a key signature, because I can enter in the exact notes that I've been playing and then just highlight it and transpose it down a step. So it's really Bb trumpet oriented.

In order for me to play Audible Architecture in the key that I'm working on – Well, I could go on forever about this – but let's say that I'm composing that first line from Audible Architecture, and then I enter it in on those notes on the score, then when I'm playing it, I'm going to play a whole-step up. To me, it doesn't have the same emotion a while-step up – it's a completely different emotion. It may be a better emotion, I'm not sure – it may feel better in that key.

Another example, if I can just go on… If you listen to Miles (Davis) play on "Walkin'" – so a blues in F (concert). He plays the concert Ab above the staff – that's a great note on the trumpet – in the context of being the minor 3rd on a major blues. That #9 sound, it has a lot of emotion spinning in it. It's just incredible, the action in that particular note.

Now the other key we tend to play the blues in is Bb. The concert Db, down in the staff, is the same technical note (in terms of chord relationship), the #9, yet it has nowhere near the same energy on the trumpet as the Ab does when we're playing a blues in F. So people pick keys based on how they feel and how they sound when you play in them. A lot of people play "Alone Together" in C minor, and I have played it in C minor, but I like it much better in D minor – where most people play it. There are certain notes in certain events in that tune that I like to choose – they feel better, they make me feel like playing because I'm involved in the experience up a whole-step.

So I think that is really important to realize – that even thought you are doing theoretical things or relationships… The intervals of Audible Architecture could be played in any key, but it's actually that key that felt the best. So I make sure I keep the trumpet in the "trumpet" key.

MW: One of the things we emphasize in jazz education is learning songs in multiple keys. When you perform specific songs in other keys, does it lose that emphasis emotionally for you?

TH: Yeah, for two reasons… One is what I just described. The melody, the feel, the vibe feels better when they're placed for a certain instrument in a certain key. It seems a lot of tunes feel good for everybody, regardless of the instrument.

But I do think it is important to learn tunes in all keys, and how to improvise in all keys because you want to be free of any kind of hindrances when you're improvising. The classic joke I always make in clinics to students or musicians is: How may trumpet players empty their spit valve when it gets to the bridge of Cherokee? You know because you're feeling comfortable in Bb, and all of a sudden… Then as the bridge winds back

towards Bb, you start to feel more fluent and comfortable. Going to the bridge in Cherokee is such an emotional key change, and you want to be able to express yourself to the fullest on that emotional event. That's really not the place to empty your spit valve. So even thought that area of the bridge only lasts 4 measures, if you practice playing the Blues in B, you'll be able to nail that emotional event. So I think it's important to play in all keys, but then you can settle on what feels best.

MW: Now you were saying on the Blues in F, that playing that Ab, the #9 has a certain emotional quality that wouldn't be available in the key of Bb if you played a Db. Do you find that different pitches can give you the same emotional content, but have different functions in the harmony? So the Db wouldn't give you the same emotional experience as the #9, but perhaps another pitch would be more similar to the experience of the Ab in F?

TH: It depends… Let's go back to that Ab. If we're playing a funk groove in E, which happens quite a bit because that is a guitar key, and I'm in F# (Bb trumpet), so I play the A# or the Bb, that note may physically feel the same because it's the same physical event. Because it is not hooked into a more interesting harmonic event – it's just the third – I find myself in that context using the A# to get to the A natural, the #9. But that G# in E (concert) does not have the same emotion as the Ab on F, even though it's the same physical note. I still find myself using it to get to the #9, Even if it's an E triad or E13. Even that G does not have the same vibrancy, it's not worse, but it just has a different feel, even though it's a half-step down, functioning in the same way. It's all very specific to each half-step. I'm sure in other cultures, it's more specific to each quarter or eighth step.

That's where this music comes from, vocalizing, and horn players trying to imitate the minute changes in a note that the voice can do. An instrument made up of buttons and tubes cannot perhaps get that specific, but we're trying.

So there are emotional grades that are minute that we all have to be tied into.

MW: So in this case, it's an emotional response, but there is also a physical component of what it feels like to play a specific note.

TH: Yes, and I don't really hear anyone talking about that, or maybe it's a non-issue. I don't know. I have a physical feeling because with the trumpet you're so physically involved to begin with, and I think on any instrument, you're involved physically. It just feels a certain way to play certain notes, and then you add that to my emotional thing, then that further affects your physical feeling.

If you watch a movie or read a book, you have an emotional experience – or even in real-life, when you have an interaction with a physical person – there are feelings that go along with that. It's all combined, and I think when you hook into that, you become a more sensitive, honest and true-to-yourself player.

MW; When we talking about specific sounds and your color associations, like F minor being tan, are you describing that as specific chord changes, tonal centers, or is it a case where you may be superimposing that based on your emotional harmonic system?

TH: Wow, you're making me think about a lot of things here. I haven't really thought about… Well, if I think about F minor as a tonal center, its kind-of that tan color. But something I haven't thought about, but because of your question, I am… I'm thinking, okay, if we're playing a blues in F minor, when it goes to the IV chord in the fifth bar, what color is that Bb? Bb to me is usually black. The Bb tonal center is like I'm looking

at the word, symbol, and whatever you would call it, like it's written in typewriter ink, black word on white paper. So I'm trying to think that when that happens inside a tan F minor, what is that? Right now, probably thinking about it for the first time ever, it's still black.

So now I'm thinking of a G minor, flat 5 that you may find on the ninth bar of the blues and the C7 that would follow it, they still have their original colors, they're not really shaded by the overall tan. The G is green-ish blue, and the C7 is a whiter cream color. (laughs) It sounds ridiculous!

MW: Not at all, and that's why I'm so interested, because you could think of those chords as having a ii-V function in the minor key – you could think of them being related to tan, but those color descriptions really have nothing to do with tan. So you're thinking of it on a case-by-case basis?

TH: Right, it's very specific.

It's interesting because through this conversation, I'm learning how I think, and we'll decide later if it's good or bad that I'm exploring this and learning about myself.

You know, there is a spot on the C7 though, regardless of the alterations, that because it has a dominant function and I'm leading to F minor, I'm sure there is a spot on that cream-white C7 that when I'm getting closer to the F minor, there may be a blending of the two., because I'm already thinking about where I'm going. To find that on a specific note on the-and of three, that's something to think about.

MW: So in other words, although there is a notated element of it (your visualization experience) it's not strict where for four beats you may be in one color – there is some bleed between colors, depending on how you're planning to approach it.

TH: Right, and if I'm playing over the C7 and I'm using notes from another key, or notes that are totally foreign to it – although on a C7, every note works except a major seventh. A lot of times if I'm playing over a G7, I may be thinking E7. just over that G7, playing the E triad. There are types of things you could throw in there, the 13, b9, there are a lot of common notes… I'll find myself getting intricately into another key while I'm playing over another key or chord and there is a blending of those particular colors. If I get really involved in E to the point that I forget about the G, or at least sort-of, that color begins to supersede the original color.

Like I said, there are also these shadings, dovetailing, and blending of various colors as well.

MW: Well, let's give this a whirl- I'm going to play a few different sections from your solo on "I Hear A Rhapsody" from Audible Architecture and I'd like to see if you have any thoughts, particularly pertaining to visualization. I've cued it up to start at the bridge of the melody. And I'd like to play to the (solo) break and the opening phrase of your solo. This phrase is fairly melodic, so let's give it a try.

(Plays segment)

MW: So that's the opening phrase with the break and into the bridge of the first chorus. Do you have any observations based on listening to it now, recollecting the performance, or since you've been playing along with the transcription that I sent you?

TH: (Laughs) Well, I've hear this solo many times, and I actually like it... I like everything on that record. It was a little under duress, and what I'm about to say will lead up to what I was trying to do musically, because I remember specific things I was trying to do on this tune, the break, everything...

I had Chicken Pox. I got it from my kids and I didn't have it as a child.

MW: Yes, we discussed this last time and you told me your Mom told you initially that you had it as a child, but you really didn't.

TH: You're right, and so when I went into the session, I had been playing. Even when I was feeling bad, I was still playing and trying to practice. We had a couple of rehearsals and we also had a gig at Smalls – which was the only time I've played at Smalls. So I felt pretty good. This was going to be the first thing on the record and I wanted it to be burning the whole way through. So when I played that break, I was hoping that Billy Kilson (drums) would just come in just screaming. That break is above the staff, in the upper register… and all of a sudden, Larry Grenadier is playing a two-feel and it was kind-of "spacey". Immediately I had to switch gears, but there was disappointment – within two seconds after the break. I had a pre-conceived notion of what I wanted to happen and that is always dangerous (laughs).

So I went with what they were doing and it turned out to be fine. Now I can't imagine it being any other way. I remember certain emotions recording the solo. I think we did two or three versions – it would be interesting for me to go back and listen to the other ones that weren't picked.

I remember coming in the next day – the day (Bob) Belden was going to come in and do his tunes. He came in and we were listening to the different versions of "I Hear A Rhapsody" and I said "I want to do another take today, before you get your horn out, we're going to do just one more." He looked at me - he had heard the takes – and he said, "You're crazy, you're writing the book on this, and the book is great. Take this one and leave it." He's a very smart person and I'm never sorry that I took his advice.

