Composition Portfolio Year 12

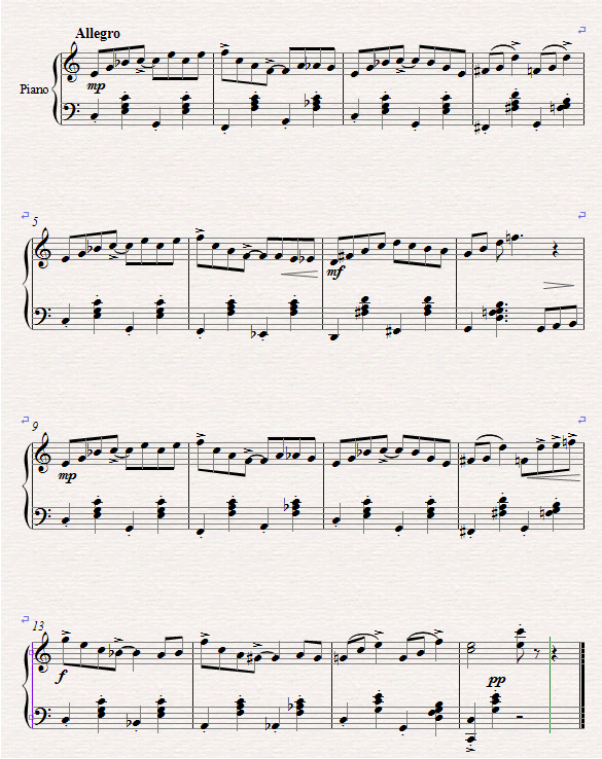
5th November, 2013

What is a Rag?

- A form of Jazz (Ragtime)
- For Piano
- Was popular between 1895 and 1918.
- Modification of march
- Usually major
- Right-hand syncopated melody
- Leaping Left hand steadily accented on 1 and 3 with chords on off beats.
- Common time or 2/4 time
- Repetition

Ragtime Composition

Today we composed in the **Ragtime** style. I composed a ragtime called **Spectacular Rag** which is 16 bars long.



This has the following ragtime features:

- The leaping 'oom-pah' left hand
- A syncopated melody
- Structure: A, A_1, A, B

My **melody** is usually syncopated throught the tied note on the offbeat of the 2nd beat. This is varied with onbeat parts such as at the end of the A section and the quaver run on the third bar of the B section.

The **melody** is mostly based around the chords, e.g. following a C7 chord in the first bar.

My **chord progression** follows a typical II-V-I. In the A section it goes:
C – F, Fmin – C – D, G7 – C
I,I,IV,IV, I, I, II, V, I

The **structure** begins with a statement of the theme (bars 1-4). Bars 5-6 it is restated again, but it is variated at bars 7 and 8. Instead of going to a C chord, it goes to a D,the next bar a G7 chord leading to the next section A.
The A section is then repeated for 4 bars, but then there is a B section based on the sequencing the quaver passage of 2nd bar of the melody (getting into motifs again ☺).
In the second last bar I take the quaver crotchet passage from the last bar of the A section and then finish with a tounge-in-cheek ending.

What for next time?

- You can use motifs to create new sections of a piece (maybe a climatic section).
- A simple chord progression is effective.
- Repetition reinforces the theme.
- Can vary syncopation with on-beat material
- Quirky endings are cool ☺

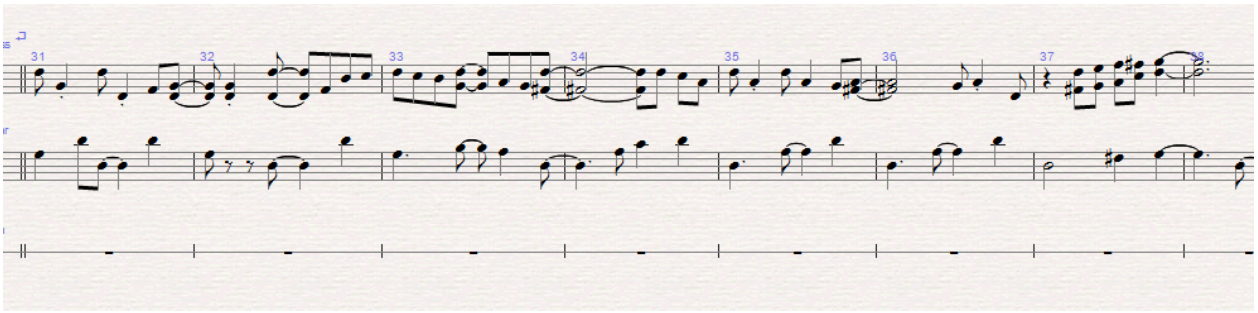
19th November, 2013

What I know about Latin Music

- Rhythm is controlled by bass and percussion (usually shakers)
- Syncopated bass line
- Syncopated melody, often in thirds
- Minor key
- Fast tempo (160 – 180 bpm)
- Bass handles chord changes

Latin Composition

Today we had to write a latin melody over a bass line.



Features of Latin Music:

- Syncopation (first bar)
- Split into harmonies (end of first bar, end of third bar, end of 5th bar, 2nd last bar)
- In G minor (alternates between V and I)

How I created it

- I used the leaping melody (first and fifth bar) to characterise it.
- I used running quaver lines (e.g. end of 2nd bar) to fill in the gaps
- I used the chords to accent off beats and chords
- At the end I used ascending 6ths to build to a climax

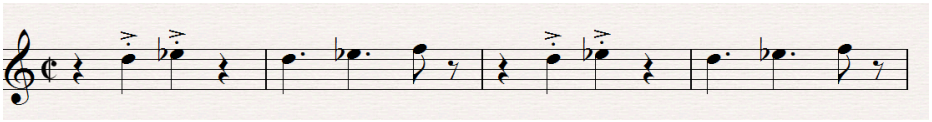
What for Next Time?

