CHAPTER 4: STANDARD JAZZ TECHNIQUES

Instead of merely assimilating clichés, Kapustin integrates jazz techniques into his own idiosyncratic but sophisticated musical language. A quick comparison with the music of other "crossover" composers in Chapter 15 will elucidate some differences of approach between Kapustin and other composers who have used jazz elements in their music. Chapters 4 and 5 will present a detailed analysis of specific techniques found in *The Preludes,* with sources ranging from boogie-woogie and stride, to jazz-rock and avant-garde techniques. This chapter deals with standard jazz techniques—practices that were in place before 1960. The following chapter will cover developments in jazz after 1960. Chapters 13 and 14 will discuss these same techniques as they are applied in *The Preludes*.

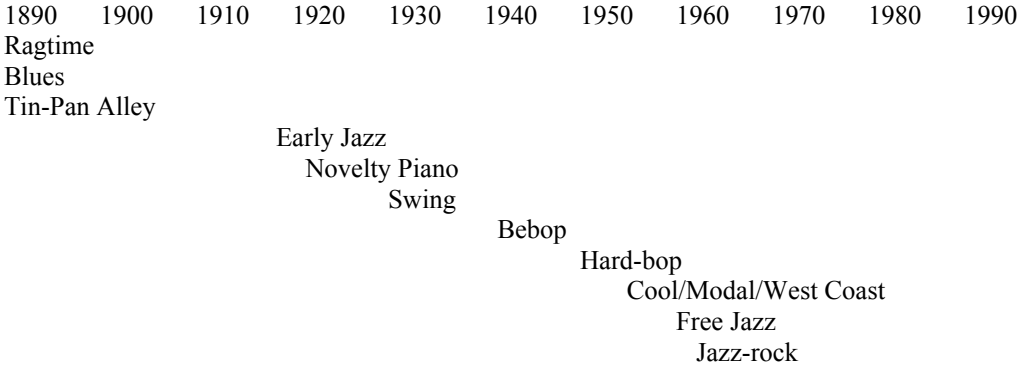


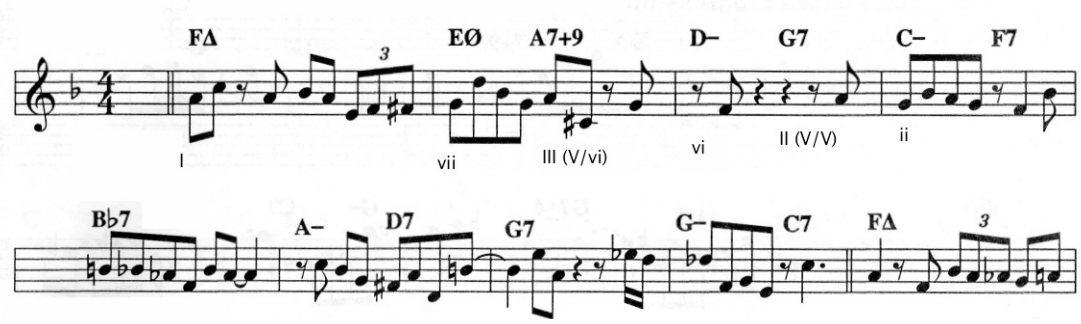
Table 4.1, History of Jazz and Jazz-influenced music

Table 4.1 shows a brief timeline of the history of jazz styles. A simplistic look at the evolution of jazz might suggest that each successive style supplanted and improved upon its predecessor. By the turn of the twenty-first century, this view is generally

thought of as outdated. Just as contemporary classical music embraces many diverse styles, so does jazz. In 2009, it is possible to find communities of performers in every genre listed in the table above as well as new trends that are easy enough to hear but difficult to label.

4.1 JAZZ HARMONIC PROGRESSIONS

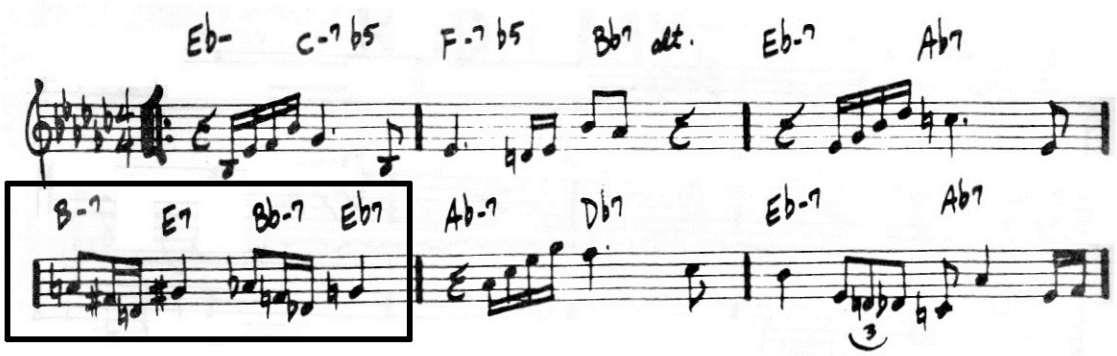
By the late 1920s, jazz had become infused with the harmony of popular song forms from Vaudeville and Broadway and this influence formed the basis of jazz form and harmony until the 1950s. This standard jazz harmony is strongly tonal and the ii-V progression functions as its basic building block.



Example 4.1, Charlie Parker's *Confirmation*, A section

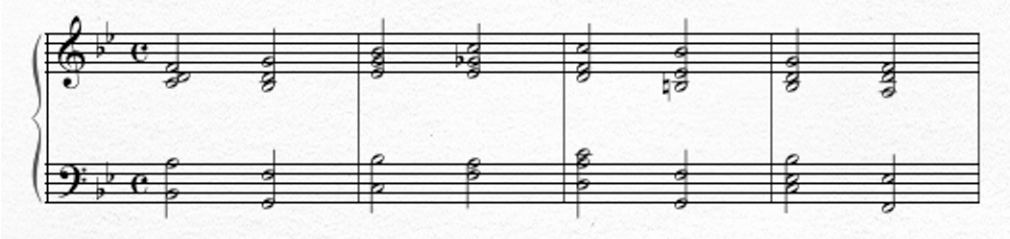
The ii-V progression can both establish a key center and also serve as the engine for modulation. In a diatonic context, the progression leads to circle of fifths motion around a key center. In the Bebop era of innovation (circa 1944-1955), artists like Charlie Parker based their experiments on a superabundance of ii-V progressions to keep the harmony constantly moving. In *Confirmation* (ex. 4.1), ii-V progressions lead around the

circle of fifths in the key of F major. Considering just root movement, it is entirely diatonic, moving around the circle of fifths from vii until it returns to tonic. The progression uses ii-V movement of mostly diatonic ii chords and secondary dominants. Exceptions are the C minor and F7 chords in bar 4, which are ii-V in the key of B♭, the subdominant. Also, before resolving to the diatonic ii chord of G minor, bar 7 uses G^7, V of V, to prolong the phrase before a ii-V cadence in F.



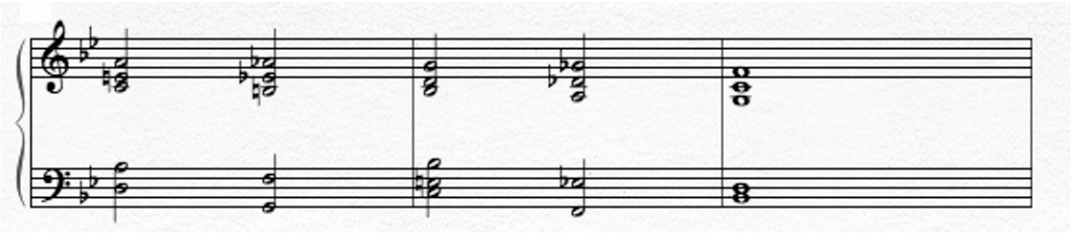
Example 4.2, Thelonious Monk's '*Round Midnight,* chromatic ii-V progression

The chromatic ii-V is another progression originating from the Bebop era that adds color and harmonic movement to a phrase. A chromatic ii-V progression is inserted into a diatonic setting, usually the ii-V a half step above the diatonic ii-V. While this is more likely to happen in improvisation choruses, Thelonious Monk's *'Round Midnight* uses the progression in the A section of the song (ex. 4.2).



