“SINGERS OF SONGS, WEAVERS OF DREAMS”
BY DAVID BAKER

by

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INTRODUCTION

David Baker was one of the great figures in the world of jazz education in the twentieth century. He studied music education, earning a bachelor of fine arts degree in 1953 and a master of fine arts degree in 1954 from Indiana University, and then went on to The School of Jazz in Lenox, Massachusetts in 1959. The faculty at the newly opened institution included several distinguished figures in jazz including Dizzy Gillespie, John Lewis, Gunther Schuller and George Russell. During his time at The School of Jazz, Baker became familiar with Russell’s *Lydian Chromatic Concept of Tonal Organization* (1953), which is a treatise that had a huge influence on the trajectory of jazz music, and would serve as the basis for Baker’s compositional language throughout his career.

While under the tutelage of George Russell, Baker began composing and playing trombone as a member of the George Russell Sextet, and he was soon recognized as one of the finest young. Baker toured extensively as a member of the George Russell Sextet, and would go on to record six albums together 1960-1965 including *Jazz in the Space Age*.

After an automobile accident forced Baker to retire from playing the trombone, he switched to cello as his primary instrument, and subsequently focused his energy on teaching and composing. Baker joined the faculty of the Jacobs School of Music in 1966 and founded its jazz studies program, where he served as chair from 1968 to 2013. He cofounded the Smithsonian Jazz Masterworks Orchestra and served as its conductor and musical and artistic director for 22 years. As a composer, Baker was commissioned to
write music for many of the greatest classical musicians and ensembles of his era, from renowned violinist Josef Gingold, to the Beaux Arts trio, the New York Philharmonic, and Janos Starker.

_Singers of Songs-Weavers of Dreams_ is a jazz suite for cello and solo percussion commissioned by Janos Starker in 1980. The instrumentation features seventeen different percussion instruments along with the solo cello. The percussion instruments used in the piece include: bongos, cowbell, cymbals, finger cymbals, guiro, jawbone, marimba, orchestra bells, scraper, snare drum, timbales, tom toms, triangle, tympani (occasionally denoted in the singular ‘tympano’ when a passage is to be played on one kettledrum), vibraphone, wind chimes and xylophone. The world premiere performance was given at Carnegie Hall with Janos Starker at the cello and George Gaber playing the percussion instruments. The same duo made the debut recording of the work for Laurel Records in 1981. When the piece was recorded, George Gaber remarked that he might, “need roller skates to get to all the percussion in time.”

While there have been very few pieces to ever make use of this instrumentation, the only piece that is known to have been written before Baker’s, _Singers of Songs-Weavers of Dreams_, is Vivian Fine’s, _Divertimento_, written in 1951. The piece included four percussion instruments (timpani, snare-drum, cymbal, tambourine, and wood-block), and while the instrumentation of Baker’s _Singers of Songs/Weavers of Dreams_ may bear some resemblance to Fine’s _Divertimento_, the stylistic writing and use of the instrumentation is uniquely, David Baker.

One of the most unique and interesting aspects of _Singers of Songs-Weavers of_
Dreams is that each of the seven movements is named for a musician who made a significant contribution to American-jazz music in the twentieth century. Not only were these seven musicians truly iconic figures in twentieth century American music, but they were also known as musicians who greatly impacted the life of Baker. Thus, the work serves as, what Baker called, an “Homage to my friends.” The seven musicians are: Miles Davis, Sonny Rollins, Jimmy Yancey, Paul Robeson, John Coltrane, Duke Ellington, and Dizzy Gillespie. According to Baker, each of the movements is, “an abstract portrait not so much an imitation of each musician’s style as a sense-impression of his life and music.” When considering the life and music of the musicians that the movements owe their inspiration, it is important to understand that each of these individuals were not just wonderful musicians in their own right, but they were all individuals who had made a significant contribution to the elevation and appreciation of jazz, as well as for garnering the respect due to African-American musicians in American culture. Baker, who can be seen as the embodiment of American culture, takes us on a journey through the history of American music, and introduces to us one at a time, to some of the colossal figures of jazz whose lives and music would leave a lasting impression on the world.

The title Singers of Songs-Weavers of Dreams first appeared in popular culture with 1911 novel by Myrtle Reed, which was subsequently made into a silent film in 1918. Weaver of Dreams is also the name of a jazz standard that was first made famous by singer Nat King Cole in 1952, and later recorded by prominent jazz musicians including Kenny Burrell, Sonny Rollins, John Coltrane, and countless others.
CHAPTER 1: MILES

The first movement of *Singers of Songs-Weavers of Dreams* is *Miles*, named after the legendary jazz trumpet player and composer Miles Davis. Davis is widely considered to be one of the most innovative and influential jazz musicians of the 20th century. Davis was born in a small town in Illinois just north of East St. Louis, where he played trumpet professionally from a young age. After meeting and playing with both Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker during their visit to St. Louis, Miles decided he would move to New York City to attend the Juilliard School of Music. From the time he arrived in New York in 1944, he became a prominent figure in the New York jazz scene, and is recognized as being the leading innovator in every major development in jazz music, including bebop, cool jazz, hard bop, modal jazz, free jazz, post-bop and jazz-fusion. While Davis is arguably one of the most celebrated jazz musicians of all time, his music was so far ahead of his time, that he sometimes found himself at odds with other musicians, music critics, or the public at large. Despite his reclusive, introverted nature, and distaste for people who could not understand him or his music, his impact on the world of jazz makes him an indelible figure in all of American music, and one that will forever be remembered for making jazz “cool.”

Baker explains that, “...the gentle vibes sound, rustling wind chimes and floating cello figures aim at capturing the gentle side of the enigmatic Miles Davis.” The opening of *Miles* begins in 4/4 time with the solo wind chimes setting an eerie mood as the cello enters with what sounds like the opening of George Gershwin’s jazz standard, “*Our Love is Here to Stay.*”
Example 1.1: “Our Love is Here to Stay” by George Gershwin

Example 1.2: Opening Cello Motive of “Miles”

The triadic opening motive of Miles, diffuses with a trill in the cello and glissando of black keys in the vibes (an instrument popularized by jazz musicians like Milt Jackson, and Lionel Hampton) before the cello repeats and reworks the simple, yet always harmonically interesting opening motive in Baker’s colorful harmonic language.