I remember thinking that this is going to be the first track on the record and I want it to be like "Without A Song" from the Freddie Hubbard record "Hub of Hubbard". It's one of the great Freddie Hubbard Records and that Freddie solo is just… So that's the model I had in my head, and it's always dangerous to have a model as well, because it puts you in that frame of mind, and it created disappointment right when I started playing.

So I went with it and I thought, okay I'm not going to try and burn eighth notes over what they're playing, but I'm going to try and play flowing and melodic.

As I've said, with the solo, I don't specifically recall the visualization associated with it, other than a few moments where I was transcribing visually as I was playing on staff paper type of moments – on some of the longer lines. I think there is one line that I play that goes over 24 bars in the middle of a chorus.

MW: Yeah, that was fun to transcribe!

TH: Yeah, and I remember seeing that written out as I played it, because it was such a contour up and down. I also remember thinking, okay well now it's starting to pick up energy and getting to the point that I hoped this take would go.

MW: When you say that, you can really see it on the transcription, on the first measure after the break on that C (concert) minor you are still playing eighth notes, but you very quickly go to a floatier triplet feel. And it seems there are a couple of instances where you try to pick it up and it doesn't quite happen. But at the top of the third chorus, you play a little pick-up and the energy immediately goes up and they (the rhythm section) go to the four-feel.

TH: Right, and I just pulled the transcription up here (on the computer), so I can look at the pinpoints and bar numbers.

MW: I think the phrase you're talking about is around measure 91 on the transcription.

TH: Right, that one and the one immediately after it I remember being transcribed while playing.

MW: One thing I find interesting is that listening to it on the surface, it sounds very chromatic, but there is a lot of voice-leading happening. It seems that you're making a clear effort to resolve in specific spots to very specific chord-tones. Are you very mindful of that while improvising?

TH: Yes. On a tune like this there are a couple of really important things that I want to point out in every chorus. I take a lot of liberties with the harmony and people may think I'm not coming from the bebop language – there are certain very traditional things that I'm kind of a stickler about. So I'm always trying to bring those out in my playing…

In this particular tune, the V of ii – if we're talking about being in Eb (concert) here, or in F in the trumpet key – looking at the top we have D minor, then a ii V to F. D minor and F are so similar that I want to make sure I land firmly in F, playing something very indicative of F major. So the next chord is the V of ii, or D7. The chord after that, as a point of reference, I think of being G minor 7 (b5) going to C7. To me, that is a very interesting "happening" specific to this tune, where you have a V of ii, and I always try to play the F# - the 3rd. This is something I listen for when people play the Blues – because so many people blow off the V of ii. The 3rd (of the V of ii) is the one note that first of all, tells you that you're not on a diatonic vi chord – in this case a D minor chord, but with the 3rd and 7th (of the D7) – the C is diatonic to the overall key, the F# is not.

MW: So you're really trying to draw attention to that secondary function…

TH: Right, and by playing the F#, that allows you to theoretically add all the wonderful alterations and extensions on a V chord. If you play a Bb on the D7 without playing the F# first, it just sounds like you're playing a diatonic note. The ear relates it to the key of F, so we're waiting around on the Bb until it resolves to the A on the F chord.

If you play the F# first, the Bb suddenly sounds like a b13, it sounds like a non-diatonic note to F, because it's been made to sound interesting by the F#. Of course, you don't have to play the F# first, you could play the Bb first and then the F# which in retrospect would make the Bb sound interesting.

So on secondary dominants, I always try to get the third in there. You could probably go through all the D7's in here (the transcription) and find a F # in many of them. It's the same thing going to the bridge with the E7 altered. A lot of times, I'm likely playing a G# in there.

MW: Right, which you do…

TH: So that's what I'm thinking…

Now the G minor b5… It's (I Hear A Rhapsody) a tune basically in a major key – F major in the trumpet key. It just happens to start in minor. So a ii chord in a major key does not usually have a b5. If anything, the chord that precedes the V of ii, based off the iii diationically, would have a b5 (In this case, A minor7 b5). The ii minor rarely has the b5, but in this case, it's a melody note. So the b5 needs to be there, and in this case, it becomes the b9 of the V chord (Db on the C7).

I hear many players disregard that when they're playing on this tune, and they play a G minor there, which would have the D in it. That's not the vibe of the tune. So there are some definite things that I like to play on every chorus. So if you go through every

instance of that G minor7 b5, you'll likely find that Db, because it is something I like to go to.

Of course on the ending, we don't really end it. I just hang that Db out there. I don't really finish the melody – let the listener resolve it to F on their own. (Laughs)

MW: Now specifically there, since you mentioned that Db coming from the melody of the tune, and because it's a tension if we're thinking about it being diatonically F major – is there any color association there inherit with that tension?

TH: Hmmm…

Well again, no more than the note Db has. So the G minor b5 is this green-ish, blue-ish G thing that I see and the Db – the flat keys tend to be darker hued – but the Db is this brownish-black thing. That's just how I see it.

Of course, emotionally and physically – which is different than talking about the colors, although they are related – it feels a certain way to play a Db in that particular situation. It feels great, which is why I stayed on it (at the ending) and through staying on it, said "Yeah we'll just stay on this and let it hang out there in the air, and if the listener wants to resolve it, they can."

This is kind-of a Thad Jones thing, and I didn't really plan this out, but at the end of the first chorus, I resolve it as though I'm playing the melody.

MW: Yeah, I love that.

TH: So after the beginnings of the weirdness, you get this very classical sounding trumpet playing the resolution, and then it's back to nut-zoid at the top of the next chorus. I think that is really the only place that I resolve the melody.

MW: You're certainly doing it there, but you're actually doing it in a number of spots. One of the things I found interesting is how you resolve these long, outside phrases in a very inside way. If I'm looking at the second page of the transcription – the first A section of the second chorus (sings line) right at the end there, you land on the root again of that F major chord. Are you thinking consciously of creating all this tension, but very deliberately bring it back in these specific spots related to your phrasing and the form of the tune?

TH: Exactly, and that's how I think. Everything is going towards a resolution at some point. There are two things I can say: If you're always playing out, it becomes boring because the listener and even me as a player, I crave resolution. If you're always playing inside over the diatonic harmony, and you're playing what's expected, that becomes boring too.

It's a combination of the proper amount of tension and release and on a tune like this, it's built in where the preparation is on the subdominant chords and the dominant chords, where something needs to happen. You can see how many more notes are available – on a dominant chord, like I said – every note except the major seventh, and why not throw that in too? On a major I chord, the number of acceptable notes to our ears is somewhat limited – so it's natural to resolve it back to that.

A little anecdote – and this is interesting because you're also speaking to Brian Lynch – Brian and I, along with Clay Jenkins, we did an audition in 1982 for Horace Silver. I flew out to L.A. to do the audition. I actually stayed with Clay and we went out to do the audition together. I think Barry Ries had just left the band.

As soon as we started, I knew Brian (Lynch) was going to get the gig. I had actually heard him play before at a college jazz festival in the seventies. I knew he was going to get the gig because he's the perfect trumpet player for that. So the next day, Horace called me and said "Hey I'm going to choose Brian." And he said, "You know, you have a lot of basic work to do still. It seems like you don't know what to play over basic ii V 's, you're rambling, and you don't resolve… You really need to go back and look at basic theory."

Of course, I was depressed and upset. He was telling me that I didn't know how to play over changes. I had already recorded records and had all this playing experience as a professional for almost ten years. I thought; well if Horace thinks I don't know how to play over changes with his ears, I need to re-examine a few things. So I figured out that it wasn't that I didn't know how to play, it's that I wasn't presenting what I was trying to say in a clear manner – so it just sounded wrong.

I had the ability; based on what I was playing on the V chord, to make the 3rd on a major chord when I landed on it, sound wrong because of what I played before it. What I had to do was figure out the presentation. I was having chop problems at the time – I was going through an embouchure change – so I would play ideas and the ideas would end basically because the wheels fell off. So I decided that I would have to bail on figures if I was in the middle of something and I felt like my chops weren't going to be able to carry through what I was hearing. I would stop and just get out of it, then start the next phrase. So I made a habit of making sure that I was in control of the ending of my ideas – I was developing a melodic language.

So I ran into Horace later. I did a gig with Bob Mintzer and he actually had an arrangement of "I Hear A Rhapsody". Horace was in the audience and I went up afterwards to say hello. He had all sorts of compliments, and of course, he didn't remember me at all. This was ten years later. So I reminded him of his comments after the audition, and he said, "I don't know what I was thinking". He couldn't believe after hearing me play that he had said those things about me, but I told him no, and explained to him what I just told you.

So, it was a great lesson for me - probably a better lesson than actually getting the gig. Well, that's hard to say, but it made me realize that someone with ears like his, and who's played with everybody and heard everybody, if he had that comment about me – it made me realize how I sounded to him and that I had to control the endings.

