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Against All Odds
The Life and Music of Michel Petrucciani

A thesis presented in fulfilment of the requirements for the
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Abstract

Michel Petrucciani, jazz pianist and composer, was a major figure in the history of French jazz who achieved much critical and popular success in his short life span. In 1999 when he died at the age of 36, he was enough of a hero in his own country to warrant inclusion alongside Duke Ellington and Miles Davis in a series of postage stamps celebrating great jazz artists. He was one of only a handful of European jazz musicians to achieve success in the U.S.

This thesis examines Petrucciani's life and music with particular emphasis placed on the evolution of his playing and composing styles through close analysis of selected piano solos and a range of compositions representing different periods of his career. An overview of his musical and personal life, as he battled with *osteogenesis imperfecta*, a rare bone disease that prevents growth to adult size, is also included, along with a study of the influence of pianist Bill Evans on Petrucciani's playing.

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INTRODUCTION

The man and his life

Colouring any discussion of Michel Petrucciani's music is the fact that throughout his life, he suffered from *osteogenesis imperfecta* (glass bones disease). He had to be carried on to the stage in his early career before gaining enough strength to walk with the aid of crutches. His stubborn refusal to allow his incapacity to limit his talent was an inspiration to all, but to what extent the novelty of his disability contributed to his fame is open to question. It is difficult to determine how his disease and resultant lifestyle affected his performances and his reputation. Should these factors even be taken into account when examining his art, or should the music stand alone and be assessed on its own merits?

This study will examine the evolution of his playing style through close analysis of seven solos from different stages of his twenty-year career to determine whether a clear progression can be detected. It will also look at how his later solos measure up to his earlier playing. A similar approach will be applied to a selected range of his many compositions.

The alleged influence of pianist Bill Evans on Petrucciani's style will be discussed with a view to deciding whether that influence was all-pervading, or only temporary in nature.

An account of Petrucciani's life is also included in order to place his music in context. This is based partly on my translation of a lengthy interview, given by the pianist a year before he died. Excerpts from personal interviews with fellow musicians are included.

Inspiration

Two serendipitous meetings gave further inspiration to this work. Eating lunch in a restaurant in the Montmartre district of Paris in the summer of 2003, I came across a news item in the current edition of *Jazz Magazine*. A mosaic sculpture was being prepared on a small square north of Montmartre as a tribute to Michel Petrucciani. The square was to be

renamed "Place Michel Petrucciani" and the inauguration ceremony was planned for the following weekend.

Eventually locating the square in question, I arrived to find Edouard Detmer, a close childhood friend of Petrucciani, and an artist in his own right, at work on his mosaic of a grand piano.



Fig. 1

The offer of a glass of wine at the bar across the road tempted him into revealing many fascinating insights into Petrucciani's early life and career. Two years later I recorded a lengthy interview with him, from which several extracts are used in this study.

The other meeting occurred that same week in Paris in 2003 when I discovered by chance a gig at "Franc Pinot" on the Ile St. Louis by a quartet led by the pianist Ludovic de Preissac. They devoted both sets that evening to the music of Michel Petrucciani, with stimulating arrangements of some of his better-known tunes like "Rachid" and "Lullaby". An album was later released entitled *Looking for Michel Petrucciani*.

Content and methodology

Part One, chapters 1-3, consists of a brief literature review, followed by a chronological account of Petrucciani's life, then a chapter discussing the influence of Bill Evans. Much of the existing material on Petrucciani is written in French. I have therefore translated many of the excerpts used.

I am indebted to Ludovic de Preissac for his help in providing some materials, including a recording of the programme made by Petrucciani for Italian radio which proved so useful when writing the chapters on Composition.

Interviews were conducted and recorded in person with drummer Aldo Romano and artist Edouard Detmer in Paris, and with drummer Eliot Zigmund in New York. Email correspondence with writer Thomas Conrad also proved very helpful.

Part Two, chapters 4-8, is devoted to Petrucciani's original compositions and includes analysis of ten tunes taken from the *Michel Petrucciani Songbook* published by Francis Dreyfus Music.

Part Three, chapters 9-16, contains transcriptions and analysis of six solos and one complete solo piano track.

The solo transcriptions and excerpts, and the compositions and excerpts were entered into the *Sibelius* computer programme. The selected solos come from fifteen whole or part-transcriptions collected from various sources. Four of them were transcribed specifically for this study by using a looping function on a Sony CD player, with the added help of a software programme entitled *Amazing Slow-Downer*: "Here's That Rainy Day", "Beautiful Love", and both versions of "Little Peace in C for You". "These Foolish Things" was transcribed by Raphael Plat, "Brazilian Like" by Ludovic De Preissac, and "In a Sentimental Mood" by an unknown author. All seven are complete solos, varying in length from 48 bars to 192 bars.

Part Four consists of the Conclusion and the Appendices.

PART ONE

CHAPTER 1

A BRIEF LITERATURE REVIEW

While researching written material on the life and music of Michel Petrucciani in order to formulate answers to the questions raised in the Introduction, one thing has become clear. No major works have been published in the public domain. For an insight into the pianist's oeuvre one must turn to a variety of sources, yet nothing of any great substance is available to date. It is this lack of centralised information, especially in English, that this study hopes, in part, to remedy.

That said, much has been written about him. Short articles and reviews abound in French and in English. Petrucciani spent much of his short adult life in America, quickly gaining fluency in the English language. He even considered himself to be half-American, and was a willing interview subject. Indeed, the many interviews published in both French and American magazines are a rich mine of information for those seeking to know the man himself.

There is one book devoted solely to him, a French publication which, with a few added photos, is actually the text of an eleven-part interview conducted by Frédéric Goaty in eleven issues of *Jazz Magazine* in 1997.¹ It is the most comprehensive overview of his life and could be considered a quasi-autobiography. A chronological account of Petrucciani's life and career, which places emphasis on his many recordings, it has been a particularly helpful resource for this study.

Other revealing interviews in French include a fascinating conversation with Pascal Anquetil in the magazine *Jazzman*.² Published just a few months before his death, Petrucciani radiates good will and "musical

¹ Goaty, Frederic. *Interview with Michel Petrucciani*. Jazz Magazine 1997 (translated into English by Phil Broadhurst).

² Anquetil, Pascal. *Michel Petrucciani – le bonheur à la clé*. Jazzman No.38 July 1998

happiness". He begins by outlining his plans for an international jazz school in the Drome region of Southern France and goes on to talk about such topics as what he is currently listening to, composing for particular musicians, why he now favours playing solo concerts, the simplification of his harmonic language, and increasing emphasis on rhythmic precision. He also addresses the issue of how his playing has evolved away from his initial influences such as pianists Bill Evans and McCoy Tyner (see Chapter 4).

Similar material can be found in a conversation with Petrucciani broadcast on *Radio France* and conducted by Michel Dubourg.³ This is one of the last interviews (April 1998) and poignantly reveals his exciting plans for the future which included composing and playing a piano concerto as well as the above-mentioned school. As his physical discomfort was becoming an increasing burden, Petrucciani was showing a greater interest in becoming involved in jazz pedagogy, probably as a means of escaping the daily grind of touring, as much as for any altruistic motive.

Published a month after his passing, an interview by Bernard Maury in *Jazzman*⁴ was recorded in Petrucciani's Paris apartment in September 1997. It reveals a number of approaches to the music that the pianist adopted as his career progressed, namely the need to communicate with the audience, and the value of limiting the number of choruses in a solo to leave the listener wanting more. Also revealing is Petrucciani's belief (shared by this researcher) that while it is important to keep listening back to your music, you are not always the best judge of it. You can like what you did today, but be indifferent to it tomorrow. Much of the interview focuses on biographical details and here the strong influence of his guitarist father is mentioned several times in the text. There is also an interesting description of his first attempts at composing, which began with a request from his father for an introduction to "Body and Soul" that branched away from the tune, then led back into it.

³ Dubourg, Michel. *Michel Petrucciani*. Radio France Normandie Caen. www.jazzcaen.com April 1998

⁴ Maury, Bernard. *Michel Petrucciani*. *Jazzman* No. 44 Feb. 1999

The interviews in French are generally more in-depth than those in English. One of the best of the latter is a late interview in a magazine for mainly rock players, *Musician*, by Robert Doerschuk⁵ in 1997, with questions slanted towards providing technical help. Only two pages long, it is still of great interest, not the least because the author begins by introducing Petrucciani to his readers by reviewing the opening track from his recent solo album *Au Théâtre des Champs-Élysées* and comparing it favourably with a typical solo performance by Keith Jarrett. The author pulls no punches in saying "While Jarrett's presumption of total freedom sometimes stalls him in cycles of clueless repetition, Petrucciani finds plenty of room for expression by using songs as touchstones on his explorations".

The interview concludes with Petrucciani's advice to rock musicians on how to expand their harmonic capabilities. There is nothing new here (read the Real Books⁶, listen to players, do the scales), and the pianist ends up talking about his physical problems and turning his handicap into an opportunity for doing something else.

A much earlier interview from 1985 by Krystian Brodacki in the Polish magazine *Jazz Forum*⁷ is revealing for a number of reasons. Interviewed by a European who calls him the "most American European pianist", at a time when Petrucciani was consolidating his career in the U.S., Petrucciani states that he feels more American than European, particularly since his move to New York. Yet he maintains his cultural identity, especially in the home. Petrucciani outlines various plans, some of which later came to fruition e.g. forming a band with another keyboard player on synthesizer (Adam Holzman – as heard on the CD *Michel Petrucciani – Live* in 1991), and the eventual posthumous release of a live recording from the Village Vanguard made by his then trio.

It is interesting to note also that at this earlier stage of his career the pianist was more interested in discussing his influences, both jazz and

⁵ Doerschuk, Robert L. *The Power Of Standards*. *Musician*. November 1997

⁶ Published collections of lead sheets of jazz and Broadway standards.

⁷ Brodacki, Krystian. *Michel Petrucciani*. *Jazz Forum* 1985

classical, such as Art Tatum, Bill Evans (see Chapter 3), Ravel, Debussy and Bartók. In discussing composition Petrucciani underrated his ability at this stage – later he was to put an increasing emphasis on originals and record entire albums of his compositions.

Although there is no book in English devoted to Petrucciani, he does rate a chapter in Robert Doerschuk's 2001 release *88: The Giants of Jazz Piano*.⁸ Placed in a brief section entitled "Old World/New Flavors", it's an incisive summary of his achievements written to a format used in each two- or three-page chapter on eighty-eight jazz pianists. i.e. a page of biography and a page or two of assessment. The latter is well written and well-researched, opening with the line "In everything he played, Petrucciani exhibited a uniquely playful virtuosity." The author goes on to discuss in detail several solos from amongst Petrucciani's albums. Doerschuk writes about *Flamingo*, the album with Stephane Grappelli and hones in on a passage with its "beautifully articulated triplet sixteenth-note flurry...it's simple but flawlessly executed and designed." Other solos discussed include: "You Go to My Head" and the solo piano intro on "Body and Soul" from the 1998 session with Steve Grossman; "Petite Louise" a duo with Stefano Di Battista and "35 Seconds of Music and More" from *Both Worlds*; "One Night in the Hotel" and "Caravan" from the solo album *Promenade With Duke*; and "Caravan" from *Solo Live*.

The writer concludes by tempering his praise with some reservations, claiming that Petrucciani "was one of the least cerebral players of his time and emotion trumped intellect. He never appeared to reharmonise a song and his arrangements betrayed no sense of premeditation". While this may have the ring of truth, one only has to listen to "In A Sentimental Mood" from *Promenade With Duke* to hear a premeditated arrangement and some changed harmonies. As will later be revealed in this study, just when one is ready to formulate a theory on some aspect of Petrucciani's music, a counter-argument can be found from elsewhere in the short career of this complex musician.

⁸ Doerschuk, Robert L. *88: The Giants of Jazz Piano*. San Francisco. Backbeat books 2001. ch.54 pp 214-217

Most of the writing on Petrucciani can be found in magazines, and in a variety of languages. While this study is limited to those in English and French, the Jazz-Institut Darmstadt in Germany lists over 150 articles and reviews from periodicals in their archives.

Thierry P  r  marti was a journalist friend of Petrucciani and contributed several pieces to *Jazzman*, including *Puissance 6*⁹ on the making of Petrucciani's last studio album *Both Worlds*. While this kind of article appears regularly in jazz magazines and often serves as glowing publicity for the forthcoming release, the author outlines the many problems encountered in the first two days of recording, includes quotes from Petrucciani and arranger Bob Brookmeyer, and reverts to the normal effusive praise only when discussing the recording process and eventual success of the final track.

A later article, *At Home with Michel Petrucciani*¹⁰ is a short, but moving account of the pianist's last days.

Many of these articles include extensive quotes from Petrucciani himself, who was happy to talk on a wide range of subjects as well as music. CD liner notes provide another fertile source, the most comprehensive being those for the posthumous release on Dreyfus *Concerts In  dits* by Pascal Anquetil,¹¹ a summary of Petrucciani's life and music with particular emphasis, of course, on his final Dreyfus recordings, and liberal use of quotes from the pianist.

Another sizeable body of writing on Petrucciani's music is made up of the hundreds of record reviews that form the staple diet of most jazz magazines. Virtually all of his recordings have been reviewed in *Downbeat*, along with the compilation sets that are being released to this

⁹ P  r  marti, Thierry. *Michel Petrucciani, puissance 6*. *Jazzman* no.29 Oct.1997. The author also wrote the sleeve notes for the CD "Both Worlds".

⁹ P  r  marti, Thierry. *At Home with...Michel Petrucciani*. *Jazzman* No. 45 March 1999

¹⁰ Anquetil, Pascal. *Concerts In  dits*. Dreyfus

day. All three French periodicals – *Jazz Magazine*, *Jazzman*, and *Jazz Hot* – have documented his entire recorded output.

Countless obituaries and homages appeared in print and on the internet immediately after Petrucciani's death. They range from the official – the French Minister of Culture, Catherine Trautmann's eulogy¹² – to the personal, in an obituary written by former musician-turned-writer Mike Zwerin,¹³ who played trombone on Petrucciani's first album, *Flash*. This recounts Petrucciani's character and personality, including his love of partying and swinging - in more ways than one "...he personified the victory of the spirit over the flesh".

Two documentaries have been made. The first, *Lettre à Michel Petrucciani* by Frank Cassenti¹⁴ was filmed at an early stage of his career and ends with his departure to America. At the time of writing, the film has yet to be re-released by Dreyfus, and a copy could not be obtained.

The second, directed by Roger Willemsen, is a sixty-minute German production entitled *Non-Stop*.¹⁵ It has been shown on Arts channels around the world, and is a moving chronicle of the pianist's life. It revolves around an interview by the director, but contains fascinating footage of Petrucciani as he moves around Paris, San Francisco and New York. We see him catching up with his early mentor, Charles Lloyd in Big Sur, and the film ends with Petrucciani playing his tune "Looking Up" on a grand piano on the roof of a New York skyscraper. There is a scene in a recording studio during the session with Stephane Grappelli that gave rise to the CD *Flamingo*, and on stage during a solo concert playing "Caravan". This is a long sequence which includes Petrucciani's own simplified version of stride piano, influenced perhaps by Thelonious Monk, where the left hand alternates bass notes and chords within one octave.

¹² Trautmann, Catherine. *Hommage de Catherine Trautmann, Ministre de la Culture et de la Communication, à Michel Petrucciani*. Website: www.cultur.gouv.fr:80

¹³ Zwerin, Mike. *Adieu to the Little Big Man of Jazz*. Jazziz P.16 May 1999, abridged from "Victory of the Spirit". January 22 1999 www.mikezwerin.com

¹⁴ Cassenti, Frank. *Lettre à Michel Petrucciani* (film). 1983

¹⁵ Willemsen, Roger. *Non-Stop* (film). 1996

The interview is wide-ranging, taking in such topics as his childhood, the current status of jazz, his dislike of too much applause, the importance of humour in his life, and his fear of death. The film closes with the poignant words "I hate to say goodbye", and the publicity gets it right in saying the film "catches the wit and joy that were at the centre of everything he did".¹⁶

Despite the fact that there is a plentiful supply of information available on Michel Petrucciani's life and music, it is scattered far and wide. Indeed, it could be argued that the most comprehensive accounts are the sixty-minute film and the extended Goaty interview. The following chapters of this study will attempt to bring into focus several aspects of his craft, while at the same time presenting a detailed overview of a life lived against all odds.



Fig. 2

¹⁶ www.performance-channel.com

Chapter 2

A BIOGRAPHY

PART ONE –life and music

1. A musical childhood

Michel Petrucciani was born into a musical family on 28 December 1962 in Orange, in the South of France. While his mother, Anne, is English, his father, Antoine or "Tony", is Italian. He is a guitarist who used to play while listening to Wes Montgomery records. Michel's brother, Philippe, though no longer a professional musician, also played guitar. Brother Louis is a fine acoustic bass player who is featured on several of Michel's recordings.

The figure of guitarist Wes Montgomery looms large in all accounts of Michel's childhood. An early indication of his advanced musical ear is the story of young Michel correcting, at an early age, his father's transcriptions of Wes' chords.

From the age of three I was enthralled by guitarist Wes Montgomery. My father, and I too, were intrigued by his sound, time, phrasing and swing. It was hot and strong – rather like my Dad.¹

When Michel's brothers went to school, he stayed at home, with the rare and incurable disease he was born with - Osteogenesis Imperfecta. Often called "glass bones disease", not a lot was known about it in the 1960s. Sufferers have an error in their genetic instructions on how to make strong bones and, as a result, their bones break easily.

Michel grew to a height of only three feet. In many children with OI, the incidence of fractures decreases significantly as the child matures, and this was the case with Michel who was able to walk with crutches by the age of 21. Although it was always certain that the disease would end his life, he lived considerably longer than the experts of the day had forecast.

¹ Goaty, Frederic. *Interview with Michel Petrucciani*. Jazz Magazine 1997 (translated into English by Phil Broadhurst). Also website: www.jazzmagazine.com/interviews/Dauj/petrucciani.htm

After seeing Duke Ellington on television, Michel was given a piano - a toy one which he promptly smashed to pieces. He demanded the real thing. Fortunately for us, he got his way.

This incident caused a ruckus... I broke it because it didn't sound like anything like the pianos I'd heard! I had heard, and especially seen, that real piano sound on a TV show featuring Duke Ellington. A great TV moment for me. That grand, the beauty of that instrument...A great memory for ears and eyes.²

Michel began to take piano lessons, but soon exhausted his first two teachers who found him too quick and cheeky. When he was six, the family left Orange and settled in Montélimar. There, he began learning the piano with Madame Jacquemin who came from Paris. She had been forced to cut short her concert career because of her husband's heart problems.

She taught me the piano for about ten years. We often came to blows, but she had guts. I used to have a little electric car track and one day Mme. Jacquemin said to me: "Instead of playing with your cars, you'd do better to practise your piano...besides, I've laddered my stockings on your damned track." I answered: "With all the cash my Dad gives you, you could easily afford another pair..." I was eight years old! I've always been like that. Maybe it comes from being short and handicapped, and not being able to walk. It was a sort of defence. You're on the defensive when you're different. Piano lessons were an hour a week. But with Dad it was everyday: jazz and classical.³

Michel's days were spent either at the piano or in hospital, in plaster due to frequent bone fractures. In Montélimar the Petruccianis opened a music shop. Artist Edouard Detmer recalls working at the shop in exchange for free records when he was a child. One day he went to Lyon to pick up a piano which was marked out for Michel...

...and that was the day I discovered Michel. I'd never seen him before and his physical presence affected me. I was twelve at the time, and Michel must have been seven or eight. We didn't speak at first...then I met him a couple of weeks later. He was playing the piano and said "Look how I play". And I must admit I had the shock of my life. At the age of seven, this kid was playing like a god. "He's the Mozart of the century" I told myself.⁴

² Goaty, Frederic. cf. note 1

³ Ibid.

⁴ Detmer, Edouard. *Personal interview*. Paris June 25 2005

Later, Michel repaired cassette players and radios, tuned guitars and demonstrated the organ for customers at the shop. Meanwhile he and his father had designed a special contraption to enable Michel's feet to operate the piano pedals – no such device was on the market, and, according to Edouard Detmer, the Petrucciani's later sold the patent to piano manufacturers. It was a simple, easily transported device that could be fitted to any piano.

By the early seventies he was doing his first gigs with the family– on a small drum kit assembled by his father. Later he was allowed to switch to piano and soon began playing gigs with trumpeter and friend Alain Brunet, with brother Louis on bass and Jacques Bonnardel on drums. Aged thirteen, he played his first major concert with Brunet's Big Band at a jazz festival in Clioustat in the Drome region. U.S. trumpeter Clark Terry sat in. By fifteen he had played with the legendary drummer Kenny Clarke, one of several people credited with discovering him. An early photo shows Clarke flanked by brother Louis and father Tony carrying Michel in his arms.

When Americans came through they were fairly surprised...could hardly believe it. We lived in a house in Montélimar, lost in the wheat fields, and we were playing *Take The A Train, In a Sentimental Mood* with all the right chords. We were the Frogs who didn't speak a word of English. They were amazed! To them we were a bit like peasants...Montélimar... the Drôme... They wondered what they'd stumbled on...⁵

The Petrucciani family later moved to Toulon, close to Nice. As Michel's local reputation grew, the gigs increased, including a trio set with Tony and Louis at L'Espace Cardin in Paris. Trombonist Mike Zwerin, who had played with Miles Davis, wrote an article about the trio in the *International Herald Tribune* and asked them to record with him. Meanwhile, Michel met Italian drummer Aldo Romano at a party in Nice and asked him to be part of the project. Romano remembers the meeting fondly.

⁵ Goaty, Frederic. cf. note 1

I met him when he was in the South of France with his father and I didn't know him but he knew me. We met in a small village near Toulon and he asked me to play with him a couple of days after.

They told me he plays very good. To see someone like that, you'd never think... So I said yes, he seemed very nice and funny and so I said yes of course I would do it. And when he started to play I didn't believe it. I was in love immediately.⁶

The final line-up for his first album had Zwerin on bass trombone and bass trumpet, Michel on piano, Louis on bass and Aldo Romano on drums. *Flash* was recorded in August 1980 and included three Petrucciani originals. He may have been only seventeen at the time, but the recording process held no terrors for a teenager who had recorded regularly with his father for years.

A second album, *Michel Petrucciani*, was soon to follow – a more substantial trio outing under Michel's own name – instigated by Romano.

I had a producer at that time, Jean-Jacques Puisseau from Owl records. I told him you have to record this guy, because he's too much. So Jean-Jacques said "Do you have a tape?" I said No, nothing, but you have to book him immediately for a record. After a few months, we made the record and it was immediately successful, *Michel Petrucciani* with J-F Jenny-Clark. After that we did another one in Italy called *Estate* and we were touring for about two years.⁷

2. An American Adventure

In 1981, against his family's wishes, Michel wrote a dud cheque at the airport and boarded a plane for California. From an early age he had wanted to travel and see the world. Soon after he arrived he met up with an old drummer acquaintance, Trox Drohart, who may or may not have introduced him to Charles Lloyd. Saxophonist Lloyd's discovery of the young pianist is one of the more celebrated episodes in Michel's life, yet accounts vary wildly as to how Michel ended up staying with him and when exactly he first played the piano for him. In Michel's long magazine interview with Frédéric Goaty, he says he met Lloyd's wife, Dorothy Darr at a dance class at a therapy institute in Big Sur. She invited him to

⁶ Romano, Aldo. *Personal interview*. Paris June 23 2005

⁷ *Ibid.*

dinner, there was a piano in the house, and Michel was invited to play that very evening.

He recounts a different chain of events in his New York conversation with Ben Sidran, recorded for National Public Radio in September 1988.

When I met Charles I didn't know who he was. I stayed at his house for about a month. There was a piano in his studio. I have a rule - I never touch other people's instruments unless they ask me to. I don't like it when other people do that in my house....One day he said, "What do you do?" I said, "I play the piano." "Would you play something for me?" I said, "O.K." By that time it was a month without playing. I was dying to touch the ivories, so I did.⁸

At this point the accounts converge. After ten minutes, to Michel's consternation, Lloyd left the room - only to return with his tenor sax, an instrument he had hardly touched for years. The pair played until five in the morning, then continued two hours later. They played for three days non-stop, then Charles called his lawyers and manager and told them he had found the avatar of the piano and was re-starting his music career. Lloyd had retired at the height of his success with the hippie crowd in the Sixties. His quartet included a young Keith Jarrett and drummer Jack De Johnette, and was one of the few jazz groups to play concerts in the big rock stadiums. He disappeared from public life and pursued a very successful career as an estate agent, until meeting Michel. Ironically, Petrucciani knew nothing of Lloyd's erstwhile fame and was even ignorant of the talents of Keith Jarrett - a fact attributable in part to the influence of his father's taste.

It was only a few days later that Michel played a concert with Lloyd in Santa Barbara to 2,000 people. Soon he was appearing in the papers as the French wonderboy who had brought back the great master. Providence and talent had granted him stardom at an early age. Two months later he recorded his first album with Lloyd at the Montreux Jazz Festival and went on to play with him for five years. He was now married "Green Card-style" to his first wife Erlinda Montano. They, too, stayed together for five years.

⁸ Sidran, Ben. *Conversations with Michel*. September 1988 Go Jazz CD, LC 05082

Before the Lloyd recording Michel returned briefly to Paris to cut an album for Jean-Jacques Pussiau who ran Owl Records. *Toot Sweet* is a duo recording with the great alto player Lee Konitz – a fairly successful pairing which Petrucciani remembers little about.

In autumn 1982 Michel was back in Paris playing with Charles Lloyd at the Paris Jazz Festival

And there I am back in France, an American: I speak American, I look American, I arrive in sandals – we played bare-foot! I'd lost all my French ways...⁹

Petrucciani recalled this era as the greatest time of his life. Lloyd booked only the finest hotels and Michel saw a side of life that astonished and thrilled him. Travel was fascinating, plane flights a novelty, and discovering different countries and cultures a buzz. Fifteen years later Michel tells a different story.

