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Harmonic Cycles And The Influence Of John Coltrane On The Music Of Bheki Mseleku

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

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Harmonic Cycles And The Influence Of John Coltrane On The Music Of Bheki Mseleku

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the MMus (Musicology) degree

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I declare that careful attention was paid to all linguistic components of the original text. No edits were made to change the meaning or intention of any content written by the author.

Chanté de Klerk

31 August 2021

ABSTRACT

This study examines selected compositions of legendary South African jazz musician and composer Bheki Mseleku and focusses specifically on his use of harmonic cycles. The principles and applications of these harmonic cycles are attributed to the influence of American jazz saxophonist and composer John Coltrane. Non-functional harmonic cycles associated with Coltrane explore the symmetry of the harmonic system and are constructed through intervals that divide the octave into equal parts in works such as *Giant Steps*, *Countdown*, and *Like Sonny*. South African jazz and the work of Mseleku have up to date mainly been researched through a musicological lens but are largely under-researched in terms of technical musical analysis. Within this study, an in-depth investigation of several aspects of Mseleku's compositions *Monwabisi*, *Cycle*, *Love Joe*, *The Age Of The Divine Mother*, *Violet Flame*, *Yanini*, and *Timelessness* are conducted through the process of musical transcription and analysis. To compensate for the limited information available on Mseleku's work within academic literature, a grounded theory approach was used and adapted to suit the functions of musical analysis. During the data collection and analysis processes, two personal interviews were conducted with well-established South African jazz musicians who are greatly familiar with Mseleku and his work. The objective was to incorporate a more holistic and multidimensional view of Mseleku's work and legacy. Themes that emerged throughout the investigative process include the reverberations of Mseleku's presence on the South African jazz scene, the importance of his work in an educational context, connections to Coltrane that extend past his harmonic influence, and the concurrent existence of a wide range of influences within Mseleku's music.

Keywords: *Bheki Mseleku, John Coltrane, harmonic cycles, South African jazz, transcription, analysis*

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background and Rationale

According to Merriam-Webster (n.d.), a cycle is “a course or series of events or operations that recur regularly and usually lead back to the starting point”. The visual representation of a two-dimensional circle is probably the simplest way of explaining what a cycle is, where moving from the beginning to the end through a connected line leads back to the beginning. The cycle of life, for instance – birth, growth, decay, death, and rebirth – is one of many real-life examples of this phenomenon. Another is the rotation of a clock, where the hand starts at twelve and moves in a constant motion across the numbers, completing its revolution when it reaches the twelve again.

In music, a harmonic cycle can similarly be defined as a series of chords that are repeated in the same order and progress systematically until it reaches the first chord again. These chordal sequences are determined by their root movements and cyclic motion can be generated by successively applying the same interval, such as a 3rd or a 6th (Adler, 2012; Bair, 2003). A sequence of identical intervals can also be referred to as an *interval cycle* and is, as previously stated, generated by a succession of single intervals which maintain a constant *interval ratio* (Antokoletz & Susanni, 2012, p. 21). The interval ratio determines the harmonic distance between chords and causes it to move through a succession of keys until the initial chord of the cycle returns.

Harmonic cycles are at the root of many musical genres and are considered the “internal motor of jazz” (Joubert, 2018). Adler (2012) cites from a masterclass with alto saxophonist Gary Bartz at Michiko Studios in New York, that all the secrets of jazz harmonic progressions and substitutions can be deduced from studying cycles (Adler, 2012, para. 3). The harmonic structure of almost any jazz standard could be considered a cycle because it moves systematically through a formula of predetermined chord progressions which may be repeated indefinitely. “Expectation and predictability” are fundamental to the harmonic system in jazz because it is what enables musicians to create melodic variation and improvise over a predictable harmonic framework (Lilley, 2019, p. 3). Cycles are thus used as a compositional device as well as a vehicle for improvisation. Mathematical laws and relationships that are present in music allow chords to be combined in ways that create and sustain expectation without reaching a point of resolution. This is the nature of cycles – to follow a repeated pattern of events without ever reaching an ending point. As a result,

cyclical progressions provide a predictable harmonic blueprint while simultaneously enabling freedom of creative expression. Standard progressions, like the I – VI – II – V progression for example, provide a vast number of possibilities for creative exploration within a basic, predictable harmonic framework. A familiar example of a harmonic cycle is the *circle of fifths*. The circle of fifths is an arrangement of all twelve notes of the chromatic scale in which the next pitch is found seven semitones (a perfect 4th) higher than the last or where each note is a perfect 5th lower than the preceding one (Levine, 1989). The cycle systematically progresses through all twelve notes of the chromatic scale and then eventually reaches the starting chord again.

A particular interest of this study is the construction and use of symmetrical cycles. Symmetrical cycles are constructed through intervals which divide the octave into equal parts. For instance, two tritones make up the value of one octave, which means that it can divide the octave equally into two parts. Similarly, an octave can be divided into three equal parts by a major 3rd interval, four equal parts by a minor 3rd interval, six equal parts by a major 2nd (whole tone) interval, and twelve equal parts by a semitone. This principle will be explained more thoroughly in sections *2.3 Coltrane and cycles* and *2.4.2 Bheki Mseleku*; the way in which it applies to the music of Bheki Mseleku (1955–2008) and John Coltrane (1926–1967) will also be discussed in depth.

Within this research inquiry, the principles and application of harmonic cycles will be investigated through the music of Bheki Mseleku alongside the impact of John Coltrane on the conceptualisation of this practice. The use of cycles, and especially symmetrical cycles, form a central thread in Coltrane's as well as Mseleku's work and in order to better understand how they function in these composers' music, it requires investigation.

Bheki Mseleku can be considered an important figure in South African jazz because he was able to bridge the gap between local and international styles of jazz, merging different streams into his unique characteristic voice (Fordham, 2008). Amongst professional jazz players, there is resounding agreement as to where Mseleku drew his inspiration from. Akin to his predecessors in the South African jazz scene such as Abdullah Ibrahim (b.1934) and Hugh Masekela (1939–2018), Mseleku's music was rooted in South African jazz idioms such as *marabi*, *kwela* and *mbaqanga* (Lusk, 2008). Mseleku's playing showcased the music he had been exposed to in his own country, but sonically it is evident that he was also strongly influenced by the American jazz tradition. Through my own interactions with knowledgeable jazz players and teachers, as well as some experience with playing and studying Mseleku's music, I have come to know that a critical influence on the American aspect of Mseleku's playing was the internationally recognised jazz musician, composer, and saxophonist John

Coltrane (1926–1967). Musically, Mseleku drew direct influences from the modal structures and harmonic concepts practiced by John Coltrane and McCoy Tyner (1938–2020) in the 1960s (Fordham, 2008). As a composer and improviser, Mseleku's strong American influences were in harmonious balance with his South African ones and the concurrent existence of these two worlds allowed for the expansion and development of South African jazz.

As a jazz piano student, I have been very drawn to Bheki Mseleku's music. Attempting to study more about his music, I realised that there is limited information available in academic literature. South African jazz has mainly been researched through a musicological lens, focusing on sociological and political aspects, for example – but it is largely under-researched in terms of technical musical analysis. One of my research interests is to contribute to this dearth of research.

The connection between the South African and American styles in Mseleku's music becomes evident through the exploration of his compositional and improvisational style. Through the process of transcription and analysis, I investigated how Mseleku combined different aesthetics in his work which resulted in his unique sound ideology and musical expression. Throughout the study, I focussed on Mseleku's approach to harmony within his compositions and improvisations through his incorporation of Coltrane-influenced concepts relating to harmonic cycles. While harmony remained the core of this study, I also investigated Mseleku's melodic, stylistic, and improvisational approaches. The melodic and improvisational elements are reliant on the harmony and thus provide a more holistic portrayal of the harmonic realm. These elements are also important to recognise the stylistic aspects and approaches in Mseleku's music. Transcribing and analysing Mseleku's music thus allowed me to investigate his use of harmonic cycles on a rudimentary level, the influence Coltrane had on his conception of harmony, and how he merged local and international streams of jazz into his unique characteristic style.

1.2. Objective of the Study

The purpose of this study was to develop a more nuanced understanding of Bheki Mseleku's use of harmony and harmonic cycles. The study focussed specifically on the influence of American jazz saxophonist and composer John Coltrane, his use of cyclic harmony and the impact of his harmonic concepts on the music of Mseleku. It also explored how Mseleku combined South African and American jazz idioms by incorporating cyclic

harmony such as the [1]*Coltrane matrix* or the diminished or augmented axes[2], together with more traditional South African jazz harmony into his compositions and improvisations to create a unique blend that is characteristic of his style.

The study aimed to expand existing literature on the harmonic complexities evident in Mseleku's compositions and improvisations. Exploring Coltrane's influence allows demonstration of how Mseleku combined South African and American idioms in his music. This section of the study will add to the existing literature (Dalamba, 2019; Jonker, 2015; Webb, 2018) which discusses the hybridisation of American and South African jazz and how combining these traditions can promote better understanding, appreciation and growth in jazz performance practice and pedagogy.

The musical transcriptions produced in this study will serve as material for further study and educational purposes, to enhance jazz pedagogy in South Africa and to promote the recognition of South African jazz as a valid stream for research. This contribution will advance the knowledge corpus of South African jazz and create material for further inquiry. Sufficient pedagogical material will create a better opportunity for jazz in South Africa to be studied through indigenous knowledge systems, instead of through a traditionally accepted Western ideological perspective. Lastly, the study endeavours to make Mseleku's use of harmony more accessible and serve as a source of reference for performers, as well as models for compositions and arrangements to jazz musicians, teachers, and students.

1.3. Research Questions

Main research question

To what extent is Bheki Mseleku's compositional approach and harmonic conception influenced and informed by the music of John Coltrane?

Secondary research questions

- How has Mseleku's work elevated South African jazz on an international stage?
- What is the impact of Mseleku's work on South African jazz pedagogy and how does the analysis of his music advance this area of study?
- Where can we draw the similarities between South African and American jazz in

1 Refer to section 2.3 *John Coltrane's innovations and influence*

2 Refer to section 2.3 *John Coltrane's innovations and influence*

Mseleku's work, and how have the relationship and contributions between the two styles advanced the art form?

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

In order to understand the inner workings of and the basis upon which harmonic cycles rest, we need to take a look at the establishment and development of harmonic cycles throughout history. This literature review investigates the European tonal system and the established principles that influenced harmonic function and the behaviour of cycles, as well as the dissolution of this system which led to the emergence of symmetrical harmonic cycles. This review gives a detailed account of John Coltrane's use of symmetrical cycles as harmonic device and melodic vocabulary within a jazz context, and its development throughout his career. Subsequently, a review of different aspects of Mseleku as an artist aims to build a solid foundation upon which his music and use of cycles can be analysed. To have a holistic understanding of Mseleku's music and to portray it as accurately as possible, it is crucial to study both his musical and non-musical influences. This literature review takes his geographical, cultural, and sociopolitical background, as well as his spiritual and philosophical beliefs, religion, and relationships into consideration to contextualise his music. Finally, the technical and musical analysis of South African jazz has to date not been researched extensively. Therefore, it is necessary to draw from other sources of information to devise an informed and systematic approach to the analysis of Mseleku's work. For this reason, this review also lists different methods and sources regarding jazz transcription and analysis and argues its importance in the discourse.

2.1. The Influence of Harmonic Systems on the Use of Cycles

The use of cycles in compositional practice has been an integral part of the musical discipline for centuries and its lineage can be traced even as far back as Bach (1685–1750) and Beethoven's (1770–1827) compositions (Joubert, 2018). Symmetrical cycles, however, have been an evolutionary product of the movement from the traditional tonal system towards a dissolution of this system, where equal importance is placed on each note of the chromatic scale.

The two most widely recognised means of establishing tonality in Western music is by means of the modal and tonal systems. The modal system is based on church modes and include monophonic and polyphonic music of the Middle ages, Renaissance, and early Baroque periods. The harmonic and melodic characteristics of the music are derived from the unique structure of particular modes. The tonal system is based on a system of major

and minor scales and includes music of the Baroque, Classical and Romantic eras (Antokoletz & Susanni, 2012). Intervals, primary triads, and tertian constructions represent the principal harmonic elements of this system. The music of the tonal system adheres to certain fundamental principles which dictate the way in which the music is constructed and behaves.

Both the modal and tonal system are based on a hierarchy of tonal functions which means that there is more importance placed on certain individual scale degrees than others. With the exception of the Dorian mode, all diatonic modes are asymmetrical structures that subdivide the octave unequally. Tonality itself is based on scales with unequal intervals because differences in intervals create different points of interest, stability, and attraction (Belkin, 2003). The combination of intervals in each scale has a distinct acoustic character, and this means that there are certain characteristic relationships between the notes of specific scales which establish their sonority and set them apart from other scales. *Active tones* within an unequal scale create instability, pushing the music forward and allowing it to move – while if all the intervals of a chord are equidistant, the effect would be static or ambiguous (Belkin, 2003).

Within both the modal and tonal systems, the music has a tonal centre (tonic) which can be seen as the *centre of gravity* towards which all other chords gravitate and resolve to. “All the constituent tones and resulting tonal relationships are heard and identified relative to their tonic” (Antokoletz & Susanni, 2012, p. 66). In the sphere of traditional tonal progressions, each note fulfils a specific tonal function according to its contextual position (Antokoletz & Susanni, 2012). The particular function of each note is determined by its position within the scale; for example, the function of the leading tone within the tonic system is to resolve to the tonic (Mount, 2020). In other words, tonality governs a specific set of rules which dictate the way in which the music is constructed to form tension and to resolve again. A dominant 7th (G7) chord, for instance, wants to resolve back to the major 7th tonic (CMaj7) because of the unstable and dissonant tritone interval between its 3rd and 7th scale degrees. During the tonal era, the tritone became one of the cornerstones of tonal function because of its chromatic or half step distance to a tonic resolution. The tritone contains both leading tone and subdominant scale degrees that resolve either inwardly or outwardly by half step to the tonic triad (Mount, 2020).

During the second half of the nineteenth century, an increase in the degree of chromaticism resulted in a loosening of functional tonal relationships. Composers from as far back as the early Romantic period (1798–1837), like Beethoven, and especially during the late romantic period, like Schubert (1797–1828), Wolf (1860–1903) [Demsey, 1991] and

Liszt (1811–1886) started making extensive use of the fully diminished 7th chord and the augmented triad due to their unique colours and tonally ambiguous symmetrical properties (Mount, 2020). The reason for this is that the diminished 7th chord can be resolved in a number of different ways, where any of the four chord tones can become the leading tone. The lowering of any of the four chord tones of the diminished chord can thus produce four different dominant 7th chords and in turn, resolve to four different tonics (Antokoletz & Susanni, 2012). Similarly, the augmented triad can be resolved in several different ways by chromatically raising or lowering different combinations of its chord tones. Like the fully diminished 7th chord, the chord tones of the augmented triad can be assigned the same function to render them equal (Mount, 2020). Composers used these chords as a way to loosen the rules of set harmonic progressions, make tonal direction completely unpredictable and suspend the establishment of a key.

2.2. The Dissolution of the Tonal System and Symmetrical Cycles

The increased use of symmetrical pitch constructions effected a dissolution of the traditional tonal system and allowed for the creation of a new kind of musical language based on symmetrical relationships, rather than tonal ones (Antokoletz & Suzanni, 2012). At first, these new techniques incorporated principles of symmetry and symmetrical inversion but were still based on functional harmonic progression rather than an axis of symmetry. Towards the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, however, cyclic concepts and symmetrical musical relationships started to infiltrate many aspects of musical composition. Composers started to base their works entirely on symmetrical relations which required a new kind of harmonic language, resulting in the challenging of “common” perceptions of tonal relationships and a need to radically alter the notion of musical aesthetics. The interval cycles and compound cyclic pitch collections replaced minor and major scales of the tonal era as a source for the majority of the 20th century musical idiom (Antokoletz & Susanni, 2012, p. 25). Function-based tonality could no longer accommodate symmetrical pitch relations and tonal progression no longer relied on tonal hierarchy generated by the order of the pitches of the major and minor scale. Symmetrical pitch relations generated their own form of tonal progression, and a new set of general rules were established (Antokoletz & Susanni, 2012).

New ways of establishing tonal centres were achieved in several different ways, one of which were symmetrical pitch collections such as the system of interval cycles (Antokoletz & Susanni, 2012). The concept of axial symmetry is used in many 20th century works as a means of establishing a new kind of tonal centricity. By dividing an octave into equal parts

through successively applying the same interval, a symmetrical axis is established around which tonality is centred. Each interval is tonicised, and the axis functions as a structural device around which a composition is arranged or based on. Axes operate in much the same way as do traditional centres in tonal works. These axes can be used as a basis for the organisation of both cyclic and modal pitch collections, or as a new means of tonal progression (Antokoletz & Susanni, 2012, p. 69).

In order to understand Bheki Mseleku's music and his use of cycles, it is important to have a good understanding of the basic principles of functional harmony and the concepts of voice leading that dictate pitch relationships, but also of the dissolution of tonal function which relies on the equal or symmetrical subdivision of the octave and the establishment of a new harmonic functional system.

2.3. Coltrane and Cycles

Jazz and popular music has a structure and history surprisingly similar to European art music. During the nineteenth century Romanic period, tonic-dominant tonality was altered and blurred to the point at which it ceased to be the most important factor in composition (Antokoletz & Susanni, 2012). The early composers of popular and jazz music were deeply affected by nineteenth century European models (Demsey, 1991), and much like nineteenth century European art music, tonality in jazz has undergone a process of expansion. A powerful tool in that expansion has been the chromatic 3rd-relation, leading to equal division of the tonic.

"In any given period, a handful of innovators are responsible for introducing new concepts into the music, or simply reinterpreting or reshaping the extant language consistent with imperatives of that time" (Baker, 1980, p. 2). The composer most strongly associated with the use of chromatic 3rd-relation techniques in the "modern" jazz era is the American jazz musician, composer, and saxophonist John Coltrane (Demsey, 1991). Coltrane had a significant influence on modern jazz through his expansion of harmonic and melodic vocabulary (Baker, 1980). The introduction of harmonic and melodic interval cycles into jazz repertoire as compositional and improvisational tool made waves throughout the jazz community and left a lasting impact on the development of jazz (Bair, 2003; Demsey, 1991). Some of Coltrane's harmonic innovations included symmetrical interval cycles, advanced systems of substitutions, chord superimpositions, expanding "scalar options", and devising more sophisticated linking devices (Baker, 1980, p. 10).

Porter (1998) offers a reliable guide to the events of Coltrane's life and an insightful look

into his musical practices. He investigates Coltrane's musical influences, his compositions, and his improvisational style and these discussions are interwoven with the biographical narrative in a well-balanced way.

Coltrane's musical output can roughly be categorised into four overlapping periods: the "Post-Bop Period", the "Vertical Period" (also known as the "Change Running Period"), the "Modal Period", and the "Experimental Period" (Baker, 1980, p. 10). These periods are all characterised by different musical aesthetics and display how Coltrane was constantly evolving as a musician and composer (Porter, 1998). Coltrane's second period, the Modal Period, can be defined by his preference for sparse chordal movement, lengthy improvisations, and a more horizontal approach to melody. The Experimental Period is characterised by an exploration of unconventional instrumentation, pan-modality, undetermined compositional structures, and varied methods of sound production (Baker, 1980). I will expand only on Coltrane's first period, the Vertical Period, due to its relevance to this study and also because this period contained developments and building blocks that extended into the later periods (Demsey,1991). This period can be defined through an abundance of chord changes that often move at the same pace as the melody.

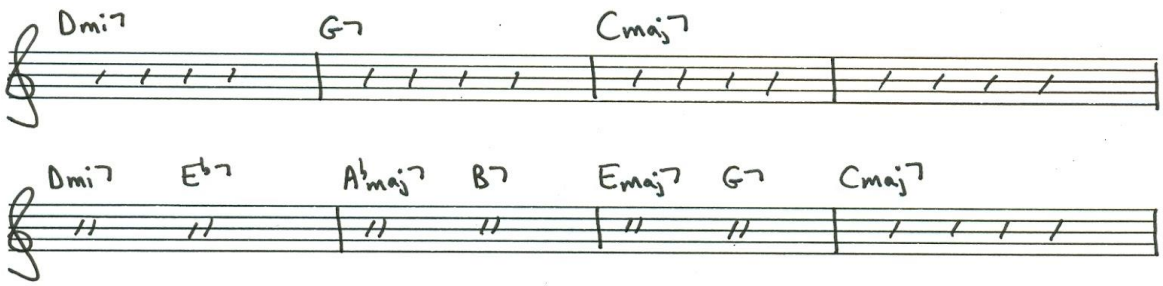
During the Vertical Period, Coltrane initially applied the harmonic devices of his contemporaries, namely ii – V7 patterns of the bebop era, turnarounds, and use of tritone substitutions. Later, he started exploring different techniques of substitutions and devised an intricate system known as the "Coltrane substitutions" (Baker, 1980, p. 17). Coltrane often reworked simple tunes and made them much more complex through sophisticated systems of substitutions based on symmetrical interval cycles. He explored multiple possibilities and scale alternatives of harmonic situations, even over the chords of the more advanced set of substitutions he devised. This usually happened in a short span of time as the density of chords also affected the speed of harmonic rhythm. Coltrane's approach to chromaticism directly influenced his approach to harmony.

Common practice within jazz repertoire is to create harmonic movement and establish tonic centres within the structure of a composition by the use of the standard ii – V – I progression. *Coltrane's changes* are derived from the basic ii – V – I progression and utilise a cycle of descending major and minor 3rds superimposed over this progression (Ricker & Weiskopf, 1991). He often employed chromatic 3rd relations in original compositions and arrangements as an elaboration or substitute progression over ii – V – I harmony (Bair, 2003) to advance the harmonic complexity, which resulted in vertically dense harmonic structures where chords and scales are stacked on top of each other (Baker, 1980, p. 10). Coltrane's method of reaching the tonic chord is just a different means to an end. Within

each cadential pattern between the ii and V chord, two rapid V – I cadences are interpolated. Each tonic centre is a major or minor 3rd apart and the movement through the cycle to each tonic chord is controlled by a dominant-to-tonic cadence to establish the new temporary harmonic centre (Demsey, 1991).

Figure A

Coltrane cycle over a ii – V – I progression



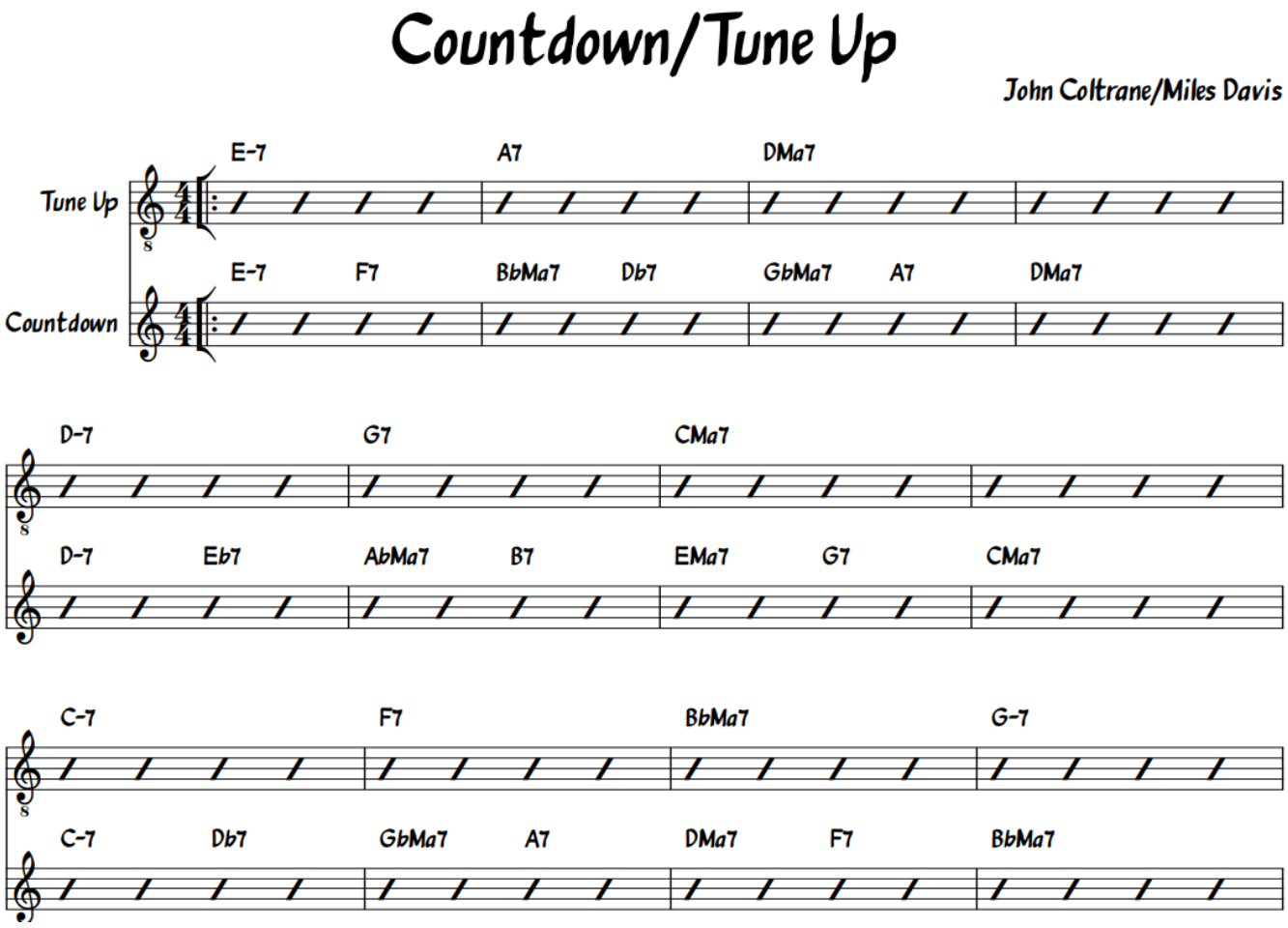
It is important to note that there is a striking aural difference between common practice motions by 3rd and equidistant 3rds-related key centres (Demsey, 1991). Simple root movement by 3rds only acts as a weaker auxiliary progression between I and V movement, while non-functional harmonic progressions like 3rds relations acts to “weaken or blur tonality because it changes the function and harmonic or melodic tendency of the pitches involved” (Demsey, 1991, p. 4). With major 3rd relations for example, three equidistant keys, which are not diatonically related according to traditional functional harmony, are being tonicised. Chromatic 3rds relations thus contain pitches which are foreign to the home key or any of its related minor scales.

Coltrane’s compositions of the late 1950s and early 1960s can be characterised by their use of major and minor 3rds cycles as chord structure (Bair, 2003). His use of the 3rds cycle was originally devised as a substitute chord progression for existing changes and the idea for using harmonic substitution to create dense vertical harmonic structures occurred as an improvisational tool to master rapid chord changes. Coltrane’s composition *Countdown* borrows its structural framework from the standard *Tune Up*, composed by Miles Davis (1926–1991) (Demsey, 1991; Ricker & Weiskopf, 1991). Coltrane, however, composed a new melody on the downward sequence of ii – V – I progressions, and also utilised a cycle of major 3rds instead to reach the tonic chords. The second and third phrase is a sequential repetition of the first phrase, this time transposed a whole step down. The compositional process of creating a new melody on an existing chord progression can be identified with the bebop era of the late '40s. Coltrane successfully created a new direction for jazz to develop

into while still incorporating the traditional practices of the style (Bair, 2003).

Figure B

Countdown chord progression over Tune Up

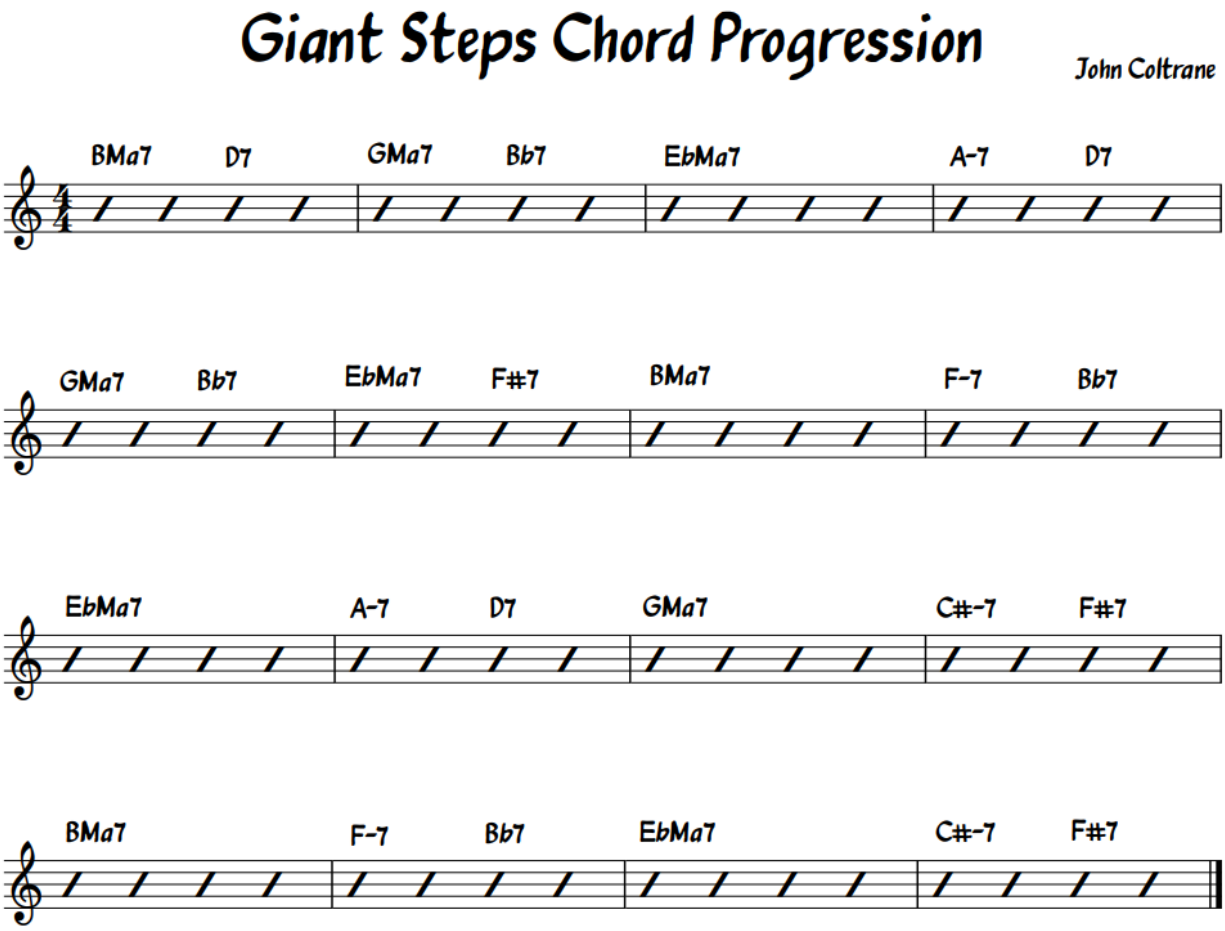


Further down Coltrane's route of exploration he not only used the 3rds cycle as a substitution device, but also created entire compositions based on this concept. One of his most famous compositions and also probably the most well-known example of this is *Giant Steps* – completely devised around a major 3rds-related cycle.

[Figure C on following page]

Figure C

Giant Steps chord progression



Giant Steps is devised around a major 3rd axis and tonicises the keys of E♭, B, and G. The first half of the tune moves through a rapid succession of major 3rd-related intervals, only prepared by its V7 while the ii-chord is omitted. In the second half of the tune, each tonic centre is established by a traditional ii – V – I (Ricker & Weiskopf, 1991). Giant Steps represents the most highly organised use of the 3rd-related principle in any of Coltrane's compositions (Demsey, 1991). Here it is not used as a reharmonisation technique plugged into a previously existing chord progression. The equidistant *major 3rd relationship* functions as the main compositional element, and the structural framework is made up of a complete 3rds-related cycle in itself without making use of a tonic-dominant axis (Demsey, 1991). The function of the progression is to form a complete major 3rds cycle. In other words, the interval cycle no longer functions as substitutions that prolong the tonic, but rather as chordal "sequences" that continuously perpetuate themselves (Bair, 2003).

Coltrane later ceased to incorporate his practice of using cycles as a tool for composing harmonic progressions, but the concept remained a part of his improvisational and melodic vocabulary. “Coltrane’s musical style was rooted in deriving melodies from the set structure of predetermined chord progressions” (Bair, 2003). During his Modal and Experimental periods, the dissolution of chordal structure created the need for a unifying or organisational element in his improvisations. Cyclic interval patterns offered him just that:

> What started out as a means for mastering difficult chord progressions and chord substitutions in his own compositions and standard jazz repertoire became one of the solutions that provided direction for improvisation over compositions with modal or free structure (Bair, 2003, p. 56).

Coltrane later extended the use of cycles as compositional structures and started incorporating them as melodic patterns that imply harmonic progression over modal pieces, static harmonic accompaniment, or pedal points. Numerous examples of instances of melodically implied major 3rds cycles in the form of descending V7 – I cadences over static harmony provide evidence that he continued to incorporate these cycles into his improvisations (Bair, 2003, p. 103). These cyclic interval patterns include constructions based on the perfect 4th, major 3rd, minor 3rd, whole tone, and tritone interval progressions. Coltrane superimposed these patterns over static harmonic accompaniment, sometimes repeating them exactly with a change in context or material surrounding them or developing them melodically in extensive improvisations. It is clear that these cyclic patterns of implied key-centres a major 3rd apart were originally derived from the chord progressions of compositions such as Countdown, *26-2*, and Giant Steps, but take on a new function in the form of melodic vocabulary.

The interval cycles used by Coltrane were unlike typical jazz vocabulary used by other artists in improvisation up to that time. Coltrane’s highly original musical language was the product of an eclectic mixture of elements, but scholars believe that the most noticeable resemblances to Coltrane’s use of interval cycles and the structural principles of the nineteenth century can be found in Nicolas Slonimsky’s *Thesaurus of Scales and Melodic Patterns* (1949) (Bair, 2003; Demsey, 1991; Porter, 1998). The purpose of Slonimsky’s book was to create a sort of database of symmetrical scales and mode organisations, reflecting the early 20th century techniques of Béla Bartók (1881–1945) and Aleksandr Scriabin (1871–1915) (Demsey, 1991).

To construct scales and patterns, Slonimsky used intervals such as tritones, major 3rds, and minor 3rds to subdivide the octave into equal parts and via the use of *interpolation*, *infrapolation* and *ultrapolation*, placed tones between, below, and above the principal

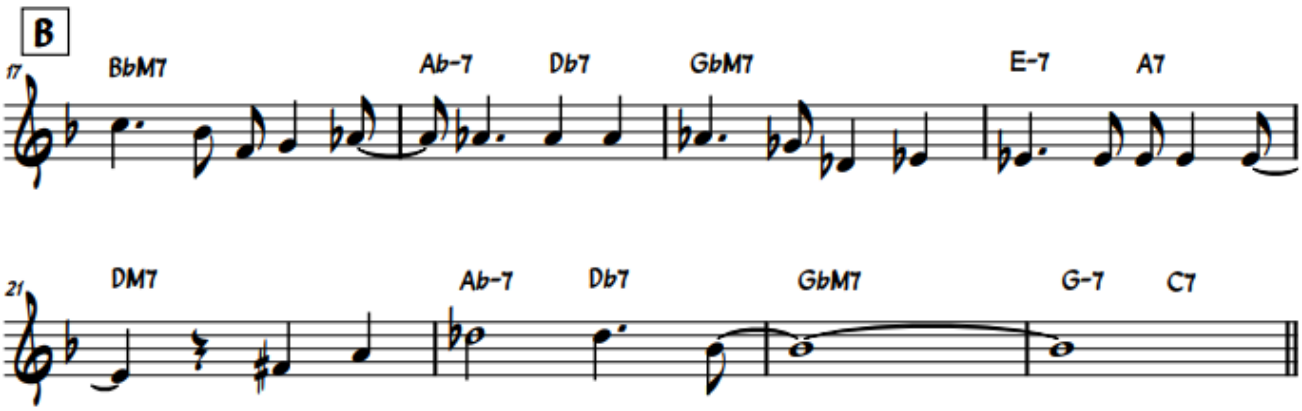
intervals (Slonimsky, 1948). For improvisational and structural content, Coltrane most likely consulted Slonimsky's "Thesaurus" as a source of material for patterns based on symmetry. The Thesaurus contains material which is almost identical to parts of Countdown and Giant Steps (Bair, 2003). Pattern no. 286 from Slonimsky's Ditone Progressions (included under Sample Infra-Ultrapolations) contains material almost identical to the melody pitches in measures 8–16 of Giant Steps. An example in the “Introduction” of the Thesaurus illustrates the point that “harmony of the V – I type will impart a feeling of tonality, even to a 12-tone progression” (Demsey, 1991) and also contains the same harmony as the first passage of Giant Steps (Bair, 2003).

Interestingly, Mseleku also considered Slonimsky’s Thesaurus an important resource. During a personal interview with Neil Gonsalves (March 5, 2021), a renowned South African jazz pianist who worked at the KwaZulu-Natal Technikon during the time Mseleku was the artist in residence there, he remarked that Mseleku placed great emphasis on the importance of the book during his involvement with the school. Before one of their rehearsals, Mseleku made copies of the book and handed it out to the other musicians. The way in which Mseleku applied the knowledge found in Slonimsky’s Thesaurus, however, is unknown and the question still remains if he shared the same musical thought and practice of the information in the book as Coltrane.

It is important to note that there are earlier jazz compositions and popular songs that also contained chromatic 3rd-related progressions reminiscent of nineteenth century compositional techniques – like the bridge section of *Have You Met Miss Jones* by Rogers and Hart (Demsey, 1991) where chords have third interval movements.

Figure D

Bridge section (measures 11-18) of Have You Met Miss Jones



Have You Met Miss Jones has a AABA song form structure, where the B section (mm. 17-21) begins in the subdominant (Bb) and moves through cadences where the keys of D and Gb are tonicised. The use of a downward harmonic sequence of major thirds functions as a prolongation of the dominant (C7) which prepares the start of the A section. The use of freer modulation and greater harmonic sophistication in the bridge sections was part of general trend at the time toward freer and more varied harmonic usage (Demsey, 1991). The melody to the bridge section is constructed from sequential material where a two-bar melodic sequence corresponds to the downward harmonic contour of the two-bar harmonic sequence (Waters, 2010). The inherent voice leading properties of cyclic major third descents cause structural notes of the passage to outline a D wholetone scale (creates a subtle 12 tone relationship).

This 3rd-related root movement was later incorporated and expanded by Coltrane. Coltrane did not single-handedly introduce this concept to the world of jazz; however, he was the first jazz musician to create entire tunes based on major 3rd key motion (Levine, 1995). As discussed previously, he used this concept not only to create new tunes but also to reharmonise standards. This cyclic harmonic practice Coltrane employed provided an improvisational and compositional approach in jazz, eventually resulting in the Modal and Experimental (also known as the “Avant-Garde”) periods of his career (Demsey, 1991). Coltrane’s work expanded the more traditional thought of the bebop era and steered the development of jazz into a new innovative space. He reworked and extended, stylistically, earlier standards and bebop repertories and made them harmonically more radical through his experiments with complete cycles of 3rds-related tonicisations (Martin, 2012). Many musicians after Coltrane incorporated his concepts into their own work and because of this, his work can easily be regarded as a mainstay of contemporary improvisation (Ricker & Weiskopf, 1991).

There are a number of reasons as to why Mseleku could have been captivated and inspired by Coltrane as a musician. We know that Coltrane was one of Mseleku’s musical idols, as he often spoke about Coltrane during interviews (Bragg, 1994) and also dedicated compositions to Coltrane – like *A Love Supreme*, which has direct and noticeable audible influence from Coltrane’s composition and album of the same title. There are also similarities between their musical approaches pertaining to harmonic cycles, as will be discussed within the next chapter.

2.4. South Africa's Political and Sociocultural Context for Musicians

Mseleku's geographical, cultural, and sociopolitical background, as well as his spiritual and philosophical beliefs cannot be separated from his identity as a musician. It is thus relevant to review the circumstances, society, and cultural environment that surrounded him and moulded his belief systems and musical conceptions.

An article by Fokkens (2004) attempts to place a better understanding on the identity of South African musicians and composers. He remarks that "creators represent the world they know and live in through their work" (Fokkens, 2004, p. 102) and thus, that the music created within a country is often a product of its environment. The unique cultural and political environment of South Africa places musicians within a unique context. Ansell (2005) provides a comprehensive and well-researched histography of South African jazz and popular music. South Africa during the 1960s to 1990s can be described as a place of great political instability and oppression, and the societal circumstances were also evident in the music scene. These politically volatile times directly influenced artists' musical expressions and jazz was used as a form of protest music in the fight for freedom against apartheid injustices (Ansell, 2005). *Soweto Blues* (Ansell, 2005) illuminates the important link between history and culture and the role of artists in the transformation of South Africa. Racial oppression by white rule was a shared experience between South Africa and America with the apartheid regime and the civil rights movement. South Africa absorbed and mimicked the sound of American jazz (and the tradition as a whole) through the smuggling of recordings, and thus certain parallels between the two streams emerged – as described by Xaluva (in Lilley, 2019): "Jazz was the language of freedom, protest, and rebellion, but also the language of celebration for all that is black and excellent – a music that spoke so eloquently of black culture around the globe".

By including interviews with many South African musicians in her book, Ansell (2005) also provides a hard-hitting discussion on the impact of apartheid on musicians and how it shaped the course of music in the country. Due to the politically hostile environment and diminished music industry, musicians sometimes faced too many restrictions which inhibited their creative work. Coplan (2008) argues that musicians' decisions to go into exile were not only motivated by political protest but also to escape the oppression of apartheid and pursue professional careers elsewhere. Mseleku was one of many musicians who decided to leave South Africa and go into exile for this reason. Although he was not indifferent to the struggle, he was less explicit about jazz as a mode of freedom, whether it be political or spiritual freedom (Makhathini, 2018). A short interview with Mseleku, however, gives his views on "culture as a weapon of struggle" and he remarks that "jazz has to do with people fighting for

freedom. My music says: I want to be free" (Ansell, 2005, p. 263). This sentiment is endorsed by other writers: "Bheki's legacy is the very embodiment of jazz as an expression of democracy. His energy and influence transcended racial, religious, cultural, and other worldly boundaries that fell outside the boundaries of his spiritual calling as a musician" (Xaluva in Lilley, 2019, p. ix).

Ballantine (2012) gives a concise narrative of South Africa's marabi jazz tradition. An in-depth account of the birth and development of urban black popular music shows how the resistance of oppression shaped the development of *township jazz*. Ballantine further explains the interrelationships among musical sounds and their social histories, which has relevance to the music of Mseleku. The epilogue of the book contemplates the place of jazz and popular music in South Africa since the end of apartheid. It argues for the continued relevance of the robust, questioning spirit of the marabi tradition which still infiltrates so many local artists', including Mseleku's, music today (Ballantine, 2012). Additionally, Ramanna's (2005) thesis serves as an important study on South African jazz musicians and identity, as well as Dalamba's (2019) study on the Blue Notes sextet and other exiled musicians.

Some of Mseleku's South African predecessors include pianists such as Abdullah Ibrahim, Chris McGregor (1936–1990), Ibrahim Khalil Shihab (b.1946) formerly known as Chris Schilder, Tete Mbambisa (b.1942), and Lionel Pillay (1934–2003). These musicians laid firm foundations in the South African music scene and directly influenced musicians such as Mseleku. It is important to mention them as the musical backdrop in which we may locate Mseleku's point of departure in constructing his distinct pianistic and compositional voice (Makhathini, 2018). Another musician available in academic literature that contributed to the South African jazz aesthetic was saxophone player Barney Rachabane (Davidson, 2012). Rachabane has been at the forefront of the South African jazz scene since the 1960s. His musical achievements span over sixty years, starting with kwela music before developing into jazz (Lottering, 2020). Davidson (2012) seeks to identify sonic elements and characteristics of Rachabane's improvisations on the tunes *Mokotedi* and *Kwela Mama* that are uniquely South African in concept. Parameters as to what constitutes *South African jazz improvisation* are elements such as cyclical repetition, an aesthetic that mainly focusses on ongoing melodic development of short motifs and figurations that occur at the cost of loosening vertical relationships with the harmonies of the music (Davidson, 2012). Davidson's article also has relevance to the study of Mseleku because of the artist's similar context and historical background. It is necessary to establish some of the South African characteristics that are present in Mseleku's music in order to recognise the influence Coltrane had on his music as well.

Mseleku's album *Home at Last* (Sheer Sound, 2003) is deeply rooted in South African music traditions (Washington, 2012). Mseleku embraced the South African jazz aesthetic and South African harmonic structures more explicitly and to a greater extent than his previous albums, although his different stylistic influences are still evident. The album featured notable local musicians such as Winston Mankunku (1943–2009), Ezra Ngcukana (1954–2010), Feya Faku (b.1962), Enoch Mthalane, Herbie Tsoaeli (b.1964), Tlale Makhene, Phillip Meintjies and Morabo Morojele (b.1960), all of whom had a notable contribution to the jazz aesthetic in South Africa during apartheid (Makhathini, 2018). The tracks on Mseleku's album were devoted to the locations and legendary performers in South Africa who had shaped this artist's development (Fordham, 2008). Compositionally, Mseleku explored developments of South African jazz – from the early marabi of the 1920s to his later influences of R'n'B, and soulful hard bop in the 1970s with bands like Expressions, The Drive and Spirits Rejoice (Lusk, 2008). On *Sandile*, a song dedicated to his friend and guitarist Sandile Shange, Mseleku goes from a slow '70s soul groove to an energetic marabi groove dominated by a mbaqanga guitar riff. Another tribute tune is *Monwabisi*, dedicated to saxophonist Winston Mankunku – where Mseleku demonstrates the possibilities of a commonly used South African kwela I – IV – V harmonic progression to evolve by modulating his theme to different tonalities through a diminished axis (Lilley, 2019). Ancient Nguni chants also appear in Mseleku's records, for example *Celebration* (on the album *Celebration,* 1992) and *Vukani* (featured on the album *Timelessness,* 1993). This shows that Mseleku's early musical influences in KwaZulu-Natal still played a major role in his musical output (Makhathini, 2018).

Makhathini (2018) wrote in his study that Mseleku is only mentioned in passing throughout Ansell's book as he is weaved into the broader narrative of black popular music in South Africa. I have also found this statement to be true amongst most of the literature available on Mseleku. Most sources elaborate only on the history and context of musicians in South Africa, and Mseleku's career has mainly been researched through musicological, sociological, and political lenses. Mseleku's historical roots and his country's political and sociocultural background is an essential part of understanding him as a musician, and necessary to form an accurate analysis of his music. There is, however, evidently a gap in the literature regarding the technical aspects and analysis of his music.

2.5. Bheki Mseleku

Bheki Mseleku was a South African-born jazz musician, multi-instrumentalist, and composer. Although he had excellent technical facility on many instruments, his talent was mainly evident through his virtuosic piano playing in which he displayed an advanced grasp

of harmony and unique chordal voicings (Lusk, 2008).

A dissertation by pianist Nduduzo Makhathini (2018) is one of the most comprehensive studies to document Bheki Mseleku's life and music in academic scholarship thus far. Due to the lack of preceding sources on Mseleku in academic literature, Makhathini's information on Mseleku's life is mostly limited to secondary sources such as magazine articles, interviews published in the general media, newspaper clippings and documentary films. There are, for example, three articles published in *Drum* magazine during 1992–2008. Ngwenya's (1992) article features an interview with Mseleku about his humble beginnings, early career days and experiences as a musician. Mitchell's (1997) article also discusses Mseleku's musical upbringing in South Africa, being caught up in the struggle during the apartheid regime and being forced into exile. In another article of Ngwenya (2008), Mseleku's family members and close friends express their loss shortly after Mseleku passed away in 2008. Two other obituaries written shortly after Mseleku's death commemorate Mseleku's life and triumphs as a musician (Fordham, 2008; Lusk, 2008). Both talk about his humble beginnings and upbringing in KwaZulu-Natal, his departure from South Africa as an exile during apartheid, his collaborations with big names on the international jazz scene, his disillusionment and struggle to make ends meet after his return to South Africa, and his return to London before his death on September 9, 2008.

Through sources such as this, Makhathini explores Mseleku's diverse musical influences which shaped his musical conception and compositional style: his Zulu upbringing, admiration of Coltrane, and his engagement with Eastern spiritual practices. The writer is particularly interested in the impact of exile on his music and the importance of spirituality. Makhathini, who is himself a musician and has had personal encounters with Mseleku, as well as knowledge and experience with performing his work, adds another dimension to his writing by supplying a perspective on the performance aspect of Mseleku's music.

Gilbert (2002) gives a concise biography of Mseleku's life, mentioning his influences as a young musician, namely Tyner and Coltrane. Mseleku's style of music is defined as a "spiritually charged brand of post-Coltrane jazz, in which he plays piano and saxophone simultaneously" (Gilbert, 2002, p. 842).

