The screened-in porch of the Hall country retreat is in the middle of the woods. The birds chirp and the chipmunks splash through the fallen leaves getting ready for winter. The cacophony of the city is far away and here we sit, my father and I, talking about *Textures*, his latest recording. From my perspective this project reveals a startling and wonderful new persona.

For nearly all my life I've been aware that my dad is a world-renowned jazz guitarist. I've tracked his travels from continent to continent, and collected his reviews and recordings. I am familiar with most of the tunes he has written, tunes recorded by both himself and other artists, and I've even learned to play a few. But I never before realized that my dad is also a Composer, with a capital C. I suspect that this will be news to most of the world (it was to my mother, and the *textures* concept for this recording was her idea), but when you stop to think about it, it's not so strange.

Composition is an integral part of jazz, for it is what musicians do on the spot when they improvise. But memorable compositions, and certainly orchestrations, require a deeper attention to form, shape, and texture. Jim's musical style has always been recognizable not by a recurring signature riff or motif, but by his compositional approach, his sound, and his feeling, as he considers the melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic elements of the music.

Jim Hall has always been an innovator. *The New York Times* said he was "the most resourceful and unpredictable guitarist playing jazz today." His playing is always evolving, stretching to embrace new influences and forge new paths. And he loves to experiment with the textures created by different instrumental combinations. At age thirteen, Jim's first professional gigs were with a group in Cleveland consisting of accordion, clarinet, drums, and guitar. But that combo was not nearly so inspirational as the Jimmy Giuffre trio, which he joined in 1957. "Giuffre's idea was to have three linear instruments [saxophone, trombone and guitar] improvise collectively," recalls Jim. "It was damn hard, yet it was one of the most enlarging experiences I've had."

This recording is like a box of chocolates where no two pieces are the alike. The vibration of a string. The echo of a horn. Notes, melodies, harmonies, rhythms, juxtaposed to build forms, shapes and textures. The craft of composition, the telling of a story. From the opening track you get a sense of Jim's love of melody, harmony, and fun.

Fanfare is one of the three pieces composed for brass. Jim uses full-bodied chords and the rich brass texture to make a small group sound at times like a symphony, and at others like a marching band. There's a New Orleans feel when they go into tempo, and then they really start to swing. Soon you find yourself engaged in a seemingly-spontaneous full-blown conversation amongst all participants, reminiscent of a wild night at the Village Vanguard with the old Thad Jones-Mel Lewis Orchestra. I say "seemingly spontaneous" because the section is not totally improvised. A quick look at the score shows that not only does each phase have a definite number of bars, but the rhythm and the upward or downward flow of the notes is notated. What is left up to each musician is just which notes to play.

Track two features fifteen string players from the St. Luke's Orchestra and a saxophone solo by Joe Lovano. From the opening tremolo and percussive beats of **Ragman** you can imagine early morning stirrings of life in an alley. The plaintive wail of the saxophone announces the ragman's arrival, and the guitar tells the Ragman's story as he goes about collecting and selling paper and rags. Jim says that when he was a child he thought the man was yelling "paper X," and you can almost hear it yourself in the Eastern European flavoring of the melody. Then the saxophone takes over as the Ragman tells his own story. You can see him dancing atop his

horse-drawn cart, at other times *hondling* with the old ladies, and in the end you can picture him going back down the alley as night falls.

The third track, **Reflections**, opens with the melodic strains of Claudio Roditi on flugel horn presenting the first of three motifs. As the brass ensemble slips into a gentle waltz two more themes are introduced. Throughout the piece Jim reflects on all three motifs, developing each and allowing them, at times, to intertwine. Claudio takes a stunning solo, Jim and Scott Colley play some unison guitar and bass lines, and at the end the brass echoes the opening theme.

Quadrologue is a plucky, percussive, four-way conversation between guitar, viola, cello, and bass. As in the previous composition, the bass and guitar occasionally speak in unison, as do the cello and viola played by Louise Schulman and Myron Lutzke, respectively. But typical of most discussions, the voices most often weave in and out, over and under. Here, too, the score provides some freedom of choice for the players as certain sections of the score are left open, allowing them to select from existing motifs at random.

A passacaglia is a form of Baroque music with continuous variations based upon an ostinato or repeated melodic phrase. Jim's **Passacaglia** opens with singing celli, and the full string section interludes alternate with his acoustic guitar solos. The piece is full of lush harmonies with resonant bass lines and rich chord clusters. Discerning ears may detect the influences of Benjamin Britten, Vaughan Williams, or Frederick Delius. Jim describes this type of string writing as "somewhat romantic and accessible to the listener," and he spent a lot of time on the voice leading so that each individual part sings on its own. Motifs weave in and out of the full-string and solo sections, and just when you think you might be left out in space, you find yourself back on familiar ground. In fact the piece ends just like it begins, but in a major key.

In Japanese, **Sazanami** means rippling waves. Again, using acoustic guitar, percussion and gentle strumming set the stage for this melodic fantasy in a tropical oasis. This is the only piece on this recording written for steel drum, adeptly executed by young Derek DiCenzo from Columbus, Ohio. While the silvery steel drums may evoke the native island breezes of the Bahamas, the Japanese title was bestowed in tribute to Jim's friend, photographer Katsuji Abe, to whom the composition is dedicated.

The recording ends with **Circus Dance**, a piece for brass quartet (two trumpets, trombone, and tuba), guitar and drums. This is a melodic waltz with a lot of surprises and dissonance; a humorous composition where the melodies are not meant to be taken seriously. In this lumbering dance, "wrong notes" and "late entrances" are deliberately written into the score. Ryan Kysor gets the trumpet solo, and Marcus Rojas on tuba gets to break out of the oom-pah tradition to play the melody for a moment. Everybody improvises at the end, and the tuba gets the final say.

I saw a lot of the behind-the-scenes work that went into the preparation of this recording. After dad had written the first couple of pieces, my mother came up with the *Textures* concept and had suggestions for instrumentation and titles. In addition to her support, the enthusiasm from agent Mary Ann Topper and her crew at The Jazz Tree sparked continuous excitement. Then there was the ever-excellent copyist, Brian Camelio, who provided computerized charts and stitched scores that wowed everyone. Jack Renner captured the sounds and the balance, and Jay Newland mastered the final tape, but it was the continuous encouragement and steady hands of two other men who made it all come together—producer John Snyder and conductor/co-producer Gil Goldstein.

Textures is more than the next chapter in my father's musical life, it is really another whole story. And yet I am reminded that these seeds were planted long ago, in the early 1950s, when my father studied composition at the Cleveland Institute of Music. "I played guitar on weekends, but I wasn't all that involved in jazz," recalls Jim. "I thought I was going into classical composing and teaching." Now, some forty-odd years later, through this recording, Jim Hall emerges as a serious composer.

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