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PLAY-A-LONG CD INFORMATION:

STEREO SEPARATION: Right Channel = Piano & Drums; Left Channel = Bass & Drums

Tuning Notes: Concert Bb & A (A=440)

PERSONNEL ON PLAY-A-LONG RECORDING:

KENNY WERNER - Piano; JOHANNES WEIDENMULLER - Bass; ARI HONENIG - Drums

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Free Play

Free music. What does that term suggest to you? Do you instantly think of Cecil Taylor, Ornette Coleman, or the 1960s? The name "Free Jazz" was actually the title of Ornette Coleman's classic 1961 recording.

Human history moves forward through action and reaction. To a certain extent, every movement is a reaction to the previous movement. In times when forms reach their highest state of complexity, the seeds of desire for freedom are planted. As society shrouds itself in rules, the environment becomes ripe for rebels. It happens in cycles. By the 1960s, jazz music had achieved an incredible level of sophistication and many musicians needed to decompose and recompose it for themselves.

Free music began to surface in the 1950s, although I once heard an interview with Willie "The Lion" Smith, who, when asked what he thought of Cecil Taylor exclaimed, "Sh__! We used to play that way in 1890!" In the early 1950s one could say that it was truly an act of courage to play free until it became more accepted in the following decade. Although free playing might have originated from American jazz musicians, it took much deeper root in Europe. But in America in the 1960s this movement had become relevant on many levels. There was a political component with the upheaval in the southern United States emerging over "Jim Crow" laws and institutional discrimination. Soon after, the Vietnam War was to politicize all of America. Music of that time was inundated with spiritual and emotional content. Given the mood of these times, there was a greater need for self-expression, to "get it all out" so to speak, rather than adhering to traditional musical conventions. And there was a much higher premium placed on "getting off" rather than "playing correctly." For these and other reasons, the free players of the time were ready for a new canvas from which to work.

From the late 1800s to the 1960s, the development of music theory had grown very steep. As a result, there were some musicians who found it necessary to knock it down and start again. These players needed to break free of the unforgiving rules of harmony and melody. There were a select few who could create freely within the rules, but most could not. For those who had not mastered what seemed to be oppressive rules, it became attractive to simply create a new game board.

A significant musician during that period told me that when they heard the ultra-sophistication of the Miles Davis quintet of the early sixties, they couldn't really understand what was going on. When that band played a simple standard it *sounded as if they were playing free*. Even today, musicians will listen to those recordings over and over again to try to figure out how, or even if - they were playing the form. The player's desire to be that free in time and form was one of the forces driving them to play free of time and form.

Track #5

Ex #1

Piano

Acoustic Bass

The image displays a musical score for a track, with a large diagonal watermark reading "SAMPLE" across the center. The score is organized into two main parts: "Piano" and "Acoustic Bass". The "Piano" part is written on a grand staff (treble and bass clefs) and consists of four systems of music. The "Acoustic Bass" part is written on a single bass clef staff and also consists of four systems of music. The notation includes various chords, single notes, and rests, indicating a harmonic and melodic progression. The watermark "SAMPLE" is written in large, bold, white capital letters on a black background, running from the bottom left to the top right of the page.