ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: THE INFLUENCE OF JAZZ AND ITS PREDECESSORS ON PIANO CHAMBER MUSIC AFTER 1920

Yurong Yang, Doctor of Musical Arts, 2025

Dissertation Directed by: Professor Rita Sloan, School of Music

In the early 20th Century, jazz music and its predecessors, such as blues, ragtime, and stride piano, began to gain widespread popularity among audiences. Their defining characteristics including syncopated rhythms, improvisation, call and response, polyphony, distinctive harmony, and unique timbre. Many classical composers were intrigued and captivated by these new types of music. Composers such as Maurice Ravel, Erik Satie, Darius Milhaud, Igor Stravinsky, Dmitri Shostakovich, and Leonard Bernstein, among many others, were drawn to jazz style and incorporated its elements into their compositions.

This performance dissertation explores how a range of these composers, including both classical and jazz musicians, integrated jazz elements into their works which feature the piano(s), highlighting the creative interplay between the two traditions.

Three recitals were prepared and presented respectively on April 6, 2023, November 14, 2023, and March 24, 2025, at Gildenhorn Recital Hall of the University of Maryland.

The first recital featured works influenced by blues and third stream. The program included the *Violin Sonata No. 2 in G Major* by Maurice Ravel, *Three Preludes* by George Gershwin, as arranged by Jascha Heifetz, and *Points on Jazz* by Dave Brubeck.

The second recital (lecture recital) featured works influenced by ragtime and stride piano. The program included *The Garden of Eden* and *Graceful Ghost Rag* by William Bolcom, and *Café Music* by Paul Schoenfeld.

The last recital featured third stream music. The program included *The Cape Cod Files* by Paquito D'Rivera, the *Sonata for Clarinet and Piano* by Alec Wilder, the *Piano Concerto No. 2* and the *Trio for Piano, Flute, and Cello* by Nikolai Kapustin.

Recordings can be accessed in the Digital Repository (DRUM) at the University of Maryland.

THE INFLUENCE OF JAZZ AND ITS PREDECESSORS ON PIANO CHAMBER MUSIC AFTER 1920

by

Yurong Yang

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Maryland, College Park, in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Musical Arts
2025

Advisory Committee:

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Dedication

To my parents and extended family, whose love and support have shaped my upbringing and carried me through every step of my journey.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to my parents, thank you for always being there for me, and for your constant support and love, I could not have done this without you.

Thank you to my dear piano teacher, Prof. Rita Sloan, thank you so much for your guidance, encouragement, endless support through my journey at UMD, I cannot thank you enough for everything you have done for me.

Thank you to Jason, for your patience, kindness, and for standing by me and believing in me, I am truly grateful for your presence in my life.

Thank you to all my collaborators and ensemble partners, thank you for your time, dedication, and efforts on my dissertation recitals.

Thank you to my dissertation committee members, thank you for your generosity on your time and insights.

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Recital Programs

Dissertation Recital 1

Yurong “Ria” Yang, Piano
Rachel Choi, Violin
John Park, Violin
Leili Asanbek, Piano

April 6, 5PM 2023
Gildenhorn Recital Hall

The Sonata for Violin and Piano No.2 in G Major Maurice Ravel

I. Allegretto
II. Blues. Moderato
III. Perpetuum Mobile. Allegro

Rachel Choi, Violin

Three Preludes George Gershwin
Arr. Jascha Heifetz

I. Allegro ben ritmato
II. Andante con moto e poco rubato
III. Agitato

John Park, Violin

Points on Jazz Dave Brubeck

I. Prelude
II. Scherzo
III. Blues
IV. Fugue
V. Rag
VI. Chorale
VII. Waltz
VIII. A La Turk – Finale

Leili Asanbekova, Piano

Dissertation Recital 2 (Lecture Recital)

Yurong "Ria" Yang, Piano
Yuna Kim, Violin
Emily Doveala, Cello
Shuai Wang, Piano

November 14, 8PM 2023
Gildenhorn Recital Hall

"The Garden of Eden" William Bolcom

IV. Through Eden's Gate – Cakewalk
I. Old Adam – Two Step
II. The Eternal Feminine – Slow Drag
III. The Serpent's Kiss – Rag Fantasy

Shuai Wang, Piano

Graceful Ghost Rag William Bolcom

Yuna Kim, Violin

Café Music Paul Schoenfeld

I. Allegro
II. Rubato
III. Presto

Yuna Kim, Violin
Emily Doveala, Cello

Dissertation Recital 3

Yurong “Ria” Yang, Piano
Ashley Hsu, Clarinet
Courtney Adams, Flute
Simone Pierpaoli, Cello
Alexei Ulitin, Piano

March 24, 8PM 2025
Gildenhorn Recital Hall

The Cape Cod Files — Paquito D’Rivera

I. Benny @100
II. Bandoneon
III. Chiquita Blues

Ashley Hsu, Clarinet

Piano Concerto No. 2, Op. 14 — Nikolai Kapustin

I. Allegro molto
II. Andante
III. Toccata

Alexei Ulitin, Piano

Sonata for Clarinet and Piano — Alec Wilder

I. Allegro moderato
II. Andante
III. Grazioso
IV. Allegro con fuoco

Ashley Hsu, Clarinet

Trio for Flute, Cello and Piano, Op. 86 — Nikolai Kapustin

I. Allegro molto
II. Andante
III. Allegro giocoso

Courtney Adams, Flute
Simone Pierpaoli, Cello

Chapter 1: Introduction

As an art form that incorporates African rhythm and European harmonic structure, it is commonly known that jazz evolved from early musical forms of blues and ragtime. Its defining characteristics include syncopated rhythm, improvisation, call and response, polyphony, distinctive harmony and unique timbre.

Although jazz originated in the United States in the late 19th century, it was becoming widely popular in Europe during the early 20th century. In 1918, James Reese Europe, an American military band director, took his band traveling to France, and introduced jazz to French and British soldiers, as well as to the general public. They had tremendous success during the tour, and France played a crucial role in helping spread jazz throughout Europe.[1] At about the same time, the Original Dixieland Jass Band traveled to England and introduced jazz to British audiences. Additionally, jazz saxophonist Sidney Bechet also contributed to the new genre's spread by touring extensively throughout western Europe and even going as far as Russia in the early 1920s.[2]

Many classical composers were intrigued and captivated by this new genre. Composers such as Maurice Ravel, Erik Satie, Darius Milhaud, Bohuslav Martinů, Igor Stravinsky, Dmitri Shostakovich, Aaron Copland, and Leonard Bernstein, among many others, were drawn to jazz and incorporated its elements into their compositions.

This performance dissertation topic was chosen out of a personal interest in both classical and jazz music, as well as a desire to explore and present underrepresented works to the

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[1] Suemedha Sood, "The Birth of Jazz", BBC, 2012, accessed March 2,2023, https://www.bbc.com/travel/article/20120224-travelwise-the-birthplace-of-jazz

[2] Karl Ackermann, "The Geography of Jazz – When Jazz Met Europe", All About Jazz, 2018, accessed March 2, 2023, https://www.allaboutjazz.com/culture-clubs-part-iv-when-jazz-met-europe-by-karl-ackermann

audience. This type of music highlights a unique and rich intersection of the two music traditions.

