THE LITHUANIAN ACADEMY OF MUSIC AND THEATRE
FACULTY OF MUSIC
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Some Methods of Discovering the Principles of Jazz Composition and Their Creative Application

Study Program: Music Performance (Jazz Guitar)
Master's Thesis

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Abstract

The thesis deals with the topic of "modern" modal jazz, focusing on characterizing the compositional principles and on offering the reader fresh ideas for the creation of new material. The dissertation begins with an overview of the modal jazz scene and it goes on with the analysis of compositions by some of the most famous modal jazz composers. The final chapters present a creative application of the concepts learned by the analysis and the conclusions of the work.

SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

Today, “modern” modal jazz is a wide word that includes many different stylistic approaches to composing developed since the middle of the past century. In about seventy years of history the modal jazz composition has been growing very quickly by absorbing the influences coming from other music genres and incorporating them in a unique various and sophisticated language.

The principles that carry out the jazz modal compositional process have been studied and developed by musicians and composers in various textbooks. “Modal Jazz Composition and Harmony” by Ron Miller (1996), “Modern Jazz Composition: Theory and Practice” (2003) and “Modern Jazz Voicings” (2001) both by Ted Pease, “The Jazz Theory Book” (1995) by Mark Levine are just some examples of authors who have tried to decipher the compositional language according to the study of recurring harmonic, melodic and structural elements. The research is based on finding answers to questions such as: “What are the compositional techniques used in modern modal jazz?”, “How is modal harmony conceived?”, “How should the principles belonging to this type of music be applied in a personal and creative way?”

Ted Pease's book "Modern Jazz Voicings" presents an in-depth analysis of the type of voicing used in modern modal jazz for small ensembles. Ron Miller, in writing "Modal Jazz", talks about how to conceive modal harmony diatonically and chromatically by mentioning how the sound of modal scales is connected to the emotional sphere of the listener and composer. "Jazz Composition Theory and Practice" reports a detailed collection of information related to tonal and modal harmonic contexts, different approaches to thematic melodic writing and studies on the different forms and compositional structures. The previously mentioned material is useful to obtain a broad overview of the compositional language linked to modern modal jazz, but the specificity of the use of the compositional principles must be sought in the musical repertoire written by every reference composer.

This work deals precisely with the discovery of some of the key principles that determine the compositional typology just mentioned and their creative application.

The objective of the research is therefore to identify, analyze and creatively rework some of the most important compositional elements based on the analysis of compositions that represent the essence of this musical language.

The hypothesis, whose confirmation is the objective of the research, is that there are similarities in the composers’ stylistic choices that can confirm the identity of “modern” modal jazz.

In order to achieve the research objective, the following concepts will be deepened:

1. Harmonization of a melody establishing “modal sound”

2. Support of the harmony by writing of one or more melodies

3. Develop and structure of a compositional idea

Once these aspects have been assimilated, it will be possible to understand the analyzed music by associating the type of sound with the compositional modality used by the composer and to propose it again by developing original ideas.

Through the analysis and the evaluation of a series of important compositions belonging to the field of modal jazz, beyond the textbooks mentioned in the bibliography, the research develops according to the following structure:

After the introduction, the paper begins by presenting a general scenario of modal harmony in jazz, mentioning the historical background, the principles, and the main differences between the early and the modern modal compositions.

The second chapter will be dedicated to the analysis of songs written by influential artists such as Wayne Shorter, Kenny Wheeler, and John Abercrombie where the investigation of the harmonic, melodic, and structural aspects of the chosen music will be provided. The compositional strategies discovered from the analysis will be evaluate by displaying sheet music examples and explaining them from the composer's point of view. The research will inspect the techniques of modal harmonization, counterpoint, motivic development and it will relate them all with the style of each composer question.

In the third chapter, the creative application of the principles discovered in the previous part will be discussed by giving examples in the compositions of the paper's author.

The final chapter will include the conclusions and it will report the results obtained from the analysis, with the purpose of enriching the compositional knowledge and supporting a personal prolific way of musical expression.

1 JAZZ COMPOSITION: GENERAL CONCEPT OF MODAL LANGUAGE

1.1 A few historical notes of Modal harmony in jazz

The conception of modal harmony in jazz is directly related with the birth of modal jazz, a musical genre that appeared during the second half of the 1900s. Modal jazz happens as a reaction to Bebop and Hard bop, which had increased the jazz structures with harmonic tonal type of progressions characterized by numerous different chords, harmonic substitutions and obsessive rhythm. Modal jazz it has been developing from the late fifties until the present days with the purpose of bringing innovation in jazz language looking for the expression of a different conception of harmony and breaks the conventional tonal relationship between chords and melody.

Among the recordings that better represent the roots of modal jazz other than the first experiments by John Russel it is worth to mention "Something Else" by Julian Cannonball Adderley (1958), Milestone by Miles Davis (1958) and "The Touch of Tony Scott" by Tony Scott where is possible to find one of the first modal songs of jazz history called "Aeolian Drinking Song". The innovation brought by those recordings opened the boundaries to the experimentations in the new huge field of modal composition which shows a remarkable maturity in the album "Kind of Blue" by Miles Davis released on the 17th August of 1959s.

Musicians refer to the special sound on Kind of Blue as "modal" because it contains a completely new way to conceive harmony and writing tunes. The desire of the composer was move away from the hard bop sound he had been championing in his live performances and on albums like 1954's "Walk in". Inspired by French composers Maurice Ravel and Claude Debussy and George Russell's 1953 book "The Lydian Chromatic Concept of Tonal Organization", Miles Davis abandoned traditional harmonies and experiment with modes. The result was that instead of harmonizing over quick chord changes in a tonal harmonic style the musicians started to improvise over a series of eight modes (or scales). Traditional harmonies were abandoned, and the players were set free.

At the beginning of the experimentation of modal harmony compositions like "So What" ("Kind of Blue") were based on a single mode and presented a basic modal harmonic structure where the melody had a lot of space to explore the chose sonority. From this meaningful point of jazz history the language of modal jazz and its related harmonic conception started to be experimented by many other important composers such Wayne Shorter, John Coltrane, Herbie Hancock and late in the 1960' Kenny Wheeler who have stretched and extended the rules concerning the application of modes, melodic writing and harmonization techniques. Is therefore intuitive that such a freedom made the

composer to explore harmony from a completely different point of view that over the time has shown the birth of a huge variety of new music and compositional strategies.

In the next point 1.2 will be exposed some of the principles and features that define modal harmony but before that, it is worth to mention some of the main recordings that played an important role in the growth of modal jazz: “My Favorite Things” by John Coltrane” (1961), “Waltz For Debby” by Bill Evans (1961), “The Real McCoy” by McCoy Tyner (1967), “Maiden Voyage” by Herbie Hancock (1965), “Speak No Evil” by Wayne Shorter (1965) and “Gnu High” by Kenny Wheeler (1975).

1.2 Some principles of Modal harmony

Modal harmony breaks the common relationship between chords and the tonal context in which they are applied, and it is based on the use of modes or “modal scales”. Each mode has a characteristic note (marked in red in Figure 1) that distinguishes its sound:

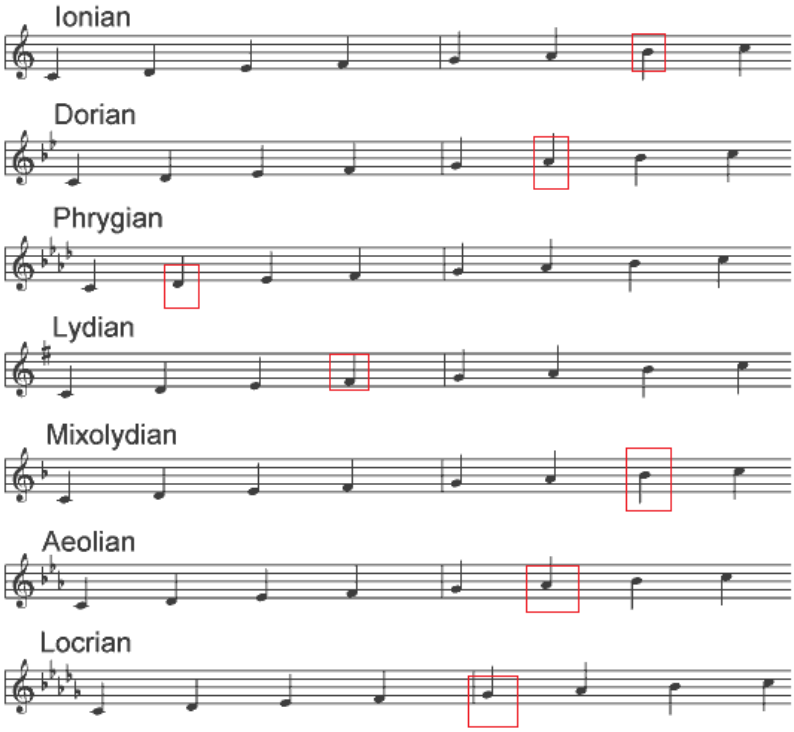

Figure 1 Diatonic Modes from the major scale

The way in which chords and the typology of scales displayed in Figure 1 are associated is independent from any tonal rule and the connection between phrases played over different chords happens by some particular melodic solution where the sounds never show a relation with the tonality but only with the chord mode (e.g. in the 5th and 6th bars of Figure 20).

It became necessary to first thing about the scale (mode) and then build the harmony according to it being aware that the chords constructions can move on the whole extension of a given scale (Figure 2).

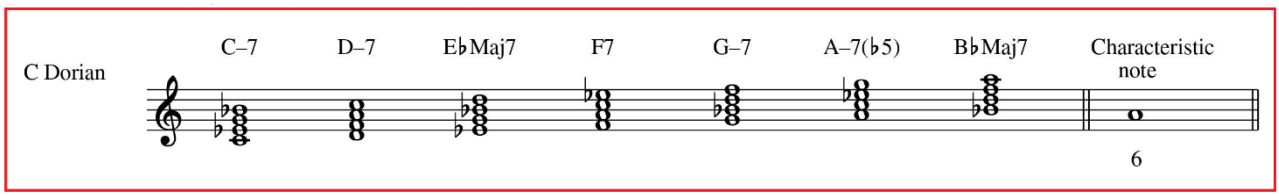

Figure 2 Diatonic seventh chords derived from C Dorian (1)

Taking the example of C Dorian scale (Figure 2) is evident how each note of the mode generates a diatonic seventh chord that can be select and combine with the others to create a specific harmonic situation according with the scale.

Another important consideration that characterized modal harmony is related to the way the chords are built. As explained by Ted Pease (1) voicings on thirds (triads and seventh chords) are identify with the major or minor modes and they tend to promote tonal rather than modal identity. A "quartal triad" (three notes voicing in perfect 4^{th}) does not sound major, minor, augmented or diminished and any of the three voicing notes may be the root of the chord. This ambiguous and suspended sonority is one of the main features that determine the modal sound.

In the process of building harmony many other principles can play an interesting role. The modes can be interchanged keeping the same bass root or the chords progression may be shaped according with the modes described by the melody. It is exactly at this point that the symbiosis between harmony and melody that characterized the previous jazz production is lost. Each mode has a unique sound and color and the variety of the obtainable harmonic combinations open a deep universe from the composer's side.

The next point 1.3 will exemplify some type of modal harmonic situations that underline the changes occurred during the growth of modal jazz.

1.3 Harmonic stylistic differences in Modal jazz

During the history of modal jazz development is possible to identify different types of approaches to harmony. According with Ron Miller (2) the early modal composition was based on one mode and a symmetrical AABA song form as shown in the example below (Figure 3, (3)):

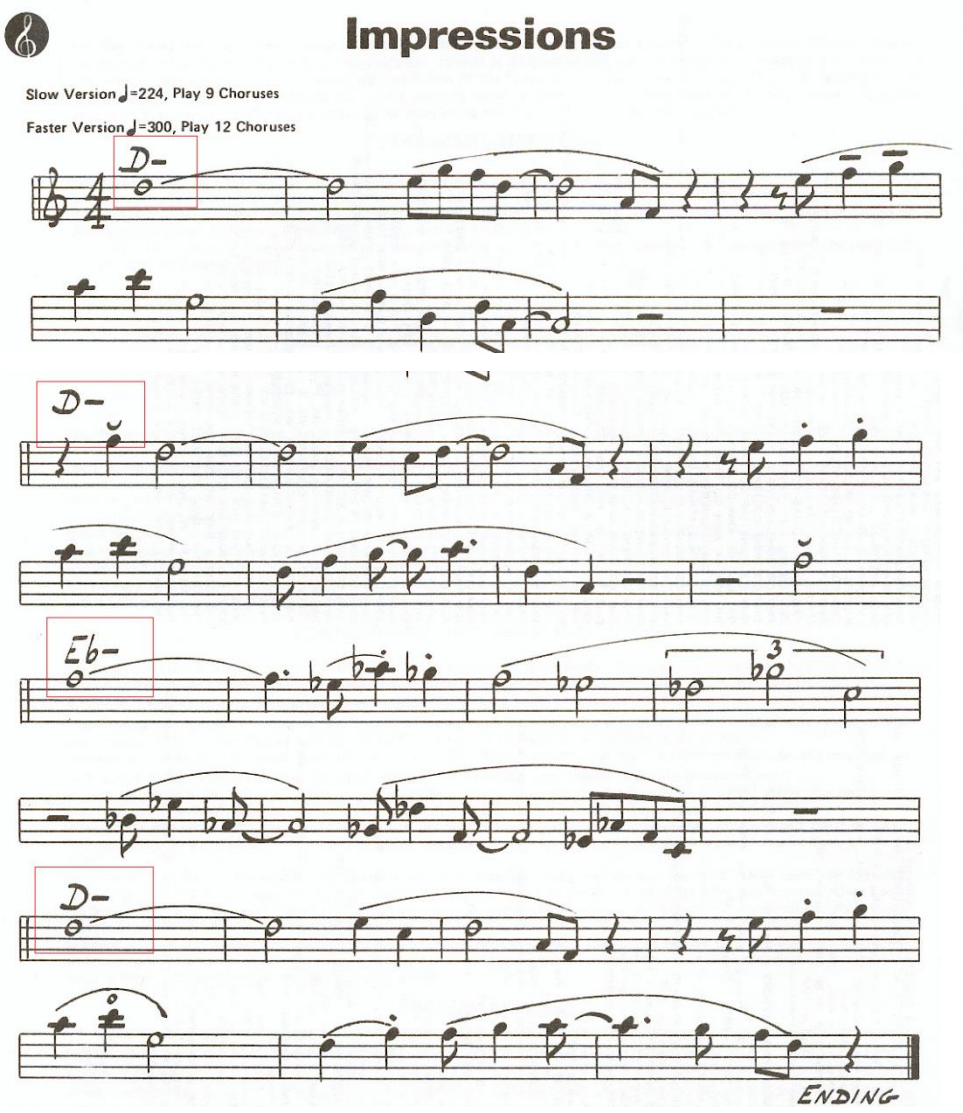

Figure 3 Impressions by John Coltrane (3)

"Impressions" by John Coltrane (Figure 3) has a typical AABA form and is based on the Dorian mode. For the first two AA (first 16th bars of Figure 3) sections the harmony is expressed by D Dorian which modulate half step higher (Eb Dorian from 17th to 24th bar of Figure 3) and then come back to D Dorian for the last eight bars (25th to 32nd bar of Figure 3). In this harmonic situation the melody has a dilated space to express the color of the Dorian mode inside a symmetrical song form.

