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Foreword

As a jazz pianist, I strive for musicality that is sonorously lyrical and for technical dexterity that communicates the spirit - a marriage of heart and hands. In the early stages of my playing, my ability to absorb and to develop my skill was fairly high. I learned from emulating the masters, from mentors and teachers and from books. But as I gained experience, I settled down to a certain style and stayed within that framework in performance, in practice, in thoughts, in exploration and in perception.

In order to expand my musical artistry, it became vitally important on occasion to venture out of my element, to experiment, to discover and to revive the pursuit of my own unique personal sound. Thus, I began my experiments in the practice rooms and on stage.

The Book

Over the years, I acquired a fair amount of phrase and pattern vocabulary, but I felt my improvisations were somewhat one-dimensional and predictable. My right hand did most of the work, while my left hand contributed little to the total sound either rhythmically or melodically. This phenomenon was possibly due to my being locked into habitual ways of doing things - from soloing to practicing.

It became imperative for me to strengthen my left hand, to enable both hands to work independently, and find ways to re-integrate them into one sound. I started to create exercises that shifted my perception about left and right hand "roles", helping me push the limits of my hand coordination, and challenged me to think differently. The ideas and possibilities became limitless. It is in this spirit that I have written this book and it is a true delight to share some of my ideas with fellow players/students.

Introduction

This book is divided into 6 chapters.

Each of you who read or use this book will have different skills and will be at different levels of ability. These chapters are designed to present you with a variety of specific areas of left hand development and left/right hand integration from which to choose.

Naturally, all the materials may be useful to you. But you can also choose from among the various exercises those that seem more interesting or challenging or most likely to help you push the limits of your playing ability, and even your thinking about piano playing, into greater heights. These exercises should be thoroughly practiced at different tempos and in different keys.

My intent is to enable you to experiment with a different approach to hand coordination practice, and to develop new skills that you can apply to your real time playing.

Chapter 2

Chord movement using both hands

The material in this chapter will help you develop dexterity and balance when using both hands in chordal movement. Chords are essential for providing rhythmic punctuation and accentuation, for adding color, volume and excitement to any musical piece. Chords must be practiced so that both right and left hands have balanced resonance.