Example 4.3, I-vi-ii-V turnarounds, *I Got Rhythm,* first four bars

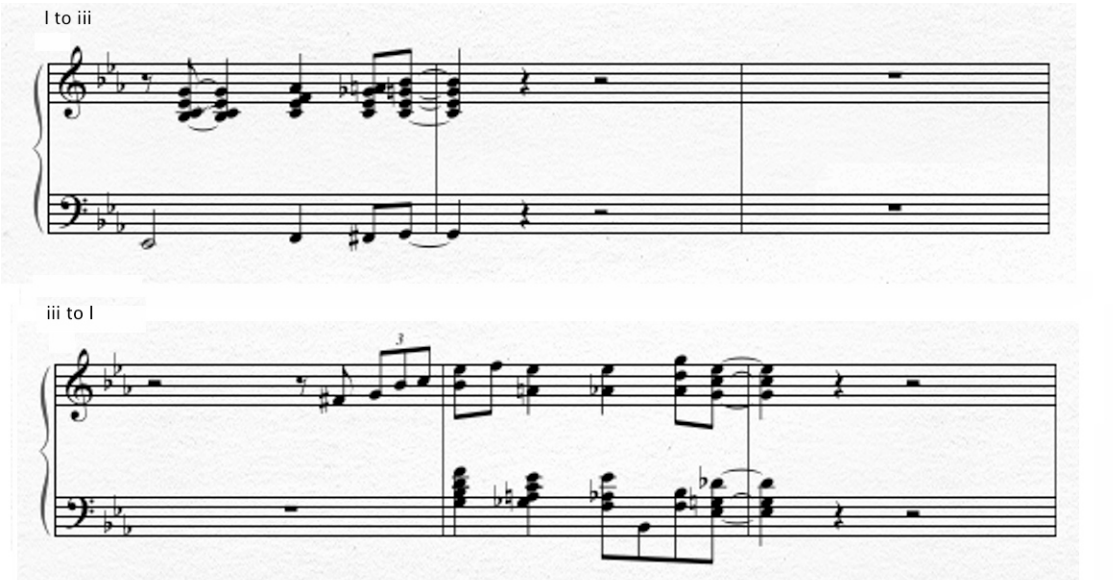
After ii-V, the most basic harmonic progression in jazz is I-vi-ii-V-I. It could be said that the repertoire that is commonly referred to as "jazz standards" is powered by this progression, one of the most basic and ubiquitous in tonal harmony. This and several other progressions can be classified as tonic prolongation, used to add color to music that would otherwise become dull and static. These progressions are also inserted into cadences to push back to the beginning of the form of a song and for that reason are called "turnarounds." There are countless songs in the standard repertoire that use this progression, and Gershwin's *I Got Rhythm* is just one well-known example (ex. 4.3).



Example 4.4, Substitutions and alterations in turnarounds

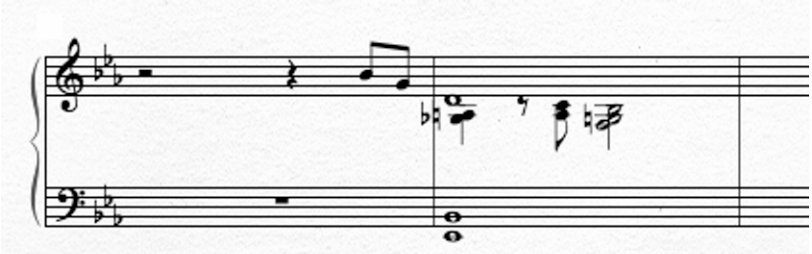
Jazz performers use many alterations and substitutions to the chords of this progression to keep it fresh. Some of the substitutions include using a iii chord in place of a I chord, and tritone substitutions, which will be covered below. Alterations mostly

involve changing minor chords into secondary dominants, so vi becomes V of ii, and ii becomes V of V. The progression in ex. 4.4 begins on iii and the vi and ii chords are changed from minor to dominant, becoming secondary dominants. The iii can also be converted into a dominant chord. Also notice that the alterations and added notes can be voiced in such a way as to create chromatic smooth voice leading.



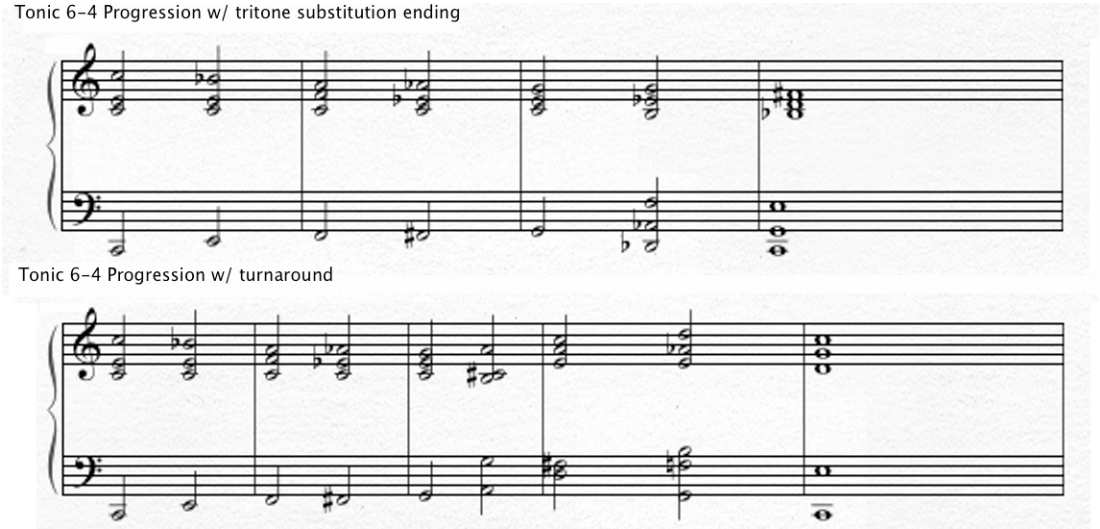
Example 4.5,The ♯ii°^{7} passing chord

Two more common progressions involve use of a ♯ii°^{7} passing chord (ex. 4.5). One is another sort of tonic prolongation that moves up from I to iii and is used in the well-known Duke Ellington song *Don't Get Around Much Anymore.* The second progression moves in the opposite direction and can either just move down from iii to ii or go completely back to I. This progression is used in the first bar of the Teddy Wilson example below (ex. 4.6).



Example 4.6, The a $i^{\circ 7}$ chord complements and extends I

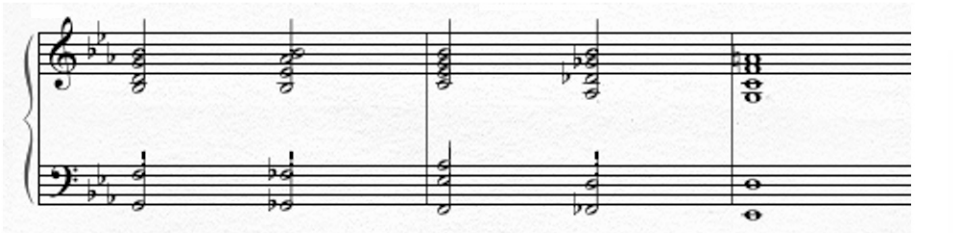
Another common device that adds color to a tonic chord is to insert a $i^{\circ 7}$ chord into the phrase (ex. 4.6). Erroll Garner's *Misty* is often played using this progression.