- Be careful of putting too much in the melody (it can have breaks!)
- Chords can place emphasis on off beats and chords
- Characterise melody with something like intervals

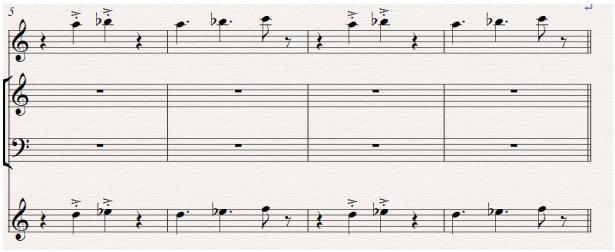
10th December, 2013

Minimalist Composition

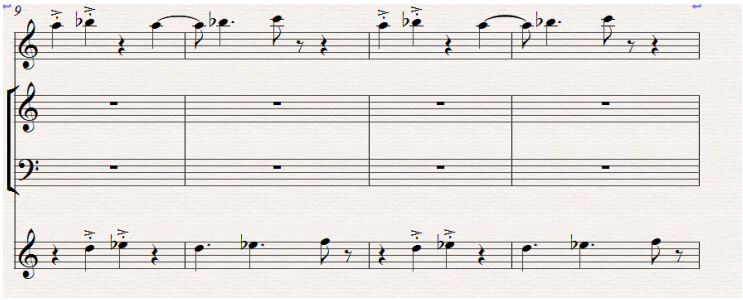
We were tasked with making a minimalist composition based on the following segment from Powerhouse (bars 2-9).



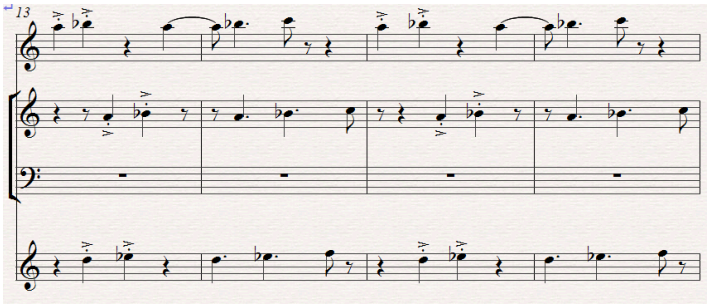
I had to develop this motif through displacement in other instruments, making the rhythm more complex. I first added a clarinet playing the same rhythm but up a fifth.



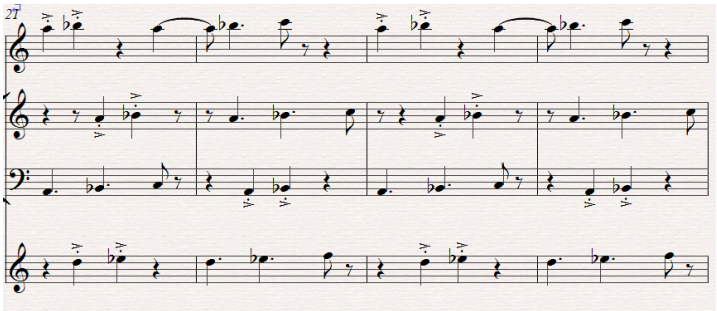
I then displaced the clarinet rhythm by moving it back one beat.



Then I introduced the trumpet with a displaced motif moving it ahead by a quaver.



Then I introduced the trombone and swapped the two bars around.



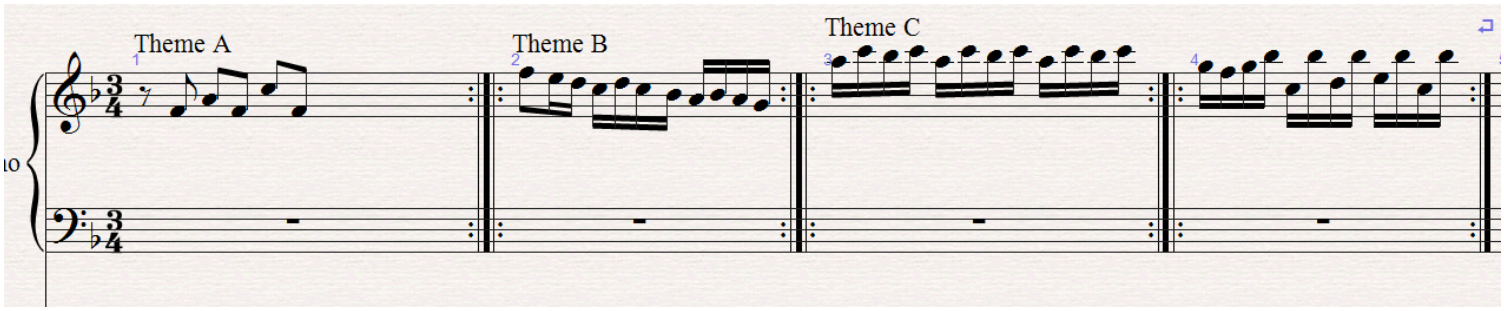
What for next time?

- I can use a simple rhythm and make it more interesting through displacement across a variety of instruments.
- I could use this as an accompanying figure.

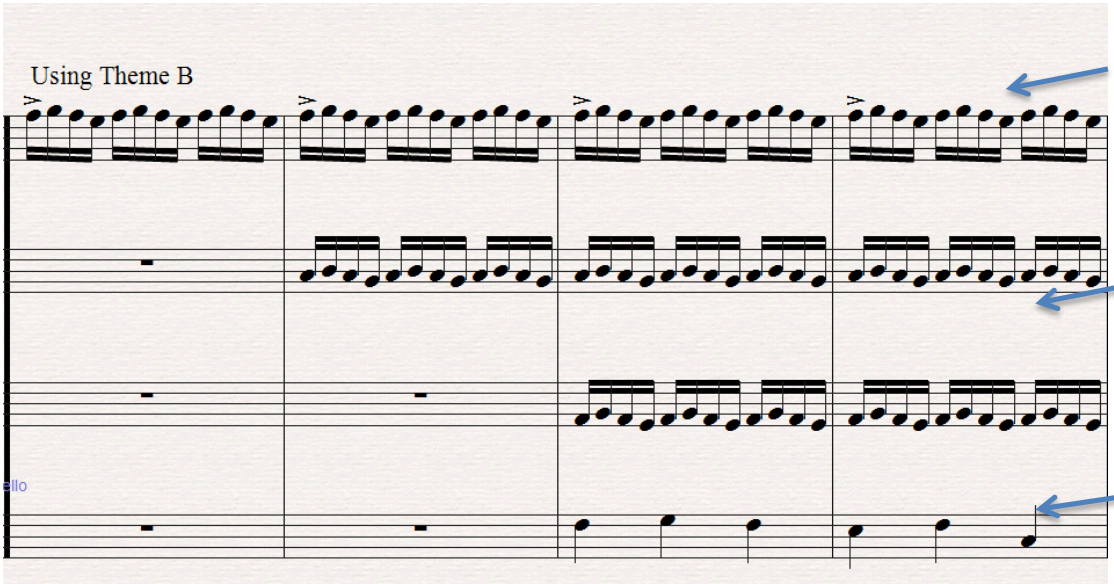
18th February, 2014

Bach Re-invention

Our class task is to create a piece that uses four motifs from below taken from Bach's reinvention No.8.