These days, I'm ashamed to say I'm a little blasé...I still enjoy it, but there's not the same excitement. I went to Japan twenty-five times, and countless times to Montreux...I take too many planes and I get sick of them. Look out, I'm talking "career". Music's different. They pay me today to pack my bags in a way. My music is always free, but to pack my bags costs more and more, because I have less and less desire to do it.¹⁰

Michel continued to record for Owl Records with a solo date in October 1982 dedicated to Bill Evans – *Oracle's Destiny*. He was also the subject of a film made by Frank Cassenti, *Letter to Michel Petrucciani*, shown at the Cannes Film Festival the following year, the first of two films dedicated to him.¹¹ 1983 saw him voted "Jazzman of the Year" by the noted critic Leonard Feather, "Best European jazz musician" by the Italian Ministry of Culture, and in France he received the Django Reinhardt Prize.¹² He was still only twenty years of age. More albums followed, including the first American record *100 Hearts*. The solo disc gained a four-star review in *DownBeat* magazine and was produced by the celebrated entrepreneur George Wein, Michel's first U.S. agent. *Note 'N Notes*, a solo outing, with piano parts overdubbed, followed for Owl records.

⁹ Goaty, Frederic. cf. note 1

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Cassenti, Frank. *Lettre à Michel Petrucciani (film)*. France 1983
Willemsen, Roger. *Non-Stop (film)*. Germany 1996

¹² The Prix Django Reinhardt has been awarded yearly since 1955 for the best French jazz musician.

All through these years musicians took it in turn to carry Michel around – it even became something of an honour to be a carrier. There were good-natured jokes about forming a carriers club with such notable members as Lee Konitz, Jim Hall and Charles Lloyd.

Although Petrucciani returned to France regularly through the eighties, he felt more at home in the States and preferred the American way of thinking. It was a position that was to shift later in life when he went back to feeling more French and maintained apartments in both countries.

Though quick to praise Charles Lloyd for opening so many doors for him, Michel left him in 1985, claiming that he had been paid virtually nothing during the five years they worked together. After a brief spell with bassist Charlie Haden, he settled in the jazz capital of New York, where he began playing with bassist Ron McClure, having recorded a duo album with him for Owl Records, his last for the label.

In New York I really lived jazz, became part of the jazz world. The bars, night clubs, I hung out until five in the morning, talking, playing, jamming. It was THE great town, no more Californian country... I met everyone: Sonny Rollins...Gil Evans...Jack DeJohnette.¹³

A chance meeting with the great arranger Gil Evans led to a brief friendship. One day, Michel received a call from him wishing him luck with his music. He died a few hours later.

That really touched me...just to talk about it...Yet we never played together. I affected people, I think. Sometimes I tell myself I must be an interesting person...People have a certain admiration for me, as if they see I'm a lesson in courage...¹⁴

Later that year Petrucciani signed a contract with Blue Note, the most prestigious label in jazz, reborn under its new president Bruce Lundvall. He was the first European jazz artist to be signed to a major U.S. label, yet there were problems from the outset. Not only did Michel fail to read the contract and conditions properly – leading to major issues later – but Blue Note wanted to make a star of the young pianist and assigned a producer who had more experience in the pop music field. He asked

¹³ Goaty, Frederic. cf. note 1

¹⁴ Ibid.

Michel to record the theme from *Superman*. Michel refused and called in Lundvall to sort it out. *Pianism* sold around 15,000 in the U.S., a healthy debut, and featured Petrucciani's working trio of the time – Palle Danielsson on bass and drummer Eliot Zigmund who remembers the session well.

There's a funny story to that album. We went into the studio and did it in one day. It took them forever to get the sound – literally six hours. We were just playing at the end of the day and we put a couple of tracks down finally, after they got the sound. The whole idea of the album was to come back the next day and re-record it. And at the end of that one day – very frazzled, we were all ill-tempered. It's impossible if they take that long to get the sound, especially with a trio, And then the producer, this guy who was known for producing Barbara Streisand – how he ever became a jazz producer, I'll never know. He said, "Well, that's it, we got it. I looked at Michel and said "What?" As nice as that album is, it could have been much better. There's things on it...Michel loses the form on "Night and Day". There are a couple of things that are really glaring. We really should have come back the next day and redone it. So that was it for Palle. That was the last time I played with Palle and Michel. That was the way the trio ended. It was kind of a drag.

That was one of the haphazard things that happened – typical of what could have happened in that band. It felt at times there was nobody really in charge. Anything could happen and that was one of them. Nobody to say, No wait a second, we got to come back tomorrow. Michel just kind of accepted it, and it was strange because it was his first album for Blue Note. It should have been redone.¹⁵

In July 1986 Petrucciani recorded his second album for Blue Note, another trio record – but with a difference, this time featuring guitar and sax. By this time his reputation had grown to the extent that he was able to hold his own with two living legends of jazz, Jim Hall and Wayne Shorter. He calls it "an exceptional meeting". *Power of Three* was recorded live at the Montreux festival and released on video as well as CD, one of only four video recordings of Petrucciani available at the time of writing.

Michel Plays Petrucciani followed a year later and sees the pianist at his best in two conventional trio settings with guest guitarist John Abercrombie. Once again he is working with big names – bassists Gary Peacock and Eddie Gomez and drummers Roy Haynes and Al Foster. While the earlier trio recordings – *Live at the Village Vanguard*, recorded first,

¹⁵ Zigmund, Eliot. *Personal Interview*. New York June 7 2005

but released later, and *Pianism* - featured several Petrucciani originals, this album sees him going in a direction he maintained through much of his remaining career. There are no standards - all tunes are written by Michel. A long world tour with Peacock and Haynes followed in 1988.

Blue Note were ultimately successful in pushing Michel Petrucciani into a more commercial area, and several albums featured him on synthesizer as well as piano, one or two even including another synthesizer player and a percussionist. Some of his writing at this time bordered on the banal, with some tunes sounding more like TV themes. Petrucciani, himself, calls this his "easier" period, with more emphasis on the song and less on jazz, and a desire to make his music more accessible. He sees it as the start of his career as a writer of more listenable songs. The album *Music* from 1989 sold more than 90,000 copies in France and even more in the States. It proved to be a major turning point in his career and turned Michel into a star. Ironically, he had to fight hard some years later to obtain the royalties that were his due. He enlisted the help of Francis Dreyfus, owner of the Dreyfus label Petrucciani would switch to, and he received a cursory note of apology from Blue Note, together with a cheque that the pianist describes as "\$450,000 - not such a huge amount over seven years".

When one of his idols, McCoy Tyner, couldn't make a session organised by drummer Lenny White, Michel was asked to take his place. He was on tour in France at the time and was flown back to New York on the Concord, paid \$26,000 for three days work, then flown back to Paris. Influenced perhaps by *Music*, White uses two synthesizer players to colour the sound. The resulting CD and video, *The Manhattan Project*, is a mixed bag with only Wayne Shorter and Michel himself providing solos of substance.

Petrucciani waited two years before recording his next album for Blue Note *Playground*. Influenced by the sound of Miles Davis' *Tutu* album, Michel used the keyboards of Adam Holzman, who had just left Miles Davis' band. To strengthen the Miles connection, Michel wrote a witty collection of Miles phrases from his fusion period and called it "Miles Davis Licks"

Michel Petrucciani's second-to-last album for Blue Note was a highly regarded solo tribute to Duke Ellington called *Promenade with Duke*. Here we have a different project altogether with Michel interpreting such classic jazz repertoire as "Take the A Train", "Satin Doll" and "In a Sentimental Mood" in his own imaginative way. There is only one original – "One Night in the Hotel" – and it's one of his most lyrical and endearing compositions. He was now married again, this time to a classical pianist, Gilda Butta, who he credits with getting his left hand up to speed for the recording session (the marriage lasted only three months).

A final, unplanned, Blue Note disc came about through Petrucciani's insistence. 1991's *Live* documents the band he was touring with at the time and includes versions of already-recorded originals played by an unusual line-up of piano, electric keyboards, bass, drums and percussion.

3. The Dreyfus Years

No longer the sole European on the Blue Note roster, Petrucciani was becoming disenchanted with the label. He began negotiations in France with Francis Dreyfus who had recently formed his own label. In financial strife at the time, Petrucciani had even attempted suicide.

I threw myself down a staircase in a bar. I chucked my crutches away, and I passed out. With all my fragile bones, I didn't even break a rib... When I came to, nothing was wrong with me. I told myself God didn't want me to die. I wasn't ready... It wasn't my time. I picked myself up and things started to improve.¹⁶

Dreyfus helped Petrucciani to recover the royalties owed by Blue Note and the final phase of the pianist's recording career was spent with the Dreyfus label. The first release, *Marvellous*, was marred by some muddy writing and poor recording of a string quartet, though Petrucciani's playing is quite joyful at times and he seems to be enjoying playing with the ace rhythm team of Dave Holland and Tony Williams. He says himself that in retrospect he didn't feel quite ready to do the arrangements (he did them anyway) and if he had the chance he'd remix the string quartet and put

¹⁶ Goaty, Frederic. cf. note 1

them more to the forefront. He was particularly flattered that drummer Tony Williams liked his melodies.

Back in New York Michel rented a flat at the property owned by the wife of Victor Jones, drummer with his previous band, but he was soon back playing and recording in Paris at the Petit Journal Montparnasse with one of his idols, organist Eddie Louiss. Two duo albums were released from those 1983 sessions – *Conférence de Presse Vol. 1&2*, the title coming from Louiss' reluctance to talk to the press. They held a press conference, but played instead.

Although his recorded oeuvre is scattered throughout with solo piano sessions, Michel Petrucciani played an increasing number of solo concerts in the last decade of his life. Several are documented on the Dreyfus label, including a live double CD set *Au Théâtre des Champs-Élysées* in November 1994, which opens with a 40-minute tour de force "Medley of my Favourite Songs".

It's the complete concert, without any touch-ups. Nothing was changed, not a single note, unlike Keith Jarrett's *Koln Concert*. Through playing solo a lot the last few years, the worlds great classical concert halls have opened their doors to me. I'm even due to play at La Scala in Milan in 1999 – Jarrett's already played there, but that's normal... he has more talent than me ...and more years behind him... In these halls it's wonderful...there's a piano, no mike, you just play...¹⁷

Sadly, Michel Petrucciani never made it to La Scala. Eliot Zigmund believes that the reason behind the move towards solo concerts may have been financial as much as musical. Being a band leader became increasingly difficult in the nineties, if not economically impossible. Most horn players find rhythm sections in each city they play in. Though perhaps less fun, it's a lot easier to travel by yourself. Petrucciani played solo for the last six years of his life, interspersed with a few trio dates and a septet.

¹⁷ Goaty, Frederic. cf. note 1

It was perhaps inevitable that Petrucciani would eventually play and record with the one (living) French jazzman more celebrated than himself, violinist Stéphane Grappelli. *Flamingo* features the pair with George Mraz on bass and drummer Roy Haynes – a Dreyfus artist to this day. It's a straight ahead session with short solos and mostly well-loved standards. Not surprisingly, given its stellar cast, it has become one of the rare gold discs in jazz, selling more than 100,000 in France alone.

A much more ambitious project followed – the formation of a sextet to tour Europe and the States, and record some new originals. It was a constant battle for Michel, who first had to persuade his record company to go along with an economically uninviting venture. Veteran arranger and trombonist Bob Brookmeyer was recruited to write the arrangements. At first they were too long and involved, not giving the pianist enough chance to shine. Even the modified versions heard on *Both Worlds* have shorter solos than usual with Petrucciani less up front in the mix than on his other recordings. More remarkable, though, is the freshness of the compositions, all written by Michel in the two years prior to the recording. The earliest recorded version – 27 February 1997 – of any of these tunes is on *Solo-Live* (another solo album from a concert in Frankfurt released soon after his death). The lyrical appeal of these late compositions together with the off-hand charm of the arrangements, rather than any exceptional piano-playing, is what makes this album one of the most enjoyable of all Petrucciani's recordings. Mention should also be made of what would turn out to be Michel's last rhythm team – Anthony Jackson on electric bass and Steve Gadd on drums.

When I look at the sleeve of my first record, *Flash*, and the one for *Both Worlds* I take stock of the path I've travelled. In 1980, I wasn't working, I weighed 25 kilos, I knew nothing about life, I was a bit lost... In 1997 I'm more thick-set, I walk with crutches, I get by on my own, I'm in good health, I've learnt a few things... and even if I've lost some hair, I think I'm better looking today than I was then!¹⁸

As Petrucciani found himself taking more and more master classes while on tour, his dream was to found an international jazz school in the South of France, in the Drome region where he had been brought up. He

¹⁸ Goaty, Frederic. cf. note 1

had already put in some work, researching sponsors and seeking helpers, and his plan was for a school with about fifty students and eight teachers, beginning with piano, guitar, bass and drums. Sadly, he ran out of time.

Michel Petrucciani died on January 6th, 1999 in Manhattan from a pulmonary infection. His lung capacity was very small due to the shape of his chest and he had become too heavy. He put on a brave face, but always knew deep down that he would die from something brought on by his ailment, if not the disease itself. In the twenty-odd years of his career he achieved more than many musicians do in a lifetime. He was survived by his mother, father and brothers, and son Alexandre, who was born with the same disease (Aldo Romano is his godfather) and stepson Rachid.

Several accolades were bestowed on him during his lifetime. In 1994 he was made a knight of the Legion of Honour in Paris. He is buried in Paris' famous Père Lachais cemetery next to Chopin. French President Jacques Chirac paid tribute to him, praising his ability to "renew jazz [*an exaggerated claim*], giving himself up to his art with passion, courage and musical genius" After his death a postage stamp was issued in commemoration by the French Post Office as part of a short series dedicated to jazz greats – he is in the company of Duke Ellington, Charlie Parker and Miles Davis. A theatre in Montélimar has changed its name to "Théâtre Michel Petrucciani".

In retrospect, it seems he was lucky to live as long as he did, lucky to receive such acclaim while still alive, yet there are some, like Eliot Zigmund who feel, had he taken better care of himself, he would have lasted longer.

He smoked cigarettes, he drank, he did other things. He lived really large in ways larger than he had to. Maybe at the end of his life, with all the acclaim that he got, he wasn't trying so hard to be a character, There were times when I felt the whole thing was a bit much. Slow down, man. Everything's cool.¹⁹

¹⁹ Zigmund, Eliot. cf. note 14

PART TWO - personality

...he wanted to be understood. But sometimes I would tell him, you please people anyway. You have a personality like that. They love you, whatever you do.²⁰

The personality of all great players is revealed in their music to a greater or lesser degree. To what extent does Michel Petrucciani's individuality come out in his playing, and on what scale did his daily battle with pain affect his performances?

To answer these questions it is helpful to look back at his early days and some of the factors that contributed to the formation of such a talent. In many ways his upbringing was a simple one. His father Tony, a strict, but fair man, introduced him to music at an early age and he was encouraged to participate in the family jam sessions, though on a fairly controlled basis. At first he played drums – his mother in particular deciding that, as far as Michel was concerned, the piano was for classical music.

I was having classical lessons so I didn't really have "the right" to play jazz or anything else on the piano. My mother insisted I play only classical. So my Dad had the great idea of putting me on the drums. He'd put together a little kit to suit my size, which also allowed me to exercise my legs. I was having osteopathic therapy and enjoying playing jazz with my brothers and father at the same time.²¹

His rapid development at the piano, though certainly attributable in part to his enthusiasm for the instrument and his natural musical talent, was also a direct consequence of his disease putting him under house arrest. While his peers were enjoying the big outdoors, Michel was confined to spending hours in the house, and for him, the most satisfying way of passing the time was at the keyboard. Later he would comment that the difference between someone talented and untalented is that a talented person loves what he's doing so much that he can spend ten hours doing the same thing and feel that only ten minutes have passed. The untalented person will spend ten minutes and feel it's more like ten

²⁰ Romano, Aldo. cf. note 6

²¹ Goaty, Frederic. cf. note 1

hours. For Petrucciani the piano was never a chore, it was his life and he could spend ten or twelve hours in front of it without even realising.

He grew up quickly, rarely experiencing the company of his peers. He was unable to attend school, receiving home tuition from a series of tutors who quickly experienced his mischievous, even manipulative, qualities.

As for school work, I had a teacher at home who came two or three times a week. It didn't work out at all: bad teachers and no contact with other pupils. Those teachers ended up leaving because we didn't get on, or else they stayed because I'd tamed them completely. A few even went as far as doing my homework for me.²²

His progress at the piano was mirrored on a larger scale in the speed with which his life evolved. Most of his time was spent in the company of adults and older brothers. Once he had left home, things moved even faster, helped partly by often being in the right place at the right time. He took little time to establish popularity with the jazz public, who, it must be said, were doubtless also fascinated by the sight of such a slight figure producing such memorable music.

In his obituary, Pascal Anquetil refers to Petrucciani's "hands of iron and arms of steel". His percussive style displayed a great energy and total physical involvement with the instrument, as if he were trying to tame the piano in a battle between David and Goliath. In the later solo recordings in particular there are some moments where notes are hit with such force that we are made aware of the mechanics of the piano, almost uncomfortably so. Driven by daily pain in his muscles and joints, he overcompensated at times, striking too hard and losing tonal quality.

Since childhood days Petrucciani had decided not to fraternize with suffering, not to make a meal of it. "You never get used to pain. You just carry on or die."²³ Childhood friend Edouard Detmer recalls the lengths Michel went to in order to distract himself. To relieve the pain he would soak in a scaldingly hot bath. "You couldn't put your finger in. It was the only thing that calmed him down. The boiling water made him forget his other aches and pains"²⁴

²² Goaty, Frederic. cf. note 1

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Detmer, Edouard. cf. note 4.

In spite of this, Petrucciani never complained, accepting his lot philosophically, even stoically, and showing great courage. Indeed, both Zigmund and Romano paint pictures of someone eager to please who wanted to be loved, to reach out to his audience with his playing. His switch to a more accessible, singable music (first heard in the big-selling album *Music*) bears witness to this need to communicate on a wider level, to have his music appreciated by a larger audience. "A lot of jazz musicians play too selfishly" he said. "In the end, they don't want to be understood. It's only them and a "happy few" who matter."²⁵

Not everyone agreed whole-heartedly with Michel's approach. Drummer Aldo Romano was sometimes frustrated by the safeness of some of his material, particularly in the earlier days. "They love you whatever you do", he told him. "So why don't you try to be more...adventurous, take more risks with your material. Try to do something different instead of always playing "C Jam Blues". Try to have a repertoire with more of your own music."²⁶

Romano's own compositions, (heard in albums like *Intervista*,²⁷ and, more recently, *The Jazzpar Prize*,)²⁸ possess that same simple, folk-like lyricism with the emphasis on melody that can be found in many Petrucciani songs, especially the later tunes – "Brazilian Like" and "Guadeloupe" come to mind. Romano was, in the end, won over. "Later he wrote some beautiful things. You can always write technically, chords and things, but to have a melody that makes sense, it's not so easy."²⁹

Michel Petrucciani decided at an early age to live life to the full while he could. A few days before he died he spent New Year's Eve with friends at the Village Vanguard, not leaving until dawn. "Speed – I have no choice in the matter. It's my life that's going by so quickly."³⁰

By most people's standards, he led a highly adventurous life. He was not one to settle for long in the same place or stay long with a partner.

²⁵ Anquetil, Pascal. *Romantic but not blue*. www.irma.asso.fr/cij/articles/petrucciani.html

²⁶ Romano, Aldo. cf. note 6

²⁷ Romano, Aldo. *Intervista*. CD Verve 537 196

²⁸ Romano, Aldo. *The Jazzpar Prize*. CD Enja 9164

²⁹ Romano, Aldo. cf. note 6

³⁰ Anquetil, Pascal. cf. note 25

I rarely stay more than five years with the same woman. At a certain point I get bored. I always need renewing, emotionally. That's also why I'm always forming new bands, why I move around a lot.³¹

Change was essential to him – whenever he felt a routine being established, he would break it. Getting bored easily, he kept moving the furniture around at home. He claimed it was the same with music. Changing his bands – shifting from solo to septet to trio – and renewing his material by composing fresh songs – one thing he never tired of – was his way of staving off the weariness that was creeping into his daily life, of distracting him from his constant physical struggles.

He was aware of the paradoxes in his character. Unable or unwilling to sustain a romantic relationship for too long, he was nevertheless a very faithful friend and maintained strong connections with the women he had lived with, notably the mother of his son Alexandre. Eliot Zigmund called him “a psychologist’s dream” because of the unpredictability of his character and the heavy burden he had to deal with. Generous and loving in nature, he could also be domineering and manipulative. He liked to carry an air of mystery about him. “You never could tell if what he was saying was really true, or half-true, or not true at all. There was always some intrigue going on.”³²

Many women were attracted to Michel, wanting to protect and take care of him due to his apparent fragility. Yet he would often dominate them and have expectations that most people might consider unreasonable.

There was always a feeling you had to approach him with kid gloves and give him a lot of slack...just for who he was and what he'd gone through. I've heard him say things to people that if he was a normal size person, they would have beaten the hell out of him. He'd get away with it. Especially if he had some alcohol under his belt. He could do amazing things.³³

Edouard Detmer, his childhood friend, recalls Michel's unpredictability. Detmer ran a record label, Anais, in the Eighties, and was able to

³¹ Goaty, Frederic. cf. note 1

³² Zigmund, Eliot. cf. note 14

³³ Zigmund, Eliot. cf. note 14

persuade Petrucciani to play on a few tracks, though he was never sure if and when it would happen.

We recorded two albums together³⁴– I'd arrange my schedule to accommodate him. He didn't play on everything, but sometimes he'd arrive at the last minute, quite unexpectedly, saying "Hi, guys, it's me." We were pretty loose about it.³⁵

CONCLUSION

Any consideration of Michel Petrucciani's greatness as a player has to take into account the ailment that dogged his career, and whether he would have achieved such fame as a man of normal stature. Even five years after his death it remains difficult to divorce his physical struggle from the musical evidence that Petrucciani left behind. Hearing the piano keys hit with such clarity and force cannot help but remind us of those large hands extending from his relatively bulky torso contrasting so dramatically with such thin, ineffective legs dangling in mid-air.

Many of the words that describe Michel's personality can equally apply to his playing. His enormous appetite for life spilled out on to the keys. He could be, in turn, playful, spontaneous, joyful, serious, humorous, tender, direct, romantic, dominating, crafty, bawdy and self-indulgent. All these characteristics emerge at one time or another in his music.

Petrucciani was sometimes guilty of excess, falling into the trap of grandstanding or playing to the gallery. The rapid tempos can be overdone and played for shock value. Quotes from standards are not always used appropriately.³⁶ Passages of repeated notes or licks, rising and falling patterns, and rapid sixteenth note lines go on for too long, diluting their effect. Comparing his playing to that of Keith Jarrett in his book *88 The Giants of Jazz Piano*, Bob Doerschuk argues, that "these

³⁴ Detmer, Edouard. Cf. note 4. When asked how to get hold of these recordings, Detmer replied, "I don't have any left. Nor does Michel. They were all given away or sold at concerts."

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ A video of a trio performance in Japan in 1988 of Petrucciani's "One For Us" shows Petrucciani quoting the first phrases of "Caravan" in a rhythmic duet section with Roy Haynes on the hi-hat. It has no connection with what has gone before and seems superfluous and irrelevant.

excesses rose from a joy that was absent from Jarrett's solemn marathons and much of the rest of jazz piano as well."³⁷

Like most great musicians, not all of his recordings are of five-star quality. They are, after all, aural snapshots of how he was feeling at the time. Guitarist Jim Hall felt he, himself, had a certain fragility in common with him, both being affected by what was going on around them. They could sound great when the environment was conducive, but relatively mediocre in less favourable surroundings. Discussing Petrucciani's final trio with Anthony Jackson and Steve Gadd, drummer Eliot Zigmund says

It was interesting music. It wasn't terribly commercial. I think he was just following his instincts...which is the way he went through life. I think Michel basically followed his nose. He was a very instinctive person and a very instinctive player.³⁸

The combination of his disease and his desire to live life so intensely must have been a distraction from the music on occasions. Though, in his earlier days, he occasionally missed gigs through staying up all night, he maintained right to the end a phenomenal energy. Edouard Detmer remembers that as the years went by and Michel remained alive and well, exceeding all earlier expectations, his friends started believing he would live on and on.

I've seen him with friends who went off on tour with him for six months. They came back and needed three months to recover. Michel, on the other hand, took off the next day for another six months, leaving his coterie asking themselves how he does it. He eats for four, drinks, plays around. He never seems unwell, and has such abnormal energy.³⁹

A year or two before his death it was becoming clear to Michel that his body could not continue to cope with the daily grind of touring and performing and he was putting into place alternate plans for his future, notably the jazz school he intended to create.

Further chapters will show that his later work, while still technically impressive, was beginning to show signs of a certain lassitude, with some self-parody creeping in and a less complex style of soloing developing.

³⁷ Doerschuk, Robert L. *88 The Giants of Jazz Piano*. San Francisco Backbeat books 2001. ch.54 p214

³⁸ Zigmund, Eliot. cf. note 14

³⁹ Detmer, Edouard. Cf. note 4.

Solos were becoming shorter (*Both Worlds*) and he was turning more and more to composition.

I always play for people. I hope that after every concert they go away happy and want to come back. My music isn't intellectual; it's sensual and full of song. Enchanting. I want it to beat with the heart and to be simple. But, just because people like my music doesn't make it in any way commercial. I'm just trying harder and harder to apply the lesson of the great masters – less is more.⁴⁰



Fig. 3

⁴⁰ Goaty, Frederic. cf. note 1

Chapter Three

THE INFLUENCE OF BILL EVANS

Introduction

While it is the goal of all serious jazz musicians to eventually develop their own voice, it is generally accepted that to achieve this they must first copy past masters.

It takes several years for influences to be thoroughly absorbed and for a personal style to emerge. Most jazz players and teachers the world over agree on the inestimable value of transcribing a favourite musician's solo note for note, then attempting to play along with it. Many of the greats attest to this 'training' method as a way of developing one's playing while internalising the musical language passed down by the great soloists. Since the bebop era jazz has been the genre of music which most allows for individual expression, yet rare are the jazz musicians who arrive on the scene 'fully formed' without going through the slow, but fascinating process of gradual evolution from a style heavily influenced by one or more established players to a more personal synthesis, and then on to a way of playing that can be identifiably one's own, to sound 'not quite like anybody else'.

