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"Tradition – A method of Change in Music"

"An Idea changes not only when some thinkers believe it to be outworn, but when other thinkers continue to hold it. An idea changes in its persistence as well as in its rejection, changes "in itself" and not merely in its appeal to the mind."[1]

Introduction

Background

From an early age, I´ve had many musical influences. As a guitarist growing up in Ireland, self-tuition was an important driving force behind my musical development. However, it was (and continues to be) the organic energy of flamenco that always served as a constant source of inspiration. My years of Music study began in W.I.T (Waterford Institute of Technology), 2008. I began studies as a classical guitarist there, but soon opted for jazz studies, having realized that this was the musical vocabulary with which I could best express myself.

Context

Since my completion of the undergraduate course, I have been searching for an artistic voice through composition. Taking this Master´s course in Valencia has expanded my horizons when approaching composition. This is due to the many influences and inspiration I´ve had, sourcing from student and faculty members, as well as visiting artists throughout the semester. But most of all, the experience so far has accentuated my passion for a fusion in music. Having studied classical and jazz guitar, and being heavily inspired by flamenco and other folkloric music, Berklee Valencia has become the perfect environment to put my notion of fusion into effect.

Proposal

Concept

The principal concept of this project is to create compositions. The collection of transcriptions, influences etc., which will be presented with a set of compositions, will give more insight into the development and process of

[1] Waldman, (1986), pp 319

thought involved with the project. The Idea is to create music which shouldn´t be easily categorized – music that is fully original, but rich in an eclecticism of influences.

Justification

One of the reasons for undertaking this project is to demonstrate the importance of traditional and folkloric music through the use of modern and jazz concepts – how traditional and even ethnic music continues to influence music today. With the aid of arrangement (a tribute to my major influences) and transcription, the primary objective is to present this work through a website, detailing the connection between my influences and my music. The final presentation will consist of a live performance with a variety of musicians that have had a great deal of importance in helping me put the project into effect.

Actions

To begin, my production class in the first semester served greatly towards preparation. In this class I composed and arranged a piece, which involved creative tasks such as rehearsal, performance and recording. This gave way to other technical tasks such as gathering the right musicians to create an ensemble, setting rehearsals and so on. The technological tasks attached to this were anything but few. Throughout the semester, I have gained much experience through recording, editing and mixing techniques. All of these proficiencies have helped me put my project more into perspective. As a result, I will have an organized agenda going into the second semester in which I plan to get all my music recorded with the aid of these newly acquired practices.

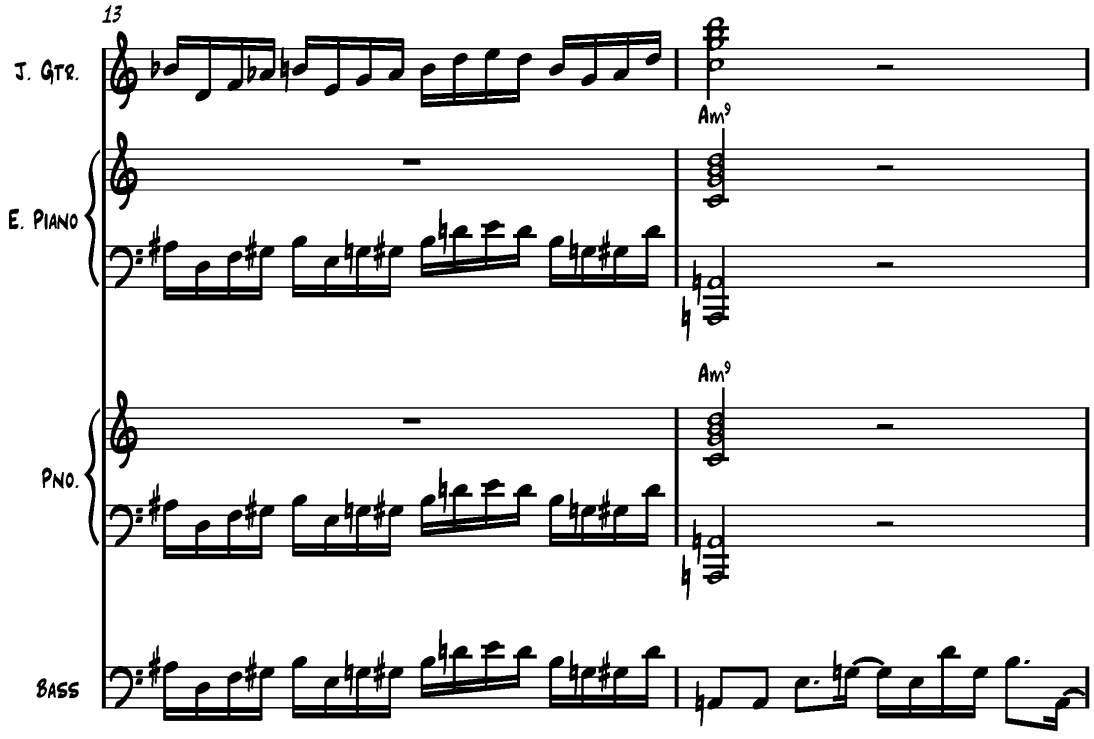
Throughout the implementation of these tasks, I will intend to document the process with photographs and video footage, as well as master audio recordings. This will benefit the prospect of a web page overall design.

For the purpose of creating a timeline, by the end of January ´14, I plan to have my work ready for rehearsals. That is to have all scores and arrangements in order. This enables the target for recording to be completed by the end of April/beginning of May.

