

Merry-Go-Round: Motivic and Schenkerian
Analysis of a Charlie Parker Solo

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Charlie Parker is one of the founding musicians of the bebop movement and is regarded by many as one of the most important jazz reformers of all time. His innovative melodic style and harmonic extensions paved the way for jazz to move beyond the boundaries of blues and swing. This article explores the application of Schenkerian analytical tools in the examination of Charlie Parker's solo style, in addition to investigating Parker's reliance on standardized motives or *crips*. Since a greatly comprehensive study of Parker's playing lies beyond the scope of this article, the focus will be placed on Parker's improvisatory solo in take one of "Merry-Go-Round." Before proceeding with an analysis, a brief history of the piece will function as a spring-board into an examination of methodology and literature pertaining to Parker's improvisatory style and structure. The work of Thomas Owens opens new analytical channels into Parker's improvisations. The writings of Steve Larson set the foundation for the use of Schenkerian analysis of jazz music. The history, methodology, and literature review set the stage for an analytical discussion of "Merry-Go-Round."

History of the Piece

"Merry-Go-Round"¹ was recorded by Harry Smith during a session in New York on September 24, 1948.² Only four songs were recorded during this session: "Perhaps," "Marmaduke," "Merry-Go-Round," and "Steeplechase." There are six takes each of "Perhaps" and "Marmaduke," most of which are incomplete, there are two takes of "Merry-Go-Round," and conflicting information as to whether there are one or seven takes of "Steeplechase."³ The personnel for this recording session is as follows:

¹ The recording used for the present analysis is Charlie Parker, *A Studio Chronicle*, JSP915 E.

² Owens, Thomas, "Charlie Parker: Techniques of Improvisation" (PhD diss., University of California), 326. Additional information can be found on Savoy's homepage <http://www.savoyjazz.com/sites/savoy/sjNews/parkerGenius1.asp>, accessed 11/10/08. This album was released as Savoy 937.

³ Owens mentions one take of "Steeplechase," however Savoy's website mentions seven.

Miles Davis – Trumpet
Charlie Parker – Alto Saxophone
John Lewis – Piano
Curly Russell – Bass
Max Roach – Drums

“Merry-Go-Round” is an extension of the 32-bar AABA song form, based on the “I Got Rhythm” chord changes. Each of the A sections is in the tonic key (I) of G, while the B section tonicizes the subdominant (IV), with an added circle of fifth motion, and dominant (V) key areas. That the 32-bar form is so prevalent among jazz standards enhances the viability of “Merry-Go-Round” to serve as a model for analysis of Parker’s solo style. While certainly not diminishing his contributions to jazz and the birth of bebop, it must be remembered that Parker’s blues heritage was always present in his playing. A 32-bar song form is therefore arguably the perfect formal medium in which to experience Parker in his most characteristic element.

Purposes of the Present Study

The analysis of this piece will serve two purposes. The first is to explore “Merry-Go-Round” in order to determine how well it adheres to the style expected in a *typical* solo of Charlie Parker’s. The second purpose is to explore the application of Schenkerian linear analysis to jazz improvisations in order to find the extent to which this type of analysis can reveal a deeper structural process in Parker’s improvisatory techniques. To advance both purposes, the works of two prolific authors will be examined. While Thomas Owens’ dissertation on Parker’s techniques of improvisation alludes to both purposes, it is more oriented toward uncovering the standard techniques and motivic uses in Parker’s solos. Several writings by Steve Larson, while also acknowledging both purposes, focus primarily on the ways in which Schenkerian analysis reveals deeper structural processes. A review of these materials is essential to understanding my approach to the analysis of “Merry-Go-Round.”

