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A Musical Analysis of *Real Talk*

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A Musical Analysis of *Real Talk*

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my grandmother Mattie, my aunt Jeanette, and my uncle Butch. Thank you for the love and support. You will always be missed and never forgotten.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I give honor to God for allowing me the strength and patience to complete this project. Secondly I thank my father Michael, my mother Gwendolyn, and my brother Mike for all their support without which I would never have come this far. Finally, I want to thank my committee members, John Mills, Jeff Hellmer, John Fremgen, Robert Duke, Bruce Pennycook, and James Polk, for playing pivotal roles in my development as a musician and for their service on my dissertation committee.

A Musical Analysis of *Real Talk*

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This dissertation is intended as a supportive document for the five-part suite for ten-piece jazz ensemble entitled *Real Talk*. It is divided into six chapters, four of which are analytical and cover the following topics: Form, Melody, Harmony, and Other Compositional Techniques. Subcategories are used within these chapters to draw attention to specific compositional components relevant to the construction of the piece; illustrative tables and examples have been provided to assist in describing these components. The ultimate purpose of this document is to describe in detail my technical approach to the composition.

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Chapter 1: *Real Talk* from the Composer

Motivation

One of the most amazing events in my musical experience came in the form of a composition lesson with Maria Schneider. While sitting in front of computer next to a piano in a 10x14 office, we discussed a few of my compositions, different approaches to composition, and my musical goals. Based on the sound I was trying to create at the time, Maria gave me suggestions as to what and whom to listen, and she critiqued some of my work. It was an informative lesson, Maria told me one thing in particular that stood out. My writing, much like hers, was long winded. Every one of my pieces that we looked at that day was around ten minutes in length. She suggested that, as an exercise, I try writing a few short pieces. I responded by writing a multi-movement twenty-five minute suite.

Concept

Real Talk is a five-part suite that sounds coherent and unified when played in its entirety. It was my intention that the individual movements should also function as shorter stand-alone pieces. To achieve this, I gave myself length restrictions and approached each movement with the intention of it being a vignette.

Writing shorter pieces comes with its own challenges, however, and my primary concern was balancing the time restriction with the amount of material I wanted to include in each movement. Ultimately, this resulted in more edits and the removal of

several passages of music. However, even in abbreviated states, each movement in the final composition satisfies my personal artistic tastes.

Aesthetics

Having solid orchestration technique, a varied set of harmonic vocabulary and devices, and the ability to generate engaging melodic content are valuable skills for any composer; however, technique and knowledge aside, my goal has always been to write music that I believe is "good." Although my personal definition of "good" is subject to change, it always includes four perception-based criteria:

1) The composition must have personal value or generate personal satisfaction for the composer.

Real Talk was written in response to some of the conversations I had with my father over the course of the last year.

2) The composition should be enjoyable for the band to perform.

This criterion can be conceived as a goal to be met during the active phases of composition, and, in my experience, has been accomplished by: creating contemporary grooves for the rhythm section to play, orchestrating passages across sections within the ensemble, exploring various role possibilities played by different instruments beyond their normal designations—this includes using wind instruments in a more rhythmic capacity and using the

rhythm section as a melodic focal point, creating more challenging ensemble passages, and including musical quotes.

3) The composition should be accessible by the target audience.

Every song is not for every audience. *Real Talk* is intended for advanced musicians coming from educated backgrounds in jazz and/or concert music.

4) The composition should tell a story.

I want my music to inspire the feeling that a journey is taking place. In some cases, my tunes are expressions of my life experiences and/or come from stories that I am trying to tell. As stated earlier, *Real Talk* is a response to some of the conversations I had with my father over the course of the last year. I prefer to allow listeners to draw their own conclusions regarding the subject matter.

Generally, if I can satisfy three out of these four criteria, I consider my work a success—*Real Talk* satisfies all four.

Influences

While growing up, through the input of friends and family, I was continuously exposed to a wide range of music. As a result, I developed an appreciation for a multiple musical genres. Works from the libraries of such phenomenal jazz composers as Kenny Wheeler, Vince Mendoza, Dave Holland, Maria Schneider, Pat Metheny, and Chris

Potter were among my essential influences while creating *Real Talk*. This composition drew inspiration from several recorded works from the aforementioned artists, specifically the following:

Kenny Wheeler's *Music for Large and Small Ensembles* (1990)

The additive element used to develop the melody in the opening of *The Sweet Time Suite* provided guidance when I designed *Real Talk: Part 1* and built the melody in *Part 3*.

Vince Mendoza's *Epiphany* (1999)

There is a particular half-step tension that shows up in *Part 5* between the top two voices in a melodic passage that was inspired by the title track, *Epiphany*.

Dave Holland's *What Goes Around* (2002), *Overtime* (2005) and *Pathways* (2010)

I have been a Dave Holland fan since I first heard his quintet live at the Reno Jazz Festival in 2003. Witnessing that performance, and seeing what I can only describe as a pure joy exhibited by the band while on the stage, completely changed my perception of what jazz was and what music could be. A few years later, while studying music in college, I found Holland's four-movement big band piece, *The Monterey Suite*, from the album *Overtime*. It showcases his mastery of extended jazz composition and helped open my eyes and ears to longer jazz works.

Maria Schneider's *Concert in the Garden* (2004)

I look to Maria when searching for ways to utilize improvised solos as compositional devices. For years, the controlled context for Donny McCaslin's tenor saxophone solo in *Buleria, Solea y Rumba* has been my model for how to accomplish this.

Pat Metheny's *The Way Up* (2005)

This album, *Part One* in particular, was a major influence on the first theme as well as the linear material in *Real Talk: Part 2*.

Chris Potter's *Underground* (2006) and *Song for Anyone* (2007).

Mixed meter and odd length phrases have been a characteristic of my writing since I first heard—and subsequently transcribed—the melody to *The Wheel*.

Even though *Real Talk* was influenced by and, at times, references these works, it was never my intention to copy or recreate them. I wanted only to show my gratitude for the skills I acquired as a result of exposure to the music of those artists. Beyond this, the main purposes of *Real Talk* were for me to experiment musically, test my ability to work with restrictions on length, and create music for the ten-piece ensemble.

The Ten-Piece Ensemble Format

Before approaching this project, the ten-piece jazz ensemble was a format in which I had limited experience. *Real Talk* effectively doubled my catalogue of ten-piece compositions. Since this is an emerging market for jazz publications, there is a practical

consideration for the expansion of my work in this area. For years, my primary writing vehicles have been the eighteen-piece jazz orchestra and the four-horn four-rhythm octet. Although I possessed a considerable amount of experience in writing for a smaller ensemble, the two additional instruments—the baritone saxophone and an additional trumpet—made the ten-piece a completely new challenge, and I wanted to use the ensemble to the same effect as the jazz orchestra as opposed to simply extending the octet.

At the time when I was conceptualizing the piece, the instrumentation of the ensemble was critical. I chose to write for a four-piece rhythm section (guitar, piano, bass, and drum set) and a six-piece wind section (alto saxophone, tenor saxophone, baritone saxophone, two trumpets, and trombone). Since the weight of the rhythm instruments was nearly equal to that of the winds, it offered possibilities for interaction between the entire wind and rhythm sections—as well as between the brass and reeds—that were unavailable in the uneven instrumental balance of the regularly sized jazz orchestra. That being said, due to numbers, the ten-piece group simply lacked the strength of a full big band for moments when more force was desired.

To make sure that the music did not suffer because of the absence of power, I adapted my writing style to account for the differences in ensemble strength. For example, consider a musical passage that needs to be louder than everything that has preceded it. In a large ensemble, one of my readily available solutions is to increase the overall volume by writing a louder dynamic for the passage. In the context of the smaller group where power is more limited—and where the use of too much power may

negatively impact sound quality—different tactics are required. Here, I would view the passage that needs to be "loud" as a target point and employ either of the following solutions: 1) decrease the volume of the music that precedes the target; 2) orchestrate the target passage in such a way that it is perceived as "louder"—one way to achieve this is by doubling voices at the octave.

As a large-scale project, *Real Talk* was approached with multiple goals in mind. I wanted to experiment with shorter compositions, write for a less familiar instrumentation, reference some of my favorite jazz artists and their works, and, while accomplishing all this, still satisfy my artistic desires. Achieving these goals seemed as though it would be fairly simple initially; however, since its onset, this project has been a constant test of my abilities and patience, and although the end result was satisfying, it has been demanding in every respect.

Chapter 2: Form

Real Talk was designed using a combination of jazz and concert formal structures. Functioning as a prologue, *Part 1* introduces melodic fragments, harmonic devices, orchestration techniques and rhythmic devices that appear later and throughout the piece. The first stand-alone movement is *Part 2*, which is most closely related to theme and variations. An ostinato propels *Part 3*, and *Part 4* is a modified song based on ABA song form. Finally, *Part 5* consists of three distinct sections in which the first two utilize modified jazz AABA form, and the final section uses theme and variations.

As a whole, *Real Talk* may be best described as a series of vignettes. The order of the movements in the suite creates a long-term increase in energy, which differs from the design of many other suites that use the order of movements to vary the intensity levels throughout. This common pattern of contrasting energy levels has not only been the norm for most symphonic works, but also for the multi-movement compositions of jazz composers from Duke Ellington onward. *Real Talk* was composed with the idea that it could be performed in its entirety or separated into its individual movements—with the exception of *Part 1*—and performed separately while still providing a satisfying listening experience. The following pages use illustrative tables and prose to outline the events and formal structure of *Real Talk*.

Table 2.1 Structural analysis of *Real Talk: Part 1*

Measure #	Harmonic Area/Key(s)	Function/Event	Detail(s)
1-10	D+/E♭+	Opening statement	Winds create chord pyramids
11-14		Thematic fragment (Theme 5 from Part 5)	Introduced by high brass
15-18		Rhythmic figure from Part 3	Wind section tutti
19-22	A♭ Lydian		Tutti continues
23-24	B Lydian		Tutti continues
25-26	D+/E♭+		Chord pyramids
27-30	C Lydian	Arrival point	Series of alternating minor and major quality chords
31-34	Cmin7 with alterations	Modified restatement of mm. 1-5	Piano and bass enter and add to the wind section pyramids

(Table 2.1, continued)

Measure #	Harmonic Area/Key(s)	Function/Event	Detail(s)
35-38	C♯ major	Thematic fragment (Theme 1 from Part 2)	Fragment appears in the guitar and piano at m. 37
39-end		Thematic fragment (Theme 4 from Part 4)	Fragment presented by the tenor sax in m. 40

Table 2.1 illustrates the events that take place in *Part 1*. This short movement is unique in *Real Talk* due in large part to its formal design. It is unlike all the other movements for a few reasons: 1) it is completely through composed, consisting only of fragmented ideas that are explored in more detail later in the piece; 2) it is quite short when compared to the rest of the suite and is the only movement not intended to function as a stand-alone piece; 3) this movement contains no improvisation and is the only one that progresses without a clearly defined musical direction. Instead, it hints at a few different paths without completely committing to them, then ends mysteriously. When considering the overall form of the composition, *Real Talk: Part 1* serves as a fragmented introduction.

The first ten measures of this piece inspire a feeling of unrest as the winds play staggered entrances outlining an ambiguous harmonic area based on D and E♭

augmented triads. This quickly moves into a presentation of thematic material and rhythmic fragments from *Part 5* and *Part 3*, respectively. Next, in measures 19-24, there is a series of quick harmonic shifts, leading from the A♭ Lydian to B Lydian mode; this adds to the tonal instability of this movement. After a brief moment in the Lydian harmonic area, the winds quickly move back into augmented triad territory. A dramatic increase in volume and an ascending sixteenth-note figure in the first trumpet lead to an arrival point at measure 27, where a harmonic shift verges on establishing a tonal center. However, just as the winds appear to settle, the entrance of piano and bass in measure 31, and the ensuing harmonic collision in the woodwinds and brass, reinforces a feeling of instability. That, paired with the denial of a resolution, makes the later arrival of C♯ major all the more satisfying. With the guitar emerging and doubling the bass line at measure 35, every member of the ensemble—with the exception of the drum set—is now involved in the music. Even though the piece has shifted to a happier mood there is still a feeling of unease due to the inconsistent nature of this introductory section. As *Part 1* ends, the drum set makes a powerful appearance through a free-form extended solo which transitions into *Part 2*.

Table 2.2 Structural analysis of *Real Talk: Part 2*

Measure #	Harmonic Area/Key(s)	Function/Event	Detail(s)
1	N/A	Transition from Part 1	Free drum solo
2-9	C Aeolian		Staggered rhythm section entrances
10-17		Theme 1	Presented by alto and tenor saxes
18-29		Transition 1	Trumpets play new melodic figure while remaining winds provide harmonic support
30-35	A♭ major	Theme 2	Trumpet 2, bari sax, and guitar
36-44	A major	1st variation of Theme 1	Solo piano with reharmonization
45-52	A♭ major	1st variation of Theme 2	New rhythmic approach for the first half of Theme 2 in the winds

(Table 2.2, continued)

Measure #	Harmonic Area/Key(s)	Function/Event	Detail(s)
53-64	C Aeolian	Improvised solo over Theme 1 chord progression	Trumpet solo
65-74	F Dorian		Solo continues with background figures in the winds
75-83		2nd variation of Theme 1	Full ensemble, theme is played by tenor sax and guitar
84-91	C Aeolian	Transition 1	Trumpets play lead line, other winds provide support
92-107	C Aeolian	2nd variation of Theme 2	Presented by piano and guitar, new syncopations and new pitch material

(Table 2.2, continued)

Measure #	Harmonic Area/Key(s)	Function/Event	Detail(s)
108-113	A♭ major	Theme 2	Restatement of original Theme 2, includes a counter-melody in the upper saxophones
114-end	Unstable (resolves to A major)	3rd variation of Theme 1	In the winds: new rhythmic syncopations, dove-tailing, and layering two rhythmic versions of the theme on top of one another

Table 2.2 outlines the events taking place in *Real Talk: Part 2*, which is the first stand-alone piece in this suite and presents complete versions of some of the ideas introduced in *Part 1*. One of the most defining characteristics of this movement is its cross-sectional interplay, showcasing the interaction between the brass and woodwinds, and the winds versus rhythm section. It also demonstrates the effectiveness of removing and adding instruments to create a variety of sound colors when the available voices are somewhat limited in comparison to a larger ensemble, such as an eighteen-piece jazz orchestra.

Part 2 opens with an extended drum solo that forms a direct connection (*attaca*) from *Part 1*. Regardless of whether or not *Part 1* is performed, this solo should always be used to begin *Part 2* since it generates an initial feeling of uncertainty before evolving

into the primary rhythmic feel, or groove, for this movement and establishes a sense of stability. After an indeterminate amount of time, the rest of the rhythm section—piano, bass and guitar—appears and assists in solidifying the groove. At this point, measure 10, the first theme in the suite, Theme 1, is introduced in its entirety by the unison voices of alto saxophone, tenor saxophone, and guitar. The rhythm section is completely dedicated to providing a solid rhythmic foundation so that the woodwinds and brass can move freely. Transition 1, beginning at measure 18, incorporates the entire the ensemble and sees the winds playing both featured and supportive roles; the saxophones and trombone support the trumpets that are presenting a new melodic motif. In measure 26 all the winds come together, ending the transition between Theme 1 and Theme 2. The arrival of the new theme is signified by a key change to A♭ major, a new chord progression, and a shift in orchestration wherein the guitar, a trumpet, and the baritone saxophone now present the melody. This new timbre is the first grouping of high brass with low woodwind, but this color does not last very long as the other winds return in quick succession via staggered entrances—an orchestration technique that is employed quite often in this suite. Then, suddenly, the winds vanish, leaving the piano to play a solo melody. Now, in the key of A major, is where the first variation on Theme 1 occurs, and after its first presentation by the piano, the melody is repeated and reinforced by the alto saxophone. Shortly thereafter, the rest of the ensemble returns momentarily to create an arrival point and resting chord on Amaj13. The following passage, beginning at measure 45, returns to the key of A♭ major and alludes to a texture presented at the beginning of *Part 1*; the winds are playing without rhythm section accompaniment. This is the first

variation on Theme 2, which incorporates new pitch material, new melodic direction, and a slightly different rhythmic structure. After only a few measures the rhythm section reappears and the first solo of the suite begins, using the chord progression that supported the original statement of Theme 1.

