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The Left-Hand Stride Piano Technique of Art Tatum
written by Paul William Shinn
has been approved for the College of Music

John Gunther
Dr. John Gunther, Associate Professor of Music Theory, committee chair

Keith Waters
Dr. Keith Waters, Professor of Music Theory, committee member

THE LEFT-HAND STRIDE PIANO TECHNIQUE OF ART TATUM

by

Jeff Jenkins
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B.M. and B.A., University of Missouri – Kansas City, 2010

M.M., University of North Texas, 2012

The final copy of this dissertation has been examined by the signatories, and we find that both the content and the form meet acceptable presentation standards of scholarly work in the above mentioned discipline.

A dissertation submitted to the
Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Colorado in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Musical Arts
College of Music

2016

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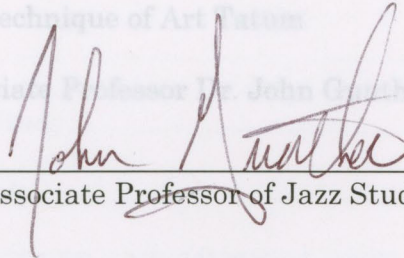
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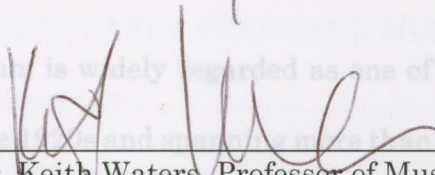


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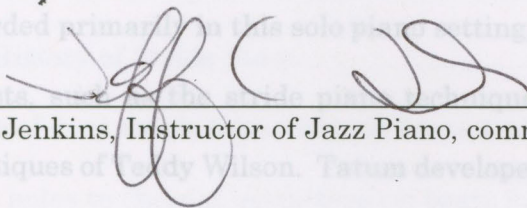
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Dissertation directed by Associate Professor Dr. John Gunther

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¹ John Burnett, "Art Tatum: A Talent Never To Be Duplicated," Published November 5, 2006, <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=6434701>.

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Throughout the history of jazz piano greats, one pianist remains who towers above all others due to his prodigious technique and harmonically inventive interpretations of popular songs from the first half of the 20th century. Along with a unique and unmistakable musical identity that allows for instant recognition among listeners, Art Tatum's name would soon become synonymous with a style and level of piano playing that has not been truly duplicated since Tatum's untimely death in 1956. It was this level of universal admiration coupled with a desire to more greatly understand the exact origins and specific techniques of Tatum's left-hand stride style that led to this study. In more closely examining portions of transcriptions in which Tatum played stride piano, it is possible to gain an even more profound level of admiration and respect for the piano playing of Art Tatum. Evidence of the appreciation of Tatum's genius are numerous, as he was universally acclaimed during his lifetime by his fellow musicians and all that heard him play. A striking example, however, of such a tribute came in 1993 in the field of computational musicology: an MIT graduate student coined a term, "the Tatum," which is now commonly used in that field to mean "the smallest perpetual time unit in music."¹

Largely self-taught after a brief period of formal training, the young Art Tatum would discover some of his first pieces by placing his fingers on the depressed keys of his home's piano roll player system, often unknowingly learning selections that were recorded as four-

¹ *New World Encyclopedia*, "Art Tatum" Accessed March 4, 2016.

¹ John Burnett, "Art Tatum: A Talent Never To Be Duplicated," Published November 5, 2006, <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=6434701>.

hand arrangements all by himself!² As was certainly the case for many other pianists who grew up in this era, Tatum's first exposure to learning to play piano began once he was able to reach the keys and feel how the player system depressed the various notes during the performance of a roll. The ability to slow down this roll allowed for one of the earliest forms of musical transcription of a pre-performed work. Since the majority of that piano music included a stride left-hand construction, stride players (Tatum in particular) would use these rolls to supplement their earliest studies.

Along with this lifelong desire to learn more about the style of early 20th-century jazz and novelty music, I began studying the works of Scott Joplin and Eubie Blake in an effort to internalize the feel of ragtime. Then I moved on to study the works of Fats Waller and James P. Johnson in order to more fully become aware of ragtime's pianistic evolution: stride piano. Having also grown up in a household containing a player piano system, the sound of stride piano and the music of the 1920s and 30s has been a part of my life since before I can even remember. A well-known 1979 clip of Oscar Peterson appearing on the Dick Cavett

Show saw Peterson giving a demonstration of the various styles of past jazz pianists.³ When I recently came across this clip, I was interested in the fact that both Peterson and Cavett referred to stride piano as the "stride piano of Art Tatum." Oscar would go on to describe the stride style as, "...the ability to play the background for yourself and make it work like a rhythm section as opposed to when you play with a rhythm section, where you would just hold the chord, usually..."⁴

² *New World Encyclopedia*, "Art Tatum" Accessed March 4, 2016, http://www.newencyclopedia.org/entry/Art_Tatum.

³ Oscar Peterson, "Oscar Peterson Piano Lesson," *The Dick Cavett Show*, YouTube video, 7:12, posted by "David Funk," June 7th, 2009, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ec-FrnaU0rs>.

⁴ Peterson, *Dick Cavett Show*. "No Greater Art," *Jazztimes*, January/February 1998.

This reminder of Tatum's command of a style of music that he is typically not associated with urged me to watch the only two solo piano video performances of Tatum widely available today: "Yesterdays" and Dvořák's "Humoresque." While watching these pieces, I was struck by the same sentiments as jazz pianist Hank Jones:

When [I] finally met him and got a chance to hear him play in person, it seemed as if he wasn't really exerting much effort, he had an effortless way of playing. It was deceptive. You'd watch him and you couldn't believe what was coming out, what was reaching your ears. He didn't have that much motion at the piano. He didn't make a big show of moving around and waving his hands and going through all sorts of physical gyrations to produce the music that he produced, so that in itself is amazing. There had to be intense concentration there, but you couldn't tell by just looking at him play.⁵

Watching a Tatum performance is simply not the visual spectacle that one might come to expect when listening to the full two-handed approach heard on his recordings. In seeing these two clips, I was immediately struck with the ease in which Tatum's left hand was striding back and forth. It simply didn't *look* like he jumped the same distance with his left hand as what it *sounded* like.

Purpose of This Study

The goal of this study is not merely to present the notes Tatum played, but to examine the theoretical and ergonomic reasons for these notes. In trying to gain a deeper understanding of Tatum's stride style over the years, I've gone through many stride method books and even casually played through some of the Tatum's existing transcription book collections. However, it was difficult to gain any sort of organized comprehension of his stride left-hand techniques without a more thorough analysis, coupled with extended transcribed examples. I found that when I did come across a transcription I liked, it often contained notation errors that didn't make sense from a pianistic standpoint or were simply incorrect.

⁵ Bret Primack, "Art Tatum: No Greater Art," *Jazztimes*, January/February 1998.

Since I actually only focused on learning the left-hand stride portions of Tatum's style, I came to focus on the inherent ergonomic ease with which Tatum selected the notes of his left-hand stride sections. The left hand portion of those older recordings was often somewhat unclear due to static so it can be difficult to distinguish all the correct pitches. Aided with technology that allowed for portions of Tatum's recordings to be slowed down in order to hear all these correct pitches of his densely voiced left hand, I was able to more accurately come to terms with the feel and overall motion of Tatum's stride technique.

In studying Tatum's right hand runs, one quickly realizes that, although many of his devices contained a stylistically unique harmonic basis central to Tatum's sound, many of these runs were also based on the ergonomics of the piano. In other words, the reason Hank Jones was so flabbergasted by this 'ease of playing' must be related to the notes that Tatum selected in his left-hand stride construction, similar to how he ergonomically constructed his right-hand runs. In watching the two videos in existence of Tatum playing solo piano ("Yesterdays" and "Humoresque"), one cannot help but be struck by the seemingly effortless lack of motion found in Tatum's body. Superfluous movements do not detract from efficient playing. In looking just at Tatum's left hand, one is struck by the full sound of his stride sections despite the fact that his hand seems to move very little horizontally. Tatum's stride style originated from Fats Waller and Tatum himself is credited with saying, "'Fats', man, 'Fats' is where I come from."⁶ Tatum's innovations pushed the stride style into a new realm of sophistication. Coining a new term for these unprecedented stride capabilities, jazz pianist Ron Davis observed:

Tatum made much use of the stride style exemplified by Fats Waller and even took it one step further. Goaded on by the boys who said he had no left hand, Tatum created

⁶ Joseph Howard, "The Improvisational Techniques of Art Tatum, (Volumes I-III)," PhD diss., Case Western Reserve University, 1978, 7.

superstride, maintaining the note-chord oom-pah execution and introducing therein a richness of sound not to be found in even the greatest of striders' work.⁷

What follows is a musical examination of the origins and trademarks of this "superstride," highlighting the various aspects that make up Tatum's style. This study presents a basic understanding of where Tatum's stride style originated and gives some examples (found in the Appendix) of how this style has lived on past his death. In admiration of this stride style, the famed classical pianist Vladimir Horowitz found himself "wish[ing] I had a left hand like Tatum's."⁸ In combining the most intricate elements of stride and swing piano styles of the 1920s and 30s, Tatum crafted a left hand so formidable that it was able to support his virtuosic right hand. Famed jazz historian Gunther Schuller concurred with the magnitude of Tatum's capabilities and the meteoric heights to which his playing had ascended, describing any influence upon future generations of jazz pianists as "...usually indirect and stylistically/technically once removed. In a sense Tatum's art was inimitable—except by reduction of its very essence, a fact borne out by thousands of imitative cocktail pianists, playing a much simplified Tatum style."⁹

Scope of This Study

This study of Tatum's left-hand stride piano style is selective by design, as I have decided to primarily study repertory in which Tatum plays a minimum of one full chorus of relatively uninterrupted stride. In this way, it was possible to find sections of Tatum's playing that establish a greater sense of continuity within the stride idiom. This initial premise disqualified a majority of Tatum's recorded catalogue (over 100 sides completed in the last

⁷ Davis, 2-3.

⁸ Anthony Tommasini, "Steven Mayer Channels Art Tatum, but Adds His Own Flourishes at Keyboard Festival," *The New York Times*, July 21, 2006.

⁹ Gunther Schuller, *The Swing Era: The Development of Jazz, 1930-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 477.

three years before his death) as Tatum rarely played a song, especially in his later years, with portions of stride that exceeded one full chorus in length. Also, I have chosen to focus only on the stride aspects of Tatum's left hand simply because the combination of the other facets of his left-hand style are diverse, widespread, and simply too unique to Tatum's style itself to warrant examination within this specific study of the stride idiom. Examples of these types of left-hand techniques would include portions of boogie-woogie patterns, extended trills, single-note walking bass, up-tempo broken tenths, pedal points, and joining with the right hand for extended runs – to name a few.