When listening to a new player it is helpful to be able to have some reference points, to see the 'bigger picture' and relate his or her playing to what we have heard before. Players, listeners and especially writers would often be at a loss to describe what they have heard without the 'influences' crutch, without the ability to detect phrases, licks, even whole passages of improvisation that are reminiscent of an already established player or, more likely, one of the great soloists on the same instrument.

In this chapter I will discuss the alleged influence of pianist Bill Evans on Michel Petrucciani by examining the latter's recordings and his own comments as well as the viewpoints of other musicians and writers in order to determine whether the commonly-held belief that Petrucciani

was a member of the Evans-school of piano playing can be substantiated.

1. Differing Views

Setting aside the impact of non-pianists – the first great soloist he studied was the guitarist Wes Montgomery – it becomes clear that by far the most common influence on Michel Petrucciani, according to the press, was pianist Bill Evans. Almost all biographical references and obituaries, many of the countless magazine articles, and even most of the early record reviews mention him as a primary influence:

It's very seductive-full of Bill Evans-like romanticism but with at times more dense harmonic features and greater tension¹

While he is an adoring admirer of Bill Evans...²

Anyone who writes about Petrucciani can't help but note the influences of Bill Evans and McCoy Tyner³

Petrucciani's early recordings for Blue Note and Owl were occasionally too much in thrall to the august modal motifs of his idol. Bill Evans.⁴

The jazz internet site *allaboutjazz* even cites Petrucciani in their biography of Bill Evans, lumping him in with far more Evans-inspired players than Michel ever consistently was:

(Bill Evans) spawned a school of "Bill Evans style" or "Evans inspired" pianists, who include some of the best known artists of our day, including Michel Petrucciani, Andy Laverne, Richard Beirach, Enrico Pieranunzi and Warren Bernhardt.⁵

Yet a quite different viewpoint emerged in discussions I had with two of his drummers, the American Eliot Zigmund and the Italian Aldo Romano.

P.B.: Bill Evans was a great influence on him. He's always claimed that.

¹ Cordle, Owen. Downbeat Sept 1985

² Cook, Richard. *Penguin Guide to Jazz on Compact Disc*. Fourth Edition. Penguin Books 1998

³ McLennan, Doug. www.salon.com

⁴ Robson, Britt [www. Citypages.com](http://www.Citypages.com)

⁵ www.allaboutjazz.com

Eliot Zigmund: He's claimed that, but you know I didn't hear it that much in the music. Michel's rhythmic touch was actually easier to play with than Bill's, so in that sense he was more coming out of McCoy Tyner...you know, the really hard swinging piano players. Bill never felt like that when you played with him...and he (M.P.) didn't have Bill's...well he did have a good harmonic sense, but not the way Bill did. Nobody did really.

Michel was a much funkier piano player than Bill was. You could see that Bill knew a lot about music, intellectually. He knew a lot about classical music, he'd played a lot of classical music. He'd taken a degree in classical music. You didn't get that sense from Michel at all. I got the sense that Michel was influenced more by blues-oriented players, more of the black tradition...⁶

P.B.: Do you think Bill Evans influenced him a lot?

Aldo Romano: I don't think so. It was just a moment, but that was not his background. It was more Oscar Peterson, many influences. He was pretending for a while. He was more bluesy. His big thing was Oscar Peterson at the beginning and some Errol Garner. You know, his left hand. Some of it, because he loved him. He was not trying to be a poet in his playing, Michel. He was more direct, trying to attract the people.⁷

Along with his early experiences playing in the family trio (with father Tony on guitar and brother Louis on bass) there seems little doubt that Petrucciani formed his style through the most common route - listening to recordings. Later he must surely have been affected by what he heard in the U.S., though there is no written or recorded evidence to suggest that his playing was changed by any other piano player. Drummer Aldo Romano recalls:

When I met him, he didn't know Keith Jarrett for example. And Keith had already played with Charles Lloyd and made many albums. Michel, he knew nothing (*of him*). Very strange.

P.B.: Perhaps that's his father's tastes.

Yes, he was obliged to listen to standards in a traditional way and study that. So at the end I would tell him - when Brad Mehldau came out. I said "You should listen to him - he's great". And he didn't want to. Maybe he was scared to be disturbed.⁸

His playing is more likely to have evolved through contact with the musicians he played with, particularly the bassists and drummers. While

⁶ Zigmund Eliot. *Personal interview*. June 7 2005

⁷ Romano Aldo. *Personal interview*. June 24 2005

⁸ Romano Aldo. *Personal interview*. June 24 2005

little can be made from Petrucciani's description of a meeting with the great pianist,

In July 1980, just before recording *Flash* I took part in the "Grande-Motte" festival. I played with Jaume, Guerin, Bernard Lubat and my brother Louis. I was introduced to pianist Bill Evans, one of my idols. I didn't say much to him because of my English...⁹

we cannot ignore the fact that Petrucciani played in early and mid-career with some of the same sidemen as Bill Evans: Eddie Gomez, Gary Peacock, Jim Hall, even Aldo Romano, and particularly Eliot Zigmund who filled the drum chair with Petrucciani's American trio for some years, and who throws an interesting light on the difference between playing with the two pianists.

I loved playing with Bill, but I caught Bill near the end of his career, but I was with Michel near the beginning of his career. It was really a more exciting experience playing with Michel. Anything could happen, it was very exciting. I got to solo a lot. We played a lot of up-tempo stuff. The audiences went crazy...¹⁰

Petrucciani himself did not discuss his influences at any great length in the several interviews with him that have been published. In one of the last that he gave¹¹ he talks about exchanging five favourite albums with his trio bandmates (Steve Gadd and Anthony Jackson). Last to make the list after Ravel's Piano Concerto in G, Ella and Louis' *Porgy and Bess*, Wes Montgomery's *Bumpin'*, and Prince's *Diamonds and Pearls* is *Montreux* 1970 by Bill Evans. He was eight years old when his brother gave him the record, but at that point he was an "unconditional fan" of Art Tatum, Bud Powell and Oscar Peterson. At first he totally rejected Evans' music, but later the album became a favourite.

It is on record that he told guitarist Jim Hall to "call me Bill"¹², but on the whole he refers to Evans as just one of the pianists he drew inspiration from. He told journalist Pascal Anquetil:

⁹ Goaty, Frederic. *Interview with Michel Petrucciani*. Jazz Magazine 1997 (translated into English by Phil Broadhurst). Also website: www.jazzmagazine.com/interviews/Dauj/petrucciani.htm

¹⁰ Zigmund Eliot. *Personal interview*. June 7 2005

¹¹ Anquetil, Pascal. *Interview with Michel Petrucciani*. Jazzman. No.38. July 1998

¹² Cook, Richard and Morton, Brian. *The Penguin Guide to Jazz on CD*. Fourth Edition. U.K. Penguin Books 1988

P.A.: Your piano playing has evolved a lot and freed itself from your first influences, mainly Bill Evans and McCoy Tyner

M.P.: Like all young musicians, I copied at first. I imitated Oscar Peterson, Erroll Garner, Bill Evans. I worked tenaciously to find the right notes and create pretty passages.¹³

In the early and mid-period years there are several instances of Petrucciani recording tunes associated with Bill Evans, though it's mostly the standards – he rarely played Evans' own compositions, with the exception of Bill's first tune, "Very Early".

M.P.: I was sort of the musical director with Charles (Lloyd): it was me for example who pushed him into playing Bill Evans' "Very Early", which wasn't in his repertoire at all. I made him work on that piece for six months. He could never get the chords in the right place, he kept getting lost. He really liked it, but said he preferred playing modal...¹⁴

2. Some recordings (*refer to enclosed CD 1 for excerpts and tracks*)

While we will discover overt references to Evans in the early work, can we detect the same current running through Petrucciani's complete oeuvre or do the echoes of Evans die out as the young pianist finds his own voice? Is it fair to say that he was tarred with the Evans brush early in his career and it stuck?

One of the clearest examples of the Evans influence is found in Petrucciani's second solo album *Oracle's Destiny*, recorded in October 1982 and dedicated to Bill Evans. Three tracks from this date, were re-issued in 2000 on the Owl Records compilation *Days of Wine and Roses*. Reviewing it in *Downbeat*, critic Doug Ramsay says: "On "Eugenia" he often sounds like Bill Evans overdubbed on two pianos".¹⁵ This is a sly reference to the breakthrough recording *Conversations With Myself* where Evans overdubs himself twice to give the effect of three pianos playing at once (e.g. 1:12-2:00 of "Hey There")¹⁶. Originally on the 1984 album *Note 'n Notes*, "Eugenia" is a Petrucciani original whose overdubbed piano, waltz tempo, rich melodic passages (2:50-3:23,

¹³ Anquetil, Pascal. *Interview with Michel Petrucciani*. Jazzman. No.38. July 1998

¹⁴ Goaty, Frederic cf. note 9

¹⁵ Ramsay, Doug. *Jazz Times* November 2002

¹⁶ See enclosed CD 1 track 1

3:30-5:20), descending patterns (5:43-47) and final rising whole-tone sequence (8:28-57)¹⁷ all recall Evans, though Petrucciani's playing is far more ebullient.

"I Just Say Hello" is an original ballad from *Cold Blues* with bassist Ron McLure. While there is a direct Evans lick, (a short downward sequence at 3:51-53)¹⁸, Petrucciani's playing bears little resemblance to the way Evans plays a ballad – it is far less richly textured harmonically. Early in the piece he builds right-hand tremolos more in the style of Erroll Garner, an earlier influence.

Another Petrucciani composition "Mike Pee" (originally from *Oracle's Destiny*) is at times an overt homage to Evans. While the title is Petrucciani's own Anglicised nickname and could imply that he is asserting his own independence, he quotes freely from Evans' vocabulary. The piece opens with rubato explorations for almost three minutes but at 2:48 (-2:58)¹⁹ the Evans allusions begin, starting with a quote from "Granadas" from *Danzas españolas* by Granados which opens the album Bill Evans recorded with a Symphony Orchestra playing classical themes. This quote recurs at 4:18 (-4:83).²⁰ The Evans tune "Very Early", which Petrucciani often played with Charles Lloyd, appears at 3:12 (-3:23) and re-appears at 5:05 (-5:20)²¹ where he solos over part of the sequence. "Someday My Prince Will Come" puts in an appearance for a few seconds at 3:22 (-3:38), coming back at 5:20 (-5:38),²² followed by a lovely reharmonisation of the first few bars of Evans' "Waltz For Debby" (5:53 – 6:10)²³

After further ruminations on his own theme, Petrucciani plays a final run which is a direct imitation of Evans (9:31).²⁴ He changes his touch to a much softer tone and runs up the keyboard echoing the slightly

¹⁷ See enclosed CD 1 tracks 2-5

¹⁸ Ibid. track 6

¹⁹ Ibid. track 7

²⁰ Ibid. track 8

²¹ Ibid. tracks 9 and 10

²² Ibid. tracks 11 and 12

²³ Ibid. track 13

²⁴ Ibid. track 14

jaunty rhythmic eighth-note feel typical of Evans, bringing to mind certain phrases Evans plays on his album with the Symphony Orchestra.

Further Evans-like phrases can be heard in "Three Forgotten Magic Words" from *Live at the Village Vanguard*, notably the right-hand thirds at the very start (0:00 -0:45) and, in the solo, the ascending sequence at 1:25- 1:32; the ornament at 2:22; and the pattern at 4:12-4:15.²⁵ Petrucciani plays sequences in thirds at 3:00-3:12, but develops them in his own way in a more robust and exaggerated syncopation at 3:19-3:41.²⁶ At 4:39-5:05 he executes a longer passage with left-hand chords in unison with the right-hand line, a Bill Evans trademark, but with less delicate balance and a heavier left hand than Evans. This is closely followed by a line leading to a rising sequence played with an Evans-like rhythmic jauntness at 5:12-5:22.²⁷

His approach to the head on the solo version of the same tune from *100 Hearts* bears a striking resemblance to Evans' style as he moves into tempo at 0:19-1:00.²⁸ The rush through the harmonies, the rapidly changing dynamics as a series of quieter chords are followed by melodic phrases where the upper notes are played fortissimo, and the prevalence of descending chromatic movement in the root notes all echo the stylistic devices found in many introductions played by Evans, particularly to his original compositions. If nothing else, this reveals that of all Petrucciani's originals this comes closest to evoking Evans' spirit.

3. Comparisons – Parallels and Opposites

In his book *Bill Evans: Portrait of the Artist at the Piano* the Italian pianist Enrico Pieranunzi discusses Evans' lyrical qualities:

Never before in the history of jazz had a pianist managed to 'sing' on his instrument, to tell a love story, with the same impact as a saxophonist or trumpeter. In that respect Evans was a revolutionary – in his ability to transform a well-established tradition, the piano previously considered as an imitator of the two dominant solo voices – the trumpet and the saxophone)²⁹

²⁵ Ibid. tracks 15-18

²⁶ Ibid. tracks 19 and 20

²⁷ Ibid. tracks 21 and 22

²⁸ Ibid. track 23

²⁹ Pieranunzi, Enrico. *Bill Evans: Portrait of the Artist at the Piano*. Rouge profound p 66 2001

Pieranunzi identifies the following factors that formed part of Evans' quiet revolution and which became essential elements in the jazz piano language thereafter:

- Rootless voicings
- Close position chords often containing a minor second interval within and creating harmonic overtones
- Frequent use of passing chords to enrich the harmonic palate
- The adapting of a chord voicing to suit different registers of the piano
- Developing melodies by treating the piano as an orchestra, using five or six voices, allotted, in part, to the right hand
- Use of a legato touch brought in from the classical realm
- Highlighting of the melodic line with great care placed on the weight of the hand on the keyboard in the tradition of the great concert pianists.³⁰

These important elements of Evans' language and technique are all evident to some degree in Petrucciani's playing, as they are in the majority of jazz pianists that followed Evans, notably Herbie Hancock and Keith Jarrett. The last element is particularly relevant to Petrucciani and underlines one of the more obvious parallels with Evans – the clarity of the line and evenness of the touch. Like Evans, his lines often 'sing' in a lyrical, romantic manner, yet their rhythmic drive is stronger and more percussive, as confirmed by drummers who played with him (See above).

Further examination of some of the similarities between the two pianists reveals the following:

Evans plays "My Foolish Heart" in A major, a key considered as uncomfortable by most pianists who generally prefer to play in 'flat' keys, rather than 'sharp' keys. Pieranunzi points out that Evans enjoyed

³⁰ Pieranunzi, Enrico. *Bill Evans: Portrait of the Artist at the Piano*. Rouge profound pp.106-7 2001

playing in these harder keys because they inspire less automatic choices in the soloist, who is less prone to resort to technically easy phrases which fall under the fingers. The ear is forced to focus completely in the sense that it can no longer count on what the hands 'already know' through having played a phrase countless times in a favourite key.³¹ Petrucciani took this further by composing many of his tunes in sharp keys – no less than 40% of his tunes in the songbook³² are in sharp keys (counting only the 61 out of 79 which have a definite tonality)

Novelty per se never attracted Evans. He was not concerned with 'new' forms of expression, preferring a more 'interior' development - a certain liberty contained within the existing rules of improvisation which could be renovated but not abandoned. His objective was to go to the very heart of his own ideas in an attempt to translate into sound what he felt deep within.

Some of this can be said of Petrucciani also. It is a commonly-held view that history will see Petrucciani as a consolidator, even populariser, of existing forms rather than an innovator.³³

Like Evans before him and Jarrett today, Petrucciani had a lifelong love affair with the piano, maintaining a healthy scepticism, if not complete aversion, to the electric keyboard. He played only the acoustic piano, not even recording the odd tune on Fender Rhodes as Evans was persuaded to do. When he decided to use electric keyboards on the aforementioned albums, his role was minimal with Adam Holzman taking up the bulk of the electric duties and Petrucciani taking all the solos on acoustic piano.³⁴

³¹ Pieranunzi, Enrico. cf. note 30 p. 74

³² Michel Petrucciani Songbook: *Compositions Originales*. Francis Dreyfus Music. Paris 2000.

³³ Doerschuk, Robert L. *88: The Giants of Jazz Piano*. ch.54 pp214-217

³⁴ A video of the Manhattan Project - admittedly not a project Petrucciani had any hand in conceiving - reveals two keyboard players standing in line at the back of the band looking - and on occasion, sounding - rather awkward. Since Petrucciani's piano solos are the most worthwhile thing about the whole concept, it is clear he made the right choice in avoiding the electrics.

Alongside these interesting parallels, however, there is plenty of evidence to suggest Petrucciani's music was heading in a different direction and the above similarities are superficial at best.

Like Evans, Petrucciani wrote new compositions throughout his career, but included far more of them in concert towards the end. His career as a solo pianist was also developing rapidly at the time of his death – Evans rarely, if ever, performed solo concerts, limiting his solo excursions to the odd album – “Alone” – and long intros before the entry of bass and drums, like his classic arrangement with his final trio of “Nardis”. Similarly, we do not find Petrucciani limiting his repertoire to the tried and true plus one or two new. As his career progressed, so did his writing.

Whereas Evans' career stalled mid-period with little development, a withdrawal into himself, and a virtually static repertoire, Petrucciani's artistic progress was steadier and more even. Although his desire to reach a wider public with more commercial material was evident in best-selling albums for Blue Note like *Music* and *Playground*, he continued to search for new material. When revisiting favourite tunes, he would apply fresh approaches to playing them and avoid any staleness. “Besame Mucho” (see appendix) is treated quite differently each time, and not only in the recording studio. Posthumous releases taken from live concerts show a variety of approaches, even when there was no question at the time of the music being released commercially.

In trying to throw light on Jimmy Giuffre's view that “Bill Evans is a more important musician than Charlie Parker” writer Don Nelsen says

Evans, like Parker, was able to express tenderness, love, anger, fear, happiness and despair – in a word: beauty. Many people feel these emotions, but don't have the technical means of expressing and communicating them. Others have the technical skills, but seem unable to get to the heart of their feelings. There are very

few who can intuitively grasp what is universal and have the means to express it"³⁵

While few would claim that Petrucciani was of equal stature (as a musician) to Bill Evans, these words bring about the question of Petrucciani's reputation as a great communicator. There can be little doubt that, brushing aside for the moment the question of his disease and its affect on both him and his public, Petrucciani had the one gift that all musicians wish for, that of communicating successfully on a variety of levels with his audience, be they patriotic Frenchmen proud of their local boy or trendy New Yorkers visiting the Village Vanguard for the first time.

"The interactive, chamber-music concept of the Bill Evans Trios"³⁶ was not explored in any great depth by Petrucciani. The Evans influence is there in the harmonic voicings and even at times in the right-hand 'touch' and the ability to make the piano 'sing', but not in the holistic trio approach. We do not really get the same feeling of an intimate three-way equal conversation in Petrucciani's trios that we do in Evans' first and last.

4. Finding his own voice

As Petrucciani's playing and reputation grew in stature, he began to shake off his early influences and while Evans' impact lingered a little longer, it, too, waned in the mid- to later years. I have found very little in his later period that can be linked back to Evans on anything but a superficial level, other than the downward broken arpeggios and some of the inner harmonic movement in the two-minute solo intro to "Home" from *Trio In Tokyo*.

³⁵ Nelsen, Don. Liner notes for *Trio '65*

³⁶ Pettinger, Peter. *Bill Evans: How My Heart Sings*. Yale University Press. p. x 1998

I cannot agree with reviewer Jon Andrews who states in his review of *Both Worlds* in *Downbeat*:³⁷ "he doesn't disguise his admiration for Bill Evans' music, particularly on "Petite Louise"."³⁸

The resemblance is slight and shallow. The left-hand arpeggios do take us back to Evans – but he often favoured downward arpeggio movement in the left hand which Petrucciani ignores. The harmonic scheme includes much II V movement and stepwise motion in the roots which could be said to echo some of Evans' writing. It is nothing more than an indication of the all-pervading influence that Evans had on the development of jazz piano, rather than a specific homage on the part of Petrucciani. After all, Petrucciani had already dedicated an entire solo piano album – *Oracle's Destiny* – to Evans early in his career. The melody makes great use of transposition, as did several Evans tunes, but this is a common tool of melodic, lyrical writing. By this time Petrucciani had long since shaken off his earlier influences such as Evans and moved on to his own personal synthesis.

Writing in *allaboutjazz.com* Aaron Rogers gets it even more wrong:

Bill Evans wrote in his liner notes for his Grammy Award-winning album "Alone" that "to understand music most profoundly one only has to be listening well." If you listen to an Evans album and follow it with *So What*,³⁹ you will understand well that Evans' music lived in the small but profound hands of Michel Petrucciani. *allaboutjazz.com*⁴⁰

This is nonsense – there is no suggestion of Evans here at all and the author is clearly not "listening well", confusing the aural evidence with the fact that Evans is the pianist on the original recording of "So What". The chord voicings are simpler, the melodic lines bear no resemblance to anything Evans might play, the solo builds in volume unlike most Evans solos, and the tune is one Evans rarely played. At best we can detect a hint of McCoy Tyner in the left-hand quartal voicings, but most pianists playing "So What" can be superficially linked to Tyner in the same way. Here Petrucciani is his own man.

³⁷ Andrews, Jon. *Downbeat*. July 1998

³⁸ See enclosed CD 1 track 24

³⁹ *Trio in Tokyo*, track 8

⁴⁰ Rogers, Aaron. www.allaboutjazz.com

pianists playing "So What" can be superficially linked to Tyner in the same way. Here Petrucciani is his own man.

Conclusion

...his extrovert attack places Evans' harmonic profundity in a setting that will energize listeners who find Evans too slow and quiet to respond to⁴¹.

The convenience of the Evans comparison remains, at least in the press and on the internet. Invariably it is seen in a positive light.

For all the comparisons to Bill Evans, Petrucciani had found his own style, which was more aggressive, fuller and sunnier than that of his idol and incorporated secondary influences as disparate as McCoy Tyner and Debussy.⁴²

In his review of a late work, the solo album *Au Theatre Des Champs-Elysees*, Doug McLennan starts with a bold assumption:

Anyone who writes about Petrucciani can't help but note the influences of Bill Evans and McCoy Tyner; the Evans voicings and sensibilities are sometimes so baldfacedly direct they're spooky. But no phrase is allowed to get too comfortably familiar, because Petrucciani inevitably swerves sideways with an odd chord choice or a flash of unexpected notes, serving a crucial function – he pays off his influences but never lets you forget he's the one calling the shots.⁴³

Dr. Herb Wong appears sceptical of Petrucciani's own claims in his review of two reissues in the International Association of Jazz Educators magazine. "He was a one-of-a-kind pianist despite his declaration of the pivotal influence of Bill Evans (stronger impact in his earlier years)."⁴⁴ The Internet site *the overgrownpath* brings up a revealing comparison with Evans and Keith Jarrett (outside the scope of this chapter) when discussing the solo piano work, but goes a little too far in claiming...

...the solo piano work is sheer genius. Here we have the musicality of Bill Evans being extended into a more innovative language, and the creativity of Keith Jarrett without the

⁴¹ Cook, Richard and Morton, Brian. *The Penguin Guide to Jazz on CD. Fourth edition* p. 1225 Penguin 1998

⁴² author unknown. www.sunnysiderecords.com

⁴³ McLennan, Doug. www.salon.com

⁴⁴ Wong, Dr. Herb. www.iaje.org

interminable post-Lisztian monologues. Petrucciani can appeal both to the emotions with melody, and guts through the power of his playing.⁴⁵

Common thinking is that Bill Evans was the primary influence on Petrucciani, and pianists such as Oscar Peterson, McCoy Tyner, even Keith Jarrett were secondary ones. I have endeavoured to show that while there is evidence to support this in his early work, the influences, particularly that of Evans, have all but disappeared by mid-career and Petrucciani has found a recognisable sound of his own.

Can we assume that this is whole-heartedly a good thing? *Jazz Times* writer Thomas Conrad, for one, does not see this as a welcome development. Remembering how an ardent jazz follower shouted "Bill Evans lives!" at the end of a Petrucciani trio concert in the early eighties, Conrad goes on to say:

I think Evans' influence on him was profound. It is apparent in certain technical elements such as chord voicings and touch and precise fingering, but more importantly in the way that Petrucciani was able to tap into that whole world of feeling, that pensive poetic poignance, that was Evans. Which leads into [the] question, "Do his later solos measure up to his earlier playing?" My strong belief is, unfortunately, no. I think that Petrucciani's later work is mostly inferior to his early stuff—and I think it is because he lost the Evans connection and went for bravura and speed and bombast.⁴⁶

Conrad raises an interesting question concerning Petrucciani's later works, one that will be examined through analysis of his solos in a later chapter. However, enthusiastic audience reaction aside, it is still true to say that there are any number of pianists who can lay greater claim to the Evans influence than Petrucciani – Warren Bernhardt, Enrico Pieranunzi, and Fred Hersch to name three. It is my belief that in taking into account Petrucciani's career as a whole, the influence of Bill Evans should not be singled out as the major factor in his development as a jazz pianist of stature. Rather he should be included in a list of pianists that inspired him, including Duke Ellington, Art Tatum, Erroll Garner, and later, Keith Jarrett – all of whom contributed to the final outcome: the unique Michel Petrucciani.

⁴⁵ author unknown. www.theovergrownpath.blogspot.com

⁴⁶ Conrad, Thomas. *Personal email*. October 2nd 2005

Appendices to chapter

1. Bill Evans repertoire played by Petrucciani

"Nardis" from *Live at the Village Vanguard*

"Round Midnight" from *Live at the Village Vanguard, Date With Time, Toot Sweet, Au Theatre Des Champs-Elysees* and *Concerts Inédits*

"Here's That Rainy Day" from *Flash and Pianism*

"Autumn Leaves" from *Cold Blues, Conference de Presse Vol.2* and *Concerts Inédits*

"You Must Believe in Spring" from *Conversations with Michel*

"Days of Wine and Roses" from *Michel Petrucciani*

"Beautiful Love" from *Power of Three* and *Concerts Inédits*

"Very Early" from *Estate* and *100 Hearts*

"Someday My Prince Will Come" from *100 Hearts* and *Concerts Inédits*

2. Besame Mucho - four recorded versions

Marvellous – trio with string quartet, 1993

Sombre and classical in nature, thanks in part to the use of the string quartet and minor sonorities. No soloing adds to the stark simplicity. Some use of jazz harmony (extensions) in the II Vs employed in the bridge.⁴⁷

Concerts Inédits – solo, July 1993

The intro repeats octaves in the bass and chords in right-hand like a piano concerto, using the four-chord riff. Melody is struck dramatically in octaves. This sounds like an early version with Petrucciani exploring his arrangement.

