

JOHN SALMON
Piano

Program

“An Evening of Dave Brubeck”

Reminiscences of the Cattle Country (composed 1946)

Sun Up
Breaking a Wild Horse
The Fairgrounds
Look At My Pony
The Chickens and the Ducklings
Dad Plays the Harmonica

Glances (composed 1976; present version, 1993)

Overture
Struttin’
Blue Aria
Doing the Charleston

INTERMISSION

The Duke

Bluette

It’s a Raggy Waltz

Program Notes

While Dave Brubeck (born 1920) is perhaps best known as a jazz pianist, his reputation is growing as a composer of fully notated works, from large-scale symphonies and choral compositions to miniature piano pieces and songs, playable by classical musicians. He was deeply influenced by the French composer Darius Milhaud, who taught him composition at Mills College from 1946-47 and encouraged the young jazzman to pursue a life both playing piano and composing.

Indeed, the works on the first half of tonight's program are Brubeck's most Milhaud-influenced. *Reminiscences of the Cattle Country* is a set of six pieces, composed during Brubeck's study with Milhaud, which, according to Brubeck, are "my first pieces for piano not in the jazz idiom of the blues or popular song form." They reflect Brubeck's boyhood days on his father's ranch, where cowboy Dave used to rope cattle and herd steers.

Glances started out as a ballet suite for the Murray Louis Dance Ensemble. It was originally orchestrated for a small chamber group, then later arranged as a piano solo. There are passages that sound remind one of Milhaud's *Scaramouche Suite*, but Stravinsky's *Petrouchka* is also present as a source. At other times Fats Waller joins in the festivities—stride in two keys!—until the riotous close, *Doing the Charleston*, when James P. Johnson meets Leonard Bernstein.

The pieces on the second half of tonight's program are jazz tunes, to be used as the basis for improvisation.

"The Duke" was originally titled "The Duke Meets Milhaud," a tribute to two of Brubeck's biggest influences, Duke Ellington and Darius Milhaud. In the first part, Ellington's laid-back swing and melodic-harmonic sophistication are apparent, while the bridge uses one of Milhaud's favorite compositional devices, bitonality (for example, the left hand playing an E major chord, spread out over a tenth, while the right hand plays a G major triad).

"Bluette" was originally heard on the 1960 album *Time Further Out*. It is a slow, plaintive waltz in B-flat minor. The "head" (the written-out part, what one hears before the improvisation) includes two melodies, presented contrapuntally. One melody was conceived for and played by Paul

Desmond, the alto saxophonist famous for his aloof personality and sad sound.

“It’s a Raggy Waltz,” also from the *Time Further Out* album, is a jumpy waltz, very different from “Bluette.” While the time signature is $\frac{3}{4}$, the rhythm is often grouped in twos—1-2, 1-2, 1-2 instead of 1-2-3, 1-2-3—creating a rag-waltz hybrid. During the improvisation section, I often utilize other rhythmic tricks, like superimposing $\frac{6}{8}$ over the bar.

--John Salmon