



# The Twentieth Century Jazz Piano Trio

## The rise of an iconic jazz paradigm

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## RESUMO

### **O TRIO DE PIANO JAZZ NO SÉCULO XX**

#### **A Evolução de um Icónico Paradigma do Jazz**

Considerando a gravação de 1947 *The Bud Powell Trio* como a gravação referência de trio de piano de jazz moderno, esta tese centra-se no surgimento e evolução do trio de jazz moderno cujo líder é pianista. Começando por apresentar, uma resenha dos estilos e técnicas para piano de da época pre-Powell, esta tese investiga a génese dos trios de piano jazz e examina três dos mais influencias pianostas de jazz e lideres dos mais legendários trios de piano jazz modernos: Bud Powell, Bill Evans e Keith Jarrett. Esta tese também abordará o paradoxo inerente a um sistema democrático - a expressão própria do individuo, em justaposição com a responsabilidade para com o todo – e a sua inequívoca analogia com o *gestalt* do trio de piano de jazz moderno. Desde a primeira gravação de um trio de jazz com pianista como líder em 1935, o trio de jazz moderno, evoluiu tornando-se um exemplo de democracia – um contexto de igualdade em que as funções rítmicas, harmónicas, e melódicas estão igualmente distribuídas entre os três instrumentistas, que são ao mesmo tempo solistas e acompanhadores. Esta tese sublinha a eficácia do trio de jazz moderno – o seu início, e porque subsiste – baseado na sua força e beleza estética.

## ABSTRACT

### **THE TWENTIETH CENTURY JAZZ PIANO TRIO – The Rise of an Iconic Jazz Paradigm**

by Susan Muscarella

Designating Bud Powell's 1947 recording, *The Bud Powell Trio*, as *the* modern jazz piano trio benchmark, here, this thesis traces the emergence and evolution of the pianist-led, piano-bass-drums-comprised modern jazz piano trio. Beginning with a general overview of pre-Powell jazz piano styles and techniques, this thesis investigates the earliest, most salient pre-Powell jazz piano trios, and examines three seminal modern jazz pianists and leaders of legendary modern jazz piano trios, Bud Powell, Bill Evans and Keith Jarrett.

This thesis also brings to the fore the paradox inherent in a democratic system – individual self-expression juxtaposed with responsibility to the whole – and its unequivocal analogy to the modern jazz piano trio gestalt. From the earliest recording of a primarily piano-dominated piano-bass-drums-comprised jazz piano trio in 1935, the modern jazz piano trio has evolved to become a paragon of democracy – an egalitarian playing field in which rhythmic, harmonic and melodic roles are evenly distributed among all three instrumentalists who have come to serve as both soloists *and* accompanists.

This thesis serves to corroborate the efficacy of the modern jazz piano trio – how it came to be, and why it will last – based on its inherent strength and beauty.

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Around that time, I was also considering the possibility of accomplishing one of my lifelong objectives, which was to complete a doctoral thesis, and was thrilled at the prospect of studying with Dr. Lopes. I applied and was accepted to the University of Évora that fall, and over the past five years, Dr. Lopes has overseen the completion of my thesis, "The Twentieth Century Jazz Piano Trio – the rise of an iconic jazz paradigm."

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Susan Muscarella  
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## INTRODUCTION

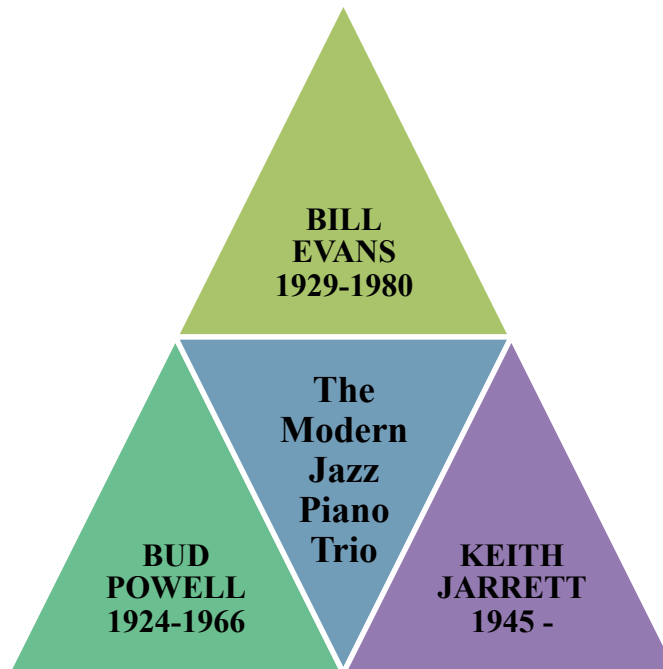


Fig. I. Three pivotal leaders of the modern jazz piano trio

The modern jazz piano trio, the incomparable music unit comprising piano, bass and drums, made its entrance into the jazz realm shortly before the second half of the twentieth century.<sup>1</sup> An imposing presence well into the twenty-first century, this unique triumvirate continues to play two pivotal roles: first, it makes an indelible artistic mark as a stand-alone unit; and second, it serves as the underpinning or the “rhythm section” of the larger jazz ensemble. In an interview on this subject in March 2011, Robert Cole, conductor and former artistic director of the San Francisco Bay Area-based presenting organization Cal Performances at the University of California, Berkeley said “The modern jazz piano trio is to the larger jazz ensemble what the string quartet is to the orchestra. In both instances, it’s their very foundation.” (Cole March 15, 2011: personal communication)

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<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this thesis, the “modern jazz piano trio” is a general term that refers to those trios from Powell’s benchmark 1947 recording, “The Bud Powell Trio,” on.

Beginning with ragtime, the genre that Dr. Billy Taylor contends is “the first authentic jazz style to emerge” (Taylor 1983: 48), this thesis investigates the evolution of the structural and artistic phenomena that have contributed to the emergence and long-standing presence of the modern jazz piano trio paradigm as epitomized by the stylistic innovations of three seminal modern jazz pianists: Earl Rudolph “Bud” Powell, William John “Bill” Evans and Keith Stanley Jarrett -- three leaders, who, through their profound work in the piano-bass-drums-comprised jazz piano trio format, have transformed the jazz world from the Bebop Era to the present. The paradigmatic shifts that take place in the emergence of this twentieth century phenomenon serve to illustrate why this unit in particular has emerged to become one of the most stalwart albeit consummate units in the jazz province.

Specifically, this thesis addresses the development of democratic principles within the context of the pianist-led jazz piano trio, focusing on individuality and division of role, and their paradigmatic juxtaposition with the collective artistic mission – all the while, documenting the sweeping technical and stylistic developments that have taken place within each unit, beginning with the first-ever piano-bass-drums-comprised jazz piano trio led by Jess Stacy, recorded in 1935. Analogies are also drawn between the structural and functional commonalities of the jazz piano trio and the simplest but strongest two-dimensional polygon, the triangle.

There is a traceable lineage from Powell to Evans, Evans to Jarrett, and Jarrett back to them both. In several published biographical accounts, by their own admission, both Evans and Jarrett pay tribute to Powell, as does Jarrett to Evans.

Evans extols the virtues of Powell in a September 22, 1966 issue of *Downbeat Magazine*:

*“He (Powell) was the most comprehensive compositional talent of any jazz player I have ever heard presented on the jazz scene. He had the potential of a true jazz player. He expanded much in a legitimate, organic way. Because of his history, he was never to use that potential that much, though he did plenty. His insight and talent were unmatched in hardcore, true jazz.”* (Paudras 1986: Coda)



In a 1996 interview with Ted Rosenthal, Jarrett alludes to the impact of both Powell and Evans on the “Standards” Trio:

*“TR: How would you say the trio has changed over, it's been almost 14 years now?”*

*KJ: Every year is a different kind of change. The most recent change in the music on tour is that we seem to be even less interested in arrangements than we ever were. I mean we're even less interested in any uniqueness of the exterior and just get into the shit every time. You know, it's almost like bebop. But not the "Nuevo Rancheros" bebop people. I mean the serious...*

*TR: Excuse me, I'm not exactly sure what you mean when you say "almost like bebop." Is it the spirit of...*

*KJ: Yes. When you listen to recordings from that time, you're listening to the energy, everybody's waiting to play (a solo). I think of Bud Powell and some of his tempos, if you just extrapolate from that... The kind of energy that the solos had - a forward moving energy, not a contemplative energy like the Bill Evans Trio, and not delicate but light. There's a lightness to it in the sense of sparkle-yness. The trio's been doing that live and we've been doing it in big situations where we used to be dramatic. (Now) we're playing things, and trying to find the feeling as soon as we can, and just sitting in that feeling and playing through it. So we're playing things like (Gershwin's) "Who Cares," an old Bud Powell tune called "John's Abbey," and more blues than often. That's not like our usual material.” (Rosenthal1996: <http://www.tedrosenthal.com/tr-kj.htm>)*

These three modern jazz pianists’ revelatory influence on one another is palpable in their respective far-reaching musical contributions. That is, Powell’s revolutionary rhythmically independent “comping” style was in complete contrast to the relentless four-beats-per-bar “comping” style of his ragtime, stride, blues, boogie woogie and Swing Era piano predecessors. Powell’s then new approach heavily influenced the “comping” styles of Evans and Jarrett as well as modern jazz pianists in general from that point on.

Transcriptions reveal Powell’s weighty rhythmic and melodic influence on Evans, who masterfully incorporated various techniques of rhythmic displacement into his labyrinthine lines – an Evans signature trait; the combination of Powell’s and Evans’s approach to melodic improvisation inspired Jarrett to produce some of the most beautifully crafted melodic lines ever heard in jazz; and the “shell voicings” unique to Powell inspired Evans whose exquisite rootless voicings and voice leading went on to factor heavily into Jarrett’s fantastical work. This thesis traces the unique stylistic

characteristics of each of these masterful pianists and the impact they had on one another within the particular parameters of the piano-bass-drums jazz piano trio format.

In addition to Powell, Evans and Jarrett, there are a host of exemplary jazz pianists who have led modern piano-bass-drums jazz piano trios whose contributions in this context are notably significant. So, why single out these three? There are four primary criteria that provide the basis on which this elite selection has been made:

- First, the seminal work produced by Powell, Evans and Jarrett in the trio format falls more or less at the beginning, middle and end of an almost seventy-five-year period of modern jazz – from the inception of the Bebop Era, representing the beginning of modern jazz, to the writing of this thesis.
- Second, all three of these pianists have led piano-bass-drums trios for a significant part of their artistic careers (a self-evident prerequisite).
- Third, as mentioned previously, each of these three pianists had a well-documented profound influence on his successor(s). At the time of this writing, these three artists whose work spans almost seven decades, represent the most influential trio leaders in the history of modern jazz. Powell's influence on Evans and in turn, both Powell's and Evans' influence on Jarrett are well-documented throughout this thesis, comparing and contrasting the rhythmic, melodic and harmonic aspects of their respective styles within the framework of the piano-bass-drums-comprised jazz piano trio.
- Fourth, these artists' respective revolutionary artistic contributions, as highlighted in this thesis, have earned them each a permanent place the history of modern jazz.

In winter of 2011, I had the rare opportunity to conduct an in-person interview with a good friend and one of the world's all time jazz heroines, the late pianist, composer

and producer Marian McPartland, who had had a long, personal and professional connection to Powell, Evans *and* Jarrett. An English-born musical prodigy with perfect pitch, McPartland met Chicago-based cornetist, Jimmy McPartland, in 1944. This jazz power couple was married in 1945 and moved to the Big Apple in 1949 where they quickly became two of the “big guns” on the exciting New York jazz scene. Since then, McPartland has been one of the leading proponents of jazz in this country. She not only had a close personal connection to Powell, but she often played two-piano duets with him. McPartland also knew Evans and Jarrett and interviewed them both for her longstanding NPR broadcast, *Piano Jazz*. Soliciting her opinion regarding the three choices of Powell, Evans and Jarrett, she confidently stated, “You have chosen the right three.” (M. McPartland, personal communication, January 16, 2011.) This endorsement, coming from one of America’s preeminent jazz piano trio specialists, was reassuring given the enormity of the applicant pool of distinguished jazz piano trio leaders from which to choose.

The jazz piano trio has traditionally been pianist-led. Thus, the pianist has always played a pivotal role in setting democratic tendency and guiding the overall stylistic direction of the unit as a whole. Furthermore, the stylistic developments which took place in jazz piano per se, aside from any given context, has had a direct influence on the stylistic developments of and roles played by both the bass and drums in the jazz piano trio format, and is *primarily* from this point of view that this thesis emanates.

Looking at a thumbnail sketch of each of these three leaders, this thesis serves to corroborate the following assertions:

- **Powell** served as the progenitor of the piano-bass-drums-comprised *modern* jazz piano trio paradigm. Known historically as one of the Bebop Era’s primary originators, Powell’s monumental contributions to bebop style itself were equally matched by his innovative contributions within the piano-bass-drums jazz piano trio format – namely, response-based “comping” – a vehicle he favored throughout his professional career.

- **Evans** pioneered and led the most melodically interactive of all piano-bass-drums jazz piano trios in the history of jazz. His commitment to creating a level playing field among his membership – a first in the context of the trio setting – serves as a testament to his consciousness of the salience of democracy within the context of collective jazz improvisation – a personal doctrine that became his lifelong artistic mission – a *modus operandi* that has become a convention within the jazz piano trio format to this day.
- And lastly, **Jarrett** led the longest-running jazz unit in all of jazz history – from 1983-2014 the personnel for the “Standards” Trio never once changed. Although this achievement represents a significant benchmark in modern jazz, it is by no means the most important reason to include Jarrett on the list. Evans’s bassists and drummers were given unprecedented opportunities to express themselves, but it was Jarrett’s commitment to absolute extemporaneity – complete freedom – within the confines of just a bare bones lead sheet that places him as the most democratic among the three leaders. He is, in this writer’s opinion, the paragon of all that practicing jazz artists aspire to be: “in the moment.”

The uniquely inimitable sound produced by the piano-bass-drums-comprised jazz piano trio is greater than the sum of its component membership. Its innate aesthetic value is subjective – as is *all* music. Therefore its value is intangible and by extension, unquantifiable. Regardless of how elusive that value may be, this thesis attempts to uncover sufficient *tangible* evidence to explain the how and why the piano-bass-drums jazz piano trio evolved into such a prominent and alluring entity in jazz. Whatever the explanation(s) may be, this thesis provides evidence that this minimal number of instruments, their respective qualities and the unique roles they play, together, produce a special balance, resulting in a fulfilling “magical” sound unlike that found in any other larger or smaller group format. From this standpoint, for many – both musicians and non-musicians alike – the piano trio is simply the “perfect” unit aside from any quantifiable or unquantifiable reason(s). Noted musicologist Nicholas Cook supports the contention that a formal understanding of music in general is not an absolute prerequisite for deriving

pleasure from it. The generality of his perspective would also apply to the sound created by the piano-bass-drums jazz piano trio.

*“To write music, to understand its techniques, or even to play an instrument requires time, application, and specialized knowledge. But when music is heard, the results of all this are somehow synthesized into an immediate and intrinsically rewarding experience that does not, as a precondition, depend upon the listener having any kind of trained understanding of what he hears.”* (Cook 1990: 2)

In keeping with this sentiment, Evans discusses his personal approach to learning:

*Everything I've learned, I've learned with feeling being the generating force.”*  
(Lees 1988: 150)

Adding to this perspective, in a 1965 interview in *Jazz Magazine* with jazz pianist and educator John Mehegan, Evans states: “...when I heard something that I liked, I was first of all inspired by the feeling.” (Mehegan 1965: <http://www.billevans.nl/Timeline.htm>)

Along these same lines, Merrilee Trost, one of San Francisco Bay Area’s foremost publicists and impresarios comments on her personal experience with the jazz piano trio:

*“As publicist for {the internationally acclaimed} Concord Records label during its early years, I had the privilege of interacting with so many of my heroes in the jazz world. Although I grew up with, and have always loved, the big bands, it became increasingly obvious to me that the piano trio is the essence of jazz. The great pianists combined with bassists and drummers convey the bare bones, pure message of the music. None of them playing alike, none imitating the other, and yet each gaining inspiration from the others, telling their stories, playing on our emotions, and bringing beauty and magic to our lives. Soloists can be lovely, large ensembles and big bands complex and exciting. But for real pleasure, to perceive the pure heart and soul of jazz, I’ll take a piano trio any time.”* (M. Trost, January 18, 2011, e-mail communication.)

In a February 1984 article “The 10 Greatest Piano Trios” in *Keyboard Magazine*, legendary jazz critic Leonard Feather discusses the capacity of the jazz pianist in various contextual forums: from the solo pianist, to the pianist in the rhythm section of a chamber ensemble, to the pianist in a big band. He notes that although the piano “has long been a staple instrument in jazz, it hasn’t always had the opportunity to be played with the kind of sensitivity and dexterity to which we have grown accustomed in the music of the

modern virtuosi.” (Feather 1984: 34) Feather notes that the reason for this transition is up for debate, but he believes it has to do with the attraction of a more “intimate type of player” to a smaller group setting which, by extension, brought the best out of the instrument.

*“... we might debate all sorts of musical factors that have altered the jazz landscape since its early years, but I think we can safely say that when chamber jazz, played by small combos rather than rocking bigger ensembles, began opening the door to a more intimate type of player, jazz piano began to shine with a new and brilliant light.”* (Feather 1984: 34)

Among these various ensemble forms, Mr. Feather explains how and why he believes the piano-bass-drums trio in particular is the optimal vehicle.

*“The unaccompanied pianist has unlimited structural freedom, but at the cost of the kind of exchanges with a rhythm section that often stimulate inspired improvisation. The big band pianist can enjoy the thrill of playing with a powerful ensemble, but the tradeoff is that he or she is often tied to a clearly defined part within the written arrangement. In the trio format, however, the keyboardist can enjoy most of the advantages and suffer few of the restrictions of these two extremes, by having the opportunity to juggle the roles of soloist and accompanist, rhythm player and melodic improviser, even adding bass lines to these interchanging responsibilities from time to time.”* (Feather 1984: 34)

In *Shall We Play That One Together?*, the biography of jazz pianist Marian McPartland, author Paul de Barros discusses McPartland’s preference for the piano-led, piano-bass-drums format over the piano-led, piano-bass-guitar format adopted by jazz pianist Nat King Cole.

*“Marian may have chosen drums rather than guitar because she preferred the clarity and freedom of the format. She later told the critic Nat Hentoff that she liked this particular setup because it was less harmonically restrictive.”* (de Barros 2012: 129)

*“The only person I, as a trio pianist, have to worry about is the bassist.”* (de Barros 2012: 129)

This thesis is divided into eight chapters that support the much-deserved merit of the piano-bass-drums jazz piano trio and the impact this unit has had within the context of modern jazz.

**Chapter One** addresses the evolution of democratization within the jazz piano trio gestalt.

**Chapter Two** provides a skeletal overview of the various pre-Powell jazz piano styles.

**Chapter Three** analyzes select material from respective first and succeeding seminal recordings of three historically vetted pre-Powell piano-bass-guitar configured trios (listed chronologically by date of birth): Art Tatum, Clarence Profit and Nat King Cole, and four piano-bass-drums configured trios (listed chronologically by date of birth): Jess Stacy, Mary Lou Williams, Erroll Garner and Oscar Peterson, for the purpose of providing an historical point of reference for the democratization that develops in the modern piano-bass-drums jazz piano trio.

**Chapters Four, Five and Six** provide empirical evidence supporting the salience of Powell's, Evans's and Jarrett's respective earliest work as leaders of a trio inasmuch as these recordings serve as commensurate points of reference in defining their particular democratic leaning and artistic style. Select succeeding work by each trio will also be included, both for the purpose of documenting their subsequent artistic development, supporting the unparalleled contributions these three pianists in particular made to forwarding the jazz piano trio paradigm throughout the second half of the twentieth century and on into the twenty-first century. Beginning with the iconic Powell trios, increasing dramatically in the Evans trios and peaking in the Jarrett "Standards" Trio, democracy (for the people) is supported by the prevailing condition of individualism (of the people) and diversity of role (by the people).

In **Chapter Seven**, the development of democratic tendency respective to the Powell, Evans and Jarrett Standards trios, is analyzed visually, via various structural aspects of

the two-dimensional polygon, the triangle. For example, the extent of individual self-expression (quantified by the number of solo opportunities) within trio membership is shown to hypothetically correlate with the lengths of the sides of three types of triangles: scalene, isosceles and equilateral. By way of illustration, in a scalene triangle, *no* sides are equal in length; in an isosceles triangle, *two* sides are equal in length; and in an equilateral triangle, *all* sides are equal in length, depicting a level playing field among individual self-expression. The three types of triangles and the lengths of their sides provide a visual representation of the extent of individual self-expression present in each unit. Namely, Powell typically occupies the longest side of a scalene triangle and Evans and Jarrett move to the opposite end of the spectrum, typically occupying a side closer to an equilateral triangle. Including the lengths of the sides, a total of fourteen structural aspects of the triangle and their correlation to the jazz piano covered.

The Conclusion of this thesis, serves to recapitulate the salience of the jazz piano trio within the broader context of the approximately 115-year-old history of the jazz art form. The trio's unique instrumentation facilitates its traditional multifunctional roles as the lynchpin of a larger ensemble as well as an autonomous organism in its own right. For eighty years, the jazz piano trio construct has developed to expedite optimal individual self-expression in the paradoxical context of collective jazz improvisation.



## Chapter One

### DEMOCRACY – THE MODERN JAZZ PIANO TRIO GESTALT

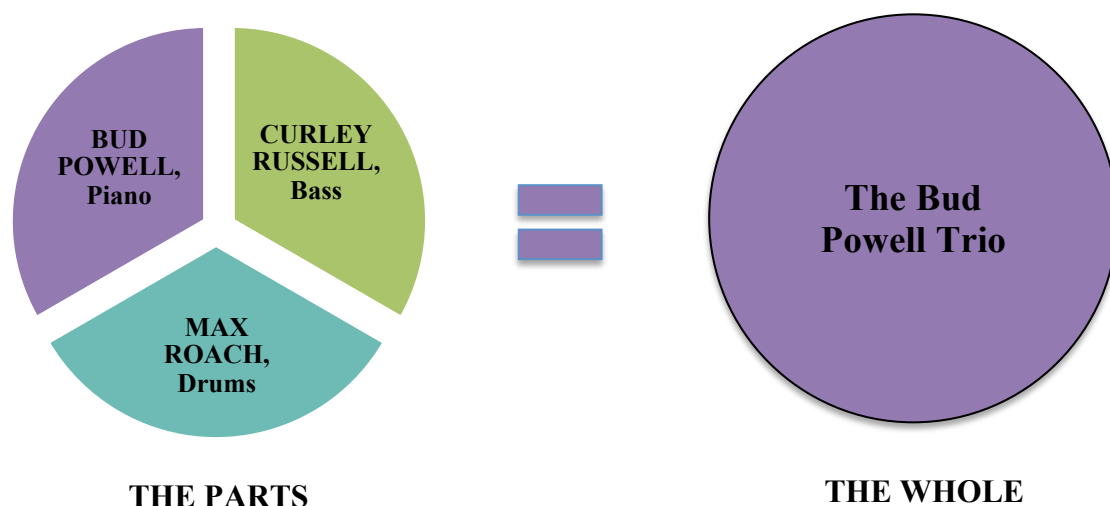


Fig. 1. A representation of the modern jazz piano trio gestalt

*“The search for one’s musical identity, “finding one’s own voice,” is a jazz performer’s imperative, manifest in his/her art, and particularly since the advent of bebop, in his/her life off the bandstand. That individuality serves as the democratizing principle in the processes of jazz collective improvisation is, given the iconoclastic nature of the music, a fitting contradiction (“coordinated independence”). However, half a century’s time has proven it to be the central impetus of the modern jazz gestalt, a lasting African “coup de trope.” (Brown 1997: 220)*

Brown’s perspective addresses a paradox inherent in collective modern jazz improvisation: individual expression is a requisite common denominator – the “democratizing principle” (Brown 1997: 220) – among membership within the context of a group. That is, within the collective modern jazz improvisation paradigm, it is, paradoxically, the individuality of each member that is key to the modern jazz gestalt. The shift to a more even distribution of rhythmic, harmonic and melodic roles that took place within modern jazz piano trio membership created a well-ordered whole – a gestalt – wherein the group (the whole) is greater than its individual membership (the parts) based on the group’s uncompromising reliance on each and every member for its very

existence. But at the same time, ironically, it was the individuality of each member that was key to creating the comprehensive artistic end result.

In collective modern jazz improvisation, the antithetical qualities of individuality and collectivity are coincidentally symbiotic and interdependent; that is, individuality and collectivity are mutually beneficial, and collectivity is absolutely dependent on individuality. Similarly, it is the individuality within the respective membership that creates the collectivity of the group. In sum, collective modern jazz improvisation relies on the paradoxical juxtaposition of independence and interdependence for a favorable artistic outcome.

The paradox inherent in a democratic system – individual expression juxtaposed with responsibility to the whole – is analogous to the modern jazz piano trio gestalt. One definition of democracy: a system of government “...of the people, by the people, and for the people,” – coined by fourteenth century theologian John Wycliffe and incorporated into the last sentence of Abraham Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address, could not better analogize the modern jazz ensemble paradigm. The analogy to jazz is clear: “Of the people” correlates with the individuality of the members within the group; “by the people”, implies their respective roles; and “for the people”, sums up the group’s collective artistic mission.

In his article *Democratic Individuality and the Claims of Politics*, George Kateb, Professor of Politics, Emeritus, at Princeton University discusses nineteenth century American-born poet, essayist and journalist Walt Whitman’s viewpoint on this subject, emphasizing the inherent symbiosis that exists between democracy and individuality.

*“More than anyone, Whitman strives to understand this connection between "en masse" and the individual. ...It would be mistaken to think that Whitman-or Emerson or Thoreau ultimately believe that democracy and individuality are foreign to each other, and that one can flourish only at the expense of the other. The meaning of the theory of democratic individuality is that each moral idea needs the other: both to bring out its most brilliant potentialities and to avoid the*

*most sinister ones. A good tension would mark the relationship between these mutually dependent and mutually refining ideas.” (Kateb 1984: 333)*

Kateb’s rationale is absolutely applicable to the modern jazz ensemble gestalt. That is, in the context of collective jazz improvisation within the modern jazz ensemble setting, there is a “good tension” (Kateb 1984: 333) that results from mutually dependent players who, collectively, make contributions with the purpose of forwarding the overall artistic mission. In the modern jazz ensemble, and by extension, the modern jazz piano trio, the coexistence of what might *appear* to be the contradictory juxtaposition of individuality – the individual player – and collective decision-making – the collective artistic result – are not only familiar to each other, they flourish only at the *benefit* of the other, and furthermore, to the extent that these principles are actually *indispensable* to one another. In *Democratic Vistas*, Whitman even goes so far as to say that “the principle itself is needed for very life's sake.” Kateb’s description of Whitman’s position on democracy is best summed up by Whitman:

*“For to democracy, the leveler, the unyielding principle of the average, is surely joined another principle, equally unyielding closely tracking the first, indispensable to it, opposite (as the sexes are opposite), and whose existence, confronting and ever modifying the other, often clashing, paradoxical, yet neither of highest avail without the other, plainly supplies to these grand cosmic politics of ours, and to the launched forth mortal dangers of republicanism, today, or any day, the counterpart and offset whereby Nature restrains the deadly original relentlessness of all her first-class laws. This second principle is individuality, the pride and centripetal isolation of a human being in himself – identity – personalism. Whatever the name, its acceptance and thorough infusions through the organizations of political commonalty now shooting Aurora-like about the world, are of utmost importance, as the principle itself is needed for very life's sake. It forms, in a sort, or is to form, the compensating balance-wheel of the successful working machinery of aggregate America.” (Kateb 1984: 333) and (Whitman 1892: 228)*

In discussing the *Structure of Jazz* in his article *What’s “American” About America*, John A. Kouwenhoven notes the analogy between nineteenth century American essayist, lecturer and poet Ralph Waldo Emerson’s view on a perfect union and the art form jazz, which emphasizes the importance of individuality –

each individual player – to the success of the aggregate enterprise – the group. “Jazz is the first art form to give full expression to Emerson’s ideal of a union which is perfect only ‘when all the uniters are isolated.’” (O’Meally 1998: 128)

This chapter addresses the extent to and manner in which democracy, through its two constituent paradigms – *individuality* (“of the people”) and *role* (“by the people”) evolves and factors into the collective artistic outcome (“for the people”) of the modern piano-bass-drums jazz piano trio – the jazz piano trio gestalt – as it relates specifically to the Bud Powell and Bill Evans trios, and the Keith Jarrett “Standards” Trio.

In looking at the significance of individuality in his treatise *Democratic Individualism and Its Critics*, Kateb contends that individuals are singularly important, in and of themselves, and not defined by any particular role or roles (although he affirms division of role *is* among the important considerations in a society). Therefore, the value of an individual is indeterminable and finitely indefinable based on the quality of uniqueness inherent in the principle of individualism. He maintains that since the value of individuality is not finitely defined by role, individuals are therefore indefinable and thus infinitely valuable, and by extension, capable of creativity and unpredictability.

*“Individualism, as theorized or regularly lived, maintains the view or exemplifies the sentiment that people – whether all or only some – count or matter apart from their roles, function, or place in society. Of course, there is no society without roles, functions, and location, without a division of labor, without differences that are often obvious and sometimes crucial. But to say or feel that people matter apart from their work and their involvements and relationships – and even that they matter more – is to say that no finite value can be put on them. Their value is not finite because they – their identities – are not exhaustively definable; they are capable of unpredictability and creativity, for good (and bad). No single act provides the key to anyone. You cannot say for certain who a person is, much less who he may become.”* (Kateb 2003: 276)

This line of thought correlates to the paradigm of the modern jazz ensemble. That is, each individual player is of value based first on his or her individualism rather than on his or her specific rhythmic, harmonic or melodic role(s) as soloist and/or accompanist (although again, division of role *is* among the important considerations within the context

of collective jazz improvisation); and each player is autonomous – at will to unpredictably and creatively make their unique artistic contributions. The conditions of unpredictability and creativity are key to the modern jazz gestalt as witnessed in the transition from the Swing Era’s large ensembles, focusing primarily on pre-conceived material for the sake of entertainment – to the Bebop Era’s small ensembles, championing in-the-moment individual expression.

In his article *Abstract of Democratic Individualism and Its Critics*, Kateb discusses the inevitable alliance of democracy with individualism and affirms the defining characteristic of democracy: freedom.

*“Where democracy exists, there will be individualism. The historical record shows that democracy inevitably engenders individualism. This proposition will be challenged by those who think either that individualism can obtain in nondemocratic cultures or that democracy can exist without engendering individualism. The paper rejects both contentions. The defining characteristic of democracy is freedom, and the oldest democratic concept of freedom is the Greek one: To be free is to live as one likes. Versions of that definition are found wherever people are or aspire to be democratic. (Kateb 2003: 275)*

The notion that individualism exists “wherever people are or aspire to be democratic” (Kateb 2003: 275) may be applied within the context of the modern jazz ensemble. Within the democratic system of the modern jazz ensemble, freedom translates into opportunity for individual expression as well as expansion of role (rhythmic, harmonic, melodic; soloist, accompanist) as he states here.

*“To live as one likes means that one is allowed to try out various roles in life. Each person is more than any single role, function, or place in society. Individualism consists in that idea. Only democracy inspires it.” (Kateb 2003: 275)*

Consistent with Kateb’s perspective, a conclusion could be drawn that the individualism self-evidently manifested by the modern jazz piano trio paradigm serves as confirmation of its existence as a democratic entity. Based on Kaleb’s assertion that “where democracy exists, there will be individualism” and his viewpoint rejecting the contention that

“individualism can obtain in nondemocratic cultures”, or that democracy “can exist without engendering individualism”, it could be said that the modern jazz piano trio, as a democratic entity, inherently engenders individualism. The focus on individuality (the player) and role (rhythmic, harmonic, melodic; soloist, accompanist) in the context of collective jazz improvisation became one of the primary defining characteristics of the Bebop Era and modern jazz and one that continues on in jazz today.

Beginning with Powell, the modern jazz piano trio emerges as an “of the people, by the people, and for the people” paradigm, which is central to this thesis. Evidence supporting the development of democratization within each modern jazz piano trio, i.e., quantifying the evolution of individualism and qualifying diversity of role, is drawn from each of their respective leader’s earliest recorded work as well as from selected seminal recordings made during what historically is established as the most productive periods of each of their lives (Chapters Four, Five and Six). Quantifying the extent of individual expression within each trio’s membership and identifying the various roles played by each member, this study traces the influential democratic tendency of each leader and the role-playing present within their respective membership from the outset to the end of each of their professional careers. Each trio reflects the unique dynamism of its membership – but invariably, as it relates to the executive leadership of the pianist who historically has served as the ultimate artistic guide in the piano-bass-drums trio setting.

Kateb goes on to say that democratic individualism is best achieved when a leader subordinates the interest of the society to the interest of the individual. Applying this concept to the trio, a favorable collective artistic outcome in a jazz ensemble is best achieved when a leader subordinates the artistic interest of the group to the artistic interest of the players within it.

*“It is noteworthy that a leader in a democracy must make the effort to yoke the interest of society (howsoever defined) to the interest of individuals. This rhetorical gesture pays obeisance to democratic individualism.” (Kateb 2003: 280)*

To best understand individualism and role within the context of the modern jazz piano trio paradigm (beginning with Powell), an analysis of selected work of seven noted pre-Powell trios will serve to corroborate both the profound evolution of freedom and level of responsibility that created this absolutely democratic framework from 1947<sup>1</sup> on.

This quote from Book IV of Aristotle's *Politics* – “If liberty and equality, as is thought by some, are chiefly to be found in democracy, they will be best attained when all persons alike share in the government to the utmost.” (2014: (Kindle Locations 5916) – may be modified to conform to the modern jazz piano trio prototype: “If liberty and equality, as is thought by some are chiefly to be found in democracy, they will be best attained when all musicians alike share in the artistic outcome to the utmost.”

For the purposes of this study, democratic tendency within the particular context of the jazz piano trio may be quantified in terms of the extent to which each individual player is given the freedom to contribute to accomplishing the collective artistic objective. The extent to which each player contributes to the overall group sound is measured in terms of “individual expression.” The twofold criteria for measuring individual expression includes: the number and placement of improvised solos taken by individual membership – inasmuch as it is through the vehicle of the solo that an individual can most effectively demonstrate his/her uniqueness; and the condition under which the solos take place – that is, extent to which preconception (pre-arranged material) plays a role in performance. (Although the role of accompanist is a critical factor, individual expression is most evident and can most easily be quantified in terms of the improvised solo (which in the case of the trios addressed in this thesis signifies a set of improvised variations on the theme) and the conditions under which the improvisation takes place.) For example, a trio whose entire membership is given opportunities to solo is more democratic than a trio whose leader is the only soloist. Moreover, the less a trio's membership is encumbered by preconceived arrangements, the more freedom they have to express themselves.

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<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this thesis, the date Powell made his first recording (*The Bud Powell Trio*) as a leader in the piano-bass-drums trio format.

Author and jazz pianist Guthrie P. Ramsey, Jr. in “The Amazing Bud Powell” discusses Vijay Iyer’s perspective on the potential of the improvised solo to communicate uniqueness or individualism:

*“Iyer recognizes that music possesses a bundle of attributes that make possible its communicative power. Its kinetic basis, together with the fact that, like speech, it is a process, is interactive, and its semiotic dimensions allow a musician to forward, through sound, highly personalized expressions that over time collate and become his or her personalized ‘voice’.” (Ramsey 2013:147)*

A survey of the earliest recorded work of six out of seven historically significant stride- and Swing Era-influenced pre-Powell pianists who recorded in the trio format reveals a monarchical-leaning paradigm where each of these leaders’ bassists and drummers are seldom allotted any easily discernable room for distinct individual expression.<sup>2</sup> In a manner of speaking, at times, it might sound as though they “can’t get a word in edgewise.” This quote from June 14, 1957 by former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom Clement Attlee, humorously describing the optimal democratic state, may also apply to the optimal democratic trio paradigm: “Democracy means government by discussion, but it is only effective if you can stop people talking.” (Thomas-Symonds 2012: <http://bit.ly/1IYXHQN>)

In this case, analogically speaking, “people” refers to the trio leader, the pianist, who prior to Powell is typically the dominant force to an extreme, and seldom stops “talking” (playing).

Wynton Marsalis comments on the structural characteristics inherent in jazz that particularly promote the democratic ideal, and how they in turn serve to promote the music itself.

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<sup>2</sup> Note: The pre-Powell trios covered in Chapter Three include both *piano-bass-drums-* and *piano-guitar-bass-*structured formats in view of the impact that the latter has had on the development of the former. With just one anomalistic exception, the Nat King Cole Trio, these seven units exhibit just a glimmer of the democratization that begins to flower within piano-bass-drums trios from Powell’s trios on.



*“As long as there is democracy, there will be people wanting to play jazz because nothing else will ever so perfectly capture the democratic process in sound. Jazz means working things out musically with other people. You have to listen to other musicians and play with them even if you don’t agree with what they’re playing. It teaches you the very opposite of racism and anti-Semitism. It teaches you that the world is big enough to accommodate us all.”* (Mullenweg (n.d): <http://jazz-quotes.com/artist/wynton-marsalis/>)

Tracing the development of democratic tendency within the jazz piano trio format through select recordings beginning with seven pre-Powell trios and then moving on to the Powell and Evans trios, and the Jarrett “Standards” Trio, empirical evidence supports the theory that a notable democratic tendency begins with Powell, increases dramatically with Evans and reaches a pinnacle with Jarrett. Note: Democratic leaning is certainly prevalent in the Jarrett “Standards” Trio from this unit’s 1983 inception on. But, as will be discussed in Chapter Six, Jarrett’s domineering artistic leadership along with his showmanship are thought by many to be obstacles that hinder the membership in his trio from reaching the level of artistic egalitarianism that permeated the Evans’s units from the 1959 LaFaro-Motian trio on. (There had previously been no better example of a purely democratic playing field within a trio setting than Evans’s 1959 version of “Autumn Leaves” on *Portrait in Jazz*, his first recording with bassist LaFaro and drummer Motian (as will be discussed in Chapter Five)). But his all-about-me stage presence aside, Jarrett’s commitment to a level playing field combined with his absolute deference to extemporaneity resulted in promoting a level of individual freedom that exceeded even that of Evans’s.

Brown comments on the evolution of individual expression and its indispensability in the modern jazz ensemble via the improvised solo, noting that it became an essential condition within the Bebop Era – one which all jazz ensembles conform to this day. “Borne of a music which showcased the improvisatory talents of the musicians, the democratization of soloistic expression in bop became the sine qua non of virtually all jazz since.” (Brown 1997: 213)

As stated above, democratic tendency within the particular context of the modern jazz piano trio is *quantified* by the extent and conditions under which its membership is granted opportunities for individual expression via the improvised solo – a *modus operandi* that traditionally has been established by the pianist, the trio’s leader – and *qualified* by its constituent paradigm, role. But in quantifying individuality and qualifying role and their inextricable and paradoxical link to creating an artistic whole (that is, to fully assess the development of democratic tendency) the development of technical skill must be taken into consideration. The impact of technical development on expansion of role, and then the impact of expansion of role on individual expression, perpetuates a continuous cycle (Fig. 1.2) as follows:

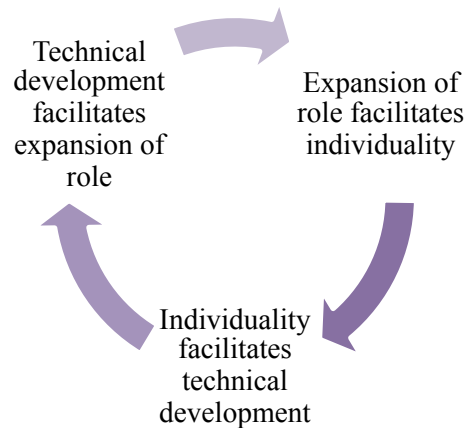


Fig. 1.1 A cycle depicting the impact of technique on expansion of role, the expansion of role on individuality, and individuality on technique

Among the recordings of the seven historically vetted pre-Powell trios examined in Chapter Three, each unit’s pianist is clearly the focal point. That is (with the exception of Nat King Cole, whose unit manifested clear signs of a level playing field), even though individuality and division of role in fact do exist to some extent, the Swing Era pianist’s rhythmically, melodically and harmonically all encompassing roles – the inherent stride-influenced piano styles in vogue at this time – perforce overrides both conditions, creating the perception that the pianist *is* the center of attention. Moreover, the limited roles of membership in pre-Powell trios result in little spontaneous interplay. Kateb’s

Aristotelian-derived contention that “unless one lives as one likes, one is reduced to one’s assigned function and thus frozen in it” (Kateb 2003: 279) is relevant here.

With what may be perceived as a few exceptions, these pre-Powell trio leaders’ sidemen are not only relegated primarily to the role of accompanists, their contributions are, with the exception of timbral considerations, for the most part, redundant. Swing Era pianists’ combination of stride-, blues- and boogie-woogie-infused playing styles covers the gamut of rhythmic and harmonic considerations, rendering bassists’ and drummers’ structural contributions almost entirely superfluous, or in many cases, even conflictive. Setting aside the incontrovertible importance of their respective unique timbral contributions, a bassist’s primary role consists of providing harmonic and rhythmic reinforcement; a drummer’s primary role consists of providing rhythmic reinforcement and percussive ornamentation. Given that the nature of their respective positions is one solely of reinforcement rather than of critical structural necessity, the bassist’s and drummer’s contributions in these stride-style-influenced trios are actually primarily timbral rather than structurally singular. To the extent that timbral considerations are important, the sideman’s world of limited “assigned functions” (Kateb 2003: 279) provided little opportunity for individual creative expression via the improvised solo.

The Bebop Era marked the return to the small jazz ensemble and the beginning of jazz as art music rather than as music for the purpose of entertainment. In *The Swing Era*, one of the jazz historian’s most valuable vade mecums documenting the development of jazz from 1930-1945, musicologist and composer Gunther Schuller notes that by the mid 1940s, jazz had come full circle, returning to the small groups of the New Orleans and Chicago years. This new period brought with it a focus on the improvised solo, promoting both individuality and role.

*“The thrust now was once again towards individual and spontaneous creativity, and in the direction of solo virtuosic prowess – again, in a way like classic New Orleans jazz, except that the latter was more ensemble-oriented, technically more limited, and harmonically less advanced. But the individual creative freedom was the same, perhaps even more so now, since bop was a much more solo-oriented music.”* (Schuller 1989: 848)

Beginning with Powell, the modern jazz piano trio began to take on discernable democratic characteristics. That is, the technical virtuosity that developed among the players enabled greater diversity of role, and diversity of role enabled greater individual expression. The roles modern jazz pianists, bassists and drummers played expanded to the point of becoming interchangeable, forever revolutionizing the capabilities of each instrument and by extension, the overall artistic outcome of the unit.

Kateb expresses his view on the effect that democracy has on spawning a diversity of roles and how the ability to undertake a diversity of roles, or reverse roles, by extension, elevates the individual above any one given role.

*“The spirit of democratic freedom encourages each person not only to play many roles in the course of his life because no role is as large as the soul, but also to reverse roles. When roles that usually define people exhaustively and in a starkly contrastive manner are exchanged, such reversal shows that the individual behind the role matters more than the role, and that anyone is capable of doing just about anything. Versatility is the sign of individualism.”* (Kateb 2003: 282)

To reiterate, again without discounting the importance of the inherent extensive timbral palette provided by each instrument, pre-Powell trios were fraught with structural redundancy, a phenomenon that occurred primarily because the entire range of rhythmic and harmonic aspects of the music was handily addressed by the Swing Era’s pianist’s left hand’s attachment to one or a combination of stride-influenced, boogie-woogie, swing or four-chords-to-the-bar styles of playing. The comprehensive rhythmic, melodic and harmonic contributions of pre-Powell trio pianists enabled them to potentially function independently with no critical tangible need for structural support from a bassist or drummer. Based on the far-reaching rhythmic, melodic and harmonic roles characteristic of these pre-bebop pianists, the bassists and drummers examined in the pre-Powell trios covered in this thesis had little room to assume much more than a very narrowly focused, predetermined responsibility primarily as accompanists throughout the course of a tune (covered in Chapter Three).

## 1.1 Individuality and Role in the Swing Era Rhythm Section – Entering the Melodic Realm

Individuality and division of role come to the fore in the Powell trios and trios from Powell-on as a result of the stylistic transition that is initiated among *all* of the members of the Swing Era-based rhythm section. This transition instigated the development of greater versatility among the piano, bass, drums and guitar, but as Schuller contends, it has the most impact on the piano. (Schuller 1989: Kindle Location 4672) The predictably formulaic stride-influenced style employed by pianists in the Swing Era is abandoned for real time interaction with group members in the Bebop Era and thereafter. Gridley compares the two approaches:

*Pianists of the swing era used stride style or played a chord on every beat or every other beat. They did not necessarily improvise new rhythms to flexibly fit those of the solo line, as did their successors in modern jazz. (Gridley 2011: Kindle Locations 2862-2863)*

The modern jazz pianists' revolutionary left hand departure from the stride-influenced styles so prevalent throughout the Swing Era eliminates the ensuing redundancy of and conflict primarily concerning the rhythmic and harmonic roles within the group. The elimination of left hand stride-influenced styles leave a rhythmic and harmonic void just waiting to be filled by the other two members of the rhythm section. In its place, pianists devise a new in-the-moment left hand technique: "comping." Completely antithetical to the predictability inherent stride-influenced beat-beholden left hand accompaniment patterns, "comp chords" are voicings for one or both hands that, in the case of the piano, originate spontaneously – *in response* – to a solo. In jazz, the term "comp" is construed as an abbreviation for the word "accompaniment" and/or "complement". One way or another, both of these interpretations are apposite. That is, "comp chords" do play an accompaniment role. But, in addition to their rhythmical unpredictability and harmonic insinuation, what sets them apart from the rhythmical and structural accompaniment patterns manifested in stride-influenced styles is their *spontaneous* complementary role. In contrast with the four-quarter-note rhythmic predictability inherent in stride-influenced

styles, “comp” chords are often syncopated and occur as a response to an event “in the moment.”

The technical developments that began to take place within the entire Swing Era rhythm section had a profound effect on promoting division of role, which, by extension, facilitated greater individuality among its membership. Schuller notes that it is these technical strides that help to facilitate division of role via the melodic line, a practice that became the convention from the Bebop Era on. He goes on to cite that this transition was also critical in facilitating the development of democracy within the modern jazz rhythm section. “As greater technical flexibility developed, it was natural that the rhythm instruments, initially confined to very primitive *rhythmic* functions, aspired to enter the *melodic* realm.” (Schuller 1989: 226)

*“As the four rhythm instruments acquired these new melodic-linear, even soloistic capabilities, they could also discard some of the earlier simple ensemble functions. And in doing so the rhythm section could merge into a more unified, more sophisticated cohesive ensemble, albeit with four co-equal partners.”*  
(Schuller 1989: 227)

Schuller’s statement supports the writer’s point made at the beginning of this chapter: “individual expression is a requisite common denominator among membership in a jazz group, but in the paradigm of collective jazz improvisation, it is, paradoxically, the individuality of each member that is key to the modern jazz gestalt.” Schuller is saying that the acquisition of “new melodic-linear, even soloistic capabilities” (Schuller 1989: 227) by members of the rhythm section is key to facilitating individual expression among membership and at the same time, facilitating equal participation in realizing the collective artistic objective. The Swing Era is witness to the expansion of roles among all of the members of the rhythm section, facilitating greater individual expression via the melodic line – translated more generally as the improvised solo – that becomes the predominant characteristic of the modern jazz piano trio gestalt.

Schuller notes that it is the piano that is first to lead the way in “aspiring to enter the melodic realm,” followed by the guitar, bass, and lastly, the drums. (Schuller 1989: 226)

Citing the linear contributions of earlier pianists including Earl Hines among others, he points out the dramatic impact the melodic aspirations of the bass and the guitar had on the stride-influenced pianist:

*“As the bass acquired greater melodic and upward mobility, extending frequently into the “tenor” register, and as the guitar settled firmly into its middle-register chordal “comping” slot, it became clear that the left hand of the piano had lost almost all of its earlier harmonic and rhythmic importance.”* (Schuller 1989: 227)

*“...once the string bass had acquired its ability to roam linearly all over the lower range, even the bass notes of the piano were no longer necessary and actually were bound to collide and interfere with the bass, obscuring harmonic function and clarity, and producing unpleasant low-register dissonances and voice leadings...”* (Schuller 1989: 227)

Next, Swing Era bass lines moved from a vertical focus with a fixation on chord tones to a horizontal or more linear focus that incorporated diatonic and chromatic passing tones (covered in Chapter Three). This melodic- rather than harmonic-centered approach became known as the “walking bass line.” Schuller discusses the impact of a linear focused bass line:

*“Such bass lines also provided a new contrapuntal element, not in the old New Orleans collective improvisation sense but as a more purely linear counterpart heard with, under and against the melodic elements in the middle or upper register.”* (Schuller 1989: 226)

The versatility that began to develop among bassists in the Swing Era is particularly evidenced by the work of two innovative bassists: Jimmy Blanton and Oscar Pettiford, whose soloistic innovations paved the way for bassists to function equally in the group. Noted jazz historian Dan Morgenstern notes the effect this had on the drums:

*“As the bass came to be seen more as an instrument that had a solo voice—thanks largely to Jimmy Blanton and Oscar Pettiford—people were more open to what it and the drums could do. (From a discussion among Terry Teachout, Philippe Baudoin, and Dan Morgenstern, conducted online in February 2004 in the jazz-research listserve; Michael Fitzgerald, moderator.)* (Pullman 2012: Kindle Locations 11177-11180)

Swing Era drummers begin to develop their own unique voice. Drummer Kenny Clarke's democratic aspirations are captured in this quote:

*"I was trying to make the drums more musical instead of just a dead beat. As far as I was concerned, the usual way of playing drums had become quite monotonous. Around this time, I began to play things with the band, with the drums as a real participating instrument with its own voice. I'd never heard anyone else do it before. (Shapiro 1955: 347-348)." (Brown 1989: 114)*

Over time, the bass develops the ability to solo to the point where for the first time in history, the bassists in Evans's trios become equal rhythmic, harmonic *and* melodic partners.

Drummer Papa Jo Jones's use of the hi-hat on beats two and four and Kenny Clarke's use of the top (ride) cymbal to keep time freed up the bass drum from its obligatory role as timekeeper. The bass drum shifts its traditional predictable role as the primary timekeeper to that of an interactive response-based "comper." "...Clarke engaged in a responsorial as well as an instigative role in supporting the soloist, while simultaneously keeping the jazz rhythm on the ride cymbal and pedaling the hi-hat on beats two and four." (Brown 1989: 109)

The Swing Era guitarist's middle-register "comping" on either all four beats or on beats two and four of a bar displace the chords predictably played by the stride-influenced pianist. Over time, however, guitarists take on a primarily melodic role, in part aided by the development of amplification. This development in turn passes the harmonic baton back to the pianist whose left hand takes on the responsibility of "comping." The Swing Era guitarist's shift from a primarily rhythmic and harmonic role to a melodic role helps to shape the Bebop Era pianist's accompaniment style – one that is free to rhythmically and harmonically complement in the moment – and one that prevails to this day.



Music of the Bebop Era witnessed solos at breakneck tempi, displaced phrasing, complex chromatic-influenced melodic lines and harmonies. That no one instrument alone was beholden to the role of soloist or accompanist lightened the load, resulting in the development of greater technical facility among all members, not to mention the opportunity to develop much more sophisticated rhythmic, melodic and harmonic concepts. The expansion of division of role enabled Powell for example, to place greater focus on executing complex right-hand single-line solos and implement a revolutionary left-hand approach to harmonic accompaniment (“comping”). Bassists began moving beyond their primarily rhythmic and harmonic accompaniment roles to become linearly focused single-line soloists in their own right. Drummers began incorporating all of the pieces of the drum kit into the mix, expanding their role as a time-keeping accompanist, to that of soloist.

Again, the technical and stylistic developments that occurred within each instrument in the Bebop Era certainly facilitated diversification of role, which subsequently facilitated greater individual expression. But the importance of the predisposition of the ensemble leader toward creating a democratic gestalt cannot be overlooked. For example, there is ample evidence of division of role in Powell’s work as is addressed in Chapter Four. However, when it came to promoting equality among membership, Evans’s inclination to create a level playing field was unsurpassed by any jazz piano trio leader that had preceded him. The technical prowess of the Bebop Era masters along with the rhythmic, melodic and harmonic complexity they infused into their music was no guarantee of their leadership’s democratic tendency.

Among the stride-influenced piano-bass-drums trios pre-Powell, democracy is almost nonexistent, and division of role extremely limited. One explanation for this is that each trio leader’s stride-influenced style was so overwhelmingly dominating – a condition completely independent of any prospective generosity of spirit – that it made it difficult for any one else to get a “word” in. No degree of personal democratic magnanimity whatsoever could prevail because based on the prevailing style at that time, there literally was no available sonic space left for the bassist and/or drummer to make a musical

statement. However, the radical developments in technique and style that arose in piano-bass-drums jazz piano trios, beginning with Powell, facilitated division of role and a level playing field as evidenced in the work of his successors, Evans and to an even greater degree, Jarrett.

The impact of leadership style on artistic outcome is especially evident when comparing Powell's, Evans's and Jarrett's earliest distinctive tendencies toward creating equal opportunity among their membership. Their respective bodies of work serve as evidence in quantifying each leader's proclivity toward promoting individuality and are also indicative of the extent to which their individual leadership styles are so inexorably intertwined with their trio's resultant artistic style.

It should once again be emphasized that this chapter serves simply as a point of reference by which to trace the evolution of democratic tendency among the piano-bass-drums trios via trios pre-Powell, the Powell and Evans trios and the Jarrett "Standards" Trio by quantifying musical data from each leaders' *earliest* as well as foremost later recorded work. Evidence from each pianist's initial recording as a leader, serves simply as a constant – the same point of reference by which to illustrate their respective predisposition toward creating a versatile membership and democratic playing field. Each leader's earliest work will also serve as a benchmark from which to delve more deeply into their lifelong artistic development (detailed in Chapters Four, Five and Six). In addition to providing critical evidence in support of these trios' two structural tendencies, the following chapters will also serve as an important point of artistic reference, including evidence proving that the artistic content heard in each of these leaders' earliest work marks a salient point of transition away from what had immediately preceded them.

"Upward Mobility" – The Swing Era rhythm section's quest for individual expression via the "the melodic realm" per Schuller (1989: 226) triggered an interesting phenomenon. The diversification of role that begins to take place within the Swing Era rhythm section inadvertently results in an expansion of tonal and timbral range among all of the instruments: The piano, bass, drums and guitar alike begin to migrate upward in register.

Pianists begin relinquishing low- and mid-register left hand stride-influenced styles for mid-register accompaniment or “comping;” double bassists and guitarists begin venturing from the low- to mid-registers to the mid- to high registers as they become critical melodic contributors; and drummers begin exchanging the timekeeping role of the bass drum in the low register for a scintillating “top” or ride cymbal, extending from the mid- to high mid-registers.

The extension of the tonal and timbral range of each instrument – specifically from the low register into the middle and high registers – that begins to occur just prior to the Bebop Era facilitated individual expression in three ways: first, as mentioned previously, in terms of role, in that all of the players begin to function equally – as both soloists and accompanists; second, in that higher registers were more conducive to sonic clarity; and third, that each instrument had access to discrete sonic space which facilitated even greater sensitivity to the gamut of each of their unique qualities. Evidence of the upward mobility that developed within each of the instruments of the rhythm section is reflected in various stylistic modifications.

Starting with the piano, the low bass note and mid-register chord pattern played in the stride or stride-influenced Swing Era pianist’s left hand transitions into mid-register two-note 1-7, 1-3 “shell” voicings in the Bebop Era pianist’s left hand as is evidenced in Powell’s playing. Peter Pullman in “Wail”, his biography of Powell touches on Powell’s desire to distinguish himself from his stride-influenced predecessors:

*“Throughout his life, Bud claimed that his father was the best stride player in Harlem. But he developed ambivalent feelings about the style as he grew to artistic maturity. While he mastered the technique, he didn’t like to be asked to exhibit it. It was what his father had done, he said, and he wanted to do something different.”* (Pullman 2012: Kindle Locations 377-379)

From Powell on, pianists’ left hands begin migrating up to rootless ‘comp’ chords situated just below and above C4 (middle C), a technique innovated by Evans and one that has influenced all modern jazz pianists succeeding him. In a January 1, 2011 article

in *Keyboard* titled “5 Ways to Play Like Bill Evans,” jazz pianist Andy Laverne places the significance of Evans’s left-hand technique at the top of the list:

*“Bill Evans single-handedly changed the sound of jazz piano—literally, with his left hand! His four-note, rootless chord voicings consist of guide tones (thirds and sevenths), along with chord tones, color tones, extensions, and/or alterations. These compact voicings also have inherently smooth voice leading.”* (LaVerne 2011: <http://bit.ly/1LQUGHN>)

Focusing next on the bass, as Swing Era bass lines become more linearly rather than harmonically focused and the bass takes on the role of soloist, it begins to move from the bass register into the tenor register as supported by Schuller in a previous quote: “As the bass acquired greater melodic and upward mobility, extending frequently into the ‘tenor’ register...”

Bassists from the 1950s on are given unprecedented opportunities to solo, utilizing more and more of the upper register of the instrument. But it was Evans’s revolutionary bassist Scott LaFaro who utilized the instrument’s entire range as noted by author John Goldsby in *Bass Player Magazine*:

*“Up until the late ’50s, most jazz bassists earned their livings playing in the lowest third of the instrument. Pioneers like Charles Mingus, Ray Brown, and Red Mitchell began to expand the range, sometimes reaching into thumb position. But Scott LaFaro was the first to use the whole range of the bass, up to the high G two octaves above the open string. His speed and two-finger right-hand plucking style, plus his ability to pre-hear the lines he was going for, gave LaFaro his saxophone-like technique.”* (Goldsby 2010: <http://bit.ly/1JUwzHW>)

Next, within the drum set, the quarter-note-beholden timekeeping bass drum pattern is taken up by the higher-pitched ride cymbal – a technique attributed to bebop master drummer Kenny Clarke. Schuller comments on the ride cymbal, noting that it is in part because of its position in a higher register that it so ideally complements the section:

*“The cymbal, on the other, with its higher pitched overtone-laden sound, was a perfect solution for getting out of the way of the other instruments, riding above*

*them, as it were, in a sonority which had at once the capacity to blend and to isolate.” (Schuller 1989: 228)*

Brown notes that on Miles Davis’ iconic 1950 recording “Birth of the Cool,” with the exception of some differentiation in the rhythmic feeling, there is little difference between the actual drumming styles of Clarke and his colleague Roach. (Brown 1997: 174) However, consistent with the modern jazz rhythm section’s crusade to occupy higher registers, he notes Roach’s preference “for smaller, higher-pitched drums.”

*“What is noticeable is the difference in the sound of each drummer’s instrument, i.e., Roach’s preference for smaller, higher-pitched drums. By the late 1940s, the evolution of the instrument from the large, dance hall assemblage to the standard four drums plus cymbals kit was complete.” (Brown 1997: 174)*

And lastly, the Swing Era guitarist’s quarter-note-driven middle register chords replace the pianist’s quarter-note-driven stride-influenced low and middle register left hand pattern. But in time, guitarists too begin to seek the melodic realm. They abandon their rhythmic and harmonic focused roles for a melodic focused role, leaving room in the middle register for the pianist’s left hand to take up the harmonic slack in the form of “comping.” As division of role expands within the piano, bass and drums, the guitar becomes superfluous – even intrusive – and the Bebop Era modern jazz piano-bass-drums-structured rhythm section becomes the rule.

To reiterate, the aspiration for all instruments in the rhythm section to enter the melodic realm is consistent with the quest for individual expression that permeated the Bebop Era. But what is the explanation for the resultant migration upward in register?

A plausible explanation is linked to the fact that in general, the midrange to high midrange frequencies, as they pertain to any instrument are those that are most sensitive to the human ear. Note: For the purposes of this explanation, the term “sensitivity” is used to mean *physical* sensitivity; the term “accuracy” is used to mean *perception*. Studies show that although the human ear is *sensitive* to frequencies from 20Hz – 4kHz,

it is the most *accurate* in the midrange, from 300Hz – 2kHz, with the highest level of *accuracy* or perceptibility estimated to be around 1kHz. From the perspective of the piano, this means that our perception is most acute from  $\approx$  C4 (middle C) up to  $\approx$  C6 as illustrated by Independent Recording Network’s *Interactive Ear Sensitivity Chart* (Fig. 1.2). They state: “The lower the line dips, the more *sensitive* (the writer’s italics) the ear is at that frequency.” They add: “The ear is the most *accurate* in the mid-range, with highest accuracy near 1kHz.” (IRN n.d.: <http://bit.ly/1V7KMVi>)

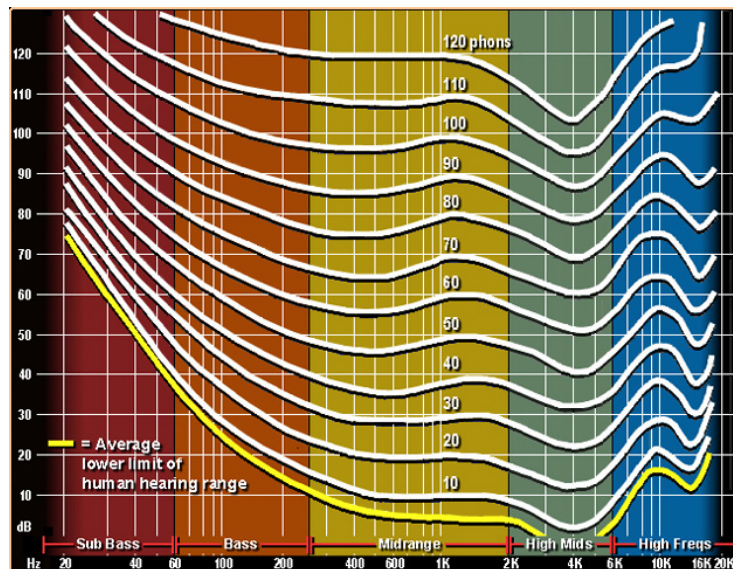


Fig. 1.2 The frequency response of the human ear

Citing specific examples within the entire rhythm section, the pianist’s left-hand’s rootless “comp” chords sound the most accurate i.e., the most perceptible, when some portion of them straddles C4. Similarly, the modern jazz bassist’s single-line solo played above 300Hz results in greater clarity and prominence. “Ear sensitivity steadily climbs out of the weakness in sub-bass response to fairly accurate levels by the time bass becomes midrange at around 300Hz.” (Ibid.) Lastly, with a frequency range of between 50-500Hz, it is not surprising that the critical timekeeping role played by the bass drum is eventually replaced with the ride cymbal, with a frequency range of 300-900Hz (Fig.1.3).

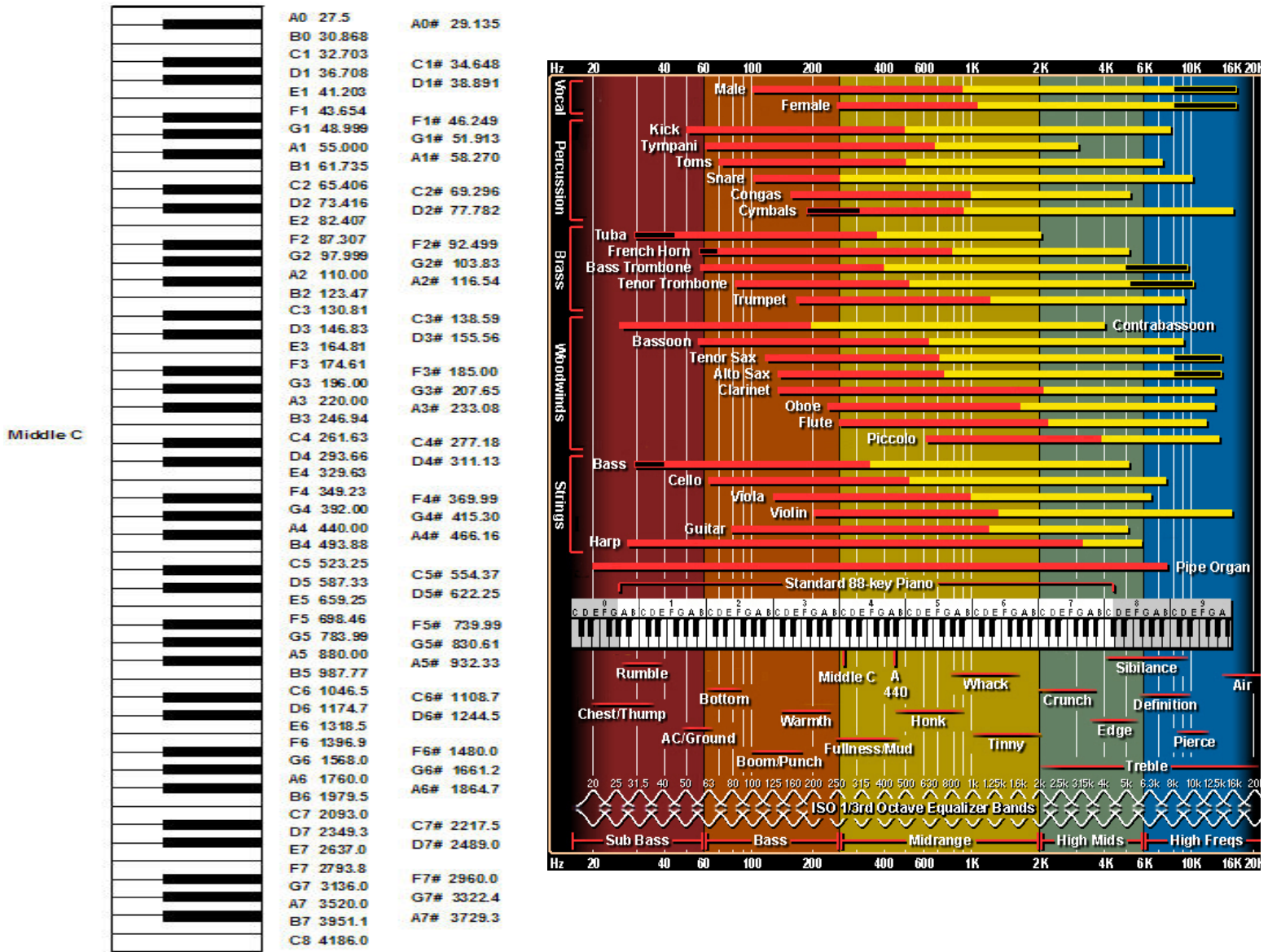


Fig. 1.3 The instrumental and vocal audio frequency spectrum

Preminent Bay Area sound technician Lee Brenkman points out a salient fringe benefit that inadvertently results from the rhythm section’s collective upward mobility: an overall expansion of the frequency spectrum or sonic playing field – a phenomenon which produces a mutually beneficial ripple effect among all of the members of group. Brenkman notes the impact the drums have on the bass for example: “Changing the drummer's main time-keeping duties from the bass drum to the ride cymbal opened up more of the overall frequency spectrum, enabling the bass to singly occupy the lowest register and therefore be heard.” (Brenkman in an email: January 22, 2015) The increase

in the frequency spectrum coincidentally provides the rhythm section with greater discrete sonic space, thereby enhancing the listener's perception of each instrument. Brown touches on the overall domino effect that in fact occurs among all of the instruments when the ride cymbal replaces the bass drum as timekeeper:

*“The resulting textural change left more sonic space in the lower and middle registers while reinforcing the cymbal’s inherent timbral relationship with the brass and wind instruments. This inspired pianists and bassist to further redefine their role as the rhythm section. Within this shift, the bassists assumed most of the timekeeping by playing chord tones on every beat (“walking”), whereas the pianists adopted a sparse, varied staccato accompaniment, which reinforced the harmonic rhythm and progression (“comping”). Clarke, and then other modernist drummers, utilized the snare drum and bass drum to punctuate the music with rhythmic accents (“klook-mops” and “dropping bombs,” the former an onomatopoetic rendering of a drum figure, and the latter named as an allusion to the war (Clarke JOHP}).” (Brown 1989: 109)*

Examining the registers utilized specifically by members of the Swing Era rhythm section, a sonic train wreck occurs in the low- and mid-registers: pianists' stride-style left-hand bass notes, bassists' bass notes, drummers' time-keeping bass drum along with the redundancy resulting from the pianists' and guitarists' mid-register voicings creates a particularly bottom- to mid-register-heavy arrangement, producing less than optimal clarity for any one instrument. The expansion of the frequency spectrum is an unintended bonus that provides each instrument in the rhythm section with critical discrete sonic space, thereby enhancing their unique qualities and in turn, the listener's perceptibility of each of them.

In sum, the quest for individual expression among musicians in the Bebop Era rhythm section serves as the catalyst for diversification of role, particularly as it pertains to “entering the melodic realm.” In the case of all of the instruments, this translates into having equal opportunity to solo; and, in the case of the bass, to also contribute more linearly in general. The collective focus on linearity precipitates a global migration upward in register, consequently expanding the frequency range of each instrument. The expanded frequency range inadvertently provides more discrete sonic space; discrete



sonic space results in optimal sonic clarity; and optimal sonic clarity enhances the Holy Grail: individual expression. And the cycle continues.

## **1.2 The Modern Jazz Piano Trio – The Quintessential Democratic Archetype**

The modern jazz piano-bass-drums trio has evolved to become the quintessential democratic archetype. Lincoln's aspiration for an enduring government "of the people, by the people, (and) for the people" is an homologous framework for the modern jazz ensemble in general, and in the case of this thesis, the modern jazz piano trio in particular: a unit *of* the players – as inherently unique individuals –, *by* the players – in a diversity of roles –, and *for* the players – as a collective artistic enterprise.

What led to the transition from the Swing to the Bebop Era, the period in which Powell produces his greatest work? Schuller's contention that the Swing Era rhythm section "aspired to enter the melodic realm" is a critical consideration. Most notably, the bebop pianists' transition away from stride-influenced, predictable left-hand patterns to an in-the-moment responsive-based "comping" tactic opened up new territory for the bassist and drummer to become equal participants in Schuller's "melodic realm." His position regarding the Swing Era rhythm section's particular aspiration may be interpreted in a broader sense, which is that the individual members comprising the rhythm section who aspired to enter the melodic realm ultimately sought opportunities for creative self-expression through the improvised solo. As technical virtuosity developed, individuality in the form of the improvised solo arose, and thus, the bebop rhythm section of piano, bass and drums evolved into a democratic entity. As Kateb states: "Democracy and individualism are inseparable phenomena." (Kateb 2003: 276)

The technical virtuosity that facilitated the diversification of role enabled members of the Powell and Evans trios and Jarrett "Standards" Trio to forge cutting edge rhythmic, melodic and harmonic ground – and often at breakneck tempi given that their music no longer relied on the adherence to dance tempi. Complex rhythmic displacement, unremitting single-line solos laced with chromatic ornamentation, advanced harmonic substitutions and reharmonization, and a reverence for harmonically complex voicings

and intricate voice leading become progressively part and parcel of Powell's, Evans's and Jarrett's standard vocabulary as is illustrated in the forthcoming chapters. A cycle is created: Technical virtuosity facilitates diversity of role, which in turn, facilitates the potential for a democratic context and the cycle continues. Continuing on, a more democratic group paradigm promotes the development of virtuosity and diversity of role, and so on, among the group's membership.

The pre-Powell, Powell, Evans and Jarrett trios' respective manifestation of democratization, as briefly outlined here, serves among these groups' primary defining characteristics. The extent of individual expression and diversity of role among their membership was key to their artistic gestalt.

THE POWELL TRIOS – Powell's recordings along with documented accounts of his behavior on the bandstand are illustrative of the blatant homage he pays to himself as opposed to his colleagues. That is, in spite of his and his colleagues' liberating technical wizardry and his stylistic divergence from an overbearing stride-influenced piano style, Powell was completely consumed with himself and his work. In either a live or recorded performance setting, the artistic welfare of his colleagues often came second at best. Longtime Powell sideman, bassist Curley Russell, very forgivingly comments on Powell's conceitedness and indifference to his colleagues. Pullman notes:

*“Russell said that Powell's continuing onstage alone was no act. He gave Powell all the credit for being just completely engaged with his own virtuosity. Further, he felt that the audience had come to expect this. Yet it wasn't a rote routine; Powell meant it, every time that he did it. At other times, though, Powell walked off the stage in the middle of his set, leaving the musicians who played in support of him to finish by themselves. At still other times, at set's end, he apologized to the audience for what he thought was the substandard level of his sidemen's play—to their astonishment.”* (Pullman 2012: Kindle Locations 29-33)

*“On the Savoy recordings, Powell reveals the virtuoso style of soloing and accompanying that made him the most influential pianist among the rising young stars of modern jazz.”* (Ramsey 2013: 69)

Guthrie Ramsey underscores Powell's work as both soloist and accompanist. His groundbreaking pianistic style impacted his fellow artistic collaborators in two primary ways: First, he gives his bassists and drummers room to develop as soloists in their own right; and second, his custom-placed left-hand "comp" chords replaced the relentless, predictable left-hand stride-influenced styles which made their roles both soloists and accompanists more perceptible. Under Powell, bassists and drummers become structurally important – even in their role as accompanists – which by extension, elevated their individualism.

Beginning with Powell, the jazz piano trio began to develop into a microcosmic democratic community. Ramsey's comment here references the fraternal nature of the rhythm section:

*"The cultural work performed by the rhythm section is a crucial aspect of what a jazz performance might say or mean to audiences. Not only does an imaginative rhythm section inspire the frontline soloists, as scholar Ingrid Monson has argued, it also presents a profound model and metaphor of community..."*  
(Ramsey 2013: 123)

Powell created a jazz ecology — a group of three independent and interdependent musicians – by eliminating the redundancy of role within the unit. Over time, the responsibilities held by membership in the Powell trios and trios post-Powell grew increasingly protean. Rhythmic, melodic and harmonic roles shifted from one member to another throughout the course of a tune because the membership was, for the first time, capable of and given the opportunity to assume more than just a single or double role. As will be discussed later in this chapter, this modus operandi was an integral part of Evans's lifelong artistic vision from the outset of his career – one that has been wholeheartedly adopted by Jarrett as well as other trio leaders succeeding him.

Paradoxically, the independence and versatility that developed within the modern piano-bass-drums jazz piano trio beginning with Powell produce an even greater interdependence among the collective membership. The complexity and spontaneity of the music that is created within this evolving new paradigm mandates unbroken

consciousness and unconditional support from among all three members for it to succeed artistically. Kateb notes the importance Plato places on the co-existence of individuality and diversification of role in a democracy: "...democracy as the culture in which people think of themselves as individuals, not as members of society defined exhaustively by their role, function, or place." (Kateb 2003: 293)

The dual state of independency and interdependency that began to develop within the Powell trios evolved over time, facilitating an increasingly democratic paradigm in trios post-Powell as was particularly evident in Evans's trios. In a January 1, 2010 article in Bassplayer magazine, one of Evans's bassists, Chuck Israels, observes:

*"The smaller the group, the more dependent the music becomes on the individual players, and it is next to impossible to find opportunities to work with musicians who are as prepared individually and as an ensemble as did. We agreed on our musical aims and we didn't try to force the music, and we all believed in each other's talents. And that was it."* (Goldsby 2010: <http://bit.ly/1JUwzHW>)

From Powell on, the ability of individual membership to spontaneously cover a multiplicity of roles necessitated complete focus on one another to achieve the optimal artistic objectives. Individual members' capability to assume a plurality of responsibilities became empowering, presenting each member with the utmost opportunity for individual expression – both in the role of soloist as well as accompanist. This freedom bore a collective artistic outcome that was as new as the moment in which it was created.

Powell made the executive decision to feature himself as soloist on every track but one on *The Bud Powell Trio*, his first trio effort, recorded on January 10, 1947. This recording is not exemplary of individuality – that is, Powell is not all that generous with his distribution of solos.<sup>3</sup> However, this first effort does exhibit a significant evolution of

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<sup>3</sup> Again, Evans's one-off trio recording in August of 1947, only months later, exhibits significantly greater democratic tendency. Evans's first effort could be considered an anomaly given that it wasn't until 1956, nine years later, that he begins recording in the trio format on a regular basis. However, his revolutionary signature mission to promote individuality and role among the membership in his various trios dispels this first effort as merely an aberration.

division of role. That is, other than Powell's inclusion of roots in his left hand, the rhythmic and harmonic redundancy so prevalent in Swing Era piano styles dissipated. The division of role evident in Powell's 1947 prototype influenced all trios to come.

As one of bebop's key progenitors, Powell's style introduced a critical and mutually beneficial relationship between the parts (the players) and the whole (the group). From Powell's 1947 benchmark on, his trio membership demonstrated a cumulative ability to take on variable roles as both soloist and accompanist, which accorded each of them the opportunity to make a larger investment in the group's overall artistic outcome. The expanded and interchangeable roles that developed among membership facilitated greater democratization within the group; and at the same time, greater democratization within the group opened up limitless artistic possibilities for its membership – a win-win situation.

Powell's comprehensive lifelong artistic statement in all solo as well as ensemble formats was revolutionary – rhythmically, melodically and harmonically. Ramsey devotes a considerable portion of his treatise to the contributions bebop, and by extension, Powell, made in elevating jazz – socially, as “art,” and artistically, as art.

*“...with bebop, jazz expanded its social pedigree and became ”art”; and it also morphed jazz itself into a genre distinct from other contemporary vernacular forms. This trajectory is easily traced from Powell's earliest recordings to his later work.” (Ramsey 2013: 14)*

THE EVANS TRIOS – In the starkest contrast with Powell, a 1947 recording of a nascent 18-year-old Evans serves as evidence of his predisposition to share the spotlight with his colleagues, and this magnanimity translates into the sound this trio achieves. He not only gave his bassist a solo, he gave him the *first* solo. He then took the second solo and gave the drummer the third solo – all of equal length, and, of note, in the same year that the then 23-year-old Powell was to make his first trio recording as leader. Evans's predisposition to promoting both democracy and division of role is apparent even in this

obscure one-off recording that was made twelve years prior to the collaboration he formed with bassist LaFaro and drummer Motian.

Evans viewed his various memberships' ability to handle diverse roles in terms of their "artistic responsibility" and believed that even distribution of the rhythmic, harmonic and melodic roles in the contexts of both soloist and accompanist was key to facilitating the democratic environment that he perpetuated in his every trio from LaFaro and Motian on. He stated that absolute virtuosity among his membership was a requisite and without it, he would have been unable to accomplish his personal artistic mission to create a level playing field.

In the particular context of collective jazz improvisation, it is the leader's prerogative to establish the level of equality among his or her membership. But at the same time, it must also be taken into consideration that, in addition to a leader's personal predisposition to creating a democratic playing field to any given extent, the ability to actually succeed is also dependent on his or her membership's ability to accomplish the diversity of tasks at hand.

Marian McPartland interviewed Bill Evans in the inaugural season of her innovative first-of-its-kind radio program, *Piano Jazz*. Recorded on November 6, 1978 (and broadcast on NPR on May 27, 1979), this priceless interview was conducted just sixteen months before Evans's untimely death on September 15, 1980. McPartland asks Evans to comment on the freedom that he so characteristically gave to the members of his various trios. His response emphasizes the importance he places on his intention to interact only with those musicians who can handle the complete freedom he gives them. In contrast with Powell, whose style organically governed the stylistic transition that the bass and drums underwent, Evans purposely sought out cohorts who had the capability and insight to create the level playing field that became his personal mission.

*"But I also really choose the people in the trio as responsible musicians and artists so that I can give them that kind of freedom and know they're going to use it with discretion and toward a total result. If it doesn't work that way, I don't*

*want to be a dictator; and if they don't have that kind of responsibility, then I really wouldn't be able to work the way I do with the guys that I have.*" (Evans 1979: <http://www.npr.org/2010/10/08/92185496/bill-evans-on-piano-jazz>)

Contrary to Pericles's perspective that the individual is considered subordinate to the society in which he lives, Kateb describes a critical trait of leadership in a democracy which promotes democratic individualism so pervasive in Evans's artistic leadership style: "Such canceling of hierarchy is, after all, what democracy is and what allows, to begin with, individualism to develop and become infused with a tendency to regard all roles as impermanent, exchangeable, or improvable." (Kateb 2003: 283)

In keeping with Evans's operational philosophy, Kateb goes on to quote Plato: "Democracy would have subjects who are like rulers, and rulers who are like subjects." (Kateb 2003: 282)

Increased technical facility and greater rhythmic, melodic and harmonic complexity took place within all of the instruments leading up to and throughout the Bebop Era, facilitating a democratic context and promoting division of role, two foundational components of modern jazz. In an interview with Paul Rubin in *Jazz Spoken Here*, Evans, again in 1979, discusses his personal perspective on the coexistence of virtuosity and responsibility, citing the extraordinary contributions of LaFaro:

*"PR: ... How would you estimate LaFaro's contribution to modern bass playing, and what role did he play in the development of that first trio?"*

*BE: In my mind Scott LaFaro was responsible in a lot of ways for the expansion of the bass. I think he is acknowledged, at least within musical circles, as being more or less the father or the wellspring of modern bass players. And when we got together I realized that Scott had the conceptual potential, he had the virtuosity, and he had the experience and the musical responsibility, and so forth, to handle the problem of approaching the bass function in jazz, especially with a trio, which is a very pure kind of setup with more freedom."* (Rubin 1992: 136)

Powell passed much of his "sonic baton" on to Evans. Asked to identify his primary influences, in an interview with Michael Spector in the March 1977 issue of

*Contemporary Keyboard*, Evans states: “If I have to name somebody in particular I would name George Shearing and Bud Powell...I guess Bud Powell might have been the outstanding early influence.” (Keyboard 1977: 24)

Evans goes on to note his great admiration for Powell, but clarifies that his high regard of one of the Bebop Era’s esteemed pioneers does not surpass the search for his own personal stylistic identity. "Bud Powell has it all," he said, "but even from him I wouldn't take everything. I wouldn't listen to a recording by Bud and try to play along with it, to imitate. Rather, I'd listen to the record and try to absorb the essence of it and apply it to something else." (Pettinger 1998: 15)

By Evans’s own admission, he was strongly influenced by Powell, but, unlike his iconic mentor, he took the level of democratization and division of role within each of his trios to a completely new level. In stark contrast to the Powell trios, each of the members of the various Evans trios was given more rather than less to say in the ultimate artistic outcome – in roles as both soloist and accompanist. Recordings from his first in 1947 to his last in 1980 prove that the Evans trios were the epitome of musical equality.

As mentioned earlier, an eighteen-year old Evans made a recording of “The Best Man” in the piano-bass-drums trio format with Connie Atkinson on bass and Frank “Fluffy” Wrobel on drums in August of 1947 in Plainfield New Jersey, just a half of a year after Powell recorded his first trio session as leader.<sup>4</sup> Although there is just one tune in this format on record from that year, the democratic tendency and division of role on this anomaly serves in stark contrast to Powell’s earliest trio offering. This recording illustrates Evans’s personal predisposition toward equality among his membership on this recording from the first bar to the last. Improvised solos are taken by all three

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<sup>4</sup> This tune was also recorded by The Nat King Cole Trio featuring pianist and vocalist Nat “King” Cole, guitarist Oscar Moore, and bassist Johnny Miller on August 19, 1946 (Tom Lord Jazz Discography), just a year prior to Evans’s August 1947 recording. Citing Cole as one of his overall major influences as will be discussed in Chapter Four, Evans’s 8-bar introduction is very similar to Cole’s in content. Additionally, Evans doubles the melody with bassist Atkinson just as Cole doubles the melody with guitarist Moore. (<http://www.amazon.com/The-Best-King-Cole-Trio/dp/B000005H11>)



instrumentalists – the *first* by bassist Atkinson, the second by Evans himself, and the last by drummer Wrobel. His mission to establish an equally interactive artistic playing field – not only by giving his bassist and drummer solos, but by giving his bassist the *first* solo – exceeds any other trio leader who came before him.

The roles taken by membership are also clearly illustrated throughout this performance. Both soloist and accompanist “hats” are “worn” by all – from the introduction, which features bassist Wrobel doubling the melody with Evans, to solos by all, to an 8-bar recapitulative pre-written coda which features call and response trading among all three members.

In stark contrast with his piano-bass-drums predecessors, if either or both bassists and drummers in the pre-Powell Stacy, Williams, Garner or Peterson trios were removed from the performance – once again, the importance of timbre aside – the impact on the rhythmic, melodic and harmonic structural integrity of the unit would be minimal given the pianist’s singular capability to cover all three of these roles. In complete contrast, in Evans’s first trio contribution, his bassist and drummer are anything but on the periphery. The collective membership is both independent and interdependent – *every* member is equally structurally critical to the artistic outcome and every member is equally capability of contributing rhythmically, melodically and with the exception of the drums, harmonically, in the roles of both soloist and accompanist. In short, this performance is illustrative of a team effort – a modus operandi that became Evans’s lifelong artistic trademark.

In 1959, the same year that Evans literally played a crucial role on Miles Davis’ groundbreaking and perpetually modern classic *Kind of Blue*, he formed the Bill Evans Trio with bassist Scott LaFaro and Paul Motian, a trio that would become *the* model for what Evans describes as the “pure” trio, a unit where responsibility for and dedication to the overall artistic objective was self-delegated and divided equally among an almost egoless, multi-functional membership. Not including the 1947 one-off recording of “The Best Man,” although he made his first trio recording as a leader in the trio format as early as 1956,

Evans's himself proclaims that his groundbreaking concept of the "pure trio" is best illustrated in *A Portrait in Jazz* recorded on December 28, 1959 in New York. In a March 1977 interview with Michael Spector in *Contemporary Keyboard* magazine Evans identifies his "original" trio as the one with LaFaro on bass and Motian on drums (almost as if his first trio with Kotick and Motian had not existed!). Chapter Five is devoted to bringing to light evidence supporting Evans's and other musicological specialists' perspectives on the concept and distinguishing characteristics of the "pure trio." (Comparing "New Jazz Conceptions" with "A Portrait in Jazz", Evans clearly leans towards featuring himself, rather than more equally dividing the spotlight among himself, Kotick and Motian.) His focus on himself rather than on his membership in this recording obviously had not yet become a part of his life's mission and may likely account for the little attention he (and other critics) paid to this recording.

Democratic tendency and division of role aside for a moment, it should be noted that this first recording from Evans as a leader certainly serves as a harbinger of the rhythmic, melodic and harmonic complexity of his material to come (as will be discussed in Chapter Five).

Evans's insight into the process of collective improvisation in the piano-bass-drums jazz piano format (the "pure trio") is reflected in the liner notes of the seminal Miles Davis recording *Kind of Blue* (See complete liner notes in Appendix 1): "Group improvisation is a further challenge. Aside from the weighty technical problem of collective coherent thinking, there is the very human, even social need for sympathy from all members to bend for the common result." (Evans 1959: <http://bit.ly/1NiPSwr>)

Breaking with tradition, Evans's bassists and drummers were given unprecedented time for individual expression. Furthermore, it wasn't uncommon for the bassists in Evans's trios to take the first solo – and lengthy ones at that. Evans describes the role played by members of his epoch-making trio with LaFaro and Motian:

*“We just really accepted a conceptual goal which was more conversational, more a thing where, including the drums, where everybody could contribute. They didn't have to play the roles that were more or less assigned by jazz tradition – that you could only walk at this time, that you could only do this at this time, ... – but rather leave our minds wide open but with responsibility...” [Rubin 1992: 136]*

Evans continues on this same subject:

*“I remember that I had been looking for a special kind of bass player for some time. I think that perhaps my approach to the concept of the first trio required a different kind of player. I wanted to make room for the bass and try to leave some fundamental roles empty so that the bass could pick them up. If I am going to be sitting there playing roots, fifths and full voicings, the bass is relegated to a time machine. I think in terms of a tune having a total shape and, for example, I try to avoid getting to full intensity too early. Any one thing done for too long gets tiring. Contrast is important to me. I even thought that drums would be a problem and we might better without them. It was remarkable that Paul Motian came along and identified with the concept so completely that drums were no longer a problem. As for Scott, I remember that he sat in one night at the Composer's Club in New York. I was astounded by his creativity, a virtuoso. There was so much music in him, he had a problem controlling it. It was like a gusher and he could not contain his ideas. He stimulated me to other areas and perhaps I helped him contain some of his enthusiasm. It was a wonderful thing and was worth all the effort that we made later to suppress the ego and work for a common result” (Hennessey 1985: <http://www.billevans.nl/History.htm>)*

In an interview with Wayne Enstice and Paul Rubin, producers and hosts of *Just Jazz*, a radio program broadcast on National Public Radio station KUAT FM in Tucson Arizona, Evans elaborates on the concept of democratization and division of role in what he describes as “a rather pure group.” Based on his personal artistic vision, the bassists and drummers in every one of his trios were equally represented and also had a higher degree of versatility than bassists and drummers in any other trio in jazz history up to this point. His trios were the epitome of democratization and absolute division of role in as much as his bassists and drummers were also capable of taking on the roles of both soloist and accompanist on a tune. Evans’s statement perfectly sums up the concept for his artistic vision and the vision that continues to set a standard for all modern jazz piano trios today:

*“This is a rather pure group, in that there’s just one person really for each function, and then we cross over the other functions. I mean, the drummer is really controlling timbre and various colors and contributions in the rhythm and, you know, the propulsion and other things, maybe just coloring, or whatever. And then you have the bass function primarily in the bass, and then he becomes a solo voice also, and an accompanying voice. And then, of course, I have most of the time the primary voice in the harmonic content. And of course, we all share all these roles in various degrees as we move around. But I don’t really define the roles so much, because at this level it’s like we all just approach the music, and I expect them to be responsible to the music and not everybody to be just indulging themselves. And we try to dedicate ourselves to the total musical statement, whatever I might be, and try to shape it according to musical ends and not ego ends.”* (Enstice and Rubin 1992: 138)

In a 1984 *Keyboard* magazine article “The 10 Greatest Jazz Piano Trios”, noted jazz critic Leonard Feather comments on Evans’s requisite versatility of his bass players to function as more than just timekeepers:

*“Evans’ accomplishments need no recapitulation here, but the interaction with his bassists is worthy of special mention.. He required a virtuoso bass artist who was less interested in playing straight time than in doing rhythmically original and often highly melodic lines.”* (Feather 1984: 34-37)

Asked for his opinion on the contributions Evans made, San Francisco Bay Area jazz scribe Andrew Gilbert specifically mentions the unprecedented freedom within the trio with LaFaro and Motian:

*“While he recorded prolifically for three decades, Evans made his most profound impact within the space of three years, during a brief tenure with Miles Davis and then as the leader of his telepathic trio with bassist Scott LaFaro and drummer Paul Motian, which introduced radical new possibilities for small groups by erasing boundaries between accompanist and soloist.”* (Gilbert February 6, 2011: in an email to the writer)

Bassist Rufus Reid, reflecting on Evans:

*“Bill Evans’s band was a bass player’s dream,” he poignantly recounted. “And, he is the only pianist I know who could start off a concert with a ballad!”* (Reid January 13, 2011: in a conversation with the writer)

The melodically interactive relationship that Evans and LaFaro had begun wasn't exactly new. In 1940, twenty-one years prior to the Evans-LaFaro-Motian trio, Duke Ellington and bassist Jimmy Blanton made a recording in a duo setting, which captures the bass in the role of a critically interactive participant. Blanton, who holds the place in jazz history as the first bassist to take single line solos, is heard on both "Pitter Panther Patter" and "Mr. J. B. Blues" on Duke Ellington, Solos, Duets and Trios (RCA Bluebird: 2178-2-RB, 1932-67, c1990); or Ellington, Never No Lament: The Blanton-Webster Band (RCA Bluebird: 50857, 3CD set, 1940-42, c2003). (Gridley, Mark C. 2011: Kindle Locations 9126-9128)

Historian Eileen Southern notes Blanton's trailblazing contributions: "His innovation was to transform the string bass from an instrument that chiefly played notes on the four beats of a measure to a solo instrument that played fluent melodies, with fast-running notes, sharply defined phrases, and ingenious melodic turns." (Southern 1997: 488)

As Evans remarks in his interview with McPartland, from LaFaro on, his bassists were virtuosic and interactive by design, and the relationships that were cultivated between him and them were uniquely groundbreaking in jazz. The Evans-LaFaro combination exemplified the symbiosis of independence and interdependence. The combined artistry of Evans and LaFaro were analogous to a beautifully improvised two-part invention supported by the rhythmic interplay of Motian. Their respective contributions were singular in their own right, but together, they created a brilliant exchange. In comparing Evans' trio with LaFaro with a "Powell-style" trio, jazz historian Mark C. Gridley attributes it in part to the pianist's distinctive and accommodating stylistic concept:

*"It was partly the Evans piano style that made possible LaFaro's contributions to these new concepts of jazz trio playing. One crucial aspect was its leanness. There are more limitations in a Bud Powell-style trio because the pianist fills up most of the spaces with long lines of his own. Rhythmic interaction between bassist and pianist is also restricted because the bassist must focus on explicitly stating the beats and has little chance to do much else. Evans, by contrast to Powell, did not require the bassist to explicitly state each beat. The way Evans voiced chords provided another freedom for the bassist. The notes that Evans*

*selected for his chords allowed bassists more latitude because their own notes were less likely to duplicate or clash. Gridley, 2011: (Kindle Locations 8734-8739)*

*“Evans provided the perfect context for the blossoming of LaFaro’s new approach to bass improvisation because he left room for the bass in the forefront of the combo sound and because Evans encouraged LaFaro to capitalize on the opportunity by taking chances and trying all sorts of nontraditional techniques.<sup>9</sup> This was also the manner in which Evans collaborated with LaFaro’s most gifted successors, Eddie Gomez and Marc Johnson. This style allowed them more room for creativity than they experienced with other bandleaders.” (Gridley 2011: Kindle Locations 8740-8744)*

THE KEITH JARRETT “STANDARDS” TRIO – Peacock’s bass solos on every track of Jarrett’s first “Standards” Trio recording *Standards Vol. I* point to Jarrett’s democratic tendency at the group’s outset. However, this thesis will provide evidence (in Chapter Six) that he takes Evans’s democratic proclivity a step further.

Jarrett’s view of the trio as a gestalt, from its earliest work in 1983 on, is supported in one sentence taken from an interview with pianist Ethan Iverson that appeared in a September 2013 issue of *Downbeat Magazine*. “One of the concepts, if not the basic concept, is that we are all sidemen to the music.” (Iverson 2013: <http://bit.ly/1LMGjnF>) Jarrett’s conceptual approach to the trio is completely aligned with Evans’s personal artistic mission:

*K.J.: “The rhythm section is the standard grouping in jazz,” he begins. “It’s situated in the center of the earth, as far as the streams that can converge there from the periphery. So I think a little miracle occurred, and I found two people whose openness was so profound that nothing was wrong with playing any certain way. In every other group I’ve been in, I’ve had to deal with players’ preferences. You’re always subtracting from what you hear to suit the others. But that’s a situation where I’m the leader. What I wanted to find was some way of everyone being a sideman, of eliminating the leader syndrome.”*

*E.I. “Jarrett may renounce leadership of the trio, but he’ll assent to being called the musical director. By this point, every trio release has all three players’ names on the front cover and spine.*

*K.J. “It’s way better than calling it ‘the something trio,’” Jarrett insists. “It’s passé. It’s three master musicians.” (Adler 2008: <http://bit.ly/1fyhK1i>)*

*“It’s not a pianist, bassist and drummer,” he muses. “It’s three musicians who hear the music as a linear and harmonic process. But linear without the harmony is cool. So that means I can actually be a horn if I want to, and that takes all the weight off this ‘What else can I play?’” (Ibid.)*

Both Powell *and* Evans are among Jarrett’s principal influences. With specific regard to democratic tendency within the trio format, Jarrett’s first “Standards” Trio offering proves to move beyond that of Evans in that a higher percentage of creative space is devoted to bassist Peacock and drummer DeJohnette. However, Jarrett actually alludes to his tendency toward artistic despotism in an interview with Ted Rosenthal that appeared in the January-February 1997 issue of *Downbeat Magazine*. Here Jarrett describes his relationship with “Standards” Trio band mates Peacock and DeJonette and their approach to playing. He surmises that Peacock and DeJohnette may interpret “his thing”, that is, his uniquely characteristic use of extended vamps, as less than a purely democratic platform from which to collectively produce their art. His use of the word “victimize” implies that as he says ‘in a way’, he holds them hostage – a far cry from Evans’s mission to create an egalitarian setting.

*TR: The trio seems to have two distinct musical approaches. The chief one being the standards played, and the other category, if you will, seems to be the improvised, extended, often very static vamp type of tunes. I was curious how that came to be?*

*KJ: Well I think that's my thing. I think if there's anything that came from the solo (approach) and from my personal point of view, it's those things. In a way, I victimize Gary and Jack every time that happens because I'm sure they wonder sometimes what it is I'm doing and what they should do. (Rosenthal 1996: <http://www.tedrosenthal.com/tr-kj.htm>)*

However, in that same interview, Jarrett talks about the development of the “Standards” Trio from 1983 to 1997, and their increasing focus on spontaneity rather than on pre-conceived arrangements, which inherently promotes a democratic forum:

*“TR: How would you say the trio has changed over, it's been almost 14 years now?”*

*KJ: Every year is a different kind of change. The most recent change in the music on tour is that we seem to be even less interested in arrangements than we ever were. I mean we're even less interested in any uniqueness of the exterior and just get into the s--- every time." (Ibid.)*

Relative to the manifestation of the level of democratization, the Keith Jarrett “Standards” Trio went on to surpass that of Evans – but not based on the number and/or the order of solo opportunities alone. As much as Evans purported that he detested the notion of being a dictator (as documented in his interview with Marian McPartland on *Piano Jazz* (NPR 1978: <http://n.pr/1JasgXi>)), and as generous as he was with sharing each and every moment with his colleagues, his predisposition to perpetually adhere to preconceived arrangements *was* dictatorial to a certain extent. Contrarily to Evans, Jarrett fostered an absolute extemporaneous paradigm in which he and his colleagues thrived. In the musical dialogue among the synergetic Jarrett threesome, this leader championed limitless artistic freedom.



**Chapter Two**  
**JAZZ PIANO STYLES PRE-POWELL**

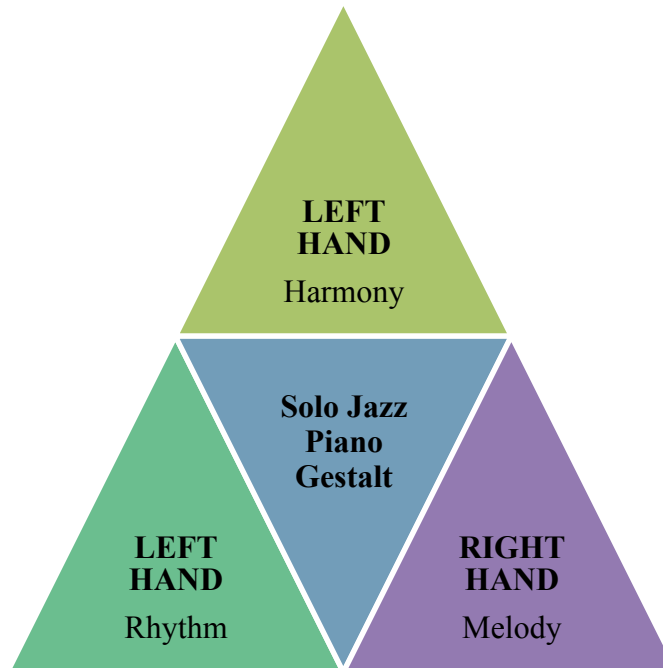


Fig. 2. Division of role in solo jazz piano

Chapter Two serves as an overview of the development of five salient jazz piano styles antecedent to the modern jazz piano style of Bud Powell – piano ragtime, blues, boogie-woogie, stride and swing – touching generally on their West African, European and pan-Caribbean cultural roots. Preceding Powell and the Bebop Era by as much as fifty years – from the late nineteenth through the middle twentieth centuries – the emergence of these distinctive styles inform the development of modern jazz piano styles and techniques, and by extension, the piano-bass-drums-comprised modern jazz piano trio, which is central to this thesis.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this thesis, the 1947 recording “The Bud Powell Trio” serves as the benchmark for the *modern jazz* piano trio format.

