Extended Essay
Subject: Music

Monk's moods: a comparison of Thelonious Monk's solos with respect to ensemble size

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Abstract (294 words)

Thelonious Monk's musical contribution is widely accepted to have been among the most important to jazz and to twentieth century music. Because of its significance, Monk's music continues to be relevant and deserving of critical analysis and discussion. Certain research papers have continued the academic conversation on Monk's music by analyzing very specific parts of his recorded performances, and then using that analysis to suggest broader ideas about his music. This essay is one of those papers because it analyzes how his soloing changed or stayed consistent with respect to ensemble size, and then uses that analysis to suggest broader ideas about how he was influenced by preceding jazz music. This essay's specific research question is the following: 'Monk's moods: a comparison of Thelonious Monk's solos with respect to ensemble size'.

Fourteen of Monk's solos from 1959 – five unaccompanied solos, five solos in a quintet and four solos in a tentet – make up the primary sources that this essay will analyze. These fourteen solos were listened to several times, and their most striking features were chosen as the criteria on which to compare the solos with respect to ensemble size. There are three rhythmic criteria, two melodic criteria, and four harmonic criteria. Each of the solos is analyzed in light of these criteria through repeated listening and transcription by the author. The results of the analysis of each solo are compared with respect to ensemble size. This research was supplemented through the consultation of existing academic literature on Monk's music and interviews with professional jazz musicians.

Research revealed that Monk's solos were fundamentally consistent with respect to ensemble size in terms of some of the criteria of comparison, while being fundamentally different with respect to ensemble size in terms of other criteria of comparison.

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Introduction

Research Question – Monk's moods: a comparison of Thelonious Monk's solos with respect to ensemble size

Thelonious Monk is widely acknowledged as one of the most important figures in jazz and in twentieth century music. Joe Goldberg, an important jazz journalist, called him "one of the greats"[1] and "a major contributor of the stature of Ellington or Parker".[2] Andre Hodeir, a highly regarded jazz musicologist, wrote that Monk is "a true artist"[3] and that he will be remembered as "THE Jazzman of our time".[4] Robin D. G. Kelley, a leading African American historian, believes that "Monk achieved a startingly original sound that even his most devoted followers have been unable to successfully imitate"[5] and that "Monk is widely accepted as a genuine master of American music".[6] Because of its evident importance, Monk's musical contribution continues to be relevant and deserving of critical analysis and discussion.

Certain research papers have continued the academic conversation on Monk's music by analyzing very specific parts of it, and then using that analysis to suggest broader ideas about his music. Clifford Korman's "Criss Cross: motivic construction in composition and improvisation"[7] is a good example of this kind of paper; in it, he looks closely at how Monk developed motifs in three recordings of his composition "Criss Cross". Korman draws on this analysis to ultimately suggest larger ideas about Monk's sense of structure, and how Monk envisioned a complete performance.

Like Korman's paper, this essay seeks to continue the academic dialogue on Monk by closely analyzing how his solos changed or stayed consistent with respect to changes in ensemble size, and then using that analysis to suggest broader ideas about his music, including how he was influenced by preceding jazz musicians. This essay's specific research question is the following: 'Monk's moods: a comparison of Thelonious Monk's solos with respect to ensemble size'. While a specific academic paper comparing Monk's solos with respect to ensemble size has not been written yet, the greater musical community seems to have general opinions about Monk that are relevant to this essay; these will be discussed in the essay's conclusion.

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[1] Goldberg, Joe. *Jazz Masters of the 50s*. New York: Da Capo, 1965. (44.)
[2] Goldberg (25.)
[3] Originally from Hodeir, Andre. "Monk or the Misunderstanding." *Jazz Hot*. Trans. Noel Burch. 1959: Nos. 142 and 143. Found in van der Bliek, Rob., ed. *The Thelonious Monk Reader*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001. (121.) (this page number refers to the page in the *Reader*, and not the page in *Jazz Hot*)
[4] Hodeir (133.) (this page number refers to the page in the *Reader*, and not the page in *Jazz Hot*)
[5] Kelley, Robin D. G. *Who Is Thelonious Sphere Monk?* Last updated 2009. Accessed Nov. 12 2009. <http://monkbook.com/monkbio/>
[6] Kelley.
[7] Korman, Clifford. "Criss Cross: motivic construction in composition and improvisation." *Annual review of jazz studies*. Vol. 10 (1999): 103-126.

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This essay's source material consists of five of Monk's unaccompanied solos, five of his solos in a quintet and four of his solos in a tentet.[8] These fourteen solos were selected for two main reasons. First, the recordings offer a snapshot of Monk within a short time frame; all of the solos are from 1959. Second, simply for consistency's sake: all of the solos are on pieces that were composed by Monk, and all are from the originally released recordings.

The essay's methodology was in four steps. First, the solos were listened to several times, and their most striking musical features identified as criteria for more detailed comparison. Each solo was then analyzed – through repeated listening and personal transcription – based on these criteria. The third step was to compare the results of the fourteen analyses with respect to ensemble size. Finally, the results of this research were supplemented through the consultation of current academic literature on Monk and interviews with professional jazz musicians.

As noted above, this essay chose the most characteristic musical devices of the fourteen solos as the nine criteria on which to compare the solos. The rhythmic criteria were use of space, use of alternate time signature configurations, and use of stride piano devices. The melodic criteria were use of references to the original melody, and use of motivic repetition. The harmonic criteria were use of chordal notes, use of blue notes, use of the whole tone scale, and use of chord extensions and alterations.

