

# A Survey of Four Introductions by Chick Corea

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*Chick Corea's florid and adventurous piano introductions burst with rhythmic, melodic, and harmonic invention. Like Erroll Garner, Corea often constructs introductions that stand on their own as complete musical statements and draw from a unique relationship with the piano and its literature. From 1965 to 1971, Corea developed several approaches to introductions that allow for increasing levels of harmonic and formal complexity and greater control of timbre that he continued to use and expand on. All these developments are crucial to Corea's evolution as an improviser, pianist, and composer. This document will examine four introductions: "This Is New," recorded in 1965 for the album Tones for Joan's Bones; "Steps," recorded in 1968 for the album Now He Sings, Now He Sobs; "Nefertiti," recorded in 1970 for the album The Song of Singing; and "Trinkle Tinkle" recorded in 1971 for the album Piano Improvisations Vol. 2.*

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## INTRODUCTION

There has been extensive scholarship surrounding Corea's compositional and improvisational approaches but very little scholarship surrounding his approach to creating introductions. Corea's introductions are worthy of serious scholarly attention because they often illuminate different strategies to harmonic and melodic structures than he would use when performing with an ensemble and often foreshadow techniques that become part of his approach to group-based improvisation. The study of Corea's introductions can be seen as a window into the evolution of his musical thinking and are an important resource for any serious study of his work. This document will examine four introductions: "This Is New," recorded in 1965 for the album *Tones for Joan's Bones*; "Steps," recorded in 1968 for the album *Now He Sings, Now He Sobs*; "Nefertiti," recorded in 1970 for the album *The Song of Singing*; and "Trinkle Tinkle" recorded in 1971 for the album *Piano Improvisations Vol. 2*.

### "THIS IS NEW" INTRODUCTION

Corea's recording of Kurt Weill and Ira Gershwin's "This Is New" is one of the earliest recorded examples of a Corea introduction. He mostly draws the melodic material from the song's verse, demonstrating Corea's respect for the conventions of popular song interpretation, which often begin with a rubato verse. Corea retains the shape and intention of the melodic line in the verse's first phrase but alters the melody several times to accommodate harmonic moves that, as we shall see, are crucial to the structure that Corea imposes on Weill's composition.

Throughout the verse, Weill makes use of the minor sixth chord to harmonize his melody. This chord, because of the instability of its tritone and the fact that it is spelled in the same way as a minor-seven-flat-five chord, has a rich and tonally ambiguous quality to it. In the first four measures the minor-sixth chords serve to both soften the effect of the two minor seventh leaps in the melody and lend some mystery to the direction of the harmonic line. Corea changes the first chord from a Gbm6 to an Ab7sus4(b9) (there is no Db in the voicing but the Db in the previous measure creates the illusion that it is a part of the chord). This voicing retains the ambiguous tritone but, because of the dissonance between the A natural and Ab, creates more of an impetus to move (Examples 1 and 2). Instead of using Weill's ii7-V7-I progression to create the first cadence, Corea moves to a D/Eb chord that reframes the A-Eb tritone and creates a different dissonance—this one a major seventh between the Eb and the D. Although this chord functions as an F7b9, there is no root in the voicing. Rootless voicings are used throughout the introduction and lend a measure of ambiguity to the harmonic structure. The entirety of the first complete measure is a part of the C whole-half diminished scale. Part of the evolution of Corea's harmonic approach involves increasingly sophisticated methods for employing the diminished scale.