Several sources (Gilbert, 2002; Lusk, 2008; Makhathini, 2018) mention the many established international musicians Mseleku had worked with during his professional career. After being forced into exile during apartheid, Mseleku established a career internationally and played on recordings with leading international jazz figures, all of whom offered notable recognition and acclaim for his talents, such as Abbey Lincoln (1930–2010), Pharoah Sanders (b.1940), Joe Henderson (1937–2001), Ravi Coltrane (b.1965), son of John

Coltrane, among others (Makhathini, 2018). Mseleku's direct contact with these players diversified his musical knowledge and approaches, but the strong connections to his South African roots remained evident in his music. The simultaneous existence of different influences within Mseleku's music, however, made it accessible to audiences around the world and made his South African aesthetic well known on an international platform.

The biographical literature on Mseleku's life is sufficient to form a good overall picture of his personal life and career; however, there is still a large gap regarding the theoretical and practical aspects of his music, as mentioned before. There are two sources available within the public domain which discusses Mseleku's work from a music analytical point of view.

The Artistry of Bheki Mseleku (Lilley, 2019) is a comprehensive analytical study which examines and deconstructs transcriptions of some of Mseleku's key works and solos in order to create a narrative and trace clear developmental ideas, influences, and concepts that are consistent throughout his music. A section from the book, titled "Cycles", discusses cycles as the starting point for unvestigating Mseleku's harmonic approach to composition and improvisation. Here he gives an analysis of four of Mseleku's compositions – *Cycle, Melancholy in Cologne, Aja*, and *Angola* – in which cycles are the primary source of harmonic organisation. In the piece Monwabisi, Lilley (2019) explores Mseleku's use of harmonic progressions, basslines, melody, as well as a way of working around the basic harmonic framework in his solos to displace the point at which the chord changes to introduce implied harmonic ideas. He notes that the style and harmonies used in this piece are consistent with popular township jazz styles. Lilley covers a lot of ground for analysing and deconstructing Mseleku's music in a way that is useful and informative, especially in relation to cycles. Although many similarities can be drawn between the approach and topic of Lilley's book and this dissertation, here the focus is placed almost exclusively on harmonic cycles and Mseleku's work is viewed and examined more in depth from this specific angle. What Lilley also does not place emphasis on and what is examined here is the influence Coltrane had on Mseleku's music pertaining to harmonic language.

Makhathini's dissertation (2018) includes an analysis of Mseleku's solo piano album *Meditations* (1992). He traces the influences audible in his sound back to African music and American jazz, and also emphasises the importance of spiritualism as a core influence in his music (Makhathini, 2018). Mseleku's more subtle influences include elements of Western Classical and Romantic music, and some Latin-based influences (Lilley, 2019).

Lilley's analysis correlates with Makhathini's explanation of Mseleku's cyclic harmonic structures. Both these sources affirm that a particular fascination with cyclical harmony forms a significant part of Mseleku's conceptual approach to composition and in some instances, it

forms the foundation of the entire harmonic structure of a piece. Compositionally, many of Mseleku's compositions are built on cyclic structures that modulate in systematic ways through all twelve keys before the cycle repeats itself (Makhathini, 2018). A cycle is created by dividing the octave into equal parts through tritones, augmented axes, diminished axes, whole tones, or through chromatic movement. Motives or melodic themes over ii – V – I chord progressions modulate through these systematic cycles. This compositional approach of Mseleku thus mirrors Coltrane's use of harmony in his early explorations of the "Coltrane [multi-tonic] changes" (Makhathini, 2018, p. 46). As mentioned earlier, through a similar approach in his compositions like Giant Steps (1959) and Countdown, Coltrane divides the octave into equal parts by moving tonal centres via 3rd relationships until the starting chord is reached again and the cycle repeats itself (Levine, 1995).

The third chapter of Makhathini's dissertation interrogates the intersections between Mseleku's music and his various modalities of spiritualism, such as Buddhism, Christianity, and African spirituality evident throughout his life and music. He further considers how these multiple and different belief systems affected Mseleku's conceptions about his musical practice (Makhathini, 2018).

It is highly significant that Coltrane and Mseleku both linked their understanding of composition and improvisation to their spiritual beliefs (Makhathini, 2018). Like Coltrane, Mseleku's melodic and modal harmonic style was influenced by his spiritual beliefs stemming from Eastern philosophy and music. In a later period, Coltrane approached his music modally to move away from the focus of a large amount of chord changes and instead delivering a single emotion, similar to the purpose of an Indian raga (Clements, 2009). In Mseleku's solo album Meditations, he draws inspiration from ragas, where he plays on the piano in a chant-like and introspective way with a drone-like quality (Fordham, 2008). For Mseleku, embracing different forms of spirituality through his music was one way of displaying his beliefs about freedom and equality within a broader context of the South African community (Makhathini, 2018). The harmonic cycles Mseleku utilises provide infinite scope for expression, creating an almost meditative quality that has profound significance for the artist in his spiritual practice (Lilley, 2019). This is reflected in the title of his album Meditations on which a cycle is used as a source for the harmonic material and structural framework of the improvisation. There is speculation that Coltrane's preoccupation with 3rd relationships contained some religious significance. The numerical importance of the three equal key areas could be interpreted as a result of the search for perfection in life and music, and could be representative of the Trinity, God, or unity (Demsey, 1991). Similarly, the use of cycles did not only serve as a compositional and improvisational device but contained religious and spiritual significance for Mseleku (Neil Gonsalves, personal communication,

March 5, 2021; Lilley, 2019; Makhathini, 2018).

The exact origin of Mseleku's inspiration for using cycles or where he came to learn about them, however, is unclear and is exactly one of the purposes of this study. We know that Mseleku was entirely untrained and mainly gathered his knowledge aurally (Bragg, 1994; Neil Gonsalves, personal communication, March 5, 2021). The question remains if Coltrane was the direct influence and inspiration for his practice of using cycles or if it was one of the more subtle influences that shaped his approach.

The sources discussed in this section emphasise the manifestation of Mseleku's sociocultural connection to South Africa in his work. Through an exploration of Mseleku's life and his musical influences, it becomes possible to study the sources of his inspiration and attain a holistic understanding of his musical conceptions and influences.

2.6. The Value of Transcription and Analysis in Jazz

Within this study, transcription and analysis have been used to investigate Mseleku's music and use of cycles. This section argues for the value of transcription and analysis as an appropriate and effective way to view an artist's work and to provide a deeper understanding and description of the inner workings of their music.

Music transcription refers to the interpretation of an acoustic musical signal by identifying its pitches, onset time, and duration, and representing its sonic information visually through written notation (Klapuri, 2006). Music is essentially an aural phenomenon, but the use of notation serves to present music through visual concepts and materialise it. This also creates conditions for new musical occurrences and organisations of a work (Lockhead, 2006). The adaptation of Western notation, however, represents a much simpler version of sonic reality and like other representational systems, music notation does not completely reflect a live musical experience (Lockhead, 2006; Rusch, 2016). It is, therefore, necessary to rely on aural experience for evidence of the constituent elements which can then be transcribed and represented visually.

A common misconception of jazz improvisation is that it happens spontaneously, or through the means of "divine intervention" and inspiration (Kirchner, 2005, p. 789). The elements of an improvised solo, as well as the harmonic knowledge and vocabulary a soloist must possess to execute this skill, is often overlooked. Jazz is primarily an aural tradition with the principal vehicle of study being repetitive listening of the actual recordings of the music. Transcription and analysis thus provide musicians with a valuable tool and practical method to acquire this skill. It allows musicians to document performances in order to learn

and understand another soloist's improvisational language and apply what they learned in the process to their own improvisations and compositions (Rusch, 2016). This concrete representation of musical events allows the musician to move back and forth between them to consider aspects that they would normally be unable to grasp in the moment.

The transcription process, however, tends to be less systematic and more personal. It is a self-taught skill to most jazz musicians, and they sometimes develop their own strategies to represent a complex musical sound with relatively simple visual symbols (Rusch, 2016). Improvised music sometimes challenges the representations of conventional notation, and therefore musical occurrences like pitch inflexion, articulation, rhythmic deviation, and expressive devices are indicated in a way the transcriber sees as most informative or descriptive (Rusch, 2016). There is, however, some degree of insider knowledge and shared notational practices within the extended jazz community. For example, the temporal proportion of two subsequent eighth notes in swing-based jazz are representative of a quarter-eight-note-tuplet "feel" or a micro-rhythmic variation thereof (Rusch, 2016).

Brooks (2019) states that, although transcription proves valuable in the pursuit of knowledge about jazz improvisation, it does have its limitations. The traditional Western European notation system cannot accurately represent complex musical phrases, rhythms, and "feel". Jazz lead sheets are also usually written with minimal articulation, phrasing, and dynamics. That is why many great jazz artists hold firmly to the belief that transcribing by ear is a crucial process in the study of jazz styles. With regards to his study of Mseleku's music, Lilley (2019) also notes that one of the limitations to analysis is that you can never fully get into the mind of the artist and how they manifested their work. Some artists are even unable to describe it themselves. That is why analysis serves as a valuable resource and a lens through which we can view and unpack the music in a way that can be explained.

The value still far outweighs its limitations. Analysis enhances the experiences of both the performer and the listener through facilitating a better understanding of the music (Agawu, 2004). The intention of musical analysis is to provide a deeper understanding of and an appreciation for a particular composer's works by bringing the reader into close contact with the musical material. The analysis process is not intended to be a narration of which note followed another, but more of an investigation to gain deeper insight into a composer's approach or influences by taking a closer look at the overall design and concept of each work (Lilley, 2019).

Transcription and analysis provide material and resources for pedagogical use. In combination, these methods are necessary to evaluate and enhance approaches towards improvisation (Frieler & Pfleiderer, 2017). Berliner (1994) combines interviews with

professional jazz musicians with detailed musicological analysis and transcriptions of their playing that follow their development up to the point where they attain their unique improvisatory voice. Berliner offers valuable information on how musicians conceptualise their music and a valuable template for my own study of Mseleku's conceptualisation of music. Salisbury (2011) strengthens the argument in favour of learning and analysing transcriptions and reckons this method of study helps musicians gain a working knowledge of common jazz styles. Even for advanced players, new techniques, different approaches, and new harmonic, rhythmic and melodic ideas are more easily grasped when repeated listening and imitation is implemented (Baker, 1980). Transcription and analysis also provide players with a means to familiarise themselves with significant jazz repertoire, artistic approaches, and increase their understanding of jazz performance practice (Salisbury, 2011). Baker (1980) reiterates that transcribing solos from records by ear, and analysing them as well, is essential for the growth of any jazz musician. His study consists of transcriptions and in-depth analyses of Coltrane solos, and is designed to provide a method for studying, analysing, imitating, and assimilating the individual styles of jazz artists.

To present material for international musicians to learn and emulate, Davidson (2012) advocates that the transcription of improvised passages by major South African jazz musicians is crucial in the process of advancing the artform. Up until now, the learning process has mainly been driven by American artists. Transcription and analysis of South African jazz are also necessary to focus the attention of academics on our homegrown artists (Lilley, 2019) and present it as a stream of music worthy of being studied abroad (Davidson, 2012).

Transcription and analysis are one of the first building blocks of codifying jazz style and remains a fundamental aspect of jazz pedagogy. The act of aural transcription together with the practice of musical analysis provides insight into the structure and creativity of jazz improvisations and represent a remarkable resource for jazz musicians as well as students and educators. Through this method, a player can identify different processes and strategies of improvising. The method remains essential for any musician to develop their vocabulary and understanding of the jazz language. Thus, to develop a strong vocabulary of South African jazz and understanding the music of artists like Bheki Mseleku, transcription and analysis of their work is considered an important practice.

2.7. Process and Strategies of Improvisation Analysis

Musical analysis is the action of identifying the various materials, elements and structures in a composition and investigating how they function (Bent, 1987; Dunsby, 1988). Analysis

also reveals how a piece of music conforms to the fundamental features of musical understanding and adheres to certain fundamental harmonic principles within tonal harmony (Lockhead, 2006). Within improvised music, the act of transcription is an integral part of the analytical process (Rusch, 2016). A good strategy and approach to analysis are necessary to successfully analyse a transcribed jazz solo and to come to an accurate conclusion about aspects such as an improviser's techniques, approaches, vocabulary, and influences. Due to some unmeasurable aspects of art and music, set procedures of improvised jazz analysis are still in its early stages, but different emerging methodologies and systems in academic literature have been used to uncover this area (Potter, 1992). Several analysis methods, from structural to musicological, have effectively been tried and applied to jazz music and will be discussed briefly in the following section to establish which methods could be applied to the analysis of Mseleku's music.

An early analytic tool still used in jazz pedagogy is to measure every note, or an entire melodic passage, in a solo against the underlying harmony and show harmonic relationship (Potter, 1992). Reductive techniques are then used to draw conclusions and construct narratives about an improvisation, illuminating its contents and explaining things like note choices and passages within a solo (Potter, 1992). Formula identification and cataloguing is used to identify complete melodic patterns referred to as *licks*, which can fit a chord or certain established chord progressions (Baker, 1980). *Schenkerian analysis* is a method of analysing tonal music, based on the theories of Heinrich Schenker (1868–1935). Schenkerian theory proposes that music is made up of various layers and shows how melodic figures are elaborations of basic harmonic structures (Parkhurst, 2008). Un-notated jazz also contains the underlying structure found in composed music, and there are significant similarities between dissonance treatment in classical music and jazz (Larson, 1998). Linear progressions and structural levels in jazz can thus adequately be described by Schenkerian principles of voice leading and structure and might serve as a valuable tool during the investigation of Mseleku's music.

Analysis methods of non-functional harmony are required for the understanding of Mseleku's as well as Coltrane's music. *Pitch-class set analysis* was developed as a method to analyse and establish coherence within Western classical atonal music by Forte (1985); Pressing (1982) and Block (1990) have, however, since incorporated pitch-class set analysis as a useful tool in understanding jazz improvisation. The technique can be used to characterise the pitch-structural "language" found in a specific genre or composer's music and provide a picture of its overall organisation (Forte, 1985). The axis system originated in the work of Ernő Lendevai (1925–1993) in his analysis of the music of Bartók and is of particular interest for this study. This system of analysis creates a functional relationship

between tones and chords, showing how they function as tonal substitutions for each other when related by intervals of a minor 3rd and a tritone (Lendevai, 1971). *Prolongation by arrival* (PBA) is used when dealing with tonal ambiguity and harmonic progressions that are less obvious, like Coltrane's 3rds-cycle pieces (Martin, 2012). By tonicisation of a specific key, conditioned listeners are often able to hear phrases as an extension of the final chord and predict cadential arrivals soon after a phrase or section begins (Martin, 2012).

Music itself lacks literary narrative and only suggests narrative through certain qualities like logical structure, coherence, mood, and musical interactivity between musicians. Bjerstedt (2015) explores an unconventional route for understanding jazz musicians' conceptualisations of their artform through storytelling. Narrative is one of the most powerful schemas of meaning construction in human thought and in music. It provides a metaphorical way of thinking about communication and expression and focusses on "how" the activity is achieved rather than "what" is being said.

Similarities between jazz and spoken language has also been an area of investigation (DeNora, 1986); although, there has been no successful application of linguistic techniques to jazz analysis (Potter, 1992). Lockhead (2006) investigated traditional methods of musical analysis while discrediting the relevance and truth within their theories. She explored the possibility of a post-structuralist as well as post-phenomenological school of thought in music analysis, which allows the possibility to take extra-musical facts into consideration. These include aspects such as the historicism of a piece, which we have established is an important influence in Mseleku's music, and worthy of consideration. Lockhead's approach, however, is challenged by the absence of visual representation of musical organisation that will lead to valid analytical observation.

Transcription and analysis are useful because they allow me to take various aspects of Mseleku's music into consideration. Applying the process to Mseleku's work can serve as a means of understanding how he constructs meaning in his music and can help identify the processes and strategies he uses to improvise and compose music. A piece of music may be difficult to uncover or theorise purely by applying one specific analytic methodology. Thus, a broader analytic approach which draws upon the various focussed approaches is needed to draw accurate conclusions and present Mseleku's music through a rich explanation.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Within arts-based research, defining methodology and the paradigmatic frame is often an ambiguous task. The challenge of research within the arts is that it is inherently dependent on abstract concepts and practices which are usually indefinable by traditional academic values. The primary focus is the investigative process, rather than the eventual outcome of the investigation (Bennett, Blom & Wright, 2011). A grounded theory methodology is, therefore, appropriate for this study because it provides a systematic approach towards data collection and analysis and could effectively be applied to musical analysis.

Grounded theory is a research method where a theory is generated, developed, and verified from data, which has been systematically collected and analysed (Egan, 2002; Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Noble, 2016). This research process is one of discovery, and data collection and analysis are interrelated processes that coincide (Corbin & Strauss, 1990).

Grounded theory is discovered empirically through induction, and, thus, discovered through means of observation or experience, rather than through theory or pure logic (Egan, 2002). Inductive reasoning involves drawing a general conclusion and generating a theory from a set of specific observations, patterns, resemblances, and regularities (Trochim, 2020). Grounded theory building is, thus, not affected by the lack of previous literature on the topic. As the musical analysis and theoretical mechanisms of Mseleku's music have been under-researched within academic discourse up to now, it was a desirable method of research for this study.

Grounded theory was used because it provided the researcher with the possibility for an initial concept to be used to provide data and then allow a theory to emerge from that data. The approach was adapted to best serve data collection and analysis within a music analysis context as opposed to coding and categorising textual data from linguistic material.

3.1. Research Paradigm and Approach

The research approach of study was qualitative, with the aim of gaining a better understanding of Bheki Mseleku's music. Using a qualitative methodology provided the researcher with the tools to study a complex phenomenon within its context (DeFranzo, 2011). According to Tracy (2013), an advantage in dealing with this type of study through a

qualitative method is that it illuminates and enhances the understanding of the subject while including lived experience. Another strength of the qualitative approach is the richness and depth of explorations and descriptions it produces (Nieuwenhuis, 2007). A qualitative research method was relevant to this study because it provided me with the necessary method to conduct an in-depth exploration of Mseleku's approach to harmony and his interpretation of Coltrane's music. A qualitative approach was also desirable because it allowed flexibility for the research to evolve with new insights and understanding (Nieuwenhuis, 2016), as was expected to happen during the analytical process of Mseleku's music and additional gathering of data.

The research on Mseleku's music was approached from an interpretivist paradigm. The aim of interpretivist research is to study and analyse phenomena through people's subjective experiences, the way they make sense of their situations and construct their meaning of reality (Nieuwenhuis, 2007). A subjectivist epistemology situated within this paradigm assumes that we cannot separate ourselves from our perspectives and what we know – who we are is a central part of how we view the world and others (Cohen, 2006), and, through our interpretation, we cognitively construct our meaning of reality. The interpretivist paradigm is also underlined by a relativist ontology. This theory of knowledge assumes that our realities are constructed intersubjectively (Creswell, 2018; Merriam, 2009) within social settings, cultures, and relationships with other people (Cohen, 2006). Communication and the exchange of meaning through language and symbols are believed to be the way in which people make sense of their social worlds (Lumen Learning, n.d.). According to Merriam (2009), there is no single fixed reality, but there are different interpretations of the same event which can all be considered true. Studying people within their social contexts are necessary to understand their constructed perceptions and the meanings they ascribe to their activities (Nieuwenhuis, 2007).

The academic material considered within the literature section, thus, tied in with this approach. An analysis of Mseleku's music required me to interpret it through the lens of his social environment and external factors and apply insight to construct a meaningful conclusion about his work. On a parallel level, it also applied to Mseleku's interpretation of Coltrane's use of harmony – Mseleku grew up within a South African context and his perceptions are formed through his own cultural knowledge systems. He made sense of Coltrane harmony through this perspective, and the result is the unique sound and characteristic style of Mseleku.

Grounded theory research, however, derives its theoretical underpinnings from pragmatism and symbolic interactionism (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Pragmatism is a

philosophical approach that evaluates theories or beliefs in terms of the success of their practical application (Hodges, 2016, p. 187). This ties in with the technical music analysis aspect of the research.

3.2. Research Design

This dissertation consists of a grounded theory methodology within a case study research design. The study can be categorised as a case study design because Mseleku's music is investigated as a single entity and emphasis is placed on the detailed analysis of limited events and conditions to provide the researcher with comprehensive insight on the subject (Maree, 2016). Exploratory case study research originates from the purpose of studying complex phenomena within their contexts. It tends to be researcher-centred because the final interpretation is generated through the researcher's observations, interpretations, and conclusions, attempting to provide a holistic portrayal, and understanding of the research setting (Cousin, 2015 in Maree, 2016). The researcher, therefore, makes sense of data from their own limited perspective to come to a closer or more in-depth understanding of a case within a real-world context.

In the case of Mseleku, the aim was to come to gain insight into his use of harmony and the incorporation of Coltrane's harmonic influence, which is why the transcriptions of his music needed to be studied and interpreted thoroughly. It was also necessary to take the non-musical influences of his music into account, such as his background, cultural setting, and philosophies, in order to come to an accurate conclusion of his music. This is why a case study design complimented the grounded theory aspect of the research.

3.3. Sampling Strategy

Purposive sampling – where "participants" were chosen with intent, to represent a phenomenon – was used for this research project (Maree, 2016). Incidents, people, or units are sampled according to their potential contribution to the development and testing of a theory. In this case, certain compositions, harmonic structures, chord progressions, sections, melodies, and improvised lines in Mseleku's music were selected *because they* would most likely produce valuable information and insight about Mseleku's harmonic conceptualisation and the influence of Coltrane's harmonic devices.

Theoretical sampling is a kind of purposive sampling, and is defined by Glaser and Strauss (1967, p. 9) as a "process of collecting data for comparative analysis". After initial

data collection and analysis, the researcher establishes what further detail needs exploring as the new theory develops, and theoretical sampling is used to produce more data and verify the concepts that have been identified in the previous analysis (Noble, 2016). Within a grounded theory method, theoretical sampling is, thus, applied to develop and refine the analysis of data.

The sample size is determined by the amount of information required for the researcher to make valuable conclusions and show credible evidence of the research outcomes. It is also influenced by the amounts of incidents required before no new information or evidence would be forthcoming (Maree, 2016).

A sample of Mseleku's pieces were chosen according to the following criteria:

- Harmonic structure
- Stylistic features
- Melodic material
- Improvised material

Harmonic Structure

As established in section *2.4 John Coltrane's innovations and influence*, Mseleku draws the practice of creating compositions based on non-functional cyclic harmonic progressions from Coltrane. To explore the different possibilities of these cyclic progressions, I selected compositions of Mseleku that mirror Coltrane's use of cyclic harmony in their harmonic structures. Specific inclusion criteria are outlined in the following sections, numbered 3.3.1 – 3.3.8.

Mseleku's compositions were chosen according to their use of the following interval cycles:

3.3.1. A piece that draws directly from a major 3rd harmonic cycle, also known as and augmented axis or the Coltrane Matrix – as used by Coltrane in Giant Steps.

3.3.2. A piece with minor 3rds-related chords changes, also known as a diminished axis – as used by Coltrane in *Central Park West*.

3.3.3. A piece that explores harmonic cycles in both major and minor 3rds – Coltrane's composition *Like Sonny* (Martin, 2012).

3.3.4. A cyclic progression that outlines the whole-tone scale – Coltrane's reharmonisation of *Body and Soul*, John Green (Demsey, 1991) and his composition *One Down, One Up*.

Stylistic Features

Compositions with characteristic South African elements were beneficial to investigate how Mseleku merged different styles of music – the music of his home country and American jazz influences. I was particularly interested in Mseleku's last album, *Home at Last*, because the album is deeply rooted in South African music traditions (Washington, 2012; Carr, 2004) and could possibly show the convergence of his wide influence of styles best. This hybridity of styles is also evident in his other albums but is embraced more explicitly in his last album.

It could be argued that all Mseleku's music, even when playing cutting edge modern jazz with American musicians, has a strong South African influence. Drawing from Lilley (2019) and Makhathini (2018), it is undeniable that South African musical styles are a key element to Mseleku's music.

Compositions were chosen with the intent to explore Mseleku's use of harmonies that are characteristic to the South African aesthetic. An analysis of these pieces establishes how Mseleku uses standard South African harmonic progressions within his own music and show possibility of harmonic expansion influenced by Coltrane's harmonic conceptions of superimposition, and elaboration of chords and chord progressions.

3.3.5. I – IV – V standard mbaqanga progression used in South African kwela.

3.3.6. A composition with a fusion of traditional South African jazz elements and American jazz elements.

Melodic and Improvised Material

Melodic and improvised material were also investigated. The aim was also to consider Mseleku's use of motivic devices and the way he interweaves and transposes melodic ideas through chord progressions. Melodic content also gave an indication of Mseleku's treatment of the basic harmonic framework, and this enabled me to measure his improvised lines against the chords.

The content of the transcribed material consists of pieces with melodic vocabulary that show the influence of Coltrane's cyclic harmonic conceptions:

3.3.7. Pieces with melodies or melodic sequences, that are transposed through non-functional harmonic progressions with related tonal centres that serve as compositional structure.

3.3.8. Pieces with improvised material played by Mseleku, based on cyclic harmonic movement, measured against the underlying harmonic structure.

One of the most important parts of my sampling strategy required investigating existing scores of Mseleku's music, as well as listening and making an aural analysis of recordings to identify possible useful material. The Coltrane matrix, for example, moves in major 3rd harmonic intervals and has a distinct sound and harmonic quality which is identifiable. Transposed melodic sequences, as well as chromatic and stepwise inner voice movement in chords could also be an indication of cyclic harmony, which could point to Coltrane's harmonic influence.

It is important to mention that I aimed to include pieces not yet transcribed and analysed within the academic discourse to provided new information and broaden the scope available on Mseleku's music. An analysis of three of the pieces included within this dissertation, however, is also available in Lilley (2019). I decided to include Monwabisi, Cycle, and Timelessness nonetheless because they all provide valuable information and insight about Mseleku's compositional practice regarding cycles. Monwabisi also showcases Mseleku's hybridisation of South African jazz and non-functional cyclic harmony wonderfully. Apart from Timelessness, the solo transcriptions of these pieces have not been included in any previous studies and were transcribed by the author to conduct further investigation about the harmonic content of the pieces. The solo transcription of Timelessness was, however, transcribed independently from the existing transcription in Lilley (2019) in order to stay in accordance and with the analysis process stipulated within this study, to get intimately familiar with the content of the music through the act of repeated listening and, ultimately, to gain deeper insight into the content of Mseleku's improvisation.

3.4. Data Collection Techniques

For this study, transcription was used as a data collection method to extract data from the selected sample of Mseleku's recorded music.

Within a grounded theory methodology, data collection and analysis are interrelated processes which happen simultaneously. Aural transcription allows the researcher to become intimately familiar with the music and conduct a detailed examination of musical

processes (Ala-Ruona, 2018) and, thus, forms the first level of analysis. After the analysis of initial data, the researcher can form a better idea of grey areas within the research that require further investigation. More data was then be gathered from these areas.

During data collection, the melody as well as the underlying harmony of selected compositions were transcribed by carefully identifying what could be perceived aurally from recordings of Mseleku playing the specific pieces. These transcriptions were then notated manually using notation software (*MuseScore 3)* to create a jazz lead sheet or improvised solo piano transcription. Existing scores of Mseleku's music were used to support the process. As revealed to me during a personal interview conducted with Andre Peterson (April 14, 2021) and confirmed by Makhathini (2018), some of these scores contain only a few handwritten chords scribbled down during rehearsals by someone other than Mseleku. That is why aural analysis combined with transcription remains the most important method of data collection, to assure that the harmonic and melodic content of Mseleku's music is documented accurately. The transcriptions focussed mainly on the harmonic structure and chord progressions of the compositions, but melodic and improvised lines were also taken into consideration if they highlighted harmonic content and showed the influence of Coltrane. Where needed, smaller and more comprehensive sections of transcribed material were made for specific sections, passages, progressions, and melodic lines and were presented in the research.

A combination of handwritten scores that are exchanged by musicians and remain in circulation within the jazz community, as well as published scores, were sometimes used for reference or taken into consideration during the transcription process. This included lead sheets of Monwabisi which appear, as mentioned before, in Lilley (2019) as well as in a fairly accessible 2008 publication called the *Cape Real Book*. The lead sheet and solo transcription of Monwabisi as well as Cycle, however, was transcribed independently by the author using Mseleku's recordings from his albums. Handwritten copies of Love Joe and Violet Flame, which included the chord progressions but no melody, were used as primary source for the harmonic structure of the pieces - the melodies were transcribed by the author. Age of The Divine Mother and Yanini were transcribed in full by the author. An authentic Bheki Mseleku piano arrangement available within the public domain, dated 1994 and copyrighted under the name of Polygram, France, together with a transcription added in Lilley (2019) was used as reference in the transcription process for the lead sheet of Timelessness. The solo transcription was made without reference to existing sources. Other resources available within the public include lead sheets of The Violet Flame, Monwabisi, Timelessness, Cycles, and Yanini, shared by Eugene Skeef and others on the Facebook group *Bheki Mseleku is Alive*, but were not considered during the data collection process

within this study.

The study also includes information from two interviews with well-established jazz musicians who have both been in close contact with Mseleku and his music at some point. The interviews are not the main focus of the study but serve as an additional source of information to shed light upon some aspects of the research which are not available in academic literature. As mentioned previously, there is a gap in academic literature pertaining to the technical analysis of Mseleku's music as well as his philosophies and thoughts behind the music he wrote. That is why I think it is valuable to include interviews with these musicians and take their knowledge, experiences, and perspectives into account to come to an accurate interpretation of Mseleku's work and capture the full essence of his music.

3.5. Data Analysis and Interpretation

In all data analysis, the purpose is to organise and elicit meaning from the data collected and then draw realistic conclusions. Cho and Lee (2014) state that grounded theory analysis is employed to yield more than just data reduction, abstraction, and core categories. It also generates a substantive theory that can explain the phenomenon.

The data used in this study consists of available lead sheets, arrangements, and transcribed material of Mseleku's music, as well as additional data from two interviews with jazz musicians closely related to Mseleku. The data analysis process consists of four phases which are roughly based on the coding process within grounded theory research, with adaptations to accommodate a musical analysis study.

Phase 1: Analysis During Data Collection

During the early stage of transcription, aural analysis already occurs during the intimate act of coming to know a complex musical sound and then having to represent it through notation. Analysis of data is, therefore, an ongoing process and happens at the same time as transcription (data collection).

Phase 2: Analytical Breakdown (Initial/Open Coding)

The second phase of interpretation consists of the process where "data are broken down analytically" (Corbin and Strauss, 1990, p. 12). The musical content of Mseleku's music was narrated in terms of its harmonic functions and grouped into different categories of information. This includes harmonic structures and stylistic features as well as melodic and improvised material as stated in the sampling strategy section.

I revised and examined the two interviews so as to become familiar with its contents and be well informed by the perspectives, experiences, and knowledge of the interviewees.

Phase 3: Comparison and Refinement (Axial Coding)

The third phase of analysis included a comparison of Mseleku and Coltrane's treatment of non-functional cyclic harmony. This was to expose any similarities and establish how Mseleku was influenced by Coltrane's harmonic conceptions.

This phase also included the exploration of relationships between categories to bring me closer to developing a theory. A comprehensive investigation of the harmonic material in Mseleku's music included analysis of harmonic structure and stylistic features as well as melodic and improvised material. These aspects are all linked and the cross-examination of them provided a more rounded conclusion about Mseleku's use of harmony. At this point, information, perspectives, themes, and insights from the interviews were included and discussed along with the analysis of Mseleku's music. This allowed for a more multi-dimensional discussion in order to come to a more accurate conclusion about Mseleku's work and to place his music in context with real-life events.

Phase 4: Theory Development

A grounded theory methodology requires the researcher to reflect upon the analysis of data – phase four commences with the formation of a theory.

In this last phase of analysis, I reflected upon Mseleku's use of harmony by focusing on where, when, how, why, and how often he uses cyclic progressions in his compositions. Some of the questions that guided my reflections were:

- Does Mseleku use cyclical harmony consistently as part of his compositional material?
- Is it a significant contribution to his use of harmony, or is it used only for effect?
- Is it functional within the existing chord structure, or does he use it to play "outside" the harmony?
- What is the purpose of his use of cyclic harmony?
- Does he use it as transitional material between different sections, to create more interesting melody lines, or to expand his harmonic progressions?
- Where does the fusion in Mseleku's music happen pertaining to South African and American elements?
- How does he advance South African music through his use of cyclic harmony?

- In what ways and to what extent does Mseleku's treatment of non-functional and cyclic harmony resemble Coltrane's use of harmony in cyclical compositions such as Giant Steps, Like Sonny, and others?

The aim of the analysis was to focus on each aspect of the transcriptions and create an overall conclusion about Mseleku's use of harmony and the way it was influenced by his perceptions of Coltrane's harmonic innovations. Observations that other researchers and writers have already made about Mseleku's music guided the analysis and discussion of this study (Lilley, 2019; Makhathini, 2018). The content of the interviews were also considered, as they contain the experiences and knowledge of two well established jazz musicians who have been in close contact with Mseleku and his music. It was then my expectation to come to a conclusion about the compositional style of Mseleku, his fusion of different styles and how he was influenced by Coltrane's cyclic harmonic use.

3.6. Ethical Considerations

In addition to data collection, personal interviews were conducted with two established jazz musicians who have been in close contact with not only Mseleku's work, but with him personally. The interviews are not the main focus of the study, nor do they replace analysis within the study; it only serves as an additional source of information to help interpret Mseleku's work accurately. Due to the lack of resources available on Mseleku's work, I believe it is helpful to take the perspectives of these musicians, with regard to Mseleku's beliefs and his work, into account to capture the full essence of the music and meaning Mseleku ascribed to it.

The interviewees were provided with a letter containing the full details of the study and what would be required of them should they choose to participate. The letter also stated that the information in the study will be available for further research and studies. The identities of the participants are used with their consent, and the interviews are cited and referenced accordingly. Participation was voluntary and participants were allowed to withdraw at any time without a reason or explanation for the withdrawal. If they decided not to participate at all, it would also not affect them negatively. The interviews were held online via the digital platform, Zoom, so that the participants felt more comfortable due to safety reasons regarding current Covid-19 circumstances. I did not foresee that any of the interview questions would cause distress amongst the participants; however, if the interview raised any sensitive or emotional matters for any of the interviewees, they were allowed to withhold any response or to stop the interview. Participants were afforded the opportunity to read

through the research paper before its submission to ensure that their opinions and viewpoints are portrayed accurately.

The ethical procedures detailed by the University of Pretoria were followed strictly at all times. During the data collection period, information was only discussed among myself and my supervisor. The interviews, transcripts, findings, and dissertation will be stored safely at the University of Pretoria in a password-protected electronic format, in the School of the Arts Music programme according to ethical guidelines for a period of fifteen years, after which they will be destroyed.

3.7. Research Quality

Research quality tends to depend on the depth and insightfulness with which a phenomenon is described or explained (Corbin, 2015). Because only the harmonic realm of Mseleku's music was considered, it enabled me, as a researcher, to study the subject in-depth and offer a full description and micro-analysis of his harmonic functions. This specialised focus enhances the credibility of the research.

A benefit of using a grounded theory methodology is that the conceptualisations of the researcher are substantive and backed by data. The simultaneous execution of the data collection and analysis processes is a major source of effectiveness of the grounded theory approach and allows the researcher to develop concepts from the data to ground the theory within reality.

Within grounded theory, however, it is vital to be aware of pre-existing conceptualisations of data interpretation (Noble, 2016). Self-awareness and evaluation are essential for any researcher to practice. Self-evaluation requires the researcher to distance themselves from the research to critically evaluate if the theory or findings genuinely match the criteria (Corbin, 2015). It is important to be aware of biases and assumptions which is why my most important measure to ensure credibility included frequent debriefing sessions between myself as the researcher, and superiors in the field, like my supervisor and other professional jazz musicians and experts (Niewenhuis, 2016). "Opening up one's analysis to the scrutiny of others helps guard against bias. Discussions with other researchers often lead to new insights and increased theoretical sensitivity" (Corbin & Strauss, 1990, p. 11).

3.8. Delimitations of the Study

There are a few disadvantages to using a grounded theory method of research:

Data collection within grounded theory requires considerable time and effort, and it may

take months to refine a theory (El Hussein, 2014). Due to different ontological and epistemological assumptions between the founders, Glaser and Strauss (1967), multiple approaches to grounded theory exist which leaves much room for confusion and a potential for methodological error (El Hussein, 2014).

Qualitative research is highly subjective, which makes it difficult to prevent researcher-induced bias. The researcher may find it hard to review existing literature without developing assumptions prior to data analysis (El Hussein, 2014). This may diminish the reliability and validity of produced information. My own level of understanding therefore might have limited my documentation and interpretation of Mseleku's music.

3.9. Chapter Outline

Chapter 1.1 serves as an introduction and provides the background and rationale of the study.

Chapter 1.2 explains the purpose of the study as well as what I aimed to achieve through the study and why it is a relevant topic to pursue.

Chapter 1.3 states the main and secondary research questions guiding the study.

Chapter 2 is a detailed review of relevant sources which provide context to the study. Here we take a look at the history and evolution of harmonic cycles within a *Western traditional tonal system* and how the dissolution of this system lead to the emergence of symmetrical harmonic cycles. The review includes South Africa's political and sociocultural background, as well as Mseleku's upbringing, career, and personal circumstances. The review also explores literature on John Coltrane's harmonic innovations and influences that had an impact on Mseleku's music. Lastly, it includes literature regarding the value of transcription and analysis in jazz discourse, processes and strategies of improvisation analysis, and examples of studies in academic literature that use transcription and analysis as a method of music research.

Chapter 3 consists of the methodological aspects of the study, including sections describing the research paradigm and approach, research design, sampling strategy, data collection techniques, data analysis and interpretation, ethical considerations, and research quality.

Chapter 4 includes a detailed analysis of Mseleku's compositions: *Monwabisi*, *Cycle*, *Love Joe*, *The Age Of The Divine Mother*, *Violet Flame*, *Yanini*, and *Timelessness*.

Chapter 5 concludes with a summary and discussion about the findings of the study.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS

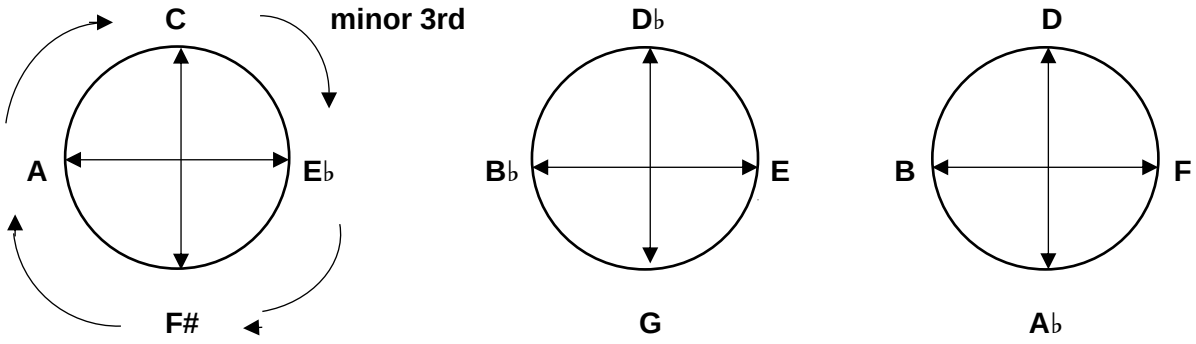
This chapter includes the analysis of seven of Mseleku's compositions: Monwabisi, Cycle, Love Joe, Age Of The Divine Mother, Violet Flame, Yanini, and Timelessness. The selected pieces all feature elements of symmetrical interval cycles and are categorised into different sections according to their compositional structures and characteristics: the diminished axis, the augmented axis, and the whole tone axis. Mseleku's pieces are discussed alongside smaller sections of some of Coltrane's pieces, which also feature symmetrical interval cycles, in order to establish a shared musical approach.

4.1. The Diminished Axis

The diminished axis is an intervallic harmonic progression or structure that is created through the repeated application of a minor 3rd interval. It results in the equal division of the octave into four equidistant key centres. Each of the key centres are diatonically unrelated to one another, and its application creates a non-functional harmonic progression. The three different diminished axes are represented through the following diagrams:

Figure E

Diminished axes dividing the octave into four equidistant key centres



The following section includes an in-depth analysis of two of Mseleku's compositions: Monwabisi and Cycle. Both make use of the diminished axis within their structural framework.

4.1.1. Monwabisi

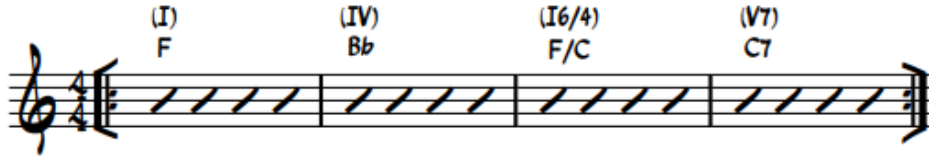
"Monwabisi" is an informal settlement situated on the southern periphery of Khayelitsha, Cape Town, South Africa. “Monwabisi” is also an isiXhosa word meaning “bringing joy”. As mentioned in section *2.1 South Africa’s political and sociocultural context for musicians,* Mseleku’s album Home at Last was dedicated to locations and legendary performers in South Africa who had an impact on him and shaped his development as an artist. Mseleku’s composition Monwabisi is a tribute song dedicated to legendary saxophonist Winston Mankunku (Makhathini, 2018). It captures the essence of the South African aesthetic, and the joyful, laid-back melody could most probably also be a celebration of the place or the people living in this settlement.

Harmonic Structure

Monwabisi’s 64-bar form can be divided into four sections. Each section consists of an eight-bar melody constructed over a typical I – IV – I $^{6}/_{4}$ – V mbaqanga chord progression.

Figure 1.1

Mbaqanga chord progression



Generally, a mbaqanga chord progression is characterised by repetition of the progression in the same key, similar to the progression described in Figure 1.1 (sometimes with slight variation). In the case of Monwabisi, Mseleku elevates the general practice of mbaqanga by modulating the progression to four different key centres along the diminished axis. Musical symmetry thus plays an important role in the overall harmonic structure of the composition as each key centre is a minor 3rd apart from each other. Even though the key centres are tonically distant from each other, the shift from one section to the next happens subtly and the ascending modulation creates a sonic effect of excitement and movement in the song, rather than disruption.

[Figure 1.2 on following page]

Figure 1.2

Monwabisi melody and chord structure

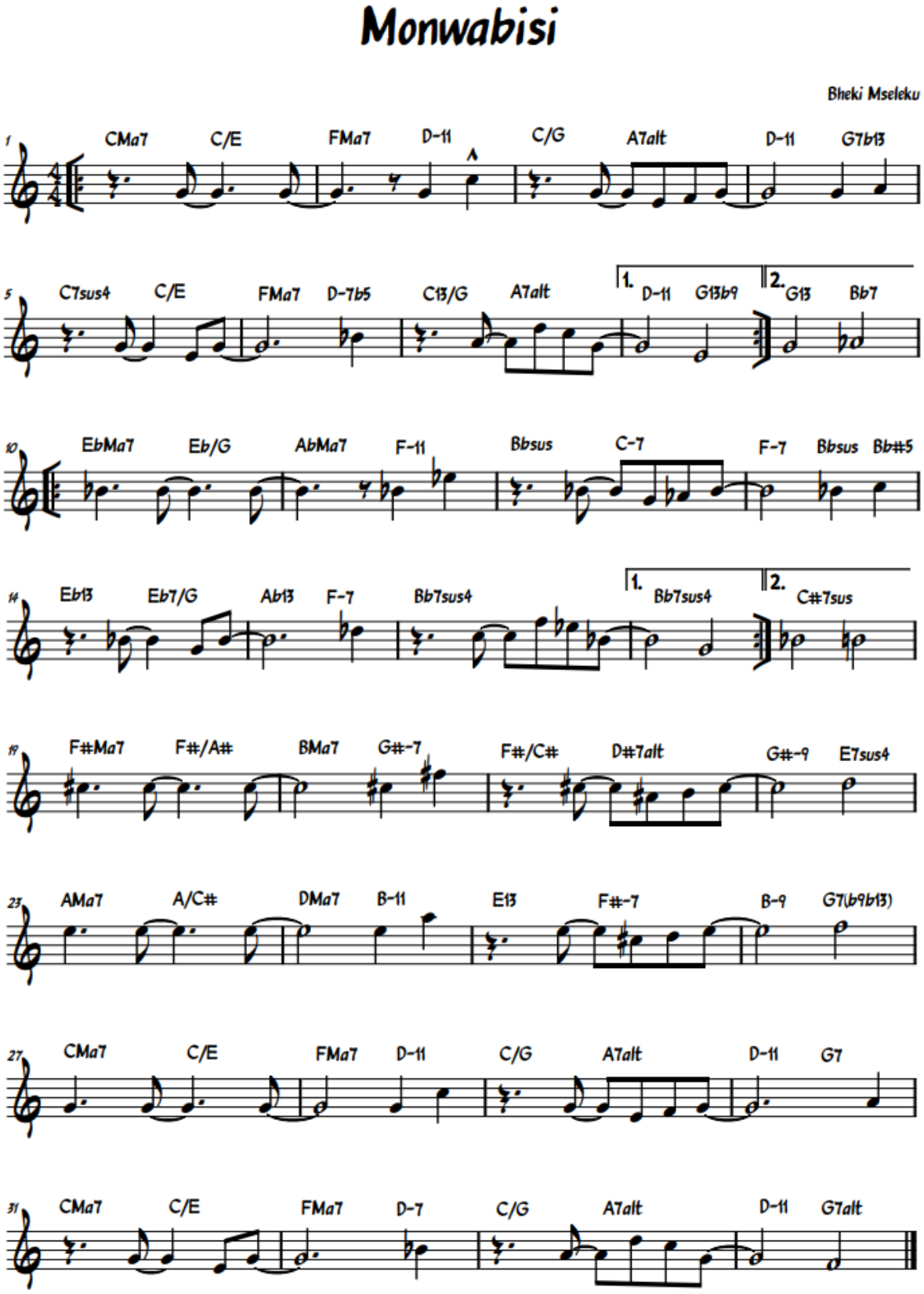


Figure 1.2 gives a visual representation of the overall harmonic structure and melody of the piece. The piece starts with an A section (mm. 1–16) in the key of C major, in which the eight-bar melody is stated and then repeated. The B section (mm. 17–32) modulates to the key of E♭ major, and here, the melody of the A section is transposed up a minor 3rd in the new key, also with repetition. In the C section (mm. 33–40), the piece modulates further along the diminished axis to F# major and then to A major. Only the first four bars of the melody are transposed to F# major (mm. 33–36), followed by a key change in which the same section of the melody is stated in A major (mm. 37–40). The eight-bar C section does not repeat, and the melody modulates back to C major for a single statement of the full eight-bar melody (mm. 41–48).

The persisting reoccurrence of the I – IV – I $^{6}/_{4}$ – V mbaqanga progression (Fig. 1.3) can also be seen as a cycle within the bigger structural diminished cycle. In addition to the chords traditionally used in a mbaqanga progression, Mseleku adds passing chords and upper structure tensions to create fuller and more colourful sounds and, thus, enhances the complexity and delivery of the progression. For example, instead of the traditional I $^{6}/_{4}$ – V7 chord movement, Mseleku increases the harmonic complexity by substituting it with a turnaround I $^{6}/_{4}$ – VI7 – ii-7 – V7 – I progression (Fig. 1.4). The practice of reharmonisation in jazz is also customary in mbaqanga under other contemporary South African jazz musicians.

Figure 1.3

Traditional mbaqanga chord progression (in C major)

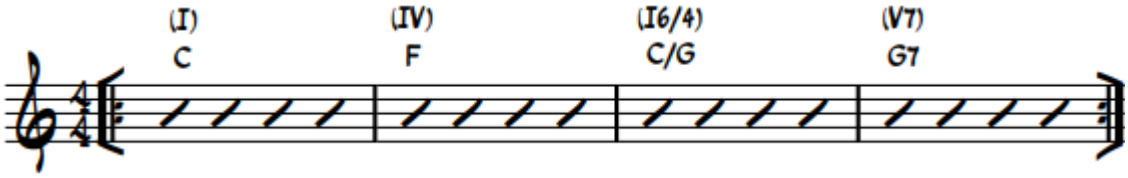
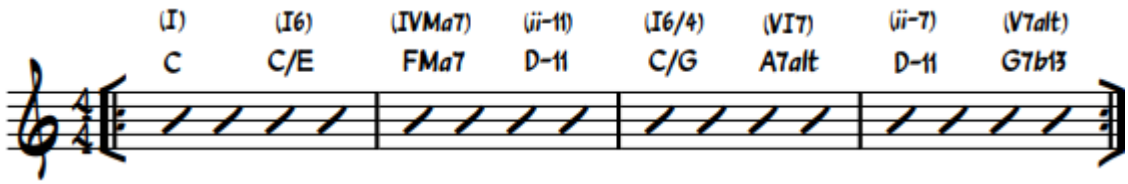


Figure 1.4

Expanded mbaqanga chord progression used in Monwabisi



Comparable to the way Coltrane made use of 3rds-related cycles to expand standard ii – V – I changes and enhance the harmonic complexity of jazz standards (Ricker & Weiskopf, 1991), Mseleku used the concept of symmetrical interval cycles to elevate the standard form of a traditional mbaqanga progression.

