THE LIFE AND MUSIC OF MCCOY TYNER

AN EXAMINATION OF THE SOCIOCULTURAL INFLUENCES ON MCCOY TYNER
AND HIS MUSIC

by

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This study is a historical, sociocultural and analytical examination of McCoy Tyner’s life and music. McCoy Tyner is a preeminent voice in the history of modern jazz piano performance, and his style is not only one of the most recognizable in jazz history, it has been studied and assimilated into the musical vocabulary of renowned pianists worldwide. Although Tyner’s influence is vast, there is a paucity of research on how he achieved his signature style, and the sociocultural and musical influences that cultivated his early musical talent and signature piano style have not been researched. This study details significant historical and sociocultural influences that nurtured Tyner’s musical talent from his birth in Philadelphia in 1938, through his brief professional tenure with the Art Farmer-Benny Golson Jazztet, which ended in 1960. These influences include the Great Migration, immediate and extended family, musical influences, formal and informal training and professional experiences prior to becoming a member of the John Coltrane Quartet. This study also details the musical influence John Coltrane had on the development of Tyner’s signature style in the early 1960s. As a member of Coltrane’s quartet, Tyner not only received valuable lessons from Coltrane, but was also exposed
to Coltrane’s multifaceted compositions, an amalgamation of modal jazz, Indian classical music and African music, all of which influenced the development of Tyner’s signature style in the early 1960s. Through transcription and analysis of select improvisations, this study also examines how Tyner generates dissonance and consonance (tension and release) – a fundamental attribute of his signature piano style – delineating melodic devices he regularly played with his right hand in tandem with harmonic devices regularly played with his left hand. Overall, this study reveals the sociocultural influences on McCoy Tyner that were the seedbed for his unique style and offers an in-depth examination of what makes that style unique.
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

McCoy Tyner is a preeminent voice in the history of modern jazz piano performance, and his style is arguably one of the most recognizable styles in jazz history. With the advent of Modal jazz at the end of the 1950s and Avant-Garde jazz during the 1960s, the general bebop framework of jazz piano performance, which had originated in the 1940s with Bud Powell, was fading (although utilized and expanded upon by a host of pianists in the 1950s and 1960s). Tyner took full advantage of these new styles of jazz, and during his five-year tenure with the John Coltrane Quartet between 1960 and 1965, developed an influential jazz piano style that could be utilized within the new Modal and Avant-Garde styles of the 1960s.

In describing the varied and significant contributions jazz pianists have made throughout the twentieth century, journalist James R. Gains succinctly writes:

“Many periods of jazz history are marked by the styles and contributions of jazz pianists. Some of the styles, although extensions of basic practices, are distinctive as exemplified by Dave Brubeck, Oscar Peterson, Bill Evans, Paul Bley and Keith Jarrett. Others piano styles represent dramatic changes, and are unique as exemplified by Cecil Taylor and Thelonious Monk.”¹

He classifies contributions as “distinctive”² or “dramatic”³ changes. McCoy Tyner’s work puts him in the same category as distinctive jazz pianists Bill Evans, Keith Jarrett, and Dave Brubeck;

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² A performer’s jazz piano style in which many characteristics of their style can be traced to a previous jazz performer’s piano style.
just as Bud Powell pianistically assimilated the innovative Bebop style of the 1940s, led by alto saxophonist Charlie Parker, McCoy Tyner pianistically assimilated the innovative Modal style of the 1960s advanced by tenor saxophonist John Coltrane. However, while studies have carefully examined the style of Evans, Jarrett and Brubeck, little work has been done examining Tyner’s style. In fact, world-renowned educator and musician, Dr. Billy Taylor suggests that:

“He [McCoy Tyner] is the kind of jazz artist whose music should be printed and studied by music students as the music of Bach is printed and studied.”

A testament to the greatness of McCoy Tyner’s music is found in the fact that Tyner’s famed pianistic style has been studied and assimilated into the musical vocabulary of pianists like Chick Corea, Joanne Brackeen, Alice McLeod Coltrane, Kenny Kirkland, Dave Kikoski, Joey Calderazzo and a host of other world-class musicians. In fact, upon hearing Corea’s Grammy award winning album “Now He Sings, Now He Sobs,” Jarvis Tyner, Jr., McCoy’s brother, initially thought Corea’s new music was his brother’s. Although Tyner has significantly influenced legions of notable pianists, literature on how Tyner achieves his signature style is scant, and the sociocultural and musical influences that cultivated his early musical talent and signature piano style have not been examined. This study reveals the sociocultural influences on McCoy Tyner that were the seedbed for his unique style and offers an in-depth examination of what makes his style unique.

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3 A performer’s jazz piano style in which many characteristics of their style cannot be traced to a previous jazz performer’s piano style.
5 Chick Corea’s single “Now He Sings, Now He Sobs” from his album with the same title, secured him a Grammy Hall of Fame Award in 1999. This award honors recordings that are at least twenty-five years old and that have qualitative or historical significance.
1.1 AIMS OF THIS STUDY

A tripartite aim exists within this study. The first is to sketch significant historical and sociocultural influences that nurtured McCoy Tyner’s musical talent from his birth in Philadelphia in 1938, through his brief professional tenure with the Art Farmer-Benny Golson Jazztet concluding in 1960. The second aim of this study is to detail the historical, sociocultural and musical influence the John Coltrane Quartet and Eric Dolphy had on the development of McCoy Tyner’s famed piano style during his five-year tenure with the group from 1960 to 1965. The third aim is to detail how Tyner utilizes his right hand in tandem with his left to generate consonance and dissonance (tension and release) within selected improvisations.

To accomplish the first objective, historical and sociocultural research has been conducted to provide pertinent information detailing early sociocultural influences that contributed to the cultivation of Tyner’s musical talent and later development of his famed piano style. This research is presented on both macro and microscopic levels. The macroscopic level provides research explaining how the Great Migration, as well as Tyner’s immediate and extended family, cultivated his musical talent. The microscopic level provides information detailing how Tyner’s musical influences, formal and informal training, and early professional experiences (prior to becoming a member of the John Coltrane Quartet) cultivated his musical talent.

To accomplish the secondary objective of this study, historical and sociocultural research has been conducted delineating the influences that helped McCoy Tyner cultivate his famed piano style. This research is also presented on both macro and microscopic levels. The macroscopic level provides research detailing the influence the Civil Rights Era and African-American culture had on the development of McCoy Tyner’s style. The microscopic level provides information on how John Coltrane and Eric Dolphy’s music influenced Tyner.
The third objective of this study was accomplished via the transcription and analysis of selected improvisations of Tyner’s.

1.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To accomplish the first and second aims of this study, significant historical and sociocultural influences that nurtured McCoy Tyner’s musical talent from birth in 1938, through his tenure with the John Coltrane Quartet, ending in 1965, are delineated. Research data was acquired from primary and secondary sources. The primary sources consist of interviews with McCoy Tyner, his brother Jarvis Tyner, Jr., and Gwendolyn Tyner his sister. Musicians that played with Tyner like Benny Golson, Oden Pope, Curtis Fuller, and Jimmy Owens were also interviewed. A trip to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Tyner’s birthplace, yielded photographs of Tyner’s grade, middle and high schools, middle school yearbooks, childhood homes, neighborhoods and church, Tioga Theater, and other locations significant in the development of Tyner’s musical talent. E-mail and a cell phone were utilized to allow further discussions with those interviewed in Philadelphia and other relevant areas. Secondary sources consisting of taped and written interviews with McCoy Tyner, interviews with people who worked with Tyner and/or attended his performances, along with books, periodicals, newspaper articles, album liner notes and Tyner’s fan website were consulted to gather historical and sociocultural data integral to this study.

The third aim of this study is achieved through the transcription and analysis of Tyner’s improvisations. Transcription, in addition to analysis, is a necessary part of this study because a review of jazz history underscores the fact that jazz is not primarily a written music tradition as
practiced within Western European culture. Instead, jazz is primarily an aural music tradition stemming from the musical practices of West African/African-American culture, and within that culture, music was aurally passed on from one person or generation to the next. As a result, jazz researchers interested in analyzing jazz are often confronted with the problem of not having scores to analyze. Consequently, researchers must utilize recordings and transcriptions of jazz music, as is done in this study.

Single note transcriptions abound within jazz literature, including some of McCoy Tyner’s improvisations. Although this type of transcription is useful for examining an improviser’s melodic material, they are not useful in examining the details of how a pianist’s melodic and harmonic materials work in conjunction with each other. As a result, full piano transcriptions notating both Tyner’s melodic and chordal material have been written and included in the appendix of this study. The computer software Transcribe! was utilized to play the recorded improvisations at a slower tempo, further ensuring the notation accuracy of each transcription.

For this study, the author selected three Tyner improvisations that were recorded in 1967, two years after Tyner left the Coltrane group. All three improvisations – “Chain Reaction,” “Passion Dance,” and “Blues on the Corner” – have not been commercially published.

The method of analysis utilized in this study is loosely based on Dr. David N. Baker’s analytical framework as illustrated in his The Jazz Style of…Series. While the general approach of examining the melodic, harmonic and rhythmic attributes of an improviser’s musical style is utilized in this study, because Dr. Baker’s analytical categories are primarily suited for the

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analysis of the Bebop jazz style, the author has modified and added analytical categories appropriate for analyzing Tyner’s modal/post-bop piano style in general and analyzing how Tyner utilized his right hand in tandem with his left to generate improvised melodies and chordal accompaniment in particular.

Three of Tyner’s improvisations are transcribed and analyzed in this study to unveil how constructs of his improvised melodies played with Tyner’s right hand worked in tandem with the chordal accompaniment played with his left hand. This is accomplished in two general steps. The first involves specifically delineating the melodic, harmonic and rhythmic components of each improvisation in this study, which identifies the important improvisational constructs Tyner employed to generate his piano style. The following tables list the specific analytical categories (all fitting within Dr. Baker’s melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic framework) used to assess the musical constructs characteristic of Tyner’s style.

**Table 1. Melodic Analysis**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Modal Scales&lt;sup&gt;9&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diatonic and Non-Diatonic Triads and Seventh Chords</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reoccurring Phrase Beginnings and Endings (Melodic)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four Note Groupings&lt;sup&gt;10&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quartal Melodic Fragments&lt;sup&gt;11&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pentatonic Scales</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>9</sup> Notes derived from the Dorian or Mixolydian modal scale.

<sup>10</sup> A series of four notes that collectively form a triad or seventh chord without playing each chord tone in exact succession.

<sup>11</sup> Quartal melodic fragments are a series of two or more notes within a melodic phrase in which each note is an interval of a perfect fourth from one another.
Motivic Cells\textsuperscript{12}, Melodic Sequences, Repetitive Melodic Fragments,\textsuperscript{13}

Call and Response

Bebop Enclosures\textsuperscript{14}, Chord Arpeggiation, Chromatic Approach Tones\textsuperscript{15}

Superimposition\textsuperscript{16}

Reoccurring Melodic Patterns

Ornamentation / Embellishment\textsuperscript{17}

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|l|}
\hline
Use of Quartal Harmony\textsuperscript{18} \\
\hline
Use of Bass Dyads\textsuperscript{19} \\
\hline
Use of Two, Three and Four note rootless chords\textsuperscript{20} \\
\hline
Use of “So What” Chords\textsuperscript{21} \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{Harmonic Analysis}
\end{table}

\textsuperscript{12} Short melodic fragments of three or four notes that are collectively subject to variation.
\textsuperscript{13} Short melodic phrases that are repeatedly played.
\textsuperscript{14} A melodic technique in which an improviser surrounds a targeted note by its upper and lower neighboring notes.
\textsuperscript{15} Pitches that precede important chord tones by a half step.
\textsuperscript{16} Superimposition is an improvisational technique an improviser uses to play a melody implying a chord, chord progression, or tonal center other than that being stated by the rhythm section. This technique has been used since 1960 to increase the use of chromaticism in jazz.
\textsuperscript{17} Use of a grace note or trill.
\textsuperscript{18} Quartal Harmony is two or more notes played at the same time in which each note of the chord is an interval of a perfect fourth from one another.
\textsuperscript{19} Two note chords played in the low range of the piano in which each note of the chord is perfect fifth apart from one another. Sometimes these chords are made of two notes that are an octave apart as seen in “Blues on the Corner.”
\textsuperscript{20} Chord voicings that do not include the root note of a chord.
\textsuperscript{21} Five-note chords, which from the bottom up, consists of three perfect fourth intervals followed by a major third interval. The use of the harmony became vogue when pianist Bill Evans utilized it on Miles Davis’ composition “So What” from his album “Kind of Blue” recorded in 1959.
### Table 3. Rhythmic Analysis

| Prevalent Rhythms within the improvisation (melodically and chordally) |
| Recurrent Rhythmic patterns found in the melodic phrase (double time, half time, asymmetrical groupings) |
| Melodic Rhythmic Contrast, Chordal Rhythmic Contrast |
| Reoccurring Phrase Beginnings and Endings (Rhythmic) |

Second, I collectively examine the melodic, harmonic and rhythmic devices found in step one to see how Tyner played melodic devices with his right hand in tandem with harmonic devices played with his left hand. Of particular interest is how Tyner generated consonant and dissonant musical devices throughout his improvisation. Identifying the musical devices that generate consonance and dissonance within Tyner’s improvisations provides insight into the heart and soul of his famed piano style - an ebb and flow of musical material that collectively produces dissonance (tension) and consonance (release) within his improvisations.
1.3 LITERATURE REVIEW

The official McCoy Tyner biography has yet to be written. Moreover, scholarly research specifically examining the historical and sociocultural influences cultivating McCoy Tyner’s early musical talent and later famed piano style is non-existent. However, two books examining the life of jazz trumpeter Lee Morgan, a musical contemporary of Tyner, and one biography in particular of jazz saxophonist John Coltrane, Tyner’s employer for five years, are applicable to this study. Additionally, three academic articles detailing attributes of Tyner’s piano style are also examined.

Jeffery McMillan’s book, “Delightfulee: The Life and Music of Lee Morgan,”\(^{22}\) is a well-researched book detailing the life of Lee Morgan. McMillian, who knew that Lee Morgan’s talent did not blossom in a vacuum, performed extensive research detailing the sociocultural influences that nurtured Morgan’s musical talent. Much of McMillan’s research is also applicable to McCoy Tyner who like Morgan, grew up in Philadelphia during the 1950’s. McMillan’s book renders information on Philadelphia musicians with whom Morgan and Tyner interacted, how Philadelphia musicians jumpstarted their careers, how they developed their musical talents, and how some of them gained international fame.

In Tom Perchard’s book “Lee Morgan: His Life, Music and Culture,”\(^{23}\) he uses the example of Lee Morgan as a springboard to illustrate his theories about drugs, race and growing up as a jazz musician in Philadelphia during the 1950s. Although the book is not the definitive biography of Lee Morgan as the title implies, the sociological information pertaining to

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Philadelphia in the 1950s is valuable to this study. Although the findings in this dissertation will not specifically add insight to McMillan’s and Perchard’s work, they will assist the researcher in contributing a work to the canon of jazz literature that details the life and music of McCoy Tyner as McMillan and Perchard has done with Lee Morgan.

Three biographies of tenor saxophonist John Coltrane, written by Cuthbert O. Simpkins, Bill Cole, and Lewis Porter have been referenced in this study. Each biographical work was assessed to gain insight into the musical mystique of John Coltrane and examined to see how he and his music cultivated McCoy Tyner’s piano style. Lewis Porter’s book “John Coltrane: His Life and Music” is the most relevant to my purposes. Porter’s musicological study incorporates the soundest research of all the Coltrane biographies preceding it. While Porter incorporates many ideas and quotations from his predecessors Simpkins and Cole, he also includes a plethora of recorded interviews with Coltrane, personal interviews with surviving family members and acquaintances. Porter’s book is valuable to this study because it not only details how McCoy Tyner came to join Coltrane’s group, replacing pianist Steve Kuhn in 1960, but more importantly, Porter’s book details Coltrane’s openness and inclusion of music from other cultures, an attribute that greatly influenced Tyner.

As a result of McCoy Tyner’s acclaimed five year tenure with the John Coltrane Quartet, and subsequent long successful solo career, McCoy Tyner has been the subject of a host of articles in popular jazz magazines like “Down Beat,” “Jazz Journal,” “Cadence,” “Jazz Times,” and “Jazz Form.” A few of the articles include in-depth personal interviews and profiles of Tyner that detail his upbringing. Ahmed Bashier’s profile of Tyner in “Jazz Journal,” and Bob Rusch’s interview of Tyner in “Cadence” are two such articles. Diane D. Tuner’s interview of

McCoy Tyner details many social, cultural and political influences, like racism, on Tyner’s early life. A transcription of the interview is found inside her anthology entitled “Feeding the Soul: Black Music, Black Thought.” Data from Bashier, Rusch and Turner’s publications are included in this study, conversely, the finding of this study will add more detail to their work. Information from original liner notes and record reviews of the albums referenced in this study are also incorporated in this study when pertinent.

Three analytical articles dealing with McCoy Tyner’s work are available. James Dorsey’s article entitled “Quartal Harmony: The Style of Pianist McCoy Tyner” analyzes two components of Tyner’s famed piano style, quartal harmony and two-note pedal voicings. Dorsey’s analysis works from transcriptions of Tyner solos made by Paul Hefner, Stephen Skinner, and Bob Leso. Dorsey’s study focuses on how Tyner rhythmically used quartal and two-note pedal voicings in his left hand to generate interest and tension within his improvisations. His musical illustrations of these chords are presented on single line staves without melodic material context, thus shedding no light on how Tyner’s chord voicings work in tandem with melodic lines played by his right hand.

Paul Rinzler’s article “The Quartal and Pentatonic Harmony of McCoy Tyner” examines McCoy Tyner’s system of harmony based on quartal and suspended chords, as well as modal and pentatonic scales. Rinzler’s analysis is based on twenty-two transcriptions of McCoy Tyner that were either, made by others, or were transcribed by Rinzler himself. Rinzler details

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27 Two note chords played in the low range of the piano in which each note of the chord is perfect fifth apart from one another.
Tyner’s uses of polychords, left hand perfect fifths, quartal chords and other components of Tyner’s harmony. Like Dorsey, the focus of Rinzler’s study is on Tyner’s harmony, and although more exhaustive than Dorsey’s, Rinzler again does not address how Tyner utilizes his right hand in tandem with his left.

The third article, also by Rinzler, entitled “McCoy Tyner: Style and Syntax,” analyzes the melodic and harmonic components of five solos. Rinzler also shows how each song presents a unique problem in applying pentatonicism and modality, two of Tyner’s favorite improvisational devices, and shows how Tyner harmonically alters the original composition to suit his own improvisational tendencies. Rinzler does a thorough job codifying Tyner’s harmonic vocabulary, as well as some of his melodic devices. He also provides intriguing information on how Tyner changes the harmonic landscape of a song to suit his personal playing style. Again, the specifics of right hand and left hand interaction are lacking. This study will focus on that aspect of Tyner’s work.

30 The use of the notes within a pentatonic scale as material for melody, or the use of the pentatonic scale as material for improvising outside the given scale.
31 The use of notes within a mode as material for melody, or the use of a mode as material for improvising outside the given mode.
2.0 EARLY INFLUENCES

2.1 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

2.1.1 Sociocultural Background

Born December 11, 1938, McCoy Tyner was raised in a poor African-American community in West Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Beatrice, his mother, graduated from Skidmore Beauty School and was a self-employed beautician who operated her own beauty salon in her home. Jarvis Sr., McCoy’s father, only had a sixth grade education and could not read or write. After relocating to Philadelphia in the early 1930s, he acquired a job selling fresh vegetables via horse and wagon throughout West Philadelphia, a successful job with the help of his outgoing personality.\(^{32}\) Surprisingly, he saved enough money from this job and made a sizable financial contribution that helped Beatrice establish her beauty salon in the late 1930s. However, when her business began to thrive rendering her economically independent, Jarvis became intimidated because his ego and masculinity were threatened, which ultimately led to the demise of their relationship.\(^{33}\) After Jarvis Sr. left the family, Jarvis Jr., McCoy’s brother, secured a job making a dollar an hour during his high school years to help his mom support the family.\(^{34}\) Exhibiting

\(^{32}\) Jarvis Tyner, Jr., personal interview by Alton Merrell, May 7, 2012.
\(^{33}\) Ibid.
\(^{34}\) Ibid.
an interest in politics, Jarvis later joined the Communist Party USA at age 20\textsuperscript{35} and later moved to New York and became a leading figure in the organization.\textsuperscript{36} Working in politics for the majority of his life, Jarvis primarily focused on combating racism by trying to alter the American capitalist system, which he believes bred social inequality in the mid to late twentieth century.\textsuperscript{37}

Gwendolyn Tyner, McCoy’s younger sister by twelve years, graduated from high school and dedicated her life to helping others. For seven years she cared for Beatrice, her mother, who battled dementia. Concurrently, she cared for Jarvis Sr., her father, who had moved back in with the Tyner family after being away for twenty-five years and was suffering from colon cancer. Although both parents were sick, Gwen considered it a blessing to have the opportunity to live with both parents, something she had not experienced since she was a small child.\textsuperscript{38} As of May 2012, Gwen works as a Home Health Aid carrying for the elderly, sick and disabled.

At the time of Tyner’s birth (1938), concentrated African-American neighborhoods did not exist within Philadelphia.\textsuperscript{39} In fact, West Philadelphia was an Irish community at the turn of the century. However, African-American neighborhoods became more prevalent in Philadelphia from 1940 through 1960. In the mid 1940s, Philadelphia had approximately 380,000 black residents, which was 18 percent of the total population. By 1960, there were 535,000 black residents, 27 percent of Philadelphia’s total population.\textsuperscript{40} The African-American populace lived in ghettos by the 1950s, which were the neighborhoods south, west and north of Center City.

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{35} Communist Party USA Website, \url{http://www.cpusa.org/jarvis-tyner} (accessed February 28, 2012)
\textsuperscript{36} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{37} Jarvis Tyner Jr., personal interview by Alton Merrell, May 7, 2012.
\textsuperscript{38} Gwendolyn Tyner, phone interview by Alton Merrell, July 22, 2012.
\end{quote}
One of them, West Philadelphia where McCoy Tyner was raised, became a housing resource for a wide array of businesses when the development of major industrial centers in North Philadelphia created a need for local employee housing.

From 1938 through 1956, McCoy Tyner and his family lived in a row house on the corner of May Street and Fairmont Avenue in West Philadelphia. His parents rented the home from Mr. Sanders, an older and patient Jewish man that was forgiving when the Tyner family did not have money to pay their rent on time. The landscaping around Tyner’s home consisted of patches of grass and lacked shrubbery. A stoop was part of the main entrance to their home; however, around the corner were row houses that had porches. Many of Tyner’s friends lived in these houses, and he often sat on these porches and talked with his friends. Tyner’s elementary, junior high, and high schools (Martha Washington Elementary, Mayer Sulzberger Middle, and West Philadelphia High) were all in walking distance from his home, and empty lots in the neighborhood served as prime sites for McCoy and his friends to play stickball with one another.

The neighborhood in which McCoy grew up taught him to be cordial and respect his elders. This is not unusual. According to Yale University professor Elijah Anderson, the act of greeting is of great cultural importance within the African-American community. It was expected of children to speak to adults in the black community when they entered a room or passed them while walking in their neighborhood. If they did not, they were often chastised because the youth’s neglect was considered disrespectful: “The caretaking adult may become indignant when a child fails in his duty to be polite. A visitor will then comment, ‘Young man,

41 Jarvis Tyner, Jr., personal interview by Alton Merrell, May 7, 2012.
42 Penn University Archives and Records Center, 
43 Ibid.
can’t you speak?’ This places the blame squarely on the child, who then may sheepishly say, ‘Hi, Mr. Jones.’” McCoy recalled his neighborhood being similar when he said:

“I had some great neighbors…everybody spoke to each other. I was taught that if you passed an elderly person in the neighborhood sitting on the step, I had to speak to them coming and going.”

McCoy’s childhood neighborhood was also one in which its inhabitants were caring and generous, and helped one another regardless of social status. For example, “the numbers man” was known for his generosity, he would often buy food for economically deprived families. During an interview, McCoy further elaborated on the kindhearted and giving nature of his neighbors, particularly Momma Madden, by saying:

“There was a lady called Momma Madden. She used to bake biscuits and rolls and she would share them with the community. She’d come over. She’d bring a pan to my mother or she passed one on to somebody else. It was a real community…I grew up in a wonderful black community…it was wonderful.”

In 1956, at the age of seventeen, McCoy and his family moved into a new home located on 5961 Cedar Avenue. (See Figure 1) Beatrice, McCoy’s mother paid $8000 for the home. It had four bedrooms with a spacious backyard. At the time, the home was located in a predominately Jewish neighborhood. Although McCoy only lived there for approximately three years, he and the rest of his family gained experience with white flight, a phenomenon that

47 People who regularly played the lottery.
49 White flight was the departure of people of European decent leaving racially mixed urban regions to go to racially homogeneous suburban regions. (From Webster’s Online Dictionary)
became prevalent in many industrial cites in the United States during the mid twentieth century. In this movement, many white residents, spurred by racism, fear, and anxiety, moved to the suburbs. During this period, real estate agents practiced “blockbusting,” a business practice that encouraged white property owners to sell their homes at a loss by suggesting that minorities moving into their previously segregated neighborhoods would diminish the value of their home and property. This added to the number of white residents fleeing to the suburbs, leaving African-Americans to reside in city neighborhoods.

Another factor that contributed to the formation of homogenous African-American communities in many urban areas, including McCoy’s community, were governmental and commercial initiatives that were created post-World War II. According to Professor Tom Perchard, certain initiatives provided white solders returning from World War II federal aid to purchase inexpensive mortgages for newly built properties located in suburban neighborhoods. Additionally, commercial initiatives encouraged non-manufacturing businesses to relocate outside the city and white employees compelled to travel with their employers followed suit. This ultimately provided even more residential living space for the newly African-American migrants. Urban governmental renewal programs cleared slums and replaced them with housing complexes controlled by local authorities. Inexpensive rent made living in these housing complexes financially attractive to many low-income African-American families like Tyner’s. Consequently, many African-Americans moved into the housing complexes, while whites relocated to the suburbs. This movement to the suburbs, in conjunction with governmental renewal programs and cheap rent fostered ethnic segregation, greatly contributing to the segregated and growing African-American communities in Philadelphia.

White flight, blockbusting, and governmental and commercial initiatives were all social forces that contributed to the development of the resulting African-American ghetto where McCoy Tyner and his siblings were raised. Jarvis Jr., McCoy’s brother, remembers he and his family being the second black family to take residence in the then Jewish neighborhood where his Cedar Avenue home was located. The move was an advancement up the social ladder; however within three years, the neighborhood turned into an economically deprived ghetto after many white families abandoned the area.  

Figure 1  Cedar Avenue Home of McCoy Tyner

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52 Jarvis Tyner, Jr., personal interview by Alton Merrell, May 7, 2012.
2.1.2 Musical Background

McCoy Tyner was born in the Swing era (1935-1945), when Swing music\textsuperscript{53} was in full bloom in the United States. It was the only time in American history that jazz dominated the popular music of the United States. Although Swing did not have a direct influence on the formation of McCoy Tyner’s early piano style, leading architects of bebop – saxophonist Charlie Parker and trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie – had an indirect influence on Tyner’s early piano style, and they began their careers performing in big bands that played Swing music. More importantly, pianists Bud Powell and Thelonious Monk, who significantly contributed to the development of bebop in the 1940s with Parker and Gillespie, influenced Tyner’s early piano style. Hard-bop pianist Red Garland, who was influenced by Powell, also influenced Tyner’s early piano style. Evidence of Powell’s, Monk’s, and Garland’s collective influence on Tyner’s early piano style can be heard on many albums that he recorded as a sideman in 1959 and 1960 such as trombonist Curtis Fuller’s \textit{Imagination} and \textit{Images of Curtis Fuller} albums released in 1959 and 1960 respectively, and Benny Golson –Art Farmer’s Jazztet’s album entitled \textit{Meet The Jazztet} released in 1960.

Although born in the Swing era, Bebop and Hard Bop are the styles of jazz that contributed most to the development of McCoy Tyner’s early piano style. Many scholars, including Dr. Nathan Davis, considered bebop as "one of the most complicated and artistically stimulating periods in the history of jazz.\textsuperscript{54} This style of music emerged from after-hour’s jam sessions at Minton’s Playhouse in Harlem during the 1940s on West 118\textsuperscript{th} street. Young

\textsuperscript{53} A form of American music characterized by big bands that played compositions that generated infectious swing rhythms that created dancing audiences and idolizing fans. The style of music evolved in the mid 1930s through the early 1940s.

