

Paul Combs on Tadd Dameron

Higher Ed Offerings:

Lectures (1-2 hours, depending on available time and the opportunity for questions from the audience) :

What We Learn From Dameron The Composer

Tadd Dameron was exceptionally skilled at composing melodies. While he is often remembered for his harmonic innovations, these were always at the service of his melodies. This lecture explores in detail, the variety of melodic designs, care in note choice, and subtlety of “poetic rhythm” found in his many compositions.

Dameron's Long Form Work

Tadd Dameron had an interest in composition that went beyond song form compositions, and arrangements developed from them. His best known “tone poem” is “Fontainebleau” from 1956. It was preceded in the 1940s by “Nearness,” and “Soulphony In Three Hearts,” and possibly some scores written for Stan Kenton’s Innovations In Modern Music Orchestra. There were also at least two works from his last years, that we still hope can be found some day. This lecture explores Dameron’s compositional techniques, which are different from those employed in his song form work.

Harmonic Themes In Dameron's Body Of Work

Many know the “Dameron Turn-Around” found in the last two measures of “Lady Bird,” but probably not all the variations on this device found in his work, both compositions and arrangements. Then there is his recurring interest in key relationships a third apart, especially the tonic to that a minor third above which he explores in a variety of ways. These and other topics are discussed.

Workshops:

The 8 Canonical Tunes (1:30 minimum, 2:00 preferable):

There are eight of Dameron’s compositions that are pretty much known universally by most jazz musicians, and therefore qualify as part of the canon, along with many compositions by Miles Davis, Duke Ellington, Charlie Parker, Wayne Shorter, etc. as well as many American Songbook tunes. In this workshop we will meet these eight: “Good Bait,” “Lady Bird,” “Hot House,” “If You Could See Me Now,” “On A Misty Night,” “Our Delight,” “Soultrane,” and “Tadd’s Delight.” Participants learn their history and what makes them unique. Depending on how many participants there are, everyone should get a chance to play on one or two, and all will take home lead sheets, with accompanying notes.

Beyond The Canon - other worthy Dameron melodies (1:30 minimum, 2:00 preferable):

There many more tunes by Tadd Dameron to work with in a manner similar to the “8 Canonical Tunes” workshop. Depending on the time available, I would pick 6 to 8 of these from different periods of his work. For instance:

A-La-Bridges, Don’t Forget It. Early 1940s
Zakat, Dameronia, Do-Bla-Bli, Mid 1940s
Dial B For Beauty, Mating Call, 1950s
You’re A Joy, Sando Latino. 1960s

Dameron For Singers (1:30 minimum, 2:00 preferable):

One of the Dameron compositions in the canon is “If You Could See Me Now,” Written in 1946 and first recorded by Sarah Vaughan. This song in the repertoire of many jazz singers, and probably recognized by nearly all of them. There are several more worthy songs by Tadd Dameron that singers should be aware of. In this workshop we will introduce as many as time permits.

Concerts:

Large Ensemble - Selected from commercially available scores, and my personal collection.

Vocal - small group arrangement adapted from my personal collection.

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Mixed Large, Smaller and Vocal - A mix of the above along with my own five and nine piece charts

I have the following arrangements (in chronological order):

Mary Lou - 3,2,4,4; written for Mary Lou Williams and the Andy Kirk band 1942, never performed
Bewildered - 3,3,5,3 + voice (likely mezzo sop.) written for Lunceford ca. 1942-43
Frolie At Five - 3,3,5,3; Lunceford ca. 1942-43
Moo-See-Ka - 3,3,5,3; Lunceford ca. 1942-43
The One I Love - 3,3,5,3; Lunceford ca. 1942-43
Good Bait - 3,3,5,3; Lunceford ca. 1944-45
Fine And Dandy - 3,3,5,3; Lunceford ca. 1944-45
Zakat - 3,3,5,3; Lunceford ca. 1944-45 (46?)
Boydstown, 4,3,5,4 (variation on Our Delight for Boyd Rayburn) ca 1944-46
For Europeans Only - 3,3,5,3; written for Don Redman 1946, (4,4,5,3 Redman added 4th brass for Louis Bellson 1951)
Lyonia - 4,4,5,3; written for Ted Heath and Artie Shaw 1949
*Fred's Delight - 4,4,5,3 + cl.; written for Shaw 1949-50
So Easy - 4,4,5,3 + cl.; written for Shaw 1949-50
Duke Ellington's Opening Theme - 5,4,5,3: for Ellington 1951, never performed
Look, Stop And Listen - 5-5(5th questionable),5,3: for Stan Kenton 1958
*Good Bait - 4,4,5,4 + violins; published by Bregman, Vocco & Conn for school bands
Fontainebleau - 4,4,5,4; published by Bregman, Vocco & Conn for school bands
*Our Delight - 4,4,5,4 + violins; published by Bregman, Vocco & Conn for school bands
*Swift As The Wind - 4,4,5,4 + violins; published by Bregman, Vocco & Conn for school bands
*On A Misty Night - 4, 3,5,3 + clarinet: written for Benny Goodman 1962 Russian tour.
Swift As The Wind - 4, 3,5,3: written for Benny Goodman 1962 Russian tour.
*Just Plain Talkin' - 4, 3,5,3 + clarinet (solo only): written for Benny Goodman 1962 Russian tour.
Fontainebleau - 4, 3,5,3 + clarinet: written for Benny Goodman 1962 Russian tour.
*Moon From The East - 4, 3,5,3 + clarinet: written for Benny Goodman 1962 Russian tour.
(Strange piece, probably not useful for program)

*Currently available from www.ejazzlines.com

In addition I have my own arrangements for nonet of "Moon From The East" and the previously unknown "This Night of Stars," which has a vocal part in addition to the nonet instruments (2 Tpts., Tbn, AS (Fl), TS (Fl), Bari, 3 rhythm). Also several lesser-known and previously unknown tunes, some of them in Quintet arrangements. I would be available as a saxophone soloist, if that suited the needs of the performance. Parts would be provided ahead of time for the initial rehearsals. I would arrive ahead of the concert for the final rehearsal(s) (see below), in which I would also share with the students technical and historical insights regarding the pieces they would be performing, time permitting.

Possible extensions of this project could include public lectures regarding the significance of Dameron's work, and work with secondary/elementary schools in performing easier arrangements of Dameron's music that I could prepare.

Fees:

Lectures, Workshops, individual \$300.00, multiple negotiable.

Concert with one rehearsal \$1000.00.

Residencies - one week (concert with rehearsal(s) plus a lecture and a workshop), \$2000.00.

Other arrangements involving nearby venues, negotiable.

Travel and lodging expense may need to be negotiated.