



COWBOY JAZZ I (Hal Leonard Publication, 2008)

Sally Saddle

There was no particular Sally who inspired this one, which is the easiest in the set. But we can pretend that Sally is a happy-go-lucky close cousin of Cowboy Karen who also likes to ride horses and wear cowboy hats!

Prairie Gary

Dedicated to a former student of Dr. Houle, Gary Field, this tune was first played by Gary in a National Guild of Piano Teachers Audition. The left hand imitates a jazz bassist. Houle has performed it as a sax/bass/piano arrangement, live on NPR's KUT-Austin radio. This catchy ditty shows the influence of Vince Guaraldi, the great jazz pianist who wrote and played the music for many *Peanuts* films.

Cowboy Karen

This fun selection took 90 minutes to compose and was inspired by Karen Wells, who liked to wear cowboy hats. Part of the wit and charm comes from the many unexpected harmonies. When it was written, however, one humor-impaired music teacher back east chided Houle for ending in the "wrong" key and using more keys than a locksmith!

Fancy Footwork

Fancy Footwork has a slight thematic similarity to *Bright-Eyed and Bushy-Tailed*. It is also reminiscent of a very early Houle piece, *To the Country*, written at age 11. It was originally titled *Frolicking Frenzies* and later dubbed *Frolicking Fancies*. The final title was conceived by Peggy Otwell, editor of the Hal Leonard "Cowboy Jazz" publication. She did so with no consultation with or permission from the composer, who, ironically, prefers her title!

Melody for Dennis

This piece is dedicated to cellist Dennis Parker (faculty, Louisiana State University). It's the most rhythmically and harmonically sophisticated in this set, yet still quite accessible. This was also performed live (as a sax/bass/piano arrangement) on NPR's KUT-Austin radio and won Second Prize in a Music Umbrella of Austin Original Instrumental Composition Competition. Houle has played cello/piano and violin/piano arrangements of this work as well.



COWBOY JAZZ II

(Abundant Silence, 2015)

Cowboy Jazz II is the second collection of five sophisticated yet accessible early to late intermediate pieces for solo piano by Arthur Houle, Professor of Music at Colorado Mesa University.

These fun selections are a great way for teachers to introduce jazz to classical pianists, for they are fully notated but also lend themselves to improvisatory license.

So saddle up and ride off into the sunset with these footloose and fancy-free gems for piano. Just remember to wear a cowboy hat and yell "yee-haw!" on the last bar of every performance!

Tommy Tumbleweeds is the easiest, most accessible tune in Cowboy Jazz II, yet has a cool sophistication that will appeal to both children and adults. It's a bluesy, laid back fun piece dedicated to Houle's good friend and former student, Tom Booth of Caldwell, Idaho. (Anyone who lives on a street named "Chicken Dinner Road" - as Tom does - just has to have a cowboy melody in his name.)

You'll soon swoon for Houle's rootin'-tootin' high noon *Saloon Tune*! It's one part rowdy cowboy, one part honky-tonk piano, and a passel of Old West free flights of fancy fingerwork. Students will have wagonloads of fun playing "Saloon Tune" at recitals, rodeos, and railroad crossings! Suitable for all "young at heart" ages (cowboy hats, batteries, and other accessories not included).

The original version of *Buckaroo Blues* was scored for piano and fender bass, with a much different bass line for both instruments. This new version is fondly dedicated to a former student, Jason Buckalew, whose last name conjured up the image of a buckaroo, or cowboy, who embraces the cowboy life with a carefree nonchalance borne of experience, contentment and unassuming confidence.

Under the Stars is a highly lyrical and sentimental "tone poem" suggestive of long wistful nights sleeping under the stars.*

*Caution: the beautiful melodies and delicious twists of romantic harmonies in this piece can cause excessive elevation of the soul, which may require a long and sturdy lasso to bring it back to earth.

Bright-Eyed and Bushy-Tailed is a fun jazzy piece (inspired by Vince Guaraldi, who wrote the music to the *Peanuts* films). This piece for late-intermediate pianists (or early advanced, if one improvises on it) is a great way to add variety and additional styles to your repertoire.