In the next example will be expose a totally different modal harmonic approach form the song “Infant Eyes” by Wayne Shorter (Figure 4, (4))

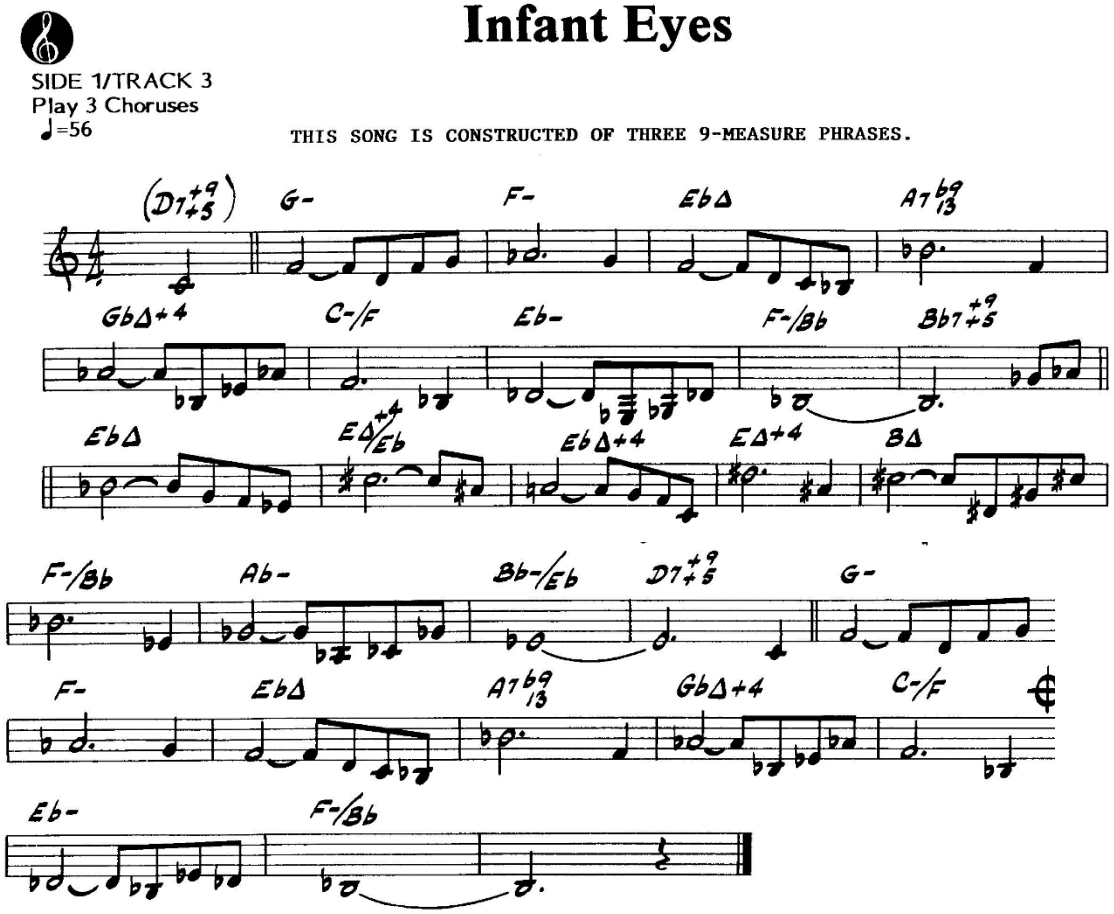

Figure 4 Infant Eyes by Wayne Shorter (4)

In “Infant Eyes” (Figure 4) harmony is denser than in the previous Coltrane example (Figure 3) and harmonic structure is much more sophisticated. Each chord is associated with the melody according with the related mode as reported in 1st to 4th bar of Figure 4: G-7: Dorian – F-7: Dorian – EbMaj7: Ionian and A7b9: Major Phrygian. “Infant Eyes” has a harmonic richness that labels it as “Modal complex” type of composition for the variety of modes and sonorities that characterized the tune.

The two examples described above in the text show how the usage of modal harmony in a compositional context change from composer to composer and from style to style (early modal to complex modal compositions). In the next chapter, to remark these changes, will be discuss and analyze the strategies for the harmony realization used by famous composers such Wayne Shorter, Kenny Wheeler and John Abercrombie integrating the analysis with a few examples of their creative application.

2 JAZZ COMPOSITION: ANALYSIS OF MODAL HARMONIC SYSTEMS

Various conceptions of harmony related to jazz composition during the jazz development

Part of the challenge of writing jazz is to use conventional chord changes, re-harmonization, modulations, and voicings in unique ways. Furthermore, part of the basic character of jazz is that its harmonic language is so well understood by experienced players that guest musicians can perform together at a moment's notice. In doing this collaboration the difference between jazz harmony and jazz voicings should be consider.

In jazz composition harmony delivers the progression of chords in time ("changes") and the possible harmonic substitutions that might be made for more familiar patterns. Jazz voicings are the individual harmonic sounds that composers and performers produce when providing vertical structures within a progression. The relationship between voicings and changes provides much of the harmonic interest in jazz - which could be based on the dualistic nature of harmony-tonal or modal (as well as based on both simultaneously).

Until the mid - 1950s, most jazz compositions were tonal. It could be said that a piece was in this major key or that minor key. Jazz voicings consisted of seventh chords and their extensions (9th, 11th, and 13th) and were built up from the root in thirds ("tertian" harmony). Functional harmony was the prevailing harmonic system of analysis. (Functional harmony recognizes the preeminence of tonic, subdominant, and dominant chords and their common tone substitutes in virtually every style of classical and popular music.) All these characteristics produced a level of comfort among jazz musicians, who welcomed the commonality of the musical language.

In the late 1950s, jazz composers such as George Russell and Miles Davis began using modes in their compositions. George Russell used various scales and modes in polytonal and poly modal relationships in compositions such as "All about Rosie." Miles Davis turned the jazz world upside down in his seminal album "Kind of Blue" with modal compositions such as "So What". The latter two classic jazz compositions were also noteworthy for their extended harmonic rhythms and for the use of ostinatos. They sounded quite different from the bebop and hard bop tunes that were also being written at the time.

The diversity of modal harmony was continuing to grow with the help of musicians like the pianist Bill Evans - he performed with George Russell and Miles Davis on that remarkable recordings and contributed to the impact of the new modal approach by voicing chords in fourths and in seconds, as well as in thirds. These new voicings were unfamiliar to most jazz musicians at first, but their usage was eagerly adopted in the early 1960s by such pianists as McCoy Tyner and Herbie Hancock, and by such composer/arrangers as Oliver Nelson and Thad Jones. From the middle of the 1960s this new harmonic language had been absorbed by most composers and players of the day and was being

used along with the earlier styles. This established variety of harmony usage lead to a new application of it, which include the use of harmonic structures conceived as unconventional back on those times.

Some tunes of the 1960s also strayed farther away from functional harmony as deliberate tonal identity became less important. Chromatic harmony and parallel harmony (so called "constant structures") became more and more common. The chord progressions of Wayne Shorter ex: "Nefertiti" and Herbie Hancock ex: "Maiden Voyage" were sometimes purposefully ambiguous. The 1st chord was no longer a frequent target point, and consequently the tonality was often vague. Sometimes it seemed as if any chord could follow any other chord, melody permitting. (Chromatic harmony).

In recent years, composers such as John Scofield have occasionally employed ostinatos and other bass lines that suggest a polytonal relationship (or disconnect) with the melody. Such Scofield tunes as "Stranger to the Light" and "I Can See Your House from Here" are good examples. Contemporary jazz harmony presents a variety of sounds ranging from simple triads to complex poly chords.

Jazz composers need to have a firm grasp of all its aspects; know how to move into tonal harmony mastering the sound of different chords progressions, harmonic substitutions and cadences as well as modes, voicing chords in 4th and the use of ostinatos. Deepen the knowledge about metric modulations, melodic devices, and songs forms to enrich their vocabulary as composers and achieve the ability to build their own style. The analysis of standard and modal songs as well as more modern and advanced compositions is one of the most efficient ways to understand and absorb some of the principles related to jazz composition.

The strategies of harmony realizations

The strategies of harmony realization are some of the procedures chosen and applied by composers to their original compositions. How each composer builds his own set of approaches to compose a song, mostly depends on his style. Specifically talking about jazz composition, the techniques used by composers have been grown and become more sophisticated during the development of the jazz language from the beginning of the 20th century until now. Each period has some features which make it recognizable from the musicians and the listeners; in this chapter, some of those features will be explored, analyzed and illustrated related to the strategies useful for their realization.

Now let us start to get more into the composer point of view from which is possible to better understand the harmonic elements involved in the process necessary to ultimate a composition. The first example is about the Wayne Shorter's composition "Nefertiti", from (4).

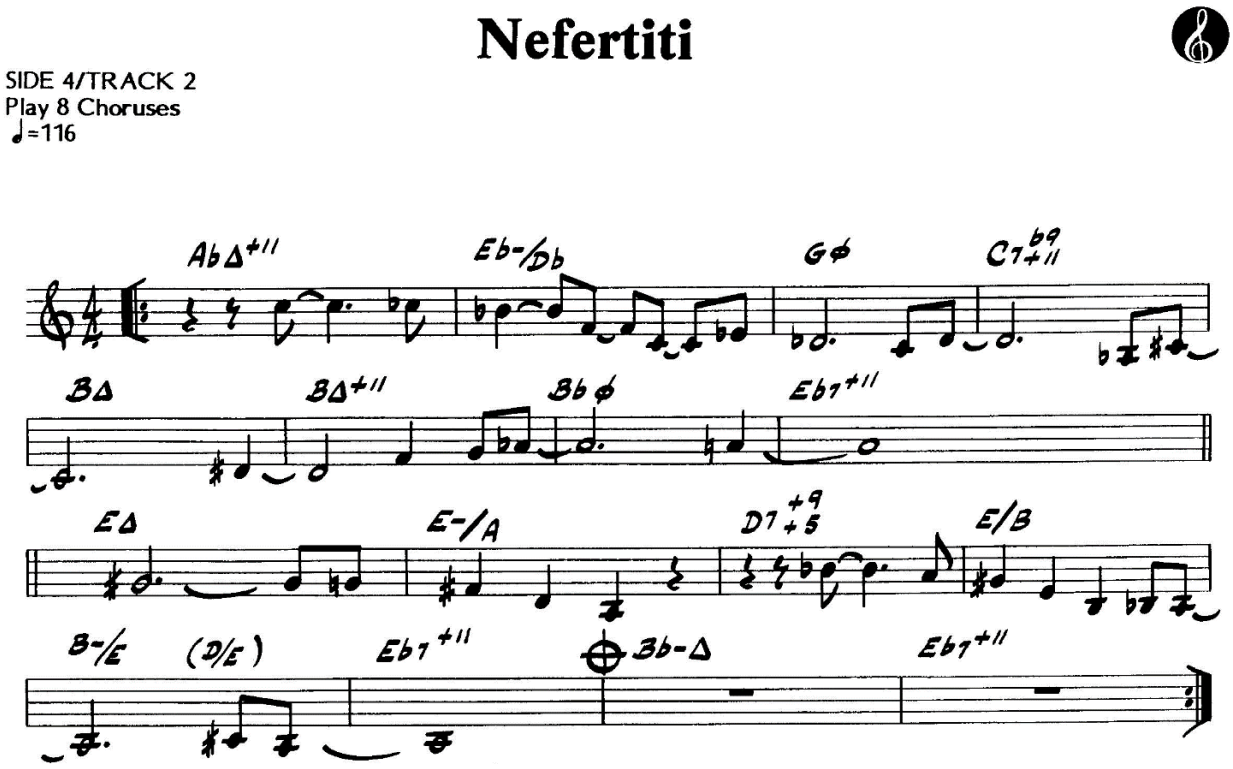

Figure 5 Nefertiti main melody (4)

This song came from the Miles Davis's album "Nefertiti" released in March 1968. The composition belongs to the sphere of modal jazz and it can be included in the "Modal Complex (free form)" category. According to the Ron Miller definition, "modal chords structures, fast or slow asymmetric rhythms and free form'' are some of the features of this type of compositions. In this tune is interesting to see how the composer choose to combine a lyrical melody with a mixture of standard chords progressions like II/V and suspended modal chords as AbMaj7 (add #11th) (Lydian). How the melody is harmonized does not follow a canonic tonal approach but is based on a modal conception of harmony.

