



Pearson

Esperanza Spalding: ‘Samba Em Prelúdio’ (from the album *Esperanza*) (For component 3: Appraising)

Background information and performance circumstances

Performer

Esperanza Spalding was born in Portland, Oregon, USA, in 1984. Active in music from an early age, she graduated from violin to double bass, studying at the Portland State University, and later at the Berklee School of Music. She has worked as a soloist and session player in a variety of musical styles, but is best known for her four solo albums *Junjo* (2006), *Esperanza* (2008), *Chamber Music* (2010) and *Radio Music Society* (2012). She has won four Grammy awards, including ‘Best new artist’ in 2011, where she was in competition with Florence and the Machine, Mumford and Sons, and Justin Bieber. Esperanza has wide musical tastes, and her own compositions show influences from jazz, blues, funk and Latin-American music – especially Brazilian styles. On the album *Esperanza* she sings in English, Spanish and Portuguese.

Composer

Roberto Baden Powell Aquino (1937–2000) was a Brazilian guitarist and composer who played a major part in the bossa nova ‘explosion’ in the 1960s. His music mixed Brazilian rhythms with complex jazz harmonies.

Lyricist

Vinicius de Moraes (1913–80) was not only a famous poet and the lyricist for some of the best-known Brazilian popular songs, but also a career diplomat. During his long career, he wrote the Oscar-winning film *Black Orpheus* and worked with composers Joao Gilberto and Antonio Carlos Jobim, creating the lyrics to bossa nova classics such as ‘The Girl from Ipanema’.

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The song and its genre

'**Samba em Preludio**', written in 1962, is a **bossa nova**. 'Bossa nova' means 'new trend' in Brazilian, and was one of the most popular musical styles of the late 1950s and early 1960s. The style mixes elements of Brazilian samba with jazz.

Lyrics

The lyrics are in Portuguese. (In some versions, verse 1 is sung by a man and verse 2 by a woman.)

Translation

Verse 1

Without you, I have no purpose
Because without you, I don't even know how to cry
I'm a flame without glow, a garden without moonlight
Moonlight without love, love without being given
Without you, I'm just lovelessness
A ship without sea, a field without flowers
Sadness that goes, sadness that comes
Without you my love, I'm no one

Verse 2

Ah, what *saudade*, what desire to see our life reborn
Come back, my dear
My arms need yours, your embraces need mine
I'm so alone, my eyes weary of staring into the distance
Come, behold life
Without you, my love, I'm no one

Performing forces and their handling

The forces used here are simple – **female voice**, **acoustic guitar** and **acoustic bass guitar**. The acoustic bass guitar is a larger version of the acoustic guitar, but with four strings, tuned to E, A, D, G (like the double bass and bass guitar). Esperanza Spalding sings and plays the bass here, but there is no specific credit for a guitarist. A second acoustic guitar part appears in the guitar solo, although it is simplified and played by one guitarist in their live performances.

The **vocal line** is low in the female range, using the **chest register**. It covers a range of a minor tenth (an octave plus a minor third) from E below middle C to the G above. The words are set **syllabically**, with one musical note to each syllable of text. The vocal line contains many leaps, and also some quite complex rhythms – **triplets**, **semiquavers**, rests. Esperanza's performance keeps closely to the printed pitches of the score, but there is variation in the performance of the rhythms and of the tempo – a performance technique known as **rubato**.

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The **bass part** is active and does much more than play the root of the chord. The very opening of the piece features a virtuosic bass solo with use of **double stops**, wide leaps, rapid semiquaver passages, a **mordent** and a **harmonic**. In places, during verse 1 (before the acoustic guitar enters), the bass appears to be playing two parts, with lower bass notes alternating with higher chords, rather like a ragtime piano accompaniment.

The **acoustic guitar** joins the accompaniment from bar 23 onwards and plays a virtuosic **solo** between Verse 2 and bar 89. In its accompaniment role, the guitar plays a mixture of plucked chords and small melodic passages, some of which cover the long notes at the end of vocal phrases. There are also passages (bars 25–27) where the guitar line seems to imitate the vocal part.

Structure

Bars 1–3	Introduction	Florid bass guitar solo.
Bars 4–19	Verse 1 (A)	An eight-bar idea repeated with changed ending the second time. The last note overlaps into the next section.
Bars 19–22	Link	Bass solo picks up the tempo to move into the ‘bossa nova’ rhythm for verse 2.
Bars 23–54	Verse 2 (B)	A 16-bar idea, repeated and changed the second time.
Bars 55–88	Guitar solo	Played over chords of verse 2.
Bars 89–104	Voice and bass duet	Bass plays vocal part from 4–11 (A) while voice sings bars 23–38 (B).
D.S. to end	Coda section	Second half of verse 2 followed by repetitions of the last line. Guitar and bass play florid riffs during the last held vocal note.