Energy is generated over the course of the solo—which should be played by a trumpet, but can be played by the tenor saxophone or piano if the trumpeter is unable to perform comfortably. As the harmonic territory changes, background figures appear behind the soloist providing even more energy and ultimately leading to the conclusion of the solo and the arrival of the second variation of Theme 1. During this passage beginning at measure 75, the theme is modified with new rhythmic syncopations and new harmonic support, while the pitch material and shape of the melodic line remain intact. Next, Transition 1 is restated and used to connect the second variation on Theme 1 to the second variation on Theme 2, during which the direction of the melodic line is changed, rhythmic alterations appear, and the harmonic support is completely removed. Here, the tonality is primarily C Aeolian, and musical activity alternates between the wind and rhythm sections. At measure 104 the ensemble reunites and restates Theme 2 in its original form with the addition of a counter-melody played by the alto and tenor saxophones. At this point the movement has reached its final stage. The closing passage of *Part 2* features a series of short, four-measure rhythmic and contrapuntal variations, which collectively form the third and final variation on Theme 1.

Table 2.3 Structural analysis of *Real Talk: Part 3*

Measure #	Harmonic Area/Key(s)	Function/Event	Detail(s)
1-4	G harmonic minor	Ostinato	Solo piano
5-8			Bass doubles piano's left hand
9-12			Guitar doubles piano's right hand, drums enter
13-16			Horns briefly enter
17-26		Theme 3	Trombone melody with rhythm section support
27-44		Restatement of Theme 3	Counter-melody in the alto sax, background hits in the winds, B♭ clarinet, muted trumpets
45-55		Transition 2	Wind and rhythm section tutti, solo send-off
56-64		Solo	Trombone solo, cued wind backgrounds

(Table 2.3, continued)

Measure #	Harmonic Area/Key(s)	Function/Event	Detail(s)
65-72		Modified Transition 2	Slightly different orchestration in winds to deal with the lack of the trombone notes within the voicings
73-82	Unstable	New melodic material	Big ensemble moment, melody in guitar, alto sax and trumpets
73-74	F Dorian		Piano and bass outline harmonic area
75-76	E Dorian		Piano and bass outline harmonic area
77-78	E♭ Dorian		Piano and bass outline harmonic area
79-82	D Lydian		Winds outline the harmonic area, chord pyramid
83-86	G harmonic minor	Ostinato	Played by rhythm section

(Table 2.3, continued)

Measure #	Harmonic Area/Key(s)	Function/Event	Detail(s)
87-100		Restatement of Theme 3	Similar to mm. 27-44, no brass mutes, no woodwind doubles
101-104 (opt. end)		Second modification of Transition 2, optional ending	Half of Transition 2, optional drum solo
105-end	D altered dominant (standing on the dominant in G harmonic minor)	New melodic material	Triplet-based melodic figure in the winds

The formal events of *Real Talk: Part 3* are detailed in Table 2.3. This movement is a dirge built primarily around an ostinato in the piano that is doubled by the bass and guitar. Harmonically, *Part 3* is the most static movement in the suite, but due to the devices employed in the construction of linear material and the orchestration techniques employed, the movement maintains interest.

The dark and brooding *Part 3* begins with the piano establishing a two-measure ostinato in G harmonic minor. The bass enters by doubling the piano's left hand. Four measures later, the drum set appears along with the guitar that doubles the piano's right hand. Four more bars pass before the lower saxophones and high brass—in harmon

mutes—interject for four measures with sparse background figures. In measure 17, the trombone makes a solo entrance and introduces new melodic material, Theme 3. The ten-measure melody is played twice. During the restatement, however, it is enhanced by syncopated rhythmic accentuations, or hits, found in the muted trumpets and clarinet (tenor saxophone), and a counter-melody presented by the alto saxophone. Simultaneously, the baritone saxophone reinforces the bass line. The mood stays dark and mysterious, and the rhythm section remains unchanged until the musical event regarded as Transition 2 appears at measure 45. This passage involves a repeated two-measure rhythmic pattern with a harmonic sidestep—a chromatic ascent in this instance—on the "and of 3" in every other measure. The rhythm section and winds emphasize this figure until the trumpets, which are no longer using mutes, create a little more excitement by layering another rhythmic motif on top of that which is present in the rest of the ensemble. After generating a high amount of intensity, most of the ensemble is taken out of play, allowing the baritone saxophone and bass to play a melodic shape that leads into the solo section for *Part 3*.

Here, trombone should be the featured instrument; however, if necessary, the solo can be played by the alto saxophone. As the solo builds, the wind section is used to thicken and darken the texture with syncopated harmonized backgrounds, which gradually creates an energetic rise that ultimately leads to the arrival of a slightly modified Transition 2. This is where *Part 3* reaches peak intensity. During this brief ten-measure passage, the ensemble plays at the loudest volume heard in this movement thus far, then decrescendos to what is arguably the most delicate moment in the suite. These

ten measures see the winds orchestrated with the trumpets and alto saxophone on the melody while the lower saxophones and the trombone provide harmonic support. This passage also possesses the most dynamic harmonic motion present in the movement—parallel minor chords descending by half steps that ultimately arrive and stand on the V chord—which makes this musical moment a point of interest. Shortly thereafter, at measure 83, the ostinato returns, and Theme 3 arrives in a fashion very similar to its original form but includes slight differences in orchestration; the trumpets are no longer muted and the clarinet part is now played on the tenor saxophone. Transition 2 is then restated with the optional inclusion of an extended drum solo within the confines of a predetermined four-measure form, or vamp, while the ensemble's rhythmic accents build more intensity. When performing *Part 3* as a stand-alone piece, the tune should conclude on the "and of 3" in the fourth measure of this phrase after at least one repetition. The remaining eight measures of music should only be played as a transition into the next movement. This final passage of *Part 3* emphasizes a dominant chord pedal point and utilizes a staggered triplet figure in the winds to slightly accelerate the tempo through metric modulation, thus preparing and initiating *Part 4*.

Table 2.4 Structural analysis of *Real Talk: Part 4*

Measure #	Harmonic Area/Key(s)	Function/Event	Detail(s)
1-4	N/A	Vamp/safety valve/transition	Drum solo (Afro-Cuban)
5-8	B major	Groove establishment	Bass and piano establish key center
9-28		Theme 4 (A)	Introduced by tenor sax, guitar doubles at measure 17
29-37	B Dorian	Transition 3 (B)	Metric modulation, shift to minor key, syncopated lines (rhythmic transition, heavy-triplet feel with backbeat on beat 3)
38-45	B major	1st variation of Theme 4 (A′)	Played by alto sax, flugelhorn, and guitar, (Gospel/R&B)
46-52		2nd variation of Theme 4 (A′ continued)	More "broken" treatment with faster harmonic rhythm

(Table 2.4, continued)

Measure #	Harmonic Area/Key(s)	Function/Event	Detail(s)
53-56		Solo send-off	Winds play chord pyramid
57-60		Solo (harmonically similar to A)	Guitar solo
61-64		(A continues)	Faster harmonic rhythm
65-81	B Dorian	Solo backgrounds (harmonically similar to B)	Winds play backgrounds
82-90		Modified Transition 3 (B)	Transition 3 with guitar solo over the first five measures
91-98	B major	Restatement of 1st variation of Theme 4 (A′)	Similar to mm. 34-45, includes one additional note resulting in a new rhythm in the wind supporting figures

(Table 2.4, continued)

Measure #	Harmonic Area/Key(s)	Function/Event	Detail(s)
99-107		3rd variation of Theme 4 (A′ continues)	Slightly extends Theme 4
108-end	Implied modulation to F major but resolves back to B major	"Tag" ending	Three times "tag" ending emphasizing a two-bar melodic fragment derived from Theme 4

Part 4, whose formal structure is illustrated by Table 2.4, is based on ABA song form—where the A section is the melodic material of Theme 4, and the B section is the material from Transition 3. The primary theme for this movement is followed by the primary transition, and concludes with a modified version of the primary theme giving *Part 4* a ternary structure; ABA′ is the most accurate way to describe this form that, though heavily altered in its later appearance, occurs twice through the course of this movement. *Part 4* closes with another modified statement of Theme 4. Of all the movements in the *Real Talk* suite, *Part 4* has the simplest structure. However, it is in this piece where some of the most interesting devices in the suite are employed. This movement contains true key changes and mode mixture, metric modulation, implied metric modulation, and multiple grooves including Afro-Cuban, R&B, and Gospel.

The drum solo at the beginning of *Part 4* can be used as a safety valve—a portion of music that can be freely repeated to ensure a smooth transition between movements in live performance. The drums are responsible for establishing an Afro-Cuban rhythmic feel to connect *Part 3* and *Part 4* while the rest of the ensemble has time to turn pages, adjust music, and prepare for their upcoming entrances. This is not an issue if the movement is performed as a stand-alone piece.

Part 4 is the only portion of *Real Talk* that begins in a major key, which is established by the bass and piano in measure 5. The bass line provides forward motion while the piano provides both a calming element and harmonic support for the music. In measure 9, the tenor saxophone introduces the melody whose material comes from Theme 4 and is the most song-like and catchy melody in the suite. The guitar doubles the saxophone on the second phrase. Leading into Transition 3, there is a brief meter change to 15/8—delineated in the score as a bar of 12/8 followed by a bar of 3/8—that supplies some rhythmic tension and slightly delays the arrival of the upcoming musical event, Transition 3. During this transition, at measure 29, a metric modulation and a key change to minor occur simultaneously. The rest of the winds enter at this point and play various rhythmic accents while incorporating brief melodic fragments that outline the new chord progression. This is also the place where the drum set begins to switch from Afro-Cuban to a more Gospel/R&B related rhythmic pattern by heavily emphasizing the triplet and incorporating a snare accent, or backbeat, placed on beat 3. From measures 38-52 Theme 4 is repeated with new harmonic support in the key of B major, background figures in the winds, and a new rhythmic feel—a hybrid of Gospel and R&B. The second half of this

passage is especially interesting as it presents the melody in a slightly angular and more disjunct manner than in its previous appearance by applying more syncopation and accelerating the harmonic rhythm. These initial statements of Theme 4, Transition 3, and the modified restatement of Theme 4 create a ternary ABA′ form. The next major event that takes place is the guitar solo.

As the solo develops, the key changes from B major to B minor, and the winds begin to insert backgrounds. These figures start as a series of staggered bell-tones and sustained notes that ultimately create and hold chords; this is where the solo builds intensity. *Part 4* reaches a dramatic peak during the final moments of the guitar solo where the backgrounds consist primarily of sustained tones and are at their most intervallically dense. Transition 3 reappears as the solo ends.

This restatement of Transition 3 serves to decrease overall intensity and ease into the next portion of music that includes two modified versions of Theme 4. The first modification—mm. 91-98—slightly changes a background figure by adding an extra rhythmic accent in the winds. Effectively this generates an overall bounce in the music. The second modification—mm. 99-107—extends the theme by two measures, generating some rhythmic tension and increasing the satisfaction felt at the arrival point in measure 108 which is emphasized by an implied key change. *Part 4* then closes with a traditional jazz "three times tag" ending constructed using melodic material from the first measure in Theme 4. During this tag, a combination of eighth notes and triplets is used to provide rhythmic tension and propel the music forward to its final resting point on Bmaj7(♯11).

Table 2.5 Structural analysis of *Real Talk: Part 5*

Measure #	Harmonic Area/Key(s)	Function/Event	Detail(s)
1-22	C Dorian sequencing through a 5th's cycle ending in D Dorian	Introduction (1st portion)	Series of descending chord pyramids played by the winds
23-26	D Dorian		Drums establish time and stabilize the ensemble
27-34	G Dorian		Full ensemble, sets up new melody
35-42		New non-thematic melody (1 A section)	Presented by the sax section
43-50		Second A section (or A′)	Slight melodic difference, brass "hits"
51-58	Implied D altered dominant	Theme 5 fragment (B section, bridge)	Primary motive of Theme 5 is introduced by saxes as a Bridge (referring to a jazz "bridge")

(Table 2.5, continued)

Measure #	Harmonic Area/Key(s)	Function/Event	Detail(s)
59-66	G Dorian	Closing non-thematic melodic statement (Last A or A″ or solo send-off C)	Aggressive syncopated "hits" in brass
67-98		Solo (AABA form)	Alto sax solo
90-98		Last A section in the solo chorus	Backgrounds enter to aid in connecting the next section
99-106	C Dorian	Transition 4 (D)	Half-time interlude, even 8th-note groove, composite line played in pieces by the wind section and in its entirety by the piano and guitar
107-114	G Dorian	Modified solo send-off (C′)	Returns to regular time, uses long tones for first 4 bars

(Table 2.5, continued)

Measure #	Harmonic Area/Key(s)	Function/Event	Detail(s)
115-146		Solo 2 (AABA form)	Tenor sax solo
131-146		B and Last A section in solo chorus	Solo continues, new background figures
147-154	C Dorian	Transition 4 (D)	Half-time feel, even 8th-note groove
155-162	G Dorian	2nd modified solo send-off (C′′)	Regular-time feel, swing 8th-notes
163-170	C Dorian	Modified Transition 4 (D′)	2nd four bars in the passage form ascending melodic figure
171-180		Theme 5 (E) (start of 2nd portion)	Presented by the guitar, brass, and bari sax, counter-melody played by alto and tenor saxes

(Table 2.5, continued)

Measure #	Harmonic Area/Key(s)	Function/Event	Detail(s)
181-196	C major and C minor mode mixture	1st variation of Theme 5 (E′)	Reharmonized with new orchestration, saxes play melody, brass provide support, rhythm section provides groove
197-203	Unstable	New melodic material (F)	Highly syncopated throughout ensemble, "bridge" in terms of AABA song form
204-210	C major	2nd variation of Theme 5 (E′′)	New reharmonization by rhythm section, staggered winds
211-End		Finale (3rd portion)	
211-218		New melodic motive (non-thematic)	New melodic motive is introduced in the guitar and piano

(Table 2.5, continued)

Measure #	Harmonic Area/Key(s)	Function/Event	Detail(s)
219-226			Motive orchestrated as a composite line in the saxes, brass provide harmonic support
227-234			New counter-line appears
235-251		Variation on mm. 219-234	Sax dovetailing and role switching in brass
252-260		Variation on mm. 243-249	No triplets
261-End	A♭ major with and ending in C minor	Final resolution	Improvised alto and tenor sax lines, full ensemble decrescendo and ritardando

Table 2.5 shows the structural breakdown of *Part 5*, which is the finale to the *Real Talk* suite and contains three distinct sections, each with its own design. The first and second sections are based on the standard jazz tune form, AABA, which differs from the third section that is through composed and incorporates theme and variations.

Part 5 begins with a series of descending minor eleventh chords moving sequentially around the circle of fifths. This sequence is played by the winds and targets G minor, as it is the primary key for this movement. After the arrival of G minor and an energetic burst from the rhythm section, the saxophones introduce a new melody in measure 35. This is the first A section. When the passage is repeated, it incorporates brass background figures in the form of long tones thus forming a second A section, A′. During the bridge, or B section, the saxophones reintroduce a motivic fragment of Theme 5—this is very similar to the fragment originally introduced by the trumpets in *Part 1*, measure 11—and the brass use both long tones and syncopated accents to provide support. After the bridge ends in measure 58, the brass become more aggressive and launch the movement into the first solo section via a series of hits. This forms a final A″ section. Since A″ plays a recurring role and acts as a solo send-off, it is labeled in multiple ways in Table 2.5. In this analysis it is referred in two ways:
1) as A″—or variants of A″ such as Last A, or final A—when used in conjunction with A and B sections, and 2) as C—or variants of C such as C′ or solo send-off—when used as a solo send-off. At this point, *Part 5* has presented an introduction and one full cycle of the AABA form.

The first solo begins at measure 67 and is performed by the alto saxophone. It is played over the previously established 32-bar AABA form twice, incorporating wind background figures during the last A section of the second time through the form. At the end of this solo a vital component to this movement, Transition 4, is introduced. This passage—labeled as D in Table 2.5—which is built by the repetition a two-measure

motif, introduces two new musical elements to *Part 5*, the half-time rhythmic shift and the composite melodic line. Composite melodic lines will be discussed in Chapter 5 of this analysis. Measure 107 is the first true solo send-off and it uses an aggressive syncopated figure in the winds. This C′ initiates the tenor saxophone solo.