The purpose of this performance dissertation is to explore how a range of these composers, including both classical and jazz musicians, integrated jazz elements into their works which feature the piano(s).

Each chapter of the dissertation focuses on different styles of Jazz: Blues, Ragtime and Stride Piano, and third stream. The chapters provide historical context, stylistic analysis and characteristics, and a brief description and introduction of the selected works that exemplify these styles.

Chapter 2: Ragtime & Stride Piano

Ragtime, as an early form of Jazz, was a popular music style from the late 19th century to the early 20th century. It originated mainly in the southern and midwestern parts of the United States.

This musical style was influenced by the syncopated rhythms (the displacement of the beat from its regular meter) of the cakewalk dance, minstrel show songs, African American banjo playing, and elements from European music.[3] According to the Library of Congress, the word "Ragtime" probably was used to describe a kind of musical meter. In the late 19th century, it was common to use the word "time" to talk about rhythmic styles in music, like "waltz-time," "march-time," or "jig-time." Most likely, "ragtime" comes from the phrase "ragged time," which means playing the piano or banjo in a way where the melody is broken into short, syncopated rhythms, while the steady overall beat is played. When musicians changed a simple, regular melody by breaking up the rhythm (syncopation), this was called "ragging" the melody, resulting in the music being in "ragged time."[4]

Ragtime music usually has three or four different sections, and each section is about sixteen or thirty-two measures long. "Typical patterns were *AABBACCC′*, *AABBCCDD*, and *AABBCCA*, with the first two strains in the tonic key, and the additional strains, often referred to as the 'trio,' most often in the subdominant." [5] The syncopation in ragtime music evokes the feeling of looseness and natural flow, which brings the excitement of the music. The

[3] Edward Berlin, "Ragtime", in *Grove Music Online* (Oxford University Press, 2025-), accessed May 4, 2025 https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.A2252241
[4] Library of Congress, "History of Ragtime", n.d., accessed November 13, 2023, https://www.loc.gov/collections/ragtime/articles-and-essays/history-of-ragtime/
[5] Edward Berlin, "Ragtime", in *Grove Music Online* (Oxford University Press, 2025-), accessed May 4, 2025 https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.A2252241

most prominent composer of ragtime is Scott Joplin, who was also known as "the King of Ragtime."[6] Among his successful works, the "Maple Leaf Rag" and "The Entertainer" are still very popular to this day.

By early 1900, ragtime was very popular everywhere. People could hear it from piano rolls, phonograph records, ragtime piano contests, as well as in music boxes and music theaters. Ragtime sheet music was also widely printed.[7] However, this popularity didn't last long. By 1920, it began to fade while blues music and stride piano started to gain popularity.

Harlem stride piano, often known simply as stride, is a style of jazz piano that was developed and inspired from ragtime. This style of playing was created and developed in Harlem, New York, hence the name Harlem Stride.[8] The name "stride piano" comes from the way the pianists' left-hand plays. Stride pianists took the ragtime "oom-pah" rhythm and added in more swing and complexity. As the left-hand bass parts are covering more of the low-end of the keyboard, pianists had to literally "stride" across the large distance.[9] Compared to ragtime, the left-hand covers a wider range in terms of distance, which often includes octaves or a tenth of bass downbeats and the third beat, and larger leaps to the second and the fourth beat of the higher chords, which makes it more challenging physically and technically. The tempo of stride piano is

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[6] Susan Curtis, "Scott Joplin (1868-1917)", Missouri Encyclopedia, accessed November 13, 2023, https://missouriencyclopedia.org/people/joplin-scott
[7] Library of Congress, "History of Ragtime", n.d., accessed November 13, 2023, https://www.loc.gov/collections/ragtime/articles-and-essays/history-of-ragtime/
[8] Dakota Pippins, "Harlem Stride/Stride:1925", The Jazz History Tree, n.d., accessed November 13, 2023, https://www.jazzhistorytree.com/harlem-stride/
[9] Nick Morrison, "Stride Piano: Bottom- End Jazz", NPR, 2010, accessed November 13, 2023, https://www.npr.org/2010/04/12/125689840/stride-piano-bottom-end-jazz

also much faster compared to ragtime, and the rhythm has more of a swing feel. The right-hand melodies are often improvised.

James P. Johnson, often called “the father of the stride piano”, along with Willie “the Lion” Smith and Thomas “Fats” Waller were some of the most prominent stride pianists at the time. Unfortunately, the popularity of the stride piano started to fade in 1930s when other jazz styles, like bebop started to rise.

In the 1970s, ragtime started its revival. Composer and pianist Eubie Blake started to reintroduce ragtime music to wide audiences via his recording show (including as a guest on the late-night talk shows) and live performances all over the world. The popular movie “The Sting” successfully reintroduced Scott Joplin’s ragtime to audiences in 1973, which moved Scott Joplin’s “The Entertainer” to the top of the American record chart.[10]

William Bolcom: Graceful Ghost Rag & The Garden of Eden

William Bolcom (1938-) is a highly regarded American composer and pianist. He developed his musical talent from an early age and studied under Darius Milhaud and Olivier Messiaen at the Paris Conservatoire, Mills College, and Stanford University.

Bolcom is known for merging popular music into traditional classical compositions. His interest in ragtime music grew after discovering scores of Joplin's works. Collaborating with William Albright, Bolcom modernized rags by incorporating various styles, including the stride style learned from Eubie Blake. He is one of the many pioneers in the ragtime revival of the 1970s. His compositions range from vocal and chamber works, to orchestral works and opera.

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[10] Library of Congress, “History of Ragtime”, n.d., accessed November 13, 2023, https://www.loc.gov/collections/ragtime/articles-and-essays/history-of-ragtime/

He has also received many awards such as the Pulitzer Prize, the National Medal of Arts, and four Grammy awards.[11]

Graceful Ghost Rag – Concert Variation for Violin and Piano

This work was originally written as a piano solo from the set "Three Ghost Rags", and later was rearranged as a violin-piano duet concert variation by the composer in 1979. The piece was written in memorial of his father, who was a graceful dancer, hence the name "Graceful Ghost". The duet version was slightly expanded from the original solo version with additional new material. The form of the piece is AABBCDEEA and the tempo marking is "slow march". The melody is very tuneful and memorable, while the left-hand bass part plays a steady "oom-pah" pattern and keeps the beat flowing. The melody is also polyphonic which makes the piece a smooth blend of traditional ragtime and classical-style writing.

The Garden of Eden – Four Rags for Two Pianos

This suite was composed in 1969. Just like the "Graceful Ghost Rag", it was originally published as a solo piano version and later arranged for two pianos by the composer. The suite contains four rags – "Old Adam", "The Eternal Feminine", "The Serpents' Kiss" and "Through Eden's Gate", which make up the story of the Fall from the bible.