With you I used to roam in the pleasure dome of Ku - bla Khan I held you

**Example 1.** mm. 1–2 of Weill's verse (Ashe, 2020).

Aflat7sus4(b9) D/Eflat A7sus4 Bflatm11

diminished scale

side stepping

**Example 2.** mm. 1–2 of Corea's interpretation (Ashe, 2020).

Corea's choice of harmonies in mm. 1–2 create the framework for the rest of the introduction. In m. 1, both voicings have the A–Eb tritone that implies a V7–I in Bb minor. This streamlines Weill's harmonic intent while the increased dissonance in both voicings obscures Weill's clear V–I progression. The original harmony in m. 2 is a Bb minor chord while the melody begins on the dissonant C before moving to the Db and F. Since Corea has already introduced the tonally ambiguous voicings in m. 1 that, while functioning like a V7 chord never explicitly state V7 (there is no F in the measure), he is able to resolve to Bb minor with a quartal voicing on beat 2 of m. 2. The quartal chord still has a Bb minor tonality but with a much different quality than the Bb minor that Weill uses. This voicing is prepared, not by the V7 from the previous measure, but by the quartal voicing a half-step below. It moves in contrary motion to the appoggiatura in which Corea has changed the first note so that the melodic resolution moves down a half step. This creates an interesting kind of resolution that jazz pianist and writer Monica Herzig refers to as "sidestepping" (2017, p. 4). Because of the leading-tone resolution (the A to the Bb) it retains some of the characteristics of a V–I cadence and the contrary motion between the melody and lower three notes also reinforce that we have arrived at a point of resolution.

The next phrase of the verse is reharmonized by Corea in a way that corresponds to the first two measures. Corea makes an important change to the original melody by not resolving the F to the Gb. This allows Corea to finish the phrase with an Eb7sus4(9) chord that leads into an arpeggiated flourish transitioning into two different elaborations on the V chord: the one in m. 7 is a further exploration of the diminished scale, and the one in m. 8 is a rootless exploration of a bVI-V cadence that resolves to an Ebm7(9) (Example 3). This is a point of resolution that differs from Weill's harmonies. It treats the F not as a point of arrival, but rather as part of a V-I cadence to Bb minor. Corea prepares the move to Bb minor with an arpeggiated flourish over an Ebm7(13) chord that both introduces some ambiguity into his harmonic design and introduces the C natural in m. 10. The C foreshadows the Cm7(13) that appears as part of a scalar run in the last half of m. 11, and the Cm7(13) leads to the V-I cadence in Bb minor.

Example 3. Two ways Corea approaches a V7 chord (Ashe, 2020).

In mm. 12 Corea uses the half-whole diminished scale to imply a move to the dominant and does so with a chord voicing that moves down in minor thirds and has two tritones so that the #9 and 13th create major 7th intervals with what we hear as the 3rd and 7th of the dominant. This is in keeping with Corea's harmonic approach, which introduces a degree of harmonic ambiguity into every voicing and uses florid passages that contain the whole scale related to the given chord.

In mm. 7–8 of Weill's introduction, he uses a progression in Bb minor that makes a striking stepwise move to the b6 at the end of m. 7 before landing on the V7 chord in m. 8. Corea treats this passage in a novel way. He begins with a rootless Bbm7 before moving to a Gm11 in m. 13. The melody, which is the 11th of the chord, becomes the raised 11th that Weill uses to harmonize the same spot in the melody. Instead of resolving the passage to the expected F7, Corea introduces the same whole-step motion that Weill uses but harmonizes it using parallel triads voiced a whole-step above the root and resolves that motion to the D#9 (no seventh) in m. 16. This is analogous to the way in which Weill uses the Gb7 in m. 7. Weill's Gb7 chord prepares the F7 chord, which deceptively moves to Ab major at the beginning of the chorus in m. 9. Corea's D chord becomes the II in a move to Cm that begins his reharmonized take on the chorus. The deception that Corea employs is in the way he obscures the move from II to V with the two chords in m. 17. Although these two voicings can be understood as Db/Eb and B7#9, the detail that gives insight into Corea's thinking is the move in the right

hand from a Db to a D triad. This could be understood as another example of sidestepping as those chords move into a Cm11 where the third is not stated until beat 3 of the melody (Examples 4, 5).

**Example 4.** Weill's verse mm. 7–8 (Ashe, 2020).

**Example 5.** Corea's treatment (Ashe, 2020).

## “STEPS” INTRODUCTION

Corea has thus far made use of rapid arpeggiated and scalar figures to elaborate on cadential moments. These figures are most easily played by one hand, tend to be played in the middle and upper registers of the piano, and have an easily identifiable harmonic function that is generally supported by the left hand (Example 6) and the use of the sustain pedal.