The tenor solo follows the same 32-bar AABA form as the alto saxophone solo. However, this solo begins in a much less aggressive manner as the rhythm section aims to produce a more ethereal texture during the first chorus. The background figures for this solo come into play during the first B section and the final A section after the repeat. The second chorus of the tenor solo is aggressive and, after building a high level of energy at its conclusion, leads into another statement of the half-time Transition 4 (D). This is immediately followed by C′′—another variant on the solo send-off in regular time. Finally, a modified version of Transition 4—labeled as D' in Table 2.5—surfaces. During the last four measures of this altered passage, the previously mentioned composite melodic line ends, and a series of ascending hits take place. This passage's purpose is to build energy and close the first section of *Part 5*. The music that takes place after the tenor saxophone solo, mm. 147-170, is special in that it sets up both the rhythmic shift to half-time and the even eighth-note feel that persist through the remainder of the movement. The repetitions and variants of Transition 4 and the solo send-off effectively generate a ternary DC′′D′ form.

The second section of *Part 5* begins in measure 171 with the first complete statement of Theme 5 presented in a fashion similar to that of a two-voice canon. After this initial melodic statement, the second section of *Part 5* follows AABA form.

Measures 181-188 form the first A. During this phrase the saxophones carry the melody, the brass provide harmony, and the rhythm section provides groove and bass lines. The second A consists of the next eight bars in which the brass are more active in their harmonically supportive role and incorporate more syncopations and counter-melodic figures to enhance the saxophone melody. Measures 197-203 form the B section, which consists of new linear material, and the final A is presented primarily by the piano. Table 2.5 designates these passages as E, E′, F, and E′′ respectively. Here, where the melodies used in the E sections come from Theme 5, there is a huge shift to the key area of C major with some mode mixture from C minor. The F section, which functions as a bridge, is a very unstable passage in that it possesses angular linear material and very swift harmonic shifts. Rhythmically, this is the one place in the entire suite where the ensemble and rhythm section hits are set up in such a way that the strong beats, beats 1 and 3, are obscured. This EE′FE′′ passage closes out the second section of *Part 5* and brings the ensemble to a resting point. In Table 2.5 this arrival is labeled as a partial resolution since it brings the movement to a resting point on Gmaj7. The music neither sounds nor feels complete in this place since it is in the key of C major, and the arrival point is on the V chord. Effectively, this is a half-cadence—likely the reason for the lack of aural satisfaction—and it leads into the third and final section of the movement.

The finale, mm. 211-266, concludes *Real Talk*. The melodic material occurring throughout this section is not directly derived from any place in the suite, though it shares some common features in its design such as: motivic variation, sequencing, and ostinato. This finale consists primarily of eight-measure phrases built from two-measure units that

are sequenced and repeated, and through the incorporation of slight adjustments to each restatement, this section of music has the feeling of theme and variations.

The first eight measures set up the entire conclusion. In mm. 211-218 the bass plays a two-measure ostinato. The piano and guitar introduce a two-measure figure that repeats with adjusted pitches to fit the harmonic progression. This linear material is built using a three-note cell consisting of eighth notes that follow a pattern that is essentially an ascending step then an ascending leap; slight alterations are made to the final four notes in the figure in order to maintain the phrase length. At measure 219 the eight-measure passage repeats, but during this presentation the saxophones double the guitar/piano via dovetailing. Dovetailing is a technique that will be discussed in a Chapter 5. Simultaneously, the brass section provides syncopated triadic harmonic support and follows a two-measure rhythmic ostinato. The passage is repeated again at measure 227 with the following changes: the guitar, trombone, and a trumpet continue the two-measure harmonic support pattern; the alto saxophone and lead trumpet double the initial three-note cell played by the piano and sustain it in unison, repeating it every two measures with the piano; the tenor and baritone saxophones introduce a new melodic figure based on the piano line that acts as a countermelody to the linear material appearing in the lead trumpet and alto saxophone. At the end of this fairly dense contrapuntal section, the ensemble comes together and plays a rhythmically unified figure. The music from mm. 211-234 is the basis for most of the remainder of *Part 5*.

The content beginning at measure 235 is a variation on the phrase at measure 219 that now incorporates more active dovetailing in the saxophones. The next passage is a

variation on the material beginning at measure 227 with the following changes: harmonic support moves to the left hand in the piano allowing the guitar to play the melodic figure; the trombone doubles the lead trumpet and alto saxophone line an octave lower; the trumpet that was previously providing harmonic support with the trombone now accompanies the line played by the tenor and baritone saxophones, which has been slightly changed via the incorporation of triplets. All these alterations result in the passage sounding familiar and fresh simultaneously. The phrase starting at measure 252 is a variation on the material from measure 243 in which the line played by the trumpet, tenor saxophone, and baritone saxophone no longer includes triplets.

All this repetition leads to the final statement in the piece. The last phrase in this composition begins with an inverted descending arpeggio in the piano and a sustained chord voiced throughout the ensemble. It is both energetic and delicate as an arrival point. In mm. 261-264, gradual descrescendos and a ritardando take place, during which the piano repeats the arpeggio while the alto and tenor saxophones improvise sparsely and eventually fade into nothingness. This is meant to slow and gradually stop all musical activity, and after a few moments of tension-free music, *Part 5* closes with a piano rubato figure that leads to a sustained Cmin11 chord orchestrated throughout the ensemble. Given all the activity that has just ended, the sound generated by this final chord is fairly delicate; however, an underlying feeling of intensity is maintained.

Chapter 3: Melody

Melodies are constructed using combinations of four musical components: scale choice (major, minor, pentatonic, etc.), direction (up, down, or staying on the same pitch), intervallic motion (steps and leaps), and rhythm (syncopation, rest, note duration, etc.). Figures created from these components are altered and refined according to my personal satisfaction and perception of what is appropriate at any given time. The finalized linear material is then used as a basis for the development of the composition. Developing melodic ideas throughout the piece is done in many ways including (but not limited to): repetition, motivic variation (taking a melody or fragment of a melody and altering it while maintaining a connection to its original form), changes in rhythm, pitch alteration, and sequencing. Though the process of melodic creation relies on intuitive decision-making, patterns are found through analysis.

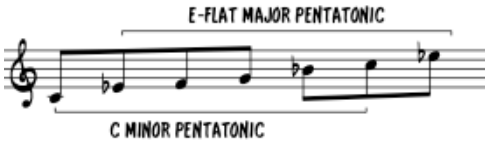
The examples included in this chapter illustrate the themes in *Real Talk*, which consist of melodic figures—either partial or complete—that recur throughout the composition and are used as the primary linear material upon which large portions of the piece are based. That being said, *Real Talk* includes musical passages that consist of both thematic and non-thematic melodic content; however, these musical events are constructed following the same guidelines as the linear material defined as "themes." This chapter analyzes and uses the themes from *Real Talk* to demonstrate the methods used when constructing monophonic linear material for the entire piece. Each of these examples will also identify and demonstrate one or more of the four musical

components—scale choice, melodic direction, intervallic motion, and rhythm—used in melodic construction throughout *Real Talk*.

Theme 1 and Theme 2

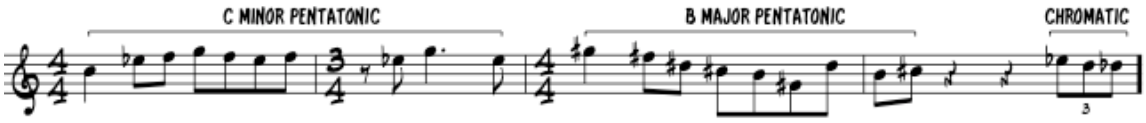
The following examples show melodic construction through the use of pentatonic scales, which are among the most prevalent scale choices employed in *Real Talk: Part 2*.

Example 3.1 Correlation of E♭ major and C minor pentatonic scales



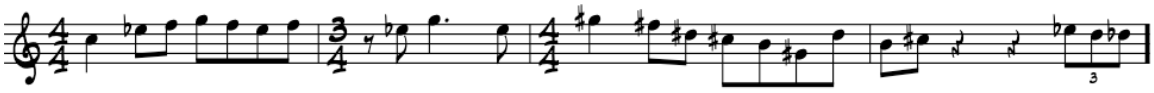
Major pentatonic scales and their relative minor pentatonic scales share the same five pitches. Example 3.1 illustrates the E♭ major pentatonic scale overlapping with its relative minor, C minor pentatonic. The major version consists of the root, second, third, fifth, and sixth scale degrees while the minor consists of the root, lowered third, fourth, fifth, and lowered seventh scale degrees. The E♭ major and C minor pentatonic scales are depicted in Example 3.1 to make their appearance easier to identify in the following examples for Theme 1 and Theme 2. As the two scales share the same pitch material but have different starting points, the labels E♭ major pentatonic and C minor pentatonic are interchangeable.

Example 3.2 Pentatonics used in Theme 1, *Part 2*, mm. 10-17



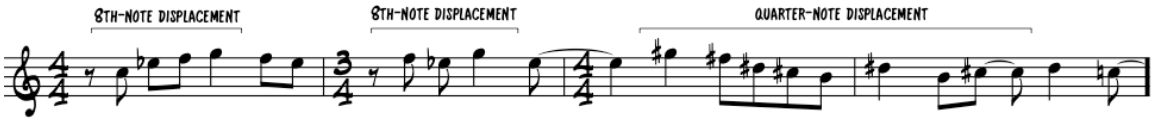
Example 3.2 illustrates Theme 1 of *Real Talk*. It is an eight-measure phrase consisting of a repeated four-measure idea, and due to the repetitive nature of the theme only the first four measures are depicted in the example. Here, the melodic material is completely pentatonic except for the chromatic triplets at the end of the system. Note that this theme incorporates two different pentatonic scales, C minor and B major. The triplet figure at the end of each system chromatically approaches C, which is both a target note and starting point in each phrase. In the context of the suite, the second system resolves back to a C and the C Aeolian mode. This melodic material appears throughout *Part 2*, but it returns with slight variations that are shown in the following four examples:

Example 3.2a Original version of Theme 1



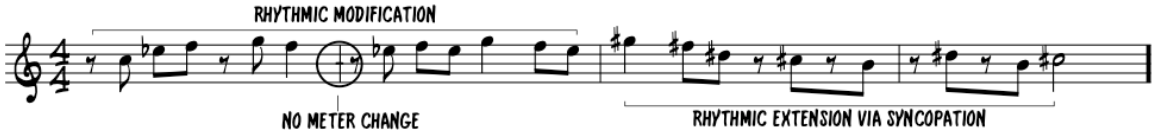
Example 3.2a illustrates the original melodic material that forms Theme 1. It is included here as a reference point so that the changes occurring in the variations are more easily identifiable.

Example 3.2b 1st Variation on Theme 1, *Part 2*, mm. 75-78



Example 3.2b is the first variation on the melodic material of Theme 1. In this variation, the starting pitch in each measure has been rhythmically displaced (shifted) by either an eighth note or a quarter note. The second measure also includes a small rhythmic twist. The final measure no longer uses the chromatic triplet approach to the next phrase that was used in the original version.

Example 3.2c 2nd Variation on Theme 1, *Part 2*, mm. 114-117



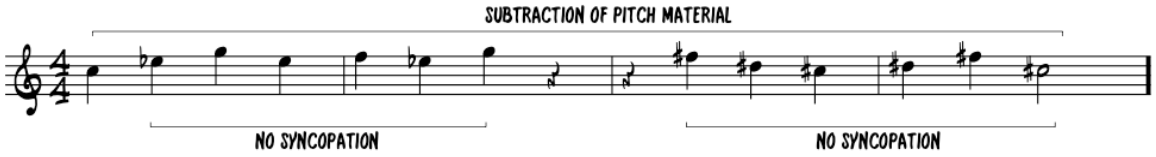
Example 3.2c is the second variation on the melodic material of Theme 1 and bolsters two major changes:

1) There is no meter change in the second measure.

2) The final measure has a completely different syncopation than the original.

Just like Example 3.2b, Example 3.2c begins with a modification to the starting point of the melodic material. The second measure includes extra repetitions of E♭-F to compensate for the additional beat in the measure thus creating a new rhythm for the melodic material.

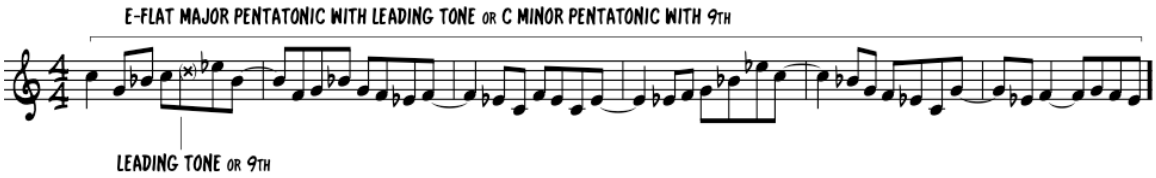
Example 3.2d 3rd Variation on Theme 1, *Part 2*, mm. 118-121



Example 3.2d is the third variation of Theme 1. Syncopation is abandoned in this variation and there is also a subtraction of pitch material on beat 1 in the third measure; the A♭ is no longer present.

All three variations possess differences from the original melodic material that have already been explained. But they also share some similarities. Each version follows the same basic contour of the original design. The shape mostly ascends in the first two measures and mostly descends in the second two measures. Also, each variation maintains a four-measure length, possesses most of the same pitch material, and presents that material in similar order.

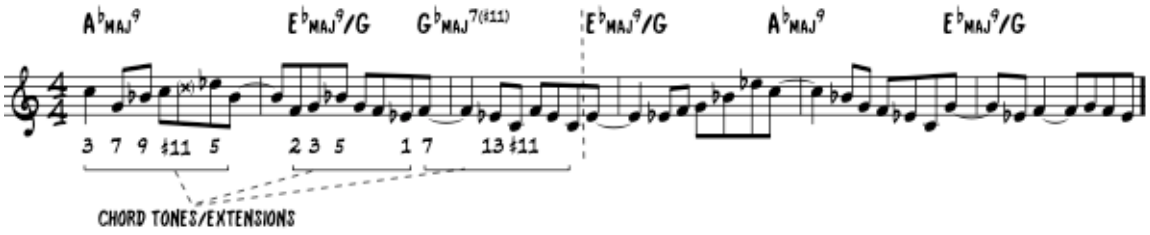
Example 3.3a Pentatonics used in Theme 2, *Part 2*, mm. 30-35



Example 3.3a depicts Theme 2 from *Real Talk*. The illustration shows a pentatonic scale being used as a melody again. The designations of both C minor pentatonic and E♭ major pentatonic appear in this example to reinforce the idea that these labels should be viewed

as interchangeable since the two scales share principal pitch material. Arguments can also be made in favor of each label. The scale can be considered as primarily C minor pentatonic due to C being both the starting pitch and the lowest pitch within the passage; C also serves as a melodic anchoring point. The argument for considering E♭ major pentatonic as the primary scale has similar weight. E♭ is both the highest pitch and the final pitch in the melody, and the passage incorporates the leading tone for the key of E♭ major, D—represented in Examples 3.3a and 3.3b by an (x). The following example, Example 3.3b shows an important fact regarding the pentatonic scale. A single pentatonic scale can be applied over multiple chords.

Example 3.3b Theme 2 with chord progression and chord tones, *Part 2*, mm. 30-35



Example 3.3b illustrates Theme 2 with a chord progression written above the staff system including A♭maj9, E♭maj9, and G♭maj7(♯11). The numbers beneath the staff show the chord tone/extension for each pitch as it relates to each chord—only the initial appearance of each pitch related to the chord symbol above the staff is marked. The only scale used here is E♭ major pentatonic. This works because all the notes in that scale are related to all the chords in the progression either as primary chord tones or as harmonic

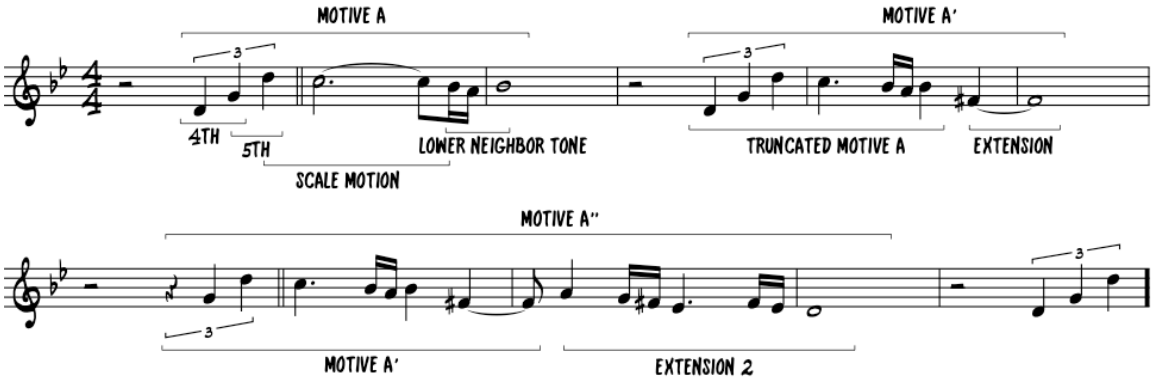
extensions of each chord. The only note of the scale that would not fit is the G♮ on the G♭maj7(♯11). This potential clash is not a factor since the use of G♮ is avoided while the G♭maj7(♯11) is played.