According to Ted Pease theoretical explanation in (1), Modal harmony appeared in the jazz scene from the late 1950s and it is mostly based on the use of diatonic modes obtained from the major scale.

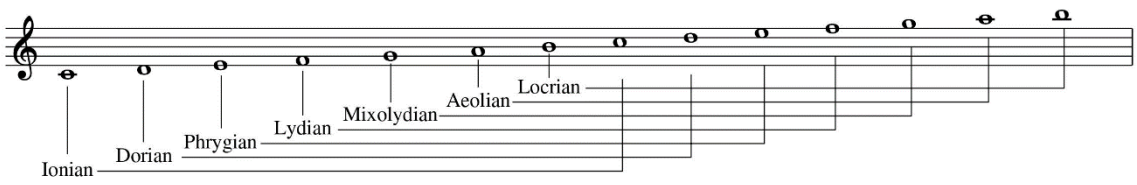

Figure 6 Diatonic modes obtained from the C major scale (1)

Here an example of the unaltered diatonic modes in C major from (2).

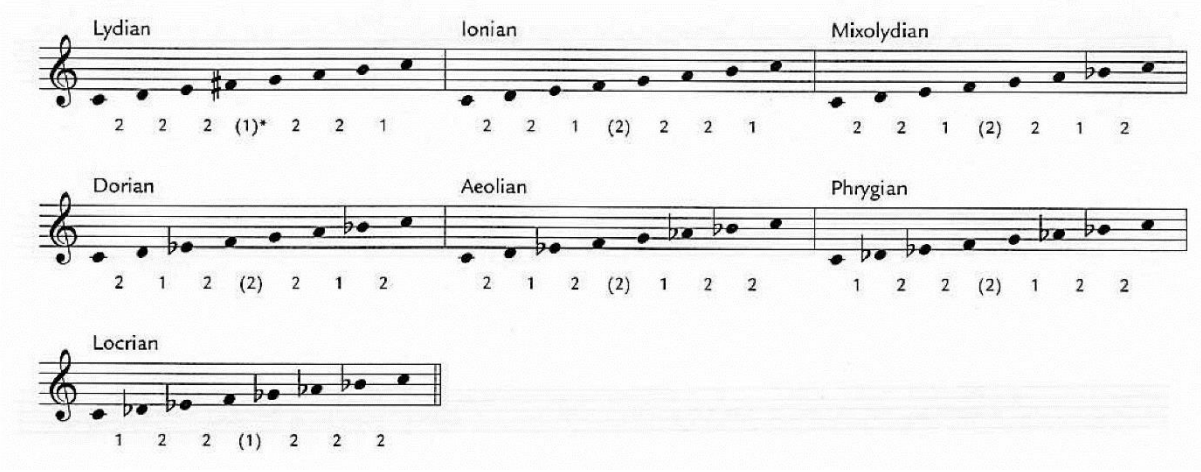

Figure 7 Unaltered diatonic modes in C major (2)

Each mode has a characteristic note and a diatonic seventh chord that can be derived from it. Let us show an example in C major: the mode called "Ionian" (I degree) has the major 7th as characteristic note and CMaj7 as derived diatonic chord, "Dorian" (II degree) has the 6th and D-7, "Phrygian" (III degree) has the b2nd and E-7, "Lydian" (IV degree) has the #4th and FMaj7, "Mixolydian" (V degree) has b7th and G7, "Aeolian" (VI degree) has the b6th and A-7 and the last "Locrian" (VII degree) has the b5th and B-7b5.

Based on these principles of modality, from a compositional point of view is first very interesting to see how in "Nefertiti" the melody is built according to chords modes. The main idea is to "paint" each chord with the characteristic notes of the mode related to it and moving the bass with an interval approach. Thinking in this way, without any tonal constraint, the composer is fully focused on supporting the melody with the best harmonic quality avoiding the usage of common chords progressions as II/V/I.

In the first four bars, the bass movement is freely organized by the interval of 4th that goes down chromatically (Ab/Db – G/C). The fact that the same idea is repeated in the lowest register gives to the harmony a sense of cohesion which is important especially at the beginning of the composition. Another relevant aspect is the common notes shared by the chords that are descending chromatically from the 3rd bar to almost the end of the first section on 8th bar.

The next four sections contain a focus on some noticeable aspects of the harmony realization.

2.1 "Shared note"

From G-7b5 the last note of each bar is bend ("shared") with the first of the next one until Eb7 (add#11th). This is a very useful technique that allows the composer to create some remarkable harmonic movements over a static note. The main purpose is to feel that the same note is changing its relation and sound, according to with the nature of the different chords. Let us examine in Figure 8 a practical example taken from bar 3rd to 5th of Figure 5.

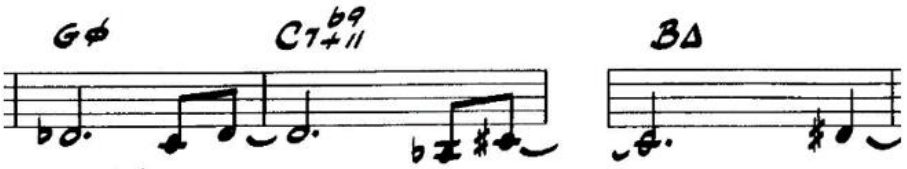

Figure 8 Nefertiti: bars 3-5 (4)

The last Db played by the melody in the 1st bar of Figure 8 is the diminished 5th of G-7b5 (characteristic note of the Locrian mode), while in the next bar it becomes the b9 of C7b9 (characteristic note of the Mixolydian b9th, b13th mode) and its related mode. Such Db is taken from the Minor Harmonic scale as shown in Figure 9 below.

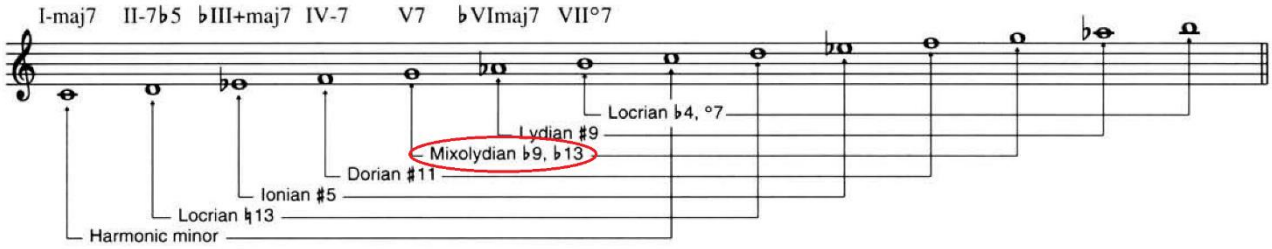

Figure 9 Diatonic modes obtained from the C harmonic minor scale (1)

The G7-7b5/C7b9 create particular harmonic situation called "minor II/V" in tonal harmony which features a very dark atmosphere and usually tend to resolve in a I- degree; thinking about the motion of the melody, instead of F-, the resolution alternatively move to the major chord Bmaj7 and the b9 of C7b9 become the 9th of Bmaj7. This specific harmonic progression has a very interesting character for what concerned the quality of the sound that reproduces. The dark sonority that is completely dominant in the 3rd and 4th bar drastically mute and become more stable and brighter in the 5th – 6th bar keeping the same note on the melody. The same "shared-note" concept is applied in 7th and 8th bar as shown in Figure 10 below.

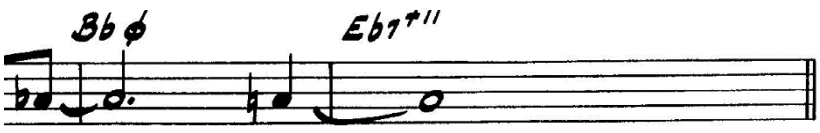

Figure 10 Nefertiti: bars 7-8 (4)

It’s interesting to see how the note A of Figure 10 played by the melody over Bb-7b5 make first of all a strong melodic tension being the 7th of Bbm7b5 (instead of b7th which is contained in the chord and Locrian mode) and then, crossing the 7th bar, directly become the #11th of Eb7 (add #11th) (characteristic note of the Lydian b7th mode). Eb7 (add#11th) and its related mode came from the Melodic Minor scale as shown in the scheme below

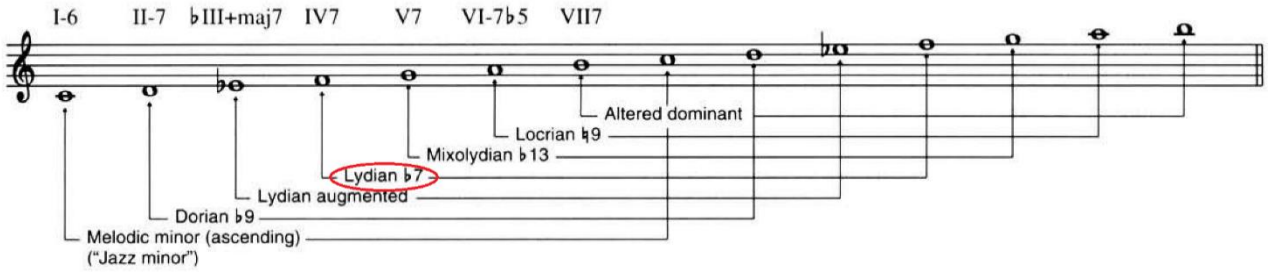

Figure 11 Diatonic modes obtained from the C melodic minor scale (1)

The Bbm7b5/Eb7#11 harmonic situation is another unusual way to present the common II/V progression; the chords movement should work as II/V but the resolution in Emaj7 (instead of Ab-/maj7) and the tension made by the melody make explicit the fact that they don’t have a tonal relation.

2.2 "Slash" chords

Another common strategy used by W. Shorter in this composition is the harmonization of the melody by inversions and "slash" chords. This technique of re-harmonizing melodies (thoughtfully described by Ted Pease in (1)) became increasingly popular among composers and arrangers for the special expression within bass performance. Inversions are indicated by the principal chord symbol followed by a diagonal slash and a designated bass note; here below an example from the 13th bar of "Nefertiti" (Figure 12)

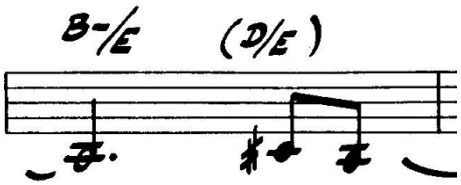

Figure 12 Nefertiti: bar 13 (4)

B-/E is an example for a B- chord in a 2nd inversion. Other so-called "slash" chord such D/E are used to produce a more ambiguous and dissonant sound. Inversions and slash chords highlight the bass line by emphasizing notes other than the root and help to create a sense of counterpoint between the melody and the bass line. Slash chords such as FMaj7/E or AbMaj7/D are interesting because they provide chord changes that are slightly out of focus. The resulting dissonance sounds more dramatic than the standard root-position orientation. It is useful to note that the more dissonant the relationship between the chord and the bass note, the more a composer/arranger is liable to use it. Combinations that produce dissonant intervals, such as the major seventh and the minor ninth, between the bass and one of the chord tones above are quite prevalent in contemporary jazz both in tunes and in extended compositions. In "Nefertiti" these types of chords are applied without any dramatic dissonance but, as shown in Figure 13, slash chords can also produce an ambiguous, more open and suspended sound.

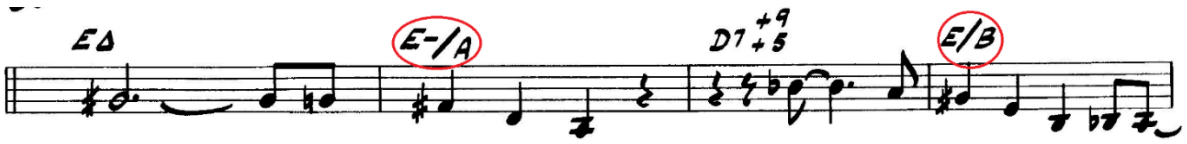

Figure 13 Nefertiti: bars 9-12 (4)

"Slash" chords that have the 4th as a bass instantly sound as "suspended" according with the sound made by the interval (4th) between the bass and the root of the chord and make the listener wait for the resolution of the progression. The chord E-/A in fact can also be conceived as a A7 sus4th if A take the root role.

Another example of the usage of "slash" chords that reproduce a more remarkable dissonance is shown in the following composition "Ralph's Piano Waltz" (Figure 14) by the composer/guitar player John Abercrombie from (5).

