

Aspects of Herbie Hancock's Pre-Electric
Improvisational Language and Their Application In
Contemporary Jazz Performance: A portfolio of
recorded performances and exegesis

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ABSTRACT

Herbie Hancock's influential recordings from his pre-electric era, 1961-1968, display a jazz piano style that contains a unique combination of musical elements. This submission for the degree of Master of Philosophy in Music Performance investigates the ways in which Hancock's improvisational language of this era can successfully be employed in performance by the modern jazz pianist.

The project identifies melodic, harmonic and rhythmic traits from Hancock's solos and presents prominent examples of each. It outlines how these are then assimilated through a practice regime that employs a series of twelve-key exercises. The musical elements are further developed to create more opportunities for their execution in a variety of musical situations. Two recitals are presented, one of Hancock's pre-electric music specifically, and one encompassing a broader repertoire. Each recital demonstrates the application of these aspects of Hancock's improvisational vocabulary in contemporary jazz performance. An explanation of this process of application is given, and specific examples from the recital recordings are used to illustrate that process.

The submission consists of CD recordings of the two 60-minute public recitals and a 7500 word exegesis. This project highlights the process used by the modern jazz pianist to assimilate new improvisational techniques and apply these in performance.

DECLARATION

I certify that this work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. In addition, I certify that no part of this work will, in the future, be used in a submission for any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution without the prior approval of the University of Adelaide and where applicable, any partner institution responsible for the joint-award of this degree.

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10 February 2014

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