As the motive is repeated, the vibes have a succession of half notes and tied-over quarter notes that create a static canvas of sound, while the cello explores the upper register of the instrument. The variation in percussion instruments highlights Baker’s ability to utilize different instruments for different purposes, and helps to create a varied soundscape in this movement. As the vibes continue to establish a spacious colorful backdrop of sound, the cello continues to freely wonder and explore the lyrical qualities of the cello. Every improvisatory-like scale in the cello is answered by the vibes with a glissando of pedaled black keys, giving the lyrical monologue in the cello a somewhat
mysterious character.

In measure eighteen, the percussion, which has been primarily establishing tonal color, changes to cymbals and begins a series of imitation as the cello again states the opening motive.

Example 1.3: Cello Restating Opening Motive with Cymbals in Imitation

The percussion now becomes restless, leading into a building of drama as the cymbals transition from triple piano to a dramatic forte before dropping back down to piano. The crescendo leads into an improvisatory passage in the lamenting cello with very subtle assistance in the cymbals before the percussion changes back to vibes. The movement then comes to a quiet close with the third and final glissando of black keys in the vibes.
Example 1.4: *Miles*: Closing Theme
CHAPTER 2: SONNY ROLLINS

The second movement of Singers of Songs-Weavers of Dreams is entitled Sonny Rollins, in honor of the great tenor saxophone player (while the piece has been published with Miles as the first movement, the premiere recording by Starker and Gaber lists Sonny Rollins as the first movement and Miles as the second).

Rollins is a saxophonist, composer and bandleader, widely regarded today as one of the most influential and important jazz musicians of all time. Born in New York City to parents from the Virgin Islands, Rollins grew up in Harlem and was exposed to the New York jazz scene from a young age. He was a self-taught prodigy on the saxophone, and by the age of 17 he was sharing the bandstand with jazz icons like Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, and Miles Davis. Of all the legendary performances and recordings that Rollins made throughout the first years of his career, he became somewhat of a folklore legend when he took a two-year sabbatical from playing publicly to spend time practicing and perfecting his craft in the late hours of the night on the walkway of the Williamsburg Bridge (an occurrence that was documented by a journalist for Metronome magazine in 1961). At the time, Rollins was widely regarded as the greatest tenor saxophone player of his generation, but upon his return to performing and recording, his prodigious output and progressive recordings solidified his title of being one of the all-time greats of jazz.

Sonny Rollins, as Baker says, “…is represented by a calypso-like theme which is treated in a very free fashion. The movement was inspired by Sonny Rollins’ now famous jazz standard St. Thomas.
Example 2.1: “St. Thomas” by Sonny Rollins

The movement opens with a steady pulse in the percussion on the timbale (a Latin-American, shallow, single-headed drum with metal casing, used in military bands, perhaps slung either side of a horse, and in classical orchestras). After the percussionist establishes the rhythmic pulse, the cello has two measures of jazzy, syncopated, four-note pizzicato chords before a six-measure passage of improvisatory double-stops that introduce the calypso-style, and there is just enough chromaticism in the harmonies to let us know that this movement will not just be a truly traditional calypso tune.

Example 2.2: Opening of Rhythm of “Sonny Rollins,” m. 1 - 6

The folk-like melody from “St. Thomas” is heard in the cello at measure thirteen, and the combination of the cello and the marimba effectively evoke the calm and cool sounds of steel drums from the Caribbean.
Example 2.3: “Sonny Rollins”: m 13 – 15 (St. Thomas theme)

As the melody comes to a close at measure nineteen, the cello begins the melody again, but now with a chromatic succession of double stops. The double-stopped version of the St. Thomas theme in the cello expands the tonal palate of the listener, as the once simple theme is now highly dissonant, yet remains recognizable thanks to the steady calypso rhythm in the marimba. This is a wonderful example of how skillful jazz composers are able to reinterpret a simple melody and use it as a canvas in which they are able to express themselves harmonically.

Example 2.4: Dissonant, Double-Stopped Restatement of “St. Thomas” mm. 19 -24

After a improvisatory solo by the cello, the theme is picked up by the marimba in
measure thirty-six, the cello assumes an accompanying role as it takes over the rhythmic
motive in double-stops, and the percussionist assists with steady percussive accents in the
resonator (a melodic percussion used to produce several different notes of different
pitches) on beats two and four. As the marimba is coming to the end of the melody, the
cello suddenly interrupts and finishes the tune.

Example 2.5: “St. Thomas” Theme in Marimba mm. 34 - 45

The following section is an improvisatory duet passage with the melody in the
timbales (marked an *ad libitum*), and the cello periodically chiming in with chords. After
a passage of cello and tympani dialogue, the marimba joins the cello in octaves, after a
virtuosic scale up to a high G in the cello.
Example 2.6: Cello and Tympani in Octaves m. 62 from “Sonny Rollins”

The cello breaks into a series of repeated sixteenth notes before the timbales enter and re-establishes the calypso rhythm while the cello has a highly embellished version of the tune. The cello then accompanies the theme in the marimba with offbeat pizzicati and double-stops before coming together for a highly chromaticized passage with both instruments in parallel major 6ths, but offset by a half-step (this is the first of several movements that include a passage of parallel 6ths for the cello).

Example 2.7: “St. Thomas” theme in Marimba, m. 79
Example 2.8: “St. Thomas” theme in Marimba, mm. 82-87

At measure eighty-eight, the theme is once again heard, this time more harmonically recognizably, in the cello as the marimba accompanies with the calypso rhythm. The cello interrupts itself at measure ninety-six to prolong the inevitable final cadence and leaps up to a high E harmonic at the top of the cellos register as the marimba fades off into the distance, and the movement comes to a close.
Example 2.9: Closing theme of *Sonny Rollins*
CHAPTER 3: JIMMY YANCEY

The third movement of Singers of Songs-Weavers of Dreams is entitled Jimmy Yancey, in honor of the great pianist Jimmy Yancey. James “Jimmy” Yancey was a self-taught pianist, composer, and singer from Chicago, Illinois. While the boogie-woogie era of jazz was popularized in the late 1930’s, it is reported that Yancey was playing in this style ever since the 1910’s and 1920’s, pioneering a style of boogie-woogie piano playing that came to be known as the “Yancey Bass.” His earliest recordings were in 1939, and his playing style is recognized today as having influenced much of American rhythm and blues music. While Yancey died in 1951, his legacy was cemented in 1986, when he was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame for his influence in the development of rock and roll.