⁴⁷ See enclosed CD 1 track 26

As the solo begins left-hand chords are struck, Beethoven-like, on each beat. The bridge emerges with a Latin feel, then the melody returns played in tremolo octaves. The performance ends with tremolo root octaves in the bass.

This is the most melodramatic and least mischievous of the three solo versions.⁴⁸

Au Théâtre des Champs-Élysées – solo, Nov. 1994

Another solo version that contains many classical references. It begins a tone down in C minor for the first chorus before modulating to D minor, Petrucciani's normal key for this piece. In the bridge and last eight of the second chorus he sounds like Errol Garner. For the third chorus he modulates back to C minor and plays the theme before straying from it in the bridge.

He often returns to a stride bass consisting of the root followed by a staccato chord to regain momentum after a rubato passage. He uses florid lines, rising octaves and chords in the right-hand, along with blues licks, and exaggerated gestures which give humorous touches.

The four-triad riff on the I chord used on *Marvellous* reappears at times, notably at the end. He concludes with a light throwaway 5-note phrase high on the keyboard in octaves before a final chord, as if to say "I wasn't serious about all the drama – just having fun"⁴⁹

Solo - solo 1997

More upbeat, even playful version. After the head, Petrucciani solos over a simple stride feel, using several blues licks at medium tempo, but slows to rubato for the bridge section. He picks up the tempo again with a stride bass consisting of root followed by staccato chord, then builds using rising octaves after the bridge.

⁴⁸ See enclosed CD 1 track 27

⁴⁹ Ibid. track 28

Slowing down to rubato, he goes straight to the bridge, remaining out of tempo, with an implied time feel at the end, as the last four chords are repeated twice to end the piece.⁵⁰



Fig. 4

⁵⁰ See enclosed CD 1 track 29

PART TWO: Compositions

Chapter 4

THE PROCESS

Pascal Anquetil: You are best known as a pianist and improviser. What drives you to compose?

Michel Petrucciani: I love talking. That's what composing is to me. A way of telling a story.¹

Petrucciani's reputation is based on his playing, not his composing. There is little indication to suggest that he will posthumously enter any Jazz Composing Hall of Fame in the years to come, even though, in Europe at least, his tunes are still being played after his death. Yet as his career progressed, he placed increasing emphasis on playing his own repertoire, preferring to explore his own pieces both in concert and on record. When he did play a standard, it would often contain references to his own writing. The ostinato bass line of "She Did it Again" was frequently combined with Billy Strayhorn's "Take the A Train".²

This chapter will discuss Petrucciani's compositional process, with reference to his own comments on writing. Several compositions will be examined in detail to determine whether there is a clear progression in his writing style and whether he achieved his aims as a composer of 'singable' melodies. "I have Neapolitan blood in me, and when I write a tune I like it to be easy to sing."³

It is important to establish first that Petrucciani composed his tunes while at the piano, not at a desk. The two procedures are quite different. Writing music away from the piano (or other instrument) is a more structured process, the writer moving from note to note, bar to bar, in a considered manner. At the piano, the composing methods can be more varied and there is a greater freedom to wander and let the inspiration of

¹ Anquetil, Pascal. *Michel Petrucciani: le bonheur à la clé*. Jazzman. no. 38 July/August 1998.

² *Solo Live*. track 11

³ Barbey, Michel. *Le Journal de Genève*. 3 September 1994

the moment take over. The approach is more pragmatic, more "laissez-faire", and there is less need to impose a form, a logical structure from the outset. In other words, the process at the piano is more improvisational in nature, with often only a small amount of the material played making up the final composition.

Petrucciani refers to this as a type of "doodling" and sees it as being analogous to the route a painter might take.

I'm looking for notes... a bit like a painter making a brush stroke on a canvas. I make a stroke, then another. Now and again there's a chord, a phrase, a note that says something to me. So I plug in my tape recorder and record it. At that point, if I decide it's worth developing, I don't let go of the idea. I take hold of the line and see where it leads me, but it's more the music that takes me somewhere, rather than me leading the music.⁴

Petrucciani preferred to call his compositions 'songs', not tunes or pieces, and when he was 'doodling' at the piano, the melody was at the forefront. Priority was given to finding a melodic phrase, and usually the harmony, rhythm and other aspects would come later. "My method is purely melodic, not harmonic or pianistic. Besides, I often say I'm not a pianist, I'm a musician."⁵

Petrucciani kept the notation of his tunes quite sparse, with little indication of how they should be played. He preferred to leave the interpretation to the individual, allowing each player as much freedom as possible. On paper, his compositions are plain lead sheets with no suggestion of such interpretive aspects as articulation, dynamics, timbre, or rhythmic accents. These factors he had internalised and they were revealed only in performance. If such important details were not notated it is partly because Petrucciani wanted to allow for spontaneity in the interpretation of his music, to let one side of the composing process come out in the performance.

Discussing his new album of Petrucciani tunes, pianist Christian Jacob (see Chapter Eight) says:

⁴ Halay, Benjamin. *Personal interview with Michel Petrucciani*. Paris 27 November 1995.

⁵ Heptane, Steven, Médioni, Franck. *Compact Disc Magazine* no.11. March 1994.

I feel very close to Michel's compositions, to a point where I almost hear the spark that started the whole writing process. A composition usually starts with an initial hunch that develops into an actual composition. The hunch being a specific idea: a loop, a melodic tidbit, a harmonic tension or succession that rocks your boat, an improvisational springboard, or any basic idea (melodic, harmonic or rhythmic) that attracts you. Michel never used the same hunch twice. He was a complete musician with a vast pool of creative knowledge to draw from.⁶

When considering the merits of a jazz composition one must not only take into account the melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic content of the written material. A second crucial factor is the chord sequence or structure used for improvising. If the sequence is too cluttered it will impede the creativity of the soloist. Too many chords per bar can interrupt the flow, especially if each chord requires a different scale. Too many rhythmic accents can be similarly distracting.

Petrucciani avoided these pitfalls by keeping his solo structures relatively simple. While it could be argued that some of his pieces are so simple they lack substance (e.g. "Dumb Breaks" or "Cantabile"), they usually contain an unusual, melodic or harmonic twist, an unexpected change of direction, or a subtle reworking of earlier material that keeps the player or listener interested. "Guadeloupe", for example, is one bar short of the traditional 32-bar length, but this is hardly noticeable because Petrucciani changes the chord quality from major to minor four bars before the end (bar 28) so that the B minor 7 becomes the first bar of a repeated II-V (ex.1). The rising three-note melodic cell in bar 25 is transposed twice, not three times as the form would normally dictate. Nevertheless, the melody feels as though it has come to a logical end in bar 29 in spite of the missing bar. (For further analysis of this piece see below)

⁶ www.christianjacob.com

25 E_m7 $G7$ $C_{MA}7$ $F\#7$

29 B_m7 $E7$ B_m7 $E7$

3 bars only (4 expected for symmetry)

Ex.1

Even a simple piece like "Bite" (1989) from *Music* is more interesting than it first seems. The single catchy motif is rather slight, but its organisation reveals subtle touches. The nine-note phrase over the first two bars follows the movement of the harmony by transposing down a minor third. This occurs three times. In the first eight bars the motif starts on the 9th of the chord (B over an A_m7). The second eight has the same melodic idea repeated, but this time a major 2nd higher ($C\sharp$). The roots of the chords remain the same, but the quality changes to major 7. While the root notes descend in minor thirds spelling out a diminished chord in both eights, Petrucciani adds a surprise in the last eight bars by maintaining the major 7 chords, but this time the roots spell out a half-diminished chord and there is no written melody at all (the pianist improvises).

SAMBA FEEL ♩ = 138

BITE

MICHEL PETRUCCIANI

Am⁷ main motif

F#m⁷ motif transposed down a minor third

5 Ebm⁷ motif down again a minor third Cm⁷ 1st part of motif only

9 A#m⁷ harmony now major third Gbm⁷ motif continues down in minor thirds

13 EbMA⁷ Cm⁷ 1st part of motif only

17 BMA⁷ GMA⁷

21 E#MA⁷ C#⁷ALT

Shortly after his death the *Michel Petrucciani Songbook* was published in France, under the guidance of his brother Philippe. It contains seventy-nine compositions in lead sheet format and is a very useful resource.⁷ With so many compositions available in the one book, comparisons are made easier. We have already referred to the proportion of tunes written in sharp keys in an earlier chapter. The table below (ex.2) shows that Petrucciani favours the swing feel above all others, with the majority at a fast or medium-fast tempo. Of twenty-five swing tunes, only two are below the metronome mark of 160. The three blues are all fast. Yet he wrote almost as many Latin pieces. There are also several ballads, waltzes and rock tunes.

⁷ Despite Philippe Petrucciani's claim in the Foreword that the songbook is made up of all the titles recorded on CD, it is not exhaustive. Several earlier tunes are missing, including "To Erlinda" from *Live at the Village Vanguard*, "English Blues" and "Vaucluse" from *Flash*, "Gattito" from *Michel Petrucciani*, and (more understandably) several of the solo piano pieces like "Eugenia" and "Mike Pee" which are discussed in the previous chapter on the influence of Bill Evans.

Songbook Content

Swing	Latin	Waltz	Ballad	Rock	Blues	Rubato
25	15	8	11	7	3	2
12 fast	3 fast	6 med up	all slow	5 med up	all fast	no tempo
11 med up	5 med up	2 med		1 med		
2 med	13 med			1 med slow		
	1 slow					

Ex.2

Given that medium tempos are ideal for an authentic swing feel where the double value of the first of two eighth-notes can be expressed more easily (at faster tempos the notes tend to even out), it is surprising that Petrucciani wrote so few pieces at that tempo. One possible explanation is that the pianist took every opportunity to display his virtuosity, and his impressive technique could best be showcased at more rapid tempos. We must bear in mind, however, his comment made near the end of his career: "I no longer want to be interesting or innovative. The killer phrase doesn't interest me and I'm not out to impress anyone any more".⁸

Listening to his final studio album *Both Worlds*, one can hear this philosophy being put into practice. Two of the three swing tunes, "Chloé Meets Gershwin" and "On Top of the Roof" are at a relatively sedate medium tempo and have a relaxed feel (his solos are shorter too).

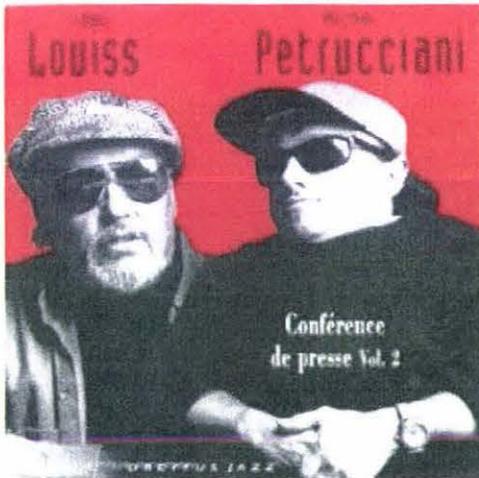
⁸ Anquetil, Pascal. cf. note 11.

Chapter 5

SIX SONGS

In 1994 Michel Petrucciani was the guest on the Italian radio programme "Musica Jazz". He spoke in English about some of the compositions that appear on his Dreyfus releases *Marvellous* and *Conférence de Presse*. This chapter examines these pieces with particular reference to the composer's own comments on each tune. These appear below, and are then followed by an analysis of each composition to establish whether the writer's intentions are revealed in the music.

1. **Hub Art** from *Conférence de Presse Vol. 2* 1995.



"Hub Art". Hub for Freddie Hubbard and Art for the art of music. It's a piece I wrote for Freddie, of course. I worked with him in 1986 and it was a great learning experience working with him. We had a great band at that time. It was Joe Henderson on saxophone, Buster Williams at the bass, Billy Hart at the drums and Freddie of course at the trumpet and myself at the piano. The chord changes of that composition is [sic] very much like the way Freddie Hubbard would write a piece of music, like I don't know if you know a piece by Freddie called "Kareem Abdul-Jabbar",

who was a very famous basketball player and we used to play that together and I tried to, in a way, to imitate those chord changes that Freddie is so good at. It's a little bit like a ball bouncing up and down, up and down. Anyway, this is called Hub Art.

These comments illuminate the composing intentions and help to enhance the listener's appreciation of the piece. The idea of a bouncing ball is easy to fit into parts of this tune, particularly the first two bars with its rising 4ths (ex. 1), and the three-note cells in bars 9 to 12 (ex. 2).

seen as analogous to the sudden change of direction skilfully executed by the basketball player.

HUB ART

MICHEL PETRICCIANI

SWING ♩ = 190

A^b7 // // //

1 *F⁷sus⁴* *G⁷sus⁴* *A⁷sus⁴* *B^b7sus⁴* *A^bM⁷* *B^bM⁷* *E^b7*

fourth intervals

5 *A^b7* *#9* *D^b7*

recurrence of fourth interval

9 *C^MA⁷* *E^M7* *B^M7* *C^MA⁷*

13 *B^M7* *E⁷* *A⁷*

17 *D⁷* *E⁷* *A^M7*

rising line (and chords)

21 *D⁷* *C⁷* *B^b7* *E⁷*

falling line (and chords)

25 *A^M7*

2. **Dumb Breaks** from *Marvellous* and *Concerts Inédits* 1994.



"Dumb Breaks", a 15-bar blues, a C minor blues. It's only the trio this time, to start with. We played more like a very strong feeling of not always positive energy because I wanted to represent something about breaking. Dumb breaks – you break something, you take a break, you break what you are doing now to do something else. You fall down and you break something or you wash the dishes and you break a glass. It's always a little bit annoying so I wanted to kind of try to recreate this climate, this ambience so to speak.

Petrucciani explained the title differently in his interview with Benjamin Halay, saying he wrote it for his son, Alexandre.

One day, while I was writing, he broke his arm. I thought of us, with our stupid fractures. It's not just the bones that break, but life itself...plans...everything. It's for all those consequences which aren't serious but spoil life.⁹

Petrucciani has only partially achieved his aim with this piece. The descending line at the start after three short notes alludes to a break followed by a fall. But this idea is repeated immediately, thereby diluting its impact somewhat. The second half is less obvious with dominant chords throughout. The melody note "rests" on each new chord. In fact, this idea really starts on bar 8, with each note value being different: two beats, two and a half, three and a half, three, then four and four and a half. This deliberate lack of symmetry reflects the overall intention of the piece: the variety of note values disturbs the flow of the melody line and mirrors the disruption that 'breaks' can cause in real life.

"Dumb Breaks" ends with an odd number of bars (15). While the pianist's tunes can appear simple and predictable, he will often throw in a surprise to catch you off-guard. Of course, we cannot judge his intentions

⁹ Goaty, Frederic. *Interview with Michel Petrucciani*. Jazz Magazine 1997 (translated into English by Phil Broadhurst). Also website: www.jazzmagazine.com/interviews/Dauj/petrucciani.htm

solely by examining a lead sheet – much lies in the performance. Taken at a fast tempo and driven by Tony Williams' pulsating, chatty drums, the head feels like nothing more than an appetiser before the main meal. As usual, Petrucciani dives headlong into his solo and never lets up.

A later trio version with brother Louis and drummer Lenny White from a live concert in Japan (Aug 1994) is played at an even faster tempo, lasts twice as long, and closes the concert. There's a full drum solo, and a double repeat of the last four bars at the end. It also includes a less successful (from the point of view of the composer's intentions above) and unrelated intro which uses the bass ostinato figure from "She Did It Again", a device Petrucciani continued to use through the rest of his career. Another example of it can be found on the intro and A section of "Take the A Train" from the 1993 recording *Concerts Inedits – Solo*.

DUMB BREAKS

FAST SWING ♩ = 240

MICHEL PETRUCCIANI

1 Cm7 break... Fm7 Cm7 ...and fall Fm7

5 Cm7 repeated idea dilutes impact Cm7 D7ALT G7ALT

9 C7ALT "resting" notes of varied length..... F7 D7ALT

13 D7ALT Eb7ALT D7ALT G7ALT Eb7ALT

17 Dm7bs C7ALT Cm7 F#7sus4 E7sus4 D7sus4 C7sus4

3. **Manhattan** from *Marvellous* and *Concerts Inédits* 1994.



This second piece is called "Manhattan", the city I live in for 15 years now and we tried with the string quartet this time to recreate the sounds of Manhattan, the sounds of the police siren, ambulances, and fire people and the people screaming and laughing and walking down the street, traffic jams, the taxis, driving really fast down the road. I am sure that any one of you that's been to New York knows for sure what I am talking about in terms of the energy...there's more energy in Manhattan, in New York than anywhere else in the world. We tried to recreate that street environment

throughout this piece. It's an F major blues.

A classic blues head with a very basic idea repeated over the first eight bars followed by new (and better) material in the last four. Petrucciani's aims are achieved once the solos start – there's plenty of energy as he is pushed by the rhythm section. The poor recording of the string quartet (under-recorded throughout the album) doesn't help in the theme, however, where few of the above ideas are conveyed successfully, if at all.

Another version from a live concert in Japan (Aug 1994) abandons all the street themes and is treated as an up-tempo blues which, it could be argued, is driven by typical "Manhattan" energy. Who better to drive the yellow taxi than a pianist with such sure timing and technical assurance and accuracy? Who better to convey the "rush" of New York than Petrucciani who plays here with such forward momentum while keeping his lines so perfectly "in the pocket"?

MANHATTAN

MICHEL PETRUCCIANI

BLUES SWING ♩ = 240

4. Rachid from *Playground, Solo Live, Live, and Conférence De Presse Vol. 2* 1990.



Rachid is my second son, or my first son because he is the oldest one, and it's a waltz in E major and there's not anything really special to that song except that I try to write melodies. I try to write something that sings and you can imagine maybe a child singing.

Like many of his works, this is written in a sharp key, E major. It starts in that key until Petrucciani switches to a bluesier minor tonality in bars 13 to 22 with a G natural appearing in alternate bars. The melody is diatonic at first, starting with a simple, but rhythmically delayed arpeggio.

The IV major 7 chord in bar 5 becomes a dominant 7 in bar 13 and the note G (the flatted 7) has a non-diatonic blues quality, and is used frequently in the next few bars, functioning as a strong chord tone for three different chords, A7, Em7, and C6/9 (ex. 4).

Although the piece begins in E major, in bar 15-18 he uses a 4-bar variation on the I-VI-II-V chord sequence starting in E minor (Em7-C#7alt-

C69-B7alt) which he repeats in the next four bars before resolving to E major.

The image shows three staves of musical notation in E major (three sharps). The first staff (bars 12-15) starts with an E7 chord. A bracket labeled "switch to dominant" spans from bar 13 to 14, where the chord changes to A7. The sequence continues with F#7ALT, B7, and EM7. The second staff (bars 16-19) begins with C#7ALT, followed by C69, B7ALT, and EM7. The third staff (bars 20-23) starts with C#7ALT, then C69, B7ALT, and finally EMA7. An annotation "G# signals switch back to major key" is placed above the B7ALT chord in bar 22, with a bracket pointing to the G# note.

Ex.4

This harmonic sequence is also used in the last eight bars of "Even Mice Dance", but in E major (see next composition).

The composer uses a 4 against 3 polyrhythm as a common composing device in his waltzes. It gives a more legato feel to the line and it occurs twice here (bars 18 and 22) and in the following waltzes: "Even Mice Dance" – bars 13, 17, 24, 26, 27, and 28, "It's a Dance" – bars 11, 13 and 27, "Lullaby" – bars 5, 6, 11, 21, 22, 27, 31, 37, 38 and 43, "100 Hearts" – bars 57 and 58, "One Night in the Hotel" – bar 7.

RACHIO

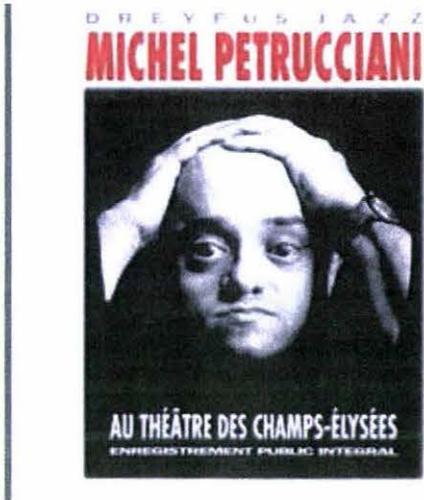
MICHEL PETRUCCIANI

JAZZ WALTZ ♩ = 160

Chords: E_MA⁷, G^{#7}ALT, C[#]M⁷, E⁷, A_MA⁷, F[#]M⁷, B⁷SUS⁴, B⁷9, E_MA⁷, G^{#7}ALT, C[#]M⁷, E⁷, A⁷, F^{#7}ALT, B⁷, E_MA⁷, C^{#7}ALT, C⁶9, B⁷ALT, E_MA⁷, C^{#7}ALT, C⁶9, B⁷ALT, E_MA⁷, A, E/G[#], F[#]M⁷, E_MA⁷, G^{#7}ALT, C[#]M⁷, E⁷, D[#]M⁷, G^{#7}, C[#]M⁷, C[#]M⁷/B, A, E/G[#], F[#]M⁷, F[#]M⁷/B, E, A

Annotations: switch to dominant, G# signals switch back to major key

5. Even Mice Dance from *Marvellous* and *Au Théâtre Des Champs Elysées* 1994.



I wrote this piece a while ago while listening to a Rachmaninov masterpiece and I heard the left hand of Rachmaninov and I transcribed his left hand to the right hand and I made it a melody. That's why it's called Even Mice Dance. It's a little play with words. We say in France. When the cats are gone, the mice are having fun. So when Rachmaninov was not there to see what I was doing, I was trying to have fun with one of his little

bits of a piece that he wrote, a master composer.

This is a beautiful piece with a romantic side, of course, given the origin of its inspiration. The melody really does feel like a dance, a (fast) waltz that conveys the image of a couple sweeping across the dance floor.

The slash chords in bars 3 and 4 come as a surprise and the harmony, despite much reliance on II-Vs, is unpredictable.

"Even Mice Dance" begins with a four-bar phrase more or less transposed down a minor 3rd for the next four. Then comes a two-bar phrase (9 & 10) repeated up a 4th, the last bar of which (12) is repeated down a minor 3rd (13) and forms the start of a four-bar section which has three bars of melodic inactivity, then another repeat of that last phrase down a major 2nd (17) and a further three bars of inactivity. (The first thirteen bars each contains a four-note cell)

Bars 21 and 22 virtually repeat, a minor 3rd down, the phrase from bars 9 and 10. Bar 22 is then taken down a 2nd in the next bar, and again in the next, this time with the four notes altered rhythmically into a 4 against 3 (24). This four-note cell continues descending step-wise three times in bars 26-28 which lead to the final eight bars, which break with the constant four (or one) note in each bar. Even so, the different rhythmic content of each of these bars is really the only change since the descending patterns occur again in bars 33-35.

The melody (but not the chords) in the eight-bar coda is a direct quote from a piece by Chopin used by Bill Evans as "Blue Interlude" on his "Trio with Symphonic Orchestra" album (ex. 5).

Chopin quote

36 $Dm7^b9$ $G7$ $Cm7$ $G7/B$ $Bbm7$ $Eb7$ $Abm7$ $G7$ $D7^b9$ $G7$ $Cm7/C\#$

Ex. 5

Petrucciani is thus paying tribute to three of his musical heroes: Rachmaninov, Chopin, and Bill Evans. He is also echoing their compositional technique of using sequences of phrases transposed several times (e.g. the opening six-note motif from the Adagio movement of Rachmaninov's Symphony No. 2). Comparisons with Bill Evans' song "Turn out the Stars" reveal the similarity of approach (ex. 6).

Turn Out the Stars – bars 5-8 and 17-24 Bill Evans

5 $Fm7$ $Bb7$ $Ebm7$ $Cm7$ $Am7$ $D7$ $Gma7$ $Em7$
motif raised a major third

17 $A^{13}sus4$ $A^{13}b9$ Dma^9/A A^9sus4 Dma^9/A
ANSWERING PHRASE

21 $G^{13}sus4$ $G^{13}b9$ Cma^9/G G^9sus4 $G7$ Cma^9/G
ABOVE BARS TRANSPOSED DOWN A TONE VARIATION OF ANSWERING PHRASE

Ex. 6

JAZZ WALTZ $\text{♩} = 144$

EVEN MICE DANCE

MICHEL PETRUCCIANI

CM7 E \flat MA7 \sharp 5 G/A \flat A \flat /G \flat

5 E \flat MA7 \sharp 5 FM7 E \flat 7/G A \flat MA7
 1st 4 bars transposed down a minor third

9 D \flat MA7 C7 \flat 9 G \flat MA7 E \flat M7
 bars 9 & 10 transposed up a fourth

13 B \flat M7 bar 12 down a minor third E7 B \flat M7 E7 \flat 9

17 A \flat M7 bars 13 & 14 down a tone D7 A \flat M7 D7 \flat 9

21 G \flat M7 variation of bars 9 & 10 C7 F \flat MA7 start of diatonic descending sequence B \flat M7 \flat 5 E7

25 A \flat M7 D \flat M7 G7 C \flat 9 F \sharp M7 \flat 5 B7

29 E \flat MA7 C \sharp 7 ALT C \flat 9 B7 \flat 9 E \flat MA7 C \sharp 7 ALT C \flat 9

36 D \flat M7 \flat 5 G7 ♩ Chopin quote C \flat M7 G7/B B \flat M7 E \flat 7 A \flat MA7 G7 D7 \flat 9 G7 C \flat M7/C \sharp

6. Night Sun in Blois from *Au Théâtre Des Champs Elysées* and *Solo Live* 1994.

Now we are in the concert hall of Kroningen which is in Holland. I just finished a concert now and I wanted to explain to you the beginning of a composition, how you create a composition. This one is called "Night Sun in Blois". I did that in Blois, a little town south of Paris, two hours by car. We were a bunch of friends – a friend of mine said, "Look, can you give me the colour or the sound of the sun?" For me, the sun, the light, is G. The chord of G is this [plays] I started by doing this [plays 2 bars] ...For me this is very light, like a solar(?). Do something from the sun and for the son, a play on words. I started by playing this phrase [plays]. Then you have to continue with something that resembles that, so I did the same thing in the same key, but the melody is in another key, so it goes like this (plays). That's the first eight, then again [plays] . Then we have to find a bridge, so the bridge of the song was...another friend that was there also that evening said, 'You should do like a Broadway-type song, so the bridge is very simple and it's like a ritournelle, something that goes over and over again like this [plays] and then back to A [plays] with the ending that goes C7 [plays] So when I did that I thought the song is over, but sometimes when you think that, it's not really over. You have to find a passage where you can sing, something that goes back and back, always in another key. The key closest to G for me is D [plays] so I started by playing D and I tried to find something very easy, kind of a la Sonny Rollins [plays calypso-like] with a melody that goes something like this [plays longer passage] then go back to G [plays] by playing C7 and D [plays] and then back to G [plays first eight and ending] . That's it, that's how you write a song. It's very easy. The idea has to come, but basically that's how you compose – with the help of friends and with an idea in mind.