Review of Owens and Larson

Possibly the most thorough examination of Charlie Parker's improvisatory style to date is the Doctoral dissertation *Charlie Parker: Techniques of Improvisation* by Thomas Owens, published in 1974. This two-part dissertation includes roughly 270 pages of analytical discourse, 112 pages of bibliography and references, and a second section containing 478 pages of transcriptions and other musical figures and examples. For even the beginning student of Parker, the transcriptions alone serve as an invaluable wealth of materials for study and performance. In addition to transcriptions of the most widely distributed recordings, Owens includes transcriptions of many alternative takes, adding to the already massive depth of material regarding Parker's recorded repertoire. Although Owens' document seems monumental, there is in fact still considerable room to expand upon his ideas, especially through analyzing solos Owens did not analyze, by transcribing pieces that Owens did not include in his dissertation, and by applying analytical methods other than those Owens employed. The focus of the present article includes all three methods of expansion, since "Merry-Go-Round" was not analyzed or transcribed by Owens,⁴ and since I will subject the piece here to linear analysis, a method not chiefly used by Owens. (Although Owens does include linear analyses in his dissertation, these constitute a relatively small portion of the overall content. He also calls for more analysis of this sort to be carried out regarding Parker's improvisatory style.)⁵

One technique Owens uses in his document is to group both blues and "I Got Rhythm" pieces according to key. This method of categorization is effective for uncovering common *licks* or *crips* (both terms being synonymous) that Parker is apt to use in his improvisations within

⁴ A transcription of "Merry-Go-Round" can be found in Jamey Aebersold and Ken Slone, *Charlie Parker Omnibook: For Eb Instruments*, (Van Nuys, CA: Alfred Publishing Company, 1978).

⁵ Owens, "Charlie Parker: Techniques of Improvisation," 271-272. "Analysis of more of this material, perhaps along the lines followed in this study, will bring into sharper focus the importance of this flourishing contemporary tradition of improvised art music."

specific keys. Before examining the melodic pattern in “Rhythm” pieces in Bb (the key of “Merry-Go-Round”) more specifically, it is essential that several general features of Parker’s style be addressed. Owens’ dissertation reveals four characterizing factors of Parker’s improvisatory style in blues pieces:⁶

1. The theme (head) has virtually no effect on the subsequent improvisations. Theme borrowings of more than five or six notes are almost nonexistent, and usually occur when a phrase of the theme resembles one of Parker’s stock improvising phrases.
2. The accompanimental style has no discernible effect on his improvisations; [regardless of the accompaniment] his solos are equally fluent and stylistically consistent.
3. No significant changes in improvisational style appear in these solos; the same tone quality, accenting, phrasing, and motives appear in [his blues solos of 1944-1952].⁷
4. Tempo is the most telling variable in these solos; the slower the tempo the more florid the improvisation and the less predictable the phrases.

Although these factors are mentioned in relation to Parker’s blues solos in Bb, they are found to be universally applicable to all of his improvisations, including those based on “Rhythm” changes. It is the motives (some of which are crips) employed in each key that are the most revealing feature of Owens’ method of organization by key. In each key (Db, Ab, Eb, Bb, F, C, and G) Parker is found to execute either 1) motives that are specific to one key only, or 2) certain motives that are common to multiple keys, but that vary in quantity according to a specific key. For example, we can take into consideration two generic motives X and Y. Furthermore, let X be a motive that is used only in the key of Bb and Y be a motive that is used in all keys. Therefore, motive X is found only in Bb improvisations. Motive Y might be used

⁶ Ibid., 91-92. Although these characterizing factors are stated in relation to blues solos, they apply almost equally to solos over “Rhythm” changes.

⁷ Ibid., 91. Owens cites “Tiny’s Tempo” of 1944 and “Laird Baird” of 1952 as the outer points of the time frame.

152 times in Bb improvisations, but only 6 times in Ab improvisations. The disparity in use of these motives between the two keys unquestionably reveals a trademark of Parker's style, and possibly allows us a glimpse into the workings of Charlie Parker's mind.

Owens' lists of motives are extensive and are beyond the scope of the analysis of "Merry-Go-Round." However, by revealing the motives used in this particular tune, a comparison can be drawn between the solos of "Merry-Go-Round" and Parker's general improvisatory output in "I Got Rhythm" changes in Bb. It may then be determined whether or not this piece can be regarded as "typical" of his technique.