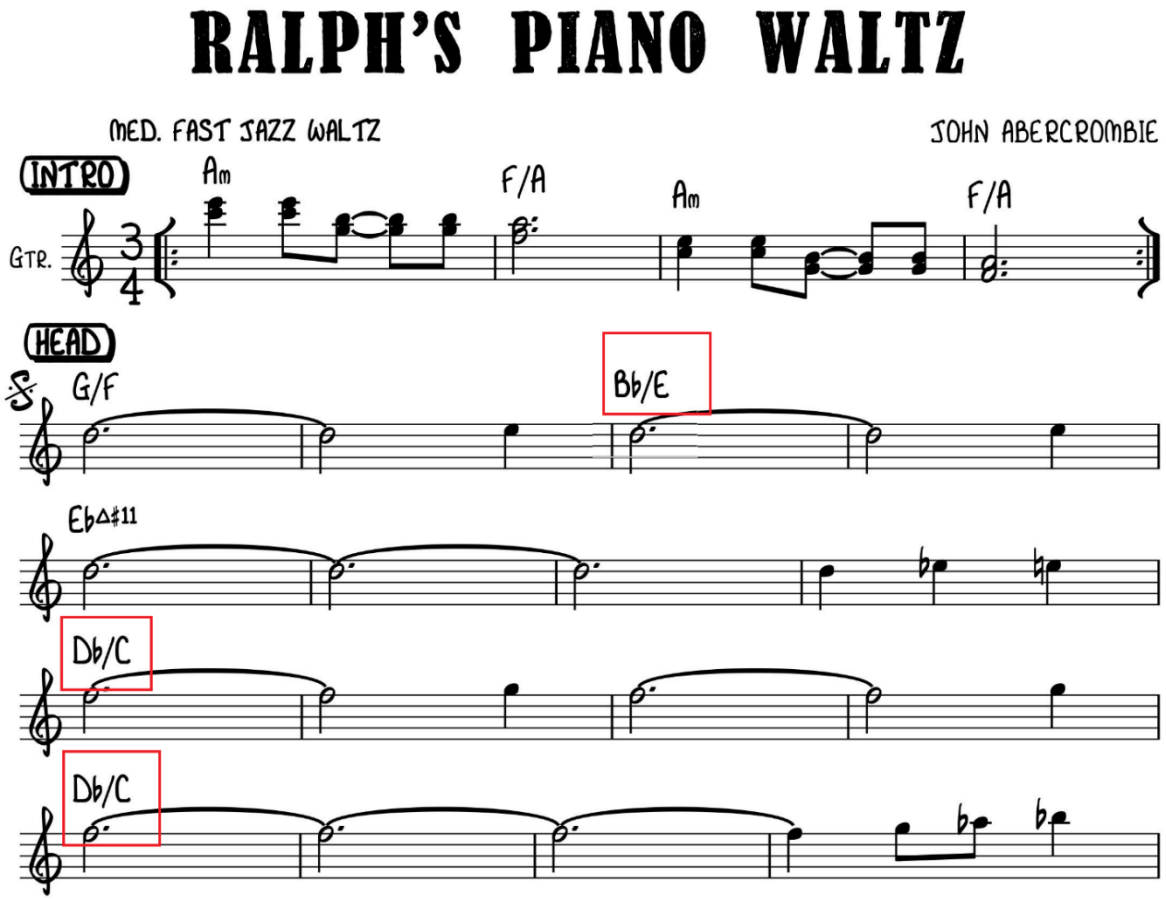

Figure 14 Ralph's Piano Waltz (5)

This song is part of the album "Timeless" by John Abercrombie released on the 1st January 1975 by the ECM records Label. In this case both cords (Bb/E, Db/C) contains a minor 9th interval between the bass and the major triad played over it. In the first example the relationship between the bass E and the major triad Bb form the following intervals: Bb/E: diminished 5th - D/E: b7th - F/E: minor 9th. Analyzing the second chord the formed intervals are: Db/C: minor 9th – F/C: perfect 4th – Ab/C: minor 6th. As previously described this type of chords result a bit "out of focus" and the sound reproduced by intervals such a minor 9th or major 7th make a tension that can strongly enhance a certain segment of melody. For a composer the goal of the usage of this type of chords is to be able to move the bass freely without the need to respect the common harmonic rules about cadences and at the same time recreating ambiguous and suspended atmospheres agreeing to the motion of the melody.

2.3 Counterpoint

Watching the compositional process from a melodic point of view, another remarkable strategy that contributes to the harmony realization in jazz composition is the usage of melodies based on compound and overlapping lines, also called counterpoint. This technique come mostly from the classical music, but it was introduced in jazz since the beginning of the 1940s and it has been growing throughout all the development of modal jazz starting from the composers such as Bill Evans and Kenny Wheeler.

The counterpoint is defined as the relationship between voices that are coordinated by harmonic rules (polyphony), yet independent in rhythm and contour. As described by Forrest Tobey in (6), when a composer writes counterpoint, he writes two or more melodies that play off each other. For this reason, the first important step is to work on creating a good melody for one voice alone. Considering this principle, however, when this technique is applied in a modal context it also has a specific relation with harmony. When writing modal counterpoint, the composer is guided by the intervals within a given mode, and the way in which he chooses their combination is the key of the quality of the counterpoint line. A basic guideline to follow is to stay conscious of the difference between the character of a consonant sound and a dissonant sound, in order to craft musical statements that work in this relationship. The perfect consonance is obtained by combining the 8^{th}, the 5^{th} and the 4^{th} interval, while the sharp dissonance is obtained from the 2^{nd} minor and 7^{th} interval. The scheme reported in Figure 15 shows how the sound gradually changes from perfect consonance to sharp dissonance.

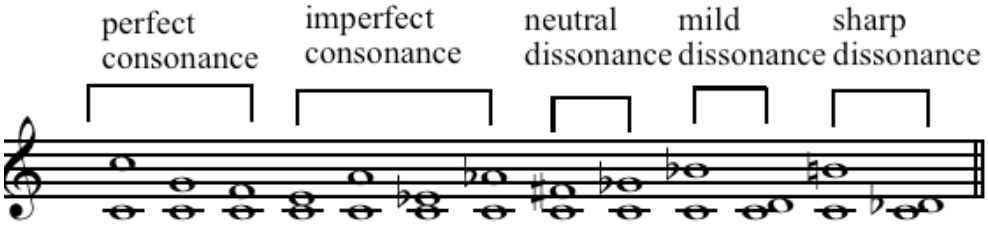

Figure 15 Consonance and dissonance scheme

An example of a counterpoint line aware of the consonance and dissonance principle is shown in Figure 16, where a passage with a crescendo and decrescendo of tensions is displayed.

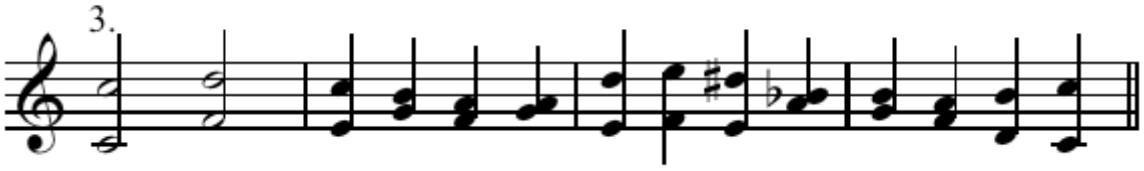

Figure 16 Example of a counterpoint line

Analyzing the melodic line, the curve of tension starts with a perfect consonance (1st interval perfect octave) and then it goes through imperfect consonances as the b6 interval in E/C, mild dissonances as the b7th interval in E/D and sharp dissonances as the major 7th interval in E/D#. It is very important to keep confidence with each of these sounds and try different combinations of them before start applying some rhythmical ideas. After some time, this practice will clearly show how a general good counterpoint line has a good balance between these extremes and the independent rhythm of the melodies.

Let us take one more example from "Nicolette" by the composer Kenny Wheeler (7), one of the masters of the counterpoint writing in modal jazz (Figure 17)

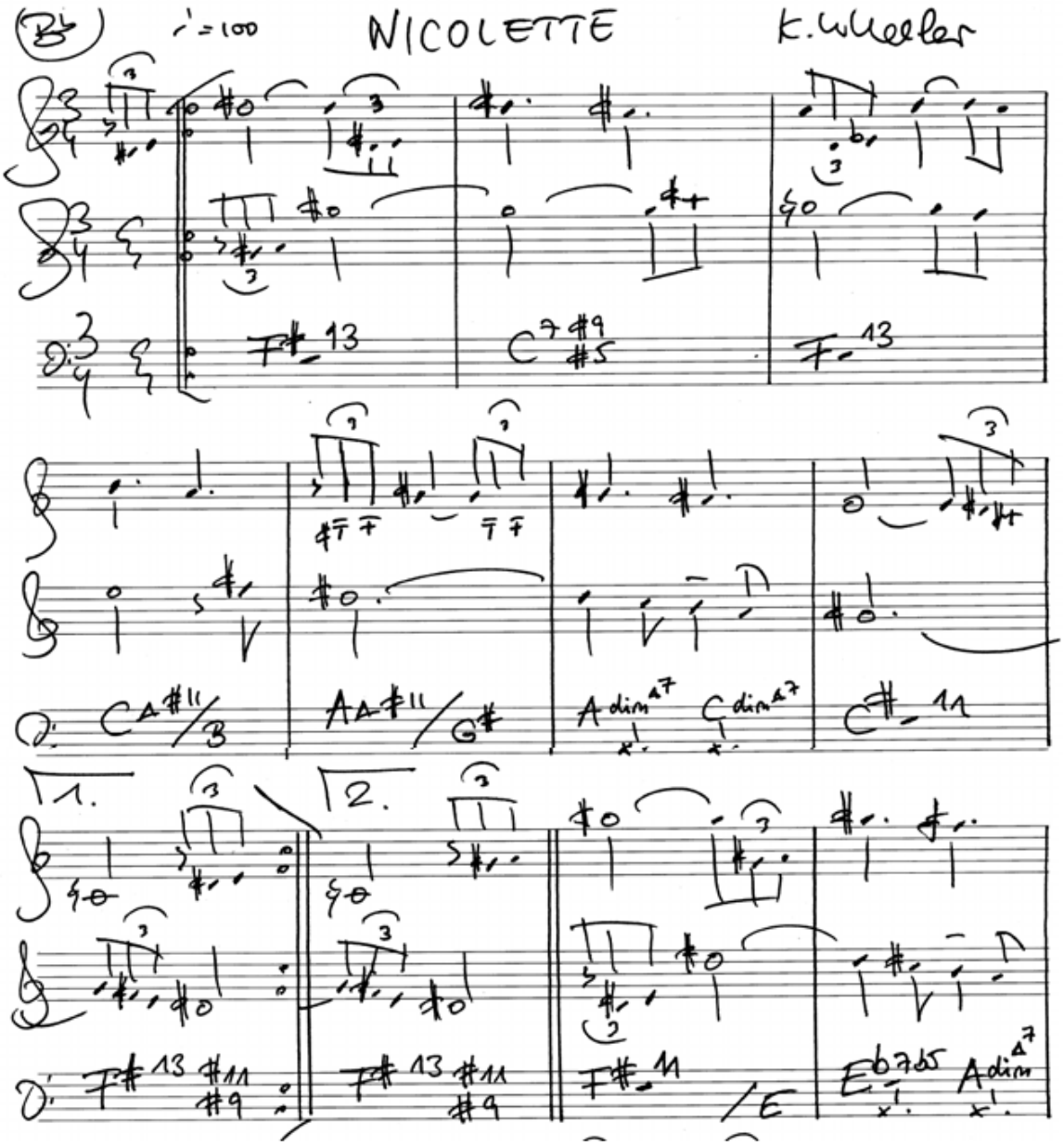

Figure 17 "Nicolette" by Kenny Wheeler (7)

"Nicolette" comes from the Kenny Wheeler's album "Angel songs" recorded in the 1996 and released the next year on the ECM Label. The composer is particularly famous for the usage of the counterpoint technique in a modal context and he declared to have been inspired by classical composers such as Byrd, Tallis and Gesualdo, in the writing of the album.

At the beginning of the composition, as exemplified in Figure 18, it is clearly recognizable how both melodies are written following a counterpoint principle.

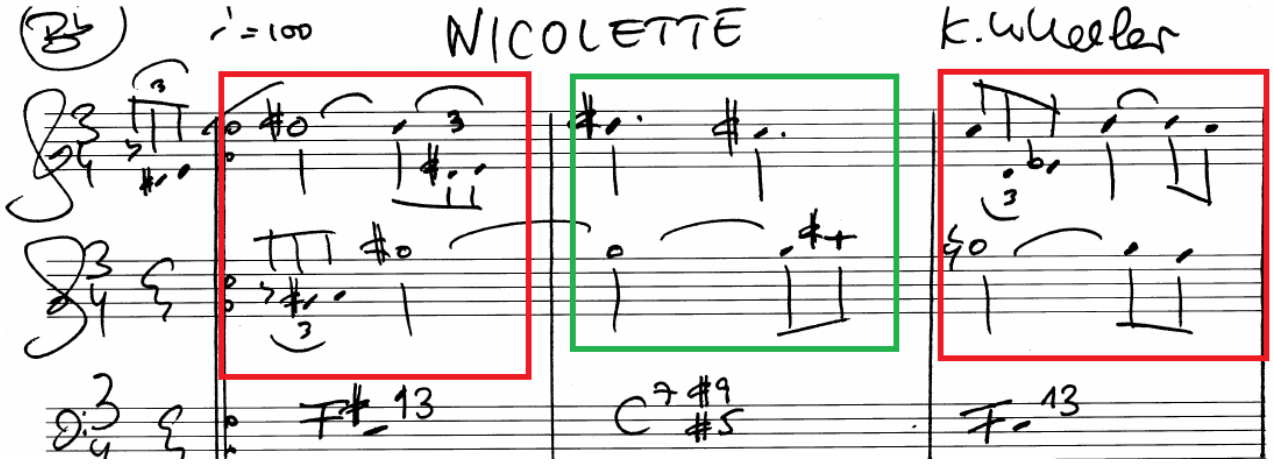

Figure 18 Nicolette: bars 1-3 (7)

In this case melodies are rhythmically independent even if they interact with each other supporting the harmony realization.

