

**A Redefined Role for Tuba in Jazz**

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## **Abstract**

In accordance with the York University MA composition thesis guidelines, I propose to create a body of work consisting of several original jazz compositions. This project will utilize myself as composer with the tuba at the heart of the compositions, often as the featured musical voice. The writing will demonstrate the tuba from not only a bass position, but also as a soloist. The focus of my thesis is to position the tuba as a core element within the jazz model, demonstrated in compositional writing and performance. The compositions will be exhibited through an audio recording, music scores, and via literary and oral dissertation to further acquaint the jury and public with my writing, and in specific what I provide as an individualistic, improvisational tuba player. These compositions are being created to not only demonstrate my strengths and sensibilities as a composer, but will also better illuminate my approach to tuba, demonstrating it as a valid and definitive voice for jazz.

My composition portfolio will include pieces for jazz duo, trio, quartet and quintet with varied instrumentation. These compositions reside within the traditional jazz approach and standard 'song' forms, but will employ various compositional techniques accrued either through my studies at York or beyond. There will be improvisation and experimentation, but most compositions will not be overly expansive with improvisation.

The goal of these compositions and my thesis is to posit the tuba as a legitimate voice as a bass instrument in jazz. This instrument has been marginalized since its earliest role in the cannon of jazz writing and arranging. The tuba, bass saxophone and similar bass instruments quickly faded into obscurity once acoustic bass became the de facto rhythm section standard on stage and in the studio. I aim to shed light on a forgotten forefather of jazz, and bring it back to the forefront of this musical genre through my own compositions and arrangements.

**Dedication:**

**Stanley Edward Burr: 1918 - 2006**

In truth, there is one sole reason for choosing to attend graduate school. Unfortunately, this choice came too late for my father to witness the only one of his four children attend and complete a graduate degree. I owe everything to my father and mother for supporting me in choosing to pursue music as a career. Without them, I would never have sustained myself in this questionable profession. From driving my sister and I to countless music lessons, extra-curricular events, flying me to auditions, and purchasing my first professional horns: I owe everything to you both.

To my late father, Stanley Edward Burr, and to my surviving mother, Lucille Isobel Burr: I dedicate this thesis and my gratitude to both of you for your continual support throughout the decades of my musical endeavours. Dad, I wish you were here. To my mother, Lucille: your kid finally finished a graduate degree: thank you.

Much love,

Jay

### **Acknowledgements:**

There are a few people who have assisted in one way or another towards my reaching this point in academia. First I would like to thank my family: Jill, Oliver and Simon for supporting me while going back to school and through this thesis, and Sheri and Ian for their word creation from the diatonic alphabet to help with my composition, "Alphabet Soup". My gratitude also extends to the musicians who brought these compositions to light in the audio recording: David Restivo, Bruce Tournay, Danny Lockwood, Sal Rosselli and Troy Dowding, for without their gratuitous support we would all simply be looking at scores, which are works of art in their own right due to my copyist, Buddy Aquilina, a gentleman whose pen and brain I mined extensively throughout this winter term. Lastly, I would like to thank a few of the faculty at York University for their insight and guidance: Dr. David Mott for his casual surety and eye-opening concepts in composition seminar, Professor Robert Witmer for his exemplary knowledge and willingness to share, and to my advisor, Professor Michael Coghlan for his insight and editing prowess, as well as the woman behind the scenes who constantly keeps the machine running, the tenacious Tere Tilban Rios. Finally, I must recognize and thank Dr. Michael Marcuzzi posthumously for his unwavering dedication towards music and education, and his enthusiasm and generosity. You will be missed, but not forgotten.

## **Table of Contents**

Abstract	ii
Dedication	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
Table of Contents	v
Introduction	01
Chapter One: Traditional Origins	09
1.1 - Emerging Technology	11
1.2 - Radio and Broadcasting	12
1.3 - Recording Evolution	16
1.4 - End of an Era and the Beginning of Swing	18
Chapter Two: Fade from Glory	20
2.1 - Early Swing years and Prohibition	20
2.2 - Victim of Fashion	21
2.3 - Further Innovations in Sound Recording and Amplification	22
Chapter Three: No Innovators, Just Imitators	24
3.1 - Pioneers of Tuba	24
3.2 - 1950's - Reemergence of Tuba	26
3.3 - 1960's - Jazz/Funk/Blues Tuba	27
3.4 - Synopsis and Reaction	29
Chapter Four: Inherent Limitations	32
Chapter Five: One Tuba Against the World	35
5.1 - Autumn Comes Too Quickly	37
5.2 - The Loneliest Monk	41
5.3 - Comin Thru	45
5.4 - Lost and Found	48
5.5 - Two Shades of Grey	52
5.6 - Amor Peligroso	55
5.7.1 - Alphabet Soup	62
5.7.2 RECIPE	64
Chapter 6: Conclusion	67

Supplemental Scores	69
Bibliography	84
Discography	85
End Notes	86

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Supplemental MA thesis CD recording	Duration
Track 1 – Autumn Comes Too Quickly	6:39
Track 2 – The Loneliest Monk	4:14
Track 3 – Comin’ Thru	4:54
Track 4 – Lost and Found	5:10
Track 5 – Two Shades of Grey	4:04
Track 6 – Amor Peligroso	6:06
Track 7 – Alphabet Soup	5:48

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<b>TOTAL PLAYING TIME:</b>	<b>36:48</b>
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## **Introduction**

This thesis presents original compositions created with a focus on the tuba as a bass instrument in a jazz context. The compositions demonstrate models relevant to specific eras of jazz history where the tuba is absent. These compositions have been created and recorded to further develop compositions outside the historical boundaries and known roles of the tuba in jazz. This re-purposing and presentation attempts to create an "alternate history" for tuba through original jazz compositions: a history imagined as if tuba had been utilized broadly as a bass instrument within various jazz styles and genres. This "history" speculates that brass bass may have progressed through a parallel existence to the string bass had it remained in progressive jazz and other popular styles of music. A change in popular taste in music relegated brass bass into dormancy throughout decades of progressive jazz evolution. Its rapid departure from popular music occurred soon into the swing era. The regression of brass bass dates from approximately the Great Depression until the 1960's when jazz significantly diminished in popularity.

Although there have been recent moves towards popularizing various forgotten or antiquated instruments, it appears that the tuba has not yet fully surfaced as a vital horn, nor is it being exploited as a plausible string or electric bass substitute. Used infrequently in almost all popular music styles, the tuba consistently performs a traditional role or is situated within a comical setting. The tuba is rarely displayed as a serious jazz instrument. Often the tuba is employed as a visual aid. This thesis offers whimsical theoretical rewriting of jazz history and posits the tuba as a functional bass instrument in hopes of establishing a versatile

and more musical role for the instrument. Such creative methodology seeks to create unique possibilities outside of the common bass function of the tuba and enable its functional role as a viable jazz bass line instrument. These original compositions create for the tuba a parallel existence to the acoustic bass and reveal the tuba as a legitimate jazz heir and as a unique and progressive bass instrument in jazz.

The tuba was vital to the development of early jazz in New Orleans. From the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century until the early 1930's it held a solid position in the foundation and origins of jazz.<sup>1</sup> Although used infrequently after 1930 the tuba was often heard in revivalist or traditional jazz settings. Mainstream popular music shifted to big band and swing culture in the late 1920's and this style remained dominant in popularity well into the 1940's. By this time, tuba had all but disappeared and string bass ruled as the predominant bass instrument in jazz. Rock/jazz fusion of the late 1960's and 1970's flourished with addition of electric bass. Tuba resurfaced at various points in time but never in progressive 'bass' playing. It seems tuba had no place as a valid bass instrument within the modernity of the jazz aesthetic.

Why had no one plied tuba bass through the early years of swing, bop, and beyond? Although there were few tuba "soloists" from the 1950's onward, no one player emerged to create a bass function role for the tuba through the many decades of jazz evolution. The most prominent tuba players avoided the brass bass role to become soloists or section players while others who doubled on both brass and string bass migrated full-time to string bass.



The tuba and sousaphone were essential bass instruments in many forms of early North American music such as Sousa marches, military bands, community orchestras, municipal wind bands, marching bands, and parade ensembles. It is evident that the role of the tuba was eclipsed by string bass but reasons for this remain unclear. My personal opinion is the string bass appeared better suited to the brighter tempos and walking bass lines which characterized swing. The sound of the tuba was simply "wrong" for the progressive sound of modern swing music.

The rise of swing music and its related culture brought forth new dance styles and fashion trends which paralleled the rise of radio. Radio became a key factor for musical success as celebrity status could be achieved through recording and broadcasting. As world economies shook from the crumbling markets of the Great Depression in the 1930's, a new focus, aimed at a massive global audience, was evident in advertising and marketing. The burgeoning medium of radio and media distribution evolved rapidly and global coverage facilitated dissemination of new music styles and fashion trends. Radio carried influence unlike any other previous media industry and fortunes were made through its domination in presenting music and entertainment to listeners worldwide. As American culture shifted direction with the Great Depression the tuba declined in popularity and its appearance in jazz and popular music was limited. Tuba exclusion is noticeable throughout the swing years and extended through the following decades of jazz evolution.

My compositions intend to reveal brass bass possibilities by utilizing the tuba as an unlikely instrument in unfamiliar jazz territory. This thesis positions the tuba

as a progressive bass instrument within jazz evolution by starting from the end of the Dixieland era through swing and on to progressive jazz styles. My rationale for imagining a revised and revisited history is to re-position the tuba as if it passed through the same evolution as the string bass. From second line to swing and beyond, the tuba will represent an "alternate" choice as a bass instrument in jazz. My compositional palette mimics various genres in an honest attempt to "reinvent" jazz history beginning at the point where tuba as bass "disappears." Specific to this thesis is the lack of brass bass evolution from the 1930's up to the late 1960's. This massive gap in proclivity of jazz bass players on the tuba is the primary motive for my compositions and recorded performances.

Evidence supporting my claim is "found" in the vacant discography of brass bass in progressive jazz: swing, bebop, hard bop, post-bop and beyond. There is an absence of recordings with brass bass through any of these particular periods of popular jazz. Established players of the period had migrated to melodic and soloist roles and in select cases were employed in big bands (e.g., Woody Herman) and larger contemporary jazz ensembles (e.g., The Gil Evans Orchestra), or remained in the early traditional style endemic to its roots. The bass function of tuba never fully evolved beyond the second line or Dixieland aesthetics until the late 1960's where it reemerges in blues and funky jazz settings. Tuba has been employed primarily in stereotypical revivalist roles from its infancy to present and its absence in the "walking bass" role and general stagnation as a jazz bass instrument is paramount to this project.

The belief that a brass bass is impractical or ill suited to jazz bass roles will be challenged. The tuba demonstrates flexibility and musicality equal to the string bass and can compete with string bass for tonal colour and timbre, ensemble function, and the necessary malleability required to serve all styles of jazz evolution. In doing so, the tuba may be legitimately represented as similar to the string bass in ability and function. Through these missing years, a re-creation of jazz history will be explored through a broad cross-section of jazz styles and performance practices such as swing, bebop, hard-bop, post-bop, Afro-Cuban/Latin, jazz waltz, and modern composition techniques.

Unusual or "odd" instruments are frequently viewed with scrutiny and deemed inappropriate for many musical situations. Pre-conceived notions and ignorance surround most non-mainstream instruments and questions arise as to their musical effectiveness. A demonstration displaying an instrument's possibilities and true potential may help. Dismissive attitudes regularly occur at jam sessions, open stage, or musical events that feature an odd instrument performed outside of its normal context. This commonly generates incredulous and startled audience reaction. Attitudes often lie within a socio-musical prejudice, either against innovation or in breaking with tradition. It is wishful to believe that musicians and audience will be more encouraging than dismissive in their opinion towards unconventional instruments and musicians. The relevance is that these negative or dismissive perceptions create stigmas and public ignorance surrounding the specifics of many instruments.