The second author that must be discussed is Steve Larson. Larson's 1987 dissertation *Schenkerian Analysis of Modern Jazz* is an important examination of the strengths and weaknesses of Schenkerian analysis as applied to the modern jazz repertoire. In 1998, several issues raised in his dissertation were published as "Schenkerian Analysis of Modern Jazz: Questions About Method" in the journal *Music Theory Spectrum*.⁸ This article poses and answers three questions regarding the suitability of the application of Schenkerian analysis to non-"Common Practice" Western art music:⁹

1. Is it appropriate to apply to improvised music a method of analysis developed for the study of composed music?
2. Can features of jazz harmony (ninths, elevenths, and thirteenths) not appearing in the music Schenker analyzed be accounted for by Schenkerian sketches?
3. Do improvising musicians really intend to create the complex structures shown in Schenkerian analyses?

⁸ Steve Larson, "Schenkerian Analysis of Modern Jazz: Questions About Method." *Music Theory Spectrum* 20, No. 2 (Autumn, 1998), 209-241.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 210.

Larson is able to convincingly answer “yes” to each of three questions, and therefore paves a clearer path toward the acceptance of Schenkerian analysis of jazz (and popular) music. Owing to the wealth of information in Larson’s article, any attempt at a summary of the article here would exceed available space. Let it simply be stated that Larson convincingly answers questions regarding suitability of Schenkerian analysis to jazz music, and that the Schenkerian methods Larson uses will be later applied to the analysis of “Merry-Go-Round” itself.

Motivic Analysis of “Merry-Go-Round”

There are several issues that arise with “Merry-Go-Round” that must be addressed regarding this specific tune, as compared to many other Parker solos. The first issue is tempo. While Parker is historically known for his ability to perform intricate improvisatory passages at exceedingly swift tempos, the quarter note = 300 tempo of “Merry-Go-Round” nears the limit of his ability to execute.¹⁰ The impressively fast tempo leads to a second issue. At this speed, any improviser must unquestionably limit the features of his/her performance if it is indeed “improvised,” as opposed to a collection of pre-composed ideas.

At quarter note = 300, the time one has available to plan ahead is severely decreased, hampering the performer’s ability to expand beyond his/her *comfort zone*. It is therefore reasonable to assume that an improviser in this situation will rely more heavily on memorized patterns, motives, or riffs which are easily recalled from cognitive and muscle memory. This is not to say that an experienced improviser cannot push beyond these limitations, but it seems only reasonable to think that any performer’s improvisatory freedom would be somewhat constrained by tempo. One way to push beyond these limitations is to work out entire phrases in advance of a performance or recording session. This is merely an expanded concept of memorized patterns,

¹⁰ Regardless of whether Parker chose this tempo, he did perform with the ensemble and therefore made a choice to perform at quarter note = 300.

motives, or crips. Recalling the pre-composed material relieves some of the cognitive burdens of the rapid tempo, allowing the improviser to expand or develop the pre-composed ideas, or to construct and develop new motives or phrases.

As mentioned earlier, one of the most compelling contributions of Owens' dissertation is the compiled lists of Charlie Parker's most commonly used motives. As stated before, these motives are then further subdivided according to their usage in both "blues" and "I Got Rhythm" changes in various keys. For the present analysis, discussion is limited to motives used in Bb and for "I Got Rhythm."¹¹ In addition to displaying the motives which Parker uses in each key, Owens also lists the frequency at which they occur in his own analyses.¹² Owens' list of the most frequently-used motives for the key of Bb is also reproduced here as Figure 1 (the list reads in descending order of frequency from top right to bottom left). Taking into account these two lists of motivic use and frequency, particular pieces may be judged as *typical* or *atypical* of Parker's style. After applying Owens' lists to "Merry-Go-Round," one finds that it is reasonably accurate to describe the tune as a typical Parker improvisation.

