William Hanson
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Thelonious Monk:
Life and Influences
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Thelonious Monk was a prolific and monumental figure in modern jazz. He directly contributed to the evolution of bebop, as well as influenced the development of free jazz, and the contributed additions to the standard jazz repertoire. Monk branched out from his influences, including swing, gospel, blues, and classical to create a unique style of composition and performance. Monk more than any other major figure in bebop, was, and remains, an original.

Monk's life can be categorized into three periods: the early, the middle, and late period. Each period lasts roughly twenty years: from 1917-1940, 1940-1960, and from 1960-1982. In Monk's early period he toured the US playing gospel music, and found early influences in swing music like Duke Ellington. It wasn't until his middle period that Monk began to record and write his compositions, and in his late period he toured the world with other renowned musicians playing bebop.

Thelonious Junior Monk was born October 10, 1917 in Rocky Mountain, North Carolina to Barbara Batts Monk and Thelonious Monk, Senior. Thelonious was the middle child, with an older sister, Marion born in 1915, and younger brother, Thomas born in 1919. Monk's birth certificate lists his father as an icemaker, and his mother as a household worker. Although both of his parents could read and write, they struggled to make enough to live on. In 1922 Thelonious' mother insisted that she take the family to New York to make a better living. Thelonious Senior did not want to leave North Carolina to Barbara Batts Monk and Thelonious Monk, Senior. Thelonious was the middle child, with an older sister, Marion born in 1915, and younger brother, Thomas born in 1919. Monk's birth certificate lists his father as an icemaker, and his mother as a household worker. Although both of his parents could read and write, they struggled to make enough to live on. In 1922 Thelonious mother insisted that she take the family to New York to make a better living. Thelonious Senior did not want to leave North Carolina.

2 Thelonious Junior Monk later adopted the name Thelonious Sphere Monk, named after his grandfather, Sphere Batts.

Monk's name is actually misspelled on his birth certificate (See Example 1A)
Carolina behind; Barbara took Marion, Thelonious Junior, and Thomas to New York by herself, determined to make a better life for them.

Once they arrived in New York via railway, Barbara found adequate work in a nursery. After living with Barbara’s cousin for a few months, she had saved enough money to buy a small apartment, a radio, a Victrola, and an upright piano. After a few years, in 1926, Thelonious Sr. returned to the family, randomly appearing at their residence in Manhattan. He was warmly accepted and soon found work near the Hudson River on a pier. To accommodate the added family member they moved across the street to a slightly larger and nicer apartment, where the family would stay for many years.

The apartment was located on West 63rd Street, in “San Juan Hill,” a nickname for the area because of its high number of West Indies immigrants. Barbara admired the strict lifestyle of the West Indies immigrants and adopted some of their customs in raising her children including the expectation of high marks in school, subordinate behavior, and a well-rounded education. In an effort to provide a well-rounded education for her children, Barbara decided that Marion would take piano lessons and that Thelonious should study the violin. Barbara hired a Mr. Wolfe to teach Marion piano, but Thelonious had no interest in violin lessons and only wanted to listen to Marion’s lessons. From only listening to Marion, Thelonious learned to play the piano well enough to impress Marion’s teacher. Mr. Wolfe then suggested they discontinue lessons with Marion and start lessons with Thelonious. Everyone agreed, including Marion.

In addition to the exposure to music from his piano teacher, Thelonious was exposed to several genres of music as a child, primarily those of swing and sacred music. Both of Thelonious’ parents respected and enjoyed music: his mother was a church
singer, and his father a swing and big band-era amateur pianist. The various types of
church music Monk was exposed to include Methodist, Episcopal, and Baptist; he was
particularly influenced by the African-American Baptist hymns.3

Just after Monk began taking lessons his father became ill and had to move back
to North Carolina. Monk Senior suffered from asthma, and could not endure the cold
winters of New York. His asthma prevented him from coming back to New York, and
Barbara refused to move back to North Carolina. This was one of the last times they
communicated with each other; they were from then on out of each other’s lives.