The Works

Before detailing the extent of my work through analysis, it is important to mention the Berklee Valencia faculty and the role that they have played in influencing and adding depth to the dimension of my project. Much of my transcription work was implemented under the guidance of Perico Sambeat in the graduate class of Topics in Improvisation. The ensembles in which I participated also broadened my horizons in terms of composition. In the first semester, I studied in Polo Orti´s Contemporary Jazz ensemble. Here, I undertook some transcription work of Polo´s composition "Revolusong". This work was a product (or reflection) of the ensemble´s influence:

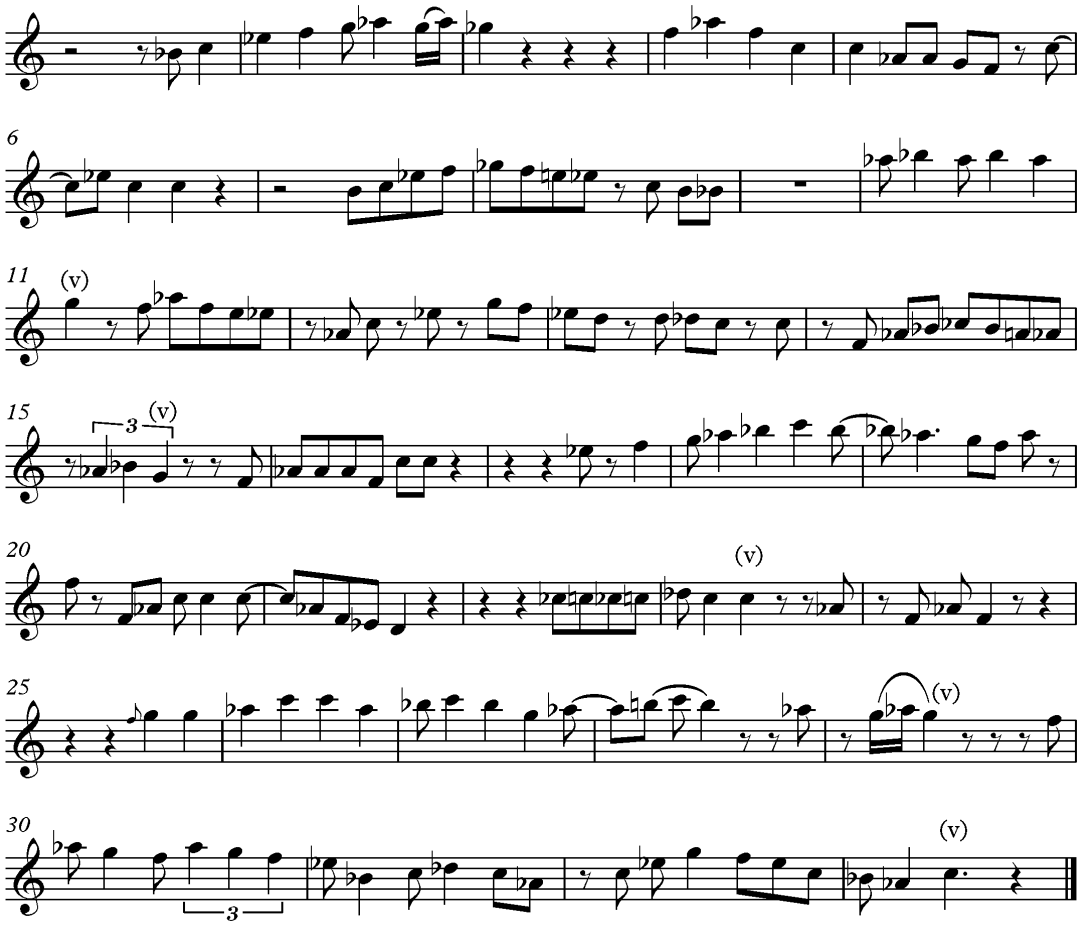
Ex. 1 "Revolusong" (excerpt) *Composer – Polo Ortí*



Topics in Improvisation - Transcription

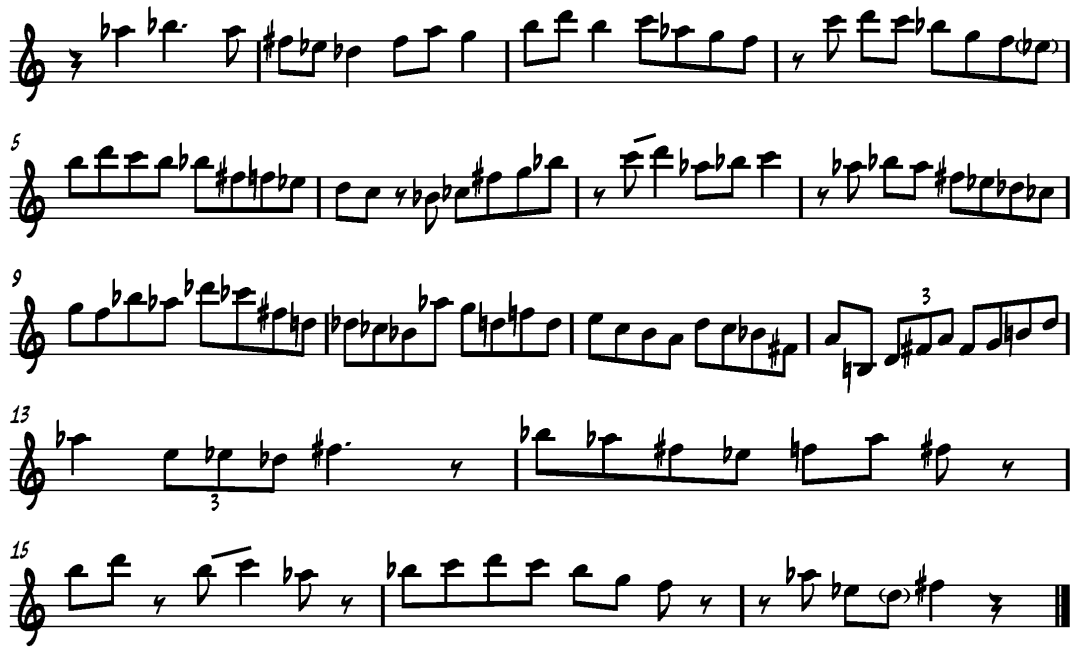
My transcription work throughout the year has consisted primarily of jazz solos – a timeline format, beginning at the rise of the era (Louis Armstrong, Lester Young).