A few musicians create personal identities and distinct musical voices on less popular instruments but they often remain unknown to the general public. A modern recording and production aesthetic can authenticate what a particular instrument may provide to any musical event: the main considerations being function, deployment and ability to serve the big picture within the musical context. Tuba, like other instruments which fall out of fashion, is able to re-emerge many years later to be branded as retro or cool. Musical instruments, like other popular mass-market images, often become stereotypes through advertising and marketing campaigns.

Insight and enlightenment is essential to this thesis, and specifically, with this instrument maintaining a progressive stance towards performing bass function. The objective of this thesis is not about postulating feats of academic proselytism in jazz theory or harmony. There are ample academics and tuba soloists, many with expertise in these areas of focus. My mission is to demonstrate possibilities when employing tuba as the bass instrument via period-specific jazz compositions. The ultimate purpose is to enlighten the scope of tuba in progressive bass roles, and to dispel the myth of it being unrealistic for serious bass duties. This thesis and supplemental recording will posit this instrument as valid for performing jazz bass roles in aesthetically functional, creative and musical idioms.

The inherent character of the tuba limits serious consideration of its being, or becoming, a legitimate jazz bass instrument. This may be true to those opposed to breaking with tradition of the mellow, refined sound of the string bass. Traditional tuba performance practice generates a "sound" deemed inappropriate for many

styles of jazz writing and ensemble playing, and the socio-musical jazz elite regard the tuba's function in popular music with skepticism. The choice of any particular instrument on any specific project should focus on the composition and the ability of the player to meet the aesthetic objectives of the production.

The stylistic malleability of tuba as bass function does not rely upon traditional performance practice or stereotypical concepts for the instrument. Sound, function, and aesthetic must be separated from historic tradition or common performance practice associated with the tuba in order to redefine the instrument.

A major component to this thesis is the audio recording. Through utilization of old and new technology, this recording employs period-specific tools, particularly velocity microphones and tube pre-amplifiers, to assist in the capture of instruments and their sound. Vintage tools are used with more contemporary technology to record and mix material. The use of various audio technologies present the tuba as it could have "existed" over many decades - a nimble instrument with a malleable sound and, when played subtly, displays a timbre similar to string bass.

This original approach stems from an early realization that many jazz bass idioms could be performed by a brass bass. The instrument is "played" with an altered musical approach refined to replicate string bass function and, to some extent, the sound. Most important is an innate duty to serve the requirements of the actual music. This thesis is partially based on musical ability, but also dwells on authenticity of personal choices: where to place quarter notes in regard to the time of the drummer or keyboardist, whether to be playful or stoic in consideration of the

song, genre, and ensemble, as well as through an individualistic style that is creative, yet maintains the functional role of rhythmic and harmonic anchor for the band.

## **Chapter 1: Traditional Origins**

There are numerous resources which are helpful in creating an outline of the origins of the tuba in jazz. Yet, the preponderance and development of musical improvisation at the close of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in New Orleans was predicated on numerous historically significant factors and a few of these will be addressed to elucidate the tuba and sousaphone's history in jazz.

After the American Civil War, many wind band instruments became widely available throughout the United States. Defunct municipal and confederate bands sold off their instruments and in doing so made available a large number of woodwind, brasswind and percussion items.<sup>ii</sup> These secondhand instruments were numerous, relatively cheap, and easy to procure. This re-allocation of band instruments was essential to the creation and evolution of music in America, and especially in the south. Jazz "orchestration" emerged from the instruments at hand. The tradition of learning to read and perform music was taught through private lessons, mentoring and through orphanages and waif's homes. Others learned from a musician within the immediate or extended family.

The growth of second line bands came as a permutation of military and parade band ritual.<sup>iii</sup> Military and parade band processions had merged with Afro-American culture and ritual, creating a new art form stemming from inherited band instruments. Afro-American and Creole society pioneered jazz via generous access to available instruments and through repurposing predominantly white societal rituals into an amalgamation of black musical styles and ideals. These were the key ingredients to musical and improvisational development in jazz. Through this

musical growth developed a style of music that was both vital, and was a truly independent American invention. The spirit of jazz lies in its innovation and originality and this facet is a prime dictum for my progressive approach to the pursuit of brass bass.

This accessibility to affordable instruments liberated those less privileged and provided a creative outlet for many poor Afro-American, Creole and lower social strata people in post-civil war society. Music was integral to Afro-American culture and the progression of unique, American musical styles derived from slave culture, or indentured servitude appeared in musical force as the blues, work songs, field hollers and improvisation. Paradoxically, the decline of predominantly white municipal bands from affluent areas provided essential tools facilitating the creation, dissemination and emancipation of improvised music.

The tuba was one of the common wind instruments utilized by New Orleans bands requiring a mobile bass instrument for parades, marches, funerals and various outdoor events. The string bass, not equipped for mobility or wet weather, was more delicate by nature and resided indoors in a stationary location. The use of bass saxophone, contrabass saxophone, and other low register reed instruments was sometimes utilized in groups without string or brass bass players. When at a loss for competent bass players it was relatively easy for a reed player to switch to the bass role when necessary.

The main asset of tuba and sousaphone as bass was their ability to perform while in transit. This elevated the tuba and sousaphone to a standard bass instrument status and placed them in a fundamental position in the growth of jazz



culture. The forward sound projection of the sousaphone and the robust, full sound of the tuba were crucial to this music. Wind instruments, as well as banjo and percussion, worked well in transit especially in the south with a climate suitable to outdoor performance year round.

In early jazz, the ability to create a dynamically balanced ensemble developed from the ability of wind instruments to innately blend in volume and projection. The loud, percussive sound of the tuba was essential for keeping time with the percussion instrumentalists and assisting in outlining chord changes. The plectra banjo easily filled a supportive harmonic role in support of monophonic wind instruments. The size and dynamic abilities of the banjo suited the marching aesthetic exceedingly well although string instruments in general were not suited for outdoor parades and weather. Mobile bands consisted primarily of woodwind and brass wind instruments with support of a rhythm section of banjo, tuba, snare, bass drum, cymbals, plus other percussion items. Although there were many exceptions to this model, it became a common formula for outdoor musical activities in New Orleans, and rapidly evolved into a new style of song and performance known as *second line*.<sup>iv</sup>

### **1.1 Emerging Technology**

Pioneering electronic technology emerged early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century with microphones, amplifiers, and loudspeaker design. Public address systems began to appear in the mid-nineteen twenties. These innovations lent a voice to quiet sound sources and provided liberation to inaudible instruments amidst noisy environments or loud bands. These advances in electronics technology had a vast

impact on music, and in particular, the creation and reinvention of the vital new musical industries: broadcasting and sound recording.

In the early 1900's, the recording industry was not yet a truly viable business due to inferior technology, a limited market, and the lack of mass-production capabilities. At the onset, each Edison cylinder phonograph recording was created from a discrete performance. Therefore the sale of one thousand wax cylinders required individually recorded performances for every copy made. The technology was not mature enough for sound recording to be a truly viable industry. Technical limitations were too great to gain mass accessibility. From the 1870's into the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, sheet music was the primary market for music dissemination and appreciation.<sup>v</sup> Printed sheet music could easily be duplicated and transported, it was affordable, and remained a popular alternative to attending concerts or live events for music appreciation, especially for those residing outside of urban, or at least metropolitan areas. That is, until the implementation of radio, advanced sound recording and broadcasting. Radio rapidly became the most influential delivery medium for popular music and entertainment.

## **1.2 Radio and Broadcasting**

Radio and broadcasting created a new arena for presenting talent. The ability for bands and musicians to broadcast live performances, or to have their records spun on-air, was the impetus for significant influence in growth of the music industry. Radio created a huge audience and had a public outreach far greater than any other medium. In lieu of relying on public concert attendance a band could be employed and then enjoyed by anyone with broadcast reception. The music

industry was born! The revolutionary feat of broadcasting talent via radio programming augmented distribution and created public recognition, admiration and fame for select performers and entertainers.

Popular music became accessible to everyone. Radio enabled people to enjoy live performances or recordings while listening in their parlour, place of work, or anywhere where adequate signal strength and reception was available.

The maturity of this technology brought the means to create and disseminate live and recorded music. Through this widely available market, popularity could now be manufactured through radio. This in turn brought certain artists instant recognition to the masses, and many popular recording and performing artists became celebrities. Prior to radio, bandleaders received remuneration through live public performances and sometimes recording sessions, although most early record labels paid very little to its content creators. Prior to radio, even if one had a modicum of success through record sales, there was an extremely limited reach for the recordings, and even less if the band did not tour. It was easy to be a big fish in a small pond, but non-travelling bands were in a very small pond, and had limited resources to become anything more than local successes in the age of radio. An act could perform live and have the added benefit of reaching a massive audience of listeners. Live concerts and records became a tool used by radio personalities to foster talent and assist them into becoming household names. On-air personalities landed positions of prestige amongst devoted listeners and celebrity status was born overnight.

In their infancy, radio stations had limited access to recordings and artists while the new recording industry was burgeoning. The regular broadcasting of live shows created instant content and also garnered mass appeal with its radio audience, either through in-house concert attendees, or as listeners outside of the ticketed event. Both sets of listeners were provided the opportunity of being spectators to fame, or as I now refer to as *fame by proxy*. Being surrounded by celebrities affords an anonymous individual greater visibility and status, and in a small manner echoes a personal celebrity status within itself. Broadcast a live performance in front of an audience and all listeners feel as if they are a direct part of the spectacle. With the rise of radio, there came an ability to create celebrities, and the quest for fame became a recurrent object of desire by all associated within the entertainment industry.

Public entertainment had been forever altered by radio, and the public's methods for accessing entertainment had changed. Original programming became lucrative for broadcasting corporations through commercial advertising and sponsorship. This partnership provided bands with better access to paid engagements, with the added incentive of potential record sales to listening consumers. The age of radio was controversial in many ways, in one part to the music content creators with having no legal precedent for remuneration.<sup>vi</sup> Radio stations and even department stores were playing songs for free to listeners. Soon, ASCAP was formed, and composers and musicians were afforded the benefits of the economic boom from within the *business* side of music. Yet, another area in broadcasting affected global society: the promotion and dissemination of

propaganda. Disinformation found its way into this new medium and sadly, has never let up. Media and its manipulation ties into political and corporate agendas, and should be an entire thesis topic unto itself. However, it is important to recognize the impact of radio on the listening public, and the manipulation employed to carry out political and corporate ideals cannot be underestimated or forgotten during the age of radio.

Media has constantly exercised influence over the masses, and although not fully implemented or exploited in the early years, great potential lie in influencing the public through commercially sponsored broadcasts. As true now as it was then, fashion trends influence buyers, and through the world's largest medium of communication, fashion of all varieties was pedaled to an eager radio audience.

Popular bands of the 1920's achieved newfound access in signing with record labels to present music to a fresh, growing market created through radio. However, there was still need to fill airwaves time via live talent as there had not yet been a major accrual of phonograph audio recordings. The innovations in recording and broadcasting not only assisted bands but had the recording industry modernized through incorporating the advanced technology created for broadcast. This in turn furthered access to new markets through playing new recordings on-air, and through radio personalities endorsing record labels and their roster of artists over the airwaves. Broadcasting and its technological advances launched a new economic model for the recording industry as it now shaped into a burgeoning sound recording market. In turn, the sheet music industry declined as people no longer had to rely on amateur musicianship to hear popular songs of the day.

### **1.3 Recording Evolution**

The pioneering achievements in microphone technology, amplifier and speaker design aided the presentation of live music for both stage and broadcasting, commencing a new era of mass communication. The transmission of events through radio waves meant a new dawn for news and entertainment: a game changer in the realm of mass appeal and access. Immediate retrieval of news, music, and entertainment now lie on the consumer's radio dial. One did not have to be in New York, Chicago or Los Angeles to access contemporary popular music, nor even need buy a newspaper to hear the news, one could tune in from rural areas to catch the hit parade, or gather breaking news from across the globe. The span of radio traversed beyond city and countryside, it transformed the worldwide entertainment and information industry in a way that only television could replicate decades later.