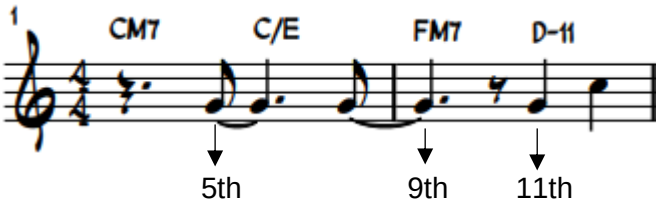
Melodic Material

On the recording of Monwabisi, featured on the album Home At Last (Sheer Sound SSCD 094), the melody is played in unison with the trumpet and the tenor saxophone an octave apart. Repetition is prevalent in the melody – each modulation is an exact statement of the original melody within the new key and follows the exact intervallic and rhythmic structure established in the initial appearance of the melody.

The eight-bar main melody of measures 1–8 is built upon smaller two-measure sub-phrases derived or developed from the opening motif or first subphrase (Fig. 1.5). The melodic line of the motif is rather simple and is mainly built on the 5th degree (the note G) of the scale; but the effect is, however, not simplistic. Tension increases as the chords change underneath, and the G melody note becomes the 9th of FMaj7 and the 11th of D-7. The consistency of the repetitive note acts as a pedal note as the harmony shifts underneath.

Figure 1.5

Primary melodic motif (first subphrase) of Monwabisi's main melody



The second and third subphrases (Fig. 1.6 and Fig. 1.7) are derived from the first idea (Fig. 1.5), with small melodic and rhythmic alterations that create variation and melodic interest but still present the entire melody as one idea. The fourth subphrase (Fig. 1.8) serves as an answer to the preceding subphrases and closes off the melody.

Figure 1.6

Second subphrase of Monwabisi's main melody

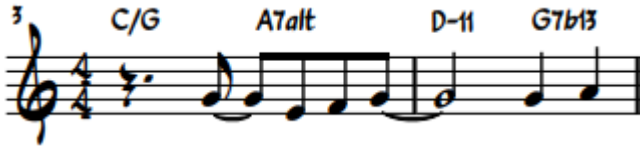


Figure 1.7

Third subphrase of Monwabisi's main melody

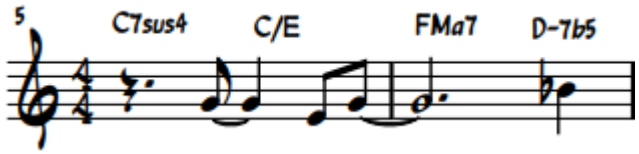
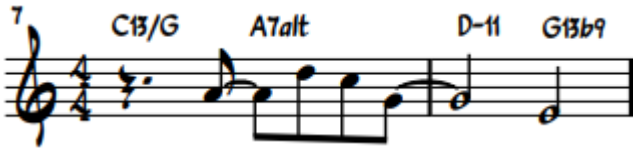


Figure 1.8

Fourth subphrase of Monwabisi's main melody



Stylistic Features

Although the piece is harmonically more complex than traditional South African jazz, it still retains its stylistic integrity. The characteristics and nature of popular township-style music is the main feature, alongside American jazz influences and Mseleku's personal interpretation.

One of the most prominent features and shared characteristic of township jazz styles within the song is the melodic bassline pattern based on the I – IV – I $^{6}/_{4}$ – V formula played over a bouncing $^{8}/_{8}$ township rhythm. The strong repetitive melody is also reference to more traditional South African jazz styles.

Through the explicit use of the standard South African harmonic progression as well as specific melodic and rhythmic elements, Monwabisi captures the essence of the South African jazz aesthetic, while simultaneously showing the possibility of harmonic expansion through the modulation of key centres along a diminished axis, and the elaboration of chords and chord progressions within the tradition.

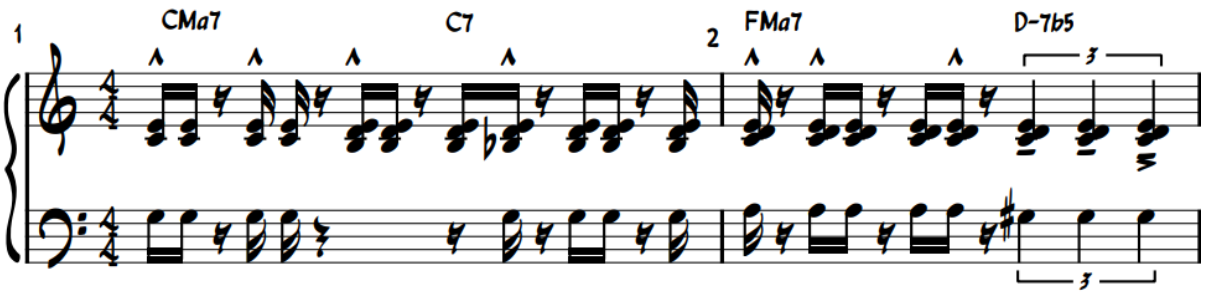
Analysis of Solo and Improvised Material

The solo starts in a lively manner as Mseleku commences with a short rhythmic chordal device that consists of syncopated sixteenth-note cross-rhythms.

[Figure 1.9 on following page]

Figure 1.9

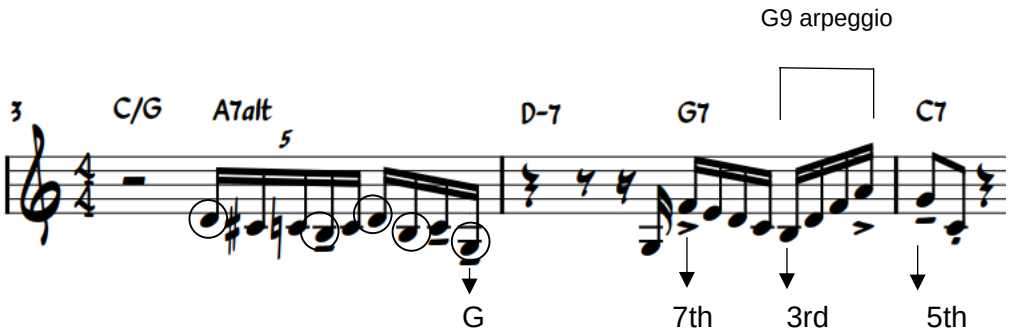
Syncopated sixteenth-note rhythm in opening phrase of solo (mm. 1, 2)



Two short melodic sixteenth-note phrases follow (Fig. 1.10). These phrases consist of scales and arpeggios, and it is evident that Mseleku targets the chordal tones of the underlying harmony – for example, the 3rd and 7th of the G7 chord, as well as the root and 5th of C7. On the A7 altered chord, Mseleku seems to emphasise a sus (natural 4th) sound by emphasising the chord tones of a G over the A7 harmony.

Figure 1.10

Two short melodic sixteenth-note phrases (mm. 3, 4 & 5)



Mseleku also makes elaborate use of enclosures around target tones as improvisatory material which hints at the bebop influences within his playing. “Much of the improvised music created by [Charlie] Parker and his followers were based on the practice of disguising essential chord tones in a melody by surrounding them with non-essential chord tones” (Hellmer & Lawn, 1996, p. 73).

Surrounding tones often depart from a chord tone by step, in either direction; followed by a leap in the opposite direction, and resolution by step to the original chord tone (illustrated in Fig. 1.13) (Hellmer & Lawn, 1996, p. 77). In measure 9 (Fig. 1.11), Mseleku targets the notes of a simple C triad arpeggio (marked with circles). He creates a melodic phrase by embellishing each target note with its enclosures and repeats the idea to create a descending sequential pattern. The same concept is again applied in measures 15–16 (Fig.

1.12) and again in measure 18 (Fig. 1.13), each time using a different rhythmic combination. The use and development of the same motif over different harmonies and in different contexts provide a certain element of predictability and cohesion within Mseleku's solo. It also points to a specific approach or improvisational language which is part of his vocabulary as a jazz musician.

Figure 1.11

Melodic phrase created through enclosures and sequence (m. 9)

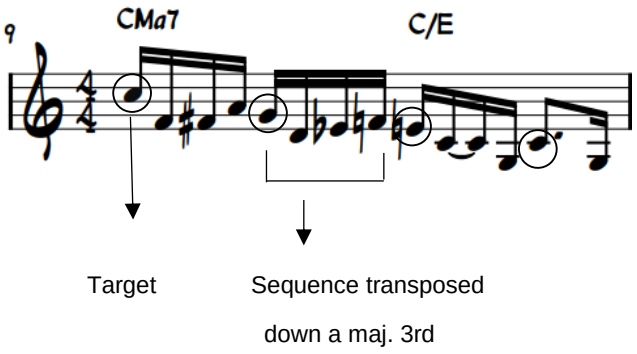


Figure 1.12

Variation of chromatic approach tones (m. 15, 16)

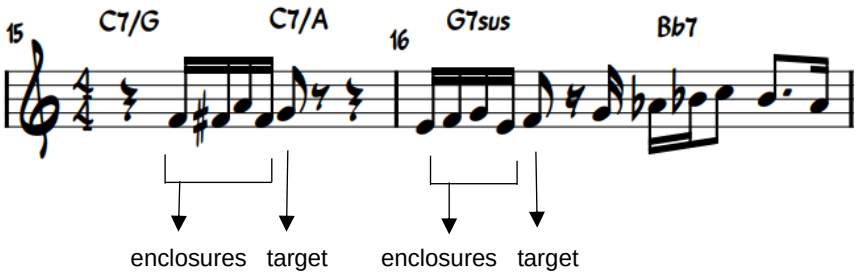
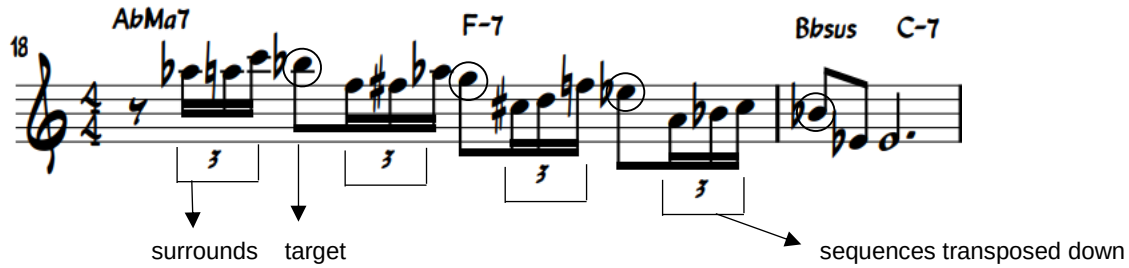


Figure 1.13

Melodic material created through enclosures and descending sequential material (m. 18)

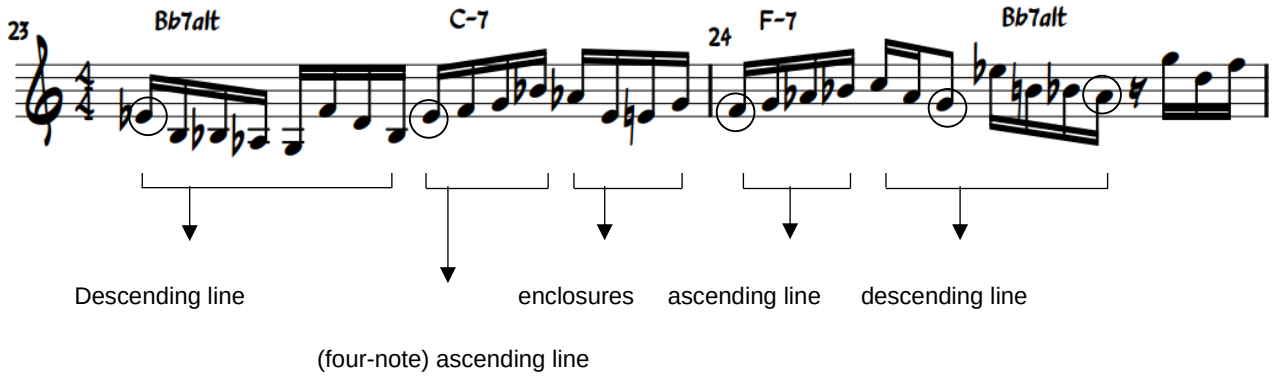


In measures 23 to 24 (Fig. 1.14), Mseleku again creates a long developing melodic line by using target chord tones and weaving them together with diatonic scale and arpeggiated

material, chromatic passing tones, and enclosures. There seems to be logic behind the construction of a line such as this. He sticks to an approximate melodic contour in terms of its intervallic organisation by raising the target tone half a step higher each time to create a sequential effect in his line. For example, a descending line with a jump, succeeded by four ascending notes on C-7 a half step higher, followed by an enclosure, another four-note ascending line on F–7 a half step higher, and then another descending line.

Figure 1.14

Improvised line created through connecting melodic material (mm. 23 & 24)



Measure 25 (Fig. 1.16) displays a re-ordering of the idea first stated in measure 17 (Fig. 1.15), which shows development of melodic ideas and again creates cohesion within the solo.

Figure 1.15

Improvised material (m. 17)

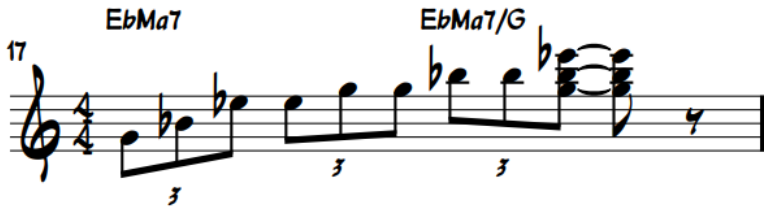
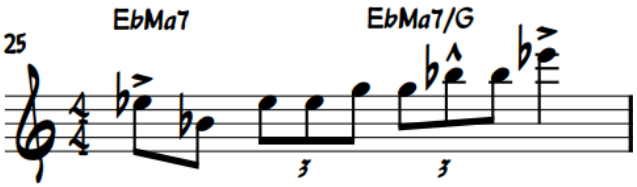


Figure 1.16

Re-ordering of improvised idea in measure 17 (m. 25)



It is not uncommon for jazz musicians to "signify[3]" on the music they played just moments before. Improvisers often comment on what they just played by spontaneously repeating, embellishing, and developing their best ideas (Walser, 1993). In Gates (1988), we encounter his theory of signification, which gives us a tool or a way of thinking about how meaning is produced in especially improvised music. The theory of signification can be applied to musical analysis to illuminate the significance of specific musical details and its delivery during performance. His theory alludes to the viewpoint that what the improviser produces is not autonomous but is a reaction to what is played before and is a constant dialogue that is enfolding. Musicians converse with each other, their audiences, and their forebearers as they play. "Musical techniques, styles and procedures are never autonomous; they are organized at a conceptual level, a level of cultural priorities and modes of thought" (Walser, 1993; Wilson, 1986). A musical aesthetic is expressive of a worldview and reactions to art feel personal, but they nonetheless reflect the ways in which our most personal feelings are socially constructed (Walser, 1993).

Neil Gonsalves shared this sentiment and gave his views on the matter (personal communication, March 5, 2021):

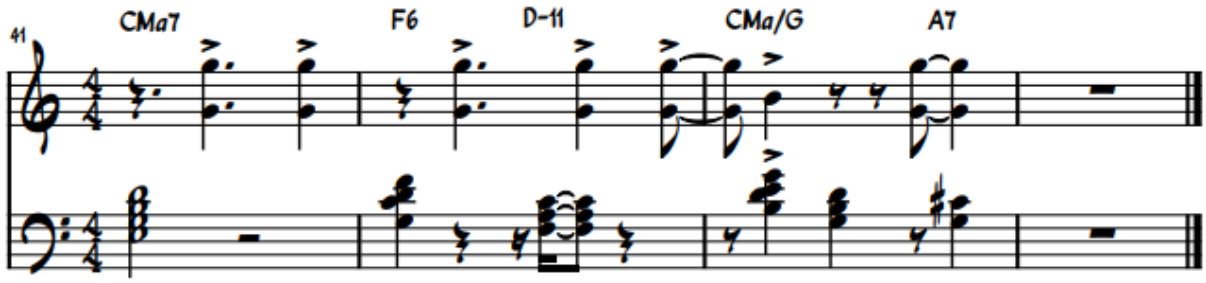
> There is this idea in jazz analysis that I do not quite agree with – that when we analyse a person's music, the assumption is that he is responding to himself. We must remember that Mseleku's playing is not in a vacuum. Jazz ensemble playing has a three-dimensional aspect to it and when we are playing with others, we focus on what everyone else is playing and we play in relation to them. I practice what I need to play by myself in the 'practice room', but when you are playing in an ensemble setting, you get fed new ideas by others and you respond differently to that. It's like when you see a school of fish swimming and they suddenly change direction all at the same time – it looks like they are one organism and have one mind. We as humans are all connected. On the band stand as well, everyone's parts interlock and there are moments where you can read the other person and you know exactly what they are going to do. So, you play in reaction to someone else.

The return of the A section in measure 41 again shows Mseleku's creative exploration of rhythmic variety and syncopated rhythms. Measures 41–43 (Fig. 1.17) resembles a rhythmically varied and syncopated version of the opening melody, with the repetitive G creating a pedal-like effect as the harmony changes underneath.

3 Signifying works through reference, gesture, and dialogue to suggest multiple meanings through association. It respects contingency, improvisation, and relativity – the social production and negotiation of meanings.

Figure 1.17

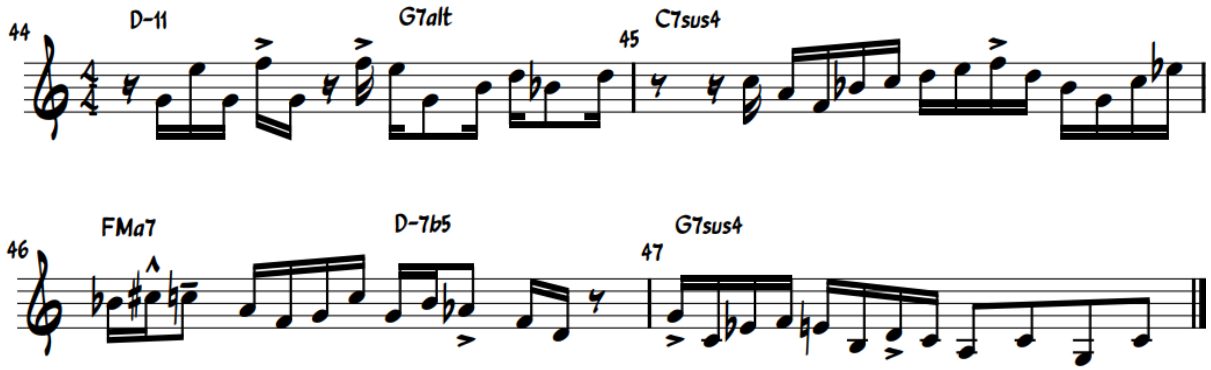
Rhythmic variation and syncopated rhythms (mm. 41-43)



Mseleku's hard bop jazz foundations fleetingly shimmer through again in mm. 44–47 (Fig. 1.18) with swift sixteenth-note runs.

Figure 1.18

Sixteenth-note runs (mm. 44–47)



Monwabisi consists of a combination of different elements. It is a strongly South African jazz infused composition which pays homage to Mseleku's cultural roots in his home country. The use of a diminished axis within the harmonic structure is not common in this setting and shows how his conceptualisation was influenced by Coltrane's practice of using non-functional cyclic harmony as structural organisation. The improvisational language within Mseleku's solo is reminiscent of a more bebop and hardbop approach and showcases how American and South African jazz aesthetics existed simultaneously within his music.

4.1.2. Cycle

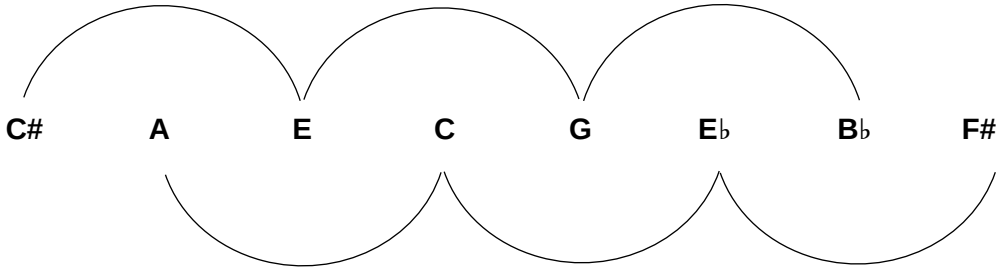
The title gives us a clear indication of Mseleku's compositional approach to the piece and refers to the cyclical nature and construction of the melody and chord progression.

Harmonic Structure

The harmonic structure of Cycle is organised around the combination of two different diminished axes: C# - E - G - B♭ and A - C - E♭ - F#. An eight-bar “harmonic formula” is created by alternating between the tones of each axis (Lilley, 2019, p. 11).

Figure 2.1

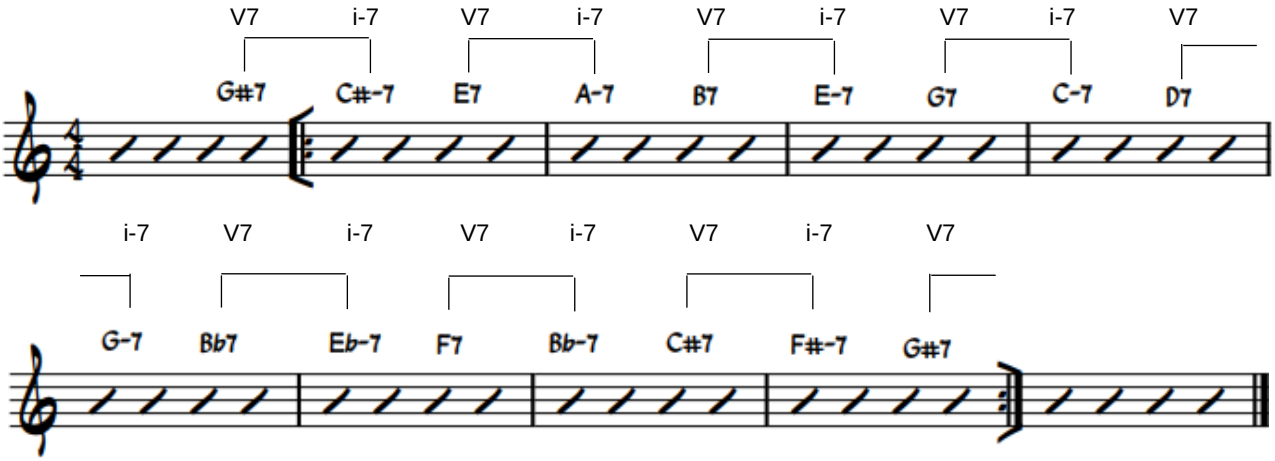
Combination of two diminished axes as harmonic organisation of Cycle



Mseleku establishes tonality through dominant-tonic resolution and the cycle is controlled by an ubiquitous dominant-to-tonic motion. Each tone demonstrated above (Fig. 2.1) is given a minor 7th (i-7) quality and is preceded by its dominant 7th chord.

Figure 2.2

V – I motion in harmonic progression



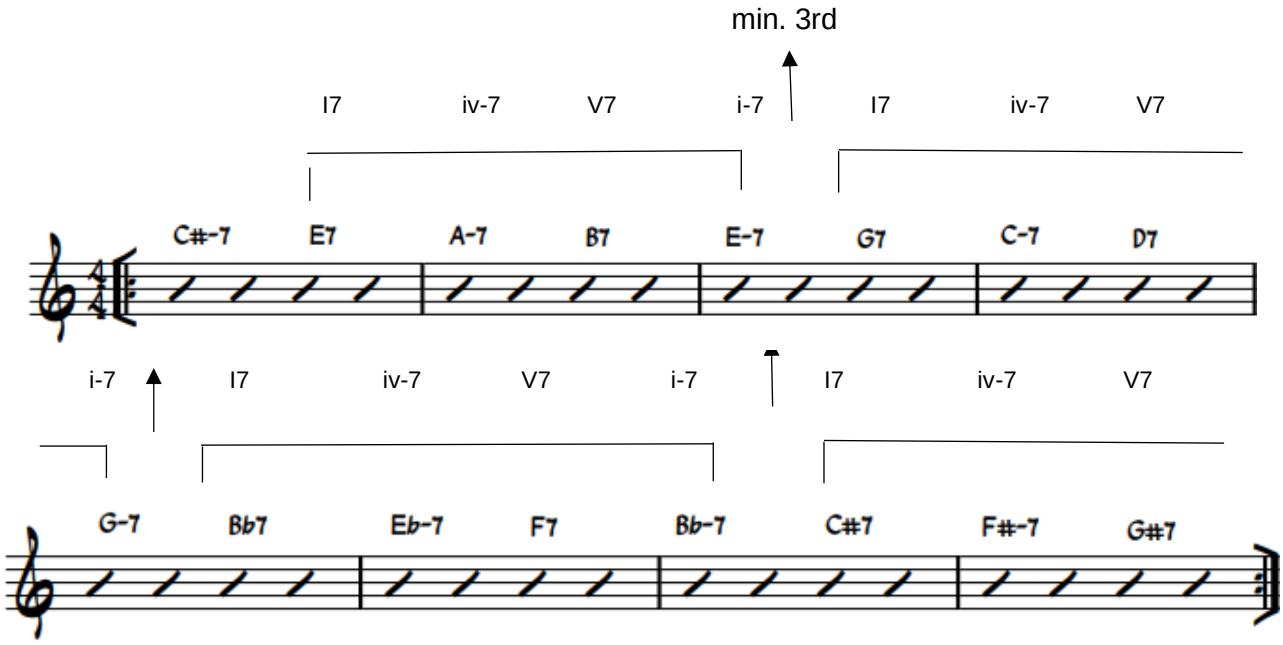
The tonicisations occur rapidly in succession and the end result is an intricate and complicated progression in which tonality is blurred and the tonal centre become ambiguous. As discussed previously, 3rd relationship harmony adds an increased amount of chromaticism and its properties tend to weaken or blur tonality because it changes the

function and harmonic (or melodic) tendencies of the pitches involved (Demsey, 1991). Because of the symmetrical nature and equal distance between the harmonies of the diminished axis as well as the cyclical nature of the piece, there is no distinctive focus point, and it is almost impossible to establish a main key centre within the piece. The starting point of the melody also changes with each new section and repeat of the chord progression, which emphasises the ongoing and continuous quality of the cycle.

The inherent qualities of a single harmonic cycle results in the generation of other cycles as well. Within a musical context, an individual cycle is but a single expression of an entire system of interval cycles. Some cyclic relationships created by the concurrent use of more than one cycle means that the number of simultaneous cyclic relationships are even greater (Antokoletz & Susanni, 2012). Within the overall structure of Cycle, our ear also recognises another easily identifiable progression which, within its own context, has a I – IV – V – I root movement. The diminished axis, however, remains the main structural element and the modulation from this short harmonic sequence to the next is a minor 3rd apart (Fig. 2.3). The I – IV – V progression is an embedded mbaqanga progression and the juxtaposition of the rapidly moving Coltrane-*esque* progression over the mbaqanga progression is testament to how Mseleku combined styles. It is, however, also possible that such root movement is merely a consequence of the juxtaposed diminished axes that is the prevailing harmonic structure or cycle – in other words it is possible that the I – IV – V root could be a coincidence rather than by design.

Figure 2.3

Alternate cyclic progression



Cycle is clearly not a direct adaptation or reworking of any of Coltrane's compositions; however, the presence of Coltrane's influence can be felt strongly within the harmonic structures and compositional concept of the piece. The idea of an equidistant minor 3rd interval cycle which seamlessly moves back to its initial starting point can be related back to Coltrane's use of symmetrical interval cycles in Giant Steps. Cycle demonstrates how Mseleku's compositional approach was influenced by principles of harmonic and melodic symmetry and even atonality (the use of 12-tone principles) – all characteristics that we find in Coltrane's work and of which he was a pioneer in the jazz world.

Giant Steps elegantly demonstrates Coltrane's *three tonics* concept and the way he experimented with a complete cycle of 3rds-related tonicisations (Jaffe, 2009). It is regarded as the most highly organised use of the 3rd relationship principle in any Coltrane composition and its unique structure makes it an example of a 3rds cycle translated into the jazz harmonic framework in its most refined form (Demsey, 1991). Unlike some of Coltrane's other works, Countdown and Tune Up, the cyclic progression of Giant Steps which comprises the harmonic structure is not used as a reharmonisation technique within a tonic-dominant framework, plugged within a previously existing chord progression. The overall structure exists without any I-V axis, and thus, without an apparent home key (Demsey, 1991).

The same is true for the harmonic structure of Cycle. Here, the equidistant 3rd relationship harmony also functions as the most important compositional vehicle. Like in Giant Steps, each key is established by its preceding V7 chord, creating a series of direct modulations (Jaffe, 2009), and the tonicisations appear quickly one after the other. In Cycle, as well as in measures 1–8 of Giant Steps, every second chord functions as a new harmonic centre. The intensity created by the rapid modulations of Giant Steps is one of its main characteristics and part of the compositional appeal. The rapid modulations to harmonically distant, 3rd-related tonalities via an intervening dominant is a big parallel that we can draw between these two pieces.

Another similarity is that harmonic ambiguity is a central figure in both Giant Steps as well as Cycle. The symmetrical construction of the 3rd-related cycles creates an effect where the beginning and ending points of the piece may sound indeterminate – in other words, not exactly known, established, or defined (Waters, 2010). When only the chord progression is played and repeated, as during an improvised solo, both pieces truly have an "endless" quality, since no cadence sounds more harmonically or rhythmically important than another. The purpose is to blur the identity of a tonic key centre and unclear global tonalities are established through harmonically distant key centres. It creates a subtle 12-tone relationship

as well. Although, Cycle makes use of a diminished axis or minor 3rd-related tonicisations, and Giant Steps of an augmented axis of major 3rd-related tonicisations, the harmonic implications and results are essentially the same. If a major or minor triad is transposed by a major or minor 3rd interval, the resulting triads will not be tonically related. So, although 3rds tonicisations may enrich a piece's harmony, its use tends to disrupt the overall tonality of the piece (Martin, 2012).

It is clear that Mseleku took the concept of chromatic 3rd-related harmony, pioneered by Coltrane in a jazz context, and developed it even further. The fact that Mseleku combines two different diminished axes within one piece and uses them concurrently, interwoven into each other means that the harmonic structure of Cycle is actually more complex than that of Giant Steps.

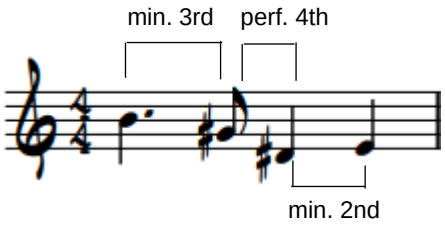
Melodic and Scale Material

Cycle is comprised of three sections. Each section has a newly composed melody which is not repeated, and the piece can thus be regarded as through-composed. Even here, Mseleku already displays the creative possibilities of constructing different melodies over a repetitive cyclic harmonic progression. This is, of course, not unique only to Mseleku and is also true for jazz in general, but Lilley (2019) affirms this idea that "endless variations are possible and motivic melodies emerge from the cycle as a direct result of the symmetry of the progression" (p. 4). A parallel concept can be drawn between the three independent melodies of the three different sections and the idea of a trinity represented by the diminished axis or minor 3rd harmonic relationships. This affirms the presence of Coltrane's direct influence which also had a preoccupation with the concept of "three" (Demsey, 1991).

The melody of the A section is constructed from a single melodic and rhythmic motif (Fig. 2.4).

Figure 2.4

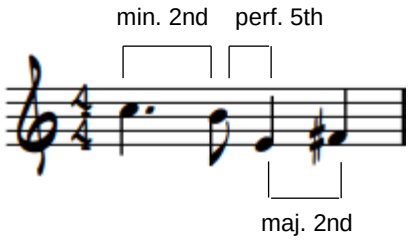
Primary melodic and rhythmic material



The first repetition of the motif (Fig. 2.5) follows the same contour as the original, but the intervallic structure is slightly altered to accommodate the underlying harmony and to create greater melodic interest.

Figure 2.5

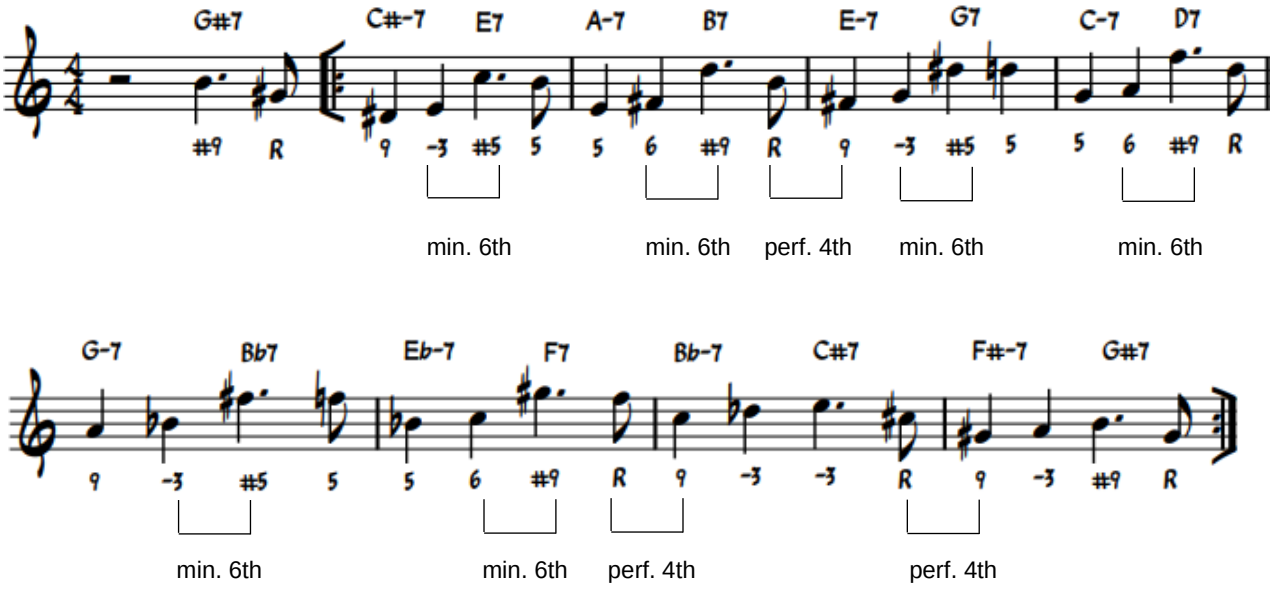
Slight alteration of primary rhythmic motif



The two consecutive motifs can be regarded as a sub-phrase, which is used as melodic material and repeatedly transposed throughout the entire eight-bar phrase (through the cycle – the harmony and the melody). The high degree of sequential material present in Mseleku's construction of melody is a result of the repetitive intervallic structure (Lilley, 2019). Mseleku targets the chord extensions in his construction of the melody and emphasis is placed on the #5, #9, and ♭13. Aesthetically, it provides the melody with richer harmonic colours. The upper extension melody notes may also provide a guide-tone line through harmonies that are somewhat unrelated and enables good voice leading which is essential to the success of a non-functional progression. The use of upper extensions of the underlying harmony as well as wide intervallic structures in the melody, where Mseleku frequently uses leaps of perfect 4ths and minor 6ths (Fig. 2.6), is an indication of more contemporary compositional techniques.

Figure 2.6

Upper extensions and use of perfect 4ths and minor 6ths in melody



It is interesting to note that all twelve notes of the chromatic scale are included in the melody. Whether Mseleku does this intentionally or it happens as a result of melodic material transposed through the cycle is not completely clear. What is noteworthy, however, is the similarity between Coltrane and Mseleku's approach of applying V-I harmony to a 12-tone pattern to import a sense of tonality.

Stylistic Features

Measures 1–8 has a simple *two feel* [4] with the emphasis placed on beat 1 and 3, together with the change of each chord. In measures 9–16 we can hear a shift in feel as the rhythmic drive intensifies, and the rhythm section starts to swing. They quickly return to a relatively straight two feel for the next eight-measure harmonic cycle, but the drive of the music immediately picks up again as we enter the solo section.

The presence of cross-rhythms within the solo section drives this part of the piece and also intensifies the rhythmic complexity. A constant $^{4}/_{4}$ time can be felt beneath the music, but the prevailing time-signature can now be regarded as $^{6}/_{8}$. For this reason, the *head* [5] will be notated in $^{4}/_{4}$ and the solo section will be notated in $^{6}/_{8}$ in the transcriptions, for the purpose of simplifying notation and to make reading easier.

Within the ever-repeating harmonic structure we can hear some variation in the rhythmic drive and complexity between different sections. Although the "groove" remains constant, additional polyrhythmic activity and cross-rhythms from the rhythm section add rhythmic complexity and drive to the music. These traits are largely attributed to African music. The rhythm of cyclical repetition is pleasing to the ear and its ongoing motion and flow reduces the need for radical changes to occur. The audience gets drawn into the cycles with the same repeated rhythmic figure many times over without the need or demand for development or even variation to occur (Davidson, 2012). The presence of cross-rhythmic activity and rhythmic cycles in jazz are common practice, but it could also speak to the African influences within Mseleku's music and could be an influence which enhanced his fascination with cycles.

4 A form of rhythmic organisation in which the first and third beats of the bar are emphasized (particularly by the bass), often leaving the second and fourth beats silent, with a resulting "boom-chick" feel (Jazz Glossary, Centre for Jazz Studies – Colombia University).

[5] 5 The first (and last) chorus of a jazz piece, in which the song or melody is stated without improvisation or with minimal improvisation.

Improvised Material

Similar to his treatment of the main melody, Mseleku continually targets the chord extensions of the underlying harmony. He maintains the character of the piece and keeps it consistent with the harmonic structure of the head by continuing to target the #9 and ♭13 established within the chord structure previously.

"Coltrane's musical style was rooted in deriving melodies from the set structure of predetermined chord progressions" (Bair, 2003), as opposed to the South African aesthetic that focusses mainly on ongoing melodic development of short motifs and figurations that occur at the cost of loosening vertical relationships with the harmonies of the music (Davidson, 2012). Similar to Coltrane, Mseleku also follows the established harmonic structure as the basis for his improvisatory material, instead of focussing mainly on melodic development. Mseleku's solo on Cycle can be regarded as more intervallic than melodic, which is reminiscent of a more contemporary improvisational approach. He frequently uses patterns and sequences that are transposed through the harmonic progression. The transposed patterns are only approximate repetitions of the initial pattern, and some intervals are slightly altered to accompany the underlying harmony. Figure 2.7 and Figure 2.8 demonstrate how Mseleku repeatedly uses a similar intervallic idea to weave a line through the progression.

Figure 2.7

Sequential pattern transposed through harmonic progression (mm. 10–12)

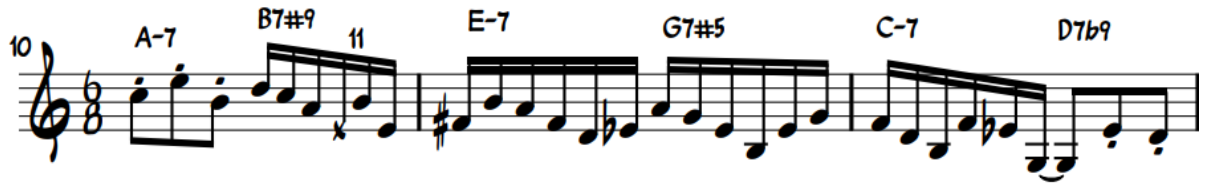
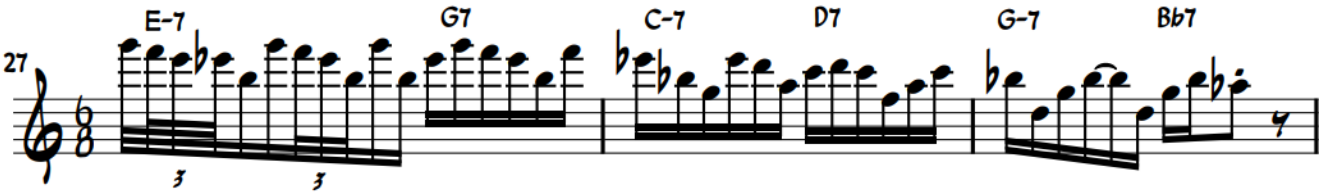


Figure 2.8

Repeated intervallic idea employed throughout improvised line (mm. 27–29)

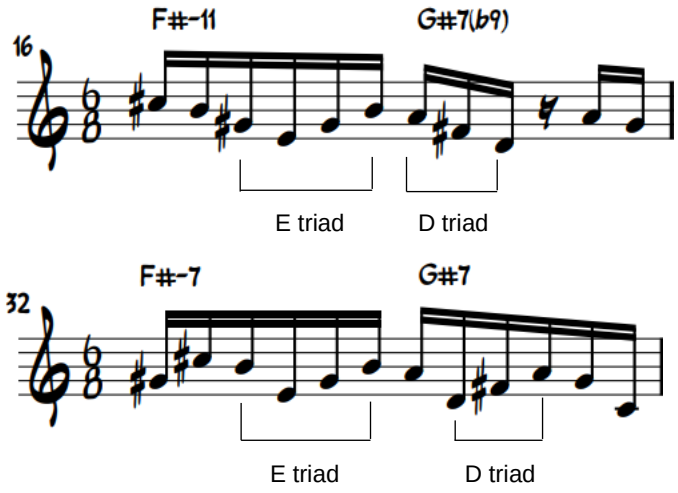


A noticeable feature in Mseleku's negotiations through the chord changes are the use of upper structure triads. In measures 16 and 32 (Fig. 2.9), Mseleku plays an E major triad (or

a C# minor 7th chord) over a F# minor 7th harmony which emphasises the natural 11 (B) of the chord. He also plays a D major triad over G#7 which incorporates the ♭9 and the #11 of the chord. The use of upper structure triads provides Mseleku with a tool to integrate the chord extensions of the given harmony into his improvised lines and create particularly interesting harmonic colours.

Figure 2.9

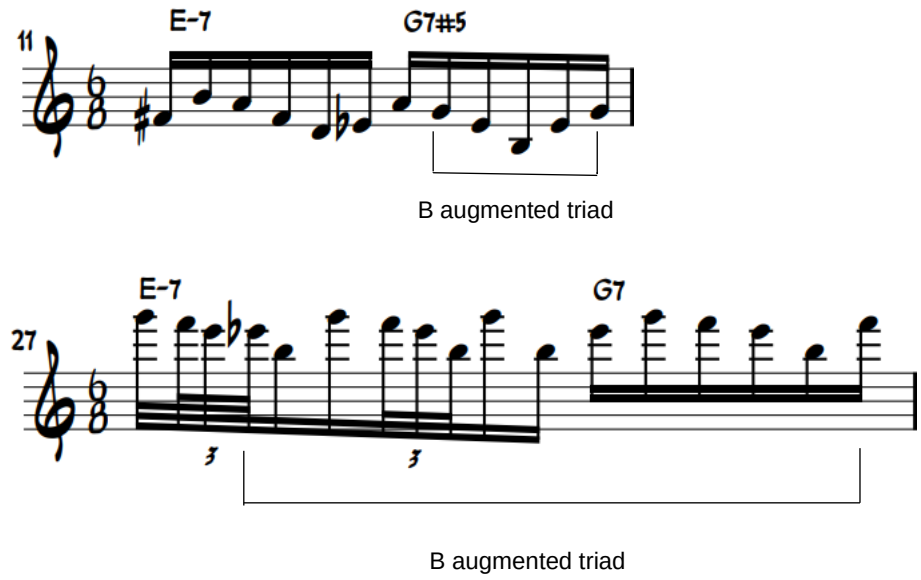
Upper structure triads (mm. 16 & 32)



In measures 11 and 27 (Fig. 2.10) , Mseleku uses a B augmented triad over a G7 harmony, which targets the #5 and results in a whole tone sound.

Figure 2.10

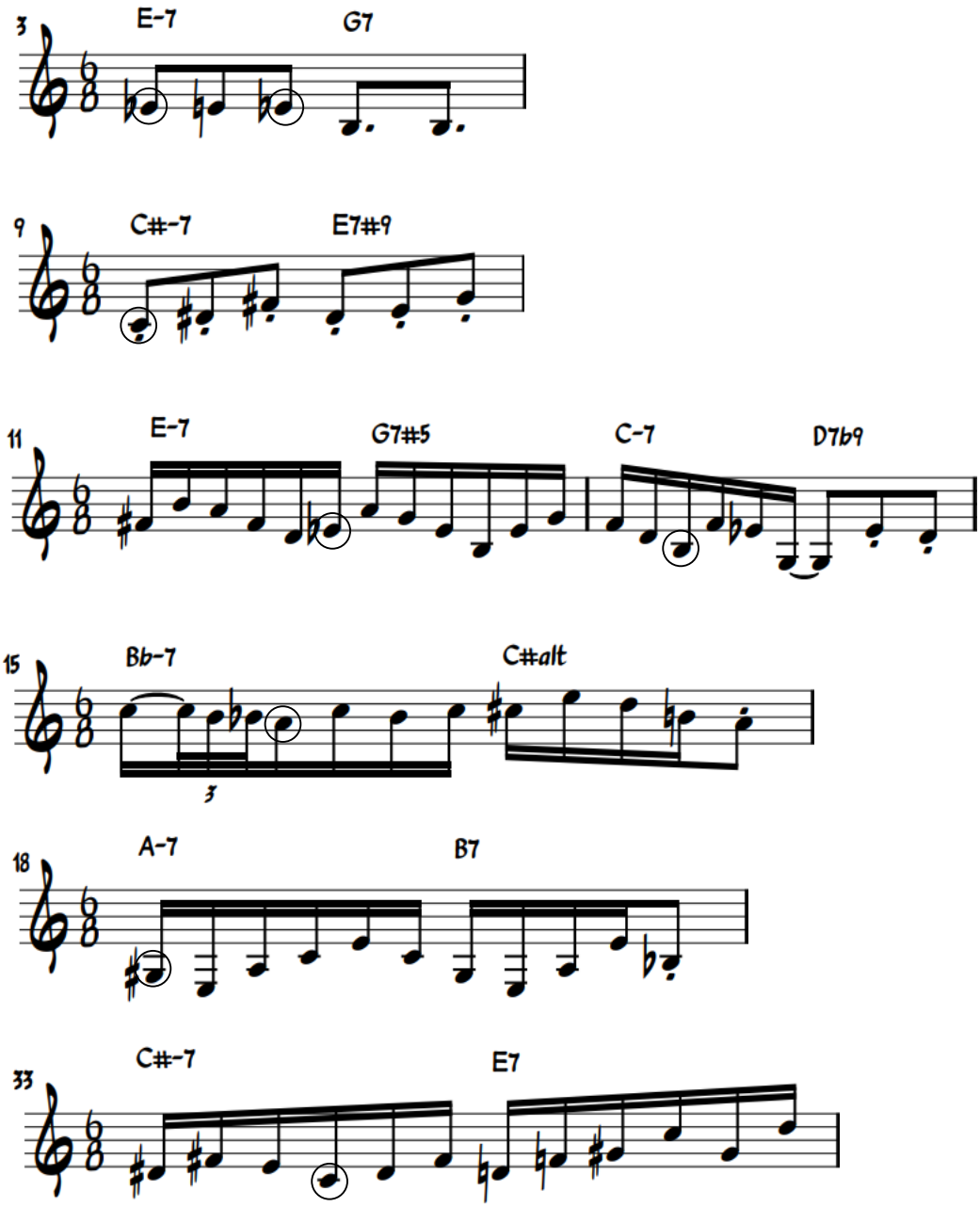
B augmented triad over G7 (mm. 11 & 27)



It is interesting to note that Mseleku plays the major 7th tone over most of the minor 7th chords that appear in the piece, which means that he uses the harmonic minor as scale material in these specific places. He does not necessarily always apply them as target tones, but sometimes use them only as embellishments within the line. Figure 2.11 illustrates a few different scenarios where Mseleku plays the major 7th over a minor chord within his improvisation.

Figure 2.11

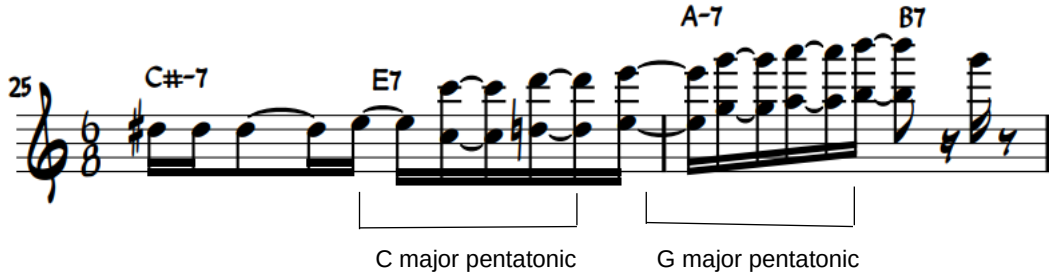
Major 7th chord tones over minor 7th chords (mm. 3, 9, 11, 15, 18 & 33)



In some instances, we can also interpret Mseleku's choice of scale material as the use of pentatonic scales starting on tones other than the tonic, which provides him with a different means to include chord alterations and extensions into his solo material. For example, in measures 25 and 26 (Fig. 2.12), we can interpret Mseleku's octave run as a pentatonic scale starting on the ♭13th scale degree (C – D – E – G – A), which allows him to play the ♭13th and #9 over the E7 chord. Similarly, in measure 26, he plays a partial pentatonic scale over A-7, starting on the ♭7 scale degree (G – A – B / D – E), which includes the 9th and anticipates the following B7 chord.