Rhythm

The way in which both melodies are written is based on the same melodic idea that is switched to always keep a long note when the other line plays a more articulate pattern (triplet or a quarter note with dot). By doing that, the main melodic idea becomes stronger, since it is simultaneously played with some rhythmical variations by two different instruments (trumpet and tenor saxophone), so that the final effect recalls a dialogue built on questions and answers. One more thing worth noticing is how this counterpoint melody contributes to emphasize the modal nature of each chord.

Modal harmony

In the first bar of Figure 18 the highest note is exactly the 13th of F#-(add13th) and the second line played the 2nd (G#), the b3rd (A) and the 9th (G# one octave higher). In this specific case the quality of the intervals involved is a perfect 5th (perfect consonance) and a diminished 5th (neutral dissonance). Then the first and the second melody reverse their role and quality of sound, jumping in the opposite register. Everything happens accordingly with the main melodic idea and the combinations of intervals that come up from this movement are a perfect 4th (D#/G# where D# is 13th of F# and G# the 9th – perfect consonance) and a 3rd (E/G# where E in b7th of F# and G# the 9th

– imperfect consonance). As illustrated in Figure 7 and its explanation, the mode referred to the -7th chord placed in the II degree of the major scale is Dorian. The Dorian mode is in turn composed on the following notes: T 2nd b3rd 4th 5th 6th b7th with the 6th as characteristic note. In the case reported in the 1st bar of Figure 18, the melody plays the 13th, 9th and b7th of F#- (add13th) describing the chord and touching the notes of the related Dorian mode. From this analysis it is clear how this technique allows the composer to achieve two important results: the first one is to make the melodic motion much more interesting and dynamic from a rhythmical point of view, while the second one is to respect and support the harmony by choosing the combination of intervals in accordance with the modes and their derived diatonic seventh chords.

Another example of the consistent use of counterpoint by Kenny Wheeler is exemplify in the composition "Mark Time" (7) in Figure 19.

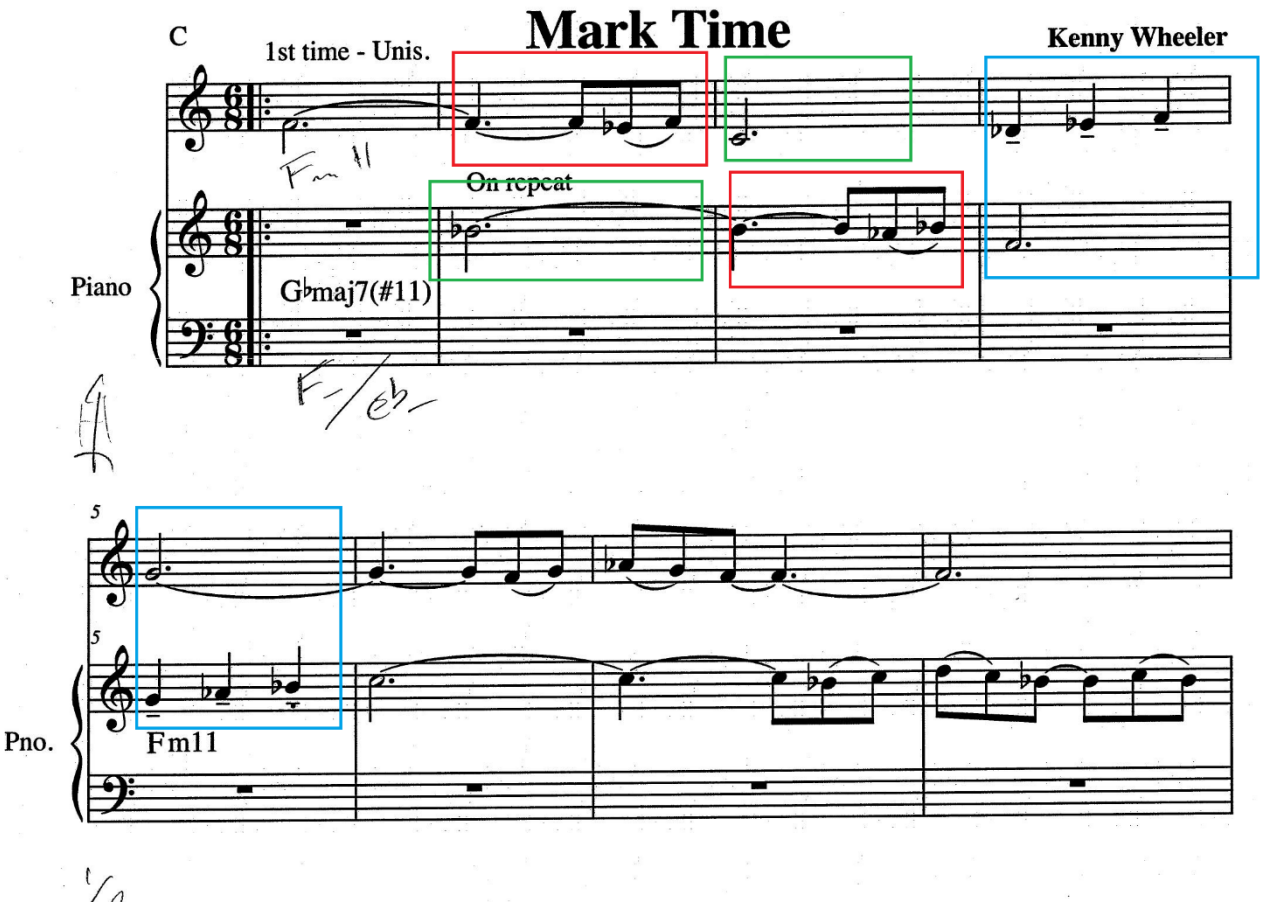

Figure 19 Mark Time counterpoint (7)

"Mark Time" is one of the songs from the Kenny Wheeler's album "All The More" recorded in 1993 and released in 1997 by the Italian Soul Note Label. This song is another example of how the composer has a very personal way to master and apply the compositional strategy in question. The counterpoint is played by trumpet and piano, and, as described in the previous example, it is based again on a specific melodic patter (1st and 2nd bar of Figure 19) which is repeated, rhythmically

switched (second line, bars 2nd and 3rd of Figure 19) and reversed (4th and 5th bar of Figure 19). In the 2nd bar it is also clear how the composer uses the technique as an "extension" of the root of each chord on the bass. From the analysis of GbMaj7 (add#11th) (Lydian), the notes F and Bb played simultaneously by the melody are the major 7th and the 3rd. Then, in bar 3 piano keep playing the 3rd and trumpet move to the #11th (C), characteristic note of the Lydian mode related to the chord. Once again, this approach to counterpoint in a modal type of situation not only emphasizes the character of the melody, but also "paints" each chord, enhancing the harmonic structure of the composition.

2.4 Motivic composition

Keep following a line of melodic based considerations, the last strategy that will be introduced in this chapter will be the Motivic Composition. As clearly explained by Ted Pease (1), the compositions conceived and developed with a motivic type of approach presents a challenge to the jazz composer that is different from composing and arranging tunes. A motivic composition develops from one or more musical fragments or "cells", instead of integrating melodies with chord progression. This concept is important because it can be applied to a harmonic chords' combination as well as to a melodic idea, if thought in a modal context.

The harmony is built and balanced by the available variety of modes and the composer's intentions to develop the motif. It's possible to work on a melodic idea played over a single mode as well as to build a modal progression and to develop it accordingly with a rhythmic (ostinato) pattern.

Defining the word "motif", it usually consists of two to eight notes, although circumstances may dictate something more extensive: it could be an interval, a broken chord or some other short musical gesture lasting for a measure or two. A motivic composition is concerned with the manipulation and development of motifs that is accomplished through the application of repetition, sequence, inversion, retrograde, displacement, harmonization, re-harmonization, modulation and so forth. In order to succeed in the usage of this technique, it is necessary to find the correct balance between familiar material (by way motivic repetition or allusion) and new material (by way variations).

Let us clarify the concept with a practical example from the composition “Sprig Song” by John Abercrombie in Figure 20, from (5).

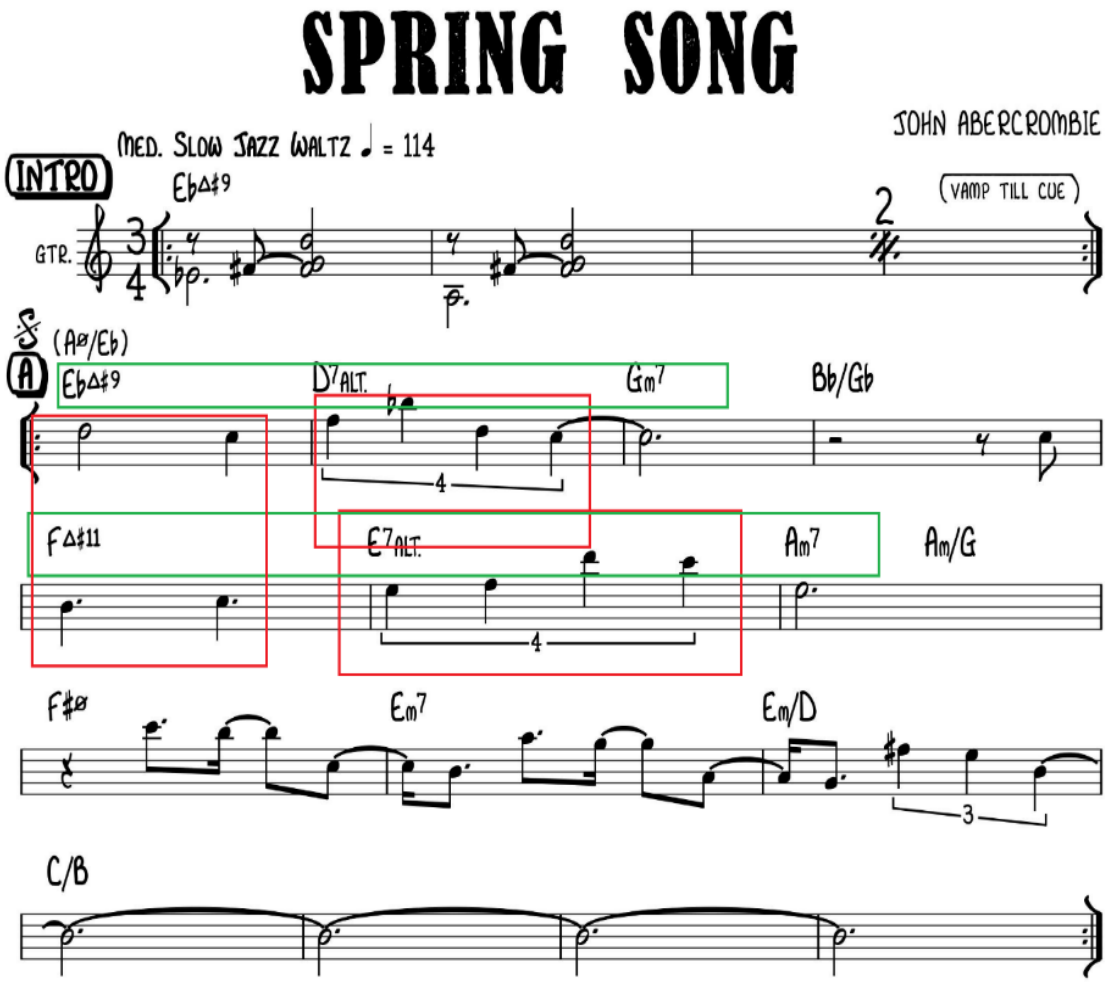

Figure 20 Spring Song (5)

In the first marked seven bars of Figure 20, it is possible to see how the composer chooses a three bars idea, and then manipulate it by using “repetition” and “modulation”. The melodic idea played in the first three bars is rhythmically repeated in 5th to 7th bar of Figure 20 and what only changes is the motion of the melody. This choice gives a rhythmic consistency to the melody and at the same time it makes it more interesting, by introducing some melodic variations.

Talking about the harmonic approach (Figure 20), once the chords progression to be applied is decided in the first four bars, the composer goes on through a modulation one tone higher, keeping the same harmonic idea with a little variation in the 7th bar (Figure 21)

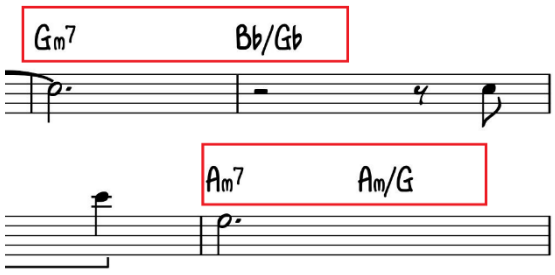

Figure 21 Spring Song: bar 3 to 7 (5)

After the modulation, the progression G-7 – Bb/Gb is rhythmically double speeded to fit into a single bar, and the bass goes down one tone from A to G, instead of repeating the half step down movement, as happened in the 3rd and 4th bar (Figure 21).

