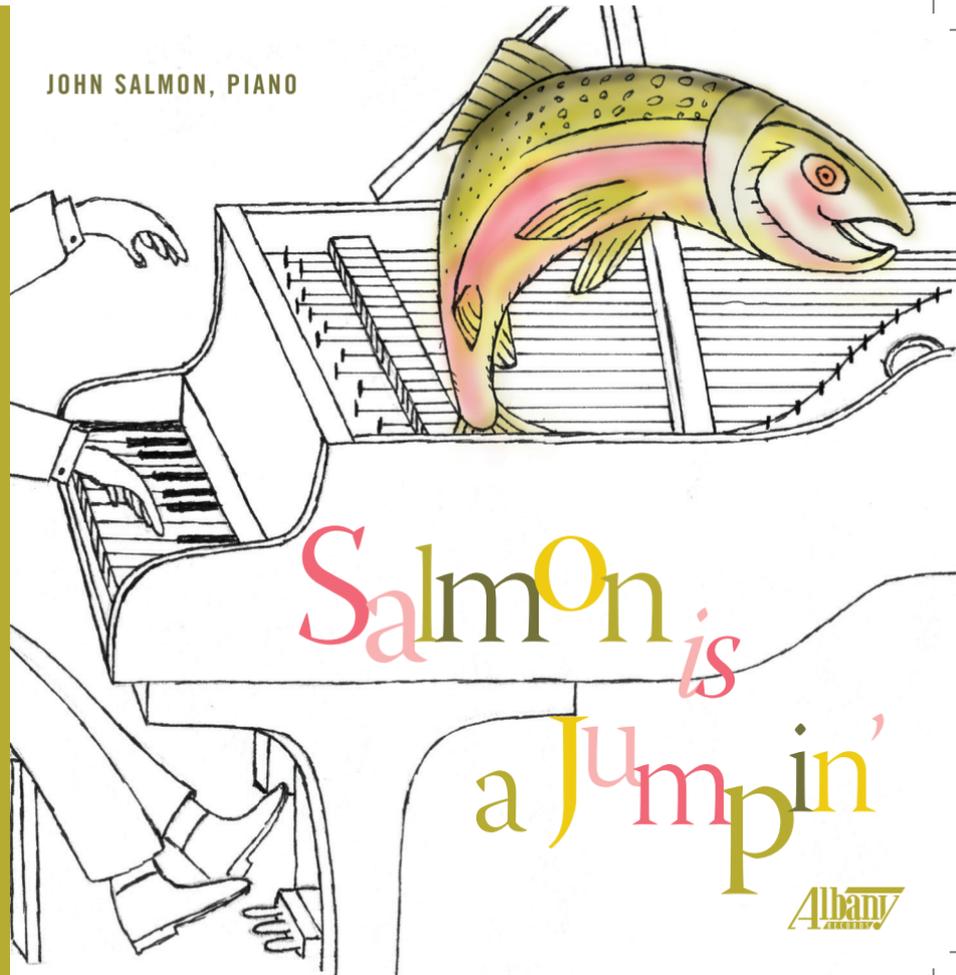


JOHN SALMON, PIANO



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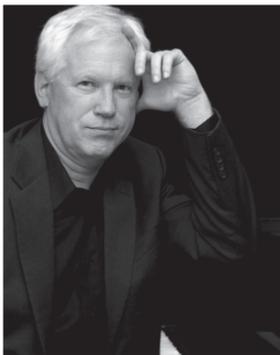
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THE COMPOSER AND PIANIST

John Salmon (www.johnsalmon.com) has distinguished himself on four continents, as both a classical and jazz artist. In the United States, he has given recitals for the Dame Myra Hess Series in Chicago, the Discovery Series in Indianapolis, the Van Cliburn Foundation in Fort Worth, and a Busoni Gala at Symphony Space in New York. He has also appeared as recitalist at many colleges and universities across the United States, including Tulane, Vanderbilt, Cincinnati College Conservatory, and San Francisco State University.

His broad repertoire covers the classics—Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Schumann, Brahms—though his involvement with contemporary music is equally strong. Salmon has championed and been at the forefront of performing new works by such celebrated composers as Dave Brubeck, Nikolai Kapustin, and Lalo Schifrin.