As cited in Chapter One, the earliest documentation of a piano-bass-drums-comprised jazz piano trio exists in the form a 78-rpm recording of Swing Era pianist Jess Stacy, bassist Israel Crosby, and drummer Gene Krupa, recorded on November 15, 1935.<sup>2</sup> Produced in the midst of the Swing Era, it is practicable that this historically important pianist and his trio manifest the various stylistic characteristics fundamental to swing style – the style directly preceding modern jazz, and ergo, its most influential informant. Continuing along the same lines then, the question arises: what are the distinguishing characteristics of *swing style* and how did *it* develop? It is through examination of a longer stylistic continuum – beginning with piano ragtime at the turn of the twentieth century, and continuing with blues, boogie-woogie and stride – that the development of swing, and subsequently modern jazz piano style, in the particular context of the modern jazz piano trio, can best be apprehended.

Schuller's words serve as a reminder that jazz styles do not fit into precise periods of time.

*“For jazz, like any other artistic/cultural/social expression, is the product of an organic continuity, an evolutionary process, that appears in many forms and takes on constantly changing characteristics. The history of jazz does not stop or begin at some convenient chronological point and at the observer's pleasure; it does not even always lend itself to a chronological delineation into decade partitions, measured in round numbers, except as the most convenient (and superficial) of time frames.”* (Schuller 1989: 844)

Though it is not possible to absolutely isolate the stylistic characteristics of any one period of jazz from either its contiguous antecedent or descendant, it is feasible to link or attribute the most distinctive stylistic aspects of a given period to another for the purpose of tracing the development of each style chronologically. Thus, for the purpose of this thesis, just the *most* distinguishing aspects of ragtime, blues and boogie-woogie, stride and swing styles are brought to the fore in determining the impact they have had on the development of the

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<sup>2</sup> Retrieved from <http://www.lordisco.com/aboutus.htm>

modern jazz piano-bass-drums trio format. Briefly tracing their respective evolution, each of these styles has made unique seminal contributions to the development of this rhythmically, harmonically and melodically balanced three-person modern jazz enterprise.

Most importantly, piano ragtime, blues, boogie-woogie, stride and swing styles all share an overriding commonality: the left and right hands team up to administer all three rhythmic, harmonic and melodic roles, enabling them to function unaccompanied. For that reason, each of these styles is examined within the context of the solo piano format in this chapter. Evidence shows that while each style manifests individual rhythmic, harmonic and melodic characteristics, the division of rhythmic and harmonic roles played by the pianist's left hand in the low and middle registers, and the melodic role played by the right hand in the middle and high register, remains fundamentally unchanged – that is, until the arrival of bebop innovator, Powell. The single harmonic role played by Powell's left hand completely breaks with the Swing Era pianist's left hand's dual rhythmic and harmonic conventions. Powell's revolutionary approach to rhythmic, harmonic and melodic division of role within the scope of the piano creates a ripple effect that impacts the membership in his various trios as well as all jazz pianists to come.

It was well known that Powell thrived on being the center of attention at his performances (as will be addressed in Chapter Four), so it is somewhat ironic that it was in big part his own revolutionary style that facilitated the individual self-expression that blossomed among *all* of the members of his various trios – a style which inadvertently resulted in diverting attention *away* from himself. Powell created a new democratic paradigm – a model that has held on within the modern jazz piano trio tradition ever since. To wit, he pared down his predecessors' left-hand rhythmic and harmonic stride- or ostinato-influenced patterns to a single harmonic *response-based* role, utilizing root-seventh- and root-third- comprised “shell” voicings – a technique that became known as “comping.”<sup>3</sup> Powell's less-is-more response-based approach to accompaniment was key to the

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<sup>3</sup> Some jazz pianists today continue to utilize this approach.

democratization that surfaced within the broader context of the modern piano-bass-drums jazz piano trio.

The transition from stride-influenced left-hand patterns to response-based “comping” that originated with Powell opened up a whole new world for the rhythm section, impacting the individual players (the parts) as well as the group (the whole) alike. All three instrumentalists – the pianist, bassist and drummer – gained a newfound freedom: an opportunity to expand their roles by “entering the melodic realm” (Schuller 1989: 226) (as was covered in Chapter One), giving them additional opportunities for individual expression via the improvised solo. In the name of promoting the common good – the collective artistic objective – members of the modern jazz trio pooled their *individual* artistic resources, elevating the artistic level of the *collective* to new heights.

Before examining the characteristic traits of each of these five pre-Bebop Era piano styles, it is important to acknowledge the inherent self-sufficiency of the piano itself – apart from any specific style of music – to gain an understanding and appreciation of this instrument’s innate potential and how that has factored into the role it has played in the context of jazz piano – in either a solo or an ensemble setting. Lyons comments on the comprehensive capability of the piano:

*“Most important, the pianist has at his fingertips all the elements of complete musical expression: rhythm, melody, and harmony.” “For jazz musicians the piano’s self-sufficiency has been one of its major assets, for it allows them to study, experiment, and perform alone.”*(Lyons 1983: 16)

In a long and detailed diatribe debunking the ‘trumpet-style’ approach to soloing attributed to pianist Earl “Fatha” Hines, Schuller, at the same time (and probably unintentionally), identifies an extensive list of intrinsic capabilities of the piano as an independent entity which include “its capacity for multiple sounds (unlike the trumpet’s single notes), produced by the fingers (not air); its capacity to embrace simultaneously melody, rhythm,

dynamics, and harmony; its quasi-percussive qualities; and its ability to render both homophonic and polyphonic structures.” (Schuller 1989: 266)

In “Jazz: Hot and Hybrid” author Winthrop Sargeant touts the importance of the piano in terms of its inherent self-sufficiency in both solo and ensemble settings, dating from the Ragtime Era in the 1890s to 1975 (1975 being the date of the latest copyright of his book).

*“The piano, today, ranks as the most important instrument used in jazz. It is the only one capable of giving a complete jazz performance unassisted, and jazz is practically never heard nowadays without it. Its ascendancy as an important solo constituent of the jazz band apparently dates from the late 1920’s and 30’s, when pianist band leaders like Duke Ellington and Fats Waller became prominent. But it was used, and even sometimes exploited, in ragtime bands of the 1890’s.”*  
(Sargeant 1975: 222)

Solo pianists have the unique advantage of simultaneously commanding absolute rhythmic, melodic and harmonic freedom. Art Tatum, known as “the godfather of solo jazz piano” (Doerschuk 2001: 66), preferred the solo format above the ensemble format for two reasons: first, he wanted to prove to his competition that his left hand was a formidable artistic contender; and second, he felt a band to be restrictive, as he expresses in a December 5, 1949 article “Music: Solo Man” in *Time Magazine*:

*“Toledo-born Art Tatum played his first professional engagement at 16 as a dance-band pianist. Two years later he left the band to go on his own as a soloist.*

*‘The other boys used to razz me,’ he says. ‘They said I had no left hand, so I made up my mind to show ‘em.’*

*“Tatum is still sensitive about criticism of his bass, but can claim, with the enthusiastic approval of his fans, that he does more with his left hand than most pianists do with both. Although one of his biggest-selling records was made with a band (Wee Baby Blues with Blues Singer Joe Turner), Tatum’s fame has come from his solo work.” ‘A band hampers me. I hafta watch out for them.’ “ (Time Magazine December 5, 1949: 56; also Doerschuk 2001: 61).*

Along with Tatum's penchant for the solo piano format, this quote also serves as evidence of the importance he, along with the "other boys" (most likely a reference to players whose opinions he respected), placed on the role the left hand in particular played in the solo piano format.

The modern piano's seven-and-a-quarter-octave-range allows a pianist to contemporaneously articulate the most sophisticated rhythmic, melodic and harmonic maneuvers in either solo or ensemble contexts. However, Feather contends that the freedom Tatum and other pianists experienced in the *solo* piano setting came at a considerable expense. (Keyboard 1984: 34) Tatum's and other solo pianists' self-sufficiency brought with it a self-imposed isolation from other musicians with whom musical exchanges could conceivably serve as important sources for inspiration. Solo pianists are beholden to producing the gamut of rhythmic, melodic and harmonic considerations without respite, which impacts the degree of implication they can employ within each of these areas. Arguably, the pianist in the piano-bass-drums trio format is afforded more options to experiment than is a solo pianist based on the wide ranging support provided by the bassist and drummer (as will be discussed in the succeeding chapters).

Each of the five pre-Bebop Era jazz piano styles examined in this chapter utilizes the full potential of the instrument – the low, middle and high registers, and everything in between. Facilitating one hundred percent self-sufficiency in a solo setting, these styles have the capability to address rhythmic, melodic and harmonic aspects equivalent to an entire orchestra. In fact, in describing the variations pianist Jelly Roll Morton (b. 1890; d. 1941) incorporated into his left and right hand technique, Dapogny believes that Morton himself *was* in fact of that mindset – that is, that both hands together took on an orchestral-like approach – the left hand articulating the rhythmic and harmonic roles, and the right hand, the melodic role.

*“The left-hand variations reflected Morton’s belief that jazz piano must be orchestral in conception. Accordingly, the left hand could be purely rhythmic-harmonic in the commonest sort of stridelike use (most like a band’s rhythm section), could play figures which recall New Orleans-style trombone or bass playing, or could become the lowest voice in a chordal segment.”* (Dapogny 1982: 12)

*“The variety of ways in which Morton used his right hand was also in keeping with his idea of orchestral style piano. This is true, not only because of the particular devices he used (most of which are used by other jazz pianists as well), but also because of the orderly way in which he used them to define, by their textural contrasts, choruses or parts of choruses. Sometimes he used his right hand to play sharply articulated chords, often widely spaced and dissonant, but overall his right hand style was very linear; that is, it almost always projected sing-able melodic lines.”* (Dapogny 1982: 12)

In a solo piano context, there is naturally no competition for individual self-expression. Turning then to division of role, what specific rhythmic, harmonic and melodic roles do the left and right hands (the parts) play in accomplishing the collective artistic objective (the whole) in the solo piano context? A sufficient body of pre-Powell solo piano repertoire exists to prove that two hands have the capability of administering all three (rhythmic, harmonic and melodic) roles, which explains why each of these styles is in fact so conducive to the solo piano setting. But, as Schuller notes, as typical as the solo piano format is within the “classical” (the writer’s quotes) music field, “even today” (Schuller 1968: 170), the solo jazz piano format, possibly because of its overwhelming simultaneous responsibility to address rhythm, harmony and melody, is the exception not the rule. Schuller cites that taking on this triple challenge with only two hands serves to explain the emergence of “many piano-bass-drums trios in jazz.” (Ibid.)<sup>4</sup>

*“Jazz being primarily an instrumental ensemble music, few people realize that the unaccompanied solo piano as it exists in the classical field is an extreme rarity in jazz; and jazz pianists who qualify in this category are, even today, limited to a select few... A jazz pianist who is going to perform unaccompanied must in effect*

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<sup>4</sup> Given that the earliest documented recording of a piano-bass-drums-comprised jazz piano trio was made in 1935, in the middle of the Swing Era, Schuller is referring to the “many piano-bass-drums trios in jazz” (Ibid.) that existed in from 1935 to 1968, the copyright of his book, *Early Jazz*.

*fulfill three functions simultaneously: he must play a melody or some form of a leading line; he must provide an underlying harmony; and he must also be his own rhythm section and bass line. This is not as easy as it may sound, and it explains why there always have been many piano-bass-drums trios in jazz.” (Schuller 1968: 170)*

Jazz pianist, educator and critic John Mehegan attributes the demise of the solo jazz piano format to the “demise of swing-bass” (Mehegan 1964: 14) played in the left hand, pointing to the genius of Powell as *the* sole instigator.

*“The demise of swing-bass also spelled the end of solo piano as an exuberant and flourishing art. It would seem in armchair retrospect that solo jazz piano might have endured this transition by adapting new measures which could have insured the continuation of such a vital adjunct of jazz. The decision to reduce the role of jazz piano to a rhythm section component was made by Bud Powell, and we must assume his genius inexorably led him to this inevitable and true conclusion.” (Mehegan 1964: 14)*

Bearing this in mind, just how do two hands manage to administer all three (rhythmic, harmonic and melodic) roles to create complete self-sufficiency in the solo piano setting? In discussing this challenge, Schuller describes stride style’s left-hand technique that was handed down by piano ragtime as the “earliest compromise answer” as illustrated in bars twenty-five and twenty-six in the left hand of stride master James P. Johnson’s “Carolina Shout” (Fig. 2.1) below.<sup>5</sup>

*“The jazz pianist, given two hands and the rather rigorous allocation of the three functions, must perforce combine all three or compromise in some way. The left-hand stride piano brought into jazz from ragtime was the earliest compromise answer.” (Schuller 1968: 171)*

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<sup>5</sup> Carolina Shout  
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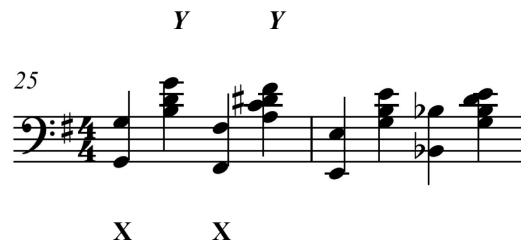


Fig. 2.1 The left-hand pattern in James P. Johnson's "Carolina Shout"

*"This left-hand technique produced the bass roots (X in the musical example), the harmony (Y), and both combined, providing the rhythmic structure against which the right hand could now play, embellish, and improvise."* (Schuller 1968: 171)

Here, Schuller clearly correlates the rhythmic and harmonic roles with the left hand and the melodic role with the right hand. He adds that "Obviously a trio which uses bass and drums relieves the pianist of having to plunk out the chord roots and to line out the rhythmic beat." (Schuller 1968: 171) Schuller's implication is that in the modern jazz piano-bass-drums trio setting, the bassist and drummer shoulder the lion's share of the rhythmic and harmonic responsibilities previously taken by the pianist's left hand in the solo setting.

In *Jazz Rhythm and the Improvised Line*, John Mehegan establishes a correlation between rhythmic values and rhythmic, harmonic and melodic functionalities, applicable to any style in any setting – solo or ensemble. This rhythmic algorithm, one which Mehegan believes is one of the principal characteristics distinguishing jazz from other styles of music, serves as a guide to rhythmic, harmonic and melodic functionality which can be directly linked to the division of role in the hands in the solo piano setting (and thusly, to each instrument in the piano trio setting). Mehegan describes this rhythmic hierarchy as "a form of florid counterpoint involving three levels of time. Each level represents one of the three basic elements of all music: melodic time; harmonic time; and rhythmic time." (Mehegan 1962: 11) The superimposition of a three-tiered system of rhythmic values that

corresponds to the three elements of music – rhythm, harmony and melody – creates a constant tension that Mehegan espouses is unique to jazz.<sup>6</sup>

*“Jazz deals almost exclusively with a specific relationship of time values which immediately distinguishes it from a large segment of other musical forms. This specific relationship of time values can best be expressed through their application to melody, harmony, and rhythm.”*

*As a general statement, it can be said that all jazz from 1900 to the present day has employed the following ratio of time values:*

- 1. A quarter-note pulse, the rhythmic unit, representing the rhythmic center of gravity of any jazz performance.*
- 2. A slower set of time values representing the harmonic unit (half-note).*
- 3. A quicker set of time values representing the melodic unit (eighth-note).”*  
(Mehegan 1962: 17)

Mehegan’s rhythmic hierarchy correlates with the rhythmic, harmonic and melodic roles of each hand in the context of each of these five pre-Powell solo piano styles in this chapter, and is applied again to the rhythmic, harmonic and melodic roles of each instrument in the context of the pre-Bebop Era jazz piano trio (as is discussed in more depth in Chapter Three).

In each of these five piano styles beginning with piano ragtime, each hand assumes a distinct role in accomplishing the collective rhythmic, harmonic and melodic objectives that aligns with Mehegan’s rhythmic hierarchy. That is, *generally*, in all five styles, the low-register bass notes together with the mid-range chords are played by the left hand and constitute the *rhythmic unit* at either the eighth note level in 2/4 meter, or the quarter note level in 4/4 meter, and the *harmonic unit* at either the quarter note level in 2/4 meter, or the half note level in 4/4 meter. The high-register notes are played by the right hand and

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<sup>6</sup> The standard order of the three elements of music – rhythm, melody and harmony – has been modified to rhythm, harmony and melody in this thesis for the purpose of correlating the roles of the two hands with the three registers of the piano: low (rhythmic role); mid (harmonic role); and high (melodic role) from left to right.

constitute the *melodic unit* at either the sixteenth note level in 2/4 meter, or the eighth note level in 4/4 meter.

As turn-of-the-century piano ragtime transitioned into to what became known as jazz in the late 1910s, variations to this particular division of role began to appear which were indicative of the metamorphosis the left hand in particular makes – from its initial strict obligation to both rhythmic and harmonic roles in the low and mid-registers in the pre-Bebop Era solo and ensemble settings, to one of a primarily harmonic role in just the mid-register in the trio setting at the outset of the Bebop Era. The right hand remained committed to playing a melodic role and still does to this day.

To make a sweeping generality, the various and distinctly different pre-jazz and jazz piano styles – from piano ragtime to swing – share two commonalities: first, the left and right hands assume the *same* rhythmic and harmonic, and melodic roles respectively; and second, together, the hands are capable of creating rhythmic, harmonic and melodic self-sufficiency necessary to function independently, without any support from additional rhythm section players. The pre-Powell jazz pianist's left hand's rhythmic and harmonic roles in either a solo or ensemble setting align with the rhythmic and harmonic roles played by a drummer and bassist in a modern jazz piano trio setting; again, the right hand's melodic role remains constant across all styles.

As discussed in Chapter One, in the same way that all members within the Swing Era rhythm section moved upward in register (seeking Schuller's "melodic realm") as a means to individual creative self-expression, the pre-Bebop Era pianist's left hand in both solo and ensemble settings also began to migrate upward in register – a transition that could be interpreted as the left hand's search for Schuller's "melodic realm" or individual expression. In contrast to its previous rigid and predictable rhythmic and harmonic roles, this shift precipitates more step-wise bass patterns and figures, melodic embellishment, and

rhythmic and harmonic unpredictability, giving the left hand greater prominence and relevance to the moment.

From late nineteenth and early twentieth century piano ragtime to mid-forties modern jazz piano, activity in the pianist's left hand became progressively sparse and unpredictable; it also continued to move upward in register as solo jazz pianists sought the sanctuary of the trio setting. The swing pianist's left hand's incessant commitment to upholding the rhythmic and harmonic responsibilities, which created glaring redundancy with the bassist and drummer in the jazz piano trio setting, was gradually replaced by spontaneous response-based rather than predictable stride-influenced rhythmic patterns. At the inception of the Bebop Era, the pianist's left hand eventually abandons its dual low- and mid-register rhythmic and harmonic roles for a single mid-register harmonic role. As Gunther Schuller notes, the solo pianist's challenge to cover all three roles with just two hands could very well explain the appearance of so many piano-bass-drums trios whose bassists and drummers handily pick up the rhythmic and harmonic responsibilities. (Schuller 1968: 170) To summarize, the pre-Powell jazz pianist's left hand's dual rhythmic and harmonic roles in the low- and mid-registers – from piano ragtime through the Swing Era– makes a dramatic transition to a primarily single mid-register-placed harmonic role in the modern jazz pianist's left hand.

For the purpose of this thesis, division of role is viewed as a *technical phenomenon* rather than a *stylist* concept – although the two are mutually inclusive. That is, the specific rhythmic, harmonic and melodic roles assigned to each hand in the aforementioned early twentieth century *solo* jazz piano styles – from piano ragtime to swing – serve both as their general structural underpinning and, by extension, factor into their unique stylistic traits. With regard to the development of role per se, soon after piano ragtime became popular, the left hand began undergoing an important *technical* metamorphosis: it began a gradual ascension from the low and mid-registers to the mid-register, discarding its dual rhythmic (low bass notes on the first and third beats) and harmonic (mid-register closed position

chords on the second and fourth beats) roles for a single harmonic role (mid-register response-based “comping”) – a role that the left hand has continued to play from the Bebop Era on.

Each of the aforementioned jazz piano styles are scrutinized, but with the primary objective of tracing the transition that the left hand in particular undertook – from its dual role in the context of the self-sufficient solo jazz piano setting to its single role in the context of the collective membership-dependent modern jazz piano trio setting. (Again, the melodic role of the right hand remained unchanged.)

Below, the illustration on the left depicts two hands per all three (rhythmic, harmonic and melodic) roles in the context of piano ragtime (solo piano); the illustration on the right depicts all three instruments in the context of the modern jazz piano trio, illustrating the dramatic transformation the left hand made – from its rhythmic and harmonic roles in piano ragtime, to its single harmonic role in the modern jazz piano trio. All three (rhythmic, harmonic and melodic) roles allocated to a pianist in the solo setting, are distributed among a pianist, bassist and drummer in the trio setting. The illustration clearly points out the distribution of responsibilities. In a very general sense, the drummer is assigned to just one role – the rhythmic role; the pianist is assigned to the harmonic and melodic roles; but it is the bassist, assigned to all three rhythmic, harmonic and melodic roles, who has the greatest responsibility. Keeping in mind that these represent only the very broadest of assignments, this illustration points out that in the trio setting, the brunt of the heavy lifting falls onto the shoulders of the bassist.

Again, the transition that pianists from Powell-on made in renouncing the dual rhythmic and harmonic roles played by the left hand in the solo piano setting, for a single harmonic role in what becomes known as “comping” in the ensemble setting, contributed to facilitating flexibility with division of role and by extension, greater individual expression among the trio membership at-large – because all members now had the artistic room to do

so. It goes without saying that the overall rhythmic, harmonic and melody complexity soared to new levels as a result of this transition (as discussed in greater detail in the succeeding chapters). Schuller substantiates the importance of this transition, alleging, “the whole development of jazz piano reflected a gradual realignment and liberation of the three functions” (rhythm, melody and harmony). (Schuller 1968: 171)

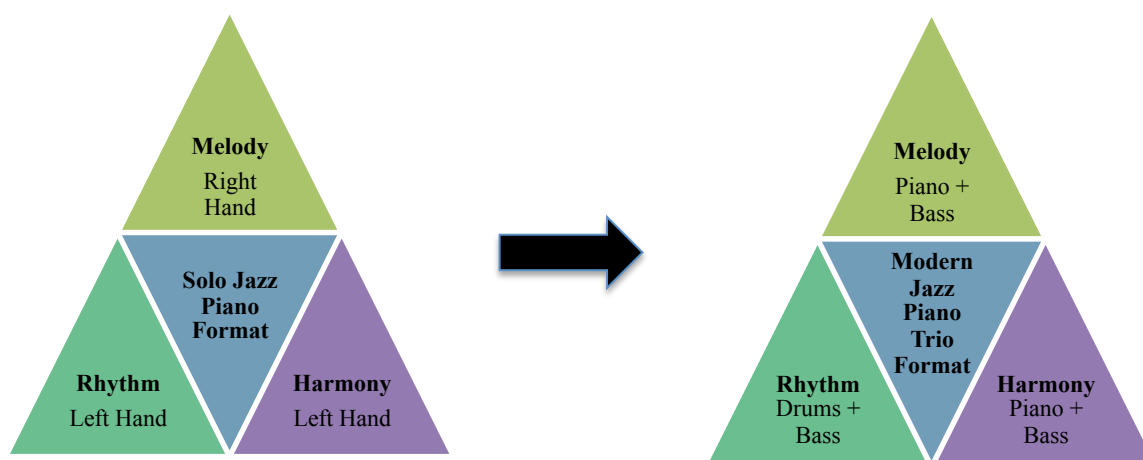


Fig. 2.2 Rhythmic, harmonic and melodic division of role in the context of solo jazz piano; rhythmic, harmonic and melodic division of role in the context of the modern jazz piano trio

While the self-sufficiency of piano ragtime, blues, boogie-woogie, stride and swing styles makes them absolutely conducive to the solo piano setting, their imposition in the context of an ensemble – in particular, the pre-Bebop Era jazz piano trio (covered in more detail in the following chapters) – raises some concern. What effect does incorporating these already self-sufficient piano styles into a jazz piano trio setting have on individuality, division of role and the overall artistic outcome (gestalt)?

As evidenced in the 1935 Stacy trio recording, as well as in the other pre-Powell trios covered in this thesis, the integration of a stride-influenced left hand into a setting with two other rhythm section players created an unmistakable rhythmic and harmonic superfluity, which subsequently indirectly obstructed the proliferation of individuality within the unit.

That is, the infusion of the inherently self-sufficient solo piano styles in the trio setting simply leaves the bassist and guitarist/drummer little room for individual self-expression via the improvised solo (let alone any transparency with respect to their individual rhythmic or harmonic contributions). Furthermore, the dual roles (rhythmic and harmonic) played by the pianist's left hand constitute an imposition, creating a too-many-cooks-in-the-kitchen conundrum in the trio setting. The rhythmic and harmonic redundancy created among the three instruments serves to do no more than blur the overall artistic presentation. It is this rhythmic and harmonic overabundance that serves as the motivating force behind the transition that the modern jazz pianist's left hand makes to response-based "comping" patterns as exemplified by Powell and his successors.

## **2.1 West African, European and Pan-Caribbean Musical Influences**

The following survey examines the distinguishing rhythmic, harmonic and melodic characteristics of each of these pre-Bebop Era piano styles from the standpoint of individuality and division of role per the left and right hands for the purpose of better understanding the development of twentieth and twenty-first century jazz piano styles within the particular context of the modern piano-bass-drums jazz piano trio format. To gain an understanding of the development of each of these pre-Powell jazz piano styles, it is critical to examine their fundamental cultural underpinnings. This overview begins with piano ragtime, for it is to this style that this writer believes the succeeding styles owe their largest debt of structural and stylistic gratitude.

The most salient rhythmic, harmonic and melodic characteristics of piano ragtime (and by extension, styles that follow) are a syncretization of musical elements from West Africa, Europe and the pan-Caribbean. Elements from these three geographical areas were brought together under adverse conditions in North America<sup>7</sup> in the early seventeenth century to

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<sup>7</sup> Centered specifically in and around the city of New Orleans, which has become known as "the birthplace of jazz."

create a completely new indigenous American music style, which three centuries later became known as “jazz.”

Referring specifically to African and European influences, Schuller notes that it was only natural that these two radically contrasting cultures came together in America given this country’s vision. “It seems in retrospect almost inevitable that America, the great ethnic melting pot, would procreate a music compounded of African rhythmic, formal sonoric, and expressive elements and European rhythmic and harmonic practices.” (Schuller 1968: 3)

In “Jazz Theory – An Overview” in the Annual review of Jazz Studies 8, Martin contends that it is conceivable that the “tension” between European derived form and harmony and African derived rhythm and melody is seminal to understanding the underpinning of jazz. Indeed, the tension between the form and harmony of the European tradition and the linear rhythmic focus of African music was perhaps a key to the foundation of jazz.”” (Martin 1996: 6-7)

But pan-Caribbean elements are also clearly discernable in works of Joplin (piano ragtime), Morton (blues) and Johnson (stride) and Profit (swing) – elements that have continued to play a major role in jazz to this day. Raeburn states “Despite their relative absence as protagonists in most discussions of jazz origins, musicians of Hispanic and Latino heritage contributed to the early development of jazz in important ways.” (Cerchiari, Cugny and Kerschbaumer 2012: Kindle Locations 835-836).

Again referring only to African and European influences, Schuller notes that although some jazz historians have been inclined to simply attribute the rhythmic, harmonic and melodic aspects of jazz to an either/or situation, i.e., – to either that of African *or* European origin – in fact, jazz is a “hybrid that evolved through many stages of cross-fertilization of over a period of more than a century.” (Schuller 1968: 4) Kouwenhoven’s view is analogous to putting all of the subset styles of jazz together into a sort of Venn diagram



illustrating that among the three elements of music, the one shared by all is a particular rhythm.

*“There is no definition of jazz, academic or otherwise, which does not acknowledge that its essential ingredient is a particular kind of rhythm. Improvisation is also frequently mentioned as an essential; but even if it were true that jazz always involves improvisation, that would not distinguish it from a good deal of Western European music of the past. It is the distinctive rhythm which differentiates all types of jazz from all other music and which gives to all of its types a basic family resemblance.” (O’Meally 1998: 128)*

Kouwenhoven expresses his difficulty with defining “the distinctive rhythm which differentiates all types of jazz from all other music” citing Winthrop Sargeant’s viewpoint on the particular European- and African-derived rhythmic characteristics as “the product of two superimposed devices: syncopation and polyrhythm, both of which have the effect of constantly upsetting rhythmical expectations.” (Kouwenhoven 1956: Harper’s magazine; also O’Meally 1998: 128)

*“It has been pointed out by writers on the subject that jazz rhythm is characterized by two distinct structural devices which are uncommon, or less common, in other types of music. These are: (1) simple syncopation and (2) the peculiar superimposition of conflicting rhythms known as “secondary rag” or “polyrhythm”. The first of these has been traced, rightly or wrongly, to European sources, and is supposed to be based on an old and well-known formula of classical composition. It is commonly thought to have been the basis of ragtime as distinct from jazz, the latter type of music involving polyrhythm as well as syncopation. The second device – polyrhythm – has been heralded as the true Negro contribution, and as the fundamental and distinguishing element of jazz rhythm.” (Sargeant 1975: 55)*

An overview of the West African, European and the pan-Caribbean influences manifested in piano ragtime, blues, boogie-woogie, stride and swing styles follows.

West African Influences – Referring specifically to African influences in early jazz, composer and musicologist Olly Wilson adds his perspective on traits inherent in African and, by extension, Afro-American music in “Black Music as an Art Form,” a paper read at

the National Conference on Black Music Research in March 1982. His first of a list of six “conceptual approaches to the process of making music” is consistent with Kouwenhoven’s and Sargeant’s views on the inherent rhythmic characteristics of Afro-American music. Wilson states: “A thorough discussion of all of the African and, by extension, Afro-American, conceptual approaches to the process of making music is out of the purview of this paper, but a brief consideration of a few such concepts should be instructive. Among these are predilections for conceiving music in such a way that the following occur:

1. *The approach to the organization of rhythm is based on the principle of rhythmic and implied metrical contrast. There is a tendency to create musical structures in which rhythmic clash or disagreement of accents is the idea, cross-rhythm and metrical ambiguity are the accepted and expected norm.*
2. *There is a tendency to approach singing or the playing of any instrument in a percussive manner; a manner in which qualitative stress accents are frequently used.*
3. *There is a tendency to create musical forms in which antiphonal or call-and-response musical structures abound {and} exist on a number of different architectonic levels.*
4. *There is a tendency to create a high density of musical events within a relatively short musical time frame – a tendency to fill up all of the musical space.*
5. *There is a common approach to music making in which a kaleidoscopic range of dramatically contrasting qualities of sound (timbre) in both vocal and instrumental music is sought after. This explains the common usage of a broad continuum of vocal sounds from speech to song. ...*
6. *There is a tendency to incorporate physical body motion as an integral part of the music-making process.” (O’Meally 1998: 84)*

With the exception of number six (which is out of the purview of this thesis), all of the traits in Wilson’s list – rhythmic diversification, percussive articulation, call-and-response phrasing, consistent, tightly-packed activity, and a multiplicity of timbres – are manifestations of the pre-Powell piano styles covered in this chapter as well as jazz generally. These African-specific traits are referenced throughout this thesis.

As an important but indirectly relevant parenthesis, adding to this list of specific characteristics of Afro-American music, Wilson goes on further to discuss what he

believes to be two different *levels* of “Black” music as art as it exists in the United States – one with roots in the West African tradition, and the other with roots in the European tradition:

*“On one level, it exists as part of the “basic” or folk African-American musical tradition, a tradition which derives most of its concepts and values from West African musical traditions although it incorporates some important aspects of western music practice. In this tradition, the artistic aspect of the music is inextricably associated with its functional role. Hence, its role as art cannot be separated from its utilitarian function. Therefore, any evaluation of this music must be cognizant of its multifaceted nature and consider its efficacy in achieving its function.*

*“On another level, black music may exist as a part of a second musical tradition in which Euro-American musical forms are characteristically transformed to become consistent with Afro-American cultural practices. Within the tradition, the music exists clearly as an object of “intrinsic perceptual interest” and thus is compatible with Western concepts of art.” (O’Meally 1998: 99-100)*

Eileen Southern, author of *The Music of Black Americans* discusses the transition that piano ragtime, for example, made from its initial role as an improvised functional music to its role as notated art music at the turn of the century.

*“In December 1897 Thomas Turpin published Harlem Rag, the first piano rag published by an African American. At last black composers were involved in writing down the music they had been playing for their own people for many years. With the entrance of ragtime into mainstream music, an improvisational music would be transformed into a notated music; a functional music, intended for dancing and entertainment, into a concert music intended for listening; a folk-style music, into the music of the individual composer, upon which he stamped his unique personality. Scott Joplin represented the peak of the tradition, earning for himself the title “King of Ragtime.” (Southern 1997: 320)*

Therefore, taking Southern’s perspective regarding piano ragtime into consideration, Wilson’s statements regarding Black music as art, could be revised to say that “the artistic aspect of ragtime is not inextricably associated with a functional role; rather it exists

clearly as an object of ‘intrinsic perceptual interest’, and thereby is compatible with Western concepts of art.”

European Influences – The most important European-originated contributions to early jazz fall within the particular areas of rhythm, instrumentation, form and harmony. These influences originated in both European songs and marches; but it was the march, especially, that made an overwhelmingly impact on ragtime and its successor jazz styles. World-renowned scholar on ragtime and its foremost emissary Scott Joplin, Edward Berlin notes the remarkable influence the march had on jazz’s immediate progenitor, ragtime.

*“When early rags are compared with marches of the same and immediately preceding years, the parallels are so close that significant distinctions can be found in only two areas: meter and rhythm. Marches were written in meters of C, 2/4, and 6/8; rags were written in all of these except 6/8. The normal rhythm of marches excludes the tied and untied syncopations of ragtime; if these syncopations are used, the march becomes a rag.” (Berlin 2002: 100)*

The march, with its devotion to a constant pulse, has for centuries served to guide soldiers marching in step in a military unit. In the last decade of the nineteenth century however, the march also became a popular dance form known as the *two-step*. Berlin cites that even John Philip Sousa’s military focused “The Washington Post March” dating back to 1889 was “used for dance and became known as the “Washington Post Two Step.” (Berlin 1994: 40) Given the dual function of the march, it is not surprising that this form is less concerned with developing melodic and harmonic considerations than establishing precise rhythmic consistency.

Remarkably, with origins in the European march, the rhythmic and harmonic roles shouldered by the left hand in late nineteenth and early twentieth century piano ragtime (exemplified by the piano ragtime triumvirate Scott Joplin, Joe Lamb and James Scott among others (Berlin 2002: 1)) continued to exist in jazz piano styles in both solo as well as ensemble settings up until Powell as a rule, and thereafter, becoming progressively an

exception. Concurring with Berlin and noting the challenge a solo pianist has in administering three radically disparate roles with just two hands, Schuller contends that the attention that the early jazz pianist's ragtime-originated left hand pattern consistently devotes to the pulse stems from the influence of the march: "It was also a translation into pianistic terms of the down-beat after-beat rhythms of march music." (Schuller 1968: 171)

Next, addressing instrumentation, the instruments of the rhythm section, including the piano, double bass, drum set and guitar/banjo (as well as melodic instruments, including the trumpet, clarinet and trombone) are all of European descent.<sup>8</sup>

Addressing form, the European-originated march also brought with it the concept of a written rather than an improvised musical form. The march comprises structurally proportional sections of eight-, sixteen- and thirty-two bar lengths – structures called strains, which are found in piano ragtime (as well as in its successor, stride). Martin and Waters bring another perspective on the organization of African and European roots of early jazz. Homologous to Mehegan's rhythmical hierarchy that corresponds to rhythmic, harmonic and melodic division of role (as discussed above), and also consistent with Wilson's list of African traits, Martin and Waters have devised a rhythmical hierarchy that corresponds to form as "large-scale rhythm," citing three successively bigger-picture levels that incorporate both African and European influences on early jazz: the level of note-to-note; the level of meter and phrase; and lastly the level of form.

1. *"At the note-to-note level, we hear clear African influences: accents fall in unexpected places, the music shows syncopated movement, and unusual vocal and instrumental timbres are evident.*

2. *At the level of meter and phrase, we hear both European and African tendencies. The harmonic flow is European in origin, yet the syncopation, cross- rhythms, and call-and-response forms are largely of African origins.*

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<sup>8</sup> The European brass marching bands served as the model for the early jazz bands.

3. Finally, at the level of form, the European influence is strongest in such features as sectional structure, tonality and instrumentation.” (Martin and Waters 2002: 8)

And lastly, focusing on the harmonic element, early jazz incorporated European harmony with origins in European songs and marches. The triad, which serves as the basic unit of European harmony, is employed into harmonic progressions that convey a clear sense of tonality as is evidenced in pre- and early jazz. With the exception of the ever-present dominant seventh chord, the more harmonically complex seventh chord eventually replaced the triad as the basic unit of harmony in jazz from the Swing Era on.

The Pan-Caribbean Connection – The syncopated left-hand pattern in Jelly Roll Morton’s earliest composition “New Orleans Blues”<sup>9</sup> exemplifies a radical rhythmic divergence from the primarily un-syncopated European march-derived left-hand obligation characteristic of early twentieth century ragtime. In “Struggling to Define a Nation,” Charles Hiroshi Garrett focuses on Morton’s work in particular to make the point that the influences on the development of jazz radiate well beyond their conventional African and European ascriptions. He contends, “Morton’s incorporation of Latin and Caribbean musical influences implies that the international roots of jazz are more complex than the barebones equation involving Europe and Africa would suggest.” (Garrett 2008: 50)

Two pan-Caribbean rhythmic patterns popularized in Cuba played a significant role in the development of early jazz based on its close proximity to New Orleans: *tresillo* and *habanera*.<sup>10</sup> Both of these patterns are based on an underlying 3 + 3 + 2 subdivision. *Tresillo* is a syncopated pattern; *habanera* is an un-syncopated pattern (Fig. 2.3). Berlin cites that dance music of the Caribbean and South America are possible sources of ragtime rhythm in particular, pieces “variously referred to as danzas, habaneras, and tangos”

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<sup>9</sup> Also known as “New Orleans Joys.” According to Morton’s recorded conversation with Alan Lomax, “New Orleans Blues” was recorded in 1902. According to Morton’s letter to Ripley and *Downbeat*, the year of composition was 1905. (Dapogny 1982: 25)

<sup>10</sup> New Orleans, Louisiana is the designated birthplace of jazz.

characterized by tresillo and habanera bass patterns under “treble melodic rhythms [which] are often identical to untied and tied rag syncopations.” (Berlin 2002: 115)

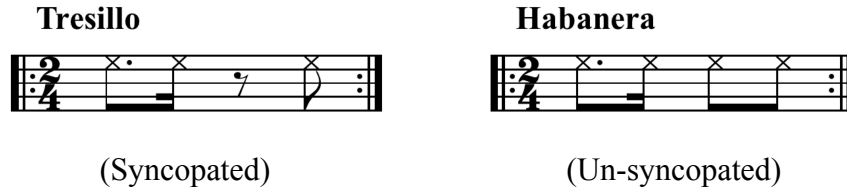


Fig. 2.3 Tresillo and habanera rhythms

Tresillo – The three-note rhythmic figure serves as the most important rhythmic building block of Afro-Caribbean music. “Even today it functions much like a primordial pulse in most popular Caribbean styles - from Haitian *compas* to Jamaican dancehall and Trinidadian *soca*.” (Mauleon via email October 7, 2013).

The *tresillo* pattern, which comprises the first bar of the 3-2 son clave<sup>11</sup>, establishes polyrhythmic implications that appear in much of ragtime as well as jazz styles thereafter. That is, extending the 123-123-12 sub-division beyond the bar line into groups of 123-123-123 repeated over several bars, results in “a composite rhythm consisting of two or more contrasting rhythms” (Peñalosa 2012: 256), creating a polyrhythmic effect. In Fig. 2.5, the 123-123-12 subdivision at the eighth-note level is extended to a 123-123-123 pattern that continues for a total of eight times over three bars before returning to beat one of the fourth bar.

**|123-123-12|3-123-123-1|23-123-123|1**

Bar 1            Bar 2            Bar 3            Bar 4

Fig. 2.5 The superimposition of eight groups of three eighth notes over three bars of 4/4, creating polyrhythm

<sup>11</sup>

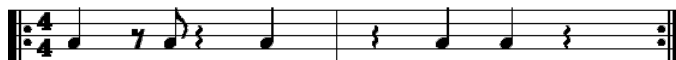


Fig. 2.4 The 3-2 son clave

The repetition of this particular rhythmic grouping (of either eighth notes in 4/4 meter or sixteenth notes in 2/4 meter) forms the basis for the far-reaching concept of “secondary rag” used extensively in ragtime as well as in succeeding styles (as discussed later in this chapter).

Morton’s “New Orleans Blues” employs the *tresillo* pattern in the left hand, consisting of a low bass note on beat one, a mid-register chord on the “and” of beat two and a low bass note or chord on beat four (Fig. 2.6). In an interview with musicologist Alan Lomax, Morton’s reference to the “bass sections” underlines the importance he placed on the left hand: “Of course you got to have these little tinges of Spanish in it, er, in order to play real good jazz. Er, jazz has a foundation that must be very prominent, especially with the bass sections, in order to give a great background. Plus, what’s called riffs today, er, which was known as figures.” (Hill, Richard and Meddings <http://www.doctorjazz.co.uk/locspeech4.html>)



Fig. 2.6 Left-hand tresillo pattern in Morton’s “New Orleans Blues”<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> New Orleans Blues  
 By Ferdinand "Jelly Roll" Morton  
 (c) 1925 (Renewed) EDWIN H. MORRIS & COMPANY, A Division of MPL Music Publishing, Inc.  
 This arrangement (c) 2015 EDWIN H. MORRIS & COMPANY, A Division of MPL Music Publishing, Inc.  
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The *tresillo* pattern created the Spanish “seasoning” that Morton contended differentiated this style from ragtime (and also distinguished himself as the self-proclaimed “originator of jazz” (Schuller 1968: 140) Morton describes the flavor of “New Orleans Blues” in what he maintains “was no doubt one of the earliest blues that was created as a composition — a playable composition — in the city of New Orleans.” He continues: “Er, of course, you may notice the Spanish tinge in it. Er, this has so much to do with the typical jazz idea. If one can’t, er, manage a way to put these tinges of Spanish in these tunes, they’ll never be able to get the right season, I may call it, for jazz music.” (Hill, Richard and Meddings: <http://bit.ly/1L80Xgx>)

Garrett notes the presence of the “3+3+2 pattern, a Latin rhythm known as the *tresillo*, which forms part of a typical clave rhythm” in the final strain of Morton’s 1938 recorded transformation of Joplin’s “Maple Leaf Rag”, citing that this is what Lomax refers to as the “subtle Caribbean beat which throbs in Morton’s music.” (Garrett 2008: 29) David Peñalosa describes the *habanera* as a “composite pattern resulting from joining *tresillo* with the main beats...” (Peñalosa 2012: 41)

The importance of the Caribbean- and Latin American-originated *tresillo* rhythmic cell to the development of the jazz canon cannot be overestimated.<sup>13</sup> It appears in the early jazz compositions of early jazz composers including Morton’s “New Orleans Blues” (1902 or 1905) (as previously noted), James P. Johnson’s “The Charleston” (1924), and Clarence Profit’s “Tropical Nights” (1939) among others. Its presence also permeates the Bebop Era – especially in the work of trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie. The swung version of the dotted-

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<sup>13</sup> In a discussion around the importance of *tresillo* and *habanera* in early jazz, Afro-Caribbean percussionist and scholar John Santos adds that “These same two patterns are the rhythmic backbone of Rhythm & Blues, not coincidentally also born in the ultra-Caribbean city of New Orleans and as such, have played a major role in Rock & Roll and other contemporary music in the US (not to mention their huge role in dance music traditions throughout Latin America and all of the Caribbean islands).” (Santos in an email on April 15, 2015)

quarter-eighth-note rhythmic cell also referred to by piano and guitar teachers as “the Charleston rhythm” functions as the fundamental “comp” rhythm for pianists and guitarists in jazz to this day.

Morton was not the only early jazz composer to incorporate Latin- and Caribbean-influenced elements into his work, (though he may most likely have been the most vocal about doing so). Although stylistically anomalistic for Joplin, the left hand in his 1909 composition (“registered for copyright February 23” (Berlin 1994: location 3418)) “Wall Street Rag” includes the *habanera* rhythm, albeit sparingly (bars one and three) (Fig. 2.7).



Fig. 2.7 The habanera rhythm in Joplin’s “Wall Street Rag” (bars one and three)

“Wall Street Rag” precedes another Joplin composition “Solace. A Mexican Serenade” “registered for copyright April 28, 1909” (Berlin 1994: location 3445), which employs the habanera rhythm throughout (Fig. 2.8). Joplin’s use of this rhythm in the left hand is the exception rather than the rule in his rags, but its unwavering appearance in this composition is evidence of the influence Latin rhythms had on Joplin, not to mention on jazz to come.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>14</sup> In Exercise No. 2 in his “School of Ragtime” Joplin also includes a four-bar exercise that centers on the juxtaposition of a syncopated right-hand melody against a tresillo rhythm left-hand accompaniment. What is puzzling is that given that he seldom used this rhythm (or the habanera rhythm, for that matter) in his rags, there is no mention of any Spanish, Mexican, Caribbean or other “seasoning” in his instructions for playing this exercise. Additionally, he only addresses the technical issues as they relate to the left hand. He writes:

*“This style is rather more difficult, especially for those who are careless with the left hand, and are prone to vamp. The first note should be given the full length of three sixteenths,*

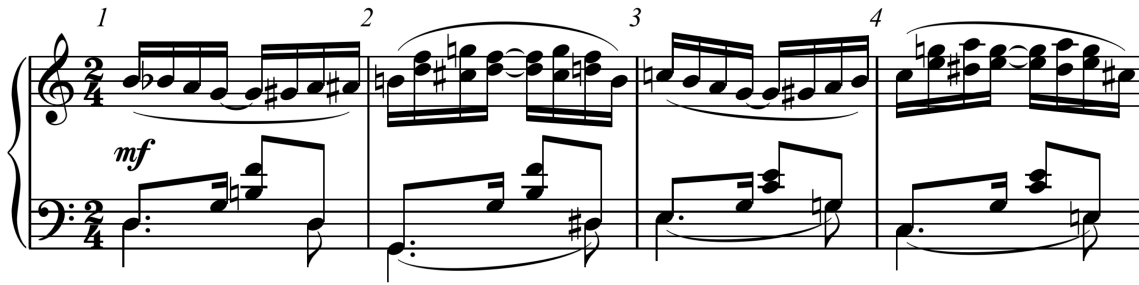


Fig. 2.8 The habanera rhythm in Joplin's "Solace. A Mexican Serenade"

"The similarities between ragtime and Latin-American dance rhythms had long been noted." (Berlin 1994: location 3436) Ragtime pianist Ben Harney associated ragtime with Mexican music as noted in his "Rag Time Instructor" published in 1897.<sup>15 16</sup> Harney writes: "RAG TIME (or Negro Dance Time) originally takes its initiative steps from Spanish music, or rather from Mexico, where it is known under the head and names of Habanara, Danza, Seguidilla." (Garrett 2008: 49-50)

Influenced by a trip to Cuba, W.C. Handy, the ascribed "Father of the Blues," composed the iconic 12-bar blues "St. Louis Blues" (1914) in which he incorporates the *habanera* pattern (bars 1,3, 4, and 5) in the eight-bar introduction (a pattern that he describes as a "tango introduction"). (Handy 1969: 122)

Jazz is a stylistic melting pot that was born in New Orleans at the turn of the twentieth century. Berlin attributes a long and colorful list of West African-, European- and Caribbean-derived sources to the development of its earliest emissary, piano ragtime,

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*and no more. The second note is struck in its proper place and the third note is not stuck but is joined with the second as though they were one note. This treatment is continued to the end of the exercise.*" (G. Schirmer, Inc. 1998: 193)

<sup>15</sup> Ragtime pianist Ben R. Harney published the first rag "You're a Good Old Wagon But You've Done Broke Down," in 1895. "When Harney performed at Tony Pastor's 14<sup>th</sup> Street Theater in New York in 1896, he billed himself as 'the Creator of Ragtime.' He cashed in on his reputation by publishing the *Rag Time Instructor* manual in 1897." (Argyle 2009: 12)

<sup>16</sup> According to Berlin "...the first ragtime instruction manual..." (Berlin 2002: 24-25)

including the march, the cakewalk, black character pieces and patrols, coon songs, Caribbean dance rhythms, cotillions, quadrilles, polkas and schottisches. (Berlin 2002: 99-118) The heterogeneous stylistic influences manifested in piano ragtime which, based on the writer's contention that ragtime is the wellspring of jazz, carry over into blues, boogie-woogie, stride and swing styles to one extent or another as are laid out here.

## 2.2 PIANO RAGTIME

*"In the beginning, there was ragtime."* (Feather 1949: 3)

To understand the development of modern jazz piano style in the particular context of the jazz piano trio, (again designating Powell as the benchmark), it is critical to gain a basic understanding of its earliest, and in this writer's opinion, most relevant antecedent, piano ragtime. There are numerous opinions regarding the classification of ragtime. Is it "jazz", "early jazz", or simply "ragtime", a discrete style in its own right? In "The 'Syncophonic' Touch," a chapter in Axel Christensen's *New Instruction Book for Rag and Jazz Piano Playing*, first published in 1920, the author, a deemed expert on the subject, expresses his own uncertainty with respect to the appropriate designation for this style. He writes: "Jazz – Syncopation – or Ragtime – whichever you call it – is built up on certain fixed laws or principles, the same as harmony, mathematics, or any other science." (Christensen 1925: 6)

Berlin's viewpoint on the subject: "Vocal and piano ragtime are, for the most part, two different types of music: the former belongs in the realm of popular song, while the latter is a unique body of instrumental music, which by virtue of its rhythmic impulse and historical influence is most properly considered within the sphere of instrumental jazz." (Berlin 2002: 2)

Coming from a perspective of a "practicing musician, a jazz pianist, and an educator," (Taylor 1983: viii) Billy Taylor boldly states that ragtime unequivocally serves as the

earliest form of jazz. Consistent with the line of thought regarding style and technique covered in this chapter, Taylor takes into consideration both “musical elements” as well as “techniques” in supporting his position.

*“Ragtime, contrary to the views of many “jazz authorities,” was the earliest form of jazz. It was the first American music to successfully combine the musical elements and techniques which had developed in the earlier Afro-American religious and secular forms of musical expression and to present those elements and techniques in a style that was unique to this country.” (Taylor 1982: 35)*

Berlin makes a similar statement to the one above regarding the eventual parting of the ways of vocal and instrumental strains of ragtime; but this time, he emphasizes the importance the piano specifically played in the development of what becomes known as jazz.

*“This writer’s perception of ragtime coincides with the modern view whereby the term, rather than being a coverall for popular music, refers primarily to a restricted body of piano music. It is evident viewing the style historically that despite the ties existing between vocal and piano strains of ragtime, a split occurred: vocal ragtime merged with the mainstream of popular music, while piano ragtime inclined toward what became known as jazz.” (Berlin 2002: 61)*

Schuller’s glossarial description of ragtime (Ibid.) includes no mention of the words “jazz” or even “pre-jazz.” Consistent with Berlin, he does support the stature of the piano in the development of this style as follows:<sup>17</sup>

*“A music characterized by syncopated melody over a regularly accented rhythmic accompaniment. In its strictest sense ragtime refers to a music style developed on the piano in the late nineteenth century.” (Schuller 1968: 381)*

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<sup>17</sup> There is no definition of the term “jazz” in the glossaries of either of Schuller’s volumes “Early Jazz” or “The Swing Era”! Sachs states “Jazz has never been, and probably cannot be, properly defined.” (Sachs 1953: 365)

Clearly, Christensen was not alone in his confusion with the terminology. Given the salient similarities between ragtime and jazz, most notably in the area of rhythm, the ambiguity with terminology that existed prior to 1920 is justifiable. Berlin attributes most of the discrepancy merely to semantics stating “What is important is that accompanying the stylistic evolution of ragtime in the late 1910s was a shift away from the term “ragtime” and toward “jazz.” (Berlin 2002: 16)

In “Rhythm and Tempo,” author and musicologist Curt Sachs attributes a host of styles to ragtime: “Rag became the sire of musical styles since known as blues, hot jazz, sweet jazz, swing, fox trot, Charleston, rumba and what not.” (Sachs 1953: 365)

Notwithstanding the multifariousness of these aforementioned musicologists’ opinions on this subject, for the purposes of this thesis, piano ragtime is the designated benchmark used to compare and contrast the techniques and styles used by its pre-Bebop Era jazz piano successors. It is this writer’s contention that it is piano ragtime – a highly structured and primarily notated solo piano style – which serves as the earliest technical and stylistic inspiration for the explosive emergence of individuality that emerges in modern jazz piano styles, and by extension, the modern jazz piano trio fifty years later. The rhythmic, harmonic and melodic contributions made by ragtime are more than less identifiable in subset styles of jazz and have, again as Berlin states, “held on tenaciously.”<sup>18</sup>

In light of these and many other viewpoints on the categorization of ragtime as either “the first form of jazz,” “early jazz” or a “progenitor to jazz,” as Axel Christensen opined, “whichever you call it,” succeeding jazz pianists of every ilk owe an enormous debt of

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<sup>18</sup> One of the most widely familiar characteristics of piano ragtime is the low bass note and mid-range chord pattern played by the left hand in various permutations, but on every beat. Authors on this subject have colorful descriptions of this well-known left hand two-part pattern. Paul Posnak describes it as “The oom-pah left hand of ragtime”... (Posnak 1998: Location 64); Joan M. Wildman describes it as “boom chick” (Wildman’s quotes here): “Even when the left-hand notation consists of the “boom-chick” (octave-chord-octave-chord) pattern, so often associated with rag “accompaniments,”... (Wildman 1979: 24) The author of this paper grew up with the term “boom chuck” as opposed to “boom chick.”

gratitude to the masterminds of piano ragtime – not only for their innovative rhythmic, harmonic and melodic inventions that gave rise to this extensive and influential canon, but for their effective delegation of rhythmic, harmonic and melodic roles assigned to each hand. Among the numerous stylistic subsets of jazz piano that have evolved over the past century, the enduring rhythmic, harmonic and melodic roles played by each of the two hands, originating in ragtime, is evidenced in even the most contemporary pianists' toolkit.

Again, whether or not ragtime serves as the earliest form of jazz (Taylor 1982: 35), piano ragtime, with its prototypical division of role in the left and right hands, introduces technical elements still utilized by many of today's jazz pianists. For that reason alone, ragtime certainly deserves to hold the place as the earliest form of jazz. This statement is not meant to disregard the unique *stylistic* characteristics inherent in piano ragtime, but rather to give credit to the technical aspects of this style that are of critical foundational value to the development of modern jazz piano. Taylor's definition of early ragtime includes a reference to this technique recognizing its European art music influence: "Early Ragtime – The crystallization of the black musical expression into a formal concept, utilizing the elements of syncopation, improvisation, and European classical piano techniques in a new combination." (Taylor 1983: 242)

Comprising musical elements inherent in West African, European and pan-Caribbean cultures, ragtime, as either the first form of jazz or, at the least, the earliest antecedent of what has become known as jazz, blatantly devoted itself to exemplifying the most distinct aspects of these cultures' unique rhythmic, harmonic and melodic contributions – again, aspects which Berlin states above "...have held on tenaciously through decades of stylistic changes in jazz" (Ibid.) in this country. These features, clearly evident in piano ragtime, continue to be referenced even in the most contemporary jazz, and for this reason, are outlined in this chapter as such salient points. African-, European- and pan-Caribbean based elements are present in Scott Joplin's work, which "As Rudi Blesh wrote in his introduction to *The Collected Works of Scott Joplin*, Joplin "effected a basic and altogether

remarkable fusion of Afro-American rhythm, American folk song both black and white, and the musical principles and procedures that America has traditionally derived from and shared with Europe.” (G. Schirmer 1998: Preface)

At this point, it is important to elaborate on the two terms “style” and “technique” as they appear in the particular context of this thesis. Berlin states: “The practice of forcing virtually every pre-bop jazz-piano style into the ragtime orbit misrepresents historical fact, serves no practical objective, and results only in confusion.” It is not the intention of this thesis to put a pre-bop jazz-piano style “peg” into a ragtime “hole.” In support of Berlin’s viewpoint, there are certainly considerable distinctive rhythmic, harmonic and melodic differences – that is, *stylistic* considerations – among ragtime and pre-bop genres. But at the same time, the similarities in the division of role – the *technical* considerations per hand – are undeniable. The objective here is to point out the differences in style, but at the same time, highlight the similarities in technique in support of the contention that piano ragtime is both a stylistic as well as practical prototype for a select category of jazz piano styles that have succeeded it.

Note that Berlin uses the word “style” (rather than the word “technique,” for example) in his statement above. For the purposes of this thesis, in an attempt to avoid the confusion of a “style-within-a-style” descriptor, the term “style” will refer to a genre’s unique rhythmic, harmonic and melodic qualities whereas “technique” will refer to a genre’s particular allocation of the hands’ rhythmic, harmonic and melodic roles. As an example, *stylistically*, in piano ragtime, the low bass note played by the left hand (the rhythmic role) may take the form of an octave, whereas in stride style piano, it may take the form of a single note. *Technically* however, generally, in piano ragtime as well as stride and much of swing styles, the left hand consists of a low bass note(s), shouldering the rhythmic role, alternating with a mid-register chord, shouldering the harmonic role, on each beat of every bar.



Again, each of these genres manifests very different rhythmic, harmonic and melodic *stylistic* considerations. But from a purely technical perspective, the general approach of playing a low bass note and mid-register chord in the left hand (the rhythmic and harmonic functions) and the melody in the right hand (the melodic function) in piano ragtime does not differ from that which is found in blues, stride, not to mention in much of swing style, and even in some modern jazz styles. (And, of course, it is also a familiar left-hand accompaniment pattern found in much of European “classical” repertoire, music composed and published considerably earlier than piano ragtime.<sup>19</sup>) However, confusion with terminology arises: first, when there is no mention of the term “stride” as a *technique* in describing ragtime; second when there *is* mention of the term “stride” as both a *style and a technique* in stride style itself; and third, when there is also mention of the term “stride” when referring to the technique used in *swing* style! That this term functions in two contexts – one as a specific style, and the other as a general technique – is cause for confusion, or, at the least, a lack of clarity.

For the purposes of this thesis, the various terms “stride”, “Harlem stride”, “stride ragtime” (Berlin 2002: 166) “stride-style”, “ragtime-stride” (Taylor 1983: 72), “stridelike” (Dapogny 1982: 510) or “stride-influenced” among others (for lack of a better term) refers to the jazz pianist’s left-hand technique, consisting generally of a low bass note, alternating with a mid-register closed-position chord on every beat (not necessarily consecutively). In his definition of stride, Dapogny, for example, gives ragtime credit for the origination of this technique. However, his definition below is cause for confusion in that in one instance he describes the activity in the left-hand as “left-hand technique”..., and in another, as “left-hand style”... as though they are one and the same. He goes on to describe stride as

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<sup>19</sup> This left hand technique is not exclusive to jazz piano styles by any means. It has also been widely used in Western European piano music. Take the Chopin waltzes, for example. Chopin’s “Grande Valse Brillante Op. 18” in Eb, for one, was composed in 1833 and published in 1834, well before piano ragtime in the late 1890s. Taylor supports the influence of European-originated piano technique on early ragtime in his Glossary as follows: “The crystallization of the black musical expression into a formal concept, utilizing the elements of syncopation, improvisation, and European classical piano techniques in a new combination.” (Taylor 1983: 242)

“only one of many styles – including those of Morton, Earl Hines, Art Tatum, etc. – which uses this left-hand technique, but it is the only style with a generally understood name,” admitting his own confusion around the use of this term, that is, that the term stride also refers to a left-hand *technique* that is utilized in other *styles* – stride style included (highlighted portion of the text). His implication as noted here is that the term stride refers to both a *style and a technique* – it is known as a style in and of itself, and also incorporates a left-hand *technique* with a “generally understood name”, that is, a kind of “universal” *technique*, which is also utilized in sundry other *stylistic* contexts. To clarify the difference between these two terms (style and technique), this sentence can be reworded to say that the music of various stylists, including Morton, Hines Tatum, etc., incorporated left-hand stride technique, which served as the fundamental rhythmic and harmonic framework of their work. Dapogny’s complete definition is as follows:

*“Stride. A piano style, strongly rooted in ragtime, associated with James P. Johnson, Fats Waller, and others. The left-hand technique, only a part of what defines stride, involves the use of a lower-register single note, octave, tenth, or other interval on the first and third beats of the (four-four) measure and middle-register chords on the second and fourth beats, the function being the statement of both pulse and harmony. This left-hand style was used in ragtime and, in various incarnations, by jazz pianists well into the 1940s. Stride is only one of many styles – including those of Morton, Earl Hines, Art Tatum, etc. –, which use this left-hand technique, but it is the only style with a generally understood name. Hence the use of the term “stridelike” here even though, considering the range of features which define stride, Morton was not a stride pianist, and even though stride style does not necessarily have historical, or any other, primacy over Morton’s or other pianists’ styles.”* Dapogny 1982: 510)

Although Schuller has included a brief description of the term “ragtime” in the glossaries of both “Early Jazz” and “The Swing Era” (Schuller 1968: 381 and 1989: 866); the term “stride” is absent from his list – surprising, given the detailed consideration he gives this style in both volumes. At the same time, he also gives ragtime credit for the technique utilized by the left hand in stride: “The left-hand stride piano brought into jazz from ragtime...” (Schuller 1968: 171) He goes on to identify stride specifically as a technique rather than as a style. “This left-hand technique...” (Ibid.) This basic jazz piano technique

traverses ragtime, stride and swing and as mentioned earlier, even continues to be utilized by jazz pianists today. Other than some iteration that includes the term “stride”, it is surprising that a universally accepted term for this pervasive ubiquitous solo piano *technique* has yet to be identified among musicologists and practitioners alike – despite its prevalence in a broad range of genres.

Ragtime manifests particular African-, European- and pan-Caribbean-originated rhythmic, harmonic and melodic traits. Rhythm, consistent with Wilson’s citation above that “There is a tendency to create musical structures in which rhythmic clash or disagreement of accents is the idea; cross-rhythm and metrical ambiguity are the accepted and expected norm.” (Ibid.) is addressed first.

In her discussion of ragtime style, Southern supports the eminent place the West African-based rhythmical element of syncopation holds in ragtime, stating, “The most significant element of ragtime of course was syncopation...in the right hand...against consistent duple meters in the left hand.” (Southern 1997: 321) It is also important to note that in her recognition of the importance of the element of syncopation in ragtime, Southern also alludes to division of role in the right and left hands.

Berlin adds to the significance of syncopation in “the contemporary understanding of ragtime, regardless of medium” (Berlin 1980: 11), citing a number of different early twentieth century definitions for ragtime – all that include a specific allusion to syncopation.<sup>20</sup>

Berlin describes syncopation as “...clearly the dominating and distinctive element in the evolution of ragtime. It is most often present in the treble melody, against a metrically accented march-accompaniment bass...” (Berlin 2002: 82)

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<sup>20</sup> Among them, is a rather humorous one written by A. J. Goodrich, an “eminent theorist and academician” in November of 1901: “*Rag-time is merely a common form of syncopation in which the rhythm is distorted in order to produce a more or less ragged, hysterical effect.*” (Berlin 1980: 11)

Berlin's description underscores the combination of the African-originated syncopation against a European-originated "metrically accented march-accompaniment bass", comprising ragtime (Ibid). It is the tension that is created between the combinations of these rhythms, both on and off the beat, that infuses this style with excitement. Sargeant describes syncopation as a means of achieving "rhythmic distortion – as a method of achieving surprise – and this is one of its common functions in jazz." Sargeant 1975: 56)

In "King of Ragtime – Scott Joplin and His Era", Berlin reiterates the importance of syncopation, including this quote on the subject by Joplin himself:

*"Its most characteristic element is its syncopated rhythm, its ragginess, its ragged time. Joplin said as much: "Why do you call it ragtime?" some one asked him long ago. "Oh!" replied Joplin, "because it has such a ragged movement. It suggests something like that." (Berlin 1994: 45)*

Another opinion regarding this primary distinguishing characteristic of ragtime is found in "They All Played Ragtime", by noted ragtime specialists Blesh and Janis (who also include an allusion to division of role in the right and left hands).

*"Ragtime is mainly distinguished from most other music by its use of the rhythm loosely called syncopation. The really unique thing about ragtime when it appeared was the way the pianist opposed syncopations (or accents on the weak and normally unaccented second and third beats of the measure) in his right hand against a precise and regularly accented bass." (Blesh and Janis 1971: 7)*

Although not related to ragtime style per se, Kouwenhoven adds an interesting perspective to the important role rhythm plays in jazz generally:

*"There is no definition of jazz, academic or otherwise, which does not acknowledge that its essential ingredient is a particular kind of rhythm. Improvisation is also frequently mentioned as an essential; but even if it were true that jazz always involves improvisation, that would not distinguish it from a good deal of Western European music of the past. It is the distinctive rhythm which differentiates all*

*types of jazz from all other music and which gives to all of its types a basic family resemblance.”*

Berlin refers to three classifications of syncopation found ragtime: untied, tied and augmented as illustrated here (Fig. 2.9). (Berlin 2002: 83)

Untied syncopations



Tied syncopations



Augmented syncopations (Rarely used after 1899)



Fig. 2.9 Untied, tied and augmented syncopations (Used by permission from the author.)

Brian Harker in *Louis Armstrong's Hot Five and Hot Seven Recordings* refers to the untied rhythm as the “cakewalk rhythm”, “a short-LONG-short-LONG-LONG pattern” that takes its name from a dance form that originated among blacks in the plantations. (Harker 2011: Kindle version) Blesh and Janis note that “Cake-walking developed into a real art, but it never froze into a set form, as it depended on each couple’s gifts for improvising steps, struts, and kicks to fit the ragtime syncopations.” (Blesh and Janis 1971: 99)

Berlin notes that in the first decade of the twentieth century a marked shift occurred in the use of untied and tied syncopations, to wit, that the predominance of untied syncopations was replaced by a predominance of tied syncopations after 1906. (Berlin 2002:128) The trend toward incorporating the tied rather than untied syncopation created greater rhythmic

tension in that with the tied syncopation, the tie connects the second strongest offbeat to the second strongest or most stable beat at the midpoint of the bar.

In ragtime, syncopation is the rule. Schuller notes there are five different syncopated rhythmic patterns in Joplin’s “Maple Leaf Rag” alone (Fig. 2.10). (Schuller 1968: 24)



Fig. 2.10 The five different syncopated rhythmic patterns in Joplin’s “Maple Leaf Rag”

Consistent also with the European march, all but three of Joplin’s forty-two rags, for example, are written in 2/4 meter.<sup>21</sup> However, an analysis of the rhythmic ratio of rhythm to harmony to melody in the 2/4-meter rags reveals a discrepancy with the ratio Mehegan establishes for 4/4-meter jazz – that is, the ratios in 2/4-meter rag do not correspond to rhythm, harmony and melody at the quarter-note, half-note and eighth-note levels respectively. Joplin’s use of the march-influenced 2/4 meter implies the primacy of two pulses per bar at the quarter-note level, consistent with the quarter-note pulse in 4/4-meter jazz; but, the harmony also occurs at the quarter-note level and the melody occurs at the sixteenth-note level, which is inconsistent with the half- and eighth-note-levels respectively in 4/4-meter jazz.

Is the inconsistency in the rhythmic ratio of rhythm to harmony to melody simply one of the principle aspects that distinguishes ragtime from jazz? Or, as a characteristic consistent with Wilson’s perspective that in African music “cross-rhythm and metrical ambiguity are the accepted and expected norm,” could Joplin, in an effort to retain the European influence of the march, yet maintain his African polyrhythmic heritage, have consciously

<sup>21</sup> “Magnetic Rag” is written in 4/4 meter and “Pleasant Moments” and “Bethena” are both written in 3/4 meter.

created a bi-metrical phenomenon where 2/4 and 4/8 meters exist isochronously? If this is the case, by dividing the rhythmic values in 2/4 meter in half, the ratios established for 4/4-meter jazz correspond *exactly* to 2/4-meter ragtime. By subdividing the 2/4-meter quarter-note pulse into four eighth notes, Joplin is given ample opportunity to subdivide the eighth-note melody into sixteenth notes, enabling him to intensely exploit both syncopation and polyrhythm. In a sense, Joplin's rags illustrate an isochronous metrical bifurcation: a European-influenced 2/4 meter in which there are simultaneously two pulses per bar at the quarter-note level, and an African-influenced 4/8 meter in which there are four pulses per bar at the eighth-note level.

Schuller leans toward supporting the latter postulation. He implies that rather than feeling the pulse at just the quarter-note level per the European-influenced 2/4-meter march, the African is capable of feeling both the quarter- and eighth-note subdivisions isochronously.

*“The African, by all available evidence, feels what we call an eighth note as his basic rhythmic unit, rather than the quarter-note division common in European music. Further research may contradict this evidence, but at the present time it is possible to say that he either thinks in eighth notes or, if he is momentarily thinking in quarter notes, is capable of feeling the eighth-note subdivisions just as strongly at any given moment in his music.”* (Schuller 1968: 25)

In Joplin's sole 4/4-meter rag, "Magnetic Rag," published in 1914, fifteen years after the publication of "Maple Leaf Rag" and just three years prior to his death in 1917, it is not surprising to find that the rhythmic hierarchy of rhythm to harmony to melody in this late work corresponds to that of jazz. That is, the pulse is at the quarter-note level; the harmony is at the half-note level; and the melody is at the eighth-note level. The perception that is conveyed by 4/4 meter is one of a longer melodic phrase. But what also sets this rag apart from his others is more than just a matter of meter alone. In this rag Joplin also incorporates the blues into the melodic line. An African vocal tradition, the blues creates a more linear than vertical sound found later in the compositional styles of Jelly Roll Morton or James P. Johnson for example. Joplin's 4/4-meter "Magnetic Rag," with its incorporation of the blues, is a harbinger of the linearity to come in jazz.

Considerable metrical contrast exists in ragtime melodies in the form of polyrhythm or cross-rhythm. One of the most common polyrhythmic techniques which became known as “secondary rag” consists of an ascending or descending 3-note melodic phrase in either sixteenth notes (in 2/4 meter) or eighth notes (in 4/4 meter) which is repeated usually four times.

In his essay “The Jazz Interlude”, twentieth century American composer Aaron Copland discusses the importance that polyrhythms play in jazz.

*“Polyrhythms are, as is known, not in themselves an innovation. They have been highly developed among primitive races and have made intermittent, momentary appearances in the works of recent European composers. They have also occurred abundantly in the English madrigals. The madrigal polyrhythms were the result of the madrigal prosody and therefore intricate deft interknitting in which no single downbeat was too definitely stressed. In a sense, therefore, the madrigal was arrhythmic rather than polyrhythmic. In fact, the madrigalists were charged by later English generation with lacking proper sense of rhythm.*

*But the polyrhythms of jazz are different in quality and effect not only from those of the madrigals but from all others as well. The peculiar excitement they produce by clashing two definitely and regularly marked rhythms is unprecedented in occidental music. Its polyrhythm is the real contribution of jazz.”* (Copland 2004: 48)

Copland goes on to cite references to ragtime found in the music of European composers including Debussy and Stravinsky at the turn of the century. The earliest instance of the use of the three-over-four polyrhythm in ragtime appeared in a little known rag titled “Roustabout Rag” composed by New Orleans pianist Paul Sarabresole.

*“Besides Harlem Rag<sup>22</sup>, the first published product of a black composer, the most compositionally noteworthy of these early entries was Paul Sarebresole’s Roustabout Rag, published by Gruenewald of New Orleans. It featured the ‘three-*

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<sup>22</sup> “Harlem Rag”, composed by pianist Thomas M.J. Turpin in 1897, is one of the earliest known published rags; but more importantly, Turpin was the first *black* composer to publish a rag, earning him the title of “Father of St. Louis ragtime.” (Jasen 1989: Kindle Location 484)



*over-four' rhythm pattern that became ragtime's most conspicuous element after 1905: a sequence of three different notes placed within a four-beat measure, which resulted in the accenting of a new note whenever the phrase was repeated."* (Jasen and Tichenor 1989)

However, it wasn't until Charles Leslie Johnson's "Dill Pickles Rag" was published in 1906 that the "three-over-four" concept caught on and went on to become a cliché in ragtime composition. In *Black Bottom Stomp*, author Jasen, who describes this rag as "made of thin air and good nature," (Jasen and Jones 2002) attributes the popularity of "Dill Pickles Rag" not in the least to its great melodic or harmonic content, but to the catchiness of its "three-over-four" polyrhythmic hook.

*"If 'Dill Pickles' was weak in the melody and harmony departments, it was strong on hooks. It was a "riff" rag, the first in which a rhythmic melodic figure – not the tonal melody itself – was the ingratiating feature. The hook lay in the shifting accents of a three-over-four pattern, a configuration that would tantalize America again later in "Twelfth Street Rag" and "In the Mood." (Jasen and Jones 2002: location 298)*

The use of the dotted note in written ragtime compositions began to appear in the second decade of the twentieth century. Its inherent rhythmic liveliness was so powerful that it brought about the use of fewer syncopated rhythms in ragtime compositions from then on. Berlin speculates on the reasons for the appearance of the dotted note. He cites three possibilities: First, that it may have reflected the actual performance practices of the time; second, its appearance may have resulted from composers seeking new rhythmic material; or third, it may have reflected the dances of that day including the turkey trot and the fox trot. (Berlin 2002: 149) One way or another, Berlin makes the statement that it is the occurrence of the dotted note that "More than any other single factor, ...changed the character of ragtime." Berlin 2002: 152)

According to Berlin, piano ragtime serves as the fountainhead of swing rhythm. This, along with other defining characteristics of this style, has continued to be referenced

throughout the development of jazz piano. In an email correspondence dated November 28, 2011, Berlin writes: "...swinging piano began with ragtime, and elements of ragtime have held on tenaciously through decades of stylistic changes in jazz. Ragtime should be included in every jazz pianist's tool kit." (E. Berlin email correspondence November 28, 2011)

Division of Role in Piano Ragtime – Southern cites dance as the original instigator of the particular division of role that becomes assigned to the left and right hands in piano ragtime.

*"The style of piano-rag music – called "jig piano"<sup>23 24</sup> by some – was a natural outgrowth of dance-music practices among black folk. As we have seen, the slaves danced in antebellum times to the music of fiddles and banjos, the percussive element being provided by the foot stomping of the musicians and the "juba patting" of the bystanders. In piano-rag music, the left hand took over the task of stomping and patting while the right hand performed syncopated melodies, using motives reminiscent of fiddle and banjo tunes." (Southern 1997: 315)*

As cited previously, relative to the pulse played by the left hand, the harmonic unit, also played by the left hand, is twice as slow as the pulse; relative to the pulse, the melodic unit, played by the right hand, is twice as fast. Applying Mehegan's rhythmic hierarchy to the foundational 2/4 meter of ragtime, the role of each hand is evident as is exemplified by "Joplin's Maple Leaf Rag" (Fig. 2.11).

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<sup>23</sup> "A literary reference to "jig piano" associates the term with social gathering in the parlors of middle-class African Americans during the last quarter of the nineteenth century." (Southern 1997: 316)

<sup>24</sup> "...the term 'jig time' is without doubt a forerunner of the term ragtime, which did not gain currency until the 1890s." (Ibid.)

## MAPLE LEAF RAG

Scott Joplin, 1899

Tempo di marcia

Right hand = melodic role  
Left hand = rhythmic and harmonic roles

The musical score for 'Maple Leaf Rag' is presented in four systems, each with a right-hand (treble clef) and left-hand (bass clef) staff. The key signature is three flats (B-flat major or D-flat minor), and the time signature is 2/4. The tempo is marked 'Tempo di marcia'. The first system shows the right hand playing a melodic line with sixteenth notes and eighth notes, while the left hand provides a rhythmic accompaniment with eighth notes and chords. The second system continues this pattern, with the right hand playing a more complex melodic line and the left hand providing a steady rhythmic accompaniment. The third system features a melodic line in the right hand and a rhythmic accompaniment in the left hand. The fourth system concludes the piece with a final melodic phrase in the right hand and a rhythmic accompaniment in the left hand.

Fig. 2.11 Division of role in the right and left hands in Joplin’s “Maple Leaf Rag”

The distinguishing rhythmic, melodic and harmonic considerations characteristic of piano ragtime and their correlation with division of role are outlined below – the rhythmic role at the eighth note level (the pulse), administered by the left hand; the harmonic role at the quarter note level, also administered by the left hand; and the melodic role at the sixteenth note level, administered by the right hand (Fig. 2.12).<sup>25</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Note: This hypothesis is not meant to imply that each hand is restricted to assuming just one role exclusively, but rather to view the hands as two independent but mutually supportive units wherein the left hand *primarily* shoulders a rhythmic and harmonic role and the right hand *primarily* shoulders a melodic role. The adverb “primarily” provides leeway for some overlapping of roles to occur. For instance, as exemplified in “Maple Leaf Rag,” the notes played in the low register by the left hand are assigned a primarily *rhythmic* role, but at the same time, as chord tones, they also contribute to the identification of the prevailing harmony. Similarly, the mid-register chords played by the left hand are assigned a primarily *harmonic* role in this style, but also serve as “verticalizations” (Schuller 1968: 39) of the prevailing chord-tone infused *melodic* material. Lastly, the high register notes played in the right hand are assigned a primarily *melodic* role; however, ragtime melodies also manifest one of the most important identifying *rhythmic* elements in ragtime style: syncopation.

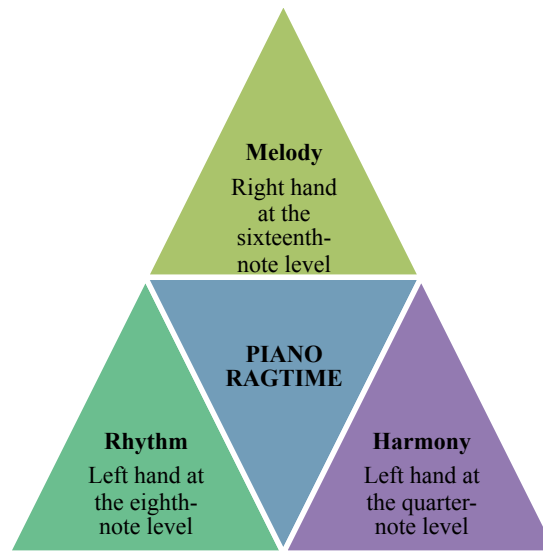


Fig. 2.12 Division of role per hand as applied to piano ragtime

The Rhythmic Role of the Left Hand – The left hand is responsible for the rhythmic element (the pulse at the eighth note level) in piano ragtime. Influenced by the European march written in 2/4 meter, the left-hand pattern consists of an un-syncopated succession of four eighth notes per bar. The most common pattern of low-register bass notes and mid-register chords consists of the following as illustrated in Joplin’s composition “Original Rags”:

Beat 1: the root of a chord as a single bass note or octave in the low register

The “and” of beat 1: an inversion of a triad or dominant seventh chord in the middle register.

Beat 2: a root or fifth of the chord as a single bass note or octave in the low register

The “and” of beat 2: an inversion of a triad or seventh chord in the middle register (Fig. 2.13).<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> The ragtime pianist often incorporated a technique known as “back beat” into the left hand. “Back beat” was a device that served to intentionally interrupt the predictable left-hand strong-weak-strong-weak root-chord-root-chord pattern with unpredictable patterns such as root-chord-chord-root or root-root-root-chord, illustrating just two variations that upset the strong-weak-strong-weak pattern.



Fig. 2.13 Left-hand root-chord-root-chord pattern in bars 9-24 of Joplin’s “Original Rags”

The Harmonic Role of the Left Hand – In addition to its rhythmic responsibility, the left hand is also responsible for the harmonic element (at the quarter note level) in piano ragtime in the form of closed-position triads and seventh chords in various inversions with origins in the European march and religious songs as illustrated in “Original Rags” and “New Orleans Blues,” above.

The Melodic Role of the Right Hand – Piano ragtime is most characterized by African-based predominately-syncopated<sup>27</sup> melodies (at the sixteenth note level) played in the right hand, which incorporates Wilson’s aforementioned African-originated “*antiphonal or call-and-response musical structures,*” and is played against a steady pulse of low notes and chords in the left hand.

The melodic line in piano ragtime has an especially close relationship with the prevailing harmony. Although not referring specifically to ragtime, Schuller contends that European traditional harmony and melody “are merely two sides of the same coin.” (Schuller 1968:

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<sup>27</sup> The term ragtime got its name from musicians’ application of syncopation to previously un-syncopated melodies. Syncopating a melody was thought of as “ragging” a melody. (Berlin 2002: 12)

39) Paraphrasing Schuller's point of view, melodic lines are often "horizontalizations" of the vertically focused harmonic progression; conversely, harmonic progressions are often "verticalizations" of the horizontally focused melodic lines. (Schuller 1968: 39)

Piano Ragtime Gestalt – Piano ragtime manifests the gamut of rhythmic, harmonic and melodic material that composers including Scott Joplin, Joseph Lamb and James Scott, to name three of the most well known<sup>28</sup>, adeptly distributed between two hands, enabling it to function effectively in a solo piano setting, completely independent of accompaniment.

The first two decades of the nineteenth century saw ragtime evolve in rhythmic, harmonic and melodic complexity. Berlin cites that it was a greater use of syncopation that accounted for the transition ragtime made to jazz just prior to 1920.

*"It was with the advent of the "jazz age," shortly before 1920 that the ragtime era came to a close. The end came gradually, as characteristics of ragtime were absorbed by jazz; for a while the two terms were freely interchanged. At last, supplanted by a newer wave of syncopation, ragtime ceased to be the emissary of American popular music." (Berlin 1980: 14)*

Solo ragtime pianists double-handedly provided clearly defined rhythmic, harmonic and melodic detail that took the place of multi-instrumental bands. In both essence and actual practice, solo ragtime piano served as a hyperbolic "one-man band," The distinct characteristics of this early piano style contributed to a sound that we hear referenced in succeeding styles including blues, Harlem stride- and swing-style piano, and, in fact, as cited by Berlin above, these characteristics continue to be incorporated into subsequent twentieth and twenty-first century styles of jazz piano in both the solo and ensemble setting.

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<sup>28</sup> "...ragtime is generally thought of as piano music, especially that of Scott Joplin, Joe Lamb, James Scott, and a few others." (Berlin 2002: 1)

## 2.3 BLUES

Southern contends there is no way to document an exact timeframe for the origination of the blues, however it has roots as an improvised vocal medium that assimilated melodic characteristics consistent with African field hollers and spirituals and harmonic and structural considerations consistent with European hymns. (Southern 1997: 331)

According to Schuller, “there is no recorded use of the term *blues*, either as a plain noun or as a title, until the turn of the century...” (Schuller 1968: 37)

On the origin of the blues, Berlin states “The genesis of blues is obscure, but the style clearly existed as a recognizable type prior to its surfacing in print as popular music in 1912.” (Berlin 2002: 154) In an email correspondence Berlin clarifies: “I was probably referring to [W.C. Handy’s] *Memphis Blues... Memphis Blues* was very well known, thereby becoming ‘the first blues.’ Of course, blues existed for more than a decade before then, but had not yet acquired the title.” (Berlin 2015: via email correspondence April 25, 2015)

He cites two earlier examples of blues that were composed but not yet published prior to 1912: Morton’s “Jelly Roll Blues”, “supposedly” composed in 1905 and Chapman’s and Smith’s “One o’ Them Things?” composed in 1904. (Berlin 2002: 155) Berlin contends that although the appearance of the blues in ragtime before 1912 was the exception rather than the rule, the rag “One o’ Them Things?” “may be the first true publication of a blues in the context of ragtime...” (Berlin 2002: 155)

Jones cites its origin as the work song, a “largely a functional music” which originally served as a method of communication in the life of a black slave – it “did not exist except as a strictly empirical communication of some part of the black slave’s life.” (Jones 1963: 98) Recalling Wilson’s ‘two different *levels* of “Black’ music as art as it exists in the United States – one with roots in the West African tradition, and the other with roots in the European tradition” (O’Meally 1998: 99-100), the blues began as functional music with

roots in the West African tradition and transitioned into music that served as professional entertainment with roots in the European tradition just prior to the beginning of the 1920s “Jazz Age,” Jones remarks: “...that people would actually pay to see and hear blues performed, was a revelation.” (Jones 1963: 98)

In citing the two styles of music that fall under the umbrella of black entertainment in the late nineteenth century, Southern states that the blues holds a place next to ragtime.

*“Black music makers developed a distinctive style of entertainment music, fitted to their own personal needs and expressive of their own individuality. It was not intended to be analyzed or even understood by whites. Ragtime was one of the earliest manifestations of this distinctive music. The other was the blues.”*  
(Southern 1997: 314)

“It is natural that ragtime and blues, emerging from the same cultural and social milieu, should be related.” (Berlin 2002: 154) Berlin attributes the publication of the first blues composition in 1912 to the subsequent proliferation of this style, (which he contends inadvertently was one of the contributing factors to the ebb of ragtime as a unique genre). (Berlin 2002: 154)

Ragtime and its predecessor blues shared a number of distinctive characteristic traits: generally, they both incorporated African-originated call-and-response structured melodic lines (although the blues were improvised rather than written); and they both were also based on a European-originated functional harmonic form (although the blues form, employing just three chords and a one-part form, was much simpler and shorter than ragtime, which changed chords every bar and was structured in lengthy three- or four-part forms).

One of the intrinsic characteristics of blues, and one that set it apart from ragtime, is the incorporation of “blue notes” into what in ragtime was primarily chord-tone focused



melodic material. There are countless definitions of the term “blue note.” The entry for “blue note” in the Harvard Dictionary of Music is as follows:

*“In African American music, especially in blues and jazz, a pitch, frequently the third, seventh, or fifth scale degree, that is deliberately sharpened or flattened in performance. The degree of inflection may vary considerably.”* (Harvard Dictionary of Music Fourth Edition 2003: 104)

In his Glossary, Schuller describes the term “blue note” as:

*“A microtonal variant, usually flatted from the pure intonation of the note. It is associated almost exclusively with the third, fifth, and seventh degrees of the scale. It is freely used in blues and jazz.”* (Schuller 1968: 374)

His characterization of “blue notes” as a “microtonal variants” rather than straightforward “flatted” thirds, fifths and sevenths implies a flexibility in pitch especially conducive to the voice.

Berlin’s description of “blue notes” applies to their use specifically in the context of the piano and specifically to their use by the right hand:

*“Blue notes are certain chromatic alterations superimposed on the major scale. The most common scale-steps for these alterations are the sharpened second (or flatted third), sharpened fourth (or flatted fifth), and sharpened sixth (or flatted seventh). These tones are used primarily by the right hand and frequently form dissonant clashes with the unaltered scale-steps used in either right – or left-hand harmonies.”* (Berlin 2002: 167-168)

As Berlin describes here, in blues (as is the case with ragtime), the melodic role is assumed “primarily” by the right hand. The incorporation of “blue notes” frequently forms “dissonant clashes” with the prevailing harmony. It is precisely this “clash” which most likely originated as a means of communicating the emotional and physical trials and tribulations faced by the Negro slave, which gives the blues its “blue” quality.

Taken from his autobiography, blues composer and musician W.C. (William Christopher) Handy talks about his intentional incorporation of “blue notes” into his compositions and the effect that he sought to achieve with this “device:”

*"The primitive southern Negro, as he sang, was sure to bear down on the third and seventh tone of the scale, slurring between major and minor. Whether in the cotton field of the Delta or on the Levee up St. Louis way, it was always the same. Till then, however, I had never heard this slur used by a more sophisticated Negro, or by any white man. I tried to convey this effect... by introducing flat thirds and sevenths (now called blue notes) into my song, although its prevailing key was major..., and I carried this device into my melody as well... This was a distinct departure, but as it turned out, it touched the spot." (Handy 1969: 120)*

Again referring to "what have since become known as ‘blue notes’", Handy states that "the transitional flat thirds and sevenths in my melody" were his attempt "to suggest the typical slurs of the Negro voice." (Banerji 2012: <http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-20769518>)

Handy also explains the reasoning behind his decision to structure his blues composition in three-line stanzas:

*"The three-line structure I employed in my lyric was suggested by a song I heard Phil Jones sing in Evansville ... While I took the three-line stanza as a model for my lyric, I found its repetition too monotonous ... Consequently I adopted the style of making a statement, repeating the statement in the second line, and then telling in the third line why the statement was made." (2011: <http://bit.ly/1L8mCYM>)*

It is important to note here that unlike in the European tradition, where melody and harmony are often directly related, African-originated melodies function independently from any particular harmonic framework as Schuller notes here.

*"Melodies are very often horizontal projections of a harmonic substructure, and harmonies are often just verticalizations of melodic segments. By contrast, African music is unilaterally melodic, that is, not harmonic in structure." (Schuller 1968: 39)*

Again, as Southern notes above, blues, which originated as an improvised vocal medium, has melodic roots in West Africa, and harmonic and structural roots in Europe. Consistent with African melodies, which have a tendency to “shift around a central tone” (Schuller 1968: 44), composers at the turn of the twentieth century began incorporating African-originated “blue notes” into their melodies (over eight-, twelve- and sixteen-bar blues forms<sup>29</sup>) that characteristically “shifted around a central tone.” (These notes over time evolved into a scale known today as the “blues scale.”)<sup>30</sup>

African-originated, blues scale-focused melodies function autonomously – they do not directly correlate with or imply specific measure-by-measure harmony, and conversely, measure-by-measure harmony does not correlate with or imply the blues scale. In a sense, the blues scale could be perceived as a kind of variations on a “cantus firmus” within a European-originated homophonic setting.<sup>31</sup>

In addition to its melodic role, the blues scale may also be viewed in the broader context of form. That is, just as African-originated melodies “shift around a central *tone*”, the blues scale also shifts around the European-originated concept of *key*. Very generally, in blues, only one blues scale is superimposed over the entire multi-chordal twelve-bar blues form. In this regard, the blues scale also functions structurally in the sense that it has a direct relationship to the key or tonal center of the blues form overall. The blues scale then can be viewed as a “horizontal verticalization” – again, not in terms of its relationship to the prevailing measure-by-measure *harmony*, but rather in terms of its relationship to the overall *key* of the blues form itself. In this regard, this scale could be viewed as the blues form’s primary binding agent. The blues scale can be perceived as performing a dual role:

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<sup>29</sup> In line with Berlin, Schuller notes that it was the twelve-bar blues pattern that predominated, in part because the first published version of the blues was a twelve-bar form<sup>29</sup>. (Schuller 1968: 37)

<sup>30</sup> Although there is more than one iteration of the “blues scale” per se, for the purposes of this thesis, this scale includes the following degrees of the major scale: 1, b3, 4, #4, 5, b7, 1, with the “blue notes” being b7, b5 and b3.

<sup>31</sup> Having or characterized by a single melodic line with accompaniment.  
<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/homophonic>

an African-originated horizontal or melodic role *and* a European-originated structural role based on its relationship to the “big picture” context of key.

According to Berlin, Handy’s “Memphis Blues,” published in 1912, is probably “the first blues” – that is to say the first blues that was given the specific title of “blues”, and also gained unprecedented popularity. Wald states “The history of blues as a broadly popular style of music begins in the fall of 1912, when W.C. Handy’s ‘Memphis Blues’ – along with two similar songs, ‘Dallas Blues and ‘Baby Seals Blues’ – sparked a national craze.” (Wald 2010: Kindle Location 2043) Based on his published blues compositions, Jones dubs Handy the “inventor” of blues and contends that Handy proved that composing blues could actually be a lucrative venture. (Jones 1963: 148)

In an article for BBC World Service, author Robin Banerji notes the significance of “Memphis Blues:”

*“In the autumn of 1912, an African-American musician by the name of WC Handy published a song that would take the US by storm - Memphis Blues. It launched the blues as a mass entertainment genre that would transform popular music worldwide.”* (Banerji 2012: <http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-20769518>)

Blues had been in existence prior to the publication of “Memphis Blues,” but it was this composition in particular that served as the catalyst for the formalization, not to mention the international popularity of the blues as a genre. In an article for BBC World Service, Wald adds:

*“Handy’s Memphis Blues was hugely significant.” It started the blues craze and made the blues a key marketing term. Memphis Blues was spread by the sale of sheet music and by the fact that every dance band in America was being asked to play it, and was playing it.”* (Joyner 2012: <http://bit.ly/1JeOLNJ>)

The division of role per hand in blues is the same as it is for ragtime: the left hand shoulders the rhythmic and harmonic roles; the right hand, the melodic role.

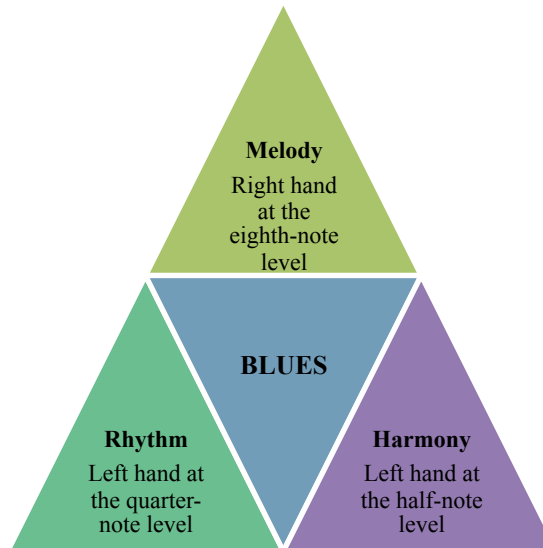


Fig. 2.14 Division of role per hand as applied to blues

The Rhythmic Role of the Left Hand – “The Memphis Blues or (Mister Crump)” is structured in the standard 12-bar blues format. The left-hand pattern references the low bass notes and mid-register chords reminiscent of ragtime on each eighth note in 2/4 meter, which provides the rhythmic foundation of this composition. Handy’s left hand also intersperses some passing tones and syncopation. The left hand also marks the end of each four-bar phrase by coming to rest for between two and four eighth notes.

The Harmonic Role of the Left Hand – The left hand states the harmony at the quarter-note-level in inversions of incomplete triads and seventh chords over a slight variation of the basic twelve-bar blues progression in italics (Fig. 2.15). Note the use of the minor subdominant in bar three and the use of what is either a tritone substitution (B7(#11) or diminished seventh chord (Bdim.7) in bar four. Handy maintains the standard I – IV – V harmonic benchmarks on the first bar of each of the three 4-bar stanzas (bars 1, 5 and 9).

1)	2)	3)	4)
I7	I7	I7	I7
<i>I7</i>	<i>I7</i>	<i>IV</i>	<i>ivm I (#IV7 (Tritone substitution of F7)</i>
5)	6)	7)	8)
IV7	IV7	I	I
<i>IV7</i>	<i>IV</i>	<i>I7</i>	<i>I7</i>
9)	10)	11)	12)
V	IV	I	I
<i>V7</i>	<i>I</i>	<i>V7</i>	<i>I</i>

Fig. 2.15 The harmonic progression in W.C. Handy's "Memphis Blues"

The Melodic Role of the Right Hand – The right hand incorporates the b3, b5 and b7 “blue notes” respective to the key of F: Ab, Cb and Eb. The b3 (Ab) in particular creates the greatest dissonance or the highest degree of “blueness” in bar ten where Handy juxtaposes it with a six-four-position F major triad (I), immediately followed by a predictable root position C dominant seventh (V7) chord on beat two.

Blues Piano Gestalt – Again, the role of the left and right hands in solo blues piano is consistent with its ragtime predecessor, but the incorporation of the “blue notes” in the melody over a set twelve-bar harmonic form clearly places this style in a category of its own: blues.

## 2.4 BOOGIE-WOOGIE

Another early jazz piano style much related to the blues, Schuller refers to boogie-woogie as a “pianistic adjunct” to the blues and “A “primitive” manner of playing the blues on the piano characterized by a steady, repetitive *ostinato* figure in the left hand or bass.”

(Schuller 1968: 37 and 374) Boogie-woogie is not only important in and of itself as a unique piano style in the jazz compendium, it is also a style that is heavily referenced in

both Mary Lou Williams's and Oscar Peterson's earliest trio recordings (covered in Chapter Three), thereby giving it particular relevance to this thesis.

Berlin contends that the "Alabama bound" chorus of *Boone's Rag Melody No. II* (1909) "may be the earliest publication of 'boogie-woogie'..." (Berlin 2002: 155). This composition incorporates the most salient characteristics of the blues, but what sets it apart is the distinctive left-hand boogie-woogie bass pattern.

*"The usual 12-measure structure of blues is here compressed to 8 measures, but such variants are not uncommon. More significant than this deviation are the piece's basic blues harmonic pattern, extensive use of blue notes, parallel melodic pattern...and boogie-woogie bass."* (Berlin 2002: 155)

Jones cites the blues as the progenitor of boogie-woogie<sup>32</sup> but notes that ragtime style also factors in "some ways." (Jones 1963: 114)

*"Basically a piano music, boogie woogie rose to its greatest popularity in the rent parties and juke joints of the North, even though, characteristically enough, it had its origins in the primitive blues of the Southern country Negro. It seemed to be a fusion of vocal blues and the earlier guitar techniques of the country singers, adapted for the piano. In some ways boogie woogie bears strong resemblance to ragtime piano style, although the repeated "rolling" (ostinato) figure used in boogie piano identifies it immediately."* (Jones 1963: 114)

Jones rules out the ostinato bass figure as one among the "some ways" piano ragtime and boogie-woogie resemble one another. Jones also points out that technically (and consistent with the traits in Wilson's "Afro-American, conceptual approaches to the process of making music" (Ibid.)), ragtime had its roots in Europe, whereas boogie-woogie, with its attention on rhythmic contrast and percussive articulations, originated from traditional Negro approaches.

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<sup>32</sup> Note: Jones does not hyphenate "boogie woogie."

*“Ragtime was the first appropriation of white pianistic techniques by Negro musicians, boogie woogie was the second appropriation of a “pianistic” approach to the instrument, but in such a blatantly percussive and blues-like manner as to separate it immediately from any more Europeanized music. In keeping with traditional styles of Negro music, boogie woogie also was predominantly a music of rhythmic contrasts rather than melodic or harmonic variations.” (Ibid.)*

However, one of the ways in Jones’ “some ways” that boogie-woogie bears resemblance to ragtime is found in the division of role per hand. Also in keeping with Wilson’s “Afro-American conceptual approaches to the process of making music”, (Ibid.), Southern couldn’t have provided a more perfect description of boogie-woogie technique, noting the roles of the hands in the process: the left hand shoulders the rhythmic and harmonic roles; the right hand, the melodic role. Remarkably, Southern’s observation begins with the role of the left hand.

*“The left hand played an ostinato figure that replicated the chord changes of the blues and moved in eighth notes, eight to the measure, often with dotted rhythms and emphasizing open fifths and octaves in the broken-chord patterns. The right hand played a highly embellished melody that set up cross rhythms against the left hand and was distinctive for its tremolos. To obtain the effect of the essential ‘bent tones,’ the pianists struck harsh, dissonant intervals, such as minor seconds and major sevenths, simultaneously. The driving rhythms of the music derived from the walking or rolling basses, as they were called...” (Southern 1997: 378)*

Taylor’s description of division of role in the hands in boogie-woogie echoes Southern’s and Jones’s. Again, he begins with the role of the left hand:

*“The function of the boogie-woogie bass line is two-fold: It establishes and maintains the basic beat of the piece, and at the same time forms a harmonic background for whatever is being played with the right hand (riffs, ragtime figures, march melodies, folk tunes and any other type of phrases the player chooses.). Therefore, the tones of the basic chords of the piece are frequently used in the construction of bass patterns in this style...” (Taylor 1983: 58)*



Schuller describes boogie-woogie as an “adjunct” of the blues form, which took one of three forms: an eight-bar pattern (the earliest); a twelve-bar pattern (the form most often played today); and a sixteen-bar pattern. His definition of this style appears in the Glossary of *Early Jazz*: “A “primitive” manner of playing the blues on the piano. It is characterized by a steady, repetitive ostinato figure in the left hand or bass.” (Schuller 1968: 374)<sup>33</sup>

Taylor points out though that although the various bass lines and melodies utilized in this style may be simplistic in their repetitive nature, boogie-woogie melodic phrases incorporate sequence, chromaticism and polyrhythms as well as devices including tremolo and the use of seconds, thirds and fourths. (Taylor 1983: 58)

What is particularly noticeable is that, among the five pre-Powell styles covered in this chapter, the left-hand ostinato bass figure in boogie-woogie bears little if any resemblance to the “angular” stride-influenced left-hand patterns that appear in piano ragtime, blues, stride and even in some swing. As “primitive” as boogie-woogie may be to Schuller (Schuller 1968: 374), its characteristic left-hand ostinato pattern exemplifies a giant leap forward in the development of jazz piano (and possibly even jazz overall) in several ways. First, and for the first time, rhythmically, the boogie-woogie bass line subdivides the bar into eight swinging eighth notes, giving this style new forward propulsion. Contrasting with the alternating low bass note-mid-register-chord approach employed in ragtime and blues, the broken octaves in boogie-woogie, which fall on either chord tones or passing tones per beat, create a more linear or melodic sounding bass pattern that could have been the harbinger of the walking tenths technique heard in swing style, not to mention in the “walking” bass line to come. The boogie-woogie bass line could be heard as a horizontalized (melodic) approach to the vertical (harmonic) role of the left hand. The

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<sup>33</sup> Note that the word “primitive” is in quotations, which this writer’s suggests is meant to convey the inherent simplicity of the ostinato bass patterns characteristic of boogie-woogie style.) Among the various dictionary definitions of the word “primitive” the following from the Apple Inc. Dictionary version 2.2.1 is the best fit: “Primitive: of or denoting a simple, direct style of art that deliberately rejects sophisticated artistic techniques.”

uppermost pitches in the left hand patterns create a convincing melody all of their own as illustrated in Sections A and D in Pine Top Smith's "The Original Boogie Woogie" composed in 1928, just a year before the composer's death (Fig. 2.16-2.19).<sup>34</sup>

Fig. 2.16 Pine Top Smith's "Original Boogie Woogie" – Section A

Fig. 2.17 Melody created by the uppermost pitch in the left hand ostinato pattern of "The Original Boogie Woogie"

<sup>34</sup> (The Original) Boogie Woogie  
 Music by Clarence "Pine Top" Smith  
 (c) 1929 (Renewed) EDWIN H. MORRIS & COMPANY, A Division of MPL Music Publishing, Inc.  
 This arrangement (c) 2015 EDWIN H. MORRIS & COMPANY, A Division of MPL Music Publishing, Inc.  
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Fig. 2.18 Pine Top Smith's "The Original Boogie Woogie" – Section D

Fig. 2.19 Melody created by the uppermost pitch in the left hand ostinato pattern of the "The Original Boogie Woogie" – Section D

The left-hand pattern in boogie-woogie is clearly a stylistic departure from its ragtime and blues predecessors, yet the division of role in the left and right hands remains the same as it does for them, as well as for its stride and swing successors.