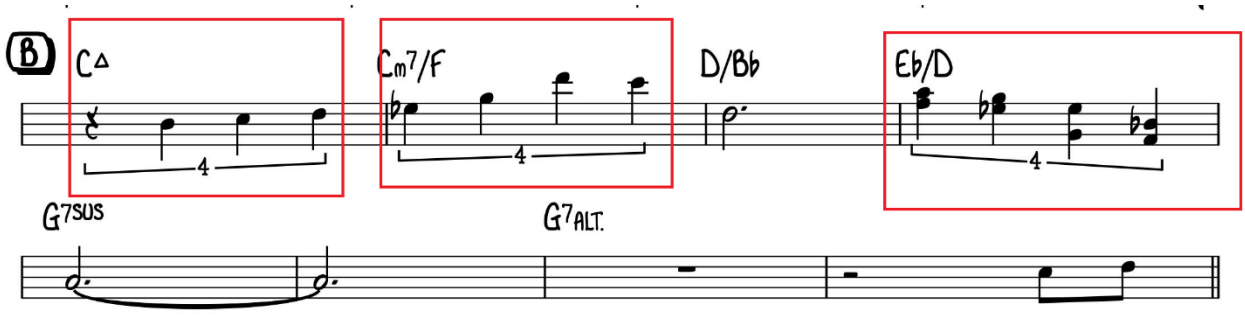

Figure 22 Spring Song: B section (5)

In the section B displayed in Figure 22, some "new material" is introduced. The composer builds a three-bar new melodic idea made by two ascending quatrains that resolve in a long 3/4 note in 3rd bar. After that, the same idea is rhythmically repeated from the 4th bar with a melodic descending motion (for one bar), just before extending the 3/4 note for the next two bars. This is another case of the usage of sequences integrate with some variations.

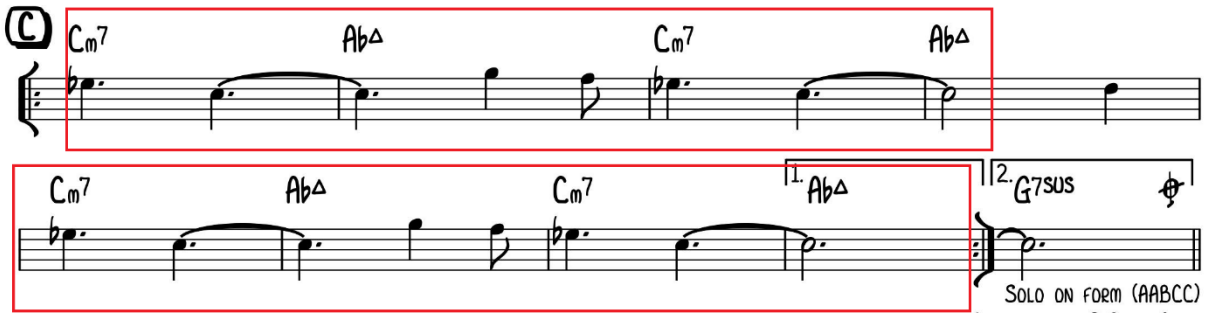

Figure 23 Spring Song: C section (5)

At this point as shown in Figure 23 the composer decides to introduce another section that is conceived as a new 4 bars melodic/harmonic idea repeated twice. There are two changes, the first

of which is in the 4th bar, where a quarter note (D) is played before the actual repetition with the purpose of making the connection more homogeneous. The second change is at the end of the section (last bar of Figure 23 in the second repetition) where a G7sus chord is played instead of AbMaj7. The melody clearly describes the mode related to each chord (C-7 (b3, root)/Dorian - AbMaj7 (3rd, 7th, 6th)/Ionian – G7sus (4th)/Mixolydian), and the simple way in which it is repeated lets the song end naturally even with the introduction of some new components.

It is interesting to notice how the composer combines different strategies during the development of the composition. The first section A is played two times before going to B where a new little melodic and harmonic ideas are presented. Then, at the end of section B that must be played only once, the huge space left by the long pause in the melody let the composer introduce C without any tension. This last section, that includes a new melodic pattern repeated two times, is a very suitable way to gently end the song. Generally, considering how the composer master the motivic composition technique by the usage of repetitions, sequences, modulations and theme variations, it becomes clear how this song respects the fundamental principle of "the balance between familiar and new material".

All the strategies discovered and analyzed in this chapter represent part of the compositional vocabulary and heritage of each composer oriented in modal jazz. The different harmonization techniques, the creative usage of modes, the relation between melody and harmony and the development of motivic ideas are all important elements to be kept in mind for a successful composition that involves modal harmony. Nobody else better than some of the most famous jazz composers can be more of an appropriate model to follow, for approaching this type of music. In the next pages, the discoveries made in this chapter will be exemplified, together with their creative possible application, in some original compositions by the author of the present document.

3 JAZZ COMPOSITION: CREATIVE APPLICATION AND EVALUATION OF COMPOSITIONAL DISCOVERIES

This chapter explores creative application and evaluation of the compositional strategies analyzed in the previous chapter 2. The original compositions shown below have been conceived and inspired by composers such Wayne Shorter, Kenny Wheeler, John Abercrombie and their influence is strongly recognizable in the following songs.

3.1 "Shared note"

The first example illustrated in the next Figure 24 is about the usage of "shared note'' in a modal type of situation, which consist in harmonizing the same note by different chords unrelated to each other from a tonal point of view. The same technique was exemplified in section 0 by Wayne Shorter's composition "Nefertiti" (Figure 8, Figure 10).

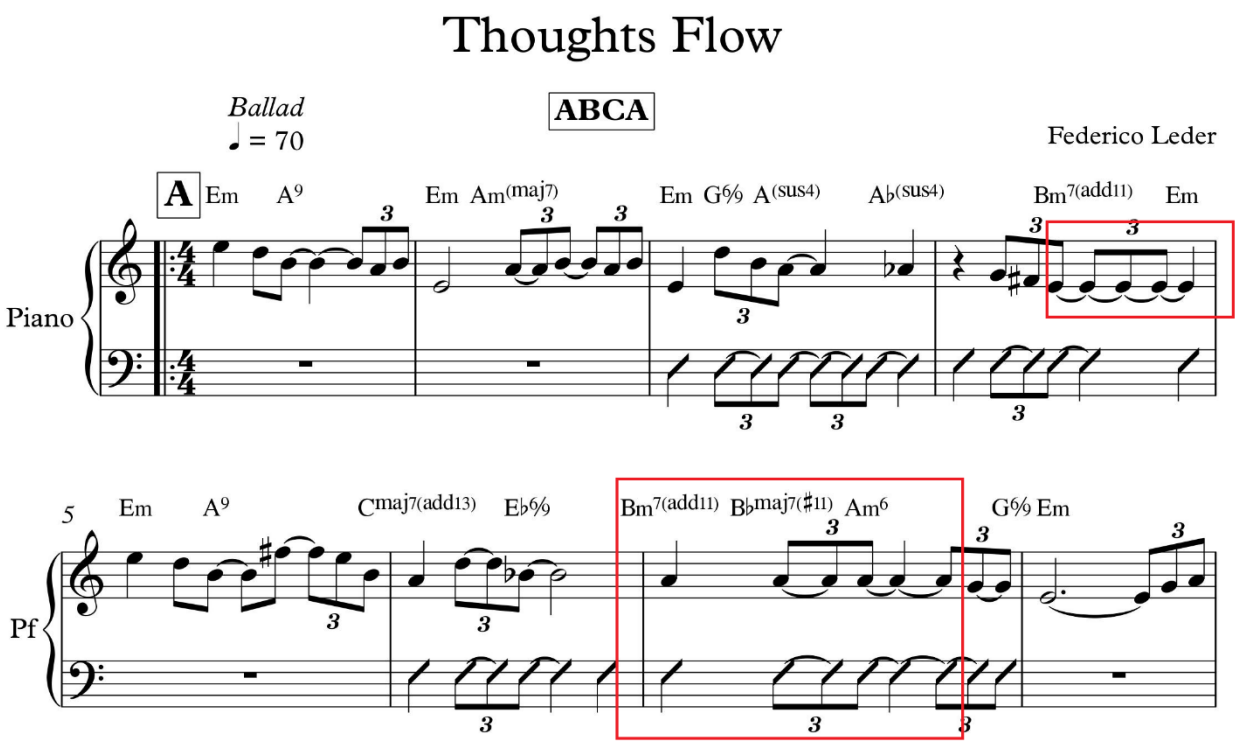

Figure 24 Thoughts Flow

In both cases marked red in Figure 24 the "shared note" technique is applied at the end of the melodic idea to make it sound different every time before moving to the next melodic phrase. In the first case (bar 4), the bass moves from B to E (4th interval) and the harmonization keeps a modal minor sound moving from a -7 (add11th) chord to a regular minor one (the melody note E is 4th of B-7 (add11th) and root of E-). In the second case (7th bar of Figure 24), the harmonization has a richer variety of sounds because it develops through three different types of chords. As the sheet music

shows, the bass line goes down chromatically from B to A and the nature of each chord changes accordingly to the bass motion. From a more open minor sound (B-7 (add11th) that harmonizes A as its b7th), the progression goes through a Maj7 (add#11th) Lydian chord which completely mute the character of the melody (A becomes the 7th of BbMaj7 (add#11th)). The atmosphere strongly switch from minor to major (from a modal point of view it goes from Dorian to Lydian) and then it ends with a different minor sound determined by A-6, that harmonizes the melodic note A as its root (the mode referred to A-6 is Dorian). The approach of this type of harmonization is based on a modal conception of harmony and as it is possible to see from the analysis, the same note goes over three different "chords colors" that makes it sound much more interesting than a single static chord.

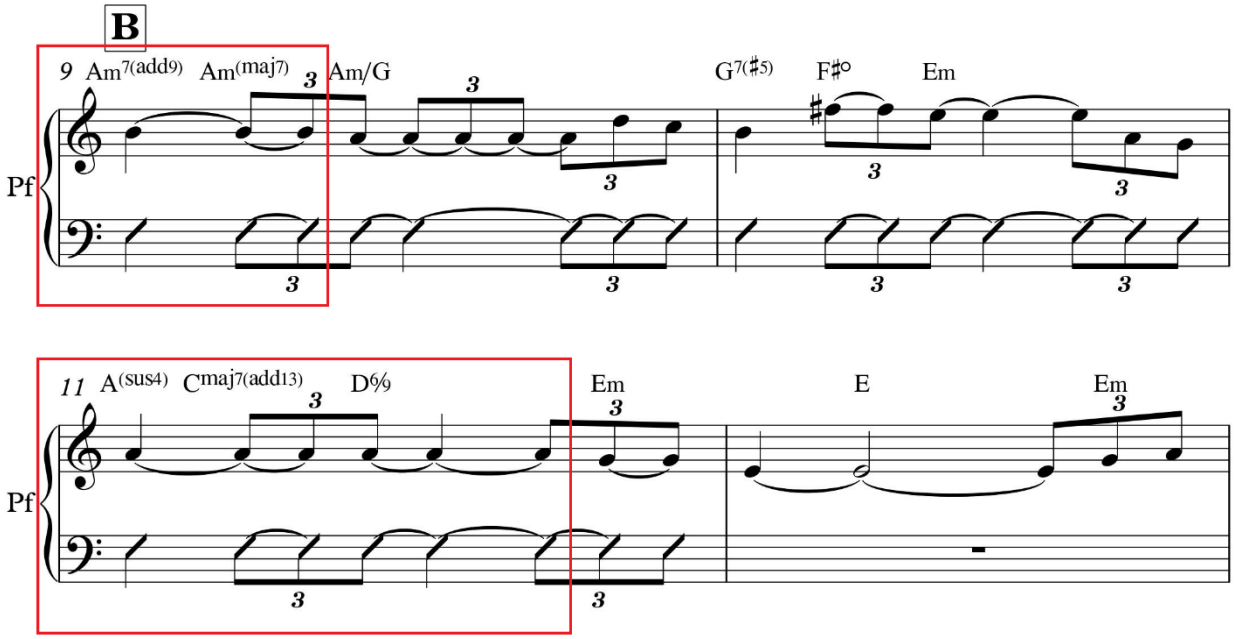

Figure 25 Thoughts Flow B section

The first 4 bars of B section (Figure 25) features the same "shared note" technique used in the section A but applied at the beginning of each melodic pattern. Firstly, an application of such a technique lets easily connect A to B. Secondly, it also gives an "asymmetrical" character to the melody. Both chords progressions also show a different harmonic nature, considering the chords involved. In the first case (9th bar of Figure 25) it is useful to think about only one chord (A) in which the bass goes down chromatically from A to G by the harmonic movement of root, maj7th and b7th. The melody's note B natural is the 9th of A-7 (add9th) and A-(Maj7) as well, but the movement of the bass change the interval between the second chord and the melody (from a natural 9th to a #9th). In the second case (11th bar of Figure 25), the melody starts with the role of root (A is root of A (sus4th)) and then it becomes the 13th of Cmaj7 (add13th) and 5th of D6/9. The progression begins with a suspended atmosphere by a sus4th chord, then it becomes more clear moving to a Major7, and then it

ends with a major pentatonic type of sonority (the 6th and 9th are characteristic notes of the major pentatonic scale).

This technique creates the possibility to think about a "simple" melody played over a "complex", richer harmony and it can be suggested for the songs on slow tempo where the melody needs to "breath" more by long notes. It can also be used at the beginning of a melodic pattern, to make the harmony denser, as well as at the end of the phrase, to intrigue the listener with its unpredictable development and variety.