\textsuperscript{54} Nathan T. Davis, \textit{Writings in Jazz, 6\textsuperscript{th} ed.} (Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt Pub., 2002), 168.
beboppers such as Bud Powell and Thelonious Monk, who greatly influenced Tyner’s early piano style (see Chapters 2.4.2 and 2.4.4), sought respect as artists and not as entertainers - entertainment was what Swing Era musicians provided in the 1920s and 1930s.\(^55\)

Dr. Nathan Davis writes "to refute the minstrel image of 1940, many of the bebop musicians refused to acknowledge applause, refused to announce the name of compositions, and refused to acknowledge requests."\(^56\) Additionally, unlike the Swing musicians of the 1920s and 1930s, bebop musicians de-emphasized commercial success and began playing long impressive solo improvisations, played to a listening audience instead of a dancing one, played in small clubs instead of large dance halls, and played in small musical ensembles as opposed to in big bands.\(^57\)

Like his bebop heroes, Bud Powell and Thelonious Monk, Tyner preferred performing in small ensembles as opposed to larger groups, and as a result, is predominantly heard in a small ensemble context during his developmental and professional years.

Hard Bop, a style of jazz that evolved in the mid 1950s, influenced McCoy Tyner’s early work primarily through the pianist Red Garland. An extension of the bebop style, the hard bop style incorporated rhythm and blues (which Tyner solely played before learning jazz), gospel music, and blues. Pianistically, according to Mark Gridley, the improvised melodic lines in hard bop are characteristic of bebop melodies but simpler.\(^58\) Also, hard bop pianists comped\(^59\) with more rhythmic variety and chord voicings in comparison to traditional bebop pianists. Pianists in addition to McCoy Tyner that exhibited these characteristics in the mid to late 1950s were

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\(^{56}\) Ibid, 168.
\(^{59}\) "Comp" is short for the word accompany. The term is used among jazz musicians to describe the technique of pianists playing short staccato chord behind a soloist or to accompany their own improvised melodic lines.
Herbie Hancock, Chick Corea, and Keith Jarrett. Furthermore, Miles Davis’ band, of which pianist Red Garland was a member from 1955 through 1959, exemplified the hard bop style between 1955 and 1961. In conclusion, McCoy Tyner’s early piano style was infused with hard bop characteristics through Red Garland’s influence and characteristics through Bud Powell and Thelonious Monk. Each pianist’s specific influences will be detailed in sections 2.4.2 through 2.4.4 of this dissertation.

2.2 THE GREAT MIGRATION

McCoy Tyner was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, a city with a rich musical heritage and teeming with luminaries from various musical genres. These genres include but are not limited to, rhythm and blues, soul, and jazz, which were popular music genres in the 1940s and 1950s. The city was an ideal incubator for the cultivation of McCoy Tyner’s musical talent, partly due to the presence of many jazz luminaries such as John Coltrane, Benny Golson, Dizzy Gillespie, Lee Morgan and the Heath Brothers. It was also known as the home of popular rhythm and blues artists like Tiny Bradshaw, Frankie Lymon and Solomon Burke, who also inspired Tyner’s musical development and taste. On the other hand, McCoy Tyner’s musical talent would not have been cultivated in the musically opulent city of Philadelphia if it were not for the Great Migration.

In the mid-1930s, McCoy Tyner’s mother and father relocated to the city of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania from Murfreesboro and Ahoskie, North Carolina, respectively. Their relocation was a part of a larger socio-historical movement called the Great Migration, a mass movement of approximately five million African-Americans migrating from rural impoverished communities in the south to flourishing industrial cities in the north between 1915 and 1960. While living in Murfreesboro and enduring the consequences of Jim Crow laws, Beatrice Tyner, McCoy’s mother, worked as a one-room schoolteacher and sang in a woman’s quartet that traveled the church circuit singing gospel music. Beatrice soon aspired to become a beautician with hopes of acquiring a better social and economic life than what she experienced in North Carolina. As a result, she relocated to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in 1937 before getting married and bearing her first child, McCoy Tyner. Beatrice’s older brother Clyde had already relocated to Philadelphia to escape the socially oppressive conditions in North Carolina also caused by the effects of Jim Crow laws. Beatrice lived with him until she could financially support herself. Jarvis Sr., McCoy’s father, also relocated to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania from Ahoskie, North Carolina during the Great Migration in pursuit of Beatrice, his girlfriend and later wife, whom he had met while singing in a gospel group in North Carolina.

During the early twentieth century, African-Americans who primarily lived in southern states viewed the industrial north as a promised land possessing good wages, improved living conditions and better opportunities. Many African-Americans developed this perspective

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62 State and local laws in the United States instituted between 1876 and 1965 the mandated racial segregation in all public facilities in Southern states of the former Confederacy on a separate but equal status for African-Americans.
64 Ibid.
65 Ibid.
because many were discriminated against and denied means for economic survival. This unjust treatment was exacerbated by legalized segregation in the south, which emerged after the 1896 Plessy vs. Ferguson Supreme Court ruling that legalized segregation. Moreover, legalized segregation prohibited African-Americans from enjoying the basic civil liberties credited them by the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth amendments. Tyner witnessed the debilitating effect of Jim Crow laws from regularly visiting his relatives, who were agricultural workers in North Carolina, as a young child. Tyner’s visits left a lasting impression on him and his older brother Jarvis Jr., an impression allowing them to see why their parents moved north in search of better lives. According to Jarvis, racism and discrimination existed in Philadelphia where he and his brother lived, but in Murfreesboro and Ahoskie North Carolina, it was more pronounced. He recalled a discriminatory encounter he and McCoy endured as young children in North Carolina:

“In five and ten cent stores, you walk in, and there’s a colored line and a white line. And the colored line doesn’t get served until the white line was empty. So you’re standing there. I looked at McCoy and said ‘What the hell is this?’ I didn’t say ‘hell’ then because I was a church kid. And he said ‘Keep quiet, we’ll get our chance’….. Went to the movie theater on Saturday, and we had to go around the back and up the side steps, we couldn’t even walk through the theater and up to the balcony. We had to go up outdoor stairs, pay at a little window on the side, and sat up in the balcony. Downstairs was empty, but we had to go up to the balcony, but that’s the way it was, and my cousin always stayed with us and told us what we could and could not do, and to be careful.”

Relocating from the South to northern cities was an attempt African-Americans made to escape the prevailing racial oppression, humiliation, and poor economic conditions caused by Jim Crow laws. This mass movement of people slowly led to the development of a plethora of African-American communities in the northern United States, including McCoy Tyner’s childhood neighborhood in West Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

During the Great Migration, several cities absorbed a large number of African-American migrants including Chicago, Detroit, Cleveland, New York City, Pittsburgh and as mentioned previously, McCoy Tyner’s hometown of Philadelphia. Geographically, Philadelphia was a popular destination during the Great Migration because of its proximity to the Mason-Dixon line. Professor Peter O. Muller underscored this when he wrote:

“While the black population in other major northern cities never exceeded two percent during the 1870-1920 period, Philadelphia was more than five percent black. Its proximity to the Mason-Dixon line made it a convenient destination for the northward migration stream of freed men after the Civil War.”

Prior to Beatrice’s and Jarvis Sr.’s arrival in Philadelphia via the Great Migration in the mid-1930s, the ethnic landscape of Philadelphia was diverse. According to Muller, Meyer and Cybriwsky, six major immigrant groups - English, Irish, German, Russian, Jews, Italian and Polish - were present in Philadelphia during the early twentieth century, and many remained in tight ethnic enclaves. People of other ethnicities were also scattered throughout the city. However, new immigration laws in the 1930s and 1940s began to limit the number of new immigrants settling in Philadelphia. At the same time, there was an influx of African-Americans that relocated to the city. In fact, the African-American presence in Philadelphia more than quadrupled from 1890 to 1930. In 1890, forty-eight years before Tyner’s birth, the United States census reported 39,371 African-Americans in Philadelphia, only 3.8 percent of the city’s population. (See Table 4) This group of people consisted of a small elite of professionals, small business owners, domestic servants to leading white families, and a large group of unskilled and

irregularly employed laborers. 71 By 1910, Philadelphia’s African-American population had more than doubled to 84,459, which was 5.5 percent of the total population. 72 (See Table 4) A primary reason for such African-American growth during the early twentieth century can be attributed to the city’s resulting labor shortage created by the manufacturing demands of World War I. By 1920, continual growth of the African-American population was seen with a count of 134,229 African-Americans; 7.4 percent of the total population. (See Table 4) In the 1930s, the decade of Tyner’s birth, the African-American population demonstrated continued increases, with a count of 219,599 African-Americans: 11.3 percent of the total population. (See Table 4) As a result of the increasing growth of the African-American population in Philadelphia, employment in northern industrial cities in the area of steel production, railroad maintenance, automobile production and meatpacking increased. 73 Unfortunately, the majority of African-American workers living in Philadelphia during the 1920s and 1930s earned three-quarters of the white national income average employed in manufacturing jobs. 74

Prior to McCoy Tyner’s birth, Beatrice, McCoy Tyner’s mother, moved to the city in search of a better life socially and economically, as many African-Americans did in the early twentieth century. As a result, McCoy Tyner was born and raised in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; a thriving musical African-American community that cultivated his musical talent.

72 Ibid, 17.
### Table 4 Philadelphia Population 1890 – 1930

(Source: U.S. Census and Contrad Weiler\(^{75}\))

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\(^{75}\) Ibid.
2.3 FAMILY

“The family is the cornerstone of our society. More than any other force, it shapes the attitude, the hopes, the ambitions, and the values of the child.”

- Lyndon Johnson

McCoy Tyner was raised in a nurturing family environment that fostered his early musical aptitude. Beatrice Tyner was the pillar of the family. Her unwavering love, support, and sacrifice nurtured McCoy’s musical talent during his youth. McCoy Tyner acknowledged her musical influence and talent when he said, “I owe my training to my mother who was once a church pianist. Our parents play such an important part in our shaping.” Saxophonist Oden Pope, a family friend whom McCoy regularly performed with at local jam sessions throughout Philadelphia said:

“Beatrice was very conscientious about McCoy doing the right thing and staying out of trouble…always directing him to go in the right direction, to be productive and make something out of his life.”

The high expectations Beatrice had of her children, and the unwavering musical support she provided with respect to McCoy’s musical development, was an outgrowth of her personal tenacity, strength and character, as exemplified by her leaving behind her old life in North Carolina to pursue her dreams. Upon arrival in Philadelphia, Beatrice worked as a domestic like many African-Americans did in the 1930s. Unfulfilled and unsatisfied with her work, she attended Skidmore Beauty School, an African-American owned establishment where Beatrice earned her beauty license and opened her own parlor in the early 1940s. Beatrice was one of the

76 Lyndon Johnson, commencement address at Howard University 1965.
78 Oden Pope, personal interview by Alton Merrell, May 9, 2012.
first African-American women in West Philadelphia to open a professional beauty salon at the time. According to Jarvis, Jr., McCoy’s brother, a featured article was published in the Philadelphia Tribune announcing and celebrating the opening of Beatrice’s beauty parlor in the early 1940s. Beatrice was known for her business acumen, and the love she had for both her family and the people in her West Philadelphia community. Her home was a place where family members congregated. She was admired by her family and highly respected in her community. Beatrice was the type of person that when she spoke, people listened.79

Figure 2 Beatrice Tyner around 1952

Figure 3 Beatrice's Ad in McCoy Tyner’s Mayer Sulzberger Middle School Yearbook

Beatrice encouraged her children to personally develop high standards for themselves and fostered that notion by investing in their talents. One way Beatrice nurtured McCoy’s musical talent was through the purchase of a spinet piano. Prior to this purchase, McCoy depended upon neighbors opening up their homes so he could practice on their pianos. Unhappy with this situation, Beatrice, a hard-working entrepreneur, saved her money for one year prior to purchasing the piano for her son. It was a major sacrifice and investment at the time, costing her $600. She purchased the piano on credit and made monthly payments to pay off the loan.80 Jarvis, Sr. was not supportive of Beatrice’s purchase because he believed his son could not make a living as a musician. Nevertheless, Beatrice’s support, encouragement, and fortitude outweighed paternal displeasure and disapproval. Beatrice’s support was further demonstrated when she placed the piano in her beauty shop because it was the largest room in her home. She could have easily viewed the placement of the piano in her shop as an inconvenience. (Her beauty shop was located in front of her home’s living quarters, with the living room and kitchen located behind the shop, and the bedrooms located upstairs behind the shop.) Moreover, Beatrice permitted young McCoy to host jam sessions with his musical colleagues in her shop while she serviced her clients. According to McCoy, the musical environment he and his friends created during jam sessions served as an incentive for his mom’s clients to go to her particular shop.82 McCoy remembered his mom’s clients tapping their feet to the music he and his friends created. Additionally, McCoy’s younger sister, Gwen, who was three or four years old at the time, used to dance to the musical sounds created by McCoy and his musician friends.83

81 McCoy Tyner interviewed by David Ellenbogen, Podcast 1, April 26, 2011.  
http://www.nycradiolive.org
82 Ibid.
Another way Beatrice cultivated her son’s musical talent was by regularly exposing McCoy to music as a child, which was an outgrowth of her love of the art. According to McCoy, if Beatrice were not a beautician, she would have been a pianist because “when she would go over someone’s home with a piano, she would always touch it.” 84 A devout member of the Baptist church and gospel pianist, Beatrice regularly took McCoy to Mount Olive Baptist Church where he was regularly exposed to gospel music. (See Figure 3) The church was the family church and was in walking distance from their home. McCoy enjoyed listening and watching the choir, organist and pianist sing and play. 85

Beatrice also regularly played a myriad of jazz records in her home, some of which included great jazz vocalists like Billy Holiday, Ella Fitzgerald and Sarah Vaughn. Young McCoy was also exposed to jazz from the jukebox at Mike’s Candy store located across the street from his home. Via this jukebox, McCoy regularly heard notable jazz artists like saxophonist Charlie Parker and vocalist Nat ‘King’ Cole for the price of a nickel. Growing up in this musical environment, McCoy became intimately acquainted with the sound of jazz, the genre of music in which he would specialize later in life.

Figure 4  Mount Olive Baptist Church

Figure 5  McCoy Tyner and Friends on their way to Mt. Olive Baptist Church - McCoy Tyner (hat) Verdell Whitmore (boy on left of McCoy), Harold Whitmore (next to steps), Letha Williams (woman on steps)
Beatrice was also instrumental in developing McCoy’s self-confidence, an attribute beneficial to his later professional career as a musician. With his mother’s encouragement, McCoy gave a concert at his family’s church (Mt. Olive) at approximately age thirteen. Tyner reminisced of the event when he said: “I put my tux on with tails, you know, and I played. She [Beatrice] was so happy.” Beatrice also raised McCoy to value his own thoughts, and to be resolute in making his own decisions. Instead of telling McCoy who he should be, she empowered him to discover the person he wanted to become on his own. One way Beatrice achieved this was through a gentle and sensitive teaching approach. McCoy says of her:

“She wasn’t a disciplinarian though. She didn’t try to over-do it, you know, she talked to you. My mother would talk to me. She explained a lot of things to me, you know. She said, ‘one day you’ll be interested in girls’…I said, really? She talked to me sensibly. She kept it real. She wasn’t trying to make me be anything other than what I was meant to be, you know. And I think I was lucky that way cause I know parents who would try to force their children to be something that they thought they should be instead of accepting them for what they were. But she never did that… she gave me that opportunity to make a choice.”

Additionally, Beatrice also cultivated McCoy’s self-confidence by affirming his singing and piano talents when he was thirteen. At that time, McCoy was an avid singer who regularly sang in school musicals during his junior and high school years. In response to the manifestation of her son’s talents, Beatrice offered McCoy a choice of taking singing or piano lessons. Noteworthy is the fact that she did not suggest one over the other, but empowered McCoy to make his own decision. McCoy spoke of his mother’s empowering rearing style, and the choice he made between taking singing and piano lessons when he said:

87 Ibid.
“…she asked me...cause I was in a lot of musicals in school from elementary to high school… when I was thirteen my mother asked me…’Do you want to study piano or singing lessons?’… I said ‘I’d rather take piano.’ It was that little voice, that told me, you know, I wanted to play piano like Ms. Addison [an elementary school teacher whom Tyner would observe playing piano during school assemblies].”88

Beatrice also gave Jarvis Jr., McCoy’s younger brother of two years and five months, the opportunity to take piano or singing lessons as a child; he chose to study piano, which indirectly fostered McCoy’s musical development by inciting a spirit of competition in McCoy, especially when Beatrice told McCoy his brother Jarvis Jr. was doing better than him. Jarvis Jr. recalled this when he said:

“He [Mr. Habershaw] took us through the first book and the second book, and McCoy was doing ok, but Mr. Habershaw told my mother I was doing better than McCoy, so my mother went and told McCoy. An McCoy just tore up that book. He went through second book, and the third book….I’m still working on the second book because its over my head.”89

Beatrice also ensured that McCoy was well acquainted with his relatives in North Carolina. This acquaintance helped develop McCoy’s personal work ethic and self-confidence, two character attributes that contributed to the development of his musical talent and successful music career. During many of his childhood summers, Beatrice took McCoy and his siblings to visit their aunts, uncles, and cousins in Murfreesboro and Ahoskie North Carolina, a ten-hour drive from Philadelphia at the time. The summer visits continued through their teen years, and during an interview, McCoy remembered witnessing the strong work ethic and warm hospitality that exuded from many of his relatives. Moreover, his relatives expected him to work along side them. McCoy reminisced of those times:

“They [Tyner’s parents] had relatives that raised tobacco because North Carolina is a tobacco state. So when I would go down there in the summertime during school break, I’d have to go out in the fields in the morning and pick tobacco… I couldn’t lay around and relax. I had to get up and go to work…but it was good. It was really good…they had corn, peanuts and tomatoes…tobacco, of course, and watermelons….they had so much and very, very hospitable people…really knew how to make you feel at home.”

Jarvis Sr., like the extended family members, also helped instill a work ethic in McCoy by making him work alongside him at his place of employment. After serving in World War II, Jarvis was offered a factory job in Philadelphia, but turned it down to work for Mr. Gross at Belmont Labs, a company that made medicated soaps and creams for skin diseases like eczema and psoriasis. Jarvis Sr. made fifty dollars a week working at the company. Belmont Labs’ most notable product was a cream called Mazzon, and as a youth, McCoy and his brother regularly worked at Belmont Labs with their father boxing small jars of Mazzon on Saturdays. Their earnings purchased their fall and winter school clothes, but Jarvis Sr. was scantily involved in McCoy’s life, and was only partially supportive of his son’s musical development. When the notion arose of buying young McCoy a piano, he was very reluctant because his desire was for his son to get a “real job,” an industry type job similar to his. Although Jarvis was not in favor of purchasing a piano for his son, he demonstrated his partial support of his son’s musical talent when he went to the club to hear McCoy perform. While at the club, he would show his support by saying “That’s my son up there.”

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Many of McCoy’s aunts, uncles and cousins were professionals in the fields of education and business, even within a repressive Jim Crow society. Jarvis, Jr., detailed a few of his relative’s accomplishments and professions when he said:

“some of them built new homes, some of them worked in construction, some were school teachers, some worked in public service. Another cousin owned the black general store in the black area of Murfreesboro, cousins Will and Ike owned a cleaners where McCoy and I worked…one of our cousins [one their father’s side of the family] was the head of the theology department at Howard University for seventeen years. Clarence G. Newsome III was his name. Dr. Newsome then became president of a historically black college called Shaw University in Raleigh, North Carolina [in 2003]…so, many of them were doing pretty well except for Jim Crow. That’s debilitating.”

Observing the professional successes of his family members undoubtedly helped instill a spirit of self-confidence in McCoy, one that originated from the notion that if his family members could succeed in life, so could he.

McCoy Tyner also benefited from the practice of community parenting that was prevalent in many African-American neighborhoods, including his own. In the 1940s and 50s, it was common practice for the structure of the African-American family to extend beyond the Western nuclear model. Neighbors and trusted friends of local African-American families often served as parental figures to neighborhood children by offering general support and a sense of community to local youths while their parents worked long hours. McCoy benefited from community parenting the many times “parental figures” in his neighborhood opened their homes so he could practice on their piano during the time his family did not own one. Oftentimes, Beatrice’s admirable reputation throughout her neighborhood won McCoy favor with his

94 Ibid.
neighbors. Their generosity and support helped foster his early musical development. McCoy underscored this early support when he said:

“I was never refused a chance to practice on their piano. So from thirteen to fourteen, I was going from one neighbor to the next neighbor [Miss Betty, Douglas Family, and Miss McClendon], and I would alternate you know….They liked my mother so they never refused me you know. And I’d practice every day after school. I couldn’t wait to get home to practice….piano just took over.”

Another way McCoy benefited from community parenting was by being the recipient of meals neighbors prepared for him and his siblings when Beatrice worked long hours. Jarvis Jr. remembers “Mama Madding” serving as a surrogate mother to him and his siblings. Mama Madding, who did not have children of her own, did day work in a rich white person’s home, through which she learned to make a variety of meals. McCoy and his siblings reaped the benefits of the development of Mamma Madding’s cooking skills. It was through her that Jarvis was introduced to spaghetti and meatballs, a meal he never had.

Highlighting the brilliance of his mother, as well as the genuine love and concern neighbors had for one another via community parenting in McCoy’s neighborhood, Jarvis Jr. recalled Beatrice and neighborhood friends establishing an emergency fund. This fund required participants to invest a certain amount of money in order to become a member. As a result, members throughout the community could make a withdrawal from the fund when they were in financial need. The stipulation to enjoy such a benefit was that members had to pay back what they borrowed from the fund. Because all the community members were not in need at the same

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97 Ibid.
time, the concept of the emergency fund was a great success.99 The Tyner family benefited from this fund when they did not have money to pay the rent.100

McCoy Tyner grew up in a family environment that nurtured his early musical talents. The nurturing occurred in a both musical and non-musical ways. Beatrice Tyner, the anchor of the family, was primarily responsible for cultivating McCoy’s early musical talent. Clearly, if it had not been for Beatrice, McCoy might not have developed into the world-class pianist he became. McCoy spoke of his mother’s amazing support when he said:

"my mother was my biggest fan, even after I went to New York City and was making records on my own. I learned later that she used to call jazz DJs in the area, including Joel Dorn, who had a big jazz show back then, asking them to play selections from my albums."101

Beatrice’s support primarily showed through her purchase of a piano, her regularly exposing McCoy to jazz music in the home, teaching McCoy self-confidence, and exposure to extended family in North Carolina. Community parenting also played an important role in the development of McCoy Tyner’s musical talent. The time McCoy spent working with his father at Belmont Labs, and the competition that arose between McCoy and his brother while taking piano lessons, all directly or indirectly contributed to the development of McCoy Tyner’s early musical talent.

100 Ibid.
2.4 MUSICAL INFLUENCES

“The person who tries to live alone will not succeed as a human being. His heart withers if it does not answer another heart. His mind shrinks away if he hears only the echoes of his own thoughts and finds no other inspiration.”

McCoy Tyner’s greatness did not develop in a vacuum, and instead of withering or shrinking, his musical heart and mind blossomed through musical training and inspiration. Tyner’s musical talent was nurtured during his youth with inspiration from Ms. Violet Addison and Art Tatum, creative musical and conceptual inspiration from Bud Powell, Red Garland, and Thelonious Monk, traditional piano instruction from Mr. Habershaw and Mr. Ted Baroni, and a brief study of music theory at Granoff School of Music (discussed in section 2.5 Formal Training). Collectively, these influences served as a seedbed for the unique piano style manifested during his tenure with the John Coltrane Quartet.

2.4.1 Violet Addison and Art Tatum

At the age of five, McCoy Tyner was enthralled by the piano skills of Ms. Violet Addison, a teacher at his Martha Washington Elementary School in West Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. (See Figure 6) According to Tyner, Ms. Addison “had long fingers,” and her piano skills were often showcased at school assemblies and other musical events at his elementary school. When speaking of Ms. Addison, Tyner recalled how she inspired him when

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102 Aisha A. Gothey, Brilliant Thoughts (Bloomington, Indiana: AuthorHouse, 2005), 122.
he said, “I used to walk by and watch her hands. I said ‘How in the world is she doing it?’”

Ms. Addison’s piano skills inspired McCoy Tyner, but because Tyner’s primary interest in elementary school was singing in the school’s Glee Club, the inspiration he received from Ms. Addison did not directly manifest until he began playing piano during his adolescent years.

![Martha Washington Elementary School](image_url)

**Figure 6 Martha Washington Elementary School**

In addition to Ms. Violet Addison, the great Art Tatum also inspired McCoy Tyner during his youth. After being invited by Ms. Merceau, the mother of childhood friend Garvin Merceau, Tyner attended a concert in 1949 in which Art Tatum performed with the Philadelphia Philharmonic Orchestra. In addition to the concert being Tyner’s first exposure to live jazz music

105 Art Tatum is often considered the greatest jazz pianist who ever lived. In the early 1940s, Tatum developed a reputation as an extraordinary performer at jam sessions in New York City. He demonstrated prodigious piano technique that positioned him in a league of his own.
at age eleven, Art Tatum inspired Tyner by illustrating a myriad of musical ideas a performer can execute when playing piano, things Tyner did not conceive of prior to hearing Tatum. Tyner was amazed by Tatum’s performance: “I knew this man was phenomenal. I couldn’t believe it.”

2.4.2 Bud Powell

Bud Powell’s approach to playing the piano served as a model and inspiration for hundreds of pianists during the 1940s and 1950s, including McCoy Tyner. Powell served as an informal teacher and musical inspiration to McCoy Tyner. Bud Powell and his brother Richie lived in Tyner’s neighborhood during Tyner’s youth. Tyner and his friends admired Powell to the point of regularly following him around the neighborhood and coercing him to play for them at Rittenhouse Hall, a place dedicated to musicians for jam sessions and rehearsal space, and a popular hang out spot. After Beatrice purchased the family piano, Powell played it, an event that left an indelible imprint on Tyner’s heart and mind. Tyner described his experience watching Powell as “a thrill” and claimed that Powell had “initiated” his piano.

According to Jarvis Tyner Jr., Powell not only played Tyner’s piano, he gave McCoy an informal piano lesson. Jarvis Jr. recalled the event:

“Bud Powell actually came to our house. I remember walking into my mom’s beauty shop and they were sitting at the piano together...Bud was living in the neighborhood about four blocks away, and he was going through some form of rehabilitation of some sort and had a relative taking care of him...and McCoy was adopted by all the the old great jazz bebop musicians in town...and somebody told Bud about him

107 Ibid.
[McCoy] and that he [McCoy] really liked Bud. So the piano was in my mother’s beauty shop, and I walked in after school, and there was Bud sitting with my brother showing him some chord voicings and all this, I don’t know what they were doing, and McCoy was a happy man. So he really admired Bud Powell a lot and played a lot like him, but found his own style in Coltrane’s band though. Created his own system.”

As Jarvis Jr. stated, Tyner was “musically adopted” by many bebop musicians in Philadelphia, and Bud Powell was just one of those musicians, but the approach Tyner employed to play jazz piano in the 1950s was based on Powell’s general approach. This is not too surprising because according to Mark C. Gridley, Bud Powell is the most imitated of all bebop pianists. During an interview with Ben Sidran, Tyner commented on how he liked the manner in which Powell approached playing the piano. Tyner liked Powell’s approach so much that he, like Powell, sporadically played two and three note staccato chords in his left hand while regularly playing horn-like melodic lines in his right. This general approach of playing the piano garnered Powell the title of “Father of Modern Jazz Piano” in the 1940s, an approach to playing the piano that can traced back to pianist Earl “Fatha” Hines with his trumpet piano style introduced during the 1930s Swing Era. However, McCoy’s early piano style heard in the 1950s was more similar to Powell’s in that it was more syncopated and melodically sophisticated than Hines’.

Tyner thought Powell was a dynamic pianist and was inspired by his dexterity on the instrument and “limitless” ideas he generated while improvising, both characteristics of

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114 The playing of horn-like lines in octaves with the right hand in conjunction with chords played with the left hand.
115 McCoy Tyner interviewed by Sonya Williams for Jazz Profiles from National Public Radio, September 2, 2002.
Tyner’s early and later piano styles. Bud Powell also influenced Tyner indirectly through Red Garland, since Garland also imitated Powell.