Louis Armstrong Solo Transcription *"Back Home Again in Indiana"*



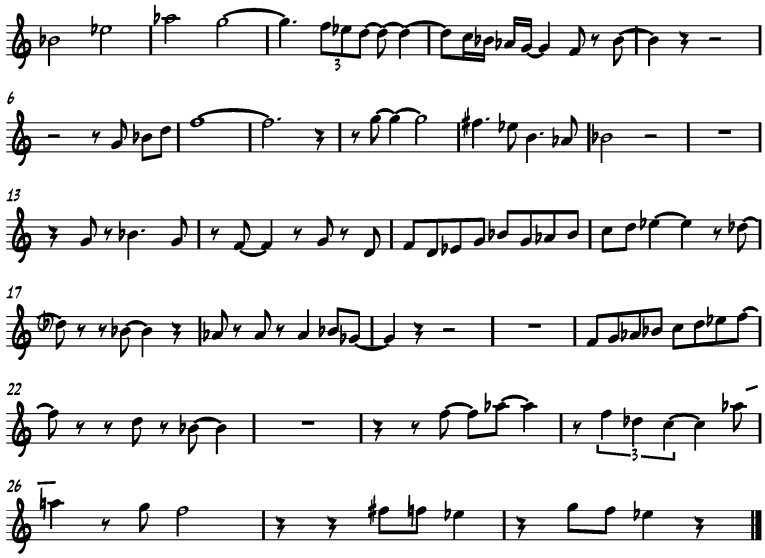
…and ending with the hard-bop & avant garde era (Lennie Tristano, John Coltrane).

Rodney Jones Solo Transcription *"Giant Steps"*



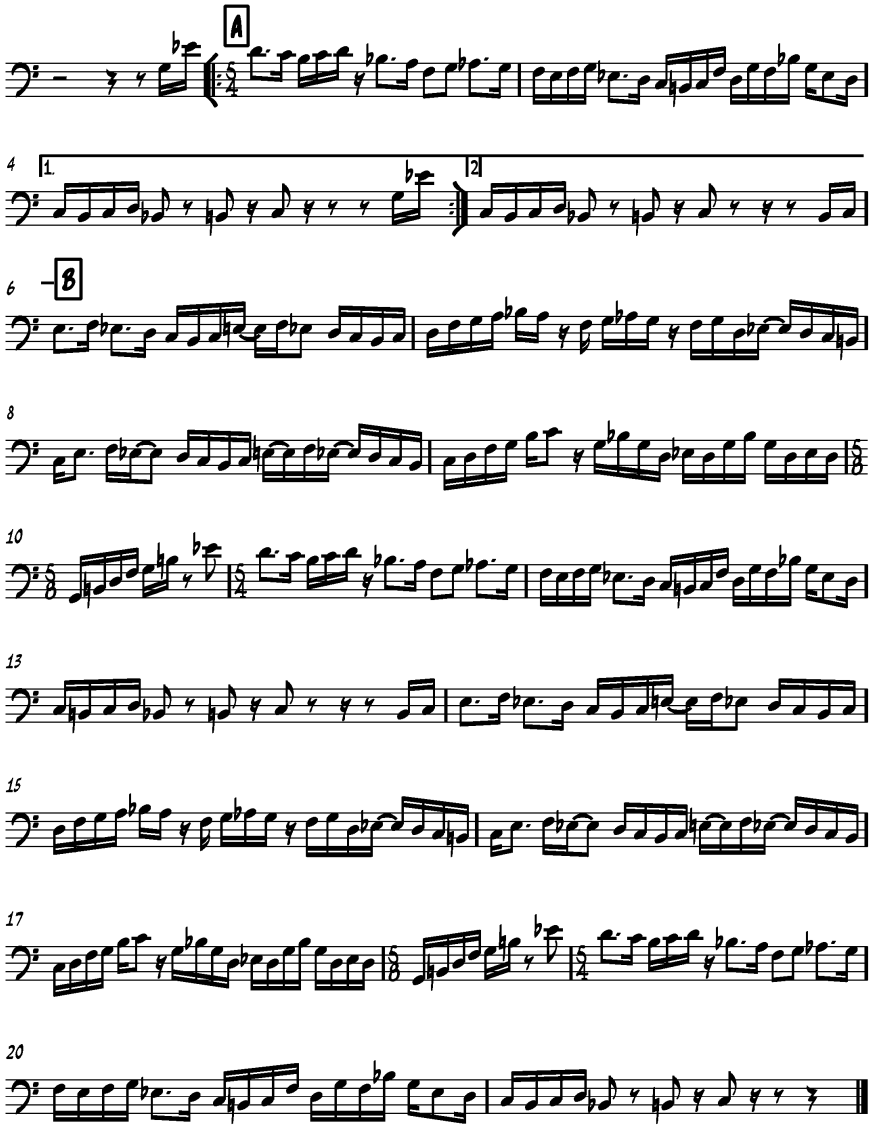
The learning process in this particular class served greatly towards the expansion of my musical vocabulary. Many of the directions in which the class moved in, were previously uncharted territories for me. For example, an area of jazz music, which I had never delved into, was covered with a great deal of attention paid to individual contribution.

Miles Davis solo trans. "*On Green Dolphin St.*"



While this catalog of transcriptions reflects the modern aspect of my influences, the highlight of my work this year in terms of transcription emphasizes the concept of fusion. The title of the piece is “Ragabop”. I transcribed the piece in the early stages of the first semester and it has served as an emblematic source of inspiration throughout the year in terms of composition.