Lastly, I've included exercises and more modern stride transcriptions at the end of the study so that any players reading this might have an opportunity for more examples and directions for further study.

CHAPTER 2

TATUM'S EARLY YEARS AND BRIEF HISTORY OF STRIDE PIANO

Biography

Born in Toledo, Ohio on October 13, 1909,¹⁰ Art Tatum, Jr. entered the world at a time when the piano was a common household instrument for all American families who could afford one. A child with prodigious early musical talents, Tatum had perfect pitch and was picking out melodies on his family's piano by the time he was just four years old.¹¹ Ragtime music maintained its widespread popularity at this point in the early 20th century, as the advent of jazz was beginning to form in New Orleans. Although there were no recordings

¹⁰ James Lester, *Too Marvelous for Words: The Life and Genius of Art Tatum* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 15.

¹¹ Ron Davis, "Ars Gratia Tatum." Accessed March 6, 2016. www.rondavismusic.com/files/RD%20TATUM%20article.pdf. 2.

available at this time, piano rolls played on various player systems allowed for some of the earliest forms of music reproduction.¹³ he had secured his first recording session.¹³

Given the varying accounts as to the timing and extent of the onset of Tatum's blindness, most recollections seem to agree that Tatum had completely lost vision in one eye while retaining very little vision (10-20%) in the other by the time he was about three years old.¹³ That being said, the young Tatum apparently did not allow this handicap to impede his musical progress, as he would come to rely solely on his ear to inform his playing. After enrolling in various schools for the blind in Toledo and Columbus, Tatum eventually dropped out of school around the age of 17 to focus solely on his aspiring musical career. Although Tatum grew up with a love for Classical music, he had realized from an early age that a career as a black concert pianist would simply not have been possible during this era and that jazz was his best shot at professional success.¹⁴ in Tatum's different musical periods of

By the age of 18, Tatum had his own 15-minute slot on Toledo NBC-affiliated radio station WSPD as a result of winning a talent competition.¹⁵ This exposure led to the building of a national reputation at an early age, a reputation which was bolstered by the anecdotal recollections passed on by other jazz pianists who toured through town during this time. Sometime between the years 1930 and 1932, Tatum began to play and tour with Adelaide Hall, playing blues piano, allowing him his first touring experience as well as his first recording sessions.¹⁶ Furthermore, this association allowed Tatum to move to New York City, as Hall hired him for an extended engagement there in 1932. This association with Hall was

¹³ Lester, 80.

¹³ Lester, 21-26.

¹⁴ Davis, 2.

¹⁵ Lester, 52.

¹⁶ Lester, 68.

instrumental for Tatum's early career, and he was soon performing extensively in his favorite format of solo piano. By March of 1933, he had secured his first recording session.¹⁷

Tatum's Playing Styles

Already with these first recordings, Tatum revealed a fully-developed mature style that would be his hallmark for the rest of his career. Although Tatum's style did not change measurably throughout his career, there were different periods of Tatum's life where he had distinct musical emphases. In his well-known book series on jazz improvisation, John Mehegan's third volume (entitled *Swing and Early Progressive Piano Styles*) features a profile dividing Tatum's career into the following three distinct musical time frames: 1) ragtime—stride period 1930-36, 2) Solo and Swing period 1936-42, and 3) Trio period 1943-56:¹⁸ These divisions serve as a useful way of taking in Tatum's different musical periods of his life, but two clarifications help in fully understanding these periodic divisions.

First, the clarification made here between the first and second periods draws a somewhat arbitrary line during the year 1936, in which Tatum switched from playing stride/novelty pieces to maturing into what would become his signature solo piano style of playing a song in a rubato-stride-rubato form, inspired by novelty pianist Lee Sims and more akin to the Swing pianists of the 30s.¹⁹ However, the earliest Tatum recordings show the already fully-formed aspects of Tatum's left-hand which was to become his trademark stride style. The 1936 delineation marks how his more Swing-inspired recordings produced during

¹⁷ Lester, 80.

¹⁸ John Mehegan, *Swing and Early Progressive Piano Styles (Jazz Improvisation 3)* (New York: Watson-Guptill Publications, 1964), 56.

¹⁹ Felicity Howlett and J. Bradford Robinson, "Tatum, Art," in *Grove Music Online: Oxford Music Online*, Oxford University Press. <http://0-www.oxfordmusiconline.com/libraries.colorado.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/27553>.

this second period attained a higher level of rhythmic and melodic freedom than those of the first period.

Secondly, labelling Tatum's final period as simply a period of trio playing is somewhat misleading. Although this is certainly true for the most part, the bulk of Tatum's recorded solo work was made in the years 1953-54. Norman Granz arranged for these marathon recording sessions in which Tatum finished 124 sides!²⁰ Mehegan's categories do help delineate this final period of Tatum's playing career as a time when Tatum's propensity for extravagant flourishes and intricate reharmonizations was at its zenith. For that reason, this document will study recordings from the first two periods of Tatum's career. Simply stated, the music from Tatum's later career did not contain as many extended portions of left-hand stride to consider for inclusion in this analytical discussion.

Aside from these useful musical categories, it would also be helpful to briefly discuss the highly competitive environment Tatum stumbled upon when he moved to New York. Starting as early as the 1920s and continuing into the 30s, the stride pianists of New York (for the most part based in Harlem) would organize rent parties. These rent parties were essentially cutting contests where each pianist would attempt to outplay the preceding pianist, all the while hoping to receive monetary compensation in order to pay rent.²¹ This environment encouraged pianists to constantly come up with creative and innovative ideas in order to show up the other pianists. It is largely reported that James P. Johnson, the progenitor of stride piano, was the first reigning pianist. His piece "Carolina Shout" was deemed by most pianists as too difficult of a "test piece." By the time of the late 20s, the undisputed king of Harlem stride was Johnson's protégé Fats Waller.²² Waller combined an

²⁰ Lester, 204-5.

²¹ Gunther Schuller, *Early Jazz: Its Roots and Musical Development* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 219.

²² Schuller, *Early Jazz*, 223.

even more prodigious and cleaner technique than Johnson with an unbridled sense of joy that often saw him singing and telling jokes while playing the most intricate virtuosic stride piano at the same time. Tatum would develop his own unique style from Waller's techniques.

Although Tatum's playing style should probably most accurately be placed in a category all on its own, in its most basic sense, Tatum's style combined the left hand techniques of Fats Waller and Teddy Wilson with the right hand techniques of Swing Era pianists Earl Hines and others. This comparison is admittedly simplistic, as Tatum's style of reharmonizations and dazzling flurries of sixteenth note runs combined multiple musical styles: stride, swing, boogie and classical music. The different influences from Waller and Wilson will be examined in greater depth in later chapters.

Having already established his virtuosic playing style from the time of his first solo recordings in 1933, Tatum would go on to play primarily in the solo setting until he formed his trio in 1943, the format he would go on to perform in until his death in 1957.²³ Begun largely due to Tatum's inability to find adequate employment as a solo act, the Art Tatum Trio was formed with the additions of Slam Stewart on bass and Tiny Grimes on guitar. The piano-guitar-bass format most likely stemmed from the lineup of the Nat King Cole Trio and would later be adopted by one of Tatum's most devoted disciples, Oscar Peterson. Although the trio had arrangements and alternated solos throughout the engagements, Tatum tended to dominate the trio with his lavish style of playing. Furthermore, Tatum would often create modulations and reharmonizations that the two band members would have to follow on the spot. The trio format allowed for Tatum to gain better working conditions during this time. Yet the music they produced—although impressive in its own right, without a doubt—paled in comparison to the sounds Tatum produced in the solo setting. Despite not focusing completely

²³ Lester, 147.

on solo performances, Tatum still recorded the aforementioned 124 sides on sessions led by Norman Granz in 1953-54. These final recordings would serve as Tatum's lifetime achievement. Recorded with a far superior sound quality given the advanced technology of the time, Tatum's notes ring clean and his arrangements demonstrate a pianist at his absolute peak. By this later point of his playing career, Tatum rarely employed stride elements for more than 8 or 16 uninterrupted measures. He simply had too many variations and tricks to draw from to remain in any one playing style for too long, hence there are no recordings from this last period of Tatum's life included in this study.

Art Tatum passed away on November 5, 1956, due to complications from uremia, "a toxic blood condition resulting from severe kidney disease."²⁴ Just three months earlier, Tatum had played in front of his largest crowd of 19,000 at the Hollywood Bowl for one of Norman Granz's "Jazz At The Philharmonic" concert events. Norman Granz had organized a solo tour for Tatum in concert halls where he had always envisioned himself of performing, billed simply as "Tatum." Alas, Tatum's fast-living lifestyle of late nights and excessive alcoholic consumption caught up with him in what should have been his moment of greatest triumph. His funeral was held in Los Angeles with several jazz icons in attendance: Oscar Peterson, Dizzy Gillespie, Sarah Vaughan, Ella Fitzgerald, Billy Taylor, Erroll Garner, Ben Webster, and Benny Carter.²⁵

There is some debate in musical circles concerning the extent to which Tatum's selections were arranged versus improvised and how this affects his standing as a "jazz" pianist. Given that the hallmark of jazz music is improvisation, the fact that his repertory included so many songs from the Great American Songbook, which became the standard vehicle of improvisation during the Swing and subsequent Bebop Eras, certainly lends

²⁴ Lester, 216.

²⁵ Lester, 219.

credence to his inclusion as a pianist within the jazz canon. Furthermore, his harmonic and melodic styles, whether completely improvised or not, both stem from the traditions of jazz.

Overall, Tatum created a style of playing that defies more precise categorization. Although Tatum was never considered by some critics to be much of a melodic improviser in the sense of Louis Armstrong or even Earl Hines,²⁶ his style of piano has been unmatched in the sixty years since his passing with regards to the rhythmic and harmonic complexities that were a staple of his work.

In seeking to learn more about the many facets of Art Tatum's techniques from existing literature, there are a few, but not many, transcription books, along with a handful of method books that shed light on the different facets of Tatum's style. One book, *The Right Hand According To Tatum*, stands out as an extensive study of his right hand style with plenty of transcribed examples. Three other method books in particular—the aforementioned John Mehegan's *Swing and Early Progressive Piano Styles*, Steinway and Son's *The Left Hand* by Riccardo Scivales and the John Valerio text *Stride and Swing Piano*—all contain portions dedicated to Tatum's stride piano left hand techniques. Although portions within each of these method books provide a fair amount of examples of Tatum's overall left-hand style, this study will more closely examine longer Tatum transcriptions with the intention of highlighting specific left hand stride techniques only. The aim is to gain a deeper understanding of the origins of Tatum's methods and investigate his own stylistic innovations.

