

## **WHO IS THIS BOOK FOR?**

This collection of 150 jazz canons was originally intended for 4 middle bass instruments. More specifically said, this book functions best with an ensemble of 4 instruments capable of the range E<sub>2</sub> to Bb<sub>4</sub>. Some instruments included within this range are tenor and bass trombone, baritone horn, euphonium, French horn, baritone saxophone, bass clarinet, bassoon, guitar, cello and of course piano. There is however no reason why this material could not be utilised for instruments slightly outside of this range such as tenor saxophone and tuba or for an ensemble of instruments one octave higher. These canons may be played by an ensemble consisting of only one particular instrument or a combination of any of the instruments listed above. Exact instrumentation is at the performer's discretion. Copies of this book are available in bass clef, treble clef, Bb, Eb and F transposition.

Although it is optimal that they be performed with 4 voices, most of these canons function sufficiently if only 3 or even 2 voices are available.

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## **WHY WRITE OR PLAY A BOOK OF CANONS?**

When confronted by a book titled '150 jazz canons', one might be inclined to ask 'Why would anyone write such a book and who would play it?' The first and most obvious answer to this is, 'for fun!' Not only is canonic writing within the realms of jazz thrilling for the composer, canons are thoroughly entertaining to perform with other musicians.

There are however also very practical applications – for example, training ensemble communication. Each canon is nothing more than a single melody lapped onto itself consequently resulting in harmonic progression. This essentially means that each musician is playing the same thing. With this as our cornerstone, global melodic and harmonic coherency only becomes achievable with strong communication within the ensemble. The musician must learn to enhance the soloistic value of their melodic line, whilst conforming to the ensemble's common phrasing and merging with the entire body of harmony. A canon may also be looped as often as needed for the ensemble to attain unity.

This book is also open for non-jazz musicians! With a wide variety of material, tempi and styles to choose from, these canons are fitting for any ensemble or group of musicians wishing to practice or experiment with jazz phrasing.

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## HOW DOES THIS BOOK WORK?

The principle behind these canons is rather straightforward. One instrumentalist begins to play the melody. When he or she arrives at the bar marked with the number 2, the second instrumentalist should begin. At the number 3, the third instrumentalist should begin, followed by the number 4 where the final instrumentalist begins.

Each canon is marked with the term '**swing**' or '**straight**'. The term 'swing' may be realised at the performers' discretion from anywhere between a light swing to shuffle. 'Straight' refers to even 8ths, usually in a latin-jazz or funk context. Often '**swing/straight**' or '**straight/swing**' will be stated. This simply means that the canon may be played either swung or straight.

Each canon is also marked with the tempo '**medium**', '**fast**' and '**medium - fast**'. These tempi are only extremely rough suggestions. 'Medium' means that the canon works well anywhere between roughly tempo 110 - 170. A 'fast' canon works best from tempo 170 - 200 and upwards. A canon marked 'medium - fast' works in a medium tempo as well as a fast tempo; from tempo 110 - 200 and upwards. Performers are encouraged to apply accelerando and ritardando as well as other experimentation in tempo at their discretion. Varying tempo and performance style will drastically change the character and colour of a canon.

Beginning a canon is the easy part - the hard part is knowing where to stop! This book utilises two different symbols to achieve '*fine*'. Other than for the conclusion of a canon, these symbols should be ignored during canon performance.

 - A fermata indicates that the ensemble is to finish on a chord. The ensemble's leader should give the cue that it is time to finish, at which point each player will hold the fermata tone in their particular passage. Occasionally, when a canon is greater in length, it is necessary for each performer to conclude on a very specific fermata. In this case, each fermata will be numbered from 1 to 4. For example, a fermata with the number 1 above it would specify that the first player to have started the canon should conclude on that particular fermata. Likewise, the second player should finish on the fermata marked by the number 2, and so on.

 - Two strokes or 'slashes' indicate the end of a melodic line. If there is only one pair of strokes, each performer should end the melody upon reaching the symbol for the last time. The result will be that each performer will conclude the melody one after the other until only one voice remains - the exact opposite to the canon's beginning. If there are four pairs of strokes, this indicates that everyone is to finish simultaneously.

This book contains no dynamic markings. It is encouraged that the ensemble decides changes in dynamics as well as other expressions amongst themselves. Especially in regards to public performance, it is critical that the ensemble animates each canon in regards to dynamic expression as well as articulation and tempo! Do not forget that the repetition of material within each canon will soon become tedious to an audience unless the ensemble takes initiative to bring them to life.