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JAZZ IMPROVISATION, ANALYSIS, AND INTERPRETATION: THREE PERFORMANCES OF "HONEYSUCKLE ROSE" BY ELLA FITZGERALD

BY

LAURA HAWLEY

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ABBREVIATIONS

CH Changes

CP Close Paraphrase

HB Harmonic Background

MB Melodic Background

OM Original Melody

TA Tonal Area

ABSTRACT

This thesis develops a framework for analyzing melodic improvisation on a jazz standard in order to explore how the improvisation relates to the original melody and harmony of the song. Using three recorded performances of "Honeysuckle Rose" by Ella Fitzgerald, the analytic method reveals the complex web of melodic and harmonic relationships in her improvisational style and musical craft.

The first chapter outlines important terminology and addresses the use of transcription as a tool for analyzing recorded performance. The second chapter explores current practices in jazz analysis and discusses strategies for jazz improvisation. Drawing on the work of prominent jazz analysts (Larson, Kernfeld, Hodson) these chapters lead to the formulation of a three-stage model for analyzing melodic jazz improvisation.

The third and fourth chapters present an analysis of Thomas "Fats" Waller's "Honeysuckle Rose," comparing analytic information gleaned from performance transcriptions and the lead-sheet. This analysis illustrates the utility of a model that allows the analyst to simultaneously consider aspects of form, melody, and harmony.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION, CONTEXT, AND METHODOLOGY

> Our pulses race when Fitzgerald starts to scat. Will she follow the melody? For how long? Will a fragment of another tune momentarily pop into her head? Will she slow down the tempo, double it, or suspend the beat altogether? Will she do her crowd-pleasing 'bass solo'? Will she trade fours with her accompanists, and will they be able to keep up with her endless inventiveness?
> If this isn't drama, I don't know what is.[1]

Introduction

Ella Fitzgerald's towering career spanned over half a century; from her teenage years with Chick Webb's band in the 1930s until her seventies in the 1990s. In his book, *Jazz Singing: America's Great Voices from Bessie Smith to Bebop and Beyond*, Will Friedwald heralds her as "one of the most important minds in modern jazz."[2] Friedwald writes about her ability to improvise and swing better than any other vocalist, her perfect intonation, her amazing capacity to create different sounds and effects with her voice, and her "endless inventiveness."[3] Indeed, it is this virtuosity and endless inventiveness that have led many writers to identify her improvisational capabilities as far surpassing those of any other singer in the history of jazz. In his book, *The Ella Fitzgerald Companion*, Norman David aptly captures the sense of awe surrounding her legendary status in the title of his first chapter: "The Ella Mystique."[4]

The sophistication of Fitzgerald's musical expression and her influence on the greater genre of jazz provide the music theorist with musical material of tremendous depth

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[1] Will Friedwald, *Jazz Singing: America's Great Voices from Bessie Smith to Bebop and Beyond* (New York: C. Scribner, 1990), 153.
[2] Ibid., 144.
[3] Ibid., 153.
[4] Norman David, *The Ella Fitzgerald Companion* (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2004), 1.

and complexity. How can we begin to understand her 'mysteriously' brilliant interpretations of jazz standards? Perhaps some would want to start by investigating the musicians who influenced her, such as Louis Armstrong, Billie Holiday, Connee Boswell, Leo Watson, Dizzy Gillespie and others. On the other hand, some might start by exploring her exceptional sense of swing, her skill in quotation and imitation, her use of scat syllables, or her highly praised phrasing. Still, others might point to her vocal quality, her perfect diction, or her ability to cross over into different styles, from blues to jazz to popular songs.

My own interest centers on her ability to navigate through a tune while creating interesting and constantly varied improvised lines – often at a fast pace – that somehow always sound both exciting and 'just right.' She is reputed to have been the only vocalist who seemed to be able to hold a listener's attention indefinitely with nothing but improvisation.[5] Friedwald contends that "Fitzgerald's interpretations have always been of melodies and harmonies."[6] As he sees it, a song's melody and harmony were the driving forces behind Fitzgerald's performances.

Like Friedwald, many authors have emphasized Fitzgerald's exceptional ear for harmony and melody, pointing out that she was not known to ever practice or warm up; rather, she simply had an extraordinary ability to assimilate and react to a tune's melody and harmony on the spot. While convictions of Fitzgerald as a harmonic and melodic improviser are widely accepted, no author has offered a detailed analysis of how her improvisations actually unfold in relation to these parameters.

Throughout this study, I investigate the ways in which selected contemporary authors articulate and interpret how musicians construct improvised jazz performance. With

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[5] Friedwald, 144.
[6] Ibid., 152.

Fitzgerald as my example, I examine the importance of form, harmony, and melody in the jazz musician's improvisational framework, with the aim of arriving at an analytical model for understanding how a jazz musician such as Fitzgerald – one of jazz's historical giants – constructs his or her improvised performance. I apply reductive analytic techniques to the original jazz tune to shed light on how different structural layers within that tune may influence a musician's improvisational framework. The thesis culminates in the application of my model, focusing specifically on Fitzgerald's interpretations of Thomas "Fats" Waller's "Honeysuckle Rose," as featured on her recorded collaborations with the Count Basie Orchestra. These collaborations are documented in the following albums: *Ella and Basie!* (1963), *A Classy Pair* (1979), and *A Perfect Match* (1979).

Context within the Literature on Jazz Analysis

This thesis participates in a burgeoning literature on jazz and popular music analysis, joining the debate surrounding the transcription and analysis of jazz performance. Different writers on jazz approach their respective explanations of performed improvisation from a number of perspectives. Barry Kernefeld's book, "What to Listen for in Jazz," provides an example of the type of writing that offers the general reader an approach for understanding how a jazz musician might improvise lines which depart for the melody of the tune on which he or she is improvising.[7] His analysis approaches improvised performances in terms of what happens in the improvised line, but stops at explaining how the musician may have made specific musical decisions regarding the realization of his or her improvised line in that particular performance, for that particular tune.

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[7] Barry Kernfeld, *What to Listen for in Jazz* (New Haven:Yale University Press, 1995).

Steve Larson's application of Schenkerian analysis to jazz performance plays an important role in the development of my analytical framework. His article, "Schenkerian Analysis of Modern Jazz: Questions about Method," argues for the utility of Schenkerian analysis as a tool for understanding a jazz musician's improvisational plan as it relates to a specific tune. He addresses the question of whether or not Schenkerian analysis is appropriate for improvised music, the problem of explaining upper chordal extensions such as ninths, elevenths, and thirteenths in jazz harmony in Schenkerian terms, and the question of whether or not jazz musicians conceived their performances in terms of the large-scale harmonic structure that Schenkerian analysis would illuminate.[8]

However, several authors have identified problems with the strict application of Schenkerian analysis to jazz, rock, and popular music. I address this critique in Chapter 2 and refer specifically Richard Middleton's and Allan Moore's criticisms of the strict Schenkerian framework as a tool for jazz analysis.[9]

The theoretical ideas relating to jazz harmony and improvisational strategies in Robert Hodson's doctoral thesis, "Interaction and Improvisation: Group Interplay in Jazz Performance," have greatly influenced my analytical model.[10] He develops a framework for approaching jazz harmony in terms of structural levels similar to the different harmonic levels presented in Larson's analysis. He also offers an extensive discussion about how various *other* elements of a jazz tune, such as melody and form, might influence a musician's improvisational plan. His explanations of how the jazz musician might approach

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[8] Steve Larson, "Schenkerian Analysis of Modern Jazz: Questions About Method," *Music Theory Spectrum* 20, no. 2 (1998): 209-241.

[9] Richard Middleton, *Studying Popular Music* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1990), and Allan Moore, "The So-Called 'Flattened Seventh' in Rock," *Popular Music* 14, no. 2 (May 1995): 185-201.

[10] Robert Hodson, "Interaction and Improvisation: Group Interplay in Jazz Performance" (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2000).

a jazz tune in terms of form, melody, and harmony comprise the backbone of my analytic approach.

All of the ideas presented above influence the theoretical model which I develop and apply throughout this study. Subsequent chapters seek to investigate, synthesize, and develop the theories put forth by the aforementioned authors, as well as others, in an effort to arrive at an analytical method for approaching jazz performance analysis in terms of how the performance relates to different structural levels of melody and harmony in the original tune. I apply this method to three recordings of "Honeysuckle Rose" as performed by Ella Fitzgerald with the Count Basie Orchestra. As one of the most important improvisers in the history of jazz, Fitzgerald's performances provide excellent musical material for this analytic inquiry.

Methodology and Terminology

Practical Experience

As a starting point for my research, I endeavoured to gain some practical experience in the jazz field in a number of ways. I took lessons in jazz theory and arranging from jazz musician and pedagogue, Yves Laroche, who also gave me introductory instruction in jazz performance and improvisation. I attended numerous jazz concerts, and appeared as a jazz singer on several occasions with both small jazz combos including the Yves Laroche trio, and in a big band setting with the University of Ottawa jazz ensemble. These experiences provided me with an invaluable knowledge base and with a practical exposure to jazz terminology. Additionally, my limited experience as a jazz singer offered me the opportunity to reflect, as a performer, on how I would construct improvised passages within

the context of a particular tune, and allowed for post-performance reflection on how my interpretation took shape. Extending from an increase in my knowledge and experience base, these opportunities also made me a more informed and sensitive listener, allowing me to approach recordings with a better-developed sense of the various elements involved in a jazz performance.

To begin my literary research, I conducted a survey of current literature related to Ella Fitzgerald, transcription, jazz history, jazz performance, and analysis and interpretation of jazz and popular music. I listened to numerous Fitzgerald recordings, and watched video footage of some of her performances.

Because my analysis applies to recorded performance, this study relies heavily on transcription. Thus, I must offer a few words on the debate amongst scholars, particularly in ethnomusicology, regarding the study of performed music through use of transcriptions. Before I do this, however, I would like to familiarize the reader with some important terminology, particularly regarding the use of the words "form" and "arrangement" in jazz parlance.

Form and Arrangement in Jazz

The term "form" refers to the structural organization of music. In the New Grove Dictionary of Jazz, Thomas Owens offers a discussion of form in jazz, explaining that, in jazz performance, "[t]he commonest structure consists of a theme (that is, a harmonized melody, or in some cases…simply a series of harmonies, having its own internal formal design), followed without pause by a succession of improvised variations based on the harmonies of the theme, and then by a repetition of the theme itself."[11] However, the use of the term "form" becomes confusing in this context because in practice, the above description

[11] *The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz*, 2nd ed., "Forms," by Thomas Owens, 823.

of a "theme and variations" form could in fact unfold in an infinite variety of ways. For instance, the performance might follow the organizational plan known as a *head arrangement* (which I will explain below), or might be guided by a partially notated arrangement. On the other hand, in his book, *What to Listen for in Jazz*, Barry Kernfeld (who also happened to be the editor of The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz) calls the theme-and-variations format by a completely different name: "chorus form."[12]

In order to discuss the structure of jazz performance, I must acknowledge an often confusing disparity between the use of the terms "form" and "arrangement" in jazz, and their use in classical music. The present discussion clarifies my understanding and use of these two terms in the context of jazz music and introduces some other important jazz terminology.

Form. Jazz musicians typically use the term "form" when discussing a jazz tune or a standard pre-existing chord progression such as the blues. Musicians call the melody of the tune the "head," and call the tune's harmonic progression the "changes," although, musicians often also use "head" to refer to the original song as a whole. These tunes provide the basis for a jazz performance, and the corpus of these tunes includes popular songs, blues, religious songs, marches, ragtime songs and ostinatos.[13]

Soloing. Owens' above explanation describes a standard *performance practice* which unfolds through multiple repetitions of a pre-composed tune's formal scheme. In this practice, the musicians play the original tune at the beginning and at the end of the performance. After the opening presentation of the head, the musicians return to the beginning of the song and cyclically repeat the tune's phrase structure and harmonic

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[12] Barry Kernfeld, 41.
[13] Owens, 823.

progression, while the musicians take turns improvising, or "soloing," on the original song in a number of ways. One repetition of the form is known as a "chorus."

The soloing musician might solo throughout just one chorus, or might continue through several choruses. On the other hand, the soloist might take only half of a chorus, or might share a chorus with another musician in a technique known as "trading fours." Trading fours occurs much like a conversation: a soloing musician improvises four measures and is answered by four measures of improvisation from another musician. Each musician continues responding to one another in four-measure units as the chorus continues.

Arrangement. Generally, musicians either discuss or demonstrate the order and duration of the improvised solos before the performance, or, the organization of solos unfolds *during* the performance through communication within the ensemble. The formal scheme of these performances is sometimes identified in jazz literature as "theme and variations" – as Owens has described – however, musicians do not typically discuss the performance in terms of "form." Rather, they typically refer to the organization of the performance as an "arrangement," and use the word "form" to refer to the structural organization of *one* chorus (or, in other words, the organization of the original tune on which the performance is based).

Robert Hodson shares my view regarding the inconsistency between Owens' definition of form and the way jazz musicians use the term in relation to the original tune on which they improvise. He defines "form" as a term referring to the jazz tune, and "consisting of the harmonic progression in conjunction with its phrase structure."[14] This way, his definition emphasizes the "internal phrase organization of [a tune's] chorus,"

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[14] Robert Hodson, 119.

which, as we will see, plays an important role in the improvisatory process (and, therefore, in my analysis), as well as in the jazz musician's ability to learn the massive jazz repertoire.

For the classical musician, "arrangement" refers specifically to a particular instrumental (or vocal) setting of a pre-existing song. A national anthem, for instance, could be arranged in many different ways, such as for SATB choir, or for a brass ensemble. In jazz, the term has a much broader application. As Kernfeld rightly points out, "distinctions among arrangement, composition, and improvisation are often not clear-cut."[15] In jazz parlance, "arrangement" might refer to a performance plan evolved from the combined suggestions of different ensemble members, decisions made with regards to individual parts, instrumental texture and solo sections, and the group leader's decisions about various aspects of the performance.[16] This type of pre-performance, planned arrangement would often be memorized by members of the band, and is known as a *head arrangement.*

As the size of jazz ensembles grew, so did a need for written-down arrangements. Kernfeld offers the example of Duke Ellington's recording, *Trumpet No End*, which is based on Irving Berlin's *Blue Skies*. This recording typifies the most common type of ensemble requiring a notated arrangement, the big band. Duke Ellington's 1946 big band included five trumpets, three trombones, five saxophones and a standard three-piece rhythm section including piano, bass and drums. Kernfeld explains that in the arrangement for this recording, the rhythm section makes their own way through the repeating choruses of the tune, following the form and harmonic progression, but the brass and reeds required written-

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[15] Kernfeld, 75.

[16] *The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz*, 2nd ed., "Arrangement," by Kernfeld, 76.

out arrangements.[17] While this example still fits under the rubric of "theme and variation" form, this way of organizing that form constitutes another type of "arrangement."

This example highlights an important feature found in the majority of jazz arrangements: the combination of pre-composed elements with elements that are improvised. Arrangers were also responsible for leaving space within their arrangements for improvised solos. In the 1930s and early 40s, at the height of the big band era, almost all the major big bands such as Ellington's or Count Basie's had their own hired arrangers who, through their style of arranging, greatly contributed to the definition of a particular band's characteristic style. According to Kernfeld, "as one who developed concepts, set the style, and inspired the musicians, [the arranger] had become in many cases more important than the titular leader of the band. Thus in jazz the arrangement took on an importance far beyond the composition."[18] A band's hired arranger would have been familiar with the musicians in the band and with who would take solos, and could organize their arrangements accordingly, combining notated elements with space left open for solo improvisation. However, this type of tailor-made arrangement was not always available. For instance, in a telephone conversation on January 3, 2007, Norman David (author of *The Ella Fitzgerald Companion*) revealed that when Ella Fitzgerald joined forces with the Duke Ellington Orchestra to record part of the *Duke Ellington Songbook* in 1957, Ellington, who was supposed to have written new arrangements in the keys in which Fitzgerald normally sang the tunes, had nothing prepared for the recording session. Consequently, they used old

[17] Kernfeld, *What to Listen for in Jazz*, 76.
[18] Kernfeld, "Arrangement," 79.

arrangements done for the Duke Ellington Orchestra, with Ella soloing in places the arranger originally intended for an instrumental solo.[19]

As the swing era merged into bop and, later, into modal jazz and free jazz, the importance of the big band diminished and the smaller ensembles of early jazz returned to prominence. Additionally, the popular songs typically used in the 30s and 40s were increasingly replaced by new compositions.[20] As such, the need for an arranger disappeared as many ensembles returned to the type of arrangement that was worked out in discussion between the members of the ensemble, or, as in the case of some free jazz, barely worked out at all. For the purposes of this thesis, however, these later styles require less attention as the Count Basie Orchestra's style was firmly rooted in the swing tradition.

Swing. The performance practice associated most strongly with the swing tradition is the "theme and variations" performance layout that Owens identified. Since this requires musicians to take turns soloing through multiple choruses, the musician relies heavily on his or her ability to keep track of where he or she is in the form as each chorus goes by. Without an innate understanding of a tune's form, musicians would not be able to coordinate their parts in performance. Jazz musicians are often judged by their ability to "keep the form," that is, to coordinate their part accurately with the structure and harmonic progression of the tune.[21]

With the jazz repertory being so vast in scope, this may seem like an onerous task. Fortunately, the great majority of jazz tunes fall into one of only a handful of formal designs. This partly explains why the term "form" is used more often in jazz in reference to this handful of structures, rather than as a descriptor for the structure of one particular

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[19] Norman David, telephone conversation with author, January 3, 2007.
[20] Kernfeld, "Arrangement," 79.
[21] Hodson, 139.

performance. As mentioned above, the song types used in jazz include popular songs, blues, religious songs, marches, ragtime songs and ostinatos.[22] Of these, popular song forms and blues forms accounted for the majority of jazz music in the swing era.

Song Form. The popular songs used in jazz performances typically consist of two sections: a verse and a chorus. The verse is through-composed and occurs once, at the beginning of the performance, introducing the chorus much as a recitative introduces an aria in opera. While Fitzgerald is known for often including the verses in her recorded performances, jazz performances typically omit the verse, especially in performances after 1920, and the chorus is used on its own.[23] The chorus in song form is usually sixteen or thirty-two bars long, consisting of symmetrical phrasing of four or eight measures each. These phrases comprise four sections organized as AABA, ABAC, and ABCD, to name a few formats, although AABA is the most common song form. In this form, the B section provides melodic and harmonic contrast, often modulating to another key, and is usually known as the "bridge" although other names for this section include "channel," "release," "middle eight," or "inside."[24]

Usually, the melody of the A section is designed to end in the penultimate measure of the phrase. As such, the relative weakness of the final downbeat of the phrase as compared to the strong downbeat at the beginning of the next phrase propels the music forward.[25] Additionally, the arrival of the final downbeat in the penultimate measure of the phrase allows for time to insert extra chords (usually ii - V in the last measure), known as a "turnaround" which pushes the music forward into the next section or chorus. While

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[22] Owens, 823.
[23] Ibid.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Kernfeld, 41.

variations of these phrase structures certainly exist, the frequency of this form within the jazz repertory helps musicians categorize and retain tunes.

Moreover, many melodies of popular songs are written with the same harmonic design as another tune, or with an embellished version of that harmony. These tunes are known as "contrafacts." Gershwin's song, "I Got Rhythm," for example, has over one hundred contrafacts. In fact, the chord progression of "I Got Rhythm" has been so widely used that is has become the most important model for jazz performance, other than the blues.[26] By establishing a strong familiarity with this progression, the musician would be able to adapt this progression to the many variations of it found in the contrafacts.

Blues. Aside from popular song form, the other important structure in jazz performance is the *blues*. Unlike song-form, the blues is not associated with a specific melody, but with the twelve-bar "blues progression," which may be expanded (as in a 16- or 32-bar blues) or compressed (as in an 8-bar blues).[27] This progression often serves as a harmonic framework for jam sessions, and is used in performance (with or without a melody), like song-form, as the basis for a "theme and variation" performance format. Many melodies have been composed to go with the blues progression. It is similar to the "rhythm changes" in that many versions of the progression exist, although a few have become more widely known than others. The flexible nature of the blues and of the "rhythm changes" illuminates an important aspect of jazz performance: the license jazz musicians and song-writers have to alter and elaborate on pre-existing chord progressions. I will return to this concept in Chapter 2.

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[26] Kernfeld, *What to Listen for in Jazz*, 52.
[27] Owens, 824.

Transcription

Let us now return to the subject of transcription and the debate surrounding its utility for studying performed music.

In his article, "Writing Ghost Notes: The Poetics and Politics of Transcription", Peter Winkler addresses the debate surrounding the utility and appropriateness of transcription for studying performed music. He describes how, from the analyst's perspective, transcription can provide an invaluable perspective from which one might explore a recorded piece of music. The transcription lacks the ephemeral aspect of the recording, allowing the analyst to compare temporally distant moments of the performance or to focus on a particular moment in the music for as long as she or he wants. On the other hand, Winkler also questions the unavoidable separation of the transcribed version from the context in which the recording was made. He explains,

> For a musician working in an oral tradition, fixing a piece in notation may be not only unnecessary, it may be an actual *impoverishment.* Once the details are immutably frozen, it is no longer possible for the musicians to respond to particular performance situations: to interact with the audience, for example, or to capitalize on the individual moods, skills, and proclivities of the performers.[28]

This statement, however, implies a misconception of what transcription should represent. As Winkler later points out, the transcription does not function as a set of instructions for how a piece should sound, rather, it serves as a visual representation of how a piece *did* sound.[29]

Steve Larson similarly addresses this issue in his article "Dave McKenna's Performance of 'Have You Met Miss Jones?'" by drawing important distinctions between a

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[28] Peter Winkler, "Writing Ghost Notes: The Poetics and Politics of Transcription," in *Keeping Score: Music, Disciplinarity, Culture*, ed. David Schwarz, Anahid Kassabian, and Lawrence Siegel (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1997), 173.

[29] Ibid., 174.

visual representation of a performance and a notated composition. He quotes from the first scholarly edition of transcriptions: James Dapogny's *Ferdinand "Jelly Roll" Morton: The Collected Piano Music*. Here, Dapogny aptly explains,

> The notation of jazz raises the question of just what notation can actually represent. It should be borne in mind that the modern music notation developed largely as a prescriptive system, designed to give performers directions on how to realize a piece in performance. In this volume [*"Jelly Roll" Morton*] it is being used descriptively, to record performances that have already taken place.[30]

Moreover, different transcriptions of the same performance may look completely different. The level of complexity and detail included in the transcription will fluctuate, depending on its intended purpose.

Larson and Winkler have both highlighted the awkwardness of transcribing performed music using the Western system of notation. As Winkler points out, Western notation emphasizes certain parameters of the music, such as rhythm and pitch, while it marginalizes others, such as aspects of timbre and tempo flexibility.[31] In spite of this, he endeavours to create a transcription of an Aretha Franklin recording and to capture every aspect of the voice from pitches and rhythm to dynamics, gospel-style ornamentation, bent pitches, different vocal timbres such as the break in her voice and falsetto sound, vocal effects such as sob-like sounds, audible intakes of breath, different types of vibrato, final consonants, vowel shifts, and points of syllabic stresses.[32] For this purpose, he employs a variety of symbols, arrows, and modified note heads.

Winkler's transcription clearly illustrates the difficulty inherent in trying to capture a performance in notation. I suggest that the effort to notate all the elements Winkler strives

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[30] Steve Larson, "Dave McKenna's Performance of 'Have You Met Miss Jones?'," *American Music* 11, no. 3 (autumn 1993), 285, quoting James Dapogny, *Ferdinand "Jelly Roll" Morton: The Collected Piano Music*, (New York and London: G Schirmer and the Smithsonian Institute Press, 1982).

[31] Winkler, 172.

[32] Ibid., 190.

to include from Franklin's performance would prove difficult in *any* genre, be it a blues, rock, or classical performance. Dapogny, for instance, compares the task of notating rhythm in jazz performance to trying to notate rubato in performed classical music.[33]

Winkler's efforts indirectly point to an important aspect of analysis: we cannot expect to address *all* aspects of a performance in one transcription or, more importantly, in one analysis. Just as we apply many different, distinct types of analysis to a piece of classical music, so is it that in popular genres, the various elements that make up a performance need to be addressed separately before we can understand the whole.

Several authors have turned to computer technology in an effort to visually represent certain aspects of performed music that proved too difficult to notate. For example, in David Brackett's "Interpreting Popular Music," he uses spectrum photos to graphically represent and compare the varied overtone content, use of vibrato, and pitch-bending in Billy Holiday's performance of "I'll be Seeing You," with those in Bing Crosby's performance of the same song.[34] While this kind of visual aid requires the reader to have some understanding of spectrum photos, Brackett's photos represent these interpretive aspects of vocal production with much more nuance than one could achieve in staff notation.

Winkler similarly uses a computer program to graphically represent one of the most difficult elements of jazz and other popular genres: swing rhythm. The common practice in transcription and in jazz music in general is to notate swung rhythm as though the rhythm was in fact even. As such, in a tune in which the main beat is a quarter note, one would notate the eighth notes as equally divided, whereas in the performance, the first half of the beat is played longer than the second half. This performance convention is often compared

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[33] Larson, "Dave McKenna's Performance," 285.

[34] David Brackett, "Family Values in Music? Billie Holiday's and Bing Crosby's 'I'll Be Seeing You'," in *Interpreting Popular Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 67.

with the French baroque practice of *notes inégales*.[35] Often, the first half of the beat is approximately twice as long as the second half, although this varies depending on the tempo of the performance and the particular style of the performer, and often changes throughout the performance. Moreover, swung rhythm does not often divide the beat evenly into a ratio that would be easily represented by our proportional scheme of notation. Therefore, as Larson points out, "[A] transcription in straight-eighth 4/4 with a note that eighth notes are "swung" is a closer reflection of the original than a transcription in 12/8 or – worse – with dotted eighths and sixteenths."[36]

We can see then, why Winkler would want to use computer technology as tool for accurately capturing the rhythm in Aretha Franklin's recording. His results confirm her tendency to vary the rhythm throughout the performance. They also confirm the complex subdivision of the beat that Larson describes. Winkler explains that in this particular recording, the drummer's subdivisions of the beat lie "somewhere between 2/3 + 1/3 and 5/8 +3/8 of a beat; a trifle closer to the second of these."[37] So, Winkler's automatic transcription supports Larson's position on the division of the beat in swung rhythm.

Transcription in this thesis

I have relied on computer technology for my transcription of Fitzgerald's recordings. While I did not use a program to automatically generate a transcription, as Winkler did, I did make use of a computer program which allowed me to slow down the tempo of the performance without altering the pitch. This, along with repeated listening of small recorded segments, enabled me to transcribe with greater accuracy.

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[35] Larson, "Dave McKenna's Performance," 284.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Winkler, 185.

Larson's transcription in "Dave McKenna's Performance of 'Have You Met Miss Jones?'" serves as a model for my own. In keeping with his approach, the following description articulates a number of ways in which my transcriptions of Fitzgerald's performances differ from the recorded performance:

1) The transcriptions follow the convention that Larson identifies in his article of notating the swung rhythm as though the beats were evenly subdivided. In the occasional places where Fitzgerald *does* subdivide the beat evenly, I will notate it as one would notate a duplet in compound time.

2) I have endeavoured to represent Fitzgerald's rhythm as accurately as possible. There are several instances in Fitzgerald's performances in which she compresses or stretches a series of notes more or less evenly over a number of beats that do not easily subdivide on the staff to accommodate the notation of her line. To avoid excessive use of stems, dots and ties, and since my analysis relates less to rhythmic subtlety than to pitch content, I transcribe these moments in the performance as either quarter or eighth notes, depending on which of the two more closely approximates the sung line. A ratio above the transcribed passage indicates the distribution of notes. The first number of the ratio shows the number of notes performed, while the second number shows the number of metrical quarter or eighth notes (depending on the type of note used in that particular instance) elapsed in the course of the phrase. For example, four eighth notes in the transcription with the ratio 4:5 above indicates four evenly articulated notes "spread out" in the space of five eighth notes.

3) Since this study concerns the relationship of Fitzgerald's improvisation to the original tune, but not to the contributions of other band members, the transcription includes

only the pitch content and rhythm of Fitzgerald's line. It contains none of the other musicians' parts nor does it contain Fitzgerald's scat syllables. Her virtuosic use of scat, while fascinating, is worthy of a completely separate study beyond the scope of this thesis. The same could be said for the relationship between her performance and that of the other band members.

4) The transcription indicates only dramatic glissandi, shakes, scoops and note bends, but does not indicate dynamics. I show glissandi with a wavy line from the note of departure to the note of arrival, shakes are notated with a mordent symbol above, scoops are indicated with short slurs leading into the 'scooped' note, and note bends are indicated with an arrow above the bent note pointing upward or downward depending on whether the note is flattened or sharpened. In instances where Fitzgerald emphasizes a consonant or shouts, the position of the note on the staff in the transcription indicates an approximate pitch area and the note-head is replaced by an 'x'. Additionally, diamond-shaped note heads indicate places where Fitzgerald approximates a pitch.

5) There are a few instances where I believe Fitzgerald 'missed' the note she intended to sing. In these cases, the transcription indicates the note Fitzgerald intended to sing, while a note in Appendix B indicates the actual note she sings on the recording.

6) There are occasional notes in the recordings that are difficult to perceive aurally. Generally, since Fitzgerald is featured as soloist, and since she sings only one line, her voice projects through the sound of the accompanying big band. In this respect, my task becomes much easier than that of Larson or Winkler, both of whom expressed difficulty in determining chord voicings in the piano because of the overtone content. I have indicated

the few instances where I have had to make an educated guess by placing parentheses around the note in question.

Formal Markings. Within each chorus, I have indicated each formal section on the transcription using the same section labels that Larson used for his. These labels have three parts. The first numerical part designates which repetition of the chorus the transcription is showing, the second indicates the formal eight-bar phrase within the chorus (A or B), and, since "Honeysuckle Rose" has one B section but three repetitions of the A section, the third part (subscript) differentiates between each A section. For instance, as Larson explains, the sections in the first chorus are labeled $1A_1$ $1A_2$ 1B $1A_3$. $2A_3$ indicates the third A section of the second chorus.[38] In instances where Fitzgerald does not enter in the first chorus (as is the case on the 1979 recording, *A Classy Pair*), I have not transcribed the performance before her entry, and therefore I label the chorus of her entry as chorus 1. I refer to measures using numbers 1-8 within each section.