"Old Adam" (Two Step) opens with a fast, playful, dance-like dotted rhythm, with contrasting dynamics in the repeat of the section (*mf* vs *p*). The melody is very cheerful and full of syncopation, while the bass stays in a steady "oom-pah" and "long-short" swing pattern. Bolcom inserts a trio (scherzando) section in the middle, which is filled with charm and

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[11] William Bolcom, "Biography", William Bolcom, 2021, accessed November 13, 2023, https://williambolcom.com/bio

playfulness. The theme comes back with the composer's "swing out!" instruction. The piece is energetic with many dramatic and contrasting sections, probably suggesting Adam's lighthearted personality and curiosity.

"The Eternal Feminine" (slow drag) is a portrait of Eve – mysterious, elegant, and romantic. The piece is a slow march with much more legato and a more graceful melodic line compared to "Old Adam". It is also less syncopated and just slightly swung in terms of the style. Just like "Old Adam", Bolcom also writes a light and joyful short middle section as a contrast.

"The Serpent's Kiss" (Rag Fantasy) is the most exciting and best-known movement from the suite. Opening with a fast and percussive sound, the movement then quickly transitions to a turbulent and chromatic section. Unlike the previous two movements, there is no longer just a simple "oom-pah" bass accompaniment in this movement. Instead, Bolcom uses the long tied notes combined with a chromatic three-note ascending motive to create a spooky, dangerous yet seductive mood, evoking the serpent's temptation of both Eve and Adam. Bolcom also includes many clear and detailed tempo changes and huge dynamic contrasts between sections to create drama. The piece is full of Bolcom's witty tricks, perhaps the most creative ones are the wood knocking and tongue clicking. It also requires the performers to have the strong sense of rhythm and ability to multi-task to do these tricks well while playing. In general, it is a highly energetic and flashy movement which is also often played just by itself as an encore.

Lastly, "Through Eden's Gates" (cakewalk) "conjures the image of Adam and Eve calmly cakewalking their way out of Paradise."[12] This movement shares many similarities with the first two, featuring smooth melodic lines accompanied by a steady "oom-pah" left-hand pattern. The dynamic range stays within pianississimo (*ppp*) to mezzo-forte (*mf*), creating a

[12] William Bolcom, The Garden of Eden: Four Rags for Two Pianos (New York, NY,1974, 2006), P.2 (unnumbered).

gentler and more subdued atmosphere, which is very different from the previous three movements. This final ragtime aims to convey a more relaxed and reflective mood.

Schoenfeld: Café Music

Paul Schoenfeld (Pinchas Schoenfeld) (1947-2024) was a virtuosic pianist and award-winning Jewish-American composer. He was best known for successfully blending different genres and musical styles into his writing. As an active concert pianist, he toured in the U.S., Europe, and South America. He also recorded many albums, including the complete violin and piano works by Béla Bartók and ragtime works by Scott Joplin. As a composer, he drew inspiration from Jazz, pop, folk, and Jewish music into his writing. Besides being a musician, Schoenfeld was also a scholar in mathematics and the Talmud (a Jewish religious text) while living in the U.S. and Israel. He passed away in April 2024 in Israel.

Schoenfeld's compositions often require high level technical skills and depth in musicality from the performers. Schoenfeld embraced such difficulty and complexity. He once said, "I want musicians to sweat while learning and performing my works."[13] Many of his works have now become part of the standard repertoire in the concert hall setting. "Café Music" is among his best-known and most frequently performed compositions.

Café Music

The inspiration of the composition was from a restaurant visit in Minneapolis. Schoenfeld was captivated by the house trio, which played in a wide variety style of musical styles at the

[13] Kristie Janczyk, "Paul Schoenfeld and His Four Souvenirs for Violin and Piano (1990)" (DMA diss., Arizona State University, 2015), 4.

restaurant. “My intention was to write a kind of high-class dinner music – music which could be played at a restaurant, but might also (just barely) find its way into a concert hall.”[14]

The piece has three movements in the classical tradition: *I. Allegro, II. Rubato-Andante Moderato, III. Presto.*

The first movement starts out with full-blown syncopation and an eighth-note swing. After the violin and cello alternate the swinging melodies, the piano takes over with an improvisatory blues scale. Schoenfeld also includes many difficult stride piano sections in this movement. Not only does the left-hand writing feature huge leaps and spans, but the right-hand melody also contains double notes throughout the passage, with many difficult interval changes. He also includes some jazz slides for the violin. At the end of the piece, he inserted “Hollywood” style writing before the theme returns.

The second movement features a beautiful and lyrical melody influenced by Jewish music. It incorporates frequent syncopation in the melody while the bass maintains a steady beat with quarter notes, together creating a relaxed and loosely flowing groove. The three instruments take turns presenting the melody.

The third movement is another exciting blend of stride piano, pop melody, and ragtime style. As the composer said, this is “not the kind of music for relaxation, but the kind that makes people sweat; not only the performer, but the audience.”[15]

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[14] Jessie Rothwell, “Café Music”, Hollywood Bowl, n.d., access November 13, 2023, https://www.hollywoodbowl.com/musicdb/pieces/239/Café-music
[15] Neil Levin, “Paul Schoenfeld”, Milken Archive of Jewish Music, n.d., access November 13, 2023, https://www.milkenarchive.org/artists/view/paul-Schoenfeld

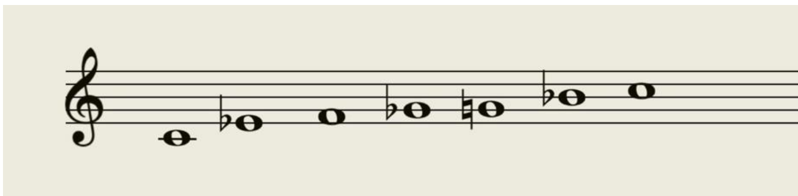
Chapter 3: Blues

As a foundation of nearly "all the later American popular forms"[16] such as blues rock, country music, jazz, pop, rock and roll, blues is a musical genre that emerged from African American communities in the Southern United States during the late 19th and Early 20th century.[17] It was rooted in early folk traditions such as work songs, and field holler at the time. As the title suggests, the blues was conveying a blue feeling, mournful and soulful, in the music.[18] Even though blues was started as a vocal form, it was also adapted instrumentally with string instruments such as the guitar and banjo.

Call-and-response is a very important element of blues. It traces back to the work songs in the field, usually when one leader sings a line, then the group follows and answers with a line. A good example could be the leader sings "I am going home tomorrow", and the rest of the groups answer with "I am going home with you."[19]

Improvisation is another essential element of blues. It "allows for spontaneous, heartfelt personal expression of pain and longing for a better life."[20]

Blues scales differ from traditional scales, usually being in the format of a minor pentatonic scale with an added flat five (the blue note). For example, the C blues scale would be:



[16] Elija Wald, "Blues", in *Grove Music Online* (Oxford University Press, 2025-), accessed May 14, 2025, https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.A2223858.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Chris Slattery, "What Makes the Blues Sounds Like the Blues?", Strathmore, n.d., accessed March 2, 2023, https://www.strathmore.org/community-education/public-education/shades-of-blues/blues-clues/
[20] Ibid.

Blues usually has twelve bars and has a specific sequence of the chords. The chord progressions and forms are:

Phrase 1 (mm. 1-4) I-I-I-I

Phrase 2 (mm. 5-8) IV-IV-I-I

Phrase 3 (mm. 9-12) V-IV-I-I

There are also eight-bar blues and sixteen-bar blues. But 12-bar blues is the most common one.

