

# JAZZ PIANO FOR DANCERS & LISTENERS

## The Bill Jackman Trio – Volume **3** of 6

1. My Cherie Amour (Latin, 9:12) by Stevie Wonder, Henry Cosby, and Sylvia Moy\*
2. Tenderly (swing, 7:57) by Walter Gross
3. Easy Living (ballad, 10:24) by Ralph Rainger and Leo Robin
4. I Wish You Love (Latin, 9:46) by Charles Trenet
5. Stella By Starlight (swing, 7:53) by Victor Young
6. Someone To Watch Over Me (ballad, 10:29) by George Gershwin
7. One Note Samba (Latin, 7:42) by Antonio Carlos Jobim
8. Spring Can Really Hang You Up the Most (ballad, 10:17) by Tommy Wolf

Total Playing Time: 73 minutes, 40 seconds

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

### About the Tunes

1. My Cherie Amour (Latin, 9:12) by Stevie Wonder, Henry Cosby, and Sylvia Moy (1968)

Although blind since shortly after birth due to receiving too much oxygen from an incubator, Stevie Wonder was already displaying his prodigious abilities as a multi-instrumentalist, singer, and songwriter by his early teens and at age 13 had a major hit with the live recording *Fingertips, Pt. 2* (1963). Wonder's music is sometimes divided into a "stylistically narrow" pre-1971 period and an eclectic post-1971 period. "My Cherie Amour," however, although written in 1968, has some the most sophisticated harmony of any of Wonder's tunes.

The tune uses the relatively uncommon 16-bar structure. Although the melody moves in a narrow range, this is not evident due to rich harmony shifting beneath it. Other tunes with this characteristic include "One Note Samba" and "Meditation" by Antonio Carlos Jobim and "Watch What Happens" by Michel Legrand. "My Cherie Amour" is ideal for jazz because its melody naturally sits on the upper notes of the chords, e.g., ninths and thirteenthths. This quality together with its very logical structure facilitate improvisation.

Bill first heard this tune played by a steel drum band that used to practice in the apartment next to his on Parker Street in Berkeley. He fell in love with it right away and knew that he wanted to add it to his jazz repertoire. Bill's Trio does this tune as a very danceable cha-cha-cha. As the tune begins, Bill is playing in the rich, lower-middle region of the piano. Then after playing the last chorus of the melody in the upper region, Bill begins to improvise on the tune. Initially he creates "small" melodies, reflective of the form the tune. Then for contrast, he shifts to the hands-in-unison mode in the lower-middle region of the piano. Returning to the single-line right-hand mode, Bill begins to

sculpt longer lines. On his last chorus, he is playing big lush “block chords.” Then Terry takes a great bass solo on this classic that should please both jazz listeners and dancers.

## 2. Tenderly (swing, 7:57) by Walter Gross (1946)

Over the years, Bill has been asked by many people to show them how to swing dance. If there was not recorded music available, Bill would hum a song as he showed them the basic steps. Most of the time that song was “Tenderly.” Since Bill likes this tune so much, he naturally wanted to add it to his jazz repertoire as a swing tune (4/4 time), and he had heard other jazz musicians do it this way. So he was quite surprised when he got the sheet music and found out that the tune was written as a waltz (i.e., 3/4 time).

However, many tunes composed as a waltzes adapt easily to 4/4 time for jazz, e.g., Bart Howard’s “Fly Me To The Moon” (1954).

There is virtually no information available about Walter Gross other than that Rosemary Clooney had a best-selling recording of his song “Tenderly” in 1955. Gross is a member of a class of composers who apparently wrote one great tune and then disappeared from the musical firmament. Other composers like this are Allie Wrubel (“Gone With The Wind,” 1937), Karl Suessdorf (“Moonlight in Vermont,” 1945) and Marvin Fisher (“When Sunny Gets Blue,” 1956).