Figure 2.12

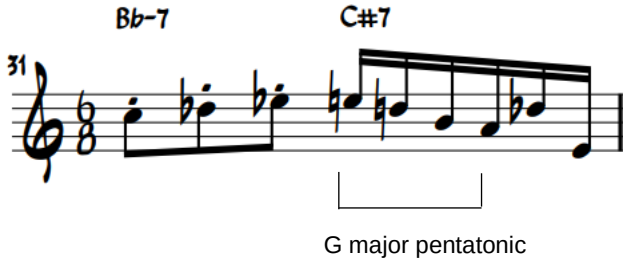
Pentatonic scales on chord extensions (mm. 25 & 26)



In measure 31 (Fig. 2.13), Mseleku plays a pentatonic scale from the sharp 11 of C#7 (G major pentatonic) over the underlying harmony, which allows him to include the #11, ♭9 and #9 alterations in his line.

Figure 2.13

G major pentatonic superimposed over C#7



Mseleku makes use of pentatonic language, harmonic minor, and whole tone scales for improvisatory material, as well as the use of upper structure triads. Scale patterns, fragments, shapes, and sequences devised from this material form the content of Mseleku's solo over the non-functional harmonic cycle. By viewing Mseleku's approach to improvisation through these concepts, we find some logic behind the specific "sounds" he targets. Superimposing these scales and stacking different harmonies over the underlying structure

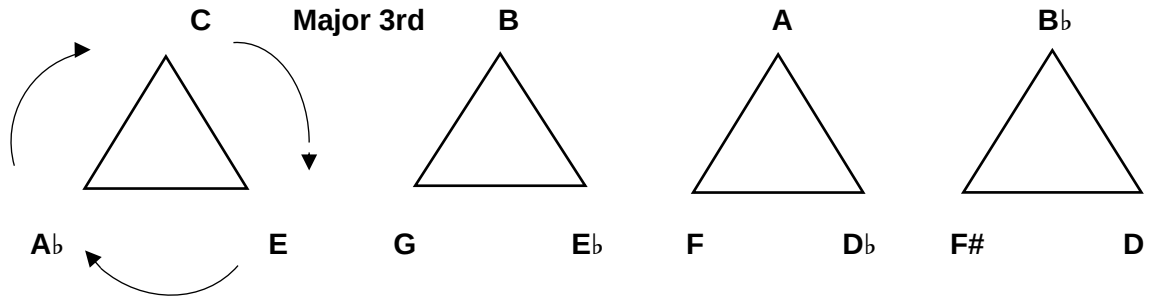
of the piece further results in a heightened sense of harmonic tension. These elements also contribute to the modern jazz aesthetic of the piece and intensifies the intervallic approach within the solo. The incorporation of pentatonic devices alludes to the musical influences from Coltrane and Tyner, which will be discussed more in depth in section *4.3.1 Timelessness*.

4.2. The Augmented Axis

The augmented axis represents a cycle of major 3rd-related intervals. It is based on the theoretical principle that dividing the octave into three equal parts creates three equidistant key centres that are all related by an interval of a major 3rd. By using the interval of a major 3rd, four different cycles of three notes each can be created, depending on the initial chord.

Figure F

Augmented axes dividing the octave into three equidistant key centres



The following section includes an analysis of Mseleku's compositions: *Love Joe*, *The Age of the Divine Mother*, *Violet Flame*, and *Yanini*. These pieces all contain elements of major 3rd-related harmony, and the author further investigates how Mseleku's use of the augmented axis was influenced by Coltrane's use of chromatic 3rd-related harmony.

4.2.1. Love Joe

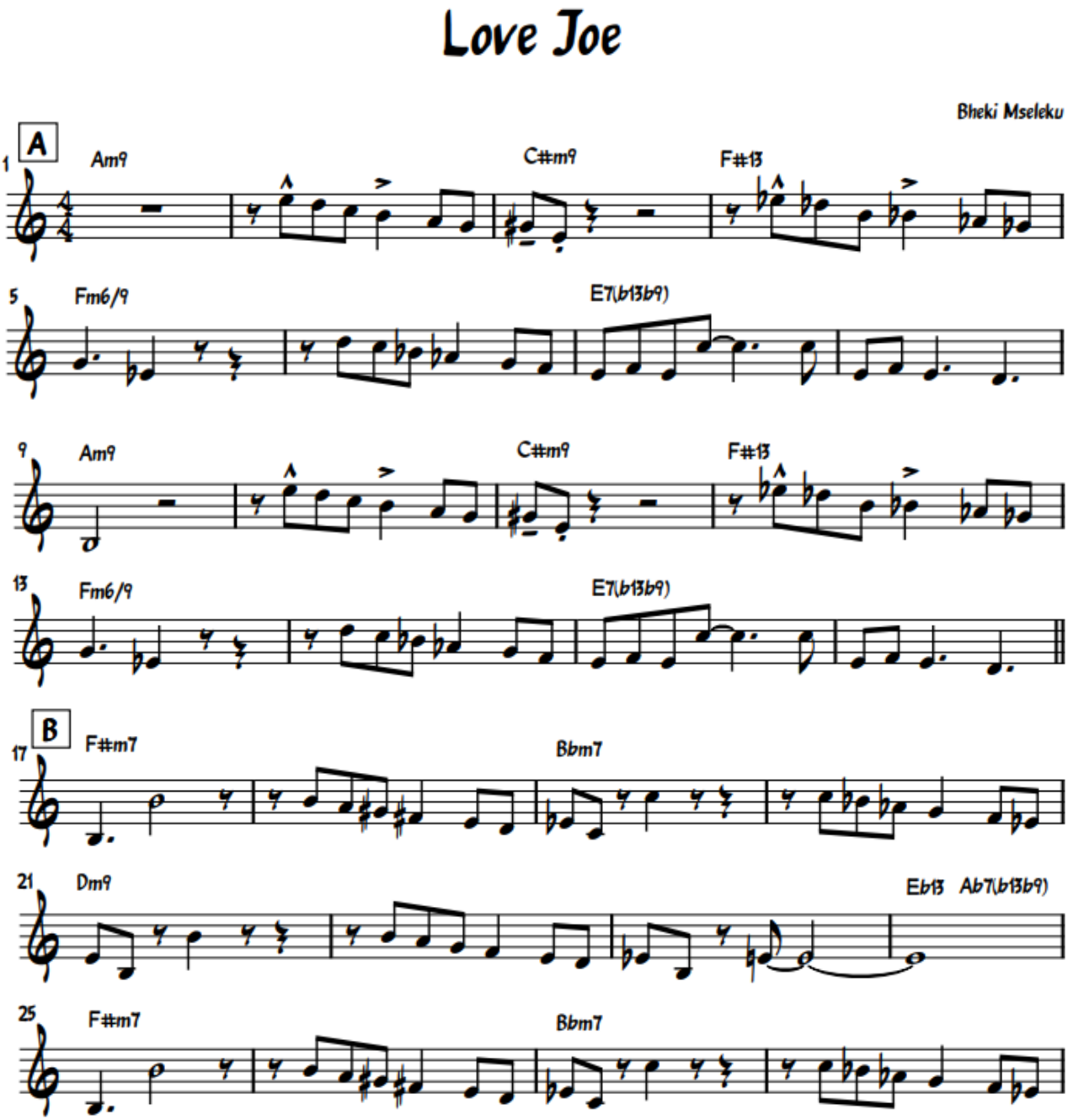
Love Joe is a medium up-tempo swing piece composed by Bheki Mseleku and is included as an instrumental version on his album *Beauty of Sunrise* (Mseleku, 1997). Although not specifically indicated by Mseleku, the title acknowledges legendary American saxophonist Joe Henderson (1937–2001). This album is described as "the child of hardbop and the modal music of the 1960s" (Mseleku, 1997) and features jazz legends such as trumpeter Graham Haynes (b.1960), son of the great jazz drummer Roy Haynes (b.1925), as well as John Coltrane's son Ravi Coltrane (b.1965), and drummer in Coltrane's famous quartet, Elvin Jones (1927–2004) (Makhathini, 2018).

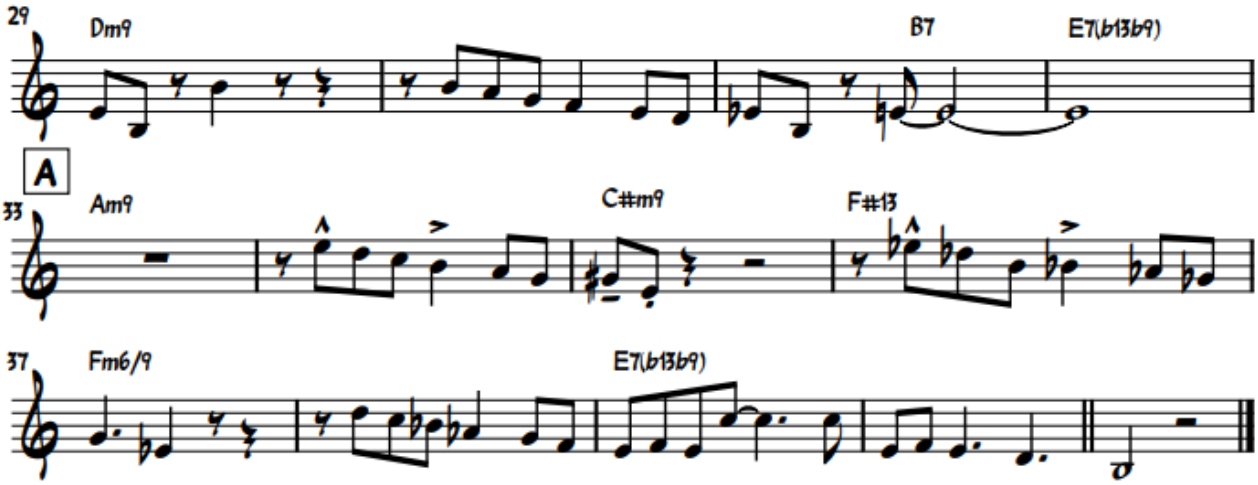
Harmonic Structure

The structure of the piece is formulated through the arrangement of minor chords built off of two different augmented axes. The A section is arranged around an augmented axis on A – C# – F and the B section around F# – B♭ – D. The overall form of the piece can be regarded as AABBA with an unconventional length of 40 measures.

Figure 3.1

Love Joe melody and chord structure





The harmonic relationships that exist between the minor chords allow for the creation of a logical progression by movements of major 3rds. A-7 can be seen as the related ii-7 of the substitute dominant (D7) leading to C#-7. Dominant function is suggested in the movement from A-7 to C#-7 (a major 3rd apart) in mm. 1–3, either as D7 (functioning as the tritone substitution) moving down a half step, or G#7alt resolving down a 5th. In measure 4, Mseleku displays the formerly implied harmonic movement within the progression through the addition of F#7 (Fig. 3.1). C#-7 functions as the related ii-7 of F#7, which is the substitute dominant leading to F–$^{6}/_{9}$. Instead of instantly repeating another major 3rd harmonic movement and creating a constant recurring interval, Mseleku moves to E7 for two bars (mm. 7–8), which establishes the return to A-7 through a perfect cadence. A-7 can thus be established as the most important tonality within the section. The piece cannot be regarded as purely cyclical or symmetrical, but the presence of major 3rd harmonic movement is the main compositional element used in the form. The musical “equation” presented in section A reappears throughout the piece and can also be seen in the B section with the similar use of minor chords built off of an augmented axis in D.

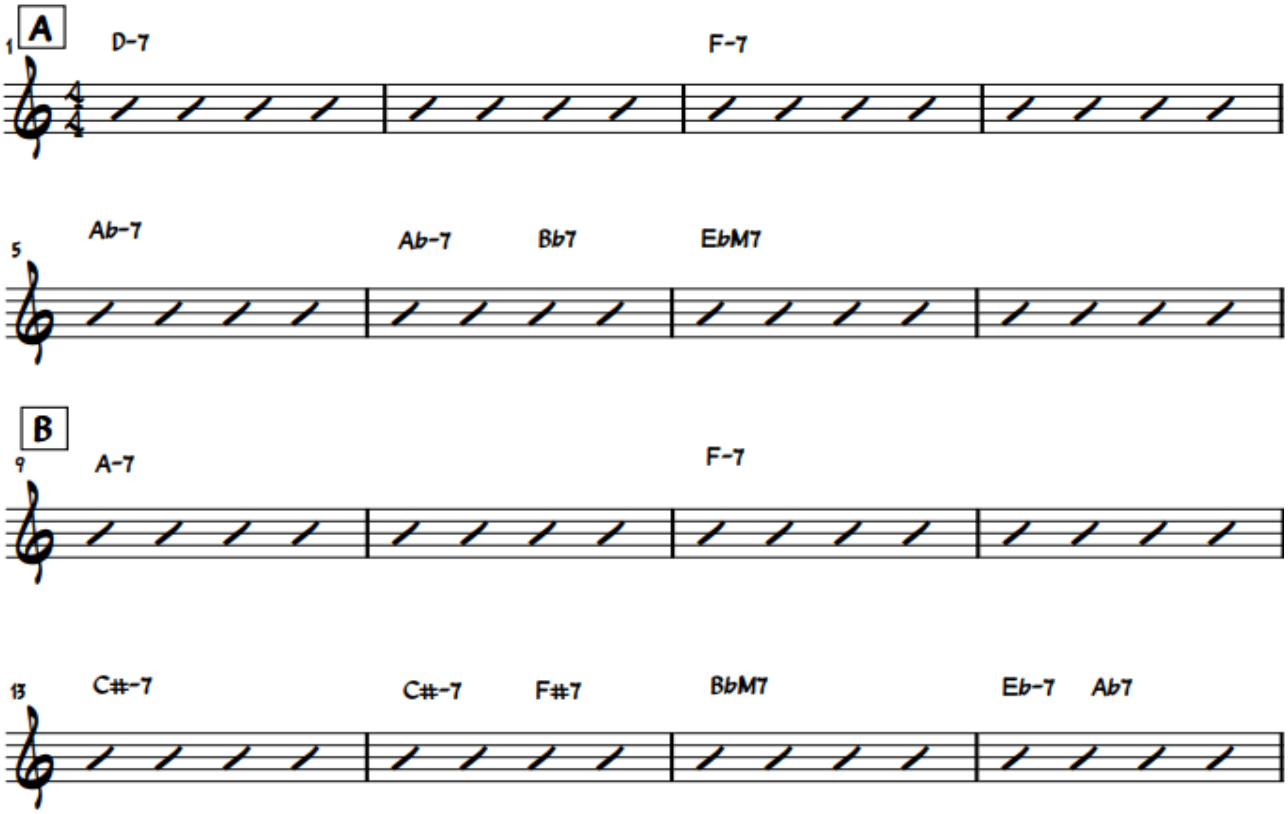
Another composition by Mseleku, *Woody’s Tune,* on the same album Beauty of Sunrise, shares some structural similarities with his composition Love Joe. Lilley’s (2019, p. 37) analysis of Woody’s Tune provides some insight into Mseleku’s practice of implied harmonic function and the way he constructs minor chords around an augmented axis. Lilley traces the concepts found in Woody’s Tune back to compositions of the post-bop period. This period includes compositional practices where modal, functional, and ambiguous harmony are often combined within the same piece and is associated with seminal artists such as Joe Henderson, John Coltrane, Miles Davis, Wayne Shorter (b.1933), and others.

Structural and harmonic similarities can also be drawn between Mseleku’s composition

Love Joe and Coltrane's composition Like Sonny – principally the prevalence of minor 7th chords arranged by 3rd relationships. Coltrane employs both the diminished and augmented axes in Like Sonny, but separately in different sections. Alongside this, the presence of both minor and major 3rds makes the piece even more ambiguous tonally. The A section consists of constant structure minor chords ascending through a diminished axis: D – F – A♭. The B section consists of descending minor 7th chords linked by major 3rds: A – F – C#.

Figure 3.2

Like Sonny chord progression, A and B sections (mm. 1–16)



The overall harmonic plan of the piece thus balances rising minor 3rds in the A section with falling major 3rds in the B section. The F-7 (mm. 3, 11) within the chord progressions of both A and B coincide during the second chord of both sections (Martin, 2012). The A section essentially tonicises E♭Maj7 (mm. 7–8), while the B section tonicises BMaj7 (mm. 14–15). The BMaj7 might be understood as the ♭IV in the E♭Maj7 environment, but the concluding tonicisations of each section resultantly form a Coltrane-esque major 3rd relationship (Waters, 2010).

The B section of Like Sonny is of special interest because it is remarkably similar to the A section of Love Joe. Both sections consist of constant structure minor chords built off of the

same augmented axis (A – F – C#) and each tonicised chord is also two bars in length. Love Joe, as well as Like Sonny, both have a Latin-based groove and both pieces are dedicated to two different important figures in the jazz world – Joe Henderson and Sonny Rollins (b.1930). It is thus necessary to acknowledge some noticeable similarities between these two pieces and their corresponding sections, but also some obvious differences. While the harmonic progression of the B section of Coltrane's piece falls by major 3rds, the A section of Mseleku's piece rises by major 3rds. Each piece also has a different way of manoeuvring back to the starting point of its respective augmented cycles: Coltrane returns to the A section via a chromatic II – V – I (E♭ – A♭ – D) progression in measures 16–17, while Mseleku returns to the first chord through a V7 – I cadence and repeats the A section. Lastly, Mseleku makes use of two different augmented axes as structural and harmonic building blocks, while Coltrane uses a different augmented and diminished cycle in separate sections.

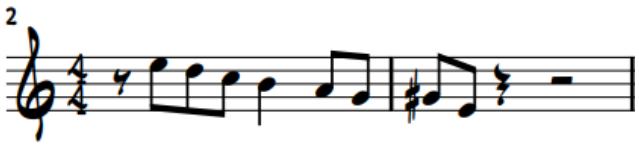
The concept, as well as the effect of the symmetrical interval cycles, however, remain the same. In both cases, it creates a sense of tonal ambiguity. Sequential material features prominently in both compositions due to the transposition of melodic material throughout the cycle. Lilley's (2019) analysis of Woody's Tune affirms our speculations about where Mseleku drew some of his inspiration and compositional practices from and strengthens my own argument about the presence of Coltrane's non-functional harmonic concepts as key influence. It also speaks of a common harmonic language and reworking of specific concepts found in a variety of Mseleku's compositions.

Melodic Material

Thematic development through variation has always been a primary approach in jazz composition and improvisation. Love Joe's melody contains much repetition and sequential material and is built entirely from the repetition and variation of a short two-measure phrase or melodic motif (mm. 2–3).

Figure 3.3

Primary melodic motif (mm. 2 & 3)



Mseleku transposes this short phrase a semitone down and makes subtle changes within each repetition, through rhythmic variation or an extension to the original phrase, to create

greater melodic interest. For example, in measure 5 (Fig. 3.4), a dotted quarter note and quarter note replace the original eighth notes in measure 3, and in mm. 7–9 (Fig. 3.5) and 15–16, a *tail* is added as an extension to expand the original phrase and connect it to the next section.

Figure 3.4

Sequential repetition of primary melodic motif (mm. 4 & 5)

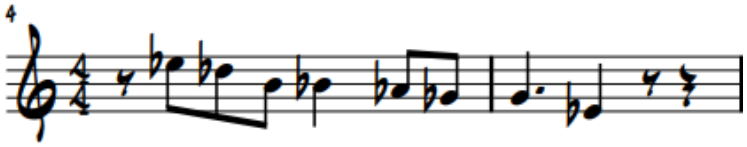
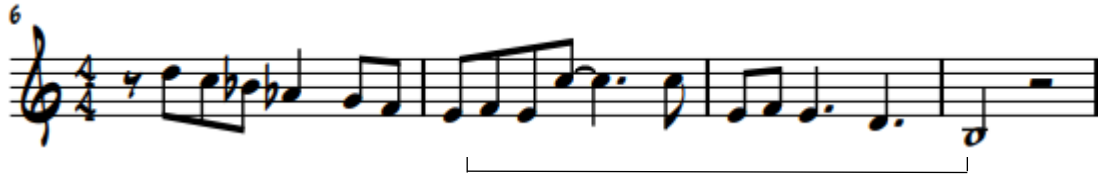


Figure 3.5

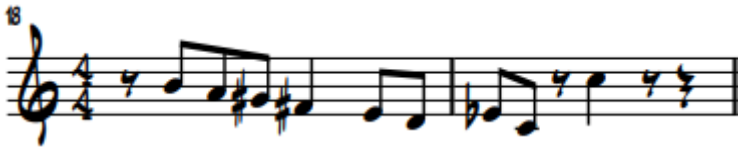
Extension of primary melodic motif (mm. 6, 7, 8 & 9)



Section B again makes use of this short two-measure phrase as primary melodic material (Fig. 3.6). The rhythmic and intervallic material of this phrase is repeated almost exactly, with small changes to accommodate the shifting harmony. It is interesting to note that within this piece, in both the A and B sections, Mseleku does not transpose the melody to accommodate the harmony. While the underlying chord structure is based on 3rd-related root movements, the melody is only transposed a semitone down or up.

Figure 3.6

Primary melodic motif in B section



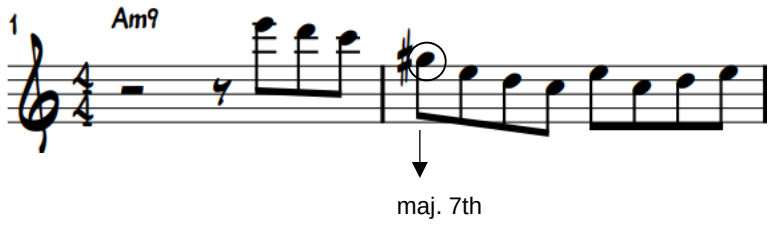
Improvised Material

Mseleku uses the main melody as inspiration for the first line in his solo. The first three notes of the solo are an exact repetition of the main melody, an octave higher. Similar to his note choices in Cycle, Mseleku plays the major 7th on a strong beat, over a minor 7th chord

(Fig. 3.7). Here, it is either an indication of a harmonic minor as scale material, or the partial use of a whole tone scale starting on the 5th scale degree of an A-7 chord (E whole tone scale: E – D – C – A# – G# – F# – E).

Figure 3.7

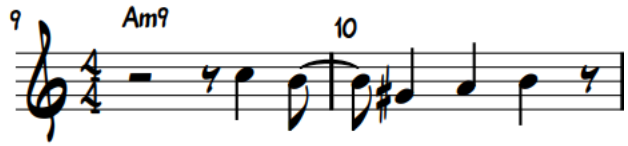
Major 7th over minor chord indicating use of harmonic minor or whole tone scale (mm. 1,2)



Mseleku again makes use of a major 7th over A-9 chord in measure 10 (Fig. 3.8), which indicates that he deliberately employs the harmonic minor sound quality.

Figure 3.8

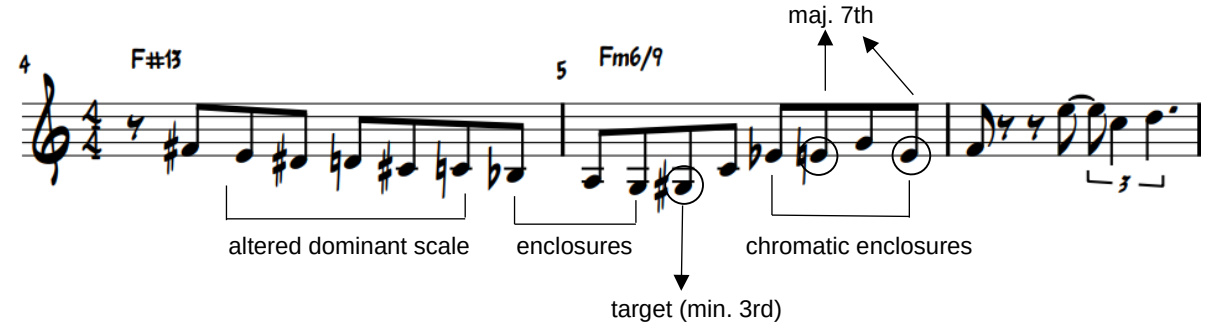
Major 7th tone over minor chord (mm. 9-10)



A good deal of chromaticism is present as part of Mseleku's melodic decoration of chord tones. In measures 4–5 (Fig. 3.9), he plays a descending altered dominant scale over F#7 [F# (R) – E (7th) – D# (13th) – D (♭13th) – C# (5th) – C (♭5th) – A# (3rd)] to shift down to F-7 a semitone below. As in Monwabisi's solo, he makes use of chromatic surround notes and enclosures to target chord tones. The use of the major 7th degree of the chord (the note E), over F-7 serves either as a passing note and forms part of the enclosure, or as another example of Mseleku's fondness of and preference for the harmonic minor sound quality.

Figure 3.9

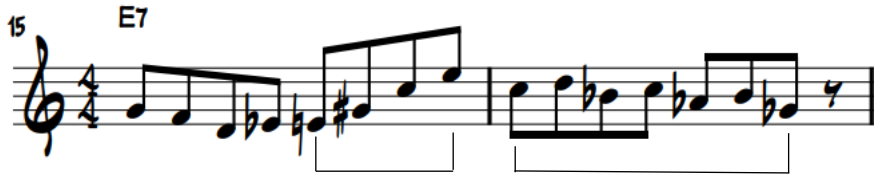
Chromaticism and melodic decoration of chord tones (mm. 4 & 5)



Identifiable scale material present in this solo includes the use of the whole tone scale, the harmonic minor scale, as well as the minor pentatonic scales. In measures 15 and 16 (Fig. 3.10), Mseleku plays a descending whole tone scale (E – G♭ – A♭ – B♭ – C – D – E) pattern to create an augmented sound over the E7 harmony.

Figure 3.10

Descending whole tone scale pattern over V7 (mm. 15 & 16)

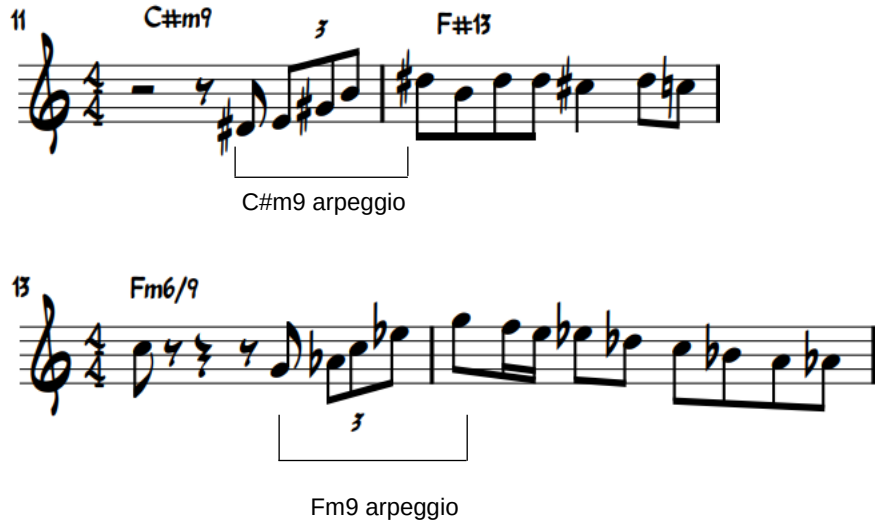


E7 augmented arpeggio descending whole tone scale pattern

Mseleku makes use of a minor 9th arpeggio as improvisational device three times and a minor 11th arpeggio once between measures 11–18 (Fig. 3.11). The recurring use of the same arpeggio over these minor chords emphasise the underlying chord structure and showcase how the symmetrical chord structure provides the opportunity for creation of sequential material and the ability to transpose ideas exactly as they are first stated. The repetition of improvisational ideas also provides Mseleku's solo with structure and coherence.

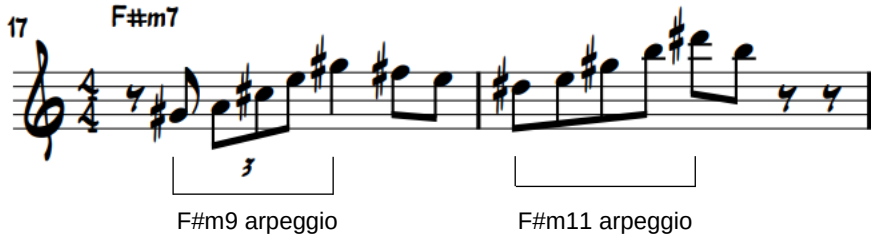
Figure 3.11

Arpeggiated figures (mm. 11, 13 & 17)



C#m9 arpeggio

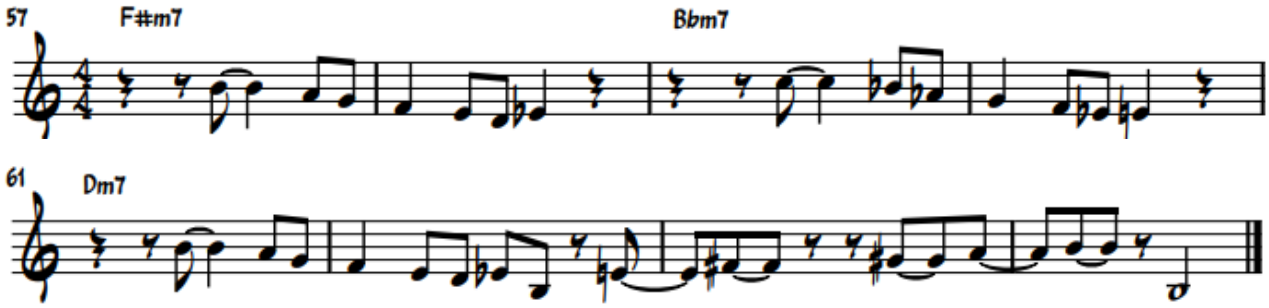
Fm9 arpeggio



In the first eight bars of the B section of Mseleku's second chorus (measures 57 to 64; Fig. 3.12), he partially quotes the melody of the head.

Figure 3.12

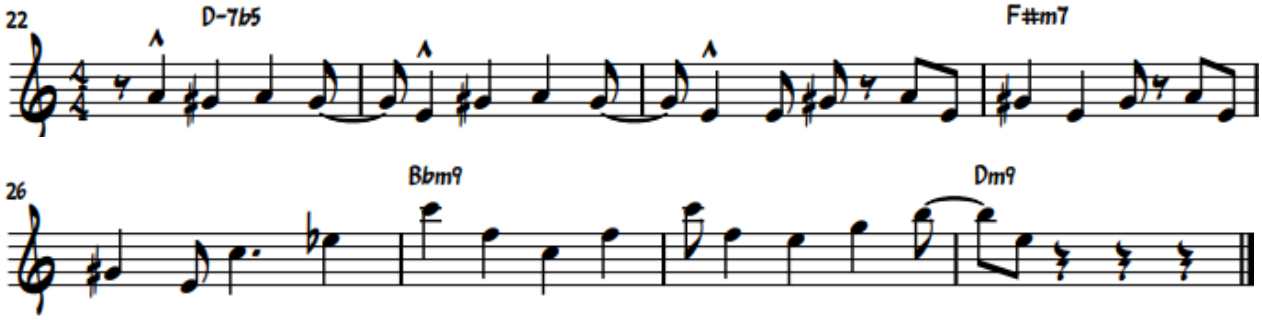
Quotation of melody (mm. 57-64)



A continually recurring theme within Mseleku's solos is the rhythmic displacement of short melodic fragments. In these instances, he focusses on rhythmic activity more than melodic development. He repeats the same melodic idea, incorporating subtle changes, and plays around with it rhythmically while weaving it through the harmonic progression. Figure 3.13 shows how Mseleku takes a simple idea of three notes (A, G#, and E) in measures 22–25 and stretches it over eight bars. In measures 26–29, he continues with a play on the same rhythmic idea, this time using chord tones as pitch material.

Figure 3.13

Rhythmic play on short melodic fragment (mm. 22-29)



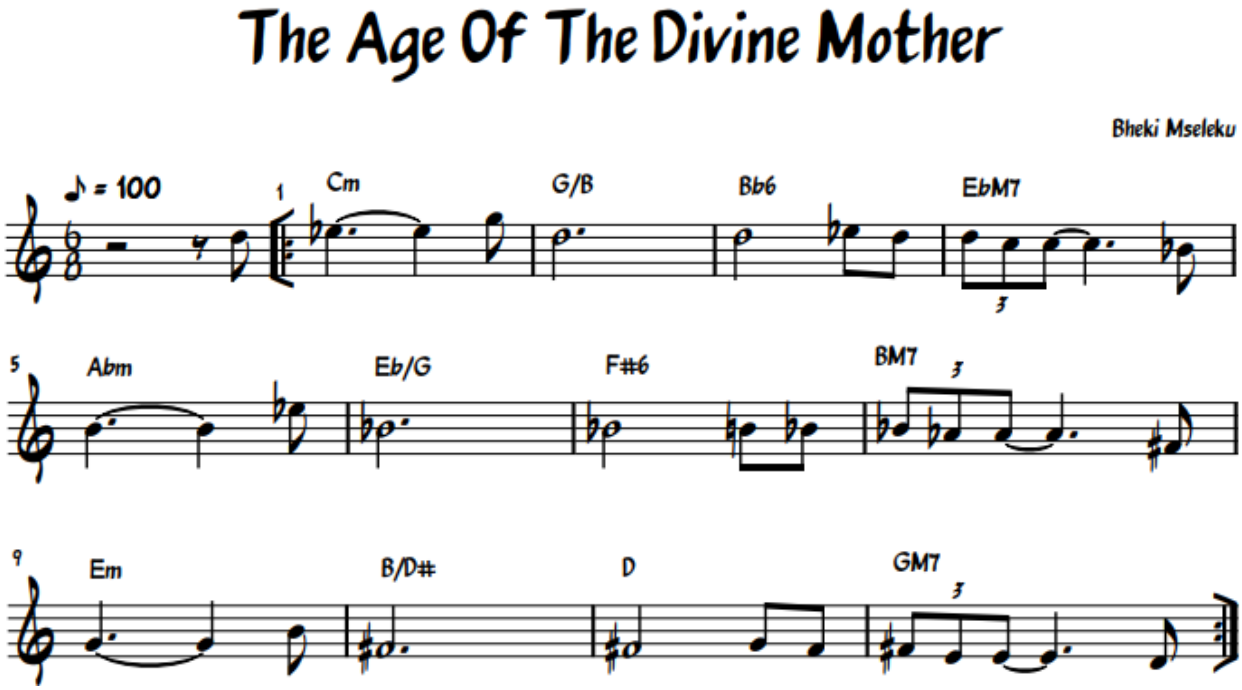
Figures 3.12 and 3.13 display examples of how Mseleku arranges and organises improvisational ideas into eight-measure phrases. He does this by taking one melodic or rhythmic motif and expanding the material by stretching or developing the idea over eight measures. This also shows Mseleku's skill in taking small melodic or rhythmic fragments and weaving them through the shifting harmony underneath.

4.2.2. The Age of the Divine Mother

The Age of the Divine Mother is the fourth track on Mseleku's album *Star Seeding* (1995). The title of the piece and its meaning alludes to the spiritual underpinnings of Mseleku's music and gives us an insight into some of his personal beliefs. The *Divine Mother* is a concept of yogic and Hindu philosophy that refers to the feminine polarity of God, the primal creator of the universe from which all life was born. This feminine aspect of God is also believed to represent wisdom, love, and transcendental consciousness – the antithesis of egoistic notions of power which often involve dominance and control. The *Age of the Divine Mother* (also referred to as the *Age of Aquarius*) is also defined as an astrological era or a great cosmic cycle in the spiritual evolution of consciousness. The age is intended to bring spiritual transformation, expansion of consciousness, mental enlightenment, healing, freedom, and peace to humanity (Sacred Wind, n.d.; Yogapedia, 2018).

Figure 4.1

The Age of The Divine Mother basic melody and chord structure



Harmonic Structure

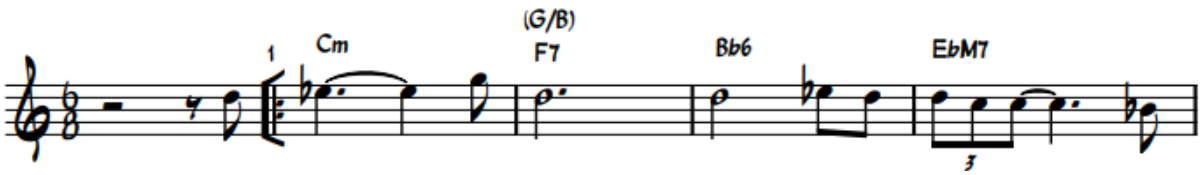
Mseleku's composition The Age of the Divine Mother is a short twelve-bar form ballad. The piece consists of three four-measure phrases. Each phrase is an exact replication of the previous phrase, but transposed a major 3rd down, thus moving through an augmented axis. Again, musical symmetry and the relationship of a 3rd plays an important role in Mseleku's structural organisation of the piece.

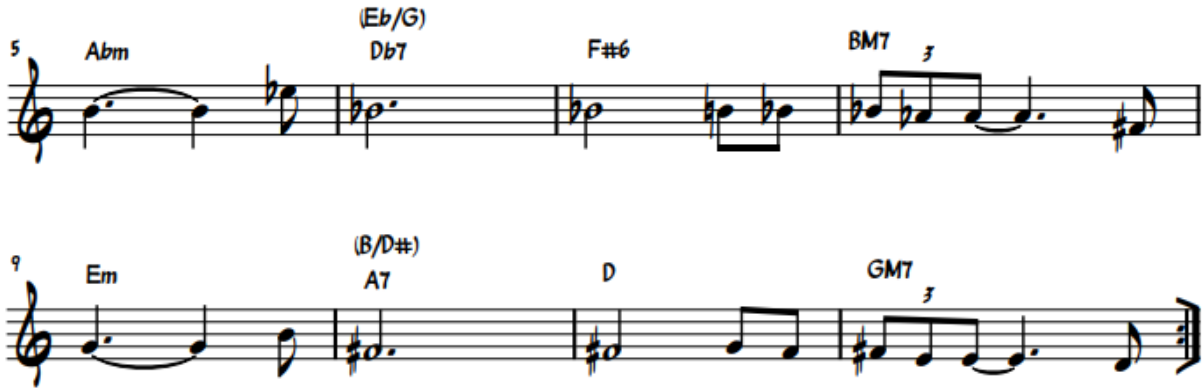
Mseleku achieves a major 3rd key relationship by using a chromatic bassline movement to move from the first chord of the progression to the third chord (Cm – B – B♭ in mm. 1–3), after which a simple V – I cadence establishes the major harmonic centre of the first phrase (mm. 1–4) on E♭Maj7. The first phrase seamlessly transitions into the next four-bar phrase (mm. 5–8) through a V – I movement between the last chord of the first phrase and first chord of the second phrase. As a result of the harmonic progression and structure of the piece, the key centre of the second phrase is established a major 3rd lower on BMaj7. The transition from the second to the third phrase (mm. 9–12) is also a major 3rd lower and repeats the same harmonic formula to establish a new key centre on GMaj7. Equal division of the octave into three parts through an augmented axis results in the progression cycling back to the beginning and we therefore arrive at Cm again.

Because of the cyclic nature of the progression, the structure of the form can be interpreted in multiple ways. As discussed previously, the inherent qualities of a single symmetrical cycle allows for the generation of more than one cycle (Antokoletz & Susanni, 2012). Another way to interpret the harmonic progression is to view the whole form as a cycle of 5ths moving through all twelve notes of the chromatic scale (Fig. 4.2). Each phrase can also be viewed as a vi – II7 – V – I progression within each 3rd-related key centre. In the presented version (Fig. 4.1), however, Mseleku deviates from a straightforward version of the cycle or progression so that the second chord of each phrase is substituted for a dominant triad with a bassline moving down chromatically (tritone substitution).

Figure 4.2

Harmonic substitution of cycle of 5ths



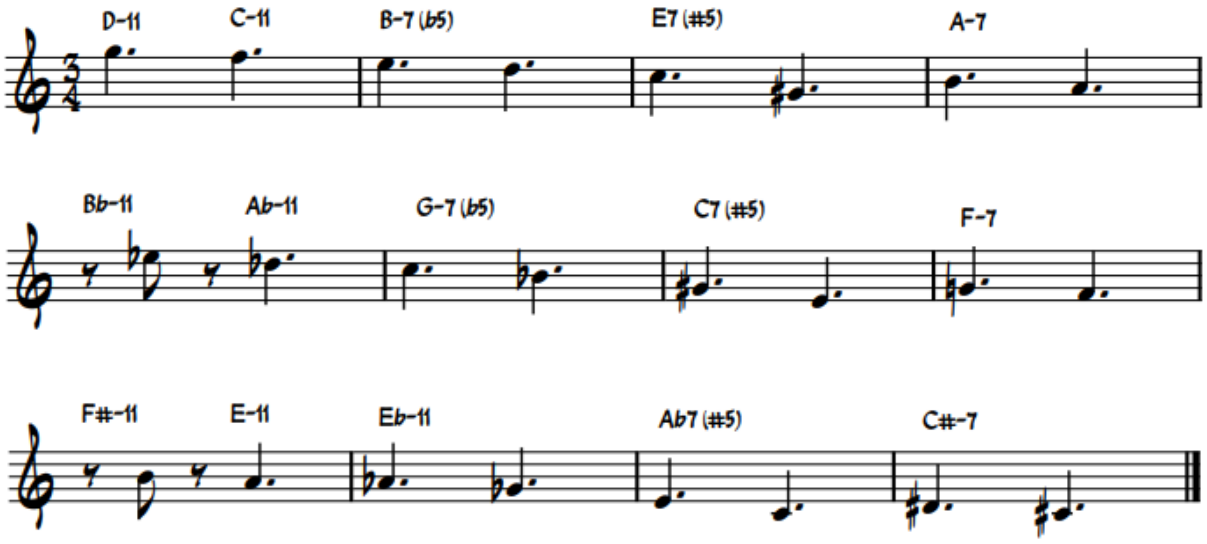


Waters (2010) suggests that Coltrane's Giant Steps instituted a compositional legacy, particularly in compositions recorded and released between 1961–1967 in the relatively immediate aftermath of the original 1959 Giant Steps recording. He examines four compositions which he believes draw from the structural design and the 3rd relationship harmony in Giant Steps. His analysis of *34 Skidoo* by Bill Evans is of particular interest for my own analysis of Mseleku's The Age of the Divine Mother because of the striking similarities in structural organisation between these two pieces and especially because Waters (2010) established strong influence from Coltrane's organisation of Giant Steps in Evans' piece.

Figure 4.3 shows the melody and harmonic structure for section A, measures 1–12, of 34 Skidoo, the portion indebted to Giant Steps for its major 3rd harmonic organisation (Waters, 2010).

Figure 4.3

34 Skidoo, A section (mm. 1–12)



This section consists of three four-bar phrases where each new phrase is systematically transposed a major 3rd down, both in its harmonic and melodic dimensions, in almost an identical way to Mseleku's The Age of the Divine Mother. Similarly, in both Mseleku's and Evans' compositions, tonicisations do not appear only with intervening V or ii – V motions. They instead work out a more extended harmonic progression over four measures. In 34 Skidoo, the major 7th harmonies that appear in Giant Steps are now replaced with minor harmonies, both at the beginning and end of each four-bar sequence. The presence of major 7th harmonies at the end of each phrase in The Age of the Divine Mother means that it resembles Giant Steps even more closely.

The symmetrical sequences transposed by major 3rds in both these compositions have much in common with Giant Steps. Waters (2010) makes a strong case for supporting the influences of Giant Steps on 34 Skidoo and sheds some light upon how this piece follows the Giant Steps model in evident fashion. Because of the structural properties that Evans' composition 34 Skidoo and Mseleku's composition The Age of the Divine Mother share, we can confidently assume that Mseleku's organisation of the three tonic principle was influenced by Coltrane as well.

Melodic and Improvised Material

The melody starts on the minor 3rd degree (E♭) of the first chord (C minor) (Fig. 4.1; measure 1), and mainly descends in a stepwise manner. This creates some interesting sonorities over the moving harmony and chromatic bassline underneath. The pitch D over the second chord (G/B) (Fig. 4.1; measure 2) can be regarded as the 5th degree of the chord, but because of the *slash chord* bassline note, it creates a minor 3rd sonority. The pitch over D in measure 2 is again repeated over measure 3 and this time has a major 3rd relationship to the root, B♭6. However, because of the presence of the 6th in the chord a G minor chord sonority is formed, and the melody pitch ultimately has a minor 3rd relationship to the harmony as well. The melody seems to "float", almost like an unending drone between the E♭ pitch on the C minor chord (m. 1) and the repeated D in measures 2 and 3, before coming down to the C in the last chord of the phrase(E♭; m. 4). The melodic pitches in measure 4 function as the major 7th and 6th degrees of the harmony (E♭Maj7), and the movement to this relationship creates a moment of released tension and a sense of finality to the phrase. This dreamy effect of a somewhat static melody is suggestive of an "eternal" or "everlasting" "Age of the Divine Mother". The static melody, however, is juxtaposed against the movements of chord changes that essentially move in a cycle of 4ths (from one

chord to the next) and a cycle of descending 3rds (harmonic distance between phrases). This melodic sequence and harmonic relationship repeat with each reoccurrence of the melody and harmonic progression. Again, the juxtaposition of the static melody against the moving changes creates a feeling of consistency despite constant changes (like The Age of the Divine Mother which remains eternal through the changes of time and the cycle of changes). The music is thus suggestive of philosophies around the eternal cycle of the Divine Mother.

Mseleku himself provides deeper insight into the spiritual significance these cyclic harmonies have for him (Bragg, 1994):

> I think another part of us live in another realm, which is not affected by any outward things that are happening, so it's always still and peaceful and I try and tune to this part. Hence, I try sometimes to play things that move gently and harmoniously in the way that they move.

During his improvised solo, Mseleku makes use of the space available within the ballad tempo to push and pull time, stretching the phrases by using various rhythmic groupings. This speeding up and slowing down of time informs the expressivity of the emotional delivery and adds to the dramatic tension present throughout the solo.

4.2.3. Violet Flame

The Violet Flame is a concept with esoteric and theosophical underpinnings. It is believed to be an invisible spiritual energy (the seventh ray of the Holy Spirit) which provides spiritual healing and transformation (The Summit Lighthouse, 2021). The high frequency of violet light which dissolves negative energy to restore positive energy, releases *karmic* ties, and revitalises the body's energy field (Vaashiisht, 2019). The Violet Flame is called the "flame of freedom" because of its perceived alchemical ability to transmute *karma*. Karma is energy-consciousness and works according to *the law of cause and effect* or the *law of the circle*. Whatever we say or do comes full circle and our every action, word, deed, and choice have direct consequence upon our lives. Negative choices and bad actions therefore cause negative energy and bad karma to build up in our lives (The Summit Lighthouse, 2021). According to teachings, the Violet Flame provides us with a tool that can be used for the transmutation of lower vibratory patterns to balance negative karma. Manifesting the Violet Flame through meditation, visualisation, and affirmations can alter negative thoughts and painful memories, and provide spiritual healing by freeing us from the baggage we have carried around, not only in this lifetime but also past lifetimes (Vaashiisht, 2019).