Figure 1 (Principle Motives in Bb)¹³

M. 1A	M. 9
M. 4A	M. 20
M. 6A	M. 13A
M. 2A	M. 1B
M. 4E	M. 10
M. 5B	M. 8
M. 3A	M. 18A
M. 7	M. 12A
M. 4C	M. 5C

¹¹ Owens, "Charlie Parker: Techniques of Improvisation," 103-104. For ease of reference, this complete dissertation can be viewed in PDF format through ProQuest Dissertations and Theses.

¹² Although Owens' analyses do not comprise the full repertoire performed by Charlie Parker, they do represent a significant enough portion to be regarded as valid for his typical output in any given key.

¹³ Owens, "Charlie Parker: Techniques of Improvisation," 120.

Figure 2 (Motivic Use in “Merry-Go-Round”)

Motive	M4A	M1A	M10	M6A	M5A	M5C	M13B	M18A
Frequency	7	4	4	3	2	2	2	2
Motive	M4E	M5B	M7	M9	M20	M12A	M13A	
Frequency	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	

Figure 2 illustrates the motives used in “Merry-Go-Round” and the frequency with which they occur. The motives in “Merry-Go-Round” (Figure 2) align nearly perfectly with those most frequently used in “I Got Rhythm” pieces as examined by Owens (Figure 1). It can therefore be reasonably assumed that “Merry-Go-Round” exhibits the melodic qualities of a *typical* Charlie Parker solo. When combined, these motives comprise roughly 23 out of the total 76 measures of improvisation. One possible explanation of why approximately 1/3 of Parker’s improvisation is based on crips is the aforementioned tempo of the tune. At quarter note = 300, Parker would have less time to instantaneously create a new melody for the piece, develop the tune’s preexisting melody, or fully develop previous material. It is therefore not surprising that this tune contains a high percentage of Parker’s basic motivic material, and fits into the category of a typical Bb “I Got Rhythm” improvisation.

Schenkerian Analysis

Thus far, the majority of the analytical discussion has concentrated on the typicality of Parker’s improvisation on “Merry-Go-Round.” While the improvisation has been found to be typical of his style, it is still inherently unique in its own right. No two solos can ever be exactly the same (unless one is a replication of a recording). The remainder of the analysis in this document will focus on properties that make Parker’s improvisation in “Merry-Go-Round” unique. Schenkerian analysis will serve as the tool with which the solos are to be examined. There are several reasons for this methodological choice. Although Schenkerian analysis is

reductive in nature, it can also serve to illuminate the beauty and originality of a composer's works. If the goal of an analytical venture is merely to show how a piece may be reduced to a descending *Urlinie* over a basic I-V-I progression, then it is a shallow venture which need not be undertaken.

However, the true goal of Schenkerian analysis is to discover the unique ways in which a composer expands this basic fundamental structure (the *Ursatz*) within his/her own personal style. In the case of jazz, the improviser is composing on the spot. According to Larson, this connection of the performer to the improvisation is the same as that of a composer to a pre-composed work.¹⁴ Schenker himself even praised the ability to improvise¹⁵ (although limited to art-music composers), calling it "the ability in which all creativity begins."¹⁶ It is therefore a misconception to believe that Schenkerian analysis cannot be applied to jazz repertoire because of its improvisational origins.

Due to the limited scope of this investigation, only Parker's first chorus of "Merry-Go-Round" will be analysed. Several limits must also be set into place as to direct the analysis toward a brief but coherent dialogue. Here, only Parker's solo will be included in detail in the analysis. The piano and bass will be accounted for in the harmonic progressions underlying the solo, but are taken as a single generic accompaniment. Also, the harmonic changes have been simplified to fit the middleground layer of sketches. Not every chord implied in Parker's melodic line will receive full attention in the middleground layer of analysis. Owing to the previous discussion of thematic influence on Parker's improvisations, further analysis of the theme is excluded.

¹⁴ Steve Larson, "Schenkerian Analysis of Modern Jazz: Questions About Method," *Music Theory Spectrum* 20, No. 2 (Autumn, 1998), 211.

