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## FORENOTE

In a favorite comic strip, Charlie Brown asks Schroeder (seated at his toy piano, mid-Beethoven sonata) how he can manage to play such difficult pieces when the black keys are only painted on. Without dropping an eighth-note, Schroeder responds "Practice, Charlie Brown. Practice."

Good grief, Charlie Brown! Every musician knows that. And practicing the transcriptions contained in this volume will offer a greater knowledge and appreciation of an area often neglected in a pianist's musical development: comping.

The art of piano "comping" (or accompanying) is a demanding skill requiring an excellent sense of time, a developed ear, a working knowledge of the jazz tradition, a secure technique, taste and creativity. No small task. And when considering the precise, spontaneous, split-second choices as to harmony and rhythm that are made hundreds of times throughout a single tune, three other prerequisites are required: courage, confidence and conviction.

Listening to the masters of this craft is unquestionably the best (and most enjoyable) way to assimilate the subtlety and beauty of their comping. The fascinating interplay between the soloist and accompanist (in the hands of such artists as Wynton Kelly, Red Garland, Bill Evans and Herbie Hancock) creates a contrapuntal matrix of infinite variety. Their recordings are still our best teachers. Jazz will always be an "aural" tradition.

Using these transcriptions (in conjunction with the Volume 54 recording (CD, cassette or LP) can go a long way in answering the question: "How can I improve my comping?" In matters of two-hand voicings, voice leading, syncopated rhythm, riffs, chord substitution, side-slipping, chromatic passing chords, articulation, accents and texture, this book presents some invaluable insights. Isolating individual trouble spots or extracting favorite passages serves as a wonderful source for creating your own "etudes" that will eventually emerge as your own personal playing style.

Following are a few additional tips to consider when using this book:

1) Always work toward creating a warm, engaging piano tone. It's the first aspect of your playing to which an audience responds. Avoid a harsh, "punchy" sound. Never "hit." Stay physically relaxed at the keyboard. Besides improving your touch, staying loose will spare you an encounter with tendonitis – the bane of all pianists.

2) The three secrets to good musicianship are:

- a) Listen
- b) Listen
- c) Listen

Be aware of what your fellow "teammates" in the rhythm section are doing, as well as the soloist.

3) The best accompanists have the best time. As Duke Ellington (no slouch at the piano himself) would put it best: "It don't mean a thing, if it ain't got that swing!" Always work to improve your time feel. Practice with a metronome, play-along records and fellow musicians to continually focus this most significant element of music.

4) Use the damper (sustain) pedal very sparingly. The use of this pedal is indicated here, as in contemporary piano scores beneath the grand staff. The pedal may be engaged in other places not indicated, of course, at the performer's discretion; but in jazz piano the emphasis is definitely on a clean rhythmic, unpedaled attack. Let your ears (as in all musical choices) be the final judge.

Jamey Aebersold's piano comping to the chords of

# Summertime

1

D<sup>-</sup> D<sup>-</sup>

G<sup>-</sup> E $\phi$  A7<sup>+9</sup>

D<sup>-</sup> G<sup>-</sup> C7<sup>b9</sup>

F $\Delta$  E $\phi$  A7<sup>b9</sup> D<sup>-</sup> A7<sup>b9</sup>

Detailed description: This sheet music provides piano comping for the song 'Summertime' in 4/4 time, featuring a key signature of one flat (B-flat major). The notation is organized into four systems, each with a treble and bass staff. The first system (measures 1-2) features a D<sup>-</sup> chord. The second system (measures 3-4) features G<sup>-</sup>, E $\phi$ , and A7<sup>+9</sup> chords. The third system (measures 5-6) features D<sup>-</sup>, G<sup>-</sup>, and C7<sup>b9</sup> chords. The fourth system (measures 7-8) features F $\Delta$ , E $\phi$ , A7<sup>b9</sup>, D<sup>-</sup>, and A7<sup>b9</sup> chords. The notation includes various rhythmic patterns such as eighth and quarter notes, rests, and dynamic markings like accents and slurs.

Jamey Aebersold's piano comping to the chords of

# Maiden Voyage

1  $\frac{A^-}{D}$  (D7sus4)

$\frac{C^-}{F}$  (F7sus4)

$\frac{A^-}{D}$  (D7sus4)

$\frac{C^-}{F}$  (F7sus4)

$\frac{Bb^-}{Eb}$  (Eb7sus4)