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#### FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Miami, Florida

## AN ANALYSIS OF FIVE ORIGINAL COMPOSITIONS

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF MUSIC

by

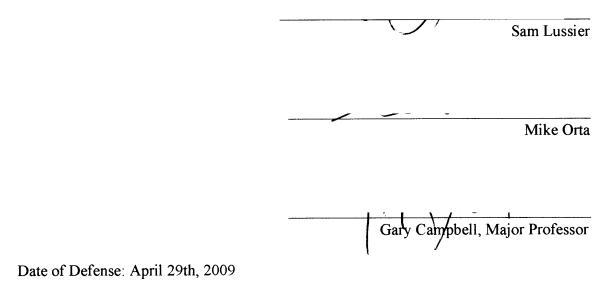
Ashley Mae Baker

2009

To: Acting Dean Brian Schriner College of Architecture and the Arts

This thesis, written by Ashley Mae Baker, and entitled An Analysis of Five Original Compositions, having been approved in respect to style and intellectual content, is referred to you for judgment.

We have read this thesis and recommend that it be approved.



The thesis of Ashley Mae Baker is approved.

Acting Dean Brian Schriner College of Architecture and the Arts

7	Dean George Walker
Univ	ersity Graduate School

Florida International University, 2009

#### ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

#### AN ANALYSIS OF FIVE ORIGINAL COMPOSITIONS

by

Ashley Mae Baker

Florida International University, 2009

Miami, Florida

Professor Gary Campbell, Major Professor

The purpose of this thesis is to analyze in detail five original compositions, each written for the performance of these pieces on March 14, 2009 for a Master's recital. In order to maintain a certain level of musical continuity among these compositions, each was created in such a way as to possess similar musical characteristics of melodic and harmonic structure. These similarities are also reflected within the overall arrangement of each composition and use of instrumentation as well. The following pages will analyze each of these compositions in accordance with several important musical factors. These elements are form and chord analysis, melodic and harmonic content, and meter and rhythm. The author's original scores are included in the appendix.

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#### I. INTRODUCTION

The following paragraphs will provide an in-depth analysis of five original compositions, and will be presented in the following order: *Phineus J. Feline*, *5-13*, *Athena, Persephone*, and *Nichiren*. The first area of each piece to be addressed will be that of basic form analysis, as well as chordal structure. After this the melodic and harmonic material of the composition will be analyzed in detail. In conjunction with this there will also be an analysis of the use of counterpoint within the piece. Following this a detailed analysis of the metric and rhythmic aspects of the piece will be addressed. One will find that even though all five compositions have their own unique characteristics, they all have similar qualities in their construction that allow for a cohesive and purposeful musical concept. It is also important to note that many of these pieces were created as a result of some form of nonmusical inspiration ranging from mythological stories to Buddhist monks. This balance of compositional creativity and theoretical organization will also be made evident in the following analysis.

#### **II. PHINEUS J. FELINE**

This piece is a medium tempoBossa nova, and is written for alto and tenor saxophones and rhythm section. This piece is named for a cat who inspired the inception of the tune. As a result there are several different aspects of the piece that are affected by this inspiration. The form of this piece can be analyzed as a simple AABA. The only slight deviation that can be found from this is in the bridge, which is actually 16 bars instead of the 8 bars contained in each A section. The chord movement of this piece is also fairly simple in its construction. Although the A sections can be loosely analyzed as moving around in the key of C minor, the majority of the chord movement throughout the form of the tune suggests a more modal concept, particularly in the bridge. In this B section of the piece one can detect tonal centers of C, F, and Db, then followed by a dominant chord that helps to establish the return into C minor. The chord movement also differs between the A sections and the bridge because of the number of chords per measure. Each of the A sections contain one chord per measure, while in the bridge the chord only change every two measures, further emphasizing the change in tonality between these sections while also providing a slight change in texture.

The melodic and harmonic content of this piece are also fairly simple in their construction just as the form and chord movement. The melodic material, played by the alto saxophone, stays almost entirely within the diatonic realm, with little use of chromaticism except for in the last bar of the A section. One of the most important elements of this composition's melodic construction is in the use of shaping within the melody, utilizing a few substantial intervallic leaps in the melody line. This effect serves several important purposes for the piece, as it not only adds color and drama to the melodic line, but also transforms the melody into an excellent vehicle for the alto saxophone in its use of the optimal range of the instrument. Figure 2.2 on the following page effectively illustrates this aspect of this melodic construction.

Figure 2.1



The harmonic content for this composition consists of a simple tenor saxophone part that enters the piece during the bridge only. Upon entering during the bridge of the piece, this harmony part serves as a "call and response" to the melody during the first eight bars, reacting to the simple and flowing melody line with its own simple countermelody. In the last half of the bridge the two horns play simultaneously, with the tenor saxophone's countermelody weave in and out of the alto saxophone part.

Though the main purpose of these two parts together is to create more of a counterpoint between the two horns, it is constructed in such as way as to form a few simple harmonies together, mainly in intervals of 3rds and 6ths. The use of counterpoint plays a vital role in this piece as it will in the other four compositions following. This is particularly in respect to the construction of the bass line and how its movement coincides with not only the melody but also with other subsequent parts within the composition. This particular piece contains a complex bass line whose strength in melodic shape and structure allow it to essentially serves as another underlying melody. Figure 2.2 illustrates this use of complex shapes.