2.4.3 Red Garland

Red Garland’s influence on Tyner began when Tyner heard notable albums by trumpeter Miles Davis’ group, of which Garland was a member (Miles: The New Miles Davis Quintet, Workin, Steamin’, Cookin’ and Milestones). McCoy Tyner was also influenced by the early recordings Garland made with John Coltrane such as “Lush Life” and “Soultrane” released in 1957 and 1958, respectively, to which he regularly listened as a new member of Coltrane’s band in 1960. Tyner underscored this when he said:

“Red and I are very close. That’s one man I really like, but see, what happened, all those recordings John had made with Red … when I first joined the band [Coltrane Quartet], the sound, some of the tunes were similar to some of that [Garland] stuff.”

Characteristics of Garland’s Hard-bop piano style that could be heard in Tyner’s early piano style include the use of lyrical bebop inspired melodies, blue notes, chord arpeggiation, two-hand chords, and eighth note melodic lines. Evidence of this can be heard on Art Farmer’s and Benny Golson’s “The Jazztet” album released in 1960. Saxophonist and co-leader of the group, Benny Golson remembered Tyner’s piano style sounding as if it originated from both Bud Powell and Red Garland, but sounding more like Garland’s with the addition of his own musical flare:

“Not Bud Powell, closer to Red Garland, reminiscent of Red Garland but going on a little further than Red, a little more adventuresome than Red. A little more

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unpredictable than Red. Red had his thing locked up, and you know what was gonna happen, McCoy had that and more. You always couldn’t put your finger on what he was going to do, but whatever he did was tasty\textsuperscript{117}… he could play the block chords, he could play single hand, he could use both of his hands. Those are the things I remember about him.”\textsuperscript{118}

A hallmark characteristic of McCoy Tyner’s mature style is his use of block chords, particularly his use of quartal chords.\textsuperscript{119} According to Mark C. Gridley in his book \textit{Jazz Styles}, Red Garland influenced Tyner’s use of block chords during his tenure with the John Coltrane Quartet.\textsuperscript{120} Although the construction of Garland’s block chords are significantly different from Tyner’s – Garland’s block chords are primarily built on tertian harmony and Tyner’s on quartal harmony – Tyner’s use of block chords while improvising started with Red Garland, however the construction of his block chords and the manner in which he uses them drastically changed when he began his tenure with the John Coltrane Quartet.

McCoy Tyner loved Red Garland’s piano style and described his style as being very beautiful and happy.\textsuperscript{121} With exposure to Red Garland’s piano style via Miles Davis’ and John Coltrane’s early albums, McCoy Tyner assimilated attributes of Garland’s “beautiful” and “happy” piano style, namely block chords and hard bop melodic content, into his own piano style.

\textsuperscript{117} Benny Golson, interviewed by Alton Merrell, April 21, 2012.
\textsuperscript{118} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{119} Quartal chords are chords consisting of two or more notes that are built using pitches an interval of a fourth from one another.
\textsuperscript{120} Mark C. Gridley, \textit{Concise Guide to Jazz, 10th ed.} (Upper SaddleRiver [N.J.]: Prentice Hall, 2010), 113.
\textsuperscript{121} McCoy Tyner, interview by Russ Musto, published December 17, 2003, http://www.allaboutjazz.com/php/article.php?id=914
2.4.4 Thelonious Monk

Pianist Thelonious Monk inspired McCoy Tyner to conceive of chord voicings that possess an open sound quality, an attribute of his mature style. Monk achieved this quality by carefully selecting and excluding certain notes within his chords. When Ben Sidran asked Tyner about the development of his personal sound on the piano during an interview in 1985, Tyner mentioned pianists Duke Ellington, Count Basie and Thelonious Monk as well:

“You’re allowing yourself to do a lot of things with sound when you leave your voicings open….yeah, and like when you hear Duke and Basie, you know, like, what they left out was very important. The fact that they left this out of here. Thelonious too, you know?”

The way Monk used space and intervals within his improvisations also conceptually influenced Tyner. During an interview with journalist Pawel Brodowski, Tyner said: “The way that he utilized space and the way that he played… intervals. I never wanted to play like him – just to listen to him. As a musician, a pianist and a composer, Monk was a major influence on me.”

During an interview with Bob Ruch, Tyner not only celebrated Monk’s use of space, but also how simple musical concepts are often complex in his music. According to Bill Cole, Tyner also had the wonderful opportunity to informally study with Thelonious Monk. During those times, Cole asserted that Monk taught Tyner about the magic of sound and that Tyner always liked the way Monk’s melodic lines sounded unlike those of other pianists.

As mentioned above, Tyner did not want to copy Monk’s style, instead, he liked how Monk created his own style, which encouraged him to do the same. For example, Monk’s style

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of comping was not conventional. His comping was sparser and rhythmically unpredictable when compared to that of other bebop pianists’. Gridley describes it as “a declamation” instead of the “springy chording provided by most modern pianists.”\textsuperscript{127} Monk’s jagged and playful approach to melodic improvisation was also unorthodox when compared to the style of many bebop pianists during 1940s and 50s.

Overall, McCoy Tyner learned a lot from Thelonious Monk. He valued Monk’s harmonic acumen; Monk’s use of unorthodox harmonic intervals likely inspired Tyner’s use of open chord voicings. Tyner also learned from Monk the value of simplicity and space in music, how simple musical concepts could be complex within themselves. Last but not least, Tyner liked how Monk created his own distinctive piano style, something Tyner does during his tenure with the John Coltrane quartet.

2.5 FORMAL TRAINING

2.5.1 Mr. Habershaw

At age eleven and a half, Tyner began attending Mayer Sulzberger Middle School located across the street from his home on the corner of Fairmount Avenue and May Street.\textsuperscript{128} (See Figure 7) During his second year, Tyner began formal piano lessons at age thirteen.\textsuperscript{129} His first piano teacher was an older African-American man named Mr. Habershaw, who was a respected clergyman, and an esteemed singing and piano teacher in Tyner’s neighborhood. He was a

\textsuperscript{129} Ibid., 29.
patient man who specialized in teaching piano to young children for only seventy-five cents per
lesson. He taught McCoy and his brother Jarvis Jr. the fundamentals of piano performance in the
European tradition (note reading, scales, arpeggios). Tyner learned of Mr. Habershaw through
Miss Betty, a neighbor who regularly permitted young Tyner to practice on her player piano until
he acquired his own. Surprisingly, Tyner did not enjoy studying piano at first,\textsuperscript{130} but after a short
time, playing the piano became his passion and Tyner, as he described it, “practiced like
mad.”\textsuperscript{131} According to Jarvis Jr., sibling rivalry amongst McCoy and himself was also a major
contributor to McCoy’s quick musical advancement while studying with Mr. Habershaw.\textsuperscript{132} (See
Section 2.3 for details) According to journalist Ahmed Bashier, Tyner’s compulsive piano
practice and zeal regularly trumped typical childhood activities like playing baseball, and

\textsuperscript{132} Jarvis Tyner, Jr., personal interview by Alton Merrell, May 7, 2012.
marbles, roller-skating, and ice-skating. \footnote{133 Ahmed Bashier, "McCoy Tyner." *Jazz Journal*, 19 no.12 (1966): 29.} After teaching Tyner for a little under a year, Mr. Habershaw told Tyner he had taught him all he could and that he needed to study with another teacher who could take him a step further. \footnote{134 McCoy Tyner interviewed by Larry Crowe for The HistoryMakers A2004.164, September 16, 2004.} At the same time, Mr. Habershaw stopped teaching in Tyner’s neighborhood. \footnote{135 Ahmed Bashier, "McCoy Tyner." *Jazz Journal*, 19 no.12 (1966): 29.} Although Tyner’s tenure with Mr. Habershaw was short, he learned the basics of piano performance from him.

### 2.5.2 Ted Baroni

McCoy Tyner began studying with Ted Baroni at the age of fourteen. Mr. Baroni was an Italian teacher who lived in West Philadelphia and taught at the West Philadelphia Music School. During Tyner’s six-month tenure studying with Baroni, he quickly blossomed becoming Baroni’s best student. \footnote{136 McCoy Tyner interviewed by Larry Crowe for The HistoryMakers A2004.164, September 16, 2004.} Tyner studied music from the classical piano repertoire that included works by J.S. Bach, Beethoven, Debussy, Tchaikovsky and others. According to Tyner, Mr. Baroni was a kind yet stern person who had high expectations of his students. Overall, Mr. Baroni exposed Tyner to music from the European classical tradition, and also cultivated Tyner’s reading and technical piano skills.
2.5.3  Granoff School of Music

For a short time, McCoy attended the Granoff School of Music located in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. (See Figure 8) The Granoff school was founded at the turn of the twentieth century by Isadore Granoff, a Ukrainian immigrant. At the time, it was one of the largest music schools on the East Coast rivaling Juilliard in New York, and the Curtis Institute in Philadelphia.

![Granoff School of Music](image)

**Figure 8  Granoff School of Music**

At Granoff, Tyner studied seventeenth century theory.\(^{137}\) About this experience Tyner says, “they taught theory, but the theory was an older style music theory, but it was helpful…every little bit helps.”\(^{138}\)

When asked about his favorite music to play during his early formal piano studies, Tyner stated he liked playing vignettes, “Claire de Lune” by Debussy, and compositions by J.S. Bach:

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however, he eventually put his sheet music away and, in the tradition of Bud Powell, Thelonious Monk and Red Garland, developed his own style through playing by ear. As Tyner put it:

“What written music does is it can show you the possibilities of what you can do with the instrument [piano]...It can’t teach you to be creative. It’s not meant to do that. It just can take you places that you may not have gone in terms of music…It’s all notated… I liked studying, but I put the books away and I took my theoretical knowledge and information that I had gathered harmonically, and I went that way.”139

2.6 INFORMAL TRAINING

In the 1950s, many musicians participated in two long-standing schools of music education: the African and European schools. The European school is rooted in the written tradition consisting of the disseminating of music from one person to another via printed music. An important value within the European school is to develop skills needed to interpret/perform written music. The African school, on the other hand, according to Dr. Nathan Davis, is rooted in oral transmission disseminating from one person to another. A primary aim within the African school is to render instruction that empowers the student to provide functional music.140 Interestingly, for African-Americans, a music education consisted of values inherent in both schools. Philadelphia’s African-American musicians received training so they could develop the technical proficiency required to perform dance band and marching repertoire.141 At the same time, at jam sessions, young musicians orally received their jazz music education.

140 Music that is incorporated with aspects of daily life.
Professor Kwabena Nketia states that principles of jazz music education consist of “slow absorption” via exposure to musical environments and active participation as opposed to formal teaching.\footnote{Kwanbena Nketia. ed. Warren L. D’Azevedo. \textit{The Musician in Akan Society: The Traditional Artist in African Societies}, (New York: Oxford University, 1992), 16.} Tyner provides evidence for Nketia’s theory when he says: “Black people’s music…you learn through doing it. It’s a practitioner’s kind of art form, gospel, blues and jazz. They are something you have to do because you can’t teach that in school.”\footnote{Diane D. Turner, \textit{Feeding the Soul: Black Music, Black Thought} (Chicago: Third World Press, 2011), 287.} At age thirteen, McCoy Tyner became a practitioner of African-American music by beginning and leading a successful Rhythm and Blues band in Philadelphia. A year later, he began learning and playing jazz at the jam sessions that abounded throughout Philadelphia. Jam sessions provided an environment for amateur musicians like Tyner to not only absorb the musical language of the older and seasoned jazz masters, he also became a practitioner.

### 2.6.1 Rhythm and Blues Band

In the early 1950s, McCoy Tyner avidly listened to Rhythm and Blues before seriously learning and performing jazz at jam sessions. At age thirteen, he informally began cultivating his creative musical and arranging abilities after starting a Rhythm and Blues band while in junior high school.\footnote{McCoy Tyner, interview by Billy Taylor, published} This band occasionally attempted to play jazz. According to Jarvis Jr., McCoy led the band and arranged the instrumental parts for each musician.\footnote{Jarvis Tyner, Jr., personal interview by Alton Merrell, May 7, 2012.} Saxophonist Oden Pope, a contemporary of Tyner, thought starting and leading a band was a natural progression for McCoy because as he said: “McCoy Tyner was a natural. He had a natural talent...he was able to play
Rhythm and Blues, Rock and Roll, Vanguard...he was very flexible.”

The members of Tyner’s band consisted of some of his classmates, which included Garvin Merceau on drums, Dave Brockington on tenor sax, and Tiden Bruden on bass. An additional member named Donald Keith played trombone, another played alto saxophone and yet another played trumpet, and Jarvis Jr., McCoy’s brother, regularly played percussion with the band. (See Figure 9)

![Figure 9 McCoy Tyner, tall young man standing at the left, watching his brother Jarvis, third from the far right, and close friend Garvin Merceau, far right, during a performance at Mayer Sulzberger Junior High School. Picture by John W. Mosley, Courtesy of The Charles L. Blockson Afro-American Collection, Temple University Libraries.](image)

Dave Brockington was the oldest and most experienced musician in the group. At the time, he was frequently performing throughout the city of Philadelphia. Although Dave Brockington could not read music, he still possessed a dynamic style of trombone playing that often resulted

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146 Oden Pope, personal interview by Alton Merrell, May 9, 2012.
in him walking on the bar to rouse the audience.\textsuperscript{147} Garvin Merceau, Tyner’s childhood friend, was a highly skilled drummer and percussionist. Tyner’s band developed a good reputation within the Philadelphia music community, and according to journalist Ahmed Bashier, Philadelphia jazz enthusiasts recalled Tyner leading a small group that was good at playing Rhythm and Blues and some jazz pieces.\textsuperscript{148} Another testament to the success of Tyner’s band occurred when they won an amateur night contest at Philadelphia’s Uptown Theatre, which was Philadelphia’s equivalent of New York’s Apollo Theater. (See Figure 10) According to Ahmed Bashier, comedian Mantan Moreland headlined the bill, and Tyner’s band secured their win when they played the then hit “Blow Your Horn” by trombonist Bennie Green. On the heels of that win, a plethora of performance opportunities surfaced for Tyner.

The importance of this band, as it pertained to Tyner, was that it provided an informal environment in which Tyner cultivated his ability to play and arrange African-American music. This ability, coupled with his piano technique acquired from the formal piano studies with Mr. Habershaw and Mr. Baroni, established a foundation for Tyner to learn jazz at the jam sessions that were prevalent throughout Philadelphia. The band also was important in that it exposed Tyner’s talent to professional jazz musicians who then began inviting him to play with them.\textsuperscript{149}

\textsuperscript{149} McCoy Tyner interviewed by Larry Crowe for The HistoryMakers A2004.164, September 16, 2004.
2.6.2 Jam Sessions

McCoy Tyner and a host of other Philadelphia jazz musicians greatly benefited from the jam sessions that abounded in Philadelphia. A jam session is a musical tradition in the jazz community that provides an opportunity for inexperienced musicians to learn from experienced musicians by listening to and performing with them. During the 1950s, a host of noteworthy jazz musicians lived throughout Philadelphia. The older generation of musicians, those born in the 1920s, included John Coltrane, Jimmy Heath and Benny Golson. The musicians of Tyner’s generation, those born in the 1930s, included Reggie Workman, Ted Curson, Bobby Timmons, Archie Schepp, Clarence Sharpe, Kenny Rodgers, Jimmy Vass, Odean Pope, Jimmy Garrison, Spanky DeBrest, and Albert “Tootie” Heath. Notable musicians such as Dizzy Gillespie, who had relatives living in Philadelphia, along with Clifford Brown, were not residents of Philadelphia, but would frequent the city to congregate with musicians at informal jam
Tyner underscored the supportive and thriving Philadelphia Jazz community by saying: “[T]hen [1950s] we had a jazz scene which was heavy and they [older professional musicians] were serious, wasn’t playing around. You had to know how to play, if you didn’t, they would show you, they’d help you.”

Jam sessions served three primary functions. At the jam sessions, amateur musicians were provided opportunities to test their skills in front of an audience. Also, jam sessions served as a proving ground for inexperienced musicians, as well as a place for new musicians in the area to network and show the jazz community what they musically had to offer. Thirdly, jam sessions provided a platform to introduce new talent to bandleaders.

During his teenage years at West Philadelphia High School (See Figure 11), McCoy Tyner regularly participated in jam sessions with musicians such as Lee Morgan, Archie Shepp, Bobby Timmons, Reggie Workman, Mickey Roker, and Jimmy and Albert ‘Tootie’ Heath. It was at these informal gatherings that Tyner learned how to play jazz. The jazz club served as his classroom and he stressed the integral role that the jam session played in his own musical development:

“That’s how I learned when I was coming up. I played with the musicians who I thought could teach me something, you know. And I surrounded myself with them as much as possible, as well as some people who were a part of my generation. But most of the guys were older than me.”

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151 Ibid.
Trumpeter Benny Bailey, a native Philadelphia musician who regularly participated in jam sessions, also underscored the importance of jam sessions and how they served as locations where musicians like McCoy Tyner were informally trained in jazz performance: “there were jam sessions in Philadelphia, there would be a bunch of guys in there playing…Sonny Stitt, Gene Ammons…all these guys would be playing together, taking turns, taking solos…that was part of learning…that’s what we were all doing there, learning our craft.”

Figure 11  West Philadelphia High School

A plethora of venues hosted jam sessions throughout the Philadelphia jazz community during the 1940s and 1950s, so Tyner had ample opportunity to participate in them. Some of these Philadelphia venues included Pep’s, the Showboat, the Blue Note (around 15th and Ridge), the Oasis, the Aqua Lounge in West Philly, plus all kinds of social clubs and taverns. According to bassist Reggie Workman, Tyner’s contemporary, venue owners opened their doors simply for the love of the music.

“The owners and managers [of performance venues] were so into music that they’d allow us to have jam sessions and come into the clubs and play during the early evening hours, even though we were too young to drink. There was a very healthy music scene in the community taverns at the time, aside from the fact that there were people like Tommy Monroe who ran music workshops for young musicians, or Owen Marshall’s big band workshop with new music he wrote and that rehearsed in living rooms, taverns, ballrooms, any place that had a piano and chairs and where we could make music.”

The Heritage House, a community center located in North Philadelphia, was an important landmark in the Philadelphia jazz community. Jam sessions were held here during the mid 1950s. Tommy Roberts, a New Jersey DJ, began hosting jazz jam sessions there on Fridays, and the community center became a haven for young musicians like McCoy Tyner to develop their talents and learn jazz history. Furthermore, the Heritage House was one of the few venues in the 1950s where underage youths could hear jazz masters perform. In addition to the Heritage House, the Academy of Music and Town Hall were also Philadelphia venues where underage youths could hear jazz masters. Jeffery McMillan detailed important aspects of the Heritage House jam session and the important role it played in young people’s lives:

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“Beginning in April 1954, The Workshop [name of the jam session] met every Friday from four to six, and featured prominent jazz artists who were in town playing evening engagements in Center City clubs. The first hour of each session entailed a performance by the featured artists, and was followed by an intermission, during which members of the audience were free to ask questions and socialize with the artists. The second hour was devoted to young musicians and composers, and audience members were encouraged to sit in with the artists or submit their work to be performed by the band. This unique, hands-on opportunity for youngsters to learn about jazz was enhanced by the quality of artists that appeared there. In 1954 alone, the artists included Chet Baker’s group [featuring James Moody], Johnny Hodges’s band (which included John Coltrane), Buddy Defranco’s group [featuring Sony Clark], Art Blakey’s All Stars, Bud Powell, Ella Fitzgerald, George Shearing, Roy Eldridge, the Errol Garner Trio, and Billy Taylor’s group. Beyond a seventy-five-cent admission fee, the only restriction to admittance to the workshop was that every attendee was required to be twenty years old or younger.”158

In West Philadelphia, Tyner and his musical peers also regularly hosted jam sessions in their homes that extended to musician’s homes and other locations throughout the city. Tyner described these sessions being formed by way of a grapevine:

“We had sort of a grapevine. In other words…somebody would call and say…we’re gonna have a session down at Mickey Roker’s house…then somebody would call and say there will be a jam session at McCoy’s house-shop…will be there at such and such a time. And then up in Germantown, Archie and Reggie, there would be sessions up there you know…so we had sessions all over the city.”159

Rittenhouse Hall, located on Haverford Ave., was another important for jam sessions and was also a place where musicians could live. According to Tyner, the owner would host dances on the weekend to cover the operating expenses. Additionally, Tyner and other musicians often hosted jam sessions there, truly making it what he described as a “clubhouse for musicians.”160

Some of the older musicians that attended the jam sessions throughout Philadelphia and

158 Ibid., 16.
159 McCoy Tyner interviewed by Larry Crowe for The HistoryMakers A2004.164, September 16, 2004
mentored Tyner included Frisby, who played saxophone; Carson, who played trumpet; and John Glenn, who played tenor saxophone.[The first name of the two men are unknown.]\textsuperscript{161}

2.6.3 Rehearsal Bands

In addition to the numerous jam sessions and performance venues within Philadelphia during the 1950s, rehearsal bands were another medium that cultivated the musical skills of McCoy Tyner and other up-and-coming musicians. These bands cultivated the musical skills of young musicians by providing a structured environment for them to develop their sight-reading, ensemble playing, and big band section-playing skills.\textsuperscript{162} These bands were unorthodox because they usually did not play for a paying audience. This was primarily due to the ages of the musicians and union restrictions.\textsuperscript{163} However, like the jam session, rehearsal bands created a social environment where musicians at various musical levels could play together.

An important rehearsal bandleader in Philadelphia during the 1950s was Tommy Monroe. Monroe’s band was known to have played a lot of arrangements by Dizzy Gillespie, and a host of Philadelphia musicians played in his band at some point in their music careers. In fact, Philadelphia-based pianist Don Wilson said “I can’t think of anybody from Philadelphia who didn’t play in Monroe’s band.”\textsuperscript{164} Some of the musicians included Ted Curson, Johny Splawn, Kenny Rodgers, Sam Reed, Kenny Barron, Bobby Timmons and McCoy Tyner.”\textsuperscript{165}

\textsuperscript{161} Ibid., 286.
\textsuperscript{163} Ibid., 9.
\textsuperscript{164} Ibid., 8.
\textsuperscript{165} Ibid., 8.
Tyner also played in Cal Massey’s rehearsal band, a band that played a significant role in advancing his professional career. (see 2.7.1)

2.6.4 House Bands

After a season of participating in and learning from experienced musicians at jam sessions during his high school years, Tyner was soon promoted to playing in numerous house bands throughout Philadelphia while in high school. Elite jazz musicians who performed in Philadelphia were usually backed by a local rhythm section that regularly included Tyner on piano, Reggie Workman on bass, and either Eddie Campbell or Lex Humphries on drums. “Pep’s” and the “Showboat,” two clubs where well-known out-of-town artists often performed in Philadelphia, were two of Tyner’s favorite places to play. His experiences playing in house bands provided opportunities for him to play with well-known jazz artists like trumpeters Miles Davis, and Kenny Durham, and saxophonists Sonny Stitt, Jackie McLean, and John Coltrane when they came to town as a single. Tyner said of his experience with house bands, “I learned so much from playing with more experienced musicians. Of course I had to jack my age up to play in those clubs,” Philadelphia trumpeter Ted Curson also detailed the fertile local environment Tyner benefited from in talking about a music store called Music City.

166 A group of musicians who regularly play at an establishment such as a jazz nightclub. These bands often accompany guest musicians.
169 Single - Without a band
171 A music store on Eighteenth street and Chesnut in center city Philadelphia. Music city became a dual music shop and concert venue.
“[Music City] was like the scene in Philadelphia for young cats and old cats. They would bring guys in from New York to play and they would have the young guys sit in with them. If you played pretty good you always ended up with some kind of gig.”172

It was through performance experiences like this that Tyner developed a good musical reputation, and a network of contacts within the Philadelphia Jazz community. The opportunities Tyner received to perform in house bands were not only attributed to his talent, contacts and reputation, it was also made possible through the Philadelphia Musicians Union Local 274. In order to work as a musician in Philadelphia during the 1950s, all musicians including Tyner, had to join the Union Local 274 led by president Jimmy Adams. Local 274 was the black Philadelphia local of the American Federation of Musicians. From 1935 through 1971, the organization advocated and secured quality employment for black Philadelphia musicians like Tyner and others. Diane D. Turner further explained the purpose of the black Union 274 by saying the organization combated the discrimination black musicians received from white labor organizations beginning in 1935, when white labor Union 77 barred blacks from joining.173 In the 1940s and 1950s, Philadelphia’s black musicians struggled for political, economic and cultural recognition, and the union provided black musicians representation via spokesmen who advocated and spoke on behalf of African-American jazz musicians.174 According to saxophonist and union member Oden Pope, Local 274 had a significant amount of political and economic influence because black musicians had to join the Local in order to work in various clubs throughout Philadelphia. In addition to Tyner, other Philadelphia music luminaries such as John Coltrane, Lee Morgan, Dizzy Gillespie, Benny Golson, Nina Simone, Jimmy and Percy

174 Oden Pope, personal interview by Alton Merrell, May 9, 2012.
Heath, Philly Joe Jones also joined. Membership in Local 274 was denoted by the possession of a cabaret card, and if black musicians did not own a card, or if the card had expired, they were not legally permitted to work in the city of Philadelphia. A colleague of McCoy Tyner, Oden Pope recalled a time when the organization enforced its strict membership guidelines: “I remember when Danny McQue, who was an agent for Local 274, went out to musicians’ gigs to collect union dues which were approximately 10 or 12 dollars…I remember several times when he would stop the music, collect dues, then leave.”

In addition to securing employment for African-American musicians like McCoy Tyner, the Philadelphia Local 274 also provided a performance space for Tyner and other up-and-coming jazz musicians to practice and develop their talents. This performance space was called the Clef Club, and was located on Broad Street. According to Diane D. Turner, the Local provided an environment for musicians to develop their musical reputations, and provided them a space to experiment with new musical concepts with each other. Overall, the Philadelphia Local 274 community encouraged the growth of aspiring African-American musicians like McCoy Tyner and others and membership in the union made it possible for Tyner to play in house bands throughout Philadelphia, an integral part of his informal training.

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175 Oden Pope, personal interview by Alton Merrell, May 9, 2012.
2.7 PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCES

While in high school, at age fifteen, McCoy Tyner began playing professionally.\(^{177}\) In 1954, he professionally free-lanced with a number of Philadelphia jazz bands and musicians, including trumpeter Lee Morgan and tenor saxophonist Paul Jeffrey. He also played at fraternity dances, in clubs, and in house bands, as was detailed previously. Tyner’s most significant professional affiliations and experiences prior to joining the John Coltrane Quartet were with Calvin Massey and with the Benny Golson-Art Farmer group called “The Jazztet.” Playing in drummer Max Roach’s group for a short period, as well as the aforementioned groups, contributed to the development of Tyner’s early piano style.

2.7.1 Working with Calvin Massey and Max Roach

At the age of seventeen, McCoy Tyner joined bandleader and composer Calvin Massey’s band in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Massey had a unique ability to recognize tremendous talent\(^{178}\) as he did with McCoy Tyner. The union of Massey and Tyner was of monumental importance due to the fact that Massey introduced saxophonist John Coltrane to McCoy Tyner, a meeting that evolved into a close relationship that significantly changed the direction of jazz.

Massey’s quintet, which solely played Massey’s compositions,\(^{179}\) consisted of Massey on trumpet, Clarence Sharp on alto saxophone, McCoy Tyner on piano, Albert ‘Tootie’ Heath on

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\(^{179}\) Ibid.
drums, and Jimmie Garrison on bass. John Coltrane and Donald Byrd appeared periodically with the group. In this band, McCoy Tyner’s sight-reading, ensemble playing, and band section-playing skills were cultivated. These skills later benefited him during his brief stint with Art Farmer and Benny Golson’s Jazztet. From 1956 to 1958, Massey’s group regularly performed in Philadelphia clubs, including the Red Rooster, where Massey introduced Tyner to John Coltrane. Interestingly, Massey had a close and long-standing relationship with John Coltrane in Philadelphia before John met McCoy. According to Charlotte Massey, Cal’s widow, Cal met Coltrane in Philadelphia during his teen years. Charlotte detailed the relationship Massey and Coltrane had:

“Cal would follow Trane around like a puppy. Coltrane and Cal lived together in Coltrane’s mother’s house. Cal used to call Coltrane ‘country’ because of Trane’s quiet personality. Coltrane never had much to say verbally. They constantly talked about music. Coltrane eventually bought a house for his mother in West Philly. Coltrane and Cal would commute between Philly and New York City for gigs.”