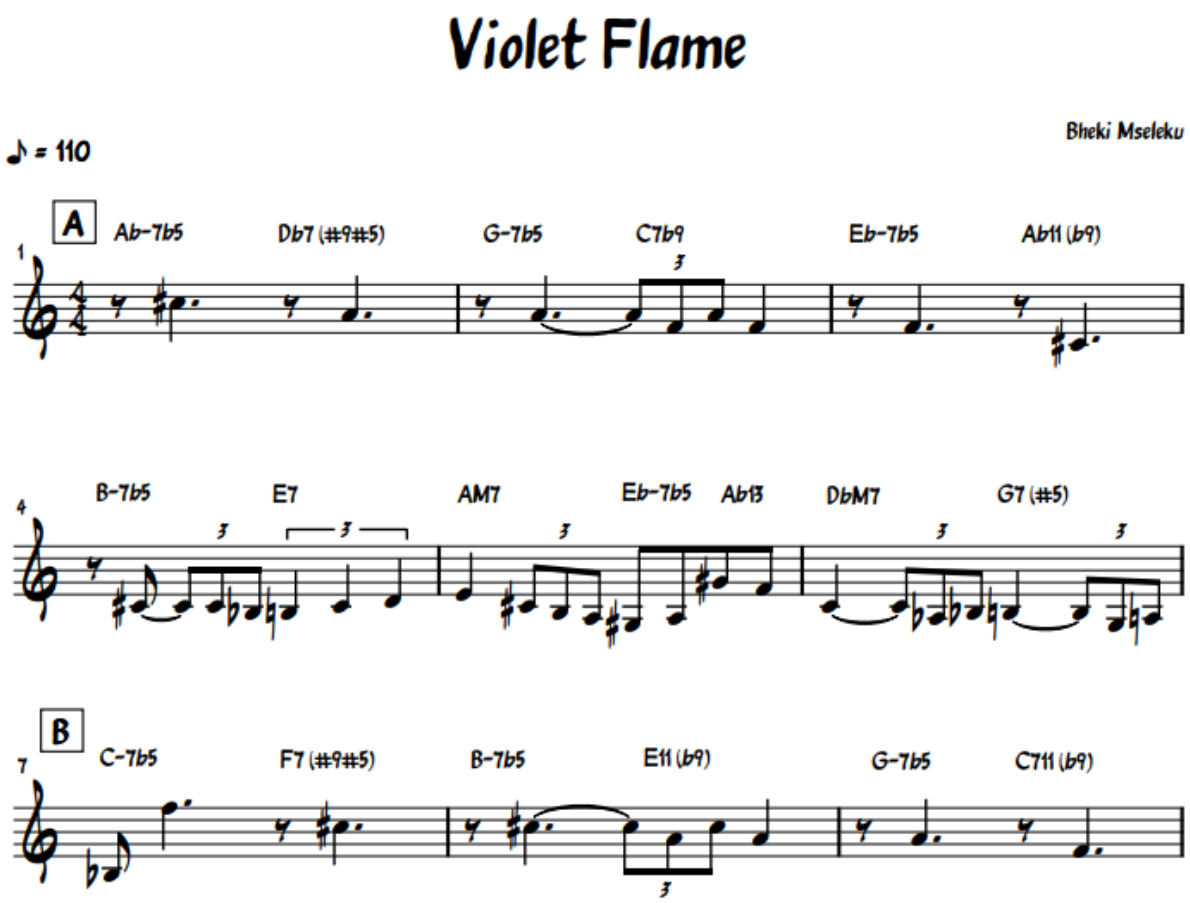
A scientific view of the Violet Flame is that, in our physical world, the violet light is the shortest wavelength of light and, therefore, the highest frequency in the physical spectrum. Since frequency is directly proportional to energy, the violet light also has the most energy which means that it has the greatest ability to change matter on an atomic level (Vaashiisht, 2019).

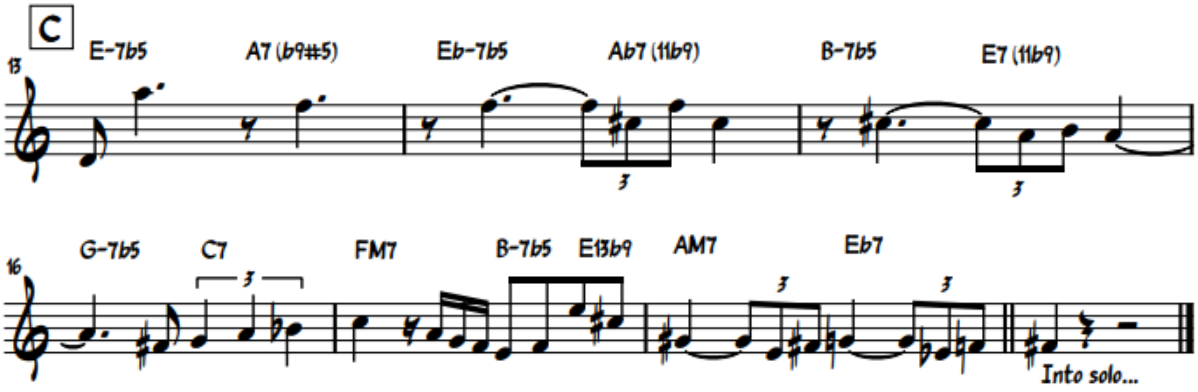
Harmonic Structure

Mseleku's composition, The Violet Flame, can be found on his album Beauty of Sunrise. The form of this piece consists of three six-measure phrases, and resultantly, an overall form of 18 measures. The Violet Flame is composed with a C# – A – F augmented axis in mind, which reflects in the melody, harmony, and structure of the piece. Each phrase is an exact repetition of the previous phrase with the melody and chords transposed a major 3rd higher. The third phrase's melody, however, contains small rhythmic alterations (m. 15), but melodic pitches remain essentially unchanged.

Figure 5.1

Violet Flame melody and chord structure

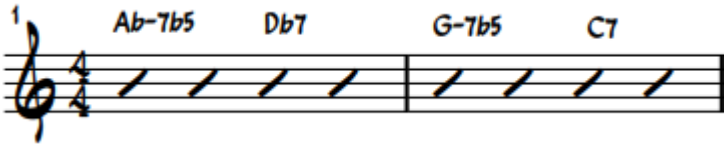




The harmonic progression commences with a chromatic ii – V or *Bill Evans ii – V* in mm. 1–2 (Fig. 5.2).

Figure 5.2

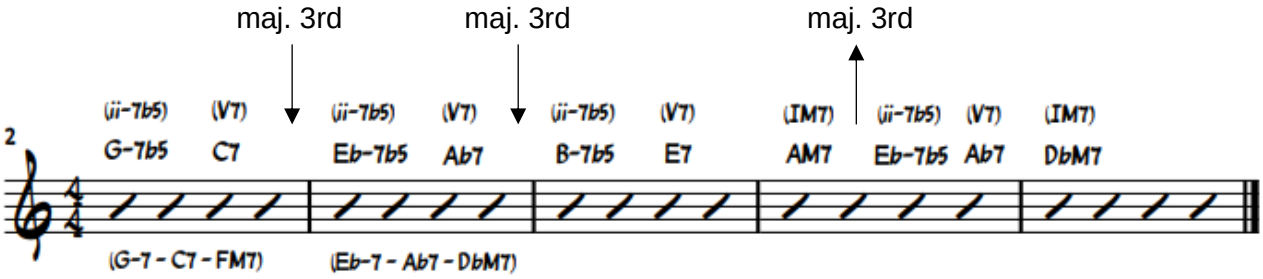
Chromatic ii – V



In mm. 2–4 the chords commence with two ii – 7♭5 to V7alt movements which resolve to AMaj7 in measure 5 (Fig. 5.3). Each consecutive ii – 7♭5 to V7 is a major 3rd apart and the tonicisation of each related interval is expressed through the note choices used in the melody as well – F, D♭ (C#), A. D♭ major is tonicised in measure 6 and further affirms the presence of the major 3rd axis.

Figure 5.3

Tonicisations of major 3rd-related harmonic centres

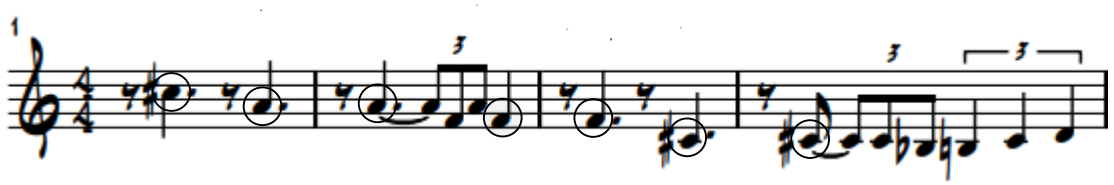


Melodic Material

The melody immediately commences with big, loud, punctuated dotted quarter notes played by the flute, trumpet, and tenor saxophone, each an octave apart. The piano accompanies with dense chords in the lower register to accentuate the dotted quarter notes even more. The dotted quarter notes spell out an F augmented triad, F – A – C#, and presents us with different layers of major 3rd relationships within the piece.

Figure 5.4

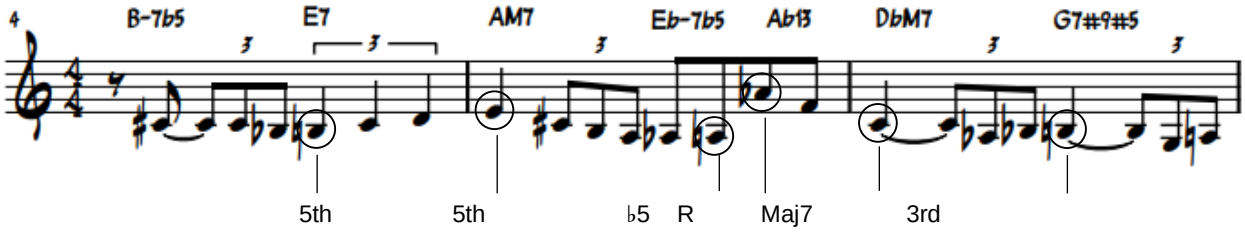
Melody centred around an F augmented triad



The remaining content of the six-measure melody, mm. 4–6 (Fig. 5.5), consists of note choices or landing points that function as chord tones, connected with stepwise movement that serve as chromatic enhancements, and approach notes diatonic to the underlying harmony.

Figure 5.5

Melody centred around chord tones



Mseleku applies the concept of the three tonic system not only to his treatment of the harmony and melody, but to the form of the piece as well – the incorporation of the F augmented triad in the melody, the three equidistant key areas (F – A – C#) on which the harmony of the piece is constructed, as well as the transposition of the melody three times reflect on the trilogy of the augmented axis.

The heavily chromatic and distantly related harmonic movement of measures 1–4, together with the disjointed and panging melody seemingly displays some kind of intense emotional distress. The resolution to a tonic centre in measures 5–6 offers some relief and might be indicative of the “spiritual healing and peace” that Violet Flame offers.

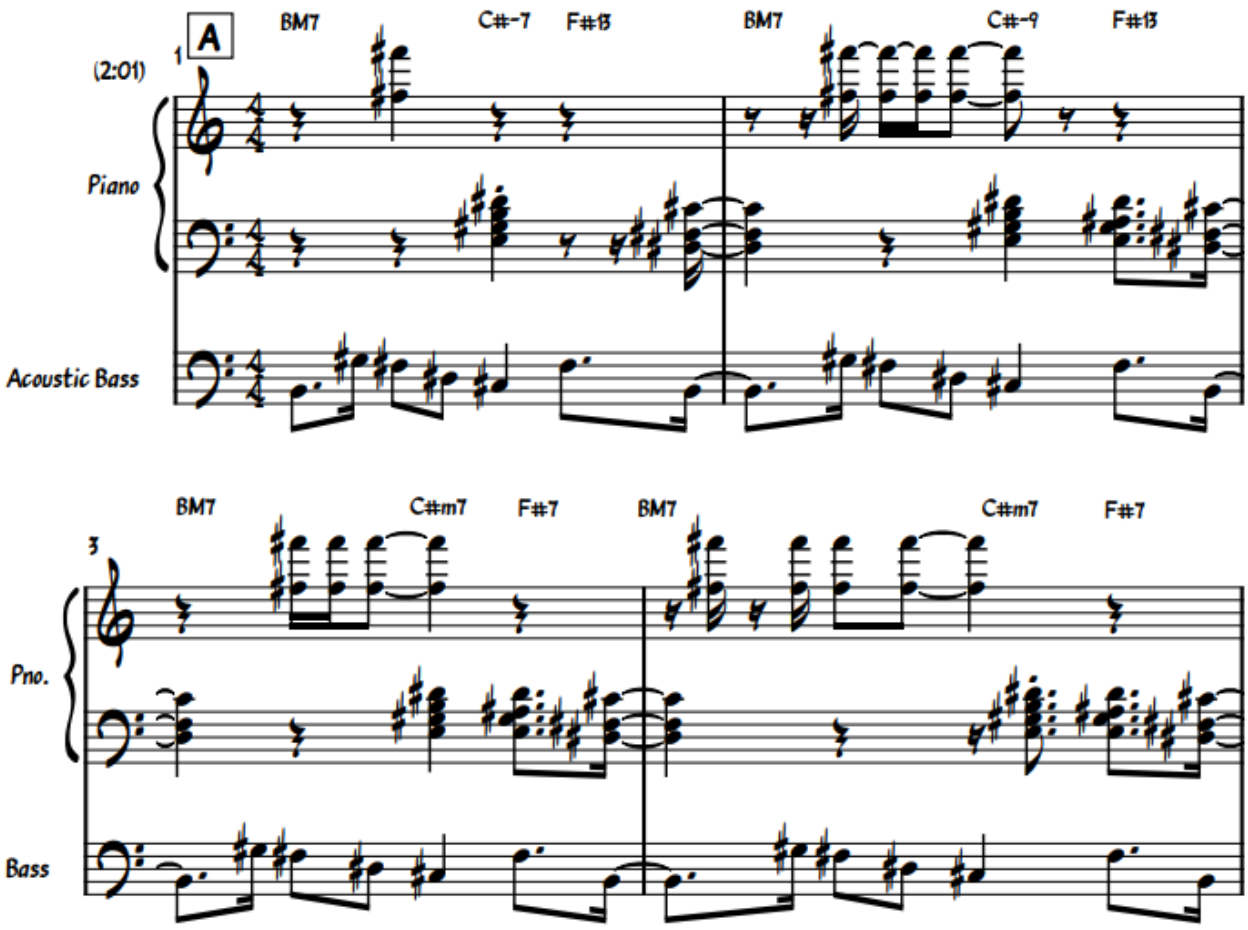
4.2.4. Yanini

Yanini is the sixth track on Mseleku's album Timelessness (1994), which features Pharoah Sanders, Elvin Jones and Marvin "Smitty" Smith on drums, Michael Bowie on bass, and naturally, Mseleku on piano. The overall harmonic identity of the entire piece cannot be described as cyclical, but major 3rd-related key centres play an important role in the construction of the piece. Especially in the B section, the incorporation of major 3rd-related harmony can be considered indispensable compositionally.

Yanini has a joyous and vibrant feel and starts with a bassline ostinato in B major, together with high rhythmic octaves in the right hand and steady chord rhythms on the piano that mimic and complement the bassline. Together, this creates a "vamp-like" effect that continues during the four-measure intro and for most of the A section.

Figure 6.1

Yanini intro and vamp on A section (mm. 1–7)



Harmonic Structure

The intro and "vamp" are mainly situated within the key centre of B major. The harmonic movement remains diatonic to the key centre and repeated ii – V – I's (C#-7 – F#7 – BMaj7) provide some interest to an otherwise static harmony. The ostinato bass merely provides a tonal and rhythmic reference.

From measure 8, consecutive ii – V cadences cause an increase in harmonic rhythm to almost one chord per quarter note. Although the chord progression and melody are different to any of Coltrane's works, the vertically dense harmony here is similar to Coltrane's compositional approach in Giant Steps, where the harmony moves at the same pace as the melody.

Figure 6.2

Vertically dense harmonic structures (mm. 8–11)

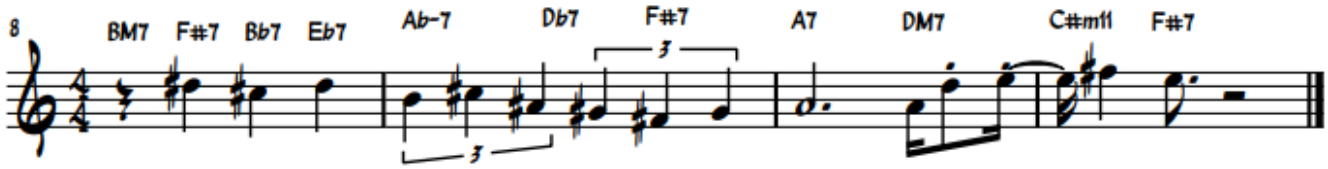
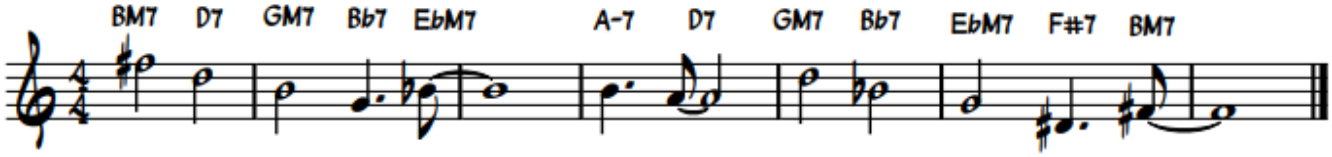


Figure 6.3

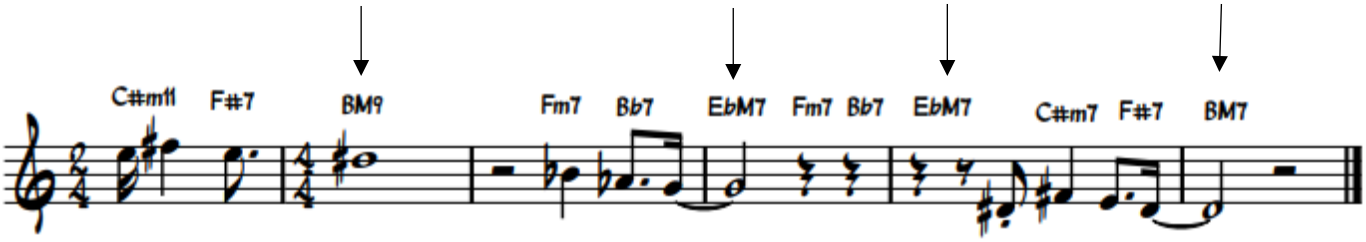
Giant Steps (mm. 1–7)



The intro vamp returns in measure 12. After the second repetition of the A section, the rhythm and groove of the vamp remains steady, while the harmonic centre shifts to E♭Maj7 (m. 14), a major 3rd up (Fig. 6.4). After three measures, it moves back to BMaj7 (m. 16). Here, we begin to see major 3rd harmonic relationships within the piece.

Figure 6.4

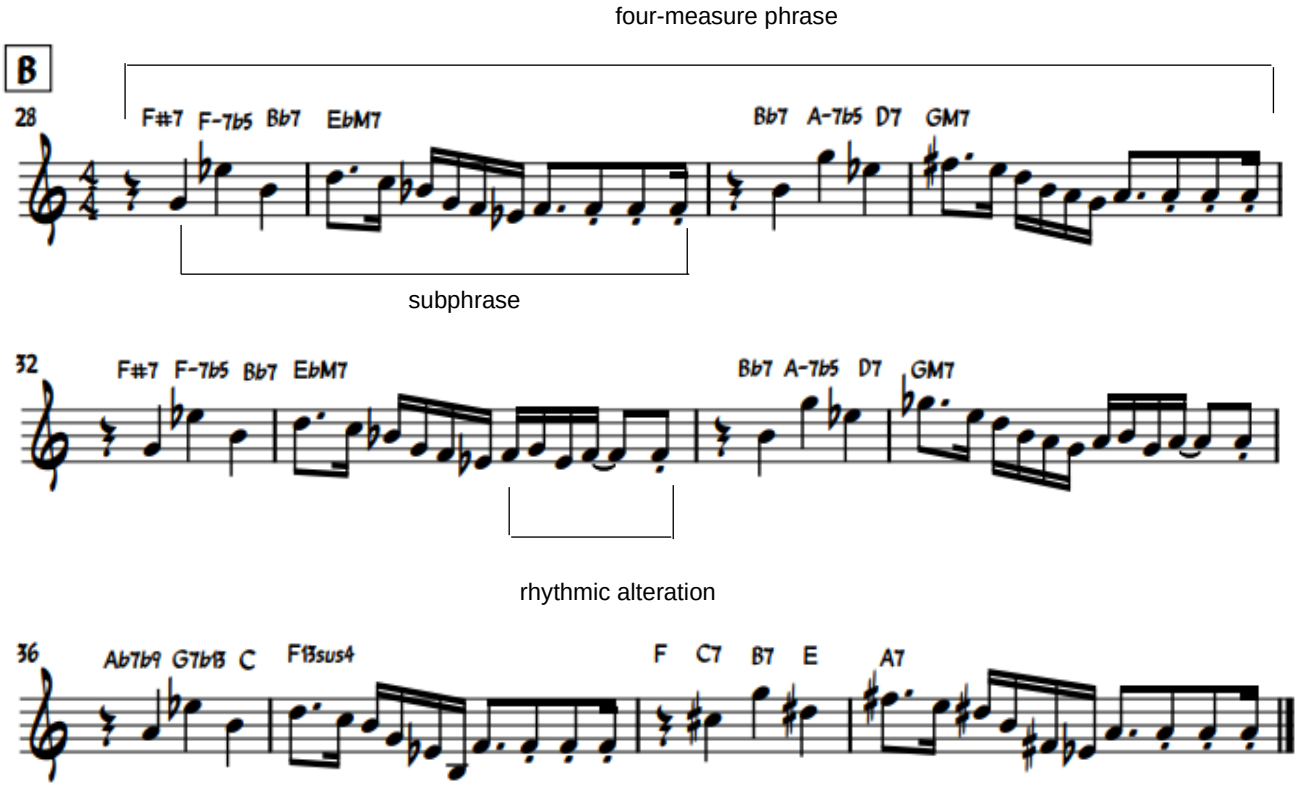
Major 3rd harmonic relationships (mm. 11–16)



The B section (Fig. 6.5) is mainly where the major 3rd-related harmonic action is happening. The B section, in its entirety, can be divided into three four-bar phrases. The main melody of the B section is comprised of a two-measure sub-phrase in E♭Maj7. This subphrase is transposed a major 3rd up and the second half of the phrase is situated within a GMaj7 key centre. The tonic centres are approached and established by a VI7 – ii-7♭5 – V – I movement. Again, Mseleku incorporates the compositional approach (used in measures 8–11) in the first measure of the subphrase, where the harmony moves at the same pace as the melody. The second restatement of the main phrase contains a small rhythmic alteration, and the 3rd is harmonised differently with F13sus4 and A7 (still a major 3rd apart) which then returns to E♭Maj7 in measure 40 through a tritone movement.

Figure 6.5

Yanini B section



From measure 29 onwards, we observe how Mseleku continues to move between the harmonic centres of E♭Maj7, GMaj7, and BMaj7. By now we recognise how these harmonic centres are situated a major 3rd interval apart. Even though the entire piece is not built around an augmented axis and the harmonic structure is not completely symmetrical, major 3rd-related harmony still plays an important role in the construction and identity of the piece. The contrast between the mostly static harmonic ostinato of the A section and the quick-

shifting, non-functional harmonic progressions of the B section offer a radical contrast within the piece, which displays Mseleku's eclectic palette and versatility as a composer.

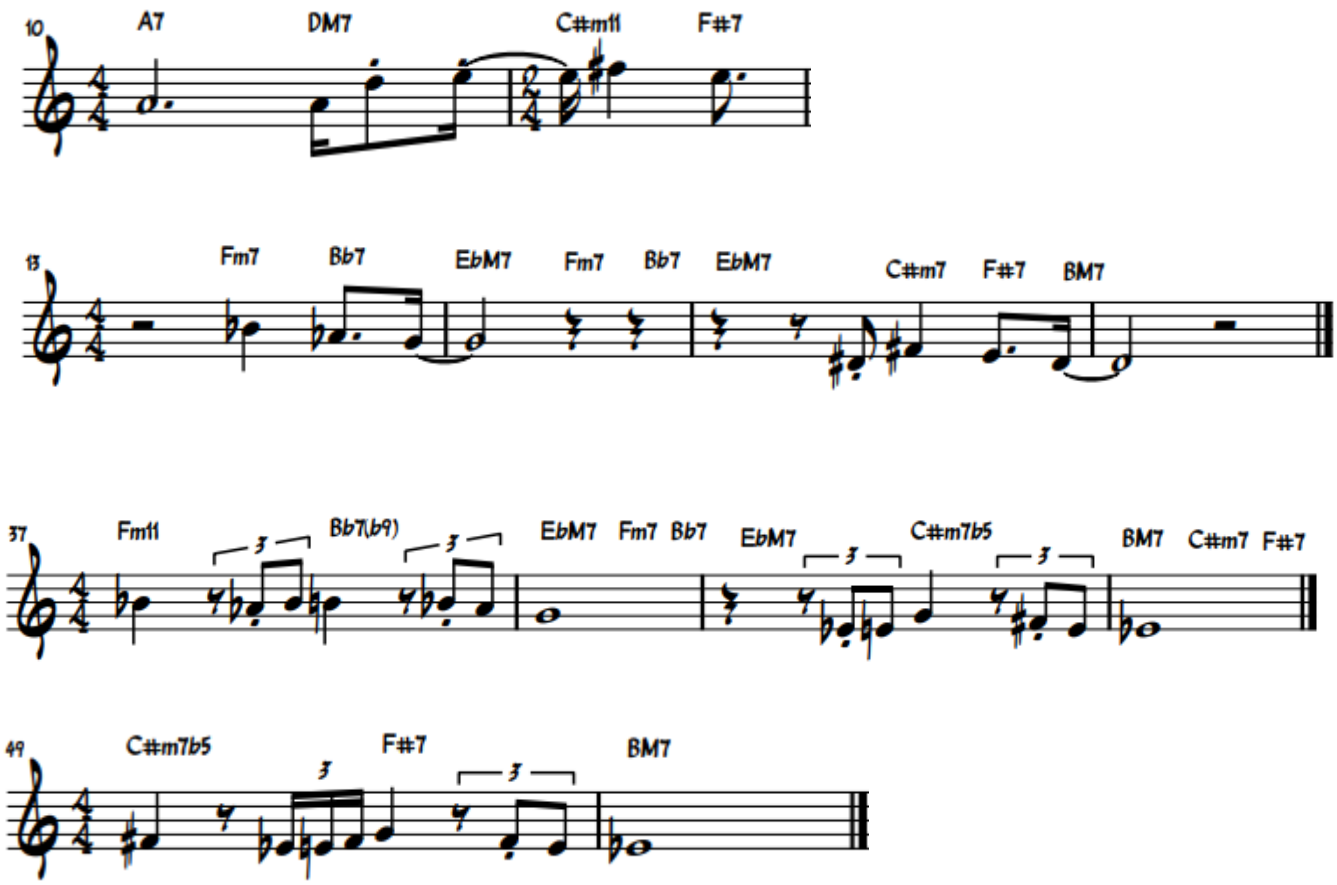
The form of the piece is an unconventional 60 measures long and can be separated into AABCD sections. The form can be considered through-composed because it does not rely on the repeat or return of entire sections, which is reminiscent of more contemporary compositional practices. Contemporary jazz compositions usually resemble a more through-composed style and do not necessarily rely on repetitions of primary themes as in song form. It defies predictable four or eight-measure repetitive phrase structure associated with earlier jazz (Hellmer & Lawn, 1996).

Melodic Material

Mseleku relies on small variations of a short melodic idea to return to the vamp. He uses this as an intro, as a way to separate the different sections or as a transition between them, and to establish some cohesion and uniformity within the through-composed style of the piece.

Figure 6.6

Variations of short recurring melody (mm. 10-11, 13-16, 37-40, 49-50)

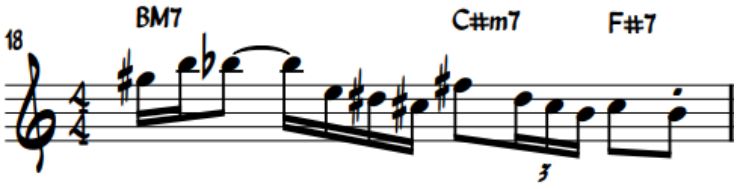


Improvised Material

Mseleku's improvisation over the ii – V – I ostinato in the A section remains exclusively diatonic and consists of B major pentatonic lines and figures, as shown in Fig. 6.7 (m. 18).

Figure 6.7

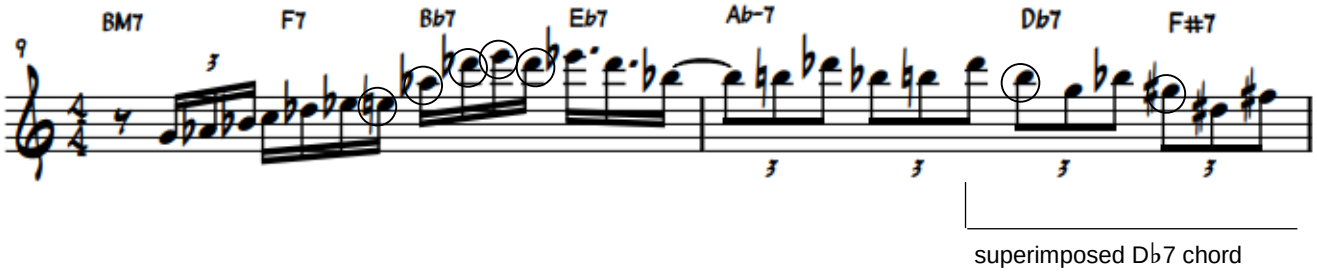
Pentatonic line (m.18)

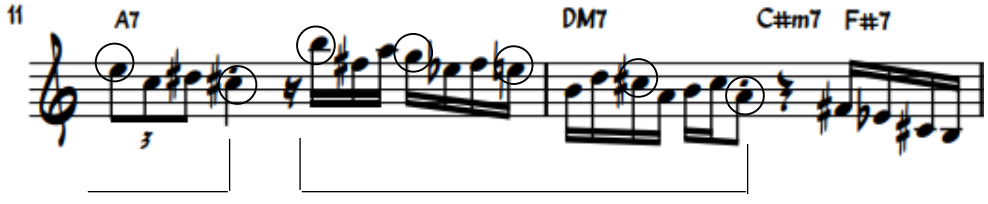


From the beginning of measure 9 to the second beat of measure 11 (Fig. 6.8), Mseleku creates a line by superimposing a D♭ minor (upper structure) triad over the fast–moving harmonies. The pattern is constructed by using enclosures to target chord tones of the superimposed chord, and then transposing the sequence down. In mm. 11–12, he uses a similar pattern over A7 and DMaj7. The result is a broken A7 arpeggiated figure which includes the 13th and ♭11th of the chord, consequently due to the use of enclosures and an exact repetition of the sequence.

Figure 6.8

Chord superimpositions in improvised line (mm. 9-12)





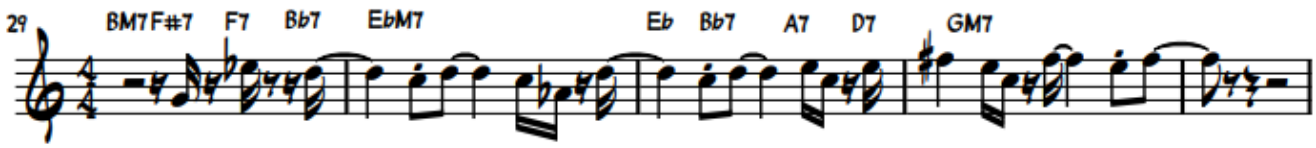
The lines in Mseleku's solo show continuity of thought through the repetition of certain melodic ideas. In some places, Mseleku seems to focus more on prime melodic development of motivic ideas as opposed to meeting harmonic targets in all of the chords. Another possibility is that Mseleku made use of what is referred to as the *blanket scale* approach, where one scale is played over all the chords of a progression (Hellmer & Lawn, 1996, p. 216). This allows the soloist to concentrate more on rhythmic interest and to play riff–like ideas that can serve as the basis for melodic development.

In many instances, we can see that Mseleku uses the main melody as a sort of template for his improvisation. He continually refers back to the melody but alternates this concept with the chord scale approach and other musical material to provide variety and transitional material between sections or melodic ideas. The melody is a vehicle for improvisation, and thus, melody notes or variations thereof are often used as the prime target notes. At some point, the lines between the melody and improvisational material are somewhat blurred. The use of motivic development plays a defining role throughout the solo and is masterfully applied. This is reminiscent of players within the traditional stream of jazz and their compositional approach to improvisation through their use of motivic development, sequences, mirroring techniques and other compositional tools. Mseleku himself is a master of taking an idea, developing it, and carrying it through a large part of the solo or later recalling the idea in some form or another again.

In the B section, Mseleku follows the same melodic construction or phrase lengths as the main melody, and each new phrase presents a new melodic and rhythmic idea. In the first phrase, mm. 30–33 (Fig. 6.9), Mseleku seems to focus on the major 7th of the chord, constantly leaving, and returning to it. Focussing on this single pitch and incorporating a rhythmic element, similar to his solo material in Love Joe, Mseleku uses a short rhythmic motif repeatedly and transposes it through the chord changes to create a four–bar phrase, similar in length to the melodic structure of the main melody.

Figure 6.9

First four bar phrase of B section in solo (mm. 30–33)

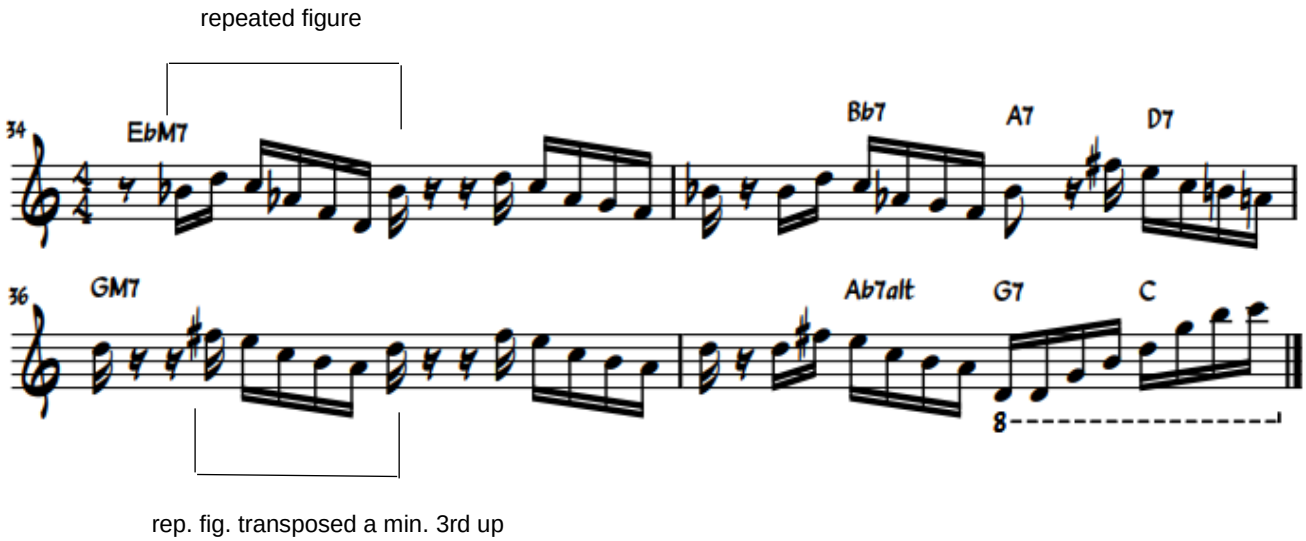


The second four–bar phrase mm. 34–37 (Fig. 6.10) also consists of a repeated figure in E♭Maj7, which is transposed exactly up a major 3rd to GMaj7. The use of sequences and

transpositions forms a big part of Mseleku's approach to making the changes within a harmonic structure that has distantly related harmonic centres.

Figure 6.10

Second four–bar phrase of B section solo (mm. 34–37)

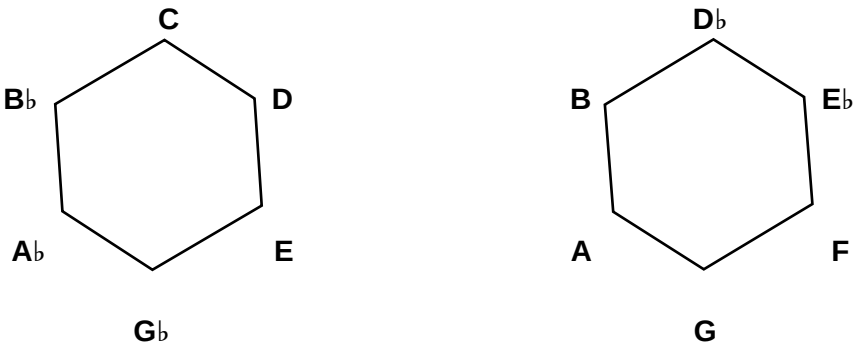


4.3. The Whole Tone Axis

The whole tone axis is characterised by cycles that divide the octave through intervals of a whole tone. Two different whole tone cycles exist, each containing six notes.

Figure F

The two whole tone axis cycles dividing the octave through intervals of a whole tone



The following section includes a thorough discussion of Mseleku's composition Timelessness. The analysis of this piece is approached from a viewpoint that the harmonic structure of the piece partially makes use of the whole tone axis as compositional element.

4.3.1. *Timelessness*

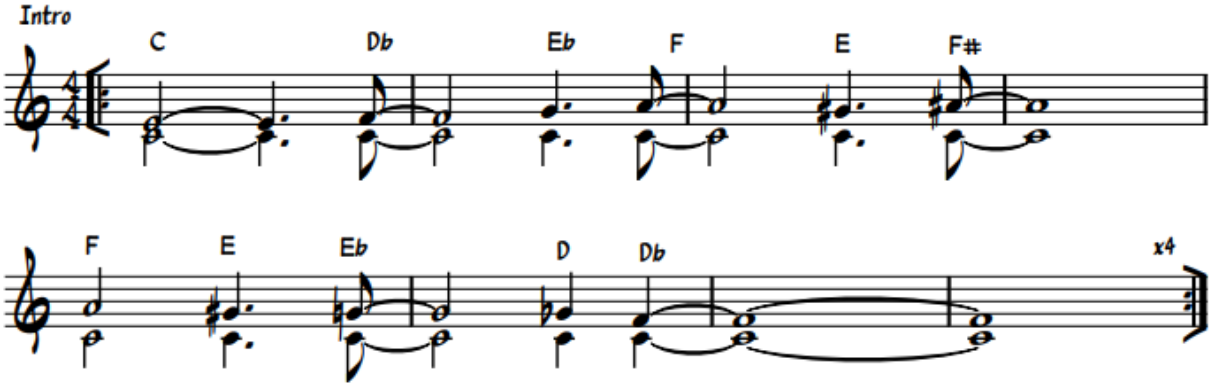
Timelessness is the first track on the album of the same name. In this recording, Mseleku's approach to playing the piano is mainly McCoy Tyner–influenced.

Harmonic Structure

The eight–measure introduction consists of constant structure major chords that move upwards and downwards, either by half or whole step intervals. The melody moves parallel to the bassline and harmonises it a major 3rd higher. A consistent middle C forms a pedal note that adds dissonance and creates unique sonorities beneath the moving harmonies.

Figure 7.1

Timelessness introduction

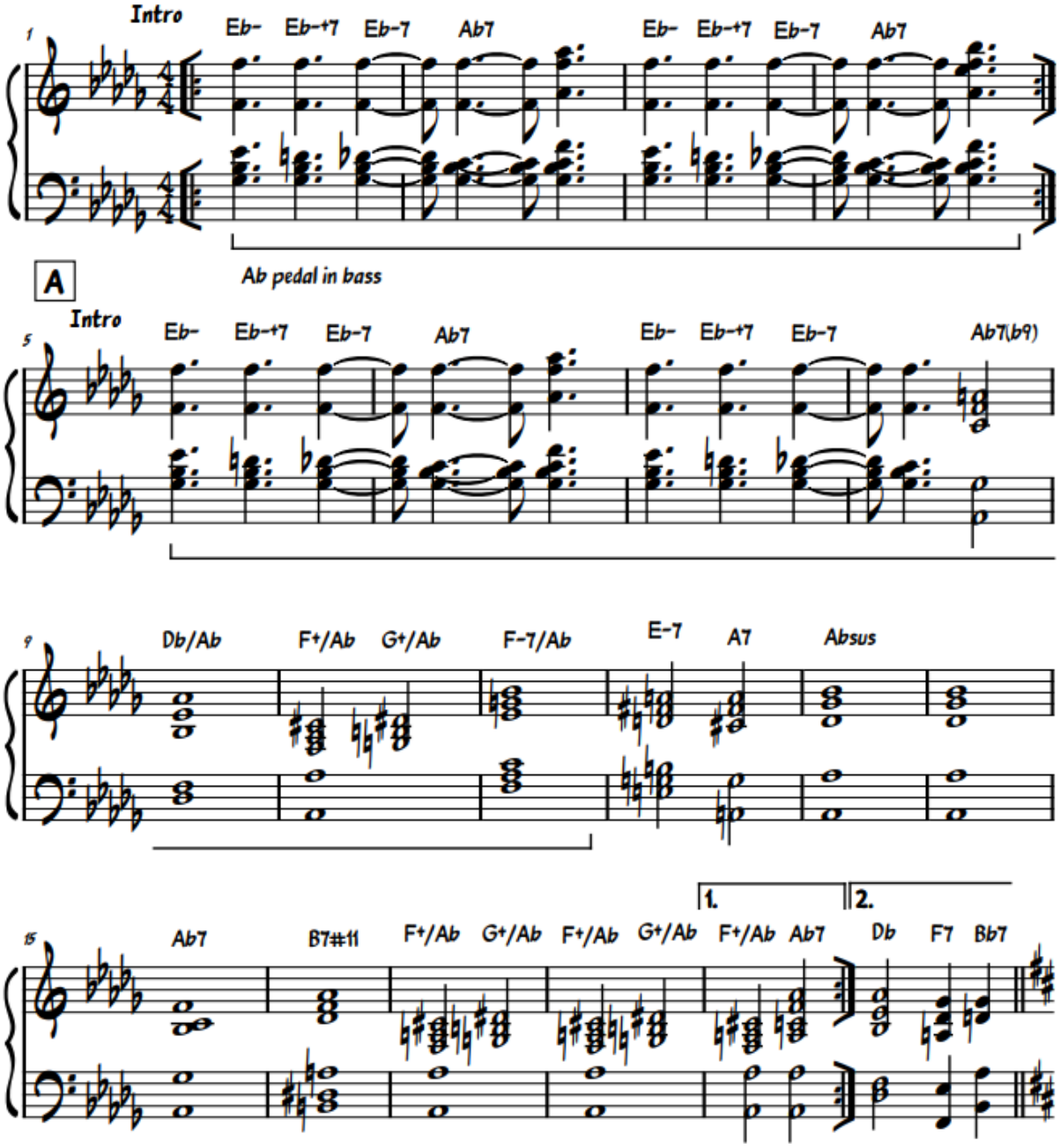


On Coltrane's 1960 recording of *Body and Soul* (Figure 7.2), composed by John Green, the rhythm section, consisting of pianist McCoy Tyner and bassist Steve Davis, play an A♭ pedal on the intro and on bars 1-7, 9-11, and 13-15 of the A sections (Levine, 1995). The dominant pedal creates a feeling of tension and release as the chords move closer and further from the constant Ab bass note (Demsey, 1991). The drone-bass is more reminiscent of Coltrane's modal techniques, but the incorporation of this effect in Mseleku's piece showcase the different compositional and aesthetic influences Coltrane had on his music.

[Figure 7.2 on following page]

Figure 7.2

Coltrane's reharmonization of Body and Soul, McCoy Tyner's piano voicings simplified (Levine, 1995, p. 378)



The A section of Timelessness (Fig. 7.3 & Fig. 7.6) consists exclusively of major chords, descending by whole steps in measures 1–4 and resolving to F in measure 5. By analysing the form of Timelessness through the lens of symmetrical interval cycles, the harmonic progression of the introduction and A section can be interpreted as being constructed from two different whole tone axes. In measures 1–4 of the A section, the progression moves

down a whole step from C major – B♭ major – A♭ major – G♭ major. From measure 4 to 5 there is only a semitone movement, which indicates a shift between the axes. The harmony then descends again with whole step movements from F major – E♭ major – D♭ major. The combination of the different axes can be seen in measures 5 and 6 of the introduction and its recurring phrases in the A section where the harmony moves chromatically. The reason for this is that the combination of two different whole tone axes utilises all twelve notes of the chromatic scale and thus forms a chromatic cycle (Adler, 2012).

The B section of Timelessness (Fig. 7.7) offers some contrast to the intensity of the A section. It consists of standard II – V and II – V – I progressions moving through the keys of E♭, A♭, and D♭. According to Lilley (2019, p. 84), the progression of the B section can be considered a prolonged Phrygian turnaround, moving back to C Major with the return of the A section (C – E♭ – A♭ – D♭).

The solo section harmony consists of a repeated whole tone cycle first established in the A section: CM – B♭M – A♭M – G♭M – FM – E♭M – D♭M. This cycle repeats four times and is then followed by an extended B section which consists of suspended chords, II – V and II – V – I progressions with variations on the original harmonic progression. Mseleku often includes a different solo section in pieces with extended and odd numbered forms, as in the case of Timelessness.

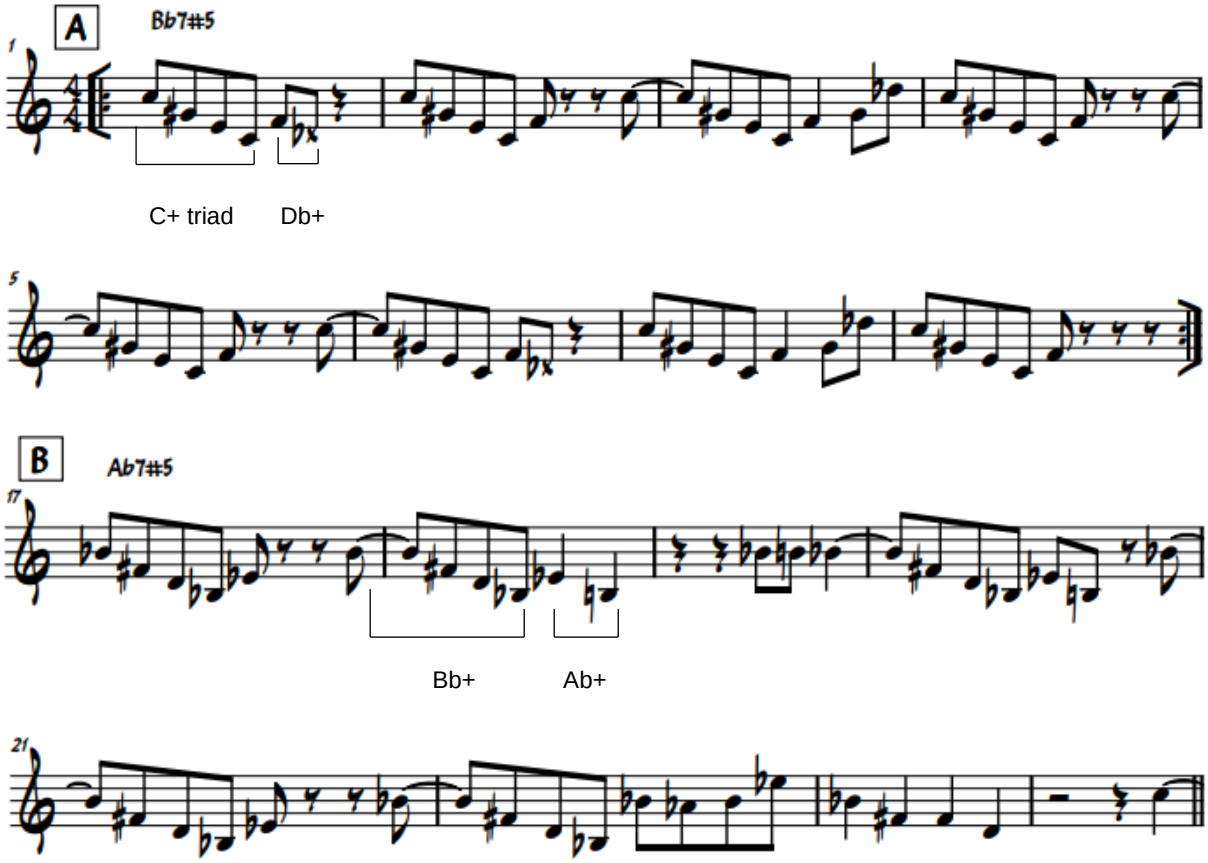
Although, none of Coltrane's pieces exclusively make use of an entire whole-tone cycle as primary harmonic and structural organisation, there are many instances where Coltrane infers the whole tone axis or uses it as improvisational material. Some of his compositions that are based on the whole tone scale include pieces like *One Down, One Up*, *Untitled 90314*, and *Song of Praise* (Bair, 2003).

In One Down, One Up, Coltrane makes use of augmented triad pairs as pitch material. The melody of the A section consists of two augmented triads, C+ and Db+ (one half step apart) over a Bb7#5 chord. The pitches for the notes of the melody in the B section are transposed one whole step down from the notes of the melody in the A section and here two augmented triads, Bb+ and B+ are played over a Ab7#5 chord (Bair, 2003).

[Figure 7.3 on following page]

Figure 7.3

One Down, One Up (John Coltrane), Live at the Newport Jazz Festival, 1965



One down, One Up can be seen as a different interpretation of the concept of symmetrical interval cycles present in pieces like Giant Steps and Countdown. As previously established, a whole tone scale consists of 6 notes in intervals of one whole step. Due to the existing symmetry in the scale, any of its notes can be considered the tonic. Thus, the same practice of temporarily tonicising the intervals of a major third harmonic cycle can be applied here to the intervals of a whole tone cycle. In relation to One Down, One Up, Mseleku's Timelessness is more a direct interpretation of the concept applied in Giant Steps, with fast changing chords moving along a whole tone axis. In contrast, One Down, One Up consists of static harmonic movement a whole tone apart.

Augmented and whole tone structures are also interchangeable. It is standard practice for jazz musicians to play a whole tone scale over an augmented chord, or vice versa, to imply a whole tone sonority by playing an augmented or #5 chord voicing over a dominant seventh chord.

