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# The Jazz Saxophone Style of Charles Mcpherson: an Analysis Through Biographical Examination and Solo Transcription

Don Wilbur Norton III

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UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO

Greeley, Colorado

The Graduate School

THE JAZZ SAXOPHONE STYLE OF CHARLES MCPHERSON:  
AN ANALYSIS THROUGH BIOGRAPHICAL EXAMINATION  
AND SOLO TRANSCRIPTION

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Arts

Don Wilbur Norton III

College of Performing and Visual Arts  
School of Music  
Jazz Studies

December 2015

This Dissertation by: Don Wilbur Norton, III

Entitled: *The Jazz Saxophone Style of Charles McPherson: An Analysis through Biographical Examination and Solo Transcription*

has been approved as meeting the requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Arts in College of Performing and Visual Arts in School of Music, Program of Jazz Studies

Accepted by the Doctoral Committee

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Accepted by the Graduate School

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## **ABSTRACT**

Norton, Don Wilbur, III. *The Jazz Saxophone Style of Charles McPherson: An Analysis through Biographical Examination and Solo Transcription*. Published Doctor of Arts dissertation, University of Northern Colorado, 2015.

This study provides an overview of the musical style of Charles McPherson, one of the most artistically accomplished and highly regarded saxophonists to emerge from the post-bebop era. It includes biographical information that is relevant to his musical development and career and an analysis of key stylistic features of his saxophone playing and improvising. These stylistic features are represented in ten accompanying solo transcriptions. The musical analysis in this study is divided into the following categories: Sonic Characteristics; Rhythmic Approach; Melodic and Harmonic Elements; and Phrasing and Solo Organization. Elements from these categories are presented with theoretical explanations, general descriptions of their application, transcription excerpts, and original musical examples. The resulting body of research highlights the unique characteristics of McPherson's jazz saxophone style, and it provides historical, musical, and pedagogical contributions to jazz scholarship.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Thanks to Jon Gordon, Dr. Edward Joffe, Jeb Patton, Randy Porter, and Michael Weiss for lending their time and insight.

Thanks to the following publishers for granting permission to reprint the chord changes and titles to the songs in the transcriptions: Alfred, Chazz Jazz, Corcovado Music, Fermata do Brasil, and Hal Leonard.

Finally, I am eternally grateful to Mom, Dad, and Chris for always supporting me in my studies and in my pursuit of teaching and performing music as a vocation. I love you, and I couldn't have done this without you. And thank you to Buddy for being my best friend.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Purpose**

This study provides an overview of the musical style of saxophonist Charles McPherson by presenting relevant biographical information, a discussion of key features of his playing, and transcriptions of some of his recorded improvisations. In doing so, it provides historical, musical, and pedagogical contributions to jazz scholarship.

From an historical perspective, this study provides a survey of McPherson's musical development and career, and it helps to preserve his status as one of the most artistically accomplished jazz saxophonists to emerge in the last half century. In documenting his career, this study also provides information about musicians with whom he interacted and performed, some of which has not yet been printed in other sources.

From a musical perspective, this study provides analysis and solo transcriptions that are intended to help lead to a deeper understanding of McPherson's playing style. It also identifies and explains key elements of his approaches to saxophone playing and improvisation. When applicable, examples demonstrating these elements have been provided.

From a pedagogical perspective, this study includes discussion of methods used by McPherson in addressing specific issues related to saxophone technique and

improvisation that can be used for individual study and teaching. The analysis and accompanying transcriptions can also serve as resources for musical study and reference.

### **Need for the Study**

Many musicians, critics, and fans have expressed great admiration for Charles McPherson's artistry. Stanley Crouch writes:

The alto saxophonist Charles McPherson is held in high esteem by musicians both long seasoned and young, ranging from Jimmy Heath and George Coleman to Greg Osby and Wes Anderson.<sup>1</sup>

Saxophonist Jon Gordon says of McPherson, "I think he's as big an influence as I have," and he states that hearing McPherson "changed my concept of what was possible and why I was playing this music."<sup>2</sup> Pianist Michael Weiss, who plays on McPherson's 1994 album *First Flight Out*, says of him, "In addition to his technical virtuosity, he plays with melodic, harmonic, rhythmic, and creative virtuosity," and he describes playing with McPherson as "a tremendous inspiration."<sup>3</sup> Woodwind artist and educator Edward Joffe writes, "Charles McPherson has been a musical hero of mine for decades," and he considers McPherson to be "one of the true legends of jazz and saxophone."<sup>4</sup>

Despite McPherson's influence and the high regard in which he is held in the jazz community, there has been no in-depth study written about him. By providing an extensive collection of information regarding his career and music, this dissertation fills that void in the canon of jazz scholarship.

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<sup>1</sup> Stanley Crouch, "Imaginative, Audacious, and Overlooked," *New York Times*, February 6, 2000, accessed October 4, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2000/02/06/arts/music-imaginative-audacious-and-overlooked.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Jon Gordon, telephone interview by author, June 6, 2015.

<sup>3</sup> Michael Weiss, telephone interview by author, May 22, 2015.

<sup>4</sup> Edward Joffe, "Charles McPherson on How to Practice Jazz," 2015, accessed July 14, 2015, <http://joffewoodwinds.com/videos/interview-charles-mcpherson>.

Also, while there are many transcription books that focus on individual artists, there are no such volumes that focus on McPherson. To date, only one transcription of an improvised solo by him has been printed in a commercially available publication, and it includes no accompanying analysis.<sup>5</sup>

### **Scope and Limitations**

The biographical portion of this study focuses on McPherson's life as it pertains to his musical training, career, and artistic development. Biographical information that is not directly related to these topics is only paid cursory attention or is not included. In the interest of describing their influence on McPherson's style, this study includes discussion of a number of other artists with whom he played or who influenced him significantly; however, these artists are only discussed to the extent that they influenced his career and musical development.

The solos used for analysis in this study are from recordings on which McPherson is the session leader, a designation that allows him greater artistic control in terms of personnel, repertoire, and performance style. His recording career as a leader currently spans a period of 51 years and includes sessions for the Prestige, Mainstream, Xanadu, Discovery, Arabesque, Vartan Jazz, Vega, Clarion Jazz, Cellar Live, Venus, and Capri labels.<sup>6</sup> This study features 10 solos transcribed from his recorded output over that time period, ranging from his first album as a leader, *Bebop Revisited* (1964), to his most recent, *The Journey* (2014). Specific solos were selected, in consultation with McPherson, based on the clarity with which they exhibit characteristic features of his

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<sup>5</sup> John Alexander, "'But Beautiful' – Charles McPherson – Alto Sax Solo," *Jazz Improv*, Spring 2005, 194-199.

<sup>6</sup> *The Jazz Discography Online*, accessed April 20, 2015, <http://www.lordisco.com>.

playing and the breadth of vocabulary used in the improvisation. Also, in order to demonstrate the application of his vocabulary in different musical settings, this study features solos played on songs of various styles and tempos (e.g. ballad, medium swing, samba, uptempo swing, etc.).

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The most complete body of biographical information about McPherson is in the form of interviews he has given for well-known jazz magazines such as *DownBeat* and *JazzTimes*, as well as for lesser-known periodicals published in both print and online formats in the United States, Canada, and Europe. These interviews feature mostly anecdotal content, usually discussing his early life and musical training, his associations with Charles Mingus and others while living in New York during the 1960s and early 1970s, his career since moving to California in the late 1970s, and his approach to saxophone playing and improvisation. An interview conducted by Mel Martin, which was published in the *Saxophone Journal* in 1988, provides insight from McPherson into his life and musical training, and it includes discussion of saxophone equipment, instrumental technique, and improvisational approaches.<sup>7</sup>

Interviews in other media formats include a video published in 2015 on the website of Edward Joffe in which McPherson discusses topics related to jazz pedagogy, his early musical education, his approaches to improvisation and saxophone playing, and his interaction with legendary jazz musicians including Charlie Parker.<sup>8</sup> This video also

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<sup>7</sup> Mel Martin, "Charles McPherson Interview," *The Saxophone Journal* 13, no. 1 (Spring 1998), accessed July 21, 2015, <http://www.charlesmcpherson.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Saxophone-Journal-1988.pdf>.

<sup>8</sup> Edward Joffe, "Charles McPherson on How to Practice Jazz," 2015, accessed July 14, 2015, <http://joffewoodwinds.com/videos/interview-charles-mcpherson>.



includes McPherson demonstrating some of his practice techniques. Another video interview, available on YouTube and accessible through a link on McPherson's personal website, was conducted in 2014 with Jazz 88.3 FM, a San Diego radio station, in which he discusses his life, recent composing activities, and musical philosophy.<sup>9</sup>

Archived radio broadcasts include interviews conducted for Arizona Public Media, the Hamilton College Jazz Archive, Indiana Public Media, KPBS Radio (San Diego, CA), WBEZ Radio (Chicago), WDCB Public Radio (Chicago), and WTIC Radio (Hartford, CT). These interviews typically contain information similar to what is found in the printed interviews mentioned above, including McPherson's early musical experiences, his study and apprenticeship with Barry Harris, his experiences growing up in Detroit, his move to New York and subsequent tenure with Charles Mingus, his professional activities since moving to California in the late 1970s, his participation in the soundtrack to Clint Eastwood's *Bird*, and the state of modern jazz.

Given his prolific career as a touring and recording artist, there are many concert and album reviews in various magazines and newspapers that discuss McPherson's musical style and his legacy as an artist. These reviews have appeared in publications that include the *Chicago Reader*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Los Angeles Times*, *New York Times*, *San Diego Union-Tribune*, and the *Village Voice*.<sup>10</sup> These pieces are typically written by reputable jazz critics, such as Stanley Crouch (*Village Voice*),<sup>11</sup> Leonard Feather (*Los*

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<sup>9</sup> Mark DeBoskey, "McPherson Jazz 88 FM Interview," 2014, accessed April 20, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b4mh6YpzZT4>.

<sup>10</sup> "Charles McPherson Website," accessed July 14, 2015, <http://www.charlesmcpherson.com>.

<sup>11</sup> Stanley Crouch, "Bebop Flambé," *The Village Voice*, August 7, 1984, accessed October 4, 2015, <http://www.charlesmcpherson.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Village-Voice-7-84.pdf>.

*Angeles Times*),<sup>12</sup> and Howard Reich (*Chicago Tribune*).<sup>13</sup> Crouch's "Imaginative, Audacious, and Overlooked" focuses on aspects of McPherson's biography and career and also provides valuable critical insight into his artistic accomplishments.<sup>14</sup> Many of the above resources, as well as biographical information, a listing of current professional activities, photos, videos, and other press materials, can be accessed on McPherson's website, <http://www.charlesmcpherson.com>.<sup>15</sup>

There are relatively few books that include information about McPherson, and there are none for which he serves as the main topic. Limited biographical information is available in reference works that include the following: *The Rough Guide to Jazz* (Carr, Fairweather, and Priestley);<sup>16</sup> *The Rolling Stone Jazz & Blues Album Guide* (ed. Swenson);<sup>17</sup> *The All Music Guide to Jazz* (ed. Ron Wynn);<sup>18</sup> *The Penguin Guide to Jazz on CD, LP, and Cassette* (Cook and Morton);<sup>19</sup> *The Biographical Encyclopedia of Jazz* (Feather and Gitler);<sup>20</sup> *The Encyclopedia of Jazz in the Sixties* (Feather);<sup>21</sup> and *The Encyclopedia of Jazz in the Seventies* (Feather and Gitler).<sup>22</sup> The biographical entries

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<sup>12</sup> Leonard Feather, "Jazz Reviews: Charles McPherson at Catalina's," *Los Angeles Times*, May 12, 1987, accessed October 9, 2015, [http://articles.latimes.com/1987-05-12/entertainment/ca-7577\\_1\\_jazz-reviews](http://articles.latimes.com/1987-05-12/entertainment/ca-7577_1_jazz-reviews).

<sup>13</sup> Howard Reich, "Two Masters Celebrate Charlie Parker," *Chicago Tribune*, August 8, 2009, accessed October 4, 2015, [http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2009-08-08/news/0908070214\\_1\\_charlie-parker-willie-pickens-jazz-showcase](http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2009-08-08/news/0908070214_1_charlie-parker-willie-pickens-jazz-showcase).

<sup>14</sup> Stanley Crouch, "Imaginative, Audacious, and Overlooked."

<sup>15</sup> "Charles McPherson Website."

<sup>16</sup> Ian Carr, Digby Fairweather, and Brian Priestley, *Jazz: The Rough Guide* (London: Rough Guides Ltd, 1995).

<sup>17</sup> John Swenson, *The Rolling Stone Jazz & Blues Album Guide* (New York: Random House, 1999).

<sup>18</sup> Ron Wynn, Michael Erlewine, and Vladimir Bogdanov, *The All Music Guide to Jazz*, ed. Ron Wynn (San Francisco: Backbeat Books, 1994).

<sup>19</sup> Richard Cook and Brian Morton, *The Penguin Guide to Jazz on CD, LP, and Cassette* (New York: Penguin Books, 1994).

<sup>20</sup> Leonard Feather and Ira Gitler, *The Biographical Encyclopedia of Jazz* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

<sup>21</sup> Leonard Feather, *The Encyclopedia of Jazz in the Sixties* (New York: Horizon Press, 1966).

<sup>22</sup> Leonard Feather and Ira Gitler, *The Encyclopedia of Jazz in the Seventies* (New York: Horizon Press, 1976).

provided in these texts are generally brief, highlighting only key aspects of his life and career. Thus, there is a considerable amount of overlap in content not only among the entries in each of these texts, but also with other sources such as the published interviews mentioned above. McPherson is also briefly mentioned several times in Paul Berliner's *Thinking in Jazz: The Infinite Art of Improvisation* with regard to his musical training and apprenticeship with pianist Barry Harris.<sup>23</sup>

Online reference works that include biographical information similar to that found in the texts above include *The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz* (2nd edition),<sup>24</sup> *The New Grove Dictionary of American Music* (2nd edition),<sup>25</sup> and the *Encyclopedia of Popular Music*.<sup>26</sup>

Aside from personal interviews with McPherson, the most valuable resource available for the study of his musical style is his recorded output. He began his recording career in 1960 as a sideman with Charles Mingus, and he made his first recording as a leader in 1964.<sup>27</sup> Since then, McPherson has continued to record as both a leader and a sideman on fairly consistent basis. The most comprehensive McPherson discography is available through Tom Lord's *The Jazz Discography Online*.<sup>28</sup> In addition to providing preserved examples of McPherson's music, these recordings include liner notes that offer further insight into his playing. Limited discographical information, usually including selected lists of albums with annotations, can be found in the following resources: *The*

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<sup>23</sup> Paul Berliner, *Thinking in Jazz: The Infinite Art of Improvisation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

<sup>24</sup> Michael James and Barry Kernfeld, "McPherson, Charles," *New Grove Dictionary of Jazz*, 2nd ed., accessed September 18, 2015, Oxford Music Online.

<sup>25</sup> Ross Musto, "McPherson, Charles," *New Grove Dictionary of American Music*, 2nd ed., January 13, 2015, accessed September 18, 2015, Oxford Music Online.

<sup>26</sup> "McPherson, Charles," *Encyclopedia of Popular Music*, July 4, 2006, accessed October 4, 2015, Oxford Music Online.

<sup>27</sup> *The Jazz Discography Online*, accessed August 4, 2015.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

*Rolling Stone Jazz & Blues Album Guide* (ed. Swenson);<sup>29</sup> *The All Music Guide to Jazz* (ed. Ron Wynn);<sup>30</sup> *The Penguin Guide to Jazz on CD, LP, and Cassette* (Cook and Morton);<sup>31</sup> and *The Biographical Encyclopedia of Jazz* (Feather and Gitler).<sup>32</sup>

McPherson has appeared as a performer in several commercially available videos. In Clint Eastwood's *Bird* (1998), he is featured performing overdubbed solos in the style of Charlie Parker.<sup>33</sup> In the documentary *The Last of the Blue Devils* (1979), he appears in concert in a club setting with legendary Kansas City bandleader and pianist Jay McShann.<sup>34</sup> In *Mingus*, a 1968 documentary by director Thomas Reichman, McPherson appears briefly in several scenes performing with Charles Mingus' band.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> John Swenson, *The Rolling Stone Jazz & Blues Album Guide* (New York: Random House, 1999).

<sup>30</sup> Ron Wynn, Michael Erlewine, and Vladimir Bogdanov, *The All Music Guide to Jazz*, ed. Ron Wynn (San Francisco: Backbeat Books, 1994).

<sup>31</sup> Richard Cook and Brian Morton, *The Penguin Guide to Jazz on CD, LP, and Cassette* (New York: Penguin Books, 1994).

<sup>32</sup> Leonard Feather and Ira Gitler, *The Biographical Encyclopedia of Jazz* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

<sup>33</sup> *Bird*, directed by Clint Eastwood (Warner Bros. Inc., 1988), VHS (Warner Home Video, 1989).

<sup>34</sup> *Last of the Blue Devils*, directed by Bruce Ricker (The Last of the Blue Devils Film Co., 1979), DVD (Kino Video, 2001).

<sup>35</sup> "Charles Mingus and His Eviction From His New York City Loft, Captured in Moving 1968 Film," 2012, accessed August 13, 2015, [http://www.openculture.com/2012/08/charles\\_mingus\\_evicted\\_in\\_1966\\_film.html](http://www.openculture.com/2012/08/charles_mingus_evicted_in_1966_film.html).

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

Much of the information presented in this study was gathered from personal interviews conducted with Charles McPherson. These interviews addressed biographical topics related to his musical training, influences, and career, and musical topics related to his saxophone technique and improvisational style, including autodidactic approaches and techniques learned in formal study and through interaction with other musicians. Interviews were also conducted with musicians who have had long-standing personal and professional relationships with McPherson, and their input was extremely valuable in guiding the direction and content of this project. This research was conducted in accordance with permission granted by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Northern Colorado.

After choosing the solos for use in this study based on the criteria presented in the Scope and Limitations in Chapter 1, the transcription process began with repeated listening to each solo. The solos were then learned by playing along with the recordings, in order to ensure accuracy and to focus on technical aspects of McPherson's saxophone playing. The final step in the transcription process was to notate the improvisations against a standard set of chord changes, though the improvised melodies might sometimes suggest alternate harmonies. In the case of original compositions, chord progressions are presented as they were intended to be played on the recording, based on

information from McPherson. The transcriptions are notated in the key of E  $\flat$ , as opposed to concert pitch, so they appear as they are played on the alto saxophone. In addition to the notes and rhythms played by McPherson in each solo, the transcriptions include the following information: recording personnel, album information, style indication, tempo marking, measure numbers at the beginning of each system, times of the beginning of each solo chorus within the recording, and articulation markings.

The transcriptions were then analyzed in terms of key features of McPherson's style that came to light during the research process. The presentation of these features in Chapter 5 includes theoretical explanations, descriptions of application, excerpts from the transcriptions, and original musical examples. Other relevant information, such as his pedagogical approaches to various concepts, is also discussed.

The first section of Chapter 5, "Sonic Characteristics," focuses on McPherson's approaches to tone production, vibrato, and articulation. By including descriptions and explanations from personal interviews and sources consulted during the research, this section describes how he conceptualizes these elements. Most of the information in this section is not applicable for use in analyzing the transcriptions. Instead, this section presents information that is not communicated in the transcriptions and is outside the scope of the Biographical Overview, but is important to understanding McPherson's style.

There are two musical examples included in this first section. One is an excerpt from McPherson's solo on "Blues for Mac" that contains a wide variety of articulations and is presented to supplement the discussion of vocal inflections in his playing. This excerpt is presented without any additional analysis; however, the articulation markings

in this example are defined in Appendix A, and they are based on a similar guide found in *Jazz Pedagogy: The Jazz Educator's Handbook and Resource Guide*.<sup>36</sup> The other is an original musical example that demonstrates an exercise used for practicing articulation that was explained by McPherson during an interview and is described in the section.

The second section, “Rhythmic Approach,” identifies outstanding rhythmic features of McPherson’s playing that were explained in interviews with him and observed through extensive listening. The transcriptions were analyzed for examples that clearly demonstrate these features, which include flexibility with regard to where phrases begin within a measure, rhythmic variety within phrases, complex rhythmic manipulation of simple melodic ideas, and creating rhythmic structure through accents. Original analysis was used to demonstrate the selected features explained in this section.

The section begins with a discussion of the flexibility of McPherson’s rhythmic phrasing. This is supplemented by excerpts from his solo on “For Heaven’s Sake” that demonstrate his beginning phrases on various sixteenth-note subdivisions of different beats within a measure, all within a single solo. Sixteenth notes were chosen as the unit of subdivision for this demonstration because much of the solo is played with a double-time feel. These phrases are highlighted by brackets under the system to show their duration, and a brief description of where the phrase begins is provided under the bracket. Additionally, these phrases are organized with regard to the order in which they appear in the measure. For example, the first phrase presented (Example 3) begins on the second sixteenth-note subdivision of the first beat, the earliest point in any measure at which a

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<sup>36</sup> J. Richard Dunscomb and Willie Hill, Jr., *Jazz Pedagogy: The Jazz Educator's Handbook and Resource Guide* (Van Nuys, CA: Alfred, 2002).

phrase in this solo begins. The following example features a phrase beginning on the upbeat, or second sixteenth-note subdivision, of the first beat, etc.

A four-measure excerpt from “Karen,” in which McPherson incorporates numerous rhythmic values, is used to demonstrate rhythmic variety within a phrase. In this example, the use of specific rhythmic durations is highlighted by brackets underneath the system, and the rhythmic values being used are indicated under the brackets. With each change of duration, a new bracket is presented. This discussion of rhythmic variety is also supplemented by an original musical example that demonstrates a pedagogical approach to developing this concept, which was explained by McPherson during an interview.

An excerpt from his solo on “Desafinado” is analyzed to demonstrate McPherson’s practice of using complex rhythmic manipulation of simple melodic material. This example features analysis that includes two sets of brackets that appear underneath the system, which are to be used in conjunction with each other to interpret the technique. The top set of brackets highlights the melodic content of the cell, and the bottom set of brackets highlights how it is being manipulated rhythmically. Both sets of brackets include short descriptive terms underneath to help the reader interpret the technique described in the text.

The final musical example in this section is an excerpt from “Blues for Mac” that demonstrates how McPherson creates rhythmic structure by placing accents on a variety of different subdivisions of the beat. In this example, accented notes are highlighted under the system and identified by their placement within the beat in order to demonstrate his concept of structural rhythmic balance, as it was explained in interviews.



The third section, “Melodic and Harmonic Elements,” focuses on McPherson’s use of traditional elements of the jazz vocabulary and how they are combined in his melodic construction. David Baker’s *How to Play Bebop, Vol. 1*<sup>37</sup> and Jerry Coker’s *Elements of the Jazz Language for the Developing Improvisor*<sup>38</sup> were used to identify melodic and harmonic elements that appear regularly in McPherson’s playing. After studying these texts to gain a thorough understanding of their content, the solos were analyzed in terms of definitions and explanations they provide. Baker’s text was used to define the bebop scale and its practical applications. Coker’s text was used to help identify many specific melodic and harmonic devices in the solos, including the following: digital patterns, change-running, 3- ♭ 9 melodic movement, 7-3 resolution, enclosure, harmonic generalization, blues scale usage, and sequencing. Additionally, Jamey Aebersold’s *How to Play Jazz and Improvise* was used to supplement the discussion of blues scale usage.<sup>39</sup>

The presentation of the elements in this section is similar to that used in the solo analyses in Coker’s book, which highlights the use of specific elements using brackets and the author’s descriptive terms above the system. In the interest of maintaining consistency with the previous section and to avoid interfering with the chord symbols, elements in this study are highlighted with brackets underneath the system, and the descriptive terms used by the authors of the above texts are positioned underneath the brackets. Additionally, in examples where the chord tones and scale degrees played by McPherson are of importance to the element being described, their numerical equivalents

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<sup>37</sup> David Baker, *How to Play Bebop, Vol. 1* (Van Nuys, CA: Alfred, 1985).

<sup>38</sup> Jerry Coker, *Elements of the Jazz Language for the Developing Improvisor* (Van Nuys, CA: Alfred, 1991).

<sup>39</sup> Jamey Aebersold, *How to Play Jazz and Improvise* (New Albany, IN: Aebersold, 1992).

have been aligned with the note and positioned underneath the brackets but above the descriptive term. These elements include bebop scales, digital patterns, change-running, 3- ♭ 9, and 7-3 resolutions.

The transcriptions were also analyzed for examples of McPherson's intervallic approach to melodic construction, which was explained during an interview and is discussed in the text of the section. The first of these two examples, an excerpt from "Spring is Here," features original analysis to demonstrate this concept. Notes that are outside of traditional chord/scale relationships are indicated underneath the system with an asterisk (\*). Additionally, brackets are used to highlight melodic material according to each chord change, and the scale typically associated with each chord is presented to further supplement the explanation in the text. Dan Haerle's *Scales for Jazz Improvisation* was consulted in determining the appropriate scale choice for each chord.<sup>40</sup> The second musical example that demonstrates this concept, an excerpt from "Evidence," accompanies an analysis of a tritone substitution in terms of linear chromaticism. It is presented without any analytical tools as a supplement to the descriptions provided in the text.

The fourth section, "Phrasing and Solo Organization," discusses key approaches used by McPherson in organizing musical content, which were explained in interviews and observed through listening. The discussion of his method for practicing rhythmic phrasing is supplemented by an example that was transcribed from a demonstration played by McPherson during a personal interview. It contains a metronome marking but no time signature, bar lines, or chord progression, per McPherson's instructions. Further,

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<sup>40</sup> Dan Haerle, *Scales for Jazz Improvisation* (Miami, FL; CPP/Belwin, 1975).

the solos were analyzed for the following features, which are discussed in the section: maintaining a connection to the melody during an improvisation, extended phrase length, and tessitura. Two excerpts from “Spring is Here” are included to demonstrate his practice of adhering to the original melody of the song while improvising, and they include labels under the system to indicate where the melody is referenced within the context of the solo. Excerpts from “Evidence” and “Karen” are provided to demonstrate McPherson’s ability to play extended phrases. In both examples, time markings that correspond with the recording and an indication of where the line begins and ends in terms of beats and measure numbers are provided to supplement the analysis. Finally, two examples are included to demonstrate the importance of instrumental range in his approach. The first, which is provided without additional analysis as a supplement to the discussion in the text, is an excerpt from “Evidence” in which he plays within a limited range of the saxophone that he describes as being important in establishing a connection with the voice. The second is an original musical example that demonstrates an exercise for practicing within a limited range that was explained by McPherson in an interview.

## CHAPTER IV

### BIOGRAPHICAL OVERVIEW

Charles McPherson was born in Joplin, Missouri, on July 24, 1939.<sup>41</sup> From an early age, he was “always enamored of music” despite not being involved in formal study.<sup>42</sup> When he visited the homes of his parents’ friends, he experimented with playing the piano if one was available.<sup>43</sup> In addition to becoming familiar with jazz through recordings and its status as a popular music during his childhood, McPherson first heard live jazz played by territory bands touring through Joplin during the summer when he was around six years old.<sup>44</sup> He enjoyed the music that these bands played, and he particularly liked the sound, shape, and color of the saxophones that he observed during the concerts.<sup>45</sup>

In 1948, at age nine, McPherson moved to Detroit with his mother.<sup>46</sup> The new neighborhood in which he resided was, out of coincidence, in the heart of Detroit’s fertile jazz scene of the late 1940s.<sup>47</sup> He lived around the corner from legendary pianist and jazz education pioneer Barry Harris and down the street from Lonnie Hillyer, with whom he later played regularly for decades.<sup>48</sup> He also lived on the same street, though several

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<sup>41</sup> Carr, Fairweather, and Priestley, *Jazz: The Rough Guide*, 432.

<sup>42</sup> Charles McPherson, interview by author, San Diego, January 9, 2015.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

blocks away, from the Bluebird Inn, which McPherson describes as being “at that time, probably the hippest jazz club in Detroit.”<sup>49</sup>

Prior to developing a serious interest in jazz or gaining an awareness of the importance of his new environment, McPherson became interested in the Bluebird Inn’s clientele, noticing that it was unique.<sup>50</sup> He felt that the people he saw going to the Bluebird Inn were different from “any other Americans” he had seen to that point in his life.<sup>51</sup> Reflecting on this observation, he states, “Now I know what that is: they were jazz fans. And they have a different consciousness.”<sup>52</sup>

When McPherson entered junior high school at age 12, he joined his school’s band program.<sup>53</sup> While his initial preference was to play saxophone, he began on flugelhorn and trumpet, as there were no saxophones available through the school.<sup>54</sup> At age 13, his mother bought him an alto saxophone, which became his primary instrument.<sup>55</sup> At that point, McPherson had some knowledge of jazz, and using that familiarity as a starting point, he became interested in learning more about the saxophone.<sup>56</sup> He thus began to listen to some of the great alto saxophone soloists in popular swing bands, including Johnny Hodges in Duke Ellington’s Orchestra.<sup>57</sup>

About a year after beginning to play the saxophone, McPherson became aware of the music of Charlie Parker through the recommendation of an older classmate.<sup>58</sup> One day, while in a local candy store, McPherson played Parker’s recording of “Tico Tico” on

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

the jukebox.<sup>59</sup> Upon hearing it, he was “completely floored,” and he knew that he wanted to play music in that style.<sup>60</sup> To McPherson, Parker’s music “made perfect sense,” and he immediately recognized the “melodic and harmonic logic” of Parker’s playing without having a technical or theoretical understanding of what he was doing.<sup>61</sup>

In addition to Parker’s recording of “Tico Tico,” which inspired his initial fascination with bebop, McPherson was greatly influenced by other recordings of Parker that were current in the early 1950s, such as *Bird with Strings* and others produced on the Verve label.<sup>62</sup> These recordings were very popular at the time, and McPherson recalls that it was not uncommon for teenagers in Detroit to be able to sing Parker’s solos with accurate phrasing and intonation.<sup>63</sup> After he discovered Parker’s music through these later recordings, which also included dates with Hank Jones, Max Roach, and Red Rodney, he became familiar with some of Parker’s earlier recordings from the mid-1940s.<sup>64</sup> McPherson believes that younger musicians have a general tendency to “listen to whatever is current at that moment when they enter jazz,” acknowledging that familiarity with great musicians and recordings of the past typically comes with further exposure to the music.<sup>65</sup>

McPherson once heard Parker play live in Detroit, and he recalls that the experience was “incredible.”<sup>66</sup> He was particularly struck by the power of Parker’s

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Charles McPherson, telephone interview by author, March 18, 2015.

<sup>63</sup> WDCB Radio, “Interview with Charles McPherson,” November 7, 2014, accessed August 27, 2015, [http://www.charlesmcpherson.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Charles-McPherson\\_11-07-14\\_wdcb.mp3](http://www.charlesmcpherson.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Charles-McPherson_11-07-14_wdcb.mp3).