3.2 "Slash" chord

Now let us move to the evaluation of another strategy commonly applied in jazz composition. Namely, use of the "slash" chords will be exemplify in the song "Pluie" (Figure 26)

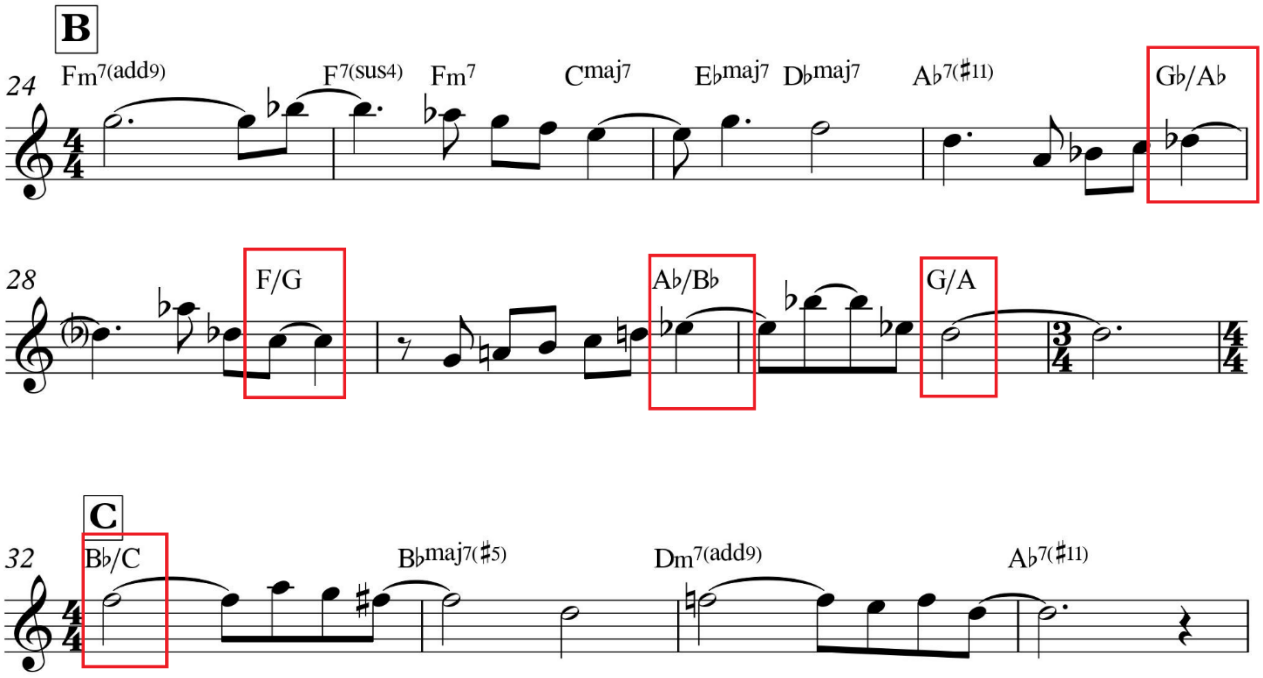

Figure 26 Pluie B and C sections

The chords marked red in Figure 26 are the specific type of "slash" chords built from a major triad played over the 9th on the bass, as illustrated in 27th bar (Figure 26), where Gb major triad is played over Ab on the bass. The sounding of the song results open, suspended and reminds the same as a sus2/4 chord, due to the intervals between the bass and the triad notes. Taking as an example the chord Gb/Ab (27th bar of Figure 26), the note Gb is the b7th, Bb is the 9th and Db is the 4th of Ab. In this case from the section B (bar 27th Figure 26) chords move chromatically down in pairs with a minor third interval between the two couples. This harmonic movement allows the composer to repeat the same idea in parallel and to make the melody stronger and stable. Then, from G/A there is one more minor third "jump" to Bb/C that makes the listener wait for the repetition of the same previous

idea, but the way in which the harmonization develops changes. Each "slash" chord harmonizes the 5th of each major triad, and the importance of this concept is related to the desire of moving the same quality of sound together with the melodic motion.

Another way of using this type of harmonization is shown in the following Figure 27 from the song "Dry River".

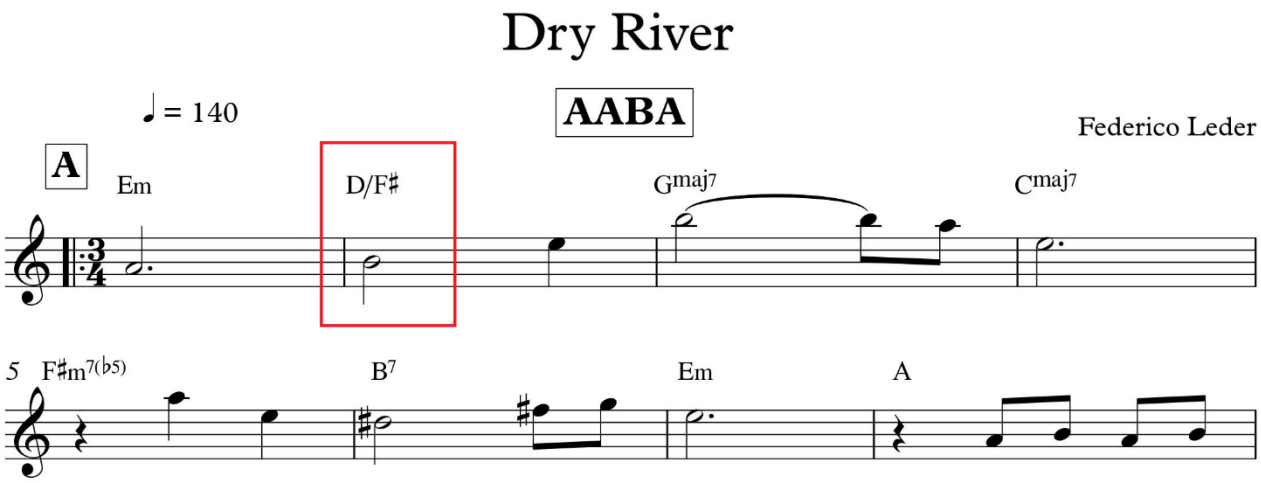

Figure 27 Dry River

In the example reported in Figure 27, D/F# is a D major in state of 1st inversion and the function of this chord is to connect E- with its relative major degree Gmaj7. Specifically, the chord works as dominant (D is the fifth degree in G), but it also contributes to support the motion of the bass line (E-F#-G). This solution sounds more "tonal" because of the common notes between E-, D and Gmaj7 (D/F# could be also conceived as E-7 (add 9th, 11th)/F#). This case and the previous one described in "Pluie" (Figure 26) are just a couple of examples very different from each other where "slash" chord and inversion can be used.

Another important strategy to be discussed, related to the concept of "harmonization", is the "unconventional" usage of II V I progression, as already described in chapter 2 analyzing "Nefertiti" (Figure 10). Here below an example from the original composition "Barefoot" (Figure 28)

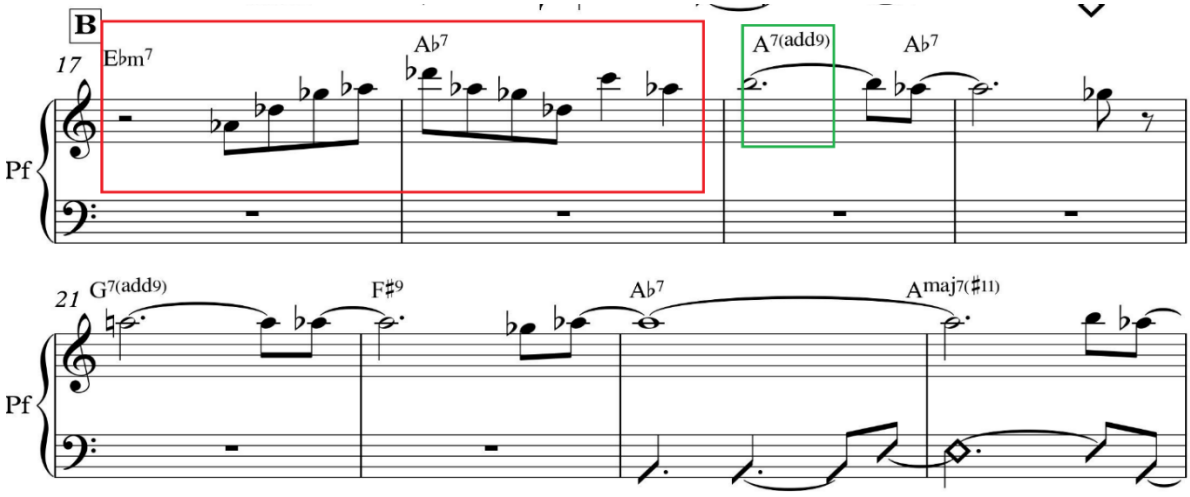

Figure 28 Barefoot B section

The section B displayed in Figure 28 starts with what seems to be a common tonal II V I progression, according to the way in which the melody is written and according to the chords Eb-7 (II-7 degree of DbMaj7) and Ab7 (V7 degree of DbMaj7). Looking at bar 18th (Figure 28) Ab7 would tend to resolve to DbMaj7 and in this case, the melody note Ab would logically move to Bb (13thof DbMaj7) or to F (3rd of DbMaj7). The main characteristic of this progression, instead, is to avoid the common tonal resolution to DbMaj7 moving to A7 (add9th), half step higher, and then to go down chromatically for the next four bars only by using seventh chords. This "unconventional" harmonic movement represents a creative way to start from an apparently tonal situation, and then to break the feeling of a "tonal center", using a tense chromatic approach, that is made more effective by the ambiguous nature of the seventh chords played sequentially.

Another example related to the usage this technique can be find in the section C of "Pluie" (Figure 29)

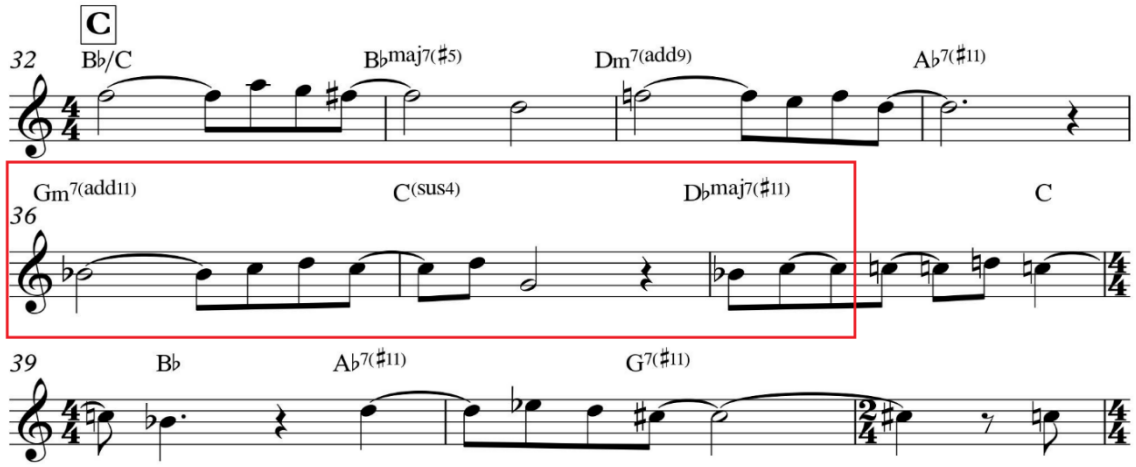

Figure 29 Pluie C section

Referring to Figure 29, in the 36th bar from G-7 (add11th) the progression goes to C7 (sus4th) and then, when it should resolve to FMaj7, it moves down chromatically to DbMaj7 (add#11th) (Lydian) instead. DbMaj7 works as "Transition Chord" and it calls the next triadic progression (C – Bb) used to introduce the end of the section C. This type of resolution at the beginning of the progression does not show a clear direction in its development. From a suspended Csus4th that can be thought as the dominant of FMaj7 (C sus4th is played after G-7 (add11th) that can be conceived as the II-7 degree of FMaj7), it moves to an alternative resolution half step up to a Lydian Maj (add#11th) chord. One purpose of this harmonic progression is to have a huge harmonic density that enriches the melody with a variety of modal atmospheres (Dorian, Mixolydian and Lydian) combined with an unconventional bass line, before ending the section. All those harmonic strategies are fundamental parts of the harmony realization that can also be evaluated from a more melodic point of view.

3.3 Counterpoint

Now, as already described in section 2.3, the usage of the counterpoint technique will be exemplified in the original composition “Wool Drop” (Figure 30).

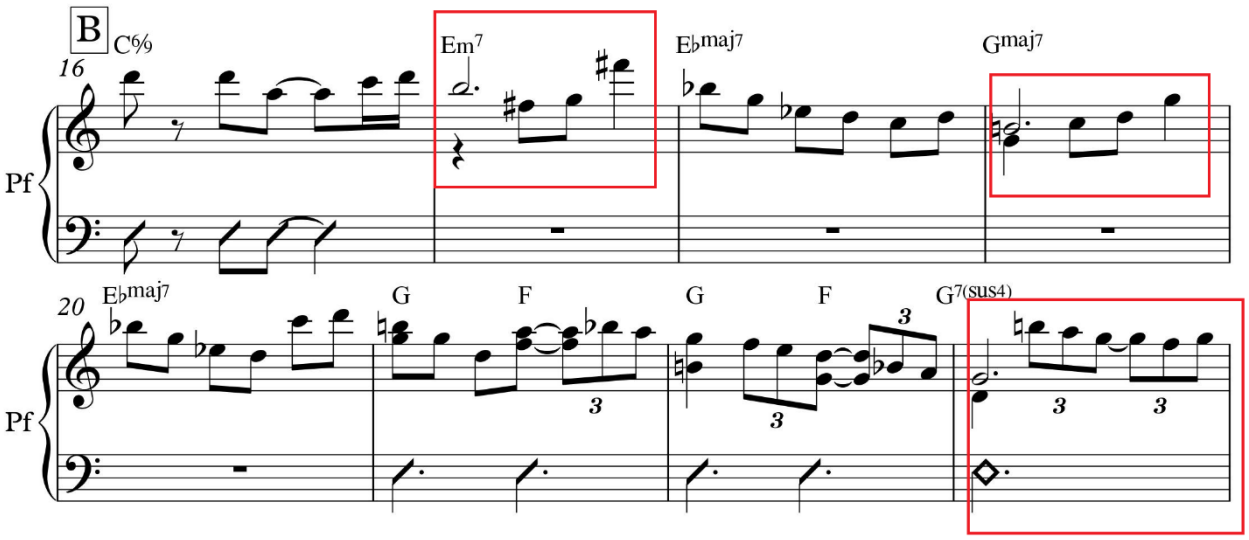

Figure 30 Wool Drop

As it is possible to see form the sheet music, in the first four bars of B (Figure 30), the counterpoint works as an answer to the previous melodic phrase. The idea is to create a dialogue between the main and the counterpoint lines, the latter “answering” with the same rhythmic idea in both cases (17th and 19th bar of Figure 30). In the 23rd bar (Figure 30), as shown in the previous chapter with Kenny Wheeler’s examples (Figure 18, Figure 19), the counterpoint includes a repetition of the triplet played in the two bars before. The purpose is to connect section B to C through a recognizable rhythmic and melodic idea that already characterized B.