Two conclusions are ultimately made. First, Monk's fourteen solos are fundamentally consistent in terms of six of the criteria based on which this essay compared the solos: alternate time signature configurations, motivic repetition, ratio of chordal notes to non-chordal notes, blue notes, the whole tone scale, and chord extensions and alterations. Second, Monk's fourteen solos are fundamentally different, with respect to ensemble size, in terms of three of the criteria based on which this essay compared the solos: space, stride piano devices and references to the original melody.

1. Rhythm

Rhythm is central to Monk's soloing style in all contexts; as the jazz critic Martin Williams stated, the "core of Monk's style is a rhythmic virtuosity".[9] In this section, Monk's use of space, of alternate time signature configurations, and of stride piano devices in the fourteen solos is examined, and then compared with respect to ensemble size.

[8] A detailed list of all of these recordings can be found in the appendix.
[9] Originally from Williams, Martin. "Thelonious Monk: Modern Jazz in Search of Maturity." *The Jazz Tradition*. New York: Oxford, 1970. Found in van der Bliek, Rob., ed. *The Thelonious Monk Reader*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001. (216.) (this page number refers to the page in the *Reader*, and not the page in *The Jazz Tradition*)

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a. Space

When noted jazz musician and scholar Wynton Marsalis listed Monk's most eccentric activities, "employing long periods of silence"[10] – or using space – was among the top three; space is clearly one of the more striking features of Monk's solos. In order to quantitatively measure space in the fourteen solos, space has been defined as an instance where Monk does not strike a note for at least two beats in his melodic line. It is important to note that instances where Monk strikes notes in the accompanying line, but not in the melodic line, and instances where Monk holds melodic notes without striking new ones both count as space. Using this definition, every case of space in the fourteen solos was found through repeated listening, and then recorded in the following table.

Table 1 – Monk's Use of Space (measured by author)

Context	Piece	Number of Spaces (± 2)	Average Space Length (in number of beats)
Solo	*Blue Monk*	15	2.5
	Ruby, My Dear	2	2
	Round Lights	6	2
	Bluehawk	3	2-2.5
	Reflections	5	3
Quintet	*Jackie-Ing*	31	3
	Straight, No Chaser	39	4
	Played Twice (Take 3)	39	3.5
	I Mean You	36	3.5
	Ask Me Now	4	2.5
Tentet	*Friday the 13th*	19	2.5
	Monk's Mood	2	2
	Little Rootie Tootie	27	2.5
	Off Minor	34	3.5

An evaluation of this table reveals two trends. The first trend that emerges is that Monk uses space far less frequently in his unaccompanied solos than in his ensemble solos, and slightly more frequently in his quintet solos than in his tentet solos. There are two exceptions to this trend. The first exception occurs in Monk's solo on *Blue Monk*. It seems that the *Blue Monk* solo is an exception because of its length; Monk uses space infrequently in the solo, however the solo is so long that by the end, he has used it fifteen times. The second exception to this statement occurs in Monk's solos on the two ensemble ballads, *Ask Me Now* and *Monk's Mood*, where Monk uses space very infrequently. Repeated listening suggests that the reason for Monk's infrequent use of space in these two solos is related to tempo – which is abnormally low because they are both ballads –, and not ensemble size, thus these solos do not appear to contradict the trend.

[10] Marsalis, Wynton. *Moving to Higher Ground.* New York: Random House, 2008. (143.)

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The second trend that emerges from this table is that Monk uses space for relatively long periods in his solos with the quintet, for relatively medium periods in his solos with the tentet, and for relatively short periods in his unaccompanied solos. This can be seen through the comparison of the the average space length in Monk's quintet solos – 3.3 beats –, his tentet solos – 2.6 beats –, and his unaccompanied solos – 2.4 beats. The exception to this trend occurs in Monk's solos on the ensemble ballads, as it did for the last trend. In these ballad solos, the average space length is shorter than the average space length for the rest of the ensemble solos. Again, this seems to be related to tempo and not ensemble size, therefore it does not contradict the trend.

Ultimately, it seems that Monk is making a fundamental change in the way he uses space in his solos in the three different contexts because he uses space with different frequency and for different periods of time in each context.

b. Alternate Time Signature Configurations

Alternate time signature configurations are among the most distinctive elements of Monk's soloing style, and he uses them in fundamentally the same way in all contexts. To examine his use of alternate time signature configurations, this essay first displays and analyzes an appropriate musical extract from one solo in each context, then compares each context based on the results of the analyses and on trends noticed from repeated listening.

When analyzing Monk's use of alternate time signature configurations, it is important to note that, regardless of whether Monk consciously chose to use these configurations or simply chose to accent his melodies in unusual places instead, his solos are analyzed in terms of alternate time signature configurations because that is an effective way of demonstrating their rhythmic eccentricity.

The musical extracts show only the melodic line, rather than showing both the melodic line and the accompaniment line, because that is where the alternate time signature configurations are most evident. It should also be noted that all bar numbers refer to the bar numbers of the original 4/4 configuration of the solo.

The first example of alternate time signature configurations is from an unaccompanied solo. From bar 2 until bar 7 of the third chorus of his solo on the unaccompanied *Round Lights*, Monk uses alternate time signature configurations. In bars 2, 5, 6, and 7, he breaks down the 4/4 bars into two 3/8 bars followed by a 2/8 bar. He doubles this configuration in bars 3-4, breaking down the two 4/4 bars into four bars of 3/8 and two bars of 2/8.

