



# SARAH AND ERNEST BUTLER SCHOOL OF MUSIC

The University of Texas at Austin

## DMA Lecture Recital

**Aaron Prado – Piano Performance – Jazz Emphasis**

**April 7, 2014 – 7:30pm**

### **Title:**

***Alone: An Analysis of Bill Evans's Solo Piano Style in 1968***

### **Abstract**

Bill Evans's 1968 album *Alone* is a landmark of solo piano in modern jazz. It represents a turning point away from the prominent solo piano styles of the past, including stride, swing, and early bebop towards a modern approach to unaccompanied playing. *Alone* was highly influential on the jazz pianists who were Evans's contemporaries, and future generations of jazz pianists. In addition to being stylistically groundbreaking, *Alone* coincided with the beginning of a resurgence of interest in solo piano technique and recording amongst modern jazz pianists after a period of relative stagnation in terms of innovation and album releases.

This discussion examines the historical context that led to the recording of *Alone*, including the evolution of solo piano styles from the 1920s to the 1960s, and how Evans's style diverges from the past while borrowing from key influences such as Bud Powell and Lennie Tristano. A detailed analysis of Evans's style – via complete transcriptions of four of the performances on *Alone* – addresses the episodic nature of the arrangements and the myriad textures employed; how Evans achieves a rhythmic swing feel without playing a steady left hand pattern; the way Evans uses subtle, sophisticated harmonic techniques; and the thoughtfully-crafted, motive-driven melodic lines in his improvisations.

Evans's stated intent – detailed in his own liner notes – was to lift solo jazz piano playing from the status of background music to a serious artistic vehicle worthy of close listening. This analysis explores the organization, sophistication, and execution Evans used to achieve his goal, raising the question of whether we should consider *Alone* to be a historical turning point in the solo technique for jazz piano or simply a great, masterful statement by a legendary pianist.