

The
PIANO
of
RICHARD TWARDZIK

Solographer: Jan Evensmo
Completed: Jan. 4, 2016, Nov. 9, 2022

Born: Danvers, Boston, Ma., April 30, 1931
Died: Paris, France, Oct. 21, 1955

Introduction:

Richard "Dick" Twardzik was one of the most exciting pianists in early modern jazz, that is the few years he lived. His music is equally fresh, original, unpredictable and moving today as it was played and recorded, mostly in jams and concerts more than half a century ago.

History:

Studied classical music before discovering jazz. Began playing in clubs in 1946 and soon became one of the most promising musicians in Boston. Played with Serge Chaloff and Charlie Parker, worked with Charlie Mariano (1951-52) and toured with Lionel Hampton. After recording with Chaloff and as a leader (1954) he joined Chet Baker for a European tour (1955). He was addicted to heroin and died from an overdose in a Paris hotel (ref. New Grove Dictionary of Jazz).

RICHARD TWARDZIK SOLOGRAPHY

CHARLIE MARIANO

Boston, Dec. 1951

Sonny Truitt (tb), Charlie Mariano (as), Jim Clark (ts), Richard Twardzik (p), Jack Lawlor (b), Carl Goodwin (dm).

One title (postscript: earlier presented as “Aviary”, although solo notation and comments below are correct for “Mariners”) was recorded for Prestige:

302 Mariners Intro 8 bars. Acc. (as), (tb) and (ts).
Solo 32 bars. (FM)

From the very first bar in the intro we meet one of the most fascinating pianists in modern jazz development. His musical world is quite different from most of his contemporaries, as evident from the dark hued solo on this “Mariners”.

SERGE CHALOFF QUINTET

Albany, NY, Spring 1952

Possibly Sonny Truitt (tb-item 3,4), Serge Chaloff (bar), Richard Twardzik (p), Jack Lawlor (b), Jimmy Weiner (dm).

Broadcast from Hotel Wellington, four titles, unissued, not available:

Love Is Just Around The Corner

Listen To Les

Gabardine And Serge

Unidentified Tune

CHARLIE PARKER JAM SESSION

Boston, prob. Dec. 8-14, 1952

Possibly Joe Gordon (tp), Charlie Parker (as), possibly Bill Wellington (ts), Richard Twardzik (p), Charlie Mingus (b), Roy Haynes (dm).

Date also given as April 12, 1951 but probably from same period as jam below.

Date possibly also March 3-9, 1952, when Parker and Twardzik first met.

One title, among several, recorded live possibly at “Christy’s”, Framingham (suburb), one has RT:

I’ll Remember April Solo 3 choruses of 32 bars.
Acc. (b). (FM)

For more comments see below, otherwise the piano is not so well recorded here, but still quite audible, and note particularly the second choruses with interesting constructions.

CHARLIE PARKER JAM SESSION

Boston, Dec. 14, 1952

Joe Gordon (tp), Charlie Parker (as), Richard Twardzik (p), Charlie Mingus (b), Roy Haynes (dm), “Symphony Sid” Torin (mc).

WCOP broadcast from the Hi Hat Club, eight titles:

Introduction	Solo 6 bars behind (mc). (SM)
Ornithology	Solo 64 bars. (FM)
Cool Blues	Solo 4 choruses of 12 bars. (FM)
Groovin’ High	Solo 64 bars to acc. (b) 32 bars. (F)
Don’t Blame Me	Intro with (tp-mute) 4 bars to acc. (as) 32 bars to acc. (tp-open) 32 bars to solo 32 bars to acc. (b) 32 bars to acc. (as) 16 bars to coda. (S)
Scrapple From The Apple	Solo 3 choruses of 32 bars. (F)
Cheryl	Solo 3 choruses of 12 bars to acc. (b) 3 choruses. (FM)
Jumpin’ With Symphony Sid	Acc. only. (FM)

One might think that this would be too much of a challenge for a young man, but on the contrary, RT is to me the most important and challenging performer on this session! We all know Bird and his greatness, and he plays very well here, but we have heard his tricks before (not those in the start of his 8th and last chorus on “Cheryl”!!!). However, we have not heard someone playing jazz piano like this, with utter confidence, as he never had done anything else (probably true!). Listen first to his sensitive accompaniment to Bird and Joe on the lovely “... Blame Me” and then his magnificent solo chorus blending classical music and jazz improvisation in a perfect way!! He gets ample solo opportunities on all items, and while there is no point in single out particular highlights since everything is history,

an exception must be made for his intriguing version of “Cool ...”, note the last chorus!