Sound recording had matured significantly by 1925, and the progress in technology afforded greater popularity, distribution and dissemination of recorded music. In the early 1920s, Drs. Walter H. Schottky and Erwin Gerlach co-invented the first ribbon microphone, and later Dr. Harry F. Olson of the RCA Company further refined the design and characteristics of this transducer. With significant advances in microphone technology came new methodologies in recording, broadcasting and public address. The recording and broadcasting studio evolved from requiring talent to perform in front of a massive, single horn diaphragm to now placing microphones in close proximity to the individual voices or instruments. Recordings could now achieve a better balance via the placement of microphones towards delicate sounds for a more accurate representation of softer sound sources.

With these advances, softer instruments (i.e.: string bass) could soon be heard in larger concert venues, and this enhanced their stature in recording and radio.

Phonograph (wax) cylinders were rapidly disappearing in the marketplace by 1915 due to the introduction of the vastly superior Gramophone. Emil Berliner patented his competition to Edison's phonograph in 1892 in Washington, D.C., and although acceptance was slow, the shellac disc became the popular medium for sound recordings in the early part of the century. Although better than the wax cylinder in many ways, shellac discs were brittle and had a limited lifespan due to deterioration from the hard needle scarring the fragile surface grooves. This obsolescence supported the need to sell more discs. Even though microphone technology had evolved greatly in the 1920's, there remained inherent limitations in the physical recording medium. Although a velocity microphone may have been able to represent an audio spectrum of 40 Hz to 15,000 Hz<sup>vii</sup>, the limitation of audio reproduction on an acoustic recorder was restricted at 168 Hz to 2000 Hz. Even after the introduction of electric recorders, frequency response only increased 2.5 octaves from 100 to 5000 Hz.<sup>viii</sup> There was yet no method in capturing and reproducing high and low frequencies accurately on disc. The midrange was reproduced the most accurately with both high and low frequencies compromised. The use of the tuba as the bass instrument was of significant value to the recorded medium. The tuba was loud enough to translate onto disc however inadequately it was represented in fidelity. Although lacking in authority and in depth of its natural audio spectrum, the tuba could still be captured and defined better than acoustic bass on a recording. Inaccuracy of audio reproduction was synonymous with the

early recording industry, and elucidates why the bass instrument in jazz was often the tuba even though it was difficult to distinguish it from a reed, brass or string bass due to the recording's volume limitations and inadequate low frequency response.

Even with these bandwidth limitations, 78 RPM discs became a widely popular sales item for Emil Berliner's *Gramophone Company* and Eldridge R. Johnson's *The Victor Talking Machine Company*. Their machines became popular music reproduction systems for both homes and broadcasting. Mass replication was enabled through a similar process to film, creating a negative image that could then be used as a template to press multiple copies. AM radio's audio reproduction spectrum restricted from 40 hertz to 5 kilohertz<sup>ix</sup> still allowed broadcast transmissions in better fidelity than any Gramophone disc. The broadcasting frequency spectrum was retained down to 40 hertz and not limited to shellac's 168 hertz cutoff. <sup>x</sup> This limitation eliminated 2 bottom octaves - a critical area for all bass instruments. The recorded medium created a negative impact for bass register instruments since they were always poorly represented. This limitation would not be lifted for many years. Even after electric recording became available in 1925, the reproduction of full audio fidelity was still limited until the technology matured in the following decades.

#### **1.4 End of an Era and the Beginning of Swing**

As the Great Depression hit in late 1929, jazz was already moving into a new age. Swing had come to prominence and the steady walking bass line had the tuba sidelined in this style. It soon disappeared from newly created swing music and



string bass became synonymous with the jazz sound. In addition, the banjo, bass saxophone and contrabass saxophone all became a part of sonic history. In later years, the clarinet and cornet would also fall out of fashion and replaced by more muscular instruments like the trumpet, saxophone and trombone, all of which had gained popularity and appeal through the rise of the then popular, fresh style of big band music. The smooth and relaxed sound of the string bass was appealing to bandleaders, and as jazz evolved, string bass became a distinct signature of the jazz sound. Instead of hot jazz style, contemporary tastes were ushered in by the big bands, now with a host of innovative ensemble writing and concepts and one revolutionary aspect of bass playing: the walking bass line.

## **Chapter 2: Fade from Glory**

North American society in the 1920s is recalled as the “jazz Age”.<sup>xi</sup> By the early 1930’s jazz maintained its status as the popular music of the Great Depression era. However, prohibition had recently come into full effect, and for common folk to escape their misery through alcohol meant finding speakeasies and blind pigs, all of which were constant employers of the working jazz bandleaders, musicians, dancers, and cabaret workers. As drinking went indoors, so did entertainment. What used to be a mainstay outdoors and in public ballrooms migrated inside, underground and out of sight. A sure method in procuring regular work as a jazz musician came directly through the back door of the entertainment industry.

### **2.1 Early swing years and Prohibition**

The Great Depression which resulted from the market crash of 1929 brought the working class into destitution. Although times were tough, there was still a desire for the drinking public to escape their troubles. This was a period of change not only for the public, but also for musicians and recording artists. Jazz, and in particular, swing bands became the most popular music in record sales and concert attendance. Live events were primarily indoors, and through the rise and implementation of public address systems, amplification provided ways for singers and instrumentalists to be heard above the din of loud environments. Bands could now access these tools to record and perform with.

These innovations played into altering the relevance of brass basses. The decline of tuba and sousaphone gigs meant string bass players doubling on brass bass gave up pursuing both. In my personal opinion, walking bass lines and

extended performances are the likely culprits for its demise, but are undocumented and unproven. However, there were a few musicians who doubled on both string and brass bass and some had an influential role in the use of tuba in early jazz recordings. They will be discussed in the subsequent chapter.

## **2.2 Victim of Fashion**

By the 1930s, the tuba had peaked in jazz, and versatile and innovative string bass players appeared at the dawn of the swing era. The momentum and musical trajectory of swing easily eclipsed the original role of bass and its function in jazz. The brass anchor was abandoned for a nimble and mellow sounding string bass: an instrument that could be amplified with the other instruments requiring sound support. The advancement of swing style heralded the end of the tuba in mainstream jazz. The ability to walk four beats per bar, and truly 'swing' appeared an impossibility on tuba, which had been relegated to beats one and three in the now antiquated hot jazz, or Dixieland style.

With the cool styling of big band, the tuba sat on the sidelines of progressive jazz, and remained relevant only to periods specific to its jazz origins. The antiquated styles of early jazz had been supplanted by smoother, sophisticated writing and arranging. With these new sounds came newly choreographed swing dance styles. The Foxtrot and Charleston were early bastions of jazz dance. Though created through mimicry of black dancing style called "Juba"<sup>xii</sup>, they coalesced into a predominantly white society and tradition. There were new, invigorating styles of dance emerging from black culture, and better identified with the new swing style, and with the artists creating the music. New styles of swing dance included the

Lindy Hop, Balboa (or Bal), Collegiate (or Carolina) Shag, and the Jitterbug,<sup>xiii</sup> all of which were departures from early jazz choreography.

### **2.3 Further innovations in sound recording and amplification**

The invention of amplifiers, microphones and PA systems were a significant contributor to the slow death of the brass bass in jazz. Yet, in reality, these innovations could have provided new opportunities for brass bass towards functioning more effectively in numerous situations. The same technology opens possibilities for each instrument or instrumentalist. It can augment, alter and assist in personifying the talent. I will elucidate later on this topic, as it is relevant to this thesis, and especially to the sound of bass register instruments and how they are performed and recorded.

In the coming chapters I will reveal process and objectives towards my music composition and performance practice on tuba to better illuminate what it is I'm attempting to redefine with tuba in jazz. In one manner, I rewrite a theoretical history through placing the tuba in various jazz styles where it was never present. In another way, I'm revealing a personal composition and performance ethic of a writer steeped in tradition, and little disposition towards *art for arts sake*. I might be viewed as a traditionalist in many ways, yet as a progressive in others. In an attempt to be both employable and acceptable as a freelance musician, I have embraced technology to keep me competitive with string and electric bass players through utilizing similar technology to achieve the end result. It is important to reveal that my main sources of inspiration do not come from the tuba, but from acoustic and electric bass players, saxophone and trumpet players, pianists and guitarists, and

various composers. This is acknowledged when listeners are unable to identify the bass instrument as a tuba when they listen to my performances. I remain inconspicuous, yet solidly represented as a bass instrument of some variety.

Technology positively assists my playing and recording and makes gigging as brass bass a less onerous task. Amplification provides the much needed support to perform effectively in loud environments. Regular application of a high quality bass amplifier and microphone are a necessity for me when performing most venues in various groups. Looking at scores is not the same as listening to a recording. These are two separate areas of study. This will readily demonstrate what is outlined in this thesis: the tuba can become a standard jazz instrument when in the appropriate hands, and when given the chance.

## **Chapter 3: No Innovators, Just Imitators**

### **3.1 Pioneers of Tuba**

There are a few seminal tuba players throughout the decades of jazz genealogy and many who doubled on brass and acoustic bass. Tuba had a few pioneers amongst the popular jazz bands of the 1920's and 1930's and some of these groups created a uniquely definitive sound. One of the most popular bands of this period was Fletcher Henderson's Orchestra, although there is not much to rave about Ralph Escudero's tuba playing. Henderson had a very successful recording group starting in the early nineteen twenties but the ensemble came into his own once Louis Armstrong joined the band in 1924. By the 1930's Henderson fully realized the true potential for unique and advanced arrangements and developed stylistically complex scores for a large band of highly competent musicians. This successful recording band has a multitude of recordings produced by ten different record labels in the 1920's alone. Henderson's sound led the jazz world into the big band format via writing for both woodwind and brass sections, even greater advances in written arrangements, and featuring distinct sections in soli roles.

Other notable bandleaders and ensembles with tuba (or bass and tuba doubling) in the 1920's included Bix Beiderbecke and the Wolverines, Isham Jones and his Rainbow Orchestra, Elmer Schoebel and his Friars Society Orchestra, Ted Weems and his Orchestra and Jean Goldkette and his Orchestra. Joe Tarto of the The Hottentots can be heard frequently on their recordings but the 1926 Vocalion label session recording of "Bass Ale Blues" demonstrates a couple of solo tuba breaks which were seldom heard in this time period. Fess Williams and his Royal Flush

Orchestra had small hits in the 1920's, and his 1927 recording of "Variety Stomp" featured tubist George Tempel, and his "Do Shuffle" featured Clinton Walker. Hayes Alfred and Lawson Buford both played tuba on sides with Jabbo Smith's Rhythm Aces, with Alfred on "Weird Blues" and Buford on "Sau Sha Stomp" in March of 1929. During the Great Depression, there was a natural desire to escape the dismal situation of poverty, so novelty songs became a popular diversion as comic relief for entertainers and their audience. In 1931, Rudy Vallee had a #2 hit in America with the novelty song, "When Yuba Plays the Rhumba on his Tuba." Although hokey, it showcased the tuba, albeit in comedic nature. Spike Jones resurrected this song many years later with Joe "Country" Washburne on tuba and applied his comedic stage persona to lampoon this zany song even further. There are other players such as 'Chink' Martin Abraham, who performed with Johnnie Miller's New Orleans Frolickers, (notably on the song "Panama") and Phil Stevens who performed on Pete Daily's Dixieland Band on "Big Bass Horn Blues", and appeared in Woody Herman's Big Band on *Woody Herman - the Complete 1948 -1950 Capitol Sessions*. Min Leibrook performed on 19 of the 27 Wolverines recordings, and there are another two tracks recorded with an un-credited tuba player on the *Complete Wolverines: 1924-1928*. Bix Beiderbecke was a highly competent writer and player, and with this band had Min Leibrook take a few solo melodic breaks, notably on "Copenhagen" which was a substantial hit for the Wolverines.