His performances have been heard on many radio stations in the U.S., including National Public Radio, WNYC in New York, WFMT in Chicago, and KUSC in Los Angeles; and on the national radio

stations of Australia, Brazil, Canada, England, Finland, France, Germany, Holland, Hungary, Italy, Moldova, New Zealand, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and Ukraine.

Salmon is a frequent guest performer at festivals in the U.S. and Europe, having appeared at the Piccolo Spoleto Festival (Charleston, South Carolina), Piano Festival Northwest (Portland, Oregon), Interlochen Piano Festival (Interlochen, Michigan), Festival for Creative Pianists (Grand Junction, Colorado), Festival Internacional de Música del Mediterráneo (Cartagena, Spain), and the International Bartók Festival (Szombathely, Hungary). Other special appearances include an all-Liszt recital in Mexico City for the American Liszt Society and an all-Brubeck recital in Washington, DC for the Music Teachers National Association.

His versatility often produces striking juxtapositions. In one concert with the Wilmington (North Carolina) Symphony in 2001, Salmon performed Beethoven's *Second Piano Concerto* in the first half, and then, in the second half, Dave Brubeck's *Elementals* for orchestra and jazz trio (with Brubeck's sons, bassist Chris Brubeck and drummer Dan Brubeck).

His recordings of Dave Brubeck's classical piano music have been widely praised ("splendid recreation of Dave Brubeck's music" Marius Dawn, *Pianist*), as has his CD of Nikolai Kapustin's piano music ("a jazz pianist blessed with virtuoso classical chops... accomplished and committed performances," Jed Distler, classicstoday.com).

John Salmon has been a member of the faculty of The University of North Carolina at Greensboro School of Music since 1989. He holds the Doctor of Musical Arts degree from The University of Texas at Austin; the Master of Music degree from The Juilliard School; *the Solistendiplom* from the Hochschule für Musik, Freiburg, Germany; and the Bachelor of Music and Bachelor of Arts (philosophy) degrees from Texas Christian University. His awards include the Premio Jaén (1979), the Gina Bachauer Award from Juilliard, a fellowship from the Beethoven Foundation (known nowadays as the American Pianists Association), and prizes from the 1979 University of Maryland (William Kapell Competition) and 1984 Busoni competitions. He was born in Fort Worth, Texas in 1954.

THE MUSIC

I have always been a classical and jazz pianist. When I was eleven, in 1966, my mother bought me the score to Robert Schumann's Toccata, far beyond my level but the kind of *ne plus ultra* toward which ambitious children naturally gravitate, about the same time that she bought me a volume of Dave Brubeck's piano works, including transcriptions of *Take Five* and *Blue Rondo a la Turk*, also beyond my ability but a meaningful jump-start on my acquisition of jazz harmonies. As a teenager, I competed in classical piano competitions and also played jazz piano in the high-school stage band which even played some of my compositions.

My professional life has mirrored my youthful inclinations, including many appearances with the jazz-faculty combo of the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, my employer since 1989, as well as performances of Bach, Beethoven, and the rest of the classical canon in recitals across the globe. My recordings of the piano music of Dave Brubeck and Nikolai Kapustin also reflect this background; both composers, in their own ways, merge classical and jazz styles.

But this is my first recording of my own piano compositions. They are unmistakably in the jazz idiom, probably even more precisely categorized as "third stream," the style popular especially in the 1950s and 60s which combines jazz and classical languages. Dave Brubeck, undoubtedly my biggest influence, but also John Lewis of the Modern Jazz Quartet, Lennie Tristano, and Jacques Loussier contributed to this mode of musical expression and to my musical development. Other disparate musical voices also show up on this CD, such as the 1930s' stride style of Fats Waller (in *Mari Pino*), the late 1960s' jazz-rock blends of Blood, Sweat, and Tears (*Imitation Rock*), and the 1970s' salsa of Tito Puente and Eddie Palmieri (*Purcell's Lament*, *Mambo Madness*).

To make matters even more interesting on this recording (and to challenge my usually even-tempered and neurosis-free recording engineer Bobby Gage), I decided to overdub myself on every track, resulting in a "duet" with myself. Some pieces have two pianos going non-stop, as in *Salmon Is A-Jumpin'*, while others, such as *Mambo Madness*, only have certain parts with an overdubbed track. On one piece, *Child's Evening Prayer*, I overdubbed only one note, in the bass, at the very end.