There are several significant developments to Corea's approach that are introduced on his recording *Now He Sings, Now He Sobs*. One is a rethinking of how these kinds of figurations can function in an improvisation. There are three crucial differences between Corea's approaches to these figurations on the two recordings.

**Example 6.** Arpeggiated passage in the right hand from “This Is New” (Ashe, 2020).

In *Now He Sings, Now He Sobs*, he uses them in the lower register of the piano as well as the middle and upper registers, and he often plays them with minimal pedal. He also is more elusive in stating their harmonic function. Sometimes they outline a progression, but that progression is often so complex that they can best be understood as a sort of color that helps to transition into the next section of a piece rather than as something that can be analyzed with traditional harmonic analytical methods. Corea also begins to play the runs between two hands, which allows complex rhythmic groupings to be more easily executed (e.g., playing a seven-note grouping with one hand playing four notes and the other playing three notes is much easier to conceptualize than accenting every seventh note of a right-hand phrase.) Playing runs in this way also allows for rapid shifts in register and a more percussive approach. Corea discusses this approach, which he continued to develop throughout his career, in his 2003 Keyboard Workshop video. He calls this technique “Ten little drummers” and states that it is a technique he uses to exploit the piano’s percussive potential.

Using the piano as a percussive instrument is important in any serious study of Corea's approach to the instrument. In his book *A Work in Progress*, Corea cites Cecil Taylor as an influence. This can be heard in the tremendous energy that runs beneath these two-handed linear passages (Corea, 2002, p. 26). According to bassist Gene Perla, Corea spent 18 months working exclusively as a drummer and was able to master the complexities of Latin rhythms over the course of a weekend (Herzig, 2017, p. 10). Although the veracity of that timeline is dubious, Corea's affinity for utilizing a percussive approach in his playing are obvious, and this technique for linear construction is an important facet of that.

Mm. 10–14 of Corea’s introduction to “Steps” illustrates some of the ways that he uses these figurations. Although m. 10 seems to loosely outline E7#9–Eb7#11–D13#9 (this kind of chromatic harmonic movement often occurs in Corea’s work), the “telescoping” of the three gestures is a more important aspect of the passage. The first gesture ranges from the G below middle C to the D, the next from C to C, and the last outlining the C to F. M. 11’s first gesture is made up of rapid stepwise motion all within a range of a fourth.

The second half of m. 11 through the beginning of m. 14 explores an EMaj7 chord in a way that demonstrates how effective Corea's two-handed approach is in dealing with complex rhythm. Each of the three iterations of the chord is treated with a slightly different gesture. The first is the widest and calls for the

pianist to rapidly cross hands in order to strike the high Ab. The other two are shaped slightly differently and call on the pianist to play different collections of pitches (although staying in the same register) that bring out various chromatic tones relating to the chord. Example 7 shows how Corea most likely crosses his hands from mm. 11–14. The downward stems are for the left hand and the upward for the right.

This is most likely how Corea divided this passage between his left and right hands

**Example 7.** Corea's division of the two hands (Dobbins, 1988, p. 8).

The utilization of this crosshanded approach is part of the distinctive harmonic and rhythmic language Corea developed. Although crossing the hands was a well-established pianistic device, Corea is one of the first jazz pianists to utilize it in the ways described here. To understand his thinking, it is important to understand how Corea might approach the challenge of creating such an addition to his musical palette. In an interview with keyboardist John Novello, Corea describes how he develops abilities to achieve musical goals that fall outside of the limits of his musical experience. In the interview, Corea uses approaching unfamiliar harmony as an example of how this might be accomplished, but it could just as easily be applied to any aspect of music making. Corea states:

Say you have some chord changes—D, G, C, E, A, D, and you're very familiar with them—you've heard them a lot and you've played them a lot. But then someone writes a tune that has some chord movement that has nothing to do with that, and all of a sudden, you're on unfamiliar ground. But you have an attraction to it. That already means that you know something, even if you think you don't. (Novello, 1986, p. 424)

