A Piano Solo by Oscar Peterson

WHEN A GREAT TUNE crosses paths with a great interpreter, the results can be memorable. This is as true now as it was in the heyday of Art Tatum. If you have any doubts, take a break from your diet of free-form piano fare and listen to Oscar Peterson's solo rendition of "Ain't Misbehavin'," from his album *The London Concert* [Pablo, 2620-111].

"Misbehavin'," written in 1929 by Fats Waller, has kept its freshness over the years; its infectious melody, bass line rising playfully beneath alternating triads and diminished chords, and rousing bridge still inspire performers today. But because it is a composition that stands fully on its own merits, rather than simply as a vehicle for soloists, it almost demands a conservative treatment, with minimal fireworks and an extra dose of good taste.

Peterson, perhaps the greatest living interpreter of jazz standards, is equal to the task. His improvisation, an excerpt of which is reproduced here, generally shows restraint and adherence to the song's structure. His left hand keeps the rhythm flowing smoothly with straightforward voicings in a relaxed pace, effortlessly spanning awkward tenths (D♭ to F in bar 28, then C♭ to E♭ walking to B♭ and D two bars later, for instance). He breaks this steady pulse only occasionally, and each time for musically logical reasons. Several times, for example, he interjects an eighth-note triplet motif; it appears first in bar 1 as a sort of tempo determinant following the introductory fermatas. Triplets reappear in bar 11, this time as a reflection of the right-hand figure in bar 10, with the effect of reining in the flurry of sixteenth- and thirty-second-notes and settling back into a more relaxed recapitulation of the melody. We see another set of eighth-note triplets at bar 15, triggered here by the bluesy licks signalling the end of the second verse in bar 16, which provides a segue to the bridge. And a final group, in bar 24, similarly cues the end of the bridge and the beginning of verse three.

Of course this wouldn't be a true Peterson solo without a taste of the fabled Peterson chops. They do crop up, but only where the continuity of the song wouldn't be disrupted. The first blizzard of thirty-second notes falls in bars 7 and 8, the last two bars of the first verse, that traditional haven for improvised pyrotechnics; the melody has been stated, so with a couple of measures to fill until the second verse Oscar turns it on. But this isn't mere mechanical showboating; the tricky alterations of low and high notes in bar 7 and the three-against-four ascending figure running from the next measure into the second verse, while not variations on any particular theme, do hint at Peterson's cleverness with an ad-libbed idea. It's also important to note that his phrasing is reserved, almost delicate, throughout the entire piece; the fast passages are gentle showers, not tidal waves, with staccatos and rests in the left hand to highlight the display even more.

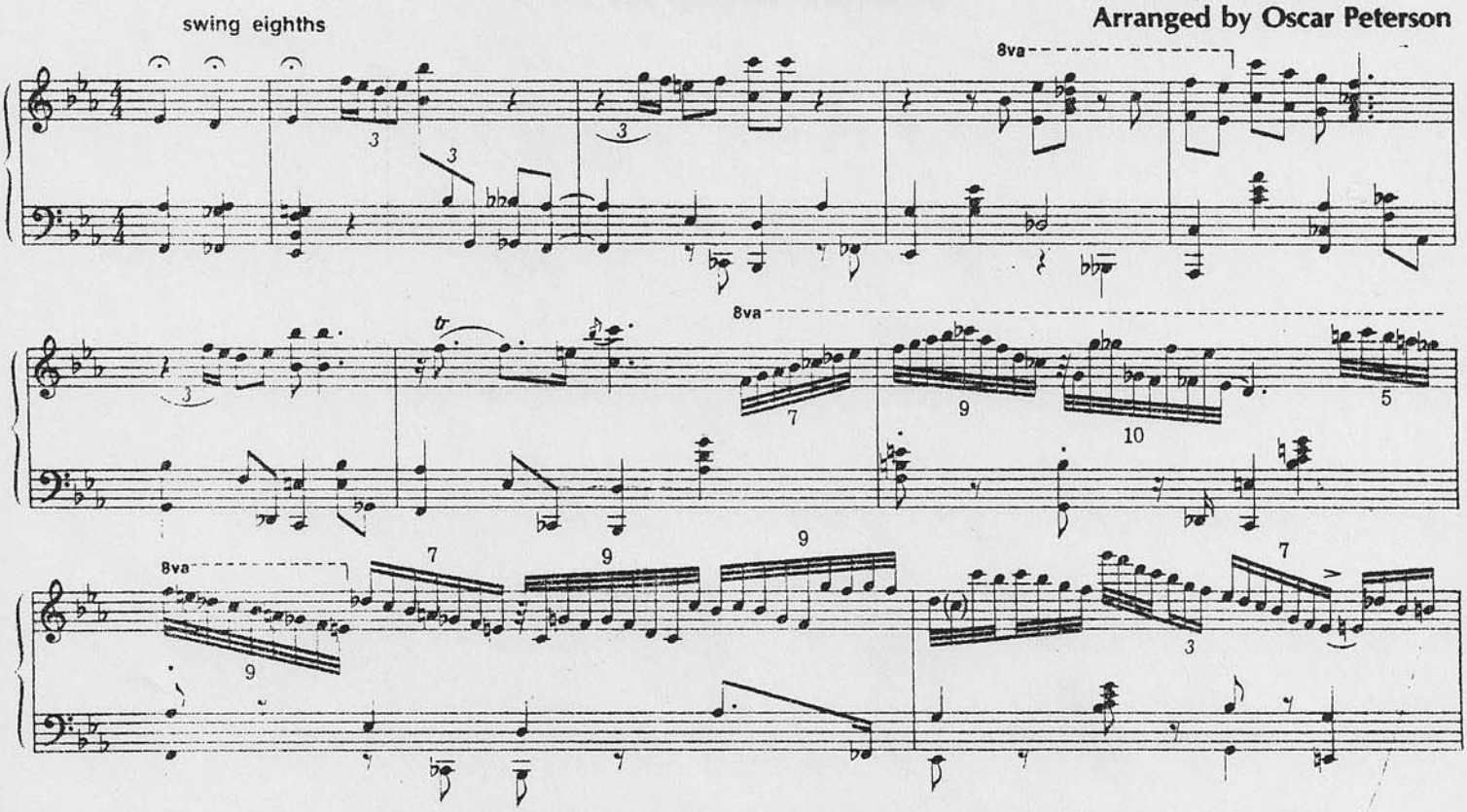
In the bridge, from bars 17 to 24, Waller's melody simplifies, with only an E♭ and a C juggled back and forth for the first several measures. The chords set against these notes are what gives this section its character, so Peterson finds room for one more sequence of virtuoso runs, beginning with the repeated figure in bar 16, which is based on, and ends with, Waller's E♭ and C. The rest of the bridge, however, is pure Peterson.

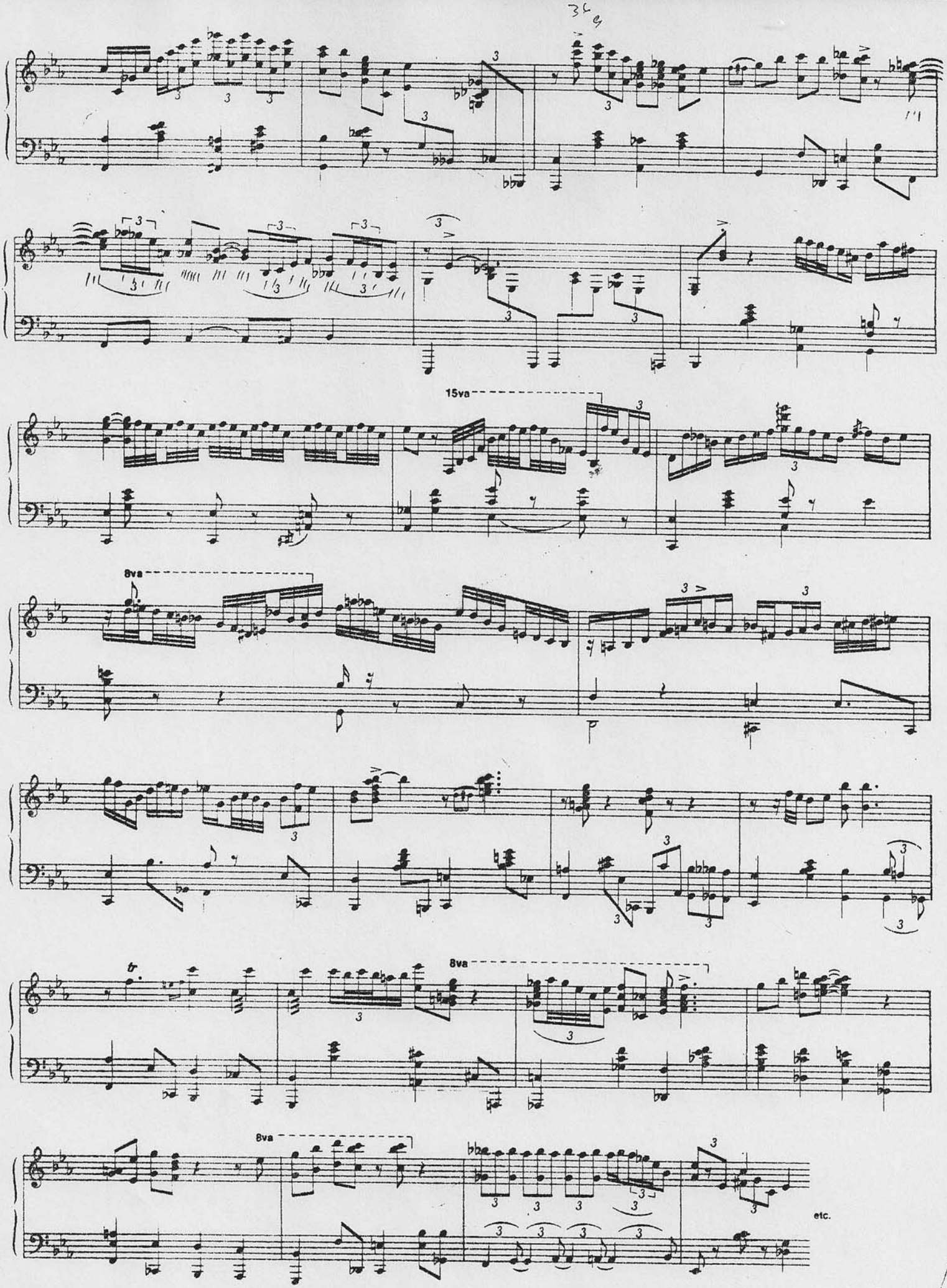
Which goes to show that if you're a player of Oscar's calibre, the familiar changes in the standard repertoire are no hindrance to spontaneous creativity. Whether starting from scratch in the Keith Jarrett fashion, or settling into the comfortable patterns of "Ain't Misbehavin'," all it takes is talent to spin instant musical fantasies from the top of your head to the tips of your fingers.

— Bob Doerschuk

"Ain't Misbehavin'"

Music by Fats Waller
Arranged by Oscar Peterson




15va
8va
8va
8va
etc.

LEONARD FEATHER

PIANO GIANTS OF JAZZ

Oscar Peterson

Just as it is all but unanimous that Art Tatum was the most phenomenal pianist in the annals of jazz until his death in 1956, it is generally accepted that the artist who has come closest to assuming Tatum's mantle is Oscar Emmanuel Peterson. That Peterson idolized Tatum and was with him near the end of his life, and that the Peterson style still bears certain resemblances to that of the master, is hardly surprising. More improbable, however, is the fact that Peterson was the first Canadian-born keyboard virtuoso ever to make a worldwide jazz impact.

Born August 15, 1925, in Montreal, he began his classical training at the age of six, won a local amateur contest when he was 14, and began a local weekly radio program soon afterward. In his late teens he began a long association with the Johnny Holmes orchestra, then one of Canada's most popular bands.

Peterson made a few records for the Canadian market; visiting musicians such as Jimmie Lunceford tried to lure him away with job offers, but it was not until Norman Granz heard him and brought him to Carnegie Hall for a brief guest appearance at one of Granz's Jazz At The Philharmonic concerts that his life as a figure of global importance began to take shape. That was in September of 1949, and starting in 1950 he began recording and touring regularly with Granz. Soon after the beginning of this association, Peterson first employed the piano-guitar-bass format that had been popularized a decade earlier by Nat King Cole. Peterson's best known group was the trio with Herb Ellis on guitar and Ray Brown on bass, which stayed together from 1953–8.

From 1958 Peterson dropped the guitar and added drums. He stayed with that instrumentation until 1972, when he decided to concentrate on solo concert recitals. He has occasionally been reunited with various guitarists and bassists (most notably Joe Pass, whose guitar technique has been likened to Peterson's keyboard facility, and the Danish bass virtuoso Niels Henning Orsted-Pedersen). But Peterson has long since shown his unique self-sufficiency.

The initial impact of this physical and musical giant of an artist was devastating. Nobody had ever dreamed that any other pianist could come so close to Tatum in terms of speed, lightness of touch, and harmonic imagination, coupled with a deeply ingrained sense of the blues and the ability to outswing any man in the house, or the world.

Peterson prefers to work alone, partly because this allows him the greatest possible freedom, but also because he finds it very difficult to secure other musicians who can keep up with him. Though his lyricism on ballads is beyond dispute, it is the speed-of-sound flag wavers that continue to amaze audiences and leave his contemporaries breathless.

A less publicized aspect of his talent is Peterson's ability to fit in compatibly with musicians of any era, in any sort of informal setting. Over the years, recording literally hundreds of albums (most of them under Granz's supervision), he has made albums in tandem with Louis Armstrong, Lester Young, Stan Getz, Dizzy Gillespie, Clark Terry, Gerry Mulligan, Stephane Grappelli, Singers Unlimited, a big recording band of his own, and a piano duo series with Count Basie and rhythm that produced two marvelous albums showing how well their contrasted styles could mesh—Oscar with his limitless chops deferring to the Count with his elliptical art of understatement.