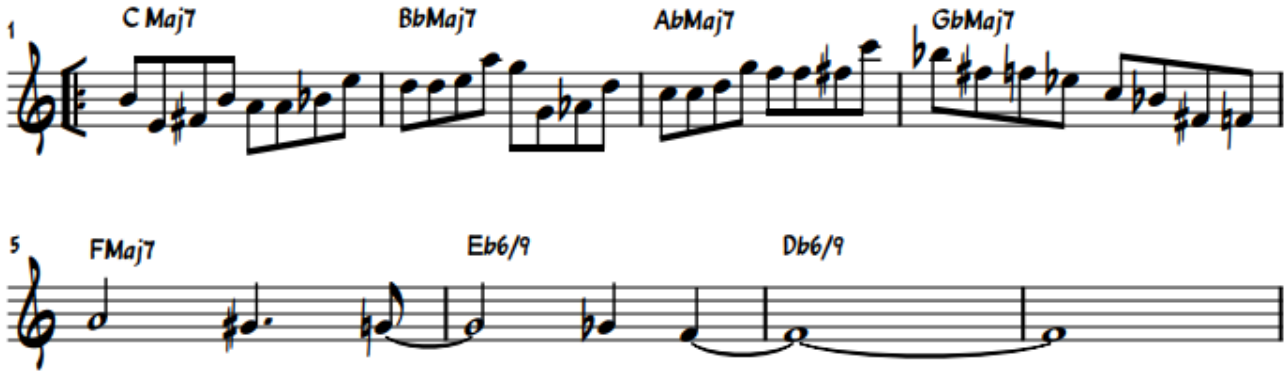
Melodic Material

The first four bars of the A section (Fig. 7.4) consist of an uninterrupted string of eighth

notes alternated by a repeat of the last four measures of the introduction – a rhythmically displaced chromatic line consisting of longer notes. The alternating melodic line utilises a descending chromatic movement constructed from the major 3rd harmonies of the underlying bassline, like in the introduction. The repetition of the last four bars of the introduction as part of the melody of the A section provides some cohesion and structure within the piece.

Figure 7.4

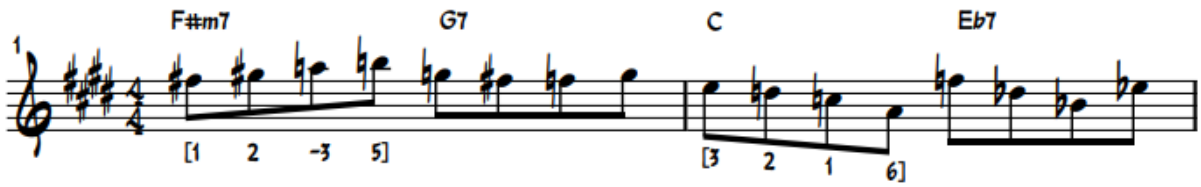
The A section melody of Timelessness (mm. 1–8)

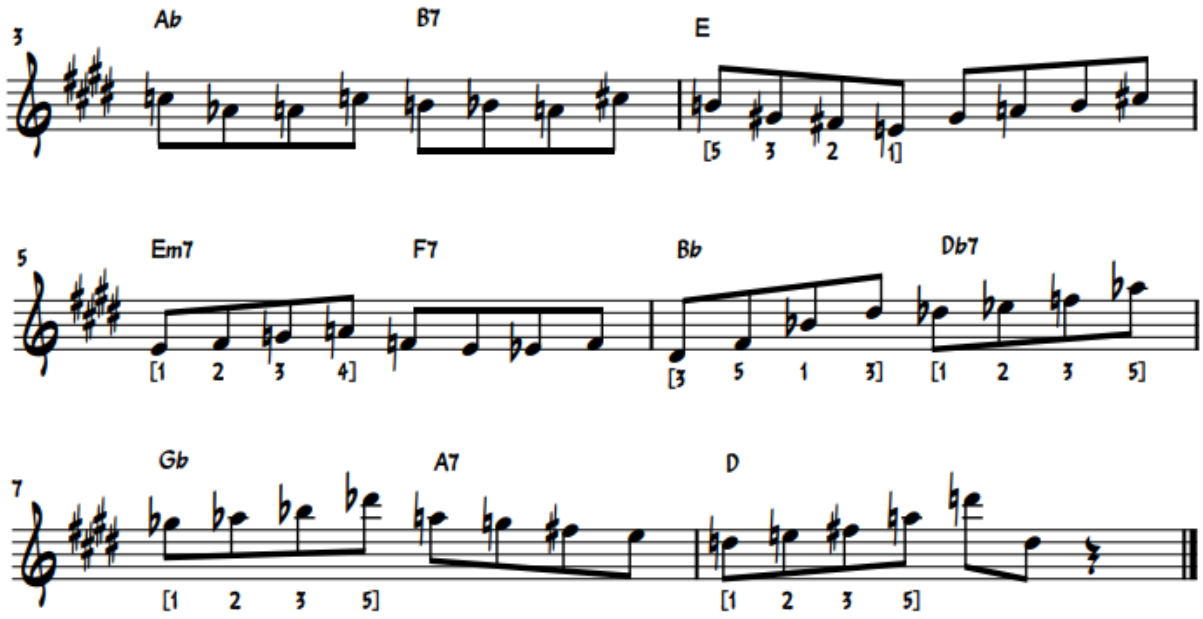


The fast tempo of the piece results in a straight-eighth feel reminiscent of more contemporary jazz compositions. Because of the fast moving, non-functional harmonic progression, Mseleku creates an angular sort of melody by arpeggiating the chords in much the same fashion as Coltrane during his improvisations on Giant Steps, by using repeated note groupings like 1–2–3–5 or variations thereof. Coltrane was known for playing different melodic patterns such as 1–2–3–4, 1–2–3–5, 1–3–5–7, 1–3–5–3, and other permutations (Baker, 1980). Patterns such as 5–6–7–9 and 9–7–6–5 included the chord extensions and provided a different texture to the improvisational material (Vaarstra, 2015). Figure 7.5 includes the first eight measures of Coltrane's solo on his composition Countdown and showcases how he used these patterns to outline the chord changes and interweaved them with other material during improvisation.

Figure 7.5

Coltrane's solo on Countdown (mm. 1–8)

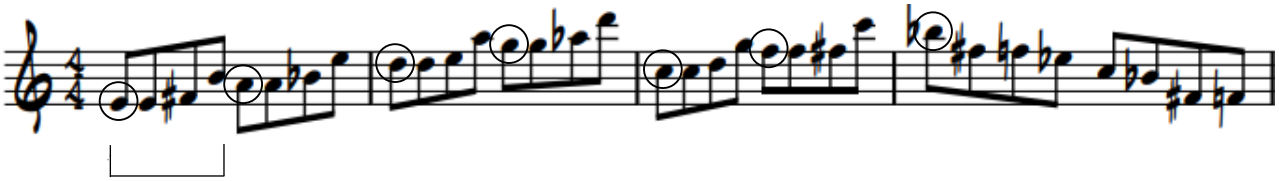




Again, the use of sequential material transposed through the harmonic progression forms the basis of Mseleku's melodic conception. The construction of the melody can be considered a sequential movement of the primary motivic device by intervals of 4ths. Each measure is an exact transposition of the previous measure a whole step down, which gives an indication of the whole tone-related harmonic structure of the piece. Figure 7.6 shows the first melodic line in its most basic form, utilising a 1–1–2–5 finger pattern starting on the 3rd of the underlying harmony and ascending by intervals of 4ths: E – A – D – G – C – F – B♭. This motivic device is testimony of the way Mseleku incorporated the pentatonic language devised by Coltrane in an attempt to outline the changes of his fast-moving 3rd-related harmonic progressions into his own music

Figure 7.6

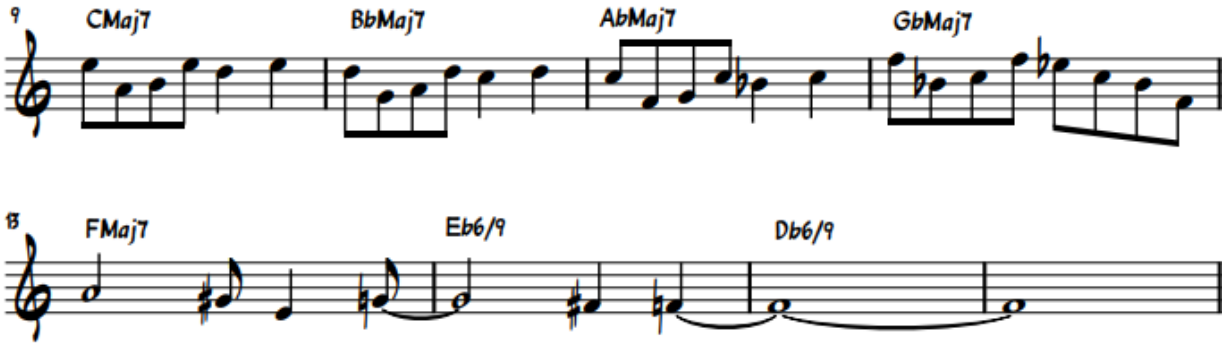
Melodic line in its most basic form, constructed from primary motivic device



The second melodic statement of the A section (Fig. 7.7) is a different expression of the same primary motif used in the first melodic line of the A section. It utilises the same harmonic progression and is formed by reshuffling the order of the notes combined with different rhythms.

Figure 7.7

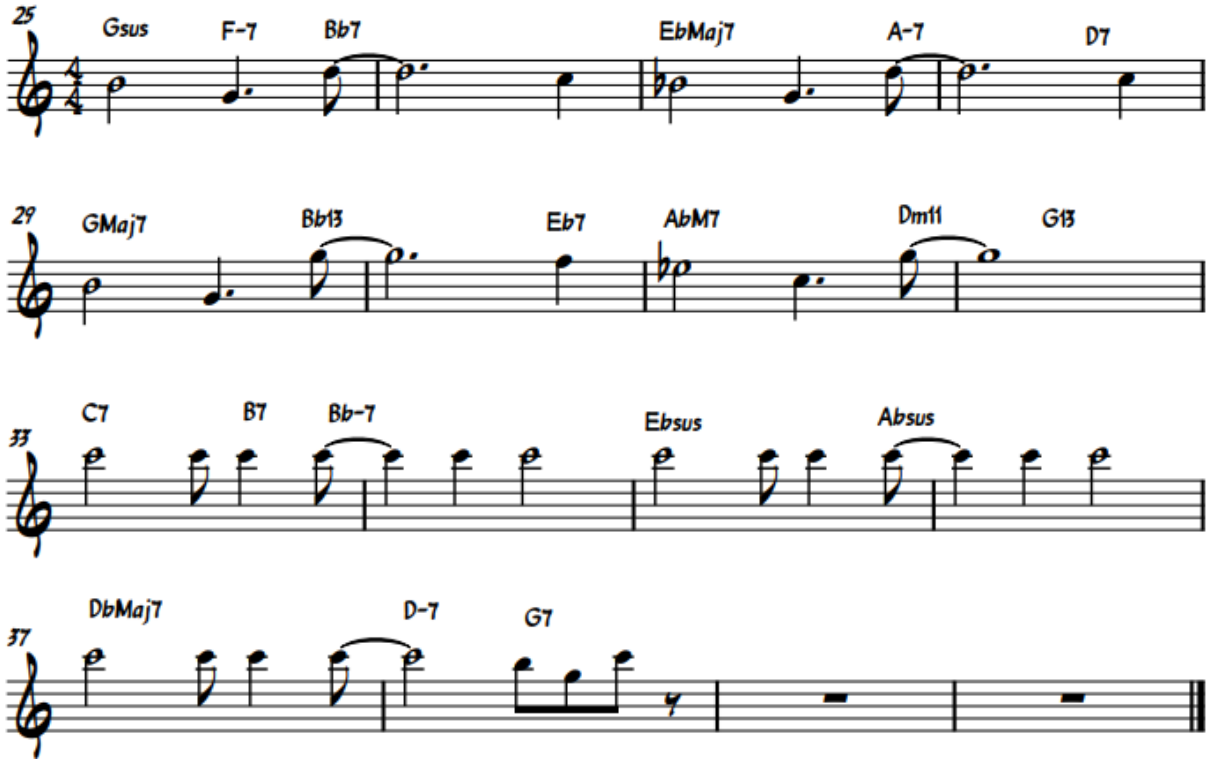
Second part of A section melody (mm. 9–16)



In the B section (Fig. 7.8), the melodic line of the first eight bars target tensions 13 and 11 over the ii-7 chord. In the second phrase, the root note is sustained and punctuated with a rhythmic line which creates tensions over the chords, similar to the intro.

Figure 7.8

B section (mm. 25–40)



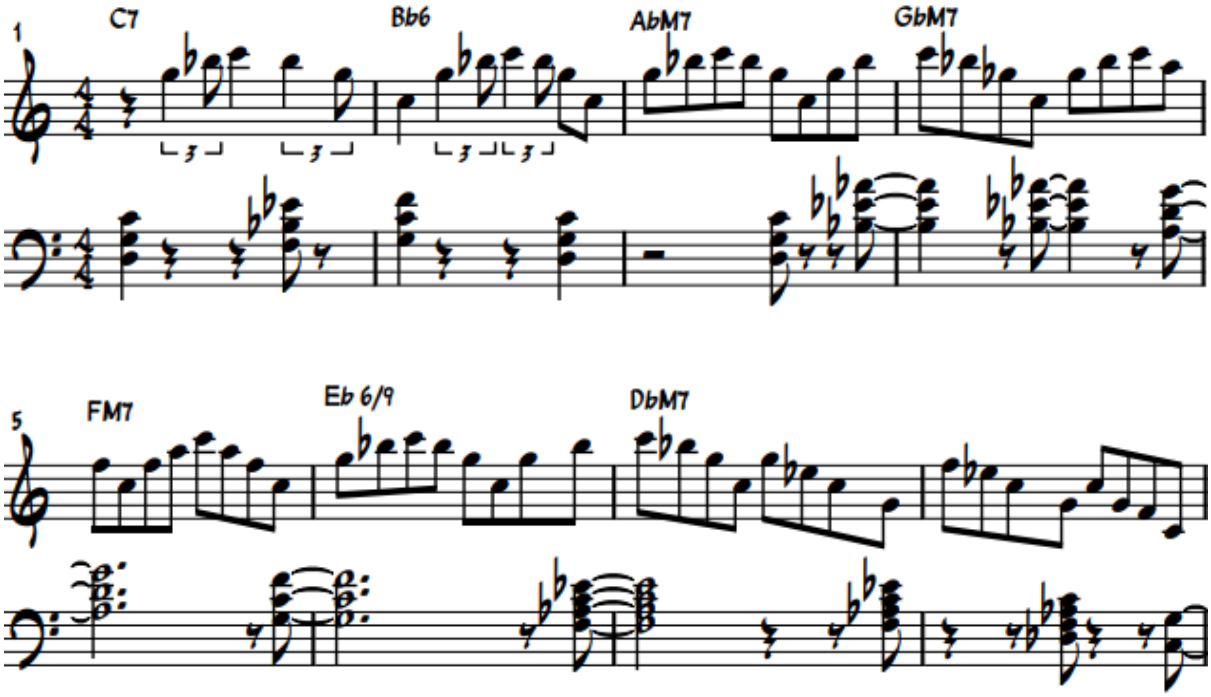
Improvised Material

After transcribing and analysing Mseleku's solo material on Timelessness, we can establish that he makes use of 4th interval quartal harmonies and voicings during his

accompaniment of the melody. The transcribed material of measures 1–8, presented in Figure 7.9, display how Mseleku's left hand chord voicings are built from intervals of 4ths.

Figure 7.9

Quartal voicings in left hand accompaniment of solo (mm. 1–8)



The musical identity associated with the pianist McCoy Tyner includes the use of quartal harmony, modes, and pentatonic scales – the adoption of which has been a major influence in the modern jazz piano style (Lilley, 2019). As Coltrane's pianist in his classic 1960s quartet, Tyner formed an indispensable part of Coltrane's sound and without him, the quality we associate with Coltrane's modal style would likely have been entirely different. Tyner also codified the use of the pentatonic scale pianistically to the point where his applications of it have become a fundamental part of every modern jazz pianist's vocabulary (Jaffe, 2009).

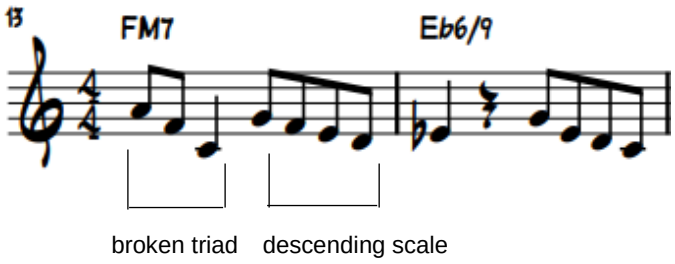
The pentatonic scale is intervallically symmetric, as are the voicings derived from it. They are not voiced in 3rds, as standard diatonic harmonies conventionally are, but in 4ths (Jaffe, 2009). Mseleku plays constant structure voicings derived from the pentatonic scale which sometimes fall outside the confines of the harmony, in a style similar to Tyner's. His approach to comping thus forms another element that adds a layer of musical symmetry to the piece. The absence of tertian structure in his voicings also allows for more harmonic freedom. Mseleku's affinity for Tyner is unmistakable and they both, not surprisingly, come from the same lineage of Afro-American players who follow a less European-orientated jazz piano tradition, but rather one more rooted in an Afro-American essence (Lilley, 2019).

Similar to his previous improvisations in Monwabisi, Cycle, Love Joe, and Yanini, Mseleku constructs his improvisation from smaller motivic ideas (consisting sometimes of only a few notes) by developing them rhythmically and melodically, transposing them and weaving them through the chord changes. Different permutations of the same device also occur frequently in Mseleku's improvisation on Timelessness. The symmetrical construction of Mseleku's improvised lines is achieved through the repeated use of melodic groups which outline essential chord tones or tensions. This either occurs naturally as a result of the chord progression, the way Mseleku constructs connecting material between certain points in the progression, or because he uses this device as the main melodic material from which he builds and develops his improvisation. Mseleku's improvised lines on Timelessness, however, contain little rhythmic variation and syncopation, and consists mostly of quarter and eighth notes. The reason for this rhythmic simplicity is most probably due to the high speed at which the song is played.

The simplest form of a prevalent melodic idea within this improvisation can be found in measure 13 (Fig. 7.10). Here it consists of a triad and a four-note grouped descending scale, diatonic to the key, which moves up a half step to the tonic of the next chord.

Figure 7.10

Simplest form of melodic idea (mm. 13 & 14)

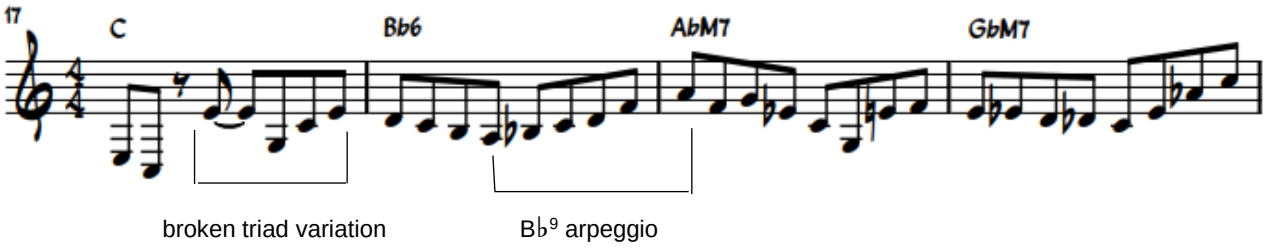


The device appears again in measure 17 (Fig. 7.11), transposed to C major – this time with slight variation and melodic development. Mseleku plays a different permutation of the broken triad and adds more melodic material to the device. This material consists of a B♭Maj9 arpeggio in first inversion, and more scale and arpeggiated material which connects the idea to the next phrase.

[Figure 7.11 on following page]

Figure 7.11

Reproduction, variation, and development of melodic idea



Measures 21–23 (Fig. 7.12) are an almost exact transposition of measures 17–19 (Fig. 7.10), a perfect 4th higher. Measures 25–26 (Fig. 7.13) are an exact replication of mm. 17–19, an octave higher; and measures 29–30 (Fig. 7.14) is, again, an almost identical restatement of measures 21–23, shifted forward to the first beat of the FMaj7 bar.

Figure 7.12

Melodic idea transposed a perfect 4th higher from original statement in measures 17–19 (mm. 21–23)

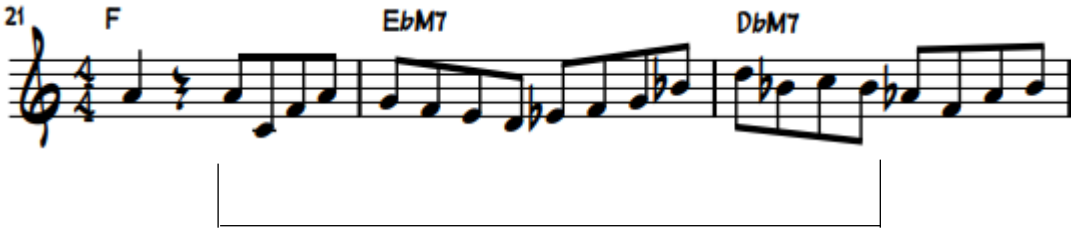


Figure 7.13

Measures 25 and 26 (exact repetition of mm. 17–19, an octave higher)

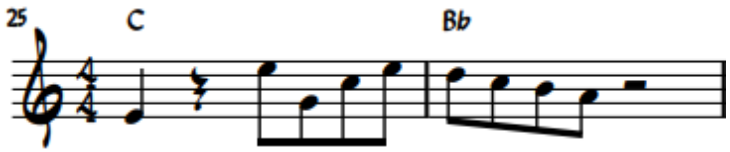
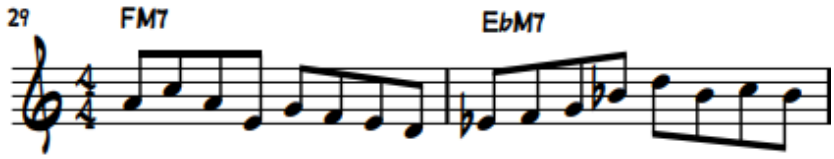


Figure 7.14

Measures 29 and 30 (approximate restatement of mm. 21–23)



CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Analysing and giving a scientific account of an artform like music, and especially improvised music, falls terribly short when trying to capture its essence. We can never know with certainty what sparked a moment of creation, and some artists even struggle to explain it themselves. What we do know, however, is that as much as the creation of music happens spontaneously, it is also a highly stylised and contrived art form. Deliberate thought and consideration are usually involved within the writing process of compositions. Through thorough examination and knowledge of the artform, we are therefore able to make informed assumptions about the formation of some of its components.

The process of transcription and analysis, together with the required musical knowledge, provided insights and served as a means to place Mseleku's music under a microscope and view it objectively according to musical principles. Transcribed material made and used within the study provided a graphic representation from which informed musical deductions about the harmonic construction and organisation of pieces were formulated. An examination of material also drew attention to conceptual ideas, stylistic aspects, repeated use of devices, and scales and patterns evident in Mseleku's music, as well as how the melodic material relates or deviates from the harmonic structures of the pieces.

Many examples, which showed credible evidence of the presence of harmonic cycles, emerged from the transcribed material of Mseleku's compositions. More specifically, harmonic cycles which resemble Coltrane's compositions in his early explorations of the three tonic system and non-functional harmonic cycles, also referred to as the Coltrane multi-tonic changes. Each piece analysed and discussed within the study showcases evidence of chromatic 3rd-related harmony within their compositional conceptualisation, harmonic structures, melodic construction, as well as improvised material. The study proves that Mseleku was influenced by John Coltrane's innovations of the three-tonic system, first made popular in a jazz context in 1959 with the release of Coltrane's album Giant Steps. It also displays clearly, however, that Mseleku's music and compositions are not a direct translation or reproduction of Coltrane's work. Rather, Mseleku builds on the concept of symmetrical structures and non-functional harmonic cycles, and creatively implements them into his own musical expressions as an extension of his knowledge of Coltrane's work and use of cycles.

The findings of the analysed material were as follows:

Two of Mseleku's Compositions Analysed within the Study, Monwabisi and Cycle, Make Use of Diminished Axes (Minor 3rd Relationships) within their Structural Frameworks. It is interesting to note how Mseleku applies the concept in two completely different ways. Essentially, Monwabisi is constructed from a traditional South African mbaqanga progression, transposed through a diminished axis so that the tonality of the progression shifts by a minor 3rd each time it is repeated. It displays a hybridisation of Mseleku's South African and American influences and is used as a method of harmonic expansion. Cycle, on the other hand, consists of a harmonic cycle that is created through the combination of two different diminished axes. It is purely cyclical in nature and resembles Coltrane's arrangement of Giant Steps in its conception.

Mseleku's Compositions Love Joe, The Age of the Divine Mother, Violet Flame, and Yanini all Contain Augmented Axes (Major 3rd Relationships) within their Inner Workings. Four different compositions which utilise an augmented axis were chosen for the study because each piece represents a different interpretation of equidistant major 3rd relationships. This strategy showcases Mseleku's expertise on the concept of symmetrical harmony through his expression of different formal structures and harmonic variations, all implementing major 3rd harmonic movements. Love Joe consists of minor chords arranged around two different augmented axes, each one applied within a different section of the piece. In The Age of the Divine Mother, four-measure phrases are transposed by major 3rds, while the chord progression essentially moves through a cycle of 4ths. Again, two different cycles are at work simultaneously. Violet Flame displays different layers of the major 3rd relationship which are present in its melodic construction, harmonic progression, as well as its formal structure and organisation. Both The Age of the Divine Mother and Violet Flame have strong symbolic reference to Mseleku's spiritual convictions. Yanini is an example of a piece that is not purely cyclical, but which still relies on major 3rd harmonic relationships as one of its most important compositional vehicles. A mostly static harmonic ostinato in the A section is countered by quick-shifting, non-functional harmonic progressions in the B section. This offers a big contrast in the piece and displays Mseleku's eclectic palette and versatility as a composer.

Lastly, Timelessness Partially Makes Use of a Whole Tone Axis in its Harmonic Structure. The use of a dominant pedal in the intro section of Timelessness is reminiscent of the Ab pedal used in Coltrane's 1960 reharmonisation of Body and Soul – this shows direct compositional and aesthetic influence. Comparable to Coltrane's composition, One Down, One Up, Mseleku infers a whole tone axis by temporarily tonicising intervals a whole

tone apart. Conceptionally, the fast-changing chords in Timelessness moving along a whole tone axis can also be considered an interpretation of the original concept used in Giant Steps. Elements of the whole tone concept can also be found in the melodic content and sequential material is prevalent due to transposition of melodic material through the cycle.

Deconstructing Mseleku's solos revealed some of the conceptual approaches that are found throughout his improvisations such as its dependence on the original melodic statement of the piece, development and variation of melodic ideas, and the role of sequences as a unifying method within a non-functional major-3rd-related harmonic structure.

The concept of a musical language based on symmetrical harmonic relationships rather than tonal ones, was a concept already adopted in Western classical music as a means to expand tonality and was not unique to Coltrane. It did, however, become a prominent practice in the jazz world due to his influence. Cyclic patterns constructed around equidistant key centres a minor 3rd, major 3rd, or whole tone apart appeared in chord progressions of his compositions including Giant Steps, Like Sonny, Countdown, Central Park West, and others. His approach to chromaticism played an important role in his approach to harmony and by dividing the octave into equal parts by successively applying the same interval, a symmetrical axis is established around which the tonality is centred. In other words, each interval is tonicised and the axis functions as a structural device around which a composition is arranged or based on. The three or four equidistant key centres being tonicised contain pitches which are foreign to the home key or any of its related minor scales and are therefore not diatonically related according to traditional functional harmony.

Coltrane was the first person in jazz to incorporate this concept so prominently in his work and create entire compositions based on it. Up until that point, musicians in the genre mainly made use of functional harmony. Through Coltrane's efforts, he managed to expand the jazz canon in such a way that every jazz musician who came after him was both directly and indirectly influenced by him. The use of cycles, and especially symmetrical cycles, form a central thread in both Mseleku and Coltrane's work; and although this practice takes on a context of its own in the hands of Mseleku, Mseleku cannot lay claim to these mechanisms of harmonic cycles. Each piece analysed and discussed within this study shows striking evidence of symmetrical interval relationships within their harmonic structures, and it is undeniable that Mseleku was influenced by the way Coltrane constructed his compositions.

We are aware, from literature, published interviews, and personal interviews, that Mseleku was very knowledgeable about many different kinds of music, such as classical music and the compositions of Liszt in which harmonic cycles are also present, and that he

also took inspiration from that. We also conduct from these sources that he was aware of and listening to Coltrane's music and was in fact a huge fan of Coltrane. During an international tour in 1977, where Mseleku performed with local South African bands Spirits Rejoice and Malombo Jazz at the Newport Jazz Festival in New York, he met two people closely related to Coltrane – McCoy Tyner and Alice Coltrane. During their acquaintance, Alice Coltrane gave Mseleku the saxophone mouthpiece that Coltrane had used during his recording of *A Love Supreme* (Fordham, 2008; Makhathini, 2018). We assume that Mseleku certainly made an impression on them and that they recognised the connection he shared with Coltrane. So much so, that they gave Mseleku Coltrane's mouthpiece with the intention of connecting them in a more tangible way.

Lastly, this study's grounded theory approach provided me with the possibility of an initial concept being used to provide data, which consequently allowed a theory or hypothesis to emerge from the data. A reflection upon the analysed data therefore allowed us to make observations of how the harmonic innovations of Coltrane play out in the music of Mseleku. The purpose of data collection and analysis was not only to formulate a substantiative hypothesis or to affirm our presumptions about Mseleku's use of cycles. It was also to gain a better overall understanding of Mseleku's music through observation from a specific angle. Coltrane's explorations of multi-tonic changes can also be used as a lens through which we can better understand and make sense of Mseleku's music and his personal approach to the concept.

During the course of the study, many other themes emerged which provided further opportunity to investigate Mseleku's music on an even deeper and more comprehensive level. In some cases, an explanation to account for the presence of these elements within the analysed music made it necessary to touch upon some of these topics, but only at surface level. An in-depth exploration of these aspects and the way they informed Mseleku's music fell outside the scope of this study. The theme of spirituality, however, required a more thorough exploration because of its strong underlying presence in both the work of Coltrane and Mseleku, and the profound meanings these musicians ascribed to music in accordance with their spiritual beliefs.

5.1. Spirituality as Parallel between Coltrane and Mseleku

A study of Mseleku's life and music cannot put aside the theme of spirituality which is intricately part of the construction of his musical practices and the narratives surrounding his life (Makhathini, 2018). This section touches on certain aspects of spirituality in Mseleku's

music which tie in with his practice of incorporating harmonic cycles in compositions. A full exploration of this particular subject falls outside the scope of this study, but it is still important to be taken into consideration because of its strong underlying presence in Mseleku's music.

Mseleku was very interested in and deeply connected to a larger understanding of life. From many sources – such as Makhathini's dissertation *Encountering Bheki: A Biographical-Analytical Consideration of his Life and Music* (2018), Lilley's book The Artistry of Bheki Mseleku, recorded interviews with Mseleku online, and many of his friends and colleagues in the South African jazz community – we know that Mseleku was a deeply spiritual person. The word "universalist" has been used to describe him. Spiritually, he found commonality in African traditional beliefs, his studies of Eastern mysticism, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, and so on (Neil Gonsalves, personal communication, March 5, 2021,). His diverse influences, such as his Zulu upbringing and his engagement with Eastern spiritual practices, shaped his conceptions with spirituality and it is reasonable to assume that his spiritual beliefs also directly impacted his piano pedagogy and compositional style (Makhathini, 2018). Mseleku himself disclosed the explicit spiritual connection he believed there to be between music and life: "Music should just be an experience every time, all the days of your life. It should be a spiritual thing, a ritual" (Bheki Mseleku on *The South Bank Show*, [Bragg, 1994]).

Eugene Skeef (colleague and close friend of Mseleku) tells of long periods spent by Mseleku in spiritual retreat in the Shyama Ashrama Radha Krishna temple in London, where he learnt to play Hindu devotional music (Makhathini, 2018, p. 44). As can be expected, he adopted many of the spiritual views of Eastern religions, which hold to the belief of the existence of reincarnation and past lives. Also known as rebirth or transmigration, reincarnation is the philosophical or religious concept that the non-physical essence of a living being begins a new life in a different physical form or body after biological death (Britannica, 2021). Reference is made to the idea that Mseleku's capabilities on numerous instruments were somehow linked to his deep sense of spirituality (Makhathini, 2018, p. 61), as well as his conviction that he had been a musician in some of his previous lifetimes (Skeef, 2019). His fascination with cyclical forms ties in with his beliefs of reincarnation, which is itself a cyclical pattern of birth and rebirth, and the unending continuation of life (Bragg, 1994; Makhathini, 2018). Makhathini (2018, p. 62) also suggests that the conclusions Mseleku reached on these matters stemmed from an enduring interest in cosmogony and Pythagorean studies, all of which are concerned with the origins and the cyclic and geometrical nature of existence.

Mseleku was well aware of the sonic implications of cyclical harmony but was also attracted to and very deliberate about the spiritual intent of using cyclical harmony to cleanse, purify, and heal himself as well as the spaces around him. In an interview with Melvyn Bragg, Mseleku explained the effect of the cyclical nature of the harmonic progressions he so fondly incorporates in his playing (Bheki Mseleku on the South Bank Show, 1944):

> I get attracted to playing these kinds of changes, like going from the key where I started until I've played twelve keys in a whole because of the flow. This has to do with trying to heal myself and heal the vibration where I'm in, rather than maybe distorting things. I think another part of us live in another realm, which is not affected by outward things that are happening, so it's always still and peaceful and I try to tune to this part. Hence, I try to play things sometimes that move gently and harmoniously in the way that they move. Like my tunes – some of them are very simple tunes because I feel attracted to this part of me that is like a child.

The "gentle and harmonious" movement Mseleku so deliberately employs in his music is noticeable in the way he often plays melodic themes that modulate fluently and almost unnoticeably (rather than abruptly or dramatically) based on clear harmonic progressions and discrete structures. That Mseleku attaches a spiritual meaning to the cyclicity in his work is evident when he comments that he adopted this style of composing as a means to purify himself and the vibrations around him (Bragg, 1994; Makhathini, 2018, p. 47).

It is interesting to note that Coltrane also held a mystical view of the power of music, which he considered to have the potential to affect human emotions and influence the physical world around him (Clements, 2009, p. 158). Hentoff (1976, p. 205) states that for Coltrane, the music was a way of "self-purgation" to the end of making himself and his music part of the "unity of all being".

Mseleku comes from a long line of jazz musicians who immersed themselves in spiritual practices and used music and performance as a tool for spiritual connection (with Coltrane probably being one of the most significant in this line). Mseleku's preoccupation with spirituality had its precursor in a generation of jazz musicians who were prominent during the American civil rights movement in the 1960s. Black political leaders, artists, and musicians looked to different forms of spirituality, like Islam, Eastern, African, Swahili, and Arabic traditions, that were in direct opposition to religious norms imposed by an oppressive government (Makhathini, 2018; Berkman, 2007,) – the same narrative that played itself out in South Africa through the apartheid era and the oppression of black people through governmental laws. The quest for spiritualism and the embracing of Eastern philosophies gave birth to novel nuances in the jazz music of 1960s America. One of the landmark

albums that embraced this devotional approach towards spirituality was John Coltrane's A Love Supreme. A notable group of musicians followed Coltrane's lead. Amongst them the pianist McCoy Tyner, pianist and harpist Alice Coltrane, and saxophonist Pharoah Sanders, (Makhathini, 2018, p. 55) – some of whom were Mseleku's biggest inspirations and idols.

Mseleku talked about Coltrane and his spiritual views during an appearance on The South Bank Show (1994), which further affirms the connection he had with Coltrane and how he related to him, musically and spiritually:

> Whenever I can get the time, to go within and feel a sense of purity, peace, and security, I try to convey this to my music… The major intention is that of simplicity, but it doesn't mean something that is advanced… a tune like Giant Steps… is not simple, it is simple because he [John Coltrane] was thinking the same way that I'm thinking about love… It is a mystical thing.

Coltrane also falls into this "school" or "movement" of spirituality within the jazz canon. In accordance with his fascination of science and spiritual traditions of all kinds, the study of Indian music and spirituality also became an increasingly dominant focus for him in later years. His recognition of the mathematical structures of music was as much a religious experience as it was about scientific discovery (Lateef in Jones, 2017). Coltrane's interest in spiritual practices and for the occult could be one reason why he explored the three tonic system and applied a specific geometry to his compositions. The relationships formed by the tonal centres in Giant Steps between the tonics (B – E♭ – G), the dominant 7th chords (B♭ – D – F#), and the minor 7th chords (A – C# – F), all form augmented triads. Three "stacked" major 3rds form an augmented triad, visualised geometrically with a trigon (triangle). According to Hollander (2016), within sacred geometry, merging the three trigons created by the tonal centres creates a hexagram which is the two-dimensional version of the three-dimensional star tetrahedron *Merkaba*, which means "light – spirit – body". Lateef sees Coltrane's music as a "spiritual journey" that "embraced the concerns of rich tradition and autophysiopsychic music", which means music from one's physical, mental, and spiritual self (Jones, 2017). This "concept of three" is prevalent throughout the theoretical structures of Coltrane's music, aiming at producing a specific "sound", but also applying to his spiritual philosophies.

During an interview included in Clements (2009, p. 172), Indian American musician Amit Heri, who is strongly influenced by Coltrane's legacy, comments:

> For me, Coltrane has the spiritual intensity, searching, and connection that is common to many of the master Indian classical musicians that I grew up listening to. It is his energy

and approach to life through music that resonates with the way of the Indian spiritual masters. Spiritual attainment through music.

In 1965, during Coltrane's Experimental Period of his music expressed a kind of religious ecstasy, sometimes incorporating prayers or chants. The intense and personal sense of spirituality as well as the incorporation of Indian mysticism into his music inspired many other musicians to pursue this direction and it remains an important part of his legacy (Clements, 2008).

We are able to draw parallels between the spiritual aspects of Coltrane and Mseleku's music and the manner in which they incorporated their beliefs into their musical practices. Both musicians placed great emphasis on the importance of their spirituality and its influence on their musical identities. References to spirituality and mysticism abound in Mseleku's aesthetic, as is also evident in his album titles such as Timelessness and Meditations, as well as track titles like The Age of the Divine Mother, *The Age Of Inner Knowing*, and *Looking Within*, to name a few (Makhathini, 2018, p. 51). Many of Coltrane's composition and album titles also suggest broad spiritual concepts that might be associated with Indian and other religious thoughts. A Love Supreme, *Ascension* (1966), *Om* (1967), *Selflessness* (1969), and *Meditations* (1966) all evoke Hindu, Buddist, or other mystical imagery or concepts (Clements, 2009, p. 158).

It is highly significant that Coltrane and Mseleku both linked their practice of composition and improvisation to their spiritual beliefs (Makhathini, 2018). Similarly, the use of cycles did not only serve as a compositional and structural device but contained religious and spiritual significance for Mseleku as well as Coltrane (Makhathini, 2018; Lilley, 2019; Neil Gonsalves, personal communication, March 5, 20210). From a musical point of view, the compositional technique was borrowed and inspired by Coltrane's Coltrane changes. In addition, there is a spiritual connection between the use of harmonic cycles and equidistant 3rd relationships that both musicians share. It is important to note, however, that Mseleku's music, as well as his spirituality and philosophical beliefs, had their own complexity apart from Coltrane's influence. Even though Mseleku's spirituality was a core influence in the significance he placed on certain musical structures, he remained autonomous and had his own belief systems. With that being said, the overlap in the significance these musicians placed on the spiritual aspect of their music is a touching point worthy of further exploration.

5.2. Mseleku's Impact on South African Jazz

It is difficult to pinpoint what the extent of Mseleku's contribution to South African music

was since there have been many other monumental jazz musicians from South Africa who had a strong impact on the direction and aesthetic of the genre. Customs of earlier musicians and bands like Abdullah Ibrahim, The Jazz Epistles, Blue Notes, Winston Mankunku Ngozi, and others, also demonstrate the influence of the melodic and harmonic language of American jazz. Nevertheless, Mseleku's music and his unique style can be distinguished from them in a few different ways.

Award-winning jazz musician, music educator and scholar Nduduzo Makhathini, a devotee of Mseleku even after his passing, released a video on social media on what would have been his birthday (on the third of March): *Remembering Bheki Mseleku: Indlela iBuzwa KwabaPhambili'* (2021). In Makhathini's commemoration, he observes one of these distinctions between Mseleku and his predecessors.

> The '60s and '70s generation had just come out of the Sharpeville Massacre, so the sound could be described as robust – one moment of joy, one moment of total aggression – because that's what the apartheid system was doing to our people. Something interesting again happened in the '80s, the time Mseleku was in exile – where people were considering, quite intensely, spirituality as a mode to respond to this lack of freedom and emancipation. People would look for it, as Mseleku would say, in a world that is not disturbed. He was talking about going "inside the sound", as opposed to how people were thinking about "playing the sound". He was talking about these safe spaces and about the avant-garde movement because he was there in Sweden playing with Don Cherry. In a sense, he was part of the free movement; but again, there is intention when he says, "I like to play harmonious things". There is so much turmoil around the world, whenever he gets a chance to play, he wants to channel a different vibration to counter this madness – so, in a way, producing a counter vibration, and option for the people that didn't really want to fight, but people who were considering a different mode of intervention.

This mindfulness of the healing and restorative properties of music directly translated into his music. It has been established that in some way, his preoccupation with cycles was a direct reaction to his spiritual views and philosophies about the influence music can have on our direct environment and the people around us. One thing that Mseleku left us with was the way we think about music and the reason why we play (Andre Petersen, personal communication, April 14, 2021). "At the core of Mseleku's practice was a bigger aspiration to remind humanity of the role of music as a mode of spiritualism and a way of promoting a universal consciousness and peace in the world" (Makhathini, 2018, p. 41). Finding himself situated in the apartheid era, Mseleku's music was not explicitly political, but resistance did register indirectly in his philosophical beliefs about the role of music and the symbolism of

his compositional techniques.

Mseleku was important, not just as a musician, but also because of what he did in powerful non-verbal ways. His influence on a post-apartheid generation is probably stronger than any of the other musicians who came before him. One of these reasons is that his music strongly resembles an American way of playing that is easier to define in terms of musical analysis – something that cannot easily be said about someone like Abdullah Ibrahim, for instance. By the time a South African audience started hearing Mseleku's music, there were already schools of education and an established tradition endorsing Tyner and Coltrane's use of harmony and structure in their music. Andre Petersen described his first-hand experience of this by saying that if one looks at the influence of jazz education on a post-apartheid generation in South Africa, they were already studying Giant Steps – so they could hear that in Mseleku's music, and that made him more popular in certain circles. It became part of a cultural movement of pride (Andre Petersen, personal communication, April 14, 2021).

Mseleku's South African roots were firmly planted and that was the foundation of his music and where it came from – the black South African experience (Bragg, 1994). The borders of traditional African music and jazz in the South African context are, however, often blurred (Xaluva, 2009). In the South African context, jazz is generally understood as a fusion of pure jazz of African American origin (particularly American swing), and traditional South African styles such as marabi, kwela, and mbaqanga (Xaluva, 2009). Traditional African music generally places more emphasis on melodic variations as opposed to complicated harmonic progressions. Ballantine (2012, p. 62) states that "in traditional African music, repeated harmonic patterns (sometimes called 'root progressions' or 'harmonic segments') are a fundamental characteristic". South African jazz songs are, thus, those supported by the typical established key harmonies associated with these progressions.

Stylistically, Mseleku made a unique contribution to the aesthetic and the continuing development of South African jazz. What he did was to enrich and evolve the harmonic language of South African jazz and make it more complex by incorporating Coltrane's compositional practice of equidistant 3rd-related key centres into this context. An example of this is his treatment and transposition of a traditional I – IV – V mbaqanga progression in Monwabisi through a diminished axis. When you take his melodic vocabulary into account – the lines, enclosures, phrasing, and note choices over dominant chords through a mbaqanga progression and a marabi groove – you hear an approach very reminiscent of bebop and hardbop. This is not necessarily unique to Mseleku; early players in South African jazz, while rooted in their own distinct cultural music forms, were also strongly influenced by the

recorded medium of great American jazz players (Xaluva, 2009). What does make Mseleku unique is that on both the South African and American end, he was a master musician who mastered these distinctly stylistic ways of playing in a very personal way.

The simultaneous existence of a South African as well as an equally strong American aesthetic in Mseleku's music made it more accessible and relatable for an international audience. During a conversation between Mseleku and some of his colleagues on *The South Bank Show with Melvyn Bragg* (Bragg, 1994), musician John Fordham comments how Mseleku's different musical influences gave him an "edge", contrary to other musicians in the industry:

> In the jazz revival that's happened on this side of the Atlantic, I think Bheki has been a very important figure because I think he has been one of the most prominent musicians who've been coming from what you might call a world musician's perspective – that's all kinds of material that are related to South African music and to African American jazz-derived music particularly, and also with some involvement in a kind of classical Romanticism as well – the kind of nineteenth century classical quality in the people that have influenced him further back; I think that broad world musical perspective of his has made him a key figure in it.

Many prominent musicians, composers, and especially pianists in South Africa have been deeply impacted by Mseleku's music, such as Nduduzo Makhathini, Andile Yenana (b. 1968), Moses Molelekwa (1973–2001), Afrika Mkhize, Mark Fransman, Andre Petersen (1978–2021), Neil Gonsalves (b. 1969) , Bokani Dyer (b. 1986), Thandi Nthuli (b. 1987), and others (Makhathini, 2018). These musicians all borrow from Mseleku's compositional aesthetic and playing style to enhance and strengthen their own musicality. Although Mseleku was never a prominent educator, his music itself had a profound and unique developmental impact on the jazz aesthetic in South Africa. Makhathini (2018) mentions in his dissertation that many of his own compositions also mirror Mseleku's compositional style. Some of the characteristics that we identify in Mseleku's solo piano playing, like short melodic themes moving in cyclic patterns and spontaneous improvisations also reflects in Makhathini's own playing. His composition *Umsunduzi* (*Mother Tongue*, 2014) uses the same harmonic cycle as Mseleku's Violet Flame (Mseleku, 1997). Many of his pieces mirror Mseleku's choice of harmonies over a common South African *marabi* I – IV – V progression, such as *From an Old Bag of Umkhumbane* (*Listening to the Ground*, 2015), which borrows from Mseleku's Monwabisi (Home At Last, 2003).

5.3. The Importance of the Transcription and Analysis of Bheki Mseleku's Music in an Educational Context

The processes and different levels of transcription and analysis within this study included aural analysis and the recognition of notes and structures, the translation and graphic representation of aural knowledge by means of written notation, an analytical breakdown and thorough investigation of the content, and a comparison and exploration of relationships between different categories. This multi-dimensional process allowed me to investigate Mseleku's music and use of harmonic cycles on a microscopic level, uncover the areas where Mseleku's harmonic conceptions showed the presence of Coltrane's influence, and how he merged local and international streams of jazz into his unique characteristic style in a step-by-step and more digestible manner.

The technical and musical analysis of South African jazz and its musicians have to date not been researched nearly enough. A greater supply of this type of research in academic literature will make South African jazz more accessible to wider audiences. The simultaneous existence of different influences within Mseleku's music emphasised the sociocultural connection to South Africa in his work even though influences audible in his sound can also be traced back to American music, which also make it more accessible to audiences on an international level. The connection between the different South African and American aesthetics can be seen, for example, in his combination of different cycles – chromatic 3rd-related cycles coexisting with traditional mbaqanga progressions.

Personally, I have learned a great deal about Coltrane's compositional practices and musical identity, as well as other closely related musicians like Tyner through the study of Mseleku's compositions. By analysing and identifying the musical influences within Mseleku's compositions and his application of certain conceptual ideas and musical practices, and comparing it to his predecessors, I have a more informed knowledge of how Coltrane and Tyner's music works as well. The study of Mseleku's music thus provides information that extends past just his own music. His incorporation of a wide spectrum of influences opens avenues to many different routes of musical exploration. The fact that Mseleku was a South African artist and made use of indigenous musical elements within his music means that it creates more academic material for the study of South African jazz through indigenous knowledge systems, instead of through a more traditionally accepted Western ideological perspective.

There exist many controversial opinions about the use of traditional Western knowledge systems and harmonic principles to approach the transcription and analysis of indigenous

African music. One such orientation, for instance, is that there is a disconnect between the cultural expression and the theoretical resemblance of the music – that it disregards the knowledge that comes from ancient, indigenous African knowledge systems and therefore resembles colonialism and oppression. As a musician and researcher who has been trained in a musical environment which favoured this type of knowledge system and the principles of Western classical music, it does restrict my study of Mseleku's music to only one form of understanding. I do believe, however, that the transcription and analysis of Mseleku's music would be a valuable endeavour for many other musicians, as it contains a deep well of knowledge and valuable information which can enrich one's perspective and musical vocabulary, especially in a South African context.

