# *LICKETY SPLIT*: Modern Aspects of Composition and Orchestration in the Large Jazz Ensemble Compositions of Jim McNeely:

An Analysis of EXTRA CREDIT, IN THE WEE SMALL HOURS OF THE MORNING, and ABSOLUTION

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## **UNIVERSITY OF CINCINNATI**

	Date: March 1st, 2008
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hereby submit this work as p Doctor of Musical Arts	part of the requirements for the degree of:
in:	
Trumpet Performance	
It is entitled:	
"LICKETY SPLIT" : Modern A	Aspects of Composition and Orchestration
in the Large Jazz Ensemble	e Compositions of Jim McNeely:
An Analysis of EXTRA CRE	DIT, IN THE WEE SMALL HOURS OF
THE MORNING, AND ABS	OLUTION
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#### **ABSTRACT**

Rayburn Wright's text, "Inside the Score," has become a standard reference for professional arrangers and university arranging courses. In this text, Wright analyzes jazz ensemble arrangements of three influential jazz arrangers: Sammy Nestico, Thad Jones and Bob Brookmeyer.

Jim McNeely is at the forefront of the American school of jazz ensemble composition. His position as composer-in-residence of the Vanguard Jazz Orchestra establishes his place in the lineage of important writers connected to that ensemble, most notably Thad Jones and Bob Brookmeyer.

This document is conceived as a fourth chapter to Wright's text. Through a series of reductions and breakdowns, it applies Wright's analysis formulae to three of McNeely's composition/arrangements: *In the Wee Small Hours of the Morning, Extra Credit,* and *Absolution*. It presents commentary on the salient features of McNeely's writing and orchestration, and should provide a useful foundation for studying his music.

#### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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#### CHAPTER 1

#### **RATIONALE**

In 1982, Rayburn Wright published a unique and valuable text titled: "Inside the Score." In this text, Wright transcribed and analyzed large ensemble compositions and arrangements of three of the most influential jazz composer/arrangers of the day: Sammy Nestico, Thad Jones and Bob Brookmeyer. This book has become a standard reference for professional arrangers as well as for college and university level jazz ensemble arranging courses. In the intervening twenty-six years, no comparable analytical text has been published concerning other important contemporary composer/arrangers. One composer worthy of such an examination is Jim McNeely.

Composer Jim McNeely is at the forefront of the American school of large jazz ensemble composition and arranging. This fact is highlighted by his current position as pianist and composer-in-residence of the Vanguard Jazz Orchestra (formerly known as the Thad Jones/Mel Lewis Jazz Orchestra). McNeely's association with the Vanguard Jazz Orchestra (in the capacity of composer-in-residence) establishes his place in the lineage of important writers connected to that ensemble, most notably Thad Jones and Bob Brookmeyer (Brookmeyer was a charter member of the ensemble). Wright's choice

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup>Wright, Rayburn. *Inside the Score*. Delevan, N.Y.: Kendor Music Inc., 1982.

of Brookmeyer and Jones' music is a testament to their influence on an entire generation of jazz arrangers and composers.<sup>2</sup> Jim McNeely's music represents the next step in the evolution of the music of the Vanguard Jazz Orchestra, and as such merits a closer examination.

From 1998 through 2002 McNeely held the post of Chief Conductor and composer/arranger of the Danish Radio Jazz Orchestra and his work has earned nine Grammy nominations. In addition to the twelve albums he has recorded under his own name, he has appeared as sideman on recordings led by major artists such as Thad Jones, Mel Lewis, Stan Getz, Bob Brookmeyer, David Liebman, Art Farmer, Bobby Watson and Phil Woods. His commissions include works for the Danish Radio Big Band, the Carnegie Hall Jazz Band, the Metropole Orchestra (Netherlands), the West German Radio (W.D.R.) Big Band, and the Stockholm Jazz Orchestra.<sup>3</sup>

In 1997, the Vanguard Jazz Orchestra recorded *Lickety Split: the Music of Jim McNeely*<sup>4</sup> (New World 80534), an album that features some of McNeely's finest large ensemble writing to date. Of the album's eight compositions, seven are McNeely originals. The three works discussed in this document represent diverse compositional approaches on the part of McNeely. Taken as a whole, an analysis of these works will

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Wright was head of the Jazz Studies and Contemporary Media program at Eastman School of Music, where he taught jazz arranging among other subjects.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup>Jim McNeely, "Biography,", http://www.jim-mcneely.com/ (accessed November 7, 2005).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup>Gary W. Kennedy, "Vanguard Jazz Orchestra," *Grove Music Online* ed. L. Macy, http://www.grovemusic.com/ (accessed 10 February, 2004).

provide a useful overview of the compositional style of one of today's leading jazz composers.

In the Wee Small Hours of the Morning is a re-harmonization of a standard ballad vehicle for alto saxophone soloist Dick Oatts.<sup>5</sup> At first sight it is the most traditional example of big band arranging. An examination of this piece will provide insight into how McNeely functions creatively in the context of a standard musical structure.

Extra Credit is a form driven piece that discards formal sections as new ones are added.<sup>6</sup> It too is an example of McNeely building a piece around a central member of the ensemble, drummer John Riley. Riley's drum part is the "central focus" of the piece "from which hang different melodic, harmonic and solo sections, much like laundry on a line." The analysis of Extra Credit also reveals some of the ways in which McNeely approaches orchestration, since each returning formal section is subsequently reorchestrated.

The opening passage of *Absolution* was initially conceived from a MIDI keyboard improvisation performed by the composer playing into notation software. McNeely then expanded and orchestrated the initial improvisation into a complete composition for full ensemble. As in the two other works, McNeely constructs this composition around the sound of a central soloist, tenor saxophonist Rich Perry.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup>Jim McNeely, *Lickety Split, Music of Jim McNeely*, p. 6 in the liner notes, New World Records 80534, 1997, compact disc.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup>Ibid., 4.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup>Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup>Ibid., 7.

Each of the three works studied herein will illustrate McNeely's approach to featuring individual soloists; every one in a different fashion. The document is conceived, in essence, as a fourth chapter to Wright's *Inside the Score*, and taken in this context, should offer a valuable insight into the compositional and orchestrational processes of one of today's most creative voices.

This document will provide commentary on the salient features of McNeely's writing and orchestration and should provide students and teachers of arranging and composition a useful foundation for studying his music. As in the Rayburn Wright text, the reductions of the scores are presented with a minimal amount of explanation, often leaving the reader to draw his own conclusions about how to best assimilate the devices and styles of the composer into one's own writing. The final chapter examines some of the overarching style characteristics that all three works share, and discusses how these traits are indicative of McNeely's general approach to the compositional process.

#### **CHAPTER 2**

#### RAYBURN WRIGHT'S INSIDE THE SCORE

This document is modeled after Rayburn Wright's *Inside the Score*, <sup>9</sup> a ground-breaking book that has served as one of the primary large jazz ensemble arranging textbooks for twenty five years. Using a series of reductions, charts, and interviews Wright examines the inner workings of three important composer/arrangers' compositional process.

The main features of Ray Wright's analysis formulae include examinations of form, melody, harmony and style, overall dynamic and orchestrational contour, and detailed discussions of vertical structures, instrumental voicings, and voice leading. The analysis of each composition is accompanied by an annotated score with reductions of the various sections that highlight the composers' unique approaches to melody, harmony, orchestration, and voice leading. Wright uses the reduction as his primary tool for studying the melodic and harmonic content of the individual arrangements.

Because the composers' styles differ widely, Wright's approach to analysis is flexible, allowing him to examine salient aspects of each. For example, he discusses mechanical voicings found in the writing of Jones and Nestico that are simply not present in the works of Brookmeyer. Conversely, Wright examines aspects of texture and

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup>Rayburn Wright, *Inside the Score* (Delevan, NY: Kendor Music Inc, 1982).

dissonance as a separate subheading under Brookmeyer that is not included in the analyses of the other two.

The materials and discussions of *Inside the Score* are presented as more of a study and listening guide than a theoretical treatise. Wright, while pointing out important patterns and devices, leaves the reader to draw his own conclusions and applications. This document will apply Wright's analytical formula to three of McNeely's arrangements: *Absolution, Extra Credit,* and *In the Wee Small Hours of the Morning*.

#### NOTES ON THE REDUCTIONS

The reductions presented herein are an attempt to highlight some of the unique facets of McNeely's writing style and to discuss how he finds creative approaches to common writing challenges. In some cases, bass lines and some instrumental lines are transposed by octave for ease of reading and to avoid excessive use of ledger lines. In these cases, the reductions seek to illustrate prevailing harmonies and vertical structures. Additionally, enharmonic spellings are used sparingly in an effort to facilitate reading and to highlight voice leading. Therefore, enharmonic spellings do not always correspond exactly to the harmonic analysis that follows.

Because McNeely uses no key signatures in either *Extra Credit* or *Absolution*, editorial key signatures and/or key changes have been added to some of the reductions. In these instances key signatures should help illustrate how McNeely is operating (often almost entirely diatonically) in a new or temporarily superimposed key without the clutter of excessive accidentals.

#### NOTES ON THE EDITED SCORES

All three arrangements are used by permission. Copies of the original manuscripts and Finale scores used for this document were provided by the composer. Additionally, he provided copies of the individual instrumental parts that were copied directly from the Vanguard Jazz Orchestra book with performance markings written by the players. The scores were then entered into Sibelius music notation software, edited, and reconciled with the parts and the recorded version. Part of the scope of this document was to provide the composer with engraved and edited scores and parts.

#### **CHAPTER 3**

#### IN THE WEE SMALL HOURS OF THE MORNING

In the Wee Small Hours of the Morning (hereafter referred to as Wee Small Hours) is a mood driven arrangement. McNeely uses a variety of melodic and harmonic devices to give the arrangement a floating, otherworldly ambiance while always keeping one foot firmly planted in the traditional framework of a solo ballad feature. Melodic elements and developed fragments from the chorus and the verse are constantly recurring as well as a significant amount of newly composed material.

Wee Small Hours is composed around the sound of alto saxophonist Dick Oatts. It is the only composition on the album not composed by McNeely and, as such, represents a good point of departure for study because it illustrates how McNeely approaches working, as an arranger, with someone else's material.

#### **MELODY**

McNeely deals with melody from two distinct vantage points. First, when melodic material is presented, McNeely heavily reinforces and highlights it through the use of extensive doublings, repetition, and orchestrations that present the melody in a prominent fashion. Harmony parts are usually below the melody with sufficient spacing as to not obscure the line, and McNeely seldom uses extreme dissonance, in the form of minor ninths or half step intervals directly beneath the lead voice. While harmony

provides a great degree of compositional interest, it seldom gains prominence over the melodic content.

The second way in which McNeely deals with melody is by using a series of standard developmental techniques including: augmentation, variation, rhythmic or metric modulation, diminution, as well as motivic development. He is constantly working and reworking melodic materials in a highly methodical and organized fashion. McNeely uses the melodies of the chorus and verse as germ material for constructing motives, numerous counter lines, an interlude, as well as introductions and endings. He then develops material using many compositional techniques that are normally associated with western art music or "classical" music. His use of these techniques is not extraordinary in and of itself. Rather, it is his pervasive use of these devices that permeates each of these works to a degree seldom encountered in the traditional realm of big band writing.

All three arrangements feature McNeely's meticulous attention to counterpoint; between melody and counter melody (or equal melodies as the case may be) and even more prominently between melody and bass line. Active and interesting bass movement is a notable feature of all of McNeely's writing as is an abundance of contrary and oblique motion among the various lines. In this respect, it would be fair to say that McNeely's preoccupation with counterpoint makes his style closely akin to the highly contrapuntal style of Bill Holman.

The first instance in which McNeely develops materials from the melody is in the rubato piano solo at the start of the arrangement. The introduction is a variation and polytonal re-harmonization of the final phrase or four measures of the melody. Using the

last four measures as an introduction is a standard performance practice in many improvised jazz settings, and McNeely's choice of this material as an opening (and eventually closing) statement is likely a natural byproduct of his career as a pianist and accompanist.

#### **ORCHESTRATION**

One way McNeely achieves a variety of orchestrational effects and colors is through the extensive use of woodwind doubles in the saxophone section, which he lists in the score as Reeds 1-5. Reed 1 is the solo alto saxophone and is the only part that does not double on another instrument. Reed 2 doubles on alto saxophone, clarinet, and flute. Reed 3 doubles on tenor saxophone, soprano saxophone (an unusual double for the traditional tenor I book), and flute. Reed 4 doubles on tenor saxophone and clarinet while Reed 5 plays baritone saxophone and bass clarinet, a traditional doubling.

The trumpet section switches between flugelhorn and trumpet either open or muted. McNeely achieves colorful voicings by mixing and matching these various trumpet options. The full ensemble passage (shout chorus) at measure 83, finds the trumpets tripling the melody on flugelhorn, harmon and cup mutes. Only the third trumpet (in cup mute) provides a harmony voice.

The saxophone solo melody is placed in a range from third line D to E above high C (written pitches), a very powerful register for the alto. This tessiture allows the soloist to be easily heard above the ensemble. The highest written pitch in the lead trumpet part is a high C#, not a particularly high note for a professional lead player. McNeely

maintains a warm ensemble sound throughout by keeping all of the winds within comfortable instrumental ranges.

The trombone section features none of the blended mutes heard in the trumpets. The entire section alternates between open, cup mute, and tight plungers (a sound not unlike a harmon mute for trumpet). As a section, the trombones function in three main ways: as a four part open or close block voice, in independent pairs, and in a three way voicing while the bass trombone rests or doubles the bass line (often with the baritone saxophone).

On a number of occasions because of bass doublings or soloists, the saxophone or trombone section is incomplete and unable to form a four-note voicing, such as when the bass trombone is doubling the bass. In these instances, McNeely simply borrows a voice from another section and places it within the voicing. The occasions when he uses this device appear to be more from expedience than of a desire for that particular tone combination or ensemble color. At no point are reeds or trombones used to fill out the trumpet voicings.

There is a wide degree of variance in the voicings McNeely uses in this arrangement. His voicings range from close position block voicings (some in drop-2 or drop-3), to widely spread chorale style voicings, modal sounding parallel fourths and fifths to an unconventional quintupling of the melody. Often, as a line progresses, formulized voicings such as drop-2 or drop-3 give way to a more linear approach in which the movement of individual lines takes precedence. This is one way in which counterpoint achieves primacy. Specific voicings and vertical structures are discussed with individual reductions.

#### HARMONY AND VOICE LEADING

The melody to *Wee Small Hours* has been reharmonized through a process that McNeely states is:

"...the result of a game I played in which I tried to keep the melody intact, but lower the roots a whole step." 10

McNeely establishes the mood of *Wee Small Hours* with a liberal use of augmented/altered sonorities including: sharp fifths, ninths, and elevenths, as well as suspended or slash chords, <sup>11</sup> also sometimes altered. Pedal points are prevalent as is an ostinato-like repeated chord pattern.

By using pedal point and ostinato, McNeely creates a static harmonic canvas over which he can exercise what often amounts to a modal approach to harmony. In other words, none of the dominant structures resolve in a traditional functional manner (i.e.  $V^7$ -

I). Both strict (chromatic) and diatonic (intervallic) planing are abundant, as well as side-slipping harmonic shifts. As we shall see, these harmonic shifts almost always occur in metrically weak positions (i.e. on the up beat and/or in the latter part of the measure) and resolve chromatically. This is even more evident in *Extra Credit* which features extended modal writing and *Absolution* which is entirely modal.

mer notes, o

12

<sup>11</sup>The term slash chord refers to suspended upper structure voicing over a bass note (e.g.  $B^{\flat}/F$ ).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup>McNeely, *Lickety Split* liner notes, 6.

#### RHYTHM

McNeely's approach to rhythm is one of his most distinguishing attributes. Melodic material is constantly reworked and varied in an extremely developmental way that is typically tied inextricably to rhythm. One of McNeely's chief sources of variation is rhythm. Whether by diminution, augmentation, or metric modulation, McNeely's rhythms are constantly shifting and crossing bar lines. When the rhythm of a particular passage is repeated verbatim (as is the case between the sections at measures 47 and 55) some aspect of orchestration or harmony is varied.

Hemiola, polyrhythm and cross rhythm are also prominent McNeely characteristics. *Wee Small Hours* features several instances of McNeely using a hemiola rhythm as a unifying motive. Subtle rhythmic variations and alterations highlight the precision, interpretation and attention to detail inherent in the Vanguard Jazz Orchestra. Breakdowns and reductions of McNeely's rhythmic approaches are included in the forthcoming discussions.

#### **DYNAMICS**

Dynamics are yet another aspect of composition over which McNeely exercises deliberate and organized control. Writing for a high level ensemble such as the Vanguard Jazz Orchestra, he is able to demand and receive a great deal of nuance, shape and color. McNeely uses an extraordinarily high number of dynamic markings throughout all his arrangements and in particular here. Undulating hairpin (crescendo followed by immediate decrescendo) shapes are prevalent with each dynamic level marked

specifically. As a rule, the ensemble exaggerates the dynamic shapes, often in ways that give prominence to the dynamics over and above elements of harmony and melody. In this respect, the dynamics may sometimes be considered a compositional device of equal importance. This general approach to dynamics as shapes is characteristic of all three of the compositions studied herein.

#### THE ROLE OF THE SOLOIST

The soloist/improviser is the central focus in this arrangement. Every effort has been made on the part of McNeely to showcase the personal instrumental sound of alto saxophonist Dick Oatts. Melody statements are presented in a clear and uncluttered fashion with harmony and counterpoint occupying significantly lesser roles. When the improvised sections occur, the soloist is free to interact with the rhythm section in a true quartet setting. The ensemble enters later with double time interjections that modulate and help energize and propel the arrangement forward, but few true background figures/pads are ever played during the solo sections. McNeely also uses this idea of interplay or conversation between the ensemble and the soloist(s) as one of the major developmental and intensity building features in his composition *Absolution*.