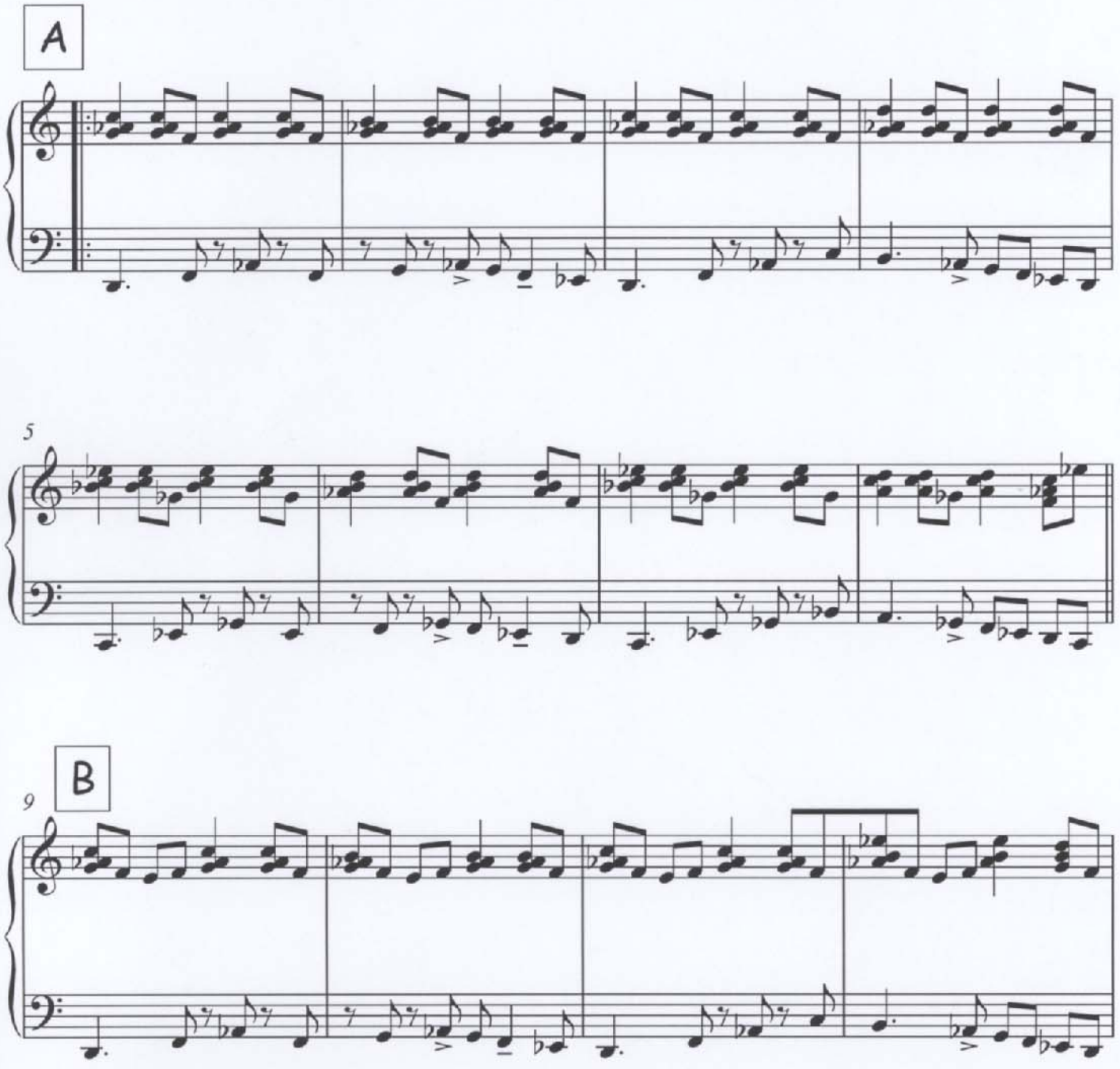
On development as a musician:

John Coltrane

."....I've found you've got to look back at the old things and see them in a new light. I'm not finished with these studies because I haven't assimilated everything into my playing. I want to progress, but I don't want to go so far out that I can't see what others are doing. I want to broaden my outlook in order to come out with a fuller means of expression. I want to be more flexible where rhythm is concerned. I feel I have to study rhythm some more. I haven't experimented too much with time; most of my experimenting has been in a harmonic form. I put time and rhythms to one side, in the past. But I've got to keep experimenting. I feel that I'm just beginning. I have part of what I'm looking for in my grasp but not all. I'm very happy devoting all my time to music, and I'm glad to be one of the many who are striving for fuller development as musicians. .... " [1]

