

## Ruby Bridges – Yazz Ahmed Jazz Horns, Grade 7

### General technique

1. Range: the lead sheet (written for flugelhorn) needs to be transposed for other instruments, the range is



- Alto sax: the piece works as a whole transposed up a perfect 5<sup>th</sup> from the Flugelhorn lead sheet, meaning the top note will be top F.
  - Tenor sax: there is a bit of jumping about needed to stay out of the altissimo register. I suggest 8va until the third bar of M, from which it can be played loco. If top F# isn't available then the phrase leading into F, and the first 3 bars of F will also need to be loco.
2. Tuning needs to be accurate over the range of the instrument, especially over the larger intervals such as bars 62 and 64. I would ask the student to practice these intervals out of time, focusing on breath support, to make sure intonation is good, and the sound doesn't weaken at the top of the register.
  3. L-N may need some slow, repetitive practice to build up legato triplet quaver technique.

### Jazz technique

1. Use the first 16 bars rest to get comfortable with 'feeling' the number of bars passing – try to get the student to hear and sing the bass movement in bar 9 to C# and back down to G in bar 13. Also listen with them to the original recording by [Yazz Ahmed \(from Polyhymnia, 2019\)](#) – the structure is different but the chord movement at the beginning is more obvious. You could also talk a little bit about the 'half-time feel' direction, and the difference between that and swing.
2. The piece is largely based around triplet crotchets, so these need to be fluent. Again, the original recording is helpful to hear how legato these are played. I suggest putting the metronome on beats 1 & 3, at a slower tempo, to work on this subdivision. The student can then speed it up during solo practice sessions.
3. In terms of general performance, jazz musicians tend to interpret lead sheets through their own style and original ideas – I've added some ideas here of what I might naturally do if playing the head without other horns. N.B. this is embellishment rather than improvisation; it's important to maintain the original rhythm and melody unless it's a 'jazz standard' in which case the student can be more interpretive with those musical elements.

### Harmony/Improvisation

1. The harmony in this piece is advanced, and uses the diminished, major, and melodic minor scales. The improvised section of the piece looks quite complex at first glance, but only uses 6 different scales (or 5 with a small alteration) – this is all written out in this document.
2. I suggest taking each chord separately to begin with, explaining the spelling, and where the harmony comes from, then vamping on it for as long as the student takes to get

comfortable. If piano accompaniment isn't an option, then a good app is 'Transcribe' in which you can loop sections of the backing track.

### First lesson ideas

1. Listen to the original recording of Ruby Bridges by Yazz Ahmed (performance, feel)
2. Talk about the feel, count the intro 16 bars aloud (aural, time)
3. Work on the triplet feel of the head (technique)
4. Explain the harmony in the improv section (theory)
5. Sing and play the relevant scales (aural, theory, technique)
6. Practice some improvising, paying attention to use of space, tone, rhythmic ideas, and 'hearing' the harmony (improv, aural, harmony)
7. Have a look at L-N, slow it down, make sure triplet quavers are fluent, give practice tips for them to get this bit under the fingers (technique)

## Chord-Scale relationships for Ruby Bridges

Josephine Davies

The image displays six musical staves, each representing a different chord and its corresponding scale mode. The scales are written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#).

- Staff 1:** Chord:  $A^\circ$  (diminished scale starting on whole step). Scale: A diminished scale (A-B-C-D-E-F-G-A).
- Staff 2:** Chord:  $A_\Delta(\#11)$  (lydian - 4th mode of the major scale). Scale: A Lydian mode (A-B-C#-D-E-F#-G-A).
- Staff 3:** Chord:  $C_\Delta(\#11)$  (lydian - 4th mode of the major scale). Scale: C Lydian mode (C-D-E-F#-G-A-B-C).
- Staff 4:** Chord:  $E^{\flat 7}/A$  (half-diminished, or locrian natural 2 - 6th mode of melodic minor). Scale: E locrian mode (E-F-G-A-B-C-D-E).
- Staff 5:** Chord:  $F\#_\Delta(\#11)$  (lydian - 4th mode of the major scale). Scale: F# Lydian mode (F#-G-A-B-C#-D#-E-F#).
- Staff 6:** Chord:  $A^{(sus4\flat 9)}$  (phrygian - 3rd mode of major scale). Scale: A phrygian mode (A-B-C-D-E-F-G-A).

If the student is struggling with the harmony, the half-diminished natural 9 scale can be substituted with a half-diminished flat 9 scale, making it the same scale as the final phrygian. It's worth noting with the student that different composers 'spell' chords differently, and often there is a choice of scales or modes that can fit.