Figure 3-1

Melody and Standard Chord Changes (Wee Small Hours)<sup>12</sup>

## In The Wee Small Hours of the Morning David Mann and Bob Hilliard DMA7 DMA7 Bmi/D D+ 0+ F#mi7 87 Emi7 ٥7 Bmi/D **D**+ F#mi765) DMA7 **B**7 F#mi7 G#mi765 Gmi6 В7 Emi7 Bb9(#11) $A^{13}$ DMA7 (Emi7 A7)

Rhythmic values are sometimes halved in the final 4 measures, creating an eight measure phrase.  $^{13}$ 

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup>Chuck Sher, *The New Real Book, Volume Two*, ed. Bob Bauer (Petaluma, CA: Sher Music Co, 1991), 156.

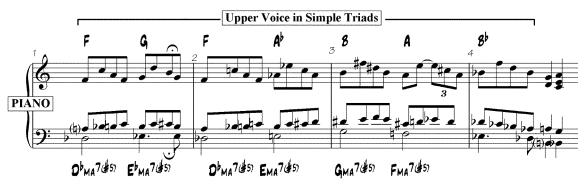
<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup>Ibid.

### ANALYSIS OF:

IN THE WEE SMALL HOURS OF THE MORNING

Figure 3-2

#### **Wee Small Hours: Piano Introduction**



Wee Small Hours begins with a rubato solo statement in the piano (Figure 3-2). On the downbeats of 1 and 3 the right hand supplies the missing third of the left hand harmony, but otherwise both hands are harmonically independent creating a polytonal texture that sets up and foreshadows the extended and altered harmonies heard throughout the arrangement. The whole step movement in the left hand is also a precursor of the rising and falling pad found throughout the arrangement.

The triadic material used for the piano introduction is a variation of the last line of the song. The lyric at this point is "time you miss her most of all." McNeely unifies the arrangement by reusing this material as the underpinning to the interlude section at measure 67 and as an "outro" or closing theme.

Pedal points and ostinatos figure prominently in this arrangement. The  $E^{\flat}$  pedal anchors a rising and falling figure that is first stated in the piano and subsequently in the brass (trombone with trumpet 4) figures in measures 5-12. This figure is echoed in the woodwinds at measure 17. The bass ostinato, a feature that figures prominently in this arrangement, is doubled by a written drum part that creates an orchestral droning effect.

From a harmonic standpoint, McNeely often uses pedal points in the form of ostinatos or rhythm section grooves beneath what is, in essence, a modal style of writing. By maintaining a static or slow moving harmonic rhythm, McNeely is free to move his lines and harmonies in a manner that is replete with side-slipping harmonies.

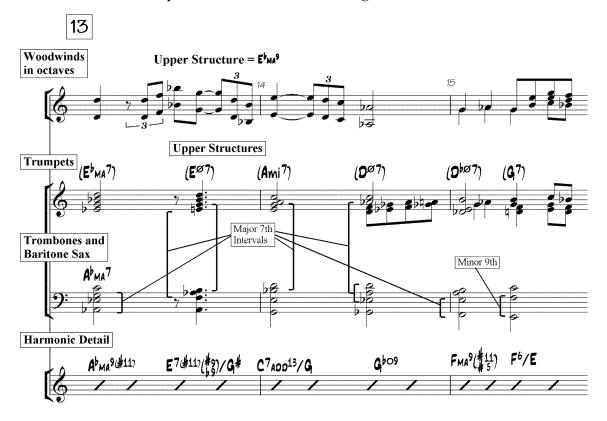
The use of exaggerated dynamic shapes begins in measure five and continues throughout the arrangement. This is one of the few places in which McNeely does not notate specific dynamic levels, only shapes.

The mixed voicing of trombones and fourth trumpet is typical of McNeely's orchestration. McNeely creates subtle tonal differences by blurring lines between sections while filling out chord voicings. This is the case when he uses trombones with baritone saxophone (as in measure 54) or the saxophones with trumpet in measure 17.

The first countermelody (m.12) begins on unison  $E^{\flat}$  and expands outward into full harmony by way of contrary motion. As the saxophone melody leaps upward (in measure 13) the bass steps downward. This style of counterpoint is especially representative of McNeely's approach to counterpoint between bass and melody.

Figure 3-3

Wee Small Hours: Saxophone line and ensemble voicings at m. 13



In measure 13 McNeely begins a counter line of newly composed material (Figure 3-3). This original counter melody is presented in the woodwinds (flutes and clarinet) in octaves, a clear and strong way of handling the new melody that does not overpower the solo saxophone melody. Although this new line moves above the range of the main melody, the use of flutes and clarinet keeps it from over-balancing the saxophone solo. Note the predominantly chromatic descent of the harmony/bass through this passage.

The brass pads feature close voiced chords in the trumpets with the trombone voicing filled out by the addition of the baritone saxophone. The bass trombone doubles the bass line. At this point, the trumpet voicings form complete seventh chords, primarily in root position (with the exception of the Ami<sup>7</sup> that is in third inversion for smoother voice leading). Although there are a few internal half and whole step grinds, the vertical structures in measures 13-16 contain numerous major 7<sup>th</sup> intervals as well as a minor 9<sup>th</sup> (generally avoided) within the trombones. The internal interval of the minor 9<sup>th</sup> is a result of the distance between the roots of the F/E slash chord. The phrygian nature of this structure makes the minor ninth sound less harsh than it might in the context of a standard tertian voicing, especially since the voice leading moves smoothly to a consonant resolution in the next measure.

Figure 3-4

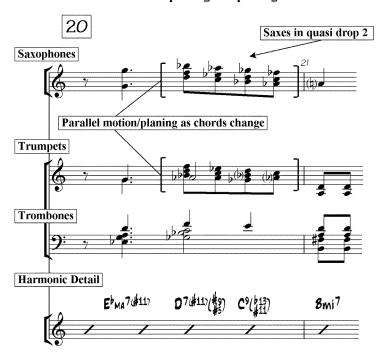
### Wee Small Hours: Mixed pad voicings at m. 17



At measure 17 the pedal point resumes and the rising figure is transferred from the trombones to the saxophones (Figure 3-4). Trumpet 4 is voiced within the saxophone section to fill out the harmony beneath the solo alto melody. These measures are a reorchestration of a similar figure in measures 5-12 which uses the trombones and fourth trumpet, creating shapes that unify the entire arrangement. For effect, McNeely introduces an additional ostinato in the piano's right hand consisting of alternating upper register octave Cs an octave apart.

Figure 3-5

Wee Small Hours: Diatonic planing and passing chords at m. 20



Measure 20 illustrates McNeely's use of substitute passing chords, parallel motion and planing within a simple counter line (Figure 3-5). Beginning from octave Gs, the saxophones and trumpets move into close voiced chords (saxophones spacing is in three parts with spacing similar to drop 2 momentarily) and descend primarily by whole steps into the B minor chord in measure 21. The lead line produces a whole tone effect. At this point, McNeely is more concerned with linear motion and smooth voice leading than maintaining fixed vertical intervals. The substitute chords move symmetrically by alternating half steps and whole steps in a motion similar to a diminished (or octatonic) scale.

The alto saxophone solo begins above a tag that reuses the introductory material and results in 4 consecutive measures of Eb pedal over which the soloist plays. Using this material as a transition achieves two things. First, it unifies the arrangement by providing a reference point of familiar material. Secondly, it obscures the start of the new chorus (at measure 28) which contributes to the impressionistic atmosphere set up to this point.

As this arrangement progresses, the interplay between the quartet and the ensemble becomes more and more active. Both *In the Wee Small Hours* and *Absolution* feature significant passages during which improvising soloists trade off with the full ensemble. As the ensemble portions modulate upward and increase in dynamics and energy, the intervening solo sections gather momentum and intensity constantly propelling and energizing the music. During these times, the ensemble passages also tend to shorten, heightening the effects of the dynamic and orchestrational crescendo.

Figure 3-6

Wee Small Hours: McNeely's chord changes for soloist (mm. 28-46)



McNeely creates an ambiguous and ethereal atmosphere through his use of augmented chords, sharp nines and elevens (Figure 3-6). Most of the harmonies in this chorus contain either an altered fifth, a raised upper extension, or function as slash chord or suspended 4<sup>th</sup>. All of the major and dominant chords are both extended and altered. Harmonic rhythm is at least two chords per bar, though the pedal sections provide a more static feel.

Figure 3-7

## Wee Small Hours: Comparison of McNeely's chord changes for soloist and standard chord changes



Wee Small Hours: Ensemble hemiola pattern at m. 47

Figure 3-8



The ensemble passage at measure 47 begins with an abrupt modulation from F major to D<sup>b</sup> major (Figure 3-8). This is the only arrangement of the three studied, in which McNeely uses key signatures.

Whole step and half step grinds are common throughout the ensemble voicings, but the open fifth voicings in the trumpets are uncommon and modern sounding. The open/parallel fifth motion in the trumpets is softened by the tenor saxophone, which supplies an internal voice that forms a series of triads and interval sets as the passage continues. Three of the woodwinds, the tenor, alto and soprano, form a shell that shares the exterior voices (open fifth) in unison with the trumpets. The trombones move in a

series of incomplete and open shell voicings that often include a doubling of the bass as well as a number of major seventh intervals.

While the full ensemble moves in a double time hemiola rhythm, the passing chords and vertical structures are quite basic and predominantly diatonic. The augmented sonority (F/Db) in measure 48 occurs on the fourth sixteenth of beat two and resolves after less than a full beat. So when the rhythm and voicing become complex, the harmony is relatively simple and consonant. This is one way McNeely highlights the swinging nature of the ensemble while supplying a fresh and open tonality as the rhythmic and dynamic activity increases.

Also, as a general rule, when McNeely uses two complex elements simultaneously (in this case rhythm and voicing), one basic musical element remains simple (e.g. harmony). This uncluttered approach allows McNeely to function on a highly complex level while maintaining a relatively high degree of accessibility and listen-ability.

Figure 3-9

Wee Small Hours: Trombone background voicings at m. 51



In measure 51 the trombones begin one of the few background figures found in this arrangement (Figure 3-9). This relatively traditional passage is based on a functional progression and shows a different intervallic spacing from note to note. The spacing is a mixture of close voicings<sup>14</sup> (mostly stacked 3<sup>rds</sup> with some occasional 2<sup>nds</sup> and 4<sup>ths</sup>) and open voicings<sup>15</sup> (spread to include two or more intervals of a 4<sup>th</sup> or greater). In measure 52 the 7<sup>th</sup> of the Fmin<sup>7b5</sup> does not resolve, as one might expect, to the 3<sup>rd</sup> of the Bb<sup>7</sup> chord. Instead, it jumps down a 4<sup>th</sup> and back up again to the #9 – not exactly linear movement.

McNeely fills out the section by adding the baritone sax for one chord prior to the modulation into measure 55. On beat four in measure 54 the rhythm section and soloist have  $A^{b7}$  notated while the trombone harmony is voiced as  $E^{b}$  min<sup>9</sup>/ $A^{b}$  (or  $A^{b9}$ sus4). The

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup>Wright, 184.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup>Ibid., 185.

voicings in this passage provide the 3<sup>rd</sup> and the 7<sup>th</sup> of each chord but may or may not include the root.

McNeely uses background figures sparingly in this arrangement. The soloist and rhythm section are free to interact without the constant interjections of other horns. This creates an intimate quartet setting that makes the intermittent ensemble passages even more effective. *Wee Small Hours, Absolution* and *Extra Credit* all feature extensive sections in which the soloist and rhythm section work outside the framework of the entire ensemble. This allows the musicians for whom McNeely is writing to have the maximum flexibility of interpretation and expression, without having to worry about clashing with written ensemble harmonies or rhythms and without having to play over top of other instruments to be heard.

Figure 3-10

## Wee Small Hours: Hemiola figure at m. 47



Figure 3-11

# Wee Small Hours: Hemiola figure at m. 55



McNeely reuses the hemiola based melody from measure 47 (see Figure 3-9) in measure 55, transposed up a semitone (Figures 3-10, 3-11). The first two measures return exactly the same, however the subsequent two measures (which now include the saxophones) are entirely different. Each time the figure returns, its orchestration is treated slightly differently. Inverted versions of this figure also appear toward the end of the transitional interlude leading up to the ensemble or "shout" chorus at measure 83. This type of developmental treatment is typical of each of the three scores discussed in this document.

The fall at the end of measure 56 is originally notated as a sixteenth, but the Vanguard Jazz Orchestra phrases this note as a sixteenth tied to a half note, falling off on beat 3.<sup>16</sup> This exaggerated interpretation of falls has sometimes been called a "Full Earl" in honor of Earl Gardner the former lead trumpet of the Vanguard Jazz Orchestra.

As the improvised saxophone solo winds down, the arrival of measure 65 ushers in a transitional, or interlude section in which McNeely develops a motive from the first phrase of the song's verse. This interlude is constructed above rhythm section parts that return to the materials of the introduction and initial melody statement (i.e. major triad figures in the piano, orchestral drum part and bass pedal point).

Instrumental interludes were a common feature of many swing era vocal arrangements (especially ballads), often serving the purpose of physically introducing the singer to the stage (called a "play on") and modulating to the key of the vocalist.

Arrangers such as Bill Finnegan, Jerry Gray and Ralph Burns often used these short passages (often eight bars or less) to showcase some of their more modern, creative, or impressionistic writing<sup>17</sup>. Here McNeely seems to be functioning within that tradition.

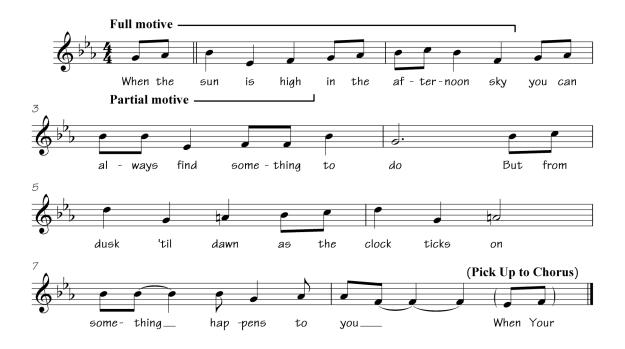
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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup>This is notated as such in the appendix section of edited scores.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup>This statement is based on the author's observations and recollections of more than a year spent traveling as a member of the Glenn Miller Orchestra (1991-92) and playing countless shows and dances, all of which featured original vocal arrangements from these and other contemporary "Swing Era" arranger/composers. These observations were confirmed in two telephone interviews (on August 22, 2007) with established arrangers and authorities on jazz ensemble arranging and literature: Vaughn Wiester and John Vermeulen, both of Columbus, Ohio.

Wee Small Hours: Verse (as Sung by Johnny Hartman)<sup>18</sup>

Figure 3-12



The interlude at measure 67 is constructed upon a motive derived from the first phrase of the song's verse (Figure 3-12). This passage features highly imitative writing using the verse motive at various pitch levels. The seldom heard verse provides a new source for compositional substance that manages to sound fresh while still paying homage to the original. This motive is also used in imitation as the closing theme of the final two bars of the arrangement.

<sup>18</sup>Bob Hilliard and David Mann, "In the Wee Small Hours of the Morning," *The Johnny Hartman Collection (1947-1972)*, reissue, Hip-O 40137, 1998, CD.

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Figure 3-13





McNeely's interlude features motivic development based upon imitation, variation, and sequential transposition (Figure 3-13). McNeely moves his motives, which function as extensions of the piano figures, freely above a static ostinato that moves from root to fifth and back.

The verse motives begin entering at measure 67 and are separated by one and one half measures at first. The first three of these full statements occur either on the upbeat of 1 or the upbeat of 3. Gradually, as the frequency of the entrances quickens, the entrances gravitate to all four upbeats. Each motive is presented in unison by an instrumental group of three players of like tessitura (i.e. two trombones and tenor saxophone, three trumpets, and two different trombones and baritone saxophone).

Beginning in measure 71, McNeely introduces an abbreviated version of the verse motive. The truncated motives coincide with the piano pattern shifting up a half step while the  $E^{\flat}$  pedal continues in the bass.

Motivic entrances continue through measure 82 at which point McNeely introduces a descending retrograde line that is borrowed from the hemiola ensemble passages at measures 47-50 and 55-59. As the motive phrases enter, their frequency increases building up tension and creating motion toward the ensemble (shout) chorus to come.

For the first eight bars of this passage the written dynamic never exceeds a mezzo-piano. The energy and tension are created by a combination of increased melodic and rhythmic activity and a prolongation of the ostinato figure.

Figure 3-14

Wee Small Hours: Reuse of hemiola figure at m. 76



In measure 76 McNeely uses the now familiar figure, only melodically inverted, as a bookend that releases the tension built by the interlude (Figure 3-14). After the ensemble descends chromatically into measure 79, the piano part regains the momentum by shifting to a register two octaves above the earlier statements. The continuation of the passage, in this manner, provides a satisfying rise and fall or undulation to the chart. McNeely is constantly increasing and releasing the musical energy, before climbing up one notch further.

Figure 3-15

### Wee Small Hours: Ensemble voicings and doublings at m. 83 (shout chorus)



The shout chorus at measure 83 is vintage McNeely featuring unique voicings and orchestration as well as some highly sophisticated rhythmic development (Figure 3-15).

McNeely presents the melody in an extremely strong and unusual manner, orchestrationally speaking. The melody line is actually quintupled in a group that includes flutes in octaves, and trumpets 1 (flugel), 2 (harmon mute), and 3 (cup mute). Passing harmonies and vertical structures feature substitutions and secondary dominants with a bass motion of predominantly half and whole steps. The inside nature of the harmonies helps keep the focus on the lead line.

As before, the trombones usually provide the 3<sup>rds</sup> and 7<sup>ths</sup> of the chords. Trumpet 4 harmonizes beneath the melody primarily in thirds with occasional fourths. The trombones and the other harmonizing instruments (such as trumpet 4, tenor and baritone saxes, and bass), move in a very linear fashion with an emphasis on the melodic motion of the line than the prevailing vertical structure or fixed voicing.

Although this ensemble section is technically the climax of the piece, it is worth noting that McNeely departs from the standard "shout chorus" model in several important ways. First, the spacing is unusually open and much less dense than one might expect. Second, the orchestration remains very light, the reeds do not switch back to saxophones while the trumpets remain on flugel or muted. The trumpets also play this passage by and large in the lower-middle and middle registers, thus functioning as an inner voice doubling the melody an octave below. Third, the contrary and oblique motion in the inner voices does not reinforce the melody in the way thickened line voicings (where all voices move parallel to the lead voice)<sup>19</sup> might. Fourth, the dynamic marking at the start of the section is only mezzo-forte with only a couple of relatively brief crescendo/hairpin figures.