Example 4.7, Blues-based $I^{6}4$ progression with and without turnaround

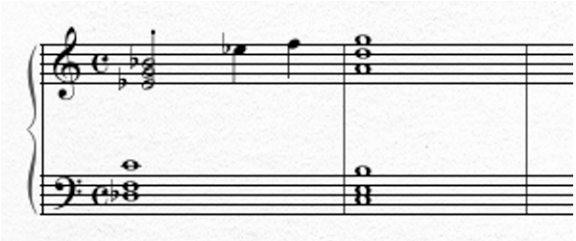
While there are several varieties of twelve-bar blues progressions, the common denominator is a move to a IV chord in the fifth bar of the form and a return to I in bar 7. There are several variations to the last section of the form, though most contemporary jazz-oriented performers use ii-V progressions and turnarounds. A common Blues-based

progression includes V of IV and a $I^{6}4$ as a cadence or turnaround. Example 4.7 shows two versions of this progression.



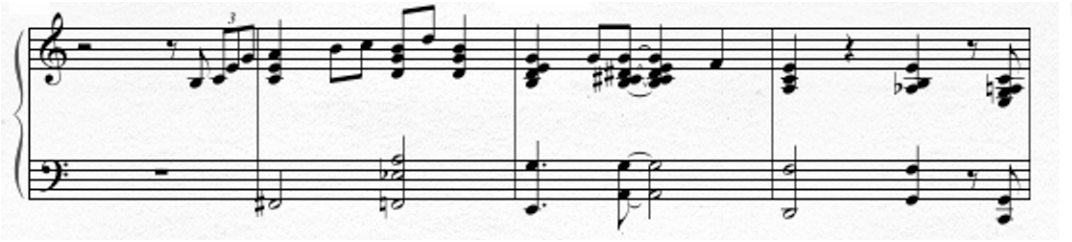
Example 4.8, A turnaround with tritone substitutions

Tritone substitution chords are another staple of jazz keyboard harmony. A tritone substitution chord retains the tritone present in a seventh chord but substitutes the root a tritone away. For example, a G^{7} chord has the tritone B—F and so does a $D^{\flat 7}$ chord, so $D^{\flat 7}$ chord can be used as a tritone substitution G^{7} and vice versa. In the ex. 4.8, the second and fourth chords are tritone substitutions: the $G^{\flat 7}$ for C^{7}, and the $F^{\flat 7}$ for a $B^{\flat 7}$. Of course, there are other upper structures added to the chords and the last two use parallel motion.



Example 4.9, $^{\flat}$II-I Cadence

Instead of a dominant chord, this popular cadence uses a tritone substitution of a ♭II major 7th chord. Because of this, it could also be considered an example of planing.



Example 4.10, ♭V cadence

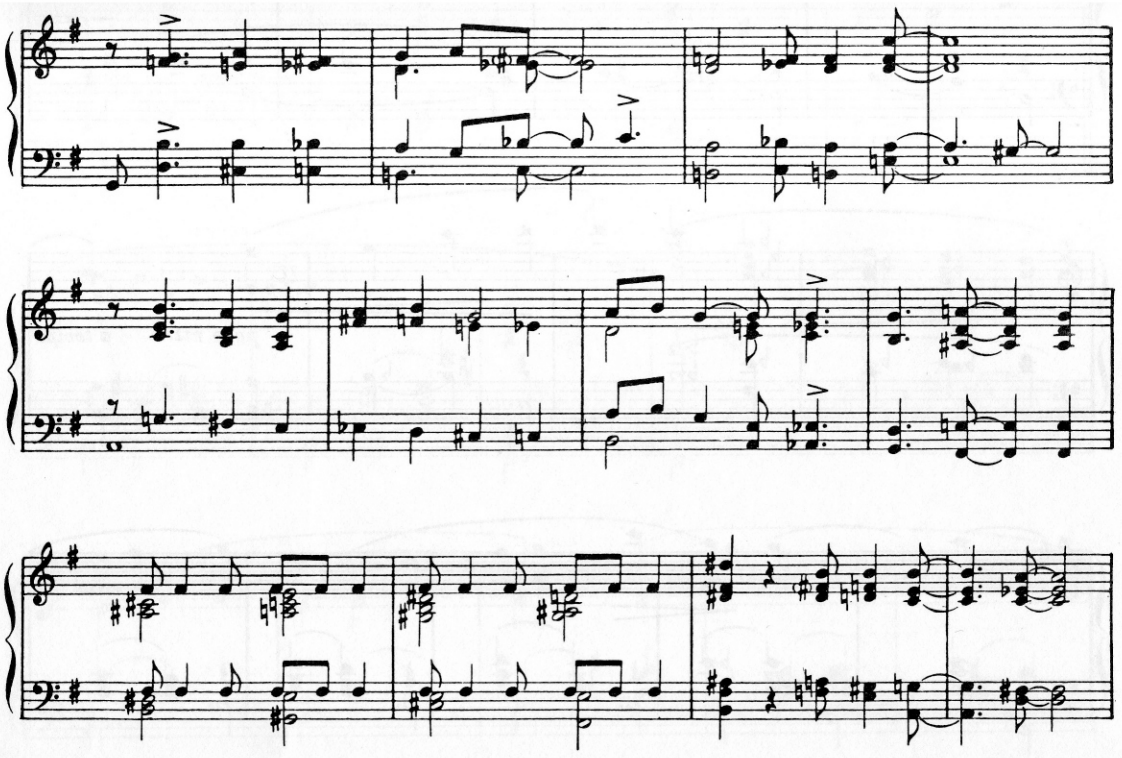
Finally, a ♭V cadence is another popular progression often used as an introduction or tag ending to a song. As seen in ex. 4.10, it starts a tritone from tonic and can either use circle of fifths movement or move downward chromatically from a dominant chord using other tritone substitution chords along the way.

4.2 CHORD VOICINGS

In most modern jazz, rarely do 7th chords provide enough resonance—most chords include further extensions, 9th, 11th, 13th, and chromatic alterations. In jazz theory, these extensions are often called "upper structures." In order to create chords with these upper extensions, either the chord has to have a fuller texture or else some of the basic chord members must be omitted. Often these chord voicings are spread between the

hands, and hardly ever voiced in simple stacked thirds. Chromatic inner voices and smooth voice leading are also markers of sophisticated jazz harmony.

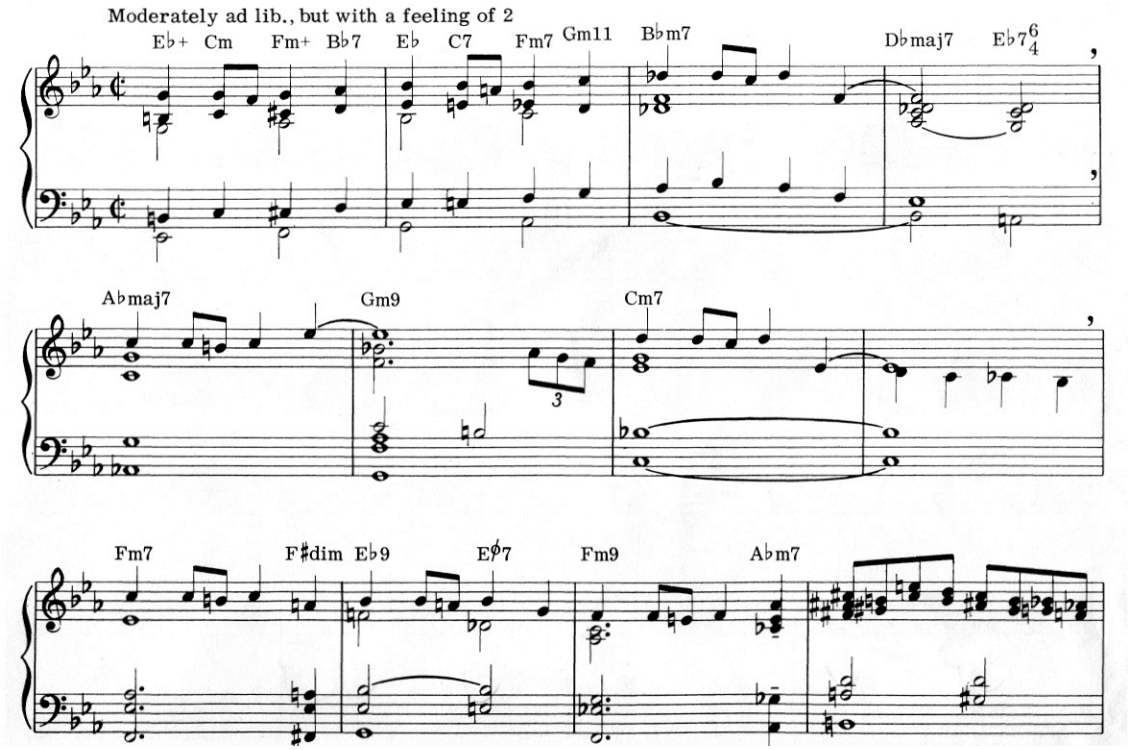
Both George Shearing and Bill Evans were known for their "touch" or "sound" at the piano. There are two aspects to this concept of a jazz pianist's sound. One is technical—the resources brought to bear in the physical aspect of playing piano, which is beyond the scope of this discussion. The other aspect is the pianist's harmonic approach and the way he or she voices chords.