McCoy’s historic meeting with John Coltrane occurred when he was played a matinee performance with Calvin Massey’s band at the Red Rooster, a local club in West Philadelphia. While on sabbatical from the Miles Davis group to visit his mother in West Philadelphia, John Coltrane visited the Red Rooster to listen to Cal Massey’s band. The club owner asked John if he would perform at the club while in town and Coltrane consented. Because Coltrane did not have a band, he played with McCoy Tyner and the rest of Massey’s rhythm section. This meeting with John Coltrane would dramatically alter the course of his music career and foster

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Tyner’s development. McCoy was also introduced to his future wife, Aisha Tyner, during his tenure with the Massey band. Aisha was the sister of the Massey band’s regular singer.\textsuperscript{182}

During Tyner’s tenure in Cal Massey’s band, he was also provided with influential experience to play with drummer Max Roach and his group consisting of George Morrow on bass, Sonny Rollins on tenor, and Kenny Dorham on trumpet. Max Roach occupies an important place in the history of jazz because together with drummer Kenny Clarke, Roach invented a new style of drumming that involved moving the fixed pulse to the ride cymbal from the bass drum.\textsuperscript{183} This practice evolved as a result of Roach and Clarke having to play extremely fast tempos when the new bebop style of jazz emerged in the 1940s. After Tyner played with Roach for approximately a week while in high school, Roach asked Tyner to join his band when Tyner was only seventeen. Excited about the opportunity, McCoy shared it with his mother, but she did not permit him to go on the road before finishing high school.\textsuperscript{184} Nevertheless, Tyner said his experience playing with Roach was formative because it taught him how to feel relaxed while playing fast tempos.\textsuperscript{185}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{182} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{184} Jarvis Tyner, Jr., personal interview by Alton Merrell, May 7, 2012.
\item \textsuperscript{185} Ahmed Bashier, "McCoy Tyner." Jazz Journal, 19 no.12 (1966): 29.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
2.7.2 Working with Art Farmer and Benny Golson – The Jazztet

In 1960, when he was twenty-two years old, McCoy Tyner joined trumpeter Art Farmer and saxophonist Benny Golson’s New York-based band called “The Jazztet.” In addition to Farmer and Golson, the band consisted of drummer Lex Humphries, trombonist Curtis Fuller and twin brother of Art Farmer, Addison Farmer, on bass. Tyner’s short six-month tenure with the “The Jazztet” was an important stepping-stone in his music career. As a member of the group, McCoy Tyner received national exposure. He also moved to New York City, the jazz capital of the world. The move signified a graduation to the “Major Leagues” within the jazz community. During his tenure with “The Jazztet,” Tyner exercised and cultivated his sight-reading and accompanying skills, and recorded an acclaimed hard-bop album entitled “Meet the Jazztet.” Tyner’s experience in “The Jazztet” was both pleasant and educational. He confirmed this when he said, “That band was a wonderful band. I learned a lot.” Bandmate Curtis Fuller also stated that Benny Golson, a former piano major at Howard University, gave Tyner a few lessons in piano technique.

McCoy Tyner’s opportunity to join the “Jazztet” came after playing a concert with saxophonist Benny Golson in 1959. A Philadelphia based jazz organization hired Golson to play a concert at the Tioga Theater in Philadelphia (see Figure 12) with a local rhythm section, and Tyner was part of that rhythm section. Golson recalled his first encounter playing with Tyner, and the process in which he tested Tyner’s musical skills prior to inviting him to join “The Jazztet.”

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187 Curtis Fuller, interviewed by Alton Merrell, April 19, 2012.
188 A rhythm section is a collection of musicians in a jazz band consisting of a pianist or guitarist, bassist, and drummer.
“It must have been around 1959 when I met McCoy: he was nineteen years old...In Philadelphia there was a jazz organization who would bring luminaries from New York who would play with a local rhythm section...the piano player was McCoy Tyner...the concerts were on Sunday at the Tioga Theater...I played that Sunday afternoon with the group. I was so impressed with the way he [Tyner] played, and I called a tune in a key we don’t usually play in...and he played with ease. So when I got back to New York, not right away, but eventually I decided to put the sextet together, and at the same time Art [Farmer] had the same idea going through his mind and we started to laugh...So who are we gonna get...I recommended McCoy and Art never heard of him, and he was a little dubious and said ‘Can he play?’ I said ‘Oh, take my word...he can play. ‘Well’ he said ‘well ok.’ And I called McCoy. And it was like he was beside the phone waiting for it to ring and for me to ask him.”

As a member of the group, Tyner’s musical skills received national exposure, and he, along with his wife Aisha, relocated to New York City, a desire of many young ambitious jazz musicians at the time. Tyner’s national exposure with “The Jazztet” primarily occurred via an

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189 Benny Golson, interviewed by Alton Merrell, April 21, 2012.
album he recorded with the group entitled “Meet the Jazztet.” Recorded in February of 1960, the album, a hard-bop classic,\(^{190}\) featured first-rate solos from Tyner along with Golson and Farmer. Also contributing to the album’s national appeal were Golson’s original compositions such as “Killer Joe” and early renditions of “I Remember Clifford” and “Blues March” on which Tyner’s excellent improvisational and accompanying skills can be heard.

Additionally, Tyner’s sight-reading skill and ability to play detailed musical arrangements were exercised during his tenure with “The Jazztet.” Prior to joining the group, Tyner was accustomed to playing at informal jam sessions and spontaneously accompanying jazz artists in Philadelphia without written musical arrangements. As a member of “The Jazztet,” Tyner played many compositions written and arranged by Benny Golson. Those compositions forced Tyner to play specifically notated piano parts, inhibiting him somewhat. There were sections designated for him to improvise, but he had to return to his written piano part before too long. Also, as a member of “The Jazztet,” Tyner also gained experience playing in a professional-looking group. “The Jazztet” had a reputation of being very professional, elegant, and classy, reminiscent of Duke Ellington and his orchestra during performances. McCoy Tyner described this and his involvement in the organized musical group environment:

> “Playing in the Jazztet was like playing in a small big band. Benny is a phenomenal arranger. He took three horns and made it sound fat\(^{191}\). It was really great. I was really proud to be in that band…it was my first time being in an organized situation like that, with good music, the band looked great. It was really wonderful.”\(^{192}\)


\(^{191}\) A slang term denoting a full or plush sound.

\(^{192}\) McCoy Tyner, interviewed by Billy Taylor, April 24, 1995.
While in “The Jazztet,” Tyner was not only provided an opportunity to exercise and cultivate his accompanying skill, but that skill was lauded by Golson because he was fond of the manner in which Tyner accompanied him when he improvised. Unlike some pianists who inhibit a jazz improviser by playing inappropriate chords or rhythms during their solo, Tyner provided inspiration and support when Benny Golson and his band mates improvised. Golson described the experience thus:

“It was fresh and daring and punctuating when he comped behind you. And it was inspirational, that is he gave you a feeling like you wanted to play because of what was happening behind you. If nothing is happening behind you, you got no inspiration and you have to play in spite of it. But he made me feel like playing, adding to what I heard coming from him.”

Benny Golson also praised Tyner for being a good listener who appropriately responded to what others played in the band. He said:

“[Tyner] listened. He didn’t just sit back there and play what he felt. He accompanied you. He played according to what I was doing. That’s the way Philly Joe played the drums. He listened. And I took a breath, and he’d play me a rough flam tap or something to set up my next expression. That kind of thing. That’s accompanying. And that’s the way McCoy was. He added to what I was doing. He wasn’t just back there not listening comping.”

After his six-month tenure with “The Jazztet,” Tyner left the group to fulfill a prior and personal commitment he made to tenor saxophonist John Coltrane in 1955. Tyner spoke of his commitment to Coltrane when he said, “We had sort of a verbal understanding that if he ever got his own group [after he left Miles Davis’ group], I would play piano.” Leaving “The Jazztet” was not easy for Tyner and according to him, “there were probably some bad feelings at first with members of “The Jazztet,” but I think they understood better later on. John’s group was

193 Benny Golson, interviewed by Alton Merrell, April 21, 2012.
194 Ibid.
where I belonged.” Benny Golson gave further insight explaining the difficulty Tyner had in leaving the group when he said:

“But he [McCoy] was leery about bringing it[leaving] into fruition because of our [Benny and John] personal relationship, but that didn’t bother me…what he [Tyner] was doing was more suited to what John was doing…getting with John sort of freed him up I think…So playing with the Jazztet, I can imagine now as I look back was sort of holding him back from what he wanted to do. And McCoy told me John was a little reluctant to hire him because John and I were such good friends. You know? But John and I never had any feelings about it. But laughingly, when I saw John, I said ‘Fine friend you are. You take me out to get my piano player and you steal him.’”

When McCoy Tyner left “The Jazztet” in 1960, he already amassed invaluable professional experience playing in Calvin Massey, Max Roach, and Art Farmer and Benny Golson’s groups. Furthermore, Tyner garnered indispensable training playing in jam sessions and in rehearsal and house bands. Collectively, these experiences, in addition to his formal training, musical influences and family support, established a firm musical foundation upon which Tyner could achieve fame during his tenure with the John Coltrane Quartet.

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196 Ibid.
197 Benny Golson, interviewed by Alton Merrell, April 21, 2012.
3.0 JOHN COLTRANE

Tenor and soprano saxophonist John Coltrane is one of the most celebrated musicians in the history of jazz. Along with bebop saxophonist Charlie Parker, John Coltrane is arguably the most innovative and widely imitated saxophonist in the history of American music. In 1960, Coltrane formed his own quartet, of which McCoy Tyner became a member the same year. During his tenure with the group from 1960 through 1965, Tyner not only toured and recorded acclaimed albums with the Coltrane quartet, also known as the “Classic Quartet,” but he also developed a highly influential piano style. His innovative piano style has been studied and assimilated into the musical vocabulary of many renowned pianists throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Tyner did not create his original piano style in a vacuum; to the contrary, it was fostered in the ideal musical environment that Coltrane and his bandmates created, particularly from 1960 through 1963. Multi-instrumentalist Eric Dolphy also influenced both Tyner and Coltrane from 1961 through 1962. Hence, the following chapter examines two areas that yield insight into how Tyner’s style evolved within the Classic Quartet. First, the valuable musical lessons that Coltrane taught Tyner and his bandmates are examined. These lessons spurred Tyner and his musical colleagues to develop their own musical voices by developing personalized performance styles. Second, John Coltrane’s eclectic musical interests, heard in his compositions that were played by the Classic Quartet in the early 1960s, are examined to see how Coltrane’s music influenced the formation of Tyner’s new style. Prior to examining the
aforementioned areas, I will discuss both the sociocultural and musical context of the early 1960s to provide a clearer understanding of the climate that inspired John Coltrane to create the music that significantly influenced McCoy Tyner.

3.1 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

3.1.1 Sociocultural Background

The sociopolitical climate of the United States was in a state of flux during Tyner’s tenure with the Classic Quartet from 1960 through 1965. African-Americans at large grew tired of the racial injustices and discrimination they had been enduring, which resulted in them being socially excluded from mainstream American society. African-American discontent and struggles for justice and racial equality in the United States led to the emergence of the Civil Rights Era: a defining period in American history when African-Americans collectively fought for their right to political equality and social freedom. Many historians purport that the Civil Rights Era began in 1955 with the Montgomery Bus Boycott and ended in 1965 following the passing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Historian Daniel W. Aldridge III defined the Civil Rights Era as the collective effort of African-Americans

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198 A political and social protest campaign against racial segregation on public transportation in Montgomery, Alabama. Rosa Parks was the leading figure of the movement when she refused to give her seat to a white person in December of 1956.
199 Civil Rights Act of 1964 – United States legislation that outlawed major forms of discrimination against African-Americans and women including racial segregation.
200 Voting Rights Act of 1965 – United States legislation that outlawed discriminatory voting practices responsible for the disenfranchisement of African-Americans in the U.S.
“overturning the South’s legal and extralegal system of Jim Crow...creating a radically transformed society in which blacks fully became part of the American nation.”

Amid this time period when African-American’s were struggling to acquire social justice and racial equality during the Civil Rights Era, McCoy Tyner experienced racial discrimination as a young professional musician. Tyner did occasionally perform with white musicians like Red Rodney and Ziggy Vines at the Red Hill Inn in New Jersey; however, this was uncommon because African-American musicians like Tyner were generally relegated to playing in segregated clubs and theaters. At the same time, for lucrative reasons, larger distinguished clubs did not segregate musicians and hired well-known African-American artists like Dinah Washington and Sarah Vaughan. Nevertheless, many local Philadelphia and regional musicians like McCoy Tyner primarily played in segregated clubs, and regularly had to suffer the subservient minstrel show stigma placed on them because they did not have a household name like Vaughan or Washington. Jarvis Jr. recalled a racially discriminatory encounter that he had while playing in McCoy’s Rhythm and Blues band in the mid 1950s.

“There were these old house rocking bars down there. Cheap booze, great music, and people would go down there and ‘fingerpop’ as they used to say, all night. McCoy got the band a gig down there, and the owner of the club said to McCoy, ‘Look, you guys aren’t lively enough.’ He said ‘Look, here’s what I want you to do. McCoy, I want you to keep playing, and when you get the group to a certain level, you stop playing. And I want the tenor player to get on your shoulders and you walk up and down the bar with him’... He saw the band as a Minstrel Show. This is the owner of the club, terrible just terrible. And McCoy said ‘I can’t do that.’ And the club owner said ‘Why not? We just want to get the crowd excited and coming back.’ And McCoy said ‘I can’t do it.’ He (McCoy) quit the gig. I was really proud of him for that.”

201 Jim Crow were laws enacted between 1876 and 1965 mandating racial segregation in all public facilities in Southern US states with a separate but equal status for African-Americans.
204 Jarvis Tyner, Jr., personal interview by Alton Merrell, May 7, 2012.
Although McCoy Tyner attempted not to frequent clubs that promoted racism,\footnote{Diane D. Turner, \textit{Feeding the Soul: Black Music, Black Thought} (Chicago: Third World Press, 2011), 289.} he did encounter it as a young professional musician during his tenure with the Classic Quintet. While traveling with the group, Tyner recalled times when he was not permitted to stay in certain hotels in New Orleans, and at other times endured overt prejudice in St. Louis Missouri and cities in the southern United States.\footnote{Ibid., 283.}

While a host of African-American Civil Rights leaders like Martin Luther King Jr. and Medgar Evers labored to assimilate African-Americans into mainstream American society during the Civil Rights Era, other African-American leaders such as Malcolm X advocated for black nationalistic ideals that promoted African-American separatism and pride. Black nationalism, a prominent political and social movement of during the 1960s, attempted to establish a social identity among African-Americans who had been stripped of their identity during slavery, thereafter suffering years of social rejection. Black Nationalists also sought to provide a context for African-American moral, cultural, and material advancement amid a racist and segregated American society.\footnote{E.U. Essien-Udom, \textit{Black Nationalism: A Search for an Identity in America} (Baltimore: The University of Chicago Press, 1962), vii.}

In conjunction with the social flux present in American society during the 1960s spurred by the politically charged Civil Rights and Black Nationalistic movements, American jazz music was also in a state of metamorphosis when Tyner joined the Classic Quintet in 1960. While African-Americans were seeking liberation from social oppression, jazz musicians were simultaneously rejecting aspects of the jazz tradition that many musicians and enthusiasts considered fundamental. This resulted in jazz becoming freer in nature: during this time, jazz transitioned from the prominent hard-bop style of the late 1950s to the new free jazz style in the
1960s. Important to note is the fact that jazz did not directly morph into free jazz from hard-bop. There was a brief “transitional period” described by Dr. Nathan Davis in which Modal jazz emerged, naturally helping jazz transition from hard-bop to free jazz.\(^{208}\) John Coltrane played a significant role in this transition as a leading practitioner of each style. The following overview delineates when McCoy Tyner’s career intersected with Coltrane’s career, as well the relational and musical influence Coltrane had on the development of Tyner’s style.

### 3.1.2 Musical Background

John Coltrane’s music career can be divided into three periods: 1955 – 1960 hard bop and “Sheets of Sound,” 1960 – 1965 Classic Quartet and modal compositions, 1965 – 1967 avant-garde/free jazz.\(^ {209}\) During the first period of his career (1955-1960), John Coltrane developed a reputation as a hard-bop musician, just as McCoy Tyner did early in his career. Coltrane also developed a highly influential style of playing the saxophone that critic Ira Gitler termed “Sheets of Sound.”\(^ {210}\) This method of performance involves playing fast notes in irregular phrase groups.\(^ {211}\) According to saxophonist and composer Benny Golson, Coltrane developed this technique by practicing Art Tatum runs.\(^ {212}\) In 1955, Coltrane garnered national acclaim when he joined Miles Davis’ quintet, but was fired two years later for unreliability caused by drug and alcohol abuse. Following this, Coltrane played with pianist Thelonious Monk for six months and began recording as a leader. Each recording that Coltrane produced during this time

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\(^{212}\) Benny Golson, personal interview by Alton Merrell, April 21, 2012.
demonstrated growth in his technical, harmonic and rhythmic sensibilities, which can be heard on his 1959 recording of “Giant Steps.” Coltrane returned to Miles Davis’ group in 1958 and participated in the modal jazz\(^{213}\) movement spearheaded by Davis. He played on Davis’ influential modal jazz albums “Milestones” and “Kind of Blue” recorded in 1958 and 1959 respectively. Coltrane continued to explore and expound upon the modal jazz style during the second phase of his career; an exploration that had a significant impact on McCoy Tyner.

Tyner joined Coltrane’s band during the second period of Coltrane’s career (1960-1965). After Coltrane left the Miles Davis group in April of 1960, Coltrane formed his first quartet in preparation for a scheduled performance at the Jazz Gallery in New York City. After experimenting with different personnel, Coltrane decided that his band, which became known as the “Classic Quartet,” would consist of bassist Jimmy Garrison, drummer Elvin Jones and pianist McCoy Tyner, who joined the group in July of 1960.\(^{214}\) It was during this period that Coltrane’s influence on Tyner’s piano style became most apparent. Specific factors that contributed to this transformation include the invaluable lessons Coltrane taught Tyner, as well as the incorporation of elements from modal jazz, Indian classical and African music styles into the Classic Quartet’s musical repertoire.\(^{215}\)

The third and final period of Coltrane’s career was from 1965-1967, which were also the two remaining years of his life. Here, his music expanded into Free Jazz, a style that evolved in

\(^{213}\) A form of jazz that utilizes church modes derived in the Middle Ages, rather than chord progressions as a harmonic and melodic framework.


the 1960s that drastically overturned many traditional or expected elements of jazz.\textsuperscript{216} During this time, Coltrane’s music also became saturated with spirituality and Eastern philosophy. McCoy Tyner recorded several Free Jazz albums with Coltrane during this period, some of which include “Ascension,” “Om” and “Living Space.” Coltrane further associated himself with the Free Jazz style by incorporating a second saxophonist and a second drummer in the group, Pharoah Sanders and Rashied Ali, respectively. Shortly after recording Coltrane’s “Meditations” album on November 23, 1965, Tyner left the group because he felt that Coltrane was going in a musical direction that did not include piano;\textsuperscript{217} however, two years before the start of the third period of Coltrane’s career, all of the components of McCoy Tyner’s mature piano style had already manifested themselves, as heard on Coltrane’s “Live at Birdland” album recorded in 1963.

\textsuperscript{216} Henry Martin and Keith Waters, \textit{Essential Jazz : The First 100 Years}, 2nd ed. (Australia United States: Thomson/Schirmer, 2009), 189.
\textsuperscript{216} Ibid., 184-185.
Before ever playing together professionally, McCoy Tyner and John Coltrane were close friends. Tyner viewed Coltrane as a “big brother.” Prior to Tyner’s tenure with Coltrane’s quartet, the two of them used to sit on the porch at Coltrane’s mother’s home in Philadelphia (see Figure 13) and converse about music and life. Tyner also became well acquainted with Coltrane’s family. During an interview with Larry Crowe, Tyner underscored the close relationship he had with Coltrane, and how their friendship, along with Tyner’s extraordinary musicianship, encouraged Coltrane to ask Tyner to join his group in 1955, five years before his group’s inception.

“He [John] was playing with Miles at the time but he took a break mid-50s, he took a break from Miles and that’s when I met him, when he came home. And I used to go to his mother’s house and sit on the porch and we’d talk. (See Figure 13) That’s when he was working on ‘Giant Steps’ and all those compositions…he was doing a lot of writing during that time…he was like a big brother to me. I used to sit down and talk to John. He took me kind of like a brother…he was very warm…and I got to know his family quite a bit actually…he said ‘when I form my own band I want you to join the band.’”

This quasi-familial relationship with Coltrane allowed Tyner to be open to mentoring by Coltrane.

Professionally, John Coltrane, who was twelve years older than Tyner, had the greatest musical influence on Tyner, and Tyner credits Coltrane as being his greatest teacher. According to Coltrane biographer Bill Cole:

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“McCoy and Trane couldn’t have been closer to the ideal of master teacher and student. Their characters and their personalities were extremely close. Both were very humble-in their introverted way. However, they always were accessible if approached and more than willing to talk about their art. Tyner loved Trane’s [Coltrane’s] music and was mesmerized by Trane’s playing.”

McCoy Tyner learned a lot about music from regularly playing with Coltrane and spoke of this during an interview saying, “He was a major teacher in my life. He taught me a lot just by playing with him, listening to him every night. How could you not learn?”

The first of two important lessons Coltrane taught Tyner and the rest of his bandmates was to develop their own musical voice. Instead of micro-managing his bandmates by telling

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222 Musical voice refers to the distinct musical style of a musician distinguishing him or her from other musicians.
them what to play, Coltrane gave Tyner and his other band members the liberty to express themselves when they performed. According to Tyner:

“I think the fact that being with John, and him allowing you to be yourself, I mean, he wasn’t the type of person that, you know, that would be categorized as a dictator. He allowed you the freedom to do what you wanted to do.”

According to Tyner, a musician’s voice is a direct reflection of who they are as a person. The opportunity he had to play with Coltrane gave him a chance to learn things about himself while simultaneously developing his musical voice. Tyner spoke of this opportunity and Coltrane’s influence on the development of his musical voice:

“Playing with him, you get a chance to get a clear view of who you were. That’s what music is supposed to be. Its an art form, a reflection of who you are….he sort of nurtured me by giving me an opportunity to play with this rich ensemble. He never told you what to do, he just created the atmosphere so that you would feel free to experiment. It was like a school. I think when he was with Miles he had that opportunity as well, so he passed that on to us. He gave me Elvin and Jimmy a chance to learn things about ourselves.”

Clearly, Coltrane created an environment in his band for Tyner to create his own musical style.

The second lesson Coltrane taught Tyner and his bandmates was the importance of listening to their fellow bandmates during a musical performance. Coltrane taught this lesson in word and in deed. Coltrane listened to the musical contributions of his bandmates during performances and musically responded in a way that acknowledged and respected their contributions while personally adding to the group’s collective musical dialogue. According to Tyner, this selfless impacted every member of the quartet and resulted in a musical environment where each band member intently listened to the other, not only on the bandstand, but off as well. During an interview, Tyner stated that when each band member selflessly listened to the

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other, each member opened the door to receive something in return. In other words, when Tyner made listening to his bandmates a priority, he “opened the door” to discover a treasure – his own style, a style that as historian Mark Gridley wrote, “served an important function within the group and significantly contributed to the signature sound of the Classic quartet.”

### 3.3 COLTRANE AS A MUSICAL INFLUENCE

John Coltrane’s eclectic musical interests, as heard in his own compositions played by the Classic Quartet in the early 1960s, also significantly influenced Tyner’s development. During an interview in 1960 with Don DeMichael for Downbeat magazine, Coltrane spoke of his eclectic musical interests and desire to incorporate a variety of musical styles into his improvisations.

> “I have certain things I’d like to present in my solos….I want it to cover as many forms of music as I can put into a jazz context and play on my instruments. I like Eastern music. Yusef Lateef has been using this in his playing for some time. And Ornette Coleman sometimes plays music with Spanish content as well as other exotic flavored music. In these approaches, there is something I can draw on and use in the way I like to play.”

Specifically, John Coltrane’s eclectic musical interest in modal jazz, Indian Classical music, and African music influenced the formation of three fundamental components of McCoy Tyner’s style. These components include: bass dyads influenced by Coltrane’s interest in Indian Classical music, quartal chords influenced by Coltrane’s interest in modal jazz, and pentatonic scales influenced by Coltrane’s interest in African music.

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Tyner’s style involved playing bass dyads forcefully and loudly with his left hand in the low range of the piano.

![Bass Dyad, D Tonal Center](image1)

The second component of Tyner’s style consists of quartal chords. These chords are constructed using quartal harmony – chords constructed with the interval of a fourth as its fundamental building block. Pianists prior to Tyner such as Art Tatum, Bud Powell, and Red Garland primarily constructed chords utilizing tertian harmony – chords constructed with the interval of a third as its fundamental building block. Tyner employed tertian chords early in his career, but between 1961 and 1962 when playing with Coltrane, Tyner’s approach to playing harmony expanded intervallically to playing quartal chords.

![Quartal Chords](image2)

The third component consists of pentatonic scales played with Tyner’s right hand. A pentatonic scale is a five-note scale that Tyner frequently employed in his improvisations. To build tension and release throughout his solo, he often employed the technique of superimposition by playing pentatonic scales that suggest tonal centers other than that being stated by the rhythm section. An example of this can be heard in his solo on “Bessie’s Blues” from Coltrane’s “Crescent” album recorded in 1964 and Coltrane’s “A Love Supreme” album recorded the same year.
3.3.1 Modal Jazz and Quartal Chords

As mentioned previously, jazz underwent a significant amount of change between the late 1950s and early 1960s. A new style of jazz emerged called modal jazz that allowed musicians to improvise without being fettered by a plethora of chord progressions as was typical within the hard-bop jazz style. What created an unfettered improvisational style within the Modal jazz style was improvisers using Gregorian modes, also known as church modes, as sources for melodic and harmonic creativity. For example, a prominent mode used in modal jazz style is the Dorian mode. Another characteristic of modal jazz that makes the improvisation sound freer in nature includes a slow moving harmonic rhythm in which a single chord may last for four, eight, sixteen or more measures, the use of pedal points, and the absence or suppression of functional harmonic relationships.228

John Coltrane’s incorporation of the aforementioned Modal jazz characteristics into his compositions and improvisations in the early 1960s influenced Tyner to begin using quartal harmonies. An analysis of all the recordings that the Classic Quartet recorded from 1960 to 1964 reveals that Tyner used quartal chords more frequently as Coltrane’s music became more modal in nature. For example, on the first recording Tyner made with Coltrane, an album entitled “Coltrane Jazz” recorded in 1960, quartal chords are not evident in his solo on “Village Blues.”

The same is true when listening to Tyner’s solo on “My Favorite Things” and “Summertime” from Coltrane’s acclaimed “My Favorite Things” album recorded in 1960. However, by 1962, Tyner’s employment of quartal chords in one or both hands had significantly increased. By 1963, Tyner regularly implemented quartal chords as heard on “Afro Blue” from Coltrane’s album “Live at Birdland” recorded in 1963.

Although classical composers such as Claude Debussy and Arnold Schoenberg incorporated quartal harmony in their music in the early 20th century, McCoy Tyner was the first jazz musician to use quartal harmonies in a way that the perfect fourth interval created within the harmony did not resolve to the third for long periods of time. During an interview, Tyner spoke of his harmonic innovation:

“I think that I was hearing that [quartal chords]. You have to hear these things in order to produce anything lasting and anything with any artistic importance. It’s got to be a part of you; otherwise you can’t do it. I attribute that to anybody else, like John, for instance...he came out of Charlie Parker...he worked with Earl Bostic...Johnny Hodges...all that experience contributed to what he became. I think that in my case, I was hearing some different things, and I felt as though it was a good situation to develop what I was doing...I think that you have to be able to hear it - what you don’t hear, you don’t feel inside.”

John Coltrane championed Tyner’s usage of quartal harmony/chords because it provided an open harmonic sound that did not restrict him while he improvised. During an interview, Tyner stated Coltrane influenced him to plane his quartal chords within modally based compositions by telling him to “keep moving” as he comped behind Coltrane’s solos. Tyner regularly employed the practice of quartal planning within modally based compositions, which became an

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229 Trane Tracks: The Legacy of John Coltrane, DVD, EFORFILMS, McCoy Tyner Interview, July 5, 2005
230 Ibid.
231 Planing is the parallel movement of chords eliminating the sense of harmonic progression.
attribute of his style and can be heard in compositions like “Spiritual” from “Live! At The Village Vanguard” album, and the composition “Miles’ Mode” from Coltrane’s self-titled album.