It seems obvious from the above, that McNeely is not overly concerned with creating a powerful (translated as high, loud, and dense) effect for this passage. On the contrary, he is more interested in maintaining the mood of the piece and does so effectively by resisting the temptation to write a bombastic, block voiced shout chorus.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup>Wright, 9.

Figure 3-16

Cell #1: Augmented and metrically Cell #1a: Slight changes, converted to Original Melody transposed into triplets swing phrasing by use of triplets Barline Shift 83 McNeely Melody Cell #3a: Diminution to Cell #2: Melody Cell #3: Augmented and Cell #4: Augmented and embellished with upper metrically transposed metrically transposed sixteenth note level and lower neighbor tones into triplets into triplets Barline Shift

Wee Small Hours: McNeely's approach to rhythmic variation in shout chorus at m. 83

Instead of relying on the upper extremes of dynamics and density, McNeely uses rhythm to generate the intensity necessary for a satisfying climax to the arrangement (Figure 3-16). The ensemble passage at measure 83 features classic McNeely rhythmic development. McNeely uses rhythmic augmentation at the level of the quarter note triplet to create an exaggerated "laid back" feel that results in three bar line shifts. Each cell within the eight measure phrase is varied rhythmically. McNeely creates tension and intensity in this passage by keeping the listener waiting for the phrases to resolve – which happens about a beat later than one expects. This approach to rhythmic writing is not particularly idiomatic and therefore requires a very high level ensemble to execute with precision and style while still swinging.

When the final reprise of the melody returns in the solo alto saxophone, not only is it a full step lower, but it takes place over a new piano figure that now descends, mirroring the rising pads heard throughout the chart. Similarly, the saxophones (again with an added trumpet voice) echo the opening pad only now descending.

The arrangement closes with a call and response of the opening verse motive between cup muted trumpets (again working in a group of 3 players) and the alto soloist. Here McNeely's logic is symmetrical, using the very beginning of the opening verse as the ending, having started the arrangement with the last four bars of the song.

#### CHAPTER 4

#### EXTRA CREDIT

## FORM OF THE ARRANGEMENT

Extra Credit is an extended work for jazz ensemble (343 measures), not including internal repeats for solos. The central organizing principle of this piece is an additive form that discards prior formal sections as new ones are added. McNeely states:

For lack of a better term, I call it a "moving rondo." It goes like this:

$$A - B - C - X^{1} - B - C - D - X^{2} - C - D - E - X^{3} - D - E - F - X^{4} - E - X^{5} - A$$

X is a II<sup>7</sup> - V<sup>7</sup> solo vamp, which is transposed up a whole step every time it appears. The X vamp also provides the underpinning of the "shout" chorus. Each time a section reappears it is orchestrated in a slightly different way.<sup>20</sup>

The ensemble sections are punctuated by a recurring modal solo vamp. McNeely labels the solo section as 'X', which is transposed up a whole step for each successive soloist.<sup>21</sup> This upward modulation provides a similar lift as the rising half step modulations that occur in *Wee Small Hours*. It is this form that compels McNeely to seek a fresh approach to almost every aspect of the jazz arrangement.

The formal map above is somewhat misleading because it obscures the simultaneous expositions and recapitulations in which a new melody is presented as a

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup>Jim McNeely, *Lickety Split, Music of Jim McNeely*, p. 4 in the liner notes, New World Records 80534, 1997, compact disc.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup>Ibid

counter melody to a reprised melody. In fact, it is the "E" melody which never returns, not the "F" melody. It also fails to identify that a number of the solos begin prior to their respective "X" sections. McNeely strictly follows the form only to the point at which his musical sensibilities compel him to depart from it. We can take him at his word that "moving rondo" is an organizing principle and not a hard fast formal template. This results in several deviations from and additions to, the additive formula. First, since the "E" melody is never reprised, the overall form is asymmetrical. This is perhaps the result of a choice predicated on what was most musically expedient. Second, McNeely includes two newly composed sections (not included in his formal sketch) following the final solo. These sections, a unison saxophone soli with trombone backgrounds and a full ensemble (shout for lack of a better term) section, are no less important than those of the additive form.

The unison saxophone soli at measure 287 takes place above a continuation of the solo or "X" section, this time with several modulations. It provides a seamless transition out of the solo section while maintaining a less intense, lighter and more forward moving texture. The peak of the piece is at the ensemble section at measure 303.

The form is also the catalyst for a series of constantly changing orchestrations while creating the necessity for newly composed theme material after each improvised solo. Additive forms are rare in jazz writing, so *Extra Credit* starts from a fresh place compositionally. McNeely treats the form as a set of compositional challenges and chooses to meet them on a large scale with expansive melodies, intricate lines, and counterpoint.

### MELODY AND COUNTERPOINT

The disparate nature of the numerous melodic areas precludes an in-depth discussion of the specific melody styles in *Extra Credit* at this point. Melodic breakdowns and discussions are included with the reductions. It is worth noting, however, that there are a number of general qualities almost all of the melodies do share. First, with the exception of the "A" melody, they are all through-composed with very little repeated material. Second, they tend to set up rhythmic patterns and/or motives that are in turn developed and varied in the course of the given melody. Third, all of the melodies contain degrees of stylistic sophistication and virtuosity that require a first rate ensemble to interpret and execute them well.

The "B" section, which enters at measure 31 and again at measure 79, is an example of McNeely's highly contrapuntal approach. The intricate saxophone melody is played against a highly rhythmic comping figure (voiced out for full brass and rhythm sections) that is strong and interesting enough to be heard as its own independent melody.

As a general rule, McNeely seldom presents more than three separate musical ideas at a time. One notable exception is at measure 103 where he has four discrete lines played at once: Melody, flugel counter melody, saxophone and rhythm pad, and bass line doubled by baritone saxophone and piano L.H..

#### Table 4-1

## Extra Credit: Major Melodic/Theme Areas

- 1. **m. 13** "A" melody is countered by drum solo
- 2. **m. 31** "B" unison/octave saxes with homorhythmic syncopated background figures in brass and rhythm
- 3. **m. 79** "B" returns with brass re-voiced
- m. 95 "C" melody introduced: descending step-wise melody presented in brass –a short 4 measure matching counter line (which also returns) enters at m.
   108
- 5. **m. 111** "D" melody is presented in the bass and piano L.H. as a solo sendoff beneath trombone solo "D" returns <u>twice</u> more
- 6. m. 143 "C" returns played by new instrument group, counter line enters at m.151
- 7. **m. 159** "D" melody returns in low winds and rhythm section as a primary theme with no counter melody
- 8. **m. 207** "E" melody arrives as angular saxophone soli-like melody– played in counterpoint to the (2<sup>nd</sup>) return of the "D" melody "E" does not return
- 9. **m. 223** "F" theme area is presented as two atonal pairs of expanding chromatic lines in long note values

- 10. **m. 271** "F" theme area returns at a diminished rhythmic ratio of approximately 2:1 piano and bass play 2 beat ostinato during this sections reprise
- 11. **m. 287** "G" section (which does not return) is a saxophone soli, played at the unison with added trombone backgrounds, trumpets tacet
- 12. **m. 303** "H" full ensemble section (chorus in close position block voicings with saxes in drop 2 and 3– movement like a comping figure more so than a melodic line
- 13. **m. 323** Intro and abbreviated "A" melody return as closing statement

### **ORCHESTRATION**

The individual melodies in *Extra Credit* tend to be either rhythmically complex, florid, or some combination of the two. All of the major melodic themes in *Extra Credit* are presented in unison and/or at the octave. Perhaps the intricate nature of these melodies along with the nearly continuous presence of counter lines/melodies persuaded McNeely to avoid presenting his themes as harmonized multi-part melodies. Each major formal section and its corresponding theme(s) and accompaniments are reorchestrated upon their reoccurrence.<sup>22</sup> When melodies return, they generally reappear in slightly different instrumental combinations and doublings, but still in unison/octave statements. It is the corresponding accompaniments (in the form of backgrounds, counter lines, grooves and pads) that serve as the primary source for reorchestrated material. In this aspect the orchestration of *Extra Credit* is inextricably tied to the form.

From the outset, McNeely continues his model of presenting melodic ideas in groups of three players, a common rule of arranging that helps ensure that a musical line is clearly heard. It is safe to say that he that he finds three players to be the minimum for the exposition of any content that needs to be heard (if not prominently so). The one exception is at measure 111 where the piano and bass introduce the "D" section melody in duet beneath the trombone solo. Comparative reductions of all of the reorchestrated sections are presented alongside their respective expositions later in this chapter.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup>Actually, the "A" melody returns in the original orchestration – unison and octaves, but only as a shortened coda section.

### HARMONY AND VOICE LEADING

In Extra Credit, McNeely deals with harmony in a different, though no less complex way than Wee Small Hours. Wee Small Hours derives a significant portion of its harmonic interest from its use of altered and extended (though primarily tertian) harmonies, whereas Extra Credit features an emphasis on modal and post-tonal (or even atonal) vertical structures. There are significant sections that function entirely linearly with little or no regard for vertical structure (see introduction mm. 1-13 and the expanding chromatic sequence at m. 223). Slash chords, suspended dominants, and altered harmonies are common as well as basic triadic harmony.

As he does in *Absolution*, McNeely frequently uses fixed interval voicings and standard voicing procedures (e.g. drop-2 and 3 etc.). What is interesting about his use of these devices is the context in which he uses them and the way he quickly discards them in favor of more linear voice leading as a section progresses. Also, because McNeely is seldom working with a truly functional tonal progression, passing chords and substitutions are sometimes chromatic but always with an eye on interesting counterpoint between melody and bass movement. Voicings used run the gamut from two voice open intervals, to three and four voice shells, to fully extended and inverted diatonic seventh chords.

At the full ensemble chorus beginning in measure 303, McNeely finally uses the entire ensemble in unison rhythm and close position block voicing. This traditional concept sounds fresh because the listener has not yet heard the concerted ensemble used in this way. A look at the reductions will show McNeely operating in a series of shifting

modal sections, but planing almost entirely diatonically with a significant number of fixed voicings. This passage is a prime example of McNeely using layers of simple devices and techniques in a manner that sounds quite complex.

### RHYTHM AND GROOVE

As one might expect from a composition predicated upon the drummer<sup>23</sup>, rhythm and rhythmic development are two of the most important facets of *Extra Credit*.

McNeely utilizes a diverse rhythmic palette that ranges from the very simple (e.g. a recurring quarter note hit on beat 4 that occurs in over 25 percent of the measures) to highly complex poly-metric textures in which multiple simultaneous lines move in up to four different independent meters. There are also instances in which McNeely deals developmentally with rhythm by way of metric modulation, diminution, or continuous variation and sequence.

All of *Extra Credit*'s melodies are rhythmically active and stylistically diverse. Some of the melodies feature bebop-style syncopation, others have a straight eighth or latin implication, while still others explore and develop rhythmic motives and hemiola. These rhythmic melodic lines and counter lines are supported by a similarly varied collection of grooves and vamps that lay a more basic and repetitive, though highly rhythmic, foundation. It is in this area that the relationship of McNeely's writing and John Riley's drumming is perhaps most obvious especially considering that, other than the initial eight bar introduction, there is no dedicated solo space for the drum set in the entire work.

<sup>23</sup>McNeely, *Lickety Split* liner notes, 4.

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McNeely also uses the groove from the solo sections as a unifying element. Although the solo section never returns in the same key, the underlying rhythm section vamp over which each soloist plays, provides a common thread throughout the work. In spite of the modulations, the returning vamp is like a home base for the listener. The groove from this section, which McNeely labels "X", continues after the final soloist and provides the underpinning for both the saxophone soli and subsequent ensemble chorus.

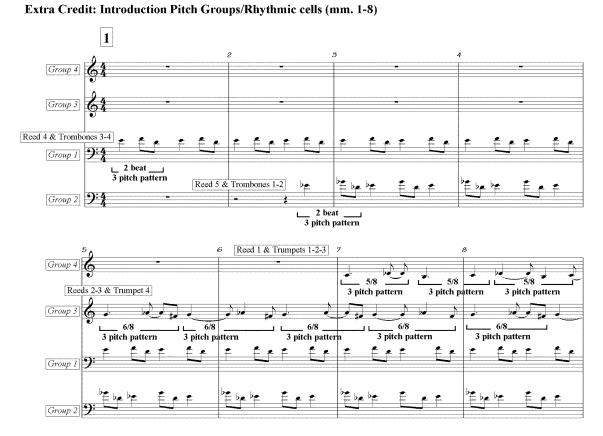
# THE ROLE OF THE SOLOIST

As he does in *Wee Small Hours*, McNeely allows for the bulk of the improvised solos to be in a quartet setting, almost entirely without background figures. While he uses solo send-offs (i.e. ensemble interjections that spill over into the solo sections) on a number of occasions, McNeely also introduces each of the soloists either during the exposition of one of the main melodies, or simultaneously with material that is taken from an earlier passage and reworked. Thus, the improvisers begin by soloing over important melodic material and transition into the combo setting. This has the effect of blurring formal divisions and creating a more seamless texture. It also creates an additional line of improvised counterpoint that both complements and competes with the written parts. The breaking down of these traditional formal barriers (between sections) is considered a unifying factor.

ANALYSIS OF:

EXTRA CREDIT

Figure 4-1

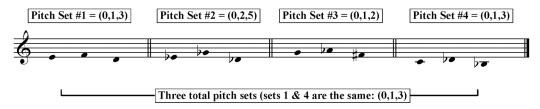


The introduction of *Extra Credit* consists of successive entrances of four groups of three players each (Figure 4-1). McNeely also used three player groupings in the interlude section of *Wee Small Hours*, although here the instrumental combinations are different. Each group plays a repeated pattern of three pitches. Each set is presented as an enclosure, with the second two pitches forming upper and lower decorations, or neighbors, of the first (though set #2 moves by minor third, the sound and shape are similar enough to the listener). All four groups are metrically independent, resulting in

what sounds like four separate meters being played concurrently. Although groups 1 and 2 are two beat patterns, the syncopated entrance of group 2 (on beat 4) and the fact that it is a rhythmic retrograde of group 1 makes it sound against the grain and independent.

Figure 4-2

### Extra Credit: Opening pitch sets (mm. 1-12)

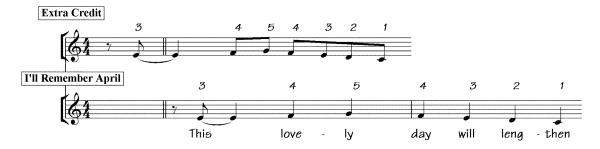


The effect of this section is both novel and intense. McNeely prefaces this introduction with the familiar sound of an eight bar drum solo on brushes (if not a cliché, at least a very popular device among jazz arrangers of all levels). By beginning the

arrangement in this way, McNeely eases into an extremely uncommon and complex section without sound overly foreign or abrupt.

Figure 4-3

Extra Credit: Extra Credit "A" melody and first phrase of I'll Remember April



The unstable circular pattern established during the introduction highlights the powerful unisons and octaves of the diatonic melody statement at measure 13. When the entire ensemble plays this passage, it sounds fresh and strong. The initial phrase of the melody shares a familiar contour with a well known jazz standard *I'll Remember April* <sup>24</sup> (Figure 4-3).

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup>Gene de Paul, *I'll Remember April*, lyrics by Patricia Johnston and Don Raye, (New York: MCA Music Publishing, 1941, 1942).

Figure 4-4

3

# Extra Credit: Unison/Octaves melody (m. 13-30)



The melody consists primarily of diatonic step-wise motion through the keys (implied since there are no vertical structures) of C major,  $E^{\flat}$  major, and  $G^{\flat}$  major (Figure 4-4). Major and minor third key relationships are a prominent feature of McNeely's progressions. McNeely decorates the lines with numerous enclosure/surrounding and neighboring tones.

The form of the melody is A-B-A<sup>1</sup>-B<sup>1</sup>. In typical McNeely fashion, none of the phrases begin on the downbeat of one. The following example illustrates how McNeely alters his melodies while keeping the overall structures intact. The devices he uses are comparable to those of the ensemble chorus discussed earlier from *Wee Small Hours* (at measure 83).

Motivic sequences are an important part of McNeely's arrangements and are one of his primary means of creating and spinning long melodic lines. Aside from measure 17 and the first two and a third beats of measure 18, there is never more than a beat and a half rest in this entire melody. In fact, this entire composition consists of extremely dense melodic writing in which only two of the main melodic themes (the rhythm changes-like pad beneath the trombone solo at measure 111 and the saxophone out chorus soli at measure 289) ever rest for more than a beat and a half. The constantly evolving melodies provide a refreshing contrast to the main improvised solo sections that include no ensemble writing or backgrounds.

Figure 4-5

### Extra Credit: McNeely's approach to melodic variation in initial theme (m. 13-30)

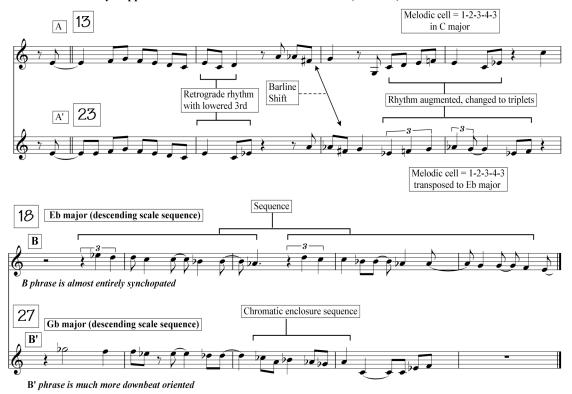


Figure 4-5 highlights some of the ways McNeely uses variation and sequence to rework returning material. Augmented, retrograde, and modulated rhythms (similar to the shout chorus of *Wee Small Hours*) are the devices McNeely favors for maintaining interest and variety.