²⁶ Schuller, *Swing Era*, 502-505.

CHAPTER 3

LEFT-HAND TECHNIQUES FROM FATS WALLER

Influential musical chronology can be a tricky subject, as it is often left to the researcher to prove which different influences were transmitted from one musician to the next. To represent Waller's overall impact on stride and how it acted as a platform for Tatum, perhaps it is best to read the following words from noted jazz historian Gunther Schuller:

Waller's role was that of a transitional figure linking James P. [Johnson] to the "modern" pianists of the late thirties, like Teddy Wilson and Art Tatum. His real service lay in taking the still somewhat disjunct elements of Johnson's style and unifying them into a single, cohesive jazz conception in which ragtime was still discernible underneath the surface as a source, but no longer overtly active as a separate formative element. In this, Waller, despite Johnson's influence, moved much closer to the pure jazz direction Hines had by then also evolved out of Armstrong's influence.²⁷

This useful analysis attempts to clear the murky waters of musical influence during this era. In categorizing Waller's role as essentially the ultimate assimilator of the stride piano era, Schuller points towards the direction in which Tatum would eventually head. Through examining in more detail the stride stylings of Fats Waller in direct comparison to that of Tatum's, it is possible to see the genesis of a complex system built upon the clear and systematic foundations of Waller's stride playing.

A notable aspect of Art Tatum's solo piano playing is the overall general form he employed for virtually all of his arrangements (with the exception of a few of his earliest recordings). This was a large-scale ternary form, beginning his rendition with a statement of the melodic material in a highly embellished rubato manner. Most likely this type of large-scale arrangements was derived from the piano stylings of Lee Sims, an influence Tatum cites as one of his most prominent.²⁸ Each 2-, 4- or 8-bar phrase of the melody typically

²⁷ Schuller, *Early Jazz*, 224-5.

²⁸ Howlett and Robinson, *Oxford Music Online*.

punctuates a mesmerizing run or set of moving harmonies where the time extended and stretched until the next phrase was set to begin. This relaxed rubato tempo allows for Tatum to deftly craft his arrangements in a way where his extended reharmonizations can be most clearly heard. The contrasting middle section of the work usually contains a portion of at least one or two choruses of in-tempo playing that typically relied heavily on a stride left hand. Although these portions of Tatum's arrangements would not always contain extended portions of left-hand stride, it seems as if stride was always the most widely-used accompaniment foundation for these in-tempo passages.

Aside from stride piano during these in-tempo sections, Tatum also uses a variety of other left-hand techniques: extended trills on a pedal tone, joining in to finish a descending right-hand run, joining the right-hand in an ascending run, boogie-woogie figures, blues bass figures, sustained tenths to delineate harmony, and open sevenths and tenths to convey ii-V movement. Following this in-tempo middle section, Tatum presents a recapitulation of the melody in a return to his rubato style to end the piece. Other stride pianists used this type of overall rubato-stride-rubato ternary form; however, Tatum made this form the foundation of his solo repertoire. To summarize Tatum's overall large-scale approach in the midst of so much attention to the smaller details, Felicity Howlett writes: "Working in layers of thought, he was able to retain large frameworks while manipulating small details and/or simultaneously reworking larger phrases or sections."²⁹

The Tatum selections chosen for this study are all examples from Tatum's recorded output that most clearly demonstrate the left-hand stride techniques discussed throughout the analysis. Generally speaking, although Tatum certainly played many of his selections at incredibly fast speeds, the selections for this project range from metronome markings of 135

²⁹ Lester, 131. *"The Entertainer," Complete Piano Rags, Minicols: Dover Publications, 1988.*

to 220 beats per minute (with one Fats Waller selection at 265 beats per minute). Whenever possible, the primary objective was to include selections that had at least one full chorus of stride playing in order to present a more complete picture of Tatum's stride techniques over a longer period of playing. At these moderate tempos, it is possible to hear all the intricacies that Tatum introduced into his own unique stride playing. In listening to his selections performed at extreme tempos (300 bpm or more), Tatum's technique and left-hand stride portions are certainly clean and operate quite functionally for his desired effect. However, Tatum would employ simpler stride figures (much like the tradition of the early stride practitioners) that would not have included his typical intricate passages of walking tenths and tenor line thumb melodies found in his playing at moderate tempos.

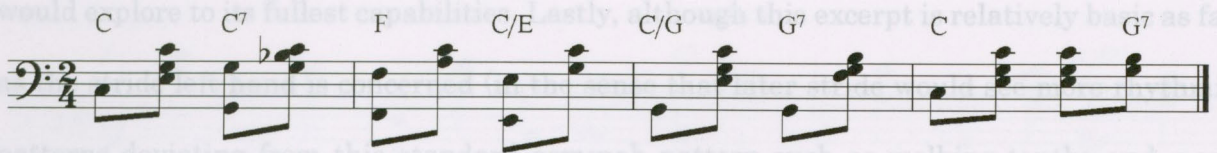
Fig. 2 – Fats Waller: "Ain't Misbehavin'"

Brief History of Stride Piano

Although the focus of this chapter is to hone in on the specific commonalities between the left-hand stride styles of Tatum and Fats Waller, a quick—and by no means exhaustive—summary of stride piano techniques up until the time of Tatum would be appropriate. The origin of stride piano resides in the ragtime piano styles of the early 20th century. These pieces featured melodies that were triadic in nature and did not feature any portions of improvisation. The meter of these pieces was a 2/4 march style featuring subdivisions of straight sixteenth notes. The first four measures of Scott Joplin's "The Entertainer" is depicted in Fig. 1 with the left hand only.³⁰

³⁰ Scott Joplin, "The Entertainer," *Complete Piano Rags*, Mineola: Dover Publications, 1988.

Fig. 1 – Scott Joplin: “The Entertainer”



A march feel is maintained through the 2/4 meter and simple left-hand oom-pah accompaniment. In this example, note the use of primarily triadic harmonies as well as the limited range of the lower (downbeat) notes. An E below the bass staff is the lowest note to open the piece.

A contrast to this small sample would be the opening six measures of Fats Waller's 1929 Victor Records recording of his composition "Ain't Misbehavin'".³¹

Fig. 2 – Fats Waller: “Ain't Misbehavin'”



Although this was recorded nearly 30 years after “The Entertainer” was published, it is still most certainly possible to identify some of the key links and differences between these two examples. First, Waller's stride version of the oom-pah bass pattern is felt in a more relaxed 4/4 meter. This allows for the eighth note pickup note shown in the first measure of this excerpt to communicate the inherent swing feel that forms the foundation of stride piano. Secondly, the range of the left-hand is greatly increased. The downbeat bass notes go lower on the keyboard (note the G in the second and sixth measures) while the chords on beats 2 and 4 extend into a higher part of the piano's harmonic range. Thirdly, Waller makes extensive use of tenths on the downbeats in almost every measure. Introduced by Waller's

³¹ Fats Waller, “Ain't Misbehavin',” *Turn on the Heat*, Bluebird 2482-2-RB, 1991, CD.

mentor James P. Johnson, tenths created a new harmonic avenue of possibility that Tatum would explore to its fullest capabilities. Lastly, although this excerpt is relatively basic as far as the stride left-hand is concerned (in the sense that later stride would see more rhythmic patterns deviating from this standard oom-pah pattern such as walking tenths and more eighth note pickups), the amount of harmonic variation and richness in just these six measures contrasts sharply with the basic I-V-I movement of the earlier ragtime selection from Joplin. Featuring notes extending beyond the simple triadic chordal nature of ragtime, Waller employs more varied chord structures that allow for expanded chromatic voice-leading, evidenced by the chromatic notes present in the E⁷ chord as well as the F minor chord in the following measure. Further examination and comparison of Waller and Tatum's stride styles reveals a number of distinct commonalities as well as some key differences.

In presenting this first pair of transcribed stride excerpts—Waller's "Handful of Keys" and Tatum's "Tea For Two"—the aim is to showcase how the basic feel and technique of Waller's stride can be found in Tatum's own stride. Recorded in 1929 and widely considered one of Waller's signature piano compositions, "Handful of Keys" presents a relatively simple overall harmonic structure.³² Employing a 32-measure AABA structure, this tune contains simple I-V-I-type harmonic movements during the A sections with a typical "rhythm changes" bridge consisting of dominant chord movement in the cycle of fifths III⁷—VI⁷—II⁷—V⁷, with each chord being played for two measures. During the A sections, the basic harmonic structure features tonic harmonies for two bars, dominant harmonies for four bars, then tonic harmonies for the final two bars with a "turnaround" included. In terms of the specific left-hand components of this selection, here are four characteristics that can be noted as contributing directly to the stride style of Art Tatum.

³² Fats Waller, "Handful of Keys," *Turn on the Heat*, Bluebird 2482-2-RB, 1991, CD.

Fig. 3 – Fats Waller: “Handful of Keys” beats 1 and 3 of each measure

0:08 ♩ = 265

1 5 9 13 17 21 25 29

F C7 G#07 C7 F C7 F C7 F#07 C7 F F07 A7 D7 G7 C7 Ab07 C7 F6 C7 G#07 C7 F

1) Tenths or single deep bass notes on beats 1 and 3 of each measure

Placement of the left-hand on beats 1 and 3 presents perhaps the biggest difference between stride and ragtime piano. Stride players, most likely seeking to emulate the actual frequency range of the upright bass in order to create a fuller sound on the piano, would jump distances in excess of three octaves (m. 19) in order to capture these lower frequencies while returning to the harmonic range of the piano to play a chord on beats 2 and 4. When not playing notes in this lower register of the piano, Waller would make use of the tenth in order to present a solid harmonic sound on beats 1 and 3. Although Tatum would incorporate this technique with techniques found in Swing pianists such as Teddy Wilson to devise his own method of employing various combinations of tenths throughout a tune, the groundwork of regular tenth usage and lower bass notes was codified by Waller in the late 1920s.

2) Added notes to triadic chordal harmonies on beats 2 and 4

This provides another example of Waller employing stride piano's richer harmonic palette that would become a hallmark of the era and hence found in the playing of Tatum as well. In examining the chords Fats uses on beats 2 and 4 throughout "Handful of Keys," there is really only one repeating instance where he uses a chord with purely triadic harmony. First seen in beat 2 of the third measure of the song, Waller uses this G minor triad to prolong the sound of the dominant C7 chord. In other words, if Waller were to have thought of this beat as a G minor harmony with an added seventh, he would have undoubtedly included the F in his voicing. But since the third measure is preceded by voice-leading from a pair of walking tenths (to be discussed later), it makes sense for Waller's stride pattern to begin communicating the V⁷ chord with the fifth in the bass rather than the tonic. The rest of Fats' chords for this excerpt all contain a note beyond just the root, third and fifth of the given chord. For example, the F chord on beat 2 of the second measure contains a D, which is the

sixth scale degree of the F major scale. This allows for added harmonic interest instead of relying on the basic triadic harmony found in ragtime.