CHARLIE MARIANO BOSTON ALL STARS **Boston, Jan. 27, 1953**
Herb Pomeroy (tp), Charlie Mariano (as), Richard Twardzik (p, tom-tom-446),
Bernie Griggs (b), Jimmy Weiner (dm), Ira Gitler (bells).
Six titles were recorded for Prestige:

444	Bye Bye Blues	Intro 8 bars to ens 32 bars. Solo 64 bars. (F)
445	Bess, You Is My Woman Now	Acc. (as). (S/SM)
446	Barsac	Acc. (as). Solo 32 bars. (M)
447	Stella By Starlight	Intro 8 bars to ens 32 bars. Solo 32 bars. (FM)
448	I'm Old-Fashioned	Duet with (tp/as) 32 bars. (FM)
449	Erosong	Acc. (as). Solo 8 bars. (S)

Not yet 22 years old, RT is playing the most unusual and complicated piano as he never had done anything else. This session is one of the few studio recordings he made, and it is quite an ear opener. Since he is playing standard material, it is possible to relate his music to playgrounds more familiar, and this writer is heavily fascinated. Start by noting the dramatic intro on “Bye Bye ...” and a strong and highly original solo later. “Stella ...” is played in a surprisingly high tempo, and again his introduction is a story for itself, sounding like church bells, and his chorus explodes with fat chords. He is also really swinging the “Barsac”. On the other side of the tempo scale we find impressionistic slow and floating 8 bars, very impressing. Note also his accompaniments, particularly to Charlie Mariano's alto sax, and in fact, the session as a whole is historical a very important one, exciting, experimental and excellent playing by all participants.

ALLEN EAGER **Boston, Feb. 1, 1953**
Allen Eager (ts), Richard Twardzik (p), Bernie Giggs (b), Glen Glennon (dm),
Symphony Sid Torin (mc).
Broadcast from the Hi Hat Club, five titles:

	Jumpin' With Symphony Sid	Acc. only. (M)
	This Time The Dream's On Me	Intro 8 bars. Solo 64 bars. (FM)
	Out Of Nowhere	Intro 8 bars. Solo 64 bars. (FM)
	Zootcase	Solo 64 bars. (FM)
	Jumpin' with Symphony Sid	Acc. only. (FM)

Allen Eager is in fine shape on this date, and that also goes for RT whose playing here is more conventional than usual. Nevertheless his originality comes clearly through, and it is particularly interesting to listen to his treatment of good old “... Nowhere”.

SAM MARGOLIS QUINTET **Lynn, Mass., Oct. 11, 1953**
Dick Wetmore (tp-except “Medley”), Sam Margolis (ts-except “Medley”), Richard
Twardzik (p), Whitney Cronin (b), Jimmy Zitano (dm).
Broadcast from Melody Lounge, ten titles, not available:

	Theme
	Jumpin' At The Woodside
	Mean To Me
	Stompin' At The Savoy
	Ballad Medley: Laura
	Body And Soul
	Caravan
	'Round Midnight
	One O'Clock Jump
	Theme

Jay Migliori (ts), Richard Twardzik (p), Johnny Rae (vib), Jack Carter (b), Bob Atcheson (dm).