Example 4.11, George Shearing's arrangement of *How About You*

This arrangement of the tune *How About You* by George Shearing (ex. 4.11) shows his chromatic approach to harmony. The song helps in this case, since it is an interesting

tune in G major that briefly modulates to the foreign key of B major. It does so simply by stepping down from G major to $F^{\sharp 7}$, the dominant of B major, in measure 4 above. It returns to G major through a circle of 5ths progression: B – E – Am^7 – D^7. This example is full of colorful passing chords and movement in tenths between the right and left hand parts along with ample upper extensions in chord voicings.



Example 4.12, Bill Evans arrangement of *Who Can I Turn To*

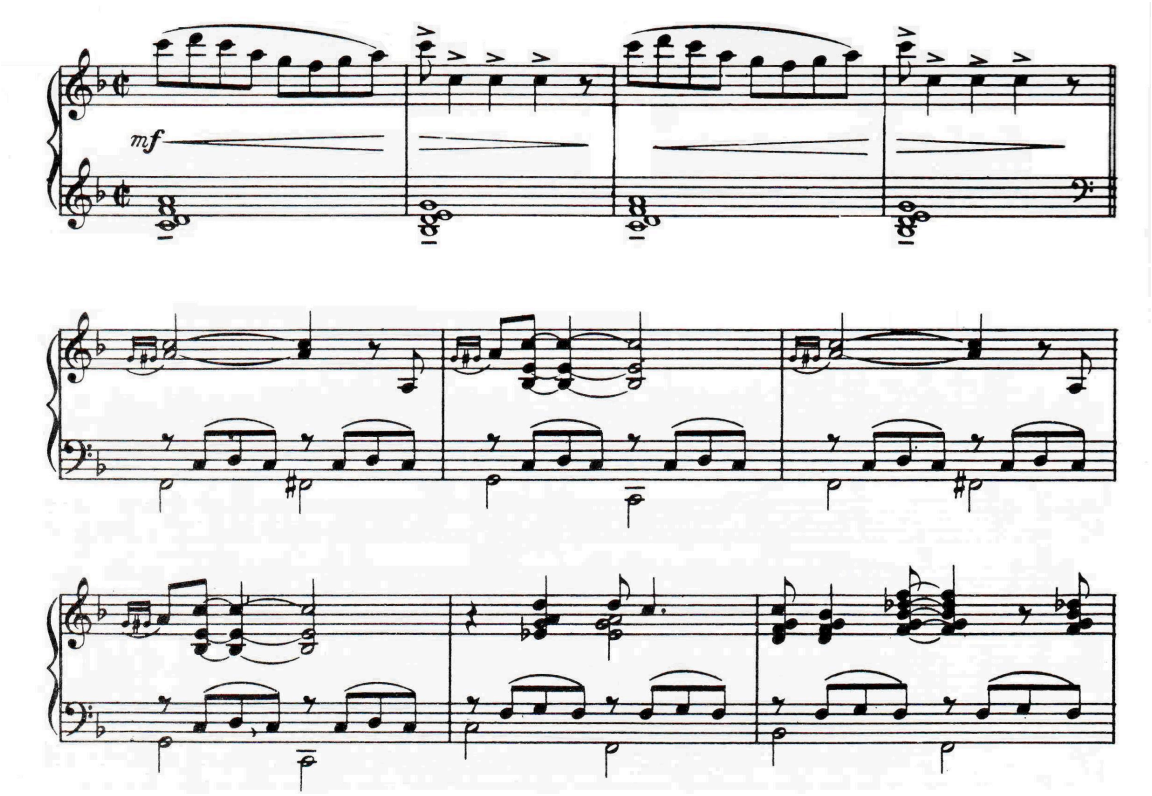
Bill Evans's recordings from the late 1950s and early 1960s have exerted an enormous influence on pianists ever since. His sophisticated harmony and chord voicings, which seem certainly to have been influenced by Ravel, bear witness to his classical background. Example 4.12, a transcription from his recording of *Who Can I*

Turn To, uses chromatic inner voices along with somewhat dissonant chord voicings to create a beautiful rendition of the song. [1] The cadence in the final bar uses a novel dominant substitution. Instead of a V chord, he uses a tritone substitution (E^7) and precedes it with its ii, B min^7. The right-hand part complements the progression with diminished harmony, a topic in the next chapter.

4.3 BOOGIE-WOOGIE

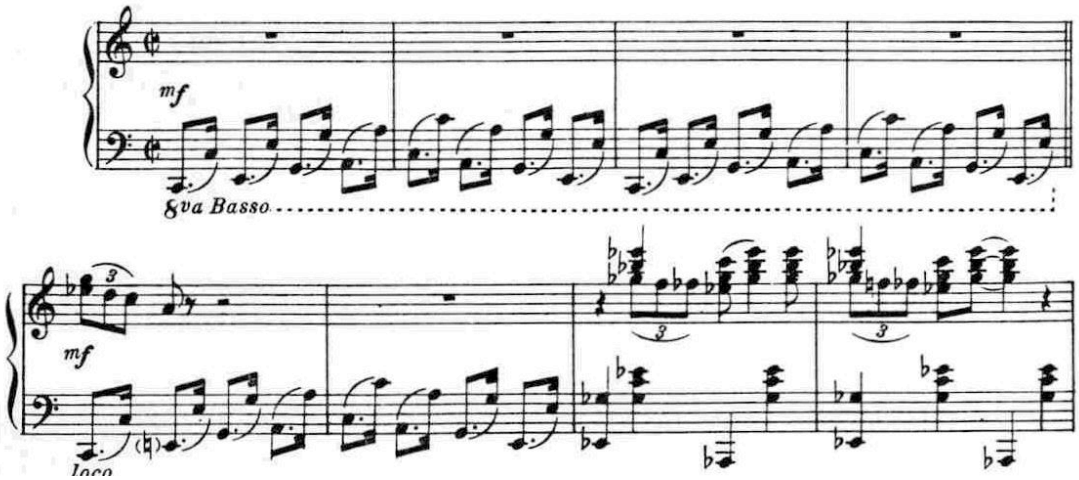
Boogie-woogie is defined by the New Grove Dictionary of Jazz as being "…characterized by the use of blues chord progressions combined with a forceful, repetitive left-hand bass figure." There are several standard boogie figures, but Kapustin tends to use them in ways that are similar to pianists who incorporate these figures as one element of their style, rather than those whose style is completely defined by their use.

[1] Note some of the erroneous chord symbols that completely ignore the root of the chord. Some examples include Gm11 in bar 2, which is really an A♭M7 with a ♯13, the D♭M7 in bar 4, which is a B♭m7, the E♭7, which is an A7 with ♯11, and the Gm9 in bar 6, which is a G sus that resolves to G7.



