

JAZZ PIANO FOR DANCERS & LISTENERS

The Bill Jackman Trio – Volume 1 of 6

1. Triste (Latin, 9:58) by Antonio Carlos Jobim*
2. How About You? (swing, 7:53) by Burton Lane
3. More Than You Know (ballad, 10:22) by Vincent Youmans
4. You Are the Sunshine of My Life (Latin, 7:17) by Stevie Wonder
5. You Stepped Out of a Dream (swing, 8:58) by Nacio Herb Brown
6. Why Try to Change Me Now? (ballad, 10:07) by Cy Coleman and Joseph A. McCarthy
7. Watch What Happens (Latin, 10:13) by Michel Le Grand
8. Here's That Rainy Day (ballad, 8:42) by James Van Heusen

Total Playing Time: 73 minutes, 31 seconds

* Only the composer(s) of the music are cited.

About the Tunes

1. Triste (Latin, 9:58) by Antonio Carlos Jobim (1967)

Although not nearly as well known as other Jobim classics such as “Desafinado,” “Wave,” “Meditation,” and “The Girl From Ipanema,” “Triste” (which means “sad” in Portuguese and Spanish) is one of his most harmonically rich compositions. Like other Jobim compositions and unlike much popular music, “Triste” has a long and intricate melody line. “Triste” first appeared on the Jobim album *Wave*, which had arrangements by Claus Ogerman.

Most jazz renditions of “Triste” are done at a fairly fast Latin tempo, e.g., at a samba tempo. In contrast, Bill’s Trio does this tune at a soulful cha-cha-cha tempo, replete with bluesy interludes. “Triste” starts on a major chord, but ends on a minor chord, which the Trio uses as an embarkation point for funky blues journeys between choruses. On the last blues interlude, Bill is playing with full “two-fisted” Red Garland type “block chords” and stays with them on his last chorus. Then bassist Terry Hilliard takes over, exploring “Triste”’s rich harmonic structure while supported by “simpatico” accompaniment by Bill and drummer Ron Marabuto.

2. How About You? (swing, 7:53) by Burton Lane (1941)

This classic by Burton Lane was introduced by Judy Garland and Mickey Rooney in the film *Babes On Broadway*. Although one of the outstanding composers of classic American popular music from the 1930s on into the 1960s, Lane remains almost unknown to the general public. Other classics by Burton Lane include: “Everything I Have Is Yours” for the 1933 film *Dancing Lady*, “Too Late Now” for the 1951 film *Royal Wedding*, “How Are Things in Glocca Mora” and “Old Devil Moon” for the 1947 Broadway musical *Finian’s Rainbow*, and “On a Clear Day (You Can See Forever)” for the 1965 Broadway musical and subsequent film of the same name.

The Trio takes this tune at a medium swing tempo, perfect for those who like to swing dance to rhythm and blues tempos. Fittingly, Bill and Lupita selected this tune for one of the six on their dance video entitled *Dancing to Jazz*. Bill's jazz treatment of the tune covers the gamut of jazz piano styles from single-note, right-hand lines, to playing in octaves a la Wes Montgomery, to "block chord" styles a la George Shearing and Red Garland. Then bassist Terry has his turn, solidly supported by Bill and Ron. On the first half of his solo, Bill is accompanying in the rich lower-middle region of the piano; then on the last 16 bars, he shifts to the upper region, lending different colors to Terry's swinging solo.

3. More Than You Know (ballad, 10:22) by Vincent Youmans (1929)

A number of the tunes the Trio recorded for this 6-CD series were composed in the 1930s and 1940s, a very fertile period for classic American popular music. However, this tune by Vincent Youmans predates this period; it was introduced in the 1929 musical *Great Day* and is the oldest tune Bill's Trio recorded. Youmans' tunes appeared in numerous musicals in the 1920s such as: "I Know That You Know" (1926) for *Oh Please* and "Sometimes I'm Happy" (1927) for *Hit the Deck*. Youman is probably best known for composing "Tea for Two" (1924) for *No, No, Nanette*, the biggest musical comedy success of the 1920s in both Europe and the USA.