During conversation with Andre Petersen (personal communication, April 14, 2021), he revealed some of his insights on the matter. His opinion is that opposing the study of African music through a process like transcription and analysis does a disservice to and undermines the intelligence of jazz musicians – particularly African musicians who would not necessarily write down their music. It does not mean that the lack of the use of written notation indicates that there is not a thoughtfulness, intelligence, and awareness of all these elements – which clearly is not the case with Mseleku. Classical music is the oldest institutionalised form of academic music study, while the academic study of jazz is still in the process of establishing a framework which does not superimpose the ideals of classical music onto this entirely different musical aesthetic. The cyclical movements of 3rds, however, are harmonic structures and inventions that already existed in the music of Liszt, Ravel, and other composers of the late Romantic period, which were also borrowed by Coltrane in his explorations of the harmonic system. Nothing played by Mseleku, that is placed under scrutiny within this study can therefore *not* be explained through the analytical lens of Western harmonic principles. What it does not explain and something which we do not have an established vocabulary for, or way of framing yet, is his execution and the feeling we get from his music. We can acknowledge that the realm of theory has these limitations, but it is important to interrogate the statement that transcription and analysis devalues the spiritual and cultural aspect of the music.

Gonsalves (personal communication, March 5, 2021) had the following to say about Mseleku as subject matter in the formal music education system:

> I think that, to every generation of South African jazz musicians that came after him, he was probably the biggest influence. Because of certain elements in his music like some hardbop language, ii – V – Is, and repetition of forms, we can view and categorise him as a jazz musician. For the academy that prizes these kinds of things, Mseleku offers a

much more sophisticated body of music that can be represented to and studied by more advanced students. There were obviously other big figures in the South African jazz industry that played a big role and offered their own contribution. Hugh Masekela, however, played more African popular music and Abdullah Ibrahim had the church music aesthetic. Abdullah plays music that you cannot really categorise as jazz – it sounds more like a movie soundtrack and has a folk music aspect to it. It is very landscape driven and open-ended, so it does not always have a compact form and repeated harmonies that jazz musicians usually sought after. Mseleku was effectively a South African hardbop musician and his music can thus be presented in already established academic courses.

The process of transcription and analysis provided me with a method to translate Mseleku's music into an alternative medium and view it from a different perspective. By translating the music into written notation, one starts seeing connections that could not have otherwise been picked up by aural perception only. What seems spontaneous and unrelated reveals the compositional thoughtfulness, elements of melodic development, knowledge of harmony, use of rhythmic development, motifs, connections to the theme, how the solo line is negotiated over two or three choruses, how it builds, and what effects come into play with the rhythm section. These are all things that happen in real time but is also carefully and thoughtfully constructed. I believe that formal theoretical analysis has a place in one level of explanation and that we do not actually have enough manuscripts and analyses of the theoretical processes at work for artists like Mseleku.

The contributions Mseleku left us with are plentiful. There are not many documented pianists in South Africa who were able to play on such a technically advanced level. The compositions and the content of recorded music he left behind are incredible in terms of their content and contribution to South African jazz. He was also important in stirring musicians to think about the spiritual nature of music (Andre Petersen, personal communication, April 14, 2021) and the impact of artists in a broader perspective of the world.

5.4. Delimitations of the Study

The main focus of the study was to investigate Mseleku's approach to harmony within selected compositions. Specifically, his use of harmonic cycles which resembles Coltrane's use of the three tonic system and non-functional harmony. Melodic, stylistic, rhythmic, and improvisational elements were also taken into consideration. These elements are all interconnected with the harmony and their presence were considered as well in order to provide a more holistic portrayal of the harmonic realm of Mseleku's music. Also pertaining to

Coltrane, Mseleku was not only influenced by his harmonic inventions, but also rhythmic elements, 'feel', melodies, exploration of range and harmonics, and involvement of the rhythm section (Baker, 1980). A thorough analysis of these elements, however, fell outside the scope of this study. For this study I only focussed on the harmonic contributions applicable to Mseleku and the unique South African context which allowed for the creation of novel Coltrane harmony interpretation and implementation.

There are many other themes on this matter worth exploring. Indigenous cultures from Mseleku's home country, the political climate in South Africa, his time in exile, and his spiritual beliefs also had an impact on his music, and Mseleku's harmonic and compositional style evolved accordingly. In some cases, an account and conclusion of the findings within the analysis made it necessary to touch upon some of these topics, but only at surface level. An in-depth exploration of these aspects and the way they informed Mseleku's music fell outside the scope of this study.

Furthermore, even though Coltrane's influence had a significant impact on Mseleku's music, Mseleku was also influenced by many other jazz musicians like McCoy Tyner (1938–2020), Thelonious Monk (1917–1982), and Keith Jarrett (b.1945). Mseleku was particularly influenced by McCoy Tyner, and we can find clear sonic evidence of that within his music. There is an obvious connection in terms of sound touch and percussive playing (Neil Gonsalves, personal communication, March 5, 2021). Tyner's sound and identity formed an indispensable part of Coltrane's group in the 1960s and without him, the quality we associate with Coltrane's modal style would likely be entirely different. For the purpose of this study, we did not explore the influence of McCoy Tyner's style on Mseleku. The affiliation between these two monumental musicians is, however, important to note because Mseleku's connection to Tyner affirms that he was also inevitably influenced by Coltrane.

5.5. Conclusion

Mseleku was a complex character, and the extent of his legacy is something that cannot quite be grasped yet. He was a product of influences we know of and of influences we do not know of. Influences that were regional in KwaZulu-Natal, Cape Town, Johannesburg, and the people he came in contact with in South Africa, as well as those he became acquainted with during his time in exile and the many established jazz musicians he worked with internationally.

I think Mseleku himself defined quite neatly what it meant to be South African, for him (Bragg, 1994):

> I have a lot of influences coming from South Africa in different ways than other people... Maybe it's hard for them to understand that South Africa is multicultural, really; there's Hindus, there's Muslims, there's all kinds of people. So, for me, when I was born, I grew up under that kind of South Africa – obviously as a Zulu, but there's all those elements. That's what I've known and that's what comes to me. So that's, for me, South African.

Mseleku drew from a wide variety of musical models, from which he forged a unique and deeply personal style. His music was highly eclectic and represented a great variety of styles, pinpointing any single source for any of his compositions is difficult or impossible.

> He was a sensitive, talented, and highly evolved person who had a wide palette of influences and different kinds of music that he listened to. It can be convenient for us to box him, but I don't think he can be constricted to just a few key influences and it is not a true representation of who he was (Neil Gonsalves, personal communication, March 5, 2021).

For the purpose of this study, however, I narrowed my focus down to mainly one specific aspect of Mseleku's music and one significant influence. I established that Mseleku's use of harmonic cycles, more specifically combinations of chords that explore the symmetry of the harmonic system, form a central thread in his compositional approach. This approach of harmonic cycles mirror Coltrane's compositional thinking in his early explorations of symmetrical interval cycles in pieces such as Giant Steps, Like Sonny, Countdown, and others. Coltrane's influence seems to extend to the compositional, aesthetical, and harmonical aspects of Mseleku's music and there seems to be a common spiritual thread in both musicians' approaches as well. Both musicians were experts in the way they approached symmetrical interval cycles to enrich the harmonic language of that which came before them, within their own respective contexts.

I want to conclude with the statement that harmonic cycles are only one of the aspects that inform our understanding of Mseleku's music. The study of Mseleku's music is far from being exhausted and there are many avenues left to explore. Mseleku's deep knowledge and reverence for his own roots coexisted in harmonious balance with the diverse range of influences alive in his music. The way he was able to simultaneously express them seamlessly and in a way that touched people profoundly, is what truly elevates him as a significant artist. His relevance to the South African jazz aesthetic is widely noticeable in the discipline and his impact can still be felt today in the music of the generation that came after him. His music is worth great attention within the academic discourse. I hope this study brings insight, creates further interest, and also urges us to continue the celebration of this remarkable musician's work and all that it represents.

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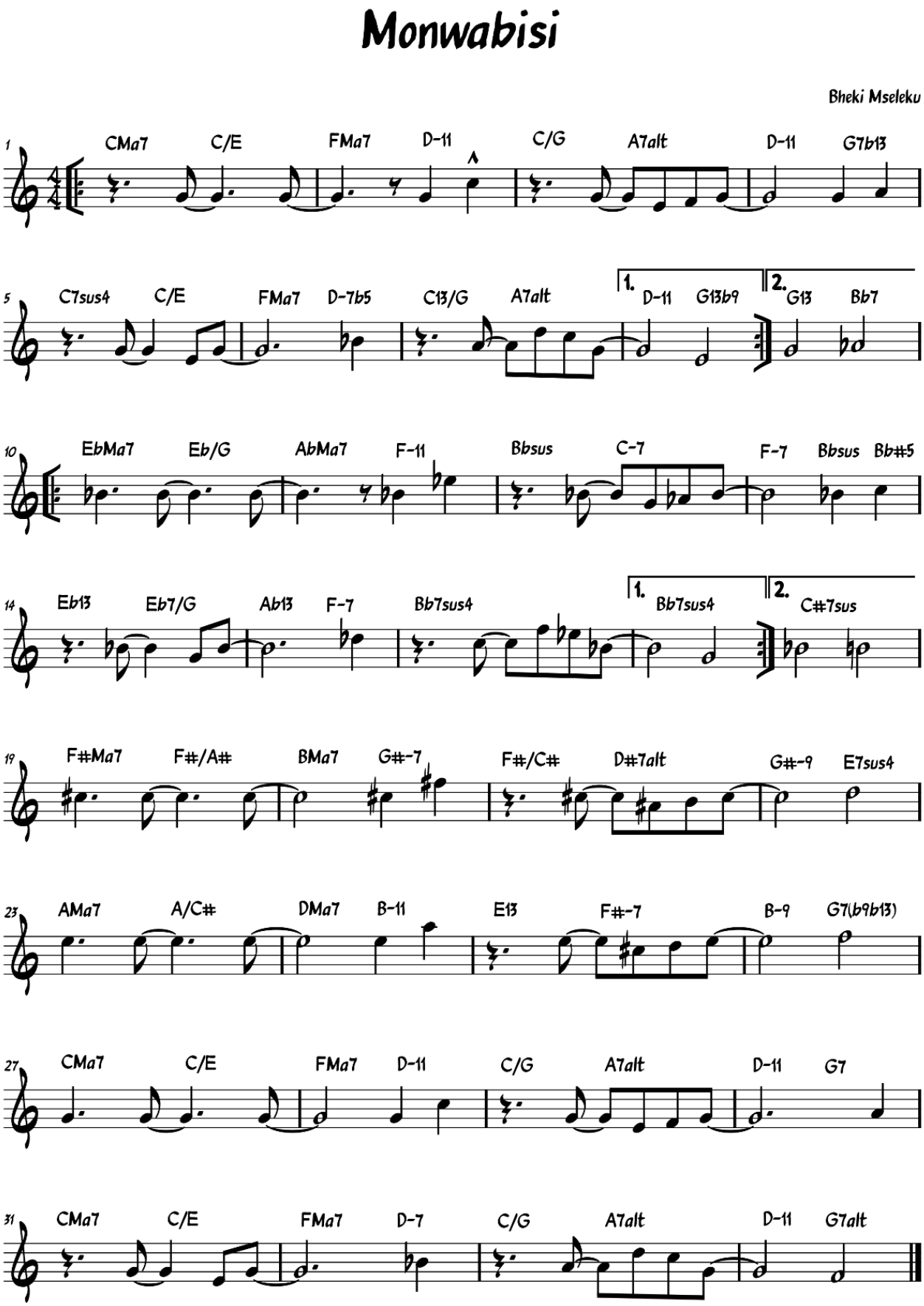
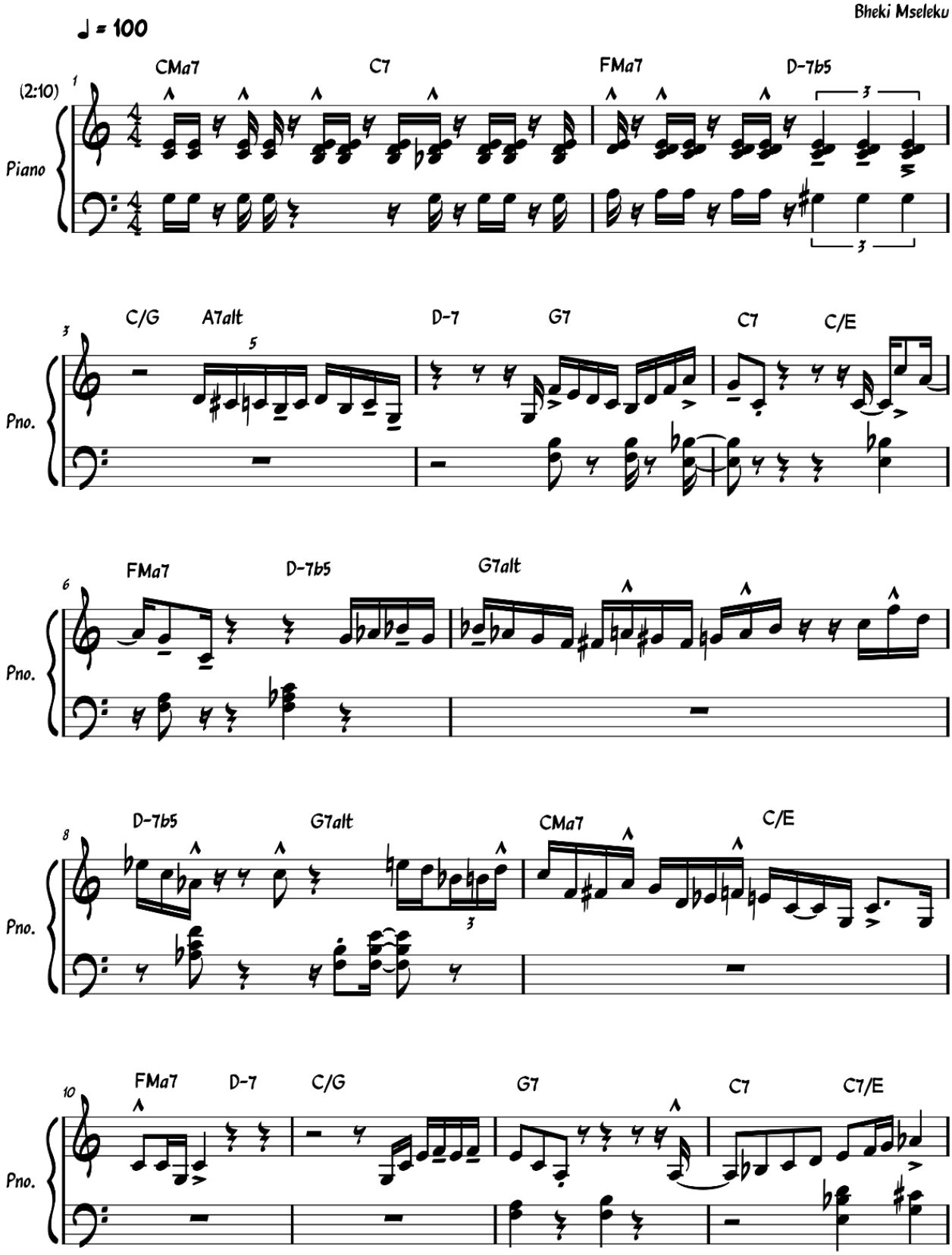
Appendix 1.1: Transcription of Monwabisi

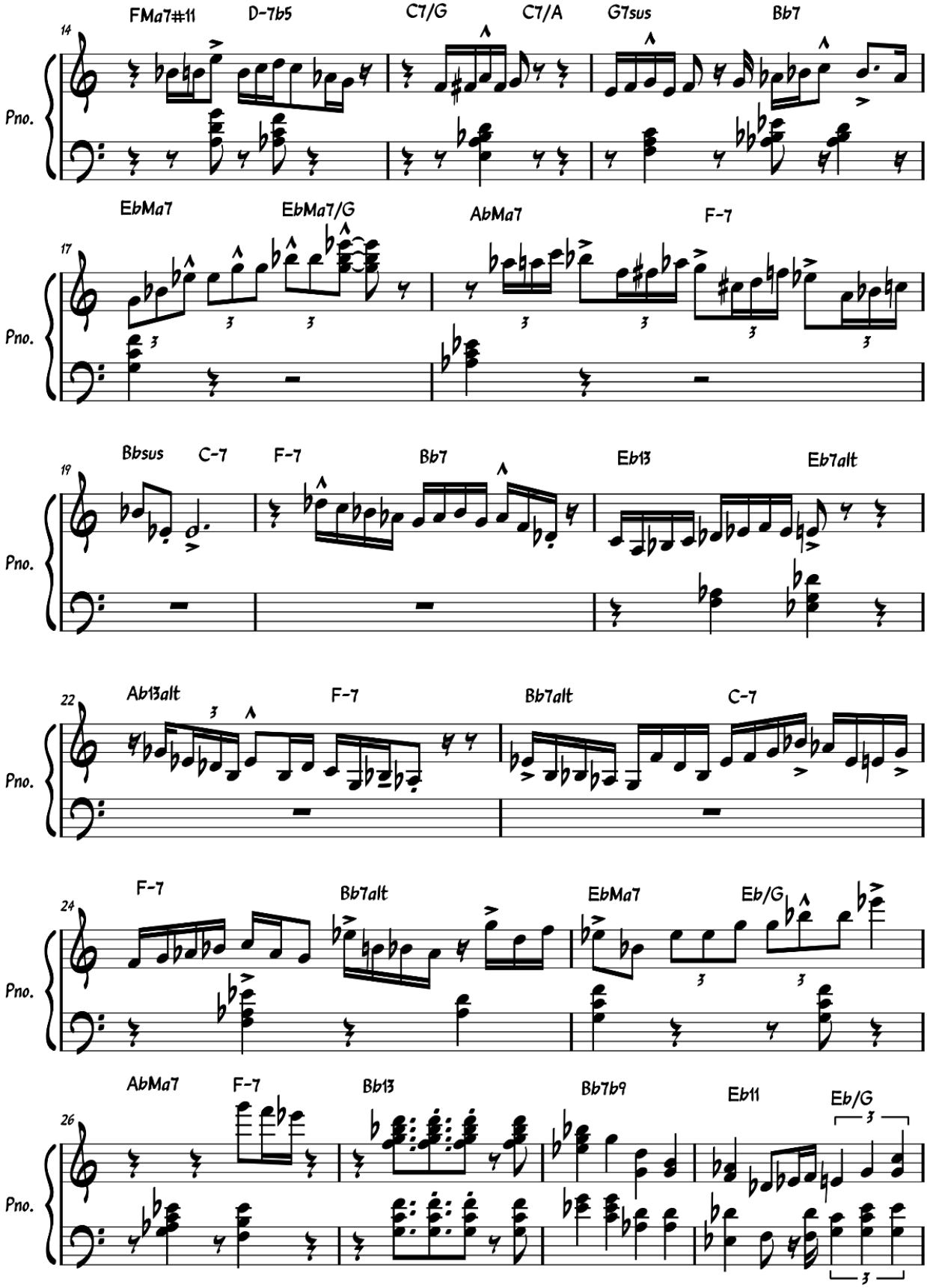


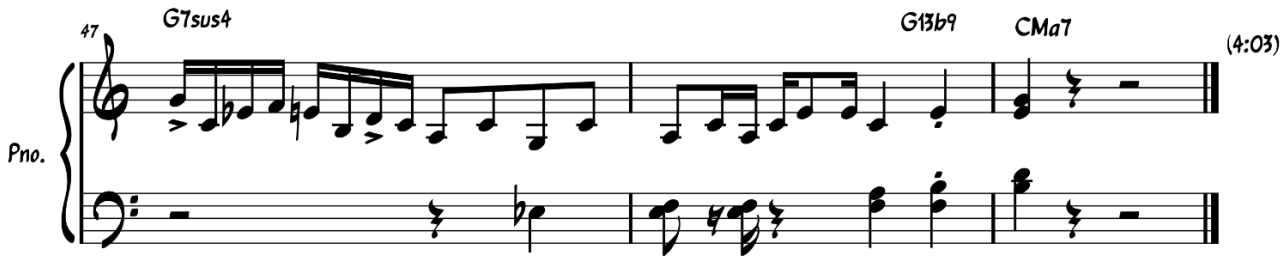
Appendix 1.2: Transcription of Monwabisi Solo

Monwabisi Solo

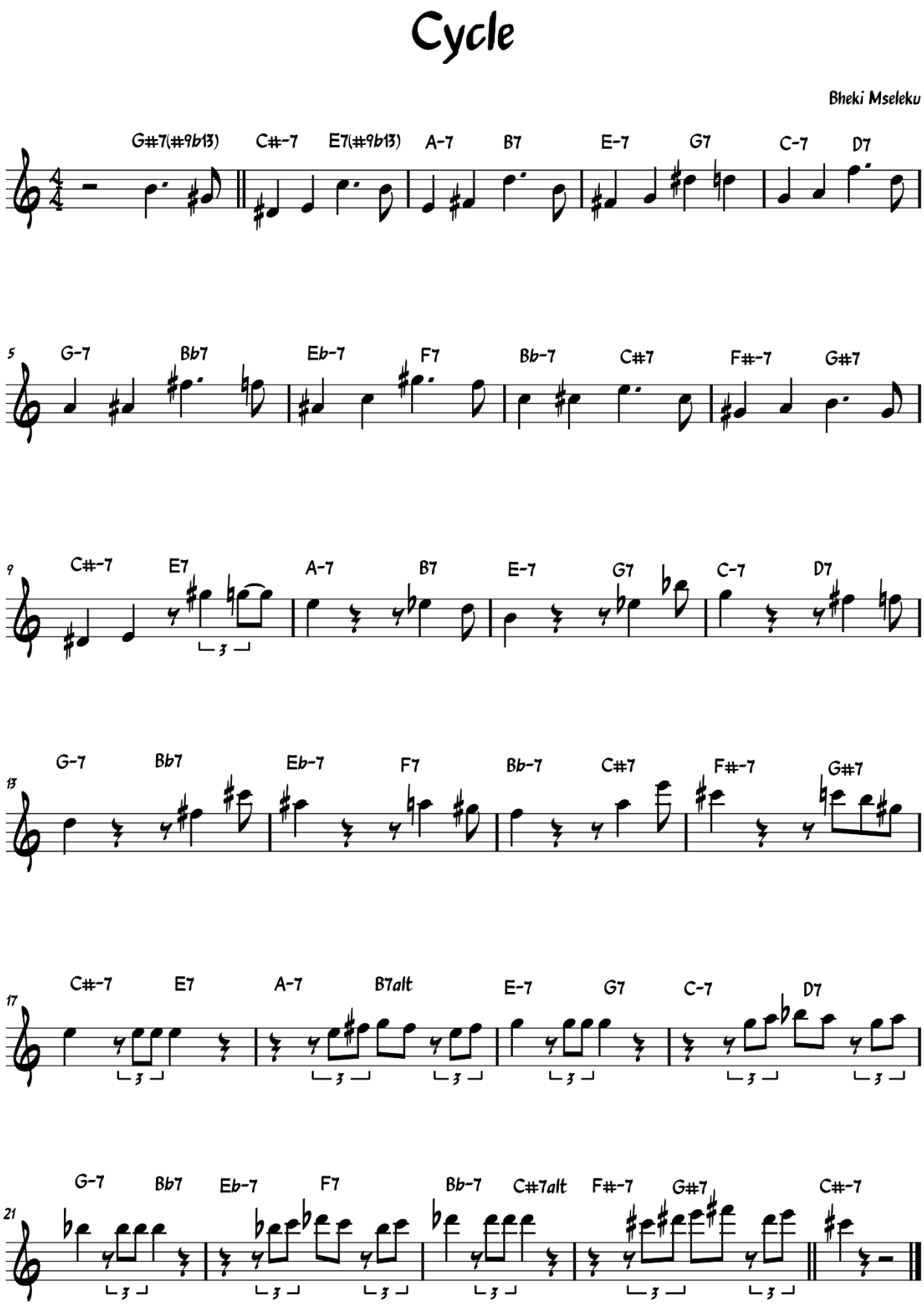
Bheki Mseleku







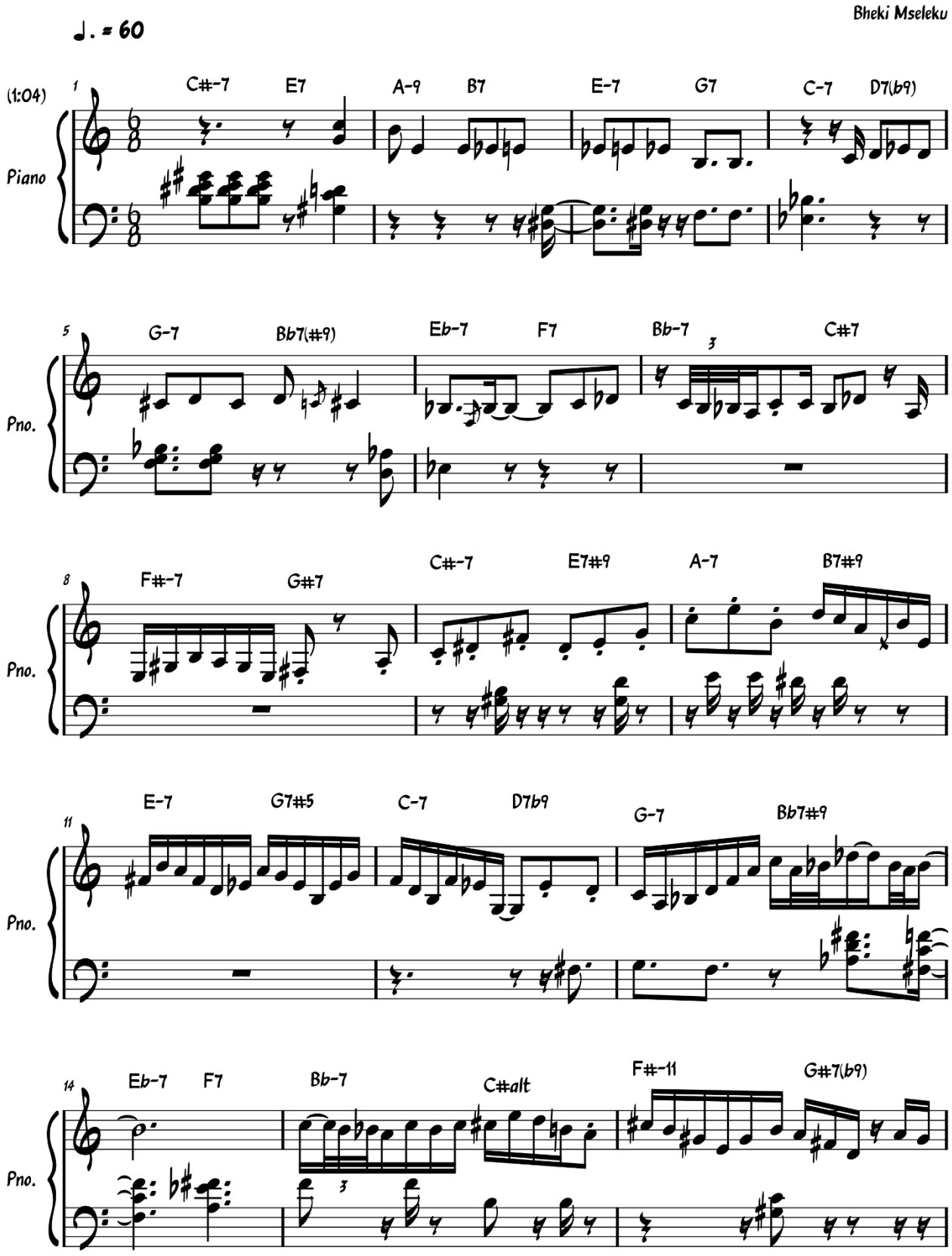
Appendix 2.1: Transcription of Cycle

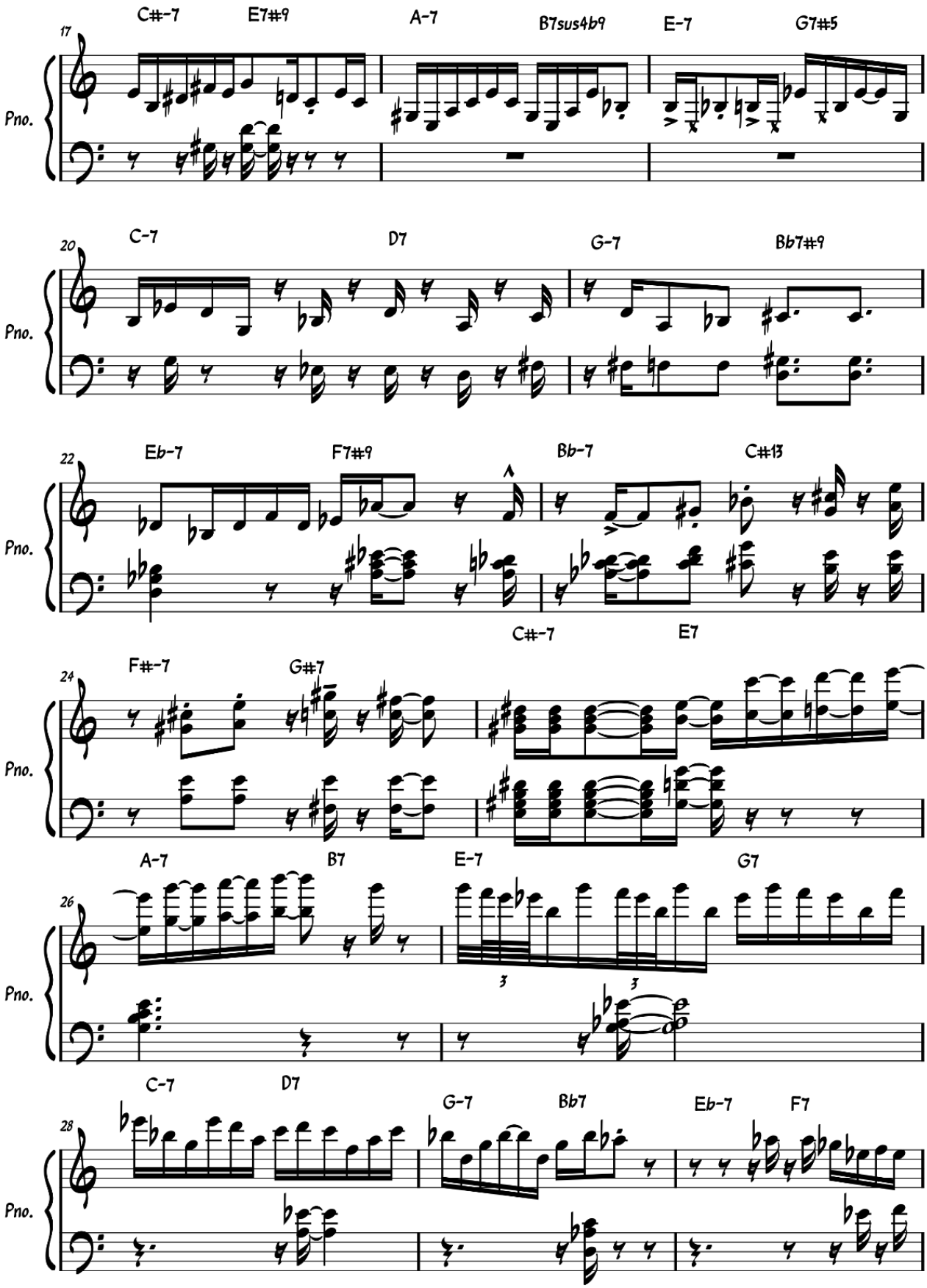


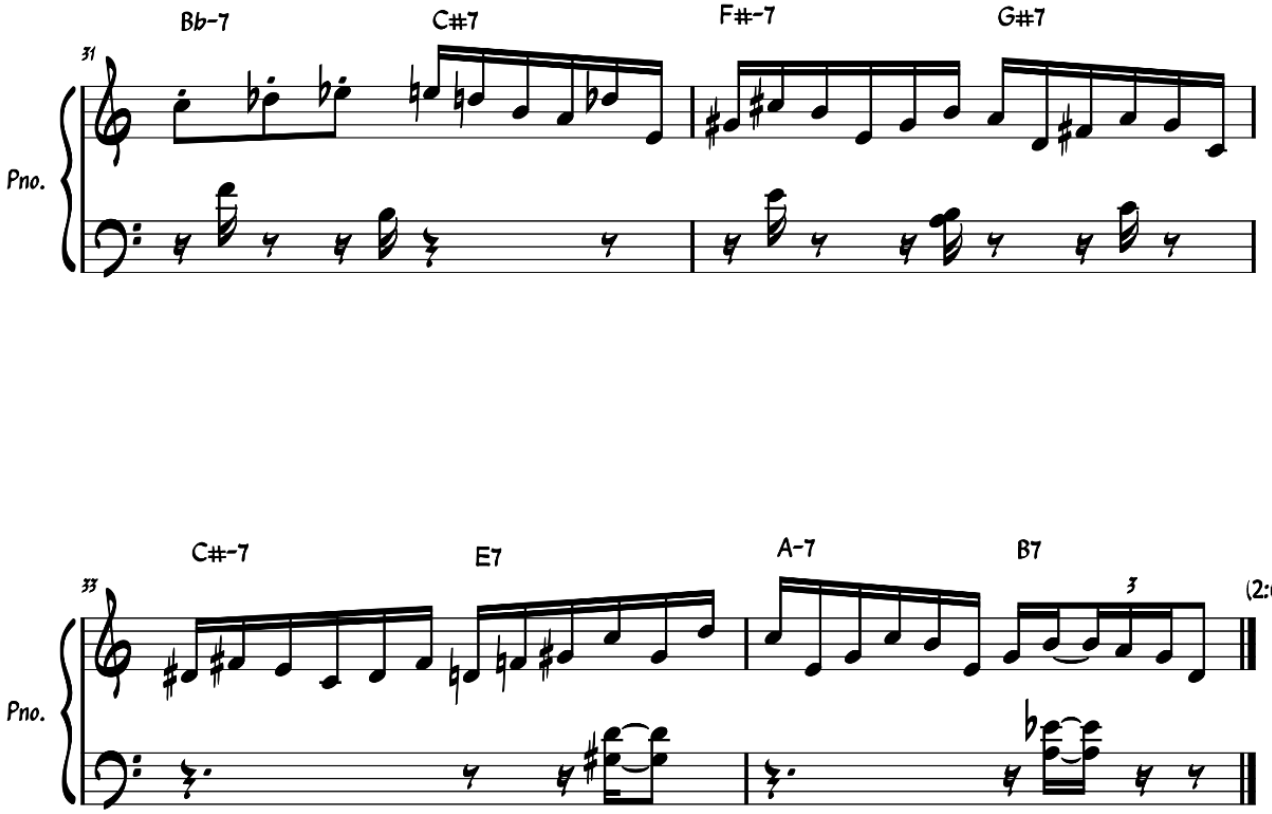
Appendix 2.2: Transcription of Cycle Solo