<sup>64</sup> Charles McPherson, telephone interview by author, March 18, 2015.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Charles McPherson, interview by author, San Diego, January 9, 2015.

sound.<sup>67</sup> McPherson asserts that recordings provide little indication of how Parker sounded in person, and he believes that a sound like Parker's will never be recreated again.<sup>68</sup>

McPherson recalls that Parker never took his teeth off of the top of the mouthpiece, and when he drew breath, his teeth would be set before he formed an embouchure, which was a "perfect seal."<sup>69</sup> He also remembers that the attack Parker used to begin his notes was an outstanding feature of his playing.<sup>70</sup> He describes it as being very forceful, recalling that Parker could make any note on the saxophone speak instantly, regardless of register, because of the efficiency with which he moved his air in the attack.<sup>71</sup> This efficiency could also be observed in other areas of Parker's technique, including his finger movement and his articulation, both of which were executed with great accuracy and precision at any tempo.<sup>72</sup>

Additionally, McPherson recalls seeing the emotion of Parker's music reflected in his facial expressions and body movement when he played.<sup>73</sup> At one point during the performance, Parker was playing a background figure behind another solo, and he became "so overcome with emotion with the lick that he couldn't contain himself" and had to walk across the stage and then back again to his original position.<sup>74</sup> This led McPherson to realize that Parker was "totally emotionally involved" in his performances, and he constructs the following summary of the emotional content of Parker's playing: "It's almost like other people are playing notes, and when I saw Bird play, he's actually

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

playing feeling, and it happens to have a note.”<sup>75</sup> McPherson believes that Parker was a “perfect saxophone player,” and seeing him in person made a lasting impact.<sup>76</sup>

After identifying Parker’s style as unique among all music he had heard up to that point, McPherson learned that the style of jazz Parker played had descriptive labels attached to it such as “bebop,” “modern jazz,” and “progressive,” and he proceeded to investigate other artists who were major innovators in that style.<sup>77</sup> He learned that bebop was a distinct genre within jazz, and he devoted himself fully to its study.<sup>78</sup>

When McPherson discovered that the nearby Bluebird Inn featured bebop and some of its foremost practitioners, he felt like he was “in heaven.”<sup>79</sup> He recalls that the house band at the club during this period included Pepper Adams on baritone saxophone, Harris on piano, Paul Chambers or James “Beans” Richardson on bass, and Elvin Jones on drums.<sup>80</sup> In addition to the members of the regular house band at the Bluebird Inn, other notable jazz musicians who lived in Detroit or spent lengthy periods of time in the city during the period of McPherson’s residency from 1948 through the late 1950s included Kenny Burrell, Miles Davis (who also lived in McPherson’s neighborhood and worked steadily at the Bluebird Inn for a time), Tommy Flanagan, Frank Foster, Joe Henderson, Thad Jones, Yusef Lateef, Billy Mitchell, and Doug Watkins.<sup>81</sup> McPherson also recalls seeing other jazz greats touring through Detroit, who, in addition to Parker,

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> This list was compiled based on all interviews conducted over the course of research for this project.



included Clifford Brown, Stan Getz, Wardell Gray, Max Roach, Sonny Rollins, Sonny Stitt, and Lester Young.<sup>82</sup>

While McPherson does not believe that there was a “Detroit sound,” or a set of musical features exclusive to the players in that region during that time, he does recognize that there was a “Detroit ethic.”<sup>83</sup> He states that while many jazz musicians in Detroit had unique styles and approaches to playing, they all exhibited a high level of technical fluency on their instruments and had a strong command of fundamental skills, including knowledge of harmony and an understanding of how to be melodic.<sup>84</sup> He adds that while many major cities and regions have produced excellent jazz musicians, the large number of great players that came from Detroit during the 1940s and 1950s was remarkable.<sup>85</sup> He feels fortunate to have grown up in Detroit when he did, yet he believes that the musicians in the generation prior to his, which included Barry Harris and many others 10 to 15 years his senior, formed the “greatest time” in the city’s jazz history.<sup>86</sup>

Although he was too young to gain entry into the Bluebird Inn when he first discovered bebop, McPherson began listening to performances from outside the club and watching the musicians through the windows.<sup>87</sup> He recalls that he and other younger musicians who were also too young to get into the club would knock on the window near where the band was playing, and drummer Elvin Jones would “fix the Venetian blind and crack it open so we could see through there.”<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Charles McPherson, masterclass, University of Northern Colorado, Greeley, CO, January 16, 2015.

McPherson also began visiting with the musicians who were playing at the club during set breaks.<sup>89</sup> It was during these interactions that he met Barry Harris, who invited him to come to the club, as minors were allowed admittance on Sundays if they were accompanied by their parents.<sup>90</sup> McPherson remembers that his first time hearing the house band at the Bluebird Inn was the first time he heard bebop played live.<sup>91</sup> On hearing those musicians, he states:

I had never heard that kind of virtuosity in my life. And it was so compelling and overwhelming. It really inspired me. And then I really got serious about trying to play like that.<sup>92</sup>

The first time McPherson and Hillyer sat in at a jam session at the Bluebird Inn, they played “Star Eyes.”<sup>93</sup> While they could play the melody, McPherson recalls that the soloing during this performance was “total nonsense,” as the two did not have an understanding of how to approach improvisation.<sup>94</sup> Harris subsequently invited the two of them to his house to teach them a little about harmony and improvising.<sup>95</sup>

At that time, Harris served as a mentor not only to younger musicians like McPherson and Hillyer, but also to older, more experienced musicians. In addition to being a great pianist, Harris had a lofty reputation as a teacher. McPherson recalls seeing musicians who were living in New York, including John Coltrane, Sonny Rollins, and Cedar Walton, studying at Harris’ home when they visited Detroit.<sup>96</sup> McPherson explains Harris’ role as an educator in the jazz community:

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<sup>89</sup> Charles McPherson, interview by author, San Diego, January 9, 2015.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> WDCB Radio, “Interview with Charles McPherson.”

<sup>92</sup> DeBoskey, “McPherson Jazz 88 FM Interview.”

<sup>93</sup> Charles McPherson, interview by author, San Diego, January 9, 2015.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

He was always willing to talk about, and explain, music. His house was always a hub of activity. All the musicians in Detroit would come by Barry's house during the course of the day. There were always people in and out.<sup>97</sup>

McPherson began to regularly study harmony, theory, and improvisation with Harris at age 15.<sup>98</sup> He already had knowledge of some scales, including major and minor, and he recalls that Harris required him to verbally recite all of the notes in the scales on which he was working, as well as their key signatures, prior to playing in lessons.<sup>99</sup> McPherson had learned the melodies to a few jazz standards from records; however, he was unaware of the concept of chord progressions.<sup>100</sup> He recalls that his initial impression of navigating the harmonic terrain of a song was that the improviser was simply supposed to play in the tonic key of the song.<sup>101</sup>

With Harris, McPherson began his study of harmony by working on the blues and then progressed to songs like "Perdido" and "I Got Rhythm."<sup>102</sup> Eventually, McPherson began learning songs with more complex harmony and forms, such as "All or Nothing at All," "Have You Met Miss Jones?," and "The Song is You."<sup>103</sup> Harris would occasionally write out solos for study, and he had McPherson do the same as an exercise.<sup>104</sup> At first, McPherson recalls that the melodies in his written solos were true to traditional chord/scale relationships but lacked logic.<sup>105</sup> Harris then instructed him to target chord

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Joffe, "Charles McPherson on How to Practice Jazz."

<sup>100</sup> Charles McPherson, interview by author, San Diego, January 9, 2015.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

tones on downbeats, which gave the melodies more harmonic consonance and structure.<sup>106</sup>

McPherson had begun listening regularly to recordings of great bebop musicians, including Parker and Dizzy Gillespie.<sup>107</sup> Transcription of the solos he heard on recordings proved difficult at first, given both the virtuosity of the musicians and the imprecision with which record players provided slower playback.<sup>108</sup> He thus did not transcribe entire solos but only smaller portions, a process he suggests is conducive to helping players find their “own way.”<sup>109</sup> McPherson briefly recalls this process:

When I first started playing, I knew about Johnny Hodges, and then I was turned on to Bird. Barry Harris loved Charlie Parker. So, I would take the records home and study some of his licks but I would never learn a whole solo.<sup>110</sup>

This combination of theoretical study, listening, and transcribing formed the basis of McPherson’s early study of improvisation. He gradually abandoned the practice of copying music verbatim from recordings, stating that, “At some point you kind of stop doing that, and you just listen to players and see how they do things. Then you try to learn how to do stuff yourself.”<sup>111</sup>

McPherson briefly took saxophone lessons at the Larry Teal School of Music, which he recalls had the best reputation for saxophone instruction among music schools in Detroit.<sup>112</sup> However, he did not study with Teal himself, instead studying with Robert Anderson.<sup>113</sup> Other than this brief period of study at the Larry Teal School, which lasted

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Martin, “Charles McPherson Interview.”

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Charles McPherson, interview by author, San Diego, January 9, 2015.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

only a few months, McPherson's formal musical training came from Harris, and it focused on harmony and improvisational skills, as opposed to saxophone technique.<sup>114</sup> As a saxophone player, McPherson is largely self-taught.<sup>115</sup>

McPherson soon began organizing jam sessions with his peers, who included Hillyer, drummers Roy Brooks and Louis Hayes, and saxophonist Donald Walden.<sup>116</sup> Also among this group were bassist James Jamerson and drummer Richard "Pistol" Allen, who later worked extensively as session musicians for Motown Records in lieu of pursuing careers in jazz.<sup>117</sup> At one point, the young musicians rented a loft in one of Detroit's business districts to facilitate their own late night practice sessions, where they worked on learning repertoire that included standards of the American Songbook and jazz tunes by composers such as Thelonious Monk, Charlie Parker, and Horace Silver.<sup>118</sup> This arrangement grew out of necessity, as younger, inexperienced musicians did not typically play with established professionals.<sup>119</sup> Despite an obvious difference in age and ability level, however, Harris occasionally accompanied the young musicians on gigs and at jam sessions.<sup>120</sup>

In addition to learning about music as a teenager, McPherson was also exposed to the intellectualism that pervaded the social culture of jazz musicians in Detroit.<sup>121</sup> This exposure came from listening to older musicians engage in casual conversation, which frequently did not pertain to music.<sup>122</sup> McPherson recalls that he found these

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Charles McPherson, phone interview by author, March 18, 2015.

<sup>116</sup> Charles McPherson, interview by author, San Diego, January 9, 2015.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

conversations to be very intriguing.<sup>123</sup> He remembers hearing Harris and his contemporaries discussing the ideas of philosophers such as Francis Bacon, Immanuel Kant, Friedrich Nietzsche, Bertrand Russell, and Arthur Schopenhauer, as well as literary works by authors such as Henry Miller and Jean-Paul Sartre.<sup>124</sup> McPherson also recalls that when he visited Harris' home, the latter was frequently engaged in intellectual activities such as the New York Times crossword puzzle, which he could complete in about half an hour.<sup>125</sup>

McPherson recalls one particular experience with Harris that led to his developing a profound appreciation for the intellectual acuity required to play jazz at a high level. Upon bringing home a report card indicating that he had earned average grades and showing it to Harris, Harris remarked that McPherson seemed to be "quite ordinary."<sup>126</sup> When McPherson replied that he was, taking no offense to the appraisal and pleased with the fact that he was not failing, Harris explained to him that there was "nothing ordinary" about the intellectual capacity of his musical heroes, such as Parker.<sup>127</sup> Harris further encouraged McPherson to start reading and exploring all other possible means of sharpening his intellect.<sup>128</sup> McPherson recalls that when Harris told him these things, it held more meaning than any previous encouragement he had received from anyone to do well in school and that his "whole concept of school and grades changed."<sup>129</sup> McPherson began to read constantly, and by the time he reached his late teens, he was able to discuss

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<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

many intellectual topics fluently, which was requisite, along with musical ability, to being considered “hip” among Detroit’s jazz elite.<sup>130</sup>

Throughout his mid- and late teens, McPherson continued to study with Harris, and by age 19, he was working regularly throughout Detroit, despite not being of legal age to work in bars or nightclubs.<sup>131</sup> Soon after establishing himself in Detroit, he followed an exodus of other local musicians who moved to New York in the late 1950s, which included older musicians like Barry Harris and Paul Chambers, as well as some of his peers, including Hillyer, Brooks, and Hayes.<sup>132</sup> McPherson recalls that serving an apprenticeship in one’s hometown and then moving to New York was typical of an aspiring jazz musician in those days, as New York was home to many of the greatest jazz musicians in the world and was an important site for networking and for being in close proximity to record companies.<sup>133</sup>

By the time of his move in late 1959, McPherson had saved enough money to live in New York for several months while looking for permanent musical work, and he acknowledges that not finding a regular source of income would have required him to eventually move back to Detroit.<sup>134</sup> Around the time of McPherson’s move, saxophonist Eric Dolphy and trumpeter Ted Curson had each made plans to leave Charles Mingus’ band to pursue other work.<sup>135</sup> This corresponded with a period during which McPherson was playing regularly in jam sessions at the Café Wha? in Greenwich Village, which

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> Arizona Public Media, “Saxophonist Charles McPherson,” 2013, accessed July 20, 2015, <https://radio.azpm.org/p/azspot/2013/4/19/23857-saxophonist-charles-mcpherson>.

<sup>135</sup> The Fillius Jazz Archive at Hamilton College, “Charles McPherson Interviewed by Monk Rowe,” February 12, 1998, accessed August 27, 2015, <http://contentdm6.hamilton.edu/cdm/ref/collection/jazz/id/1094>.

featured afternoon jam sessions run by Booker Ervin.<sup>136</sup> Based on the recommendation of Detroit native Yusef Lateef, Mingus came to hear McPherson and Hillyer play one afternoon, and he hired them to play in his band, beginning with a performance that night.<sup>137</sup> Because Mingus hired McPherson and Hillyer during the period in which Dolphy and Curson were beginning to serve out their two weeks' notice, McPherson's earliest performances with Mingus were in a horn section that featured two alto saxophones and two trumpets.<sup>138</sup>

McPherson admits that he occasionally harbored concern for his physical well-being during his tenure with Mingus, due to Mingus' reputation for confrontation over professional and musical disagreements.<sup>139</sup> During McPherson's first night playing with Mingus, the latter tore the strings out of the club's piano due to non-payment from the club owners, who had mob affiliations.<sup>140</sup> Additionally on that first night, Mingus threatened Dolphy to a knife fight after Dolphy attempted to serve his official two weeks' notice.<sup>141</sup> While nothing came of the threat, McPherson always put forth great effort to play Mingus' music at an acceptable level in order to avoid a confrontation.<sup>142</sup>

McPherson recalls, however, that his relationship with Mingus was relatively tranquil.<sup>143</sup> He attributes this to his refusal to accept a \$5 payment for a gig that was

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<sup>136</sup> WBEZ Radio, "Charles McPherson Interview with Barry Winograd," June 10, 1993, accessed August 27, 2015, [http://www.charlesmcpherson.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/WBEZ\\_Audio\\_6-10-93\\_01.mp3](http://www.charlesmcpherson.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/WBEZ_Audio_6-10-93_01.mp3).

<sup>137</sup> The Fillius Jazz Archive at Hamilton College, "Charles McPherson Interviewed by Monk Rowe."

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> DeBoskey, "McPherson Jazz 88 FM Interview."

<sup>140</sup> The Fillius Jazz Archive at Hamilton College, "Charles McPherson Interviewed by Monk Rowe."

<sup>141</sup> Martin, "Charles McPherson Interview."

<sup>142</sup> DeBoskey, "McPherson Jazz 88 FM Interview."

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.



played at a benefit concert for poet Kenneth Patchen, a friend of Mingus'.<sup>144</sup> When McPherson declined the meager pay and suggested that Mingus instead donate it to Patchen, Mingus became emotional and thanked McPherson for his donation.<sup>145</sup> This was early in McPherson's tenure with Mingus, and McPherson states that afterwards, he "could do no wrong" from Mingus' perspective.<sup>146</sup>

Furthermore, McPherson was a masterful interpreter of Mingus' repertoire. Stanley Crouch recounts the following scene from a September 20, 1964 performance at the Monterey Jazz Festival, one day after Mingus had fired a majority of the musicians hired to play one of his orchestral works at the festival:

In a brilliant strategic move, Mingus opened with a medley of Ellington ballads and McPherson let everyone know what the deal was, first singing the melody of *In A Sentimental Mood* so warmly from the bell of his horn, then sailing through Billy Strayhorn's *Take The 'A' Train*, which allowed the musicians to open up and swing. But McPherson's masterpiece was the perfectly ordered succession of melodies he invented on Mingus' *Orange Was The Color Of Her Dress, Then Blue Silk*. There was nothing missing – tone, rhythmic authority, harmonic ease, nuance. That improvisation was one of the greatest events in all of Mingus and it made obvious how vital a grip McPherson had of the language of bebop.<sup>147</sup>

Crouch summarizes the influences of both Harris and Mingus on the early development of McPherson's style:

From Mr. Harris he had learned that the be-bop of Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, Bud Powell, Fats Navarro and others could be played with real creativity, not as an uninspired quilt of clichés. With Mingus, Mr. McPherson's gift for melodic invention was given a number of contexts because the bassist wrote in a variety of forms, some conventional, most not, which meant that the player had to be ready for unusual harmonic progressions, for key,

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<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> Stanley Crouch, notes to Charles McPherson, *First Flight Out*, recorded January 25 and 26, 1994, Arabesque AJO113, 1994, CD.

tempo and metric changes and for pieces that might change direction when Mingus shouted out instructions.<sup>148</sup>

McPherson has also stated that Mingus' compositions had a great influence on him, particularly in the latter's approach to harmony in ballad writing.<sup>149</sup> He recalls that the root movement and voicings that Mingus used led to "a certain unusualness" that McPherson found "insightful."<sup>150</sup> He admits that when he was younger, he did not always understand some of the features of Mingus' writing, including the root movement of his harmony; however, he has since developed a deeper sense of appreciation for the logic in the music of composers such as Mingus and Monk, both of whom use unorthodox compositional devices but can "make it make sense."<sup>151</sup>

McPherson believes that not only did his harmonic sophistication improve as a result of playing with Mingus, but that he also developed "a certain power" in his sound.<sup>152</sup> He points out that Mingus carried himself with a forceful presence, and his music was also very powerful.<sup>153</sup> He explains that the music required musicians to incorporate "all the different manifestations of power," not just audibility, into their style when playing it.<sup>154</sup> Overall, of his time with Mingus, McPherson reflects, "My professional teeth were really cut playing with that group."<sup>155</sup>

McPherson made his first recorded appearance as a sideman with Mingus on October 20, 1960 for Candid Records.<sup>156</sup> The recording featured Curson and Hillyer on

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<sup>148</sup> Stanley Crouch, "Imaginative, Audacious, and Overlooked."

<sup>149</sup> Charles McPherson, interview by author, San Diego, January 9, 2015.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

<sup>152</sup> The Fillius Jazz Archive at Hamilton College, "Charles McPherson Interviewed by Monk Rowe."

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> *The Jazz Discography Online*, accessed June 23, 2015.

trumpet, McPherson on alto saxophone, Dolphy on alto saxophone and bass clarinet, Booker Ervin on tenor saxophone, Nico Bunink on piano, Mingus on bass, and Dannie Richmond on piano.<sup>157</sup> Over the next four years, McPherson appeared on a number of other recording dates with Mingus, as well as other sessions led by Barry Harris, Pepper Adams, and Art Farmer.<sup>158</sup>

McPherson recorded his first album as a leader, *Bebop Revisited!*, in 1964 for Prestige Records.<sup>159</sup> It was the first of six albums he recorded for Prestige, followed by *Con Alma!* (1965), *Live at the Five Spot* (1966), *From This Moment On* (1968), *Horizons* (1968), and *McPherson's Mood* (1969).<sup>160</sup> McPherson recalls that his association with Prestige began when producer Don Schlitten, whom McPherson calls “a lover of bebop,” reached out to him to record for the label at a time when Bob Weinstock was selling the Prestige catalog to Schlitten.<sup>161</sup>

By the time of his first release as a leader, McPherson was regularly identified not just as a Parker devotee but as an artist who had assimilated the bebop language and used it as the basis of an original style. In the liner notes to *Bebop Revisited!*, Ira Gitler offers the following insight into Parker’s influence on McPherson, as well as the latter’s creative interpretation of Parker’s language:

There have been, and will be, comparisons between McPherson and his model, Parker. Well, he is not the new Bird, but he has really gotten inside of Bird’s style, no doubt because Bird got through so completely to the inside of him. McPherson has really grasped the rhythmic nuances inherent in Parker’s phrasing, and his sound is one of the most vital to be

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<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

<sup>161</sup> Charles McPherson, telephone interview by author, March 18, 2015.

heard in some time. To be so close to someone, and yet be distinctive is a challenge that he meets head on with positive results.<sup>162</sup>

Regarding some of his other early influences outside of jazz, McPherson recalls moving into an apartment in New York in the early-to-mid-1960s in which the previous tenant had left behind a number of classical music records in excellent condition.<sup>163</sup> He remembers that listening to these records was very influential on his musical development and led him to gain a deep appreciation for modern European composers such as Stravinsky, Mussorgsky, and Prokofiev.<sup>164</sup> While he didn't necessarily "copy" the musical information from those recordings, or make a conscious effort to incorporate it into his playing, he contends that all listening "floods your subconscious" and informs a musician "either on a conscious level or a subconscious level."<sup>165</sup> An example of this influence can be heard in McPherson's composition "I Don't Know" from *Con Alma!*, which is informed by both Charlie Parker's "Parker's Mood" and Nicolai Rimsky-Korsakov's *Scheherazade*.<sup>166</sup>

In 1968, McPherson provided the following insight regarding the importance of listening to a wide variety of music:

We, as musicians, can't afford not to hear those who came before us. A layman, on the other hand, can listen to whatever makes him feel good, because he is not as wholly involved as the musician. A musician must go way back and listen to all of it, all kinds of music – not just jazz. All the great cats did that; they knew no musical boundaries, they knew they couldn't afford to be prejudiced. A musician should go as far back in his listening as he possibly can, ignoring all the little segregated categories that the writers and critics like to put music into. A musician's scope should be wide; he does not have the layman's privilege to be narrow.

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<sup>162</sup> Ira Gitler, notes to Charles McPherson, *Bebop Revisited*, recorded November 20, 1964, Original Jazz Classics OJCCD-710-2, 1992, CD.

<sup>163</sup> Charles McPherson, telephone interview by author, March 18, 2015.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

That is, if he wants to become great, if he really wants to become an artist.<sup>167</sup>

McPherson also cites John Coltrane as an influence; however, he did not try to copy Coltrane's style as he had done with Parker earlier in his development.<sup>168</sup> He recalls that after a period of assimilating Parker's style, he did not have interest in recreating that type of study with another player.<sup>169</sup> McPherson heard Coltrane numerous times in person, including performances with Miles Davis in Detroit, Coltrane's "classic quartet" that included McCoy Tyner, Jimmy Garrison, and Elvin Jones, and his later groups that featured multiple bassists and drummers, including Rashied Ali, as well as other horn players in addition to Coltrane.<sup>170</sup> McPherson cites Coltrane's recordings on the Blue Note and Atlantic labels, as well as his work with Miles Davis and Cannonball Adderley in Davis' band, as among his favorite examples of Coltrane's work.<sup>171</sup>

In addition to inspiring McPherson with his music, Coltrane provided an example of artistic devotion that helped guide his musical development, exhibiting an unending pursuit of new knowledge and a "willingness to try and work very hard."<sup>172</sup> At one point during his tenure in Mingus' band, McPherson took a brief sabbatical from being a professional musician and supported himself and his family by working for the Internal Revenue Service.<sup>173</sup> During this time in the mid-1960s, his children attended a grade school across the street from Coltrane's home.<sup>174</sup> Because McPherson's job required him to work slightly past the time his children were being released from school, Coltrane's

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<sup>167</sup> Chris Albertson, "Charles McPherson: Ornithologist," *DownBeat*, May 16, 1968.

<sup>168</sup> Charles McPherson, interview by author, San Diego, January 9, 2015.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>170</sup> Charles McPherson, interview by author, Greeley, CO, January 16, 2015.

<sup>171</sup> Charles McPherson, interview by author, San Diego, January 9, 2015.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*

wife, Naima, agreed to take care of McPherson's children until he could pick them up.<sup>175</sup> When he came to get his children after work, he would regularly visit with Coltrane, who would, after practicing all day long, visit with McPherson for approximately 30 minutes in the afternoon.<sup>176</sup> McPherson recalls being impressed by the "seriousness" with which Coltrane's devoted himself to music and to becoming a "complete" and "enlightened person" during this period of acquaintance, which lasted approximately a year.<sup>177</sup>

In the mid-1960s, McPherson began working more regularly with his own groups, including one with Harris, Hillyer, and tenor saxophonist George Coleman.<sup>178</sup> Along with McPherson, these three formed the core of a working band that featured various drummers and bass players at different times.<sup>179</sup> The group typically performed throughout the east coast in cities such as New York and Baltimore, and McPherson recalls touring Europe with members of this band, specifically Harris and Hillyer.<sup>180</sup> Also during this period, McPherson recorded on sessions led by musicians other than Mingus and himself while still working regularly with Mingus.<sup>181</sup> McPherson negotiated his obligations to Mingus with his desire to work as a bandleader and freelance sideman by scheduling recording dates and performances during periods of inactivity with Mingus' group.<sup>182</sup>

McPherson states that performing and recording with groups other than Mingus' during this period was something that he "definitely wanted to do."<sup>183</sup> While he calls his

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<sup>175</sup> Ibid.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

<sup>178</sup> Charles McPherson, telephone interview by author, March 18, 2015.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid.

first five years with Mingus “insightful” and a “learning experience,” he acknowledges that after a while, his “direction was a little different than Mingus’ direction,” and working with his own group allowed McPherson to further develop his artistic identity, select his own repertoire, and in general, have greater control over his career.<sup>184</sup> In 1967, McPherson was recognized by *DownBeat* magazine as a “Talent Deserving Wider Recognition,” and in 1968, he was the subject of a feature article in the publication.<sup>185</sup>

One particularly interesting recording from this time period featuring McPherson as a sideman is Barry Harris’ 1968 album *Bull’s Eye!*, which is worthy of note because it features McPherson exclusively on tenor saxophone. While McPherson has primarily played alto saxophone throughout his career, he believes that the tenor saxophone’s range, its design (i.e. weight and size), and its natural timbre make for an instrument that “serves the player well.”<sup>186</sup> He views the tenor saxophone as an instrument that allows more forgiveness to the player in regard to the amount of control required to play with an attractive tone and to play the instrument in tune, particularly in the upper register.<sup>187</sup> He describes this quality in a 1968 interview:

It seems that the alto, being high-pitched, makes your deficiencies more evident. These deficiencies don’t show up as readily on the tenor, because it’s pitched low. The higher pitched your instrument is, the more together you have to be on it. People are more acclimated to the sound of the tenor. All your innovators have been tenor men – Prez, Coleman Hawkins and so on – except for Bird. I think he was the first real innovator on alto. If you don’t play the alto in tune and get a really good sound, it becomes offensive to the average ear. You take the average tenor player, a good one, and hear him playing alto – he’ll sound horrible. On the other hand, when an alto player switches to tenor, he sounds OK – it’s rarely a come-down.<sup>188</sup>

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<sup>184</sup> Charles McPherson, telephone interview by author, March 18, 2015.

<sup>185</sup> Albertson, “Charles McPherson: Ornithologist.”

<sup>186</sup> Charles McPherson, telephone interview by author, May 13, 2015.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid.

<sup>188</sup> Albertson, “Charles McPherson: Ornithologist.”

McPherson believes that playing both alto and tenor saxophone is to a player's advantage, a belief that is based on his knowledge of the history of jazz saxophone and the frequency with which great saxophonists of the past have played both instruments.<sup>189</sup> He points out that many great saxophonists, including Parker, Coltrane, Coleman Hawkins, Lester Young, and Cannonball Adderley, have spent significant time playing both alto and tenor, despite being well known for playing one or the other.<sup>190</sup> Furthermore, he points out that many of Charlie Parker's early influences were tenor saxophonists, including Hawkins, Young, and Chu Berry.<sup>191</sup> McPherson cites Sonny Stitt, who he believes was among the greatest saxophonists in history, as an example of a musician who mastered both alto and tenor saxophones, and he believes that Stitt's virtuosity on each instrument informed his mastery of the other.<sup>192</sup>

As McPherson's style matured and his career developed throughout the 1960s, the free jazz movement was not one with which he aligned himself or one that held much influence on him. He does, however, recognize the greatness of some of the avant garde's foremost practitioners, particularly Ornette Coleman, whose style he perceives as an "impressionistic view" of Charlie Parker.<sup>193</sup> McPherson explained his view of free jazz and its role in musical expression in his 1968 *DownBeat* feature:

Physically, all avant garde represents is different structures, different musical forms and devices. All this is purely physical and I have nothing against it because, to me, music is just a means to an end. Emotion is the main ingredient of any art, and I feel that it's an artist's requisite to be able to portray any emotion that a human is capable of feeling – whether he's a musician, painter or writer. Music is not *the* end – emotions come first,

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<sup>189</sup> Charles McPherson, telephone interview by author, May 13, 2015.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid.

<sup>191</sup> Joffe, "Charles McPherson on How to Practice Jazz."

<sup>192</sup> Charles McPherson, telephone interview by author, May 13, 2015.

<sup>193</sup> Charles McPherson, telephone interview by author, March 18, 2015.



then music. The most important thing is what you have inside, and your ability to bring it out, to communicate through whatever device you have at your command. If it happens to be avant garde music, *solid* – if it's Dixieland, *solid*. No one emotion is superior to the other; we all have our own bag but we mustn't forget that it's related to the other bags."<sup>194</sup>

McPherson states that Lester Young has also been influential on his musical development.<sup>195</sup> He once saw Young in Detroit at a concert that also featured tenor saxophonists Yusef Lateef and Sonny Rollins; all three saxophonists played with separate bands first and then played one set together with the same rhythm section.<sup>196</sup> McPherson remembers that he and his friends attended the concert favoring the bebop style of Sonny Rollins, but they were surprised at how impressive Young sounded, especially when playing with younger, more modern musicians.<sup>197</sup> McPherson recalls that Young “never ran out” of ideas in his improvisations and that his sound was “bigger and louder” than he had anticipated.<sup>198</sup>

McPherson did not feel strongly influenced by Young until the late 1960s and early 1970s, though he always had an understanding that Young was a seminal figure in the development of jazz.<sup>199</sup> In a 1986 interview, he stated:

He (Charlie Parker) was a real influence for a while, but as I got older, other influences crept in; Lester Young, Art Tatum and Bud Powell; Lester Young quite a bit, actually.<sup>200</sup>

McPherson calls Young a “forerunner” of the generation of bebop musicians that followed him, and he states that “without Lester Young, you wouldn't have Charlie

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<sup>194</sup> Albertson, “Charles McPherson: Ornithologist.”