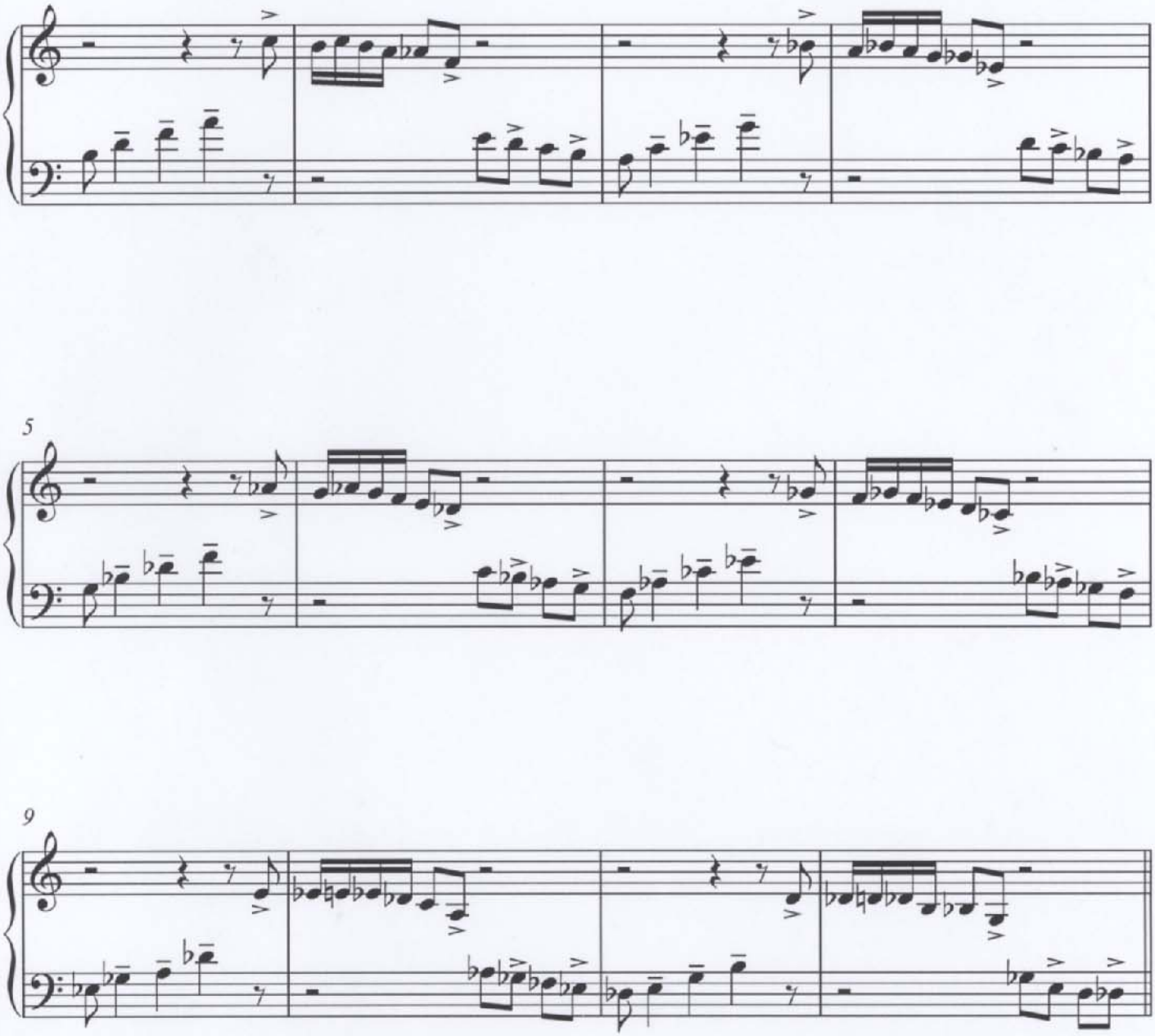
Chord Exercise #4

This exercise consists of both hands playing different sets of patterns. The left hand remains constant with the 2-bar pattern while the right hand plays a one-bar phrase for section "A" and switches to another pattern for section "B". The goal is to maintain steadiness in both hands with a balanced resonance.