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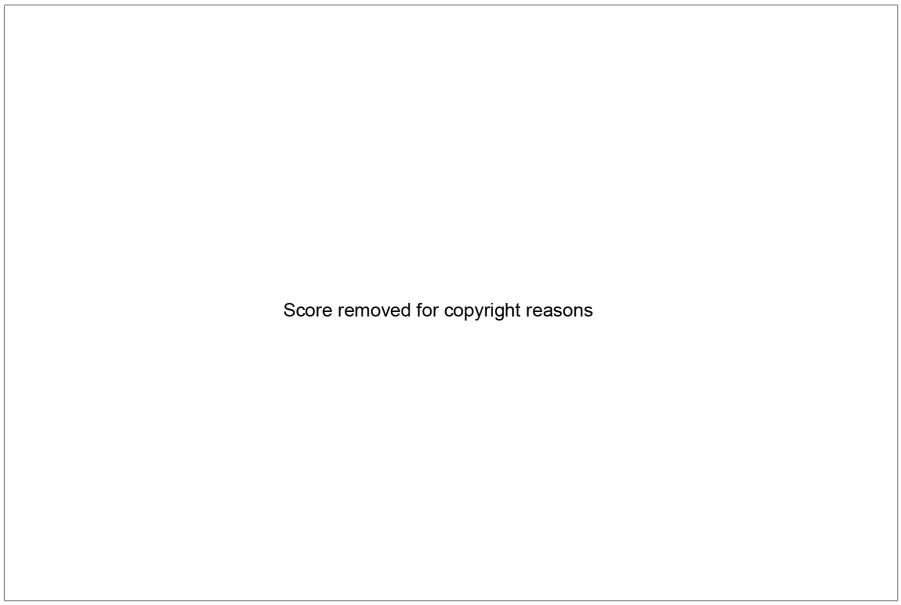
Figure 1a – 4/4 configuration of the first seven bars of the third chorus of Monk's solo on the unaccompanied *Round Lights* (transcribed by author)



The next example comes from a quintet solo. From bar 8 until bar10 of the second chorus of his solo on the quintet's *Straight, No Chaser*, Monk uses an alternate time signature configuration by repeating a motif. Instead of using regular 4/4, he plays a 2/4 bar followed by two 7/4 bars. Notice that this alternate configuration and the original 4/4 configuration both end on beat 1 of bar 12, so that both give a sense of rhythmic resolution.

Figure 2a – 4/4 configuration of bars 8-10 of the second chorus of Monk's solo on the quintet's *Straight, No Chaser* (transcribed by author)

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Figure 2b – Alternate time signature configuration of bars 8-10 of the second chorus of Monk's solo on the quintet's *Straight, No Chaser* (transcribed by author)

The last example comes from a tentet solo. In the last A section of the first chorus of his solo on the tentet's *Off Minor*, Monk uses an alternate time signature configuration. From bar 2 until bar 5, Monk plays two bars of 7/4 followed by a bar of 2/4. At the beginning of bar 6, he plays a bar of 3/4, then six bars of 3/8. He establishes the six bars of 3/8 by repeating an ascending whole tone scale figure. The 7/4 bars from bar 2 until bar 5 have been broken down in Figure 3c.

Figure 3a – 4/4 configuration of the last A section of the first chorus of Monk's solo on the tentet's *Off Minor* (transcribed by author)

Figure 3b – Alternate time signature configuration of the last A section of the first chorus of Monk's solo on the tentet's *Off Minor* (transcribed by author)

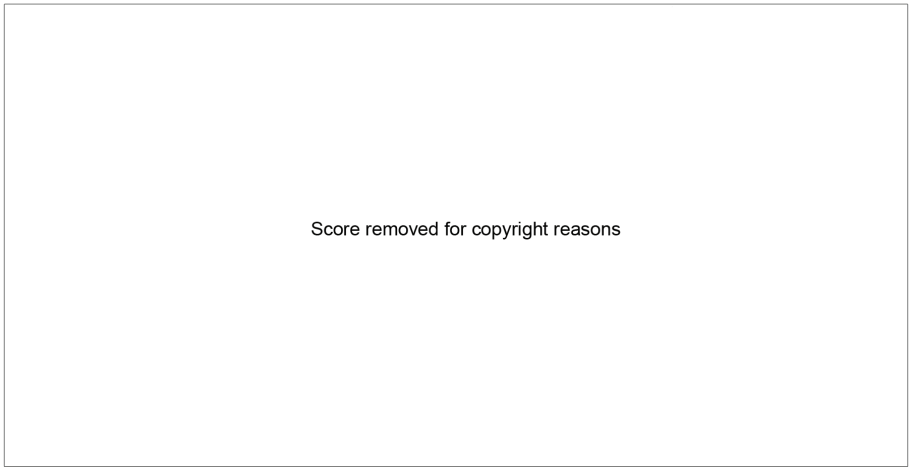

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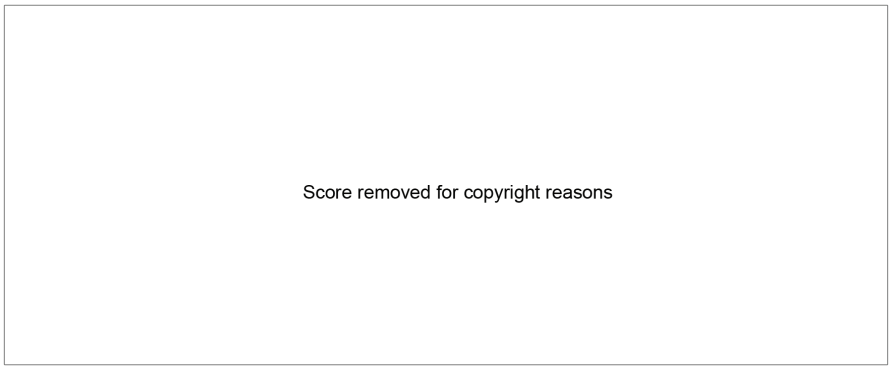
Figure 3c – Alternate time signature configuration of the last A section of the first chorus of Monk's solo on the tentet's *Off Minor* (with the 7/4 bars broken down) (transcribed by author)



These extracts show how Monk used alternate time signature configurations. None of the configurations are exactly identical, and this reflects the fact that Monk does not usually use the same configurations in his solos. The only configuration that he uses in several different solos is the 3/8, 3/8, 2/8 alternate configuration of a 4/4 bar. Nevertheless, Monk's use of alternate time signature configurations is consistent throughout his solos in the three contexts in that all fourteen solos are relatively equal in terms of their rhythmic eccentricity.

