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The Two Brazilians – Compare and Contrast

Introduction

Michel Petrucciani recorded Brazilian Suite (*Michel Plays Petrucciani. Blue Note*) in 1987. It was actually the first of a three-part composition but the only part that was released on the record. Eleven years, and only months before Michel Petrucciani died, he released his final studio album, which contained a similar composition entitled Brazilian Like (*Both Worlds. Drefus Records. 1998*). This essay is aimed at exploring these tracks by means of comparing compositional, improvisational, and performance elements of the “Two Brazilians”. Apart from the fact that both tunes have the flavour of Brazilian Samba, are the compositions related to each other in other ways stylistically, melodically or harmonically? “She did it again” (*Michel Plays Petrucciani. Blue Note. 1987*) is named after a cat! Was Brazilian Like named with similar flippancy, or was it inspired by Brazilian Suite, written during Petrucciani’s Blue Note years?

Composition

First, let's examine the obvious. Both tracks are of a similar tempo, Brazilian Suite being the faster at $\text{♩} = 108$, only 8 beats faster than Brazilian Like at $\text{♩} = 100$. They both share the same key signature of 5 flats, however on closer inspection Brazilian Suite is really in the key of Ab minor, and only resolves to Db major during the final vamp. So the tunes are both in a minor key a tone apart. Brazilian Suite has a 36 bar form split into 3 sections at 14, 16 and 6 bars respectively. For the purposes of this essay I shall name these sections A, B and C. These sections are based on the reoccurrence of the main tonic based theme shown below.



Brazilian Like has a more common 32 bar form with a motif that is repeated, but only twice this time. I would suggest that this track has an ABB form where B also starts after 14 bars, then again at 23. The melody for the B section is shown below.



The form for Brazilian Like is different to a conventional 32 bar form split into four sections of 8, or even 2 sections of 16 bars. Instead it consists of three sections, 14, 8, and 12 bars long. Whilst not being the same length this tune does share some similarities with Brazilian Suite, as both compositions have a tri sectional form and have reoccurring motifs, the second of which reoccurs at the same place within the form.

I would like now to consider some of the functional harmony. As I stated before Brazilian Suite is really in the key of Ab minor. After examining the changes it can be stated that most of the chords sit on, or close by to that diatonic foundation. Exceptions can be found at bar 9 perhaps with a Cmaj7#5 chord originating from A melodic minor harmony, and at bars 19 -21 where the key modulates briefly to D major. The interesting thing is that there is a fairly large chunk of Brazilian Suite that uses secondary dominant functions and the cycle of fourths to support the melody. Six bars into the tune an Eb7(b9) chord is spelled, followed by D7(#11) (which is just a tritone substitution of Ab7), then Db7. We then see one bar rest before the cycle starts again this time beginning on B7 (a tritone substitution of F7), moving to Bb7(b9) then Eb7(b9) and finally landing on the tonic at bar 13. This cyclic dominant movement is shown in the following excerpt.

Interestingly enough, Brazilian Like clearly contains a large amount of secondary dominant function within its harmonic structure also. Bars 7 – 9 spell a II V I in Bb minor with the II being the secondary dominant chord C7(b9). After the tonic chord is spelt this harmonic idea continues with a VI7, II7, V7 progression, with a surprise abrupt modulation to Gb, the fourth chord of Db major at bar 15.

Musical notation for bars 7-15 of 'Brazilian Like'. The key signature is Bb minor (three flats). The notation is in treble clef with a 4/4 time signature. Chord symbols are written above the notes. Bar 7: C7(b9) above a whole rest. Bar 8: F7(b9) above a quarter note G, quarter note A, quarter note Bb, quarter note C. Bar 9: Bbm7 above a quarter note D, quarter note Eb, quarter note F, quarter note G. Bar 10: G7 above a quarter note Ab, quarter note Bb, quarter note C, quarter note D. Bar 11: C7 above a quarter note Eb, quarter note F, quarter note G, quarter note Ab. Bar 12: whole rest. Bar 13: Cm7 above a whole rest. Bar 14: F7 above a whole rest. Bar 15: Gbmaj7 above a quarter note Gb, quarter note Ab, quarter note Bb, quarter note C.

After four bars in Db the largest section of this secondary dominant structure starts with another II V I in Bb minor. The tonic then becomes a dominant and progresses cyclically through the keys before landing on Bb minor at the end of the form. The chord sequence reads as Bb7(b9) – Ebm7 – Ab7 – D7 (tritone) – Dbmaj7 – G7 (tritone) – Gb7 (tritone) – C7(#9) – F7(b9), and finally Bbm7.