Theme 2 incorporates all four components of melodic construction. The scale choice is pentatonic. The shape of the line consists of various intervallic leaps—thirds, fourths, and fifths—and stepwise scalar motion. Note that the target tones in this theme are always in descending order and appear on off-beats. These notes—C, B♭, F, E♭, C, G, and F—are valuable as linear anchors since they give the melodic line a sense of direction and generate interest. The syncopation, anticipation, occurring on the "and of four" in each measure gives the melody forward motion. By the time the melody reaches its final measure, the anticipation becomes predictable. By changing the arrival point of the final target note—F—to beat two, interest is maintained.

Theme 3

The following example illustrates how a melody can be constructed using a primary motive and a series of variations.

Example 3.4 Construction of Theme 3, *Part 3*, mm. 16-26



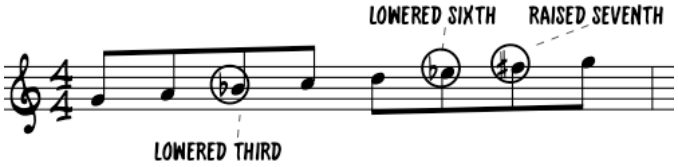
In Example 3.4, we see the evolution of a short motive into a longer melody. *Motive a* is a basic melodic idea. The motive begins with two intervallic leaps, a fourth and a fifth, then uses descending scale motion to approach a lower neighbor tone figure. After the initial statement, variation occurs. *Motive a′* is essentially a rhythmically truncated version of *motive a* that includes an extra note, or "extension." *Motive a″* is a combination of *motive a′* and "extension 2." Collectively, these motives form the melody that is Theme 3, and the evolution of this theme follows two procedures:

1) The original motive is repeated with a slight change applied to it.
2) After the change is applied to the original motive, new material is added.

Following these two procedures generates continuity and a feeling of growth.

Theme 3 is more than an example of motivic variation. It also introduces a new scale choice for melodic construction within this piece, harmonic minor, shown in Example 3.5.

Example 3.5 The G harmonic minor scale



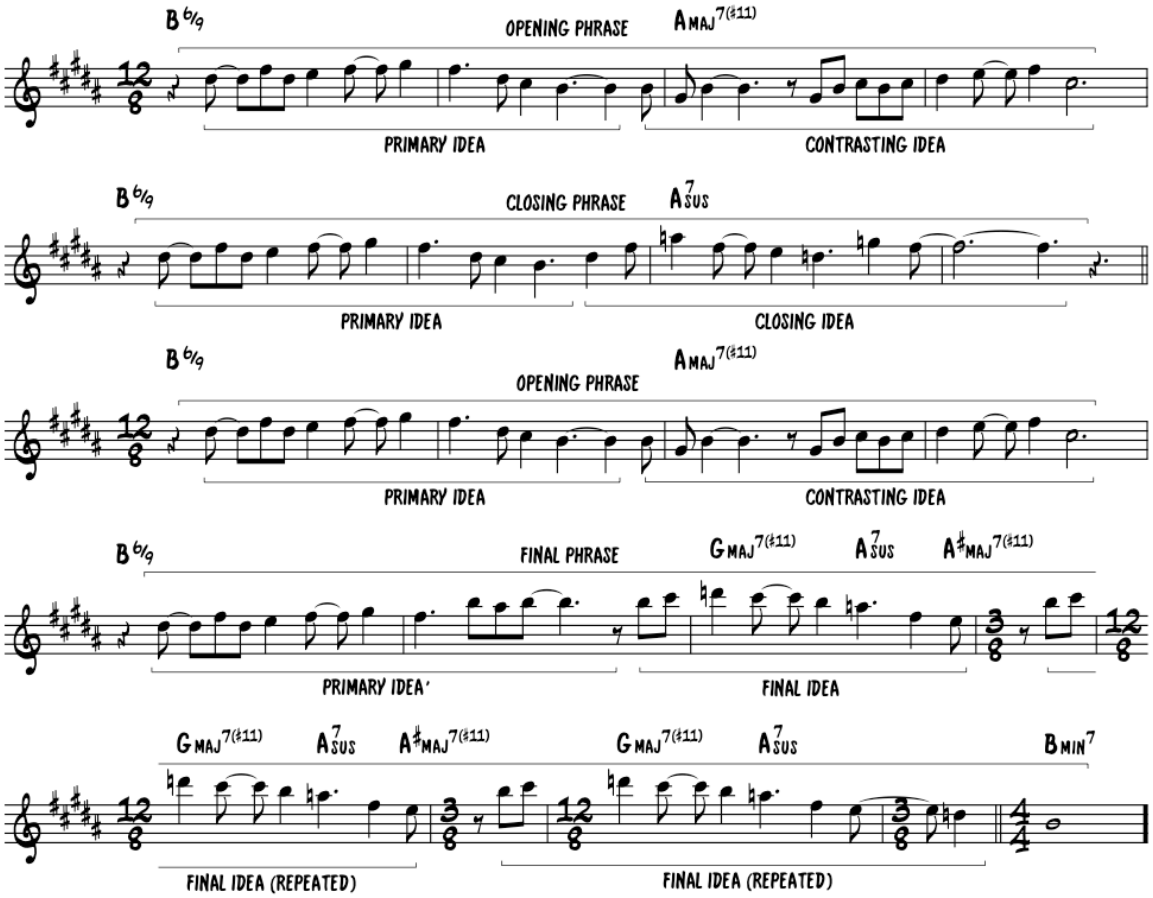
The harmonic minor scale is a natural minor scale with a raised seventh scale degree, and G harmonic minor is the prevalent scale used in *Real Talk: Part 3*.

The following examples, though related to motivic variation, show the use of longer primary melodic ideas and how they are combined with new contrasting melodic material in order to form longer melodies. Example 3.4 demonstrated how a single short idea could be transformed into a larger idea. These next examples show how complete phrases are used to construct longer melodies.

Theme 4 and Theme 5

The first part of this section uses Theme 4 to demonstrate the role phrase structure plays in framing a melody when dealing with extended linear figures. Terminology used in the discussion of phrase structure pertaining to Theme 4 and Theme 5 has been adapted from the William Caplin text, *Classical Form*. Here, the melody consists of two statements, opening and closing/final, which are made of two smaller phrases that are built by combining at least two shorter ideas. The following examples break down Theme 4 into its phrases.

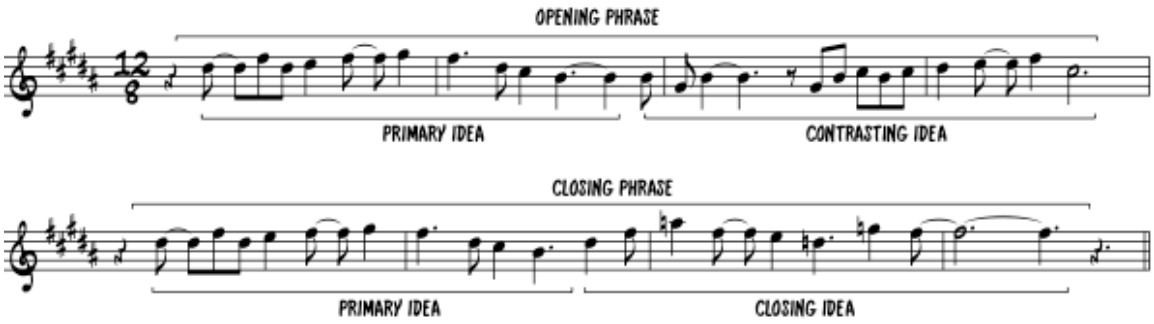
Example 3.6 Theme 4, *Part 4*, mm. 9-28



Example 3.6 illustrates Theme 4, the longest melody in *Real Talk*. It is primarily diatonic with respect to the chord progression it follows, and in terms of chord-scale relationship—the connection of a scale or scales to a particular chord quality—this melody does not incorporate any pitch material beyond what is expressed by the chord symbols in the progression. The last measure in the fourth system is an exception since the A♯maj7(♯11) is not played during the 3/8 measure and the B and C♯ in that measure are anticipating the chord in the first measure of the fifth system, Gmaj7(♯11). This

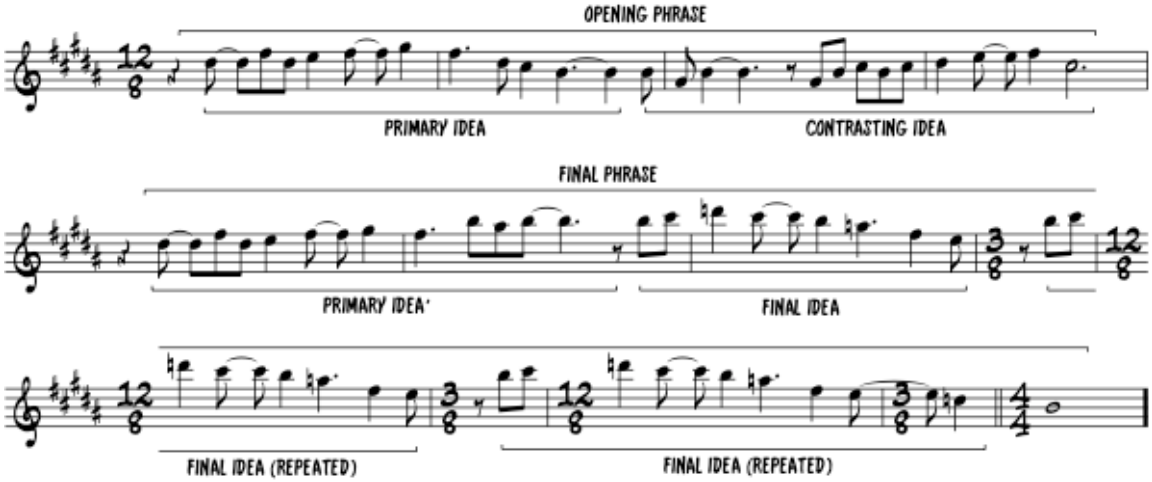
melody is mainly constructed via repetition, but it is the contrasting ideas within Theme 4 that make it whole and separate it from being an example of shorter motivic variation like Theme 3.

Example 3.6a Structure of the first half of Theme 4, *Part 4*, mm. 9-16



Example 3.6a presents a complete eight-measure melodic statement. This statement contains two parts, a four-measure opening phrase and a four-measure closing phrase, which follow a simple pattern—a "primary idea" is stated and then a "contrasting/closing/final idea" is stated. The difference of labeling lies in the content and classification of the second idea in each phrase. The contrasting idea, while concluding the opening phrase, does not offer a feeling of completion. It is too active in its final measure to provide both a sense of arrival and rest. The closing idea, on the other hand, limits the melodic activity in the final bar and clearly ends any linear motion. The longer note value in the final measure creates "breath" in the phrase, thus closing it and providing space before the next statement begins.

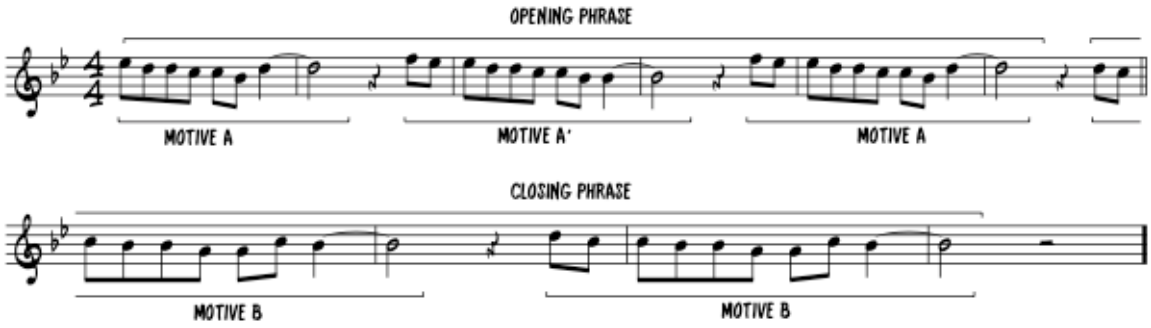
Example 3.6b Structure of the second half of Theme 4, *Part 4*, mm. 17-28



Example 3.6b depicts the second half of Theme 4. As with the first half of Theme 4—shown in Example 3.6a—there are two phrases that combine to form this melodic statement. The opening phrase here is identical to the one in Example 3.6a. The closing phrase—labeled "final phrase," since it is the ending phrase for the entire melody in Theme 4—is where the linear material deviates from the previous example. The final phrase contains a modified version of the primary idea, or Primary Idea′, that appeared in the first two bars of each phrase thus far. The modification hints that something new is coming, and the arrival of the final idea is the payoff. The repetition of this final idea delays and intensifies the arrival of the B♮ in the final bar of this example and Theme 4. That delay creates tension in the melody and makes the arrival point a more effective place of release.

Theme 5, shown on the following page, is similar to Theme 4 in that it is constructed primarily based on the repetition of a simple idea.

Example 3.7 Structure of Theme 5, *Part 5*, mm. 171-180



Example 3.7 shows the use of the repetition and variation to give life to a melodic idea that may seem flat or uninteresting. Theme 5 is based on a very short, very simple *motive a*—descending scale motion with a repeated note before each descent covering the distance of a perfect fourth. To enhance the melodic effectiveness of *motive a*, a procedure of motivic variation—repeat the initial idea while incorporating a slight change—is applied. Next, a feature of phrase structure—present a contrasting idea (labeled as a closing phrase in this instance)—is employed to finish framing the melody. The contrasting idea is *motive b*. *Motive b* though rhythmically similar to *motive a* has a different starting note, uses new pitch material, and includes a different ending contour resulting in contrary motion on the last three tones. There is enough of a difference between the two motives to justify separate labels. If there is no variation in a melody it runs the risk of becoming boring; however, simple changes can enhance a melody's effectiveness. Theme 5 utilizes this approach.

Melody plays an essential role in *Real Talk*. Most of the melodies in the suite are used repeatedly as form markers, and that same repetition is also intended to make the

piece more memorable for the listener. Successful melodies tend to be easily remembered. American pop music heavily emphasizes the use and reuse of catchy melodies and phrases that are both singable and easily digested by the audience. The United States educational system makes excellent use of repetition as a tool to emphasize and reinforce various pieces of information. Melodic repetition is employed throughout *Real Talk* in order to make the composition easier for the listener to digest and remember.

Chapter 4: Harmony

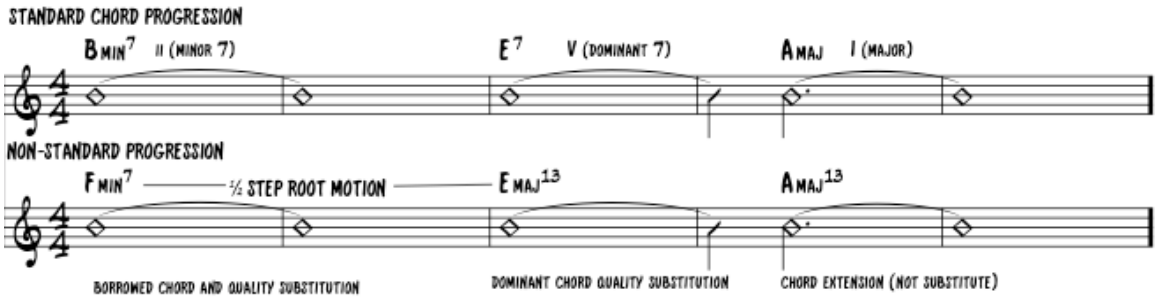
This chapter discusses the harmonic vocabulary used throughout this piece, including chord progressions and vertical structures. The chord progressions employed in *Real Talk* are essential to the piece's identity since they serve as a foundation for most of the composition's linear material. There are several constructional devices used in the creation of these progressions including: small intervallic root movement, chord substitution, ostinato, pedal point, and planing. These devices are the five primary techniques that provide the harmonic fingerprint of *Real Talk*, and this chapter examines various chord progressions in order to discuss and illustrate how the five primary techniques are employed.

