



University of North Florida
UNF Digital Commons

All Volumes (2001-2008)

The Osprey Journal of Ideas and Inquiry

2004

Artist Study: The Compositional Style of Jazz Guitarist Nathen Page

Stephen Lesche
University of North Florida

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.unf.edu/ojii_volumes

 Part of the [Composition Commons](#)

Suggested Citation

Lesche, Stephen, "Artist Study: The Compositional Style of Jazz Guitarist Nathen Page" (2004). *All Volumes (2001-2008)*. 89.
http://digitalcommons.unf.edu/ojii_volumes/89

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the The Osprey Journal of Ideas and Inquiry at UNF Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in All Volumes (2001-2008) by an authorized administrator of UNF Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [Digital Projects](#).

© 2004 All Rights Reserved



Artist Study: The Compositional Style of Jazz Guitarist Nathen Page

Stephen Lesche

Faculty Sponsor: Kevin Bales,
Assistant Professor of Music

Nathen Page is one of the masters of modern jazz guitar. Unfortunately, he is also one of the least known and recognized of the masters. While reflecting on this seemingly paradoxical situation, I have been only able to surmise two explanations for it. The first is fairly obvious. It is simply a fact that he has always been a self-promoted artist; he has never been able to gain the national audience and promotion that a big record label can afford. This can be attributed to many different reasons, but none of those can really address the question of why he is a master.

The second explanation can provide a closer look into why he is a master. When people who may not really understand jazz improvisation first see him perform live, they may be put off by his unorthodox tone and technique. I know that this was certainly the case for me the first time I saw him play when I was sixteen. At the time I was very young, uninformed, and thought that he must sound and play a certain way in order to be good. I expected him to have a rich, dark tone and virtuoso technical abilities. According to my standards at that time, he failed. He had what I thought was a very bright and harsh tone and not anywhere near as much technique as some of the other musicians I was listening to had. I believe that there are some people who might not recognize

his mastery because he does not compare to other guitarists that they have listened to. In spite of this, this is exactly why he is so great: he plays like himself. His tone is all his own and I have grown to enjoy it. His approach to technique is also very personalized. While he may not be able to produce rapid flurries of sixteenth notes like some of his contemporaries can, this has never hindered him in expressing himself and producing music of the highest caliber.

In developing as an artist, there are three main steps that one must go through. The first step is to learn the basics. Musicians must learn how to properly hold their instrument, produce a tone, must know all of the scales, chords, theory, etc. This provides a solid groundwork that everything else can be built on. The second step is to study the work of other people. This process involves immerse yourself in their music and learning the how and why of it. It includes learning how their songs are put together, examining different devices or motives that they use, and discerning exactly what makes their performances good music. In an undeveloped musician, one who has not yet reached the third step (these are not necessarily discrete steps, but more of a pattern of development), it can sound as if they are simply copying the other person's style. This is where the third step comes into play.

This project deals primarily in my own development in the third step. This third step involves taking those works that had been studied in step two, extracting ideas from them, turning and twisting them around, and then creating something new from them. The purpose of this step is to develop one's own style as an artist. From studying what makes someone else's music unique, it helps to

develop that same uniqueness in one's own playing.

For this project, I have composed three and arranged two compositions for jazz quartet in the style of Page. The featured instrumentation will be guitar, piano, drums, and bass, which is the same instrumentation that Page had used almost exclusively since he first formed his own group. In preparation for writing my compositions and arrangements, I first had to learn Page's compositions and arrangements by transcribing them from his recordings. In presenting my compositions/arrangements, I will first present the Page composition that my work will be derived from, along with a short written explanation of the song. Then I will present my own work, along with an explanation of how exactly I derived it from the preceding Page composition.

While there are many jazz musicians who are considered masters, choosing Nathen Page was an easy choice. Kevin Bales, professor at the University of North Florida, had been Page's pianist for over ten years, so there is no one better to consult with about Page's style than him. Also, since he

knows all of Page's compositions and arrangements, I was able to learn them the way that Page intended.

