

Jazz from Hell: The Music of Inferno

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Abstract

For my Honors Thesis project, I have created a suite of original music based on Dante's *Inferno*, from the *Divine Comedy*. The nine pieces of music, each of which references one of the nine circles of hell, were performed as a part of my senior recital at the School of Music. Each song references an idea, a story element, or a theme from the corresponding circle and makes use of relatively different styles/instrumentation for the sake of variation. The challenge came with not only designing such a large amount of music, but also making it interesting to listen to while still being true to the source material.

Key Words: Dante, Inferno, Jazz

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An Intro into Dante, *Inferno* and My Project

Though written in the early 14th century, Dante Alighieri's *Divine Comedy* still retains its reputation as one of the most captivating works of world literature. The trilogy has been studied critically since its original publishing in 1320, a year before Alighieri's death. Immediately controversial by nature, Dante's masterwork has remained under constant scholarly scrutiny and discussion. The *Divine Comedy*, comprised of three poems, *Inferno*, *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso*, details Dante's arduous journey through the center of the Earth and up into the heavens. Along his journey, Dante records the wondrous and the horrendous; he hears music too beautiful to comprehend and sees things too horrible for description. The epic poem has been a muse for all kinds of artists in virtually every time period.

During the Renaissance, Botticelli painted and illustrated Dante on sheepskin and Alessandro Vellutello created intricate engravings detailing specific locations and events from the poem. In the 19th century, William Blake's imaginative drawings added his own personal spin on Dante's narrative and Gustave Doré designed intricate illustrations and engravings still widely used when depicting *Inferno*. **Within the last hundred years, in 1951**, Salvador Dalí was commissioned to craft 100 watercolors and woodcuts for Dante's 700th birthday, which he completed in many eclectic styles. Just a few years later, Robert Rauschenberg fashioned thirty-four solvent transfer drawings of printed images rubbed onto paper, chronologically depicting the 34 cantos from *Inferno*.¹ These examples are only visual depictions of Dante's universe and do not include countless

¹ For more information and to see images, visit: <http://www.worldofdante.org/inferno1.html>

interpretations that exist in other mediums. In the world of music, for example, the *Symphony to Dante's Divina Commedia* by Franz Liszt consists of two movements regarding the first two books of Alighieri's poem. The first movement, encompassing *Inferno*, is chromatic, tonally ambiguous and creates very dense textures to emulate chaos of Hell. Liszt disperses several themes representative of plot events and places in both movements. There was even a video game produced in 2010 based on Dante's writings.² This still glosses over dozens of other artists influenced by the *Divine Comedy*.

Arguably the most widely read of the three books, *Inferno* documents Dante's trek through the perversion of sin and the eternal torment sin inflicts on one's soul. Dante organizes Hell in reference to Aristotle's postulations on the three different types of souls and aspects of the human psyche in the *Nicomachean Ethics*: the vegetal, the animal and the rational. Of the nine circles in Dante's *Inferno*, the first five are considered sins of incontinence, or "vegetal" sins. Six and seven contain the "animal" sins of violence and the remaining two circles are the "rational" sins, fraud and betrayal. Created when Satan was cast down from Heaven, Hell's concentric rings form an inverted cone through the center of the Earth. The enormous crater left from Satan's impact encompasses the entirety of the Inferno, with the exiled angel residing at the bottom. Starting at the top, the sins of incontinence embody one's inability to retain control over their most basic of desires and contain the circles of Lust, Gluttony, Greed and Wrath. These sins have no malice or ill intent and these actions are not inherently evil as they encompass natural desires. It is here where upper hell ends and lower hell

² For more information visit: <https://www.ea.com/games/dantes-inferno>

begins. The sins of violence contain sinners with intent to commit animalistic, violent acts against others, gods and ideals. The last two circles, where the rational sins reside, is home to those who wield words and thoughts with malicious intent. These sins differ from those above, as they do not contain physical violence, but intellectual violence. To Aristotle and Dante, the one aspect separating humankind from the animal kingdom was our ability to use rational thought. Therefore, to use the gift separating man from beast for the purpose of evil constitutes the most serious degree of sin.