Small Intervallic Root/Bass Movement and Chord Substitution

Small intervallic root/bass movement and chord substitution are common harmonic characteristics in this piece. Small intervallic root movement refers to chord root motion that emphasizes the use of seconds and thirds. Movement of the bass, or lowest voice, can be but is not always connected to root motion. Chord substitution refers to diatonic chords whose qualities differ from the traditional qualities, chords borrowed from other keys, and superimposed chords. The use and combination of these devices is essential to the harmonic language of *Real Talk*.

The composition, though remaining in certain key areas for various periods of time, tends to obscure tonal centers by employing chord progressions that avoid the more common pathways—like the ii-V-I—in favor of other harmonic routes. The following examples depict chord progressions that include small intervallic root motion and/or chord substitutions that obscure the perceived key and harmonic arrival points.

Example 4.1 Comparison of the standard ii-V-I chord progression to a non-standard ii-V-I progression appearing in *Part 2*, mm. 40-44



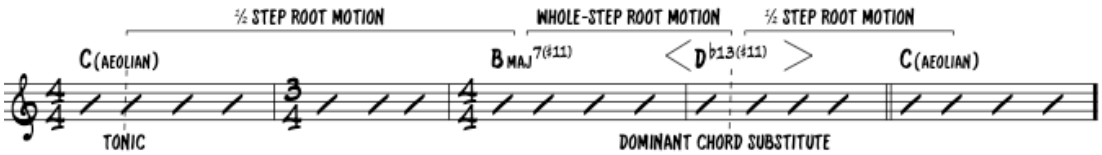
The staff systems shown in Example 4.1 show two chord progressions. The first system is a traditional diatonic ii-V-I in the key of A major which yields a chord quality sequence of minor-dominant-major and follows the circle of fifths. The second system is a chord progression taken from *Real Talk*. The root motion in this progression is half-step then fifth and follows the chord quality sequence of minor-major-major, which does not match the quality sequence in a traditional diatonic ii-V-I. Also, the first chord Fmin7, is diatonically unrelated to the key of A major. The Emaj13 has a root that is found on the V chord in A major, however, the chord quality has been changed; diatonically, the chord built with E as the root should be dominant.

Example 4.1 illustrates two chord substitutions. The first concerns the Fmin7. As a root, F is borrowed from A minor which is the parallel minor to A major, and the quality of this borrowed chord should be major, however, it has been replaced by a minor-seventh chord quality. Fmin7 is both a quality substitute for the F major triad and a chord substitute for Bmin7. With respect to Bmin7, this is a modified version of tritone substitution in which the like-quality substitution occurs between the ♭vi and ii, rather than the ♭II and V7. The second substitution in this example concerns the quality of the chord on the V chord, E, which is major instead of dominant.

In Example 4.1 the dominant-tonic relationship is circumvented by combining the strong cadential root movement of V-I, E to A, with non-functional coloristic harmony. Because of these factors the progression may sound unresolved even though it has reached a resting place.

The following three examples also focus on less common bass motion, root movement, and/or chord substitution:

Example 4.2a Harmonization of Theme 1, *Part 2*, mm. 6-10



The chord progression in Example 4.2a is the primary harmonization for Theme 1 in *Real Talk*. Though it may appear random, it is quite logical. By examining the root motion

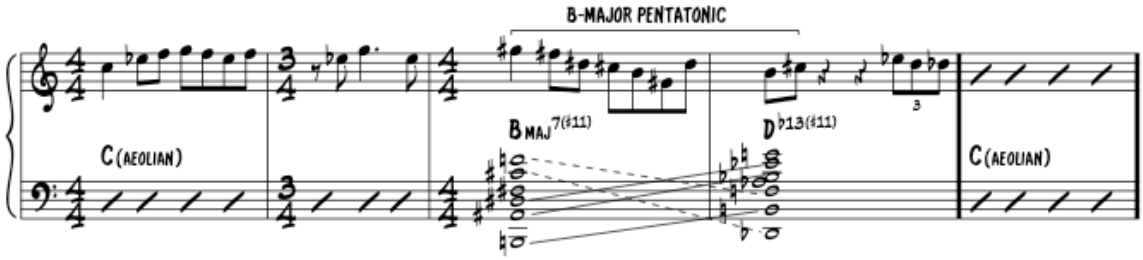
between each chord—C-B-D♭-C—a lower-upper neighbor group is identified. This technique of chromatic enclosure is typically found in bebop melodies and has been applied here to shape root motion within the chord progression. There are also two substitutions in this example. The first is the diatonic chord quality substitute of Bmaj7(♯11)—which does not exist in C Aeolian, but is very close in pitch content to G7alt/B—for Bdim. The second is the dominant chord substitute of D♭13(♯11) for G7. Also, Bmaj7(♯11) is essentially an A♭min7 extended to the thirteenth, and A♭min7 has a ii-V functionality with D♭13(♯11). The second substitution is the tritone substitute of D♭13(♯11) for G7.

Example 4.2a depicts a chord progression revolving around the C Aeolian mode, or Cmin11(♭6) sonority, making C natural minor the arrival point. G7 would be the normal V7 chord that pulls to tonic in this key. The D♭13(♯11) is a tritone dominant chord substitution for the G7. (Tritone substitution works on dominant chords since both the original and substitute chords share the same third and seventh chord tones, the quality defining tones in many seventh-chords. In dominant chord structures, both the third and seventh chord tones resolve by half-step to the root and third of their diatonically associated tonic chords).

Example 4.2a also provides insight into one of the methods used in the creation of colorful harmonic progressions that evade functionality and easily allow for stepwise and small intervallic root movement. The key lies in deciding on how to restrict bass motion then finding chords that both support the melody and share a fair number of common

tones. Example 4.2b is a more detailed illustration of Example 4.2a indicating the common tone relations between adjacent chords.

Example 4.2b Melody and harmonization of Theme 1, *Part 2*, mm. 6-10

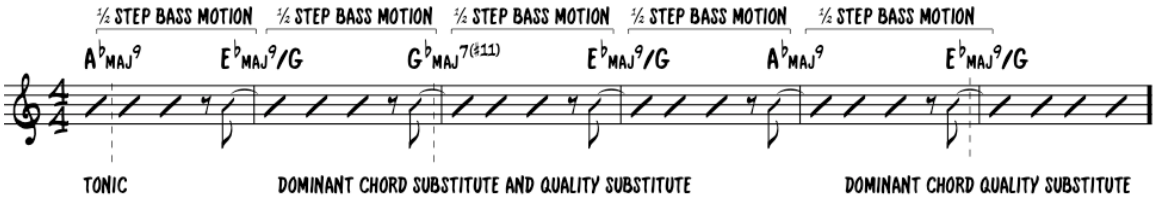


Example 4.2b shows Theme 1 as it is initially harmonized in *Real Talk: Part 2*. When constructing harmony it can be beneficial to determine the beginning and ending chords of a progression before working on the interior design. In this example, the progression will begin on and resolve to a minor quality chord with a C as the root, and there is a need to restrict bass movement to intervals of seconds and thirds in order to avoid too much functionality. Since the melody here is based on B major pentatonic, the chord roots need to be supportive of that scale. The tightest available root movement that satisfies these conditions around C♮ is the half-step below—B—and the half-step above—C♯ or D♭—as both notes are part of the B major pentatonic scale. Once the root movement is decided upon, chord quality can be assigned based on the type of melodic support that is desired.

Once again, Example 4.2b includes a Bmaj7(♯11) and a D♭13(♯11). The notes that spell these chords, respectively, are: B-D♯-F♯-A♯-C♯-F. D♭(C♯)-F-A♭-C♭(B)-

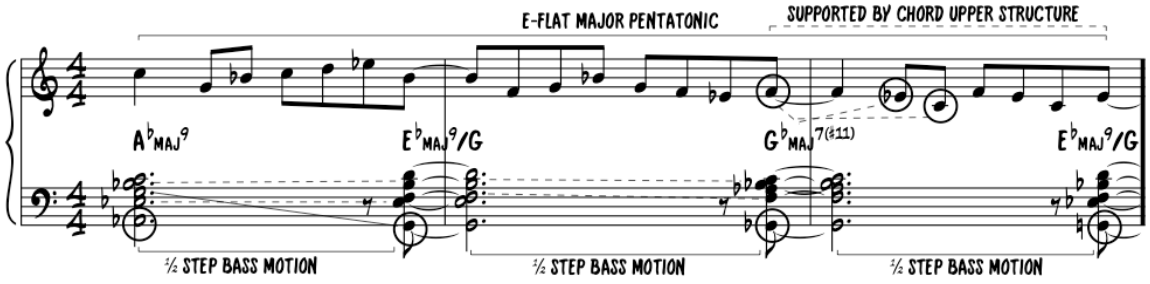
E♭(D♯)-G-B♭(A♯). There are five common tones between these two chords—C♯, D♯, F, A♯, and B—all of which can be used in support of the B major pentatonic melody.

Example 4.3a Harmonization of Theme 2, *Part 2*, mm. 30-35



Example 4.3a depicts a combination of half-step bass motion and chord substitution. The tonic chord is A♭maj9. The E♭maj9/G is a quality substitute for the E♭7—the V7 chord associated with the key of A♭ major. (In the first measure of this example the chord is not necessarily considered a substitute for the V7 since A♭maj9 is not the target. In the third measure, however, this is another case of chord quality substitution for the V7 since A♭maj9 is the target). The use of half-step bass motion results in the E♭maj9/G appearing in first inversion. The G♭maj7(♯11) is classified as both a chord substitute and a quality substitute because of the two ways it can be analyzed. In one way it can be considered the extension of an E♭min7—which would be a minor V chord in A♭. Another way to look at it is as a quality substituted flat-seven major chord (♭VII) being borrowed from A♭ minor. The quality change comes from raising the seventh—which should be an F♭—by a half-step. In this progression, the role of the G♭maj7(♯11) is to provide interesting harmonic color while maintaining similar sonority to its adjacent chords and to generate a bass line that always moves chromatically.

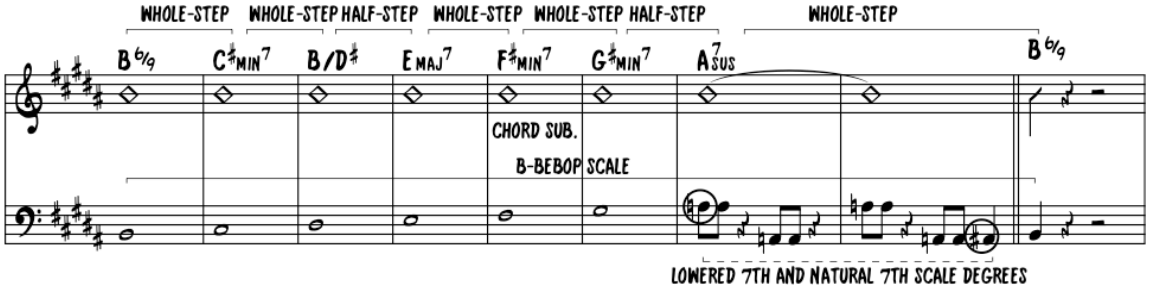
Example 4.3b Melody and harmonization of Theme 2, *Part 2*, mm. 30-32



Example 4.3b depicts the first three measures in Theme 2 as it is initially harmonized in *Real Talk: Part 2*. In this excerpt, the chord progression leaps by a fourth between the first two chords. However, the bass motion is reduced to a half-step due to the inversion of the second chord. The E♭ major pentatonic melody is easily supported by the A♭maj9 and E♭maj9/G since the notes E♭, F, G, B♭, and C are all either primary chord tones or pitches found in the upper extension of the chords. The one chord that does not fully support the pentatonic melody is the G♭maj7(♯11)—although it does maintain small intervallic root movement. This is a not an issue, however, since the unsupported note—G—does not appear in the melody while the G♭maj7(♯11) is being played, and the E♭ in the melody is supported as the thirteenth by the implied extended structure of the G♭maj7(♯11). Up to this point, the construction of this chord progression has been very similar to that expressed in Examples 4.2a-b. However, this G♭maj7(♯11) is the point at which the method of chord progression construction differs the most from Examples 4.2a-b in that a G♭major triad does not share many common tones with an E♭major triad. However, the upper chord extensions associated with a G♭maj7—even though they are

not explicitly indicated by the chord symbol—share many common tones with both of the chords built on E♭ and A♭, including the melodic notes C, E♭, and F.

Example 4.4 Chord progression and bass line, *Part 4*, mm. 38-45

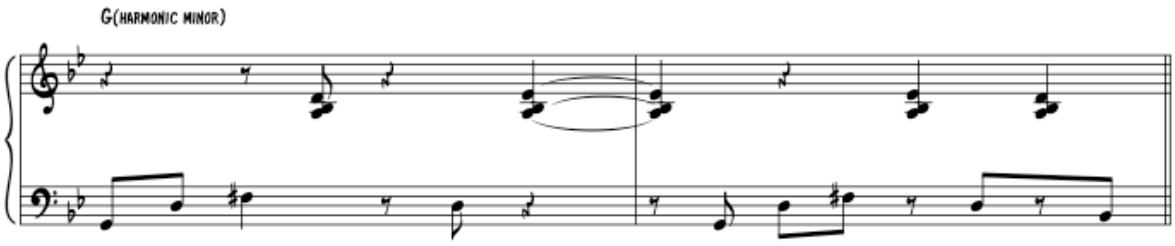


Example 4.4 illustrates the creation of a scale via the use of stepwise bass motion. In this instance, a B dominant bebop scale (Mixolydian scale that includes both the natural and lowered seventh scale degrees) is generated. The chord progression in this excerpt includes diatonic root and bass motion in B major—which is maintained by utilizing an inversion of the B major triad in the third measure—and employs the substitution of F♯min7—a quality substitution for F♯7, the V7 chord.

Ostinato and Pedal Point

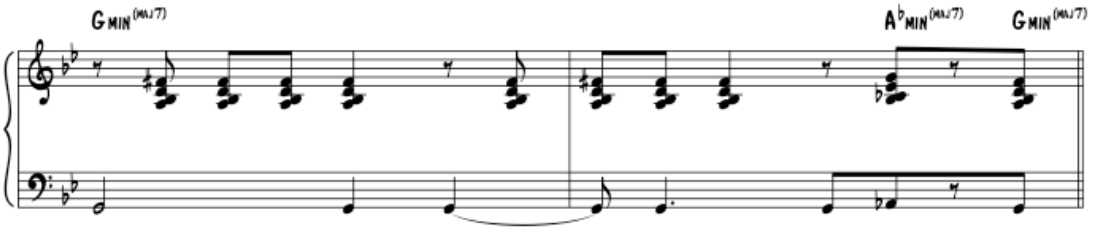
The next set of examples show the use of ostinatos and/or pedal points, the harmonic foundation for *Real Talk: Part 3*.

Example 4.5 Piano ostinato, *Part 3*, mm. 1-2



Example 4.5 shows the primary ostinato upon which *Part 3* is built. This ostinato, which outlines G harmonic minor, is the lynchpin that holds together the entire movement. *Part 3* stays primarily in G minor—moving between the harmonic and melodic forms—but it also includes brief moments of harmonic departure.