This, along with the fact that Monk uses alternate time signature configurations with relatively the same frequency in all three contexts, leads to the conclusion that Monk uses alternate time signature configurations in fundamentally the same way regardless of ensemble size.

c. Stride Piano Devices

As an adolescent and then as a young man living in the first half of the twentieth century in New York, the piano style that Monk would have heard most was the Harlem stride style. Furthermore, his most important idols were its most important practitioners; James P. Johnson, Fats Waller, and Duke Ellington.[11] In the fourteen solos, Monk only ever uses stride piano devices in the unaccompanied solos. Of these devices, he uses left hand stride bass patterns the most prominently. The fact that he makes evident use of these devices in the unaccompanied solos and the fact that he does not use them in his solos in either ensemble leads to the conclusion that, in terms of stride piano devices, Monk's unaccompanied solos are fundamentally different from his ensemble ones.

[11] Gourse, Leslie. *Straight, No Chaser: The Life and Genius of Thelonious Monk*. New York: Schirmer Books, 1997. (13.)

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2. Melody

Monk's sense of melody, including his search for fresh source material for his melodies, is a vital aspect of his distinctive soloing style. In this section, Monk's use of references to the original melody and of motivic repetition in the fourteen solos is examined and compared with respect to ensemble size.

a. References to the Original Melody

References to the original melody are among the most idiosyncratic devices of Monk's soloing style. The New Yorker writer Whitney Balliett explained the close relationship between Monk's compositions and solos perfectly, stating that "his improvisations were molten Monk compositions, and his compositions were frozen Monk improvisations".[12] The following table details Monk's use of references to the original melody in each of the fourteen solos.

Table 2 – Monk's Use of References to the Original Melody

Context	Piece (Ballads = *)	Use of References to the Original Melody
Solo	*Blue Monk*	none
	*Ruby, My Dear**	Monk's solo is an adornment of the melody.
	Round Lights	This piece is a special case because it is not clear what the melody actually is. The first and last chorus are different, which is unusual; Monk always plays the original melody in his first and last choruses. This suggests that *Round Lights* does not actually have a melody. It is not possible to test this by looking at other versions of *Round Lights*, because this is the only recorded version.
	Bluehawk	none
	*Reflections**	Monk's solo is an adornment of the melody.
Quintet	*Jackie-Ing*	Monk plays the melody closely during the last three quarters (24 bars) of his solo.
	Straight, No Chaser	• In the first chorus and the second last chorus, Monk repeats the resolution that is central to the original melody. • In the last chorus of his solo, Monk plays the melody closely.

[12] Originally from Balliett, Whitney. "The Talk of the Town." *The New Yorker*. 1 March 1982: 37-38. Found in van der Bliek, Rob., ed. *The Thelonious Monk Reader*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001. (228.) (This page number refers to the page in the *Reader*, and not the page in *The New Yorker*)

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	Played Twice (Take 3)	Monk's solo is an adornment of the melody.
	I Mean You	Monk plays the melody closely in the last A sections of each chorus.
	*Ask Me Now**	Monk's solo is an adornment of the melody.
Tentet	*Friday the 13th*	• Monk only *directly* refers to the melody once (the fifth bar). • He indirectly refers to it for most of his solo by playing the triplet figure that is central to the melody.
	*Monk's Mood**	Monk's solo is an adornment of the melody.
	Little Rootie Tootie	• Monk plays the melody closely for the last 12 bars of each chorus. • He indirectly refers to it for most of his solo by playing the triplet figure that is central to the melody.
	Off Minor	Monk plays the melody closely in both B sections and in the last A section of his solo.

A few trends regarding Monk's use of references to the original melody emerge from this table. First, Monk never refers to the original melody in his unaccompanied solos. Second, Monk usually refers to the melody – directly or indirectly – in his ensemble solos, and often ends those solos by quoting the original melody.

The exception to both of these trends occurs in Monk's solos on ballads. In all of his ballad solos, regardless of ensemble size, Monk does little else besides playing the original melody and adorning it with notes that fit with the harmonic progression. The melodic line of the first chorus of Monk's unaccompanied solo on *Ruby, My Dear*, displayed in Figure 4, contains only four notes that are neither from the original melody nor from the part of the chords in the harmonic progression. This solo is a good example of how Monk creates solos on ballads by adorning the original melody.

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Figure 4 – First chorus of Monk's solo on the unaccompanied *Ruby, My Dear* (transcribed by author) (melody notes in green, chordal notes in red)

Ultimately, it seems that Monk used references to the original melody in fundamentally different ways in his unaccompanied solos and in his ensemble solos. In the former, he would never refer to the original melody, whereas in the latter, he would do so often.

b. Motivic Repetition

One of Monk's most characteristic melodic devices is the repetition of short, memorable melodic phrases, or motifs. This essay has only examined cases of motivic repetition that contain at least three repetitions of the initial motif, and in which each repetition is within a bar of the last. These specifications were chosen because examination of anything less precisely defined would simply have provided too much data for the scope of this essay. The following table displays Monk's use of motivic repetition in the fourteen solos.