The tuba examples listed previously exist as part of the infancy of the jazz canon. The recording industry was new and perched on the cusp of the new distribution medium of radio which was poised to revolutionize entertainment

medium and market. The key to commercial success lay in the market potential for popular songs and popular tastes, both of which favoured the burgeoning swing band movement. The out-of-date and out-of-fashion Dixieland bands with tuba and banjo were left behind.

### **3.2 1950's - Reemergence of Tuba**

During the 1950's there were a few pioneers and innovators in the field of jazz tuba even though the field was open to implement the tuba in various manners throughout the many years of jazz evolution. The few players who chose to stick with the instrument were innovators of sorts but were recalcitrant in applying the tuba to the bass function. Instead, these performers chose to favour the tuba as a solo voice. Red Callender, one of the earliest artists to release an album of jazz selections on the tuba, was a well-known west coast bassist who doubled on the tuba. His 1954 Crown LP release, *Speaks Low* is an early example of tuba in the spotlight, and is one of the first releases employing tuba in a lead role. This is a great album for introducing the tuba as a front instrument. The tuba is utilized as a lead melodic voice in jazz and the authority of the bass voice is precedent setting. The album serves as a vehicle to display tuba in the front line and not in the bass chair.

Ray Draper had a promising career and a troubled life. At sixteen he had recorded with Jackie McLean and led his own quintet showing promise as a writer and jazz player. This young tuba player with an ability to solo was hired in 1958 by Max Roach for his quintet but after a year on the road he returned to New York. Draper sought the role of soloist or section player for himself and was not content with playing the role of bassist. In the era of hard bop, Draper had carved a small



niche with tuba. Even though his tone was poor, and his abilities mediocre, he was afforded the opportunity to play and record with John Coltrane on the 1957 New Jazz release, *The Ray Draper Quintet featuring John Coltrane*. Even so, there was never an attempt to sit in the bass chair, even into the 1960's where he preceded Miles Davis in pioneering the fusion movement with his group and record entitled "Red Beans and Rice featuring Spareribs, Ray Draper". Still, Draper was an innovator and one of the few to take the tuba to the next level in jazz.

### **3.3 1960's - Jazz/Funk/Blues Tuba**

The 1960's saw few faces appear behind the tuba although some notables were Don Butterfield, Slide Hampton, Laymon Jackson, and later Howard Johnson. All demonstrated their prowess as soloists but none performed bass duties outside of traditionalist, stereotypical settings except for Howard Johnson. It is not until Bob Stewart appears in the late 1960's and later with the re-emergence of second line bands such as the Dirty Dozen Brass Band in the late 1970's where we witness bass function on tuba or sousaphone tended to with musicality and mastery. In my research, these are some of the first documented (recorded) instances where progressive bass functions are provided by brass bass. Bob Stewart, and Kirk Joseph (of the original Dirty Dozen Brass Band) are quite similar in their approach to bass lines, most always in funky, groove-oriented riffs, although Joseph also displays the ability to proficiently deploy walking bass lines. Both players illustrate the rhythmic style of punctuated funk bass ideals, and an innate ability to groove hard with the drums or percussion and the ensemble. These two stylists are the closest to my personal approach on the horn yet still dissimilar.

Bob Stewart is a fabulous player and an undervalued musician in the jazz cannon. More than a functioning bass player, Stewart has memorable solos which are the definitive spotlight on this instrument. His sound is synonymous with the tuba featuring a hard, heavy attack, and a forward, edgy sound. His sonic voice lacks subtlety and demonstrates the brassy pomp that is inherent with traditional tuba practice. In contrast, Kirk Joseph is the best example of tuba (sousaphone) functioning as a legitimate jazz bass substitute. His ease of execution and ability to "walk" adeptly is more representative of string bass techniques than tuba ideals. Joseph appears to be alone in this approach and is unique among other brass bass artists on recordings to date. The playful nature in Joseph's execution lends a light, refined touch free of heavy attack or forceful tone. This is an example of a moderate playing volume and relaxed attack to accommodate the physical and technical requirements of kicking bass accurately on tuba. Kirk Joseph should stand alone as a definitive pioneer of tuba jazz bass playing. Upon hearing his tone, style and line content it was evident to me as a younger player that I should follow a similar approach. In addition I worked to develop my individual personality, the ability to become adaptable, and to execute any style with tuba functioning as bass.

Other well-known tuba players of the 1980's and 1990's are Sam Pilafian, Jim Self, and Jon Sass. Pilafian, a tremendous player with incredible soloist chops, had mild success with an album on Telarc Digital called *Travelin' Light* (released May 10, 1991.) This is a duo album of jazz standards with guitar virtuoso Frank Vignola. Pilafian, although wonderful soloist, exhibits bass playing skills that are stiff and suited to the old style of antiquated jazz and not relevant to swing, bop, or other

progressive styles. Jim Self has been a West Coast session player for decades, worked on numerous film soundtracks and session work, and is also a unique tuba soloist. However, Self is never without a bass player in his jazz recordings, and he is never caught plying bass duties, except in the lightest of manners. In this regard, Pilafian takes the edge for at least being able to play basic bass lines. The final tubist of note in the current generation is Jon Sass, a player demonstrating wonderful stylistic ideas and incredibly funky bass lines. Sass, a fine example of modernity in tuba playing, can execute bass lines on the tuba with funky, punctuated bass playing but he does not demonstrate any elements of swing or traditional string bass idioms within his playing. Although a formidable player, jazz bass style is not his musical forte.

### **3.4 Synopsis and Reaction**

No tuba or sousaphone player carries any influence over my stylistic approach and direction towards my writing and performing tuba bass in jazz (with the exception of hearing Kirk Joseph for the first time.) My inspiration comes primarily from string bass players. Harmonic and rhythmic sensibility paired with virtuosity dedicated to attending to the foundation of jazz duties appeal far greater to my personal sensibility and performance ethic. This idea combines anchoring the rhythm section with functioning as a dynamic improvisational voice – playful and provocative. The true innovators of bass role were and are not tuba players and the challenge is to serve this model with the tuba.

I first heard Miles Davis, Charlie Parker, John Coltrane, and Thelonious Monk as mid high-school teenager in a time of growing musical sensibilities and

boundaries. As a young tuba player I primarily identified with the bass player. There was an instant connection and I soon realized that lines played by string bassists could be done on the tuba. From the early 1980's to the present I have devoted a career of refining bass playing technique on tuba. I have eliminated the emblematic, stereotypical sound of tuba, and substituted a less idiomatic non-traditional approach on the horn. Influential bass players like Paul Chambers, Reggie Workman, Jimmy Garrison, Ron Carter, John Pattitucci, Jaco Pastorius, Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen, Dave Holland, and Charles Mingus were models. Herbie Hancock, Chick Corea, Bill Evans and McCoy Tyner were also influential as were saxophonists Wayne Shorter and John Coltrane. It is not about tuba players leaving their mark on music, it is about musicians leaving a mark on creating an identity within their pursuit of performing music. Inspiration remains the most significant impact on my growth as an artist, composer, and performer.

String bass has the distinction of being present from the origins of jazz to the present, with a style and sound that is unique. However the tuba can substitute for string bass. Traditionally played it does not approximate the sound of a string bass but with appropriate focus on performance practice, mimicry, and proper amplification approximation in tone and function becomes viable. This is no different than other artists employing traditional instruments in non-traditional ways. Trumpeter Jon Hassell has experimented in channeling musical and religious beliefs into a unique sonic personality. Through utilizing technology, his trumpet has been presented as a wholly unorthodox sound, one that is virtually unidentifiable as a trumpet. His use of Kiranic vocal style melded with world music

sensibilities has influenced not only his trumpet playing, but helped create a distinctive, unique voice on an otherwise predictable sounding instrument. Through these departures from the traditional, Hassell has coined the term “Fourth World” regarding his musical sensibilities, and throughout his career he stands alone as a player not steeped in tradition, but treading his own path to creativity and self-expression.

I am a musician steeped in tradition but with an eye towards the future. My objective of being employable through being a stand-in for string bass is out of necessity more than of a creative obsession. I chose to remain a tuba player even though I play bass and a variety of other instruments. I remain a practitioner of low brass. Why? I have created a unique voice on the tuba with an immediately identifiable sound that is only traceable to myself. This area of personal identity is relative to experimenters like Jon Hassell on trumpet and effects, or David Sylvian through his later career. David Sylvian is a British keyboardist and singer who retired from the British glamour band, Japan, to become a versatile and experimental composer and performer choosing to focus on sound and structure. Sylvian’s recent move from traditional music forms to explore improvisation at the core, and deconstructionism of song and structures is another departure from mainstream tradition. Although Sylvian is not representative of the broad musical palette in this thesis (except for one ballad, “Two Shades Of Grey”), his focus on sound and personal discovery is not dissimilar.

## Chapter 4: Inherent Limitations

When competing for professional engagements one must accept the natural limitations and distinct differences between string and brass bass. Pizzicato string bass produces a mellow and emotive texture and serves as an essential support element within the idiom. The tuba, known for punchy articulations and robust texture, requires breath control to play continuous phrases. The double bass cannot sustain notes without use of a bow while the tuba can sustain easily and produce crescendos and diminuendos. A number of differences can be drawn between these two instruments but the major limitation of the tuba in performing bass function is stamina. There is intense physical effort required in breathing and breath control, embouchure and lip endurance in attempting to perform in an approach approximating the role of the string bass. A player must adapt to expressing *less* of what is expected from the instrument, and *more* of what cannot be anticipated or imagined. This includes smooth legato playing in lieu of punchy articulation, subtleness in execution of rhythmic and stylistic ideas that are more idiomatic to string or electric bass players than to tubas. The creation of melodic and harmonic line content beyond traditional expectations is essential. Creating a stylistically personified sound and approach is the primary reason for this area of study and my overall approach to tuba bass function. There is no one that sounds similar to myself in performing bass function on tuba. My approach to bass playing is unique, well developed and, after performing this duty for over 25 years, I have yet to hear another tuba player in the bass role in any fashion similar to my own.

Tuba is like any other instrument that is physically demanding and there is a significant amount of physical effort required to adequately perform bass duties. Performing on other wind instruments requires physicality but it is of a different quality. A lead player states the melody and perhaps solos on occasion but when not active in these roles is able to rest while the other front line performers parlay within the ensemble. There are no breaks for the rhythm section players unless specific to the arrangement or trading within sections. The bass performs almost continuously throughout every piece of jazz repertoire. The stamina to provide this function requires physical strength with continuous breath support and an embouchure in constant contact with a massive mouthpiece. An individual composition can be a task of endurance but is only one component of an entire session or gig.

Due to the physical demands amplification is essential to assist in performing at an adequate sound pressure level (SPL)<sup>xiv</sup> to match the other musicians in performance. This facilitates a balance within the ensemble and the venue itself, meaning, one must not only hear one self, but also maintain parity with the remainder of the band, and the space to be performing within. Personal experience and evaluation indicate that difficulty arises when the tuba's acoustic SPL exceeds 90 decibels. Although it is possible to sustain performing at high levels for short periods, it rapidly causes muscle and lip fatigue and eventually abrasions. Also musical sensitivity and facility of command are compromised when the SPL is too loud. An ensemble that strays beyond the point where an individual can no longer accurately represent one self is situated in a losing battle. Drummers often dictate

peak SPL and in this modern age are the primary reason for amplification of acoustic instruments and required sound support.

The similarity between tuba and string bass in jazz performance is best found through "volume appropriate" playing. Utilizing appropriate amplification technology enables one to feel secure and perform within a personal comfort level in any size venue. This is the primary factor in the tuba's recorded sound on the supplemental audio disc: the tuba's acoustic performance volume is very low: approximately 74 - 78 decibels (dB) during continuous phrases of most performances with walking bass lines. This equates to a physical dynamic marking of *mp*, or mezzo-piano. There are sections where dynamics elevate, but the mean amplitude still resides well below 80 dB. The microphone and amplifier capture the sound of soft, subtle playing and amplify it. The timbre of the tuba is tonally and aesthetically different when performed with restraint in volume and articulation. This is easily demonstrated when contrasted with a traditional approach with heavy articulation and high volume. The punctuated and brassy timbre of tuba is easily created when performing at 90 dB and higher. The different timbre is instantly recognizable and is facilitated by the player creating the sound of the instrument. The adaptation from traditional performance practice of loudly punctuating notes to playing light and smoothly lends a unique sensibility to jazz tuba, and towards brass bass function within many musical contexts.



