Borja Rojo

MUR 122a

Concert Review

11/1/14

UR Jazz Band

UR Jazz band performed a short concert this past weekend. It is comprised of a large ensemble containing a rhythm section of piano, bass, guitar, and drums, a sax section of six altos and two tenors, a trombone section of three, and a trumpet section of four. This band played three pieces: Blue Opening by Ike Sterm; Hit the Bricks by Gordon Goodman; The Queen Bee by Sammy Nestico.

Blue Opening begins with a cool groove with a call and response from the rhythm section and the sax section. The drummer did a nice job of keeping the tempo and his playing tight, letting the saxophones clearly play through in between his hits, repeating the same motif for the duration of the intro. This fantastic effect set the main rhythm of the song. The intro continued to use this groove while various players filled in the spaces left by the drummer as accents and calls in an incredibly tasteful and controlled manner. The trombones, trumpets, and tenor sax all took turns playing small, two beat licks in their own call and response manner. These mini-solos lead to a final culmination of the band entering the second section of the song, where the rhythm section loosened and the whole band fell into the main groove of the song. This continued for about 16 bars until the rhythm section returned the beat of the intro and set up the foundation for the solo section. Many of the players gave admirable solos; they were interesting but not too complicated. They lent to the cool feel of the piece in their simple nature. This was, overall, a cool, blue opening.

Hit the Bricks opens with a steady bass line solo and shaker, soon joined by the piano. The foundation they set here persisted throughout the song. After eight bars, the drums came in with a fill and the rest of the band joined with the horns blasting chords. Soon after, the horns filled out to have the trumpet carry the main melody. In an incredibly syncopated fashion, the piece had distinct hip-hop feel to it up until the horns came in with massive swells as the piece entered the solo section. First, everyone cut out except for the bass and drums for couple bars. Then, everyone else came back in with a saxophone solo leading. The saxophone rode over the lines, adding flavor and an interesting flair. Next, the guitar came in with a much different style, staying within the chords and adding it’s own texture to the mix. Once the guitar faded back into the rhythm, the piece returned to the second section and ended with a nice break down and trumpet shout.

The Queen Bee was a steady, swing song that featured a saxophone solo. The piece began with a chill drum and sax grooving together. Soon after, the trumpets began to steal the melody from the saxophones and the two sections engaged in an alternating fashion, playing off each other and not against each other. This continued until the solo section where all but a saxophone and the rhythm section dropped out. This resulted in a smooth line of playing, where the rest of the ensemble periodically filled in with one beat chords for emphasis, much like a rap line has gang shouts. After the solo, which was rather uneventful, the piece regressed to its simplistic swing and ended with a ritardando into a held chord. This song was rather uninvolved, but a pleasant listen all the same.