Table 3 – Monk's Use of Motivic Repetition

Context	Piece (ballads = *)	Total Use of Motivic Repetition
Solo	*Blue Monk*	• bars 3-10 (third chorus): one bar motif
	*Ruby, My Dear**	The only motifs used are drawn from the original melody, which is the basis for the whole solo.
	Round Lights	none
	Bluehawk	• bars 1-7 (first chorus) • bars 5-8 (third chorus)
	*Reflections**	The only motifs used are drawn from the original melody, which is the basis for the whole solo.
Quintet	*Jackie-Ing*	• first eight bars of the first chorus: two bar motif taken from the end of trumpeter Thad Jones' solo

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	Straight, No Chaser	• three cases of motivic repetition as the basis of an entire eight bar section • one case of motivic repetition as the basis of an entire sixteen bar section
	Played Twice (Take 3)	The only motifs used are drawn from the original melody, which is the basis for the whole solo.
	I Mean You	• first two A sections of the second chorus • B section of the second chorus
	*Ask Me Now**	The only motifs used are drawn from the original melody, which is the basis for the whole solo.
Tentet	*Friday the 13th*	• second and third choruses: octave motif • seventh and eighth choruses: descending motif • ninth, tenth and eleventh choruses: chordal motif
	*Monk's Mood**	The only motifs used are drawn from the original melody, which is the basis for the whole solo.
	Little Rootie Tootie	• first A section of second chorus: trill motif
	Off Minor	• first A section of first chorus • second A section of first chorus

This table suggests that Monk uses motivic repetition regularly in his solos in all contexts. Sometimes, he invents the motives, and other times, he draws them from the original melody; he often uses the latter technique on ballads, as the previous section showed. Ultimately, Monk uses motivic repetition in fundamentally the same way in his solos regardless of ensemble size.

3. Harmony

Monk's sense of harmony was a very original component of his solo style; in *A New History of Jazz*, Alyn Shipton called Monk "the most innovative pianist"[13] in terms of advancing bebop harmony. Monk's sense of harmony is characterized by several devices; the ones that this essay will examine, in the fourteen solos, are use of chordal notes, use of blue notes, use of the whole tone scale, and use of chord extensions and alterations. While analyzing Monk's use of these devices, it is important to note that while he may not have actually chosen to play these notes because of their specific harmonic functions – but rather because they sounded appropriate to him –, they are nevertheless analyzed in terms of these harmonic functions.

Monk's sense of harmony across the fourteen solos with respect to ensemble size will be analyzed in the following way: portions of solos in the three contexts that are representative of Monk's overall harmonic style have been chosen, transcribed,

[13] Shipton, Alyn. *A New History of Jazz*. 2nd ed. New York: Continuum, 2007. (353-354.)

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displayed, and analyzed based on the four harmonic criteria. The results of the analysis of each solo will be compared with respect to ensemble size.

Lastly, before beginning analysis, the term 'blue note' should be defined. In this essay, the term will be used to designate any note that approaches another chromatically, either ascending or descending. Also, the author of this essay must feel that this note was, in some way, related to the vernacular of the blues, a music that Monk would have been exposed to.

Figure 5 – First chorus of Monk's solo on the unaccompanied *Blue Monk* (transcribed by author)

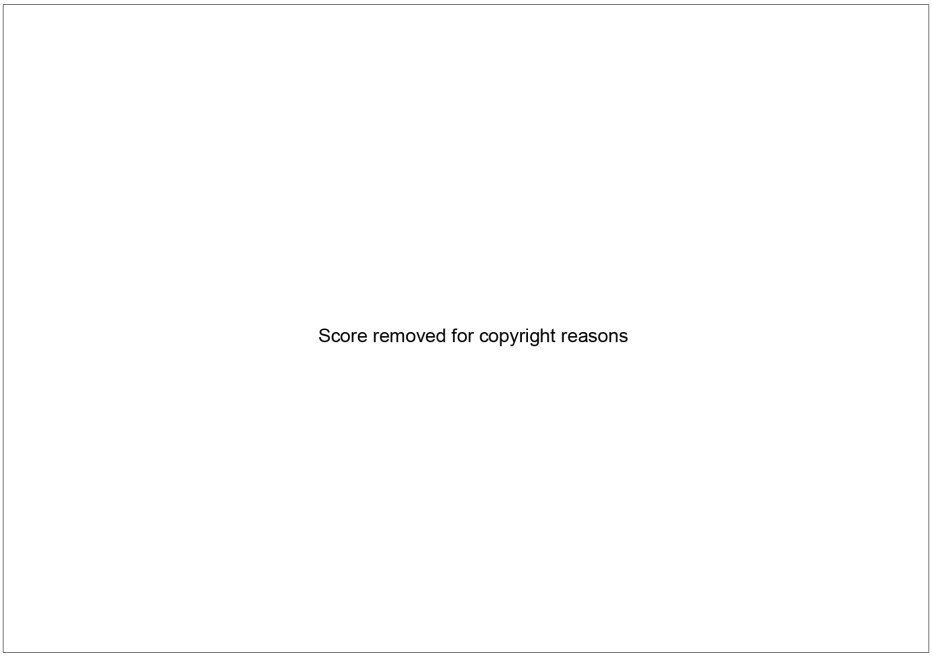

Table 4 – Analysis of the First Chorus of Monk's Solo on the Unaccompanied *Blue Monk*	
Type of Non-Chord Tone	**Use**
Ratio of Chordal Notes to Non-Chordal Notes	approximately 3:1
Blue Notes	• Db (beat 3, bar 3) (ascending to D natural) • Db (beat 3, bar 3) (descending to C)