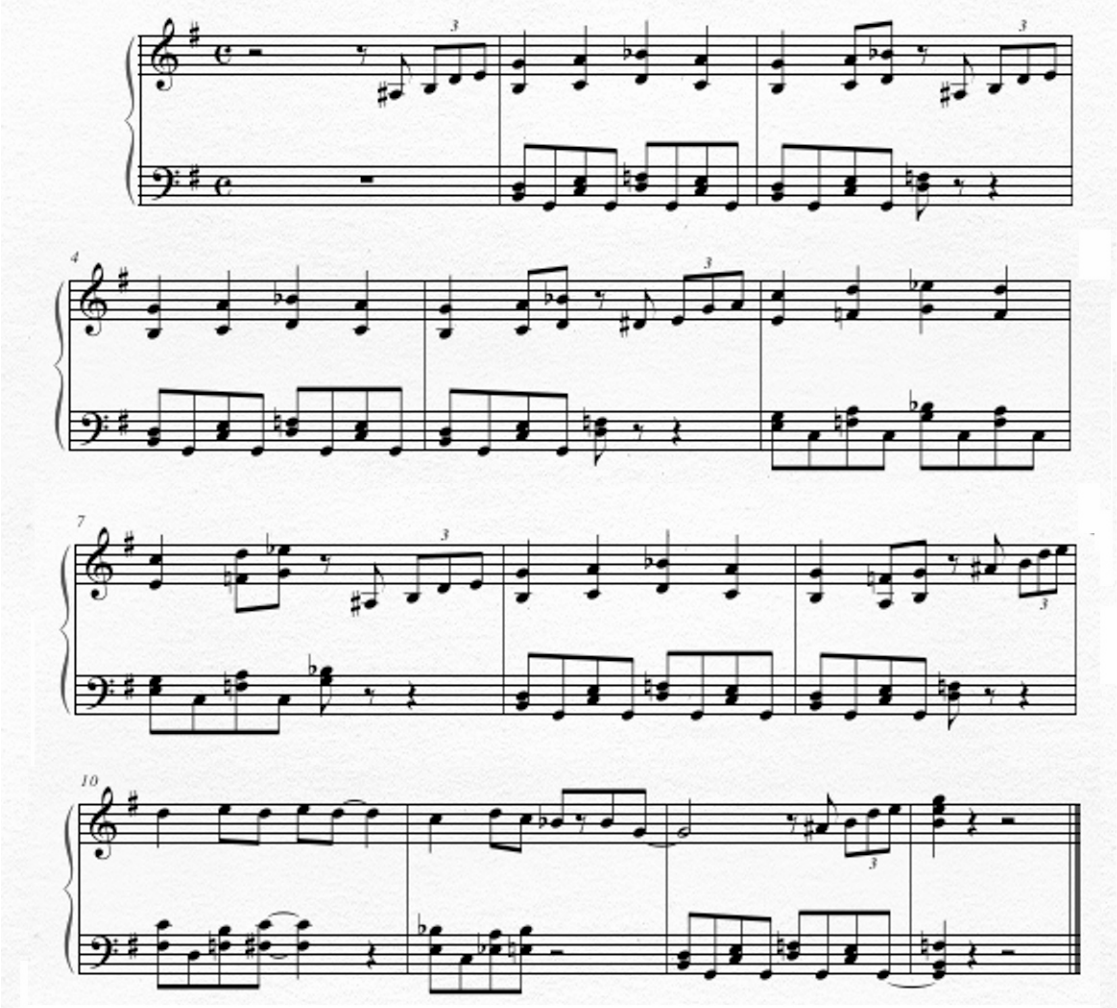
Example 4.13, Waller's *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea*

In ex. 4.13, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea,* Thomas "Fats" Waller uses a technique that later became a trademark of Count Basie: two voices that push the harmony and rhythm forward. Here the bass moves up chromatically from I to ii, then to V and back to I, with the chromatic note functioning as V of V. The tenor part repeats scale degrees 5-6-5 throughout.



Example 4.14, Fats Waller, *Alligator Crawl*

In ex. 4.4, *Alligator Crawl,* Waller uses the broken-octave boogie figure, here arpeggiating the tonic added-sixth chord. In measure 7, it switches to Stride—addressed below.

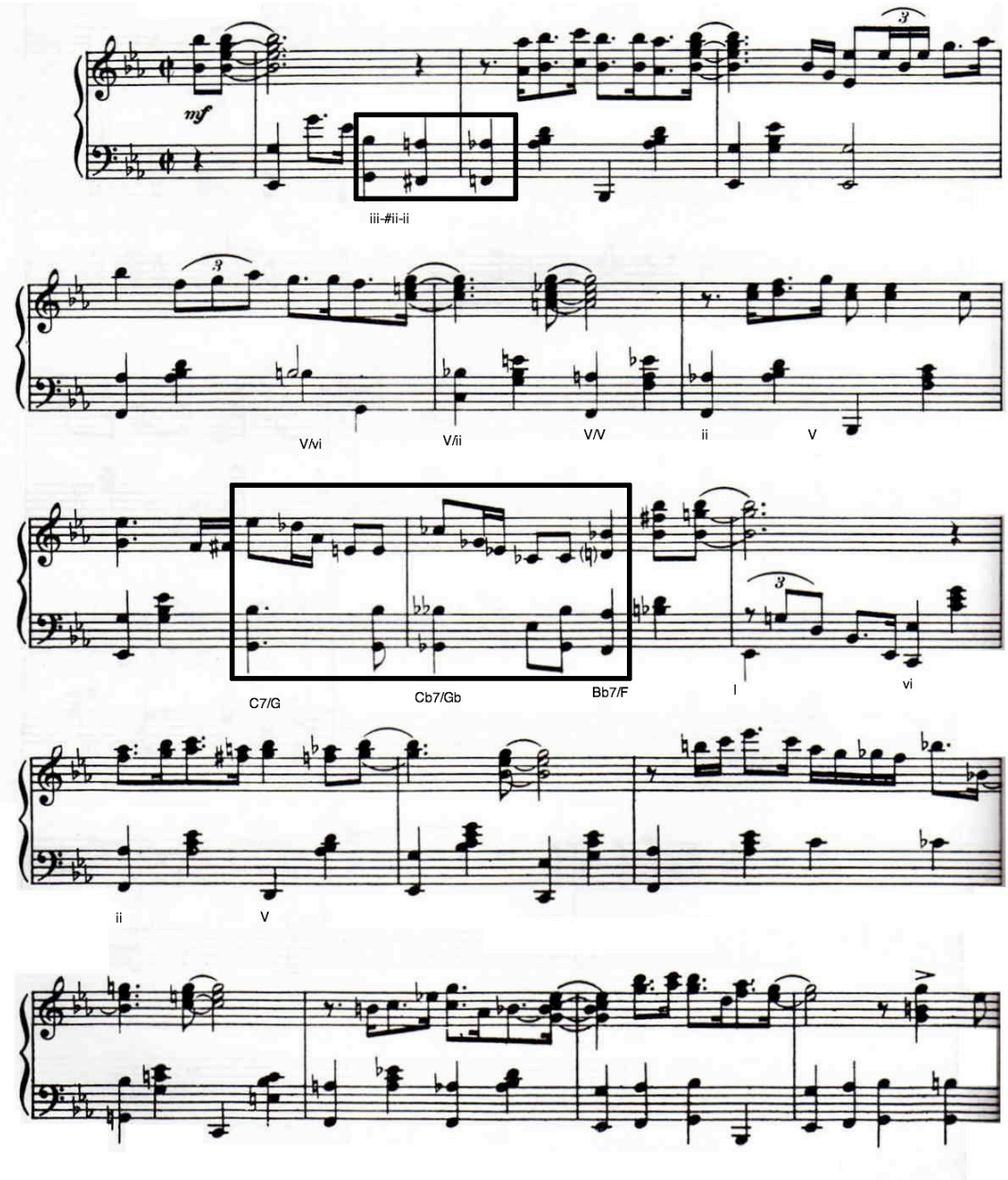


Example 4.15, Boogie with broken chords

Another type of boogie accompaniment figure is also used in blues and rock. In ex. 4.15, the upper two voices of each triad move up to the 7th then back to the triad. In a blues progression, it usually will appear in the same format on I, IV, and V chords, as in the example above.