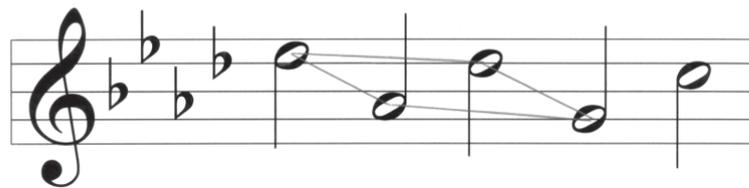
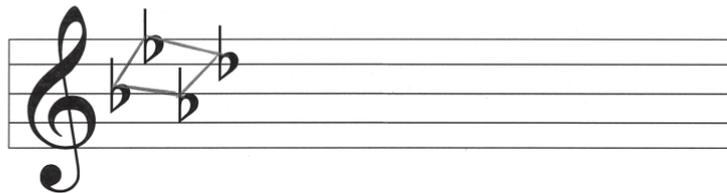
One of the most stimulating aspects of this overdubbing experiment was the constantly altering ratio of written-out to improvised parts. Sometimes my score was fairly explicit in both parts; in *Fughetta on Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?*, for example, only one 16-bar segment (in the primo part) was improvised. At the other end of the spectrum was my experimentation with spontaneous composition in both parts, as in *Des Abends* where verbal cues such as "tinkle," "splat," and "ping" often took the place of musical notation.

I also delighted in deciding, sometimes on the spot, to switch parts for practical reasons. For instance, in *Imitation Rock* the primo or treble part began the accompanying bass ostinato figure before the improvised solo, picked up later by the overdubbed track. In other words, sometimes the soloist became the accompanist for a few bars and vice versa.

Still another artistic concept to explore and conquer was the right textural balance. With four hands on eighty-eight keys, there was a temptation to fill the sonic canvas with lots of notes. I tried to find the right balance among all the possibilities: doubling lines at the octave or unison, exploiting all the registers of the keyboard, and sometimes giving one part a multi-measure hiatus.

At the end of the recording process, I had a new appreciation for Bill Evans's groundbreaking recording from 1963, *Conversations with Myself*, in which he also overdubbed himself. Now I know why that LP has spawned so few worthy descendants. But also, now that I have experienced this rather dramatic learning curve, I can't wait to do another overdubbed album! Why do matadors return to the ring, climbers plan another hike up Mount Everest, politicians run for office again?

Small Diamond is my musical reaction to Ilya Bolotowsky's painting, "Small Diamond" (housed in the Weatherspoon Art Museum on the University of North Carolina at Greensboro campus). In the painting, quadratic figures are placed in a tightly controlled, geometrically balanced scheme on a square-shaped canvas whose corners point north, south, east, and west. My composition mirrors this abstract linearity in its disciplined counterpoint, with the "head" starting out like a little fugue. There are also references to diamond shapes, both in the A-flat major key signature (see illustration) and melodic shape of the fugal subject (see illustration).



With *Imitation Rock* as the second track of this disc, some may wonder if a TV infomercial for affordable jewelry is at hand. Actually, “rock” here means the musical style, as does “imitation”—the contrapuntal practice of having various voices sing the same melodic fragment—even if one seldom hears these disjunct idioms merged nowadays. What if Chuck Berry had jammed at the Thomaskirche in eighteenth-century Leipzig or Johann Sebastian Bach had done his *preludieren* at present-day Blueberry Hill in St. Louis?

Purcell's Lament is a reference to Henry Purcell's famous aria “When I Am Laid in Earth,” also called “Dido's Lament,” from his opera *Dido and Aeneas*. My piece is in the same key as Purcell's aria, G minor, and is based on the same chromatically descending bass line. Grief or regret is instantly felt in both works, despite the centuries separating their composition. But an energetic salsa erupts in *Purcell's Lament* (Tito Puente on stage with Dido?) before a brief return to the sad, descending music.

Scatitude was originally written for SATB chorus and jazz trio. It is a combination of scat, etude, and attitude. Sometimes it sounds like hillbillies on steroids, but in 5/4 meter.

Mari Pino refers to my wife Mari Pino del Rosario, known to her college students as a demanding, energetic professor and to the academic community as a rigorously intellectual, brilliant scholar of Spanish literature. But to me, she is tender and informal—a slow 1930s stride number, easy and inviting, though deep and subtle.