So I play this weird stuff on the top of the third page (of the transcription), and I end it by just playing a triad. That's a direct result of what he said. You make a speech and you just ramble, so you walk away and wonder did I get my point across or not? Sometimes you make a speech and you nail it and you were able to communicate exactly what you wanted to say. So I decided, even if people didn't like what I said, I wanted to throw it out there so that they were or weren't liking exactly what I wanted to say. This solo is a result of that way of thinking.

MW: Looking back to the first page of the transcription, I'm really interested in this phrase or shape that you play on the last two bars of the bridge leading into the final A section of the first chorus – right on the E minor 7, b5. We discussed your experience of pre-visualizing a general contour or angular shape. If I'm looking at that as just a visual shape, it looks like you are really trying to maintain that melodic shape.

TH: Yes, definitely. On that E minor7 b5 I play a big, FAT Ab on beat three. Even though I outline the E minor thing before that, I'm not so much thinking, "Okay, I'm playing over E minor 7 b5, and then A7 altered." I'm thinking what would be an interesting line or contour that would lead back to D minor. I don't have any predetermined goal that I'm going to play E on beat one of the D minor. That's a decision that's probably made somewhere around beat four of the previous bar. A lot of it is influenced by what I just played – something very tonal on the ii V heading into C. I'm still playing legato, not really burning the eighth notes yet. I'm just playing a line with some notes I know are going to be foreign to E minor. Once you get to the A7 altered, everything works, so at that point it's really about playing something interesting to get back to D minor. As soon as I get to D minor, I play one eighth note and I'm out of the tonality again. Again, you can see on that D7, I land right on the F# on beat four of that bar, just to emphasize that 3rd again on the V of ii. I'm just trying to be in and out, and not necessarily humorous, but I'm a funny person, so it happens.

I'm telling jokes as I'm playing! Thad Jones is a huge influence, although I don't think I really sound like him. He cracked me up so many times when he was playing because he would set up a tendency, and then he would play something heading in another direction – just like his writing. I think that general attitude just rubbed off.

MW: Another element of this solo I notice - particularly when you start getting into the energetic, eighth note feel - is that your phrases tend to be long, but start and end in interesting ways. It appears that you're deliberately playing across natural phrase endings according to the form, but in other cases ending in very obvious spots. There are also quite a few instances where you leave a few measures – typically three or four – for

Billy (Kilson) to play in. Is this something you're mindful of or worked on, playing asymmetrically?

TH: I like to play long phrases because you build suspense. Also, listeners are inherently waiting for a breath when they hear a wind instrument. This is many levels below what they may be consciously listening to or aware of. A guitar player can play long lines and it doesn't start to feel uncomfortable or exciting because they can just play continuously. For horn players, there is an expectation that there are going to be pauses. Listeners aren't thinking, oh yes, there is a breath now, but they are used to it.

This isn't a conscious thing I've tried to work on, but it just so happens that I like to play long phrases, and I've been able to take huge breaths and play those phrases… But it kills my chops to do that. So I like to play with drummers – and we talked about this before – that when I stop playing, they keep the energy going. (Billy) Kilson and I played a lot together during this time and he knew what I liked to do. So many of these three bar rests are after a long phrase and I just have to take the mouthpiece off my lips for a second to let the blood rush in and get set again for the next phrase. It's important for a drummer to be able to do that. I often have to tell them that just because I'm not playing, it doesn't mean I'm bugged that you're playing too much or too loud. A lot of times, unless we've talked through it, they think it's like every other trumpet player they've played with where they think it's too much, so they back off and I come in and wear out my chops trying to get the energy back up. Billy knew what to do, so I just left those holes because of the physical thing, plus with the Chicken Pox, I wasn't in the best physical shape and I knew I was going to have to leave more space than usual.

Playing over the bar lines is very important and I talk about it with students – to play over the phrase markings. It adds excitement and takes you into new territories emotionally. Of course, if you do that all the time, it also becomes boring. Sometimes you have to just land on one and hook up with the natural phrasing of the tune. Again, it's that balance of tension and release.

MW: I'd like to play one more section if we could and it's pretty much right where we left off. We're still in the first chorus and we're leading into the bridge, really looking at that contoured line/shape on the E minor7 b5. I also notice on the top of the second chorus you mimic that shape and line again. So let's listen and see if you have any thoughts pertaining specifically to visualization or feelings about what you played.

TH: I just remember that I was trying to play in a manner that was going where the rhythm section was going – it was cooking, but in a very subtle way. I just remember that it felt good to play legato and float over that.

There's a spot in there, probably at the end of that chorus, where Billy (Kilson) starts to play rim shots and I can tell that he's going to start going from that point on. Before that, it's legato and I'm trying to imitate a classical trumpet player – not really – but I like to bring out that side as well. By playing legato, you can focus on the sound and that kind of thing.

I'm not really consciously trying to take a motive and repeat it. I don't really think of those things, but I know they happen. I'm just trying to play something that has some continuity to it and everything relates and builds.

MW: Right. Well, I suppose the last question that I have is: Since you're involved in education as well, do you have any tools or exercises from a pedagogical standpoint that

you would use to help with the visual process or to address these concepts with students so they can think in more abstract terms in how they improvise?

TH: Well, this is what I talk about all the time when I do master classes, workshops, and even private lessons. First of all, I talk about associating what notes feel like on your horn, without any kind of harmonic, rhythmic, or melodic framework. Take a D minor chord and play every note slowly, every note in the Dorian scale. How do you feel emotionally about every one of those notes?

I never really talk about colors, but maybe I should start bringing that up. Tell them that if you start seeing colors, that's good and let that happen. Because there are so many jazz education materials out there, and a lot of it is scale-based, people are playing those scales up and down and they think that every note in the scale is approved and they can hold it out as a long tone. However, they don't get specific enough to say when you play an E over a D minor chord how you feel about that note and when would you want to use it? How do you feel about every note in that particular chord scale? Also, you should consider the combinations. When you play the E, what do you hear next in this particular situation? On a D minor that's part of a ii V into C, what do you hear? How do you use the E when it's just over D minor (vamp)?

I try to bring out questions that they should ask themselves that perhaps you can't really answer verbally, but they are good things to observe about your own playing. I think that need to be brought out a lot more. That's the way I always thought, but I don't really hear anyone talk about it. I'm sure if you went back and asked these questions to Charlie Parker or Coltrane, they would have different answers, but it would be along the same lines. They are playing from emotion. They are not trying to play "approved" things that

are right or wrong, or that will get them through a jury at school. They're just trying to express themselves. How do you express yourself?

Phone Interview with Brian Lynch - 11/14/10 (notes)

Visualization – often confusion over the whether it is a result or an initiator of musical content. There is often confusion between cause and effect in how visualization may take place.

- Elaborated: Visualizing a visual component (such as a melodic shape) at the beginning of a solo may be a means to initiate a musical idea or the process of visualization itself. However, it may also be "activated" at different parts of a performance due to a number of variables (such as information from the rhythm section/other musicians or suddenly activate do to a particular musical gesture).
- At the beginning of a solo this may be achieved by visualizing initial pitch choices and their relationships in **the harmonic/tonal field** – i.e. tension or strength harmonically. This can take on a number of forms pertaining to vertical space (both in pitch location and place in the harmony) but **unrolls** horizontally according to time. (rolling forward type of motion left to right – in terms of two-dimensional space).

When reading changes or playing music that may be "less familiar" Brian often visualizes the music happening on the page. In his opinion, this may be a result of visualization already being present in reading the music and changes.

- **Possible Follow-up: Does this particular visualization include rhythmic notation (in a traditional) sense in addition to note-choices. Since so much of his approach (and most contemporary improvisers) relies on the eighth note pulse, is that particular rhythmic component a given?**

Sometimes this process can involve a physical **pre-visualization** related to trumpet playing in particular, or a feeling of how it would "feel" to make fingering combinations. This relates directly to using space in an improvisation to visualize or prepare what is going to happen next.

In terms of two-dimensional space, pitch and time are the easiest representations to assign to a visual representation (horizontal and vertical). Brian often thinks of an additional dimension based on harmony and tonality that allows one to play "**off axis**", often referred to as outside playing/plane-ing/ or side-slipping. He also used the term "Intertexuality", possibly referring to using harmonic devices or approaches not directly implied by the composition's or changes' structure. **(follow-up on this)**

Low to High (register) is visualized as a general component.

Rhythm: adjusting the line length (length being a visual component of duration) in order to arrive at certain points in time (corresponding to form, rhythm, phrase endings, note-choices, etc.)

- In some cases, Brian feels visualization is more present in his rhythmic approach, which may be an extension of his background working in Latin music "(Visualization) Experienced directly when playing rhythmically".
- Playing in a polyrhythmic manner (against basic components of the pulse) can be described visually as "whirling objects" and "Geometric Shapes" which can often be odd (groups of 5, 7, etc).
- The Geometric Shapes can exist on a plane or axis during the improvisational process.

- Playing in a manner that focuses on different divisions of the pulse (i.e. eighth note triplets vs. eighth notes) can also create a different rhythmic framework visually.

When playing in a modal context, side-slipping can be viewed as playing off axis, though there is still a component of movement that is directional due to rhythm, forward momentum, etc.