Key Choices. While I have analyzed the lead sheet for "Honeysuckle Rose" in its original key (F major) in Chapter 3, Fitzgerald's 1963 recording is in fact in D♭ major, while both 1979 versions start in B♭ major and modulate to C major. In my examples in Chapter 4, the reader should be aware that I have transcribed her performances in the key in which she performed them, and have transposed the material of the original (and related analysis) to the key of each transcription.

These transcriptions serve as important tools for analysis. As I mentioned above, this study aims to develop an analytical model for studying jazz performance. I begin my analysis with the original jazz tune, examining the elements of the original that may

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[38] Larson, "Dave McKenna's Performance," 292.

influence Fitzgerald's improvisation. The transcriptions allow me to represent aspects of how I perceive Fitzgerald's interpretation of the tune. I apply my model to the transcriptions to illustrate how her interpretation relates to the specific elements I identify in the original.

Criteria for Recording Selection

I based my selection of recordings for analysis on a number of factors. In his analysis of a Bill Evans performance, Steve Larson finds it necessary to argue against contentions that in his improvisations, "Evans relied on a set of formulas chosen merely because they fell readily under the hand."[39] This suggestion seems to reduce Evans' playing to mere button-pushing, implying that his performance has less to do with sensitive listening than with convenient patterns of fingering. By selecting a vocalist as my subject for analysis, I have essentially circumvented this argument. As we know, the instrument of the voice is located entirely in the body, thus, the singer must mentally plan each pitch in order to intone it. As such, it would be odd to suggest that Fitzgerald would have constructed her performances out of formulas that "fell readily under the voice." I think I can safely contend that Fitzgerald had to prepare each note she sang in her "inner ear."

However, initially, this had nothing to do with my choosing Fitzgerald's work as my material for analysis. My original motivation came from a personal fascination with her recordings and with her ability to improvise. Similarly, my interest in studying her work with Count Basie initially arose simply because out of all her recordings in my own personal collection, *something* caught my ear about her recordings with the Count Basie Orchestra, as though there was something particularly brilliant about her performances on these recordings – something my ear simply could not keep up with.

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[39] Steve Larson, "Schenkerian Analysis," 218.

As I began surveying various writings in jazz, I soon discovered that many writers have also reacted this way to these particular recordings. Will Friedwald describes the 1963 recording, *Ella and Basie!*, as demonstrating "the most propulsive, impetuous, and catchy rhythmic motion (meaning swing) ever heard."[40] A similarly enthusiastic Norman David, author of "The Ella Fitzgerald Companion," says of the same album: "At this time in history, when the Beatles and rock were starting to overtake America and the world, Ella and Basie demonstrated that they were still two of the hippest musicians around and that they still had a lot to say."[41] He later contends, "*Ella and Basie* cooks from the first note of the first track and never lets up."[42] Of their 1979 recording, *A Classy Pair*, David comments, "Ella sings brilliantly and it would be difficult to find another performance on which Basie himself plays any better."[43]

Thomas "Fats" Waller's 1929 song, "Honeysuckle Rose," was the most logical choice of tune because it is the only one that appears on all three of Fitzgerald's recordings with Basie. Moreover, according to Norman David, "If there was any tune that could be deemed the perfect theme for Ella and Basie, a selection with which the two stars felt a deep connection, it had to be "Honeysuckle Rose."[44] Throughout a section in his book devoted to Ella's work with Basie, the reader can sense his enthusiasm for these "Honeysuckle Rose" recordings in both his prose and in his transcriptions, three out of four of which he devotes to sections of the "Honeysuckle Rose" recordings.

Fitzgerald improvises brilliantly in all three performances, and together, they offer a wealth of interesting material for comparison. Each recording features her with the big band

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[40] Friedwald, 150.
[41] David, 171.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Ibid., 176.
[44] Ibid.

(she performs with a smaller ensemble on some tracks). Quincy Jones wrote the arrangements for the 1963 recording, *Ella and Basie*, while both the 1979 recording, *A Classy Pair*, and the live recording of the same year, *A Perfect Match*, use Benny Carter's arrangements.

A Brief Chapter Summary

In this chapter I have discussed the central inquiry of this study, have identified several important authors in the field of jazz and jazz analysis, have explained various terms, and have addressed my recording selection, use of transcription, and analytic approach.

In Chapter 2, I offer a more detailed discussion of specific contributions from the authors mentioned thus far, as well as others. I examine different frameworks for analyzing improvised jazz, and articulate how each of them informs my own analytical model. I discuss different strategies for improvisation, pointing to how an understanding of these strategies plays an important role in my analytic approach.

In Chapter 3, I synthesize and develop the analytic ideas discussed in Chapter 2. I arrive at a three-stage model for analyzing the melodic improvisation in a recorded jazz performance. The majority of Chapter 3 is devoted to the first stage in my model, which I illustrate through a detailed analysis of form, melody, and harmony in "Honeysuckle Rose."

In Chapter 4, I demonstrate the third stage of my analytical model. In this stage, I analyze portions from Fitzgerald's performances of "Honeysuckle Rose" as featured on the albums *Ella and Basie!* and *A Classy Pair*. In this analysis, I focus on the relationships between her improvisation and aspects of the "original" composition as represented on the lead-sheet.

Finally, Chapter 5 comprises my conclusion, and points to other aspects of jazz performance that might influence Fitzgerald's improvisation by bringing in her performance on *A Perfect Match* for comparison with the others.

CHAPTER 2

THE INTERPRETATION OF IMPROVISATION: CURRENT PRACTICES

In this chapter, I discuss several contemporary approaches to understanding and analyzing the melodic improvisation in a jazz performance. The bulk of this chapter examines the respective approaches of three authors: Barry Kernfeld, Steve Larson, and Robert Hodson.

Paraphrase, Formulaic Improvisation, and Motivic Improvisation

Barry Kernfeld, editor of the New Grove Dictionary of Jazz, discusses how a listener might understand jazz improvisation in his book, "What to Listen For in Jazz." His chapter entitled "Improvisation" begins with the following quote from Charles Mingus: "You can't improvise on nothin', man. You gotta improvise on somethin'."[1] Following this quotation, Kernfeld endeavours to address that "somethin'" by describing what he considers to be the three most important strategies a jazz musician would employ in performing improvised lines.

He identifies the first of these three techniques *paraphrase improvisation.* In this type of improvisation, the jazz musician elaborates on the original melody of the tune, but not to the extent that the original melody becomes unrecognizable. As Kernfeld points out, a paraphrased improvisation could occur at varying levels of complexity, from the addition of a few embellishments to the tune, to a "highly imaginative reworking of that melody."[2]

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[1] Barry Kernfeld, *What to Listen for in Jazz* (New York: Yale University, 1995), 119.
[2] Ibid., 131.

With paraphrase improvisation, in terms of Mingus' statement, we could identify the "somethin'" improvised *on* as the melody.

Kernfeld's second category, *formulaic improvisation*, describes a technique in which the jazz musician builds his or her improvised performance by combining and manipulating a series of small musical fragments. The musician strings together these fragments to create a continuous musical line. These motivic ideas, or gestures, are referred to in jazz parlance as "licks."[3] According to Kernfeld, jazz musicians and ensembles often cultivate their own corpus of such licks, which they weave into their performances over and over again in an infinite variety of transformations. To understand the "somethin'" on which the musician improvises in this case though, we need to go further than identifying fragments strung together in a series. Without that "somethin'" guiding their organization, these fragments offer about as much meaning as we would get from reading through the words in a dictionary at random. Kernfeld hints at the "somethin'" involved in this strategy when he says:

> Like paraphrase improvisation, formulaic improvisation may be based on a theme, the rhythmic and harmonic structure of which remains inviolate in terms of meter, phrase lengths, tonal relationships, and principal harmonic goals. A theme, however, is treated with greater freedom than in paraphrase improvisation. Its melody need not remain recognizable. Instead, *against repetitions of an existing structure*, a new melody emerges. (emphasis mine)[4]

Kernfeld offers another hint regarding what the formulaic improviser improvises *on* in his analysis of a Charlie Parker solo:

> [T]he concept of formulaic improvisation illuminates a technique for responding instantaneously to the intense requirements of his preferred style, bop. Influenced far more by the generalities of key and tempo and by the specifics of moment-by-moment harmonic progression than by the particular tune that he happened to be

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[3] Ibid., 137.
[4] Ibid., 138.

> playing, Parker brought to any musical situation a well-rehearsed body of formulas, which he then embedded into his lines in a fluid and frighteningly effortless manner.[5]

Kernfeld's subsequent analysis of a Parker solo does not, unfortunately, include any information about the harmonic progression, but rather identifies the melodic fragments Parker uses and shows where these fragments recur in different ways throughout the solo. I would posit that the melodic formulae reveal the surface manifestation of a more complex improvisatory effort. In other words, simply identifying the formulas does not illustrate *how* Parker uses them in a meaningful way in the context of a specific tune. While Parker may improvise *using* a variety of recurring fragments, the real "somethin'" – or in this case, "somethin's" – which Parker improvises on, are the "existing structure(s)," which Kernfeld describes (in the quotation above) as "generalities of key and tempo" and "harmonic progression." In other words, Parker embeds his melodic formulae into his lines in two different ways: he either ignores the specific chords and instead works within an overall key-area, or he uses his fragments in a way that articulates the chord-by-chord harmonic progression.

Finally, Kernfeld's third category describes improvisation created by repetition of a small melodic fragment throughout a phrase or formal section of a piece. He aptly calls this *motivic improvisation.* Like formulaic improvisation, in motivic improvisation the musician may realize the motive in different ways using techniques such as ornamentation, transposition, augmentation, diminution, expansion and compression, and rhythmic alteration; to name a few. According to Kernfeld, this kind of improvising was not prominent until after the 1950's for two important reasons: First of all, improvised lines in jazz before 1950 were expected to maintain some relationship to the original tune. More

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[5] Ibid.

importantly, the faster harmonic rhythm of tunes from pre-1950 jazz styles such as swing and bop made it nearly impossible for any musician to sustain motivic improvisation for very long. The slower-moving harmonic rhythms characteristic of post-1950 styles such as modal jazz and free jazz made sustained motivic improvisation more feasible.[6] Like formulaic improvisation, then, we would say that in motivic improvisation, the musician improvises *on* the harmony.

Kernfeld's observations here regarding an improvisation's relationship to the original song's melody and harmony are crucial to understanding, again, what the jazz musician improvises *on* when improvising with motives. Like formulaic improvisation, motivic improvisation relies on, and must relate in some way to, the underlying harmony. I would also propose that these motives are not randomly selected, but often generate from an aspect of the original tune's melodic line. In this way, the jazz musician would improvise on *both* the harmony and the melody at the same time. I will return to this idea in my analysis in Chapter 4.

Kernfeld's summary of improvisation techniques describes a way of understanding improvised jazz melodies in terms of three different categories – paraphrase, formulaic, and motivic improvisation – each of which explains how one might understand improvisation in terms of its pitch content. His explanation offers the listener a general way of approaching improvised lines in jazz, and introduces some important concepts in the links he makes between paraphrase improvisation and melody, and between formulaic and/or motivic improvisation and harmony. Indeed, the core of understanding improvisation lies in the relationship between a musician's improvisation and the melody and/or harmony of a tune.

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[6] Ibid, 143.

It is by looking deeper into these relationships that we can explore what Mingus means when he talks about improvising "on somethin'".

Schenkerian Analysis, Harmony, and Improvised Jazz

Steve Larson's article, "Schenkerian Analysis of Modern Jazz: Questions about Method" argues for the utility of Schenkerian analysis in understanding how a jazz musician conceives his or her improvisation. Drawing from John Rink's article, "Schenker and Improvisation" as well as from Schenker's essay, "The Art of Improvisation," Larson first sheds light on the importance that Schenker placed on improvisation. He refers to Schenker's discussion of C.P.E. Bach's *Essay on the True Art of Playing the Keyboard,* in which Schenker illustrates how his own theories on musical structure relate closely to C.P.E. Bach's outline for an improvised free fantasy.

Larson also suggests that while Schenkerian analysis was originally developed for composed music, improvisation may not be as different from composition as we might assume. For instance, we can often hear jazz musicians "working out" their improvisations on the "alternate takes" made available on CD releases, much like a composition is worked out over time.[7] Moreover, just as Schenker's theories suggest an abstract underlying harmonic structure in composed music, Larson asserts that improvised jazz music follows a deeper, underlying structure.

The Question of Upper Chordal Extensions in Jazz Harmony

A large section of Larson's article addresses the issue of upper chordal extensions such as ninths, elevenths and thirteenths in jazz harmony. Some might argue that these

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[7] Steve Larson, "Schenkerian Analysis of Modern Jazz: Questions About Method," *Music Theory Spectrum* 20, no. 2 (1998): 211.

chord tones were not a part of the music Schenker analyzed, therefore rendering Schenkerian analysis inappropriate for jazz music. However, Larson contends that not only *do* these chord tones appear in classical music, the way these tones function in jazz music fits perfectly well in the context of the Schenkerian model. He states, "Although these dissonances may receive greater emphasis and may be treated more freely in modern jazz than in classical music, their basic meaning remains the same: a dissonance derives its meaning from more stable pitches at deeper structural levels."[8]

Larson discusses a variety of approaches to understanding these upper chordal extensions. He turns first to Steven Strunk's stance in his article "Bebop Melodic Lines." Here, Strunk contends that approaching these tones as an accumulation of thirds (i.e. as "ninths," "elevenths," and "thirteenths" stacked above the chord) is not necessarily the most useful way to understand them. Strunk argues that we would better understand these pitches as melodic tensions, rather than harmonic events, saying, "In a tonal diatonic setting, a tension is a pitch related to a structurally superior pitch (usually a chord tone) by step, such that the tension represents and substitutes for the structurally superior pitch, called its resolution, in the register in which it occurs."[9] He observes that "the sense of dissonance of a tension derives usually from a potential seventh interval between the tension and a chord tone below it,"[10] and illustrates how these tensions occur in terms of voice leading. For instance, in the example of a II^{13} chord within a II^{7} - V^{7} progression, Strunk shows that the II^{13} (in C major, D-F-A-C-B) would be avoided because the B (the thirteenth) would disrupt

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[8] Ibid., 213.

[9] Larson, 214, quoting Steven Strunk, "Bebop Melodic Lines: Tonal Characteristics," *Annual Review of Jazz Studies* 8 (1996): 97-98.

[10] Larson, 214, quoting Strunk, 98.

the important voice-leading event of scale degree eight in II^7 (C) moving to scale degree seven in V^7 (B).[11]

Strunk also notes that "tensions" resolve in different ways, first stating that "the resolution of a tension sometimes occurs immediately on the surface of the composition, before the chord supporting the tension changes."[12] A suspension, for example, would fall into this category. Tensions might also resolve within the same chord but after a melodic embellishment. According to Strunk, these two types of resolutions occur frequently in bebop melodies.[13]

Strunk illustrates four more examples in which "tensions" resolve to more stable chord pitches. The first is the V^7 augmented ninth chord which, in C major, would include the pitches G-B-D-F-B♭.[14] In this instance, the augmented ninth (B♭) is dissonant with scale degree seven (B♮). According to Strunk, the augmented ninth resolves to another dissonance – the flattened sixth scale degree – which then resolves to scale degree five, a stable chord tone.

The second case is the presence of scale degree six in a tonic chord, a common occurrence in jazz. Strunk notes that the sixth scale degree, while not a chord tone, does not form a seventh with any of the notes in the triad. Interestingly, he suggests that typically, the sixth scale degree in the tonic chord exists as "an unresolved addition to I, not standing for [scale degree] 5 (which is often voiced a step away from it), but also not a chord tone."[15]

Another case involves tensions which resolve after their chord changes, sometimes even resolving to another tension. As Strunk points out, this often happens in sequential

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[11] Larson, 214.
[12] Larson, 214, quoting Strunk, 110.
[13] Larson, 214.
[14] My use of B♭ here instead of A♯ is reflective of Larson's explanation.
[15] Larson, 216, quoting Strunk, 99.

passages, forming "chains of stepwise tensions."[16] Strunk also addresses tensions which carry through to become chord tones in subsequent chords, suggesting that when this occurs, the tension loses "its 'need' to resolve."[17]

While Strunk offers several valuable explanations for the behavior of upper chordal extensions, his specific examples exclude some important occurrences in jazz harmony. In response to his extensive discussion of Strunk's article, Larson offers his own opinion:

> While Schenkerian analysis can explain a great deal about modern jazz, some features of modern jazz performances may remain difficult to explain. Such anomalies include: parallel motion in perfect fifths and octaves; parallel motion in dissonant intervals; dissonances added to final tonic sonorities; dissonances that do not resolve until or after a change of harmony; dissonances that are resolved by dissonances; dissonances and their resolutions sounding in the same register; uses of dissonances and even 'polychords' in ways that seem to function more to add color than to expand voice-leading content; and pieces that begin and end in different keys.[18]

Pointing to a contrast with Strunk's theories, Larson recalls Steven E. Gilbert's article, "Gershwin's Art of Counterpoint," in which Gilbert asserts,

> Since Gershwin wrote basically tonal music, it is reasonable that we adopt a modified Schenkerian approach. However, the word "modified" must be stressed. The main point of difference is that in Gershwin's harmonic language the dissonance had at least been partially – to use Schoenberg's word – emancipated. The triad was still necessary for closure, but dissonances such as ninths and so-called thirteenths did not require resolution.[19]

Reflecting on Gilbert's position, Larson cautions against categorizing all upper-chordal extensions as emancipated dissonance; pointing out that jazz musicians frequently resolve these dissonance through skillful voice leading. I would point out, however, that Gilbert argued for *partially* emancipated dissonance. Perhaps, like Larson, he adopts a

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[16] Larson, 216, quoting Strunk, 111.
[17] Larson, 217 quoting Strunk, 112.
[18] Larson, 217.
[19] Larson, 218, quoting Steven E. Gilbert, "Gershwin's Art of Counterpoint," *The Musical Quarterly* 70/4 (1984): 423).

middle-ground between Strunk's strict categorization of 'upper-chordal extensions' as specifically functional tensions and the notion of totally emancipated dissonance.

I would contend here that upper chordal extensions in jazz harmony may or may not resolve in different ways depending on their context within the song and on the style of the improviser. For instance, I would argue that we do not necessarily need to understand the frequent presence of the added thirteenth in final tonic chords of jazz tunes as an example of 'emancipated dissonance.' Rather, I share Strunk's stance concerning the sixth as unresolved (but not emancipated) dissonance, and argue that we might consider the tension that the unresolved thirteenth contributes to an otherwise stable chord to be an *important* element of instability. In performance, this built-in destabilizing element helps the music propel forward into the next repetition of the chorus.

Larson's own voice-leading analysis of an improvisation by Bill Evans on Ray Noble's 1936 tune "The Touch of Your Lips" suggests to me that these dissonances should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis, although he does not explicitly say so. His Schenkerian graph appears later in the article, paired with a section discussing whether or not jazz musicians conceive their improvisations in terms of the complex structures that Schenkerian analysis illuminates. A close look at his graph clearly illustrates how many of the upper-chordal extensions do in fact resolve either within the same chord or, more often, by resolving to chord tones belonging to a new harmonic event.

However, there are also occasional instances where the dissonances do not resolve. Interestingly, Larson treats these pitches in a variety of ways in his analysis: sometimes he ignores these pitches, in other instances he seems to normalize them at the middle-ground level, or, he omits them entirely.

While his analysis convincingly exemplifies how Evans, through voice leading, resolves the vast majority of upper-chordal extensions as prolongations of a deeper structure, his treatment of the dissonances that do not seem to resolve puzzles me. Should we understand these unresolved dissonances as examples of momentary aesthetic weakness? I am inclined to consider these as the kind of dissonance to which Larson referred earlier as seeming "to function more to add color than to expand voice-leading content." Later in the article, Larson suggests that "In some cases, a dissonance may be understood as a substitution even though the resolution does not appear."[20] Bearing this possible exception in mind, and considering that the majority of tensions in Evans' performance resolve, Larson's analysis convincingly illuminates how the 'upper-chordal extensions' in Evans' improvisation relate to and prolong an underlying, background level of structure.

The Background Harmonic Plan in Jazz Improvisation

The most important goal of Larson's analysis of Evans' improvisation is the illustration of how a jazz musician may structure his or her improvisation in terms of a background harmonic framework. As his starting point, Larson turns to a dialogue between Marian McPartland and Bill Evans from an interview which was recorded in 1978 for broadcast on a national radio show called "Marian McPartland's Piano Jazz." Bill Evans' first statement in Larson's transcription of their dialogue is fascinating: "I always have, in anything that I play, an absolutely basic structure in mind. Now, I can work around that differently, or between the strong structural points differently, but I find the most fundamental structure, and then I work from there."[21] Evans goes on to clarify that the fundamental structure he refers to is not the chorus-by-chorus arrangement, but rather a

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[20] Larson, 239.
[21] Larson, 219.

concept of the different key areas *within* the chorus. Evans identifies and plays different examples of how he elaborates on the fundamental structure, for example, by adding a dominant pedal point under a tonic to dominant back to tonic gesture. Evans' musical examples (as transcribed by Larson,) paired with his verbal articulation of how he is improvising, reveal that he is indeed working from a large-scale background framework consisting of tonic prolongation over a dominant pedal, followed by tonic prolongation over a circle of fifths, followed by the tonicization of the mediant, which finally moves back to the tonic.[22] Larson points out that Evans' description of his improvisational plan organizes the tune according to important voice-leading events, rather than in four-bar units which would correspond with the hypermeter of the tune.

Larson's Schenkerian graph illustrates how Evans' improvisation follows his own description of the fundamental structure. First, Larson applies the analysis to the tune as it appears in the sheet music. His analysis highlights, even at the background level, the same important harmonic and voice-leading events that Evans described in his plan. Larson then clearly illustrates, through his analysis of a segment from Evans' performance, how Evans manifests this structure in his improvisation. His two graphs also reveal how Evans directs his performance through descending fourth progressions, which appear at the middle-ground level in his graph of the original tune.

Schenkerian Analysis: Criticism and Modification

Larson's use of Schenkerian analysis works well in its application to this performance for a number of reasons. Firstly, solo piano improvisation lends itself well to the Schenkerian model because of its capacity to articulate bass movements at the same time as melodic movements. In terms of analyzing improvisation from a single-line instrument,

[22] Larson, 229.

such as a voice or a saxophone for example, Schenker graphs become somewhat lacking as an analytical tool.

His analysis also works well because Bill Evans studied Schenkerian analysis and, as his interview with McPartland (transcribed in Larson's article) illustrates, he intentionally conceived his improvisation in terms of large-scale harmonic structures.[23] However, while Evans is able to articulate his broad harmonic plan, his explanation does not seem to include prolongation of the descending *urlinie.* I find Larson's application of the descending *urlinie* to his analysis of "The Touch of Your Lips" difficult and somewhat limiting. For example, this particular tune actually features a gradually *ascending* line throughout the A section, which Larson has had to manipulate to fit into the Schenkerian *urlinie* model. While the *urlinie* may relate to the underlying harmonic scheme, it has little to offer in what it can reveal about the improvised melody. Moreover, as a whole, the Schenkerian model does not allow the analyst to account for the possibility that some musicians may conceive their improvisation in terms of *melodic* structures.

Allan Moore and Richard Middleton have both argued against the strict application of the Schenkerian model to popular music forms. Both identify the *urlinie* as awkward in the context of rock music.[24] As I will illustrate in Chapter 3, by eliminating the constraints of the *urlinie*, the analyst would have the freedom to identify other underlying voice-leading structures that may play a more important role in the formation of a musician's improvisation. I will return to this later in this chapter.

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[23] Robert Hodson, "Interaction and Improvisation: Group Interplay in Jazz Performance" (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2000), 16.

[24] Allan Moore, "The So-Called 'Flattened Seventh' in Rock," *Popular Music* 14, no. 2 (May 1995): 187; Richard Middleton, *Studying Popular Music* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1990), 196.

The problems inherent in using the *urlinie* (and with the Schenkerian framework in general), Moore explains, arise partly because while Schenker's model seeks to illuminate elaborations of an over-arching background harmonic structure, rock music develops through *repetitions* of harmonic structures. Moore's point applies equally to jazz music. As I discussed in Chapter 1, jazz performances, like the one Larson analyzed, develop through the multiple repetitions of the chorus. As such, we can not apply the Schenkerian model to an entire jazz performance as a single unit. Rather, we need to consider the underlying framework behind *each* chorus as a discreet unit. Larson has done this in his analysis, and it works because "The Touch of Your Lips" has an ABAC phrase design. This phrase organization allows Larson to view the song in two large sections. As he explains it in his analysis, the return of section A halfway through the song can be understood as an interruption in the progression, and the second section completes the closure of the fundamental line and progression.

However, many jazz tunes contain a higher frequency of repetition than "The Touch of Your Lips." This is because, as I explained in Chapter 1, the majority of jazz songs have an AABA phrase design, not ABAC. Moreover, in many AABA songs, all three A sections consist of *exactly the same* melodic and harmonic design. In fact, the tune I will analyze in subsequent chapters, "Honeysuckle Rose," falls into this category. How then, can we apply Schenker's model to this phrase format? With three identical A sections, can we logically privilege the final A section as the only A section that completes the fundamental line?

Structural Levels of Harmony in Jazz Performance

Middleton calls for a modified application of Schenkerian analysis which would "forget the rigid *Urlinie* forms but keep the approach to melodic prolongation."[25] He points the reader to an article by Alan Perlman and Daniel Greenblatt: "Miles Davis Meets Noam Chomsky: Some Observations on Jazz Improvisation and Language Structure." In this article, Perlman and Greenblatt compare the structure of jazz performance to that of language as described by Noam Chomsky in *Cartesian Linguistics*.[26] Their theory relates to Chomsky's concepts of the relationship between the "deep," "shallow," and "surface" structures of a sentence. According to Chomsky, the surface structure (the actual sentence) generates from a deep structure, which he defines as "the underlying abstract structure that determines its semantic interpretation."[27] The shallow structure encompasses all possible manifestations of the deep structure.

Perlman and Greenblatt apply Chomsky's idea of deep, shallow, and surface structures to improvised melody in jazz. They equate the deep structure to the chord symbols found on the sheet music of a particular tune. They map the shallow structure onto the infinite possible melodic lines a jazz musician might improvise over that progression (the deep structure). Finally, as Chomsky defines the surface structure as the actual sentence, so Perlman and Greenblatt identify the actual improvised melody as the surface structure in their model.

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[25] Middleton, 196.

[26] Alan M. Perlman and Daniel Greenblatt, "Miles Davis Meets Noam Chomsky: Some Observations on Jazz Improvisation and Language Structure," in *The Sign in Music and Literature*, ed. Wendy Steiner (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 169-183.

[27] Noam Chomsky, *Cartesian Linguistics* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966): 32-33, quoted in Robert Hodson, "Interaction and Improvisation: Group Interplay in Jazz Performance" (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2000), 111-112.

Their identification of different structural levels in jazz performance offers a useful perspective for the analyst to consider. However, their explanation of their model's deep structure becomes inconsistent when they posit, "The progression known as the 'twelve-bar blues' is the deep structure for hundreds of songs. Blues changes, [...] in their simplest form [...,] are customarily modified by jazz musicians in order to achieve alternate deep structures of greater harmonic complexity."[28] Since they have already identified the deep structure as a single chord progression of a specific tune, this assertion that the chord progressions for hundreds of songs generate from the deep structure of the blues becomes problematic. Are they suggesting then that there can be a deep structure within a deep structure, or, a "deeper deep" structure? Clearly harmonic progressions derived from a more basic progression (like progressions based on the blues) render Perlman and Greenblatt's model somewhat awkward.

In his doctoral dissertation, "Interaction and Improvisation: Group Interplay in Jazz Performance," Robert Hodson also criticizes the model of Perlman and Greenblatt model in terms of its application to jazz harmony. The first problem, he explains, arises from the many difficulties inherent in the task of analyzing jazz harmony. This task is particularly difficult because of the fluid nature of a particular tune's harmony; the chords in the progression often differ from source to source. For example, according to Hodson, lead sheets from widely-used sources such as *The Real Book* are frequently inaccurate.[29] Moreover, jazz musicians often learn tunes by rote.

Even more complications arise in trying to analyze a particular performance. Hodson explains,

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[28] Perlman and Greenblatt, 170.
[29] Hodson, 97.

> Recordings of the same tune by different groups of musicians will often have similar, but not quite the same, harmonic progressions. And, even if you decide that you are going to focus your attention on only one recorded performance, the harmonic progression of that performance may still be difficult to pin down – it may change over the course of the performance, or each musician may interpret and present the harmony in a slightly different way.[30]

I would add to this that often a portion of a particular performance may not even have enough pitches sounding simultaneously to define a specific chord or progression.

Changing Blues Changes

Hodson offers a more thorough explanation than Perlman and Greenblatt of the twelve-bar blues as a progression which can change from performance to performance. The "basic blues" progression consists of the chords I, IV and V articulated in a slow harmonic rhythm (each chord occupies a few measures); however, this progression is often varied by embedding more chords within that basic structure. Hodson illustrates two examples of commonly known variants. He calls the first one the "jazz" blues progression because it is the one used most often by jazz musicians. His second example, he explains, is known as "Bird" blues because it appeared most famously in Charlie Parker's (a.k.a. Bird's) composition, "Blues for Alice."