Yancey’s style of piano playing was distinct for its strong-repeated figure in the left hand and melodic decoration in the right hand, and always remaining delicate and subtle rather than hard and driving. As Baker explains, “This movement exhibits in a sophisticated manner many of the characteristics of boogie-woogie style ostinato, dazzling poly-rhythms, blues riffs, etc.”

The movement begins with the solo cello playing a series of measures in pizzicato using the “twelve-bar blues” pattern, and in typical Baker fashion, each measure takes an unexpected turn in the way it moves from chord to chord (perhaps a nod to the exploration and working out of different styles that defined Yancey’s creative output). While a typical twelve bar blues progression includes I-IV-I-V-IV-I, the cello part opens each beat outlining a minor 7th chord with a “walking bass line” (a style of bass
accompaniment or line, common in baroque music and jazz, which creates a feeling of regular quarter note movement, akin to the regular alternation of feet while walking), that always “walks” down a step from the last beat of one measure, to the first beat of the next. The sound of the solo cello pizzicato evokes the sound of the classic upright bass player in a jazz combo, and in the third measure, the cymbal and timbale enter in pianissimo in the style of a jazz drummer with wire brushes.

Example 3.1: Opening of “Jimmy Yancey,” Solo Cello Twelve-Bar Blues With Walking Bass

In measure thirteen, the cello breaks into a series of pizzicato chords over a G pedal (ending the twelve-bar blues), and the percussion enters with a four-note motive that repeats every three eighth notes, but appears in 4/4 meter that serves to contrast the triplet rhythm that was established since the start of the movement by emphasizing each eighth-note of the measure.

Example 3.2: The Bells Enter With a Four-Note Motive Emphasizing 3/8 against 4/4

In measure 19, the ethereal bells relinquish their four-note motive and re-establish the 4/4-triplet rhythm, followed by the twelve-bar blues in thirds, while the cello floats into a lyrical, bluesy melody in the upper register of the cello.
Example 3.3: m. 19, The Bells Re-establish the 4/4 Triplet Rhythm; Blues Motive in the Cello

The rhythmic motives continue in the bells as the cello continues the bluesy sequential working out of the blues motive, and in measure twenty-six, the accompaniment in the bells dissipates and there are two series of glissandi before a measure and a half of wind chime tremolo recalls the atmosphere heard earlier in *Miles*.

Example 3.4: mm. 17 - 20 from *Jimmy Yancey*

Wind Chime Section from *Miles*
As the bells return to the triplet figures at measure thirty-two, the cello has a series of jazzy glissandi before returning to the rhythmic triplet motive over yet another measure of the wind chimes (an example of Baker bringing back material from the beginning of the piece), and then the cello and bells trade off two beats of sequential triplets, and then two beats of the bluesy twelve-bar baseline.

Example 3.5: Two Beats Sequential Blues Motive and Two Beats Twelve-Bar Blues Triplets

As both the cello and the bells return to the triplet figures, there is a build-up of energy and a crescendo to the climax in measure forty-one.

Example 3.6: mm. 32-41 from Jimmy Yancey
The texture leading up to this climax becomes increasingly thick, as both voices seem to operate completely independent of each other, although they work with the same triplet rhythmic figure, like two jazz players exchanging riffs back and forth. As the cello returns, there is a four-measure passage with little jazz rhythm at all, and the harmonies are incredibly dissonant (measure 44 begins a passage of the cello and marimba together in minor 2\textsuperscript{nd} intervals).

![Example 3.7: M. 44, Cello and Marimba in Minor 2\textsuperscript{nd} Intervals](image)

The passage dissipates as the vibraslap (a percussion instrument consisting of a piece of stiff wire, bent in a U shape, connecting a wood ball to a hollow box of wood with metal “teeth” inside) and then triangle comes in with a forte tremolo. The cello starts again with the steady rhythm of the twelve-bar blues, now marked “piu mosso” over a pedal F, and as the bass moves to D we have another entrance of the wind chimes in tremelo. As the cello plays the twelve-bar blues for the second measure, the tremolo wind chimes return and just as the pace quickens, the momentum comes to a halt as the note value for the twelve-bar blues motive in the cello augments and the bells have a series of imitation that work against any established rhythm in the cello.
Example 3.8: Twelve-Bar Blues Base and Third Repetition of Wind Chimes

As the cello works out a sequence of the triplet motive, the marimba drops out at measure fifty-six and the cello tremolos on octave F#’s (paying homage to the well-known tremolo section of the Debussy sonata for cello and piano), until dropping out at measure fifty-eight.

Example 3.9: Twelve-Bar Blues, and Octave F#s leading into m. 58

Octave F#’s in the Debussy Sonata for Cello and Piano, 3rd Movement

As the vibes take over the triplet rhythm, the cello re-enters with all tremolo double stops before beginning a series of glissando harmonics up the highest register of
the A string for two measures (unmistakably in the style of the Shostakovich sonata for cello and piano).

Example 3.10: M. 62-Glissando Harmonics from *Jimmy Yancey*

The cello has a solo of glissando double-stops in measure sixty-four and a long glissando double stop in measure sixty-five, which leads us to a steady rhythmic pulse in the tympano starting in measure sixty-six.

Example 3.11: mm. 32-41 from *Jimmy Yancey*

The cello enters over the constant eighth-note pulse with a series of sequences based on the eighth-note, two sixteenth-note motive, and in measure sixty-nine the cello begins a series of octaves reaching up to a high C sharp in measure seventy-one.
Example 3.12: m. 69, Cello Octaves

The cello descends to the bottom of the instruments register as it tremolos on a low C/A and then tremolos on a C sharp/B flat double-stop with a fermata. The next two measures have the introduction of a new rhythmic motive in the marimba based on a descending scale occurring over two beats.