Ravel: Sonata for Violin and Piano in G Major

Along with Claude Debussy, French pianist, composer, and conductor Maurice Ravel (1875-1937) is regarded as one of the leading figures of "impressionism." It is interesting to note that both composers rejected the label. Ravel was known for his unique use of harmonic color and brilliant orchestration.

Ravel studied with Gabriel Fauré at the Paris Conservatoire. Even though he was almost expelled twice by the conservatoire due to politics (his non-traditional style didn't fit with the conservatory's values), his experience there still helped in shaping his skillset and artistry.

Like Debussy, Ravel frequently used modal scales, pentatonic scales, whole tone scales, and extended harmonies in his writing. He drew his inspiration from many sources, including Spanish folk music (he grew up hearing Spanish music due to his mother's origin), Asian music (Paris Exposition World Fair in 1889 and the appeal of the exotic in French artistic society), Greek music (Neo-classic trend), jazz, and blues. However, his form structure still leant towards the classical.

Ravel was deeply fascinated by American jazz and blues. "America gave birth to jazz, but Paris was the first to hail it as an art. War-weary and hungry for diversion, Parisians in the

1920s and 1930s embraced this exotic musical form."[21] After he moved to Montfort-l'Amaury 1921, he frequently visited the most fashionable Parisian nightclubs where jazz was a popular music trend. Therefore, it is not a surprise that he titled the second movement of his second violin sonata "Blues".[22] Another example is his *Piano Concerto in G Major*, which is a fusion of classical structure and jazz style.

Ravel visited the United States in 1928. During this four-month tour, he not only had successful concert performances, but he also further explored the new and vibrant sound of jazz and blues. He was impressed by Gershwin's compositions, and together they listened to jazz at the Savoy Ballroom in Harlem for several nights. He also visited Connie's Inn and the nearby Cotton Club, where he heard Duke Ellington and his orchestra.[23] He encouraged Americans to embrace this genre and treat it seriously: "Personally I find jazz most interesting: the rhythms, the way melodies are handled, the melodies themselves." [24] He was so enamored with jazz that he even wrote an article entitled "Take Jazz Seriously" to encourage Americans to value this form of music.[25]

Sonata No. 2 for Violin and Piano

Ravel started to work on the Sonata No.2 in 1923 but didn't finish it until 1927 due to his busy schedule and his perfectionism. The sonata has three movements: *I. Allegretto; II. Blues (Moderato); III. Perpetuum mobile (Allegro).*

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[21] "Jazz age in Paris, 1914-1940", Smithsonian Institution Archived Exhibition, n.d., accessed March 2, 2023, https://www.sites.si.edu/s/archived-exhibit?topicId=0TO36000000U0G1GAK
[22] Alessandro Turba, Introduction to *Sonate (Sonata),* by Maurice Ravel, (Paris: Durand, 2018), XIII.
[23] Timothy Judd, "Gershwin and Ravel Share the Blues", the Listener's Club (blog), July 19, 2017, https://thelistenersclub.com/2017/07/19/gershwin-and-ravel-share-the-blues/
[24] Ibid.
[25] Deborah Mawer, *French Music and Jazz in Conversation – From Debussy to Brubeck*; (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 139

Ravel uses the Mixolydian mode scale in the opening theme of the first movement. The unusual rhythmic combination of the eighth- and sixteenth-notes creates a calm yet moving feeling. The musical material came to the composer while he was crossing the English Channel struck with homesickness.[26] Later, he also uses whole tone scales with ascending root-position major triads to create a floating mood. The tonality is ambiguous. The violin and piano take turns playing the theme, and at the end, the violin holds a long note while the piano winds down with the returning theme.

The second movement is the heart of the piece. It opens with a unique bitonality: the violin is in G major and the piano is in A-flat major. The opening pizzicato chords in the violin suggest banjo or guitar sounds. After the violin finishes the chords, the piano takes over and continues them, while the violin starts out with a nostalgic melody and slide-like portamenti. Ravel uses both instruments to create certain timbres, like percussive pizzicato, jazz slides, and brass sounds. He also uses a large amount of syncopation throughout the piece, to create the swing feeling. The piece ends with the nostalgic theme spilt between the two instruments and is finalized by the violin sliding up to "an exquisitely 'blue' minor seventh."[27] Interestingly, Ravel also uses these harmonic progressions in the duet "*How's Your Mug*" for his opera *L'Enfant et les Sortilèges* (The Child and the Magic Spells).

The third movement opens with the distinctive "gallo-flamenco"[28] theme borrowed from the first movement. Once the sixteenth-note runs begin, the violin maintains a driving momentum. Meanwhile, the piano goes through a mechanical pattern and shifts to different keys, including a three-note motif, which is a transfiguration from the second movement swing theme.

[26] Alessandro Turba, Introduction to *Sonate (Sonata),* by Maurice Ravel, (Paris: Durand, 2018), XIII.
[27] Ibid., XIV
[28] Ibid.

Here, Ravel makes it a major-seventh figure and creates a fresh harmonic sound. At the end, after a full cycle, the opening theme of the first movement returns, now emphasized by parallel fifths in the piano, and the violin maintains the intensity with octave runs towards the end, finishing in fiery fashion.

George Gershwin: Three Preludes (Heifetz Arrangement)

American pianist and composer George Gershwin (1898-1937) was famous for bridging the worlds of classical, popular, and jazz music. He studied piano, harmony, theory, and orchestration at age fourteen and continue to age twenty-three, even though he claimed he was largely "self-taught."[29] He started his musical career as a "song plugger" for a music publishing company in Tin Pan Alley in New York when he was fifteen. The experience enhanced his skills in techniques, transposition, and improvisation. Still in his teens, Gershwin had already earned the reputation as one of the most gifted pianists and worked with popular singers, as well as being a rehearsal pianist for Broadway musicals.[30] These early experiences broadened his understanding of popular music and jazz music. He was fascinated by the music of Irving Berlin and Jeromy Kern. By 1919, he had already had success publishing his music and became one of the most celebrated musicians in New York.

Gershwin composed his first major work *Rhapsody in Blue* in 1924, which brought him worldwide fame. During Ravel's U.S. visit in 1928, Gershwin performed an impromptu *Rhapsody in Blue* for him at his birthday party, and the French composer was impressed by the young 29-year-old's talent. Gershwin also tried to arrange to have lessons from Ravel, but Ravel

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[29] William Hyland, *George Gershwin, A New Biography,* (Westport, CT, Prager Publisher, 2023), 37.
[30] Richard Crawford and Wayne Schneider, "Gershwin, George", in *Grove Music Online* (Oxford University Press, 2025-), accessed May 14, 2025, https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.A2252861.

decided that "it would probably cause him to write 'bad Ravel' and lose his great gift of melody and spontaneity."[31] Later in 1928, Gershwin went to France and tried to have composition lessons with the renowned pedagogue Nadia Boulanger. However, she rejected him and famously told him "I can teach you nothing", which he took as the finest compliment of his life. She was afraid that rigid classical study would ruin his own style. It was also during this time that Gershwin composed *An American in Paris.*

Throughout the remainder of his career, Gershwin continued to compose popular songs for Broadway and works for orchestra. Among his most celebrated works are *Porgy and Bess, I Got Rhythm,* and the *Piano Concerto in F Major*. His death at the tragically young age of thirty-eight cut short promising career.