![Quartal Chords Tyner Plans along the B Dorian Mode within his solo in "Miles' Mode" released in 1962.](image)

**Figure 17** Quartal Chords Tyner Plans along the B Dorian Mode within his solo in "Miles' Mode" released in 1962.
3.3.2 Indian Classical Music and Bass Dyads

John Coltrane’s interest in North Indian classical music became increasingly evident as he began incorporating characteristics of the style into his compositions in the early 1960s. This influence prompted Tyner to begin playing bass dyads as part of his new piano style.

Originating from South Asia, the Hindustani Indian classical music style specifically disseminated from northern India. The Hindustani style favors the use of musical instruments and is characterized by a repeated song form that serves as a vehicle for extended instrumental improvisations.

A review of jazz history shows that the Hindustani style had a significant influence on jazz musicians like guitarist John McLaughlin, saxophonists Yusef Lateef and John Coltrane. In the early 1960s, Coltrane began listening to Hindustani Indian sitar master Ravi Shankar. Shankar became Coltrane’s teacher and had a significant impact on his musical style. Coltrane’s love for Ravi Shankar’s music was reflected in naming his son Ravi in 1965 and when he said: “I like Ravi Shankar very much. When I hear his music, I want to copy it – not note for note of course, but in his spirit.” While being influenced by Ravi Shankar in the early 1960s, John Coltrane began incorporating two defining characteristics of the Hindustani music style, static harmony and drone oriented bass lines, into his compositions. For example, John Coltrane’s album “My Favorite Things,” released in October of 1960, extensively employs static harmony.

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236 Ibid.
and drone-like bass lines. In reference to the drone heard in Coltrane’s rendition of “My Favorite Things,” John said “I’ve been listening more and more to Indian music, and I’ve been trying to use some of their methods in some of the things we’re doing, but at that time [the creation of “My Favorite Things”] it was more or less subconscious.” The Indian drone, also known as a pedal point in western music, can also be heard in compositions such as “Olé” from Coltrane’s album “Olé Coltrane,” “India” from the album “Impressions,” and “Resolution” from his four-part suite “A Love Supreme” album recorded in 1964. Figure 18 below illustrates Coltrane’s use of the drone in “Resolution” from his widely celebrated four-part suite “A Love Supreme” recorded in 1964. All these compositions exemplify the significant influence the Hindustani Indian music style had on Coltrane’s musical style.

**Figure 18** Phrase One of "Resolution" from "A Love Supreme."

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Within Coltrane’s drone-filled compositions, McCoy Tyner began playing bass dyads with his left hand in the early 1960s. Tyner regularly played bass dyads rhythmically on the downbeat, which accentuated the dominant tonal center as Coltrane’s improvisations became more and more atonal in the 1960s. The bass dyads on the downbeat served as an anchor and springboard for Coltrane to generate less tonal improvisations. In a 1962 interview, Tyner said:

My playing, I believe, possessed…metronomic rhythmic accuracy…because I have a good strong left hand. John knew that he could count on this rhythmic foundation [bass dyads], on this carpet [planned quartal chords], and that even when he threw himself into his wildest improvisation, he would always have behind him, unshakeable, the regular tempo of his pianist.”

Tyner’s use of bass dyads can be heard in compositions like “Olé” from Coltrane’s “Olé Coltrane” album recorded in 1961, and “Dear Old Stockholm” from Coltrane’s “Impressions” album recorded in 1963.

3.3.3 African Music and The Pentatonic Scale

In addition to quartal harmonies and bass dyads, John Coltrane’s interest in African music also influenced McCoy Tyner to assimilate pentatonic scales into his right hand improvisations. Tyner was also exposed to the rhythm of African music at a young age. McCoy’s childhood friend, Garvin Merceau, introduced Tyner to Afro-Cuban music during their childhood years. Rhythmically, Afro-Cuban music was derived from African music and Jarvis Tyner Jr. recalls Merceau’s rhythmic influence on Tyner when he said:

“Garvin use to invite us to his house all the time to play. We learned one-one-co from him, a style of Afro-Cuban conga playing. There are basically three parts. One is a basic rhythm, the other is the classic Latin rhythm, the third is ‘boom boom boom boom.’ We would jam on that all night. That was our baseline. We came out of that

According to his brother Jarvis, McCoy was also exposed to African rhythms through his affiliation with the Judimar School of Dance. Judimar was an educational institution that instilled artistic excellence in Philadelphia during the early years of the Civil Rights Movement. Marion D. Cuyjet, the school’s founder and premier ballet pedagogue, encouraged her students never to allow the color of their skin to thwart their aspirations. Moreover, Tyner played piano for African dance classes, which exposed him to African drumming. As a form of payment, Tyner was given free interpretive dance and ballet lessons, which he partook of for a season.

Early in Tyner’s tenure with the John Coltrane Quartet in the 1960s, many African American jazz musicians, including Coltrane and Tyner, championed the black nationalistic ideal that promoted African-American pride. In an attempt to establish a respectable African-American social identity that was non-existent during slavery, many black jazz musicians looked to Africa for musical inspiration and as a source from which to develop their unique musical identity as opposed to Europe. According to Bill Cole, this Black nationalistic ideal “opened Trane up to Africa and his awareness of Africa, not merely as some far-distant continent where his descendants could be traced, but as a real and living source for him.” The plethora of compositions Coltrane wrote and gave African names to come from that “source.”

John Coltrane’s affiliation with African music and culture was cultivated in the early 1960s through his friendship with Nigerian drummer Michael Babatunde Olatunji. Olatunji relocated to the United States in 1950 and through his recordings and touring ensembles, introduced a host of musicians to West African performance traditions, including John

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According to Lewis Porter, Coltrane studied many of Olatunji’s recordings as well as other African folkloric recordings. His motivation was to acquire inspiration to fuel his musical creativity as evidenced on Coltrane’s “Africa/Brass” album recorded in 1961. “Africa/Brass,” evolved from Coltrane’s sincere interest in identifying culturally with his heritage and musical roots. In an interview with Russ Musto, Tyner affirmed this notion by emphasizing the group’s cultural mission as opposed to any attempt to make political statements regarding social injustice via music.

“A lot of people were doing it at that time [using jazz music to make political statements regarding social injustice]. It [Coltrane’s music] wasn’t all about politics. Some writers made it out to be political, but just like anything else, you want to know about your history. It doesn’t mean you’re political. To some writers everything had to be political. I told them I wasn’t playing music because of that. We were playing because of the cultural identification. Not even that. We’re just playing music because we’re musicians, basically. You want to talk about identification, okay. But it’s not because of politics. I never liked politics that much.”

Coltrane’s exposure to African music resulted in an extensive use of pentatonic scales in his improvisations beginning in 1961. This is to be expected because the pentatonic scale is an integral part of African music and other music all over the world. John Coltrane’s increased improvisational use of pentatonic scales subsequently influenced McCoy Tyner to adopt pentatonic scales as part of his style beginning in 1961. Of the first three albums the Coltrane group released in the early 1960s – “My Favorite Things,” “Coltrane Plays the Blues,” and “Africa/Brass,” “Africa/Brass” is the first album in which Tyner and Coltrane are distinctively


heard employing the pentatonic scale within their improvisations. On the albums that followed “Africa/Brass,” such as “Live at Birdland” (1963), “Crescent” (1964), “A Love Supreme” (1964), and “The John Coltrane Quartet Plays” (1965), Tyner and Coltrane use the pentatonic scale extensively, especially within Dorian based modal compositions.245

3.3.4 Eric Dolphy and A Freer Improvisational Style

From 1961 through 1962, free jazz alto saxophonist, flutist and bass clarinetist Eric Dolphy was a member of Coltrane’s group. During this brief period, Dolphy significantly influenced McCoy Tyner and John Coltrane to develop freer improvisational approaches. Dolphy’s improvisational style was characterized by unexpected phrasing and intervals. He made significant contributions to notable Coltrane recordings like “Olé Coltrane,” “Africa/Brass,” and “Live! at the Village Vanguard.”246 The union between Dolphy and Coltrane has been referred to as one of the most successful musical unions in the history of jazz,247 and Dolphy’s influence on Tyner and Coltrane can clearly be heard on the aforementioned albums. Coltrane elaborated on Dolphy’s influence on him and his bandmates when he said:

“Dolphy’s inclusion in the group had a broadening effect on us. There are a lot of things we try now that we never tried before. We’re playing things that are freer than before.”248

245 A pentatonic scale is compatible to the Dorian mode because the first, third, fourth, fifth and seventh scale degrees of a minor pentatonic scale are the same scale degrees of the first, third, fourth, fifth and seventh scale degrees of D Dorian mode (eg. D Dorian mode = D, E, F, G, A, B, C, D and D minor pentatonic scale = D, F, G, A, C)
246 Nathan Davis, interviewed by Alton Merrell, Saturday April 7, 2012.
Coltrane biographer, Bill Cole, also credits Dolphy for influencing Coltrane to develop a freer improvisational approach. According to Cole:

“The Trane was so used to playing hard bop, playing arpeggios and playing consistent tempos. Eric jumped all over the horn when he played…when you listen to Trane at the end of his career, you’d notice he jumped around the horn quite a bit.”

Dolphy’s musical style border-lined between hard-bop and free jazz. As Martin and Waters state, “Dolphy was equally convincing at playing both inside and outside; that is, he could move outside the harmonic progression – with pitches not part of the given chord or mode – then deftly return inside to take up the harmonies.” This “inside/outside” improvisational technique is sometimes referred to as harmonic superimposition, which was influenced by Free jazz, a new style of jazz that mirrored the turbulent United States social and political climate spurred by the events of the Civil Rights Era and Black Nationalist ideals of the 1960s. As Coltrane’s “A Love Supreme” recorded in 1964 illustrates, harmonic superimposition became more and more a characteristic of Tyner’s and Coltrane’s musical style from 1962 through 1965.

During McCoy Tyner’s tenure with the John Coltrane Quartet in the early 1960s, Tyner fashioned a new piano style that influenced a host of pianists in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Coltrane’s multiethnic jazz music primarily consisting of Modal Jazz, Indian Classical and African music, combined with Tyner’s creative genius, fostered the three major components of his new piano style, which included quartal chords, two note bass chords, and pentatonic scales. Free Jazz musician Eric Dolphy also influenced Tyner and Coltrane to develop freer improvisational approaches that broadened their improvisational style. In addition to Dolphy’s

251 The technique of playing a melody using a chord, chord progression or tonal center other than that being stated by the rhythm section.
freer improvisational approach and Coltrane’s multiethnic jazz music, Coltrane taught Tyner and his bandmates invaluable lessons that encouraged them to develop their own unique musical styles. It is from these multifaceted experiences, coupled with McCoy Tyner’s creative ingenuity, that Tyner’s famed piano style was born in the 1960s.
4.0 TRANSCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 SELECTION CRITERIA

In the late 1950s, McCoy Tyner’s piano style clearly fit within the Hardbop\(^\text{253}\) style of jazz. Evidence of this fact can be heard on jazz trombonist Curtis Fuller’s albums “Imagination” and “Images of Curtis Fuller” recorded in 1959 and 1960, respectively. Further evidence of Tyner’s Hardbop style can be heard on trumpeter Freddie Hubbard’s album “Open Sesame” and the Jazztet’s album “Meet the Jazztet” both recorded in 1960. McCoy Tyner’s mature style did not develop until after he began playing with John Coltrane in 1960. Additionally, the compositions selected for transcription and analysis within this study were recorded after Tyner left Coltrane’s group in 1965. By 1967, Tyner began recording for Blue Note records, and his distinctive piano style was heard on these albums. The author has selected compositions/improvisations that collectively represent contrasting musical styles such as modal and blues. Also, the compositions/improvisations in this study have not been commercially published and analyzed.

\(^{253}\) A style of music that is an extension of bebop. Bebop was based on harmonic improvisation evolving from regular jam sessions at Minton’s Playhouse in Harlem New York in the mid 1940’s by Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, Theolonius Monk, Bud Powell and others. Hardbop, which emerged in the 1950s, incorporated influences from rhythm and blues, gospel music and blues within the existing bebop style.
4.2 “CHAIN REACTION”

4.2.1 Historical Background

After an illustrious five year tenure with the John Coltrane Quartet and recording six albums as a leader for the Impulse record label from 1962 through 1964, McCoy Tyner entered a five-year period (1965-1970) of financial struggle, hard work, sacrifice, and sparse employment opportunities attributed to the Rock and Funk music craze taking the United States by storm in the mid to late 1960s. This left many jazz musicians, including Tyner, with little work. 

During this difficult period, Tyner regularly recorded as a sideman for a host of notable Blue Note artists, including Hank Mobley (“A Caddy for Daddy,” “A Slice of the Top,” “Straight No Filter”), Stanley Turrentine (“A Bluish Bag,” “The Prodigal Son”), Donald Byrd (“Mustang”), Bobby Hutcherson (“Stick Up”), Lou Donaldson (“Lush Life”), and Blue Mitchel (“Heads Up”).

In the late 1960s, he developed a reputation as the house pianist for Blue Note records and as a result, Tyner’s style became synonymous with the sonic ethos of the label. Although Tyner received a generous amount of publicity working as a sideman for the label, he did not make enough money to support himself and his growing family. As a result, Tyner took non-musical jobs to fulfill his financial responsibilities. Nevertheless, working as a sideman for Blue Note records provided him an opportunity to record as a leader for the label in 1967 after his contract with the Impulse record label expired. Beginning with his first Blue Note album entitled “The Real McCoy,” from which two songs are analyzed within this study. Tyner went on to record five additional albums as a leader for Blue Note between 1968 and 1970.

In 1966, McCoy Tyner worked as a sideman with tenor saxophonist Hank Mobley and recorded Mobley’s composition “Chain Reaction” for Blue Note records. Alfred Lion, the label’s record producer, was already acquainted with McCoy Tyner’s musical prowess through Tyner’s long affiliation with the label as a sideman. The composition “Chain Reaction” is from Mobley’s fifteenth album as a leader entitled “Straight No Filter.” The album was initially released with six compositions in 1986 shortly after Mobley’s death from pneumonia, and reissued on compact disc in 2001.\(^{255}\) The reissued Blue Note disc contains nine compositions, eight of which are Mobley’s originals, except for Melvin “Sy” Oliver’s composition “Yes Indeed.” “Chain Reaction” is on both the original 1986 release and the reissued 2001 compact disc release. The nine compositions found on the reissue include “Straight No Filter,” “Chain Reaction,” “Soft Impressions,” “Third Time Around,” “Hank’s Waltz,” “Syrup and Biscuits,” “Comin’ Back,” “The Feelin’s Good,” and “Yes Indeed.” McCoy Tyner recorded three of the compositions including “Straight No Filter,” “Chain Reaction,” and “Soft Impressions.” Additionally, all nine compositions were recorded on four separate recording dates, all produced by Alfred Lion at Van Gelder Studio in Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey. The four recording sessions occurred on March 7, 1963, October 2, 1963, February 4, 1965, and June 17, 1966.

The compact disc features four prominent jazz pianists during the 1960s including Barry Harris, Andrew Hill, Herbie Hancock and McCoy Tyner. Interestingly, all four pianists, except for Barry Harris, were either already leading their own Blue Note recording sessions or had already recorded for the label as a sideman when they recorded Mobley’s “Straight No Filter” album. Barry Harris was in the process of moving from the Riverside record label to the Prestige label as a leader. Three out of four pianists on Mobley’s album were already recording artists for

the label shows record labels promoted their own artists to increase album sales from their recording catalog. Sometimes Blue Note artists did not look at this favorably because it prohibited them from recording with their touring band, and it sometimes fostered contention that broke up bands.

“Chain Reaction” was recorded on June 17th, 1966 with Lee Morgan on trumpet, Hank Mobley on tenor saxophone, Billy Higgins on drums, Bob Cranshaw on bass, and Tyner on piano. This recording occurred just six months after Tyner left the Coltrane Quartet, and ten months before recording his first Blue Note album entitled “The Real McCoy.” These particular musicians had experience working together prior to recording “Chain Reaction” when they recorded Mobley’s album “A Caddy for Daddy” six months earlier with the addition of trombonist Curtis Fuller. They also recorded together earlier in 1966 on Mobley’s album “A Slice of the Top.” Additionally, McCoy Tyner and trumpeter Lee Morgan were already acquainted as both of them were Philadelphia natives.
4.2.2 Analysis of the Composition

“Chain Reaction” is a fast swing modal composition in common time. Mobley wrote the composition after his short tenure with the Miles Davis group in 1961, after which Mobley developed an increased penchant for modal compositions. The tempo of “Chain Reaction” moves at the swift pace of two hundred sixty beats per minute. The piece begins with a sixteen-measure introduction played by the piano, bass, and drums, collectively establishing the rhythmic feel of the composition. Following the introduction, the forty-measure song form begins, following an AABBA format. Each “A” and “B” section is eight measures in length. The melody of the composition is played by the trumpet and harmonized by the tenor saxophone a perfect fourth below, both of which utilize notes of the “D” Dorian mode during the “A” sections. The melody of the “B” section is the same as that of the “A” section but is a half step higher, employing notes of the “E-Flat” Dorian mode, while the tenor saxophone harmonizes a perfect fourth below. Hence, the composition oscillates between “D” minor and “E-Flat” minor.

Harmonically, “Chain Reaction” is based on “D” Dorian modal harmony during the “A” sections, and “E-Flat” Dorian modal harmony during the “B” sections. While Lee Morgan and Hank Mobley played the melody of the composition, McCoy Tyner played an ostinato pattern using “So What” chords, the same chords pianist Bill Evans used while recording Miles Davis’ “So What” modal composition in 1959 from Davis’ “Kind of Blue” album. The solo form of the composition follows an AABBA forty-measure song form delineated during the initial statement of the melody.

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4.2.3 Improvisational Content

There are a total of three improvisations in “Chain Reaction.” McCoy Tyner takes the first solo, a lengthy seven choruses lasting four minutes. Trumpeter Lee Morgan and tenor saxophonist Hank Mobley also take solos, playing three and four choruses respectively. Of the three solos, Tyner’s is arguably the most musically convincing even though Mobley is the leader of the recording session. Tyner’s edge is most likely attributed to his extensive performance experience playing modal compositions with John Coltrane in the early 1960s.

4.2.3.1 Melodic Material

An analysis of the melodic constructs Tyner utilized within his improvisation on “Chain Reaction” reveals note choices derived from modes, triads, seventh chords, and major and minor pentatonic scales. Melodically, Tyner’s improvisation on “Chain Reaction” is fundamentally based on the “D” and “E-Flat” Dorian modes, in which Tyner generally employed pitches derived from the “D” Dorian mode during the “A” sections of his solo, and “E-Flat” Dorian mode during the “B” sections. Figures 19 and 20 below illustrate both the “D” and “E-Flat” Dorian modes from which Tyner constructed his melodic phrases. Figure 21 illustrates Tyner’s use of the “D” and “E-Flat” Dorian modes within the context of “Chain Reaction’s” AABBA solo form.

![Figure 19 “Chain Reaction:” “D” Dorian Mode.](image-url)
Figure 20 “Chain Reaction:” “E-Flat” Dorian Mode.

Figure 21 “Chain Reaction:” The primary modes from which Tyner selected pitches to play his improvised melodic phrases with “Chain Reaction’s AABBA song form.

Figure 22 below is a sample phrase showing Tyner’s use of the “D” Dorian mode, and Figure 23 is a sample phrase showing Tyner’s use of the “E-Flat” Dorian mode. Noteworthy is that “F” and “C” are notes in common between “D” and “E-Flat” Dorian mode. Both pitches play a prominent role in the piece.

Figure 22 “Chain Reaction:” Melodic phrase derived from pitches in “D” Dorian Mode - measures 37-39.
In addition to selecting notes generally derived from “D” and E-Flat” Dorian modes, Tyner regularly selects notes derived from major and minor triads, as well as dominant and half-diminished seventh chords and inserted them into his improvised melodic phrases. Below is an excerpt of Tyner’s improvisation illustrating his inclusion of arpeggiated triads and seventh chords into his melodic phrase. Within this particular phrase, Tyner incorporated two “D” minor triads, a “D-Flat” major triad, a “G” dominant seventh chord, and a “B” minor half diminished seventh chord, all within an “A” section of the solo form.

Tyner primarily incorporated triads and seventh chords within his melodic phrases by playing arpeggiated four-note melodic groupings. These note groupings can be seen in measures 33-34, 38, 47-48, 67, 69-70, 135-136, 169-171, 259. Figure 25 illustrates Tyner’s usage of this melodic technique.
Figure 25 "Chain Reaction:" Tyner’s use of a four-note melodic grouping that included an arpeggiated triad and seventh chord - measures 169-170.

In addition to arpeggiating triads and seventh chords via four-note groupings within his melodic phrases, Tyner periodically began his melodic phrases by arpeggiating a major or minor triad. Of the forty-five musical phrases that make up Tyner’s solo\(^{257}\) within “Chain Reaction,” fourteen of his musical phrases begin with the arpeggiation of a triad. Four of the fourteen begin with an arpeggiated “D” minor triad (measures 33, 40, 97, 229). An additional four of the fourteen begin with an arpeggiated “A-Flat” major triad (measures 49, 57, 195, 197), and two more of the fourteen begin with an arpeggiated “E-Flat” minor triad (measures 62, 233).

Another characteristic of Tyner’s improvised melodic phrases is that he periodically ended his melodic phrases by playing two or three notes at the same time. These punctuating phrase endings occur sixteen times throughout his improvisation and can be seen in measures 33, 61, 65, 76, 80, 104, 114, 121, 136, 144, 196, 200, 209, 244 and 288. An example of Tyner’s punctuating phrase ending is illustrated in Figure 26.

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\(^{257}\) This calculation was derived by counting repeated phrases that are part of a riff or motivic development as one when calculating the total sum of Tyner’s melodic phrases.
In addition to selecting pitches from the “D” and “E-Flat” Dorian modes and triads and seventh chords played via four-note groupings, Tyner periodically utilized pitches from “D” minor pentatonic scale, “E-Flat” minor pentatonic scale, and the “A-Flat” major pentatonic scale within his improvised melodic phrases. Although these pentatonic scales are subsets of the “D” and “E-Flat” Dorian modes, Tyner employed them as a means of accentuating specific pitches with the mode. A minor pentatonic scale is a five-note scale consisting of the first, third, fourth, fifth and seventh scale degrees of the Dorian mode. For example, “D” minor pentatonic scale consists of D – F – G – A – C, which are the first, third, fourth, fifth and seventh scale degrees of “D” Dorian mode. “E-Flat” minor pentatonic scale consists of E-Flat – G-Flat – A-Flat – B-Flat – D-Flat, which are the first, third, fourth, fifth and seventh scale degrees of the “E-Flat” Dorian mode. A major pentatonic scale is a five-note scale consisting of the first, second, third, fifth, and sixth scale degrees of a major scale. However, in “Chain Reaction,” Tyner plays pitches from the “A-Flat” major pentatonic scale (A-Flat – B-Flat – C – E-Flat – F) accentuating the second, fourth, fifth, sixth and first scale degrees of the “E-Flat” Dorian mode. During his seven-chorus improvisation in “Chain Reaction,” Tyner utilized pitches from “A-Flat” major pentatonic scale a total of five times and can be seen in measures 53-54, 60-61, 95-96, 103-104, and 195-196. The second most utilized pentatonic scale in “Chain Reaction,” “E-Flat” minor, was
employed three times within his improvisation as seen in measures 62-63, 168, and 215. Tyner
employed pitches from “D” minor pentatonic scale twice within his improvisation and can be
seen in measures 33-35 and 229-232. Below is an excerpt of Tyner’s improvisation illustrating
his insertion of notes from an “A-Flat” major pentatonic scale.

Figure 27 "Chain Reaction:" Tyner's use of pitches from the "A-Flat" Major Pentatonic Scale - measures 53-
55.

Additional melodic devices found within Tyner’s improvisation on “Chain Reaction”
include the use of quartal melodic fragments, melodic sequences, repetitive melodic fragments,
call and response phrases and pitch ornamentation. Quartal melodic fragments are a series of
two or more notes within a melodic phrase in which each note is an interval of a perfect fourth
from one another. These melodic fragments add melodic contrast and character to Tyner’s
phrases and were used one time within his solo in “Chain Reaction” in measures 254-256.

Figure 28 "Chain Reaction:" Tyner's use of Quartal Melodic Fragments within a melodic phrase - measures
253-256.
Melodic sequences are found five times within the improvisation, once during an “A” section (measures 130-133), and four during a “B” section (measures 161-163, 198-200, 206-208 and measures 273-284). Figure 29 below is an example. This particular sequence is based on the interval of a second followed by a third.

![Figure 29](image1.png)

Figure 29 "Chain Reaction:" Tyner's use of melodic sequence - measures 129-132.

Tyner utilizes repetitive melodic fragments three times throughout his seven-chorus improvisation as seen in measures 116-122, 153-160 and 177-190. The repetitive melodic fragments add rhythmic and melodic contrast to the eighth note melodic phrases, prevalent throughout the improvisation. Figure 30 below illustrates a repetitive melodic fragment Tyner played within his improvisation.

![Figure 30](image2.png)

Figure 30 "Chain Reaction:" Tyner's use of a Repetitive Melodic Fragment - measures 177-181.
Call and response is also found throughout “Chain Reaction.” This musical practice, with origins from African tribal music, makes Tyner’s solo conversation-like and is found in measures 40-46, 73-94, 105-108, 137-148, and 161-164. Figure 31 below is a small excerpt of a call and response phrase Tyner repeatedly employed in measures 73 through 94 of his improvisation.

![Figure 31](image)

Figure 31 "Chain Reaction:" Tyner's use of call and response - measures 81-84.

In addition to melodic sequences, repetitive melodic fragments, and the use of call and response, McCoy Tyner incorporated trills and grace notes into his improvised melodic phrases. Figures 32 and 33 below are excerpts from Tyner’s improvisation illustrating his usage of grace notes and trills.

![Figure 32](image)

Figure 32 "Chain Reaction:" Tyner's use of grace note ornamentation - measure 289-292.
Throughout Tyner’s improvisation in “Chain Reaction,” he repeatedly plays three reoccurring melodic patterns, which are integral parts of his improvisational language. The first reoccurring melodic pattern, labeled Pattern #1, is illustrated in Figure 34 below.

Reoccurring melodic Pattern #1 consists of five pitches, with an interval pattern of a descending minor third, ascending major second, ascending minor third, descending perfect fifth and a descending major second. The first three pitches of the pattern formulate a bebop enclosure, in which an improviser surrounds a targeted note by its upper and lower neighboring notes. Tyner plays two versions of Pattern #1 within his improvisation, which the author labels Pattern #1(A) and Pattern #1(B). Pattern #1(B) is Pattern #1(A) transposed. Within Pattern #1(A), the bebop Enclosure consists of the notes “D-Flat” (upper neighboring note), “B-Flat” (lower neighboring note) and “C,” the target note of the enclosure. The remaining pitches of Pattern #1(A) are “E-Flat” and “A-Flat.” Pattern #1(A) is found five times throughout Tyner’s improvisation.
Noteworthy is the fact that the last three notes of Pattern #1(A) form an arpeggiated “A-Flat” major triad, and Tyner regularly played Pattern #1(A) within the “E-Flat” Dorian mode “B” sections of “Chain Reaction” as seen in measures 55, 165, 205, 237-238, 240-241. Within Pattern #1(B), Tyner encloses the note “F” following it with the notes “A-Flat” and “D-Flat” instead of enclosing the note “C” as is done in Pattern#1(A). Figure 35 illustrates Pattern #1(B) below.

Figure 35 "Chain Reaction:" Tyner's use of Pattern #1(B) within his improvisation - measure 68.

Pattern #1(B) is found three times throughout Tyner’s improvisation, specifically in measures 68, 111, and 211-212. Collectively, Tyner plays Pattern #1(A) and (B) a total of seven times in his improvisation and Figure 36 illustrates each pattern below.

Figure 36  "Chain Reaction:" Tyner's Reoccurring Melodic Patterns #1(A) and (B) throughout his improvisation on "Chain Reaction" - measures 55, 68, 111, 165, 211-212, 237-238 and 240-241.
The second reoccurring melodic pattern Tyner played within his improvisation on “Chain Reaction” is labeled Pattern #2. This pattern consists of four notes characterized by an initial ascending third either repeated or varied.