Figure 2.2



Although this bass line is only written out for the introduction and the first three bars of each A section, the shape of the line is implied by the bass throughout the piece. The role of the bass in this piece is not only important in its use of counterpoint, but it also helps to establish the continual driving momentum of the piece, particularly in the A sections.

The meter/rhythm elements to this piece provide an important contrast to the more simply constructed melodic and harmonic aspects previously discussed. Rather than using a common time signature throughout the composition, the introduction and the A sections are constructed of a pattern of mixed meters. This pattern starts with a bar a 4/4 which moves to a bar of 3/4 (essentially 7/4 but grouped separately). After these two bars there is another 4/4 bar that is followed by a bar of 5/4.

Although the measure-to-measure metric shifts create a sense of displacement, symmetry is restored at the level of the phrase, since the entire four-bar phrase still contains the 16 beats that would have occur in four measures of 4/4 time. The same metric pattern is continued for throughout the A section. in texture to the A sections, In contrast, the bridge remains in 4/4 time throughout, creating a more relaxed feel for this section of the piece. This metric grouping works together with the moving bass line and the saxophone to create unique phrasing for the melody and to infuse the piece with energy and momentum. Rhythmic hits are also used in the rhythm section parts at key points in the piece, such as the transitions between A sections or between the A section and the bridge.

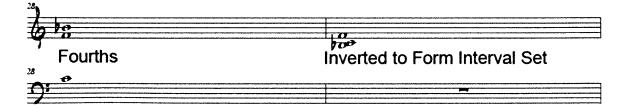
#### III. 5-13

The next piece is 5-13, a composition written for alto and soprano saxophones and rhythm section. This piece features a number of atypical and unconventional elements

within its construction. This piece is essentially written in 3/4 with a swing feel, though there are some deviations from this at times. The form of this piece is quite irregular, with the melody of the chart consisting of 26 measures total, though there is also an extensive introduction as well as ending that can not be considered as part of this form. The 26 bars of the melody can be broken apart into sections A and B, with the A section consisting of the first 11 bars and the B section consisting of 15. The form of the solo section differs greatly from this 26 bar form. It is constructed of three open repeated groups, each 8 measures long. This use of an unusual form further emphasizes the more unique aspects of the piece, particularly the overall pacing and phrasing of the piece.

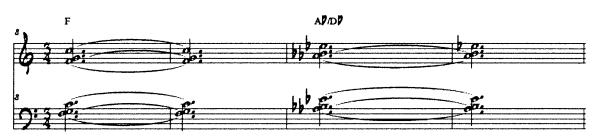
Despite the irregularity in the piece's form, this is not nearly as unconventional as the construction of its chord progression. In this particular composition most of the chords are constructed of interval sets, which provided the initial inspiration for the creation of this piece. These interval sets can simply be viewed as three notes with an interval of a fourth between each that have been inverted into a smaller grouping. Figure 3.1 depicts this transformation from a group of fourths to a single interval set.





The very nature of these interval sets lends itself to a certain amount of tonal ambiguity, therefore allowing a great deal of freedom in choice when constructed melodic and harmonic material in the piece. These interval sets are used throughout the composition in such a way as too either state a particular tonality explicitly or to leave the option for different tonal centers to emerge. The use of this concept is apparent especially in the first four bars of the solo section. Notice in the example from the piece below how the interval sets and bass notes suggest a basic tonality, yet there is still freedom for the soloist to project these sounds as major, minor, or even dominant chords according to their note choices. Figure 3.2 illustrates this use of slightly ambiguous chords.

Figure 3.2



The melodic and harmonic content of this piece are both more simplistic in construction than they at first appear to be. The melody has a very angular shape and utilizes several larger intervallic leaps just as the previous tune. The main difference though lies in its use of chromatic upper and lower neighboring tones to obscure the otherwise simple diatonic melody. This tactic is not only used in the flute melody line, but even before that in the bass part at the beginning of the piece. The bass line hints at the melody that will be stated later in the tune, using the same chromatic tones to obscure the tonality.

The melody is very short, lasting for only four measures before the harmony part enters, which is essentially another melody that serves as a "call and response" with the initial melodic statement. The harmony contains no chromatic tones, staying within the diatonic realm of each tonal center. It should also be noted that unlike the previous pieces, there is little use of counterpoint between the horn parts and the bass, with the exception of the bass movement between the C and F Lydian tonal centers.

The use of meter and various rhythmic elements also play an important part in the sound of this composition. Although the time signature for this piece is primarily 3/4, there is some movement back and forth between 3 and 4 in the beginning of the A and B sections of the melody as well as in the introductory material. These changes between 3/4 and 4/4 also coincide with rhythmic elements that cause a slight pause in the second bar of the melody, creating a slightly uneven disrupting feeling to the previous 3/4 groove that had been established. The use of quarter note triplets here in this second bar emphasizes this change.

Figure 3.3



Also much like the previous pieces discussed, hits are played by the rhythmic sections in pivotal moments in the form in order to establish transitions from one section to another, particularly at the end of the introduction into the A section, and also at the end of the B section going into the solos.

#### IV. ATHENA

The next piece in this group of compositions is *Athena*. This composition is unique compared to the other four pieces in its use of three horns in addition to a rhythm section. This piece was inspired by the mythological goddess of wisdom. This influence can be heard in the intricacies within the horn lines weaving in and out of each other, as well as the bass line that suggests a certain amount of cleverness. It also features a longer form than the other works to be performed. The form of this piece can be considered slightly irregular. It can be most accurately analyzed as ABAC with and added "D" section. This form is unique in its length and its use of the extra D section as interlude material that enables the transition into the next chorus of the tune. One must also note that this extra D is not played at the end of every chorus. It is used before and after the solo section of the piece and is omitted from the form in between each soloist.