Three Preludes (1926)

Interestingly, Gershwin composed the *Three Preludes* around the same time Ravel was working on his *Sonata No. 2 for Violin and Piano*. Like Chopin, Gershwin originally planned to write twenty-four preludes. However, the project was ultimately reduced to just three, which remain the only three solo piano concert works published during his lifetime. In 1942, renowned violinist Jascha Heifetz transcribed the *Three Preludes* into a duet for violin and piano.

The tempo marking of the first prelude is *Allegro ben ritmato e deciso* (fast, rhythmically good, and decisive). It opens with the call-and-response exchange built on the two distinctive five-note motif featuring blue notes (flat seventh). In this arrangement, the piano starts the call and the violin responds. Gershwin marked *"con licenzia"* (with freedom) for the opening phrases. The piano then starts with the signature ostinato syncopated rhythm while the violin

[31] Jack Zimmerman, "Facinatin' Rhythm: When Ravel Met Gershwin", Chicago Symphony Orchestra, 2021, accessed April 8, 2025, https://cso.org/experience/article/7984/fascinatin-rhythm-when-ravel-met-gershwin

develops the five-note motives. Even though the piano part has different rhythmical patterns throughout the whole piece, they are all syncopated and slightly varied from one to the other. In this duet arrangement, Heifetz added imitative dialogues between the two instruments (e.g., mm. 16-19, mm. 25-28 and mm. 37-39). The main theme returns at the end and creates a well-balanced ternary form (ABA).

The second movement, marked *Andante con moto e poco rubato*, was described as a little "blues lullaby" by Gershwin. Like the first movement, it is also in ternary form. The piano opens with a smooth, steady walking bass line, setting the mood for the violin's bluesy, melancholy theme. In this arrangement, the piano and violin take turns playing the theme and accompaniment for each other. Then, the two instruments play the theme together in the high register, and then piano goes back to the steady walking bass line and the violin finishes up the theme. In the middle section, the piece shifts from minor to major, and the tempo changes to a slightly faster pace. After the ritard at the end of the second section, the first theme returns with an even sadder mood. The piece ends with the piano and violin answering each other, and piano concludes with ascending arpeggios and a C-sharp ninth chord.

The third movement is driven by a highly syncopated dance rhythm, and is also in ternary form. Similar to the first prelude, this movement is also marked *Allegro ben ritmato e deciso*, and opens with a bold, chromatic, and dramatic introduction. Then, the violin starts with the "question and answer" phrases, with the piano joining the conversation shortly after, while the left-hand bass keeps the steady and energetic dance rhythm going. The middle section is relatively more legato, yet the underlying energy is sustained by the highly chromatic harmonies, the syncopation in the violin line, and the off-beat interplay between the pianist's two hands. The section ends with a dramatic build-up, featuring the piano's octave trill and the violin's sweeping

octave slides and trills. The opening theme then returns with the violin's fiery octave passages and sides, bringing the piece to an energetic ending.

Chapter 4: Third Stream

In the middle of the 1950s, American musician, composer, and educator Gunther Schuller developed the concept of the "Third Stream", which was a new genre fusing classical music (the "first stream") and jazz music (the "second stream"). Its root can be traced back to ragtime, jazz-inspired classical compositions by Claude Debussy, Igor Stravinsky, Darius Milhaud and others that incorporated jazz idioms in their compositions**,** the development of non-improvised "symphonic jazz; and the use of classical compositional technique and instrumentation by jazz musicians like George Gershwin, James P. Johnson, Duke Ellington, among many others.[32] The intention was to "define and promote music that deliberately mediated aspects of classical and jazz techniques, while maintaining the crucial element of improvisation."[33] Since the late 1950s, the scope of the term has expanded to include a wide range of musical fusions that merge European classical tradition with African American improvisational musical style, often incorporating both vernacular and classical traditions from throughout the world. [34]

Third Stream music is a well-balanced blend and creative fusion of the two genres. It can be heavily notated and retains the spirit of Jazz-style improvisation. The notable composers of the Third Stream included Gunther Schuller, John Lewis, George Russell, Alec Wilder and Dave Brubeck, among many others.

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[32] Gunther Schuller, and Tom Greenland, "*Third stream*", in *Grove Music Online* (Oxford University Press, 2025-), accessed May 14, 2025, https://doi-org.proxy-um.researchport.umd.edu/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.A2252527

[33] Deborah Mawer, *French Music and Jazz in Conversation – From Debussy to Brubeck*; (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 36.

[34] Gunther Schuller, and Tom Greenland, "*Third stream*", in *Grove Music Online* (Oxford University Press, 2025-), accessed May 14, 2025, https://doi-org.proxy-um.researchport.umd.edu/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.A2252527

Dave Brubeck & Points on Jazz

American jazz pianist and composer Dave Brubeck (1920-2012) was a key figure and pioneer of West Coast Cool Jazz (jazz music with a more relaxed tempo and lighter tone compared to Bebop's fast tempo style) alongside Chet Baker, Paul Desmond, and Gerry Mulligan during the late 1940s-50s.

Brubeck grew up in a musical family in California. His mother was a classically trained pianist, and his two brothers were also musicians (one was a drummer and the other was an organist-composer). Music was constantly played in Brubeck's house, with a wide range of genres from Bach to Chopin, to French repertoire, opera, and Sousa Marches. Dave's older brother Howard studied with the renowned French composer Darius Milhaud at Mills College, which paved the way for Dave Brubeck to study with him later as well.

Milhaud played an important role in Dave Brubeck's musical journey. In his teaching, Milhaud emphasized the fundamentals of traditional composition techniques, such as harmony, counterpoint, fugue, and orchestration. He also introduced Brubeck to the concepts of polyrhythm and polytonality, which later became a hallmark of Brubeck's style. The teacher-student relationship continued after Brubeck's four years of formal study with him in college. Milhaud's non-judgmental, supportive approach "g[a]ve students the space to become themselves and establish their identities."[35] Their relationship evolved into a long-lasting friendship, with Milhaud continuing to mentor Brubeck until his death in 1974.

Brubeck was also deeply influenced by early jazz greats, such as Art Tatum, Louis Armstrong, "Count" Basie, and Duke Ellington. Among his most celebrated works are "The Duke," "Blue Rondo à la Turk," and Paul Desmond's "Take Five" (Brubeck didn't write it, but

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[35] Ibid., 250.

they played it together in his Dave Brubeck Quartet, and it became the biggest hit the quartet ever had).

Points on Jazz (1960)

Points on Jazz is an eight-movement ballet suite composed for two pianos in the tradition of “Theme and Variation”. “Some of the variations are based on jazz concepts, others are derived from the classics.”[36] The inspiration of the theme came to Brubeck after his visit to the *Museum of Chopin* in Poland, which reminded him of his jazz pianist friends who were influenced by Chopin. Coincidently, it was also the last day of his quartet’s concert tour in Poland. During his reflective train ride back from the museum, the “romantic, melancholy”[37] theme came to his mind. In the evening of their final concert, he played the theme for the audience during the intermission, as a gesture of gratitude to the audience and the people of Poland. He named it “*Dziekuye*” – Polish words for “thank you”.