Example 3.13: Rhythmic Motive in Marimba

The cello has a series of octaves outlining the twelve-bar blues scales and then the marimba and cello resume their triplet rhythmic figure at measure seventy-seven as we have the second appearance of a parallel 6th passage for the cello. From measureseventy-
seven, the two instruments lock back into a steady triplet rhythmic figure and as the rhythmic pulse is re-established, we hear a variety of harmonic and textural varieties.

Example 3.14: Triplet Rhythm is Re-established

The cello and marimba take turns soloing over the other instruments twelve-bar blues rhythm, and by measure eighty-eight the cello takes over the solo voice for good as it eventually winds down at the *ritardando* in measure ninety-two. As the cello part turns to pizzicato, the cello begins anew at measure ninety-four with a soulful, blues bass line, again using the triplet rhythmic figure.
Example 3.15: Blues Bass-line over in Triplet Rhythm

The tympani take over with their own variation on the twelve-bar motive, and the cello uses the triplet figure to take another improvisatory-style solo. As the cello reaches the major seventh tremolo half notes at measure one hundred and two, the two instruments bring the movement to a close with hints of the triplet rhythmic motive in the tympani and then vibes before the cello finishes the movement with a final triplet motive in double stops, over the octave F sharps in the vibes.
Example 3.16: Major 7\textsuperscript{th} Tremolo of Cello at m. 102
CHAPTER 4: PAUL ROBESON

The fourth movement of Singers of Songs, Weavers of Dreams is described by Baker as “the centerpiece of the suite” and is entitled, Paul Robeson. Paul Robeson was an important American musician, athlete and political activist in the U.S. during the twentieth-century, and is the only artist represented in this work who was not truly known as a jazz musician. Robeson was a celebrated actor, valedictorian of his class, and a world-class athlete (nominated posthumously to the college hall of fame in 2007) at Rutgers University before he went on to study law at Columbia University in 1920. Robeson practiced law for a short time in 1923, but after experiencing extreme racism at this legal firm, he decided to dedicate himself to singing and acting. By 1924 he had become a standout actor for his role in several plays, and he decided to move with his family to Europe in order to escape the racism in America. Robeson soon became a beloved international figure who avidly spoke out about injustice, racism and world politics, and he soon was performing at anti-Nazi demonstrations for the Allied forces during World War II. Upon his return to the US, he continued to have a successful career on Broadway, but his career suffered when the U.S. government claimed that Robeson was a member of the communist party. As a result of these claims, Robeson’s legacy in the U.S. suffered irreparable damage. While internationally he remained a celebrated performer until his death in 1976, he is still one of the greatly underappreciated figures in modern American history.

Of all of Robeson’s accolades and achievements, he is remembered today as the first major concert singer to popularize the performance of African-American work songs
and spirituals. While historians in the US have since recognized and embraced spirituals as a uniquely American genre of music, it was Paul Robeson’s singing of melodies such as *Go Down Moses*, and *Motherless Child* (heard in this movement), which helped paved the way for our society to recognize the important place that these works have had in the history of American music.

The movement opens with the “low muffled” solo timbale, playing repeated C’s in what is notated: “March cadence (ad lib): after the style of a funeral dirge.”

![Example 4.1: March Cadence from Paul Robeson](image)

As the timbale establishes the march-like character, the score indicates that the “cadence continues, alternately receding and coming to the fore until cutoff.” The solo cello enters in an improvisatory/recitative style over the steady march of the timbale, which gives a fitting accompaniment for the broad, proud, declamatory-style statements of the cello, fitting of Paul Robeson’s character. As the timbale subsides, the solo cello continues with its monologue, until it rests on a high F sharp, and the vibes (now with the motor on), rebut with a dissonant major seventh interval.
Example 4.2: Cello Rebut with M7 interval

As the cello proceeds, it continues to lament using material derived from the opening theme/tune, while the vibes continue to chime in only at the ends of the cello statements. At letter C, the solo cello begins a new theme, which is later reminiscent of Baker’s interpolation of *Sometimes I feel like a Motherless Child.*

Example 4.3: Theme of *Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child*

Example 4.4: Interpolation of “*Sometimes I feel like a Motherless Child*” at letter D

This theme is then expanded and repeated while the vibes accompany by octave half notes, followed by syncopated octaves.
Example 4.5: Modified Version of “Sometimes I Feel like a Motherless Child”

At rehearsal D, the vibes return to give a tonal backdrop for the tune in the cello, which has now turned into an interpolation of *Go Down Moses*, faintly heard in the successive double-stops.

Example 4.6: Theme from “Go Down Moses”

Example 4.7: Baker’s Interpolation of “Go Down Moses”

The end of the tune brings a return of the haunting wind chimes that tremolo on C, which have returned throughout every movement of the suite. Letter E continues with a leisurely strolling pizzicato in the cello, and the cool harmonies of the vibes providing a
steady accompaniment.

Example 4.7: Cello Pizzicato at Letter E

After three measures, there is a fermata in both instruments before the motor is turned off in the vibes, and the cello has its third series of parallel major 6ths, which again, recalls a theme from, *Go Down Moses*.

Example 4.8: Cello Plays “*Go Down Moses*” in Octaves

As the dissonant harmonies between the cello and vibes are held with another fermata at four measures after E, there is a sustained descending scale in the vibes with the motor on again, which creates a stunning atmospheric effect and a collage of dissonant harmonies before the last haunting echo of the theme in the cello. Once the last beat in the motive are held out with another fermata, the cello and vibes bring the
movement to an ethereal close with an ascending scale of steady eighth- notes for three measures, all major sixths apart.