<sup>195</sup> Charles McPherson, interview by author, Greeley, CO, January 16, 2015.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid.

<sup>197</sup> Charles McPherson, telephone interview by author, August 20, 2015.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid.

<sup>200</sup> Martin, “Charles McPherson Interview.”

Parker, Stan Getz, Dexter Gordon, Wardell Gray, Trane...nobody.”<sup>201</sup> He further explains that Young is the “beginning...of how we all phrase now,” especially in terms of eighth-note feel and placement of accents within a line.<sup>202</sup> McPherson cites Young’s “floating” sound and his way of “shaping the notes” as stylistic innovations, and he calls his vibrato “perfect.”<sup>203</sup> He also points out that early in Young’s career, he played “a lot of notes” and “long lines,” which were also features of Parker’s playing.<sup>204</sup>

While McPherson acknowledges that he did not appreciate Young’s music much when he was younger, he now says of Young, “The older I get, the more I like him.”<sup>205</sup> McPherson states that as he has matured as a musician, he has developed the ability to “know how to listen to people and not play like them.”<sup>206</sup> He further explains, “I know how to take what it is I want and not take anything else.”<sup>207</sup> Given this approach, he says that what he takes from Young’s music is not necessarily specific musical information, but an overall stylistic feeling.<sup>208</sup> McPherson provides the following insight:

There’s a vibe that he (Young) has. There’s not just the notes, there’s a musical ambience that he has when he plays that really is the essence of jazz, in a way. And also the essence of how you’re to relax when you play.<sup>209</sup>

McPherson also admires the quality of “storytelling” that Lester Young exhibits in his playing. In describing this feature, he explains, “You think of your solo, for instance, as not just that you’re running a set of changes, but that you’re actually creating

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<sup>201</sup> Charles McPherson, interview by author, Greeley, CO, January 16, 2015.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid.

a mood.”<sup>210</sup> He states that Young was also a big influence on Miles Davis, who is known as one of the greatest interpreters of ballads in the history of jazz.<sup>211</sup> While many people admire Davis for this quality in his playing, McPherson points out that Young “was always there” with his ability to establish deep emotional content in his musical interpretations.<sup>212</sup> McPherson likens Young to an Impressionist painter and calls him a “real artist,” and he adds that Young was a “very nice, gentle man.”<sup>213</sup>

In 1971, McPherson recorded his first album for Mainstream Records, the eponymously titled *Charles McPherson*.<sup>214</sup> He went on to record two more albums as a leader for Mainstream after this first release: *Siku Ya Bibi* (1972) and *Today’s Man* (1973).<sup>215</sup> *Siku Ya Bibi* features songs associated with Billie Holiday, a concept that he proposed.<sup>216</sup> This album, the title of which means “Day of the Lady” in Swahili, is notable in that it features McPherson accompanied by a rhythm section of guitar, piano, bass, and drums on some songs, and on others the rhythm section is augmented with guitar and a small string orchestra.<sup>217</sup> He describes Holiday’s influence in the album’s liner notes:

I never met her, and I never had the pleasure of seeing her in person. But I’ve been listening to her records ever since I was seventeen or so. There are so many things in her art that move me. Her phrasing, her freedom in phrasing. And also the way she *understood* what she sang. When you heard her, you *knew* she understood what she was singing about.

Billie was so convincing, so real, so honest. She was the epitome of the jazz singer. That free rhythmic concept she had, and that way she had of

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<sup>210</sup> Ibid.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid.

<sup>213</sup> Ibid.

<sup>214</sup> *The Jazz Discography Online*, accessed June 23, 2015.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid.

<sup>216</sup> Charles McPherson, telephone interview by author, March 18, 2015.

<sup>217</sup> Nat Hentoff, notes to Charles McPherson, *Siku Ya Bibi*, [1972], Mainstream Records MRL 365, 33 1/3 rpm.

bending the notes. Anybody can bend a note, but what makes a difference is *where* it's being bent. She knew where to do it, and she did it subtly. Billie was not what you'd call an athletic singer. She would stay close to a melody – unlike Sarah Vaughan and Ella Fitzgerald. She did make changes, but they'd be in little spots here and there. A jazz singer doesn't have to do a whole lot it's *what* she does that counts. And that's true, of course, of horn players too.<sup>218</sup>

By the end of 1972, McPherson's tenure with Charles Mingus ended.<sup>219</sup> However, he continued to tour and record under his own name and as a sideman.<sup>220</sup> He does not recall his parting with Mingus as being the result of a formal declaration by either party but as a "segue" that resulted from a combination of a period of relative inactivity with Mingus' group and McPherson's growing stature as a bandleader and independent sideman.<sup>221</sup> He recalls that the split was not contentious.<sup>222</sup> He later recorded on two more sessions with Mingus, which yielded the albums *Mingus at Carnegie Hall* (1974) and *Something Like a Bird* (1978).<sup>223</sup>

In 1975, McPherson recorded *Beautiful!*, his first of four albums released by Xanadu Records.<sup>224</sup> Xanadu was founded by Don Schlitten, who was also responsible for signing him to Prestige in the 1960s.<sup>225</sup> His second album for Xanadu, *Live in Tokyo*, features songs recorded at a concert in Tokyo on April 14, 1976.<sup>226</sup> The songs on this album were recorded on the same day as the material for Barry Harris' *Tokyo: 1976*,

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<sup>218</sup> Ibid.

<sup>219</sup> Charles McPherson, phone interview by author, San Diego, January 9, 2015.

<sup>220</sup> Charles McPherson, telephone interview by author, March 18, 2015.

<sup>221</sup> Ibid.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid.

<sup>223</sup> *The Jazz Discography Online*, accessed June 23, 2015.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid.

which was also released by Xanadu.<sup>227</sup> His final two albums recorded for Xanadu were *New Horizons* (1977) and *Free Bop!* (1978).<sup>228</sup>

On January 18, 1978, McPherson recorded with Charles Mingus for the last time.<sup>229</sup> This session, which produced the material for the album *Something Like a Bird*, featured McPherson in a large ensemble with many notable musicians whose careers spanned several generations, including musicians not typically associated with Mingus as well as those who had played with him for many years.<sup>230</sup> McPherson describes the recording as featuring “almost like a who’s who of that particular time in New York.”<sup>231</sup>

On the day following this final recording session with Mingus, McPherson moved to California.<sup>232</sup> Despite planning to eventually return to New York after spending time with his mother, he stayed in California permanently.<sup>233</sup> Though now based on the west coast, McPherson continued to make regular trips to New York and to tour internationally.<sup>234</sup> He acknowledges that upon moving to California, the regularity with which he toured Europe “dwindled a little bit,” which he attributes to New York’s closer geographical proximity to Europe; however, he eventually resumed a more regular European touring schedule.<sup>235</sup> He cites his near 20 year residency in New York as having been suitable enough to build and maintain professional connections in both New York international markets, including Europe and Japan.<sup>236</sup>

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<sup>227</sup> Ibid.

<sup>228</sup> Ibid.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid.

<sup>230</sup> Ibid.

<sup>231</sup> Charles McPherson, telephone interview by author, March 18, 2015.

<sup>232</sup> Charles McPherson, interview by author, San Diego, January 9, 2015.

<sup>233</sup> Ibid.

<sup>234</sup> Charles McPherson, telephone interview by author, March 18, 2015.

<sup>235</sup> Ibid.

<sup>236</sup> Ibid.

McPherson recognizes that early in his career, he did not have knowledge of the importance of saxophone equipment.<sup>237</sup> He became aware of this importance while playing an engagement with saxophonist Sonny Stitt over the course of four or five days in the early 1980s.<sup>238</sup> McPherson recalls that at that time, he was playing a Brilhart alto saxophone mouthpiece with a “5” opening and a relatively hard reed, and he was unaware of the concept of selecting reed strength based on the size of the tip opening of the mouthpiece.<sup>239</sup> While they were offstage, Stitt asked McPherson if he could play on his equipment.<sup>240</sup> He recalls that after Stitt played one note on this setup, he said, “Oh no, that’ll never do.”<sup>241</sup> When McPherson inquired as to what he meant, Stitt replied, “A saxophone is supposed to sound like a violin. Your reed is way too hard. You’re working too hard.”<sup>242</sup> After Stitt offered to let McPherson play his instrument, McPherson states, “I played one note on his horn, and before I could even play two notes, he snatched it back.” McPherson recalls that he “could not believe how easy it was. Absolutely no resistance.”<sup>243</sup>

After discovering that he needed to consider playing on a softer reed, McPherson also learned that he would have to further develop control of his embouchure, as to avoid the intonation issues associated with playing on a softer setup.<sup>244</sup> Ideas like this were new to McPherson, who, despite achieving a high level of artistry early in his career, was largely self-taught as a saxophonist.<sup>245</sup> As a result of this encounter with Stitt, he got what

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<sup>237</sup> Charles McPherson, interview by author, Greeley, CO, January 16, 2015.

<sup>238</sup> Ibid.

<sup>239</sup> Ibid.

<sup>240</sup> Ibid.

<sup>241</sup> Ibid.

<sup>242</sup> Ibid.

<sup>243</sup> Ibid.

<sup>244</sup> Ibid.

<sup>245</sup> Ibid.

he calls “the mouthpiece bug,” developing a fascination with mouthpieces that has continued throughout his career.<sup>246</sup> He states that once a saxophonist plays on a good mouthpiece and “discovers what a mouthpiece is supposed to be, then that’s when you get hooked.”<sup>247</sup> He further states that the desire to find an exceptional mouthpiece comes from both the realization that good equipment can help alleviate problems that are not due to a player’s technique and a refusal to “settle” for equipment that inhibits a musician’s artistry.<sup>248</sup>

Prior to this encounter, McPherson was thoroughly familiar with Stitt’s style and had a tremendous amount of respect for his saxophone technique.<sup>249</sup> However, after meeting him, McPherson realized that Stitt’s technical facility did not come about “perchance” but that Stitt was like a “scientist” in his approach to playing the saxophone.<sup>250</sup>

McPherson continued to record as a leader and as a sideman after moving to California. On April 14, 1983, he led a recording session that yielded the tracks to *The Prophet*, the first of two albums he made for Discovery Records.<sup>251</sup> His second album for the label, *Follow the Bouncing Ball*, was recorded in 1989.<sup>252</sup>

In 1988, McPherson’s playing was featured on the soundtrack to *Bird*, Clint Eastwood’s biopic about Charlie Parker.<sup>253</sup> He had been referred to Eastwood for the job

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<sup>246</sup> Ibid.

<sup>247</sup> Ibid.

<sup>248</sup> Ibid.

<sup>249</sup> Ibid.

<sup>250</sup> Ibid.

<sup>251</sup> *The Jazz Discography Online*, accessed June 23, 2015.

<sup>252</sup> Ibid.

<sup>253</sup> Buddy Seigal, “Charles McPherson: In Control of His ‘Illusions,’” *Los Angeles Times*, June 2, 1993, accessed July 22, 2015, [http://articles.latimes.com/1993-06-02/entertainment/ca-42468\\_1\\_charles-mcpherson](http://articles.latimes.com/1993-06-02/entertainment/ca-42468_1_charles-mcpherson).

by the film's music director, Lennie Niehaus.<sup>254</sup> His role in the production of the soundtrack was to perform alto saxophone solos for scenes in which Parker's playing was unavailable, including scenes for which recordings were of poor quality or did not exist.<sup>255</sup> He cites as an example of the latter a scene in which Parker and Red Rodney played for a Jewish wedding, which actually happened but was not recorded.<sup>256</sup> McPherson explains that Eastwood first heard Parker in a Jazz at the Philharmonic concert as a teenager, an experience that changed Eastwood's life and helped him develop an understanding of the kind of "confidence" and "self-assuredness" that a great artist has to have.<sup>257</sup>

While McPherson has never tried to sound like exactly like Charlie Parker nor tried to deny his influence when he was learning to play, he has been compared to Parker many times throughout his career.<sup>258</sup> He believes that this is due in large part to his being an alto saxophonist, as Parker was.<sup>259</sup> Because of Parker's immense contributions to the jazz language, McPherson contends that musicians who play other instruments would also be compared to Parker much more frequently if they played alto saxophone.<sup>260</sup> However, upon hearing his album *Illusions in Blue*, a self-produced album recorded live in 1990 in San Diego, McPherson was struck by how different he sounded from Parker.<sup>261</sup> While he acknowledges that his playing was still "Bird-influenced," he recalls having a revelation while listening to the recording that it didn't really sound like

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<sup>254</sup> Charles McPherson, interview by author, Greeley, CO, January 16, 2015.

<sup>255</sup> Ibid.

<sup>256</sup> Ibid.

<sup>257</sup> Ibid.

<sup>258</sup> The Fillius Jazz Archive at Hamilton College, "Charles McPherson Interviewed by Monk Rowe."

<sup>259</sup> Ibid.

<sup>260</sup> Ibid.

<sup>261</sup> Ibid.



Parker's music but was instead a style that was a "deviation," or "off to the side a bit."<sup>262</sup>

McPherson remembers this as being the first such realization he had that his style had developed into one that was completely personal and unique in comparison with Parker's.<sup>263</sup>

After *Illusions in Blue*, McPherson continued to record as a leader in the 1990s for the Arabesque label.<sup>264</sup> He states that at the time he began working with Arabesque, the label was primarily known for producing classical music but was looking to develop a larger jazz catalog.<sup>265</sup> His first recording for Arabesque was *First Flight Out*, was recorded in 1994.<sup>266</sup> Subsequent albums recorded for the label include *Come Play with Me* (1995), *Manhattan Nocturne* (1997), and *What Is Love* (released in 2010), his final album for the label.<sup>267</sup> While recording these four albums for Arabesque, he also recorded a live album in 1996 entitled *Live at Vartan Jazz*.<sup>268</sup>

Since recording *What Is Love*, McPherson has recorded five albums as a leader: *Is That It? No, But...* (Vega, 2000); *Charles McPherson with Strings: A Tribute to Charlie Parker* (Clarion Jazz, 2001); *Live at the Cellar* (Cellar Live, 2002); *But Beautiful* (Venus, 2003); and *The Journey* (Capri, 2014).<sup>269</sup>

McPherson is an active composer, and most of his albums feature one or more of his own compositions. He has cited Mingus as one of his earliest inspirations to compose, stating that he was not particularly interested in writing music prior to working with

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<sup>262</sup> Ibid.

<sup>263</sup> Ibid.

<sup>264</sup> *The Jazz Discography Online*, accessed June 23, 2015.

<sup>265</sup> Charles McPherson, telephone interview by author, March 18, 2015.

<sup>266</sup> *The Jazz Discography Online*, accessed June 23, 2015.

<sup>267</sup> Ibid. An extensive inquiry as to the year in which *What Is Love* was recorded yielded no definite results. It was, however, the last album recorded by McPherson for Arabesque and would thus have been recorded in the late 1990s.

<sup>268</sup> Ibid.

<sup>269</sup> Ibid.

Mingus.<sup>270</sup> He also attributes more widespread acknowledgement of his uniqueness as an artist among listeners and critics to his writing and recording original compositions.<sup>271</sup>

McPherson notes that his most successful compositions have come about not as the result of a methodical composing regimen, but at times when the sections of a piece came very naturally to him.<sup>272</sup> In a 2007 interview, he provided the following description of the origin of his compositional ideas:

For me, there's a background in my consciousness that's like a river, with musical chords, notes and musical statements that are always there, that are disorganized and not constructed, freely floating around. If I feel moved, I'll take elements of it and construct something.<sup>273</sup>

McPherson subscribes to the belief that it is valuable for non-pianists to compose away from the piano, as their lack of technical facility on the instrument can encumber the transfer of musical thought from the composer's mind to the final product.<sup>274</sup> He explains that the composer should allow the "melodicism" that can be conveyed through the voice to guide a composition's development, as opposed to the harmonic prescriptions that are often associated with piano playing (e.g. common chord progressions such as ii-V-I).<sup>275</sup> Furthermore, he believes that harmony should not dictate melody but that melody should dictate harmony, and he suggests that this approach,

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<sup>270</sup> Angela Carone and Alan Ray, "Alto Saxophonist Charles McPherson Highlights a Career Spanning 50 Years," July 13, 2009, accessed July 23, 2015, <http://www.kpbs.org/news/2009/jul/13/alto-saxophonist-charles-mcpherson-highlights-career>,

<sup>271</sup> Charles McPherson, telephone interview by author, August 20, 2015.

<sup>272</sup> Charles McPherson, interview by author, San Diego, January 9, 2015.

<sup>273</sup> Ken Dryden, "Charles McPherson: Passionate Bopper," July 17, 2007, accessed July 24, 2015, <http://www.allaboutjazz.com/charles-mcpherson-passionate-bopper-charles-mcpherson-by-ken-dryden.php>.

<sup>274</sup> Charles McPherson, interview by author, San Diego, January 9, 2015.

<sup>275</sup> Ibid.

which he learned from Barry Harris, results in harmonies that sound “out of the box” and wouldn’t otherwise be considered.<sup>276</sup>

In February 2015, the San Diego Ballet premiered *Sweet Synergy Suite*, featuring music by McPherson and choreography by Javier Velasco.<sup>277</sup> Prior to composing the work, McPherson was initially inspired to write music to accompany dance by his daughter, Camille, who began dancing as a child and is now a professional ballerina with the San Diego Ballet.<sup>278</sup> In 2013, he was awarded a Creative Catalyst Grant by the San Diego Foundation to write *Sweet Synergy Suite*, which “blends McPherson’s signature bebop, Latin and Afro-Cuban rhythms with Velasco’s ballet and jazz choreography.”<sup>279</sup>

McPherson states that one of the challenges in writing the music for this ballet was incorporating improvisation into forms with consistent timing and instrumentation so that the dancers could appropriately synchronize their movements with the music.<sup>280</sup> In regard to writing the music for *Sweet Synergy Suite*, he explains that “when you do projects out of your comfort zone, you learn something, because you’re forced to look at something differently.”<sup>281</sup>

He also notes that since *Sweet Synergy Suite* has “no continuous story line,” he created his own story lines to guide his composing so he “wouldn’t be just playing notes.”<sup>282</sup> He describes this as creating an “emotional script for each tune,” and he

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<sup>276</sup> Ibid. McPherson cites Richard Wagner as an example when discussing this method of composing.

<sup>277</sup> “Sweet Synergy Suite,” 2015, accessed July 4, 2015, <http://www.charlesmcpherson.com/sweet-synergy-suite>.

<sup>278</sup> Charles McPherson, interview by author, San Diego, January 9, 2015.

<sup>279</sup> Pam Kragen, “McPhersons team up for dance ‘Suite,’” 2014, accessed July 4, 2015, <http://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/news/2015/feb/04/charles-and-camille-mcpherson-synergy-suite>.

<sup>280</sup> Charles McPherson, interview by author, San Diego, January 9, 2015.

<sup>281</sup> Ibid.

<sup>282</sup> Ibid.

compares this to the work of film score composers, who have a thorough understanding of how to evoke emotion through music.<sup>283</sup>

The ability to convey emotion is an important aspect of McPherson's approach to improvisation. He explains the importance of an artist developing this quality:

Usually, to improvise well, you have to master a lot of theory. So, having done that, having accrued that kind of knowledge, it's a matter of executing that. But once you've learned some of the academics of what harmony is all about, that's not even half of it. For people who improvise, after you learn the rudiments, then it's 'What kind of story are you going to tell?' Then, personality takes over. Personality is the thing that executes what you know. So it comes down to what kind of person you are, how well-rounded you are. If you're going to portray love, then, will you be able to do that by way of your medium, by way of your horn? Or joy. Or ecstasy. Or depression. Can you convey that? Do you have the dimension as a performer? You have to be a musical thespian. Can you portray deep sadness? And all these things come into play. And this is what makes a great artist, as opposed to a great musician. A great musician can be a great mechanic. A great artist is one who might not be the greatest mechanic, but their greatness is how multi-dimensional they are in conveying all the human gradations of emotion.<sup>284</sup>

In addition to being an active performer and composer, McPherson is a highly reputable educator. He acknowledges that teaching has been valuable in helping him develop as a saxophone player and as a musician, and he subscribes to the philosophy that "to teach is to learn."<sup>285</sup> He has been a guest clinician at music schools and universities throughout the world, and he occasionally teaches private lessons in his home.

McPherson believes that, despite the preponderance of jazz education materials on the market today, it is valuable for students to develop their own understanding of how to play jazz. Using aural comprehension of chord/scale relationships as an example, he

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<sup>283</sup> Ibid.

<sup>284</sup> Geoff Bouvier, "Sax," *San Diego Reader*, April 20, 2006, accessed October 5, 2015, <http://www.charlesmcpherson.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/SD-Reader-4-20-06SM.pdf>.

<sup>285</sup> Charles McPherson, interview by author, San Diego, January 9, 2015.

states, “There is something to be learned by the person when out of all the wrong notes, you’re forced to eke out the right ones without somebody telling you (what they are).”<sup>286</sup> He suggests that a student is “establishing a very important brain-ear connection” using this means of development, as opposed to relying on demonstration and theoretical explanation.<sup>287</sup>

Approximately 60 years after he began studying and performing jazz, McPherson notes that there are a number of challenges facing young musicians today that were not present in the environment in which he developed as an artist.<sup>288</sup> In regard to the public reception of jazz in modern times, he asserts that “there is nothing about the society-at-large that supports” jazz and that it is necessary “to be in love with the art of it and in love with what you’re doing” in order to find success.<sup>289</sup> He also notes that there are fewer opportunities now for young musicians to serve an apprenticeship, as opposed to previous generations, in which “young players played with people that were a little older and knew more” and could “grow in many different ways.”<sup>290</sup> He points out that this prevents young musicians from learning valuable lessons as quickly as they might otherwise be able to if someone with more experience were guiding them, citing the aforementioned interaction with Sonny Stitt as an example from his own musical development.<sup>291</sup>

McPherson also advises young jazz musicians who aspire to have successful careers in music to acquire as much knowledge as they can about the business of

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<sup>286</sup> Charles McPherson, masterclass, University of Northern Colorado, Greeley, CO, January 16, 2015.

<sup>287</sup> Ibid.

<sup>288</sup> Ibid.

<sup>289</sup> Ibid.

<sup>290</sup> Ibid.

<sup>291</sup> Ibid.

music.<sup>292</sup> He acknowledges that the music industry generates a tremendous amount of revenue from many different sources, and it is beneficial for musicians to familiarize themselves with its “machinery,” including relevant advances in technology, in order to maximize their earning potential.<sup>293</sup> He also encourages musicians to actively incorporate composing and publishing into their professional activities, as the royalties that accumulate from licensing can provide a valuable source of income.<sup>294</sup>

McPherson resides in San Diego with his wife, Lynn, a classical pianist and educator. He describes his current professional life as “total music.”<sup>295</sup> He frequently performs and teaches throughout the United States, making occasional tours of Europe and Japan.<sup>296</sup> He also typically practices constantly throughout the day and makes time for composing whenever possible.<sup>297</sup>

When asked if he is able to reflect and gain satisfaction in what he has accomplished in his career, McPherson says that he is not.<sup>298</sup> He further states, “If you’re really serious, there’s a never-ending quest. So the quest itself is fun.”<sup>299</sup> McPherson adds that as a musician, since the fundamental elements of music (e.g. notes, scales, and chords) are finite, “mastery over yourself is really the challenge.”<sup>300</sup>

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<sup>292</sup> Joffè, “Charles McPherson on How to Practice Jazz.”

<sup>293</sup> Ibid.

<sup>294</sup> Ibid.

<sup>295</sup> Charles McPherson, interview by author, San Diego, January 9, 2015.

<sup>296</sup> Ibid.

<sup>297</sup> Ibid.

<sup>298</sup> DeBoskey, “McPherson Jazz 88 FM Interview.”

<sup>299</sup> Ibid.

<sup>300</sup> Ibid.

## CHAPTER V

### STYLISTIC OVERVIEW

#### **Sonic Characteristics**

McPherson strives to produce a sound that is an extension of his voice.<sup>301</sup> He describes the vocal qualities of the saxophone:

The reason I like the saxophone is because, out of all the instruments, it's the closest to the human voice. How it sounds, and also how the tone is produced, what you do with your throat and your mouth. When you play the saxophone, it's like you're singing. You have an open throat, and you're thinking vowel-sounds, and, indeed, the instrument is very voicelike. It's very close in timbre to the human voice.<sup>302</sup>

McPherson explains that, in addition to the importance of equipment, another valuable concept that he learned from Sonny Stitt in the discussion mentioned in the previous chapter was that the saxophone can be voiced by shaping the aural cavity as one would do to pronounce consonant and vowel syllables in speech.<sup>303</sup> Stitt explained that certain notes “sound better” when they are produced while shaping the throat according to how one would pronounce particular sounds.<sup>304</sup> Further, he demonstrated that this type

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<sup>301</sup> The Fillius Jazz Archive at Hamilton College, “Charles McPherson Interviewed by Monk Rowe.”

<sup>302</sup> Bouvier, “Sax.”

<sup>303</sup> Charles McPherson, interview by author, Greeley, CO, January 16, 2015.

<sup>304</sup> Ibid.

of manipulation can be used to change the timbre of notes, providing a vocal quality to one's sound.<sup>305</sup>

McPherson also conveys emotion and humanity in his playing through the use of vocal inflections.<sup>306</sup> He points out that this is an artistic goal that has been shared by great jazz musicians throughout history, beginning with the music's early roots.<sup>307</sup> He adds that when players conceive of their instrument as "just a mechanical, physical, frozen structure," their music tends to be devoid of the emotion and humanity that they could otherwise achieve if they treated their instrument as an extension of their voice.<sup>308</sup> His use of vocal inflections is demonstrated in example 1, the opening chorus of his solo on "Blues for Mac." This excerpt shows his use of accents, grace notes, scoops, falls, and ghosted notes, which create vocal nuances in his playing.<sup>309</sup>

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<sup>305</sup> Ibid.

<sup>306</sup> The Fillius Jazz Archive at Hamilton College, "Charles McPherson Interviewed by Monk Rowe."

<sup>307</sup> Ibid.

<sup>308</sup> Ibid.

<sup>309</sup> An index to the articulation markings used in this study can be found in Appendix C.



The musical score consists of six staves of music in 4/4 time, key of D major (two sharps). The notation includes various chords and melodic lines with vocal inflections. The chords labeled are E7, A7, D7, C#MIN7, F#7(b9), BMIN7, and F#7. The melodic lines include triplets and quintuplets, and the music is written in a style that suggests improvisation and vocal-like phrasing.

Ex. 1. Application of vocal inflections. “Blues for Mac,” mm. 1-12.

McPherson explains the process of developing a unique sound on the saxophone:

It’s a very natural thing. You know, it’s something that has to come about in a natural way. At the same time, I can’t say that developing your tone doesn’t involve an act of deliberation. Maybe the act of deliberation would be to know that that’s what’s to be desired. It’s like being a little kid in school and learning to write cursive. You’re looking at the teacher, and you’re trying to make your letters look like her letters. But then, after a while, everybody has his own handwriting. You’re creating your own sound. It’s what kind of sound you hear in your head. You know, what is your concept of sound? Everybody hears differently. We all have a different set of ideals. But personality has the last say-so. That decides how you do what you do with what you know.<sup>310</sup>

<sup>310</sup> Geoff Bouvier, “Sax.”

McPherson also stresses the importance of being able to produce a “pure sound” on the saxophone, or a sound that has a clean attack, is in tune, is devoid of vibrato, and is not intended to imitate any other saxophone sound; the pure sound should reflect a player’s unfettered concept of tone.<sup>311</sup> When this is achieved, preferably on a note in the upper register (e.g. a high B or a comparable note that requires significant focus and skill to play in tune), he instructs students to keep the same embouchure that was used to produce that tone and to maintain a similar embouchure throughout the rest of the range of the saxophone.<sup>312</sup> He states that this process will help players realize their “own sound.”<sup>313</sup>

McPherson advises that singing is of great value in learning how to play jazz.<sup>314</sup> He notes that because many musicians play instruments and are not vocalists, they do not recognize the importance of singing.<sup>315</sup> Specifically, he emphasizes the importance of singing to create a sense of unity between the musician and the instrument, or as treating the saxophone as an extension of oneself.<sup>316</sup> This requires the player to not only execute the technical requirements of playing the saxophone, but to also focus on all mental and physical requirements necessary to playing the instrument, such as hearing the note before it is played and adjusting the throat muscles prior to producing a tone.<sup>317</sup> He contends that this leads to a sound that is more “organic” and has “more humanity on a very subtle level.”<sup>318</sup>

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<sup>311</sup> Charles McPherson, interview by author, San Diego, January 9, 2015.

<sup>312</sup> Ibid.

<sup>313</sup> Ibid.

<sup>314</sup> Joffe, “Charles McPherson on How to Practice Jazz.”

<sup>315</sup> Ibid.

<sup>316</sup> Ibid.

<sup>317</sup> Ibid.

<sup>318</sup> Ibid.

In order to help students develop this sense of unity with their instrument, McPherson instructs them to sing a pitch at random and to then find that same note on the saxophone.<sup>319</sup> He states that while some students are able to find the corresponding note on the instrument immediately, many cannot at first, but eventually will.<sup>320</sup> He likens this exercise to training a muscle; as students do it more, they will develop greater accuracy in matching their voice to the saxophone, thus further developing the “ear-brain connection” that is crucial in creating a deeper connection with the instrument.<sup>321</sup>

McPherson’s conception of vibrato is also directly related to the voice.<sup>322</sup> As opposed to a metrically-based approach to practicing vibrato, or one in which undulations are contrived and spaced out in equal subdivisions of the beat, he believes that saxophone vibrato should be unique and “perfect” to each individual musician’s artistic tastes.<sup>323</sup> He also adds that it should mimic the vibrato that the musician uses when singing.<sup>324</sup> Additionally, he suggests that lead alto players in a saxophone section need to have a unique but consistent vibrato so that other players in the section can match it.<sup>325</sup>

McPherson does not believe that vibrato should necessarily change according to musical circumstances, and he again makes a comparison to handwriting.<sup>326</sup> When students learn how to form letters, they use an external model (e.g. their teacher) as an example; however, a student eventually develops a unique way of forming the letters.<sup>327</sup> In the same unconscious way that students maintain a certain degree of consistency in

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<sup>319</sup> Ibid.

<sup>320</sup> Ibid.

<sup>321</sup> Ibid.

<sup>322</sup> Ibid.

<sup>323</sup> Ibid.

<sup>324</sup> Ibid.