Six titles were recorded at Harvard's radio station WHRB, now issued on Fresh Sound:

6:17	Fatty	Intro 8 bars. Soli 32 and 32 bars. (M)
5:36	Fatty alt.	Intro 8 bars. Solo 64 bars.
3:43	Get Happy	Intro 8 bars. Solo 64 bars. (F)
3:33	Get Happy alt.	As above. (F)
3:41	'Round Midnight	Intro 8 bars to solo 32 bars. Long coda. (S)
6:12	Chanticleer	Solo 64 bars. (FM)
4:42	Ryan's Love	Solo 88 bars. (F)
4:33	Willow Weep For Me	In ens. Solo 8 bars. (S)

And
Postscript of Nov. 2022: This marvellous CD came to my notice just some weeks ago and shows, once again, that RD was one of the most exciting pianists in the world of modern jazz. Just start by playing the two "Fatty"-intri, and you will understand what I mean. His improvisational capabilities are endless, possibly because his profound knowledge of modern classical music. Just listen to his magnificent 8 bars on "Willow ..." or "... Midnight" for that matter, slow items which are easy to follow. On uptempi you better have to follow on to try to fathom what he is trying to say. The two intri on "Get Happy" for instance! Just go ahead and get this music and enjoy yourself!!

SERGE CHALOFF

Boston, Sept. 3, 1954

Herb Pomeroy, Nick Capazutto (tp), Gene DiStachio (tb), Charlie Mariano (as), Varty Haritounian (ts), Serge Chaloff (bar), Richard Twardzik (p), Ray Oliveiri (b), Jimmy Zitano (dm). (Capazutto, DiStacchio and Haritounian out on "... Jump"). Five titles were recorded for Storyville (one more, "Sherry", without RT), issued as "The Fable Of Mabel":

-1	The Fable Of Mabel	Solo/arr. (F/S)
-2	The Fable Of Mabel	As above. (F/S)
-3	The Fable Of Mabel	As above. (F/S)
	Slam	Solo 32 bars. (FM)
-1	A Salute To Tiny	Solo 8 bars. (M)
-2	A Salute To Tiny	As above. (M)
-1	Eenie Meenie Minor Mode	Solo 8 bars. (M)
-2	Eenie Meenie Minor Mode	As above. (M)
-1	Let's Jump	Intro 8 bars. Acc. (as/tp). Solo 64 bars. Acc. (b) 8 bars. (FM)
-2	Let's Jump	As above but solo 32 bars. (FM)

A very exciting experimental session, "cool" Boston, with emphasis on advanced arrangements, and it really should not be solographically dissected, particularly "... Mabel" does not deserve this. However, concentrating upon RT, he has many exciting solo spots. On "Slam" he again opens his solo like church bells but then goes further into his musical kingdom. Note the two quite different soli on "... Tiny", and dig particularly how he almost goes striding on the end of take 1, the better one. Also great to compare the "Eenie ..."s. Finally, to encounter Basie's "... Jump" is delightful anachronism, with RT giving two very different intri, as well as soli. Note the session as a whole and everybody contribute to its success with much inspired soloing.

RICHARD TWARDZIK

Boston, probably Oct. 1954

Richard Twardzik (p).

Six titles were recorded by Peter Morris at an informal private session, issued as "1954 Improvisations":

	Warming Up	4:16. (M)
	Nice Work If You Can Get It	1:29. (FM)
	'Round Midnight	3:32. (S)
	Get Happy	3:05. (F)

It Could Happen To You	2:29. (S)
All The Things You Are	2:49. (M)

Boston, probably later Oct. 1954

Richard Twardzik (p), Jack Lawlor (b-“I Get ...”), Peter Littman (dm).
Same, six titles:

Yesterdays	2:22. (F)
Original	2:49. (M)
Our Love Is Here To Stay	4:47. (S)
I Get A Kick Out Of You	1:49. (FM)
Bess You Is My Woman Now	3:36. (S)
I’ll Remember April	7:53. (S/F)

Quoting Peter Morris’ CD-liner notes: “I am putting out this CD because after 36 years I have come to think it one of the handful of great recordings of music of all time. I think admirers of Charlie Parker, Bud Powell and Lennie Tristano will find this so. The listener must be patient with an amateur tape recording, sections of practice and an upright piano untuned till the “Yesterdays” track”. As said, these performances may be divided into two groups, the six first before they tuned the piano, and the six last after. This is unique historical material, and should be played with great concentration. To select highlights is very difficult, particularly after such lovely liner notes, but you should definitely spend some time with the very slow and beautiful “Our Love ...” and “Bess ...”!