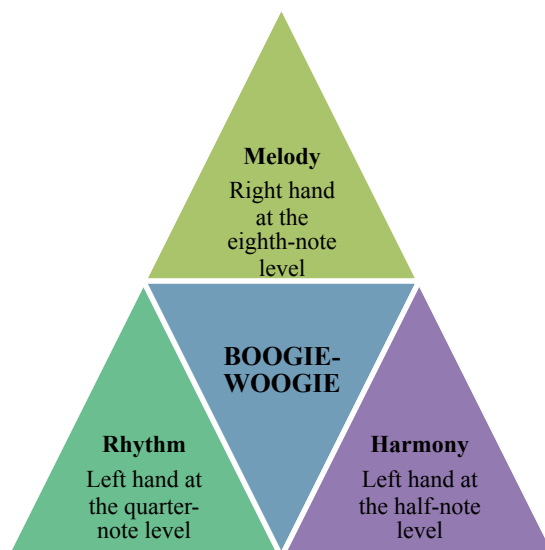


Fig. 2.20 Division of role per hand as applied to boogie-woogie

**The Rhythmic Role of the Left Hand** – In boogie-woogie, the low-register notes, occurring in various ostinato patterns (as exemplified in Smith’s boogie-woogie), subdivide the bar into four groups of dotted- eighth-sixteenth notes (for a total of eight notes,<sup>35</sup>). Each group (often comprising the same two pitches), played by the left hand, occurs at the quarter note level and constitutes the rhythmic unit.

**The Harmonic Role of the Left Hand** – Unlike stride-influenced styles, there are no mid-register chords in boogie-woogie. However, in addition to shouldering the rhythmic role, the left-hand ostinato patterns clearly convey the prevailing harmony – either in the form of roots and fifths, broken octaves or other patterns, and constitute the harmonic unit at the half note level.

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<sup>35</sup> Boogie-Woogie is also known as “eight to the bar” based on a left-hand ostinato pattern of the eight-note subdivisions (dotted-eighth-sixteenth-note rhythm) per bar in 4/4 meter.

The Melodic Role of the Right Hand – The high-register notes, occurring at the eighth-note level and played by the right hand, constitute the melodic unit.

As with its ragtime and blues predecessors, the two hands team up to maintain all aspects of rhythm, harmony and melody.

## **2.5 STRIDE (HARLEM STRIDE)**

Stride or Harlem stride is piano ragtime's closest descendant. Musicologists, including Berlin, Martin and Waters and Schuller to name several, support this statement, citing that these styles' close relationship is immediately apparent in the rhythmic, harmonic and melodic division of roles undertaken by the left and right hands.

Berlin writes "The term 'ragtime' has been applied inappropriately to other styles as well, most notably to stride piano (in this case, mislabeled "stride ragtime")<sup>36</sup>, which shares with ragtime a left-hand pattern of low bass notes alternating with closed-position chords in mid-piano." (Berlin 2002:166) Martin and Waters agree that the techniques used in the left hand in stride-style are similar to those in piano ragtime; but that stride pianists "treated the melodic right hand in a freer manner with added blues elements..." (Martin and Waters 2002: 23) Schuller weighs in on the similarity between the roles of the left hand in the two styles, acknowledging stride as an "evolutionary extension of ragtime piano." "In stride piano, the prevailing piano style throughout the twenties, itself an evolutionary extension of ragtime piano, the left hand played a leaping accompanimental pattern which generally placed bass notes on the first and third beats of a bar, and the harmony notes, one or two octaves higher, on the second and fourth beats." (Schuller 1989: 227)

In the second decade of the twentieth century, during the period of unprecedented prosperity known as the "Roaring Twenties", ragtime transitioned into what became

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<sup>36</sup> Taylor refers to this style as "ragtime-stride." (Taylor 1983: 66)

known as stride or Harlem stride. Jazz piano styles have evolved to a considerable extent since the advent of Harlem stride, yet even the most modern jazz piano trio leader covered in this thesis, Keith Jarrett, continues to pay implicit, referential and even reverential tribute to the technical basics of stride style.<sup>37</sup>

With deep rhythmic, harmonic and melodic roots in ragtime, blues and the ring shout, Harlem stride style was epitomized by pianists including Willie “The Lion” Smith (1893-1973), James P. Johnson (1894-1955) and Thomas “Fats” Waller (1904-1943). Among them, it was Johnson, who earned the title the “father of stride piano” based on the immeasurable contributions he made to the development of this genre – one that has endured well beyond the six decades of his life.<sup>38</sup> As mentioned earlier, for some unknown reason, the definition of the term “stride” or even “Harlem stride” is glaringly absent from Schuller’s Glossary of Terms – nor is it listed in the index – in “Early Jazz.” Schuller does however describe Johnson as having risen to become “the undisputed leader of the Harlem piano school” by 1920. (Schuller 1968: 215)

Johnson’s stride style, an outgrowth of the ragtime “school”, differs from its stylistic predecessor in several notable ways. First, rhythmically, his eighth notes are swung. Second, melodically, Johnson incorporates the horizontal element of the blues into his work. Previously noted, it was the blues that first appeared as sung rather than played on an instrument which influenced the primarily chord-tone focused melodies of ragtime to take on a more linear quality as exemplified in Johnson’s compositions. Martin notes:

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<sup>37</sup> One example of Jarrett’s use of stride-influenced style is heard on his double CD “My Foolish Heart” (Live at Montreux) recorded in 2001 where it is referenced in 3 tunes: Fats Waller’s two classics, “Ain’t Misbehavin’” and “Honeysuckle Rose,” and Richard Rodgers’s “You Took Advantage of Me.”

<sup>38</sup> Schuller and Southern place Johnson’s date of birth as 1891 and his date of death as 1955 (Schuller 1968: 215 and Southern 1997: 396); Blesh and Janis place his date of birth as 1894. (Blesh and Janis 1971: 203) A photograph of a tombstone created by the James P. Johnson Foundation lists his date of birth as 1894. (2015 <http://bit.ly/1h6aTNU>)

*“Deviations from arpeggiation could be heard in the blues, which was more linear and modally based than the circle-of-fifths dependency of jazz applied to the popular song. The more nonfunctional basis of the blues surely derived from its being closer to its African origins, where harmony in the European sense was not a factor in the music’s structure.”* (Martin 1996: 6-7)

Third, based on comparisons of multiple recordings of the same composition, it is known for certain that Johnson added the element of improvisation into his performances.<sup>39</sup>

However, among these idiosyncratic traits, Schuller maintains it is Johnson’s implementation of swing rhythm that was his greatest musical contribution.

*“James P. Johnson’s greatest contribution was to recast the rhythms of ragtime into a more swinging steadier jazz beat. To implement this he had a steady, rocking left hand providing a reliable rhythmic substructure. But even at its “stridingest,” his left hand added a flow and forward movement that none of the earlier players had, except Morton.”* (Schuller 1968: 216)

Schuller goes on to add that perhaps Johnson’s left-hand “flow and forward movement” (Ibid.) may be attributed to the infusion of the blues that he incorporated into his right-hand melodies. He notes that the intrinsically mechanical nature of the piano more easily promotes rhythmic and harmonic (vertical) considerations than those that are melodically (horizontally) oriented. Given that ragtime has its roots in the piano, and that the piano by design more easily accommodates rhythmic and harmonic rather than melodic aspects, it was only natural that ragtime melodies played by a pianist’s right hand exemplified a rhythmic and harmonic emphasis.

*“The point is that the pure ragtime tradition was essentially a piano tradition. As such it could deal easily with vertical, harmonic ideas and a more mechanical,*

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<sup>39</sup> That said, Henry Martin discusses the aspect of improvisation in stride style compositions in his article “Balancing Composition and Improvisation in James P. Johnson’s ‘Carolina Shout.’” Martin argues that stride inherently was a compositional rather than improvisational form to begin with. He maintains that although this style was more conducive to improvisation than its ragtime predecessor, the complexity of its multi-sectional structure is such that it doesn’t lend itself to improvisation like the shorter modern theme-based forms used by Powell and beyond.

*percussive, and rigid application of rhythms than the blues could. But by superimposing the vocal, linear feeling of the blues on the piano, James P. made an important break with the past and changed the piano into an expressive instrument.* “ (Schuller 1968: 217)

The impact of the horizontally focused blues on stride style added a new linearity to melodic lines as exemplified in Johnson’s work.

In discussing stride style, Schuller describes the contributions Johnson’s left and right hands made to jazz as more horizontally- than vertically-focused than ever before. “But the smoothness of the right-hand runs, the more relaxed flow of the left hand – in other words, the whole “horizontalization” of the music – represented at the time a new direction in jazz piano.” (Schuller 1968: 217) It is important to note that Johnson’s compositions were written in 4/4 rather than 2/4 meter. The expansiveness of this meter presented the composer with an opportunity to create more horizontally focused melodic phrases – one on which swing pianists continued to capitalize.

Comparing the rhythmic, melodic and harmonic *roles* employed by the left and right hands in Joplin’s most popular composition, “Maple Leaf Rag,” with the Johnson iconic composition “Charleston,” there are clear *stylistic* differences between the piano ragtime and stride genres as noted above; but *technically* speaking, the division of role carried out by the left and right hands is the same. The division of role in In Harlem stride, as exemplified in Johnson’s stride classic “Charleston,” published in 1924, is the same as it is in Joplin’s “Maple Leaf Rag,” published in 1898, close to a quarter of a century earlier. Focusing on roles per hand, Posnak describes the “virtuoso style called stride developed by the Harlem rent-shouters” (Posnak 1998: Kindle Location 72), which used ragtime as a springboard. Of particular note here is his view of the left-hand tenth, which as he describes here, developed “a life of its own.”

*“The oom-pah left hand of ragtime was expanded to wide leaps between main-beat bass notes and weak-beat chords, often jumping two or more octaves. Single-note and octave basses were often replaced by tenths or filled-in tenths— a bigger sound*



*(for big hands), at a faster tempo. The left-hand tenth developed a life of its own, often “streaming” in parallel instead of striding, sometimes starting with the upper-note thumb instead of the bass-note fifth finger (“backward tenths”), sometimes mixing it up on the main and secondary beats to throw the listener off balance. Meanwhile, the right hand was freed up to cut figure eights around the melody, with brilliant passagework, combinations of single- and double-note riffs, chords, and melodic improvisation, often at cross-rhythm with the steady, driving left hand.” (Posnak 1998: Kindle Location 73)*

The rhythmic and harmonic roles played by the left hand and the melodic role played by right hand is exemplified in bars 25-32 in Johnson’s “Charleston” (Fig. 2.21).

The image displays a musical score for the piece "Charleston" by Johnson, specifically bars 25 through 32. The score is written for piano in 4/4 time and is in the key of B-flat major. It is presented in three systems, each with a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The first system begins at bar 25, the second at bar 28, and the third at bar 31. The left hand plays a steady, driving eighth-note accompaniment, often using "backward tenths" (starting with the thumb on the upper note). The right hand plays a melodic line with complex rhythmic patterns, including figure eights and various chords and riffs. The score includes dynamic markings such as *mf* and *f*, and articulation marks like accents and slurs.

Fig. 2.21 Transcription of bars 25-32 of Johnson’s “Charleston” (transcribed by Paul Marcorelles)

The division of role in the left and right hands in stride-style remains the same as it did in piano ragtime, blues and boogie-woogie: the left hand shoulders the rhythmic and harmonic roles; the right hand, the melodic role.

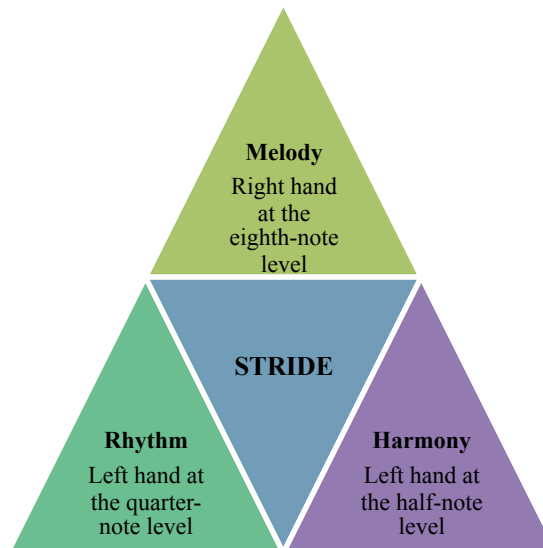


Fig. 2.22 Division of role per hand as applied to stride

The Rhythmic Role of the Left Hand – Fitting perfectly into Mehegan’s rhythmically hierarchical schema, in 4/4-meter stride style, the low-register notes, which occur as single notes or tenths rather than octaves at the quarter- rather than the eighth-note level, are played by the left hand and constitute the rhythmic unit. Note: One important stylistic difference between stride and ragtime is the use of the single note or the tenth rather than the octave in the left-hand bass pattern. Mehegan points out the many technically related advantages of thinning out the low note in the left-hand bass pattern:

*“By using the single note, the stride pianists were able to achieve an even more incredible speed in their left-hand motion. Thus, the use of the single note permitted more freedom in the harmonic functions of the left hand since only the extended fifth finger was necessary to strike the bass note, reducing the “traveling” distance of the left-hand movement, particularly in striking the black keys. This advantage further allowed for more chromatic roots moving in more complex inverted chords than previously possible. An added asset of the single-note root was an improved*

*architectural relationship between the left and right hands by reducing the ponderous octave in the bass register.” Mehegan 1964: 13*

Although applicable to the left and right hands both, “stop time,” a rhythmic technique utilized to build rhythmic tension and excitement is clearly evident in “Charleston.”<sup>40</sup> Also, as cited earlier, the main theme of this composition is based on the pan-Caribbean originated tresillo (dotted quarter-note – eighth-note – quarter rest – quarter-note) rhythm.

The Harmonic Role of the Left Hand – Mid-register chords played by the left hand occur at the half note rather than quarter-note level and constitute the harmonic unit. Harmony is not more complex than root position and various inversions of basic major or minor triads or dominant seventh chords. However the incorporation of the tenth, as enigmatic as this interval is, certainly provides more harmonic information than just one note or an octave.<sup>41</sup>

The Melodic Role of the Right Hand – As with ragtime, blues and boogie-woogie, the melody, which is played by the right hand, occurs at the eighth-note level and constitutes the melodic unit. Stylistically, melodic lines begin moving away from their previous chord-tone focus, in part due to the incorporation of blues-infused lines.

The Stride Gestalt – With a hand – literally the left hand – in the development of the left-hand response based “comping” technique that became the norm in the Bebop Era, Jasen and Jones maintain that what sets stride apart from its not too distant kinsman, ragtime, is that in stride, the left hand was no longer so rigidly tied to the metronomic role it had played in ragtime, and that it was “set free to jam with the right, to provide syncopated

---

<sup>40</sup> “Stop time” is a rhythmic device utilized by composers to bring attention to a given phrase whereby the left and right hands in unison repeat a particular short rhythmic pattern, usually at the beginning of each bar for the entire length of the phrase, interrupting the established continuous rhythmic motion of the written material. The term “stop time” is a misnomer in that time (the pulse) does not literally stop; the rests in between the repeated rhythmic patterns create an illusion that “time stops” between each bar when in reality the pulse is merely implied.

<sup>41</sup> Mehegan makes the important point that a minor tenth interval may imply any one of eight different harmonies. (Mehegan 1964: 12)

countermelodies, and to produce unexpected accents to contrast with those in the upper octaves.” (Jasen and Jones 2002: Kindle edition) The authors contend that rhythm in general becomes more complex because the left hand is also contributing syncopated accompaniment. “Stride literally doubles the possibilities for syncopations...” (Ibid.)

The harmonic fabric in stride became more complex in stride in big part due to the implication introduced by the incorporation of the tenth in the left hand.

The importance of the incorporation of blues elements into stride (as well as all pre-Bebop piano styles) cannot be overestimated. Schuller makes a weighty observation that (similar to Morton) it was due to the assimilation of the linear element of the blues into Johnson’s stride style that factored heavily into the transition from ragtime to jazz. (Schuller 1968: 216)

Acknowledging its ragtime lineage, Taylor credits stride for the seminal rhythmic, melodic and harmonic contributions that subsequently laid the groundwork for its swing successor.

*“Ragtime-stride extended all the elements and devices developed by several generations of ragtime composer-performers and laid the foundation for the four-beat feeling inherent in swing, the longer melodic lines, and the greater use of harmonic patterns involving ninth and thirteenth chords.”* (Taylor 1982, 1983: 73)

## **2.6 SWING**

In his Glossary, Schuller describes the term “swing” in the broad context as an era: “A period in the development of jazz (1935-1945) characterized by the emergence and national popularity of “swing” bands, the Swing Era. (Schuller 1989: 867). Conversely, in “Swing and Early Progressive Piano Styles” Mehegan refers to swing in the narrower context as a distinct piano style, lending credence to its progenitor, ragtime, but acknowledging its demise to make way for a whole new artistic gestalt, bebop. He states that the fifteen-year period from “...1935 to 1950 represents a culmination of the ragtime

tradition dating back to 1900; it also represent the years in which this great tradition was destroyed and replaced by the modern innovations of the “bop” era.” (Mehegan 1964: 9)

Successors of the Harlem stride “school” stylists, four swing pianists who made seminal contributions to this style in both solo and ensemble formats (listed chronologically by date of birth) include Earl “Fatha” Hines (1903-1983), Art Tatum (1909-1956), Teddy Wilson (1912-1986) and Nat “King” Cole (1919-1965). The contributions of Tatum and Cole, in their role as leaders of the jazz piano trio format, are covered in Chapter Three. The technical and stylistic strides made by Hines and Wilson are addressed here. These two pianists’ respective unique contributions to jazz piano – in either a solo piano or ensemble context – are worthy of note.

Hines – The swing pianist’s left hand referenced stride technique but the right hand ventured well beyond the vertical-focused melodies originating in ragtime and stride as evidenced in the work of Hines. “Hines radically transformed jazz piano when he was barely twenty-two years old, expanding upon all previously established piano styles from ragtime to the stride idioms of the early twenties.” (Schuller 1989: 264) Mehegan comments on the melodic “strides” made in the Swing Era – and in particular, those made by Hines. “The new concepts in the right hand improvised line came from an entirely different source – Midwesterner Earl Hines. Hines, formerly a ragtime pianist, had seen the ragtime prison of the right hand and turned to the soaring melodic genius of Louis Armstrong to free the right hand from the oppressive mannerisms of ragtime.” (Mehegan 1964: 13)

Hines is given credit for inventing the “trumpet style” approach to improvisation aimed at emulating the linearity of a trumpet or saxophone. (Schuller contends however, that in spite of all of the hype around Hines’s then supposed new style, his contributions are both “revolutionary and evolutionary,” citing aspects of his playing that had been incorporated into his predecessors’ work, including “Jelly Roll” Morton (on “Muddy Water Blues” and

“Big Foot Ham”(1923)), Eubie Blake (on “Sounds of Africa”(1921)), and James P. Johnson (on “Carolina Shout”(1921) and “You’ve Got to be Modernistic”(1930)). ” (Schuller 1989: 264)) Schuller contends that Hines’s styles was far from sounding like a trumpet or for that matter any other “horn” because of the inherent percussive nature of the piano. He contends that if there is anything about Hines’s playing that resembles a trumpet it is only “to the extent that there is something of the lean, cutting sound of a trumpet in Hines’s tone and touch, something he conceivably had in his ear throughout childhood from his brass-playing father and uncle, the former a member of a fourteen-piece brass band.” Schuller 1989: Kindle Locations 5412-5414)

Wilson – Feather notes the incomparable artistry exhibited by the Benny Goodman Trio, featuring Goodman on clarinet, Wilson on piano and Krupa on drums:

*“Teddy Wilson’s key role, along with the discreet drumming of Gene Krupa and Goodman’s matchless virtuosity, established this as the first genuine example of the piano chamber jazz.”*

*“Wilson’s style was hailed in its day as a retrenchment from, or at least a contrast to, the incisive, more strongly rhythmic work of Earl Hines. Wilson rose quickly to become, along with Hines and Fats Waller, one of the predominant piano influences of the day.”* (“Keyboard” February 1984: 34)

A member of the Benny Goodman trio from 1935-1939 and a devotee of Hines, his style reflects Hinesian left- and right-hand traits: first, what Mehegan describes as a left-hand “swing-bass tenth system” and second, the incorporation of octave melodies in the right hand. (Mehegan 1964: 15) With technical roots in stride piano, Wilson’s swing-bass tenth system was not an absolutely revolutionary left-hand technique at this time as noted by Mehegan, who points out that swing pianists, including Wilson and Tatum, “utilized the innovations of the Harlem school which were particularly applicable to the left-hand structure.” (Mehegan 1964: 13) With left-hand roots in the stride players of the twenties (Waller, Smith and Johnson), he cites that Wilson’s right hand was a direct descendent of Earl “Fatha” Hines. (Mehegan 1964: 13)

Utilizing the swing-bass tenth system (tenth-chord-tenth-chord), diatonic and chromatic tenths, and combinations of all of them on every beat per bar, Wilson was able to unequivocally define both rhythm and harmony (although, as mentioned above, the use of the tenth added the element of harmonic implication). The diatonic and chromatic motion also added an important contrapuntal element to his right hand (“horizontal verticalization”), portending the appearance of the “walking” bass line to come. Given Wilson’s left hand’s extensive rhythmic and harmonic coverage, Feather notes it is not surprising that “neither Goodman nor Wilson seemed inhibited by the absence of a bass player, though in later years Goodman would invariably add a bassist to provide what seemed like an essential harmonic foundation.” (Keyboard February 1984: 34)

Examples of swing-bass tenths (tenth-chord-tenth-chord), diatonic tenths, chromatic tenths and a combination of them all are illustrated here (Fig. 2.23-2.26). (Mehegan 1964: 15-16)



Fig. 2.23 Left-hand swing bass pattern: tenth-chord-tenth-chord



Fig. 2.24 Left-hand swing bass pattern: diatonic tenths



Fig. 2.25 Left-hand swing bass pattern: chromatic tenths + tenth-chord-tenth chord



Fig. 2.26 Left-hand swing bass pattern: a combination of diatonic and chromatic tenths + tenth-chord

The division of role in the left and right hands in swing-style remained the same as it was in stride-style: the left hand shoulders the rhythmic and harmonic roles, and the right hand, the melodic role.

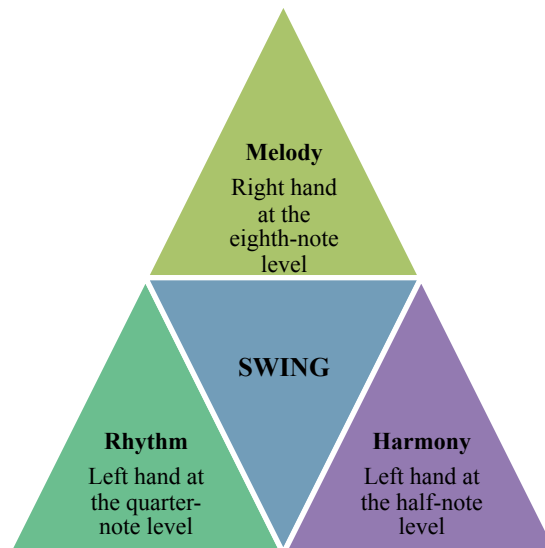


Fig. 2.27 Division of role per hand as applied to swing

The Rhythmic Role of the Left Hand – Left-hand swing piano technique drew extensively from its progenitor, stride. In 4/4 meter, the low-register notes played by the left hand occur as single notes or tenths at the quarter-note level and constitute the rhythmic unit.

The Harmonic Role of the Left Hand – Per Mehegan, the Wilson swing-bass tenth system “must be approached from both the *horizontal* and *vertical* points of view in order to



capture its intrinsic beauty.” (Mehegan 1964: 16) The mid-register chords played by the left hand occur at the half-note rather than quarter-note level and constitute the harmonic unit.

The Melodic Role of the Right Hand – The high-register notes played by the right hand occur at the eighth-note level and constitute the melodic unit. Melodic lines are horizontally rather than vertically focused.

The Swing Gestalt – *Technically*, the two hands together address all aspects of rhythm, harmony and melody; *stylistically*, the traits intrinsic to swing style forecast the future – bebop – a style created by musicians who deliberately sought to abandon their swing forerunners’ conventions in search of a means to greater self-expression.

## 2.7 SUMMARY

*“Each period eventually exemplifies and defines itself, even if sometimes its deciphering cannot be accomplished in its own time and must await retrospective interpretation. And yet as individual as each era may ultimately be, it cannot be entirely separated from its connections to the past and its links to the future.”*  
(Schuller 1989: 845)

This chapter serves as a general outline, tracing the evolution of styles and techniques of seminal piano styles from the early twentieth century piano ragtime of Scott Joplin through the mid-forties swing style of Nat “King” Cole that are particularly relevant to the development of the modern piano-bass-drums jazz piano trio paradigm. Consistent with Schuller’s view, evidence reveals that particular stylistic and technical aspects of piano ragtime are undeniably perceptible in blues, boogie-woogie, stride, and swing piano styles. Although there are distinct stylistic differences among them, they all share a technical commonality: the rhythmic, harmonic and melodic division of role in the left and right hands is homologous. That is, in all of these styles, the left hand is primarily accountable for the rhythmic and harmonic considerations; and the right hand, for the melodic considerations.

Schuller's contention that "...as individual as each era may ultimately be, it cannot be entirely separated from its connections to the past and its links to the future" is relevant to the transition that the Swing Era made into the Bebop Era – but not the least in the sense that Bebop Era pianists (and other musicians) sought to *extend* the established fifty-year stylistic continuum. Ironically, it was those very connections to the past that incited Bebop Era musicians' dramatic severance with the Swing Era traditions. In their search for a means to greater self-expression, Bebop Era musicians swept aside the Swing Era convention of creating music for the sake of entertainment for serious "art music" that promoted themselves as individuals and moreover, as individual artists. Stylistically, the Bebop Era saw rhythmic, harmonic and melodic complexity soar to new heights, for musicians across the board no longer had to bend to creating and performing music accessible to the masses. As alluded to earlier, for pianists in particular, this search manifested itself in a technically notable way: the left hand gave up its dual low and mid-register rhythmic and harmonic roles for a single mid-register harmonic role, abandoning the solo piano setting for a place in the rhythm section of a small ensemble. A new era was born when Swing Era pianists abandoned the swing bass as their left-hand go-to technique. Mehegan writes of its impact on solo piano in particular:

*"The demise of swing-bass also spelled the end of solo piano as an exuberant and flourishing art. It would seem in armchair retrospect that solo jazz piano might have endured this transition by adapting new measures which could have insured the continuation of such a vital adjunct of jazz. The decision to reduce the role of jazz piano to a rhythm section component was made by Bud Powell, and we must assume his genius inexorably led him to this inevitable and true conclusion."*  
(Mehegan 1964: 14)

In the 1968 publication *Early Jazz*, his first volume devoted to chronicling the history of jazz, Schuller contends that young people are repelled by older jazz, and in particular, piano music given its stereotype as "zany, cornball novelty music." He states: "It is easy to see that they are put off by the unrelieved "oom-pah" of the left hand, the rigid ragtime syncopations, and the frequent melodic clichés." (Schuller 1968: 171) (Schuller implies

that he is also speaking for himself.) The key word in Schuller's elegy is "unrelieved" in that it describes a static mechanical environment, devoid of opportunities for individual self-expression – the antithesis of the in-the-moment creative playing field musicians in the mid-1940s began seeking. Both Mehegan and Schuller believe that the transition in division of role that occurred played a major role in the demise of solo piano, and not surprisingly: the left hand gave up its commitment to one of its two critical roles – rhythm. The instability that resulted created a dependency – a need that was addressed by a bassist and drummer (addressed in Chapter Three) in the context of the iconic jazz piano trio.

Remnants of the five styles covered in this chapter appear from time to time in the Bebop Era and beyond, but bebop style and technique radically broke with the rhythmic, harmonic and melodic traditions of the past as evidenced by Powell on his first jazz piano trio recording as a leader in 1947.



### Chapter Three

## JAZZ PIANO TRIOS PRE-POWELL

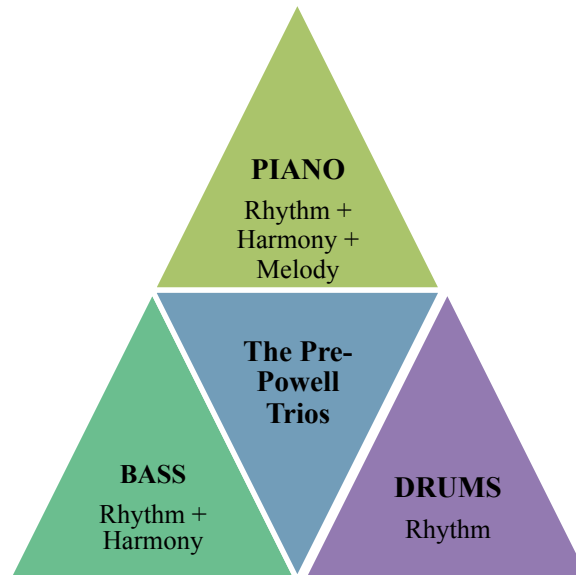


Fig. 3. Division of role in pre-Powell trios

*“The trio format didn’t catch on during the first ten years of recorded jazz. During the decade following the Original Dixieland Jazz Band’s hallmark 1917 session, few attempts were made to record this embryonic idiom in a subtle or intimate manner, partly because jazz was still fundamentally a dance music played without benefit of sophisticated amplification in less than sedate clubs, a fact that encouraged musicians to sacrifice introspection for straightforward rhythm and performance volumes that could compete with audience noise levels.” (Feather 1984: 34)*

In his article “The 10 Greatest Jazz Piano Trios” in the February 1984 issue of *Keyboard*, Feather traces the development of the jazz piano trio citing the July 13, 1935 recording of the trio led by clarinetist Benny Goodman with pianist Teddy Wilson and drummer Gene Krupa as “the first genuine example of the piano chamber jazz setting.” (Feather 1984: 34)

Feather’s claim may or may not have taken into consideration the recording that the self-proclaimed inventor of jazz, pianist Jelly Roll Morton, made with the same

instrumentation ten years prior to Goodman's<sup>1</sup>; nor does he mention the recording made by the piano-bass-drums-comprised Jess Stacy Trio in 1935, that very same year. One way or another, Feather goes on to note that the unusual instrumentation of Goodman's trio – that is, without the harmonic grounding of a bass – did not seem to faze the group. This was likely due to Swing Era pianist Wilson's stride- and swing-influenced left-hand that provided the group with a solid harmonic underpinning as Feather contends here:

*“It is noteworthy that neither Goodman nor Wilson seemed inhibited by the absence of a bass player, though in later years Goodman would invariably add a bassist to provide what seemed like an essential harmonic foundation. To this day the early Goodman Trio sides retain their self-sufficiency and validity.”* (Feather 1984: 34)

As self-sufficient as Goodman's trio may have sounded to Feather in 1984, today, over thirty years later, the unique instrumentation of clarinet, piano and drums has yet to catch on. But two other piano-led jazz piano trio formats did: the piano-bass-guitar-comprised trio, and the piano-bass-drums-comprised trio. Although the piano-bass-guitar configuration has continued to serve as a viable, albeit much less popular, option to this day,<sup>2</sup> the contributions made by a select group of pre-Powell leaders in this format warrant its attention here. Between the two formats however, it is the piano-bass-drums-comprised trio format that has proven to stand the test of time.

This chapter first examines the earliest works of three seminal Swing Era pianists who led piano-bass-guitar-comprised trios influential in the development of the piano-bass-drums-comprised trio format (listed chronologically by date of birth): **Art Tatum** (b. 1909, d. 1956); **Clarence Profit** (b. 1912, d. 1944); and **Nat King Cole** (b. 1919, d. 1965). Note: these pianists' trios are subsequently covered chronologically by the date of their first recording rather than by their date of birth.

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<sup>1</sup> This oversight may be due either to Feather's known dislike of Morton or, that his categorization of Morton as an “early jazz” pianist eliminated him from the “jazz pianist” applicant pool.

<sup>2</sup> Oscar Peterson, Ahmad Jamal, Benny Green and Diana Krall are among preeminent American jazz pianists well known for leading piano-bass-guitar and piano-bass-drums trio formats.

Next, this chapter examines the earliest works of four historically proven pianists who led piano-bass-*drums*-comprised trios preceding Powell's 1947 recording (listed chronologically by date of birth): **Jess Stacy** (b. 1904, d. 1995); **Mary Lou Williams** (b.1910, d. 1981); **Erroll Garner** (b. 1921, d. 1977); and **Oscar Peterson** (b. 1925, d. 2007). Note: these pianists' trios are also subsequently covered chronologically by the date of their first recording.

Continuing to trace the analogy between the jazz piano trio and their democratic tendencies, each of these leaders' respective first recordings will serve as a baseline for tracking the development of the pre-Powell piano-guitar-bass- and piano-bass-drums trio formats, pre-Powell by virtue of the degree to which they manifest the following three criteria:

- Individuality – the extent to which trio membership has the opportunity for individual expression (of the people)
- Division of role – the rhythmic, harmonic and melodic roles played by membership (by the people); and
- The trio gestalt – the distinguishing rhythmic, melodic and harmonic considerations that together set each trio, as a collective unit, apart from one another (for the people)

This chapter focuses on quantifying and qualifying the developments in both the piano-bass-guitar-comprised trio format and the piano-bass-drums-comprised trio format with regard to three criteria: each unit's leader's predisposition to a democratic playing field i.e., the extent of the prevailing individuality; the flexibility among membership's rhythmic, harmonic and melodic roles; and the distinguishing considerations at work respective to each unit as a cooperative enterprise i.e., the trio gestalt). Note: This survey covers only those characteristics that most distinctly set each trio apart from one another.

As discussed in Chapter One, democracy is inextricably linked with individuality and division of role. This thesis supports the contention that the development of democracy

within the trio configuration hinges to a great extent on the stylistic developments that have taken place in the piano per se over the past eighty years, and provides evidence that those that occur relative to the piano, in particular, are in direct correlation with the increase in artistic indispensability that evolves among the unit's respective membership across the board. Granted, the trios' "sidemen" – guitarists, bassists and drummers alike – also undergo major stylistic developments throughout the Swing Era. However, the groundbreaking stylistic evolution that has taken place within the realm of jazz piano, in itself, since 1935, has served in large part to inspire the other two members of the trio to rise to the occasion both technically and stylistically to facilitate a level playing field. As in the aphorism 'A rising tide lifts all boats', the technical and stylistic developments of the "sidemen" evolved to create a synergetic triumvirate. Paradoxically however, as the division of role became more evenly distributed among the group, the three *independent*, yet mutually supportive musicians, at the same time, produced an *interdependent* coalition – a paradigm clearly manifested within the various Evans trio recordings, beginning with his aforementioned 1947 anomalous case in point.

The evolution of jazz piano has been a critical factor in determining the extent to which each musician in the jazz piano trio setting plays a vital role in the collective artistic outcome. This thesis provides evidence that in the context of either the guitar- or drums-comprised trio setting, it is primarily the pianist's style that is the principal driving force in creating a paradigm that in most cases *pre-Powell*, either merely accommodates its sidemen, or in most cases *Powell* and *post-Powell*, completely compels and engages them to play an essential role in realizing the collective artistic objective. Specifically, it is pianists' gradual transition away from the dominating rhythmic and harmonic left-hand "comp" patterns manifested in stride- and swing styles that serves as *the* critical factor in nurturing the indispensability that develops among the modern jazz piano trio's collective membership. Over time, the pianist, bassist and guitarist/drummer respectively have developed greater *independence* (diversification of role), which at the same time, ironically, has produced a greater *interdependence* among them in their quest for a successful artistic result. With greater freedom comes a greater responsibility by each



member to hold up his or her end of the artistic bargain in creating the collective artistic outcome.

### **3.1 Piano-Bass-Guitar Trios**

The piano-bass-guitar trio format first emerged in the late 1930s, approximately a decade earlier than Powell's 1947 piano-bass-drums trio benchmark: *The Bud Powell Trio*. There is evidence to support the impact that the three leaders of the piano-bass-guitar-comprised trios covered in this chapter have on the development of the structure of the modern piano-bass-drums trio *in general*, and on the personal stylistic development of the three seminal leaders – Powell, Evans and Jarrett – who comprise the primary focus of this thesis, *in particular*; thus, the relevance of this particular trio format here.

The piano-bass-guitar-comprised trio format appeared at the time when jazz began to make the pivotal transition from music for dancing, to music for listening. Big bands in the raucous setting of the large hall made way for small ensembles in the intimate setting of the nightclub. These small ensembles were no longer required to overcome the cacophonous volume produced by a large hall of dancers, and also, no longer needed a drum set to propel tempos.<sup>3</sup> The membership in this drummer-less rhythm-section-based ensemble format now turned their focus inward on themselves and their music, producing results with greater subtlety and detail.

**Nathaniel Adams Coles AKA Nat “King” Cole – b. 1919; d. 1965** – The popularity of the piano-bass-guitar trio format was based in large part on the high standard and irresistible sound created by what is America's first and most popular piano-bass-guitar-comprised trio, the Nat “King” Cole Trio. Cole defied the odds of attaining success in the world of jazz to become one of the most celebrated and financially successful jazz musicians in jazz history. One of the jazz musician's all-time favorite jokes – Question: “How do you make a million dollars as a jazz musician?” Answer: “Start with five million.” – was far from applicable to Cole. He started with nothing and earned his

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<sup>3</sup> The mandatory military draft implemented in the Second World War also contributed to depleting the ranks of the big bands, which, as a consequence, promoted the rise of the small bands.

tremendous success single-handedly, inspiring a long list of jazz pianists to opt for the trio with guitar rather than with drums – a format, which subsequently spread like wildfire. On NPR's *Jazz Profiles*, jazz pianist and educator Dr. Billy Taylor comments on how Cole's trio was the standard of that time: "There was a whole period where if your trio didn't sound somewhat like the Nat Cole trio, you didn't work too much. That was the standard by which many groups were judged." (<http://n.pr/1Idx4dB>)

Pairing down the typical four-piece 1930s Swing Era piano-bass-drums-guitar rhythm section to a drummer-less trio also had an economical advantage: the opportunity to pay three rather than four musicians made it more attractive to employers. Another not so insignificant reason for the popularity of this particular trio configuration is that a guitarist took up much less room than a drummer on the bandstand, making this format more conducive to getting work in smaller club settings.

Functionally, in line with Mehegan's thinking, in the context of the piano-bass-guitar trio, it was the guitarist who took on the role of the drummer, providing a consistent blanket of chords that were for the most part strummed on every beat. This solid rhythmic foundation, at the quarter-note level (the level of the pulse), freed up the pianist to concentrate on soloing without simultaneously having to worry about sustaining the time – and/or, as an added bonus, defining the harmony. A solid bassist enabled the pianist and guitarist to alternate roles of both accompanist and soloist. One was free to solo while the other solidified the rhythm and harmony, and vice versa. Together, the pianist, bassist and guitarist produced a rich, colorful texture that, at the same time, adeptly covered the entire range of rhythmic, melodic and harmonic considerations.

The first iteration of the Nat "King" Cole trio began in 1937 In Los Angeles as "The King Cole Swingsters" with Cole on piano, Oscar Moore on guitar and Wesley Prince on bass.<sup>4</sup> On NPR's *Jazz Profiles*, singer and pianist Bobby Short and composer and arranger Pete Rugolo set the scene in Los Angeles in the late 1930s:

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<sup>4</sup> According to Feather, this was the first significant piano-led chamber jazz ensemble. (*Keyboard* 1984: 34)

Short: *“The environment was fraught with musicians who were talented and ready and willing and able because there was no television. So one recorded or one played on the radio, or even better for us listeners, one played in clubs, live. And there were gigs all over the place...There were always chances for live music to be played. And there were countless bars and restaurants and grills and hotel rooms where one could go and play. Nat played at a place called the 331 I remember over on Eighth Street for a long, long time. A lot of action!”*

Rugolo: *“I used to go hear him play with his trio on Western Avenue at 331 Club. He never thought of singing except he’d sing a song once in a while – he’d sing Sweet Lorraine or something. He love singing but he never thought he’d make a living at singing ‘cause – he was known as a great pianist and his trio was so great.”* (<http://n.pr/1Idx4dB>)

Cole had it all: along with Rugolo, Feather and many other noted jazz musicians, critics and educators, thought of him as a groundbreaking jazz pianist first – even though his vocal prowess proved to be just as deserving of recognition (to saying nothing of the fact that it also played a large part in the huge commercial success he enjoyed as an internationally renowned entertainer). “Cole occasionally sang tunes like “Sweet Lorraine” and the memorable blues “That Ain’t Right”, but his main contribution was as a pianist.” (Feather 1984: 34)

A devotee of pianist Earl “Fatha” Hines, Cole not only influenced many of the art form’s noted jazz pianists, but as a singer with an otherworldly tone, he also served as an important jazz ambassador who had the ability to translate a very complex music into a language that not only became accessible to, but also loved and consumed by the general public.

Chronicling Cole’s dual roles as jazz pianist and vocalist, NPR’s Jazz Profiles produced a two-part documentary on Cole: Part I, titled “Nat “King” Cole: The Pianist,” pays particular tribute to his artistry in his role as a pianist; and Part II, titled “Nat “King” Cole: The Vocalist,” extols his virtues in his role as a vocalist. (<http://n.pr/1Idx4dB>) Host of the documentary, internationally renowned jazz, blues, cabaret and pop singer Nancy Wilson cites the paradox that she and many others believe permeated Cole’s life. She contends

that although Cole's greatest strength lay in his ability as a jazz pianist, his greatest success was a completely unintentional result of his extraordinary ability as a pop vocalist. Wilson states: "Nat Cole made his greatest success as a singer of ballads and pop standards, but he was first and foremost a jazz musician." (Ibid.)

Jazz historian Gary Giddins, for one, feels that too much has been made of Cole's dual artistic personalities and that his vocal prowess was in fact steeped in the jazz tradition.

*"Yet the split between his jazz and pop selves is probably overstated. The thing about Cole's singing that becomes heightened after you detour through the instrumental work is how infused with jazz it is, even when the material is dire. Comparisons have been drawn between Coles' vocal timbre and phrasing and that of tenor saxophonist Lester Young, the casual swing and cool intonation."*  
(Giddins 1998: 405)

In the aforementioned NPR documentary, singer and pianist Bobby Short describes Cole as being a "musician" first. His distinctive inflection on the word "musician" may suggest that the point he is making is not about jazz versus pop styles of music, but rather about Cole's role as a pianist versus his role as a vocalist.<sup>5</sup>

Short: *"I think that Nat was first of all a musician and he cared most about making music as has been evidenced by his long list of recordings – successful recordings, that is – and his brilliant piano playing. You don't get that by just being sexy. He was a darned good musician."* (<http://n.pr/1Idx4dB>)

Short talks about the unique instrumentation of the King Cole trio:

*"He (Cole) was one of the first that I can recall to pair down the ensemble to the piano, bass and guitar. That was followed quickly by others who saw his success. Working with a guitar is a very intricate business for a pianist because you have to get your chords and your figures and your syncopation together, and Nat with Oscar Moore had worked it out fairly well."* (Ibid.)

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<sup>5</sup> Given Short's unmistakable emphasis on the word 'musician', the writer believes it is possible that he is implying that Cole's skill as a pianist superseded his skill as a vocalist. Instrumentalists and even vocalists unfortunately often, subconsciously, prejudicially place musicians into the categories of *musicians* and vocalists rather than *instrumentalists* and vocalists!

So what was the catalyst behind the particular guitar-comprised trio chosen by Cole? In his biography of Nat King Cole titled “Nat King Cole”, author Daniel Mark Epstein provides one explanation: “Like so many milestones in the history of the performing arts”, the piano-guitar-bass configured King Cole Trio arose from both an “artistic impulse as well as a practical need.” (Epstein 1999: 73)

The artistic impulse and practical need Epstein is referring to here may be just have been a twist of a fate in Cole’s case. That is, many club owners could not afford full orchestras, but they wanted a sound that was fuller than a solo pianist for their patrons who primarily came to *dance*, not just to *listen* to a band. While working as a solo pianist at the Century Club in Los Angeles in 1937, Cole was offered a good-paying job at a nightclub in Hollywood called the Swanee Inn, but only if he could find a bassist, guitarist and drummer to round out the group. According to Epstein, it turned out that the bandstand at the Swanee Inn was too small to hold the entire quartet, so Cole opted for the drummer-less piano-bass-guitar format. The size limitation of the bandstand was serendipitous for Cole. His trio with guitarist Moore and bassist Prince landed a six-month run at the Swanee Inn and stayed together thereafter to become the renowned Nat King Cole Trio.<sup>6</sup>

Again, the four-piece Swing Era piano-bass-drums-guitar-comprised rhythm section was a rule; a three-piece drummer-less trio, an exception. Friedwald notes how Cole used piano, guitar and bass to his personal artistic advantage in this transcribed interview from the NPR documentary:

*“The guitar was a standard instrument of the Swing Era rhythm section. Later on, because of the economy, the standard rhythm section became just piano, bass and drums; but in the 30s and 40s, the guitar was fairly standard.... At some point, he*

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<sup>6</sup> In an interview with Wilson on NPR’s Jazz Profiles, jazz writer Will Friedwald is of the opinion that the particular piano-bass-guitar configuration of the Cole trio resulted from a no-show by drummer Lee Young. (<http://n.pr/1Idx4dB>) There is some discrepancy among various sources regarding whether or not Young just didn’t show up for the gig as Friedwald says, or whether or not there was just not enough room for the drum kit on the bandstand at the Swanee Inn as is described by Epstein. One way or another, the absence of the drum set on that particular engagement was a twist of fate that is credited for contributing to the development of Cole’s signature style trio format, and by extension, his remarkable success from then on.

*(Cole) just discovered that he liked it better without the drums and that sort of gave him the edge to develop his really own piano style based primarily on the absence of the drummer. I think that you could say that Cole was the first to really make a point of using that instrumentation and really figuring out what was unique about it and what was special. And the way the three instruments could fit together in a whole new way, and Cole not only did it musically but in terms of his career so effectively popularized that combination that there were literally dozens and dozens of these groups in the late 40s that were patterned directly after the King Cole Trio...*” (2008: <http://n.pr/1Idx4dB>)

Epstein expresses his opinion on the quality of the recordings that this “small ensemble” makes between 1938-1942: “They ... exhibit artistry in molding the small ensemble that ranks with the greatest achievements in jazz between the two World Wars.” (Epstein 1999: 75)

Cole’s trio was important for its consistent manifestation of high level of musicianship as well as its contributions to the promotion of the small ensemble in the midst of the Swing Era’s proliferation of big bands. Cole’s first big hit, categorized as one of his signature novelty tunes, was “Straighten Up and Fly Right,” recorded in 1944 on Capital Records. Schuller notes that the seven-year gap that had ensued between the band’s inception in 1937 and this recording was due mainly to the challenges the Trio faced at a time when big bands were saturating the market. “In the commercial marketplace of the Swing era big bands, a tiny trio of piano, bass, and guitar –black musicians at that – had some difficulty in being heard and appreciated.” (Schuller 1989: 817)

Cole’s singing became increasingly important to the success of the trio over time. In fact, among the eight tracks on his first recording, there is only one all-instrumental number. There are several theories on why Cole chose to add his voice to the mix. Schuller contends that Cole incorporated more and more songs to meet the increasing requests of his audiences (Schuller 1989: 817). Friedwald however believes that Cole initially added a vocal element to the trio merely to offset the tedium of his group’s night-after-night routine, which ironically, was in big part what ultimately catapulted them to fame.

*“Early on, Cole said that he sort of began singing pretty much to break the monotony, or as to add another voice to the trio, ‘cause you have to remember that these people were working continually for years and years before anyone had ever heard of them, and they were experimenting with every possible thing they could do, and one of the things that started happening was that when Cole started to sing, people started requesting more and more of his singing, and that eventually became one of the very dominating aspects not just as Cole’s subsequent career as a pop vocalist, but of the trio itself. Cole’s singing was always one of the most important elements of it.” (2008: <http://n.pr/1Idx4dB>)*

Schuler weighs in on the serendipity of Cole, the vocalist: “Turning into a vocalist almost by accident, he discovered that he had, in addition to a superb ear, a distinctive voice – a baritone in range with a tenor quality – with a warm velvety timbre which projected an aura of intimacy.” (Schuller 1989: 822}

Jazz pianist Billy Taylor (in Part I of the NPR documentary) describes the block chords or locked hands style technique originated by Milt Buckner that also became one of Cole’s signature traits (and which both Powell and Evans later incorporated into their playing). “When Milt Buckner began to develop that style, one of the things that he did was to take a chord, and we’ll say a C major seventh chord, which would be C E G and B from the root up, and what he would do, is to play those notes as a chord and double the melody which was the ‘B’.” (2008: <http://n.pr/1Idx4dB>)

Although he occasionally incorporated stride and swing styles into his playing, Cole’s left hand served as a harbinger of the modern jazz pianist’s left-hand “comping” technique to come – one that heavily influenced Powell. Pianist Monty Alexander, comments on the atypical nature of Cole’s left hand – especially for a Swing Era-steeped pianist:

*“He hardly played the left hand at all. The tendency with a lot of jazz players who swing is to do a lot of left hand activity in a chordal way. With Nat, he would just play a little interjection there in the left hand like he’d go (demonstrates), just so sparsely. It could have been like: (demonstrates stride influence). He could have been doing it like that, but he left it out. He was a real classic example of less is more.” (Ibid.)*

Alexander’s observations are highly insightful. Solidly, in the midst of Swing Era stride- and swing-influenced pianists, Cole’s less-is-more left-hand approach is far ahead of his

time. His left-hand approach is indicative of the sparse left-hand response-based “comping” technique that emerges so clearly with Powell – and that remains the modern jazz pianist’s left hand’s praxis today.

Flawless might be the best adjective to describe Cole’s trio’s work, and their characteristic pristine quality may be attributed in large part to his very detailed pre-conceived arrangements, which even applied to solos. Will Friedwald comments on this aspect – one of Cole’s secrets to success:

*“It was always this really careful articulated combination of what has been preset and what is spontaneous, and in that respect, it is very much like Duke Ellington’s orchestra because on almost all of the classic Ellington works, very few of the actual improvisations are actually improvised right on the spot. I mean those solo routines were worked out and they would play variations on them from night to night – you might say there were variations on variations, but at least 60% of what Nat or a soloist in the Ellington group would play would be worked out beforehand.” (Ibid.)*

Cole chose a more explicit moniker for his group: “The Nat King Cole Trio” and the three musicians went into the studio to make their first recording, *The King Cole Trio*, a year after honing their craft at the Swanee Inn, Jim Ottos’ and Foxhill’s Café. According to Epstein, the Trio’s first recording was made by the company Standard Transcriptions, specifically for performance on radio in September of 1938. (Epstein 1999: 78)

Individuality – Cole’s predisposition for creating an equal playing field could not be more evident than on “With Plenty of Money and You,” one of only two instrumental tracks on this recording.<sup>7</sup> Conclusions regarding the extent of individual expression on this tune are drawn based on the following formula:

$$\frac{\text{heads + solos / member}}{\text{total choruses}} = \text{individual expression}$$

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<sup>7</sup> The other all-instrumental track on this recording is a highly arranged rendition of “The Blue Danube.”



Note: Introductions and tags are noted but not factored into this equation based on their respective inconsistency.

**“With Plenty of Money and You” 2’ 50” (Music: Harry Warren; lyrics: Al Dubin)**

Form: A(16 bars)-A1(22 bars)

Introduction: 16 bars (piano and guitar trade fours)

Total choruses: 4

Head in: Piano

First solo: Guitar, A(16 bars)-A1(20 bars)

Second solo: Bass A (16 bars, half-time)

Third solo: Piano A1 (12 bars, half-time + 8 bars at the original tempo), A (16 bars, original tempo)

Head out: Piano A1(18) + tag

Individual Expression: Piano 63%; bass 13%; guitar 25%

Cole’s generosity for sharing the spotlight on this highly arranged track is revealed at its outset with a 16-bar introduction comprising four sets of trading fours between himself and guitarist Moore. After Cole states the “head in,” he graciously hands the first solo over to Moore, the second solo to Prince, and then takes the last solo for himself. The arrangement of this tune affords all three participants an opportunity for individual expression in the form of solos, trades, fills and unison background parts, all in support of the overall artistic objective.

Division of Role – Cole’s punctiliousness is apparent on every track of his trio’s first documented effort. As evidenced in “With Plenty of Money and You,” the extent of the division of role within the Cole trio is striking in comparison with the other pre-Powell trios covered in this chapter. All three members of the Cole unit alternate shouldering rhythmic, melodic and harmonic roles alike throughout this track. Guitarist Moore’s pervading four-beat-to-the bar “comping” takes the place of a drum set; his “comping” on beats two and four clearly emulates the role of the hi-hat cymbals. Cole’s reciprocal “comping” on beats two and four and Prince’s walking bass lines provide Moore’s solo with complete rhythmic stability. Each instrument in the Cole trio is allotted a melodic role as is indicated by solos, trades and fills; and all three instruments are also inherently capable of functioning as harmonic contributors.

One of Cole's striking signature trademarks is the highly detailed arrangements of his repertoire – one that Bill Evans, who lists Cole as a major influence, adopts as well, albeit to a lesser extent (as covered in Chapter Five). Cole's proclivity for creating detailed arrangements is apparent in his earliest recorded instrumental, typifying the intricate "road map" characteristic of so much of the Cole canon.

Cole's impetus for creating such detailed arrangements may very well be a result of the trio's particular instrumentation itself. As evidenced in "With Plenty of Money and You," Cole's arrangements capitalized on, rather than fell prey to, the potential for redundancy among personnel in any improvised setting – but especially in this particular format given the potential for harmonic redundancy among all three instrumentalists. If Cole's detailed arrangements didn't ensure perfectly structured jazz vignettes, at the very least, they served as vehicles to maximize the division of role and by extension promote the artistic potential among all three musicians.

Specifically, Cole's penchant and propensity for creating complex, even serpentine arrangements is manifest throughout "With Plenty of Money and You." There is nothing straightforward or predictable about Cole's adaptation of this tune. That is, the "head in" is extended, the solos are of different lengths and they incorporate both half time feel and half time rhythmic variations, there are pre-arranged breaks between sections, and the "head out" is incomplete, interrupted by an extended coda. The 17<sup>th</sup> century proverb "A place for everything and everything in its place" (Ratcliffe, Oxford Dictionary of Quotations 2000, 2010: Kindle Location 5836) could be used to describe Cole's work in general. This arrangement leaves nothing left to chance (and as mentioned above, especially the opportunity to create a level playing field). Cole's arrangement appears to be custom designed with one purpose in mind: to optimally spotlight his membership's unique artistic capabilities. Cole places a significant amount of responsibility on himself and his membership to keep track of this level of detail over such a relatively short period of time.

That being said, the form of the original song, “With Plenty of Money and You,” is unconventional to begin with. This song consists of an 8-bar verse followed by a 36-bar A-A1 refrain. The A section is a total of 16 bars divided into two 8-bar phrases; however, A1 is a total of 20 bars divided into one 8-bar phrase, and three 4-bar phrases. The phrasing in the A section is predictable; however, in A1, the 2-bar phrase comprising bars 13-14 does not resolve predictably to I in bars 15-16. Instead, bars 13-14 are repeated in bars 15-16 and 17-18, prolonging the resolution to the tonic in bars 19-20.

How does Cole handle this unusual form? His arrangement begins with the piano and guitar trading fours over a 16-bar introduction. The A section follows the original 16-bar form. However, in the head in, Cole extends the already extended 20-bar A1 section, by adding an additional two bar-break that he and Moore play in unison, for a total of twenty-two bars. Cole’s arrangement of the “head in” is as follows (Fig. 3.1):

A		VI <sup>7</sup>		VI <sup>7</sup>		VI <sup>7</sup>		VI <sup>7</sup>		
A1		VI <sup>7</sup>		VI <sup>7</sup>		VI <sup>7</sup>		VI <sup>7</sup>		

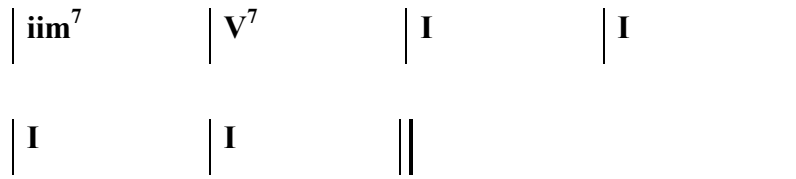


Fig. 3.1 Form of the “head in” of “With Plenty of Money and You”

Guitarist Moore is granted the first solo at a blistering tempo of 320 M.M. over the original 36-bar A-A1 form. In the last 8 bars of his solo, he makes an 8-bar transition to half-time feel, setting up Prince who then takes a 16-bar solo over the A section, but in actual half-time (the quarter-note becomes the half-note). Cole’s solo follows suit in half-time over the first 12 bars of A1 and then transitions back to the original tempo over the remaining 8 bars of this section. His solo continues through 12 bars of the A section at which point he and Moore play an arranged 4-bar break to transition to the head out which begins at A1. Cole plays just 18 bars of the “head out” and at bar 19 begins an elaborately arranged coda to conclude the tune. All to say, this is a highly complex “road map.” The level playing field and diversity of responsibility that Cole establishes within this two-minute, fourteen-second framework is a tangible testament to his consciousness if not high regard for both individuality and division of role – and just as is the case with Evans (in his 1947 recording of “The Best Man”) it is heard in his earliest recorded work.

Compared with the stride- and swing influenced left-hand style of his pre-Powell contemporaries, Cole’s left-hand “comp” patterns are sparse. On the “head in” of “With Plenty of Money and You,” his left-hand “comping” patterns primarily take the form of a simple single-note, two-beat feel bass pattern throughout most of the tune, a style heard in much of Powell’s work.

Although Cole does not incorporate block chords or the locked-hands technique on this particular track, it is a technique that he generously employs in much of his succeeding work. This distinctive technique is important not only because of its manifestation in Powell’s work, it was also a technique that became one of the fundamental components of Evans’s artistic vocabulary (covered in Chapters Four and Five). The locked-hands

approach to voicing melodies is one of the primary distinguishing stylistic characteristics shared by Swing Era pianist Cole, and modern jazz pianists Powell and Evans.

Block chord or locked-hands technique originated with vibraphonist Lionel Hampton's pianist Milt Buckner in 1942 – not by George Shearing who is often erroneously credited with its conception.<sup>8</sup> According to Schuller, it was conceivable that in developing this uniquely distinctive style for piano, Buckner was influenced by the block-chord style often used by Swing Era big band arrangers: "...I suspect that his chordal style of playing was in fact a translation to the piano of the kind of parallel block-chord writing arrangers, especially Benny Carter, had been consistently using in four- or five-part saxophone ensembles since the early thirties." (Schuller 1989: 399)

The highly arranged nature of Cole's repertoire with his sax soli-like block chords, Moore's "comping" on beats two and four, emulating the hi-hat cymbals, and Prince's two-beat and walking harmonic grounding, combine to sound like a three-piece big band. Cole's detailed arrangements come to be a signature trait that continued throughout his professional career.

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<sup>8</sup> In a September 1971 broadcast on WTIC, Hartford, CT of the series "A One Night Stand with the Big Bands", Arnold Dean interviews jazz pianist George Shearing. In the interview, Shearing is on record for crediting Milt Buckner with inventing the locked-hands or block chords style technique routinely employed by Peterson, Evans and himself among others. However, he rightly takes credit for contributing to its popularity among jazz pianists.

*A.D.:* "How did you come up with this Shearing sound? (11:48) It's so distinctive. I don't think anybody had done it before you.

*G.S.:* "It's quite accidental." "The sound was accidentally born at rehearsal. The locked hands style which people erroneously credit me with inventing (actually I think I can take some kind of credit for bringing it before the average public....but I did not invent it. The locked hands style was first played by Milt Buckner when he played with Lionel Hampton in the early to mid forties. If you were to break our sound down, it would be Milt Buckner with the vibes playing the melody and the guitar playing the melody an octave below. Or, if you will, a style which perhaps would be even more readily identifiable or easier to relate to: the Glenn Miller sound where he has a clarinet on top – the clarinet part would be played by the vibes and he has four saxophones, the bottom saxophone played by guitar and all five saxophone parts played by the piano. Plus, a well-ordered and subdued rhythm section with a written bass line so that the roots are always taken care of and so on and so forth." (Dean 1971: [http://www.goldenage-wtic.org/BB44\\_George\\_Shearing.mp3](http://www.goldenage-wtic.org/BB44_George_Shearing.mp3))

Although no quotes appear in “With Plenty of Money and You”, Cole’s relish for incorporating material from other recognizable Western European and “Great American Songbook” repertoire is apparent in many of his successive recordings. For example, he somehow manages to position quotes from four well known works including “Hall of the Mountain King” by Edvard Grieg, “Sweet Lorraine” by Cliff Burwell (music) and Mitchell Parish (lyrics), “Rhapsody in Blue” by George Gershwin and “Humoresque No.7”, all into in a 1944 recording of “Body and Soul.” This technique factored heavily into the close bonds that Cole created with his audiences.<sup>9</sup>

Another of Cole’s signature trademarks was his love for the novelty tune – and especially when it reflected the tenor of the day. In the case “Gone with the Draft,” focused on the draft. In NPR’s Jazz Profiles, Friedewald comments on Cole’s attraction to this style:

*“Cole loved these jivey novelty tunes, a lot of which were blueses or were blues-based, but Cole was really into these fast riffing numbers and these numbers with nonsense titles that meant absolutely nothing – some kind of catchy word or expression, and I think that that shows how Cole was always sort of into the temporal and the topical and the things that were happening just now and in that respect it reminds me a lot of the sensibility of the Warner Bros. cartoons of the period or magazine articles of that period.”* (<http://n.pr/1Idx4dB>)

The Cole Trio Gestalt – Today, almost fifty years after his death, Cole is still described as “unforgettable.”<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Quoting familiar melodies and improvised solos is a technique that many jazz musicians use, among them, Keith Jarrett, who was admittedly highly influenced by Cole. For example, in his solo over the Clifford Brown 12-bar blues “Sandu” on the 1999 Standards Trio album *Whisper Not*, Jarrett includes quotes by pianist John Lewis from the Modern Jazz Quartet’s album *Jazz at Carnegie Hall* on the tune “Blues Milanese” (4:23 on “Blues Milanese” and 1:10 on “Sandu”), by vibraphonist Milt Jackson in the interlude on “Bag’s Groove” (3:13 on “Bag’s Groove” and 2:04 on “Sandu”) and from the Miles Davis tune “Four” (2:25 on “Sandu”).

<sup>10</sup> This description alludes to Cole’s major 1951 hit “Unforgettable”, a song that was resurrected and recorded by his daughter Natalie Cole in 1990-91. *Unforgettable: With Love*, an album highlighting this song, along with her father’s previously recorded well known and sentimental covers, was released on June 11, 1991 on the Elektra label. Technology along with the expertise of multiple Grammy- winning recording engineer Al Schmidt enabled daughter Cole to weave her father’s voice into a completely new recording, synthesizing their two voices into a nostalgic father-daughter collaboration from two completely different periods of time. Forty years after her father’s hit was released, her “electronic duet” as it was described in a *New York Times* article

Cole's forward-looking artistic contributions and generous leadership style serve as one of the most important transitional links that connected the Swing to the Bebop Era and beyond. His artistic achievements eclipse those of his contemporaries' and inspire those of his successors in the following seminal ways:

- Just three quarters the size of the traditional Swing Era big band rhythm section, Cole's structural concept underlines the rhythm section as a fully functioning stand-alone unit. Democracy and division of role are ever-present distinctive traits under his artistic leadership. As illustrated in his earliest trio recording of "With Plenty of Money and You", Cole's guitarist and bassist are given ample opportunity for individual expression via improvised solos, trades and fills; and each member singularly demonstrates the ability to alternate shouldering rhythmic, melodic and harmonic roles throughout this track.
- Intimating the future, Cole abandons the stride- or swing-influenced left-hand technique for a sparse, even sometimes single-note accompaniment. His right hand relinquishes the earlier rhythmically relentless primarily chord tone-focused approach to soloing for stepwise, chromatically infused and beautifully phrased melodic lines. Although he twice alludes to Cole selling out, in *Jazz – America's Classical Music*, author Grover Sales lists Cole among those he believes represent the forerunners of bebop. (Sales 1992: 44, 71 and 132)
- Cole maximally capitalizes on the potentially harmonically redundant instrumentation of piano, guitar and bass.
- Cole takes full advantage of his vocal skill in realizing his personal artistic mission without (as this writer believes) compromising the artistic integrity of his work.
- Elements of Cole's style, including his highly arranged repertoire, response-based "comping," signature block chord style voicings and the use of quotes in his solos, become staples of succeeding modern jazz pianists.

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"Cole's 'Unforgettable' Sweeps the Grammys" by Jon Pareles and published on February 26, 1992 (<http://www.nytimes.com/1992/02/26/arts/cole-s-unforgettable-sweeps-the-grammys.html>), went on to become her best-selling record, selling four million copies winning Grammys in every category in which it was nominated at the 34<sup>th</sup> annual Grammy Awards in 1992. (Buskin 2004 <http://www.soundonsound.com/sos/jan04/articles/classictracks.htm>)

Cole was clearly ahead of his time – a harbinger of the Bebop Era and a major influence on jazz pianists and jazz piano trios to come – in particular, on Evans. Cole’s influence on Evans is “on record” both literally and figuratively. That is, although he cites a considerable difference between the two in terms of in their approach to tone, Pettinger ascribes an eighteen-year old Evans’s homage to Cole: “The biggest influence on Evans at this time, though, was the pianism of Nat “King” Cole – in Bill’s estimation ‘one of the tastiest and just swingin’est and beautifully melodic improvisers and jazz pianists that jazz has ever known, and he was one of the very first that really grabbed me hard.’” (Pettinger 1998: 15) Evans summed up his personal sentiments toward Cole again three years later in a note to his brother: “I sat at the same piano and played the same keys as Nat King Cole. It was reverential.” (Pettinger 1998: 21)

Cole’s devotees include both his highly respected peers – those musicians comprising the leading jazz artists of the day, as well as a demanding general public – and his reputation as a masterful jazz pianist, vocalist and consummate entertainer has continued to influence pianists into the twenty-first century. Schuller speaks for so many of Cole’s adherents: “Since Cole became in the last seven years of his life world-renowned as a singer, it is little remembered today that he was in his earlier career not only one of the most outstanding jazz pianists of his day but stylistically one of the most advanced.” (Schuller 1989: 817)

**Clarence Profit – b. June 26, 1912; d. October 22, 1944** – Among the earliest jazz pianists to lead a piano-bass-guitar trio, Swing Era pianist Clarence Profit, who Feather refers to as Cole’s “East Coast counterpoint” (Feather 1984: 35), began performing as early as 1937. But, unfortunately, he only recorded “a dozen or so sides in 1939 and 1940” (Schuller 1989: 489) in the trio format and among them, there are only two listed in the Lord discography. According to Lord, Profit’s earliest recording in the piano-bass-guitar-comprised trio format, *The Clarence Profit Trio*, was made in New York on February 15, 1939 and features Billy Moore on guitar and Ben Brown on bass. A second, and only other recording of Profit in the trio setting (included in the Lord discography sans a title),



was made in New York on September 11, 1940, and included Jim Shirley on guitar. (Lord: <http://bit.ly/1OO205R>)

Schuller lauds the accomplishments of Profit and his trio, rating them (as well as Cole's) much higher than Tatum's, for example. Comparing the Tatum trios to both Cole's and Profit's trios, Schuller is of the opinion that "Many of the trio's recordings are flawed, and except for Tatum's own playing, do not even measure up as trio/ensemble performances to the best work of the Nat "King" Cole or Clarence Profit trios." Commenting on the impact the Profit trio has on modern jazz, Schuller adds: "But at its best – the earlier recordings provide a glimpse of this – this pioneer trio (along with the Nat "King" Cole Trio) became one of the earliest models for dozens of similar groups flourishing during the 1940s." (Schuller 1989: 489)

Taylor cites Profit as an important harmonic innovator of the 1920s and 30s based on his incorporation of more complex harmonies and harmonic devices such as the tone cluster for example, as is heard on the tresillo-based track "Tropical Nights" from the 1939 recording *Clarence Profit Trio*. Taylor notes that Profit was an important influence on Tatum and that the two of them would spend time playing together, re-harmonizing chorus upon chorus of the same melody. (Taylor 1982: 20)

As mentioned previously, Cole is an important progenitor of individuality and division of role in the jazz piano trio format – especially when it came to his anomalous response-based, sparse left-hand approach to "comping" – and even more so in that this approach occurred in the midst of a primarily stride- and swing-based piano constituency. Although seven years Cole's senior, Profit's first effort comes two years subsequent to *The King Cole Trio*. His stride- and boogie-woogie-infused left hand style, as evidenced on four out of the six different titles on *Clarence Profit Trio* clearly references the past. However, the rhythmic, melodic and harmonic impact he made on Powell in particular makes him especially relevant to this thesis. Pullman (among others) cites Profit as one of the important early influences on Powell. As substantiated by his recordings, Powell

interspersed and diversified his forward-looking stylistic ambitions with those of his stride-oriented forefathers, Profit among them. (Pullman 2012 Kindle Locations 599-600)

Individual Expression – Conclusions regarding the extent of individual expression on Profit’s recording, *Clarence Profit Trio*, recorded on February 15, 1939, are drawn based on the following formula:

$$\frac{\text{head + solos / member}}{\text{total choruses}} = \text{individual expression}$$

Note: Introductions and tags are noted but not factored into this equation based on their respective inconsistency.

**1. “Don’t Leave Me” 2’57” (Music: Clarence Profit)**

Form: 32 bars A-A-B-A  
Total choruses: 2  
Introduction: None  
Head in: Piano  
First Solo: Piano, .75 chorus (A-A-B)  
Head out: Piano, last A only  
Individual Expression: Piano: 100%

**2. “There’ll Be Some Changes Made” (Music: Benton Overstreet) 2’38”**

Form: 18 bars A (8)-B(10)  
Total choruses: 3.5 including the “head in” and “head out”  
Introduction: Piano, 2 bars  
Head in 1: Piano A-B  
Head in 2: Guitar A-B  
First Solo: Piano, A-B  
Head out: Piano: B section only  
Individual Expression: Piano: 72%; guitar: 28%

**3. “I Got Rhythm” (See below.)**

**4. “I Got Rhythm” (Music: George Gershwin; lyrics: Ira Gershwin) 2’50”**

Form: 34-bar A(8)-A(8)-B(8)-A(10)  
Total choruses: 6

Introduction: Piano, 4 bars  
Head in: Guitar  
First Solo: Guitar, 1 chorus  
Second solo: Piano, 3 choruses  
Head out: Piano (bass solo at bridge)  
Individual Expression: Piano: 63%; bass: 4%; guitar: 33%

**5. “Down Home” (Music: Clarence Profit) 2’53”**

Form: 12-bar blues  
Total choruses: 6 including the head in and out  
Introduction: None  
Head in: Piano, 12 bars  
First solo: Guitar, 2 choruses  
Second solo: Piano, 2 choruses  
Head out: Piano, 12 bars  
Individual Expression: Piano: 67%; guitar: 33%

**6. “Tropical Nights” (Music: Clarence Profit) 2’46”**

Form: (See below.)  
Total choruses: (See below.)  
Introduction: Piano, 16 bars  
Head in: A(8)-A(7) + 8-bar (interlude)  
First Solo: Piano A(8)-B(8)-A(8)-B7 + 12-bar interlude  
Head out: Piano A(8)-B(8)-A(8)-B7  
Individual Expression: Piano: 100%

**7. “Tropical Nights” (See above.)**

**8. “Tea For Two” (Music: Irving Caesar; lyrics: Vincent Youmans) 3’20”**

Form: 32-bar A1-A2-A3-B  
Total choruses: 2 including the head in and out  
Introduction: Piano, rubato  
Head in: Piano  
First Solo: Piano, A1, A2, A3  
Head out: B  
Individual Expression: Piano: 100%

**9. “Tea For Two (See above.)**

Profit generously gives guitarist Moore the opportunity to play the head and/or solo on three out of the six tunes (50%) analyzed on this recording: “There’ll Be Some Changes Made”, “I Got Rhythm” and “Down Home.” Moore is given the second “head in” on “There’ll Be Some Changes Made” and the first solo on both “I Got Rhythm” and “Down Home.” Individuality is evidenced in both the number of solos given to membership as well as in his “comping” on “There’ll Be Some Changes Made” as is discussed below.

Division of Role – On “Don’t Leave Me” – Profit incorporates a stride- and swing-style left hand on the “head in”, his solo and the “head out.” Moore is devoted to strumming a chord on each beat and Brown primarily plays an ornamented two-beat rhythmic feel throughout the entire track. Profit goes into double time feel at the bridge, which does not faze either Moore or Brown who continue on in the same vein as they began. Profit’s left hand and Moore’s strumming on every beat creates rhythmic and harmonic predictability and redundancy.

Profit’s attachment to a left-hand stride-influence style is also apparent on “I Got Rhythm” and “Tea for Two,” and a left-hand boogie-woogie style on “Down Home,” which creates harmonic and rhythmic redundancy with both guitarist Moore and bassist Brown.

However, on Moore’s solos, rhythmic and harmonic redundancy is at its lowest point: that is, only 67% instead of 100% of the unit is taking responsibility for the rhythmic and harmonic elements. Moore and Brown consistently reinforce both rhythmic and harmonic considerations and also add timbral variety, but the poor quality of the recording along with Profit’s left hand’s incessant attention to beats one and three in the low register and beats two and four in the mid register of the piano obscures the guitarist’s and bassist’s contributions to a considerable extent. Generally, Profit’s left-hand stride-influenced style pattern creates rhythmic and harmonic redundancy with Moore’s “comping” and Brown’s bass lines throughout this entire recording.

Of note however, is the contrast between Profit’s left and right hands. His right hand takes a completely different path from that of his left hand in that in contrast with the predicable, stock nature of his left-hand stride-influenced style, his right hand has a mind

of its own, contributing spontaneous, horizontally focused melodic lines. Profit's solos signal a commitment to the moment rather than any pre-conceived or pattern-based melodic material as is illustrated in his solo in "Don't Leave Me." He was not one to rely on predetermined licks, familiar or convenient scale patterns or excessive ornamentation as is heard in solos by some of his successors like Tatum, for one.

There is no extraneousness in Profit's right-hand melodic lines, indicating that, unlike Tatum for example, technical and ornamental flare are clearly not among his primary artistic concerns. Setting himself apart from Tatum, he incorporates the use of space in a relatively unadorned solo to communicate beautifully symmetrical musical sentences. The short-lived double-time feel he incorporates into his solo at the bridge adds a welcome element of surprise and is in sharp contrast to the otherwise slow, sultry minor blues-infused nature of this tune.

"There'll Be Some Changes Made" and "Tropical Nights" serve as exceptions to Profit's devotion to a formulaic-like stride and/or boogie-woogie-based left hand on this recording. The techniques Profit employs in these two tunes are worthy of mention.

First, on "There'll Be Some Changes Made", Profit's two-handed accompaniment under Moore's second "head in" reveals the response-based "comping" technique utilized by Cole that becomes the standard among modern jazz pianists from Powell on. In the repeat of the head in, Profit abandons any indication of stride-influenced style, implementing two-handed "comp" chords in an in-the-moment rhythmic response to Moore's execution of the second head in. In spite of the fact that he is stating the second "head in", rather than soloing, Moore's role in the 'melodic realm' is completely unobstructed enabling him to stand out among his colleagues. The contrast between Profit's stride-influenced style and his response-based "comping" here is striking. His response-based approach serves to rhythmically and harmonically support rather than inhibit Moore's melodic role. There is a perfect distribution of role as well as register in this 18-bar repetition of the head in: Brown's primarily 2-beat feel bass pattern takes on a combination rhythmic and harmonic role in the bass register; Profit takes a harmonic role in the middle register; and Moore

takes a melodic role in the upper register. Albeit a short 18-bar track, Profit makes his mark as a harbinger of the “comping” techniques that become par for the course in the modern piano-bass-drums jazz piano trio.

Second, on “Tropical Nights”, Profit abandon’s a stride-influenced left hand quarter-note focus for the tresillo rhythm, referencing the past (Jelly Roll Morton and James P. Johnson, for example); the arranged nature of this tune with its unison lines as well as Profit’s tone clusters forecasts the future (Evans, for example).

According to Lord, Profit completed his last piano-guitar-bass piano trio recording on September 11, of 1940 in New York, (a year and seven months after he recorded *The Clarence Profit Trio*), but now with Jimmy Shirley on guitar. His commitment to featuring Shirley is clearly evident on every tune. Shirley’s solo displays both technical aptitude and melodic enterprise. Bassist Brown is a featured soloist on Ellington’s “Hot and Bothered.” His solo comprises a beat-focused walking bass line accompanied by Profit’s and Shirley’s background figures.

Individual Expression – Conclusions regarding the extent of individual expression on Profit’s second recording (untitled) are drawn based on the following formula:

$$\frac{\text{head + solos / member}}{\text{total choruses}} = \text{individual expression}$$

Note: Introductions and tags are noted but not factored into this equation based on their respective inconsistency.  
<https://play.spotify.com/user/1294997630/collection/artist/770R4Cqc9XuSNieNBAtt6B>

### **1. “Dark Eyes” (Music: Traditional Russian) 3’09”**

Form: 16-bars A-B  
Total choruses: 9  
Introduction: Piano, rubato  
Head in: Piano

First solo: Piano, 1 chorus  
Second solo: Guitar, 2 choruses  
Third solo: Piano, 2 choruses  
Head out: Guitar, 1 chorus  
Fourth solo: Piano, 2 choruses  
Individual Expression: Piano: 67%; guitar: 33%

### **2. “Times Square Blues” (Music: Clarence Profit) 2’ 58”**

Form: 12-bar blues  
Introduction: Piano, 4 bars; 12-bar blues  
Total choruses: 6  
Head in: Piano  
First solo: Guitar, 2 choruses  
Second solo: Piano, 2 choruses  
Head out: Piano  
Individual Expression: Piano: 67%; guitar: 33%

### **3. “Hot and Bothered” (Music: Duke Ellington) 3’17”**

Form: 32-bar A-B-A-B  
Total choruses: 6  
Introduction: Piano, 4 bars  
Head in: Piano, 1 chorus with a 4-bar tag  
First solo: Guitar, 1 chorus  
Second solo: Piano, 1 chorus  
Third solo: Guitar, 1 chorus  
Fourth solo: Bass, A-B(10)  
Fifth solo: Piano, A-B  
Sixth solo: Bass, A-B(10)  
Head out: Piano, A-B + tag  
Individual Expression: Piano: 50%; bass 17%; guitar, 33%

### **4. “Azure” (Music: Duke Ellington; lyrics: Irving Mills) 3’31”**

Form: 32-bar A-A-B-A  
Introduction: Piano and guitar, 20 bars  
Total choruses: 2  
Head in: Guitar  
Head out: Guitar  
Individual Expression: Guitar: 100%

On Profit’s second trio effort individual expression is divided 67%/33% on the first two tracks although guitarist Shirley is given the first solo on the second two tunes, and both

the head in and head out on the last. Compared with Profit's first recording in the piano-bass-guitar format, this represents a significant increase in his commitment to a level playing field.

Division of Role – There are moments in every tune on this recording where Profit and Shirley exhibit rhythmic and harmonic division of role, but this only occurs when Profit abandons a stride-style left hand “comp” pattern on the heads (i.e., “Dark Eyes” and “Times Square Blues”) or under his own solos (i.e., the first solo on “Dark Eyes” and the first chorus of his first solo on “Times Square Blues”). The tune that exhibits complete division of role – that is, is without rhythmic or harmonic redundancy whatsoever – is the last, “Azure.”

The Profit Trio Gestalt – Although his documented output in either a solo or the trio format was sadly minimal, Schuller notes that nonetheless, Profit (along with Cole), significantly impacted pianists of the 40s: “This pioneer trio (along with the Nat “King” Cole Trio) became one of the earliest models for dozens of similar groups flourishing during the 1940s.” (Schuller 1989: Kindle Location 21636) Profit was not one hundred percent beholden to a stride-influenced technical approach and his use of tone clusters, implementation of various rhythmic feels within tunes and his horizontal rather than vertical approach to improvised solos were some of the signature traits that put him on the map as one of the innovative leaders of a piano-bass-guitar trio, pre-Powell.

**Art Tatum – b. October 13, 1909; d. November 5, 1956** – Art Tatum's technical command of the instrument is his long suit and what becomes the focal point of his work among his jazz compatriots, critics and general audiences alike. Pullman cites the influence his virtuosity has on Powell for one: “This, Tatum's singular, solo-virtuoso determination, had tremendous appeal to Powell. While, later on, he acknowledged other, early influences and, once he became a star, was comfortable naming others whose style he liked, Tatum remained the only pianist whom he always identified as his superior in technique.” Pullman 2012: Kindle Location 577)



It isn't surprising to see copious recordings in the solo piano format given Tatum's technical prowess. Schuller states that "Although he was to return to the trio format from time to time after the mid-1940s his finest playing came always as a soloist." (Schuller 1989: Kindle Location 9724) Schuller continues along this line:

*"It is ironic that Tatum's public popularity was tied to two of his least achievements: on the one hand, his early rather mechanical preset show-piece style (as in Tiger Rag, Tea for Two), and on the other hand, his 1040s' trio work. Tatum was above all a soloist. He found ensemble playing confining and often rode rough-shod over other players, wrestling them to the ground with a barrage of technique, or worse yet, seemingly not even recognizing their presence at all."* (Schuller 1989: 482)

However, Tatum made a certain mark as leader of a piano-guitar-bass comprised trio and continued to record in this format until October 7, 1956, just short of a month before his death on November 5, 1956. It is in the context of the guitar-comprised trio that he is under scrutiny here. An examination of Tatum's earliest work in the context of a piano-bass-guitar comprised jazz piano trio serves to support the impact he made on the development of the piano-bass-drums-comprised jazz piano trio and its leaders.

Tatum made his first piano-guitar-bass trio recording *Art Tatum Trio* with Tiny Grimes on guitar and Slam Stewart on bass in a live setting on March 22, 1943. Whether or not his performances in the trio format represent his *finest* playing, Feather contends he has firsthand knowledge that among the various formats in which Tatum performed – especially solo piano – it was actually within the trio format that he gained the most *pleasure*. Moreover, in line with Feather's contention, Giddins and DeVaux maintain that it was in fact Tatum's trio with Tiny Grimes on guitar and Slam Stewart on bass that brought him his greatest success. "Audiences enjoyed watching the three instrumentalists challenge each other with oddball quotations from songs other than the ones they were playing." (Giddins and DeVaux 2009: 279)

Tatum's popularity among his jazz colleagues reaches the point of reverence as is noted here by jazz pianist Dave Brubeck who sings his praises in a 1977 interview with Paul Rubin and Wayne Enstice: "I would consider the greatest musical genius that I've ever

met in my life was Art Tatum. I would put him against any American musician I've ever known." (Enstice and Rubin 1994: 80)

Tatum was the idol of many including Powell. But many critics question the basis for this reverence, citing Tatum's technical ability as just "smoke and mirrors." Beyond his practically untouchable technical wizardry, proof of any real depth or innovation in his work is often questioned. Schuller, for one, challenges the profundity of his artistic integrity, citing that his repertoire relies almost exclusively on American popular songs rather than his own original work; he regurgitates 'nineteenth- early twentieth-century classical rhythmic, melodic and harmonic vocabulary'; and, his excessive melodic and harmonic redundancy undermines his ability as a true improviser. Schuller exposes a practice employed by Tatum that is completely antithetical to the artistic objectives of the modern jazz musician for whom extemporaneous composition is at the core:

*"...Tatum's "originality" was undercut by the redundancy with which he used certain harmonic and ornamental devices, and by the fact that he was not truly speaking as an improviser. Tatum far more often than not, worked out his "improvisations" and, except for occasional minor variants, played them virtually the same way over long periods of time."* (Schuller 1989: 481)<sup>11</sup>

Tatum's accolades though, as agreed on by Schuller among others, are based primarily on two skills: his technical mastery and his ability to superimpose complex harmonic substitutions over simple chord progressions. Speaking first to his superhuman technical ability, Schuller implores those who have never heard him, to do so.

*"Almost every one of Tatum's performances is from a pianistic-technical point of view a marvel of perfection....For his playing must be heard to be believed, and in its technical perfection it is something beyond verbal description,... The note-perfect clarity of Tatum's runs, the hardly believable leaps to the outer registers of the piano (he is not known ever to have missed one);, his deep-in-the-keys full piano sonority, the tone and touch control in pyrotechnical passages clearly beyond the*

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<sup>11</sup> Schuller does go on to acknowledge that this approach was not just one used solely by Tatum alone, but was used by other noted artists including Hawkins and Armstrong for example, who made their pre-composed material sound spontaneous. (Schuller 1989: 481)

*abilities of the vast majority of pianists to merely render the notes in some nominal way – these are miracles of performance which must be appreciated aurally.”*  
 (Schuller 1989: 482)

Tatum demonstrates his notoriety for melodic over-embellishment, a feature consistent with his compulsion for technical exhibition, on his interpretation of the A-A-B-A standard, “Exactly Like You,” on his first effort.<sup>12</sup> With the exception of the first two bars of the Introduction, which provide the listener with a clue to the title of this upcoming tune, his rendition of the melody of “Exactly Like You” is so ornamented it is barely discernable, prompting the listener to wonder whether the protocol of stating a “cantus firmus” was completely foreign to Tatum. By way of comparison, the first two A sections of McHugh’s original melody is as follows:

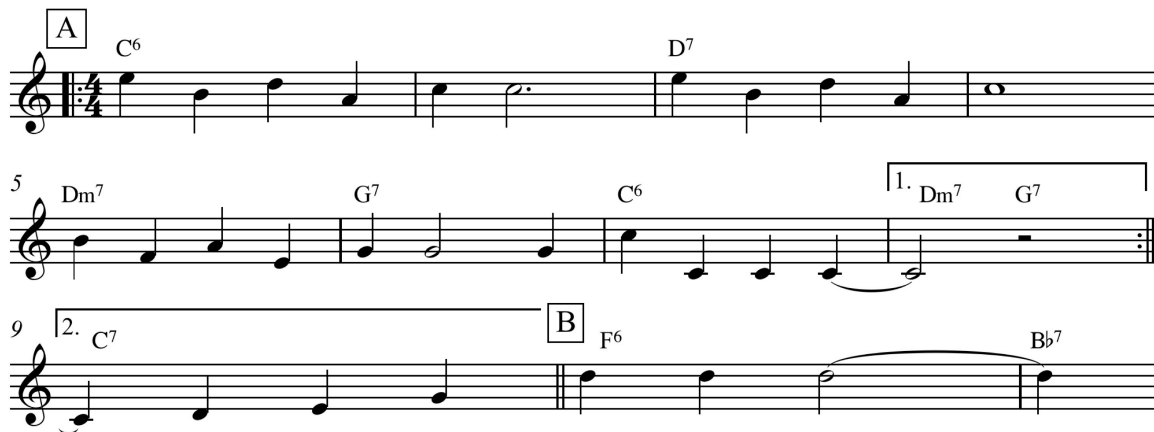


Fig. 3.2 Original melody of “Exactly Like You” (letters A-A1)

Granted, jazz musicians seldom perform the melody of any jazz standard without embellishing it to some extent. Jazz standards are always an interpretation of their published iteration. However Tatum’s interpretation is so far removed from the original

<sup>12</sup> Words by Dorothy Fields; Music by Jimmy McHugh  
 (c) 1930 (Renewed 1957) COTTON CLUB PUBLISHING and SHAPIRO BERNSTEIN & CO. INC., New York  
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version of this tune that it could easily be conceived as an improvised solo rather than a recognizable head. Tatum's rendition is as follows:

(Introduction)

Chords: C<sup>6</sup>, (C<sup>#</sup>7), D<sup>7</sup>, Dm<sup>7</sup>, G<sup>7</sup>, Cmaj<sup>7</sup>, D<sup>7</sup>, G<sup>7</sup>, Cmaj<sup>7</sup>, E<sup>b</sup>7, Dm<sup>7</sup> 8<sup>va</sup>, G<sup>7</sup>, Cmaj<sup>7</sup>, D<sup>7</sup>, G<sup>7</sup>, (F<sup>#</sup>7), G<sup>7</sup>, Cmaj<sup>7</sup>, G<sup>7</sup>, D<sup>7</sup>, G<sup>7</sup>, C<sup>7</sup>, F<sup>6</sup>.

Fig. 3.3 Tatum's interpretation of "Exactly Like You" (letters A-A1)

In terms of his predisposition for harmonic substitution, bassist Chuck Israels (Scott LaFaro's replacement in Evans's trio in 1961), had the opportunity to play with Tatum and grouses that his extensive use of harmonic substitution demanded his bassists to be no less than mind readers. LaFaro also adds that he believes that it was for this reason that Tatum was most successful in the context as a solo pianist.

*"There are many approaches to improvisation that are very satisfying for people like pianists, but some of those ways drive me nuts as a bass player. If you take Art*

*Tatum for example, he was a genius who would stick close to the original melody while varying the harmonization from chorus to chorus. That could drive a bass player nuts, because there's no way of knowing where a piano player like that is going. Since his improvisation is in the harmony, you either had to play something that was so basic that almost anything would work with it, or you would have to play the melody, since that was the predictable part that you would play with him. Or you would have to be able to read his mind. These are the reasons why players like Tatum were often most successful as solo performers, although there may be sides of them that are sympathetic to playing with other musicians.” (Berliner 1994: 402)*

Individual Expression – Conclusions regarding the extent of individual expression on Tatum’s first piano-bass-guitar recording, *Art Tatum Trio*, recorded March 22, 1943 with guitarist Tiny Grimes and bassist Slam Stewart, are drawn based on the following formula:

$$\frac{\text{head + solos / member}}{\text{total choruses}} = \text{individual expression}$$

Note: Introductions and tags are noted but not factored into this equation based on their respective inconsistency.

### 1. “Tiny’s Exercise” (Music: Tiny Grimes) 5’18”

Form: 32-bar A-A-B-A

Introduction: Piano, 8 bars

Total choruses: 7

Head in: Piano and guitar

First solo: Piano, 1 chorus

Second solo: Guitar, 2 choruses

Third solo: Bass, 1 chorus

Fourth solo: Piano and guitar arranged shout chorus on A sections with piano solos at bridges

Head out: Piano and guitar

Individual Expression: Piano, 36%; bass, 14%; guitar, 50%

### 2. “Melody in F” (Music: Anton Rubenstein) 5’ 41”

Form: 48-bar A(8)-A(8)-B(8)-C(8)-A(8)-A(8)

Introduction: Piano, 4 bars

Total choruses: 7  
Head in: Piano and guitar arrangement  
First solo: Piano, 2 choruses  
Second solo: Guitar, 1 chorus  
Third solo: Bass, 1 chorus  
Fourth solo: Piano, 1 chorus  
Head out: Piano and Guitar arrangement  
Individual Expression: Piano, 57%; bass 14%; guitar 29%

### **3. "Let Me Off Uptown" (Music and lyrics: Earl Bostic and Redd Evans) 3' 48"**

Form: 32-bar A-A-B-A  
Introduction: Piano, 8 bars  
Total choruses: 7  
Head in: Piano  
First solo: Piano, 1 chorus  
Second solo: Guitar, 1 chorus  
Third solo: Bass, 1 chorus  
Head out: Piano and guitar, 3 arranged shout choruses with piano solos at the bridge  
Individual Expression: Piano, 50%; bass, 14%; guitar, 36%

### **4. "Exactly Like You" (Music: Jimmy McHugh) 3' 58"**

Form: 32-bar A-A-B-A  
Introduction: Piano, 8 bars  
Total choruses: 6  
Head in: Piano  
First solo: Piano, 1 chorus  
Second solo: Guitar, 1 chorus  
Third solo: Bass, 1 chorus  
Head out: Piano and guitar, 2 unison shout choruses over the A sections with piano solos over the bridges  
Individual Expression: Piano, 50%; bass, 17%; guitar, 33%

### **5. "Sweet Lorraine" (Music: Cliff Burwell; lyrics: Mitchell Parish) 3' 56"**

Form: 32-bar A-A-B-A  
Total choruses: 3  
Introduction: Piano, 4 bars  
Head in: Piano  
First solo: Guitar, 1 chorus  
Head out: Arranged shout chorus with fills by the guitar and bass  
Individual Expression: Piano, 50%; Guitar, 50%

The distribution of solos on the *Art Tatum Trio* supports Tatum's clear commitment to a level playing field. He gives guitarist Grimes and bassist Stewart ample opportunity for individual expression throughout this entire recording: Grimes solos on every track (albeit his solos are often somewhat obscured by Tatum's overzealous "comping"); Stewart has solos on all but one track. In Tatum's rendition of "Exactly Like You", all three members are given solos of equal length, not to mention, he generously gives Grimes the first solo over an entire chorus.

Division of Role – Similar to Cole whose arrangements reflected "A place for everything and everything in its place," Tatum created detailed arrangements for every tune on this recording, which supported a clear division of role. Although Tatum's left hand intermittently references stride and swing bass tenth styles, in general, he consciously avoids rhythmic and harmonic redundancy by not synchronizing them with Grimes four-chords-to-the-bar "comping" patterns. By and large, Grimes takes the rhythmic and harmonic roles in the mid-register under Tatum's solos; Tatum takes the rhythmic and harmonic roles alternating low and mid-registers under Grimes's solos; Stewart takes the rhythmic and harmonic roles in the low-register under both; Tatum alone takes the rhythmic and harmonic roles in the form of response-based "comping" in mid-register under Stewart's solos. Division of role is the clearest and most balanced in those moments when Tatum abandons a stride- or swing-style left-hand "comp" pattern for response-based "comp" patterns in mid-register.

The Tatum Trio Gestalt – Tatum was considered a superstar – especially among his jazz piano colleagues who were in awe of his uncanny technical ability. Though there was no lack of individual expression on Tatum's first effort, however, his incessant playing in general – especially his predilection to fill at *every* opportunity – as well as his left hand's assumption of both the rhythmic and harmonic roles specifically, at times clouded clear evidence of division of role among his sidemen.

### 3.2 Piano-Bass-Drums Trios

According to Lord, the earliest documented recording of a piano-bass-drums-comprised trio is by pianist Jess Stacy in 1935, three years earlier than the earliest recording of a piano-bass-guitar-comprised trio made by Cole. Both were popular formats that existed concurrently, but it is the piano-bass-drums configuration that has endured and become the instrumentation of choice for both the trio as a stand-alone unit as well as the anchor of a larger jazz ensemble. There are a number of advantages to this particular instrumentation that have contributed to its emergence and sustainability. In general, the exchange of the guitar for the drums promotes greater division of role, and by extension, individuality, among membership in the group in the following ways:

- The absence of the guitar eliminates the potential for harmonic redundancy or conflict with the piano and the bass; the piano and bass have complete harmonic freedom.
- The drum set takes a primarily rhythmic role. Although drummers have opportunities for individual expression via the improvised solo, this instrument does not compete melodically or harmonically with the piano and the bass.
- The drum set adds a multiplicity of purely percussive timbral elements, providing contrast and excitement to the sonic mix.

Note: Leaders of each pre-Powell piano-bass-drums-comprised trio are listed chronologically by the date of their earliest recording in the trio format. (For the purpose of maintaining consistency within this study, the earliest works of Powell, Evans and Jarrett are also examined and used in quantifying, comparing and contrasting these trends (see Chapters Four, Five and Six)). Needless to say, each of these trio leaders' styles evolved considerably over the course of their respective lifetimes. Their respective earliest work serves only to evaluate and measure these two trends using the same yardstick.

**Jess Stacy – b. August 11, 1904; d. January 1, 1995** – The Jess Stacy Trio, consisting of leader Jess Stacy on piano, Israel Crosby on bass, and Gene Krupa on drums, recorded the first-ever piano-led, piano-bass-drums-comprised trio on November 15, 1935 in Chicago,



five years into the Swing Era. (See entry S11278 in The Jazz Discography Online.) According to TJD-Online, this 1935 session also marks the thirty-one-year-old pianist's first ever *recording* as a leader. On this untitled session, each member of the Stacy-led trio clearly exhibits definitive characteristics of the music-for-dancing Swing Era style apropos to the era in which this recording took place. However, the Stacy trio makes an unprecedented statement – one that is critically relevant to this thesis: It is the first known recording of a jazz trio comprising the piano, bass and drums instrumentation. This trio's most salient feature – its piano-bass-drums instrumentation – is a format that, from the Bebop Era on, becomes the standard instrumentation of the modern jazz rhythm section; and it also functions just as effectively as an independent three-member unit. The four tunes recorded on this session include “In the Dark”, “Flashes”, “Barrelhouse” and “The World is Waiting for the Sunrise.”

Conclusions regarding the extent of individual expression on Stacy's first recorded effort are drawn based on the following formula:

$$\frac{\text{head + solos / member}}{\text{total choruses}} = \text{individual expression}$$

Note: Introductions and tags are noted but not factored into this equation based on their respective inconsistency.

### **1. In the Dark 3'16”**

Bix Beiderbeck's composition “In the Dark”, represents the fourth in a series of four completely notated pieces written for solo piano titled *Modern Piano Suite, No. 4: In the Dark*, and constitutes one-third of this recording. (Interestingly, this track also contains Beiderbecke's “Modern Piano Suite, No. 3: Flashes” which follows “In the Dark.”) With the exception of Stacy's interpretation of the endings of each of these pieces, there is no improvisation included on either of these two tracks, rendering the quantification of individual expression moot.

**2. Flashes** (see 1., above)

**3. Barrelhouse (Music: Jess Stacy) 3'03"**

Form: 32-bar A-B-A-B

Total choruses: 3

Introduction: 4 bars

Head in: Piano, 1 chorus

First solo: Bass, 1 chorus

Head out: Piano, 1 chorus

Individual expression: Piano 66%; bass 33%

**4. The World is Waiting for the Sunrise<sup>13</sup> (Music: Ernest Seitz; lyrics: Eugene Lockhart) 3'10"**

Form: 32-bar A-B

Total choruses: 6

Introduction: 4 bars, Piano

Head in: Piano

First solo: Piano, 4 choruses

Head out: Piano, 32 bars of shout chorus

Individual expression: Piano, 100%

Individual Expression – Among the four tracks of Stacy's first trio recording, the selection that exemplifies the greatest degree of individual expression is Stacy's own composition, "Barrelhouse." The individuality that is so clearly in evidence on this track is of great significance in that it takes place in the earliest example of a pre-Powell piano-bass-drums-comprised trio format.