I first used Theme B to create a building ostinato.

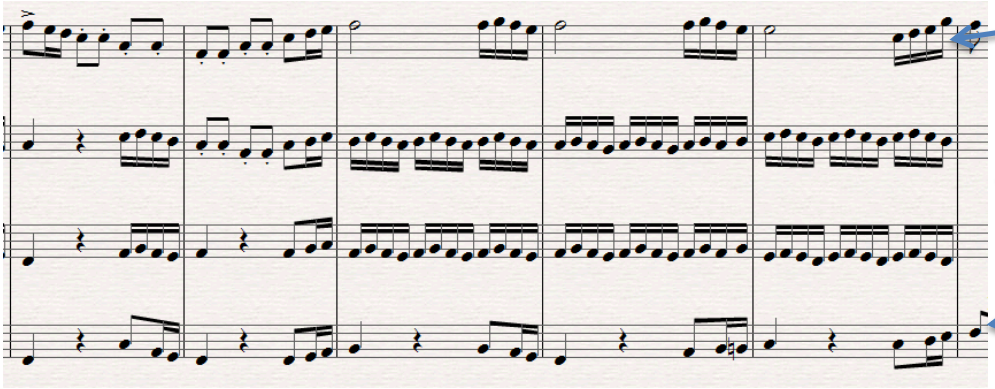


Theme B repeated

Built texture by adding violin and viola, harmonizing on a F major chord

Added bass line

I then developed a melody with Violin I.

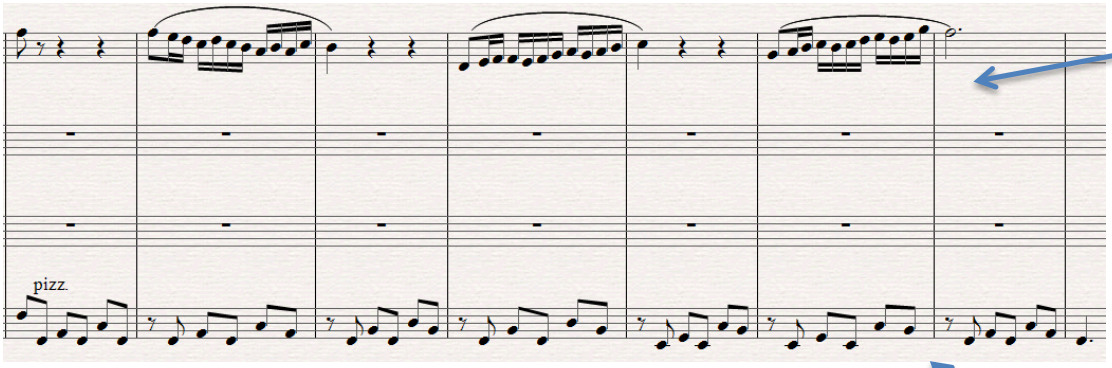


Long melody stands out, with last part of Theme B connecting long notes

Theme B as harmony sequences

Using first part of Theme B

Next I lightened the texture with a pizzicato bass line.



Using Theme B to create melody. Long notes stand out

Using Theme A to create pizzicato bass line.

What for next time?

- Pizzicato can be used to lighten texture
- Fill in the second section
- Length of notes can make it stand out
- Can work vertically
- Change texture to create interest

The Real Thing

Criteria

- Maximum of 2 minutes
- Represent the topic of 'Music of the last 25 years'

What is handed in

- 2x score
- 2x CDs
- 1x portfolio
- 15% of HSC
- Final due date: August 27th
- September 1st – posted to Board of Studies

25th February, 2014

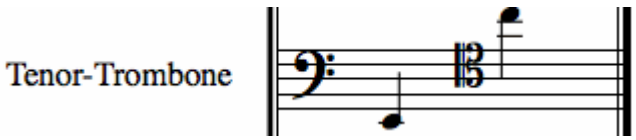
What I like

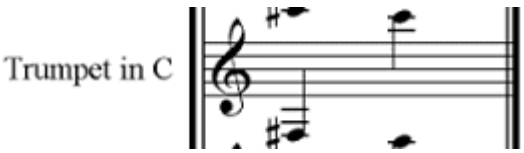
- Different and independent voices
- Jazzy chords and harmonies
- Strong beat
- Blues
- Solos

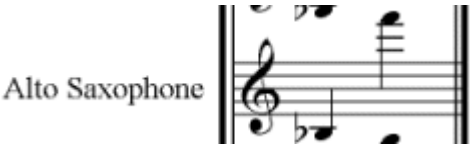
Ideas

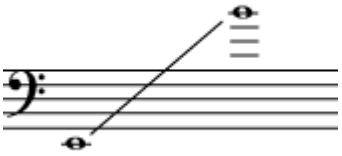
Instruments

- Piano (full range)
- Alto Saxophone (B^b– F)
- Trumpet in C (F# - C)
- Trombone (E – C)
- Double Bass (E – B^b)
- Drums









Style

- Minor key
- Slow and menacing (crotchet = 90)
- Dissonance and extended chords
- Like ‘Around Midnight’

Structure

- Jazz standard: AB with solos and then A
- The sections will be 8 bars long
- Mathematically: 90 x 2 / 4 = 45 bars
- AB = 16 bars, piano solo = 16 bars, A = 8 bars, Coda 4 bars

Dynamics and Expressive Techniques

- Glissandos on double bass to provide uneasy feeling
- Flutter tongue on horns
- Trills and high notes on piano
- Symbols and high hat on drums (maybe dotted rhythm)