In 1932 Monk started enrollment at Stuyvesant High School, a rigorous school for
predominately white students. Some of Monk’s schoolwork exists and is in viable
condition, having previously been auctioned at $60,000 on February 20, 2005. (See
Examples 2A and 2B.) Monk was admitted on the basis of a high I.Q. score and having
achieved high marks in junior high school. Although he ended his first year with passing
marks and reasonable attendance, his second-year attendance dropped from 88 out of 95,
to 16 out of 92 days. His grades also plummeted, a reflection of his attendance, and in
1934 he dropped out of high school to play music. Two primary reasons for this decline
stem from his inability to play music in the band because he was an African-American in
a predominately white school, and his participation in his newly formed trio that began
playing gigs around town earning small fees and tips. Monk was too exhausted from
playing all night to get up after a few hours of sleep and go to school; while this life style
had a heavy toll on his schoolwork it opened the doors to new opportunities. After Monk
dropped out of high school his trio began competing in the Apollo Theater’s

Wednesday-night amateur contest. He won so many times that he was banned from competing, so that others could have a chance to win.

Monk also began lessons with Professor Buster Archer, the organist of the Union Baptist Church near his residence. He only studied with Archer for a short while before the church was relocated. One important connection that Monk would make through the Union Baptist Church before it moved was the Reverend Graham. The reverend was a singing preacher, and offered to take Monk and his trio on the U.S. gospel circuit. On his tour of the gospel highway Monk was allowed the freedom to experiment with as much dissonance as he wanted as long as he was accompanying Reverend Graham. She never told him how to play the piano, leaving him his musical freedom. After a few years of touring Monk returned to New York so that he could write without any interruptions.

Upon arriving back in Manhattan Monk, now in his late teens, began to play at various small clubs, mainly anywhere he could earn a bit of money. Although Kenny Clarke commented that Monk was just playing gospel music and there was nothing unusual, Monk was gaining valuable experience. He took as his idols and inspiration James P. Johnson, Fats Waller, and Duke Ellington. Duke Ellington would play a significant role in developing Monk’s unique style.5

Monk formed his first documented group in 1938, calling it the Thelonious Monk Quartet. It consisted of Jimmy Wright on tenor sax, “Massapequa” on bass, and William “Keg” Purnell on drums. This was the first real experimentation Monk conducted, playing with chordal and rhythmic structures, Monk said on the subject: “I never studied... I just experimented arranging. You learn most harmonics by experience. You

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1 The Reverend Graham is also known as the “Texas Warhorse.”
2 Duke Ellington’s influences can be heard in Monk’s early solos on Monk’s recording with Dawkins and Monk’s early Blue Note sessions.
fool around and listen. Most chord structure is practically arithmetic, anyway. You just have to use common sense."6

Also in the late 1930's Monk began study with an affiliate of Juilliard.7 Further research is needed to identify the person or persons with whom he studied with, but it is here that Monk was influenced by the scholastic music of Julliard, dissonant post-war music. Monk was exposed to the twelve-tone music of Stephan Wolpe, a war refugee who was teaching jazz musicians in the area.8 Wolpe was a student of Webern, who was a student of Schoenberg. It was this exposure that helped develop the unique musical style for which Monk would become known.9

It was in Monk's middle period that he composed the bulk of his works. Throughout this period Monk worked with almost every jazz musician that contributed to bebop, in addition to many others that would go on to contribute to free jazz and other modern jazz styles. Also this period marks the beginning of Monk's recording career: working with Blue Note, Prestige, and Riverside. Although Monk would, in his late period, work with Columbia he would produce not nearly as many significant recordings or compositions as his middle period, starting in 1940.

The middle period can be divided into two parts based on the development of his compositional style: the evolutionary years, lasting from 1940-1947, and the maturation years, lasting from 1947-1960.

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7 It is speculated that Monk actually studied with Stephan Wolpe, but there are no records of his study.
8 Wolpe came to America as a result of the Nazi persecution. It is a direct influence that the Second World War had on music.
9 Gourse, *Straight No Chaser.* pp. 15-20
In 1940 Monk was hired to work as the house pianist for a small Harlem club called Minton’s Playhouse. This is where bebop was born. It was here that Monk was free to experiment with other musicians and share his original ideas. Kenny Clarke, who had previously given Monk a mundane review, the house percussionist was thrilled to hear Monk experimenting so aggressively with dissonant harmonies, modern phrasings and rhythmic structures. Clarke and Monk began to modernize the swing music they had grown up with: adding their accents, phrasings, and harmonic changes.

Monk was the major force behind the evolution of bebop. Monk stated on the subject: “if my own work had more importance than any other’s, it’s because the piano is the key instrument in music...all styles are built around piano developments. The piano plays the chord foundation and the rhythm foundation, too... I was always at the spot and could keep working on the music. The rest, like Diz and Charlie came in only from time to time. At first.”