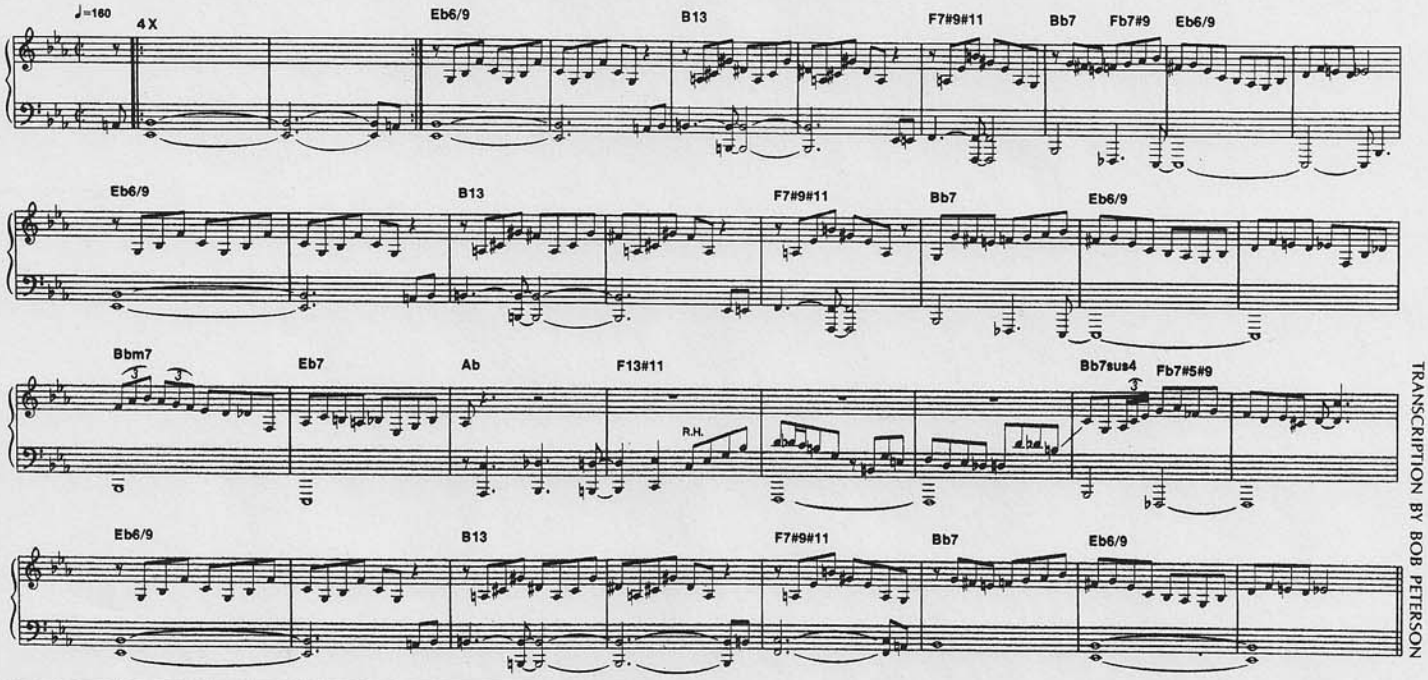
Peterson has not been particularly active as a composer; his eloquent *Canadiana Suite*, recorded in the mid-1960s, drew less critical attention than it deserved. The selection chosen to represent him here is one of his originals, *A Little Jazz Exercise*, recorded in 1974 for an album entitled *Tracks* [MPS/BASF, MC 20879, now out of print].

This is played at what might well be called "Tempo di Peterson," though the open-fifth pseudo-Scots introduction (bars 1–8) give no hint of the frantic state of things to come. Once into the melody, Oscar keeps the left hand to a minimum, waiting until the third bar of the bridge to use a series of tenths as a fill while the right hand, so to speak, pauses for breath.

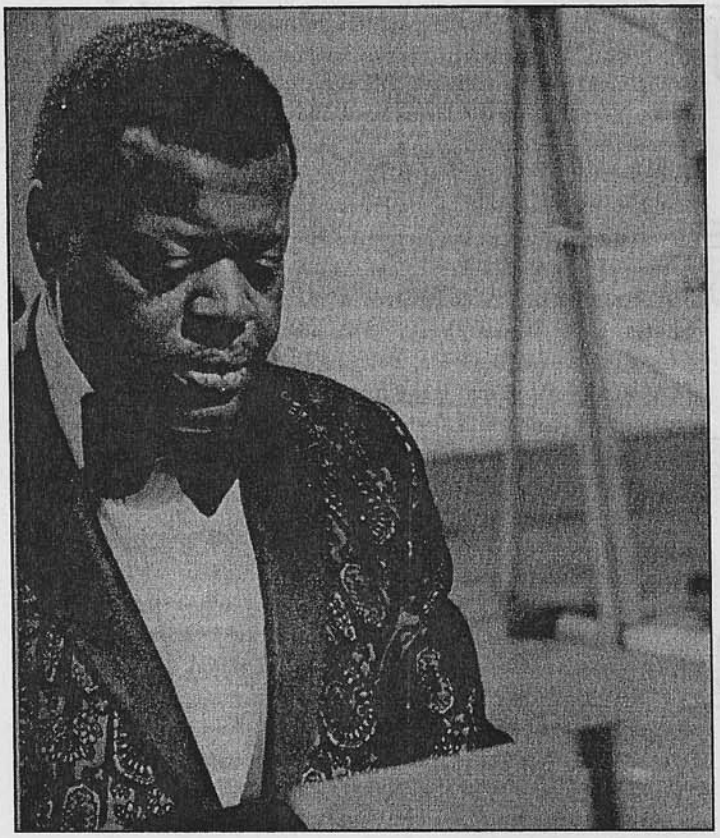
Much of the charm of this piece lies in the use of the *B13* as an unlikely follow-up to the initial *Eb9(6)*, and Oscar's reluctance to use the obvious notes of any chord.

The Peterson proclivity for sustaining the movement with rhythmic and melodic bravura is well illustrated in the 16th bar of the chorus. The long series of almost uninterrupted eighth-notes might have been expected logically to have stopped, at least momentarily, when he reaches the *Eb* on the third beat; but without even an eighth-note of hesitation he plunges on into another long phrase, beginning with the low *F*, even throwing in a couple of triplets for good measure during the *Bbm7* bar.

If you think the left hand has it easy on this chorus, study the record and listen to the following two, during which Peterson lets loose with a wild stride pattern while never letting up in the right hand. Oscar has won innumerable awards over the years; perhaps the only one not yet accorded to him, and I hereby present it, is: Pianist Most Able To Turn All Other Pianists Green With Envy. I suspect he will hold that title as long as he lives.



TRANSCRIPTION BY BOB PETERSON



Oscar Peterson

Oscar Peterson is undeniably one of the greatest pianists in the history of jazz, and like all artists he conveys much more in a performance than the mere strings of notes printed on the following pages. There is a nuance and swing in his playing that brings his right hand lines to life, and no analysis of the pitches he chooses can do justice to his artistry. Nevertheless, there is value in seeing first-hand how his melodies are formed. In this early solo, Oscar Peterson's debt to the bebop style is clear, and pianists who would like to explore the lyrical patterns at the root of the Peterson approach can benefit from "trying them on for size."

Oscar Peterson needs no introduction to fans of jazz piano, of course. Born in Montreal in 1925, he studied classical piano from the age of six and even in his teens he began performing on a weekly radio show. After Norman Granz invited him to appear at Carnegie Hall in 1949 in a Jazz at the Philharmonic concert, his career sky-rocketed. His most famous trio included guitarist Herb Ellis and bassist Ray Brown.

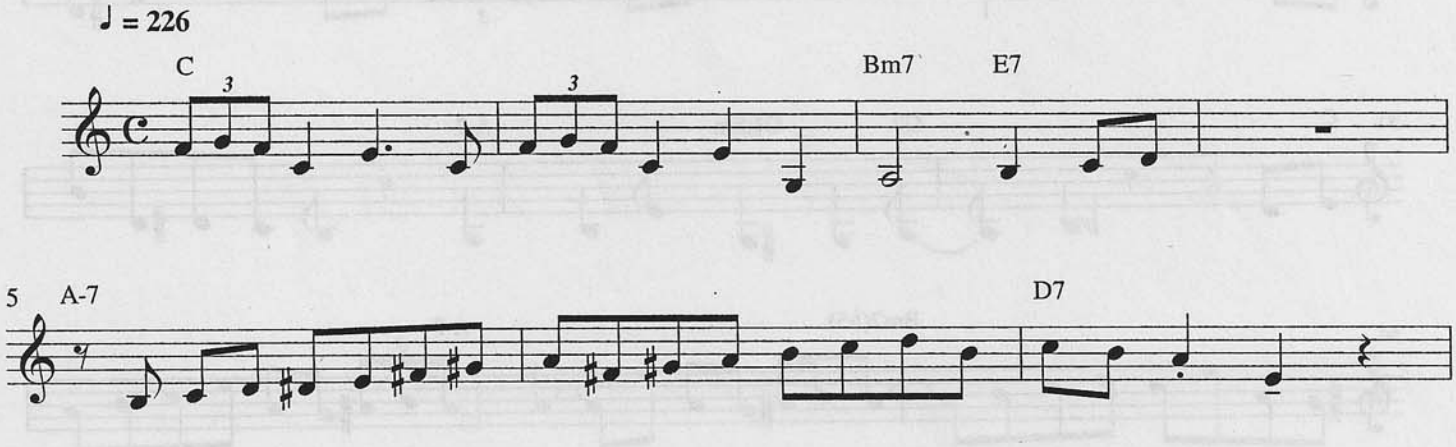
As a soloist, his crisp, facile and articulate improvising inspires awe in other musicians. His mastery, not just of piano technique, but of the history of jazz piano style, infuses his playing with depth, intelligence and soul.

Oscar Peterson's Improvisation On

LOVER, COME BACK TO ME

from Billie Holiday Verve Jazz Masters 12CD314519825-2

SIGMUND ROMBERG AND OSCAR HAMMERSTEIN II
TRANSCRIBED BY THOMAS WINTHROP STEVENS



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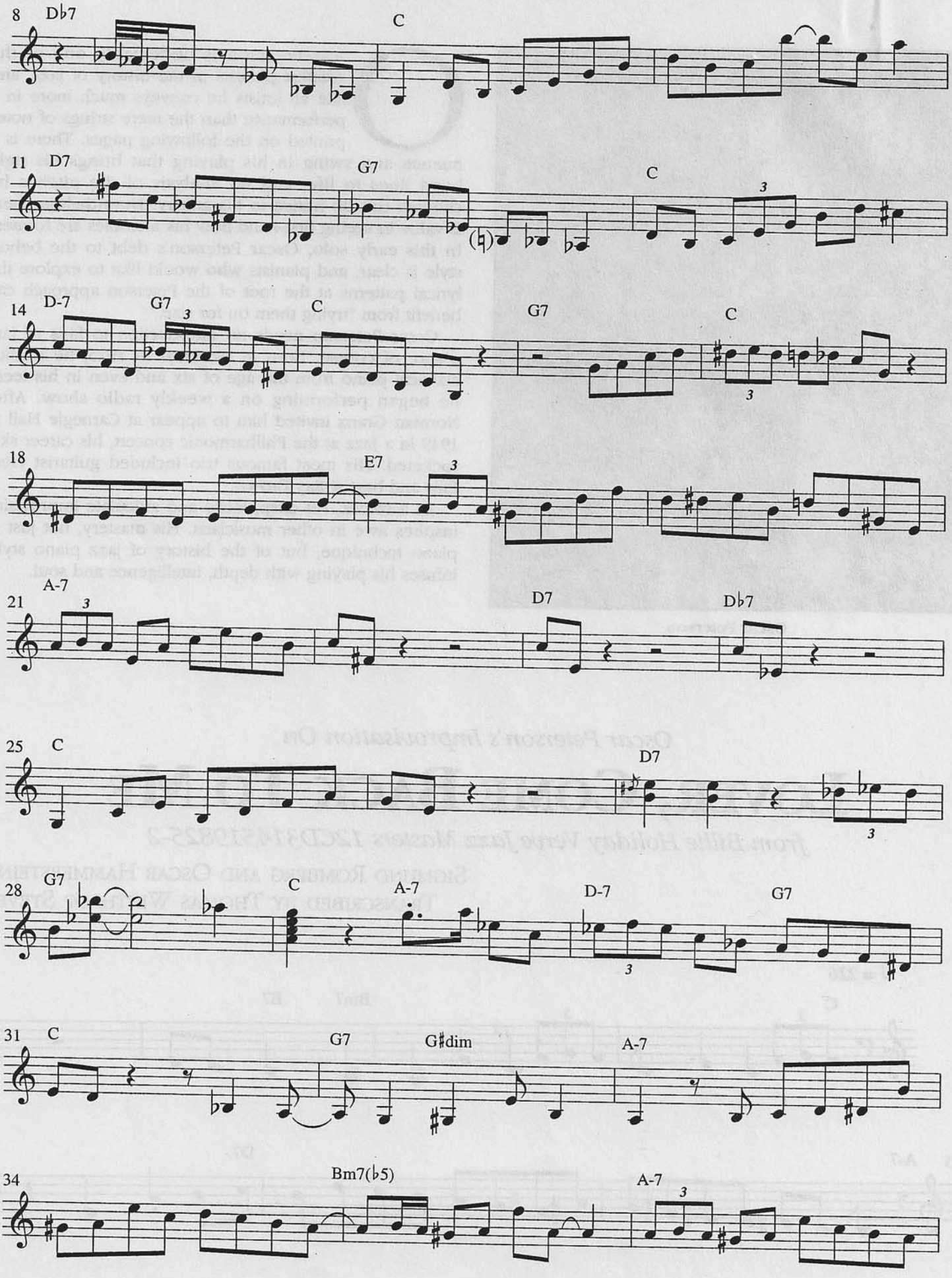
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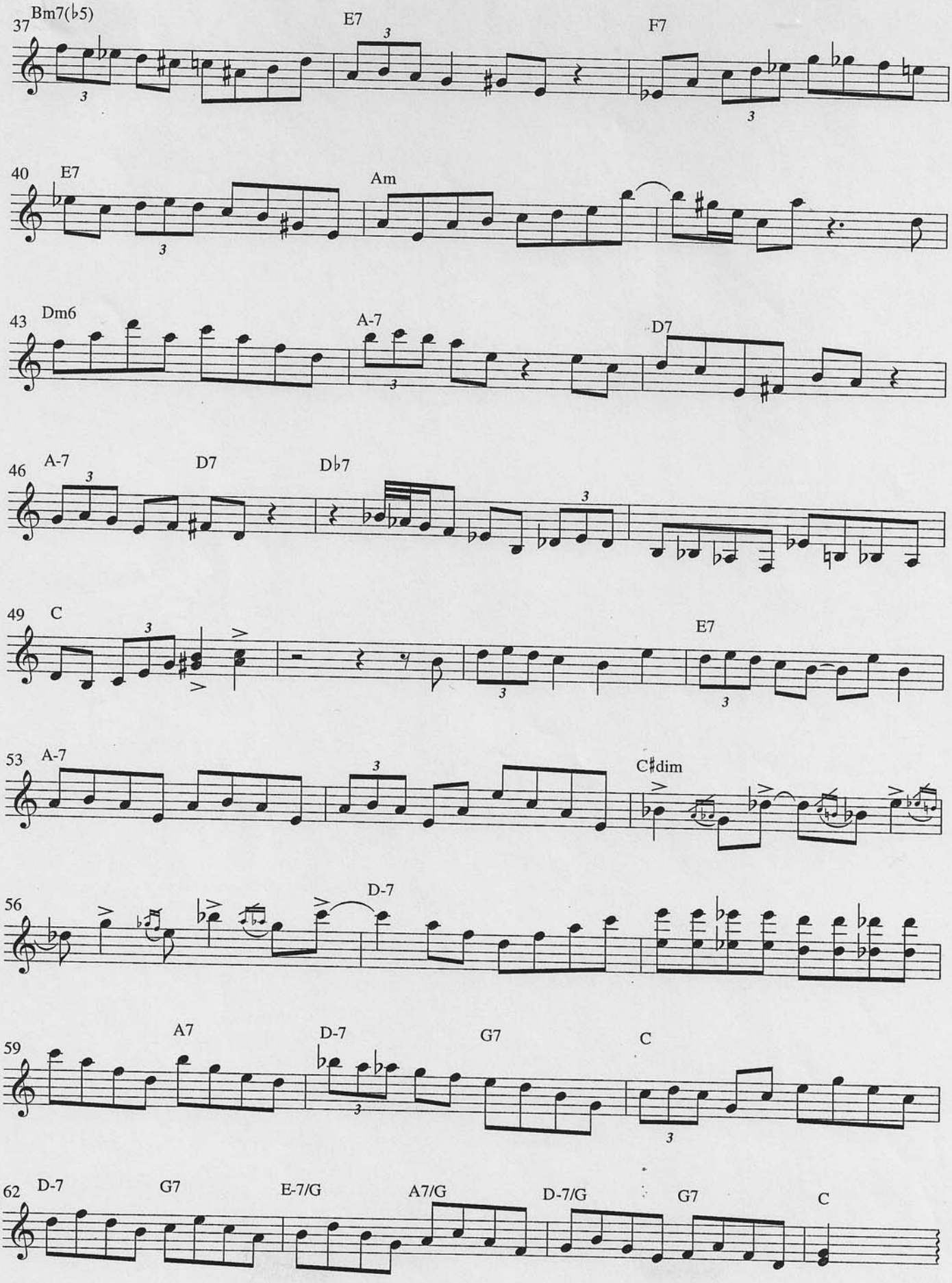
C
11 D7
G7
C
14 D-7
G7
C
G7
C
18
E7
21 A-7
D7
D♭7
25 C
D7
28 G7
C
A-7
D-7
G7
31 C
G7
G♯dim
A-7
34
Bm7(♭5)
A-7