This tune has an enduringly beautiful melody and a distinctive bass line which Bill showcases nicely in his opening arrangement in the rich lower-middle region of the piano. The melody has a lot of movement, but in fact is anchored on a small number of essential notes that are close together. Bill utilizes these anchor notes to create new improvised melodies in the single-line right-hand mode. Then after exploring the tune in the hands-in-unison mode, Bill turns to the “block chord” mode, first with locked-hands and then in the open full-piano style. This tune’s rich bass line gives bassist Terry a chance to display his melodic gifts, while keeping the dance beat going with Ron’s swinging support; Bill’s simpatico accompaniment tastefully highlights the tune’s essential notes. This tune, like so many in classic American popular music, has 32 bars, but it has an ABAC form rather than the very common AABA form.

## 3. Easy Living (ballad, 10:24) by Ralph Rainger and Leo Robin (1937)

Ralph Rainger is another one of the outstanding composers of classic American popular music who, like Burton Lane, is virtually unknown to the general public. However, from 1930 until his death in a plane crash in 1942, Rainger composed quality songs (usually with lyricist Leo Robin) for over 50 films, including “I Wished On the Moon” for *The Big Broadcast of 1936* (1935), “Blue Hawaii” for *Waikiki Wedding* (1937), and “Ebb Tide” for *Ebb Tide* (1937). His “Thanks For the Memory,” introduced by Bob Hope in *The Big Broadcast of 1938* (1938), won an Academy Award. Having studied both music and law in college, Rainger began his career as a lawyer, but in 1926 became a pianist for Broadway musicals and vaudeville shows.

Introduced in the 1937 film of the same name, “Easy Living” has had some beautiful renditions by vocalists such as Billy Holliday and Dinah Washington. With its rich harmony and abundant chord changes, this tune is naturally suited for development as a

jazz ballad, which typically includes the “double-time” mode, i.e., using 16<sup>th</sup> notes. (When there is just one chord per measure, a soloist playing a steady stream of 16<sup>th</sup> notes has to play 16 notes on the same chord, making it difficult to create interesting melodies.) This 32-bar tune has an AABA structure, with an exquisite bridge (i.e., the B section).

Bill’s Trio opens the tune with a lush arrangement of the melody (the “head”) in the rich lower-middle region of the piano. Like “Tenderly,” the melody of “Easy Living” has a lot of movement, but in fact is anchored on a small number of essential notes that are close together. Bill employs these anchor notes to create new improvised melodies. Note on the bridge how he effectively melds his Bill Evans-style left-hand voicings into his jazz melody lines, thus adding body to the single-note line. Then Bill locks his hands and explores this classic with “block chords” in the middle of the piano. Then after further exploration with “block chords” in the upper regions of the piano, bassist Terry takes over: his bass solo is creatively melodic, with Bill playing complimentary counter-melodies that highlight the tune’s essential notes and Ron sensitively maintaining the pulse.

#### 4. I Wish You Love (Latin, 9:46) by Charles Trenet (1946)

Bill has long been captivated by this simple, lovely melody, and it was one of the earliest tunes he added to his jazz repertoire. It was originally a French tune, with French lyric and music by Charles Trenet. Although “I Wish You Love” is often done as a ballad, Bill always heard it Latin, and his Trio does it as a very danceable cha-cha-cha. This tune is another example of how a melody can move in a narrow range, yet still be enduringly beautiful and rich. Other tunes like this are “My Cherie Amour” by Stevie Wonder, “Meditation” by Antonio Carlos Jobim, and “Watch What Happens” by Michel Legrand.

The tune has a beautiful verse which Bill plays solo. Then the Trio breaks into a Latin groove, with Bill playing the melody in the rich lower-middle region of the piano. “I Wish You Love” is a very formful tune which Bill incorporates into his melodic improvisations. On his first jazz chorus, he sculpts “small” melodies, but on successive choruses his lines get longer. Then for contrast, Bill changes to the hands-in-unison mode a la Wes Montgomery’s “playing in octaves style. He then takes a turn with first compact and then expanded “block chords.” Then bassist Terry melodically explores this classic, with simpatico dance-oriented accompaniment from Bill and Ron.