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	• Db (beat 2, bar 7) (ascending to D natural) • Db (beat 4, bar 7) (ascending to D natural) • F# (beat 1, bar 9) (ascending to G) • F# (beat 3, bar 9) (ascending to G)
Whole Tone Scale	• Beat 1, bar 5 until beat 2, bar 6 • Bar 10
Chord Extensions and Alterations	• C (beat 3, bar 2) (thirteenth) • C (beat 2, bar 4) (ninth) • G (beat 3, bar 4) (thirteenth)

In the first chorus of his solo on the unaccompanied *Blue Monk*, Monk uses chordal notes much more than non-chordal notes; the former make up about 75% of his solo. Monk also uses blue notes frequently; in particular, he uses Db to approach D natural three times. Monk uses the whole tone scale twice; while the first instance, at during bars 5 and 6, is not particularly evident, the second case, during bar 10, is quite prominent. Monk also uses chord extensions on three occasions within the first four bars, and then not at all for the rest of this chorus. This concentrated use in the first four bars seems to be characteristic of the way that Monk uses chord extensions and alterations: not very often overall, however in a very intense way within certain short selections of the solo.

Figure 6 – Second A section of first chorus of Monk's solo on the quintet's *I Mean You* (transcribed by author)

Table 5 – Analysis of a Part of Monk's Solo on the Quintet's *I Mean You*	
Harmonic Device	**Use**
Ratio of Chordal Notes to Non-Chordal Notes	approximately 2:1
Blue Notes	none
Whole Tone Scale	• Bars 11-12
Chord Extensions and Alterations	• A (beat 4, bar 13) (ninth)

In this solo, Monk uses chordal notes frequently, albeit not as frequently as in the extract from *Blue Monk*. Nevertheless, chordal notes still make up the majority of his

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solo. Oddly, Monk does not use any blue notes in this extract. Monk uses the whole tone scale quite openly, during bars 11 and 12. In this extract, Monk only uses one chord extension, a ninth on the Gmin7 chord at bar 13.

Figure 7 – First chorus of Monk's solo on the quintet's *Straight, No Chaser* (transcribed by author)

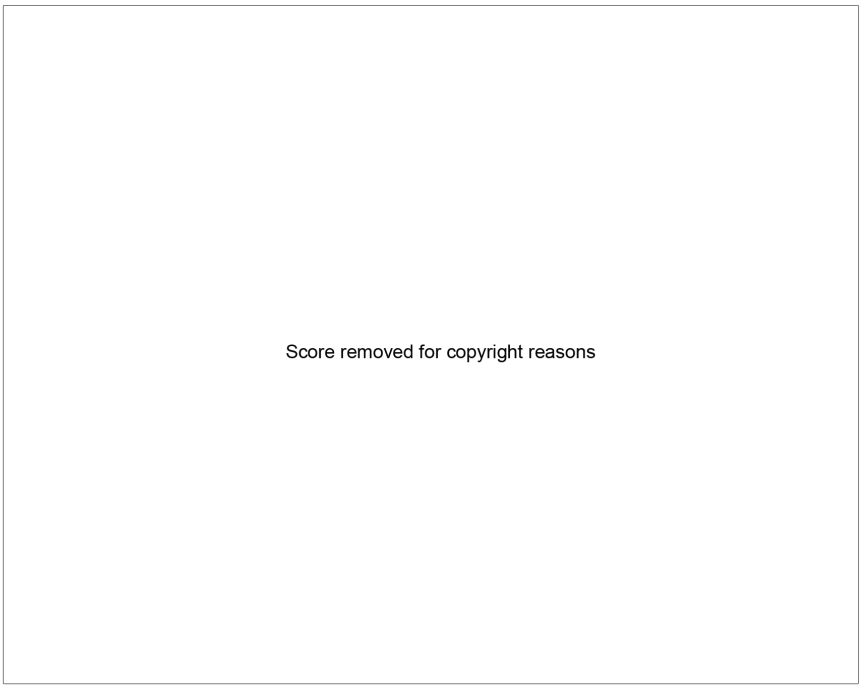

Table 6 – Analysis of a Part of Monk's Solo on the Quintet's *Straight, No Chaser*	
Harmonic Device	**Use**
Ratio of Chordal Notes to Non-Chordal Notes	approximately 5:3
Blue Notes	• A, Db (pickup measure) (ascending to Bb, D natural) • C (beat 4, bar 1) (ascending to Db) • A, Db (beat 4, bar 2) (ascending to Bb, D natural) • G (beat 4, bar 3) (ascending to Ab) • C (beat 4, bar 4) (ascending to Db) • Ab (beat 4, bar 5) (ascending to A natural) • A, Db (beat 4, bar 6) (ascending to Bb, D natural)

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	• G (beat 4, bar 7) (ascending to Ab and descending to F) • E natural (beat 4, bar 9) (descending to Eb) • Db (beat 1, bar 11) (ascending to D natural) • A, Db (beat 4, bar 11) (ascending to Bb, D natural)
Whole Tone Scale	none
Chord Extensions and Alterations	• A natural (beat 4, bar 5) (sharp eleventh)

In this extract, the ratio of chordal notes to non-chordal ones is lower than usual. Monk uses blue notes very frequently, especially the combination of A and Db ascending to Bb and D natural. Monk does not use the whole tone scale very much, and he only uses one chord alteration; a sharp eleventh over Eb7 in bar 5.