Finally, the choice to study Page was solidified in the fact that I have seen him play more than I have any other musician. I did not enjoy that first time I saw him play as much as I hoped I would because of the expectations I brought with me. Still, there was something that intrigued me and over the years I would take every chance I could get to see him perform. Probably to his annoyance, I used to ask Professor Bales almost every other day when the next time he would be playing with Page would be. Once I got over my initial displeasure about his playing, I started to embrace all of the things that I had rejected in the beginning. I hope that through this project I can help to spread his name and show others how to embrace these things in Page's music so then they will be more able to embrace their own uniqueness in themselves. I will also strive to show other people why he should be considered as one of the masters not just of jazz guitar, but of jazz music.

LOVE FOR SALE

ACE N. PAGE

1 **INTRO**



5



A **8**

9 Eb7 8b7



13 Eb7 8b7



17 Eb-7 Ab7 Db7 Gb7 C-7(b5) F7(#5)



23



29 **1st** **2nd**



B

33 Eb-7 Ab7 Db7 8b7



37 Eb-7 Ab7 Db7

41 Bb7(#5) Eb-6

45 Db7 C7 Db7 C7 B7 B7 Bb7



D.S. AL CODA

SOLOS

49 Eb7 Bb7 Eb7 Bb7

57 Eb-7 Ab7 Db7 Gb7 C-7(b5) F7(#5) Bb7

65 Eb-7 Ab7 Db7 Bb7 Eb-7 Ab7 Db7

73 Bb7(#5) Eb-6 Db7 C7 Db7 C7 B7 Bb7

81 Eb7 Bb7 Eb7 Bb7

89 Eb-7 Ab7 Db7 Gb7 C-7(b5) F7(#5) Bb7

Love for Sale

“Love for Sale” was one of Page’s favorite standards to play. It was included in the set list almost every time I saw him play live. There is not much to his arrangement of it, but there is enough to give this well-played (and sometimes over-played) standard a breath of fresh air.

Page enjoyed starting out this song by himself, with a funky guitar

vamp. The vamp that he used was actually one that he took from a Cedar Walton composition entitled “Bolivia” (Fig 1). After repeating this vamp a few times with a crescendo after each repetition, the rest of the band would eventually come in playing the vamp with him. By putting a different bass line under the existing melody, he gives the composition a certain energy that it did not have before.



Figure 1. Bass line from Cedar Walton composition “Bolivia” which is used as basis for “Love for Sale”.

After enough energy had been built, the vamp would give way to the start of the melody and the first A section, which would be in 4/4 swing. At the end of the A section, the vamp would again be played. However, instead of playing it for just the required two bars to complete the 16-bar A section, he extends for vamp for an extra six bars. Sometimes, the vamp would be extended even longer, with the next section coming in on cue.

By simply putting playing a different bass line under a melody, Page proves that it is not necessary to completely rewrite a song in order to have your own arrangement of it. In fact, except for the vamp, the only other change he made to the song was to put a few punctuations in it to lead into the bridge. By simply taking view of something in a different light, it is possible to leave your own mark on it.

WEST END BLUES

LOUIS ARMSTRONG/ARR LESCHE



CONTINUO OSTINATO

E^b7



A^b7



E^b7

(Gm7^b5)

(C7)



B^b7

E^b

E^b/G

A^b7



A^o11

B^b

A^b

B^b7[#]5



A^b

A^bm11

E^b

E^b7



(c) 2004 LESCHE

West End Blues

“West End Blues” is a Louis Armstrong composition that was originally recorded with his Hot Fives and Sevens (from *The Complete Hot Fives and Sevens*, Columbia Records, original recording 1928). While the original starts with a trumpet cadenza, I opted to start by having the guitar play a vamp by itself, ala Page. Then, also in the spirit of Page, the rest of the band comes in with the vamp.

In picking out a vamp to play under the melody, I was originally concerned about the tempo of the piece. A Page-ish vamp would probably not fit with the original tempo, so I decided to give it a more upbeat feeling by raising the tempo. The vamp that I chose to use was taken from trumpeter Lee Morgan’s song “The Sidewinder” (Fig 2).