The  $E^{\flat}$  in measure 16 works like a pivot or common tone for the modulation. It is initially heard as a blue note (or lowered  $3^{rd}$ ) in the key of C. In the returning  $A^1$  phrase,

the  $E^{\flat}$  occurs one measure earlier and the remainder of the phrase is in  $E^{\flat}$ . McNeely continues to use non-functional harmonic "progressions" and key relationships favoring movement in thirds. For example, when the B melody returns at measure 27, it has modulated up a minor  $3^{rd}$  to the key of  $G^{\flat}$ .

Extra Credit: Accented beat 4 hits (occur in the following measures)

Table 4-2

16	66	119	167	212
35	84-87	121	169	215-222
38-39	91	143-158	172	244
43	95-110	159	174	302
47	11	161	207	303
55-62	113	163	209	305
64	115-116	164	211	334

Total = 84 (over 25% of total measures)

The accented quarter note ensemble hit on beat 4 in measure 16 is a motive in and of itself. It figures prominently throughout the arrangement. McNeely reuses the beat 4 hit in more than a quarter of all the measures in the arrangement (Table 4-2).

Figure 4-6

# Extra Credit: Saxophone melody at m. 31



The angular melody at measure 31 illustrates how McNeely deals with layers of complexity (Figure 4-6). The chromatic melody (initially in g minor) moves in a highly rhythmic and unpredictable fashion while the accompaniment figures are also very active,

independent, and syncopated. The vertical harmonies are simple inverted triads with added 9ths in trombones. The voicings are simple open fourths in the trumpets with a shell voicing in the trombones that creates a full brass voicing.

Notwithstanding the layers of complex and simple writing going on at this point, there are only two independent lines occurring at the same time keeping the texture comprehensible in spite of the heightened activity. The underlying groove features a bass line that moves logically (largely by steps and thirds) while the main melody is constantly sequencing and developing in a self referential way that keeps the listener grounded.

Figure 4-7

### Extra Credit: Solo backgrounds at m. 55



The beginning of the tenor solo at measure 47 changes character becoming a recurring vamp. Measure 55 (Figure 4-7) illustrates a three voice comping pad played in by unison brass and saxophones. McNeely layers melodies, building until the open modal solo section at measure 63. The section functions as a background figure and send-off for the tenor solo, as well as the underpinning of the "C" melody that fully arrives in measure 95. The saxophones move in second inversion triads that are matched at the unison by the combined brass and piano voicing. The trombones, moving in

parallel fourths, are another case in which McNeely uses a two pitch open brass voicing (a fourth or a fifth), though he uses this device more frequently in the trumpet section.

Note that the underlying harmony is considerably different than the notated chord changes provided in the solo part. The four bar send-off at measure 63 is an example of McNeely transferring a "piano-ism" (in this case a montuno<sup>25</sup> in octaves) to his ensemble writing. The change of texture, from harmonized block chords to the unison montuno figure, provides an energizing release from the static repetition of the prior vamp. It signals the arrival of something entirely new. McNeely resolves this particular montuno with a strong quarter note hit on beat four, keeping with that established motive.

This four-measure passage is revealing. Its obvious connection to McNeely's pianist side is notable as one of the very few instances that identify the arranger as a piano player. In other words, the vast majority of McNeely's writing is instrumentally idiomatic, lying well within the natural confines of the instruments' technique and range.

<sup>25</sup>A montuno is a syncopated repeated piano vamp common in Cuban and/or Salsa music.

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Figure 4-8





The section at measure 79 features a more understated approach to re-voicing and re-harmonization (Figure 4-8). The underlying chord qualities remain essentially the same, with only the addition of the major 7<sup>ths</sup> that were not present in the passage at 31. The trumpets feature the most extensive modifications, changing from open 4<sup>ths</sup> to fully voiced and inverted 7<sup>th</sup> chords. The trombone voicing is the same, but with the addition of an added pitch a 4<sup>th</sup> above (producing the fifth of the chords) what were formerly three note shells.

The main area of harmonic interest and intensity is found on the fourth beat of measures 84 and 85. Here McNeely uses a distinctively dissonant and uncommon polychord:  $\frac{D}{E^b ma^7}$ . This structure functions like a major ninth chord with a #9 and a #11.

The open spacing of the voicing intensifies an internal half step grind between trumpets three and four, with no other voices within a fourth.

Figure 4-9

Extra Credit: New melodies and re-orchestration from section beginning at m. 95 (Excerpt begins m. 103 where all melodies are present)

[Molecty Creury] [103]



At measure 95 McNeely employs four separate melodic ideas in counterpoint (Figure 4-9). This section is effective for several reasons. First, the ideas are introduced and established as a repeating vamp, with each melody firmly established before another melody is layered upon it. Second, the straight eighth note feel of the arrangement lends itself to the type of rhythmic layering (with multiple, simple independent rhythmic levels performed simultaneously) found in Latin or Salsa music. Third, the melodic ideas are relatively short and memorable. Lastly, the counterpoint is written in a way that moves

logically, almost bounces, passing from one idea group to the next. The interlocking bass and piano parts are heard as one musical idea/line.

Although the bass line coupled with the harmony above results in some rather chromatic slash or suspended chords, the triadic nature of the piano and horn pads does not come across as a particularly complex element. The strong internal logic and relative simplicity of each of the separate elements of this passage create a complex texture that is at once intricate and listenable.

Figure 4-10

### Extra Credit: Trombone solo and transition at m. 111



The beginning of the trombone solo section introduces material that is quite different from what has been heard to this point in the chart (Figure 4-10). The passage functions as both the exposition of a new melody area and an introductory sendoff for the new soloist. At this point the texture changes dramatically from full ensemble to rhythm section with soloist.

McNeely begins this section by notating six measures of a traditional functional progression in the solo chord changes for the trombone  $(I-V^7/ii-ii^7-V^7)$  in the key of C major). This is followed by a standard deceptive cadence stepping up and resolving by semitone to the vi chord. After the next two measures, which consist of  $ii^7-V^7-I$  in the remote key of  $D^{\flat}$ , any semblance of functional progression disappears. No chord changes are included in any of the rhythm section parts at this point.

This is one of several instances in which the chord symbols provided in the solo part are interpreted very loosely (if not entirely ignored) by the soloist. At measure 47 tenor saxophonist Rich Perry takes a sparse chromatic approach to the solo changes while Ed Neumeister's trombone interpretation is anything but harmonically literal. Neither feels compelled to explicitly outline the notated progression. McNeely avoids this altogether by using a pedal point beneath his own piano solo, with no notated chord changes whatsoever. This allows him complete harmonic freedom. All of the soloists approach their respective solo sections as one chord modal vamps, centered on the  $ii^7$  chord and ignoring the notated  $V^7$  chord.

Figure 4-11

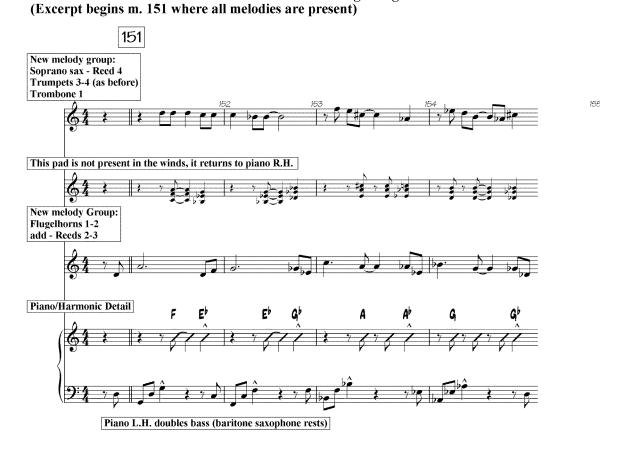
#### Rhythmic motive at m. 111



The main interest of this section is the development of a one measure, three pitch rhythmic motive which is presented eight times in the sixteen measure passage (see Figure 4-11). This pattern has a strong clavé reference, being the first half of a 3-2 pattern. McNeely treats this motive differently from those discussed up to this point. The melodic and intervallic contour is maintained throughout (leap up of a fifth or more, leap down). Even when the motive is displaced by anticipation or delayed entrance, it remains in tact most of the time (five out of eight times), hitting the accented fourth beat.

Extra Credit: Re-orchestration at m. 143 of section beginning at m. 95

Figure 4-12

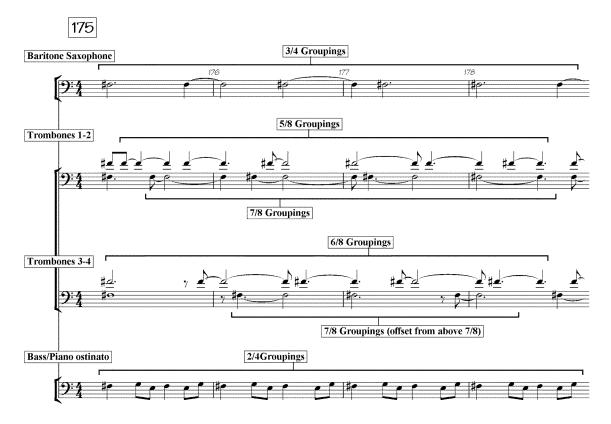


The passage at measure 143 is a slight re-orchestration which features a minimal amount of re-voicing (Figure 4-12). Melody group #1 adds two saxophone voices while losing two trombone voices. The comping pad (formerly played by Reeds 1, 2, and 4) is here played only by piano right hand. The "New" melody group adds Reeds 2 and 3. The overall effect of this new orchestration is negligible, but it technically adheres to the composer's plan to re-orchestrate sections as they return. The bass and piano melody stated beneath the trombone solo at measure 111 returns at measure 159. Here it is presented as its own theme and is doubled by a low register ensemble of baritone

saxophone and trombones three and four. Aside from the simple re-orchestration and absence of a coinciding improvised solo, this section is the same as that at measure 111.

Figure 4-13

#### Extra Credit: Piano Solo send-off at m. 175



This low register "D" melody resolves into a transition section (at measure 175) in which the bass and piano recall a familiar sounding three note pitch group ostinato from the introduction (Figure 4-13). The pitch group of the piano is 0,1,3 which is one of the original three groups present in the introduction. The metric layering of the concert F‡s gives this passage an improvised or random effect that is unlike the introduction with its audible circular patterns.

The open vamp piano solo section begins at measure 191 in the key of A minor. It occurs above a bass ostinato that walks up the first four tones of the minor scale.

Although McNeely has notated all of the "X" solo sections as standard ii<sup>7</sup>-V<sup>7</sup> progressions, on the Vanguard Jazz Orchestra recording all of the soloists treat their respective vamps as primarily modal grooves with very little reference to any dominant function. The rhythm section responds accordingly providing modal/quartal comping harmonies along with side-slipping harmonies.

Figure 4-14

### Extra Credit: New melody and counterpoint at m. 207



The two part texture at measure 207 features inventive contrapuntal writing on the part of McNeely (Figure 4-14). A new "E" melody is presented in the form of an angular and active unison saxophone soli. The new material is set against a unison reprise of the "D" melody by the trombone section. This is the same melody that had previously served as the trombone solo send-off. The "E" melody never returns, whereas this is the third occurrence of the low "D" melody. This formal deviation is unaccounted for in McNeely's formal sketch.

Both melodic lines are active, so McNeely uses unisons throughout. The first half of the new melody (up through measure 214) has the character of an improvised line that plays off the rhythmic contour of the trombone line. Interesting counterpoint is produced as the lines move in turns while the other rests or sustains. The first half of the new line is through-composed (with no sequenced or repeated material) and only three enclosing gestures serving as a common audible thread.

Measure 215 again finds McNeely layering unequal metric divisions. The intensity of this passage is created by the simultaneous development of two contrasting rhythmic motives. Here he superimposes a four note 3/4 motive above the ongoing development of the original three note 4/4 motive. This new hemiola section is built upon a four note motive that uses the four tones of an Eb7 chord, descending from the seventh. As the section builds, the seventh (Db) shifts upwards a semitone to D natural, forming and Ebma7 chord. Measures 216-222 express the highest degree of musical tension to this point in the arrangement.

Figure 4-15

#### Extra Credit: Expanding linear/chromatic passage at m.223



The "F" theme that arrives in measure 223 is perhaps the most startling section in the arrangement (Figure 4-15). Here we find another example of McNeely employing devices normally associated with "classical" composition. The result is a passage that sounds unlike anything typically heard in the realm of jazz, and for good reason.

McNeely achieves a disconcertingly random and atonal effect while working with only a few basic materials; four chromatic lines.

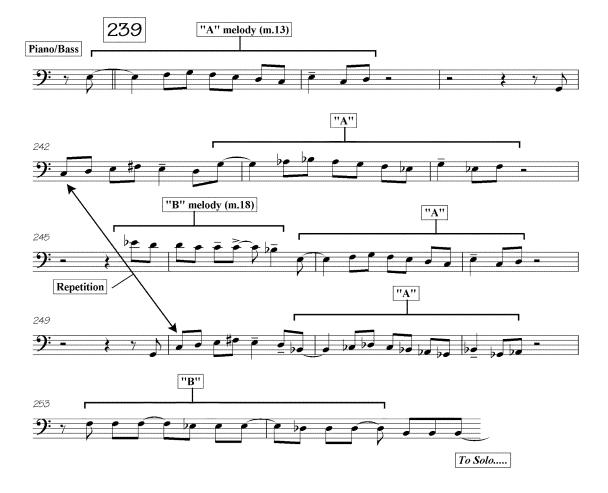
The "F" theme is based on two pairs of outwardly expanding and then contracting chromatic lines. The second pair is presented in imitative entrances and is a loosely based transposition of the first. All the lines move primarily by half step. It is the rhythmic irregularity of each line that imparts this section with much of its seemingly random nature. McNeely uses long note durations (by way of tied notes and dotted rhythms) coupled with asymmetrical values that have no audibly discernible pattern.

Orchestrationally, three of the lines are presented by groups of three players, with one line (line #1) played by a group of four. Lines one and two initiate the expanding sequence together while lines three and four have staggered entrances at five and eight measures respectively.

McNeely approaches this section (and its subsequent return) freely. Each line forms an incomplete chromatic scale, but all omit different scale degrees. The lines turn around at different intervals and the transposed versions are not literal copies. His primary concern appears to be with the overall effect of the passage rather than a strict adherence to a set formula.

Figure 4-16

Extra Credit: Piano/bass send-off m. 239



The send-off for the trumpet solo at measure 239, while not a main theme area, exhibits more of the developmental character of McNeely's writing (Figure 4-16). In this short transitional section, McNeely recalls the initial "A" section melody from measure 13. Here he sequences and transposes six phrases from the earlier theme in a way that smoothly transitions into the final solo section.

Figure 4-17





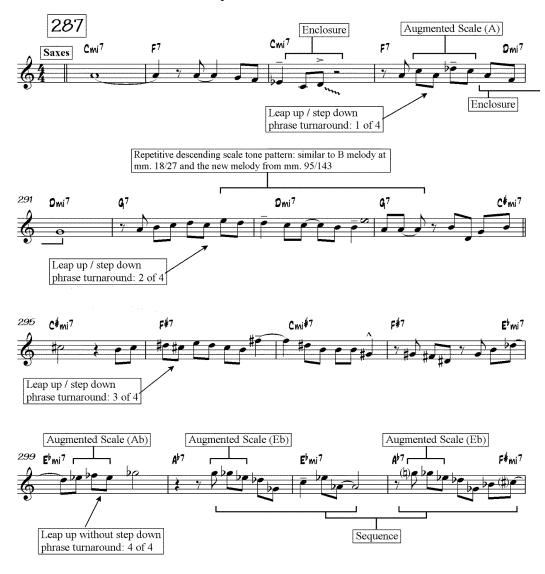
The return of the "F" melody at measure 271 is another example of McNeely creatively deviating from his initial formal map (Figure 4-17). Instead of changing the orchestration of the original four chromatic lines, he rhythmically diminishes the lines

themselves by a ratio of approximately 2:1. The passages now goes by in a rough double-time while the instrumental groups remain exactly the same. Again, it appears McNeely favors the overall effect of the music of the moment in choosing not to be dogmatic in applying a strict 2:1 ration to every note.

This rhythmic change makes perfect sense from a listener's standpoint since the section occurs some seven minutes into the arrangement (the total playing time is nearly nine minutes). The quickened pace helps propel the music forward while keeping the intensity at a higher level than a full-length reprise would have.

Figure 4-18

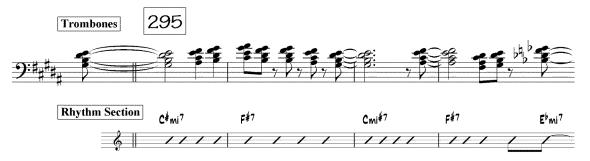
#### Extra Credit: Melodic breakdown: Saxophone soli at m. 287



The modern sounding of line of the unison saxophone soli at 287 is a melodic extension of the angular and active themes heard thus far (Figure 4-18). Each phrase peaks slightly higher as the chords modulate upward. McNeely's use of a half step upper neighbor tone lends a distinctly modern flavor to the line implying the sound of an augmented scale.

Figure 4-19

## Extra Credit: Trombone block voicings m. 295

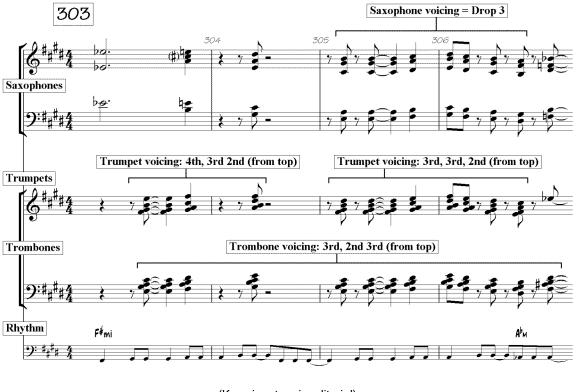


(Key signature is editorial)

This is a representative passage of the McNeely's trombone writing beneath the saxophone soli from measure 287 to 302 (Figure 4-19). Here he works with a fixed, close position voicing and planes it primarily diatonically. The underlying chord progression is the same as those of the solo sections and McNeely treats it as a sequence of predominantly modal sections.