In regards to the chord structure of this composition, it must be analyzed a more modal in nature just as with *Phineus J. Feline*. This modal quality to the piece directly correlates to one the more important distinctions regarding the chordal structure of the piece, specifically the intentional omission of dominant chords. Instead of using dominant chords to make typical transitions from one chord to the next, other methods were used to achieve a similar desired affect. Some examples of this include the use of two Maj7#11 chords that set up the return to the Ebsus in the second A section, or the use of movement between thirds during much of the chord progression. The foundation for the chord progression though lies between the initial movement between two chords, Ebsus and Esus. Also like *Phineus*, these two chords provide not only the base upon which the piece melodically and harmonically stems out from, but also the introductory material for the tune. The movement of the chord progression also plays an important role in the phrasing and spacing of the tune, chord changes occurring every two bars during the A sections and then moving to one per bar for the B and C sections (with the exception of the last four bars).

Much like several of the other compositions among this group, the melodic structure of *Athena* is also more simplistic in nature, with the biggest difference in this piece being the extensive use of harmony parts. The melodic material for all three of the horn parts is constructed similarly, with the used of a number of wide intervallic leaps within the melody and subsequent harmony lines. The use of certain melodic shapes is also carefully utilized and manipulated in different ways in order to create a well-developed and organized structure among each of the horn parts. Though the alto saxophone part contains the melody for most of the piece, there are moments within the piece where the horn parts weave in and out of each other, trading the melody back and forth between one another. It is also important to note that while there are some simple harmonies created by these parts working together (mostly 3rds and 6ths), these parts are too be analyzed more so as counterpoint, as they each have their own strong melodic and rhythmic shapes. The use of this counterpoint comes to a climax at the second A of the chart after the solo section,

where all three horns are playing independent lines that each have their own melodic strengths. As with the previous two pieces, counterpoint also plays an important role not just in its use within the three horn parts but also with the use of a written bass line as well. This bass line is used as the introduction of the tune as with *Phineus J. Feline*, and continues to be an important moving element throughout the piece. This bass line is line is line is line is figure 4.1.



The use of meter and rhythm in this composition is more simplistic, with the piece remaining in medium up tempo 4/4 time. This piece also features extensive use of quarter note triplets throughout the horn parts, though particularly in the alto melody line. Also like the pieces discussed before, this is to illustrate contrast between the flowing melody and the energy and momentum of the rhythm section. There are also important rhythm section hits in transitional part of the tune that build energy into each new section of the form, particularly from the end of the B section into the second A as well as the C section into D. The following Figure shows some of these hits that can be found throughout the piece.





V. PERSEPHONE

*Persephone* is written for soprano saxophone and rhythm section. This piece features many of the same elements as the previous three works, thus preserving the musical cohesiveness between each of the compositions. This piece is inspired by the mythological story that carries the same name: each part within the piece is a musical representation of a character in this myth. This representation is evident in the contrast between the different elements molded together. For example, the melody represents the somber voice of the young girl Persephone, while the smooth, repetitive bass line represents the river Styx in the underworld.

The form of the piece is a simple twenty 24 bar blues in F minor. The chord structure is fairly standard for a minor blues with a few exceptions. First, the minor I and IV chords each have an added flat-6 to the chord. This use of the Aeolian mode allows for a much darker coloring to the progression. Specific clustered voicings are also used not only to emphasize the darker sound of the flatted sixth, but also to add a sense of agitation to each chord. The following is an example of these more dissonant chord voicings:

11



Figure 5.1

The turn around in the last eight bars of the piece utilizes a series of chords moving up chromatically to the finale V chord back into F minor. These are: A maj7#5, Bbsus, B13#11, and C7alt.

As in *Phineus J. Feline*, the melodic and harmonic content of *Persephone* is also relatively straightforward in its construction. The melodic material for this piece remains diatonic to the chord progression throughout the piece, as well any harmonic material. The melody is constructed almost entirely of wide intervallic leaps, which contrast with the more dissonant clustered chords played by the piano. The overall effect of the melody is that of a simple yet angular melodic line that "floats" over the rhythm section. This melody is also constructed so as to comfortably fit the range of both the soprano saxophone and the guitar comfortably; the soprano plays the melody in the first chorus, while the guitar enters with the melody in the second chorus.

The harmony part is played on the soprano sax and accompanies the guitar melody in this straight-eighth portion of the piece. It is constructed similarly to the melody of the tune, and serves as a simple, subsequent melody and counterpoint to the guitar voice. As in the previous pieces, *Persephone* also utilizes counterpoint in its bass line to create a particular layering of voices and produce a certain amount of perpetual drive and momentum. Here an undulating repeated bass line is used to create this momentum, and it continues through the form with the exception of the chromatic moving chords in the last eight bars.

Figure 5.2



The use of rhythmic and metric elements in this piece is more limited than the previous composition. The straight-eighth Latin section of the piece is in 3/4 time, but changes to a swing feel upon its transition into up-tempo swing for the solo section. The rhythmic construction of melodic and harmonic material is also relatively simple. Quarternote triplets are used abundantly to further emphasize the flowing texture of the melody and well as the harmony line. There are also a few rhythm section hits in the last eight bars of the form that work cohesively with the chromatic chord movement to help shape this portion of the chorus into the climactic section of the form.

