

Selections from
Bill Evans at Town Hall

Piano Transcriptions and Performance Notes by
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Ludlow Music, Inc.

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Contents

- 4 **Acknowledgments**
- 5 **Foreword**
- 6 **Notes**
- 16 **Solo—In Memory of His Father**
 - Prologue**
 - Improvisation on Two Themes**
 - Story Line**
 - Turn Out the Stars**
 - Epilogue**
- 39 **Epilogue**
- 40 **One for Helen**
- 54 **Who Can I Turn To (When Nobody Needs Me)**
- 63 **Only Child**
- 71 **Orbit**
- 77 **Funny Man**

Foreword

Bill Evans enjoyed playing solo piano, mainly for the freedom of expression it gave him. But he modestly thought that he did not have “the dimension to really be a solo pianist entirely” (an opinion which his admirers certainly do not share). Moreover, since he felt that the jazz audience needed the drive of a rhythm section, he always chose the trio setting in concert, playing solo for a few moments or an occasional song.

His father, Harry L. Evans, died shortly before Bill's New York concert debut at Town Hall on February 21, 1966. Bill, then thirty-six, decided to play a requiem to his father in the first half of the concert to create a more intimate atmosphere. Some trio pieces opened and closed the first half; the remainder of the concert featured Bill with a big band led by tenor saxophonist Al Cohn.

For the requiem, Bill assembled four original tunes into a suite: two written pieces (“Prologue” and “Epilogue”) and two tunes on which he improvised (“Story Line” and “Turn Out the Stars”).

The outcome was equal to the event—this performance was rightly and unanimously praised as an important achievement, and was repeated once for television in 1968 in memory of Robert F. Kennedy. An abridged version of this solo appeared in a folio entitled *Bill Evans Plays*, published by TRO in 1969. The present volume presents a newly transcribed version of the complete solo. From the same concert are new transcriptions of “Who Can I Turn To” from *The Roar of the Greasepaint—The Smell of the Crowd*, and another original by Evans, “One for Helen” (both played by the trio).

Three additional compositions appear in this folio. Two of them also appeared in the original edition of *Bill Evans Plays*, and are newly transcribed for this folio: “Only Child” and “Orbit” (both from the album *A Simple Matter of Conviction*). The third title has never appeared in print before, “Funny Man” (from *Further Conversations With Myself*). Originally a two-piano recording of Bill overdubbing himself, this title has been arranged for solo piano.

Jeff Sultanof, Editor

Prologue

“Prologue was probably composed especially for the Town Hall concert to match “Epilogue.” It is a classical piano piece written to be played as written without improvisation, and without the jazz feeling generally present in the music of Bill Evans.

For this modal piece, he chose the Ionian mode. To reinforce this, the left hand plays an ostinato pattern throughout: four chords built on the I, IV, III and II degrees, with the chords building from two to three, then four notes in close voicing. Evans previously used this device in “Peace Piece” (1958), “Flamenco Sketches” (1959) and “NYC’s No Lark” (1963).

The first eight-measure phrase in E Ionian is played in single notes:



This quiet melody evokes Erik Satie’s *Gymnopédies* and their melancholy mood, a feeling which corresponds to Evans’s mood at the time. Interestingly, *Gymnopédie No. 2* was one of the first pieces recorded by Evans after the death of bassist Scott LaFaro (on the album *Nirvana* with Herbie Mann).

This phrase is transposed down a fourth for the following eight measures, then abandoned for some variations and modulations. In this middle section, both hands often mix in the same register, the right hand playing double notes alternating small and wide intervals. This can also be found in Chopin’s *Berceuse* in D \flat (Op. 57), a work Evans certainly knew—the *Berceuse* is also built upon a one-bar left-hand ostinato.

Twice in measures 19–22 (C Ionian) and measures 28–33 (G Ionian), the right hand merely plays arpeggiated lines on the I chord:



And in measure 23, we find the right hand outlining the initial figure of the *Berceuse*:

Prologue:



Berceuse:



Is this a mere coincidence, an unconscious reminiscence? This is probable, as we know that Evans did not like quoting pieces.

After five measures in G Ionian, Evans returns to E Ionian for a restatement of the melody, this time in fourths.

Four modes are played in this piece: E Ionian, C Ionian, A \flat Ionian and G Ionian. Is it chance that if we combine these scale degrees, they form an A \flat maj7(+5) chord, which comes from the melodic minor scale? Probably not, if we consider that Evans was exploring the possibilities of this scale at the time (see “Story Line,” “Turn Out the Stars” and “One for Helen.”)