Another example of counterpoint writing from the ending of “Wool Drop” is shown in Figure 31, below.

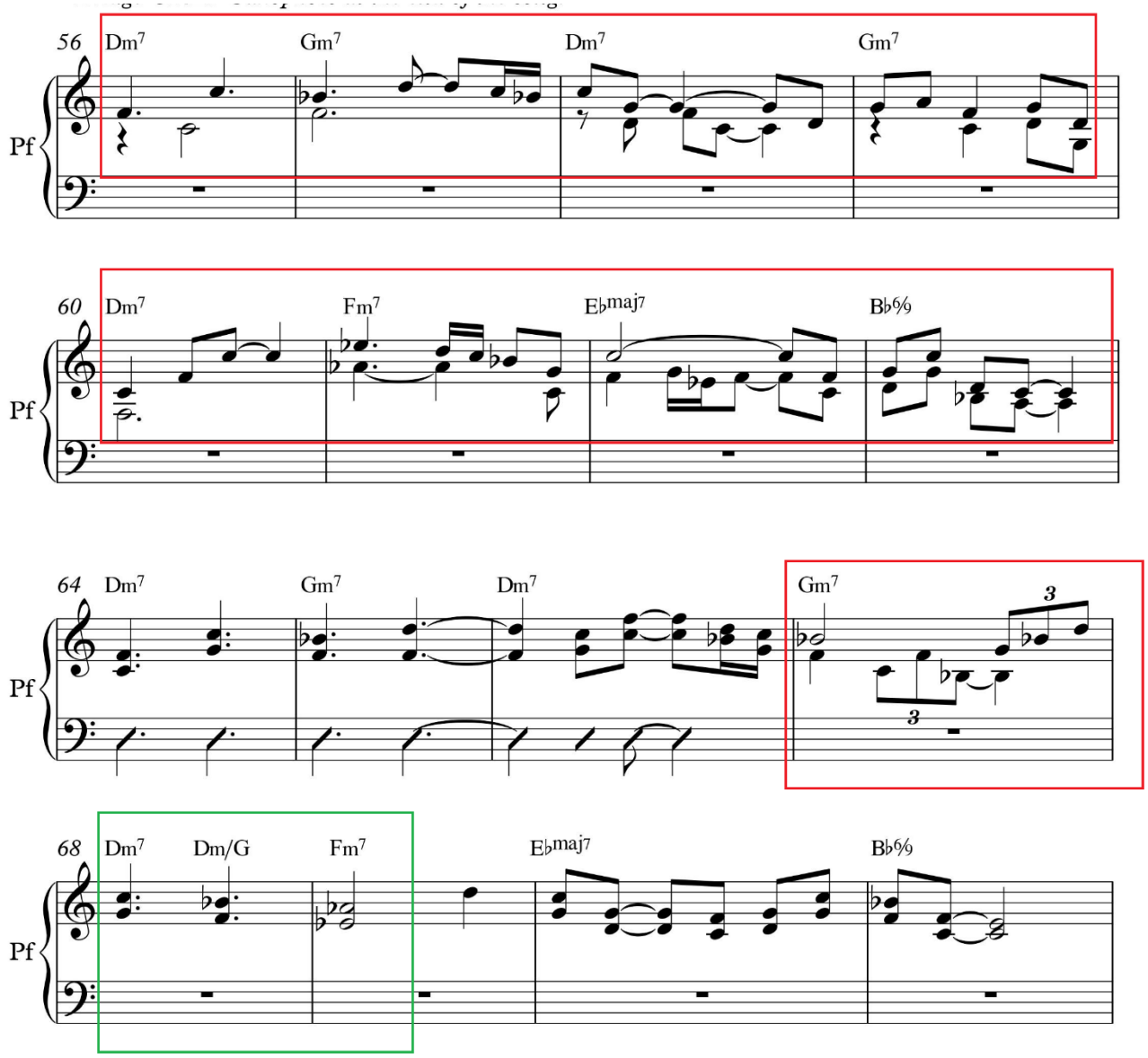

Figure 31 Wool Drop final melody

Referring to Figure 31 the whole melody is precisely placed at the end of the main tune and it is played without rhythmic section, to valorize the character of the counterpoint. With respect to the main melodic line, the second one is rhythmically independent and switched, to enrich the dynamic motion of the counterpoint. Both lines meet only to support and to make harmony more explicit, as it happens from 63rd bar (Bb 6/9 in Figure 31) to almost the end of the section. In the 2nd case (67th bar of Figure 31), after three bars where both lines are rhythmically moving together, the second melody breaks the motion, by extending the melodic idea and by anticipating the triplet with the same rhythmic figure. This strategy is applied exactly before the last four bars, to create a melodic movement just before letting the melody go to the end. After that, looking at 68th and 69th bar of

Figure 31, where the counterpoint makes the lines work rhythmically together again, the voices are harmonized using 4th forth intervals to extend sounding chords. Analyzing the relationship between melody and chords in 68th to 69th bar (Figure 31) the result is: in D-7, the melody touches the 4th, b7th, in D-/G the melody touches b7th and b3rd of G, and in F-7 the melody touches b7th, b3rd. The goal of this specific way of harmonizing, inside a counterpoint context, is to give to the melody the "taste" of the 4th interval sound (very common in modal jazz), "tracking" the harmonic specificity of each chord.

3.4 Motivic Composition

Keeping the same focus on the harmony realization by some melodic tools, the "Motivic Composition" is the last strategy that will be exemplified in this chapter. The first example is taken from the original tune "Rheumy Eyed" (Figure 32).

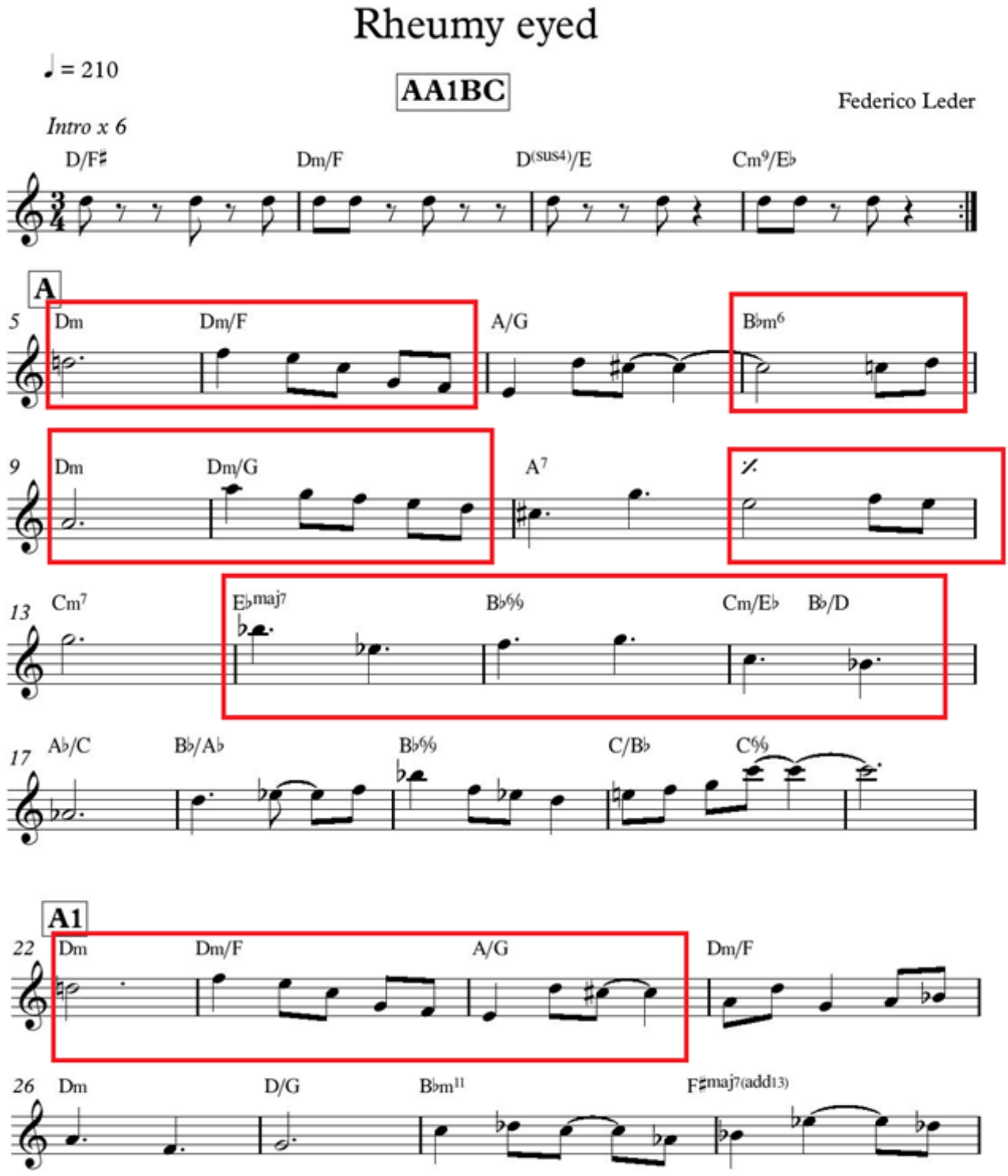

Figure 32 Rheumy eyed

In the first 8 bars of A section (5th to 12th bar of Figure 32) is presented the same type of situation already discuss in section 0 in "Spring Song " (Figure 20). The first melodic idea developed from the 5th to the 8th bar is rhythmically repeated almost entirely from the 9th to the 12th bar, but with a different melodic motion and harmonization. This slightly variated repetition moves to the next eight bars introducing another rhythmic and harmonic idea within the space of the next three bars (bars 14th to 16th of Figure 32). To point out once again how the melodic development contributes to the harmony realization, it can be seen how the melody is integrated in the harmonic conception and how the most important chord notes are emphasized by the melodic movement.

Let us take a few examples in which some of the key notes will be shown. In D-/F (the 6th bar of Figure 32) the melody plays F (b3rd), E (9th), C (b7th), G (4th), F(b3rd); in A/G (7th bar of Figure 32) the melody plays E (5th), D (4th) and C# (3rd); in Bb-6 (8th bar of Figure 32) the melody plays Db (b3rd), C (9th) and D natural (major 3rd) that works as tension note to connect the 8th and the 9th bars before the repetition of the first thematic idea. In D-/G (10th bar of Figure 32) the note A (5th) is followed by G (4th), F (b3rd), E (9th) and D (root). In the A7 chord of the last example, the melody plays C# (3rd) and G (b7th)).

Once presented A, A1 starts with the same melodic/harmonic idea as A for the first three bars before starting to explore some other different harmonic fields. This is a clear example of motivic composition that closely connects the idea to be developed with the construction of the harmonic structure. The repetition and variation of melodic and harmonic ideas define the composition under a concept that gives cohesion and character to the composition. At the same time, they allow the composer to explore an almost infinite numbers of harmonic combinations. This strategy gives the composition clear beginning, development and conclusion with a balance between the elements that are repeated and introduced as new ones.

CONCLUSIONS

Writing about harmonization techniques:

1. To obtain a rich variety of harmony in "simple" thematic structures without articulated melodic phrases, the choice of the "shared notes" principle is exemplary. In the case of a single note harmonized by chords without any tonal relationship, it is possible to think separately about which modal sonorities you want to refer in harmonizing the note of the melody. An example is reported in the composition "Thoughts Flow" where the same note belongs to different modes (Figure 24, Figure 25).

2. Harmonic ambiguity could be achieved using the “slash” chords. This strategy involves decision upon the types of intervals between bass and triad supporting the melody, as illustrated in the composition “Ralph’s Piano Waltz” (Figure 14, (5)), where the composer chooses the specific interval of minor 9^{th}.

About melodic writing and Counterpoint:

3. To reach stability and melodic cohesion, the same melodic fragment could be repeated and modulated several times as shown in “Mark Time” (Figure 19, (7)).

4. To create rhythmic movement and tension within the melody, it is effective to rhythmically overlap and to offset the same melodic idea as illustrated in “Nicolette” (Figure 17, Figure 18, (7)).

5. It is possible to contribute to the harmonic support by choosing the chords that are created by the meeting of the two melodic lines as notes of extension of the bass. An example is given in the final melody of “Wool Drop” (Figure 31).

About Motivic Composition:

6. A coherent and varied thematic development within the piece can be obtained through a harmonic modulation of the same thematic idea, as exemplified in the A section of “Spring Song " (Figure 20, (5)).

7. To balance the compositional material involved in the piece, it is necessary to gradually introduce the thematic ideas and to choose a song form and a structure length suitable for their gradual development, as demonstrated in the AABCC sections of the same “Spring Song” composition (Figure 20, Figure 22, Figure 23, (5)).

FIGURE INDEX

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