He goes on to describe how his previous experiences only take him so far. The breakthrough occurs when he changes the lens through which he has assessed the problem:

So then he thinks, “Oh well, melodically, the notes that go on top of these sounds have to be dealt with differently too. There’s a new thought process here. Let me try skating around a little bit and not actually playing scale-wise, what fits into these triads.” And so forth. And you know, there could be a breakthrough. For the guy might start skating melodically, and then discover, “Gee, skating’s really easy for me to do, I can skate like hell.” And as soon as he starts skating and applying it to this thing he thought he couldn’t do, then, all of a sudden, in about a second, he sounds good on this thing that a few moments ago was a big drag. (Novello, 1986, p. 425)

The decision to play these kinds of passages with two hands allows for a variety of rhythms, harmonies, and melodies that would be much more difficult to execute without the development of this technique. The mechanics of executing these passages are familiar to any accomplished pianist, so for Corea to apply it to new situations was a conceptual shift and something that he could just do rather than having to create a difficult technical approach that fell within the “old” way of doing things.

Corea continues to explore relatively static harmony modally in his introduction to “Steps” but explores each mode more thoroughly than in his statement of the verse of “This Is New.” With one important exception, Corea limits his modal explorations to major, minor, and dominant, and the modes come from the major scale. He also draws from a wider dynamic and textural range and explores the extreme registers of the piano with a new authority.

The opening measure is part of the C whole-half diminished scale. Mm. 2–5 are clearly part of Gb mixolydian, and m. 7 is a straightforward (for Corea) statement of Eb7sus4 (Example 8). The most striking aspect of this passage is not harmonic but rhythmic. The percussive quality so important to his ensemble playing has become a part of his solo piano conception, and this new quality serves to create contrast with some of the more impressionist elements present.

**Example 8.** Corea’s use of rhythm in the introduction for “Steps” in mm. 1–7 (Dobbins, 1988, p. 9).

Mm. 8–9 restate the harmonic material from mm. 1–6 but, rather than creating two discreet events, Corea allows the diminished scale flourish to move into the Gb pentatonic material in one fluid gesture. He resolves the phrase to an E7sus4, which prepares the material in mm. 12–14 that centers around E major.

**Example 9.** M. 8 begins with a diminished-like passage that moves to Gb7sus4 on beat 3 of m. 9 that moves down to E7sus4 on beat 4 (Dobbins, 1988, p. 9).

In addition to preparing the move to E7sus4, the stepwise motion between Gb and E in m. 9 prepares the stepwise motion that occurs in m. 15 (Example 10).

**Example 10.** Stepwise resolution to a stable harmony (Dobbins, 1988, p. 10).

Corea has begun ideas with statements of diminished scale material that resolve into something more tonal. In mm. 15–16, he reverses the process. The end of m. 15 is a C minor run that moves into a collection of polychords on beats 3–5 of m. 16 that each relate to diminished scales (Example 11).

**Example 11.** Resolution to an unstable harmony (Dobbins, 1988, p. 10).

In m. 17 he inverts a strategy that he used earlier. Rather than resolving down by a whole step as he does at the end of m. 9, Corea resolves the G/Ab up a half-step to Ab/A. He then uses a flourish that is basically an inversion of the figure in m. 1 to prepare the final section of the improvisation (Example 12).

**Example 12.** Flourish in m. 17 is an inversion of m. 1 (Dobbins, 1988, pp. 10, 9).

The last section is a contrast to the material we have heard previously. It is more spacious than the beginning and returns to the kind of harmonic material that Corea uses in “This Is New.” Corea uses the ascending bass motion that he introduces in m. 17 to link mm. 18–19 and mm. 20–21. In mm. 18–19, the E7#9 moves to the Gb7sus4, and in mm. 20–21, the B7(#11) moves to the DbMaj7 (Example 1.13).