#### 5. Stella By Starlight (swing, 7:53) by Victor Young (1946)

Most composers of classic American popular music from the 1920s through the 1950s were pianists. Victor Young, however, was a violinist who made his American debut as a soloist in 1921 at Orchestra Hall in Chicago. After that, he dedicated himself primarily to popular music, including vaudeville productions and Ted Fiorito’s orchestra, of which he was violinist and arranger. In 1931, he became musical director for Brunswick Records. In 1935, he moved to Hollywood, where he formed his own orchestra and joined the staff of Paramount Pictures. Over the next twenty years (until his death in 1956), Young composed and conducted music for numerous television and radio shows and record albums and wrote scores (sometimes with collaborators) for over 225 films.

Despite his range of musical activities, Young is most remembered today as a great songwriter whose tunes include: “A Hundred Years From Today” for the revue *Blackbirds of 1933*; “I Don’t Stand a Ghost of a Chance” for the 1933 film *Follies Bergere*, which starred Maurice Chevalier and Merle Oberon; “Street of Dreams” (1932), of which Frank Sinatra recorded a memorable rendition; “Stella by Starlight” for *The Uninvited* (1944); “My Foolish Heart” for the 1949 film of the same name; “When I Fall In Love” for *One Minute To Zero* (1952); and the title song and score for *Around the World in 80 Days*, for which Young won an Academy Award (posthumously).

Like so many tunes of classic American popular music, “Stella by Starlight” has 32 bars, but it does not follow one of the common forms such as AABA or ABAC. In fact, it is a rarity in classic American popular music in that it has no repeats at all. This recalls Antonio Carlos Jobim’s “Desafinado,” of which critics’ early assessment was that it would never catch on with the American public because it doesn’t have a full repeat in its structure.

Although it doesn’t have any repeats, “Stella by Starlight” is a very formful tune, with prominent essential notes, and Bill incorporates this into his improvised lines. After exploring this classic in the single-line right-hand mode, Bill shifts to the hands-in-unison mode; however, on the second half of this chorus, he utilizes the tune’s intriguing essential notes to play pretty arpeggiated patterns in his right hand. For contrast, Bill then shifts to the locked-hand “block chord” style in the middle of the piano, and on the second half of this chorus achieves an unusual effect with half-note triplets. For further contrast, Bill then shifts to open full-piano style. Then bassist Terry creatively explores the tune’s distinctive bass line, with sensitive accompaniment from Bill and Ron.

#### 6. Someone to Watch Over Me (ballad, 10:29) by George Gershwin (1926)

Although many great composers of classic American popular music such as Burton Lane and Harry Warren do not have name recognition with the general public, George Gershwin does have it and rightly deserves it. During his meteoric but then truncated career (he died suddenly at age 38 in 1937 after emergency surgery for a brain tumor), he composed hundreds of songs for Tin Pan Alley, the Broadway stage, and Hollywood films, many of which became part of classic American popular music. These include: “The Man I Love,” “Fascinating Rhythm,” and “Oh Lady Be Good” (1924); “I’ve Got Rhythm,” “Embraceable You,” “I’ve Got a Crush On You,” and “But Not For Me” (1930); “Summertime,” “It Ain’t Necessarily So,” and “I Got Plenty O’ Nuttin’” from *Porgy and Bess* (1935); and “A Foggy Day” and “They Can’t Take That Away From Me” (1937). These tunes are actively performed today.

Although George Gershwin was first and foremost a great songwriter, he also composed large-scale concert pieces which bridged what had previously been considered separate idioms: popular (including jazz) and classical traditions, and black American folk music and opera in *Porgy and Bess*. In less than 12 years, while maintaining separate careers as a songwriter, pianist, and conductor, he produced four large-scale works of enduring appeal: the *Rhapsody in Blue*, the *Concerto in F*, *An American in Paris*, and *Porgy and Bess*.