When playing "inside" Brian described this as closer to maintaining a sense of balance. Double time, in Brian's experience becomes much more about specific note choices and what he describes as "visual formulas" of seeing the actual notes unrolling (from a roll) in order.

Initial Listening Experiences played a huge role in this, as did a simultaneous interest in modern/non-objective art.

- Associating the music of Late Coltrane with Kandinsky and Cubism (sensing a direct relationship between viewing/listening to one and experiencing the other).
- Descending Staircase by Duchamp – fracturing harmony in the same way the artist fractured the pictoral frame. Forward motion of the staircases (lines in music) that are abruptly changed in another direction.

E-mail Responses - Brian Lynch February 9, 2011

1.You mentioned in our first discussion how you would be very likely to experience visualization when reading changes, or playing music that is less familiar (not memorized) – probably since the visual process is already activated. Could you elaborate further on this – does this visualization include complete transcription (including rhythmic notation) oris it a more abstract combination of noteson the staff and general contours?

Sometimes the visualization can be fairly detailed - almost like a real time transcription. Have you even seen the Giant Steps transcription animation on YouTube?: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2kotK9FNEYU - kind of like that. Other times it's more just shape.

2.You used the term "intertextuality" when we were discussing the concept of playing "off-axis" or outside. Do you use this term to describe musical material (i.e. chord superimposition, structures, rhythmic devices, etc) taken from other sources specifically? Does this include visual (or visually-oriented) material as well?

I think what I was going for in using that term was to reference juxtaposing different improvising lexicons (or sub-lexicons) in the course of an improvisation. For me, side-slipping, for instance, is not just a device in itself but also seems to denote for me a change in style. Moving from "inside" to "outside" can feel like moving into a different era. Maybe "intertextuality" wasn't the most precise term to use, but I think it does have a use. I think of the lexicon of Charlie Parker or Fats Navarro as a text, just as I think of the lexicons of Freddie Hubbard, Woody Shaw, McCoy Tyner, "Chocolate" Armenteros and

all the other influences as texts. Going from a classic strict bebop lexicon (which I immensely enjoy working within) to a "out" harmonic thing or a Afro Cuban way of rhythmically displacing the note objects is like the traditions conversing or the "texts" talking to each other.

Does the above have any relationship to visualization (in my process)? I think it does in where the "text" gets retranslated or abstracted in the thought process even the interplay of lexicons becomes a play of shape against shape.

3.You mentioned experiencing visualization directly when playing in a rhythmic manner, specifically "whirling objects" and "geometric shapes". I'd like to explore this a little further and discuss what rhythmic elements may activate this.

With "whirling" objects for example – does this occur when playing against the pulse (tuplets, triplets, etc) or can it also relate to odd note-groupings played with the pulse (or any other devices you may be using)? Is pitch choice a consideration regarding the geometric shape?

I experience this the most when my rhythms set up "cross beats" against the basic meter and or pulse. If odd note groups create cross beats then in that case as well. Pitch is not usually a consideration here, I think.

4.Are there any particular performances (recorded) that you recall as having strong visual "activation" when they performed? If so, are these performances something that you would feel comfortable discussing in an analytical manner, comparing the visual process to traditional transcription analysis?

I mentioned "Household Of Saud" as perhaps a good example to talk about. Let's work with that solo.

5.Finally, given your experience as an educator and a student of music – are there any exercises, either conceptual or musical, that you employ or may have employed that in your opinion helped to develop visual activation or furthermore, can help developing improvisers to experience it?

I can't say I've done this so far in a way that I can access. It (visualization) may be embedded into the various strategies I use in my own practice. I'm certainly interested in exploring a way to use visualization in my teaching after going through this study!

Brian Lynch Phone Interview (#2) – February 9 2011

MW: So let's start with your solo on "House of Saud". I have it set up where I can play it over this connection (internet – Skype), and we can both follow along with the written transcription. I have a couple specific questions, and if you have any recollections of what you may have been experiencing visually during the performance, we can cover those as well.

(plays beginning of solo halfway through the first chorus)

MW: The first thing I notice there is how you land on the C (transposed – Bb) there, in measure 10. I'm not sure how you are thinking of that – but I'm seeing and hearing you playing C minor there, based off that b5 against the F#min11. Is there a visual aspect associated with that, particularly with what you've described visually as playing "off-axis"?

BL: I'm thinking more C7 there (sings the line), then more of a short F7, eventually getting back to the F# minor through a couple of chromatic turns. I think that's a good place to discuss, because I think you could find a number of different places in my solo where I would use that sort of strategy of emphasizing something more or less a half-step up from a certain important or preceding pitch.

I think that is something that I do experience inside my head visually as some kind of tilting of the tonic plane.

MW: Did something specific activate that, such as landing on that C natural?

BL: I think playing the C natural initiates it. It's a little weird trying to analyze yourself, but you'll notice that there is a durational accent on that pitch.

MW: Right, you're hitting it on beat four and holding to establish it.

BL: … And then establishing that shift before I elaborate on it – which way am I going to go with it?

MW: Looking at the transcription, you do something similar on the top of the second page, the third measure of the second chorus.

BL: Yes, it's a similar passage.

MW: I also notice that at the very start of that second chorus, you land very firmly in F minor over the F# minor.

(plays passage)

BL: Yeah, it's sort of an oscillation between F minor and F# minor .

MW: Before that, on the B13 (sings figure) you establish a melodic motive there. Is there any visual component to that, since you are repeating it rhythmically and maintaining a shape there?

BL: I think it's more in the realm of thinking motivically. I'm not sure if anything visual is being activated there though. I think it's more compositional. Like, here's something I want to move around a little bit, I don't think the visual component comes into play there. The visualization is more involved in the long lines, as they are unrolling themselves.

MW: You mentioned the notes "unrolling" in our previous conversation. Are you visualizing those pitches as transposed to Bb, or in concert pitch?

BL: In Bb always.

MW: Interesting. Another element you described last time we spoke was about visualizing formulas when playing in double time, and transcending the notes. I was wondering if

you could elaborate on that, is it long segments of musical material, or something more abstract?

BL: It's just a longer segment of notes that go together naturally. They may have been at some level rehearsed or put together. I think that everyone gets to some type of typical formations that are typical of their playing. You'll find that when you're transcribing anyone, from Coltrane to Freddie Hubbard, or Kenny Dorham on down. When you transcribe your tenth Kenny Dorham solo, you can almost sing along with the solo, the same thing with Bird (Charlie Parker), because you know that this part usually comes after that part, or something similar.

MW: Sure, there are certain tendencies. I had a similar experience transcribing this (House of Saud) particular solo- after awhile you start to hear where things are heading.

BL: Right, there are typical things that kind of fall under the fingers in certain places.

MW: I'm glad you said that. I was sharing this transcription with a fellow trumpet player the other day and we both felt that the solo just lays well and feels very natural to play on the trumpet.

BL: I think it's a matter of them being composed of fairly conjunct intervals. There is nothing too angular in this particular solo. It's definitely coming from an approach tone and enclosure type of style.

MW: Going back to the rhythmic visualization and it may not be as present in this solo since you're mostly dealing with the eighth note pulse, but were you experiencing and rhythmic objects visually in this solo?

BL: Well, let's look at the beginning of the third page (fifth measure of the third chorus) for instance. There is kind of a "closing up" type of effect there (sings line). So there is that effect that you're tightening up the circle there.

MW: Right, so you're accenting and playing those groupings against the natural pulse.

BL: Yes, and I'm also going up in half-steps there, then the half-step motion tightens up at the level of the quarter note, instead of the half note at the end of the phrase. So I'm going up in half steps every two beats, then at the end I'm literally going up half-steps every beat.

MW: While we're on that page, you finish your phrase at measure 85 with that descending pentatonic pattern that is somewhat accented against the pulse. Is there a visual rhythmic element to that phrase as well?

BL: I'm not sure. It's hard to say. I think I'm reacting to the cross-beat in the accompaniment figure there.

MW: Right, the comp in the rhythm section against the pulse… Well, let's listen a little more to the solo and let me know if you hear anything that you may want to discuss, or recall any visual-specific experiences from as you recorded it.

(plays recording)

Another thing I like about this solo is that you alternate between long eighth-note passages and quarter notes, establishing somewhat of a balance between the two rhythmically while playing, particularly at the beginning and end of the solo. Is that something you're mindful of?

BL: Well, I think that I want to emphasize the beat in certain places just to make everything hang together. It seems like it is just part of having variety, if it was all eighth

notes, it wouldn't be too interesting. The one thing I don't have in this solo is triplets. With this kind of drive, I don't hear triplets breaking up the line – I really want to keep the swing and the drive going. I think going into quarter notes gives the ear a little breathing space and emphasizes the time more. Sometimes when you're playing these long eighth note lines and chromatically, you have to be careful that there isn't some drift in your time feel. I think playing the quarter notes can allow you to stay grounded.

MW: Since you recorded this fairly recently, do you recall experiencing visualization in any particular spots as you were improvising, such as transcription as you were playing?