Monk spread the new harmonic ideas of bebop to other musicians, including Dizzy Gillespie who said in his autobiography:

I learned a lot from Monk... Like, the minor-sixth chord with a sixth in the bass. I first heard Monk play that. It’s demonstrated in some of my music like the melody of ‘Woody ’n You’ the introduction to ‘Round Midnight’ and part of the bridge to ‘Manteca.’

Bebop is defined as a style of jazz stressing melodic improvisation and extreme tempos. Typically bebop is played in a small combo, in 12 bar blues or 32 bar popular tunes in a theme-solo-theme format. In performance performers stress jagged fast-moving melodies and/or rhythms. Pianists combine silence with punctuation to reinterpret traditional harmonies through chordal extension, alteration, or substitution. Drummers add asymmetrical accents, while swinging cymbal patterns and walking bass lines mark the beat.


There were lots of places where I used that progression that Monk showed me... The first time I heard that, Monk showed it to me, and he called it a minor-sixth chord with a sixth in the bass. Nowadays they don’t call it that. They call the sixth in the bass, the tonic, and the chord a C-minor seventh, flat five. What Monk called and E-flat-minor sixth chord with a sixth in the bass, the guys nowadays call a C-minor seventh flat five.

So now I extended that into a whole series of chords. B minor, E-seventh, B-flat minor seventh, E-flat seventh, and into C. We’d do that kind of thing in 1942 around Minton’s a lot. We’d been doing that kind of thing, Monk and I, but it was never documented because no records were being made at the time. There was a recording ban.

Monk contributed several key items to the development of bebop, and more so than any other bebopper epitomized the radicalism associated with Bebop. Monk would don eccentric hats and sport a fuzzy goatee in addition to twirling around on stage, especially during other musician’s solos. He symbolized the 1940s modern jazz musician as an artist, and would often go for days without communicating except by playing music.

At clubs like Minton’s the bebop rhythm section was able to develop fully, and Monk together with Clark began to explore further the idea of putting accents on unusual beats. While working at Minton’s Monk also began developing his unique style, often playing his original works: Monk preferred to play his own compositions over others’

Monk wrote in 16-bar or 32-bar structures with unconventional harmonies and jagged melodic lines, and when Monk had free time while at Minton’s he was working out new substitute harmonies to implement. Alp Shipton states that monk was the “most innovative pianist, in terms of introducing and developing the harmonic ideas of bebop.”


Monk not only developed key harmonic ideas for bebop at Minton’s, but also continued to develop new harmonic ideas that would later help create his signature style. \(^{15}\)

Even though the general public did not know of Monk yet, he had a considerable impact on the jazz musicians around him. Budd Johnson, the saxophonist of Dizzie Gillespie’s Onyx Club quintet stated on Monk’s work with bebop: “I really heard Monk doin’ this stuff before anybody. I don’t think anybody else had the tunes. I really would put Monk before Diz [Dizzie Gillespie] in my knowledge.”\(^ {16}\) But the aura of Monk’s style was only at the cusp of circulating through recorded sound. Jerry Newman made the only recordings of the Minton’s jam sessions, but they were unofficial. The pianist on these recordings cannot be definitively identified, and in some instances often thought to be Monk is instead most likely Kenny Kersey.\(^ {17}\) Monk was almost a decade behind other pioneers of bebop to begin recording.

By 1944 Monk had further developed his own approach to harmony when he joined Coleman Hawkins’s band. In October of 1944 Monk made his first definitive appearance on a commercial recording. He can be heard taking short solos on Hawkins’s Flyn’ Hawk and On the Bean, and Monk’s experimental harmonic progressions can be heard as he accompanies the tenor sax.\(^ {18}\)

Although Monk was largely unaccepted by the public for his growing obscenities, it did not diminish his reputation with his fellow jazz musicians yet. By 1944 Monk had become mentor to Bud Powell. Powell would soon become renowned as one of the greatest jazz pianists of his time. Powell is responsible for reconfiguring the jazz.