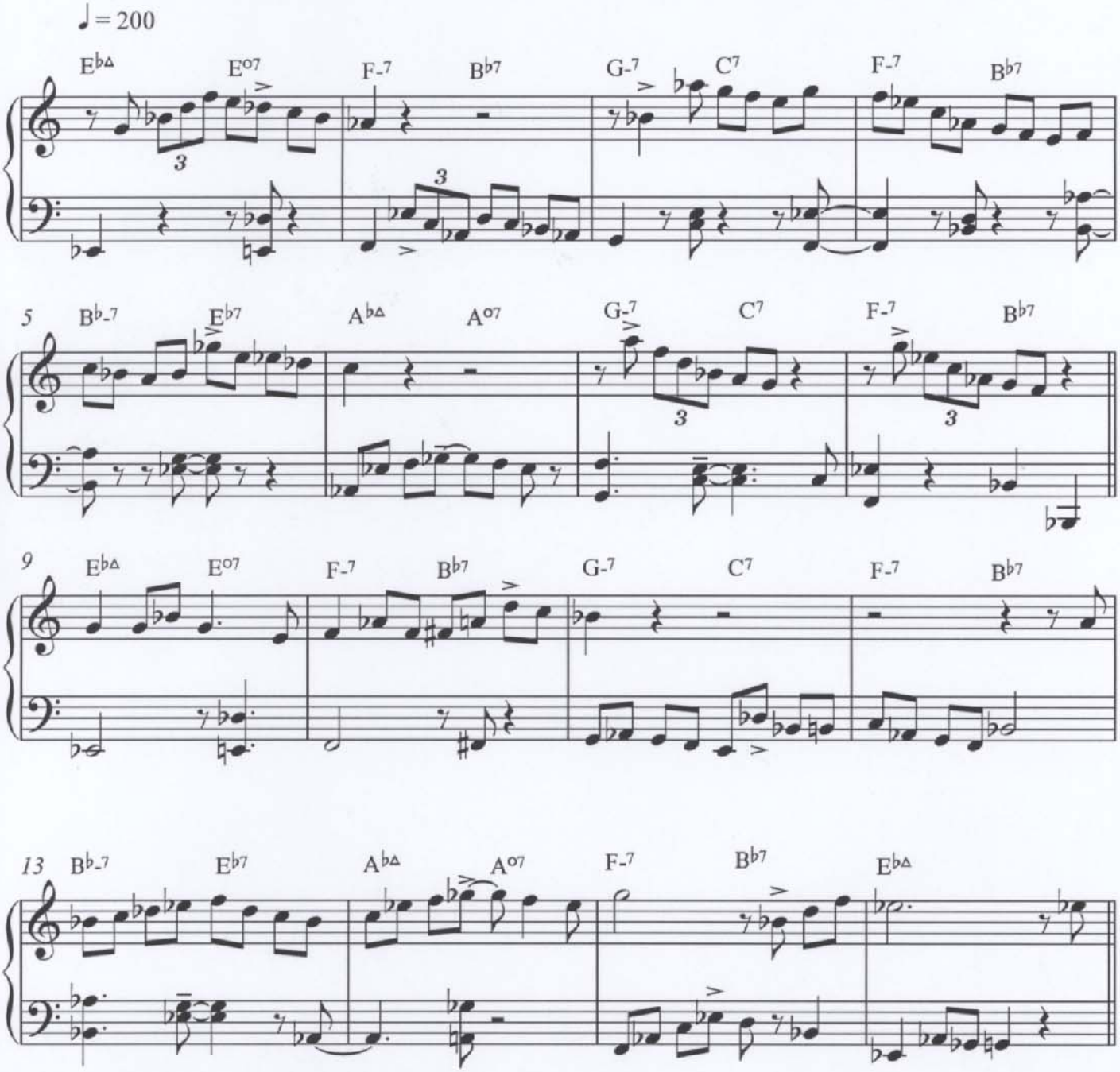


Interplay Study #1

This exercise uses left and right hand to play a two-bar phrase seamlessly. The phrase should sound like one continuous line. The syncopation in the left hand should not be rushed. Practice in various tempos.



Rhythm Changes (Eb)

based on " I Got Rhythm"
by George Gerswhin
arrg:emiko hayashi

This is another application exercise based on the "Rhythm Changes". Again, take note of the various techniques that make the dialogue between left and right hand interesting. Practice the exercise in different keys. Experiment by creating your own solo using similar "interplay" techniques.