Figure 2. Vamp from Lee Morgan’s composition “The Sidewinder”.

To change the song to make it the way that I liked it, I changed the form from that of a 12-bar blues to a 25-bar double blues, where each chord lasts

twice as long and there is an extra bar at the end. Also included in this arrangement is a break (bar 19), and various alterations of the original melody (bars 19-24).

SHORT STORY

JOE HENDERSON/ARZ LESCHE

DRUMS

13

17

21

25

1

Fm17 Bb7 Ebm17 Ab7

SHORT STORY

Musical notation for measures 39-45. The key signature has two flats (Bb, Eb). Measure 39 starts with a treble clef and a dynamic marking of *pp*. The bass line contains the following chords: Ab7, D^bMA7, and Cm17. The melody in the treble clef consists of half notes and quarter notes.

Bass line for measures 45-46. Measure 45 contains a half note Eb, a quarter note Gb, and a half note Bb. Measure 46 contains a half note Eb, a quarter note Gb, and a half note Bb.

Musical notation for measures 46-50. Measure 46 starts with a treble clef and a dynamic marking of *pp*. The bass line contains the following chords: Fm17, Bb7, Ebm17, Ab7, Ab7, D^bMA7, and Dm17/G7. The melody in the treble clef includes slurs and accents.

Bass line for measures 50-54. Measure 50 contains a half note Eb, a quarter note Gb, and a half note Bb. Measure 51 contains a half note Eb, a quarter note Gb, and a half note Bb. Measure 52 contains a half note Eb, a quarter note Gb, and a half note Bb. Measure 53 contains a half note Eb, a quarter note Gb, and a half note Bb. Measure 54 contains a half note Eb, a quarter note Gb, and a half note Bb.

Bass line for measures 54-58. Measure 54 contains a half note Eb, a quarter note Gb, and a half note Bb. Measure 55 contains a half note Eb, a quarter note Gb, and a half note Bb. Measure 56 contains a half note Eb, a quarter note Gb, and a half note Bb. Measure 57 contains a half note Eb, a quarter note Gb, and a half note Bb. Measure 58 contains a half note Eb, a quarter note Gb, and a half note Bb.

Bass line for measures 58-62. Measure 58 contains a half note Eb, a quarter note Gb, and a half note Bb. Measure 59 contains a half note Eb, a quarter note Gb, and a half note Bb. Measure 60 contains a half note Eb, a quarter note Gb, and a half note Bb. Measure 61 contains a half note Eb, a quarter note Gb, and a half note Bb. Measure 62 contains a half note Eb, a quarter note Gb, and a half note Bb.

Bass line for measures 62-66. Measure 62 contains a half note Eb, a quarter note Gb, and a half note Bb. Measure 63 contains a half note Eb, a quarter note Gb, and a half note Bb. Measure 64 contains a half note Eb, a quarter note Gb, and a half note Bb. Measure 65 contains a half note Eb, a quarter note Gb, and a half note Bb. Measure 66 contains a half note Eb, a quarter note Gb, and a half note Bb.

Chord progression for measures 66-70. Measure 66: Fm17. Measure 67: Bb7. Measure 68: Ebm17. Measure 69: Ab7. Measure 70: Ab7.

Chord progression for measures 70-74. Measure 70: D^bMA7. Measure 71: Dm17/b5. Measure 72: G7. Measure 73: G7. Measure 74: G7.

Short Story

To keep with the idea of using a bass line or a vamp from one song and putting it underneath the melody of another song, I decided to use this idea with two more recent songs. I melded tenor saxophonist Joe Henderson's composition "Short Story" with the bass line from OutKast's "The Way You Move" (Fig 3). The reasoning behind choosing these songs is that they are both songs that I enjoy listening to, and, since the OutKast song was released and was very popular during the course of

this project, the bass line would be easily identifiable. It would also give me a chance to experiment and try a different angle to the concept of melding two songs together. The vamp from Lee Morgan's "The Sidewinder" was an easy choice for "West End Blues" since that vamp is very characteristic of Page's playing. It is also a busier vamp with more notes happening in a certain amount of time than "The Way You Move", so it wouldn't require the rhythm section to fill in the spaces as much as "The Way You Move" would.