Example 4.9: Final Ascending Scale of Steady Eighth Notes

Baker’s use of artificial harmonics in the final measure of the cello, along with the pedaled vibes, is another wonderful example of his ability to vary timbre, color and tonal sounds to achieve an appropriate mood for the piece.
CHAPTER 5: ‘TRANE

The fifth movement of *Singers of Songs, Weavers of Dreams* is ‘Trane, which takes its name from legendary saxophonist and composer, John Coltrane. Coltrane was born in 1926 in North Carolina, and was inspired to play the saxophone after listening to the recordings of Charlie Parker and Johnny Hodges. Coltrane would later go on to play in the big bands of Duke Ellington and Dizzy Gillespie before getting his first big break as saxophonist for the Miles Davis quintet. Davis reportedly always encouraged Coltrane to be more creative, and experiment with different sounds in his playing. As a result, Coltrane pioneered the use of modes in jazz and later became a founding father of free avant-garde forms of jazz. Coltrane eventually would go on to be one of the most innovative jazz saxophonists and composers of all time.

According to Baker, this is “the most jazz-influenced movement of the seven, replete with coruscating bebop lines, jazz-like rhythms and harmonies reminiscent of Thelonius Monk and Tadd Dameron.” The movement opens with a tremolo cymbal from ppp to ff and back down to pp before a two-measure intro of the crown setting the tempo. Baker begins the piece with cymbal, as similar to many beginnings of Coltrane’s music. For example, *Coltrane’s Impressions*, begins with soft pulsating cymbal, which create a sizzling introduction, similar to the opening of ‘Trane.

The cello enters with a jazzy, syncopated motive that is truly reminiscent of the free jazz style of John Coltrane. At measure ten, the cello solo turns into a repeated pattern of triplet half notes in 4/4, followed by a series of eighth notes in 2/4.
Example 5.1: ‘Trane mm. 10-11

The two measures repeat until measure nineteen, when the tympani establishes a new rhythmic pattern that emphasizes the second half of beats two and four. The rhythmic stress played by the tympano, allows the phrase to have an improvised feel.

Syncopation, as seen all throughout Baker’s works and in jazz music, can be traced back to Buddy Bolden, known as King Bolden, an African-American New Orleans jazz cornetist of late 19th century. Bolden’s band has been credited with creating what is known as the big four, and, as Wynton Marsalis describes it, was “the first syncopated bass drum pattern to deviate from the standard on-the-beat march.”

Example 5.2: Example of King Buddy Bolden’s “Big Four”

Almost a half a century later, Duke Ellington paid tribute to Bolden’s creative innovation in his 1957 suite, A Drum Is a Woman. The distinctive syncopation can be heard in Rhythm pum te dum of the 1957 suite.
Example 5.3: Syncopated Rhythm of ‘Trane, mm. 18-20

As the two instruments reach letter A, there is a halt in the syncopated dialogue as both instruments tremolo for the duration of the measure before A. At A, there is a note to the performers to proceed “Tenderly; slower a bit” and both instruments establish a new motive of dotted quarter, eighth and two quarter notes, followed by two quarters and a half note. It may be speculated that Baker emulates the intervals and style of the funeral march of Chopin in measure twenty-three.

Example 5.4: Tenderly; Slower a bit mm. 23-25

Funeral Theme by Frederick Chopin

The cello and tympani introduce the motive in octaves, and at measure twenty-five, the cello ascends scale-wise up to the top of the cello before the end of the motive is heard again. As the timpani provide a low-rumbling tremolo in the low register of the instrument, the cello offers a slightly modified version of the theme.
Example 5.5: ‘Trane mm. 25-28

As the cello develops the motive in a free and improvisatory style, the rumbling in the tympani subsides, and the cello continues to explore the motivic material, finding a dramatic tremolo and fermata on major seconds at the end of forty-seven and crescendo until the break before letter B. The double stops played by the cello give the phrase a rustic, pesante and folk-like feel, before a dramatic crescendo into measure forty-seven.

Example 5.6: Rustic Double Stops played by Cello mm. 43-47

Letter B begins with two cowbell hits, which signal the entrance of the cello, again with the Coltrane style sequence in eighth notes. As the cello explores harmonies in the way Coltrane would on a saxophone, the percussion keeps an up-tempo pulse with a steady series of eighth notes played on the rim of the snare. As the percussion gives two final accented rim shots, the cello restates the opening motive of the beginning of the movement (in measure sixty-one) before giving way to a truly Coltrane-esque solo, which is accompanied by the constant, and ever-changing rhythmic patterns in the drums.
Example 5.7: ‘Trane mm. 59 – 67

As the cello takes a rest at measure seventy-six, the percussion restates the syncopated rhythmic motive before restarting the string of constant eighth notes leading us into letter D. Letter D begins with the pulse from the previous section, and after four measures the marimba enters with a return of the rhythmic motive that has continued to reoccur throughout the movement. The syncopated tremolos of the percussive accompaniment give a sense of urgency, then suddenly fading to piano, allowing the cello to enter at letter D. In the second half of measure eighty-two, the cello plays chromatic triplets, which can be considered as an upbeat to the next measure.
Example 5.8: ‘Trane m. 76 to letter D

The cello begins yet another fiendishly challenging solo that vividly brings to mind the style of Coltrane, and this time the solo cello soars to the highest registers of the instrument in the same way that Coltrane would explore the highest reaches of his tenor saxophone. At letter E, the solo cello bursts into an energetic and fiery passage of double-stop sixteenth notes before resting at the end of measure ninety-eight, before beginning with the sequential motivic eighth notes, which opened the movement.
Example 5.9: ‘Trane, letter E to m. 98

As the steady eighth note rhythm is established in the cello, the percussion re-enters with cymbals and drums in a jazzy pattern, which enables the steady eighth notes of the solo cello to settle into a groove. At letter F the steady eighth notes of the cello, turns into a repeat of the second motive we heard at the opening (from measure ten) and after the statement in the cello, the motive is repeated a half-step lower in the tympani. However, in contrast to the opening, the phrase at letter F is pizzicato, which continues over five measures. It can be said that Baker reminiscences the bass plucking of the opening of Coltrane’s, *Equinox* (or could be seen as a nod to the recurring mantra “a love supreme” that permeates throughout the first track of his album “A Love Supreme”).