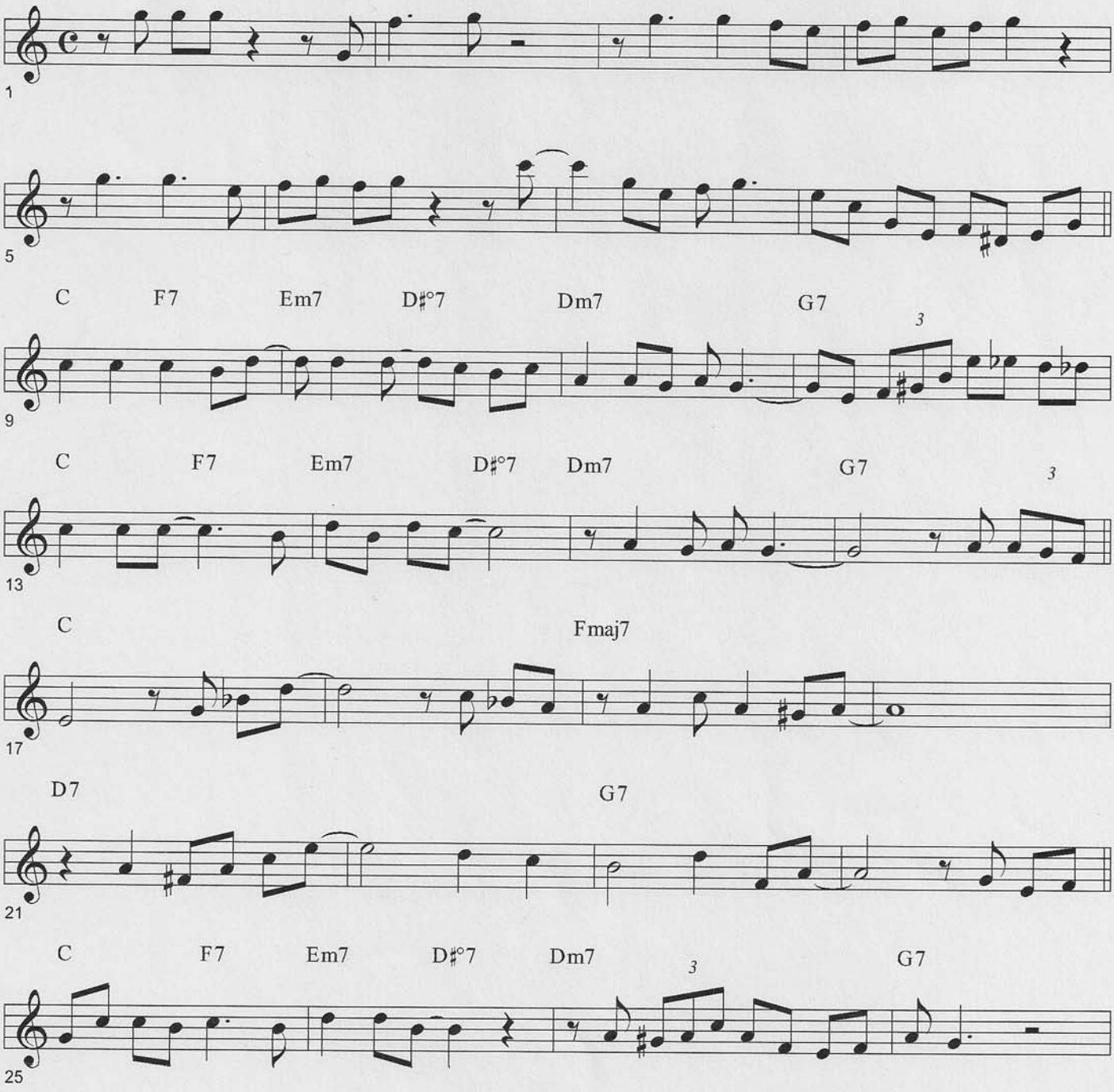

37 Bm7(♭5)
E7
F7
40 E7
Am
43 Dm6
A-7
D7
46 A-7
D7
D♭7
49 C
E7
53 A-7
C♯dim
56
D-7
59
A7
D-7
G7
C
62 D-7
G7
E-7/G
A7/G
D-7/G
G7
C

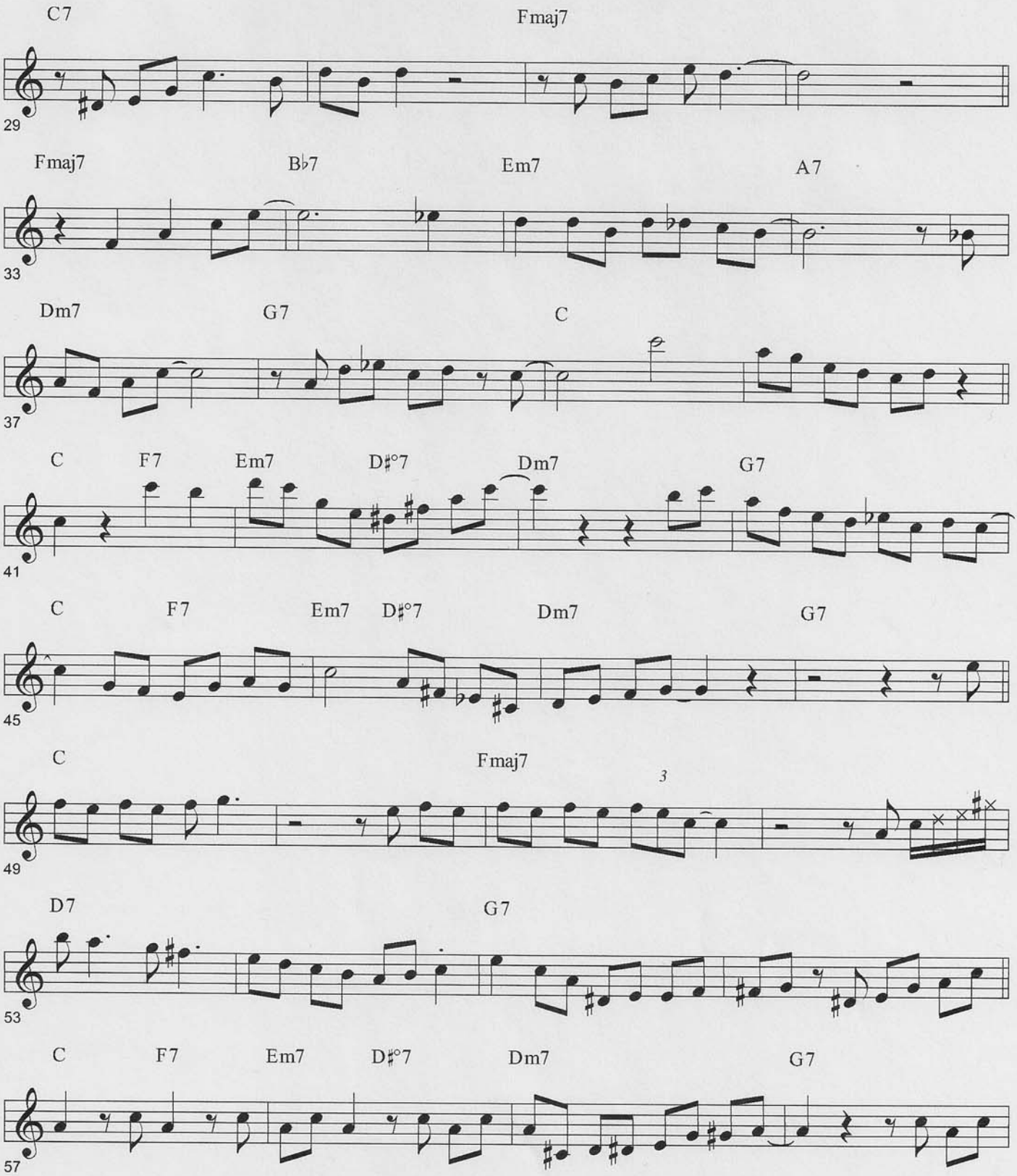
PENNIES FROM HEAVEN

STAN GETZ TENOR SOLO
OSCAR PETERSON PIANO SOLO
From the CD: The Essential Stan Getz

(Both solos written 8va)

GETZ:

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Fmaj7
B♭7
Em7
A7
33
Dm7
G7
C
37
C
F7
Em7
D♯°7
Dm7
G7
41
C
F7
Em7
D♯°7
Dm7
G7
45
C
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3
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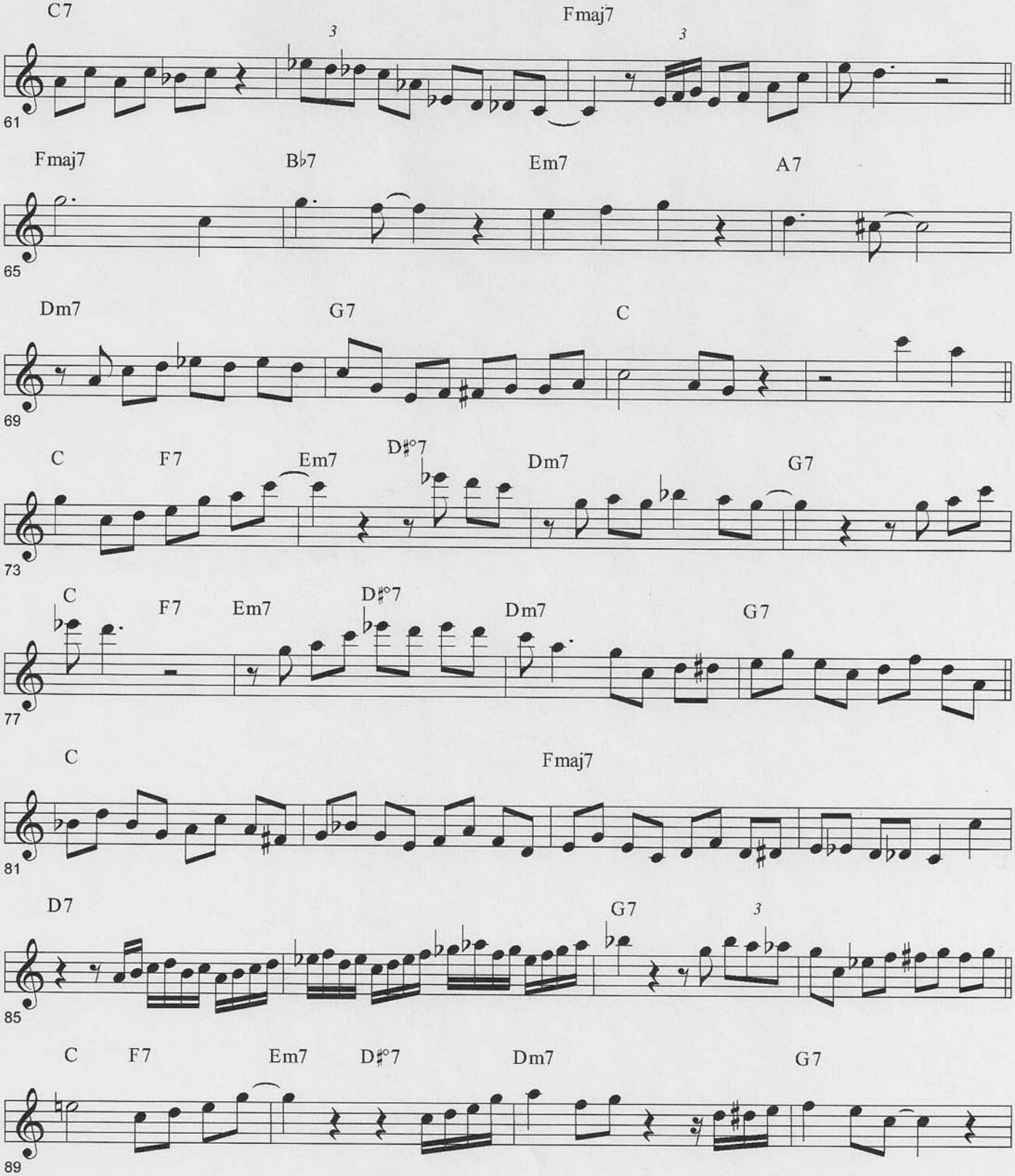
D7
G7
53
C
F7
Em7
D♯°7
Dm7
G7
57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Dm7
G7
C
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C
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Em7
D♯°7
Dm7
G7
73
C
F7
Em7
D♯°7
Dm7
G7
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C
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Em7
D♯°7
Dm7
G7
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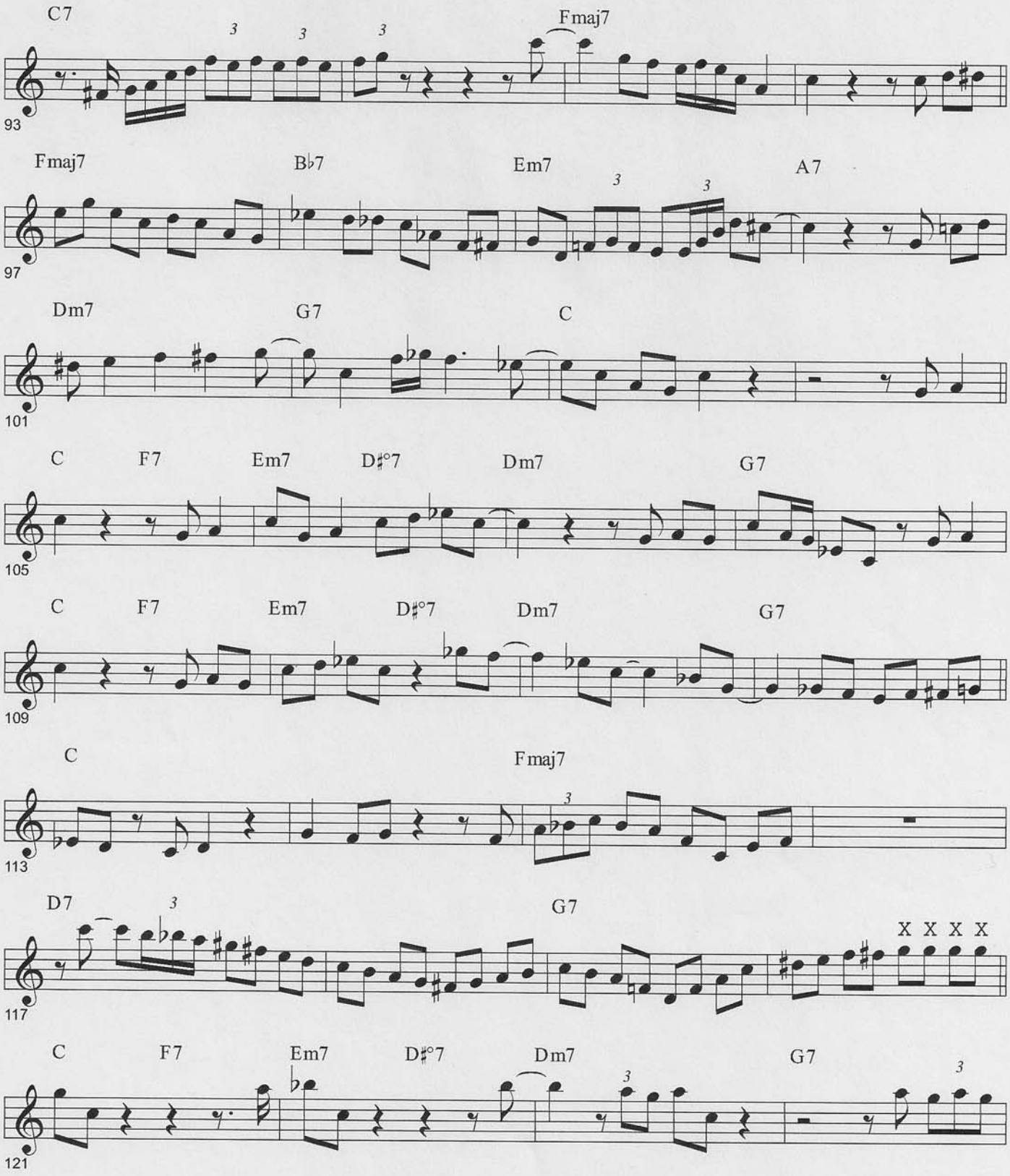
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Fmaj7
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Dm7
G7
C
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C
F7
Em7
D♯°7
Dm7
G7
105
C
F7
Em7
D♯°7
Dm7
G7
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C
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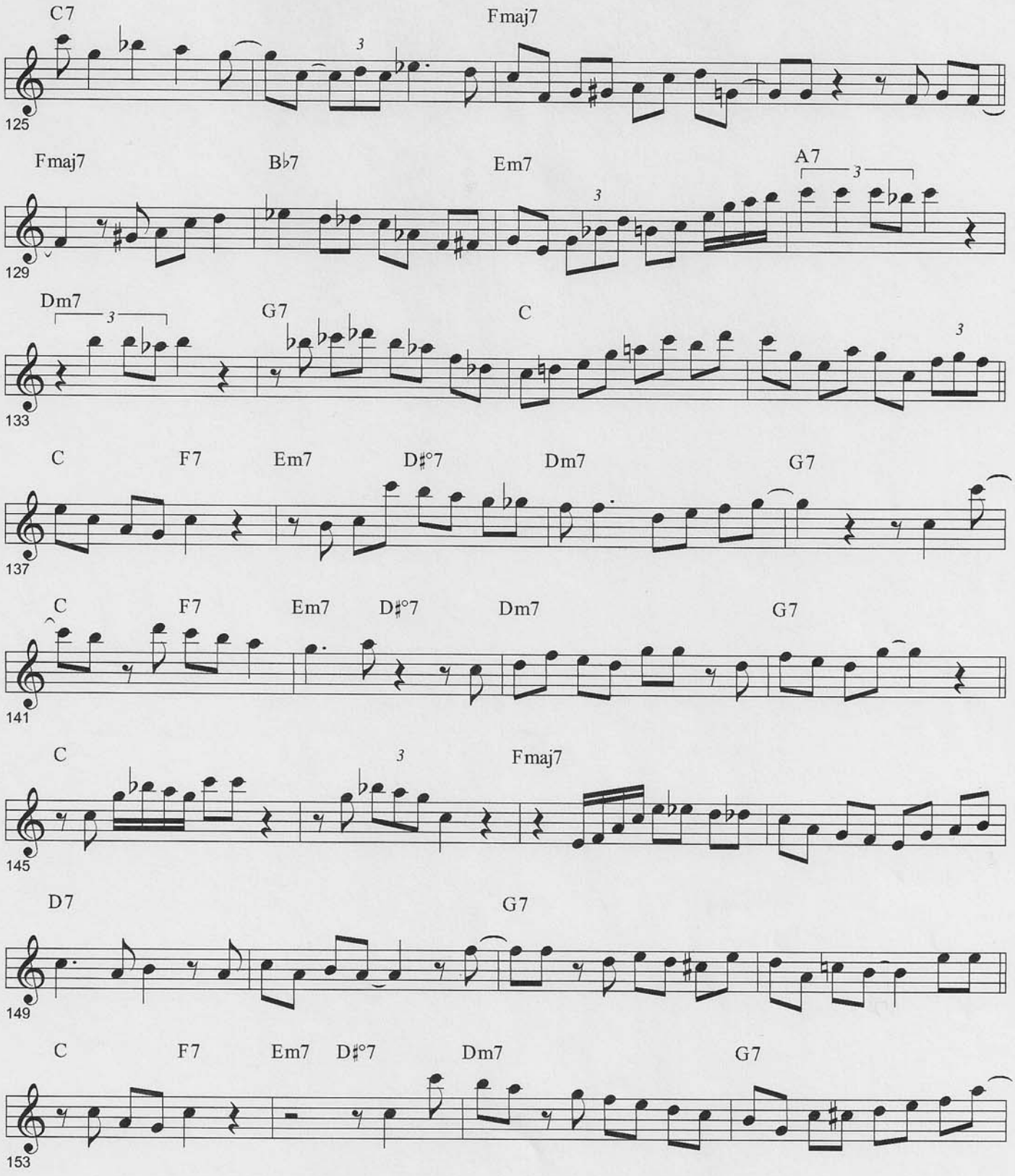
D7
G7
X X X X
117
C
F7
Em7
D♯°7
Dm7
G7
121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Dm7
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C
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F7
Em7
D♯°7
Dm7
G7
137
C
F7
Em7
D♯°7
Dm7
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Em7
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Dm7
G7
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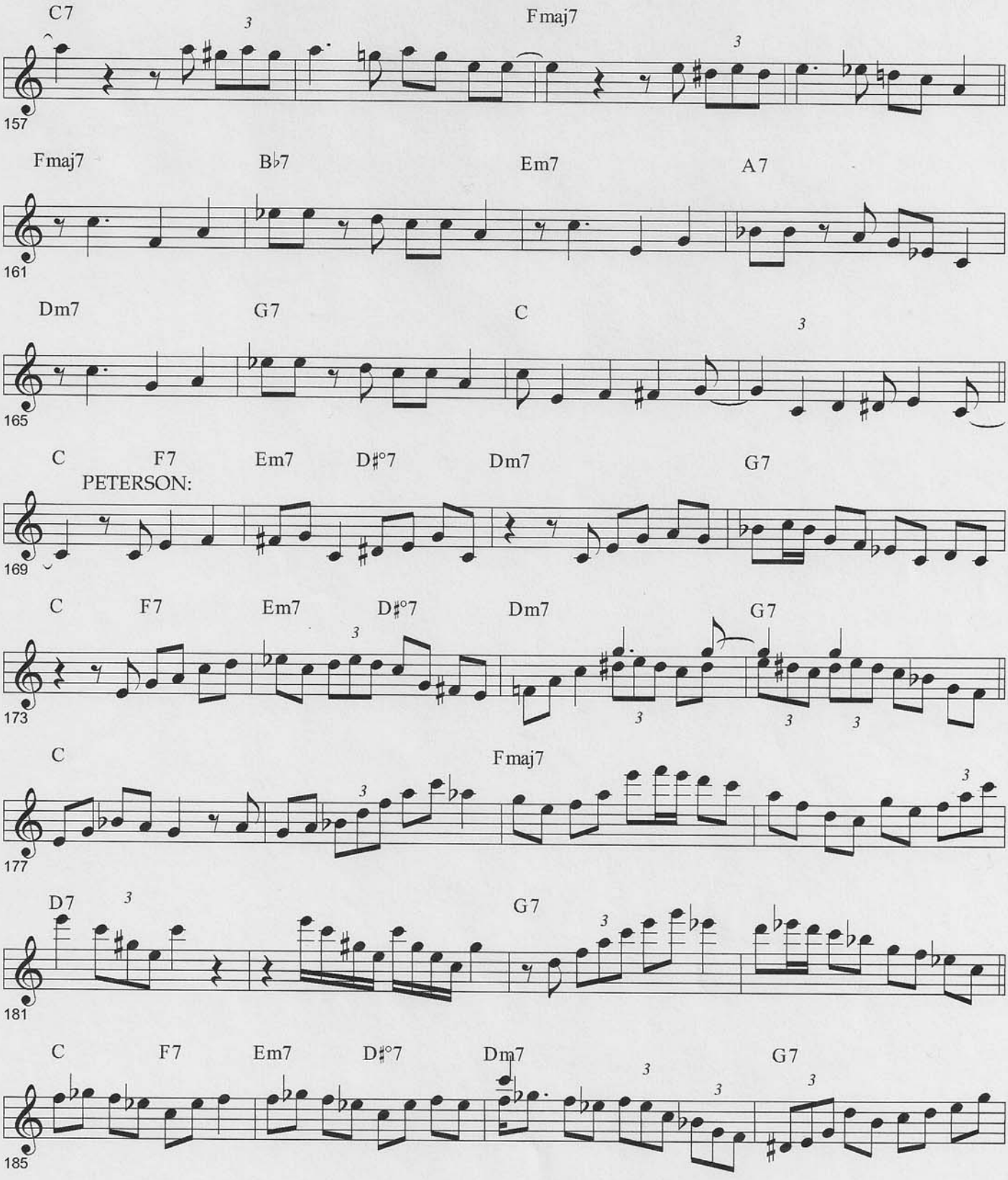
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Em7
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Dm7
G7
C
165
C
F7
Em7
D♯°7
Dm7
G7
PETERSON:
169
C
F7
Em7
D♯°7
Dm7
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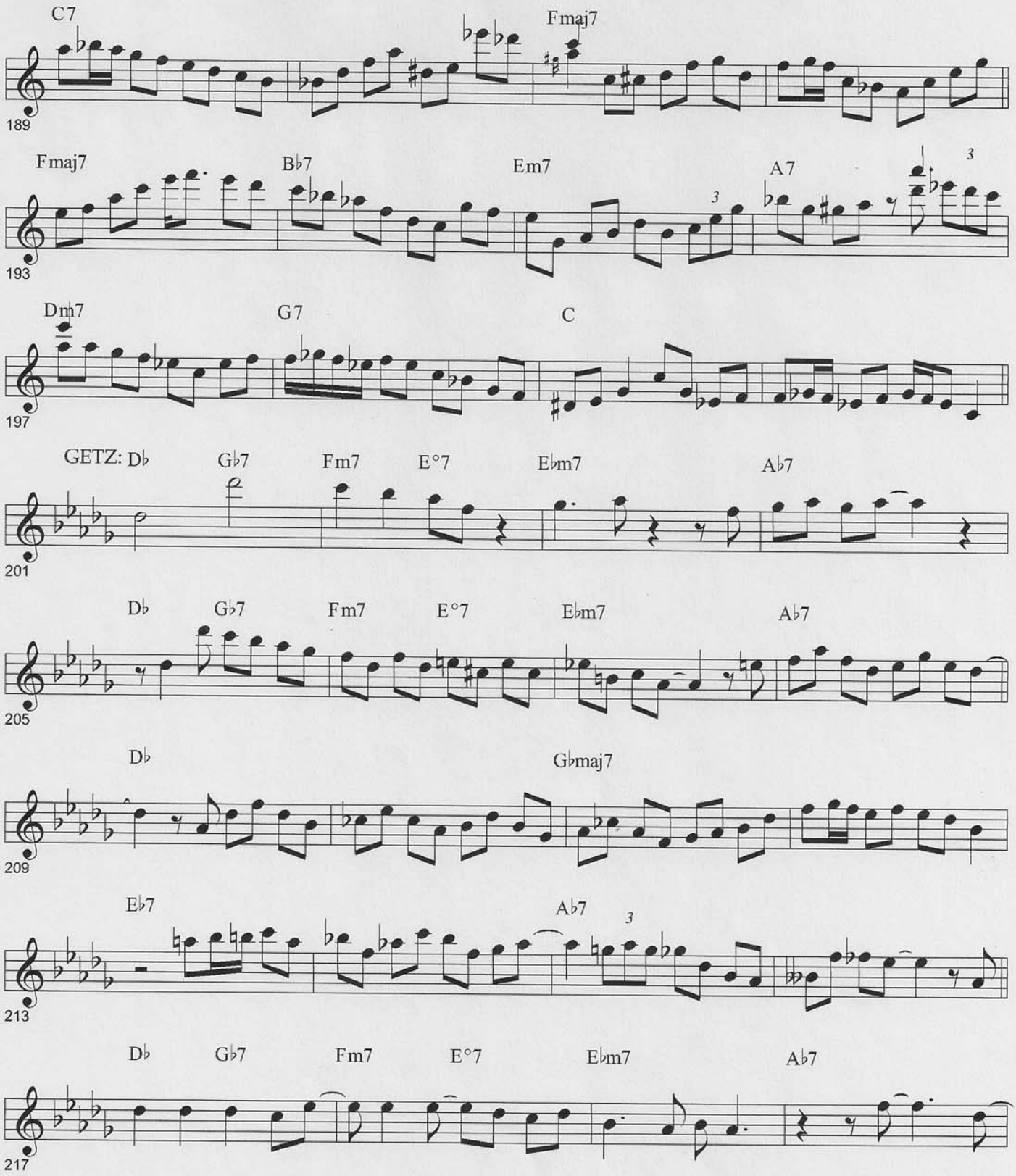
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Fmaj7
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A7
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G7
C
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GETZ: D♭
G♭7
Fm7
E°7
E♭m7
A♭7
201
D♭
G♭7
Fm7
E°7
E♭m7
A♭7
205
D♭
G♭maj7
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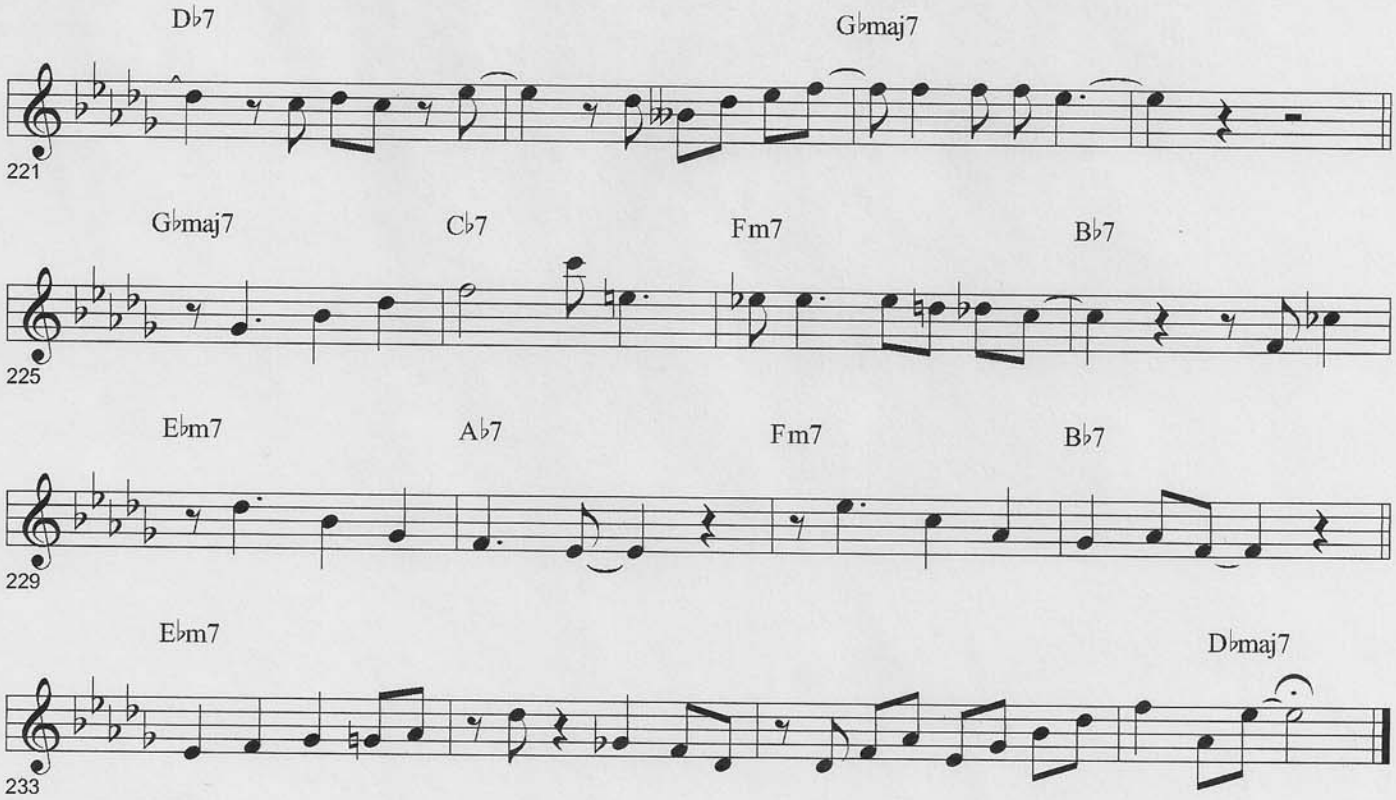
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Fm7
B♭7
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A♭7
Fm7
B♭7
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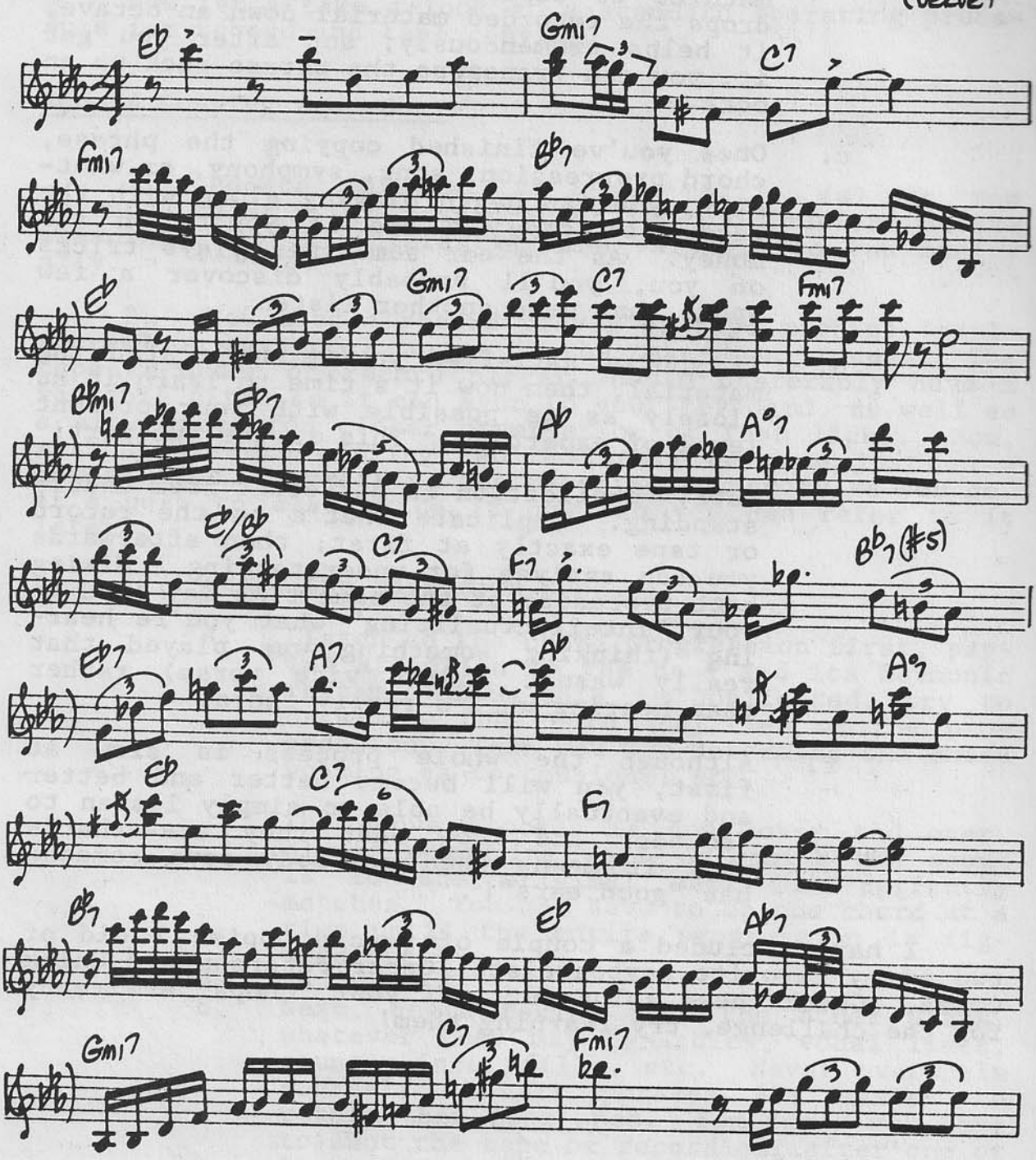
E♭m7
D♭maj7
233