“Ragabop” trans.



This particular piece shed a lot of light onto the project´s concept. It is a perfect example of fusing tradition with modern music. Transcribed before I had even chosen a subject for my project, I wanted to see how far I could travel through my own music with a similar concept.

Composition

"La Drova"

Written in the first semester of the academic year, this is the first of four compositions recorded this year. "La Drova" is a creative representation of my flamenco influences more than any other. It is named after a village of the Valencian mountainside.

The journey through time signatures here creates a dynamic, which is respectful to the genre, but not a copy of it.

Structure

"A" section harmony is kept quite simple due to the rhythmic movement. The melody is also simplistic, but woven by the 5/8 & 6/8 time signatures to paint an abstract idea of tradition. "B" & "C" sections were introduced as a contrasting, responsive element to the main theme. This is also achieved through the use of odd time signatures.

The solo section and coda are "tribute" sections in many ways to the common Flamenco palo (name of any given flamenco musical form), Bulería (6/8).

As much as flamenco music has inspired "La Drova", credit is due to many modern influences, such as Avishai Cohen, who successfully transmits a sense of tradition through composition.

La Drova

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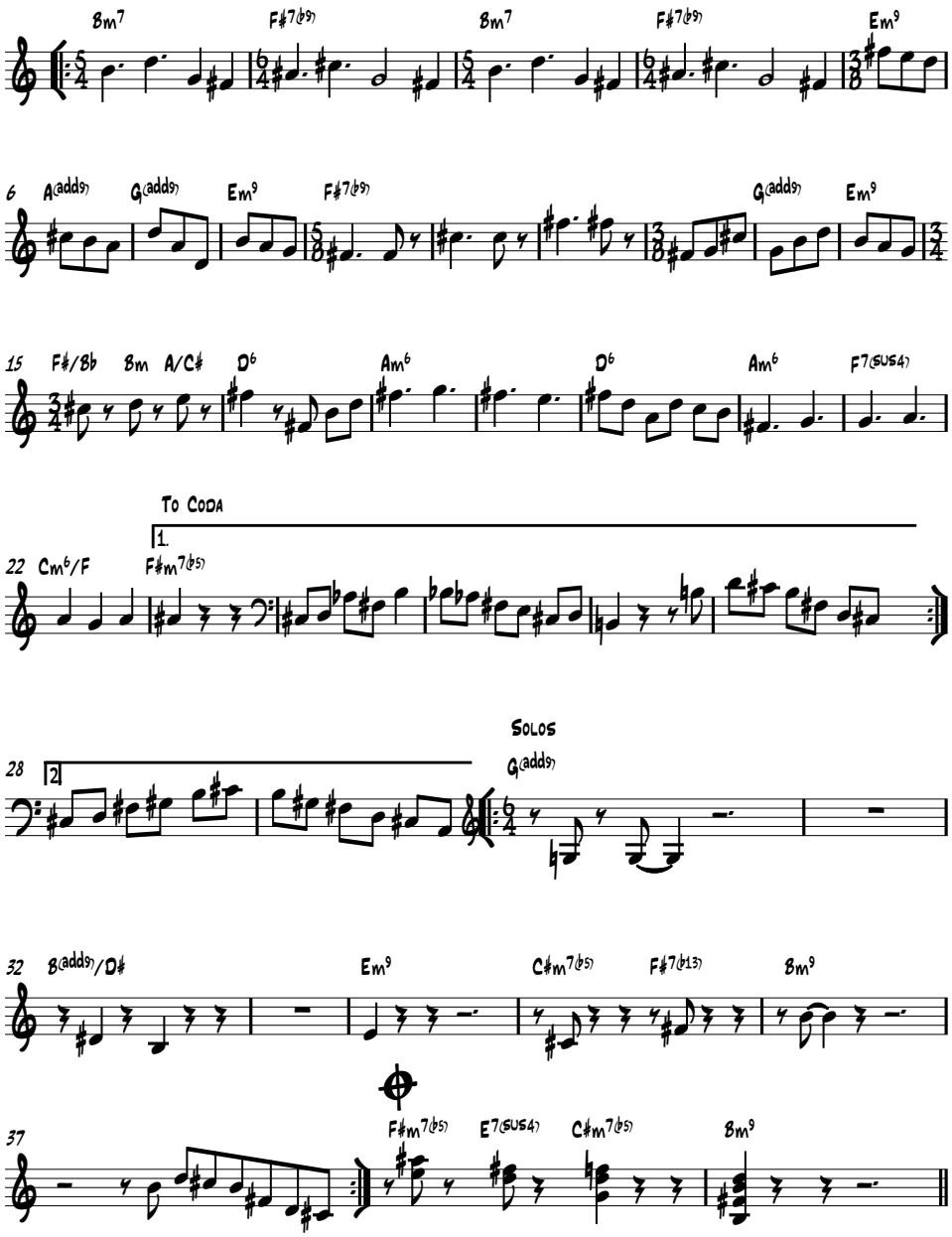

“Rounds”

This composition also reflects a creative approach, in the sense that this piece was written in January completely fresh, i.e. not based on a previous original idea. It is a demonstration of my natural influences, i.e. music I grew up with, including folk, as opposed to genres that I approached for inspiration in a more analytical way. (Classical & Jazz)

There are some other artists whom are worth mentioning that have inspired this process. Tigran Hamasyan is a pianist who has also kept closely in touch with his Armenian heritage. He successfully expresses this through composition.

Structure

The A melody - Very rhythmically driven but both melodically and harmonically simple. This I can certainly relate to eastern folk dances, with the influence of classical guitar music also. Odd time signature in “B” melody used here to give the impression of an idea, rather than the execution of one.

The idea here was to introduce a contrasting section with a darker feel to the A melody. In this melody there´s a slight presence of flamenco tonality shown in the harmony – minor 2nd movement.

