

Now's the Time

Charles (Charlie) Parker (1920-1955)

Arranged for choir by Norma Jean Luckey

Background

“Charles Parker, Jr. (August 29, 1920 – March 12, 1955) was an American jazz saxophonist and composer. . . Parker, with Louis Armstrong and Duke Ellington, is largely considered one of the most influential of jazz musicians. . . Parker played a leading role in the development of bebop, a form of jazz characterized by fast tempos, virtuosic technique, and improvisation based on harmonic structure.”¹

He had a significant musical partnership with trumpeter Dizzie Gillespie, with whom he made several recordings in the bebop style. *Now's the Time* comes from this style. It was first recorded in 1945, and is written in the form of 12 bar blues.²

Recordings

Charlie Parker: <https://youtu.be/ryNtmkfeJk4>

Never hurts to go back to the source. Check out Charlie Parker's version on the recording “Birdsong”.

Fairfield County Children's Choir, 2008: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sCxR-usJqW4&feature=PlayList&p=176A6520E33DC092&playnext_from=PL&playnext=1&index=9.

Analysis

key: F major

meter: 4/4

structure: 12 bar blues in choruses; be-bop style.

In the original version, Parker plays the melody twice, then improvises for several choruses, eventually returning to the melody at the very end. Lucky's arrangement uses a similar format, although instead of improvisation she creates new countermelodies that work well over the existing harmonic structure.

SECTION	MEASURE	EVENT AND SCORING
intro	1-2	piano introduction
Chorus 1	3-26	using the original melody (theme A) – unison; this is sung twice over a 12 bar blues progression

¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charlie_Parker, [accessed 5/30/2010].

² *ibid.*

Chorus 2	27-38	new melody (theme B) – unison, 3 identical phrases over the same 12 bar blues
Chorus 3	39-50	call and response (theme C) – done 6 x – identically over the 12 bar blues
Chorus 4	51-62	new theme (theme D) – melody in upper voices, answer in lower, 3 identical phrases over 12 bar blues
Chorus 5	63-74	themes C and D are combined as partner songs – middle voice sings theme D melody only; upper voice sings call of theme C, lower voice sings response of theme C; 12 bar blues
Chorus 6	75-76	theme A is repeated in unison
coda	77	final cadence on and F7#9 chord