

THE SECOND LINE RHYTHM OF NEW ORLEANS AND THE SAMBA RHYTHM OF BRAZIL.

by Patrice Fisher



New Orleans, Louisiana, is the birthplace of jazz. A very multi-cultural place, at the mouth of the Mississippi River. There are many musical influences, including those from the descendants of the African Diaspora as well as descendants of European and Hispanic immigrants. I've soaked up these influences as a Latin jazz harpist from New Orleans.

Because we live on land which must be reclaimed from the swamp, our houses are built very close together. We have a rich tradition of street music, whether it is played for a Mardi Gras parade or a jazz funeral. One of the most important elements of this music is that it makes you want to dance in the streets.

After listening to this street music pass through your neighborhood, whether you are Black, Irish, Italian, Central American, French, or Haitian, you get the rhythm in your head and combine it with your own cultural traditions. These many cultural influences combined to inspire the birth of the Jazz Idiom.

An important New Orleans rhythm, which I'm sure had its roots in African music, is the "Second Line" rhythm. During a jazz funeral, there is usually a brass marching band, playing slow mournful music on the way to the cemetery. Because we believe in the resurrection of the departed person's spirit, we play happy, dancing music, when leaving the cemetery. A line of dancers follows the line of the brass marching band. This line of dancers is called the Second Line. The most common rhythmic basis of this dance music is the Second Line rhythm.

The Second Line rhythm, which has accents on the first beat, the upbeat after the second beat and the fourth beat, has become very common in popular music and is the backbone of the Rhythm and Blues genre.

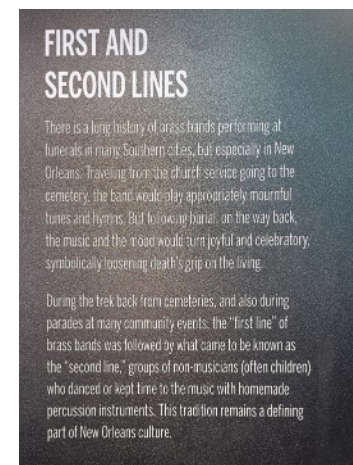
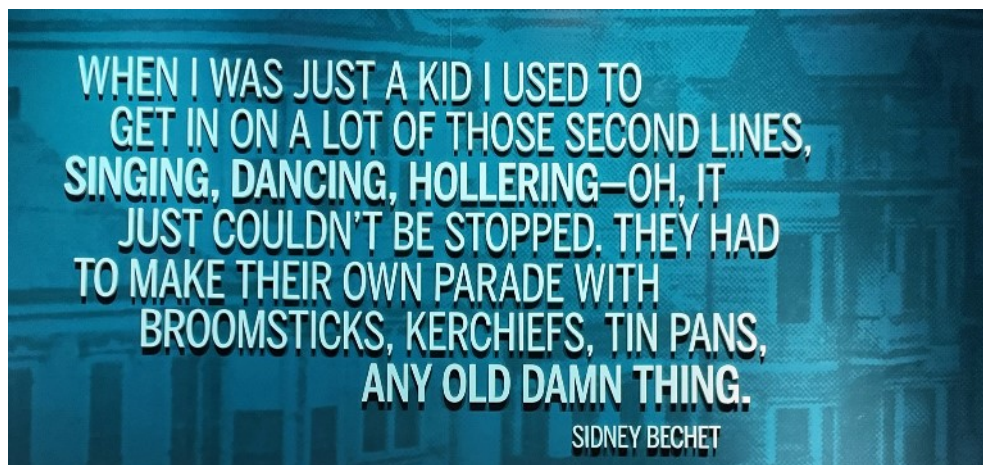
My composition, "Happy Socks," demonstrates this rhythm. You can play "Happy Socks" as a solo, but if you can invite a friend to play with you, you can get a rich, funky, gumbo combination of rhythms. This combination of rhythms gives the true feeling of the Second Line and gives "Happy Socks" its unique sound.

With your left hand, play two 3-note arpeggios, which accent the first beat, the upbeat after the second beat and the fourth beat. There are only two chords in the A section: F and Bb. You can play the F chord in root position, using the note F, which is the name of the chord, as the first note. You can create an easy pattern with your left hand, by playing the Bb chord in its first inversion, keeping F on the bottom, and moving your second finger and thumb up one step to Bb and D. Try repeating this pattern in your left hand, until you can do it without thinking. This left-hand rhythm gives the music a syncopated feeling.