![Pattern #2](image)

Figure 37 "Chain Reaction:" Tyner's use of Pattern #2 within his improvisation in "Chain Reaction" - measure 99.

Pattern #2, like Pattern #1, is found seven times throughout Tyner’s improvisation. Figure 38 below illustrates each time Tyner utilized Pattern #2.

![Pattern #2 Illustration](image)

Figure 38 "Chain Reaction: Tyner's Reoccurring Melodic Pattern #2 - measures 99, 109, 143, 147, 151, 167.

Slightly different interval patterns are found in Tyner’s use of reoccurring melodic Pattern #2 – either the third or fourth notes can be varied.

The third melodic pattern, labeled Pattern #3 in Figure 39 on the next page, consists of five notes with a specific interval pattern of an ascending minor third, descending minor second, and descending major third, and a descending major second. The first three notes of the pattern
form an enclosure of “B,” followed by the notes “G” and “F.” Of the five occurrences of this pattern all take place during an “A” section of the solo form.

Figure 39 "Chain Reaction:" Tyner's Reoccurring Melodic Pattern #3 - measures 37, 66-67, 99-100, 210-211, 258-259.
4.2.3.2 Harmonic Material

Within “Chain Reaction,” McCoy Tyner primarily utilizes quartal chords as left hand accompaniment.

![Figure 40 "Chain Reaction:" Two Three Note Quartal Chords Tyner utilized within his improvisation.](image)

Along with quartal chords, Tyner regularly plays a bass dyad consisting of notes an interval of a perfect fifth from one another. These dyads are found extensively throughout Tyner’s improvisation.

![Figure 41 "Chain Reaction:" Tyner's Bass Dyad.](image)

In addition to quartal chords and bass dyads, Tyner also plays three note rootless dominant thirteen chords in his improvisation. Three note rootless dominant chords consist of three notes that delineate dominant harmony by including the third, flat seventh, and the thirteenth without the inclusion of the chord root. Although these chords are planed like other quartal chords within Tyner’s improvisation, I classified the chord “G-Flat” – “C” – “F” and its neighboring chords as rootless dominant thirteen chords considering the IV7 function the chord plays throughout Tyner’s improvisation (See pages 129-130 for more information). Figure 42 below illustrates these chords:
Tyner also played rootless “E-Flat” four-note minor nine chords, rootless four note “E-Flat” minor six-nine chords, rootless three note minor nine chords, and rootless three note minor six-nine chords within his improvisation. Tyner also played two note chords accentuating the seventh and ninth of “E-Flat” minor nine harmony, and two note chords accentuating the sixth and the ninth of “E-Flat” minor six-nine harmony. Figure 43 illustrates each of the aforementioned chords Tyner regularly played.

Tyner’s use of these chords can be seen in measures 53-56 (rootless two-note chords), measures 89 – 94 (rootless three-note dominant nine chords) and measures 121-122 (rootless four-note minor nine chords and rootless four-note minor six-nine chords).

Last but not least, Tyner played chord clusters as left hand chordal accompaniment during the “A” sections of his improvisation. The notes in these clusters diatonically fit within
the “D” Dorian mode and form quartal harmony when inverted. These clusters can be seen in measures 73-74, 105-108, 137-141, and 145-146. Figure 44 illustrates:

![Diagram of chordal clusters with quartal harmony](image)

Figure 44 "Chain Reaction:" Chord Cluster Usage - measures 73-74, 105-108, 137-141 and 145-146.

### 4.2.3.3 Rhythmic Material

Tyner’s previous experience playing hardbop, in which eighth note rhythms are a staple of the style, informs the rhythm of “Chain Reaction.” Additionally, the fast tempo of “Chain Reaction” is an ideal musical environment for Tyner to use repetitive melodic fragments and call and response units, which set up cross-rhythms and collectively generate the hard swinging rhythmic groove heard throughout his improvisation. The trills, as seen in measures 193-194 and 218-223, also add rhythmic variety to the predominant eighth note motion.

An assessment of the beginning and ending of the phrases in “Chain Reaction” reveals that there is more rhythmic regularity at the end of phrases than at the beginning. Of the forty-five phrases, seven begin with a three eighth note pick-up. This can be seen in measures 33, 49, 53 209, 229, 233 and 257. On the other hand, twenty phrases out of the forty-five end with two quarter notes on beats three and four in measures 33, 55, 63, 74, 78, 82, 86, 90, 94, 96, 106, 144, 200, 202, 209, 215, 257, 263, 290, and 292.
A rhythmic assessment of Tyner’s left hand chordal accompaniment in “Chain Reaction” reveals his penchant for syncopation, particularly for playing chords on the “and” of beats two and four. Syncopated upbeat chordal accompaniment is found throughout his solo. Figure 45 below illustrates two comping rhythms that Tyner regularly employs throughout his improvisation.

Figure 45 "Chain Reaction:" Two prominent comping rhythms Tyner played with his left hand throughout his improvisation - measures 64, 67, 69-70, 77, 85, 87, 95, 97.

4.2.4 Creation of Consonance and Dissonance: Right and Left Hand

The combination of right hand and left hand to generate consonance and dissonance is an important target of this study. To construct consonant sounding melodic phrases with his right hand, Tyner primarily selects pitches derived from the “D” Dorian mode during the “A” sections of the AABBA song form and from the “E-Flat” Dorian mode during the “B” sections. With his left hand, Tyner concurrently planes consonant sounding three note quartal chords to generate the accompaniment. He does this by planing quartal chords along the same “D” or “E-Flat” Dorian mode, from which he selects the right hand pitches.

Quartal chord planing is a technique of playing three-note quartal chords in stepwise parallel motion. In “Chain Reaction,” Tyner regularly generates consonant left hand chordal accompaniment by planing quartal chords along the “D” Dorian mode during the “A” sections and occasionally along the “E-Flat” Dorian mode during the “B” sections of his improvisation. Figure 46 and 47 illustrate this. Note how the root note of each quartal chord expresses the “D”
or “E-Flat” Dorian scale. Also, every other note in each quartal chord can be found in its corresponding Dorian scale.

Figure 46 “Chain Reaction:” Quartal chord planing along the “D” Dorian mode.

Figure 47 “Chain Reaction:” Quartal planing along the “E-Flat” Dorian mode.

Tyner uses a plethora of quartal chords, as illustrated in Figure 46 and 47 above, throughout. During the “A” sections, Tyner gives preference to quartal chords built on the third, fourth and second degrees of “D” Dorian mode. During the “B” sections, Tyner favors quartal chords built on the third, second, and first scale degrees of “E-Flat” Dorian mode. Figure 48 below illustrates this fact.

Figure 48 “Chain Reaction:” Quartal Chords Tyner favors during his seven chorus solo on “Chain Reaction.”
Macroscopically within “Chain Reaction,” McCoy Tyner generates consonant musical constructs by playing melodic phrases with pitches derived from the “D” or “E-Flat” Dorian mode, while planing quartal chords with his left hand along the same “D” or “E-Flat” Dorian mode. Figure 49 below illustrates one of Tyner’s melodic phrases, where he plays pitches derived from the “D” Dorian mode with his right hand while planing quartal chords along the first five scale degrees of the same mode with his left hand.

![Figure 49 "Chain Reaction:" Melodic Phrase comprised of pitches from "D" Dorian mode with quartal chord planing along the "D" Dorian mode - measures 173-176.](image)

Within this framework, Tyner regularly inserts arpeggiated diatonic and non-diatonic triads and seventh chords into his melodic phrases. These diatonic and non-diatonic chords at times generate consonant musical constructs and dissonant musical constructs at other times. Overall, these diatonic and non-diatonic triads generate distinctive melodic contours within Tyner’s improvisation. The brilliance of inserting diatonic and non-diatonic triads into his

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258 Diatonic triads and seventh chords refer to triads and seventh chords in which its pitches fit within “D” Dorian mode during the “A” sections and “E-flat” Dorian mode during the “B” sections of “Chain Reaction.” Non-Diatonic Triads and seventh chords refer to triads and seventh chords in which its pitches do not fit within “D” Dorian mode during the “A” sections and “E-flat” Dorian mode during the “B” sections of “Chain Reaction.”
Collectively, Tyner arpeggiates triads and seventh chords a total of sixty four times during his improvisation. Of those sixty four times, he arpeggiates a diatonic sounding “D” minor triad twenty-four times, each time during an “A” section of the solo form. This is not surprising because twenty-four measures out of the forty-measure “Chain Reaction” solo form are based on the “D” Dorian mode and the notes of “D” minor triad diatonically fit within that mode. A little more surprisingly, the second most frequently arpeggiated chord within Tyner’s improvised melodic phrases is the “G” dominant seventh chord. This chord is also diatonic and is arpeggiated eight times within the “A” sections of Tyner’s improvisation. The next three most frequently arpeggiated chords are an “A-Flat” major triad, an “A-Flat” dominant seventh and an “E-Flat” minor triad. These three chords are also diatonic because they are found in the “B” sections of the solo form based on the “E-Flat” Dorian mode.

Tyner periodically inserts a variety of arpeggiated non-diatonic triads and seventh chords into his melodic phrases to generate dissonance within his improvisation and then resolves that dissonance by returning to notes within the prevailing “D” or “E-Flat” Dorian mode. Some of the chords Tyner arpeggiated to create dissonance include “D-Flat” and “D” major triads and “B” minor and “B-Flat” dominant seventh chords. Below is an excerpt of Tyner’s use of arpeggiation in his improvisation illustrating his inclusion of an arpeggiated “D” minor triad (consonant), a “D-Flat” major triad (dissonant), a “G” dominant seventh chord (consonant), and

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259 Static harmonic environment refers to the one harmony that is prescribed for each section of the solo chorus (D-7 for the “A” sections and E-flat minor 7 for the “B” sections). This modal characteristic is different from the bebop style of jazz where the improviser generates melodic phrases from chords.
a “B” minor half diminished seventh chord (consonant), all played during a “D” Dorian mode based “A” section in the solo form.

![Figure 50 “Chain Reaction:” Tyner's inclusion of triads and seventh chords within his melodic phrases - measures 67-71.](image)

Table 5 below summarizes all the consonant and dissonant triads and seventh chords Tyner arpeggiates in the right hand phrases in “Chain Reaction.” Additionally, the number of times each chord is arpeggiated, the measure number in which the chord is arpeggiated, its location in the song form, and a brief summary of whether or not the triad or seventh chord is consonant or dissonant within his melodic phrase is also listed.
Table 5  “Chain Reaction:” Summary of all the diatonic and non-diatonic triads and seventh chords Tyner incorporated in his melodic improvisation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chord Type</th>
<th>Number of Times Used</th>
<th>Measure #</th>
<th>Part of the form</th>
<th>Summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>D minor triad</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>33, 38, 40-41, 47, 67, 69, 71, 97, 100, 113, 139, 151, 152, 169, 173, 175, 229, 230, 259.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Tyner incorporates D minor arpeggios in his melodic lines within a D minor / modal environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-flat minor triad</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>62, 203, 233</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Tyner arpeggiated an E-Flat minor triad 3 times within an E-Flat minor / modal environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G major triad</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>129,270</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Tyner arpeggiated a G major triad 2 times within a D minor / modal environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-flat major triad</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>100, 170</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Tyner arpeggiated a D-flat major triad 2 times within a D minor / modal environment. He used superimposition with this major triad to build tension by temporarily leaving the D tonal center.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F major triad</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>137-138, 147</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Tyner arpeggiated an F major triad 2 times within a D minor / modal environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D major triad</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>167-168</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Tyner arpeggiated a D major triad 1 time within a D minor / modal environment. He used superimposition with this major triad to intentionally play “outside” of the prevailing E-flat tonal center.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-flat major triad</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Tyner arpeggiated a B-flat major triad 1 time within a D minor / modal environment. The note “B-flat of the triad adds tension to the melodic line.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-flat minor triad</td>
<td>1 260</td>
<td>89,91,93</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Tyner arpeggiated a B-flat minor triad multiple times as part of a riff within an E-flat minor / modal environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A minor triad</td>
<td>1 261</td>
<td>73,75,77,79,81,83,85,87</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Tyner arpeggiated an A-minor triad multiple times as part of a riff within a D minor / modal environment.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

260 Since B-flat minor triad is part of a repetitive call-and-response phrase, the B-flat minor triad is counted once in measures 89 - 93 of chorus 2.
261 Since A minor triad is part of a repetitive call-and-response phrase, the A minor triad is counted once in measures 73-88 of chorus 2.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chord Type</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Notes</th>
<th>Player</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>G minor triad</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tyner arpeggiated a G Minor triad 1 time within a D minor / modal environment. He used superimposition with this minor triad to temporarily leaving the D tonal center.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F minor triad</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tyner arpeggiated an F Major Triad 1 time within an E-flat minor / modal environment.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B minor seventh</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>235,262</td>
<td>A, B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tyner arpeggiated a B minor seventh chord 2 times. Once while in a D minor / modal environment, the other while in a E-flat minor / modal environment. In both instances, he used superimposition with this chord to intentionally play “outside” of the prevailing D and E-flat tonal center.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E minor seventh</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>143-144</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tyner arpeggiated an E minor seventh chord 1 time within a D minor / modal environment.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A minor seventh</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tyner arpeggiated an A minor seventh chord 1 time within a D minor / modal environment.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-flat dominant seventh</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tyner arpeggiated an E-flat dominant seventh 1 time within a D minor / modal environment. He used superimposition with this chord to intentionally play “outside” of the prevailing D tonal center.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G dominant seventh</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>48, 67, 135, 136, 169, 170, 259, 263</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tyner arpeggiated a G Dominant seventh 8 times within a D minor / modal environment.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-flat dominant seventh</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>126, 238, 288</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tyner arpeggiated an A-flat Dominant seventh 3 times within an E-flat minor / modal environment.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-flat dominant seventh</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>213</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tyner arpeggiated a B-flat dominant seventh 1 time within a D minor / modal environment. He used superimposition with this chord to intentionally play “outside” of the prevailing D tonal center.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B Minor Seventh Flat 5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tyner arpeggiated a B-Minor Seventh Flat 5 once within a D minor / modal environment.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tyner regularly utilizes four-note groupings within phrases while planing quartal chords with his left hand. Tyner’s four-note groupings regularly include arpeggiated diatonic and non-diatonic triads and seventh chords as seen in measures 33-34, 38, 47-48, 67, 69-70, 135-136, 169-171, 259. Figure 51 below illustrates the components of various four-note groupings: a D minor diatonic triad, diatonic dominant sevenths G7 and B7(b5), a non-diatonic Db major triad, and a non-diatonic Eb7, all with quartal chord planing in the left hand.

Along with the insertion of non-diatonic triads into his melodic phrases, Tyner also generates tension through the use of modal superimposition. Modal superimposition is an improvisational technique in which a melody implies a modal scale other than that being established by the rhythm section. The release of the tension generated by superimposition occurs when Tyner returns to playing within the established mode of the improvisational section. Tyner employs modal superimposition ten times in “Chain Reaction,” and it can be viewed in the following measures: 102-104, 109-112, 133-135, 146-150, 165-168, 170-172, 210-215, 233-236, 254-256, and 258-203. Figure 52 on the next page is an example of Tyner’s use of modal superimposition.
McCoy Tyner also generates tension by playing three note rootless dominant thirteenth chords with his left hand, temporarily abandoning the quartal chord planing technique and playing the rootless dominant thirteenth chords by moving them up or down chromatically or by whole step. Tyner executed this technique against the prevailing tonal center, which was either “D” during the “A” section of the solo form or “E-Flat”/“A-Flat” during the “B” section. Tyner’s use of rootless dominant thirteenth chords to generate tension within the improvisation occurs three times. The first occurs in measures 153-160 where Tyner plays a repeating riff in his right hand with chromatically moving rootless dominant thirteenth chords in his left hand. (See Figure 53). Something similar occurs in measures 219-222; in that instance Tyner plays a trill in the right hand instead of a riff. A third occurrence takes place in measures 255-256 where Tyner plays outside the prevailing “D” Dorian.
As explained previously, Tyner creates melodic and harmonic movement in what seems like a limiting melodic and harmonic modal context in “Chain Reaction.” Tyner creates momentum by regularly arpeggiating diatonic and non-diatonic triads and seventh chords with his right hand while planing quartal chords with his left hand. Within the “A” sections of the solo form, Tyner periodically constructs melodic phrases that suggest a $i-I\!V^7$ harmonic progression. This is achieved through four-note groupings that arpeggiate “D” minor triads or seventh chords followed by four-note groupings that arpeggiate “G” dominant seventh chords. This is seen in measures 40-45 (“D” minor triads followed by “G” dominant seventh), measures 47-48 (“D” minor triad followed by a “G” dominant seventh), measure 67 (“D” minor seventh followed by “G” dominant seventh).

Within the “A” sections of the solo form, Tyner also constructs melodies that suggest a $i-I\!V^7$ harmonic progression and support the implied progression by planing quartal chords along the “D” Dorian mode establishing “D” minor/Dorian harmony then regularly accentuating an $F – B – E$ quartal chord with his left hand, which can be viewed as a three note rootless “G” dominant thirteenth chord. This is seen in measures 135-136, 139-140, and 259.

In the “B” sections, Tyner regularly constructs melodies and quartal harmonies that accentuate the $IV$ chord – “A-Flat major triad / dominant seventh chord. As stated previously in section 4.2.3.1 and illustrated in Figure 20, Tyner primarily uses notes from the “E-Flat” Dorian mode during the “B” sections of his improvisation. Tyner melodically accentuates the note “A-Flat,” the root note of the $IV$ chord, giving the “E-Flat” Dorian the sound of “A-Flat” mixolydian. Tyner further emphasizes notes of the $IV$ chord - “A-Flat” major triad / seventh chord - by playing “A-Flat” pentatonic scales (measures 53-54, 60-61, 95-96, 103-104, 195-196), diatonic triads within “A-Flat Mixolydian mode (measures 89-94), and Pattern #1(A) (measures
55, 165, 205, 237-238, 240-241), in addition to the “A-Flat Mixolydian modal scale (measures 241-248).

In the “B” sections, Tyner not only constructs melodic phrases that imply a IV chord – “A-Flat” major triad / dominant seventh chord - he also harmonically supports the implied IV chord with his left hand by playing and accentuating the G-Flat – C – F quartal chord while planing quartal chords in “E-Flat” Dorian mode. The quartal chord G-Flat – C – F can be viewed as a IV chord – three note rootless “A-Flat” dominant thirteenth chord. Note how Figure 42 classified this chord as an “E-Flat minor six-nine chord as seen below (third chord from the left in the illustration below).

Illustration from Figure 43.

However, because Tyner plays melodic and harmonic devices delineating “A-Flat” major / sub-dominant harmony during the “B” sections of his improvisation, the G-Flat – C – F quartal chord is better classified as a rootless three note “A-Flat” dominant thirteenth chord. The remaining chords Tyner plays throughout the “B” sections of his improvisation illustrated in Figure 43 above are better classified as “A-Flat” suspended dominant and dominant thirteen chords in light of implied IV chord during the “B” sections of Tyner’s improvisation. This reclassification of chords is illustrated in Figure 54. Also illustrated in Figure 54 is Tyner’s penchant for playing “A-Flat” dominant suspended chords and resolving the suspended fourth down to the third throughout the “B” sections of his improvisation. Four-note “A-Flat” rootless dominant thirteenth and suspended dominant thirteenth chords are seen in measures 121-122. Rootless
three-note “A-Flat dominant and dominant suspended chords can be seen in measures 89 – 94. The two note rootless dyads accentuating suspended fourth and the thirteenth of “A-Flat” dominant thirteenth can be seen in measures 53-56.

Figure 54 "Chain Reaction:" The renaming of the chords Tyner regularly plays during the "B" sections of his improvisation.

Further validating the notion that Tyner implied a IV chord - “A-Flat” major triad / sub-dominant harmony –within his melodic and harmonic devices in the “B” sections of his improvisation is the fact that he actually plays a low “A-Flat” before playing the “A-Flat” dominant 13(sus4) in measure 201. See Figure 55.

Figure 55 “Chain Reaction:" Tyner’s use of a low “A-Flat” bass note followed by “A-Flat” Dominant 13 Suspended 4th and “A-Flat” Dominant 13th chords accentuating the IV chord during the “B” section.
McCoy Tyner’s use of isolated left hand dyads is an integral component of his style. Such dyads are played in the low range of the piano throughout the entire improvisation. In “Chain Reaction,” Tyner uses the dyads fifteen times, often playing them at the beginning of a new solo chorus as in measures 72, 104, and 136. He also plays them to signal the last “A” section of a solo chorus, as in measures 64, 97, 208, and 289. Left hand dyads serve as musical punctuation between improvised phrases, as in measures 72 and 104. Figure 56 illustrates this:

![Figure 56 "Chain Reaction:" Tyner's use of the D – A Dyad – measures 72-76.](image)

Additionally, Tyner uses a bass dyad (D – A) to re-establish the tonality after he plays a melodic phrase that temporarily abandons the established tonal center. Examples of this can be found in measures 217, 256, 264 and 289.

Another common feature is the use of melodic sequences, riffs, or call and response phrases in the right hand, while modally planing in the corresponding mode in the left hand. (See Figures 57-59)
Figure 57 “Chain Reaction:” Tyner playing a melodic sequence in the right hand while modally planning in D Dorian mode in the left hand - measures 129-132.

Figure 58 “Chain Reaction:” Riff with modal quartal planning in D Dorian – Measures 177-181.

Figure 59 “Chain Reaction:” Call and response phrases with modal planning in D Dorian - Measures 81-84.
4.2.4.1 Summary

McCoy Tyner’s improvisation in “Chain Reaction” reveals that he regularly uses modal scales, diatonic triads, diatonic seventh chords, repetitive melodic fragments, melodic sequences and patterns within consonant melodic phrases played by his right hand. Concurrently, Tyner regularly plans consonant three-note quartal chords along the “D” and “E-Flat” Dorian modes, plays consonant quartal chord clusters, plays consonant bass dyads to musically punctuate his melodic phrases or re-establish the tonal center, and consonantly plays rootless dominant thirteen and rootless dominant suspended chords with his left hand during the “B” sections. Tyner also uses non-diatonic triads, non-diatonic seventh chords, and modal superimposition within dissonant melodic phrases played by his right hand. Concurrently, Tyner plays non-diatonic three-note quartal chords with his left hand to generate harmonic dissonance during his improvisation.
4.3  “PASSION DANCE”

4.3.1  Historical Background: “Passion Dance” & “Blues On the Corner”

Ten months after recording “Chain Reaction” with saxophonist Hank Mobley, McCoy Tyner was given an opportunity to record for Blue Note records as a leader. His three-year Blue Note recording tenure produced seven albums as a leader by 1970, after which he switched to the Milestone label in 1972. When Tyner recorded his initial Blue Note recording entitled “The Real McCoy,” he still faced financial and employment challenges as he did almost a year prior when he recorded with Mobley. Nevertheless, the album proved that Tyner continued to mature musically, and that “The Real McCoy” album was a defining work of his career.

“The Real McCoy,” recorded less than three months before John Coltrane’s death, garnered copious attention from listeners and critics when it was released on April 21, 1967. Critic Mark Gilbert stated that the album offered piano playing from Tyner that had not been fully integrated into the jazz mainstream at the time. The album, according to critic Scott Yanow, “captures four masters at their prime for a set of timeless music that remains contemporary.”

The first thing to strike listeners about “The Real McCoy” was the quartet configuration of Tyner’s band. Prior to this album, Tyner released six albums while under contract with the Impulse record label, and only two of them featured horns. The Impulse label emphasized the piano trio format to place Tyner in a musical context distinctly different from that of the John Coltrane Quartet. The label also wanted to achieve the financial success rival labels had with

jazz piano artists like Bill Evans, Erroll Garner, Ahmad Jamal and Oscar Peterson. Produced by Alfred Lion and recorded at the Van Gelder Studio in Engelwood Cliffs, New Jersey, “The Real McCoy” was the first album recorded under Tyner’s name for the Blue Note record label.

The personnel for “The Real McCoy” album included Joe Henderson on tenor saxophone, Ron Carter on bass, and Tyner’s band mate from the Coltrane Quartet, Elvin Jones on drums. As stated in the original liner notes by Nat Hentoff, Tyner put much thought into selecting personnel for the album and was also pleased with what each musician contributed to the album. Regarding each musician’s contribution, Hentoff quotes Tyner saying,

“That sound of his [Henderson] goes through the whole range of his instrument. If I had to use one word for Joe’s playing, it would be ‘mature’. As for Ron Carter, aside from his technique, he has unusual flexibility and everything he plays shows a real, keen intelligence at work. What can I say about Elvin Jones? After six years of working with him in John Coltrane’s group, I have no words to describe fully my respect for him as a musician. I can try by mentioning his capacity to go in all kinds of directions. And no matter what the direction, Elvin always gets to the nucleus of what’s going on. He molds what’s happening to fit what the soloist is doing. And always, no matter, how many polyrhythms are in the air, Elvin’s time at the bottom stays groovy.”

Tyner wrote all of the compositions on “The Real McCoy” and many of them are idiosyncratic of his mature piano style. Hentoff believed that Tyner’s compositions “offer a brightness and optimism that weren’t often apparent in Coltrane’s quartet.” Tyner had recorded his own compositions on the Impulse record label prior to the release of “The Real McCoy,” but never recorded an album featuring all his original works. The five original compositions on the album include “Passion Dance,” “Contemplation,” “Four by Five,” “Search for Peace,” and “Blues on the Corner,” all of which have become jazz standards. This study analyzes two compositions, “Passion Dance” and “Blues on the Corner.” Detailing how he

265 Ibid.
arrived at the composition’s titles, Tyner told Nat Hentoff that “Passion Dance” “after I’d written it, sounded to me like a kind of American Indian dance. It evoked ritual and trance-like states.” “Blues on the Corner” is a musical portrait of Tyner’s childhood: “when I was growing up in Philadelphia, some of the kids I knew liked to hang out on the corner. And this is sort of a musical picture of that scene, youngsters talking, kidding around, jiving.”

4.3.2 Analysis of the Composition: “Passion Dance”

“Passion Dance,” with a tempo of two hundred twenty beats per minute, is a fast swing composition in common time. It contains an “A” section and a contrasting “B” section. The melody in the “A” section is based on the “F” Mixolydian mode. The only pitch in the “F” Mixolydian mode not present in the melody is “D,” the sixth scale degree. Additionally, prevalent intervals of a perfect fourth between the notes “B-Flat” and “E-Flat” melodically evoke sounds of suspended harmony. In the “B” section, the first eight measures of the melody emphasize the first, third, fourth and fifth scale degrees of the “E-Flat” Dorian mode, and the last eight measures of the melody emphasize the third, fourth, fifth and seventh scale degrees of the “E-Flat” Dorian mode.

Harmonically, “Passion Dance” is based on “F” Mixolydian modal harmony during the “A” sections, “E-Flat” Dorian modal harmony with a “B-Flat” pedal point during the first eight measures of the “B” section, and “E-Flat” Dorian modal harmony during the last eight measures of the “B” section. After the melody is stated twice, McCoy Tyner takes the first solo, which was two minutes and thirty-two seconds in length. Tenor saxophonist Joe Henderson and drummer Elvin Jones, Tyner’s former colleague within the John Coltrane quartet, follow with solos

266 Nat Hentoff. “Original Liner Notes to The Real McCoy Record Album,” April 1967.
respectively. The solo form of “Passion Dance” is open. A standard lead sheet of the piece instructs the performer to improvise within “F” dominant seventh suspended fourth harmony indefinitely. Figure 60 below illustrates the directive.

![F7(sus4) notation]

Figure 60 “Passion Dance:” - Open Solo Form

Free improvisational solo sections were commonplace in the 1960s due to the influence of the Free Jazz movement led by Ornette Coleman and Eric Dolphy. The effect of the Avant-Garde jazz style on Tyner can be heard in the liberty he takes going in and out of the “F” tonal center while improvising. The free and simple harmonic design of the improvisational section demands the performer to utilize a plethora of improvisational techniques to sustain the listener’s interest.