Mapping these two variants of the blues progression under the "basic" progression, Hodson clearly illustrates how these other progressions generate from the "basic blues" progression. His example is reproduced in Example 2.1:

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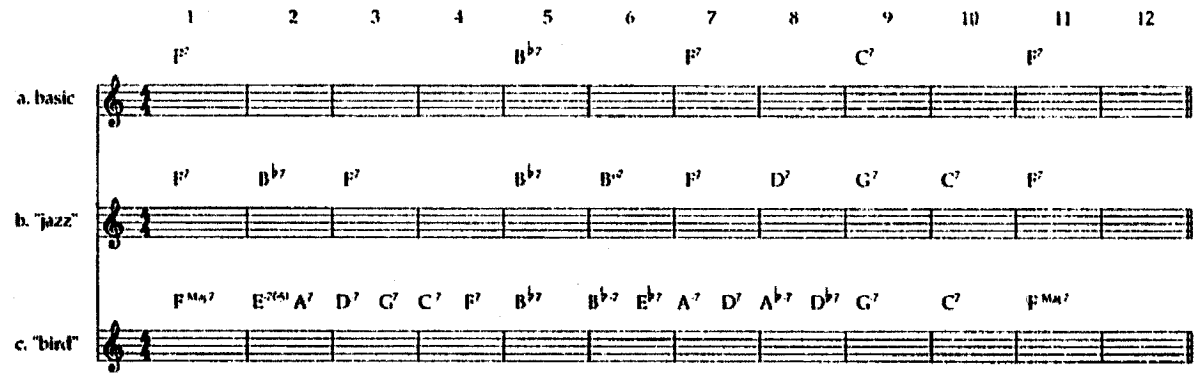
[30] Hodson, 98.

Example 2.1. Three Blues Progressions[31]



He identifies the basic blues progression as a twelve-bar prolongation of the tonic chord and, starting with the "jazz" version, describes each of the variant progressions in terms of how they relate to that tonic prolongation.

In the "jazz" progression, the move from tonic to subdominant back to tonic in mm. 1-3 can be understood as a "smaller-scale" representation of the harmonic motion from mm. 1-7 of the basic progression. The B^{o7} in m. 6 serves a melodic voice-leading function rather than a harmonic one; creating a chromatic passing tone between the B♭ of the subdominant chord and the C of the tonic chord. The cycle of fifths from mm. 8-11 expand the basic V – I progression into what Hodson identifies as "a chain of dominant functions" which create a strong harmonic pull toward the final tonic.[32]

In the third line, the "bird" blues, we find the chain of dominant functions at work again, propelling the harmony forward in a much faster harmonic rhythm from the second measure to the structurally important IV^7 in m. 5. In mm. 6, 7, and 8, it would appear at first

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[31] *Source:* Ibid., 86.
[32] Ibid., 89.

that each of these measures contains an isolated dominant function which does not continue through the next measure.

However, as Hodson explains, these dominant functions are "nested" within a more complicated harmonic phenomenon at work here: the *tritone substitution* (which in fact derives from the dominant function). Hodson explains, "In jazz harmony, for the most part, three elements define a given chord: the root, 3rd, and 7th. The 5th ... may be altered or even dispensed with without changing the basic identity of the chord."[33] In a dominant-seventh chord, the feeling of the "need" for resolution comes from the dissonance formed by the tritone between the 3rd and 7th of the chord. Of course, an interesting feature of the tritone is that when inverted, it maps back onto itself, or, in other words, inverts onto the same notes, thus forming the same interval. Hodson uses the example of a C^7 chord, the dominant seventh of F. The 3rd and 7th of C^7 (E and B♭) could be inverted and respelled as A♯ and E – the 3rd and 7th of an $F♯^7$ chord. A tritone substitution occurs when this feature of the tritone is used advantageously by replacing the root of the original dominant-seventh (C of C^7) with the note that is a tritone away (F♯), resulting in a chord containing F♯ – A♯ – E. Hodson explains, "In this case – and this is a crucial point – the tritone substitute $F♯^7$ does not reorient the music to a B (or B^7) tonic, but rather maintains the same referent – F^7 – of the C^7 dominant it replaced." Furthermore, he illustrates through an example that the important voice leading events of the 3rds and 7ths are maintained: "in both cases, E descends to E♭, B♭/A♯ descends to A♮." He states, "This is the crucial and radical fact about the tritone

[33] Ibid., 90.

substitution: not the substitution per se, which is a mere harmonic trick of the light, but its role as an enriched, intensified dominant in the *original tonal context*"[34] (emphasis mine).

In the example above, Hodson suggests that the $E\flat^7$ in m. 6 "slides" down to the D^7 in m. 7, which slides down to the $D\flat^7$ in m. 8 which slides down finally to the C^7, which then moves to the final tonic through the dominant function. Furthermore, Hodson describes the dominant functions in each of those measures as "nested" within the larger chain of tritone substitution functions.[35] We can see then, how this elaborates the original blues progression: the same background harmonic gesture of I – IV – V – I remains, while these important structural harmonies are prolonged by chains of dominant functions or tritone substitutions.

In light of these observations, Hodson proposes a reworking of Perlman and Greenblatt's analogy between generative grammar and jazz performance. He opts to "redefine the deep structure of jazz harmony as a simplified abstraction, a mental map of network that lies *beneath* the chord changes." He reallocates the shallow structure to encompass all possible progressions that might generate from, or in other words prolong, that deep structure. Finally, he redefines surface structure so that it accounts for one specific realization (from an infinite number of possible realizations) of the deep structure. As he explains in his example above:

> [T]he basic blues progression can serve as the deep structure, and the "jazz" and "bird" blues can be interpreted as surface structures generated from this deep structure through the harmonic functions of subdominant, dominant, and tritone substitution. The shallow structure…consists of all of the possible blues progressions that could be generated from this basic blues deep structure.[36]

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[34] Ibid., 93.
[35] Ibid., 90.
[36] Ibid., 99.

This model refines Perlman and Greenblatt's theory, and Hodson's framework for structural levels in jazz harmony answers Middleton's call for a "modified Schenkerianism." More importantly however, his generative theory provides the analyst with a useful tool for exploring different levels of structure with which a musician might engage throughout the course of a performance. Throughout this chapter and in subsequent chapters, I will illustrate how deep, shallow, and surface harmonic structures all play an important role in the jazz musician's improvisational process. The framework of these different structural levels as developed by Hodson informs my analytical model, discussed in Chapter 3. The analysis in Chapter 4 exemplifies how this approach can help us understand different ways a musician might construct his or her improvisation.

Let us turn now to another important influence on my analytical model: improvisational strategies.

Strategies for Improvisation: Form, Melody, and Harmony

Throughout his doctoral dissertation, Hodson discusses different strategies for improvisation. His explanation differs from Kernfeld's in a number of ways. First of all, Hodson identifies which styles of jazz he is referring to when he talks about different improvisatory styles. As we saw in Kernfeld's description of motivic improvisation and its lack of use in jazz styles before 1950, improvisatory techniques can, and often must, differ depending on the style. Secondly, unlike Kernfeld, when Hodson explains improvisation on a pre-composed tune, he discusses the improvisatory technique in terms of its relationship to the original tune. In this way, he makes it clear how and why an improvised line takes its

shape. Hodson's and Larson's views on how improvisation unfolds inform the majority of the present discussion on improvisational strategies.

Interactions with form

Hodson first suggests a number of ways in which the form of a tune may influence a musician's improvisation. He points out that, "[s]ince a jazz performance generally consists of many repetitions of a tune's form – in the playing of the head at the beginning and end, and through each of the improvised solos – a given tune's form often becomes second nature to a musician, and musicians are often judged on their ability to 'keep the form.'"[37] However, as Hodson explains later: "each musician has a range of possibilities for relating their individual improvisations to the form."[38]

Consider the phrasing in a 32-bar jazz standard with an AABA form. This phrase structure may lead the improviser to create phrases which strongly conform to the AABA format, maintaining the even phrasing of the original tune. The musician might additionally weave a feature into the improvised phrase which enhances a formal division or which draws attention to the moment where the original phrase would end. For example, a drummer might maintain a regular time-keeping pulse throughout a phrase and then suddenly increase the texture or add an interesting rhythmic interjection in the last bar of the phrase to highlight the important structural moment.[39]

The AABA design could also shape an improvisation in terms of its overall concept of repetition (A + A), contrast (B), and return (back to A). Paul Berliner gives an example of one way a pianist might reflect this scheme:

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[37] Ibid., 139.
[38] Ibid., 142.
[39] Paul Berliner, *Thinking in Jazz: The Infinite Art f Improvisation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 328.

> To portray large structural units, pianists can punctuate the music rhythmically with block chords over an A section, then create a contrasting texture by improvising sweeping free-rhythmic arpeggios over the B section, thus floating the time. In subtler terms, they can outline short structural units by repeating a crisply articulated off-beat pattern over the course of four-measure progressions, then resolve the pattern's tension with a chord on the downbeat of the fifth.[40]

However, the musician may alternately create suspense by improvising phrases which obfuscate the original structure through, for instance, displacement of the starting point and/or ending point of the improvised phrase, so as to overlap into the previous or next formal section.[41] Similarly, the improviser may create irregular phrases of varying lengths, setting them against the symmetrical phrasing of the song's original form. This type of phrase displacement is more characteristic of the bop style.[42] These observations summarize and exemplify several ways a song's phrase design and form might become an important influence on a musician's improvisation in terms of hypermeter and phrase relationships.

Interactions with Melody

Hodson later describes different strategies for interacting with the original **melody** in one's improvisation. He mentions briefly the option of creating an improvised line which closely resembles the original tune, a strategy that Kernfeld called paraphrase improvisation. Kernfeld's description of improvisation on a tune's melody goes no further than pointing out that musicians improvise using paraphrase at varying levels of complexity, from improvisations that highlight the original tune in an obvious way to improvisations that depart dramatically from it.

Hodson sheds light on these more dramatic departures by describing the possibility of improvising on what he calls the "genetic blueprint" of the tune's "underlying voice-

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[40] Ibid., 335.
[41] Hodson, 138.
[42] *The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz*, 2nd ed., "Forms," by Thomas Owens, 826.

leading."[43] While this type of improvisation still falls under Kernfeld's category of paraphrase improvisation, the concept of a melody's underlying voice-leading points to one way in which we might understand Kernfeld's above mentioned "highly imaginative reworking" of the melody.

This kind of melodic analysis differs from Larson's Schenkerian analysis of "The Touch of Your Lips." Unlike Hodson's approach, Larson's analysis is positioned firmly in the traditional Schenkerian model of analysis. In his graph, he showed how both the melody of "The Touch of Your Lips" and Bill Evans' improvisation on that melody prolonged a descending 3-line with an interruption at the mid-point of the song. However, as I discussed earlier, the abstraction of the background 3-line (*urlinie*) from the original melody is limited as a tool for describing a *melody-based* improvisational plan.

In contrast, Hodson's concept of underlying voice leading relates more closely to the melody and phrase structure of the original tune, rather than privileging the tune's harmonic design. Hodson's analysis of the melodic voice leading in the song "Autumn Leaves" is reproduced below in Example 2.2. This example illustrates the original melody on the top staff, with Hodson's analysis on the two staves below and bar numbers indicated above. He analyzes the A section in the first system and the B section in the second.

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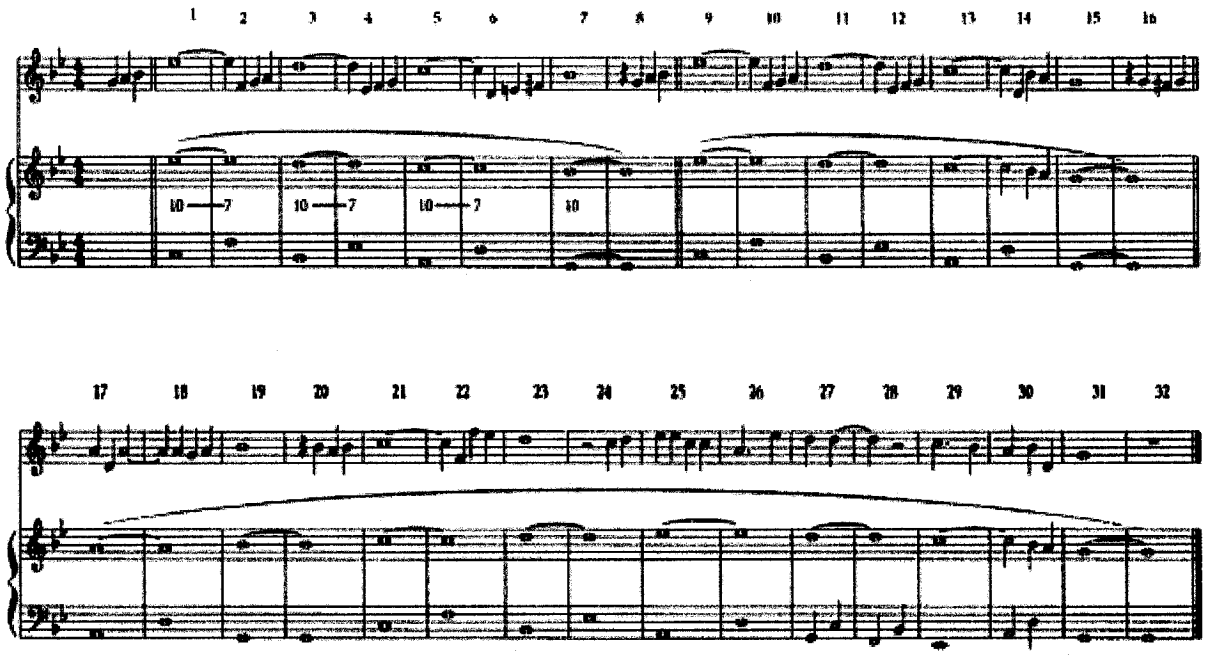
[43] Hodson, 182.

Example 2.2. "Autumn Leaves" tune and voice leading[44]



In this example, he shows how all of the sustained pitches throughout the two phrases in the tune's A section change their function from the 3rd of the chord to the 7th as the chord changes and then resolves down a step to the next sustained pitch. The notes between each of these sustained pitches in the original melody serve to prolong the underlying voice-leading scheme. The first phrase of the B section (mm. 17-24) prolongs an ascending stepwise line, while the second phrase of section B (mm. 25-32) repeats the underlying voice-leading of the second phrase of A, although the melody differs.

Rather than normalizing the melody to fit the model of Schenker's *urlinie* (which descends over the course of the entire song), Hodson's example shows the underlying voice leading of each individual melodic phrase, and allows for both descending *and* ascending

[44] *Source:* Ibid., 184.

background lines. In this way, he accommodates the contour of the original melody and reveals a deeper level of structure that still relates closely to the original tune. Moreover, his analysis of the underlying voice leading generates *from* the music, rather than from a pre-conceived model like the *urlinie*.

Hodson's description of the underlying melodic plan for the whole tune also addresses how each of the song's phrases relates to the other. The first phrase of section A, for example, descends from scale degree six (E♭) to scale degree three (B♭) while the second downward phrase of section A restarts this melodic gesture at scale degree six (E♭), and then completes the line by descending all the way down through the minor sixth to the tonic (G). The B section works its way back up the minor sixth by the mid-point of the section and then once again works its way back down the minor sixth by step to arrive back at the final tonic. Hodson points out: "While this section does indeed contrast with the preceding A section, it does so not by bringing in entirely new material, but rather by transforming and recontextualizing the familiar materials of the A section."[45] In other words, the tune achieves a sense of coherence not from a single underlying gesture as Schenkerian analysis would illuminate, but rather by the close relationship between each phrase. Furthermore, the initial underlying descent from E♭ to B♭ in mm. 1-8 realizes, on a larger scale, the rising fourth motive that recurs in the melody (for example, from the third to fourth note of the tune: B♭ to E♭), while the "completed" descent of the minor sixth in the second phrase mirrors the tune's opening melodic gesture which outlines the minor sixth between the same notes: G and E♭.

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[45] Hodson, 185.

In Hodson's model, the importance placed on the relationship between different structural levels shares common analytical values with Schenkerian theory. In fact, Larson similarly finds it important to point out moments in Bill Evans' improvisation when he completes a melodic gesture at the foreground level which not only articulates the middleground progression that contains it, but also ends at the same time as that very middleground line. He calls such simultaneous completions *confirmations.* Hodson seems to have reversed the idea of the confirmation, showing how the descending minor sixth (and ascending, in B) in the background voice-leading confirms the *opening* intervallic gesture of the melody (G – A – B♭ – E♭), an observation which supports his analysis.

Hodson's analysis of "Autumn Leaves" illustrates how a musician could create an improvised line which does not necessarily define the original tune, but which preserves the underlying voice-leading plan of the melody. Although he addresses this melodic feature in the context of improvisation strategies rather than as part of his explanation regarding deep, shallow, and surface structures, Hodson has effectively mapped his previously developed structural model for harmony onto "Autumn Leaves'" melody. As I see it, his analysis reveals a "deep structure" in the melody's underlying voice leading. The "shallow structure" would encompass all possible manifestations of that deep structure, and the actual melody of "Autumn Leaves" constitutes the "surface structure."

Through Larson's analysis, I have described how Schenkerian analysis can illuminate large-scale structures in jazz tunes and solo improvisation and have explained how Larson's analysis is particularly useful for analyzing improvisations that were conceived in terms of large-scale harmonic relationships. Hodson's model, on the other hand, privileges neither the harmony nor the melody over the other, and therefore provides

us with a tool for analyzing improvisations in terms of how they relate to a tune's original melodic structure, rather than solely in terms of harmonic structure. This analytical framework will help us understand the content of an improvisation that generates from aspects of a tune's melody. Hodson's discussion of underlying voice leading will act as a springboard for my arrival at another theoretical framework for understanding deeper melodic structures. I will develop this framework and its application to "Honeysuckle Rose" in Chapter 3.

To the strategies Hodson identified, I would add quotation as one more possibility for melodic improvisation. Quotation of other melodies occurs frequently in jazz improvisation. This technique requires the musician to recognize harmonic progressions that are common between pieces – such as resolution functions, chains of dominant functions or tritone substitutions – in order to successfully insert part of a melody from one piece into another. The existence of contrafacts, as discussed in Chapter 1, often helps this musician with this technique. For instance, in Fitzgerald's improvisation on "How High the Moon" at the famous 1960 concert in Berlin, she quotes the melody of "Ornithology," a contrafact of "How High the Moon," by Charlie Parker. Quotation is particularly interesting with regard to structural levels of harmony because it requires the improviser to think in terms of two different surface manifestations of the same harmonic deep structure.

I have heretofore articulated a number of ways a musician might interact with the melody of a tune in his or her improvisation. These include improvising a line which closely resembles the original melody, quotation from a contrafact, creating a line which preserves the melody's underlying voice leading, and articulating or developing the melodic

background. Let us now consider the many ways a tune's **harmony** might influence improvisation.

Interactions with Harmony

Hodson points out that the musician has the option of improvising a line which articulates each passing chord of the original composition. This is known as "running the changes."[46] Often, the musician looks for repeating harmonic patterns within a tune, such as two versions of the (frequently occurring) ii – V – I progression in a row, or such as the "chain of dominant functions" shown earlier in Example 2.1. An improviser might highlight this repetition of harmonic gesture by playing the same improvised line over the repeated progression, transposed to fit with within the harmonic context of each occurrence of the progression, much like a sequence in classical music. We will see an example of this type of repetition in the next chapter.

Hodson also explains how an improviser might conceive his or her improvisation in terms of key areas. This strategy relates closely to Larson's analysis of Bill Evans' performance, which, the reader will recall, demonstrated how Evans conceived his improvisation in terms of background harmonic prolongation.

Recalling Kernfeld's concept of formulaic improvisation, this understanding of harmony can help us understand *how* the musician might fit certain formulae into a specific tune. Smaller melodic fragments could fit into a chord-by-chord improvisation while larger formulae might instead fit within a key area, but not necessarily articulate each passing chord of the progression.

Hodson addresses a third strategy for improvising on the harmony in which the improviser creates a melody out of harmony notes that function as important pitch

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[46] Ibid., 189.

connections between the chords, such as the connection between scale degree seven in a dominant chord and scale degree one in a tonic chord. Thinking in terms of these connections, according to Hodson, an improviser can create a very strong melody.[47] This differs, of course, from the abovementioned strategy of improvising on the underlying voice leading of the melody, which necessarily involves making important *melodic* connections, rather than harmonic. In Chapter 3, I will show how these two strategies differ for "Honeysuckle Rose."

Finally, Hodson describes the strategy of creating improvisation through the repetition and transformation of motives – a strategy I addressed earlier in my summary of Kernfeld's approach to understanding improvisation. The discussion of harmony above presents their harmonic context: *how* they fit into the tune. The improviser could either use a motive to articulate the chord changes, or, more freely, can develop a motive within a key area, rather than focusing on each passing chord. However, motives can also be used in improvisation as a way of improvising on an aspect of a tune's melody. The ensuing chapters illustrate how both melodic and harmonic considerations play an important role in understanding motivic improvisation. As we will see, this becomes especially interesting in terms of the *relationship* between the motive and the harmony.

In his book, "Thinking in Jazz," Paul Berliner offers another perspective on how a musician might interact with the harmony in his or her improvisation by manipulating the chord voicing. He explains, "Advanced performers draw upon numerous pitch collections in creating their own personal versions or voicings of chords, leaving unchanged their fundamental character of their function within a progression."[48]

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[47] Ibid., 193.
[48] Berliner, 83.

Considerations such as register, chord voicing, close or open spacing of the chord (on a keyboard), doubling of a chord-tone at different octaves, arrangement of intervals, sparseness or richness of chordal elements, and inversion, can impact the sound of a performance, and indeed a musician's consistent particular treatment of one or more of these parameters can become an identifiable feature of his or her style. For instance, Count Basie's early technique known as *stride-style* articulated the harmony with the left hand by alternating bass notes in the low register with the chord in the middle register while the right hand played a single line. Fats Waller is cited as having influenced this style of playing.[49] Basie is best known, however, for his *comping*. Comping involves articulating the harmony with both the right and left hands, usually in the middle register, in various inversions and voicings. Basie was one of the first pianists to play this way, and is so strongly associated with comping, that his comping style became the model for many future jazz pianists.[50]

In addition to chord voicing, Berliner describes three different possibilities the musician has for making alterations and additions to the song's harmonic progression. These three strategies engage the harmony's *surface* structure.

He describes the first type of addition as follows: "Besides representing a particular version or model of a composition's progression with different voicings, players may decorate its structure with embellishing chords, enlivening the piece's harmonically static segments."[51] Typical examples of this kind of harmonic embellishment include adding a passing chord between two chords in the composition, adding a diatonic or chromatic

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[49] Mark Gridley, *Jazz Styles: History and Analysis*, 8th ed. (Toronto: Prentice-Hall Canada Inc., 2003), 123.

[50] Ibid., 125.

[51] Berliner, 84.

neighbouring chord which departs from and then returns to the chord it decorates, and adding a passing chord between two inversions of the same chord.[52]

Secondly, the performer also has the option of, rather than embellishing the original harmony, actually altering it. This can happen in two ways. Preserving the root of the chord, the musician might add upper chordal extensions not in the original harmony, such as ninths, elevenths, and thirteenths and their chromatic alterations. The musician might also decide to change the quality of the chord, for example, changing a major seventh chord to a dominant seventh. It is also possible to do away with the root of the original, substituting a new chord with a new root. According to Berliner, "Chords can usually serve as effective replacements for one another when they are closely enough related through common tones to perform the same function within the piece's structure, preserving 'essential lines of the original progression'."[53]

Berliner calls the third strategy "harmonic insertion." Harmonic insertion is similar to adding embellishing chords in that it is also often used to create momentum in a moment of harmonic stasis by adding chords between those in the original. However, while embellishing the harmony usually involves adding only one relatively non-functional chord for the purpose of decorating another chord, harmonic insertion might involve the addition of multiple chords, which often move further away from the original harmony. Berliner offers some examples: "Insertion chords can be a basic ii – V movement anticipating a structural chord or an elaborate sequence between structural chords. At times, players introduce distinctive features to the progression by inserting a diminished chord for color or

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[52] Ibid.
[53] Ibid.

producing blues effects by alternating a structural chord containing a natural third with an insertion chord containing the flattened third."[54]

Hodson and Berliner highlight many different ways in which an improviser can interact with different structural levels within a tune's harmonic design. A musician may choose to articulate the chord-by-chord progression, known as "running the changes," or may embellish the changes by adding passing chords, altering or adding extensions to a chord, or adding functional harmonic insertions to a progression. Also, considerations of register and voicing play a role in articulating the changes. Hodson also points out that a musician might repeat an improvised line over repeated harmonic gestures to draw attention to that harmonic repetition. He also explains how the improviser can create melodies using the important connecting pitches between chords or, contrastingly, how a musician might relate his or her improvisation to the harmony's deep structure. Finally, he addresses development of motives as an improvisational tool. As we will see in Chapter 4, motives can relate to both harmony and melody. All of these observations point to important considerations for the analyst, as their application in a musician's improvisation can reveal central features of a particular musician's improvisational process.

Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, I have discussed a number of different approaches to understanding performed jazz. I discussed Kernfeld's approach which explored aspects of improvised jazz melody, explaining its realization in terms of paraphrase, formulaic improvisation and motivic development. Then, I explained how Steve Larson applied Schenkerian analysis to show how Bill Evans approached his performance in terms harmonic prolongation by using a tune's background harmonic scheme as a framework for

[54] Ibid., 85.

improvisation. Finally, I addressed Hodson's and Berliner's observations on improvisation strategies. Their explanations of these strategies illuminate how musicians may also improvise in ways that can relate to many *different* aspects of not just a tune's harmony, but also its melody and form.

In the next chapter, I integrate the ideas put forth by each of these authors to establish a three-stage method for analyzing the melodic improvisation in a recorded performance of a jazz standard.

CHAPTER 3

LEAD-SHEET ANALYSIS

In the previous chapter, I discussed the analytic approaches of several authors who have influenced my theoretical framework. In this chapter, I incorporate important ideas from each of these authors to advance a methodology for analyzing the melodic improvisation in a recorded performance of a jazz standard. From Kernfeld, I borrow the concepts of paraphrase and motivic improvisation,[1] and explore how each of these strategies emerges in Fitzgerald's improvisation. My approach to interpreting the role of harmony in improvisation incorporates Larson and Hodson's discussion of background or "deeper" levels of harmony, as well as Hodson's explanation of how various aspects of a tune's harmonic design might influence improvisation. I also rely on Larson's position on upper chordal extensions as important voice-leading events relating to a harmonic structure.[2] From Hodson, I also borrow and develop his concept of background melodic structures, as well as considerations of form.[3]

Informed by each of these scholars, I will now establish a three-stage process for interpreting the melodic improvisation in a recorded performance of a jazz standard. Having selected a recording for analysis, the first stage, which I will call "Lead-Sheet Analysis," involves analyzing the original composition on which the performance is based (in the case of this thesis, the 32-bar standard "Honeysuckle Rose"). This analysis seeks to illuminate aspects of surface and deep structures in the tune's melody and harmony, as well as formal

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[1] Barry Kernfeld, *What to Listen for in Jazz* (New York:Yale University, 1995).

[2] Steve Larson, "Schenkerian Analysis of Modern Jazz: Questions About Method," *Music Theory Spectrum* 20, no. 2 (1998): 209-241.

[3] Robert Hodson, "Interaction and Improvisation: Group Interplay in Jazz Performance" (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2000).

considerations as they relate to melody and harmony. The analysis of the lead sheet provides the musical material of the original tune for comparison with the performance.

Since the performance exists only in recorded form, the second stage involves making a transcription of the performance.[4] The third and final stage, "Transcription Analysis," is a comparison of the transcription from stage 2 with the musical elements gathered in the lead-sheet analysis. This comparison illuminates how the improviser relates, in performance, to different aspects of the original tune.

The remainder of this chapter demonstrates and develops the first stage in the methodology outlined above by offering an analysis of Thomas "Fats" Waller's "Honeysuckle Rose."[5]

Illustrated in Example 3.1, this well-known 32-bar song form has an AABA phrase design consisting of four eight-bar phrases. Each A phrase ends with a perfect cadence which arrives both harmonically and melodically on the second last measure of the phrase, creating a momentary lull in the forward momentum of the song and highlighting the end of the formal section. (However, as the reader will recall from the previous chapter, the addition of the thirteenth in the F^6 chord at the end of each A section disrupts the tonic chord's stability, propelling the tune forward through the momentary lull in the phrase.) The B section, on the other hand, arrives harmonically on the dominant in its second last measure; however, the melody continues to propel the music forward into the final A section. As I mentioned above, I will address other aspects of form as it relates to the present discussion of melody and harmony, as well as in my transcription analysis in Chapter 4.

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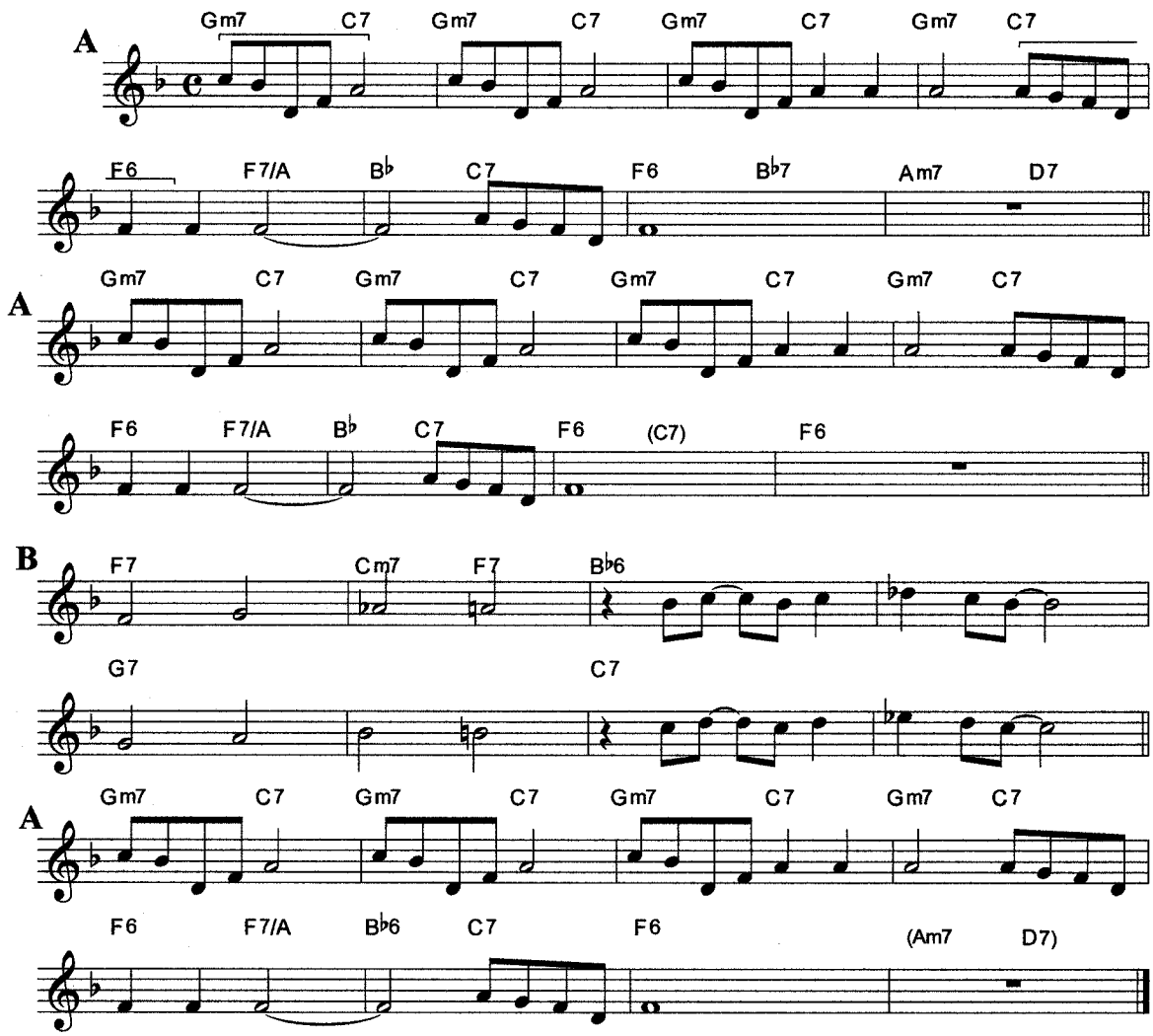
[4] Please see Chapter 1 for a detailed explanation of my approach to transcription in this thesis.