PUT ON A HAPPY FACE

OSCAR PETERSON
(VERVE)



PUT ON A HAPPY FACE:

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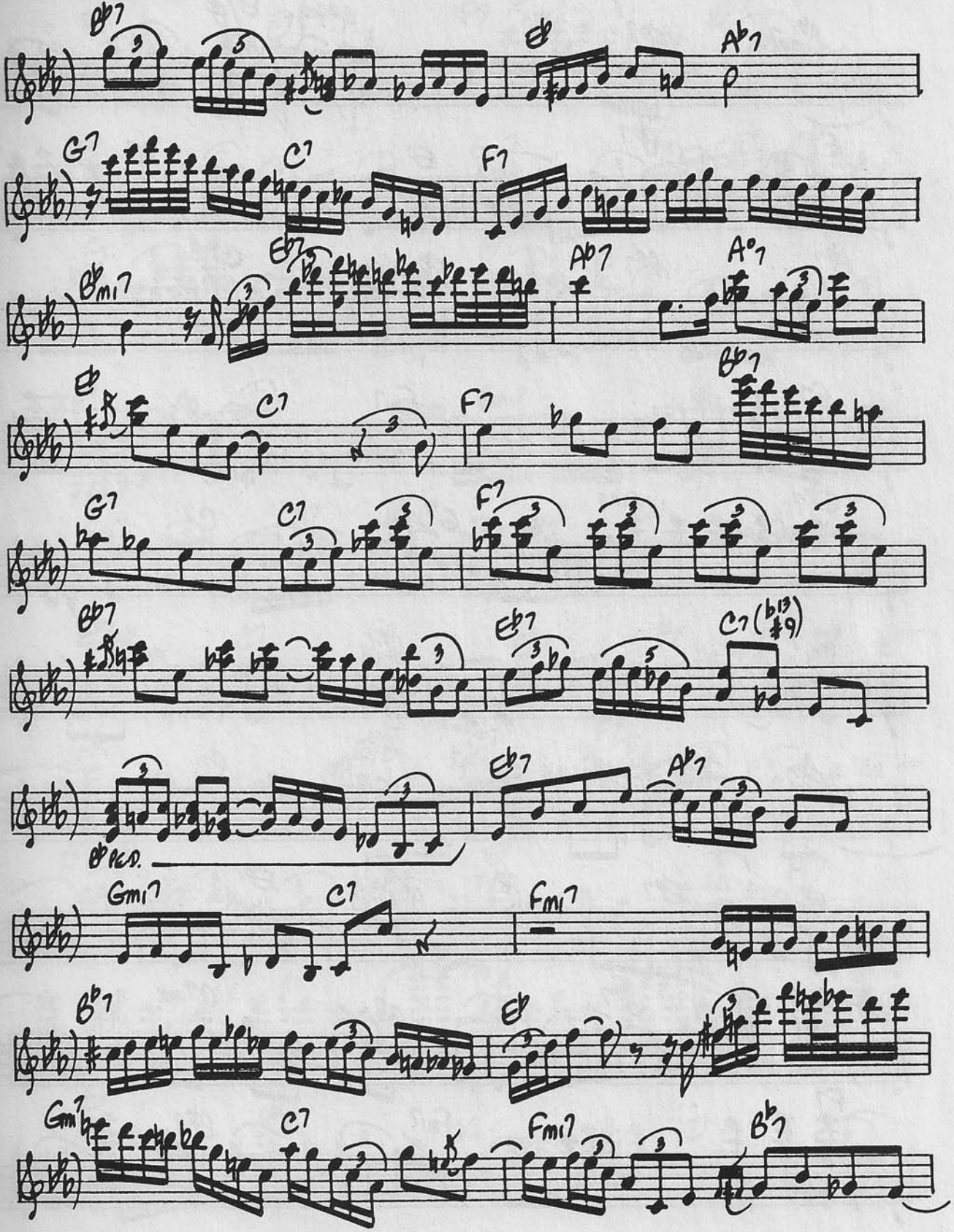
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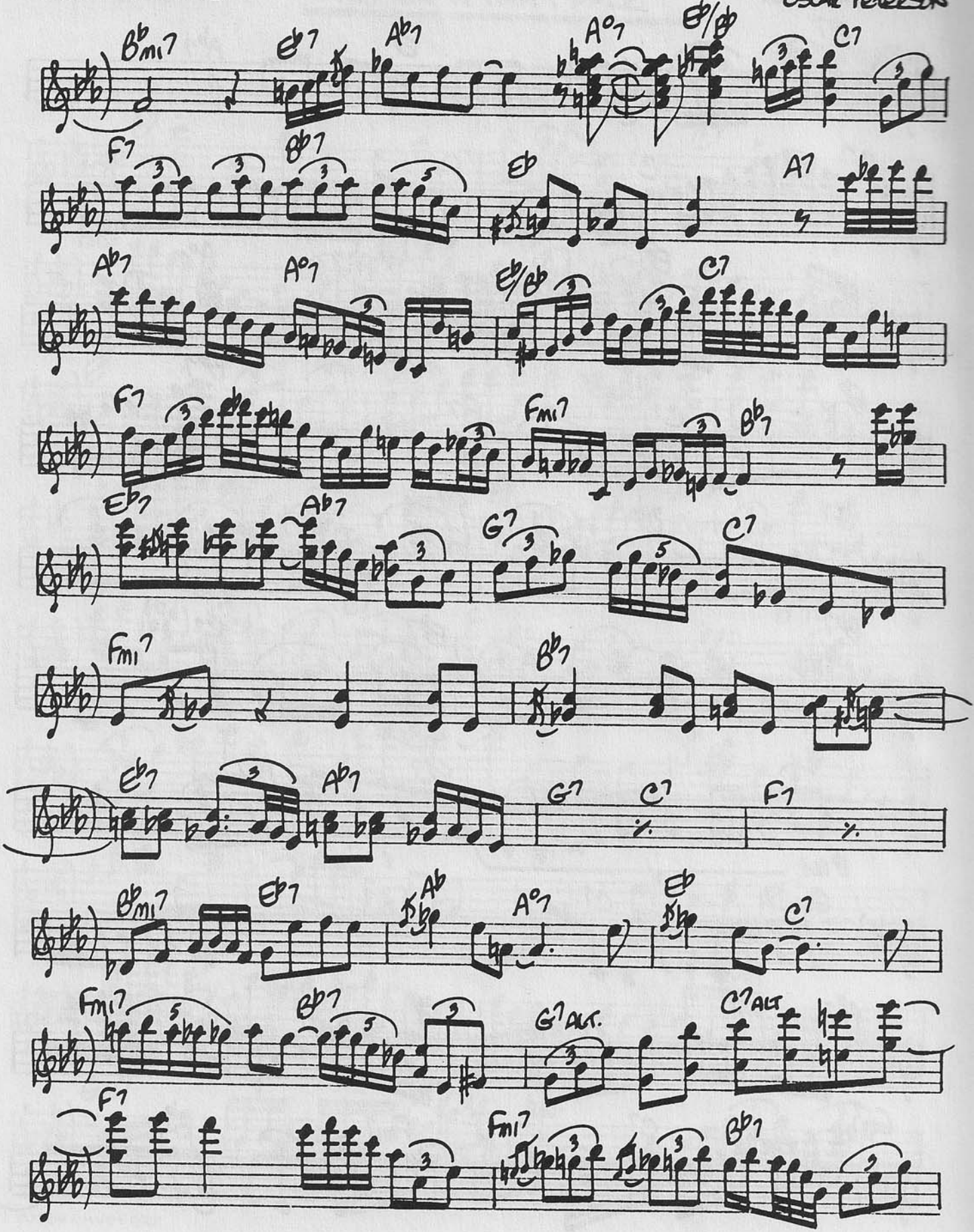
E♭
A♭7
G7
C7
F7
E♭7
B♭m7
A♭7
A°7
E♭
C7
F7
B♭7
G7
C7
F7
B♭7
E♭7
C7(♭13 ♯9)
E♭7
A♭7
B♭ PED.
Gmi7
C7
Fmi7
B♭7
E♭
Gm7
C7
Fmi7
B♭7

