

Sound and structure: arranging in performance serhan osman

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gIntroduction

In this assignment I will endeavour to reflect on the process of re-arranging the Turkish song ' Don Desem' (If I say ' come back'), particularly focusing on my dual role as composer and performer. I will refer to a variety of musical components, namely; the genre, scale and modes, harmony, song structure, texture, timbre, incorporating the methods applied to best effectively convey my project to my ensemble. In compiling this essay I will draw on the works of a variety of academic theorists

In his book on Sound and Structure, John Paynter states a composer's arrangement is creative however; the interpretative role of the performer also calls for inventiveness. (Paynter, J. 1992: 11p) Therefore this challenge of music re-arrangement forces artistic creativity, discipline and music style adaptation. Hence, if you perform the same material three times, and on each occasion with a different group of musicians, our stylistic idioms and steeped conventions will automatically alter certain elements of the song.

My ensemble consisted of six selected members, of which all performed by ear. This influenced me greatly when notating my written music score, as spending hours on writing a detailed complex score would only result in the performer spending hours translating and interpreting what I wanted to achieve.

Our different artistic backgrounds and dissimilar interest in music genres proved not to be an issue as my group possessed good skill, flair and discipline on their instrument throughout rehearsals. When selecting the

members of my group, I knew very little about my peers but I gave particular thought to the choice of timbres available to me. Although there were to some degree a limited choice of instruments, I approached this problem in reverse asking the question, what can I do with the resources available to me? Look at the characteristics of the timbres available to me? How can they be used?

These considerations were influential on the instrumentation and members chosen for the arrangement. This group consisted of a drummer who came from an R'n'B background, a bass player that only played bass for the purpose of this project, two percussionists; one playing the Conga's and the other a female playing tambourine and maracas, a male lead guitarist influenced by Turkish rock, and myself, a male keyboardist that predominantly played by ear. Further considerations were given to the musical aptitude of each player which influenced me to transpose the pitch of the song a whole tone down as the guitarist was more familiar and flexible in the key of F major in terms of solo playing.

In his work, 'Paynter' refers to stylistic change as a renewal of musical language and colour giving the composition a new perception of reality (Paynter, J. 1992). With reference to melody/harmony, timbre, texture, dynamics and rhythm, my aim was to modify certain characteristics of 'Don Desem' without losing its main identity as a composition, yet adding a feeling of originality with the resources available to me.

The lead guitarist took the place of the vocals and played the vocal melody lines. The composition took an instrumental path and as a keyboard player I provided accompaniment to the lead guitar melody forming a heterophony texture. However, within the last chorus the keyboard right-hand harmonises with a piano voice together with the guitar melody forming melodic counterpoint.

I found the melody to be inseparably connected with its supporting harmony particularly in reference to its cadence points where the final note of the melody in the chorus sections fall onto the tonic (I). In terms of harmony and scale the key of the piece was not straight forward. The melody derives from the minor scale mode of 'A phrygian'. This scale is played from the pitch a major third above the major scale's tonic. The resulting scale is minor and as the A becomes the new tonal centre the minor third between the A and the C provides a minor quality. If we build a chord on the tonic, third and fifth, results in a minor chord. As this scale contained one flat; Bb, and as it is the third degree scale in the F major scale the diatonic chords of F major are used. Occasionally the guitarist uses the phrygian dominant, representative of 'flamenco' music and the Arabic 'hicaz' scale. This is produced by sharpening the third degree scale of the phrygian mode creating a polymodal scale i. e. the use of two different modes simultaneously.

Music & Theory Q & A, 1987, (Online) available at <http://www.ars-nova.com/Theory%20Q&A/Q56.html> (accessed on 24 March 2011)

The song took the structure of 'Intro, Chorus, Pre-Verse, Verse, Bridge, Chorus, Solo, Chorus, Outro' and various musical devices were used to embellish the composition such as; call and response, ornaments, clean breaks, syncopation, use of chromatic notes, variation, passing chords, substitution chords and changes in dynamics most of which are symbolic of Latin, Jazz and Blues music. Daryl Runswick in his book on 'Rock, Jazz and Pop' reinforces that the drummer and percussionists help in accentuating the style of the song adding various textures to the drum pattern in the rhythm section. (Runswick, D. 1992: 77p) It was crucial that the bass guitar interlocked with this Latin Bossa-Nova drum pattern regulating constant syncopated emphases on the first and third beat of the bar. I used the root note of the bass line to create minor and major 9ths throughout the song creating suspense and tension. For e. g. by playing a Dm7 on the right-hand of the keyboard harmony over a Bb in the bass created a Bbmaj9 (IImaj9) often heard in Jazz music.

On examining the title of the song; 'If I say come back' one can relate to the overall mood of the compositions harmony. The title is an indirect question which requires an answer leaving the listener in a state of ambiguity. This vagueness is constantly supported in the harmony with the supertonic of Bbmaj7 (chord IImaj7) which acts as an approach chord to the minor Tonic (I). The right hand chord progression within the chorus elegantly descends from the subdominant (IV) to the tonic (I) in hindsight forming a plagal cadence answer with the addition of passing chords in between. This step-wise motion emphasises the uncertain feeling and emotion within the

listener. The original song uses a fade-out effect, t however, to add further tension and frustration to this feeling of bewilderment, the song comes to a close dramatically ending on the 'subdominant' (chord IV). This conclusion may be perceived as to forming a plagal cadence, especially if the song was to continue eventually arriving back to the tonic at the end of the chorus. The rhythm style and guitar nuances did not alone provide a difference in stylistic change, but also the similar chord progression used in the harmony adds new meaning, emotion and feeling within the composition.

Conclusion

This challenge of re-arranging an original work brought upon us a new and exciting way of thinking and re-creating. However, in considering each musicians background and style technique, this inevitably pushed the characteristics of the piece far greater than I had imagined. This task required the application of both practice and theory of popular music performance, proving to be an extremely fascinating and rewarding experience for myself and my ensemble.

Bibliography

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Discography

Artist: Orhan Olmez

Album: Su Misali (2003)

Track: ' Don Desem'