Texture

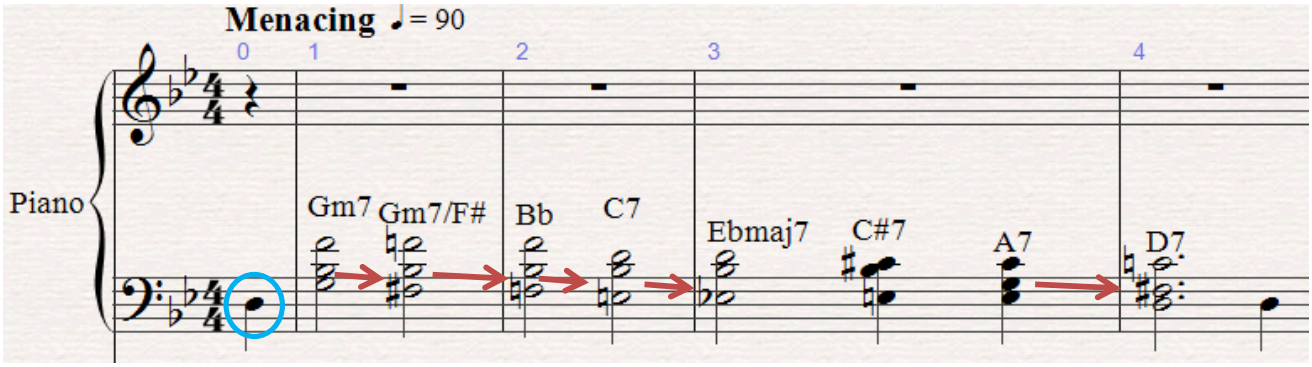
- Bass player provides root notes and rhythm
- Piano player features as soloist
- Horns provide harmony
- Drums lead tempo and dynamics (also provide contrast)

Melody

- Piano
- Long, four bar phrases
- Quaver arpeggios up, then down

28th February, 2014

Today I am beginning to write the composition. I have used the Trumpet in B^{b}, Tenor Trombone, Alto Saxophone, Double Bass, Drums and piano. It is set it in G minor (my favourite key).



Chords

I have also done a rough draft of a chord progression. It follows a chromatic note downwards, making for a depressing feeling. However, I do feel it may be a bit generic sounding, so I might add extra notes and alterations to these chords.

The leading note of the D characterises the head.

What for next time?

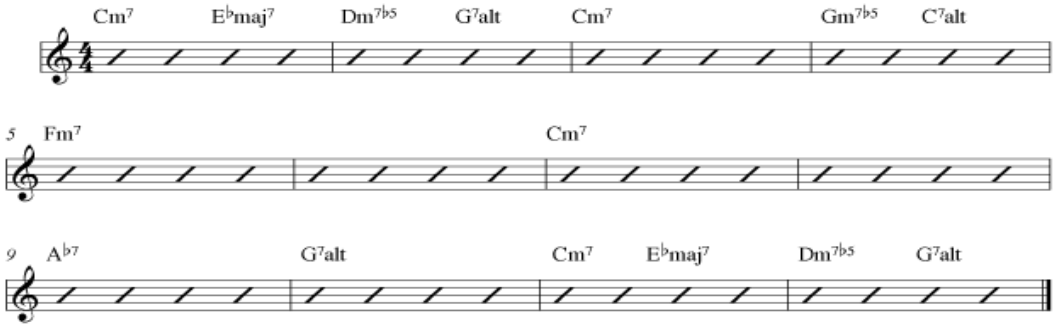
- Create a melody (listen to songs)
- Extend or change chords
- Add some cool harmonies in horns

4th March, 2014

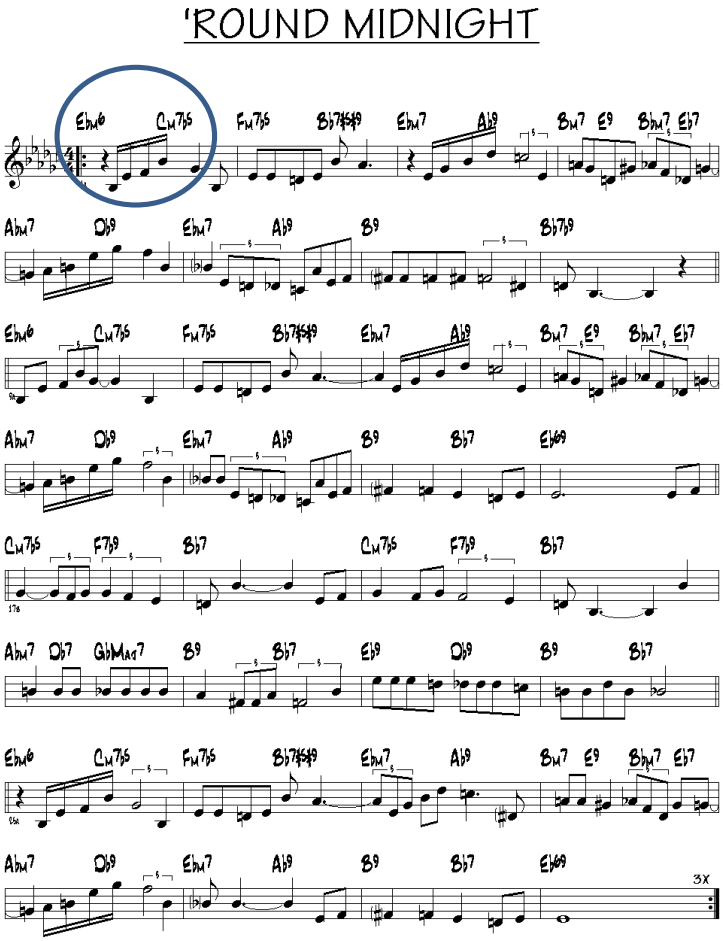
Changing the chords

I find that the chords I have chosen I find too generic, or simple. So I looked up some other jazz chord progressions.