## **Chapter 5: One Tuba Against the World**

The choice to utilize tuba in the bass chair is predicated on a lifetime performing this role in numerous musical styles in a plethora of bands, ensembles, collectives and groups of improvising players. Until graduate school, I had no formal training or practical education in jazz performance, theory, harmony or composition. All prior knowledge developed from listening, performance practice and from being put in situations where making immediate music was of paramount importance. My role is as a player and composer and music has always been more visceral than academic.

The collection presented offers a broad palette but does not focus on extended techniques with regard to compositions or instruments. With the exception of "Alphabet Soup" the material concentrates on composing within jazz models where tuba had not served as the bass instrument. There are players demonstrating extended techniques and free playing from the mid to late 1960's onward. Seminal players include Howard Johnson, Bob Stewart, and Dave Bargeron. Newer generation artists such as Jon Sass, Edwin Rodriguez, and Marcus Rohas have each planted creative seeds in the garden of modernity. The musical material within this thesis is written with the intent of placing the tuba in jazz styles not normally featuring brass bass function.

The repertoire enclosed contains early swing and jazz ballad styles of the 1930's up to electric, or fusion bass style of the late 1960's into the early 1970's. The use of period microphone and amplifier technology helps emphasize the tuba's role as a direct replacement for string or electric bass. Microphone selection and

placement combined with the appropriate preamplifier helps tailor the sound in relationship to musical context. A unique similarity to the timbre and style of upright bass is thus achieved. The use of technology in support of my string bass sensibilities assisted in my creation of an individualistic approach and voice to jazz bass on tuba. It is also worth reiterating that there are no tuba influences present as stylistic approach and content derive from influences outside of tuba performance practice but are nevertheless essential to the jazz periods and their evolution.

5.1 Autumn Comes Too Quickly

# AUTUMN COMES TOO QUICKLY

by: N.J. BURR  
© Nov. 9, 2011

BALLAD (♩ = 72)

Handwritten musical score for 'Autumn Comes Too Quickly'. The score is written in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (Bb) and a 4/4 time signature. The tempo is marked as BALLAD (♩ = 72). The score consists of 11 staves of music. The first staff begins with a circled 'S' and a double bar line. Chord symbols are written above and below the staff. A first ending bracket labeled '1)' spans the 10th and 11th staves, and a second ending bracket labeled '2)' spans the 11th and 12th staves. The score concludes with a 'FINE' marking and a circled 'D.S. AL FINE' instruction. An 'Eb PEDAL' marking is present under the 13th staff.

Chord symbols: F, Eb7(#11), G-7, C7, B-7(b5), E7(b13), A-9, D7(#11)(b13), D-7, Ab7(b9), G-7, C7(b9), Bb7, E7(#11), Gbmax7, Eb-7, Ab-7, Db7(b13), Gbmax7, Eb- Eb-(max7), Eb-7, Eb-6/Ab, A-7(b5), D7(#11)(b13), G-7(b5)13(b9)(#11), F, Eb7(#11), G-7, C7, B-7(b5), E7(b13), A-9, D7(#11)(b13), B-7(b5), Bb7, A-7, D7(b9)(#11), G-7, C7(#9), F6, FINE, D.S. AL FINE.

Upon listening to the recording, one is presented a reflective and melancholic mood, a sound evocative of a bygone jazz era. The influences stem from the era of Cole Porter and Gershwin but the recording is representative of ballad stylists like Coleman Hawkins and is similar in feel to the 1939 release of "Body and Soul". The style channels the appeal of Ben Webster in the late 1930's, and shades of late Dexter Gordon with regards to his approach to balladry. The representative period is not of early swing, but of the mature swing era where small ensemble ballads were popular, and when the smooth style of tenor saxophone became the statesman of instrumental jazz balladry. The ensemble remains understated, as is standard when supporting saxophone led ballads. The sparse background is intentional in an attempt to create a relaxed rhythmic feel associated with performances of this era.

The seeds of this song manifested itself through the opening 4 measures of the melody. As this melody being lyrically memorable, it held enough cognitive longevity to question whether it was actually original, or perhaps unintentionally borrowed. Upon research, mostly through canvassing well-informed jazz musicians, I had a melody appearing to be original. The remainder wrote itself in a matter of minutes. Initial intent was to purpose it for my trio, but upon further consideration a saxophonist appeared as the proper choice for performing the melody. This track is the second take without prior rehearsal. Focus will not run deep in jazz analysis and dissection of one song after another. Instead, I will attempt to address the pertinent style and structural significance, as well as place the tuba performing brass bass within the appropriate genre.

The application of a laconic tempo is often endemic to swing era ballads, and the significance of this work is to demonstrate how a tuba carries an expressive emotional edge in contrast to acoustic bass. The expressiveness of a brass instrument is far different than string bass for communicating melancholic expression. Another distinct area acoustic bass cannot compete with tuba is for both sustain and the ability to crescendo. This is amply demonstrated on the recording. Tuba is almost unknown and undocumented within this style of jazz. This tune allows a distinct personality for tuba and the saxophone, and is illustrated on this take. However, a personal objective was to keep the song performance within parameters of early jazz balladry, even if not totally evident from this modern recording session.

Ribbon microphone technology has not been outmoded or surpassed since it's emergence in the mid 1920's, and the velocity microphone design continues to be employed for their flattering, un-hyped frequency response and euphonic representation of musical instruments and vocals. Microphones of this lineage were regularly utilized on recordings of the swing era. In continuation of this tradition, I utilized one on my horn and three others in the recording of these songs.

The final element dissected and explained is the bridge. Concurrent with many standards, this particular section is not unlike many ballad bridge structures, but the elusive and colourful tonal shift at the start of the bridge (bar 17) is a truncated turnaround, with partial reference to measure 4 of the A section. The shift to G flat major seven in measure 18 in the bridge is unexpected when preceded by an E dominant structure, projecting a cadence to the sub-mediante chord, A. This

harmonic shift is the golden moment of autumn, when there is a brief reprieve from the wet and chilly days, the elusive cadence instead leading to the flat supertonic, G flat major seventh instead of the sub-median chord of A minor. But, as fall always catches up, so does the melancholy in measure 21 in the bridge, where the chill in the air is reflected via the E flat minor pedal with the descending chord patterns, and is soon resolved in a similar manner to the head.

Writing and performing "Autumn Comes Too Quickly" was an absolute pleasure with the fellows, and at present I am most proud of this song above the rest. This is from the resplendent, memorable nature of an original song that could easily be considered a modern standard if placed amongst the vast jazz standards library. One could hope someday it might actually make it there - if jazz wasn't already dead.

5.2 The Loneliest Monk

# THE LONELIEST MONK

by: N. JAY BURR  
© JUNE 22, 2012

MED. SWING (♩ = 126)

Handwritten musical score for "The Loneliest Monk". The score is in B-flat major, 4/4 time, med. swing. It consists of four systems of two staves each (treble and bass clef). The first system has chords Bb7, Ab7, Bb7, and Gb7. The second system has chords F-7, Bb7, A7, D9, and B07. The third system has chords Bb7, Db7(#9), E7(#9), and Eb7(#9). The fourth system has chords D7(#9), Db7(#9), C7(b13), F7(#11), B07, Bb7, and F7. The piece ends with a double bar line and the word "FINE" written above and below the staff.

The song title would be self-explanatory to any jazz musician, but for those that aren't jazz cognoscenti, it is a homophone for one of the most influential composers and musicians of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Thelonious Monk. This homophone title is credited to my oldest son, Ian, who bought me a copy of the book, *Thelonious Monk: The Life and Times of an American Original*. His initial reference to this play on words inspired the song title for a tuba melody deployed in much the same manner as Monk: a dissonant, angular melodic line with heaps of chromaticism, harmonized with altered chord progressions and cadences, set within a traditional 12 bar blues structure.

One of the major innovations in jazz evolution was the scaling down of chords and voicing to the bare essentials. As jazz moved forward through the swing years and into the 1940's, chordal harmony matured to the point where chord structures were minimal in density, yet exhibited the pinnacle of harmonic complexity. The chord essentials and the voicing innovations of Monk were paramount to the mature development of bebop harmony, and the related style that would be the antithesis to swing era principles of danceable, simple melodies, and lush orchestration. The tough, stark voicing of bop harmony made it clear that the new guard of musicians were steering away from past models and developing new ones.

This song was conceived as solo tuba for the head, with traditional bop quartet accompaniment of tenor saxophone, keys and drums. The awkward melody is synonymous of Monk's angularity and dissonant approach. However, the harmony displays a traditional blues model, but with chord alterations and non-traditional



cadences within the form and function of standard blues structures. The blues has been a common jazz vehicle from its infancy, yet the basic model has been evolving for over a century.

Bop harmony and chord substitutions are a substantial departure from traditional blues changes, and this piece is no different. A conscious choice was made to alter the tonal center of measure 5, where traditionally the harmonic progression would lead to the subdominant (in this piece, E flat). Instead, the cadence shifts the tonality to A dominant, a tri-tone away from the expected and anticipated sub-dominant E flat. There is awkwardness in this tonal shift, but as it is only a transitory passage leading back to the home key of B flat 2 measures later, it is also endemic to the altered chord motions employed by bop innovators such as Monk. The chromatic descent from measure 9 through measure 10 is another common harmonic device employed within bop chord changes. The result is ambiguity of tonality, and increased harmonic tension: a device applied and exploited mercilessly a few generations prior by composer, Richard Wagner, and his late, post-Romantic orchestral scores. It seems odd to compare Monk with Wagner, but one inherent principle drawn from chromaticism is the prolonging of tonic resolution<sup>xv</sup>, a common ideal shared by composers past and present.

The main rhythmic component to “The Loneliest Monk” is one of anticipation: rhythmic shots are placed on upbeats throughout the twelve bar form, again, a common tool in bop music. The emancipation of swing rhythms found in jazz, and in particular, bebop evolution is one of deep musical significance. Tempos surged and harmonic complexity evolved, creating urgency to the drive of the

rhythm section. Syncopation became common in melodic and harmonic writing, and the role of the drums had also evolved through advancement of rhythmic drive. The bebop era changed the time feel of what was earlier a simple swing feel. Tempos climbed as advanced harmonic complexity began, and the raw emotion of a relentless rhythmic drive replaced the danceable qualities of big band jazz.

Similarities in facets of modern artistic practice become self-evident as progressive bebop artists made concerted efforts to create art for arts sake, and not for public interest. Herein lies a division of artistic principles between the old school and the new guard: that of those *following* trends, and of those *creating* trends.

5.3 Comin' Thru

# COMIN' THRU

by: N. JAY BURR  
© SEPT. 15, 2012

FAST SWING (♩ = 200)

The musical score is written in 4/4 time with a key signature of one flat (Bb). It consists of ten staves of music, with measure numbers (6), (10), (15), (19), (25), (28), (32), and (36) indicated at the beginning of their respective staves. The score includes various chord annotations such as G-6, Eb MAJ 7, D7(b9) (b13), Ab MAJ 7, Db MAJ 7, D-7(b5), G7(ALT), C-9, C-9/Bb, F7/A, Db MAJ 7, B-7(b5), E7(#9) (b13), A-7(b5), D7(b9) (#11), G-6, D9, Bb7, Eb7, Ab MAJ 7, Db7, Gb MAJ 7, B7, E-7, A7(#9) (b13), (D7(b9) (#11)), G-6, D9, and (D.C. AL FINE). The notation includes eighth and sixteenth notes, rests, and dynamic markings like accents and slurs. The piece concludes with a double bar line and the instruction '(D.C. AL FINE)'.