[5] This tune, from the Broadway musical, "Ain't Misbehavin'," was composed in 1929 with lyrics by Andy Razaf.

Example 3.1. Thomas "Fats" Waller's "Honeysuckle Rose"[6]



Melodic Structure in "Honeysuckle Rose"

As I mentioned in the previous chapter, the element of contrast between an A section and a B section could influence one's improvisation. Of course, contrast can occur via several musical parameters. Let us first consider melodic contrast. Several melodic elements in the A section differ from those in the B section. The A sections (all of which

[6] *The New Real Book*, vol. 2, ed. Chuck Sher (Petaluma, CA: Sher Music Co., 1991).

are exactly the same) consist of two melodic ideas which are marked with horizontal brackets in example 3.1. The first idea repeats each bar for three bars with a slight rhythmic alteration in bar 3. Then, two iterations of the second idea finish off the A section. Overall, the A section features a disjunct and winding melody which contrasts with section B's stepwise, smooth melodic contour.

Also, the chromaticism in the B section differs from the completely diatonic A section. Finally, the overall melodic gesture or contour in the A section features a descent from scale degree five to the tonic while the B section *ascends* from tonic to dominant. These considerations of form and melody relate to the tune as represented on the lead sheet, and, as the previous chapter discussed, a musician might interact with these elements of "Honeysuckle Rose" in a variety of ways.

However, in the previous chapter, I also explored the possibility of examining different structural layers of a tune's melody. In this context, I addressed Hodson's explanation of how a musician might base their improvisation on a tune's underlying voice-leading plan, which he illustrated using the song "Autumn Leaves" as an example. The reader will recall that I mapped his harmonic concepts of "deep," "shallow," and "surface" structures onto his melodic analysis (although Hodson had not used those terms outside of the context of harmony). With this in mind, we can see that the melodic considerations above only address aspects of the melody's surface structure. How then, does Hodson's concept of underlying melodic structure influence my analysis of "Honeysuckle Rose?"

I would like to suggest another possibility, influenced by Hodson's model, for exploring background melodic structures. Allan Moore has written extensively about popular music analysis. In the second chapter of his book, "Rock: The Primary Text,"

Moore recommends studying melody in rock music by analyzing its contour and 'focal pitches.'[7] His interest in focal pitches relates to Hodson's idea in that both models endeavour to reveal important features of the melodic line. However, while Hodson's analysis of underlying voice leading implies a specific relationship between consecutive notes (at the background level), Moore's focal pitches may not necessarily relate to one another in terms of step-wise voice leading. Rather, taken all together, focal pitches yield a somewhat skeletal version of the tune, which I will call "melodic background."

Unfortunately, Moore does not identify his criteria for selecting focal pitches, and since his example of their application shows only his analysis (an abstraction of the performed music), but not a transcription, our understanding of how he came about the focal pitches in his example can come from educated guesswork at best. For the purpose of my own analysis of "Honeysuckle Rose," a number of factors have influenced my selection of focal pitches. These factors include agogic accent, the relative duration of the notes (keeping in mind the assumed "swung" eighth notes not indicated in the composition), the contour of the melody, and the important points of melodic arrival. I should point out that Fitzgerald's performances of "Honeysuckle Rose" also informed my choice of pitches, as it was her improvised line that first suggested to me the possibility of an improviser using melodic focal pitches as a vehicle for improvisation. With these factors in mind, let us now consider the melodic background of "Honeysuckle Rose."

Example 3.2 shows the A and B sections of the tune on one staff and, on the staff underneath, the melody's focal pitches. Example 3.3 reduces this further to exclude the original tune and eliminate repetitions.

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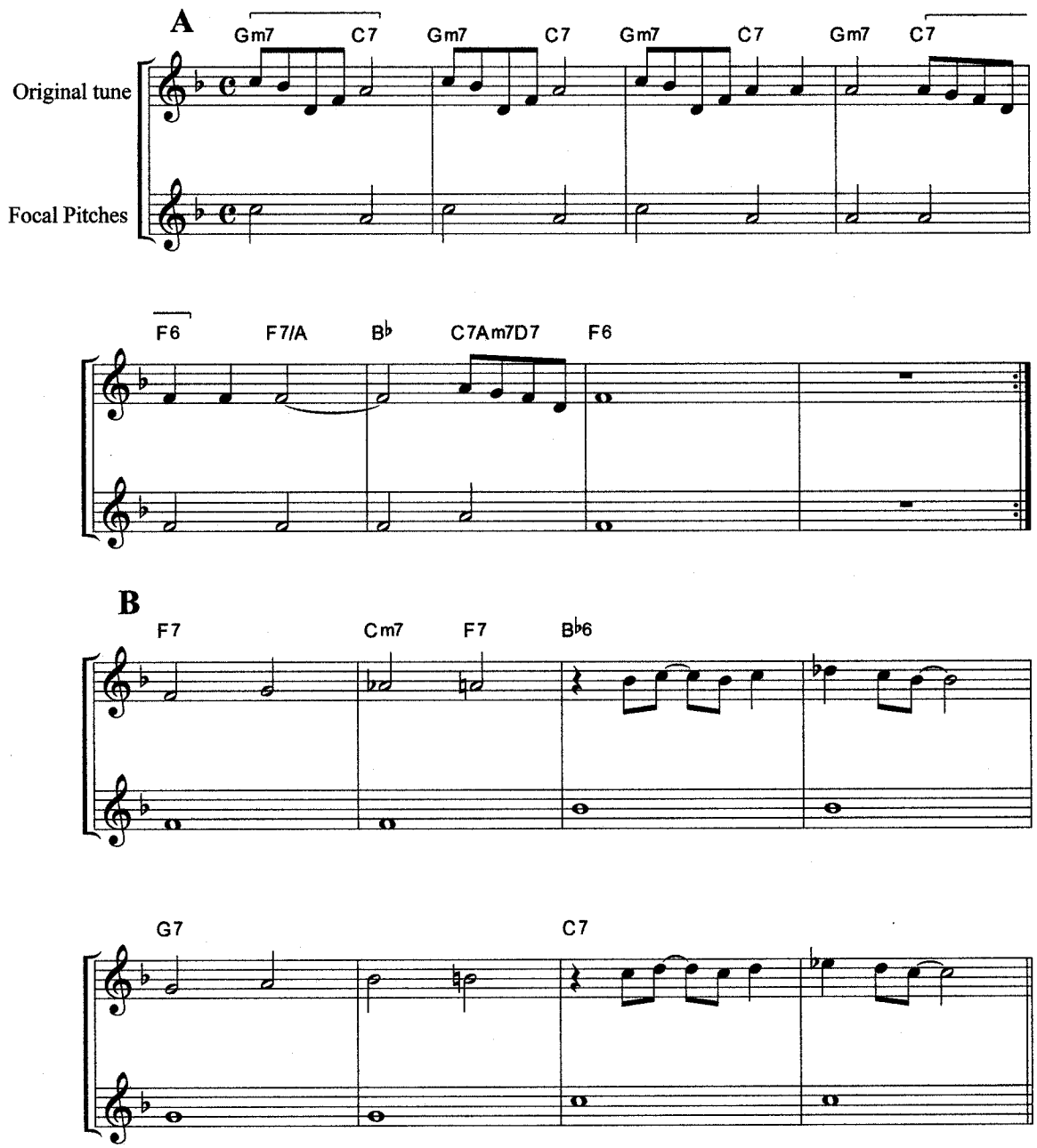
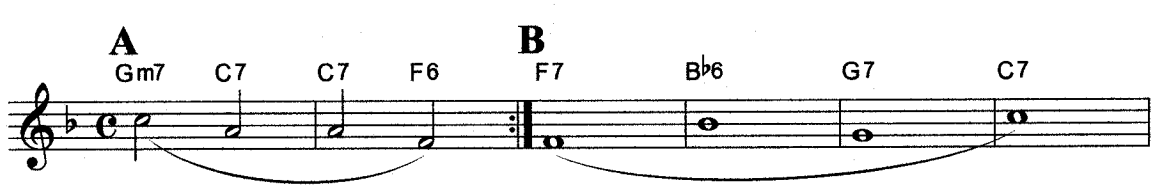
[7] Allan Moore, *Rock: The Primary Text*, 2nd ed. (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2001), 50.

Example 3.2. "Honeysuckle Rose" and focal pitches



Example 3.3. "Honeysuckle Rose" melodic background



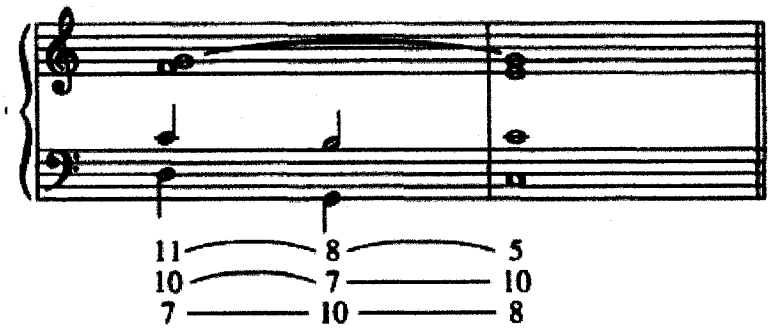
The pitches in the melodic background shown in Example 3.3 outline a tonic triad throughout the course of the first phrase, beginning with a background melodic gesture of the fifth (C) dropping to the third (A) in the first melodic idea (bracketed), completing the triad with a background articulation of the third moving to the tonic (F) in the second melodic idea (bracketed).

The repetition of the melodic background in motive 1 (mm. 1-3) serves a specific function. If we look at the chord changes that go with these pitches, a question arises. The first pitch, C, occurs over a Gm^7 chord, which includes the notes G, B♭, D and F. The C in the melody, therefore, only fits into this chord as an eleventh, not as one of the structural notes of the chord. The next background pitch, A, arrives over a C^7 chord, which includes the notes C, E, G and B♭. Again, we find that the focal pitch of the melody is not a member of the chord's important structural pitches. Rather, it fits into the harmony as an upper chordal extension; this time it is a thirteenth. While the melodic background articulates a tonic triad throughout the A section, the first four bars of the triad's articulation clash with the harmony as "tension" notes until we finally arrive with both scale degree one and tonic harmony in m. 5. How can it be that the important melodic pitches in the first half of each A section are upper harmonic extensions, or in other words, if those are the important pitches, should they not belong to the structural tones of the chord?

I would like to answer this question by returning for a moment to part of Larson's discussion of ninths, elevenths and thirteenths in his article, "Schenkerian Analysis of Modern Jazz" (which I discussed at length in the previous chapter). He refers to Strunk's ideas on how a "tension" (by which term he refers to an upper-chordal extension) might lose its "need" to resolve through a change in harmony. For instance, when a II^7 chord

containing scale degree five (making it an eleventh chord, in jazz terms) moves to V^7, the tension (by which he refers to the eleventh) in the II^7 loses its need to resolve by becoming the root of the V^7. Larson takes this idea further to suggest that in fact, because the dominant chord is more structurally important, the eleventh in the II chord (in C major: D-F-G-A-C) "is not a 'dissonance' at all – rather, the G is the structural tone, while the [other] voices are dissonant."[8] So, we hear the A (if it is present-the fifth is often omitted, as it is in Larson's example below) and C of II^7 resolving to G and B of V^7 while the D and F are common to both chords.[9] Larson's example is reproduced below.[10]

Example 3.4. An "eleventh"



Returning now to "Honeysuckle Rose," we can understand the dissonant melodic focal pitches in two ways. If we use Strunk's model we could say that the C over Gm^7 and A over C^7 lose their "need" to resolve when the harmony changes in m. 5 to the tonic chord. On the other hand, we could also understand it in terms of Larson's description of harmonic dissonance. I would like to expand this idea and apply it to the whole A section, thereby privileging the melodic focal pitches over the local harmony. In this light, the background pitches C and A are more structurally important than the chord changes, and therefore the

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[8] Steve Larson, "Schenkerian Analysis of Modern Jazz: Questions About Method," *Music Theory Spectrum* 20, no. 2 (1998): 217.

[9] Ibid.

[10] *Source:* Ibid.

Gm^7 and C^7 sound as harmonic dissonances. Each repetition of C and A over this harmony builds the tension further until finally the chords resolve to a tonic harmony in m. 5.

The B section presents a less complex melodic background. It consists of two resolution functions.[11] The first gesture, F to B♭, tonicizes scale degree four (B♭), while the second, G to C, tonicizes scale degree five (C). Notice how the relationship between the melodic backgrounds of A and B creates coherence within the tune: the A section encompasses a gesture from C down to F while the melodic background in the B section reverses this gesture, beginning with F and ending on C. The melodic background in the B section also realizes this relationship between the first and fifth scale degrees on a smaller scale through its background articulation of F to B♭ (mm. 17-19) within a four-bar tonicization of B♭, followed by a background articulation of G to C (mm. 20-24) within a four-bar tonicization of C. However, in each of these four-bar tonicizations, the momentary fifth scale degree is followed by movement up through the leading tone which resolves to the chord it tonicizes. So, in the first phrase of B we hear a connection between F-A♮ leading to the B♭, and in the second phrase we hear G connecting to B♮ resolving to C. Thus the melodic background in B agrees with the secondary dominant harmony underneath, unlike the melodic background in the A section, which clashes with the harmony.

The above discussion has addressed different aspects of the melody in "Honeysuckle Rose," approaching these aspects in terms of deep and shallow levels of structure. As we shall see in the ensuing chapters and the analysis therein, these levels of structure play an

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[11] I am borrowing this term from Berliner (74), who states: "When dominant chords built on scale degrees other than the fifth resolve up by a fourth to major or minor chords, for example, they create new areas of relative stability away from the tonic and perform a "tonic or resolution function" and sustain or redirect harmonic tension to further points of resolution."

important role in Fitzgerald's improvisatory framework. The forthcoming analysis in Chapter 4 illustrates how these levels of melodic structure act as "modes of improvisation" for Fitzgerald; as different levels of the original melody which she can embellish and develop. Let us now consider the different modes of improvisation that may arise from deep and shallow levels of harmonic structure.

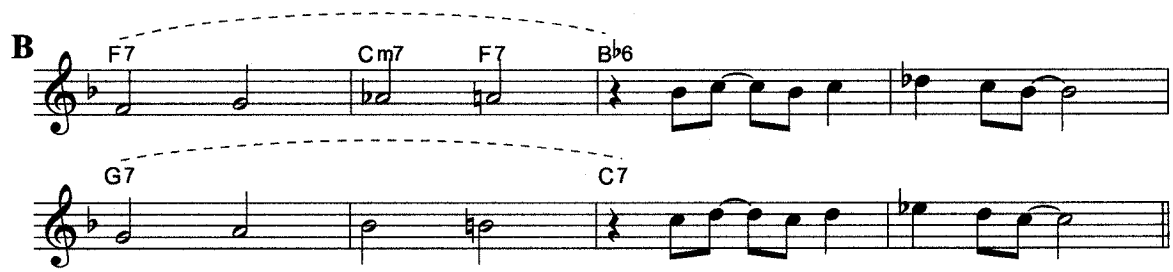
Harmonic Structure in "Honeysuckle Rose"

In the previous chapter, I identified a harmony-based improvisatory technique known as "running the changes," and discussed four different ways in which a musician might relate his or her improvisation to a tune's chord-by-chord progression. I will now explore these four strategies as they apply to "Honeysuckle Rose."

Firstly, the musician (in this case, Fitzgerald) might create an arpeggiated line which outlines the pitch content of each passing chord. Notice also, the elements of contrast between the harmonic progression in A and that of B. While the A sections stay within the context of the tonic key, the B section first tonicizes the subdominant, then tonicizes the dominant.

This section also points to a second important strategy, explained in the previous chapter, for improvising on the changes. Notice the two dominant to tonic gestures in a row shown in example 3.5. This repetition lends itself well to creating a sequence-like improvised line in which the performer would improvise the same line over each phrase, transposed to fit within the context of each resolution.

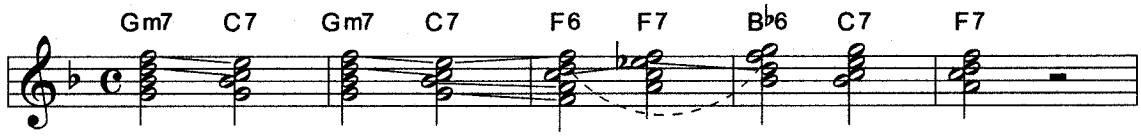
Example 3.5. "Honeysuckle Rose" V - I gestures in the B section



Thirdly, as Berliner explained, the improviser might *add* chords to the original progression. While this would be a particularly difficult technique for a single-line instrument like the voice, the forthcoming analysis will question whether or not Fitzgerald alludes to other harmonies or adds extensions onto individual chords in her improvisation.

Finally, the reader will recall a strategy for improvising on the harmony in which the improviser creates a melody out of harmony notes that function as important pitch connections between the chords. Example 3.6 illustrates one possible realization of the harmonic voice leading in mm. 3-6 of Honeysuckle Rose.

Example 3.6. "Honeysuckle Rose" harmony and voice-leading



Notice that in the alternation between Gm^7 and C^7, the root and third of Gm^7 become the fifth and seventh of C^7 while the fifth and seventh of Gm^7 resolve downward to the root and third of C^7. This pattern continues as the fifth and seventh of C^7 resolve down to the root and third of the F chord, while the root of C^7 becomes the fifth of F. At this moment, the thirteenth is added, diminishing the stability of the arrival on the tonic chord. While the F harmony acts as a resolution of the previous four bars, the added thirteenth (D) propels the progression forward into the momentary tonicization of B♭. The D resolves by first passing

up to the seventh of F^7 (E♭) and then back to D as the third of $B♭^6$ in m. 6. If the improviser created a melody which emphasized these harmonic voice-leading events, the resultant line would differ significantly from an improvisation based on the pitch content of the *melodic* background, much of which, as I have shown, does not belong to the chords in the progression but, instead, outlines the tonic triad against the non-tonic harmony underneath.

These four possibilities for harmonic improvisation – running the changes, emphasizing similar harmonic gestures, adding to the harmony, and highlighting the harmonic voice leading – all involve an engagement with the harmony's changes, or, in other words, the harmony's "surface structure" as identified by Hodson (see Chapter 2). In analyzing Fitzgerald's improvisation, then, passages that articulate chord arpeggiation, added upper chordal extensions, sequences, or important harmonic voice-leading connections may suggest a changes-based improvisation. However, like melody, an improviser might also approach harmony in terms of a deeper, background structure.

Larson's analysis, which I discussed in the previous chapter, illustrated how an improviser might develop a performance through harmonic prolongation. Using this technique in "Honeysuckle Rose," rather than articulate each passing chord, an improviser might conceive an improvisation that approaches the first phrase of A as a prolongation of the dominant chord, and the second phrase as a prolongation of the tonic.

Interestingly, while in A we have four bars of dominant prolongation followed by four bars of tonic prolongation, the B section compresses this background structure. In the first four bars, the harmony prolongs V for two bars, followed by I for two bars in B♭ major. The second phrase repeats this gesture in the dominant key, C major.

In a similar vein, Hodson and Larson have also explained how an improviser might conceive his or her improvisation in terms of key areas. The A sections of "Honeysuckle Rose" consist of chords which all belong to the key of F major. The only exception is the D^7 chord at the end of mm. 8 and 32, which serves in both cases as a brief secondary dominant propelling the music forward into the next A section. As discussed in Chapter 1, when this occurs at the end of a chorus it is known as a "turnaround," fulfilling the practical role of keeping the harmonic rhythm moving and linking one chorus to the next. Since the chords all belong to F major, the improviser could focus on creating an improvised line from the pitches of F major, rather than trying to articulate each passing chord.

In the B section we could understand the harmonic progression in the first phrase (F^7 - Cm^7 - F^7 - $B\flat^6$) as V^7 - ii^7 - V^7 - I^6 in B♭, while we would hear the second phrase of B (G^7 - C^7) as V^7 - I in C major. Thinking in the context of these two key areas, the improviser could choose pitches from the B♭ major scale in the first phrase, and from C major in the second.

I have now explained both the harmony's surface structure (the changes) and its deep structure (harmonic prolongation) in "Honeysuckle Rose" and articulated different ways in which these structures can influence a musician's improvisation. Like the melodic structures I developed above, the framework I have developed for the harmony provides different perspectives from which we can look at a jazz tune for comparison with its performance.

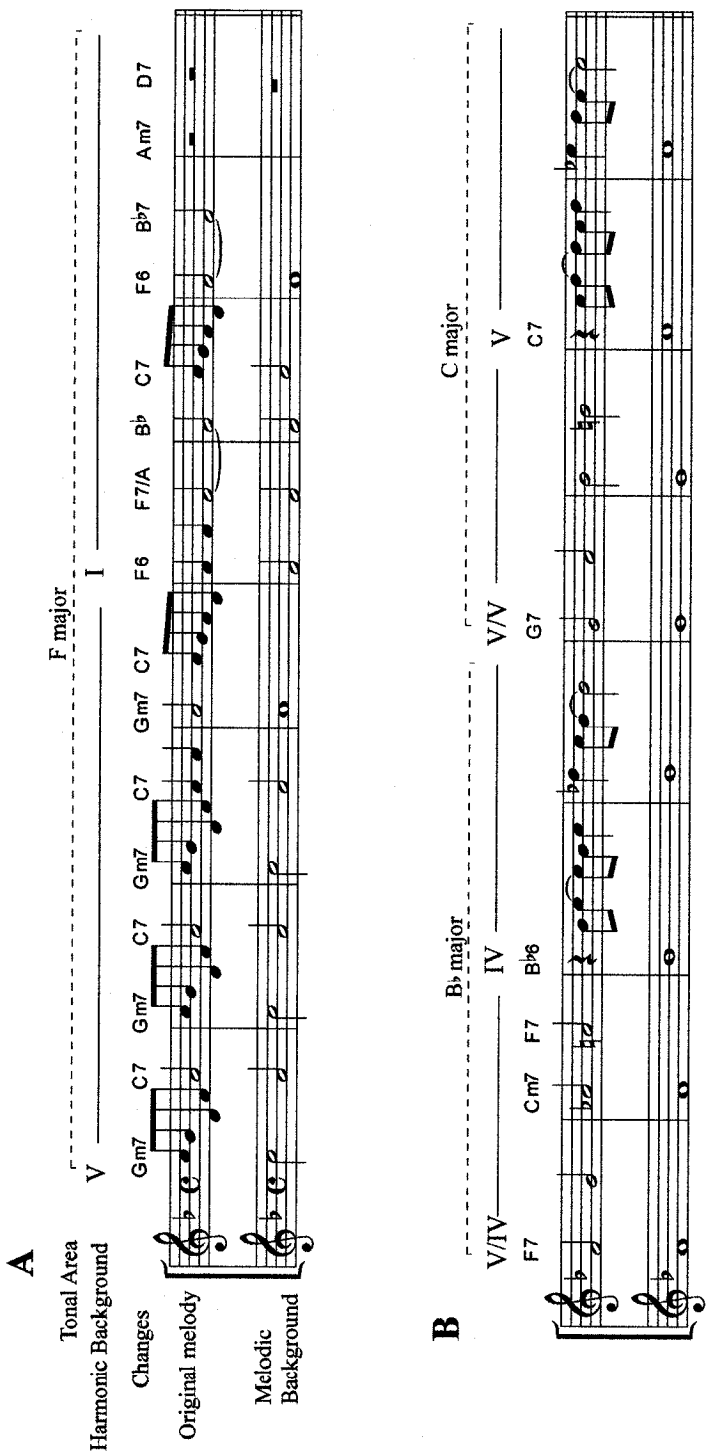
Conclusion: Modes of Improvisation

All of the melodic and harmonic elements I have shown through analysis of the lead sheet provide useful material for comparison with Fitzgerald's performances in subsequent chapters. We can understand these melodic and harmonic parameters as different levels at which a performer improvises on the original tune, as different "modes of improvisation." From the considerations above, I summarize these modes of improvisation into six categories, illustrated in Example 3.7 as they apply to "Honeysuckle Rose."

The first three modes, "original melody," "close paraphrase" and "melodic background" pertain to melody-based improvisation. "Original Melody" (OM) indicates moments where the musician adheres to the original melody, with or without minor rhythmic alteration. "Close Paraphrase" (CP) indicates moments where the original melody is performed with some embellishment, but not so much as to obscure the original melody (this mode is not indicated in Example 3.7). Finally, "melodic background" (MB) indicates moments where the performer bases her improvisation on the melodic background of "Honeysuckle Rose," which I analyzed earlier in this chapter. As we will see, Fitzgerald develops melodic background in numerous ways, including rhythmic and melodic embellishments, as well as manipulation of form.

The remaining three modes of improvisation, "changes," "harmonic background," and "tonal area" pertain to harmony-based improvisation. "Changes" (CH) indicates places where the improviser articulates the chord-by-chord progression of the tune. "Harmonic background" (HB) indicates moments where the performance reflects harmonic prolongation. Finally, "tonal area" (TA) designates places where the musician seems to be improvising in terms of a general sense of the key or tonal area.

Example 3.7. "Honeysuckle Rose" modes of improvisation



In this chapter, I identified the three stages involved in my model for analyzing a recorded performance of a jazz standard that involves aspects of improvisation: Lead-Sheet

Analysis, Transcription, and Transcription Analysis. In this chapter, I have demonstrated the first stage, Lead-Sheet Analysis, through my analysis of "Honeysuckle Rose." This analysis illustrates my analytical model for identifying different structural levels of melody and harmony, all of which may play a role in a performer's improvisational plan. For a discussion of my approach to transcription, the reader should refer to Chapter 1. Having completed the second stage (transcription) of my three-stage model, the following chapter will demonstrate the third stage in my analytical model: Transcription Analysis. In this stage, I will use the material garnered from the lead-sheet analysis to illuminate how Fitzgerald realizes aspects of the original tune in her improvisation.

CHAPTER 4

FROM LEAD-SHEET TO PERFORMANCE: INTERPRETING FITZGERALD'S IMPROVISATION

In the previous chapter, I briefly summarized how the ideas presented in Chapter 2 influence my analytical model. I also outlined the three stages of that model: Lead-Sheet Analysis, Transcription, and Transcription Analysis. The bulk of the third chapter, however, demonstrated the first stage, Lead-Sheet Analysis, by presenting a detailed analysis of Thomas "Fats" Waller's "Honeysuckle Rose."

In this chapter, I will present the final stage of my analysis. In this stage, I compare the structural elements illuminated in the lead-sheet analysis with my transcriptions of two recordings featuring Ella Fitzgerald performing "Honeysuckle Rose" with the Count Basie Orchestra. The goal of this analysis is to examine structural relationships throughout her improvisation. As we shall see, Fitzgerald's performance incorporates sophisticated relationships with both the original composition, and with itself.

Fitzgerald's 1963 performance from *Ella and Basie!*

The first performance I will examine comes from Fitzgerald's first recorded collaboration with the Count Basie Orchestra. Ella and Basie recorded the album, aptly named *Ella and Basie!*, in July of 1963 for Verve Records. Quincy Jones wrote the arrangements for the session, and his arrangement of Thomas "Fats" Waller's "Honeysuckle Rose" appears as the first track on the album. This arrangement – in D♭ major (as opposed to the original key of F major) – features three full choruses plus a half-chorus and ends with an eight-measure coda. Fitzgerald sets the tempo at approximately ♩ = 192, singing the

lyrics through the first chorus before switching to scat for the second and third choruses. The second chorus involves alternation between the ensemble and Fitzgerald, while the third chorus features the ensemble for the first half, turning the spotlight back onto Fitzgerald for the B section and final A section. She scats through these two sections and then returns to the lyrics for the final half-chorus and coda.