Cycle Solo

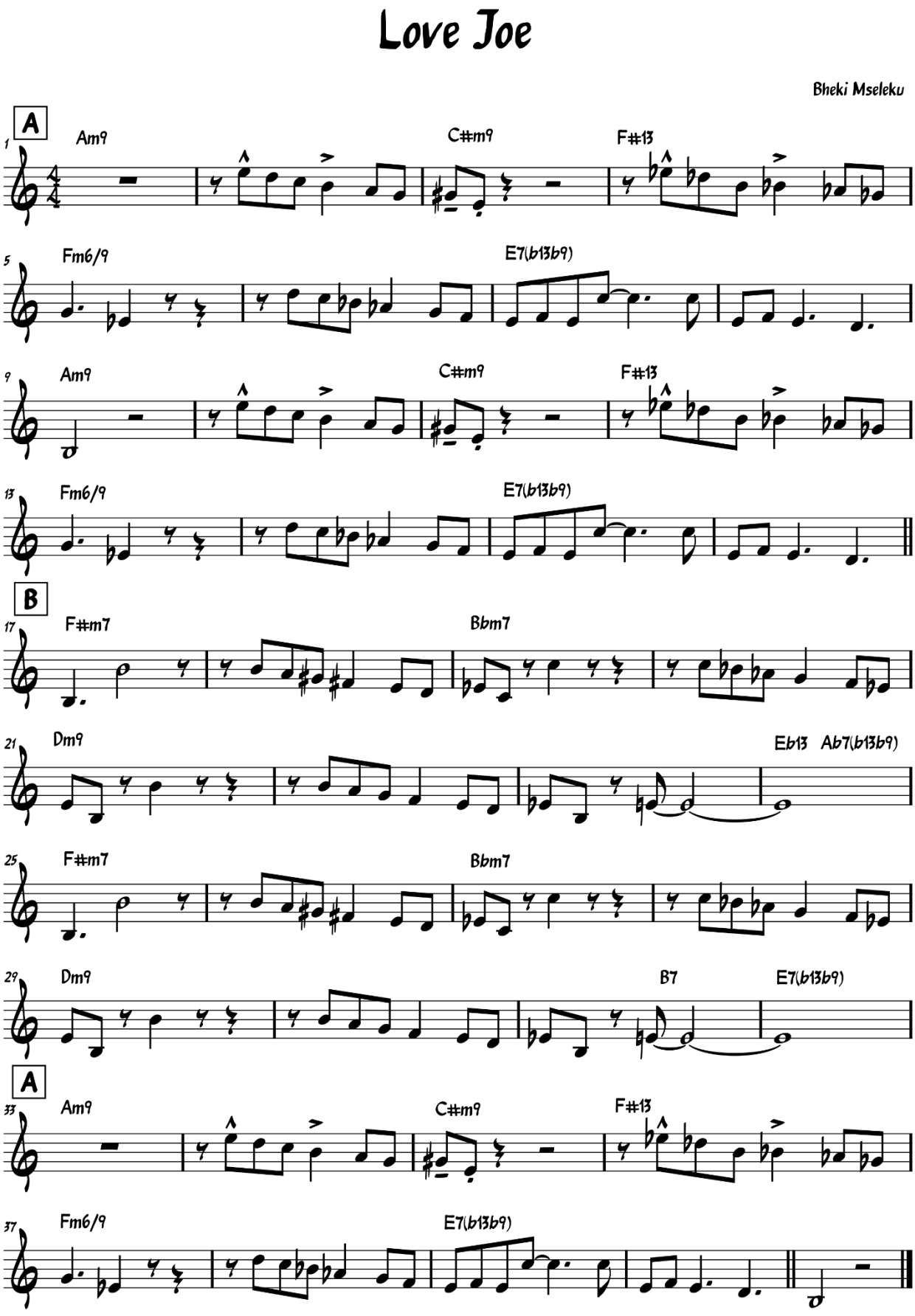
Bheki Mseleku



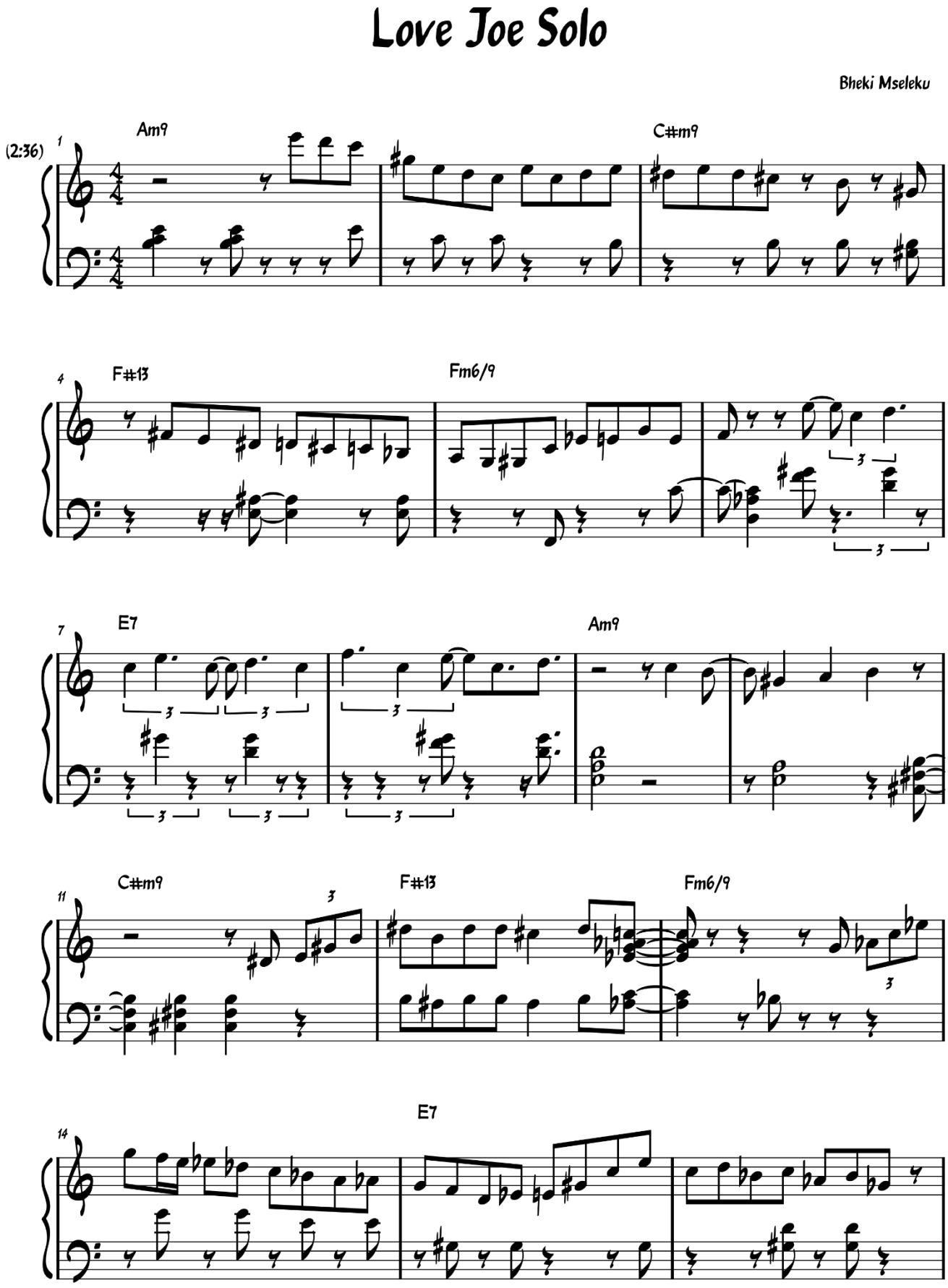


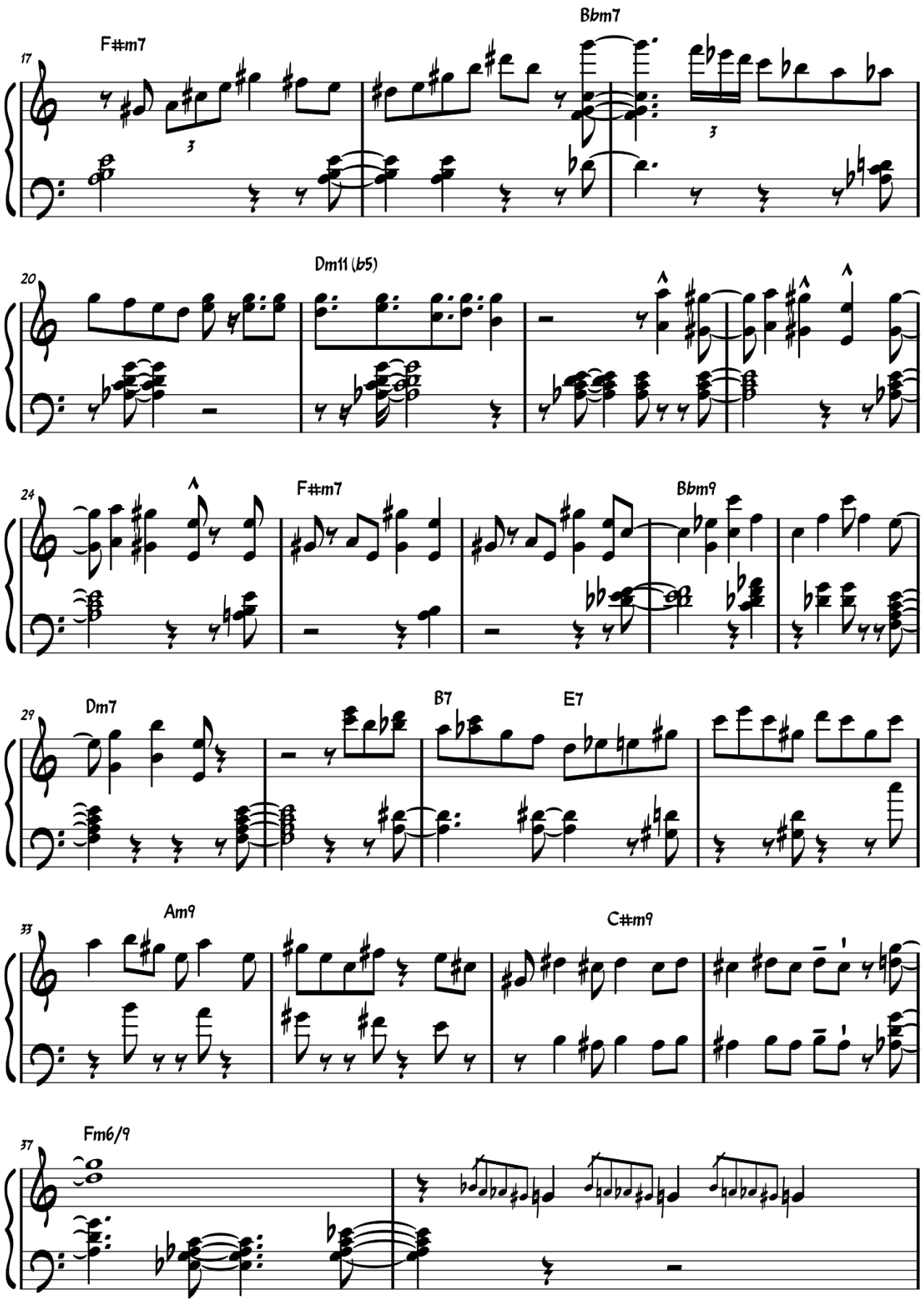


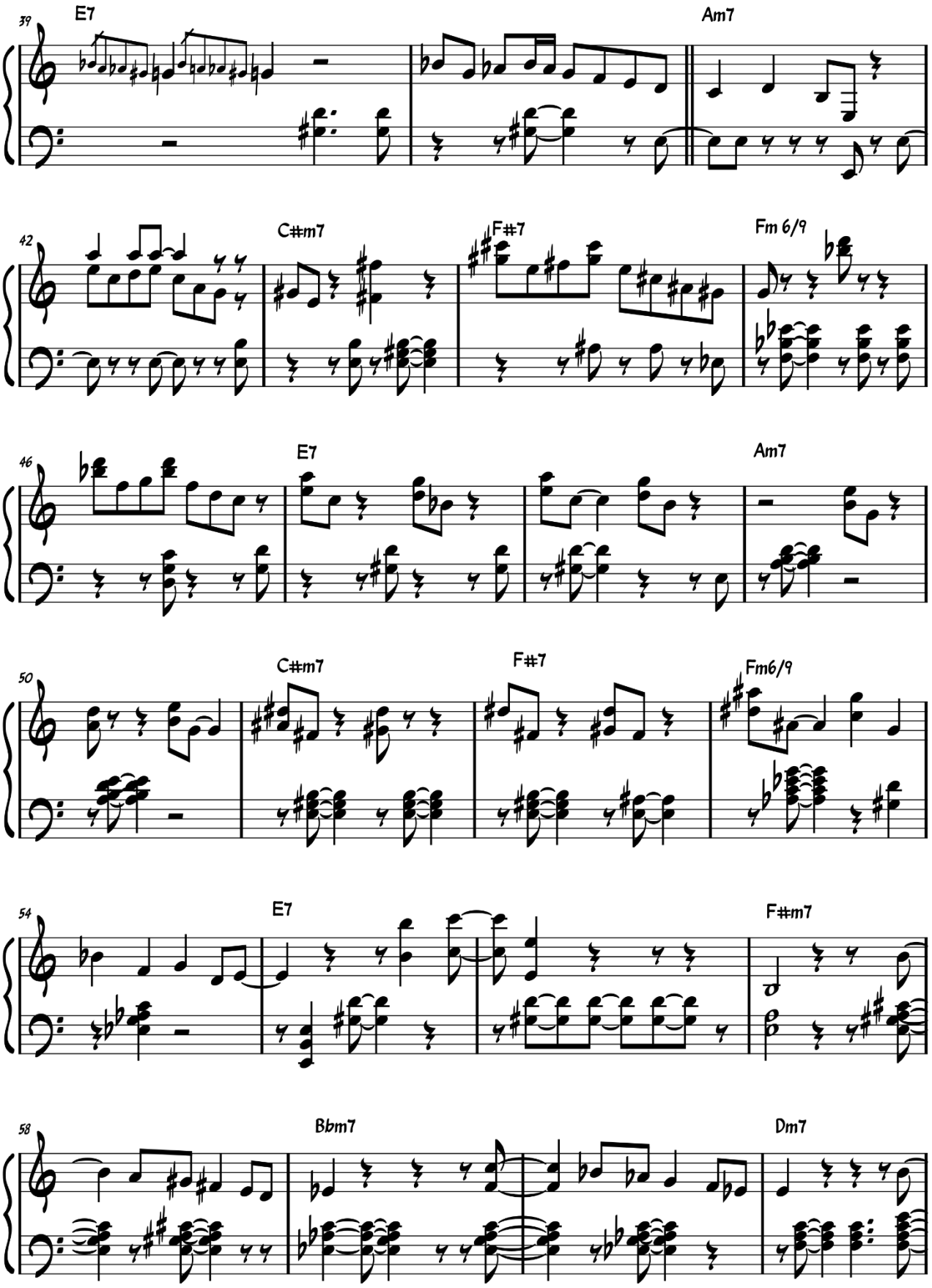
Appendix 3.1: Transcription of Love Joe

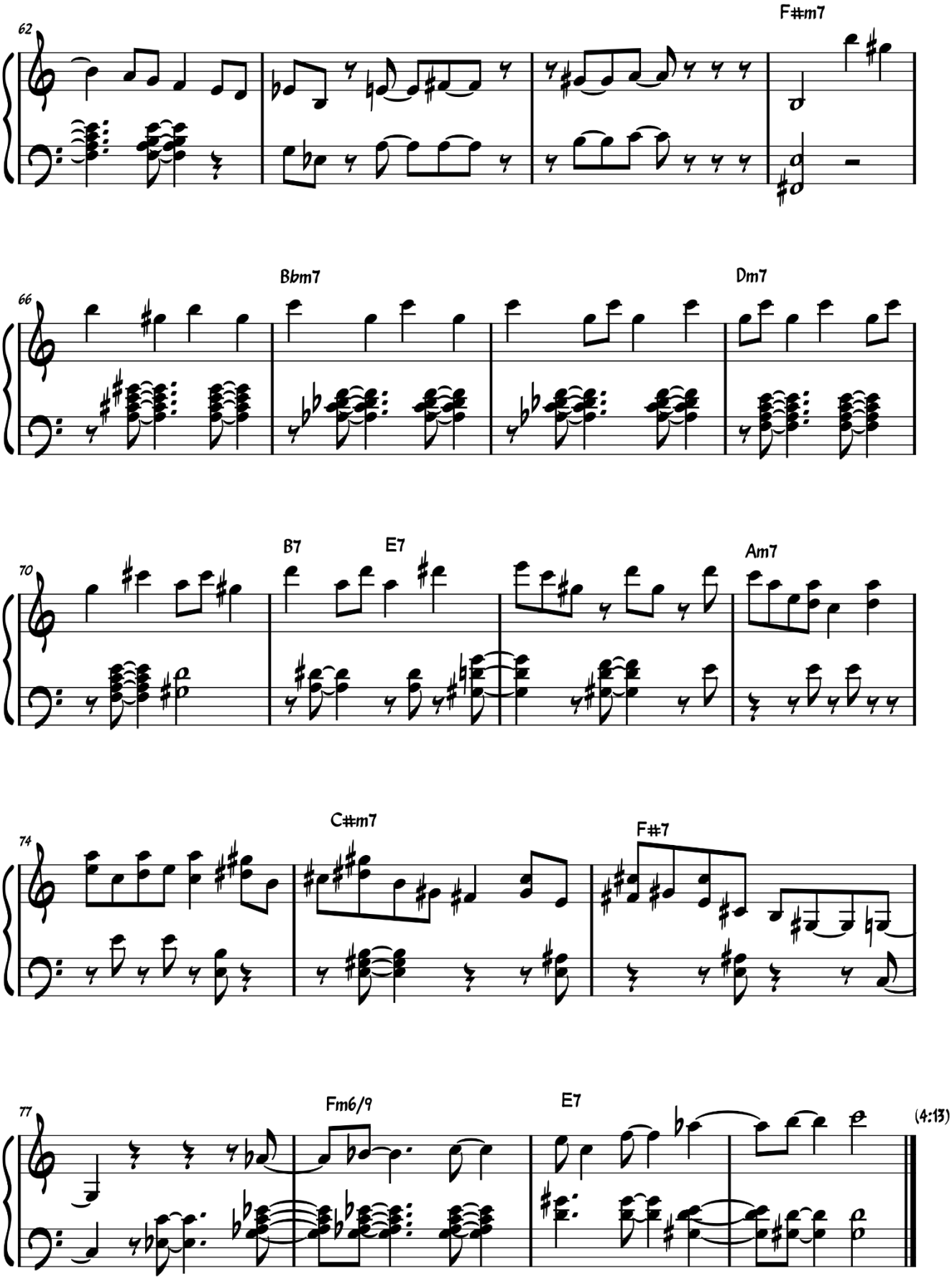


Appendix 3.2: Transcription of Love Joe Solo

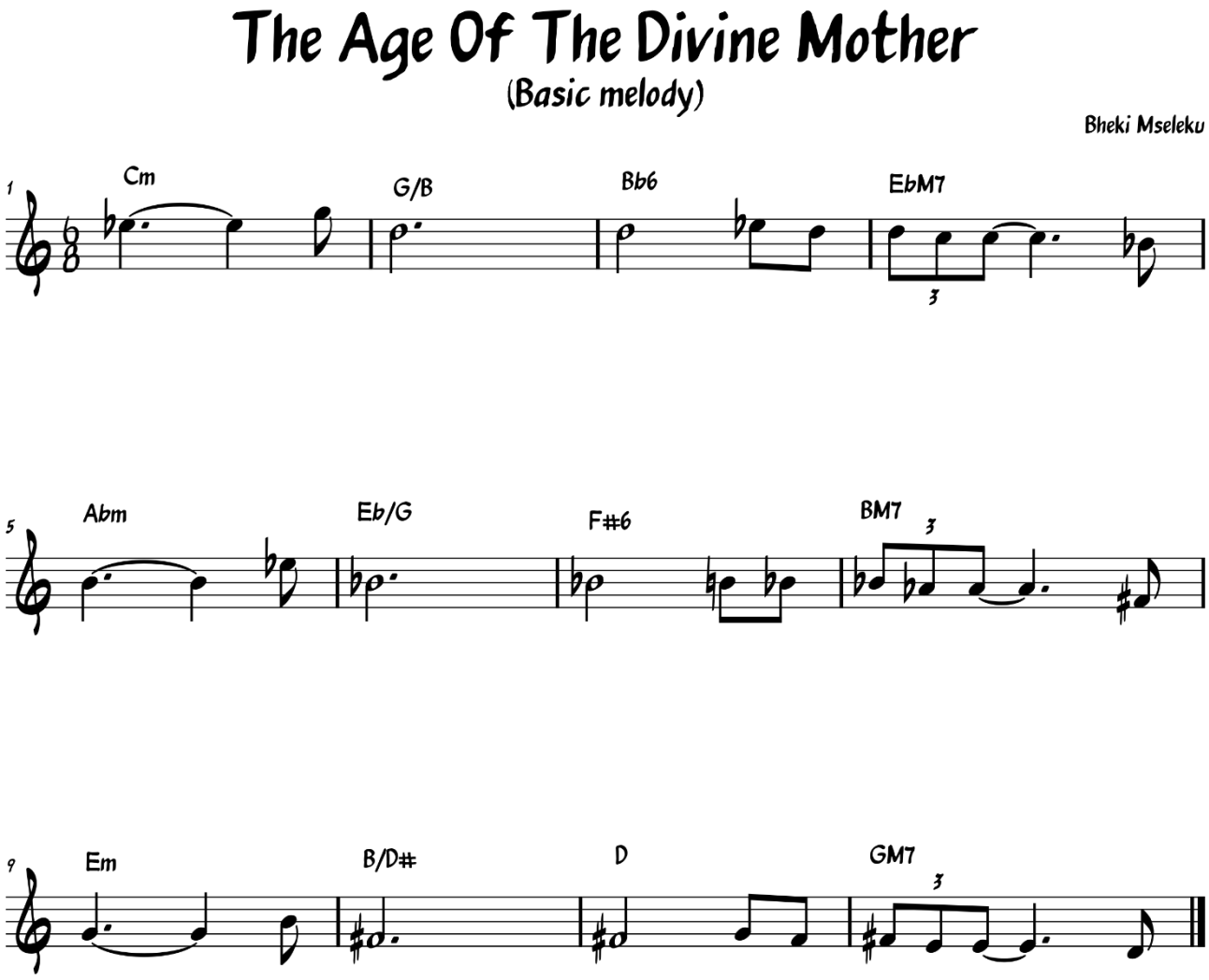




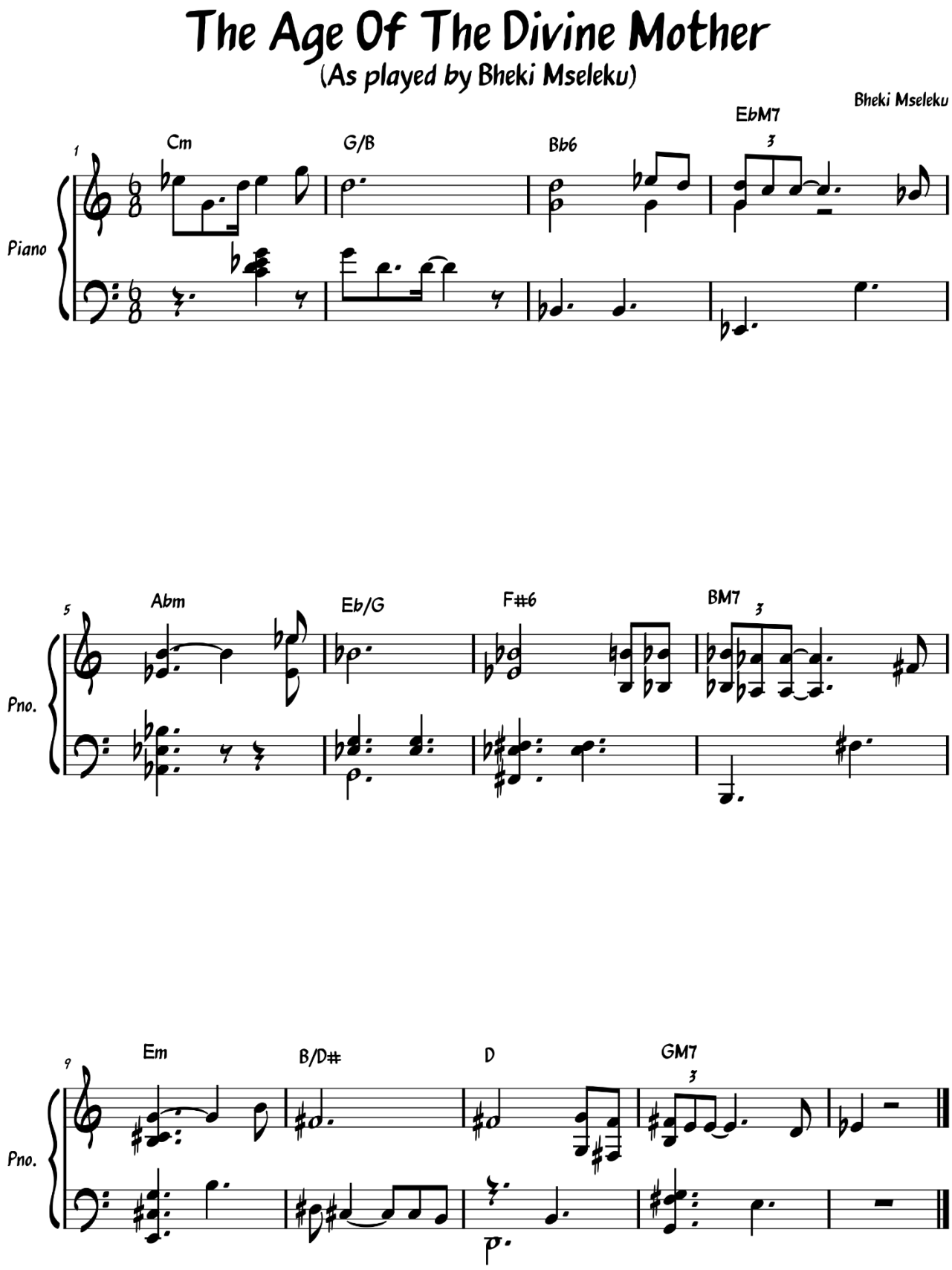




Appendix 4.1: Transcription of The Age of the Divine Mother (Basic Melody)



Appendix 4.2: Transcription of The Age of the Divine Mother (Recorded Version)

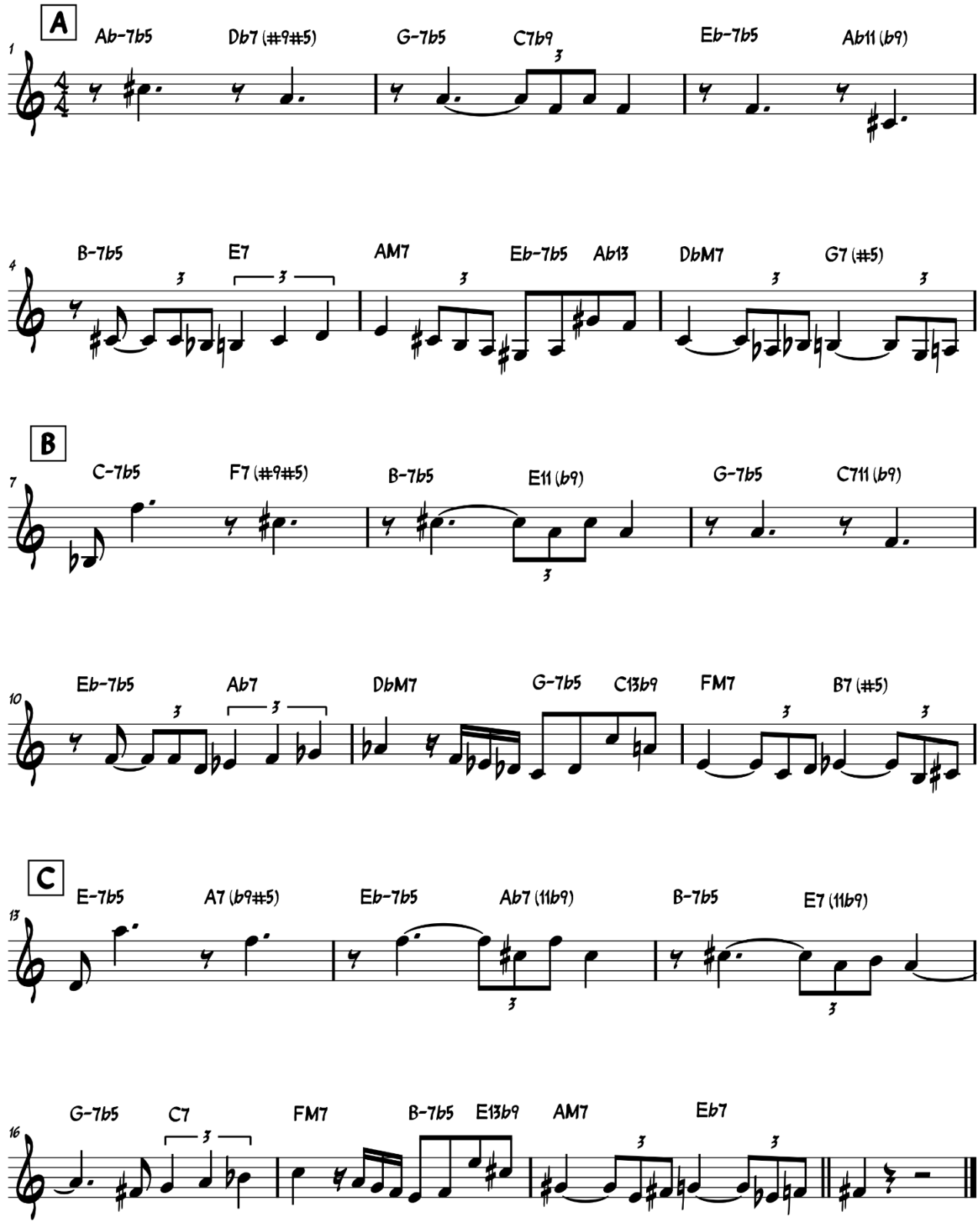


Appendix 5: Transcription of Violet Flame

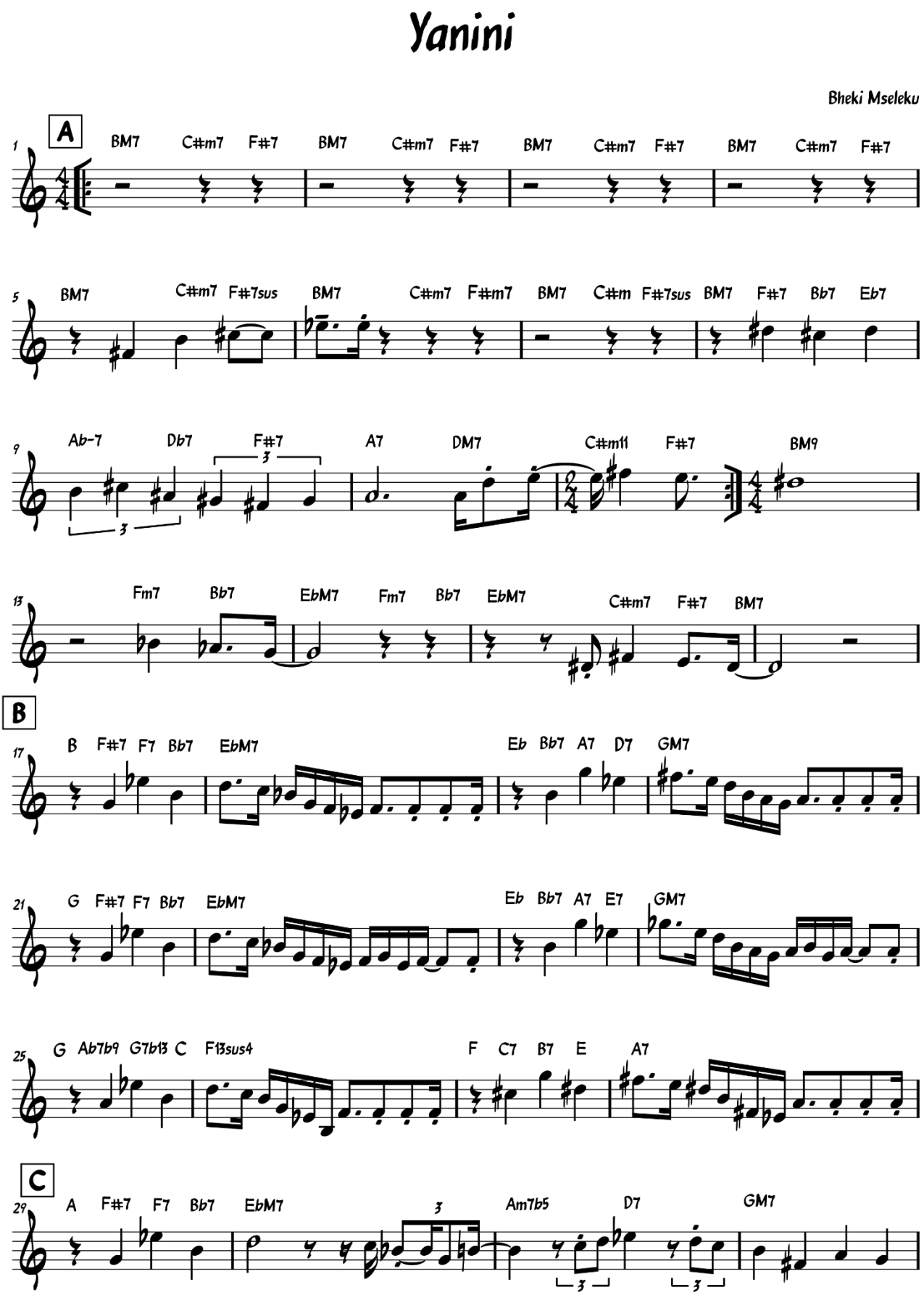
Violet Flame

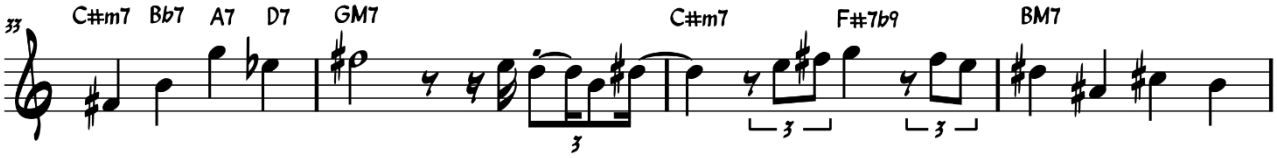
Bheki Mseleku

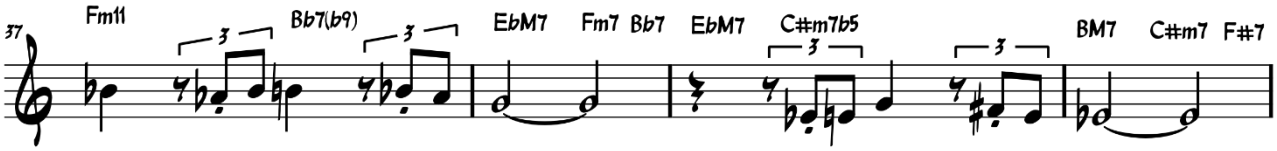
♪ = 110



Appendix 6.1: Transcription of Yanini







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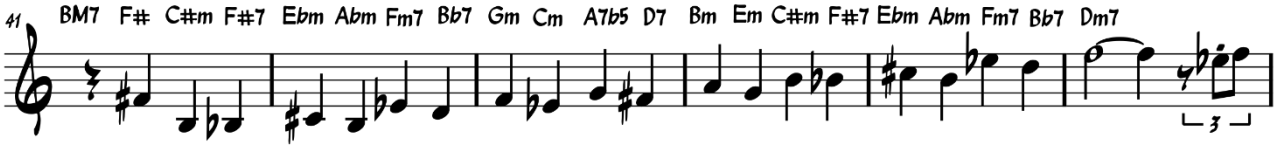
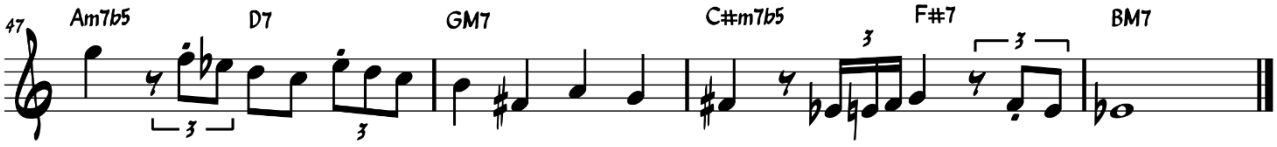
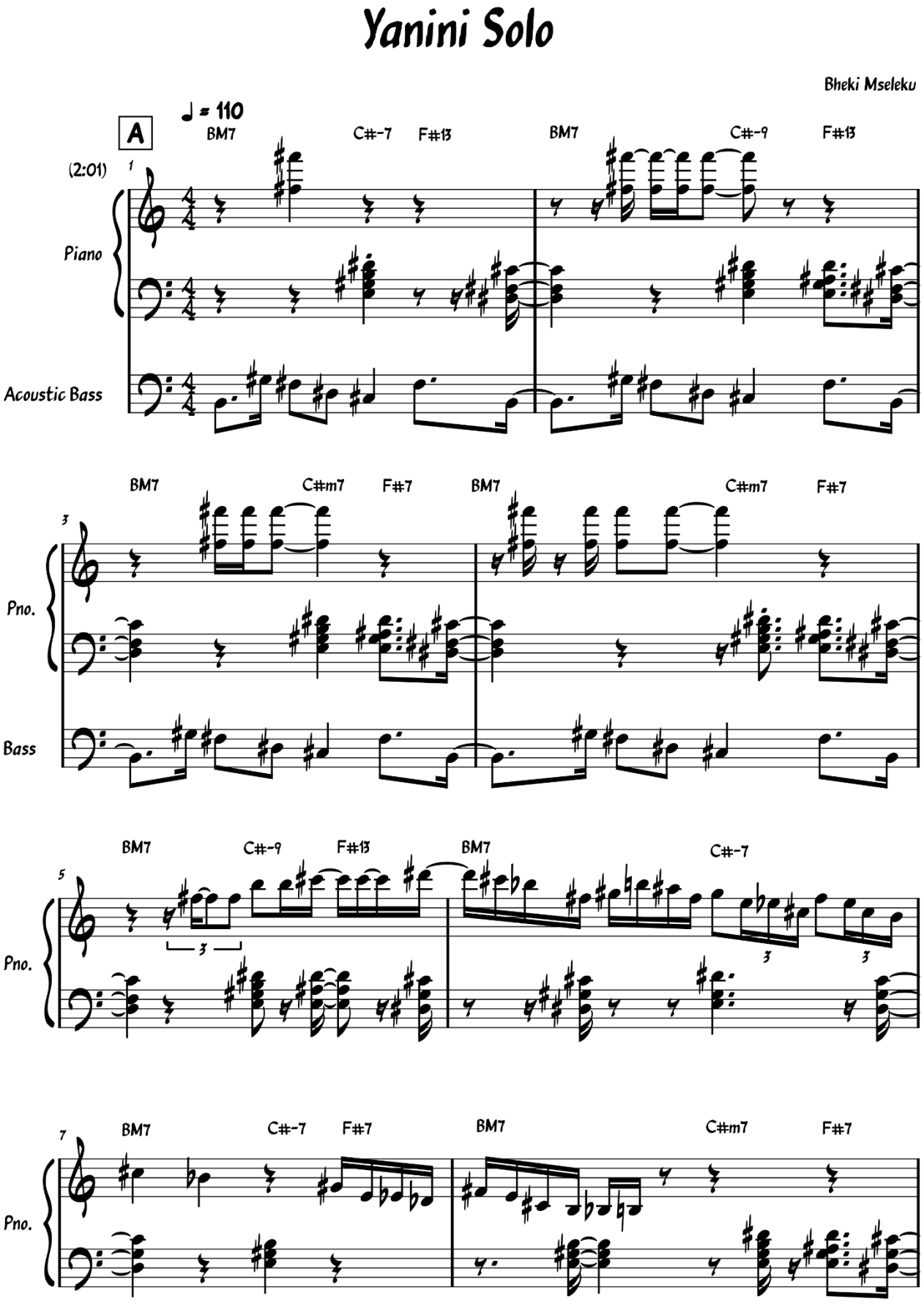
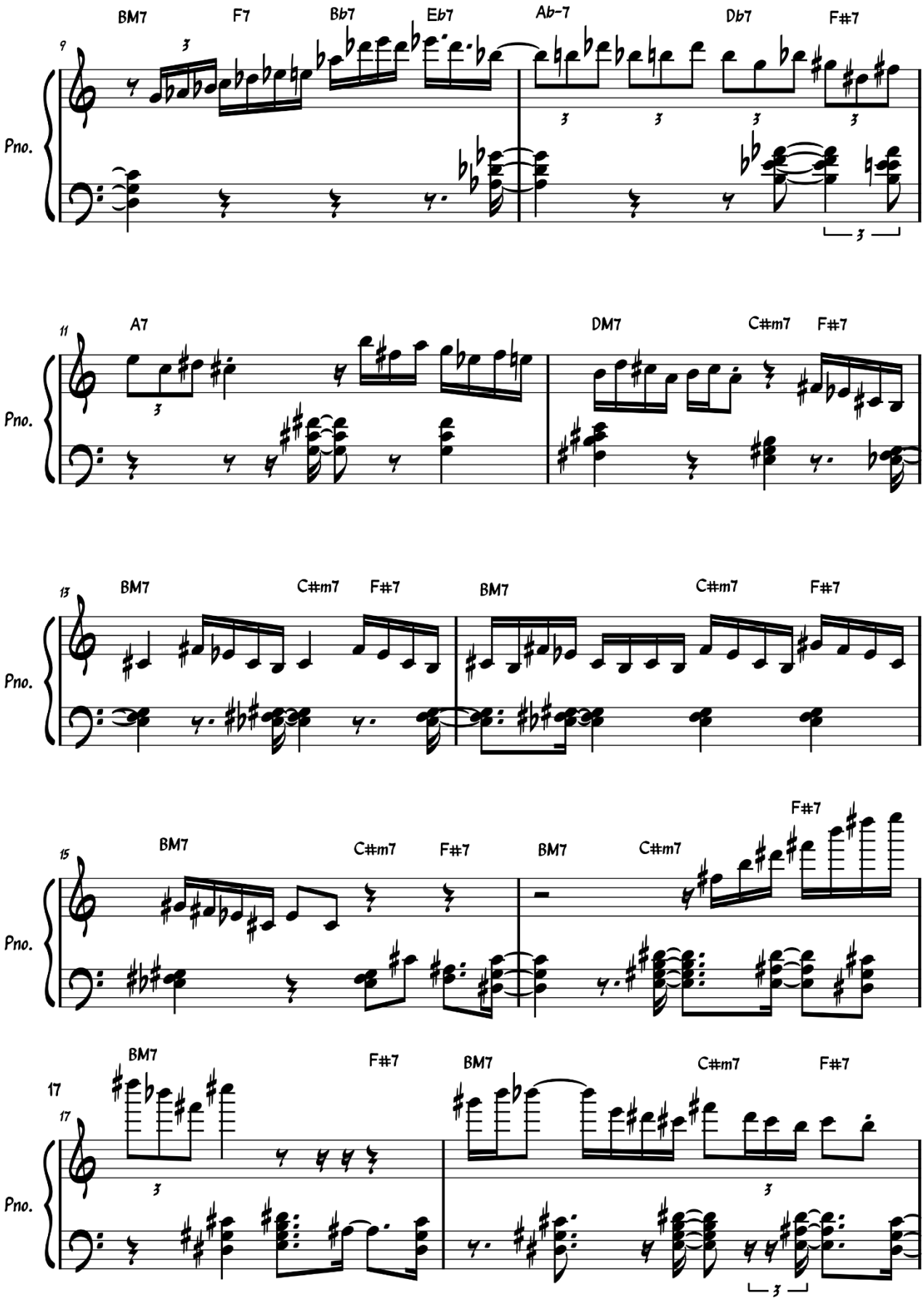
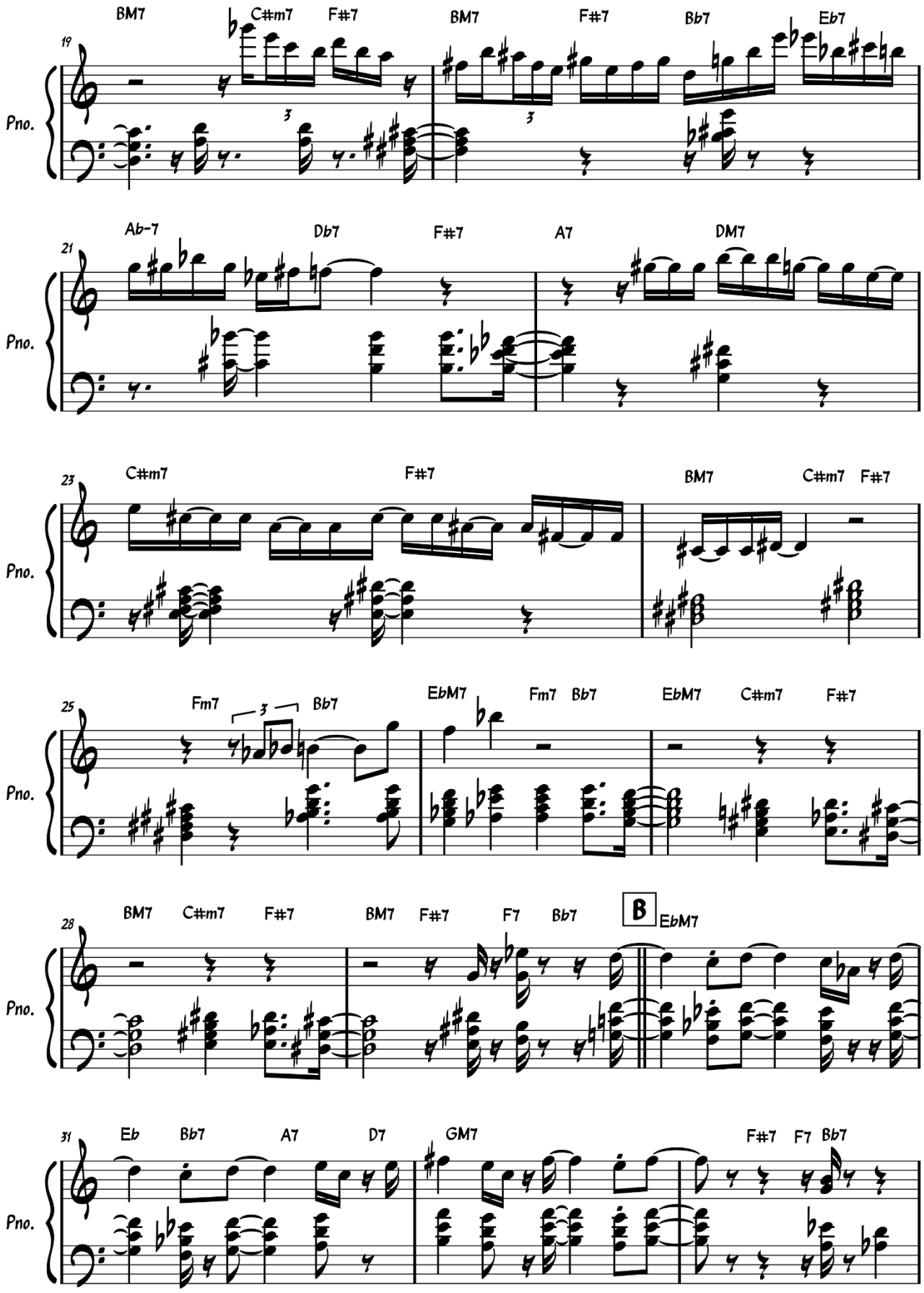


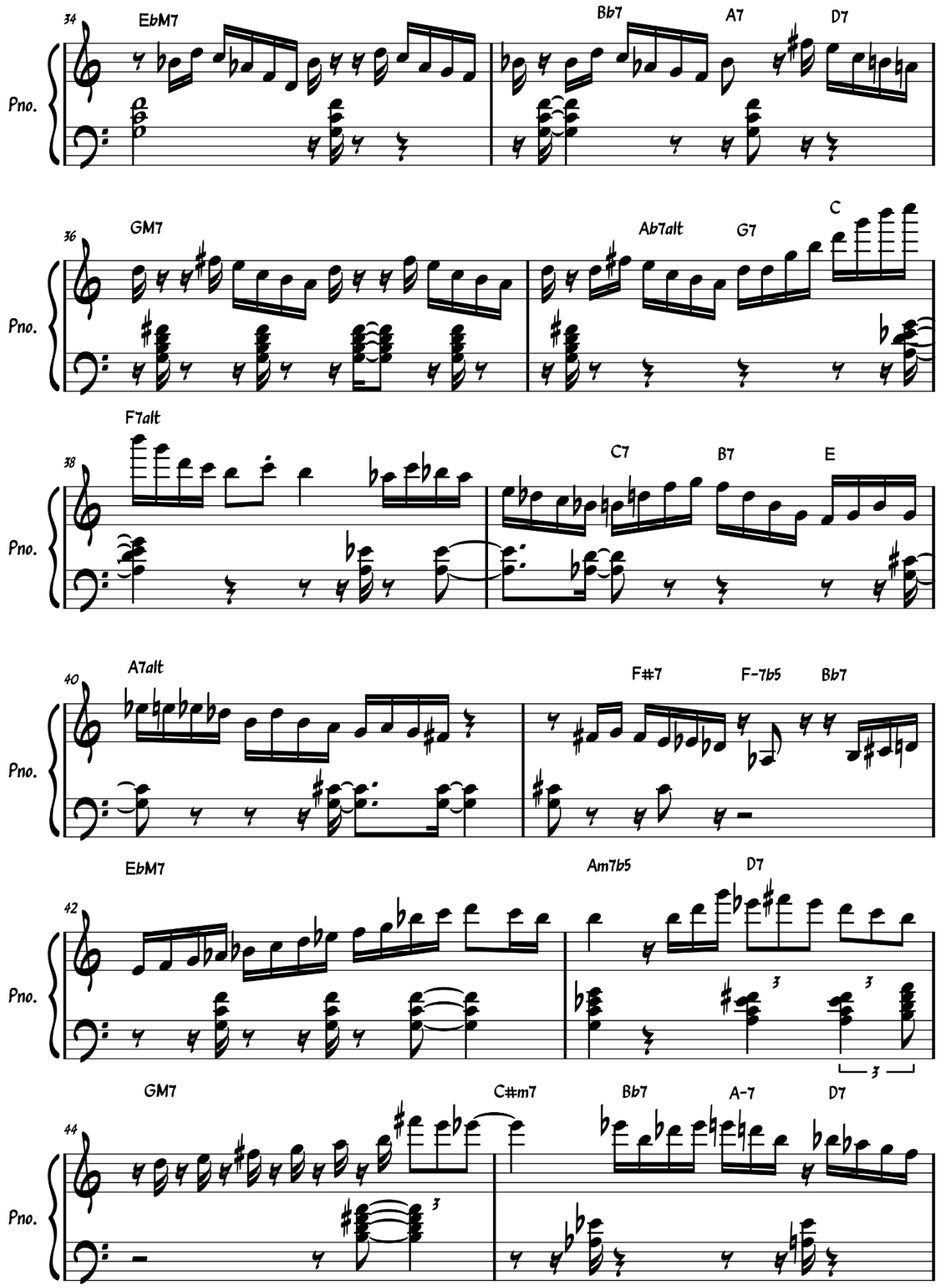


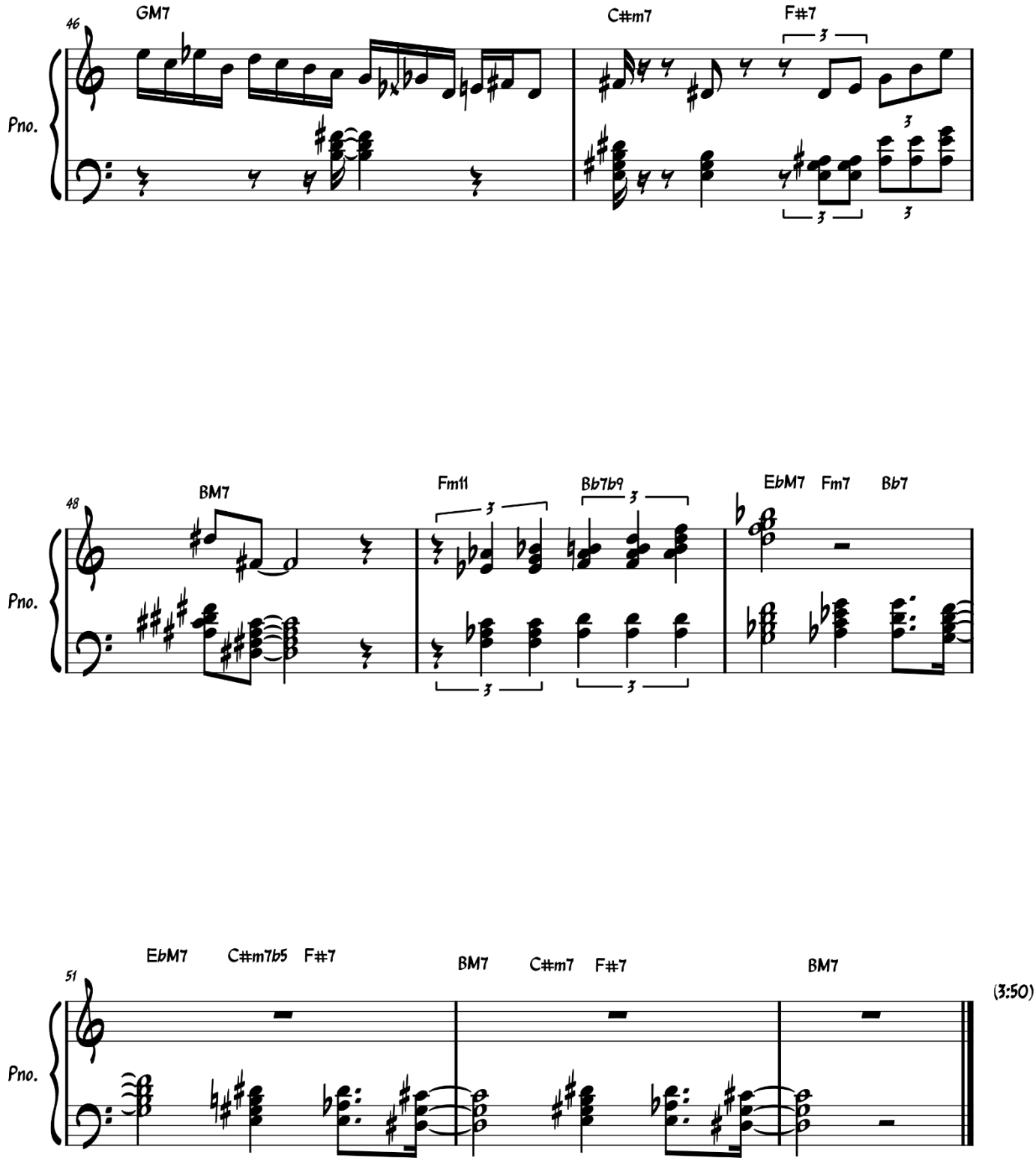
Appendix 6.2: Transcription of Yanini Solo



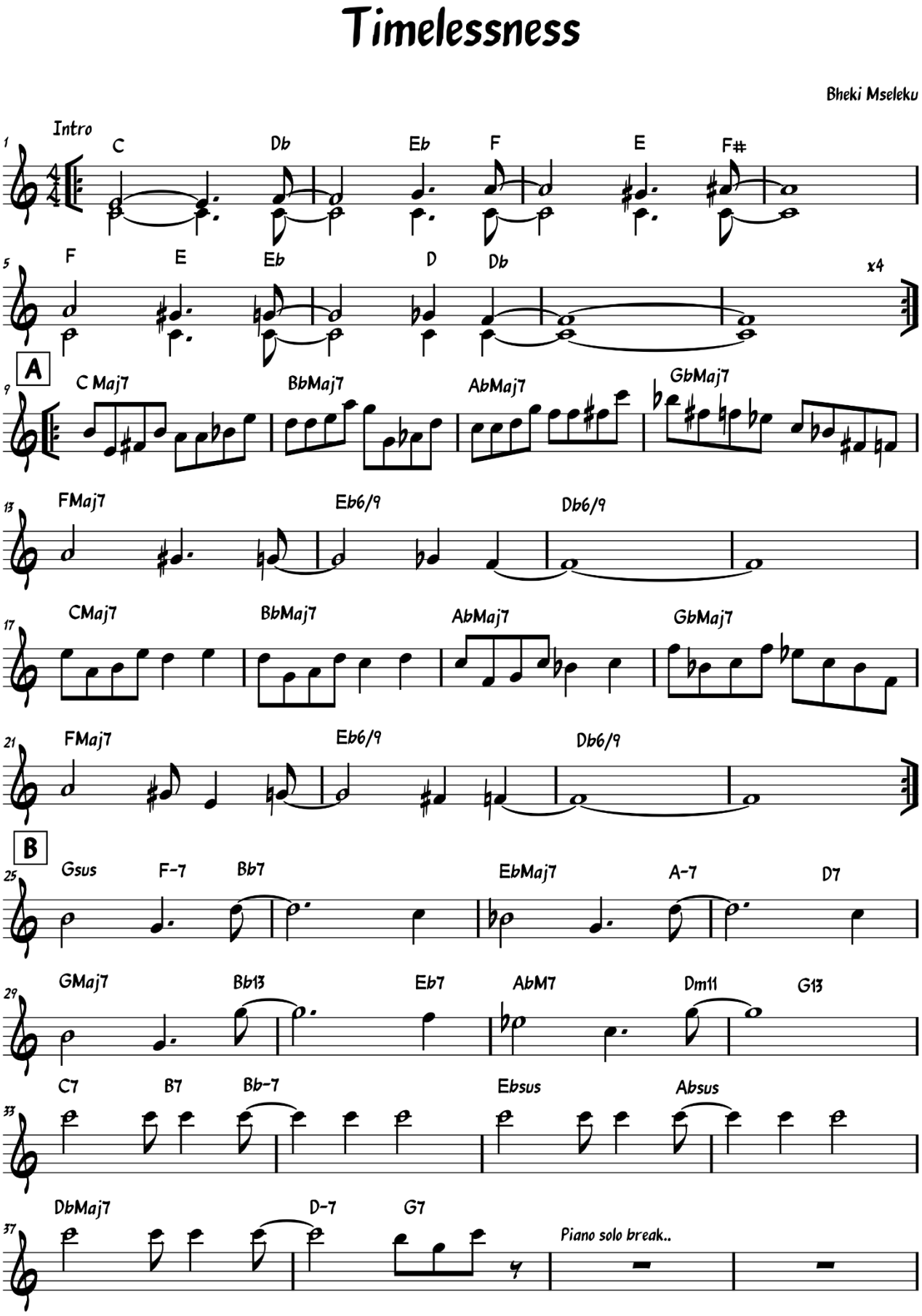


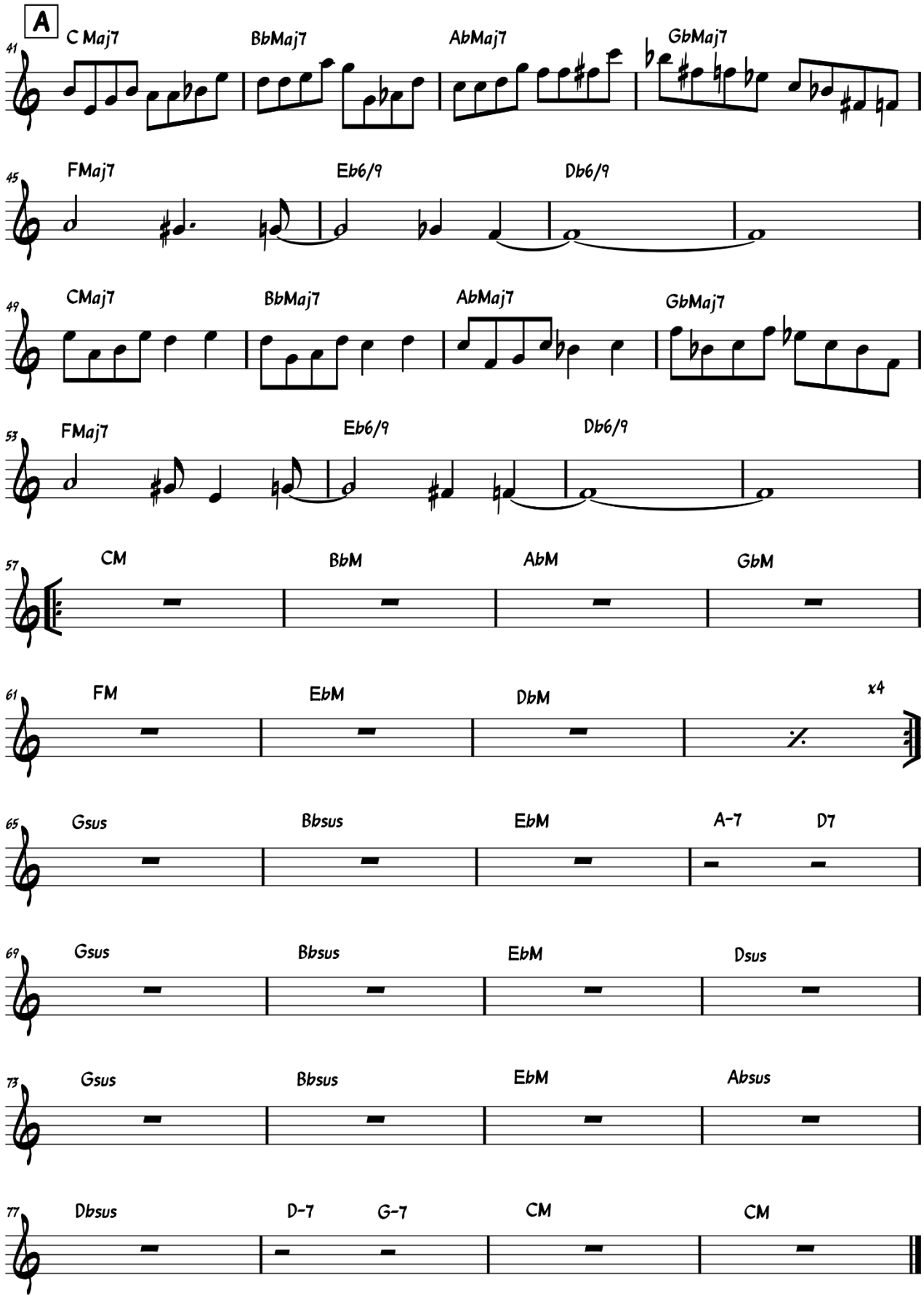






Appendix 7.1: Transcription of Timelessness





Appendix 7.1: Transcription of Timelessness

Timelessness Solo

Bheki Mseleku