

BILL EVANS

TIME REMEMBERED

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FOREWORD

In addition to being a great privilege, writing this foreword is also a great opportunity. It allows me to make some observations regarding a music that, while apparently neither revolutionary nor provocative, continues to cast an enormously seductive spell on pianists and non-pianists alike. As happens with any attempt to analyze the expression of great artists, it becomes clear that only certain elements of Evans' language are readily accessible, the remainder being a mysterious universe that defies definition and is not only inseparable from that language but appears to be its very life source.

That is why, when seated at the piano before transcriptions of his performances such as those offered in this collection, while the graphic representation of Evans' sounds on paper points the way to analytic/rational examination of his music, on the other hand we soon discover that what is visible on the score is only a part of that music. In other words, it is an invisible, ineffable "other" that gives these notes their extraordinarily rich and emotional narrative force. This duality is mainly associated with the harmony in these pieces – a topic that we could easily discuss *ad infinitum*. To help gain a better understanding of it we might turn to composer Ernst Toch's excellent "The Shaping Forces in Music", in which he writes that, "*while the notion "chord" carries much more the flavor of something solid, static, substantial, measurable; the "harmony" notion implies the aspect of the fluid, unsubstantial, immeasurable. We may say chord is to harmony as body is to soul; or harmony is the soul of the chord*". Toch's distinction between 'chord' and 'harmony' fits perfectly with our considerations on the rational and irrational in Evans' piano playing: the analyzable and "the other".

Beyond these observations, however, the question remains: how can anyone, accomplished musician or student, undertake to render justice to these pages?

One problematic but, nevertheless, intriguing solution is suggested by the great Chicago pianist Lennie Tristano (Bill Evans repeatedly indicated him as one of his most important influences) who, in the introduction to a collection of his best known pieces, writes: "*Ultimately, for a musically and emotionally valid performance of this music, the performer must play with something very close to my own playing feeling*". Advice that could appear extreme, and difficult to follow, but that could also apply to the music contained here. In essence, in addition to reading these notes so splendidly transcribed by Wetzel, it is necessary to try to "interpret" this music as if Evans himself were performing it. Bizarre, you say? Yes indeed but, after all, not so different to what an actor does with a character from Shakespeare or Ibsen: he or she must simply *become* that character.

Needless to say the best rewards are assured if these selections are not only read but listened to at the same time, thus allowing for a more insightful interpretative venture capable of leading well beyond that analytic/rational region, and of placing the exceptional beauty of the music here transcribed within reach of your own hands and hearts.

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