4.4 STRIDE

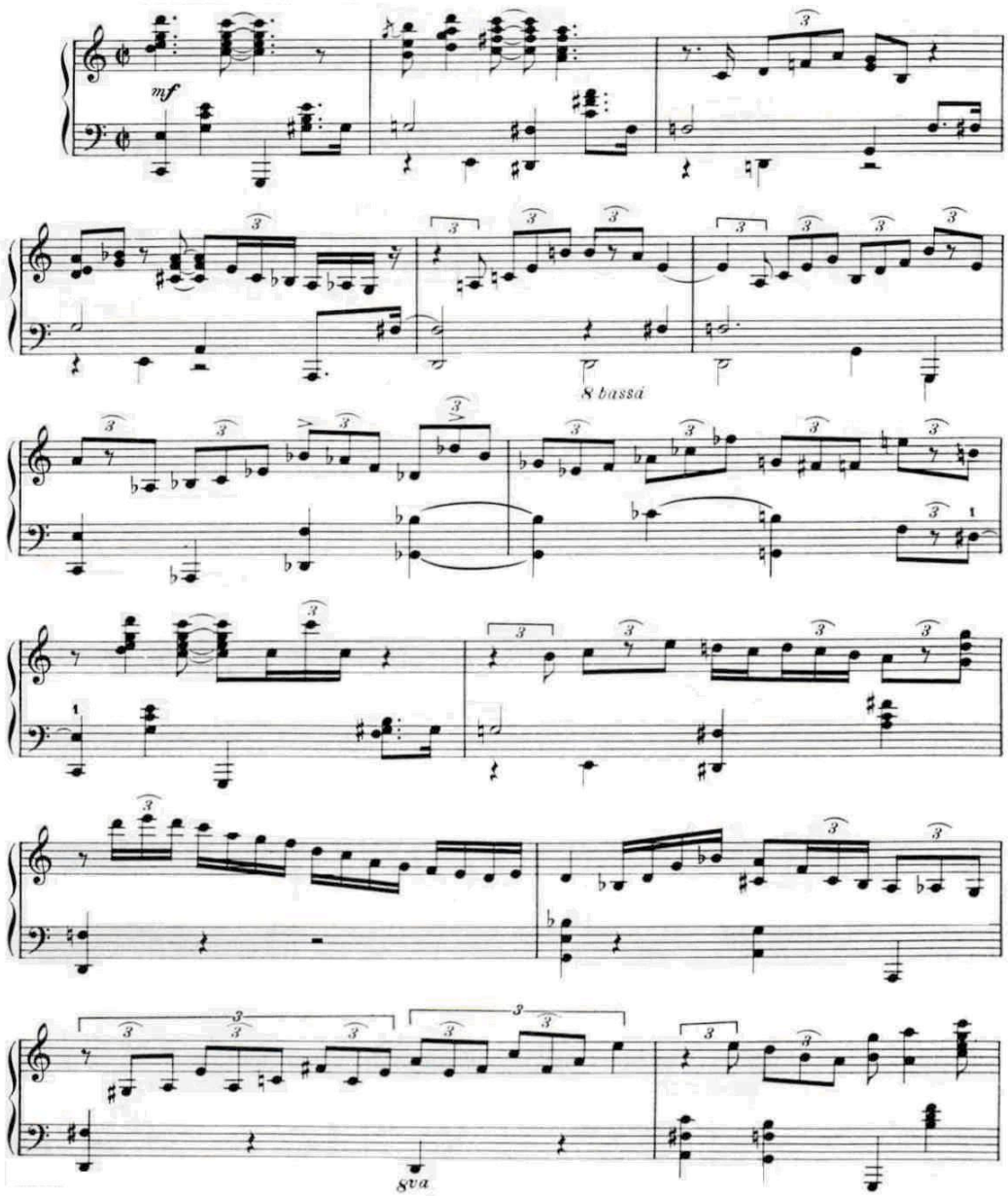
Stride is a style of piano playing that grew directly out of ragtime and was the predominant approach for pianists wishing to imitate the rhythmic drive of a jazz ensemble in solo playing. In some stride piano, there is a constant swing back and forth between low bass and mid-range chord; others vary this rhythm. The use of tenths in stride is common and for some performers, an integral feature of their approach. Two examples will show aspects of the style.



Example 4.16, Teddy Wilson's *Blue Moon* arrangement

Teddy Wilson's *Blue Moon* is a good example of harmonic expansion in early jazz, as well as the use of tenths in stride at a relaxed tempo. This arrangement is, for the most part, very diatonic and rhythmically straightforward, though Wilson does alter the

basic I-vi-ii-V-I pattern of the song, which is a standard 32-bar song form in AABA format. In the original version, the I-vi-ii-V-I pattern is repeated eight times in the span of the first two A sections. Wilson uses this progression only once, in measures 9-11. In place of this, he inserts a V of vi in measure four and this move to vi breaks up the monotony of the repeated progression. In addition, there is an unexpected chromatic sidestep in the last two bars of the first A, which normally would have a turnaround. In measures 7-8, Wilson alters the basic pattern of chromatic tenths used in measures 1-2, placing the G♭ and B𝄫 in bar 8 in the "wrong" place—the downbeat. This creates a harmonic displacement and a sidestep from C^7 to $C♭^7$ to $B♭^7$, so possibly an example of planing. The $C♭^7$ is a tritone substitution for F^7. It is also noteworthy that Wilson's chord voicings rarely go beyond the 7th.



Example 4.17, Art Tatum's *Sunday* arrangement

Art Tatum's *Sunday* is much more complex harmonically and rhythmically, with use of extended structures in chord voicings, chromatic alterations of chords and melodies, and complex rhythmic displacement within the context of a relaxed stride

technique. While Wilson used tenths to create resonance and a fuller texture, Tatum goes further by often turning the upper note of the pair into a tenor counterpoint line, with elements of voice leading pushing the harmonic progression forward. One of the most striking things in this arrangement is the way that Tatum temporarily leaves the key center in the break between the A sections—the same place in the form that Wilson performed a little sidestep. In measures 7 and 8 there would normally be a I-vi-ii-V-I turn-around; instead Tatum uses an out-of-context circle-of-fifths harmonic progression: C–A♭–D♭–G♭ with a sidestep up to the dominant G^7 in the third beat of bar 8 to return to C major.

4.5 SWING EIGHTHS

By the late 1920s, a rhythmic style that sounds like jazz to contemporary ears had been established. That rhythm is generally referred to as swing or swing eighths, an uneven triplet-based subdivision of the quarter note. It is a ubiquitous sound, easy to identify yet difficult for many to master. Sometimes swing eighths are notated as eighth-note triplets with a tie between the first two notes. Other times, duple-based eighth notes are accompanied with an indication to swing the rhythm. Swing eighths and syncopation are an integral part of many jazz styles from the 1920s to the present.

Syncopation has been a part of jazz from the beginning, but the type of rhythm that was a product of the Bebop revolution of the 1940s was decidedly different from the relaxed swing era syncopation that preceded it. Though it is still triplet-based, there is more duple division of the beat than existed in the Swing Era, partly because of the faster

tempos and faster runs. As the tempo increases, the distinction between triplet-based swing rhythm and straight-eighths becomes less and less apparent. Three elements specific to Bebop rhythm have become part of standard jazz rhythmic practice: very fast tempos, triplets alternating with duple rhythm, and strong accents at the ends of phrases, often on the last sixteenth note. This type of syncopation is sometimes an anticipation, which will be discussed below. Performance aspects of swing-eighths will be discussed in Chapter 7. Kapustin makes ample use of syncopation and swing-eighths, though less than half of *The Preludes* use this type of rhythmic approach.

4.6 BENT-NOTE AND DOUBLE-NOTE TECHNIQUES

Jazz and jazz-rock use bent-note and double note techniques that originated from vocal and guitar-based blues forms. Since both the voice and the guitar can bend pitches, it is a natural means of expression and is an American interpretation of African musical practice. The piano can only simulate the effect by using crushed notes, usually the blue notes of flat third and fifth, which are very effective at giving a funky blues feeling.[2] Oscar Peterson was a master at using these techniques and two examples will illuminate their use.