BL: I think that I'll often have a visualization of the first phrase of my solo. It's important to have something very precise in mind for what you first play. I think this is also true for the last thing you play, or how you finish your solo. I definitely have the sort-of flash before I start playing – notice that there is a small pause (on the *House of Saud* solo) and that may be space to consider that. It might be a small indication to myself that I'll start playing quarter notes and see where that leads me.

MW: One thing I remember you talking about last time is how there can be different activators for visualization while improvising. One of the activators you mentioned is space. Does using space help you to visualize what you may play next?

BL: Yes. I think you certainly use rests for musical reasons, but I think you can also use that rest to visualize where you want to place the next phrase, in terms of the range of your instrument. I may see a specific note. I think more than anything else there are definite shapes involved once I get going. In the case of those chromatic lines, I'm not really watching that unfold as a transcription exactly, although there may be an element

of that. I think it's just a little more immediate with the other content – like visualizing what note I want to start a phrase on.

Also, I should tell you that along with visualizing the note (as notated), I'm also visualizing the fingerings. In other words, it's the same thing as mentally practicing – mentally playing or silent mental practice. So you can practice off the instrument in three steps. You can sing the lines and tap out the finger combinations with your right hand on a surface. Sometimes I'll do it on the knuckles of my other hand. Then you can do the same thing without singing, and then without the tapping. So you're hearing or visualizing notes in your head and you're also mentally making the fingerings. Now each note has a fingering associated with it.

An example would be hearing a chromatic scale in your head and visualize all the corresponding fingerings as you hear the notes mentally. It's a great exercise. I definitely think practicing this way is useful when you're on airplanes or something like that. I've often practiced like that. It's the way we work on music that we have to figure out that we may not be familiar with on the way to a gig. A lot of times you don't look at the music until you're on the plane.

Doing this (study) has had an influence on the way I generally use visualization when I'm playing.

MW: That's been an interesting thing talking to the other subjects of the study – I'm getting more e-mails and information from everyone because we're all thinking about how we use and experience visualization as we go along.

BL: Right… and I think that consciously getting into this is a good study to see if you can use it more mindfully in your practice and playing. I'm doing that – this is very

interesting to me in an intermediate basis, seeing if I can work on visualization techniques in my own practice and pass that along to my students.

These days, because I'm teaching a lot, I definitely thinking about how I conduct my personal practice and it serves as prep for my students in a lot of ways.

MW: When you were performing this particular solo, were your eyes closed?

BL: I don't know if I played with my eyes closed. Sometimes my eyes will kind of de-focus or even roll back into my head a little when I'm playing. I don't usually have my eyes shut when I'm playing.

MW: Do you feel any difference in the activation if your eyes are unfocused?

BL: I think when my eyes are unfocused I'm really trying to tap into the mental visual field and get inside my head a little more.

MW: Great. Unless you have any more thoughts pertaining to this solo, let's go over some of the follow-up questions that I wrote down based on our previous conversation. You talked about visualization existing in a "gray area" as to whether you're initiating it in the beginning of a solo, or if it's a consequence of being initiated by another stimuli. In your view, what musical stimuli, musical or otherwise, do you find most likely to activate the process?

BL: Something the other musicians are doing. Certainly in the harmonic realm – with the pianist and guitarist, certain types of voicings will activate something in return on my part. When I play with pianists that have absolute pitch, the type (of musicians) who can react very quickly to something that I do, and throw it back at me because they are likely visualizing some sense too. I wonder if they are doing it in those cases. Certain players

can stimulate you because you can almost see the acuteness of their own ear. That can definitely be a factor, also rhythmic elements that come from other musicians.

MW: When you're talking about vertical relationships in a two-dimensional sense – we talked about how pitch could be a vertical relationship, but time and duration could be a horizontal one. You also mentioned how the vertical element could be location in a "tonal field". What do you mean by tonal field?

BL: Let's say you're thinking about a mode, and the field would be the unordered set of pitches.

MW: So when you say unordered, do you mean not in a scale or structural form?

BL: If you're thinking vertically, you're probably seeing the pitches that are more or less strung from top to bottom, like the beads on a necklace that are being held from the top and hanging down. They are ordered in a sense, but you're thinking about the patterns that could be created. An arpeggio would be every other bead out and a pentatonic would be certain patterning. It's something I'd like to get more into than something I currently do, but also thinking of rhythmic arrays in the same sense.

MW: I see – that is much clearer. Finally, how do you feel that visualization may assist you in getting across your musical intent?

BL: I think I haven't really considered it as explicitly as the question is posing…

MW: I remember a term you used last time was "macro-content". Do you think it may help you to think in larger scale concepts of musicality as opposed to more specific musical instances?

BL: Yes. It's definitely a part of grouping things into larger units and you can ultimately put those together to achieve the overall design or tell the overall story of a solo. Past

that, I'm not sure how much I can say is really conscious. I think what is interesting is that you are taking people that use this and through this study creating more awareness, you could examine what happens then. It would be interesting to see some follow-ups on this later on.

MW: Sure, a little down the road to see if creating awareness has changed the way people think about it and experience it.

We touched on this last time, but you talked about having a strong connection between abstract art and visualization when you're improvising. Do you feel that at that point in your life, when you had an interest in visual art and music is when the visualization may have developed, or did it occur earlier?

BL: I think it was continuous. When I became serious about playing is also when I developed an interest in the arts, especially twentieth century art. I think abstract art and cubist art provided a strong inspiration. I was discovering that around the same time that I was discovering certain music, like Coltrane. It seemed to have many of the same attributes.

Phone Interview with Jason Palmer – Jan. 4, 2011

MW: Let's just start with the first general question – Could you give a brief description of how visualization plays into your improvisational approach?

JP: I think it relates to the transcription part of development and what I've come to do now. I think that when I was learning the language to this music, I spent a lot of time transcribing solos and I would actually learn it by ear first – then I would write it down. For some reason, I was able to connect what it looked like on paper to what it sounded like and felt like in my playing – having the instrument in my hands.

So whenever I improvise, I try to relate what those notes look like interval wise on paper and how it would feel, and how I could relate that to what I was trying to play – like in the playing of Kenny Dorham. If I was trying to imitate somebody, I would try to relate that to their playing by looking at it on paper.

MW: So, in that case you're feeling it like a sensory cross-over where seeing, hearing, and feeling it are all intertwined.

JP: Yeah. With me, I have absolute pitch – so when I hear a piece of music, I can see the music going from the beginning to the end like a score. So it's easier for me to connect with what is being sounded, what is being played, through what it would look like on the score.

MW: In terms of your own approach in visualization and feeling it in terms of notation as a trumpet player, do you see it in concert pitch or transposed?

JP: Usually in concert pitch - which is interesting because when I first started my studies at New England Conservatory, I didn't know what transposition was – I thought solfege was a gym class. I really learned how to transpose in college. Whenever I played with people, they would give me concert pitch charts, and so now I compose in concert (pitch) and I play in concert, even though I play a Bb instrument. When I see music, I'd say 99% of the time, I see it in concert pitch.

MW: In terms of tying this back to your development and transcribing, did you also transcribe in concert pitch?

JP: Yes. I started getting really serious about transcribing in college.

MW: Visually, if you could describe this notation – does it appear as if it was notated on staff paper?

JP: Yes.

MW: Is it fully realized? Are you seeing all the rhythms, all the accidentals, bar lines, etc?

JP: Yes, I usually see the actual notes themselves. I don't really see key signatures, I usually just see the accidentals and the bar – because so many of the charts we play modulate every bar if you really think about the changes and everything.

MW: I know a lot of the music you play features mixed meter- how does that play into the visualization? Are you seeing it in the complex meter, so in 7/4, you're really seeing it notated in 7?

JP: Yeah, as opposed to 4 and 3 – I usually see 7.

MW: Interesting. Do you see the entire line or phrase before you play it, or does it unfold as you play?

JP: I usually see it as an entire phrase. Hmm…

I think it also depends on who I'm playing with. If I'm playing with people who have really large ears and they interact – then I usually see it as it unfolds. In those cases, I'm usually a more reactionary player, where I'll play something that complements what I heard in terms of somebody comping for me - if it's a really interesting trio, or whoever I'm playing with… If I'm playing with a group of people and I'm more in the leader role – if it's my band – I usually see what is going to happen beforehand and further along. I usually play from a standpoint of trying to make everyone sound better in my group. I'm trying to bring out things that they've never really played - or maybe never thought of this chord or voicing. I'm trying to do that without playing it and telling them to play that way. So I think I usually see it unfold as I'm playing with a looser group. I think it's a little more structured when I'm playing with my group and my tunes.

MW: So you may see it a certain way, but in the process of playing it may change depending on something that you're hearing?

JP: Exactly.

MW: Since we're talking about interaction and responding to what other people may be playing in the group – having absolute pitch and this ability to see things transcribed as they are played, does that play into the visualization too? Where you hear a certain comp or structure, will you visualize that notated and then react to it?

JP: Yeah, for sure. Many times there are different rhythms and different chords superimposed over the foundation of the song – like the form, the rhythm, or some kind of hit that goes on. If there is something superimposed over that it is a stronger image in my mind. It ends up becoming a picture into that persons mind. I start to think, "What are they thinking about?" – What kind of shape, what kind of picture, what kind of color… It's easier for me to see in my mind what they're thinking, or my guess at what they're thinking.