\(^{15}\) Shipton, *A New History of Jazz*, p. 484

\(^{16}\) Shipton, *A New History of Jazz*, p. 486

\(^{17}\) Shipton, *A New History of Jazz*, p. 487

\(^{18}\) Shipton, *A New History of Jazz*, p. 487
vocabulary, which would have lasting effects on later players. Powell's impact on jazz is comparable to other Beboppers such as Armstrong, Parker, Young, Gillespie, Christian, Blanton and Evans.19

Monk's early improvisation was linear, but it was often abrupt and riff-oriented. Monk used unexpected silences and rhythmic displacements of repeated phrases. He also often simulated tonal distortions by playing in minor seconds or thirds. Monk begins to use the whole-tone scale and other even more angular notes. Much of Monk's early soloing was influenced by Duke Ellington, and is later acknowledged by both Monk and Ellington as sharing common grounds. Even though there are no recordings of Monk's earlier solos, some of it carried over into his compositions. Epistrophy, and Round Midnight were recorded in the early 1940s by the Cootie Williams' band, and Hackensack (Riffside), Stuffy (Stuffy Turkey), and I Mean You were recorded in the mid 1940s by Hawkins.20

Monk had also written many of his tunes that he would later record by the mid to late 1940s, but it was not until 1947 that his body of work began to be properly documented. In 1947 Blue Note record producer Alfred Lion signed Monk to the label, making Monk his protege. Monk became one of Lion's greatest passions.21 Lion organized seven recording sessions for Monk. The first four, made between 1947 and 1948, demonstrate major statements of the evolution on Monk's style. These four sessions showcase Monk's style to be almost fully formed. Monk uses many of his signature characteristics: angular intervals and whole-tone scales, the stark repetition of

20 Owens, Bebop, p. 143
21 Shipton, A New History of Jazz, p. 490
simple melodic fragments, thick and dissonant accompanying chords, and all dropped subtly with a sudden unexpected explosion.22

Also on Monk’s earlier sessions for Blue Note he begins to integrate some of his earlier influences in his music. On the recording of *Humph* the thematic phrase is built on a whole-tone scale, the thematic phrase is also repeated in the bridge. This is a compositional technique that Monk commonly used. It is likely influenced from gospel or swing, specifically in call-and-response music. Also both the “A” section of *Humph* and the bridge of *Well You Needn’t* feature a movement through the key-cycle popularized by Art Tatum and Don Byas. *Well You Needn’t* is usually played incorrectly, the incorrect version stemming from a cover version by Miles Davis in 1954.23 Working in a trio Monk uses several unexpected bars of stride piano on the alternate take of *Nice Work If You Can Get It*. Monk also hints at boogie woogie style in two bars of figured bass in *Ruby My Dear*, and again in the right-hand block chords of *Well You Needn’t*. Although he makes reference to earlier styles of jazz, Monk’s recordings are distinctively something new. Monk’s style is so strong that “everything he touches turns, if not to gold, at least to Monk.” Many of Monk’s most famous compositions were recorded in the earlier sessions with Blue Note, including *Ruby My Dear. Well You Needn’t, Off Minor, Round Midnight, Epistrophy, I mean You, Misterioso, In Walked Bud*, and *Monk’s Mood*.24

In a review by Leonard Feather, published in 1949, Monk’s reputation was called “grossly distorted, as a result of some high-powered publicity work. He has written a few attractive tunes, but his lack of technique and continuity prevented him from

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22 Gioia, *The History of Jazz*, p. 242
24 Gioia, *The History of Jazz*, p. 242
accomplishing much as a pianist. The once “high priest of bebop” was now too far outside the mainstream music to be well received by even most members of the jazz community. His unique style, using heavy disjunction, was considered too puzzling; listeners considered Monk’s music to be nothing more than a game of connect-the-dots instead of being able to see the whole picture. The public’s response to Monk’s work is highly similar to the their response to earlier works by Schoenberg and Webern. In 1948, Orrin Keepnews, who would later play a much larger role for Monk, conducted an interview with Monk. Keepnews states that Monk was a “little known figure,” but he was potentially “making a huge step forward” in modern jazz.