RICHARD TWARDZIK TRIO Hackensack, NJ. Oct. 27, 1954

Richard Twardzik (p), Carson Smith (p), Peter Littman (dm).
Seven titles were recorded for Pacific Jazz:

A Crutch For The Crab alt.	3:19. (M)
Albuquerque Social Swim	2:59. (FM)
Bess, You Is My Woman Now	3:22. (S)
Yellow Tango	4:18. (M)
‘Round Midnight	3:40. (S)
I’ll Remember April	3:04. (F)
Just One Of Those Things	3:07. (F)

The first time out of Boston, and the only trio session he recorded in studio, thus this is something unique, an exciting chapter in the development of modern piano jazz. Or maybe not, because Richard Twardzik was always something very special, with solid classical background and a deep understanding of harmony. What he manages to do with a standard is always very surprising but nevertheless quite obvious, it has to be this way. It might be utterly stupid to compare him to Erroll Garner, but there is a resemblance to the extremely personal way of letting the improvisation be an organic consequence of the improviser’s personality rather than a variation on the given theme. I cannot select any ‘best’ items here, everything is exciting, if you have tuned in to RT’s music, but of course it is a must to listen closely to his personal version of the famous “... Midnight”, dig the last fifty seconds! The way he swings “... April” and “... Things” in uptempo is also highly remarkable. “... The Crab”, “... Social Swim” and “... Tango” are his own compositions. Postscript of Jan. 3, 2016: The so-called alternate take of “... The Crab” is actually the same take with a truncated beginning (ref. Jack Chambers).

CHET BAKER QUARTET Amsterdam, Holland, Sept. 17, 1955

Chet Baker (tp, vo), Richard Twardzik (p), Jimmy Bond (b), Peter Littman (dm).
Five titles were recorded live at “Concertgebouw”:

Tommyhawk	In ens. Solo 3 choruses of 32 bars to acc. (b). (F)
Indian Summer	Acc. (tp). Solo 64 bars to acc. (b) and (tp). (SM)
I’m Glad There’s You	Acc. (tp). Solo 24 bars to acc. (tp) and coda. (S)
But Not For Me	Acc. (vo) 32 bars. Solo 64 bars to

acc. (b) and (vo). (M)
 My Funny Valentine (NC) Intro 4 bars to acc. (vo)
 12 bars (NC). (S)

RT joined Chet Baker for a tour in Europe, a decision which turned out to be fatal. Seen in a historical perspective, it is easy to see that to join Baker was the worst thing the young RT could do, addicted to hard drugs as he was already. Musically however the many concerts preserved show the pianist's creativity and originality. Starting out with "Tommyhawk", it seems that he tries to crush the piano with his violent attack in uptempo, exciting! Much of the same can be heard with his fat chords on "... For Me". Even more impressive he is when tempo goes down, his solo on "... Summer" is great, as is his comping of the bass solo on the latter, note the ending here! Finally, for me the session highlight is the very slow "I'm Glad ...", note particularly the end of the solo. And the delicate intro on "... Valentine" is enough to merit a solography!

CHET BAKER QUARTET Scheveningen, Holland, Sept. 18, 1955
 Same. Six titles recorded live at "Kurhaus":

Tommyhawk	In ens. Solo 3 choruses of 32 bars to acc. (b). (F)
Indian Summer	Acc. (tp). Solo 64 bars to acc. (b). (SM)
Someone To Watch Over Me	Intro 4 bars to acc. (vo) 32 bars to solo 24 bars to acc. (vo) 8 bars to coda. (S)
Imagination	Acc. (tp) 36 bars to coda. (S)
C. T. A. (NC)	Acc. (tp). (F)
Exitus	Playing behind CB announcing. (SM)

Another Dutch concert only one day after the first one, both with good sound, and it is very interesting to compare the many alternate versions on the tour. This "Tommyhawk" is really cooking, and RT plays completely differently here and not as violent. "... Summer" seems more groovy and relaxed, note for details the opening of the two choruses here, lovely! They both seem inspired by each other on the vocal part of "Someone ...", and the solo is as original as you can get them.