#### VI. NICHIREN

The final piece in this group of compositions is *Nichiren*. This piece features many of the same elements utilized in the previous four works, with a particular emphasis placed on the use of odd meters and contrapuntal writing. This composition is for soprano and tenor saxophones and rhythm section, but serves as a feature for the soprano saxophone.

The inspiration for this piece comes from an interest in Buddhism, particularly the Buddhist Monk whose name is used for the title. This inspiration carries a significant influence over almost ever aspect of the piece, from the shape of the melody to the harmonic structure.

The form of this piece is 16 bars, and can be analyzed as an ABC form with an added four bar extension that leads into the next chorus. Much like the pieces previously discussed, the chord progression for *Nichiren* is essentially modal, with the exception of a ii-V-I progression in the C section of the form. The basic driving component of the chord progression in this piece is the movement between Gmin11 and Amin11, which is not only found in the first four bars of the tune, but is also used for introductory material and for the four bar extension at the end of each chorus. The chord qualities in the piece are almost predominantly minor, with a few more colorful chords utilized in key locations in the piece including a Dmaj7#5 at the end of the B section.

The melodic and harmonic material for this composition once again share many structural similarities with the pieces previously mentioned. Melody and subsequent harmony parts both remain within the diatonic realm. The melodic material is also more angular than linear, utilizing many wide intervallic leaps throughout the melody as well as the harmony parts played by the tenor saxophone and guitar. The soprano saxophone carries most of the melody throughout the piece, though it is at times doubled an octave lower by the tenor saxophone. The guitar has an important repetitive line that starts in the introduction and continues through much of the piece. This line serves the purpose of establishing one of several layers of melodic material that blend together throughout the composition.

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Figure 6.1



The guitar also plays several important countermelody lines along with the soprano, with the tenor occasionally breaking away from the melody line to play together with the guitar. Much like in the previous composition *Athena*, there are also sections of the melody where the three instruments weave in and out of each other "trading" the melody back and forth between each other while doing so. This use of counterpoint in the horn and guitar parts is further utilized in the bass part, playing a complex yet melodic line that doesn't just simply add another color to the layers of sound predominant through much of the tune, but helps establish the tone for the entire piece.

The meter and rhythmic material for this piece add an entirely new layer of complexity to the composition. It is in 7/4, and remains in this time signature for the entire piece, including the solo section. The use of this meter is vital for several elements of this piece, especially in the unique phrasing it creates for every individual part and melodic line. The feeling created by this shifting of beats and phrases is one of asymmetry, yet there undulating repetition of the bass and guitar parts allow the overall feeling of the piece to still be flowing and even, giving the impression of a long 14 beat phrase that carries over two bars rather than just one.

The rhythmic layout of the piece is also very specific to the overall musical effect. Since there are many layers coinciding throughout the piece, each line must have a rhythmic purpose so as not to impede upon another's importance and effect the blending of each part. Here is a specific example of how the piano and bass parts work together because of the rhythm notated for the piano:





#### VII. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it is important to note that the use of many various methods and musical elements went into the creation of these five original compositions. Through this discovery, one must recognize the importance in balance when both creating and performing music for any instrumentation and in any genre. While having the ability to accurately assess the musical aspects of a composition from a theoretical viewpoint is key, it is also imperative to the overall musical integrity of the piece to be able to recognize the more abstract concepts that reveal deeper layers of meaning within each composition. Each of these pieces share a number of fundamental similarities from an analytical perspective, and through this realization it is evident that the emotional and spiritual elements that influenced these works further emphasize this unity while simultaneously providing each with its own unique characteristics.

**APPENDIX A: THE FIVE COMPOSITIONS** 

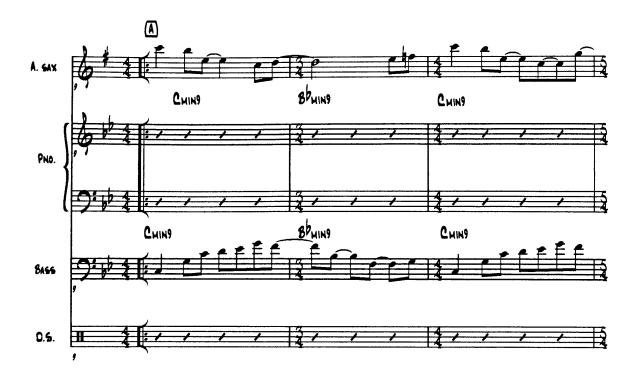
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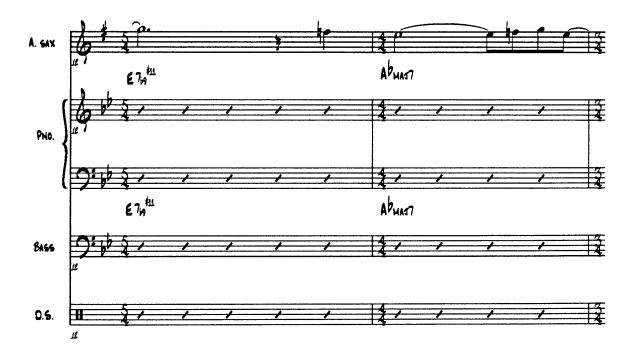
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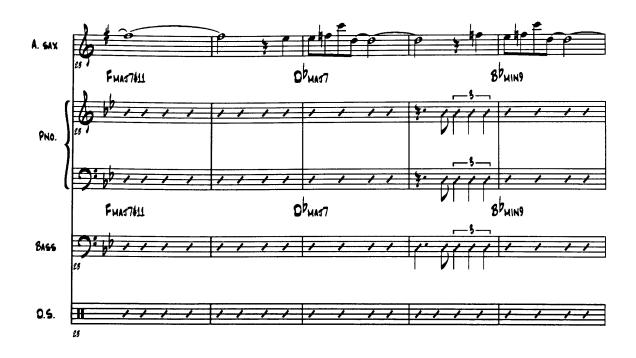