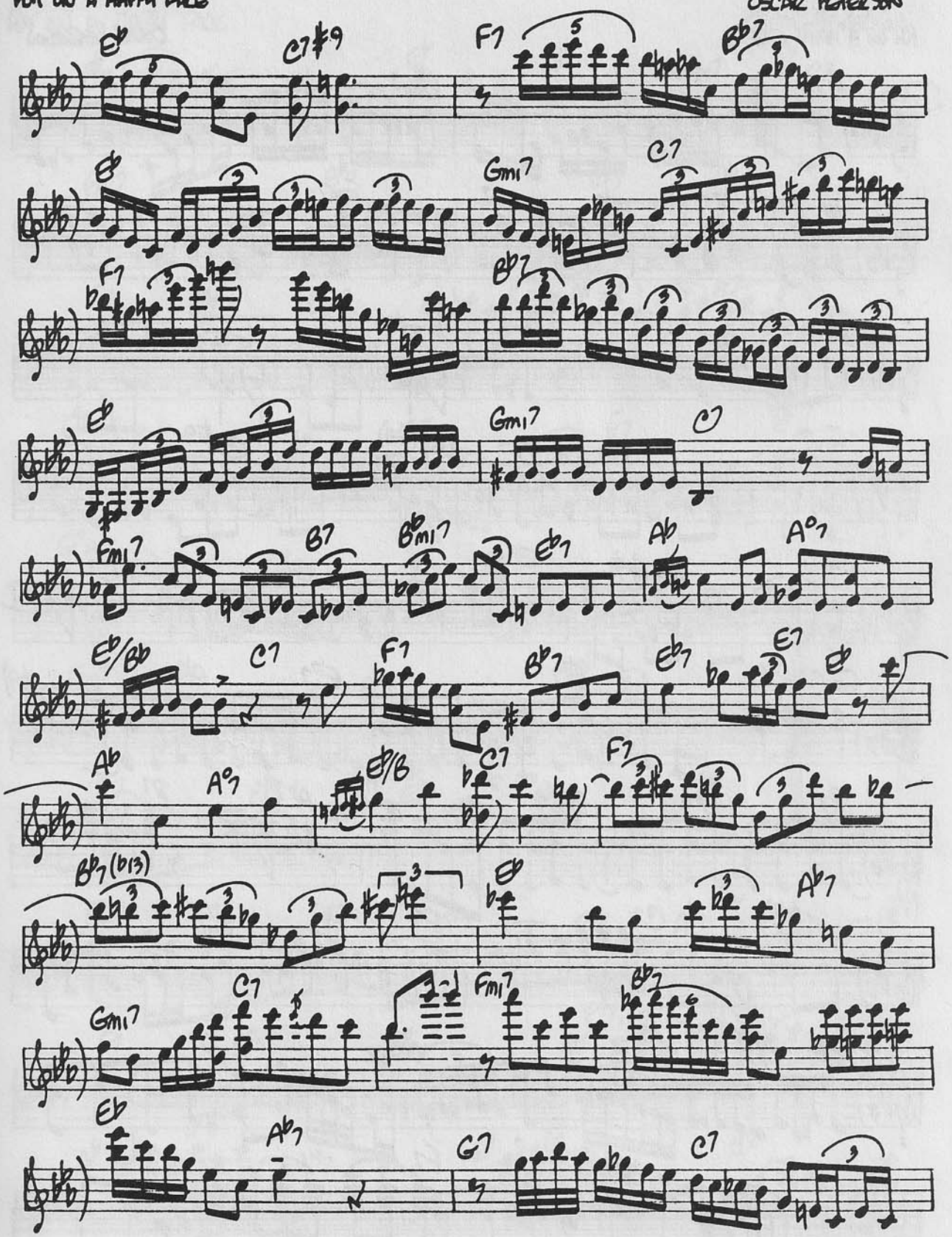
PUT ON A HAPPY FACE

OSCAR PETERSON



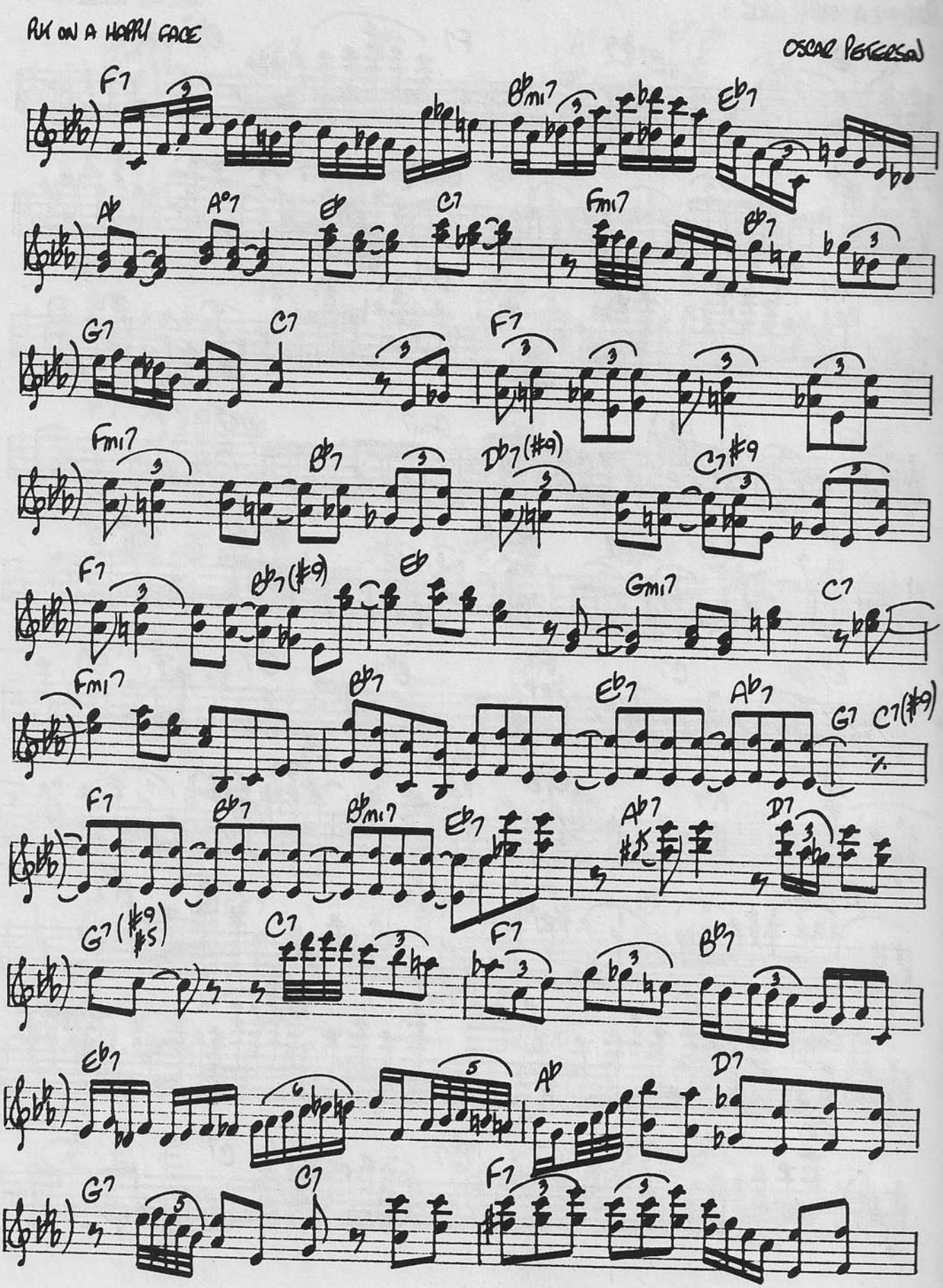
PUT ON A HAPPY FACE

OSCAR PETERSON



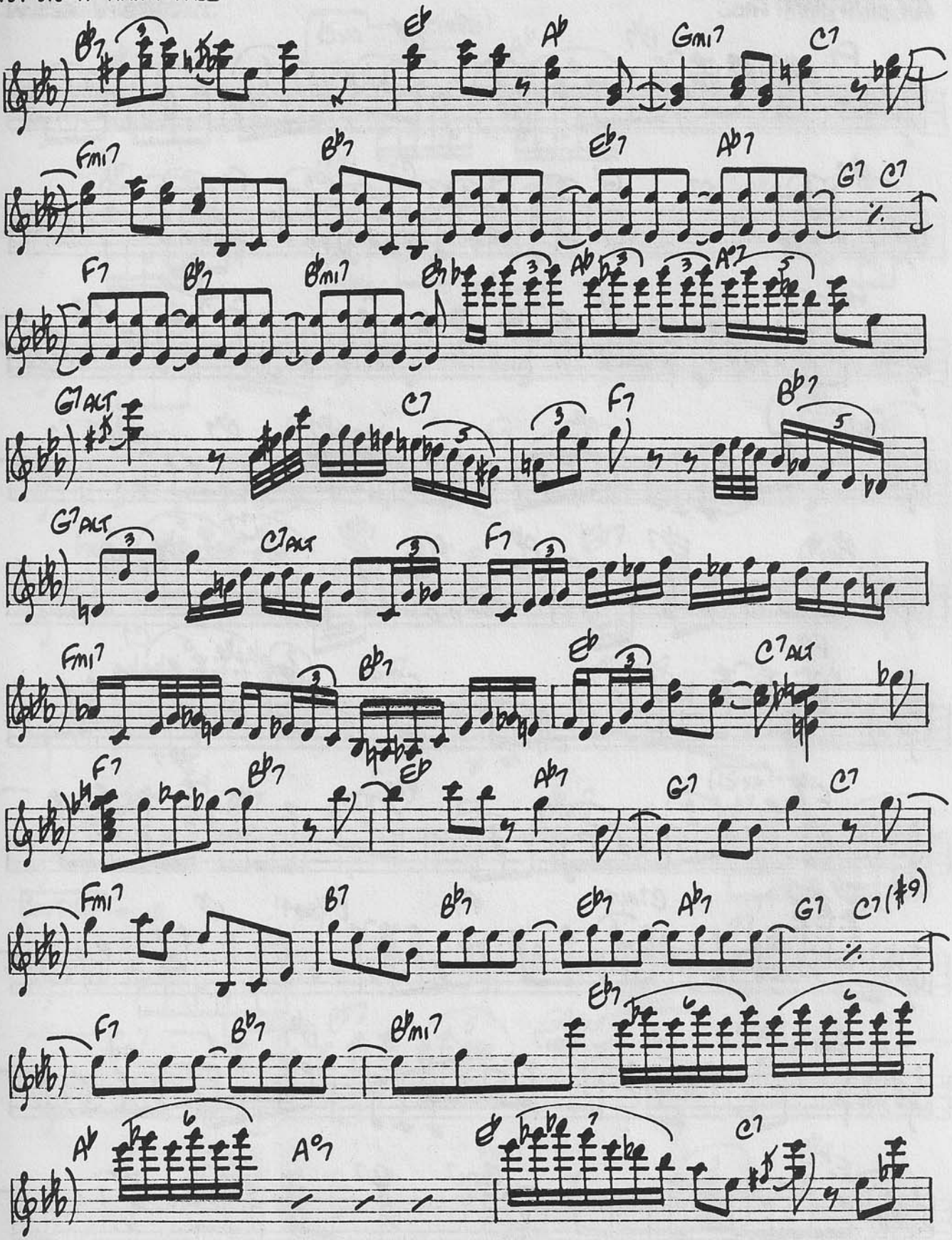
PUT ON A HAPPY FACE

OSCAR PETERSON



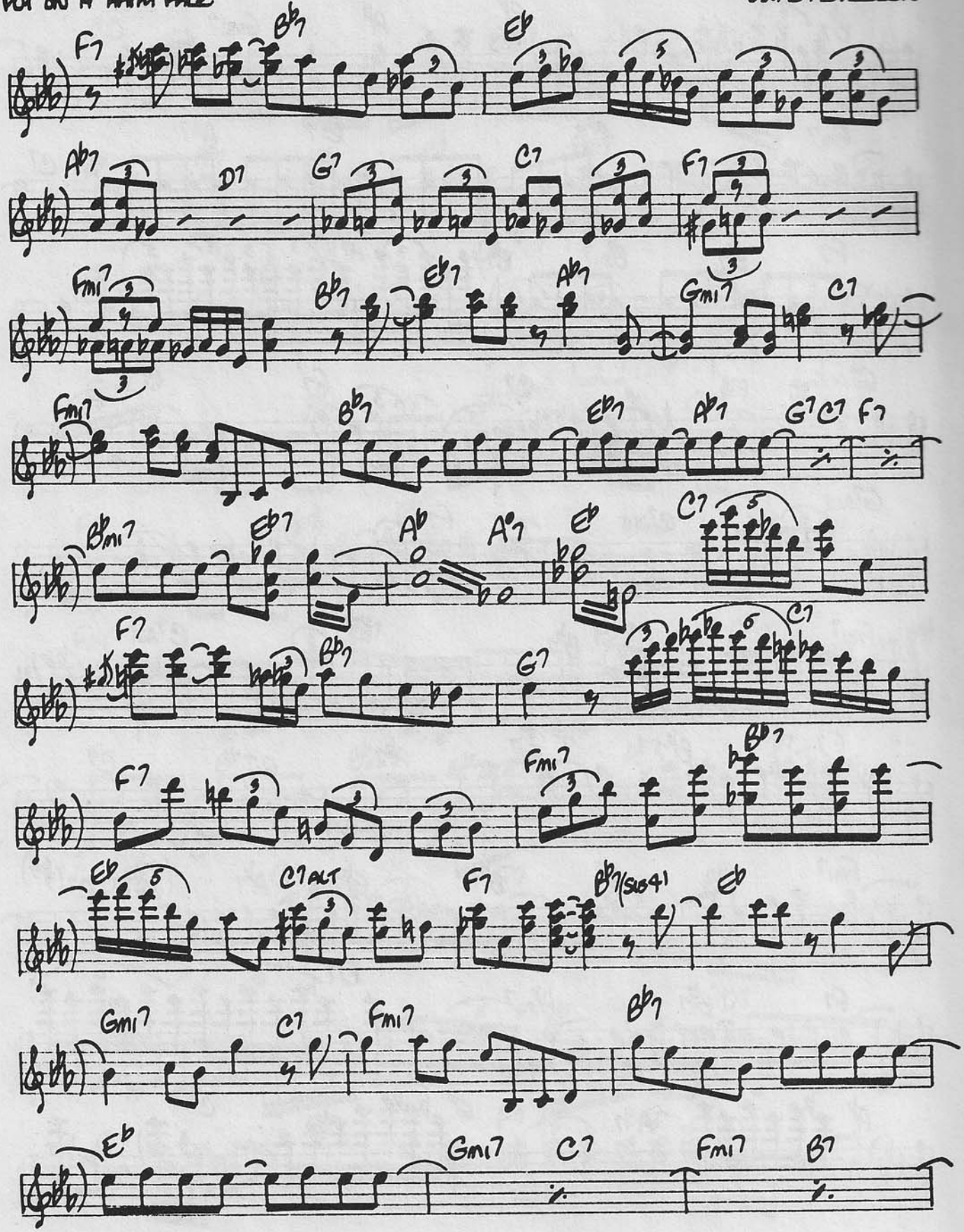
PUT ON A HAPPY FACE

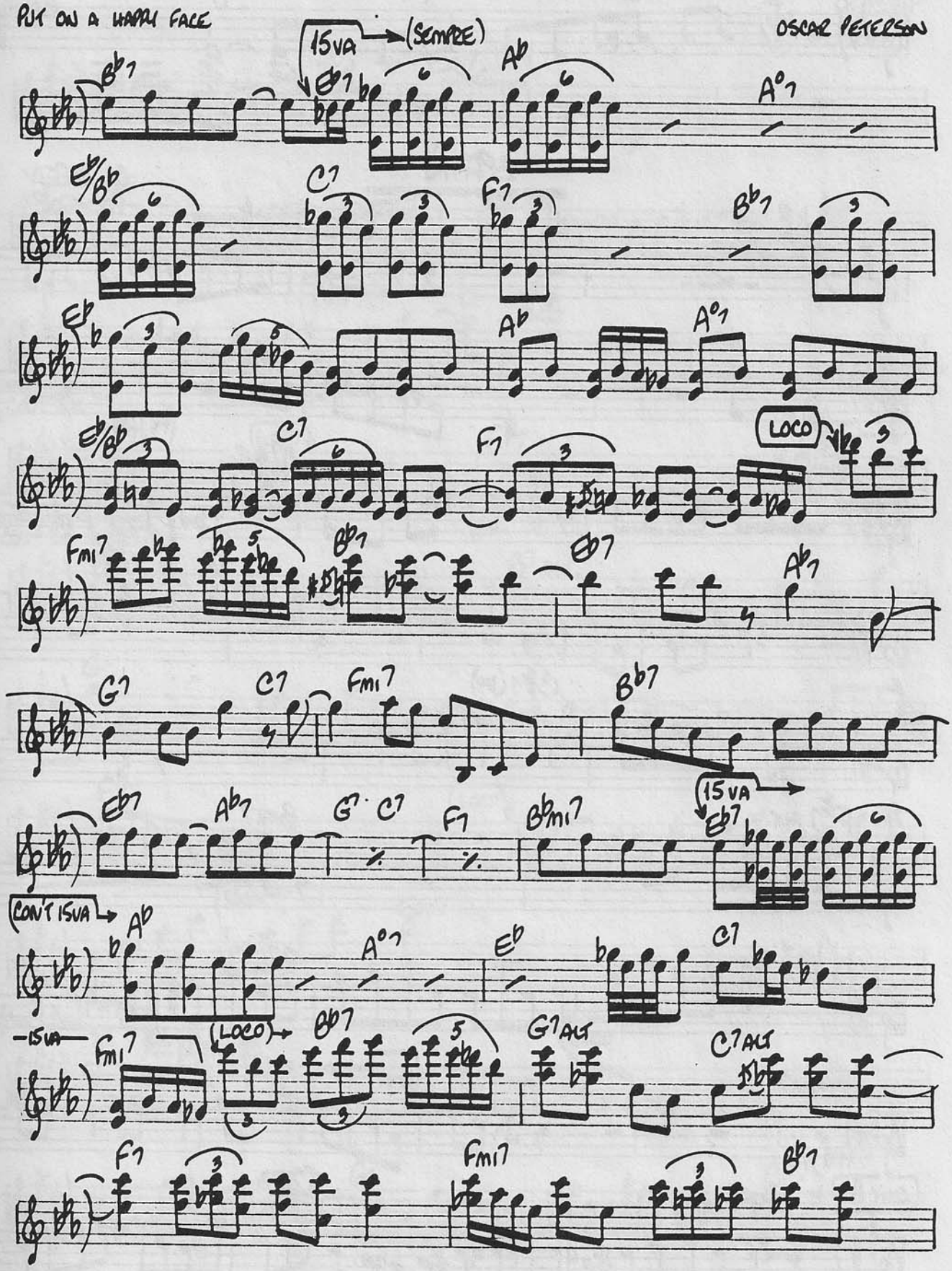
OSCAR PETERSON

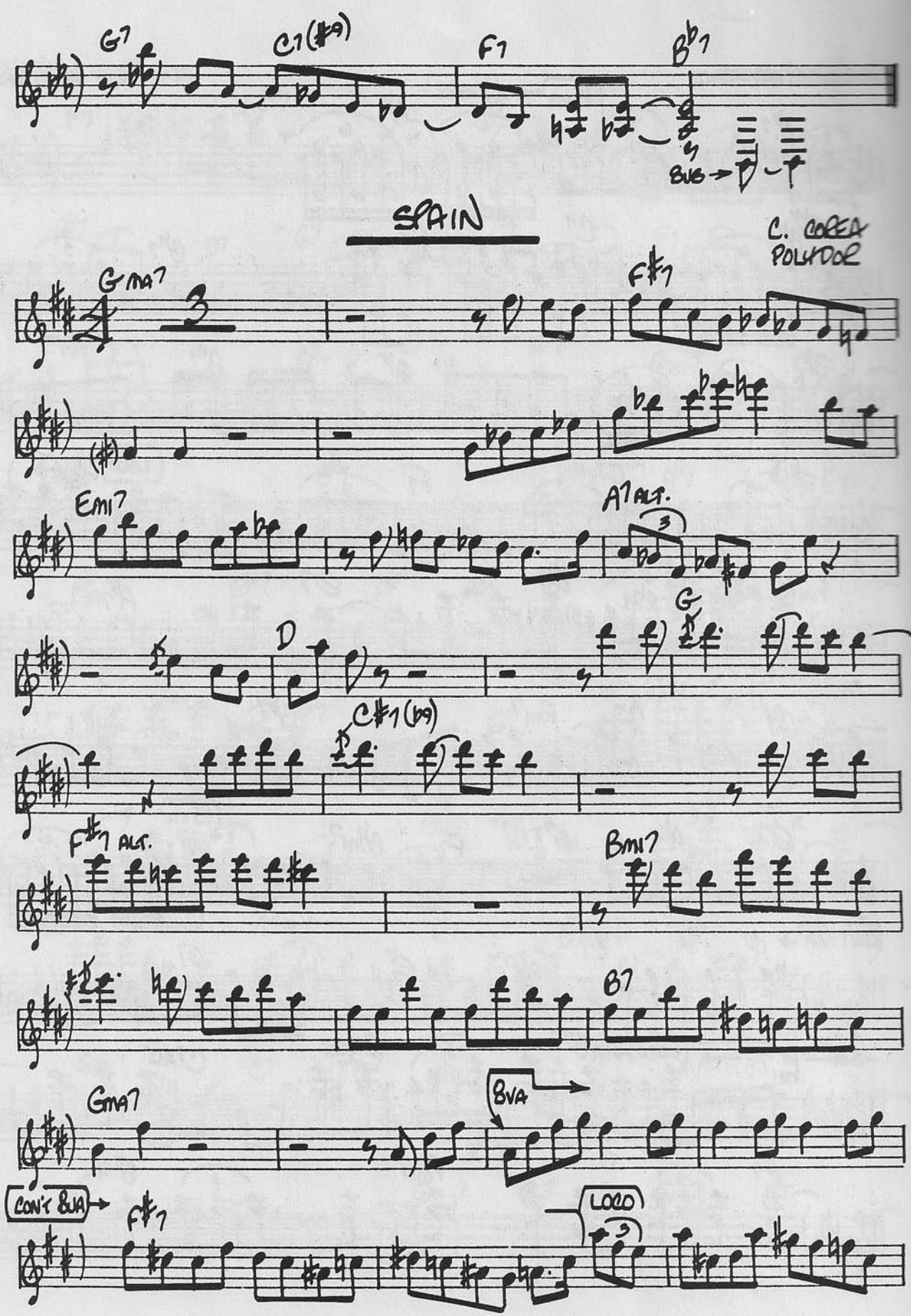


PUT ON A HAPPY FACE

OSCAR PETERSON




PUT ON A HAPPY FACE
OSCAR PETERSON
15VA
(SEMPRE)
LOCO
15VA
CONT 15VA
-15VA-
(LOCO)
G7 ALT
C7 ALT