Tonality

- The **key** of the piece is **B minor**.
- Many **bossa novas** use minor keys.
- Despite the complexity of some of the harmony, the music does not **modulate** (change key).

Texture

- The introduction is **monophonic** (a single line of music) – apart from a couple of **double-stops** (two notes or more at once).
- The texture here is mostly **homophonic** (tune and accompaniment), but note that the bass part at times becomes almost melodic enough to be a melody in its own right.
- The passage at bars 89–104 is **polyphonic** (two or more separate melodic lines at once) as the two melodies of the piece are combined.

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Harmony

- The harmonies are essentially **tonal**.
- They show the influence of **jazz** and of **American popular song** in being quite **complex**.
- Despite this, the movement of the **chord roots** is still based around chords **I, II, IV** and **V**.
- There are frequent **chord extensions** – where extra thirds are ‘piled up’ on top of the triad to produce sevenths, ninths, elevenths and thirteenth.
- Other types of chords are used – **diminished seventh** (bar 35); **flattened fifth chord** (bar 44).
- **Chromatic chords** (containing notes outside the scale of the home key) are used – C#7 (bar 31) and C and F major chords (bars 27/28).
- Although **cadences** are not used here in quite the same way as in classical styles, the ends of sections tend to land on either chord V (bar 11) (at the halfway point of the verse), or on the tonic with a more conventional V–I perfect cadence (bars 52–53).
- The chord progressions sometimes create a **descending chromatic** (by semitone) movement in the bass line (bars 30–38).

Melody

- There are two main melodies in this song, heard separately at first, and then combined at bars 89–104.
- **Verse 1 (A)** bars 4–19
 - An eight-bar idea (bars 4–11), repeated with a different ending, in bars 12–19.
 - A series of phrases, linked by a common rising **arpeggio** (broken chord) **shape (bar 4)**.
 - The first (or second) note of each phrase **descends** by a semitone or a tone in a long **downward sequence**.
 - The music descends almost beneath the female vocal range, to a low E, at bar 11.
 - The melodic line moves, unusually, mostly by leaps of a **third** and occasionally of a **seventh**, in bars 8–9.
 - All phrases have a span of a **seventh**, apart from the first, which spans a **minor sixth**.
 - Bars 12–17 is a repeat of bars 4–9, however, the melody is developed through rhythmic changes.
 - The melody changes in bar 18, where a jazzy **flattened fifth** (F^b) is used to prepare for the descent to the **tonic**.
- **Verse 2 (B)** bars 23–54
 - The note values have doubled here, with the increase in tempo at bar 19, so the apparent increase in phrase lengths is false.
 - A 16-bar idea (bars 23–38), repeated (like (A)), with a different ending, in bars 39–54.
 - In contrast to (A), this melody is almost **entirely conjunct (stepwise)** in movement.

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- Bars 23–26 descend to the **leading note** (raised seventh note of the scale –A# here), answered by a rising and falling idea in bars 27–30, which in itself is related to the ending of verse 1 (see bars 17–18).
- Bars 31–34 are in sequence with 23–26, a fourth higher.
- Bars 34–35 repeat the **flattened fifth** idea (from the end of verse 1) twice, the second time in **sequence**, a note lower (this is to move away from the tonic, in order to set up the repeat).
- Bars 38–54 repeat 23–38, but with the last phrase (36–38) omitted.

Tempo, metre and rhythm

- The tempo during bars 1–3 bars is **very free** and it is difficult to recognise a strong pulse.
- Verse 1 has a slow tempo, with much rhythmic **rubato** (freedom taken with the tempo).
- The tempo almost doubles at bar 19, where the bass guitar begins the **bossa nova** tempo.
- A free tempo returns at bar 114.
- The piece is (apart from two bars) wholly in 4/4 **quadruple** time, although the change of tempo from bar 19 onwards tends to make the piece from there on sound as if it is moving in two minims to a bar (2/2).
- The rhythms of the vocal melody in **verse 1** are quite complex, although never syncopated enough to lose the sense of beat.
- There are frequent **triplets**, and **rests** effectively separate most of the phrases here.
- The bass part in verse 1 is complicated, making more use of **syncopated rhythms** than the vocals and only occasionally (bars 6, 9, 10, 14 and 17) using a typical bossa nova-type rhythm.
- In verse 2 the vocal line is mostly in longer note values, but the start of the notes tend to be off the beat, syncopated a quaver before the beat sometimes.
- There are fewer triplets in this section.
- From bar 23 the bass part plays much closer to the ‘standard’ bossa nova rhythm – dotted crotchet and quaver pairs – although still with some syncopations and quaver movement.
- The guitar part also adds to the rhythmic interest, with both syncopated and un-syncopated passages.
- From bar 89 the vocal rhythms of verse 2 are less syncopated, perhaps in order to fit in more easily with those of verse 1 (in doubled note values).

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