"Night Sun in Blois" is the third part of "Trilogy in Blois". (The first two are entitled "Morning Sun in Blois" and "Noon Sun in Blois").

It would seem the composition was extended to include the first two sections later. Petrucciani makes no mention of these in his comments above, and the first recording is of "Night Sun in Blois" only, from the solo concert recorded in 1994 "Au Théâtre Des Champs-Elysées". It appears as part of the full trilogy in 1997's *Live*. The first two parts are less memorable, the third standing better as a single composition in three sections as described by the composer above.

The opening theme is a strong, lyrical seven-note phrase, answered in bars 2 and 3, then transposed up a fourth with the same rhythmic contour but different intervals. While the first chord is G we are really in the key of D major throughout which does not fit easily with the writer's comments

about changing key. The first four bars of the bridge he refers to (bars 8-11) offer a marked contrast with a simple repeated arpeggio, before returning to variations on the main theme over a descending II-V-I harmonic pattern (12-15) leading back to a reiteration of the first two bars before a surprise interrupted cadence – the C7 in bar 18. This is a 'back-door' \flat VI dominant leading to D major.

The third section has the rising root movement of a calypso, although the melody hardly suggests the rhythmic vitality of that style. This part seems unnecessary and adds little to the piece other than a structure for improvisation. Petrucciani might have been better to stick to his first instinct and finish at bar 19. However, in the light of the sensual quality of the opening theme and its attractive development, we can forgive more readily the ordinariness of what follows.

RUBATO. FOR SOLO $\text{♩} = 120$

NIGHT SUN IN BLOIS

MICHEL PETRUCCIANI

GMA^7 $F\sharp M^7$ EM^7 A^7 DMA^7 $A\flat 7\flat 9$ GMA^7 $F\sharp M^7$
 main motif motif transp. up a fourth

5 EM^7 A^7 $A\sharp DIM^7$ Bm^7 D/A $G\sharp DIM^7$ $C\sharp M^7\flat 9$ $F\sharp 7$ GMA^7 GMA^7/A

9 DMA^7 $Am^7 F\sharp DIM^7 GMA^7$ GMA^7/A DMA^7 $C\sharp 7\flat 9$ $F\sharp M^7$ B^7
 motivic variations.....

13 EM^7 Am^7 $D\sharp M^7\flat 9$ $G\sharp 7\flat 9$ $C\sharp M^7$ $F\sharp 7$ GMA^7 $F\sharp M^7$
 return of original motif

17 EM^7 A^7 C^7 DMA^7 DMA^7 $F\sharp 7_{ALT}$
 unexpected chord ("back door" bVII7)

21 GMA^7 A^7 $A\sharp DIM^7$ Bm^7 EM^7 A^7_{SUS4} DMA^7 $F\sharp 7_{ALT}$

25 GMA^7 A^7 $A\sharp DIM^7$ Bm^7 E^7 EM^7 A^7 A^7
 1. 2.

29 $C^7\sharp 11$ GMA^7 $F\sharp M^7$ EM^7 A^7 C^7 DMA^7

Chapter 6

TWO EARLIER COMPOSITIONS

1. Lullaby from *Music* 1989.



This is a charming waltz that gains its strength from its mix of simplicity (most of the long notes begin on the first beat of the bar and there is little rhythmic variety) and more varied note choices, many taken from extensions.

The first stressed note, for example, is a #11 over the root chord of G major. The next is the 13th over a dominant sus 4 chord (ex. 1).



Ex. 1

In bar 7 the melody descends to the #11 of the IV chord, then to a #11 of a dominant chord (Bb7) in the next bar (ex. 2).



Ex. 2

11ths and 9ths are emphasised on minor 7 chords. The tune has three sixteen-bar sections with a form of A, A1, A2.

This is a typically lyrical Petrucciani tune (see title) with his trademark 4 against 3 occurring in bars 5 and 6 of each section. The first six bars of each section are identical.

JAZZ WALTZ ♩ = 140

LULLABY

MICHEL PETRUCCIANI

G/D D⁷sus⁴ D/G D⁷sus⁴ GMA⁷ #11 D⁷sus⁴ 13th

3 GMA⁷ D⁷sus⁴ GMA⁷ D^b7 CM⁷#11 #11 B^b7 #11

9 EM⁷ A⁷ EM⁷ A⁷ D⁷sus⁴

15 Am⁷ D⁷ GMA⁷ D⁷sus⁴ GMA⁷ D⁷sus⁴

21 GMA⁷ D^b7 CM⁷ F⁷ F[#]dim⁷ 3 EM⁷ EM⁷/D

27 C[#]M⁷b⁹ F[#]7 B^M7 E⁷ Am⁷ D⁷

33 GMA⁷ D⁷sus⁴ GMA⁷ D⁷sus⁴ GMA⁷ D^b7

39 CM⁷ F⁷ F[#]dim⁷ 3 EM⁷ A⁷ EM⁷ A⁷

45 D⁷ Am⁷ D⁷

2. Three Forgotten Magic Words from *Live at the Village Vanguard* 1985.



This piece has a classic symmetry and contains a surprisingly lyrical (and singable) melody line considering the brightness of the tempo. It is twenty bars in length and the opening five-note phrase is answered with another in bars 3 and 4 (ex. 3).

THREE FORGOTTEN MAGIC WORDS MICHEL PETRUCCIANI

SWING ♩ = 200

Am7^{b5} D7^{b9} Cm7 F7 1st motif answered E7^{b9}

1st motif

1st motif answered

Ex. 3

The opening two bars are then transposed up a minor 3rd in bars 5 and 6, but the harmony does not follow the same pattern, the minor II-V being replaced by an augmented dominant chord. This time the answering phrase (bars 7 and 8) is a variation of the previous one with different note values and a wider 7th interval leap between the last two notes (ex. 4).

A7^{#5} 1st motif raised a minor third A^{b7} second answer Am7 seventh

Ex. 4

The second idea enters in bar 9, but is answered with a paraphrase a 5th lower, again with a different rhythmic emphasis in bars 12 to 15 (ex. 5).

9 $G^{\flat 7}$ 2nd motif MM' $G^{\flat M 7}$ C^7 $F^{\flat M A 7}$ 3

13 $D^{\flat DIM 7}$ 2nd motif lowered a fifth $D^{\flat M 7}$ G^7 $A^{\flat DIM 7}$ third motif 3

Ex. 5

A third idea is introduced in bar 16 over a diminished chord and immediately answered with an enclosure in bar 18 before resolving on an unexpected major 7 harmony, (although this changes to minor in the second-time bar) (ex. 6).

$A^{\flat DIM 7}$ third motif $A^{\flat M 7}$ E^7 third motif answered $A^{\flat M A 7}$

Ex. 6

The entire piece progresses in a logical and organised fashion with each of the three motifs being transposed and/or answered with a paraphrase. The harmonic progression, though unpredictable, has a similar logic, returning often to an A chord, which the composer uses in a variety of colours – $A^{\flat M 7}$, $A^{\flat M 7 \flat 5}$, $A^{\flat 7 \sharp 5}$ and $A^{\flat M \sharp 7}$.

Chapter 7

TWO LATER COMPOSITIONS

1. Guadeloupe from *Both Worlds* 1997.

Every melodic phrase progresses in step-wise motion. A chromatically rising three-note pick-up becomes the central motif of this late composition which repeats a tone higher each time over 8 bars with over six beats rest in between (ex. 1).

GUADELOUPE

MICHEL PETRUCCIANI

LATIN $\text{♩} = 66$

rising 3-note cell - main motif

5

Fm7 D7 G#m7

Ex. 1

There are some unexpected harmonic shifts along the way with the second eight bars seemingly stalling the proceedings with a four-bar phrase repeated with a slight variation in the next four, all over a repeated II-V progression.

The original three-note cell returns at a higher pitch in bar 16, this time with a three-note answering phrase. A shorter space is used between each phrase and this section lasts for only four bars before a surprisingly verbose phrase enters in bar 21 followed by a bluesy one over minor chords (ex. 2).

21

Am7 Em7

more active phrase with wider range

Am7 Em7

blues phrase

rising 3-note cell a fifth higher

Ex. 2

The effect is subtle but remarkable, and feels like a momentary release after the sly events that precede it. It injects a brief forward momentum to an otherwise lazy melody played over a relaxed Latin rhythm.

The initial motif again returns a perfect 5th higher in bar 25 as the three rising notes occur four times, a tone higher each time. Because the cell is again placed like a pick-up, i.e. in the last part of the bar, Petrucciani is able to spring a further surprise by omitting a bar, so that he utilises only three bars before concluding with a conventional long note held over three of the last four bars.

This reduces the tune to the odd length of thirty-one bars and breaks up the near-perfect symmetry of the overall melodic and rhythmic design. It's another example of the composer's trademark twists which, after a few hearings (or playings), sound quite natural. This symmetry does not extend to the harmonic scheme which modulates frequently after a conventional II-V-Idim-I opening in F major.

GUADELOUPE

MICHEL PETRUCCIANI

LATIN $\text{♩} = 66$

rising 3-note cell - main motif

4 Fma7 D7 G#m7

8 C#7 F#m7 B7 F#m7

12 B7 F#m7bs variation on bars 9-12 F#m7bs

16 B7bs return of 3-note cell E7 answering phrase Am7 previous idea transposed up a tone F#7

20 Bm7 Am7 more active phrase with wider range Em7 Am7 blues phrase

24 Em7 rising 3-note cell a fifth higher G7 Cma7 F#7

28 Bm7 E7 Bm7 E7

2. **Brazilian Like**¹⁰ from *Both Worlds* and *Solo Live* 1997.

Here we have a lovely lyrical melody over a samba rhythm. Interesting use is made of the diminished chords which move chromatically in bars 3 and 4. At this point the melody moves non-diatonically to accommodate them. The tonal centre, however, remains Bb minor for nine bars until a G7 chord is introduced followed by C7 (shades of Ellington, who often substituted a dominant 7 for a minor 7 as the II chord preceding a V chord.)

Soon we arrive in Gb major (bar 15) temporarily before returning to Bb minor (18). Bar 22 has an unusual chord scale choice: an upward B major 7 scale (starting on Bb) over a Bb7(b9) chord. The Locrian flavour implies a Bbm7b5 but the dominant chord is a better choice to lead to the following Ebm7. (This scale is not played in the solo piano version from "Solo Live".)

The title of the tune is particularly reflected in bars 9-11 where consecutive quarter-notes are placed on the off beat, reinforcing the samba rhythm within the melody (ex. 3).

The image shows a single staff of music in treble clef. Above the staff, four chords are indicated: F7b9, Bbm7, G7, and C7. The melody consists of quarter notes and eighth notes. The notes are: bar 8: F4, Ab4, Bb4, C5; bar 9: Bb4, C5, D5, Eb5; bar 10: Eb5, F5, G5, Ab5; bar 11: Ab5, Bb5, C6, Bb5. The final note is a half note G5.

Ex. 3

Tritone substitution is used in bar 24, not as a substitute but rather as an additional passing chord after the V chord. A further tritone movement occurs in the following bar, this time from a major 7 to a Lydian dominant.

¹⁰ "Brazilian Like" is one of nine compositions by Petrucciani chosen for the first-ever French Real Book. We should perhaps take the choice of writers with a grain of salt since it is published by Dreyfus Records and is limited to musicians from their roster.

The Petrucciani selection is interesting in that four of them are later songs (three from *Both Worlds*), while four are from the Eighties:

Three Forgotten Magic Words 1985, The Prayer 1986, She Did It Again 1988, Looking Up 1989, September Second 1991. Little Peace in C for You 1996, Brazilian Like 1997, Chloe Meets Gershwin 1997, Guadeloupe 1997.

These passing chords lead into the I chord (Dbmajor) and the IV chord (Gbmajor), increasing the harmonic momentum. (In his solo version the pianist adds a further tritone substitution in bar 23.)

He uses regular IIm7-V7 progressions only twice (in bars 13 and 14, and 23 and 24), but employs such variations as II7-V7 (e.g. bars 7 and 8), IIm7-Imaj7 with the V7 missing (bars 17 and 18), and a tritone substitution as a passing chord straight after the V chord (IIm7-V7- \flat II7-Imaj7 in bars 23 and 24)

The melodic content of bars 23-27 is identical to bars 15-19, but the chords are quite different, arriving at the C7 \flat 9 in bar 27 by another route

In Bob Brookmeyer's arrangement on *Both Worlds*, the theme is not played after the piano solo – the sextet play a B \flat vamp to close out the piece.

Petrucciani has ended up with thirty-two bars, but at no point is there a suggestion of a bridge or B section. The tune is a seamless whole that flows logically to its restful last four bars. Strangely, there is only one chorus of improvising on the solo version and two on the sextet recording – a case of not making the most of a very good piece for improvising over.

Chapter 8

SUMMARY OF PART TWO

In trying to establish whether there is a clear progression, or even distinct phases in Michel Petrucciani's composing output, it is important to bear in mind that his entire career spanned less than twenty years. An instinctive and pragmatic individual, his writing varied in quality. While one can find first-rate originals in his repertoire when he was only in his early twenties ("Three Forgotten Magic Words", "Lullaby"), other pieces are less memorable. Some tunes would have been written on the spur of the moment with no particular goal in mind, others composed for a particular situation. The thinness of the title track and some of the material on *Manhattan* for example may have been the result of keeping it too simple in order to accommodate the string quartet.

When asked about Petrucciani's compositions, drummer Eliot Zigmund replied:

I liked playing them. I never thought they were great compositions. They were all fairly simple and kind of unique and fun to play. A lot of them were very blues-oriented. Kind of simple things he would just figure out sitting at the piano. I think the playfulness and the spontaneity of his personality came out.

He had a serious side to his music. You'd get emotional playing with him...if he played ballads, bossa novas. He wrote that really nice tune for Elis Regina.¹¹

Petrucciani had another ten years of composing in him after Zigmund left his trio, and during that time composed some of his best work. Considering his aim of writing lyrical melodies, another of his drummers, Aldo Romano, said "Later he wrote some beautiful things. You can always write technically, chords and things, but to have a melody that makes sense, it's not so easy."¹²

A new American album by pianist Christian Jacob¹³ is devoted solely to Petrucciani's compositions, with new trio arrangements of tunes such as "Rachid" and "Even Mice Dance". Jacob is a French musician who has lived

¹¹ Zigmund, Eliot. *Personal Interview*. New York June 7 2005. The tune referred to is "Regina" from the album "Pianism", with Zigmund on drums.

¹² Romano, Aldo. *Personal interview*. Paris June 23 2005

¹³ Jacob, Christian. *Contradictions "A look at the music of Michel Petrucciani"* (CD) Wilder Jazz 2006

in the U.S. for many years. In the course of an interview published on his website¹⁴ he is asked his view on critic Stephen Cook's description of Petrucciani as "a weaver of myriad textures, rhythms and styles who produced work that sounds both complex and seamless." He replies, "I think this describes pretty well what attracts me: a mix of knowledge rolled back into simplicity."

By the mid-eighties Petrucciani's writing was beginning to develop a distinct personality, and one can identify certain characteristics occurring in many of them.

- A preference for fast swing tunes or medium Latin tunes
- The prevalence of sharp keys – "Rachid", "Night Sun in Blois".
- Forms of different lengths – "Dumb Breaks" (15 bars), "Guadeloupe" (31), "Thirteen" (13), "Play Me" (22).
- Lyrical, romantic melodies – "Even Mice Dance", "Lullaby".
- The use of blues-flavoured phrases – "Guadeloupe", "September 2nd".
- The transposition of a motif or melodic cell to create sequences (a technique derived from his improvising) – "Even Mice Dance", "Bite", "Hub Art", "Guadeloupe"
- A rising scalar passage at the beginning of the tune – "Looking Up", "Training" (transposed in the third bar).

MEDIUM SWING ♩ = 200 **TRAINING** MICHEL PETRUCCIANI

The musical notation shows a single staff in 4/4 time. The tempo is marked as MEDIUM SWING with a quarter note equal to 200. The title 'TRAINING' is centered above the staff, and the composer's name 'MICHEL PETRUCCIANI' is on the right. The key signature is two flats. The melody begins with a rising scalar passage. Chords are indicated above the staff: A♭MA7, Dm7, G7, Cm7, C♯m7, and F♯7.

Ex. 1

- The re-iteration of an idea later in the piece – "Even Mice Dance", where bars 21 and 22 are a minor 3rd lower than bars 9 and 10.
- The use of a 4 against 3 polyrhythm in waltzes – "Rachid" (bars 18 and 22), "Even Mice Dance" (bars 13, 17, 24, 26, 27 and 28), "Lullaby" (bars 5, 6, 11, 21, 22, 27, 31, 37, 38 and 43).

¹⁴ www.christianjacob.com

- Dominant chords resolving to another dominant rather than a major chord – “Hub Art” (bars 5, 7 and 15)
- The use of an unexpected or unrelated chord change. In some tunes these occur in the first four bars – the diminished chords in bars 3 and 4 of “Brazilian Like” and the D7/C in bar 3 of “Regina” (ex. 2).

LATIN **REGINA** MICHEL PETRUCCIANI

Ex. 2

While some of the features of his writing listed above are those adopted by many composers, in Petrucciani's hands they combine to form a recognisable style where strong and lyrical melodies are played out over relatively simple structures and chord sequences which often take an unpredictable, even humorous, turn at times. His compositions are uncomplicated and many are shorter in form than the traditional thirty-two bar length. He wrote few suites (the one exception being “Trilogy in Blois”). His tunes do not have the complexity of, say, some of pianist Chick Corea's work. His earlier pieces in particular seem more like a diluted version of Bill Evans' writing with less dense and complex harmony. In the late eighties he acknowledged the influence of Miles Davis' electric period, incorporating synthesizers into his music, simplifying and refining his melodies, and becoming a star and big-seller for Blue Note in the process. One of his most appealing pieces of the time is called “Miles Davis Licks”¹⁵ and is made up of exactly what the title suggests – a collection of phrases that Davis played, or might have played, over his rock-influenced rhythm sections. This leads to the conclusion that, while no clear progression in the standard of Petrucciani's compositions was found, many belong to distinct phases of his career and reflect the direction his music was taking at the time.

As discussed above, Petrucciani placed an increasing emphasis on the performance of his compositions as his career progressed, to the extent

¹⁵ *Playground* track 4.

that there was no question of arranging anything but his own originals on his last studio album. In a late interview the pianist echoed the philosophy of one of his heroes, Duke Ellington.

I compose a lot for individuals, thinking of a specific musician. Because I know he is going to like soloing on it – the music will show him in a good light. It's the Southern Frenchman's gift of the gab. It never stops. I always have music in my head.¹⁶

This claim that he wrote specifically for others seems limited to the harmonic structures of his tunes. There is little evidence of the type of involved bass and drum parts that can be found in Corea's music. His trio pieces are not heavily arranged like those of his fellow Frenchman Jacky Terrasson, and they do not include rapid changes of direction or unorthodox time signatures. There is not even a song in 5/4 time.

Nevertheless, while Petrucciani was not an innovative or particularly adventurous composer, many of his tunes, or songs as he liked to call them, possess a unique charm of their own, infused with his Gallic wit and romantic French spirit. This chapter has endeavoured to show that the pianist's originality as a player is also evident in his extensive repertoire of compositions.



Fig. 5

¹⁶ Anquetil, Pascal. cf. note 11.

PART THREE: Seven Solos – Transcription and Analysis

Each chapter in Part Three consists of two parts: an analysis of a solo from one of Michel Petrucciani's recordings, followed by an annotated transcription of that solo.

Chapter 9

HERE'S THAT RAINY DAY– from *Pianism* 1985

(transcribed by Phil Broadhurst)



Musicians: Palle Danielson – bass and Eliot Zigmund – drums

Time: 4/4 **Tempo:** ♩ = 132

Key: F minor **Form:** 32 bars, ABAB₁

Piano solo: three choruses (96 bars)

“Here’s That Rainy Day” begins with a solo piano intro, a brilliant free-ranging passage where the pianist uses fragments of the melody to take him in different harmonic directions, moving round different key centres until settling on a variation of the last eight bars of the tune. When the bass and drums enter the melody is treated relatively conventionally.

Petrucciani frequently acknowledged Bill Evans as his main influence, but their approaches to a standard like this are quite different. A solo intro from Evans, for example, would stay more within the form of the tune. Yet his playing of the melody would be more likely to contain subtle reharmonisations of the original changes, something Petrucciani was less interested in.

The pianist’s melodic imagination and fluidity drive him along so relentlessly here that he leaves virtually no spaces between ideas. – There are two beats rest over bars 13 and 14, one and a half in bar 41, and one in bar 64 – that’s all through the entire three choruses. If we need to look for influences here it would surely be more towards the Oscar Peterson

school of relentless outpouring. The time-worn strategy of letting the listener digest one idea before hearing the next is not for Petrucciani!

Petrucciani plays three choruses before the bass solo and employs a different approach to each. The accepted strategy of slowly building up an improvisation from simple to complex ideas, melodically and rhythmically, throughout the solo, is not followed by Petrucciani here. Rather, he does this for each chorus.

First Chorus

The first chorus starts with a simple but charming sequence followed by three bars of syncopated quarter-notes for rhythmic variety. In bar 11 the pianist starts a passage with several trademark triplets and then in bar 14 launches, by way of a chromatic run, into a rhythmically complex section of sixteenth-notes, some grouped in sextuplets or quintuplets. They often rise and fall within the same bar (16, 17), moving step-wise or chromatically through the chord-scales, using chromatic enclosure in 17 and 21, a rising diminished pattern in 22, and repeated notes in 23. This lasts for ten bars, but even then there is no rest for the ears as a long series of triplets follow, winding down to a pattern that descends the scale and ends on the A \flat below middle C at the start of the second chorus.

Second Chorus

The second chorus begins from scratch again as if Petrucciani is giving himself and the listener a rest – in fact the build-up lasts longer this time, stretching over two choruses. His lines are less active in this second chorus and are often played as quarter-note triplets. The second eight bars contain a delightfully simple descending five or six-note pattern (bars 41-46). This is a quote from the song *Suicide is Painless* by Johnny Mandel, better known as the theme from the television comedy series “Mash” (Ex. 1).

The image shows two staves of musical notation in 4/4 time. The first staff contains three measures of music. Above the first measure is the chord B^b_M7 , above the second is E^b7 , and above the third is $A^b_{MA}7$. The second staff contains three measures of music. Above the first measure is the chord $D^b_{MA}7$, above the second is G_m7 , and above the third is $C7$. The notation includes various note values and rests, with some notes beamed together.

Ex. 1

In the third eight he reverts back to quarter-note triplets, but creates a rhythmically matching counter-line in the left hand. This leads back to a single right-hand line in the last eight bars of the chorus which flirts briefly with the original melody (bar 57) before branching off.

Third Chorus

Now at last the bass player moves to a walking line (four notes per bar) giving the solo new momentum. The third chorus opens with four bars of sixteenth-notes, then four bars of even denser material, with notes grouped in quintuplets or sextuplets, which end with two notes a minor 3rd apart rising chromatically (bars 70-72). The texture thins out a little for the next eight which ends with a four-note phrase repeated several times across the bar lines with chordal accompaniment from the left hand (bars 76-80).

The second half of this chorus starts with a bluesy phrase in the upper register played in 6ths (bars 81-4), then reduces in volume with a repeated minor 2nd alternating with a single B^b played with great rhythmic variety (bars 85-7), before ending satisfyingly with a return to the melody, a fragment of which is repeated several times in a sort of call and response between the left and right hand before it is brilliantly echoed by the bass player in the final bar of the chorus to launch his own solo. This is the type of musical event that seems planned, but is more likely to be the result of great musicianship and empathy between the players.

solo from "Pianism" (Blue Note CDP 7 46295)

HERE'S THAT RAINY DAY

MICHEL PETRUCCIANI SOLO

Medium Swing

♩ = 132

Solo starts: 2:10

Fm

D^bma⁷

rhythmic simplicity and repeated notes

2

26 Gm^7 chromatic run Am^7 A^bdim^7 desc. pattern

29 Gm^7 C^7 Fma^7

32 Gm^7 C^7alt **2nd. chorus** Fm arp. D^bma^7 rept.(from bars 1&2)

36 G^bma^7 Gm^7 C^7 Fma^7 Intensity level drops as lines are now less active up to bar 47

40 Cm^7 F^7 B^bm^7 desc. sequence E^b7 A^bma^7 D^bma^7

45 Gm^7 C^7 Am^7 chromatic run Gm^7 C^7

49 Fm D^bma^7 G^bma^7

53 Gm^7 C^7 Cm^7

56 F^7 B^bma^7 Gm^7 paraphrase of orig. melody Am^7 chrom.

60 A^bdim^7 Gm^7 C^7 Fma^7

64 Gm^7 C^7 **3rd chorus** Fm sideslipping

66 *encl.* *D^bma⁷* repetition(bars 19,73) 3

68 *G^bma⁷* 6

69 *Gm⁷* *encl.* 6' *encl.* 6

70 *C⁷* asc. pattern 5 6 6 6

71 *S^{uc}* *F^mma⁷* 6 6 6 6

72 *Cm⁷* 5 5 *F⁷* chromatic run

73 *B^bm⁷* (8) rept.(19,67) *E^b7* 3 3

75 (8) *A^bma⁷* *D^bma⁷* *Gm^{7b5}* 3

78 *C^{7b9}* (8) *rhyth.displacement* *Gm⁷* *D^{7#9}* *Gm⁷* *C^{7#9}*

81 (8) *F^m* *S^{uc}* *D^bma⁷* *G^bma⁷* 3 3 3

85 *Gm^{7b5}* *rhyth. displacement* *C⁷* 3 3 3 3 3

4

87 Cm⁷ F⁷ B^bma⁷ orig.theme

90 Gm⁷ Am⁷ A^bdim⁷ antiphony between hands & rhyth. displ...

93 Gm⁷ C⁷ Fma⁷

96 5:01

Chapter 10

BEAUTIFUL LOVE from *The Power of Three* 1986

(transcribed by Phil Broadhurst)



Musicians: Jim Hall – guitar

Time: 4/4 **Tempo:** ♩ = 216

Key: D minor

Form: 32 bars, ABAB₁

Piano solo: two choruses (64 bars)

Played as a duet with guitarist Jim Hall, this is the opening track on the video, but track 5 on the CD. The pair make several attractive changes to the chord sequence, with a pedal A used in the first three bars and in bar 10 a B \flat m7 is substituted for the usual Gm7. Bars 13 and 14 have Bm7 \flat 5, E7 \flat 9 replacing the more standard Dm7, G (or B)7#11.