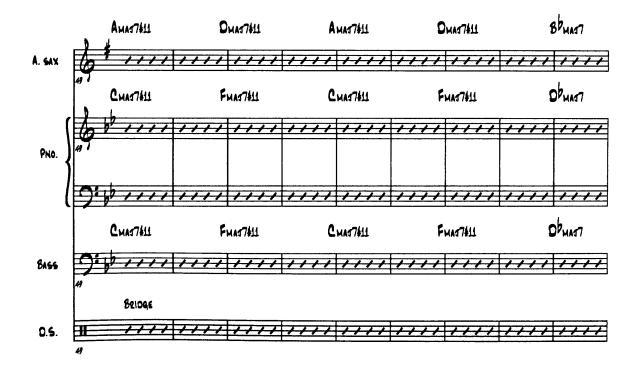


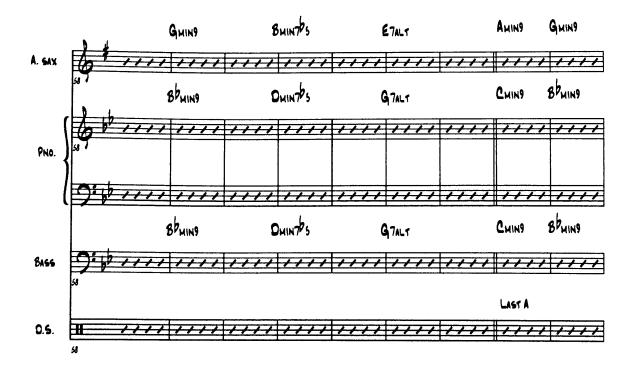


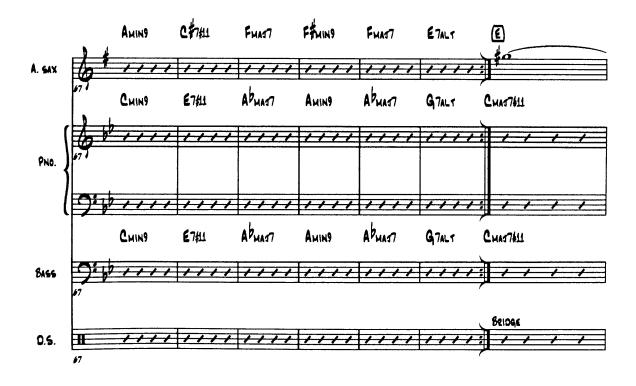


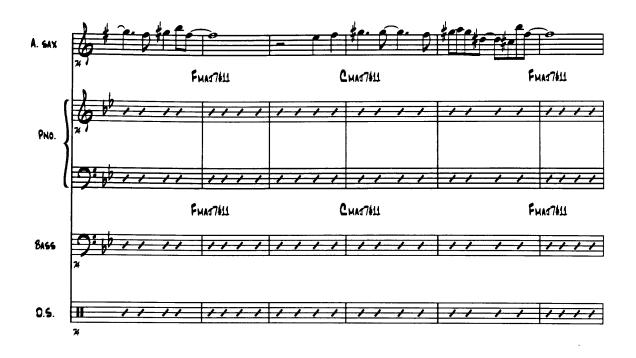


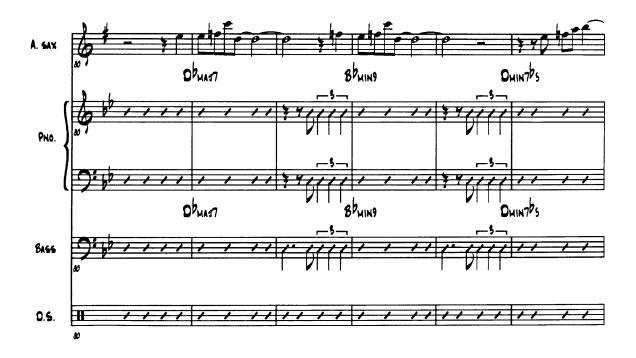
















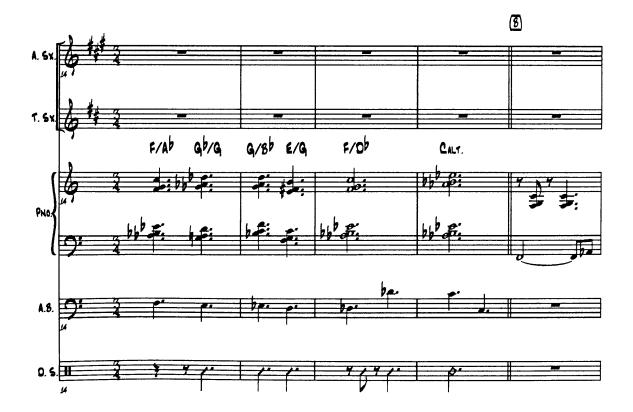




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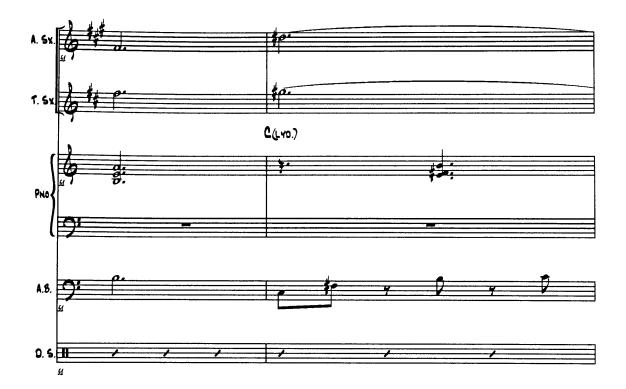