<sup>325</sup> Ibid.

<sup>326</sup> Ibid.

<sup>327</sup> Ibid.

their handwriting regardless of how or what they are writing, a musician maintains a consistent vibrato regardless of what is being played.<sup>328</sup> In this sense, it becomes a musical “signature” and a personal “nuance of sound.”<sup>329</sup>

McPherson’s playing features an approach to articulating lines in which the tongue plays an unobtrusive role in stopping the vibration of the reed.<sup>330</sup> He emphasizes that the tongue needs to “barely grace the reed” in such a manner that it does not interrupt the player’s tone and finger dexterity, and he advises that one should not think of “stopping the sound” with the tongue.<sup>331</sup> He points out that when this approach to articulation is applied properly, “it almost sounds like you’re tonguing every note, and you’re not.”<sup>332</sup> He also notes that this is a key element in the style of Charlie Parker.<sup>333</sup>

This articulation method can be practiced by taking a scale fragment (e.g. the first five notes of a major scale ascending and descending) and repeating it uninterrupted at a fairly fast tempo (e.g. playing sixteenth notes at a tempo of quarter note = 132).<sup>334</sup> When students repeat this scale fragment, they should lightly touch the reed with their tongue in a way that captures the sound and feeling described above.<sup>335</sup> McPherson stresses that no predetermined articulation pattern should be used and that students should articulate at random while repeating the scale fragment uninterrupted.<sup>336</sup> This exercise is demonstrated in example 2.

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<sup>328</sup> Ibid.

<sup>329</sup> Ibid.

<sup>330</sup> Ibid.

<sup>331</sup> Ibid.

<sup>332</sup> Ibid.

<sup>333</sup> Ibid.

<sup>334</sup> Ibid.

<sup>335</sup> Ibid.

<sup>336</sup> Ibid.



Ex. 2. Sample tonguing exercise.

This exercise can then be repeated on scale fragments in different registers of the saxophone.<sup>337</sup>

### Rhythmic Approach

Saxophonist Jimmy Heath provides the following insight regarding McPherson's rhythmic mastery:

McPherson has that same kind of unpredictable bubbling up of notes in phrases that Charlie Parker had. A lot of the guys who learned from Bird simplified the rhythm because Charlie Parker did so many things in the rhythm that you had a whole lot on your plate if you tried to recreate that part of his playing too. Charles McPherson is definitely himself, an original, but he has that wild side, that boldness nobody else ever got who came from Bird.<sup>338</sup>

McPherson cites Charlie Parker's ability to begin phrases on any subdivision of any beat in a measure as one of the most impressive features of his rhythmic approach.<sup>339</sup> He further believes that one of Sonny Stitt's main contributions to jazz was that he presented Charlie Parker's melodic and harmonic vocabulary in a way that was less rhythmically complex and thus accessible to a greater number of musicians.<sup>340</sup>

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<sup>337</sup> Ibid.

<sup>338</sup> Crouch, "Imaginative, Audacious, and Overlooked."

<sup>339</sup> Charles McPherson, interview by author, Greeley, CO, January 16, 2015.

<sup>340</sup> Ibid.

McPherson relates, via a discussion between his son, drummer Charles McPherson, Jr., and drummer Max Roach, that Parker would purposely “start a phrase in a funny spot, and it would throw the rhythm section.”<sup>341</sup> As an example of this, McPherson describes Parker beginning a phrase on beat four of a measure as though it were beat one of the next measure (a beat early), thus causing confusion within the rest of the band.<sup>342</sup>

McPherson plays with a rhythmic flexibility that allows him to begin phrases on different subdivisions of any beat within a measure. To demonstrate this quality, examples 3-15 show him starting phrases on various sixteenth-note subdivisions of the beat in 4/4 time. All of these examples were taken from his solo on “For Heaven’s Sake,” in which he begins phrases on all sixteenth-note subdivisions of each beat at some point in the solo, except for the downbeat of beat 1, the fourth sixteenth-note subdivision of beat 1, and the downbeat of beat 4.<sup>343</sup>

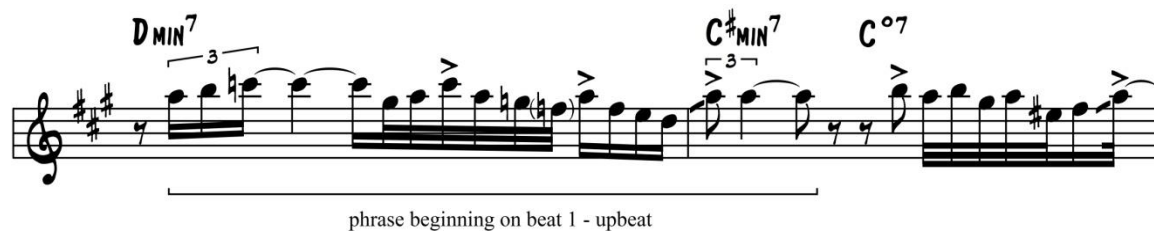


Ex. 3. Phrase beginning on the second sixteenth-note subdivision of beat 1. “For Heaven’s Sake,” mm. 12-13.

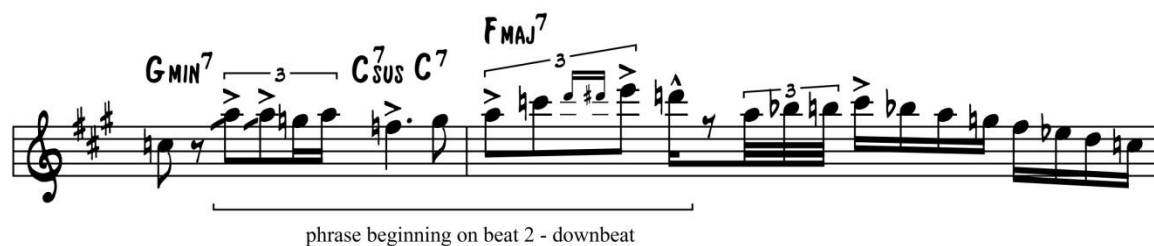
<sup>341</sup> Ibid.

<sup>342</sup> Ibid.

<sup>343</sup> McPherson also begins phrases in this solo on subdivisions of the beat that are smaller than sixteenth notes.



Ex. 4. Phrase beginning on the upbeat of beat 1. “For Heaven’s Sake,” mm. 37-38.



Ex. 5. Phrase beginning on beat 2. “For Heaven’s Sake,” m. 49-50.



Ex. 6. Phrase beginning on the second sixteenth-note subdivision of beat 2. “For Heaven’s Sake,” m. 13-14.

**G MIN<sup>7</sup>** (GROWL) **C<sup>7</sup><sub>SUS</sub>** **C<sup>7</sup>** 10  
 phrase beginning on beat 2 - upbeat

**F MAJ<sup>7</sup>** 15 5  
 phrase beginning on beat 2 - fourth sixteenth note

**A MIN** **A MIN/G** 3  
 phrase beginning on beat 2 - fourth sixteenth note

Ex. 7. Phrase beginning on the upbeat of beat 2. “For Heaven’s Sake,” mm. 51-53.

**F MAJ<sup>7</sup>** 3  
 phrase beginning on beat 2 - fourth sixteenth note

**G MIN<sup>7</sup>** (GROWL) **C<sup>7</sup><sub>SUS</sub>** **C<sup>7</sup>** 10  
 phrase beginning on beat 2 - fourth sixteenth note

Ex. 8. Phrase beginning on the fourth sixteenth-note subdivision of beat 2. “For Heaven’s Sake,” mm. 50-51.



Three staves of musical notation in treble clef, key of D major (two sharps). The first staff begins with an **A MAJ<sup>7</sup>** chord. A phrase starting on beat 3 is marked with an **F<sup>#</sup>7(b9)** chord and a bracket labeled "phrase beginning on beat 3 - downbeat". The second staff features a **B MIN<sup>7</sup>** chord and an **E<sup>7</sup>** chord, with a bracket labeled "11" and another labeled "10". The third staff includes a **B<sup>b</sup> MIN<sup>7</sup>** chord and an **E<sup>b</sup>7** chord, with a bracket labeled "7" and another labeled "9". The notation includes various slurs, ties, and accidentals.

Ex. 9. Phrase beginning on beat 3. "For Heaven's Sake," mm. 34-36.

A single staff of musical notation in treble clef, key of D major (two sharps). It begins with a **B MIN<sup>7</sup>** chord. A phrase starting on the second sixteenth-note subdivision of beat 3 is marked with an **E<sup>7</sup>** chord and a bracket labeled "phrase beginning on beat 3 - second sixteenth note".

Ex. 10. Phrase beginning on the second sixteenth-note subdivision of beat 3. "For Heaven's Sake," m. 11.

phrase beginning on beat 3 - upbeat

Ex. 11. Phrase beginning on the upbeat of beat 3. “For Heaven’s Sake,” mm. 38-40.

phrase beginning on beat 3 - fourth sixteenth note

Ex. 12. Phrase beginning on the fourth sixteenth-note subdivision of beat 3. “For Heaven’s Sake,” m. 6-8.

phrase beginning on beat 4 - second sixteenth note

Ex. 13. Phrase beginning on the second sixteenth-note subdivision of beat 4. “For Heaven’s Sake,” mm. 5-6.



Ex. 14. Phrase beginning on the upbeat of beat 4. “For Heaven’s Sake,” mm. 16-18.



Ex. 15. Phrase beginning on the fourth sixteenth-note subdivision of beat 4. “For Heaven’s Sake,” mm. 20-21.

McPherson points out that many players focus on creating lines using mostly eighth notes; however, he emphasizes that it is important for players to exhibit rhythmic creativity in addition to harmonic creativity.<sup>344</sup> Another key feature of McPherson’s rhythmic approach is the creation of phrases that contain a wide variety of rhythmic values. In example 16, he uses the following rhythmic durations over the course of a four-measure phrase: a sixteenth-note triplet, sixteenth notes, an eighth-note triplet, eighth notes, an eighth note tied to an eighth-note triplet subdivision, quarter notes, and an eighth note tied to a quarter note.

<sup>344</sup> Charles McPherson, interview by author, San Diego, January 9, 2015.

eighth note (pickup)      quarter note      sixteenth notes

sixteenth notes (cont.)      sixteenth-note triplet      eighth-note triplet

eighth note      eighth note tied to quarter note      eighth note      eighth note tied to eighth-note triplet subdivision      eighth-note triplet

eighth note      quarter note      eighth note tied to quarter note

Ex. 16. Rhythmic variety within a phrase. “Karen,” mm. 46-49.

McPherson teaches the development of this type of rhythmic variety by first instructing students to improvise lines that exclusively feature one specific subdivision of the beat, such as eighth note triplets.<sup>345</sup> He then has them create lines that include another subdivision of the beat, such as eighth notes or sixteenth notes, merged with the original subdivision.<sup>346</sup> This merging is to take place within an unbroken phrase, as opposed to

<sup>345</sup> Ibid.

<sup>346</sup> Ibid.

playing separate phrases of one subdivision and alternating them with phrases of another subdivision.<sup>347</sup> This process is demonstrated in example 17.

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<sup>347</sup> Ibid.

Step 1: Improvising using eighth-note triplets

Step 1: Improvising using eighth-note triplets. The exercise is in 4/4 time, key of Bb major. It consists of four staves of music. The first staff has measures with B<sup>b</sup>7, E<sup>b</sup>7, and B<sup>b</sup>7 chords, each followed by an eighth-note triplet. The second staff has F<sup>MIN</sup>7, B<sup>b</sup>7, and E<sup>b</sup>7 chords, each followed by an eighth-note triplet. The third staff has B<sup>b</sup>7, D<sup>MIN</sup>7, G<sup>7(b9)</sup>, and C<sup>MIN</sup>7 chords, each followed by an eighth-note triplet. The fourth staff has F<sup>7</sup>, B<sup>b</sup>7, G<sup>7(b9)</sup>, C<sup>MIN</sup>7, F<sup>7</sup>, and B<sup>b</sup>7 chords, each followed by an eighth-note triplet. The exercise ends with a double bar line.

Step 2: Eighth-note triplet subdivision merged with an eighth-note subdivision

Step 2: Eighth-note triplet subdivision merged with an eighth-note subdivision. The exercise is in 4/4 time, key of Bb major. It consists of four staves of music. The first staff has measures with B<sup>b</sup>7, E<sup>b</sup>7, and B<sup>b</sup>7 chords, each followed by an eighth-note triplet. The second staff has F<sup>MIN</sup>7, B<sup>b</sup>7, and E<sup>b</sup>7 chords, each followed by an eighth-note triplet. The third staff has B<sup>b</sup>7, D<sup>MIN</sup>7, G<sup>7(b9)</sup>, and C<sup>MIN</sup>7 chords, each followed by an eighth-note triplet. The fourth staff has F<sup>7</sup>, B<sup>b</sup>7, G<sup>7(b9)</sup>, C<sup>MIN</sup>7, F<sup>7</sup>, and B<sup>b</sup>7 chords, each followed by an eighth-note triplet. The exercise ends with a double bar line.

Ex. 17. Sample exercise for creating rhythmic variety within a phrase.

Example 18 demonstrates a rhythmic technique used by McPherson in which he takes a simple melodic idea, such as a scale fragment or arpeggio, and repeats it in a complex rhythmic pattern to create interest. In the first measure of this excerpt, he plays a seven-note cell from the B mixolydian scale and phrases it in rhythmic groupings of nine over two. After playing the cell twice in m. 80, he begins it a third time, completing the second grouping of nine and leading into the second measure of the phrase. In m. 81, he slightly alters the melodic content of the phrase by eliminating the G# from the original cell. This new six-note cell, which bridges mm. 80 and 81 and coincides with the transition from a nine over two subdivision to a sixteenth-note subdivision, is played twice. The phrase ends with a three-note cell that is melodically identical to the first three notes of the preceding cells. Despite these slight changes from the first measure of the phrase to the second, m. 81 sounds like a seamless continuation of m. 80, particularly because of the fast tempo and the accents McPherson places at the melodic peak of each cell.

In m. 82, he begins a phrase on beat 2 featuring an eight-note cell played in sixteenth notes that continues into m. 83 and ends with a quarter note on beat 2. While not as rhythmically complex as the previous phrase, the shape of the cell, the accents, and the sixteenth-note subdivision of the second phrase provide a logical continuation.

The third phrase of this example, which begins on the upbeat of beat 3 in m. 83 and anticipates the harmony of m. 84, is also based on an eight-note cell, as in the previous phrase. In this third phrase, he creates instability by extending the first note of each cell, leading to a feeling of tension that is resolved by playing a quarter note on beat

1 of m. 85. While the melodic content of these phrases is simple, McPherson generates excitement through his rhythmic inventiveness and precision.

The image displays two staves of musical notation in 2/2 time, illustrating complex rhythmic phrasing. The first staff features a melodic line with accents and ties, divided into five cells: two seven-note cells, two six-note cells, and one three-note cell. Above the staff are labels for chords:  $B^7$ ,  $B^{7(b9)}$ , and  $B^{7(b9)}$ . Below the staff are labels for rhythmic groupings: "rhythmic grouping of nine over two" and "sixteenth note subdivision". The second staff continues the melodic line with similar phrasing, divided into four cells: two eight-note cells and two eight-note cells. Above the staff are labels for chords:  $E^{7(b9)}$ ,  $E^b_{MAJ}{}^7$ , and  $A^{7(b9)}$ . Below the staff are labels for rhythmic groupings: "sixteenth note subdivision" and "sixteenth note subdivision - extended first notes".

Ex. 18. Complex rhythmic phrasing of a melodic cell. “Desafinado,” mm. 80-85.

McPherson describes 4/4 time as a “very nebulous meter.”<sup>348</sup> He asserts that most people can’t hear very well within the time signature because “the only thing that gives it architectural points are the hits that occur” when musicians play in it.<sup>349</sup> He adds that without bar lines, 4/4 time would be “an endless series of quarter notes” without any inherent tension.<sup>350</sup> Because of the prevalence of 2/4 (or 2/2) time in modern rock, funk, fusion, Latin, and pop styles, he believes that people “gravitate toward” that feel and that many modern musicians and dancers have difficulty relating to music in 4/4.<sup>351</sup>

<sup>348</sup> Ibid.

<sup>349</sup> Ibid.

<sup>350</sup> Charles McPherson, telephone interview by author, October 7, 2015.

<sup>351</sup> Charles McPherson, interview by author, San Diego, January 9, 2015.



He explains that the way to build rhythmic tension and structure within 4/4 is to create phrases that are “punctuated and accented strategically.”<sup>352</sup> Example 19, McPherson’s third chorus on “Blues for Mac,” features accents on downbeats, upbeats, and subdivisions of the beat that fall in between downbeats and upbeats. In this example, accented notes are highlighted underneath each system by both an asterisk (\*) and a letter indicating where the accent is placed within the beat: “d” (downbeat); “u” (upbeat); “o” (other). By varying the divisions of the beat on which he places accents, McPherson creates a balanced rhythmic structure within 4/4 time.

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<sup>352</sup> Ibid.

The image displays six staves of musical notation for the piece "Blues for Mac," measures 25-37. The notation is in 4/4 time and features various chords and rhythmic markings. The chords are labeled above the staves: A<sup>7</sup>, D<sup>7</sup>, B<sup>min</sup>7, F<sup>#</sup>7, C<sup>#</sup>min7, F<sup>#</sup>7(b9), and A<sup>7</sup>. The rhythmic markings are placed below the staves: \*d, \*u, and \*o. The notation includes various rhythmic values, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests. The first staff shows a sequence of chords: A<sup>7</sup>, D<sup>7</sup>, and A<sup>7</sup>. The second staff shows a sequence of chords: A<sup>7</sup>, D<sup>7</sup>, B<sup>min</sup>7, F<sup>#</sup>7, C<sup>#</sup>min7, F<sup>#</sup>7(b9), and A<sup>7</sup>. The third staff shows a sequence of chords: B<sup>min</sup>7, E<sup>7</sup>, and A<sup>7</sup>. The fourth staff shows a sequence of chords: A<sup>7</sup>, F<sup>#</sup>7, B<sup>min</sup>7, E<sup>7</sup>, and A<sup>7</sup>. The fifth staff shows a sequence of chords: B<sup>min</sup>7, E<sup>7</sup>, and A<sup>7</sup>. The sixth staff shows a sequence of chords: A<sup>7</sup>, F<sup>#</sup>7, B<sup>min</sup>7, E<sup>7</sup>, and A<sup>7</sup>. The rhythmic markings are placed below the staves: \*d, \*u, and \*o.

Ex 19. Rhythmic structure through accents. "Blues for Mac," mm. 25-37.

## Melodic and Harmonic Elements

The purpose of this section is to identify melodic and harmonic elements that occur regularly in McPherson's playing and to demonstrate his application of them in order to gain a deeper understanding of his highly unique and creative approach to melodic construction.

McPherson frequently uses bebop scales as a means of achieving harmonic clarity in his lines.<sup>353</sup> David Baker provides the following historical perspective on the development and importance of these scales:

From his earliest recordings Charlie Parker can be observed groping for a method for making the modes of the major scale sound less awkward and for rendering them more conducive to swing and forward motion. Gradually, in a systematic and logical way, he began using certain scales with added chromatic tones. Dizzy (Gillespie), approaching the scales from an entirely different direction, began utilizing the same techniques for transforming them. These scales became the backbone of all jazz from bebop to modal music.<sup>354</sup>

Baker goes on to say that "the added chromatic passing tones make the scales 'come out right.'"<sup>355</sup> Example 20 illustrates the difference between a traditional mixolydian scale and what he calls the bebop dominant scale.<sup>356</sup>



Ex. 20. Comparison of mixolydian scale and bebop dominant scale.

<sup>353</sup> Baker, *How to Play Bebop*, 1.

<sup>354</sup> Ibid.

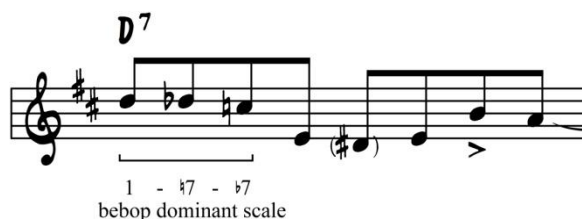
<sup>355</sup> Ibid.

<sup>356</sup> Ibid.

Baker provides further analysis:

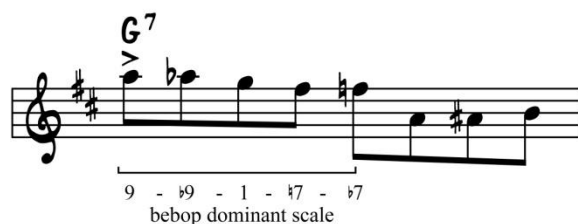
There are a number of reasons why the second scale makes sense. First, in the second scale all of the chord tones are on down beats; and second, the tonic of the scale falls on beat one of each successive measure, and the fifth falls on beat 3.<sup>357</sup>

Using the bebop dominant scale and numerous variations on it, McPherson plays melodies that define the underlying harmony by targeting chord tones on downbeats. Example 21 demonstrates his application of this principle in basic fashion by playing a chromatic passing tone between the root and flatted seventh of a dominant chord, resulting in the flatted seventh of the dominant chord falling on a downbeat.



Ex. 21. Basic application of the bebop dominant scale. “Si Si,” m. 3.

Expanding on this principle, McPherson also uses chromatic passing tones to connect upper extensions to nearby chord tones, achieving the effect described above. In example 22, he descends chromatically from the ninth, which results in the ninth, root, and seventh landing on beats 1, 2, and 3, respectively.

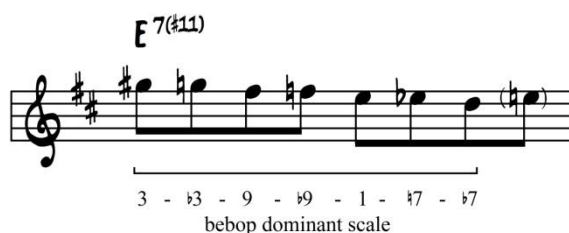


Ex. 22. Bebop scale figure descending chromatically from the ninth. “Si Si,” m. 29.

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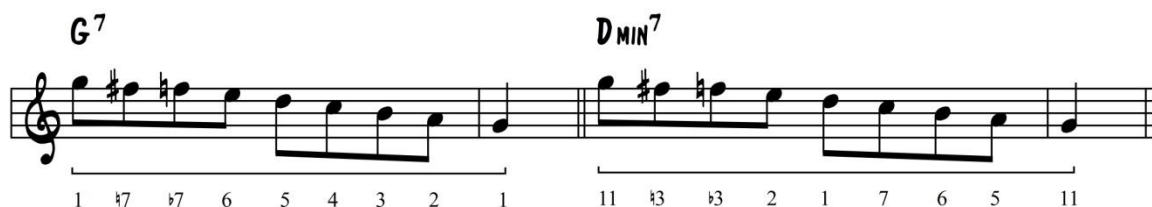
<sup>357</sup> Ibid.

In example 23, he expands on this concept further by beginning on the third of the chord and descending chromatically to the flatted seventh, resulting in the third, ninth, root, and seventh being played on beats 1, 2, 3, and 4, respectively.



Ex. 23. Bebop scale figure descending chromatically from the third. “Desafinado,” m. 72.

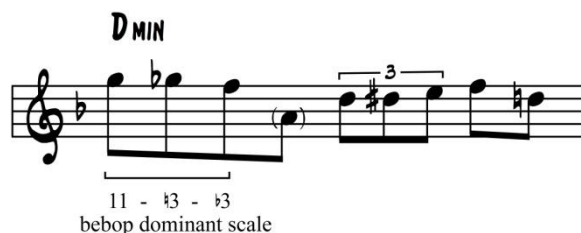
The bebop dominant scale is also applicable to minor chords. Baker writes, “On a minor seventh chord the scale is reckoned from the root of the related dominant seventh chord, i.e., G- = C dominant (bebop).”<sup>358</sup> Whereas the chromatic passing tone of the bebop dominant scale connects the root and seventh of a mixolydian scale, it connects the eleventh and third of a dorian scale. This relationship is shown in example 24.



Ex. 24. Comparison of bebop dominant scale on dominant and minor chords.

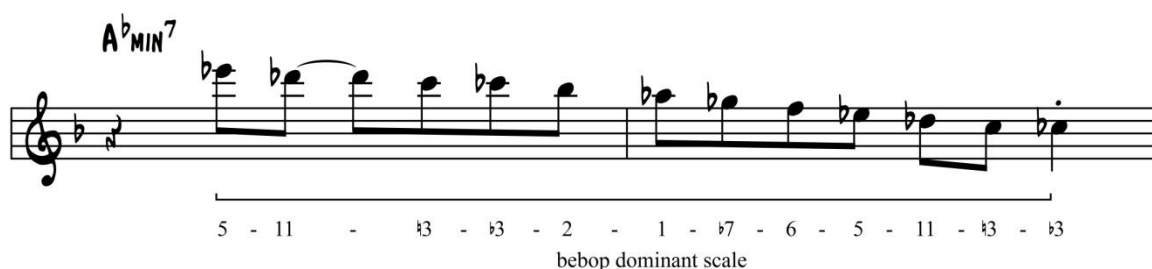
In example 25, McPherson begins on the eleventh of the chord on the downbeat and descends chromatically to the third on beat two, a similar figure to the one shown in example 21.

<sup>358</sup> Ibid.



Ex. 25. Simple application of the bebop dominant scale over a related minor seventh chord. “From This Moment On,” m. 22.

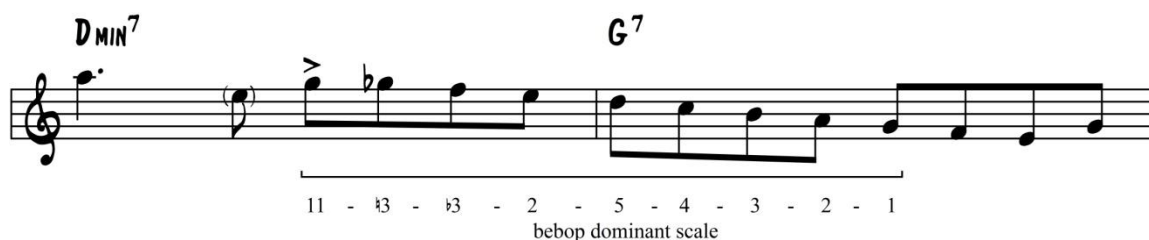
In example 26, he begins on the fifth of the A  $\flat$  dorian mode on beat 2, playing the eleventh on the upbeat and holding it through the downbeat of beat 3. Beginning on the upbeat of beat 3, he continues with an eighth-note descending D  $\flat$  bebop dominant scale, resulting in the third, root, sixth, eleventh, and third (again) on the remaining downbeats in the phrase. While the sixth and eleventh are not typically thought of as chord tones, there are no notes in the dorian minor scale that sound dissonant when played over a minor seventh chord.



Ex. 26. Extended application of the bebop dominant scale over a related minor seventh chord. “From This Moment On,” mm. 68-69.

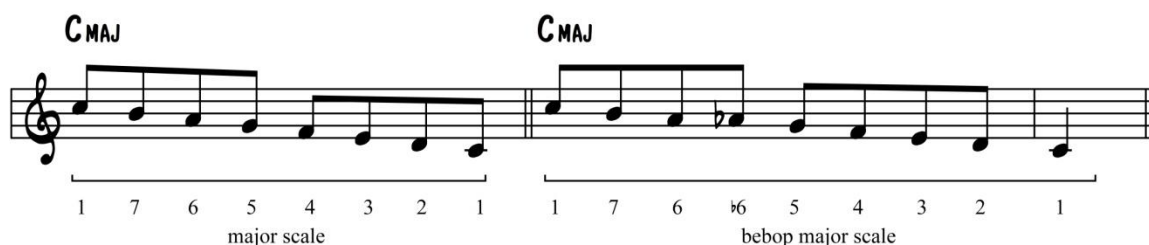
The ability to apply the same bebop dominant scale over the ii and V chords in the same key makes it particularly useful over ii-V progressions. In example 27, McPherson begins a descending bebop dominant scale on beat 3 of the minor chord and continues to play the scale over the bar line into the dominant chord. After reaching the root of the

scale on the downbeat of beat 3 in m. 62, he returns to the mixolydian mode as opposed to continuing with the bebop dominant scale.



Ex. 27. Application of the bebop scale over a ii-V progression. “I Get a Kick Out of You,” mm. 61-62.

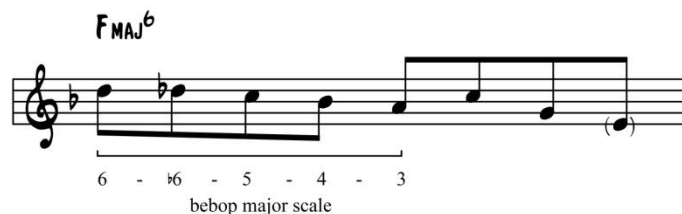
The other type of bebop scale is the bebop major scale.<sup>359</sup> In this scale, a chromatic passing tone is added between the fifth and sixth degrees to allow for the chord tones 1, 3, 5, and 6 to fall on downbeats, demonstrated in example 28.



Ex. 28. Comparison of major scale and bebop dominant scale.

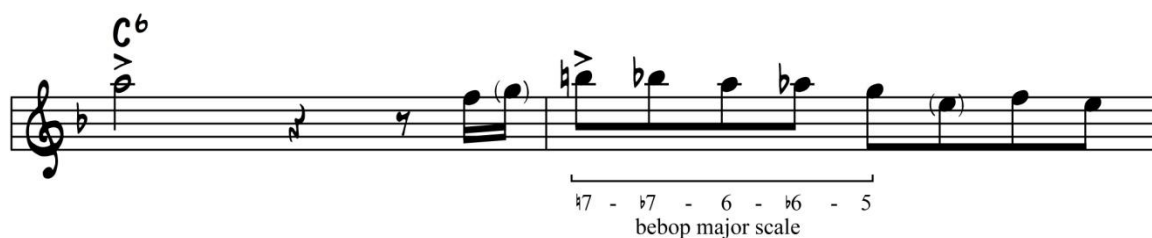
Example 29 demonstrates McPherson’s use of this scale. He begins on the sixth scale degree on beat 1 and uses the bebop major scale to descend to the third of the chord before changing the direction of the line.

<sup>359</sup> Baker, *How to Play Bebop*, 12.



Ex. 29. Simple application of the bebop major scale. “From This Moment On,” m. 30.

In example 30, McPherson plays a bebop major scale figure that begins on the seventh and descends chromatically to the fifth, a practice similar to that demonstrated above of using chromatic passing tones to connect upper extensions to chord tones on dominant chords.