Later, the American choreographer Dania Krupska, who was of Polish descent, approached Brubeck and asked to use the theme to create a jazz ballet upon which she was working. As she described the story of the ballet and the rhythms she had in mind, Brubeck began to imagine and develop the variations that would become *Points on Jazz*. The piece was transcribed by Dave’s brother Howard Brubeck.

There is no detailed narrative of the piece in the traditional sense. Instead, each movement represents a different mood, rhythm, and style of jazz. The dancers draw inspiration

[36] Dave Brubeck, Note on the Music to *Points on Jazz,* by Dave Brubeck, transcribed by Howard Brubeck, (San Francisco, CA: Derry Music, 1963), 1 (unnumbered)
[37] Ibid.

from these musical elements to shape their movements and expression. The eight movements are *I. Prelude; II. Scherzo; III. Blues; IV. Fugue; V. Rag; VI. Chorale; VII. Waltz; VIII. A La Turk.*

The first movement, *Prelude,* starts with the theme marked "quiet, calm" by the composer. It moves to a slightly faster section, featuring syncopated rhythms and sixteenth-note embellishments on the theme. In the following "bright" section, Brubeck introduces alternating walking bass lines that establish a steady groove. Meanwhile, he also adds in the sparkling answering line in the upper register, creating a playful dialogue. Then, the activity slows down as the two pianos echo off each other, until it builds up again with the energetic triplet variations on the theme, adding to the rhythmic excitement and drive of the "brighter" section. Finally, the movement gradually winds down as the theme returns, now more reflective, and it concludes with a distinctive minor-major seventh chord, hinting at both resolution and ambiguity.

The second movement, *Scherzo,* has a fast tempo and lighthearted character. The sixteenth-note pattern in the higher register runs throughout the whole piece in the first piano part, creating a sense of motion and sparkle. Meanwhile, the second piano maintains the steady quarter-note pulse, and later shifts into a dotted rhythm patter while still maintaining the steady beat underneath. The middle section modulates from the original B-flat minor to B-flat major, including the blue note in the decorative passage, which musically represents "the girl" in the story line. The piece ends with a G minor eleventh chord, leaving a touch of jazz-infused color and openness.

The third movement is a slow *Blues*, with a soulful expression. It starts with the first piano playing the blues variation on the theme in the high register of B-flat minor. Then, it transitions to a slower G minor section with an emphasis on E natural rather than E-flat, the raised sixth of the scale. Brubeck then shifts into a faster but quieter triplet section that slowly

builds up tension. The momentum continues to grow with a faster tempo and *forte* sound, eventually reaching a powerful climax. The peak is marked by a dramatic buildup of a chromatic series of seventh chords and a sweeping glissando. The energy then winds down with a repeating triplet pattern and gradually eases into the returning theme of the original slow blues.

The fourth movement is a *Fugue*, showcasing Brubeck's traditional classical composition skills. Brubeck uses elements such as canon, stretto, rhythmic augmentation, and other devices to transform the theme, blending the classical structure with his jazz voice.

The fifth movement is a *Rag*. Brubeck utilizes polyrhythmic interplay between the two pianos. The introduction features off-beat accents, cross rhythm, and frequent meter shifts, alternating between 5/4, 3/4, and 4/4 time signatures. After the rhythmically-complex opening, Brubeck transitions into a traditional ragtime style to transform the theme, adding lightness and playfulness.

The sixth movement is a *Chorale*, written in a slow and contemplative style. Brubeck uses polytonality throughout the movement, the first piano in C minor and the second piano in C major, creating harmonic tension and ambiguity in the tonal center. It represents the loneliness of "the boy" in the storyline.

The seventh movement is a *Waltz*, which opens with a clever quotation of the quartet's iconic "Take Five", with a slight twist in both the harmony and rhythm. It features a blend of meters: the time signature marking is 3/4 and 9/8. The main theme is embedded within the "Take Five" rhythmic motif, while the decorative sixteenth-note runs from the second movement, the *Scherzo*, make a return and adds to the continuity. The movement starts in G-flat minor, later modulating to C minor in the faster section. After a dramatic buildup in C minor, the movement

ends unexpectedly with a bright C major, which is also a classical-era compositional technique (the so-called Picardy third), providing a sense of resolution and uplift.

The final movement *A la Turk* (in the Turkish manner) also features the brilliant quotation from Brubeck's famous "Blue Rondo à la Turk". The exciting 9/8 meter (group 2+2+2+3) sets an exhilarating tone right from the start. After the introduction and the 9/8 variation on the theme, Brubeck uses a polyrhythmic texture between the two pianos. While one piano maintains the 9/8 (2+2+2+3) rhythm, the other one shifts to 3/4, with occasional accents in a way that creates an illusion of a large duple meter. Later, Brubeck further develops it into hemiolas (a temporary rhythmic shift when two different rhythm groupings or meters are played against each other) i.e., three against four, and two against three groupings, and off-beat accents with tied notes, a fascinating use of the metric ambiguity. Brubeck then brings back the blues variation theme from the third movement, weaving it into the section before the Turkish-inspired 9/8 groove. Finally, this leads into a rich, flourishing transformation of the main theme. The writing is in the style reminiscent of 19th century romantic piano writing, particularly imitating Chopin's writing, and echoing his influence. Even with this lush section, the complex rhythms keep going, especially hemiolas (two against three, four against six). Then, the momentum gradually slows down, thinning to simple triplets accompanying the melodic theme, somewhat evoking the introspective character of the opening of Beethoven's *Moonlight Sonata*.

Alec Wilder: Sonata for Clarinet and Piano

Alec Wilder (1907-1980) was a remarkably versatile American composer. He was known for blending elements of jazz, pop, and classical music elements in his compositions. His wide-

ranging career included work as an arranger, orchestrator, songwriter, film composer, and composer of solo, chamber, and large ensemble works.

Gunther Schuller once said: "What so many of us respect in Alec Wilder was his absolute independence as an artist. For years Alec wrote music for taste and quality with that personal melodic touch that was all his own, undaunted by musical fashion or fads."[38]

Wilder was largely a self-taught composer. He decided to pursue a music career in his late teens, after he taught himself to play the banjo and the piano. He took private studies in counterpoint and composition at the Eastman School of Music (although he was never formally enrolled as a student there).

The musical influences on Wilder were as diverse as his output. He absorbed inspiration from Bach, Debussy, and Wagner, and placed a high value in the traditional writing of canons and fugues. At the same time, he was deeply impacted by Jerome Kern and George Gershwin, and believed in the free, intuitive approach to motifs and themes.[39]

Many of Wilder's compositions were written for his musician friends and collaborators who came from the classical, pop, and jazz worlds. These included Jan DeGaetani, Eileen Farrell, Gunther Schuller, Frank Sinatra, Robert Levy, Gerry Mulligan, Mitch Miller, and many others.