¹⁵ Heinrich Schenker, "The Art of Improvisation," trans. Richard Kramer, in *The Masterwork in Music, Volume I*, ed. William Drabkin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 2-19.

¹⁶ Heinrich Schenker, *Free Composition*, trans. and ed. Ernst Oster (New York: Longman, 1979), 6.

Schenkerian analysis is generally categorized by three levels in which musical events are depicted. The background represents the most basic harmonic idea (fundamental bass) and the descending *Urlinie* (either an 8-, 5-, or 3-line). On the other end of the reductive spectrum from the background is the foreground, which accounts for every note of the piece and the way in which notes relate to each other and to the *Urlinie*. Between these two levels of magnification, and thus conveniently named, lies the middleground. This level is more ambiguous regarding what notes to include and which to omit. It can also offer not just one, but several layers of interpretation. Therefore, a full Schenkerian sketch might include a background, a foreground, and multiple middleground layers. For “Merry-Go-Round” a background and several middleground layers are given. One middleground level nears the detail of a foreground sketch. In order to better relate the details which are closer to the foreground, the second middleground level provides a reduction geared more toward the background, which guides the entire composition. The presentation of the three levels should therefore provide a smooth transition from near-foreground toward the background. Due to space limitations, the complete background cannot be fully reproduced in one location; however, it can be easily comprehended by viewing the background sketches found in Figures 3-6.

“Merry-Go-Round” falls into the category of a descending *Urlinie* from $\hat{5}$. Parker’s first note choice is scale degree $\hat{5}$, setting up a clear 5-line without the need for an initial ascent (refer to Figure 3).¹⁷ The unfolding to A and subsequent F# serve as upper and lower neighbor tones to the chord tone G in m. 2. After a descending G-Major arpeggio (shown as an octave unfolding of G), Parker reaches back up to E which is enhanced by the leading tone D#.

¹⁷ The remaining discussion of “Merry-Go-Round” refers to pitches in the key of Eb, not concert pitch. This approach was chosen to facilitate an easier visual connection to the score.

Figure 3 (Chorus 1, Section A)

The musical score consists of three systems, labeled 1, 2, and 3. System 1 features a single treble clef staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 3/4 time signature. The melody begins with a quarter note G4, followed by a quarter note A4, and then a quarter note B4. A slur covers the next four notes: B4, A4, G4, and F#4. The piece concludes with a triplet of notes: G4, A4, and B4. System 2 consists of two staves: a treble clef staff on top and a bass clef staff on the bottom. The treble staff continues the melody from system 1, with a slur over B4, A4, G4, and F#4, followed by a quarter note G4. The bass staff provides a simple accompaniment, starting with a whole note G3. System 3 also consists of two staves: a treble clef staff on top and a bass clef staff on the bottom. The treble staff continues the melody with a slur over B4, A4, G4, and F#4, followed by a quarter note G4. The bass staff provides accompaniment with a whole note G3. Chord symbols are placed below the bass staff in system 2: I (G3) under the first measure, V (B4) under the second measure, V/IV (A4) under the third measure, IV (F#4) under the fourth measure, and I (G4) under the fifth measure. System 3 has the same chord symbols: I (G3) under the first measure, V (B4) under the second measure, V/IV (A4) under the third measure, IV (F#4) under the fourth measure, and I (G4) under the fifth measure.

This E serves as an upper neighbor to the D on the downbeat of m. 3. Measure 3 begins as a descending scale ending on Ab, an upper leading tone to the G which does not appear until m. 4, beat 2. The A and Ab both serve as upper neighbor tones to a prolonged G from m. 2-4 (shown in the sketch as a slur). After sounding the Ab, Parker reactivates the upper register with a descent beginning on F. This F serves three functions. The first is a local upper-neighbor to E, which is transferred down an octave in m. 4. The second function is as the initiator of a downward scale to G in m. 4. The third function is as a neighbor tone to the Eb at the end of m. 4, which itself acts as an upper neighbor to D on the downbeat of m. 5. In fulfillment of the second function, the F is now heard as initiating another descent to the tonic in m. 5, beat 3. This three-fold function of F is best seen in the first two levels of Figure 3 (m. 3).

