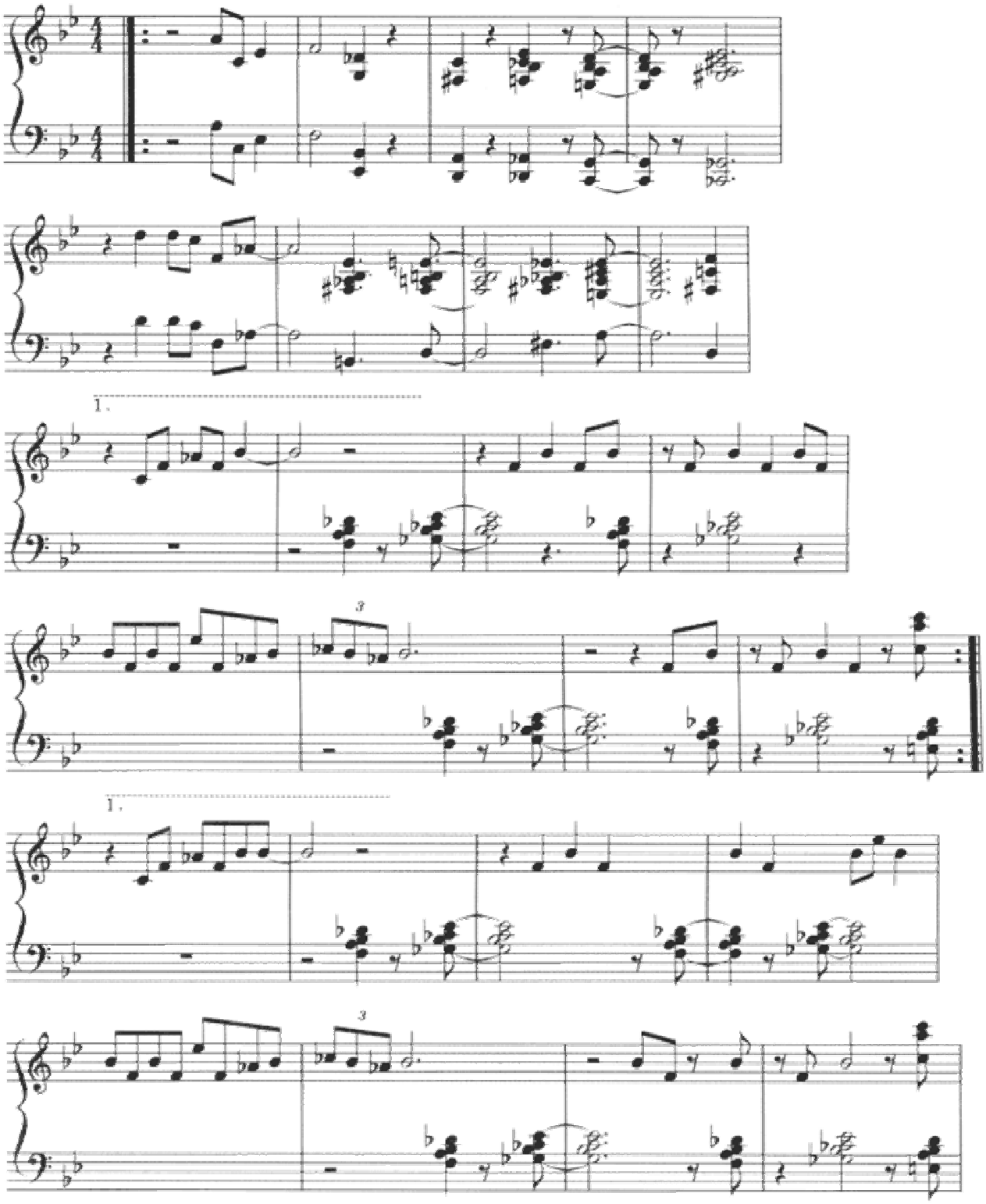
Transcriptions: London Blues

by Christiaan 'Niliov' van Hemert

Well, I think words alone are insufficient when it comes to describing the music of Brad Mehldau. To me this man is definitely one of the most important and innovative pianists today. The song, which is featured here is from his first album: "Introducing Brad Mehldau". "London Blues" is in fact just a blues in **F**, although on first hearing that might not seem the case. Let's look at the theme: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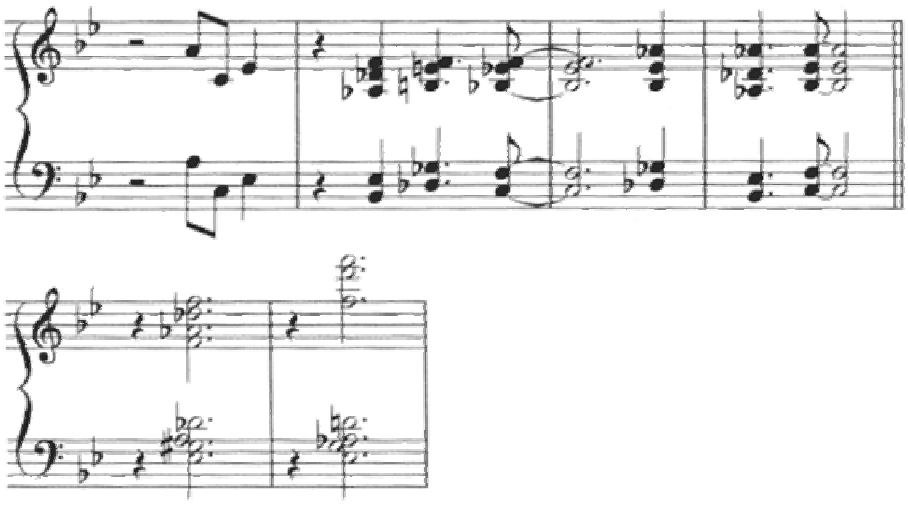

The theme clearly starts on a **F7**, followed by a descending pattern of chords to a **B7**. This is quite "normal": **B7** of course is the tritome substitute for **F7**, so a **Bb7** is expected. This chord is "skipped" though and "replaced" with a clever sequence of cluster voiced major7 chords. This sequence works because of three reasons. First: the chords are all a minor third apart, **Bmaj7 - Dmaj7 - F#maj7 - Amaj7**, so in fact the bass notes themselves form a chord! Second: they are all **maj7** chords, thus providing a logical and somewhat "spacey" sound. And third: the sequence ends in a **Amaj7**, a substitute for **Amin7**, which would be normal on that spot. The **D7b10** nicely introduces the **Abmin/Db7** pedal, which is just a stretched substitute for **G7** leading to **C7**. Of course this **C7** is replaced by means of an old "trick": "sussing the dominants", so no **C7** but a **C7sus**. Well, if you look at the tune this way it IS a blues, right?

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