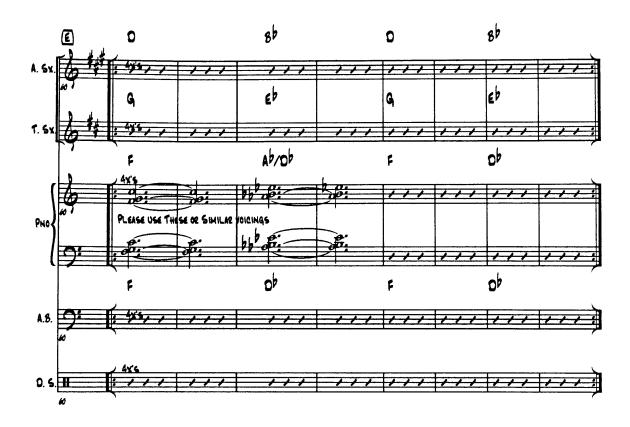


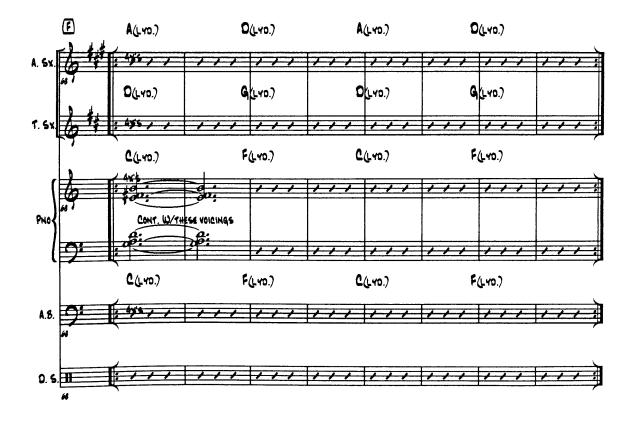


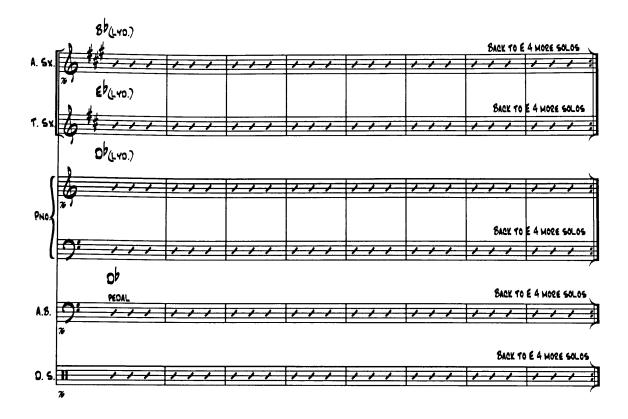


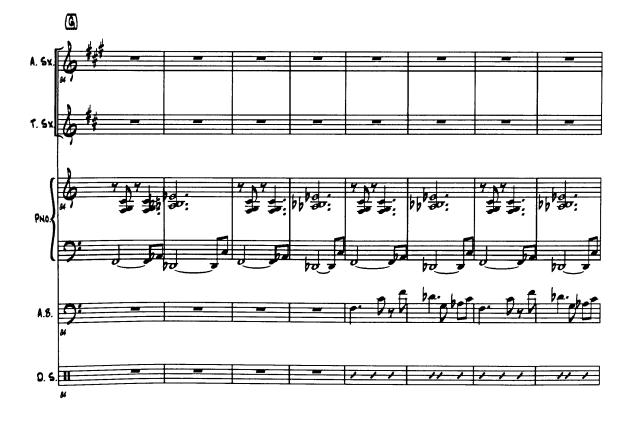












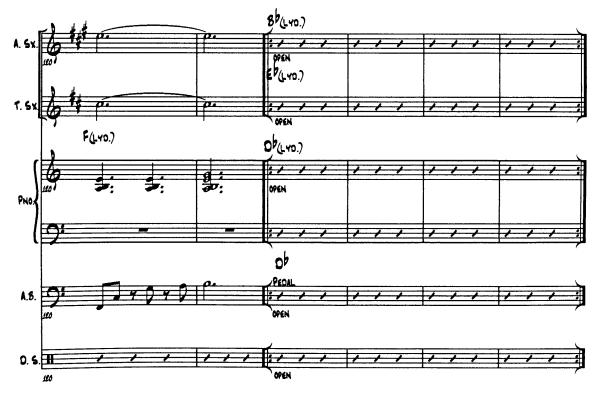










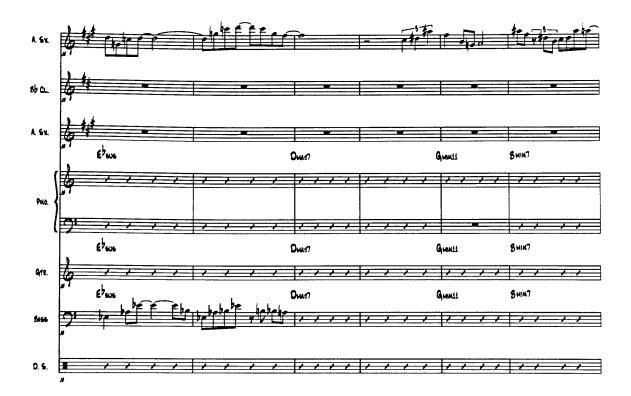


## ATHENA

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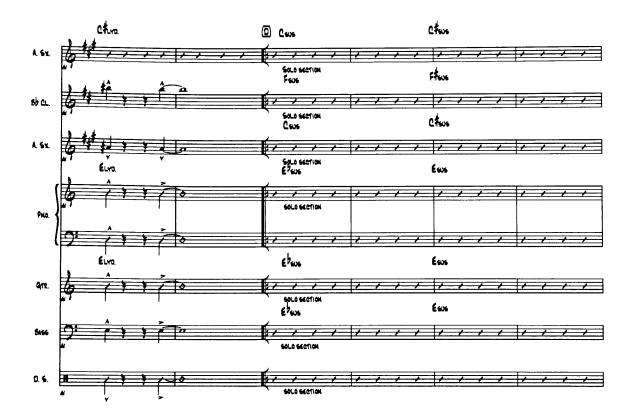