The deeper into Hell one travels, the more elaborate each ring is and the more horrible the sin and its punishments become. Dante's creation of ironic punishments, or *contrapassos*, for each sin has sparked discussion regarding the nature of true justice and true evil. With no holds barred, Dante also swings at political, religious and mythical figures in a way unheard of at the time. The combination of all these factors makes for a truly epic poem indeed.

Every successive read through of *Inferno* reveals more depth and intrigue to Dante's world. The poem not only tells the fantastical story of Dante traversing down through the depths of Hell, but also gives a visual allegory for despair and darkness in one's life. *Inferno* does so while seamlessly weaving Christian and Roman mythologies. Dante accomplishes all this while following a specific rhyming and syllabic pattern in all three poems: eleven syllables per line, three lines per tercet (rhyming *ABA*, *BCB*, *CDC*, etc.) with an extra line at the end of each canto.

During his journey through *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso*, Dante describes angelic music and employs musical language describing the polyphony transcending

humankind. Fittingly in *Inferno*, there is no “music” to be found. Rather, Hell is full of the perversion of music, noise and language. Prior to even entering the gates of Hell, the first observations Dante records are the sounds he hears, saying:

The sighs, groans and laments at first were so loud,
Resounding though starless air, I began to weep:
Strange languages, horrible screams, words imbued

With rage or despair, cries as of troubled sleep
Or of a tortured shrillness – they rose in a coil
Of tumult, along with noises like the slap

Of beating hands, all fused in a ceaseless flail
That churns and frenzies that dark and timeless air
Like sand in a whirlwind (*Inf.* 3.19-27).³

Dante includes references to musical ideas or instruments in *Inferno*, however these always feature non-harmonious sounds and perversion of musical harmony. For instance, while travelling through the many pouches in the eighth circle, Dante and Virgil come across a group of demons called the Malebranche. These demons are assigned to torture corrupt politicians residing in the fifth pouch with claws and hooks. Much like a military bugle call, the leader, Malacoda, calls attention to the other demons by making “a trumpet of his ass” (*Inf.* 21.139). Later in the tenth pouch, Dante observes an interaction between Sinon and Master Adam, who committed the sins of falsifying words and money, respectively. He describes Master Adam’s body being “shaped exactly like a lute” (*Inf.* 30.47) and Sinon striking his “rigid belly, which resounded just like a drum” (*Inf.* 30.102-103). On the edge between the eighth and

³ All quotations and translations are taken from the Pinsky edition of the poem.

ninth circle, the giant Nimrod can be seen off in the distance. Nimrod, the creator of the Tower of Babel, caused God to scatter humanity across the earth and confound their speech so that they could no longer understand one another. He is heard spouting nonsensical phrases and blowing angrily on a massive horn around his neck.

The perversion of musicality and language was intriguing to me, which led to the idea for this thesis in the first place. To me, *Inferno* is a story about the human condition and the necessity to knowing the depths of human depravity in order to be worthy of personal growth. It seemed fitting that my senior recital, representing the culmination of my own growth over four years as a musician at DePaul, would also reflect those ideals of knowing weakness for growth in *Inferno*.

At its most fundamental, music is about the development of tension and release, with classical music long ago championing this idea over the long forms of symphonies and suites. In my opinion, jazz music has refined the idea of short-term tension and release and does so more satisfyingly than most modern popular music. I think this is what I have found so captivating about jazz music as a whole. *Inferno* is a book full of turmoil and emotion and while the “release” comes to fruition in the other books of the *Divine Comedy*, jazz as a medium allows for the exploration of the highs and lows of emotion in the moment. As a player, one slowly discovers the musical language of developing melodies and weaving intriguing melodic tension and release through solos. Becoming a composer has further increased the understanding and exploration of this attention to purposeful release. This project gave me an external motivator to improve my knowledge of jazz melody and harmony both as a composer and as a player.