Figure 8 – first four choruses of Monk's solo on the tentet's *Friday the 13th* (transcribed by author)

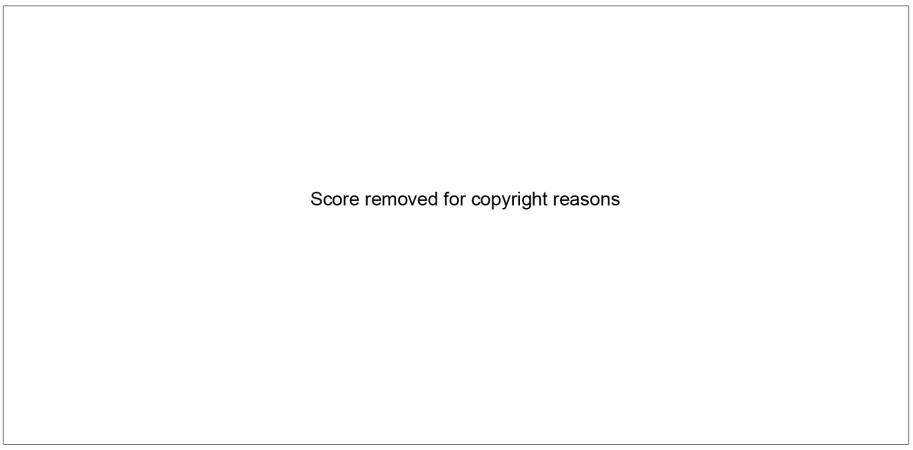

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Table 7 – Analysis of a Part of Monk's Solo on the Tentet's *Friday the 13th*	
Harmonic Device	**Use in Solo**
Ratio of Chordal Notes to Non-Chordal Notes	approximately 5:3
Blue Notes	• Bb (beat 4, bar 2) (ascending to B natural) • Bb (beat 4, bar 6) (ascending to B natural) • Bb (beat 4, bar 8) (ascending to B natural) • Bb (beat 4, bar 10) (ascending to B natural)
Whole Tone Scale	• Beat 3, bar 15 until beat 4, bar 16
Chord Extensions and Alterations	• F natural (beat 1, bar 6) (ninth) • Eb (beat 4, bar 14) (flat ninth) • Eb (beat 1, bar 13) (flat ninth of a suspended D7 chord)

In this extract, the ratio of chordal notes to non-chordal ones is lower than usual. Monk uses the Bb blue note, always ascending to B natural, fairly frequently. Monk uses the whole tone scale at the very end, and does so quite overtly. Monk uses chord extensions and alterations fairly frequently, as well.

The harmony within these extracts is representative of Monk's harmonic style in his solos all contexts. While neither the ratio of chordal notes to non-chordal notes, nor the number or type of blue notes, nor the number of whole tone scale references, nor the number or type of chord extensions and alterations is perfectly and exactly consistent between extracts, they all suggest largely the same thing: most of the notes in Monk's solos are chordal, and he often uses blue notes, the whole tone scale and chord extensions and alterations. Repeated listening suggests that these statements apply to his soloing in all contexts. This means that, harmonically, Monk's solos were fundamentally consistent.

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Conclusion

Fourteen of Monk's solos were compared with respect to ensemble size with the following nine criteria in mind: space; alternate time signature configurations; stride piano devices; references to the original melody; motivic repetition; ratio of chordal notes to non-chordal notes; blue notes; the whole tone scale; and chord extensions and alterations. Having done this, two conclusions are made.

The first conclusion is that Monk's fourteen solos are fundamentally consistent with respect to ensemble size in terms of six of the criteria that this essay looked at: alternate time signature configurations; motivic repetition; ratio of chordal notes to non-chordal notes; blue notes; the whole tone scale; and chord extensions and alterations.

The second conclusion is that the fourteen solos are fundamentally different with respect to ensemble size in terms of three of the criteria that this essay looked at: space; stride piano devices; and references to the original melody. This second conclusion is important for two reasons.

First, the second conclusion is important because it shows that Monk was not a one-sided musician who approached all music in the same manner. Instead, he was a very sophisticated musician who changed his playing in different contexts – whether consciously or subconsciously –, and stuck by those changes. This is a very admirable quality: learning to be sensitive to one's immediate musical environment is evidence of musical genius. While the jazz community seems to largely accept Monk's brilliance now, this essay, along with others, helps to break any remaining doubts.

Second, the second conclusion is important because it can be interpreted as evidence of the argument that Monk did not create his musical style completely independently, but that, to a certain extent, his style is an extension of the music of earlier jazz musicians. Advocates of this argument would read this essay, and then make the case that if Monk's style had no antecedents, he would not follow certain major stylistic conventions that other jazz pianists follow. Examples of stylistic conventions that Monk and other jazz pianists follow that this essay found include avoiding space in unaccompanied solos and avoiding stride piano devices in ensemble solos. Those in favour of Monk-as-someone-who-was-influenced would state that, because he follows these conventions, he must have been influenced by earlier jazz pianists.