Example 5.10: ‘Trane, mm. 112-115
The cello re-enters with a motive of tremolo eighth notes, and two half notes, and at measure one twenty-five, the cello returns to the sequences of eighth notes as the percussion has what Baker notates as a “haze” or atmosphere of sound.

Example 5.11: Haze in Vibes from ’Trane, mm. 124-127

The cello has a fiendishly difficult series of ascending, double-stop tremolo figures beginning at measure 128, before it turns to a statement of the opening motive, now in octaves. The “haze” character is reminiscent of Maurice Ravel’s, *Tzigane* for Violin and Orchestra. Ravel also manages to capture a haze-like atmosphere, as the harp plays a virtuosic improvisatory-like flourish underneath the accompanying violin double-stops.
Example 5.12: Total Haze in Vibes, mm. 128-130

_Tzigane, by Maurice Ravel_

The solo cello then enters at letter G with a repeat of the mantra/motive for six measures, featuring a pizzicato triplet of half notes followed by four eighth notes.

Example 5.13: Letter G from ‘Trane

Once the pace has been re-established in the cello, the tympani enter in tremolo with the same syncopated rhythm that opened the movement. As the tympani sub-sides, there is a sixteenth note run up to the top of the cello before giving way to a passage of flourishing sextuplets over a sustained pedal (reminiscent of the well-known passage from the Saint-Saens Concerto).
Example 5.14: Descending Triplet Passage from ‘Trane

Descending Triplet Passage from Saint-Saens Concerto

The tympani provide a low rumbling tremolo as the cello gives a final statement of the motivic material from the opening and ascends to a harmonic D. As the cello and tremolo tympani hold a fermata on the final measure Baker brings back the tremolo D in the tympani with a fermata that goes from \( p \) to \( ff \) and back down to \( pp \), while the cello holds ghostly harmonics of F sharp and C sharp.

Example 5.15: mm. 150-151 from ‘Trane
CHAPTER 6: DUKE

The sixth movement of *Singers of Songs-Weavers of Dreams* is named *Duke*, after the great American composer and pianist Duke Ellington. Born in 1899, Duke Ellington was one of the most prolific composers in all of American history, who wrote thousands of compositions for the stage, screen and the contemporary American songbook. Born in Washington D.C., Duke began playing the piano professionally by the age of 17, and by the 1920’s he was a prominent figure in the nightclubs of New York. There, he established his reputation as a bandleader that made hundreds of recordings, appeared in films and radio, and eventually made two tours of Europe in the 1930’s. Over the course of a career that spanned half a century, Ellington was awarded countless accolades (including 12 Grammy awards between 1959 and 2000), and will be remembered as arguably the most important American composer of all time.

As Baker explains, “This homage to Duke Ellington, who was one of America’s greatest composers, puts a vast array of instrumental colors and combinations on display. With all of its shimmering effects, it hints at Duke’s orchestral virtuosity.” The shimmering effects that Baker describes are evident from the very start of the movement, as the solo cello enters with a slowly drawn out trill on E and then an E one octave higher over another entrance of the tremolo wind chimes that crescendo from piano to forte and back down to piano to give a ghostly effect. The opening, which can be interpreted as a written out accelerando, gives the sense of *mysterioso* and urgency. The wind chimes, entering during the second half of the second measure, gives a ponticello-like texture, adding to the eerie and ghostly opening of *Duke*. 
Example 6.1: Opening of *Duke*, mm. 1-3

The cello then proceeds to a recitative-like section with the varied sounds of the percussion instruments that answer the cello at the end of each phrase. This conversation-like pattern between cello, triangle, wind chime, and vibes in measures four to six, highlights the improvisatory nature and democracy of a jazz ensemble. Measures four to six, typical of the jazz idiom, highlights individual freedom of both instruments, but at the same time, each instrument adheres to the voice responsible for the rhythmical framework and structure of the piece.

Example 6.2: mm. 4-6 from *Duke*

The use of a variety of different percussion instruments is especially effective in this movement as they are constantly changing (between wind chimes, bells, triangle, vibes, cymbals), which add many layers of sound to the lamenting vocal line in the cello. The motives are derived from the opening cello ascending eighth notes theme, and the rhythmic patterns are primarily based on a triplet patterns, both in the percussion and the cello.
The repeated motive of minor seconds is again seen (although an abridged version), as in the opening of Duke. And, instead of wind chimes, an ascending bell glissando is used in the second half of measure 17. A more dramatic effect is felt due to the simultaneous ascension and crescendo of eighth notes in the bell.

Example 6.3: Modified Version of Opening Motive

The playful triplet rhythm of measure 29 played by the cello, presents interesting articulation. During the first half of measure 29, Baker writes two and two slurs within the triplet motif. However, in the second half of measure 29 and onward, Baker changes this slurring to three and three. This playful bowing aligns with the cymbal, and gives yet another sense of urgency.

Example 6.4: Triplet Motive, mm. 29-30

As the dialogue in the cello and vibes begins to settle, the bell glissando, followed by artificial harmonics in the cello, create a wraithlike and smoky effect. It can be said that Duke, provides an urban, film noir-style of music; shadowy and oneiric. As the triangle and cymbal quietly play, Duke draws to a close.
Example 6.5: Whimsical-style conversation between cello and vibes, mm. 31 – end
CHAPTER 7: DIZZY

The seventh and final movement of *Singers of Songs, Weavers of Dreams* is entitled *Dizzy*, after the legendary jazz trumpet player and innovator of the “bebop” style, Dizzy Gillespie. Gillespie was born in Cheraw, South Carolina in 1917. The youngest child of nine, Dizzy began playing the piano at age four. By the 1930’s, he was playing trumpet in the great big bands of New York such as in the Frank Fairfax Orchestra, and the Edgar Hayes and Teddy Hill orchestra. After working with the great swing bands of the 1930’s and 40’s, Gillespie formed his own famous big band in 1946. Dizzy, a trumpet virtuoso and improviser, brought innovation and new style to the world of jazz. Although stylistically influenced by the legendary, David Roy Eldridge, Gillespie brought new and innovative sounds to the world of jazz music, bringing in harmonic complexity and a unique sense of style, later becoming the pinnacle and father of bebop jazz.