MW: You mentioned color there. Does color ever play into the visualization, or is it still black and white notation?

JP: I think colors are clearer to me in the beginning of a piece. I think as a piece unfolds it begins to blur.

Many times I visualize a song starting on a blank canvas. If you're painting, you usually start on a blank, clear canvas. As soon as notes and rhythms come into play, that's when it starts to unfold for me. So I see them clearer that way, but as soon as I start to add color, everything begins to meld into this image of a color that I can't quite put into words.

MW: Okay. The reason I'm asking is because when I spoke to Tim Hagans – and I'm still not really sure if this is a form of synesthesia – he has actual color associations with notes in regard to how they may fit into the harmony.

JP: Oh yes. I can see that.

MW: So F minor may have a specific color, like tan, and if you play an Ab, there is a maroon quality to it. Are you thinking at all in combinations like that? When we're

talking about starting to build this color palette, are certain colors dependent on mode sounds, or chord sounds and pitches?

JP: Yeah, for sure. I think the rhythm of what's being played influences that. If it's a slow tune, for me, that's going to be a stronger color – darker, with more pigment.

I think certain notes superimposed over a chord bring out the color, especially if the chord tone (pitch) in the melody isn't something that is really in the chord scale of the chord that is written. When I compose, I like to write melodies and then have chords underlying that don't have an influence or relationship with the melody. I got that from Booker Little. He was someone who wasn't scared of dissonance.

MW: Right, I noticed on your last record you did "Strength and Sanity" (from the Booker Little recording "Out Front")

JP: Yes, that's a beautiful tune. The way he thought about composing that piece, I'm pretty sure he had that (concept) in mind – not being tied down to consonance in arranging it. So I think that composing, and not being tied down into having the melody relate to chords allows for more possibilities in colors coming into play. I'm always searching for this new color, and I don't know if I'll find it, but just the journey of looking for it is what makes it interesting and fun for me.

MW: Do you see a direct correlation between that concept and composition and that being an element in your playing (improvising) as well? So you may be favoring going to certain pitches that aren't in the traditional chord-scale to create a visual "color palette"?

JP: Yeah, I definitely try to. Even with my students, especially with my advanced students, I try to instill the idea of looking at a chord and thinking multiple chords and trying to relate their musical ideas within certain keys. (For example) I have one method where they'll think in three keys if they look at one key – so in C, they'll try and relate it to C, E, and G#. It's kind of like the whole Giant Steps thing…

MW: Augmented, sure.

JP: Yeah, and relating a minor chord up a half-step – the way McCoy Tyner would voice chords behind Coltrane, or he would improvise. So thinking of an Eb minor chord as using Eb and E (dorian) so they can broaden their palette of colors to paint their story. So I definitely try to bring that into my improvising, and it's kind of like arranging. You're arranging your own melodic song within the framework of the people you are playing with.

MW: That's very interesting. So do you think when describing colors as coming from different sources – like the Coltrane augmented system, or the plane-ing/sideslipping between Dorian modes a half-step apart – is this developed by your experience learning and growing up in this music?

JP: For sure, because before I was really hip to that and introduced to that style of playing, I was really into playing "inside" and not playing any "wrong notes" per se – they say you can't play this note or that note. Then I heard McCoy comp and I said, "Ohh, what is this?" It made me go back and really listen to what he did and listen to others. It made me realize that it is okay to do that and it sounds cool in my own playing and perhaps it will pique someone else's ears and influence them to stretch their ears and their improvising.

MW: I guess it's difficult to think back to certain points, but since you've talked about visualization coming from this transcription standpoint, has there always been a visual component - because you have absolute pitch – when improvising, or did it develop through all these experiences?

JP: I think it developed through these experiences, because when I realized that I could hear things, I thought that all musicians could do it. So it wasn't really anything special to me. If someone played a note on the piano and asked me to play it back on trumpet and I did, they would wonder how I did that and I would say "it's easy".

I think through learning to transcribe and learning how people phrase piqued my interest, and I don't think it would have piqued my interest if I didn't transcribe. A lot of great players don't transcribe that much – many are just very natural and have a very musical mind. I had to work much harder, because I don't think I was as talented as a lot of players I listened to. I've had to put in a lot of work and I was able to develop through that.

MW: You talked about how early in your playing you were into playing "inside" – all the "right notes" and right choices of phrases. If you can think back to that, do you think the color association was limited back then as you weren't exploring these possibilities?

JP: For sure. It was definitely something that held me down, because I think about it in terms of being a canvas and the notes I had available to me were a certain number. Before, I had a certain number, but as I started to really listen, the box I was creating in became bigger, in addition to the number of colors I had.

I think it's a blessing and a curse because if I didn't have the discipline to really focus on how I wanted to approach a song, improvisation wise – I would feel like I could just play anything. You can just play anything, but you still need to make it relate to something – to someone in the band, someone in the audience, to yourself, something you heard before…

On the other hand, if you do have that discipline, the world is your playing field. You can really draw from anything. You can look at someone's face and try to play based on what their face looks like, or what you hear your drummer do on their snare drum. It's something I really had to work on and it's something I'm still working on.

MW: It's interesting to hear you say that. So you're saying that all this work that you've put in has allowed you to make music from abstract sources and translate that into musical ideas?

JP: Yes. It's certainly a selling point in playing this music and continuing to play this music.

MW: Are there any outside influences that may have informed your approach, such as other art forms, mentors, teachers, or other types of media?

JP: For sure. I'm really into abstract art – I love (Salvador) Dali. I've wanted to do a project where I go to a museum and just write a composition based on his piece and just write what comes to mind. So I really like visual arts, like sculpture. There's also speeches – listening to great speeches and wondering what that looks like. I'm really into dance – ballet…

I'm really into sports too, just seeing the gracefulness of great athletes – they way they move. I think in particular Basketball and Boxing really play a part.

I remember auditioning for the Monk Institute about, I don't know – it must have been about 11 years ago, and Wayne Shorter was on the panel. He told me that when he joined Miles' (Davis) band, Miles told him, "You always have to play like a boxer. You have to know when to throw your punches and know when to dodge." Going back and listening to him solo, like the Plugged Nickel Stuff, it just confirms what he may have been thinking about. The way he would play his phrases – a staggered approach, where he would play a lot here, then rest a lot and let Tony (Williams) cook a bit on his cymbal. It's the same thing with Miles. They say that Miles was sick there, but his playing was boxer-like. He had these bursts of energy and then these down times in the songs. I could put on that record and then put on a Manny Paquio or Mohammed Ali fight and see the approaches. You know, just hearing them improvise and they really don't have to play a melody, but just to see the jabs and punches, the hits on the snare – It's definitely an art form in itself to hear that.

Poetry too - the phrases of poetry are something I've wanted to get into. Maybe composing a piece based on the flow of words from a poem.

MW: Those are varied influences and many of them are very visual. When you have the experience of watching a great boxing match or basketball game, do you have the sensation of actually hearing music or visualizing something transcribed as you're watching?

JP: Definitely, although I would say more so with artwork, not so much with sports. I think many times with these sporting events – seeing them on television and going to

them – I'm always distracted by the sound. You know, you hear the organ, but you never get to see the sport in its pure form. I used to play basketball in high school and hearing the rhythm of the ball bouncing on the ground, and the shoes squeaking – that's all poetic to me and to hear the rhythm in that is something special. I think I was closer to that, just the pure sound of the sport, when I was playing, but seeing it on television – you hear the organ, all the commercials…

MW: The commentators…

JP: So it's a distraction for me, but when I see a piece of art it's usually in a still environment. I can imagine what it would sound like, to look at a Dali painting – and I think it is stronger in that regard.

MW: Where there any teachers or mentors that knew this about you (visualization) and helped you to develop it – providing specific insight or exercises, or do you feel it is more based on your own process and experience with transcription and music experiences?

JP: I think it was my own experiences. I mean people would say, "Ohh you need to check out Dali" or things related to music… But I think it is just being exposed to certain things and different places. A lot of it is from being on the road, having down time and going to museums or the city. So, I think that being exposed to it opened up my ears. I was always the kind of person who wondered what things could be. What would that sound like? What would Van Gogh sound like if he was a musician – what would he write?

MW: Are there any musical examples, in terms of music you've recorded or on your albums, that you feel best describes or conveys the visual element of your improvisational approach – times where you felt it was really happening?

JP: I think I may have some live stuff along that avenue. For commercially available stuff, I don't think I do – because that's done in a sterile environment.

I record every gig that I do, and actually, I think I have a recording of this gig I did with Grace Kelly's band – she's a saxophonist, and I play with her. We did this gig at a museum in New York called "Harlem at the Himalayas". This museum features the artwork of Himalayan artists and artists from the Andes region. One of the stipulations for the gig was that the leader has to compose a piece of music based on a piece of art there. I remember doing the gig, and we were surrounded by all this art … I felt as though I was playing based off what was in that room. I think I have it and if I can pull it up, I'll send it to you.