The growth of bebop in the 1940's came to represent a new aspect of jazz composition and performance. The racing tempos and altered harmonies created a new vocabulary in which artists developed personal treatises of approach to writing, performing and improvising. There was also a backlash to the frenetic style of speed bop, and the west coast style migrated towards less frantic and mellower writing and performance practices.

"Comin' Thru" is a cross between bebop and post-bop ideals, with a tempo and harmonic sensibility residing in hard bop or post-bop ethos. The tune is more representative of Wayne Shorter or Herbie Hancock's style than it is of Charlie Parker or Dizzy Gillespie, thus the rationale for straddling genres. The gist of this piece is to represent the tuba in a hard driving bass role, paying respect to some influential masters of string bass in bop and post-bop sensibilities: Paul Chambers, Ron Carter, Jimmy Garrison and Reggie Workman.

The use of trumpet and alto saxophone is employed to carry the traditional quintet sound, and enforces toughness and muscularity of the lead instruments through extensive use of bop harmony for horns: the brute sound of two horns harmonized through parallel 4ths and line resolutions to major 2nds help emphasize the masculinity in timbre and rough harmonic choices. This sensibility is further demonstrated through traditional means of piano and drums driving the groove home, and through ensemble accents on the triplet quartal patterns at the tail end of both A and B sections.

The harmonic progression of the song is derivative of the post-bop ethos, and was conceived hand in hand with the melody. At first writing, this piece was again

intended for trio, but upon further examination of line content and angularity of melody, it rapidly became apparent this song was more appropriate for horns to blow the head as opposed to the piano, and then was augmented from quartet to quintet, adding another horn and then subsequent harmonization to the melody. Originally, the quintet was to be tenor saxophone and trumpet, but upon trial and error with arrangement, it quickly appeared that alto saxophone was a better match for keeping in range, as well as providing the muscle within melodic lines. The trumpet melody was unchanged, and the alto harmony created to accentuate the flavour of the song through semi-traditional bop horn harmony and line phrasing.

Lastly, the primary motive of this song within the thesis is to apply the tuba in bass position to have listeners recognize that the tuba is fully capable of providing the incessant rhythmic and harmonic drive of a string bass. Not only the sound and line content are similar, they are near indistinguishable from each other. The fundamental differences are the inherent brief pauses in the continuous bass lines to catch a breath. Otherwise, the bass style and sound are near matches.

5.4 Lost and Found

# LOST & FOUND

by: N. JAY BURR  
© SEPT. 17, 2012

JAZZ WALTZ (d.=56)

The musical score is written in 3/4 time with a key signature of one flat (Bb). It consists of ten staves of music, each with a treble clef. The notation includes various chords and melodic lines with slurs and accents. The chords are as follows:

- Staff 1: F
- Staff 2: Db MAJ7, C7(sus4)
- Staff 3: Eb MAJ7, Ab MAJ7, Db7(b9), C7(b9)
- Staff 4: Bb-7, D-7
- Staff 5: Gb MAJ7, Bb7(b9)(sus4), E7(b13)
- Staff 6: A-7, D7(b9)(#11), G-7, C7(b9)
- Staff 7: F
- Staff 8: Db MAJ7, C7(sus4)

Measure numbers (25), (37), and (49) are indicated at the beginning of the fourth, seventh, and eighth staves, respectively. The piece concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots at the end of the eighth staff.

"LOST & FOUND", p2

Handwritten musical notation on a single staff. Above the staff are four chord symbols: Eb MAJ7, Ab MAJ7, Db7(b9), and C7(b9). The notation includes a treble clef, a key signature of one flat (Bb), and a 4-measure phrase. The notes are: Eb (quarter), Ab (quarter), Bb (quarter), and C (quarter). A circled cross symbol is at the end of the staff.

(D.C. AL CODA)

Handwritten musical notation for a coda. It features a circled cross symbol followed by the word "CODA" in a box. Below this, the chord symbol "F6" is written above a single note (F) on a staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The staff ends with a double bar line.

In the mid-1950's, jazz again witnessed giant changes in stylistic growth and expansion of harmonic ideals. The influences of pianist Bill Evans and his trio of Scott LeFaro and Paul Motian deeply influenced the progression of jazz trios, and more relevant, a new approach to harmony, chord voicing and harmonic progressions in the 1950's and beyond. Evans' unique classical, yet introspective approach to the trio format changed the perception of what a jazz trio was, and what it could be. This group demonstrated how a modern jazz trio performs: not as background to a traditional lead instrument or player (i.e.: piano), but equally involved as group soloists. The freedom associated with individual soloistic approaches to ensemble playing had enormous impact on the character of jazz, and provided foresight into what could be created collectively. Extended harmonic movement, lush voicing and chord progressions, and across bar-line drum phrasing accentuates dramatic interplay, and a personal and intimate awareness otherwise unknown to jazz groups. The Gestalt concept that *the whole is greater than the sum of its parts*<sup>xvi</sup> is now reversed, and *the sum of the parts exceeds the sum of the whole* should be realized within this musical model.

"Lost and Found" is an example of refining and distilling simple melodic movement with evocative chord relations and chordal movement. In many ways, Bill Evans altered the waltz form into an epic harmonic journey. I am not directly comparing my writing to Evans, but expressing the similarities in writing a jazz waltz for trio, but deciding to leave out the drums and record it as a duo. It is very comfortable to hide behind the drums, especially when performing bright tempos, better allowing small breaks for breathing on the tuba, but in duo format there is no



hiding, and the required breathing demonstrates how that inconvenience may result in becoming an actual musical ingredient from within a performance.

With the waltz as a basic building block, a simple melody carried by evocative harmonic movement is an easy vehicle in which to make music. This aspect once again appears as an area unknown to brass bass. This song appeared through one simple objective: to write a jazz waltz and deploy it in a stylistic approach that is not dissimilar to the early Bill Evans trio. Worth noting is the decision to utilize my recently restored Rhodes Mark I electric piano to pair with the tuba on the recording. The playfulness and interplay of musicians is key in creating the floating, dreamy delivery on the recording. This can further lend authenticity of harmonic and rhythmic execution, lending a lilting, light feel in three. The choice of sequence for chord movement is akin to Evans sensibilities, and as a result, has a harmonic distance closely resembling the song title. Although not reflected in the score or lead sheet, there is an intro and outro that evolved when performing this tune: once again the muse of improvisation comes to alter the structure, fortunately to musical advantage.

5.5 Two Shades of Grey

# TWO SHADES OF GREY

by: N. JAY BURE.  
© JUNE 22, 2012

BALLAD (♩=72)

Handwritten musical score for 'Two Shades of Grey'. The score consists of six staves of music in a ballad style (♩=72). The key signature is B-flat major (two flats). The first staff starts with a  $Bb-7$  chord and a  $D-9$  chord. The second staff has chords  $Db^{maj7}$ ,  $Gb7$ ,  $E^{maj7}$ , and  $A7(b9)(\#11)$ . The third staff has chords  $Cb^{maj7}$ ,  $Bb7(b9)(b13)$ ,  $Eb-7$ , and  $Ab7$ . The fourth staff has chords  $D7$ ,  $Db7$ ,  $Gb7$ , and  $Bb7(b9)(\#11)$ . The fifth staff has chords  $Bb-7/F$ ,  $Bb-7$ , and  $D-9$ . The sixth staff has chords  $Db^{maj7}$ ,  $Gb7$ ,  $Ab-7$ ,  $F7(b9)(b13)$ ,  $Bb-7$ , and  $F7(b9)(\#11)(b13)$ . There are also some circled annotations and a 'CODA' symbol.

Handwritten musical score for the Coda section. It features two staves. The first staff has a circled 'CODA' symbol and the chords  $Ab-7$ ,  $F7(b9)(b13)$ , and  $Bb-7$ . The second staff has the word 'RITARD' written below it.

In the world of music, artistic expression and inspiration lie amongst a vast and varied pool of resources. Thematically, love is as relevant and important to jazz as within any artistic endeavour. The forces of nature and creation are also popular inspirational tools and are substantial fodder for creating music and compelling artistic expression. However, along with love, joy, nature and fulfillment there comes sorrow, regret, pain and misery. All become catalysts to artistic expression, and within this piece, a personal quest to move forward and not regress artistically, even if held back emotionally. The elusive answer in life is not necessarily *black and white* in nature, but “Two Shades of Grey”. This is the reflective, or self-effacing manner in which I approached this composition. In retrospect to the original intent, it was again decided to perform this as a duet with piano, and attempt a quasi-chamber music approach, as if it were a composition placed in a formal music recital.

In lieu of having the answers, I question the authenticity, motives, and rationalization of human expression. For a reflective song, I undertake the required passion and melancholy to create a ballad that is impressionistic, and brooding in character. The realization is that there are no answers to these questions, and within confusion lay even more questions, and more often than not, there appear even less answers.

In ballad creation, there is a need to reflect emotion, or personification of the intended mood in attempting to convey the appropriate emotional character to a song. This particular composition is less controlled by function of necessity or whim, but of an endearing, heartfelt longing to understand. The human equation is not of

finite understanding, but of questioning our reality, and attempting to understand the unknown. What is known in this song is that there is a melancholic underbelly, and the plaintive execution of tuba is key to the intent of the melody. Essentially, a personal melodic approach is designated to reap the emotion of the melody. Attention should be paid to its expressiveness, and the manner of execution is similar to other lead brass instruments, such as trumpet or trombone. However, most pertinent is the manner of melodic styling that essentially is uniquely individual to the tuba, but still interchangeable with string bass: fluidity of melodic movement, sliding and scooping notes, as well as melodic phrasing and the emotional impact displayed on the recording. These elements are not interchangeable with the string bass, nor exhibited by many others on the tuba.

This performance conveys a unique musical style and sensibility on an otherwise cumbersome and awkward instrument. Although not written on the score, it was discussed that piano accompaniment was to be sparse and in the higher register. This was a production decision made to maintain register separation and clarity for the tuba melody. This in turn exhibits the tuba in an authoritative low melodic voice. The mood of "Two Shades of Grey" is approached delicately, and was as simple to record as pushing the red button to start, and a spacebar to stop. There are no retakes or overthinking: it was done in one pass.

5.6 Amor Peligroso

# AMOR PELIGROSO

by: N. JAY BURR  
© JAN. 3, 2013

BRIGHT LATIN (d=100)

Handwritten musical notation for the first system. The top staff is a grand staff with a treble clef and a common time signature. The bottom staff is a bass clef staff. The music is in 4/4 time. The first measure contains a whole note chord D-9. The second measure contains a whole note chord F-9. The bass line consists of eighth and quarter notes.

Handwritten musical notation for the second system. The top staff is a grand staff with a treble clef and a common time signature. The bottom staff is a bass clef staff. The music is in 4/4 time. The first measure contains a whole note chord Bb-9. The second measure contains a whole note chord Eb-7. The third measure contains a whole note chord Gb MA7 F7. The bass line consists of eighth and quarter notes.

Handwritten musical notation for the third system. The top staff is a grand staff with a treble clef and a common time signature. The bottom staff is a bass clef staff. The music is in 4/4 time. The first measure contains a whole note chord D-9. The second measure contains a whole note chord F-7. The bass line consists of eighth notes. A circled 'A' and a circled '8' are written to the left of the first measure.

Handwritten musical notation for the fourth system. The top staff is a grand staff with a treble clef and a common time signature. The bottom staff is a bass clef staff. The music is in 4/4 time. The first measure contains a whole note chord Bb-9. The second measure contains a whole note chord Eb-7. The third measure contains a whole note chord Gb MA7 F7. The bass line consists of eighth and quarter notes.