Attending the music school here at DePaul, I have come to very much enjoy composition and in just a few short years have grown a significant amount as a writer. The senior thesis, in combination with my senior recital has forced me to step out of my comfort zone as a writer and as a player. By exploring forms of musical writing that I am not accustomed to, I am also exploring forms of playing I am not practiced at equally. In conjunction, the honors thesis has pushed my studies of *Inferno* forward, as a more expansive knowledge can only make my musical writing more personal and expansive as well.

I have been working closely with Thomas Matta, DePaul's jazz arranging and composition professor over the past few years and learned a great deal about writing in the jazz medium. He has driven me to increase my skills substantially in a short amount of time. In addition, he has recommended a vast collection of literature on writing jazz harmony, melodies and arranging for diverse ensembles. There is a wealth of knowledge in these books that I have gleaned from and I plan to use the large list he has provided to further strengthen my pieces in the future. Because nine pieces was such a substantial goal, I began working and writing at the start of the academic year, only to complete the final large ensemble song, around two weeks before my recital. There is always time for much more research and growth however, so while the jazz medium is the one I know the best, I have further plans to expand my writing to include as many genres and styles as I am able to learn.

A significant amount of thought and effort goes into every step of a piece of music and the process is entirely individual to each person and each song. There are a

multitude of elements one has to think about and balance to create a cohesive tune that is accessible and enjoyable to listen to while not being too difficult or convoluted for the musicians to be able to play. Forming chord changes that have functionality and are harmonically interesting in conjunction with creating a memorable melody can be a daunting task and requires just as much practice as playing an instrument. This, combined with writing in reference to a complex text like *Inferno*, involves a great deal of problem solving and troubleshooting. I think the process of creatively solving problems using musical theory is what attracts me so much to the writing process. It is also very gratifying to hear a piece performed or recorded and come to fruition.

In order to create each piece, I would sit down for a critical read of the canto/cantos regarding one sin. Using the Pinsky translation to read and cite the poem alongside the Hollander commentary (accessed via Dante Lab), I read the poem and attempted to translate descriptive sections of text or events into musical ideas. This is not a way of thinking that I was accustomed to, but became less arduous as I got more practice and has led to some very intriguing avenues of writing. Some ideas are broader and can apply to the form of the song or the ensemble arrangement while some ideas are more focused and can affect minute details such as an interval in the melody.

The6Masters: Limbo

Dante finds himself in a dark place, devoid of hope. He and his guide, Virgil, begin their journey through the Inferno in Limbo. This circle contains virtuous pagans, those of great virtue born before Christ and those unable to be baptized, like children

and those of other religions. Located within this ring, a castle resides containing those Dante greatly admired and is the most pleasant place in *Inferno*. Almost like an inferior Heaven located within Hell, this area is bathed in light and warmth. Dante meets many of the greatest thinkers and writers here like Homer, Socrates, Aristotle, Ovid, Lucan and Julius Caesar.

This piece is divided into two major sections: one representing the dark and hopeless woods Dante starts the poem in and the other, the noble castle located within Limbo. The first section contains a dreary and slow funeral march created by the drums and bass. This groove gives the impression of being eternal, having no beginning or end. The only sort of melodic content the listener is given is derived from two trombones representing Dante and Virgil. Rather than any sort of conventional melodic phrasing, the two horns play long, somber whole notes a half step apart. This dissonant, crunchy sound, combined with the similar timbres of two trombones, is rather grating and is only given context by sparse and melancholy chordal foundations played by the piano. The harmonic rhythm continues to shorten and increases in intensity until a smack from the drums brings Dante and Virgil into the illuminated castle. Being full of light and life, the tempo drastically switches into a double time feel. Now the trombones play a significantly more melodic line, this time with a much larger interval of a fourth between them. While the first section was slow and dissonant, being tonicized with minor chords, the second section is fast and consonant with primarily major sounding chords. The two trombones each solo individually and then play a chorus together, trading back and forth to represent the trading of ideas Dante and the other great minds partake in.