The E which is the goal of an octave transfer in m. 4 also serves as Parker's activation point of a new lower register. The register below the tonic of the *Urlinie* is shown in Figure 3 as a beamed grouping of downward stemmed pitches. These beamed figures account for all of Parker's pitches below $\hat{1}$ as ascending figures which twice reach up to tonic. Each time Parker sound the low E4, he immediately rebounds upward toward a member of the tonic triad. In m. 6, Parker finally begins his descent from $\hat{5}$ to $\hat{4}$ during a scalar passage. The immediate aural impression is one of an eventual descent to $\hat{1}$. Parker certainly encircles the pitch G with upper and lower neighbors, but denies the listener the feeling of closure through the ascent back to $\hat{3}$. At the middleground level, this is shown with open note heads as a descent to $\hat{3}$. However, at the background level, it is merely a prolongation of tonic through an eight-measure phrase which moves melodically from the structural $\hat{5}$ to a non-structural $\hat{3}$.

Section **A2** (Figure 4) begins once again on D, a reaffirmation of the 5-line and a reactivation of the $\hat{5}$ prolonged in the previous section. The D here, as in section **A1**, unfolds to

Figure 4 (Chorus 1, Section A2)

The image displays a musical score for Figure 4 (Chorus 1, Section A2), organized into three systems (1, 2, and 3). Each system contains two staves: a vocal line (treble clef) and a piano accompaniment line (bass clef). The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 4/4.

System 1: The vocal line begins with a slur over the first two notes, followed by a slur over the next four notes. The piano accompaniment features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. Annotations include "Exp. 4-Prg." above the vocal line and "4-Prg." above the piano line. A fermata is placed over the final note of the piano line. A measure rest is indicated by a horizontal line with a brace.

System 2: The vocal line continues with a slur over the first two notes, followed by a slur over the next four notes. The piano accompaniment continues with eighth notes. Annotations include "4-Prg." above the piano line. Chord symbols "I", "V", "V/IV", and "IV" are written below the piano staff. A measure rest is indicated by a horizontal line with a brace.

System 3: The vocal line continues with a slur over the first two notes, followed by a slur over the next four notes. The piano accompaniment continues with eighth notes. Annotations include "V", "V/IV", and "IV" below the piano staff. A measure rest is indicated by a horizontal line with a brace.

A, although this time emphasized through the upper-neighbor Bb. The use of the blue note (b3) as the highest pitch thus far adds a more chromatic touch to the introductory passage of the second phrase. In m. 2, Parker leaps down a m7 to A#. This A# serves as a leading tone to B, and activates a lower register which prolongs a descent from B to G in m. 3-5.¹⁸ The high A in m. 2 is an upper neighbor to G, which is reached in m. 4 and is embellished with the intermediary Ab, m. 3 beat 3. The chord tone G is transferred down an octave through a long stepwise descent and final rebound from F4 in m. 4-5. It is then transferred directly up an octave to begin another descent in m. 5-7. During this final descent, a 4-progression connects the G to the *Urlinie* pitch D ($\hat{5}$).

Near the end of this descent, Parker reactivates a low E again as an ascent up to G. Just as in section **A1**, he uses this ascent in contrary motion to the descent of the *Urlinie*. Both of these lines find their culmination in the tonic pitch G, but again Parker arpeggiates the tonic triad, this time ending the phrase on the same pitch which he used to initiate it, D ($\hat{5}$). The background sketch illustrates that section **A2** is a prolongation of tonic through a descent D-C-B, ending back on $\hat{5}$. Although a beautifully melodic phrase, Parker refuses to grant the listener a feeling of closure through the descent to $\hat{1}$.