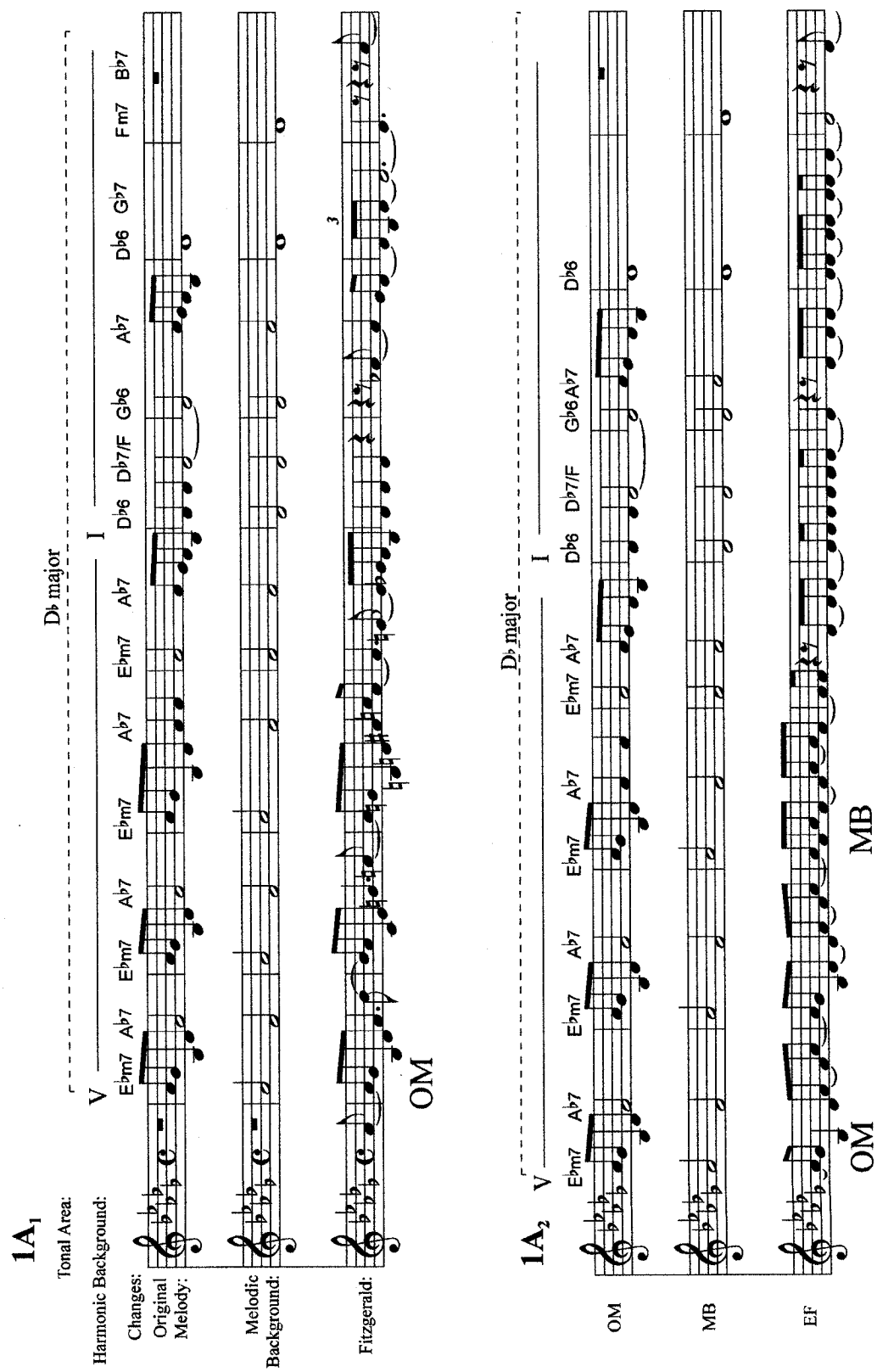
To illustrate how she employs aspects of the original tune (as analyzed in the previous chapter) in her interpretation, I will presently offer a close reading of seven interesting sections in this performance,[1] discussing her line as it relates to the original melody (OM), close paraphrase (CP), melodic background (MB), changes (CH), harmonic background (HB), and/or tonal area (TA), as identified at the end of Chapter 3. For ease of comparison, the notated examples in this chapter align my transcription with each of these parameters (as shown in Chapter 3, example 3.3), which are transposed to fit with the key of the performance.

Melody-Based Improvisation

Example 4.1 illustrates the first half of the first chorus.

[1] For a complete transcription of Fitzgerald's performance, see Appendix A. See Appendix B for notes on the transcription.

Example 4.1. Analysis of sections $1A_1$ and $1A_2$ from *Ella and Basie!*

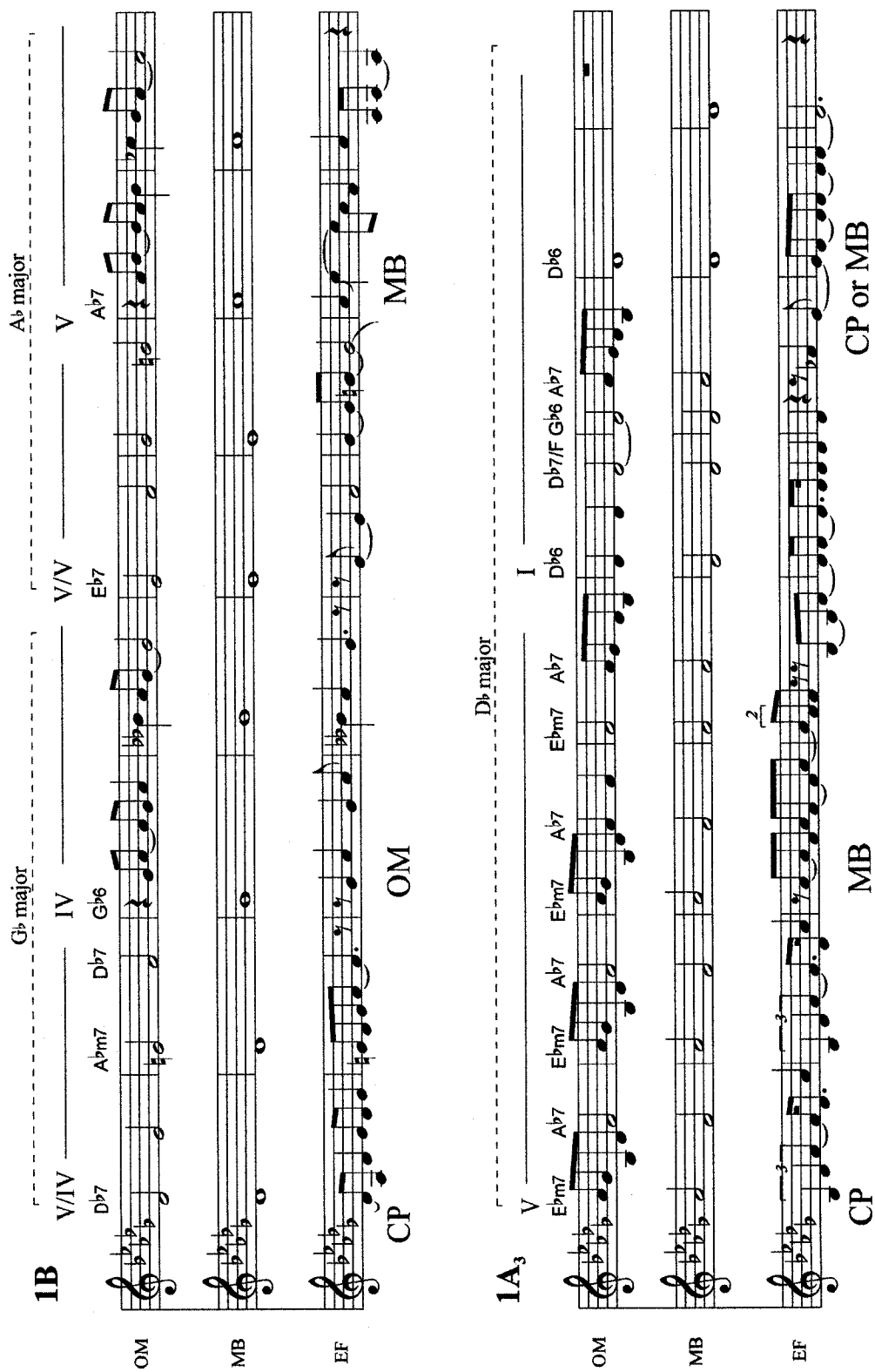


Fitzgerald starts her performance by presenting the original melody (OM) in the first section ($1A_1$). Accompanied by bass only in this phrase, she adds interest to her delivery of the original melody by nimbly transposing in each bar for the first four bars. She begins in the original key, moves up a tone to E♭ major in m. 2, heads back down a semi-tone to D major, and then slides back down to the home key of D♭ major through the flattened third (the E♮ in m. 4). She finishes off the first phrase still articulating the original tune with rhythmic alteration and with the flattened, or "blue," third.

In $1A_2$, Fitzgerald begins the phrase by continuing to sing the original tune for two measures, but then merges smoothly into articulation of the melodic background (MB). Notice here, in the third measure, how she alternates between the two melodic background pitches, A♭ and F, in eighth notes. Then, in the fourth measure, she anticipates the D♭ of m. 5 and remains on that D♭ from the melodic background until the end of the phrase. Interestingly, her anticipation of the D♭ in m. 4 *should* sound jarring against the $A♭^7$ harmony; however, the reader will recall my explanation regarding the tension between the melodic background and the changes. As I explained in Chapter 3, the melodic background outlines a tonic triad against the alternation between ii^7 and V^7 in the changes. Since the melodic background pitches connect to one another to articulate a tonic triad throughout the entire A section, and since the tonic chord has more structural weight than the supertonic or dominant, we can understand the *harmony* as dissonant in mm. 1-4 of the A section, resolving to consonance with the melodic background when it arrives on a tonic chord in m. 5. Fitzgerald's early arrival on the D♭ in m. 4 highlights the connection between melodic background pitches, further emphasizing the harmonic resolution in m. 5.

Example 4.2 illustrates the remainder of the first chorus.

Example 4.2. Analysis of sections 1B and 1A$_3$ from *Ella and Basie!*



The first two measures of 1B exemplify the "close paraphrase" technique. Here we can easily hear the original melody, D♭ - E♭ - E♮ - F; but Fitzgerald embellishes the first three notes by dropping down to another chord tone and coming back, in the case of the D♭, or by adding a lower neighbour. She returns to the original melody for mm. 3-6 of 1B. In section $1A_2$ we saw how Fitzgerald articulated the melodic background by alternation between A♭ and F in eighth notes. In the final two measures of 1B, her improvisation *oscillates around* the melodic background pitch (A♭) by jumping up a third to C, returning to A♭, then jumping down a third to F, then back up again to the A♭.

It is interesting to note that throughout her performance, when Fitzgerald's improvisation highlights important structural pitches, she frequently includes a reference to the third below the lowest structural tone, or, in other words, the sixth, much like the example in m. 7 of 1B. This relates to the melody in the second half of the A section (what I identified as the second melodic idea in Chapter 3, Ex. 3.2). Here, the important structural tone, D♭, arrives in both m. 5 and m. 7 after a "dip" down to B♭. So, while Fitzgerald's line at the end of 1B highlights the melodic background, it simultaneously references an element of the melody's surface structure from the A section.

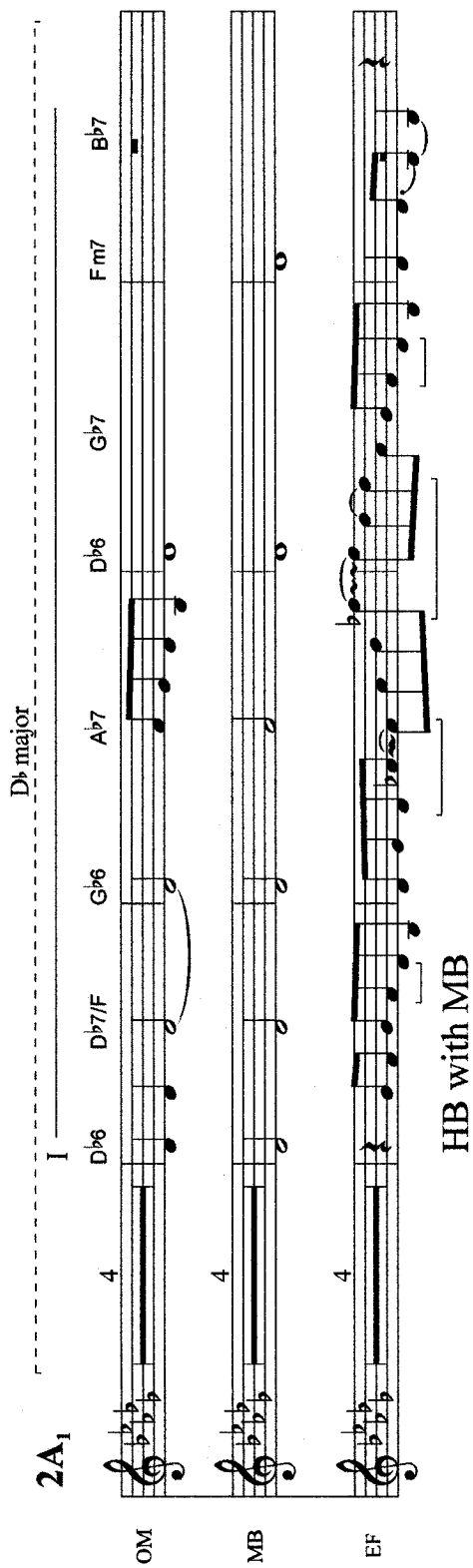
Another interesting use of close paraphrase occurs in the following section, $1A_3$. In the first two bars of this section, Fitzgerald reorganizes the original melody, singing the last three notes of the melodic motif (B♭ - D♭ - F) first, and ending the measure on the note with which the original melody begins, A♭ (Ex. 4.2). She then alternates between the A♭ and F of the melodic background in mm. 3-4 and arrives at D♭ at the end of m. 4, approaching it from the now familiar third below (B♭).

Perhaps even more interesting about section $1A_3$ is its relationship to section $1A_2$ (Ex 4.1). Keeping in mind that unless otherwise indicated, eighth notes represented on the transcription are performed "swung," notice the similar rhythmic treatment between the first two bars of $1A_2$ and $1A_3$. While her delivery of the original tune in $1A_2$ contrasts with the close paraphrase I described in $1A_3$, Fitzgerald links these two sections by similarly stretching the B♭ - D♭ - F gesture, at the end of the measure in $1A_2$, and at the beginning of the measure in $1A_3$. She also treats mm. 3-4 of both of these sections similarly, by alternating between the melodic background pitches in eighth notes. The second halves of these sections differ slightly, but both emphasize the D♭ of the melodic background. Thus, we can see how Fitzgerald not only links her improvisation to aspects of the original composition through articulation of the original melody, close paraphrase, or melodic background; she simultaneously creates coherence and unity in her performance by connecting different sections of her improvisation. In other words, as she improvises, Fitzgerald engages surface and deep structures of the original composition *as well as* elements of the *new* surface structure that she generates.

Integrating Melody and Harmony

An interesting relationship between Fitzgerald's improvised line and the harmonic background occurs in section $2A_1$ (Ex. 4.3).

Example 4.3. Analysis of section $2A_1$ from *Ella and Basie!*



Here, Fitzgerald improvises a line that contrasts with the overall downward movement of the original tune by outlining a D♭ major chord in a gesture that sweeps upward through an interval of a twelfth before heading back down. Her line reaches its highest point at the very moment the original tune reaches its lowest in a gesture which highlights the background tonic prolongation against the changing harmony in the ensemble. This illustrates another example of a relationship between surface structures (between her improvisation and the original melody) as well as a relationship to deep structure (harmonic background articulation).

Notice again her inclusion of the thirteenth through her alternation between D♭ and B♭ at the end of m. 5 moving into m. 6, as well as at the end of m. 7 moving into m. 8. I interpret this inclusion here as an addition to the tonic prolongation, making it a prolongation of I^6, rather than as a reference to the melodic gesture I described previously.

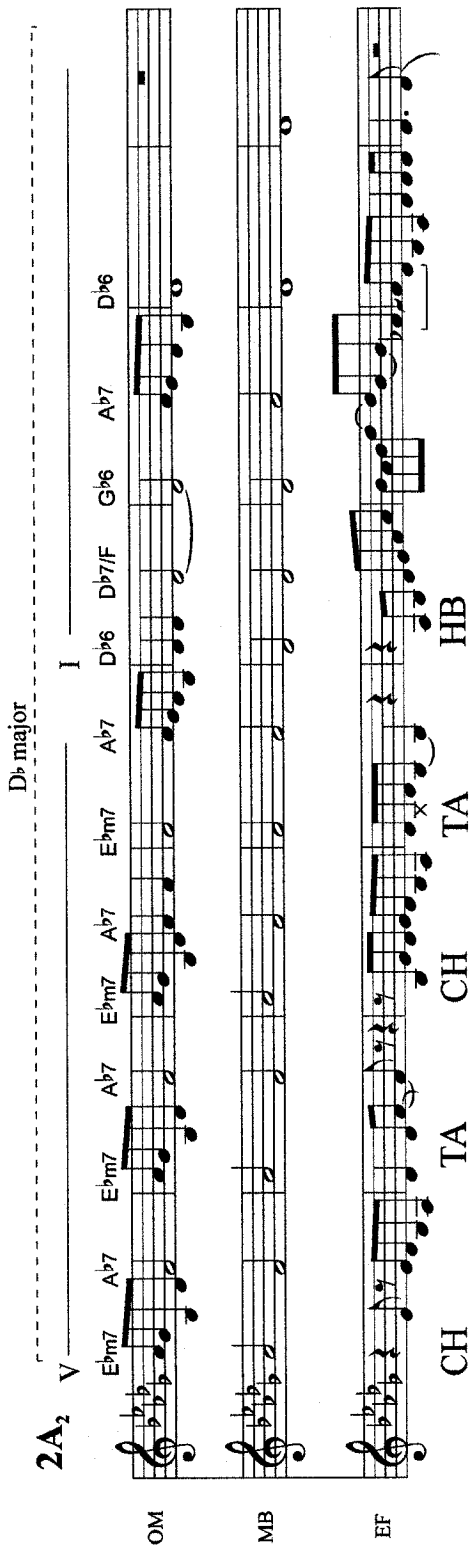
Although her line in this section seems to relate primarily to the harmonic background, it also contains four references to the F - D♭ gesture from the melodic background (bracketed). In m. 5, the beginning of her phrase sounds as though it relates most closely to background melody, embellishing it with appoggiaturas and the "dip" down to the third below before developing her line with the ascent through the tonic. She uses an inversion of the melodic background gesture on the second beat of m. 6 as the spring board for her ascent, bringing it out with a short glissando up to the F, and then highlights the third occurrence of the melodic background by articulating it an octave higher at the high point of her phrase (beginning of m. 7). Fitzgerald articulates the fourth instance of the melodic background less conspicuously at the end of her phrase in m. 7. As we can see, this phrase

incorporates contrast between surface structures at the same time as it relates to both the harmonic and the melodic background.

Harmony-Based Improvisation

By contrast, the next section (Ex. 4.4 illustrated on the following page) illustrates moments in Fitzgerald's performance which relate to the tune's harmony without invoking melodic elements.

Example 4.4. Analysis of section $2A_2$ from *Ella and Basie!*

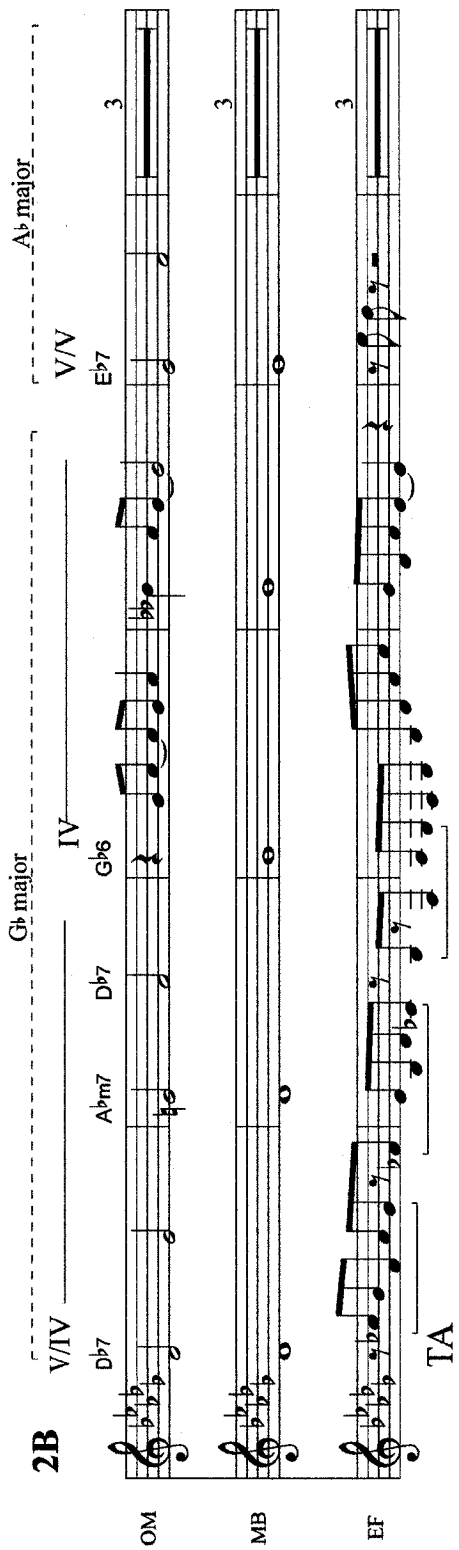


In the first measure of $2A_2$, the pitches in Fitzgerald's line relate to the changes (CH), but not to the melodic background (MB). Then, instead of returning to a pitch from E♭m7 to match up with the harmony, Fitzgerald moves from the dominant at the end of m. 1 to land on the tonic in m. 2 in a melodic V – I gesture that relates more to the general tonal area (TA) than to the changes (CH). She repeats this gesture from m. 3 to m. 4, articulating the changes in m. 3 and merging into general tonal area in m. 4.

In mm. 5-8, she returns to the idea of harmonic background (HB), outlining a I^6 chord in an arch-shaped gesture that recalls mm. 5-8 in the previous section, section $2A_1$. Thus, we see another instance where Fitzgerald creates a sense of unity in her performance by linking different sections of her improvisation, as we saw in the first chorus (Ex. 4.1 & 4.2). Unlike the previous section, however, her arch-shaped line in $2A_2$ puts less emphasis on the melodic background, articulating it only once from m. 6 to 7 (bracketed).

An example of an improvised phrase that articulates the general tonal area occurs in section 2B (Ex 4.5).

Example 4.5. Analysis of section 2B from *Ella and Basie!*



Here, Fitzgerald establishes the new key immediately by starting her phrase on a C♭, as opposed to the C♮ of D♭ major. She then confirms the context of this C♭ as part of G♭ major (as opposed to the blue seventh in D♭ major) by continuing downward in a five-note figure that resolves to G ♭ in m. 1 (bracketed). This figure becomes the basis for her line. As we can see, she repeats this five-note figure twice (bracketed), modifying it slightly by leaving out the second note in the third iteration of the figure. Her placement of each occurrence of the figure creates rhythmic interest as the first iteration lands on the second half of beat 1, the second on the end of beat 4 and the third on the second half of beat three in m. 2. Taken together, these three figures articulate a slightly embellished descending G♭ major scale.

Once again, the contour of her phrase contrasts with the contour of the original, which in this case, ascends throughout. It also contrasts with previous sections in her improvisation. As we saw, sections $2A_1$ and $2A_2$ each featured an arch-shaped phrase, and these two arch-shaped phrases related to one another. In section 2B, Fitzgerald reverses the arch in a phrase that descends and then rises back up, in an upside-down arch that refers to and contrasts with the previous sections. Notice also the 'dip' down to a third below the important structural tone (G♭ down to E♭) in m. 4. As we have seen, this reference to the third below appears like a motivic idea throughout the performance. Thus, in 2B, we see how Fitzgerald's line relates in important ways to both deep and surface structures of the original composition, as well as to other sections of her performance.

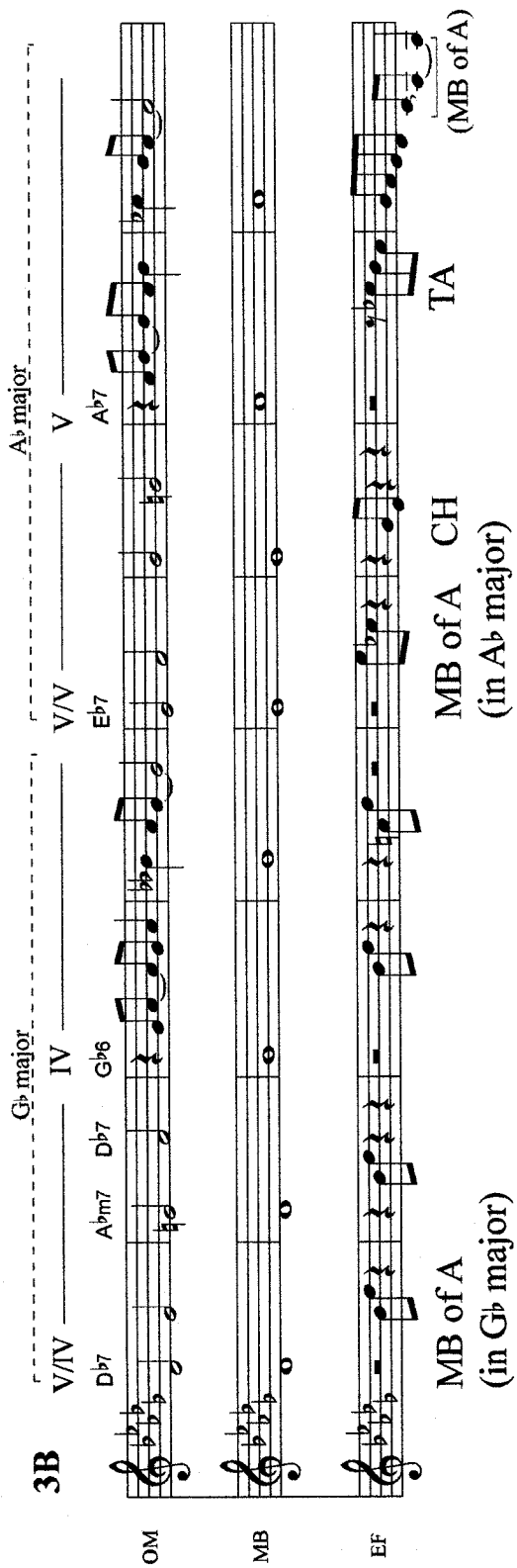
Improvisatory Juxtapositions

One of the most structurally interesting moments in the performance occurs in section 3B (Ex. 4.6). Recall the previous chapter, in which I described how the background

harmony in the B section compresses that of the A section. While the A section contains four bars of V followed by four bars of I at the background level, the B section contains *two* bars of V to two bars of I in the subdominant key, then, two bars of V to two bars of I in the dominant key. The *melodic background*, on the other hand, differs between the A and B sections. Both of these sections share the same *harmonic* gesture at the background level, yet the *melodic* background in A outlines a descending tonic triad against the V – I gesture (creating dissonance with the V chord), as opposed to the B section's melodic background, which agrees with the harmony. The melodic background of both sections begins with scale degree five, but, in A we hear a connection between scale degree five and three, while in B there is no such connection.

Returning now to 3B, we can see how Fitzgerald exploits the harmonic relationship between A and B by improvising a phrase in the B section that articulates the melodic background structure of the A section (Ex. 4.6); a strategy made possible by the shared harmonic structure of the two sections.

Example 4.6. Analysis of section 3B from *Ella and Basie!*



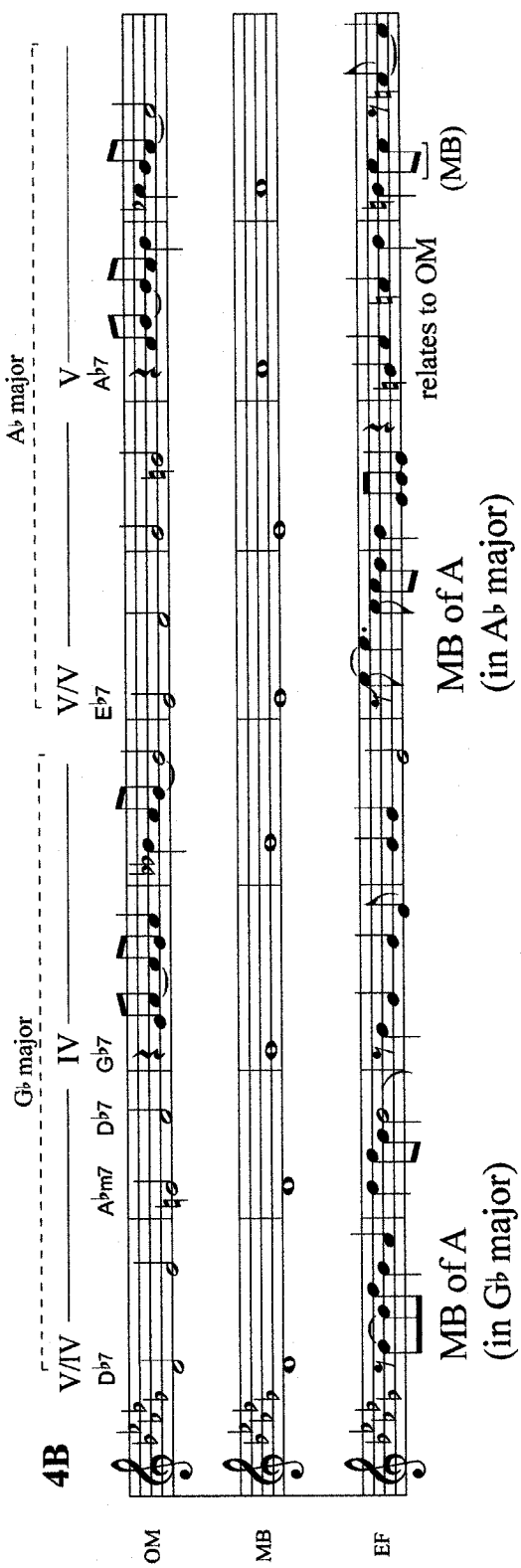
Previous examples have shown Fitzgerald alternating between the melodic background pitches, scale degree five and three, in the A section. Here, she articulates scale degrees three and five in the context of G♭ major to introduce a two-note motif which she features in the first six measures of 3B. Rather than complete the melodic background of A here, which would resolve to scale degree one with the arrival of the tonic harmony (here, the $G♭^6$ chord in m. 3), Fitzgerald stays on scale degrees three and five, altering the motif slightly in m. 4.