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[38] Gunther Schuller, About the composer *to Alec Wilder Sonata for Clarinet and Piano*, by Alec Wilder (Newton Center, MA: Margun Music,1968), 1 (unnumbered)
[39] Phillip Lambert, Alec Wilder, (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2013), 4.

Sonata for Clarinet and Piano (1963)

The Sonata for Clarinet and Piano was dedicated to the clarinetist Glenn Bowen and edited by Gunther Schuller. It has four movements, and each of them features a section of contrapuntal writing, which is one of the hallmarks of Wilder's style.

From the very beginning of the first movement, Wilder introduces tonal ambiguity. Even though the key signature is in C major, accidentals appear in each measure. The main theme is subject to various transformations throughout the whole movement. He has the meter shift from 4/4 to 6/8, 7/8, 2/4, then back to 4/4, suggesting the "rhythmic impetus and interest of the passage."[40] The middle section is a three-voice canon between the clarinet and piano. After the canon, the theme returns a fourth above its original pitch and in augmented rhythm, accompanied by the rich chromatic jazz harmony of seventh and ninth chords. The opening accompaniment figure is then developed further in different keys, and the final statement of the theme joins to conclude the movement, with a confident, swift, and bright ending.

The second movement is a lyrical, expressive, and highly chromatic slow movement. The use of the open chord voicings in the piano writing (mm. 24-32) evokes a sense of impressionism, reminiscent of Debussy. Just as in the first movement, Wilder also uses meter shifting in this movement, from 2/4 to 1/4, to 3/8, and back to 2/4, adding a subtle rhythmic fluidity and unpredictability.

The third movement is a waltz-like, joyful movement marked *Grazioso*. Though graceful in character, Wilder uses many dramatic dynamic contrasts, for example from fortissimo (*ff*) to subito piano (*sub.p*), to emphasis the differences between sections. The clarinet theme remains graceful and legato throughout, but towards the end, it changes to cute and bouncy staccato lines,

[40] Glenn Bowen, "The Clarinet In The Chamber Music Of Alec Wilder" (DMA diss., University of Rochester, 1968),152.

which are echoed by the piano's right-hand with a canonic imitation. The movement ends with an *accelerando* chase-like interaction between the two instruments, suggesting the wit and humor of the composer.

The final movement, *Allegro con fuoco*, opens with a bold twelve-tone melodic line in the piano, followed by the clarinet entering by way of a sweeping arpeggio. The piano twelve-tone bass line is constant throughout the movement, sometimes in rhythmical augmentation. This suggests that movement is written in passacaglia style, a music form originating in the early 17th century, in which music builds over a repeating bass line or harmonic progression. In his DMA dissertation, Glenn Bowen noted that in the original version of the score (mm. 32), Wilder marked "*ad. lib*", giving performers freedom to "improvise rhythmically with the written pitches."[41] This instruction did not appear in the later published edition. Nevertheless, the sixteenth-note figures in the clarinet part convey a clear sense of improvisation, even in the absence of explicit instruction.

Paquito D'Rivera: the Cape Cod Files

Paquito D'Rivera (1948-) is a renowned Cuban-American saxophonist, clarinetist, and composer, celebrated for his versatility in both classical and jazz music. He has won a total of sixteen Grammy and Latin Grammy Awards for his many exceptional recordings.

Born in Havana, Cuba, D'Rivera began to play with an orchestra at the age of 10. He later co-founded the innovative group **Irakare** which fused jazz, rock, classical, and traditional Cuban music, and won a Grammy Award in 1979.

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[41] Ibid., 172.

While D’Rivera is widely known for his passion for jazz and Latin jazz, he also made significant contributions to the classical world. As both a performer and composer, he has worked with leading orchestras, including the London Symphony Orchestra, the National Symphony Orchestra, and the Costa Rica National Symphony, among many others. His own ensembles, the Chamber Jazz Ensemble, the Paquito D’Rivera Big Band, and the Paquito D’Rivera Quintet are also highly sought-after worldwide.

D’Rivera’s work often reflect his broad musical interests, ranging from African-Cuban rhythms and melodies to his classical roots, showing a seamless blend of cultural and stylistic influences.[42]

The Cape Cod Files (2009)

This piece was commissioned by the Cape Cod Music Festival for their 30th Anniversary. It has four movements: *I. Benny @ 100; II. Bandoneon; III. Lecuonerias; IV. Chiquita Blues*. Since this dissertation recital focused on works involving the piano, the third movement *Lecuonerias,* an unaccompanied solo clarinet improvisation based on melodies by Cuban composer Ernesto Lecuona, was omitted from the performance.

The first movement, *Benny @ 100*, is a tribute to the “King of Swing”, clarinetist Benny Goodman, in honor of his 100th birthday. It opens with a clarinet quotation from Goodman’s introductory playing of the song “Memories of You.” The piano then enters with an improvisatory solo, followed by a conversation between the two instruments. The clarinet explores various embellishments and variations on the theme, while the piano provides steady rhythmical support and responses. After a brief transition, D’Rivera shifts to an exciting boogie-

[42] Paquito D’Rivera, “Biography”, Paquito D’Rivera, n.d., access April 8, 2025, https://paquitodrivera.com/bio/

woogie style, featuring a few improvisatory solos for both the clarinet and piano. Goodman's theme then returns near the end, and the movement finishes with a rhythmically complex and polytonal ending.

The second movement *Bandoneón* is written in the style of the Argentinean Milonga, the dance, which is the precursor of the Tango. The meter is 4/4 with the grouping of 3+3+2, creating a syncopated groove. D'Rivera is constantly shifting the melodic accent between triple and duple grouping, while the piano maintains the 3+3+2 pattern as the rhythmic foundation.

Chiquita Blues, the last movement of the piece, is a vibrant and playful movement inspired by Antonio Orlando Rodriguez's novel "Chiquita", which tells the adventure of a 26-inch-tall Cuban singer and actress, who rose to fame in New York. The movement blends the "elements from the American 12 bar blues, as well as traditional Cuban Danzón and contemporary atonal music."[43] The movement opens with a challenging, highly syncopated rhythm. Though the notation is very difficult to read measure by the measure, grouping the rhythm into two-bar phrases makes it more approachable. An example of the score is shown below.

[43] Paquito D'Rivera, Composer's Note, *The Cape Cod Files for B-flat Clarinet and Piano*. (Los Angeles, CA: Hendon Music, 2009), unnumbered.

(Excerpt from *Chiquita Blues* by Paquito D'Rivera, Hendon Music, 2009, mm. 1-5.)

The music then transitions to a melodic Danzón section, a traditional Cuban dance style evolved from habanera, before returning to the rumba section again.

Throughout the movement, D'Rivera shifts rhythmic accents within different musical styles, to build the sense of excitement and unpredictability. He also incorporates blue notes, bending pitches, and sliding in the melody, adding a bluesy character to the line. The piece ends with a fortissimo (*ff*) off-beat *tutti*, where both instruments play in powerful unison, ending the piece with flair.