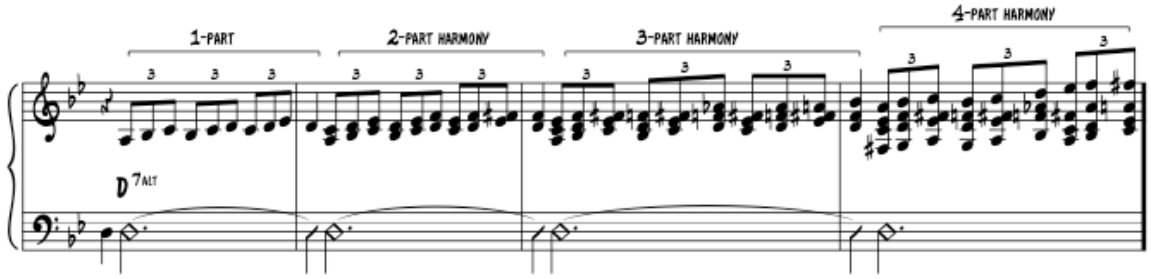
Example 4.6 Harmonic side-stepping, *Part 3*, mm. 65-66



Part 3 is essentially a pedal in G minor. Example 4.6 shows one possibility for harmonic variation within a pedal point, side-stepping. The pedal is over Gmin(maj7). The Abmin(maj7) chord appears for an extremely short time (a single eighth-note), and as such is not perceived as a new point of harmonic arrival. The chord is more of an interjection. Musical instances like this one are part of a jazz technique known as chromatic side-stepping, which occurs when a new chord is superimposed by parallel

movement, most commonly a half-step above, over an indicated chord. This often takes place during improvisation—in either the improvised line or its accompaniment—and is used to create tension and/or intensify a melodic line. In this movement it is used to generate harmonic interest and is played by the entire ensemble to avoid the harmonic clash and thereby the potential misconception that the side-step was a mistake. (As a technique, side-stepping also falls into the category of planing which is discussed later in this chapter).

Example 4.7 Score reduction of final pedal point in *Part 3*, mm. 105-108



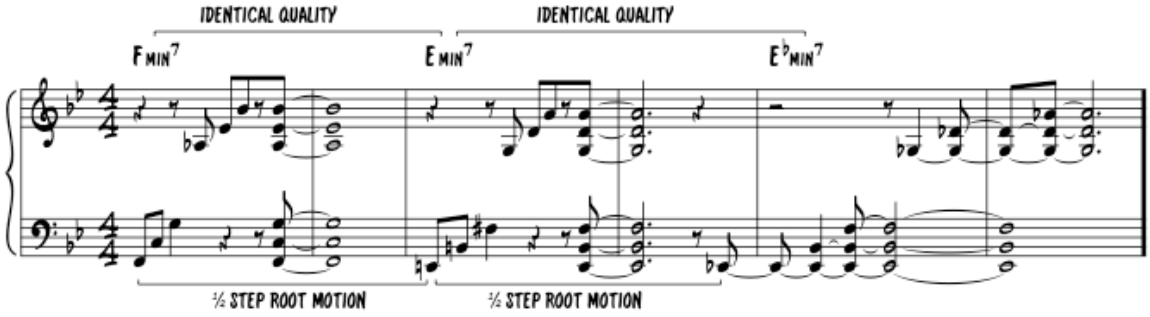
The final ostinato/pedal-point excerpt is Example 4.7. This score reduction shows how a melodic figure can be enhanced over a harmonic pedal point. In the example, a melodic triplet figure is stated, sequenced and harmonized in two parts, then sequenced and harmonized in three parts, and finally, sequenced and harmonized in four parts. Each additional voice layer increases the amount of tension in the passage. The pedal point here is beneath a D7alt—which includes both the raised and lowered fifth scale degree rather than the natural fifth. The melody and harmonized voices are products of a combination of the G natural and harmonic minor scales—which include an A♮. Since

both the D7alt chord and the G natural/harmonic minor scales express a dominant function with a lowered ninth (E♭) scale degree, the discrepancy in the fifth scale degree (A♮) is not perceived as an incorrect pitch.

Planing

One more significant harmonic device employed throughout this composition is planing. Planing occurs when two or more voices move in parallel to one another either diatonically—remaining within a single key center—or chromatically—following the same exact intervallic structure. The last of the five harmonic devices that define *Real Talk*, planing is an essential component of the harmonic language spoken in this composition.

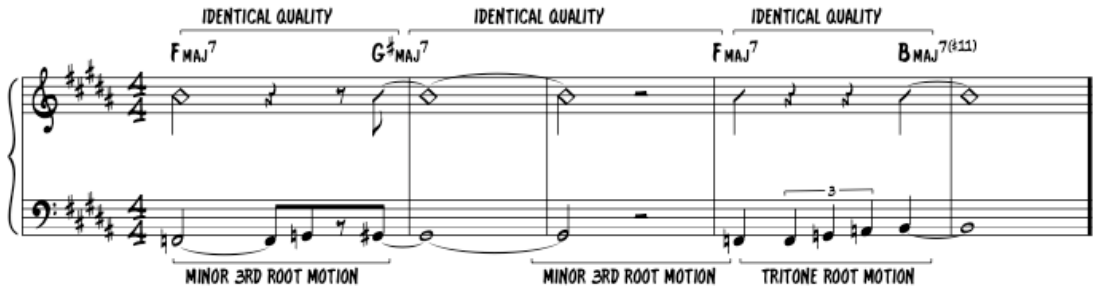
Example 4.8 Parallel harmony excerpt, *Part 3*, mm. 73-78



Example 4.8 is taken from the piano part during are large ensemble passage in *Part 3*. This example shows three successive minor chords of identical quality and voicing.

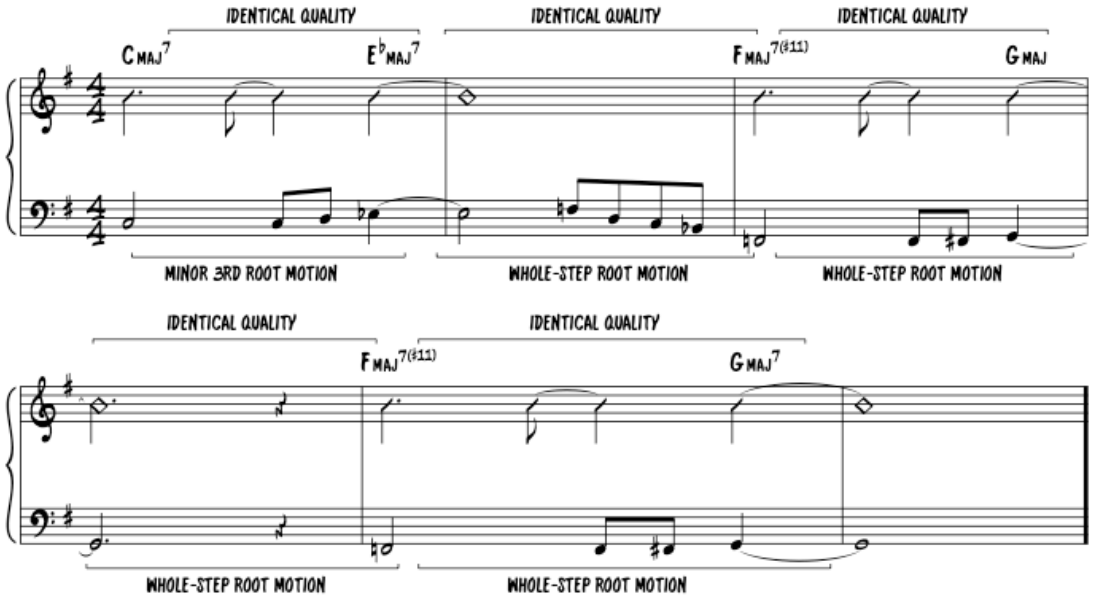
Every note in the figure being played is transposed by half-step. The combination of exact transposition and chromatic sequencing ensures that the same sound quality persists throughout the passage.

Example 4.9 Parallel harmonic progression, *Part 4*, mm. 111-115



Example 4.9—which is a combination of the piano and bass parts from *Part 4,* mm. 111-115—is another example of planing, but this illustration does not include a precise voicing. That has been left for the pianist to decide. Because of this, some voices may not move with chromatically parallel motion. Therefore, in performance, this may not necessarily result in perfect chromatic planing; however, the direct transposition of major chord qualities demonstrates the use of parallel harmonic motion. As a result of this planing, none of the chords depicted here appear within the same diatonic key. In instances like this one, the chord quality is being transposed into different keys and maintained. This is harmonic planing.

Example 4.10 Example of planing with non-functional root movement, *Part 5*, mm. 204-209

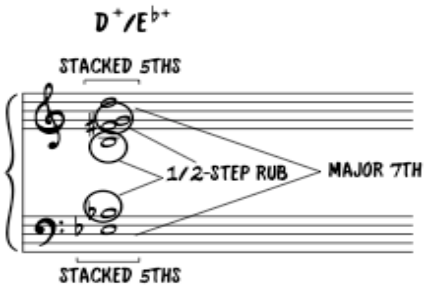


Example 4.10 is included here since it shows a combination of two harmonic devices at work: small intervallic/stepwise root movement and planing. The bass motion does not exceed the interval of a third—in this particular excerpt, this actually applies to both the bass motion throughout the passage and the movement of the roots in the chord progression. The chord qualities are all major-seventh with the exception of the extensions on the Fmaj7(♯11).

Chord Voicing

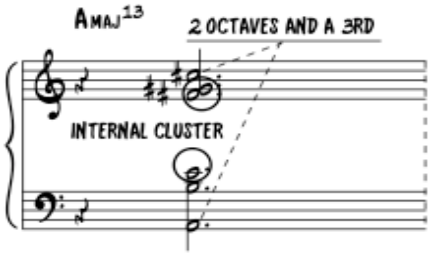
So far this chapter has focused on the techniques employed in developing the chord progressions used in *Real Talk*, but vertical structures have not been discussed. The next examples illustrate the different ways chords are voiced in the woodwinds and brass at various points and throughout the composition.

Example 4.11 Voicing of a D+/Eb+



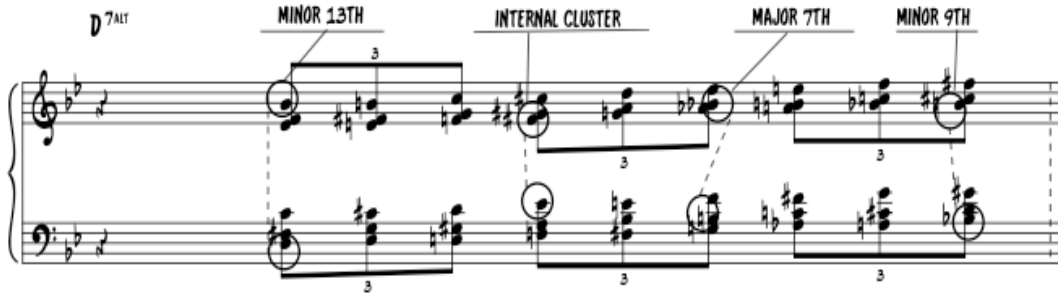
Example 4.11 is derived from the first passage in *Part 1* and establishes the harmonically ambiguous atmosphere that defines the first half of the opening movement. This voicing is formed by taking three perfect-fifth intervals and stacking them on top of one another while separating the pairs by a half-step. This results in tension between four of the inner voices. It also generates a major seventh interval—displaced by an octave—between the outer voices. This is an open voicing.

Example 4.12 Voicing of an Amaj13



Example 4.12 is another example of an open voicing due to the spacing between the outermost voices. Again there is an internal cluster of tones—major second intervals between three inner voices—and a very large interval between the outermost voices; the three unmarked outer voices would actually form whole-step clusters where they voiced in closest possible position. This structure is consonant and only includes a single half-step tension that occurs between the A and G♯—which is inverted into a seventh interval.

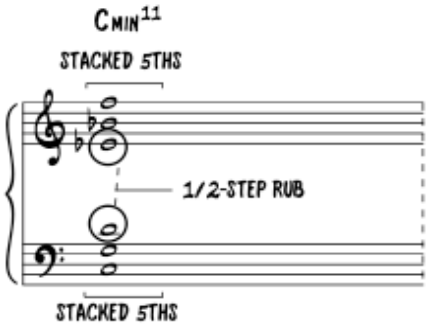
Example 4.13 Voicing of a melodic figure over D7alt



Example 4.13 is a fairly close voicing in comparison to the others found in the composition. Once again the clusters occur between three inner voices. This example

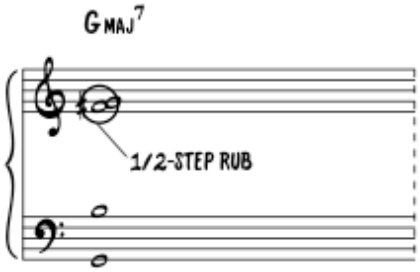
also demonstrates parallel planing. The first voicing employed in this excerpt is of a D7alt. It is voiced from bottom to top as D-F♯-C-E♭-F-B♭. These notes are the first, third, seventh, flat-ninth, sharp-ninth, and flat-thirteenth (or sharp fifth) scale degrees, respectively. This vertical structure is directly transposed by an ascending half-step eight times in this excerpt. In this series of chords the intervals that create the most tension are the minor ninth and major seventh since they are essentially half-steps displaced by an octave.

Example 4.14 Voicing of a Cmin11



Example 4.14 is another open voicing. In this illustration there are two elements in play, stacked perfect fifths and a half-step rub. There are two sets of three notes that form a total of four perfect fifth intervals. A different stack is shown in each staff and they are separated by a half-step. As in the previous examples, this creates tension between the innermost voices.

Example 4.15 Voicing of Cmin11 from *Real Talk: Part 5*



The voicing shown in Example 4.15 is unique within this piece. It appears in *Part 5* m. 208, is an arrival point, and is only used once. Every vertical structure up to this point has shared two common factors:

1) The tensions (second intervals) appear between the inner voices.

2) There is an interval space of at least a third between the top two voices.

This voicing places the tension on top of the chord and sets the two highest voices a half-step away from one another. This contrasts with every other wind section vertical structure in the piece. In the context of this excerpt, G is the melody note. The F♯ is placed next to it to generate just enough tension to make the arrival point sound more interesting since the chord does not include any extensions or more colorful tones.

Harmony plays both cohesive and separating roles in *Real Talk*. The suite is unified in that the same techniques are used and recycled throughout to generate material. This assists in creating interconnectivity between movements. However, each movement also possesses harmonic trademarks: the lack of a tonal center, an emphasis on chord substitution, the prevalence of an ostinato, and unique chord voicings. It is the

combination of individuality and similarity that allows each movement in *Real Talk* to remain simultaneously connected and separated.

Chapter 5: Other Compositional Techniques

This chapter discusses essential compositional techniques employed throughout *Real Talk* pertaining to orchestration and use of the rhythm section. There are two techniques that deal with orchestration:

1) Instrument Grouping

   Instrument grouping refers to the association of instruments being used in a particular role. In *Real Talk*, role is divided into the following two categories: melodic and supportive. When not resting, each of the instruments in the ensemble may function in either of these categories.

2) Dovetailing

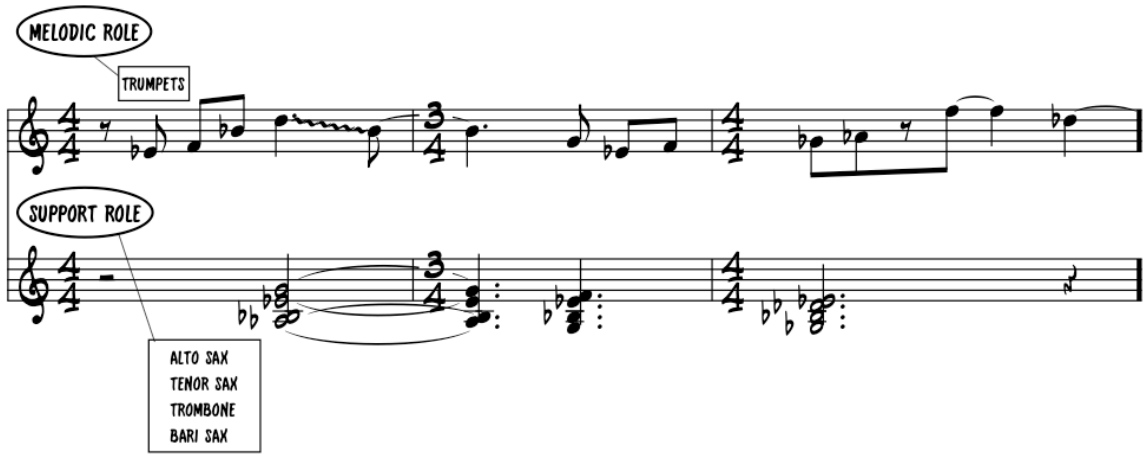
   Dovetailing takes place when an idea is initiated by one or more instruments and is continued or concluded by another instrument or group of instruments. The continuation of an idea can include any number of syncopations or sustained tones and may as a result create chords, melodic shapes, or both simultaneously.