**Example 13.** Corea’s use of ascending bass motion (Dobbins, 1988, p. 10).

None of the voicings in this passage are more complex than the material that he works with in “This Is New.” However, on beat 3 of m. 22 Corea introduces a new harmonic device. The collection of pitches (F, Cb, Gb, and A or Bbb) are part of a Gb melodic (or harmonic) minor scale (Example 14). Previously Corea

has only explored modal scales that are modes of major scales. These explorations tend to relate to the fifth or first degrees of the scale. The dissonant passages are generally part of a diminished scale. This voicing anticipates some of the developments that Corea introduces in his introduction to “Nefertiti,” which explores some of the possibilities presented when using various modes from melodic and harmonic minor.



**Example 14.** Corea’s use of a mode outside of those relating to major scales. The last chord in this passage could be part of F# melodic, or harmonic minor (Dobbins, 1988, p. 10).

## “NEFERTITI” INTRODUCTION

Like “This Is New,” Corea’s introduction to “Nefertiti” is in large part an elaboration on a preexisting compositional structure, but in the intervening five years between recording “This Is New” and “Nefertiti,” Corea developed many new methods for interpreting written material. The introduction is structured around radically contrasting episodes. Rapid scalar passages alternate between stark melodic fragments and dense harmonic passages. The unifying characteristic is the speed at which these episodes shift. Like a collage, the constantly shifting textures allow for a kind of unifying glow to hover above its chaotic surface.

Corea begins his introduction to “Nefertiti” with a sweeping statement of the augmented scale—a scale that alternates half-steps and minor thirds (Example 15). The augmented scale had been explored by Corea in his compositions “Converge” and “The Brain,” both of which draw important melodic and harmonic movements from it. Unlike those compositions, Corea does not use the augmented scale as part of the introduction’s harmonic structure. Instead, he systematically employs it to temporarily release the improvisation from the restraints of harmonic function. In “Nefertiti,” there are three times that Corea employs the augmented scale: m. 1, m. 11, and mm. 30–31. In all three cases, Corea uses a (somewhat) conventional cadence after the augmented scale run to introduce a new improvisational episode. In the last two examples, Corea moves through different augmented scales. The effect is the same because the intervallic structure is strong enough to supersede any sense of modulation that a shift in scale might imply.



**Example 15.** Corea's first use of the augmented scale. Notice how he shifts scales halfway through the first gesture and in the second gesture (Ashe, 2020).



**Example 16.** Corea's second use of the augmented scale (Ashe, 2020).

4 Nefertiti introduction

**Example 17.** Corea's third use, once again switching scales halfway through the first gesture (Ashe, 2020).

The passage in m. 2 is built on an Ab7sus4, which moves into a pointillistic-like exploration of DbMaj7(#5) in m. 3 (Example 18). However, Corea's use of a Gb implies either a mode of Bb harmonic minor or Db harmonic major (harmonic major is a major scale with the flattened sixth), instead of the more conventional Bb melodic minor. The Gb creates a minor second with the F so that the third and fourth are both present in the harmony, which destabilizes

it. Throughout the introduction, Corea consistently employs similar strategies to destabilize cadential moments; m. 12 is a statement of an E7 chord with the addition of the 4th and the major 7th, and m. 32 is a Gbadd2 with the G natural functioning as an appoggiatura (Example 19). This strategy, through which tonal centers and cadential moments are disrupted, creates a much different effect than what occurs in “Steps,” where the harmonies used at cadential moments tend to be sonorities that fall within the at-the-time traditional boundaries for resolved sonorities in modern jazz.

**Example 18.** Addition of the Gb lends ambiguity (Ashe, 2020).

**Example 19.** More harmonic ambiguity (Ashe, 2020).

Corea does not limit his explorations of unstable harmonies to cadential moments. Throughout the introduction he utilizes the various scalar modes to create labyrinthine complexes of harmonic movement that shift around common tones that often lead to wildly divergent harmonic pathways. The most elaborate application of this technique can be seen in mm. 16–22 (Example 20). Corea begins the passage with a statement of an Eb7(b9#11)(no3rd) moving to an

AbMaj7(#5). To do this, he utilizes the C half-whole diminished scale for the first chord and the Ab Lydian (#5) scale (the third mode of F melodic minor) for the second. The C and E are common to both chords, and Corea uses them to pivot from one tonality to the next.