However, this bright moment is fleeting and the original funeral march returns to signify the return of Dante's impending journey.

The Day We Read No Further: Lust

In the second circle, where the sins of incontinence begin, those who committed acts of lust reside. In life, these souls succumbed to the whirlwind of desire and the body, so in death they are thrown around in a maelstrom for all eternity. Here, Dante stops to speak with two lovers, Francesca and Paolo. He feels great pity and empathizes with the damned in this circle as Dante holds love in high regard.

To try to embody the idea of chaos, this piece is primarily a free piece of music. The drums and bass begin walking at a rapid tempo with no real tonal center. As they do so, trombone, alto and piano slowly begin playing what seem like random notes. Each instrument is assigned a specific note set, containing some consonant notes and some dissonant ones. They play, increasing in intensity until the entire ensemble hits descending chords clusters. The melody here is designed to feel unfinished and jarring. The foundation of the walking bass contains a seven note rising riff. This cycles for a seven bar phrase, where the idea repeats again giving an unending and relentless feel to the groove. The brain is hardwired to hear an eight bar phrase, so the strange phrase length comes as a surprise to the listener. A bluesy, but angular melody plays in unison twice in the horns and piano. On its third iteration, the saxophone transposes up a major second and while dissonant, still sounds consonant to the ear. The final iteration of the melody adds the piano a half step between the two horns. This note cluster

cements the idea that harmony has no bearing on the song and somewhat prepares the listener for the incoming solos. The solos progress with several textural changes and time signature modulations until a drum solo brings back the original melody. Just to throw off the listener one more time, the descending chord clusters from the intro are reiterated in time and one more time modulation is thrown in before the piece ends.

Cerebus&Ciaccio: Gluttony

In this circle, Cerberus, the three-headed hellhound of Greek mythology guards the sinners who committed gluttony. The damned here wallow in a vile, putrid slush produced by a ceaseless, foul, icy rain – a great storm of putrefaction. Cerberus, described as “the great worm,” mauls and flays sinners with its claws and teeth. Dante and Virgil pass safely by throwing mud into its mouth. Dante briefly talks with a sinner here named Ciaccio, meaning, “pig,” who predicts the expulsion of the White Guelphs, Dante’s political party in Florence. This is the first time Dante uses a character in *Inferno* to “predict” political events yet to happen, including his own exile.

In seven, this piece contains an asymmetrical Latin groove at its foundation. The bass begins alone, making it very difficult to for the listener to understand what the time feel is. Once the drums enter, the ear begins to wrap itself around the time feel but is still lacking in harmonic content. Soon the guitar follows, giving the needed harmonic context to the groove. In each subsequent phrase, a new instrument or layer is added to the texture. First, the trumpet plays a smooth and calm melody followed by the alto, playing a more angular line for contrast. Finally the trombone enters, playing a line that

fills any spaces left by the two established melody lines. These three melodies represent the three feasting heads of Cerberus. Similar to how the three heads combine into one beast, the three melody lines are fused into one “monstrous” combination. Underneath, the rhythm section plays asymmetric hits in unison adding yet another layer for the listener to try and comprehend. The full timbre gorges the audience’s ears much like the damned residing in this circle gorged themselves in life.

Fortune: Greed

Those who spent their wealth with avarice and those who refused to by hoarding their possessions reside in the fourth circle. The two are opposite sides of the same coin and attempt to abuse the will of Fortune. Fortune, a personification of God’s will, is often represented by the symbol of the wheel, to allude to the cycle of obtaining and losing wealth that persists throughout life. Located on opposites sides of this circle, the spenders and the hoarders push massive boulders towards the other party. All the while, each side yells at the other, questioning their opposing way of life, hurrying “forward till they must meet / And dance their round” (*Inf.* 7.22-23). They push the large weights until meeting and jousting using their heavy “weapons,” only to turn around, repeating this battle for eternity.

