

W. Jay Sydeman

A Jazz Fantasy
for Solo Piano
(1976)

Why did I write a “Jazz Fantasy” in 1976 when up to that point my considerable repertoire was quite abstract, even avant-garde-ish? Well, why not? Hindemith said a composer should do it all. He did, and I followed his fine example. Of course the old classical regimen of having tight thematic material snuck in, but the material is decidedly jazz-ish... actually a combination of a classical pianist (very careful, very precise) playing jazz.

But what era of jazz, you might well ask. Well, I guess sort of big band 40-ish. Certainly not be-bop, certainly not rock 'n roll-ish. Yes, that sophisticated 40-ish feeling where the beat is always there but in a somewhat subtle way. After all it is a JAZZ fantasy.

– W. Jay Sydeman, January 2013

W. Jay Sydeman's life mirrors the breadth and variety of his music. Born in New York in 1928 and educated at Manhattan's Mannes School of Music, he quickly became one of the most sought-after and honored composers of his generation, receiving commissions from such prestigious groups as the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, the Tanglewood Music Center, and the Boston Symphony, which premiered his orchestral work in memory of John F. Kennedy in 1966. “Sydeman uses a whole battery of far out techniques,” wrote the *New York Times*, “but he has an uncanny ability to throw in the whole avant-garde machinery as if it were the simplest, most normal way of making music in the world ... More than many of his colleagues, he seems to know what will sound well, and he works for some remarkably attractive, pure textures. His sounds seem to grow from a physical sense of exactly what material is right.”

In 1970, after a heady period that included awards from the National Institute of Arts and Letters, the Boston Symphony Orchestra and Library of Congress, Sydeman left New York – and composition – to begin a journey of personal and artistic exploration.

“Around 1980,” he has written, “I returned to composition – at first a large number of choral works which reconnected me to the source of all music – the human voice. Out of this new lyric impulse have evolved all of my works since that time – more romantic, more accessible. I create music for the musician.”

– Howard Hersh,
Artistic Director of “Music Now”

Sydeman is part of a composers' group in Nevada City annually producing the “Wet Ink Festival of New Music.” He now lives in Mendocino and hosts a bi-weekly program on KZYX, “The Mind of a Composer,” 10 am to noon on Mondays, introducing and commenting on contemporary music.

Duration: circa 2:00

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A Jazz Fantasy

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(1976)

Fast ♩ = c. 144

Measures 1-3 of the piece. The music is in 4/4 time with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The tempo is marked 'Fast' with a quarter note equal to approximately 144 beats per minute. The first measure starts with a mezzo-forte (mf) dynamic. Brackets are used to group notes, indicating the primary voice. A finger number '1' is shown under the first note of the third measure.

Note: Brackets denote primary voice

Measures 4-6. Measure 4 begins with a piano (p) dynamic in the right hand and a forte (f) dynamic in the left hand. Measure 6 ends with a 'rit.' (ritardando) marking. Brackets continue to denote the primary voice.

Measures 7-9. Measure 7 is marked 'a tempo'. Measure 8 includes fingerings '1 2 1 3' for the right hand and a 'p' (piano) dynamic. Measure 9 features a mezzo-forte (mf) dynamic in the left hand. Brackets denote the primary voice.

Measures 10-14. Measure 10 starts with a mezzo-piano (mp) dynamic. Measures 11-14 contain complex rhythmic patterns with various fingerings (e.g., 4, 4, 2, 1 in the right hand; 5, 2, 1, 4, 5 in the left hand). Brackets denote the primary voice.

Measures 15-18. Measure 15 begins with a mezzo-piano (mp) dynamic. Measures 16-18 continue the complex rhythmic and harmonic development. Brackets denote the primary voice.

19

4

f

1 1 5 5 5

23

p

mp

27

p

mf

31

mp

Bring out L.H. upper notes

34

mf sub.

f

37

f
Ped.

Poco più mosso ♩ = c. 148

41

mp *relentless*
L.H. very stacc.

45

cresc.

49

f *mp sub*

53

p

55

f

L.H. is melody

59

Tempo I ♩ = c. 144

mf

p

63

poco

mp

65

f

mp

68

mf

p

8va