3) Passing chords to extend static harmonies

Another staple of the stride style passed on to Tatum that was fully embodied in Waller's playing is the use of passing harmonic structures. Now, although Tatum would ultimately develop this concept to an unmatched degree, Waller certainly introduces several harmonic centers and motions that go above and beyond the given harmony of the composition. Beginning in the first measure, Waller employs a common technique of playing a V harmony on beats 2, 3 and 4, containing a C⁷ harmony which resolves to the continued F major chord on the first beat of the second measure. Waller uses a passing chord knowledge rooted in dominant and diminished harmonies. Throughout this selection, instances of these passing chords are easy to find: beats 3 and 4 in measure 4, beats 3 and 4 of measure 13, beats 3 and 4 of measure 16, beats 3 and 4 of measure 19, beat 4 of measure 21, beats 3 and 4 of measure 23 and beats 3 and 4 of measure 28. A pattern emerges that shows Waller apt to include passing harmonies on the weaker harmonic beats of the measure (beats 2 and 4). He rarely extends the passing harmonies into the next measure or begins a measure with a passing harmony. This aspect helped preserve the overall harmonic structure of the tune and is a facet of Waller's playing—and even ragtime—that Tatum indeed surpassed in the sense that his passing chords and reharmonizations were not limited to certain parts of measures or barlines.

4) Walking Tenths

Compared to the other selections in this study, "Handful of Keys" is played at the brisk tempo of 265 beats per minute. Despite this quick tempo, Waller still employs several

instances of walking tenths that foreshadow some of the intricacies that would later be used by Tatum. In mm. 2, 10 and 26, Waller uses the same chromatic descending tenth line in order ensure smooth voice-leading down to the tenth that follows in the next measure. Also, at such a quick tempo, these are ergonomically some of the safest tenths to be able to execute since Waller is only walking minor tenths, which have a much more manageable hand span than major tenths. The rhythmic and harmonic origin of this particular type of walking tenth line stems from the moving octaves used in ragtime as a way of breaking up the monotony of the oom-pah bass. In mm. 31-32, Waller employs a turnaround of descending chromatic minor tenths that sets up the next chorus. Although tenths will be examined in greater detail later, it is important to note that Waller was using these instances of walking tenths frequently throughout his playing. These tenths would later be found in Tatum's style in a greatly increased fashion as well as parts of Wilson's style in a more abstract and reduced fashion. Recorded on his first solo recording session as a leader on March 21st, 1933, "Tea for Two" established Art Tatum's arrival on the jazz scene as a fully-formed mature artist.³⁴ The following transcription³⁵ contains all of the aspects discussed previously on "Handful of Keys" but also includes several new techniques that would emerge as a hallmark of the Tatum stride style. Overall, this piece, along with "Tiger Rag" recorded at the same session, would announce Tatum's virtuosic qualities for all to hear. The advanced use of chromatically altered harmonic features figured heavily into the new sound that Tatum had achieved at such an early stage of his career. In looking specifically at the left-hand technique present in "Tea for Two" in direct comparison to some of the techniques used in "Handful of Keys" there are several new and old techniques that stand out in the following selection:

³⁴ Lester, 80.

³⁵ Brent Edstrom and Ronny S. Schiff, *The Art Tatum Collection*, Milwaukee: Hal Leonard Corporation, 1996.

Fig.4 – Art Tatum “Tea For Two”

0:07 $\text{♩} = 165$

1 $B\flat m7$ $E\flat 7$ $B\flat m7$ $E\flat 7(\#5)$ $A\flat maj7$

5 $B\flat m7$ $E\flat 7$ $B\flat m7$ $E\flat 7$ $A\flat$

9 $Dm7$ $G7$ $Dm7$ $G7$ $C6$ $Em7$ $E\flat o7$

13 $Dm7$ $G7$ $Dm7$ $G7(\#5)$ $C7$ $B7$ $B\flat 7$ $A7$ $A\flat 7$ $G7$ $G\flat 7$ $F7$

17 $B\flat m7$ $E\flat 7$ $B\flat m7$ $E\flat 7(\#5)$ $A\flat maj7$ $D9$

21 $B\flat m7$ $E\flat 7$ $B\flat m7$ $E\flat 7$ $C\flat 7$ $F7$

25 $B\flat m7$ $F7$ $B\flat m7(\flat 5)$ $E\flat 7(\#5)$ $A\flat 7$ $G\flat 7$ $F7$ $B\flat 7$ $D\flat o7$

29 $A\flat/C$ $B\flat o7$ $B\flat m7$ $E\flat 7$ $A\flat$ $B\flat o7$

The image displays a musical score for Art Tatum's "Tea For Two" in bass clef. The score is divided into eight systems, each containing a line of music with chord markings above and a melodic line below. The key signature is three flats (B-flat major/C minor). The tempo is marked as 165 beats per minute. The first measure is marked with a time signature of 0:07. The chords and notes are as follows:

- Measures 1-4: $B\flat m7$, $E\flat 7$, $B\flat m7$, $E\flat 7(\#5)$, $A\flat maj7$
- Measures 5-8: $B\flat m7$, $E\flat 7$, $B\flat m7$, $E\flat 7$, $A\flat$
- Measures 9-12: $Dm7$, $G7$, $Dm7$, $G7$, $C6$, $Em7$, $E\flat o7$
- Measures 13-16: $Dm7$, $G7$, $Dm7$, $G7(\#5)$, $C7$, $B7$, $B\flat 7$, $A7$, $A\flat 7$, $G7$, $G\flat 7$, $F7$
- Measures 17-20: $B\flat m7$, $E\flat 7$, $B\flat m7$, $E\flat 7(\#5)$, $A\flat maj7$, $D9$
- Measures 21-24: $B\flat m7$, $E\flat 7$, $B\flat m7$, $E\flat 7$, $C\flat 7$, $F7$
- Measures 25-28: $B\flat m7$, $F7$, $B\flat m7(\flat 5)$, $E\flat 7(\#5)$, $A\flat 7$, $G\flat 7$, $F7$, $B\flat 7$, $D\flat o7$
- Measures 29-32: $A\flat/C$, $B\flat o7$, $B\flat m7$, $E\flat 7$, $A\flat$, $B\flat o7$

1) Tenor melodies

The first innovative aspect of this recording is the relative ease and clarity with which Tatum maintains a smooth tenor harmony line with his left thumb. Indicated on this score with the tenuto markings found above some of the left-hand voicings on beats 1 and 3 throughout the selection, this technique allowed for extensive possibilities that Tatum would interpolate into his stride playing throughout his career. This aspect of Tatum's playing will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter dealing with Teddy Wilson. However, for the purposes of this transcription, it can be helpful to note that Tatum's thumb melodies most often move by step and highlight the movement from ii^7-V^7 found in the first two measures and continued with the emphasis on scale degrees 7 and 6 found on the tonic chord in mm. 3 and 4. Any tenuto markings on this score were added by the author and serve to highlight these tenor melody notes.

2) Large intervallic leaps in stride construction

In tradition with the stylings of the stride era, Tatum maintains several large leaps throughout "Tea for Two." Good examples of this can be found in the low G he plays in mm. 9-11 and 13-14. This leap spans a distance of greater than three octaves. Throughout the piece, however, Tatum tends to construct tenths and their subsequent chords on beats 2 and 4 with a minimal distance between the top note of the tenth and the bottom note of the chord voicing. This observation helps support the hypothesis that Tatum's stride contained notes and features that were based as much on ergonomics as they were innovative harmonies. Due mainly to Tatum's large hands, which could spread the distance of a twelfth on the piano, he was able to reach all of the tenths quite easily and although he was still striding quite a great distance from the lower note of the tenth to the highest note of the following chord, the distance between the top note of the tenth and the bottom note of the chord voicing was indeed

minimal. A great example of this facet of Tatum's playing can be seen in mm. 25-28 in this section. On each of these pairs of bass tenths and tenor chords the distance between the top note of the tenth and the bottom note of the following chord is a step or unison.

5) Beginnings of Tatum walking tenth triads

3) Greater use of anticipated tenths provides compelling rhythmic motion through walking

In mm. 11-13, Tatum plays three instances of anticipated tenths where he plays one of the notes of the tenth as an eighth note preceding the downbeat where the tenth occurs. This technique serves two purposes. On the one hand, the extra note acts to propel the overall sense of swing of the piece by adding an extra eighth note in between the string of steady quarter notes, allowing the player to give further emphasis to the overall swing feel from their left-hand alone. Another reason behind these anticipated tenths deals with the ergonomics of playing these passages. At this tempo of 165 bpm, it is not too terribly difficult to reach all the tenths in time, so these eighth note anticipations are unnecessary from a technical point of view. However, ergonomically this style of broken tenth allows for Tatum to place his hand in the desired position a little bit earlier than if he were to play all the notes of the tenth simultaneously.

4) More altered chromatic harmonies

There are a few instances in this example where Tatum alters the original chord progression. Beginning in the second measure, we can already hear Tatum's use of an augmented dominant harmony providing a chromatic alteration. The B \sharp found in the chord on beat 4 leads into the C found in the chord on beat 2 of m. 3. Another prominent passage of altered harmonies occurs during the turnaround in mm. 15-16 as the tune progresses from the tonicized key of C major to the home tonic key of A \flat major. Here Tatum plays a string of

descending chromatic dominant chords, which resolve flawlessly into the next section. Not shown here, the right hand further emphasizes a dominant augmented harmony as well.

5) Beginnings of Tatum walking tenth triads

In mm. 7-8, 24, and 31-32, Tatum provides compelling rhythmic motion through walking tenth chord harmonies. Although the theory of these types of movements will be discussed in greater detail shortly, these few examples again present the breadth of Tatum's harmonic concept as he makes effective use of passing tenth chords to elaborate static harmonies. While the examples at mm. 7-8 and 31-32 provide diatonic chordal movement, m. 24 presents ascending chromatic diminished tenth chordal voicings. On beat one, Tatum plays an F⁷ tenth voicing and then moves up to a G diminished voicing (functionally operating as a C⁷/G in this instance) on beat two. While beat 4 provides an A diminished voicing that operates as a F^{7(b9)}/A to lead into the following B^bmin⁷ chord, beat three simply presents the chromatic diminished chord between the two voicings on beats 2 and 4. In other words, all three of the voices move in parallel motion from beat 2 to 4, creating a strong sense of complete voice leading. These types of harmonic nuances point to the expanded harmonic vocabulary of Tatum and also serve as an example of the amount of detail involved in Tatum's note choices.