Stacy's deference to a level playing field on this track is quadruply apparent. First, he gives bassist Crosby a solo; second, he gives him the first solo; third, he gives him an entire chorus; and fourth, Stacy does not even take a solo himself. This level of magnanimity is unheard of in the piano-bass-drums-comprised trio format until the highly democratic Evans-LaFaro-Motian trio.

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<sup>13</sup> Note: Published by Chappell-Harms, Inc. in New York in 1919, the original form of this work includes a 4-bar introduction, 16-bar verse and an 18-bar chorus. On this track, Stacy plays and solos over just the chorus, taking the liberty of omitting the last two bars to create a simpler 16-bar structure over which to improvise. The trio also imposes a double time rhythmic feel on the original song. In this interpretation, Stacy converts the original 18-bar chorus to a 32-bar form.

Although bassist Crosby's primarily vertically focused solo over this tune represents the melodic antithesis of the beautifully crafted linear-focused solos by LaFaro (or any of Evans's bassists for that matter), his performance provides the listener with ample evidence to categorize it as a solo, nevertheless. Setting it apart from an all-quarter-note-per-bar driven walking bass line (with the exception of the last two bars) consisting primarily of consecutive root-root-root-root or root-root-fifth-fifth patterns on the head (Fig. 3.4), Crosby's solo comprises some syncopation, very few consecutive repeated tones, and places more emphasis on complete arpeggios of chords i.e, the standard two-bar ascending-descending root-third-fifth-sixth-root-sixth-fifth-third bass pattern. Stacy is clearly "comping" – albeit busily – and Krupa's accompaniment demonstrates a definitive drop in volume, signaling Crosby's bass solo (Fig. 3.5).

Intro

Head in)

Chords: C, G7(#5), C, G7(#5), C7, F, D7, G7, C, A7, D7, G7, C, A7, D7, G7, C

Fig. 3.4 Crosby's bass line on "Barrelhouse"

Fig. 3.5 Crosby's solo over "Barrelhouse" (Transcription: S. Muscarella)

To reiterate, Crosby's solo, including its placement and length, is revolutionary in that the presence of a bass solo on this recording represents an early glimpse of the democratic paradigm to come within the piano-bass-drums trio format. Crosby's solo is indicative of the equality that begins to develop within trio membership in general from 1935 on.

On "The World is Waiting for the Sunrise" Stacy clearly asserts himself as the dominant force within the unit. He plays both "heads in" and "out" and takes all of the solos with only minimal attention given to Crosby or Krupa for what could be characterized as quasi

bass and/or drum solos – but even that depiction is a stretch. Neither Crosby nor Krupa is given any *discrete* space to take a distinguishable solo on this track; rather these two primarily play the role of accompanists, contributing more to timbral contrast and less to any discrete structural support. On the first A of the third and fourth choruses of the piano solo, Stacy lowers the dynamics, indicating the possibility of a bass solo; and in fact, bassist Crosby does intersperse some contrasting syncopation into his quarter note walking lines. But Stacy’s drop in dynamics is deceptive. His graciousness in supporting any kind of solo from Crosby goes only as far as “comping” comparatively softer. His “comping” patterns proceed to morph into a full-blown continuation of his solo.

In an attention-getting effort on this same tune, Krupa’s accompaniment in particular becomes so intrusive throughout the last chorus of this track, it sounds as though he *is* soloing! In the last chorus of this tune, drummer Krupa unmistakably ramps up his presence by playing markedly busier and louder, adding a plethora of syncopated stick shots and cymbal crashes. Schuller’s take on Krupa’s unflattering artistic innovations are apparently consistent with Stacy’s as he notes here: “Hearing these moment of talent and intelligence, one is hard put to also explain Krupa’s often deplorable monotonous drumming in the early Goodman Trio and Quartet sides, or the horrors of Sing, Sing, Sing, or the countless other example of Krupa’s rigidly relentless pounding “(Jess Stacy was wont to call it “Krupa’s banging”).” (Schuller 1989: Kindle Location 799) Krupa’s performance on this track may be construed as “banging”; at the same time, it may also be interpreted as simply vying for attention. One way or another, Krupa contributes to creating a more robust climax to this tune.

Division of Role – Other than serving to provide wide-ranging textural contrast, in general, there is little evidence of a distinct or remarkable division of role among the Stacy trio membership on this track, a condition that is primarily a result of Stacy’s all-encompassing if not overbearing stride-influenced style. There is continuous rhythmic and harmonic redundancy among the three members in view of the fact that Stacy’s stride-influenced left-hand singly addresses both rhythmic and harmonic elements, leaving little

sonic room for either a bassist or drummer to play an indispensable role. Although timbrally one-dimensional, Stacy, double-handedly, functions as a self-contained unit, administering all three (rhythmic, harmonic and melodic) roles. The role of either the bassist or the drummer on this recording is not of notable tangible structural significance. Though these two sidemen may provide minimal critical rhythmic and harmonic reinforcement here, their timbrally contrasting and percussively ornamental contributions are immeasurable.

Again, generally on this recording, Stacy's stride-influenced style left and right hands together address the lion's share of every beat or division of every beat on every track. His left-hand single-handedly serves as a metronome, identifying almost every beat of every bar, and together, both hands' attention to roots, thirds and fifths and inversions of triads and seventh chords identify the prevailing harmony.

Stacy's right hand is the unit's primary melodic contributor, although the better part of his melodic material is more vertically than horizontally focused. In this regard, in general, there is actually little division of role between Stacy's own two hands, which are in big part harmonically redundant. One example of his propensity for playing vertically focused melodies is heard in his four-bar improvised introduction to "The World Is Waiting for the Sunrise", the first two bars of which comprise an arpeggiated C major triad (Fig. 3.6).

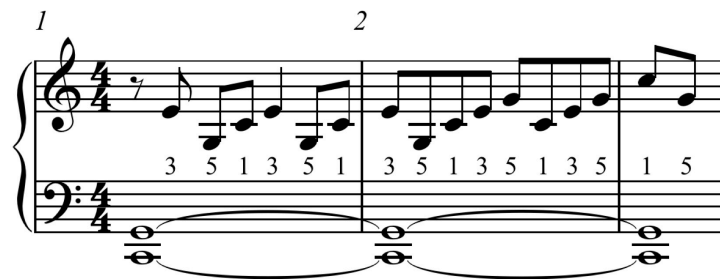


Fig. 3.6 The first two bars of Stacy's introduction to "The World Is Waiting for the Sunrise"

Division of role in the Stacy trio is murky – the antithesis of the multi-functional membership that develops later in the Powell trios, and even more so, in the Evans and Jarrett trios. That is, the unquestionable importance of the timbral contributions among the various instruments a given, redundancy among the Stacy trio membership is rampant

inasmuch as the incessant verbosity inherent in stride-influenced left-hand-style piano literally single-handedly addresses the gamut of rhythmic and harmonic considerations, leaving little opportunity for the development of versatility and individual expression from bassist Crosby or drummer Krupa. Again, on this recording, Crosby's and Krupa's respective contributions are indispensable, but primarily as they pertain to multi-timbral harmonic and rhythmic reinforcement rather than structural integrity.

The Stacy Trio Gestalt – To reiterate, Stacy's right hand melodic lines are remarkably chord tone-focused. Compared with the Parker-influenced chromatic-infused melodic development manifested by Powell in the next decade, Stacy's primarily vertically focused single-line solos comprise little ornamentation.

There is little rhythmic contrast between the highly embellished, chord tone-focused original melody and the melodic improvisation among any of the six 32-bar choruses of "The World is Waiting for the Sunrise," for example. That is, the first thirty-two bars of the original melody and the melodic improvisation over the entire form are similar in both rhythmic and melodic content. There is little rhythmic or melodic contrast between the original melody and the melodic improvisation over the form, causing it to sound especially monochromatic.

On his first recording as leader of a trio, Stacy and his two sidemen collectively produce a mono-textural, predictable aural experience for the listener. To wit, there is not one moment where all three members of the group are *not* playing together. Each track is a veritable "wall of sound", although there is some saving grace in the deference the trio pays to dynamics, helping to set Crosby's solo on "Barrelhouse" apart.

There is little rhythmic, melodic or harmonic unpredictability found on this recording based primarily on Stacy's unyielding left-hand stride-influenced style along with the harmonic redundancy in his right-hand melodic lines. Stacy's contributions alone leave little to the imagination. His left-hand quarter-note-driven low bass note-mid-register chordal pattern covers both rhythmic and harmonic roles. His right-hand melodic material

is predictably phrased and harmonically superfluous; the use of non-chord tones is practically non-existent. That said, as leader of the earliest known recording in the piano-bass-drums-comprised jazz piano trio format, Stacy is to be extoled for the mark he makes in the development of this important entity within the greater jazz realm.

**Mary Lou Williams – b. May 18, 1910; d. May 28, 1981** – Already steeped in the stride traditions of James P. Johnson and Earl Hines by the age of nineteen, Williams went on to incorporate some of the stylistic traits of Fats Waller, Willie “The Lion” Smith and Count Basie into her stylistic mix. Her first trio recording with bassist Booker Collins and drummer Ben Thigpen was made on March 7, 1936, shortly after the 1935 Stacy trio recording. Williams recorded three of her own compositions (on what TJD-Online lists as Williams’s second-ever recording): “Corny Rhythm”, “Over Hand” (“Froggy Bottom”) and “Isabelle.” (See entry W6758 in The Jazz Discography Online.)

In a 1977 interview with Williams, author Len Lyons asked her if she was more partial to solo or trio playing:

L.L.: *“Do you prefer solo or trio playing?”*

M.L.W.: *“I prefer trio, if they’re together with me. There’s some mental telepathy there, and it’s more fun.”* (Lyons 1983 72)

Conclusions regarding the extent of individual expression on this recording are drawn based on the following formula:

$$\frac{\text{head} + \text{solos} / \text{member}}{\text{total choruses}} = \text{individual expression}$$

Note: Introductions and tags are noted but not factored into this equation based on their respective inconsistency.

### **1. “Corny Rhythm” (Comp. Mary Lou Williams) 2’47”**

Form: 32-bar A-A-B-A

Total choruses: 4

Introduction: Piano, 4 bars



Head in: Piano  
First solo: Piano, 2 choruses  
Second solo: Bass, .5 of a chorus (A-A)  
Head out: Piano, B-A  
Individual expression: Piano: 88%; bass, 12%

## **2. “Overhand” (“New Froggy Bottom”) (Comp. Mary Lou Williams) 2’45”**

Form: 12-bar blues  
Total choruses: 7  
Head in: Piano, 2 choruses  
First solo: Piano, 3 choruses  
Head out: Piano, 2 choruses  
Individual expression: Piano: 100%

## **3. “Isabelle” (Comp. Mary Lou Williams) 2’57”**

Form: “head in”: 32-bar A-B-A-B + break: 4 bars  
Total choruses: 3.5  
Introduction: Piano, 4 bars  
Head in: Piano  
First solo: Piano 1.5 choruses (A-A + A-B-A-B)  
Head out: Piano  
Individual expression: Piano: 100%

Individuality – Williams dominates all three tracks of this recording with the exception of one 8-bar “benefit of the doubt” section devoted to bassist Collins in “Corny Rhythm.” Similar to the dynamics evidenced in the Stacey trio, a drop in volume by Williams and Thigpen is indicative of what could be construed as a bass solo in the two A sections between Williams’s first and second solos. The problem is that Williams continues to play along with, as well as, over bassist Collins. He is never featured without a busy piano accompaniment, obscuring this as a definitive bass solo. Collins’s lines are never rhythmically more adventurous than half notes or quarter notes and his melodic lines adhere closely to chord tones. Drummer Thigpen is given no solos on any of the tracks on this recording. In short, in terms of individual expression on her first trio recording as leader, Williams is clearly the “top dog.”

Division of Role – In general, there is little division of role among membership within any of these three tunes. Given Williams’s all-encompassing rhythmic, harmonic and melodic

roles, neither Collins nor Thigpen are structurally indispensable. Williams's, Collins's and Thigpen's roles as either soloists or accompanists are clearly unvarying throughout the entire length of each tune on this recording, and Williams, functioning as both soloist and accompanist in this unit, proves to be 100% self-sufficient. In addition to being the only truly discernable soloist on this recording, her left hand accompaniment patterns incorporate both stride- and boogie-woogie-influenced styles into each of the tunes and therefore could easily function sans any accompaniment from a bassist and drummer.

Exemplifying her self-sufficiency, in "Corny Rhythm," Williams's left hand references single bass notes as well as stride- and swing-style throughout this track. She is so completely self-sufficient that the bass doesn't even come in until her second chorus of solos, 1' 24" into the track.

"Over Hand" ("New Froggy Bottom"), as described by Schuller is a "Mary Lou Williams old boogie-woogie number from 1929." (Schuller 1989: 354). He describes what he believes to be her influences on this track:

*"In addition to her thorough familiarity with that great pianistic triumvirate of Johnson-Waller-Hines, she now began slipping in touches of Basie's new, more economical style. This is first noticeable on some of her 1936 trio recordings, especially Overhand and Swingin' for Joy, although the latter also pays tribute to the special lyricism of Willie "The Lion" Smith. (Schuller 1989: 360)*

On this track, Williams's left hand is devoted to a boogie-woogie bass line on the "head in" and "head out" and stride- and swing-style on her solos; Collins and Thigpen are structurally redundant but make important timbral contributions. The redundancy prevalent between Williams' left hand and Collins' bass line which doubles the 8-note-to-the-bar boogie-woogie bass line pattern clearly illustrates the prevailing redundancy among the three musicians on this recording.

On the third track, "Isabelle," again, Williams's stride- and swing-style left hand creates complete self-sufficiency throughout the entire track.

Bassist Collins and drummer Thigpen serve almost exclusively as accompanists on all three tunes of this recording, reinforcing rhythm and harmony. Collins not only doubles the roots of chords (primarily in half-time feel), but also repeatedly doubles Williams's left-hand boogie-woogie bass pattern. Thigpen reinforces rhythm and time with brushes. As mentioned earlier on, the stride- and boogie-woogie-infused style played by Williams creates considerable redundancy among the memberships' roles throughout this recording. In contrast with bassist Crosby's solos heard on Stacy's first piano-bass-drums trio recording a year earlier, Williams's bassist serves primarily as harmonic and rhythmic reinforcement rather than as a unique independent contributor.

The Williams Trio Gestalt – On her first trio recording, Williams's stride-, swing- and boogie-woogie-influenced left hand facilitates a high level of self-sufficiency. Stylistically, Williams's first effort is basically a solo piano performance accompanied by bass and drums, which only reinforce rhythm and harmony, but make unique timbral contributions. In this regard, Williams decidedly references the past.

Although not evidenced in this first piano-bass-drums trio effort, in *The Great Jazz Pianists* author Lyons notes that later into the forties, Williams did prove to be an early proponent of bebop while maintaining her ties to her blues and swing roots.

*“During the forties in New York, Mary Lou became one of the early champions of bebop, and she befriended Thelonious Monk, Dizzy Gillespie and Bud Powell. The new music influenced her own playing profoundly, although it did not diminish the authenticity with which she played blues and swing-era piano. Williams was adept at integrating new idioms in her music without dropping the old ones.” (Lyons 1980: 68)*

Williams lived through a number of jazz periods including The Swing, Bebop and Post-Bop Eras, making many more stylistic contributions than are evidenced on this benchmark first recording.

**Erroll Garner – b. June 15, 1923; d. January 2, 1977**

*“The trios led by Erroll Garner, starting in 1944 and continuing until a year or two before his death in 1977, were basically a one-man show, a pianist accompanied by bass and drums...” “...Garner himself was responsible for 99 percent of the success, and all of the personality, involved in these many units.”* (Feather 1984: 35)

Feather’s point of view holds water in that on his first trio recording, Garner is the only soloist. However, his abandonment of a stride-influenced left-hand accompaniment pattern early on in his career signaled one of the first instances of division of role within the piano-bass-drums trio format.

Born on June 15, 1921 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Garner was just three years Powell’s senior. A true innovator, Garner straddled the Swing and Bebop Eras, developing a unique style that could not be categorized as belonging solely to either period. Best known for his original composition “Misty”, the self-taught Garner devised a novel style early on in his career. Noted stride pianist Dick Hyman provides a description of Garner’s unique approach:

*“...Well, very often he’s playing the right hand in octaves with two or three notes filled in and it comes out rather like a brass section up in that range. It’s a kind of a block chord playing, but it’s in one hand because Garner’s most typical characteristic in rhythmic numbers like this is that he’s strumming with the left hand in the manner of a guitar. And this pervades a great deal of the actions of his left hand but you have to understand that when he’s doing this kind of strumming in the left hand, usually he had a bass player that was walking underneath...”* (Hyman 2007: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IM-77RvpJf0>)

In this same demonstration, Hyman goes on to use the analogy of the right hand, which alternates between sounding like a big band when using the lines comprising filled in octaves, and a tenor saxophonist when playing single note lines. He then addresses Garner’s uncanny rhythmic feel, which in the world of jazz piano, is uniquely his.

*“Another characteristic of Garner’s was that he used rubato which means literally in Italian ‘robbed’ – that is, you take a little bit of one beat and put it on the next*

*one and in effect in piano playing, it's having the right hand play a little behind the left hand. Garner would use that for awhile and then he would suddenly break into exactly on the beat playing, and it was a very refreshing change.” (Ibid.)*

Garner’s left hand created a bed of beat-focused rhythmic stability that enabled his right hand to be rhythmically provocative. Garner’s right-hand alternation between playing on the beat and slightly behind the beat of his left hand produced an unprecedented “floaty” or lazy rhythmic feel that exuded warmth and charmed his listeners. But it is Garner’s break with a stride- and swing influenced left-hand “comp” pattern that is of particular importance to the development of the division of role within the piano-bass-drums trio format. His mid-register left-hand guitar-strumming style left the low register open for a walking bass line. This stylistic shift had a profound impact on modern jazz pianists and, by extension, modern jazz piano trios to come.

The earliest piano-bass-drums trio recording by the 23-year-old Garner is titled *Passport to Fame: Erroll Garner Trio*. Garner’s first effort is recorded on December 18, 1944 in New York City and features John Simmons on bass and Harold “Doc” West on drums. The tune titles, composers, date of publication, lengths and forms from this date follow. Note: Conclusions regarding the extent of individual expression on this recording are drawn based on the following formula:

$$\frac{\text{head} + \text{solos} / \text{member}}{\text{total choruses}} = \text{individual expression}$$

Note: Introductions and tags are noted but not factored into this equation based on their respective inconsistency.

**1. “Perdido” (Music: Juan Tizol; lyrics: Ervin Drake and Hans Jan Lengsfelder) 2’ 48”**

Form: 32-bar A-A-B-A  
Total choruses: 3  
Introduction: None  
Head in: Piano  
First solo: Piano, 1 chorus

Head out + 6-bar tag: Piano  
Individual expression: Piano: 100%

**2. “Soft and Warm” (Comp. Roger Kay) 3’07”**

Head in: 36-bar A-A-B-A + 4-bar tag  
Total choruses: 2.25  
Introduction: 8 bars  
Head in: Piano  
First solo: Piano, 1 chorus + 8-bar tag  
Head out: Piano A + 6-bar tag  
Individual expression: Piano: 100%

**3. “Everything Happens to Me” (Music: Matt Dennis; lyrics: Thomas Adair) 3’10”**

Head in: 32-bar A-A-B-A  
Total choruses: 1.5  
Head in: Piano  
Piano: Head out B-A  
Individual expression: Piano: 100%

**4. “I’m in the Mood for Love” (Music: Jimmy McHugh; lyrics: Dorothy Fields) 2’52”**

Form: 32-bar A-A-B-A  
Total choruses: 1  
Intro: 4 bars, rubato, solo piano  
Head in: Piano, rubato, solo piano  
Piano: Head out, rubato, solo piano  
Individual expression: Piano: 100%

**5. “All the Things You Are” (Music: Jerome Kern; lyrics: Oscar Hammerstein II) 3’42”**

Form: 36-bar A(8)-A(8)--B(8)-A(12)  
Total choruses: 2  
Introduction: Piano solo, rubato A(8)-A(8)-A(8)-B(8)-A(12)  
Head in: Piano  
Head out: Piano + tag  
Individual expression: Piano: 100%

**6. The Blue Room (Music: Richard Rodgers; lyrics: Lorenz Hart) 3’**

Form: 32-bar A-A-B-A  
Total choruses: 3

Introduction: 8 bars  
Head in: Piano  
First solo: Piano, 1 chorus  
Head out: Piano + 6-bar tag  
Individual expression: Piano: 100%

**7. “I Get a Kick Out of You” (Music and lyrics: Cole Porter) 3’ 01”**

Form: Intro: 12; “head in”: A(16)-A(16)-B(16)-A(16)  
Total choruses: 1.5 including the head in and head out  
Piano: Head in  
First solo: Piano B(16)  
Head out: Piano Last A + Coda  
Individual expression: Piano: 100%

**8. “Blues I Can’t Forget” (Comp. Erroll Garner) 3’10”**

Form: 8-bar blues  
Total choruses: 4 including two 8-bar heads in and one 12-bar head out  
Introduction: Piano, 4 bars  
Head in: Piano, 2 choruses  
First solo: Piano, 1 chorus (12-bar blues)  
Head out: Piano 1 + 4-bar tag  
Individual expression: Piano: 100%

**9. “Boogie Woogie Boogie” (Comp. Errol Garner) 3’19”**

Form: 16-bar blues  
Total choruses: 8  
Introduction: 8 bars  
Head in: Piano, 2 choruses  
First solo: Piano, 5  
Head out: Piano, 1 chorus + tag  
Individual expression: Piano: 100%

**10. Gliss in the Dark (AKA “Errol’s Bounce”) (Comp. Erroll Garner) 3’08”**

Form: Head: 34-bar A(10)-A(8)-B(8)-A(8) + Introduction(8)  
Total choruses: 2 including the head in and head out  
Introduction: 8 bars  
First solo: Piano A(8)-A(8)-B(8)  
Head out: Piano, A(8) + Introduction(8)  
Individual expression: Piano: 100%

Individuality – With regard to distribution of solos, Garner exhibits no tendency whatsoever to share the spotlight with his artistic cohorts on any of the tracks of his first piano-bass-drums trio recording. He plays the “heads in”, the solos and the “heads out” on every track, supporting Feather’s observation that in this setting, Garner was indeed the center of attention: “...Garner himself was responsible for 99 percent of the success, and all of the personality, involved in these (his) many units.” (Feather 1984: 35)

Division of Role – On “Perdido,” Garner begins by anchoring the entire first two A sections with dominant and tonic pedals on each beat in the left hand under a right-hand block chord-voiced melody. Bassist Simmons doubles Garner’s left hand and drummer West follows suit, marking each beat on the bass drum. The band transitions from the quarter-note stop time feel in the first two A sections to an all out 4/4 swing feel at the bridge. Garner’s left hand transitions to a stride-influenced-style – even though he has substantive rhythmic and harmonic support from Simmons’s walking bass line and West’s brushwork. The last A section of the “head in” proceeds in the same manner as the first two A sections with Garner and Simmons doubling the left-hand pedal point, West marking quarter notes and Garner’s right-hand playing a block chord voiced melody.

Garner takes the first and only solo in true “Garner-style” incorporating both combination single line and block chord solo over a stride-style left-hand accompaniment for one entire 32-bar chorus. His arrangement of the “head out” is the same as the “head in.” Garner’s stride-style influenced left-hand accompaniment on this track invalidates a clear division of role.

Garner begins “Soft and Warm” with an eight-bar introduction accompanied by a habanera-based hand drum and bass pattern adapted to 4/4 meter (Fig. 3.7).

### Habanera Rhythm



Fig. 3.7 The habanera rhythm



This rhythm continues throughout the first two 8-bar A sections, an 8-bar bridge and the last 8 + 4--bar A section. Division of role is apparent throughout the entire “head in” in that each musician is playing a unique structural role: The piano takes responsibility for the melody and harmony; the bass, for the rhythm and harmony; and the drums for rhythm.

The trio transitions from the habanera-based rhythm back to swing feel for the piano solo. Rather than play an improvised solo, as is usually the case immediately following the “head in” in jazz, Garner instead plays an ornamented, swung version of the “head.” At this point, whether or not his solo is considered a second “head in” or a genuine solo, the division of role becomes blurred as a result of Garner’s left hand’s focus on stride and swing bass (walking tenths) that mark every quarter note of the bar. The swing feel continues throughout his solo, transitioning back to the habanera for eight additional bars at the end of his solo. The “head out” consists of A + a 6-bar tag. Needless to say, the “road map” of this tune is unconventional.

Garner is the only featured soloist on “Everything Happens to Me” and his left hand is devoted to a stride-influenced style throughout.

With the exception of the last 20 seconds, “I’m in the Mood for Love” consists of a rubato solo piano version of “I’m in the Mood for Love”, rendering individual expression and division of role irrelevant.

On “All the Things You Are,” Garner opens with an implied 8-bar solo piano rubato introduction to the “head in.” This is an unusual rendition of this jazz standard in that Garner adds an additional A section prior to the B section. Simmons and West enter at the bridge. Garner’s solo references the “head in” the right hand; his left hand contributes both stride and swing-styles, resulting in timbral rather than structural division of role. Again, this track is all about Garner.

Garner's left hand incorporates both stride- and swing-influenced styles throughout the entire "head in" as well as on his solo of "The Blue Room." Again, Simmons and West make timbral rather than structural contributions.

"I Get a Kick Out of You" opens in a rhythmically similar fashion to "Soft and Warm." There is some division of role on the "head in" as Garner's offbeat "comping" does not compete with Simmons's bass line. Garner transitions to swing feel on his solo over the bridge, incorporating a stride-style left hand.

On "Blues I Can't Forget," Garner's left hand integrates left-hand stride- and swing styles along with contrapuntal single line bass lines on the "head in," throughout his solo and on the "head out." Simmons and West contribute timbral rather than structural contributions on this track.

As the title "Boogie Woogie Boogie" implies, this tune incorporates several boogie-based left-hand patterns throughout the "head in", solos, and "head out." Garner's left-hand boogie-woogie bass lines are pervasive throughout this track, resulting in little division of role.

Garner's left hand references stride and swing bass tenths styles on "Gliss in the Dark"/"Errol's Bounce. Simmons and West contribute timbral rather than structural contributions on this track.

The Garner Trio Gestalt – Garner incorporates left-hand stride-, boogie-woogie and swing-influenced styles throughout this first trio recording, basically leaving his bassist and drummer with no critical structural responsibility. Other than Garner's solo piano introductions, all three musicians are playing together continuously, creating a homogenous texture as is heard in the Stacy and Williams trios. Furthermore, similar to these two predecessors, the material on Garner's first trio recording is not illustrative of any groundbreaking phenomena pertaining to individual expression or division of role.

That being said, the Garner unit makes great strides in both of these areas on *The Erroll Garner Trio*, Garner’s second piano-bass-drums trio effort. Recorded just three weeks following *Passport to Fame* on January 10, 1945 in New York, there is clear evidence of a team effort on two of the four tracks of this recording: “White Rose Bounce” and “Movin’ Around.” Garner’s cohorts include Edgar Eddie Brown on bass and Harold “Doc” West again on drums. Solos are given to bassist Brown at the bridges of the “head out” of “White Rose Bounce” and “Movin’ Around.” While only eight bars long, the bridges on these two respective tracks serve to document Garner’s inclination for the first time, to share at least a small portion of the spotlight with his colleagues.

This recording also makes a seminal mark in terms of division of role. Granted Garner’s left hand continues to reference stride, swing and even boogie-woogies left-hand styles throughout this entire recording. But, as evidenced in his 32-bar AABA solo on “White Rose Bounce” (from 1:04 to 1:56) this recording is of particular importance in that it serves as a preview of Garner’s revolutionary new left-hand quarter-note-based mid-register “comp” pattern, a first of its kind jazz piano style that goes on to earn him a permanent place in the history of jazz piano.

As described by Hyman above, Garner’s one-of-a-kind artistic signature encompasses a wide range of rhythmic, harmonic and melodic aspects. Among them, his unique approach to “comping” in particular, as evidenced in this second recording, serves as a singular link to the development of the modern jazz piano-bass-drums trio. On much of his solo in “White Rose Bounce” for example, Garner relinquishes a stride- and swing-influenced left-hand accompaniment pattern (Fig. 3.8) for a pattern consisting of mid-register chords on every beat (Fig. 3.9). 100% of Garner’s left-hand activity occurs in the mid-register.



Fig. 3.8 Typical left-hand stride “comp” pattern: 50% in the low register and 50% in the mid register



Fig. 3.9 Garner's left-hand "comp" pattern: 100% in the mid register

Garner's left-hand technique exemplified in his version of "Back Home in Indiana" (Judy 2004: [http://nedjudy.com/jpt/#erroll\\_garner](http://nedjudy.com/jpt/#erroll_garner)) below, served to facilitate the restructuring of the piano-bass-drums jazz piano trio format in three major ways: First, his left-hand four-beat-to-the-bar mid-register-placed "comp" pattern covered both rhythmic and harmonic roles, enabling him to use a drummer in place of a guitarist; second, the jazz piano trio format with drums in place of guitar also eliminated any potential harmonic redundancy; the third, Garner's mid-register "comping" pattern eliminated the competition between the Swing Era stride- and swing-influenced left-hand patterns and the bassist's single-note and/or walking bass lines in the low register (Fig. 3.10).



Fig. 3.10 Garner's left hand "comp" pattern on "Back Home Again in Indiana."<sup>14</sup>

Garner's omission of left-hand bass notes in the low register impacts the bass in two ways: First, the bass itself becomes more discernable sonically; and second, the bassist is given the opportunity for complete independence. As evidenced in the solo section of "White Rose Bounce," Garner's new left hand technique signals the onset of a distinguishable division of role in the piano-bass-drums trio format. Each member in the Garner unit now plays both structural and timbral roles.

Garner's left hand's mid-range "comping" style exemplifies the upward migration in register that occurs in the Swing and Bebop Era rhythm sections (discussed in Chapter

<sup>14</sup> Permission granted by Ned Judy via email on August 3, 2015.

One). Rhythmically however, Garner's left hand continues to be devoted to a mid-register, one chord per beat. Although this, along with an unprecedented laid-back right hand became his personal artistic signature and one that put him on the jazz piano "map" permanently, Garner's rhythmically unvarying left hand was the antithesis of the rhythmically response-based "comping" patterns epitomized by Powell. But again, what was most notable and had such a profound affect on the division of role within the piano-bass-drums trio format was that Garner's left-hand "comp" patterns largely took place in the mid-register of the piano. The absence of low bass notes opened up the low register for the bass, giving the bassist room for individual expression as well as heightened clarity of sound. Garner's break with a stride- and swing-influenced left-hand "comp" pattern was one of the most remarkable phenomena to take place in jazz piano – both in the piano-bass-drums trio format as well as in any other ensemble format – and not in the least in terms of the profound affect this had on the entire rhythm section as will continue to be discussed in subsequent chapters. Although reference and reverence to stride- and/or swing-influenced left-hand accompaniment patterns continues to surface in Garner's trios to come, his mid-register situated "comping" patterns foreshadow the "comping" conventions in modern jazz piano-bass-drums trios to come.

It is Feather's contention that among Garner's many trios, none in particular stood out inasmuch as Garner was consistently the center of attention. (Feather 1984:35) As mentioned, Garner incorporates stride-influenced style into much of his first recording, but in subsequent recordings his left begins incorporating a mid-register "comp" chord on every beat, much like the four-beat-to-the-bar strumming of a Swing Era jazz guitarist. There is a high level of rhythmic predictability in Garner's new left-hand approach, but this along with the relationship to his laid back tremolo-infused right-hand melodic contributions produced an innovative new style. Most importantly though, the upward migration of his left hand opens up room for the bass alone to occupy the low register of the sonic spectrum as well as provide the trio with an independent harmonic substratum. All of these aspects produce a gestalt that deserves a place in the development of the modern jazz piano paradigm, just "moments" away.

**Oscar Peterson – b. August 15, 1925; d. December 23, 2007** – Comparing Peterson with his contemporaries, Lyons states: “More than any other pianist, Oscar Peterson has inherited the harmonic conception and awesome technique of Art Tatum, his mentor and early idol.” (Lyons 1983: 131)

According to Lord, Oscar Peterson’s first documented recording as leader of a piano-bass-drums jazz piano trio, “The Oscar Peterson Trio”, was made in Montreal on April 30, 1945, just over four months subsequent to Garner’s first effort, and features Bert Brown on bass and Frank Garepy on drums. (Peterson was also well known for his work as leader of a piano-guitar-bass trio format.)<sup>15</sup>

Peterson’s first recording was made just two years prior to Powell’s first effort in 1947. <sup>16</sup>Peterson’s first piano-bass-drums trio recording is important here in that it serves as a benchmark which is consistent with the other pre-Powell leaders’ first recordings. Note: Conclusions regarding the extent of individual expression on this recording are drawn based on the following formula:

$$\frac{\text{head + solos / member}}{\text{total choruses}} = \text{individual expression}$$

Note: Introductions and tags are noted but not factored into this equation based on their respective inconsistency.

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<sup>15</sup> Lyons asks Peterson why he replaced his then guitarist Barney Kessel (1952-59) for drummer Ed Thigpen in 1959.

*Peterson: “I must admit part of the reason was an ego trip for me. There was a lot of talk about my virtuosity on the instrument, and some people were saying, “Oh, he can play that way with a guitar because it’s got that light, fast sound, but he couldn’t pull off those lines with a drummer burning’ up back there.” I wanted to prove it could be done. We chose Ed Thigpen because of his brushwork and sensitivity in general.”* (Lyons 1983: 136)

<sup>16</sup> As, Peterson’s first effort, this recording pales in comparison to the monumental artistic strides he made in either piano-guitar-bass- or piano-bass-drums trio formats as evidenced in future recordings.

**1. “I Got Rhythm” (Music: George Gershwin; lyrics: Ira Gershwin) 3’3”**

Form: 32-bar A-A-B-A  
Total choruses: 5  
Introduction: 4 bars  
Head in: Piano  
First solo: Piano: 1.5 (A-A)  
Second “solo”: Bass, .25 (B)  
Third solo: Piano, .25 (A)  
Fourth solo: Piano, 2.75  
Head out: Piano, .25 (A) + tag  
Individual Expression: Piano: 95%; bass: 5%

**2. “Louise” (Music: Richard A. Whiting; lyrics: Leo Robin) 2’58”**

Form: 32 bars A-A-B-A  
Total choruses: 2 including the head in and out  
Introduction: 4 bars  
Head in: Piano  
First solo: Piano A, A,  
Head out: Piano B, A  
Individual Expression: Piano: 100%

**3. “Louise” (Alternate take –see above.)**

**4. “My Blue Heaven” (Music: Walter Donaldson; lyrics: George Whiting) 3’01”**

Form: 32-bar A-A-B-A  
Total choruses: 5  
Introduction: Piano, 4 bars  
Head in: Piano  
First solo: Piano, 1 chorus  
Second solo: Bass, 1 chorus  
Third solo/Head out: Piano, 2  
Individual Expression: Piano: 80%; bass: 20%

**5. “The Sheik of Araby” (Music: Ted Snyder; lyrics: Harry B. Smith and Francis Wheeler) Milton Brown) 3’02”**

Form: 32 bars A-A-B-C  
Total choruses: 6  
Introduction: Piano, 8 bars  
Head in: Piano, 1 chorus  
First solo: Piano, 1 chorus  
Second solo: Bass, 1 chorus

Third solo/Head out: Piano, 3 choruses  
Individual Expression: Piano 83%; bass: 17%

Individuality – Compared with the individuality evidenced on the Garner’s earliest trio recordings, Peterson is generous with his distribution of solos on this recording. There are bass solos on three out of five of these tracks: a smidgen of “I Got Rhythm” and one entire chorus on both “My Blue Heaven” and “Sheik of Araby,”

Division of Role – If nothing else, Peterson’s first trio recording as a leader is for the most part a testament to his extraordinary technical skill as well as his knowledge of and ability to subsume a wide range of styles into his music – in particular as relates to his left hand. He begins “I Got Rhythm” with a four-bar blues-focused solo piano introduction in stop time. He then plays the first two A sections of the head, incorporating two-handed Buckner-style block chords over Brown’s walking bass line and Garepy’s wire brushes accompaniment. For some reason, Peterson substitutes a completely unrelated step-wise sequential melodic pattern for Gershwin’s original bridge, then returns to the original melody for the last A section. Exemplifying a clear division of role on the “head in”, the Brown and Garepy accompany Peterson’s mid-register focused melody with a walking bass line in the low register and brushes in 4/4 meter.

Peterson takes the first solo, a single line improvisation at 31:53 over the entire first chorus. His left hand plays a primarily stride-influenced root-chord-root-chord pattern, effacing the division of role he had previously established on the “head in.” The first two A sections of the second chorus consist of a repeated stop-time figure in the likeness of the 1942 classic “A String of Pearls” to re-establish some degree of division of role. He interrupts the repetition at the bridge, “comping” sparsely to expose the walking bass line and wire brushes accompaniment to a great extent. Giving Peterson the benefit of the doubt, this interpreted as a joint solo, though Brown and Garepy continue on through this section in a similar fashion with their previous devotion to the quarter note. In reality, Peterson’s sparse “comping” over Brown’s walking bass line and Garepy’s drum accompaniment appears to merely provide contrast rather than provide an opportunity for a bass or drum solo. Peterson then returns to the “The String of Pearls” figure for the last



A section of this second chorus. He then solos for the entire remainder of the tune over an incessant boogie-woogie left-hand bass pattern, leaving Brown and Garepy with little structural responsibility.

At a time when the new ‘art music’, bebop, was beginning to make a name for itself as one of the most important eras in the history of the jazz art form, this track illustrates Peterson’s left hand’s devotion to both rhythmic and harmonic roles, highlighting all four beats of every bar in either a stride-influenced, swing or boogie-woogie left hand accompaniment – again, a technique clearly referencing the past rather than forecasting the future. His boogie woogie-infused last three choruses signal his personal viewpoint that the busier he is and the more responsibility he takes, the better.

Peterson employs Buckner-style block chords in the four-bar introduction and “head in” of “Louise,” accompanied by a walking bass line and brushes. (The bass line is barely audible in the mix here.) Peterson adds double time feel on the A sections, Peterson’s right hand plays a double time feel pickup to his single line solo at 1:30 and continues to imply double time feel throughout the first two A sections. Brown and Garepy completely disregard Peterson’s double time implication, emphasizing each quarter note. Peterson’s implication is so blatant, it’s almost as if Brown and Garepy are in another world. Peterson’s right hand plays a single line melody in and out of double time feel accompanied by his left hand, which marks every beat with a chord. The head out is identical to the head in.

Peterson opens “My Blue Heaven” with a four-bar introduction, a right-hand single-line improvisation over I6 – biii dim – iim7 – V7. His left-hand “comp” chords fall on beat one and are played one-to-a-bar, in stop-time. Bassist Brown’s steadfast walking line and drummer Garepy’s brushes accompaniment are in “four”, with complete disregard for Peterson’s stop-time rhythm. In an acknowledgement to division of role, Peterson plays the “head in” block chord-style, which provides ample room for Brown and Garepy to distinguish themselves rhythmically, harmonically and of course, timbrally. There is no duplication of role among membership in the “head in”: The piano definitively sculpts the

melody and harmony via the distinctive Buckner-style locked-hands approach; the bass provides rhythmic and harmonic support via a contrapuntal quarter-note walking line; and the drums sustain the rhythmic vitality via the timbrally contrasting use of brushes.

Peterson takes the first solo – a single-line solo in his right hand and predictable “comp” patterns on beats two and four in his left hand over the first two A sections. At the bridge his left hand begins a forward-looking but short-lived response-based “comp” pattern, a clear indication of a division of role between his left and right hands. On the last A section of his solo, he reverts to a full-blown stride-influenced left-hand accompaniment to set up the bass solo.

Bassist Brown takes a solo in the form of a solid continuous quarter-note walking line accompanied by Peterson’s strategically placed two-handed syncopated comp voicings over the entire second chorus. Peterson’s “comping” may not necessarily be perceived as response-based per se given that it occurs over a completely rhythmically “flat” bass solo in all quarter notes, but it necessarily is not predictable and is interestingly placed.

The third and final chorus of this tune takes a startling stylistic turn. In total contrast with the preceding two choruses, Peterson converts the entire last chorus of this tune to a rocking boogie-woogie blues-focused solo in an astounding display of pianistic virtuosity.

This recording, made just two years shy of Powell’s first trio effort provides invaluable insight into the development of the modern jazz piano trio paradigm as evidenced by Peterson’s locked-hands style “head in” and response-based “comping” for both himself on the bridge and bassist Brown under his solo. But his allusion to both stride in the last A of his solo, and boogie-woogie on the entire last chorus, takes the listener on a stylistically backward- rather than forward-looking journey. The transitions he makes from the forward-looking sparse block-chord style “head in” to response-based “comping”, to setting up the bass solo via stride-influenced style left hand coupled with the boogie-woogie-based last chorus, make it clear that his idea of building excitement is to play all three rhythmic, harmonic and melodic roles, suppressing all of the evidence of division of

role or individuality that he had previously accrued. This couldn't be clearer than in the stride-influenced style he plays to up the bass solo. His forward-looking and quite sparse "comping" over the bass solo transitions into backward-looking full-blown boogie-woogie-style piano in the last chorus. In 1945, Peterson's boogie-woogie-style climax to this tune might have been received as completely conceivable – although boogie-woogie at this time is a far cry from being a new style; in fact, it very well might have been considered an older style by that time. But just when Peterson begins moving in the direction of employing a modern-jazz-like response-based left-hand "comping" pattern, as he illustrates at the bridge of the first chorus as well as throughout the entire 32-bar bass solo, he steps back in time by incorporating a stride-influenced left-hand pattern in the last A section of his solo. Then, in the third and final chorus, in what could be construed as his attempt to create the high point of this tune, he bursts into a driving boogie-woogie solo, monopolizing the remainder of this track. This self-contained boogie-woogie-infused last chorus completely obliterates any division of role within his membership. In today's trio world, where division of role reigns supreme, a move like this would most likely be interpreted as self-indulgent, if not just plain rude.

Peterson's interpretation of "The Sheik of Araby" serves to highlight his technical wizardry on the one hand and his lack of subtlety on the other. This rendition is like a tsunami of sound that incorporates a range of styles beginning with an overbearing boogie-woogie left hand bass pattern under the right-hand "head in," completely obliterating any critical structural contributions by his two colleagues. Peterson then transitions to a stride-influenced left hand, incorporating walking tenths. As what might be heard as a gesture to compensate for his overindulgence, Peterson gives bassist Brown a 32-bar chorus in which to walk under a syncopated "comp" pattern that enables him to garner some individual distinction. Brown is devoted to the quarter-note rhythm for an entire chorus, but Peterson affords him sufficient deference to categorize his walking bass line as a solo. Following Brown's "solo", Peterson returns to a broken octave boogie-woogie left-hand pattern that he employs up to the conclusion of the tune.

The Peterson Trio Gestalt – Peterson’s use of mid-register Buckner-style block chords, occasional use of mid-register left-hand “comping” patterns, right-hand chromatically infused single-line solos and overall technical prowess together provide a glimpse of the complex linearity, virtuosity and team effort characteristic of modern jazz to come. But throughout this first offering, as is apparent in his left-hand’s recurring devotion to both rhythm and harmony, Peterson never completely abandons his predisposition to take the lion’s share of the limelight; or, assume all three rhythmic, harmonic and melodic roles.

### **3.3 Summary**

All of the aforementioned pre-Powell jazz piano trios functioned as small ensemble “fish” in a primarily big band “pond.” Based on their appearance within the last ten years of the fifteen-year-long Swing Era, it is not surprising that the trio format inclined to espouse certain characteristics of a big band including an unmitigated attention to the pulse, the use of the locked-hands or block chords approach to voicing melodies that emulated the big band-style four-and five-part writing or the detailed arrangements of repertoire. Again, the Swing Era big band was a large structure with one primary purpose: to provide entertainment for a general public that, as many historians express, hoped to “dance” its way out of the Great Depression, an era which still ranks as the most devastating economic period in the history of the US. This meant that the music played by big bands, which catered to the general public, had to meet a critical criterion of all popular music: it needed to be accessible. That accessibility came in the way of a palpable homage to a pulse or beat as well as an easily sing-able and memorable melody as exemplified by repertoire from the body of work known as the Great American Songbook. It was only after these two elements were present that composers could then turn their attention to any harmonic considerations. All of these attributes are reflected in miniature in the pre-Powell jazz piano trio which represents a microcosm that references the past – the Swing Era, with its focus on music as entertainment – and at the same time, intimates the future – the Bebop Era, with its focus on jazz as art music.

It is interesting to note the correlation between the size of the ensemble and the size of the audience as jazz made the transition from its role as entertainment in the Swing to its role

as art music in the Bebop Era. Simply, in the 1930s and early 1940s, the large number of musicians comprising big bands correlated with a large number of people comprising their audiences; in the mid 1940s on, the small number of musicians comprising small groups correlated with a small number of people comprising *their* audiences. The rationale behind the large ensemble-large audience; small ensemble-small audience phenomenon extends well beyond ensemble size alone. The Swing Era big band was focused less on individual expression and more on creating music for entertainment's sake – music that was easily digested by the public at large. The visceral rather than intellectual nature of the music of the Swing Era appealed to and attracted a large audience who came primarily to *dance*. The large, raucous dance hall was critical to accommodating the throngs of patrons who converged to “cut a rug”<sup>17</sup>. Conversely, the Bebop Era small group was focused primarily on promoting individual expression – for creating music for art's sake, a style of music that was far more rhythmically, harmonically and melodically complex than the repertoire of most of the big bands. The sophisticated nature of the music of the Bebop Era appealed to and attracted a much smaller audience who came primarily to *listen*. The small, intimate and much quieter nightclub setting was simply more conducive to the urbane listening audience.

In addition to the correlation of the size of the audience to the accessibility of the music, there were other non-music related factors that contributed to the transition from the large group-prevalent Swing Era to the small group-prevalent Bebop Era. One explanation for the wane in the number of big bands in the late 30s is that many big band musicians joined the armed forces to serve in the Second World War. Those few who remained formed small groups. Also, in 1944, endeavoring to subsidize the war effort, the US Government imposed a hefty cabaret tax aimed at penalizing entertainment-related activities. This included big bands as well as vocalists who provided music for dancing, an activity which fell under the bailiwick of entertainment. This tax discouraged the big bands in the big dance halls, but encouraged the small instrumental groups in the small nightclubs.

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<sup>17</sup> The term “cut a (or the) rug” refers to an informal dance, typically in an energetic or accomplished way: *you can cut a rug when dance bands and singers take to the stage*. (Apple Inc. Dictionary Version 2.2.1 2005-2011)

In a March 17, 2013 article in the “Opinion” section of the *Wall Street Journal*, writer Eric Felton comments on the effect that the entertainment tax had on the demise of the Swing Era and its large audience appeal and how it ushered in what turned out to be a cutting-edge but less accessible music. The title of Felton’s article sums up the situation.

***“How the Taxman Cleared the Dance Floor***

*Thanks to a 'cabaret tax,' millions of Americans said goodbye to Swing Music. A lot fewer said hello to bebop.”* (Felton, 2013: <http://on.wsj.com/1KIY05U>)

Inspired by Felton’s article “How Taxes and Moving Changed the Sound of Jazz”, author Patrick Jarenwattananon notes that in addition to the cabaret tax, the recording ban issued by American Federation of Musicians from 1942-1943 ironically turned out to have a positive effect on promoting the Bebop Era as well:

*“Historical incidents other than the cabaret tax set it (bebop) in motion, too. The 1942 strike of the American Federation of Musicians barred instrumentalists from recording for record companies — the union was concerned that recorded music was supplanting live music without adequate royalties. Once the ban was lifted, many smaller, independent record companies rushed to document bebop innovations, and those records were bought up by a growing crowd of aficionados willing to pay for the latest and greatest. In turn, gatekeepers such as radio DJs and magazine editors — well before the democratizing Internet — were able to make a living by broadcasting and curating the modern, cutting-edge music.”* (Jarenwattananon 2013: <http://n.pr/1fUEs3U>)

The recording ban contributed indirectly to promoting the individuality that was to become one of the cornerstones of the Bebop Era. In agreement with Jarenwattananon, Schuller notes that with the exception of the financial impact the recording ban had on the industry, record companies turned their attention to reissuing earlier works from their catalogs. Not only did this positively impact record collectors, it also brought attention back to earlier jazz, when the focus was on the smaller group and the individual soloist – a feature that had gotten overwhelmed by the craze of the Swing Era big bands.

*“It is remarkable that the recording ban had so little negative effect on jazz, except in a financial way. In fact, the ban helped some aspects of jazz quite profoundly. For example, record companies began to reissue earlier records from their catalogs, which was not only a boon to jazz record collectors but created an awareness among many music lovers that jazz did have a venerable history to be taken seriously and appreciated, at the same time reminding listeners of the deeper values of the pre-Swing Era jazz, values which had been in many cases dissipated and abandoned.”* (Schuller 1989: 847)

Among the trios analyzed in this chapter, it is this writer’s belief that Cole, given his high level of rhythmic, melodic and harmonic maturity, overall musicality and devotion to creating an even playing field for his membership, is the pre-Powell trio leader who contributes the most to forecasting the future of the modern piano-bass-drums trio. Interestingly, among the pianists covered in this chapter, relative to Powell, Cole’s earliest trio recording exemplifying these traits, appears much earlier than one might have expected. In noting Cole as one of his primary influences, Bill Evans states *“I think he (Cole) is probably the most underrated jazz pianist in the history of jazz.”* (Pettinger 1998: 13)

Analyzing individuality, division of role and distinguishing stylistic characteristics within the Powell trios, evidence presented in Chapter Four supports Powell as a consummate messenger who not only helped to usher in the Bebop Era, but also created an artistic foundational model for the modern jazz piano-bass-drums trio. Powell completely embodies Schuller’s description of the transition from the Swing to the Bebop Era:

*“Inevitably, jazz turned to the small combo...Here the fresh ideas and exploratory thrust of bop – its greater technical agility, new clarity of lines, more advanced harmonies and melodic constructions – had at last found a flexible, versatile medium, the ideal vehicle for these new forms of expression.” “But most important of all, jazz (bop) had found its way back to improvisation.”* (Schuller 1989: 848)

Schuller notes the impact the transition to the small ensemble format had on individual expression in particular: “What followed (the Swing Era) was in many ways even more exciting and, if the truth be told, given to a purer, more personalized form of individual expression.” (Schuller 1989: 849) The flexibility and versatility that developed within the

small group ensemble in the Bebop Era (for the purposes of this thesis, the jazz piano trio) began to flourish with the onset of Powell and his various star-studded trios.



## Chapter Four

### THE BUD POWELL TRIOS

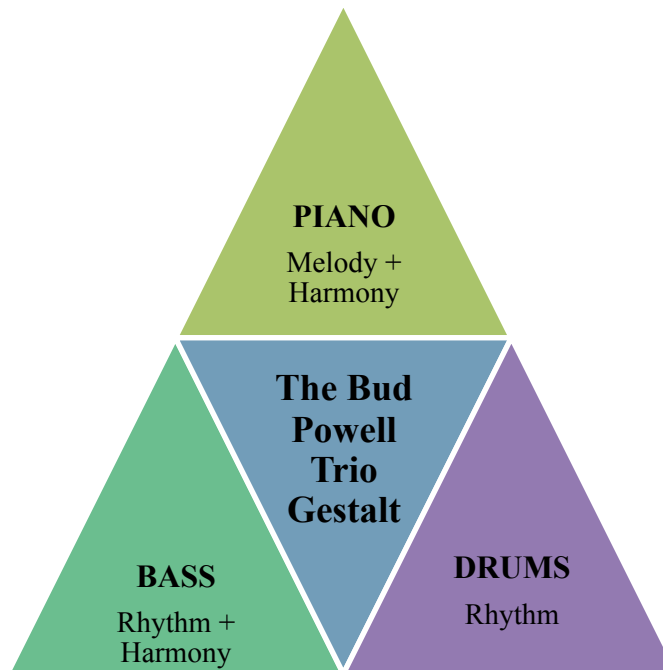


Fig. 4. Division of role in the Bud Powell trios

*“Perhaps more than any other pianist, Powell codified the now standard trio configuration of piano, bass, and drums. The most significant of his predecessors substituted guitar for drums, like Art Tatum and Nat Cole, or worked solo or in larger ensembles...”* (Giddins 1998: 321)

#### 4.1 EARL RUDOLPH “BUD” POWELL

Earl Rudolph “Bud” Powell was born on September 27, 1924 in Harlem, New York in the midst of the Harlem Renaissance. Powell was surrounded by a musically inclined family. His father William Sr., an accomplished stride pianist in his own right, began giving his discernibly precocious son formal piano instruction when he was just four years old. Juxtaposed with the “Harlem Renaissance,” “the cultural, social, and artistic explosion that took place in Harlem between the end of World War I and the middle of the 1930s,” (<http://to.pbs.org/1nege1m>) Powell’s boyhood coincided with one of the country’s greatest economic downturns – the Wall Street crash of October 1929, which

ignited the Great Depression – and he came of age in the midst of yet another horrific turn of events, World War II.

Recognizing his son's potential early on, William Sr. engaged an additional teacher, William F. Rawlins, who gave him what he referred to later on in his life as “semi-classical” training. (Pullman 2012: Kindle Location 357) Much to the disappointment of both of his parents and his teacher, who had pinned their hopes on their child prodigy pursuing a life as a concert pianist, Powell dropped out of high school at age fifteen to become a professional jazz musician. He landed his first major job with trumpeter Charles Melvin “Cootie” Williams in 1943 and appeared on his first recording with Williams in 1944 at the age of twenty. Powell's life would be forever changed by an incident that took place in January of 1945 while he was with Williams's band. On a one-night stand in Philadelphia, Powell showed up late for the job, physiologically impaired by some unknown substance that caused him to be disruptive. His behavior triggered a violent run-in with a policeman who administered life-altering head trauma with his Billy club. Powell, at the age of twenty-one, was left permanently mentally impaired. He spent the rest of his professional career in and out of mental institutions and was perpetually driven to the magic bullets of drugs and alcohol.

Powell made his first recording as leader of a piano-bass-drums-comprised jazz piano trio, *The Bud Powell Trio*, in 1947, at age twenty-three, two years after the end of the Second World War. Powell's first recording occurred during one of the country's most culturally explosive periods. In the world of jazz, this period became known as the Bebop Era, marking the beginning of modern jazz. In *The Amazing Bud Powell*, author Guthrie P. Ramsey, Jr. paints a vivid picture detailing the convergence of events of monumental consequence that took place in the 1940s: “World War II, black mass migration from southern states to northern urban centers, a mounting, urgent sense of black political and social efficacy, and an increased African American presence in all aspects of the cultural media” (Ramsey 2013: 56-57) – all in and around the time Powell, as one of bebop's founding fathers, was making an indelible artistic mark for himself. Ramsey points out the tremendous impact that bebop had, noting that ironically, the black effort to achieve

greater social mobility through “high culture,” was upstaged by bebop, an art form itself ensconced within the realm of “mass culture.” (Ramsey 2013: 57)

Powell’s life, which should have ended gloriously in celebration of his life’s work as one of the most important icons in the history of jazz, instead ended sadly on July 31, 1966 – just short of the pianist’s forty-second birthday. Years of personal ups and downs took their toll not only on Powell’s work, but also on the public’s perception of him. Given Powell’s monumental artistic contributions, in spite of the turbulence of his personal life, one can only imagine how much more productive his professional career could have been had he lived a conventional lifestyle, free of incarcerations in mental hospitals, bouts with alcohol and drugs, and the law. Rising above the fray that enveloped his life, Powell’s cutting-edge artistic accomplishments earned him the respect of his colleagues who regarded him as the leading jazz pianist of the time, and musicologists continue to endorse this sentiment to this day.

Giddins’s and Ramsey’s assessment of Powell’s impact on jazz, as noted at the outset of this chapter, addresses the enormity of the contributions Powell made to the evolution of the piano-bass-drums-comprised jazz piano trio paradigm in particular. This chapter examines the distinguishing rhythmic, harmonic and melodic characteristics, individuality, division of role, and the overall gestalt characteristic of three select trios led by an innovator who “laid down the basis for modern jazz piano,” to quote one of bebop’s founding fathers, trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie. (Smith 2015: <http://bit.ly/1IJx2Is>) It was evident from the first recording he made as leader on January 10, 1947 in New York City (with bassist Curley Russell and drummer Max Roach), to the last, made sometime in late 1965 or early 1966 (pathetically, with two unknown sidemen), that it was Powell who broke both technical and stylistic boundaries set by his immediate swing predecessors, garnering him the accolade as “...the finest pianist of the bebop generation, and arguably the most influential keyboard player of the past seventy years...” (Giddins and DeVaux 2009: 321)

The image of the triangle heading this chapter depicts the revolutionary shift that took place in the piano-bass-drums jazz piano trio format, beginning with Powell's first trio recording in 1947. With respect to division of role, the piano forewent one of its three previous roles – its rhythmic role – which enabled the pianist to place greater focus on melodic and harmonic considerations; the bass took on an additional role – a melodic role – which enabled the bassist to alternate taking all three roles; the drums continued to take a rhythmic role, although drummers were now also being given more opportunities for individual expression via discrete drum solos and/or trading.

The extent of Powell's contributions are acknowledged by Pullman: "Wherever in the world small-group modern jazz is heard today, no matter the kind of nightclub, the pianist is going to play some Bud Powell during his or her set." Pullman 2012: Kindle Location 83) In his treatise on bebop, "The Birth of Bebop," DeVaux supports the perpetual relevance of bebop music, which by extension includes Powell:

*"Bebop is a music that has been kept alive by having been absorbed into the present; in a sense, it constitutes the present. It is part of the experience of all aspiring jazz musicians, each of whom learns bebop as the embodiment of the techniques, the aesthetic sensibilities and ultimately the professional attitudes that define the discipline."* (DeVaux 1997: 2)

Powell's unparalleled artistry and virtuosity soon came together to earn him the reputation as bebop's number one pianist, and it was Powell, along with the two other noted bebop virtuosos, alto saxophonist Charlie Parker and trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie, who spearheaded the movement which put New York City on the map as the modern jazz capital of the world.

What were the technical and stylistic traits that set Powell and his piano-bass-drums-comprised trios apart from his predecessors? How did his work go on to influence two of the most important leaders of jazz piano trios to emerge in the history of jazz – Bill Evans and Keith Jarrett? Through historical accounts and transcription and analysis of selected work, this chapter serves to answer these questions, gaining insight into this influential artist's work by addressing Powell's **key influences**, the **rudiments of bebop**, the

**technical and stylistic aspects specific to Powell** as the progenitor of the modern jazz piano trio, the extent of **individuality and division of role** within select Powell trio recordings, and the **Powell trio gestalt**.

#### 4.2 Key Influences

Powell had two especially supportive and influential colleagues who mentored him throughout both his personal and professional life. One was Mary Lou Williams; the other was Thelonious Monk (whom Williams mentored as well). One other long distance Powell devotee, a Frenchman named Francis Paudras who was a commercial artist as well as a classically trained pianist, followed Powell's career from the moment he heard his music. Under Powell's artistic spell, Paudras describes the impact Powell's music had on him in his book "Dance of the Infidels," a comprehensive account detailing the pianist's life and work:

*"The experience was like a lightning bolt, a sublime and blinding revelation. I was filled with bliss. . . . I couldn't explain why, but I knew at once that for me this music was the most important in the universe. As this certainty grew, the course of my life was transformed. The power of the music became part of my everyday gestures, my everyday acts."* (Guthrie 2013: 93).

Paudras was instrumental in sustaining Powell's life and career. In 1959, after years of mental hospital stays, encounters with the law and family tragedies, including the death of his brother Richie Powell, and the death of Charlie Parker and other colleagues, Powell and his family made the decision to seek what began as a short-term artistic asylum in Paris in an attempt to resurrect his career. Their stay ended up lasting five years, which may be attributed in big part to the generous shepherding of his disciple, Paudras, throughout his Paris sanctuary. Although Powell's most artistically notable work – much of which is in the trio setting – occurred prior to his stay in Paris, he found some artistic respite and public acknowledgement at the Blue Note jazz club in Paris. Powell opened in December of 1959 with bassist Pierre Michelot and drummer Kenny Clarke, a trio that came to be known as "The Three Bosses." (Pullman notes that the three decided on this name rather than designating a particular trio leader even though Powell ended up either calling most of the tunes or just barging ahead and playing them, giving his sidemen no

choice. (Pullman 2012: Kindle Location 8082) (This is one of many instances illustrating Powell's self-absorption.) One recording made by "The Three Bosses" in 1961, *A Portrait of Thelonious*, is particularly noteworthy and will be covered in more detail later in this chapter.

### 4.3 The Rudiments of Bebop

Origin of the Term – Giddins contends that although the origin of the term bebop is uncertain, this neologism has been linked to the actual *sound* of this new style of music – in particular, a two-note figure, often the flatted fifth, heard at the end of a phrase. "The new jazz was popularly known as "bebop," a term of dubious origin often cited as the onomatopoeic equivalent of the two-note phrases (frequently the interval of a flatted fifth) that capped many of the melodic figures improvised by the modernists." (Giddins 1998: 261)

Pullman offers a similar line of thought. He speculates that the two-syllable term could have come from Dizzy Gillespie who often ended his phrases with two short notes. "Dizzy Gillespie, upon coming off a bandstand (possibly during that 1943 Onyx engagement), was said to have responded to a spectator's "What was that?" with, accenting both syllables: "BE-BOP." (Pullman 2012: Kindle Location 1459)

Gioia's thinking is consistent with Giddins's origin of the term: "The onomatopoeia of its nickname— at first "rebop" or "bebop," eventually shortened further to a simple "bop"— was all too fitting." (Gioia 2011: 188)

Pullman describes the initial bias of the press to both the "new music" and its neologism.

*"The new music that he and others had promulgated since the early Forties was characterized in the press as a wholesale rejection of the musical status quo, swing music. These modernists were, it said, jettisoning the rhythmic and melodic conventions that had made jazz so danceable. So all that they were experimenting with, including unorthodox chord intervals, was given a catchall epithet—bebop. The press initially used the term only sarcastically." (Pullman 2012: Kindle Location 69))*

*“But among reactionary elements, especially of the press, the neologism was proof that the music was nonsense.”* (Pullman 2012: Kindle Location 1480)

There was also contention from its fans as well as the press around the music as well as the name. Pullman says that its fans swung both ways: “bebop was an admiring appellative or derisive epithet...” (Pullman 2012: Kindle Location 1478)

Brown is of the same mind, implied in his statement that “This music, which ultimately became known as ‘bop,’ much to the dismay of its originators...” (Brown 1990: 39) He goes on to say that “untitled compositions were often identified among musicians by “scat” renditions of their distinctive melodies, a practice which may have inspired the uninitiated to call the new music ‘be-bop.’” (Brown 1990: 39)

Ramsey notes Langston Hughes’s sardonic interpretation of the term through a fictional character by the name of Jesse B. Semple (who became known simply as “Simple”) who declares that the term bebop arose from the police beating on Negroes heads. From Hughes’s “The Best of Simple”: “Every time a cop hits a Negro with his billy club, that old club says ‘BOP! BOP!... BE-COP!...MOP!...BOP’ That’s where Be-Bop came from, beaten right out of some Negro’s head into them horns and saxophones and piano keys that plays it.” (Ramsey 2013: 74)

Feather, in 1977, noted that J.J. Robbins & Sons, Inc., the publisher of his 1949 groundbreaking publication “Inside Be-bop,” went so far as to change the title to “inside Jazz,” “scared by the supposedly pejorative significance of this much maligned term...” (Feather 1977: Introduction)

Pullman notes that Powell himself also disliked the term – but only because he believed labeling the music was like limiting its creative potential. Powell also begrudged the use of the term by those who merely sought to rub shoulders with the true jazz virtuosi.

*“Powell also resented those who reckoned themselves insiders by using bebop. Even musicians who presumed to be part of the movement could rankle him, if he perceived that they were only horning in on what he or select others were doing.”*  
Pullman 2012: Kindle Location 1475)

Powell correlated the term with lack of respect as he notes here:

*“It’s unfortunate that our music has been shackled with the name ‘bop.’ I wish it had been given a name more in keeping with the seriousness of purpose that stimulates invention in this form.”* (Pease 1951: 16 per Brown 1990: 57)

Taylor defines bebop as “the dominant jazz style of the 1940s, which featured long melodic lines, complex rhythms, and impressionistic harmonic patterns, many which ended on an accented upbeat.” (Taylor 1982: 241)

Schuller shortens bebop’s name to “bop” and pins its timeframe down to a ten-year period from 1943-1953. Specifically, he defines it as “The name given to a period in jazz, and to the music characteristic of that period (ca.1943-53). Also known as bebop or (less familiarly) rebop.” (Schuller 1989: Kindle Location 16786) Pinning the advent of bebop down only generally, Schuller describes bebop as the emerging style of the early 1940s. (Schuller 1989: location 14460) He describes the transition from the Swing to the Bebop Era as “...the grand transition that occurred – as it happened – in the 1940s, and moved jazz from one idiom (called swing) to another (first called rebop or bebop, then later just bop, and finally modern or progressive jazz).” (Schuller 1989: Kindle Location 16586)

Gridley, who pegs the timeframe of the Bebop Era loosely as the “early 1940s to the early 1950s” describes bebop as “bop [or] (bebop) as the style associated with Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, Thelonious Monk, Bud Powell, Dexter Gordon, and Sonny Stitt.” (Gridley 2011: Kindle Locations 12138-12139)

According to The New Oxford American Dictionary, bebop is “a type of jazz originating in the 1940s and characterized by complex harmony and rhythms. It is associated



particularly with Charlie Parker, Thelonious Monk, and Dizzy Gillespie.” (The Oxford Dictionary of English 2010: Kindle Location 60978)

One of the least profound yet acutely succinct definitions of bebop is found in the Merriam-Webster dictionary: “A fast and complex type of jazz music” (<http://bit.ly/1N8RaJn>), although this definition fails to provide any kind of timeframe relevant to the jazz continuum.

Paraphrasing an interview on Rhapsody Films “Barry Harris – Spirit of Bebop” in 2004, Giddins says, “Bebop is just a press name. What we’re really talking about is modern jazz – a real shift in the music.” (Ricker 2004: DVD) One way or another, the term “bebop” has endured and retains a clear connotation all its own among the jazz elite.

Signature Trademarks – What are the distinguishing characteristics of bebop – those that both draw from and set it apart from swing? Emphasizing the tremendous impact bebop had on jazz (and therefore, on the jazz piano trio), DeVaux makes a bold declaration: “To understand jazz, one must understand bebop.” (DeVaux 1997: 3) This is a loaded statement with an interminable list of plausible substantiations, but among them, one of the most important is that all jazz – from its ragtime inception on, has weathered “the struggle against the restrictions imposed on all progressive thought in an art that has been commercialized to the point of prostitution; of struggle against reactionaries who resent anything new which they can neither understand nor perform themselves.” (Feather 1949 and 1977: 45) – continues to hold forth as a forward-looking art form. (Gioia 2011: 185)

Baker claims that bebop has one foot in the past and the other in the future. In his one-page list of bebop characteristics, David Baker contends that “Bebop tended to codify all that had gone before; it is considered the common practice period in jazz.” He then goes on to note that later styles including “cool, hard bop, funky, contemporary mainstream (4ths, pentatonics, angularity, etc.), third stream, fusion, etc. – have borrowed liberally from the language, structure, syntax, grammar, gestures, etc., of bebop.” (Aebersold 2010: 37)

Repertoire – Harkening back to its roots, bebop draws from much of the jazz standard and blues repertoire popular in the Swing Era. (Gioia 2011: 187) In the 30s, recognition of a familiar theme was paramount; in the 40s, that focus shifted dramatically. Given the radical improvised interpretations, or what were considered by many to be radical aberrations, imposed on the Tin Pan Alley canon, bebop repertoire could very easily be considered “the music of revolt” as was cited in an essay by Ross Russell originally published in 1948. (DeVeaux 1999: 172) Was the bebop musician intentionally attempting to obscure this music to prove that jazz was “art” – separate and greater than the commercialized music comprising what we now refer to as the Great American Songbook? DeVeaux believes that this line of thought misses the point. He contends that inasmuch as bebop was a new genre that needed to establish its own general oeuvre “the sensibilities of the bebop generation were still intimately connected to the music of Tin Pan Alley.” (DeVeaux 1999: 173-174) DeVeaux intimates that the complex interpretations of this canon are a consequence of the bebop musician’s eye on the bigger prize: individual expression.

*“The purpose of their improvisation was not so much to displace or erase the original but to offer a personal interpretation of it. These interpretations, of course, were designed to display the artistry of the improviser through dizzying displays of virtuosic passagework, ingenious harmonic substitutions, and the like. All of this, admittedly, led in the direction of obscuring the original tune.”*  
(DeVeaux 1999: 173-174)

Gioia notes the importance that was placed on the improvised solo: “Instrumental solos were at the heart of each performance, sandwiched between an opening and closing statement of the melody.” Gioia 2011: 189) New melodies known as contrafacts were composed over existing forms, including Gershwin’s 1930s staple “I Got Rhythm” (a form which became known simply as “rhythm changes”), twelve-bar blues and other staples from the Great American Songbook. (Feather 1949 and 1977: 49) Ramsey contends that although this technique was utilized prior to the Bebop Era, it became so widespread that it has become one of this period’s most “distinguishing qualities.” (Ramsey 2013: 130)

It became the convention for the bebop composer/improviser to overlay a completely new melody over an extant harmonic structure – a technique employed primarily for a number of practical purposes. In “Rhythm Changes – Contrafacts, Copyright, and Jazz Modernism,” author Mark Osteen provides the context for the widespread use of this compositional device that became known as a “melodic contrafact.” The term is credited to musicologist James Patrick, who coined it in a 1975 article “Charlie Parker and the Harmonic Sources of Bebop Composition: Thoughts on the Repertory of New Jazz in the 1940s,” (Journal of Jazz studies 2 (1975). The “melodic contrafact” provided the Bebop Era composer protection from copyright infringement in both live performance and in the recording studio (Osteen 2011: Kindle Location 367), based on the allegation that harmonic structure lies outside of the purview of copyright law.<sup>1</sup> Osteen contends that it was the “melodic contrafact” that actually “enabled the recording of early bebop. In that sense, commodification – the transformation of jam session vehicles into original tunes – advanced the art form by enabling bebop musicians to create their legal plagiarisms.” (Osteen 2011: 104) The use of the “melodic contrafact” also facilitated improvisation in that it provided a player with a familiar harmonic progression and form. This device was useful in helping to cut costs in the recording studio in that familiar harmonic progressions and forms required less rehearsal time. Outside of the recording studio, the “melodic contrafact” facilitated musicians who were unfamiliar with one another’s playing to find immediate common ground on gigs. Lastly, based on the idiosyncratic nature of melody itself, the melodic line is employed as the ultimate means of individual expression in the Bebop Era inasmuch as in standard jazz repertoire it is the *melody* of a tune rather than the *harmonic progression* that serves as its distinguishing characteristic.

“Chops” – Gioia comments on the importance of technical virtuosity (“chops”) in bebop – at both the fastest and the slowest of tempi, noting that even at slow tempi there was often implication of “double time feel.”

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<sup>1</sup> In his introduction of his compilation “Modernism and Copyright”, editor Saint-Amour notes that Osteen, in his article “Rhythm Changes: Contrafacts, Copyright, and Jazz Modernism,” purports that “U.S. courts have tended to solve this difficulty by treating melody as (protectable) expression and harmony as (non-protectable) idea.” Saint-Amour 2011: Kindle Location 367)

*“Above all, these crystalline improvisations were made vibrant by the breathless speed with which they were executed. Never before had instrumental technique been so central to the music’s sound. Rarely had jazz tempos been so fast. Or, for that matter, so slow—the boppers were not afraid of even the most languid ballad tempos, but even in these instances their solos frequently implied a doubling of the stated time, staying true to the ethos of speed at all costs. (Gioia 2011: 187-188)*

Referring to Powell specifically, Gioia states “Along with most other pianists who came of age between 1940 and 1950, Powell was at his sharpest when the tempo approached or exceeded two hundred beats per minute.” (Gioia, 2011: 219)

Brown reiterates the necessity of virtuosity along with comprehensive musicianship skills to meet the rigor fundamental to this style: “This new music demanded a virtuosic command of one’s instrument and the mercurial musicianship to negotiate the expanded [melodic], harmonic and rhythmic vocabulary of an improvisatory music frequently played at prestissimo tempi.” (Brown 1997: 45)

The increase in tempos characteristic of bebop had a tremendous impact on swing feel. The eighth notes, played at tempi too fast to swing, became a “steady stream of eighth or sixteenth notes executed with quasi-mechanical precision...” (Gioia 2011: 187)

Rhythmic Considerations – Consistent with Wilson’s first in a list of traits inherent in African and Afro-American music (Chapter Two), Taylor provides an account of the multi-layered rhythmic fabric of bebop:

*“Bebop musicians were, in fact, restating and reshaping the African concept of layers of rhythm. The bassist played four beats to the measure; the drummer played syncopated patterns on his ride cymbal while making offbeat accents on this snare and bass drums; the pianist played extended harmonies in syncopated patterns, and the soloists improvised long, complicated, double-time melodies on top of everything.” (Taylor 1983: 133)*

Taylor notes that bebop, a 4/4 meter-conceived music, undeterred by all of its rhythmic complexity, held onto a consistent pulse, a jazz tradition harkening back to ragtime that served as the nucleus for the kaleidoscopic fabric of syncopation, polyrhythm and

unexpected accents characteristic of this style. (Taylor 1982: 129 and 134) He emphasizes that in bebop, as well as all jazz, the pulse is the “Holy Grail.”

*“One of the most distinguishing features of good jazz playing is that it is basically a form of creative expression against the limitation of a steady beat. This beat may actually be played, as in swing or the older forms of jazz, or merely suggested, as it often is in bebop. No matter how it is indicated, it must be felt to such an extent that it always retains its validity.”* (Taylor 1982: 130)

Bebop drummers expanded their rhythmic role from one-dimensional timekeepers to *interactive* participants in the context of collective jazz improvisation. In his treatise “Modern Jazz Drumset Artistry,” Brown notes the innovative contributions made by Kenneth “Klook” Clarke and Max Roach, two of bebop’s most influential drummers, who also performed in Powell’s trios from the outset to the sunset of his career.

*“The rhythm section, usually a trio including piano, contrabass, and drumset, provided a highly diversified textural mosaic, which not only supported but also interacted with the ‘frontline’ (horn) soloists. This change in the role of the rhythm section was instigated by the pioneering efforts of such drumset artists as Kenny Clarke (1914-1985) and Max Roach (b. 1924), who expanded the function of the drumset from accompanying timekeeper to active participant in the creative music-making process. Thus, these drumset artists and their instruments, the heartbeat of the jazz ensemble and the core component of the rhythm section, paved the way for the evolution of modern jazz.”* (Brown 1990: 39-40)

Melodic Considerations – Improvised single line solos moved from their vertical focus in the Swing Era to a horizontal or linear focus in the Bebop Era, incorporating scales that mirrored and inspired the complex underlying altered harmony – and melodic ornamentation was the rule. Brown contends: “the salient feature of this musical style is embodied in the composed or improvised “bop lines,” the often spontaneous inventions of Gillespie, Parker, and Powell.” (Brown 1990: 39)

Improvised melodic lines paralleled the underlying functional harmonic progression. In a yin and yang relationship, bebop lines intentionally incorporated chord tones on beats, yet it was the non-chord tones on off beats that received the accent. The weight of both chord

tones and their placement on beats was balanced with accents placed on non-chord tones on weak beats, producing both the qualities of stability and uplifting excitement at the same time.

The use of the chromatic passing tone, one of the most highly utilized melodic devices found in a bebop musician’s single line solos, is a non-chord tone that occurs between the interval of a major second, generally on a weak beat. The use of the chromatic passing tone on a weak beat in a step-wise scalar passage facilitates a smooth transition to a chord tone on a strong beat. (The eight-tone scale, known as the “bebop scale,” is formed by adding a chromatic passing tone to major, dominant or minor scales to facilitate the arrival on a chord tone on a strong beat. (See examples of the bebop scale applied to the Mixolydian, Ionian and melodic minor scales in Fig. 4.1)). Baker describes it thus: “Very simply stated, the added chromatic tones make the scales ‘come out right.’” (Baker 1985: Kindle Location 27) What Baker means by “coming out right” is that all of the chord tones fall on all four beats; the tonic falls on beat one of each successive measure, and the dominant falls on beat three as follows:

**Mixolydian Scale**



**Dominant Bebop Scale**



**Ionian Scale**



**Major Bebop Scale**



**Melodic Minor Scale**



**Melodic Minor Bebop Scale**



Fig. 4.1 The dominant, major and melodic minor bebop scales

Levine notes that the bebop scale appeared in improvised jazz solos as early as the 1920s, citing Louis Armstrong's 1927 solo over Lil Hardin's "Hotter Than That." The scale appeared just occasionally in the 1930s, but "didn't become an everyday part of the jazz language until the 1940s" (Levine 1995: 172) – which accounts for the term "bebop scale." Baker conducted a survey of more than 500 solos "from Louis Armstrong through Lester Young and Coleman Hawkins" (Baker 1985: Kindle Location 19), noting that improvised solos became both increasingly horizontal and more chromatic. He contends that prior to 1940, the incorporation of chromaticism into jazz solos was perceived as somewhat arbitrary and credits Parker and Gillespie for developing a specific set of guidelines for incorporating chromaticism into the modes of the major scale, rendering them "more conducive to swing and forward motion." Baker claims this scale has become "the backbone of all jazz from bebop to modal music." (Baker 1985: Kindle Location 25)

Bebop solos, primarily linear in nature, closely implied the underlying chord progressions to the extent that the single-note melodic line alone – without the help from either an accompanying chord or bass line – often provided sufficient information to identify the harmonic progression. The harmonic implication was unambiguous as a result of placing chord tones on beats. However, with that said, bebop lines in general were highly ornamented and included extensive use of the chromatic passing tone, the "surround" tone and the two-, three-, four- and five-note neighbor and double neighbor tone figures among others. (See examples in Glossary of Melodic Ornamentation in Appendix 2.)

Harmonic Considerations – Baker notes that harmony "gained equal footing with melody and rhythm" and gradually took on more Western European qualities. (Aebersold 2010: 37) In bebop, the theme and variations (head and improvised solos) merely referenced the standard functional harmony used in Tin Pan Alley repertoire. But Ramsey notes that bebop takes the Tin Pan Alley staple a step further: it is "a style dependent on a hyperintensification of functional harmony." (Ramsey 2013: 144) What does Ramsey mean by hyperintensification? Feather contends that although bebop harmonic structures were fundamentally simple and derived from "chord patterns such as 'I Got Rhythm' or the blues, it is only the deviations, or implied changes, that give bebop its harmonic

subtlety.” (Feather 1949 and 1977: 49) The harmonic subtlety Feather is referring to is the tension that results from the addition of various alterations to seventh chords – in particular the b5 along with the ninth, eleventh and thirteenth upper extension tones (i.e., b9, #9, #11 and b13) and reharmonizing the progressions of familiar forms, including (rhythm changes” (i.e., “Bud’s Bubble”) and the twelve-bar blues (i.e., “Blues for Alice”).

The Bebop Gestalt – Eileen Southern succinctly summarizes the collective rhythmic, harmonic and melodic complexities that embodied bebop:

*“Bop developed into a music that was characterized by complex polyrhythms, shifting accents, exciting dissonant harmonies, new tone colors and irregular phrasing.”*

Brown believes there are two salient “characteristic trademarks” that set modern jazz apart from its predecessors: “. . . a further examination of the music reveals that the punctuated polyphonic dialogue and polyrhythmic underpinning (“comping” and “dropping bombs”) supplied by the rhythm section is the characteristic trademark which distinguishes modern jazz from its antecedents.” (Brown 1997: 46)

#### **4.4 Stylistic Traits**

By 1940, the rhythmic, melodic and harmonic panorama of jazz had evolved to an unprecedented level of complexity. The hardcore jazz virtuosi were swept up by this revolutionary new style, Powell among them. Bebop brought with it a new standard of excellence, one that demanded its primarily small ensemble constituency reach for unrivaled technical and artistic achievements as they sought individual expression via Schuller’s “melodic realm” – the improvised solo. Jazz, by way of its bebop emissaries, moved up in status to become characterized as “art music,” which came with a challenge that had a profound effect on Powell’s personal style and therefore on the membership within his various trios. Powell’s fast and furious right-hand melodic innovations and new left-hand approach to “comping” met the challenge, profoundly impacting the development of this new style. Ramsey endorses the far-reaching contributions made by Powell: “. . . jazz had experienced a generic shift. Jazz, according to many, had become a



new “genre,” and it did so partly because of Powell’s important contributions.” (Ramsey 2013: 7) He adds that the forward-looking Powell was not one to maintain the stylistic status quo:

*“He was one of the key musicians who supported jazz’s perceived move outside the tight constellation of ‘vernacular’ styles such as blues, gospel, jump and urban blues, rhythm and blues, and, later, rock ‘n roll. And he is an exceptional example of this shift because even while he helped to codify bebop’s language, he developed an idiosyncratic, forward-looking voice within it.” (Ramsey 2013: 7)*

“Comping” – Powell’s pioneering accomplishments made an indelible artistic mark on jazz piano to come. As one of the Bebop Era’s progenitors, Powell is, according to DeVaux, among the frontiersmen who are “both the source of the present... and the prism through which we absorb the past.” (DeVaux 1997: Introduction) Lauded as the foremost bebop *piano* pioneer, Powell, as evidenced in *The Bud Powell Trio*, abandoned the stride-influenced left-hand technique so prevalent among pianists in the Swing Era. As discussed in Chapter One, Powell turned away from his predecessors’ left-hand attachment to an incessant underlying rhythmic and harmonic pad to develop a new, absolutely rhythmically relevant-to-the-moment, response-based approach to “comping,” comprising a root with just two- or three-note open voicings (mostly thirds, fifths and sevenths).

Inspired by the left-hand technique utilized by one of his mentors, piano-bass-guitar trio leader Nat “King” Cole, Powell’s less-is-more left-hand technique ironically brought more rather than less attention to his presentations. The rhythmic unpredictability and harmonic sparseness of his voicings were offset by their rhythmic relevance to the complex melodic lines that spewed out from his right hand. Gioia comments on the division of role within the modern jazz pianist’s right and left hands, noting the contributions the minimally structured left-hand voicings made to both harmonic content as well as rhythmic kick, and how no other pianist manifested this technique better than Powell:

*“This new style, as it developed, came to emphasize the right hand, which played fast melody lines laced with all the chromatic color tones and rhythmic flurries found in a Parker alto solo. The left hand supported this linear approach with supple comping chords— often simple structures built with only two or three notes— that were almost as important for their rhythmic kick as for their meager harmonic implications. No player realized this ideal better than Earl ‘Bud’ Powell.”* (Gioia 2011: 216-217)

Gridley provides an interesting analogy on Powell’s “comping” approach, noting that “the breakthrough [Swing Era pianist and bandleader] Count Basie had made in lightening the manner in which a pianist supplied chords and support for an improvising soloist was paralleled by the way Powell lightened the manner in which a pianist accompanied his own solo lines.” (Gridley 2011: Kindle Location 4603)

Powell’s revolutionary left-hand approach to “comping” was free of the requisite time-keeping responsibilities the Swing Era pianist was beholden to in the context of the primarily entertainment-driven dance bands. Ramsey correlates the rise of bebop with the absence of social dancing in particular. “The so-called bebop revolution has been generally perceived as a radical break with tradition, particularly because of the perceived absence of social dancing in its aesthetic.” (Ramsey 2013: 14) The relentlessness of the left hand in stride-influenced styles, which reinforced the fundamental focus on rhythm and time that dancers needed to “cut a rug,” was no longer a consideration in the development of bebop. Powell’s syncopated left-hand jabs, often anticipating the next chord change on the “and” of beat four, were the antithesis of the predictable beat beholden rhythmic simplicity so conducive to dancing.

In addition to the apposite rhythmic and harmonic support Powell’s left hand gave to his right-hand melodic lines, his sparsely positioned, thinly-textured open voicings also left sonic room in the low register, which eliminated the competition with the double bass and the bass drum, an inherent drawback with the stride-influenced left-hand patterns of the past.

In this way, Powell’s left-hand technique was a catalyst for individual expression among his bassist and drummer colleagues. Powell’s bassists became singularly useful, alternating between harmonic, rhythmic and melodic roles. The low register situated bass drum, which served as the primary rhythmic anchor in the Swing Era, abandoned its strict timekeeping role for that of an accompanist. Drummer Kenny Clarke was first to use the bass drum to “drop bombs” (provide accents). The role of the bass drum as timekeeper was reassigned to the high-register situated ride cymbal, which was more audible and therefore facilitated greater individual expression. It was the left-hand innovation of Powell that did so much to promote the division of role within the piano-bass-drums trio format, in big part due to his sparsely situated left- hand “comping” patterns which left sonic room for his bassists and drummers to get a “word” in – in the roles of both soloists and accompanists.

Powell transformed the Swing Era pianist’s stride-influenced pattern of left-hand low register root and mid-register chord generally ascribed to every beat, into open “shell” 1-7 – 1-3 voicings that were played in *response* to, rather than *obligingly* to, his convoluted melodic innovations (Fig. 4.2).

### Variations of Powell-style “shell” voicings

The figure displays three variations of Powell-style “shell” voicings in 4/4 time, each consisting of four measures. The chords are Dm7, G7, Cmaj7, and C6. The first staff shows a 1-7 voicing for Dm7, a 1-3 voicing for G7, a 1-3 voicing for Cmaj7, and a 1-6 voicing for C6. The second staff shows a 1-3 voicing for Dm7, a 1-7 voicing for G7, a 1-3 voicing for Cmaj7, and a slash for C6. The third staff shows a 1-7 voicing for Dm7, a 1-3 voicing for G7, a 1-7 voicing for Cmaj7, and a 1-6 voicing for C6.

Fig. 4.2 Powell-style “shell” voicings

Most important, Powell’s revolutionary left-hand “comp” patterns, the antithesis of predictability, functioned as custom-designed phenomena – responses that were absolutely relevant to the excitement of each and every moment as is evidenced in the first eight bars of the A section of the head of “Celia” (Fig. 4.3). His signature left-hand response-based “comping” style led the way for jazz pianists to come.

Fig. 4.3 The first eight bars of the head of “Celia” (Gerard & Sarzin Publishing CO. 2000: 64)

In *Wail*, Pullman’s biography of Bud Powell, Taylor likens the left-hand stride-influenced style piano to a complete rhythm section and implies it was Powell’s intention to accept the technical challenge of abandoning this rhythmically and harmonically all-inclusive approach for something “different in rhythmic content.” (Pullman 2012: location 1203) Taylor notes:

*“Bud got the rhythmic drive very quickly. One of the hardest things for a pianist to do was to make the switch from playing stride piano and being a complete rhythm section [to] getting a horn-like flow that was different in rhythmic content. You couldn’t do that with your left hand. That’s why he stopped playing stride.”* (Pullman 2012: location 1203)

However, just as music within the bebop movement broke with traditional forms, so did Powell's idiosyncratic new piano style. Setting himself apart from both his Swing Era predecessors and Bebop Era contemporaries, one of Powell's most indelible contributions to modern jazz piano, and therefore modern jazz itself, was the introduction of a liberated left-hand. His "comp" patterns originated spontaneously, replacing a largely prescribed quarter-note-driven rhythmic and harmonic underpinning of stride-style previously employed by Swing Era pianists in the piano-bass-drums trio setting. Powell's rhythmically innovative left-hand approach broadened pianists' technique beyond the role of primary timekeepers in trios, post-Powell on. He reformed the activity of the left hand by linking it to the moment. "In that way, he departed from the stride tradition and the "chomp, chomp, chomp, chomp" style of chording used by many swing pianists." (Gridley 2011: Kindle Location 4601-4602) In a 1996 article in *The Atlantic Monthly*, author Francis Davis comments on the division of role in Powell's hands:

*"Powell in effect reconfigured the keyboard to the specifications of bebop, not just spinning out fleet successions of single notes with his right hand but also sounding broken chords and off-the-beat accents with his left. His left hand catapulted his right. The best way to explain its often misunderstood function in Powell's music might be to say that he drummed with it, instead of playing stride bass with it in the manner of Tatum and most other earlier jazz pianists."* (Davis 1996: <http://theatlantic.com/1h7n259>)

The absence of the continuous quarter-note rhythm heard in earlier piano-bass-drums trios also presented bassists and drummers with new rhythmic responsibilities, greater sonic latitude and therefore more opportunities for individual expression.

Melodic Innovation – Levine points out that although the starkly structured harmony of Powell's left-hand voicings, which he describes as "skeletal, rudimentary, and transparent" may seem "primitive by comparison" (Levine 1989: 162) to those voicings utilized by Evans (covered in Chapter Five), there is one notable advantage: Powell's voicings lent themselves to being situated slightly lower on the keyboard, providing his right hand with more of the keyboard to utilize for soloing purposes whereas Evans's primarily mid-register voicings limited the right hand to soloing in higher registers. (Levine 1989: 162)

Inspired and heavily influenced by Charlie Parker, the complexity and speed of Powell’s horn-like single-line solos set him apart from all jazz pianists who came before him. His approach rhythmically, melodically and harmonically also impacted both his bassists and drummers. Pullman notes the effect Powell had on his two colleagues:

*“Powell made it clear that his primary inspiration for his piano-trio ideas was neither his classical training nor Monk. It was Parker, whose rhythmic innovations were what Powell most responded to: ‘I prefer the trio, because I can really get the horn thing goin’. I can do things with the drummer that a horn player would do.’ The fast tempos required the drums to be played more on the ride cymbal than on the bass drum, so that the drummer could heavily accent selected beats. As well, modern pianists were choosing different intervals for their chords than were swing pianists, which compelled the bassists to make adjustments in their playing, too.”* (Pullman 2012: Kindle Locations 1666-1671)

Powell had penchant for resolving phrases in unpredictable places. Ramsey describes his technique of “rhythmic displacement” as “asymmetrical phrasing, sinewy melodic lines that often overrode standard cadential resting points...” Ramsey 2013: 137) Powell’s “asymmetrical phrasing” is evident in his solo over “Bud’s Bubble.” In one of many examples, in bar nine of the first chorus of his solo, the resolution to the tonic chord (Bb), predicted to occur on beat one (the strongest beat in the bar), does not occur until beat three (the second strongest beat in the bar). (Lopes 2008: 63) Powell extends the dominant seventh chord-focused line (F7) begun on beats three and four of bar eight (a weak bar), across the bar line into beats one and two of bar nine (a strong bar), resolving to the third of the tonic chord (D) two beats later, on beat three (Fig. 4.4).

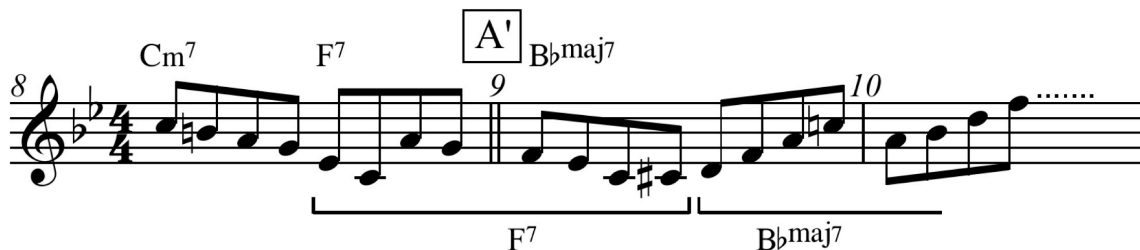


Fig. 4.4 Rhythmic displacement in bars 8-9 of “Bud’s Bubble”

Similarly, in bar 43 of the second chorus of the same solo, Powell prolongs the resolution of the tonic (Bb) to beat three – again, via the dominant seventh chord (F7) (Fig. 4.5).

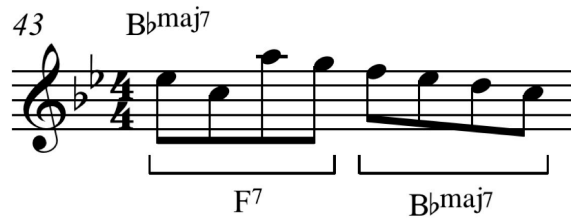


Fig. 4.5 Rhythmic displacement in bar 43 of “Bud’s Bubble”

See a complete transcription of Powell’s head and solo over “Bud’s Bubble” in Appendix 3 and 4 respectively.<sup>2</sup>

Powell also incorporated another form of rhythmic displacement into his music – polymeter – as is evidenced in his original composition “Tempus Fugit” recorded in 1949 with bassist Russell and drummer Roach. Beginning on beat three in bar one of the second chorus of his solo, Powell superimposes six groups of phrases in 3/4 meter. The drama of the polymeter is heightened further by the fact that it also extends across an eight-bar phrase (Fig. 4.6).

(2nd chorus)

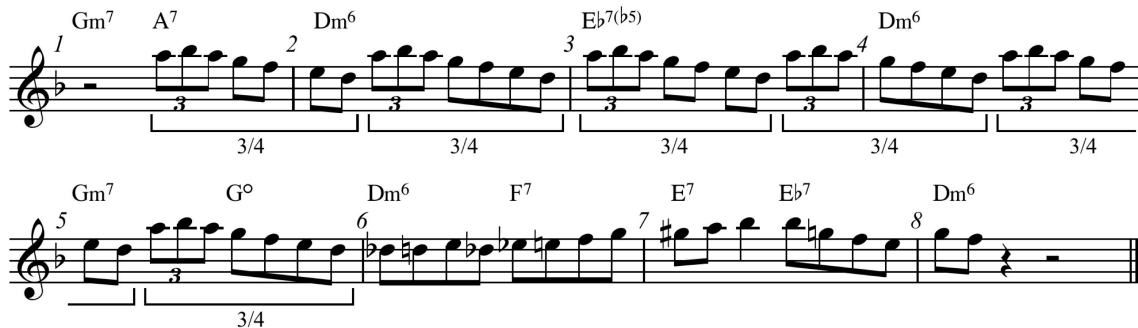


Fig. 4.6 Polymeter in Powell’s “Tempus Fugit” (Amsco Publications 1978: 29) Note: Permission granted by the publisher to use “brief passages in a review.”

The rhythmic approach Powell pioneered had a tremendous influence on both Evans and Jarrett whose single line solos took rhythmic displacement to new heights. (Various forms of rhythmic displacement are covered in greater detail in Chapter Five.)

<sup>2</sup> The writer’s transcription of “Bud’s Bubble” represents an average of the composer’s actual performance and what is believed to be his intention.

Trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie comments on his personal assessment of Powell's strength as a soloist rather than accompanist: "Bud's importance was as a great soloist, not necessarily an accompanist. He was too much of a rebel for that." (DeVeaux 1999: 292) Powell's right-hand melodic lines moved away from the straightforward arpeggio- or blues-based statements characteristic of his stride-influenced predecessors, to a complex, step-wise and chromatically ornamented communiqué in keeping with (and sometimes even competing with) the new regime established by horn players including Parker and Gillespie. Although Powell was determined to be the "top dog" at any session, regardless of instrument, it was well known that he and Parker, in particular, were competitors with one another. Ramsey provides an account of an incident alto saxophonist Jackie McLean remembers that took place in a night in a midtown club in 1949:

*"When Parker and Powell faced off on the bandstand as kids do in a schoolyard. Parker played a great solo on "Salt Peanuts" but, after hearing Powell solo on it, barged back in to solo again rather than have the band regroup to play the ensemble. "Bud had played so much more than Bird that Bird had to play again." Of course, Powell then followed Parker's topper with a second solo of his own. The sidemen just stopped to watch these masters play king-of-the-hill on the bandstand. McLean says that he saw the otherwise unflappable Parker behave this way only with Powell."* (Pullman 2012: Kindle Locations 2252-2257)

Taylor asserts that Powell's love for the jazz piano styles of Fats Waller, Earl Hines and Art Tatum was upstaged by the iconic Charlie Parker. "I want the piano to sound just like Charlie Parker... Forget Tatum already. We're talkin' about somethin' new." (Pullman 2012: location 1221)

Although Powell cited Tatum as one of his biggest influences, Powell, in singling out Parker, was looking for a more linear approach to soloing. Schuller notes that Tatum's playing wasn't "quite bebop, for it was still too chord-conscious, given half the time to harmonic arpeggios and thus more ornamental than purely linear/melodic." "... Tatum's at-right-angles harmonies were still firmly anchored to their bass roots, i.e, not really free to develop quasi-independent lines." (Schuller 1989: Kindle Location 9723)



The use of consecutive eighth notes, step-wise motion and chromatic ornamentation, all characteristics of the bebop style, set Powell apart from his Swing Era predecessors' approach to soloing. As noted in Chapter Three, the pre-Powell trio leaders – most notably Stacy and Williams – based their solos primarily on chord tones or the blues scale, which was characteristic of much of the melodic development prior to the bebop period.

*“Improvisation in the 1920s and 1930s was fairly dependent on arpeggiation. This is what would be expected of a style that was diatonically based and rooted in its usages on European harmony. . (Martin 1996: 6-7)*

Martin's assertion is exemplified in the extensive use of Stacy's triad-based arpeggio in his introduction to the 1935 recording of “The World is Waiting for the Sunrise” (see Chapter Three) – a far cry from Powell's harmonically sophisticated introduction in the 1947 recording of “Bud's Bubble,” for example (see below).

### ***The Bud Powell Trio – Recorded January 10, 1947, New York City***

*“Among all the great bebop pianists active in the mid-1940s – Al Haig, Clyde Hart, George Wallingford, Thelonious Monk, Dodo Marmarosa – Bud Powell was the first to lead a piano trio date, a benchmark accomplishment for any jazz pianist.” (Ramsey 2013: 136-137)*

Harvey Pekar contends that Powell's career can be divided into three distinct periods: the first, from 1943 to 1945, with trumpeter Cootie Williams; the second, from 1946 to 1953, the years Pekar considers Powell was “at the top of his game”; and the last, from 1954 until his death in 1966, years that produced inconsistency, yet in his words “constitute a fascinating and high quality output.” (Pekar 1964: 1)

According to Pekar, *The Bud Powell Trio*, falls into the timeframe where Powell was at his best. Under Powell's leadership – with support from two of the Bebop Era's seminal anchor sidemen bassist Curley Russell and drummer Max Roach – *The Bud Powell Trio* is viewed as the progenitor of jazz piano trios to come. With its never before heard rhythmic, melodic and harmonic complexity, revolutionary approach to “comping” and technical virtuosity, Powell's first effort was a benchmark: the *Bud Powell Trio* serves as the stylistic wellspring of the modern jazz piano-bass-drums-comprised trio.

Illustrating only a tendency toward embracing a more democratic playing field and a greater division of role among his membership, the exhilaratingly high level of musicianship displayed by Powell and his sidemen on this recording and recordings to come, set a standard for all jazz piano trios from the Bebop Era-on. Powell's groundbreaking approach serves as an exemplar that contemporary jazz pianists today reverently look upon as a critical point of reference and inspiration for their personal technical and artistic development. Ramsey describes Powell's groundbreaking contributions:

*“His work represents, for many, a pinnacle of artistic achievement among the pantheon of brilliant jazz pianists. His relentless flow of musical ideas – their unsettling rhythmic disjunction; those explosive launches into beautifully crafted passages of push, pull, run, and riff, punctuated by the perfect landing at ferocious speeds – remains an inspiring, though intimidating, factor for pianists who come behind him.”* (Ramsey 2013: 17)

Starting with the benchmark, *The Bud Powell Trio*, the division of role within jazz piano trio began to evolve, creating a unit in which the whole (the trio) became greater than the sum of its parts (its membership) – a gestalt – a convention that the jazz piano trio format has retained to this day. The range of rhythmic, and harmonic and melodic versatility developed by pianists, bassists and drummers alike in the Bebop Era gave each musician new freedom and therefore greater opportunity for individual expression in roles as both soloists and accompanists.

This new independence, which for the most part had been just a thought among Swing Era piano-bass-drums-comprised trios, gave rise to a new division of role, which, ironically, at the same time, created interdependency among trio membership. That is, members became reliant on one another's ability to alternately shoulder rhythmic, melodic and harmonic roles as both soloists *and* accompanists. As addressed in Chapter Three, the rhythmically, harmonically and melodically all-encompassing stride-influenced technical approach used by pre-Powell jazz pianists inherently enabled them to function autonomously without accompaniment. Moreover, (also covered in Chapter Three), Swing Era bassists and drummers often assumed more or less a pre-determined role as keepers of the rhythmic and/or harmonic gates, and more often than not, took a single role as accompanist. It was not as though pre-Powell trios were completely devoid of individual expression and/or division of role – it was just that at that particular time, these conditions were not hard and fast prerequisites. From Powell on however, a rotating division of labor among membership developed and soon became an unequivocal requirement among trios to follow. Equal opportunity for individual expression combined with a multi-functioning membership, both heretofore unprecedented, became the two foremost conditions within the modern jazz piano trio format.