The use of a vibraphonist Milt Jackson in the 1947 recordings, and two following sessions for Blue Note, allowed Monk to get a ringing tone from sparse chords in the most unexpected places. Both Misterioso and Straight No Chaser feature this interplay between Monk and Jackson. Also Monk begins to use freer rhythmic structures. In I Mean You Monk uses a written introduction as an interlude and a coda, where it is treated as a three and a half bar phrase. Monk would build on the rhythmic freedom of I Mean You in Criss Cross. Here Monk expands on his rhythmic displacement by creating an opening phrase and eight bar bridge that is in 3+3+2, instead of 4+4. Guethler Schuller praised Criss Cross in 1958, calling it more than a “tune” or “song,” but instead a true “composition for instruments.” Schuller compared each piece on the 1951 disc to an abstract painting (Four in One, Criss Cross, EroneZy Straight No Chaser, Ask Me Now, and Willow Weed For Me). The harmonies of Straight No Chaser are built on a typical

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23 Gioia, The History of Jazz, p. 240
24 Gourse, Straight No Chaser, p. 44.
twelve-bar blues, but what makes it unique is the melody is a rhythmic displacement of a
changeable motif. One version of the motif would resolve on a blues note, and the other
on a major third. On Four in One Monk uses unexpected surprisingly fast passages in the
melodic line.

After Blue Note, in 1952 Monk began recording with Prestige Records. Monk
achieved very little success at Prestige and even though he recorded seven sessions also
he did not produce a significant album during this time. His contract was released in 1953
due to poor sales for $108.27. However, his success began its ascendance in 1955 when
Monk signed with Riverside, a small record company run by Orrin Keepnews. Keepnews
still believed in Monk and supervised all 28 recording sessions with him. Although
Monk's compositional technique did not evolve much more past the mid to late 1940s
Monk began experimenting with new formats and guest soloists. Under the assistance of
Keepnews Monk worked and recorded with such horn players as Sonny Rollins, John
Coltrane, Coleman Hawkins, Gerry Mulligan, Johnny Griffin, Phil Woods, Harold Land,
Charlie Rouse, and also with modern jazz percussionists such as Max Roach, Kenny
Clarke, Roy Haynes, Shelly Manne, Art Taylor, and Shadow Wilson. This was a massive
project for just a small label, but proved to be one of Monk's most fertile times for
recording and collaborating, and importantly Riverside also allowed Monk the freedom to
solo. Monk boasted intimate piano sessions with exaggerated tempi to fully display the
rich harmonics and overtones of his writing. In the 1957 release I Should Care Monk
lingers on a simple statement of the melody of 32 bars for over three minutes. Monk did

Gioia, The History of Jazz, p. 244
not feel the need to put more notes than necessary, stating, "It’s not the notes you play, it’s those you leave out."\(^\text{30}\)

Some of Monk's best work was recorded at Riverside: *Crepuscule with Nellie, Pannonica*, and *Brilliant Corners*. *Brilliant Corners* is one of Monk's most complicated works. It features a tripartite structure that includes both seven and eight measure sections, different scalar patterns, and different tempi. Kenny Mathieson said on complicated music like *Brilliant Corners*: "the palpable sense of the musicians struggling to master the very artificial hair-raising complexities of the pianist’s scheme is one of the primary sources of the music’s enduring fascination."\(^\text{31}\)

In the late 1950s Monk’s popularity began to rise sharply. In 1955 he was being called the “Greta Garbo of jazz.” In 1957 Monk began playing at the Five Spot to sold-out audiences, night after night. The public was so taken with Monk that not only was his contract at the Five Spot extended to eight months, but also the management brought in a special piano chosen by Monk. Ira Gilter said, “Those of use who heard it will never forget the experience.”\(^\text{32}\) In 1958 and 1959 Monk was awarded first place in the Down Beat Critics Poll. Monk was highly praised by the jazz world, and the general public was starting to follow along. In 1960 after touring the US, Monk was charging $1000 per night. This is roughly ten times what he was released for from Prestige a few years before.

Monk’s increased fame drew the name of the largest record company at the time, Columbia. This marks the beginning of his late period. The late period is categorized by Monk’s extensive fame and fortune. Monk was featured on the front of *Time* magazine in

\(^{30}\) Gioia, *The History of Jazz*, p. 244

\(^{31}\) Shipton, *A New History of Jazz*, p. 490

\(^{32}\) Gioia, *The History of Jazz*, p. 945
28 February 1964. Also, Monk’s quartets were the world’s premier bebop groups featuring; saxophonists Sonny Rollins, John Coltrane, Charlie Rouse; bassists Wilbur Ware, Ahmed Abdul Malik, Sam Jones, John Ore, Larry Gales; and drummers Art Taylor, Art Blakey, Shadow Wilson, Roy Haynes, Frank Dunlop, and Ben Riley. The only significant recordings produced at Columbia were Raise Four and Green Chimneys. It was in this period that Monk played out his perfected art for the world.

