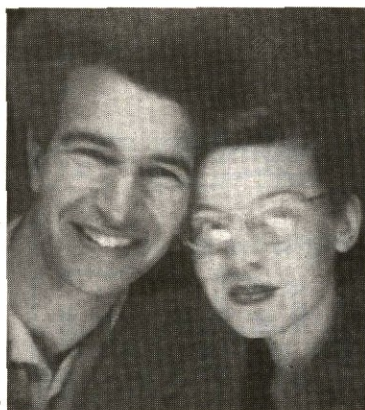


DAVE BRUBECK'S *Remembrance of Madeleine Milhaud*

BY JOHN SALMON



Dave and Iola waiting for Madeleine.

Madeleine Milhaud died January 17th, 2008, just two months shy of what would have been her 106th birthday. Wife of *Les six* composer Darius Milhaud, whom she had married in 1925, she was a talented actress, and at the epicenter of French musical life for most of the twentieth century. Her association with composers Satie, Schoenberg, Stravinsky, Poulenc and many others, and her unique insight into Milhaud's life and work (recounted in Roger Nichols' book, *Conversations with Madeleine Milhaud*), provide us with a very personal view of music history.

Brubeck and the Milhauds

She was a friend and inspiration to several generations of musicians, actors, playwrights, dancers, and authors, both in the United States and in Europe. It was in Oakland, California, at Mills College, that Dave Brubeck got to know her, when, in 1946, by virtue of the GI Bill, he studied composition with Darius Milhaud. Brubeck had just returned from a tour of duty in Europe during WWII and was at something of a crossroads: his rancher father still had hopes that Dave would return to the ranch as a cowboy, while his mother, a classically trained pianist and teacher, was more encouraging of a career in music. In those days, the formal study of jazz simply didn't exist, and a master of music degree was even more improbable for Dave because of the trouble he had reading and writing music.

Milhaud, who had incorporated jazz into his 1923 composition *La Création du Monde*, was the perfect teacher for Brubeck. He recognized the young jazz pianist's enormous talent and urged him to pursue composition seriously. As Dave's late brother Howard Brubeck (1916-1993) once told me, "Milhaud saved Dave." It was a turning point in Brubeck's professional life. No greater confirmation of that statement exists than in the fact that Dave and Iola named their firstborn son Darius. "Had the child been a girl," recalls Iola Brubeck, "no doubt she would have been named Madeleine."

It is likely that Brubeck's approach to bitonality—one hand in one key, one hand in another—comes from Milhaud, who applied the technique often in such works as *Saudades do Brazil* and *La Boeuf sur le Toit*. Rare is the Brubeck improvisation that does not illustrate this principle: a blues in G will, under Dave's hand, inevitably become, simultaneously, a blues

She was a friend and inspiration to several generations of musicians, actors, playwrights, dancers, and authors, both in the United States and in Europe.

in B-flat. There is also something of Milhaud's transcultural openmindedness in Brubeck's compositions: Milhaud captured Harlem and Rio de Janeiro in his "serious" works; in his cantata *Truth is Fallen*, Brubeck juxtaposes 1970s rock music with an atonal, dodecaphonic fugue. Clarinetist and fellow Milhaud student Bill Smith says that two of Milhaud's favorite sayings were "Dare!" and "Why not?"

Brubeck Remembers Madeleine

One particular incident stands out in the Brubecks' memory. By virtue of both her musical and dramatic training, Madeleine had become known as a reciter in such works as Roland Manuel's *Jeanne d'Arc* and Milhaud's *La Cantate de l'Enfant et de la Mère*. Stravinsky once called on Madeleine.

In Brubeck's words: "Stravinsky was producing his piece *Perséphone* [for speaker, soloists, chorus and orchestra, composed in 1933] once in 1946 in New York and called Madeleine Milhaud to perform [the speaker part] because she was one of the only actresses who could also read music. Darius was reluctant to let her go, because he wondered who would take care of him. So Iola and I volunteered to stay with him while Madeleine was out of town. I think she was gone about two weeks—it took a long time to get across the country by train, from Oakland to New York.



Madeleine Milhaud at 104.

“I remember waiting for her at the train station in Oakland with Darius. There was a photo booth at the train station where, to pass the time waiting for Madeleine’s train to arrive, we took some silly photos. I guess those photos are in the archives [Brubeck Archives, University of the Pacific, Stockton CA].”

The photos taken at the Oakland train station on January 9th, 1947 (see the top of page 28 for one of them), capture only some of the high spirits anticipating Madeleine’s arrival. According to Iola, there was another picture, snapped just seconds later, with Milhaud sticking out his tongue at the camera. Alas, that photo is nowhere to be found.

Another anecdote from Dave Brubeck (which he asked that I not repeat since Dave is so easily embarrassed; pardon me, Dave—it was just too good) reveals Madeleine’s earthy sense of humor: “Mme. Milhaud lived in a tough neighborhood of Paris, where the sailors used to hang out, where the Moulin Rouge was. I asked her once if she didn’t worry about her safety. She said, ‘David, just the contrary, I feel very safe. Every pimp and whore knows me. I’m well protected.’”

Remembrance of Madeleine Milhaud

The day after reading of Madeleine’s death, Brubeck wrote a piano piece dedicated to her, *Remembrance of Madeleine Milhaud*. It is tender, lyrical, and slightly wistful. There is a musical link to Milhaud’s piano piece *Romance*, which has a recurring motif, C-D-C-F...