MW: That would be great. One of the reasons I wanted to interview you for this, besides being an admirer of your playing, is that you're from my generation and I'm interested as a side-element to this at looking at generational influences visually. Brian Lynch also mentioned Abstract art, but I'm interested as our generation is in that area of being visually stimulated by the internet, computers, video games, etc. and I'm interested in how that interacts with this visual component to making music.

JP: Well, I think the visual element is actually a commonality that kind of ties the generations together.

Phone Interview with Jason Palmer - March 9, 2011

MW: Since I'd like to establish a little biographical background on everyone, Could you talk a little bit about your early experiences with music, such as when you became interested or involved in music, when you began playing the trumpet?

JP: I started playing the trumpet in sixth grade. There was a band program at my school. I initially started out on cornet. I wasn't really serious about it at first, it was more of a novelty to me. Then one summer, I was home and I turned on the radio and I tried to make music along with the songs on the radio. I realized that the notes I played weren't really sounding right to my ears, so I figured some of the songs out and I realized that there was more than one or two major scales. So I ended up learning all of my scales by ear. I believe this was the summer of my seventh or eighth grade year. So a little time had passed since the sixth grade before I really started to sit down and figure the instrument out on my own.

When I got to high school, I was recruited to play in a camp that was dedicated to John Coltrane. He's from my home town. So I joined that camp in the summer, and through that I received an invitation to audition at a music school that operated after normal school hours, so I ended up going to that school as well, which was called the Greensboro Music Academy - I think they may have changed the name since.

So I went there three days a week in my junior year. I was able to take private lessons and ensembles, and that's when I really began to get serious and practice as much as I could.

MW: Since you have absolute pitch, are you from a musical family or were you exposed to music early on?

JP: Not really. I just remember listening to records and playing with my Dad's phonograph a lot - scratching the records like DJ's would do. So I guess music was always in the house early on. My parents were always playing songs and turning on the radio on Saturday mornings. My Dad plays guitar, but he doesn't read music, he plays by ear, so he always tells me that I got my ear from him.

I realized I had absolute pitch when I was in High School. I was in the band room with one of my best friends. He was sitting at the piano and he played a note and told me to play it on my instrument. I played it back to him and he said "How can you do that?" I thought it was normal and everyone could do it. He said "No, no, not everyone can do that." So, I figured it out then and really didn't think anything of it.

MW: Since you grew up in North Carolina, what made you decide to move to Boston and attend school there?

JP: When I was at the Greensboro Music Academy my trumpet teacher pressed me to audition for colleges for music and he knew about New England Conservatory. At the time, when I was in school, I was interested in both classical and jazz. He knew that that particular school had a reputation for being pretty strong in both. There was also a really good trumpet teacher there, Charlie Schuelter, who my trumpet teacher really respected. So he (the trumpet teacher) helped me put together a package to audition at the school and I ended up auditioning for the jazz program. I wanted to audition for both, but I didn't get my audition packet into the school in time to audition for both. So I auditioned for the jazz department and I got a scholarship offer. It's funny, because most people when they think of music schools in Boston, they think of Berklee, but I had never heard of Berklee. So when I went up to audition at NEC, I had a free day - so I walked around and up Mass

Ave. , which is where Berklee is, and I looked at this school which is this great, big building and I walked in thinking "Wow, this is really cool to have two music schools that are less than 500 yards away from each other in one city". NEC is not really a big school, it's only three buildings and they don't really have a campus. I just thought it would be great to go to a city where there was a lot of creative energy.

I only applied to NEC and another school, which was Center College in Kentucky. That's where Vince DiMartino teaches, and he has very balanced way of playing. He's well schooled in both disciplines. My teacher really respected him and I considered going there because it was a little closer to home. I ended up not getting a music scholarship because they don't give out music scholarships, well they didn't at the time (at Center College), so I got an academic scholarship. It didn't really balance out though and it made more sense for me to go to NEC.

MW: Are there any early musical experiences perhaps in high school or in college that were very important to you or influential?

JP: Yes. I think the first time I heard Clifford Brown play. I remember riding home from a rehearsal from the Music Academy for the combo I was in and the piano player had "Study in Brown". He played the track of Clifford playing Cherokee and I thought to myself, "is that a trumpet? How could he make a trumpet sound like that?" So that's what I wanted to do in life. I think that was the turning point for me.

As far as playing, I think it's just a culmination of meeting people and being able to play with people. I can't really pinpoint one specific example... Perhaps my first concert in Jordan Hall, which was perhaps the first two weeks into school of my freshman year at NEC. There were two things that happened - we got to play with Benny Golson. He did a

residency there and I got to play with the Wind Ensemble at NEC and that was a special project. They brought in some jazz majors to perform with the Wind Ensemble and Gunther Schuller conducted - that was pretty cool.

So those type of experiences really spawned me to practice and get better.

MW: I've got it set up here, and I've edited it down to include just the solo, but I can play a little bit of the improvisation you did on your composition "Abu Abed". We can do this a few ways, perhaps a little bit at a time, because it's a longer solo, or we could just listen to whole thing and maybe discuss it. What would you prefer?

JP: I can listen down to it, we can listen to the entire piece.

(Plays Jason's solo on Abu Abed - Live at Wally's)

MW: Okay, so maybe in a very general sense - do you recall there being any type of abstract visualization, since you've talked about how that can come from an abstract source, or more specific instances where you visualized phrases in their entirety before you played them?

JP: Yes. I remember in the beginning, after the guitar solo, someone in the crowd had a pretty resonant cheer that was on the same note that I started my solo on.

MW: That E on top of the staff that you bend around.

JP: Yeah, I remember trying to match that and I just started to play with that tone that came from whoever that person was. It seemed to be very tonal and it was in the key of the song. I remember seeing just a big blur of people in the audience and I had the sound come at me from the audience. Usually there is a lot of noise at the club (Wally's Jazz Cafe in Boston). I don't know if you've ever been there, but it's a really small place and people are usually packed in there pretty tight. A lot of times when we play there, you

have to battle the elements of their conversations coming at you. In this particular case, there was an actual note that came through right at the onset of the cheering, or it could have been the first thing that my ears wanted to hear. So I think I set things off from there.

For this particular solo, I ended up going more with what the guitar player was playing. He kind of guided me through just by playing the cascading chords that weren't in the changes. So I ended up playing more in terms of reacting to what he was playing, and spring-boarding from that.

MW: When you talk about reacting to the guitar player, and what he's playing with those cascading chords because of how you experience visualization, is that an abstract experience, or given your experience of seeing things notated, were those elements notated on staff paper visually for you and then used in your improvisation?

JP: Yes. I see what he's playing. When he plays like that, it kind-of conjures up images in my mind that kind of cause me to play in a different way. It's like we're painting a picture together and he may paint something and I'm trying to paint something that complements what he's doing, rather than just mimicking him. I think that's what I tried to do in this case. There are some cases where I mimic him more to a degree, especially when he plays actual lines during the comping - like ideas instead of just the strumming of a chord.

MW: I know you talked about this the last time we discussed this topic, but we talked about how the beginning of a tune or a solo can be a blank canvas. I noticed on this performance, coming out of the guitar solo, there is a lot of space that is created at the

beginning of your solo. Are there any color associations that you experienced either in the beginning of the solo or that you may have taken from the guitar comping?

JP: I think when I wait and let the space settle, it's like I'm erasing what was there before. Many times that doesn't actually work though, because the space is being filled in any case. It's really becomes who you want to listen to, since there are no actual breaks in the tune.

I think it was just a new picture. It's not a blank picture, but just a new one.

MW: One of the things I really like about this solo is that you really take thematic material and deal with it for an extended period of time before moving on to something new. Is there any corresponding visual element that assists you with that? Retaining certain motives for example that you can use later, or taking an idea and really developing it for a certain amount of time?

JP: Yeah - I think it's along the lines of painting something that someone could recognize. So you end up re-tracing the lines to make the form of what you're drawing more accessible. I guess I can make that parallel. I can say that I learned the most about that from John McNeil. I remember doing a promotion, going from my first year to my second year and I kept all of the comments that they made about my playing and I remember him saying to use more motives in my playing. In the fall of that year, when Benny Golson came, he told a story about using repetition and how he related it to pigeons - feeding pigeons and shooing them away. He was in the park one day and he had fed the pigeons, throwing some breadcrumbs down. He shooed the pigeons away, so they flew away and then they came back, and then he shooed them again so they flew away

and then came back again. When he tried to shoo them a third time, they just stayed. So that effect only lasted a limited amount of time.

So he told us, you need to not play motives too much, or repeat the same idea, you need to switch it up and maybe change the rhythm within that phrase to change it up a little bit. So I carried that and McNeil's advice with me.

MW: Right and there are some interesting things within this. Like the somewhat stock minor ii/V(sings line). You play that once and then repeat it in the upper octave about 30-40 seconds later. So there is a retention of that idea, in addition to the bending long pitches. You also quote Surrey with The Fringe on Top at one point against the 5 feel. And of course, there are a number of instances where you're dealing with a melodic or rhythmic motive that you may just slightly alter and repeat. Is there a visual element in playing motivically as well?

JP: Yeah. You know I tell people a lot of times that I tend to think of things in numbers as well. So it's a little like the idea of having a phone number and you play that phone number or melodic code. So for example 1235, and then changing the last number of it. So you're switching one element of that out for something else.