The degree of earlier musicians' influence on Monk is important because it is a source of constant debate within the jazz community. Some, like Charlie Rouse, a saxophonist who played with Monk, who states that Monk "never copied anyone"[14] and

[14] Sales, Grover. "I Wanted to Make It Better: Monk at the Blackhawk." *Jazz: A Quarterly of American Music*. Vol. 5 (31-41.) Found in van der Bliek, Rob., ed. *The Thelonious Monk Reader*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001. (105.) (This page number refers to the page in the *Reader*, and not the page in *Jazz: A Quarterly*)

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that Monk "always played just like himself"[15] and Andre Hodeir who states that Monk "when he looks back, does not see his fellow travelers"[16], believe that Monk's style was completely self-made and that any influence he absorbed, if any, was extremely small. Others, like Joe Goldberg who talks about "Monk's antecedents"[17] and Robin D. G. Kelley who states that Monk's music was "deeply rooted in tradition"[18], believe that Monk's music was a continuation of the music of earlier jazz musicians. The only person who could have resolved this debate was Monk himself, but unfortunately, that never happened. Monk enjoyed contradicting himself; he told jazz producer Orrin Keepnews that he appreciated one of Orrin's articles that "presented Monk as being sort of the continuation of a stream that began with Jelly Roll Morton and continued through Duke Ellington, people who were bandleaders and composers and piano players"[19], but Monk also told critic Grover Sales that he "never had what you might call a major influence".[20] Ultimately, while this essay provides evidence in favour of one argument, the debate will continue, and force musicians to constantly re-evaluate their understanding of Monk's music.

This essay examined a very specific part of Monk's music and ultimately reached a conclusion that will further the discussion of Monk's music. Nevertheless, if this discussion wants to advance even more, then more transcription and analysis should be done, in order to draw more conclusions about Monk's work. Nick Fraser, a member of the jazz faculty at the University of Toronto, believed that many factors besides changes in ensemble size were involved in Monk's work; if Monk is to be better understood, then more of these factors could be isolated and examined in academic papers. Monk, too, acknowledged all of the variables within his music when he stated that "everything I play is different; different melody, different harmony, different structure".[21]

In looking closely at the relationship between changes in ensemble size and Monk's soloing style, this essay has provided a helpful addition to the continued discussion on Monk's music. It is hoped that this academic conversation will continue, and that musicians around the world will come to know, appreciate and critically consider Monk's innovative music.

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[15] Sales (105.) (This page number refers to the page in the *Reader*, and not the page in *Jazz: A Quarterly*)
[16] Hodeir (121.) (This page number refers to the page in the *Reader*, and not the page in *Jazz Hot*)
[17] Goldberg (27.)
[18] Kelley.
[19] Bret Primack, dir. "Saint Monk." *Concord Music Group*.
[20] Sales (104.) (This page number refers to the page in the *Reader*, and not the page in *Jazz: A Quarterly*)
[21] Goldberg (28-29.)

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Appendix – Table of Recordings

The 14 Solos					
Ensemble Size – *Album*	**Piece Title**	**Form**	**Average Tempo (value of a quarter note in beats per minute)**	**Beginning and Ending of Monk's Solo (time)**	**Length of Monk's Solo**
Unaccompanied - *Thelonious Alone in San Francisco*[22]	*Blue Monk*	12-bar blues	124	0:45-2:40	5 choruses
	Ruby, My Dear	32-bar AABA (ballad)	78	1:43-2:40	half of a chorus (first two A sections)
	Round Lights	12-bar blues	72	0:40-2:45	3 choruses
	Bluehawk	12-bar blues	92	0:56-2:30	3 choruses
	Reflections	32-bar AABA (ballad)	78	1:40-3:20	1 chorus
Quintet - *5 by Monk by 5*[23]	*Jackie-Ing*	16-bar melody	194	4:45-5:22	2 choruses
	Straight, No Chaser	12-bar blues	132	6:03-8:28	6 choruses
	Played Twice (Take 3)	16-bar melody	132	5:02-6:59	4 choruses
	I Mean You	32-bar AABA	142	6:53-8:44	2 choruses
	Ask Me Now	32-bar AABA (ballad)	62	6:19-8:33	1 chorus
Tentet - *The Thelonious Monk Orchestra at Town Hall*[24]	*Friday the 13th*	4-bar melody	140	3:05-4:25	11 choruses
	Monk's Mood	32-bar AABA (ballad)	64	6:04-8:07	1 chorus
	Little Rootie Tootie	32-bar AABA	172	4:45-6:15	2 choruses
	Off Minor	32-bar AABA	166	5:25-6:54	2 choruses

[22] [audio recording] Monk, Thelonious. Thelonious Alone in San Francisco. Riverside, 1959.
[23] [audio recording] Monk, Thelonious. 5 by Monk by 5. Riverside, 1959.
[24] [audio recording] Monk, Thelonious. The Thelonious Monk Orchestra at Town Hall. Riverside, 1959.

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STUDENT STATEMENT

I had a very positive experience with the extended essay; for me, it was exciting, enlightening and, at times, a bit stressful. I was able to write my essay on the music of Thelonious Monk, a topic that really interested me. I also had an amazing supervisor, Mr. Arnot-Johnston, who kept me on track and made sure that my essay had an argument and wasn't just an expression of my love for Monk's music.

I think that I can really see the benefits of the extended essay now that I am in university. Having had the opportunity to write a real paper in high school gave me a huge advantage in terms of being able to find information, being able to communicate and being able to work with evidence and arguments.

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EXAMINER'S COMMENTS

The research question is clearly stated and implies a sophisticated response for the essay to be successful. The premise is given in the introduction that the student “seeks to continue the academic dialogue on Monk”, outlining that this research is original.

The student has made his own excellent extensive transcriptions of the music on which to base his personal evidential reasoning, with a good range of secondary sources and an interview to back this up. The bibliography is extensive and imaginative.

The musical analysis is thorough and detailed, and the extensive and focused conclusion effectively sums up the findings of the investigation in a professional manner, while acknowledging that further research needs to be continued in this area “if Monk is to be better understood”.

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