Enduring Youmans tunes from the 1930s include "Carioca," which was danced to by Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers in the 1933 film *Flying Down to Rio*. Youmans was forced to retire in 1934 due to tuberculosis after a professional career of only 13 years.

Often ballads are done at such a slow tempo that all dancers can do is just stand there on the dance floor and hold each other. In contrast, Bill's Trio takes this tune at a tempo dancers can move to and do turns to. Bill and Lupita love to dance to this tune and selected it for one of the six on their dance video *Dancing to Jazz*. On the first jazz chorus, Bill sculpts lean jazz melodies, tastefully using space. On the next chorus, the jazz lines get fuller as Bill works in the "double-time" mode, i.e., using 16th notes. Then, to create contrast from the single-line melody mode, Bill turns to "block chords," first tightly voiced in the middle of the piano and then opened up full-piano style to occupy much of the keyboard.

4. You Are the Sunshine of My Life (Latin, 7:17) by Stevie Wonder (1972)

When selecting the tunes for this series of CDs, Bill researched all eras of classic American popular music, particularly from the mid-1920s on. One of the most important composers since the 1960s has been Stevie Wonder, and Bill's Trio included two of Stevie's tunes in this series. "You Are the Sunshine of My Life" shows that while Stevie incorporates traditional musical forms, he is not bound by them. On the traditional side, this is a 32-bar tune with an opening 8-bar section that repeats once. Then breaking with tradition, the last 16 bars have no repeating sections.

Although "You Are the Sunshine of My Life" is sometimes done as a swing tune, Bill felt that this tune wants to be done Latin, somewhat like Stevie's original version; the Trio

does it as a very danceable cha-cha-cha. Although the tune was written at the height of the counter-cultural period (the early 1970s), its harmonic structure is orderly and diatonic (i.e., major scale harmony), and the Trio respects this. Bassist Terry, who really likes this tune, takes an inspired solo, with solid dance-oriented accompaniment by Bill and Ron.

5. You Stepped Out of a Dream (swing, 8:58) by Nacio Herb Brown (1940)

Bill was first exposed to Nacio Herb Brown's songs as a child hearing his mother play the novelty tune "Doll Dance" (1926) on their home's grand piano. For a period in the 1920s and 1930s, Brown and lyricist Arthur Freed dominated Hollywood film musicals. Their tunes included: "Singin' in the Rain" for the 1929 film *The Hollywood Revue of 1929*, "Pagan Love Song" for *The Pagan* (1929), and "Temptation" for *Going Hollywood* (1933).

Bill happened upon "You Stepped Out of a Dream" (which was introduced in the 1941 film *Ziegfeld Girl*) in a collection of songs recorded by Andy Williams while searching for tunes for his jazz piano repertoire. He was immediately attracted to its lean melody and unusual harmony with chromatic movement. The harmony of the last eight bars is particularly non-conventional, but the tune still ends with a satisfying resolution.

Bill's Trio swings this classic from the outset, with Terry's walking bass line carrying Bill's chromatic introduction. Perhaps because this tune has a "lot of space," which can be problematic for jazz musicians, it is often done at blazing, "straight-ahead" tempos. (A fast tempo compresses space and relieves the soloist of the need to create the necessary "ideas" to fill large spatial areas that have sparse chord changes.) In contrast, Bill's Trio takes this tune at a soulful, swing dance tempo. Ron makes creative use of the tune's space with his fills and accents. Then it is Terry's turn to explore the tune's rich and unusual harmony. The Trio takes the tune out as they brought it in, with Terry's walking bass line carrying Bill's chromatic ending.