G7
C7(#9)
F7
B♭7
8VB
SPAIN
C. COREA
POLYDOR
GMA7
F♯7
EMI7
A7 ALT.
D
G
C♯7(♭9)
F♯7 ALT.
BMI7
B7
GMA7
8VA
CON'T 8VA
F♯7
LOCO

名演を探せ!!

オスカー・ピーターソンの名演
イン・ザ・ウィー・スモール・アワーズ・オブ・ザ・モーニング

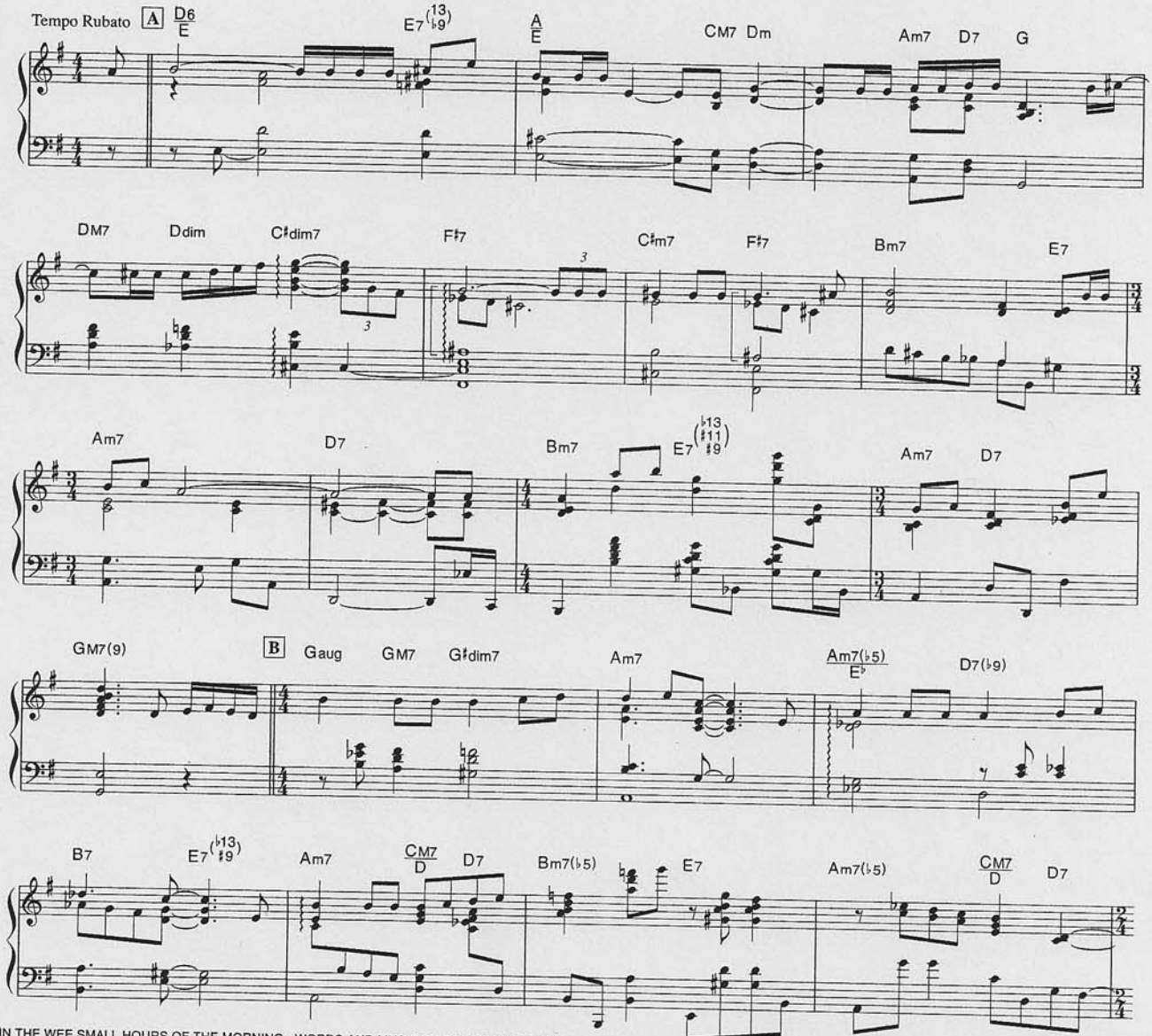
採譜：河本芳子

In The Wee Small Hours Of The Morning
バラッドの名曲をピアノで研究してみよう

クリフォード・ブラウン、ウェス・モンゴメリーなどジャズの巨人たちのそれぞれの名演を集めたベスト盤がポリドールよりシリーズで発売された(本誌今月号129ページ参照)。そこでその中から6月に久しぶりに来日する巨匠オスカー・ピーターソンの名演を取り上げた(ちなみにこのベスト盤シリーズのポイントは選曲する方も大物アーティストということだが、ピーターソンを担当するのはレイ・ブラウン。1951年から14年間ピーターソン・トリオのベーシストとして活動を共にした、ピーターソンのプレイを最もよく知る人のひとりだ)。