Extended Walking Tenth Triads

Another important facet of Art Tatum's stride left-hand style is derived in part from Fats Waller's technique of harmonizing extended passages of static harmonic motion with series of walking tenth chords. While neither Waller nor Tatum would typically play walking tenths for as long a period as demonstrated in the following two examples, it was common for both to insert 2-4 bars of walking harmonies into their performances amidst standard oom-

pah stride playing. The fascinating thing about these harmonized bass lines is that, especially in shorter passages of 2-4 measures, each voice of the chord would typically move in the same direction simultaneously, creating strong voice-leading throughout the walking line. Generally speaking, these walking tenth passages consist of harmonic movement over four beats that either ascends a perfect fourth or descends a perfect fifth. These types of harmonic rhythmic motion are typically best for walking tenths since they lend themselves to stepwise motion, the most comfortable and accurate ergonomic movement for the stretched hand. The walking tenth technique would become more widely used as the Swing Era progressed by players such as Teddy Wilson and Earl Hines, but they tended to favor the more open sound of the tenth dyads rather than the filled-in tenth triads preferred by Waller and Tatum.

At one point in his own 1929 composition "Sweet Savannah Sue," Waller plays a succession of 19 measures of walking tenth triad chords.³⁶ The astounding rhythmic drive that results from the usage of this technique foreshadows more of a 4-feel than the standard 2-feel that later developed in the Swing Era. Figure 5 contains the functional harmonic changes of each tune. Figure 6 contains the functional harmonic progression as dictated by the motion of the tenths. The two figures show two perspectives, and the performer improvises the superimposed chord changes as the song progresses.

³⁶ Fats Waller, "Sweet Savannah Sue," *Turn on the Heat*, Bluebird 2482-2-RB, 1991, CD.

Fig. 5 – Fats Waller: “Sweet Savannah Sue”

1:29 $\text{♩} = 165$

The musical score consists of five staves of bass clef notation. Above the staves, chord labels are provided for each measure. Measure numbers 1, 5, 9, 13, and 17 are indicated at the start of their respective staves. The chords are: D7/F# (m. 1), A7 (m. 2), D7 (m. 3), G (m. 4), D7A G/B C#7 (m. 5), G7 (m. 6), C (m. 7), C7 (m. 8), F (m. 9), D7 (m. 10), Bb (m. 11), G7 (m. 12), C7 (m. 13), F7 (m. 14), D7 (m. 15), Eb (m. 16), Eo7 (m. 17), Bb (m. 18), F7 (m. 19).

Waller’s tenth triads warrant further explanation. Generally speaking, when playing walking tenth triads he plays the tonic chord or inversion of the tonic chord on the strong beats (1 and 3) of the measure while playing some form of a passing chord on the weak beats (2 and 4) of the measure to ensure proper voice-leading. In figure 6, there are several noticeable instances where Waller plays beat 1 of a measure with an inversion instead of the root position of the given chord. Measures 4,6,9,10 (2 times), 14, 19 and 20 all contain instances where either the third or fifth of the triad is the lowest note of the tenth. The motion of this excerpt is almost exclusively by step with only 6 instances of movement by skip (third). Furthermore, with only a few exceptions, all three of the voices move together in parallel motion to create this strong sense of voice-leading.

Fig. 6 – Fats Waller: “Sweet Savannah Sue”

1:29 ♩=165

1 D⁷/F[♯] A⁷ D⁷ A⁷/E D⁷/F[♯] F[♯]+ G D7A G/B C[♯]0⁷ G⁷/D C/E E^b0⁷ G⁷/D

5 C G⁷/D C/E F[♯]0⁷ C⁷/G F[♯]0⁷ C⁷/G G[♯]0⁷ F/A C⁷/G F C⁷/G F/A C⁷/G F⁷ D⁷

9 B^b/D F⁷/C B^b F⁷/C B^b/D F⁷/C G⁷/B G⁷/D C⁷ G⁷/D C/E G⁷/D C G⁷/D C/E C⁷/G

13 F E^b6 B^b/D C[♯]0⁷ F⁷/C B^b/D E^b D A⁷/E D⁷/F[♯] A⁷/E D A⁷/E F⁰7 D

17 E^b B^b/F E^b/G B^b/F E⁰7 B^b/F E⁰7 E^b0⁷ B^b/D C[♯]0⁷ B^b/D C[♯]0⁷ F⁷/C B⁰7 F⁷/C F⁷

Figure 6 individually labels all the chords to show how these basslines are constructed from a chord-to-chord perspective. Identifying the function of these tenth triads presented difficulty when trying to decide how to label the diminished tenth triads (major 6th + tritone). Although these chords can be labelled simply as diminished 7th chords (that perform their function as passing chords with parallel voice-leading on the weak beats of the measure), it seems more appropriate to think of these diminished chords as inverted V⁷ chords of the given harmony that act as passing chords between instances of local tonic harmony. The first example of this occurs on the second beat of m. 2. The label of A⁷/E—despite that triad not having an A in it—more accurately represents the true functionality of the triad since it connects a D⁷ triad to a D/F[♯] triad complete with leading tone resolution of the C[♯] of beat 2

to the D of beat 3. Throughout these examples, any diminished triad that acted as a V⁷ passing chord between two inversions of the local harmony for that measure has been labelled as a dominant chord and not a diminished chord.

Diminished tenth triads work best as passing chords to a closely related harmony. They allow the harmonic language of the walking tenth triads to continue the three-note voice-leading but be able to allow for the walking line to adapt to the harmonic information of the given tune. Diminished chords are also used to add another chromatic passing chord if an extra half-step is necessary, as in m. 4. In order to approach the C⁷ chord on beat one of m. 5 most convincingly with three-note voice-leading, a diminished tenth triad of G⁷/D allows for a strong V-I movement. Because the preceding line began on beat 1 with this same tenth voicing, the addition of a chromatic diminished passing tenth triad on beat 3 in order to resolve into the next bar demonstrates the usefulness and flexibility of these diminished tenth triads. There are also several instances throughout the passage where Waller uses a diminished tenth to step out of the harmony only to return right back to the same tenth. This type of neighboring tenth chords create extra rhythmic motion and examples of this type of movement can be found in mm. 6, 18, 19 and 20.

Recorded over a decade later at an after-hours session on September 16th, 1941 at Monroe's Uptown House, Art Tatum's left-handed comping on "Lady, Be Good" during a trio jam session with upright bass and trumpet features an extended portion of walking tenth triadic harmony. Tatum's bassline actually lines up with Ebenezer Paul's bass a few times throughout this excerpt, but for the most part Tatum tends to dominate the sound of the entire group so his left-hand portions were easy to differentiate from the rest of the band.³⁷

³⁷ Art Tatum, "Lady Be Good," *God Is In The House*, Onyx 205, 1972, CD.

Joseph Howard maintains this sentiment in saying that, "...it is apparent that Tatum did not alter his style when performing with other instrumentalists. The participating musicians

Fig. 7 – Art Tatum: “Lady, Be Good”

1:52 ♩=220

The musical score is written in bass clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a tempo of 220 beats per minute. It consists of 18 measures of music. The chords indicated above the notes are: Am7 (measures 1-4), D7 (measures 5-8), G (measures 9-12), C9 (measures 13-16), and D7 (measures 17-18). A double bar line is placed at the end of measure 18, indicating the start of a new 32-bar chorus.

had the option of either competing with Tatum on his level or altering and adapting their style to fit within his fireworks.”³⁸ In a similar fashion to “Sweet Savannah Sue,” “Lady, Be Good” showcases tenth triadic movement by step for 18 measures with a few stride chords played on beats 2 and 4. The double-barline at the end of the fourth measure of the example delineates the beginning of a new 32-bar chorus. In comparison to the tenth triads played by Waller, Tatum’s tenth triads contain more variety in terms of the harmonic rhythm they employ when navigating the given chord changes, as well as a greater use of chromatic harmonies. When examining the first excerpt, it becomes apparent that Tatum has taken Waller’s walking tenth triad technique to a new level of sophistication. A cursory glance

³⁸ Howard, 66.

shows instances of 4-note voicings on some of the chords on beats 1 and 3 including mm. 4, 12 and 16. The A⁹ chord in m. 16 is particularly interesting in that Tatum approaches this chord voicing of a ninth by using voice-leading of the top thumb notes from the movement found in the previous measure. Although Tatum would often use these four-note tenth voicings, he would typically play them during the rubato sections of his arrangements and play these somewhat leaner tenth triads for the in-tempo stride portions of his improvisations.

The shifting harmonies from chord to chord further indicate a similar approach to Waller, but again reveal an extra level of sophistication. Like Waller, Tatum would commonly employ an inverted V⁷ chord on beat 2 of a measure to connect a root position and first inversion chord on beats 1 and 3. In the span of only the first eight measures, Tatum employs this technique in all but two occasions (bars 1 and 6). Throughout this excerpt, Tatum repeatedly uses these passing dominant harmonies but then adds his own chromatic root position dominant tenth triads on two occasions in order to support voice-leading. These instances occur in mm. 9 and 17. In m. 9, the F dominant chord on beat 4 doesn't really lead functionally into the following A⁷/E chord. However, the fact that all the voices move by whole-step or half-step allow for this seemingly incongruent passage to work quite beautifully. The F^{#7} tenth triad in m. 17 is the solution Tatum used to descend a perfect fourth over the span of four beats, which is actually quite an uncommon movement as typical walking triad harmonic patterns work best when ascending a fourth or descending a fifth. In this measure, the F^{#7} acts as a passing chord on beat 2 that allows for Tatum to arrive at his target harmony on the third beat with D/F[#] which then allows him to continue the walking line until the D⁷ tenth triad at the beginning of m. 18.

Fig. 8 – Art Tatum: “Lady, Be Good”

1:52 ♩=220

1 Am⁷ G D/F# A⁷/E D⁷ A⁷/E D/F# D⁷/A G D⁷/A G/B D⁷/A G D⁷/A G/B D⁷(b9)/A

5 G D⁷/A G/B D⁷/A G/B C⁹ C⁷/G G D⁷/A G/B D⁷/A G D⁷/A G/B

9 Am G F⁷ A⁷/E D⁷ A⁷/E D/F# G D⁷/A G/B A⁹ A⁷/E D⁷

13 G D⁷/A G/B G⁷(b9) C⁷ C⁹ G D⁷/A G D⁷/A B⁷ D⁷/A A⁹ G/B D⁷/A

17 G F#⁷ D/F# A⁷/E D⁷ A⁷/E D/F# D⁷/A

One last observation in comparing Waller’s and Tatum’s approaches is that Tatum’s tenth walking lines are less limited by constant stepwise motion. This was perhaps due to the fact that his technique and harmonic imagination were at a higher level than Waller’s. For example, in m. 2 (beats 3 and 4), instead of using two passing chords along with the root D⁷ chord and its inversion, Tatum plays three inversions of the D⁷ harmony with only one V⁷ passing harmony for the measure, effectively enclosing beat 1 of m. 3 in 3-voice parallel motion. Tatum uses this technique again in m. 18 on beats 3 and 4, enclosing the G major tenth triad on beat 1 of the measure directly following this excerpt. These examples demonstrate some of the origins of the stride walking tenth triad technique along with its subsequent use and subtle evolution in the hands of Art Tatum.