Brubeck intentionally echoes this melodic fragment in his first four notes, G-flat—A-flat—G-flat—A...



*The day after reading of
Madeleine’s death, Brubeck
wrote a piano piece dedicated
to her, Remembrance
of Madeleine Milhaud.*



Dave, left and Darius Milhaud, right, with an unidentified man.

Courtesy of the Brubeck Collection, Holt-Atherton Special Collections, University of the Pacific Library.

Both pieces are in F major. Dave once arranged the piece for flute, piano, cello, trombone, and drums, and it was performed by Bobby Militello, Dave, and Dave’s sons Matthew, Chris, and Dan at a 1992 centennial tribute to Milhaud. According to Dave, Madeleine loved *Romance*, and that fact no doubt played a role in his own reference to it. Notice that Milhaud’s character marking, “Tendrement,” is mirrored in Brubeck’s indication “Tenderly.” He could have written “Reverently” as well. The last measures capture angelic harp strumming (m. 37) and her dignified ascent to heaven (mm. 38-40), capped by the hymnic mandate “Amen.”

Playing Brubeck’s *Remembrance*

Of course, the first thing one notices about this piece is that it isn’t jazz. There is no swing, no syncopation, and no super-articulated touch. Rather, legato, voicing, and cantabile—those things you piano teacher keeps stressing to you when you play a Chopin Nocturne—are relevant here.

Perhaps the biggest challenge is to transform the nearly ubiquitous quarter-note texture into something that doesn’t plod. Maintaining the “long line” and keeping the phrase moving are vital. It will help to use *rubato* liberally and not be hemmed in by Brubeck’s metronome marking of 76 to the quarter note. At some points in this piece, I speed up to around 92 to the quarter note, and I’m not afraid to linger over certain downbeats, either because they sound like arrival

Continued on page 33

Measures 25-28 continue the Gospel harmonic, melodic, and rhythmic feel. However, when improvising over these changes, you can certainly use some bebop language, as both Gary Versace and I did on the recording. Make use of Ionian Mode or Lydian Mode for the major chord, Dorian Mode for the minor7, and Mixolydian Mode and/or Dominant Diminished for the dominant seventh chords.

The first ending has a longer harmonic rhythm with two measures each of F7sus4 (bright) going to F7sus4b9 (dark), which turns around back into the Bbmaj7+5. The second ending's diminished harmonic rhythm accommodates the extra chords, which are needed to resolve correctly back to the "intro." The eighth note left hand line anticipations keeps things moving along. Notice the Bb7sus4, which moves smoothly into the Bb7b9+11. These dominant seventh alterations can be easily achieved by playing a major triad (E), which is a tritone above the root of the chord (Bb). Good scale

choices are Bb Mixolydian for the Bb7sus4, and Bb Dominant Diminished for the Bb7b9+11.

Taking the Coda from measure 28 on the last repeat, we have the now familiar F7sus4 to F7sus4b9, which deceptively resolves to the C-7b5/Bb. This can also be thought of as Eb-/Bb, or, a minor iv chord, which then resolves to the major I, another typical Gospel resolution. The closing arpeggio is made of the C-7b5 (C half diminished 7) chord tones. For fingering, start with the thumb on C, and use consecutive fingers, which will put your 4th finger on the Bb. Then, turn your thumb under, and repeat up the octaves. A slow upward rolling motion on the final Bb chord will put your right hand and left hand at the extremities of the keyboard. Hold that until it decays.

Thanks for playing my tune, and I hope you enjoyed your *Journey to Joyous Lake*.

See *Joyous Lake* on the following pages, and a Gospel arrangement of "When The Saints Go Marching In" on page 36.

Remembrance of Madeleine Milhaud, con't. from page 29

points or because the unexpected chords deserve attention. (Remember what you're supposed to do when you come upon roses—Stop! Smell! But don't stop at every flower, please, or else you will sound incoherent.)

Pedal is another matter that requires finesse and taste. Because I can reach the left hand tenths of measures 1-6, I employ pedal only at the barlines of 1-5 in order not to mix appoggiaturas with chord tones. Once the measures become more chordal (measures 6-9), the pedal can be held throughout the measure.

Here's a rough estimation of my approach to phrasing, pedal and rubato in the first nine measures:

See Dave Brubeck's *Remembrance of Madeleine Milhaud* on page 22.

Pianist John Salmon is on the faculty of the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. He has recorded 3 CDs of Dave Brubeck's piano music. See John's feature article on Brubeck in this issue. Among his previous articles on this subject is "What Brubeck Got From Milhaud" (American Music Teacher, February/March 1992).

REMEMBRANCE OF MADELEINE MILHAUD

DAVE BRUBECK

Tenderly ♩ = 76

mp
with pedal

4 *poco - cre - scen - do -*

8 *mf* *dim. e rit.* *a tempo* *p*

12 *cre - - scen - do -* *f* *dimin - - uen - -*

17 *ritardando* *poco a poco a tempo*
do - - - *pp* *poco - a - poco - cre - scen - do* *f* *diminuendo*
u.c.

21

pp *p*

26

p *cédez*

30 *a tempo*

a tempo *poco* - - -

34

poco - - - *cre* - - - *scen* - - - *do* - - -

38 *cédez* *a tempo* *ritardando*

f *diminuendo* *pp* *A - men*