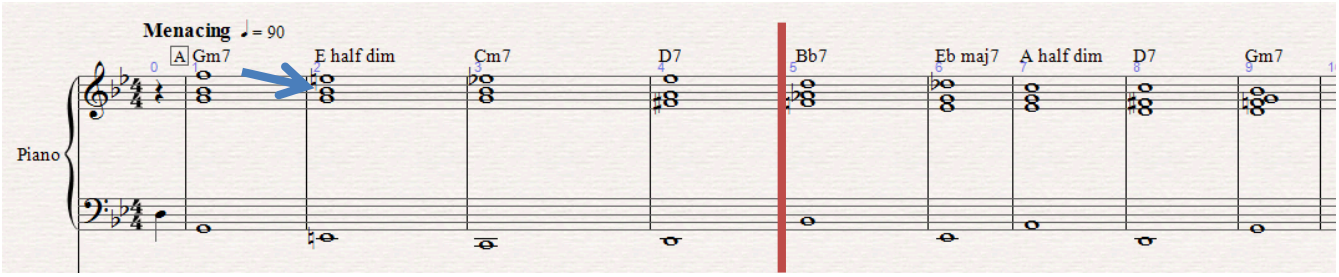
I maj7	vi m7	ii m7	V7	iii m7	VI7	ii m7	V7
C maj7	A m7	D m7	G7	E m7	A7	D m7	G7



- I have seen a lot of songs based around II-V-I progressions
  E.g. 'Killing Me Softly With His Song' – I-IV-VII-III- I-IV –V
- A song that has cool harmonies is 'Blue Rondo A La Turk' by Dave Brubeck
- In 'The Goodbye Look' by Donald Fagen he begins on the relative major.
- Round midnight is what I'm looking for in terms of mood.



I've figured out a chord progression which I like and suits the feel I'm going for.



It goes: I-VI(sharp)-IV-V III-VI-II-V-I

I borrowed the minor third down from Gm7 – E half dim from the 'Round Midnight chart

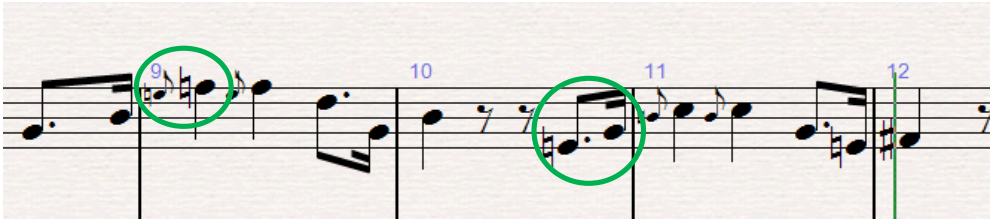
What for next time?

- Create a melody
- Make some harmonies for the horns.

11th March, 2014

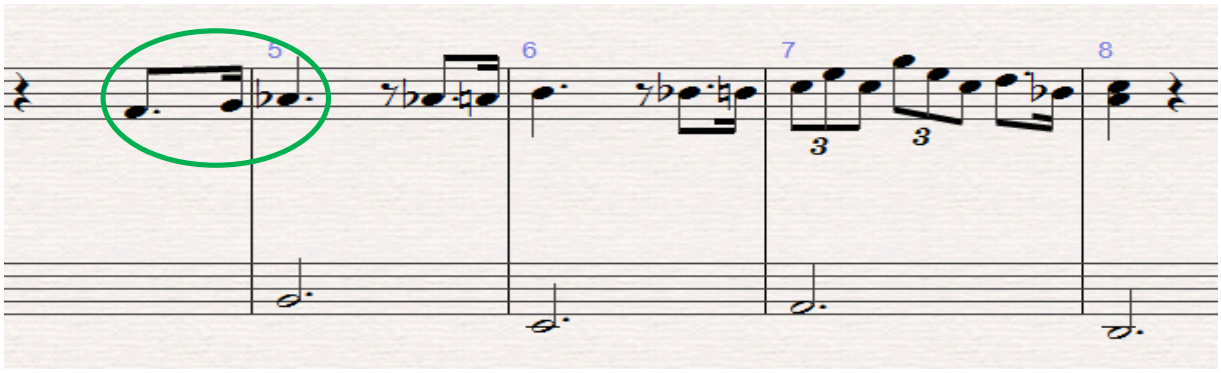
Melody

Today I made the melody!



The grace notes are to be played as a crush note (I'll change it later). The dotted rhythm seems to characterise the melody quite well. I sequence this in the next two bars beginning on an E natural to fit the E diminished chord.

These are the second 4 bars



This is characterised by the ascending dotted rhythm section, which then explodes into a bunch of triplets in the 7th bar over a A half dim chord, before ending on a third on the D7.

Harmony

I put in straight minims in the harmony for the horns, but I found it sounded horrible. This might be the Sibelius player, but I feel like the harmonies should be sparse and only enter in on the hits.

What for next time?

- Create a bass line
- Create a harmony for the horns

18th March, 2014

Research on Style

Style: Jazz Standard

Here's some information I found from Wikipedia:

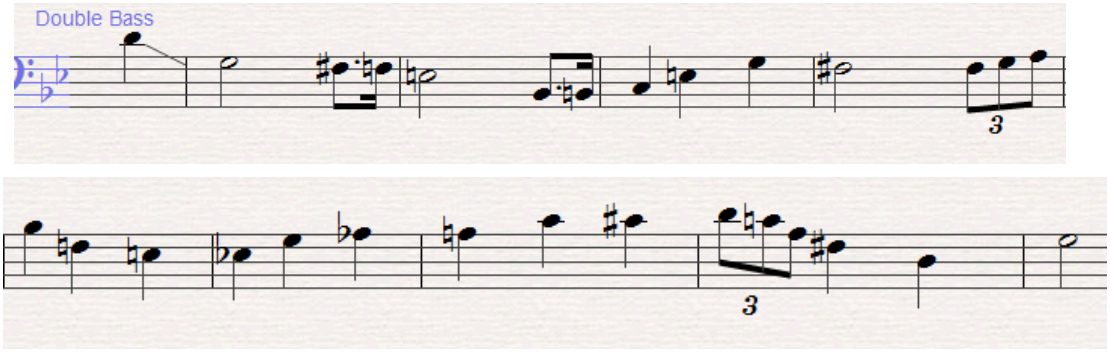
- Not all jazz standards were written by jazz composers. Some were originally from musicals, etc.
- When gaining popularity in 1920, was intended for dance music.
- Origins and influence include blues, ragtime and spirituals
- In the early years of jazz, record companies were often eager to decide what songs were to be recorded by their artists. Louis Armstrong broke the trend
- Jazz standards are compositions that have endured. Examples include:
    - 'Honeysuckle Rose' by Fats Waller
    - 'Ain't Misbehavin' by Fats Waller
    - 'Stardust'
    - 'My Funny Valentine' by Richard Rodgers
- Many of George Gershwin's Broadway music has become standards:
    - 'The Man I love'
    - 'I loves You Porgy' (I'm playing this for Ext.)
    - 'Summer Time'
- 1930s was when 'swing jazz' rose up. Artists include Duke Ellington, Benny Goodman and Count Basie.