To emulate the endless “dance” that the sinners in this circle partake in; this piece is a delicate waltz. The trombone asserts a simple and carefree melody that is echoed in canon by the trumpet. Just as the sinners are equal but opposites in ideologies, the melodies shared between the two horns are almost identical but skewed

from one another in time. The two combine and play spacious hits, allowing the drums to interject and represent the questioning between opposing sides. The intensity picks up when the ensemble plays a rhythmic hemiola leading up to a loud and dissonant smack from the drums and the horns. This “crack” emulates the smashing of boulders and the colliding of bodies. The chordal form, too, reflects and leads up to the climax. Going back and forth between two major chords of similar timber, the chords feel effortless. Soon however, the two chords switch between major and minor chords of slightly differing timbres. In the last few bars, the chords change from a major chord to an augmented chord of a very different sound, again at an unexpected moment. From here out, the entirety of the piece is restated in retrograde, referencing the eternal back and forth battle of the damned.

Phlegyas Crosses the Styx: Wrath

As the last of the sins of incontinence, the circle of wrath is the end of Upper Hell and the end of Dante’s sympathy towards the damned. Begrudgingly, Phlegyas ferries Dante and Virgil across the River Styx, beginning the fifth circle. Here, the wrathful fight and tear each other apart on the surface, while the sullen, or the passively wrathful, reside beneath the swampy river in a black sulkiness where no joy can be found. On the far side of the Styx, Dante and Virgil are refused entry into the City of Dis, or lower hell, by the three Furies. An angel arrives and commands the gates to be opened, rebuking those attempting to slow Dante’s progress.

To start this piece, the bass player bows a low ostinato drone, setting the ominous and dreary tone of the filthy Styx. This ballad is rubato, meaning there is no set tempo, allowing the time to slow or accelerate expressively. Over top, solo trombone plays a melody comprised of two modes. The first mode, Mixolydian, represents the sullen underneath the surface while the second mode, Locrian, is more dissonant and aggressive sounding, representing the souls on the river's surface. Throwing off the listener a bit, the guitar enters for the second melodic iteration and plays slightly behind the trombone, like an echo. During the bridge section, the bass, guitar and piano play lavish chords and provide harmonic weight nonexistent in the piece previously. This chordal section represents the descent of a heavenly being, who opens a gate blocking Dante and Virgil's path.

The Soul Dies With the Body: Heresy

The first souls Dante meets once in the City of Dis reside in tombs of flame. Those who committed heresy prescribed to Epicurean philosophy that the soul dies when the body is gone, going against the fundamental Christian ideals regarding the eternity of the soul. Dante is hailed by the sinner Farinata degli Uberti, who recognizes his Florentine accent and it is revealed they are of opposite political parties. While making cordial conversation, another of the damned, Cavalcante de' Cavalcanti, interrupts and having only heard snippets of the conversation, believes his son, a close friend of Dante's, has died. Distraught, Cavalcante retreats back into his tomb. Virgil calls to Dante and the two continue on their way.

In 7/8, this piece grooves in a contemporary jazz fashion and while the time signature is jarring, the feel is relaxed. The initially stated melody in alto represents Farinata, as he is the first voice to call out from his fiery tomb. His melody is calm, linear and easily fits over the asymmetric time signature to parallel his proud demeanor. Farinata stands tall in his fiery tomb and does not cry out as the other sinners here do. He calls to Dante, who is represented by the guitar. His melody is also calm and linear but suggests a more symmetric time signature spanning two normal measures. This melody and the sax line pleasantly “converse” with one another diatonically. When the trombone melody representing Cavalcante finally enters, it too is diatonic. It is much more vertical, weaving up and down at the ends of phrases and often seems to interrupt. As the conversation progresses and Cavalcante’s misunderstandings increase however, the notes become more dissonant and more chromatic. Cavalcante recedes back into his tomb and the trombone drops out, as does the alto when Farinata and Dante’s conversation is nearing a close. The bass doubles the guitar melody to represent Virgil calling out for Dante so that they may continue their journey.