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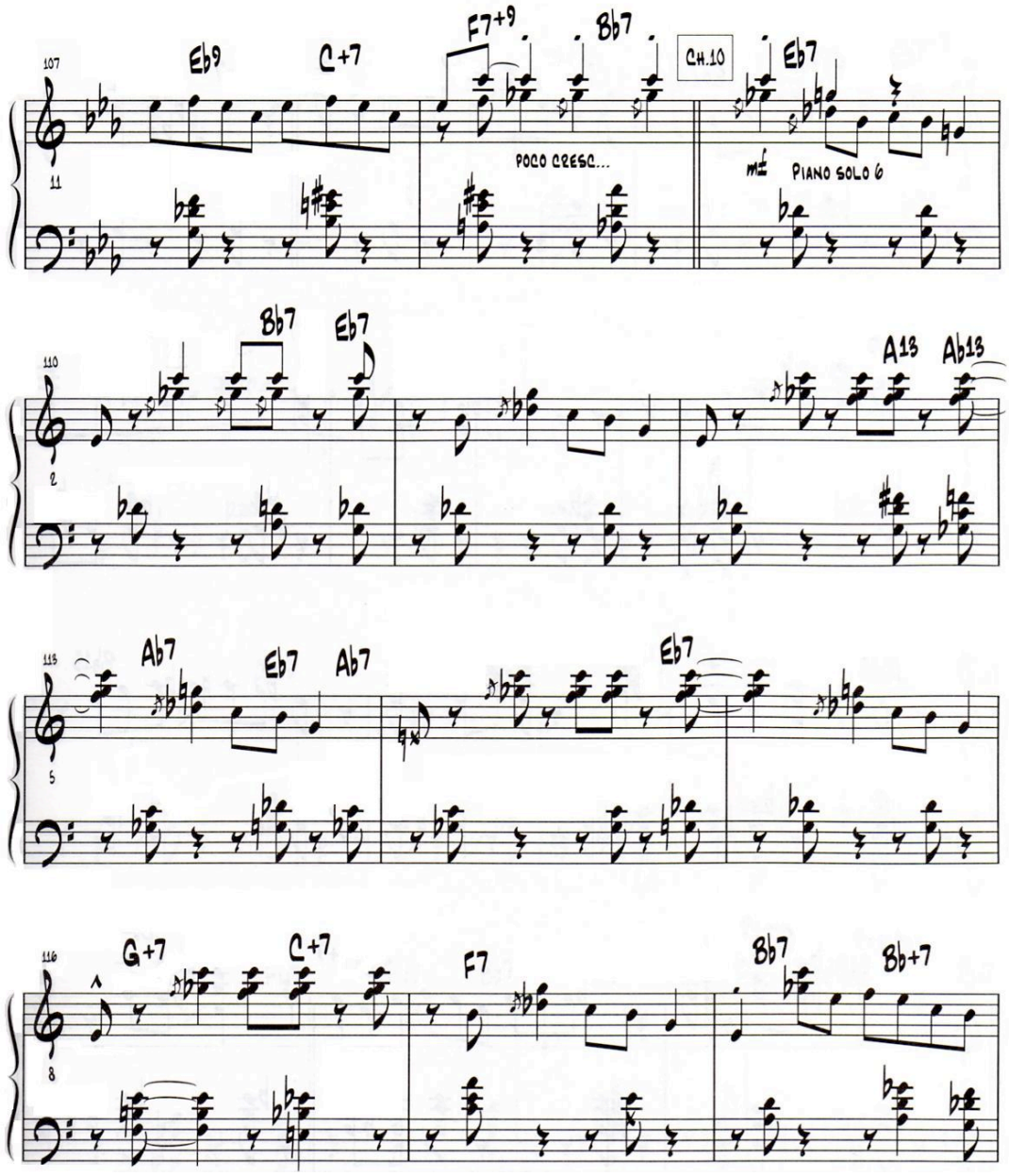
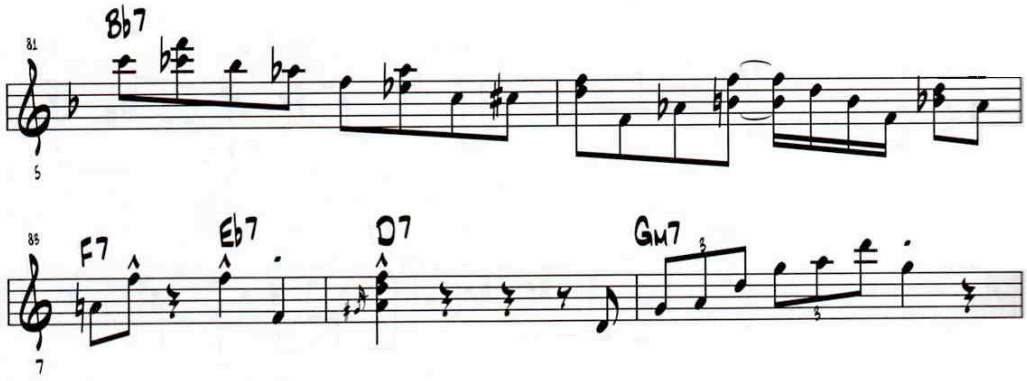
[2] The New Harvard Dictionary of Music defines funky as "Earthy, sexual, danceable, gospel-influenced." The Oxford Companion to Music online says funk is "a musical style derived from Rhythm and Blues and Soul, characterized by repeated rhythmic figures and a strong bass line."



Example 4.18, Oscar Peterson, *The Smudge*

The Smudge is a blues piece in E♭ written by Peterson. This example is from the tenth chorus of his improvisation and shows both bent notes and double notes. These bent-notes are all G♭, the blue third, or D♭, the blue seventh. Peterson insistently repeats

these notes despite the changing harmony, creating effective dissonance that must be resolved.



Example 4.19, Oscar Peterson, *Blues Etude*

Two bars from *Blues Etude*, another blues piece written by Peterson, will demonstrate double notes. The added notes are always chord tones and add texture and resonance to a single-note melodic line.

4.7 WALKING BASS LINES

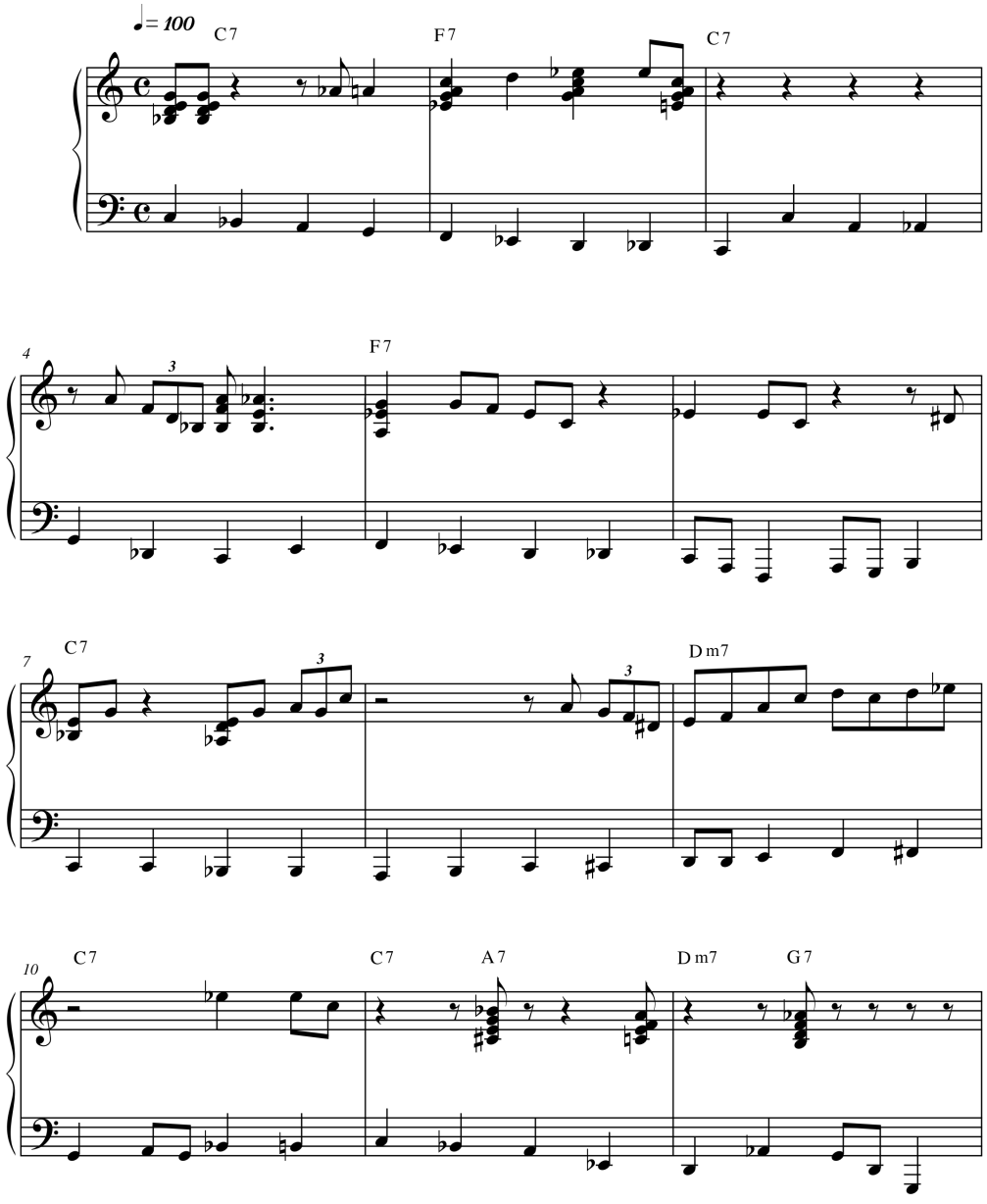
Walking bass developed in the swing era and has continued to be a primary component of any jazz ensemble. Pianists can also benefit from occasionally simulating the effect of an upright bass with its unique ability to keep both rhythm and harmony moving forward. Effective walking bass lines have the following characteristics:

Mostly step-wise motion in quarter notes

Strong chord tones (goal notes) on downbeats

Approach notes, usually a half-step above or below a goal note

Arpeggiation, eighth notes, and triplets to provide accents



Example 4.20, Walking bass line in a blues progression

Example 4.20 shows a walking bass line in a blues progression with chromatic approach notes that push to important chord tones, especially on downbeats.

4.8 RHYTHMIC AND HARMONIC ANTICIPATION

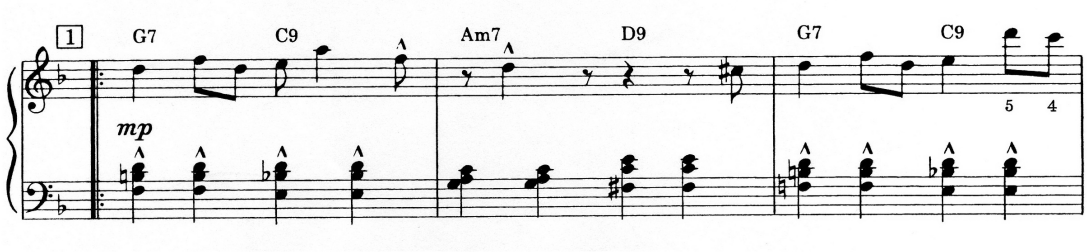
The use of syncopation in jazz is widely understood, though another common device, anticipation, is perhaps not so well documented. Anticipation is a technique used in broad range of jazz styles to heighten rhythmic vitality. Simply put, playing a chord just ahead of its anticipated appearance enhances the effect of syncopation. Jazz artists as diverse as Art Tatum, Bill Evans, and Chick Corea all use anticipation. There are anticipations in some of the examples above. In Teddy Wilson's *Blue Moon* (ex. 4.16), he consistently places chords in the right-hand part an eighth or sixteenth beat ahead of their anticipated appearance, coming ahead of the left-hand harmony. In fact, the arrangement starts with this technique and it is repeated in measures 2-3, 4-5, 8-9, 10-11, 14-15, and 15-16. There are fewer instances in Art Tatum's *Sunday,* ex. 4.17, but it is used in bars 2, 4, 10, and 14. In Peterson's *The Smudge* (ex. 4.18), there is anticipation in measures 4-5, 6-7, and 11. The device is also present in two examples of Herbie Hancock and Chick Corea to come.

4.9 GARNER-STYLE CHORDS

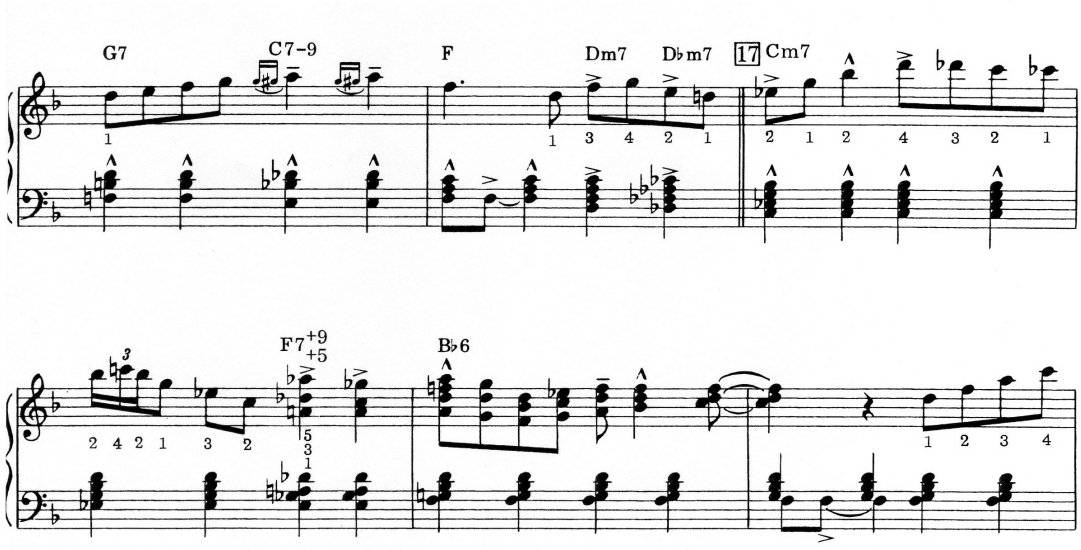
Like most of the influential jazz performers of the twentieth century, Erroll Garner developed his own distinct and instantly recognizable approach to jazz piano.

Garner's style combines elements of Swing and Bebop, and is both distinctly his own and at the same time often emulated.

The most characteristic element of Garner's style is repeated left-hand chords, not unlike the strumming of a big-band guitarist serving up a steady beat in support of a soloist. In the same manner, repeated left-hand chords on the piano create a propulsive and steady rhythmic backdrop for syncopated right-hand improvisation. Garner would often add occasional offbeat syncopated kicks in the left hand. This is such a strong stylistic marker, that it is hard to play repeated left-hand chords in a jazz style without evoking Garner.



Example 4.21, Garner's *Paris Bounce,* A section



Example 4.22, Garner's *Paris Bounce,* B section

In ex. 4.21, the A section of Garner's *Paris Bounce*, steady left-hand chords play against a syncopated right-hand melody. Example 4.22 is the bridge of the same song—an example of Garner injecting syncopations into the left-hand part in measures 2 and 6. This example is an original piece in a published arrangement. In performance, Garner would often take advance of his large span and play these chords in 10ths, thereby putting the bass notes lower in the range of the instrument. The result is a fuller sound and even more of a rhythmic kick from the left hand.

4.10 SUMMARY

The stylistic language of jazz developed quickly from around 1920 until the 1950s, with each subsequent generation extending its range until a fairly stable approach

to rhythm and harmony had been achieved. Though innovation continued and styles developed from Swing to Bebop, and on to Cool and Post-bop, by the late 1950s jazz had achieved something akin to the stylistic stability of common practice tonality in classical music. In the late 1950s, this began to change with the inclusion of rock and 20th century classical elements influencing new directions in jazz.