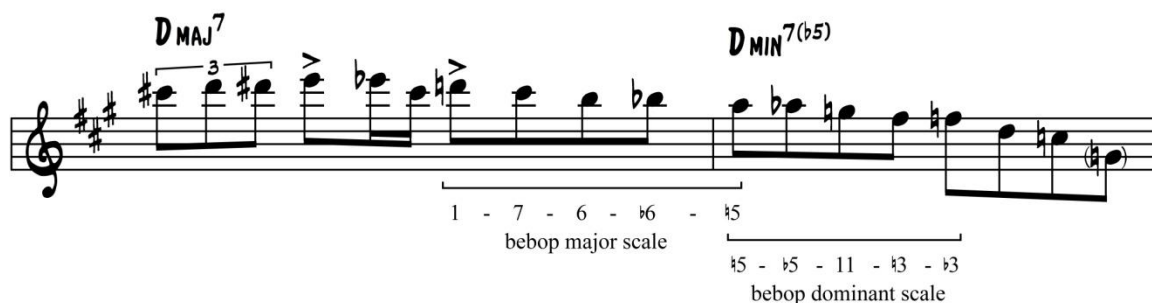


Ex. 30. Bebop major scale figure beginning on the seventh with an extra chromatic passing tone. “From This Moment On,” mm. 42-43.

In example 31, McPherson combines the bebop major and bebop dominant scales within a single line. On beat 3 of m. 10, he begins a descending D major bebop scale that resolves to an A natural on the downbeat of m. 11. At that point the chord changes to Dmin7(b 5), which serves as the ii chord of a ii-V-I in C major. Applying the G dominant bebop scale, he descends chromatically over the ii chord, connecting the natural fifth, eleventh, and third (or the ninth, root, and seventh of G dominant) with chromatic passing tones to resolve on beat three before altering the shape of the line going forward. While the A natural on the downbeat of m. 11 does not fit with the strict spelling of the chord (a natural fifth on a half-diminished chord), the extensive chromaticism within the

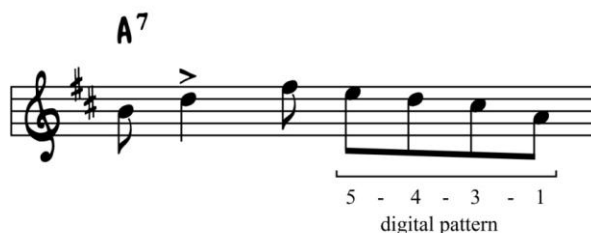


line, the general harmonic implication (a minor ii chord), and the fast tempo help to mitigate any perceived dissonance.



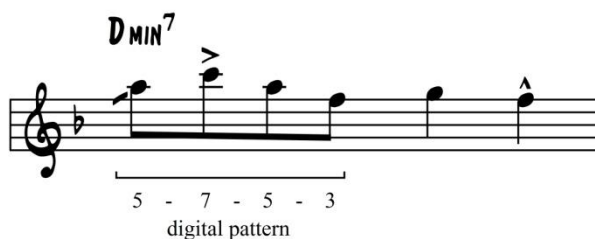
Ex. 31. Combining bebop major and bebop dominant scales within a single line. “Horizons,” mm. 10-11.

Examples 32 through 35 demonstrate McPherson’s use of digital patterns, or “cells of notes, usually numbering 4-8 notes per cell, that are structured according to the numerical value of each note to the root of a chord or scale.”<sup>360</sup> These small melodic cells are typically combined with other elements in the construction of longer melodic statements.

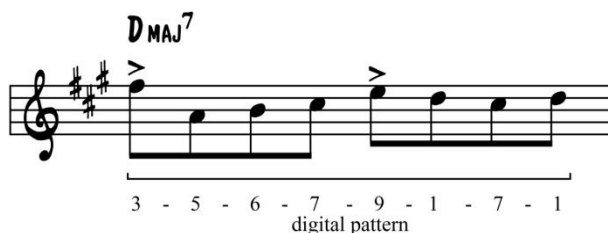


Ex. 32. Four-note digital pattern. “Si Si,” m. 46.

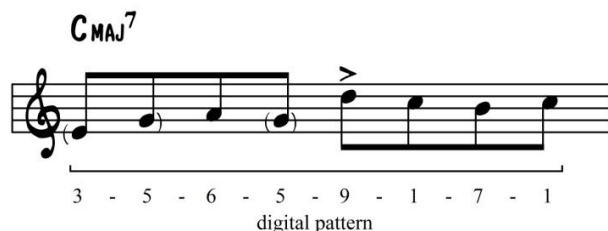
<sup>360</sup> Coker, *Elements of the Jazz Language*, 8. Coker attributes the origin of this term to David Baker.



Ex. 33. Four-note digital pattern. “Spring is Here,” m. 28.



Ex. 34. Eight-note digital pattern. “Horizons,” m. 49.



Ex. 35. Eight-note digital pattern. “I Get a Kick Out of You,” m. 15.

Jerry Coker makes the following observation about digital patterns:

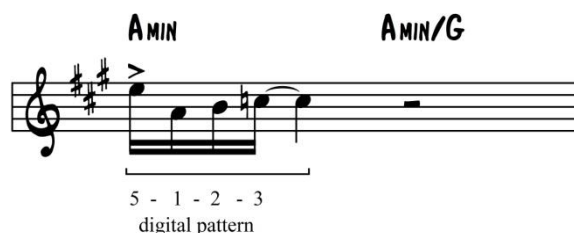
Generally speaking, digital patterns usually occur at one rhythmic level for the entire cell (as opposed to a mixture of rhythmic values), and that level is most often the eighth-note level. However, they will also appear, though less frequently, in mixed rhythmic values and at, say, the sixteenth-note level (double-time) or the quarter-note level (as in the walking bass line).<sup>361</sup>

In example 36, McPherson plays a four-note digital pattern at the sixteenth-note (double-time) level, tying the last note in the cell to a quarter note. In example 37, he plays two consecutive four-note digital patterns at the thirty-second-note (triple-time)

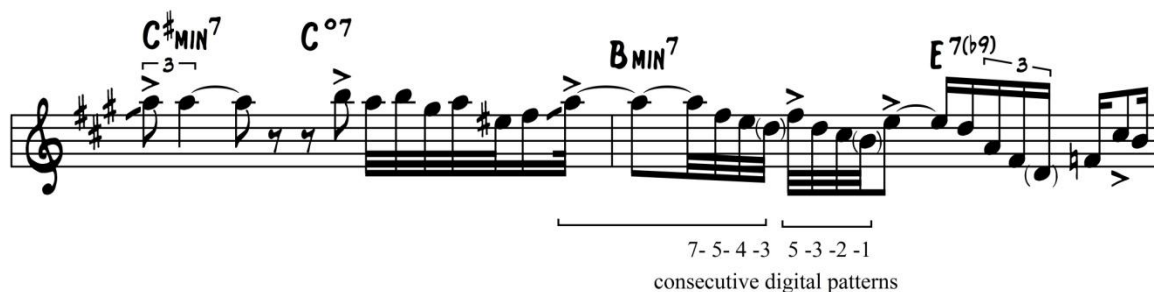
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<sup>361</sup> Ibid.

level. The first note of the first digital pattern in example 37 begins as a thirty-second note at the end of m. 38 and is tied to an eighth note and another thirty-second note to begin the first digital pattern in m. 39. By extending the length of individual notes in these cells, McPherson applies the concept described above of playing digital patterns in mixed rhythmic values.

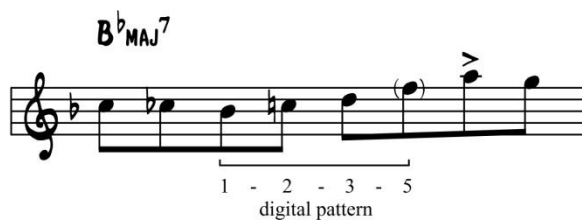


Ex. 36. Double-time digital pattern. “For Heaven’s Sake,” m. 21.

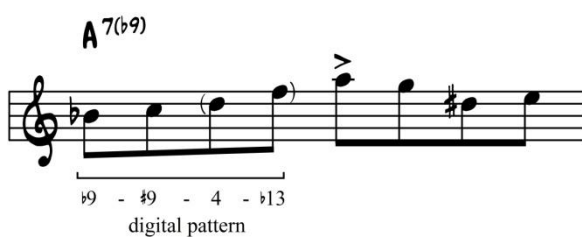


Ex. 37. Two consecutive triple-time digital patterns. “For Heaven’s Sake,” mm. 38-39.

Digital patterns can be easily manipulated and used in different harmonic settings. Examples 38 through 42 show McPherson’s use of the same four-note digital pattern (the equivalent of 1-2-3-5 in a major key) transposed and beginning on a different chord tone in different chord qualities. In examples 39 and 41, the digital pattern includes scale degrees that are considered dissonant against the underlying harmony (the fourth and natural seventh, respectively). In both cases, however, the familiar shape of the melodic cell and the tempo mitigate any perceived dissonance.



Ex. 38. Digital pattern beginning on the root of a major chord. “From This Moment On,” m. 26.



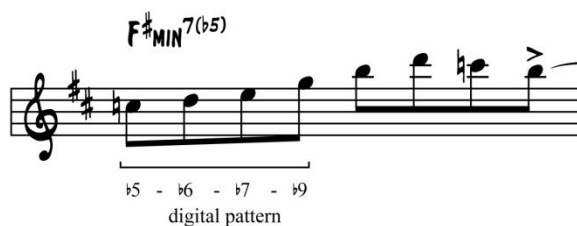
Ex. 39. Digital pattern beginning on the  $\flat 9$  of a dominant 7( $\flat 9$ ) chord. “I Get a Kick Out of You,” m. 88.



Ex. 40. Digital pattern beginning on the third of a minor chord. “Evidence,” m. 11.

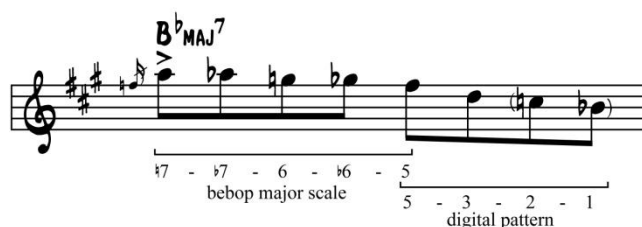


Ex. 41. Digital pattern beginning on the third of an altered dominant chord. “I Get a Kick Out of You,” m. 107.



Ex. 42. Digital pattern beginning on the flattened fifth of a half diminished chord. “Desafinado,” m. 56.

In example 43, McPherson connects the bebop major scale, descending chromatically from the seventh, to a four-note digital pattern. This example shows how he uses the elements described above in the formation of longer melodic statements.



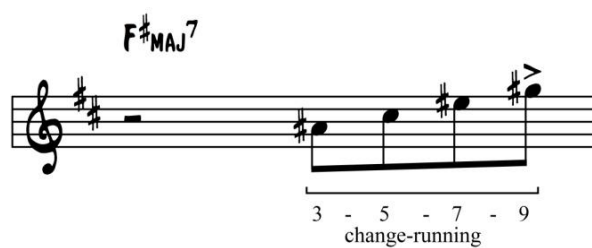
Ex. 43. Bebop major scale and four-note digital pattern. “Horizons,” m. 44.

McPherson also frequently employs change-running, defined by Coker as “a jazz colloquialism for chord-arpeggiating.”<sup>362</sup> Examples 44 through 46 demonstrate this concept.



Ex. 44. Change-running. “Desafinado,” m. 74.

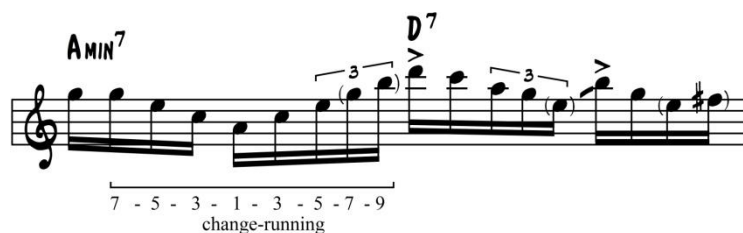
<sup>362</sup> Coker, *Elements of the Jazz Language*, 1.



Ex. 45. Change-running. “Desafinado,” m. 38.

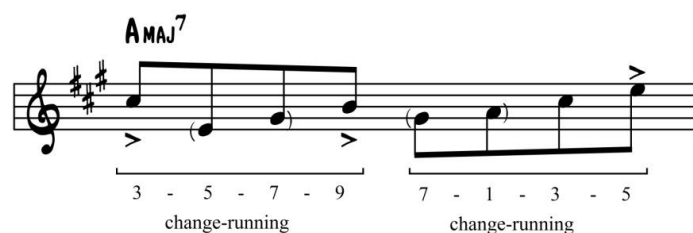


Ex. 46. Change-running. “Spring is Here,” m. 21.



Ex. 47. Change-running. “Karen,” m. 53.

Example 48 demonstrates change-running in two consecutive four-note cells, both of which occur in inversion.



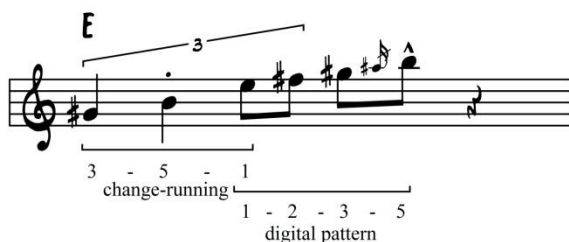
Ex. 48. Change-running in two consecutive four-note cells. “Horizons,” m. 1.

Examples 49 through 51 show McPherson combining digital patterns and change-running within a single phrase. In example 49, he plays a digital pattern on beat 1 and a change-running figure on beat 3. Each element is followed by a similar two-note figure, creating cohesiveness within the phrase.



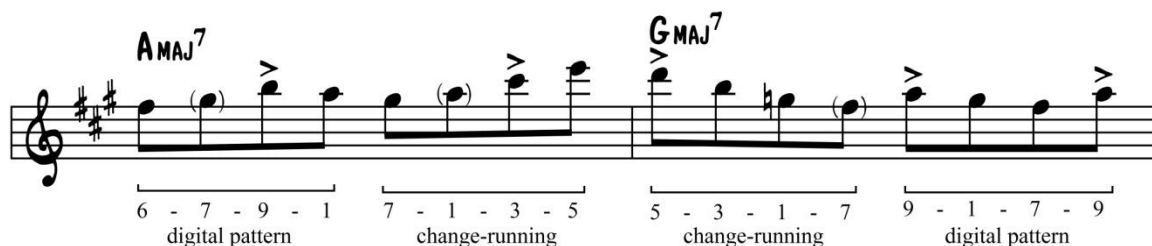
Ex. 49. Digital pattern and change-running within a phrase. "Karen," m. 15.

In example 50, he combines change-running and a digital pattern within a complex rhythmic figure. He begins by outlining an E major triad in a quarter-note triplet. The last subdivision of this triplet is played in eighth notes, the first of which serves to end the arpeggiation and begin a four-note digital pattern. Though the digital pattern begins as two eighth notes in a subdivision of a quarter-note triplet, it ends in two standard eighth notes. This rhythmic complexity further demonstrates concepts presented in the previous section.



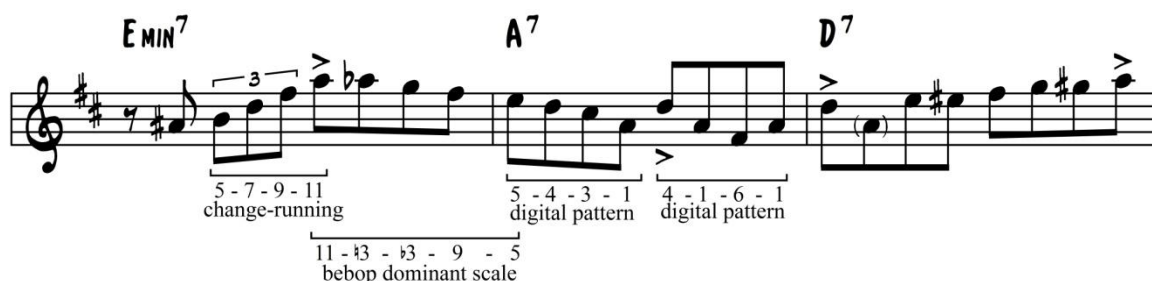
Ex. 50. Change-running and digital pattern with complex rhythmic phrasing. "Karen," m. 18

In example 51, McPherson uses both digital patterns and change-running in each of two consecutive measures.



Ex. 51. Digital patterns and change-running within a phrase. “Horizons,” mm. 41-42.

Examples 52 and 53 demonstrate the use of the bebop dominant scale, digital patterns, and change-running in a single phrase. In example 52, McPherson begins the phrase by approaching a change-running figure from the lower neighbor tone. After reaching the eleventh of the ii chord (**E<sub>MIN</sub>7**), he begins a descending bebop dominant scale figure that leads into the V chord (**A7**). On the downbeat of m. 70, he plays two four-note digital patterns, the second of which anticipates the I chord (**D7**) in m. 71.

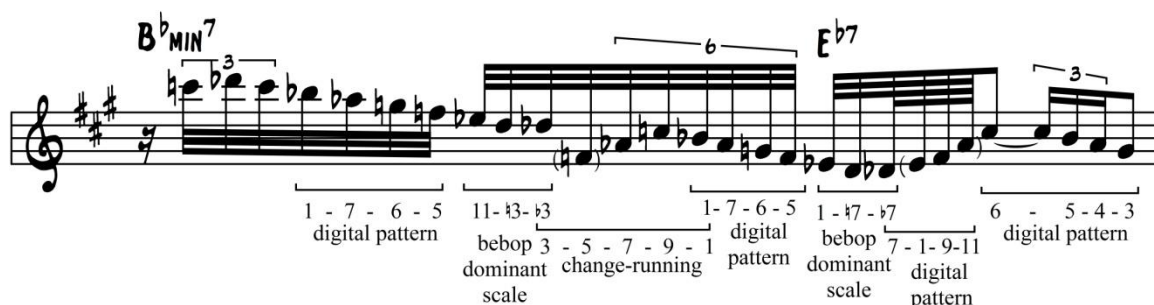


Ex. 52. Change-running, bebop dominant scale, and digital patterns within a single phrase. “Si Si,” mm. 69-71.

In example 53, he begins by leading into a descending four-note digital pattern followed by a short bebop dominant scale cell. The **D<sup>b</sup>** at the end of the bebop scale cell becomes the first note of a change-running figure that is followed by a repetition of the initial digital pattern and bebop scale cell an octave lower. The **D<sup>b</sup>** that ends the second



bebop scale cell becomes the first note of two consecutive four-note digital patterns that end the phrase, the second of which features mixed rhythmic values.



Ex. 53. Digital pattern, bebop dominant scale, and change-running within a single phrase. “For Heaven’s Sake,” m. 28.

In example 54, McPherson applies 3- ♭ 9, a common feature of the bebop vocabulary defined as “melodic motion from the 3rd of a dominant seventh chord to the flatted 9th of the same chord.”<sup>363</sup>



Ex. 54. Simple application of 3- ♭ 9. “I Get a Kick Out of You,” m. 128.

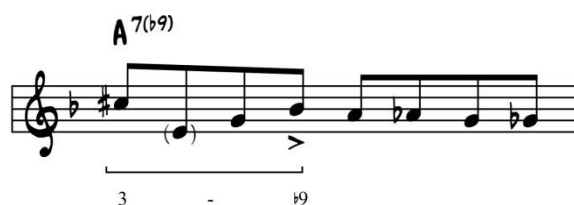
Application of 3- ♭ 9 does not require the improviser to immediately follow the third by the flatted ninth. In example 55, McPherson plays the third on the downbeat of beat 2, followed by all other chord tones in the inversion (fifth, seventh, and root, respectively) before reaching the flatted ninth on beat 3.

<sup>363</sup> Coker, *Elements of the Jazz Language*, 26.



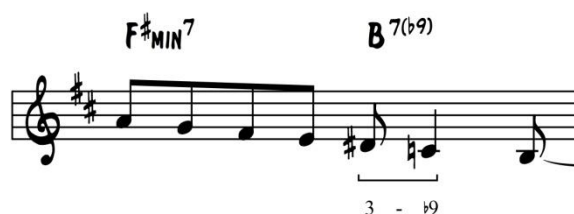
Ex. 55. Extended application of 3-  $\flat$  9. “Desafinado,” m. 77.

In example 56, McPherson begins on the third and plays an inverted arpeggiation from the fifth and leading to the flatted ninth before changing the direction of the line.



Ex. 56. Inverted arpeggiation of 3-  $\flat$  9. “From This Moment On,” m. 17.

Example 57 demonstrates McPherson’s use of 3-  $\flat$  9 in a linear fashion, as opposed to the arpeggiated examples above.



Ex. 57. Linear application of 3-  $\flat$  9. “Si Si,” m. 92.

Coker writes, “A resolution in music generally refers to smooth, graceful connections of successive chords in a progression. The term also implies that harmonic tension is being relieved.”<sup>364</sup> The 7-3 resolution is commonly used in jazz when a chord progression moves from ii to V or from V to I and the seventh scale degree of the

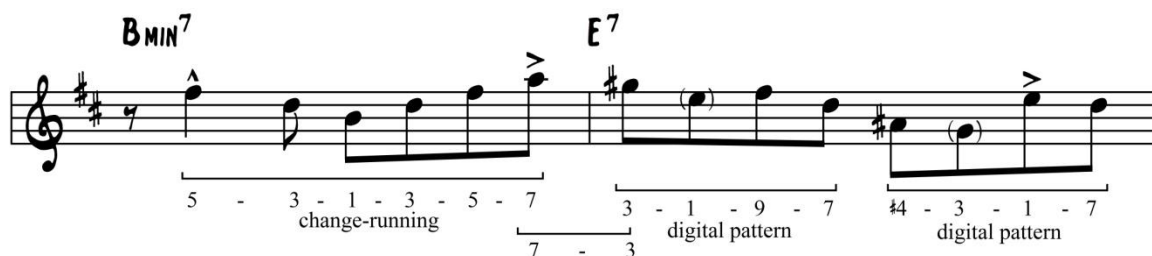
<sup>364</sup> Coker, *Elements of the Jazz Language*, 19.

previous chord resolves to the third of the new chord.<sup>365</sup> Example 58 demonstrates McPherson's use of the 7-3 resolution from ii to V.



Ex. 58. 7-3 resolution on a ii-V progression. "Spring is Here," m. 25.

In example 59, he begins a ii-V progression with a change-running pattern and then uses a 7-3 resolution to lead into the V chord in the following measure, in which he plays two four-note digital patterns.



Ex. 59. Change-running, 7-3 resolution, and digital patterns on a ii-V progression. "Desafinado," mm. 44-45.

Example 60 demonstrates McPherson's application of a 7-3 resolution from V to

I.



Ex. 60. 7-3 resolution on a V-I progression. "Evidence," mm. 37-38.

<sup>365</sup> Ibid.

In example 61, he begins with a four-note digital pattern on beat 3 that ends on the seventh and resolves to the third of the following chord. After resolving to the third, he plays a descending bebop dominant scale figure that changes direction after landing on the root on beat 3 of m. 17.

Example 61 shows a V-I progression from A<sup>MIN</sup>7 to D<sup>7</sup> to G<sup>7</sup>. The notation includes a four-note digital pattern (4 5 - 6 - 1 - 7) and a bebop dominant scale figure (3 - b3 - 9 - b9 - 1).

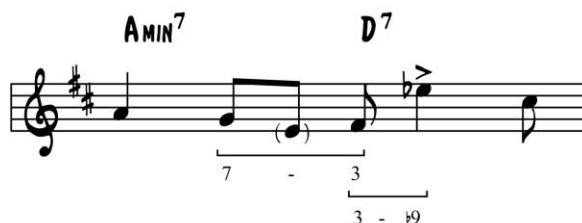
Ex. 61. Four-note digital pattern, 7-3 resolution, and bebop dominant scale figure on a V-I progression. “Si Si,” mm. 16-17.

In example 62, McPherson descends a G mixolydian scale beginning on the seventh that leads to a 7-3 resolution on the downbeat of m. 95. The resolution is followed by a four-note digital pattern and change-running.

Example 62 shows a V-I progression from G<sup>7</sup> to C<sup>MAJ</sup>7. The notation includes a descending mixolydian scale, a 7-3 resolution, a four-note digital pattern (3 - 5 - 6 - 7), and change-running (9 - 7 - 1 - 3 - 5 - 1 - 5).

Ex. 62. 7-3 resolution, digital pattern, and change-running on a V-I progression. “I Get a Kick Out of You,” mm. 94-96.

In the same way that applying 3- b 9 does not require the improviser to move directly from the third to the flatted ninth, a 7-3 resolution is still effective if the third does not immediately follow a seventh from the previous chord. In example 63, McPherson plays a note between the seventh of the ii chord and the third of the V chord, followed by a 3- b 9.



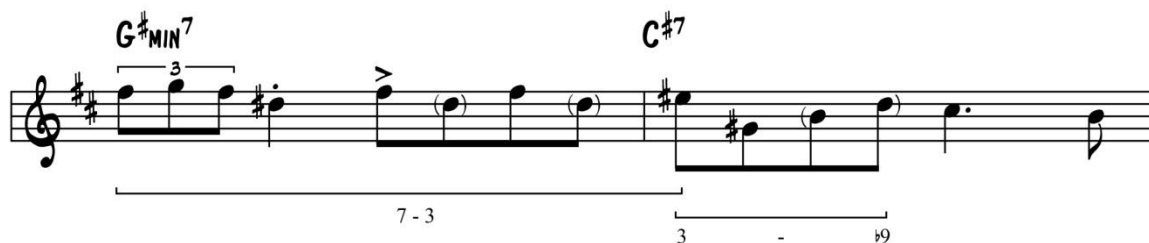
Ex. 63. Indirect 7-3 resolution with 3-  $\flat$  9. “Si Si,” m. 4.

In example 64, McPherson uses a 7-3 resolution in each of two consecutive measures. In m. 29, the motion of the melody suggests movement from the root to the seventh of the ii chord (A  $\flat$  min7) followed by a resolution to the third of the V chord (D  $\flat$  7). Although the line is delayed by a beat (i.e. a beat late according to the harmony it suggests) and there is an extra note between the seventh and the third, the effect of the resolution is still felt. In m. 30, the resolution is clearer and is anticipated by an eighth note.



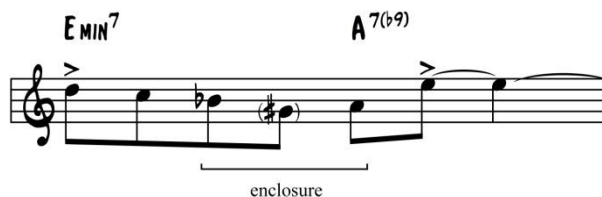
Ex. 64. Two consecutive applications of a 7-3 resolution. “Spring is Here,” mm. 29-30.

In example 65, McPherson plays an F# at the beginning of the phrase that remains prominent throughout the first measure. Although the E# at the beginning of m. 105 is preceded by other melodic activity after the initial introduction of the F# at the beginning m. 104, the effect of a 7-3 resolution is felt. This example also features an extended 3-  $\flat$  9 through inverted arpeggiation, as demonstrated in example 46.

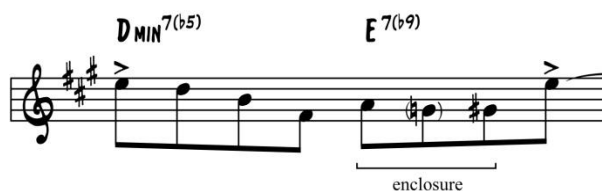


Ex. 65. Indirect 7-3 resolution with extended 3-  $\flat$  9. “Desafinado,” mm. 104-105.

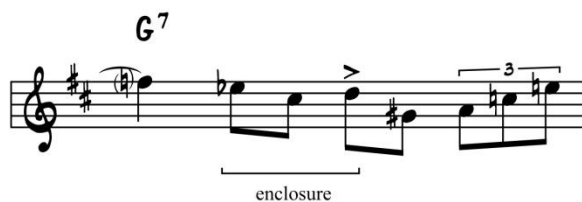
Enclosure is “a linear or melodic device in which an object note is approached by both the upper and lower leading tones.”<sup>366</sup> In many cases, the object note is a chord tone. Examples 66 through 68 demonstrate McPherson’s use of this technique.



Ex. 66. Enclosure. “I Get a Kick Out of You,” m. 4.



Ex. 67. Enclosure. “Horizons,” m. 56.



Ex. 68. Enclosure. “Si Si,” m. 65.

<sup>366</sup> Coker, *Elements of the Jazz Language*, 50.

In example 69, McPherson embellishes an enclosure in m. 19 by approaching the lower leading tone from a half step below, resolving to the third on beat 3. This is followed by a measure that features a linear application of 3-  $\flat$  9.



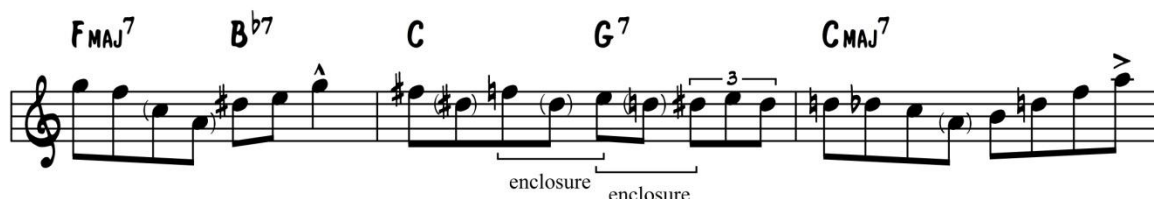
Ex. 69. Embellished enclosure and 3-  $\flat$  9. “I Get a Kick Out of You,” mm. 19-20.

Example 70 also features an embellished enclosure resolving to the third of the chord on beat 3. After the resolution, McPherson plays a descending chromatic bebop dominant scale leading into the next measure.



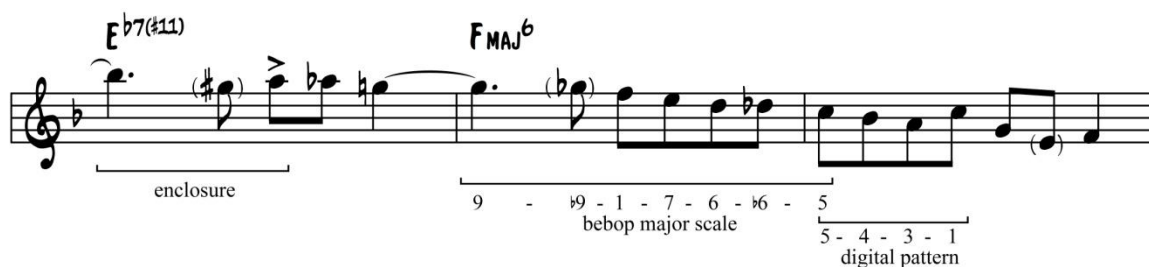
Ex. 70. Embellished enclosure and bebop dominant scale. “I Get a Kick Out of You,” m. 86.