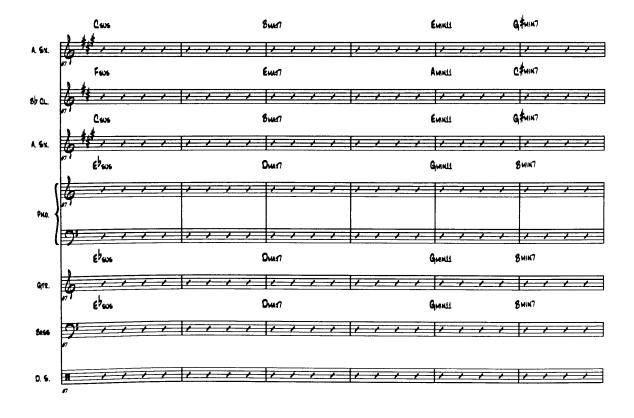


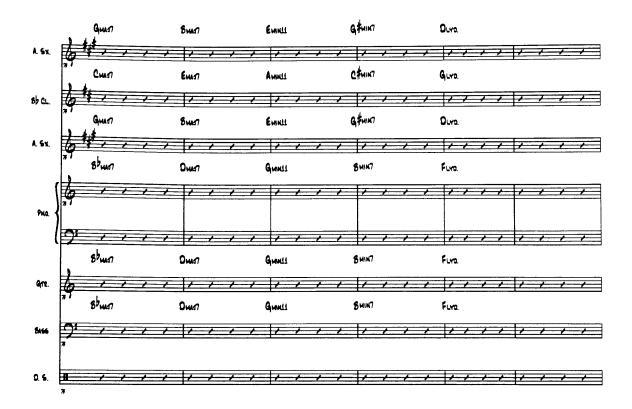


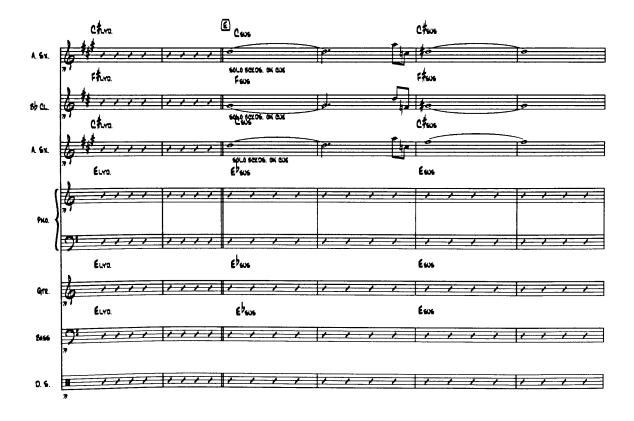
















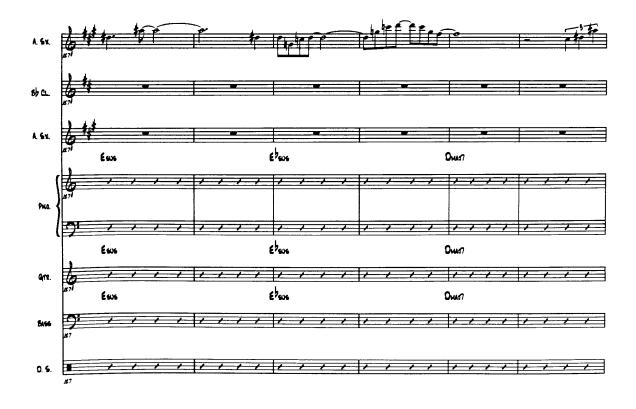










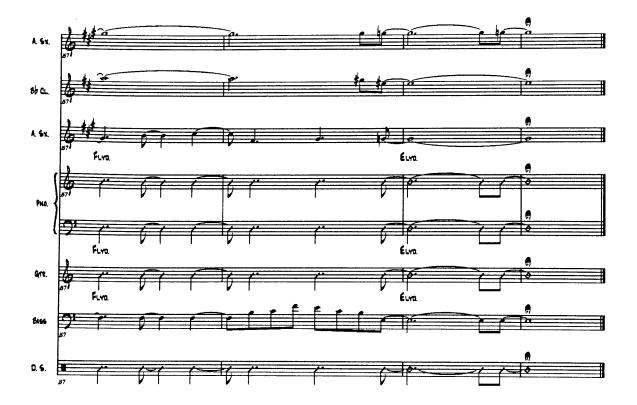










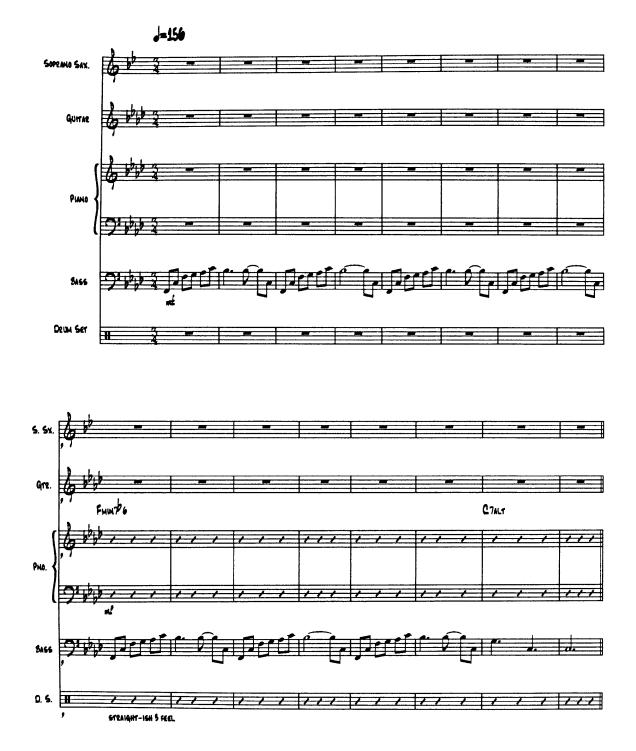