In m. 5, she inverts the motif, outlining scale degree five to the blue third in A♭ major. She then switches to pitches from the harmony in m. 6, continuing the 'blue' note idea by flattening scale degree seven. She bases the end of her phrase on a descending A♭ major scale (with a blue third at the beginning), relieving the rhythmic tension of the repeated short, and widely-spaced two-note motif. Notice however, how the end of her phrase subtly articulates the melodic background of A by ending with a gesture of scale degree three to one in A♭ major (bracketed).

This example illustrates a possible manifestation of a suggestion I made in Chapter 2 regarding motivic improvisation: the motives used in motivic improvisation may not necessarily be randomly selected, but may relate to an aspect of the original tune. We have seen how Fitzgerald's motivic improvisation in 3B relates to the melodic background of the A section. Moreover, this relationship becomes clear because of similarity between the harmonic gestures in A and B, thus invoking aspects of form in a more complex way than she has thus far.

This juxtaposition of the A section's melodic background with the B section returns with less subtlety in section 4B (Ex. 4.7).

Example 4.7. Analysis of section 4B from *Ella and Basie!*



In the first two measures, Fitzgerald highlights scale degrees three and five in G♭ major against the dominant harmony. Then, she completes the melodic background concept from the A section by emphasizing scale degrees three and one when the resolution to tonic harmony arrives in mm. 3-4. Notice again her inclusion of the third below.

In mm. 5-6, she treats the melodic background more loosely, but still emphasizes scale degrees five and three; now in A♭ major. Interestingly, in m. 7 she sings an ascending chromatic line to lead up to the second half of the melodic background, which she completes by singing C-A♭ in m. 8 (bracketed). This ascending chromatic line recalls the chromatic ascent in mm. 5-6 of the original tune.

Fitzgerald's improvisation in this section relates to that of the previous B section (Ex. 4.6) in that, like in section 3B, she bases her line on the melodic background of the A section, recasting it to fit with the two tonal areas of B. On the other hand, in 3B Fitzgerald subtly articulates only part of the melodic background in a brief two-note motif, whereas here, she uses the complete melodic background gesture.

Interestingly, she also relates m. 1 and m. 5 of 4B to the corresponding measures of 3B by articulating the melodic background pitches in the same order. To clarify, in m. 1 she sings scale degree three to scale degree five in G♭ major (as opposed to scale degree five to three, as the original melodic background would do), just as she did in m. 1 of 3B. Then, she reverses this gesture in m. 5 just as she did in the previous B section, singing scale degree five to three in A♭ major.

We can see, in these examples, how complex Fitzgerald's improvisation is in this section. Not only does her line relate to harmony in its use of the harmonic relationship between A and B, it also engages with aspects of form, by "inserting" the melodic

background from A into the B section, thus also involving melodic elements. Furthermore, her improvisation relates to elements of the original melody in its inclusion of the third below the important structural tone in mm. 3-4, as well as in the chromatic ascent in m. 7.

With these seven examples, I have illustrated how Fitzgerald's performance engages a complex web of relationships both within itself and to aspects of the original tune. I have addressed the simultaneity of structural levels at work in her improvisation, and have shown how she creates coherence and unity within this performance of "Honeysuckle Rose."

Fitzgerald's 1979 Performance on *A Classy Pair*

Let us now examine these analytic considerations as they apply to Fitzgerald's performance on a later recording, entitled *A Classy Pair*. Fitzgerald recorded this album with the Count Basie Orchestra in February 1979 for Pablo Records. Benny Carter wrote the arrangements for this album, and, as is the case with *Ella and Basie!*, "Honeysuckle Rose" appears as the first track on the album.

Basie performs the first half of the first chorus alone after delivering a simple, rhythmically free four-bar introduction. He employs a flexible sense of rubato, easing the performance in at a very approximate ♩ = 108, with the rhythm section subtly joining in at the arrival of the first B section. Basie continues soloing in the tune's original key, F major, for the remainder of the chorus as well as through the entire second chorus, gradually increasing the tempo throughout. Fitzgerald enters at approximately ♩ = 132, although throughout the performance, the tempo gradually increases to approximately ♩ = 142. With Fitzgerald's entry, the key changes to B♭ major by using Basie's last resolution to tonic (in F major) as a pivot chord (V in B♭ major). This lower key (as compared with the 1963

arrangement's key, D♭ major) likely reflects changes in the "comfort zone" of Fitzgerald's range, which lowered as she aged (she would have turned 62 two months after this recording was made).

In this performance, Fitzgerald solos all the way through two choruses, then trades fours with the band throughout the first two A sections of her third chorus. In the B section of her third chorus, she trades "twos" with the band, then trades fours again in the last A section, which ends with a modulation up a major second to C major. Fitzgerald continues trading fours with the band in the first two A sections of her final chorus in C major, then solos through the second half, ending with a four-bar "tag."[2]

All together, this arrangement contains six cycles through the chorus; however, for the purposes of my analysis, I will label the chorus of Fitzgerald's entry as chorus 1. As with my analysis of the 1963 recording, I have transposed the analytic parameters shown in my examples to fit with the keys of the performance. The present discussion will address six examples from this recording.[3]

Starting with different 'feel'

Fitzgerald's improvisation in the first section of her entry, section $1A_1$ (Ex. 4.8), relates to the melodic background in a variety of ways, unlike her opening chorus on the 1963 recording in which Fitzgerald strays little from the original melody.

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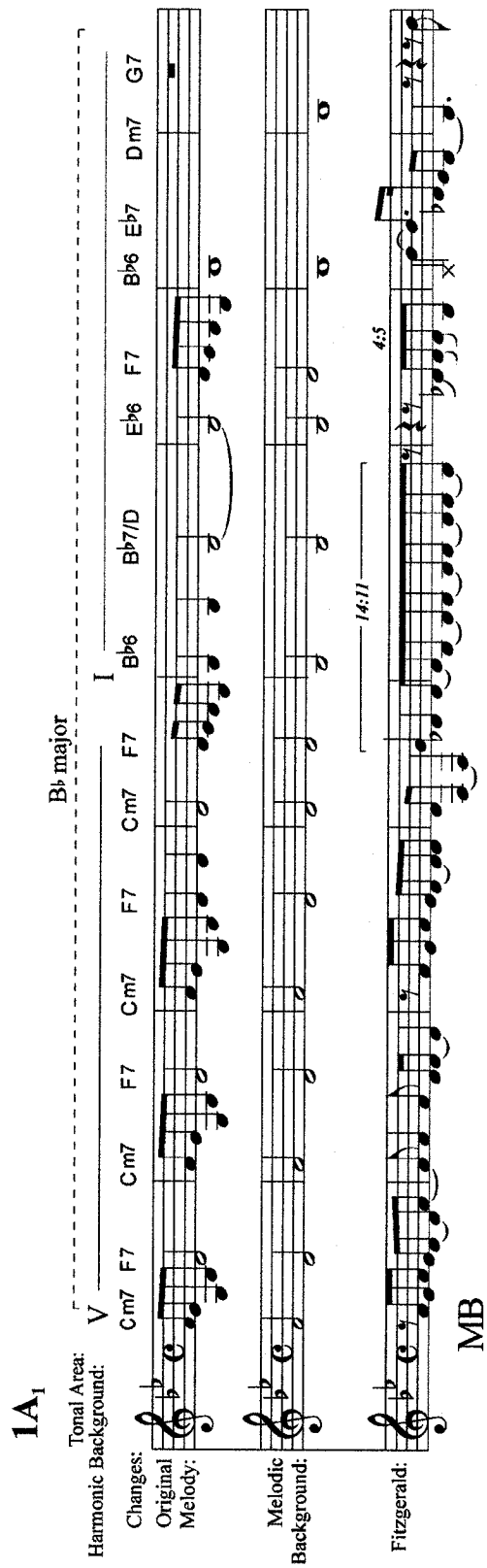
[2] A "tag" is a phrase, usually only a few bars long, added to the end of a performance. Often, the tag consists of a repetition of the last two or four bars of the tune.

[3] For a full transcription of Fitzgerald's performance, see Appendix A.

Example 4.8. Analysis of section $1A_1$ from *A Classy Pair*



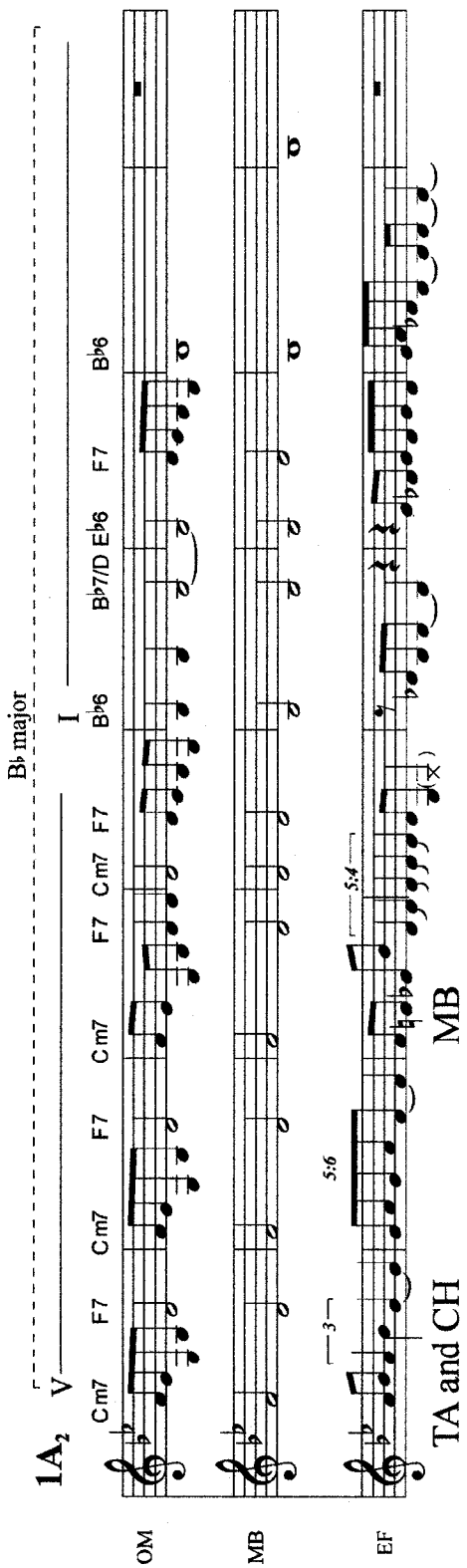
In the first bar of section $1A_1$, Fitzgerald includes an E♭ as a passing note between the two melodic background pitches, then, omits the passing note in m. 2. She brings the passing note back in the third measure. In the fourth measure, she abandons the passing-note embellishment and instead develops the melodic background's F-D alternation by dropping down to the F *below* D in m. 4, rather than reiterating the F in its original position. She treats the melodic background with great rhythmic flexibility to end the phrase, which I have approximately represented as fourteen eighth notes "squeezed" into the space of eleven, or, as it sounds, seven quarter notes in the space of five and a half. Notice her leap up to the G in the middle of m. 4, highlighting the added sixth which, the reader will recall, figured prominently in the 1963 performance.

In the second half of this section, Fitzgerald's emphasis of the melodic background closely resembles the *original* melodic background structure in the staff above because of her rhythmic treatment and the lack of added embellishing pitches. She remains on the B♭ in m. 5, scooping up to D♭ three times in m. 6, and articulating the B♭ an octave higher in m. 7, only to return back to the original octave through one more articulation of the D♭-B♭ gesture with a C passing note. As we can see, Fitzgerald highlights the flattened, or 'blue,' third (D♭) in this section rather than staying on the original D♮. Her emphasis of the blue third combined with her highly flexible rhythm and the slower tempo all contribute to a more relaxed, "bluesy" sounding opening than that of the fast-paced, energetic 1963 recording.

Sequence and harmony

An interesting juxtaposition of Fitzgerald's line against the harmony occurs in the first two bars of section $1A_2$ (Ex. 4.9).

Example 4.9. Analysis of section $1A_2$ from *A Classy Pair*



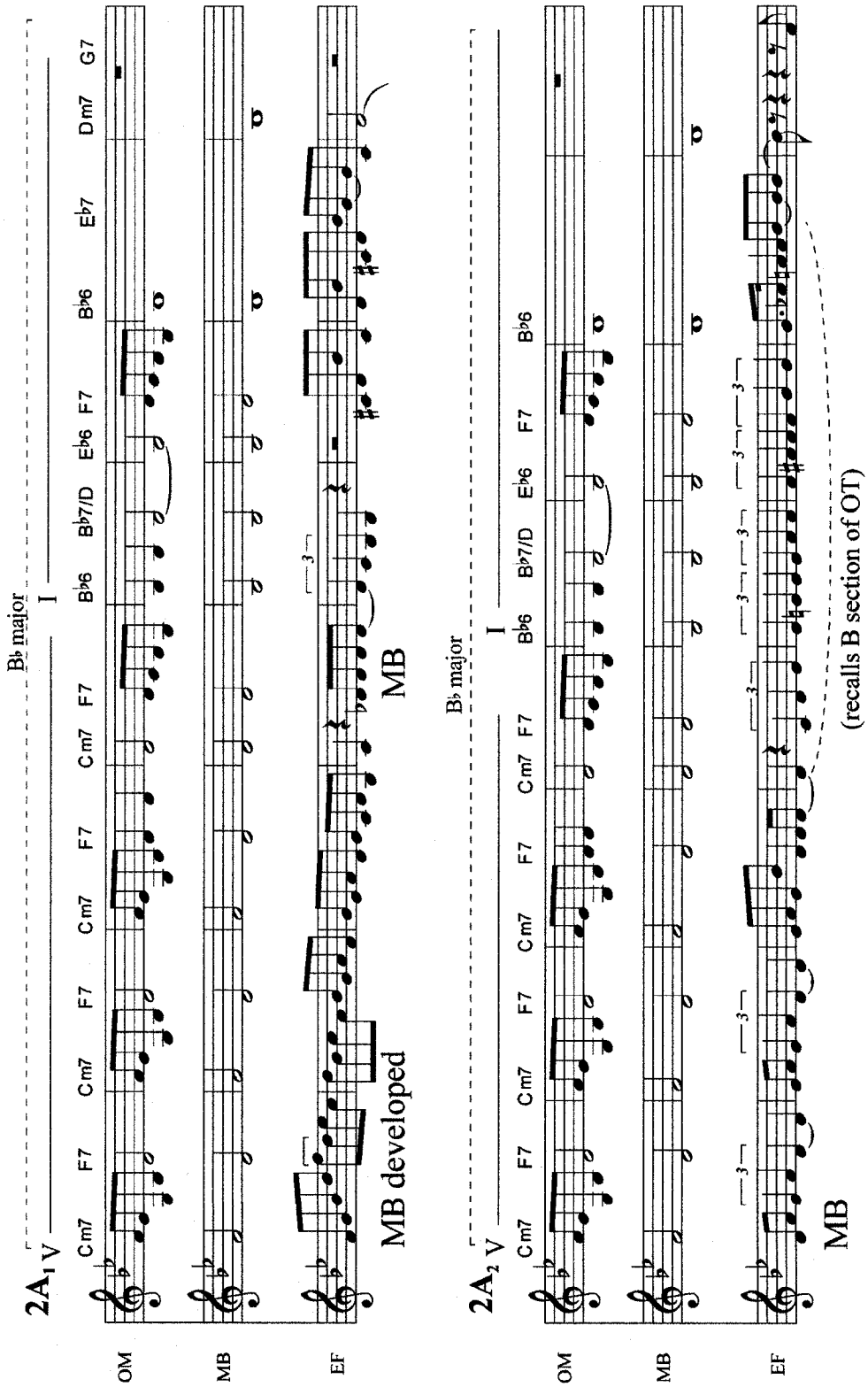
In the first bar, Fitzgerald introduces a figure which she repeats sequentially in m. 2. Her line in these two bars seems to relate to the general tonal area of B♭ major with the goal of landing on the F at the end of m. 2. However, what makes these two bars interesting is the way they *sound* in relation to the *changes*. Recall my discussion from the previous chapter regarding repeated harmonic gesture found in the B section's two V - I progressions, and how an improviser might highlight the repeated harmonic gesture by articulating the same improvised line over each occurrence, transposed to fit with the tonal context gesture like a sequence. In this example, however, Fitzgerald introduces a sequence in an unusual context. Because the harmonic gesture (Cm^7 - F^7) repeats exactly (i.e. without changing key), Fitzgerald's *sequential* repetition creates the impression of tension and release, rather than homogeneity of harmony and melody. In the first bar, she emphasizes A against the Cm^7, adding a thirteenth to the chord, then lands on G, adding the ninth to the F^7 chord. In the following bar, the repeated figure sounds as though it resolves to more stable pitches: G and F with Cm^7 and F^7 respectively.

Fitzgerald breaks the sequence in the following bar, outlining the melodic background in a chromatic descent from F to D, with a quick leap up to B♭ before arriving on the D. Her rhythmic flexibility as she repeats the D six times, scooping up to it each time, recalls the flexibility and scooping of the previous section (Ex. 4.8). Fitzgerald's line in the second half of this section continues to emphasize the melodic background pitches, highlighting again the blue third, as she did in section $1A_1$.

Interesting Melodic Background Development

Two interesting developments of the melodic background occur in the first two sections of Fitzgerald's second chorus (Ex. 4.10).

Example 4.10. Analysis of sections $2A_1$ and $2A_2$ from *A Classy Pair*



Fitzgerald starts section $2A_1$ on the melodic background pitch, F, continuing with an ascending gesture that rises up to F an octave higher. Remarkably, this gesture in the first half of m. 1 comprises all of the notes from the A section's melodic background (F, D, and B♭) plus the recurring added sixth. Upon arriving at the top F, Fitzgerald skips back down to D, articulating the F-D melodic background gesture (bracketed). She then uses this descending third figure as the basis for a long descending line that spans an octave and a half from mm. 1-3. This line clearly defines the B♭ major tonality (TA), through the unique development of the melodic background figure. Fitzgerald directs this descending line to land on a *harmony* note, C, in m. 4.

The second half of this section ($2A_1$), starting in the middle of m. 4, shows yet another instance of Fitzgerald highlighting the blue third, an important feature of this performance. This occurs in mm. 4-5, where she flattens the D of the melodic background. Then, in mm. 6-8, not only does she invert the melodic background by alternating the D with the B♭ *above* rather than below; she *also* plays on the flexibility of the third scale degree by including *both* the flattened version of the third (notated enharmonically as C♯) and the original D♮.

Fitzgerald's improvisation continues outlining the melodic background in the next section, section $2A_2$, but puts greater emphasis on the E♭ passing note in mm. 1-3. Of greater interest here, however, is the relationship of her line in these three measures to the first three measures of section $1A_2$ (see Ex. 4.9). Not only do these two sections feature the same rhythmic treatment (the reader will note that the subtle differences I have endeavoured to transcribe would not likely be noticed without the kind of careful, repetitive listening required for transcription – it is my contention that the listener would hear these sections as

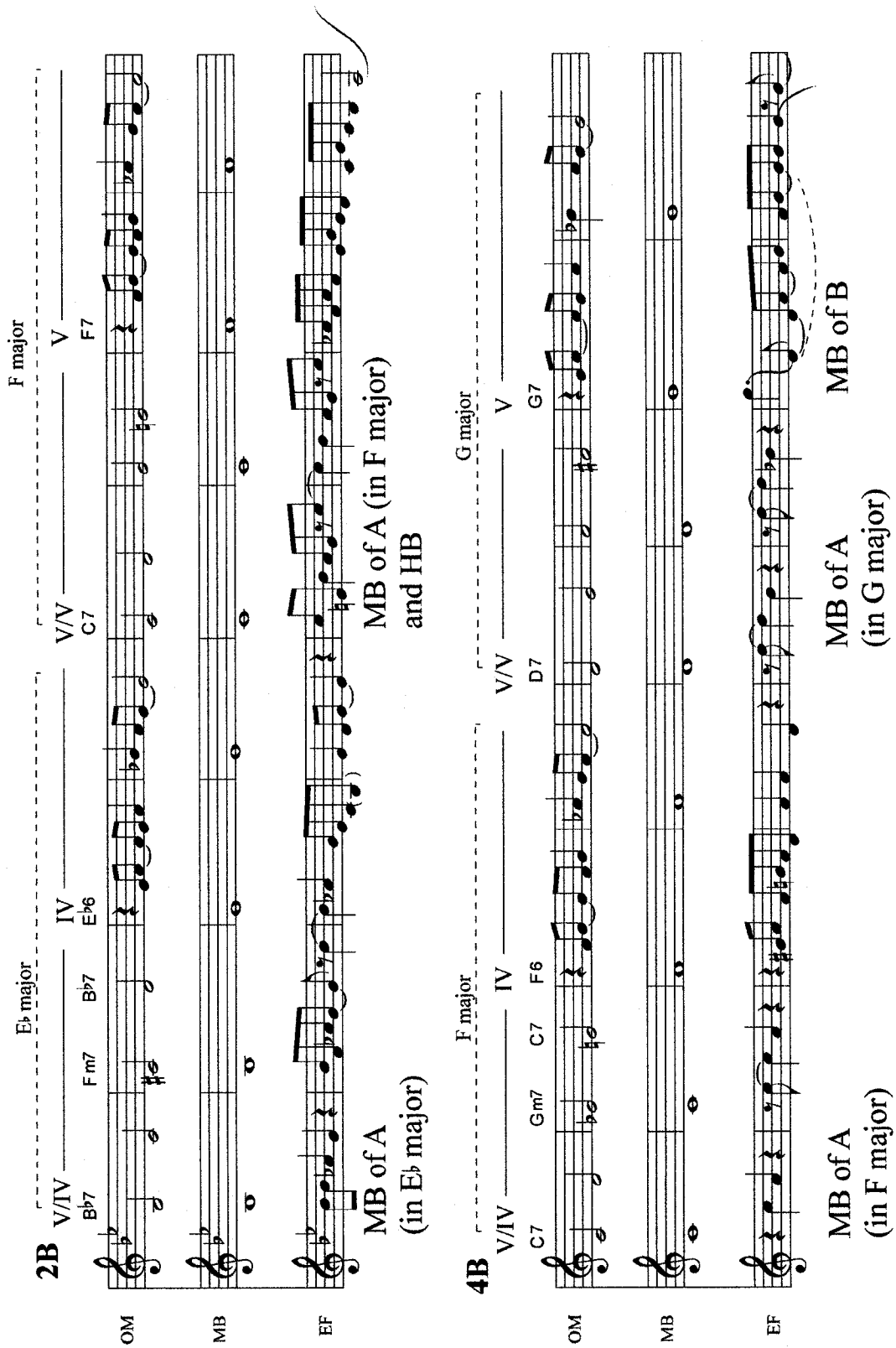
rhythmically the same), the melody in mm. 1-2 of section $2A_2$ is almost an exact transposition of the melody in the first two measures of section $1A_2$, and, m. 3 repeats the third measure of $1A_2$ almost exactly. In this respect, Fitzgerald's improvisation here relates to both the melodic background, with her embellishment of the F-D alternation, and to another moment in her performance, lending a sense of cohesion to the performance as a whole.

Fitzgerald inverts the D-B♭ portion of the melodic background, as she did at the end of section $2A_1$, in mm. 4-8 of section $2A_2$. This time however, she connects these two pitches with a long chromatic ascent in quarter-note triplets from mm. 4-7. The ascending chromatic line here recalls the ascending chromatic motion in the B section of the original melody. So, in these four bars, Fitzgerald's line simultaneously relates to an aspect of the original melody's surface structure (chromatic ascent), relates to an earlier moment in her improvisation (melodic background inversion in section $2A_1$), and develops the deep structure (melodic background).

Treatment of the B section

In my analysis of the 1963 performance, I illustrated two instances where Fitzgerald developed the A section's melodic background structure by applying it to the two tonal areas of the B section (see Ex. 4.6 and Ex. 4.7). This also occurs twice on the *A Classy Pair* recording; in section 2B and in section 4B (Ex 4.11).

Example 4.11. Analysis of sections 2B and 4B from *A Classy Pair*



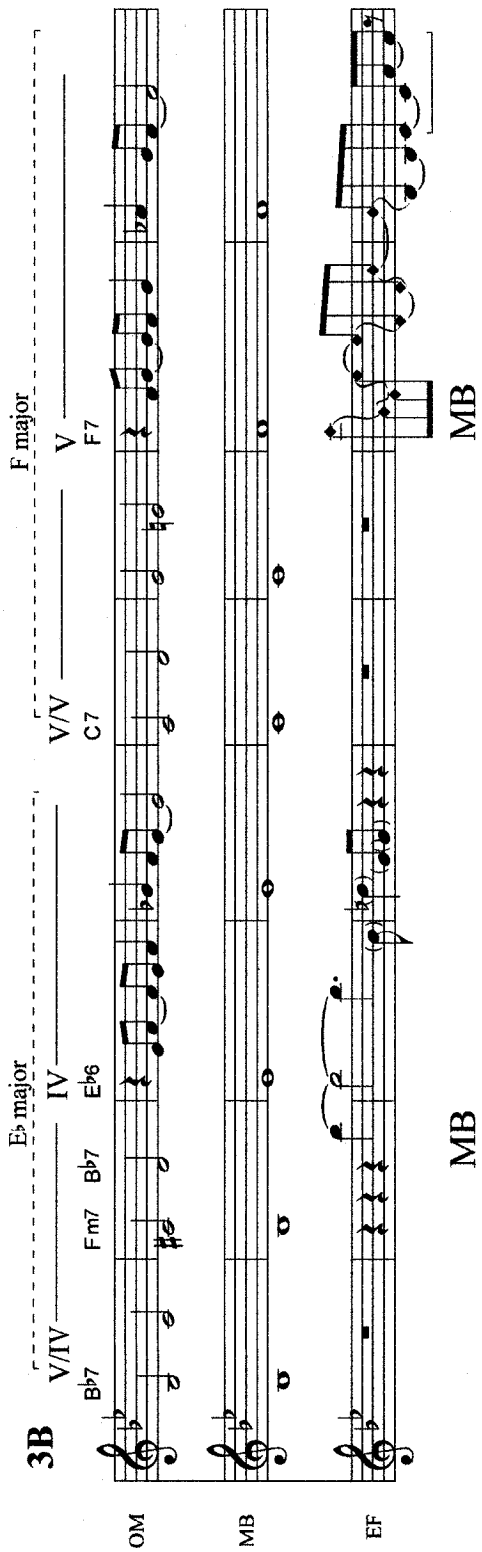
In section 2B, Fitzgerald develops the movement from scale degree five to scale degree three in the context of E♭ major against the dominant of E♭ major in mm. 1-3, adding a passing note in the first measure and a lower cambiata in m. 2. In the third and fourth measures, she completes the melodic background structure by resolving to the E♭. In the second half of the section, Fitzgerald's line continues to develop the melodic background from the A section within the context of F major, as we can clearly see the framework of C-A-F as the basis for her improvisation here. However, she embellishes the melodic background in mm. 5-6 with pitches that articulate the underlying harmony, as opposed to the original melodic background structure, which, through its articulation of the tonic chord, sounded partly dissonant against the dominant chord in the harmony. In m. 7 Fitzgerald articulates the third scale degree to tonic in F major, highlighting the second half of the melodic background from the A section. However, she sings the "blue" third here, connecting this measure to the multiple other blues references throughout her performance. She uses the descending third gesture here as a building block, similar to her development of this interval in section $2A_1$, continuing it in a descending motive that outlines an F^7 chord throughout mm. 7-8.

Notice the clearly articulated movement from scale degree five (C) to three (A) in mm. 1-2 resolving to scale degree one (F) in mm. 3-4 of section 4B, which is now in the context of F major, the subdominant of C major (recall that the performance modulates to C major in Fitzgerald's fourth chorus). This example also contains another instance of Fitzgerald's "dip" down to the recurring third below (D) in mm. 3 and 4. Then, in the context of the dominant key, G major, Fitzgerald articulates scale degree five (D) to three (B) in both m. 5 and m. 6, flattening the third in m. 6. Instead of completing the gesture by

resolving *down* to scale degree one in m. 7, Fitzgerald jumps to the tonic an octave *higher*. From here, she slides quickly down to the D an octave and a half below, and outlines a compressed version of the B section's melodic background gesture rising from D to G.

We have now seen four instances, two from each performance, in which Fitzgerald's improvisation articulates the melodic background from the A section in the context of the B section, taking advantage of section B's similar harmonic design. Let us now turn to an example from a B section in which *its own* melodic background comes through in Fitzgerald's line (Ex. 4.12).

Example 4.12. Analysis of section 3B from *A Classy Pair*

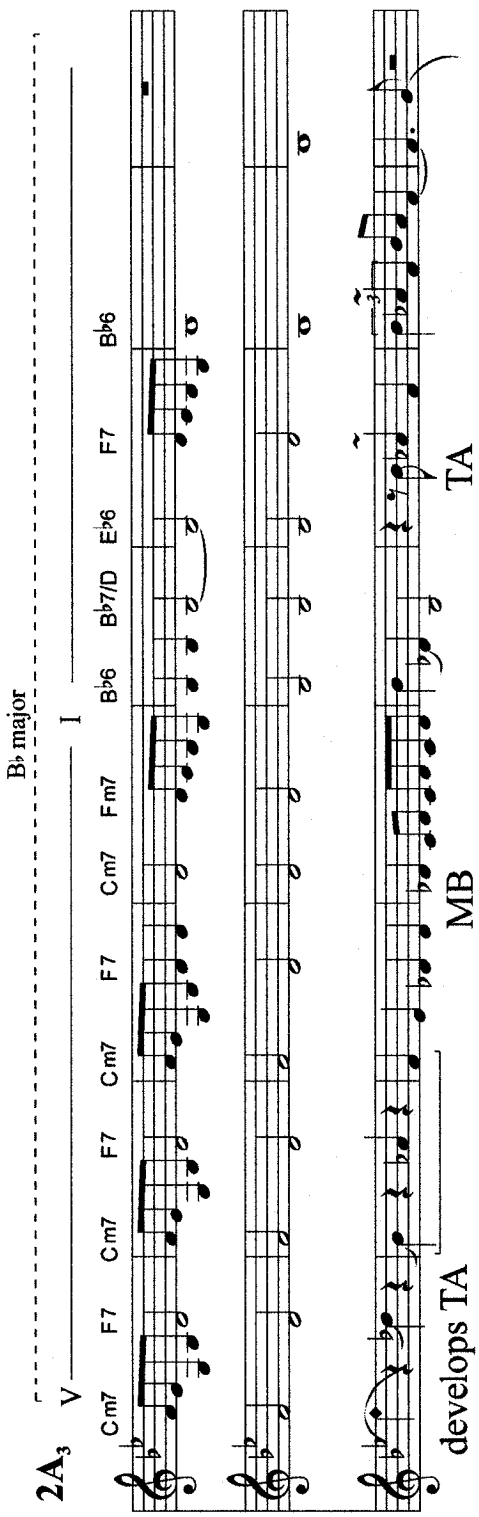


Here, in section 3B, Fitzgerald enters on the B♭ from the melodic background, delivering it at a staggering two octaves above its original position. She sustains this note for four beats, and then seems to trail off onto notes that belong to an $E♭^7$ chord (bracketed because the pitches are difficult to hear on the recording). She then seems to attempt a similar gesture in the second half of 3B, in an effort to deliver the C from the melodic background in mm. 5-6. To my ear, it sounds as though the intended C does not actually sound; it is as if the listener hears a "glimpse" of the high C in the beginning of her slide away from it. Fitzgerald compensates for this with an elaborate syncopated series of widely spaced pitch approximations, which I have represented on the transcription as high or low points of glissandi. Interestingly, however, she seems to regain her bearing in m. 8 in time to end her phrase with the C-F gesture from the melodic background.