**Example 20.** Use of common tones to facilitate harmonic motion (Ashe, 2020).

Corea begins m. 17 with a DbmM7(add4) that moves to a collection of pitches from the C half-whole diminished scale using C as the fulcrum for this harmonic shift. The striking aspect of the second voicing in m. 16 is the Db, Gb, and C played in the right hand that Corea then moves up a major 6th. He uses a C triad (still part of the C half-whole diminished collection) to create the effect of a C7#9add13 that he changes at the end of beat 3 by introducing a D that reframes the Bb, Eb, and A in the right hand as part of a Phrygian chord that moves to a Gb/D at the end of beat 4, which functions as part of a Bb7alt moving into the Eb minor material in beat 5 of the same measure.

M. 18 begins with a D(#9). On beat 2 Corea superimposes it over a minor 2nd built on Eb, which gives the effect of D/Eb, a standard sonority in Corea's lexicon. However, he uses voice leading to change the upper structure to an Absus4 so that the effect is like a C#m7(9) chord, which he obscures with the voicing on beat 4. Beats 3 and 4 can be understood as related to Ab harmonic major.

Beat 4 of m. 18 and beat 1 of m. 19 are linked by the C half-whole diminished scale, and the Gb that ends beat 1 of m. 19 prepares the Db7sus that moves to a G/A through the half-step resolution of the Eb to the D. Corea moves to Bm11 and then introduces a C at the end of m. 19, which allows the harmony to pivot to an Ab7 at the beginning of m. 20. He creates a V-I relationship between the Ab7 and G/Db but uses the Db as a pivot into a Dbm11. Corea then reframes that chord by introducing a passage that moves D, A, E in the left hand against the upper part of the Dbm11, which can then be heard as an E7sus4.

Corea finishes this section by introducing the C# in m. 21, which functions as the 13th of the Esus4 but also serves as the bass for the next gesture that implies a Db with a D and F suspended above it moving to the C/Db that ends the passage. The tritone in the bassline is like the tritone move in m. 19 and strengthens the resolution to the low Db. The diminished scale filigree at the end of the measure reinforces the cadential nature of the end of this passage.

Throughout the introduction, Corea constantly references the melody. This is often done by utilizing the descending half-step motive that occurs several times in Shorter's composition. These passages often contrast the rest of the introduction. Corea often presents these fragments unadorned by the intricate harmonic procedures discussed earlier. Mm. 6–10 are an example of this (Example 21). Corea surrounds each melody note with space and harmonizes them with triads (except for the Bb/Gb in m. 6.) Although the passage at the end of m. 8 would seem to break this pattern, the passage, which is played with the pedal down, is so abstract that its harmonic function is blurred. It is heard as a cluster of sound rather than as a complex harmony. This effect is enhanced by the repeated statement of the B two octaves above the highest note of the cluster. Corea brings the rest of the rhythm section in with a statement of the last eight measures of "Nefertiti" that employs the same strategy (Examples 21–23).

**Example 21.** Corea's first reference to the melody of "Nefertiti" (Ashe, 2020).

Example 22. Corea's second reference to the melody of "Nefertiti" (Ashe, 2020).

Example 23. Corea's third reference to the melody of "Nefertiti" (Ashe, 2020).

Occasionally, as in m. 20, the melody will bob to the surface, which lends a sense of structure to the improvisation (Example 24).

Example 24. High notes are phrases from the melody (Ashe, 2020).

He also references the melody in m. 22. Although it moves more quickly than the previous two melodic statements, it is still stated in a way that allows it to stand out from the rest of the improvisation. He harmonizes the phrase with parallel polychords, which, though complex, are much more easily heard due to the parallel motion and the polychords (G/Ab, Gb/G, and F/Gb) being sonorities familiar to both the introduction and Corea's work during this period (Example 25).