A new chameleonic division of role was beginning to surface, as is evidenced in *The Bud Powell Trio*. Compared with prior roles, each instrument was becoming technically and artistically capable of trading rhythmic, melodic and harmonic roles, and these roles were shared amongst trio membership more and more frequently from Powell's benchmark trios on. "Bud's Bubble", Powell's variation on Benny Harris' "Crazeology," (an "I Got Rhythm" "melodic contrafact"), illustrates the pianist's groundbreaking severance with the rhythmic, melodic and harmonic aspects inherent in stride-influenced piano styles of the past – an approach that promoted a more democratic playing field and greater division of role among membership in the trio setting.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> "The tune was originally [titled] "Little Benny", written by Benny Harris, Powell's buddy. Harris had recorded it in late 1944 for Savoy with Budd Johnson, Clyde Hart, and Oscar Pettiford (the core of the early bop band that was then at Spotlite). It's unknown who titled the tune. The composer credit on the original Powell 78 is Harris's." (Pullman 2012: Kindle Locations 3532-3535)

“Bud’s Bubble,” Powell’s only original on this date, is a mere two-minute, thirty-six second track that exemplifies the gamut of rhythmic, melodic and harmonic aspects characteristic of modern jazz, and Powell’s performance on this track is illustrative of some of his best work. Commenting on the impact his early recordings in particular had, not only on bebop, but, on the broader history of jazz, Ramsey states:

*“And, most important, in them we experience his own highly personalized synthesis of bebop convention, his own style: a blistering palimpsest consisting of Tin Pan Alley structure overlaid with virtuoso melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic intensities. It became a new language and, indeed, one of the most influential styles in jazz history.”* (Ramsey 2013: 82)

Powell often incorporated written introductions and interludes into his original work. In fact, these sections became among his signature traits: the introductions preparing the listener for the theme (the “head”); and the interlude serving as the entremets between it and the variations (the solos). Powell sets up the “head” of “Bud’s Bubble” with an 8-bar introduction: two 2-bar antecedent consequent phrases, repeated twice. Each 4-bar phrase is a clever variation on the standard Ima7 – VI7 – iim7 – V7 – iiim7 – VI7 – iim7 – V7 chord progression often used in jazz introductions (Fig 4.7).

The musical score for Powell's introduction to "Bud's Bubble" is presented in two systems. The first system contains measures 1 through 4, and the second system contains measures 5 through 8. The tempo is marked as quarter note = 264. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and the time signature is 4/4. The score is written for piano, with a treble and bass clef. Chord symbols are placed above the staff: Dm7 (measure 1), Db7(#5) (measure 2), Gbmaj7(#11) (measure 3), B7(#11) (measure 4), Ab9 (measure 5), G9 (measure 6), Gb9 (measure 7), and F7(#11) (measure 8). The melody consists of eighth and quarter notes, with some rests. The bass line features chords and single notes.

(Transcription: S. Muscarella)

Fig. 4.7 Powell’s introduction to “Bud’s Bubble”

In the first 4-bar phrase, Powell begins with a *iiim7* (*dm7*) chord, a substitution for *I**ma7* in bar one. He follows this with the tritone substitution of *VI7* (*Db7 (#5)*) in bar two; the tritone substitution for *iim7*, but as a major seventh chord (*Gbmaj7 (#11)*) in bar three; and the tritone substitution of *V7* (*B7 (b9 #11)*) in bar four. In the second phrase (as if the first phrase is not interesting enough), he incorporates the tritone substitution for *iiim7*, but as a dominant seventh chord (*Ab9*) in bar five; the *VI9* chord (no substitution) in bar six; the tritone substitution for *iim7*, but as a dominant seventh chord (*Gb9*) in bar seven; and *V7* (*F7 (#11)*) (no substitution) in bar eight. All in all, the introduction comprises eight different chords with only two, the *VI7* chord in bar six and the *V7* in bar eight, occurring at traditionally predictable points.

The right-hand motif, to some extent a pedal on F, can be reduced to the interval of an octave (F) followed by the “crunchy-ish” interval of a major second (either B $\flat$  and C or A and B $\natural$ ) in each bar, with the exception of bar seven, where Powell breaks the pattern with a major second – Ab and B $\flat$ .

Fig. 4.8 Reduction of Powell’s introduction to “Bud’s Bubble”

Based on the repetition of the melodic motive in the right hand, the antecedent consequent nature of the phrasing is a result of the harmonic variation. Powell builds tension by successfully juxtaposing the same octave and major second pattern – the octave F and the major second B $\flat$  and C, alternating with the octave F and the major second A and B natural – over this series of eight completely different chords, bringing

attention to the V7 chord in bar eight by preceding it with the one exception: the octave F, and the major second, Ab and Bb. Here, he juxtaposes an F natural in the right hand with a Gb7 chord in the left hand. The dissonance resulting from the F natural in the right hand against the F flat in the left hand drives home the dominance of the pedal F, which is appropriate given that it is the dominant of the key the Bb. Broken down even further, the introduction of “Bud’s Bubble” could be reduced down to a series of tonics and dominants (Fig. .4.9).

Fig. 4.9 Further reduction of Powell’s introduction to “Bud’s Bubble”

But clearly, Powell has chosen a different path for this introduction – one that transforms simple tonic to dominant functionality into elaborate eloquence.

The A Sections of “Bud’s Bubble” mirror the chord progression of “I Got Rhythm” with one exception: Powell substitutes a iim7-V7-Imaj7 progression in the key of Gb in bars five and six. The B Section (bridge) follows the standard chord progression found in the bridge of “I Got Rhythm” – essentially an 8-bar turnaround (Fig. 4.10) beginning on III7 of the key of Bb:

**B**

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
III7 (D7)	III7 (D7)	VI7 (G7)	VI7 (G7)	II7 (C7)	II7 (C7)	iim7 (Cm7)	V7 (F7)

Fig. 4.10 The bridge of “Bud’s Bubble”

The A sections of “Bud’s Bubble” center primarily on the melodic motive of the descending major or minor second offset by two 2-beat sets of eighth-note arpeggios, the

first occurring on beat three, the second strongest beat in the bar; the second occurring on beat one, the strongest beat in the bar. Within the 8-bar thirty-two beat A section, there are only four beats that occur as an arpeggio; the others occur as descending seconds. Granted, major and minor seconds strung together merely create stepwise motion. But, in this case, Powell also leaps to and ends important phrases with this interval as noted in Fig. 4.11. The melodic motive of the second raises the possibility of a correlation between the introduction and the A Section. That is, is it possible that the high incidence of major seconds in every bar of the introduction, heralds the melodic motive of a major or minor second in the A sections? In bar two, beginning on beat three, he breaks the stepwise motion, employing a Bbmaj7 arpeggio starting on the third that goes up to the ninth; in bar seven, he again breaks the stepwise motion employing the same Bbmaj7 arpeggio from the third beginning on beat one, but that peaks at B natural, the #11 of F7 (up a major second), which resolves down a major second and then back up a minor second to the tonic. Again, these two arpeggios occur in different places of each bar: the first begins in bar two on beat three, the second strongest beat of the bar, the other in bar seven on beat one, the strongest beat of the bar, which contributes to signaling the conclusion of the section (Fig. 4.11).

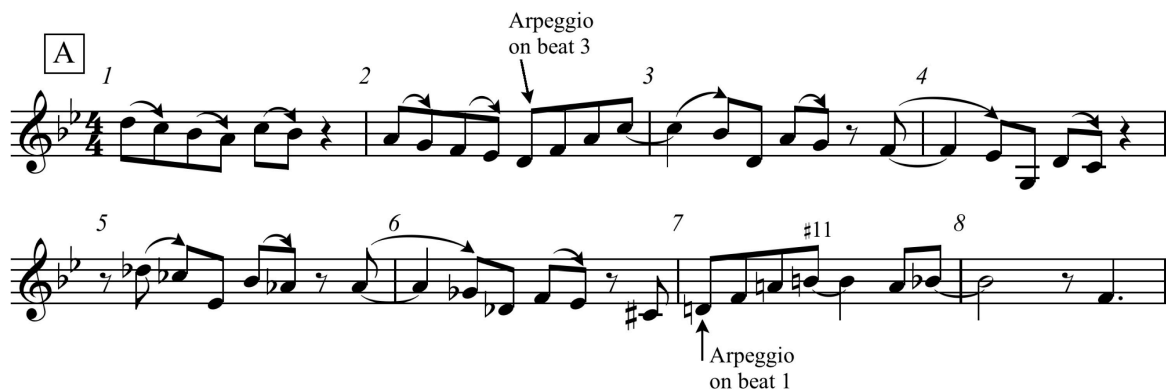


Fig. 4.11 The motive of the second in the A section of the head of “Bud’s Bubble”

Powell’s Left-Hand “Strides” – Note the sparse, syncopated and responsive nature of Powell’s left-hand “comp” rhythm in the head of “Bud’s Bubble.” It is important to reiterate Powell’s tendency to place his left-hand “comp” chords on offbeats, emphasizing the syncopation of the right-hand melodic line. His radical left-hand rhythmic approach and harmonic voicings could not be more different from those of his

Swing Era piano trio predecessors – from Stacy’s 1935 stride-infused left hand on “The World is Waiting for the Sunrise,” to Mary Lou Williams’s 1936 boogie-woogie bass line in “Overhand (New Froggy Bottom)” to 1944 Erroll Garner’s four-beat-to-the-bar mid-register ‘strummed’ chord inversions in “Back Home in Indiana.”

In a January 1996 article in the *Atlantic Monthly*, author Francis Davis comments on Powell’s left hand:

*“Powell in effect reconfigured the keyboard to the specifications of bebop, not just spinning out fleeting successions of single notes with his right hand but also sounding broken chords and off-the-beat accents with his left. His left hand catapulted his right. The best way to explain its often misunderstood function in Powell’s music might be to say that he drummed with it, instead of playing stride bass with it in the manner of Tatum and most other earlier jazz pianists.”* (Davis 1996: <http://theatlantic.com/1h7n259>)

The relevance in Powell’s left-hand “comping” patterns is evident in its rhythmic synchrony with his right hand. His left hand had a purpose, which was to serve as a conscious in-the-moment harmonic contributor to his right hand. It was Powell’s approach to “comping” more than his magnanimity with doling out solos to his sidemen that contributed the most to promoting individual expression within his various trios’ membership. His left hand’s particularly placed open “shell” voicings gave his bassists and drummers the sonic room they needed to be heard in whatever roles they played.

Technical Ability – The quarter note in “Bud’s Bubble” clocks in at a blistering metronome marking of 264. Emulating his idol Parker, Powell played at breakneck tempi, a characteristic of most musicians in the bebop era. However, Powell was seemingly driven to play at extremely fast tempi as if it were the act of playing fast itself that was the goal. What was remarkable was his ability to so articulately improvise complete musical sentences at such fast tempi.



#### 4.5 Individuality and Division of Role

Evidence of distinct individuality began to arise within the piano-bass-drums trio format as is evidenced in *The Bud Powell Trio*. However, once again, as is corroborated on this particular recording, it was certainly not on account of Powell's generosity in allotting solos to his cohorts, but rather that his sparse mid-range response-based left-hand "comping" patterns provided the sonic space for the others to be heard in their roles as either soloists *or* accompanists. In keeping with the *modus operandi* of his predecessors, including pianists Stacy, Williams and Garner, but in sharp contrast to his successors Evans and Jarrett, there are only two tracks where Powell is not the *only* soloist. However, for the first time in a piano-bass-drums trio format, as captured in his earliest trio offering, Powell's rhythmically responsive left-hand "comping" patterns signal an independence of the hands not heard in his predecessors' work in the particular piano-bass-drums trio format. For example, unlike Garner's signature mid-register devotion to every beat, Powell's left-hand "comping" patterns are paradoxically predictable in their unpredictable, in-the-moment response to his right hand.

With Powell's left-hand considerations aside for the moment (for the purpose of consistency) conclusions regarding the extent of individual expression evident in selections from *The Bud Powell Trio* are drawn based on the following formula:

$$\frac{\text{heads} + \text{solos} / \text{member}}{\text{total choruses}} = \text{individual expression}$$

##### 1. "I'll Remember April" (Music, Gene de Paul; lyrics, Patricia Johnston and Don Raye) 2'52"

Form: 48 bars; A(16)-B(16)-A(16)

Total choruses: 2

Introduction: 4 bars

Piano: Head in

First solo: Piano, (A(16)-B(16))

Piano: Head out (last A) plus a 4-bar tag

Individual Expression: Piano: 100%

##### 2. "(Back Home Again In) Indiana" (Music: James F. Hanley; lyrics: Ballard MacDonald) 2'44"

Form: 32 bars: A(8)-B(8)-A(8)-B(8)

Total choruses: 6

Introduction: 8 bars

Piano: Head in

First solo: Piano, 3 choruses

Second solo: Drums, 1 chorus of trading 8s with a pre-composed 8-bar ensemble figure

Piano: Head out (Note: The melody is not stated. Powell improvises over 1 chorus of the tune inserting alternate chord changes in bars 21-28. The ensemble concludes with an 8-bar pre-composed tag.

Individual expression: Piano: 85%; Drums: 15%

### **3. “Somebody Loves Me” (Music: George Gershwin; lyrics: Ballard MacDonald and Buddy DeSylva) 2’56”**

Form: A(8), A(8), B(8), A(8)

Total choruses: 3 including the head in and head out

Introduction: 8 bars

Head in: Piano

First solo: Piano, 1 chorus

Head out: Piano A, A, B, A(12) with a pre-composed ensemble tag

Individual expression: Piano: 100%

### **4. “I Should Care” (Music and lyrics: Axel Stordahl, Paul Weston and Sammy Cahn) 3’02”**

Form: A1(8); B1(8); A2(8); B2(8)

Introduction: None

Total choruses: 1.5 including the head in and head out

Introduction: None

Head in: Piano

First solo: Piano, A2(8)

Head out: Piano, B2 (8) with pre-composed ending

Individual expression: Piano: 100%

### **5. “Bud’s Bubble” (Music: Benny Harris) 2’36”**

Form: 32-bar A-A-B-A

Total choruses: 5

Introduction: 8 bars

Head in: Piano

First solo: Piano, 2 choruses

Second solo: Drums, 1 chorus trading 4s with the piano

Head out: Piano with tag

Individual expression: Piano: 80%; Drums: 20%

**6. “Off Minor” (AKA “What Now”) (Music: Thelonious Monk) 2’24”**

Form: 32-bar A-A-B-A  
Total choruses: 3  
Introduction: 8 bars  
Head in: Piano  
First solo: Piano, 1 chorus  
Head out: Piano A-A-B-A(10)  
Individual expression: Piano: 100%

**7. “Nice Work if You Can Get It” (Music: George Gershwin; Lyrics, Ira Gerwshin) 2’18”**

Form: A(8)-A(8)-B(8)-A(9)  
Total choruses: 4  
Introduction: 8 bars  
Head in: Piano  
First solo: Piano, 2 choruses  
Head out: Piano with tag  
Individual expression: Piano: 100%

**8. “Everything Happens to Me” (Music: Matt Dennis; Lyrics: Thomas Adair) 2’41”**

Form: 32-bar A-A-B-A  
Total choruses: 1  
Introduction: 4 bars  
Head in: Piano:  
Head out: Piano + tag  
Expression: Piano: 100%

Individuality – Among the eight selections on this recording, two distinctly feature drummer Roach. The first is “Indiana” (an abbreviation for the old 1917 warhorse “Back Home in Indiana”). In stark contrast with Garner’s 1945 rendition of this tune, in which the pianist is the only featured soloist, Powell trades two sets of “eights” with Roach over completely new compositional material written expressly for the purpose of featuring the drums.<sup>4</sup> For this reason, the drums are calculated as getting one full chorus. The second

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<sup>4</sup> The term “trading” in jazz refers to two or more musicians – typically, every other musician being the drummer – alternating soloing over a specified number of bars. The number of bars is often decided upon in mid-performance. Phrase lengths typically correlate in one way or another to the form of the tune. For example, over a 32-bar form, musicians trade an even numbers of

is “Bud’s Bubble. On this track, Powell devotes an entire 32-bar chorus of this tune to trading fours with Roach.

In contrast with Evans’s upcoming recordings, where his bassists play a major role in the artistic outcome, bassist Russell is not featured as a soloist on any of the eight selections on this recording. Rather, he serves solely as an accompanist, accenting the most important rhythms, walking or playing a “2-beat” rhythmic pattern throughout this entire recording. Russell’s arco contribution adds a contrasting timbre at the end of “April in Paris.”

On this first trio recording, Powell is featured on every one of the eight tracks; Roach is featured on two. Compared with the first Stacy, Williams and Garner trio recordings, where there are no distinct solos other than piano, 25% of the tunes on Powell’s maiden voyage trio recording feature the drummer, representing at least a glimmer of democracy within the bebop-based piano-bass-drums-comprised trio setting.

Division of Role – The division of role heard within the Powell-Russell-Roach trio was directly aligned with the stylistic transition that was taking place within the piano, bass and drums themselves. The level of specialization present among the personnel within the Powell trio in 1947 was in big part a result of the transition that each instrument in the rhythm section itself (piano, bass and drums) began to undergo to meet the stringent technical demands that bebop placed on it.

Examining other later benchmark recordings, one that manifests all of Powell’s signature traits is his original “Celia.” Written for his only daughter, Cecelia, “Celia” appears on *Bud Powell – Jazz Giant*, which was recorded in New York in January and February of 1949. Featuring bassist Ray Brown and drummer Max Roach, this recording falls within

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bars – usually four or eight. Over a 12-bar blues, they may trade 4-bar phrases or even entire choruses given its shorter form. “Trading” is *typically* a vehicle used to feature the drummer in particular. One approach used to build excitement in a tune is to begin trading over a long phrase length, which progressively becomes shorter and shorter, setting up the “head out.” A typical example would be to begin trading eights over the first chorus, fours over the second and twos over the last, segueing into the “head out.”

the timeframe of what is considered by Pekar to be Powell's most productive period. Pullman sums up what he believes is the significance of this 1949 studio session (his first as leader on the Mercury label) to the development of the modern jazz piano trio:

*“It produced the hard-driving, percussive modern music that Powell had long wanted to make; music that converted all of the great harmonic and rhythmic ideas of Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie to the piano-trio format. While this wasn't the very first piano-trio recording that could be called modern, it was a landmark session. What soon became a commonplace in modern jazz, and soon after the standard trio instrumentation in nightclubs—piano—bass—drums—was here staked out, in the studio, by Powell, Brown, and Roach.”* (Pullman 2012: Kindle Location 3112).

Another contrafact of “I Got Rhythm,” Powell's composition, “Celia,” begins with a signature 8-bar introduction and concludes with an 8-bar interlude, employing everything from simple chord tones on beats and diatonic passing tones, to chromatic passing tones and “surround” tones. (See the “head” of “Celia” in Appendix 4.)

Interestingly, the introduction to “Celia” is, to a certain extent, similar to the introduction to “Bud's Bubble” in that they both incorporate the use of a pedal (Fig. 4.12). However, in the introduction of “Celia,” the pedal is manifested in the harmonic progression; in the introduction of “Bud's Bubble,” the pedal is manifested in the melodic line. Specifically, both introductions comprise two 2-bar antecedent consequent phrases that are repeated twice, for a total of eight bars. But what sets the two apart (aside from the actual melodies and harmonies themselves) is that the antecedent consequent nature of the introduction to “Celia” is a result of rhythmic variation in the melodic motive which is superimposed over a static harmonic progression, whereas the antecedent consequent nature of the introduction to “Bud's Bubble” is a result of a static melodic motive which is superimposed over a varying harmonic progression. In the introduction of “Celia,” the right-hand melody alternates Bb and F in the first bar with Eb and B in the second bar of each of the 2-bar phrases. It is the rhythmic variation rather than the pitches per se that create the antecedent-consequent nature of this 8-bar phrase (Fig. 4.12).

Fig. 4.12 Powell’s introduction to “Celia”

**CELIA**

By Earl Bud Powell

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The harmony remains a statically I – V7 – I – V7 – I – V7 – I – V7 progression throughout the entire introduction. The melodic pattern over the alternating I – V7 harmonic progression serves as preparation for the Bbmaj7 chord (I) at Letter A (Fig. 4.13).

Fig. 4.13 Reduction of the introduction to “Celia”

According to Pullman, Powell's Latin-based original "Un Poco Loco" recorded on May 1, 1951, again with bassist Russell and drummer Roach, "was Powell's greatest studio performance in a trio. It's a terrific example of how a jazz idea, conceived without strict architecture or an ending, took shape only by the parallel creative urges of Powell and drummer Max Roach, who ought to have been credited as co-composer." (Pullman 2012: <http://n.pr/1gvkmO3>)

The self-deprecating connotation of the titles "Un Poco Loco," "Wail," "Oblivion," and "Hallucinations" to name four, were reflections of Powell's tormented mental state. The titles he chose for his compositions were possibly a way of issuing a cry for help. (Gioia notes: "A casual observer could gather much about Powell simply by glancing at the names of his compositions.") (Gioia 2011: p. 217))

In line with Pullman's view of the significance of this tune, Ramsey asserts that "Un Poco Loco" is simply "Powell's most famous composition" (Ramsey 2013: 183) and describes the tension within it (and Powell's music in general) in terms of "againstness." In the case of "Un Poco Loco" he notes that this tension results from the juxtaposition of rhythmic stability with harmonic instability:

*"The grounding of the stable Latin beat and the unsettling harmonic language of the piece make for a delicious tension. It is not until Powell's solo, a repetitive montuno section, that the groove and harmonic environment sync up. Indeed, before the solo, the Powellian againstness approach is in robust full effect."* (Ramsey 2013: 183)

"Un Poco Loco" begins with another signature 8-bar introduction divided into two 4-bar antecedent-consequent phrases. This vertically focused introduction is in complete contrast to those in "Bud's Bubble" and "Celia." For one, in "Un Poco Loco," the right and left hands are locked together rhythmically with the rhythm section in the first three bars of each of the 4-bar phrases. Additionally, Powell does not incorporate the use of a pedal in either hand (Fig. 4.14).

Fig. 4.14 Powell's introduction to "Un Poco Loco"

The harmonically enigmatic "Un Poco Loco" is perhaps another manifestation of Powell's incongruous life brought to light through his music. Adding to the unconventional progression itself, Powell also utilized a particular voicing that inherently wears many hats. This voicing, along with its inverse inversion, has become a contemporary jazz piano staple.<sup>5</sup> Most commonly structured as either a major third, major second and perfect fourth, or its inversion, a perfect fourth, minor second and major third, the bottom and third voices of each inversion create the interval of a tritone, which gives this voicing the flexibility to function as a number of different types of chords (Fig. 4.16-4.20).

<sup>5</sup> Jazz pianists recognize these voicings as the V13 chords that are found in the two sets of iim7-V7-I voicings Mehegan established in 1965 as "The A and B Forms." (Mehegan 1965: 49-55) But they have come to function as more than just V13 voicings (Fig. 4.15)

THE A FORM

THE B FORM

Fig. 4.15 Mehegan's A and B Forms of the iim7-V7-I<sub>ma</sub>7 voicing



V13

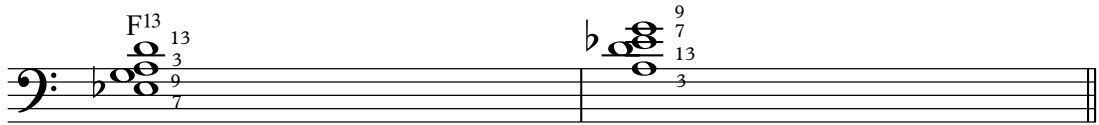


Fig. 4.16 A V13 chord voiced either as 7-9-3-13 (the A Form)) or 3-13-7-9 (the B Form)

V7<sup>b</sup>13, #9

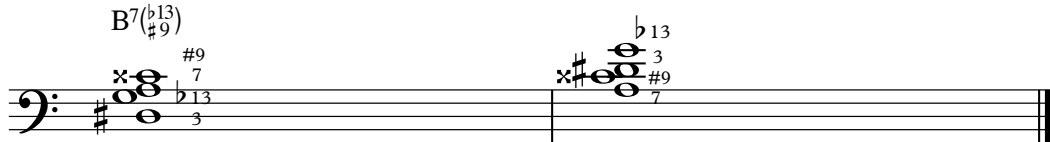


Fig. 4.17 A V7(#9,b13) chord voiced either as 3-b13-7-#9 (the A Form) or 7-#9-3-b13 (the B Form)

i min. 6/9

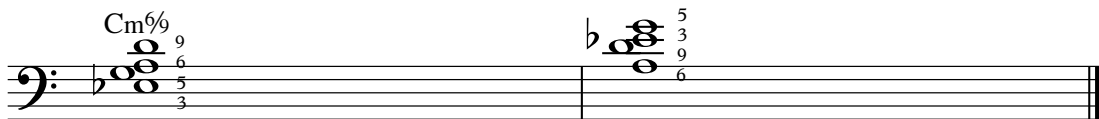


Fig. 4.18 A im6/9 chord voiced either as 3-5-6-9 or 6-9-3-5

vi min 7<sup>b</sup>5



Fig. 4.19 A vim7(b5) chord voiced either as b5-7-1-4 (or 11) or 1-4-b5-7

I Maj 7<sup>b</sup>5

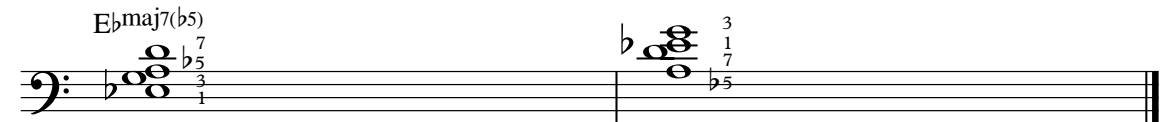


Fig. 4.20 A Ima7(b5) chord voiced either as 1-3-b5-7 or b5-7-1-3

Powell employs the major third-major second-perfect fourth form of this four-note voicing to harmonize the melody throughout “Un Poco Loco.” In fact, the distinctive

quality of this voicing serves as one of this composition's distinguishing characteristics. However, in bars three and four and seven and eight of the introduction, and thirteen through sixteen of the A section, Powell's effort to simultaneously retain this voicing and accommodate the melody results in a harmonic anomaly: a Cma7(#11,b9) chord.

Not included among the four different types of seventh chords listed in Fig. 4.20 above, this "conflicted" chord defies conventional chord-scale theory. That is, deviating from the Lydian scale-implied 1-3-b5-7 voicing used for all of the other major seventh (b5) chords in this piece, Powell superimposes this voicing on the fifth rather than on the root of the chord, resulting in a 5-7-b9-#11 voicing. The b9 is inconsistent with alterations found in conventional major seventh chord harmony, (see the head of "Un Poco Loco" in the Appendix 5)<sup>6</sup>, but Powell somehow manages to make this harmonic disagreement work.

One can only make an attempt to get to the bottom of Powell's thinking here. The 1-3-b5-7 voicing that Powell uses for the Ebma7(b5), Dbma7(b5), Gbma7(b5) and Cma7(b5) chords in bars one through eight of the A section implies a Lydian scale; but, the scale implied by the 5-7-b9-b5 voicing for the Cma7(b9)(b5) chord (in bars three and four and seven and eight of the introduction, and bars thirteen through sixteen of the A section) – even taking into consideration the notes in the step-wise sixteenth-note fill in the succeeding bar – is not as obvious given the discrepancy between the C in the bass and the Db in the chord.

Could the 5-7-b9-b5 voicing Powell uses for C7b9(b5) be a 1-3-b5-7 voicing for a Gma7(b5) in disguise, implying the G Lydian scale superimposed over a C natural in the bass to create momentary polytonality? After all, similar to the other ma7(b5) chords in this composition, the voicing would then comprise a root, third, flat fifth and major seventh, exactly like the others do. Other than the bass note, the notes in the voicing combined with the notes in the fill, imply G Lydian.

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<sup>6</sup>Un Poco Loco By Earl "Bud" Powell Copyright (c) 1953 (Renewed 1981) EMI Longitude Music

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Could Powell have gone so far as to suggest polytonality here, or was he simply determined to harmonize the melody (again, the melody in bars three and four and seven and eight of the introduction, and bars thirteen through sixteen) utilizing the very same voicing he uses to harmonize the melody in bars one through eight of the A section? The latter approach seems more plausible. Employing the 5-7-b9-b5 voicing for Cma7b9(b5) in bars three and four and seven and eight of the introduction, and bars thirteen through sixteen enables Powell to maintain both the melodic and harmonic “b5-ness” so fundamental to this composition (and to his compositional style, generally). Melodically, the uppermost pitch of the 5-7-b9-b5 voicing is the flatted fifth. Harmonically, it enables Powell to maintain the same basic harmonic “flavor” throughout. He manages to succeed in ‘putting a round peg into a square hole here,’ creating a “delicious tension.” (Ramsey 2013: 184)

How does Powell manage to “get away with” this harmonic contradiction? Why is the listener convinced that this chord “belongs” in these bars? It is perhaps due to several factors: first, there is considerable repetition of this particularly distinctive voicing, which recurs just enough to convince the listener of the overarching Lydian “flavor” imbued in this composition; second, both chords have two distinguishing tones in common – the flatted fifth and the major seventh. There is only one note in the Cma7(b9)(b5) voicing that is the “odd man out” – the flatted ninth. The others – the fifth, seventh and flatted fifth are merely unremarkable chord tones. Third, the melody, a b5, serves as a convincing element. In general, the “against-ness” that Ramsey contends permeates Powell’s music rises to the occasion here in the form of just one note – the flatted ninth – that causes momentary harmonic tension. Is it possible that the tonal duality implied in “Un Poco Loco” was the locura – the madness or insanity – mirroring Powell’s mental illness?

Powell recorded *A Portrait of Thelonious* on December 17, 1961 in Paris, France with bassist Pierre Michelot and Kenny Clarke (the personnel known as The Three Bosses).<sup>7</sup>

Morgenstern notes the importance of this recording:

*“...a working unit, not a pick-up group brought together to make a record. And it shows. Founded in 1959 as The Three Bosses, this was the best trio Powell headed during his six-year European sojourn which ended with his return to the United States in the fall of 1964.”* (Morgenstern 1961: <http://bit.ly/1gZUieB>)

In a detailed and beautifully crafted set of liner notes for this benchmark recording, Morgenstern challenges the negative critique Powell had received as a result of the “trials, both spiritual and physical, which this remarkable musician has suffered throughout his career.” (Ibid.) He goes on to say:

*“It has often been suggested that no man subjected to such suffering could maintain the high standards set by his early work, and the tendency has been to interpret every change in Powell’s style as a sign of declining powers. Such interpretations do Powell scant justice, because they fail to take into consideration the obvious fact that the playing of every truly creative musician undergoes changes in the course of time. In Powell’s case, the dazzling pyrotechnics, the wild humor, the youthful exuberance are no more. In their place, we have new elements characteristic of artistic maturity: serenity, lucidity, reflectiveness, and an economy of means which, no matter whether cause of effect, has resulted in a paring down to musical essentials of one of the great seminal styles of jazz piano. Everything Powell plays is imbued with a rare musicality, a sense of structure and form, which are the hallmarks of an extraordinary player. Aside from this, his time and touch should be the envy of most jazz pianists.”*  
(Ibid.)

Of note on this recording is a 12-bar blues by Earl Bostic titled “No Name Blues.” This recording exemplifies all that Morgenstern describes: “new elements characteristic of artistic maturity: serenity, lucidity, reflectiveness, and an economy of means...” (Ibid.)

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<sup>7</sup> In his liner notes, Morgenstern contends this recording was made in a nightclub setting (Ibid.); Yanow disagrees in his review of the album: “One oddity: the applause heard throughout this release was added on later because this was actually a studio album.” (Yanow (n.d.): <http://bit.ly/1KkcUNd>)

In terms of individual expression, bassist Michelot is given four choruses of solos on this track, illustrating at least some generosity on the part of Powell who takes thirteen choruses, over three times as long. Conclusions regarding the extent of individual expression on this tune are drawn based on the following formula:

$$\frac{\text{heads} + \text{solos} / \text{member}}{\text{total choruses}} = \text{individual expression}$$

Note: Introductions and tags are noted but not factored into this equation based on their respective inconsistency.

### **“No Name Blues” (Music: Earl Bostic) 6’41”**

Form: 12-bar blues  
Total choruses: 21  
Introduction: Bass and drums (8 bars)  
Head in: Piano (2 choruses)  
First solo: Piano (13 choruses)  
Second solo: Bass (4 choruses)  
Head out: Piano (2 choruses)  
Individual expression: Piano, 81%; Bass, 19%

“No Name Blues” is a cheerful 12-bar blues in Bb major. Powell’s solo, with all of its bebop-ness, clearly mirrors the uplifting quality of the “head.” Rhythmically, Powell’s solo, consisting mostly of eighth notes with sixteenth notes sprinkled in here and there, does not reflect the sense of urgency heard in his earlier work. This solo sounds more like a statement made by an artist who no longer is compelled to prove anything to anyone. (See a complete transcription of Powell’s solo over “No Name Blues” in the Appendix 6.)<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> The writer’s transcription of “No Name Blues” represents an average of the composer’s actual performance and what is believed to be his intention.

#### 4.6 The Powell Trio Gestalt

*“Good as Powell was with combos featuring a horn front line, his greatest recorded achievements were to come as an unaccompanied soloist or leader of a trio. Featured this way, he had more room in which to stretch out and display his enormous gifts.”* (Pekar and Morgenstern 1964: 2)

Deveaux and Giddins sum up the bebop gestalt and by extension all that applies to Powell as one of its founding fathers: “In other words, there is jazz piano Before Powell and After Powell.” (DeVeaux and Giddins 2009: 322) The extreme intensity Powell brought to each performance was palpable as noted by Carmen McRae, whose account of his history making contributions depicts that of a tormented artist who was aware that his life was constantly on the verge of disintegrating -- which it was.

*“His piano playing to me was always a little frantic, never relaxed. He never relaxed, as though he was trying to do so much and get it all out because he did not have enough time to fool around. Even in ballads he had to get in so many notes, as though he might not get another chance to play the same tune again.”* (Taylor 1993: Kindle Location 1796)

By 1947, each of the members of the Powell-Russell-Roach trio was a uniquely qualified, multi-hat-wearing virtuosic artistic contributor in his own right. Setting the course for piano trios to come, under the artistic leadership of Powell, they were given the opportunity to make unique contributions – in large part because Powell’s particular style to a greater extent than ever before facilitated division of role. Most important, in keeping with the bebop zeitgeist, individual membership in Powell’s trios were absolutely committed to the collective artistic objective. From this benchmark trio recording on, the unique artistic contributions of trio members came together to support the artistic whole. Each performance became a synergetic experience with interactive, interdependent participants rather than three players assuming a single prefixed and predictable responsibility.

No longer obligated to play the role as a timekeeper for a dancing audience seeking an unremitting pulse and familiar tune, Powell’s music manifested increased tempi, displaced phrasing, skeletal harmony, longer melodic lines and the extensive use of

chromaticism. Virtuoso participation from each instrumentalist became a requisite from the Bebop Era-on. Coming from merely a supplementary position as a music supporting a dancing public, jazz was developing into an art form sought after by a hardcore listening audience.

Giddins notes Powell's vast influence: "The basic style of jazz piano that we've all grown up with, whether it's Bill Evans or McCoy Tyner or Tommy Flanagan or Red Garland, you name it, they all come from Bud, because Bud showed them how to play the new music on the keyboard." (Giddins (n.d.): <http://n.pr/1IJy9I9>)

In a live interview for Rhapsody Films highlighting the life of Barry Harris, Giddins sums up Powell's impact not only on Harris himself, but, on modern jazz piano as a whole:

*"When musicians heard Bud Powell – he had so much power and so much percussiveness and attack; and it was so full of energy and vitality, but also it was explosive as opposed to the more lambent and melodic styles of Art Tatum and Teddy Wilson and the musicians before. But, this was a new way of playing music and consequently, a new way of thinking about yourself – and thinking about yourself in relation to the society in which you lived. Bud invented the language of modern piano." (Eforfilms 2004)*

Citing specific rhythmic, melodic and harmonic examples, Davis notes the impact that Powell had on other pianists including jazz's second most democratic trio leader, Evans (covered in the next chapter):

*"To emphasize Powell's conceptual debt to Parker risks overlooking Powell's considerable influence on several generations of pianists, beginning with George Wallington, Walter Bishop Jr., and others of Powell's contemporaries whose solos often anthologized his. Hank Jones and Tommy Flanagan softened Powell's attack with generous amounts of Teddy Wilson and Nat King Cole. Bill Evans's inner voicings originated in Powell's 1951 Verve recording of "Oblivion," and the beginnings of both McCoy Tyner and Cecil Taylor are discernible in the skeletal harmonic structure and implied double meter of Powell's 1951 Blue Note recording of "Un Poco Loco." (Davis 1996: <http://theatln.tc/1DIAerl>)*

Chapter Five is devoted to providing an overview of the artistic praxis of Bill Evans, who throughout his professional career, established himself as an unparalleled champion of democracy within the context of the jazz piano trio. In scrutinizing Evans's unique contributions to the trio format, Gioia's statement serves as a reminder that Evans (along with a select bloc of jazz piano's most innovative paragons) owes a huge debt of gratitude to Powell. "By the mid-1950s, other jazz keyboard approaches had emerged, but even the pianists whose work stood out as the most original— Bill Evans, Horace Silver, Ahmad Jamal, Oscar Peterson, Cecil Taylor— still owed an enormous debt to this pioneer of modern jazz." (Gioia (2011: 221).

DeVeaux quotes Carl Dahlhaus who contends "What counts...is the continuing existence of the past in the present." (DeVeaux 1997: 2), a statement that certainly applies to Powell and the influence he continues to have on all of contemporary jazz.

*"It would be hard to overstate Powell's impact. His ingenious technique and originality as an improviser and composer established the foundation for all pianists to follow. Long after bop had faded, Powell remained a source of inspiration for pianists as varied as the harmonically engrossed Bill Evans and the rhythmically unfettered Cecil Taylor. In other words, there is jazz piano Before Powell and After Powell."* (Giddins and DeVeaux 2009: 322)

Ramsey sums up the Powell-Evans lineage noting the indelible mark Powell left on Evans. But it was Evans's emphasis on promoting reciprocity within the membership of his trios along with his sophisticated rhythmic, melodic and harmonic language that to such an extraordinary extent extended beyond the parameters of bebop (covered in Chapter Five). "The Powell feeling suffused Evans's best keyboard work, but Evans left a legacy that opened jazz to interaction and harmonic richness well beyond the norms of bebop." (Ibid.)





**Chapter Five**  
**THE BILL EVANS TRIOS**

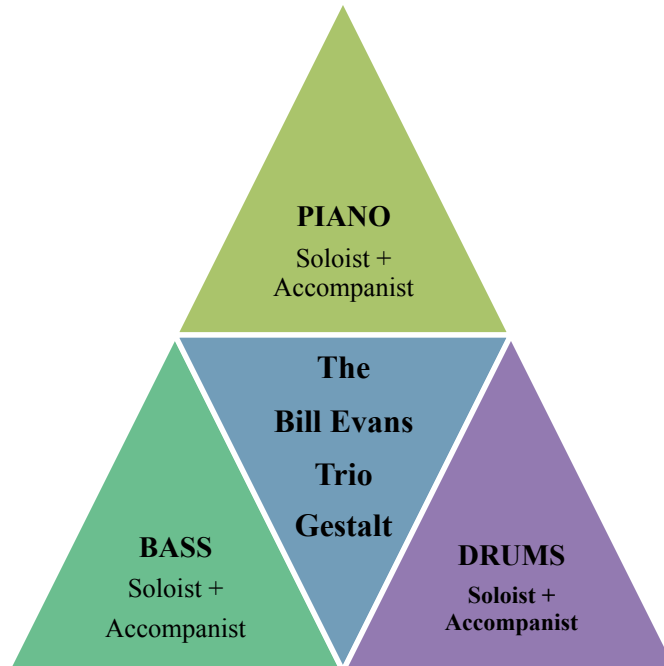


Fig. 5. Division of role in the Bill Evans trios

*"Group improvisation is a further challenge. Aside from the weighty technical problem of collective coherent thinking, there is the very human, even social need for sympathy from all members to bend for the common result." – Bill Evans (Piazza 1996: 346)*

### **5.1 WILLIAM JOHN EVANS**

Bill Evans was born in Plainfield, New Jersey on August 16, 1929. Both of his parents placed a high value on music – especially that which was associated with their respective cultural heritages: his father, of Welsh Protestant ancestry, introduced him to the vocal tradition of Wales and also participated in a barbershop quartet; his mother, of Russian Orthodox ancestry, was also an amateur pianist and introduced him to the vocal traditions of Russia. The musical household in which Evans and his older brother Harry Jr. grew up must have had a profound effect on them, given that they both went on to become music professionals – Bill a jazz musician and Harry a music teacher.

Evans started playing piano at age six, focusing strictly on Western European concert music for the next six or seven years. According to Pettinger, Evans first heard jazz when he was around twelve years old. (Pettinger 1998: 12) In his interview with Marian McPartland on *Piano Jazz* in 1978 (mentioned in Chapter One), Evans talks about his first encounter with jazz:

*“Early on, I started out with boogie-woogie as far as jazz was concerned... I used to be the fastest boogie-woogie player in Central Jersey. I started with boogie-woogie, which is good, you know, because...It’s the blues. And what better way to start playing jazz.”* (Evans 1978: <http://n.pr/1JasgXi>)

When it came to the rudiments of scales and arpeggios and the like, Evans was not the perfect student. He ascribed his imperfection to an approach to playing he would rely on throughout his professional life:

*“Everything I’ve learned, I’ve learned with feeling being the generating force. I’ve never approached the piano as a thing in itself, but as a gateway to music.”* (Pettinger 1998: 11)

Pettinger notes that the young Evans had decidedly caught the jazz bug while playing the 1939 Hawkins and friends warhorse “Tuxedo Junction” in his brother’s high school rehearsal band. On this occasion, he took the opportunity to venture off the written page and improvise over the tune – a moment that served as a catalyst to a lifelong career in jazz.

*“It was such a thrill. It sounded right and good, and it wasn’t written, and I had done it. The idea of doing something in music that somebody hadn’t thought of opened a whole new world to me.”* (Pettinger 1998: 12)

Evans’s career as a professional musician started while he was still in high school. His ability to improvise landed him jazz gigs; his ability to sight-read created a demand for his services in a variety of non-jazz settings. Evans’s curiosity to broaden his musical horizons led him to listen to contemporary European repertoire as well as jazz. According to Pettinger, Evans recalls listening to Stravinsky and Milhaud alongside the likes of Coleman Hawkins, Bud Powell, Dexter Gordon, Earl Hines and Nat King Cole. (Pettinger 1998: 13)

Evans's high school days coincided with the emergence of bebop, the New York City-based jazz phenomenon, only minutes from his home. Too young to seize the opportunity to immerse himself in the thick of this groundbreaking jazz movement, Evans chose to attend Southeastern Louisiana College<sup>1</sup> a thousand miles away. Located in the city of Hammond, just fifty miles from the birthplace of jazz, New Orleans, Evans entered Southeastern in 1946 on a scholarship, and, according to his sister-in-law Pat Evans, his college days were some of the happiest of his life. (Evans 2011: 5) Evans continued to lead a double life: a student in the day and professional musician by night. He graduated in May 1950 with two bachelor of music degrees: one in piano, and the other in music education.

After college, Evans went on to begin creating what was to become a nonpareil legacy in jazz. This chapter focuses in particular on his work as leader within the context of the piano-bass-drums-comprised jazz piano trio. Alongside his stellar but ephemeral career, Evans suffered with hepatitis, and that, coupled with his longtime drug abuse, led to his death in New York on September 15, 1980.<sup>2</sup> Having just turned fifty-one, Evans, (like his predecessor Powell) died at a young age after producing enormous volumes of work, again, primarily within the piano-bass-drums jazz piano format – output that constitutes a blue ribbon standard of jazz.

This chapter examines **key influences**, revolutionary **operational philosophy**, signature **stylistic traits**, and extent of **individuality and division of role** within three of Evans's most prominent trios: the earliest, his first "pure" trio (as described below), with bassist Scott LaFaro and drummer Paul Motian, from 1959-1961; the middle and longest-running, with bassist Eddie Gomez (eleven years) and Marty Morell (seven of the eleven years) from 1966-1977; and the last and according to Evans, his favorite, with bassist Marc Johnson and drummer Joe La Barbera, from 1979-1980. This chapter concludes with the **Evans trio gestalt**.

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<sup>1</sup> Now Southeastern Louisiana University.

<sup>2</sup> In an article in the *New York Times*, Terry Teachout contends that Evans "picked up the habit in 1958 as a member of Miles Davis's sextet, and despite occasional interludes of sobriety, it stayed with him, finally leading to his death in 1980." (Teachout 1998: 1 <http://nyti.ms/1ULZEcN>)

## 5.2 Key Influences

Evans was generous with publicly acknowledging his role models. Two of his most important influences also happened to be leaders of piano trios. According to Pettinger, Evans cites pianist Nat King Cole as one of his earliest sources of inspiration – especially in regard to beautifully crafted improvised single line solos. Pettinger notes: “The biggest influence on Evans at this time, though, was the pianism of Nat “King” Cole – in Bill’s estimation ‘one of the tastiest and just swingin’est and beautifully melodic improvisers and jazz pianists that jazz has ever known, and he as one of the very first that really grabbed me hard.’” (Pettinger 1998: 15) Interestingly, Cole, as early as 1937, proved he was a staunch proponent for creating a level playing field (albeit within the piano-bass-guitar trio format as was covered in Chapter Three), a *modus operandi* Evans also went on to espouse. In addition to his refined sense of melody, Cole, like Evans, manifested a proclivity toward promoting a three-way conversation among his colleagues.

Schuller points out that harmonically and melodically Cole was also “one of the most advanced” pianists of his day and also notes that his performances were enhanced by a “unique piano touch and buoyant rhythmic feel.” Schuller 1989: Kindle Locations 16274-16275). Pettinger adds that as often as Evans acknowledged his stylistic debt to Cole, the two differed in one significant way: their respective approaches to technique. He notes that Cole’s approach was delicate and as Evans describes, “on the surface” of the keys, a technique he most likely developed to support his singing. Pettinger describes Evans’s search for a “deeper, more engaging tone, firmly extracted from the bed of the key.” (Pettinger 1998: 16) Evan’s tone is perhaps one of the most important elements that set him apart from his more percussive sounding predecessor, Powell – a sound that, in some fashion, is reflected in the supernatural tone that was soon to be elicited by his successor and Evans devotee Keith Jarrett (covered in Chapter Six).

In a tribute to another important idol, Bud Powell, in the September 1966 issue of *Downbeat Magazine*, Evans is quoted as saying:

*“He was the most comprehensive compositional talent of any jazz player I have ever*

*heard presented on the jazz scene. He had the potential of a true jazz player. He expanded much in a legitimate, organic way.” (Paudras 1986: Coda)*

After a concert at Cardin Hall in Paris on November 26, 1979, Evans notes the significance of his mentor, Powell, to both himself and to jazz by and large:

*“If I had to choose one single musician according to his artistic integrity, for the incomparable originality of his creation, and the grandeur of his work, it would be Bud Powell. He was in a class by himself.” (Paudras 1986: Foreward)*

Just five years his junior, post-bop pianist Evans credited his bebop antecedent, Powell, as one of his, as well as one of jazz history’s, most influential leaders, as he himself went on to establish and solidify the democratic ideal within the context of the jazz piano trio format at an unprecedented artistic level. In his article titled “The Bill Evans Legacy,” author Doug Ramsey writes of Powell’s “profound” impact on Evans:

*“What he called bebop giant Bud Powell’s ‘comprehensive composition talent’ for improvisation directed his mature development. In a 1970 radio interview, Evans told the Norwegian journalist Randi Hultin: ‘There are some feelings which don’t make you emotional. They don’t make you cry, they don’t make you laugh, they don’t make you feel anything but profound, and that’s the feeling I got from Bud.’ The Powell feeling suffused Evans’s best keyboard work, but Evans left a legacy that opened jazz to interaction and harmonic richness well beyond the norms of bebop.” (Ramsey 2015: <http://on.wsj.com/1LVcq5I>)*

### **5.3 Operational Philosophy**

Fortunately, for history’s sake, Evans (to a much greater extent than Powell) was outspoken about his personal artistic modus operandi. The quote by Bill Evans at the top of this chapter is excerpted from the liner notes on Miles Davis’s iconic 1959 recording *Kind of Blue*.

Evans’s words also completely encapsulate the operational philosophy he upheld throughout his life – from his first trio recording in 1947 to his last in 1980.

Evans’s deep-seated predisposition to promoting democratic principles in a trio setting is manifested in his earliest recorded work (1947) and remained his modus operandi over the next thirty-three years. Evans’s artistic development in the context of the trio over the course

of his professional life was due in large part to the all-encompassing roles played by his trios' bassists and drummers whose support facilitated his mission to reach new artistic heights. In "Part 2" of a three-part interview conducted in 2012 with drummer Marty Morell, who played with Evans from 1968-1975, author Marc Myers, via the blog JazzWax notes:

*"The first Bill Evans Trio with bassist Scott LaFaro and drummer Paul Motian liberated the rhythm section. Up until the first Bill Evans Trio's formation in 1959, a rhythm section was largely a supportive unit that played behind horn players. Or in cases where a trio stood alone, the bass and drums were there to keep time while the piano entertained. But with the first Bill Evans Trio, the rhythm section became something much more—a group of independent conversationalists who exchanged ideas advanced by the pianist."* (Myers 2012: <http://bit.ly/1G5HpUC>)

Evans consistently refers to the qualities of freedom and individuality in what seems to be every chance he gets. For example, his democratic consciousness is highlighted in the five-paragraph *Introduction* to John Mehegan's *Contemporary Piano Styles* wherein he uses the word "freedom" in each of the third and fourth paragraphs and the word "individual" in the fifth:

*"It is only through thorough understanding of these materials ("tools to be a developing musician") and the principles involved in their use that increasing degrees of **freedom** in performance are gained (or won).*

*The more clearly one understand the fundamentals, the more encompassing can be the generalization – and thus the more true **freedom** is won (attained).*

*It is my opinion that the presentation of materials to be found in John Mehegan's books on improvisation are the most concise, thorough and comprehensive, and will offer the talented pianists a priceless saving of time, and the benefit of a concept which will not impose style, and therefore will allow his **individual** treatment to develop."* (Mehegan1965: Introduction)

A 1964 interview with noted jazz historian and educator Dan Morgenstern provides insight into the operational philosophy of the then thirty-five-year-old Evans, who discusses the concept of freedom in the context of collective improvisation. He emphasizes the necessity of utilizing a pre-existing form to attain maximum independence, which he consistently sought in performance. He states "The only way I can work is to have some kind of restraint

involved—the challenge of a certain craft or form—and then to find the freedom in that...” (Morgenstern 2004: Kindle Location 5508) The implication here is that ironically, for Evans, this “restraint” or control was critical to eliciting maximum creativity – a paradoxical methodology that permeated his entire artistic life.

Morgenstern goes on to challenge the standard jazz repertoire Evans chooses to serve as this “restraint,” citing the viewpoint held by French critic André Hodeir, who contends that the forms found within the Great American Songbook canon along with the variations on 12-bar blues that are utilized as the primary basis for jazz improvisation in the Swing through the Bebop Eras, had by this time run their course, and that new compositional material was needed. Contrary to Hodeir’s point of view, Evans implies that when it comes to creating a plausible improvised variation on a theme, it is the “pilot” (the improviser) not the “airplane” (the repertoire) that is really at the heart of the matter. (Morgenstern 2004: Kindle Location 5508) Evans explains: “The need is not so much for a new form or new material but rather that we allow the song form as such to expand itself.” Evans adds:

*“...I think the forms can change and can still basically come from the song form and be a true form—and offer everything that the song form offers. Possibly, this will not satisfy the intellectual needs of somebody like Hodeir, but as far as the materials involved in a song are concerned, I don’t think they are restricting at all, if you really get into them. Just learning how to manipulate a line, the science of building a line, if you can call it a science, is enough to occupy somebody for twelve lifetimes. I don’t find any lack of challenge there.” (Ibid.)*

In the Preface of “Bill Evans – The Last Compositions”, musicologist Blancq notes that Evans never got caught up in the free jazz movement of the sixties or the fusion movement of the seventies but that he went on to reduce the number of Great American Songbook staples in his live performances, replacing them with his original compositions as well as compositions by his contemporaries in the last decade of his life. (Blancq 2000: Preface)

Evans goes on to comment on the state of freedom in the particular context of the group, pointing out that, ironically, and that which “everybody seems to miss,” is that utilizing a pre-existing form promotes greater rather than lesser independence among group membership.



*“I can’t expect the other person to know just when I’m going to all of a sudden maybe change the key or the tempo or do this or that. So there has to be some kind of common reference so that we can make a coherent thing.” “This doesn’t lessen the freedom,” he continued. It increases it. That’s the thing that everybody seems to miss. By giving ourselves a solid base on which to work, and by saying that this is accepted but our craft is such that we can manipulate this framework—which is only like, say, the steel girders in a building—then we can make any shapes we want, any lines we want. We can make any rhythms we want, that we can feel against this natural thing. And if we have the skill, we can just about do anything. Then we are really free. But if we were not to have any framework at all, we would be much more limited because we would be accommodating ourselves so much to the nothingness of each other’s reference that we would not have room to breathe and to make music and to feel.”* (Morgenstern 2004: Kindle Location 5521-5533)

Morgenstern notes that Evans’s music is often perceived as the result of an intellectual rather than intuitive process. Evans admits that although he knows the theoretical ins and outs of his playing, he certainly does not take a theoretical approach to improvising. He contends that the relationship of theory to improvisation is no different from the relationship of vocabulary to the spoken or written word – and that music theory is merely a tool that a jazz musician subconsciously references to articulately express him or herself in an improvised setting, just as owning an extensive vocabulary is the key to articulately communicating in a verbal or written setting. “I don’t consider that I rely any less or more on something like intuition than any other jazz player, because the plain process of playing jazz is as universal among the people who play jazz correctly—that is, those who approach the art with certain restrictions and certain freedoms—as, for instance, the thought processes involved in ordinary, everyday conversation.” (Morgenstern 2004: Kindle Location 5485)

*“Everybody has to learn certain things, but when you play, the intellectual process no longer has anything to do with it. It shouldn’t, anyhow. You have your craft behind you then, and you try to think within the area that you have mastered to a certain extent. In that way, I am relying entirely on intuition then. I have no idea of what’s coming next, and if I did, I would be a nervous wreck. Who could keep up with it?”* (Morgenstern 2004: Kindle Location 5496)

Evans comments on the theoretical discipline that is needed in an interview with Michael Spector in the March 1977 issue of *Contemporary Keyboard*:

*“A person has to become very respectful of the motion of one tone in any place in music, just the step of one tone to another place a half-step away or a whole-step away or whatever. He has to truly respect that and realize the importance of musical motion and economy and things like that, which can only come from strict theoretical discipline.”* (Spector 1977: <http://www.billevans.nl/Timeline.htm>)

In an interview with Len Lyons, Evans discusses what he believes to be the advantage of having the theoretical knowledge he had in the process of developing his individual style:

*“I was just trying to play...I didn't have the kind of facile talent that a lot of people have, the ability just to listen and transfer something to my instrument. I had to go through a terribly hard analytical and building process. In the end I came out ahead in a sense because I knew what I was doing in a more thorough way”* (Lyons 1989: 221)

Drummer Morell captures the nature of Evans’s operational philosophy around the concept of “restraint” needed to elicit creativity as applied specifically to live performance:

*“JW: Did Evans plan out sets?”*

*MM: Yes, very carefully. Bill never went up on stage and winged it. He would never sit down and play something we weren't already aware he was going to play. We'd work out who was going to solo first and so on. He would let us know the format.”* (Myers 2012: <http://bit.ly/1NQ0pfY>)

Morell was asked what it was like to play with Evans whose operational philosophy was as he described “control without control.”

*“JW: When you were playing behind Evans, what are you hearing?”*

*MM: I was just trying to get with the groove. I was trying to free-up and follow my instincts. That's when jazz is at its best. It's control without control.”* (Ibid.)

Evans’s use of a preconceived road map was very much in line with his idol Nat “King” Cole (covered in Chapter Three). In an interview with Feather, Evans’s bassist post LaFaro, Chuck Israels, notes that there were arrangements for most of the pieces he recorded with Evans and

that were given to him at the session “written on the pages of a 3” by 5” notebook. ...Bill had worked out arrangements for each of them that had specific harmonies and rhythms that we had to digest on the spot.” (Feather via Keyboard 1984: 37) In a later interview in 2010 with Sean Dietrich in *All About Jazz*, Israels comments on the detailed arrangements of “familiar pieces” that served as the band’s backbone:

*“It made my job easy. I was unprepared to do that kind of organizing/arranging work at that time. Bill was meticulous and thorough, and was continuously prepared with beautifully worked out material. Once exposed to Bill's versions of familiar pieces, I was hard pressed to accept other ways of hearing them.”* (Dietrich 2010: <http://bit.ly/1KR9KWx>)

Evans, at the same time, acknowledges his use of preconceived material, but that comes with the freedom to improvise:

*“Naturally, there are certain things that we play, like opening choruses, that become expected. But even there, changes occur all the time, and after that, when you’re just playing, everything is up for grabs. We never know what’s coming next. Nobody could think that fast... not even a computer.”* (Morgenstern 2004: Kindle Location 5502)

Evans may have had a solid theoretical grounding, and his work may have manifested unprecedented rhythmic, melodic and harmonic complexity, but the spontaneous innovation that spewed from him and his two sidemen served to substantiate that it could not have been at the expense of intuition. In a January 1965 interview with Mehegan, Evans comments on the foremost role intuition played in his personal artistic process:

*“I have learned from everybody in the sense that when I heard something that I liked, I was first of all inspired by the feeling,” he said. “And then I would try to find some way to organize the reason for what had happened in such a way as to apply it to my own thinking. In other words, my ideas were built on a body of principles extracted from other peoples’ ideas.”* (Mehegan 1965: <http://bit.ly/1Cs5uu2>)

Israels notes how “when all was said and done,” the music always spoke for itself.

*AAJ: “While you were with the trio, the level of musical communication was almost magical. What were some of Evans' methods of communication with the rest of the group in performance (if he had any)?*

*CI: Everything—everything—was communicated through the sound of the music. There were no other signals of any kind ever—no count-offs, head nods, spoken instructions...nothing.*” (Dietrich 2010: <http://bit.ly/1KR9KWx>)

#### 5.4 Stylistic Traits

Along with his groundbreaking democratic operational philosophy and “the application of logic to a creative musical process” (Pettinger 1998: 17), the primary signature stylistic traits which set Evans apart from his predecessors included the use of three and four-note rootless voicings in the left hand, the “drop two” voicing, rhythmic displacement, long, complex melodic lines, and last but not least, a refined tone.

Rootless Voicings – Beginning with his innovative use of four-note rootless voicings, pianist Andy LaVerne asserts that Evans “single-handedly changed the sound of jazz piano—literally, with his left hand!” (LaVerne 2011: <http://bit.ly/1LQUGHN>)

As noted in Chapter Four, John Mehegan established two forms of the iim7-V7-Ima7 progression – four-note voicings for the left hand whose foundational guide tones (thirds and sevenths/sixths) produce maximum economical voice leading. Mehegan’s rootless configurations for the iim7-V7-Ima7 progression are often referred to as the “Bill Evans voicings” and are an important area of study for every aspiring jazz pianist. As noted by LaVerne (Ibid.), these voicings were sonically effective in mid-register, prompting Evans’s right hand to occupy a much higher register. Without the root, these voicings also produced implication, which added intrigue to the presentation.

LaVerne notes that Evans “often jokingly referred to himself as ‘king of the locked hands,’ the approach for voicing melodies developed first by Milt Buckner and made popular by George Shearing (covered in Chapter Three). However, LaVerne notes that Evans “modernized” the locked hands approach (four-way close chord voicings with the top note *doubled*, down an octave) by dropping the second note from the top of the voicing down an

octave, a technique that has become known as the “drop two” voicing.<sup>3</sup> (LaVerne via Keyboard 2011: <http://bit.ly/1LQUGHN>) For example, compare Mehegan’s original A Form of the iim9-V13-Ima9 progression (Fig. 5.1) with the “drop two” version of these voicings (Fig. 5.2). The application of this technique to close position, or in the case of Mehegan’s voicings, semi-close position chords, produces a shimmering open sound.

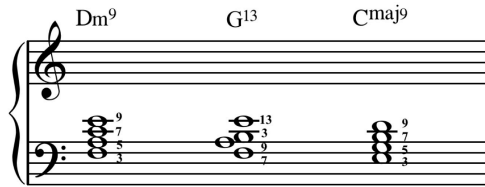


Fig. 5.1 Mehegan’s original “A Form” voicings

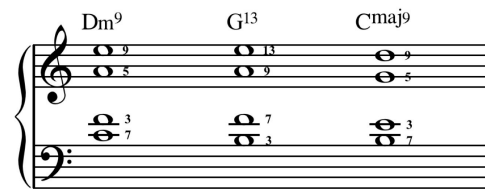


Fig. 5.2 The “A Form” voicings as “drop two” voicings

Rhythmic Displacement – On McPartland’s *Piano Jazz*, Evans opens the program with a solo version of his best-known composition, “Waltz for Debby.” In response to her question addressing what he believes to be the seminal developments in his playing over the years, Evans notes that in addition to developing inner voice motion, he has paid particular attention to developing his approach to rhythm. He implies that this was an intentional effort and a direction independent from any kind of trend – an understatement given that the extent of the displacement he infused within both his compositions and improvisations far exceeded anything that had ever been heard before in jazz. The labyrinthine rhythmic approach Evans took was his own invention and the mark of a brilliant mind. His ability to communicate at this level spontaneously was uncanny. He describes to McPartland the important role rhythm plays in his personal artistic practice and the intention the went into further developing it:

*“As far as the jazz playing goes, I think the rhythmic construction of the thing has evolved quite a bit. Now I don’t know how obvious that would be to the listener, but the displacement of phrases, and the way phrases follow one another and their placement against the meter and so forth is something that I have worked on rather hard and it’s something I believe in. It has little to do with trends. It has more to do with my feeling about my basic conception of jazz structure and jazz melodies and the way rhythmic things follow one another. So I just keep trying to get deeper into that and as the years go by, I seem to make some progress in that direction and do some things which please myself.”* (McPartland 1978: <http://n.pr/1JasgXi>)

<sup>3</sup> See Levine’s *The Drop 2 Book* for an in-depth study of the “drop two” technique.

McPartland particularly notes his extensive use of rhythmic displacement in and prompts him to demonstrate this technique on “Waltz for Debby.” Evans politely tells her he can better illustrate displacement on Cole Porter’s “All of You” and then proceeds to play an over the top displacement-packed version of the tune. Marian exclaims: “That was wild! You displaced it so much, I couldn’t find the place to come in!” She invites him to solo over the tune again, but this time she plays the written melody underneath to give listeners a familiar point of reference. At the end of the form, Marian remarks “Wow! My goodness...that felt like swimming against the tide!” Evans then discloses the intentional exaggeration of his rendition to drive home the point. (Ibid.)

Evans’s use of rhythmic displacement in his compositions and improvisations put him on the map as a rhythmic wizard. In his article *Rhythmic Displacement in the Music of Bill Evans*, theorist Steve Larson refers to the various techniques of rhythmic displacement utilized by Evans in “All of You” on McPartland’s program. He notes that Evans incorporated three different displacement techniques, either separately or in combination: a melodic phrase whose resolution is either anticipated or delayed – a technique Larson calls an “accentual shift”) (Poundie, L., Burnstein and Gagné 2006: 104); the use of polyrhythm – a technique Larson describes as “measure-preserving polymeter,” a term originated by Keith Waters) (Ibid.); and the use of polymeter itself – a technique Larson describes as “tactus-preserving polymeter,” again a term originated by Waters. (Ibid.).

Larson sets the technique of displacement via “accentual shift” apart from that employing polymeter succinctly:

*“Whereas polymeter presents different meters at the same time, accentual shift presents the same meter at different times. ‘Accentual shift’ may place a figure before or after its normative metric placement. Where the pitch content of an accentually shifted pattern allows us to hear it as an anticipation, it immediately heightens interest by drawing attention to its beginning and to the beat on which it ‘belongs.’ Where the pitch content of an accentually shifted pattern allows us to hear it as a delay, it may prolong intensity the way a suspension does, making us wait for the pitches it displaces.”* (Ibid.)

Larson goes on to describe polyrhythm (again what he refers to as “measure-preserving polymeter”) as a technique “creating cycling gestures that call attention to the downbeats of agreement,” whereas polymeter (i.e., “tactus-preserving polymeter”) “typically creates longer gestures of suspense that anticipate a forthcoming simultaneous downbeat.” (Ibid.) Evans’s style consistently implemented all three levels of displacement as though they were standard operating procedure.

By way of illustration, an example of an “accentual shift” which *anticipates* resolution is found on beats three and four of bar forty of Evans’s solo over “Beautiful Love” from the 1966 recording “Bill Evans at Town Hall” with bassist Israels and drummer Wise (see complete transcribed solo<sup>4</sup> in Appendix 7).<sup>5</sup> Here Evans anticipates the resolution of C7 to Fmaj7 two beats early by playing the root, third, seventh and ninth of F (chord tones) on beats three and four over the C7 chord (Fig. 5.3).

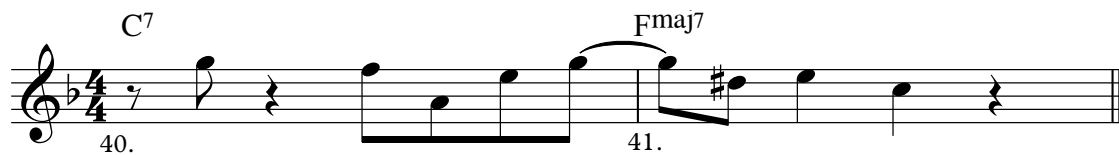


Fig. 5.3 Example of “accentual shift,” anticipating resolution

An example of an “accentual shift” which *delays* resolution is found in the same solo in two places in bar fifty-five via the use of the melodic ornament the bebop staple, the surround tone. In this example, the resolution to the third of the Gm7 chord occurs on beat two, a weak beat; the resolution to the tonic occurs on the “and” of beat three, another weak point in the bar (Fig. 5.4).

<sup>4</sup> Transcription by Daniel Mertens.

<sup>5</sup> Beautiful Love

Words by Haven Gillespie; Music by Victor Young, Wayne King and Egbert Van Alstyne

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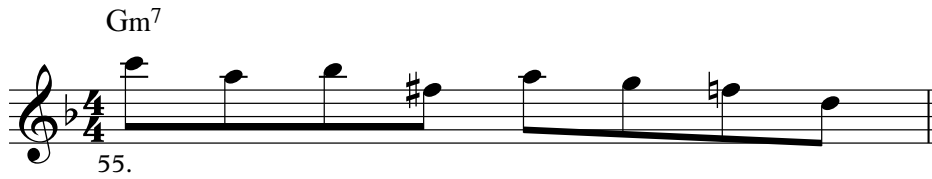


Fig. 5.4 Example of “accentual shift,” delaying resolution

Evans’s extensive use of polyrhythm adds to the enigmatic nature of his work. He often incorporates quarter-note triplets into his solos which begin on a beat *other than beat one*, or which cross over the bar line. Another much-used Evans device is to play quadruplets over bars of 3/4 meter. One of the best examples of Evans’s use of polyrhythm appears in bars five and six of his trademark eight-bar introduction over “Autumn Leaves” where he superimposes two groups of quintuplets over two bars of 4/4 meter, with accents on the second and fourth note of each quintuplet provided in unison by a chord in his left hand, a root in the bass and a hit on the bass drum (Fig. 5.5).



# Autumn Leaves (Les Feuilles Mortes)

English Lyrics by Johnny Mercer, French Lyrics by Jacques Prevert

Music by Joseph Kosma

The musical score for the introduction of "Autumn Leaves" is presented in three systems. The first system includes Piano, Acoustic Bass, and Drum Set parts. The Piano part features a complex polyrhythmic pattern in 4/4 time, with notes grouped in 3s, 2s, 3s, 3s, and 4s. The Acoustic Bass part plays a simple quarter-note bass line. The Drum Set part uses brushes and H.H. (Hi-Hat) to play a pattern of eighth notes, also grouped in 2s, 3s, and 4s. The second system includes Piano (Pno.), Acoustic Bass (A. Bass), and Drum (Dr.) parts. The Piano part continues the polyrhythmic pattern with notes grouped in 5s, 6s, 7s, and 8s. The Acoustic Bass part plays a quarter-note bass line with some syncopation. The Drum part continues the eighth-note pattern with groups of 5s, 6s, 7s, and 8s. The third system includes Piano (Pno.), Acoustic Bass (A. Bass), and Drum (Dr.) parts. The Piano part continues the polyrhythmic pattern with notes grouped in 5s, 6s, 7s, and 8s. The Acoustic Bass part plays a quarter-note bass line. The Drum part continues the eighth-note pattern with groups of 5s, 6s, 7s, and 8s. The score is in 4/4 time and features a variety of chords including Cm7, F7, Bbmaj7, Ebmaj7, Am7(b5), D7(b9), and Gm7.

Fig. 5.5 Example of polyrhythm in Evans's introduction to "Autumn Leaves"

## Autumn Leaves

English lyric by Johnny Mercer; French lyric by Jacques Prevert; Music by Joseph Kosma

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There is no better example of Evans's use of polymeter than that which is found in the head of Evans's original composition "Peri's Scope," written in early 1958 for his girlfriend Peri.

This 24-bar A-B-C-structured tune in 4/4 meter is interrupted at bar thirteen, a strong bar, by five groups of phrases in 3/4 meter (fifteen beats) superimposed over bars thirteen through sixteen. Evans breaks the polymeter on beat four of bar sixteen (Fig. 5.6).

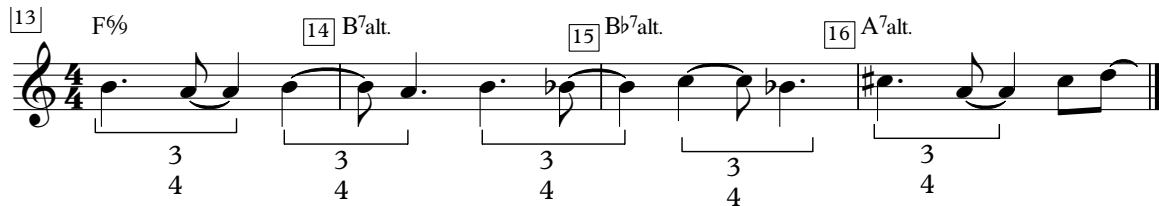


Fig. 5.6 Example of polymeter in the head of Evans’s “Peri’s Scope”

Another more complex example of Evans’s use of polymeter is evident in his solo, again, over “Beautiful Love.” The first sixteen bars of the third chorus exemplifies the impact of the use of polymeter – in this case, phrases of 3/4 over 4/4 meter – a technique that runs throughout this solo (Fig. 5.6). In the third chorus, Evans superimposes nine groups of phrases in 3/4 meter over bars eight through fourteen, breaking the motif on beat four of that bar. The rhythmic motive employed in each of the three-bar groups is as follows:

Beat 1: an eighth-note triplet; an eighth note and two sixteenth notes; or, a quarter note

Beat 2: two eighth notes

Beat 3: an eighth-note triplet (with the exception of an incomplete triplet on beat one of bar 10)

Interestingly, Evans only uses the quarter note once – on beat one of bar eleven – a strong bar – to mark the first beat of the next five groups of phrases in 3/4 meter.

Figure 5.7 shows a musical score in 4/4 time. The melody consists of groups of three eighth notes, which are bracketed and labeled with a '3' below them. Chords are written above the staff: Em7(b5) (measures 1-2), A7alt. (measures 3-4), Dm6/9 (measures 5-6), Dm7 (measures 7-8), Dm6/9 (measures 9-10), D7alt. (measures 11-12), Gm7 (measures 13-14), Bb7 (measures 15-16), Em7(b5) (measures 17-18), and A7alt. (measures 19-20). Measure numbers 5, 9, and 13 are placed at the beginning of their respective bars. Brackets below the staff indicate the 3/4 meter for each group of three beats.

Fig. 5.7 Example of polymeter in Evans’s solo in bars eight-fourteen over “Beautiful Love”

To best illustrate Evans’s use of polymeter, the nine groups of three beats, are notated in 3/4 rather than 4/4 meter (Fig. 5.8). (The measure numbers below mark the first beat of each bar in 4/4 meter.)

Figure 5.8 shows the same solo transposed to 3/4 time. The melody is written in a single staff with a 3/4 time signature. The groups of three eighth notes are now single measures. Chords are written above the staff: Em7(b5) (measure 8), A7alt. (measure 9), Dm6/9 (measure 10), D7alt. (measure 11), Gm7 (measure 12), Bb7 (measure 13), A7alt. (measure 14), Dm6/9 (measure 15), and Dm6/9 (measure 16). Measure numbers 7 through 16 are placed below the staff. A bracket under measures 14-16 is labeled "one more group of 3!".

Fig. 5.8 Bars 8-16 of Evans’s solo over “Beautiful Love” transposed to 3/4 meter

In addition to the above approaches to displacement, Evans incorporates another rhythmic technique that he called the “internalized beat,” an approach whereby time is continuously implied, but not always literally stated by members of the group. Gioia states “As a result the music floats over the bar lines in a way that no previous jazz ensemble had attempted.”

(Gioia (no date): <http://bit.ly/1KPz0MP>)

Technique/Tone – As for Evans’s playing, Davis described it in a widely quoted phrase as “like crystal notes or sparkling water cascading down from some clear waterfall.” (Doug Ramsey 2015: <http://on.wsj.com/1LVcq5I>) Evans’s tone is possibly a result of his attempt to make the piano “sing.” Ramsey includes this quote by Evans:

*“Especially, I want my work—and the trio’s if possible—to sing. It must have that wonderful feeling of singing.”* (Ibid.)

Pettinger attributes Evans’s emotional impact on his listeners to the way he played a note – that his notes “sang.” He describes Evans’s ability:

*“The sound is alive and breathing, and is heard not as decibels at a certain pitch, but as a manifestation of an artistic spirit. He possessed that priceless attribute, the ability to communicate feeling through sound – in his case, a gift that was both innate and informed.”* (Pettinger 1998: 95)

Bassist Israels had first hand experience with the tone Evans elicited as noted in this excerpt from an article he wrote on the music of Bill Evans:

*“With fingers like pistons, poised a scant millimeter over the keys, he dropped into the depths of the action as if propelled by steel springs, or he would caress the keys with the stroke of a loving mother touching her baby’s cheek. All dynamic gradations short of bombastic pounding were at his command, and he used them to express delicate nuances of melody, and to separate and distinguish various voices of the harmonic texture. In some important ways, Evans’ harmonies consisted less of chords than of piling up of contrapuntal lines in which the tension and release between the melody and the secondary voices was exquisitely shaded by his control of pianistic touch. His legato line was unsurpassed by any other pianist. No note was released before its fullest time, giving his playing a richness that resulted from the momentary clashes of*

overtones as successive tones overlapped in the sounding board.”<sup>6</sup> (Arends 2014: <http://bit.ly/1HQKnlg>)

## 5.5 Individuality and Division of Role

*Very Early 1943-1949, Volume 1.* – As mentioned in Chapter One, Evans’s first known recording in the piano-bass-drums jazz piano trio format is found on *Very Early 1943-1949, Volume 1*. The only tune in this format, titled “The Best Man,” was made in 1947 when Evans was just eighteen years old; the same year Powell recorded his maiden voyage effort, *The Bud Powell Trio*. In addition to the high-level musicianship demonstrated by Evans, bassist Connie Atkinson, and drummer Frank “Fluffy” Wrobel,<sup>7</sup> the most noteworthy aspect of this track is Evans’s consciousness in promoting a democratic playing field – one in which all members of the group have the freedom to express themselves.

On this track (again as noted in Chapter One), Evans gives distinctive solos to both his bassist and drummer, and to boot, he gives the *first* solo to bassist Atkinson; he takes the second solo and gives the third to drummer Wrobel. Each of the three solos is of equal length, which, given the little attention traditionally given to pre-Powell sidemen, could have been perceived as an anomaly when in fact it set the stage for the democratic playing field he created within all of his trios to come. The introduction features both the piano and bass; the eight-bar tag comprises alternating fills by the bassist and drummer. Graciously emphasizing the contributions of his sidemen, the introduction and ending are in line with Evans’s signature trait: his presentations comprised a team effort.

Conclusions regarding the extent of individual expression evident in “The Best Man” are drawn based on the following formula:

$$\frac{\text{head} + \text{solos} / \text{member}}{\text{total choruses}} = \text{individual expression}$$

---

<sup>6</sup> In the writer’s opinion, Israel’s description of Evans’s tone could also apply to the tone elicited by Evans’s successor, Jarrett.

<sup>7</sup> Tom Lord lists his name as Frank “Fluffy” Wrobel ([www.lorddisco.com](http://www.lorddisco.com)); Peter Pettinger lists it as Frank Robell. (Pettinger 1998: 13)

Note: Introductions and tags are noted but not factored into this equation based on their inconsistency.

**“The Best Man” (*Very Early 1943-1949, Volume 1, 1947 with Connie Atkinson, bass; Frank “Fluffy” Wrobel, drums*) 2’53”**

Form: 32 bars A-B-A-C

Total choruses: 4

Introduction: Piano, 8 bars

Head in: Piano

First solo: Bass, 1 chorus

Second solo: Piano, 1 chorus

Third solo: Drums A-A(16 bars)

Head out: Piano + tag B-A(16 bars)

Individual expression: Piano, 62.5%; Bass, 25%; and Drums, 12.5%

In contrast with trio recordings pre-Powell, as well as in Powell’s first trio recording, there is a predominance of bass and drum solos and fills that occur within this 2:53 offering. The short recording length of this effort was clearly no deterrent to Evans’s early predisposition to infuse the qualities of democracy and division of role into this group.

The democratic tendency and division of role that are overwhelmingly apparent in the teenage Evans’s first trio recording are remarkable and serve as evidence of his personal leadership style at the outset of his career – a style that he obviously felt was critical to his artistic identity then, and one which became a philosophy that he embodied and sustained throughout his entire professional life. That Evans gave his bassist and drummer solos that together account for one-third of this performance – especially as early as 1947 – is notable in itself. But, in the case of this recording and many others to follow, it is in his deliberate placement of the bass solo *ahead* of his own, that he makes an even stronger statement.

Pettinger identifies the first bona fide Bill Evans Trio as that with bassist Jimmy Garrison and drummer Kenny Dennis. He notes that this group was short-lived – their first engagement lasted but one week. As it turned out, Evans’s concept for his ideal trio was the antithesis of the direction this particular trio took – and in particular due to the narrow concept of Garrison who “was not interested in liberating the role of the bass.” (Pettinger 1998: 91) Evans sought out a completely new group paradigm: one where the pianist was not

the center of attention one hundred percent of the time; one that gave the pianist the opportunity to more meaningfully interact with the bassist and drummer; and one where the opportunity for individual expression among all members of the group existed. Evans expressed his intent to create a level playing field:

*“I’m hoping the trio will grow in the direction of simultaneous improvisation rather than just one guy blowing followed by another guy blowing. If the bass player, for example, hears an idea that he wants to answer, why should he just keep playing a 4/4 background? The men I’ll work with have learned how to do the regular type of playing, and so I think we now have the license to change it.” (Ibid.)*

Pre-LaFaro and Motian – “New Jazz Conceptions,” recorded in New York on September 27, 1956 features bassist Teddy Kotick and drummer Paul Motian. A benchmark in Evans’s career, this recording stands as his first jazz piano trio offering as leader. Recorded almost ten years after Powell’s first trio recording as leader, Pettinger talks about Powell’s influence on Evans, as he believes it relates to this particular recording:

*“Powell’s own long and energetic lines needled their way deeply into the playing of the young Evans...and their far-reaching effect is explosively evident on this album. If pushed into naming the influence of one pianist over all others, Evans nominated Bud Powell.” (Pettinger 1998: 38)*

In keeping with his 1947 recording of “The Best Man,” Evans’s democratic tendency and division of role are evident on “New Jazz Conceptions.” There are twelve tracks (eleven different tunes) on “New Conceptions in Jazz” – four more than on Powell’s first trio recording, and eight, which are longer in length. For example, the longest tune on Powell’s first trio recording is 3:02; the longest tune on Evans’s first trio recording is 8:12, 63% longer. Although the additional length certainly affords more solo time for the bassist and drummer, and could also serve as a plausible explanation for the numerous solo opportunities they’re given, it is worth reiterating that, given the attention Evans pays his bassist and drummer nine years earlier (as evidenced in his recording of “The Best Man”), an argument could be made that the length of the recording was not a factor in determining the extent to which his bassists and drummers were featured – rather, it was more likely that it was Evans’s personal egalitarian ideology at work.

Writings discussing Evans's artistic development in the trio format often completely sidestep "New Jazz Conceptions," citing *Portrait in Jazz*, with bassist LaFaro and drummer Motian, as his "First Trio" or "Original Trio." For example, in an article titled "The Magic of the Jazz Piano-Bass-Drums Trio," Jerry Jerome, Rutgers School of Music writes: "The earliest Bill Evans Trio, featuring bassist Scott LaFaro and drummer Paul Motian, is considered by many to be the prototypical "melodically interactive" piano trio." (<http://bit.ly/1Tjzook>) The Evans-LaFaro-Motian trio was not the earliest Bill Evans Trio, but it is considered to be the earliest "prototypical 'melodically interactive' piano trio", and, as mentioned above, for that reason earned the distinction as a "pure trio" in that members of the trio functioned as both soloists and accompanists.<sup>8</sup>

Given the brilliant artistic performance documented in "New Jazz Conceptions," the little attention this effort receives among musicologists and critics takes more into consideration than just the collective artistry manifested in this group alone. More than about the actual artistry per se, the lack of attention given to Evans's first effort as leader most likely has to do with the particular conceptual structure of the unit as a whole. That is, as Evans himself affirmed, his lifelong mission was to lead a "pure" trio, a group whose aggregate membership was not only encouraged, but also *expected* to contribute equally to the overall artistic end result. Participation at this level was a prerequisite – an expectation that Evans addressed in interviews throughout his entire career. Rubin asks Evans to elaborate on this concept:

*“PR: Could you elaborate on the musical function of each member in your trio?”*

*BE: This is a rather pure group, in that there's just one person really for each function, and then we cross over the other functions. I mean, the drummer is really controlling timbre and various colors and contributions in the rhythm and, you know, the propulsion and other things, maybe just coloring, or whatever. And then you have the bass function primarily in the bass, and then he becomes a solo voice also, and an accompanying voice. And then, of course, I have most of the time the primary voice in the harmonic content. And of course, we all share all these roles in various degrees as we move around. ...we try to dedicate ourselves to the total musical statement,*

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<sup>8</sup> A quote apropos of the role of the bass in Evans's trios comes from Chuck Israels, LaFaro's immediate successor: "We didn't think that quarter notes and half notes were the only note values that you can play." (Arends in *All About Jazz* April 16, 2010 <http://bit.ly/1NVSMor>)



*whatever it might be, and try to shape it according to musical ends and not ego ends.*”  
(Enstice and Rubin 1992: 138)

Comparing “New Jazz Conceptions” – with its close stylistic ties to its predecessor bebop – to *Portrait in Jazz* – with its focus on achieving a forward-looking democratically centric paradigm – and coupling this with Evans’s widely known personal artistic mission to pursue a collectively driven artistic unit, it is not surprising that so many published accounts ascribe a greater profundity to a *Portrait in Jazz*. Noted jazz critic Leonard Feather adds his support to the eminence of the Evans-LaFaro-Motian trio in his February 1984 article in *Keyboard* magazine titled “The Ten Greatest Jazz Piano Trios”: “...but the trio most closely associated with him {Evans}, and the one I would nominate for inclusion here, was the 1959-61 group in which Paul Motian was the drummer and Scott LaFaro the bassist.”

In addition to the five-year period separating these two recordings, the other significant tangible difference between them lies in their respective bass personnel. Evidence proves that a major difference between these two recordings hinges on the impact that the multifunctional bassist LaFaro had on creating a more interactive group setting – an artistic philosophy completely in tandem with Evans’s lifelong personal artistic mission. The widely known love affair Evans had with the LaFaro-Motian trio, which emanated from their extraordinary collective artistic intuition, serves at least in part to provide an understanding of why his first offering as a leader is almost completely disregarded, not only by himself, but also by any credible historical accounts. However, as previously mentioned, although Bill Evans’s career as a leader of some of jazz history’s most profound piano-bass-drums trios is often divided into three primary periods (the trio with LaFaro and Motian; the trio with bassists Eddie Gomez and drummer Marty Morell; and lastly, the trio with bassist Marc Johnson and drummer Joe La Barbera), it is important to acknowledge *New Jazz Conceptions* as an important transitional work: that is, this recording concurrently pays robust homage to its bebop past – especially evident in Evans’s single line soloing – and provides profound insight into Evans’s and his successors’ ensembles democratic-leaning future within the framework of the piano-bass-drums jazz piano trio. This work also served as a palpable divergence from the immediate past, signaling the beginning of a revolutionary paradigm –

“new jazz conceptions” – promoting democratization, division of role and rhythmic, melodic and harmonic innovation within the trio format.

Conclusions regarding the extent of individual expression manifested in *New Jazz Conceptions* are drawn based on the following formula:

$$\frac{\text{head + solos / member}}{\text{total choruses}} = \text{individual expression}$$

Note: Introductions and tags are noted but not factored into this equation based on their inconsistency.

*New Jazz Conceptions* (Recorded on September 27, 1956 with bassist Teddy Kotick and drummer Paul Motian)

### 1. “I Love You” (Music: Porter) 3’53”

Form: 32 bars AABA

Total choruses: 6

Intro: Piano, 16 bars

Head in: Piano

First solo: Piano, 3 choruses

Second solo: Bass and drums trade 8s over one chorus

Head out: Piano + tag

Individual expression: Piano, 83%; Bass, 8.5%; Drums, 8.5%

### 2. “Five” (Music: Bill Evans)<sup>9</sup> 4’

Form: 32-bar A-A-B-A “rhythm changes” contrafact

Total choruses: 6

Intro: 12 bars 4/4 meter heard as 16 bars of 3/4 meter

Head in: Piano

First solo: Piano, 3 choruses

Second Solo: Bass 8(A); piano 8(A); drums 8(B); bass 8(A); piano 8(A); drums 8(A);

Head out: Piano B-A

Total bars: 204

Individual expression: Piano, 83%; Bass, 8.5%; Drums, 8.5%

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<sup>9</sup> Given the complexity of the form of “Five”, individual expression was calculated based on total number of bars and in this case, includes the introduction.

**3. “I Got It Bad” (Music: Ellington; lyrics: Webster) 1’37”**

Piano solo. N/A.

**4. “Conception” (Music: Shearing) 4’45”**

Form: 44-bar A(12)-A(12)-B(8)-A(12)

Total choruses: 6

Head in: Piano, A-A(rubato)-B-A

First solo: Piano, 3 choruses

Second solo: Drums A-A-B-A (trades 6s on the A sections)

Head out: Piano + tag

Individual expression: Piano, 83%; Drums, 17%

**5. “Easy Living” (Music: Ralph Rainger; lyrics: Robin) 3’51”**

Form: 32-bar A-A-B-A

Total choruses: 2

Introduction: Piano rubato over A section

Head in: Piano

First solo: Piano, A-A-B

Head out: Piano, last A only

Individual expression: Piano, 100%

**6. “Displacement” (Music: Evans) 2’34”**

Form: 32-bar A-A1

Total choruses: 5

Introduction: Piano

Head in: Piano

First solo: Piano, 3 choruses

Head out: Piano

Individual expression: Piano, 100%

<http://www.lil-works.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Bill-EvansFake-Book.pdf>

**7. “Speak Low” (Music: Weil; lyrics: Nash) 5’08”**

Form: 56-bar A(16)-A(16)-B(8)-A(16)

Total choruses: 4.5

Introduction: none

Head in: Piano

First solo: Piano, 2 choruses

Second solo: Bass, A(16)-A(16)

Third solo: Drums, B(8)-A(16)

Head out: B(8)-(A(16) + tag (12 bars)

Individual expression: Piano, 78%; Bass, 11%; Drums, 11%

**8. “Waltz for Debby” (Music: Evans) 1’18”**

N/A. Solo piano

**9. “Our Delight” (Music: Dameron) 4’44”**

Form: 32-bar A-A-B-A

Total choruses: 7

Introduction: Piano

Head in: Piano

First solo: Piano, 3 choruses

Second solo: Bass, 1 chorus (trades 4s with piano)

Third solo: Drums, 1 chorus (trades 4s with piano)

Head out: Piano + tag

Individual expression: Piano, 72%; Bass, 14%; Drums, 14%

**10. “My Romance” (Music: Rodgers; lyrics: Hart) 1’58”**

Solo piano. N/A.

**11. “No Cover” (Take 1) (Music: Evans) 8’12”**

(See Take 2, below.)

**12. “No Cover” (Take 2) (Music: Evans) 7’32”**

Form: 12-bar blues

Total choruses: 10

Introduction: None

Head in: Piano, 1 chorus

First solo: Piano, 4 choruses

Second solo: Bass, 2 choruses

Third solo: Drums, 2 choruses (trading 6s)

Head out: Piano, 1 chorus

Individual expression: Piano, 60%; Bass, 20%; Drums, 20%

50% of these twelve tracks include both bass and drum solos. 25% of the selections are solo piano; 42% of the tracks are either solo piano or trio with just piano solos on them; the remaining 8% features piano and drums. Evans’s first major trio recording as a leader exhibits a considerable increase in distribution of solos compared with Powell’s first 1947 trio recording where there are no bass solos whatsoever, and there are drum solos on only

two tracks. Unlike Evans's subsequent recordings, there are no tracks on this recording where Evans gives the first solo to either the bassist or drummer.

**Evans-LaFaro-Motian Trio** – Gioia expounds on what he believes to be the significance of this trio:

*“It is not going too far to see this short-lived trio as redefining the nature of the jazz rhythm section. Almost all the great piano-bass-drums units of later years— perhaps most notably the exceptional Herbie Hancock– Ron Carter– Tony Williams combination that powered Miles’s mid-1960s band— would, in some measure, draw on the innovations of this seminal trio.”* (Gioia 2011: 274)

Evans recalls his search for an interactive bass player – one who would go beyond serving solely as an accompanist. He discloses the dubiousness he also felt in finding a drummer compatible with this groundbreaking approach – Evans mission was “to suppress the ego and work for a common result.” (Hennessey 1985: <http://www.billevans.nl/History.htm>)

The combination of LaFaro and Motian quelled his fears as he explains here:

*“I remember that I had been looking for a special kind of bass player for sometime. I think that perhaps my approach to the concept of the first trio required a different kind of player. I wanted to make room for the bass and try to leave some fundamental roles empty so that the bass could pick them up. If I am going to be sitting there playing roots, fifths and full voicings, the bass is relegated to a time machine. I think in terms of a tune having a total shape and, for example, I try to avoid getting to full intensity too early. Any one thing done for too long gets tiring. Contrast is important to me. I even thought that drums would be a problem and we might better without them. It was remarkable that Paul Motion came along and identified with the concept so completely that drums were no longer a problem.”* (Ibid.)

In an interview with Rubin and Enstice in *Jazz Spoken Here*, Evans stated "In my mind Scott LaFaro was responsible in a lot of ways for the expansion of the bass. I think he is acknowledged, at least within musical circles, as being more or less the father or the wellspring of modern bass players. And when we got together I realized that Scott had the conceptual potential, he had the virtuosity, and he had the experience and the musical

responsibility ... to handle the problem of approaching the bass function in jazz, especially with a trio." (Rubin and Enstice 1994: 136)

Evans with bassist Scott LaFaro and drummer Paul Motian recorded *Portrait in Jazz* on December 28, 1959 in New York City. Bassist and author of *The Jazz Bass Book*, John Goldsby touches on the democratic tendency of this group in his article Game Changer: How Scott LaFaro Rewrote The Rules Of Jazz Bass: "Evans, LaFaro, and Motian adopted a democratic approach in which players were free to simultaneously improvise on a given tune to create a complex, contrapuntal texture." (Goldsby 2010: <http://bit.ly/1CXrxX7>) This is the recording that marked the beginning of the three-way conversations – the “counterpoint” – that become the Evans trademark. Morell recounts the “magic” that he heard both LaFaro and Motian bring to the trio, emphasizing that it lies within Evans finding the opportunity he sought for interplay among his collective membership.

*JW: “What specifically did LaFaro contribute to that trio?”*

*MM: Scott brought interplay, beauty, lines and rhythmic configurations. He also wrote some great tunes. Before that, Bill had played with [bassist] Paul Chambers, who was four to the floor. Scott introduced interplay between the bass and piano, and Bill understood how rare that was in jazz. Scott's playing changed Bill's approach and what he wanted to do with a trio. And then Scott was gone.*

*JW: So LaFaro transformed the bass into conversational participant rather than just the piano's metronome?*

*MM: That's a good way to put it. Those guys invented the whole concept of the rhythm section engaging in interplay. Before that first Bill Evans Trio, the rhythm section was a whole different concept. Scott [pictured above] was a big part of that invention—the fluidity of the soloing lines, the notes he used, the notes behind the piano in broken time but that still made sense.” (Ibid.)*

Born on April 3, 1936 in Newark, New Jersey, bassist LaFaro joined Evans's trio with Motian in 1959. Pettinger contends that *Portrait in Jazz* was revolutionary in that it for the first time provided Evans with a platform by which he could realize his vision to create a three-way conversation among the members of his group. (Pettinger 1998: 96)

Much of the credit for inciting this revolutionary paradigmatic change has been given to LaFaro. In his online article “Game Changer: How Scott LaFaro Rewrote the Rules of Jazz Bass”, Goldsy notes:

*Portrait in Jazz was the ear-opening shout-out that a new way of trio playing had arrived. Using standards like “Autumn Leaves,” “Witchcraft,” and “Come Rain or Come Shine,” LaFaro broke from the traditional time-keeping role, choosing instead to play around the piano lines while letting the drums outline a steady groove. Evans called the approach ‘conversational.’” (Goldsby 2010: <http://bit.ly/1CXrxX7>)*

Feather contends that Evans’s artistic mission necessitated a bassist who could contribute contrapuntally to the mix:

*“The interaction with his bassists is worthy of special mention. He required a virtuoso bass artist who was less interested in playing straight time than in doing rhythmically original and often highly melodic lines. Evans’ modus operandi called for a very special sensitivity on the part of the bassists.”*

LaBarbera, the last drummer to play with Evans, is also of the mind that it was largely LaFaro who was the catalyst in launching this new approach: “Paul Motian was playing the time, and I think that was exactly what Bill needed. The real interaction was happening between Bill and Scott.” (Ibid.)

Evans’s last bassist, Marc Johnson, who played with the Evans-Johnson-LaBarbera trio from 1978 until the pianist’s death in ’80 is quoted in the November 2008 issue of *Bass Player*:

*“The things LaFaro did in-between piano phrases and across the time were phenomenal and made a deep impression on me. It was a conceptual thing; he served as a melodic counter-voice to everything else that was happening. He wasn’t walking all the time in 4/4, yet he had a real groove with Bill and Paul Motian.” (Ibid.)*

Others have given credit to the synergy that was created by the group collectively. Goldsby himself notes that the Evans-LaFaro-Motian contingent was “*A group that redefined the piano trio with its conversational style of improvisation.*” He explains:

*Before the Bill Evans Trio, most jazz featured a solo instrument on top of a supporting rhythm section. Evans, LaFaro, and Motian adopted a democratic approach in which players were free to simultaneously improvise on a given tune to create a complex, contrapuntal texture.” (Ibid.)*

Eddie Gomez, bassist with Evans for eleven years from 1966-1977 notes:

*“When you look at the way Scotty played the bass, that aspect by itself is extraordinary. But the interactivity between all the instruments, the dialogs, the space they created was unique. I began to fathom that later when I played with Bill: How much music you can personally create is related to how much you create as a group.” (Ibid.)*

Bassist and author of *Scott LaFaro: 15 Solo Transcriptions*, Phil Palombi, credits the group with transforming LaFaro’s playing:

*His transformation occurred when he teamed up with two other musicians who allowed him to be adventurous within the trio. We may never have heard Scott play the way he did on ‘Waltz for Debby’ if it wasn’t for Bill Evans and in particular Paul Motian.” (Ibid.)*

Gioia summarizes the Evans-LaFaro-Motian collective:

*“The line between soloist and accompanist – isolated and distinct in the swing and bop idioms – often blurs and at times totally disappears. The piano work, the bass line, the percussion part weave together in a marvelous, continuous conversation.” (Gioia 2011: 274)*

Using the analogical comparison between the trio and triangle that is presented in Chapter Seven, it could be said that Evans was searching for the “equilateral triangle” – and it was in the LaFaro and Motian contingent that he first found it – and from that point forward, never let it go. As depicted in the triangle at the top of this chapter, Evans’s democratic approach became one of his greatest hallmarks – a groundbreaking tactic, which collectively promoted individual expression and by extension, diversity of role, to the maximum extent possible based on the capability of his membership.



Tragically, LaFaro was killed in an automobile accident on July 6, 1961, only a year and a half after joining the trio. As Morell notes in the interview with Myers, this loss devastated Evans who had pinned so much hope on this group – and much of it based on the interplay he was for the first time able to have with LaFaro. One of Evans’s primary sources of inspiration and revitalization at a time when he felt his career was at a lull, the death of the twenty-five-year-old LaFaro caused the pianist to take a self-imposed hiatus for an entire year. As traumatic as LaFaro’s untimely death was to Evans, his short tenure with the trio made it possible to launch the prototype for the equally interactive jazz piano trio that Evans had longed to create. LaFaro was the lynchpin to creating a legacy that continues to be the gold standard for the trio format to this day.

Conclusions regarding the extent of individual expression manifested in Evans’s recording of “Portrait in Jazz,” the first “pure” trio, are drawn based on the following formula:

$$\frac{\text{head + solos / member}}{\text{total choruses}} = \text{individual expression}$$

***Portrait in Jazz*** (Recorded December 28, 1959; featuring Bill Evans, piano; Scott LaFaro, bass; and Paul Motian, drums.)

**1. "Come Rain or Come Shine" (Music: Harold Arlen; Lyrics: Johnny Mercer) – 3'24"**

Form: 32-bar A1-B-A2-C  
 Total choruses: 2  
 Introduction: None  
 Head in: Piano  
 First solo: Piano, A1-B  
 Head out: Piano, A2-C  
 Individual expression: Piano, 100%

**2. "Autumn Leaves" (monaural version) (Music: Joseph Kosma; Lyrics: Johnny Mercer and Jacques Prévert) 5'26"**

(See 11. below.)