"AMOR FELIGROSO, PZ

(A9)

D-7 F-9

Bb-7 Eb-7 GbA7 F7(ALT)

(B) SWING

Bb-7 C-7 F7

A-7 F7 E7(ALT)

(B9)

Eb-7 Ab7 A7(#11) (b13)

"AMOR PELIGROSO," P. 3

D-11      B $\flat$ 7(b9) (sus4)  
F

Ab MAJ 7      G-7      C7(b9)

(C) LATIN

f D7(#9)      sf — f

sf — f

A7(#9) (b13)      sf — f D7(alt) (SOLOIST BREAK)

(D.  $\times$  w/REPEATS)

(TAKE  $\oplus$  ONLY TO END)

LATIN (CODA) (OPEN) "AMOR PELIGROSO", p4

$f$   $D7(\#9)$   $f$   $p$  —  $f$   $f$   $p$  —  $f$

(ON CUE)

$A7(\#9)$   $(b13)$   $f$   $p$  —  $f$   $D7(\#9)$



Aside from gangster and drug cartel sounds of “Narcocorrido”<sup>xvii</sup> and norteño folk corrido traditions in popular Mexican and Latin American music, tuba has not been readily associated with afro-Cuban or Latin-jazz bass roles. The visibility of tuba within contemporary Latin music is absent through the years of this genre of jazz. The tuba in Latin American folk culture is primarily heard in polka or waltz rhythms via accordion combos or full brass bands. Within these Mexican styles, there is a wonderful association with tuba as both a melodic and harmonic instrument in popular songs. However, this is not the style or intent with “Amor Peligroso”. This song is a composition with focus on traditional rhythms endemic to popular Latin jazz models.

There are distinct similarities between Latin jazz bass function and second line rhythms with tuba or sousaphone. One of the major correlations between these styles is the syncopated rhythm employed by the bass. However, the essential difference is straight eighth note feel in Latin jazz, and loosely deployed swing feel within second line bass lines. “Amor Peligroso” demonstrates both straight and swung bass style, straddling both between A and B sections of the song. The chord progression employed is not standard of Latin songwriting practice, but once again plies a path of oddly related harmonic progressions and tonal centers. The melding of these differences imparts a distinctly original flavour to an otherwise traditional Latin jazz form.

Arranging the piece for quintet was essential not only to provide the song with adequate harmonies to convey the traditional approach to Latin music, but also to demonstrate the edge and bravura of brass and horn to assist in elevating the

musical style towards a salsa band ideal. Future plans are to include a third horn with the addition of trombone, but alas: time and money are no longer an option. This will be pursued later as a post-graduate option.

Popular salsa music reveals a limited, or restricted use of chord progressions, and a song's character is represented primarily through its arrangement, which quite often is a vehicle to display lush, colourful chords in lieu of intense harmonic movement, or strange cadences to new keys. Traditionally, there is rare use of multiple, or varied chord progressions, and even less often any alternating of tonal centre or apparent key. A conscious choice has been made to deviate from models of tradition and bring "Amor Peligroso" towards an exploration of moving tonal centers arriving through turnarounds with surprise cadences. The result is a traditional music style evolved to create a progressive stance apart from the traditional Latin music model.

It will appear that false tonal centers and elusive harmonic cadences are essential tools in my compositions. I opt to write tonal music, but often employ tonality as a non-permanent zone. This focus is to continue to play the game of tonality, but make it elusive, and derive pleasure from resisting predictability and comfortable landings. This stance stems directly from a personal composition ethic to write and perform in otherwise played out genres and antiquated writing styles.

An example of ambiguous tonality is evident from the lack of key signature, but further demonstrated via the opening eight measures: without a traditional cadence, the only element defining the key of the song is the assumption that the opening outlining a D minor 9 chord is the home key or tonal centre. The use of this

chord progression is the building block of both the introduction and the A section. This leads one to believe that the song may be D minor, but once the bridge arrives 40 measures later in swing, the tonal centre shifts to Bb minor, A minor, and Eb minor before the final false cadence repeating to the beginning. Tonality is never actually defined or revealed until section C with group vamp. The key is eventually defined at the conclusion of the final measure with a perfect cadence of A dominant 7 to D minor before each 2 bar break for soloists, or conclusively at the end of the song.

5.7 Alphabet Soup

# ALPHABET SOUP

by: N. JAY BURR  
© OCT. 13, 2012

VERY SLOW IN 2 (d=50)

VAMP D- (DORIAN) (ON CUE) D-

(D-)

G7

E-7 D- D-/C B-7(b5) Bb7(#11) A7(sus4)

1) A7(ALT) 2) G7 G7(#11)

B) E-7 F7(b13)/Eb D-7 Eb MAJ7(#5)

E-7 F7(b13)/Eb G7 E-7 A+9

C

FREE IMPROVISATION INTO CHAOS - (NO TRADITIONAL STRUCTURES)

(ON CUE: D X AL ⊕)  
(NO REPEAT!)

"ALPHABET SOUP" #2

**CODA**

VERY RUBATO

Chord symbols: E-7, F7(b13) Eb, D-7, Eb MAJ7 (#5), E-7, F7(b13) Eb, G7, E-7 A+9

**LEGEND:**

STANZA 1 - DEAD BABE FED AGED CABBAGE  
 CELL #1: **[DBFAC]**

STANZA 2 - BEADED FAG GAGGED DEAF DAD  
 CELL #2: **[BFGDD]**

STANZA 3 - CEDED BAD CAFÉ BEEF  
 CELL #3: **[CBCB]**

## RECIPE - Alphabet Soup

1. Set tempo roughly at half note = 50, heating tuba, melodica and drum kit in a slow 2 feel.
2. Let the mix stew until tenor sax enters with melody at A
3. Keep sauce simmering until sax completes first iteration of melody:  
DEAD BABE FED AGED CABBAGE, BEADED FAG GAGGED DEAF  
DAD, CEDED BAD CAFÉ BEEF
4. Repeat step 3 until completion of melody A twice and rapid boil is achieved
5. Add cell #1 (1<sup>st</sup> letter of each word in stanza 1) starting at B
6. Add cell #2 (1<sup>st</sup> letter of each word in stanza 2) twice for good measure
7. Add cell #1 again, then complete with the addition of cell #3 (same as above) until all source ingredients have been added
8. Let the stew simmer and coalesce until time to repeat steps 1 through 7
9. Remove from burner and let concoction sit for an extended period before serving

The key to making a healthy soup is not rushing to add ingredients: all soups must come from good stock, and until the desired base is achieved, it is best to wait till adding the special sauce.

Bon Appetit!

Although a traditionalist, there are certain composition and performance practices that appear in my writing, performing and recording aesthetic. “Alphabet Soup” utilizes the diatonic musical alphabet, A B C D E F G as the compositional essence of this final piece. Without use of accidentals in the melody, the deployment of seven notes might appear rather boring. This piece was conceived and composed through word creation from the diatonic musical alphabet. A list of sixty-two words was created and then culled using fourteen words applied in three sentences, and distilled into three cellular derivatives to create the melody and form of “Alphabet Soup”.

The goal was to employ words derived from the diatonic musical alphabet and then create melodic ‘sentences’. The fourteen words are employed within three sentences, creating the melody of the A section. The words below spell out the melody played by the tenor saxophone: DEAD BABE FED AGED CABBAGE, BEADED FAG GAGGED DEAF DAD, CEDED BAD CAFÉ BEEF. Through octave displacement and rhythmic variance, the word melody is presented as a quirky statement carried by the tenor. The deployment of these words as melodies is via angular leaps and varied rhythmic phrases, lending a creative edge to what otherwise would be a mundane melody. The second element of compositional creativity lies in the B section, where melodic cell fragments are created from taking the first letter (note) of each word per stanza, and stringing them together to create three distinct cells: DBFAC, BFGDD, CBCB. These three cells are the building blocks of the B section melody.

A significant deviation from normal practice is the instrumentation and harmonization of the melody. With the melody being stark and odd, the instrumentation choice was to veer away from tradition, with melodica used in lieu of piano, and once again tuba and drums as rhythm section. The piece conveys a quasi-circus or soundtrack feel, and the intentionally quirky accompaniment to the histrionic tenor saxophone effectively presents the performance as if recording a drunken, Baltic street band. Although the saxophone plays a limited note melody, the harmony is free to augment the basic diatonic tonality beyond the innate Dorian feel, and chords are employed to further colour and enhance the internal harmonic structures. Within the diatonic musical alphabet stems a natural Dorian feel, but the chord accompaniment is allowed to break from basic Dorian harmony and associated structures on behalf of supporting the simple melody beyond standard modal harmony.

The full intent of this piece is outlined in the “recipe”, displayed directly after score 5.7. Sometimes, it is essential to not take music too seriously, and retain the flair of originality in purpose and fun in execution. The recorded performance is taking full advantage of this, and was a hoot to both create and perform this piece.



## **Chapter 6: Conclusion**

In my opinion, I believe there has been a silent revolution in the value and importance of music in the modern age. Society recognizes that the public are engaged and entertained by music, but are reticent to accept an antiquated business model of its sale and distribution. There also are key differences in core values between our “digital” youth generation and the old “analog” generation. There are issues of morality, and apathy towards placing any monetary value on music, and in the big picture, any digital art creation. Instead of adhering to past values and tradition, we as composers, performers and individuals must move forward. There will always be art and culture, regardless of whether or not there is value placed on its creation and dissemination. There is no better time than the present to be visible and accessible as artists, yet to be independent of rules, regulations and confines previously associated with the music industry. Inevitably, we are our own bosses, and are held to be accountable to no one but ourselves.

As a composer, I write for everyone, anyone and even sometimes no one. But as an unorthodox jazz instrumentalist, I perform *with anyone for everyone or no one*. This thesis presents a compositionally traditionalist approach while still attempting to innovate as a jazz bass player. The ultimate function of this is to demonstrate the abilities of the tuba bass as a versatile instrument in many styles. This approach is the culmination of an odd instrument deployed within an unlikely realm and required to display a personality worthy of legitimacy as a bass instrument: one residing on the outside of mainstream in the music industry, regardless of specific genre. It is the instrument I choose to play that ultimately

limits my ability to work in mainstream groups, or in any context applied within a mainstream music model. As a musician, I am progressive, but as a writer, I am primarily traditional. The music of this thesis will attest to that. However, the aim of this thesis is to provide a glimpse into an area where the tuba is re-invented and redesigned and to have it placed amongst the canon of styles it had been excluded from. The possibilities demonstrated through these compositions are to facilitate discussion and further elucidate the capabilities of this odd instrument in mainstream jazz writing. The realization of an individualistic approach to creating a unique voice on the tuba, and the utilization of appropriate recording and production tools can make the difference between staying ahead of the curve, and falling behind. In this, the objective remains clear; create a unique place for tuba in jazz and have the limelight cast upon it once again after decades in absentia from jazz history.

Supplemental Scores

Bb PART

# AUTUMN COMES TOO QUICKLY

by: N. JAY BUER  
© Nov. 9, 2011

BALLAD (♩ = 72)

Handwritten musical score for Bb Part, featuring two staves per system. The score includes various chords and musical notations:

- System 1:** Chords: G, F7(#11), A-7, D7. Chords below staff: C#-7(b5), F#7(b13), B-9, E7(#11)(b13).
- System 2:** Chords: E-7, Bb7(b9), A-7, D7(b9). Chords below staff: C#o7, F#7(#11), Abmaj7, F-7, Bb-7, Eb7(b13), Abmaj7.
- System 3:** Chords: F-, F-(maj7), F-7, F-6/Bb, B-7(b5), E7(#11)(b13), A-7(b5), D13(#11). Chords below staff: F-7, B-7(b5), E7(#11)(b13), A-7(b5), D13(#11).
- System 4:** Chords: G, F7(#11), A-7, D7, C#-7(b5), F#7(b13). Chords below staff: B-9, E7(#11)(b13), C#-7(b5)C7, B-7, E7(b9)(#11).
- System 5:** Chords: A-7, D7(#9), G6, FINE. Chords below staff: A-7, D7(#9), G6.