In example 71, McPherson uses enclosure to target two consecutive downbeats. While the object notes in this example are not chord tones that provide harmonic clarity, they continue a melodic shape that begins on beat 4 of m. 62 and continues through beat 1 of m. 64 in which each successive downbeat is lowered by a half step.



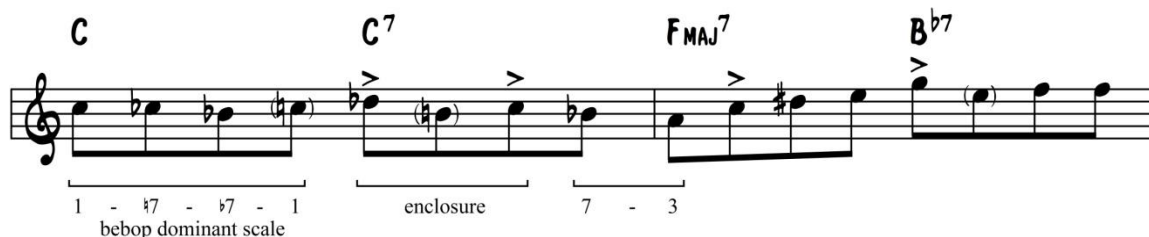
Ex. 71. Enclosure targeting non-chord tones. “Evidence,” mm. 62-64.

In example 72, McPherson uses enclosure to target the #11 of the E <sup>b</sup>7(#11) in m. 13 before descending chromatically to anticipate the ninth of the Fmaj6 chord in m. 14 by one beat. He then employs a descending bebop major scale, beginning with a chromatic passing tone between the ninth and the root. After resolving to the fifth on the downbeat of m. 15, he plays a four-note digital pattern.



Ex. 72. Enclosure, bebop major scale, and digital pattern in a phrase. “From This Moment On,” mm. 13-15.

Ex. 73 demonstrates McPherson’s use of the bebop dominant scale, enclosure, and a 7-3 resolution over a V-I progression.



Ex. 73. Bebop dominant scale, enclosure, and 7-3 resolution over a V-I progression in a phrase. “Evidence,” mm. 77-78.



In example 74, McPherson uses nearly all of the above elements (with the exception of 3- ♭ 9) in a three-measure phrase, demonstrating his mastery of combining smaller elements to create longer melodies. The elements are identified underneath the system.

The musical notation for Example 74 consists of two systems. The first system is in the key of C#7(#11) and contains three measures. The second system is in the key of CMAJ7 and contains one measure. The annotations for the first system are as follows:

- Measure 1: 7 - 2 - ♭4 - 2 (digital pattern)
- Measure 2: 3 - 2 - 1 - ♭7 - ♭7 - 1 (bebop dominant scale)
- Measure 3: 7 - 1 - 2 - 3 (digital pattern)

The annotations for the second system are as follows:

- Measure 1: 3 - 5 - 9 - 7 - 1 - 3 - 5 - 7 (change-running)
- Measure 2: 7 - 3 (enclosure)
- Measure 3: 7 - 2 - 1 - 5 (digital pattern)

Ex. 74. Digital pattern, bebop dominant scale, digital pattern, enclosure, 7-3, change-running, and bebop major scale in a single phrase. “Karen,” mm. 32-34.

While the above elements are typically employed to provide harmonic clarity, McPherson also occasionally uses harmonic generalization, a practice in which “an improviser chooses one scale to accommodate two or more chords of a progression.”<sup>367</sup> Harmonic generalization does not necessarily mean that the notes of the chosen scale are not consistent with traditional chord/scale relationships. In example 75, McPherson improvises using the A natural minor scale over several different chords. While his note choice throughout fits the harmony, it suggests a melody in A minor.

<sup>367</sup> Coker, *Elements of the Jazz Language*, 45.

harmonic generalization (A natural minor)

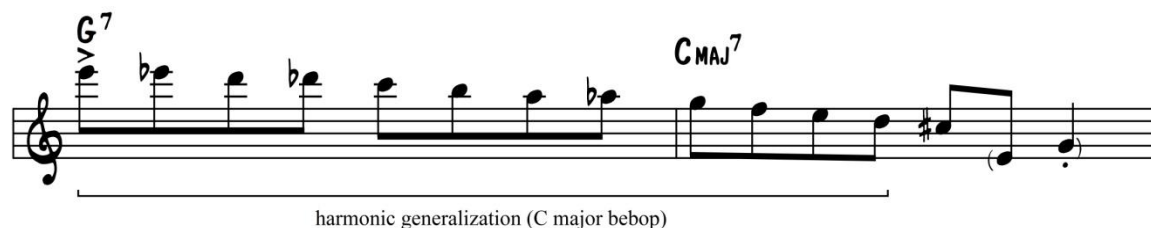
Ex. 75. Harmonic generalization using the natural minor scale. “For Heaven’s Sake,” mm. 21-24.

In example 76, McPherson plays an A half-whole diminished scale (a diminished scale alternating between half steps and whole steps from the root) over the bar line, applying it to both the minor and dominant chords in a ii-V progression.

harmonic generalization (A half-whole diminished)

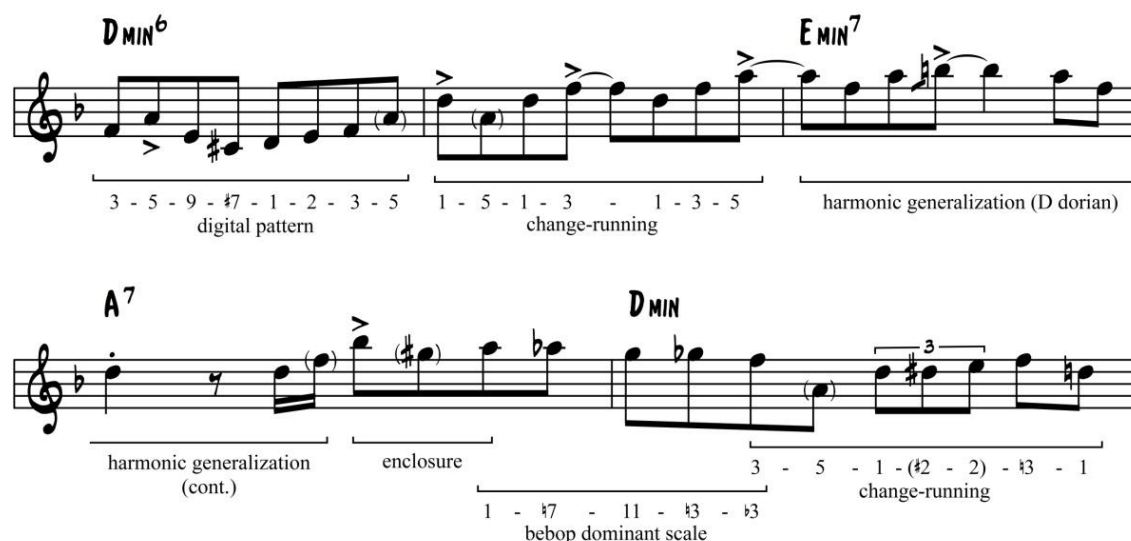
Ex. 76. Harmonic generalization using the diminished scale. “Si Si,” mm. 21-22.

In example 77, he plays a descending C major bebop scale with chromatic passing tones between the third, ninth, and root, over a G7 chord. The scale is continued into the Cmaj7 chord, thus fitting the above definition.



Ex. 77. Harmonic generalization using the bebop major scale. “I Get a Kick Out of You,” mm. 130-131.

In example 78, McPherson uses harmonic generalization within a line containing several other elements. He starts by playing an eight-note digital pattern in m. 18 that is followed by a change-running pattern in m. 19. He then applies harmonic generalization by continuing to play in D minor over the Emin7 and A7 chords. After enclosing the A on beat 4 of m. 21, he plays a descending bebop dominant line that leads into a quasi-change-running figure with two chromatic passing tones between the first appearance of the root and the third.

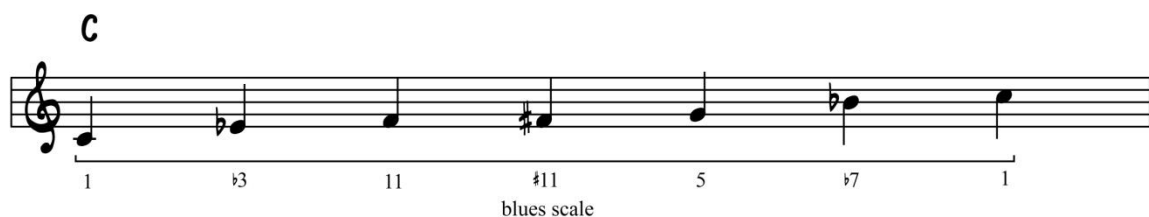


Ex. 78. Digital pattern, change-running, harmonic generalization, enclosure, and bebop dominant scale. “From This Moment On,” mm. 18-22.

McPherson articulates the importance of the blues to his stylistic conception:

I consider myself a blues player. I mean, I play jazz and all of that, but the blues is very important to me. It's not always that important to all jazz musicians. They think of the blues as something over here on the side, but to me, it's a very important part of the equation of what jazz is. For me, I do have some precepts of what I think it is and the blues is definitely one of them. In my performance, whenever I play, I always make a point of playing the blues a couple times a night. That's the way I do it and it's deliberate.<sup>368</sup>

The influence of the blues is evident in McPherson's melodic vocabulary as well his repertoire selection. In addition to frequently referencing the genre through sonic devices such as pitch bends, growling, and other vocally-derived effects, he also captures melodic elements of the blues by creating melodies using the blues scale, shown in example 79.



Ex. 79. Blues scale.

Example 80 demonstrates McPherson's use of this scale at the beginning of his second chorus on "Blues for Mac." In m. 13, he draws from the blues scale (omitting the flattened third and the sharp eleventh) to construct a one-measure descending phrase that ends by resolving up to the major third. In m. 14, he begins a new phrase by employing a full descending version of the blues scale that echoes the previous phrase, providing melodic continuity. Though m. 14 features the A blues scale over a D7 chord, the flexibility and familiarity of both the scale and the blues form itself allow for the scale's use in the tonic key over any part of the form.

<sup>368</sup> Shannon J. Effinger, "McPherson Talks Mingus," *DownBeat*, June 11, 2012, accessed June 14, 2015, [http://downbeat.com/default.asp?sect=news&subsect=news\\_detail&nid=1922](http://downbeat.com/default.asp?sect=news&subsect=news_detail&nid=1922).

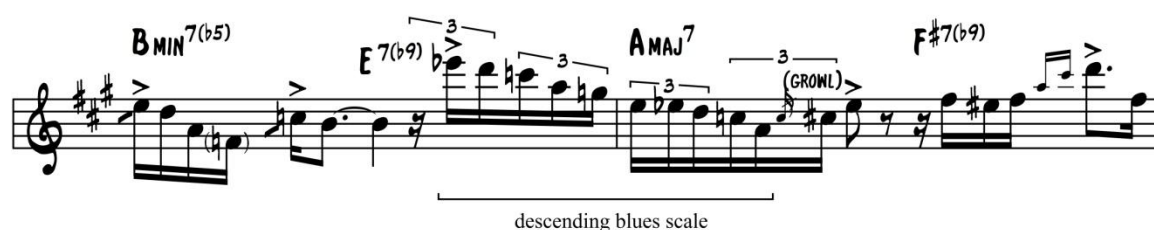


Ex. 80. Blues scale application. "Blues for Mac," mm. 13-14.

Coker provides further insight into the use of the blues scale in various harmonic situations:

Still another means of achieving harmonic generalization is to use the blues scale over a section of a tune. Because we are accustomed to hearing a single blues scale over the various chords of a blues, that phenomenon can be transferred to other, non-blues progressions.<sup>369</sup>

This concept is demonstrated in example 81, in which McPherson plays a descending blues scale in sixteenth-note triplets, crossing the bar line from an E7(b9) chord to an Amaj7 chord. As in the previous example, the tonic blues scale (A) is played over a non-tonic chord.

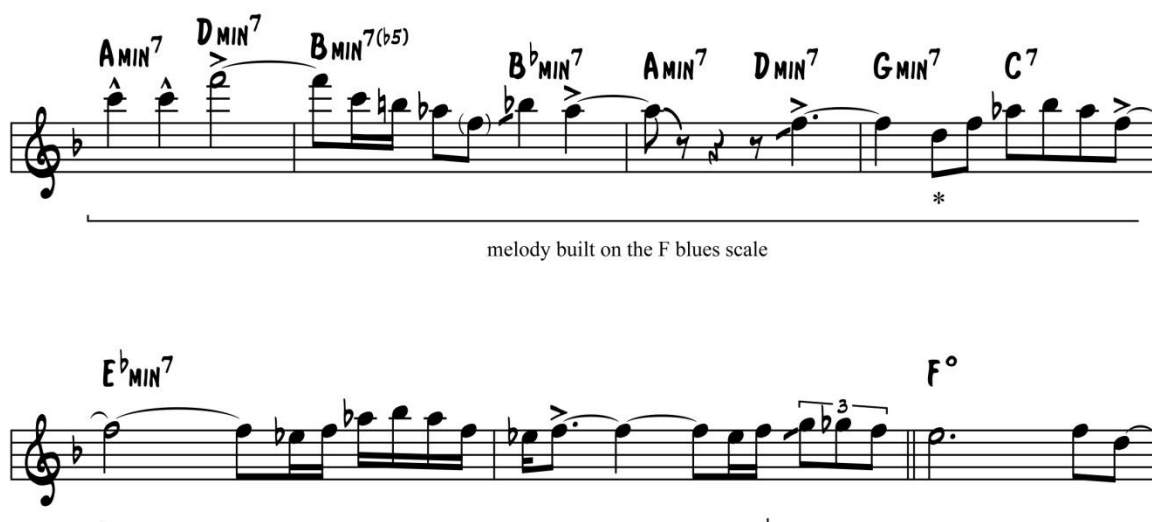


Ex. 81. Harmonic generalization through use of the blues scale. "For Heaven's Sake," mm. 41-42.

In example 82, McPherson improvises almost exclusively on the notes of the F blues scale. In the underscored portion, the only note that is not in the F blues scale, the D in m. 36, is marked by an asterisk (\*) under the system. In this example, he does not play

<sup>369</sup> Coker, *Elements of the Jazz Language*, 45.

the notes in the scale consecutively, as he does in examples 80 and 81. Regarding this practice, Jamey Aebersold explains, “Jazz players usually play bits and pieces of the (blues) scale or make up licks utilizing certain notes of the scale.”<sup>370</sup>



Ex. 82. Harmonic generalization through use of the blues scale. “Spring is Here,” mm. 33-39.

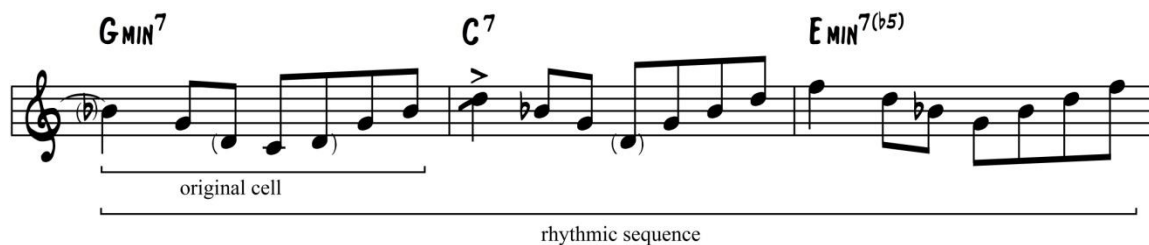
Coker writes, “A sequence occurs when a melodic fragment is immediately followed by one or more variations on that same fragment.” He further explains:

The motives used for sequences may be long or short, and they may be melodic, rhythmic, harmonic, or based on a provocative interval. Sometimes the sequential occurrence of the motive is simple and transparent. Other times it may be heavily-decorated and disguised, perhaps escaping the conscious awareness of the listener, but it is nevertheless sensed in some subtle way.<sup>371</sup>

Example 83 features a sequence in which McPherson introduces a simple rhythmic idea in m. 165 and repeats it in mm. 166-167 with different pitch content.

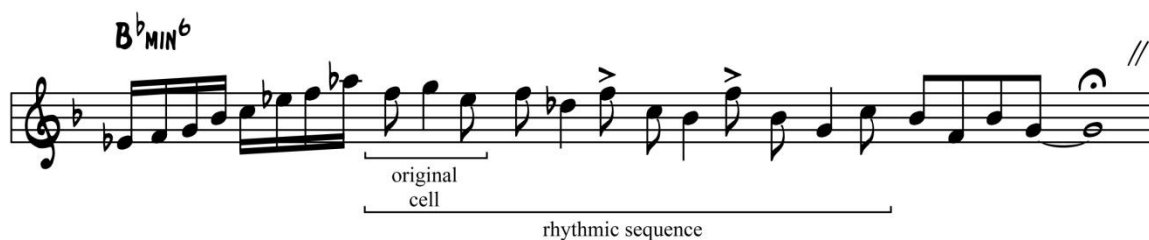
<sup>370</sup> Aebersold, *How to Play Jazz and Improvise*, 41.

<sup>371</sup> Coker, *Elements of the Jazz Language*, 55.



Ex. 83. “I Get a Kick Out of You,” mm. 165-167.

Example 84, an excerpt from McPherson’s cadenza on “From This Moment On,” features a sequence that is based on a two-beat rhythmic cell (eighth note – quarter note – eighth note) and is played four times, with different pitch content each time.



Ex. 84. Rhythmic sequence. “From This Moment On,” cadenza excerpt.

The above sequence is one of several elements from the first phrase of the cadenza. The entire phrase is analyzed in example 85, and it demonstrates the use of a sequence within a line that also features digital patterns, change-running, and bebop dominant scales.

**B<sup>b</sup> MIN<sup>6</sup>**

4 - 5 -  $\flat$ 6 - 1 digital pattern

6 - 5 - 3 - 1 change-running

11 -  $\flat$ 3 -  $\flat$ 3 - 2 - 1 bebop dominant scale

1 - 7 - 6 - 1 digital pattern

5 -  $\flat$ 5 - 11 bebop dominant scale

4 - 5 - 6 - 1 - 2 - 4 - 5 - 7 digital pattern

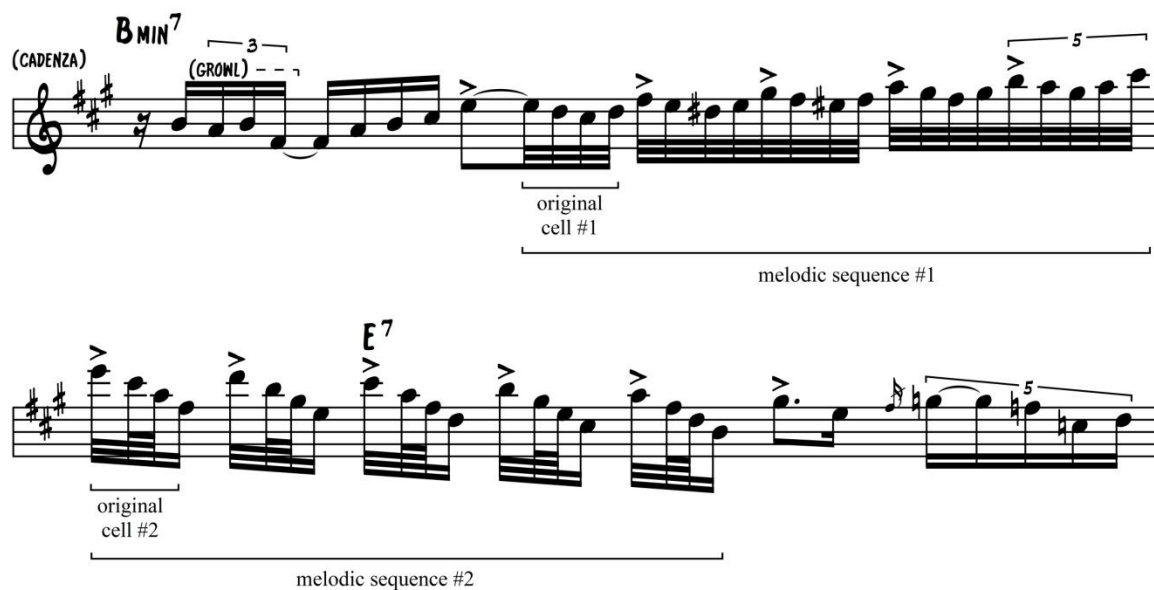
rhythmic sequence

1 - 5 - 1 - 6 digital pattern

Ex. 85. Digital pattern, change-running, bebop dominant scale, bebop dominant scale, and rhythmic sequence in a single phrase. “From This Moment On,” cadenza excerpt.

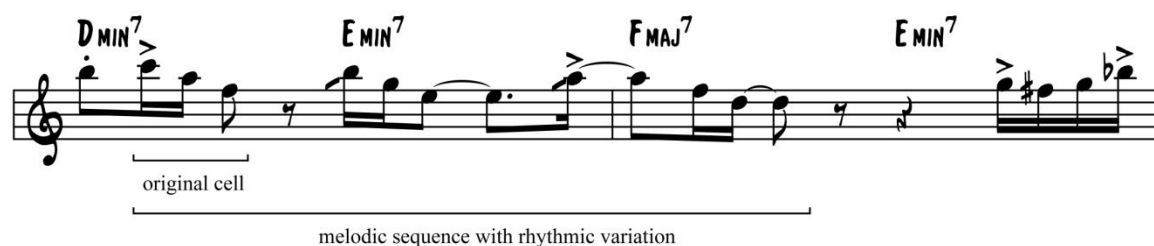
Example 86 features two melodic sequences. The first is based on a four-note cell built on the scale degrees 4-3-2-3. The cell is then transposed diatonically stepwise up the scale. The last repetition of the cell is altered to include a fifth note, which leads directly into the next sequence. The second sequence is based on a descending four-note arpeggiated motive that is transposed stepwise diatonically down the scale and bridges the chord change (Bmin7 – E7) played in the rhythm section.





Ex. 86. Two melodic sequences. "For Heaven's Sake," cadenza excerpt.

In example 87, both the melodic and rhythmic content of the original cell are altered over the course of a sequence.



Ex. 87. Melodic sequence with rhythmic variation. "Karen," mm. 36-37.

McPherson explains, "Harmonically, I'm less interested in root movement than I am in relationships from note to note."<sup>372</sup> Noting the intervallic nature of this approach, he points out that while he adheres to chord/scale relationships, this conception lends itself to the improviser playing "in and out (of the harmony) at will."<sup>373</sup> He also recognizes that after a certain point, relying less on the relationship of notes in a melody

<sup>372</sup> Charles McPherson, interview by author, San Diego, January 9, 2015.

<sup>373</sup> Ibid.

to the root of the chord and more on their relationship to one another depends on subjective interpretation of how to organize the notes in the chromatic scale.<sup>374</sup>

This approach is demonstrated in example 88. In this excerpt, from McPherson's solo on "Spring is Here," the scales typically associated with the song's underlying harmonic progression have been indicated under the melodic content of the solo. All notes that are "outside" of the standard chord/scale relationship are marked by an asterisk (\*) under the system.<sup>375</sup> The chromaticism achieved using the approach described above does not sound deliberately "outside" the harmony. Instead, the contour of the lines, the inclusion of many notes that are "inside" the harmony, the conviction with which the lines are played, and the diverse rhythmic content (at a fairly fast tempo) all contribute to an overall sense of logic that transcends harmonic consonance.

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<sup>374</sup> Ibid.

<sup>375</sup> The chord changes in this arrangement/transcription are based on a lead sheet provided by Charles McPherson. Scales were selected based on the "Guide to Scale Choice" in Haerle's *Scales for Jazz Improvisation*, 50-52.

**Staff 1:**  $A_{MIN} 7(b5)$   $D 7(b9)$   $B^b_{MIN} 7$   $E^b 7$   
 A locrian    D diminished (half step-whole step)     $B^b$  dorian     $E^b$  mixolydian

**Staff 2:**  $F_{MAJ} 7$   $D_{MIN} 7$   
 F major    D aeolian

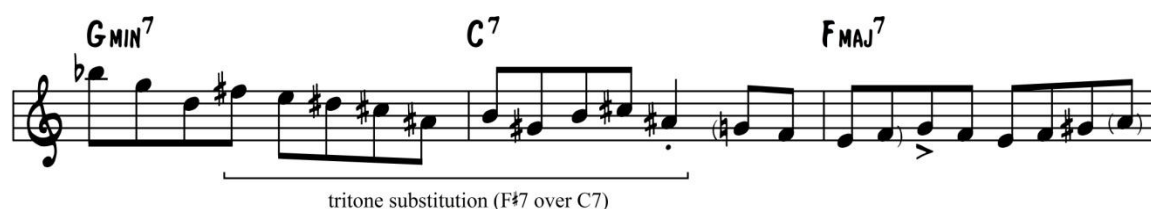
**Staff 3:**  $G_{MIN} 7$   $E_{MIN} 7(b5)$   $A 7(\sharp 5)$   
 G dorian    E locrian    A whole tone

**Staff 4:**  $D_{MIN} (MAJ 7)$   $A^b_{MIN} 7$   $D^b 7$   
 D dorian     $A^b$  dorian

Ex 88. Intervallic melodic construction. “Spring is Here,” mm. 9-17.

Example 89 demonstrates McPherson’s use of a tritone substitution, a technique in which the V chord of a ii-V-I progression is replaced by the dominant chord a tritone away. Despite the harmonic implications of the technique, this example further demonstrates the linear approach to chromaticism described above.

McPherson begins the substitution (F#7 over a C7 chord) on the upbeat of beat 2 of the ii chord in m. 113, anticipating the dominant chord by two and a half beats, and he continues it through beat 3 of the V chord in m. 114 before returning to the original key. The contour of the line, which peaks at the beginning of the phrase in m. 113 and descends steadily until the downbeat of the I chord in m. 115, is never drastically interrupted to facilitate an arpeggiation or any other obvious reference to the altered root movement. Additionally, the intervals used throughout are relatively small, never exceeding a perfect fourth and consisting primarily of seconds and thirds (both minor and major). Thus, although the melody in example 89 represents a common harmonic practice, its shape and intervallic construction suggest a linear conception of chromaticism based the description above.



Ex. 89. Linear application of a tritone substitution. “Evidence,” mm. 113-115.

McPherson explains, “Music is an ear thing. If you want to compose music and you want to improvise, it’s an ear thing.”<sup>376</sup> While he acknowledges that he readily shares theoretical information with his students, he also engages them in ear training exercises so they understand the value of developing their aural skills.<sup>377</sup> Such exercises include learning songs (e.g. “Happy Birthday”) in all twelve keys by ear.<sup>378</sup> He states that

<sup>376</sup> Joffe, “Charles McPherson on How to Practice Jazz.”

<sup>377</sup> Ibid.

<sup>378</sup> Ibid.

students may struggle with the process at first, but he also points out that “the more you do it, the better you get.”<sup>379</sup>

### **Phrasing and Solo Organization**

Learning repertoire has played an important role in the development of McPherson’s approach to improvisation. As opposed to learning how to improvise by taking “licks” and plugging them into appropriate harmonies, he has always favored a method that involves learning a song thoroughly and developing a personal way of playing it.<sup>380</sup> He attributes this in part to Barry Harris’ willingness to accompany him in lessons when he began learning how to improvise.<sup>381</sup> While McPherson acknowledges that there is value in learning licks in all twelve keys, he points out that there are some melodies that can only practically be applied to certain keys due to the fingering system and the range of the saxophone.<sup>382</sup> He also notes that a song’s key and harmonic structure can lead to the repetition of specific licks with which the improviser is comfortable.<sup>383</sup>

When McPherson began learning repertoire, he would memorize a song’s harmony and find the “best notes or the best phrase” to play over the course of a solo.<sup>384</sup> He has always had a sense of “wanting to try for” that feeling, even before he could describe it in musical terms.<sup>385</sup> He provides a concise explanation of this concept:

Sometimes the most musical phrase has to have what I call a ‘divine sequence.’ It is something so correct that it’s almost a universal thing, and

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<sup>379</sup> Ibid.

<sup>380</sup> Charles McPherson, interview by author, San Diego, January 9, 2015.

<sup>381</sup> Ibid.

<sup>382</sup> Ibid.

<sup>383</sup> “One Night Stand with the Big Bands,” accessed July 24, 2015, <http://www.goldenagewtic.org/BB-40.html>.

<sup>384</sup> Charles McPherson, interview by author, San Diego, January 9, 2015.

<sup>385</sup> Ibid.

it's correct because of how it flows and unfolds. In a linear way, it's very straightforward and it's the truth of that moment.<sup>386</sup>

Thus, a personal sense of melodic phrasing is vital to McPherson's improvisational approach. He qualifies the term "melodic" as "the notion or the ability to eke out the most wonderful note of the moment in time, or the sequence of notes at a moment in time."<sup>387</sup> He believes that "melodic logic" is "subjective to a point," but that "everybody knows when it's happening."<sup>388</sup> He attributes this quality in his playing not to any specific pedagogical method, but to experimenting with phrasing early in his development and to being informed aurally by great players, many of whom he heard in Detroit when he was first learning to play.<sup>389</sup> He believes that musicians who possess this quality are not simply playing licks, and he points out that listeners who are not musicians or even jazz fans can tell when a logical syntax is being formed by the improviser.<sup>390</sup>

McPherson has developed a concept called "what, where, and when" to describe his approach to phrasing.<sup>391</sup> In this concept, "what" refers to preexisting musical information, such as scales, chords, and melodies.<sup>392</sup> The "what" category consists of immutable theoretical information, and he states that "the notes are what they are."<sup>393</sup>

"Where" refers to the order in which elements of the "what" category are sequenced.<sup>394</sup> For example, if the harmony of a song suggests the use of a specific scale

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<sup>386</sup> George Varga, "Charles McPherson: Ornithology with Strings," *JazzTimes*, May 2005, accessed July 19, 2015, <http://jazztimes.com/articles/15613-charles-mcpherson-ornithology-with-strings>.

<sup>387</sup> Charles McPherson, interview by author, San Diego, January 9, 2015.

<sup>388</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>389</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>390</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>391</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>392</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>393</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>394</sup> Joffe, "Charles McPherson on How to Practice Jazz."

when improvising, “where” refers to the order in which notes of that scale are organized. Thus, “where” is a variable factor.