The 1979 performance as 'bluesy'

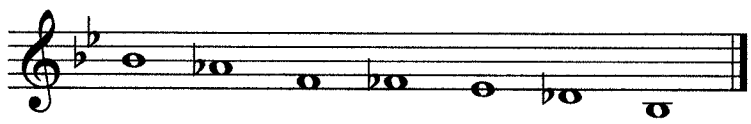
Throughout my discussion of Fitzgerald's 1979 performance of "Honeysuckle Rose," the majority of the examples analyzed have contained instances of "blue" notes. I also suggested, with regard to Example 4.8, that Fitzgerald's use of blue notes, flexible rhythmic delivery and slower tempo gave her entry a much more laid back and "bluesy feel" than that of her 1963 recording. The most interesting blues reference, however, occurs in section $2A_3$ (Ex. 4.13).

Example 4.13. Analysis of section $2A_3$ from *A Classy Pair*



In this section, Fitzgerald's line relates to the general tonality of B♭. However, rather than outline a B♭ major scale, Fitzgerald bases her line on a descending B♭ *blues scale* (illustrated in Ex. 4.14).

Example 4.14. descending B♭ blues scale



As Example 4.13 illustrates, Fitzgerald starts this descent in m. 1 on the fifth scale degree (F), continuing down through the blue third (D♭), tonic (B♭), blue seventh (A♭), fifth (F), arriving at the blue third (D♭) at the end of m. 3. From here, she merges into the second half of the melodic background in mm. 4-5, highlighting the relationship between the third and first scale degrees with an emphasis on the flattened third. In mm. 6-8, Fitzgerald recalls a portion of her descending blues scale from mm. 2-3 (bracketed) which articulates the first three notes of the descending blues scale. She repeats his portion three times, highlighting the importance of the blues in this performance.

Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, I have illustrated the application of the third stage in my analytic model: Transcription Analysis. I have shown how Fitzgerald's performance relates to and develops the original tune, close paraphrase of the original tune, melodic background, changes, harmonic background, and/or tonal area in various levels of complexity throughout. Moreover, the close reading required for this analysis lent itself well to exploring how Fitzgerald creates a sense of unity and cohesiveness in her performance by referring back to earlier moments in her improvisation. She does this by recalling a variety of musical elements from earlier passages, including rhythm, contour, melody,

improvisatory strategy, or by featuring certain pitches throughout the performance, such as the recurring sixth or the blue notes in the 1979 recording. In other words, Fitzgerald's performance involves sophisticated relationships to the original tune's surface and deep structures, as well as to the new surface structure that *she* generates.

The three-stage model I have offered also allows the analyst to compare the performance with a standard set of "modes of improvisation" – melodic and harmonic structures gleaned from the Lead-Sheet Analysis. Because these structures remain constant, they offer the analyst a meaningful way to compare the developments of contrasting performances. This analysis has therefore illustrated the utility of an analytical model which allows the analyst to consider several improvisational strategies simultaneously.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND FURTHER DIRECTIONS

Throughout this study, I have endeavoured to develop a method for analyzing the melodic improvisation in a recorded jazz performance. I explored several approaches to this type of analysis in Chapter 2. These included Kernfeld's general descriptions of paraphrase, formulaic, and motivic improvisation; Larson's application of the Schenkerian model to performed jazz; and Hodson's discussions of form, melody, and harmony in jazz music, as well as his explanation of improvisation strategies. Each of these authors offered analysis to accompany their explanations of a particular improvisational technique. For example, Kernfeld offered an analysis of a Charlie Parker solo which illustrated different recurring formulas that Parker strung together in different ways to create his improvised line.[1] He presented a different example to illustrate paraphrase improvisation, and a third example to show motivic improvisation. Larson's Schenkerian graph showed how a performance by Bill Evans unfolded in terms of a large-scale concept of harmonic prolongation. Similarly, Hodson used a variety of examples to show different improvisational techniques. It would seem then, that the goal for each of these authors, in their analysis, has been to illustrate a particular improvisatory technique as it occurs in performance.

In the third chapter, I integrated ideas from each of these authors and others, with the goal of arriving at an analytical framework that would allow the analyst to consider a multiplicity of musical parameters in his or her analysis of recorded jazz. In other words, whereas Kernfeld's, Larson's, and Hodson's analyses aimed to explain a specific improvisatory technique in terms of how it is used in performance, my analysis flips this

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[1] Barry Kernfeld, *What to Listen for in Jazz* (New York: Yale University, 1995), 138.

relationship: it endeavours to understand a *performance* in terms of improvisatory techniques.

I arrived at a three-stage method for analyzing the melodic improvisation in a recorded jazz performance, and throughout Chapter 3, I illustrated the application of the first stage, Lead-Sheet Analysis, by analyzing the melody, harmony, and form in Thomas "Fats" Waller's tune, "Honeysuckle Rose." I based my analysis on insights gleaned from Kernfeld, Larson, Hodson, and others, integrating concepts of different structural levels within a tune's melody and harmony, which, according to these authors, might affect a musician's improvisation. Influenced by these ideas, I arrived at six "modes of improvisation," or structural parameters of melody and harmony which the improviser may realize and develop in different ways throughout her or his performance. These structural parameters include original melody, close paraphrase, melodic background, changes, harmonic background, and tonal area. I illustrated my analysis of each of these parameters (with the exception of close paraphrase) in "Honeysuckle Rose" in Chapter 3 (Example 3.7).

Having completed the second stage of my analysis, transcription (discussed in Chapter 1), I applied the third stage, Transcription Analysis, in Chapter 4 by analyzing two performances of "Honeysuckle Rose" by Ella Fitzgerald. In this stage, I considered the relationship between Fitzgerald's improvisation and each of the parameters described above. My analysis illustrated how Fitzgerald's performance does not unfold solely in terms of one specific musical parameter, such as harmonic prolongation or melodic paraphrase; rather, she articulates and combines various aspects of melody, harmony, and form throughout her improvisation. In addition to articulating the original melody or closely paraphrasing that melody, Fitzgerald also improvised lines which realized the melodic background in many

different ways. The analysis additionally revealed instances where Fitzgerald's improvisation delineated the changes, or reflected a concept of harmonic prolongation or tonal area. Moreover, her performance frequently related to several of these parameters simultaneously. Finally, the close reading required for this analysis lent itself well to exploring how Fitzgerald creates a sense of unity and cohesiveness in her performance by referring back to earlier moments in her improvisation.

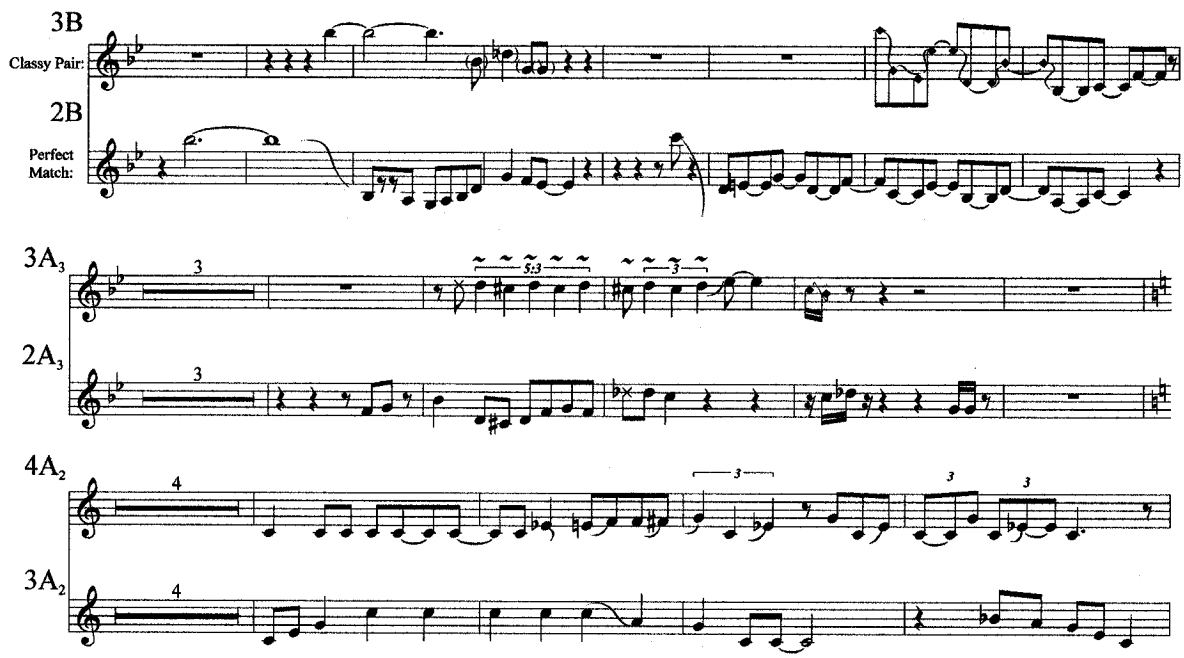
I have thus demonstrated the utility of an analytical model that allows one to consider these different parameters simultaneously. I have also shown the importance of lead-sheet analysis as the first stage in my analytical model, as it provided a framework for close reading of the transcription by acting as a standard with which we could compare the improvisation. By framing the improvisation this way, we are better able to contextualize and comprehend the improvisation, and, furthermore, are better equipped to articulate our observations of the performance in a meaningful way. The lead-sheet analysis also provides a useful point of departure for explaining how a performance might recast aspects of the original tune, or even deviate from them.

My analysis points to a strong relationship between "Honeysuckle Rose" as a composition and Fitzgerald's performance. In passages where Fitzgerald's improvisation does not articulate the melody in an obvious way, I have shown an alternative to understanding these passages merely as strung-together formulas or motives selected from an improviser's repertory of "licks." My analysis, instead, consistently relates the improvisation to the original composition, as well as relating the performance to itself. This approach made it possible to observe that in passages where Fitzgerald's line did not immediately resemble the original melody, she did in fact articulate deeper melodic and/or

harmonic structures of the original tune. This held true for both longer passages and motivic improvisation.

I am, however, by no means suggesting that a jazz musician generates his or her improvisation solely from aspects of the original tune. In fact, if we compare Fitzgerald's 1979 performance on *A Classy Pair* with a live performance she did later that year we can see several striking similarities between her two performances. The live performance with the Count Basie Orchestra uses an adaptation of the same Benny Carter arrangements that were used for the *A Classy Pair* recording session. It appears on a Pablo Records release of the concert on a CD entitled *A Perfect Match.* Example 5.1 aligns three similar sections from these two performances:[2]

Example 5.1. 1979 recordings of "Honeysuckle Rose:" three similar sections



Notice how, in section 2B of the *A Perfect Match* recording, Fitzgerald sustains a B♭ at the beginning of the phrase, and then reaches for the high C in the middle of the phrase,

[2] For a complete transcription of Fitzgerald's line in each of these performances, see Appendix A. Notes on the transcriptions can be found in Appendix B.

just as she did in section 3B from the *A Classy Pair* recording. Comparing section $2A_3$ from *A Perfect Match* with $3A_3$ from *A Classy Pair*, we can see that at the end of these sections, Fitzgerald abruptly cuts off her improvisation in m. 7 in both performances. In sections $3A_2/4A_2$ Fitzgerald emphasizes the C from the melodic background (not shown). In Chapter 4, I pointed out many ways in which the 1979 recording on *A Classy Pair* differed from the 1963 *Ella and Basie!* performance, showing how, although the tune (and, therefore, the structural harmonic and melodic material for improvisation) remained the same, Fitzgerald developed the various harmonic and melodic structures in different ways, lending a more "bluesy" feeling to the 1979 recording. Therefore, we can rule out the possibility that these two 1979 recordings sound the same simply because they are the same tune. How, then, do we account for their similarity? To find the answer to this question, we must look beyond the relationship between Fitzgerald's improvised line and the original tune. We must look to the *ensemble*.

Many authors, including Robert Hodson, Paul Berliner, and Ingrid Monson[3], have written extensively about the role of ensemble communication in improvised jazz performance. Each of these authors touches on the roles fulfilled by different instruments in a jazz ensemble and explores the seemingly infinite ways in which the musicians in an ensemble can interact with and influence one another in performance. Berliner offers two commonly-used metaphors in his description of interaction in group improvisation:

> One metaphor likens group improvisation to a conversation that players carry on among themselves in the language of jazz. The second likens the experience of improvising to going on a demanding musical journey. From the performance's first beat, improvisers enter a rich, constantly changing musical stream of their own creation [...] through the channels of a composition's general form. Over its course, players are perpetually occupied: they must take in the immediate inventions around

[3] Ingrid Monson, *Saying Something: Jazz Improvisation and Interaction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

> them while leading their own performances toward emerging musical images, retaining, for the sake of continuity, the features of a quickly receding trail of sound.[4]

Indeed, ensemble interaction must be considered one of the most important ingredients in performing jazz. Jazz musicians must *tune in* to one another in order to be able to continuously react and respond to the musical events around them. Monson explains that a good jazz musician does not base his or her improvisation solely on melodic and harmonic aspects of the original tune – to do this would be to fulfill only the minimum requirements of getting through a chorus structure. Rather, a performer must know the tune so well that it is like second nature so that the performer can engage with the rest of the band.[5] Musicians who seem to ignore the other members of the band, failing to respond to the musical sounds around them would be accused of "not listening" or of "playing something he or she practiced" – serious insults to a jazz musician. Monson quotes jazz musician Don Byron:

> I hate hearing them bands where like… one cat's playing some shit that he practiced. Another cat's playing some shit that he practiced. Everybody's playing some stuff that they practiced…. On a certain level there's like a feeling, "Well, I like playing with you," but I mean, what does that mean… You know, we didn't play shit together. We didn't do nothing together. I played my stuff, you played your stuff, we didn't screw up the time.[6]

Essentially, if a performance lacks this conversational interactivity, it simply is not good jazz.[7]

Let us now return to Fitzgerald's two 1979 performances of "Honeysuckle Rose." With the importance of ensemble interaction in mind, I contend that Fitzgerald's two 1979 performances share strikingly similar passages because they share the same written-down

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[4] Paul Berliner, *Thinking in Jazz: The Infinite Art f Improvisation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 349.

[5] Monson, 84.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid.

arrangement by Benny Carter. Of course, each performance adapts this arrangement differently (recall the flexibility of the *arrangement* in jazz music as I discussed in Chapter 1). While the entire performance on *A Perfect Match* seems to use a written-out arrangement for the band with the rhythm section fulfilling their role through improvisation, the recording on *A Classy Pair* begins with four improvised choruses with only the rhythm section, adding the arranged band material only in the third and fourth choruses. Table 5.1 illustrates the organization of each performance in terms of which choruses use a written-down arrangement, and which are improvised (as I hear it). Fitzgerald's contribution is entirely improvised. Similarly, the specific musical material from the rhythm section would not have been indicated in the written-down arrangement. For the purpose of this discussion, since the first two choruses of the performance on *A Classy Pair* do not feature Fitzgerald, I will label them "Introduction" (even though they do not serve as such in the context of the performance).

Table 5.1. Arrangement in the 1979 recordings of "Honeysuckle Rose"

Formal Section	*A Classy Pair*	*A Perfect Match*
Introduction	Basie plays a rhythmically free 4-measure intro and then solos for 2 choruses accompanied by the rhythm section → **improvised**	8-measure introduction played by the band → **arranged**
1	Fitzgerald solos throughout the chorus accompanied by the rhythm section → **improvised**	Fitzgerald solo throughout the chorus accompanied by the band → **arranged**
2	Fitzgerald solos throughout the chorus accompanied by the rhythm section → **improvised**	Fitzgerald solos, trading fours (or twos) with the band → **arranged**
3	Fitzgerald solos, trading fours (or twos) with the band → **arranged**	Fitzgerald solos, trading fours with the band in the first half of the chorus and soloing throughout the second half, accompanied by the band → **arranged**
4	Fitzgerald solos, trading fours with	NA

	the band in the first half of the chorus and soloing throughout the second half, accompanied by the band → **arranged**	
Coda	Fitzgerald and band → **arranged**	Fitzgerald and band → **arranged**

If we consider the *A Perfect Match* recording to be representative of Benny Carter's arrangement in its entirety, we could say that Carter's arrangement comprises an eight-measure introduction and three choruses, ending with a coda. It would seem then, that the recording of *A Classy Pair* comprises an adaptation of the arrangement. It omits the introduction and first chorus from Carter's arrangement, replacing them with two improvised choruses featuring Basie and the rhythm section, followed by two choruses featuring Fitzgerald and the rhythm section. Only after Fitzgerald's first two choruses does the band join in, playing the second and third choruses from Carter's arrangement, plus the coda. So, in terms of the Carter arrangement, Fitzgerald's third and fourth choruses on the *A Classy Pair* recording correspond to her second and third choruses on the *A Perfect Match* recording.

This explains, therefore, why her improvisation in her third and fourth choruses from *A Classy Pair* shares similar passages with her second and third choruses on *A Perfect Match* (see Ex. 5.1). While Fitzgerald's sustained high B♭ and high C in sections 3B/2B do articulate the melodic background, they *also* respond to the brass, which sustain these pitches in mm. 1 and 4 of this section in Carter's arrangement. In the following section (sections $3A_3$ and $2A_3$ of the *A Classy Pair* and *A Perfect Match* recordings, respectively), Fitzgerald abruptly cuts off her phrase in the last two bars of the section on both recordings, as if she did not expect the two-measure piano break indicated in the arrangement. I would also suggest that with the repeated Cs in section $4A_2$ of the *A Classy Pair* recording and

section $3A_2$ of the *A Perfect Match*, Fitzgerald responds to a series of repeated Gs which the band plays at the beginning of that section.

A thorough analysis of the ensemble's influence on Fitzgerald's performances is beyond the scope of this study. Throughout this thesis I have developed a model for analyzing the melodic improvisation in an improvised jazz performance of a standard tune. Applying this model to three of Fitzgerald's performances of "Honeysuckle Rose," I have examined and illustrated the complex web of relationships between Fitzgerald's improvisation and different layers of melodic and harmonic structure within the original tune. This analysis has shed light on the sophistication and coherence of her performances, opening a window into the world of her musical brilliance. As such, I have demonstrated the utility of my analytical model as a lens through which one might examine a jazz performance in detail.

However, as I have touched upon in this chapter, the importance of her interaction with the other musicians performing with her cannot be underestimated. Indeed, all three of the "Honeysuckle Rose" performances that I have discussed – from *Ella and Basie!* (1963), *A Classy Pair* (1979), and *A Perfect Match* (1979) – abound with instances of Fitzgerald responding to other members of the band. To appreciate fully the scope of Ella Fitzgerald's brilliance – the "Ella Mystique" – future analysis must consider the role of the ensemble in the creation of a Fitzgerald improvisation.

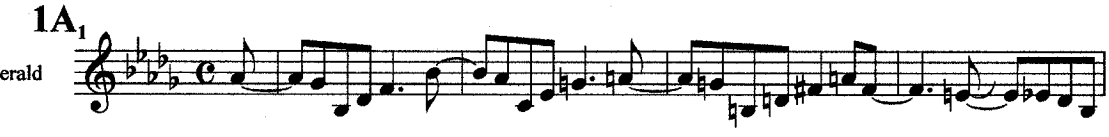
Appendix A – Transcriptions

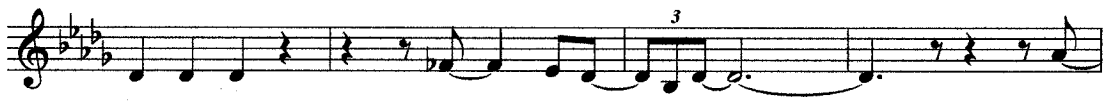
"Honeysuckle Rose" from *Ella and Basie!* (1963)

Transcribed by:
Laura Hawley

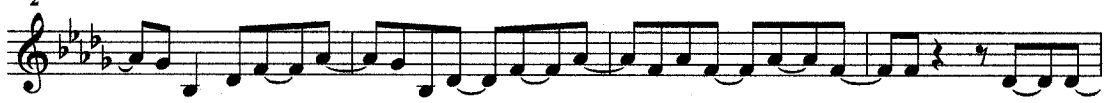
1A$_1$

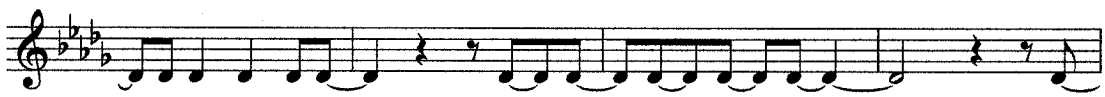
Fitzgerald



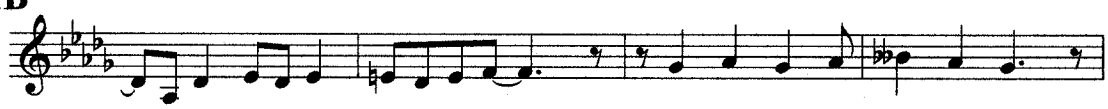


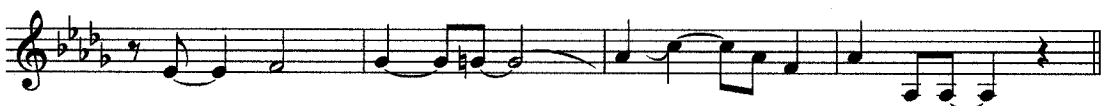
1A$_2$



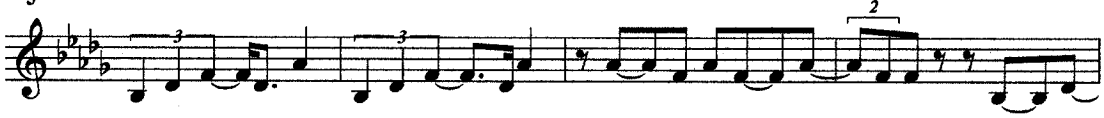


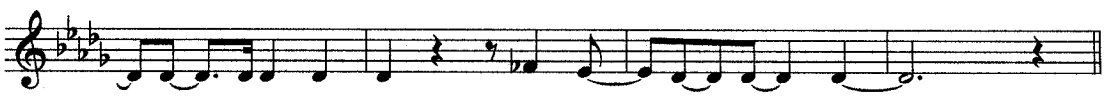
1B



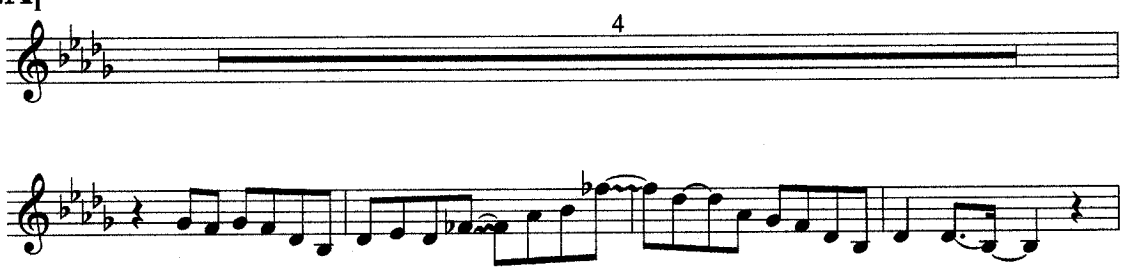


1A$_3$

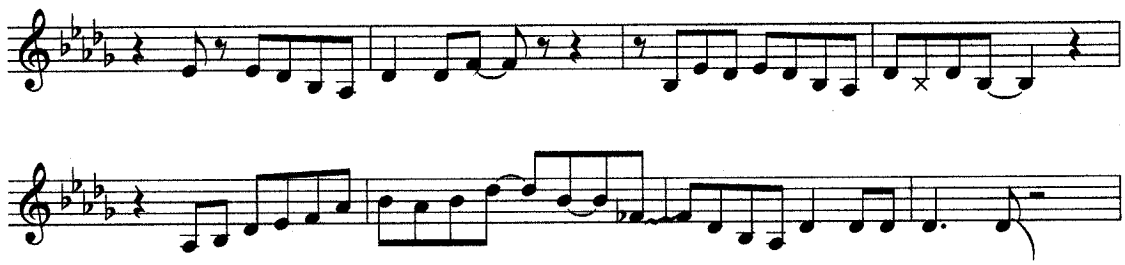




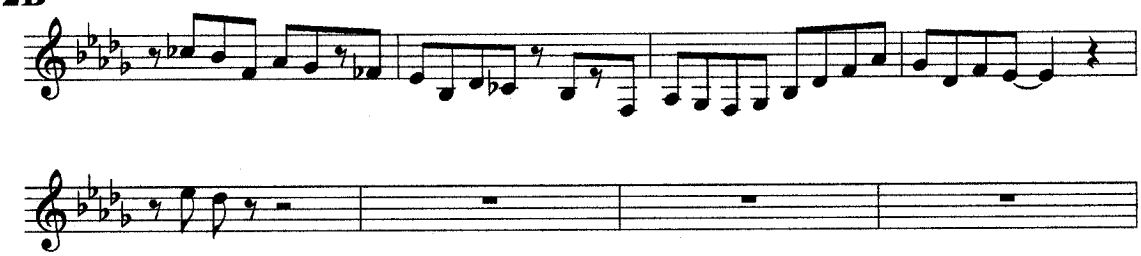
2A$_1$



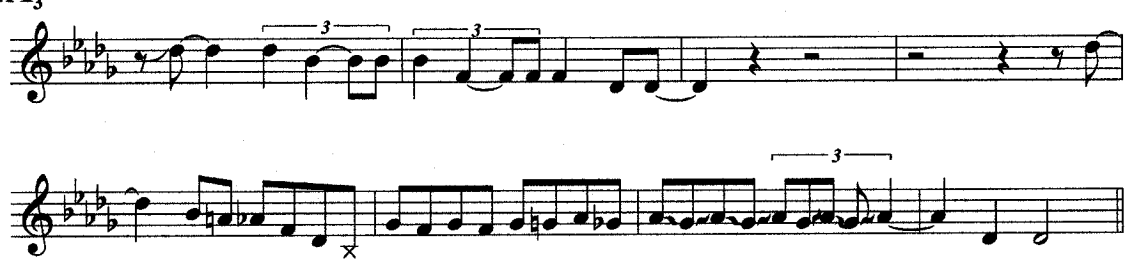
2A$_2$



2B



2A$_3$



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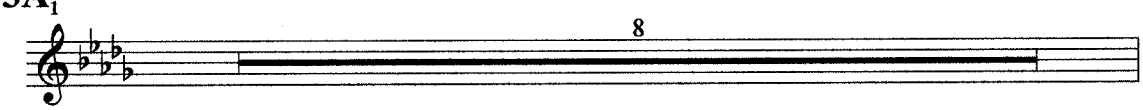
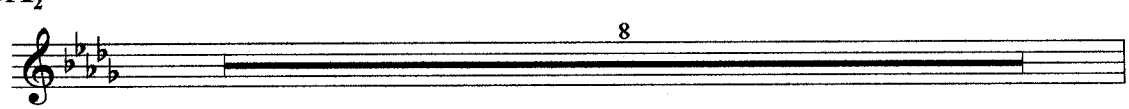
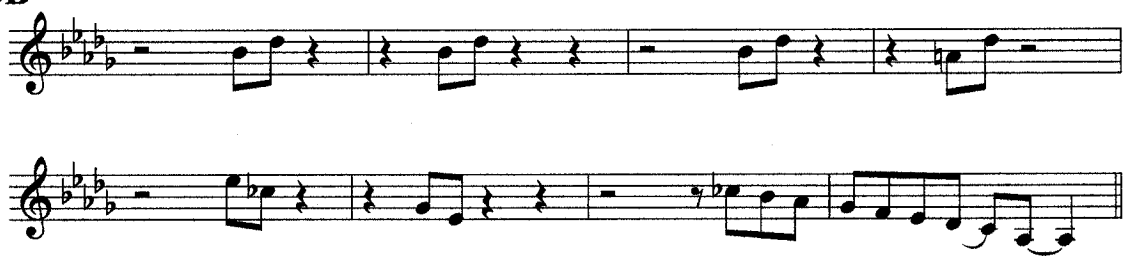