The rhythm section—or specific instruments within the rhythm section—plays many roles, though it is used primarily to support the winds. However, there are moments in *Real Talk* where the rhythm section becomes the primary musical focus.

Instrument Grouping

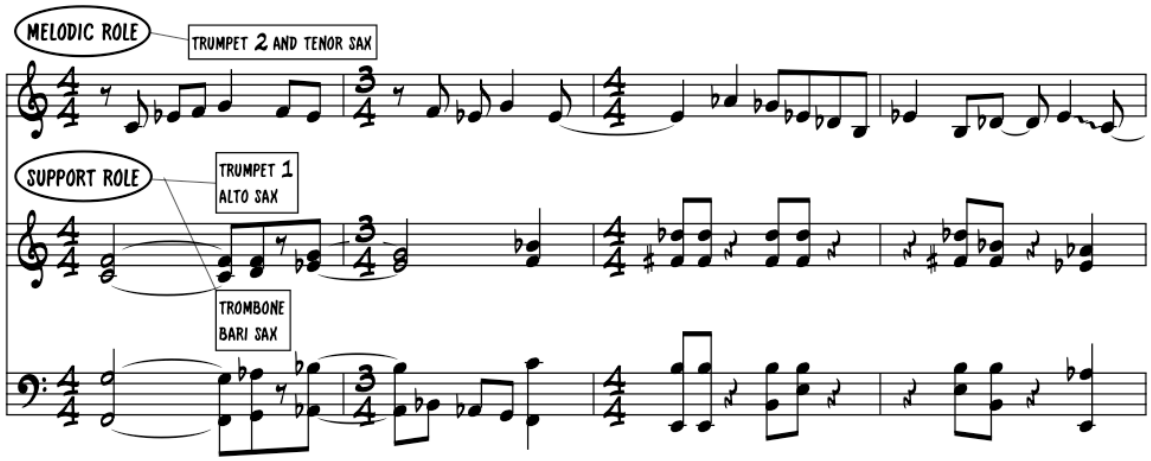
There are multiple instrument groupings available within a 10-piece ensemble. The instruments in the *Real Talk* ensemble fall into the following sections: woodwind, brass, and rhythm. Each instrument in the ensemble can be grouped with other instruments either within their section or from another section generating either a homogenous or mixed color, respectively. As stated earlier, the instruments in these groups play either melodic or supportive roles. The number of instruments in a given role varies throughout the composition. In this analysis, the weight of instruments in opposing roles is expressed in terms of melodic vs. supportive numbers. The following examples illustrate the most prominent instrument groupings employed in the woodwind and brass sections throughout *Real Talk* and include role weighting of 2 vs. 4, 2 vs. 2 vs. 2 (a special case), and 3 vs. 3.

Example 5.1 Homogenous melody and mixed support 2 vs. 4 grouping, *Part 2*, mm. 18-20



Example 5.1 depicts a 2 vs. 4 grouping. The two trumpets cover the melodic role, and the remaining four winds provide support. The melodic role in this grouping is homogenous since it is covered by brass instruments alone. The supporting instruments form a mixed color group—three woodwinds and one brass. The next excerpt, Example 5.2, illustrates a completely mixed color grouping.

Example 5.2 Mixed melody and mixed support 2 vs. 4 grouping, *Part 2*, mm. 75-78



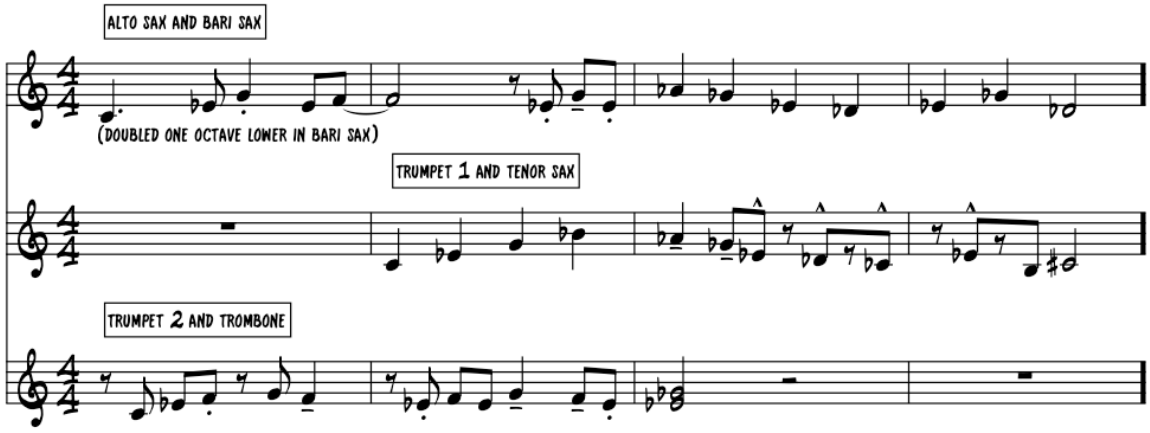
Example 5.2 is another 2 vs. 4 grouping. However, this differs from Example 5.1 in that it has a mixed sound quality in both the melodic and supportive roles. The melody—written in the first system—is carried by trumpet and saxophone. The support figures, likewise a mix of brass and saxophone colors, appear in the remaining winds and provide both harmonic support and rhythmic propulsion.

The two previous examples have shown groupings with weights of 2 vs. 4. Each example has had a melodic figure carried by two instruments and supporting figures carried by four instruments. The supporting figures do not overpower the melodic figures in these examples, however. Since the melodic instruments are usually in unison or octave unison and the supporting instruments are usually orchestrated in four-part harmony and have less motion in their lines compared to the melody, the support figures should be perceived as less commanding than the melodic figures and are easily pushed into the background. The 2 vs. 4 group, where the melodic role is carried by two

instruments and the support role is carried by four instruments, is the only 2 vs. 4 grouping used in *Real Talk*.

The next example is of a special case grouping, 2 vs. 2 vs. 2. This grouping does not clearly follow the role distinctions of melody and support, and clarifying the roles of each group is difficult since each instrument plays a version of the melody.

Example 5.3 Special instrument 2 vs. 2 vs. 2 grouping, *Part 2*, mm. 122-125

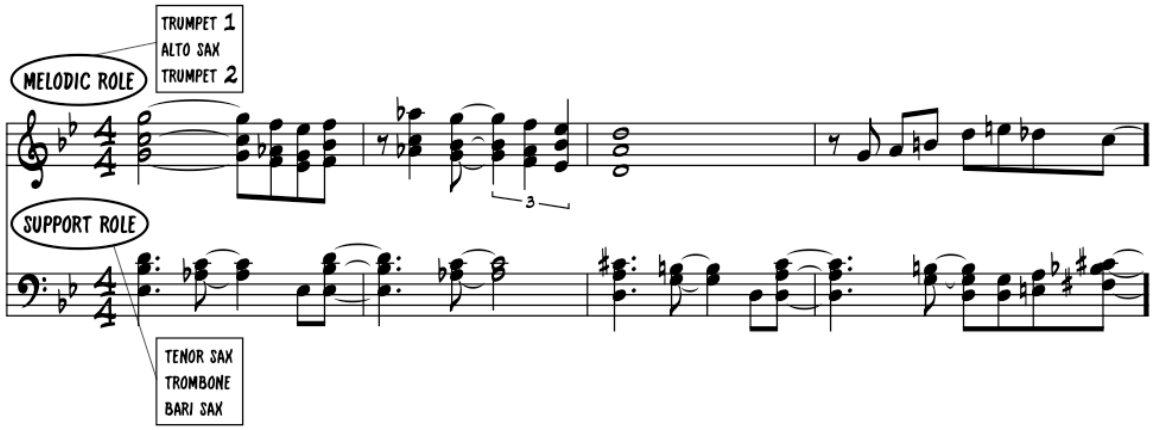


Within the context of the composition this passage obscures the melody. Since each pair of instruments plays a fragment and/or variation of the melodic figure simultaneously the distinctive lines between melodic and supportive roles become blurred. This excerpt appears as part of a series of rhythmic variations to Theme 1 in which every instrument in the wind section is playing the melody. The most complete version of the melody is illustrated in the first system and played by the homogenous grouping of alto and baritone saxophone. The second system depicts one version of the second half of the melody and is assigned to the mixed group of trumpet and tenor saxophone. The third system

displays a variation on the first half of the melodic figure and is performed by the trombone and remaining trumpet.

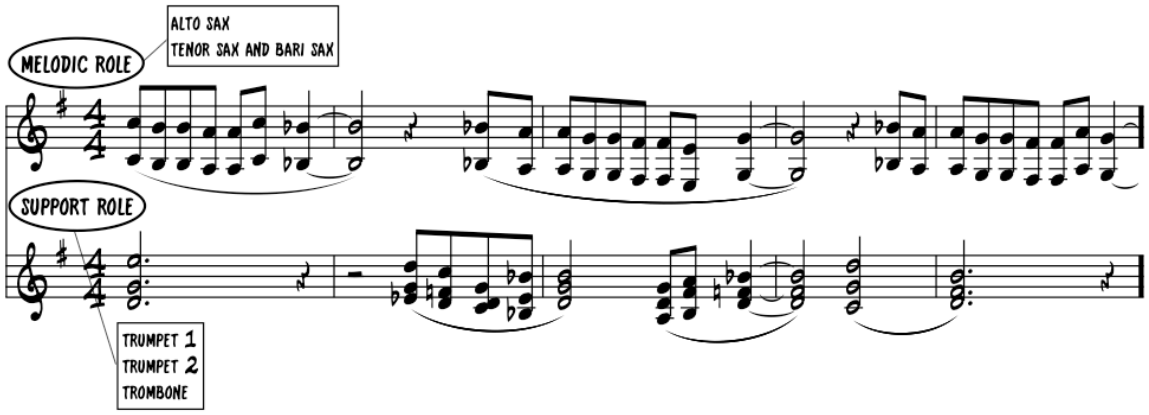
The next examples illustrate the two types of 3 vs. 3 instrument groupings, completely mixed and completely homogenous. These groups show equal instrument distribution with regard to the melodic and supportive roles.

Example 5.4 Mixed melody and mixed support 3 vs. 3 grouping, *Part 3*, mm. 73-76



In Example 5.4 both groups are harmonized. The melody is doubled in octaves by the trumpets and harmonized internally by the alto saxophone. The remaining winds are harmonizing an ostinato behind the higher timbre voices. Since the alto saxophone is providing harmony, it may appear possible to label the example another 2 vs. 4 grouping. However, this would be incorrect. Given the shape, direction, and rhythm employed in the alto saxophone line, the alto is clearly following the same design as the octave doubled trumpets and not the ostinato played by the other instruments. This is a completely mixed 3 vs. 3 grouping.

Example 5.5 Homogenous melody and homogenous support 3 vs. 3 grouping, *Part 5*, mm. 183-187



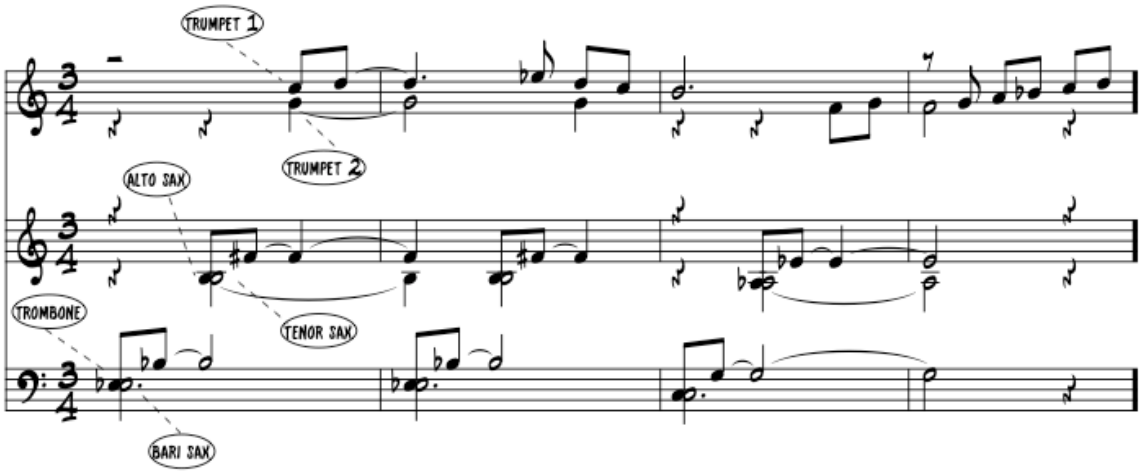
Example 5.5 illustrates the classic separation of the woodwind and brass sections. This is a completely homogenous, 3 vs. 3 grouping. The reeds are playing the melody while the brass section provides harmonic support and countermelody. This grouping occurs in other places in *Real Talk* and always uses the brass in the supportive role.

Dovetailing

As stated earlier in this chapter, dovetailing occurs when an idea is initiated by one or more instruments and continued or concluded by another instrument or group of instruments. In *Real Talk*, dovetailing is used to create chords and to reinforce melodic lines. Chords created through dovetailing are often referred to as pyramids, and melodic lines created or reinforced through dovetailing are called composite lines. The following

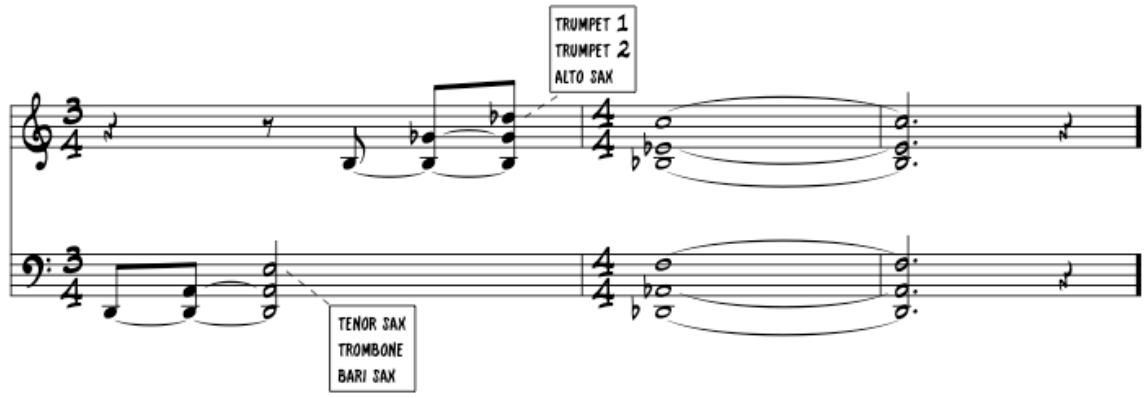
examples illustrate the two types of dovetailing and the results they yield pertaining to *Real Talk*.

Example 5.6 Pyramid generated through dovetailing, *Part 1*, mm. 7-10



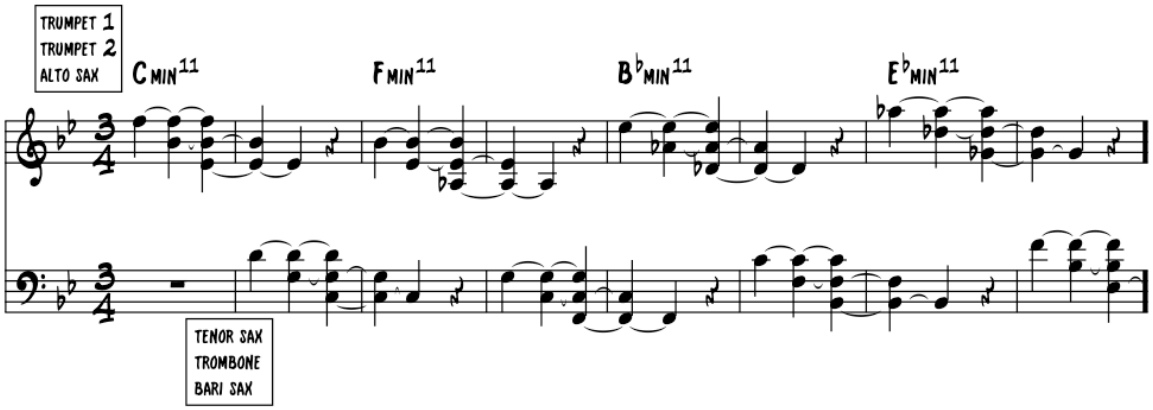
This example shows an ascending chord and line formed by systematically adding two voices. There is a single eighth-note line generated by the staggered entrances of baritone saxophone and trombone, alto and tenor saxophones, and trumpets. As the voices reach their sustained pitches, a chord pyramid forms. The chord is formed by stacking three perfect fifth intervals on top of one another and separating each successive fifth by a semitone. The chord quality of this pyramid is the augmented triad pair D+/E♭+.