Figure 3. Bass line from OutKast song "The Way You Move".

This arrangement begins much the same way that the OutKast song does. The drums come in with the time for eight bars, bass joins in for eight, and then the melody comes in. Just as in "West End Blues", I doubled the length of the A section so the bass line would play out long enough to have its full

effect. Finally, in keeping with Page's version of "Love for Sale", the first ending (B section) is extended by starting the vamp on the last two bars of the phrase and adding six extra bars. This was used to create a seamless flow in the transition from the B section back to the A section.

CARRIE

NATHEN PAGE

BALLAD

A MIN7 D SUS13 B MIN7 B5 C# MIN9 C MIN9 F13 Bb MAJ7

F MIN9 E7#9 Eb MIN9 Ab13

1 C# MIN7 F#13 F# SUS7 F#7 F SUS7 F7 2 D MIN9 G13 Db MAJ7 Eb6/11

C MAJ7 Bb MAJ7 A MAJ7

Carrie

Carrie is one of Page's most recent, and deceptively simple, compositions. It was written while he was living in Altamonte Springs, FL and is about one of the girls in the neighborhood that he and his wife Ginny watched grow up.

The 16 bar form can be described as ABAB'. A very popular and one of Page's favorite, compositional devices is simply to take a motif (Fig 4a) and then move it into a different key (Fig 4b). This makes the motif sound fresh and new, as opposed to reiterating the original motif verbatim, which can become tiresome after a while.



Figure 4a. Original motif from "Carrie".

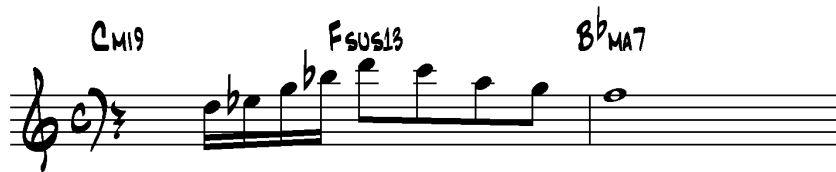


Figure 4b. Transposed motif from "Carrie"
(Transposed up a minor third).

One idea that Page does that I have not quite heard anyone else use is to put a pause, or fermata, in the middle of the song. They are frequently used during intro or endings, but it is rare to hear one in the form of the song. Page uses an exaggerated fermata at the end of bar 2 of the A section after he plays motif 1 to set up the transition to motif 1' (Fig 5). The most logical source of inspiration for this idea is probably that it is something he picked up when he

was in tenor saxophonist Sonny Rollins' band. Sonny would frequently break time and go into a rubato section. A great example of this is on his recording of "Without a Song" (from *The Bridge*, Sonny Rollins, RCA Bluebird, 1962) during the final B section. At this point, the drummer and bassist both lay out and leave Rollins to play the melody and Jim Hall to accompany him on guitar. The feel is very loose and not in any strict tempo. No matter where Page got the inspiration for this idea, it is still very much his own thing that he uses to put his own character on the music.

The image shows a musical staff in treble clef with a common time signature (C). The melody consists of eighth and quarter notes. Above the staff, seven chords are indicated: A^m7, D^{sus}13, B^m7^b5, D^bM19, C^m19, F¹³, and B^bM^bA7. A fermata is placed over the final note of the second bar, which is a quarter note G^b on the second line of the staff.

Figure 5. Using a fermata on beat 4 of the second bar to set up a transposition of the motif (from “Carrie”).