Musical notation for bars 22-26 of 'Brazilian Like'. The key signature is Bb minor (three flats). The notation is in treble clef with a 4/4 time signature. Chord symbols are written above the notes. Bar 22: Bb7(b9) above a quarter note Bb, quarter note C, quarter note D, quarter note Eb. Bar 23: Ebm7 above a whole note Eb. Bar 24: Ab7 above a quarter note Ab, quarter note Bb, quarter note C, quarter note D. Bar 25: D7 above a quarter note Eb, quarter note F, quarter note G, quarter note Ab. Bar 26: Dbmaj7 G7#9 above a whole note Db. Bar 27: Gb7 above a quarter note Gb, quarter note Ab, quarter note Bb, quarter note C. Bar 28: C7#9 above a quarter note D, quarter note Eb, quarter note F, quarter note G. Bar 29: F7(b9) above a quarter note Ab, quarter note Bb, quarter note C, quarter note D. Bar 30: Bbm7 above a whole note Bb.

I would now like to consider the melody line of Brazilian Suite. It is heavily syncopated and begins high in the register with the melody rising quickly in fourths, after which it descends slowly over 8 bars. Bars 9 -12 see two melodic copies of bars 7-8 as the extended diatonic cycle leads us to the tonic at bar 13.

Bar 15 (B) sees the melody stated again but this time leading towards a repeated 5-note motif that descends mostly chromatically from G to D.

In true Petrucciani style this motif is rhythmically displaced and is played giving the line a real sense of character. The melody is played for the last time at bar 31, which is almost identical to the opening 6 bars, this time just landing on the tonic chord instead of the #IV7.

In terms of the melody, Brazilian Like has simpler compositional elements. The 1st 5 bars are really built around a melodic CESH (Contrapuntal Elaboration of Static Harmony) descending from F to the tonic note at bar 5. Two chromatically descending diminished chords Gdim7 and Gbdim7 support the melody at bar 3-4. These just substitute for C7(b9) – F7(b9), which further exemplifies the use of secondary dominants in this composition. Duke Ellington is well known for often changing a II chord in a II – V – I progression from its diatonic minor, to a dominant seventh chord.

Bar 8 sees the beginnings of a 4-note motif similar to a change running exercise taken through cyclical based harmony based on 3 – 4 - 5 of each scale.

This is ascending in nature and, just like Brazilian Suite, is also heavily syncopated. The B section at bar 15 is as I stated before, contains a motif which is repeated twice ending at the tonic at bar 28.

One other element of Brazilian Like is the melody at bar 22, which employs the B Locrian mode surprising you with an E natural halfway through the bar.

Elements of similarity between melodies of Brazilian Suite and Brazilian Like are not easy to spot. Stylistically however I feel there can be some comparison. Both melodies are heavily syncopated and tend to move in a linear fashion, either up or down the piano. Both melodies include large sections containing motifs that are repeated through different changes. At this stage I would argue that whilst these two melodies aren't related to each other directly, that they do seem to follow a similar composition plan, whether or not it was on a conscious level.

Arrangement and Performance

Brazilian Suite features Al Foster on drums and Eddie Gomez on bass completing an exciting piano trio. The track starts with a minor vamp based on Abm7 and Ebm7. This vamp is also a harmonic resting place for 8 bars every chorus, so it really is an important part of the overall form. The head is played once after which Petrucciani takes two choruses, before passing the lead to Gomez for one chorus. Petrucciani enters back in with some "guide tone" based noodling,

and states the head again at the B section (bar 15) giving the feeling of conclusion. However, in true Petrucciani style, he can't help but race off in a musical "whirlwind" at bar 22 that lasts until the C section 9 bars later. He then plays a lovely 6 bar melodic CESH to finish the form. The head is played for the final time, at which time Petrucciani raises the dynamic of section B considerably whilst playing off beat chords throughout. This has a very lilting affect on the listener and further helps to re-emphasise the harmonic "road map" of this track.

Michel Petrucciani's comping style on Brazilian Suite is unique. He seems to like stringing together large sections of "across the beat" accompaniment, implying a different rhythmic feel. An example of this is during the head on the last 6 bars where he uses metric modulation to imply a triplet feel over the 4/4 bar. This idea carries on well into the first chorus of solos. It is then echoed on the drums at the beginning of the next chorus, as Foster states the same rhythm using cymbals and bass drum.

Michel Petrucciani appears to be a person with a good sense of humour, as in the quotes he makes during his first solo. At 1m01s he quotes "Summertime", then "Cry me a River" at 1m54s. During the second chorus Petrucciani then quotes "I can't get started without you" at 3m02s.

Brazilian Like is played by a six-piece band. Two Petrucciani veterans Steve Gadd (drums) and Anthony Jackson (bass) form the rhythm section. They are joined by Flavio Boltro (trumpet), Stefano Di Battista (saxophone), and Bob Brookmeyer (valve trombone).

The track starts with just snare and bass drum. This is a very Brazilian rhythm implying the sound of the "Surdo" (Brazilian bass drum) played on 3, against a complimentary syncopated groove played on brushes.