I don't recommend trying to dance to *Mambo Madness*. The 7/4 meter and frenetic pace may cause injury.

Des Abends starts out sounding *not* like jazz but like the avant-garde language of Stockhausen or Boulez. Crepuscular moods and a few cricket chirps dominate until the wilder, more dangerous aspects of night emerge, calmed only by a brief reference to Robert Schumann's *Des Abends*, the first of his Op. 12 *Fantasiestücke*.

Bossa Bachiana was originally scored for women's chorus (SSAA) and jazz trio. The piece brings together two styles: J.S. Bach's chorale and bossa nova. Perhaps it is also a second cousin of Villa-Lobos's *Bachianas Brasileiras*. As well, influence from John Lewis's Modern Jazz Quartet, The Swingle Singers, and Jacques Loussier is detectable.

Fughetta on Brother, Can You Spare a Dime? is as much a response to Dave Brubeck's fugal treatment of Harburg and Gorney's well-known Depression-era song as to the original “Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?” My piece does borrow harmonies from Harburg and Gorney's song and the melody does appear briefly, about three minutes in, but cast in Brubeck's distinctively imitative counterpoint.

Blue Noon is a triple-meter ballad with a mainly diatonic melody and harmonies reminiscent of Billy Strayhorn. In my head, I hear Ellington's alto saxophonist Johnny Hodges playing the melody of *Blue Noon*, his rich tone, expressive swoops, and warm vibrato making the long notes especially attractive.

In *Congo*, I recall the drummers of central Africa, playing numerous polyrhythmic figures over a 6/8 ground bass. They, those drummers, would probably laugh at my simplistic patterns—I was proud of my grouping of 5 eighth-note beats over several bars of 6/8—since even their eight-year-old drummers do that and more (like adding yet another rhythm on top of the texture with their feet, something I could never do). In the back of my mind, I still hear Od Ogatu, a Kenyan billed as “the world's fastest drummer,” whom I heard as a boy at the 1964 World's Fair in New York.

Child's Evening Prayer was written by my paternal grandfather, Hugh Cameron Campbell Salmon (1883-1970), an Englishman who immigrated to Canada in 1908. "Papaw," as we called him, found a variety of employments—playing piano in a silent-movie theatre in Toronto; selling radios in Nelson, British Columbia; running a goat dairy in Walnut Creek, California—though his biggest passion was undoubtedly composing small works for piano, most in the unpretentious, pleasant style of Edward MacDowell's character pieces. I play *Child's Evening Prayer* as written, then add an improvisatorial commentary in D minor—which I am tempted to call "Parent's Nighttime Sigh"—before concluding with Papaw's cadence.

Very Larry is a semi-bitonal blues. The somewhat Dadaistic title came from a friend who saw my original manuscript, scribbled on the bottom of a poorly photocopied lead sheet for Bill Evans's *Very Early*, and thought he read "Very Larry." The title—and its random, madcap association with the Three Stooges—stuck.

Salmon Is A-Jumpin' would have been grammatically incorrect if referring to the fish. But, as an autobiographical statement, it is correct, especially when I get in a B-flat blues swinging mood.

—John Salmon

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Recorded September 20th & 27th, October 18th, November 1st & 22nd, 2009 in the Organ Hall, School of Music, University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

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Salmon is a Jumpin' JOHN SALMON, PIANO

Salmon is a Jumpin'

JOHN SALMON, PIANO

JOHN SALMON

- 1 Small Diamond [2:59]
 - 2 Imitation Rock [4:08]
 - 3 Purcell's Lament [6:46]
 - 4 Scatitude [2:16]
 - 5 Mari Pino [5:08]
 - 6 Mambo Madness [3:55]
 - 7 Des Abends [3:16]
 - 8 Bossa Bachiana [4:12]
- E.Y. "YIP" HARBURG & JAY GORNEY,
ARR. JOHN SALMON**
- 9 Fughetta on Brother, Can You Spare a Dime? [3:53]

JOHN SALMON

- 10 Blue Noon [3:21]
- 11 Congo [5:04]

HUGH C.C. SALMON

- 12 Child's Evening Prayer [5:05]

JOHN SALMON

- 13 Very Larry [1:08]
- 14 Salmon Is A-Jumpin' [2:13]

Total Time = 53:30

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