Figure 4-20

### Extra Credit: Out Chorus - Ensemble Block Voicings at m. 303

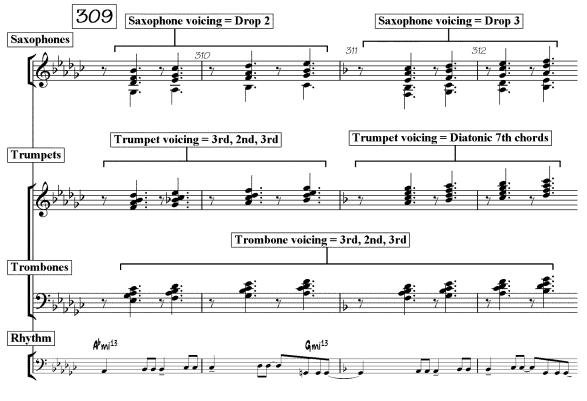


(Key signature is editorial)

Much of the impact and intensity of the "shout" chorus at measure 303 comes from the strength of the close block voicings (Figure 4-20). This is the first use of this writing style up to this point and it provides a powerful contrast to the seemingly endless counterpoint of the prior sections. Non-diatonic passing chords, secondary dominants, chromatic substitutions, and side-slips are not present here. The entire ensemble chorus functions linearly with the individual voices planing diatonically.

Figure 4-21

## Extra Credit: Diatonic planing and voicings at m. 309

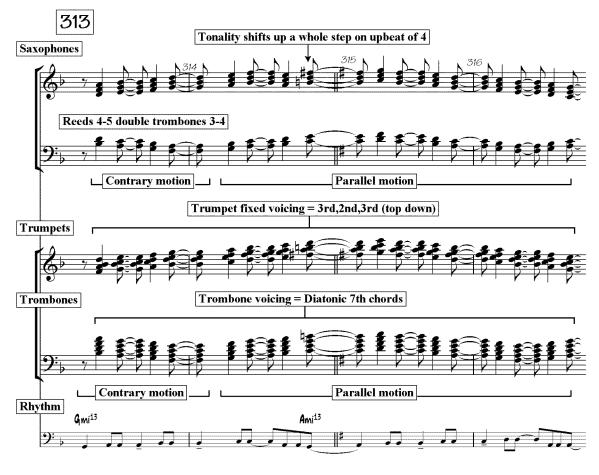


(Key signatures are editorial)

McNeely uses two main devices to create and maintain intensity throughout this section (Figure 4-21). One is a series of constantly shifting key centers. The other is his development of the upbeat rhythm in measure 309 which returns in 313, twice as fast.

Figure 4-22

## Extra Credit: Diatonic planing and voicings at m. 313



(Key signatures are editorial)

The top of the phrase in measure 315 is the climax of the piece (Figure 4-22). As the line reaches its peak, all voices move in parallel motion while the harmony lifts by whole step. The modulation is heard as moving from g minor to G major. At the peak of the phrase the brightness of G major presents an extreme contrast to the prior dark g minor.

The upper saxophones move in diatonic triads, the trumpets in inverted diatonic seventh chords, and trombones move in root position diatonic seventh chords. The lead line (in the first trumpet) is clearly heard as it is always separated from the next voice by a third.

At measure 323 McNeely uses a truncated version of his introduction as transition to a final quote of his "A". This section functions like a codetta, returning a portion of the initial theme and ending, of course, with an accented quarter note hit on beat four.

#### CHAPTER 5

#### ABSOLUTION

#### MELODY AND FORM

Absolution is another mood driven piece (in the spirit of Wee Small Hours) in which McNeely paints an austere and prayerful image. The often monophonic texture is a stark contrast to the hyperkinetic counterpoint of Extra Credit. Absolution's melodies have a speech-like (or even chant-like) cadence and a contour with a preponderance of linear motion. Phrases are replete with repeated pitches in a manner intimating recitative. The conversational nature of Absolution creates a through-composed form with only four measures (mm. 53-56) returning as a bridge to the ending.

Much of the melodic substance is derived from various combinations of two basic pitch groups and two rhythmic cells.<sup>26</sup> One pitch group is a simple digital gesture (4-3-2-1) in the key of G minor while the other can be seen as an upper portion of an F pentatonic scale (Figures 5-1 and 5-2). Many of the important melodies in *Absolution* are derived in whole or in part from pentatonic scale structures.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> McNeely, *Lickety Split* liner notes, 7.

The pitch groups are used to form two melodic groups that interact conversationally.<sup>27</sup> From the outset, the melodies McNeely creates with these groups tend to polarize around the pitches of C and G (the fifth and ninth of the initial tonal center of F). The resulting tonality is static and ambiguous with no sense of cadence or closure.

Imitation, repetition and variation are the primary developmental devices in *Absolution*. The line between improvised and composed material is often blurred as McNeely integrates controlled improvisations by the full ensemble to achieve imitative and random effects. In other instances (i.e. measure 49), McNeely writes out elongated rhythms at staggered entrances to achieve an effect that sounds improvised.

#### **ORCHESTRATION**

Unlike the constantly evolving orchestration of *Extra Credit*, McNeely maintains a fairly consistent approach to ensemble writing throughout *Absolution*. The initial melody statements are made by a unison duet of tenor saxophone and trombone. The trombone is written in an unusually high register, in a cup mute, and hovering around high C's. This instrumentation and register (rather than the typical grouping of three players placed in more idiomatic ranges) brings out a tension in the sound that might be associated with the internal struggle one seeking absolution might endure. This melody is joined intermittently with a unison group of five additional players. This interplay of

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

groups evolves to a varying number of unison instrumental combinations throughout the first thirty one measures. There are several passages that are orchestrated for groups of three players, but in this arrangement (perhaps because of high proportion of unison and octave materials) the number of players in a given instrumental group often fluctuates.

Absolution's saxophone writing features only one deviation from the standard big band orchestration with Reed 1 playing soprano saxophone. As in *Wee Small Hours*, the trumpet section features a blending of cup and harmon mutes along with flugelhorns.

The highest written pitch in the lead trumpet part is a high E, not considered an extreme upper register demand for a professional lead player. Aside from the muted trombone duet with the tenor saxophone, the trombone section uses no mutes.

A large part of the solo section is in standard quartet format consisting of rhythm section and soloist. At measure 77 McNeely introduces ensemble background figures that function in a conversational and developmental way. Working with two alternating groups an octave apart, McNeely constructs two expanding lines that add pitches (one at time) as they move outward. This additive approach results in gradually lengthening lines that eventually transform into a sequence of imitative descending motives. These motives share the melodic contour of the pitch group #1.

#### HARMONY AND VOICE LEADING

Absolution uses modal and non-functional harmony throughout. The bulk of the extended modal passages are built around major tonality/key centers as opposed to the more traditional use of minor keys or modes. In the few sections with a faster harmonic rhythm, root movement in thirds is prominent.

The first thirty one measures of *Absolution* are presented in unison monophonic statements with the only incidental harmony resulting (in two instances) from lines that branch off and move in oblique motion below a held pitch (Figure 5-1).

Figure 5-1

#### Absolution: Oblique motion at m. 10

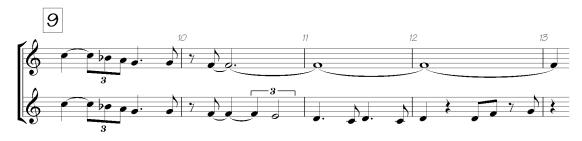


Figure 5-2

#### Absolution: Improvised polyphony at m. 18



Figures 5-1 and 5-2 illustrate the only two polyphonic occurrences prior to measure 32. Both techniques are scored throughout the ensemble. The use of these devices, while technically constituting polyphony, results in a delayed or echo effect throughout the ensemble rather than a true vertical sonority.

McNeely offsets the harmonic simplicity of the modal passages with moments of intense dissonance and chromaticism. Measures 101-103 feature stacked augmented triads a half step apart while measures 169-171 use stacked major triads, also a half step apart. These sections provide a contrast to the open voiced consonance of the measures that precede them.

An example of McNeely using harmony in a developmental way occurs at measure 121. Here he develops and a progression cell based on a bVI7-bVII7-I7sus4 pattern. This pattern undergoes an extended succession of shifts, alternating between the expected resolution and a series of deceptive resolutions to remote keys. A detailed analysis of this section accompanies a reduction and listening guide (see Figure 5-22).

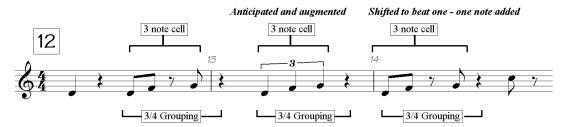
Absolution's ensemble voicings include: a pervasive use of unisons and octaves, strict and diatonic planing, spread voicings, and structures built of stacked fifths. Both of the extended monophonic sections (the opening 31 bars and the solo section and backgrounds mm. 65-100) are followed by chorale sections that include a modulation and fixed mechanical voicings that move in a mixture of diatonic and strict planing.

### **RHYTHM**

Although McNeely's approach to rhythm and rhythmic development in *Absolution* is different in many respects from the arrangements discussed previously, it is no less vital. In keeping with the more tranquil mood and pace of the composition, rhythmic cells and motives are varied in a more conversational and less obvious manner. Rhythmic ideas are reinforced through repetition that results from the pervasive imitation, while variations and hemiola patterns tend to be less exaggerated and more leisurely than those of *Extra Credit* and *Wee Small Hours* (Figure 5-3 below).

Figure 5-3

# Absolution: Rhythmic variation and hemiola at m. 12



McNeely employs an entirely different approach to rhythmic development in the passage that begins in measure 121. Here he takes a seven pitch motive (constructed from a pentatonic scale descending from the fifth scale degree) and subtly alters it while continuously changing the meter of the bars in which the motive occurs as well as the measures between occurrences. As the passage progresses, the motives and meters are diminished, quickening the repetitions and increasing the musical energy and tension.

Also in the realm of rhythm, McNeely continues his practice of utilizing so-called "classical" compositional procedures. In the solo section of *Absolution* he employs the medieval technique of isorhythm, working with repeated rhythmic and pitch groups.<sup>28</sup> A detailed discussion of this aspect is included in the following chapter.

#### THE ROLE OF THE IMPROVISER

As in *Wee Small Hours* and *Extra Credit*, McNeely constructs an entire piece around the sound of a central soloist.<sup>29</sup> Tenor saxophone soloist Rich Perry presents the main melodic material (in duet with the trombone) as well as the main body of improvised soloing. It is his sound that provides the impetus for the arrangement.

Absolution also calls for a small amount of improvisation from every member of the ensemble, both collectively and individually. The first fifty measures include four instances in which members of the ensemble improvise (ad lib) on a given melodic fragment. Measure 121 initiates a sequence of call and response between the band and

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup>McNeely, *Lickety Split* liner notes, 7.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup>Ibid..

soloists in which every member is called upon to play a short improvised statement between entrances of a constantly reoccurring and changing pentatonic motive.

ANALYSIS OF:

ABSOLUTION

Figure 5-3

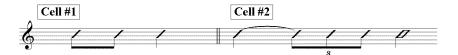
#### **Absolution: Opening Pitch Groups**



McNeely uses several distinct (and relatively simple) devices as the building blocks for *Absolution*. The use of pitch groups combined with rhythmic cells, rather than melodic motives, allows McNeely the freedom to develop his rhythmic approach while still maintaining a recognizable thematic reference point (Figure 5-3). The shapes of these two groups are clearly present throughout the arrangement.

Figure 5-4

#### **Absolution: Rhythmic Cells**



Rhythmic cell #2 is the more prevalent of the two and most often paired with pitch group #1 creating a clearly defined motive that McNeely uses in a highly developmental way (Figure 5-4). Cell #1 is less likely to appear in its pure form and is heard (as is) mostly in the opening 30 measures.

Figure 5-5

## Absolution: Initial Piano/Bass Vamp

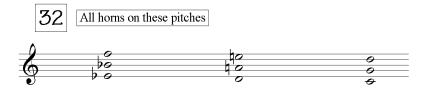


A three measure asymmetrical ostinato is heard throughout a considerable portion of the arrangement (Figure 5-5). The bass doubles the lower voice of the piano. It serves as unifying factor as well as a building block for the isorhythmic section at measure 65.

Absolution's initial 31 measures consist primarily of two instrumental groups using combinations of the two rhythmic cells combined with the two pitch groups above the static piano/bass ostinato. Almost all of the melodic movement is linear and there are numerous repeated pitches in both groups. The musical effect resembles a blend of plainchant and recitative.

Figure 5-4

# Absolution: First polyphonic section at m. 32



Measure 32 initiates the first true polyphony with the entire ensemble moving in parallel fifths (Figure 5-4). These pitch sets are drawn from the initial group ( $^{\flat}$ 3-2-1), the final three pitches of pitch group #1. This melodic line follows strict intervallic planing. The sudden movement in parallel fifths combined with rhythmically improvised repetitions creates a startling and haunting echo effect.

Figure 5-5

### Absolution: Mechanical saxophone/ensemble voicings and planing at m. 37



(Key signature is editorial)

Measure 37 begins the first of two chorale sections that feature an extensive use of diatonic and strict planing (Figure 5-5). For his voicings, McNeely uses a tetrad shell which is a three note vertical structure consisting of a fourth and a second (from the top down). All the winds are scored on one of the three pitches. The time feel of this passage changes from swing to straight eighth notes, creating a more "classical" sounding texture.

The voicings of the saxophones in this chorale passage are doubled by the brass in uniquely McNeely fashion. Again, with an emphasis on bringing out the lead line, three trumpets double melody while only one trumpet plays the voice a 4<sup>th</sup> below. Trombones one and two play the bottom note of the three note shell voicing in unison.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>30</sup>Gary Campbell, *Expansions*, 2nd ed. (Houston, TX: Houston Publishing, 2002).

Figure 5-6

## Absolution: Mechanical saxophone/ensemble voicings and side-slipping at m. 42



McNeely creates harmonic tension by moving the voicing/harmony up by half step in measure 43 (Figure 5-6). This use of strict chromatic planing differs from measure 40 as the lead line and third voice move entirely out of the key. In McNeely's writing, this type of harmonic shift almost always occurs in a metrically weak position. When the line turns around and comes back to the tonal center, McNeely resumes diatonic planing.

Figure 5-7

### Absolution: Imitative passage and side-slip key change at m. 45

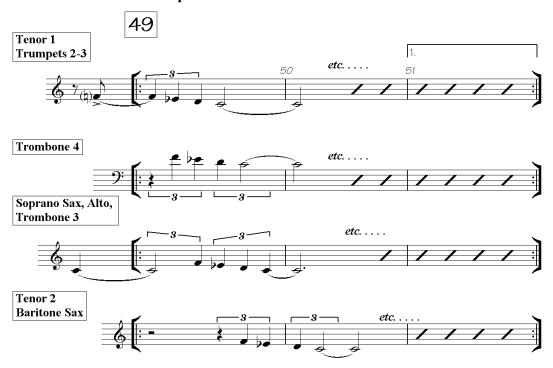


Figure 5-7 shows how McNeely sets up an imitative pattern and uses it to modulate. Working with three groups of three players, McNeely establishes a sequence in which Group 1 plays a motive (constructed from pitch group #1) that is in turn answered by Groups 2 and 3. In measure 48 Group 3 resolves the motive a semitone higher than expected. This resolution initiates a quick modulation in which the other groups and rhythm section play the entire motive a half step higher. The entire sequence begins on beat four and is complete by the end of measure 50.

This type of modulation (in which the harmony shifts unexpectedly and directly in a metrically weak position in the back half of the measure) occurs frequently enough in the three compositions studied herein, that it could be considered a consistent style characteristic of McNeely.

Figure 5-8

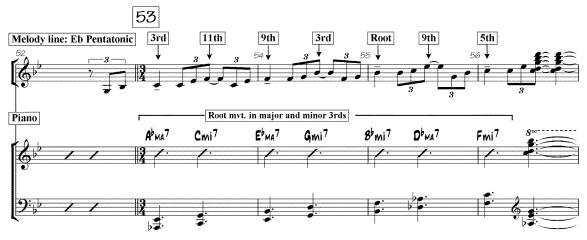
## Absolution: Imitation and improvisation at m. 49



Measure 49 is an example of group improvisation woven into the fabric of the composition (Figure 5-8). Here, four instrumental groups begin an elongated version of pitch group #1 in staggered entrances. The phrase is then improvised by the same players.

Figure 5-9

#### Absolution: Pentatonic line at m. 53



The rising pentatonic line at measure 53 is the only section of the composition to return later in the chart (Figure 5-9). It does so in measure 188 as a bridge to the final seven measures of the piece. The line itself is broken up and spread throughout the winds in a series of pyramid entrances. Figure 5-9 shows a reconstructed version of the line in its entirety.

Above a similarly rising progression that moves in a combination of major and minor thirds, the notes of the  $E^{\flat}$  pentatonic scale work as common tones. In other words, the  $E^{\flat}$  pentatonic can function as an appropriate scale choice for any of the chords in the progression.

The intensity of this passage is heightened by a meter change (from quadruple to triple) and the use of hemiola in the rhythm section and trombones. Since the section only lasts twelve beats, McNeely could have chosen to remain in 4/4 time, but the change

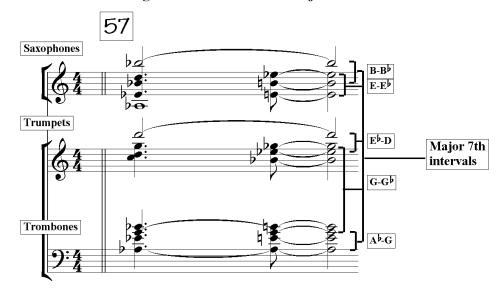
to triple meter aligns the downbeats of the phrases in a way that seems more logical, at least from a reading standpoint.

In this short four measure passage, McNeely moves from one extreme to another in terms of dynamics, register, and dissonance. The intensity of the line increases as it rises and moves from a very consonant pentatonic sound to a very dissonant resolving harmony in measure 57.

The lead trumpet scoring from measures 56-60 has high concert "D" tied whole notes with a diminuendo to pianissimo. An extended diminuendo to pianissimo on a written high E is an unusual and difficult demand for any lead trumpet player. This is another example (as in the upper register trombone and tenor saxophone melody/duet at the beginning) in which McNeely uses orchestration to create audible (and likely physical) tension.