The solo starts with the fifth mode of a D harmonic minor scale rising up to the first bar. (Petrucciani also uses an introductory rising scale in several compositions).

A common device the pianist uses here is to superimpose a related arpeggio over another chord. In bar 5, we have a Dm7 arpeggio over a Gm7. This reoccurs with a subtle change in rhythmic emphasis in bar 21, and in bar 25 an Am arpeggio is played over a Dm7. He uses a B \flat arpeggio as an upper structure triad on the A \flat 7 in bar 4 and a variation in the same place in the second chorus.

Early in the solo (e.g. bar 5 here and in "Here's that Rainy Day") he starts a phrase with a 4th on Gm7. This occurs quite often and indicates that Petrucciani often returns to the same place on the keyboard for a particular chord. On "Beautiful Love" this can be found in bars 1 & 60 (A7 \flat 9), bars 3 & 35 (Dm7), bars 8, 24 & 56 (E7 / E \flat 7) and bars 29 & 61 (Dm7/F7/)

Two notes a 3rd apart rise diatonically in 31-2, then continue to rise in a more complex rhythm in 33-4, thus keeping going over the end of the first chorus and start of the second (ex. 2). This is unusual for Petrucciani who normally likes to mark clearly the end of one chorus and the start of the next (as in both "Little Peace..." solos and in "Brazilian Like").

31 D_M^Δ ascending sequence... $A7^{\flat 9}$...and diminished scale

Ex. 2

In bars 17-19 descending dotted quarter-notes create rhythmic displacement. This is a favourite lick and can be found in the last seven bars of "Little Peace in C for You" (Tokyo version – see below). Petrucciani uses this polyrhythmic device to great effect not only in his improvising, but also in his compositions. The eight dotted quarter-note chords over three full bars in "She Did It Again" offer dramatic contrast to the locked-in rhythm of the opening ostinato dominating the rest of the tune.

Other points of interest are:

- the long string of even eighth-notes in bars 36-42.
- an anticipation in bar 43 of the $A7^{\flat 9}$ in the following bar employing the diminished scale.
- The four-note descending phrase played three times at bar 45 is taken up a perfect 4th in bar 47 and played another three times. He plays with rhythmic displacement even more in the next bars (49-52) with chromatic turns around a focal note, first an A, then A an octave lower, then D, then A a further octave lower.
- The frequent use of $\flat 9$, $\sharp 9$ and $\sharp 11$ in the melodic line, often played at or near the beginning of the bar.

This is a well-balanced solo with lines rising and falling within a range of only two and a half octaves.

FROM 'POWER OF THREE' - (BLUE NOTE CDP 7 46427)

BEAUTIFUL LOVE

MICHEL PETRUCCIANI SOLO

MEDIUM UP SWING

♩ = 216

1st Chorus

chromaticism

5th mode D harm. min scale

3 Dm7 arpeggio A^{b7} upper structure triad (Dm7 arpeggio) C⁷ Fma⁷ arp. F⁷

8 E⁷ encl. #11 E⁷ #11 Dm⁷ desc. sequence paraphrase of theme B^{b7} Em^{7b5} arp.

12 A⁷ #9 #9 Bm^{7b5} E^{7b9} b9 A^{7b9}

16 A^{7b9} original theme ma⁷ from melodic minor Dm⁷ upper str. triad repeated from bar 4 A^{b7} b9

rhythmic displacement

21 Gm⁷ (Dm7 arpeggio) C⁷ 3 Fma⁷ arp. F⁷ repetition from bar 8 E⁷ E^{b7}

rm(5)

25 Dm⁷ (Am7 arpeggio) B^{b7} rept.(10) Em^{7b5} A⁷ b9

29 Dm⁷ F⁷ #9 E⁷ #9 E⁷ b9 Dm⁶ ascending sequence...

2nd chorus

33 A^{7b9} ...and diminished scale Dm⁷ rept.(3) A^{b7} encl.

rhythmic displ.

37 Gm⁷ C⁷ b9 Fma⁷ E⁷ A⁷

desc. sequence

41 Dm⁷ B^{b7} arp. Em^{7b5} A^{7b9} #11

2

rhythmic displacement

45 Bm^{7b5} E^{7b9} A^{7b9}

49 A^{7b9} $b9$ (chromatic turns.....) Dm^7

52 A^{b7} $b9s$ Play notes short..... Gm^7 C^7 Fma^7 F^7 arp. 3

56 E^7 $rept.(8) \#11$ E^{b7} Dm^7 $B^b m^7$ Bm^{7b5} $B^b 3$ A^7 $b9$

61 Dm^7 F^7 E^7 A^7 (ma7) Dm^6 8^{bb}

Chapter 11

IN A SENTIMENTAL MOOD – from *Promenade With Duke* solo 1993



Time: 4 / 4 ballad **Tempo:** rubato, then ♩ = 60

Key: D minor

Form: 32 bars, AABA

Complete solo piano track: two and a half choruses + four-bar intro. (86 bars)

Intro and first chorus

The inspiration here is the version of this song played by Duke Ellington and John Coltrane on their 1962 Impulse album (MCAD 39103), notable, amongst other things, for the six-note riff Ellington plays as the intro and through the first bars of the tune. Petrucciani makes witty use of this lick throughout his treatment of the piece, frequently referring back to it, sometimes in unexpected places.

He starts with the Ellington riff and plays it four times. It appears first in its most basic incarnation – C major triads played over D in the left hand resolving to D minor triads. It will reappear in several different guises throughout.

The introduction has a classical sobriety, not just in the chord voicings – note the dramatic use of octaves in the pick-up to the theme. The first hint of jazz comes in the D minor chord in bar 6 which includes an 11th in its voicing. This is reinforced in bar 8 by the bluesy broken arpeggio on the B \flat 7 passing chord.

In bar 9 the Ellington riff is surprisingly played in D major. This resolves to an E triad, though the C natural hints at the 7th of the D7 chord which is the original chord of the next bar (10). Petrucciani uses the related II first however (Am7), then in bar 11 delays the original II-V (Gm7-C7) for two beats by first playing the II-V a semitone up (A \flat m7-D \flat 7). To conclude the first A section the pianist employs grace notes to create a bluesy feel en route to the F major triad (home key).

The second A section begins with a clever chromatic enclosure; not in the melody line where Petrucciani is often prone to use it, but in the root notes of the harmony, i.e. two parallel triads in E \flat , two in D \flat , then the delayed D minor chord in the second bar (14).

Another variation of the Ellington riff is played in bar 17, this time with E major triads resolving to D major. Petrucciani ends the second eight with the same material repeated from the first eight, before preparing for the key change to the bridge's D \flat major with a V chord.

The first four bars of the bridge hold no surprises, but in bars 25 and 26 the theme is voiced in Ravel-like parallel triads, a device Petrucciani will return to in the bridge of the second chorus.

The last eight of the first chorus starts with the return of the Ellington riff, but this time repeated in the second bar where Petrucciani squeezes in the next phrase of the melody – reducing it from seven to six notes – then transposes the Ellington riff again into Gm to fit the harmony and then repeats material from bar 8, albeit with subtly different rhythmic placement (bar 32). On the second chord of bar 34 the pianist uses the same extensions as the equivalent back in bar 10 – D7 \flat 9 \sharp 11.

Thus far Petrucciani has played mostly rubato, using implied time rather than stated. The end of the first chorus sees him employing four quarter-note chords to set up a regular, lilting swing tempo.

Second Chorus

Petrucciani begins his improvisation by reiterating the Ellington riff in single notes struck very hard – while he varies the dynamics of his line, many notes are hit with great emphasis. For the first eight bars we hear a simple lyrical line, a melodic variation of the theme, accompanied by single root notes followed by a chord or two in the left hand in a sort of modern slow stride. Of interest is: the witty use of voice leading from the E \flat of bar 39 to the D in bar 40 which echoes the CESH¹ used in the original harmony; the variation on the Ellington riff Petrucciani slips in at

¹ CESH a term coined by David Baker. Contrapuntal Elaboration of Static Harmony refers to the use of a chromatically moving inner line within the chord. The most common examples are a descent from the root to the 6th by semitones, as in "My Funny Valentine", and a rise in semitones from the 5th to the 6th, as in the James Bond theme.

bar 41; the basic two-note voicings used in bar 42; the major 2nds on top of the 5th played low on the keyboard in bars 41 and 44.

The second eight opens with three and a half bars of repeated triplet figures wherein notes change to match each chord change. These give way to a descending diminished run in bar 48 into a bar of pentatonic material referring obliquely to the melody. A rapid G major arpeggio at the end of the bar (49) sets up a 'Tatumesque' rising sequence in C played over three octaves at breakneck speed - on a C/E substitute for Am - and ending in a descending D7 altered lick which gives way to a rising and falling line with a gospel/blues flavour (bar 51), then a variation on the blues phrase on F major from bars 12 and 20.

The bridge opens with a dramatic passage using an Ab pedal point in the left hand, a harmonic generalisation that gives Petrucciani the freedom to use diatonic and parallel whole-tone triads in the right hand to stunning effect - in fact he alternates them bar by bar - 53 has diatonic triads, 54 parallel triads, 55 diatonic and 56 parallel. These have a lyrical melody on the top line which is then rhythmically displaced through a slight delay at bar 56.

A seven-note phrase - a quasi-quote from "I Can't Get Started" - is then developed through bars 57-59, transposed twice. The third time Petrucciani places it earlier in the bar starting on an offbeat, then inserts the D7 altered lick again (bar 59)

The final eight bars of this second chorus opens with a right-hand trill under which Petrucciani plays the Ellington lick in the left hand in 3rds, which he repeats in the next bar. The D7 altered lick occurs again in bar 63 followed by a rapid rising pattern of alternating 3rds which, in turn, leads to an across-the-bar paraphrase of the Ellington riff in triplets (bars 64-65). A descending pattern (bars 66-67) comes to rest on the F chord held for full two beats - the longest period of inactivity in the entire performance. Petrucciani then follows a frequent ballad convention by omitting the first half of the third chorus and skipping straight to the bridge.

Third Chorus (from bridge)

The first bar (69) echoes bar 53, but without the pedal point in the bass. Although the pianist rises diatonically in triads he starts on the I diminished chord, then keeps ascending, playing triplets up three octaves to a high tremolo on C which lasts over two bars (71-72) while the left hand plays stately chords until, out of nowhere, the main theme returns at bar 73.

The final A section continues with the melody, but with the relatively well-known alternative chord changes that descend chromatically from the tritone (B) to the Gm in bar 79. In bar 81 a D major is used instead of D minor, echoing the change made back in bar 9.

We had perhaps been expecting an earlier return to the Ellington riff but Petrucciani saves it until the end where it reappears after the last chord of the tune and is then transposed into D \flat major for its final outing, with the same voicing as before, but the top line now moving in 4ths instead of 3rds. In the final bar an F major 7 chord concludes the piece.

Petrucciani puts his own stamp on an Ellington standard and demonstrates his ability to organise his material and present a coherent whole. Once played, ideas are rarely discarded, often reappearing later, sometimes subtly disguised. This gives a thematic unity to the performance which seems so well-planned it gives an impression of having been through-composed. This is due to the variety in Petrucciani's improvising vocabulary, the technical brilliance with which he accomplishes it, and his superb command of form. The clarity of his lines and depth of harmonic thinking result in an inspired example of his solo piano craft, thankfully devoid of his occasional excess and self-indulgence.

The Ellington lick acts as the glue which solidifies the whole. It is applied through the first chorus – in bars 1-5, 7, 9, 15, 17, 29-31 and 33 – is referred to during the improvised chorus – bars 37 and 61-62, with a paraphrase in 64-65 – and returns for the final statement in 84 and 85 – nineteen times in all.

Many of Petrucciani's personal devices – repeated triplets, trills, blues licks, long passages of rapidly played scalar material, and witty harmonic substitutions – are used, but are never overdone. References to his

classical forebears appear, and throughout there is a sense of drama - as in the bold use of the $A\flat$ pedal at 53 - and expectation. When will he unleash one of his rapid-fire runs?

from *Promenade with Duke* (Blue Note 80590)**In A Sentimental Mood**

Michel Petrucciani solo piano

Ballad

Intro C/D Dm C/D Dm C/D Dm C/D Dm C/D Dm

Ellington riff

5 **A1** C/D Dm Dm11 3 D7#9/G# 3 Gm 8^{3rd} D7b9 Gm9 Bb7 A7#9

Ellington riff

9 D Am7 A^b/D 3 A^bm7 Db7 Gm7 F#m/C7

Ellington riff

12 Gm7/F F 1:03 D^b/E^b E^b C^b/D^b D^b Dm7 A^b9

chrom. enclosure

15 Gm D7 D7b9 Gm9 Bb7 A7b13 E/D D 5

Ellington riff

Ellington riff

18 Am11 D⁷alt 3 Gm C 3 repetition from bar 11 B⁷/F F A^b7sus4 A^b7b9

rept.(12)

2

1:37

21 $D^b m a^9$ $B^b m^7$ E^9 $E^b m^{11}$ A^9/E $A^b 7_{sus}^{4,3}$ $F m^7$ E^7

24 $E^b m^{11}$ $B m/A^7$ $A^b 7$ $A^b alt$ $D^b m a^9$ C $B^b 9 C$ $A^b/E^b G^b/D^b$ C B^b F E^b F G^b A^b F E^b

parallel triads

27 $C^7_{sus} 4$ $A^b 9$ $G m^{11}$ C/D $D m$ C/D $D m$

2:07

Ellington riff

31 $G m$ D^7 $G m^9$ $B^b 7$ $A^7 9$ C/D $D m$

Ellington riff

Ellington riff

34 $A m^7$ A^b/D $G m$ $C^7 9$ $F_{sus} 2$ $B^b 13$ A^{15} $A^7 alt$

rept(10)

a tempo

2:39 2nd Chorus

37 =60

$D m$ $A^7 9$ $D m^7$ $D^7 9/A^b$ E^b/G $D^7 9$

Ellington riff

40 Gm^7 Em^7b^5 $A^7b^9b^{13}$ Ell. riff

42 Gm Am D^7sus^4 Gm Gm^9 B^b/C C^7b^9 F^6 Fma^9 $A^7b^9b^{13}$

3:11 Dm

45

47

48 Gm^7 $A^7b^9b^{13}$ Dm^9 arpeggio

50 ascending sequence C/E D^7alt altered lick

4

51 Gm B^b/C F rept. (12) Em⁷ E^bm⁷ F/A^b⁷

53 3:42 D^b/A^b diatonic triads parallel triads diatonic triads

pedal point - harmonic generalisation

56 parallel triads "quote" sequence D^bsus² E^bm⁷ E7^{b9} E^bm⁷ E^bm⁷/A^b A^b7^{b9}

59 Gm⁷ D⁷alt Gm⁷ 6 A⁷b⁹b¹³

4:11 61 Dm C/D Dm Dm C/D Dm

6 7 7 6 6 6 6 6

Ellington lick

63 Gm⁷ D⁷alt repetition from bar 50 Gm⁷ A⁷b⁹b¹³

3 altered lick 3 6 3 3

65 *Ell. lick (para.)* *desc. pattern* 5

Chords: Dm^7 , $E13b9$, Am^9 , $D7b9$, Gm , $C7b9$

68 *3rd Chorus-last 16 only* 4:42 *diatonic triads*

Chords: F^6 , Ebm^9 , $A7b9$, (D^b) , Ebm^7/A^b , A^b13

71 *(8)*

Chords: Fm , Em^7 , Ebm^7 , $A7b9$, D^bma^7 , Bbm^9

theme returns

74 *(8)*

Chords: Ebm^7 , A^b7 , A^b13 , Gm

77 *5:12* *new chord changes* $8va$

Chords: $Gadd9/B$, E^b/B^b7 , Am^9 , A^bm^9 , Gm^6 , Gm^7 , A^b/D

80 *rept.(9)*

Chords: Gm^7 , E^7 , $A7b13$, D , $D9$, E/D , Am^7 , A^b/D

6

83 Gm C⁷b⁹ rept.(11) F⁶ C Dm D^bma⁷ E^bm E^bm¹¹/B^b C/F 5:55

Ellington riff

Chapter 12

THESE FOOLISH THINGS - from *Conference de Presse Vol.1* 1994

transcribed by Raphael Plat



with Eddy Louiss – organ

Time: 4/4 **Tempo:** ♩ = 190

Key: E \flat major

Form: 64 bars (ballad played in double time), ABAB $_1$

Piano solo: two choruses (128 bars)

Taken at a medium-tempo in double-time, not as the usual ballad, this treatment has a solo full of Petrucciani's trademarks.

Certain ideas are repeated or varied at the exact same points in the sequence in each chorus. Bar 27 is an exact copy of bar 11 rhythmically and melodically, and the following bar has a variation of the material in bar 12. A #11 is played at the start of bar 7 over the F7 chord, and appears again at the beginning of bars 23 and 119, and in bars 13, 55, 77, 78 and 93 – all over an F7.

The eighth bar of the A section has a tritone substitute E7 in place of B \flat 7. This must have been pre-planned with the organist since it occurs each time. The pianist plays ascending and descending E7 scales (bars 8, 24, 56, 72, 88 and 120), but does not favour the #11 we might expect from a non-diatonic chord.

On four of the six occasions a bar of C7 occurs (12, 28, 76, 92), Petrucciani plays an altered scale, even anticipating it two beats early at bar 91. Again the pianist favours a scalar passage.

At the bridge (bar 33) he starts a repeated phrase of eight notes built on the G blues scale played as triplets. Because there are eight, not nine notes, the phrase is constantly displaced rhythmically, yet, showing the mark of a great player, Petrucciani is able to continue the flow the

moment he comes out of the idea six bars later and continue with a long run of eighth-notes (bars 39-43).

Second chorus

One bar before the second chorus (bar 64) the pianist launches into another repeated phrase, this time over seven bars. It consists of a five-note upward chromatic cell, again played within eighth-note triplets. This creates rhythmic displacement by superimposing a 5/8 feel. When the triplets end they are replaced at bar 73 by a tour-de-force passage of sixteenth-notes which build momentum by their sheer length alone – 20 bars of superbly played lines mixing major, diminished and altered scales with enclosures, brief chromatic runs and arpeggios. These venture to the top of the keyboard and back, and subside into triplets as gasps of appreciation are heard from the live audience. This is the climax of a solo which has one more repetitive bluesy trick (bars 114-118) up its sleeve before ending with a simple bebop-like idea at bar 126.

There has been no let-up other than the syncopated G minor triads at 98 and 102 which relieve the rhythmic evenness of the preceding passage begun at 73. It is not Petrucciani's way to give his audience breathing space to digest an idea or a long line – his is more of a take-no-prisoners approach which puts him firmly in the post-bop camp, at least when tackling standards at a medium tempo.

MEDIUM SWING

FROM CONFERENCE DE PRESSE VOL. 1 (DREYFUS FOM 36568)

THESE FOOLISH THINGS

MICHEL PETRUCCIANI SOLO

♩ = 190

SOLO STARTS: 1:29

E^bma⁷ arpeggio Cm⁷ Fm⁹ B^b7 repetition from bar 3
 5 E^bma⁷ arp. Cm⁷ F⁷#11 #11 E⁷ asc. scale
 9 B^bm⁹ bebop lick E⁷ 3 A^bma⁷ arp. C⁷ altered scale
 13 F⁷ #11 3 Fm⁹ B^b7 3
 17 E^bma⁷ Cm⁷ Fm⁹ arp. B^b7
 21 E^bma⁷ bebop quote Cm⁷(repeated) F⁷#11 #11 E⁷ asc. scale
 25 B^bm⁹ E^b7 A^bma⁷ rep. (bars 11&12) C⁷
 29 F⁷ Fm⁷ B^b7 E^bma⁷ Am⁷^b5 D⁷^b9 bebop lick (bar 9)
 33 8-note blues cell repeated 9 times - rhythmic displacement
 36 D⁷^b9 3 3 Gm⁹ 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3
 39 Cm⁹ F⁷^b9 B^bma⁷ chrom. run Gm⁹ encl.

2

45 Cm⁹ F^{7b9} B^bma⁷ Edim

47 Fm⁹ 3 encl. B^b7 encl. E^bma⁷ Cm⁷ 3 asc. pattern...

51 Fm⁷ ...based on Fm chord tones B^b7⁹ E^bma⁷ Cm⁷

55 F^{7#11} 3 E⁷ B^bm⁷ E^b7 3

59 A^bma⁷ C⁷ 3 to flat 9 lick F⁷ Fm⁷ B^b7 E^bma⁷

64 5-note chromatic cell (5/8 feel) repeated over 7 bars

B^b7 3 3 3 3 E^bma⁷ 3 3 3 3 Cm⁷ 3 3 3 3

67 Fm⁷ 3 3 3 3 B^b7 3 3 3 3 E^bma⁷ 3 3 3 3

70 Cm⁷ 3 3 3 3 Fm⁷ 3 encl. E⁷ 3 asc. & desc. scale

73 B^bm⁷ tension released by rising scale as activity is heightened E^b7

75 A^bma⁷ encl. chrom. run C⁷ altered scale

77 F⁷ change run #11 encl. #11

79 Fm⁷ encl. B^b7

81 E^bma⁷ 8^{va} diminished scale Cm⁷ diminished scale

85 Fm⁷ encl. B^b7 diminished scale

85 E^bma⁷ chrom. run encl. Cm⁷ encl.

87 Fm⁷ encl. encl. E⁷ asc. scale encl.

89 B^bm⁷ extended enclosure 8^{va} E^b7 dim. arp. dim. scale

91 encl. (anticipated) altered scale A^b7 bC⁷

93 F⁷ triplets - slight thinning of texture Fm⁷ arp. 3 B^b7 3 E^bma⁷ further thinning 3 Am⁷^{b5}

96 Am⁷^{b5} D⁷^{b9} Gm⁹ Am⁷^{b5}

100 D⁷^{b9} Gm⁹ intro. of syncopation to relieve the evenness Cm⁷^b

104 F⁷^{b9} B^bma⁷ arp. Gm⁹ rhythmic displacement Cm⁹

4

108 $F7b9$ $Bb7$ unison with L.H. $Edim$ $Fm9$

112 $Bb7$ $Ebma7$ $Cm7$ $Fm9$

116 $Bb7$ $Ebma7$ $Cm7$ $F7#11$ tension released #11

120 $E7$ asc. scale $Bbm7$ $Eb7$ $Abma7$

124 $C7$ $F7$ arp.

126 $Fm7$ $Bb7$ $Ebma7$ $Bb7$ Eb

Chapter 13

LITTLE PEACE IN C FOR YOU – from *Flamingo* 1996

transcribed by Phil Broadhurst



Musicians: Stéphane Grappelli – violin, George Mraz – bass, Roy Haynes – drums

Time: 4/4 **Tempo:** ♩ = 108

Key: C major **Form:** 32 bars, AABA

Piano solo: two choruses, the first shared with the drummer (48 bars)

This is a solo with a difference – ostensibly two choruses, but the first is traded in eights with the drums. Though he only has a total of 16 bars, Petrucciani sets things up beautifully for his second full chorus by using ideas which he will reclaim and vary later, notably the shape of the opening phrase, the descending bebop lick, and the G altered scale.

Not a note is wasted and the pianist shows great architectural skill in shaping his brief statement, expertly blending chromaticism with melodic flair and a healthy dose of the blues.

The solo starts with harmonic generalisation using 4 notes from Cm7 (or C7 with #9) with middle C as the pivot note, then in bars 5 and 6 a bebop lick emerges organically from the previous blues phrases. It appears separately on two occasions later in the solo (it can also be found in bars 9 and 10 of the solo on this same tune from "Trio In Tokyo"). Petrucciani runs up a G altered scale, then arpeggiates it downwards in bars 7 & 8.

The bridge (after 8 bars of drums) has a single idea – a split octave descending chromatically from a high F#. The line is made interesting by (a) sometimes reversing the high/low order, (b) syncopating the two notes occasionally and (c) interrupting the last octave with an extended enclosure in bar 24.

To start the second chorus he retains the same melodic idea used in the first bars of the solo, but alters it rhythmically. While the line has the same melodic contour, it occurs slightly higher up the C minor scale.

In bar 43 the bebop lick from bars 5 and 6 starts on beat 3. Variations occur in bar 47 where the lick starts on beat 1, and in bar 63, where it begins on beat 3 and concludes the solo.

He refers back to the theme at the start of the bridge. The last three bars of the bridge are of great interest since the pianist plays a bebop-like enclosure at bar 54, then the two densest bars of the solo – rising triplets on an F major arpeggio (on G7) followed by descending triplets on a G altered scale which echo in reverse the content of bar 7 (ex. 3). This illustrates in miniature Petrucciani's penchant for approaching the end of a solo with a passage of thicker textures.