**Example 25.** A harmonized version of the melody (Ashe, 2020).

### **"TRINKLE TINKLE" INTRODUCTION**

"Trinkle Tinkle" is a composition by Thelonious Monk, a major influence on Corea's work. In a 1982 essay written for *Keyboard Magazine*, Corea expounds on Monk's influence on him as a pianist:

He had a very strong effect on me as a piano player, too. Monk made me aware of so many things on the piano. His playing was very clear, very subtle and sophisticated, but also very simple. He always plays the melody, even when he's not playing the melody. He's always playing the tune that is being played. (Corea, 1982, p. 2)

Corea's interpretation of Monk's composition reflects this. The introduction is an elaboration of the melody and throughout the performance, Corea references both Monk's lean, angular approach, and deeply personal sense of timbre. Corea manages to do this while incorporating the harmonic, rhythmic, and pianistic language discussed in the three previous introductions.

The rapid gestures that make up much of the melody of "Trinkle Tinkle" are often elaborated on in Corea's introduction. In his introduction to "Nefertiti," Corea often employs exotic scales for these kinds of passages, and he employs a similar strategy for "Trinkle Tinkle." However, instead of using those scales as sounds often used outside of the structure of the tune, Corea begins to incorporate them into "Trinkle Tinkle's" harmonic framework and often combines these scales, which creates the effect of passages that seem to be simultaneously "inside" and "outside" the harmony. In m. 11, Corea employs the augmented scale over a Gb13 chord that ornaments the song's melodic fragment heard in beats 3 and 4 (Example 25). He then uses D pentatonic to bridge between the Gb7(13) and the B7 (on which Corea adds a #9), before ending the phrase with the expected whole-tone-based sonority (Example 26).

**Example 26.** Corea's use of extended harmony to elaborate on Monk's melody (Ashe, 2020)

Corea uses a similar admixture of exotic scales in mm. 28–29. This passage is built around the angles of the melody but is colored with the scalar palette that Corea developed. In m. 28 he creates a passage that alternates between the augmented scale and a pentatonic scale that leads into m. 29, which moves from the diminished to the augmented scale (Example 27).

**Example 27.** Rapidly shifting scales (Ashe, 2020)

In m. 23, Corea deftly uses a Db half-whole diminished passage over two dominant 7th chords that ascend in half-steps. The implication is that, while the right-hand passage can be analyzed as being part of one diminished scale, the rising 7th chords in the left hand imply that he is drawing the line from two separate scales! (Example 28).

**Example 28.** Could be from an augmented or diminished scale (Ashe, 2020)

Corea's runs in "Trinkle Tinkle" are like the ones used in "This Is New" in that they are generally played with the right hand. However, the way he quickly shifts between scales is similar to the way Corea conceptualizes the two-handed runs used in the introductions for "Steps" and "Nefertiti." This allows Corea to use the left hand to add complexity or clarity to the runs that he previously would

have used both hands to execute. In Corea's introduction to "Nefertiti," he uses dense vertical structures to create complex harmonic motion. By using scalar right-hand lines in tandem with the kinds of tonally ambiguous left-hand voicings used in "Trinkle Tinkle," Corea is able to retain the complex harmonies used in "Nefertiti" without the bulkiness of the dense vertical harmony.

## CONCLUSION

One of the great challenges for post-bop musicians like Corea was in synthesizing two of the important approaches to jazz improvisation that emerged in the late 1950s and early 1960s: the harmonic complexity and modal exploration developed by John Coltrane and the often multi-voiced dialogues and open sensibilities that the freely improvised music developed by Cecil Taylor, Paul Bley, Ornette Coleman and others emerges from. The techniques discussed here are important components of how Corea negotiated this struggle as they afforded him a variety of ways to approach a wide range of material while still maintaining his unique approach to the piano and to improvisation. Although it is beyond the scope of this essay, an investigation into subsequent recordings by Corea will demonstrate how he continued to refine these approaches and apply them to different contexts while continuing to develop new ones, never sacrificing his unmistakable approach to the piano and music making.

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