4.3.3 Improvisational Content: “Passion Dance”

4.3.3.1 Melodic Material

An analysis of the melodic devices Tyner uses within his improvisation in “Passion Dance” reveal note choices derived from modes, triads, melodic sequences, quartal melodic fragments, motivic cells, call and response and the blues scale. Melodically, Tyner’s improvisation in “Passion Dance” is based on the “F” Mixolydian mode. It is from this mode that he regularly selects notes to construct his consonant melodic phrases as illustrated in measures 33-35, 36-40, 41-42, 43-44, 53-56, 66-67, 68, 97-100, 113-116. Figure 61 illustrates the “F” Mixolydian mode.
Figure 61 “Passion Dance:” – “F” Mixolydian Mode.

Figure 62 below, illustrates Tyner’s use of notes derived from the “F” Mixolydian Mode within his improvisation.

Figure 62 “Passion Dance:” – A phrase from Tyner's improvisation employing notes from the “F” Mixolydian mode - measures 37-40.

Tyner also arpeggiates triads found within the “F” Mixolydian mode (see measures 33, 42, 49, 53-55, 73-74, 77, 126.) Within the phrase shown below, Tyner incorporates two “F” major triads, two “E-Flat” major triads, and a “C” minor triad.

Figure 63 "Passion Dance:" Tyner's inclusion of diatonic triads within his melodic phrase - measures 53-56.
Tyner also incorporates non-diatonic triads into his non-F Mixolydian melodic material, though somewhat sporadically as seen in measures 71 (“G-Flat” major triad), 119 (“G-Flat” major triad), 122 (“G” major triad). Within “Passion Dance,” Tyner also combines non-diatonic triads as parts of melodic sequences seen in measures 61-62 (“A” major triad followed by “G” minor triad), measures 92-93 (“E” major triad, “D” major triad, followed by “E” major triad), 167-168 (“G” major triad, “A” major triad, followed by “C” major triad), 175-176 (“G” Major Triad, “A” Major Triad, “B” Major Triad). Figure 64 below illustrates Tyner’s use of melodic sequence via major triads a whole step apart from one another.

![Figure 64](image)

Figure 64 “Passion Dance:” Non-diatonic triads usage as part of a melodic sequence – measures 175-176.

Additional melodic devices Tyner uses in his improvisation are quartal melodic fragments, motivic cells, call and response, and notes from the “C-Sharp” blues scale. Tyner incorporates quartal melodic fragments approximately sixteen times and is seen in measures 33, 95, 100, 116, 118-120, 121, 122, 123. Additionally, Tyner periodically ended his melodic phrases with quartal melodic fragments as seen in measures 95, 100, 116 and 120. Figure 65 shows a quartal melodic fragment ending a phrase.

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268 Quartal Melodic Fragments are short series of notes within a melodic phrase in which the notes are an interval of a perfect fourth from one another.
McCoy Tyner also incorporates three and four note diatonic and non-diatonic motivic cells into his improvisation. According to Henry Martin and Keith Waters, motivic cells are short melodic ideas subject to variation and development. John Coltrane employed this technique in his modal jazz period and it is probable that Tyner adopted the technique after regularly being exposed to Coltrane’s application of it. Three note diatonic cells are seen in measures 43-44. Three note non-diatonic cells are seen in measures 46, 47-48, 69-70, and 106. Four note diatonic cells are seen in measures 129-134. Four note non-diatonic cells can be seen in measures 135-136. Figure 66 and 67 illustrate Tyner’s use of three and four note motivic diatonic and non-diatonic cells within his improvisation.

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Call and response is also found throughout Tyner’s improvisation in “Passion Dance.” This musical technique, which adds a conversational-like quality, can be observed in measures 33-40, 41-48, 97-100, 157-158, 159-160, 161-162, 163-164. Figure 68 below illustrates Tyner’s usage of call and response within his improvisation.
McCoy Tyner also employs notes of the “C-Sharp” blues scale, Pattern #1(A) and Pattern #2 in one instance. Notes from “C-Sharp” blues scale are seen in measures 81-84:

Figure 69 "Passion Dance:" Tyner's use of the first four notes of the "C-Sharp" blues scale - measures 81-84.

In “Passion Dance,” Tyner does play a derivative of the Pattern #1(A), five notes with the first three notes consisting of a bebop enclosure, found in “Chain Reaction.” Although Tyner does not play bebop enclosures (Pattern #1(A)) regularly in his improvisation in “Passion Dance,” they are found in measures 39 and 104.
4.3.3.2 Harmonic Material

Quartal harmony, in three and five note chords, is the principle harmony Tyner uses in “Passion Dance.” Three - note quartal chords are played two hundred eighty times throughout his entire improvisation. Two quartal chords that Tyner repeatedly uses within his improvisation are illustrated in Figure 70 below.

Tyner played the F – B-Flat – E-Flat quartal chords eighty-two times throughout his improvisation, which is his quartal chord of preference, as opposed to the G – C – F quartal chords he plays seventy-eight times, his second quartal chord of preference.

Tyner also employs five-note quartal chords, bass dyads, and “So-What” chords within his improvisation. The five-note quartal chords are built on the second, third and fifth scale degree of the “F” Mixolydian mode and can be seen in measures 177-179. (See Figure 71)

Bass dyads are found thirty-six times in Tyner’s solo (see measures 40, 43, 44, 49, 56, 58, 61, 64, 72, 80). “So What” chords, a five-note chord voicing that from the bottom up consists of three perfect fourth intervals followed by a major third interval, can be seen in measures 180-184. The chord came into vogue when pianist Bill Evans introduced it on Miles Davis’ composition “So What” from his album “Kind of Blue” recorded in 1959, hence the name.
4.3.3.3 Rhythmic Material

Eighth note rhythms are prominent in Tyner’s melodic phrases in “Passion Dance” as they are in “Chain Reaction.” Tyner often ends his phrases on the downbeat, as seen in measures 35, 40, 42, 44, 48, 55, 58, 70, 80, 100, 104, 144, 168, 176. Periodically, Tyner injects sixteenth notes (measures 107-112) or eighth note triplet rhythms (measures 43-48, 66, 129-136) into the prevailing eighth note rhythms. The three-note quartal chords Tyner plays throughout his solo with his left hand are heavily syncopated, accentuating the upbeats, seen in measures 34, 37-40, 77 - 80, 117-120, and 165-168.
4.3.4 Creation of Consonance and Dissonance: Right and Left Hand

Unsurprisingly, Tyner uses many of the same improvisational devices in “Passion Dance” as he does in “Chain Reaction” because they are both modal compositions. As in “Chain Reaction,” Tyner regularly selects pitches derived from modes to construct consonant melodic phrases in “Passion Dance,” however, Tyner predominantly selects pitches from the “F” Mixolydian mode in “Passion Dance” instead of the “D” or “E-Flat” Dorian mode as done in “Chain Reaction.” Concurrently, Tyner planes consonant three-note quartal chords with his left hand to generate accompaniment. He does this by planing quartal chords along the same “F” Mixolydian mode from which he selects the right hand pitches. Of the seven consonant quartal chords Tyner could consonantly play in stepwise parallel motion along the “F” Mixolydian mode, Tyner gives preference to quartal chords built on the first two scale degrees: F – B-Flat – E-Flat and G – C – F. He plays F – B-Flat – E-Flat eighty-two times and G – C – F seventy-eight times. Figure 72 illustrates Tyner’s melodic and harmonic use of the “F” Mixolydian mode.

Figure 72 "Passion Dance: "Use of pitches from "F" Mixolydian mode to construct melodies and quartal chord accompaniment - measures 41-44."
Within this framework, Tyner regularly inserts arpeggiated diatonic triads, quartal melodic fragments\(^{270}\) and motivic cells\(^{271}\) into his consonant melodic phrases. Tyner’s use of arpeggiated diatonic triads can be seen in measures 33, 42, 53, 54, 77 (“F” major triad), measures 34, 41, 54 (“C” minor triad) and measures 53-54, 55, 73-74 (“E-Flat” major triads.) Figure 73 illustrates Tyner’s use of diatonic triads in conjunction with consonant quartal chords with his left hand.

![Figure 73](image)

Figure 73 "Passion Dance:" Tyner's use of diatonic triads in his melodic phrase supported by diatonic quartal chords constructed on the "F" Mixolydian mode - measures 53-56.

In addition to consonant diatonic triads, Tyner inserts dissonant non-diatonic triads into melodic phrases. This can be seen in measures 61-62 (“A” major triad), 71 (“G-Flat” major triad), 91-93 (“E” and “D” major triads), 119 (“G-Flat” major triad), 122 (“G” major triad), 167-168 (“G” and “A” major triads), 175-176 (“G,” “A” and “B” major triads). Some of the dissonant non-diatonic triads Tyner plays form melodic sequences seen in measures 92-93 (“E” major triad to “D” major triad and back to “E” major triad), 167-168 (“G” major triad to “A” major triad), 175-176 (“G” major triad to “A” major triad to “B” major triad). Another time, Tyner’s dissonant non-diatonic triad use did not form a melodic sequence as seen in measures 61-62 (“A” major triad to

\(^{270}\) Quartal melodic fragments are a series of two or more notes within a melodic phrase in which each note is an interval of a perfect fourth from one another.

\(^{271}\) Short melodic fragments of three or four notes that are collectively subject to variation.
“G” minor triad). When playing dissonant non-diatonic triads with his right hand, Tyner concurrently plays dissonant three-note quartal chords with his left comprised of notes derived from the “F-Sharp” Mixolydian mode seen in measures 61-62, 92, 93; exceptions are quartal chords he plays derived from the “F” Mixolydian mode, seen in measures 71 and 119. Additionally, Tyner builds tension in the improvisation by playing quartal chords in whole steps with his left hand while playing non-diatonic triads with his right hand in measures 122 and 175.

Tyner employs diatonic and non-diatonic quartal melodic fragments into his improvisation. He plays diatonic quartal melodic fragments five times as seen in measures 95, 100, 116, 119, 120. In all the aforementioned measures, Tyner plays a diatonic quartal melodic fragment consisting of notes “E-Flat” down to “B-Flat” and down to “F,” except for the quartal melodic fragment in measure 120, where he plays a “B-Flat” down to “F.” Concurrently, Tyner plays the consonant quartal chord “F” – “B-Flat” – “E-Flat” with his left hand, except for the non-diatonic quartal chord comprised of the notes “E-Flat” – “A-Flat” – “D-Flat” he plays in measures 95 and 120.

Dissonant non-diatonic quartal melodic fragments were played three times in the improvisation, as seen in measures 118, 121, and 123. In the aforementioned measures, Tyner plays dissonant non-diatonic quartal melodic fragments consisting of the notes “C-Sharp” up to “F-Sharp” in measures 118 and 123, and another quartal melodic fragment consisting of the notes “E-Flat” up to “A-Flat” in measure 121. While Tyner inserts these dissonant quartal melodic fragments consisting of notes from the “F-Sharp” Mixolydian mode with his right hand, Tyner planes dissonant quartal chords along the “F-Sharp” Mixolydian mode with his left hand, which included “E-Flat” – “A-Flat” – “D-Flat,” and “F-Sharp” – “B” – “E.” However, in
measure 118, Tyner plays a consonant quartal chord consisting of the notes “F” – “B-Flat” – “E-Flat,” while playing a dissonant quartal melodic fragment in his right hand.

Tyner also incorporates three and four note diatonic and non-diatonic motivic cells into the improvisation. He inserts consonant three and four note diatonic motivic cells into melodic phrases as seen in measures 43-44 and 129-134, while concurrently planing three note quartal chords along the “F” Mixolydian mode with his left hand. Three and four note non-diatonic motivic cells generate tension within Tyner’s improvisation and are seen in measures 46, 47-48, 69-70, 106. Concurrently, Tyner planes quartal chords with his left hand in one of three ways: in chromatic upward motion (measure 46) (see Figure 74), repeated playing of the consonant quartal chord “G” – “C” – “F” (measures 69-70), and moving quartal chords in the same downward direction as the motivic cells played with his right hand, except for the quartal chord “E” –“A” –“D” on the “and” of beat three in measure 136. Surprisingly, there is not a consistent methodology Tyner employs when playing three and four non-diatonic motivic cells with his right hand, and with the quartal chords he plays with his left. He arbitrarily selects quartal chords that generate dissonance and regularly resolves that dissonance with a low dyad played with his left hand.

Figure 74 "Passion Dance:" Tyner creating dissonance by playing non-diatonic three and four note motivic cells while chromatically moving three note quartal chords with his left - measures 45-46.
Tyner regularly resolves dissonance in the improvisation by playing bass dyads with his left hand. Playing bass dyads re-establishes the tonal center after Tyner plays melodic phrases and accompaniment chords that abandon the “F” tonal center. Bass dyads are played fifteen times and are seen in measures 49, 65, 73, 80, 89, 97, 101, 113, 128, 136, 145, 160, 164, 168, 177. Figure 75 below illustrates this concept.

Figure 75 "Passion Dance:" Bass Dyad Re-Establishing the Tonal Center - measures 77-80.

Tyner also utilizes dyads to rhythmically “punctuate” the end of his melodic phrases in the same manner commas and periods punctuate sentences within the written English language. Out of thirty-six times, Tyner plays bass dyads thirty-two times (88% of the time) to rhythmically punctuate the end of his melodic phrases and is seen in measures 40, 43, 44, 49, 56, 58, 61, 64, 72, 80, 89, 97, 99, 101, 104, 113, 120, 128, 132, 136, 145, 146, 148, 150, 152, 154, 157, 160, 164, 168, 171, 177, 180. Figure 76 illustrates below.

Figure 76 "Passion Dance:" Bass Dyads Tyner employs to punctuate the ends of his melodic phrases - measures 41-44.
Tyner employs four improvisational techniques involving both his right and left hand. They include superimposition, bi-tonality, and five-note quartal and “So What” chords. Superimposition is an improvisational technique that an improviser uses to play a melody implying a chord, chord progression, or tonal center other than that being stated by the rhythm section. This technique is the primary way Tyner creates tension within his improvisation. He melodically abandons the “F” tonal center and melodically superimposes notes from the “F-Sharp” Mixolydian mode or notes from “F-Sharp” Major Pentatonic scale into his melodic phrases. Tyner’s use of melodic superimposition can be seen in measures 52 (F-Sharp major pentatonic), 63-64 (F-Sharp Mixolydian), 77-79 (F-Sharp major pentatonic), 94 (F# major pentatonic), 118 (F# Mixolydian),119-120 (F# Mixolydian), 140 (F# major pentatonic), and 143-144 (F# Mixolydian). Figure 77 illustrates Tyner’s use of superimposition:

Through superimposition, Tyner generates tension in his improvisation when he plays notes from “F-Sharp” Mixolydian mode to formulate melodic content played by his right hand, and concurrently planes quartal chords along the “F-Sharp” Mixolydian mode with his left hand as chordal accompaniment seen in measures 63-64, 77-79, 94, 140. At times, Tyner plays notes
derived from an “E-Flat” minor pentatonic scale, a subset of notes from the “F-Sharp” Mixolydian mode. This is seen in measures 77-79 and 140.

Bi-tonality, the simultaneous occurrence of two tonal centers within a composition,\textsuperscript{272} generates tension within Tyner’s improvisation. In measures 81-86, Tyner repeatedly plays the first four notes of the “C-Sharp” blues scale with his right hand, momentarily accentuating a “C-Sharp” tonal center, while repeatedly playing a (G-C-F) quartal chord in his left hand, momentarily accentuating an “F” tonal center.

![C-Sharp Blues Scale](image)

**Figure 78** "Passion Dance:" Bi-Tonality within Tyner's improvisation - measures 81-84.

Tyner uses consonant five-note quartal chords and dissonant five-note “So What” chords to climactically conclude his improvisation as seen in measures 177 through 184. Tyner concurrently plays a portion of these chords with his right hand, and the remaining portion with his left. The notes in his five-note quartal chords consonantly fit within the “F” Mixolydian mode. His “So What” chords build tension in the improvisation by a specific planing arrangement. He releases that tension by playing a bass dyad in measure 185. Figure 79 illustrates Tyner’s use of five-note quartal chords and “So What” chords.

Figure 79  "Passion Dance:" Tyner's consonant use of five-note quartal chords and dissonant "So What" chords - measures 177-184.
4.3.4.1 Summary

McCoy Tyner’s improvisation in “Passion Dance” reveals that he regularly employs modal scales, diatonic triads, quartal melodic fragments, and motivic cells within consonant melodic phrases played by his right hand. Concurrently, Tyner regularly planes consonant quartal chords along the “F” Mixolydian mode with his left hand, giving preference to quartal chords build on the first and second scale degrees. He also plays consonant bass dyads with his left hand, which re-establishes the tonal center and musically punctuates melodic phrases throughout the improvisation. Additionally, Tyner consonantly uses five-note quartal chords at the end of his improvisation. Tyner also uses non-diatonic triads, melodic sequences, non-diatonic quartal melodic fragments, motivic cells, superimposition, and bi-tonality within dissonant melodic phrases played by his right hand. Concurrently, Tyner dissonantly plays quartal chords with his left hand by non-diatonically planing along the “F-Sharp Mixolydian mode, planing quartal chords in whole steps, planing quartal chords in a chromatic upward motion, planing quartal chords in the same downward direction as a dissonant melodic device played with his right hand, and at times, planes quartal chords in an arbitrary manner. Additionally, Tyner dissonantly uses five-note “So What” chords at the end of his improvisation, all of which are played by his right and left hand.
4.4 “BLUES ON THE CORNER”

4.4.1 Analysis of the Composition: “Blues on the Corner”

“Blues on the Corner” is a medium tempo swing composition in common time, with a tempo of one hundred sixteen beats per minute. The form of the composition is twelve measures in length, and Tyner loosely adheres to the following twelve bar blues chord progressions throughout his solo.

**Figure 80 “Blues on the Corner:” - General Solo Progressions.**

The melody of “Blues on the Corner” is primarily comprised of eighth note triplet rhythms repeated throughout the composition. The melody uses notes from the “B-Flat” minor pentatonic scale in measures six and seven, contributing to the composition’s bluesy character. Tenor saxophonist Joe Henderson plays the main melody, while Tyner harmonizes with a countermelody a third below in measures 1-3 and 5, and a fourth below in measures 9-10 and 13-14, and then plays in unison with Henderson in measures 4 and 6 - 7.
A definitive attribute of the melody is that the melody and accompanying harmony abandon the “B-Flat” tonal center/“B-Flat” dominant thirteenth harmony typically heard in measures three and four of standard twelve bar blues progressions. Instead, Tyner plays a planing arrangement of five descending quartal chords (dominant seventh suspended fourth chords), each a major second apart from one another, that ultimately resolve to an “E-Flat” dominant thirteenth chord in measure five. Figure 81 below illustrates:

![Figure 81](image)

Figure 81 “Blues on the Corner:” Descending Dominant 7th Suspended Fourth Chords a Major 2nd Apart; Melody comprised of Quartal Melodic Fragments - measures 3 and 4.

### 4.4.2 Improvisational Content: “Blues on the Corner”

#### 4.4.2.1 Melodic Material

In “Blues on the Corner,” McCoy Tyner takes the first solo, which is about two minutes and thirty seconds in length. He uses a wide variety of melodic devices including the pentatonic scale, chord arpeggios, notes from the Mixolydian mode, quartal melodic fragments, bebop enclosures, chromatic approach notes, repetitive melodic fragments, notes from the blues scale, diatonic and non-diatonic triads, melodic note groupings, and a melodic sequence.
Tyner generates a blues sonority within many melodic phrases by regularly playing notes derived from minor pentatonic scales and, less commonly, the blues scale, which is a minor pentatonic scale with the addition of the sharp four scale degree. Tyner uses the minor pentatonic scale throughout the improvisation as seen in measures 22-24, 28, 33-35, 37, 39, 43, 46-47, 49, 58-60, 60-61, 68, 70, 77-78, 81-86. The “B-Flat” minor pentatonic scale, seen in measures 22, 33-34, 34-35, 39, 46-47, 58, 77-78; “F” minor pentatonic scale, seen in measures 24, 68; “E-Flat” minor pentatonic scale, seen in measures 60, 70, and “F-Sharp” minor pentatonic scale, seen in measure 61. Tyner use of the “B-Flat” blues scale is seen in measures 27, 30, 79-80, 86. Figure 82 below illustrates Tyner’s usage of the “F” minor pentatonic scale while playing a rhythmic flurry:

![Figure 82 “Blues on the Corner:” Excerpt of a phrase possessing notes from the “F” Minor Pentatonic Scale - measure 68.](image)

Tyner incorporates chord arpeggiation, notes from the Mixolydian mode, quartal melodic fragments, bebop enclosures, chromatic approach notes, repetitive melodic fragments, and melodic note groupings within many of his melodic phrases. His use of chord arpeggiation is seen in measure 19 (“F” minor 9), 49 (“C-Sharp” minor 9), 50 (“A” half-diminished 7) (“F” dominant 7), 62 (“G” minor 7), 70 (“E-Flat” dominant 7) and 73 (“F” dominant 7). Figure 83 illustrates Tyner’s use of chord arpeggiation:
Notes from the “B-Flat” or “E-Flat” Mixolydian mode are seen in measures 31, 41-42, 51, 57, 65-67, 69, 74, quartal melodic fragments in measures 23, 39, 43, 47, 71, 81-85, bebop enclosures in measures 20, 31, 40, 44, 48, 50, 61, 72. Figure 84 illustrates Tyner’s use of a bebop enclosure:

Chromatic approach notes, which are notes that precede important chord tones by half step, are seen in measures 17 (“C-Sharp” to “D”), 21 (“F-Sharp” to “G”), 29 (“D-Flat” to “D”), 30 (“C” to “D-Flat”), 31 (“E” to “F”), 36 (“A-Flat” to “A”), 37 (“F-Sharp” to “G”), and 69 (“C” to “D-Flat”). Figure 85 illustrates:
Tyner uses repetitive melodic fragments in the improvisation seen in measures 17, 29-30, 53-55, 81-86, and melodic note groupings seen in measures 18 (four-note grouping within a “E-Flat” dominant chord), 30 (four-note grouping within a “B-Flat” dominant chord), 37 (four-note grouping within a “F” dominant chord), 63 (four-note grouping within a “B-Flat” dominant chord), 70 (“E-Flat” dominant chord). Tyner’s use of a repetitive melodic fragment and a melodic note grouping is illustrated in Figure 86 and 87.
Tyner also incorporates a series of diatonic and non-diatonic triads into his improvisation. Diatonic triads are seen in measure 32 with the arpeggiation of a “G” minor triad, “F” minor triad, “D” diminished triad and “C” minor triad (note that all the pitches of the aforementioned chords can be found within the “B-Flat” Mixolydian mode and are diatonic with the “B-Flat” dominant thirteenth chord Tyner plays in measure 32.) Tyner’s non-diatonic triad use is seen in measure 71 with the arpeggiation of an “A” and “G” major triad.
4.4.2.2 Harmonic Material

Tyner uses three types of chords within his improvisation: three and four-note rootless chords, three note quartal chords, and a combination of four, five and six-note quartal/quasi-quartal chords. Additionally, he periodically plays bass dyads throughout his improvisation. When playing three-note rootless chords, Tyner plays dominant thirteenth chords and dominant seven sharp nine chords by playing the third, seventh and the thirteenth or the third, seventh and sharp nine chord tones with his left hand. Figure 88 illustrates this below.

![Figure 88 “Blues on the Corner:” Tyner’s Three-Note Rootless Chords.](image)

Tyner plays four-note rootless dominant thirteenth chords and four-note rootless minor nine chords throughout the improvisation. He plays four-note rootless dominant thirteenth chords by playing the third, seventh, ninth and thirteenth chord tones, and the four-note rootless minor nine chords by playing the third, fifth, seventh and ninth chord tones. These chords are seen in measures 25, 31-32, 37, 44, 48, 49-50, and Figure 89 illustrates them below.

![Figure 89 “Blues on the Corner:” Common Four-Note Rootless Chords.](image)
Tyner uses three-note quartal chords extensively throughout the improvisation, as seen in measures 21-24, 28, 39-40, 42, 45-47, 61, 71, 81-84. He plays a bass dyad in measure 29 signaling the start of the second solo chorus, another bass dyad as musical “punctuation” in measure 57 signaling the start of section #2, and low octaves throughout the improvisation, especially when beginning a new solo chorus as in measures 52, 65, and 77. Tyner also plays a combination of four, five and six-note quartal/quasi-quartal chords in the improvisation, as seen in measures 87 and 88. Tyner has a penchant for ending improvisations with five note quartal/quasi-quartal chords as played in “Blues on the Corner,” “Passion Dance,” and “Chain Reaction.”

4.4.2.3 Rhythmic Material

Eighth note triplets and sixteenth notes are prominent melodic rhythms throughout the improvisation. Sixteenth note melodic phrases generate a double time feel against the medium tempo of the composition, which made it easy for Tyner to oscillate between playing sixteenth and triplet based rhythmic phrases.

Tyner also uses rhythmic flurries\(^{273}\) throughout the improvisation, seen in measures 27-28, 30, 56, 68, 75-76, 78, 80. These flurries provide rhythmic contrast to Tyner’s triplet and sixteenth note infused phrases. Trills at the end of Tyner’s melodic phrases also add rhythmic contrast to the improvisation as seen in measures 24-25, 35-36, 51, and 59-60. As in “Chain Reaction” and “Passion Dance,” Tyner’s left hand chordal accompaniment in “Blues on the Corner” is also syncopated throughout, especially on the upbeat of two and four.

\(^{273}\) Rhythmic flurries are large groups of notes played in succession usually in a quick scale-like fashion. These “flurries” generally offer a stark rhythmic contract to the surround rhythms.
4.4.3 Creation of Consonance and Dissonance: Right and Left Hand

The twelve-measure solo form of “Blues on the Corner” uses blues chord progressions illustrated in Figure 80. The following three-part analysis identifies the consonant and dissonant melodic and harmonic devices Tyner plays in tandem with his right and left hands. The first part, labeled “Section #1,” summarizes what Tyner plays in measures 1-4 of his six-chorus solo. The second part, labeled “Section #2,” summarizes what Tyner plays in measures 5-8 of his six-chorus solo. The final section labeled “Section #3,” summarizes what Tyner plays in measures 9-12 of his six-chorus solo. This analytical approach is a way to identify and explain how Tyner generates consonance and dissonance in four measure sections throughout his six-chorus improvisation.

Section #1 – Summary of Measures 17-20, 29-32, 41-44, 53-56, 65-68, 77-80

As stated previously, Tyner plays consonant and dissonant melodic and harmonic devices in Section #1. They are classified as consonant if they are diatonic to the chord progressions specified in the first four measures of the solo chord progressions illustrated in Figure 90 below, and dissonant if they are non-diatonic to the same progressions.

![Figure 90 "Blues on the Corner:" Solo Progressions of the first four measures of the twelve-bar blues solo form.](image-url)
The following table gives a detailed summary of the melodic and harmonic devices Tyner plays in Section #1 of his six-chorus improvisation. In the table, Tyner’s consonant and dissonant melodic and harmonic devices are color coded, with black representing consonant melodic and harmonic devices, and red representing dissonant melodic and harmonic devices.
Table 6 "Blues on the Corner:" Summary of the Consonant and Dissonant Melodic and Harmonic Devices in Section #1

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<td>Four Note melodic grouping within E-Flat Dominant Seventh</td>
<td>F minor 9 arpeggio</td>
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<td>Arpeggiated Diatonic Triads within B-Flat Mixolydian Mode (G Minor Triad, F Minor Triad, D Diminished Triad, C minor triad)</td>
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<td>B-Flat 13, F7(#9) (Three Note Rootless Chord)</td>
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<td>the flat 7 and sus4 of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>minor 3rd (D-Flat) to</td>
<td></td>
<td>E-Flat7sus4 played in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>B-Flat7sus4 played in</td>
<td></td>
<td>left hand, B-Flat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LEFT HAND</td>
<td>Octave Bass Notes, B-</td>
<td>F7sus4, B-Flat7sus4,</td>
<td>E-Flat7sus4, F#7sus4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Flat7sus4</td>
<td>Octave Bass Notes</td>
<td>(Quartal Chords)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Octave bass notes -Bb</td>
<td>(Octave Bass Notes, Octave</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>and A-Flat- Ab may be a</td>
<td>Bass Notes with added</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>mistake, Quartal Chords)</td>
<td>octave note</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80</td>
<td>RIGHT HAND</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LEFT HAND</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Chorus #4**

**Chorus #5**

**Chorus #6**
In Section #1, Tyner regularly plays consonant melodic and harmonic devices in his musical phrases. This includes repetitive melodic fragments/chromatic approach notes that accentuate the third of “B-Flat” dominant thirteen chords and the seventh of “E-Flat” dominant thirteen chords seen in measures 17, 29-31, 65-67, call and response seen in measures 17-18, 29-33, 41-42, 53-55, 65-67, 77-78, 79-80, pitches from the “B-Flat” Mixolydian mode in measures one and three of Section #1 and “E-Flat” Mixolydian mode in measure two of Section #1 (measures 31, 41-42, 65-67), notes from the blues scale in the second and fourth measures of Section #1 (measures 30, 79-80) bebop enclosures in measures three and four of Section #1 (measures 20, 31, 44), and pentatonic scales in measures two, three and four of Section #1 (measures 43, 68, 78). As Tyner plays the aforementioned consonant melodic devices, he regularly plays consonant three note rootless “B-Flat” and “E-Flat” dominant 13 chords as left hand chordal accompaniment seen in measures 17-18, 41-42, 65-66. Additionally, Tyner occasionally plays a bass dyad or an octave bass note at the top of a new solo chorus to re-establish the “B-Flat” tonal center (measures 29, 77).