Ex. 3

The two-bar rising bebop phrase in bars 58-9 is answered with a reverse shape in bars 60-61 and the solo finishes with a variation on the earlier bebop lick.

Also of note is the use of a blues lick in bar 38, and the diminished scale in bars 45-6 derived from an A7b9 chord.

This solo makes an interesting comparison with the solo recorded the following year, which is examined in the next chapter. It is much shorter, probably in deference to violinist Stephane Grappelli's advancing years. Most of the solos are relatively brief on the album. The later solo is from a live recording at the Blue Note in Tokyo and Petrucciani takes the chance to stretch out and play six choruses.

Apart from the use of chromatic runs and sequences, and harmonic generalisation, the two solos have little in common (There are no

examples of change running or rhythmic displacement here). This is not surprising, given their different lengths, circumstances and personnel.

2

55 D⁷ *encl.* G⁷ F^{ma9} arpeggio G alt scale

57 C^{ma7} A⁷ D^{m7} G⁷ arp. C^{ma7} A⁷ D^{m7} G⁷ C^{ma7} A⁷ arp.

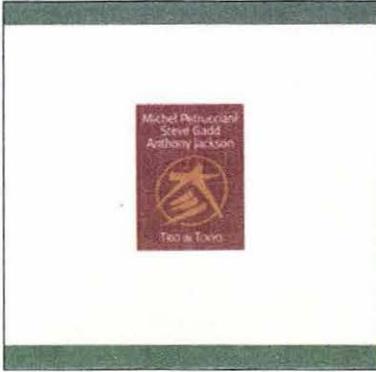
62 D^{m7} G⁷ C^{ma7} phrase starts on beat 3 - bebop lick repeat with variation

Chapter 14

LITTLE PEACE IN C FOR YOU –from *Trio in Tokyo*

1997

transcribed by Phil Broadhurst



Musicians: Anthony Jackson – bass and Steve Gadd – drums

Time: 4/4 **Tempo:** ♩ = 144

Key: C major **Form:** 32 bars, AABA

Piano solo: six choruses (192 bars)

Technically assured at a very fast tempo, this is a superbly planned and well-balanced solo. In contrast to the previous version explored in the previous chapter, Petrucciani stretches out over six choruses.

While it contains a few flat spots in its overuse of repeated notes¹, this is still a bravura display. Petrucciani can be guilty of grandstanding, being too “flashy” or even “showing off” and he doesn’t manage to completely avoid these pitfalls here. Descending chromatic scales, and one note repeated frequently to herald the end of a chorus (see final paragraph of this chapter), suggest coasting and lack of imagination. Despite these reservations, the overall effect is impressive, not least because he maintains a relentless forward motion while at the same time “digging in”. He achieves this in part by using space sparingly – playing in almost every bar and taking only short breathers. (as in “Here’s That Rainy Day”)

His playing is characteristically joyous and ebullient, executed with a seemingly sunny simplicity that hides the fact that he organises his material skilfully. He uses a different device each time to set up the next chorus: (1) repeated notes, (2) a recurring downward arpeggio lick, (3) a simple scalar approach to the root, (4) repeated wide octaves and (5) a

¹ Passages of repeated notes occur also in “Brazilian Like” (see below) and “Here’s That Rainy Day” (bars 37-39).

repeated pentatonic phrase followed by a pick-up. Even the much-used passages of repeated notes are treated differently each time.

The only personal touch missing here is his use of rapid sixteenth-note runs near the end of a solo. No doubt the fast tempo precludes these.

Left-hand chords, usually consisting of two- or three-note voicings, are used sparingly, appearing for the first time at the end of the second chorus, similarly for the third, then as occasional punctuation during the fourth and fifth choruses. A four-chord grouping in unison with the right hand is played in bar 166, and this is the only occasion when the left-hand chords come anywhere near the same volume as the right hand.

Chord tones (1,3,5,7) are used as the first notes in 73% of the bars, keeping the solo well-grounded in the basic "Rhythm" changes².

Bars 5, 6, and 7 have arpeggiated major triads descending in whole steps – F#, E, D, then C (arpeggiated downwards) In bars 60-61 he starts a sequence of major triads that appear to rise in 4ths F#, B, E, but the E triad is actually a 1st inversion of C major, bringing us back to the home key. In all his solos Petrucciani rarely remains "outside" for longer than a bar or two. This feature of his improvising, which could be seen as a conservative element given the degree of experimentation that preceded him in the work of such pianists as Paul Bley or Don Pullen, is perhaps a reflection of his musical philosophy and his desire to appeal to a broad range of listeners. It explains why Robert Doerschuk³ describes Petrucciani as "more the traditionalist" when comparing him with Keith Jarrett.

On a "Rhythm" sequence like this the pianist sensibly uses harmonic generalisation. The C-A7-Dm7-G7 for two beats each is often simplified to a bar of C and a bar of G7. Also in bars 27-29 and 128-9, he plays a Cm pentatonic phrase. This is brought back for a dramatic passage in the entire last eight bars of the fifth chorus wherein a six-note descending pentatonic arpeggio is repeated over and over to create thrilling rhythmic displacement (bars 153-160).

² The chord sequence of Gershwin's "I Got Rhythm" is one of the most common in jazz.

³ Doerschuk, Robert L. *88: The Giants of Jazz Piano*. San Francisco. Backbeat Books 2001 ch.54 p.214

Sometimes Petrucciani transposes a phrase just once as in bar 51 (up a perfect 4th to reflect the chord change), bars 54-55 (the same), bars 86-87 (down a perfect 4th), bars 138-9 (up a major 2nd), and in the final bridge starting at bar 177 (a four-bar phrase repeated down a tone to match the chord changes).

Bar 88 starts the first of several passages of repeated notes, here it's a G and later a C in octaves in bars 123-8. This is taken further in the final chorus in bars 170-6 where eighth-note Cs in split octaves are played repeatedly with a two-beat rest in between each cell. By starting the idea on the second bar of eight, Petrucciani shows uncanny mathematical precision by playing the two Cs three times, then four, then five, then four, then three. This brings the last one out at the end of the eighth bar, a perfect set-up for a tension-breaking different note at bar 177 to start the bridge (ex. 4).

170 C_{Maj}^7 rhythmic displacement - octaves grouped in 3,4,5,4,3, building tension

175 tension released. E is new focal point E^7 A^7

Ex. 4

A chromatic scale descending to low F on the keyboard in bars 73-78, has a somewhat grandstanding effect, but chromaticism is used to much better effect in a short, but exciting, eighth-note run in bars 134-6 and in bars 147-150.

Ideas are often repeated with subtle rhythmic or melodic variation at the same or similar points in each chorus. At the start of the second chorus (bar 33), for example, a downward arpeggio occurs on the G7. Two bars later it's repeated from the 9th (1st inversion). Variations can be found in bars 64, 98, 100, 106, 108

The final chorus begins with a cell of two notes a 3rd apart rising diatonically (bars 161-5) and ends with a rhythmically displaced series of

dotted quarter-notes descending down a C major scale. (Note a similar device used at the end of his solo in "Brazilian Like")

Note also the use of a bebop lick in bars 9-10, and quotes from the original theme in bars 113-4.

Other points of interest are:

- the use of bebop licks at bars 9, 21-22, and 32.
- frequent use of chromatic enclosure.
- the ascending four note pattern based on an F minor arpeggio (bars 50-53). This harmonic generalisation results in a strangely natural-sounding A \flat over an E \flat major 7 repeated an octave lower two beats later.
- the rhythmic interest created by the quarter-note triplet placed on beats 2 and 3 in bar 47, and further use of rhythmic displacement in bars 106 & 107.
- the stress on the #11 at the start of bar 119 to resolve a passage of repeated triplets played in 3rds.

Benjamin Halay⁴ identifies several other examples of repeated notes – most of the last eight bars before the reiteration of the theme of "Sahara" and part-way through his solo on "La Champagne", both from "Michel Plays Petrucciani". Halay believes this indicates the influence of the drums and the bouncing of the stick on a ride cymbal or snare. Clearly Petrucciani has the same rhythmic strength and accuracy as many of the great drummers he has worked with when he incorporates these percussive moments into his solos. Halay goes further and suggests that "when studying the rhythmic aspect of one chorus from "Sahara", one is struck by the variation in length, and the increase and reduction in rhythmic values. There is no doubt this reflects the influence of the drumming (in this instance Roy Haynes).

⁴ Halay, Benjamin. Les compositions en trio de Michel Petrucciani. Mémoire de Maitrise. Université de Tours 1997.

SOLO STARTS: 0:54
 SOLO FROM "TRIO IN TOKYO" (DREYFUS FDM 36605)
LITTLE PEACE IN C FOR YOU
 MICHEL PETRUCCIANI

VERY FAST ♩ = 144

Cma⁷ A⁷ Dm⁷ G⁷ Em⁷ A⁷ Dm⁷ G⁷ Cma⁷ A⁷ upper structure...

6 Dm⁷ ...triad G⁷ C arpeggio A⁷ Dm⁷ G⁷ Cma⁷ A⁷ bebop lick Dm⁷ G⁷ chrom. run

11 Em⁷ A⁷ Dm⁷₃ G⁷ Cma⁷ A⁷ Dm⁷ G⁷ Cma⁷

17 E⁷ A⁷ ascending sequence D⁷

22 G⁷ chrom. run Cma⁷ A⁷ Dm⁷ G⁷

27 Em⁷ A⁷ Dm⁷ G⁷ Cm pentatonic Cma⁷ A⁷ Dm⁷ G⁷ Cma⁷

32 **2ND CHORUS** Cma⁷ G⁷ arp. Cma⁷ G⁷

37 Cma⁷ G⁷ Cma⁷ G⁷ chrom. run

41 Cma⁷ chrom. sequence/rhythmic displacement G⁷ Cma⁷ G⁷ ascending pattern

45 Cma⁷ arp. G⁷ chrom. run Cma⁷

49 E⁷ arp. arp. A⁷ arp. D⁷

2 54 G7 Cma7 arp. G7

59 Cma7 arp. G7 side-slipping Cma7 arp. G7 Cma7 arp.

64 G7 Cma7 3rd CHORUS G7 arp. Cma7 G7

69 Cma7 G7 Cma7 enclosure G7 encl.

73 Cma7 5 bar chrom. run G7 Cma7 G7 8vb

77 Cma7 G7 rare use of space after 1st chorus as a pause between high activity chrom. run

81 E7 weaker ideas - material thinning out to..... A7

85 D7 G7 ...repeated notes Cma7

90 Cma7 Cma7

94 G7 Cma7 4TH CHORUS Cma7 arp. G7

99 Cma7 G7 arp. Cma7 arp. G7 Cma7

104 G⁷ Cma⁷ arp. G⁷ arp. Cma⁷ arp. G⁷ arp.

109 Cma⁷ arp. G⁷ Cma⁷ E⁷ orig. theme

114 A⁷ D⁷

118 anticipated G⁷ altered scale G⁷ chromatic run

121 Cma⁷ Cma⁷

126 Cma⁷ 5TH. CHORUS G⁷ Cm pentatonic

131 Cma⁷ G⁷ Cma⁷ G⁷ enclosures Cma⁷

136 G⁷ Cma⁷ G⁷ arp. Cma⁷

140 G⁷ Cma⁷ G⁷ Cma⁷

144 E⁷ A⁷

148 encl. D⁷ encl. encl. G⁷

4

152 G^7 Cma^7 Cm pentatonic/rhythmic displacement Cma^7

156 Cma^7 repeated phrase with emphasis on rhythm Cma^7

160 **BTH CHORUS** Cma^7 G^7 Cma^7 ascending pattern G^7

165 Cma^7 arp. G^7 Cma^7 G^7 Cma^7

170 Cma^7 rhythmic displacement - octaves grouped in 3,4,5,4,3 building tension

175 E^7 tension released. E is new focal point A^7

180 D^7 G^7 previous 4 bars transposed down a tone

185 Cma^7 G^7 Cma^7 rhythmic displacement Cma^7

190 G^7 Cma^7 G^7 Cma^7

Chapter 15

BRAZILIAN LIKE from *Both Worlds* 1997

(transcribed by by Ludovic De Preissac)



Musicians: Bob Brookmeyer – trombone and arrangements, Anthony Jackson – bass, Steve Gadd – drums, Flavio Boltro – trumpet and Stefano Di Battista – sax.

Time: 4/4 samba **Tempo:** ♩ = 88

Key: B \flat minor

Form: 32 bars, no sections

Piano solo: two choruses + coda (69 bars)

This is a typical late-period solo with only two examples of delayed resolution – bars 20 and 46. Petrucciani does not stray from the chord sequence. Chord tones (1,3,5,7) are used as the first notes in 70% of the bars and there is a lack of adventure and risk-taking, partly as a result perhaps of the sextet environment, not that the front-line is playing during the solo which is just a regular trio.

There is still much to enjoy – the technical clarity of his lines, the lyrical quality of the majority of the solo and the subtle use of the odd blues phrase, as in bars 43 and 44. Bar 19 has a Locrian scale on C7 \flat 9 and rising scalar triplets which change to eighth-notes in the next bar as the line descends. He uses a similar device later in bars 37 and 38 with the same scale over a different chord (B \flat m7).

Petrucciani plays two choruses. The second is more active than the first, as in bar 52 where two groups of seven notes are followed in the next bar by a rapid sixteenth-note pattern. On the last beat he anticipates the B \flat 7 \flat 9 chord by starting a rising diminished scale figure which ends in a three-note cell that is repeated diatonically a minor 3rd below (bar 55)

and again at the start of the next bar with an added note (C) bringing the short sequence nicely to a close (ex. 5).

The image shows two staves of musical notation. The first staff, labeled '52', starts with a treble clef and a key signature of two flats. It contains two measures. The first measure is marked with a chord symbol $F7(b9)$ and a '7' below it. The second measure is marked with $B^b m7$ and a '7' below it. An 'ascending pattern' is indicated by a bracket over the notes in the second measure. The third measure of this staff is marked with 'anticipation of next chord'. The second staff, labeled '54', also starts with a treble clef and a key signature of two flats. It contains four measures. The first measure is marked with $B^b m7$ and a '7' below it, with a bracket above it labeled 'diminished scale'. The second measure is marked with $E^b m7$ and a '7' below it. The third measure is marked with A^b7 and a '7' below it. The fourth measure is marked with $D7(b9)$ and a '7' below it. A bracket below the second, third, and fourth measures is labeled 'descending sequence'.

Ex. 5

Note the similarity between the start and end of each chorus. The first four bars have much in common – they start the same way, but in the second bar the line is more active in the second chorus. The two diminished chords of bars 2 & 3 are treated the same way melodically with simple diminished arpeggios, but in the second chorus the second and third notes are delayed slightly, giving a triplet effect. Such subtle variation of the same raw materials is common in the pianist's improvising.

The last four bars of the first chorus have a repeated root note (see "Little Peace for You") played thirteen times both off the beat as eighth-notes and on the beat as quarter-notes before a rising pick-up into the second chorus. This same device is used four bars earlier in the second chorus with seventeen repeated Fs which then evolve into increasingly wider leaps. They are rhythmically displaced, but finally resolve on the F an octave above in the final bar of the solos.

Other points of interest are:

- the bebop lick used in bar 11
- quotes from the original theme in bars 16, 33-4, and 48 (the same place as 16)
- the downward scale using the second mode of the harmonic minor on $Cm7$ in bar 39.

- the return to the same place on the keyboard for a particular chord or part of the sequence (section of the chorus): bars 1-5 and 33-37, 8 and 40, 16 and 48, and 23 and 55.

Throughout, the left hand comps a bossa nova rhythm with two- or three-note chords at about half the volume of the right hand. This solo, from later in his career, makes less use of extensions and uses less elements than earlier solos.

FROM BOTH WORLDS (GREYFUS FDM 36590)
BRAZILIAN-LIKE

M. PETRUCCIANI SOLO

SAMBA

$\text{♩} = 88$
 $B^b m^7$

$B^b m^7 / A^b$ $G^0 7$ arpeggios $G^b 0 7$

5 $B^b m^7 / F$ $C^7(b^5 b^9)$ cf. Beautiful Love $F^7(b^9)$

9 $B^b m^7$ arp. G^7 C^7 bebop lick arp.

13 Cm^7 F^7 $G^b m^7$ Fm^9 original theme

17 $E^b m^7$ $D^b m^7$ $C^7(b^9)$ $F^7(b^9)$ delayed resolution

21 $B^b m^7$ arp. $B^b 7(b^9)$ $E^b m^7$ A^7 $D^7(\sharp 11)$

25 $D^b m^7$ $G^7(\sharp 11)$ $G^b 7$ $C^7(\sharp 9)$ $F^7(\sharp 9)$

29 $B^b m^7$ b^6 6 b^6
 repeated notes as contrast, and to set up second chorus

33 **2nd chorus** $B^b m^7$ $D^b m^7 / A^b$ $G^0 7$ $G^b 0 7$
 orig. theme (paraphrase) repetition from bars 3-5

37 $B^b m^7 / F$ Cm^7 harmonic minor - II mode F^7

41 $B^b m^7$ G^7 C^7 Cm^7

2

46 **F7** delayed resolution **G^bmaj7** **Fm⁹** **E^bm7** orig. theme & rept. (16) **HOLD BACK.....**

50 **D^bmaj7** **C7(b9)** **F7(b9)**

53 **B^bm7** asc. pattern anticipation of next chord **B^b7(b9)** dim. scale **E^bm7** **A^b7** **D7(#11)** desc. sequence

57 **D^bmaj7** **G7(#11)** **G^b7** **C7(#9)** **F7(#9)** **B^bm7** rept. (29-32)

62 **B^bm^b6** **B^bm⁶** **B^bm^b6** **B^bm⁷** repetition as contrast to preceding melodic lines rhythmic displacement

66 **B^bm^b6** **B^bm⁶** **B^bm^b6** **B^bm⁷**

Chapter 16

SUMMARY OF PART THREE

Though they have much in common, the seven Michel Petrucciani solos transcribed and analysed above differ in many ways. The playing contexts (location and personnel) vary. Some are recorded live, some in a studio.

Three were recorded with a trio, one with a guitarist, one with an organist, one with a sextet, and one solo. Two come from the 1980s, the rest from the 1990s.

The shortest solo – “Little Peace in C for You” from *Flamingo* has only a chorus and a half of material. The longest is on the same tune from *Trio in Tokyo* which lasts six choruses (192 bars). Though half the length in bars, the longest time-wise at over three minutes is from “Here’s that Rainy Day”. It is also arguably the richest in content, using seventeen different elements of improvisation (as identified below) over ninety-six bars. These elements are devices used by many improvisers; they are by no means exhaustive, but are merely a selection of the most common in Petrucciani’s work. The occurrence of each of these elements in the seven solos is noted on the scores.

- **Chord-tone arpeggios**, often known as change-running, where the 1st, 3rd , 5th, 7th and sometimes the 9th of the chord are outlined
- **Chord-tone passages**: as above, but with one or two passing tones included
- **Chromatic runs**: ascending or descending
- **Chromatic sequences**: a short motif transposed in semitones above or below
- **Patterns or sequences**: a melodic phrase, played then transposed up or down a number of times
- **Rhythmic displacement**: altering the rhythmic emphasis of a repeated motif by starting at different points in the bar. This often appears to cause a temporary change in the time signature.
- **Repeated notes**

- **Repeated material:** a melodic passage that reoccurs later in the same solo
- **Quote from original theme:** a quote or paraphrase from the theme (or "head"), usually played at the same point in the chord sequence as the original
- **Enclosures:** a three-note cell in which the third note is preceded by a note a semitone above, and a note a semitone below
- **Bebop lick:** a melodic phrase taken from the bebop language, often characterised by the insertion of a chromatic passing note into the line
- **Sideslipping:** a melodic phrase played "outside" the key of the current chord, usually taken from the scale a semitone above or below
- **Upper Structure Triad:** the use of a triad formed from extensions of the chord e.g. the 9th, #11th and 13th creating a major triad a tone above the root
- **Anticipation:** notes from a chord that are played a bar or beat(s) before the chord occurs
- **Octaves in right hand**
- **Antiphony between hands:** a kind of "call and response", where one hand "replies" to a phrase played by the other
- **Phrases in 3rds:** a section of the improvised line harmonised a 3rd below
- **Phrases in 6ths and/or 5ths:** a section of the improvised line harmonised a 5th or 6th below.

The numbers of the bars in which each of the above elements occur can be found below for the six trio solos. In addition, the choice of note played at the start of each bar relative to the chord is documented in a set of tables summarising each chorus of the solo. Finally, as a means of comparison, the same tables have been constructed for solos by pianists Bill Evans, Keith Jarrett and Kenny Barron.

Although the sample is relatively small, some conclusions can be drawn.

When improvising on his own compositions, Petrucciani plays less complex lines, favouring chord tones at the start of the bar more often. Seventy per cent or more of the bars begin with the root, 3rd, 5th or 7th of the current chord.

On the three standards the pianist employs chord extensions to a greater degree than in his own compositions. He begins the bar with the 9th as often as the 3rd or 7th on "...Rainy Day" (table 1). The flat 9th on "Beautiful Love" occurs as frequently as the 7th (table 2). Of course the chord sequence determines these findings to some extent. A flatted 9th is common on a dominant chord preceding a minor tonic chord, and "Beautiful Love" has several of these. A comparison with the table showing the frequency of chord tones used by Bill Evans to start the bar reveals a striking similarity in the use of flatted 9ths and overall chord tones. He begins with flatted 9ths in 9% of the total number of bars, as does Petrucciani. Chord tones are used by Evans at the start of 59% of the bars, 57% by Petrucciani.

(A further comparison with the Grammy-winning solo by Kenny Barron on the blues "Take the Coltrane" is less revealing than first appears. The adventurous use of extensions at the start of many bars is less surprising due to the over-familiarity and simplicity of the 12-bar blues chord sequence).

The lack of space in Petrucciani's soloing is evident in the number of blank bars. Five of the six trio solos have activity in every bar, and the remaining "Little Peace..." (table 5) is taken at such a relentless pace that it's not surprising he feels the need to take the odd breather. (Note that Keith Jarrett takes twice as many pauses in his solo on "Solar") Whether this spare use of space is good or bad is to some extent a subjective matter of taste. It could be argued that in Petrucciani's case it goes a long way towards defining his style, particularly the precision and technical fluency that allow his ideas to pour forth with such rhythmic accuracy.