Violence: Violence

The circle of Violence is separated into three smaller subsections: violence against others, violence against oneself and violence against God, nature or art. The first, comprised of a river of boiling blood, submerges its sinners depending on the severity of their blood lust. The second contains the Forest of Suicides. People here are cast down from above and grow as trees. Their branches, when broken, feel as if the

soul is being dismembered. Because the damned threw their bodies away in life, they are denied access to them in death. In the last subsection, sinners here reside in a burning desert, underneath constantly raining fire.

In parallel, this piece also contains three major sections. The first, a fast modal section representative of the boiling river of violence against others, is comprised of three modes. A driving, unison melodic idea is stated in the Mixolydian mode and elaborated in the Phrygian mode, becoming more dissonant and displaced in time. Again, the melody becomes increasingly vertical and dissonant in the Locrian mode. The whole section is repeated again with each horn having individual augmentations of the melody, clustering the texture even more until all arrive at a loud chord in fourths. The second section, representing the forest of suicides, halves tempo dramatically, seemingly out of nowhere. The horns adorn mutes and descend chromatically, creating a lilting soundscape underneath a soloing guitar to create the moaning and wailing of the living-dead trees. Here, the harmony is no longer modal, but instead functional using several tritone substitutions. This creates disjointed bass movement that feels unnerving while still driving forward harmonically. Finally, the third section takes the melody stated in the first and adds the new tempo and functional harmony from the second section. Sinners here burn slowly and consistently while staring upwards towards the heavens. A final solo piano cadenza represents God, of whom the sinners are continuously reminded.

Malebolgia: Fraud

After a short trip on the winged monster Geryon, Dante and Virgil begin the long and arduous journey through the circle of Fraud. Geryon, described as having “a just man’s face, outwardly kind” (*Inf.* 17.90), possesses a body of an armed serpent; his scales, so brilliant, “no Tartar or Turk ha[d] ever woven a cloth / more colored in field and figure” (*Inf.* 17.14-15). However, Geryon also possesses a tail “quivery // And restless in the void where it hung down / Squirming its venomed fork with an upward twist, / Armed like a scorpion” (*Inf.* 17.21-24), personifying the idea of fraud. His outer image may be kind, unassuming and brilliant, but has venomous intentions lurking in the background.

Separated into ten unique pouches, called *malebolgia*, the eighth circle contains a myriad of sinners and complex punishments. Along the way, the intrepid duo meets many strange characters, witnesses gruesome transformations and does a fair amount of hiking. At times, Dante and Virgil are able to walk above the subsections on stone bridges, but elsewhere are required to traverse through each pouch, climbing the ever-steepening dividers between each sin.

To emulate the idea of fraud in musical language, this piece is written and arranged to be musically unpredictable and surprising to the listener. Melodic and harmonic ideas are introduced, insinuating a musical resolution, only to deceive the audience and deliver something else. Just like Geryon’s physical appearance, this piece is initially attractive, only to reveal fraudulent progressions. The originally stated melody is introduced by guitar with no harmonic context. During this initial statement, the bass

accompanies and compliments the guitar line, occasionally walking in time. Without drums however, the song's several time signature changes are obscured and virtually unidentifiable. When the rest of the ensemble finally enters, the melody is broken between the three horns and is elaborated further. With the time finally identifiable, it becomes apparent how the harmonic rhythm occurs at odd intervals, often resolving in deceptive fashions. The melody itself is unpredictable and is never identical in any iteration. At times, the melodic content is reminiscent of a blues only to move in an unanticipated way. At the end of each solo form, the drum feel switches from swing to an Afro-Cuban groove. A repeating bass function moves between suspended chords, feeling unresolved and forward moving. This new section is representative of the continued climbing Dante and Virgil must partake in to scale between each malebolgia and returns several times throughout the piece.

