

UNIVERSITY *of* VIRGINIA

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presents

A Distinguished Major Recital

Thomas Kehoe

piano

Saturday, April 24, 2021
University of Virginia

Recital Program

Thomas Kehoe, *piano*

Ethan Blaser, *upright bass*

Peter Wellman, *drums*

Up Jumped Spring

Freddie Hubbard
(1938-2008)

Bananas

Thomas Kehoe
(b. 1999)

Scapple from the Apple

Charlie Parker
(1920-1955)

Rain

Thomas Kehoe

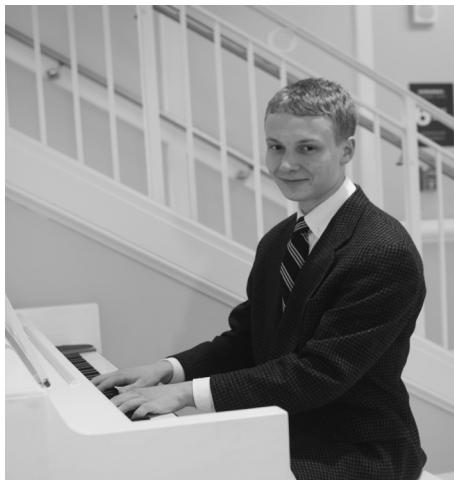
25

Thomas Kehoe

The Sorcerer

Herbie Hancock
(b. 1940)

About the Performers



Thomas Kehoe is a fourth-year student from Richmond, VA majoring in Music and Computer Science. Thomas took up classical piano lessons at a young age at the behest of his parents. He studied with Cori Bider, and over the years he enjoyed playing works by composers such as Chopin and Debussy. In high school Thomas joined the jazz band and started checking out artists from the jazz world like Wes Montgomery.

Upon arriving at UVA, Thomas halfheartedly decided to audition for the jazz ensemble and was promptly blown away by the music happening at the audition, which inspired him to dedicate himself to learning to improvise and play jazz. Since then, he has played in the jazz ensemble under the tutelage of John D'earth and played with local groups like the Shrugs at venues around Charlottesville.

After college, Thomas will be working in Richmond and plans on attending medical school. In his free time, he enjoys hanging out with his friends and younger siblings, hiking around the woods, and busking on the downtown mall.

Ethan Blaser is a fourth-year student at the University of Virginia studying Physics. He grew up in Los Angeles, California where he started playing the upright bass after switching over from the electric bass at the age of 13. He later played in the jazz band at Harvard-Westlake High School, while studying jazz double bass with Hamilton Price and Nate Light. During those years, as the bassist in his high school jazz combo, he competed in the 2017 Monterey Next Generation Jazz Festival, while also playing at local venues around LA such as Vibrato Grill Jazz. Additionally, his high school big band was recognized in Downbeat Magazine for “Outstanding High School Jazz Band Performance”.

Since coming to UVA, he has played upright bass in both the UVA Jazz Ensemble lead by John D'earth, Pete Spaar's Thursday Small Group, as well as playing at local events around Charlottesville. In addition to his work as a performer, Ethan is an Echols Scholar, conducts research on transiting exoplanets, and served as the UVA chapter President of Pi Lambda Phi Fraternity.

Peter Wellman is a fourth-year Mechanical Engineering major from Midlothian, Virginia. He began playing piano at the age of 5, then learned bass, guitar, and drums in high school. In addition to playing the instruments, Peter fixes old ones and sometimes builds new ones. For the past three years, Peter has been studying jazz drumming with Robert Jospe on a scholarship and performing with the UVA Jazz Ensemble.

During the pandemic, he has recorded tracks for the upcoming Jazz Ensemble album at The Sound studio. Peter plans to begin his engineering career at a robotics company after graduation, but will also continue working on personal recording projects and collaborations.

Program Notes

This short album contains three original jazz compositions and a selection of three standards. These six tunes encompass a wide range of jazz styles, from abstract 60s post-bop in the style of the second Miles Davis Quintet to classic bebop and pop tunes.

Out of the three originals on this album, the first one that I wrote was "Bananas". "Bananas" is a fairly long, somewhat typical post-bop tune in 5/4 with a lot of chord changes. The tune starts out hanging on an unusual augmented major 7th chord for four bars, and moves through a few more similarly unusual, non-diatonic chords before arriving at a more conventional second section at bar 9. The third and fourth sections mirror the first two in structure, and afterwards there's a final ending bit to round things out. The melody of the tune provides continuity between the sections and serves to hold everything together.

The second tune, "Rain", is based around the melody from the nursery rhyme "Rain, rain, go away". Rather than this melody being placed into a form, it actually defines the form along with another melody which serves as a counterpoint to it. Each section of the tune is delineated both by a change in melody and a change in the chords. The end result is a tune with unusual numbers of measures for each section and a very floaty, impressionistic feel to it, sort of like a Debussy piece.