Solo section - jazz concept of improvisation.

Rounds

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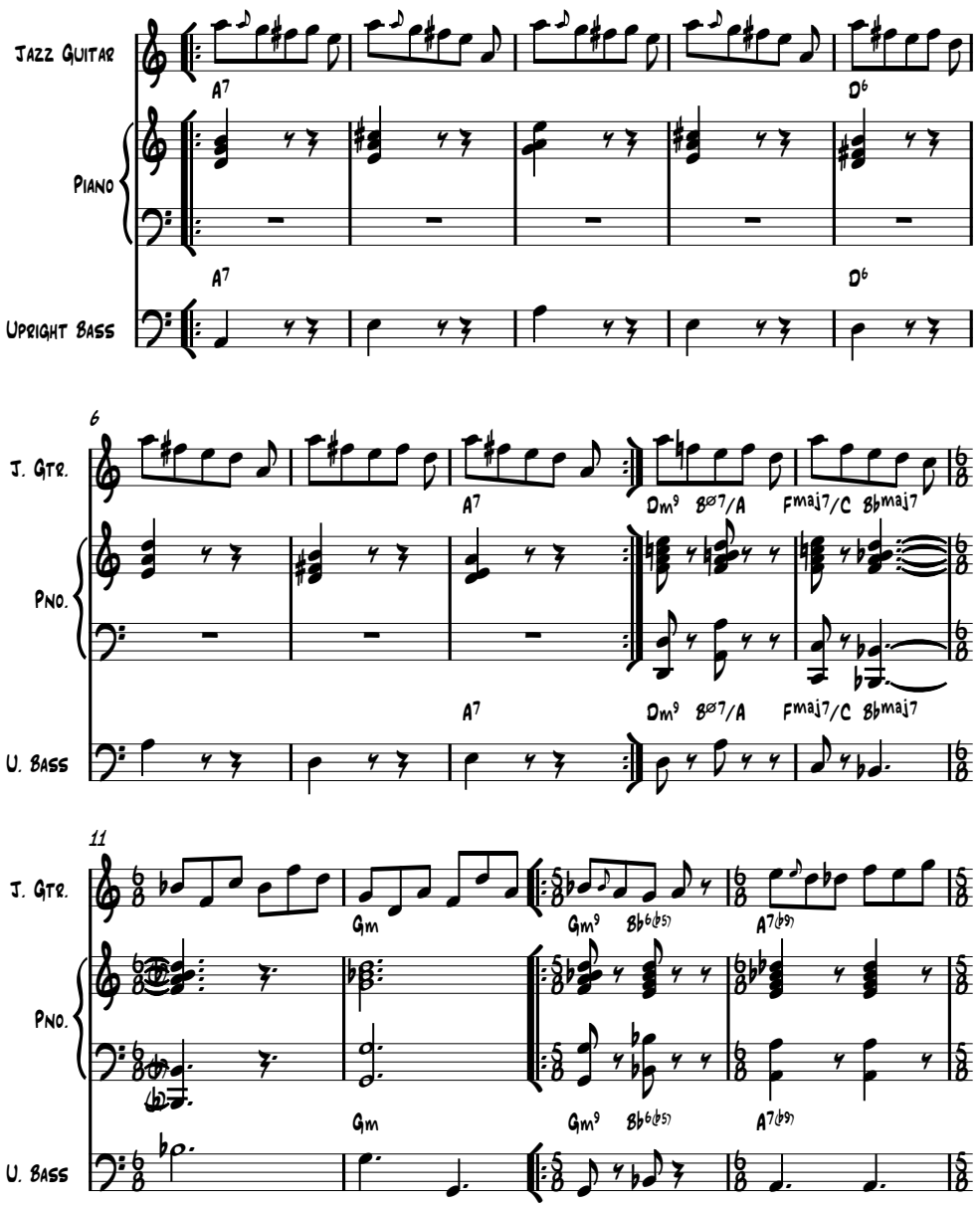
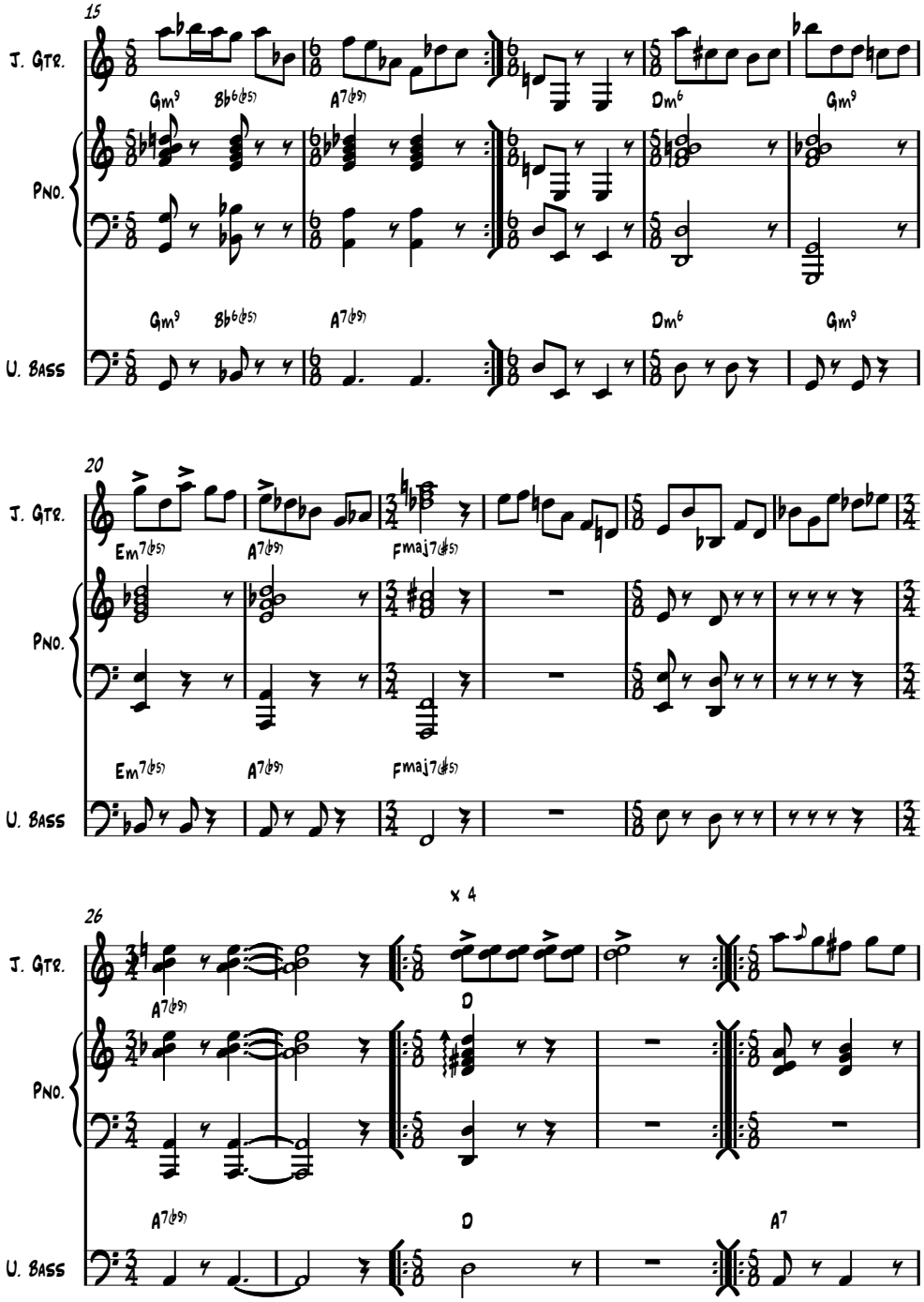
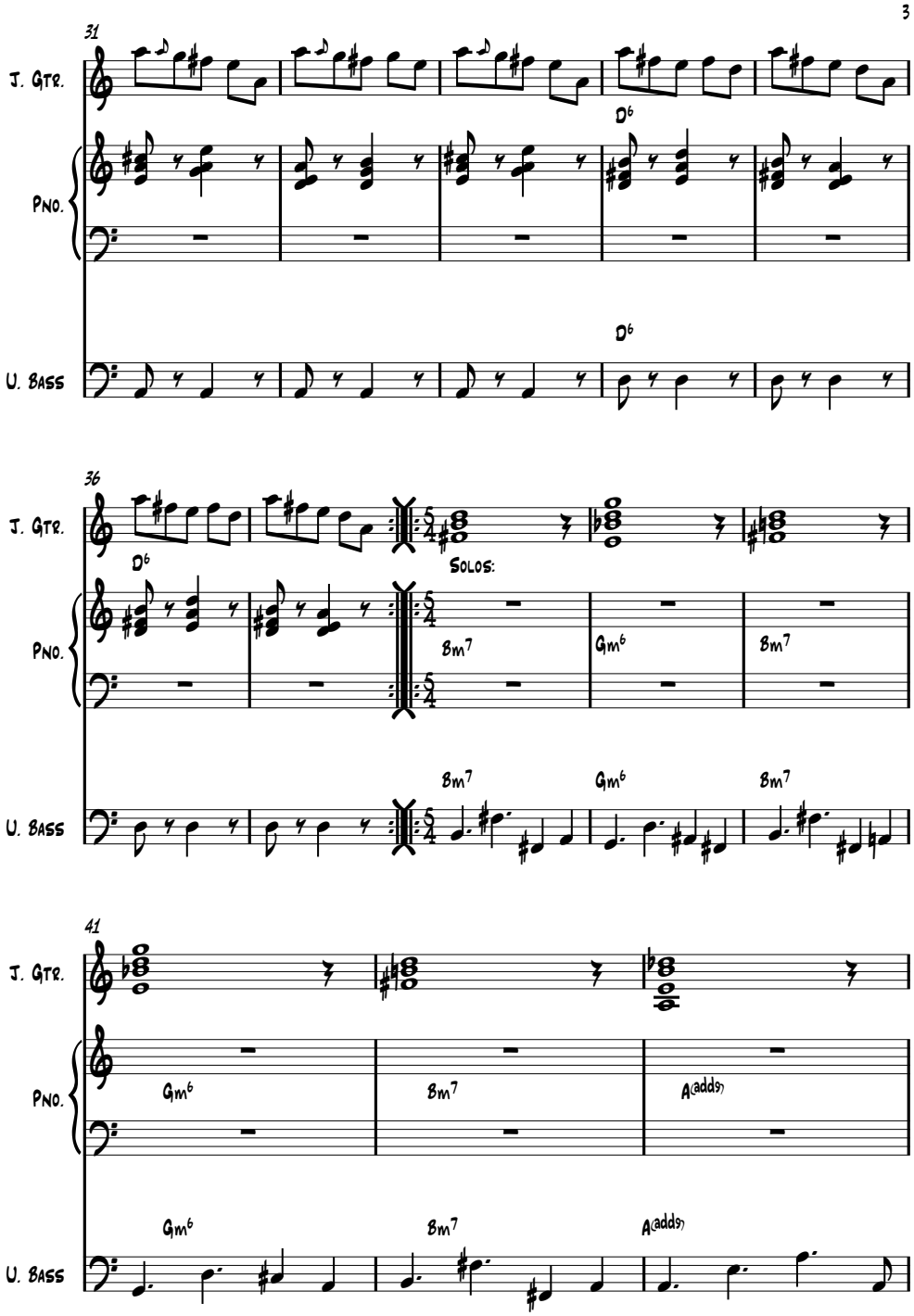