Nikolai Kapustin: Piano Concerto No. 2, Op. 14 & Trio, Op. 86

Ukrainian pianist and composer Nikolai Kapustin (1937-2020) was known for seamlessly blending jazz language into his classical compositions. He began composing at the age of thirteen and studied piano with Avrelian Rubakh at the Moscow Conservatory. Initially pursuing a career as a virtuoso performer, he was soon captivated by jazz, which he discovered through nighttime broadcasts of the "Voice of America." The radio station introduced him to the music of

Benny Goodman, Nat "King" Cole, and Louis Armstrong. In his early twenties, Kapustin decided to focus on composition rather than a career as a concert pianist. Even though he didn't like performing, he joined a jazz combo at a local restaurant in order to better understand jazz. The ensemble's recording was eventually broadcast by the "Voice of America."

Kapustin played in various jazz ensemble groups, including his own quintet, Yuri Saulsky's Big Band and Oleg Lundstrem's Jazz Orchestra. Despite this, he never considered himself a jazz pianist. In one of his interviews, he explained "I am not interested in improvisation. And what is a jazz musician without improvisation? But I am not interested, because it is not perfect."[44] He considered structured music to be more important than the spontaneity of improvisation. He explained, "all of my improvisation is written, of course, and they became much better, it improved them." [45] His favorite jazz pianist was Oscar Peterson.

Kapustin composed over one-hundred sixty works. All of them were written for his own pleasure rather than having been commissioned. His compositions range from solo piano works to chamber music and large ensemble works. As a piano virtuoso, he also recorded a substantial portion of his own piano compositions.

Piano Concerto No. 2, Op. 14 (1972)

While the rest of the world considers the Kapustin Piano Concerto No. 2 a fully developed and mature work, Kapustin himself considered it a "juvenile concerto."[46] Later, when he reflected on it with his characteristic perfectionism, he described the piano part as "clumsy"[47]

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[44] Martin Anderson, "Obit Nikolai Kapustin", Toccata, 2020, accessed April 8, 2025, https://toccataclassics.com/obit-nikolai-kapustin/
[45] Ibid.
[46] Nikolai Kapustin, Trans. By Anton Kapustin, Preface on *2nd Concerto for Piano and Orchestra Op.14*, by Nikolai Kapustin (n.p.: Affairs. Co,1972), 5 (unnumbered).
[47] Ibid.

and the harmonization was "straightforward without any spark of ingenuity."[48] However, after listening to the recording, his "attitude becomes more tolerant, even favorable,"[49] recognizing that the piece reflected his early style of composition.

The concerto contains three movements, following the traditional concerto format. The first movement opens with a quotation from Gershwin's *I Got Rhythm*. Kapustin then develops the first theme through a series of modulations: from A major and F major, immediately followed by a piano cadenza in E-flat major, with an unexpected return to C major. Within just the first three pages, Kapustin explores numerous key changes, fully utilizing every opportunity to modulate the first theme before transitioning into the second theme. The second theme is more relaxed, laid-back and syncopated. In the orchestration, Kapustin includes a drum set to maintain the groove, a highly innovative orchestration choice for a concerto. In the orchestra *tutti* section (Rehearsal No. 27), he transforms the motif into a brief canon with six entrances in different keys. The final section features some unexpected, non-traditional harmonic progressions, and brings the theme back to C major. The whole movement is filled with extended harmonies (especially seventh chords), hand crossings (in both chords and runs), octave unisons, and long triplet phrases.

The second movement has very lyrical lines and a highly inventive meter 8/8 (3/8+2/8+3/8). The irregular meter makes counting difficult, especially since the agogic accent in the melody doesn't always align naturally with the orchestra's groove. After the theme is introduced, Kapustin includes several improvisatory solo lines for the piano, reminiscent of the style of Oscar Peterson's solo riffs. After a dramatic development section, the theme returns, and the movement ends with floating lines fading into the highest register.

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48 Ibid.
49 Ibid.

The last movement is a *Toccata*, which is a form meant to highlight a performer's virtuosity. The piano part frequently features unisons between the two hands. It starts with an off-beat sixteenth-note run, which continues almost non-stop throughout the whole movement. Towards the end, Kapustin uses hemiola in octaves and broken chords between the two hands, similar to Chopin's writing in his Ballade No. 4. Similar to the first movement, hand-crossing is used extensively in this movement. Many of the hand-crossings happen off the beat, which makes this movement extremely challenging to play, as the accents do not necessarily align with the physical motion of switching hands.

Trio for Flute, Cello and Piano, Op. 86 (1998)

The three-movement Trio Op. 86 is Kapustin's first piano chamber composition in trio from and has become one of his most popular works.

The first movement begins with a powerful *tutti*, which sets an intense, energetic tone. The piano then establishes a driving triplet groove, maintaining a fiery, perpetual motion throughout. Kapustin includes improvisatory solos for each instrument. The complex syncopation in each instrumental line combined with the rhythm presents significant challenges for performers.

The second movement is an expressive *andante* movement. The opening motif resembles the iconic opening of Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*. The theme then unfolds in a long melodic line filled with wide intervallic leaps. Kapustin then passes the theme between the three instruments, and later even develops it into a canon.

Kapustin cleverly links the second and the third movements by using the final phrase of the second movement as the opening material of the third movement, though transformed from

minor to major. The third movement is a lively, energetic, and playful movement. While it may not be as densely syncopated as the first movement, its rhythm is still very challenging. Kapustin incorporates the elements of swing and rock groove into the texture, giving it a modern and jazzy flavor. Additionally, Kapustin has very detailed articulation markings in this movement, making it very challenging to perform. The fast tempo, combined with a variety of articulations and off-beat accents, requires exceptional precision and coordination from the performers. Just before the coda, material from the first movement reappears, bringing the work full circle.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Music is constantly evolving. When we consider the history of western classical music and the emergence and development of jazz, it becomes clear that both traditions have been shaped by their predecessors, while also influencing each other. Western classical music laid the foundation of melody and harmony upon which jazz expanded with extended harmony, syncopated rhythms, and improvisation. Even though the two are different genres, they are far from isolated or unrelated. Many composers and performers from both traditions have admired one another's work and have actively sought to learn and adopt elements from the other's musical languages.

As this research has demonstrated, so many musicians and composers, from the early 20th century to the present, have taken on jazz's idioms and styles, integrating them into traditional classical music form and structures. The result is a unique and innovative blend that gives classical music a fresh sound and new expressive possibilities.

Through this research project, I have gained a deeper understanding of various stylistic nuances, including diverse rhythmic patterns and grooves, different approaches to grouping and musical phrasing, different articulations, harmonic structures, and voicings. I also discovered the fascinating musical connections among the composers studied. By addressing and overcoming a range of performance difficulties, including all things rhythmical, musical, and technical, I developed greater sense of stylistic flexibility, enhanced rhythmic and tonal sensitivity, deeper listening skills and musical empathy, as well as increased confidence in taking artistic risks as a performer.

There are still more jazz-influenced piano chamber works that remain to be explored. This study represents only a small glimpse into the vast landscape of jazz and its predecessors'

impact on classical music. Jazz music remains an influential, diverse, and foundational genre that continues to leave a lasting mark on the broader musical world. Through this project, I hope to encourage more musicians and scholars to take an interest in jazz-inspired piano chamber music works and continue to explore the rich intersection between these two vibrant traditions.

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