**3. "Witchcraft" (Music: Cy Coleman; Lyrics: Carolyn Leigh) 4'37"**

Form: 40-bar A-B-C-D-A  
Total choruses: 5  
Introduction: None  
Head in: Piano  
First solo: Piano, 2 choruses  
Second solo: Bass, 1 chorus  
Head out: Piano + tag  
Individual expression: Piano, 80%; Bass, 20%

**4. "When I Fall in Love" (Music: Victor Young; Lyrics: Edward Heyman) – 4'57"**

Form: 32-bar A-B-A-C  
Total choruses:  
Introduction: None  
Head in: Piano  
First solo: Piano A-B  
Head out: Piano A-C + tag  
Individual expression: Piano, 100%

**5. "Peri's Scope" (Music: Bill Evans) – 3'15"**

Form: 24-bar A-B-C  
Total choruses:  
Introduction: None  
Head in: Piano  
First solo: Piano, 4 choruses  
Head out: Piano  
Individual expression: Piano, 100%

**6. "What Is This Thing Called Love?" (Music and Lyrics: Cole Porter) 4'36"**

Form: 32-bar A-A-B-A  
Total choruses: 8  
Introduction: Piano  
Head in: Piano  
First solo: Piano, 4 choruses  
Second solo: Bass, 1.5 choruses  
Third solo: Drums, .5 choruses  
Head out: Piano  
Individual expression: Piano, 75%; Bass, 19%; Drums, 6%

**7. "Spring Is Here" (Music: Richard Rodgers; Lyrics: Lorenz Hart) – 5'09"**

Form: 32-bar A-A1

Total choruses:  
Introduction: None  
Head in: Piano  
First solo: Piano, 16 bars (A)  
Head out: Piano, 16 bars (A1)  
Individual expression: Piano, 100%

**8. "Some Day My Prince Will Come" (Music: Frank E. Churchill; Lyrics: Larry Morey) 4'57"**

Form: 32-bar A-A1  
Total choruses: 7  
Introduction: Piano (solo, rubato over form)  
Head in: Piano  
First solo: Piano, 3 choruses  
Second solo: Bass, 2 choruses  
Head out: Piano + tag  
Individual expression: Piano, 71%; Bass, 29%

**9. "Blue in Green" (Music: Bill Evans) 5'25"**

Form: 10-bar A  
Total choruses: 15 (see below for various rhythmic variations)  
Introduction: None  
Head in: Piano, 2 choruses  
First solo: Piano, 5 choruses double time; 4 choruses double time, doubled; 3 choruses double time  
Head out: Piano, rubato  
Individual expression: Piano, 100%

**10. N/A**

**11. "Autumn Leaves" (Take 9) "Autumn Leaves" (monaural version) (Music: Joseph Kosma; Lyrics: Johnny Mercer and Jacques Prévert) 5'26"**

Form: 32-bar A-A-B-C  
Total choruses: 9  
Introduction: Piano, 8 bars (Evans's signature introduction)  
Head in: Piano  
First solo: Bass 2 choruses  
Second solo: Piano 3 choruses  
Third solo: Bass, 1 chorus  
Head out: Piano + tag  
Individual expression: Piano, 66.7%; Bass, 33.3%

12. N/A

13. N/A

In assessing the overall democratic tendency within this recording, evidence proves that along with Evans himself, the lion's share of discrete solos went to LaFaro. However, a listen to any of these tracks will substantiate Motian's seminal contributions as accompanist – an artist who so artfully held the fort down come the hell or high water situations he faced with Evans and LaFaro.

From track nine through thirteen on, the track most relevant to this thesis is the monaural version of “Autumn Leaves” (take 9). This particular take is of special significance in that it epitomizes all of Evans's and his trios' signature traits: his trademark polyrhythmic introduction; the three-way interplay among his colleagues – in particular, the contrapuntal exchanges between piano and bass; his democratic inclination (although there is no distinct drum solo on this track); attention to tone and dynamics.

Evans begins “Autumn Leaves” with the well-known arranged introduction that he incorporates almost “word for word” into most all of the recordings he made of this jazz standard.<sup>10</sup> The repeated use of this signature introduction was just one example of the paradoxical methodology he acknowledges he relied on to achieve maximum freedom of

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<sup>10</sup> In addition to *Portrait in Jazz* (1959), examples of the introduction include but are not limited to *The Legendary Bill Evans Trio – The 1960 Birdland Sessions* (1960), *The Secret Sessions* (1966), *Live at Art D'Lugoff's Top of the Gate* (1968), *Jazzhouse* (1969) *Autumn Leaves* (1969) and *Half Moon Bay (Live)* (1973). Interestingly, on his very last recording of “Autumn Leaves on *Bill Evans: Turn Out the Stars with Johnson and LaBarbera* in 1980, Evans abandons his stock introduction for a much freer, more emotional in the moment version, similar to the introductions Jarrett plays with his trio The Standards Trio; although he does include his stock fill in bar twenty-four of the “head in.” Evans's version of the introduction to “Autumn Leaves” on *The Last Waltz*, his second to last public performance recorded in San Francisco on September 8, 1980, is similar to the version on *Turn Out the Stars*, and again, he does include his stock fill in bar twenty-four of the “head in.” This would be the last time he would play or record what had become over the past twenty-one years, one of his trios' signature staples.

expression. (As is discussed in Chapter Six, this is an approach that is entirely antithetical to that which is heard in Keith Jarrett’s work as evidenced by his blatant lack of repetition in The “Standards” Trio’s thirty-one-year run.)

**Evans-Gomez-Morell Trio** – In her 1978 interview with Evans, McPartland discusses her artistic relationship with Gomez, stating that all the while he played with her, his heart was really set on playing with Evans and that when he finally got the opportunity, “he was the happiest guy in life.” (McPartland 1978 <http://n.pr/1CWzN6L>)

The recording the Evans-Gomez-Morell trio made together titled “Live "Top Of The Gate", recorded in New York on October 23, 1968 was a benchmark as qualified by Morell in the interview with Myers in 2012:

*JW: Why was the Top of the Gate recording so lively and special?*

*MM: That gig was the birth of a new era for the Bill Evans Trio. Eddie had been with Bill but I was new, so the trio was new. What you hear on the recording is our excitement about this new period and that we were working quite well together.*

The trio performed an arranged version of Jerome Kern’s “Yesterdays” in each of two sets of this live date that exemplifies all of the Evans signature traits.<sup>11</sup> First, he brings the band in with a short solo piano introduction. The “head” of “Yesterdays” is an arranged paraphrase of Kern’s original melody. True to his reputation as a magnanimous leader, Evans gives the virtuosic bassist Gomez the first solo. Gomez takes three choruses accompanied by Evans who then also takes three choruses himself. Evans plays the “head out” followed by a short tag. The group ends “Yesterdays”, a tune in D minor, unexpectedly on a major rather than

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<sup>11</sup> Yesterdays

from ROBERTA and LOVELY TO LOOK AT

Words by Otto Harbach; Music by Jerome Kern

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minor tonic, incorporating the principle of the picardy third. Drummer Morell functions solely as an accompanist on this track.

**“Yesterdays” (Set 1) 5’07”**

Form: 32-bar A-A1

Total choruses: 8

Introduction: Piano, rubato

Head: Piano

First solo: Bass, 3 choruses

Second solo: Piano, 3 choruses

Head out: Piano + tag

Individual Expression: Piano, 62.5%; Bass, 37.5%

Evans’s penchant for rhythmic displacement in the form of polymeter is in full force in his solo on “Yesterdays.” In the first sixteen bars alone, he cleverly superimposes two separate groups of phrases in 3/4 meter over 4/4 meter. The first group of four phrases begins on beat one of bar two and extends from bar two to the end of bar four, traversing three bars; the second group of six phrases begins on beat one of bar thirteen and extends from bar thirteen to bar seventeen, traversing four and one-half bars (Fig. 5.9).

The image displays a musical score for the piece "Yesterdays" in 4/4 time, featuring a complex rhythmic structure. The score is divided into measures 1 through 17. Above the staff, brackets indicate groups of measures with a 3/4 time signature, suggesting a polymeter. The chords used are: Dm6/9 (measures 1, 3, 5), Em7(b5) (measure 2), A7alt. (measures 2, 3), Dm6/9 (measure 3), N.C. (measure 6), Bm7(b5) (measure 7), E7alt. (measure 8), A7alt. (measure 9), D7(#9) (measure 10), G13 (measure 11), C7 (measures 12, 13), Cm7 (measure 13), F7 (measure 14), Bbmaj7 (measures 14, 15), and N.C. (measure 15). The score includes various rhythmic patterns, including triplets and accents, and ends with a double bar line at measure 17.

Fig. 5.9 Example of Evans's use polymeter in "Yesterdays"

Again, all of the displacement techniques (the use of "accentual shift," polyrhythm and polymeter) that Evans recurrently incorporated into his solos became one of his most prominent signature traits. His convoluted rhythmic approach to improvising was not for the faint of heart and required a special group of sidemen who had the ability to keep track of beat one at all times.

On this recording, the trio repeats a number of the tunes they played in the first set, in the second set, including "Emily," "Yesterdays" and "Round Midnight." In line with Morell's insight into the organization brought to each performance, it is interesting to compare the versions in Set 1 with the versions in Set 2.

To begin with, each tune in Set 1 is close to being the same length as the same tune in Set 2. "Yesterdays" clocks in at 5:07 in Set I, and 4:48 in Set II; "Emily" at 4:47 in Set I, and 5:08

in Set II; and “Round Midnight” at 6:25 in Set I, and 6:27 in Set II – a difference of nineteen, twenty-one and two seconds respectively.

Regarding individual expression, “Yesterdays” (Set 1) is 19 seconds longer than it is in Set 2, but the tempo is much faster in Set 2, allowing for more choruses of solos. Both “Emily” and “Round Midnight” are much closer in length and exhibit the same percentage of individual expression.

What is most noticeable however is that in each of the two takes of all three tunes, the introductions, heads and tags exhibit more than less the same arrangement, indicating the “restraint” Evans purported to need to maximally express himself. His adherence to detailed arrangements is one of the most important characteristics that set Evans apart from Jarrett, who was more often than not, improvising at all times (as will be covered in the next chapter).

**“Yesterdays” (Set 1) 5’07”**

Form: 32-bars A-A1  
Total choruses: 9  
Introduction: Piano  
Head in: Piano, 2 choruses  
First solo: Bass, 3 choruses  
Second solo: Piano, 3 choruses  
Head out: Piano + tag  
Individual Expression:  
Piano, 62.5%; Bass, 37.5%

**“Yesterdays” (Set 2) 4’48”**

Form: 32-bars A-A1  
Total choruses: 16  
Introduction: Piano  
Head in: Piano, 2 choruses  
First solo: Bass, 7 choruses  
Second solo: Piano, 5 choruses  
Head out: Piano, 2 choruses + tag  
Individual Expression:  
Piano, 56%; Bass, 44%

**“Emily” (Set I) 4’47”**

Form: 40-bar A-B(16)-A1-B1(16)-C(8)  
C(8) Total choruses: 5  
Introduction: Piano (head, rubato)  
Head in: Piano  
First solo: Piano 2 choruses  
Second solo: Bass, 1 chorus  
Head out: Piano + tag  
Individual expression:  
Piano, 80%; Bass, 20%

**“Emily” Set II) 5’08”**

Form: 40-bar A-B(16)-A1-B1(16)  
Total choruses: 5  
Introduction: Piano (head, rubato)  
Head in: Piano  
First solo: Piano, 2 choruses  
Second solo: Bass, 1 chorus  
Head out: Piano + tag  
Individual expression:  
Piano, 80%; Bass, 20%

**“Round Midnight” (Set I) 6’25”**

Form: 32-bar A-A-B-A  
Total choruses: 3.5  
Introduction: Piano

**“Round Midnight” (Set II) 6’27”**

Form: 32-bar A-A-B-A  
Total choruses: 3.5  
Introduction: Piano



Head in: Piano  
First solo: Piano, 1 chorus  
Second solo: Bass, 1 chorus  
Head out: Piano B-A + tag  
Individual expression:  
Piano, 71%; Bass, 29%

Head in: Piano  
First solo: Piano, 1 chorus  
Second solo: Bass, 1 chorus  
Head out: Piano B-A + tag  
Individual expression:  
Piano, 71%; Bass, 29%

**Evans-Johnson-LaBarbera Trio** – Although it was the group with LaFaro and Motian from 1959-1961 that put Evans on the map, Evans conceded that it was the trio with Johnson and LaBarbera that ranked as his favorite among all of the trios he led. (Feather in Keyboard 1984: 37) In his 1978 interview on *Piano Jazz*, Evans talks about his eleven-year stint with bassist Gomez and the challenge he faced in finding a replacement for him after he left. Evans to McPartland: “I’ve now found a new young bass player from Dallas Texas who... just has it all going. I needed a certain kind of musician and after four or five months of searching he did appear and he was absolutely the one.” (McPartland 1978: <http://n.pr/1JasgXi>) Pettinger writes “Evans felt him to be closer in spirit to Scott LaFaro than to Eddie Gomez.” (Pettinger 1998: 257)

What Pettinger believes so dramatically sets Evans’s last trio apart from those preceding it was the infusion of “a new element of risk-taking from Evans reminiscent of his all too brief interplay with Gary Peacock in the 1960s.” He credits Johnson with inspiring Evans to reach new heights. Pettinger notes that drummer Eliot Zigmund, who played with Evans and Johnson, believed that Evans was looking for a major change after Gomez and that the more openness Johnson brought to the music fit the bill. (Pettinger 1998: 256) Pettinger adds that Evans viewed his trios in the early seventies as static whereas this “new one was all the time manifesting and inner growth, and a willingness to expand.” (Pettinger 1998: 267)

In the April 2002 publication of *Modern Drummer*, La Barbera talks about his experience playing with Evans, emphasizing the complete freedom he had to express himself within this group.

*“Bill’s music let me play the full spectrum of what I was capable of doing. When I got the gig, a couple of people said, ‘You’re going to have to play quiet with that trio all*

*night long, and you won't get to stretch out.' That was absolutely false. He gave me plenty of room to play, and dynamically it went from a whisper to a roar. So it really was up to the player to take the initiative and make it what you could. We never had to follow a certain rule or play within a certain set of parameters. It was about taking the music wherever it could go.*

*He didn't want to talk about the music. He wanted to play it and let it evolve, which is the way it should be.” (Mattingly 2002: 81-81)*

## **5.6 The Evans Trio Gestalt**

One approach to assessing the development Evans made over twenty-one years is to compare recordings of the same tune made by each these groups respectively. Using the standard “My Romance” as a point of comparison is as good as any. The transition that Evans made over twenty-one years can be traced through the examination of six different versions of this Rogers and Hart standard.

On the LaFaro-Motian rendition of “My Romance” on the trio’s last live recording in 1961, the piano and bass are featured 67%:33%. These percentages changed as evidenced in the Gomez-Morell rendition recorded in 1972. On this recording, this standard became a vehicle for Evans to progressively feature both of his sidemen *over* himself – and in particular, the drummer – in a novel format where members of the group traded entire 32-bar choruses. Interestingly, regarding individual expression, on all of the versions but the first, Evans’s drummers, Morell and LaBarbera are positioned almost equally at between 42-43%. The attention given to featuring the drummer increases significantly beginning with the Gomez-Morell trio. Evans kept this unusual road map intact over this particular tune from 1972-1980.

Beginning with the Gomez-Morell trio, “My Romance” also served as a platform that included an extended rubato solo introduction to a tune – a characteristic that Keith Jarrett later incorporated to a much greater extent into tunes on many of his recordings (covered in Chapter Six).

Unsurprisingly, another constant was Evans’s use of polymeter. For example, in both of the 1972 and 1973 versions of this tune with Gomez and Morell, his arrangement includes the superimposition of four groups of 3/4 meter over bars 10-12 of the A section (Fig. 5.9).<sup>12</sup>

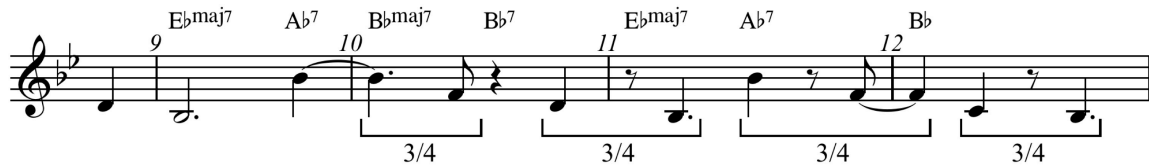


Fig. 5.10 Evan’s use of polymeter in bars 10-12 of “My Romance”

In both of the 1980 versions of this tune with Johnson and LaBarbera, his arrangement includes the superimposition of six groups of 3/4 meter over bars 17-20 of the head at A1 as follows:

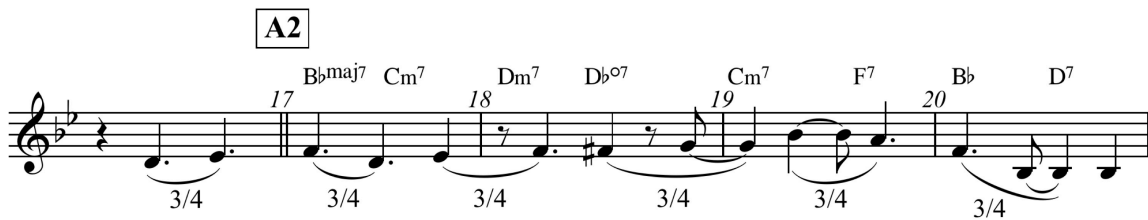


Fig. 5.11 Evan’s use of polymeter in bars 17-20 of “My Romance”

<sup>12</sup> My Romance

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**“My Romance” from *Bill Evans Trio Sunday at the Village Vanguard* recorded on June 25, 1961 with LaFaro and Motian.<sup>13</sup> 7’08”**

Form: 32-bar A-A1  
Total choruses: 9  
Introduction: Piano solo (rubato version of the head)  
Head in: Piano  
First solo: Piano, 3 choruses  
Second solo: Bass, 3 choruses  
Head out: Piano with tag  
Individual expression: Piano, 66.7%; Bass, 33.3%

**“My Romance” from *Momentum* recorded February 4, 1972 with Gomez and Morell. 10’24”**

Form: 32-bar A-A1  
Total Choruses: 14  
Introduction: Piano, 1 chorus (rubato)  
“Head in”: Piano  
First solo: Drums, 1 chorus  
Second solo: Bass, 1 chorus  
Third solo: Drums, 1 chorus  
Fourth solo: Bass, 1 chorus  
Fifth solo: Drums, 1 chorus  
Sixth solo: Bass, 1 chorus  
Seventh solo: Drums, 1 chorus  
Eighth solo: Piano, 1 chorus  
Ninth solo: Drums, 1 chorus  
Tenth solo: Piano, 1 chorus  
Eleventh solo: Drums, 1 chorus  
Twelfth solo: Piano, 1 chorus  
“Head out”: Piano + tag (arranged)  
Individual expression: Piano: 36%; Bass, 21%; Drums, 43%

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<sup>13</sup> Orrin Keepnews, producer of this watershed recording, as well as many other Evans recordings, notes that this was the final recording of the Evans-LaFaro-Motian trio and that while the group had a three-week-long engagement at the Village Vanguard, he discloses he didn’t really know why he chose to record them on the very last day of their run. Keepnews adds “Talking about living dangerously!” given that LaFaro then died only days later. He says that although his Riverside label had not developed an effective marketing strategy at this time, this recording basically sold itself. It had everything going for it: a live recording with Evans as a “darling” in the eyes of the critics coupled with the headlines that resulted from the tragic death of LaFaro. (Primack 2008: <http://binged.it/1J8mDd4>)

**“My Romance” from the *Tokyo Concert* recorded on January 20, 1973 with Gomez and Morell. 8’40”**

Form: 32-bar A-A1  
Total Choruses: 12  
Introduction: Piano, 1 chorus (rubato)  
Head in: Piano  
First solo: Drums, 1 chorus  
Second solo: Bass, 1 chorus  
Third solo: Drums, 1 chorus  
Fourth solo: Bass, 1 chorus  
Fifth solo: Drums, 1 chorus  
Sixth solo: Piano, 1 chorus  
Seventh solo: Drums  
Eighth solo: Piano, 1 chorus  
Ninth solo: Drums, 1 chorus  
Tenth solo: Piano, 1 chorus  
Head out: Piano + tag (arranged)  
Individual expression: Piano, 42%; Bass, 16%; Drums, 42%

**“My Romance” from *The Paris Concert, Edition One* recorded on November 26, 1979 with Johnson and LaBarbera. 9’16”**

Form: 32-bar A-A1  
Total Choruses: 12  
Introduction: Piano solo (extended form)  
Head in: Piano  
First solo: Drums, 1 chorus  
Second solo: Bass, 1 chorus  
Third solo: Drums, 1 chorus  
Fourth solo: Bass, 1 chorus  
Fifth solo: Drums, 1 chorus  
Sixth solo: Bass solo, 1 chorus  
Seventh solo: Drums, 1 chorus  
Eighth solo: Piano, 1 chorus  
Ninth solo: Drums, 1 chorus  
Tenth solo: Piano, 1 chorus  
“Head out”: Piano with tag (arranged)  
Individual expression: Piano, 33%; Bass, 25%; Drums, 42%

**“My Romance” (1<sup>st</sup> set) from *Turn Out the Stars: The Final Village Vanguard Recordings* recorded June 5, 1980 with Johnson and LaBarbera. 8’20”**

Form: 32-bar A-A1  
Total choruses: 12

Introduction: Piano solo (rubato, extended form)  
Head In: Piano at 1:28  
First solo: Drums, one chorus  
Second solo: Bass, one chorus  
Third solo: Drums, one chorus  
Fourth solo: Bass, one chorus  
Fifth solo: Drums, one chorus  
Sixth solo: Piano, double time  
Seventh solo: Drums, 1 chorus  
Eighth solo: Piano, 1 chorus  
Ninth solo: Drums, 1 chorus  
Tenth solo: Piano, 1 chorus (double time)  
Head out: Piano, 1 chorus (double time) + tag  
Individual expression: Piano, 42%; Bass, 16%; Drums, 42%

**“My Romance” from *The Last Waltz* (Disc 5) recorded September 3, 1980, with Johnson and LaBarbera. 9’14”**

Form: 32-bar A-A1  
Total choruses: 12  
Introduction: Piano, (rubato, extended form)  
Head In: Piano  
First solo: Drums, 1 chorus  
Second solo: Bass, 1 chorus  
Third solo: Drums, 1 chorus  
Fourth solo: Bass, 1 chorus  
Fifth solo: Drums, 1 chorus  
Sixth solo: Piano, 1 chorus (double time)  
Seventh solo: Drums, 1 chorus  
Eighth solo: Piano, 1 chorus  
Ninth solo: Drums, 1 chorus  
Tenth solo, Piano, 1 chorus (double time)  
Head out: Piano (double time) + tag  
Individual expression: Piano, 42%; Bass, 16%; Drums, 42%

Evans recorded his last official live performance at the renowned jazz club Keystone Korner in San Francisco between August 31 and September 8, 1980, just a week before he died.<sup>14</sup>

Evans’s realization of his personal mission to create egalitarianism in the context of the piano-bass-drums jazz piano trio format was central to his legacy – from his first recording in

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<sup>14</sup> Evan’s ultimate performance was scheduled to run from September ninth through fourteenth at Fat Tuesday’s in New York City. His failing health permitted him to appear only the first two days of this run. He died on September 15, 1980 at Mount Sinai at age 51 as a result of a lifelong history of drug abuse.

1947, to his last in 1980. Ramsey sums it up: “His conception of the jazz trio became the model for balancing the good of the group with individual freedom in the modern rhythm section of piano, bass and drums.” (Ramsey 2015: <http://on.wsj.com/1LVcq5I>)

The individual expression that Evans so ardently championed within his various trios created a three-part ripple effect of inspiration that produced unmatched collective artistic results. That is, never before had the prerequisite for virtuosity as both soloist *and* accompanist been as high as it was in his trios. His rigorous standard of excellence served to challenge each of his sidemen to reach new artistic heights; and the mutually beneficial three-way interplay among three equally capable contributors made the artistic process and ultimate outcome just that much richer for them all.

Ironically, the trios Evans most cherished were those two that bookended the earliest and latest years of his professional career and were the shortest-lived – each lasting for just over a year and a half. They were also both cut short tragically – the first by the death of LaFaro and the second by the death of the leader himself. Nevertheless, the unremitting dedication to individual expression that he infused into a monumental body of work within the trio format over his lifetime was unsurpassed by any who came before him.

Pat Evans, Evans’s sister-in-law, describes his complete devotion to jazz: “Bill was only present in a world constructed by jazz. It became his only truth. He gave it his total self, all day and every day. He sacrificed his body and his last breath to it – to the tragic significance of jazz.” (Evans, Pat 2011)

His legacy remains ours to treasure in perpetuity.

## Chapter Six

### THE KEITH JARRETT “STANDARDS” TRIO

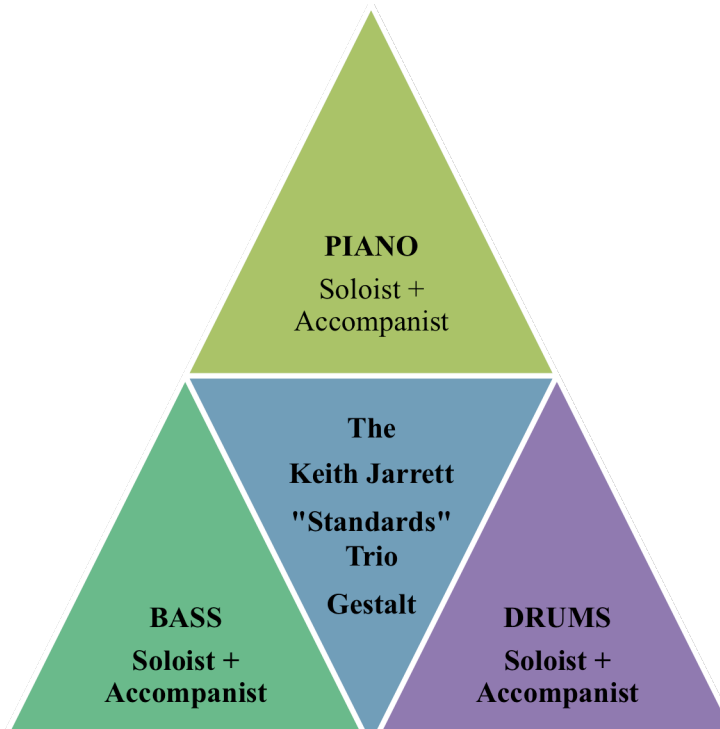


Fig. 6. Division of role in the Keith Jarrett “Standards” Trio

*“Play like you think it’s going be the last time. That’s the only way to play.”* – Keith Jarrett (Iverson 2009: <http://bit.ly/1HXCBWR>)

#### 6.1 KEITH STANLEY JARRETT

Keith Jarrett was born on May 8, 1945 in Allentown, Pennsylvania. This auspicious date marks the birth of a jazz pianist whose resolute commitment to the moment so absolutely epitomizes the jazz manifesto. Coincidentally, this date also marks the end of the war with Germany in Europe, followed just four months later by Japanese surrender to the United States, signaling the end of World War II (September 2, 1945). Jarrett’s birth coincided with a new beginning filled with the promise of peace and prosperity in America.



Jarrett, the oldest of five sons, manifested a proclivity for listening to and playing music in early childhood. His quite apparent interest in pursuing it did not go unmissed by his parents, who invested in a used piano for their son for fifty dollars. His ability to play along with music he heard on the family radio as well as to improvise were indicative of a natural musical ability, including the gift of perfect pitch. These advantages, coupled with the results of a test which determined the six-year-old Jarrett to have the IQ of a genius, provided a solid foundation for the national and international renown he would go on to gain in the worlds of both jazz and Western European concert music.

It is important to note that although the piano was Jarrett's primary instrument, and the one he studied formally, he was also drawn to also playing the drums and claims that the drum set was really his first instrument. (Carr 1991: 10) Not only did Jarrett play drums and percussion on recordings prior to the formation of the "Standards" Trio, his love of the drums particularly, and rhythm in general, is reflected throughout his life's work – from his left-hand "comping" patterns emulating "snare chatter"<sup>1</sup> or a Latin-originated merengue conga pattern, to the extended rhythmic-focused vamps and ostinato patterns he incorporates into the endings of his pieces.

Jarrett performed his first public performance at age five and his debut recital at age eight. His parents divorced when he was eleven, but Ian Carr, author of the Jarrett biography *Keith Jarrett – The Man and His Music*, surmises that what might have had a devastating effect on him, actually "probably had a profoundly liberating effect on the young Keith Jarrett, stimulating his musical adventure and creativity." (Carr 1991: 11) Somehow, Jarrett's mother weathered the hardships of being a single parent to ensure her son had the piano lessons she believed to be so important to him. At age fifteen, Jarrett, who had by then developed an interest in playing "popular music, dance music and jazz," (Carr 1991: 13) made a pivotal decision to discontinue his formal lessons.

In a 1995 article in *Time*, authors Walsh and Levy/Oxford note that while in high school, Jarrett "turned down a chance to study in Paris with the late Nadia Boulanger, teacher of

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<sup>1</sup> The "comping" patterns played by jazz drummers on the snare drum.

three generations of American composers.” This was not a decision Jarrett made lightly. He explains it was in an attempt to avoid being pigeonholed: "I was developing a way with music that would be better off minus the labels on everything, minus the descriptions, minus the analysis." (Walsh 1995: <http://ti.me/1K1hySC>)

At age sixteen, Jarrett dropped out of high school to take a job as a shipping clerk at a factory that had earned the epithet the “finger factory” due to the high number of fingers their employees lost in the company’s machinery. Occasionally playing gigs around town, Jarrett landed a fluke stint at the local jazz club, the Deer Head Inn in Delaware Water Gap, close to Allentown, which served as the springboard he needed to quit his job and launch his career as a professional jazz pianist.<sup>2</sup> His stint at the Deer Head Inn provided Jarrett with opportunities to meet and play with other name artists in the area including Fred Waring’s Pennsylvanians. In 1963, *Down Beat* magazine got wind of Jarrett’s precocious ability and awarded the seventeen- (or eighteen-) year-old a scholarship to attend Berklee College of Music. His tenure at Berklee lasted just a year. In 1964, Jarrett, along with his new wife Margot Erney, moved to New York City where “he had decided to commit himself seriously to jazz and improvisation.” (Carr 1991: 22)

The austerity that came with being a newcomer to the ruthless New York jazz scene was palpable. Jarrett and Margot endured below-standard living conditions while he played jam sessions here and there in an attempt to get his foot in the door of a group of New York’s select jazz elite. Fortunately for Jarrett, Margot was able to secure sufficient employment to sustain the two of them, albeit just minimally. After months of attempting to sit in on the reputable Village Vanguard Monday night jam sessions, Jarrett finally got his chance. Serendipitously, drummer Art Blakey was sitting at the bar and heard Jarrett that night. He immediately asked him to join his New Jazz Messengers, marking Jarrett’s first job in a major group.

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<sup>2</sup> Jarrett, Peacock and Motian would record an album *At the Deer Head Inn* on September 16, 1992. Anchored by house pianist John Coates, Jr., from 1962-1992, this jazz club which purports to be “the oldest continuously running jazz club in the country” (<http://deerheadinn.com>) has served as a haven for Jarrett along with a number of other jazz greats including Al Cohn, Zoot Sims, Stan Getz, Phil Woods and Dave Liebman just to name several.

After a short-lived stint with Blakey, constantly struggling to “put a round peg into a square hole” stylistically, Jarrett, who was just shy of his twenty-first birthday, garnered a fortuitous recommendation from Jack DeJohnette, tenor saxophonist Charles Lloyd’s drummer at the time, who convinced Lloyd to invite Jarrett to join his group. Under the leadership of Lloyd along with sidemen bassist Cecil McBee and drummer DeJohnette, the Charles Lloyd Quartet became “one of the most successful groups in jazz, with a global reputation and audience.” (Carr 1991: 27) Lloyd’s mid-sixties quartet was formed at a time when electric rock groups were the rage in both America and Europe. Carr notes that Lloyd’s group “cut across all categorization, moving in and out of modal music, bop, abstraction and rock with a brilliant virtuosity, which opened up new avenues of development.” (Carr 1991: 32) Unlike the tight form-beholden direction of Blakey’s Messengers, Lloyd provided Jarrett with the stylistic freedom he sought.

At the end of a three-year tenure with Lloyd, Jarrett went on to perform and record with a number of major artists including the iconic Miles Davis. He also formed the “American Quartet” with Dewey Redman, Charlie Haden and Paul Motian, followed by the “European Quartet” with Jan Garbarek, Palle Danielsson and Jon Christensen, and also recorded a number of live solo piano concerts. In his article “In Conversation with Keith Jarrett,” writer Stuart Nicholson notes that Jarrett’s entire body of recorded work can be divided into three distinctive periods based on his record labels: the first on Atlantic (1967-1971); the second on Impulse (1973-1976); and his last on ECM (1971-present). (Nicholson 2009: <http://bit.ly/1RCc5J8>) Among Jarrett’s many artistic accomplishments, it is his work within the context of the “Standards” Trio during the ECM years, which is the main focus of this chapter.

Specifically, this chapter examines Jarrett’s **key influences**, the **evolution of the “Standards Trio,”** his **operational philosophy**, signature **stylistic traits** and commitment to **individual expression** followed by the **“Standards” Trio gestalt**. Recorded evidence includes a brief examination of Jarrett’s benchmark trio recording with Haden and Motian in 1968 on the Atlantic label as a point of reference, as well as a

more extensive scrutiny of select recordings with Peacock and DeJohnette in the Standards Trio from 1983 on, on the ECM label.

## 6.2 Key Influences

In an interview with crossover pianist Ethan Iverson in 2009, Jarrett discusses his early influences, noting in particular a white-covered double LP recorded by pianist Ahmad Jamal. Jarrett explains that this recording “changed everything about what I thought could happen.” He adds that serendipitously, both Peacock and DeJohnette owned the same Jamal album:

*“Up to then it was a virtuosity thing: playing fast, or swinging. (At least swinging was there.) But then there was a spatial thing, and not a need for constant playing. I used to practice drums to that album all the time: not to get rid of Vernel Fournier, but because Vernel was so wonderful. He didn’t even have to pick up the sticks but did just incredible stuff with brushes. As it turns out, Gary Peacock, Jack DeJohnette and I all had that same white album.”* (Iverson 2009: <http://bit.ly/1HXCBWR>)

After he hears that both Peacock and DeJohnette had the same recording, Iverson humorously exclaims “Aha! The secret DNA of the Standards Trio.” (Ibid.) If only it were that simple.

Jarrett tells Iverson that he first heard Evans (with Peacock and Motian) when he was just fifteen and notes that although he had not yet heard much of him, people who heard both of them perceived a stylistic similarity in the two. Iverson attributes it possibly to the attention they each pay to voice leading.

*“When I was 15 or so, going through town with Fred Waring and his Pennsylvanians, I heard Bill Evans play there with Paul Motian and Gary Peacock. At 15, I’m hearing Paul and Gary for the first time! And I hadn’t really heard much of Bill yet, even though people said I sounded like him.”* (Ibid.)

Unlike Evans, who focused on Western European concert only early on in his childhood, the “classical” repertoire that Jarrett focused on as a child has continued to play a major role throughout his performing life. (Downbeat September 1999: <http://bit.ly/1MMuuw6>)

Author and critic Dan Ouellette discusses Jarrett's bout with the bacterial disease chronic fatigue syndrome, an affliction that derailed him in the fall of 1996 and lasted for two years. Ouellette notes Jarrett's particular focus on bebop upon his return to work. This new area of interest is clearly evidenced among the fourteen tracks of his 1999 recording *Whisper Not*, which includes two Bud Powell originals "Hallucinations" and "Bouncing with Bud" as well as Clifford Brown's 12-bar blues "Sandu" as well as Dizzy Gillespie's "Groovin' High."

*"The new Keith is basically the old Keith with slightly different inflections. For example, he says his voice is much more tuned in to bebop now than it was before."* (Ibid.)

Jarrett responds:

*"I've been trying to free up my left hand to play like the middle bop period where much of the real stuff of modern jazz was born. I'm adding in these little jagged things with my left hand that might get in Gary's way more. I'm trying to pay tribute to bop-era pianists every time I play."* (Ibid.)

"Jarrett chafes when asked who specifically he's paying tribute to. Still, upon a little prodding he responds. Bud Powell?" (Ibid.) Jarrett's response:

*"Well, if I had to name someone, sure. But I also think of Lennie Tristano even though I hate the way he played right on beat all the time. But basically I'm trying to hear the history of jazz as well as play into the future while playing the stupidest standard tunes. If that helps some people understand why Gary, Jack and I have a zillion recordings of standards, then good. All three of us love melody and don't like playing clever."* (Ibid.)

Jarrett's long melodic lines make reference to Powell (whose single-note solos earned him the title of the "Charlie Parker of the piano") and to Evans, who pioneered a never before heard complexity of rhythmic displacement and studied approach to voice leading. But it is Jarrett who, in the context of the "Standards" Trio, combines both of these mentors' prominent attributes with his own rhythmic, melodic and harmonic approach to create a new and exciting sound within in the context of repertoire from the "Great American Songbook." Jarrett's conceptual approach is both exhilarating and

transformative based on his utter submission to the moment. His commitment to absolute extemporaneity formed his distinctive style, one in which there is seldom if ever any blatant repetition of material from past performances. Every aspect of his playing is as new as the moment in which it is played.

### **6.3 Evolution of the “Standards” Trio**

Carr surmises that Jarrett’s decision to turn his focus to playing standard jazz repertoire in the piano-bass-drums trio format was a result of the isolation he had experienced playing through-improvised music in the solo piano setting for so many years. This alludes back to Feather’s contention in the Introduction of this thesis: “The unaccompanied pianist has unlimited structural freedom, but at the cost of the kind of exchanges with a rhythm section that often stimulate inspired improvisation.” (Feather 1984: 34) Carr notes that Jarrett had been concentrating on performing improvised music in the context of solo piano since 1976, and was looking for something to “recharge his batteries.” He affirms that Jarrett also “seemed weary of the aloneness, the sheer isolation, which solo concerts imposed on him.” (Carr 1991: 143)

Like Evans, who paradoxically sought what he described as the “restraint” of the jazz standard as a vehicle for maximum individual expression, Jarrett, at this time in his life, also chose the more structured setting of repertoire from the “Great American Songbook” (as well as Western European concert music) to express himself. A primary difference between these two artists’ interpretations of this repertoire, however, lies in the *extent* to which preconception played a part in their respective operational philosophies. They both utilized the structure of the jazz standard as a means of “restraint,” but unlike Evans, Jarrett’s renditions were completely devoid of preconception whatsoever. In fact, it was this particular setting, that of completely *unencumbered* “restraint,” which provided each member of the Trio with the platform they needed to access their respective voices to the open-ended extent that they did. Carr notes the path Jarrett took in his search for the restriction he needed to gain greater freedom: “One way to progress towards new freedoms is to work in a more restricted area, and in Jarrett’s case this pointed toward the preconceived structures of standard tunes and classical music.” (Ibid.)

Dividing the thirty-one year life span of the “Standards” Trio itself into distinct periods is slightly more difficult, primarily because the Trio’s personnel remained constant. However, since this particular personnel remained unchanged for over three decades, select recordings from each decade – 1983-1993; 1993-2003; and 2003-2013 – are examined, beginning with the Trio’s benchmark *Standards Volume 1*.

Although the “Standards” Trio, under Jarrett’s leadership, holds the record for serving as the longest running group in jazz history, it does not mark the pianist’s first experience as leader of a jazz piano trio. Interestingly, both his first recording as leader and first recording as leader of a jazz piano trio, *Life Between the Exit Signs* (on the Atlantic label), included little repertoire from the “Great American Songbook.” Comprising seven originals and only one standard, it was recorded early on in his career in May of 1967 in New York, with bassist Charlie Haden and drummer Paul Motian. Jarrett went on to record two more trio albums: one with Haden and Motian on October 30-31, 1968 in Los Angeles, titled *Somewhere Before* (which includes seven originals by Jarrett, a composition by Bob Dylan, and one standard by Zaret, Chaplin and Cahn); and another, again with Haden and Motian, on June 14, 1972 in Hamburg, Germany titled *NDR Jazz Workshop* (which includes ten originals by Jarrett and one by Haden). Few and far between, the standards in these three offerings are just a mere gesture of the Jarrett trio’s singular body of work to come.

Jarrett did not make another complete trio recording for another eleven years, but *Standards, Volume 1*, recorded on the ECM label on January 11-12, 1983 in New York with Peacock and DeJohnette,<sup>3</sup> signaled the first of a lineage of twenty unparalleled trio recordings to come from this group. Unlike his prior recordings in the trio format, the “Standards” Trio now focused almost exclusively on repertoire from the “Great American Songbook.” After an eleven-year hiatus from playing and recording in the trio format, the release of *Standards, Volume 1* elicited this response from Carr: “It seemed

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<sup>3</sup> Jarrett also made another trio recording within this last period titled *At the Deer Head Inn* on September 16, 1992, but with Peacock and Motian.

that a powerful but pent-up vein of feeling and creativity was suddenly released – speech after long silence – and in the trio format so beloved by Jarrett.” (Carr 1991: 145)

Commenting on Jarrett’s work following the release of *Standards, Vol. 1* in a February 4, 2008 publication of *The Jazz Blog.Com* on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Standards Trio, noted jazz historian and author Ted Gioia notes the significance of this anniversary: “Jarrett has been recording standards in a trio format for longer than Bill Evans did.” (Gioia 2008: <http://bit.ly/1fyQZdJ>)

Gioia also comments on the drastic change in direction the “Standards” Trio signified for Jarrett who transitioned from performing original compositions in solo and ensemble formats to focusing on American popular repertoire in a trio:

*“His music was always surprising and different, but there was one constant—Keith played his own songs. On a series of recordings for Impulse and ECM, he made his mark not just as a pianist, but also as a prolific composer.” (Ibid.)*

*“Of course, I often wondered during this period what Jarrett might do working over conventional bebop changes or standards or even a twelve-bar blues. But that seemed unlikely to ever happen. ... After all, Jarrett would hardly even play his own older compositions during these years, so anxious was he to move on to the next new thing.” (Ibid.)*

Gioia notes that Jarrett’s rapt attention to the music of other composers – primarily those who were responsible for creating the body of work that has become known as “The Great American Songbook” – represented a shift in his personal artistic mission. Up to this point, prior to the release of *Standards, Vol. 1*, Jarrett had earned his reputation as both a preeminent performer and composer. Gioia provides us with his incite on Jarrett’s return and longtime commitment to the popular American standard repertoire:

*“It is in this context that we need to understand Jarrett's return to popular standards in the early 1980s. Not that Jarrett didn't love the old songs, but even more significantly, he had reached a stage in his career where celebrating the music of other composers was now central to his personal vision quest.” (Ibid.)*



*"Ever since my solo concerts I've been considered a sort of 'landed proprietor' of my own music," Jarrett explained in 1989, "a guy who goes on stage and finds something new every time, as if on command. Now I wanted to show them that music arises from music, from ideas, from material that doesn't belong to anyone." (Ibid.)*

At a time when so many jazz musicians (including Wynton Marsalis and Chick Corea, for example) felt the need to create elaborate arrangements of standards to justify including them in their repertoire, Gioia points out Jarrett's exceptional allegiance to the "original essence of these songs."

*"Clever new arrangements play no role in the success of this celebrated group. But don't let this lead you to assume that Jarrett is not pushing this song to the limits. He doesn't need to play "All the Things" in 13/8 or with a twelve tone row in mind (as pianist Alex von Schlippenbach has done) to create a musical masterpiece. Jarrett, Peacock and DeJohnette do it the old fashioned way: by listening to each other, and paying attention to the flow of the music." (Ibid.)*

Gioia attributes the high standard set by the Trio to their rapt commitment to listening to one another. He believes that "these three players did not worry about working out an arrangement beforehand, and that their foremost concern was with playing spontaneously and intensely in the moment, relating to each other and to the song, without tricks or artifice." (Ibid.)

In a May 27, 2013 interview with Jarrett on NPR's "All Things Considered", host Robert Siegel asks Jarrett what playing standards means to him. His response addresses what he believes to be the incomparability found with the "Great American Songbook" repertoire:

*"First of all, they are anything but standard by today's standards. They're exceptional. There was a period of time in American history where so many things came rushing in, especially in popular music. The people that were doing that were people who were actually good at writing melodies, for example." (Siegel 2013: <http://bit.ly/1K39HXI>)*

Jarrett's quote also reinforces Gioia's observation that the "Standards" Trio's uncanny interpretations of standard jazz repertoire were not reliant on any preconceived

arrangements; rather, their artistic outcomes relied solely on the intrinsic capability of each musician to listen to one another and synthesize their respective contributions into a collective genius. Paradoxically, the “Standards” Trio collectively capitalized on minimum preconceived structure to produce maximum unbiased innovation.

#### **6.4 Operational Philosophy**

Jarrett’s command at the top of this chapter: “Play like you think it’s going be the last time” – in a sense, the command *carpe diem* – represents his profound commitment to the moment (not only within the context of the “Standards” Trio, but to all of the music he has produced over his entire lifetime). In an interview published in the October 1981 issue of *East West Journal*, a thirty-six-year-old Jarrett explains his ideal condition is to play without any preconception whatsoever. He assures the magazine’s journalists that he is not implying he is God and can create greatness out of thin air, but when he is at his best, he believes he succeeds in doing exactly that.

*“That’s the ideal, to have no preconceived notion. I’m not saying that I’m God and can go out there and create from absolutely no idea to something great, but the best nights and the best parts I succeed in it.”* (Seaker, Lehnert and Shaw 1981: 40)

Gioia touches on the transition Jarrett began making in the early 1980s, from playing his own compositions, to playing the music of others – much of it Western European concert music – noting the variety of recordings he has made of music by Bartok, Shostakovich, Harrison, Hovhaness, Bach, Handel and Mozart. He notes: “The full range of the keyboard tradition was now apparently at his fingertips.” (Gioia in jazz.com blog 2008: <http://bit.ly/1fyQZdJ>) Gioia adds that Jarrett, who was absolutely capable of successfully crossing over genre-specific boundaries in a diversity of settings, is particularly unique in that there are very few classical pianists who have successfully traversed to become proficient jazz players. (Ibid.)

In a 1996 interview with Ted Rosenthal in the January/February 1997 issue of *Piano and Keyboard Magazine*, Jarrett chalks it up to simply not being able to juggle playing both

jazz and “classical” music as well as composing, at this point in his life, and if one thing had to go, it was composing.

*“At this moment in my life, as insane as two things are, three things are suicidal. If I had to take one thing out of the mix right now, what I took out was the composing. Both things that I do that seem so different, I’m approaching them as the player. So there’s the mysterious explanation for why standards (with the trio) and not originals.”* (Rosenthal in *Piano and Keyboard Magazine* 1997: <http://www.tedrosenthal.com/tr-kj.htm>)

Referring back to the first three recordings made by the “Standards” trio (*Standards Vol. 1*, *Standards Vol. 2*, and *Changes*), Nicholson asks Jarrett: “What was the ethos of the trio then, and how it has evolved?” Jarrett responds:

*“Well, interestingly, it evolved all by itself, as long as we keep the same principals just not possessing the music as though it’s ours and just going in as a player in a group. It evolved like that. It depends on the purity of Gary and Jack and I at that time, and that’s all it depends on, plus our health of course. But really the purity of intent.”* (Nicholson 2009: <http://bit.ly/1RCc5J8>)

In an article by Corinna da Fonseca-Wollheim in the January 29, 2009 issue of the *Wall Street Journal*, Jarrett explains the physiological result of playing an all-classical concert versus an all-improvised concert:

*“If you’re improvising and you finish a concert and you’re changed forever, that’s different from finishing any kind of classical concert, no matter how good. The reason you can’t be physically, cellularly changed is it did not come through you. The music was already there.”* (da Fonseca-Wollheim 2009: <http://on.wsj.com/1Odj1GX>)

In the interview with Iverson, Jarrett explains the process he believes one undertakes in developing a personal artistic “voice,” implying that one’s own voice is an inherent and indelible characteristic of oneself. He states that one’s personal stylistic laurels will never disappear, but that merely “resting on them,” is the key to mediocrity. His perspective is apparent in the unending unfolding of the new material comprising his life’s work.

*“What happens is, your voice isn’t going to go anywhere. But if you try to possess it, by playing only the things you like, forever, you will then sound like all these other guys who became stylists, and everybody knows how good they are, and you don’t expect any surprises, certainly no big surprises. You don’t expect to be confronted with a new reality. Because you think you know who these guys are. So voice is like personality. And then after you have this personality, what you want to do is get it out of there, in the sense of it being a conscious thing. Because you’re never gonna lose what you gained, but if you don’t take it further, you will just stagnate and you’ll be one of those guys that’s, well... “Remember how he sounded?” “Yeah, yeah, it was cool, it was good.” (Iverson 2009: <http://bit.ly/1HXCBWR>)*

Jarrett continues to describe the process he applies to improvising, emphasizing that his personal artistic fulfillment lies in the challenge he provides for himself. He likens the development of ideas to a biofeedback mechanism rather than to any sort of established personality or style, reflecting his devotion to the moment. Jarrett’s philosophy embodies the condition that, to paraphrase the philosopher Heraclitus (500 BCE), “one cannot step into the same river twice.” His work is an absolute reflection of the moment, and no two moments are exactly alike. Jarrett puts a twist on Heraclitus’s philosophy in the liner notes of his 1985 recording *Spirits*, noting that not only does one not step into the same river twice, one is also never the same when stepping into the river.

*“I cannot say what I think is right about music; I only know the ‘rightness’ of it. I know it when I hear it. There is a release, a flowing out, and a fullness to it that is not the same as richness or musicality. I can talk about it in this way because I do not feel that I created this music as much as I allowed it to emerge. It is this emergence that is inexplicable and incapable of being made solid, and I feel (or felt) as though not only do you never step in the same river twice, but you are never the same when stepping into the river.” (Jarrett 1985: Liner notes of *Spirits*)*

He reiterates the same line of thinking, emphasizing the importance of the context of the moment in his interview with Iverson in 2009:

*For me, if I don’t play something that doesn’t challenge my concept of what I liked before that second, something’s wrong. So what you do is you create a “cell,” let’s call it. And that cell is your voice. And then you want that cell to replicate in whatever direction it wants to per microsecond. And that’s when you expand it, and it becomes not a personality anymore, it becomes a biofeedback mechanism. Otherwise, what feedback do you get from playing what you like? “Okay, hey, I*

*really like that chord, I'm going to use that chord again.*" (Iverson 2009: <http://bit.ly/1HXCBWR>)

Jarrett's philosophy is consistent with that of Evans. In Part one of "Bill Evans – A Person I Knew" in the March 1985 edition of *Jazz Journal International*, author Brian Hennessey includes a quote by Evans reinforcing his operational philosophy as leader:

*"Naturally, as the lead voice, I might have shaped the performances, but I had no wish to be a dictator. If the music itself did not coax a response, I did not want one."* (*Jazz Journal International*, March 1985: <http://www.billevans.nl/Brian.htm>)

Perfectly aligned with Evans's operational philosophy as noted above, Jarrett likens the process of collective improvisation to "applying the solo gestalt to three people, and trying to lead, without being a leader." (Nicholson 2009: <http://bit.ly/1RCc5J8>)

Tenacity also factors into Jarrett's professional tenets. In an interview with musician, writer and editor Jon Regan on March 6, 2012, covering the release of his then new solo piano recording "Rio," recorded on April 9, 2011 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, Jarrett discusses the high value he places on his lifelong commitment to perseverance, recalling a pivotal moment from his youth:

*"When I was a kid, I said to my mother, 'Oh, this piece looks so hard. I don't think I can play this. And she said, 'Can you play the first note?' And I said, 'Yeah.' And she said, 'Can you play the second note?' And I said, 'Yeah.' And she said, 'Well, then you can play the piece.' And I think this is an affirmation of the fact that I have been working gradually and carefully, and without getting f\*\*\*ed up, being on drugs, or getting off the path long enough that I couldn't get back on again. It's an affirmation that if you do work on things, there is a result."* (Regan 2012: <http://bit.ly/1eQ9Gsn>)

Unlike both Cole and Evans who so often adhered to a preconceived road map – so much so, that they became part and parcel of certain tunes – Jarrett's arrangements of the "Great American Songbook" were created spontaneously. Gioia shares his belief that upon listening to older versions of the Trio's recordings that they relied on the moment itself rather than on a predetermined "road map" to guide them artistically:

*“What comes across in listening again to the these old trio records, after a quarter of a century has elapsed, is how much they are about listening, instead of just playing. I have the distinct impression that these three players did not worry about working out an arrangement beforehand, and that their foremost concern was with playing spontaneously and intensely in the moment, relating to each other and to the song, without tricks or artifice. Gioia 2008: <http://bit.ly/1fyQZdJ>”*

In an interview with Zbigniew Granat in the September 2003 issue of DownBeat magazine, Jarrett discusses the uncertainty that permeated his upcoming 2004 concert schedule with the “Standards” Trio indicative of his and the Trio’s allegiance to the moment:

*“I don’t know what’s going to happen,” he said, sitting in his study filled with CDs and sound equipment. “We don’t work like other bands. We don’t know what we are going to play. It’s always been the way I work.” DownBeat 2003: <http://bit.ly/1I3e6mG>”*

Unlike Evans, who completely avoided through-improvisation, Jarrett is well known for completely improvising entire concerts in both solo and trio formats. Among many, three benchmarks come to mind. His earliest through-improvised recording in the solo piano format *Facing You*, recorded on November 10, 1971), was also his first recording on Manfred Eicher’s up and coming label ECM. *The Koln Concert*, recorded four years later on January 24, 1975 in Koln, Germany ranks as his most popular completely improvised live solo piano recording. And within the trio format, the third studio recording of the “Standards” Trio, *Changes*, recorded on January 11-12, 1983 in New York was a through- improvised effort.

In the July/August 1985 issue of *Jazz Hot*, Jarrett makes an interesting comment regarding improvised music implying that ironically, the structure inherent in bebop, played an important role in informing the lack of structure inherent in improvised music: “I think that bebop, as well as the Avant Garde of the 1960s, were the two most important periods for improvised music... We are bringing to life the knowledge of another era, and making bebop contemporary.” (Carr 1991: 148)

A comparison of four of Jarrett renditions of “Autumn Leaves,” a standard that he played and recorded often, may be made for the purpose of shedding some light on the Trio’s seminal developments, including the conditions under which the group operated, and the extent to which freedom was manifested throughout various points of its existence.

Evidence proves that Jarrett took the democratic standard set by Evans to the next level – a condition that has been determined to be quantified both objectively – by the number and order of solos per member – and subjectively – by the particular operational philosophy each pianist embraced. That is, on the one hand, Evans, whose operational philosophy included the need for “restraint” – a pre-conceived structure to achieve ultimate creativity – bookended many tunes (including “Autumn Leaves” as noted in Chapter Five) with familiar introductions and endings; whereas on the other hand as evidenced here, Jarrett and his tunes “lived” in the moment.<sup>4</sup>

None of the versions of Jarrett’s renditions of “Autumn Leaves” here, which, in terms of a “road map,” resemble one another in the least. Just the most notable aspects of each version are identified here:

1. “Autumn Leaves” from *Still Live* recorded live at “Philharmonic Hall”, Munich, Germany, July 13, 1986 begins with no introduction whatsoever, features all three members and concludes with a vamp at the end which takes up 2’16” of the tune;
2. “Autumn Leaves” (Disc 3 from *At the Blue Note – The Complete Recordings* recorded live at the “Blue Note” in New York (1<sup>st</sup> set), June 4, 1994) is first of all, a remarkably 26’42” long. It begins with a 4’23” extended rubato improvisation based on the melodic motif found with the last 8 bars of the head and concludes with a vamp over a deceptive C7sus-C7 chord in the form of a piano and drum exchange that transitions into a drum solo which is 13’26” – half the length of the entire track! (This is a perfect example of Jarrett’s frequent use of a dominant

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<sup>4</sup> According to Lord, Powell, unfortunately, never recorded “Autumn Leaves.”

seventh sus4 chord in place of a minor chord as well as the extended vamp at the end of a tune as noted by LaVerne. (Keyboard 2012: <http://bit.ly/1HHaEik>)

3. “Autumn Leaves” from *Tokyo '96* (Recorded live in Tokyo, Japan, March 30, 1996) begins with an 8-bar introduction, features all three members and ends abruptly with the insertion of last 16 bars of “Speak Low,” referencing a completely different tune (!). Jarrett employed the abrupt ending consisting of a marcato (rather than a staccato) eighth note on the root of the tonic chord. LaVerne describes this ending as “a soft landing” and notes: “This surprising ending has a drama all its own—just like all of Keith Jarrett’s music!” (Keyboard 2012: <http://bit.ly/1HHaEik>)
4. “Autumn Leaves” from *Up For It* recorded live in Juan-les-Pins, France on July, 2002) serves as a drum feature with two full choruses plus a long solo under the concluding vamp (7’37”) over a completely unpredictable set of chord changes.

The distribution of solos within the Trio’s four versions<sup>5</sup> of “Autumn Leaves,” spanning the years between 1986 and 2009, provides insight into the extent of individual expression within this group. Unencumbered by pre-composed introductions, “hits” (accents) and/or tags, these versions of “Autumn Leaves” also speak to the expanse of freedom espoused by Jarrett.

Again, conclusions regarding the extent of individual expression manifested in each rendition of “Autumn Leaves” are drawn based on the formula:

$$\frac{\text{heads + solos / member}}{\text{total choruses}} = \text{individual expression}$$

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<sup>5</sup> Recordings are listed in chronological order. According to Lord, these are the only four “Standards” Trio recordings that include “Autumn Leaves” and all four recordings were made in a live setting.



Note: Introductions and tags are noted, but not factored into this equation based on their unpredictable and indeterminate nature.

**1. “Autumn Leaves” *Still Live* recorded live at “Philharmonic Hall”, Munich, Germany, July 13, 1986 10’24” (Note: approximately 34 seconds at the end of this track is devoted to audience applause)**

Form: 32-bar A-A1-B-C

Total choruses: 16

Introduction: none

Head in: Piano (In tempo)

First solo: Bass, 3 choruses

Second solo: Piano, 9 choruses (Note: The first chorus of his solo is incomplete. It should have begun at 2:08 but Jarrett omits A1 and starts his solo at B. The first complete chorus begins at 2’32”<sup>6</sup>)

Third solo: Drums, 2 choruses

Head out: Piano + vamp\*

Individual expression: Piano, 69%; Bass, 19%; Drums, 12%

\*Vamp: 1’38” of this tune is devoted to the vamp

**2. “Autumn Leaves” (Disc 3 from *At the Blue Note – The Complete Recordings* recorded live at the “Blue Note” in New York (1<sup>st</sup> set), June 4, 1994 26’42” (Note: approximately 33 seconds at the end of this track is devoted to audience applause)**

Form: 32-bar A-A1-B-C

Total choruses: 11

Introduction: Piano 4:23 (Extended improvisation on motif found with the last 8 bars rubato)

Head in: Piano, 1 chorus

First solo: 5 choruses

Second solo: Bass, 3 choruses

Third solo: Piano, 1 chorus (Transition to the head out)

Head out: Piano + vamp\*

Individual expression: Piano, 73%; Bass, 27%

\*Vamp: Piano and drum exchanges over variations of C7sus (Gm7) - C7 that transition into a drum solo. The vamp lasts for 13’26”

**3. “Autumn Leaves” *Tokyo ’96* (Recorded live in Tokyo, Japan, March 30, 1996) 7’59”**

Form: 32-bar A-A1-B-C

Total choruses: 12

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<sup>6</sup> The omission of A1 exemplifies the risk involved in improvisation at this level; but at the same time, it illustrates the deftness of Peacock who picks up on the omission without “dropping a beat.”

Introduction: Piano solo (8 bars, rubato at C)  
Head in: Piano, 2 choruses  
First solo: Piano, 6 choruses  
Second solo: Bass, 1 chorus  
Third solo: Drums 2 choruses (trades 8s)  
Head out: Piano at 6:49 + tag (in the form of the last 16 bars of “Speak Low” which ends abruptly)  
Individual expression: Piano, 75%; Bass, 8%; Drums, 17%

**4. “Autumn Leaves” *Up For It* recorded live in Juan-les-Pins, France, July, 2002) 16’58” (Note: approximately 1’31” at the end of this track is devoted to audience applause)**

Form: 32-bar A-A1-B-C  
Total choruses: 13  
Introduction: (last 8 bars rubato)  
Head in: Piano, 1 chorus  
First solo: Piano, 9 choruses  
Second solo: Drums, 2 choruses  
Head out: Piano, 1 chorus  
Individual expression: Piano, 85%; Drums, 15%  
Vamp: Piano and Drum exchanges for 7:37 (Variations of C7sus – C7 – Cm7 – C7; begins in bar 31 at 8:04 and concludes at 15:26)

### **6.5 Stylistic Traits**

Technique/Tone – The Keith Jarrett “Standards” Trio was formed in 1983, just three years after the death of Bill Evans. Heavily influenced by Evans’s sound, Jarrett states: “Bill Evans added beauty to the world of jazz with his commitment to touch, and jazz piano wasn’t the same anymore.” (Doerschuk 2001: V)

Regen plied Jarrett with questions pertaining to the approach he takes in eliciting such a remarkable tone both live and in the studio. Jarrett’s technique is a persistent mystery and his nontechnical reply here is not helpful in solving it. However, his response is very much along the lines of the approach Evans claims to take as discussed in the previous chapter. Jarrett says:

*“I just think that people don’t know how much they have to be in shape. Of course it has to do with listening, because otherwise how are you going to get to it? You have to be able to hear it and know that it’s something special, whatever it is. But the physical input of players is so lacking in commitment. Sometimes what you’re*

*hearing is just commitment to one note at a time in a long series of notes.”*  
(Regen 2012: <http://bit.ly/1eQ9Gsn>)

Jarrett asserts that it is first the act of listening, which is key to acquiring the tone he is able to draw out from the piano. He notes that what he believes people hear in his playing is the attention he pays to just one note at a time – and in fact, each and every note he plays manifests a tangible deliberateness. Jarrett goes on to address the care and lifetime commitment that go into creating his personal sound:

*“There is one more thing I wanted to say about your last question about how I get that sound on the piano, which is that people don’t jump in. Everybody wants to test the water, right? And if it’s too cold, they’re not going to go in. But there are times when the only way to know whether it’s too cold is to dive in. I see player after player sounding like all he did was check to make sure the water was comfortable enough. Kind of like, “Okay, now I know I can do that someday if I really feel like it.” It’s a lifetime commitment, and I don’t think most musicians think seriously enough. I just care about what comes out. It isn’t like I want to get my paycheck and leave.”* (Ibid.)

In response to Iverson’s question, Jarrett reiterates the importance of listening and matching what he hears, to the sound he plays.

**“EI:** *What about touch, and touching the piano?*

**KJ:** *What about it?*

**EI:** *You’re someone that gets a certain sound out of the piano. That’s your sound. No one else gets that sound, and I know it’s not the piano. It’s not like you have one special piano. You get that sound; it’s on your earliest records, on whatever instrument, I think even some uprights in some cases.*

**KJ:** *Forgetting the musical content for a moment, if a musician is working on his or her voice, he or she is trying to match what he hears in his head with what he hears when he plays. The only explanation for that difference in sound coming out of the piano is that. Otherwise, it couldn’t be consistent. It just couldn’t be consistent. Not with all the different kinds of touch I’ve been using, especially recently.”* (Iverson 2009: <http://bit.ly/1HXCBWR>)

Right-Hand, Single-Note Lines – LaVerne contends that Jarrett’s “single-note right hand lines are probably his best-known trademark.” (Keyboard 2012: <http://bit.ly/1HHaEik>)

His signature melodic approach over standard repertoire incorporates a combination of the blues (over both blues and non-blues-related progressions), the bebop language of Powell, and the diatonic simplicity of country, gospel and reggae. (Keyboard 2012: <http://bit.ly/1HHaEik>) His melodies are often grouped into clear-cut antecedent-consequent phrases. This fundamental call-and-response technique is often interrupted by flurries of rhythmically confounding through- improvised lines that seem to “come out of the blue.”

One example of Jarrett’s use of the blues scale (D minor) over a non-blues-related progression is evident in bars 93-94 of his solo over the jazz standard “Come Rain or Come Shine” from the 1986 recording, *Still Live*.<sup>7</sup> In contrast, bars 95-96 follow with clear reference to the bebop language and use of ornamentation including the upper diatonic and chromatic neighbors as well as surround tones (Fig. 6.1) (see examples of ornamentation in Glossary of Melodic Ornamentation in Appendix 2).



Fig. 6.1 The juxtaposition of blues and bebop languages in Jarrett’s solo over “Come Rain or Come Shine”

Another example of his use of the blues scale (F) over a non-blues-related progression is evident in bars 163-164 over “Four” from the 2001 recording, *My Foolish Heart*.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Come Rain or Come Shine

From ST. LOUIS WOMAN. Words by Johnny Mercer; Music by Harold Arlen  
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<sup>8</sup> Four

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Although it's just one “blue note” over just two bars, the Ab creates a striking effect because Jarrett plays it over an Fmaj7 chord in a context completely unrelated to a blues. His frequent use of the blues scale in non-blues contexts adds warmth and familiarity to the moment (Fig. 6.2).



Fig. 6.2 Jarrett’s use of the blues scale in his solo over “Four”

An example of his use of one of the most common melodic ornaments found in bebop – the lower chromatic-upper diatonic surround tone – is found in this line in bars 46-47 of his solo over “Four” from *My Foolish Heart* (Fig. 6.3).



Fig. 6.3 Jarrett’s use of the surround tone in his solo over “Four”

Antithetical to the single-note lines typical of bebop, Jarrett’s improvisation over standard chord progressions took what could be described as a “big picture” approach. That is, he often played diatonically, or *over* non-diatonic chord changes, highlighting the overall *key* of the passage rather than each individual *chord*. (One of the most common and simplest examples of this technique utilized in the jazz oeuvre is found in the 12-bar blues form in which, very generally, the improvised line consists of just a single blues scale over an entire substitution-filled 12-bar blues progression. For example, the six-note F blues scale (descending) – F, Eb, C, Cb, Bb, Ab, F – could be played over the following conventional 12-bar blues progression:

|| F7 | Bb7 | F7 | Cm7 F7 | Bb7 | Bb7 | F7 Bb7 | Am7 D7 | Gm7 | C7 | F7 D7 | Gm7 C7 ||

Fig. 6.4 A conventional 12-bar blues progression

This one scale serves as the “glue” that binds all twelve bars together, implying just one key: F.) As illustrated in “Come Rain or Come Shine” above, Jarrett took the blues scale a step further, often applying it to other progressions such as the conventional iim7-V7-Imaj7 or Imaj7-vim7-iim7-V7 progressions.

Defying bebop conventions, his solos over these progressions were often exceptionally diatonic in nature. Paradoxically, coming from the melodic complexity of a Powell and/or an Evans who so often “played on the changes,” Jarrett’s “simple” diatonic approach to play “over the changes” produced a complexity all its own. Jarrett’s approach built tension and added excitement to the moment based on the clash (dissonance) that occurred between the diatonic scale and the often-altered underlying harmony.

One example of Jarrett’s particularly diatonic leaning (i.e., the use of unaltered/unornamented melodic lines) is found in his solo over Gerry Mulligan’s tune “Five Brothers” from *The Out of Towners*. The last A section of the first chorus of his solo consists solely of notes in the C major scale (Fig. 6.5). This tendency runs throughout his entire solo (including over non-diatonic harmony) over this tune. (See complete transcription of Jarrett’s solo over “Five Brothers” in Appendix 12.)<sup>9</sup>

Fig. 6.5 Jarrett’s use of the diatonic scale in his solo over “Five Brothers”

<sup>9</sup> The writer’s transcription of “Five Brothers” represents an average of the composer’s actual performance and what is believed to be his intention.

Interestingly, in addition to melodically “summing up” the key, Jarrett also quite drastically simplifies the chord progression in the bridge. Mulligan’s version includes tonicizations to four different keys, each moving down by half step; Jarrett’s version includes just two, the second moving down by a half step, condensing the number of tonicizations down into a “bigger picture” approach. In a sense, Jarrett’s focus on the overall key rather than on each chord (along with his diatonic approach to soloing) contemporized the bebop proclivity toward the more chord changes, the better. Note Mulligan’s original bridge, followed by Jarrett’s harmonically abbreviated rendition (Fig. 6.6 and 6.7):

2.  $\overbrace{\text{Dm}^7 \text{Db}^7 \text{C}^7 \text{B}^7}^{\text{E}}$   $\overbrace{\text{B} \text{E}^{\text{maj}7} \text{Fm}^7 \text{Bb}^7 \text{Eb}^{\text{maj}7}}^{\text{Eb}}$   $\overbrace{\text{Em}^7 \text{A}^7 \text{D}^{\text{maj}7}}^{\text{D}}$   $\overbrace{\text{Ebm}^7 \text{Ab}^7 \text{Db}^{\text{maj}7}}^{\text{Db}}$   $\overbrace{\text{Dm}^7 \text{Db}^7}^{\text{C}}$

Fig. 6.6 Mulligan’s bridge with tonicizations to the keys of D, Db, D and Db

2.  $\overbrace{\text{Dm}^7 \text{Db}^7 \text{C}^7 \text{B}^7}^{\text{E}}$   $\overbrace{\text{B} \text{E}^{\text{maj}7} \text{F}\sharp\text{m}^7 \text{B}^7 \text{E}^{\text{maj}7} \text{Fm}^7 \text{Bb}^7 \text{Eb}^{\text{maj}7} \text{Fm}^7 \text{Bb}^7 \text{Eb}^{\text{maj}7}}^{\text{Eb}}$   $\overbrace{\text{Dm}^7 \text{Db}^7}^{\text{C}}$

Fig. 6.7 Jarrett’s bridge with tonicizations to E and Eb

Jarrett’s reharmonization of the bridge necessitated writing a completely different melody. Compare Mulligan’s melody in Fig. 6.8 with Jarrett’s rewrite in Fig. 6.9:

$\text{B}^7$   $\overbrace{\text{B} \text{E}^{\text{maj}7} \text{Fm}^7 \text{Bb}^7 \text{Eb}^{\text{maj}7} \text{Em}^7 \text{A}^7}$

$\text{Dm}^{\text{aj}7}$   $\text{Eb}^{\text{m}7}$   $\text{Ab}^7$   $\text{Db}^{\text{maj}7}$   $\text{Dm}^7$   $\text{Db}^7$

Fig. 6.8 Mulligan’s original bridge of “Five Brothers”

The image shows two staves of musical notation in 4/4 time. The first staff contains measures 1 through 4. Above the notes are the following chords: B7, B7, F#m7, B7, Emaj7, Fm7, and Bb7. The second staff contains measures 5 through 8. Above the notes are the following chords: Ebmaj7, Fm7, Bb7, Ebmaj7, a triplet of eighth notes, Dm7, and G7.

Fig. 6.9 Jarrett’s revised bridge of “Five Brothers”

(For purposes of comparison, Mulligan’s head (per the Real Book Volume II) and a transcription of Jarrett’s interpretation of it (per the recording *The Out of Towners*) are included in Appendix 9 and 10 respectively.)

Another of Jarrett’s solo signature trademarks within the context of the trio is to begin a single-note right-hand line sans left-hand “comp” chords. This technique, which often lasts for long stretches of time, is evidenced early on in the trio format. For example, in the first chorus of “Everything I Love” (*Life Between the Exit Signs*), his left hand lays out for most of the first sixteen bars of his solo after which it begins to sprinkle a few single notes in here and there for the next sixteen bars. His left hand finally joins in, in full force, right before the beginning of the second chorus, building the momentum of the solo. Another later example of this technique is heard in the first chorus of “The Song is You” (*Still Live*), and yet another occurs in the first sixteen bars of his solo over “Five Brothers” (*The Out of Towners*). This technique is successful for two reasons: first, Jarrett’s adeptly crafted single-note lines so clearly imply the underlying harmony that they are absolutely capable of standing on their own without any stated harmonic underpinning; second, the absence of harmonic support at the beginning of a solo creates textural “headroom,” which generates even greater excitement when his left hand finally enters.

As mentioned in Chapter Three, Jarrett, like Cole, incorporates quotes into his single-note solos. One example of his use of this technique can be heard in his rendition of Clifford Brown’s 12-bar blues “Sandu” from the 1999 “Standards” Trio album *Whisper Not*. None



of these quotes are from familiar tunes let alone are among the conventional phrases musicians use when quoting. Two quotes, the most obscure, are taken from an April 27, 1966 recording made by the Modern Jazz Quartet titled *Jazz at Carnegie Hall*. The other, from Miles Davis's composition, "Four." Specifically, Jarrett quotes pianist John Lewis on "Blues Milanese" (at 4:23 on "Blues Milanese" and 1:10 on "Sandu"); vibraphonist Milt Jackson on "Bag's Groove" (at 3:13 on "Bag's Groove" and 2:04 on "Sandu") and Miles Davis's composition, "Four" (2:25 on "Sandu").

Rhythmically, Jarrett's approaches to soloing range from playing in-the-pocket swinging and straight eighth-note lines to outbursts of triplets and sixteenth notes precisely aligned with the pulse. Additionally, in line with his personal mission to attain complete freedom – in this case from his strict obligation to the pulse – one of Jarrett's most striking signature traits is manifested in his organic approach to playing "over the time." This technique that, on the one hand, subjectively evokes warmth in a ballad – such as in his renditions of "When I Fall in Love" – and daredevil excitement in medium tempo swing tunes – such as in "Stella By Starlight" from the 1985 recording *Standards, Live* – on the other, objectively confounds analysts who attempt to capture his intention on paper. Unlike Evans, whose various approaches to any form of rhythmic displacement were executed in reference to the pulse and therefore capturable via standard rhythmic notation, Jarrett's melodic lines are often rhythmically intangible; they have minds of their own, seemingly with no regard for the pulse as a point of reference. The only way to access the enigmatic beauty of Jarrett's solos in any context is to listen to them live or in recordings, for there is no way standard notation can accurately convey the "floaty" rhythmic effect Jarrett achieves. Saxophonist and jazz educator Dave Liebman discusses this technique, referring to it as playing "over the time." Liebman implies that, in his opinion, the ability to play "over the time" demonstrates the ultimate in rhythmic independence between mind and body.

*"A more abstract concept very much demonstrated by Eric Dolphy, Ornette Coleman and John Coltrane at various periods is what I term over the time. This means that for small episodic passages the improviser creates a sense of being out of time without an obvious reference point. Usually these are fast noted*

*passages and wild sounding in texture, but the effect is of the improviser freeing himself from the ongoing pulse like a bird in flight, quickly returning with a vengeance to earth, or in other words completely swinging in time. The ability to do this gracefully is one of the highest forms of time playing in my opinion. To be free but to know where you are at the same time is magical. It is the equivalent of playing truly chromatically, meaning in another key but with an underlying reference to the home key center.”* (Liebman 2015: <http://bit.ly/1I4F3Y8>)

Voice-Leading and Division of Role in the Right and Left Hand – Iverson asks Jarrett whether or not the projected similarity between himself and Evans has to do with their respective particular attention to voice-leading. Jarrett responds:

*“Voice-leading is melody-writing in the center of the harmony. If you can do it, you’re lucky enough to get to a moment where you can actually find more than one thing happening and trace those things at the same time to a logical next place... or illogical place – really it doesn’t matter sometimes!”* (Iverson 2009: <http://bit.ly/1HXCBWR>)

Jarrett discusses the division of role in his left and right hands, making the critical point that, unlike what often happens in jazz piano where the right hand takes the brunt of the work, both hands should be contributing at all times.

*“It’s so different than what people think when they look at a lead sheet and build those blocks the way you learn harmony. They can’t get away from this structure of vertical playing with your left hand and then if you’re lucky, maybe a good idea in your right.”* (Ibid.)

Jarrett attributed his independence of the hands and ability to voice-lead to his training as a classical player as he explains here:

*“But the thing is, partly because I was trained as a classical player, I believe your hands aren’t supposed to have one be dead and one be alive. The longer I’m around, the more I realize that, especially when I have a great bio-feedback mechanism happening with the audience playing solo: There’s no way I can avoid hearing what I’m not doing with my left hand. I’m not doing what could be done. So most of the time, recently, I’m asking my left hand to tell me what it wants to do. Because usually it’s right, and my brain is just locked into some sound that I like, or worse, that I used to like.”* (Ibid.)

There is no better example of Jarrett’s ability to voice lead than in his introduction to “Come Rain or Come Shine” from *Still Live*, recorded on July 13, 1986 in Munich Germany. (See Terefenko’s transcription in Appendix 12.) In *Keith Jarrett’s Transformation of Standard Tunes*, author and jazz pianist Dariusz Terefenko points out Jarrett’s mastery of voice leading evidenced in his extended introductions within the context of the “Standards” Trio:

*“Jarrett’s solo introductions to jazz standards comprise a memorable aspect of his work with the “Standards” trio. Full of harmonic surprises and unexpected melodic turns, these lengthy beginnings exhibit an attractive formal design supported by a masterful handling of harmony and counterpoint.”* (Terefenko 2009: 268)

“Comping” Patterns – In addition to incorporating the standard left-hand comp pattern on beat one and the “and” of beat two (the standard “Charleston” “comp” pattern in Fig. 6.10) Jarrett’s left hand often emulated the pattern (often used by Red Garland in Fig. 6.11) which anticipates both beat one and beat three. Jarrett’s placement of “comp” chords on all off beats (the “and” of beat four and the “and” of beat two) created tension and set up a forward moving groove that created excitement. Both of these rhythms can be heard throughout Jarrett’s solo over “Four” from *My Foolish Heart*.



Fig. 6.10 The standard “Charleston” “comp” pattern



Fig. 6.11 A “comp” pattern in the style of Red Garland

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, Jarrett also incorporated another completely revolutionary left-hand “comp” pattern into his medium tempo jazz tunes. The Latin American originated one-bar rhythmic pattern is derived from a familiar

merengue conga pattern, consisting of swinging eighth notes on beat two and the “and” of beat two, and beat four and the “and” of beat four. Mauleon defines this conga pattern adopted by Jarrett’s left hand as follows: “The *conga* (or high drum) plays a pattern which accentuates beats 2 and 2+, 4 and 4+, alternating between slaps (S) on 2 and 2+, and open tones (O) on 4 and 4+.” (Mauleon 1993: Kindle Location 1062) Emphasis on the up beats – either beat two and the “and” of beat two, beat four and the “and” of beat four (incomplete merengue patterns), or both (a complete merengue pattern) – create a deep swinging groove (Fig. 6.12).

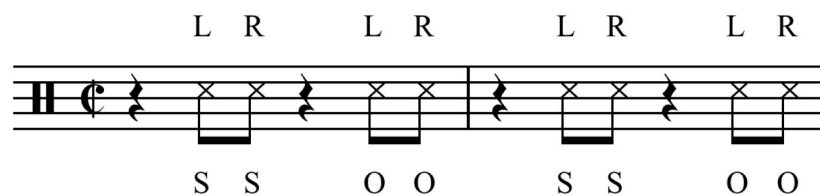


Fig. 6.12 Merengue conga pattern

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, Jarrett had a lifelong penchant for playing the drums, one that is manifested in his left-hand “comping” patterns in the context of the “Standards” Trio. Examples of incomplete merengue comp patterns are found in the first chorus of Jarrett’s solo on “Autumn Leaves” (*Tokyo '96 (Live)*) in the following places just to name several: beat four and the “and” of beat four in bars 5 and 11; beat 2 and the “and” of beat two in bar 19; beat four and the “and” of beat four in bar 21

There is no better example of Jarrett’s extensive use of the complete merengue conga pattern (eighth notes on beat 2 and the “and” of beat two, and beat four and the “and” of beat four) than throughout his solo over “Five Brothers” from *The Out of Towners*. This pattern can be heard in Jarrett’s left hand in bars five and six of the B section of the second chorus of his solo.

Use of the Vamp/Ostinato – Jarrett often concluded a tune with an extended vamp or ostinato, a device that consists of an open-ended repeated phrase. Jarrett’s vamps transitioned into elaborate codas – vignettes in their own right – which served as an

opportunity for exchanges between drummer DeJohnette and himself as well as a vehicle to feature DeJohnette specifically, as exemplified by the endings in the 1986, 1994 and 2002 versions of “Autumn Leaves” as detailed later in this chapter.

Body Language and Verbal Outpouring – Jarrett is well known for his unique physical idiosyncrasies, ecstatic-like outcries and reprimanding verbal outbursts reprimanding his audiences – all which have become quite controversial (but in this writer’s opinion, pale in comparison to his incomparable artistic gifts). Idiosyncratic body language is not unique to Jarrett as exemplified in both of his two modern jazz piano trio predecessors, Powell and Evans.

Powell displayed distinct physical and verbal mannerisms at the keyboard as detailed by Groves and Shipton In *The Glass Enclosure: The Life of Bud Powell*:

*“He would generally sit slightly sideways at the keyboard (a trait which became more evident during the Paris years on account of his increasing girth). His right leg would be twisted out, his foot stabbing the floor. His trouser legs had a tendency to ride up over his calves, and he would hunch his shoulders, giving a sense to the onlooker of his great physical involvement in the music. (Groves and Shipton 1993: 43)*

Groves and Shipton also describe Powell’s “guttural grunting and heavy breathing which accompanied his playing,” as well as distorted facial expressions, which escalated over time:

*“This can be heard on many of his recordings from all periods, and a sense of the facial mannerisms which went with this can be gleaned from photographs which show his upper lip drawn high over his front teeth, and his features contorted.” (Groves and Shipton 1993: 43-44)*

And then there was Evans, who sat hunched over the piano keys looking quite introverted and at times, strung out. Writer Andrew J. Whitman notes in his article “Listening to My Life: Bill Evans, The Quiet Pursuit of Beauty,” that “Bill Evans changed the face of jazz.” Evans’s introverted idiosyncrasies are completely opposite of the extroverted mannerisms of Powell and Jarrett:

*“But in typical self-effacing fashion, he did it quietly and unassumingly, presiding over a musical revolution characterized by gentleness and lyrical romanticism rather than bombast and self-promotion. His many innovative contributions whisper rather than scream and are cloaked in understated beauty.*

*Besppectated and painfully shy, torn by the self-doubts and insecurities that eventually led to decades of heroin addiction, Bill Evans played the piano as if he were trying to tame a fearsome beast. In his typical concert pose—hunched over the keys, head bowed low—he looked more like a humble supplicant than a star.”* (Whitman 2006: <http://bit.ly/1LbSlZe>)

Carr notes: “Jarrett’s mannerisms at the piano and his vocal noises when he plays seem to skeptics to be part and parcel of his apparent cockiness.” (Carr 1991: 190) He cites that “Litweiler, writing in the early 1980s, gives what had become by then the cliché view of this aspect of Jarrett, referring to ‘...his autoerotic groans, sighs, grunts, and moans as he leaps from his chair to thrust his pelvis at the keyboard while he plays...’” (Ibid.) Carr contends that “Self-consciousness is the enemy of inspired improvisation, and it is certain that Jarrett would aim to be oblivious of the self while making music.” (Ibid.) Given that Jarrett’s attention is one hundred percent focused on “inspired improvisation,” the extreme physical and verbal eccentricities he manifests in performance can only exist as subconscious disinterested affects. DeJohnette could have the best possible explanation: he chalks it up to Jarrett’s love affair with the piano. (Ibid.)

Dan Ouellette provides his personal take on Jarrett’s visual appearance in a video of the Tokyo ‘96 concert:

*“One of jazz’s most athletic pianists, Jarrett’s concerts are unforgettable visual experiences. The video captures him soaring in ecstasy, restlessly throwing his entire body into improvisational torrents. In sync with the music, he stands, he crouches, bends his knees, tucks his head close to the keys, swivels his hips and sprawls elastically across the keyboard.”* (Ouellette 1999: <http://bit.ly/1MMuuw6>)

In the summer of 2014, during a casual conversation with jazz pianist Benny Green, the writer broached the subject of democratic tendency within the context of the jazz piano trio, in particular as it applied to the Evans and Jarrett trios. Green’s hands down opinion

was that Evans “won” by a significant margin – but not based on Evans’s generosity with his distribution of solos, but rather on Jarrett’s obnoxious attention-getting mechanisms that superseded any number of solos Jarrett had doled out to his sidemen. Green’s view – that it was all about Jarrett – represents a novel take on quantifying democracy within the context of the jazz piano trio.

Jarrett’s rationale for his eccentric body language and verbal outpouring is expressed numerous times over the course of his professional career. In a 1996 interview with Ted Rosenthal, Jarrett explains the process that elicits his singing:

*“Well I think the singing comes from the fact that the subject matter is being dictated to me and I have to quickly “transcribe” it and then decide how to play it and in what dynamic and which finger and all that, so it's an explosive process.”*

In the Forward of Doerschuk’s 88 – *The Giants of Jazz Piano*, Jarrett responds to what is often perceived as his having a love affair with the piano when he plays. Like Evans, his objective is to get the instrument to sing as he notes here:

*“The truth is that it is a wrestling match. The piano is so stiff and unbending in essence that it takes all my effort to get it to sing. (Doerschuk 2001: VI)*

Doerschuk asks Jarrett about whether or not his physical movements are his attempt to elicit a more organic sound from the instrument. Jarrett notes that he has never developed any kind of formal philosophy around it, but jokes: “Everybody else does that for me.” (Doerschuk 2001: 266) He acknowledges that his movements are not in any way connected with show in that they are there both in live as well as studio performances and recordings.

In 2009 Jarrett attributed it to “struggle” as noted by da Fonseca-Wollheim:

*“Many have written -- and complained -- about his physical relationship with his instrument, the tortured positions he gets into while playing, and the moans and groans that escape him. But Mr. Jarrett says that what some see as an almost sexual relationship with the piano is really one marked by struggle.”*

Jarrett's response addresses his objective to draw out a particular sound from the instrument, (noting that – like Evans – eliciting a vocal quality is one of the important objectives) and that all of the contortions he makes are an effort to “fool” the piano into sounding like something other than what it is: a piano.

*"I'm never trying to get it to sound just like a piano. I'm trying to find every possible way to make it either a voice or an instrument that is unlike a Western instrument. You know, it can't be a guitar but I wish it was; it can't be an orchestra but I wish it was. So the rebellion that I'm faced with immediately upon sitting down at a piano is that it is a piano. And I can turn cartwheels -- it's not going to make any difference. But what I can do is try to almost fool the instrument into becoming something else."* (da Fonseca-Wollheim 2009: <http://on.wsj.com/1Odj1GX>)

Asked yet again to explain the reason behind the vocal outpourings that have always characterized his performances, a now 70-year old Jarrett tells NPR's Rachel Martin that his vocalizations are always involuntary. Martin questions the emotional catalyst behind the outbursts; Jarrett's explanation describes his state of mind and adds that the vocalizations most often occur in the spaces between phrases.

*"It's potential limitlessness that I'm feeling at that moment. If you think about it, it's often in a space between phrases, [when I'm thinking,] "How did I get to this point where I feel so full?" And if you felt full of some sort of emotion you would have to make a sound. So that's actually what it is — with the trio, without the trio, solo. Luckily for me, I don't do it with classical music."* (Martin 2015: <http://n.pr/1lrBkbS>)

Extended Introductions and Endings – Taking Evans's solo piano introductions – usually based distinctly on the form or a section of the form of the tune – a step further, Jarrett begins many tunes with extended, through-improvised rubato introductions based on the tune's most prominent motifs rather than on any particular section of the form. Terefenko describes Jarrett's approach as an exploration of “the apparent duality between free fantasy and the tune's cantus firmus.” (Terefenko 2009: 291) Terefenko's quote above also supports Jarrett's solo introductions to jazz standards as one of the Standard Trio's high points. An example that is the epitome of Jarrett's commanding ability to improvise



extended introductions over the essence of a tune is heard in “Come Rain or Come Shine” (see Terefenko’s transcription in Appendix 13). Here, Jarrett improvises a “free fantasy” based on composer Harold Arlen’s cantus firmus for the duration of 2’38” before stating the “head in.” Not including the audience applause at the end of the performance, the overall duration of this tune is 9’55”; the introduction comprises 26% of this track!

Unlike Evans’s frequent use of an arranged tag in his endings, Jarrett substitutes one of two devices: the vamp and/or the abrupt ending (what LaVerne calls a “soft landing” (Keyboard 2012: <http://bit.ly/1HHaEik>)) – both, which create a dramatic effect, albeit via two completely opposite mechanisms.

Examples of the use of the vamp – often over a pedal – are heard in many of Jarrett’s “Standards” Trio recordings. In fact, he incorporates a long vamp consisting of the D natural minor scale over a D pedal at the end of “The Meaning of the Blues,” in the Trio’s very first recording. The length of this track is 9’23”; the ending is 1’46”, almost 19% of the entire tune.

One example incorporating the technique of the “soft landing” is heard on “All of You” from the 1995 recording *Standards in Norway*. Here Jarrett has the opportunity to extend the iim7-V7-iiim7-V7 tag beginning at bar twenty-nine, ad infinitum, a technique often employed at the end of many jazz standards, but chooses instead to add just two additional bars of the iim7-V7, ending uncommonly sooner than later on the root of the tonic chord.

## **6.6 Individuality and Division of Role**

As evidenced in the “Standard” Trio’s first recording, *Standards, Vol. 1*, the rhythmic, melodic and harmonic complexity imbued in every track soared to a level previously unheard of in the jazz piano trio format under the inspired tutelage of Jarrett. As with Evans and the sidemen in his various collectives, Jarrett, Peacock and DeJohnette were equally matched. Each took on roles of both soloist and accompanist (as depicted by the graphic at the top of this chapter).

Jarrett took the democratic concept pioneered by Evans to a new level – one that can be measured both qualitatively and quantitatively. That is, in addition to his generosity with providing his sidemen with ample opportunities to solo, Jarrett extended Evans’s operational philosophy by eliminating any pre-conceived road maps within the Trio’s repertoire. Contrary to Evans’s admitted dependency on this particular aspect of “restraint,” the lack of arranged introductions, endings or solo order was *more* rather than less inspiring to the Jarrett collective. Jarrett’s live-in-the-moment modus operandi created an environment that promoted an unprecedented depth of individual expression. Peacock describes his first mind-blowing experience in the recording studio with the “Standards” Trio, implying that for him, Jarrett’s artistic depth exceeded even that of Evans:

*“For me, the only other pianist of note who had impacted on me that forcefully playing standards was Bill Evans – the work I did with Bill. And after that I’d worked with other pianists who played standards – they played very well...I played with very talented players, but they never...There was a depth that Bill played that made just about anybody else playing standards pale into the background. Then when we started playing standards on this date it was, like...talk about depth...Whew! So it opens a whole other level of experience, which made it like: Yes, I’ll endorse this absolutely. It was incredible!” (Carr 1991: 145)*

The Jarrett unit is a phenomenon, a nonpareil embodying collective jazz improvisation and individual self-expression at an unprecedented level inspired by an artist who eschews pre-conceived arrangements, repetition and/or cliché. Simultaneously referencing Powell and Evans in both interviews and recordings, the Trio transformed a body of standard jazz repertoire into one-of-a-kind works of art for thirty-one years.

***Life Between the Exit Signs*** – Before examining *Standards, Vol. 1*, the Jarrett-Peacock-DeJohnette “Standard” Trio’s first recording, it is important to gain a sense of style and individual expression manifested in Jarrett’s earliest recorded work as a leader, *Life Between the Exit Signs*, recorded on May 4, 1967 in New York City. Only twenty-two years old when he recorded this album, *Life Between the Exit Signs* clearly manifested

signs of the multi-faceted Jarrett to come. A brief examination of the only standard on this recording, Cole Porter's "Everything I Love," provides evidence of Jarrett's stylistic traits as well as individual expression within the context of the trio.

The trio begins "Everything I Love" "right on it" with no introduction whatsoever. There is a three-way conversation among Jarrett, Haden and Motian, but compared with the first recording the "Standards" Trio would make fifteen years later, the group sounds disjointed and unsettled, almost as though they are trying too hard to emulate Evans's approach of facilitating a level playing field. Carr purports that the extent of group interplay that occurred in *Life Between the Exit Signs* was even greater than that in Evans's trios: "At least two of the pieces 'Margot' in waltz time and the ballad 'Love No. 1', sound like homages to Bill Evans, but both have bravura flashes of pure Jarrett – tumultuous phrases twisting freely around the pulse – and already there are signs of even more group interplay than was usual in the Bill Evans Trio." (Carr 1991: 42) This is in big part because there is no point in this tune at which Haden or Motian establish any kind of distinct rhythmic groove – even when Jarrett's phrasing obviously summons them to do so at the top of the second chorus of his solo. Nevertheless, Jarrett continues to play two more choruses amidst the fits and starts of Haden and Motian.

Jarrett's long, primarily single-note solo – absent of left-hand "comp" chords at the beginning as mentioned above – clearly reflects the changes, but it is rhythmically unpredictable, true Jarrett-style. Haden is given two choruses of solos; although Motian is given no time to solo per se, his constant busyness throughout this tune gave him ample room for individual expression.

Jarrett's characteristic vocal outbursts are audible early on in his solo and in contrast with his extended endings to come, the ending on this tune takes the form a brief tag, which dribbles to a somewhat musically disorganized end.

As noted below, Jarrett demonstrates a generosity with solos on this track, taking the first three choruses, then allowing Haden the next two. Again, conclusions regarding the extent of individual expression on this tune are drawn based on the formula:

$$\frac{\text{heads} + \text{solos} / \text{member}}{\text{total choruses}} = \text{individual expression}$$

Note: Introductions and tags are noted but not factored into this equation based on their unpredictable and indeterminate nature.

**“Everything I Love” (Music: Porter) from *Life Between the Exit Signs* recorded May 4, 1967 with Charlie Haden and Paul Motian) 4’ 33”**

Form: 32-bar A-B-A-C

Total choruses: 7

Introduction: None

Head in: Piano

First solo: Piano, 3 choruses

Second solo: Bass 2

Head out: Piano + tag

Individual expression: Piano: 71%; Bass, 29%

***Standards, Vol. 1*** – The following selections appear on Jarrett’s first recording with the “Standards” Trio, *Standards, Vol. 1*, recorded on January 11-12th in New York City. The number of solos given to bassist Peacock and drummer DeJonette is indicative that Jarrett is continuing to follow in Evans’ democratic footsteps. However, on the Trio’s first effort, bassist Peacock is relegated to soloing *second* on every track. Solos in selections of this recording are distributed as follows.

Note: Conclusions regarding the extent of individual expression on this recording are drawn based on the formula:

$$\frac{\text{heads} + \text{solos} / \text{member}}{\text{total choruses}} = \text{individual expression}$$

Note: Introductions and tags are noted but not factored into this equation based on their unpredictable indeterminate nature.

***Standards, Vol. 1* (Recorded January 11-12, 1983 with bassist Gary Peacock and drummer Jack DeJohnette)**

**1. “Meaning of the Blues” (Music: Bobby Troup; lyrics: Leah Worth) 9’ 23”**

Form: 32-bar A-B-A-C  
Total choruses: 3.25  
Introduction: 8 bars A  
Head in: Piano  
First solo: Piano, 1 chorus  
Second solo: Bass, 1 chorus  
Head out: Piano, last A + tag (vamp)  
Individual expression: Piano: 75%; Bass, 25%

**2. “All the Things You Are” (Music: Jerome Kern; Lyrics: Oscar Hammerstein) 7’ 45”**

Form: 36-bar A-A-B-A with a 4-bar extension  
Total choruses: 13  
Introduction: Piano B-A  
Head in: Piano  
First solo: Piano, 8 choruses  
Second solo, Bass, 3 choruses  
Head out: Piano  
Individual expression: Piano, 77%; Bass, 23%

**3. “It Never Entered My Mind” (Music: Richard Rodgers; lyrics: Lorenz Hart) 6’ 43”**

Form: 34-bar A-A-B-A with a 2-bar extension  
Total choruses: 4  
Introduction: None  
Head in: Piano  
First solo: Piano, 1 chorus  
Second solo: Bass, 1 chorus  
Head out: Piano (Last A) + tag  
Individual expression: Piano, 69%; Bass, 31%

**4. “(I’m Afraid) The Masquerade Is Over” (Music: Allie Wrubel; lyrics: Herb Magidson) 5’ 58”**

Form: 56-bar A(16)-A(16)-B(8)-A(16)  
Total choruses: 5  
Introduction: Piano B  
Head in: Piano  
First solo: Piano, 2 choruses  
Second solo: Bass, 1 chorus  
Head out: Piano  
Individual expression: Piano, 80%; Bass, 20%

**5. “God Bless the Child” (Music: Arthur Herzog, Jr.; Lyrics: Billie Holiday) 15’ 33”**  
**Note: The form is not strictly adhered to on this tune, making it difficult to accurately quantify individual expression. Individual expression listed here is approximated.**

Form: 38-bar A(10)-A(10)-B(8)-A(10)  
Total choruses: 5 (including the drum solo)  
Introduction: 4 bars  
Piano: Head in  
First solo: Piano, 1 chorus  
Second solo: Bass, 1 chorus  
Transition to third solo: All, a 12-bar vamp  
Third solo: Drums, a vamp for 2’ 11”  
Piano: Head out  
Vamp: piano and bass call and response for 3’ 47”  
Individual expression (approximate): Piano, 60% Bass, 20%; Drums, 20%

As first mentioned in Chapter One, in 1947, an 18-year old Bill Evans set a precedent with regard to egalitarianism and role, granting his bassist the *first* solo on the first track of his first trio recording. Despite the fact that bassist Peacock is not heard in that exalted place in any of the tracks on Jarrett’s first “Standards” Trio recording, he does have the opportunity to take a significant number of solos on *every* track of this benchmark recording. Drummer DeJohnette is given only one solo, which appears on “God Bless the Child”, the last track of the recording. All in all, compared with Evans in terms of numbers of solos per member, Jarrett’s generosity is more than less in line with that of Evans. However, Jarrett’s lack of preconceived arrangements gives him the edge with regard to aggregate individual expression.

The following tunes quantify individual expression within selected recorded work by the Trio spanning all three decades from 1986-2009 (which Lord cites as the Trio's last published recording to date).

***Still Live (Recorded July 13, 1986)***

“When I Fall in Love” (Music: Victor Young; Lyrics: Edward Heyman) 8’ 23”

Form: 32-bar A-B-A-C

Total choruses: 3

Introduction: None

Head in: Piano

First solo: Piano, 1 chorus

Second solo: Bass, A-B

Head out: Piano A-C + tag

Individual expression: Piano: 83%; Bass, 17%

***Standards in Norway (Recorded October 7, 1989)***

“All of You” (Music: Cole Porter; Lyrics: Cole Porter) 8’ 17”

Form: 32-bar A-B-A-C

Total choruses: 11

Introduction: None

Head in: Piano, 2 choruses

First solo: Bass, 1 chorus

Second solo: Piano 5

Third solo: Drums, 2 choruses (trades 8s)

Head out: Piano, 1 chorus + tag

Individual expression: Piano: 73%; Bass, 9%; Drums, 18%

***Whisper Not (Recorded July 5, 1999)***

“Sandu” (Music: Clifford Brown) 7’ 27”

Form: 12-bar blues

Total choruses: 23

Introduction: None

Head in: Piano, 2 choruses

First solo: Piano, 16

Second solo: Bass, 3 choruses

Head out: Piano, 2 choruses

Individual expression: Piano: 87%; Bass, 13%

***My Foolish Heart (Recorded July 22, 2001)***

“Four” (Music: Miles Davis) 9’ 10”

Form: A-A1 32 bars  
Total choruses: 14  
Introduction: None  
Head in: Piano  
First solo: Piano, 8 choruses  
Second solo: Bass, 2 choruses  
Third solo: Drums, 2 choruses (trades 8s)  
Head out: Piano  
Individual expression: Piano, 71%; Bass, 14.5%; Drums, 14.5%

***The Out of Towners* (Recorded July 28, 2001)**

“Five Brothers” (Music: Gerry Mulligan ) 11’ 13”

Form: AABA 32 bars (a “rhythm changes” contrafact)  
Total choruses: 15  
Introduction: None  
Head in: Piano  
First solo: Piano, 9 choruses  
Second solo: Bass, 2 choruses  
Third solo: Drums, 2 choruses (trades 8s for 2 choruses) = 13%  
Head out: Piano + tag  
Individual expression: Piano, 73%; Bass, 13.5%; Drums, 13.5%

***Somewhere* (Live in Lucerne/2009) – (Recorded on July 11, 2009)**

“I Thought About You” (Music: Jimmy Van Heusen; Lyrics: Johnny Mercer) 6’ 30”

Form: 32-bar A-B-A-B1  
Total choruses: 2  
Introduction: None  
Head in: Piano, A-B-A-B1  
First solo: Bass, A-B  
Head out: Piano, A-B1 + tag  
Individual expression: Piano: 75%; Bass, 25%

The main takeaway from these six selections is that the percentages of individual expression are indicative that Jarrett clearly holds a candle to Evans in his commitment to an equal playing field, with the one exception being that unlike the bassists in Evans’s collectives, bassist Peacock is less contrapuntal and not *often* granted the first solo. Also, nowhere in these selections is there evidence of pre-conceived formula for solo hierarchy or beginning or ending tunes, a trait supporting Jarrett’s homage to the moment.



## 6.7 The Jarrett “Standards” Trio Gestalt

Jarrett’s life as a professional artist in *all* contexts has been fraught with controversy for a number of reasons – all completely antithetical to the cause célèbre surrounding his predecessors, Powell and Evans, whose entire lives were plagued by a range of adverse repercussions of mental illness and substance abuse. Carr believes that possibly the biggest reason for the controversy surrounding Jarrett, lies simply (and in the writer’s opinion, groundless) in the fact that the scope of his work encompasses such a diversity of musical genres; it makes it difficult for critics to categorize him stylistically, which gives rise to their frustration. Is Jarrett a jazz pianist or a classical pianist, or both? In *But Beautiful – A Book About Jazz*, author Geoff Dyer Notes: “Jarrett is as much the heir of Rilke and Liszt as he is of Bill Evans or Bud Powell...” (Dyer 1996: 213)

Carr, who is baffled by the critics’ unwarranted assault on the pianist, asserts that Jarrett’s musical breadth “is bewildering in its universality.” (Carr 1991: 186) The universality that Carr contends has permeated Jarrett’s professional life is exactly that which contributes to his artistic stature, not to mention his practical ability to fill large concert halls. Jarrett’s ability to address a diversity of styles of music, all at a world-class level, earned him the access to the large audiences he consistently drew. But above all, it is the consciousness and integrity that Jarrett has consistently brought to each and every performance – whether it be playing solo, in an ensemble format or playing Western European concert music, which transcends the many different styles he has embraced throughout his life.

