

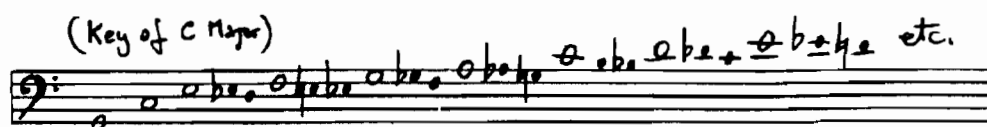
“Knockin’ Myself Out”

Among other things, Tatum was famous for his legendary “after-hours” sessions, in which it is said he played in a most spontaneous, informal, and experimental way (also singing in some pieces, such as “Toledo Blues”). With portable equipment in 1941, Jerry Newman recorded some of these sessions at the Gee-Haw Stables, Reuben’s and Clark Monroe’s Uptown House Harlem clubs. Among these recordings is “Knockin’ Myself Out,” a blues piece Tatum played with bassist/singer Chocolate Williams on July 26, 1941 at the Gee-Haw Stables. Besides singing on some choruses, in “Knockin’ Myself Out” Tatum played the two full solo piano choruses we have transcribed here. They are the first and the eighth choruses, marked by a very relaxed and informal mood, with sparse left hand work (in bars 6-11 and 13-15, the left hand part is just our suggestion, provided for harmonic reference).

As a whole, in “Knockin’ Myself Out” Tatum used both a traditional bluesy phrasing and some of his distinctive and more advanced devices. The first chorus is basically traditional, further proving that Tatum was an able and “real” blues player despite some critics’ incredible assertions. In bar 2, notice the subtle and effective idea of alternating a triplet, a sextuplet, and a triplet again.

The eighth chorus is more adventurous and experimental, and it is also one of Tatum’s most astonishing exploits. In bar 15, he plays the distinctive, dissonant trick we studied earlier. Bars 17-18 are a little jewel of inventiveness and enterprise. After placing a totally unexpected and effective C9b5 left hand chord, Tatum plays a lightning-like descending-ascending phrase split between the hands and resolved by one of his descending runs on an F7 chord. You are advised to listen to this recording (available on Onyx 205CD) to fully appreciate this episode in all its acrobatic beauty.

In bars 20-21 we find one of Tatum’s diatonic-chromatic ascending runs, whose pattern is shown below (diatonics in whole notes, chromatics in small black notes). It is discussed in the chapter on “climbing” runs:



The eighth chorus ends with a blues-stride phrase in James P. Johnson's manner (bar 23), followed by one of Tatum's two-handed tricks. Again it must be noted that when accompanying the vocal choruses of "Knockin' Myself Out," he played the purest of blues piano. His accompaniments here are never intrusive, and he truly uses a wide repertoire of traditional blues piano devices. During his after-hours sessions in clubs like Clark Monroe's, it is unlikely that Tatum was not heard by younger jazzmen and future boppers, who probably had the chance to absorb the more advanced aspects of his style, such as the double-time phrasing and the harmonic innovations. On this matter, also see the introductory notes to "Sweet Georgia Brown."

Knockin' Myself Out

as recorded by Art Tatum on July 26, 1941

Lil Green

Transcribed by Riccardo Scivales

1st chorus
Medium (♩ = c.108)
Swing 8ths
C7

^aVery probably by mistake, bassist Chocolate Williams interprets the first eight bars as a piano Intro, thus entering at bar 9 with a walking bass line on the C6 chord.



8th chorus
♩ = c. 108 (Swing 8ths)

13 C7 F7 *gua* C7

17 C9(b,5) F7

19 C

21 Cdim

23 Dm7 G7 C