You can stop there, and your left hand will have a Second Line rhythmic accompaniment to the solo version of "Happy Socks." You can use this rhythmic pattern to accompany many songs.

However, if you have two people playing, the second person can add a second layer of syncopation, by playing an ascending and descending arpeggio in eighth notes. Using the same notes that you are playing in your left hand, start the ascending arpeggio after the first beat and descending arpeggio after the third beat.

If you have a percussionist, they can play continuous eighth notes, but accent the first beat, the upbeat after the second beat and the fourth beat.



The two signs above are in the National Museum of African American Music in Nashville, Tennessee.

Patrice Fisher

The second section of “Happy Socks” uses the Samba rhythm of Brazil. In the Samba rhythm, your left-hand thumb plays in anticipation of the first beat of the measure and your fourth finger plays the same note an octave lower on the downbeat.

Start by playing an arpeggiated octave in your left hand. Play the root of the chord with your thumb on the upbeat after the fourth beat. Play the bottom note of the octave on the first beat of the measure. You can stop there, and your left hand will have a Samba rhythmic accompaniment to the solo version of “Happy Socks.” You can use this rhythmic pattern to accompany many songs.

However, if you have two people playing, the second person can add a second layer of syncopation, by playing a chord on the upbeats after the first and second beats. Use the same notes that you are playing in your left hand but play two right hand chords after every left-hand octave. Your hands alternate. They will never play together. The chords of the B section descend in steps.

Fitting your two hands together is a bit tricky, but just remember, play two left hand notes (high and low) ending on the downbeat and always play your right hand off the beat. If you get lost, just go back to playing the octave in your left hand until you can feel the syncopation in your right hand. This is a little bit like patting your head and rubbing your stomach at the same time, but there is lots of repetition. Playing syncopation by ear is always easier than counting and reading. If you internalize the rhythm, it has a more relaxed feeling.

If all this sounds difficult, you can watch my “Happy Socks” online class at my YouTube page, Patrice Fisher and Arpa. The video demonstrates the Second Line and Samba rhythms, using my “Happy Socks” composition. The music is on **pages 55-55**.

There is a performance video of our North Shore Celtic Harp Ensemble playing “Happy Socks” at North Shore Chapter AHS YouTube page. Play along with the track to get the feeling of the syncopation.

You can buy the written music for my other original compositions at my website PatriceFisher.com.

Patrice, a Latin jazz harpist, favors the music of New Orleans, Brazil, and Cuba, saying that, not only is the harp comfortable harmonically with the music, but she is drawn to its complexities and syncopations: “That’s what makes you want to dance.” Patrice is a graduate of Tulane and Wolf Trap and lives in New Orleans, where she has been composing and performing since the 1980’s. She has appeared at numerous international jazz festivals with her group, Arpa, in Bolivia, Brazil, Cancun, and Guatemala. Patrice has 15 CDs of original music, the latest being Happy Socks. She has performed, for more than 30 years, at the

New Orleans
Jazz & Heritage
Festival.
Patrice
regularly
performs a
guest artist
with many
international
jazz musicians
in Germany,
Mexico,
Brazil, United
Kingdom,
Canada, and
Guatemala.



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**GOOD LUCK AND
MAY YOUR SOCKS
ALWAYS BE HAPPY.**

Second Line
Rhythm
Moderato

Happy Socks Solo Version

by Patrice Fisher

A

F B \flat /F F B \flat /F

F B \flat /F F B \flat /F

B

Samba

Dm C B \flat Am B \flat Am Gm F

Dm Dm/C B \flat maj7 F/A

B \flat maj7 F/A C6/G F

Second Line
Rhythm
Moderato

Happy Socks, Part Two

by Patrice Fisher
c. 2012

A Play 4 times

F Bb/F F Bb/F

F Bb/F F 1. 3. Bb/F 2. 4. Bb/F

Samba Rhythm

B

Dm C Bb Am

Bb Am Gm

Dm C Bb Am

Bb Am Gm