Judecca: Betrayal

At the bottom of Hell, Dante and Virgil walk through the final circle. Here, those who committed the sin of betrayal reside. Separated into four subsections, Betrayal is a frozen wasteland where its sinners reside encased in ice. Those who betrayed their brethren, their political party, their country, and their guests are frozen in ways befitting each category. In the center, where Lucifer resides, are those who betrayed their benefactors. Here, Satan chews on the bodies of Brutus, Cassius and Judas (Judas, the betrayer of Jesus and Brutus and Cassius, the betrayers of Ceasar). Again, Dante combines the political, the mythological and the religious into one singular punishment.

When Satan, the original betrayer of God, was cast down from Heaven, his impact created the conical Hell that Dante records. He is frozen from the waist down and is described as having three heads and six wings. He weeps from his six eyes and his tears mix with blood and pus as they pour down his three chins. The beating of his wings and his breath cause icy winds that freeze the entirety of the ninth circle. Almost as quickly as he is seen, Satan is forgotten. Dante and Virgil climb down his waist until they pass through the center of the Earth and climb to the southern hemisphere, a previously unexplored area of the world.

To emulate the icy landscape of the final circle, this piece swings at a “cool” medium-slow tempo, also allowing for some defying of expectations. Just as Dante the author almost trivialized Satan by giving him very little attention in *Inferno*, this song is almost pleasant to listen to and is far from being the nastiest part of Hell. With an increased ensemble size of six horns, each horn section is allowed to alter the overall timbre of the piece several times. Each horn section represents one of Satan’s heads and play isolated motives that combine with each other for a densely layered vamp section. The harmonic structure and melody combine to emulate the “sigh” of Satan’s breath and wings. The chords in the latter half of the melody descend chromatically and then rise back up past where they started. This is representative of Dante and Virgil climbing down Satan’s legs until gravity reverses.

Final Comments

The main goal for this project, at its most basic, was to challenge myself with the creation of an entire recital compelling enough to listen to. Writing a song or two that is convincing and enjoyable is one thing, but designing an entire original recital and keeping an audience interested the whole time is another entirely. In addition, having each piece be referential in some way to *Inferno* and its nine circles adds another layer of complexity and difficulty. This endeavor forced me to think about specific aspects of each song: the logical progression of a melodic idea, the harmonic progression, arranging a piece of music in a way that showcases each instrument while avoiding monotony, etc.

For the fluidity of the recital, one has to think about the variations between time feels and styles, melodic themes consistent between each song and the actual logistics of running a program containing ten musicians. In my recital program, I provided succinct liner notes (a more concise and condensed version of the explanations above) in order to explain why I make some of the musical choices I do. Although this project is directly related to my senior recital and thesis project, I would like to pursue recording all this material at some point to have physical evidence of my personal growth up to this point. Ultimately, the pieces I wrote will just be mile markers of where I am as a musician and a writer right now.

Annotated Bibliography

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Notes by Nicole Pinsky. Noonday Press/Farrar, Straus and Giroux. 1994.

Since this is the source material for my whole recital, it only seems fitting to put this one first. This poem has been a continued source of inspiration and wonder for me over the years. I first read it in high school for an AP English class and was primarily interested in the surface level story of Dante traversing through Hell and the beautiful language used to describe the horrors he witnesses. As I was required to reread it further, with more in depth and focused readings, I began to realize the scope and density of Dante's writing. This only fostered interest and intrinsically motivated readings outside of school.

Baker, David N. *Arranging and Composing for the Small Ensemble: Jazz, Rhythm and Blues, Jazz Rock*. Frangipani Press, 1985.