FOR GIN AND NATE

STEVE LESCHE

$A\flat 13$ $G7\flat 9$ $G\flat 7$ $FMA7$ $E\flat 7$ $FMA7$ $E\flat 7$ $C7\sharp 9$ $G\flat 7$

$FMI7$ $GMI7$ $FMI7$ $GMI7$ $D-$ $E\flat-$ $E-$

$FMI7$ $G/B\flat$ F/G G/A

F/G G/A

G/A $Fsus$ $E\flat sus$ $D\flat sus$ $Csus$ $FMI(MA7)$

For Gin and Nate

This composition was inspired by my visit to Page's widow, Ginny, in the spring of 2004. I was very fortunate for her to take me in for a few days and share with me about her and Page's life together. She told me all about their life together, including how they met, about their friends, even their mutual love for sailing.

After the visit with Mrs. Page, I went home and immediately wrote this song. Since I wanted to write a song based on their life together, I decided to use the number two as a unifying theme. In keeping with this theme, I based the melody on two primary notes which are a whole step (which equals two half

steps) apart. When taking away the ornamental notes, it can be seen that the first four bars really only consist of the notes A and G (Fig 6a). At the end of bar 4, there are two fermatas (Fig 6a) which, is in Page's composition "Carrie", give way to a change in the motif. In this case, the melody is transposed down a major 6th (Fig 6b), while the chords change from what was an Ionian (major) mode in the first four bars, to a Dorian (minor) mode in the next six bars. Finally, in the last four bars, while the melody notes stay the same, the underlying harmony changes from minor to a major-suspended sound. This sound was chosen to create inherent tension in the composition that will eventually resolve once the form starts back over.

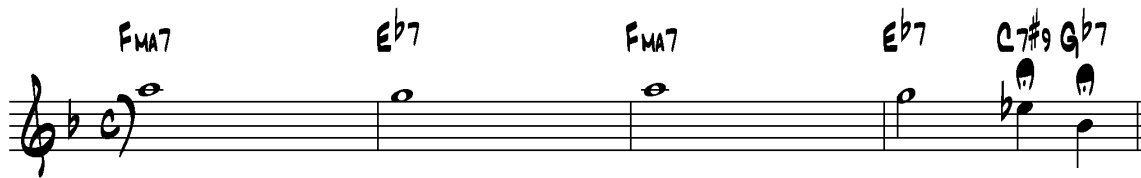


Figure 6a. 1st four bars of "For Gin and Nate" with ornamental notes stripped away – Fermatas in 4th bar.



Figure 6b. 2nd four bars of "For Gin and Nate" with ornamental notes stripped away.

Stepping

Nathen Page

The musical score for "Stepping" is written in treble clef and 4/4 time. It consists of five staves of music. The key signature changes from one flat (Bb) to two flats (Bb, Eb) at measure 13. The score includes various chords and melodic lines with slurs and ties.

Staff 1: Chords: Dmin7b5, G7b9, Cmin7, Cmin7/bb. Measure 1 starts with a repeat sign.

Staff 2: Chords: Amin7b5, D7#9, Gmaj7. Measure 5 is marked with a '5'.

Staff 3: Chords: Gmin7, Amin7b5, D7b9, Gmin7, Gmin7/f, Emin7b5, A7. Measure 9 is marked with a '9'.

Staff 4: Chords: Dmaj7, Ebmin7, Ab7, Dbmaj7, Cmin7b5, F7b9. Measure 13 is marked with a '13'.

Staff 5: Chords: Bbmaj7, Bbmaj7, Amin7b5, D7b5, Gmaj7. Measure 17 is marked with a '17'. The first two measures of this staff are marked with '1' and '2' respectively, indicating a first and second ending.

Steppin'

“Steppin’” is a composition with a 38-bar, AA’ form. One of the interesting aspects of this song is how conversational the melody is. This is particularly noticeable in how every phrase has another phrase that seems to answer back to the original one. It begins in bar 1 with a four note idea with the three notes in the second bar serving as a continuation of that idea. Page then has a response to this original idea by creating a dialog between the melody

instrument (in this case, the guitar) and the rhythm section. While the rhythm section plays an upbeat eighth note/downbeat quarter note rhythm, notated by Xs, the melody answers back with a repeated three note motif (Fig 7a), which then resolves into bar 5. So, while on a micro level there is all of this conversation occurring in the first 4 bars, on a macro level, the second 4 bars is used to respond to everything that happened in the first 4 bars.