LEFT-HAND TECHNIQUES FROM TEDDY WILSON

The artistry and musicality of Tatum's left-hand stride playing, in its most oversimplified form, comes from his total amalgamation of the Fats Waller stride and walking tenth techniques combined with the more relaxed rhythmic feel and strong left-hand tenor countermelodies made popular by Swing Era pianists such as Teddy Wilson.

It should be noted, though, that the Swing Era pianist with the greatest overall influence on Tatum was Earl Hines. From Hines, Tatum gained a more melodic linear approach to the piano. John Mehegan summarizes this influence:

Earle Hines freed the right hand from the mechanical restriction of ragtime, paving the way for the linear concepts of Tatum. [...] This aided Hines in forging a new image as to the role of the piano within a rhythm section, a disciplined role subordinate to the work of the over-all section, [...] As a solo pianist, Tatum was not primarily interested in this aspect of Hines's playing, but the right-hand 'trumpet' styles of Hines certainly remained an important source for Tatum's linear ideas.³⁹

Earl Hines, six years older than Tatum, was described by a childhood friend of Tatum's named Eddie Barefield, who heard Tatum practicing by improvising to Hines' recordings in the 1920s, as being "...from a different school from Fats Waller. See, Earl Hines was the first, was really the change of the style of the piano players, modern piano players. Fats was from the old school. Course, when you heard him play you didn't hear nothing of anybody but Art. But he got his ideas from Earl's style of playing."⁴⁰ Admittedly, this influence from Earl Hines was most clearly manifested in Tatum's right-hand technique as he fully embraced Hines' richly extravagant, irrepressible style to the more modest proportions of Wilson's.⁴¹ definition of the role of the piano as a solo instrument with similar possibilities of melodic

As stated above, the main point of influence and commonality shared between the left-hand techniques of Tatum and Wilson is that of the left thumb tenor melody. As Schuller put

³⁹ Mehegan, 103-104.

⁴⁰ Lester, 57-8.

more linear fashion while employing use of a “terminal vibrato” effect to punctuate phrases, a stark contrast to the triadic nature of ragtime piano melodies. The Hines influence can be heard in Tatum’s left hand during rubato sections as Tatum would employ some of the sustained left-hand chords used by Hines as a method of bringing his right-hand “trumpet” lines to the forefront. For the purposes of this study focusing only on Tatum’s left-hand stride, it suffices to say that Hines’s left-hand style did not significantly influence Tatum’s stride construction. From Hines, Tatum developed his right-hand articulations and approach as well as an overall more relaxed swing feel than his predecessors of the stride era. Hines, however, was much more of an improviser than Tatum and took more chances with his right-hand improvisations, though his left-hand accompaniment was much sparser than Tatum in the solo piano setting.

Returning to Teddy Wilson, it is at this point that the chronology of influence becomes somewhat convoluted. For it is certainly a problematic assertion to claim that Teddy Wilson was an influence on Art Tatum as Wilson was born three years later and even spent a portion of his teenage years in Akron absorbing Tatum’s early style. However, as Tatum began to loosen up the strict stride sensibility that had characterized his work from the early 30s, he would soon be adopting some of the same techniques as Wilson. This includes an emphasis on left-hand thumb tenor melodies. Gunther Schuller reports, “Conversely there is strong evidence that in the late thirties, when Wilson was becoming a nationally known figure through his work with Benny Goodman, Tatum began to reduce, at least temporarily, his richly extravagant, irrepressible style to the more modest proportions of Wilson’s.”⁴¹

As stated above, the main point of influence and commonality shared between the left-hand techniques of Tatum and Wilson is that of the left thumb tenor melody. As Schuller put

⁴¹ Schuller, *Swing Era*, 507.

⁴² Teddy Wilson, “Rosetta” *Teddy Wilson – Statements and Improvisations*, Smithsonian

LP, Accessed digitally March 6, 2016.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JDrBKMimfQs>

⁴¹ Schuller, *Swing Era*, 502.

it, this thumb technique, “When combined with the right hand, [...] created the impression of a three-handed pianist. It was not, I hasten to add, an effect that could be achieved by using the pedals of the piano, but it obviously required large hands.”⁴² This chapter focuses solely on the various distinctions of the shared aspects of the tenor thumb melodies between Tatum and Wilson.

Already in the first example from Tatum in this document, “Tea for Two,” it is possible to see the beginnings of this thumb melody line. Whereas Waller would typically play stride tenths on beats 1 and 3 with equal emphasis on all notes in the tenth, Wilson would add particular emphasis to the uppermost thumb note in order to create harmonic countermelodies. This emphasis would also be embraced by Tatum as the ideal method of prolonging the harmonic notes from the chords (as these thumb notes tended to be the 3rd and 7th scale degrees of the given harmony). The left thumb lays in the perfect position to achieve this on the piano.

Teddy Wilson’s 1935 recording of “Rosetta,” composed by Earl Hines, provides several clear examples of this left-hand thumb melody technique.⁴³ Before discussing this technique in more detail, however, it would be prudent to acknowledge some of the other general facets of Wilson’s stride style that may have had an impact on Tatum as well. In general, Wilson plays fewer notes and tends to favor an open tenth rather than a filled-in tenth triad for his stride playing on beats 1 and 3. Furthermore, a more relaxed feel allows Wilson to sustain more notes with his left hand in order to emphasize the inner moving harmonies. Wilson’s left hand operates with a less structured approach than Waller and perhaps even Tatum.

⁴² Schuller, *Swing Era*, 507.

⁴³ Teddy Wilson, “Rosetta” *Teddy Wilson – Statements and Improvisations*, Smithsonian Special Collection – R005, 1977, LP, Accessed digitally March 6, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JDrBKMimfQs>.

Regarding the harmonic role of the left-hand tenor lines, "Rosetta" exemplifies an early Wilson take that captures the essence of this important technique. In Figure 9, notes that sound as if they are comprising a portion of the tenor countermelody line are notated with a tenuto marking. Although most of the notes deemed to be a part of this tenor countermelody have been notated as quarter notes, in listening to the recording one gets that sense that Wilson almost intends for these notes to ring until the next tenor thumb note is played. For example, the F# in m. 2 lasts at least two and maybe even three beats until it is played again on beat 4 of that measure. The ensuing tenor melody from mm. 2-4 of F#-G-F-E stands out on the recording as each of these tenor notes is struck percussively and produces a ringing bell-tone sound. Throughout the selection, Wilson makes fairly regular use of emphasizing the left-hand thumb melody as can be seen in the first four measures. Other important features that are common to the Tatum style include the tenth on beat 4 of mm. 12 and 16. Here we have a case where the oom-pah stride motion is reversed and there is strong voice-leading into the following measures. Measure 12 uses tenor countermelody to strengthen the downward resolution while m. 16 uses the same technique for an upward resolution.

Overall, these tenor lines created new possibilities for improvisation. Measure 14, for example, showcases a left-hand figure that most likely would not have been used by a stride pianist such as Fats Waller. Here Wilson omits the rest of the left-hand and just plays the important tenor voice-leading line devoid of any literal harmonic support (denoted with tenuto markings). This texture would continue to become a part of Tatum's style, but would be most completely developed a few years later with the advent of bebop and Bud Powell's "shell voicings." In m. 19, Wilson similarly eschews a harmonized walking bass line in favor of a sustained G bass note with an ascending harmonic elaboration through use of the left-

Fig. 9 – Teddy Wilson: “Rosetta”

0:06 ♩=140

1 Eb⁶ D7(♯5) Eb⁶ G7/D C7

5 F7 Bb7 Eb⁶ Gb7 F#o7 Fm7 Bb7

9 Eb D7 Eb⁶ G7/D C7

13 F7 Bb7 Eb⁶ F9 Bb D7

17 Gm/Bb Gm⁶ A^o7 D7 Gm Ebm7

21 Bb/D Dbm F7 Bb7

25 Eb⁶ D7(♯5) F7 Bb7 Eb⁶ G7 C7

29 F9 Bb7 Eb⁶ F#o7 Fm7 Bb7

Detailed description: This is a musical score for the bass line of 'Rosetta' by Teddy Wilson. The score is in 3/4 time with a tempo of 140 beats per minute. It consists of eight staves of music, each starting with a measure number (1, 5, 9, 13, 17, 21, 25, 29). The key signature has two flats (Bb and Eb). The notation includes various chords such as Eb6, D7(♯5), G7/D, C7, F7, Bb7, Eb6, Gb7, F#o7, Fm7, Bb7, Eb, D7, Eb6, G7/D, C7, F7, Bb7, Eb6, F9, Bb, D7, Gm/Bb, Gm6, A°7, D7, Gm, Ebm7, Bb/D, Dbm, F7, Bb7, Eb6, D7(♯5), F7, Bb7, Eb6, G7, C7, F9, Bb7, Eb6, F#o7, Fm7, and Bb7. A triplet of eighth notes is marked in measure 9. The score ends with a double bar line and a key signature change to one flat (Bb).

hand thumb. Beats 3 and 4 of m. 23 also display a technique that would become a common Tatum device. That is, in sustaining two of the three notes in a tenth triad for two beats with one of the notes moving on the second beat, two completely different harmonies can be created within the same hand position. Measure 26 contains a thumb melody device also used by Tatum. In substituting a dominant F⁷ chord for the ii chord in a ii-V-I progression, Wilson allowed for chromatic thumb voice-leading in order to emphasize landing on the E^b tenth triad of m. 27. Lastly, the figure on beats 3 and 4 of m. 30 features a sustained thumb note—the third of a ii chord—being held for two beats while the lower portion of the left hand plays first the ii bass note and then the V bass note. As stated earlier, these left-hand tenor thumb melodies changed how the stride left hand was played as the tradition continued into the 30s and evolved into Swing piano.