Here's some tips I got from wikiHow (http://www.wikihow.com/Write-Jazz-Music)

- Simple structure is fine!
- II-V-I progressions are important
- Try new structures

Bass Line

I have formed the bass line for the head of the chart.



I planned to have it plucked like a usual double bass plays, but it's a bit hard to hear it on Sibelius. The line is very chromatic, and I hope this creates the sinister effect. There is a problem with the empty space during the minums, so I might use the horns or the drums to fill in the void.

Structure Re-calculation

Crotchets per minute = 90

Number of minutes = 2

Number of crotchets = 180

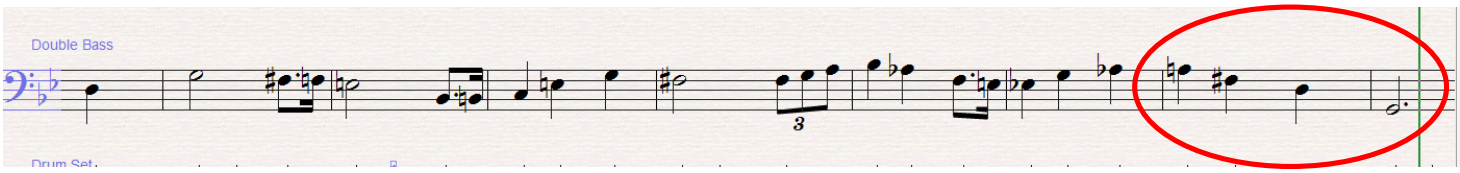
Crotchets per bar = 3

Number of bars = 60

25th March, 2014

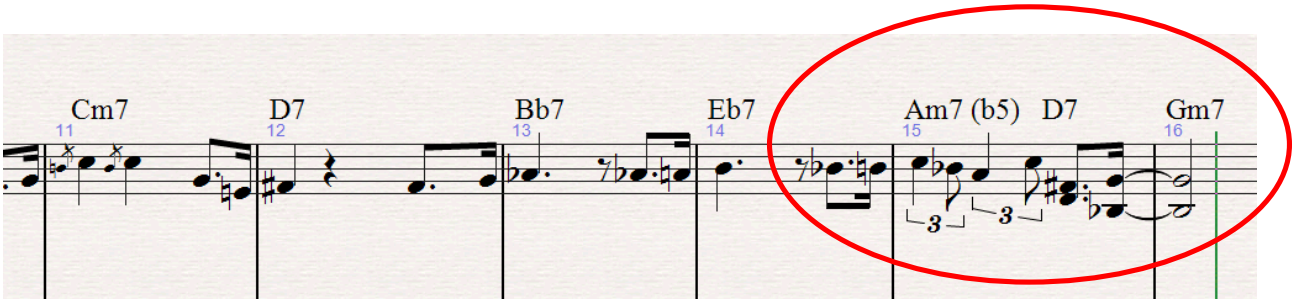
Bass Line

Today I finished the bass line for part A.



The only difference between the first and second time is the last two bars, which fit to match the changed harmony.

Changed Harmony



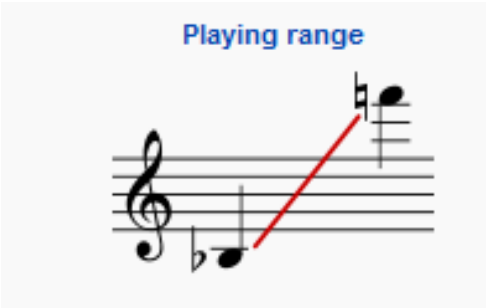
I have squished the last two chords into one bar to resolve to the Gm7 a bar early, so it has a resolution feel to the end of the section.

Similarly the melody has been changed to fit this change. The change between the third and sixth at the end add to the resolution feel.

Change of Saxophone?

I'm thinking of changing the alto saxophone to a tenor saxophone. This is because I might be transferring the melody over to the saxophone, and the tenor will suit the dark and menacing mood I'm going for.

This is the range of the tenor saxophone.



This will allow:

1. Horns to play harmony with tenor
2. Piano to do its own thing on the top of the melody

Additionally I will try and get a mute for the trumpet.

What for next time?

- Find an appropriate mute for the trumpet
- Make some harmonies for the saxophone melody with other horns.
- Start the solo section!

4th April, 2014

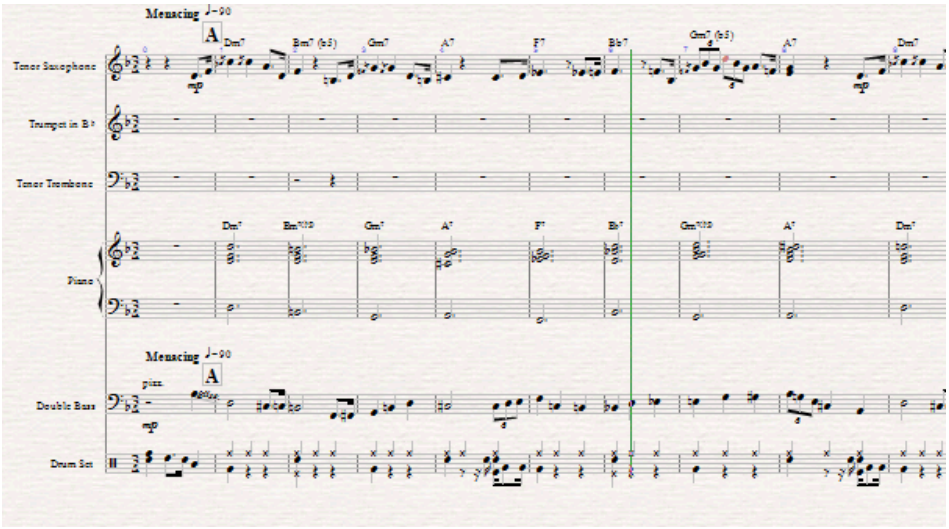
Transposition to D minor

In order to make the melody easier to play for the tenor saxophone and make the overall pitch lower, I've transposed down to D minor