15
J. Gtr.
Pno.
U. Bass
Gm9
Bb6(b5)
A7(b9)
Dm6
Gm9
20
Em7(b5)
Fmaj7(#5)
x 4
26
D
A7


31
J. Gtr.
Pno.
U. Bass
D6
D6
36
J. Gtr.
Pno.
U. Bass
D6
Solos:
Bm7
Gm6
Bm7
Bm7
Gm6
Bm7
41
J. Gtr.
Pno.
U. Bass
Gm6
Bm7
A(add9)
Gm6
Bm7
A(add9)

“Coop´s Dream”

In this particular piece, I wanted to explore a very different horizon. It can be classified as a funk/jazz/fusion combination. Setting the folk driven compositions aside for a while, I wanted to produce a piece of music that spoke (or didn´t for that matter) for itself. I gave it this particular name as a tribute to the Television series “Twin Peaks”. In a way, I wanted to reflect the essence of surrealism through the piece.

The principal characteristic that drives this piece is rhythmic syncopation in the melody.

The harmony is purposely kept simple in order to give way to the rhythmically active melody. However, it displays a consistent and rich sense of modal interchange harmony. (“A” – B minor to B major & “B” – F# major to F# minor).

Big influences here (apart from the above mentioned TV show) include Joshua Redman, Adam Rodgers and Chris Potter.

Coop's Dream

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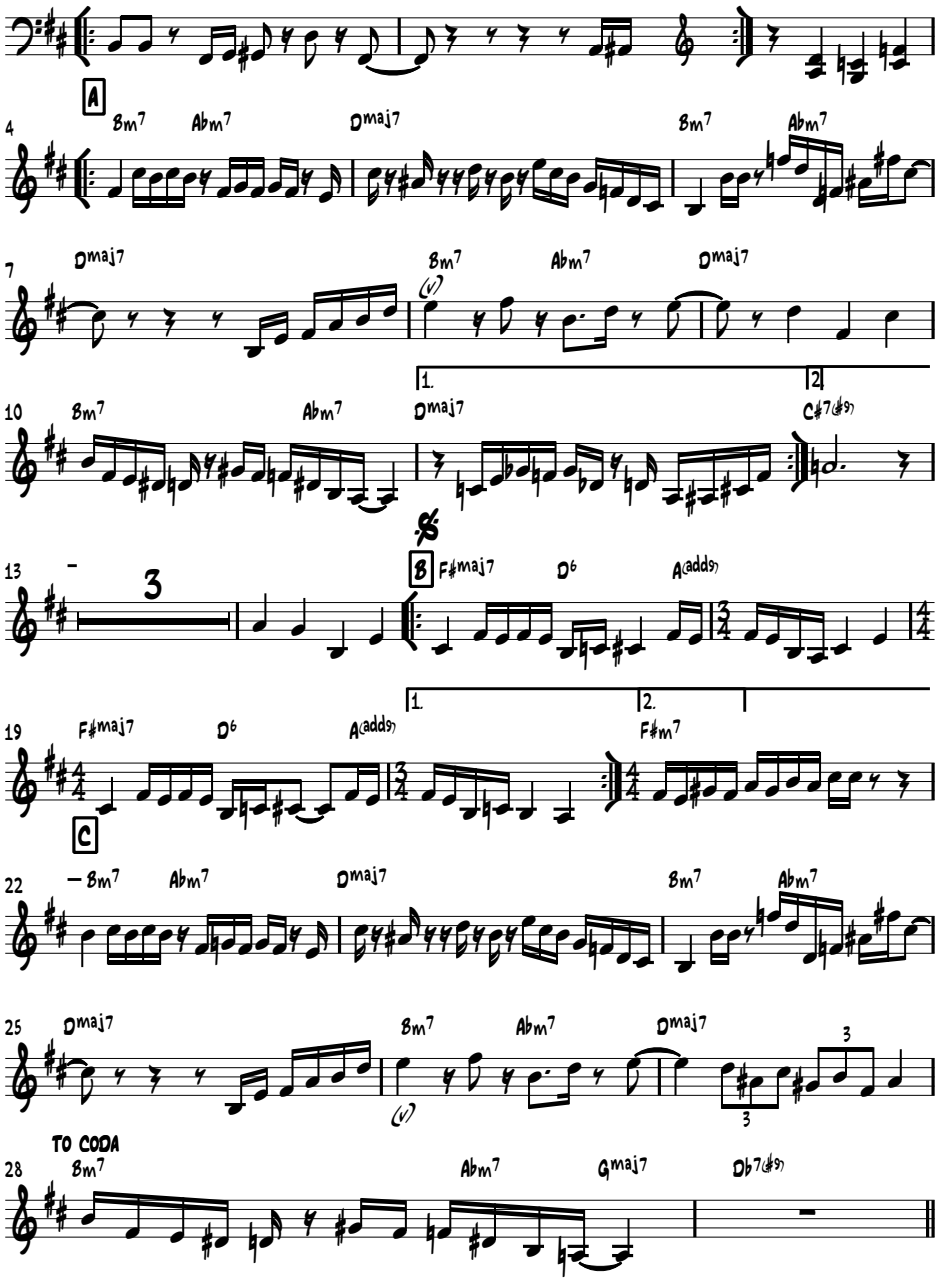
Funk

♩ = 120

(Sample Bass)