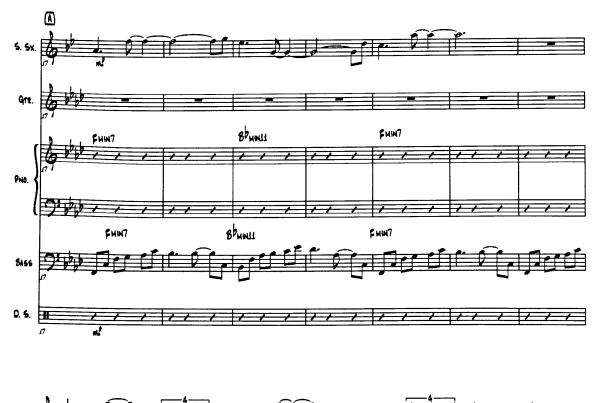
## PERSEPHONE

SCORE

ASHLEY BAKER

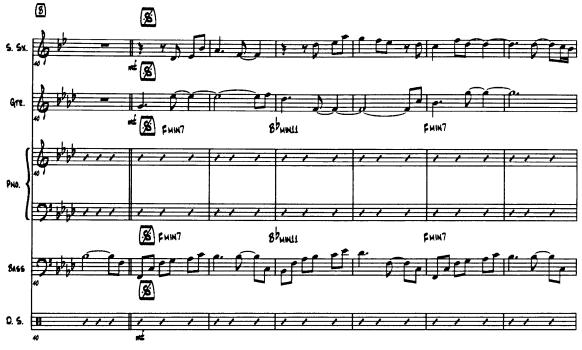






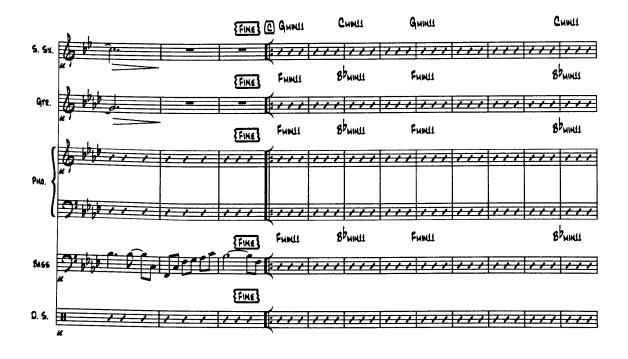


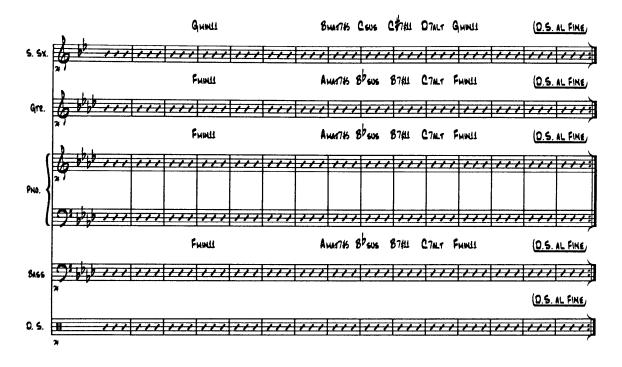














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