Figure 10 shows a 1940 Art Tatum recording of “Georgia on My Mind” (another after-hours session), in which the tenor thumb melody technique of Tatum can be heard in a very prominent way in the third and fourth measure of each A section.⁴⁴ This occurs first in mm. 3 and 4 with a strictly chromatic descending tenor melody beginning on the A^b on beat 1 of m. 3. By first moving down to become the G for the E^b⁷ chord followed by the G^b for A^b⁷, F for the D^b, E for the C[#] diminished, E^b for the C diminished, D for the B diminished and even D^b for the B^b^{min7} chord in bar 6, Tatum continues this chromatic descent over three full measures. Keeping the tenor notes legato is certainly a challenge for portions like this and, as Gunther Schuller noted, is only really physically possible for pianists with a certain hand span. An ingenious bit of Tatum tenor voice-leading occurs in m. 22. Here Tatum begins the measure with a strong A^b from his thumb on the F minor chord with a somewhat inaudible

⁴⁴ Art Tatum, *God Is In The House*.

Fig. 10 – Art Tatum: “Georgia On My Mind”

0:00 ♩=150

1 $A\flat$ G C^7 Fm^7 $E\flat^7$ $A\flat^7$ $D\flat$ $C\sharp^{\circ 7}$

5 $C^{\circ 7}$ $B^{\circ 7}$ $B\flat m$ $E\flat$ G^7 $A\flat$ $A^{\circ 7}$ $B\flat m^7$ $E\flat$

9 $A\flat$ G C^7 Fm^7 $E\flat^7$ $A\flat^7$ $D\flat$ $C\sharp^{\circ 7}$

13 Cm $B^{\circ 7}$ $B\flat m$ $E\flat^7$ $A\flat$ $D^{\circ 7}$ $G^{\circ 7}$ $C^7(b9)$

17 Fm $B\flat m$ Fm $B\flat m$ Fm $B\flat m$ F^7 $B\flat^7$

21 Fm Gm^7 C^7 Fm F^7 G^7 Cm D^7 $G^7(b9)/B$ $B\flat^{\circ 7}$ $A\flat^7$ G^7 $E\flat^7$

25 $A\flat$ G^7 C^7 Fm $E\flat^7$ $A\flat^7$ $D\flat^6$ $D\flat m^6$

29 Cm $B^{\circ 7}$ $B\flat m^7$ A^7 $A\flat^6$ $B^{\circ 7}$ $B\flat m^7$ $E\flat^7$

E played on beat 2. Beat three follows as an F major tenth with the thumb adding an extra passing tone of B \flat before ascending with the rest of the hand to play a G major tenth on beat 4. Tatum's tenor line adaptations are also examined in "Tea for Two" and will further be examined in "Ain't Misbehavin'" in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS ON TATUM'S STRIDE STYLE

After examining some of the origins of Art Tatum's stride style, we will examine a few more of his performances in order to more completely grasp Tatum's approach. As mentioned in the preface, only two Art Tatum solo piano performance videos are known to exist. Below is the first 16 measures of Tatum's stride playing in his 1953 rendition of Dvořák's "Humoresque."⁴⁵ This portion begins the middle stride section of the overall large-scale form of the piece, Tatum begins slowly in the first measure but then displays masterful harmonic flow in beats 3 and 4 of the second measure. Here we can see Tatum playing a D \flat /F tenth triad on beat 3 and changing to a F⁷ tenth triad on beat 4 while holding the lowest note F. More movement of this type occurs again in mm. 4 and 12 in a clever four-beat resolution of a G \flat ⁷ chord to a D \flat /A \flat chord. These passages are a wonderful example of a preconceived form that Tatum would include his alternate chord changes as a turnaround to begin the next Tatum left-hand stride pattern. Tatum maintains a B \flat and a G \flat for the first three beats of these measures as he moves the inner voice around before playing a G diminished tenth voicing that resolves to the D \flat /A \flat chord in the following measure.

⁴⁵ Art Tatum, "Art Tatum Plays Dvorak," YouTube video, 2:45, posted by "steveie986," June 4th, 2006, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qYcZGPLAnHA>.

Perhaps one of the most identifiable characteristics of the Tatum style which hasn't been discussed yet, chromatic reharmonizations, appears in mm. 7-8. This excerpt is not exactly stride, which precludes the most dramatic of Tatum harmonizations from inclusion in this study. However, with this example it is possible to get an idea of some of Tatum's reharmonization tendencies. First, the passage in question occurs during the last two measures of an 8-measure phrase. This was the most common place within the 32-bar song

Fig. 11 – Art Tatum: “Humoresque”

0:48 ♩=205

1 D^{\flat} $D^{\flat 7}$ F^7 $G^{\flat 7}$ $D^{\flat 7}$ $G^{\flat 7}$

5 D^{\flat}/A^{\flat} $A^{\flat 7}$ D^{\flat} C^7 $B^{\flat 7}$ 3 $E^{\flat m 7}$ A^7 $D^{\flat m 7}$ G^7 $E^{\flat m 7}$ $A^{\flat 7}$

9 D^{\flat} $D^{\flat 7}$ $G^{\flat 7}$ $D^{\flat 7}$ $G^{\flat 7}$

13 D^{\flat}/A^{\flat} $E^{\flat 7}(\flat 9)$ $A^{\flat 7}$ $D^{\flat 7}$ $A^{\flat 7}$ $D^{\flat 7}$ F^7

form that Tatum would include his alternate chord changes as a turnaround to begin the next phrase. In this particular example, Tatum plays a iii-VI-ii-V pattern in the key of C (half-step below tonic) for six beats before adding in a quick two-beat resolution back to the tonic key of D^{\flat} . When executing these chord substitutions, Tatum would hold the tenor lead lines (m. 7) according to the desired harmonic rhythm and resolve the lower notes accordingly.

* Art Tatum, "Ain't Misbehavin'," *Get Happy!* Black Lion Records BLP 30194, 1977, Digital.

One final example of Tatum's overall stride style comes from his 1938 recording of "Ain't Misbehavin'."⁴⁶ This recording is a fitting culmination of all the stride techniques discussed in this study. To begin, Tatum makes extensive use of sustaining tenor thumb melodies throughout this entire chorus. The amount of tenuto markings indicate just how much attention was given to the thumb melody on this rendition. Similar to the other examples examined in this study, these tenor thumb melodies move by step or third except for when Tatum decides to 'reset' the line of tenths (m. 11).

Much like the version of "Humoresque" examined earlier, Tatum again employs a chromatic harmonic reharmonization in mm. 7-8. Beginning on beat 3 in m. 7, Tatum begins a cycle of ii-V progressions of F^{min}-B^{b7}, E^{min}-A⁷ (inverted) and E^{bmin}-A^{b7}. Tatum doesn't play this reharmonized passage in full stride but in the Teddy Wilson style of step-wise open tenths. Measure 27 also presents a complete functional harmonic progression. Here Tatum plays a D^b major tenth triad on beat 1, a G^b/B^b (IV chord) on beat 2, then an A^{b7} tenth triad on beat three followed by a closed voicing of D^{b7} on beat 4 to lead to G^{b6} in the next measure. The main reason this passage is so interesting is that the top note of the first voicing is an F, followed by a descending chromatic walkdown D^b, C, C^b and finally landing on B^b for the G^b tenth triad. Lastly, m. 31 contains another smooth Tatum tenth turnaround. Here Tatum lands on a D^b major tenth, descends to an F⁷/C diminished tenth on beat 2 followed by a B^{b7} dominant tenth on beat 3, all the while ensuring smooth voice-leading with a stepwise descending tenor line.

⁴⁶ Art Tatum, "Ain't Misbehavin'," *Get Happy!* Black Lion Records BLP 30194, 1977, Digital.

Fig. 12 – Art Tatum: “Ain’t Misbehavin’”

0:00 ♩=135

1 Db Ebm7 Ab7 Db F7 Gb Ebm Gb^{o7}

5 Db/F E7 Eb⁹ Ab7 Db Fm7 Bb7 A7 Ebm7 Ab7

9 Db Ebm7 Ab7 C7 Db Db7/Ab Gb Ebm7 Ab7

13 Db/F E7 Eb⁹ Ab7 Db Gb^{o7} Db/F

17 Bbm Gb/Bb Eb7/Bb Bb7

21 Cm B^{o7} Bbm7 Eb7 Ab7 Bb7 Eb7 Ab7

25 Db Ebm7 C7 Db Db7 Gb⁶ Ebm7

29 Bbm7/F E7 Eb7 Ab7 Db Bb7 Ebm Ab7

The image displays a musical score for Art Tatum's "Ain't Misbehavin'". It is written in bass clef with a key signature of two flats (Bb and Eb) and a tempo of 135 beats per minute. The score is divided into measures, with chord changes indicated above the staff. The chords listed are: 1: Db, Ebm7, Ab7, Db, F7, Gb, Ebm, Gb^{o7}; 5: Db/F, E7, Eb⁹, Ab7, Db, Fm7, Bb7, A7, Ebm7, Ab7; 9: Db, Ebm7, Ab7, C7, Db, Db7/Ab, Gb, Ebm7, Ab7; 13: Db/F, E7, Eb⁹, Ab7, Db, Gb^{o7}, Db/F; 17: Bbm, Gb/Bb, Eb7/Bb, Bb7; 21: Cm, B^{o7}, Bbm7, Eb7, Ab7, Bb7, Eb7, Ab7; 25: Db, Ebm7, C7, Db, Db7, Gb⁶, Ebm7; 29: Bbm7/F, E7, Eb7, Ab7, Db, Bb7, Ebm, Ab7.

Overall, the scope and magnitude of Art Tatum's piano skills are beyond compare. Perhaps this is one reason there seems to be a relatively limited amount of analytical musical literature examining the intricate stylings of this much-respected jazz master. In the mid-50s, shortly before Tatum's death, a poll was conducted by Leonard Feather for his upcoming *Encyclopedia of Jazz* asking jazz musicians which other player they admired most on their own instrument. "More than two-thirds of the pianists surveyed put Tatum at the top of the list."⁴⁷ This reverence held among pianists reveals the respect Tatum commanded from the most discerning of listeners. The countless hyperbolic statements that have been made regarding Tatum's prowess and technical proficiency speak for themselves. Although Tatum's overall style might not have possessed the greatest popular appeal or even received the greatest critical accolades throughout his career, there was never a shortage of respect for the skills he commanded. His reharmonizations, although not discussed extensively in this study, paved the way for the future harmonic innovations of the Bebop Era. Strict examination of Tatum's stride playing displays a historical approach rooted in the predecessors of jazz piano. In exploring the left-hand stride stylings of Art Tatum in greater detail, I hope to have promoted a greater understanding regarding the left-hand stride foundation of this man's undeniable singular musical genius. As the renowned jazz critic Barry Ulanov once said, "Tatum! You can't imitatum!"⁴⁸

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⁴⁷Ted Gioia, "The Dozens: Art Tatum at 100," Accessed March 4, 2016, <http://www.jazz.com/dozens/the-dozens-art-tatum-at-100>.

⁴⁸ Lester, 135.