13th May, 2014

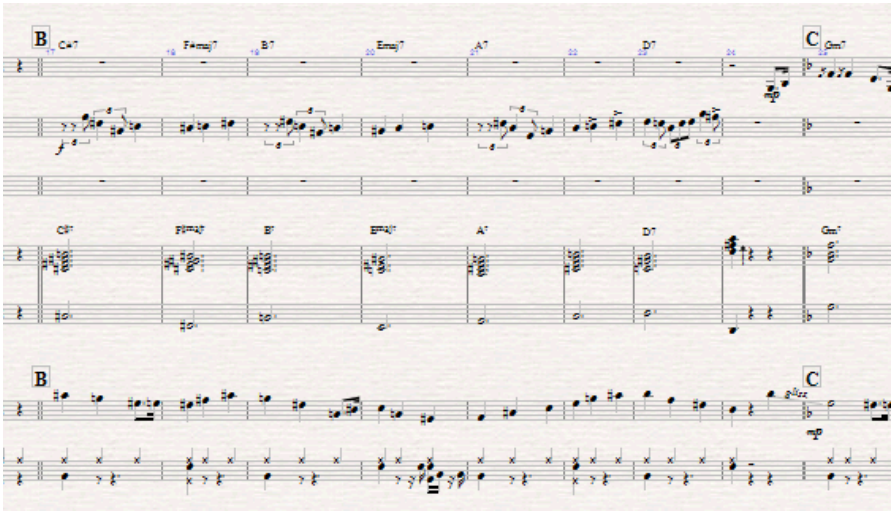
The Head

I've completed the structure and melody of the first head ☺.
First I've got the A section:



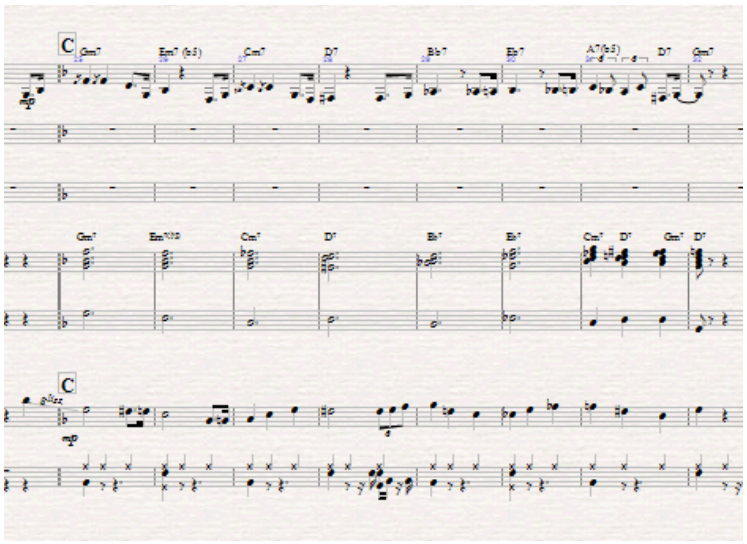
In D minor, it takes up 16 bars (2 cycles of chord progressions. In the horns I want to have a homophonic texture paralleling the saxophone's melody. In the piano I want to have a simple part that emphasises the swing feel of the piece. The drum will add to this.

Next I've got the B section.



This is the exciting and loud section. It takes up 16 bars of V-I chords and modulates down to G minor. The trumpet takes over the melody with a descending sequence. In the horns I want them to have independent parts from the melody which have stabs and create excitement. In the piano I want a ragtime like left hand and a playful counter melody in the right hand.

Finally, I’ve got the C section.



It is the first 8 bars of the A section in G min. I want to have a light and polyphonic texture in the horns. The piano will have descending high notes to give a calm atmosphere (compared to the previous section.

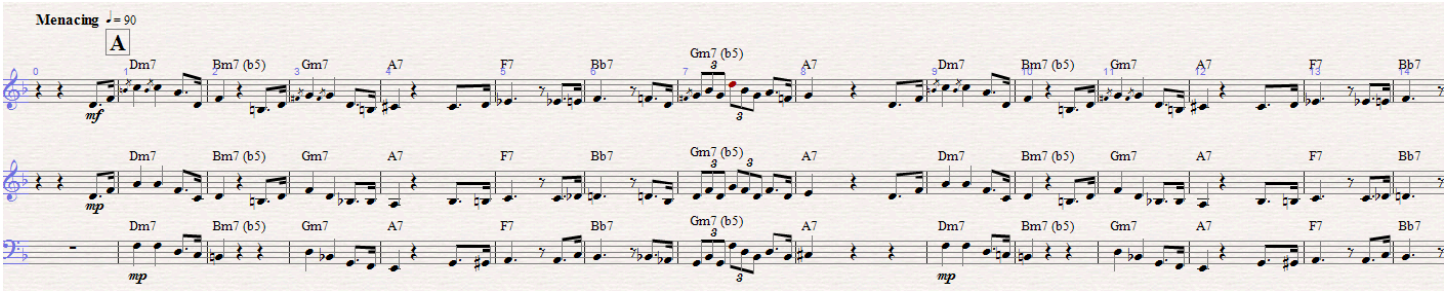
What for next time?

- Fill in the A+B+C sections.

16th May, 2014

A Section

I have filled in the harmonies in parallel with the saxophone solo.



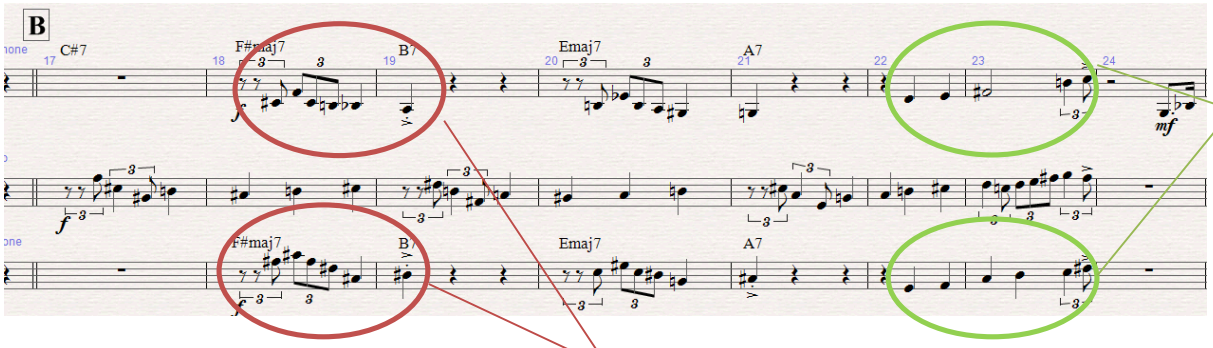
What for next time?