I haven't really spent too much time sitting down and practicing it, as opposed to working on that organically with a group. I try and let that whole idea come to me.

MW: There are some instances where you're playing some very interesting more eighth-note type of melodic lines. Is there a visual element to that, where you're seeing it transcribed as you play it or you may see it ahead of time?

JP: Most of the time I do see it before I play it. Sometimes my body or my chops won't allow me to fully execute what I was meaning to play. I think what I see mostly is what I

want to start with and what I want to resolve my phrase to. I think those are the two things that are most clear. I always try to line those up with what the rhythm section is playing - so if I want to float over the time, I want to resolve the phrase rhythmically with them. So I tend to see the notes, rhythm, and phrasing both with them and in my own conscious space.

MW: It's interesting you bring that up. One of the other elements the other guys (subjects) have talked about is that there is also a physical component that goes along with both hearing and visualizing. Do you experience that at all? So when you pre-visualize a phrase to play, there is also a pre-physical component related to what it's going to feel like to play those specific valve combinations?

JP: That is definitely there. Also there is a feeling related to the amount of compression and what my torso is going to have to feel like in order to execute what I mean to play. With me, I have a thing where my legs go up and down - I don't know how to quite describe it... But in order to play a phrase that may start in the upper register and for that to be executed in time, I may have to bend my legs a little more or not.

MW: So there is a physical element that helps you to play what you are visualizing as well.

JP: Yes.

MW: On this particular tune (Abu Abed), are you thinking 5/4 or 5/8 on this?

JP: 5/4. I initially wrote the tune in 5/8, but I think it's easier to feel in 5/4.

MW: Many times when I'm playing in mixed meters, I think of clave patterns that naturally lay in the rhythm of the tune. You use a variety of them in your solo, but one of the patterns I noticed is the dotted quarter, dotted quarter, and then some type of division

of those remaining two beats. When you visualize what you're playing notated, do you see your phrases grouped that way as if they were notated on staff paper?

JP: Yes, there is definitely a clave pattern there. I remember that we rehearsed this and we used that device a lot. I'm not sure how much I actually see it on paper, because we played it so much in rehearsing it and getting everyone to feel the same clave together, but I don't know if I actually wrote that out - the patterns that we worked on.

MW: Interesting. Another pattern you use is the dotted quarter, quarter, and that repeated, which gives the rhythm a lot of forward momentum.

Since I know that you are active teaching, do you have any strategies that you've worked on in your own practice or with your students that you think may assist them in visualization?

JP: What I like to do is give students an idea of one thing that they can only work on. So I'll say we can only use quarter note triplets or only triplets in any rhythmic format - so half note, quarter note, or eighth note triplets. That's all they can use rhythmically and put on a play-along and have them improvise with that in mind. Or I'll say that they can only use the interval of a fifth or the notes from a C major pentatonic and a F# major pentatonic. So they end up having a limited number of colors that they can paint with. I've found that it helps them see notes and rhythms exclusively in their creative mind.

I think as far as playing in odd time signatures - recently I've had some of my ensembles take a tune like "All The Things You Are" and I'll have them look at the chart and visualize every other measure in 3/4 - so we're going to do it in seven. I'll have them interpret the melody as if they are going to have a beat taken away in every other bar.

The melodic instrument players - they're able to do that to a degree. Right now at Berklee I have mostly mid-level players, not the cream of the crop and not the worst. So I'd say right now that I probably have a sixty to seventy percent success rate with students who are able to do that right off the bat. Many are working on it, and hopefully they'll be able to do it by the end of the semester.

MW: Are there any things in your personal practice that may strengthen visualization or develop it?

JP: I work on intervallic modes. I'm not sure if I mentioned it before, but I got this idea from John McNeil. You take two intervals and improvise using only those intervals. So we would start out by taking two intervals that aren't too far apart, but aren't too close together. So I wouldn't do a half-step and whole-step or a minor and major seventh. I'd probably start off with a fifth and a whole-step and sit down and purely improvise with no changes in mind, and then do the same thing in the context of a blues or a modal tune. Then I would focus on what I call target notes, which are the notes that you start on and the notes that you want to finish on. So I've worked on that quite a bit and I relayed that to some of my more advanced students and some of them have taken it and run with it.

MW: That is something Greg Gisbert talked about when I studied with him .We would practice taking two intervals that don't equal an octave and improvise trying to maintain that order. What you find out is that you develop consonance because you're maintaining a specific type of structure. I think that's also my patterns work so effectively.

JP: Yes.

MW: So the final question I really want to cover today is: How do you think visualization and your process helps you in getting your musical intent across?

JP: I'd say that if you have that connection where you see something and you can relate it to an audience, I think it's that much more rewarding to my musical psyche. I always tell my students that the master's have eliminated the bridge (or barrier) between what they hear in their heads and what comes out of their instrument. If you can eliminate that bridge, that is something that will allow you to never feel like you're at a loss for ideas. I think that I'm always trying to get to that point, and being on that continuum to eliminate that bridge is something that keeps me going.

APPENDIX C

Informed Consent Documentation

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

PURPOSE:

The goal of this research is to gain insight into and analyze the improvisational approaches of professional established jazz improvisers/trumpeters that experience varied forms of visualization during the improvisational process. Information gained through recorded interviews and discussions will be compiled by the author, focusing on background, processes, use in recorded works, and any peripheral material related to pedagogy and educational content.

In addition, the responses to questionnaires and phone interviews, written and dictated by acknowledged improvisers, will give insight to the procedures involved in improvising using non-aural influences and visual sources/stimuli.

PROCEDURE:

The informed consent form will be attached to an email (recruitment letter) and sent out to the participants. All participants are asked to review this form and state in a response email whether they agree to have their names published or not. Each participant acknowledges through his/her response that he/she has read and understood the informed consent form and further agrees to its terms. The responses and transcriptions of interviews will be used for research and will be included in the co-investigators doctoral essay. Through the email response, the subject also agrees that his/her responses will be published in the essay.

RISKS:

No foreseeable risks or discomfort are anticipated for you by participating. All responses recorded by phone interview are available for review by the subject, and all final written material including the subject's direct thoughts and opinions will be available for review before the essays final defense. All recording files of the interview(s) will be in sole possession of the co-investigator. Any responses or correspondence through email cannot be guaranteed as secure.

BENEFITS:

Although no benefits can be promised to you by participating in this study, the information gathered and distributed later is intended to be used to broaden the scope of improvisational processes and sensory cross-over in musical settings.

ALTERNATIVES:

You have the alternative to not participate in this study. You may stop participating at any time or you can skip questions you do not want to answer. Nothing will happen to you as the result of halting participation.

COSTS:

No costs are anticipated for you to participate in this study.

PAYMENT TO PARTICIPATE:

No monetary payment will be awarded due to participation in this study.

CONFIDENTIALITY:

The investigators and their assistants will consider your records confidential to the extent permitted by law. The US department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) may request to review and obtain copies of your records. Your records may be reviewed for audit purposes by Authorized University employees or other agents who will be bound by the same provisions of confidentiality. The participants' names and responses will be made public in my dissertation, which will be submitted to the faculty of the University of Miami this Spring 2011 and will be available for educational purposes unless he/she indicates to the principle investigator that they would like their information kept confidential. Please state your preference in your email response on whether you want your name published or not.

RIGHT TO WITHDRAW:

Your participation is voluntary; you have the right to withdraw from the study.

OTHER PERTINENT INFORMATION:

The researcher will answer any questions you may have regarding the study and will give you a copy of the consent form after you have signed it (e-mail response). If you have questions about the study, please contact Matthew White, co-investigator, at 305-766-8230 or mattwhitemusic@gmail.com or Professor Rachel Lebon, at 305-284-5813, or RLLebon@aol.com If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Human Subjects Research Office (HRSO) at 305-243-3195.

Please print a copy of this consent document for you records.

from doylehud <doylehud@aol.com>
to Matthew White <mattwhitemusic@gmail.com>
date Wed, Jan 19, 2011 at 12:11 PM
subject Re: Visualization study - informed consent form
mailed-by aol.com

Jan 19

Dear Matt,

I have read the consent form for Matthew White's research and I agree to its contents.

Sincerely,

Tim Hagans

from Brian Lynch <brianlynchjazz@mac.com>
to Matthew White <mattwhitemusic@gmail.com>
date Thu, Mar 17, 2011 at 7:17 PM
subject Re: Visualization study - informed consent form
mailed-by mac.com

Mar 17

Hi Matt,

This email is notice that I give consent for you to use interviews with me as well as transcriptions of my recorded work in your dissertation. It's been a pleasure to be your research subject!

Best,

Brian

from Jason Palmer <jasonpalmertrumpet@gmail.com>
to Matthew White <mattwhitemusic@gmail.com>
date Wed, Feb 16, 2011 at 10:49 AM
subject Re: Visualization study - informed consent form
mailed-by gmail.com
signed-by gmail.com

Feb 16

Hello Matt,

Yes, I read and agree to the terms in the consent form!

Take care,

Jason Palmer

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