Figure 7a. Creating a dialogue between the melody and the rhythm section (rhythm section represented by Xs).

In the third 4 bar phrase, Page changes the tonality from major to minor (in this case, from G major to G minor). After the tonality change, he uses a classic Benny Golson-type progression (Fig 7b) to bring him to a key that is a fifth away, which in this composition is

the key of D major. When arriving in the key of D major in bar 13, he uses the motif of F# down to A. To keep it consistent, he then transposes this motif down a half step, so it becomes F down to Ab in bar 15.

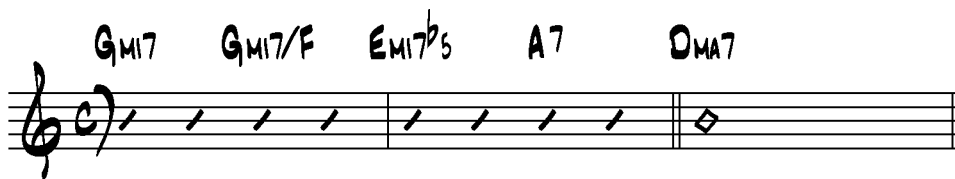


Figure 7b. Harmonic progression that Benny Golson popularized to arrive at a key center a fifth away.

What I like about this composition is that will all of the different motives developing and responding to each other, it helps to keep the song from having a

stagnant feeling. By the end, there is a feeling that he has said a whole lot in just a short amount of time and that, with all of the “conversational” motifs

occurring back and forth, a great story

has just been told.

THE NEXT PAGE

STEVE LESCHE

5

A minor 7 flat 5 D7 G minor 7 G flat 7 sharp 5

9

F minor 7 flat 5 B flat 7 flat 9 E flat major 7

13

¹ D minor 7 flat 5 G7 C minor 7 C minor 7 flat A minor 7 flat 5 D7

17

G major 7 A flat minor 7 D7 G flat major 7 G minor 7 C7 F major 7 B flat 7

19

² D minor 7 flat 5 G7 C minor 7 F7 A flat 6

23

G minor 7 flat 5 C7 sharp 9 F minor 7 B flat 7 sharp 9 E flat major 7

The Next Page

“The Next Page” was the very first song I composed for this project. The title is an allusion to the titles of his records, which include “Page One”, “Page Two”, and “The Other Page”. At this point, I was not quite sure which direction to take my compositions and exactly how much of Page’s influence I should put into them. I was also still rather new to composing (I had only written a few songs before this), so I decided to structure this song in a similar way to how Page structured one of his. The composition I modeled this after was “Steppin”.

The shape of the first four bars of “The Next Page” is modeled exactly after the first four bars of “Steppin”. First, there is a short motif that ends on the “and” of four and is then continued

in the next bar. In the third and fourth bars, a dialogue occurs between the melody instrument and the rhythm section, in just the same way as it does in Page’s composition. Bars 5-8 then have the job of answering the first four bars and relieving the tension that has been built up.

The quarter note triplet phrase the is used in bars 9 and 10 is one that is borrowed from a Miles Davis/Gil Evans composition entitled “Miles Ahead”(Fig 8), only it is transposed to fit the chords. The next phrase is set up by a descending minor third motif from Eb to C. It is then altered using a device than Page employed many times; that is, simply moving the idea down in half steps, with the harmony matching it. Here, this device is used four times (Fig 9).



Figure 8. Original motif from Miles Davis/Gil Evans composition “Miles Ahead” – Major mode.



Figure 9. Altered motif used in “The Next Page” – Transposed down a minor third and in the minor mode.

In keeping with the structure of Page’s composition, the original motif is now repeated. When the second ending comes around, the Miles Ahead motif is

again repeated, but is resolved in a different way than the first in order to end the song. The song then ends with a short two bar phrase.