“When” refers to the concept of rhythmic phrasing, and McPherson believes that it “very well might be, in terms of animation and creation, the most important thing when it comes to improvising.”<sup>395</sup> “When” describes not only the rhythmic construction of melodies, but also the rhythmic relationships among phrases in a solo. He states simply, “‘When’ is implying time and space.”<sup>396</sup> Like “where,” “when” is a variable factor, and he suggests that the two are “holding hands” in the creative process.<sup>397</sup>

McPherson has developed an exercise for practicing rhythmic phrasing in which the melodic content (“what”) is all 12 notes of the chromatic scale.<sup>398</sup> In this exercise, phrases are built predominantly on a consistent subdivision of the beat, such as eighth notes or sixteenth notes, though varying note lengths can be used throughout.<sup>399</sup> There is no preconceived key, meter, or underlying harmonic progression, and it is to be done while keeping a steady pulse on a metronome.<sup>400</sup> Since the melodic content is constructed from all twelve notes of the chromatic scale, he states that the goal of this exercise is to “rhythmically phrase whatever note(s) I want a million different ways.”<sup>401</sup> He further explains, “I’m approaching it as if I were a drummer,” as to avoid focusing on harmony and melodic content and to concentrate on rhythm and phrasing.<sup>402</sup> He adds that “thinking

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<sup>395</sup> Ibid.

<sup>396</sup> Charles McPherson, interview by author, San Diego, January 9, 2015.

<sup>397</sup> Joffe, “Charles McPherson on How to Practice Jazz.”

<sup>398</sup> Charles McPherson, interview by author, San Diego, January 9, 2015.

<sup>399</sup> Ibid.

<sup>400</sup> Ibid.

<sup>401</sup> Ibid.

<sup>402</sup> Charles McPherson, telephone interview by author, October 7, 2015.

like a drummer” requires the improviser to include accents within the line to provide tension and release, as explained in the second section of this chapter.<sup>403</sup>

Example 90 shows a transcribed excerpt of McPherson demonstrating this exercise.<sup>404</sup> Based on the above instructions, it is presented without a time signature, bar lines, or a chord progression. Accents have also been included to show the rhythmic structure McPherson creates in the absence of a time signature. Since there are no measures, accidentals in the melody are valid for the duration of each phrase (i.e. between rests). Additionally, as this example is played in a double-time swing feel, the sixteenth notes are swung and the eighth notes are played straight.

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<sup>403</sup> Ibid.

<sup>404</sup> This excerpt was transcribed from a demonstration played by McPherson during a personal interview on January 9, 2015.





Ex. 90. Exercise for practicing rhythmic phrasing.

McPherson suggests that a good way of beginning to approach this exercise is to choose a major scale and to think of melodies in terms of four-note phrases.<sup>405</sup> He cautions that because of the asymmetrical nature of the major scale, students will sometimes play phrases in which notes that were previously on downbeats now fall on upbeats.<sup>406</sup> Thus, “cognizance of the down(beat) is of utmost importance” because students must develop an awareness of how to properly align the notes in their phrases with the beat.<sup>407</sup> He advises that if students lose track of the beat within a phrase, they

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<sup>405</sup> Ibid.

<sup>406</sup> Ibid.

<sup>407</sup> Ibid.

should stop and reestablish the pulse before continuing.<sup>408</sup> He further adds that if students have difficulty playing with a good time feel, he will instruct them to begin all phrases on a downbeat.<sup>409</sup> He has observed that this not only helps students improve their time feel, but it helps them improve their ability to play over chord changes, an added benefit of beginning to organize their musical thoughts.<sup>410</sup>

In discussing how this practice regimen transfers to his improvisations and the performance of repertoire, McPherson states:

I can stop that (practice exercise) and then play a tune. ‘All the Things You Are,’ whatever, it doesn’t make any difference what the tune is, and then apply that same thing.<sup>411</sup>

He acknowledges that the ability to transfer this approach to improvising over repertoire is contingent on having a thorough knowledge of a song’s form and underlying harmonic progression:

You don’t even have to worry about (playing wrong notes) because you already know the tune. You do have to know the tune, you do have to know the structure. But then after that, that’s it.<sup>412</sup>

He further elaborates on his mindset when applying this technique to a song after it has been thoroughly learned:

The kind of mentation that’s giving me the creative statement at this moment has nothing to do with the harmony, has nothing to do with the melody, nothing to do with this A minor chord right there. It’s just something to do with how are you going to phrase the notes in that A minor chord.<sup>413</sup>

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<sup>408</sup> Ibid.

<sup>409</sup> Joffe, “Charles McPherson on How to Practice Jazz.”

<sup>410</sup> Ibid.

<sup>411</sup> Charles McPherson, interview by author, San Diego, January 9, 2015.

<sup>412</sup> Ibid.

<sup>413</sup> Ibid.

McPherson attributes the development of this pedagogical concept to a human desire to reconcile what is understood in the subconscious mind with what can be explained by the conscious mind.<sup>414</sup> He also points out that some of the greatest jazz musicians are those who have an intuitive understanding of what should be played while not necessarily being able to explain why.<sup>415</sup>

When learning a song, McPherson first plays through the written music and then usually makes an effort to commit it to memory, including the melody, harmony, and form.<sup>416</sup> He also believes that it is important to learn the lyrics of a song, stating that the process “broadens your understanding of what the tune is” and informs the musician of the “emotional meaning of what the tune is supposed to be.”<sup>417</sup> He notes that in terms of improvising, he has found “deep value in being very much informed by the melody,” particularly when he is performing works from the Great American Songbook.<sup>418</sup> He points out that this doesn’t mean he plays the melody “more” while he is improvising, but that the “connection in having the nuances of the melody be more informative” is more prominent.<sup>419</sup>

McPherson acknowledges that he used to approach improvising as a “dichotomy” between playing the melody to a song and then soloing over the chord changes.<sup>420</sup> Over time, however, he has come to believe that a better way to approach playing songs and

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<sup>414</sup> Ibid.

<sup>415</sup> Ibid. In this interview, McPherson cites Chet Baker, with whom he briefly associated professionally, as an example of someone who possessed an advanced level of phrasing but who did not demonstrate an advanced knowledge of jazz harmony.

<sup>416</sup> Charles McPherson, telephone interview by author, March 18, 2015.

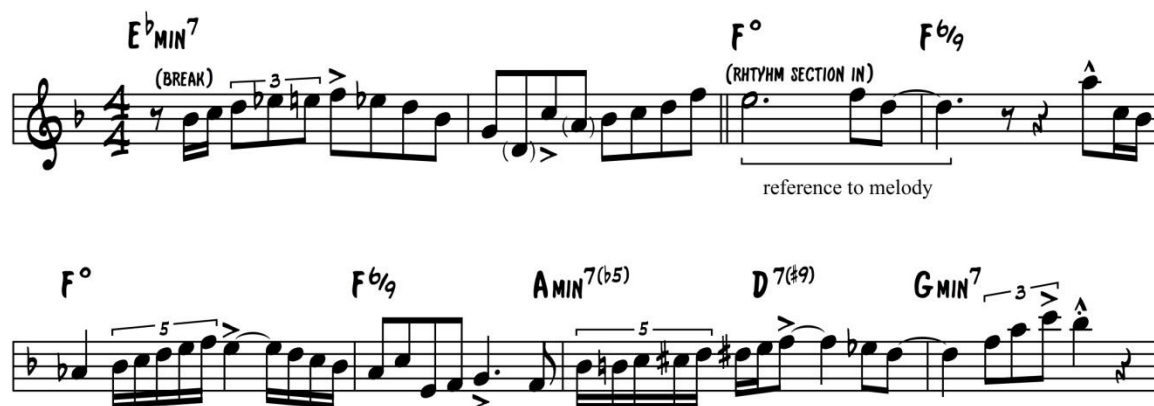
<sup>417</sup> “One Night Stand with the Big Bands.”

<sup>418</sup> Charles McPherson, telephone interview by author, March 18, 2015.

<sup>419</sup> Ibid.

<sup>420</sup> Ibid.

improvising over them is to “not think of the duality of it, but to think of it as one.”<sup>421</sup> He describes the melody of a song as a “frozen solo,” or “someone else’s rendition of the harmony.”<sup>422</sup> He likens the concept of respecting the composer’s melody while improvising over a song’s form to that of classical composer recapitulating themes within a piece as “part of the framework” of a piece of music, as in a sonata.<sup>423</sup> He states that composers create a “thematic continuity of ideas” over the course of a piece of music, and he believes that “the improviser is supposed to actually do the same thing” by letting the melody of a song inform the improvisation over its form.<sup>424</sup> In his solo on “Spring is Here,” he references the original melody at the beginning of both choruses of his solo, creating a sense of cohesiveness and a connection to the original composition. This is observed within the context of the surrounding musical material in examples 91 and 92.



Ex. 91. Reference to the melody of “Spring is Here” at the beginning of the first chorus. “Spring is Here,” mm. 1-8.

<sup>421</sup> Ibid.

<sup>422</sup> Ibid.

<sup>423</sup> Ibid.

<sup>424</sup> Ibid.

The image displays two staves of musical notation. The first staff begins with a B-flat major key signature and a 7/4 time signature. It features a melodic line with several eighth and sixteenth notes, some beamed together. Above the staff, the chords  $E^b_{MIN}7$ ,  $F^\circ$ , and  $F^{b/9}$  are indicated. A bracket below the staff, spanning the  $F^\circ$  and  $F^{b/9}$  chords, is labeled "reference to melody". The second staff continues the melodic line with the same rhythmic patterns. Above this staff, the chords  $F^\circ$ ,  $F^{b/9}$ ,  $A_{MIN}7(b5)$ ,  $D 7(\sharp 9)$ , and  $G_{MIN}7$  are indicated.

Ex. 92. Reference to the melody of “Spring is Here” at the beginning of the second chorus. “Spring is Here,” mm. 37-44.

Another outstanding feature of McPherson’s playing is the creation of phrases that are extraordinarily long. In example 93, an excerpt from his solo on “Evidence,” he begins a phrase on beat two of m. 74 that lasts through the downbeat of m. 85, the equivalent of 11 full measures.

1:53

**E MIN<sup>7</sup>** **A 7(b<sup>9</sup>)** **D MIN<sup>7</sup>** **G<sup>7</sup>**

phrase begins-  
m. 74, beat 2

**C** **C<sup>7</sup>** **F MAJ<sup>7</sup>** **B<sup>b7</sup>** **C** **G<sup>7</sup>**

**C MAJ<sup>7</sup>** **G MIN<sup>7</sup>** **C<sup>7</sup>**

**F MAJ<sup>7</sup>** **B<sup>b7</sup>** **C MAJ<sup>7</sup>** 2:02

phrase ends-  
m. 85, end of beat 1

Ex. 93. Extended phrase length at a fast tempo. “Evidence,” mm. 74-85.

In example 94, McPherson plays a phrase that lasts for 24 beats, or the equivalent of six full measures. Due to the slower tempo, however, its duration is 3 seconds longer than the above excerpt from “Evidence.”

The musical score is written on a single staff in 4/4 time. It consists of four lines of music. The first line contains the following chords: F<sup>MAJ</sup>7, E<sup>MIN</sup>7 (2:11), B<sup>b</sup>MIN<sup>9</sup>, and E<sup>b</sup>13. A bracket indicates the phrase begins at measure 37, beat 4. The second line contains A<sup>b</sup>MAJ, D<sup>MIN</sup>7, and D<sup>#</sup>13. The third line contains D<sup>MIN</sup>7, G<sup>7</sup>, and C<sup>MAJ</sup>. The fourth line contains A<sup>MAJ</sup>9 and ends at measure 44, beat 4. The score includes various musical notations such as eighth notes, quarter notes, and rests, with some notes marked with accents or slurs.

phrase begins-  
m. 37, beat 4

phrase ends-  
m. 44, end of beat 4

Ex. 94. Extended phrase length at a medium tempo. “Karen,” mm. 37-43.

In Grove Music Online, Owen Jander defines tessitura as

A term used to describe the part of a vocal (or less often instrumental) compass in which a piece of music lies – whether high or low, etc. The tessitura of a piece is not decided by the extremes of its range, but rather by which part of the range is most used.<sup>425</sup>

McPherson applies the concept of tessitura in his approaches to saxophone playing and improvisation. He again compares the saxophone to the human voice, pointing out that it has a limited range in which the instrument “sings.”<sup>426</sup> While he does not provide a specific range of pitches that delineate this area of the instrument for him,

<sup>425</sup> Owen Jander, “Tessitura,” *Grove Music Online*, accessed June 6, 2015, Oxford Music Online.

<sup>426</sup> Charles McPherson, interview by author, San Diego, January 9, 2015.

he explains that it centers approximately around low A on the alto saxophone.<sup>427</sup> This note corresponds with a middle C on the piano and falls comfortably within the range of a standard male tenor voice. In example 95, an excerpt from a phrase in his solo on “Evidence,” he limits the tessitura of his improvised melody to the middle register of the saxophone, keeping the range within an octave and never playing more than a tritone away from low A in either direction.



Ex. 95. Limited tessitura within an improvised line. “Evidence,” mm. 33-36.

McPherson compares the practice of improvising a melody within a specific register to an individual singing a part in a vocal arrangement.<sup>428</sup> In both cases, the musician performs melodies that fit an underlying harmonic progression and fall within a limited range of pitches.<sup>429</sup> He recommends developing the ability to find this vocal register of the saxophone and being able to improvise over any harmonic progression while staying within that range.<sup>430</sup> This frequently involves altering the shape of a melody in order to not overstep the bounds of the prescribed range in which one is trying remain.<sup>431</sup>

In his teaching, McPherson encourages students to occasionally limit the range of the saxophone in which they are improvising as a means of creating variety in their

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<sup>427</sup> Ibid.

<sup>428</sup> Ibid.

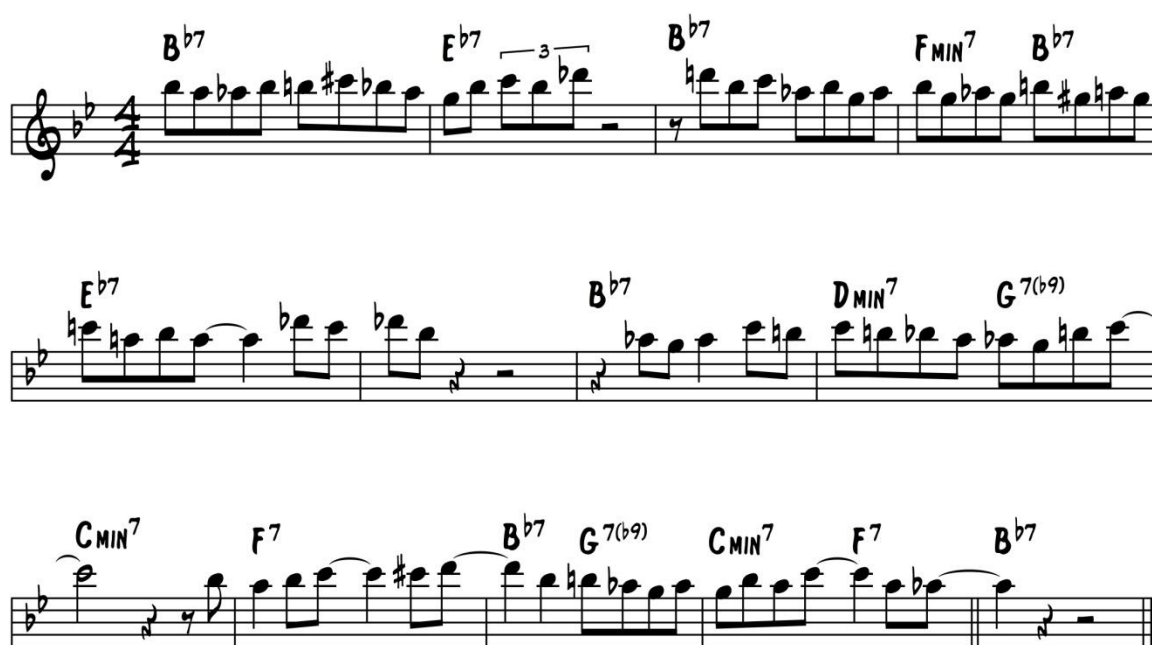
<sup>429</sup> Ibid.

<sup>430</sup> Ibid.

<sup>431</sup> Ibid.



playing.<sup>432</sup> For example, he instructs students to practice improvising exclusively within one octave or within another prescribed range on the instrument.<sup>433</sup> Playing in such a way encourages students to improvise more creatively, instead of relying on musical material they might play out of habit or comfort.<sup>434</sup> It also helps students gain advanced technical knowledge in the area of the instrument on which they are focusing.<sup>435</sup> Example 96 demonstrates this practice technique, limiting the range from high G to high (palm key) D.



Ex. 96. Sample practice exercise limiting improvisation to within a range of high G to high D.

McPherson emphasizes that when performing, it is important to “play the moment.”<sup>436</sup> While he acknowledges that jazz musicians practice to develop a repertoire of musical ideas to draw from when they perform, he believes that previously

<sup>432</sup> Ibid.

<sup>433</sup> Ibid.

<sup>434</sup> Ibid.

<sup>435</sup> Ibid.

<sup>436</sup> Ibid.

unrehearsed material played by the improviser, which he calls “stuff that comes out of the sky,” is often the most satisfying part of a performance.<sup>437</sup> He states that as musicians continue to build up their knowledge of musical ideas from which to draw when they improvise, it becomes easier for them to come up with original ideas.<sup>438</sup>

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<sup>437</sup> Ibid.

<sup>438</sup> Ibid.

## CHAPTER VI

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Charles McPherson's rich musical style reflects a wide range of influences. His early musical training in Detroit, including his study with Barry Harris and his exposure to many of the great jazz musicians in that city during the 1950s, provided him with artistic and philosophical foundations upon which he has continued to build throughout his career. After moving to New York in 1959, his style continued to develop as a result of his lengthy tenure with Charles Mingus, his extensive work as a bandleader and sideman in various groups, and his interaction with other influential musicians. Since moving to California in 1978, McPherson has continued to record and perform regularly, further developing his musical style while establishing himself as a prominent composer and educator.

McPherson's conception of sound as an extension of his voice guides his approaches to tone production, articulation, and vibrato. Outstanding rhythmic aspects of his playing include flexibility of phrasing in relation to the beat, the use of multiple rhythmic values within phrases, manipulation of simple melodic cells through complex rhythms, and the creation of rhythmic structure through strategic placement of accents. The melodic and harmonic content of his improvisations features unique applications of traditional elements of the jazz language and an intervallic approach to melodic construction that results in harmonic freedom. Finally, his solos are organized through an

individual approach to melodic and rhythmic phrasing, thorough knowledge of a song's melodic, harmonic, formal, and lyrical content, and consideration of instrumental range.

Charles McPherson is a singularly important figure in the history of jazz. His artistry represents a deep commitment to self-expression that continues to inspire musicians, listeners, and students throughout the world. This study documents his significance by presenting detailed information about his career and musical style. The historical content within can serve as a reference source for further study of his music and the music of artists he has been associated with or influenced by in his career. The stylistic analysis, which provides in-depth discussion of his musical vocabulary, examples of application, and practice suggestions, can be used to guide and inspire individual study and pedagogy in the areas of saxophone technique and jazz improvisation.

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## APPENDIX A

### ARTICULATION NOMENCLATURE

Articulation markings used in the transcriptions are defined below. These markings are influenced by the articulation guide presented in *Jazz Pedagogy: The Jazz Educator's Handbook and Resource Guide*, by J. Richard Dunscomb and Willie L. Hill, Jr.<sup>439</sup>



Parentheses indicate a “ghosted” note, which is played much softer, or is barely audible, in comparison to other notes at a given dynamic level.



A regular accent indicates a note that is played with a stronger attack and with a normal duration.



A marcato accent indicates that a note is played with a stronger attack and with a shorter than normal duration.

---

<sup>439</sup> Dunscomb and Hill, Jr., *Jazz Pedagogy*, 70.



A tenuto marking indicates a note that is held for its entire value, occasionally in an exaggerated fashion.



A staccato marking indicates that a note is held for a shorter duration than its normal value but is not accented.



A note with both a marcato and a staccato is played with a stronger attack and for a duration that is much shorter than normal.



A scoop indicates that a note is approached using a pitch bend from below. It is located directly to the left of the note head.



A short fall indicates that a note is ended by lowering the pitch as the sound decays.



A muted note indicates that a pitch is muffled relative to an adjacent note of the same pitch with a more open sound.



An open note indicates that a pitch is played with a fuller tone relative to an adjacent note of the same pitch with a more muffled sound.



A growl tone is one that is produced while the player produces a growling sound from the throat while playing.



A fall indicates that a note is ended by playing descending pitches as the note decays.

## APPENDIX B

### CHORD SYMBOL NOMENCLATURE



The following chart lists chord symbols used in the transcriptions as they relate to various chord qualities. Chord symbols have been notated in the key of C but are applicable to all keys.

<u>Chord Quality</u>	<u>Symbol</u>
Major	<b>C</b>
	<b>C<sup>ADD #11</sup></b>
	<b>C<sup>b</sup></b>
	<b>C<sup>MAJ<sup>b</sup></sup></b>
	<b>C<sup>b/9</sup></b>
	<b>C<sup>MAJ<sup>7</sup></sup></b>
	<b>C<sup>MAJ<sup>7(#11)</sup></sup></b>
	<b>C<sup>MAJ<sup>9</sup></sup></b>
Dominant	<b>C<sup>7</sup></b>
	<b>C<sup>7(b9)</sup></b>
	<b>C<sup>7(#9)</sup></b>
	<b>C<sup>7(#11)</sup></b>
	<b>C<sup>7(#5)</sup></b>
	<b>C<sup>7<sup>ALT</sup></sup></b>
	<b>C<sup>13</sup></b>
	<b>C<sup>13(#11)</sup></b>
	<b>C<sup>7<sub>SUS</sub></sup></b>

Minor	$C_{MIN}$
	$C_{MIN}^6$
	$C_{MIN}^7$
	$C_{MIN}^9$
Half-Diminished	$C_{MIN}^{7(b5)}$
Diminished	$C^\circ$
	$C^{\circ 7}$
	$C^{\circ(MAJ7)}$

## APPENDIX C

## TRANSCRIPTION INDEX

Solos are presented in chronological order by recording date. Personnel listing and album information are provided on the transcriptions.

“Si Si,” Charlie Parker	139
“From This Moment On,” Cole Porter	142
“Horizons,” Charles McPherson	145
“I Get a Kick Out of You,” Cole Porter	147
“For Heaven’s Sake,” Elise Bretton, Sherman Edwards, and Donald Meyer	153
“Desafinado,” Antonio Carlos Jobim and Newton Mendonca	159
“Blues for Mac,” Charles McPherson	164
“Karen,” Charles McPherson	168
“Evidence,” Thelonious Monk	172
“Spring is Here,” Richard Rodgers and Lorenz Hart/arr. Charles McPherson	176

## APPENDIX D

## TRANSCRIPTIONS

Charles McPherson's alto saxophone solo on:

## Si Si

album: *Bebop Revisited!* (1964)personnel: Charles McPherson - Alto Saxophone;  
Carmell Jones - Trumpet; Barry Harris - Piano;  
Nelson Boyd - Bass; Al Heath - Drums

comp. Charlie Parker

Medium Up Swing

♩=220

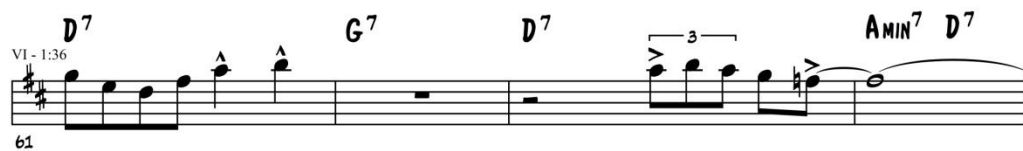
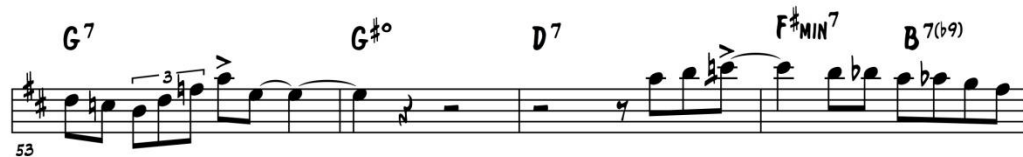
I - 0:31

First system of musical notation (measures 1-8). The key signature is two sharps (F# and C#), and the time signature is 4/4. The notation includes various chords: D<sup>7</sup>, E<sup>MIN</sup>7, A<sup>7</sup>, D<sup>7</sup>, A<sup>MIN</sup>7, D<sup>7</sup>, G<sup>7</sup>, G<sup>#o</sup>, D<sup>7</sup> (with a triplet), F<sup>#MIN</sup>7, and B<sup>7(b9)</sup>. The melody features eighth and sixteenth notes with accents and slurs.

Second system of musical notation (measures 9-16). The notation continues with chords: E<sup>MIN</sup>7, A<sup>7</sup>, D<sup>7</sup>, E<sup>MIN</sup>7, A<sup>7</sup>, D<sup>7</sup>, E<sup>MIN</sup>7, A<sup>7</sup>, D<sup>7</sup>, E<sup>MIN</sup>7, A<sup>7</sup>, D<sup>7</sup>, A<sup>MIN</sup>7, D<sup>7</sup>, and A<sup>MIN</sup>7. The melody includes triplet markings and slurs.

Third system of musical notation (measures 17-24). The notation continues with chords: G<sup>7</sup>, G<sup>#o</sup>, D<sup>7</sup>, F<sup>#MIN</sup>7, B<sup>7(b9)</sup>, E<sup>MIN</sup>7, A<sup>7</sup>, D<sup>7</sup>, E<sup>MIN</sup>7, A<sup>7</sup>, D<sup>7</sup>, A<sup>MIN</sup>7, D<sup>7</sup>, and A<sup>MIN</sup>7. The melody includes triplet markings and slurs.

Fourth system of musical notation (measures 25-32). The notation continues with chords: G<sup>7</sup>, G<sup>#o</sup>, D<sup>7</sup>, F<sup>#MIN</sup>7, B<sup>7(b9)</sup>, and D<sup>7</sup>. The melody includes triplet markings and slurs.



**G<sup>7</sup>** **G<sup>♯°</sup>** **D<sup>7</sup>** **F<sup>♯</sup>MIN<sup>7</sup>** **B<sup>7(b9)</sup>**  
 65

**E<sup>MIN</sup>7** **A<sup>7</sup>** **D<sup>7</sup>** **E<sup>MIN</sup>7** **A<sup>7</sup>**  
 69

**D<sup>7</sup>** **G<sup>7</sup>** **D<sup>7</sup>** **A<sup>MIN</sup>7** **D<sup>7</sup>**  
 VII - 1:49  
 73

**G<sup>7</sup>** **G<sup>♯°</sup>** **D<sup>7</sup>** **F<sup>♯</sup>MIN<sup>7</sup>** **B<sup>7(b9)</sup>**  
 77

**E<sup>MIN</sup>7** **A<sup>7</sup>** **D<sup>7</sup>** **E<sup>MIN</sup>7** **A<sup>7</sup>**  
 81

**D<sup>7</sup>** **G<sup>7</sup>** **D<sup>7</sup>** **A<sup>MIN</sup>7** **D<sup>7</sup>**  
 VIII - 2:02  
 85

**G<sup>7</sup>** **G<sup>♯°</sup>** **D<sup>7</sup>** **F<sup>♯</sup>MIN<sup>7</sup>** **B<sup>7(b9)</sup>**  
 89

**E<sup>MIN</sup>7** **A<sup>7</sup>** **D<sup>7</sup>** **E<sup>MIN</sup>7** **A<sup>7</sup>** **D<sup>7</sup>**  
 93



Charles McPherson's alto saxophone solo on:

personnel: Charles McPherson - Alto Saxophone;  
 Cedar Walton - Piano; Pat Martino - Guitar;  
 Peck Morrison - Bass;  
 Lennie McBrowne - Drums

# From This Moment On

album: *From This Moment On* (1968)

Uptempo Swing

comp. Cole Porter

♩=272

1 - 1:59

6

10

14

18

22

26

30

FROM THIS MOMENT ON (from "Out Of This World")

Words and Music by COLE PORTER

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Charles McPherson's alto saxophone solo on:

# Horizons

album: *Horizons* (1968)

personnel: Charles McPherson - Alto Saxophone;  
Cedar Walton - Piano; Pat Martino - Guitar;  
Nasir Hafiz - Vibes; Walter Booker - Bass  
Billy Higgins - Drums

comp. Charles McPherson

Medium Up Swing

♩=236

I - 1:02

5

9

13

17

21

25

29

33

$G^{MIN}$   $G^{MIN}/F^{\#}$   $G^{MIN7}$   $C^7$

37

$F^b$   $B^{MIN7(b5)}$   $E^{7(b9)}$

41

$A^{MAJ7}$   $G^{MAJ7}$   $C^{MAJ7}$   $B^b^{MAJ7}$

45

$E^b^{MAJ7}$   $A^{7(b9)}$

49

$D^{MAJ7}$   $D^{MIN7(b5)}$   $G^{13}$

53

$C^{MAJ7}$   $A^{MIN7}$   $D^{7(\sharp 11)}$   $D^{MIN7(b5)}$   $E^{7(b9)}$   $A^{MAJ7}$

Detailed description: This musical score is in G major (one sharp). It consists of six staves of music, numbered 33 to 53. The notation includes various chords and melodic lines. The chords are:  $G^{MIN}$ ,  $G^{MIN}/F^{\#}$ ,  $G^{MIN7}$ ,  $C^7$ ,  $F^b$ ,  $B^{MIN7(b5)}$ ,  $E^{7(b9)}$ ,  $A^{MAJ7}$ ,  $G^{MAJ7}$ ,  $C^{MAJ7}$ ,  $B^b^{MAJ7}$ ,  $E^b^{MAJ7}$ ,  $A^{7(b9)}$ ,  $D^{MAJ7}$ ,  $D^{MIN7(b5)}$ ,  $G^{13}$ ,  $C^{MAJ7}$ ,  $A^{MIN7}$ ,  $D^{7(\sharp 11)}$ ,  $D^{MIN7(b5)}$ ,  $E^{7(b9)}$ , and  $A^{MAJ7}$ . The melodic lines are written in a treble clef and include various rhythmic values and accidentals.

Charles McPherson's alto saxophone solo on:  
**I Get a Kick Out of You**

personnel: Charles McPherson - Alto Saxophone;  
 Barry Harris - Piano; Buster Williams - Bass  
 Roy Brooks - Drums

album: *McPherson's Mood* (1969)

comp. Cole Porter

Uptempo Swing

$\text{♩} = 276$

1 - 2:47

The musical score is written for alto saxophone in 4/4 time. It begins with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a tempo of 276 beats per minute. The score is divided into measures, with measure numbers 1, 5, 9, 13, 17, 21, 25, and 29 indicated. Chords are written above the staff: Dmin7, G7, Cmaj7, Emin7, and A7(b9). The melody features various rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and includes musical notations such as triplets, slurs, and accents.