Four bars later the trumpet and sax enter with a quartal line, harmonised in major seconds, trumpet playing the higher note.



This gives the track a light playful feel. This is soon contrasted however by the use of held diminished chords leading the listener back to the tonic vamp at the top of the chart. Jackson plays his signature deep low pedal notes using the volume control to create the effect of bowing strings. This short introduction is basically a great piece of arranging on Bob Brookmeyer's part, quite a contrast to Brazilian Suite.

The head is played twice, the horn section playing counter melodies over held notes at bars 5 – 6 and 12 – 13. Petrucciani takes the only solo based on the form; this has a very unhurried feel about it with none of the urgency sometimes found in his playing. Just like in Brazilian Suite, Petrucciani uses metric modulation triplets to comp himself for the entire 2 choruses as shown below



Also just like in Brazilian Suite, he quotes the melody at the B section then proceeds to double time for a few measures. Interestingly enough this is the last time that the form is heard. The melody is not stated again and instead he chooses end with a vamp over a CESH, namely, Bbm - Bbm#5 – Bbm6 – Bbm#5. Trumpet and Trombone play backgrounds whilst Battista noodles on sax.

Conclusion

If Michel Petrucciani were alive today I would be curious to ask him about the source of inspiration for his last studio recorded samba composition. It is difficult to draw any rock solid conclusion when really all the evidence collected is circumstantial. Many of Petrucciani's compositions include unusual form lengths, repeated motifs and are written in unusual keys, so it should be noted that some (or even all) similarities found between the two tracks might be coincidental. They could also be an integral part of Petrucciani's compositional style.

However, presenting the case that the two tunes are linked, below is a brief synopsis of similarities. Both tracks share the **same key signature**, and are of a **similar tempo and feel**. They both have a **tri sectional form**, the first of which is the same length. They are both **harmonically similar** with their **extensive use of cyclic secondary dominant function**. Both tunes employ **heavily syncopated linear lines** and **contain repeated cells** that weave themselves through the changes. Both tracks have **tonic "harmonic breathers"** between choruses, and both end with **vamps over static harmony**.

From a performance point of view, Brazilian Like is more advanced in terms of arrangement. Petrucciani's playing has a greater maturity, his solo contains less "grandstanding", and he doesn't quote. Brazilian Suite however is joyful to listen to! His playing is bouncy and springlike, and his solo seems to remain true to the form of the track. The only similarity seems to be the comping style employed in both

Brazilian Suite and Brazilian Like, whether linked or not, are both great tracks and represent Petrucciani at his compositional best.

References

Michel Petrucciani Songbook, Compositions Originales. Drefus Music (2000)

[Michel Petrucciani Wikipedia Source](#)

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michel_Petrucciani

BRAZILIAN LIKE

FROM "BOTH WORLDS" - DREYFUS JAZZ

MICHEL PETRUCCIANI

SAMBA
♩ = 88

A $Bb-7$ $Db7/Ab$ $Gdim7$ $Gbdim7$

$Bb-7/F$ $C7(b9)$ $F7(b9)$

$Bb-7$ $G7$ $C7$ $Bb-7$

$C-7$ $F7$ **B** $Gbd7$ Db/F

$Eb-7$ $Dbd7$ $C7(b9)$ $F7(b9)$

$Bb-7$ $Bb7(b9)$ **B** $Eb-7$ $Ab7$ $D7$

$Dbd7$ $G7(\#11)$ $Gbd7$ $C7(\#9)$ $F7(b9)$

$Bb-7$ $Bb-7$ $Bb-7$ $Bb-7$

BRAZILIAN SUITE

FROM "MICHEL PLAYS PETRUCCIANI" - BLUE NOTE

MICHEL PETRUCCIANI

JAZZ SAMBA

$\text{♩} = 104$

Ab-7 Eb-7 Ab-7 Eb-7

A Ab-7 Ab-7/Gb E7(#11) Eb-7

Db-7 Eb7(b9) D7(b9) Db7

C#7(#9) B7 Bb7(b9) Eb7(#9)

Ab-7 Eb7(b9) B Ab-7 B7/F#

F-7(b9) Bb7 E-7 A7

Db7 Eb-7 Ab7 Db7 Bb-7 Bb-7

Eb-7 Ab7 Db7 Bb-7

Handwritten musical score for a piece in E-flat major, consisting of four staves of music. The notation includes various chords and melodic lines.

Staff 1: Chords: E Δ 7(#11), Eb7, Ab-7, Ab-7/Gb. Includes a circled 'c' above the staff.

Staff 2: Chords: E Δ 7(#11), Eb-7, Db-7, Eb7(b9).

Staff 3: Chords: Ab-7, Eb-7, Ab-7, Eb-7. Features a double bar line with repeat dots.

Staff 4: Chords: Db Δ 7, Db Δ 7. Features a circled 'd' above the staff.