Figure 5-10

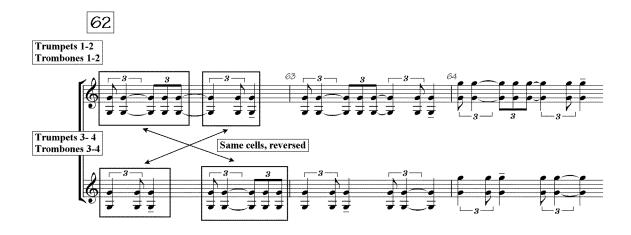
# Absolution: Resolving chord and stacked major 7ths at m. 57



The resolving chord in measure 57 is an Ab major  $^{7\,(\#11)}$  (Figure 5-10). The outer intervals are held in tact while the inner voices shift to create highly dissonant upper structures. The final result is a spread voicing of a non-functional vertical structure that is the result of stacked major  $7^{th}$  intervals. The three sets are (spelled as written):  $A^{\flat}$ -G- $F^{\sharp}$ , E- $E^{\flat}$ -D, and B- $B^{\flat}$ . The notes E, B,  $E^{\flat}$  and  $B^{\flat}$  are doubled at various octaves. The roots of the stacks spell an E major triad. As the inner voices shift, the outer notes ( $A^{\flat}$  below and high  $B^{\flat}$  and D) are held through.

Absolution: Octaves send off to solo section m. 62

Figure 5-11



McNeely uses two brass groups for the tenor solo send off at measure 62 (Figure 5-11). The rhythms of the first group are swapped and reversed in the second group.

Although this rhythmic layering produces an articulated note on every part of the running triplet figure for 3 measures, the aural effect is random, like two voices speaking (or mumbling) at the same time.

Figure 5-12

Absolution: "Isorhythmic" piano and bass vamp: Talea/Rhythmic pattern at m. 65



Figure 5-13

## Absolution: "Isorhythmic" Color/pitch group at m. 65

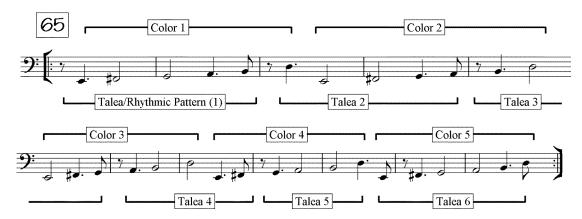


The solo section in *Absolution* employs the medieval compositional technique of isorhythm.<sup>31</sup> McNeely uses a five note rhythmic pattern called a talea (Figure 5-12). He combines it with a sequence of six pitch groups (in parallel fifths). One time through the pitch sequence is called a color (Figure 5-13).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>31</sup> McNeely, *Lickety Split* liner notes, 7.

Figure 5-14

# **Absolution: Solo Section --Isorhythmic elements (ratio = 5:6)**



The repeated twelve measure solo section results in five occurrences of the color and six occurrences of the talea, expressed as a ratio of 5:6 (Figure 5-14).

Figure 5-15

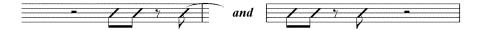
### Absolution: Two part additive backgrounds in brass at m. 77



The background figures at measure 77 show the brass working in two groups (Figure 5-15). Here McNeely begins a process of melodic interplay in which he alternately adds one pitch to each group. The trumpets are harmonized in various combinations of fixed voicings that plane in the key of B minor. The trombones are in unison. The two groups trade phrases while adding pitches, slowly growing the phrases until measure 89 where they work in imitative versions of the same descending motive.

Figure 5-16

## Absolution: Rhythmic cell #3



At measure 89 the two groups have morphed to form variations of the initial pitch group #1 combined with rhythmic cell #2 (Figure 5-16). These melodies are subsequently combined with another common rhythmic cell that emerges throughout the arrangement but that is not explicitly labeled by McNeely (see Figure 5-17 below). McNeely uses the descending phrase shape extensively through the remainder of the arrangement. The imitative phrases at this point, while relatively busy, still function as backgrounds for the tenor saxophone solo.

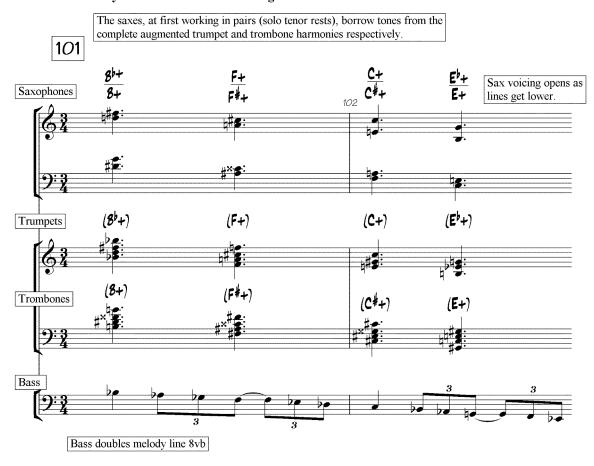
Figure 5-17

Absolution: Two part imitative backgrounds at m. 89



Figure 5-18

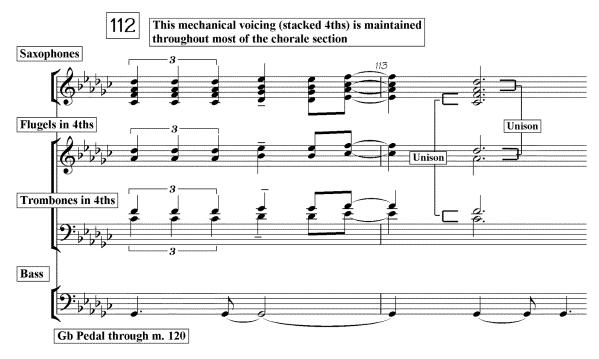
## Absolution: Polytonal section of stacked augmented triads at m. 101



Measure 101 jumps out forcefully with a highly complex and dissonant harmony of stacked augmented chords in unison rhythm (Figure 5-18). This intense arrival point signals the end of the solo section and the lead-in to the second chorale section.

Figure 5-19

# Absolution: Modal chorale voicing at m. 112



(Key signature is editorial)

The chorale section at measure 112 is similar (though slightly more harmonically complex) to its earlier counterpart at measure 37 (Figure 5-19). Both sections set up and maintain patterns of fixed voicings that are planed in both diatonic and strict fashion.

The passages are performed in straight eighth note feel creating anthem-like melodies.

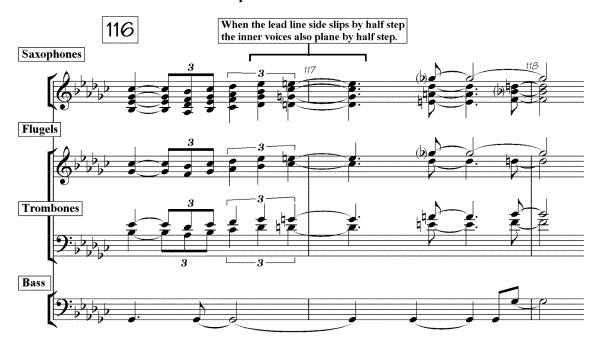
Both chorales are modal with a major tonality, occurring over a pedal point. McNeely planes voices strictly during side-slips, but otherwise maintains mostly diatonic movement.

The main differences in the second chorale are the use of an open fourth spacing (measure 37 uses a tetrad of a fourth and second) and the use of a four voice texture

versus the earlier three. The formula used here is based on two fourth intervals, the second built a third above the top note of the lower.

Figure 5-20

## Absolution: Modal chorale side-slip at m. 116



(Key signature is editorial)

In measure 117 McNeely uses an oblique internal side-slip in which the inner voices move up, planing by half step on the upbeat of 4 (Figure 5-20). This is akin to the internal movement in measure 57 where the outside voices are held while the internal voices move by step to more dissonant intervals.

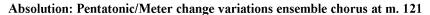
Figure 5-21

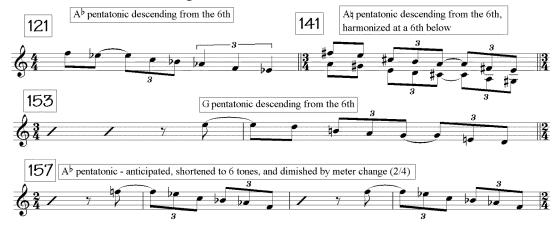
## Absolution: Basic progression cell mm. 121-164



At measure 121 McNeely builds a unique ensemble section based upon the development of four major ideas and/or devices (Figure 5-21). The first device is an upward moving harmonic cadential formula (i.e.  ${}^{b}VIma^{7(\sharp 11)} - {}^{b}VII^{7}sus^{4} - I^{7}sus^{4}$ ). McNeely develops this formula by resolving it intact or deceptively (and thereby modulating directly) to another unrelated and distant key. He resolves deceptively half the time.

Figure 5-22





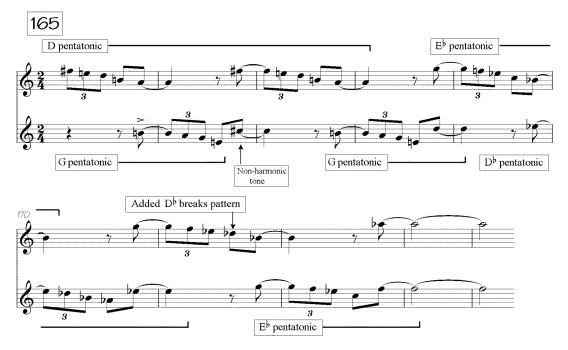
The second device he uses is a descending pentatonic motive that is related to the initial pitch groups, but new to this part of the composition (Figure 5-22). Like the cadence formula, this motive is constantly shifted, modulated and frequently anticipated. Beginning in measure 141, McNeely adds interest to the line by harmonizing it at the interval of a sixth below.

The third device used in this passage is an accelerating sequence of meter changes. As the occurrences of the descending motive increase, the time between interjections is constantly varied by transparent meter changes. The meter changes necessitate subtle rhythmic and melodic shifts in the pentatonic motive, but it remains audibly in tact throughout. McNeely builds tension by slowly and irregularly increasing the frequency of ensemble entrances, and by anticipating the new entrances with ties across the bar line. All of this activity occurs with the constantly shifting harmonic resolutions.

The fourth idea underlying this section is that of imitation and interplay between the soloists and the ensemble, and eventually within the ensemble as it breaks into two alternating imitative groups. Each of the wind players is called upon to play a brief improvised statement in a sequence of call and response that continues until measure 165. The solo spaces gradually become smaller as the meter changes shorten the intervals between the ensemble phrases.

Figure 5-23

# Absolution: Pentatonic interplay at m. 165



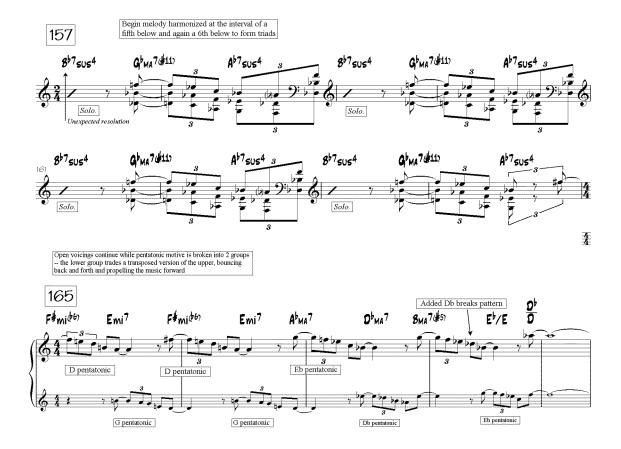
At m. 165 McNeely finally establishes a solid pattern of repeated imitative entrances that gradually rise to the climax of the passage at measure 173 (Figure 5-22). The heightened activity is accompanied by upwards modulations that increase the intensity until the addition of the  $D^{\flat}$  in measure 171 which breaks the pattern signaling the ending of the section.

The reductions in figures 5-24 and 5-25 are listening guides for the passage at measure 121.

Absolution: Encomble/Soloieta buselidavum soction m. 121



Figure 5-25



McNeely increases the melodic density at measure 157 by adding a third harmony part another sixth below. The result is a series of inverted triads in an extremely open voicing. By measure 165 the energy and intensity is at its peak. The rapidly alternating phrases, while moving within an active and complex texture, are very consonant and "inside". The polychord resolution (i.e.  $D^{b}$  over D) going into measure 169 is a sharp dissonance and also quite unexpected.

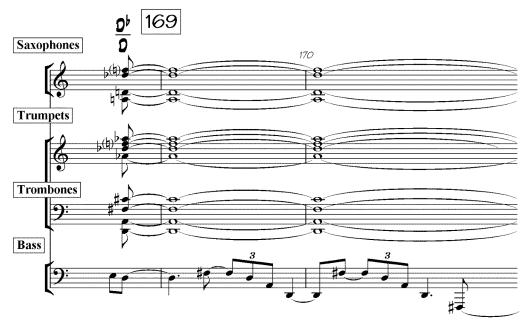
Table 5-1
Absolution: Resolution of VI<sup>7</sup>-VII<sup>7</sup>-I<sup>7</sup> progression (mm. 121-164)

b <b>y</b> 17	<sup>▶</sup> √117	Resolves to:	Distance from expected resolution
<b>G</b> b <sub>MA</sub> 7(#11)	<b>A</b> <sup>57</sup> s∪s <sup>4</sup>	8 <sup>♭7</sup> s∪s <sup>4</sup>	in tact
<b>G</b> b <sub>MA</sub> 7(#11)	<b>A</b> <sup>57</sup> 5US <sup>4</sup>	8 <sup>7</sup> 5U5 <sup>4</sup>	up a ½ step
G <sub>MA</sub> 7(#11)	A <sup>7</sup> sus <sup>4</sup>	8 <sup>7</sup> 5US <sup>4</sup>	in tact
GMA <sup>7</sup> (#11)	A <sup>7</sup> sus <sup>4</sup>	F <sup>7</sup> SUS <sup>4</sup>	tritone
0 <sup>6</sup> MA <sup>7</sup> (\$11)	E <sup>♭7</sup> sus <sup>4</sup>	F <sup>7</sup> 5US <sup>4</sup>	in tact
0 <sup>6</sup> MA <sup>7</sup> (#11)	E <sup>♭7</sup> sus <sup>4</sup>	F <sup>#7</sup> sus4	up a ½ step
<b>D</b> MA <sup>7</sup> (¥11)	E <sup>7</sup> sus <sup>4</sup>	F <sup>#7</sup> sus4	in tact
<b>О</b> ма <sup>7</sup> (#11)	E <sup>7</sup> sus <sup>4</sup>	A <sup>7</sup> sus <sup>4</sup>	up a minor 3 <sup>rd</sup>
FMA7(#11)	G <sup>7</sup> sus <sup>4</sup>	A <sup>7</sup> sus <sup>4</sup>	in tact
FMA7(#11)	G <sup>7</sup> sus <sup>4</sup>	8 <sup>57</sup> 5U54	up a ½ step
<b>G</b> <sup>b</sup> MA <sup>7</sup> (#11)	A <sup>57</sup> 5US <sup>4</sup>	8 <sup>57</sup> 5U54	in tact
<b>G</b> <sup>b</sup> MA <sup>7</sup> (#11)	A <sup>♭7</sup> sus <sup>4</sup>	F#mi <sup>&amp;6)</sup>	tritone

McNeely uses this progression found in Table 5-1 a total of 12 times and resolves it up by the expected whole step exactly half of the time All of the deceptive resolutions are to remote keys, either a half step, minor third, or tritone away.

Figure 5-26

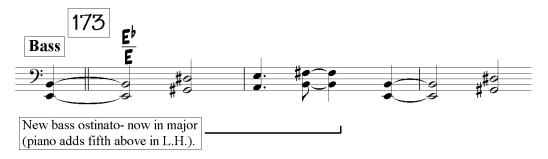
# Absolution: Polychord ensemble voicing at m. 169



The chord at measure 169 is an intense and unexpected arrival point, especially after the long section of consonance created by the use of so many pentatonics (Figure 5-26). The voicing is spread and the musical tension results from three major seventh intervals within the structure, though some are displaced by octave. Major sevenths occur between: D and C# (enharmonic  $D^{\flat}$ ), A and G# (enharmonic  $A^{\flat}$ ), and F# and E# (enharmonic F).

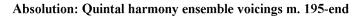
Figure 5-27

# Absolution: New bass pattern at m. 173



The returning piano/bass ostinato at measure 173 has a more major sound to it than previous versions (Figure 5-27). However, the superimposition of the E<sup>b</sup> tonality above the E major bass line produces a harsher or angrier sound. The pattern has been changed from three measures to two, but is clearly recognizable as a form of the original line. The pattern is now anticipated on beat four of the prior measure rather than originating on the upbeat of beat one.

Figure 5-28





The concluding measures of *Absolution* feature intervallic writing not heard thus far (Figure 5-28). The open sounds of the stacked fifth voicings are thickened with the internal half step grinds that frequently occur among the lower saxophones, lower trumpets and upper trombones. The trumpets move in unison with the saxophones in this passage while the trombones move generally within a fixed voicing with a half step often occurring between trombones one and two.

### CHAPTER 6

#### **CONCLUSIONS**

In his synopsis of the writing styles of Sammy Nestico, Thad Jones, and Bob Brookmeyer, Ray Wright points out nine basic qualities they all have in common with each other, as well as other fine writers. These are all equally applicable to the writing style of Jim McNeely.

### **SUMMARY**

- 1. **Each chart has a focus**.<sup>32</sup> All three of the compositions studied in this document have clearly defined (and stated) central organizing principles as well as primary soloists around whose sounds and styles the arrangements are built. McNeely sets boundaries, establishes a framework, and defines his compositional challenges from the outset. He then looks for creative solutions to his compositional problems. The main idea or mood always takes precedence over aspects of harmony, voicing, form, and orchestration.
- Each chart has a consistency of harmonic and voicing procedures.
   Although McNeely may use a diverse palette of harmonic colors and voicings,
   his charts remain harmonically consistent within themselves. They also share

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup>The nine sub-headings in this list are taken from Wright's *Inside the Score*, page 182.