A notable attribute of Tyner’s improvisation in Section #1 is that he plays three and four note rootless chords in addition to the standard solo blues progressions he plays illustrated in Figure 90. These chord additions consonantly add harmonic diversity among Tyner’s three note rootless “B-Flat” and “E-Flat” dominant 13 chords. One such chord is the addition of v9 (“F” minor 9) chords that precede I13 chords (“B-Flat” dominant 13) as seen in measures 20, 31-32, and 44 in the fourth measure of Section #1. Tyner also plays V7(#9) chords (“F” dominant 7 #9) after I13 (“B-Flat dominant 13”) chords seen in measures 31, 43, and 67 in measure three of Section #1 (See Figure 91). Tyner also plays an “F” dominant 7 #9 chord following a “B-Flat” dominant 13 chord, as seen in measure 41.

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Tyner occasionally generates dissonance in Section #1. The most prominent occurrence is seen in measures 53-56 where Tyner plays a repetitive melodic fragment accentuating the “B-Flat” tonal center and the thirteenth chord tone of the accompanying dissonant rootless three note “G” dominant 13 chord Tyner plays with his left hand. What is noteworthy about the “G” dominant thirteen chord is that it is the same shape as the three note rootless “B-Flat” dominant thirteen chord Tyner typically plays in measure one of Section #1, however, Tyner plays the chord a minor third below to generate tension created by the tri-tone in the chord between the notes “F” and “B,” and the notes “E” played in the chord and “B-Flat” played by the bassist. Figure 92 illustrates on the next page.
Also in Section #1, Tyner generates dissonance by arpeggiating a non-diatonic “B” minor nine chord with his right hand (measure 43). He also plays dissonant seven-note groupings (one using pitches from the “E-Flat” minor pentatonic scale and another using pitches from the “D” minor pentatonic scale) with his right hand (measure 68). Concurrently, Tyner plays non-diatonic quartal chords with his left hand seen in measures 43, 67-68, 79-80. Noteworthy is that Tyner primarily creates tension by playing these non-diatonic quartal chords in the fourth measure of Section #1, during the fourth, fifth, and sixth choruses, and resolves the tension in the first measure of Section #2 by playing a diatonic bass dyad in measure 57, a single bass note in measure 69, and a diatonic bass octave in measure 80. Tyner also plays bass dyads with his left hand at the beginning of a new solo chorus, as seen in measure 29, to punctuate his melodic
phrases, as seen in measures 36, 84-85, and to re-establish the tonal center after melodically and harmonically abandoning it, as seen in measures 77-78, 89.

Section #2 (Summary of measures 21-24, 33-36, 45-48, 57-60, 69-72, 81-84)

The solo changes of Section #2 are illustrated below.

Figure 93 "Blues on the Corner:" Solo Progressions of measures 5 through 8 of the twelve-bar blues solo form.

The following table is a summary of the consonant and dissonant melodic and harmonic devices Tyner plays in Section #2 of his six-chorus improvisation. They are color coded as previously done in Section #1.
Table 7 "Blues on the Corner:" Summary of the Consonant and Dissonant Melodic and Harmonic Devices

Tyner plays in Section #2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chord</th>
<th>Eb13</th>
<th>Eb13</th>
<th>Bb13</th>
<th>Bb13</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Measure #</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chorus #1</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RIGHT HAND</strong></td>
<td>Chromatic Approach</td>
<td><strong>RIGHT HAND</strong></td>
<td><strong>RIGHT HAND</strong></td>
<td><strong>RIGHT HAND</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes (F# to G)</td>
<td>“B-Flat” Minor</td>
<td>Quartal Melodic</td>
<td>“F” Minor Pentatonic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pentatonic Scale</td>
<td>Fragments within B-Flat</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>minor pentatonic scale</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LEFT HAND</strong></td>
<td>E-Flat 13, E-Flat7</td>
<td><strong>LEFT HAND</strong></td>
<td><strong>LEFT HAND</strong></td>
<td><strong>LEFT HAND</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chords, Quartal Chord</td>
<td>7sus4</td>
<td><strong>LEFT HAND</strong></td>
<td>F7sus4, Eb7sus4,</td>
<td>F7sus4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Three Note Rootless</td>
<td></td>
<td>F7sus4</td>
<td>(Quartal Chords)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chords, Quartal Chord)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measure #</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chorus #2</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RIGHT HAND</strong></td>
<td>“B-Flat Minor</td>
<td><strong>RIGHT HAND</strong></td>
<td><strong>RIGHT HAND</strong></td>
<td><strong>RIGHT HAND</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pentatonic Scale</td>
<td>B-Flat” Minor</td>
<td>“B-Flat” Minor</td>
<td>Chromatic Approach</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pentatonic Scale</td>
<td>Pentatonic Scale</td>
<td>Notes (G# to A)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>accentuating the 3rd</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>of the F Dominant 13,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LEFT HAND</strong></td>
<td>E-Flat 13, B-Flat7</td>
<td><strong>LEFT HAND</strong></td>
<td><strong>LEFT HAND</strong></td>
<td><strong>LEFT HAND</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chords, Quartal Chord</td>
<td>(#9), E-Flat 13</td>
<td>Bb7sus4, Ab7sus4</td>
<td>B7sus4, Ab7sus4</td>
<td>F7sus4, Ab13, G13,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Three Note Rootless</td>
<td>(Quartal Chords)</td>
<td>(Quartal Chords)</td>
<td>Ab13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chord)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Quartal Chord, Three</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Note Rootless Chords)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measure #</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>48</td>
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<td><strong>Chorus #3</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RIGHT HAND</strong></td>
<td>Four-note grouping</td>
<td><strong>RIGHT HAND</strong></td>
<td><strong>RIGHT HAND</strong></td>
<td><strong>RIGHT HAND</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>within Eb Dominant 13</td>
<td>B-Flat” Minor</td>
<td>“B-Flat” Minor</td>
<td>Chromebop Enclosure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pentatonic Scale</td>
<td>Pentatonic Scale</td>
<td>of “B” accentuating</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Scale with Quartal</td>
<td></td>
<td>the third of “G”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Melodic Fragments in the</td>
<td></td>
<td>dominant, Arpeggio</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>scale</td>
<td></td>
<td>outlining a “G”7 flat 9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LEFT HAND</strong></td>
<td>E-Flat 13, E-Flat7</td>
<td><strong>LEFT HAND</strong></td>
<td><strong>LEFT HAND</strong></td>
<td><strong>LEFT HAND</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chords, Quartal Chord</td>
<td>7sus4</td>
<td>F7sus4, F7sus4, E7sus4</td>
<td></td>
<td>F7sus4, F#7sus4,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Three Note Rootless</td>
<td>(Quartal Chords)</td>
<td>A-Flat 13, D-9, G13</td>
<td>(Quartal Chords)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chords, Quartal Chord)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(Three and Four Note Rootless Chords)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measure #</td>
<td>Chord</td>
<td>Eb13</td>
<td>Eb13</td>
<td>Bb13</td>
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<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
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<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57</td>
<td>Chorus #4</td>
<td>RIGHT HAND</td>
<td>Notes derived from E-Flat Mixolydian mode</td>
<td>RIGHT HAND</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LEFT HAND</td>
<td>Bass Dyad, E-Flat7 (#9) (Bass Dyad, Three Note Rootless Chord)</td>
<td>LEFT HAND</td>
<td>E-Flat7 (#9), F#7sus4 (Three Note Rootless Chords, Quartal Chord)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>69</td>
<td>Chorus #5</td>
<td>RIGHT HAND</td>
<td>Notes derived from E-Flat Mixolydian mode, Chromatic Approach Notes (C to Db)</td>
<td>RIGHT HAND</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LEFT HAND</td>
<td>E-Flat 13, E-Flat7sus4 (Three Note Rootless Chords, Quartal Chord)</td>
<td>LEFT HAND</td>
<td>E-Flat 13, E-Flat7sus4 (Three Note Rootless Chords, Quartal Chord)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>81</td>
<td>Chorus #6</td>
<td>RIGHT HAND</td>
<td>Quartal Melodic Fragments within B-Flat minor pentatonic scale</td>
<td>RIGHT HAND</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LEFT HAND</td>
<td>Bass Dyad, E-Flat7sus4 (Bass Dyad, Quartal Chords)</td>
<td>LEFT HAND</td>
<td>E-Flat7sus4 (Quartal Chords)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As in Section #1, Tyner plays consonant melodic and harmonic devices in Section #2 of his improvisation. Prominent consonant melodic devices include minor pentatonic scales (measures 22-24, 33-35, 46, 58-60, 70, 81-84), quartal melodic fragments (measure 23, 47, 71, 81-84), chromatic approach notes (measures 21, 36, 69), chord arpeggios (measures 48, 70, 72), pitches from the Mixolydian mode (measures 57, 69), and bebop enclosures (measures 48, 72). Concurrently, Tyner plays rootless three-note dominant chords, rootless four-note minor nine and dominant thirteenth chords, three-note quartal chords (dominant suspended fourth chords) and bass dyads with his left hand as listed in Table 7.

A prominent attribute of Tyner’s improvisation in Section #2 is that he plays consonant bluesy melodic material using notes from the “B-Flat” minor pentatonic scale (measures 22-24, 33-35, 46, 58-60, 70, 81-84) and quartal melodic fragments (measures 23, 47, 71, 81-84) diatonic to the “B-Flat” minor pentatonic scale. He also melodically accentuates the “E-Flat” dominant 13 harmony prescribed by the solo changes in measure five of Section #2 by consonantly playing chromatic approach notes (measures 21, 36, 69), notes from the “E-Flat” Mixolydian mode, and a four-note grouping within “E-Flat” dominant thirteen harmony. Concurrently, Tyner plays consonant rootless three-note “E-Flat” dominant thirteen chords and “E-Flat” quartal chords (“E-Flat” dominant seven suspended fourth) with his left hand as seen in measures 22-23, 33-35, 46, 58-59, 81-84. Noteworthy is that Tyner consonantly plans between the rootless “E-Flat” dominant thirteen chord and the “E-Flat” quartal chords with his left hand (measures 21-22, 45-46, 69-70). Jazz pianists prior to Tyner did not plan quartal chords in the context of a twelve bar blues improvisation as Tyner does. Figure 94 illustrates.
Also in Section #2, Tyner occasionally plays a iii9 (“D” minor 9) to VII3 (“G” dominant 13) chord progression with his left hand in place of the prescribed “B-Flat” dominant 13 harmony in measure 8 (measures 48 and 72). In measure 48, Tyner plays a “D” minor 9 and a “G” dominant 13 chord with rootless four-note chord voicings, and in measure 72, plays rootless three-note chord voicings for the same progression. In both occurrences of the iii9 (“D” minor 9) to VII3 (“G” dominant 13) progression, Tyner melodically accentuates the VII3 (“G” dominant 13) chords by playing a bebop enclosure on “B,” – the third of a “G” dominant chord – and arpeggiated the “G” dominant 13 chord, as seen in measures 48 and 72.

In Section #2, Tyner plays bass dyads with his left hand to re-establish the tonal center after melodically and harmonically abandoning it as seen in measures 57 and 80-81. Also in Section #2, Tyner simultaneously generates harmonic dissonance and melodic consonance in his improvisation by playing dissonant non-diatonic quartal chords that abandon the prescribed “B-Flat” dominant thirteen harmony in measures 7 and 8 of Section #2. Concurrently, Tyner plays pitches from the “B-Flat” minor pentatonic scale (measures 23, 35, 59, 83-84) that consonantly accentuates the “B-Flat” tonal center. Figure 95 illustrates.
Also, Tyner plays dissonant melodic and harmonic devices that abandon the prescribed “B-Flat” dominant 13 harmony in measures seven or eight of Section #2. These devices include non-diatonic quartal melodic fragments (measures 47, 71), a “B” minor nine arpeggio (measure 47), notes from the “E-Flat” minor pentatonic scale (measures 60, 70), and a series of non-diatonic triads (measure 71). Concurrently, Tyner plays dissonant non-diatonic quartal chords with his left hand as seen in measures 47, 60 and 71.

The solo changes of Section #3 are illustrated below.

Figure 96 "Blues on the Corner:" Solo Progressions of measures 9 through 12 of the twelve-bar blues solo form.

The following table is a summary of the consonant and dissonant melodic and harmonic devices Tyner plays in Section #3 of his six-chorus improvisation. They are color coded, as previously done in Sections #1 and #2.
Table 8 "Blues on the Corner:" Summary of the Consonant and Dissonant Melodic and Harmonic Constructs Tyner plays in Section #3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chord</th>
<th>Measure #</th>
<th>Measure #</th>
<th>Measure #</th>
<th>Measure #</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>RIGHT HAND</td>
<td>RIGHT HAND</td>
<td>RIGHT HAND</td>
<td>RIGHT HAND</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chorus #1</td>
<td>Chromatic Approach Notes (Ab to A) accentuating the 3rd of “F- Dominant 13, Diatonic Triads within “F” Mixolydian mode – F and C minor triads</td>
<td>Four note grouping-arpeggiation of E-Flat dominant seventh harmony</td>
<td>“B-Flat” Blues Scale</td>
<td>“F” Minor Pentatonic Scale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LEFT HAND</td>
<td>LEFT HAND</td>
<td>LEFT HAND</td>
<td>LEFT HAND</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F13 (Four note rootless chord)</td>
<td>E-Flat 13 (Four note rootless chord)</td>
<td>Eb7sus4, Ab7sus4 (Quartal Chords)</td>
<td>Ab13, F7sus4 (Three note rootless chord, Quartal chord)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measure #</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>RIGHT HAND</td>
<td>RIGHT HAND</td>
<td>RIGHT HAND</td>
<td>RIGHT HAND</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chorus #2</td>
<td>“B-Flat Minor Pentatonic Scale-(the note F-Sharp sounds like a mistake)</td>
<td>Five-note grouping of E-Flat dominant seven</td>
<td>“B-Flat” Minor Pentatonic Scale, Non-Diatomic Quartal Melodic Fragments</td>
<td>Notes from “F” Major Pentatonic Scale, Bebop Enclosure of “A” accentuating the third of “F” major triad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LEFT HAND</td>
<td>LEFT HAND</td>
<td>LEFT HAND</td>
<td>LEFT HAND</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F13 (Four note rootless chord)</td>
<td>E-Flat 13 (Four note rootless chord)</td>
<td>Eb7sus4, F7sus4, F##sus4 (Quartal Chords)</td>
<td>E-Flat7sus4, F7sus4, E7sus4, F##sus4, G7sus4 (Quartal Chords)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>RIGHT HAND</td>
<td>RIGHT HAND</td>
<td>RIGHT HAND</td>
<td>RIGHT HAND</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chorus #3</td>
<td>Arpeggio of C# minor 9, F# Major pentatonic</td>
<td>Arpeggio of C minor 6 chord, Bebop enclosure of “A” accentuating the third of the F13, Arpeggio of F7</td>
<td>Notes from the B-Flat Mixolydian mode except for the F#</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LEFT HAND</td>
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<td>LEFT HAND</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C#-9, F#13 (Four note rootless chords)</td>
<td>C-9, F13 (Four note rootless chords)</td>
<td>Bb13, Eb13, Bb7(#9) (Three note rootless chords)</td>
<td>Eb7sus4, F7sus4, G7sus4, F7sus4, Octave Bass Notes (Three and Four Note Rootless Chords)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measure #</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>64</td>
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<td>-----------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chorus #4</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>RIGHT HAND</strong></td>
<td><strong>LEFT HAND</strong></td>
<td><strong>LEFT HAND</strong></td>
<td><strong>LEFT HAND</strong></td>
<td><strong>N/A</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F# minor pentatonic scale, Bebop Enclosure of “B-Flat” accentuating the third of F# major triad</td>
<td>F#7sus4 (Quartal Chord)</td>
<td>F13 (Three Note RootlessChord)</td>
<td>E-Flat7sus4 (Quartal Chord)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RIGHT HAND</strong></td>
<td><strong>LEFT HAND</strong></td>
<td><strong>LEFT HAND</strong></td>
<td><strong>LEFT HAND</strong></td>
<td><strong>F7sus4, Eb7sus4, F7sus4, G7sus4, Octave Bass Notes (Quartal Chords)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arpeggio of “C” minor eleven, Arpeggio of F7</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>LEFT HAND</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>F7sus4, Eb7sus4, F7sus4, G7sus4, Octave Bass Notes (Quartal Chords)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Measure #</strong></td>
<td>73</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chorus #5</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td><strong>LEFT HAND</strong></td>
<td><strong>LEFT HAND</strong></td>
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<td><strong>LEFT HAND</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arpeggio of F7</td>
<td>F13 , F7sus4 (Three Note Rootless Chords, Quartal Chord)</td>
<td>E-Flat 13 (Three Note Rootless Chords)</td>
<td>E-Flat7sus4, F7sus4 (Quartal Chords)</td>
<td>F7sus4,Ab13, Ab7sus4, Bb7sus4 (Quartal Chords, Three Note Rootless Dominant Chord)</td>
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<td>Notes derived from “E-Flat” Mixolydian mode</td>
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<td><strong>Measure #</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Chorus #6</strong></td>
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<td>Quartal Melodic Fragments within B-Flat minor pentatonic scale</td>
<td>Quartal Melodic Fragments within B-Flat minor pentatonic</td>
<td>Two Hand Quartal/Quasi Quartal Chords</td>
<td>Two Hand Quartal /Quasi Quartal Chords</td>
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Prominent consonant melodic devices Tyner plays in Section #3 include chord arpeggios (measures 26 and 38 – “E-Flat” dominant seventh, measure 49 – “C-Sharp” minor seventh, measure 50 – “F” dominant seventh and “A” minor seventh flat five, measure 62 - “F” dominant seventh, measure 63 – “B-Flat” dominant seventh, measure 73 - “F” dominant seventh) and minor pentatonic scales (measures 28, 37, 39, 61, 85, 86). Concurrently, Tyner plays rootless three-note dominant chords, rootless four-note minor nine and dominant thirteen chords, three-note quartal chords (dominant suspended fourth chords) and bass dyads with his left hand, as listed in Table 8 above.

In Section #3, Tyner consonantly inserts \( ii - V \) chord progressions into his improvisation. For example, Tyner plays \( ii9 \) (“C” minor 9) to \( V13 \) (“F” dominant 13) chord progressions in place of the prescribed “E-Flat” dominant thirteen chord in measure 10 of Section #3. This is seen in measures 50 and 62. Specifically, in measure 50, Tyner plays a rootless four-note “C” minor 9 and a “F” dominant 13 chord with his left hand, while his right hand melodically accentuates those chords via a bebop enclosure of “A” and an arpeggiation of “C” minor six and “F” dominant seventh chords (Figure 97). However, in measure 62, Tyner melodically arpeggiates a C” minor eleven and an “F” dominant seven chord – delineating the \( ii9 \) (“C” minor 9) to \( V13 \) (“F” dominant 13) progression while only playing an “F” dominant thirteen chord with his left hand. Figure 97 illustrates Tyner’s insertion of the \( ii - V \) progression.
Tyner also generates dissonance in his improvisation by inserting non-diatonic $ii - V$ chord progressions into Section #3 of his improvisation. He regularly plays dissonant $ii9$ (“C-Sharp” minor 9) to $V13$ (“F-Sharp” dominant 13) chord progressions in place of the prescribed “F” dominant 13 chord in measure 9 of Section #3 and seen in measures 49-50, 61, 85. In measures 49-50, Tyner plays both a “C-Sharp” minor 9 and “F-Sharp” dominant 13 chord with his left hand using four-note rootless voicings, while melodically arpeggiating a “C-Sharp” minor 9 chord followed by playing notes derived from the “F-Sharp” major pentatonic scale with his right hand. In measure 61, Tyner only implies the $V13$ (“F-Sharp” dominant 13) of the $ii9$ (“C-Sharp” minor 9) to $V13$ (“F-Sharp” dominant 13) progression and plays an “F-Sharp” dominant 7 suspended fourth quartal chord in his left hand and melodically plays a “B-Flat” bebop enclosure accentuating the third of his “F-Sharp” dominant chord. In measure 85, Tyner only plays the $V13$ (“F-Sharp” dominant 13) of the $ii9$ (“C-Sharp” minor 9) to $V13$ (“F-Sharp” dominant 13) progression by playing a three-note rootless “F-Sharp” dominant 13 chord, while melodically playing notes derived from an “F-Sharp” major pentatonic scale with his right hand.
In measure 11 and 12 of Section #3, Tyner does not regularly play the prescribed “B-Flat” dominant thirteen chord. Instead, he conspicuously generates dissonance by planing non-diatonic quartal chords with his left hand, while playing rhythmic flurries/repetitive note groupings (measures 27-28, 51-52, 75-76) in the right hand seen in measures 52 and 64. Tyner regularly releases the tension by playing bass dyads that re-establish the “B-Flat” tonal center at the beginning of the second, fourth, fifth and sixth solo choruses. Figure 98 illustrates below.

![Figure 98](image)

Figure 98  "Blues on the Corner:" Dissonance generating Non-Diatonic Quartal Chords in measures 11 and 12 of Section #3 - measures 51-52.

Tyner also generates dissonance at the end of his improvisation by playing a combination of two hand four, five and six-note quartal/quasi-quartal chords, as seen in measures 87 and 88. He resolves the tension he generates by these chords by playing a bass dyad in measure 89. He also plays bass dyads with his left hand to musically punctuate his melodic phrases in Section #3, as seen in measures 36, and 84-85.
4.4.3.1 Summary

In McCoy Tyner’s improvisation in “Blues on the Corner,” he regularly employs repetitive melodic fragments/chromatic approach notes, modal scales, call and response, bebop enclosures, quartal melodic fragments, and portions of the blues and pentatonic scales within consonant melodic phrases played by his right hand. Concurrently, Tyner plays consonant three note and four note rootless dominant thirteen chords and minor nine chords with his left hand. The dissonant melodic phrases Tyner plays incorporate seven-note groupings consisting of non-diatonic pentatonic scales, non-diatonic triads, non-diatonic quartal melodic fragments, and the arpeggiation of non-diatonic seventh chords. Concurrently, Tyner dissonantly plays non-diatonic quartal chords with his left hand. The most notable feature of Tyner’s improvisation is that he consonantly and dissonantly plans three note quartal chords within the twelve bar blues solo form, similarly to the way he does when he plays in a modal jazz context. This is noteworthy because more chords and a faster harmonic rhythm is found within “Blues in the Corner” in comparison to modal based compositions such as “Chain Reaction” and “Passion Dance.”
Inherent in McCoy Tyner’s unique piano style is a musical ebb and flow comprised of specific melodic and harmonic devices that repetitively generate tension and release. This oscillation is primarily generated by Tyner playing consonant and dissonant hard-bop melodic devices\textsuperscript{274} with his right hand, while consonantly and dissonantly playing rootless three and four note chord voicings with his left. Additionally, Tyner’s diatonic and non-diatonic use of quartal chords played by his left hand, along with diatonic and non-diatonic pentatonic scales and hard bop melodic devices played by his right, are the primary means by which Tyner generates tension and release in his improvisations. He regularly resolved that tension by playing a bass dyad with his left hand.

\textsuperscript{274} Bebop enclosures, chromatic approach notes, chord arpeggios, and modal scales
5.0 CONCLUSION

As shown in this study, many sociocultural influences acted as a seedbed that cultivated McCoy Tyner’s unique piano style. Geographically, Tyner was born and raised in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, an ideal musical, social and culturally rich city that nurtured his musical talent. Beatrice Tyner, McCoy’s mother, ensured he grew up in a family environment that fostered his early music talent in both musical and non-musical ways, and through community parenting, McCoy was given opportunities to practice on his neighbors’ piano. With inspiration from Violet Addison and Art Tatum; creative musical and conceptual inspiration from Bud Powell, Red Garland, and Thelonious Monk; traditional piano instruction from Mr. Habershaw and Mr. Ted Baroni; and a brief study of music theory at Granoff School of Music, Tyner’s musical talent was nurtured during his youth. Culturally, McCoy’s talent was nurtured within the African-American community, where he adopted the culture’s methodology for learning to play jazz, which consisted of active participation and habitual exposure to the music. Tyner’s early professional experiences with Calvinx Massey, Max Roach and the Benny Golson-Art Farmer Jazztet also contributed to the development of Tyner’s early talent, but it was during Tyner’s tenure with the John Coltrane Quartet, when he was influenced by Coltrane’s teachings and by performing Coltrane’s multiethnic jazz music, that he fashioned his unique piano style. An in-depth examination of Tyner’s unique piano style, as done in this study, reveals that the essence of his style consist of a perpetual development of dissonance (tension) and consonance (release)
throughout his improvisations through the use of specific melodic and harmonic devices. It is through the aforementioned multifaceted sociocultural influences, coupled with Tyner’s creative ingenuity, that his unique piano style was born in the 1960s, a style that continues to be influential in the playing of prominent jazz pianists in the twenty-first century.
6.0 REFERENCE

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Dissertations


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6.3 DISCOGRAPHY

6.3.1 Hank Mobley


6.3.2 McCoy Tyner


APPENDIX A

COMPLETE, ANALYTICAL TRANSCRIPTIONS
Chain Reaction
from Hank Mobley's *Straight No Filter*, Blue Note Records
transcription by Alton Merrell

Fast Swing (\( \frac{3}{4} \) = c. 260)

Trumpet in Bb

Tenor Sax

Piano

Bb Tpt.

T. Sx.

Pno.
Chain Reaction

B♭ Tpt.

T. Sx.

Pno.

B♭ Tpt.

T. Sx.

Pno.

A

Pno.

\(m^f\)
Chain Reaction
Chain Reaction
Chain Reaction
Chain Reaction
Chain Reaction
Chain Reaction
Chain Reaction
Chain Reaction
Passion Dance
from McCoy Tyner's The Real McCoy, Blue Note Records
transcription by Alton Merrell

Fast Swing ($\frac{4}{4}$ = c. 220)
Passion Dance

\[\sum \sum \sum \sum \sum \]

\[\sum \sum \sum \sum \sum \]

\[\sum \sum \sum \sum \sum \]

\[\sum \sum \sum \sum \sum \]
Passion Dance
Passion Dance
Passion Dance
Passion Dance
Passion Dance
Passion Dance
Blues on the Corner
from McCoy Tyner's The Real McCoy, Blue Note Records
transcription by Alton Merrell

Medium Swing $\frac{\text{j}}{\text{= 116}}$

Tenor Sax

Piano

T. Sx.

Pno.

©2012
Blues on the Corner
Blues on the Corner
Blues on the Corner

Solo - Chorus 2
Blues on the Corner

Solo - Chorus 4

D
Blues on the Corner
Blues on the Corner
Blues on the Corner
APPENDIX B

SCORES OF ORIGINAL COMPOSITIONS PERFORMED AT PHD RECITAL
MAIN ST. RAG
MAIN ST. RAG
Andante

Trumpet in B
Alto Sax
Tenor Sax
Acoustic Bass
Drum Set

Bass Line

Alfred's Blues
Alton Merrell

©2012 - Minstrel Music Publishing (BMI)
Alfred's Blues
Alfred's Blues
Alfred's Blues
Alfred's Blues
Alfred's Blues
# CALM AFTER THE STORM
(Free Jazz Score)

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MIRACLES

DIVINE INTERVENTION - MOVEMENT #1

Alton Merrell

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Miracles

Divine Intervention - Movement #1
MIRACLES
DIVINE INTERVENTION - MOVEMENT 1
Miracles

Divine Intervention - Movement #1
**Miracles**

**Divine Intervention - Movement #1**

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