



Recorded in March, 2024.

Jazz musicians frequently discuss color as an aspect of harmony. The “color tones” of a chord are typically understood to be extensions stacked above a triad. “Colorful” harmonies include four to seven tones sounding at once. Though the colors of harmony alone are enough to evoke particular fashions in the history of jazz, other musical colors also influence the overall character of the performance.

In jazz, color is also expressed through timbre. Jazz musicians strive to develop a personal sound, a particular quality of their tone that is immediately and singularly identifiable. Astute listeners can differentiate recordings of Freddie Hubbard, Lee Morgan, and Roy Hargrove in as little as a single note through the color of their sound alone. A collection of personal sounds contribute to the identifiable sound of a particular group.

Jazz compositions seem to evoke mood through a combination of musical colors. In the most iconic jazz compositions, the choice of tempo, meter, melody, harmony, and form, constitute a color palette that serves as the backdrop for improvisation. The particular qualities and relationships of these elements are what make it possible to immediately differentiate the music of master jazz composers. For experienced musicians, the music of Thelonious Monk, the music of Wayne Shorter, and the music of Joe Henderson (to name a few) have a unified character, similar to the personal sound of a soloist, in part due to the composer’s favored color palette.

In the recordings that inspire me, I am struck by how the color palette of a particular composer blends with the collective voice of a group. The effect of the final recording is the result of a group-oriented approach that is impossible to replicate because they are shaped by in equal parts by the source material and the collective performance of the musician on a particular day.

These recordings are my attempt to re-create that group-oriented approach. In the beginning, I worked specifically to craft flexible compositions that sketch particular moods. “Close,” “The Squeeze”, and “Low Profile” use unique tempo, meter, form, and texture, but are united by soulful melodies, harmonies influenced by contemporary R&B, and asymmetrical form that encourages a lyrical approach to improvisation.



As the details of the sessions fell into place and I chose musicians to participate in this project, I began to consider the arrangement of the tunes -- specifically how I could leverage the architecture of the recorded performance to bring light to each musician’s personal sound. In this way, the final recordings capture my compositional color palette as shaped by the personalities of some of my favorite players. Luckily, when you have collaborators as talented as Alton, Greer, and Chris, the final product is greater than the sum of its parts.

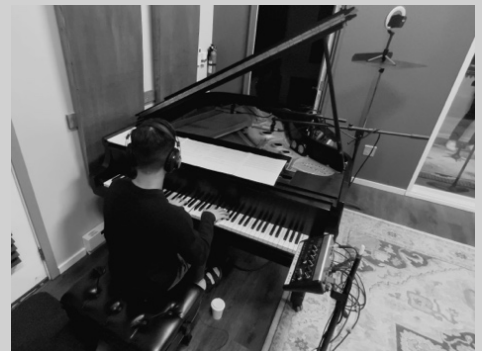


Color includes three compositions refined from fall 2022 to spring 2024.

“Close” is a short composition featuring spoken word. The lyrics are excerpts from “Close,” a poem from David Whyte’s book *Consolations*. In this book, Whyte reappraises everyday words to reveal a depth of meaning we frequently take for granted. As I continue to study music, I am convinced all musicians have to make peace with the feeling of being close.

“The Squeeze” has a bouncy groove inspired by Sean Jones. My favorite music is uplifting - it sneaks up on you, invites you to play, and challenges you to reach for the highest standard you can perceive.

“Low Profile” has a singable melody, shaded by shifting harmonies, and driven by insistent swing. I wrote the core of the tune while playing with the keyboard during my student teaching, missing hearing Alton play. We put the tune together in a short session, thanks to keen edits from Chris.



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**Color** is dedicated to my trumpet teachers John Schlabach, Brian Lynch, and Dr. Robert Sears who all encouraged me to persist studying the trumpet even when I would get discouraged. I grow every day that I embrace challenges with grace and curiosity.

Credits:  
Ryan Kerwin – Trumpet/Flugelhorn  
Alton Wong – Piano  
Chris McGraw – Bass  
Greer Lambert – Drumset  
Mixing and Mastering by Joshua Swiger and Ryan Kerwin  
Art by LHHS Advanced Painting.  
Design by Ryan Kerwin and Mark Santore.  
Produced by Ryan Kerwin