Section **B** is represented by Figure 5. There are again several unfoldings of D to A in this phrase. Parker begins the section on D; however in this case it is not as structurally important as in previous instances. The background level reveals that the D, although locally important in the unfolding, is not a structural pitch in the descending 5-progression over the subdominant harmony. The D-A unfoldings over the subdominant harmony in this phrase are included to illustrate Parker's continued use of this figure regardless of the underlying harmony, possibly an

¹⁸ In order to make reference to the sketches more accessible, measure numbers will be restarted for each section of the AABA form. Therefore, each section will have its own m. 1-8.

Figure 5 (Chorus 1, Section B)

The image displays a musical score for Figure 5 (Chorus 1, Section B), organized into three systems. Each system contains two staves: a treble clef staff on top and a bass clef staff on the bottom. The key signature is one sharp (F#).

System 1: The treble staff begins with a treble clef, a sharp sign (♯), and a hat symbol (^) above a '5'. The melody features a series of eighth notes with slurs and ties. A bracket with an asterisk (*) spans a group of notes. The bass staff contains a single note with a sharp sign (♯) above it.

System 2: The treble staff continues the melody with slurs and ties. The bass staff shows a sequence of notes with Roman numerals: II, V, IV, I, V, I, V. A horizontal line is drawn under the I, V, I, V sequence.

System 3: The treble staff continues the melody. The bass staff shows notes with Roman numerals: IV, V, I. A horizontal line is drawn under the V, I sequence.

Additional markings include a hat symbol (^) above a '5' at the end of the treble staff in each system, and a sharp sign (♯) above a note in the bass staff of the first system.

effect of the rapid tempo. The figure is supported later by the dominant harmony, in which $\hat{5}$ is able to be heard again as structural in correlation to being sounded as the highest pitch of the chorus. The background sketch shows that the D over the dominant is prolonged not only by the unfolding, but also by an upper-neighbor Eb.

The middleground sketches demonstrate this process, but also show Parker's movement through nearly two full octaves (E4 – D6). It is in this section of harmonic contrast that Parker provides the highest contrast in range. Also of note is the use of the motive which Owens labeled M5C, performed here in m. 6. This motive in itself can be viewed as a hidden repetition of the D-A unfolding. The most important aspect of section **B** that should be gleaned from the sketches is the full outlining of the subdominant triad through a 5-progression and the use of the D-A unfolding as a reassertion of $\hat{5}$ over a dominant harmony. At the background level, $\hat{5}$ cannot be supported by the subdominant triad; therefore Parker not only sounds this pitch as the highest sonority of the chorus, but also utilizes it to end the phrase over the tonic triad that begins the next section. This could be the result of Parker stalling, another effect of the rapid tempo.

Three times thus far Parker has ended his phrases on a member of the tonic triad other than $\hat{1}$, greatly increasing its expectation as the final pitch in the last section. The D that served as the conclusion of section **B** is elided with final phrase (**A3**, Figure 6). Each of the four sections of the AABA form thus begin on D ($\hat{5}$), removing any doubt about the use of a 5-line as the *Urlinie* of the first chorus of "Merry-Go-Round." In the Schenkerian sketch for the final phrase, the initial D is omitted because of its stronger connection with the termination of section **B**.

Figure 6 (Chorus 1, Section A3)

The image displays a musical score for three systems, labeled 1, 2, and 3. Each system consists of a vocal line (treble clef) and a piano accompaniment line (bass clef).
System 1: The vocal line begins with an 'Emb. 4-Prg.' annotation. The piano accompaniment features a '4-Prg.' annotation. A large bracket spans the vocal line from the first measure to the end of the system, with 'N.B.' written above it. Chord symbols $\hat{5}$, $\hat{4}$, $\hat{3}!$, and $\hat{2}$ are placed above the vocal line. The piano accompaniment has a 'I' chord symbol below the first measure.
System 2: The vocal line has an 'Emb. 4-Prg.' annotation. The piano accompaniment has a '4-Prg.' annotation. A large bracket spans the vocal line from the first measure to the end of the system, with 'N.B.' written above it. Chord symbols $\hat{5}$, $\hat{4}$, $\hat{3}!$, and $\hat{2}$ are placed above the vocal line. The piano accompaniment has chord symbols V, V/IV, IV, V_6^7/IV_5 , and I below the staff.
System 3: The vocal line has an 'Emb. 4-Prg.' annotation. The piano accompaniment has a '4-Prg.' annotation. A large bracket spans the vocal line from the first measure to the end of the system, with 'N.B.' written above it. Chord symbols $\hat{5}$, $\hat{4}$, $\hat{3}!$, and $\hat{2}$ are placed above the vocal line. The piano accompaniment has chord symbols IV, V_6^7/IV_5 , and I below the staff.