David Baker, while not what one would describe as "famous" in the jazz world, is a legendary jazz composer/arranger and pedagogue. Just recently passing in 2016, his influence spans more than just the music he wrote. The majority of jazz educators and aspiring jazz students probably own at least one of his 70 books published before his passing. Baker was a mentor and teacher to Tim Coffman, who is the jazz trombone professor here at DePaul, so it is not farfetched to say that his teachings personally have shaped my playing in some way.

In this text, Baker discusses many of the fundamental issues one comes across when writing music. Starting as simple as how to design a melody, to how to write chord substitutions for a six-piece band, the book covers a wide variety of topics. I plan to read all it has to offer eventually, but I specifically perused his separate chapters on two, three, four, five and six part writing. For my recital, I wrote for several different ensemble sizes and there were several things learned from Mr. Baker regarding the nuances of writing for a specific ensemble size.

Lowell, Dick, et al. *Arranging for Large Jazz Ensemble*. Berklee Press, 2003.

Dick Lowell, an associate professor of jazz composition at Berklee College of Music, has been a respected composer and trumpet player for over thirty years. He has written and recorded with many notables including Mel Tormé, Tony Bennet, Jack Jones, etc. This book, like the one mentioned above, begins with the basics, listing the ranges and timbres of every instrument that would commonly play in a large jazz ensemble. Information like this is only available to someone who has written a lot and noticed what works and what does not. To be able to list this all in one place is invaluable for someone who has less experience like me.

This book is full of invaluable information, ranging from simple and essential concepts to complex and unconventional ones. Later in the book, Lowell

discusses the pros and cons of arranging horns in certain ways based off the timbre of the melody, the exact instrumentation of each particular section of a large ensemble and how fast the “color” change is that the writer is going for. As someone not well versed in large ensemble writing, this book intrigues me greatly as it has a wealth of knowledge to offer. It was a goal of mine to have at least one large ensemble song as a part of this project in order to force myself to broach this difficult form of writing.

“Dante Lab.” *Dante Lab*, Dartmouth College, dantelab.dartmouth.edu/.

This website/e-reader is indispensable as a tool to anyone that is reading and studying Dante. Created by Dartmouth College, Dante Lab consolidates four different translations and over 75 commentaries by famous and respected scholars, both historical and modern. Having access to all this information simultaneously greatly expedites the process of comparing the text and the commentaries. In order to have a more complete understanding of the poem, I would have the Hollander commentary up at all times while reading from my Pinsky translation. I could compare the Pinsky notes with the Hollander commentary with much less effort, greatly streamlining my writing process. Much time has been spent flipping back and forth between a chapter and its accompanying commentary at the end of the book, so having everything in one place in conjunction to a print text is invaluable.

Roglieri, Maria Ann. *Dante and Music*. Ashgate Publishing, 2001.

While this book is full of fascinating information regarding all the numerous musical references and ideas within the entirety of the *Divine Comedy*. I found particularly useful information about *Inferno* in two chapters: “The Music of Dante’s Hell, Purgatory and Paradise” and “The Antimusic of Hell: Screams and Lamentations.”

Other Works Consulted

Cuthbert, Michael Scott. "Music." *Dante in Context*, edited by Zygmunt G. Baranski and Lino Pertile, Cambridge University Press, 2015, pp. 448–457.

Dobbins, Bill. *Jazz Arranging and Composing: a Linear Approach*. Advance, 1986.

Pease, Ted. *Modern Jazz Voicings: Arranging for Small and Medium Ensembles*. Berklee Press, 2001.

Roglieri, Maria Ann. "Music." *The Dante Encyclopedia*, edited by Richard Lansing, Maria Ann, Garland Publishing, 2000, pp. 631–634.

Sturm, Fred. *Changes over Time: the Evolution of Jazz Arranging*. Advance Music, 1995.