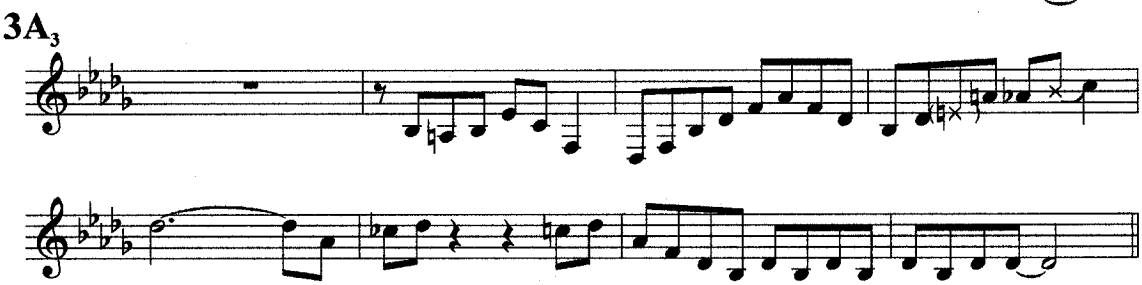
3A$_2$



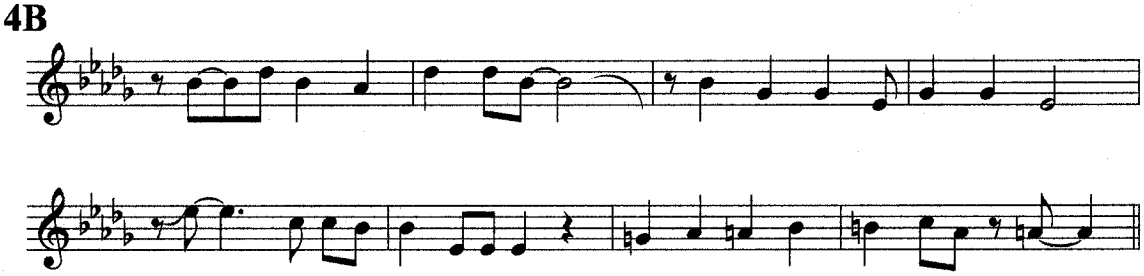
3B



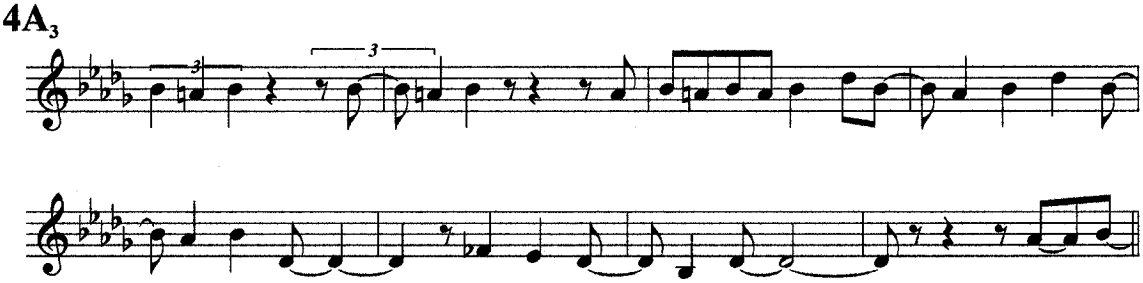
3A$_3$



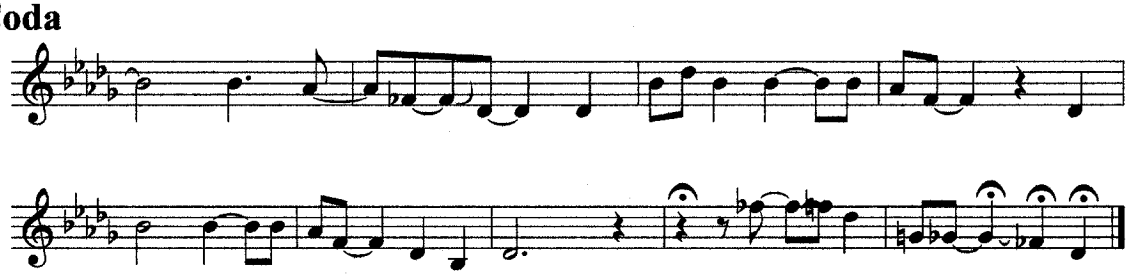
4B



4A$_3$

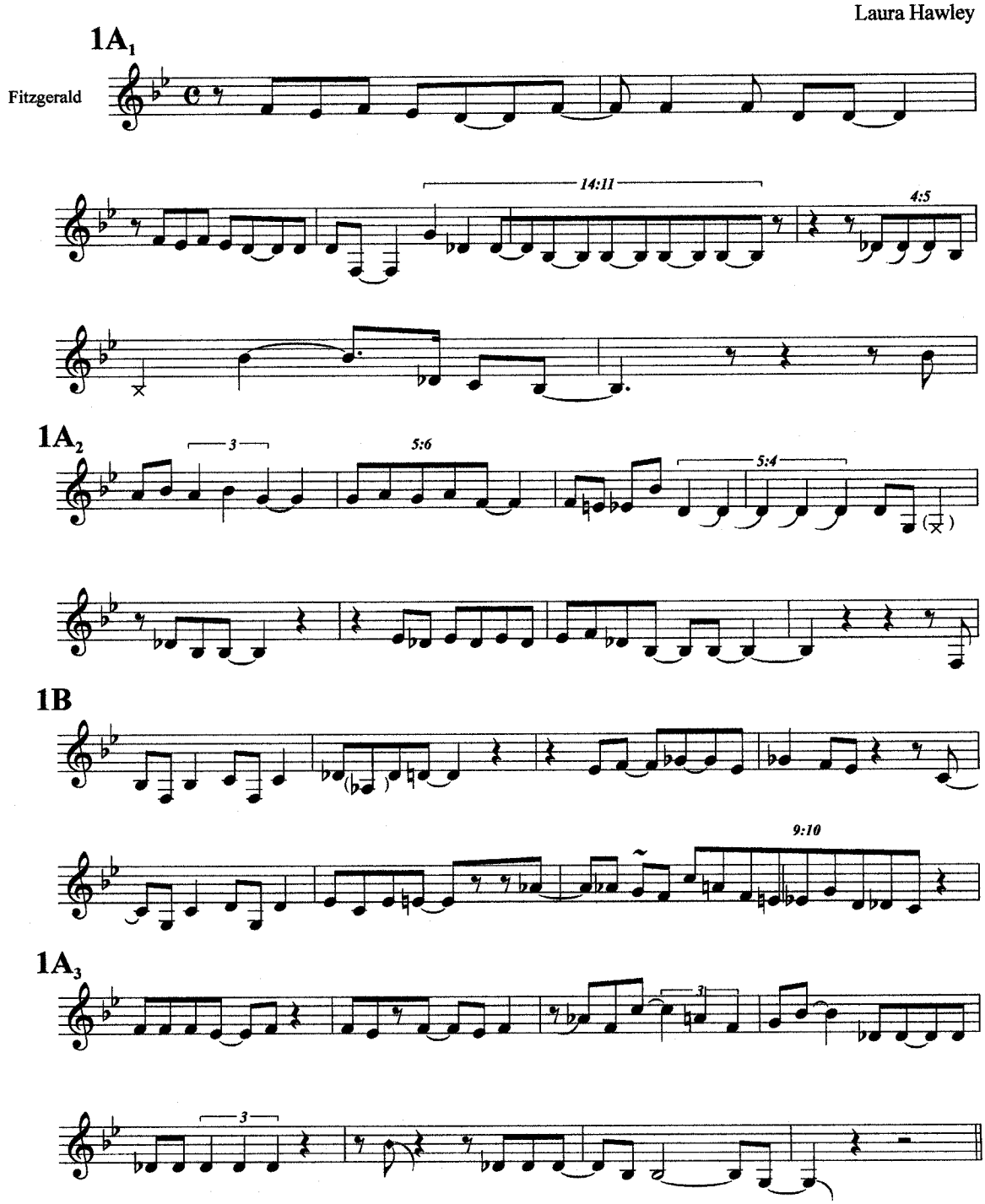


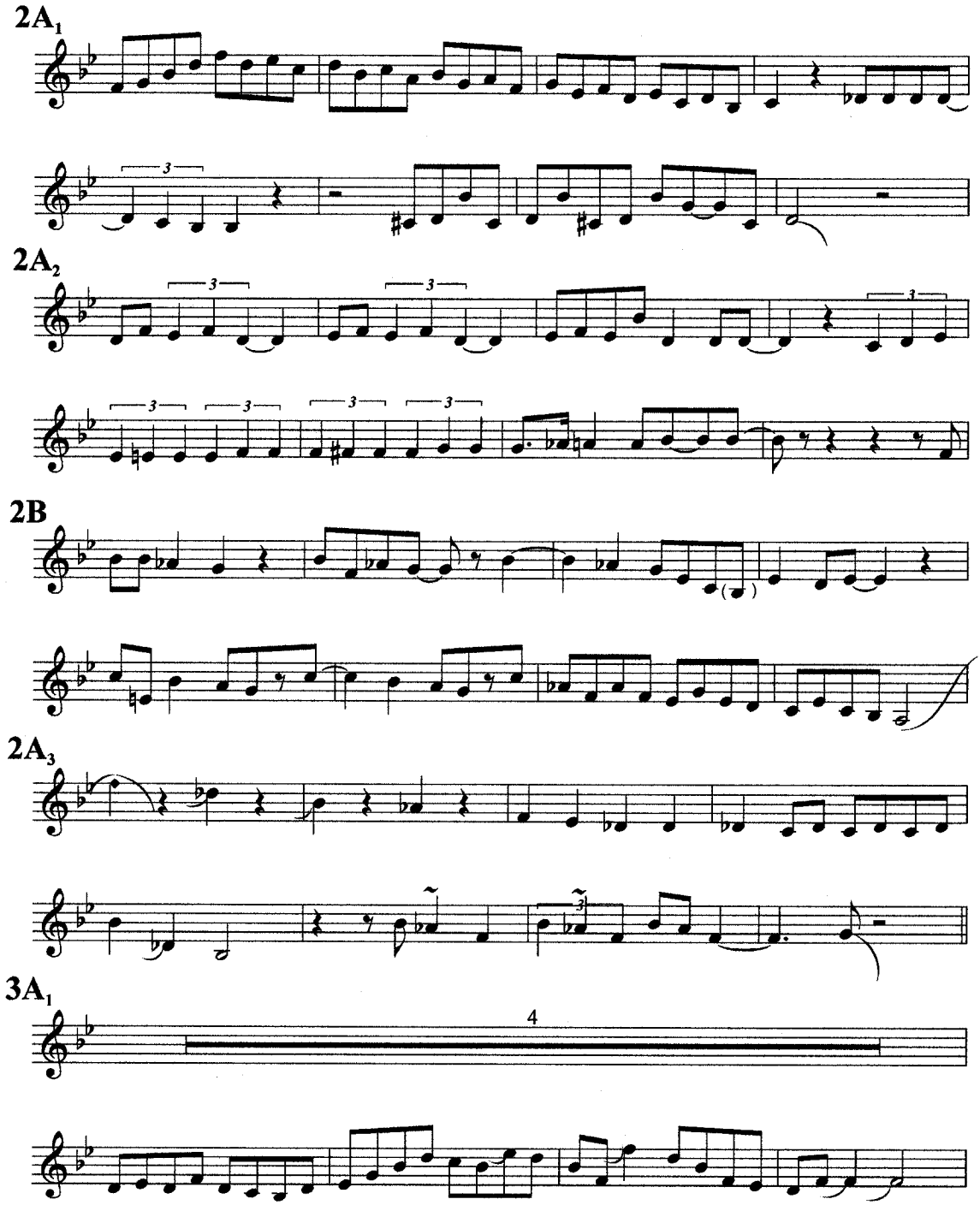
Coda

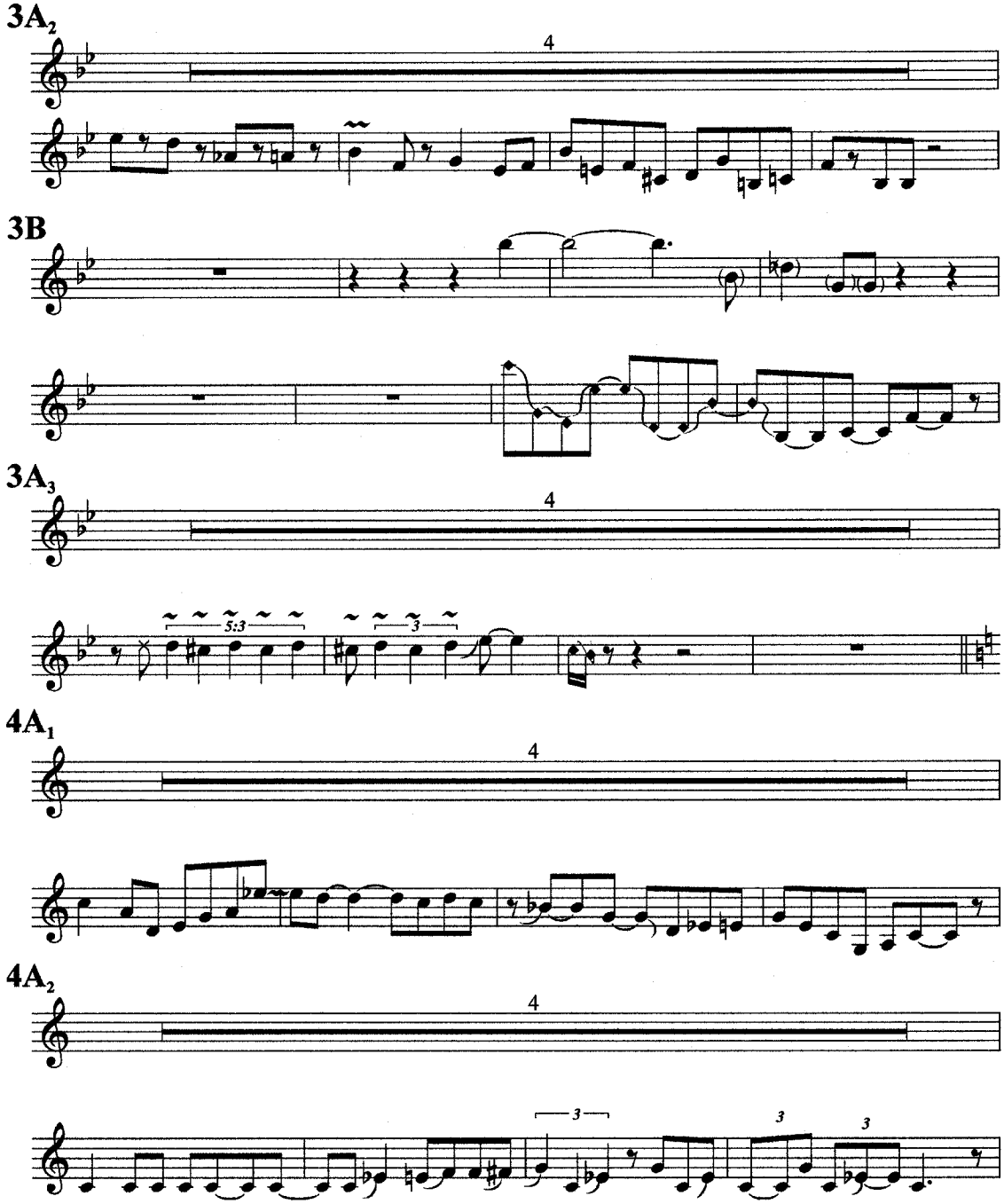


"Honeysuckle Rose" from *A Classy Pair* (1979)

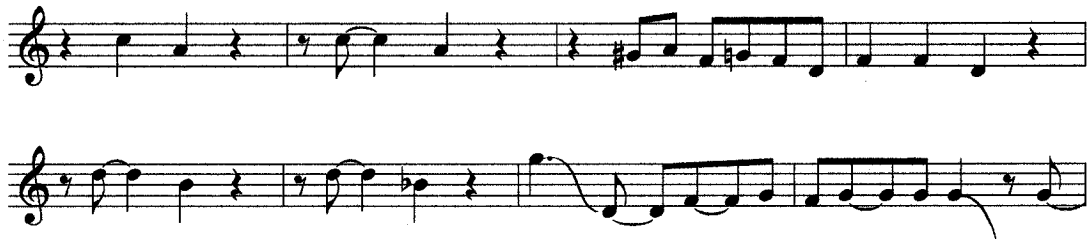
Transcribed by:
Laura Hawley



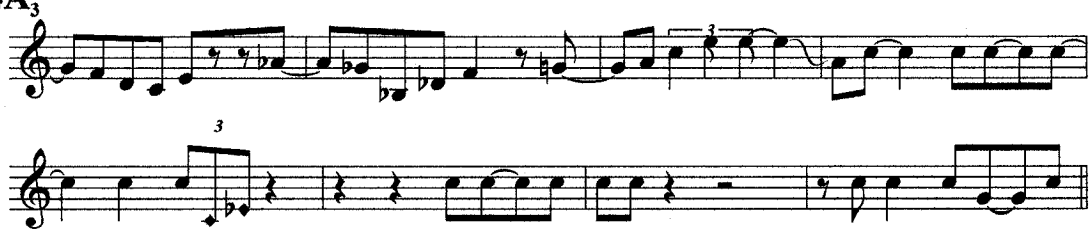

2A1
2A2
2B
2A3
3A1
4


3A2
4
3B
3A3
4
5:3
3
4A1
4
4A2
4
3
3
3

4B



4A$_3$



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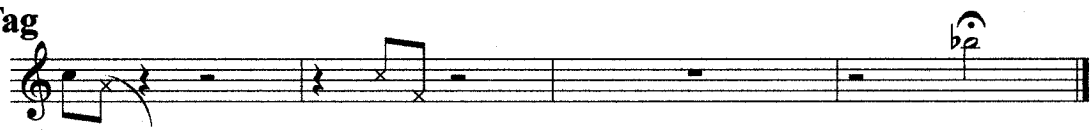
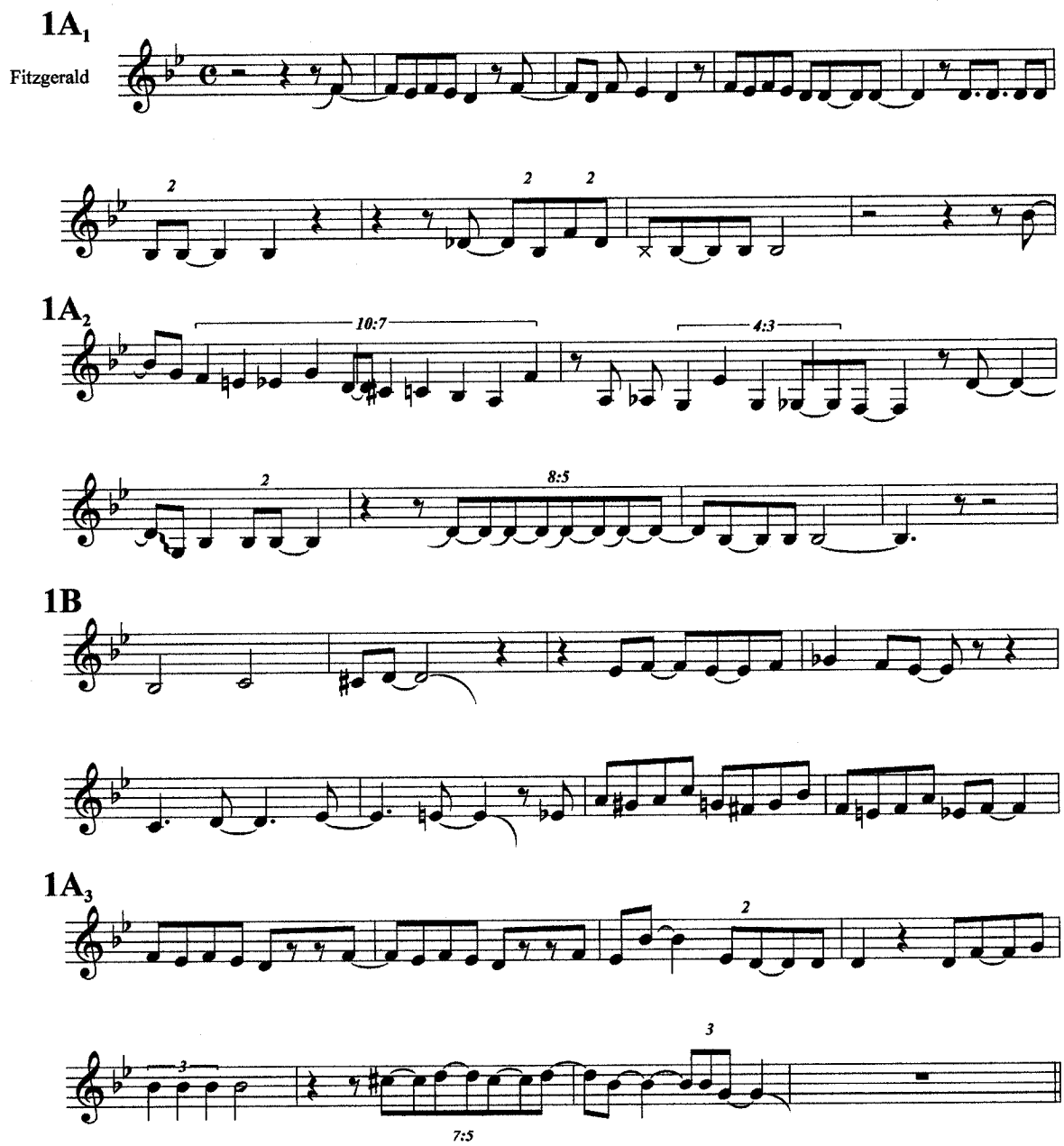
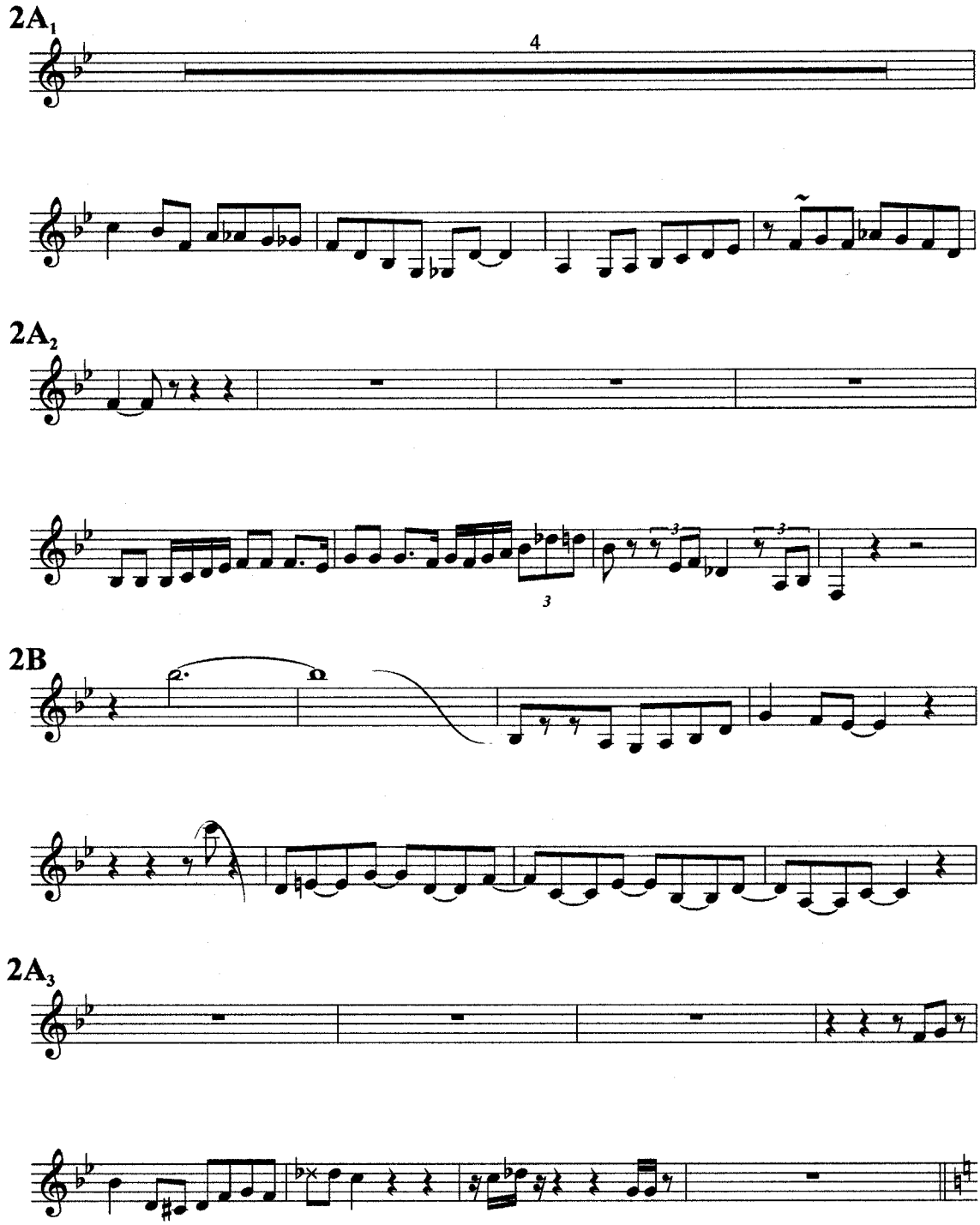
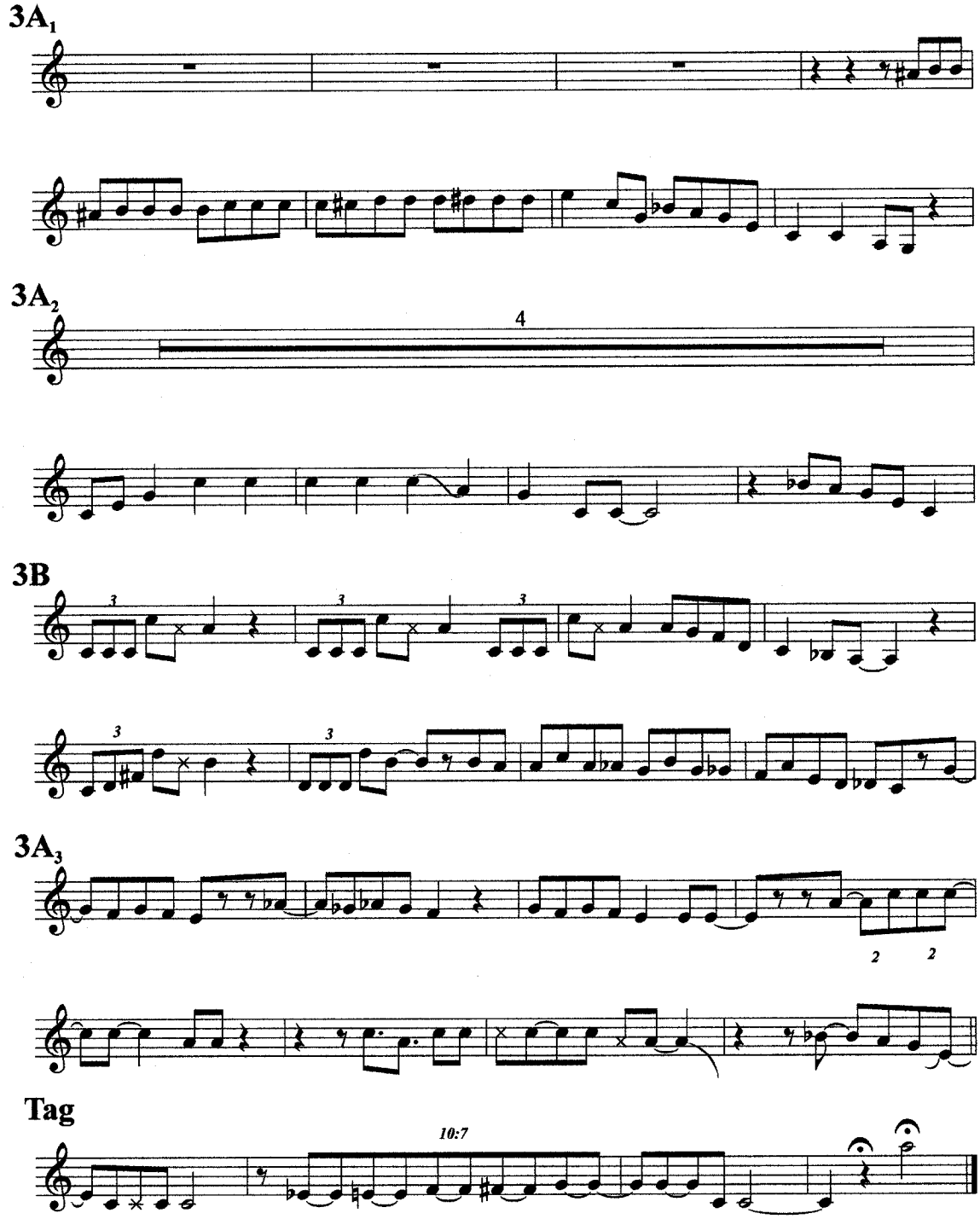


"Honeysuckle Rose" from *A Perfect Match* (1979)

Transcribed by:
Laura Hawley




2A1
4
2A2
3
3
3
2B
2A3


3A1
3A2
4
3B
3A3
Tag
10:7

Appendix B – Notes on the Transcriptions

Album: *Ella and Basie!* (1963)

N/A

Album: *A Classy Pair* (1979)

Section	Measure(s)	Transcription Indicates:	As it sounds on the recording:
$2A_1$	1	F – D eighth notes on beat 3	Fitzgerald does not fully vocalize the F – it sounds as breath with a small 'squeak.' The D is almost flat enough to be a C – possibly because Fitzgerald is regaining her bearings after missing the F.
$2A_1$	7-8	C♯ (last eighth note of m. 7) going to D (half note in m. 8)	Fitzgerald intones these pitches quite low – could possibly be transcribed as C - D♭
2B	3	B♭ - last eighth note in the measure	This pitch is barely audible
2B	5	E♮ on second half of beat 1	Difficult to tell if Fitzgerald sings this note or if it is from someone else (possibly the pianist)
3A2	7-8	B♮ - C at the end of b. 7 to F in b. 8	Approximate intonation

Album: *A Perfect Match* (1979)

Section	Measure(s)	Transcription Indicates:	As it sounds on the recording:
3B	1 and 2	Triplets on C at beginning of m. 1 and beginning and end of m. 2	Difficult to discern the rhythm because of the band and because of the scat syllables Fitzgerald uses here.

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