In m. 1-3 of the final phrase (Figure 6), Parker rises to the upper G, prolonging it by the neighboring A, which already reaches the apex of the phrase. The line in m. 3 begins to descend, first sweeping through a tonic arpeggio creating an octave transfer, but also more slowly in the second half of the measure, landing on the structural $\hat{5}$ in m. 4 beat 1. As in the other two A sections, there is a local descending line toward G, which is secondary to the descent of the *Urlinie* in this phrase. Also, as in the other A sections, Parker activates the lower register during this descent, creating a contrary ascending line toward G which is repeated twice.

The final descent of the *Urlinie* begins in m. 3 beat 1. A 4-progression prolongs tonic from G to D, initiating the structural $\hat{5}$ one final time. From here each successive strong beat supports the descent to $\hat{4}$, $\hat{3}$, and $\hat{2}$. Underneath this *Urlinie* remains the contrary ascent from E to G. Perhaps Parker's last attempt at altering the listener's expectations is in the final two notes. Just as he finishes the line on G, he again sounds a B, which in previous phrases has resulted in an incomplete descent. Here, Parker then immediately returns to tonic, ending the chorus with an undeniable sense of completion.

One final aspect of this phrase must be addressed in regard to typical Schenkerian analysis. The appearance of Bb ($b\hat{3}$) in m. 6 would be questionable with respect to a strict Schenkerian analysis. In jazz or blues music, and here in an improvisatory solo by Charlie Parker, this alteration can be viewed simply as a blues inflection of the diatonic line. More problematic than this flatted pitch alone is the harmony with which it is supported. If Aebersold's harmonic notation is correct, both $\hat{3}$ and $\hat{2}$ are supported by C#. When both of the structural pitches are taken into account, in addition to Parker's delay of the resolution across the bar (and chord change), it is possible to view $\hat{3}$ and $\hat{2}$ as being supported by an $A^{7(b9)}$ sonority in first inversion. This chord functions as the V^9/V , and can be seen as a dominant substitute in

which the dominant itself does not appear. Although this is a “stretch” with respect to employment of a strict Schenkerian analysis, the application of the model to jazz and blues does require some alteration, as is argued in Larson’s methodological article. In the instance of the A⁷ ^(b9) chord, the response to any argument of method is one of blues inflection and a borrowed dominant.

Conclusions

The work of Charlie Parker has received increased attention in the academic world since his death. Although much has been done, there is still a great deal of material that has yet to be examined, and there are alternative methods with which to approach his music. Previous research by Thomas Owens has provided the tools so that Parker’s solos might be judged to be motivically typical or atypical. In the case of “Merry-Go-Round” the improvisation was found to be typical, with stock motives and crips comprising nearly 1/3 of the material. This high concentration of “prepared” motives owes in part to the rapid tempo, providing minimal reaction time to the soloist.

With the application of Schenkerian analysis, Parker is shown to have a highly structured approach to the first chorus irrespective of the tempo and the use of pre-composed ideas. The D-A unfolding, descent of the octave and octave transfer, upper neighbor motion, activation of a lower register to produce a long range contrary ascent to tonic, and the 4-progression to prolong tonic from $\hat{8}$ to $\hat{5}$ are techniques that Parker employs throughout the four phrases to create cohesion amidst the flurry of eighth notes. It is techniques such as this, that are brought out by Schenkerian analysis, which can provide a deeper insight into the improvisational style of Charlie Parker.

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