I GET A KICK OUT OF YOU (from "Anything Goes")

Words and Music by COLE PORTER

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**G<sup>MIN7</sup>**  
 33

**G<sup>MIN7</sup>** **C<sup>7</sup>** **E<sup>MIN7(b5)</sup>** **A<sup>7</sup>**  
 37

**D<sup>MIN7</sup>** **B<sup>MIN7(b5)</sup>** **E<sup>7ALT</sup>** **A<sup>7ALT</sup>**  
 41

**D<sup>7</sup>** **D<sup>MIN7</sup>** **G<sup>7</sup>**  
 45

**D<sup>MIN7</sup>** **G<sup>7</sup>** **C<sup>MAJ7</sup>** **E<sup>MIN7</sup>** **A<sup>7(b9)</sup>**  
 49

**D<sup>MIN7</sup>** **G<sup>7</sup>** **C<sup>MAJ7</sup>** **A<sup>7</sup>**  
 53

**D<sup>MIN7</sup>** **G<sup>7</sup>** **E<sup>MIN7</sup>** **A<sup>7(b9)</sup>**  
 57

**D<sup>MIN7</sup>** **G<sup>7</sup>** **C<sup>MAJ7</sup>** **E<sup>MIN7</sup>** **A<sup>7</sup>**  
 61



II - 3:43

65

69

73

77

81

85

89

93

Chord symbols:  $D_{MIN}^7$ ,  $G^7$ ,  $C_{MAJ}^7$ ,  $E_{MIN}^7$ ,  $A^{7(b9)}$

Markings: (GROWL), 3, 3



**G<sup>MIN7</sup>**  
 97

**G<sup>MIN7</sup>**      **C<sup>7</sup>**      **E<sup>MIN7(b5)</sup>**      **A<sup>7</sup>**  
 101

**D<sup>MIN7</sup>**      **B<sup>MIN7(b5)</sup>**      **E<sup>7ALT</sup>**      **A<sup>7ALT</sup>**  
 105

**D<sup>7</sup>**      **D<sup>MIN7</sup>**      **G<sup>7</sup>**  
 109

**D<sup>MIN7</sup>**      **G<sup>7</sup>**      **C<sup>MAJ7</sup>**      **E<sup>MIN7</sup>**      **A<sup>7(b9)</sup>**  
 113

**D<sup>MIN7</sup>**      **G<sup>7</sup>**      **C<sup>MAJ7</sup>**      **A<sup>7</sup>**  
 117

**D<sup>MIN7</sup>**      **G<sup>7</sup>**      **E<sup>MIN7</sup>**      **A<sup>7(b9)</sup>**  
 121

**D<sup>MIN7</sup>**      **G<sup>7</sup>**      **C<sup>MAJ7</sup>**      **E<sup>MIN7</sup>**      **A<sup>7</sup>**  
 125

III - 4:40

129

133

137  
(GRONL)

141

145

149

153

157

Chords:  $D^{MIN7}$ ,  $G^7$ ,  $C^{MAJ7}$ ,  $E^{MIN7}$ ,  $A^{7(b9)}$ ,  $G^7$ ,  $E^7$ ,  $A^{7(b9)}$

**G<sup>MIN7</sup>**  
 161

**G<sup>MIN7</sup>**      **C<sup>7</sup>**      **E<sup>MIN7(b5)</sup>**      **A<sup>7</sup>**  
 165

**D<sup>MIN7</sup>**      **B<sup>MIN7(b5)</sup>**      **E<sup>7ALT</sup>**      **A<sup>7ALT</sup>**  
 169

**D<sup>7</sup>**      **D<sup>MIN7</sup>**      **G<sup>7</sup>**  
 173

**D<sup>MIN7</sup>**      **G<sup>7</sup>**      **C<sup>MAJ7</sup>**      **E<sup>MIN7</sup>**      **A<sup>7(b9)</sup>**  
 177

**D<sup>MIN7</sup>**      **G<sup>7</sup>**      **C<sup>MAJ7</sup>**      **A<sup>7</sup>**  
 181

**D<sup>MIN7</sup>**      **G<sup>7</sup>**      **E<sup>MIN7</sup>**      **A<sup>7(b9)</sup>**  
 185

**D<sup>MIN7</sup>**      **G<sup>7</sup>**      **C<sup>MAJ7</sup>**      **E<sup>MIN7</sup>**      **A<sup>7</sup>**      **D<sup>MIN7</sup>**  
 189

Charles McPherson's alto saxophone solo on:

# For Heaven's Sake

album: *Siku Ya Bibi* (1972)
 personnel: Charles McPherson - Alto Saxophone  
 Barry Harris - Piano; Earl Dunbar - Guitar;  
 Sam Jones - Bass; Leroy Williams - Drums

 comp. Elise Bretton, Sherman Edwards,  
 and Donald Meyer

Ballad

♩=56

1 - 0:14

For Heaven's Sake  
 Words and Music by Don Meyer, Elise Bretton and Sherman Edwards  
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16 **AMAJ<sup>7</sup>**

17 **GMIN<sup>7</sup> C<sup>7</sup><sub>sus</sub> C<sup>7</sup> FMAJ<sup>7</sup>**

19 **GMIN<sup>7</sup> (GROWL) C<sup>7</sup><sub>sus</sub> C<sup>7</sup> FMAJ<sup>7</sup> (GROWL)**

21 **AMIN AMIN/G F<sup>#</sup>MIN<sup>7</sup>(b5) FMAJ<sup>7</sup>(#11) BMIN<sup>7</sup>(b5)**

24 **E<sup>7</sup>(b9) BMIN<sup>7</sup>(b5) E<sup>7</sup>(b9)**

26 **AMAJ<sup>7</sup> F<sup>#</sup>7(b9) (GROWL) BMIN<sup>7</sup> E<sup>7</sup> (GROWL)**

28 **B<sup>b</sup>MIN<sup>7</sup> E<sup>b</sup>7**

29 **DMIN<sup>7</sup>**

30 **C<sup>#</sup>MIN<sup>7</sup>** (3) (GROWL) **C<sup>o</sup>7** (3) (5)

31 **BMIN<sup>7</sup>** (GROWL) (3) **E<sup>7</sup>(b9)** (3) (6) (6)

32 **A<sup>MAJ</sup>7** (3) **F<sup>#</sup>7** (3) (3)

33 **BMIN<sup>7</sup>(b5)** **E<sup>7</sup>(b9)** (GROWL) (3)

34 **A<sup>MAJ</sup>7** **F<sup>#</sup>7(b9)** (3) (12)

35 **BMIN<sup>7</sup>** (11) **E<sup>7</sup>** (10) (6)

36 **B<sup>b</sup>MIN<sup>7</sup>** (7) **E<sup>b</sup>7** (9) (3)

37 **DMIN<sup>7</sup>** (3) **C<sup>#</sup>MIN<sup>7</sup>** (3) **C<sup>o</sup>7** (3)

II - 2:28



39 **B<sub>min</sub>7** **E7(b9)** **A Maj7** **F#7** (GROWL)

41 **B<sub>min</sub>7(b5)** **E7(b9)** **A Maj7** **F#7(b9)** (GROWL)

43 **B<sub>min</sub>7** **E7** (GROWL)

44 **B<sup>b</sup>min7** **E<sup>b</sup>7**

45 **Dmin7**

46 **C#min7** **C°7** **Bmin7** **E7(b9)**

48 **A Maj7**

49 **Gmin7** **C<sup>7</sup> sus** **C7** **F Maj7**

51 **G<sup>MIN</sup>7** (GROWL) - - **C<sup>7</sup><sub>SUS</sub>** **C<sup>7</sup>** 10

52 **F<sup>MAJ</sup>7** 15 5

53 **A<sup>MIN</sup>** **A<sup>MIN</sup>/G** 3 **F<sup>#</sup><sup>MIN</sup>7(b5)** **F<sup>MAJ</sup>7(#11)** 3

55 **D<sup>MIN</sup>7** 3 **B<sup>MIN</sup>7** **E<sup>7</sup>** 3

57 **B<sup>MIN</sup>7(b5)** **E<sup>7</sup>(b9)** 3 **A<sup>MAJ</sup>7** **F<sup>#</sup>7(b9)**

59 **B<sup>MIN</sup>7** **E<sup>7</sup>**

60 **B<sup>b</sup><sup>MIN</sup>7** **E<sup>b</sup>7** 3

61 **D<sup>MIN</sup>7** 5



62  $C^{\sharp}MIN^7$   $C^{\circ 7}$

63 (CADENZA)  $B^{\flat}MIN^7$  (GROWL) 3 5

64  $F^7$  5

65  $B^{\flat}MAJ^7(\sharp 11)$  6

67 12

Detailed description: This musical score is for guitar, spanning measures 62 to 67. It is written in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). Measure 62 features a  $C^{\sharp}MIN^7$  chord and a  $C^{\circ 7}$  chord, with a five-finger scale run. Measure 63 is marked '(CADENZA)' and features a  $B^{\flat}MIN^7$  chord, a 'GROWL' effect indicated by a dashed line, and a triplet of eighth notes followed by a five-finger scale run. Measure 64 features an  $F^7$  chord and a five-finger scale run. Measure 65 features a  $B^{\flat}MAJ^7(\sharp 11)$  chord and a six-finger scale run. Measure 67 features a twelve-finger scale run. The score includes various musical notations such as accidentals, ties, and fingering numbers.

Charles McPherson's alto saxophone solo on:

# Desafinado

album: *Live in Tokyo* (1976)personnel: Charles McPherson - Alto Saxophone;  
Barry Harris - Piano; Sam Jones - Bass  
Leroy Williams - Drumscomp. Antonio Carlos Jobim  
and Newton Mendonça

Samba

 $\text{♩} = 124$ 

1 - 1:47

Chords and measures:

- Measure 1:  $A^7$
- Measure 2:  $D^{MAJ7}$
- Measure 3:  $E^7(\sharp 11)$  (GROWL)
- Measure 4:  $E^{MIN7}$
- Measure 5:  $A^7$
- Measure 6:  $F^{\sharp MIN} 7(\flat 5)$
- Measure 7:  $B^7(\flat 9)$
- Measure 8:  $E^{MIN7}$
- Measure 9:  $F^{\sharp 7}(\flat 9)$
- Measure 10:  $B^7$
- Measure 11:  $B^7(\flat 9)$
- Measure 12:  $E^7(\flat 9)$
- Measure 13:  $E^{\flat MAJ7}$
- Measure 14:  $A^7(\flat 9)$
- Measure 15:  $D^{MAJ7}$
- Measure 16:  $E^7(\sharp 11)$
- Measure 17:  $E^{MIN7}$
- Measure 18:  $A^7$
- Measure 19:  $F^{\sharp MIN} 7(\flat 5)$
- Measure 20:  $B^7(\flat 9)$
- Measure 21:  $E^{MIN7}$
- Measure 22:  $B^{\flat MIN} 6$
- Measure 23:  $D^{MAJ7}$
- Measure 24:  $C^{\sharp 7}$
- Measure 25:  $F^{\sharp MAJ7}$
- Measure 26:  $G^{\circ 7}$
- Measure 27:  $G^{\sharp MIN7}$
- Measure 28:  $C^{\sharp 7}$
- Measure 29:  $C^{\sharp 7}$
- Measure 30:  $C^{\sharp 7}$



E<sup>7</sup> E<sup>MIN7</sup> A<sup>7</sup> D<sup>6</sup> A<sup>7</sup>

66

II - 2:54 D<sup>MAJ7</sup> E<sup>7(♯11)</sup>

70

E<sup>MIN7</sup> A<sup>7</sup> F<sup>♯MIN7(♭5)</sup> B<sup>7(♭9)</sup>

74

E<sup>MIN7</sup> F<sup>♯7(♭9)</sup> B<sup>7</sup> B<sup>7(♭9)</sup>

78

E<sup>7(♭9)</sup> E<sup>♭MAJ7</sup> A<sup>7(♭9)</sup>

82

D<sup>MAJ7</sup> E<sup>7(♯11)</sup>

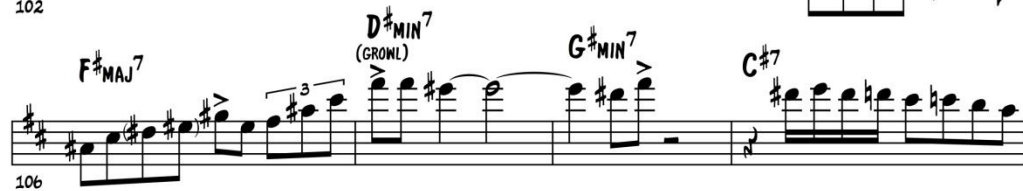
86

E<sup>MIN7</sup> A<sup>7</sup> F<sup>♯MIN7(♭5)</sup> B<sup>7(♭9)</sup>

90

E<sup>MIN7</sup> B<sup>♭MIN6</sup> D<sup>MAJ7</sup> C<sup>♯7</sup>

94



130

134

Chords:  $E^7$ ,  $C^9$ ,  $E^7$ ,  $E_{MIN}^7$ ,  $A^7$ ,  $D^6$ ,  $A^7$ ,  $D_{MAJ}^7$

The musical score consists of two staves. The first staff, starting at measure 130, is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). It contains four measures of music. The first measure has a melodic line with eighth notes and a slur, with an  $E^7$  chord above it. The second measure has a melodic line with eighth notes and a slur, with a  $C^9$  chord above it. The third and fourth measures continue the melodic line. The second staff, starting at measure 134, is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). It contains five measures of music. The first measure has a melodic line with eighth notes and a slur, with an  $E^7$  chord above it. The second measure has a melodic line with eighth notes and a slur, with an  $E_{MIN}^7$  chord above it. The third measure has a melodic line with eighth notes and a slur, with an  $A^7$  chord above it. The fourth measure has a melodic line with eighth notes and a slur, with a  $D^6$  chord above it. The fifth measure has a melodic line with eighth notes and a slur, with an  $A^7$  chord above it. The sixth measure has a melodic line with eighth notes and a slur, with a  $D_{MAJ}^7$  chord above it. The score ends with a double bar line.

Charles McPherson's alto saxophone solo on:

# Blues for Mac

personnel: Charles McPherson - Alto Saxophone;  
 Alan Broadbent - Piano; Jeffery Littleton - Bass  
 Charles McPherson, Jr. - Drums

album: *Follow the Bouncing Ball* (1989)

comp. Charles McPherson

Medium Slow Blues

♩=84

I - 0:36

1

3

5

7

9

11

13

15

**D<sup>7</sup>**

17

**A<sup>7</sup>**

19

**C<sup>#</sup>MIN<sup>7</sup>** **F<sup>#</sup>7(b9)**

20

**BMIN<sup>7</sup>** **E<sup>7</sup>**

21

**A<sup>7</sup>** **F<sup>#</sup>7** **BMIN<sup>7</sup>** **E<sup>7</sup>**

23

III - 1:45 **A<sup>7</sup>** **D<sup>7</sup>**

25

**A<sup>7</sup>**

27

**D<sup>7</sup>**

29



31  $A^7$   $C^{\#MIN^7}$   $F^{\#7(b9)}$

33  $B^{MIN^7}$   $E^7$

35  $A^7$   $F^{\#7}$   $B^{MIN^7}$   $E^7$   $A^7$  IV - 2:19

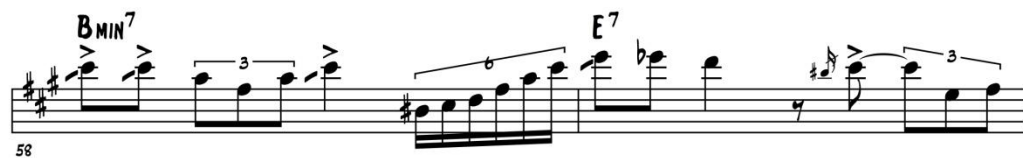
38  $D^7$   $A^7$

40  $D^7$

42 3 10 10

43  $A^7$  6 6 3 3

44  $C^{\#MIN^7}$   $F^{\#7(b9)}$   $B^{MIN^7}$  3 3 5



Charles McPherson's alto saxophone solo on:

# Karen

album: *First Flight Out* (1994)personnel: Charles McPherson - Alto Saxophone  
Michael Weiss - Piano; Peter Washington - Bass  
Victor Lewis - Drums

comp. Charles McPherson

Medium Swing

♩=124

1 - 1:01

The musical score is written for alto saxophone in 4/4 time, with a tempo of 124 beats per minute. The key signature is one sharp (F#), indicating the key of D major. The score consists of 18 measures, organized into nine staves. Chord symbols are placed above the corresponding measures. The melody features various rhythmic patterns, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and includes triplet markings (indicated by a '3' over a group of notes). Measure numbers 1, 3, 6, 8, 11, 14, 16, and 18 are indicated at the start of their respective staves.

Chord symbols and measure numbers:

- Staff 1: CMAJ<sup>7</sup> (1), C (3)
- Staff 2: AMAJ<sup>7</sup> (6), DMIN<sup>7</sup> (8), EMIN<sup>7</sup> (10), FMAJ<sup>7</sup> (11), EMIN<sup>7</sup> (12)
- Staff 3: B<sup>b</sup>MIN<sup>9</sup> (14), E<sup>b</sup>13 (15), A<sup>b</sup>MAJ<sup>7</sup> (16)
- Staff 4: DMIN<sup>7</sup> (18), D<sup>#</sup>13 (19), DMIN<sup>7</sup> (20), G<sup>7</sup> (21), C (22)
- Staff 5: AMAJ<sup>9</sup> (24), DMIN<sup>7</sup> (25), EMIN<sup>7</sup> (26), FMAJ<sup>7</sup> (27), EMIN<sup>7</sup> (28)
- Staff 6: B<sup>b</sup>MIN<sup>9</sup> (30), E<sup>b</sup>13 (31), A<sup>b</sup>MAJ<sup>7</sup> (32)
- Staff 7: DMIN<sup>7</sup> (34), G<sup>7</sup> (35), C<sup>b</sup>/9 (36), B<sup>13</sup> (37)
- Staff 8: E (39), F<sup>#</sup>MIN<sup>7</sup> (40), B<sup>7</sup> (41)

E  
 20  
 A MIN<sup>7</sup>  
 D<sup>7</sup>  
 G MAJ<sup>7</sup>  
 B<sup>b7</sup>  
 E<sup>b</sup> MAJ<sup>7</sup>  
 A<sup>b7</sup>(#11)  
 22  
 D MIN<sup>7</sup>  
 D<sup>#13</sup>  
 D MIN<sup>7</sup>  
 G<sup>7</sup>  
 C MAJ<sup>7</sup>  
 24  
 A MAJ<sup>7</sup>  
 D MIN<sup>7</sup>  
 E MIN<sup>7</sup>  
 27  
 F MIN<sup>7</sup>  
 B<sup>b7</sup>  
 E<sup>b</sup> MAJ<sup>7</sup>  
 A<sup>b</sup> MAJ<sup>7</sup>  
 29  
 C<sup>#7</sup>(#11)  
 C MAJ<sup>7</sup>  
 32  
 C  
 A MAJ<sup>7</sup>  
 34  
 D MIN<sup>7</sup>  
 E MIN<sup>7</sup>  
 F MAJ<sup>7</sup>  
 E MIN<sup>7</sup>  
 B<sup>b</sup> MIN<sup>9</sup>  
 E<sup>b13</sup>  
 36

39  $A^{\flat}MAJ^7$   $D^{MIN^7}$   $D^{\sharp 13}$

41  $D^{MIN^7}$   $G^7$   $C$

43  $A^{MAJ^9}$   $D^{MIN^7}$   $E^{MIN^7}$   $F^{MAJ^7}$   $E^{MIN^7}$

46  $B^{\flat}MIN^9$   $E^{\flat 13}$   $A^{\flat}MAJ^7$

48  $D^{MIN^7}$   $G^7$   $C^{\flat 9}$   $B^{13}$   $E$

51  $F^{\sharp}MIN^7$   $B^7$   $E$

53  $A^{MIN^7}$   $D^7$   $G^{MAJ^7}$   $B^{\flat 7}$

55  $E^{\flat}MAJ^7$   $A^{\flat 7(\sharp 11)}$   $D^{MIN^7}$   $D^{\sharp 13}$

57

$D^{MIN7}$   $G^7$   $C^{MAJ7}$   $A^{MAJ7}$

60

$D^{MIN7}$   $E^{MIN7}$   $F^{MIN7}$   $B^b7$   $E^b^{MAJ7}$

63

$A^b^{MAJ7}$   $C^{\sharp7}(\sharp11)$

65

$C^{MAJ7}$   $C$

Detailed description: This musical score is for guitar, spanning measures 57 to 65. It is written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The score consists of four staves. The first staff (measures 57-59) contains chords  $D^{MIN7}$ ,  $G^7$ ,  $C^{MAJ7}$ , and  $A^{MAJ7}$ . The second staff (measures 60-62) contains chords  $D^{MIN7}$ ,  $E^{MIN7}$ ,  $F^{MIN7}$ ,  $B^b7$ , and  $E^b^{MAJ7}$ . The third staff (measures 63-64) contains chords  $A^b^{MAJ7}$  and  $C^{\sharp7}(\sharp11)$ . The fourth staff (measures 65) contains chords  $C^{MAJ7}$  and  $C$ . The notation includes various rhythmic values, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and triplets are indicated by a '3' over a bracket. Measure numbers 57, 60, 63, and 65 are placed at the beginning of their respective staves.

Charles McPherson's alto saxophone solo on:

## Evidence

album: *Manhattan Nocturne* (1997)personnel: Charles McPherson - Alto Saxophone;  
Mulgrew Miller - Piano; Ray Drummond - Bass  
Victor Lewis - Drums

comp. Thelonious Monk

Uptempo Swing

♩=240

1 - 0:49

The musical score is written for alto saxophone in 4/4 time, marked "Uptempo Swing" with a tempo of 240 beats per minute. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The score consists of 29 measures, divided into four systems of seven measures each, with the final system containing only two measures. Chord progressions are indicated above the staff, and measure numbers 1, 5, 9, 13, 17, 21, 25, and 29 are marked at the beginning of their respective lines. The notation includes various rhythmic figures, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests, with some measures featuring triplets and accents.

Chord progressions (measures 1-29):

- Measures 1-4: CMAJ<sup>7</sup> (3), EMIN<sup>7</sup>, A<sup>7</sup>(b9), DMIN<sup>7</sup>, G<sup>7</sup>
- Measures 5-8: C, C<sup>7</sup>, FMAJ<sup>7</sup>, B<sup>b7</sup>, C, G<sup>7</sup>, CMAJ<sup>7</sup>
- Measures 9-12: CMAJ<sup>7</sup>, EMIN<sup>7</sup>, A<sup>7</sup>(b9), DMIN<sup>7</sup>, G<sup>7</sup>
- Measures 13-16: C, C<sup>7</sup>, FMAJ<sup>7</sup>, B<sup>b7</sup>, C, G<sup>7</sup>, CMAJ<sup>7</sup>
- Measures 17-20: GMIN<sup>7</sup>, C<sup>7</sup>, FMAJ<sup>7</sup>, B<sup>b7</sup>
- Measures 21-24: CMAJ<sup>7</sup>, A<sup>7</sup>, D<sup>7</sup>, G<sup>7</sup>
- Measures 25-28: CMAJ<sup>7</sup>, EMIN<sup>7</sup>, A<sup>7</sup>(b9), DMIN<sup>7</sup>, G<sup>7</sup>
- Measures 29: C, C<sup>7</sup>, FMAJ<sup>7</sup>, B<sup>b7</sup>, C, G<sup>7</sup>, CMAJ<sup>7</sup>

Evidence

By Thelonious Monk

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II - 1:17

33 **CMAJ<sup>7</sup>** **EMIN<sup>7</sup>** **A<sup>7(b9)</sup>** **DMIN<sup>7</sup>** **G<sup>7</sup>**

37 **C** **C<sup>7</sup>** **FMAJ<sup>7</sup>** **B<sup>b7</sup>** **C** **G<sup>7</sup>** **CMAJ<sup>7</sup>**

41 **CMAJ<sup>7</sup>** **EMIN<sup>7</sup>** **A<sup>7(b9)</sup>** **DMIN<sup>7</sup>** **G<sup>7</sup>**

45 **C** **C<sup>7</sup>** **FMAJ<sup>7</sup>** **B<sup>b7</sup>** **C** **G<sup>7</sup>** **CMAJ<sup>7</sup>**

49 **GMIN<sup>7</sup>** **C<sup>7</sup>** **FMAJ<sup>7</sup>** **B<sup>b7</sup>**

53 **CMAJ<sup>7</sup>** **A<sup>7</sup>** **D<sup>7</sup>** **G<sup>7</sup>**

57 **CMAJ<sup>7</sup>** **EMIN<sup>7</sup>** **A<sup>7(b9)</sup>** **DMIN<sup>7</sup>** **G<sup>7</sup>**

61 **C** **C<sup>7</sup>** **FMAJ<sup>7</sup>** **B<sup>b7</sup>** **C** **G<sup>7</sup>** **CMAJ<sup>7</sup>**



III - 1:45

65

69

73

77

81

85

89

93

IV - 2:12

97

CMAJ<sup>7</sup> EMIN<sup>7</sup> A<sup>7(b9)</sup> DMIN<sup>7</sup> G<sup>7</sup>

101

C C<sup>7</sup> FMAJ<sup>7</sup> B<sup>b7</sup> C G<sup>7</sup> CMAJ<sup>7</sup>

105

CMAJ<sup>7</sup> EMIN<sup>7</sup> A<sup>7(b9)</sup> DMIN<sup>7</sup> G<sup>7</sup>

109

C C<sup>7</sup> FMAJ<sup>7</sup> B<sup>b7</sup> C G<sup>7</sup> CMAJ<sup>7</sup>

113

GMIN<sup>7</sup> C<sup>7</sup> FMAJ<sup>7</sup> B<sup>b7</sup>

117

CMAJ<sup>7</sup> A<sup>7</sup> D<sup>7</sup> G<sup>7</sup>

121

CMAJ<sup>7</sup> EMIN<sup>7</sup> A<sup>7(b9)</sup> DMIN<sup>7</sup> G<sup>7</sup>

125

C C<sup>7</sup> FMAJ<sup>7</sup> B<sup>b7</sup> C G<sup>7</sup> CMAJ<sup>7</sup> CMAJ<sup>7</sup>

Charles McPherson's alto saxophone solo on:

## Spring is Here

album: *The Journey* (2014)

personnel: Charles McPherson - Alto Saxophone;  
 Keith Oxman - Tenor Saxophone;  
 Chip Stevens - Piano; Ken Walker - Bass  
 Todd Reid - Drums

comp. Richard Rodgers and Lorenz Hart/  
 arr. Charles McPherson

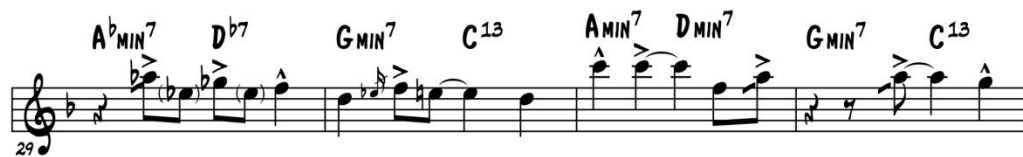
Medium Up Swing

♩=232

I - 0:38

Chord changes and measure markers:

- Measure 1:  $E^b_{MIN} 9$  (BREAK)
- Measure 5:  $F^{\circ}(MAJ7)/G$  (RHYTHM SECTION IN)
- Measure 8:  $F^b_9$ ,  $A_{MIN} 7(b5)$ ,  $D 7(b9)$
- Measure 11:  $G_{MIN} 7$ ,  $A_{MIN} 7(b5)$ ,  $D 7(b9)$ ,  $B^b_{MIN} 7$ ,  $E^b 7$
- Measure 14:  $F_{MAJ} 7$ ,  $D_{MIN} 7$ ,  $G_{MIN} 7$ ,  $G_{MIN} 7/F$
- Measure 17:  $E_{MIN} 7(b5)$ ,  $A 7(b5)$ ,  $D_{MIN} 6$
- Measure 21:  $A^b_{MIN} 7$ ,  $D^b 7$ ,  $G_{MIN} 7$ ,  $C 7$ ,  $F^{\circ}(MAJ7)/G$ ,  $F^b_9$
- Measure 25:  $F^{\circ}(MAJ7)/G$ ,  $F^b_9$ ,  $A_{MIN} 7(b5)$ ,  $D 7(b9)$ ,  $G_{MIN} 7$



61  $A_{MIN}^{7(b5)}$   $D^{7(b9)}$   $B_{MIN}^7$   $E^{b7}$   $F_{MAJ}^7$   $D_{MIN}^7$

65  $A_{MIN}^7$   $D^{b7}$   $G_{MIN}^7$   $C^{13}$   $A_{MIN}^7$   $D_{MIN}^7$   $G_{MIN}^7$   $C^{13}$

69  $A_{MIN}^7$   $D_{MIN}^7$   $B_{MIN}^{7(b5)}$   $B_{MIN}^7$   $A^{7(\sharp 9)}$   $D^7$

72  $G_{MIN}^9$   $C^{13}$   $E_{MIN}^9$   $F^\circ(MAJ7)/G$

APPENDIX E

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD  
DOCUMENTATION

UNIVERSITY of  
NORTHERN COLORADO



*Institutional Review Board*

DATE: November 25, 2014

TO: Don Norton

FROM: University of Northern Colorado (UNCO) IRB

PROJECT TITLE: [668434-2] The Jazz Saxophone Style of Charles McPherson:  
An Analysis through Solo Transcription and Biographical  
Examination

SUBMISSION TYPE: Amendment/Modification

ACTION: APPROVED

APPROVAL DATE: November 24, 2014

EXPIRATION DATE: November 24, 2015

REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review

Thank you for your submission of Amendment/Modification materials for this project. The University of Northern Colorado (UNCO) IRB has APPROVED your submission. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

This submission has received Expedited Review based on applicable federal regulations.

Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the project and insurance of participant understanding. Informed consent must continue throughout the project via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require that each participant receives a copy of the consent document.

Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by this committee prior to initiation. Please use the appropriate revision forms for this procedure.

All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risks to subjects or others and SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported promptly to this office.

All NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must be reported promptly to this office.

Based on the risks, this project requires continuing review by this committee on an annual basis. Please use the appropriate forms for this procedure. Your documentation for continuing review must be received with sufficient time for review and continued approval before the expiration date of November 24, 2015.

Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of three years after the

completion of the project.

If you have any questions, please contact Sherry May at 970-351-1910 or Sherry.May@unco.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

**Thank you for the submission of your amendment/modifications. Your application is now approved. Be sure to use the revised consent form in your data collection.**

**Best wishes with your research and thank you for your patience with the IRB process.**

**Sincerely,**

**Dr. Megan Stellino, UNC IRB Co-Chair**

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within University of Northern Colorado (UNCO) IRB's records.