Additional markings include a circled 'D' with a slash and a circled '1' at the beginning, and a circled '2' at the start of the second system. A 'FINE' marking is present at the end of the piece.

(D. ✂ AL FINE)

(Bb PART)

# THE LONELIEST MONK

by: N. JAY BURR  
© JUNE 22, 2012

MED. SWING (♩=126)

Handwritten musical score for the Bb part of 'The Loneliest Monk'. The score is written on a single staff in treble clef with a key signature of two flats (Bb) and a 4/4 time signature. The tempo is marked 'MED. SWING (♩=126)'. The score consists of four lines of music. The first line starts with a C7 chord and a note marked '(TUBA PLAYS HEAD)'. The second line has a G-7 chord. The third line has an Eb7(#9) chord. The fourth line has an E7(#9) chord and ends with a 'FINE' marking. Chord changes are indicated above the staff: C7, Bb7, C7, Ab7, G-7, C7, B7, E9, Db7, Eb7(#9), F#7(#9), F7(#9), E7(#9), Eb7(#9), D7(b9), G7(#11), C#7, C7, and (G7). The score concludes with a double bar line and the word 'FINE' in a box.

Four empty musical staves, each consisting of five lines, provided for additional notation or practice.

(ALTO SAX)

# COMIN' THRU

by: N. JAY BURR  
© SEPT. 15, 2012

FAST SWING (♩ = 200)

Handwritten musical score for Alto Saxophone titled "COMIN' THRU" by N. Jay Burr. The score is in 4/4 time with a tempo of 200 bpm. It consists of 32 measures across eight staves. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The score includes various chords such as E-6, B7(b9), F#7(b9), Bb MAJ7, B-7(b5), E7(ALT), A-9, A-9/G, D7/F#, F MAJ7, G#-7(b5), C#7(#9), F#-7(b5), B7(b9), E-6, B9, G7, C7, F MAJ7, Bb7, EbΔ7, G#7, C#-7, and F#7(#9). It also features triplets and a double bar line with repeat dots at the end.

"Comin' Thru", p2

(36)

(B7 (b9) (#11) (b13)) E-6 B9

(D.C. AL ⊕ CODA)

Bbmaj7 G#-7(b9)

C#7(#9)(b13) F#-7(b9) B7(b9)(#11) E-6

(ALTO)

Bb PART

# COMIN' THRU

by: N. JAY BURE  
© SEPT. 15, 2012

FAST SWING (♩ = 200)  
A-6

Handwritten musical score for "COMIN' THRU" in Bb major, 4/4 time, fast swing tempo. The score consists of 10 staves of music with various chord annotations and measure numbers.

Chord annotations include: A-6, E7(b9)(b13), Eb MAJ7, E-7(b5), A7(ALT), D-9, D-9/C, G7/B, C#-7(b5), F#7(#9)(b13), B-7(b5), E7(b9)(#11), A-6, E9, C7, F7, Bb MAJ7, Eb7, Ab Δ7, C#7, F#-7, and Bb7(#9)(b13).

Measure numbers are indicated at the start of several staves: (6), (10), (15), (19), (23), (28), and (32).

"Comin' Thru", p2

Handwritten musical notation on a staff. The first measure is circled and labeled (36). The notation includes a whole note chord labeled  $(E7(b9) (\#11) (b13))$ , followed by a half note chord labeled  $A-6$ , and another half note chord labeled  $E9$ . The notes are written in a treble clef.

(D.C.A. ⊕ CODA)

Four empty musical staves, each consisting of five lines.

Handwritten musical notation on a staff. It begins with a circled section labeled  $\oplus$  CODA. The notation includes several chords:  $F\#7(\#9) (b13)$ ,  $B-7(b5)$ ,  $E7(b9) (\#11)$ ,  $A-6$ ,  $E^b MAJ7$ , and  $C\#-7(b5)$ . The notes are written in a treble clef.

(Bb PART)



Bb PART

# LOST & FOUND

by: N. JAY BURR  
© SEPT. 17, 2012

JAZZ WALTZ (d. = 56)

Handwritten musical score for Bb Part of "Lost & Found" Jazz Waltz. The score consists of seven staves of music in 3/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The first staff starts with a G chord and a half note G. The second staff has Eb major 7 and D7(sus) chords. The third staff includes F major 7, Bb major 7, Eb7(b9), and D7(b9) chords. The fourth staff has C-7 and E-7 chords. The fifth staff includes Ab major 7, C7(b9) (sus4), and F#7(b13) chords. The sixth staff has B-7, E7(b9) (#11), A-7, and D7(b9) chords. The seventh staff starts with a G chord and a half note G. There are measure numbers (25) and (37) at the beginning of the fifth and seventh staves respectively. The score ends with two empty staves.

"Lost & Found"

Handwritten musical notation for the first system of "Lost & Found". It consists of two staves. The first staff has a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a common time signature. It contains a half note chord Eb MAJ7, followed by two quarter notes, a dotted quarter note, and a quarter note chord D7(sus) with a 4-measure slur above it. The second staff also has a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp, and a common time signature. It contains a half note chord F MAJ7, followed by a quarter note chord Bb MAJ7, a quarter note chord Eb7(b9) with a 4-measure slur above it, and a quarter note chord D7(b9). The system ends with a circled cross symbol.

(D.C. AL CODA)

(CODA)

Handwritten musical notation for the CODA section. It consists of a single staff with a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a common time signature. It contains a half note chord G6, followed by a double bar line.

~2.0

(Bb)

(Bb PART)

# TWO SHADES OF GREY

by: N. JAY BURR  
© JUNE 22, 2012

BALLAD (♩=72)

Chords: C-7, E-9, Eb MAJ7, Ab7, F# MAJ7, B7(b9)(#11), Db MAJ7, C7(b9)(b13), F-7, Bb7, E7, Eb7, Ab7, C7(b9)(sus) G, C#/G#, C-7/G, C-7, E-9, Eb MAJ7, Ab7, Bb-7, G7(b9)(b13), C-7, G7(b9)(#11)(b13).

(D. C. AL CODA)

Chords: C-7, G7(b9)(#11)(b13), C-7.

Rit.

# AMOR PELIGROSO

by: N.J. BURR  
© JAN. 3, 2013

BRIGHT LATIN (♩ = 100)

The musical score is written in bass clef with a 4/4 time signature. The tempo is marked as BRIGHT LATIN (♩ = 100). The key signature has two flats (Bb and Eb). The score consists of a main melody line and two empty staves for accompaniment. The melody is divided into sections A and B. Section A is marked with a circled 'A' and a circled '8', indicating an 8-measure phrase. Section B is marked with a circled 'B' and the word 'SWING', indicating a 4-measure phrase. The accompaniment staves are marked with diagonal lines, suggesting a rhythmic pattern. Chord symbols are placed above the staff lines.

Chord symbols for the melody line:

- Measures 1-2: D-9
- Measures 3-4: F-9
- Measures 5-6: Bb-9
- Measures 7-8: Eb-7
- Measures 9-10: Gb<sup>major</sup>7 F7
- Measures 11-12: D-9
- Measures 13-14: F-7
- Measures 15-16: Bb-9
- Measures 17-18: Eb-7
- Measures 19-20: Gb<sup>major</sup>7 F7
- Measures 21-22: D-7
- Measures 23-24: F-9
- Measures 25-26: Bb-7
- Measures 27-28: Eb-7
- Measures 29-30: Gb<sup>major</sup>7 F7(ALT)

Chord symbols for the accompaniment staves:

- Staff 1: Bb-7, C-7, F7
- Staff 2: A-7, F7, E7(ALT)

"Amor PELIGROSO", p2

(B9) Eb-7 Ab7 A7(#11) (b13)

D=11 Bb7(b9) (sus4) F Abmaj7 G-7 C7(b9) (C)

(C) LATIN D7(#9) 2

A7(#9) (b13) sf D7(alt) (SOLOIST BREAK)

(CODA) (D. S. w/REPEATS) (TAKE= ONLY TO END)

LATIN (OPEN) D7(#9) 2

(ON CLUE) A7(#9) (b13) sf D7(alt)

(TUBA)

ALTO SAX

# AMOR PELIGROSO

by: N JAY BURR

© JAN. 3, 2013

BRIGHT LATIN (d=100)

(RHY.) B

(A) B-9 D-7

G-9 C-7 Eb major 7 D7

(A9) B-7 D-9

G-7 C-7 Eb major 7 D7 (ALT)

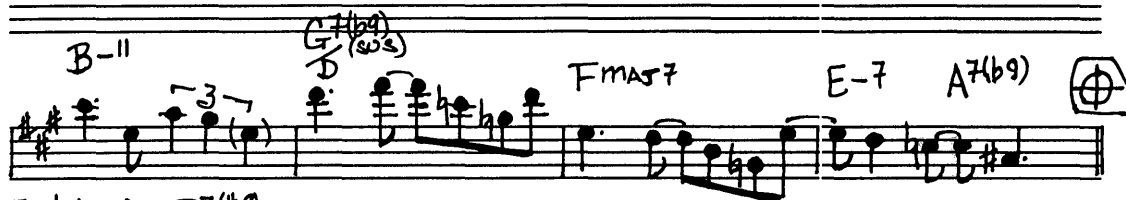
(B) SWING G-7 A-7 D7

F#-7 D7 C#7 (ALT)

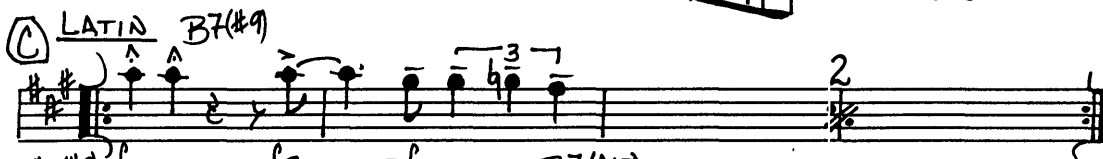
(B9) C-7 F7 F#7 (b9)

"Amor Peligroso", p2

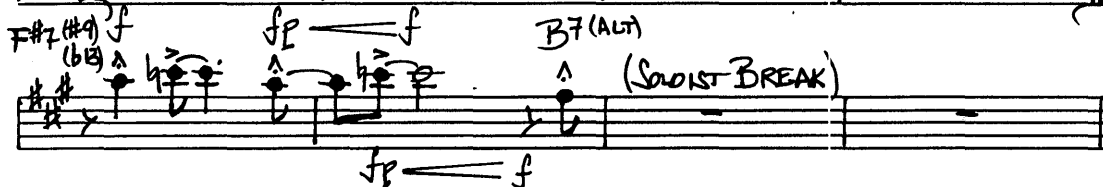
B-11  $G^{\#}(b9)$   
D (sus) Fmaj7 E-7 A7(b9)  $\text{\textcircled{C}}$



$\text{\textcircled{C}}$  LATIN B7(#9)



F#7(#9) (b9) f B7(ALT) (Soloist Break)



D.S. w/REPEATS

$\text{\textcircled{C}}$  CODA

(TAKE  $\text{\textcircled{C}}$  ONLY TO END)

LATIN



$\text{\textcircled{C}}$   $\text{\textcircled{C}}$



(ALTO)

(TRUMPET)

# AMOR PELIGROSO

by: N. JAY BURE.  
© JAN. 3, 2013

BRIGHT LATIN (♩=100)

(RHY.) 8

(A) (S) E-9 G-7

C-9 F7 Abmaj7 G7

(A9) E-7 G-9

C-7 F-7 Abmaj7 G7(alt)

(B) Swing C-7 D-7 G7

B-7 G7 F#7(alt)

(B9) F-7 Bb7 B7(b9)



"AMOR PELIGROSO", p2

E-11 C7(b9) / G (sus) Bb MAJ7 A-7 D7(b9) (C)

(C) LATIN E7(#9) B7(#9) (b3) E7(ALT) (SOLOIST BREAK)

(D. S. W/REPEATS) (TAKE ONLY TO END)

LATIN (OPEN) ON WE

(TRPT)

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## **End Notes:**

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