The last original, "25", was inspired by the Miles Davis tune "Filles De Kilimanjaro". "Filles" is a very open-ended tune. Most of the piece is structured around a one note bass vamp and an associated descending figure. This bass stuff, along with the head that gets played a few times at the beginning of the piece, presents a kind of open harmonic landscape that the band explores during the solos. There is no harmonic progression or modal structure to play off of, just a bass part and the memory of the melody from the head. "25" is a similar kind of tune. At the beginning there's a bassline, and this bassline continues for the

whole main section of the tune while the melody changes on top of it. It keeps going during the solo section too, providing a base for everyone to play over instead of a chord progression like you'd normally have. There's also a more conventional, shorter second section to contrast with the first one.

Out of the three standards, two are in more of a classic jazz style. "Scrapple" is a bebop tune with a head written by Charlie Parker over the pop song "Honeysuckle Rose". It's got a very typical AABA form and harmonic structure. "Up Jumped Spring" is a pretty waltz written by Freddy Hubbard; the original recording has a fantastic flute solo. "The Sorcerer", on the other hand, is a gritty, abstract post-bop tune. Written by Herbie Hancock, the tune features an angular melody and dark chord changes which encourage a freer style of improvisation. With the head only lasting 16 bars, the direction for soloing is very much left up to the musicians. The arrangement on this album follows the trio version on Herbie's 1968 record "Speak Like a Child".

The two biggest inspirations for the music on this short album and my piano playing in general have been Herbie Hancock and Stevie Wonder. I really admire Herbie's lines and his playing in general. He's simultaneously very creative, seeming to never run out of new ideas, and very deliberate, always making each note or phrase he plays count for something. He's also got a great sense of humor, which you can hear in his music.

Some of the tunes on this album take a lot of elements from post-bop. Post-bop as a genre is basically synonymous with the music of the second Miles Davis Quintet of the 60s. Herbie was the piano player for this group, and a lot of my more "out there" harmonic and improvisational sensibilities come from my experience with the music created by the members of that group, Herbie in particular. A good example of this that I've already mentioned is Herbie's composition "The Sorcerer", which first appeared on the 1967 Miles Davis record of the same name featuring the second quintet. This tune demonstrates one of the key elements of post-bop, which is abstraction. When playing a more conventional jazz tune like

"Up Jumped Spring", you improvise faithfully following the tune's harmonic structure. With a tune like "Sorcerer", there still exists an underlying harmonic structure, but it exists more as a background element than as a strict roadmap that you have to follow. Soloists can choose to adhere or not adhere to the harmonic structure moment by moment. This freedom is enabled by the lack of functional harmonic progressions in post-bop tunes, which instead move from one chord to another based on common tones or melodic motives. For example, the first 4 bars of "Sorcerer" go Dbmaj7, Dmaj7, E-6/9, D-6/9, and then back to Dbmaj7. Definitely no dominant-tonic resolutions there. If you listen to Miles Davis and Wayne Shorter improvise over this tune, you can hear how at times they navigate the harmonic progression and at other times they just skate over top of it.

Another thing I like about Herbie or more generally the jazz he's been involved with is the level of interaction and collective playing that goes on. One recording I've listened to over and over again is bassist Ron Carter's "Einbahnstrasse" with Herbie on piano and Billy Cobham on drums, from Ron's record "Uptown Conversation". This is a fairly straightforward, bluesy tune, but it's made special by the way that the group plays it collaboratively. When they play the head, all three musicians are contributing melodic ideas to the music, not just the piano, and it's not like they're playing some set arrangement either. They're listening to each other and coming up with their own improvised setting for the head as they go. This collaboration continues during the solos and overall it really elevates the music to another level.

As for Stevie, I really admire the way he sings from the heart. Obviously he has serious vocal chops, but it's the chops combined with a certain kind of honesty or vulnerability that I think makes his singing special. I try to play piano in the same way that Stevie sings. His songwriting is really great too; two of my favorites are "Superwoman" from "Music of my Mind" and "Lookin' for Another Pure Love" from "Talking Book".

Anyways, thanks for reading these notes. I hope they were a helpful guide to some somewhat out-there music.

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to John D'earth and the rest of the jazz faculty for bringing me into the jazz ensemble as a first year and guiding my musical development throughout my time at UVA. It's hard to believe how much I've learned over these four years, and I'm certain music will be a lifelong passion for me.

I'm thankful also for all of my fellow students with whom I've played, including Peter Wellman, Ethan Blaser, Rami Stucky, Tianyu Zhang, Tina Hashemi, Michael McNulty, and many more. Finally, I'm grateful to my parents for always loving and supporting me and to God for all the blessings I have in life.

Distinguished Major Program

The Distinguished Major Program allows outstanding music majors to work on large-scale projects during their last two semesters at the University. The project may consist of a thesis, a composition, or the performance of a full recital; a project that combines these components is also possible.

Majors normally apply to the program during their sixth semester. After a preliminary discussion with the Director of Undergraduate Programs (DUP), a student arranges supervision by a main advisor and two other committee members, and submits a proposal to the DUP and Department Chair. Each spring, the DUP announces detailed application procedures and a deadline. Work on the Distinguished Major project normally takes place through three credits of independent work in the last two semesters at the University.

More information can be found at: music.virginia.edu/degree/dmp.

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