“Someone To Watch Over Me” was introduced by Gertrude Lawrence in the 1926 musical *Oh Kay!* In this tune, as in many of Gershwin’s (and also Jimmy Van Heusen’s), the bass line is very important. (Bill has started the development of each tune in his jazz repertoire with original sheet music, which unlike the popular “fake books,”\* has the composer’s bass line.) This bass line is prominent in Bill’s opening arrangement of the melody, which he plays in the rich, lower-middle region of the piano.

(\* “Fake” books are collections – sometimes illegal – of hundreds of tunes with just the single-line melody and the chord symbols. They do not have the composer’s bass line.)

This tune is formful, with essential notes that are close together. Listen to how Bill utilizes these features on his first jazz chorus, as he sculpts pretty, lean melodies. On the next chorus, his jazz lines get fuller as he works in the “double-time” mode, i.e., using 16<sup>th</sup> notes; however, they are still anchored on the tunes essential notes. Then for contrast, Bill shifts to the “block chord” mode, first in the locked-hand style, then in the big, full-piano style; Gershwin’s bass line can be heard throughout. Its rich bass line makes this tune a natural for a bass solo, and Terry’s creative and melodic treatment does it justice; Bill and Ron provide sensitive accompaniment.

#### 7. One Note Samba (Latin, 7:42) by Antonio Carlos Jobim (1961)

Although Jobim is often seen in photos with a guitar, his first instrument was the piano, which he studied with several prominent Brazilian teachers beginning in his early teens. He also studied orchestration, harmony, and composition. By the mid-1940s, he was working as a pianist in the bars and nightclubs of Rio’s beach areas of Copacabana and Ipanema. Meanwhile, he was developing as a composer. In the late 1950s, the world first began to hear Jobim’s songs: “Desafinado” was presented on a 1959 album by Joao Gilberto, and “One Note Samba” was introduced on Gilberto’s second album.

As the name suggests, the melody of “One Note Samba” moves in a narrow range. However, Jobim keeps the melody interesting with rich harmony shifting beneath it. Other Jobim tunes such as “Meditation” share this characteristic as does “Watch What Happens” by Michel Legrand and “My Cherie Amour” by Stevie Wonder. In marked contrast, other Jobim tunes such as “Wave” and “Triste” have long and intricate melody lines.

Most jazz renditions of “One Note Samba” are done at a fairly fast Latin tempo, e.g., at a samba tempo. In contrast, Bill’s Trio does this tune as a very danceable cha-cha-cha. On his first jazz chorus, Bill works with lean melodies anchored on the tune’s almost stationary essential notes. On the second chorus, he uses these anchor points to create pretty arpeggiated melodies. By his last chorus, he is working with big, full “block chords.” “One Note Samba” is a great tune for bassists, and Terry’s exploration of the theme is melodic and danceable, with Bill and Ron providing steady backing.

#### 8. Spring Can Really Hang You Up the Most (ballad, 10:17) by Tommy Wolf (1955)

There is virtually no information available about Tommy Wolf other than that his tune “Spring Can Really Hang You Up the Most” was introduced in the original St. Louis production of *The Nervous Set*. Wolf is a member of a class of composers remembered for having written one great tune, after which they apparently disappeared from the musical scene. Other composers in this class are Karl Suessdorf (“Moonlight in Vermont,” 1945), Walter Gross (“Tenderly,” 1946), and Marvin Fisher (“When Sunny Gets Blue,” 1956).

The tune has pretty verse which Bill plays unaccompanied. Then the Trio launches into this classic. It is a 32-bar AABA tune, with distinctive whole-tone movement in the bass line, which Bill utilizes imaginatively with left-hand notes. This tune is very formful, and Bill uses its essential notes as a basis for his improvised lines, although they may ascend where the theme descends. On the next chorus, Bill’s jazz lines get fuller as he works in the “double-time” mode, i.e., using 16<sup>th</sup> 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. Throughout his jazz exploration of this classic, Bill effectively utilizes the bass line’s whole-tone movement with left-hand notes. This tune has a special extended ending which the Trio renders beautifully to close.

LUPITA LOPEZ JACKMAN