- a consistency in the overall harmonic approach that is individual without being predictable or formulaic.
- Each chart relies on idiomatic tunefulness. McNeely's uses strong
  melodies that are clearly presented and reinforced by voicings, dynamics and
  orchestration.
- 4. **Rhythmic invention is of primary importance**. Perhaps the area in which he is most original, McNeely's use and development of rhythm is a highlight of these charts.
- 5. **Reuse of material is a constant**. Reuse is a somewhat misleading term when applied to McNeely's writing, especially since he hardly ever repeats material verbatim. McNeely uses his raw materials in exceptionally developmental ways that often cause his melodies and lines to undergo significant changes and variations. In using devices such as motives, pitch groups, rhythmic and melodic cells, and intervallic series, McNeely unifies his compositions while presenting a constantly evolving soundscape.
- 6. **Harmony serves the needs of the chart**. McNeely uses a wide palette of tertian and modal structures (with a wide variance of relative dissonance). He also employs numerous harmonic formulae and other devices that are necessarily contrived (i.e. manufactured); McNeely's use of dissonance is tempered by the smoothness of his instrumental lines and the internal logic of his voicings. Although there are moments of intense dissonance, (especially in *Absolution*) it doesn't seem to take on a life of its own.

- 7. Balance in the use of variable elements is achieved by having some elements remain constant while attention is directed to other elements.

  McNeely does this by maintaining a balance between complexity and simplicity. Usually, some aspect of either harmony, voicing, melody, or rhythm remains accessible and listenable while the level of complexity and tension is raised elsewhere.
- 8. Harmonies are "justified" and voice-leading is never forgotten. In many instances, the harmonies are not only justified by, but created by the voice-leading. McNeely's linear style of writing places an emphasis on logical voice-leading within each instrumental line. The resulting harmonies (whether they are tonal, chromatic, modal, or even atonal) are arrived at in a logical way that is seamlessly integrated into the overall fabric of the composition.
- 9. Each chart features good registers and idiomatic instrumental writing.
  McNeely seldom ventures into extremes of register for any of the winds. And while the majority of his instrumental writing is idiomatic, it does on occasion require a high degree of technical virtuosity and interpretational nuance.

#### MCNEELY-ISMS

There are a number of areas that stand out when looking at McNeely's overall approach to writing, at least as it applies to these three charts. When it comes to techniques or the general the style features that apply to all three compositions, the key words are diversity and flexibility.

Harmonically, any and every type of vertical structure is fair game. McNeely uses simple triadic harmony, inverted triads, altered and extended chords, augmented and symmetrical sonorities, various slash and suspended chords, bitonality, interval structures such as stacked 4ths, 5ths, and major 7ths, atonality, and linear chromatic writing. He uses degrees of consonance and dissonance that range from extended monophonic writing to stacked augmented chords a half step apart. The use of any given vertical structure is governed by the demands of the music.

McNeely's melodies are similarly diverse. They can range from a simple three note pitch group to an extended foray into the virtuosic world of angular post-bebop chromaticism. His melodic lines are, without exception, rhythmically vital and active. In addition to strong and tuneful melodies, McNeely demonstrates meticulous attention to counterpoint and the creation of interesting counter melodies. His constant awareness of counterpoint extends to the relationship of his melodies to the bass movement. These considerations result in active and interesting bass lines with (often inverted) harmonies that sound fresh while providing good voice leading.

McNeely's instrumental voicings are likewise varied. His most favored voicing is the unison followed by unison with octaves. Many of his angular and chromatic lines preclude harmonization of any sort. In special circumstances he may choose to maintain a fixed mechanical or intervallic voicing over a significant period (such as the chorale sections of *Absolution*), but he is not prone to using standard voicings such as drop-2 or drop-3 for any length of time. Sometimes it seems that McNeely is trying to find a way to get as many players (or instrumental colors) as possible on a given melody line, and then filling out the harmony with who is left (e.g. measure 83 in *Wee Small Hours*).

Non-tertian voicings are used throughout these charts. There are numerous instances of open fourths and fifths in the brass voicings as well as significant sections based on quartal harmony. During the extended passages of modal harmony, McNeely uses a great deal of planing, primarily diatonic with strict planing used to highlight sideslipping or "outside" tonal shifts. Often, McNeely uses open voicings that spread the ensemble for extended sections.

Many of McNeely's functional or tertian voicings are the result of a linear approach to the individual voices that often takes precedence over a fixed voicing. This linear approach also effects which substitute and passing chords are used, leading to a more chromatic sound with relatively few secondary dominant passing chords. In other words, he may start a passage with the saxophones in a drop-2 voicing but move away from it for no obvious reason. On the other hand, he may start the passage in close voiced chords and gravitate (albeit temporarily) to a drop-2 or drop-3.

One reason for this flexible approach to voicings may be that he doesn't employ (at least in the traditional sense) many of the conventional devices associated with "big band" writing such as the customary saxophone soli or a flag waving shout chorus.

Drop-2 or drop-3 voicings are helpful in a typical saxophone soli, where an arranger

might be required to harmonize a lead line for anywhere from sixteen to sixty four measures.

McNeely often uses non-traditional chord progressions and sequences that are seldom based on a straightforward dominant to tonic functionality. He favors root movements based on thirds and whole and half steps. He frequently moves upper structures above pedal points and ostinatos.

One outstanding aspect of McNeely's style is his extensive use of compositional techniques commonly associated with European art (or "classical") music. A few of the devices found include: serial techniques, pitch class sets, melodic and rhythmic cells, isorhythm, planing, additive phrase building, polytonality, polyrhythm, metric modulation, extensive use of hemiola, monophony, augmentation, and diminution.

McNeely's rigorous application of such techniques sets him apart and his highly developmental approach is in evidence throughout.

McNeely's approach to orchestration is always dictated by the music at hand. He uses instrumental groupings that often combine players from across the ensemble while at other times he may choose combinations of like instruments, or instruments in similar registers (e.g. the low register ensemble in *Extra Credit*). On occasion, he may borrow a voice from another section to complete a harmony. McNeely frequently doubles the bass line in the bass trombone and/or baritone saxophone. The trumpets and trombones do not always work together as a concerted brass section. Important melodic ideas are almost always presented by a group of three or more players, with three being the most common grouping.

All three charts feature extensive space for the soloist(s) to interact with rhythm section only. When background figures are present, they are given to thorough compositional development and are not just pads or comping figures behind a soloist. The relationship of the soloist(s) to the entire ensemble is more organic than one might expect in a traditional arrangement. Improvisations occur throughout the fabric of the composition, not just in narrowly defined "solo sections." The concept of interplay between soloist and ensemble is a prominent feature of all three compositions.

McNeely exercises thoughtful and deliberate control over every aspect of the compositional process. It is his attention to musical detail that allows him to execute the "big picture" concepts that serve as the impetus for each of these pieces.

### THE MUSIC OF THE MOMENT

There are numerous occasions in each of these three charts, in which McNeely sets up a pattern or operates within some type of fixed guideline or self-imposed structure. It may be a detailed formal map, a fixed mechanical voicing or an instrumental combination. In each case, McNeely uses the pattern, device or framework up to the point at which he feels musically compelled to depart from it. Without exception, the overall musical effect takes precedence. In other words, he doesn't allow the device or procedure to interfere with the overall effect of the music. He readily breaks from the structure or pattern when the music calls for it.

Any discussion of McNeely's success as a writer must mention his successful career as a player. McNeely comes to writing at the height his career as a world-class improviser, accompanist, and jazz soloist having worked Stan Getz, Chet Baker, Phil

Woods and countless other first-tier jazz artists. His compositions feature thoughtful and creative ways of integrating and supporting improvising soloists in a manner born from his ability to do so as a pianist. His melodic writing reveals the wit and sophistication of first-rate improviser. While he avoids the use of "piano-isms" in his instrumental writing, it seems his deep connection to the keyboard serves as the wellspring for much of his compositional material.

## MCNEELY AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES

McNeely's contemporaries can be seen as belonging to one of two general categories: traditional big band arrangers and composers who take a more orchestral approach to large jazz ensemble writing (soundscape composers for lack of a better term). Among the former group are writers such as Bob Mintzer, Toshiko Akiyoshi, Tom Kubis, Gordon Goodwin, Bob Curnow, Slide Hampton, John Fedchock and Bill Holman (who alternately exhibits traits of both categories). The compositions and/or arrangements of these writers fall primarily within the tradition of big band arranging that can trace its roots back to the dance band arrangements of the swing era.

The charts of these arrangers tend to include many of the standard devices and techniques found in a traditional arrangement, such as: saxophone solis, shout choruses, solo backgrounds and pads, mostly swing eighth notes, clear divisions between formal sections, limited improvised solo space, and a harmonic vocabulary derived mainly from the bebop era with a functional tonic to dominant relationship. The arrangements of these writers are generally available through commercial publishing houses who find a

good part of their market with college and high school jazz bands as well as some professional and community big bands.

The orchestral approach of the soundscape writers may be said to emanate from the writing of Duke Ellington, Gil Evans, and Bob Brookmeyer, who is both a predecessor and contemporary of McNeely. The established and influential contemporary composers in this category are fewer. This group includes Maria Schneider, Brookmeyer, Kenny Wheeler and McNeely. These composers treat the ensemble from an orchestral standpoint; often dealing in long-form extended works.

The general style characteristics of this group, of which McNeely is most definitely a part, include: treating orchestration and instrumental combinations in terms of color, dynamics as shapes, more expansive and integrated solo space, less dependence on traditional forms, and a more contemporary harmonic vocabulary including a higher percentage modal and non-functional harmony. These writers tend to work primarily as composers rather than as arrangers, preferring to work with their own material. Many of their arrangements are self-published and their works are generally not as commercially accessible or available as those in the first list.

The McNeely style is unique for several reasons. Whereas someone like Maria Schneider forms an ensemble around her concept of sound, McNeely's sound is, in large part, a product of his interaction with a long established group of players with its own tradition of interpretation and writing. His style is a direct descendent and synthesis of the groove oriented, rhythmically vital style of Thad Jones and the large-scale canvases of Brookmeyer. Although he has a consistent methodology and approach to writing, his

compositions display very little of the homogeneity of sound found in the works of Schneider.

The three works studied herein reflect McNeely's comprehensive mastery of the processes of composition and orchestration, his assimilation of the jazz language, and the diversity of his creative approach. Each piece presents a wealth of material for further study and, as Wright mentions in his conclusion, the discussions begun here only scratch the surface when it comes to what can be found within them.

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#### APPENDIX A

### SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

## RECORDINGS AS LEADER

McNeely, Jim. In This Moment:	The Jim McNeely Trio. Stunt 02142, 2003. CD.
Play Bill Evans (The	DRJO and Jim McNeely). Stunt 02042, 2002. CD.
<i>Nice Work, The Danis</i> DCCD 9446, 2001. CD.	sh Radio Jazz Orchestra & Jim McNeely. DaCapo
Lickety Split: The Var New World 80534-2, 199	nguard Jazz Orchestra Plays the Music of Jim McNeely. 97. CD.
Sound Bites (w/ the Si	tockholm Jazz Orchestra and Dick Oatts). Dragon 311,
Jim McNeely at Mayb	peck (Volume 20). Concord 4522, 1992. CD.
East Coast Blow Out.	Lipstick 890072, 1999. CD.
Jigsaw (w/Stockholm	Jazz Orchestra). Dragon 213, 1995. CD.
. Winds of Change. Ste	epleChase 31256, 1991. CD.

From the Heart. Owl 045, 1985.
East Side, West Side. Owl 024, 1981.
The Plot Thickens. Muse 5378, 1979.
Rain's Dance. SteepleChase 4001, 1978.
SELECTED OTHER RECORDINGS
Brookmeyer, Bob. <i>Through a Looking Glass</i> . Finesse FW 37488, 1982. LF
Farmer, Art and Slide Hampton. <i>In Concert</i> . Enja 4088, 1984. LP.
Getz, Stan. Blue Skies. Concord Jazz CCD-4676, 1995. CD.
Line for Lyons. Gazelle STV-4090, 1983.
Pure Getz. Concord CJ 188, 1982.
Liebman, David. Time Line. Owl 054, 1989. CD.
Homage to Coltrane. Owl 046, 1987. CD.
Mel Lewis Jazz Orchestra. <i>Make Me Smile</i> . Finesse FW 37987, 1982.
Plays Bob Brookmeyer. Gryphon G912, 1980.
<i>Naturally</i> . Telarc 10044, 1979.
Mel Lewis Quintet. Mellifluous. Gatemouth 1006, 1981.
Reid, Rufus. Seven Minds. Sunnyside SSC 1010, 1984.

The Vangaurd Jazz Orchestra. <i>The Thad Jones Legacy</i> . New World 80581-2, 1999. CD.		
Walrath, Jack. Demons in Pursuit. Gatemouth 1002, 1979. LP.		
Woods, Phil. You and the Night and the Music. Venus 79038, 2002. CD.		
Plays the Music of Jim McNeely. TCB Music TCOB95402, 1995. CD.		
The 20th Anniversary Album. Mosaic 159, 1995. CD.		
Souvenirs. Evidence 22177-2, 1994. CD.		
An Affair to Remember. Evidence 22125-2, 1993. CD.		
Full House. Milestone 9196-2, 1991. CD.		
The Phil Woods Little Big Band: Real Life. Chesky JD47, 1990.		
Woods, Phil and Jim McNeely. Flowers for Hodges. Concord CCD 4485, 1991. CD.		
COMPOSITIONS AND ARRANGEMENTS RECORDED BY		
Carnegie Hall Jazz Band		
Danish Radio Jazz Orchestra		
De Paul University Jazz Band		
Hessicher Rundfunk Big Band (Frankfurt)		
Manhattan School of Music Jazz Ensemble		
Mel Lewis & the Jazz Orchestra		
Metropole Orchestra (Netherlands)		

Phil Woods Quintet

Stan Getz Quartet

Stockholm Jazz Orchestra

The Vanguard Jazz Orchestra

UMO Jazz Orchestra (Helsinki)

University of Northern Colorado Jazz Lab Band I

West German Radio Big Band (Cologne)

# APPENDIX B EDITED SCORES

# IN THE WEE SMALL HOURS OF THE MORNING

# IN THE WEE SMALL HOURS OF THE MORNING

David Mann and Bob Hilliard Arranged by: Jim McNeely





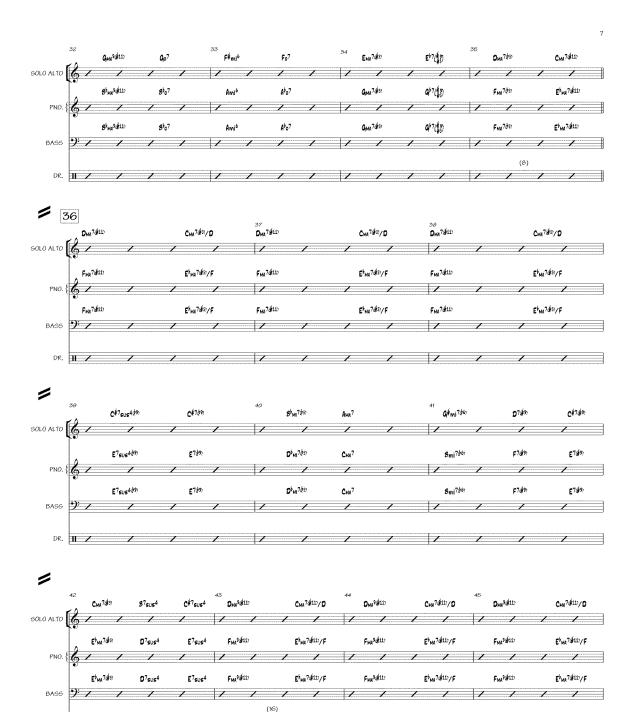






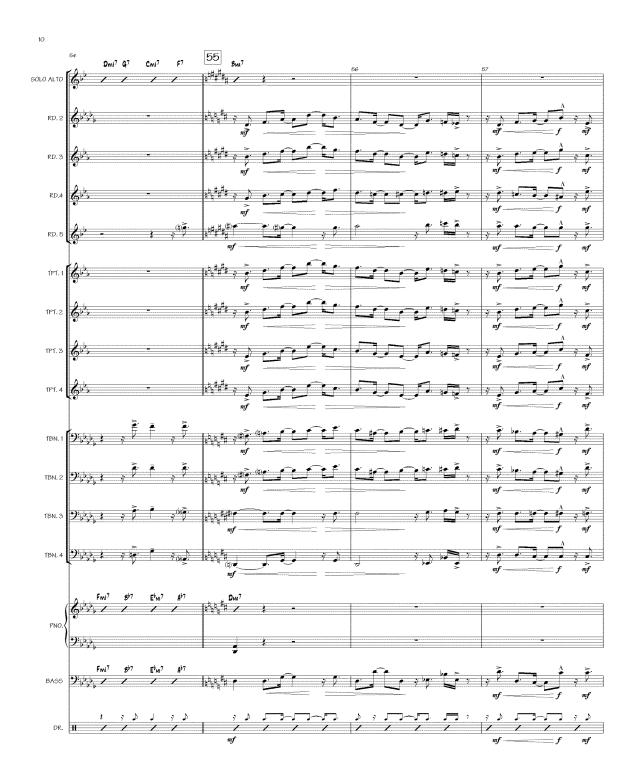
C%MA7#117 GmiMA9 (Swing) 



