Example 5.7 Pyramid generated through dovetailing, *Part 1*, mm. 36-38



Example 5.7 is another ascending pyramid formed by dovetailing. This pyramid leads to a new harmonic resting point, unlike the pyramid in Example 5.6 that outlines a chord but has no intended direction. The dovetailing in the first measure of this excerpt is used to create tension. In the second measure, dovetailing followed by unified motion and sustain creates release and an arrival point.

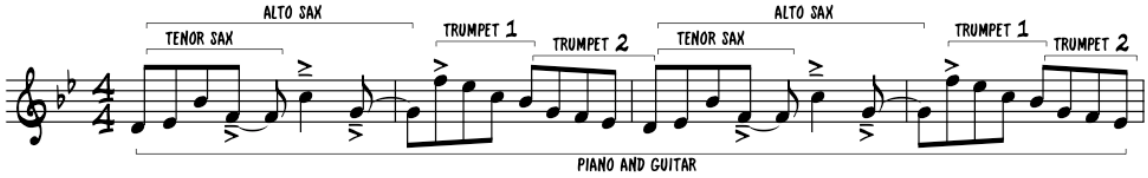
Example 5.8 Chord progression generated by descending pyramid dovetailing, *Part 5*, mm. 1-8



Example 5.8 illustrates another use of dovetailing. This example demonstrates how sequential dovetailing can be used to form a chord progression. The chord progression formed here is a fifths cycle of minor chords starting in C and ending in E♭. The progression is formed through descending pyramids.

The following two excerpts show how dovetailing can be used in the orchestration of melodic lines, thus creating composite lines. The first example, Example 5.9, illustrates a single melodic line and includes a diagram of how each instrument that plays the melody connects to the next instrument in the sequence.

Example 5.9 Composite melody with instrument mapping, *Part 5*, mm. 99-102



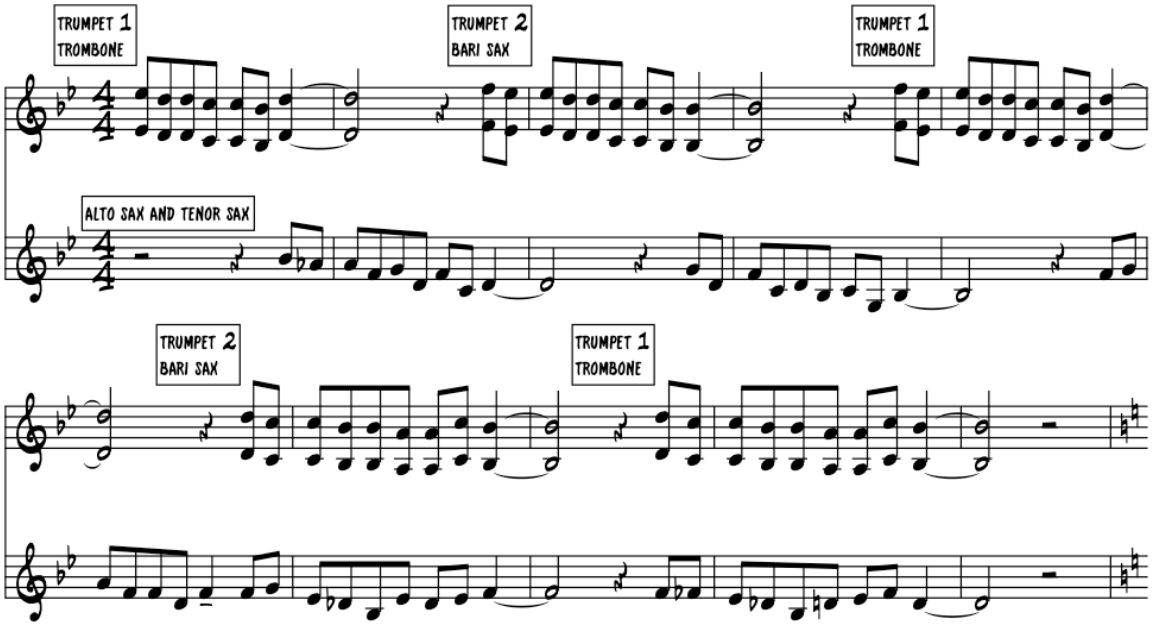
Example 5.9 appears multiple times as Transition 4—first referenced in Chapter 2—in *Real Talk: Part 5*. Although this section focuses on the uses of orchestration technique pertaining to the winds, here it is necessary to discuss the piano and guitar. Both rhythm section instruments play this melodic figure in its entirety. The different wind instruments are used to reinforce various portions of that figure resulting in a composite line in the wind section.

In the winds, the alto and tenor saxophones initiate the idea. After the tenor drops out, the alto continues until the line is picked up by trumpet 1. After trumpet 1 finishes

its part, trumpet 2 takes over and completes the melodic figure. When the second trumpet finishes its part the cycle begins again with the two saxophones.

In this example, each wind instrument is mapped onto the melodic line played by the piano and guitar, and this mapping shows time periods during which the wind instruments are active or inactive as pertains to the melodic figure. During the periods where their activity is not mapped out in Example 5.9 the winds are operating in support of the melodic line. Contrary to the mixed roles of support and melody played by the winds in Example 5.9, the roles taken on in Example 5.10, are singular and focused.

Example 5.10 Composite melody and alternating grouping colors, *Part 5*, mm. 171-180



In Example 5.10, the alto and tenor saxophones provide a countermelody, while the trumpet/trombone and trumpet/baritone saxophone instrument combinations provide the

melody. Dovetailing occurs here between the first and second systems. This is also an example of alternating homogenous and mixed colors in the melody. The double saxophone combination, though not beginning with the same pitch as the previous group, continues the idea initiated by the trumpet/trombone combination. The two saxophones also serve as a cohesive element between the trumpet/trombone and trumpet/baritone saxophone combinations. Due to the countermelody provided by the two saxophones and the alternation of homogenous and mixed color, the melodic motion of the passage is propelled forward and continues to generate interest even though it is of a fairly simple design.

Uses of the Rhythm Section

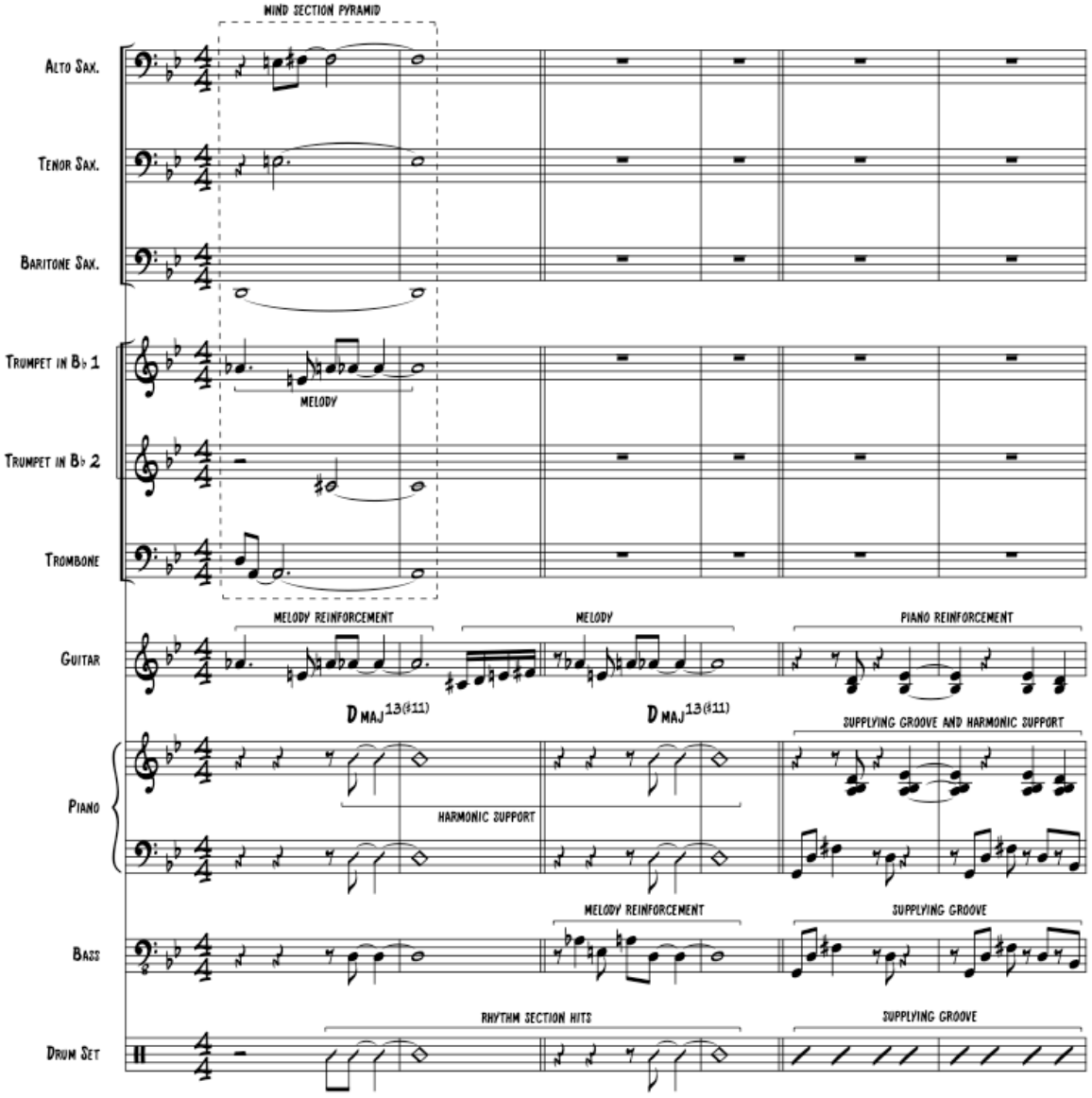
As stated at the beginning of this chapter, the rhythm section usually plays a supportive role in *Real Talk*. Yet there are a few occasions where the rhythm section—or instruments within the rhythm section—is the focus. In the case of the drums, this focus comes in the form of solos, whether they are free-form or occurring in the context of an active ensemble; at all other times, the drum set is either resting or playing a supportive role by outlining a specific rhythmic foundation, or groove, in jazz parlance. The bass is always used in an assistive role. The piano and guitar are involved in a variety of functions.

The piano and guitar support the winds, build upon the rhythmic foundations established by the drum set and bass, and generate melodies (as seen in Example 5.9). The piano, while in the rhythm section, functions primarily as harmonic support and is

never used to reinforce a wind instrument; there are occasions when wind instruments are used to reinforce the piano (see Example 5.9). Also, since the piano can provide its own harmonic and rhythmic accompaniment while playing a melody, it maintains a special role as a potential solo instrument.

Throughout *Real Talk*, the guitar is used primarily as a supportive element. In the rhythm section, its role is to provide harmonic and rhythmic assistance. Outside of that, the guitar is used to reinforce melodies played by the winds and to double either the left or right hands of the piano. Example 5.11 illustrates a special passage in *Part 3* during which the rhythm section fulfills multiple musical roles in quick succession. This excerpt also depicts the only moment in this composition where the guitar is the melodic focal point as well as one of the two moments where the bass doubles the melody.

Example 5.11 Multiple uses of the rhythm section in quick succession, *Part 3*, mm. 79-84



In this example, the guitar is used in three roles: melodic reinforcement, melody, and piano reinforcement. The piano is used in two roles: harmonic support and supplying the groove. The bass also supplies the groove and briefly doubles the melody. The drum set

is used to accent the rhythms and provide a foundation. Also labeled in this example is a chord pyramid in the winds achieved through dovetailing.

This analysis has covered compositional techniques related to form, melody, and harmony in detail. Approaches to orchestration can be as unique to composers as fingerprints are to humans. In *Real Talk*, the manner in which instrument combinations and dovetailing are used serves to accentuate musicality by creating a variety of timbres and varying the methods employed in the construction and arrangement of linear material. The ways in which the rhythm section is used enhances the musical unpredictability of the piece and allows the individual instruments within the section some momentary diversions from their usual supportive roles.

Chapter 6: Final Thoughts

Beyond Composition

Away from the writing desk, *Real Talk* offered two serious issues for me: rehearsing and conducting. Running rehearsals for this piece was one of the most stressful events I have encountered in my musical lifetime. As the music was read for the first time a number of questions and concerns ran through my mind. Most important was the idea that I was a terrible writer based on the rough first reading of the piece. The reality, of course, was that the music was more difficult than I realized after having focused on it for so long. It was old to me but new to the performers. The ensemble needed more time with the piece in order to understand its spirit and accurately capture that essence in performance.

As for conducting, I consider it a necessity at times. I have some experience in conducting jazz ensembles, but nothing compares to the experience of conducting one's own work. I found it difficult to conduct *Real Talk* because of my close connection to the music and knowledge of the piece. Initially, it was a bit overwhelming to hear every single mistake as it occurred, but once I overcame that hurdle—by relaxing and remaining patient—everything gradually fell into place. Although I do not anxiously await the next rehearsal and conducting experience of my own music, I am confident that it will be worth the effort in the long run.

Ten-Piece

I now have a better understanding of the tools available to me when writing for a ten-piece ensemble. While I consider *Real Talk* a successful work, the composition does not fully explore the possibilities of the ten-piece format, which still has many more compositional options available for exploration including (but not limited to): chord voicings, instrument groupings, sectional interplay, and methods of using linear material. Though it is not an immediate concern, in my next ten-piece project I will be sure to explore more of those options.

Perspective

Overall, the creation of *Real Talk* was a great test of my current ability, and the project allowed me to evaluate both my strengths and weaknesses. Through the course of this project I was able to achieve my goals of: writing shorter music, referencing some of my favorite artists, an experimenting within an unfamiliar ensemble. I believe *Real Talk* has enough variety in its content to be enjoyable by both those who perform it and those who listen, and I am satisfied with the quality of the final product.

It is part of my usual compositional approach to move on from a piece as soon as it is completed so that I can begin a new work. That way, I avoid falling into the trap of endless edits and can maintain a high volume of musical output, but this project forced me to live with a single composition for what I consider to be an exceptionally long period of time. Though I do not plan on spending this much time on a single piece again, I do understand that there is much to be gained from investing larger amounts of time into single compositions. The depths of high quality writing that can be reached during the

editing phase are truly astonishing, however, the price associated with that much depth—which in my case was a severe loss in total productivity—is slightly more than I would like to pay on a regular basis.

Hindsight is 20/20. New pathways and solutions always seem more obvious when looking back, but excessive reflection can cloud judgment and possibly hinder the vision of what lies ahead. Knowing that, I believe it to be more worthwhile to remember the areas I wish to change and improve upon and use that information to guide me in the creation of my next work. That being said, I trust that my experiences over the last eight months will prove invaluable in the shaping of my future compositions.

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Vita

Marcus Wilcher was raised in California and grew up listening to Soul and Hip-Hop music. He has studied saxophone at Riverside City College in Riverside, CA with Jeff Ellwood and Charlie Richard, and at The University of Texas-Austin with John Mills. He also studied jazz composition and traditional composition with John Mills and Bruce Pennycook, respectively, at the University of Texas. In Austin, Wilcher maintains working relationships as a composer and performer with many groups including: Centerpeace (a sextet led by pianist and educator Dr. James Polk), the Andre Hayward Quintet, the Concept Jazz Orchestra, and The University of Texas Jazz Orchestra. He also leads two bands that focus on his original compositions: The Marcus Wilcher X-tet (a jazz band of indeterminate size), and 5th Protocol (a groove-based quintet). Most recently, he was a finalist in the 2013 ArtEZ Composition Competition—part of the Grolsch International Jazz Festival in Enschede, Holland. In that same year, Marcus also received a commission from the New York Youth Symphony for the new original jazz orchestra piece *To Whom It May Concern*, which was premiered during the 2013-2014 concert season.

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This dissertation was typed by Marcus Wilcher.