It was after he formed his own group that Dizzy rose to stardom as a charismatic bandleader/performer/composer. He is well remembered today not only for the dissonant harmonies and complex rhythmic style of his bebop compositions, but also for incorporating Latin, Afro-Cuban, Caribbean and Brazilian styles into jazz.

As Baker explains, this movement “is dedicated to Dizzy Gillespie, one of the twin titans of the bebop era (the other being Charlie Parker) who, in addition to many other accomplishments, was a pioneer in the fusion of jazz and Latin American music.” The Rough Guide to Jazz summed up Dizzy Gillespie’s playing style stating: “The whole essence of a Gillespie solo was cliff-hanging suspense: the phrases and the angle of the approach were perpetually varied, breakneck runs were followed by pauses, by huge
interval leaps, by long, immensely high notes, by slurs and smears and bluesy phrases; he always took listeners by surprise, always shocking them with a new thought.”

“Dizzy” begins with the virtuosic solo cello opening, with a chromatic descending scale of sixteenths that recalls the famous start of “The Flight of the Bumblebee,” which seems fitting for the frenetic, virtuosic style that has come to be associated with Gillespie’s trumpet playing.

Example 7.1: Cello Opening of “Dizzy”

Opening of Rimsky-Korsakoff’s “Flight of the Bumblebee”

The percussion answers with its own series of sixteenths in the timbales, which gives the movement a distinctly Latin sound. The solo cello answers the percussion with a fiendishly difficult flourish of sixteenth notes and double-stops until the timbales brings it all to a halt in measure eight and the two instruments start off into a steady groove with an Afro-Cuban flare.
Example 7.2: Flourish of Sixteenth Double Stops in Cello

After the percussion’s cadence, the solo cello answers with a much more subdued motive of three eighth notes on F, followed by a low C tied to an E flat. The percussion answers with the shimmering maraca-like sound of the shells, going from ppp to mf.

Example 7.3: Dramatic ppp to mf Played by Shells

The cello comes back in to join the percussion with a repeat of the same motive, now along with the steady beat in the shells. As the two instruments begin playing together, we hear the true sound of a Cuban salsa dance piece both through rhythm and texture. Shells, referred to as cáscara, are also the name of a rhythmic pattern commonly heard in salsa music, commonly played on timbales shells. The performer of the timbales, the timbalero, uses a wide-variety of techniques in order to achieve a percussive and fiery expression of various sounds.
Example 7.4: Cuban, Salsa Dance-like Rhythm, mm. 14-15

The rhythm is provided in the percussion while the cello comps (a term used in jazz music which describes chords, rhythms and countermelodies used to support a jazz musicians improvised solo or melodic line) and then breaks into a two measure solo of eighth-notes keeping a steady rhythm, with intervals reminiscent of the Coltrane movement (measure sixteen-eighteen).

As the percussion returns, there is now the added sound of the cowbell and shells, both of which are accompanied by the cello. At measure twenty-four, the cello again plays solo for two measures while continuing the steady pace of the eighth notes, and the percussion rejoins at measure twenty-six as the cello introduces a new motivic idea to develop (again made starting with four eighth notes and now followed by two quarters). It is also interesting to note that indicated slurs (original markings of David Baker), is indicative of a legato, almost lazy-like style. It is clear that, as observed by the change of slurs before each down beats, Baker wishes to contrast what has been performed a few measures prior. The sudden switch from a salsa-like dance theme with cowbell, to the legato melodic line of the cello for two measures (mm. 24-25) without cowbell, gives the listener a sense of the capricious- like nature of bebop jazz.
The way in which the motivic material is used in this movement proves to be quite different than the typical method used in classical music. While in classical music the motive would be introduced and then reworked with different sequences and modulations, the motive here is played and then followed by a measure of an improvisatory style outburst, which usually strays far from the motive. The motive then repeats, and again, is followed with an answer which serves as a compliment to the first improvisatory style outburst. The solo cello introduces yet another new idea at measure thirty-four, which is made of a series of jazzy double stops and off-beat rhythms. After eight measures, the cello suddenly trills C/E flat while the tympani cleverly brings back the eighth note motive that was first heard in the cello at measure ten. The four eighth-note motive appears seven times throughout the movement, and is somewhat reminiscent of one of the most well-known four-note (short-short-short-long) motif in classical music literature, the opening to the Symphony No. 5 by Ludwig van Beethoven.
Example 7.6: *Dizzy* - m. 10, Eighth Note Motive Played by Cello

Eighth Note Motive Played by Timpani

Beethoven *Symphony No. 5*: Opening Motive

The cello follows with entrances of the syncopated motive from measure thirty-four, now heard with virtuosic scales adding a virtuosic flare. As the cello continues to re-work the motive, the tympani repeats the four eighth note and tied quarter note motive every other bar until the two instruments cadence at forty-seven.

Example 7.7: Cadence at m. 47
The percussion has a solo two beats on the jawbone (now on beats two and three, giving the feeling that the once driving rhythmic pulse has been lost), before the timbales, shells and cello re-enter at measure fifty with the original motive from measure ten.

Example 7.8: Timbales, Shell, and Cello, m. 50

With the rhythmic pulse back in place, the cello embarks on its most wildly jazzy and soulful outbursts, followed by returns of the opening motive. The cello brings back the opening motive from measure ten before breaking into another “Flight of the Bumblebee” like passage of chromatic sixteenth notes and then returns to the four eighth note and tied over quarter note motive over the comps in the percussion, first heard with the vibraslap.

Example 7.9: Chromatic Sixteenth Notes played by Cello, m. 53

The timbales enter at measure seventy-seven with a steady pulse of accented eighth notes, and the cello has an improvisatory series of trilled double stops, adding to the intensity of the salsa-like rhythm. Bebop, one of Baker’s original musical genres as a trombonist, is a highly ornamented style of music. One of the distinguishing
characteristics of bebop is the use of ornamentation, including glissandi (up and down), chromatic scales, grace notes, mordents and trills. Ornamentation appears throughout this movement as well as the entire work, and thus, the characteristic bebop style of Baker’s writing is evident throughout all seven movements.