In an interview with Jarrett in the June 1984 issue of *DownBeat* magazine, author Art Lange asserts that based on his extensive and multifarious list of accomplishments that includes: “his reputation-building term with Charles Lloyd in the 60s heyday of flower power; his subsequent electric excursions into Fillmore rock psychedelia alongside Miles Davis; his trend-setting solo piano extravaganzas stretching back over a decade; his two distinct yet decisive quartets, one American (Dewy Redman, Charlie Haden, Paul Motian), one Scandinavian (Jan Garbarek, Palle Danielsson, John Christensen); his chamber music experiments from *In The Light*; his spontaneous hymns coaxed from a

baroque organ; his composed “concertos” for (variously) piano, flute, saxophone, bass plus orchestra; even his recent return to a stripped-down trio (Jack DeJohnette, Gary Peacock) – that “Jarrett is a man of contradictions.” (Downbeat 1984: <http://bit.ly/1I2EwoB>) Lange regards the innate essence of contradiction, a quality he believes Jarrett embodies, as a requisite for creative artists across the board. He paraphrases Walt Whitman’s perspective on the inherent paradoxical nature of this condition as it pertains to life, generally, as well as its relevance to the creative artist, specifically:

*“Walt Whitman wrote, suggesting that life is based on contradictions. Contradiction inspires concern and abandon—both necessary for a creative artist. Contradiction implies change and growth, not stasis. Contradiction allows for failures and successes. And contradiction acknowledged admits a struggle with forces possibly larger and more important than we casually care to recognize. Keith Jarrett, in his music and philosophies, is a contradiction.”* (Ibid.)

This chapter provides evidence that the Keith Jarrett’s “Standards” Trio changed the face of the jazz piano trio paradigm to come – well beyond even those extraordinary contributions made by the various Powell and Evans contingents.

First, like Evans, Jarrett’s unmitigated deference to the moment was undeniable. But, unlike Evans who was admittedly calculative and deliberate in his approach, Jarrett was fantastical – the epitome of extemporaneity. The Trio’s ability to transcend a pre-existing form to such a full extent was unparalleled. Carr notes: “Jarrett’s artistic integrity has been maintained by his immense self-discipline and his emphasis on ‘consciousness’ – an awareness which is central to his whole way of living.” (Carr 1991: 194) Carr adds that when Jarrett was asked what he believed to be his “main work,” he responded ‘staying conscious.’” (Carr 1991: 194)

Jarrett’s democratic operational philosophy echoes that of Evans. Jarrett: “What I wanted to find was some way of everyone being a sideman, of eliminating the leader syndrome.” (*JazzTimes* 2008: <http://bit.ly/1fyhK1i>) Five years later, he reiterates the Trio’s

operational philosophy and implies that their success rests on the Trio's collective creed, embracing communal support from each musician:

*“In 30 years we never had an argument about music. We never had a dispute of any major consequence. We just show up and play. One of the concepts, if not the basic concept, is that we are all sidemen to the music.”* (Iverson 2013: <http://bit.ly/1LMGjnF>)

Unlike both Powell and Evans, who succumbed to the temptation of hard-core drugs, Jarrett fortunately never fell prey to any form of substance abuse. He acknowledges his “drug” of choice has always been his music. Now 70 years old, and continuing to make artistic contributions of monumental proportion, Jarrett has outlived his two antecedents by twenty-eight and nineteen years respectively. His contributions span a greater portion of his adult life than those of his two predecessors whose lives were cut short by their respective addictions.

Like both Powell and Evans, Jarrett was exposed to Western European concert music at an early age, but, unlike each of them, Jarrett never abandoned this repertoire completely for jazz; in fact, performing this music has continued to play an important role in his life – a practice that has also become popular with other jazz musicians including Chick Corea, Eliane Elias and Wynton and his brother Branford Marsalis to name four.

Unlike both Powell and Evans, who played in small jazz clubs, Jarrett's immense popularity has, for the most part, demanded live performances in large 2,000-set concert halls which have consistently sold-out, an indication that the music he plays appeals to a much more diverse audience. Jarrett's ability to cross genres has introduced audiences to jazz, a traditionally hard sell.

Unlike Powell and Evans whose personnel rotated from time to time, Jarrett led a group with the same personnel for a record-holding thirty-one years, a feat and in and of itself.

Jarrett finds himself at a crossroads now that the “Standards” Trio is no longer active.

*"I don't have a trio now so... all I know is that I'm not going to look for other guys who I would need 30 years to get as good as we got, that's the biggest problem of all. How much rapport and understanding we had, it's unmatched anywhere I think."* (From <http://www.keithjarrett.org/>)

A number of factors all came together to create this prodigious artist. His innate gifts along with his virtuosic technical ability and mastery of and longtime commitment to performing a vast stylistic repertoire, from jazz to Western European concert music, are notable in and of themselves. But it is his absolute commitment to the moment – to being willing to “fly through the air with the greatest of ease,” without a safety net – that sets him apart from all who came before him.

The writer is not alone in her belief that Keith Jarrett is the ne plus ultra of jazz pianists and his “Standards” Trio, the quintessence of jazz piano trios. New York Times critic Ben Ratliff opines on the synergy of the group:

*"What Jarrett repeatedly accomplishes...is the mystical moment where a song with a familiar melody becomes transformed; the band finds its window of original insight, clambers in there, and builds something with full-bore group improvisation that you haven't ever heard before. All great individual jazz players have achieved this..."* (Ratliff 2002: 224)

Pianist Geoffrey Keezer, who, along with Jarrett, also held the piano chair in Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers, states:

*"Keith Jarrett exemplifies the highest ideal of an improviser. He gives 150% every time he plays, allowing himself to be an open channel for the creative spirit to flow through. From this space, spontaneous composition arises moment-to-moment, never repeating itself, never falling back on "licks" or preconceived devices. This is the level of improvising I try to reach when I play...not to emulate Keith's notes or phrasings, but to play with that kind of pure, unbridled freedom and joy."* (Keezer 2005: via an email to the writer)

San Francisco Bay Area saxophonist Dr. Michael Zilber sums up what he believes really matters in a 2005 email to the writer:

*“Jarrett is one of the true artists of the piano. His liquid and romantic legato, his inexorable sense of melody, his yearning, poignant and aching vulnerability phrasing speak to me in profound ways. Alongside Herbie Hancock, he is my favorite pianist. The touch he has and the flow are both astonishing. When people focus on his demeanor and his occasionally cranky outbursts or his tuneless moaning along, it seems to me they are focusing on something outside of the artistic experience. They are focusing on the show, the entertainment value, and that takes us into another world, the world of functional music. I don't disagree that he can be a noisy and sometimes cantankerous stage presence, but the journey of soul and discovery he takes you on with his versions of “When I Fall In Love” and “If I Should Lose You,” his exquisite sense of timing, space and swing are what matters to me. I want my parents and significant others to be kind, warmhearted folks. To me, it is fairly irrelevant what the public persona of the people I listen to is - I mean hell, TS Eliot was a cold and judgmental SOB, Wagner was a philandering anti-Semite, Miles Davis was a wife-beater and Coleridge was an opium addict. In the end we have their art, and while it would be nice if our musical heroes had similarly heroic personalities, as long as the music moves me, all else is just commentary.” (Zilber 2005: via an email to the writer)*

All to say, Jarrett’s music is the embodiment of life itself.



## Chapter Seven

### THE JAZZ PIANO TRIO FROM A DIFFERENT ANGLE

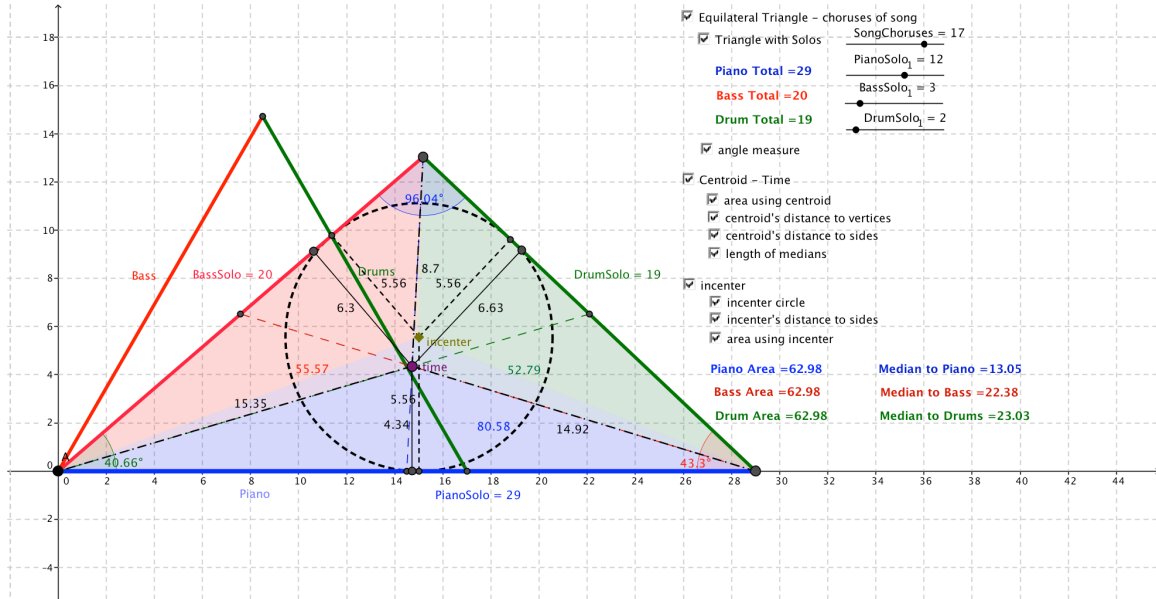


Fig. 7. An analogical representation of the jazz piano trio

*“In the first place, then, as is evident to all, fire and earth and water and air are bodies. And every sort of body possesses solidity, and every solid must necessarily be contained in planes; and every plane rectilinear figure is composed of triangles...”*

Plato (C. 427-347 B.C.) from the *Timaeus*

There are notable commonalities between the simplest and yet strongest of plane polygons, the triangle, and the music unit, the jazz piano trio, which concern both aesthetic beauty and structural design. Aesthetically, the triangle serves as an inspirational focal point for some of the world’s most resplendent art and architecture;<sup>1</sup> structurally, its triangular frame has served as a critical underpinning in architectural settings for centuries.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, aesthetically, the jazz piano trio serves as both a consummate stand-alone unit, and, structurally, it has also served as the underpinning of a larger jazz ensemble for over eighty years. This chapter endeavors to draw a hypothetical

<sup>1</sup> As an example, a pediment, the triangular structure that sits atop a portico of columns on the uppermost part of the façade of a classical-style building.

<sup>2</sup> Ironically, it is its inherent “simplicity” that gives the triangle its strength, qualifying it for use as a truss, the framework supporting roofs and bridges. (Mitler (n.d.) <http://bit.ly/1Jtqtxr>)

analogy between the two entities – the triangle and the jazz piano trio – focusing on their respective aesthetic and structural qualities.

Plato considered the triangle to be the basic building block of the universe. An enclosed plane figure, the triangle comprises three straight sides, which intersect at three points, or vertices, forming three angles. Its singular beauty a given, the triangle's strength is derived from the fact that no amount of force applied to any of its corners can change its shape.

For the purpose of this analogy, each of the three sides of the triangle shall correlate with each instrument in the trio. Just as the triangle is uniquely defined by the lengths of its three sides<sup>3</sup>, the trio is uniquely defined by the artistic makeup of each of its three members. In other words, while just one, and only one triangle can be drawn if the lengths of all three of its sides are given, just one and only one jazz piano trio can exist if all three of its members are given. For instance, this chapter illustrates how the three unique triangular shapes – equilateral, isosceles and scalene – correlate with the three unique artistic units led by each of the three modern jazz piano trio leaders comprising the focal points of this thesis (Powell, Evans and Jarrett) based on the particular artistic qualities manifested in their respective membership.

Including its sides, the following *Glossary and Analogical Relationships* identifies fourteen structural elements of a triangle along with a hypothetical analogical comparison to various structural elements comprising a modern jazz piano trio that will be applied to select recording by Powell, Evans and Jarrett. The structural elements that comprise the triangle and give it its identity and integrity are analogous to the overall aesthetic that comprises the modern jazz piano trio and gives it its artistic stamp and strength.

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<sup>3</sup> “Triangles may [also] be defined in terms of their sides or in terms of their angles.” (Calter 2008: 67) The three triangles – equilateral, isosceles and scalene – supporting this analogy are defined by the lengths of their sides.



## 7.1 GLOSSARY AND ANALOGICAL RELATIONSHIPS

**1. Angle:** The space measured in degrees formed by two intersecting straight lines (Fig. 7.1).

**Analogical Relationship:** Each angle represents the relationship of one component member to its adjacent component member i.e., piano to the bass, bass to the drums, and the piano to the drums. Note: each angle of the triangle is dependent on the length of its opposite side. Note: the smallest angles are those closest to the most prominent component member.

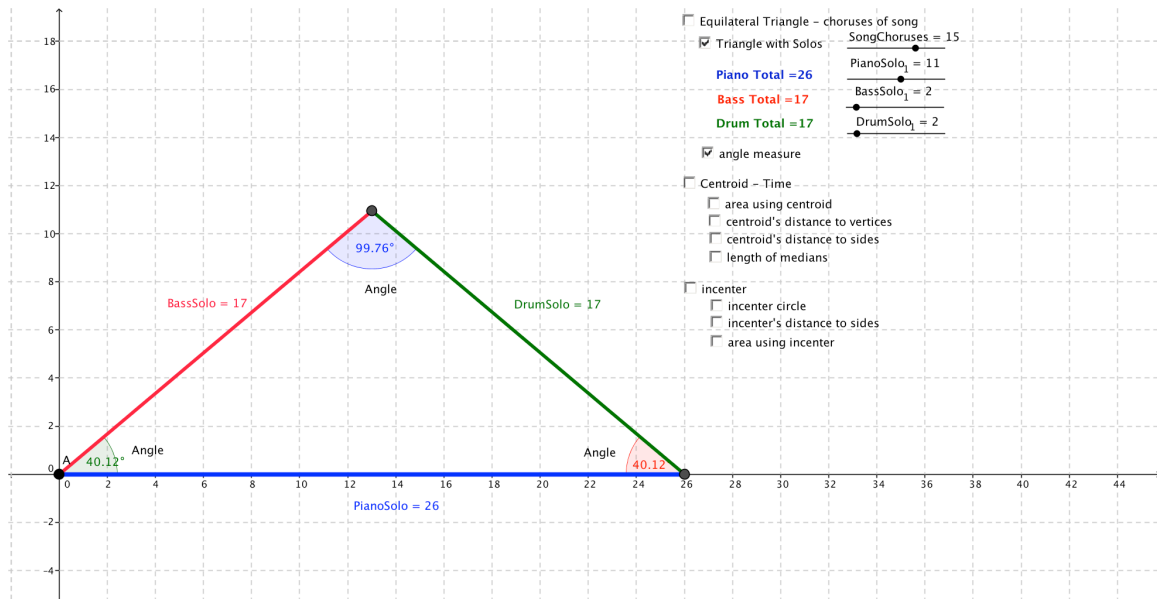


Fig. 7.1 Angle

**2. Area of each of the three inner triangles respective to the centroid (center of gravity):** Area of each of the three inner triangles respective to the centroid as the point of intersection (Fig. 7.2).

**Analogical Relationship:** the area of each of the three inner triangles using the centroid represents the equal commitment of each component member to time/pulse. Note: the area of each triangle is the same irrespective of the lengths of the sides, representing component member's equally shared commitment to time/pulse (Fig. 7.2 and 7.3).

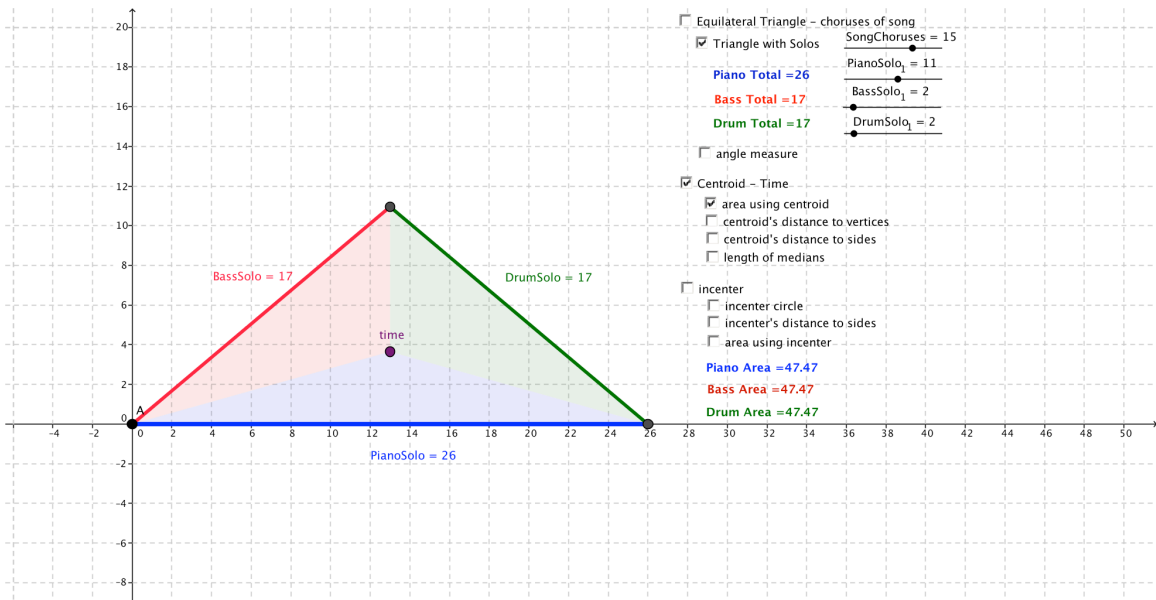


Fig. 7.2 Area of each of the three inner triangles respective to the centroid

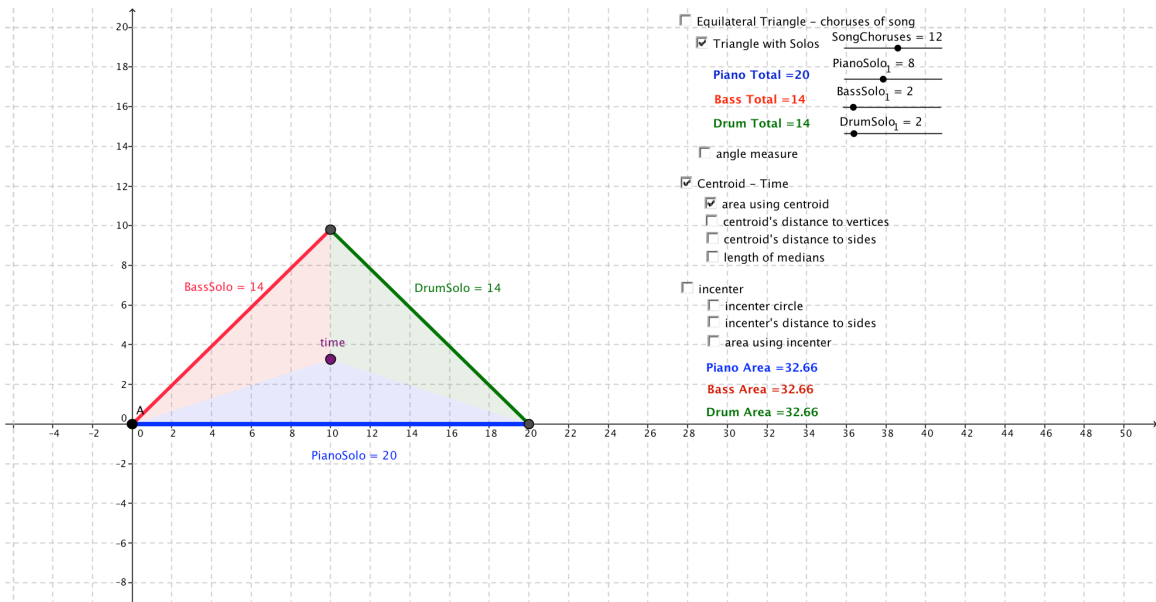


Fig. 7.3 Area of each of the three inner triangles respective to the centroid in a triangle with sides of different lengths

**3. Area of each of the three inner triangles respective to the incenter:** Area of each of the three inner triangles formed respective to the incenter as the point of intersection (Fig. 7.4).

**Analogical Relationship:** the area of each of the three inner triangles using the incenter represents the level of contribution made by each component member to the collective artistic objective.

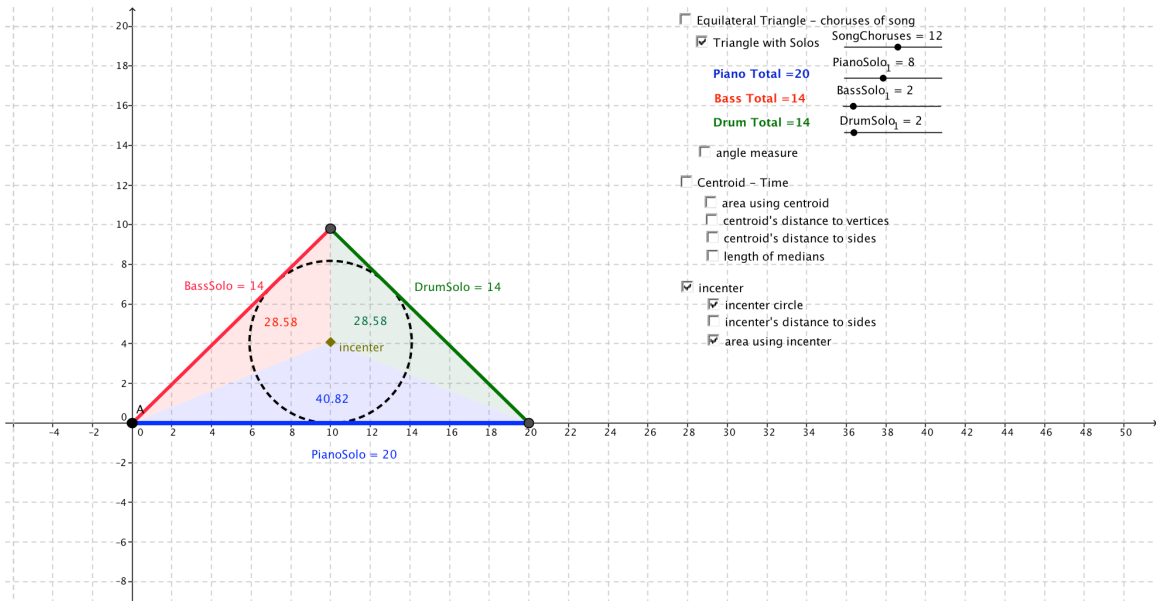


Fig. 7.4. Area of each of the three inner triangles respective to the incenter

**4. Centroid (center of gravity):** the point of intersection of a triangle’s three medians located at two-thirds the distance along a median from a vertex to the opposite side (Fig. 7.5). (Calter 2008: 70)

**Analogical Relationship:** the centroid represents time/pulse – the unit’s “center of gravity.” The lines drawn from the midpoint of each side of the triangle to the opposite vertex (the *medians*) intersect at a point called the centroid, which is the triangle’s center of gravity. As the triangle changes shape, the center of gravity will always be closest to the longest side (the instrument demonstrating the most prominence).

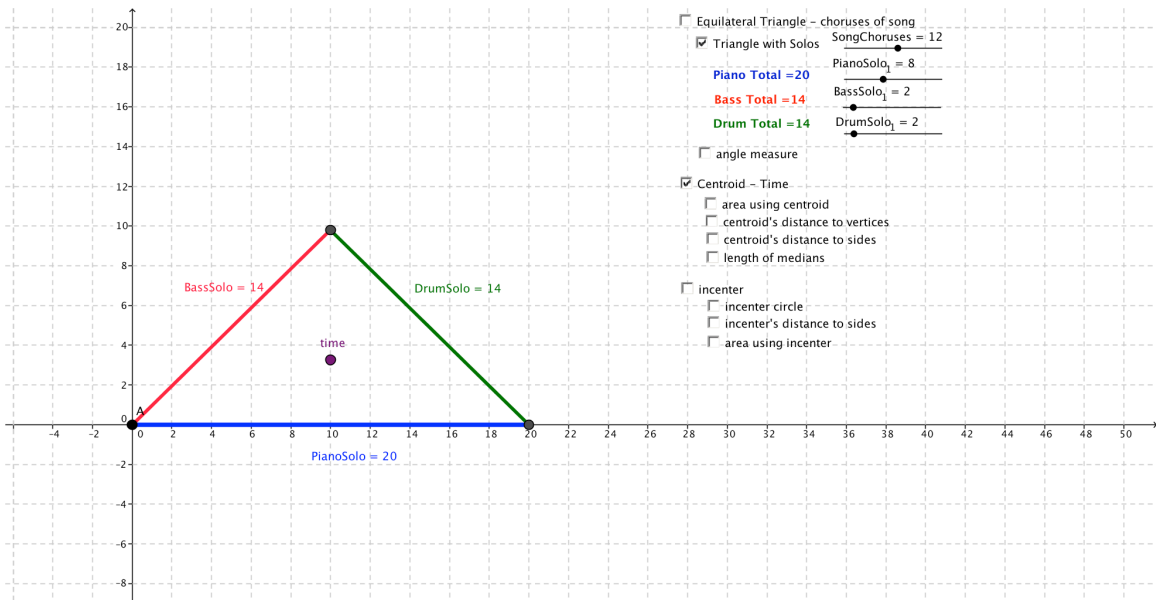


Fig. 7.5 The centroid

**5. Distance from the Centroid to each side:** distance from the point of gravity to each side (Fig. 7.6).

**Analogical Relationship:** the distance from the centroid to each side represents the degree to which a component member influences rhythmic tendency. Note: the component member who is most prominent, sets the tendency for rhythmic feel or the relationship of rhythm to time/pulse and is closest to the centroid. The other two members support the tendency.

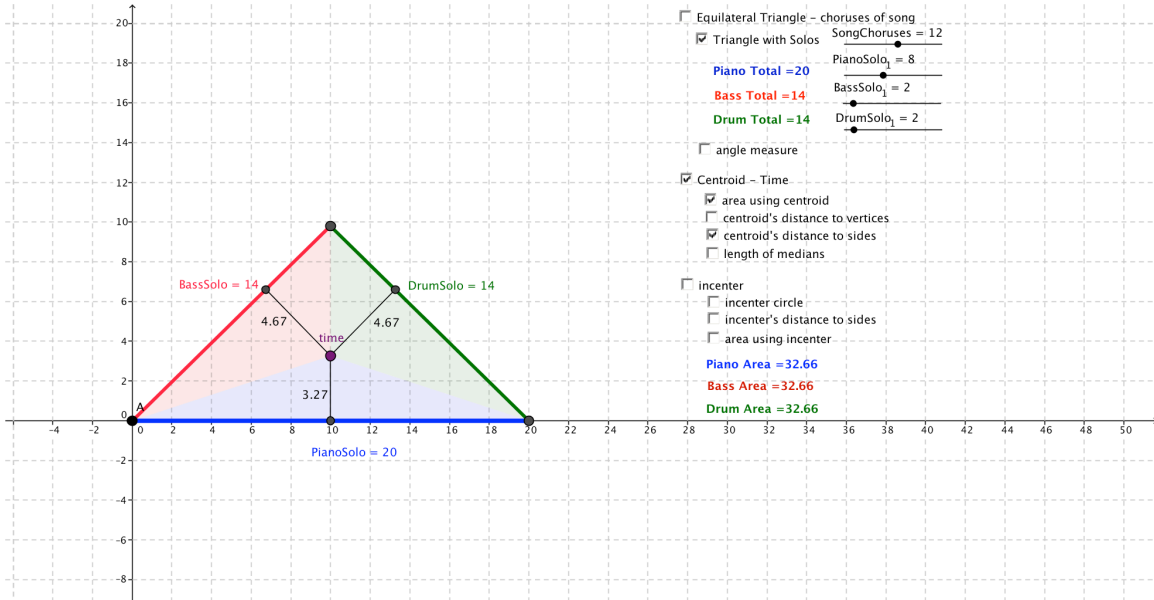


Fig. 7.6. Distance from the centroid to each side

**6. Distance from Centroid to Vertices:** distance from each vertex to the point of gravity (Fig 7.7).

**Analogical Relationship:** the centroid's distance to the vertices is similar to the analogical relationship of the median in that the shortest distance belongs to the two members who support the most prominent member. That is, in Fig. 7.7, the distance is shortest from the vertex shared by the bassist and drummer to the center of gravity, which is closest to the pianist or most prominent member. Note: the dotted lines divide the triangle into three smaller triangles of equal area.

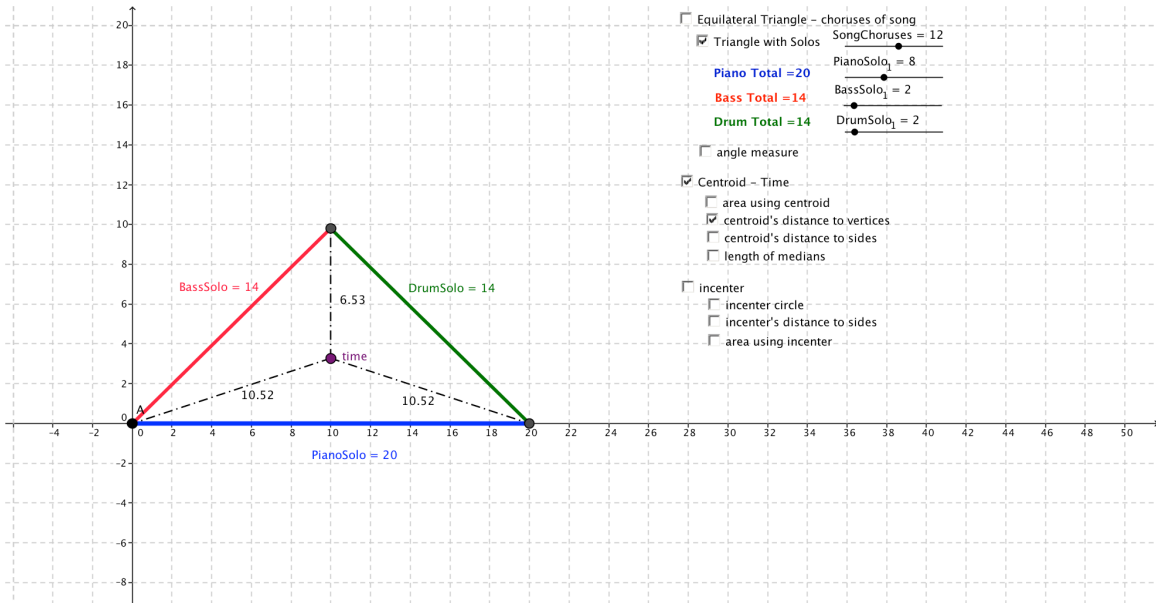


Fig. 7.7 Distance from the centroid to the vertices

**7. Distance from each side to the incenter:** distance from each side to the center of the incenter circle (Fig 7.8).

**Analogical Relationship:** the equal distance from each side to the incenter represents the equal commitment of each component member to the overarching artistic objective. Note: the distance from each side to the incenter is the same irrespective of the lengths of the sides, representing component members' equally shared commitment to the collective artistic end.

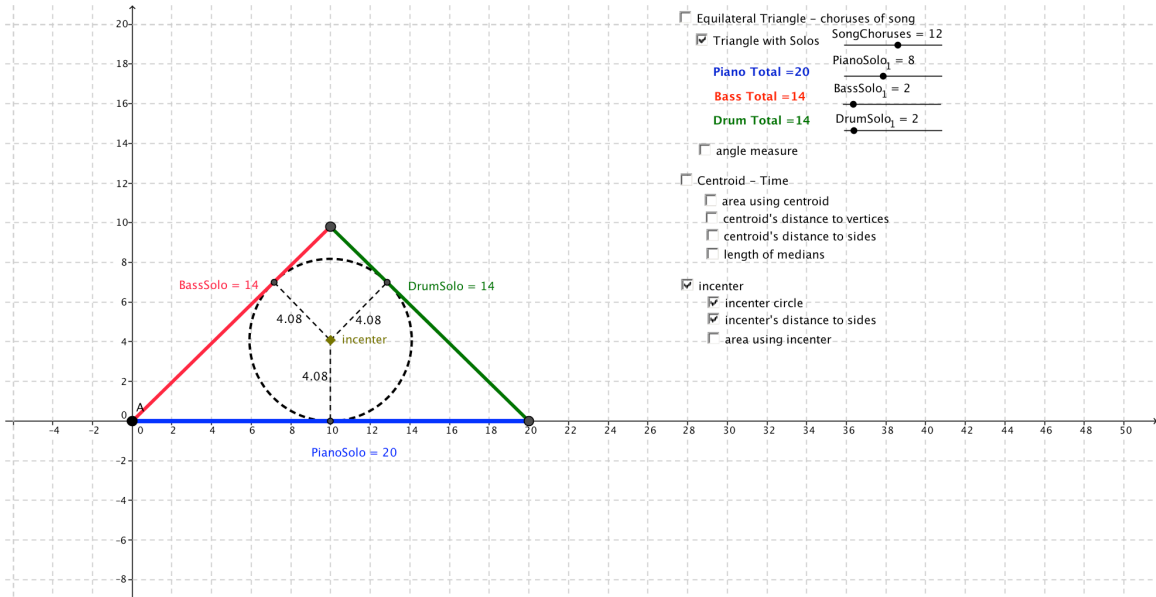


Fig. 7.8. Distance from each side to the incenter

**8. Incenter:** the center of the inscribed circle, located at the intersection of the three angle bisectors of the triangle.” (Fig. 7.9) (Calter 2008: 70)

**Analogical Relationship:** the incenter represents the heart of the component members’ collective artistic objective.

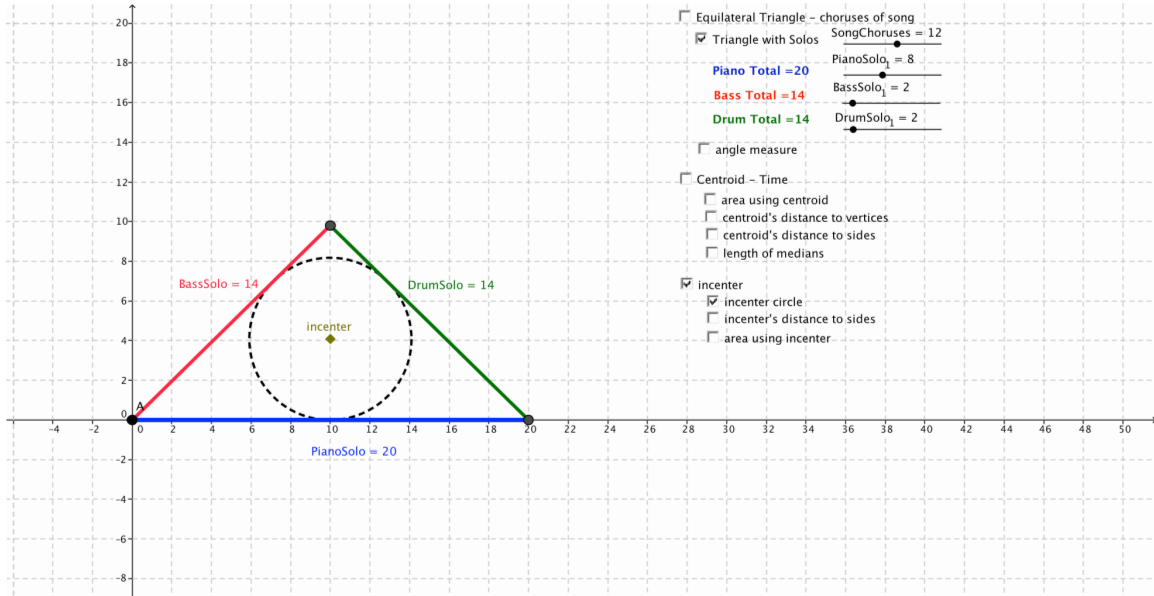


Fig. 7.9. The incenter

**9. Incenter Circle:** a circle inscribed within a triangle tangent to all three sides of the triangle (Fig. 7.10).

**Analogical Relationship:** the incenter circle, concurrently touching all sides, represents the omnipresent relationship of all of the component members to one another within the unit.

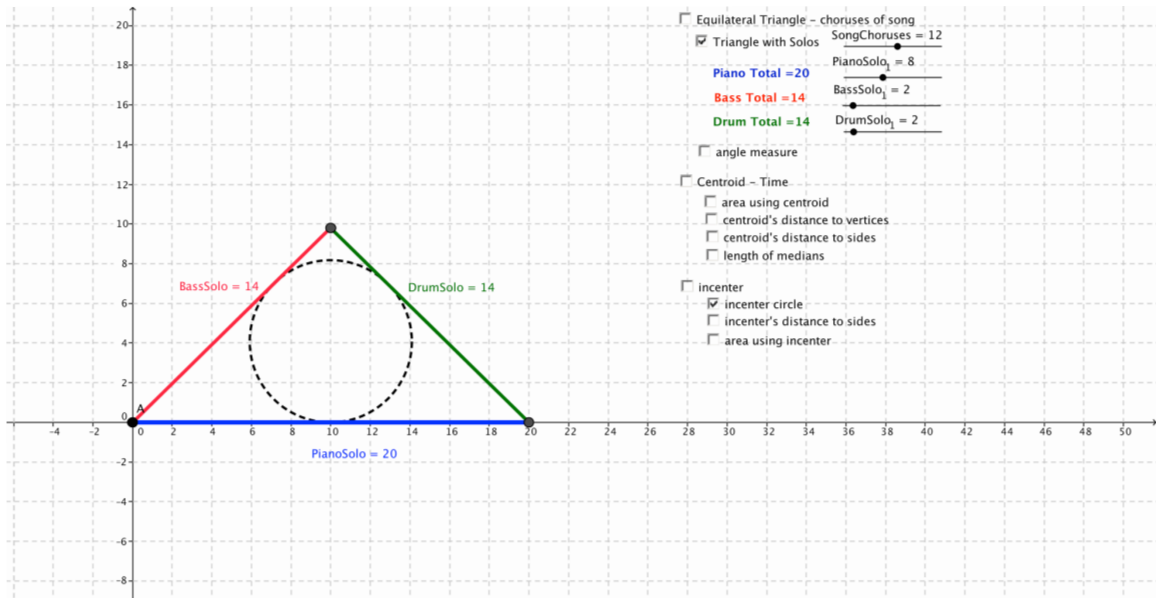


Fig. 7.10. The incenter circle

**10. Length of a Side:** the structural aspect that determines its classification i.e., whether or not it is an equilateral, isosceles or a scalene triangle (Fig. 7.11).

**Analogical Relationship:** The length of a side correlates with the extent of individual expression. The length of a side is determined by the total number of choruses played plus the total number of solo choruses played on a given piece.

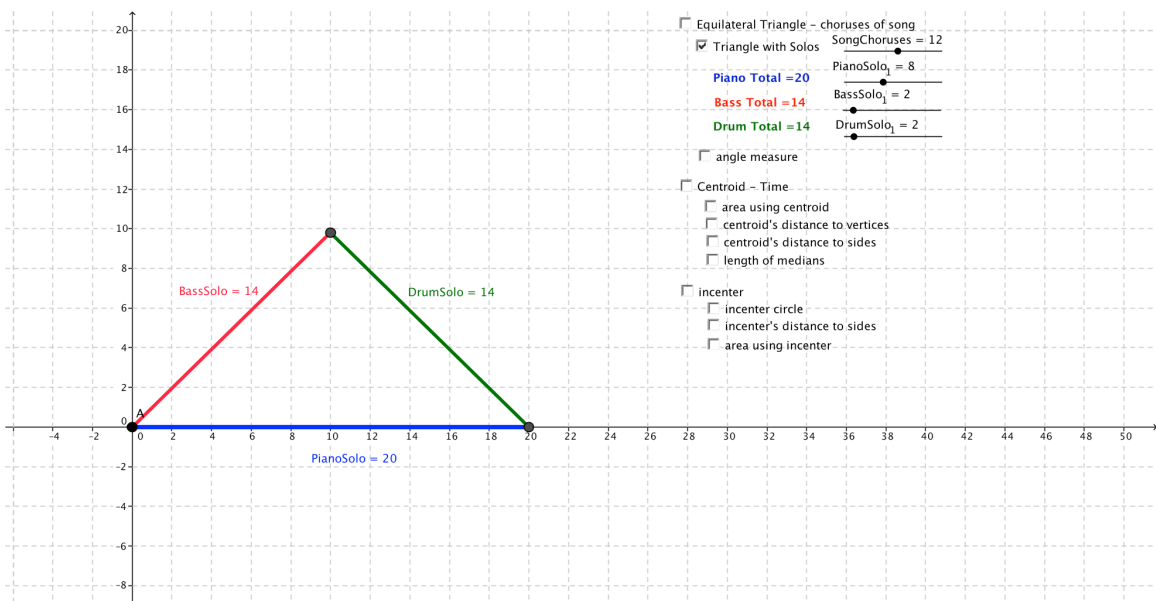


Fig. 7.11. Length of a side

**11. Median:** a line from a vertex to the midpoint of the opposite side (Fig. 7.12) (Calter 2008: 70)

**Analogical Relationship:** the length of the median represents the relationship of one component member to the vertex shared by the other two component members i.e, piano to bass/drums; bass to piano/drums; and/or drums to piano/bass. Note: the shorter the median, the greater the support given to the most prominent component member – the component member with the longest side and closest to the centroid or time/pulse – by the other two members.

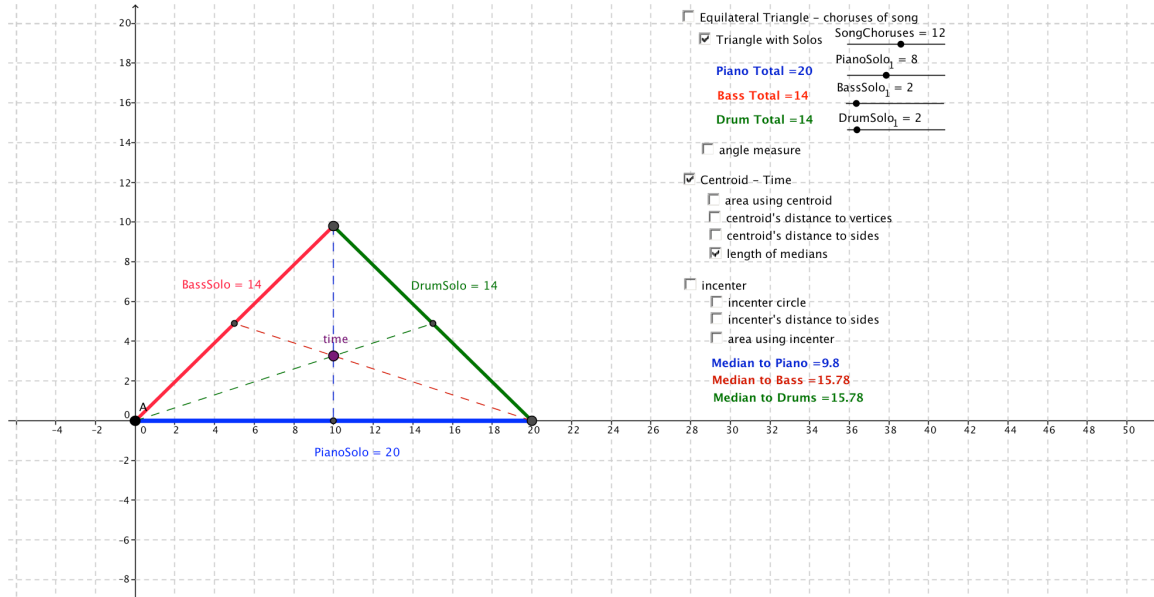


Fig. 7.12. The median

**12. Shape:** Three classifications (shapes) of triangles that serve to support the purpose of this analogy are defined in terms of their sides and include equilateral (Fig. 7.13); isosceles (Fig. 7.14); and scalene (Fig. 7.15).<sup>4</sup>

**Analogical Relationship:** the shape of the triangle i.e., equilateral, isosceles and/or scalene represents a visual comparison of the relative prominence among the component members of the trio, i.e., piano, bass and drums, in relation to the artistic whole. I.e., an equilateral triangle illustrates equal prominence of component membership to the overall artistic objective; an isosceles triangle illustrates equal commitment of two component members with the third member playing a lesser or greater role; and a scalene triangle represents unequal prominence among all three component members.

<sup>4</sup> Again, “Triangles may [also] be defined in terms of their sides or in terms of their angles.” (Calter 2008: 67)



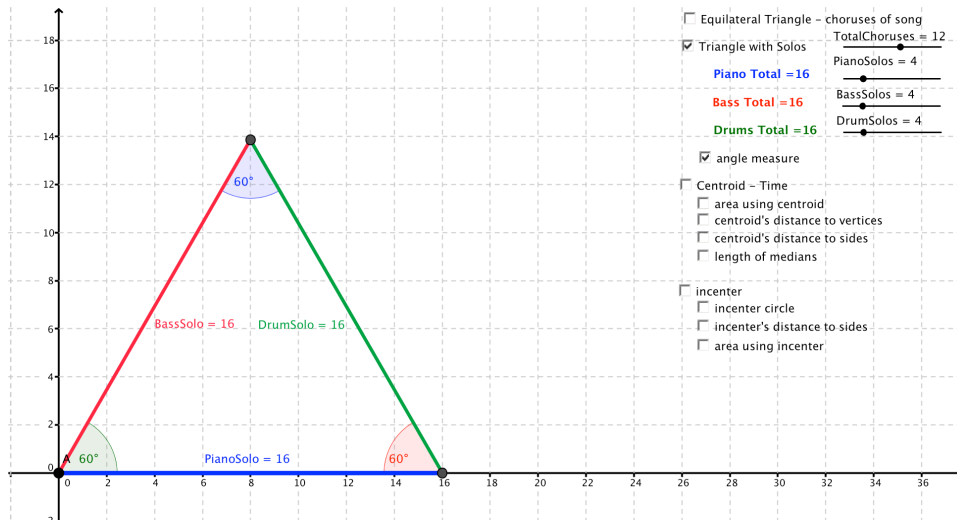


Fig. 7.13 Equilateral triangle: a polygon with three equal sides and three equal angles of 60 degrees each  
 Note: the three angles of all three classifications of triangles add up to 180 degrees.

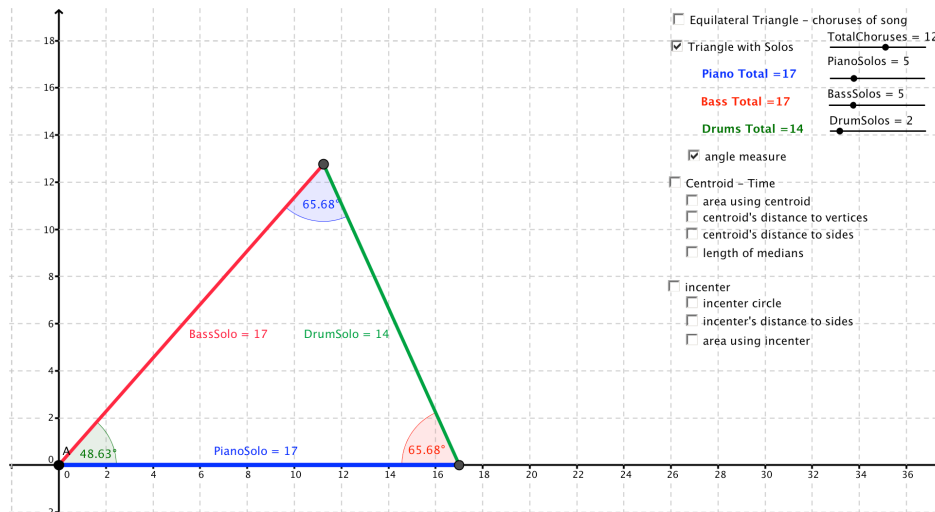


Fig. 7.14 Isosceles triangle: a polygon with two equal sides and two equal angles opposite the equal sides

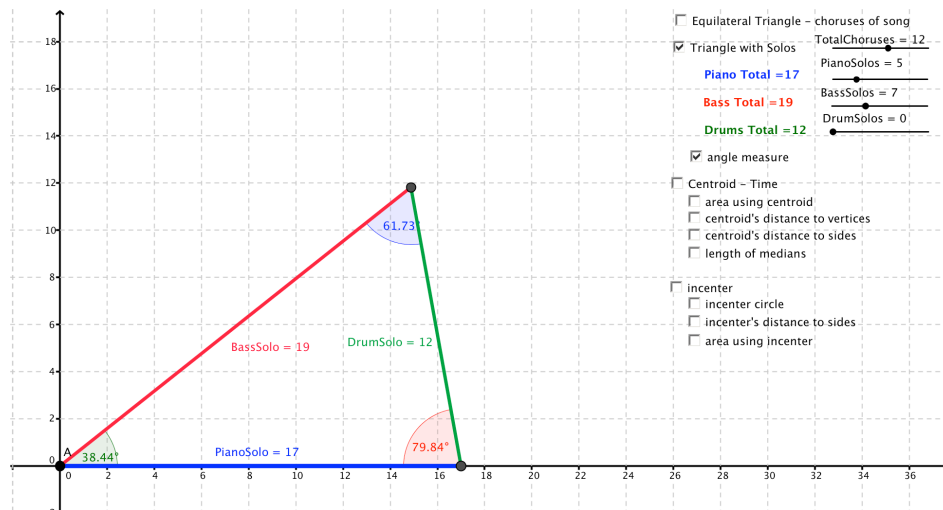


Fig. 7.15 Scalene triangle: a polygon with no equal sides and no equal angles.

**13. Side:** one of three straight-line segments that intersect at three points (vertices), completely enclosing the plane figure (Fig 7.16).

**Analogical Relationship:** a side of a triangle represents one of the component members, i.e., piano, bass and drums.

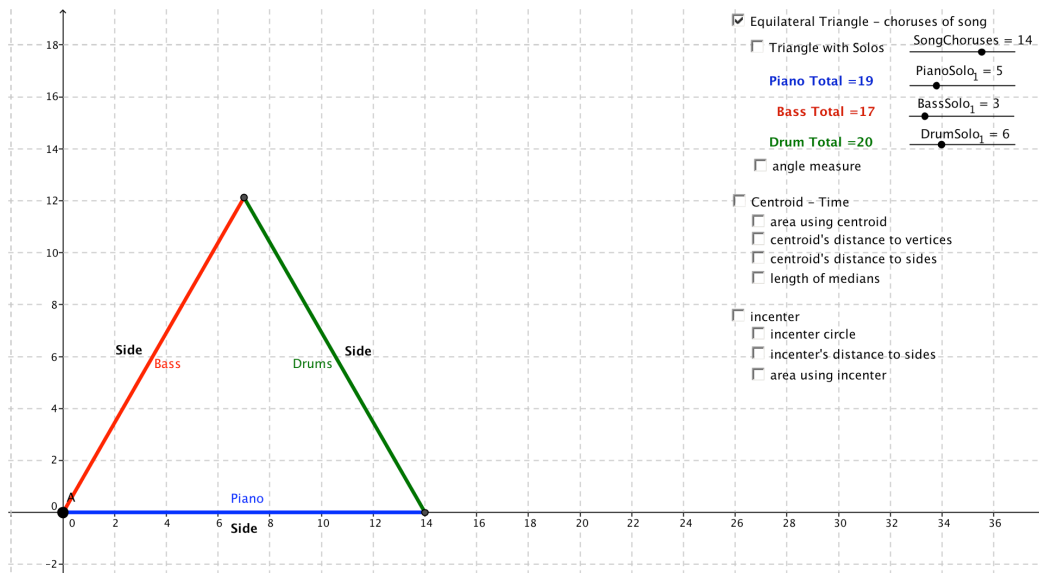


Fig. 7.16. Side

14. **Vertex:** a corner point of a polygon (Fig 7.17).

**Analogical Relationship:** each vertex connects all possible component members i.e., piano/bass, bass/drums, and piano/drums to one another. The triangle is the *only* polygon that facilitates this immediate connection.

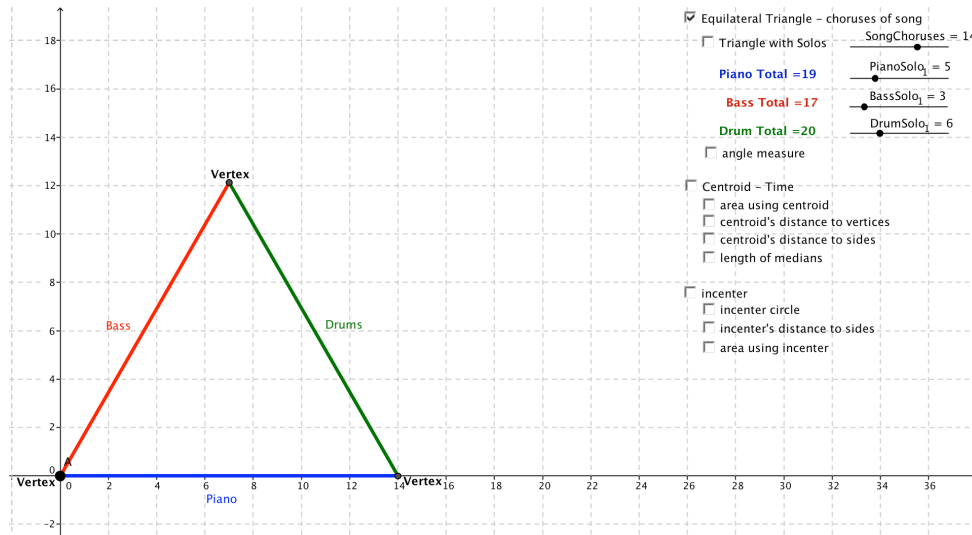


Fig. 7.17 Vertex

Fig. 7.18 illustrates all of the above analogical relationships within one triangle.

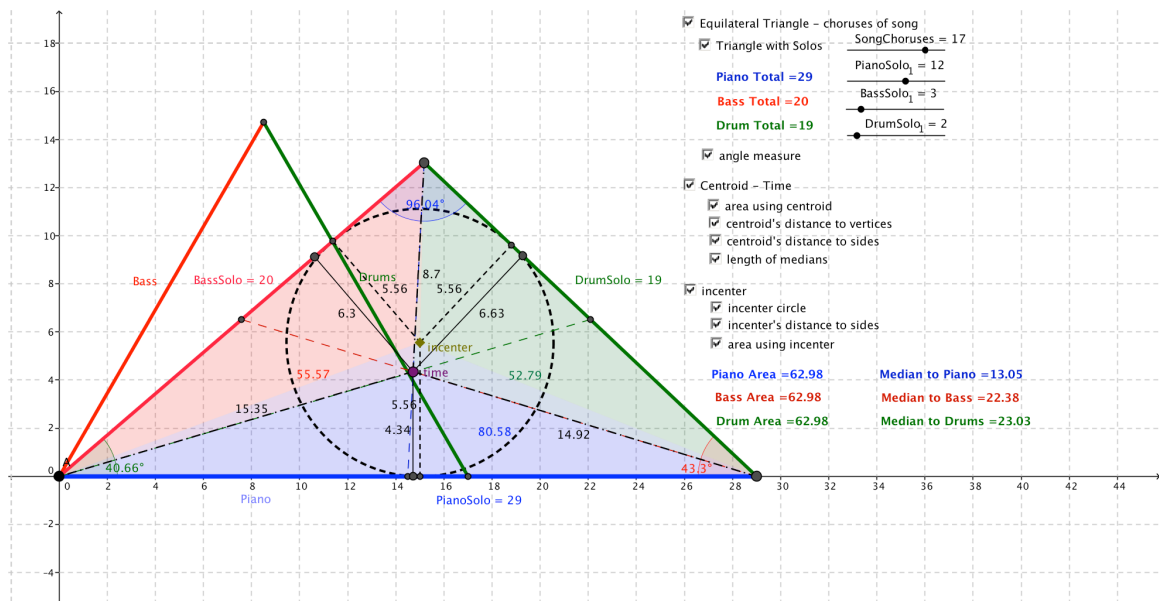


Fig. 7.18 All analogical relationships within one triangle

## 7.2 Correlations Between the Triangle and the Trio

As covered under “shape” above, the triangle comprises three unique sides – three straight lines of the same or varying lengths that intersect at points called vertices. These three unique sides come together to create one of three unique shapes: an equilateral triangle, with three sides of equal length; an isosceles triangle with two sides of equal length; or a scalene triangle with three sides of unequal length. Each side of a triangle makes a uniquely invaluable contribution to the plane figure as a whole and assumes varying degrees of responsibility based on its length. Correspondingly, each member of the trio makes uniquely invaluable contributions to the overall artistic endeavor and assumes varying degrees of responsibility based on the level of his/her prominence. Just as the triangle serves as both a structural and aesthetic source of support, the piano, bass and drums together, create the foundational music unit in jazz – either as a stand-alone unit, or as the rhythm section of a larger ensemble. This thesis shows through specific data how the definitive styles of the Powell, Evans and Jarrett trios correlate to the shape of one of the three types of triangles.

Clearly, a component member of a trio is inevitably more prominent than a member of a larger ensemble. For example, a component member of a trio comprises 33.33% of the unit whereas a component member of a quartet comprises just 25% of the unit. Similarly, a component member of a quartet, comprising 25% of the unit, is more prominent than a component member of a quintet, comprising 20% of the unit, and so on.

Component members in the trio setting may be featured in any one or more of the following seven combinations: **P, B, D, PB, PD, BD** and **PBD** (Fig. 19).<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Note: *combination* refers to an arrangement of component members whose order is irrelevant.

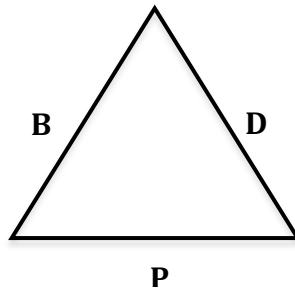


Fig. 7.19 Representation of a trio via a triangle

A quartet, with the addition of just one more member, produces a greater number of possible combinations. Just as a quadrilateral takes on a greater range of possible shapes i.e., a rectangle, parallelogram, rhombus and so on, the addition of just one more component member results in eight more combinations! I.e., a quartet consisting of saxophone, piano, bass and drums produces the following fifteen combinations: **S, P, B, D, SPB, SPD, SBD, PBD, PBS, SP, SB, SD, PB, PD and SPBD (Fig. 20).**

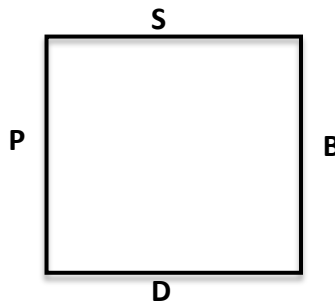


Fig. 7.20 Representation of a quartet via a square

The addition of just one more component member, for example, a quintet with rhythm section, saxophone and trumpet produces thirty-one combinations (Fig. 21).

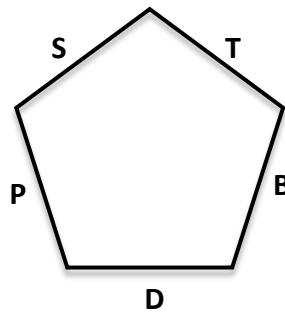


Fig. 7.21 Representation of a quintet via a pentagon

Looking at a twenty-piece big band through an analogical polygonal lens, it is visually evident that each band member is even more obscure and has less responsibility in the ultimate creative outcome. For example, compare a regular polygon with three equal sides, i.e., an equilateral triangle, with a regular polygon with four equal sides, i.e., a quadrilateral, which is a square. The interior angles of the equilateral triangle are all 60 degrees; the interior angles of the square are all 90 degrees, 50% wider than those of the triangle. Now compare an equilateral triangle with a polygon with twenty equal sides, i.e., an Icosagon. The interior angles of the icosagon are 270% wider than those of the triangle illustrating a greater distance from one member to another. In a trio, the angles are narrower, signifying that members are literally closer to one another structurally as well as artistically (Fig.7.22).

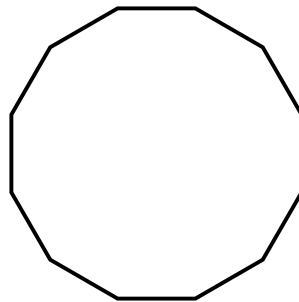


Fig. 7.22 A dodecagon (12 sides)

A dodecagon with twelve sides and whose interior angles are 150 degrees begins to resemble a circle with jagged edges. The angle is so wide it makes it difficult to even differentiate one side (one member within the unit) from another (member within the unit). Adding enough sides to represent the number of musicians in a big band widens the angle to such an extent that the sides are practically indistinguishable. For example, an octakaidecagon or enneadecagon with eighteen and nineteen sides respectively, representing a big band with eighteen or nineteen members, are polygons whose angles widen to between 160-161 degrees.

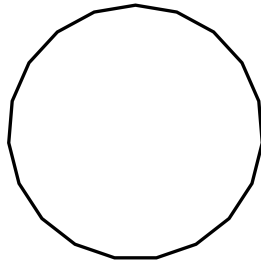


Fig. 7.23 An enneadecagon (19 sides)

In theory, the larger the ensemble setting, the less time there is to focus on the individual and individual expression. Compared with each member in a trio, each member in a big band is much less responsible for generating the overall artistic outcome. Note: this is not to say that there aren't exceptions to this theory. In fact, the extraordinary personnel in big bands such as the Duke Ellington or Count Basie Orchestras are completely contrary to this theory. These (and many other) bands were staffed with the who's who of jazz musicians whose individual contributions represented more than 160-degree angles! That's also not to say that the rhythm section in a big band does not have a special role. This theory simply supports the potential for innate transparency and greater focus on the individual in the chamber jazz ensemble setting.

The transparency afforded by the chamber ensemble – a trio for example – demands both technical virtuosity and artistic prowess from each of its members. Bassist Chuck Israels, who took LaFaro's place a year after his death affirms that there is a definite correlation between the size of the group and the extent of the responsibility taken by the individual instrumentalists: "...the smaller the group, the more dependent the music becomes on the individual players." (Goldsby 2010: <http://bit.ly/1CXrxX7>)

As mentioned above, each of the triangle's unique three sides is directly connected to the other two. Applying the analogy that each of the three sides corresponds to the pianist, bassist and drummer respectively, a hypothesis can be made that each member of the trio is directly connected to the other two, facilitating perpetual intimate three-way communication not possible in larger ensembles. Unlike the functionality inherent among membership in larger ensembles, the trio format comprises minimum instrumentation,

providing maximum connection among its membership while concurrently affording each member a generous framework for individual expression.

The pianist as leader in the trio format assumes the greatest responsibility in exchange for the ultimate creative rhythmic, melodic and harmonic freedom inherent in this unit. Unencumbered by preconceived and highly detailed big band arrangements, the rhythmic, melodic and harmonic roles played by each member in the trio setting are spontaneous and therefore, inherently unique. Each member is given the freedom to express him or herself in a way that is unconditionally relevant to the moment – not beholden to a composer’s or arranger’s preconceived artistic plan. However, as noted above, the greater number of members within the group, the less opportunity there is for individual expression, just as each side of a triangle is more distinguishable than each side of a 19-sided enneadecagon, the polygon resembling a jagged looking circle.

Take for example the remarkable difference among leaders Powell, Evans and Jarrett in the trio format compared with their performances as leaders or sidemen in other larger ensemble situations. In the case of the possible combinations of instrumentation alone, there are considerably more possibilities that give rise to a range of textural considerations in addition to the particulars of rhythm, melody, harmony and most importantly, time.

Like a close-knit family, each side of a triangle is directly connected to its adjacent sides at the vertices or corner points. This phenomenon exists *only* in a triangle as illustrated in the above example. **P** (The piano) shares a vertex with both **B** (the bass) and **D** (the drums); **B** (the bass) with both **P** (the piano) and **D** (the drums); and **D** (the drums) with both **B** (the bass) and **P** (the piano), covering the three possible combinations of a duo configuration: **PB**, **BD** and, the least heard of all of the three combinations, **PD** (the piano and drums). All three sides of the triangle are intimately connected to one another at each of the three vertices and are the minimum number of sides necessary to form a completely enclosed entity. Similarly, the pianist, bassist and drummer are intimately



connected to one another and are the minimum number of instruments necessary to produce the overall trio sound that listeners interpret as fulfilling or “complete.”

To reiterate, while a triangle is characterized by the length of its sides, the modern jazz piano trio is characterized by the unique qualities of each of its respective members. Again, the triangular framework is the simplest but yet strongest of all polygons and serves as the basic building block of more complex structures such as three-dimensional polyhedrons, for example. Similarly, the pianist, bassist and drummer are the building blocks of more complex music structures such as trios, quartets and quintets. While the triangle serves as both a meaningful structure in and of itself as well as the basic building block of more complex geometric structures, the jazz piano trio serves as both a meaningful unit in and of itself as well as the foundation of a larger jazz ensemble.

For the purpose of illustrating this analogy, each of the three members of the trio, the pianist (**P**), bassist (**B**) and drummer (**D**) is assigned to each of the three sides of a triangle. An equilateral triangle represents the pianist's, bassist's and drummer's collective statement of the “head” over which they improvise in a standard theme and variations format. In an equilateral triangle, all sides are of equal length and contribute equally to the aesthetic and structural integrity of the polygon. Similarly, each component member contributes equally to the aesthetic and structural integrity of the head. As the piece progresses from the theme to the variations, the shape of the triangle changes in direct relation to the prominence of each member, which is determined by the number of solos they take. Think of a mercurial triangle that fluctuates among the shapes of the three basic triangles – the equilateral, isosceles and scalene triangles, which is in direct proportion to each member's role as either soloist or accompanist – its shape ever changing as the piece progresses.

Taken from Paul Calter's geometric reference, *Squaring the Circle – Geometry in Art and Architecture*, the centroid (or median point) of a triangle is the point of intersection of its three medians as well as its “center of gravity.” (Calter 2008: 70) For the purpose of this

analogy, the centroid represents time/pulse – for musicians, the center of gravity and “holy grail.”

A critical component of rhythm: time/pulse is an element which is shared among all members in a group and In fact, time/pulse, or the lack thereof, is the primary point of reference for musicians in conductor-less chamber ensembles of any size or style. In an orchestral setting for example, the conductor assumes the greatest responsibility for defining and communicating the whereabouts of time/pulse. Members of a conductor-led orchestra are highly dependent on the conductor to determine exactly when they play. In a conductor-less chamber music ensemble such as a trio, the unit collectively takes responsibility for defining and communicating among one another the whereabouts of time/pulse. Members of an improvisation-infused small jazz ensemble are completely dependent on one another to determine not only when to play, but also on what to play and when to play it. Throughout the course of a jazz piece, the role as leader in determining tendency for time/pulse rotates among members of the group. Given the omnipresence of improvisation in the jazz ensemble, the pulse is the ultimate dynamic element. It is the one point of reference that all members in the group have in common: it is their common ground. Note that in the following example, the centroid’s distance to the sides is in direct proportion to the prominence of each component member. For example, the shorter the centroid’s distance to a side, the greater the prominence of a particular member. The centroid’s distance to the sides is the shortest from the side of the most prominent component member (the member who takes the most solos); it is the longest from the side of the least prominent component member (the member who takes the least solos).

The Pythagoreans had ways of looking at the significance of numbers that extended far beyond mere quantification, and their creative yet practical perspective is apropos to the structural composition of the jazz piano trio. For example, for the Pythagoreans, the number one, or *monad*, is a point which represented the source of all numbers and is indivisible; the number two, or *dyad*, is a line which represents diversity, duality and the loss of unity; and the number three, or *triad*, is a plane whereby unity and diversity of

which it is composed are restored to harmony. (Calter 2008: 5 and 435) Each instrument, piano, bass and drums, in solo or duo settings is invaluable in and of itself, but when the three come together, they produce an artistic congruousness unlike any other smaller or larger music unit in jazz.

In the jazz piano trio, the scope of the contributions made by all three instruments must be taken into consideration at *all* times – regardless of whether or not they're actually physically playing. Since this is an improvisational playing field, any one, two or three instruments could play – or not play. In this regard, all three serve as *potential* sources of support. However, exactly *what* their contributions will be, and *when* they will be made are unknown quantities until the moment they occur. That's why both playing in and listening to an improvisation-based ensemble is so exciting -- there are literally no predictable events. A successful artistic outcome is dependent upon a combination of the creative input of all three musicians collectively – even if their participation is just a *theoretical* possibility. Each member knows that he/she can rely on each other at any given moment and that presumption is just as meaningful in theory as it is in practice. Improvising musicians depend on one another regardless of whether or not they're actually *literally* playing.

In this hypothetical analogy, the equilateral triangle to the far left in each illustration represents all three artists' collective statement of the head or theme. The triangle to the right represents the prominence of the three component members based on the number of their respective solos.

Parenthetically, in a jazz ensemble, a musician's awareness of and responsibility to time/pulse is ever present – again, regardless of whether they are actually *physically* playing or not. The purpose of identifying this mutually shared focal point is greater than merely maintaining a sense of cohesion within the group. Although each trio's unique relationship to time/pulse is not the focus of this chapter, it is important to note that aesthetically, both the relationship of each musician to time/pulse as well as the relationship to the musicians collectively to time/pulse is an important characteristic,

which sets an ensemble apart and gives it its unique identity. Musicians' various relationships to time/pulse have been described as "behind the beat," "on the beat," "on top of the beat," "rushing," "dragging," "in the pocket," "in the groove," "swinging hard," "floaty" and so on – all which factor into trios' and their members' respective sounds. As important as this trait is, its abstract quality makes it difficult to quantify via a triangle.

Looking first at an equilateral triangle independent of any particular recording (Fig. 7.24), each side is of equal length, representing equal prominence/individual expression among the trio's membership. Note how the centroid and the incenter are perfectly superimposed over one another representing the component membership's equal commitment to both time/pulse and overall artistic objective of the piece. The area of the three inner triangles (representing each component member) respective to both the centroid and incenter are equal (32.48); the distance to the sides respective to both the centroid and incenter are equal (4.33); the length of the medians are equal (12.99); and the centroid's distance to each vertex is equal (8.66). These data support the component memberships' equal artistic vision and commitment to the tune.

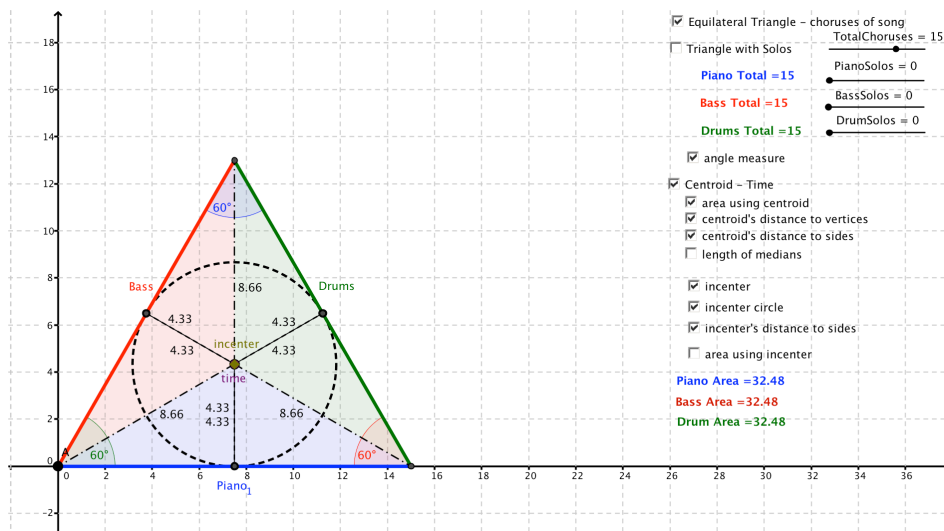


Fig. 7.24. An equilateral triangle: a representation of a level playing field

Note: For the purposes of the analogy, in all examples, *the total number of choruses* factors in both “heads in” and “heads out” (two choruses). For the purposes of this study, in each example, the “heads in” and “heads out” are played by the pianist and are factored into the number of their respective choruses of solos.

**1. “Bud’s Bubble” (AKA “Little Benny” or “Crazeology”) from *The Bud Powell Trio* recorded January 10, 1947 with Powell, Russell and Roach. 2’33”**

Form: 32-bar A-A-B-A

Introduction: 8 bars

Head in: Piano

First solo: Piano, 2 choruses

Second solo: Drums, 1 chorus (trades 4s)

Head out: Piano + tag

Total Choruses: 5

Piano: 5 total choruses + the “head in” and “head out” + 2 choruses of solos = 9

Bass: 5 total choruses + 0 choruses of solos = 5

Drums: 5 total choruses + 1 chorus of solos = 6

The equilateral triangle on the left represents equal prominence among membership; and the superimposed scalene triangle on the right serves to illustrate the prominence of Powell on this tune. The piano is featured 4/5ths of the time; the drums are featured 1/5th of the time; and the bass takes a 100% supporting role. In terms of instituting magnanimity among his membership, *The Bud Powell Trio*, Powell’s first effort as leader, set the tone for individual expression within much of his work to come.

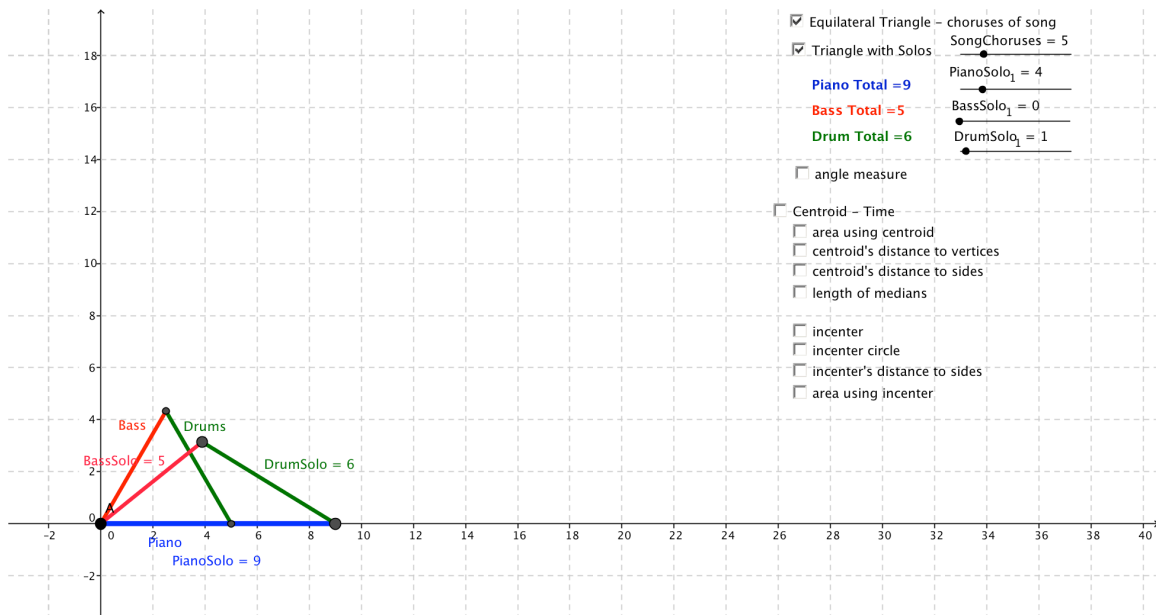


Fig. 7.25 A representation of “Bud’s Bubble”

## 2. “Off Minor” from *A Portrait of Thelonious* recorded December 17, 1961 with Powell, Michelot and Clarke. 5’30”

Form: 32-bar A-A-B-A

Introduction: none

Head in: Piano

First solo: Piano, 5 choruses

Head out: Piano

Total choruses: 7

Piano: 7 total choruses + the “head in” and “head out” + 5 choruses of solos = 14

Bass: 7 total choruses + 0 choruses of solos = 7

Drums: 7 total choruses + 0 choruses of solos = 7

Consider the distribution of solos on the following selections from one Powell’s seminal recordings, *A Portrait of Thelonious*, recorded in 1961, fourteen years after he recorded *The Bud Powell Trio*. On this recording, the piano once again is by far the most prominently featured of all three members, following the stereotypical jazz piano trio model where the pianist is the bandleader and focal point. Serving as the ‘frame around a picture’ of Powell, the bassist and drummer function in an overwhelmingly supportive role serving as the canvas on which Powell splashes one color after another – in three cases, for the entire length of the tune. The nascency of the democratic tendency that was

beginning to develop within the jazz piano trio format – in big part attributable to the mindset of Evans – could be taken into consideration here, but this recording was made two years after Evans’s groundbreaking recording “Portrait in Jazz” in 1959. Clearly, Powell was not influenced by Evans’s penchant for creating an even playing field on *A Portrait of Thelonious*.

In Fig. 7.26 below, the equilateral triangle on the left represents the total number of choruses of the piece. The superimposed triangle to the right takes the form of just a single line, representing the complete prominence of Powell who plays the “head in” and the “head out” and takes five choruses of solos. Bassist Michelot and drummer Clarke, representing the other two sides necessary to form the triangle were unaccounted for inasmuch as they were relegated to taking a 100% supporting role on this piece.

Listening to this recording now, a half century later, the monochromaticism that resulted from just one soloist (Powell) is a glaring anomaly to recordings of piano trios made after Powell’s time. This is especially evident in the recordings of the Evans and Jarrett trios where the solos taken by their respective bassists and drummers not only added contrast to the overall presentation, they were also absolutely critical to each leader’s personal artistic mission. All to say, Fig. 7.26 clearly literally and figuratively represents the “one-sidedness” of Powell’s rendition of this Thelonious Monk staple.

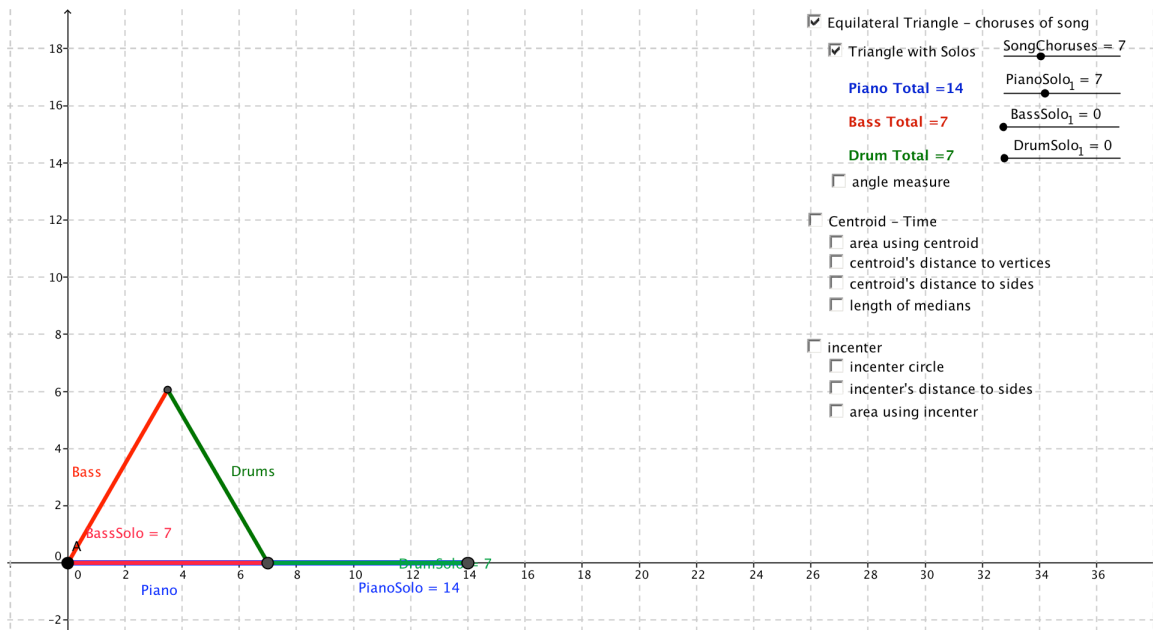


Fig. 7.26 A representation of “Off Minor”

### 3. “There Will Never Be Another You” from *A Portrait of Thelonious* Recorded December 17, 1961 with Powell, Michelot and Clarke. 4’20”

Form: 32-bar A-A1

Introduction: 4 bars

Head in: Piano

First solo: Piano, 3 choruses

Head out: Piano

Coda: 4 bars (same as Intro)

Total choruses: 5

Piano: 5 total choruses + the “head in” and the “head out” + 3 choruses of solos = 8

Bass:  $5 + 0 = 5$

Drums:  $5 + 0 = 5$

Comparing “Off Minor” in Fig. 7.26 with “There Will Never Be Another You” in Fig. 7.27 below, the prominence of leader Powell (again the only soloist on this tune) represented by just a single line, is visually obvious.



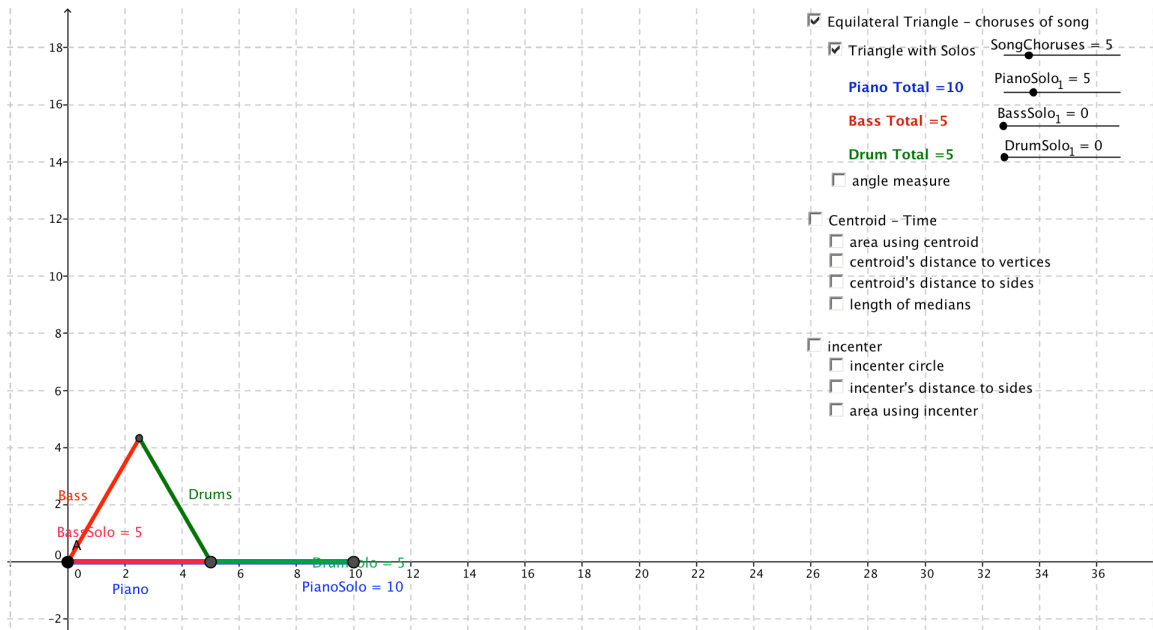


Fig. 7.27 A representation of “There Will Never Be Another You”

#### 4. “No Name Blues” from *A Portrait of Thelonious* Recorded December 17, 1961 with Powell, Michelot and Clarke, drums. 6’41”

Form: 12-bar blues  
 Introduction: BD (8 bars)  
 Head in: Piano, 2 choruses  
 First solo: Piano, 13 choruses  
 Second solo: Bass, 4 choruses  
 Head out: Piano, 2 choruses  
 Total choruses: 21  
 Piano: 21 total choruses + 2 “heads in” and 2 “heads out” + 13 choruses of solos = 38  
 Bass: 21 total choruses + 4 choruses of solos = 25  
 Drums: 21 total choruses + 0 choruses of solos = 21

In Fig. 7.28, the equilateral triangle on the left represents the total number of choruses of “No Name Blues.” The superimposed isosceles triangle to the right represents the total number of choruses of the piece plus the total number of solos taken by each component member and clearly illustrates the prominence of Powell with thirteen choruses of solos. Moving in a more democratic direction though, supporting member bassist Michelot was given four choruses of solos on this track. However, all in all, Powell took a solo over three times the length of the bassist, further illustrating his prominence on this tune. Note that the centroid (the center of gravity) is closest to the most prominent member, Powell.

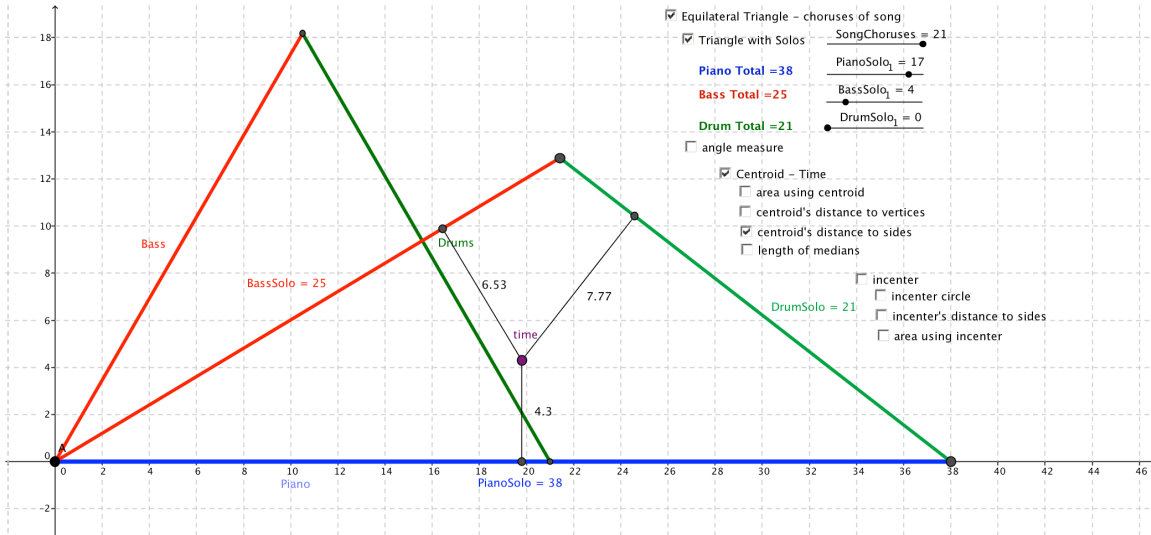


Figure 7.28 A representation of “No Name Blues”

**5. “I Ain’t Foolin’ from *A Portrait of Thelonious*  
Recorded December 17, 1961 with Powell, Michelot and Clarke. 3’ 24”**

Form: 32-bar A-A-B-A

Introduction: None

Head in: Piano

First solo: Piano, 4 choruses

Head out: Piano

Total choruses: 6

Piano: 6 total choruses + the “head in” and the “head out” + 4 choruses of solos = 12

Bass: 6 total choruses + 0 choruses of solos = 6

Drums: 6 total choruses + 0 choruses of solos = 6

Again, Powell is the only soloist, represented by a single line (Fig. 7.29).

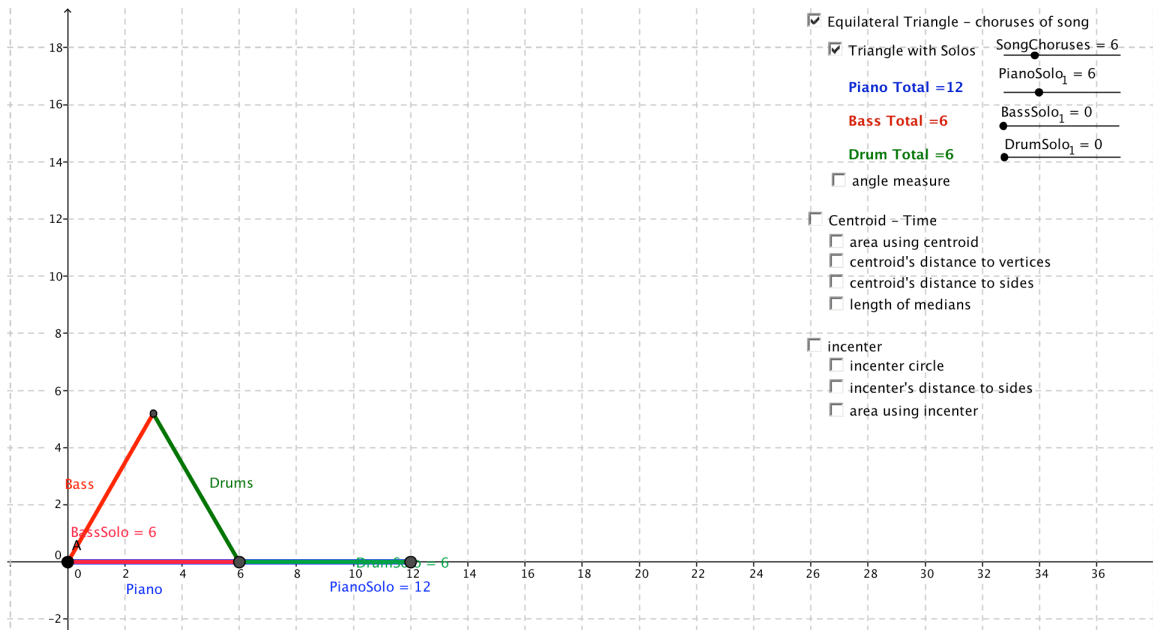


Fig. 7.29 A representation of “I Ain’t Foolin’”

### 6. “Squatty” from *A Portrait of Thelonious* Recorded December 17, 1961 with Powell, Michelot and Clarke, drums. 5’57”

Form: 32-bar A-A-B-A

Intro: drums, 4 bars

Head in: Piano

First solo: Piano, 5 choruses

Second solo: Bass, 1 chorus

Head out: Piano

Total choruses: 8

Piano: 8 total choruses + the “head in” and “head out” + 5 choruses of solos = 15

Bass: 8 total choruses + 1 chorus of solos = 9

Drums: 8 total choruses + 0 choruses of solos = 8

The scalene trio to the right in Fig. 7.30 below illustrates the prominence of Powell in terms of just the lengths of the sides. Fig. 7.31 includes the area of the three inner triangles representing the equal commitment of each component member to time/pulse. (The area of each triangle is the same irrespective of the lengths of the sides, representing each component member’s equally shared commitment to time/pulse.) The centroid is closest to Powell (the most prominent member). Also, the smallest angles are those closest to Powell (again the most prominent member).

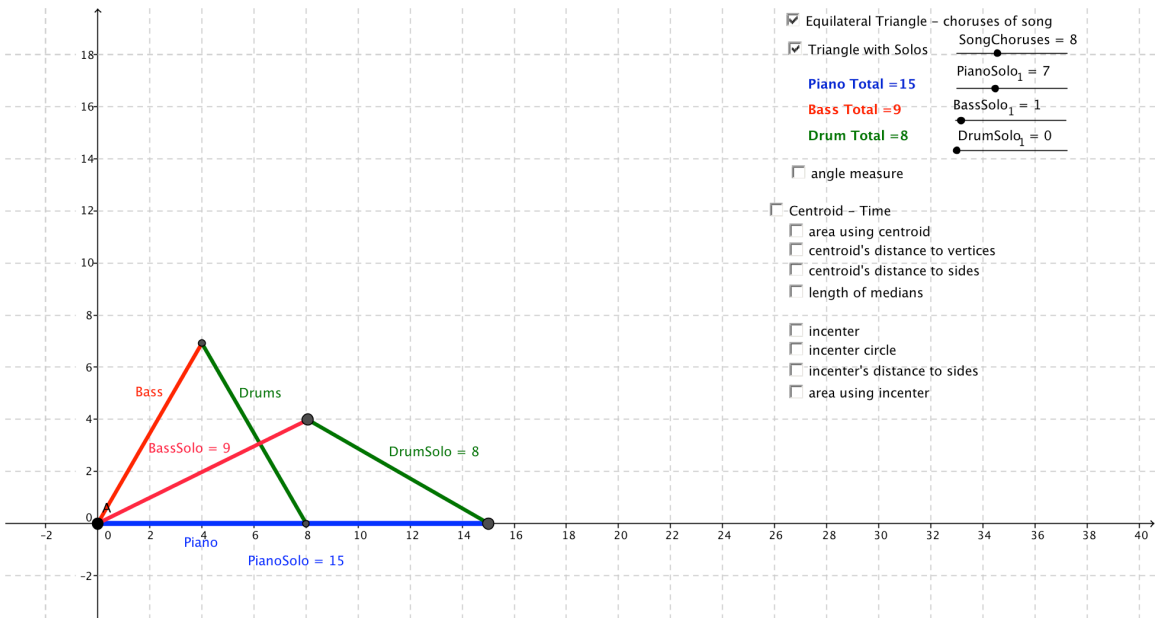


Fig. 7.30 A representation of “Squatty”

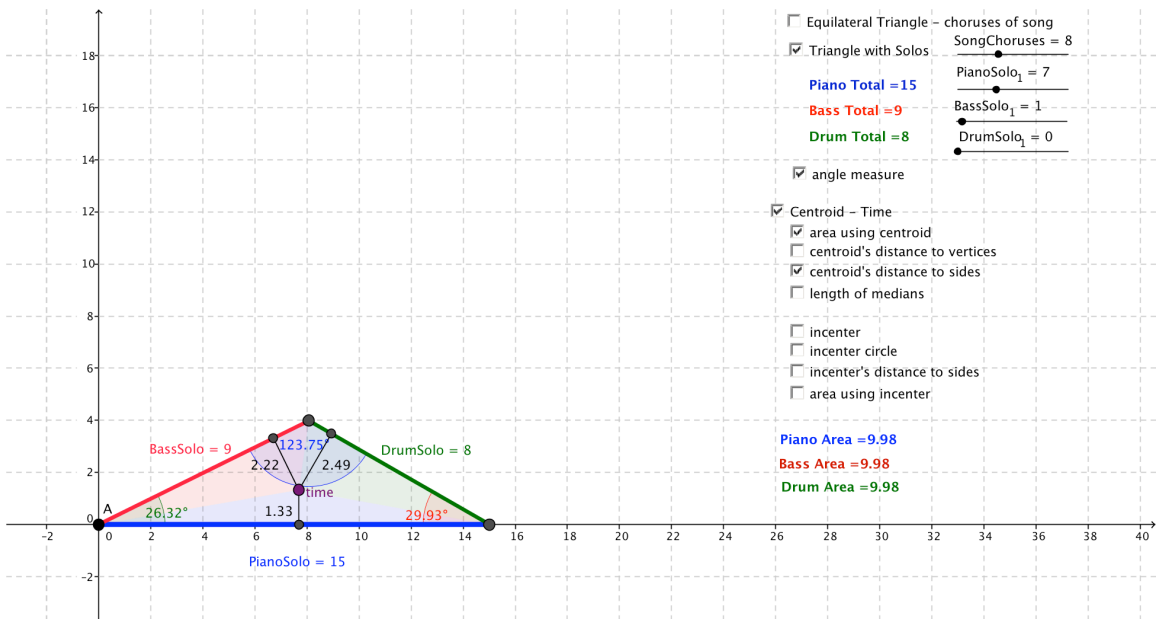


Figure 7.31 A representation of “Squatty” including the area of the three inner triangles

As stated above, from Powell’s earliest trio recording as leader (*The Bud Powell Trio* recorded in 1947) to one of his last and best (*A Portrait of Thelonious* recorded in 1961), Bud chose to remain the most prominent among the membership of his various trios. However, on “No Name Blues”, bassist Michelot did take four choruses of solos, following Powell’s thirteen-chorus solo. Be that as it may, consider that on Evans’s version of “Autumn Leaves” on *A Portrait in Jazz* – recorded in 1959, two years earlier

than *A Portrait of Thelonious* – Evans not only gave LaFaro the first solo, he also gave him more than one chorus and then featured him trading 4s! (see “Autumn Leaves,” (Fig. 7.32) below.)

**7. “Autumn Leaves” from *A Portrait in Jazz* (mono version)  
Recorded December 28, 1959 with Evans, LaFaro and Motian. 5’26”**

Form: AABC  
 Introduction: 8 bars  
 Head in: Piano  
 First solo: Bass, 2 choruses  
 Second solo: Piano, 3 choruses  
 Third solo: Bass, 1 chorus (trades 4s)  
 Head out: Piano + tag  
 Total Choruses: 8  
 Piano: 8 total choruses + the “head in” and “head out” + 3 choruses of solos = 13  
 Bass: 8 total choruses + 3 choruses of solos = 11  
 Drums: 8 total choruses + 0 choruses of solos = 8

On “Autumn Leaves” from the 1959 Bill Evans Trio recording *A Portrait in Jazz*, bassist LaFaro not only takes the first solo, he takes two choruses and also trades fours with Evans on one chorus, following Evans’s solo. The triangle in Fig. 7.32 clearly illustrates the democratization of the Evans trio where the pianist and bassist are almost equally prominent.

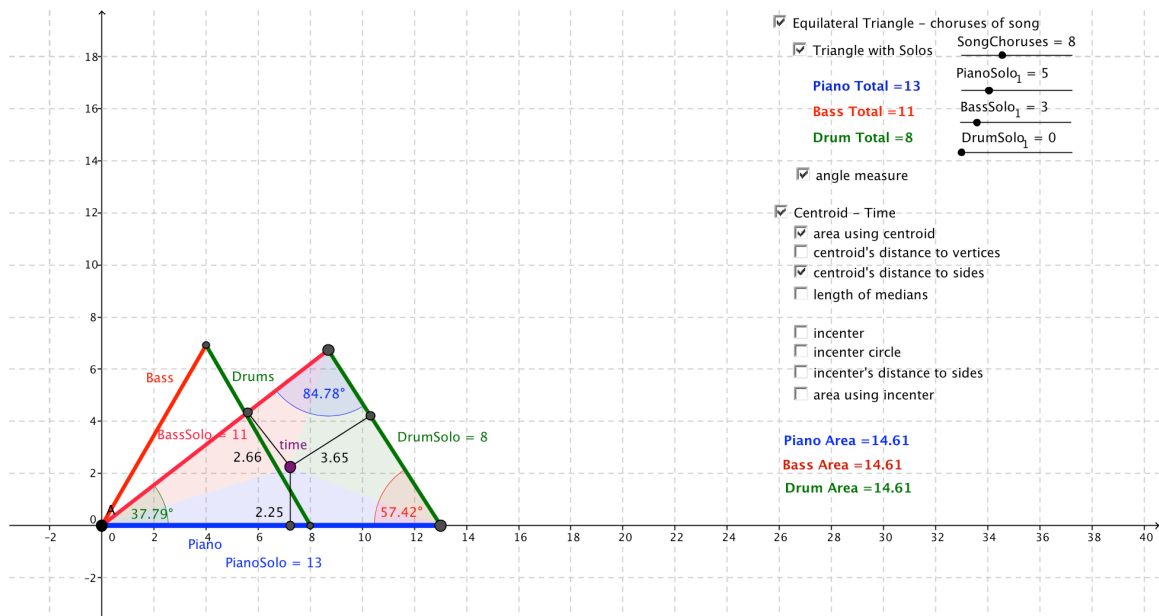


Fig. 7.32 A representation of “Autumn Leaves”

**8. “My Romance” from *Momentum* recorded February 4, 1972 with Evans, Gomez and Morell. 10’24”**

Form: 32-bar A-A1

Total Choruses: 14

Introduction: Piano, 1 chorus (not factored into the calculations)

Head in: Piano

First solo: Drums, 1 chorus

Second solo: Bass, 1 chorus

Third solo: Drums, 1 chorus

Fourth solo: Bass, 1 chorus

Fifth solo: Drums, 1 chorus

Sixth solo: Bass, 1 chorus

Seventh solo: Drums, 1 chorus

Eighth solo: Piano, 1 chorus

Ninth solo: Drums, 1 chorus

Tenth solo: Piano, 1 chorus

Eleventh solo: Drums, 1 chorus

Twelfth solo: Piano, 1 chorus

“Head out”: Piano + tag (arranged)

Piano: 14 total choruses + the “head in” and “head out” + 3 choruses of solos = 19

Bass: 14 total choruses + 3 choruses of solos = 17

Drums: 14 total choruses + 6 choruses of solos = 20

As discussed in Chapter Five (the Evans Trio Gestalt), beginning with the 1972 recording of “My Romance” with Gomez-Morell through the 1980 recording with Johnson and LaBarbera, Evans used this standard as a means to feature his sidemen – in particular, the drummer – who trade solos over entire 32-bar choruses. Per Fig. 7.33, the longest side belongs to drummer, Morell. The widest angle belongs to Evans who is the least prominent member.