- Fill in the B section

20th May, 2014

Harmonies

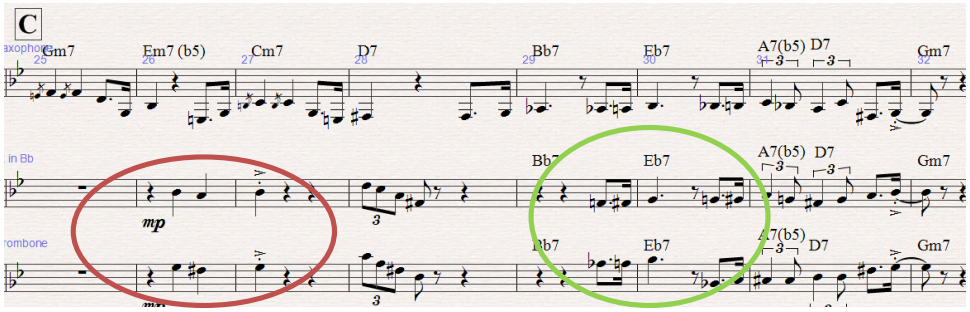
I have finished the harmonies for the whole head. For the B section:



Joins Trumpet line

Stabs from the Sax and Trombone are independent from Trumpet melody

For the C section, I continued the counter melody idea.



Structure

I've pretty much finalised my structure. The chords will follow two full run-throughs of the head (A,B,C which is 32 bars). Then there will be a piano solo over the A section (which is shortened to 8 bars due to time allowance) and B section (8 bars). The piece will then finish on the C section with a one bar coda or so.

1. A
2. B
3. C
4. A – piano solo
5. B – piano solo
6. C with an extended coda

Piano Solo

Possible scales:

- Pentatonic scales of the chords
- Dorian, Phrygian, etc.
- Ascending melodic minor scales
- Diminished scales:
    - Root, Tone, Semitone, Tone, Semitone, Tone, Semitone, Tone, and Semitone brings you back the root
    - Root, Semitone, Tone, Semitone, Tone, Semitone, Tone, Semitone, and Tone brings you back to the root.

What for next time?

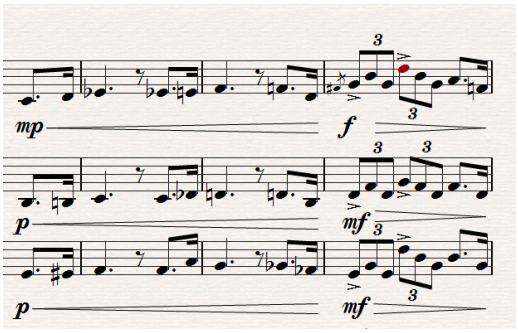
Get the piano part sorted ☺

21st May, 2014

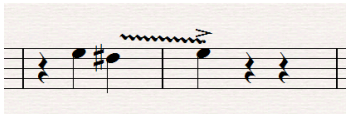
Dynamics and Expressive Techniques

I've tidied up the appearance of the score so it looks a bit neater.

- I've deleted all the chord markings on all the parts except for the piano.
- Put 'solo' and 'tutti' where appropiate
- I've made a few crescendos and decrescendos at the peak of phrases



- I've tried to incorporate a glissando in the trombone part, but it doesn't look good and the playback doesn't sound good. Will have to try it out in Jazz combo.



The Name

I've decided to call my composition 'Sultry Sunday' (for the time being). I feel the piece gives a relaxed and lazy mood, like relaxing on the beach on a hot Sunday afternoon.

22nd May, 2014

Piano Solo

Ms Woskanian has suggested that I look to my Kaputsin piece that I'm preparing for Music Ext. performance to assist me in creating a piano solo.

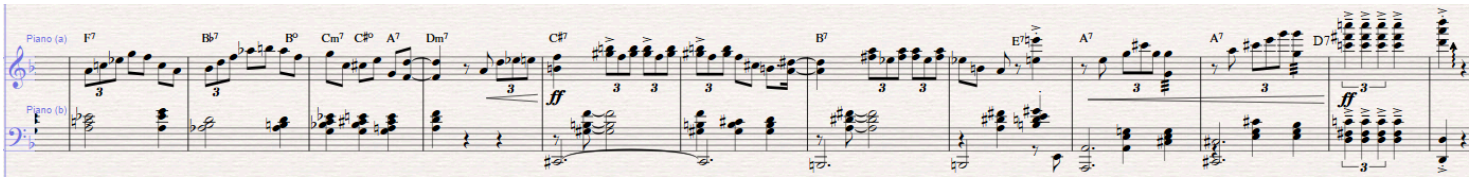
Here's some things I noticed about how Kaputsin writes his piano part:

- Lots of syncopation with both triplets and dotted rhythms
- Often goes from single notes to large chords to emphasise certain parts of the phrase
- Descending 6ths using the chord
- Tight clusters of chords
- Thirds + 6ths
- Using motifs

17th June 2014

Piano Solo

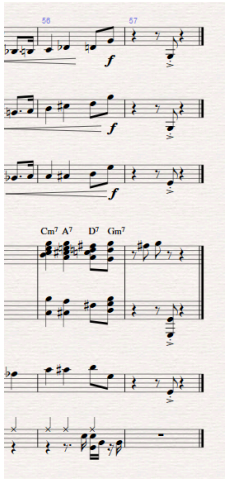
I've finished the piano solo ☺



I am thinking of maybe adding some altered chord stuff later, but for now I am satisfied with what I have done. It starts simple, with a few sequences, but at the C#7 chord it rises in intensity, with the triplet figure in the higher register. At the A7, there is a big build-up with the piano playing tremolos, before a crotchet-triplet figure on the D7 in unison with the rest of the band.

Ending

I feel like this ending is a cheeky turnaround to the minor sustained chords from the rest of the piece. It might be too much of sudden change, but I am yet undecided.



What for next time?

- Piano part for rest of the piece
- Brass backing for the piano solo