HERE'S THAT RAINY DAY

Chord-tone arpeggios	Bars 13, 67, 73
Quote from original theme	89-91
Chromatic runs	14, 18, 26-27, 47-49, 56, 72
Chromatic sequences	9-10
Patterns or sequences	2-3, 22, 28-32, 41-46, 70-72
Rhythmic displacement	77-80, 85-87, 92-97
Repeated notes	23, 25, 37-39, 51-52
Repeated material	34-35, 67, 73
Sideslipping	19, 65
Enclosures	15, 17, 21, 66, 69,
Octaves in R.H.	73-74, 81
Antiphony between hands	91-95
Enclosure	15, 17, 66, 68
Upper Structure Triad	69
Anticipation	16, 69
Phrases in 3rds	49
Phrases in 6ths and/or 5ths	81-84

Total of Elements used: 17

ALSO:

#4s and #5s	16, 19, 22, 54, 78, 79
b9s	16, 32, 54
#9s	16, 22, 32

Chorus by Chorus: start of each bar

Table 1: Here's That Rainy Day

1st note of bar	1st chorus	2nd chorus	3rd chorus	TOTAL	%
1	2	2	6	10	10
3	4	6	3	13	13
4/11	3	4	2	9	9
5/b5	7	12	5	24	25
#5/b6	0	0	1	1	1
6/13	5	0	5	10	10
7	4	5	4	13	13
9	5	3	5	13	13
b9	0	0	1	1	1
#9	0	0	0	0	0
#11	1	0	0	1	1
blank	0	0	0	0	0

BEAUTIFUL LOVE**Bars**

Chord-tone arpeggios	3, 7, 11, 23, 35, 42, 55
Arpeggio from related chord	5, 21, 25
Quote from original theme	9, 17-18
Patterns or sequences	9, 31-34, 38-40, 53
Rhythmic displacement	17-19, 33-34, 45-52
Repeated material	20, 24, 26, 35, 56, 60
Repeated notes	15, 63-64
Enclosure	8, 24, 36
Upper Structure Triad	4, 20

Total of Elements used: **9**

ALSO:

#4s and #5s	8, 17, 44, 56
b9s	1, 2, 12, 14, 16, 20, 28, 30, 33,
38,	47, 49, 54, 60
#9s	12, 29, 30, 61

Chorus by Chorus: start of each bar

Table 2: Beautiful Love

1st note of bar	1st chorus	2nd chorus	TOTAL	%
1	3	11	14	22
3	6	7	13	20
4/11	1	3	4	6
5/b5	2	2	4	6
#5/b6	2	0	2	3
6/13	0	0	0	0
7	2	4	6	9
9	3	0	3	5
b9	5	1	6	9
#9	2	1	3	5
#11	3	1	4	6
blank	0	0	0	0

LITTLE PEACE...from "FLAMINGO"	Bars
Chord-tone arpeggios	58, 61
Chord-tone passages	45
Chromatic sequences	17-24
Patterns or sequences	39-40
Repeated material	50, 47, 63
Enclosure	8, 24, 49, 50, 54
Bebop lick	5-6, 47, 63-4
 Total of Elements used:	 7

ALSO:	
#4s and #5s	54
b9s	7-8, 45, 46, 49, 50
#9s	3-5, 7, 32-34, 36, 45

Chorus by Chorus: start of each bar

Table 4: Little Peace....from *Flamingo*

1st note of bar	1st chorus – 16 bars	2nd chorus – 32 bars	TOTAL	%
1	12	7	19	40
3	4	5	9	18
4/11	0	4	4	8
5/b5	0	8	8	17
#5/b6	0	0	0	0
6/13	0	2	2	4
7	0	3	3	6
9	1	0	1	2
b9	0	2	2	4
#9	0	1	1	2
#11	0	1	1	2
blank	0	0	0	0

LITTLE PEACE IN C FOR YOU – Trio in Tokyo Bars

Chord-tone arpeggios	7, 34, 45, 49-51, 57 61, 63, 66, 94, 100-1, 105-7, 138
Chord-tone passages	49-55
Quote from original theme	113-115
Chromatic runs	9, 24, 40, 46, 74-78, 81-82, 119-120
Chromatic sequences	20-23, 41-43
Patterns or Sequences	44, 149-150, 162-164 177-184
Rhythmic displacement	41-43,153-160, 170-176, 185-192
Repeated notes	31-32, 88-92
Sideslipping	59-61
Bebop licks	10-11
Enclosures	71, 71 134, 148-9

Total of Elements used: **12**

ALSO:

#4s and #5s	0, 10, 20, 21, 22, 43, 56, 60, 70, 72, 85, 86, 109, 115, 116, 117, 134, 140, 147, 149, 150, 151, 152
b9s	0, 2, 19, 22, 55, 56, 83, 87, 113, 116, 117, 118, 119, 147, 148, 152, 168
#9s	22, 53, 94, 116, 118, 119, 148, 152, 168

Chorus by Chorus: start of each bar

Table 5: Little Peace ...from *Trio in Tokyo*

1st note of bar	1st chor -us	2nd chor -us	3rd chor -us	4th chor -us	5th chor -us	6th chor -us	TOTAL	%
1	6	7	5	15	7	17	57	30
3	4	4	4	2	4	3	21	11
4/11	2	0	1	0	0	1	4	2
5/b5	7	5	8	4	3	7	34	18
#5/b6	0	2	2	1	1	0	6	3
6/13	4	4	1	2	1	1	13	7
7	1	8	8	1	4	4	26	14
9	2	1	1	6	2	0	12	6
b9	1	0	2	0	1	0	4	2
#9	0	1	1	0	0	0	2	1
#11	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0.5
blank	4	2	2	1	1	0	10	5

BRAZILIAN LIKE

Chord-tone arpeggios

Chord-tone passages

Quote from original theme

Patterns or sequences

Rhythmic displacement

Repeated material

Repeated notes

Bebop licks

Total of Elements used:

ALSO:

#4s and #5s

b9s

#9s

Bars3-5, 9, 12, 21, 35,
37

43-44

16, 33-34, 48

53, 55-56

65-68

33 (from 1), 35-7
47-8 (from 15-6),
62-64 (from 29-31)

29-32

11

8

25, 40, 58

8, 19, 21, 22, 51, 52,
54

11, 20, 28, 52

Chorus by Chorus: start of each bar

Table 6: Brazilian Like

1st note of bar	1st chorus	2nd chorus	TOTAL	%
1	8	3	11	16
3	7	12	19	28
4/11	0	2	2	3
5/b5	8	5	13	19
#5/b6	1	1	2	3
6/13	1	1	2	3
7	2	3	5	7
9	2	7	9	13
b9	2	1	3	4
#9	2	2	4	6
#11	0	0	0	0
blank	0	0	0	0

Table 7: Summary of solos:**Here's That Rainy Day**

1 st note of bar	%
1	10
3	13
4/11	9
5/b5	25
#5/b6	1
6/13	10
7	13
9	13
b9	1
#9	0
#11	1
blank	0

Chord tone total = 61%

Beautiful Love

1 st note of bar	%
1	22
3	20
4/11	6
5/b5	6
#5/b6	3
6/13	0
7	9
9	5
b9	9
#9	5
#11	6
blank	0

Chord tone total = 57%

Bill Evans: Beautiful Love from Explorations

1 st note of bar	%
1	14
3	17
4/11	11
5/b5	14
#5/b6	3
6/13	5
7	14
9	6
b9	9
#9	2
#11	1
blank	1

Chord tone total = 59%

Little Peace in C For You from Trio in Tokyo

1 st note of bar	%
1	30
3	11
4/11	2
5/b5	18
#5/b6	3
6/13	7
7	14
9	6
b9	2
#9	1
#11	0.5
blank	5

Chord tone total = 73%

These Foolish Things

1 st note of bar	%
1	12
3	20
4/11	9
5/b5	12
#5/b6	6
6/13	2
7	15
9	10
b9	6
#9	1
#11	2
blank	0

Chord tone total = 59%

Keith Jarrett: Solar from Deer Head Inn

1 st note of bar	%
1	8
3	17
4/11	10
5/b5	13
#5/b6	3
6/13	4
7	15
9	10
b9	3
#9	1
#11	3
blank	10

Chord tone total = 53%

Little Peace...from Flamingo

1 st note of bar	%
1	40
3	18
4/11	8
5/b5	17
#5/b6	0
6/13	4
7	6
9	2
b9	4
#9	2
#11	2
blank	0

Chord tone total = 81%

Brazilian Like

1 st note of bar	%
1	16
3	28
4/11	3
5/b5	19
#5/b6	3
6/13	3
7	7
9	13
b9	4
#9	6
#11	0
blank	0

Chord tone total = 70%

Kenny Barron: Take the Coltrane from Wanton Spirit

1 st note of bar	%
1	9
3	12
4/11	7
5/b5	11
#5/b6	6
6/13	4
7	10
7 (on b7)	9
9	7
b9	4
#9	9
#11	9
blank	2

Chord tone total = 42%

PART FOUR

CONCLUSION

Michel Petrucciani was a unique and colourful character whose memory lives on, particularly in his native France. His music continues to be played there, and several albums have been released in Europe dedicated to him, in whole or in part, since his passing in 1999.

While the Composition and Analysis chapters in this study have treated his playing and composing like that of any other leading jazz pianist, one can not ignore the fact that he was an inspiration to many precisely because of his unique situation as a human being, not just as a musician.

Petrucciani preferred to gloss over the daily struggle with his disease and concentrate on his career, but it was becoming clear in his last few years that the incessant touring schedule was taking its toll on his health and his ability to maintain such a lifestyle. Certain decisions were being made to reduce the stress of handling a busy and successful career alongside a debilitating disease, notably the increasing emphasis on solo piano work, and the plan to open a music school in the South of France.

Was his status as a cultural hero, particularly in France, due solely to the impact of his music, or were people's opinions coloured by the triumph over adversity that he represented every time he stepped on stage or entered a recording studio? The answer must surely be the latter, though to what extent it is difficult to determine. General audiences are more likely to have been affected by the novelty factor of seeing a man on stage whose physical appearance was so affected by his disease, than, say, the musicians playing with him or ardent jazz followers who quickly saw beyond the surface to focus on the music alone.

The awkward questions have to be asked in the end. Was Petrucciani unique as a musician, or as a sufferer of osteogenesis imperfecta who was still able to play brilliantly? Would his impact and reputation as a player have been as great had he not been dealt such a poor deal at birth?

Pianist Mike Nock recalls seeing him play in New York in the early days without knowing anything about him beforehand. "I couldn't believe that such a small guy could play so great. It was incredible to watch."¹

It seems impossible to divorce the man from the player however hard one might try. An analysis alone of his playing and composing styles would be too restricting and would not give a full picture. In Michel Petrucciani's case one cannot study the music alone and ignore how it was produced and by whom. It would do him a disservice.

That said, it is clear that many aspects of Petrucciani's development as a player followed the same pattern as most other jazz pianists. Early classical training within a musical family, the flowering of natural talent through the early teens, the absorbing of early influences like Oscar Peterson and later Bill Evans, and the gradual emergence of a singular voice (see Chapter Three) are all common factors in a jazz musician's progress towards being one's own person. Even the trajectory of his own career had much in common with that of others, sometimes depending on a dose of good fortune to initiate the next phase. Without the mentoring of Charles Lloyd, for example, Petrucciani may have made much slower progress in establishing himself on the U.S. scene. Without the contract with Blue Note Records, his music would not have reached the wide audience it deserved.

The frequent references in the press to the influence of Bill Evans has led to a detailed examination which has revealed that this influence was undeniably present in Petrucciani's early years. At one stage he even dedicated an entire solo piano track to him (Mike Pee from *Oracle's Destiny*) which included the liberal use of Evans' licks and quotes from his repertoire. Taking his career as a whole though, the Bill Evans influence was found to be exaggerated and nothing more than a convenient reference point held over from Petrucciani's early playing. While some writers lament the loss of the Evans connection (Thomas Conrad, for example) it is clear that by the mid-eighties Petrucciani had found his own signature sound.

¹ Nock, Mike. *Personal conversation*. June 2006.

Though his career lasted less than twenty years, Petrucciani's output was considerable and he has left behind a substantial body of music, including some excellent compositions with a distinct personality. While this study failed to find a *steady* increase in the quality of these pieces as their number grew, it was evident that many of the better ones were indeed written in the later years. This was consistent with Petrucciani's own faith in the worth of these tunes and their growing prominence in his repertoire. Many feature strong, lyrical melodies over fairly simple structures and chord sequences which often take off in surprising directions. Many of his later albums contain original repertoire only and there is even a case to be made that his final studio album, *Both Worlds*, put greater emphasis on his compositions, and Bob Brookmeyer's arrangements of them, than on his own playing.

His compositions continue to be played by other musicians, particularly in France and Italy. The young Italian alto player, Francisco Cafiso, recently issued a CD of a live recording of his "Concerto for Michel Petrucciani" which features, along with his own writing, several Petrucciani tunes played by his quartet. In France pianist Ludovic de Preissac has long championed Petrucciani's tunes (as mentioned in the Introduction).

No evidence was found, however, of Petrucciani's influence living on in the U.S. until just a few weeks before the completion of this study. The recent album recorded in the U.S. by the Christian Jacob Trio, discussed in Chapter Eight, may revive interest in the pianist's writing.

When improvising on his own compositions, Petrucciani played less complex lines, favouring chord tones at the start of the bar more often. Of the three solos on his own tunes studied in chapters 13-15, 70% or more of the bars begin with the root, 3rd, 5th or 7th of the current chord. Whether this diminishes the impact of these solos is a moot point. Certainly the listening audience is less familiar with the chord sequence of an original, than of a standard. More use of chord tones can therefore strengthen the sequence, aiding the listener to follow more easily the form of the tune. On the other hand, while this is the case with "Brazilian Like", the other original in this study, "Little Peace in C for You", uses the

"I Got Rhythm" changes which are much more familiar. There is scope here for further work to be done on the different approaches that might be taken by soloists on original chord progressions as opposed to standard chord progressions.

In summary, while his output was inconsistent and he is unlikely ever to make it into a list of top jazz composers, Michel Petrucciani did nevertheless succeed in writing charming songs of considerable merit and originality.

In examining Petrucciani's improvising, this study analysed seven solos, four of them on standards, and three on originals. Many common threads were found and it was noted that the pianist uses many improvisational devices in the common domain, such as change-running (or chord-spelling), chromatic runs, sequencing, and chromatic enclosures. Rhythmic displacement, triplet figures, and repeated notes feature strongly in all the solos.

It is accepted that there are limitations in the kind of analysis undertaken. Clearly further solo transcription and analysis would give a broader picture. Solo analysis does not take into account important considerations such as dynamics and group interaction. It cannot accurately convey rhythmic feel, thereby bypassing one of the shining characteristics of Petrucciani's playing on which he placed more and more emphasis over the years. Rhythmic accuracy was one of his central aims, and he succeeded brilliantly in playing 'right in the pocket', crediting the influence of several great drummers with whom he played in giving him such rhythmic strength. While this is evident in a great deal of his playing, it is on the fast tempo of "Little Peace in C for You" from the live version in Tokyo that we hear it at its most prominent. It is no coincidence that this is a late recording: rhythmic precision and an increasingly percussive style featured more strongly as Petrucciani's career evolved. This is revealed more through listening than studying a written transcription. The (albeit minor) reduction over the years in the number of melodic improvising elements, detected in the solo analysis chapters above, are in line with Petrucciani's comments about no longer wanting to impress his audience with "the killer phrase" at the expense of clarity and simplicity.

There is also further work to be done on the later solo piano recordings, given that Petrucciani's reputation as a solo pianist was growing throughout the nineties to the extent that favourable comparisons were being made with the solo work of Keith Jarrett. Both pianists have in common outstanding technical prowess and a penchant for playing uninterrupted for forty minutes or more at a time. Petrucciani could claim some uniqueness in his approach to playing lengthy medleys of his favourite tunes which happily mixed his own songs with Broadway tunes and jazz standards. The most notable example can be heard on the first track of the live solo recording *Au Théâtre des Champs-Élysées*, a forty-minute tour de force entitled "Medley of My Favourite Songs", where he ranges from his own "Rachid" to Duke Ellington tunes via "My Funny Valentine" and "Autumn Leaves".

Michel Petrucciani was one of several European jazz musicians to come to the fore in the latter stages of the twentieth century. One can point to the influence of the German ECM label and the emergence of Keith Jarrett's European quartet in the seventies as two of many factors that widened the impact and global spread of jazz as an art form. It can be argued that Petrucciani came along at a fortuitous time when some of the hard work in gaining acceptance for European jazz had already been done. Nonetheless, the uniqueness of his playing, reinforced by his striking physical aspect, have guaranteed him a place in the history of jazz piano, a place he undoubtedly deserves given the extraordinary talent he could so easily have undernourished had it not been for his tenacious courage against all odds.



Fig. 6

Appendices

Enclosed compact discs:

Music

CD1 accompanies chapter 3 - influence of Bill Evans

CD2 accompanies Part 2 - compositions

CD3 accompanies Part 3 – solos

Text

1. Interview with drummer Eliot Zigmund
2. Interview with drummer Aldo Romano
3. Interview with artist Edouard Detmer
4. Interview with Michel Petrucciani by Frederic Goaty. Published in Jazz Magazine 1997 (11 parts). Translated into English by Phil Broadhurst.

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Flash (1980)

Michel Petrucciani: *piano*
 Mike Zwerin: *valve trombone, bass trumpet*
 Louis Petrucciani: *bass*
 Aldo Romano: *drums*

Recorded at Jean Roché Studio, St-Martin-de-Castillon, August 11,12,13
 1980

Recording Engineer: Jean Roché
 Produced by Mike Zwerin
 EPM Musique FDC 5512

Michel Petrucciani (1981)

Michel Petrucciani: *piano*
 Jean-François Jenny-Clark: *bass*
 Aldo Romano: *drums*

Recorded at Spitsbergen Studio Holland, April 3,4, 1981

Recording Engineer: Yan Willen
 Produced by Jean-Jacques Pussiau and François Lemaire
 Owl Records OWL 025

Date with Time (1981)

Michel Petrucciani: *piano*

Recorded at Acousti Studio, Paris, December 15 1981
 Recording Engineer: Clement Ziegler
 Produced by Jean-Jacques Pussiau and François Lemaire
 Owl Records OWL 064
 Liner notes: Aldo Romano

Estate (1982)

Michel Petrucciani: *piano*
 Furio Di Castri: *bass*
 Aldo Romano: *drums*

Recorded at Forum Rec Studio, Rome, March 29,30, April 16, May 5 1982

Recording Engineer: Sergio Marcotulli
 Produced by Maurizio Giammarco, Federica Roa, Amedeo Sorrentino
 IRD Records TDM 001
 Liner notes: Daniel Soutif

Toot Sweet (1982)

Lee Konitz: *alto*
 Michel Petrucciani: *piano*

Recorded at Centre Musical Bosendorfer, Paris, May 25 1982
 Recording Engineer: Jean-Martial Golaz
 Produced by Jean-Jacques Pussiau
 Owl Records 013 432 (reissued 1993)
 Liner notes: Alain Gerber

Montreux 82 (1982)

Charles Lloyd: *flute, tenor*
 Michel Petrucciani: *piano*
 Palle Danielsson: *bass*
 Son Ship Theus: *drums*

Recorded at Montreux International Jazz Festival, July 16, Montreux, Switzerland.
 Recording Engineer: David Richards
 Produced by Gabriel Franklin and Charles Lloyd
 Elektra/Asylum Records 60220-1
 Liner notes: Charles Lloyd and Pierre Grandjean

Oracle's Destiny (1982)

Michel Petrucciani: *piano*

Recorded in, Paris, October 18 1982
 Recording Engineer: Jean-Martial Golaz
 Produced by Jean-Jacques Pussiau
 Owl Records 032
This album is dedicated to Bill Evans

A Night in Copenhagen (1983)

Charles Lloyd: *flute, tenor, Chinese oboe*
 Michel Petrucciani: *piano*
 Palle Danielsson: *bass*
 Son Ship Theus: *drums*
 Guest, Bobby McFerrin: *vocals*

Recorded live by Danmarks Radio, Copenhagen Jazz Festival 1983
 Recording Engineer: Jorn Jacobsen
 Produced by Ib Skovgaard
 Blue Note CDP 07778510420

100 Hearts (1984)

Michel Petrucciani: piano

Recorded live at RCA Studio A, New York, June 1983
 Recording Engineer: James Crotty
 Produced by Gabriel Franklin
 Blue Note 7243 5 38329 (originally Concord 43001)
 Liner notes: Leonard Feather

Live at the Village Vanguard (1984)

Michel Petrucciani: *piano*
 Palle Danielsson: *bass*
 Eliot Zigmund: *drums*

Recorded live March 16 1984
 Recording Engineer: Tom Arrison and Gabriel Franklin
 Produced by Gabriel Franklin and Michel Petrucciani
 Blue Note 7243 5 40382 (originally Concord 43001)
 Liner notes: Michel Petrucciani

Note N'Notes (1984)

Michel Petrucciani: *piano + two tracks of overdubbed piano*

Recorded at Village Studio, October 5 1984
 Recording Engineer: Guy Simon
 Produced by Jean-Jacques Pussiau
 Owl Records 037

Cold Blues (1985)

Michel Petrucciani: *piano*
 Ron McLure: *bass*

Recorded at Classic Sound Productions Studio, January 11 1985
 Recording Engineer: A. T. Michael MacDonald
 Produced by Jean-Jacques Pussiau
 Owl Records 042

Pianism (1985)

Michel Petrucciani: *piano*
 Palle Danielsson: *bass*
 Eliot Zigmund: *drums*

Recorded at RCA Studio C, December 20 1985
 Recording Engineer: Mike Moran
 Produced by Mike Berniker
 Blue Note CDP 7 46295
 Liner notes: Mort Good

Darn That Dream (1985)

Michel Petrucciani: *piano*
 Louis Petrucciani: *bass*
 Antoine Petrucciani: *guitar*

Recorded at Studio CMD, Marseille, France
 Recording Engineer: Jean-Luc Chapey
 Produced by Jean Corti
 CEL 66772

Power of Three (1986)

Michel Petrucciani: *piano*
 Jim Hall: *guitar*
 Wayne Shorter: *soprano*

Recorded live at the Montreux Jazz Festival, July 14 1986
 Recording Engineer: Dave Richards
 Produced by David Rubinson and Mary Ann Topper
 Blue Note CDP 7 46427
 Liner notes: Fernando Gonzalez

Michel Plays Petrucciani (1987)

Michel Petrucciani: *piano*
 Gary Peacock: *bass* (1-5)
 Roy Haynes: *drums* (1-5)
 Eddie Gomez: *bass* (6-9)
 Al Foster: *drums* (6-9)
 John Abercrombie: *guitar*
 Steve Thornton: *percussion*

Recorded live at Clinton Recording Studio, tracks 1-5 September 24,
 tracks 6-9 December 9,10 1987
 Recording Engineer: Ed Rak
 Produced by Eric Kressman and Ed Rak
 Blue Note CDP 7 48679
 Liner notes: Fernando Gonzalez

Music (1989)

Michel Petrucciani: *piano, synthesizer, B3 organ and vocal*
 Tania Maria: *vocal*
 Joe Lovano: *soprano*
 Anthony Jackson: *electric bass*/ Chris Walker: *electric bass*
 Andy McKee: *electric bass*/ Eddie Gomez: *acoustic bass*
 Lenny White: *drums*/ Victor Jones: *drums*
 Frank Colon: *percussion*
 Romero Lubambo: *guitar*
 Gil Goldstein: *accordion*
 Adam Holzman: *synthesizer*

Recorded at The Record Plant, New York
 Recording Engineers: Tom Swift and Frank Pekoc
 Produced by Michel Petrucciani and Eric Kressman
 Blue Note CDP 7 92563

The Manhattan Project (1989)

Michel Petrucciani: *piano*
 Wayne Shorter: *soprano and tenor*
 Stanley Clarke: *bass*
 Lenny White: *drums*
 Gil Goldstein and Pete Levin: *keyboards*

Recorded live at Chelsea Studios, New York, December 16 1989
 Recording Engineer: Alec Head
 Produced by Lenny White
 Blue Note CDP 7 94204 DVD 44301 9

Playground (1991)

Michel Petrucciani: *piano and synthesizers*
 Adam Holzman: *synthesizer*
 Anthony Jackson: *bass*
 Omar Hakim: *drums*
 Steve Thornton: *percussion*
 Aldo Romano: *drums* (track 4)

Recorded live at Clinton Recording Studios, New York.
 Recording Engineer: Tom Swift
 Produced by Michel Petrucciani and Eric Kressman
 Blue Note CDP 7 95480

Michel Petrucciani – Live (1981)

Michel Petrucciani: *piano*
 Adam Holzman: *keyboards*
 Steve Logan: *bass*
 Abdou M'boop: *percussion*
 Victor Jones: *drums*

Recorded live at The Arsenal, Metz, France November 1991.
 Mastering Engineer: Eric Tucker
 Produced by Michel Petrucciani and Gilles Avinzac
 Blue Note CDP 7 80589

Promenade with Duke (1993)

Michel Petrucciani: *piano*

Recorded at Power Station, New York
 Recording Engineer: Roger Roche
 Produced by Michel Petrucciani and Gilles Avinzac
 Blue Note CDP 7 80590

Marvellous (1994)

Michel Petrucciani: *piano*
 Dave Holland: *bass*
 Tony Williams: *drums*
 Graffiti String Quartet

Recorded at Studio Palais des Congrès
 Recording Engineer: Roger Roche
 Produced by Michel Petrucciani and Yves Chamberland
 Dreyfus Jazz FDM 36564

Conference de Presse – Vol. 1 (1994)

Michel Petrucciani: *piano*
 Eddy Louiss: *Hammond organ*

Recorded live at "Petit Journal Montparnasse", June 14,15,16 1994
 Recording Engineer: Roger Roche
 Produced by Francis Dreyfus and Yves Chamberland
 Dreyfus Jazz FDM 36568
 Liner notes: Yves Chamberland

Conference de Presse – Vol. 2 (1995)

Michel Petrucciani: *piano*
 Eddy Louiss: *Hammond organ*

Recorded live at "Petit Journal Montparnasse", June 14,15,16 1994
 Recording Engineer: Roger Roche
 Produced by Francis Dreyfus and Yves Chamberland
 Dreyfus Jazz FDM 36573
 Liner notes: Francis Dreyfus

Au Théâtre des Champs-Élysées (1995) two discs

Michel Petrucciani: *piano*

Recorded live at Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, Paris, November 14 1994
 Recording Engineer: Roger Roche
 Produced by Francis Dreyfus and Yves Chamberland
 Dreyfus Jazz FDM 36570

Flamingo (1996)

Stéphane Grappelli: *violin*
 Michel Petrucciani: *piano*
 George Mraz: *bass*
 Roy Haynes: *drums*

Recorded at Studios Davout, Paris, June 15,16,17 1995
 Recording Engineer: Claude Hermelin
 Produced by Francis Dreyfus and Yves Chamberland
 Dreyfus Jazz 36570

Both Worlds (1997)

Michel Petrucciani: *piano*
 Anthony Jackson: *bass*
 Steve Gadd: *drums*
 Bob Brookmeyer; *valve trombone and arranger*
 Flavio Boltro: *trumpet*
 Stefano Di Battista: *soprano and alto*

Recorded at Right Track Recording Studio, New York, 1997
 Recording Engineer: Roger Roche
 Produced by Francis Dreyfus and Yves Chamberland
 Dreyfus Jazz FDM 36590
 Liner notes: Thierry Pérémarti

Solo Live

Michel Petrucciani: *piano*

Recorded live at "Alte Oper", Frankfurt, Germany, February 27 1997
 Recording Engineer: René Ameline
 Produced by Hélène Dreyfus
 Dreyfus Jazz FDM 36597

Live in Tokyo

Michel Petrucciani: *piano*

Recorded live at Blue Note, Tokyo, November 1997
 Recording Engineer: Roger Roche
 Produced by Francis Dreyfus
 Dreyfus Jazz FDM 36605
 Liner notes: Pascal Anquetil

Conversations with Michel (2000)

Michel Petrucciani: *piano*

Bob Malach: *tenor*

Duets recorded at Ferber and Gimmick Studios, January 1989
 Conversations with Ben Sidran recorded at Roxy Recorders, New York,
 January 1989
 Recording Engineer: Roger Roche
 Produced by Ben Sidran
 Go Jazz LC 05082
 Liner notes: Ben Sidran

Concerts Inédits (1999) three discsDisc 1: **Solo**

Michel Petrucciani: *piano*

Recorded live at the Antibes Juan les Pins Jazz Festival for France Musique
 radio, July 27 1993
 Recording Engineer: René Ameline
 Produced by Francis Dreyfus

Disc 2: **Duo**

Michel Petrucciani: *piano*

Niels Henning Orsted Pedersen: *bass*

Recorded live at the Copenhagen Jazzhouse, Denmark by Danish
 Broadcasting Corp. April 18 1994
 Recording Engineer: Lars Palsig
 Produced by Francis Dreyfus

Disc 3: **Trio**

Michel Petrucciani: *piano*

Louis Petrucciani: *bass*

Lenny White: *drums*

Recorded live at Nabari, Japan, August 14 1994
 Recording Engineer: René Ameline
 Produced by Francis Dreyfus
 Liner notes: Pascal Anquetil

Dreyfus Jazz FDM 36

Dreyfus Night in Paris (2003)

Marcus Miller: *bass*
Michel Petrucciani: *piano*
Kenny Garrett: *alto and soprano*
Biréli Lagrène: *guitar*
Lenny White: *drums*

Recorded live at Palais des Sports, Paris, July 7 1994
Recording Engineer: Roger Roche
Produced by Francis Dreyfus
Dreyfus Jazz FDM 36652

N.B. This discography does not include the compilation CDs *Days of Wine and Roses* (Owl 548 288), *The Best of Michel Petrucciani* (Blue Note 89916), or the recent release from Dreyfus, *So What*.



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