AFTERNOON IN AFRICA

NATHEN PAGE

Staff 1: C_{MAJ7} F⁷ B^b_{MAJ7} Eb⁷
PNO GTR

Staff 2: Ab_{MAJ7} G⁷ C_{MAJ7} Eb⁷ Ab_{MAJ7} G^{#b}13

Staff 3: C_{MAJ7} GAUG LATIN BASS PEDAL

Staff 4: Eb^{min9} Ab⁷ D^{min9} G⁷
15 CODA (D.C. AL CODA)

Staff 5: C_{MAJ7} Eb⁷ Ab_{MAJ7} G^{7#9} C_{MAJ9}
19

Afternoon in Africa

“Afternoon in Africa” was written while Page was on tour in Africa with Swiss drummer Alvin Queen, whom he had met while playing in the Charles Tolliver Quartet. Their three month tour took place in the spring of 1988 and brought them to many places all over the continent. This song was written during one afternoon in Africa (hence the title), before a show they were going to play that night. Because of its simple yet compelling melody, it instantly became one of the band’s favorite songs.

“Afternoon in Africa” was built based off an idea that the early bebop musicians (including Charlie Parker,

Dizzy Gillespie, Thelonious Monk, et al) propagated. They would very often take an existing song, such as “Indiana” (Fig 10a), and strip away the melody so the only thing left would be the harmonic progression. Then, they would write their own melodies on top of the harmonic structure creating brand new songs. In this example, the song is Charlie Parker’s composition “Donna Lee” (Fig 10b). Very often, these new melodies would be more complex, faster, and harder to play than the original. This whole process is very similar to how artists today (especially in pop music) will use samples of different songs in their own songs, or write remixes of other people’s songs.

Figure 10a. First 8 bars of the jazz standard “Indiana” by McDonald/Haley.

Figure 10b. First 8 bars of the bebop composition “Donna Lee” by Charlie Parker.

In keeping with this tradition, Page used the harmonic structure from

the jazz standard “Afternoon in Paris” by John Lewis as a basis to write his

composition “Afternoon in Africa”. The form of the song is AABA, and it is a 4/4 swing. From examining the first four bars of “...Paris” (Fig 11a) and “...Africa” (Fig 11b), it can be observed that the same exact harmonic structure is

in use. Also, Page’s melody loosely mirrors Lewis’ by having the same duration of pickup notes (they equal a quarter note in both compositions) and by using the same idea repeatedly, only transposing it to fit the different chords.

Figure 11a shows the first four bars of John Lewis' composition "Afternoon in Paris". The music is written in treble clef, 4/4 time, and C major. The melody consists of quarter notes with a quarter rest pickup. The chords are CMA7, CM17, F7, BbMA7, BbM17, and Eb7.

Figure 11a. First 4 bars of John Lewis composition “Afternoon in Paris”.

Figure 11b shows the first four bars of Nathen Page's composition "Afternoon in Africa". The music is written in treble clef, 4/4 time, and C major. The melody is similar to Lewis' but with a different pickup note duration. The chords are CMA7, CM17, F7, BbMA7, BbM17, and Eb7. The instrumentation includes PIANO and GUITAR.

Figure 11b. First 4 bars of Nathen Page composition “Afternoon in Africa”.

In an effort to put his own stamp on the music, Page changed the bridge of the song. He abandons Lewis’ bridge (Fig 3a), which is in swing with a ii-V-I-VI7 turnaround, and creates his own which has a Latin feel and only has one

chord, G augmented (Fig 12b). This creates sufficient tension to push the song into the final A section, giving that final section the duty of not only reiterating the original theme and ending the song, but also to release that tension

Figure 12a shows the bridge (B Section) of "Afternoon in Paris". The music is written in treble clef, 4/4 time, and C major. The melody consists of quarter notes with a quarter rest pickup. The chords are DM17, G7, CMA7, A7, DM17, G7, CMA7, DM17, G7.