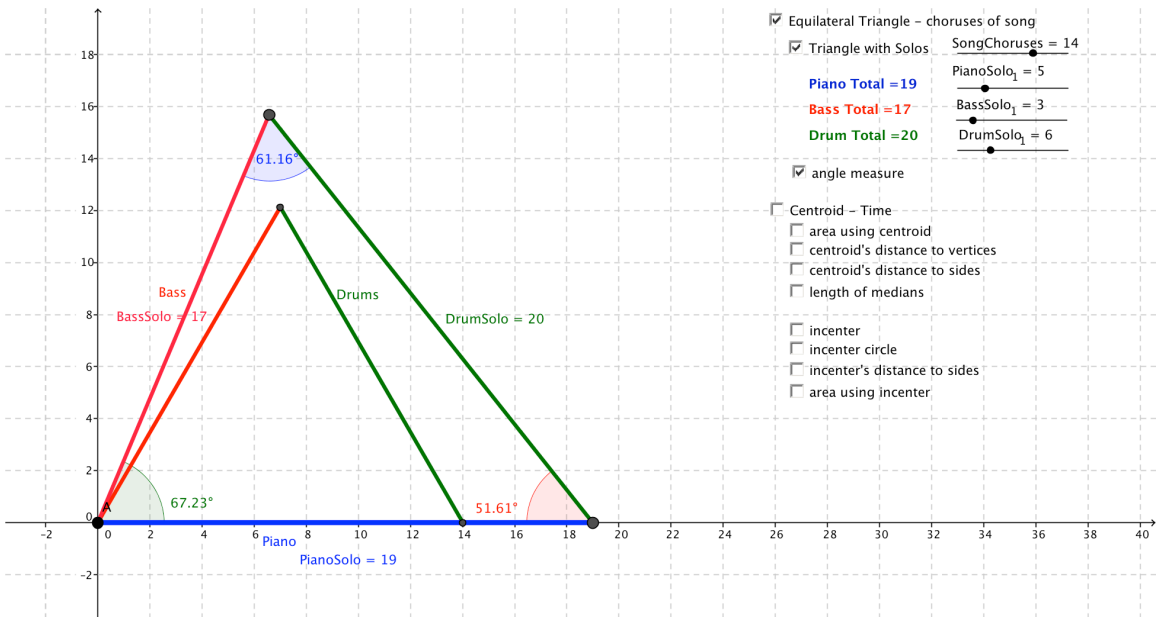


Fig. 7.33 A representation of “My Romance”

Note that in Fig. 7.34 below, the distance from the centroid to the drums, the most prominent member, is the shortest, representing the degree to which a component member influences rhythmic tendency. It is Morell who is most prominent and therefore has the most sway in setting the tendency for rhythmic feel or the relationship of rhythm to the time/pulse. Both Evans and Gomez support the tendency.

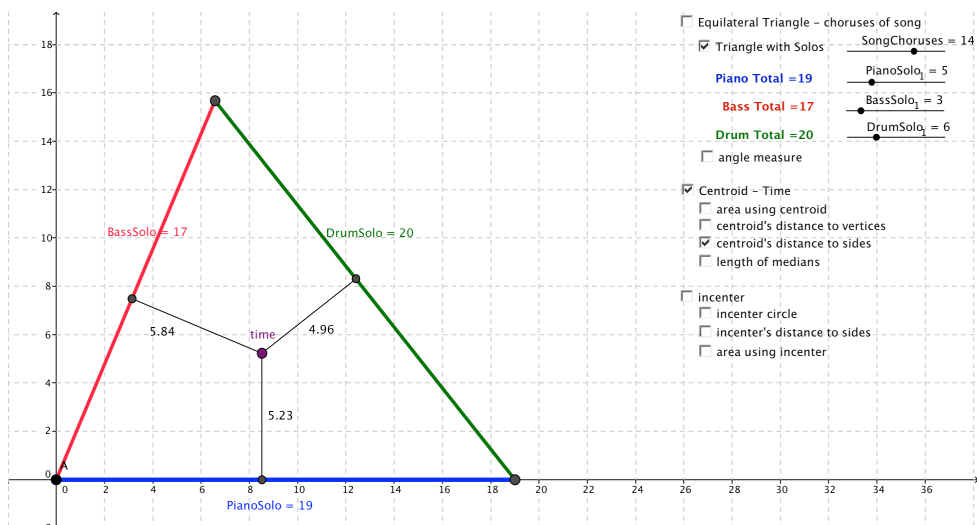


Fig. 7.34 A representation of “My Romance” relative to the centroid

### 9. “Five Brothers” from *The Out of Towners*

Recorded July 28, 2001 with Jarrett, Peacock and DeJohnette, drums. 11’13”

Form: 32-bar A-A-B-A

Introduction: None

Head in: Piano

First solo: Piano, 9 choruses

Second solo: Bass, 2 choruses

Third solo: Drums, 2 choruses (trades 8s)

Head out: Piano

Total choruses: 15

Piano: 15 total choruses + the “head in” and “head out” + 9 choruses of solos) = 26

Bass: 15 total choruses + 2 choruses of solos = 17

Drums: 15 total choruses + 2 choruses of solos = 17

Although the distribution of solos on this recording is indicative of this unit’s tendency to feature all component members, Jarrett takes the lion’s share of the solos. The piano is by far the most prominently featured of all three instruments, once again following the stereotypical jazz piano trio model where the pianist and bandleader is the focal point. Both bassist and drummer however are given two choruses of solos weighing in somewhere between the often autocratic Powell-led trios and always democratic Evans-led trios. However, as supported in Chapter Six, the extent of individual expression evident within the Jarrett trios clocks in higher than that within the Evans trios, based not on number of solos per se, but on the absolute extemporaneity that characterized the “Standards” Trio’s playing field – an abstract condition that cannot be illustrated using the basic structural components of a triangle.

In Fig. 7.35 below, the equilateral triangle on the left represents the total number of choruses of “Five Brothers.” The superimposed isosceles triangle to the right represents the total number of choruses of the piece plus the total number of solos taken by each component member. The isosceles triangle clearly illustrates the prominence of leader Jarrett who took nine choruses of solos. The supporting members, Peacock and DeJohnette, demonstrate equal prominence, with two choruses of solos each. Note that the centroid’s (center of gravity) distance to the sides is shortest (closest) to the most prominent member, Jarrett. Note also that the smallest angles are those closest to Jarrett.



The area relative to the centroid is the same for all members regardless of prominence, representing respective membership's equal commitment to time/pulse.

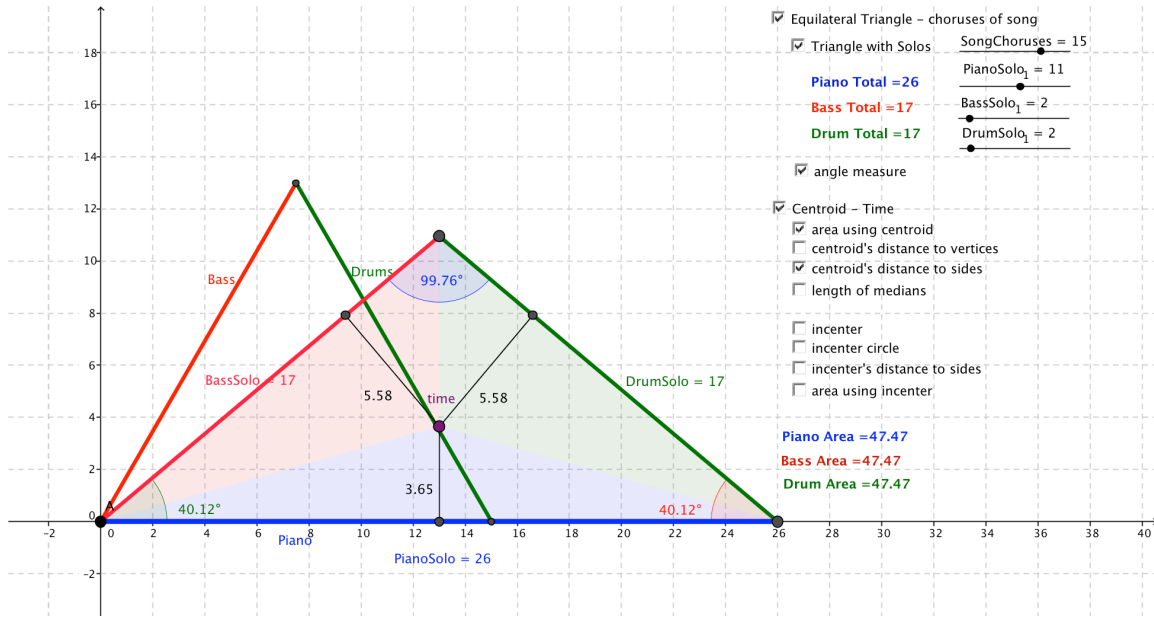


Fig. 7.35 A representation of “Five Brothers”

In the isosceles triangle in Fig. 7.36, below, the incenter's distance to the sides remains equal (4.75), once again representing the respective component membership's continuous commitment to the overall artistic objective. Compare this with the centroid's distance to the sides in Fig. 7.34, above. In this illustration, the centroid's distance to the sides (5.58) is the same for the bassist and drummer who both take the same number of solos. However, it is less (3.65) for the pianist who is the most prominent, supporting the analogy that the center of gravity is closest to the most prominent component member – again, the member who is most responsible for setting the tendency of time/pulse.

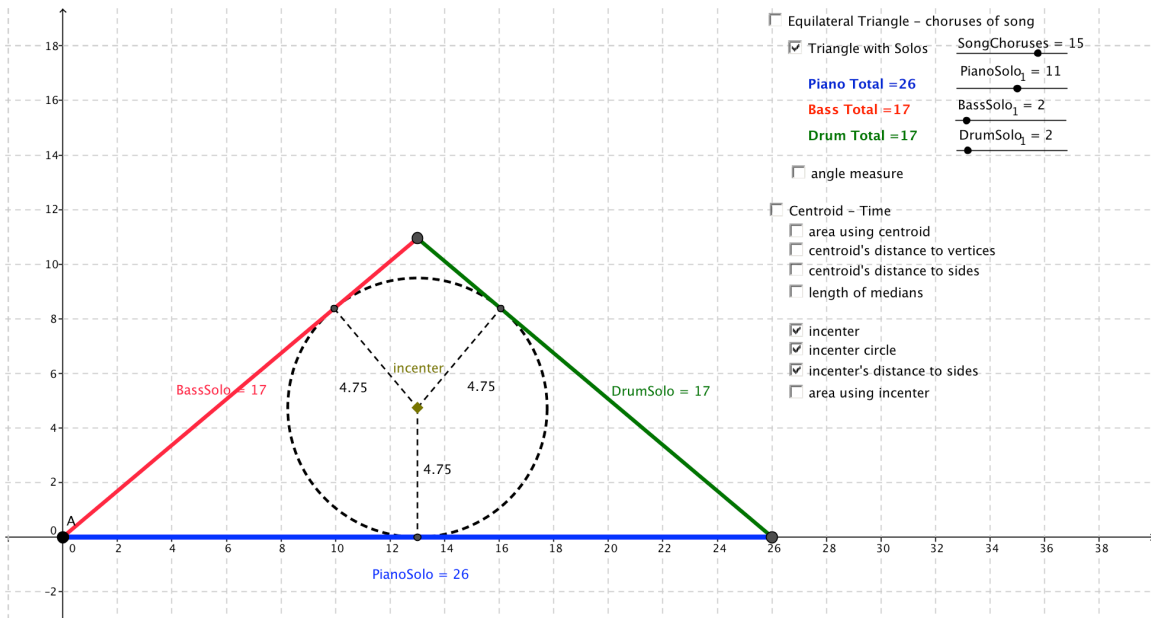


Fig. 7.36 A representation of “Five Brothers” relative to the incenter

In Fig. 7.37 below, the lengths of the median to bass and median to drums are equal (20.25). The median to piano (10.95) however, is less, supporting the analogical relationship of the median: The median represents the relationship of one component member to the other two component members i.e, piano to bass/drums; bass to piano/drums; and drums to piano/bass. Note: the shortest median belongs to the most prominent component member, i.e., the component member with the longest side and closest to the centroid or time/pulse.

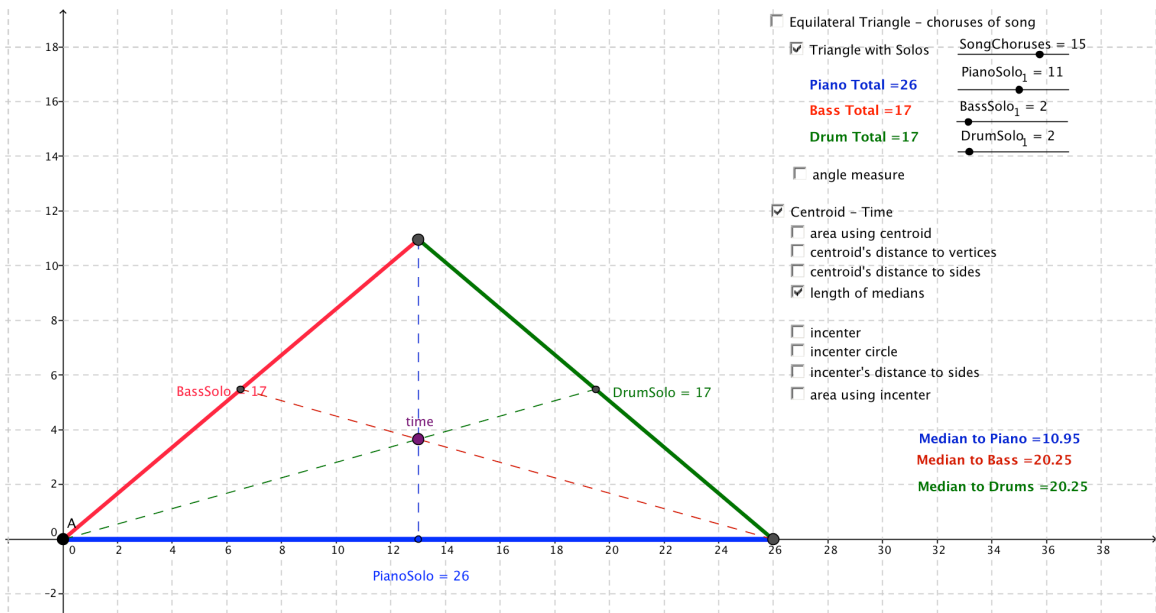


Fig. 7.37 A representation of “Five Brothers” relative to the median

In Fig. 7.38 below, the area of the three inner triangles using the incenter represents the level of contribution made by each component member to the collective artistic objective. Note that the area of the bassist and drummer is equal (42.35) based on their equal prominence in this particular piece. However, the area of the pianist (59.79) is greater reflecting this component member’s overall greater prominence and responsibility in forwarding the overall artistic objective. Note: the distance of each side to the incenter is the same irrespective of the lengths of the sides, representing component members’ equally shared commitment to the collective artistic end.

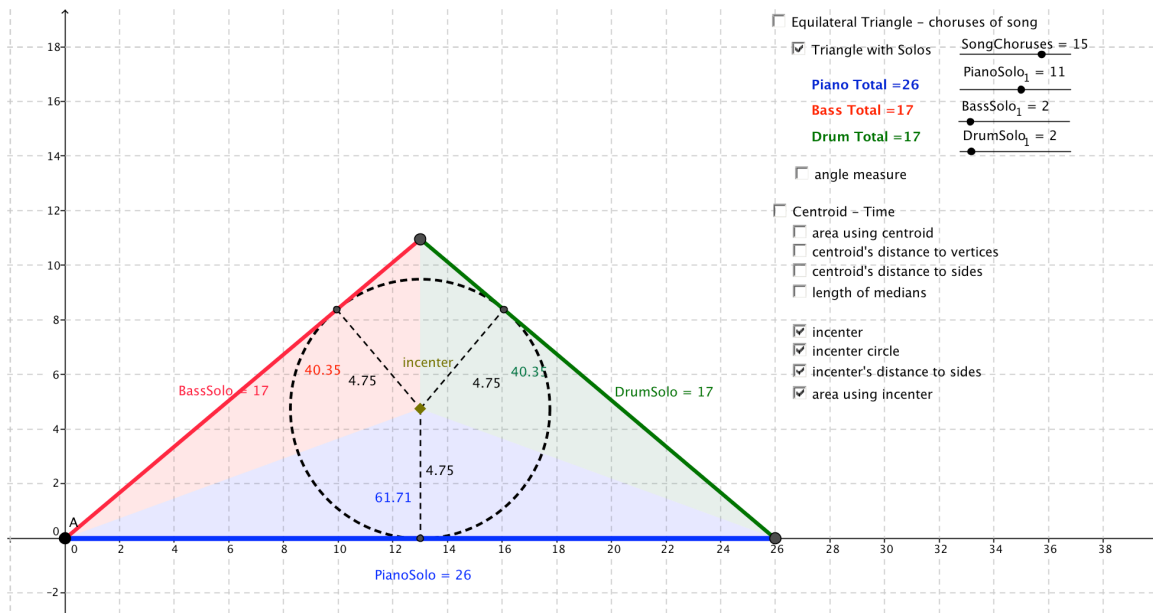


Fig. 7.38 The area of the three triangles relative to the incenter

### 10. "Four" from *My Foolish Heart* recorded July 22, 2001 with Jarrett, Peacock and DeJohnette. 9'10"

Form: 32-bar A-A1

Head in: Piano

First solo: Piano, 8 choruses

Second solo: Bass, 2 choruses

Third solo, Drums, 2 choruses (trades 8s)

Head out: Piano

Total choruses: 14

Piano:  $14 + 8 = 22$

Bass:  $14 + 2 = 16$

Drums:  $14 + 2 = 16$

"Four," is quite consistent with the levels of prominence on "Five Brothers." (These two tunes were recorded within less than a week of one another.) Again, in this isosceles triangle, Jarrett is the most prominent component member. Therefore, the centroid is closest to Jarrett; the smallest angles are closest to Jarrett; but the area respective to the centroid is equal irrespective of the level of prominence among membership, illustrating the trio's collective commitment to time/pulse.

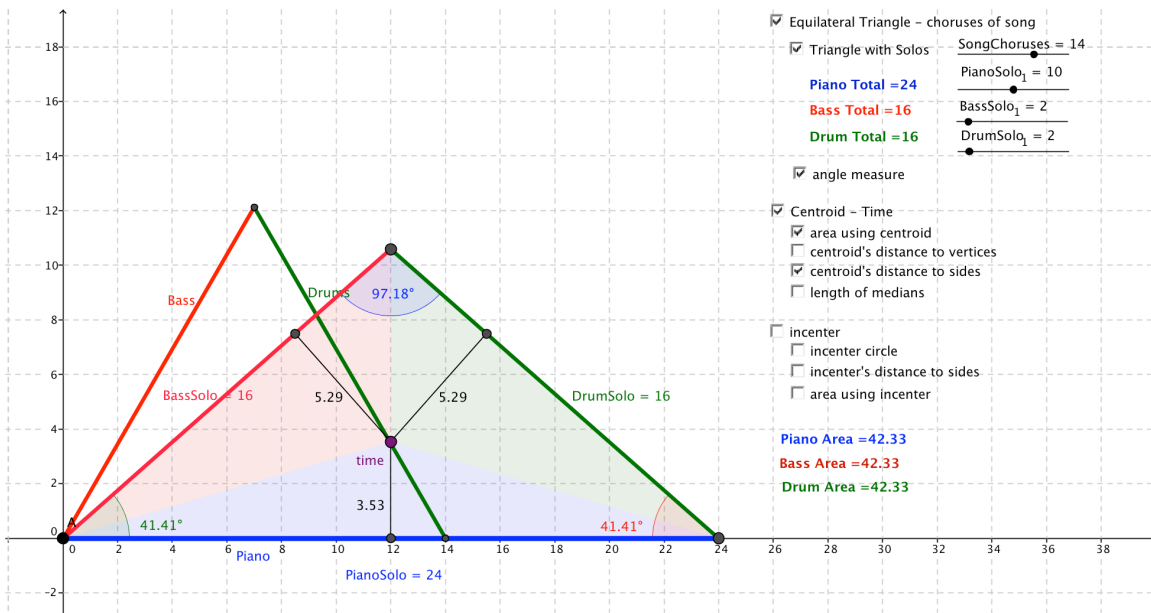


Fig. 7.39 A representation of “Four”

All of the triangles above represent *completed* versions of tunes as performed by one of the three modern jazz piano trios. But, *over the course of a given tune*, what process did each trio/triangle undergo to end up with its particular shape and corresponding characteristics? The following triangles represent the transition the trio/triangle made over “Four,” from beginning to end of the tune, relative to the centroid (the center of gravity). For example, Fig. 7.40 represents “Four” prior to any activity whatsoever (an equilateral triangle); Fig. 7.41 adds Jarrett’s “head in”; Fig. 7.42 adds Jarrett’s eight choruses of solos; Fig. 7.43 adds Peacock’s two choruses of solos; Fig. 7.44 adds DeJohnette’s two choruses of solos; and finally, Fig. 7.45 adds Jarrett’s “head out.”

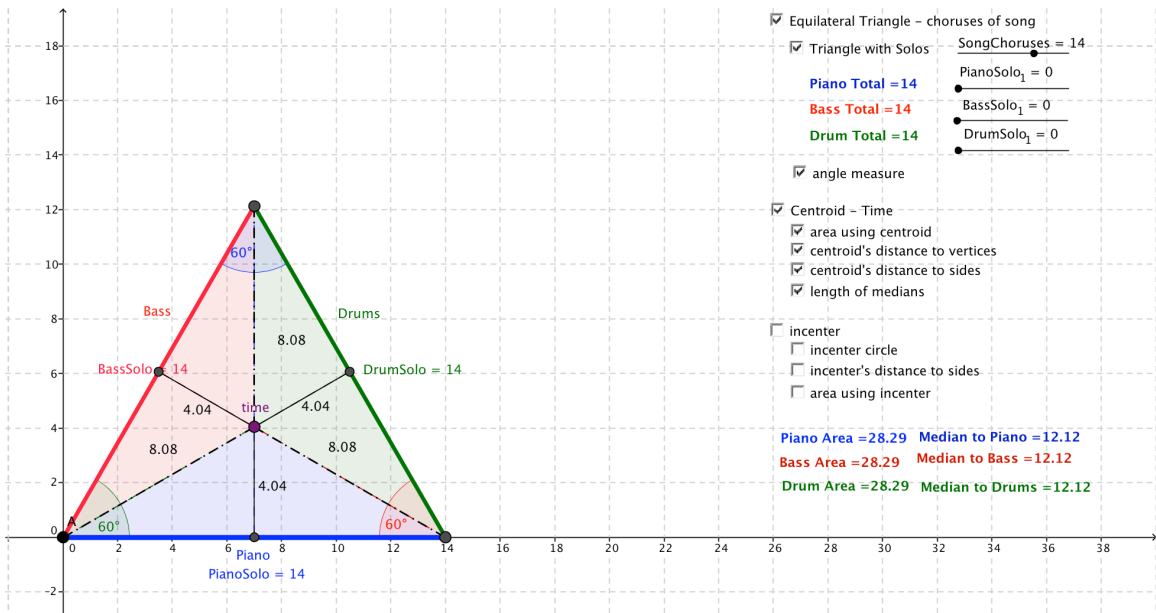


Fig. 7.40 A representation of “Four” prior to any activity

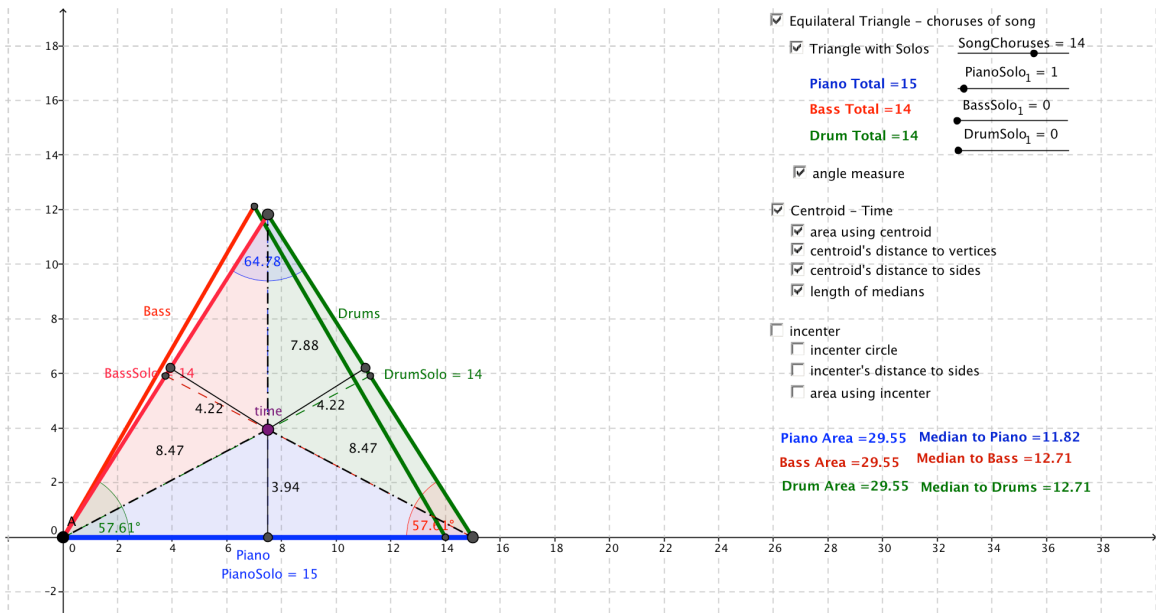


Fig. 7.41 A representation of “Four,” adding the “head in”

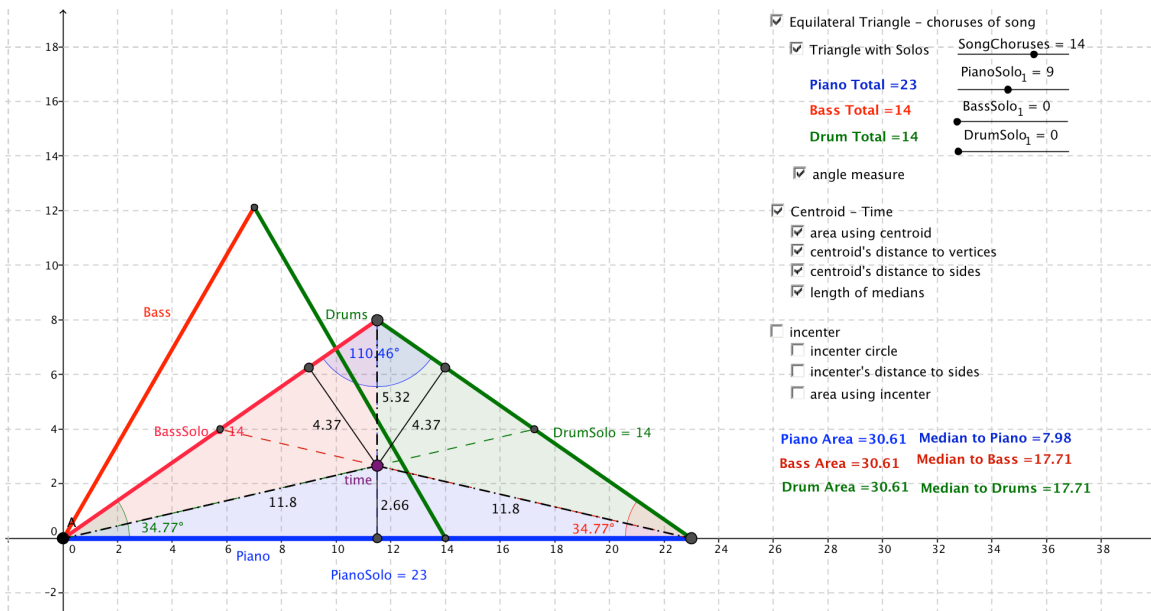


Fig. 7.42 A representation of “Four,” adding Jarrett’s eight choruses of solos

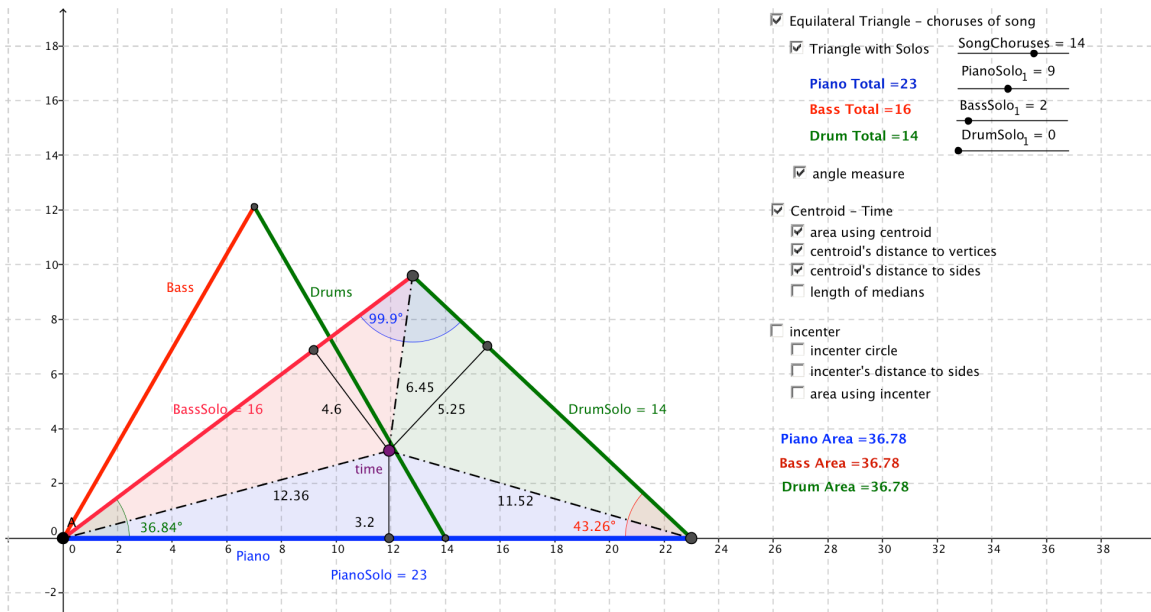


Fig. 7.43 A representation of “Four,” adding Peacock’s two choruses of solos

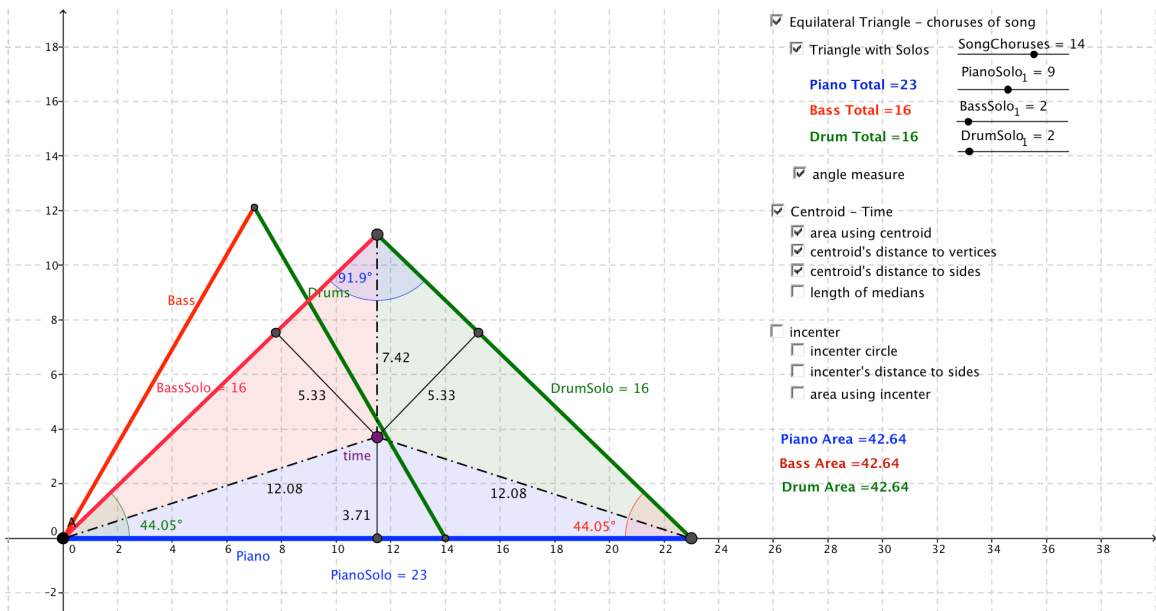


Fig. 7.44 A representation of “Four,” adding DeJohette’s two choruses of solos

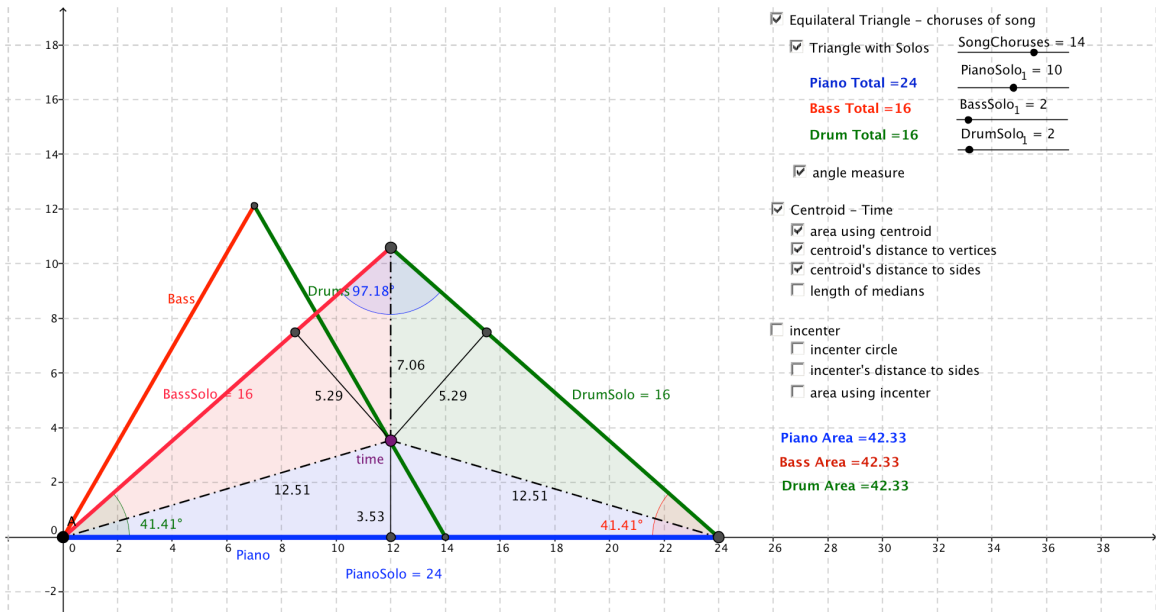


Fig. 7.45 A representation of “Four,” adding the “head out”



### **7.3 Summary**

This chapter serves to highlight the similarities between two discrete, self-contained paradigms: the smallest yet strongest plane polygon, the triangle, and the smallest yet strongest unit in jazz, the jazz piano trio, examining a selection of recorded repertoire by modern jazz piano trio leaders, Powell, Evans and Jarrett. The above examples illustrate the point that just as each of the triangle's unique structural aspects plays an indispensable role in determining its unique shape, each of the three trios' members plays an indispensable role in determining the unit's overall artistic gestalt.

## Conclusion

### THE MODERN JAZZ PIANO TRIO: GREATER THAN THE SUM OF ITS PARTS

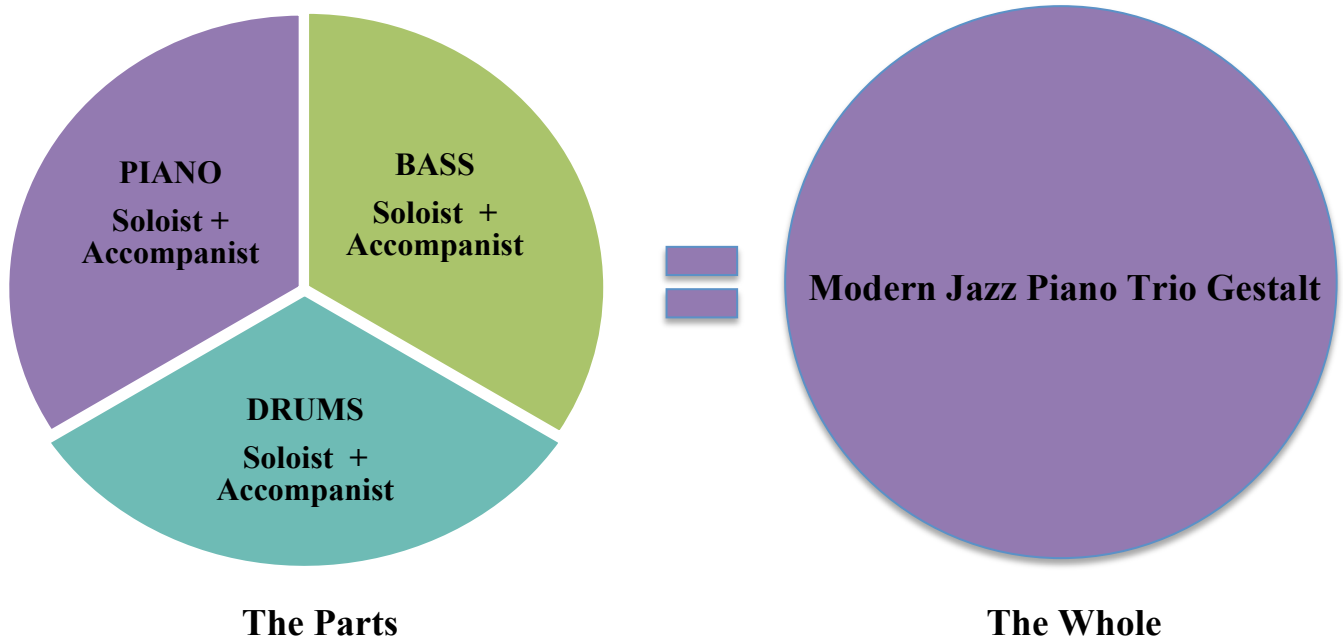


Fig. 8. A representation of the modern jazz piano trio gestalt

*“By virtue of the triad, unity and diversity of which it is composed are restored to harmony.” – Pythagorean number symbolism (Calter 2008: 5)*

Elaborating further on the meaning of numbers (as touched upon briefly in Chapter Seven), Calter notes that unlike the quantitative implication the word “number” has today, the Pythagoreans viewed a number as a manifestation of a particular qualitative and “sometimes fanciful” attribute. (Calter 2008: 5 and 435) The numbers one through three, as viewed through the eyes of the Pythagoreans, could hypothetically correlate with the development of the jazz piano trio, beginning with its earliest solo piano roots, on. That is, Calter describes the number one as follows:

*“The number one, or Unity, was called the monad by the Pythagoreans. It was seen as the source of all numbers, good, desirable, and indivisible. ‘Unity is the principle of all things and the most dominant of all that is: All things emanate from it and it emanates from nothing. It is indivisible and...it is immutable and never departs from its own nature through multiplication ( $1 \times 1 = 1$ ). Everything that is intelligible and not yet created exists in it...’ (Calter 2008: 435)*

The last sentence, “Everything that is intelligible and not yet created exists in it,” taken from Theon of Smyrna, *Mathematics Useful for Understanding Plato*, p. 66 (Calter 2008: 36), plausibly corresponds to pre-Powell solo jazz piano styles – and in particular, piano ragtime – which served as the wellspring of modern jazz piano style. Recall Feather’s bold statement in Chapter Two: “In the beginning there was ragtime.” (Feather 1949: 3)

The number two is not applicable here in that the duo format never took hold in the same way that the solo jazz pianist or the jazz piano trio has. Could the Pythagorean’s view of this number have any bearing on this phenomenon? Calter maintains: “The number two, the dyad, represented diversity, duality, a loss of unity, the number of excess and defect.” (Calter 2008: 5)

The number three is the only number equal to the sum of the previous two numbers ( $1 + 2 = 3$ ). The Pythagorean’s view of the number three supports the argument that there is an inherent “harmony” within the jazz piano trio: With three, the triad, that dualism was resolved. The two extremes were united, giving Harmonia.” (Calter 2008: 5)

This thesis has attempted to explain the emergence, evolution and staying power of the piano-led, piano-bass-drums-comprised modern jazz piano trio, a unit wherein the immutable requisite of each instrumentalist is a manifestation of absolute technical virtuosity and artistic merit. Each member of the group is required to serve equally in the contexts of both soloist and accompanist in accomplishing the collective artistic objective, thus supporting the contention that the modern jazz piano trio intrinsically serves as the ultimate vehicle for individual expression within the context of the collective modern jazz improvisation paradigm – the perpetual paradoxical phenomenon of the jazz zeitgeist. In addition to addressing the rhythmic, harmonic and melodic complexity characteristic of

modern jazz, Ramsey emphasizes the potential for individuality via improvisation in the contexts as both soloists and accompanists:

*“Although historians may still debate whether bebop was a revolutionary or an evolutionary style development, agreement exists on its core qualities. Most prominently, bebop consists of an enriched melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic vocabulary that required astute musicianship and a “virtuosic bravado”. Bebop’s most significant contribution to the jazz tradition was in the area of improvisation, both in soloing and accompanying.”* (Ramsey 2013: 122)

Addressing this unit’s most relevant technical and stylistic jazz piano roots in both solo and ensemble contexts, this thesis traces the development of individuality, division of role and the gestalt existent within the agencies of solo piano ragtime at the turn of the twentieth century, through blues, boogie-woogie, stride and swing styles in both solo and ensemble contexts over the next forty plus years, to explain the emergence of the trio’s earliest modern jazz emissary, Earl “Bud” Powell – “the man” of bebop piano (Ramsey 2013: 122) just prior to mid-century. As mentioned throughout this thesis, Powell, the designated “father” of modern jazz piano style, served as one of Evans’s primary influences. As mentioned previously, by his own admission, both Powell’s and Evans’s styles and techniques had a major impact on Jarrett, who led the longest running jazz piano trio in the history of jazz.

What accounted for the emergence and fortitude of this supremely balanced democratic unit? From the perspective of the casual jazz onlooker, the modern jazz piano trio may look as though it were simply in the right place (New York City) at the right time (the 1940s), in the thick of the artistic upheaval that Ramsey describes as “a hotbed of activity for all manner of black artists.” (Ramsey 2013: 26) But, in actuality, it took almost fifty years of sifting through styles and techniques and rearranging roles and registers for the modern jazz piano trio to emerge, manifesting the prerequisite condition of democracy it does today.

Schuller’s observation that the process that each member of the rhythm section went through in seeking the “melodic realm” (Schuller 1989: 226) as a means to achieving

greater individual expression – to making a personal artistic mark – was seminal. It was through the agency of the improvised solo that this objective was realized. It took pianists almost fifty years to delegate one of its initial three roles: rhythm; the bassist to acquire an additional role: melody; and the drummer to participate as both accompanist and soloist. All of these developments took place as each made the transition to a higher register – literally in an attempt to be heard.

Each modern jazz piano leader made seminal contributions to the development of the jazz piano trio. A summary of those that are most notable follows here:

### **Powell**

- Powell, who was off in his own world mentally for most of his professional life, did not set any records for creating a democratic playing field within his various trios. However, one of the most critical contributions he made to jazz piano in general was his revolutionization of the role of the left hand – from its predictable stride-style devotion to an all-four-beats-per-bar pattern, to a sparse in-the-moment response-based approach to accompaniment that became known as “comping.”
- On par with bebop icon Charlie Parker, Powell’s ability to extemporaneously craft streams of complex eighth-note lines at breathtaking tempi was awe-inspiring and raised the bar for his contemporaries as well as all jazz pianists who succeeded him.
- Powell incorporated both polyrhythm and polymeter into his improvisation, a technique that later became one of Evans’s most prominent signature traits.
- A prolific composer, Powell’s innovative compositions, with clever introductions and interludes continue to rank among the most challenging repertoire in jazz today.

## Evans

- Evans transformed the jazz piano trio paradigm into a level playing field, requiring that his bass and drums cohorts demonstrate the highest artistic ability as both soloists *and* accompanists. Recognized for his groundbreaking melodically interactive trios, Evans's bassists were known for their solos, but also particularly for the highly contrapuntal contributions they made throughout the course of an entire tune.
- "Evans's harmonically sophisticated left-hand voicings were situated in the middle register, compelling the right hand to occupy a higher register. The frequent absence of roots in the lowest voice added an exciting element of harmonic implication to the mix."
- Evans consciously developed the technique of rhythmic displacement well beyond that of any of his predecessors (and quite possibly beyond any of his successors). A personal artistic mission, his mastery of rhythmic displacement became one of his strongest and most recognized artistic suits.

## Jarrett

- The Keith Jarrett "Standards" Trio with Peacock and DeJohnette functioned for thirty-one years – an unprecedented artistic marriage in jazz. This technically and artistically exceptional threesome developed an unprecedented rapport with one another, thriving solely on their combined respective intuition and the skeletal road map of a lead sheet.
- If Evans's trios from LaFaro-Motian on could be described as "pure" trios in that each member of the trio shared equally in overseeing all three (rhythmic, harmonic and melodic) roles, the Jarrett "Standards" Trio could be described as "purest trio" in that not only did all three members share equally in the total artistic outcome, other than an attachment to a thumbnail sketch of a lead sheet, their work was also without any preconception and absolutely extemporaneous. Without preconceived introductions and interludes such as those built into Powell's or Evans's repertoire for example, each member of the "Standards" trio was as free as they could possibly be to make individual artistic choices. This

aspect – ultimate freedom within the context of collective improvisation – supports the contention of this thesis, which is that among the three modern jazz piano leaders, Powell, Evans and Jarrett, it is Jarrett who trumps as the most democratic of them all. His collective’s only (and ironically, the safest) safety net was “the moment.” Jarrett’s modus operandi manifested itself in the trio’s overall sound – one that they achieved by being given the artistic “license” to play with complete abandon.

- Jarrett’s popularity grew to the point where he was able to play sold out shows in large concert halls – the antithesis of the intimate jazz club – notwithstanding his exaggerated showmanship, ecstatic outbursts and admonishments directed toward his audiences, all which proved to be a constant irritant. A multi-stylistic virtuoso, Jarrett became an enigma to his followers who were looking to pigeonhole him into one stylistic box or another. It is baffling to think that after hearing his enraptured introduction to “Come Rain or Come Shine” from *Still Live* (see Appendix 12), his joyful solo over “Five Brothers” from *The Out of Towners* (see Appendix 11) or any other of his non-jazz-related work for that matter, that there could be anything other than reverence for this brilliant musician and his trio.

To reiterate, the modern jazz piano trio paradigm manifests specific inherent characteristics that contribute to its unique place in the jazz continuum. To begin with, the small size of the group facilitates maximum individual expression via the improvised solo. The trio’s unique instrumentation – piano, double bass and drum set – produces a wealth of timbrally contrasting sounds that together create a sonically colorful and engaging artistic outcome. The distribution of roles and registers allows each instrument adequate discrete sonic space to get a “word” in. All three instrumentalists are required to be fully-fledged virtuosos and artists of the highest caliber who manifest the capability of exchanging rhythmic, harmonic and melodic roles equally as soloists as well as accompanists. The level artistic playing field among trio membership produces a mutually inspiring milieu, resulting in a gestalt of the highest order.

This focus of this thesis “The Modern Jazz Piano Trio” was born simply out of intuition, or better yet, based on nothing more than a feeling, supported by the author’s extensive professional experience as a jazz pianist, performing in a jazz piano trio – both as a stand-alone unit as well as the rhythm section of a larger ensemble. But in defense of origination, to quote Einstein “There is no logical way to the discovery of these elemental laws. There is only the way of intuition, which is helped by a feeling for the order lying behind the appearance.” (<http://bit.ly/1EwhVAn>)

The author’s practical experience has made this thesis more tenable; but the extensive research that has gone into documenting a plausible theoretical explanation for the long-lasting success of the modern jazz piano trio as a profoundly balanced modern jazz gestalt, has in this case at least, corroborated the value of instinct. Long live the jazz piano trio!



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**APPENDIX 1**

**Liner Notes to *Kind of Blue***

## **Liner Notes to *Kind of Blue***

Following are Bill Evans's liner notes from the original 1959 LP release:

*Improvisation in Jazz* by Bill Evans:

There is a Japanese visual art in which the artist is forced to be spontaneous. He must paint on a thin stretched parchment with a special brush and black water paint in such a way that an unnatural or interrupted stroke will destroy the line or break through the parchment. Erasures or changes are impossible. These artists must practice a particular discipline, that of allowing the idea to express itself in communication with their hands in such a direct way that deliberation cannot interfere.

The resulting pictures lack the complex composition and textures of ordinary painting, but it is said that those who see will find something captured that escapes explanation. This conviction that direct deed is the most meaningful reflection, I believe, has prompted the evolution of the extremely severe and unique disciplines of the jazz or improvising musician.

Group improvisation is a further challenge. Aside from the weighty technical problem of collective coherent thinking, there is the very human, even social need for sympathy from all members to bend for the common result. This most difficult problem, I think, is beautifully met and solved on this recording.

As the painter needs his framework of parchment, the improvising musical group needs its framework in time. Miles Davis presents here frameworks which are exquisite in their simplicity and yet contain all that is necessary to stimulate performance with a sure reference to the primary conception.

Miles conceived these settings only hours before the recording dates and arrived with sketches which indicated to the group what was to be played. Therefore, you will hear something close to pure spontaneity in these performances. The group had never played these pieces prior to the recordings and I think without exception the first complete performance of each was a "take."

Although it is not uncommon for a jazz musician to be expected to improvise on new material at a recording session, the character of these pieces represents a particular challenge.

Briefly, the formal character of the five settings are: "So What" is a simple figure based on 16 measures of one scale, 8 of another and 8 more of the first, following a piano and bass introduction in free rhythmic style. "Freddie Freeloader" is a 12-measure blues form given new personality by effective melodic and rhythmic simplicity. "Blue in Green" is a 10-measure circular form following a 4-measure introduction, and played by soloists in various augmentation and diminution of time values. "All Blues" is a 6/8 12-measure blues form that produces its mood through only a few modal changes and Miles Davis'

free melodic conception. "Flamenco Sketches" is a series of five scales, each to be played as long as the soloist wishes until he has completed the series. (<http://bit.ly/1NiPSwr>)

## **APPENDIX 2**

### **Glossary of Melodic Ornamentation**

## Glossary of Melodic Ornamentation

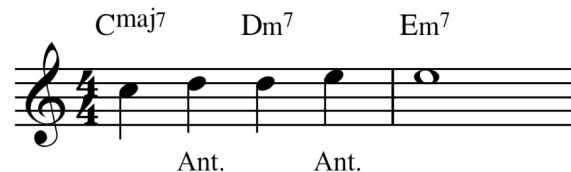
(For use in conjunction with “The Modern Jazz Piano Trio – the Rise of an Iconic Jazz Paradigm”)

Notes: All examples are written in the key of C and based on the major triad. All examples can also be applied to the minor triad.

Among the endless number of possibilities, melodic ornamentation in jazz generally adheres to the following “rule:” when approaching from above, use a diatonic tone; when approaching from below, use a chromatic tone (i.e., see 1a. and 2b. under Two-Note Neighbor Tone Figures).

### ANTICIPATION (Ant.)

A nonchord tone that anticipates a chord tone at the change of harmony.



Musical notation in 4/4 time showing three measures. The first measure is labeled C<sup>maj7</sup> and contains a quarter note G4. The second measure is labeled D<sup>m7</sup> and contains a quarter note G4. The third measure is labeled E<sup>m7</sup> and contains a quarter note G4. Below the first and second measures are the labels "Ant.".

### APPOGGIATURA (App.)

A diatonic or chromatic nonchord tone (incomplete neighbor) usually on a **strong beat approached** from above or below **by leap** (i.e., without preparation), and **resolving** up or down **by step** to a chord tone on a weak beat or division of a beat. Note: The appoggiatura is a suspension without preparation.



Musical notation in 4/4 time showing three measures. The first measure is labeled C<sup>maj7</sup> and contains a quarter note G4. The second measure contains a quarter note G4. The third measure contains a quarter note G4. Below the second measure is the label "App.".

### ESCAPE TONE (E.T.)

A nonchord tone approached by step by a chord tone in one direction and resolved by leap to a chord tone in the opposite direction. (The opposite of the appoggiatura.)



Musical notation in 4/4 time showing three measures. The first measure is labeled C<sup>maj7</sup> and contains a quarter note G4. The second measure contains a quarter note G4. The third measure contains a quarter note G4. Below the first, second, and third measures are the labels "E.T.".

### NEIGHBOR TONE (N.T.)

Complete: A nonchord tone moving **stepwise** (either diatonically or chromatically) from and back to a chord tone.

Incomplete: A nonchord tone moving **stepwise** (either diatonically or chromatically) either to or from a chord tone.

**Two-note Neighbor Tone Figures (Incomplete)**

A diatonic or chromatic nonchord tone that ornaments a chord tone directly above or below it (stepwise). Note: The incomplete neighbor tone figure may also be an appoggiatura when it is approached by leap and occurs on a strong beat.

**1a. Upper Diatonic**

A nonchord tone that moves diatonically down by step to a chord tone.



**1b. Lower Diatonic**

An inversion of 1a., a nonchord tone that moves diatonically up by step to a chord tone.



**2a. Upper Chromatic**

A nonchord tone that moves down chromatically or by half step to a chord tone.



**2b. Lower Chromatic**

An inversion of 2a., a nonchord tone that moves up chromatically or by half step to a chord tone.



## Three-Note Neighbor Tone Figures (Complete)

### 1a. Upper Diatonic

A nonchord tone that moves diatonically up from and then back down to a chord tone.



### 1b. Lower Diatonic

An inversion of 1a., nonchord tone that moves diatonically down from and then back up to a chord tone.



### 2a. Upper Chromatic

A nonchord tone that moves chromatically or by half step up from and then back down to a chord tone.



### 2b. Lower Chromatic

An inversion of 2a., a nonchord tone that moves by half step down from and back up to a chord tone.



## Four-Note Double Neighbor Tone Figures (the four-note “turn”)

Note: All examples begin on a *non-chord* tone and end on a *chord* tone.

### 1a. Upper-Lower Diatonic

Two nonchord tones: the first, a diatonic step above the chord tone; the second, a diatonic step below the chord tone.





**1b. Lower-Upper Diatonic**

An inversion of 1a., two nonchord tones: the first, a diatonic step below the chord tone; the second, a diatonic step above the chord tone.



**2a. Upper Diatonic-Lower Chromatic**

Two nonchord tones: the first, a diatonic step above the chord tone; the second, a chromatic or half step below the chord tone.



**2b. Lower-Chromatic-Upper Diatonic**

An inversion of 2a., two nonchord tones: the first, a chromatic or half step below the chord tone; the second, a diatonic step above the chord tone.



**3a. Upper Chromatic-Lower Diatonic**

Two nonchord tones: the first, a chromatic or half step above the chord tone; the second, a diatonic step below the chord tone.



U.N. L.N.

### 3b. Lower Diatonic-Upper Chromatic

An inversion of 3a., two nonchord tones: the first, a diatonic step below the chord tone; the second, a chromatic or half step above the chord tone.



### 4a. Upper and Lower Chromatic

Two nonchord tones: the first, a chromatic or half step above the chord tone; the second, a chromatic or half step below the chord tone.



### 4b. Lower and Upper Chromatic

An inversion of 4a., two nonchord tones: the first, a chromatic or half step below the chord tone; the second, a chromatic or half step above the chord tone.



### Five-Note Double Neighbor Tone Figures (the five-note "turn")

Note: All examples begin and end on a chord tone.

#### 1a. Upper-Lower Diatonic

Two nonchord tones: the first, a diatonic step above the chord tone; the second, a diatonic step below the chord tone.



#### 1b. Lower-Upper Diatonic

An inversion of 1a., two nonchord tones: the first, a diatonic step below the chord tone; the second, a diatonic step above the chord tone.



### 2a. Upper Diatonic-Lower Chromatic

Two nonchord tones: the first, a diatonic step above the chord tone; the second, a chromatic tone or half step below the chord tone.



### 2b. Lower Chromatic-Upper Diatonic

An inversion of 2a., two nonchord tones: the first, a diatonic step below the chord tone; the second, a chromatic tone or half step above the chord tone.



### 3a. Upper Chromatic-Lower Diatonic

Two nonchord tones: the first, a chromatic tone or half step above the chord tone; the second, a diatonic step below the chord tone.



### 3b. Lower Diatonic-Upper Chromatic

An inversion of 3a., two nonchord tones: the first, a diatonic step below the chord tone; the second, a chromatic or half step above the chord tone.



### 4a. Upper-Lower Chromatic

Two nonchord tones: the first, a chromatic or half step above the chord tone; the second, a chromatic tone or half step below the chord tone.



### 4b. Lower-Upper Chromatic

An inversion of 4a., two nonchord tones: the first, a chromatic tone or half step below the chord tone; the second, a chromatic or half step above the chord tone.



## PASSING TONE (P.T)

### 1. Diatonic Passing Tone

A diatonic tone moving upward or downward on a **weak beat or division of a beat (unaccented)** or on a **strong beat (accented)** between two adjacent chord tones. *Note: A diatonic passing tone is also referred to as a scale tone, a tone connecting two adjacent chord tones.*



### 2. Chromatic Passing Tone

A chromatic tone moving upward or downward on a **weak beat or division of a beat (unaccented)** or on a **strong beat (accented)** between two adjacent diatonic tones.



## "SURROUND" TONES

Two nonchord tones that leap the distance of a major or minor third, "surrounding" a chord tone above and below, by step.

### Three-Note "Surround" Tone Figures

#### 1a. Upper-Lower Diatonic

Two nonchord tones: the first, a diatonic tone above the chord tone; the second, a diatonic tone below the chord tone.



#### 1b. Lower-Upper Diatonic

An inversion of 1a., two nonchord tones: the first, a diatonic tone below the chord tone; the second, a diatonic tone above the chord tone.

Musical notation in 4/4 time, treble clef. The melody consists of four groups of three eighth notes. The first group is C4, D4, E4. The second group is D4, E4, F4. The third group is E4, F4, G4. The fourth group is F4, G4, A4. The notes are beamed together in groups of three, with a '3' above each group.

L.N. U.N.

### 2a. Upper Diatonic-Lower Chromatic

Two nonchord tones: the first, a diatonic tone above the chord tone; the second, a chromatic tone or half step below the chord tone.

Musical notation in 4/4 time, treble clef. The melody consists of four groups of three eighth notes. The first group is C4, D4, E4. The second group is D4, E4, F4. The third group is E4, F4, G4. The fourth group is F4, G4, A4. The notes are beamed together in groups of three, with a '3' above each group.

U.N. L.N.

### 2b. Lower-Chromatic-Upper Diatonic

An inversion of 2a., two nonchord tones: the first, a diatonic tone below the chord tone; the second, a diatonic tone above the chord tone.

Musical notation in 4/4 time, treble clef. The melody consists of four groups of three eighth notes. The first group is C4, B3, A3. The second group is B3, A3, G3. The third group is A3, G3, F3. The fourth group is G3, F3, E3. The notes are beamed together in groups of three, with a '3' above each group.

L.N. U.N.

### 3a. Upper Chromatic-Lower Diatonic

Two nonchord tones: the first, a chromatic tone or half step above the chord tone; the second, a diatonic tone below the chord tone.

Musical notation in 4/4 time, treble clef. The melody consists of four groups of three eighth notes. The first group is C4, D4, E4. The second group is D4, E4, F4. The third group is E4, F4, G4. The fourth group is F4, G4, A4. The notes are beamed together in groups of three, with a '3' above each group.

U.N. L.N.

### 3b. Lower Diatonic-Upper Chromatic

An inversion of 3a., two nonchord tones: the first, a chromatic tone or half step below the chord tone; the second, a chromatic tone or half step above the chord tone.

Musical notation in 4/4 time, treble clef. The melody consists of four groups of three eighth notes. The first group is C4, B3, A3. The second group is B3, A3, G3. The third group is A3, G3, F3. The fourth group is G3, F3, E3. The notes are beamed together in groups of three, with a '3' above each group.

L.N. U.N.

### 4a. Upper-Lower Chromatic

Two nonchord tones: the first, a chromatic tone or half step above the chord tone; the second, a chromatic tone or half step below the chord tone.



**4b. Lower-Upper Chromatic**

An inversion of 4a, two nonchord tones: the first, a chromatic tone or half step below the chord tone; the second, a chromatic tone or half step above the chord tone.



**Four-Note “Surround” Tone Figures**

A 4-note figure beginning and ending on a chord tone.

**1a. Upper-Lower Diatonic**

Two nonchord tones: the first, a diatonic tone above the chord tone; the second, a diatonic tone below the chord tone.



**1b. Lower-Upper Diatonic**

An inversion of 1a., two nonchord tones: the first, a diatonic tone below the chord tone; the second, a diatonic tone above the chord tone.



**2a. Upper Diatonic-Lower Chromatic**

Two nonchord tones: the first, a diatonic tone above the chord tone; the second, a chromatic tone or half step below the chord tone.



**2b. Lower Chromatic-Upper Diatonic**

An inversion of 2a., two nonchord tones: the first, a diatonic tone below the chord tone; the second, a diatonic tone above the chord tone.



### 3a. Upper Chromatic-Lower Diatonic

Two nonchord tones: the first, a chromatic tone or half step above the chord tone; the second, a diatonic tone below the chord tone.



### 3b. Lower Diatonic-Upper Chromatic

An inversion of 3a., two nonchord tones: the first, a chromatic tone or half step below the chord tone; the second, a chromatic tone or half step above the chord tone.



### 4a. Upper-Lower Chromatic

Two nonchord tones: the first, a chromatic tone or half step above the chord tone; the second, a chromatic tone or half step below the chord tone.



### 4b. Lower-Upper Chromatic

An inversion of 4a, two nonchord tones: the first, a chromatic tone or half step below the chord tone; the second, a chromatic tone or half step above the chord tone.



## SUSPENSION (Sus.)

A nonchord tone occurring on a **strong beat**, which is held over or repeated from one chord to another with which it creates a dissonance, and resolves downward by step on a beat or division of a beat in a weaker position. Note: The suspension is an appoggiatura with preparation.





## **APPENDIX 3**

### **Head of “Bud’s Bubble”**


# BUD'S BUBBLE

BUD POWELL

UP TEMPO SWING

DM17 Db7 GbMA7 B7b5

D7#5#9 G9 C7b5/G F7b5 B7b5

 Bb GM17 CM17 F7 DM17 GM17 CM11 F7

AbM17 Db7 GbMA9 CM1/G CM17 F7b5 Bb6 (F#7)

Bb GM17 CM17 F7 DM17 GM17 CM11 F7

AbM17 Db7 GbMA9 CM1/G CM17 F7b5 Bb6

D7 G7

C7 F7

B $\flat$  G $\flat$ M17 C $\flat$ M17 F7 D $\flat$ M17 G $\flat$ M17 C $\flat$ M11 F7  
 A $\flat$ M17 D $\flat$ 7 G $\flat$ MA9 C $\flat$ M1/G C $\flat$ M17 F7 $\flat$ 5 B $\flat$ 6 (F $\sharp$ 7)  
 FINE

SOLOS (RHYTHM CHANGES):

B $\flat$  G $\flat$ M17 C $\flat$ M17 F7 D $\flat$ M17 G $\flat$ M17 C $\flat$ M17 F7 (B7) (B $\flat$ )  
 F $\flat$ M17 B $\flat$ 7  
 (E $\flat$ M16) (D $\flat$ M17)  
 E $\flat$ 7 E $\flat$ M17 D $\flat$ M17 D $\flat$ o7 C $\flat$ M17 F7 B $\flat$  G $\flat$ M17 C $\flat$ M17 F7  
 D $\flat$ M17 G $\flat$ M17 C $\flat$ M17 F7 F $\flat$ M17 B $\flat$ 7 E $\flat$  E $\flat$ M17 B $\flat$  F7 B $\flat$   
 D7 G7 C7 F7  
 B $\flat$  G $\flat$ M17 C $\flat$ M17 F7 D $\flat$ M17 G $\flat$ M17 C $\flat$ M17 F7  
 F $\flat$ M17 B $\flat$ 7 E $\flat$  E $\flat$ M17 D $\flat$ M17 (D $\flat$ M17) D $\flat$ o7 C $\flat$ M17 F7  
 AFTER SOLOS, D.S. AL FINE

IN THE SOLOS, G7 IS USED AS AN OCCASIONAL SUBSTITUTE FOR G $\flat$ M17 IN MEASURES 3, 11, & 27.

CHORDS IN PARENTHESES ARE OCCASIONALLY PLAYED AS SUBSTITUTIONS.

## **APPENDIX 4**

### **Powell's solo over "Bud's Bubble"**

# Bud Powell's Solo Over "Bud's Bubble"

Transcription: S. Muscarella

**A**

(First chorus) B♭maj7

G7 Cm7 F7 Dm7 G7 Cm7 B7

5 B♭7 (E♭maj7) Eb7 Ebm7 Dm7 (D♭7) D♭m7 Cm7 F7

**A'**

9 B♭maj7 G7 Cm7 F7 Dm7 G7 Cm7 F7

13 B♭7 Ebmaj7 Ebm7 B♭maj7 F7 B♭ (Eb7)

**B**

17 D7 G7

21 C7 F7

**A2**

25 B♭ G7 Cm7 F7 Dm7 G7 Cm7 F7

29 B♭7 Eb7 Ebm7 Dm7 D♭7 Cm7 B7

2 (Second chorus)

**A** 33  $B\flat maj7$   $Cm7$   $F7$   $Dm7$   $G7$   $Cm7$   $F7$

37  $B\flat7$   $E\flat7$   $E\flat m7$   $Dm7$   $D\flat m7$   $Cm7$   $B7$

**A'** 41  $B\flat maj7$   $G7$   $Cm7$   $C\sharp o7$   $Dm7$   $G7$   $Cm7$   $F7$

45  $B\flat7$   $E\flat$   $E\flat m7$   $B\flat maj7$   $F7$   $B\flat$

**B** 49  $D7$   $E\flat7$   $D7$   $G7$   $\text{trill}$

53  $C7$   $\text{trill}$   $F7$   $\text{trill}$

**A2** 57  $B\flat maj7$   $E\flat7$   $B\flat maj7$   $G7$   $C7$   $F7$

61  $B\flat7$   $E\flat maj7$   $B\flat m7$   $B\flat maj7$   $G7$   $Cm7$   $F7$

Note: The quality of this recording combined with Powell's sparse and ambiguous "shell" voicings and the bassist's walking line make these chord changes approximate.

## **APPENDIX 5**

### **Head of "Celia"**

# CELIA

MEDIUM SWING

BUO POWELL

$Bb/F$   $F7b5$   $Bb/F$   $F7b5$

$Bb/F$   $F7b5$   $Bb/F$   $F7b5$

**A**

$BbMA7$

$EbmI7$

$DMI7$

$EbmI7$

$Ab7$

$DMI7$

$Db7$

$CMI7$

$B7$

$BbMA7$

$C\emptyset$

$B7b5$

$BbMA7$

$EbmI7$

$DMI7$

$EbmI7$

$Ab7$

$DMI7$

$Db7$

$CMI7$

$B7b5$

$BbMA7$

$Bb6$

**B**

$AM17b5$

$D7$

$GMI$

$C7$

$CM17b5$



**F7b5**                      **BbMA7**                      **Ebm17**                      **DM17**

**Ebm17**    **Ab7**    **DM17**    **Db7**                      **CM17**    **B7b5**                      **BbMA7**

**SOLOS: (C∅ B7b5)**

**Bb6**                      **C** **Ebm17**                      **Ebm17**    **Ab7**                      **DM17**

**G7**                      **CM17**                      **B7**                      **Bb6**

**SECTION C IS PLAYED ON THE FIRST HEAD ONLY.**

**SOLOS OVER AB.**

## **APPENDIX 6**

### **Head of "Un Poco Loco"**

# UN POCO LOCO

UP-TEMPO LATIN

BUO POWELL

Chords: DMI11 G(#5#9) DMI11 G(#5#9) DMI11 G(#5#9) CMA7b9b5




Chords: DMI11 G(#5#9) DMI11 G(#5#9) DMI11 G(#5#9) CMA7b9b5



Section marker: [S]


Chords: EbMA7b5 DbMA7b5 GbMA7b5 CMA7b5



Chords: EbMA7b5 DbMA7b5 GbMA7b5 CMA7b5



Chords: AM19/D D13 D9 D13 G#M19/C# C#13 C#9 C#13



Chords: CMA7b9b5

Annotation: OPEN C-G 5TH:

Section marker: [C] To CODA




Chords: FMI7 Bb7 Eb EbM17



Chords: Ab7 DbMA9 G7b5b9 G7b9b13

PIANO (LEFT HAND):



**CMA7**                      **AM17**                      **D7**                      **G**                      **DM11** **G(#5#9)**

**D.S. AL CODA**

**CODA**  
**C ADD9/E**                      **A13**                      **A7#9**                      **DM11**                      **G11**

**GbmA7b5**                      **FMA7**                      **EM17**                      **DM1**                      **D $\flat$**

**N.C.**

**FINE**

**MELODY (BELOW) IS PLAYED 2XS OVER VAMP, THEN SOLOS.**

**AFTER SOLOS, D.S. AL CODA (PLAY THROUGH ENTIRE HEAD FROM SIGN, WITH REPEAT); AD. LIB. END AT FINE.**

**MELODY (PLAYED 2XS OVER VAMP BEFORE SOLOS):**

**APPENDIX 7**

**Powell's solo over "No Name Blues"**

Powell's head and solo over "No Name Blues"

From *A Portrait of Thelonious*

Transcribed by S. Muscarella

1 Bb7 Eb7 E° Bb7 /

5 Eb7 Eb7 E° Bb7/F /Eb /D Db7 Cm7

10 F7(sus4) Bb 1. F7(sus4) 2. F7 pick-up  
3

13 1 Bb7 Eb7 Bb7 /

17 Eb7 E° Bb7

20 / G7 Cm7 F7

23 Bb7 3 3 F7 2 Bb7 3 3 Eb7 E°

27 Bb7 / Eb7 Eb7

31 Bb7/F /Eb /D Db7 Cm7 F7

No Name Blues  
by Earl Bostic

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35 Bb Cm7 F7 3 Bb7 Eb7 E°

39 Bb7 Eb7

42 Eb7 E° Bb7/F /Eb /D Db7 Cm7

46 F7(sus4) Bb F7 4 Bb7

50 Eb7 E° Bb7 Eb7

54 Eb7 E° Bb7/F /Eb /D Db7

57 Cm7 F7(sus4) Bb F7

61 5 Bb7 Eb7 E° Bb7

65 Eb7 Eb7 E° Bb7/F /Eb /D Db7

69 Cm<sup>7</sup> F<sup>7</sup>(sus4) B<sup>b</sup> F<sup>7</sup>

73 [6] B<sup>b</sup>7 E<sup>b</sup>7 E<sup>o</sup> B<sup>b</sup>7

77 E<sup>b</sup>7 E<sup>b</sup>7 E<sup>o</sup> B<sup>b</sup>7/F /E<sup>b</sup> /D D<sup>b</sup>7

81 Cm<sup>7</sup> F<sup>7</sup>(sus4) B<sup>b</sup> F<sup>7</sup>

85 [7] B<sup>b</sup>7 E<sup>b</sup>7 E<sup>o</sup> B<sup>b</sup>7

89 E<sup>b</sup>7 E<sup>b</sup>7 E<sup>o</sup> B<sup>b</sup>7/F /E<sup>b</sup> /D D<sup>b</sup>7

93 Cm<sup>7</sup> F<sup>7</sup>(sus4) B<sup>b</sup> F<sup>7</sup>

97 [8] B<sup>b</sup>7 E<sup>b</sup>7 E<sup>o</sup> B<sup>b</sup>7

100 E<sup>b</sup>7 E<sup>b</sup>7 E<sup>o</sup> B<sup>b</sup>7/F /E<sup>b</sup>



104 /D Db<sup>7</sup> Cm<sup>7</sup> F<sup>7</sup>(sus4) B<sup>b</sup>

108 F<sup>7</sup> B<sup>b7</sup> Eb<sup>7</sup> E<sup>o</sup> B<sup>b7</sup>

113 Eb<sup>7</sup> Eb<sup>7</sup> E<sup>o</sup> B<sup>b7</sup>/F<sub>3</sub> /Eb /D Db<sup>7</sup>

117 Cm<sup>7</sup> F<sup>7</sup>(sus4) B<sup>b</sup> F<sup>7</sup>

121 B<sup>b7</sup> Eb<sup>7</sup> E<sup>o</sup> B<sup>b7</sup>

125 Eb<sup>7</sup> Eb<sup>7</sup> E<sup>o</sup> B<sup>b7</sup>/F /Eb /D Db<sup>7</sup>

129 Cm<sup>7</sup> F<sup>7</sup>(sus4) B<sup>b</sup> F<sup>7</sup>

133 B<sup>b7</sup> Eb<sup>7</sup> E<sup>o</sup> B<sup>b7</sup> /

137 Eb<sup>7</sup> Eb<sup>7</sup> E<sup>o</sup> B<sup>b7</sup>/F /Eb

140 /D Db7 Cm7 F7(sus4) Bb

144 F7 [12] Bb7 Eb7 E° Bb7

148 Eb7 Eb7 E° Bb7/F /Eb

152 /D Db7 Cm7 F7(sus4) Bb

156 F7 [13] Bb7 Eb7 E°

159 Bb7 Eb7 Eb7 E°

163 Bb7/F /Eb /D Db7 Cm7

166 F7(sus4) Bb F7

## **APPENDIX 8**

### **Evans's solo over "Beautiful Love"**

# BILL EVANS' PIANO SOLO ON "BEAUTIFUL LOVE"

This musical score is for a piano solo on the piece "Beautiful Love" by Bill Evans. It is written in the key of D minor and 4/4 time. The score consists of ten staves of music, each with a measure number on the left. The notes are written in a treble clef. Above the notes, various chords are indicated, such as E<sup>ø</sup>7, A<sup>7</sup>ALT, D-, G-7, C<sup>7</sup>, F<sup>Δ</sup>7, B<sup>b</sup>7, and G<sup>7</sup>#11. Some notes are grouped with a '3' above them, indicating triplets. The piece concludes with a double bar line at the end of the final staff.

3

7

12

17

22

28

34

40

45

50

55

59

63

68  $A^{7ALT}$   $D^-$   $G^-7$   $C^7$   $F\Delta^7$

74  $E\emptyset^7$   $A^{7ALT}$   $D^-$   $G^-7$   $B^b7$   $E\emptyset^7$   $A^{7ALT}$   $D^-$   $B^{\natural}7$   $G^7\#11$

81  $B^b7$   $A^{7ALT}$   $E\emptyset^7$   $A^{7ALT}\#$   $D^-$

87  $G^-7$   $C^7$   $F\Delta^7$   $E\emptyset^7$   $A^{7ALT}$   $D^-$   $G^-7$

93  $B^b7$   $E\emptyset^7$   $A^{7ALT}$   $D^-$

96  $B^b7$   $A^{7ALT}$   $D^-$   $E\emptyset^7$

Detailed description of the musical score: The score is written for guitar in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. It consists of six staves of music. The first staff (measures 68-73) features a melodic line with chords  $A^{7ALT}$ ,  $D^-$ ,  $G^-7$ ,  $C^7$ , and  $F\Delta^7$ . The second staff (measures 74-80) includes chords  $E\emptyset^7$ ,  $A^{7ALT}$ ,  $D^-$ ,  $G^-7$ ,  $B^b7$ ,  $E\emptyset^7$ ,  $A^{7ALT}$ ,  $D^-$ ,  $B^{\natural}7$ , and  $G^7\#11$ . There are triplets of eighth notes in measures 77 and 78. The third staff (measures 81-86) starts with a  $B^b7$  chord and includes  $A^{7ALT}$ ,  $E\emptyset^7$ ,  $A^{7ALT}\#$ , and  $D^-$ . The fourth staff (measures 87-92) features  $G^-7$ ,  $C^7$ ,  $F\Delta^7$ ,  $E\emptyset^7$ ,  $A^{7ALT}$ ,  $D^-$ , and  $G^-7$ . The fifth staff (measures 93-95) has  $B^b7$ ,  $E\emptyset^7$ ,  $A^{7ALT}$ , and  $D^-$ . The sixth staff (measures 96-98) begins with  $B^b7$ ,  $A^{7ALT}$ , and  $D^-$ , followed by  $E\emptyset^7$  and ends with a double bar line.

**APPENDIX 9**

**Head of “Five Brothers” (Mulligan)**

# Five Brothers

Gerry Mulligan

♩ = 108

C Dm G<sup>7</sup> C Dm<sup>7</sup> G<sup>7</sup>

5 Gm<sup>7</sup> C<sup>7</sup> F Bb<sup>7</sup> 1. C Eb<sup>7</sup> Dm<sup>7</sup> G<sup>7</sup>

2. Dm<sup>7</sup> Db<sup>7</sup> C B<sup>7</sup> E

Fm<sup>7</sup> Bb<sup>7</sup> Eb Em<sup>7</sup> A<sup>7</sup>

D Ebm<sup>7</sup> Ab<sup>7</sup> Db Dm<sup>7</sup> Db<sup>7</sup>

C Dm<sup>7</sup> G<sup>7</sup> C Dm<sup>7</sup> G<sup>7</sup>

Gm<sup>7</sup> C<sup>7</sup> F Bb<sup>7</sup> Dm<sup>7</sup> Db<sup>7</sup> C

**APPENDIX 10**

**Head of "Five Brothers" (Jarrett)**



### Five Brothers (Jarrett Version)

♩ = 188

**A**

1 C A<sup>7</sup> Dm<sup>7</sup> G<sup>7</sup> Em<sup>7</sup> Eb<sup>7</sup> Dm<sup>7</sup> G<sup>7</sup>

5 Gm<sup>7</sup> C<sup>7</sup> F Bb<sup>9</sup> Em<sup>7</sup> Eb<sup>7</sup> Dm<sup>7</sup> G<sup>7</sup>

**A'**

9 C A<sup>7</sup> Dm<sup>7</sup> G<sup>7</sup> Em<sup>7</sup> A<sup>7</sup> Dm<sup>7</sup> G<sup>7</sup>

13 Gm<sup>7</sup> C<sup>7</sup> F Bb<sup>7</sup> C B<sup>7</sup>

**B**

17 Ema<sup>7</sup> F#m<sup>7</sup> B<sup>7</sup> Ema<sup>7</sup> Fm<sup>7</sup> Bb<sup>7</sup>

21 Ebma<sup>7</sup> Fm<sup>7</sup> Bb<sup>7</sup>(b9) Ebma<sup>7</sup> Dm<sup>9</sup> G<sup>7</sup>

**A2**

25 C A<sup>7</sup> Dm<sup>7</sup> G<sup>7</sup> Em<sup>7</sup> A<sup>7</sup> Dm<sup>7</sup> G<sup>7</sup>

29 Gm<sup>7</sup> C<sup>7</sup> F Bb<sup>7</sup> (Em<sup>7</sup> Ebm<sup>7</sup> Dm<sup>7</sup> G<sup>7</sup>)

*Break* -----

**APPENDIX 11**

**Jarrett's solo over "Five Brothers"**

**Five Brothers** (Comp. Gerry Mulligan)  
 Keith Jarrett's rendition from *The Out-of-Towners*  
 Recorded July 28, 2001 on ECM (G) 1900  
 Transcription: S. Muscarella

**A**  $\text{♩} = 188$

1 C A<sup>7</sup> Dm<sup>7</sup> G<sup>7</sup> Em<sup>7</sup> Eb<sup>7</sup> Dm<sup>7</sup> G<sup>7</sup>

5 Gm<sup>7</sup> C<sup>7</sup> F Bb<sup>9</sup> C Eb<sup>7</sup> Dm<sup>7</sup> G<sup>7</sup>

**A'** 9 C A<sup>7</sup> Dm<sup>7</sup> G<sup>7</sup> Em<sup>7</sup> A<sup>7</sup> Dm<sup>7</sup> G<sup>7</sup>

13 Gm<sup>7</sup> C<sup>7</sup> F Bb<sup>7</sup>(sus4) C B<sup>13</sup>(sus4) B<sup>13</sup>(b9)

**B** 17 E<sup>ma7</sup> F#m<sup>7</sup> B<sup>7</sup>(#11) E<sup>ma7</sup> Fm<sup>7</sup> Bb<sup>7</sup>(b9)

21 Eb<sup>ma7</sup> Fm<sup>7</sup> Bb<sup>7</sup>(b9) Eb<sup>ma7</sup> Dm<sup>9</sup> G<sup>13</sup>

**A2** 25 C A<sup>7</sup> Dm<sup>7</sup> G<sup>7</sup> Em<sup>7</sup> A<sup>7</sup> Dm<sup>7</sup> G<sup>7</sup>

29 Gm<sup>7</sup> C<sup>7</sup> F Bb<sup>9</sup> (Em<sup>7</sup> Ebm<sup>7</sup> Dm<sup>7</sup> G<sup>7</sup>)

*Break* -----

**A**<sup>2</sup> 33 (1st chorus of solos) N.C.  
(C<sup>6/9</sup> A<sup>7</sup>) (Dm<sup>7</sup> G<sup>7</sup>) (C A<sup>7</sup>) (Dm<sup>7</sup> G<sup>7</sup>)

37 (Gm<sup>7</sup> C<sup>7</sup>) (Fma<sup>7</sup> Fm<sup>7</sup>) (Em<sup>7</sup> A<sup>7</sup>) (Dm<sup>7</sup> G<sup>7</sup>)

**A'** 41 (Cma<sup>7</sup> A<sup>7</sup>) (Dm<sup>7</sup> G<sup>7</sup>) (Em<sup>7</sup> A<sup>7</sup>) (Dm<sup>7</sup> G<sup>7</sup>)

45 (Gm<sup>9</sup> C<sup>7</sup>) (Fma<sup>7</sup> Bb<sup>7</sup>) (Cma<sup>7</sup>) | B<sup>7</sup>

**B** 49 Ema<sup>7</sup> F#m<sup>7</sup> B<sup>9</sup> Ema<sup>7</sup> Fm<sup>7</sup> Bb<sup>9</sup>

53 Ebma<sup>7</sup> Fm<sup>7</sup> Bb<sup>9</sup> Ebma<sup>7</sup> Dm<sup>7</sup> G<sup>7</sup>

**A2** 57 C<sup>6/9</sup> Dm<sup>7</sup> Em<sup>7</sup> Dm<sup>7</sup> G<sup>13</sup>

61 Gm<sup>7</sup> C<sup>7</sup> Fma<sup>7</sup> Bb<sup>9</sup> C<sup>6</sup> A<sup>7(b9)</sup> Dm<sup>7</sup> G<sup>7</sup>

**A** 65 *(2nd chorus of solos)*  
 C<sup>6</sup>/<sub>9</sub> A<sup>7</sup>(b13) Dm<sup>7</sup> G<sup>7</sup> Em<sup>7</sup> A<sup>7</sup> Dm<sup>9</sup> G<sup>13</sup>

69 Em<sup>7</sup> A<sup>7</sup> Dm<sup>7</sup> G<sup>7</sup> C<sup>6</sup>/<sub>9</sub> A<sup>7</sup> Dm<sup>7</sup> G<sup>7</sup>

**A'** 73 C<sup>6</sup>/<sub>9</sub> A<sup>7</sup> Dm<sup>7</sup> G<sup>7</sup> Em<sup>7</sup> A<sup>7</sup> Dm<sup>7</sup> G<sup>7</sup>

77 Gm<sup>7</sup> C<sup>9</sup> Fm<sup>a7</sup> B<sup>b9</sup> C<sup>6</sup> F<sup>#m7</sup> B<sup>9</sup>

**B** 81 E<sup>ma7</sup> F<sup>#m9</sup> B<sup>13</sup> E<sup>ma7</sup> F<sup>m9</sup> B<sup>b13</sup>

85 E<sup>b9</sup> F<sup>m7</sup> B<sup>b7</sup>(b9) E<sup>b9</sup> Dm<sup>9</sup> G<sup>13</sup>

**A2** 89 C<sup>6</sup>/<sub>9</sub> A<sup>7</sup>(b13) Dm<sup>9</sup> G<sup>13</sup> C<sup>7</sup> A<sup>7</sup>(b13) Dm<sup>9</sup> G<sup>13</sup>

93 Gm<sup>7</sup> C<sup>9</sup> Fm<sup>a7</sup> B<sup>b9</sup> C<sup>6</sup>/<sub>9</sub> A<sup>7</sup>(b13) D<sup>7</sup>(#9) G<sup>13</sup>

**A** 97 *(3rd chorus of solos)*  
C<sup>6</sup> A<sup>7(b13)</sup> Dm<sup>9</sup> G<sup>13</sup> C<sup>6</sup> A<sup>7(b13)</sup> Dm<sup>9</sup> G<sup>13</sup>

101 Gm<sup>7</sup> C<sup>9</sup> Fma<sup>7</sup> Bb<sup>9</sup> C A<sup>7</sup> Dm<sup>7</sup> G<sup>7</sup>

**A'** 105 C<sup>6</sup> A<sup>7</sup> Dm<sup>9</sup> G<sup>13</sup> C<sup>6</sup> A<sup>7</sup> D<sup>7</sup> G<sup>7</sup>

109 Gm<sup>7</sup> C<sup>7</sup> Fma<sup>7</sup> Bb<sup>7</sup> C F#m<sup>7</sup> B<sup>9</sup>

**B** 113 Ema<sup>7</sup> F#m<sup>7</sup> B<sup>13</sup> E<sup>6</sup> Fm<sup>7</sup> Bb<sup>7</sup>

117 Ebma<sup>7</sup> Fm<sup>7</sup> Bb<sup>13</sup> Eb<sup>6</sup> Dm<sup>9</sup> G<sup>13</sup>

**A2** 121 C<sup>6</sup> A<sup>7(b13)</sup> Dm<sup>9</sup> G<sup>7(b13)</sup> C<sup>6</sup> A<sup>7(b13)</sup> Dm<sup>9</sup> G<sup>13</sup>

125 Gm<sup>7</sup> C<sup>9</sup> Fma<sup>7</sup> Bb<sup>9</sup> A<sup>7(b13)</sup> D7(#9) Dm<sup>7</sup> G<sup>7</sup>

**A** 129 *(4th chorus of solos)*  
 C<sup>6</sup>/<sub>9</sub> A<sup>7</sup>(b13) D<sup>9</sup> G<sup>13</sup> C<sup>9</sup> A<sup>7</sup>(b9) Dm<sup>9</sup> G<sup>7</sup>(b13)

133 Gm<sup>7</sup> C<sup>7</sup> Fma<sup>7</sup> B<sup>b</sup>13 C A<sup>7</sup>(b13) Dm<sup>7</sup> G<sup>7</sup>(b13)

**A'** 137 C<sup>6</sup>/<sub>9</sub> A<sup>7</sup>(b13) Dm<sup>9</sup> G<sup>13</sup> E<sup>7</sup>(#9) A<sup>7</sup>(b13) Dm<sup>9</sup> G<sup>13</sup>

141 Gm<sup>7</sup> C<sup>9</sup> Fma<sup>7</sup> B<sup>b</sup>7(sus4) C<sup>6</sup>/<sub>9</sub> F#m<sup>7</sup> B<sup>9</sup>

**B** 145 E<sup>b</sup>ma<sup>7</sup> F#m<sup>7</sup> B<sup>9</sup> E<sup>b</sup>ma<sup>7</sup> Fm<sup>7</sup> B<sup>b</sup>7

149 E<sup>b</sup>ma<sup>7</sup> Fm<sup>7</sup> B<sup>b</sup>7 E<sup>b</sup>ma<sup>7</sup> E<sup>b</sup>6/9 Dm<sup>9</sup> G<sup>13</sup>

**A2** 153 C<sup>6</sup>/<sub>9</sub> B<sup>b</sup>13 A<sup>7</sup>(b13) D<sup>7</sup>(#9) G<sup>13</sup> C<sup>6</sup>/<sub>9</sub> A<sup>7</sup> Dm<sup>9</sup> G<sup>7</sup>

157 Gm<sup>7</sup> C<sup>7</sup> Fma<sup>7</sup> B<sup>b</sup>7 C<sup>6</sup>/<sub>9</sub> A<sup>7</sup>(b13) D<sup>9</sup> G<sup>7</sup>(b13)

6 (5th chorus of solos)

**A** 161 C<sup>6</sup>/<sub>9</sub> A<sup>7</sup>(b13) Dm<sup>9</sup> G<sup>13</sup> C<sup>6</sup>/<sub>9</sub> A<sup>7</sup>(b13) Dm<sup>9</sup> G<sup>13</sup>

165 Gm<sup>7</sup> C<sup>9</sup> Fma<sup>7</sup> Bb<sup>7</sup> C<sup>6</sup>/<sub>9</sub> A<sup>13</sup> Dm<sup>9</sup> G<sup>13</sup>

**A'** 169 C<sup>6</sup>/<sub>9</sub> A<sup>7</sup>(b13) Dm<sup>9</sup> G<sup>13</sup> C<sup>6</sup>/<sub>9</sub> A<sup>7</sup>(b13) Dm<sup>9</sup> G<sup>13</sup>

173 Gm<sup>7</sup> C<sup>13</sup>(b9) F<sup>6</sup>/<sub>9</sub> Bb<sup>13</sup> C Am<sup>7</sup> F#m<sup>9</sup> B<sup>13</sup>

**B** 177 E<sup>6</sup>/<sub>9</sub> F#m<sup>9</sup> B<sup>13</sup> E<sup>6</sup>/<sub>9</sub> Fm<sup>9</sup> Bb<sup>13</sup>

181 Eb<sup>6</sup>/<sub>9</sub> Fm<sup>9</sup> Bb<sup>13</sup> Eb<sup>6</sup>/<sub>9</sub> Dm<sup>9</sup> G<sup>13</sup>

**A2** 185 C<sup>6</sup>/<sub>9</sub> A<sup>7</sup>(b13) Dm<sup>9</sup> G<sup>13</sup> E<sup>7</sup>(#9) A<sup>7</sup>(b13) Dm<sup>9</sup> G<sup>13</sup>

189 Gm<sup>7</sup> C<sup>9</sup> Fma<sup>7</sup> Bb<sup>13</sup> C<sup>13</sup> A<sup>7</sup>(b13) D<sup>9</sup> G<sup>13</sup>



(6th chorus of solos)

A

193 C<sup>6</sup> A<sup>7(b13)</sup> Dm<sup>9</sup> G<sup>13</sup> E<sup>7(b9)</sup> A<sup>7</sup> Dm<sup>7</sup> G<sup>13</sup>

197 Gm<sup>7</sup> C<sup>9</sup> F<sup>6</sup> B<sup>b13</sup> C A<sup>7(b13)</sup> Dm<sup>9</sup> G<sup>13</sup>

A'

201 C<sup>13</sup> A<sup>7(b13)</sup> Dm<sup>9</sup> G<sup>13</sup> (floats) E<sup>7(#9)</sup> A<sup>7(b13)</sup> Dm<sup>9</sup> G<sup>13</sup>

205 Gm<sup>7</sup> C<sup>9</sup> F<sup>ma7</sup> B<sup>b9</sup> C F<sup>#m7</sup> B<sup>9</sup>

B

209 E<sup>6</sup> F<sup>#m9</sup> B<sup>13</sup> E<sup>6</sup> F<sup>m9</sup> B<sup>b13</sup>

213 E<sup>b6</sup> F<sup>m7</sup> B<sup>b9</sup> E<sup>bma7</sup> Dm<sup>7</sup> G<sup>13</sup>

A2

217 C<sup>6</sup> A<sup>7(b13)</sup> Dm<sup>9</sup> G<sup>13</sup> C<sup>6</sup> E<sup>7(#9)</sup> A<sup>7(b13)</sup> Dm<sup>9</sup> G<sup>13</sup>

221 Gm<sup>7</sup> C<sup>9</sup> F<sup>6</sup> B<sup>b13</sup> C A<sup>7(b13)</sup> Dm<sup>9</sup> G<sup>13</sup>

8 (7th chorus of solos)

**A** 225 C<sup>6/9</sup> A<sup>7(b13)</sup> Dm<sup>9</sup> G<sup>13</sup> C<sup>6/9</sup> E<sup>7(#9)</sup> A<sup>7(b13)</sup> Dm<sup>9</sup> G<sup>13</sup>

229 Gm<sup>7</sup> C<sup>7(b9)</sup> Fma<sup>7</sup> B<sup>b9</sup> C<sup>6/9</sup> A<sup>7</sup> Dm<sup>7</sup> G<sup>7</sup>

**A'** 233 E<sup>7</sup> A<sup>7</sup> Dm<sup>7</sup> G<sup>7</sup> C<sup>6/9</sup> A<sup>7(b13)</sup> D<sup>7</sup> G<sup>7</sup>

237 Gm<sup>7</sup> C<sup>7(b9)</sup> Fma<sup>7</sup> B<sup>b9</sup> C C<sup>6</sup> F<sup>#m7</sup> B<sup>9</sup>

**B** 241 E<sup>ma7</sup> F<sup>#m9</sup> B<sup>13</sup> E<sup>6/9</sup> Fm<sup>9</sup> B<sup>b13</sup>

245 E<sup>b6/9</sup> Fm<sup>9</sup> B<sup>b13</sup> E<sup>b6/9</sup> Dm<sup>9</sup> G<sup>13</sup>

**A2** 249 (8) C<sup>6/9</sup> A<sup>7(b13)</sup> Dm<sup>9</sup> G<sup>13</sup> C<sup>6/9</sup> A<sup>7(b13)</sup> Dm<sup>9</sup> G<sup>13</sup>

253 (8) Gm<sup>7</sup> C<sup>13</sup> F<sup>6/9</sup> B<sup>b13</sup> C<sup>13</sup> E<sup>b9(sus4)</sup> E<sup>b9</sup> D<sup>7alt.</sup> Dm<sup>9</sup> G<sup>13</sup>

(8th chorus of solos)

A

257 C<sup>9</sup> Eb<sup>7(sus4)</sup> D<sup>7alt.</sup> (H) G<sup>13</sup> C<sup>6/9</sup> A<sup>7(b13)</sup> D<sup>7alt.</sup> G<sup>7</sup>

261 Gm<sup>7</sup> C<sup>9</sup> Fma<sup>7</sup> Bb<sup>9</sup> C<sup>6/9</sup> A<sup>7</sup> D<sup>7</sup> G<sup>7</sup>

A'

265 C<sup>ma7</sup> A<sup>7</sup> Dm<sup>7</sup> G<sup>13</sup> C<sup>7</sup> A<sup>7</sup> D<sup>7</sup> G<sup>13</sup>

269 Gm<sup>7</sup> C<sup>7</sup> Fma<sup>7</sup> Bb<sup>9</sup> C<sup>6</sup> F#m<sup>7</sup> B<sup>13</sup>

B

273 E<sup>6/9</sup> F#m<sup>9</sup> B<sup>13</sup> E<sup>6/9</sup> Ema<sup>9</sup> Fm<sup>9</sup> Bb<sup>13</sup>

277 Eb<sup>6/9</sup> C<sup>7(#9)</sup> Fm<sup>9</sup> Bb<sup>13</sup> Db<sup>9</sup> Eb<sup>6/9</sup> Ebm<sup>9</sup> Dm<sup>9</sup> G<sup>13</sup>

A2

281 C<sup>6/9</sup> A<sup>7(b13)</sup> Dm<sup>9</sup> G<sup>13</sup> C<sup>6/9</sup> A<sup>7(b13)</sup> Dm<sup>9</sup> G<sup>13</sup> (floaty)

285 Gm<sup>7</sup> C<sup>9</sup> Fma<sup>7</sup> Bb<sup>9</sup> C<sup>6/9</sup> A<sup>7(b13)</sup> D<sup>9</sup> G<sup>13</sup>

10 (9th chorus of solos)

**A** 289 C<sup>9</sup> A<sup>7(b13)</sup> D<sup>9</sup> G<sup>13</sup> C<sup>6</sup> A<sup>7(b13)</sup> D<sup>9</sup> G<sup>7</sup>

293 Gm<sup>7</sup> C<sup>9</sup> Fma<sup>7</sup> Bb<sup>9</sup> C<sup>6</sup> A<sup>7(b13)</sup> D7(#9) Dm<sup>9</sup> G<sup>13</sup>

**A'** 297 C<sup>6</sup> A<sup>7(b13)</sup> Dm<sup>9</sup> G<sup>13</sup> E7(#9) A<sup>7(b13)</sup> D7(#9) Dm<sup>9</sup> G7(b13)

301 Gm<sup>7</sup> C<sup>9</sup> Fma<sup>7</sup> Bb<sup>9</sup> C<sup>6</sup> F#m<sup>7</sup> B<sup>9</sup>

**B** 305 E<sup>6</sup> Ema<sup>9</sup> F#m<sup>9</sup> B<sup>13</sup> E<sup>6</sup> Fm<sup>9</sup> Bb<sup>13</sup>

309 Eb<sup>6</sup> Fm<sup>9</sup> Bb<sup>13</sup> Eb<sup>6</sup> Dm<sup>9</sup> G<sup>13</sup>

**A2** 313 C<sup>6</sup> A<sup>7(b13)</sup> Dm<sup>9</sup> G<sup>13</sup> C<sup>6</sup> A<sup>7(b13)</sup> Dm<sup>9</sup> G<sup>13</sup>

317 Gm<sup>7</sup> C7(b9) Fma<sup>7</sup> Bb<sup>9</sup> C<sup>6</sup> N.C. C

## **APPENDIX 12**

### **Jarrett's introduction to "Come Rain or Come Shine"**

Narratio

Measures 1-3 of the piece. The music is in 4/4 time and B-flat major. Measure 1 features a piano introduction with a 7-measure rest in the bass. Measures 2 and 3 contain a melodic line in the right hand with a triplet of eighth notes in measure 3.

Measures 4-6. The melodic line continues in the right hand, with a 7-measure rest in the bass. Measure 6 ends with a fermata over the final chord.

Measures 7-9. Measure 7 begins with a 7-measure rest in the bass. Measure 8 features a triplet of eighth notes in the right hand. Measure 9 includes a triplet of eighth notes in the right hand and a 7-measure rest in the bass, with the instruction "accel." written below the bass line.

Measures 10-12. Measure 10 starts with a 7-measure rest in the bass. Measures 11 and 12 feature a complex rhythmic pattern in the right hand with many beamed notes, and a 7-measure rest in the bass.

Measures 13-15. Measure 13 begins with a 7-measure rest in the bass. Measures 14 and 15 feature a complex rhythmic pattern in the right hand with many beamed notes, and a 7-measure rest in the bass, with the instruction "accel." written below the bass line.

16

3 3

18

Transition

20

23

26

Probatio

29

Musical score for measures 29-31. The piece is in a minor key, indicated by two flats in the key signature. Measure 29 features a triplet of eighth notes in both the treble and bass staves. Measure 30 continues with similar rhythmic patterns. Measure 31 concludes with a triplet of eighth notes in the bass staff and a triplet of sixteenth notes in the treble staff, marked with a 'v' (accents) and a 'b' (bend).

32

Musical score for measures 32-34. Measure 32 begins with a slur over a series of chords in the treble staff. Measure 33 continues this melodic line. Measure 34 features a single eighth note in the treble staff and a half note in the bass staff.

35

Musical score for measures 35-37. Measure 35 starts with a slur over a series of chords. Measure 36 features a slur over a series of eighth notes in the treble staff. Measure 37 concludes with a triplet of eighth notes in the treble staff and a triplet of eighth notes in the bass staff.

38

Musical score for measures 38-39. Measure 38 begins with a slur over a series of chords. Measure 39 continues this melodic line with a slur over a series of eighth notes in the treble staff.

40

Musical score for measures 40-42. Measure 40 features a slur over a series of eighth notes in the treble staff. Measure 41 includes a double bar line with a wavy line underneath, indicating a section change or a specific performance instruction. Measure 42 concludes with a slur over a series of eighth notes in the treble staff.



43

Musical score for measures 43-45. The piece is in G minor (one flat) and 3/4 time. Measure 43 features a complex texture with a triplet of eighth notes in the right hand and a dotted quarter note in the left hand. Measure 44 continues with similar textures, including a triplet of eighth notes. Measure 45 concludes with a final chord in the right hand and a dotted quarter note in the left hand.

Peroratio

46

Musical score for measures 46-47. Measure 46 begins with a whole note chord in the right hand and a dotted quarter note in the left hand. Measure 47 features a sequence of eighth notes in the right hand and a dotted quarter note in the left hand.

48

Musical score for measures 48-49. Measure 48 features a sequence of eighth notes in the right hand and a dotted quarter note in the left hand. Measure 49 concludes with a final chord in the right hand and a dotted quarter note in the left hand.