さてここに掲載した曲は、元はフランク・シナトラ(vo)のために書かれた美しいバラッド。ピーターソンの演奏は61年のシカゴでの録音で、ライヴのざわめきの中、静かにテンポ・ルバートで始まる(頻繁に拍子が変わるのはあくまで目安として見てほしい)。A B のヴァースを経て C からがテーマだ。ソロなので左手はルートと3度音または7度音を基本としつつ、例えば C の8小節目などいろいろなところに見られる内声の半音進行がサウンドを豊かにしている。F からイン・テンポになり、ベースも入るのでピアノはルートから解放され中音域でのヴォイシングに移っているが、F の6～8小節など、声部のスムーズな進行を参考にしてほしい。テクニックとパワーのピーターソンにしては最初ちょっと地味に感じるが、聴き返すたびに味わいの出てくる表現力に富んだ演奏だ。〈解説：北原英司〉

「オスカー・ピーターソン・セレクティッド・バイ・レイ・ブラウン」
ポリドール POCJ-9632
3月28日に"アーティスト・セレクション・ベスト・シリーズ"中の1枚として再発売されたオスカー・ピーターソンのベスト・アルバム。



IN THE WEE SMALL HOURS OF THE MORNING : WORDS AND MUSIC BY BOB HILLIARD AND DAVID MANN
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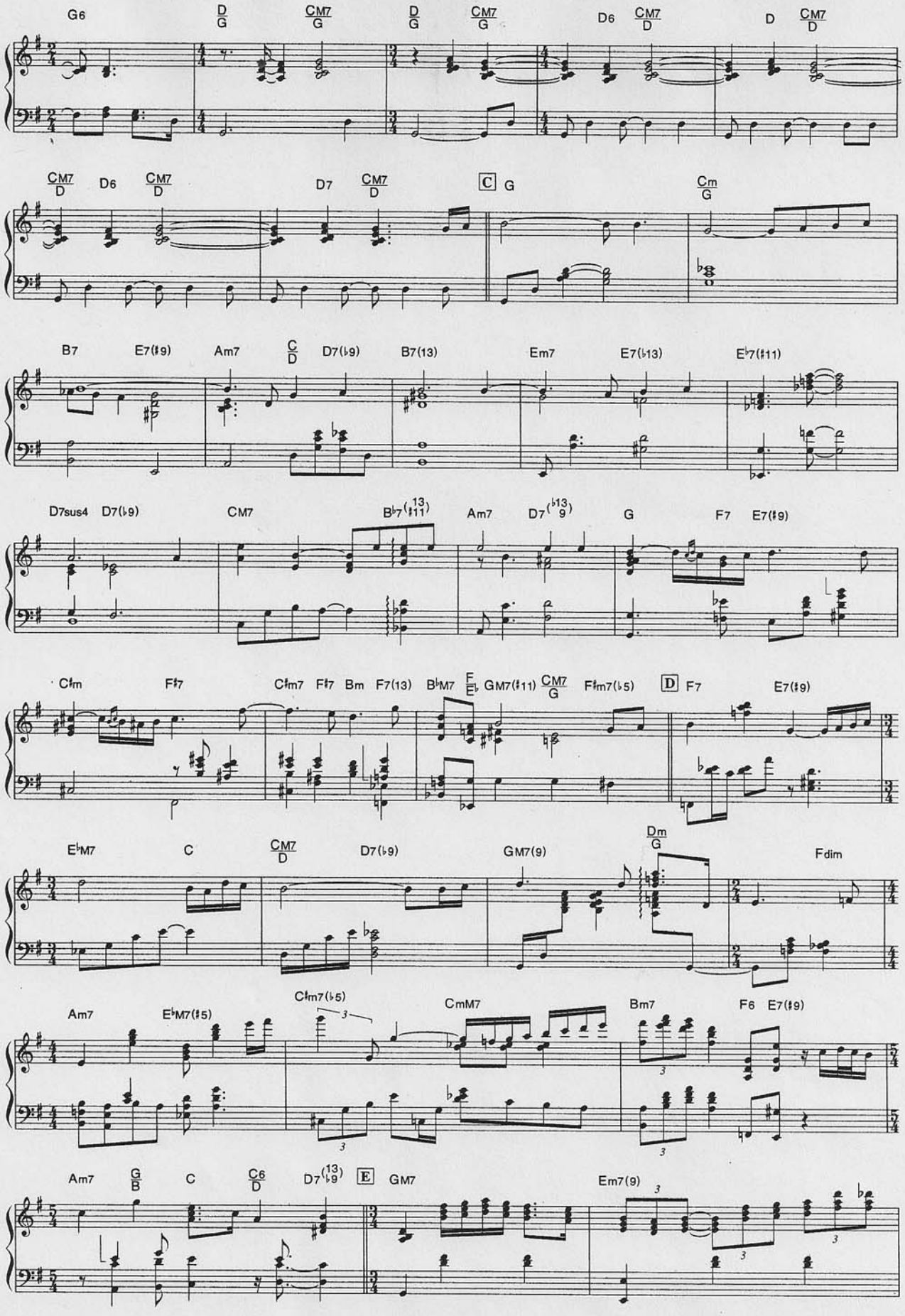
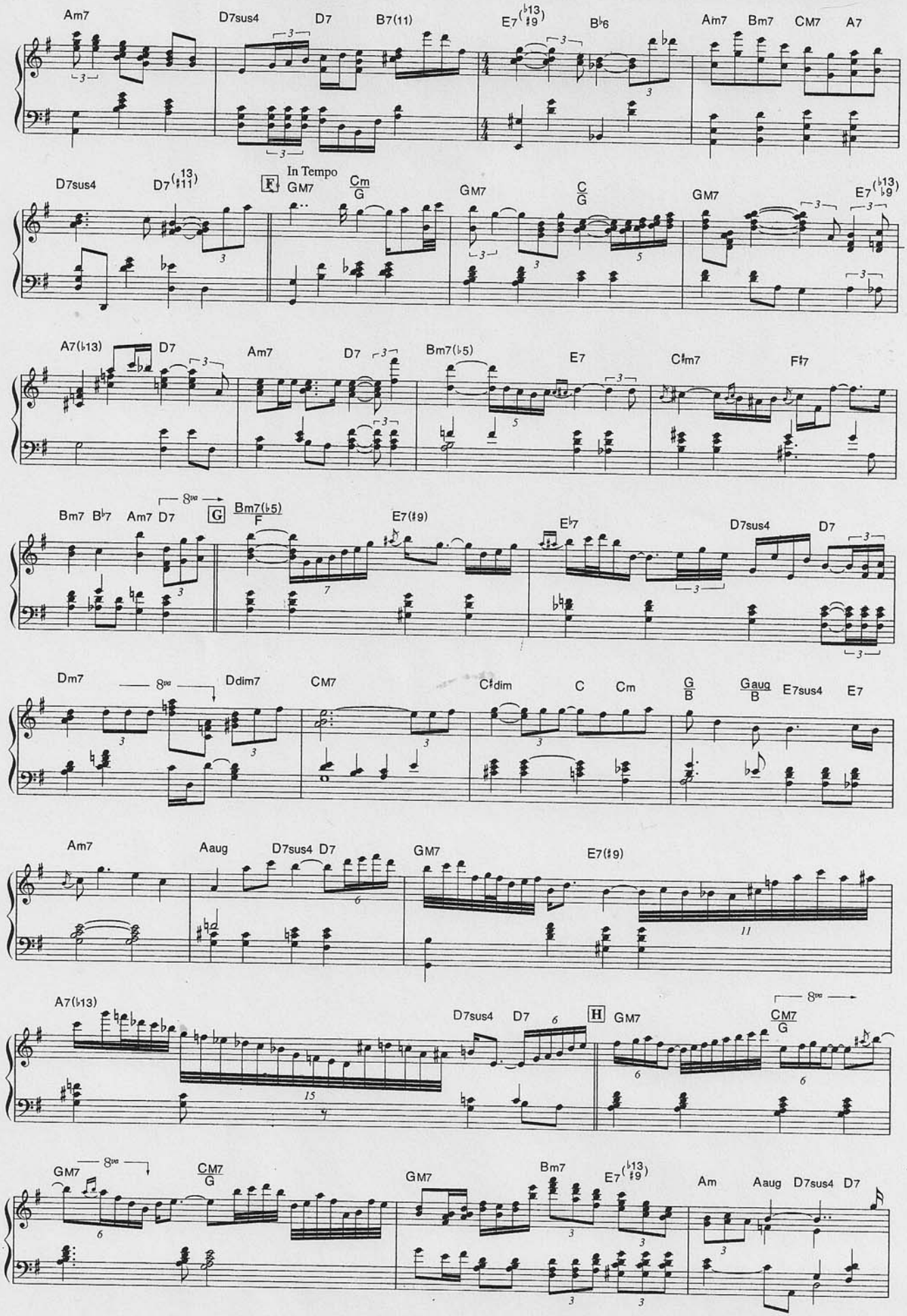
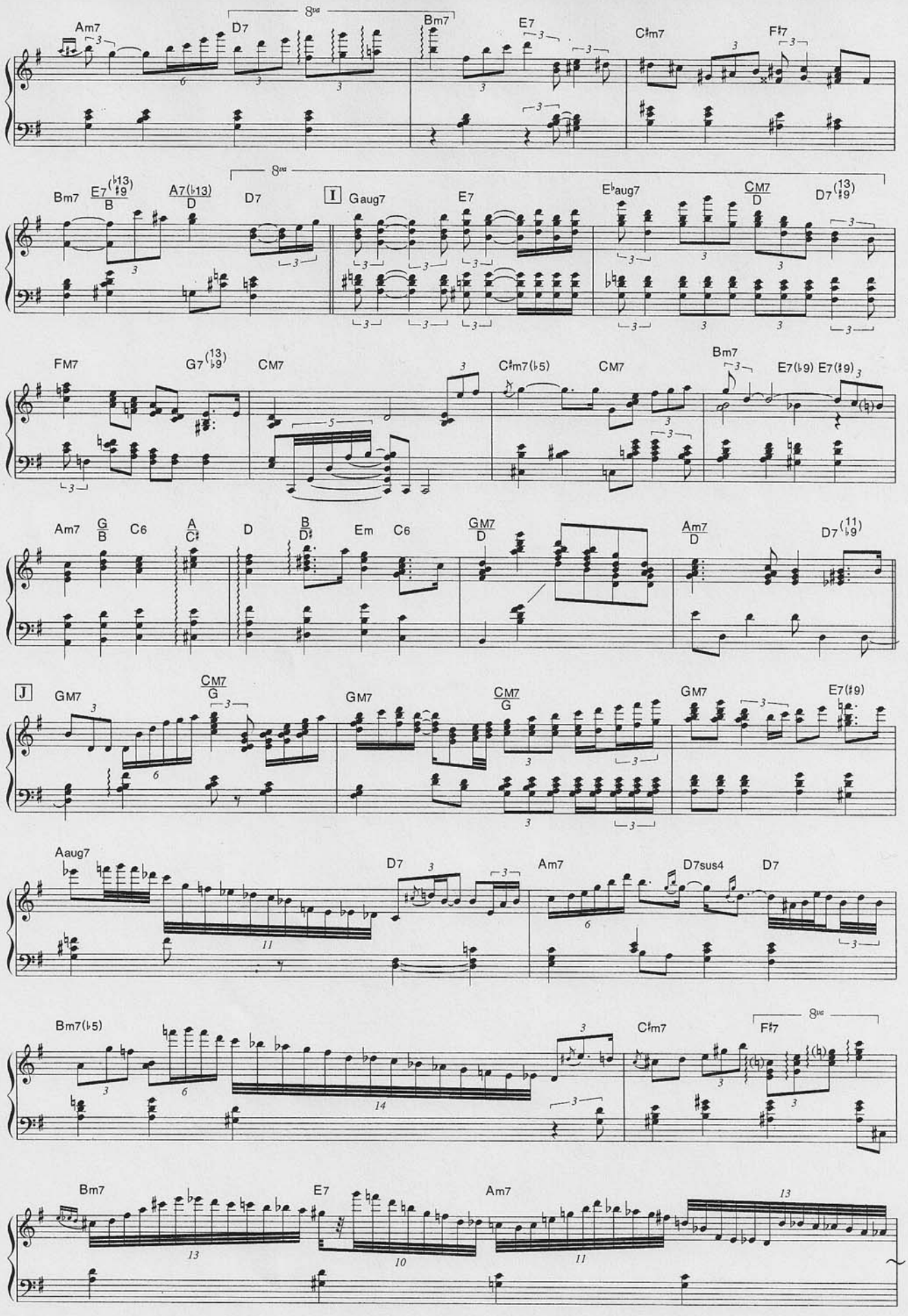
「IN THE WEE SMALL HOURS OF THE MORNING」オスカー・ピーターソン(p)の名演




Am7 D7sus4 D7 B7(11) E7(♭13 ♯9) B♭6 Am7 Bm7 CM7 A7
D7sus4 D7(♯11 13) F In Tempo GM7 Cm/G GM7 C/G GM7 E7(♭13 ♭9)
A7(♭13) D7 Am7 D7 Bm7(♭5) E7 C♯m7 F♯7
Bm7 B♭7 Am7 D7 G Bm7(♭5)/F E7(♯9) E♭7 D7sus4 D7
Dm7 Ddim7 CM7 C♯dim C Cm G/B Gaug/B E7sus4 E7
Am7 Aaug D7sus4 D7 GM7 E7(♯9)
A7(♭13) D7sus4 D7 H GM7 CM7/G
GM7 CM7/G GM7 Bm7 E7(♭13 ♯9) Am Aaug D7sus4 D7


Am7
D7
Bm7
E7
C♯m7
F♯7
8va
Bm7
E7(♭13/♯9)
B
A7(♭13)
D
D7
I
Gaug7
E7
E♭aug7
CM7
D
D7(13/♯9)
FM7
G7(13/♭9)
CM7
C♯m7(♭5)
CM7
Bm7
E7(♭9)
E7(♯9)
Am7
G
B
C6
A
C♯
D
B
D♯
Em
C6
GM7
D
Am7
D
D7(11/♭9)
J
GM7
CM7
G
GM7
CM7
G
GM7
E7(♯9)
Aaug7
D7
Am7
D7sus4
D7
Bm7(♭5)
C♯m7
8va
F♯7
Bm7
E7
Am7