6. Why Try to Change Me Now? (ballad, 10:07) by Cy Coleman and Joseph A. McCarthy (1952)

This is another tune Bill found by playing through sheet music, this time a collection of Cy Coleman tunes entitled *The Genius of Cy Coleman* (which includes photos of Coleman hobnobbing with Hubert Humphrey and other celebrities). Bill immediately fell in love with the tune's melody and harmony and remains baffled as to why it has not been recorded by more jazz musicians; in contrast, they have recorded Coleman's *Witchcraft* (1957) much more. Numerous Coleman tunes appeared in films and Broadway musicals such as: "If My Friends Could See Me Now" and "Big Spender" in *Sweet Charity* (1965) and "Hey Look Me Over" in *Wildcat* (1960)

Because "Why Try to Change Me Now?" has at least two different chords per measure (i.e., per four beats), it is naturally suited for development as a jazz ballad, which typically includes the "double-time" mode, i.e., using 16th notes. (When there is just one chord per measure, a soloist playing a steady stream of 16th notes has to play 16 notes on the same chord, making it difficult to create interesting melodies.) Because Bill's jazz

improvisations are built on the tune's original chord changes, they reflect the tune. When ballads don't have "enough" chord changes, jazz musicians often add chords so they have "more changes to blow on." While this facilitates their improvisations, it tends to result in improvisations which do not to reflect the original tune. This tune has rich chord changes all the way through, but the bridge (i.e., bars 17-24 of the 32-bar tune) is particularly rich. Check out what Bill and Terry do with it.

7. Watch What Happens (Latin, 10:13) by Michel Le Grand (1964)

This beautiful tune was the "Husband Theme" in the French movie *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg*, which starred Catherine Deneuve and others. Bill first heard it done as a swing tune by an organ trio which played for swing dancing in Oakland, CA. Later he heard it done Latin by Brazil '66 and other groups, and from then on he wanted to do it Latin. LeGrand has done over 170 film scores which featured his tunes such as "The Windmills of Your Mind" (1968) for *The Thomas Crown Affair* and "What Are You Doing the Rest of Your Life?" (1969) for the *Happy Ending*.

"Watch What Happens" has a pretty verse which Bill plays unaccompanied. Then the Trio breaks into a cha-cha-cha beat, and they are off on a jazz exploration of this gorgeous tune. The melody is deceptively simple, with lots of space, and stays in a narrow range. Bill finds it remarkable that such a simple tune can be so enduringly beautiful. Reflecting the structure of the tune, Bill sculpts simple melodies with ample space on his first few jazz choruses. As he proceeds further on this jazz exploration, his jazz lines get longer and fuller. Then after a visit to the lower middle part of the piano to explore hands-in-unison melodies a la Wes Montgomery's playing in octaves, Bill moves to full-piano, Red Garland-style "block chords" for his last jazz chorus. Then Terry makes his soulful statement on this great tune. Ron's playing is tasteful and supportive throughout.

8. Here's That Rainy Day (ballad, 8:42) by Jimmy Van Heusen (1953)

Although Jimmy Van Heusen is better known than Burton Lane, his name should be up there with George Gershwin, Cole Porter, and Hoagy Carmichael in terms of name recognition by the general public. His output was prolific and of consistently high quality, and his tunes have been recorded by scores of jazz musicians. From the 1940s on into the 1960s, Van Heusen's tunes appeared in many films and also on television, such as "Love and Marriage" in the 1955 television production of Thornton Wilder's *Our Town*, which starred Frank Sinatra. However, Van Heusen's early successes were songs for stage productions such as "Darn That Dream" in the 1939 musical *Swingin' the Dream*, and "Here's That Rainy Day" was introduced in a musical, *Carnival in Flanders* (1953), by Broadway star John Raitt, the father of country-rock singer Bonnie Raitt.

Bill had heard many jazz renditions of "Here's That Rainy Day" before he bought the sheet music and played through the tune. He was surprised that the tune is very formful and has a distinctive, chromatic-like bass line, neither of which he had heard in the jazz renditions. (A great advantage of starting with the original sheet music is that you really learn what the composer intended.) The melody has a lot of space, which Bill creatively incorporates into his first jazz chorus. On the next chorus, his lines get longer and fuller

as he works in the “double-time” mode, i.e., using 16th notes. Then Bill shifts to big full chords before turning things over to Terry who imaginatively develops the tune’s rich bass line, with sensitive accompaniment from Bill and Ron.

LUPITA LOPEZ JACKMAN