The left-hand chords have been strictly transposed, constantly producing a full harmonic texture.

All of these elements, along with the use of the pedal and the overlapping of both hands in the central section of the piece, make “Prologue” a neo-impressionistic work.

Story Line

“Story Line” was probably composed specifically for the Town Hall concert. It is a harmonic structure on which Evans improvises freely. There is no specific melody. He had previously done this as early as 1958, where, based on his research on modes in the '50s, he recorded “Peace Piece,” which is an improvisation on two chords. Two other occasions are:

For “Know What I Mean” (1961 with Cannonball Adderley), Evans used a simple progression of five minor chords to improvise in the Dorian mode: F \sharp m9, E \flat m9, Em9, Am9 and Cm9 – two measures for each chord. Incidentally, the choice of four of these chords was determined by a diminished relationship: F \sharp m, Am, Cm and E \flat m (in 1962, Evans was to use these same chords in a different order in “Time Remembered,” measures 17–20, another opportunity to explore the Dorian mode).

“Re: Person I Knew” (1962 for the album *Moonbeams*) proceeds from the same concept: no definite melody (even if one was written later on), and no rhythmic feel. The main purpose of the piece is to create an atmosphere by means of the modes selected for improvisation. Not surprisingly for modal music, dominant seventh chords are absent; as in “Time Remembered” there are only major and minor chords, this time played over a pedal point throughout the sixteen bars of the tune.

Using the same idea in “Story Line,” Evans took the chord changes of the first twelve bars of “Re: Person I Knew” as a starting point of a fifty-two bar structure. Therefore “Story Line” can be considered an extension of “Re: Person I Knew,” divided up into 16 + 8 + 16 + 12 measures (ABAC form).

Like an endless blues progression, the harmony is based on the tonal degrees I, IV and V (C, F and G). IV and V are always minor, whereas the I chord shifts between major and minor before it becomes major in the last eight measures;

the piece has the feeling of major-minor as a result. There is another ambiguity which gives the piece a special flavor: the three chords have the minor 7th quality (Dorian), or the minor-major 7th quality (melodic minor). Both modes are omnipresent throughout the piece.

The C pedal point, which is the key element of “Re: Person I Knew,” is maintained during the first forty measures (the ABA sections). It plays a prominent role by reinforcing the static effect of the repeated chords. We have the impression of uniformity, of a monotonous wandering, of circular motion and immobility at the same time, one chord coming steadily after the other, like waves.

The pedal point is abandoned in measure 41 (section C). The bass line descends chromatically from the first to the fourth degree, followed in the last chorus by a final cadence I, VI, II, \flat II. The last chord, $D\flat/G$, makes it possible to avoid the real dominant seventh (G7). It does not resolve on the tonic, creating a suspended feeling (this final $D\flat$ is taken from “Re: Person I Knew,” and coincidence or not, “Turn Out the Stars” which follows “Story Line” and ends on the same pitch, albeit with a minor chord: $C\sharp m$).

The harmonic ambiguity prevails until the end; after the C major chord is measure 49, the last three chords— $A m(maj7)$, $D m7(\flat 5)$, $D\flat/G$ —are related to three different scales. The C major and scale chord is not played anymore; on the contrary, the final phrase is a simple C natural minor scale.

Notice Evans’s use of the *drop 2* technique during his solo, in which the second note from the top of the chord is dropped an octave (2nd chorus: m. 35, 3rd chorus: m.m. 4, 7 and 8).

Evans did not keep “Story Line” in his repertoire, whereas the *short version* (“Re: Person I Knew”) remained.

Story Line

L.H. Voicings and R.H. Scales Suggested

A

The notation shows four measures of music. Each measure consists of a right-hand scale and a left-hand chord voicing. Measure 1: Right hand: C major scale (C4 to C5); Left hand: Cmaj9 chord (C4, E4, G4, Bb4, C5). Measure 2: Right hand: F ascending melodic minor scale (F4 to F5); Left hand: C+ chord (C4, Eb4, G4, Bb4). Measure 3: Right hand: G ascending melodic minor scale (G4 to G5); Left hand: Gm(maj7) chord (G4, Bb4, D5, F5). Measure 4: Right hand: G Dorian scale (G4 to G5); Left hand: Gm7 chord (G4, Bb4, D5, F5). Measure 5: Right hand: F Dorian scale (F4 to F5); Left hand: Fm7 chord (F4, Ab4, C5, Eb5). Measure 6: Right hand: C Dorian scale (C4 to C5); Left hand: Cm7 chord (C4, Eb4, G4, Bb4). Measure 7: Right hand: C Dorian scale (C4 to C5); Left hand: Cm7 chord (C4, Eb4, G4, Bb4). Measure 8: Right hand: C Dorian scale (C4 to C5); Left hand: Cm7 chord (C4, Eb4, G4, Bb4).