In mm. 77-79, a set of double-stop trills descends, while the timbales maintain the salsa-like rhythm in the cello.

![Example 7.10: Salsa-like Rhythm in mm. 77-78](image)

In measure eighty-five the percussion enters with the guiro, which is a Latin-American percussion instrument consisting of an open-ended, hollow gourd with notches cut in one side and is played by rubbing a wooden stick ("pua") along the notches to produce a ratchet-like sound. It is interesting to note, that the guiro, because of its unique instrumental qualities and character, is also used in classical music, such as in the works by *Uirapurú* by Hector Villa-Lobos and in *Le Sacre du printemps* by Igor Stravinsky.

![Example 7.11: Guiro Entrance, m. 85](image)

The variety of percussion instruments provides a truly striking effect in this finale.
movement, and the Afro-Cuban style influence is unmistakable. Afro-Cuban jazz, first emerging in the early 1940’s, was brought to the East Coast jazz scene by bebop innovator, Dizzy Gillespie. Afro-Cuban and Bebop fusion music were often referred to as, “Cubop,” short for Cuban bebop. The be-bop style of Gillespie is characteristically embraced by the cello throughout the final passages of this movement, as there is a fantastic use of virtuosic runs, inventive use of pulse and a fearless use of pauses followed by rhythmically varied sequences.

The timbales breaks up the steady eighth-note pulse for two measures with a series of triplet quarter notes over two measures, before the solo cello re-enters with a chromatic series of tremolo eighth notes over the cowbell, and before bringing the movement to a fantastic conclusion with a final statement of the opening motive.

The cowbell, a hand percussion instrument usually made out of metal, is often featured in Latin-American music and popular music. Tuned cowbells, or Almglocken, are occasionally heard in classical works as well, such as in Richard Strauss (Alpine Symphony), Gustav Mahler (Symphony #6) and Olivier Messiaen (Et expecto resurrectionem mortuorum and Couleurs de la cité celeste).

In measure 96-98, Baker writes out descending hexatonic blues scale eighth notes in the cello, but, different from any other descending eighth-note pattern, Baker writes an interesting articulation—two notes legato, two notes staccato. This articulation continues over three measures. By omitting the percussive accompaniment of the timbales, it is clear that Baker intended to highlight this contrasting articulation, and the descending hexatonic blues scale framework. It should be noted that, although hexatonic scales are
often typical of blues scale, traits of this scale could be traced to traditional hexatonic scales of European folk music.

Example 7.12: Blues Scale Solo Played by Cello, mm. 96-98

At measure 101, the cello performs an ascending, then descending scale, which features sixteenth note flourishes utilizing a pattern of a minor third interval followed by four chromatic notes for over four measures.

Example 7.13: Steady Eighth Notes for Two Measures with Triplet Quarter Notes in the Timbales (conclusion)
CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION

Baker’s *Singers of Songs, Weavers of Dreams* is most certainly a wonderful addition to the cello repertoire. The only composition written for percussion and cello before Baker’s *Singers of Songs, Weavers of Dreams* is the *Divertimento for Violoncello and Percussion* by Vivian Fine, with several compositions being written for viola and percussion (Sculthorpe’s *Sonata for Viola and Percussion*, 1960; Colgrass’ *Variations for Four Drums and Viola*, 1957). Fine’s composition was written in 1951, and not performed until 1962, and shows no sign of influencing Baker’s work. Baker’s *Singers of Songs, Weavers of Dreams*, like many of his other compositions, owe their inspiration solely to the musicians that commissioned the works, and this particular composition has the unique ability to tie together the people and musicians that helped to inspire Baker throughout his life in jazz, with his two colleagues at Indiana University who were both celebrated musicians in the world of classical music. Since the time of this composition, there have been several compositions for a solo string instrument and percussion (including Golijov’s ‘Mariel’ for cello and marimba, 1999; Dumitriu’s *Five Sketches in Song Form* for Viola and Marimba, 2004; Woehr’s *Djembach* for viola and percussion, 1999; Colgrass’s *Hammer and Bow* for violin and marimba, 1999), yet this would appear to be in part to the trend of writing more music to enhance the chamber music repertoire of the solo viola, as well as percussionists.

Baker’s *Singers of Songs, Weavers of Dreams* remains unique not only because of the personal nature of each movement, but also for the incredible number and variety of percussion instruments utilized throughout the work. The writing for cello is similar to the other four pieces Baker composed for solo cello (his Cello Concerto, Concerto for
Cello and Jazz Band, Sonata for Cello and Piano, Sonata for Solo Cello, Suite for Cello and Jazz Trio), which takes its influence from some of the great classical composers of the 19th and 20th centuries (e.g. Kodaly, Hindemith, Britten, etc), as well as the improvisational styles of the great jazz bass players from the 1950s-60s (e.g. Charles Mingus, and Ron Carter).

While *Singers of Songs, Weavers of Dreams* is currently not included in the standard cello repertoire, it serves as a musical treasure for anyone interested in the life and musical language of David Baker. While there are many jazz inspired pieces in the twentieth-century repertoire, no classical composer would ever be as intimately familiar with the legendary figures and musical styles of the musicians that inspired *Singers of Songs, Weavers of Dreams*. While this piece can be appreciated on its own for the tonal colors that produced by the extensive list of percussion instruments, and the innovative writing for cello, it is certainly a very effective composition when enjoyed by listeners that are familiar with the musical styles of the musicians that inspired each of the seven movements.

In *Singers of Songs, Weavers of Dreams*, David Baker creates a musical mosaic filled with textural contrasts, vibrancy and life. The unique instrumentation, combined with the stylistic influences of the great musicians in the history of American jazz music, makes for a fantastic homage to Baker’s friends and colleagues. It is quite certain that as future audiences and musicians learn to appreciate this innovative composer that was able to simultaneously exist as an important figure in both the worlds of classical and jazz music, *Singers of Songs, Weavers of Dreams* will serve as a window into the life and musical history of the quintessential composer of the third stream.
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