Figure 12a. Bridge (B Section) of “Afternoon in Paris”.

G Aug
 LATIN
 SAGG PEDAL
 E^bm19
 A^b7
 Dm19
 G⁷

Figure 12b. Bridge (B Section) of "Afternoon in Africa".

THE ROAD TO LES AVANTS

STEVE LESCHE

INTRO/ENDING

Bbmaj9 Abmaj9

A13b9 D7alt

♩ = 240

DRUMS 8

FINE (EMPHASIS ON FINE)

17

Gm17 C7 Fm17 Bb7 E7#9 Ebm17

21

G7#b9 Cm17

25

Fm17 Bbm17 Eb7 D7

29

Gm17

2x

The Road to Les Avants

The idea for “The Road to Les Avants” came about from my tour of Europe in the summer of 2003 with the UNF Jazz Ensemble. We played at three different jazz festivals during the two weeks that we were there, and the second festival we played at was the Montreux Jazz Festival in Switzerland. Montreux is a very beautiful town situated on the shore of Lac Léman (Lake Geneva) with a breathtaking view of the French Alps and glaciers directly across the lake.

Since we were staying in Montreux for 4 days and only had to play one concert, we were allowed plenty of time for sightseeing and exploration. On our third day there, some friends and I decided to take a hike up the mountain to see where it would take us. As we left Montreux and its’ upscale and modern provisions (including Rolex and Gucci stores) and traveled up the mountain, it was as if we were being taken back in time. Just above the city it felt as if we were in an early 20th century village, with its cobblestone pathways and gardens outside of all the houses. The thing I remember most about this part of the trip were all the steps we had to go up. After going up a few hundred vertical feet of steps, it felt like they would go on forever! Fortunately, once we got above the city and the village, we came to a road.

After going uphill on the road for a little while, we came upon a sign that read: “Les Avants – 5km”. One of my friends remembered Professor Bunky Green (director of UNF’s Jazz Program) telling him to go there. We all tried to imagine what could possibly be so great about this place, since Green never

actually said why we should go there. We continued to follow the road uphill on its zigzagging, seemingly never-ending trip to Les Avants. On the way, we were able to see many magnificent sights, including the French Alps, some very old mansions on neighboring mountains, Montreux (which by this time was well below us), and eventually, even cows grazing on the side of the mountain.

After a little while longer, we finally reached Les Avants which was located almost at the top and on the other side of the mountain from Montreux. Even though it was a very nice little town, I think we were all maybe just a little disappointed, seeing as we still couldn’t figure out why Green wanted us to go there or what exactly he wanted to see.

What I got from this experience is that maybe in some roundabout kind of way, Green was telling us that sometimes in life the journey is more important than the destination. To put it another way, in order to really live and learn, you should always be searching and exploring new things and never just feel comfortable with your “destination”. I’d have to say that during that day in Montreux, I had more fun just on the trip to Les Avants than when we actually arrived.

Upon writing this composition, I wanted some kind of unifying theme to describe our trip. The first thing I could remember about the trip was those hundreds of steps. To make it even worse, they were longer and wider (and older) than most other steps. I decided to represent these stairs by composing the song primarily in half notes. The song consists of 2-four bar sections that represent the stairs (bars 13-16; 21-24). The two sections (bars 17-20; 25-28)

that come after the “stairs” sections represent the times that we would stop to rest and take pictures. When comparing the “rest” sections to the “stairs” sections, it is clear that there is far less melodic and harmonic activity taking place. The final part of the song (bars 29-32), with its melody that changes directions multiple times, represents the walk up the zigzag road and then finally our arrival (bars 33-39) in Les Avants.

The compositional device of Page’s that was used for this composition was taken from his song “Afternoon in Africa”. In that song, the ‘A’ sections are in 4/4 swing, but the ‘B’ section is a Latin groove over a G augmented chord (Fig 12). The same idea is in “The Road to Les Avants” in bars 25-28. The rest of the song (with the exception of the very last sections) is in 4/4 swing, but this part is a Latin groove over a G minor chord.