Fm(maj7)	Cm(maj7)	Fm7	Gm(maj7)
F ascending melodic minor	C ascending melodic minor	F Dorian	G ascending melodic minor

D \flat maj7(+11)	Cm(maj7)	F \sharp m7(\flat 5)	Fm7
D \flat Lydian	C ascending melodic minor	A ascending melodic minor	F Dorian

B

1.

Cmaj7	G \flat 7(+11)	Fm7	F \sharp $^\circ$
C major	D \flat ascending melodic minor	F Dorian	F \sharp diminished scale

Cmaj9	Gm7	Fm7	D \flat maj7
C major	G Dorian	F Dorian	D \flat Lydian

C

2.

B $^\circ$	Cm7/B \flat	Am6	Fm(maj7)/A \flat
C natural harmonic minor	C natural minor	A ascending melodic minor	F ascending melodic minor

Cmaj7/G G \flat 7(+11) Fm7 F \sharp $^\circ$
 C major D \flat ascending melodic minor F Dorian F \sharp diminished scale

Cmaj7/G F \sharp m7(\flat 5) Fm7 D \flat maj7/G
 C major A ascending melodic minor F Dorian

Alternate chords for ending: Am(maj7) Dm7(\flat 5)
 A ascending melodic minor F ascending melodic minor

Turn Out the Stars

“Turn Out the Stars” was played for the first time at the Town Hall concert. It was composed between late 1963 and early 1966. The title comes from Bill’s friend Gene Lees, who wrote the lyrics for this romantic, harmonically rich song. It has an ABC structure, divided 16 + 8 + 16 measures.

Section A: The first motive consists of two repeated notes a half-step away from the first melody note, which will be played six times in the A and C sections. Evans may have gotten the melodic idea from the song “I Should Care,” which he recorded in 1962. Systemically used, the device of a short motive, harmonized in different ways and transposed, “Bill’s Hit Tune,” “The Opener,” “Orbit,” “Song for Helen,” “34 Skidoo,” “Tiffany” and “Your Story” are examples.

The chord progressions for the entire tune are only II, V, I, and V, I in major or minor. In the first ten measures, the key center changes every two bars, going up by thirds: Am, C, E \flat , G, B. These five scale degrees form an Am9(\flat 5) chord, a chord derived from the C melodic minor scale. This device of organizing different key centers was fashionable at the time (E \flat , G and B are the key centers of John Coltrane’s “Giant Steps,” written in 1959). Evans would use this device again: “Orbit” was also recorded in 1966.

Evans later made some modifications in the melody and harmony of this section, also adding passing chords.

Section B: In choosing the chords for this section (II, V, I in D major and C major), Evans may have been inspired by the bridge of Dave Brubeck’s composition “In Your Own Sweet Way,” which Evans recorded in 1962:

Em7	A7	Dmaj7	Em7	A7	Dmaj7	Dm7	G7	Cmaj7	<i>etc.</i>

These chords are played by the right hand over a dominant bass pedal (A, then G), a recurrent device in Evans’ music. It creates a static effect on this section of the song, contrasting with the two other sections which have a directional motion: ascending (A) and descending (C).

The left hand plays arpeggiated lines from the bass pedal. Evans was left-handed, and his left-hand lines are real counter melodies, without rhythmic or melodic weakness, as if they were written down as in a classical composition.

Evans’ chords in the medium-high register and melodic lines in the medium-low register give the piano an amazing sound. The comparison with the music of Chopin is inevitable.

Section C: From measure 25, the melodic and harmonic motion descends in key centers by step (Em, Dm, Cm). The initial figure (F–F–E–E) reappears in measure 31, transposed first, then as in measure 35, then re-harmonized in an unexpected way in the last two measures: Ab7, C#m (the first chord is labeled Ab7 because the melody note F belongs to Db major; the resolution is diverted in minor with a C#m chord). This final cadence is obviously a re-harmonization of measures 3 and 4:

Dm7	G7	Cmaj7

This would have been a banal ending, and Evans avoids it in a sophisticated way, ending the tune in a mood full of uncertainty.