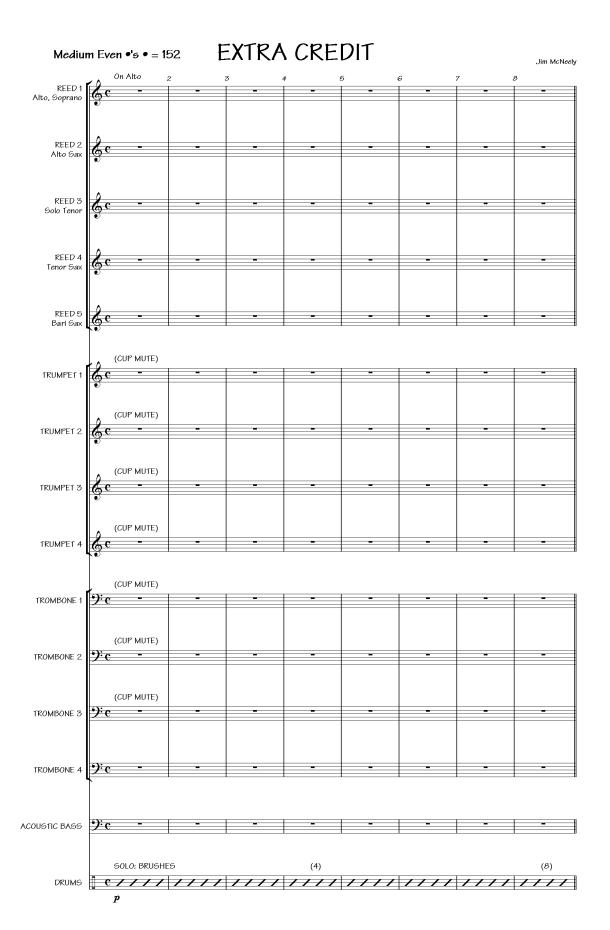








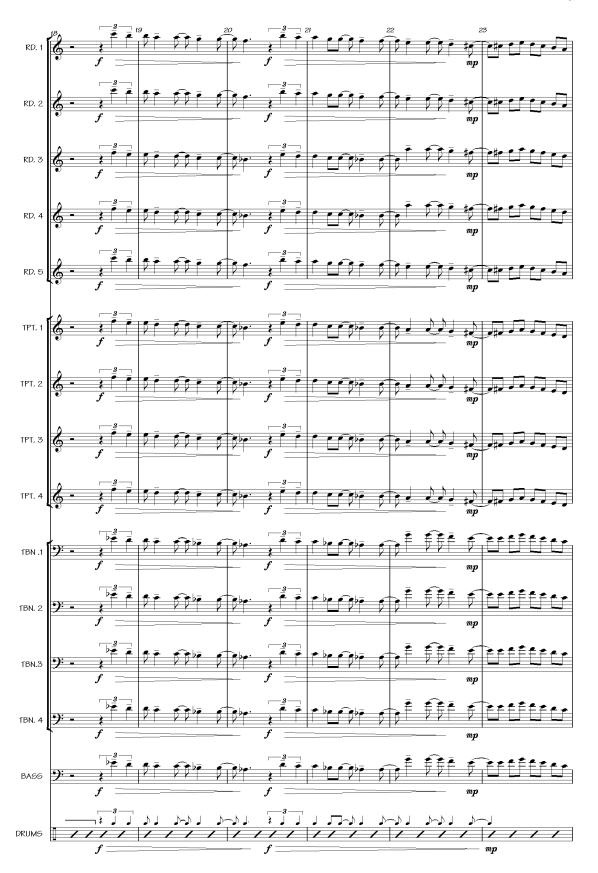
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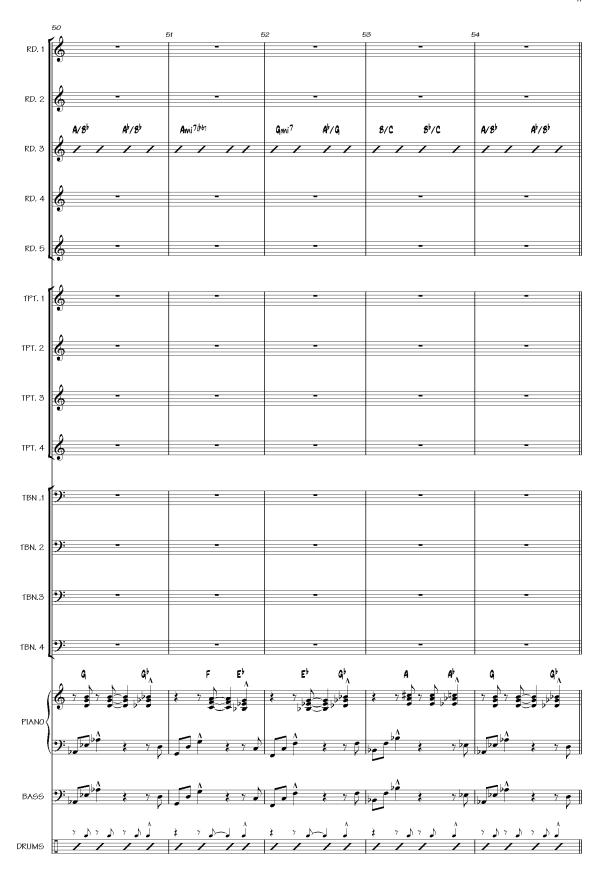








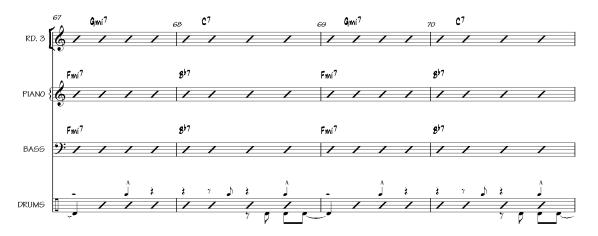




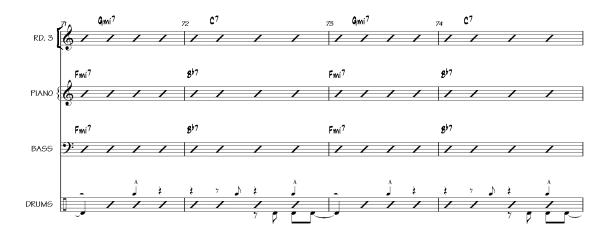




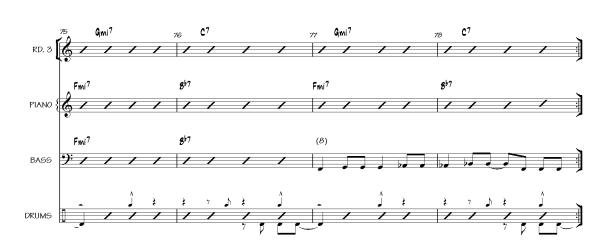














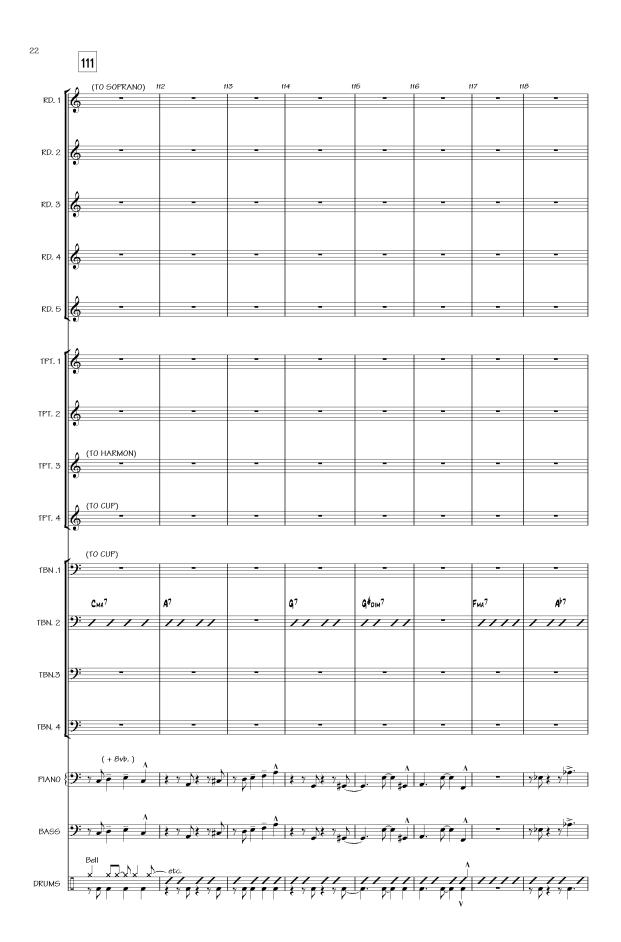




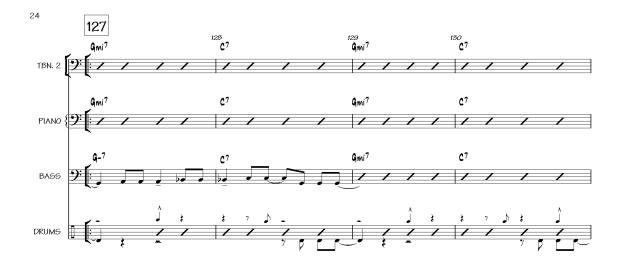




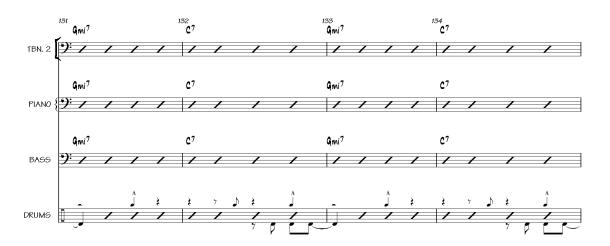




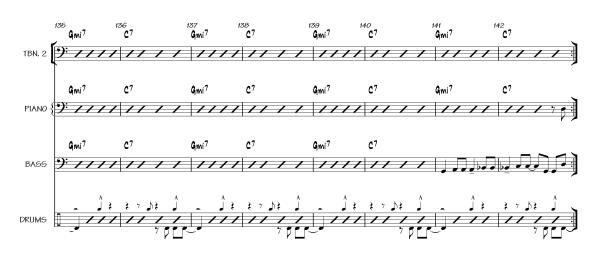














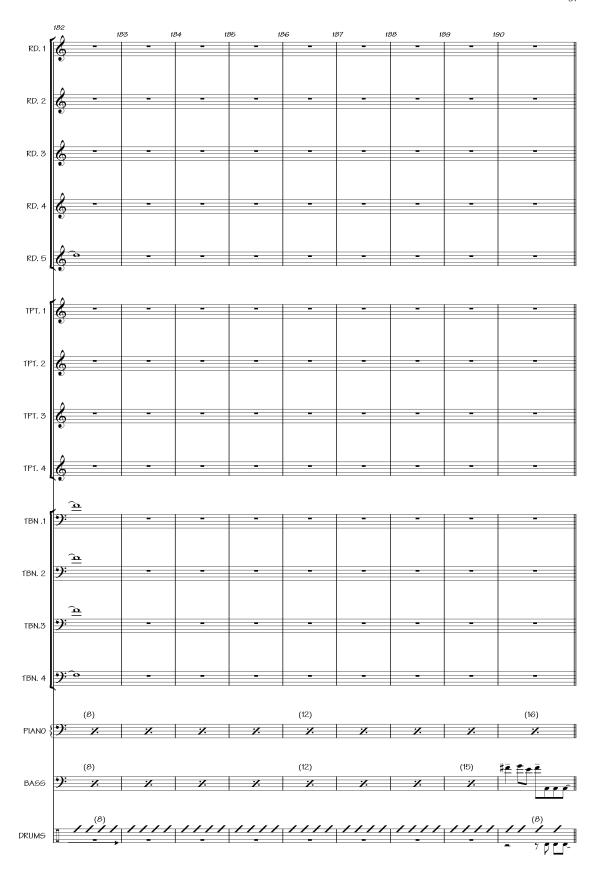


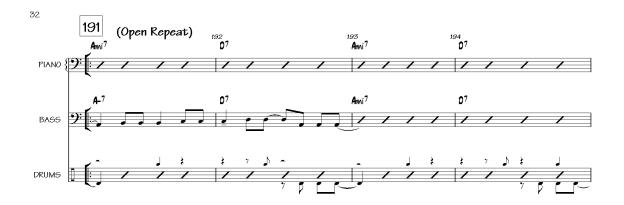




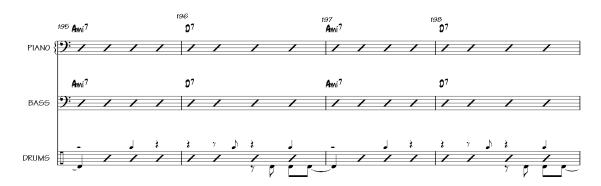


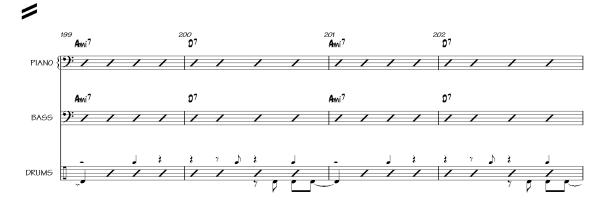


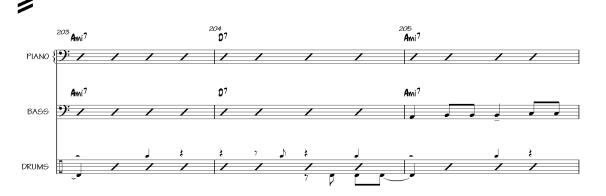






















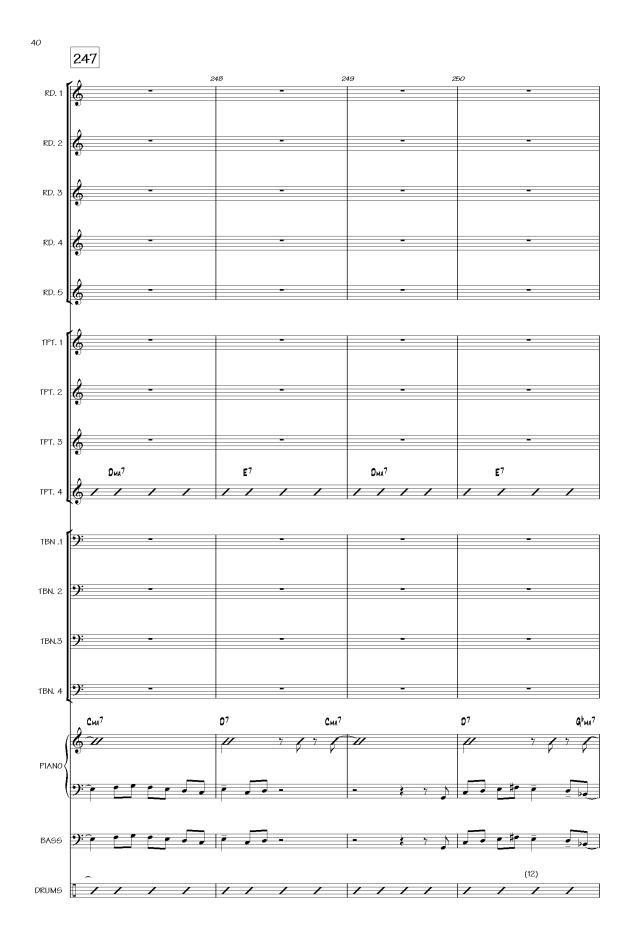




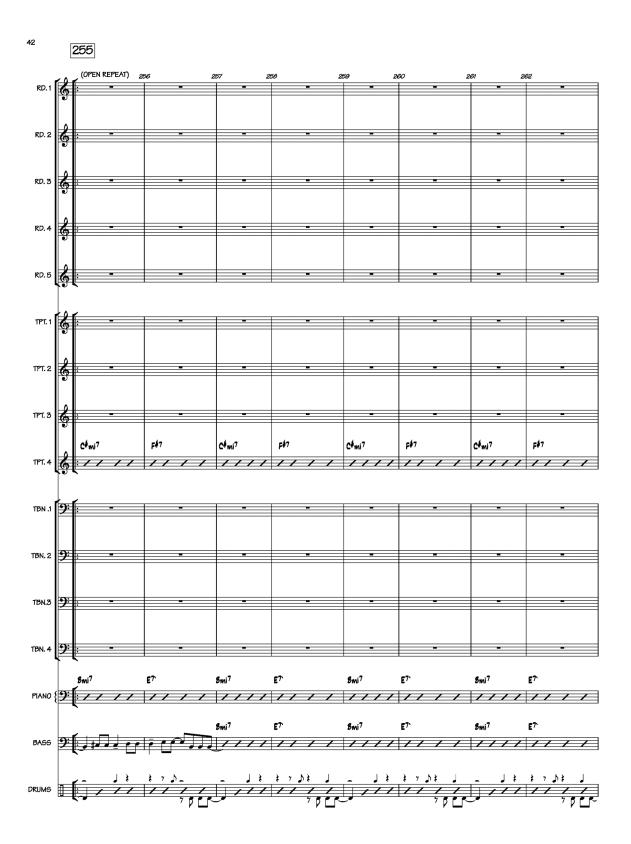




























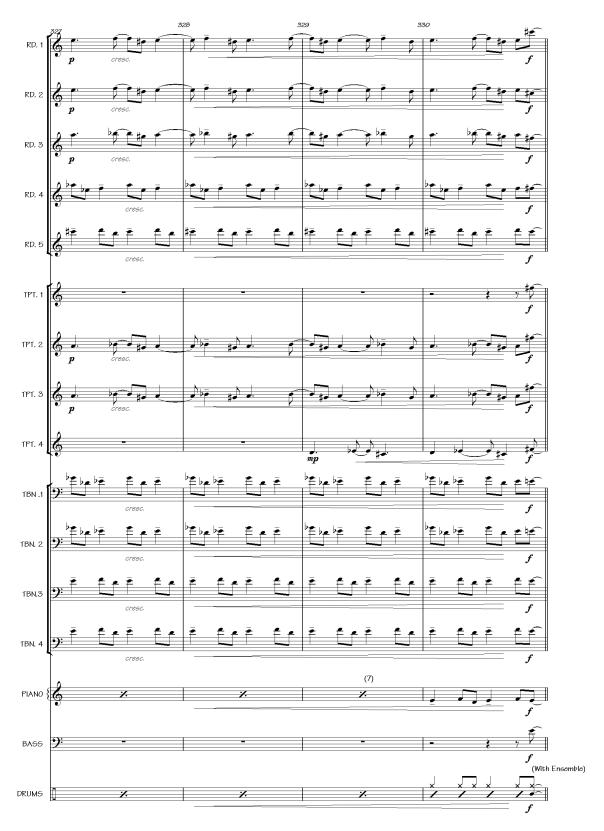














## ABSOLUTION





