In addition to playing around the world Monk would take in one more apprentice, John Coltrane. Coltrane began playing with Monk in 1957, and was on the verge of becoming the leading tenor saxophonist in jazz. Coltrane’s playing was the logical and final extensions of Parker’s innovations. Coltrane praised Monk as a “musical architect of the highest order.” On Trinkle Tinkle and Nutty Coltrane, instead of emulating Monk, Coltrane filled Monk’s spaces with virtuosic playing. Also Monk dropped out of some of the horn solos to allow Coltrane to stretch out with just drums and bass accompanying, and Coltrane would later use this extensively in his own band.

Monk’s genius lay in his ability to pair the modern with the simple, using silence as space and altering of thick and thin chords. Monk also created elaborate mazes that only the well-trained ear could listen to. In contrast to his complicated works are his ballads. Compositions like Ruby My Dear and Round Midnight were relatively easier to listen to for the public. Also Monk could create the ambient art song with works like Crepuscule with Nellie. Monk was particularly fond of using major and minor seconds and major and minor sevenths, as well as minor ninths and tritones. Monk believed these intervals represented an exposed unadorned fashion.

33 Gioia, The History of Jazz, p. 246
Throughout Monk's career, he integrated simple repetitive melodies with his avant-garde tendencies. Pieces such as Epistrophy, Misterioso, Blue Monk, Well You Needn't, Let's Cool One, Rhythm-a-ning, Hornin' In, Trinkle Tinkle, Bemsha Swing, and Off Minor all showcased memorable developed themes. These melodies would often stay in the listener's head long after they listened to the piece. A major element of Monk's genius was to be aware of which notes of a chord that needed to be sounded to make it most effective, and that even the same group of notes, or their inversions, would have a completely different sound when pitched in a different register. "Monk taught the science of the maximum economy in the choice of the notes making up a chord. Why play three when two were enough... you always think you are hearing more notes than he is actually playing."

Monk's last official performance was scheduled at Carnegie Hall in 1976, but like one last unexpected phrase Monk surprised his fans with a performance at a small New York bar. In his final years he found refuge at a longtime patron, Baroness de Koenigsbruck, who also cared for Parker in his last days. On February 5, 1982 Thelonious Sphere Monk suffered a stroke and died twelve days later. He was sixty-four. Monk's legacy lives on through his many contributions to jazz.

Shipton, A New History of Jazz, p. 485
Thelonious Monk’s contributions to jazz can be seen in Chart 1A.
Bibliography


Orrin Keepnews Record Changer #8
Monks Contributions to Jazz

1. Mentoring Coltrane and Powell
2. Helping to pioneer bebop
3. Monk’s underlying simplicity, even if seemingly off-center
   a. Ruby My Dear - built on a four-note downward evocation of the syllables, is later used Dave Brubeck. Although evocation is not completely new to jazz, the idea of setting an entire song lyric was.
   b. * Friday the 13th - a theme and countermelody occupying a mere four bars over a chordal vamp repeating every two bars, helped inspire the reaction against bop
      i. Also seen in
         1. Little Rootie Tootie - A Section
         2. Locomotive - A Section
         3. Monk’s Dream - B Section
         4. We see - B Section
4. Freedom of several themes from the metrical regularity of earlier music
   a. Thelonious has two extra bars in the bridge, making it a 36 measure form, creating a feeling of suspense
   b. *Criss Cross- Monk expands on his rhythmic displacement by creating an opening phrase and eight bar bridge that is in 3+3+2
   c. Trinkle Tinkle - 6 bar theme and drum break that is 2 bars in Prestige and 1.5 in Columbia.
   d. Comin on the Hudson - AABA -(A5)(A5) 9B3.5) (A5)
   e. Brilliant Corners - ABA- (A8) (B7) (A7)
      i. The alternate chorus is at twice the tempo.
5. Solos should relate to the theme in improvisation
   a. Well You Needn’t – the thematic material for the central eight-bar bridge section is a repetition of the main theme - this creates a different effect between sections of the song from the conventional popular song notation that the bridge should be quite distinct
   b. Brilliant Corners – necessitates that the sidemen should bear in mind the theme as a base for their improvisation, rather than merely running the chord changes.
Example 1A
Thelonious Monk’s Birth Certificate
Example 3A
Example of Monk's early schoolwork
"Everyone Should Read"