On the whole, the chord changes travel through no less than twelve key centers, a harmonic instability characteristic of most of Evans’ compositions.

After the solo performance at Town Hall, “Turn Out the Stars” was almost always played by the trio – it is played as such at the Village Vanguard a month later. The swing tempo and strong playing balanced the romantic nature of the theme. Evans never tired of playing this great tune which always remained in his repertoire and is now regarded as a classic.

Epilogue

“Epilogue” was originally recorded in 1958 on the album *Everybody Digs Bill Evans*. As this piece was about thirty-eight seconds long and definitely conclusive in character, it was placed at the end of each side of the album like a tag. At Town Hall, Evans used it to conclude his solo, but with a few modifications. The two versions are presented in this folio for comparison.

Like “Prologue,” “Epilogue” is a piece which is entirely written and without improvisation. It is very simple: the melody is basically pentatonic, evoking a Russian folk line (Evans was Russian on his mother’s side). The piece consists of four three- and four-bar phrases, each separated by a slight pause.

There are only two voices at the beginning, both hands playing single notes (the left hand has a descending Eb scale). But in measure 4, voices are added: the right hand plays the melody in fourths, fifths or sixths, while the left hand plays the chords in fifths. Together they indicate the C natural minor scale, the last phrase being an almost complete scale. The line goes down to conclude the piece – and the requiem – on a final tonic chord without the third.

Like “Prologue” and “Story Line,” “Epilogue” did not remain in Evans’ repertoire.

One for Helen

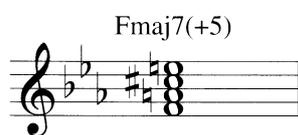
This original composition was dedicated to Helen Keane, Evans’ manager since 1962, and was probably written a few months before the Town Hall concert, where it was recorded for the first time, although not released on the original LP. It was conceived as a fast-swing trio piece. At Town Hall the tempo is ♩ = ca. 192, but was played faster later on; ♩ = ca. 250 at Montreux in 1968, and on *Blue and Green* and *Live in Europe* in 1974.

It is an ABC tune divided into 16 + 8 + 10 bar phrases, an unusual 34 bar structure.

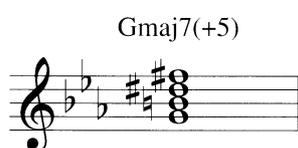
Section A: The first four-bar phrase is in C minor (the key of the piece), and is transposed up a fourth in measure 9 (F minor), then evolves differently by measure 13.

Section B: The melody leads with a half-step (the basic figure of the theme) on the pitch C#. This middle section is the perfect place to breathe; there is a lot of space in the melody with whole notes on primary beats, creating a feeling of suspended time. The four whole notes are altered notes, or extensions of the dominant seventh chords, which are part of the complete cycle of fifths (measures 15–28). The right-hand line, moving up and down in wide and small intervals, is made up of two Major 7 (+5) chords, cleverly arpeggiated in contrary motion, the shape of phrase 2 being the reverse of phrase 1:

Phrase 1: Measure 17



Phrase 2: Measure 22



The chord quality is a product of the melodic minor scale, another clue that Evans was exploring the scale at the time of composition.

Section C: The first phrase is repeated, then the final line goes upward to the tonic in contrary motion with the chords. In the last eight measures of the last chorus, notice the downward motion of the chords, from B \flat 7 to the final Cm of the Coda. This Coda was later replaced by a two chord vamp comprising sixteen bars, also used as an introduction.



A few remarks on the solo:

1. Measures 13–23 of the second chorus— notice the systematic use of augmented triads on the dominant 7th chords, a sound related to the melodic minor scale.
2. 3rd chorus, m.m. 8, 21–24, 31; 4th chorus, m.m. 19–20 — chords are placed on the fourth beat of the measure, anticipating their normal placement on the next primary beat, along with the four eighth-note figures *displaced* on beats four and two (3rd chorus, m.m. 21–24):

Evans explains: “It’s a way of keeping the music moving when you’re using a regular metric form, by making the phrase accents and motivic accents fall according to the content of the motives, falling before it should happen, or maybe dividing it up in different ways as it happens. It’s a way of propelling the music, making it have a great deal of forward motion, and at the same time saying something extra because you’re getting deeper into the language of music.” (Interview with Jim Aikin, *Contemporary Keyboard*, June, 1980). Evans had explored displacement of motives quite a bit, using it in his solos and in performances of songs written by others such as “I Believe in You” (Empathy, 1962), and in his own “Displacement” (1956). So ten years prior to the Town Hall concert, Evans already had remarkable ability in terms of rhythmic variation.