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⁴⁹ Oscar Peterson, "Eight Bar Boogie Blues." YouTube video, 4:43, posted by "newjackwing21," June 21st, 2007, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XhQjwPI6H0k>.

A. Fig. 13 – Oscar Peterson: “Eight Bar Boogie Blues”⁴⁹

1:09 ♩=265

1 C7

5 F7 C7 A7

9 Dm7 G7 C7 Dm7 G7

13 C7 F7 C7

17 F7 C7 A7

21 Dm7 G7 C7

⁴⁹ Oscar Peterson, “Eight Bar Boogie Blues,” YouTube video, 4:43, posted by *Verve 514* “newjackswing21,” June 21st, 2007, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XhQjwPI6H0k>.

B. Fig. 14 – Hank Jones on “Please Don’t Talk About Me When I’m Gone”⁵⁰

1:02 ♩=135

1 Eb G⁷ C⁷ Gm⁷ C⁷

5 F⁷ Fm⁷ Bb⁷ G⁷ C⁷ Fm⁷ Bb⁷

9 Eb G⁷ C⁷ Gm⁷ C⁷

13 F⁷ Fm⁷ Bb⁷ Eb Abm⁶ Eb

17 G⁷ C⁷

21 F⁷ Fm⁷ C⁷(b9) Fm⁷ Bb⁹

25 Eb⁶ G⁷ C⁷ Gm⁷ Cm⁷

29 F⁷ Fm⁷ Bb⁷ G⁷ C⁷ F⁷ Bb⁹

⁵⁰ Hank Jones, “Please Don’t Talk About Me When I’m Gone,” *Handful of Keys*, Verve 514 216, 1993, CD. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uUT6En0PXXA>

C. Fig. 15 – Bram Wijnands: “Blues My Naughty Sweetie Gives To Me”⁵¹

0:46 ♩=220

1 Gm6

5 Cm6

9 D7 Gm6

13 A7 Eb/Bb D7

17 Gm6

21 Cm6 D7

25 G7 C7

29 F7 Bb6 Am7 D7

⁵¹ Bram Wijnands, ““Blues My Naughty Sweetie Gives To Me” ~ Bram Wijnands @ KC Riverfest ~ July 4th, 2010,” YouTube video, 2:51, posted by “tdub1949,” July 8th, 2010, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uUT6En0PXSA>.

D. Fig. 16 – Left-Hand Tenth Exercises

A few extra notes to consider for the pianist:

- Practice these exercises slowly, cleanly, and deliberately.
- Playing tenths often requires the development of a whole new set of hand muscles that are necessary in order to hold this span open. Be patient and don't force anything! It can take months or even years to build up the endurance necessary to play through even one full chorus. There are, of course, several instances of stride pianists who did not use tenths in their playing (Donald Lambert, for example). It is quite possible to create a satisfying stride left hand without using tenths, but for the most part, authentic stride requires heavy usage of this span.
- One of the key movements required of the pianist in order to be able to play tenths smoothly is a keen sense of control of the left-hand thumb. Specifically, the pianist must focus on developing the ability to open and close the left-hand thumb joint closest to the nail from 180° to 90° with great control.
- The exercises presented here deal specifically with becoming acquainted with the various left-hand tenths and tenth triads that Tatum and other stride pianists used. In familiarizing his/herself with these tenths, the pianist will discover an appreciation for the tenth as the harmonic and systemic foundation of Tatum's left-hand stride style.
- The aim of the following exercises is to present a methodology of familiarizing one's self systematically with the variations of tenths used in the stride style. Specifically, this set of systematic tenth exercises seeks to present a *physical* foundation upon which a pianist can gain a greater understanding of left-hand tenths. In terms of construction of the left-hand stride portions, I've shied away from presenting too many of my own examples of how to apply these tenths in practice, opting instead to allow the Tatum transcriptions throughout the document serve as a style guide. Combining these analyzed examples with an ergonomic understanding of tenth technique—gained through adherence to these exercises—will give the pianist the ability to realize his/her own left-hand stride patterns. A collection of idiomatic walking tenth progressions is included at the end of the exercises.

Minor Seventh Tenth Triads

Open Minor Tenths

First staff of music for 'Open Minor Tenths'. It shows a sequence of notes in a bass clef, starting with a B-flat, followed by a sequence of notes that form a minor tenth interval.

Second staff of music for 'Open Minor Tenths'. It continues the sequence of notes from the first staff, showing various inversions and positions of the minor tenth interval.

Minor Tenth Triads

First staff of music for 'Minor Tenth Triads'. It shows a sequence of triads in a bass clef, each consisting of a root note, a minor third, and a minor tenth above the root.

Second staff of music for 'Minor Tenth Triads'. It continues the sequence of triads from the first staff, showing various inversions and positions.

Diminished Tenth Triads

First staff of music for 'Diminished Tenth Triads'. It shows a sequence of triads in a bass clef, each consisting of a root note, a diminished third, and a diminished tenth above the root.

Second staff of music for 'Diminished Tenth Triads'. It continues the sequence of triads from the first staff, showing various inversions and positions.

Minor Seventh Tenth Triads

First staff of music for 'Minor Seventh Tenth Triads'. It shows a sequence of triads in a bass clef, each consisting of a root note, a minor seventh, and a minor tenth above the root.

Second staff of music for 'Minor Seventh Tenth Triads'. It continues the sequence of triads from the first staff, showing various inversions and positions.

Open Major Tenth

Two staves of musical notation in bass clef. The first staff contains a sequence of notes: C2, D2, E2, F2, G2, A2, B2, C3, D3, E3, F3, G3, A3, B3, C4. The second staff contains a sequence of notes: C3, D3, E3, F3, G3, A3, B3, C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5.

Major Tenth Triads

Two staves of musical notation in bass clef. The first staff contains triads: C2-E2-G2, D2-F2-A2, E2-G2-B2, F2-A2-C3, G2-B2-D3, A2-C3-E3, B2-D3-F3, C3-E3-G3, D3-F3-A3, E3-G3-B3, F3-A3-C4, G3-B3-D4, A3-C4-E4, B3-D4-F4, C4-E4-G4. The second staff contains triads: C3-E3-G3, D3-F3-A3, E3-G3-B3, F3-A3-C4, G3-B3-D4, A3-C4-E4, B3-D4-F4, C4-E4-G4, D4-F4-A4, E4-G4-B4, F4-A4-C5, G4-B4-D5, A4-C5-E5, B4-D5-F5, C5-E5-G5.

Dominant Tenth Triads

Two staves of musical notation in bass clef. The first staff contains triads: C2-E2-G2, D2-F2-A2, E2-G2-B2, F2-A2-C3, G2-B2-D3, A2-C3-E3, B2-D3-F3, C3-E3-G3, D3-F3-A3, E3-G3-B3, F3-A3-C4, G3-B3-D4, A3-C4-E4, B3-D4-F4, C4-E4-G4. The second staff contains triads: C3-E3-G3, D3-F3-A3, E3-G3-B3, F3-A3-C4, G3-B3-D4, A3-C4-E4, B3-D4-F4, C4-E4-G4, D4-F4-A4, E4-G4-B4, F4-A4-C5, G4-B4-D5, A4-C5-E5, B4-D5-F5, C5-E5-G5.

Major Seven Tenth Triads

Two staves of musical notation in bass clef. The first staff contains triads: C2-E2-G2, D2-F2-A2, E2-G2-B2, F2-A2-C3, G2-B2-D3, A2-C3-E3, B2-D3-F3, C3-E3-G3, D3-F3-A3, E3-G3-B3, F3-A3-C4, G3-B3-D4, A3-C4-E4, B3-D4-F4, C4-E4-G4. The second staff contains triads: C3-E3-G3, D3-F3-A3, E3-G3-B3, F3-A3-C4, G3-B3-D4, A3-C4-E4, B3-D4-F4, C4-E4-G4, D4-F4-A4, E4-G4-B4, F4-A4-C5, G4-B4-D5, A4-C5-E5, B4-D5-F5, C5-E5-G5.

Major Scales in Tenths

Staff 1: Major Scale in Tenths, C major, ascending and descending.

Staff 2: Major Scale in Tenths, D major, ascending and descending.

10th-11th Stretching Exercise

Staff 3: 10th-11th Stretching Exercise, C major, ascending and descending.

Staff 4: 10th-11th Stretching Exercise, D major, ascending and descending.

Staff 5: 10th-11th Stretching Exercise, E major, ascending and descending.

Staff 6: 10th-11th Stretching Exercise, F major, ascending and descending.

Staff 7: 10th-11th Stretching Exercise, G major, ascending and descending.

Staff 8: 10th-11th Stretching Exercise, A major, ascending and descending.

Staff 9: 10th-11th Stretching Exercise, B major, ascending and descending.

Staff 10: 10th-11th Stretching Exercise, C major, ascending and descending.

10th--11th Stretching Exercise

Dm7 C G/B D7/A G7 F7 C/E G7/D Dm7 C/E G/B D7/A G7 D7/A A7 G/B

12-Bar Blues Walking Tenth Triads

C7 G7/D C/B C7/G F7 C7/G F7 Dm7 C7 G7/D C/E F7 Gm Dm7 C7 C/E

F7 C7/G F/A C7/G F7 F/A Bb7 Bb7 C7 Gm7 F7 Em7 Em7 Em7/G A7 A7/C7

Dm7 A7/B Dm7/F D7/A G7 F7 C/E G/D C G7/D Bb7 Cb7 Dm Ab G G/B

I-ii one measure walking tenth triad examples

C G/D C/E E^b07 Dm C G/D C/E C[#]07 Dm

C G/D C/E E^bm7 Dm C G/D E^b07 C[#]07 Dm

C G/D Em7 A7 Dm C C/E E^b07 C[#]07 Dm

C B^b7 A7 A/C[#] Dm C G/B A7 A/C[#] Dm

C B^b7 A7 E^b7 Dm C B7 B^b7 A/C[#] Dm

ii-V examples

Dm7 A7/E Dm/F F[#]7 G7 D7/A G/B G7/D Dm7 A7/E Dm/F D7/A G7 F7 C/E G/D

Dm7 C G/B D7/A G7 F7 C/E G7/D Dm7 C/E G/B D7/A G7 D7/A A[#]07 G/B

12-Bar Blues Walking Tenth Triads

C7 G7/D C/E C7/G F7 C7/G F7 D^b7 C7 G7/D C/E F[#]07 Gm D^b7 C7 C/E

F7 C7/G F/A C7/G F7 F/A B^b07 B07 C7 G^b7 F7 E^bm7 Em7 Em/G A7 A7/C[#]

Dm7 A7/E Dm/F D7/A G7 F7 C/E G/D C G/D E^b7 C[#]07 Dm A^b G G/B

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