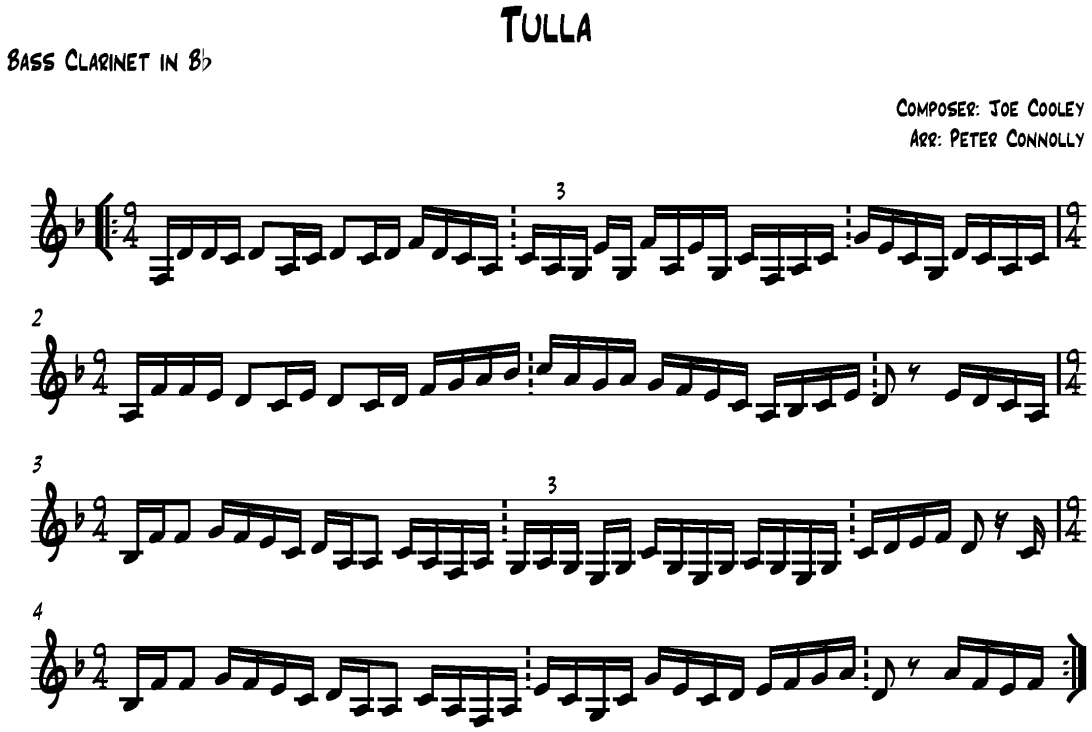
“Tulla”

I always had the idea of transforming a well-known traditional tune – be it Irish or Spanish. Initially, the idea was to experiment with a slip jig – which is the classification of Irish melodies in 9/8 time…But I stumbled upon an even more popular tune – The Tulla Reel.

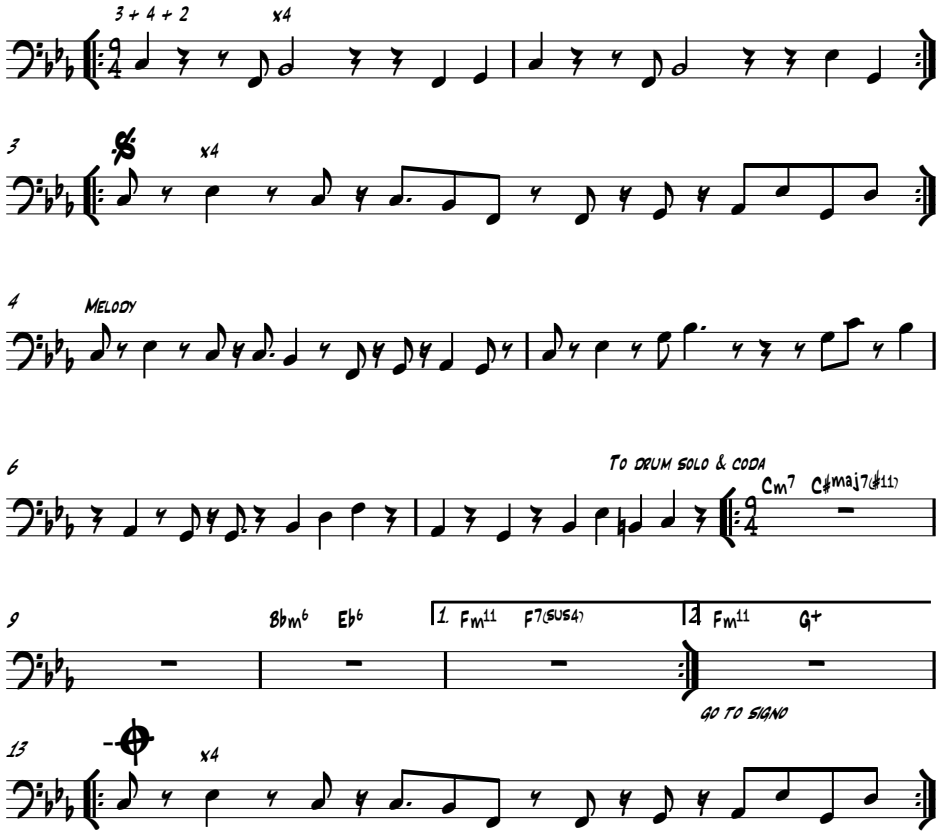
The piece forms part of the traditional Irish repertoire but was popularized in the 20th century by accordion player, Joe Cooley and his Tulla Ceilí band.

Prior to the choosing of the tune, I had already come up with the groove (9/4) – this is why I tried to work with a slip jig (As mentioned above) because of the 9-beat relationship. After the melody was arranged and in place (a stressed anacrusis at the end of every phrase), the structure took form with an improvised solo section. The instrumentation also provides a modern context - (Electric guitar & electric piano).

Also, the choice of bass clarinet was to mark a certain contrast between that, and the typically high-pitched whistle, which is commonly heard in traditional Irish music.



TULLA


3 + 4 + 2
x4
3
x4
4
MELODY
6
TO DRUM SOLO & CODA
Cm7
C♯maj7(♯11)
9
8♭m6
E♭6
1. Fm11
F7(SUS4)
2. Fm11
G+
GO TO SIGNO
13
x4