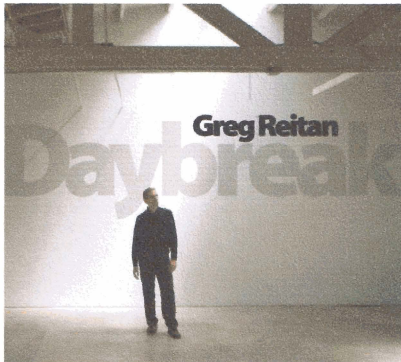


## Piano trio encounters of the modern mainstream kind (CD reviews)

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Looking back at my notes regarding *Daybreak*, the latest CD from Los Angeles pianist Greg Reitan, I see that two words have been repeatedly jotted — “pretty” and “fast.”

Of course, an elaboration is in order. the dominant impression I get of Reitan is that he’s first of all, a player who stresses a bell-like sound and lyricism a la Fred Hersch. I don’t know if Reitan is one of the many pianists who have taken lessons with Hersch, but he sounds to me as if he’s who has been influenced by Hersch’s beauty-first esthetic. Also, Reitan often hears music moving quickly, expressed in long, cascading lines. I recall that on some of Hersch’s early recordings, there would be a burner such as *One Finger Snap*, and I get the sense that Reitan, with, for example, his brisk and exciting original *Five Four*, has a need for speed.

The disc begins with two short tracks that feel almost like one overture and another. First comes the title track, which is, umm, pretty and fast, hitting listeners like a 90-second amuse-oreille. *Once Upon A Summertime*, the first of several ballads, follows. Reitan casts a stately vibe as he introduces the Michel Legrand piece by himself before bassist Jack Daro and drummer Dean Koba for some refined, blues-tinged swinging. A slow, swelling rendition of *Monk’s Mood* follows, and it’s similarly structured, with Reitan playing unaccompanied, before Daro and then Koba join in.

Taken at a walking pace, *Chelsea Bridge*, undergoes a wee bit of subtle reharmonizing — perhaps enough for Reitan to say that he’s presenting his “de-rangement.” *Blue in Green* is the disc’s longest and most expansive track, with an extended solo piano introduction and dreamy theme statement, a improvisatory stretch in which Reitan spins melodies with his right hand while his left hand’s fingers do the walking. The tempo’s a snappy medium one, faster than you might expect, before Daro and Koba enter and help the tune conclude at a slower, more floating pace. The disc-closing version of *Lament* is a walking ballad with some punch to it.

There are two medium-tempo waltzes – Vince Guaraldi’s *Great Pumpkin Waltz* and Reitan’s own more austere *The Bells of Soledad* — and then there are the tracks that race unabashedly, including Wayne Shorter’s *Toy Tune*, Reitan’s *Five Four* and the sprightly *Iridescence*, a short piece steeped in the sounds of Americana. Here’s just a snippet of that last piece:

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On the whole, Reitan’s CD is nice and cohesive, showing clearly his artistic mindset. I look forward to hearing how his music deepens and broadens over coming recordings.