“One for Helen” would not be played much by the trio, and would be abandoned in later years. But another original composition, “Song for Helen” was dedicated to Helen Keane in 1978.

Who Can I Turn To (When Nobody Needs Me)

This 1964 hit for Tony Bennett was recorded by Evans for the album *Trio '65* in February of the same year. It is a thirty-two bar song in ABAC form, divided into four phrases of eight bars each.

In spite of a lack of originality in the harmony, with its II, V, I, I, II, III, IV and a detour in the subdominant key, one can understand why Evans liked the song. Like many of his own melodies, this one is based on a short figure, repeated and transposed with variations, falling systematically on the fourth beat of the measure before the primary beat (a placing which gives more strength to the musical phrase). An example of Evans using this device himself can be found in his later composition "Letter to Evan." "Who Can I Turn To" is the kind of melody Evans could have written.

He also had a fondness for this kind of structure, which offered melodic and harmonic possibilities for creative improvisation. Like all great jazz artists, his genius lay in his ability to transfigure a rather sentimental theme, avoiding too much sweetness and bombastic lyricism. He was always aware of this danger, his modesty and musical intelligence preventing him from falling into this trap. One remarkable thing about his playing in general is the absence of any decorative elements, arpeggios, and runs up and down the keyboard.

The way the song is treated at Town Hall is exemplary, typical of Evans' arrangements for his trio:

- A short introduction by solo piano (a dominant 7th chord).
- Statement of the theme by piano with arco bass, rubato. As he is not tied to a steady tempo, Evans had total freedom of expression, and can play full piano voicings and bass lines, and has greater freedom with his left hand.
- Second statement of the theme is in tempo with bass and drums. Evans' playing is more rhythmic, with a stronger jazz feeling. The left hand plays rootless voicings, as the root is often covered by the string bass.
- Solos—at Town Hall, as in all later performances of this song, the order was always a bass solo, then piano.
- Restatement of the melody with the trio.
- Coda.

A few remarks about this arrangement:

Section A: The first four measures of every A section are played over a dominant bass pedal to contrast with the ascending chord progression that follows (I, II, III, IV). These chords are enriched with voice movements—such counter melodies are a strong point in Evans' playing.

E♭maj7 Fm7 Gm7 A♭maj7
 / / / / | / / / / |

becomes

E♭+5 E♭6 Fm+5 Fm6 E♭/G G° A♭6 A♭maj7
 / / / / | / / / / |

In *Trio '65*, the voice movement was different:

E♭ E♭+5 Fm7 Fm+5 Gm7 A♭maj7 A♭+5
 / / / / | / / / / |

Section B: Re-harmonized with melodic changes (Evans often reshaped melodic lines of pop songs and standards).

Original chords:

A♭maj7 Fm7 D7 Gm7 Cm7 A♭maj7 Dm7(b5) Gm7 C7 Fm7 B♭7
 / / / / | / / / / | / / / / | / / / / | / / / / | / / / / | / / / / | / / / / | / / / / |

Evans' chords:

A♭maj7 G+7(#9) Cm9 Fm7 F#° Gm7 C7 Fm7 A♭m7 Bm7 E7
 / / / / | / / / / | / / / / | / / / / | / / / / | / / / / | / / / / | / / / / |

Notice the chord substitution in measures 15 and 16 (the turnaround); it is based on a diminished relationship. Evans had previously used it in 1962 to re-harmonize measures 5 and 6 of "I Hear a Rhapsody" (*Undercurrent* with Jim Hall).

The second A section is re-harmonized to avoid a repetition of the first eight measures—this re-harmonization is different from the *Trio '65* version—the diminished chord in measure 17 and the dominant seventh chord in measure 19 played over a B♭ pedal point add tension to the second statement of the first motive.

As in Section B of "Turn Out the Stars," the right hand plays chords over the left hand eighth note lines developed based on the pedal tone.

As in "One for Helen," the chords sometimes fall on the fourth beat of the measure, anticipating the primary beat (measure 30 of the head, measures 26 and 31 of the 2nd theme; in the solo, measure 298 of chorus one, measures 17–19 of chorus two).

All these components, handled with a great sense of form, contribute to a very personal and coherent rendering of this show tune, as if Evans were playing his own composition.

"Who Can I Turn To" remained in the trio repertoire.