CHET BAKER QUARTET/QUINTET Mainz, Germany, Sept. 21, 1955
 Same with Rolf Schnoebiegel (tp-"All ...") added.
 Three titles were broadcast from "Grosser Saal Des Kurfurstlichen Schlosses":

Walkin'	Solo 8 choruses of 12 bars to acc. (b) 3 choruses. (FM)
Indian Summer	Acc. (tp). Solo 64 bars to acc. (b). (M)
All The Things You Are	Intro. Solo 2 choruses of 36 bars to acc. (b). (FM)

The sound is not as good as on the previous Holland recordings, but listening to this historical group is still a great pleasure. RT's solo on "Walkin'" again demonstrates how special he is, and his blues concept certainly also. A third version of "... Summer" is slightly faster than the former ones, and the soloing is again completely different as should be the case for a perfect improviser. Finally "All The Things ..." with a floating piano out of any previous experience, later with a great solo.

CHET BAKER QUARTET Zürich, Switzerland, Sept. 24, 1955
 Postscript of Jan. 3, 2016: This is not a Richard Twardzik session. The correct personnel is reported to be: Chet Baker (tp), Elsie Bianchi (p), Siro Bianchi (b), unidentified (dm).

To avoid confusion, I let remain what I wrote earlier:
 "Two titles:

Happy Little Sunbeam	Acc. (tp) to solo 64 bars. (FM)
Moonlight In Vermont (NC)	Intro 4 bars to acc. (tp) to solo 8 bars (fade out). (S)

Little has been preserved from this concert (or maybe additional material exists?), and the sound is inferior to earlier ones. "Moonlight ..." also is not complete and

therefore not what it probably could have been. “Happy ...” has nevertheless a fine piano solo to be noted”.

CHET BAKER**Paris, Oct. 4, 1955**

Personnel probably as usual.

Broadcast from Salle Pleyel, acetate spotted on eBay years ago, one title, possible this and more exist:

My Old Flame

CHET BAKER SEXTET**Köln, Germany, Oct. 9, 1955**

Same as Sept. 17 plus Hans Koller (ts), Willi Sanner (bar) on “Cool Blues” and “I’ll Remember April”.

Nine titles were recorded in concert at “Borsensaal”:

Exitus	Acc. (tp) to solo 5 choruses of 12 bars to acc. (b). (M)
Tommyhawk	In ens. Solo 4 choruses of 32 bars to acc. (b). (F)
Imagination	Acc. (tp) 36 bars to coda. (S)
Yellow Tango	Solo feature (with (dm)) 8:40. (M)
Someone To Watch Over Me	Intro 4 bars to acc. (vo) 32 bars to solo 24 bars to acc. (vo) 8 bars to coda. (S)
C. T. A.	Acc. (tp) to solo 4 choruses of 32 bars to acc. (b). (F)
My Funny Valentine	Intro 2 bars to acc. (tp) to solo 20 bars to acc. (tp) to coda. (S)
Cool Blues	In ens to acc. (bar), (tp) and (ts) to solo 8 choruses of 12 bars to acc. (b) 3 choruses. Soli 4, 4 and 4 bars. (FM)
I’ll Remember April	Intro 8 bars to ens to acc. (ts), (bar) and (tp) to solo 3 choruses of 48 bars to acc. (b). (FM)
Exitus (Theme)	Solo 14 bars, partly with CB announcing. (SM)

Another concert with very good sound! Some titles are exciting new versions of material from previous concerts, like “Tommyhawk”, “Someone ...” (note the transition from solo to second vocal!) and “Imagination”, but there are many new ones. One should not blame RT for lacking courage; to choose his far out “Yellow ...” as a duo number with drums, in a foreign country in the middle fifties ...! Colourful soloing on uptempo titles “Exitus”, “C.T.A.”, “Cool ...” and particularly to my taste “... April”, just pick your choice and enjoy! For me the great highlight however is “... Valentine”, from an almost classical intro through soft accompanying CB’s intense trumpet solo to an unearthly piano solo. Note careful the magnificent laidback and transparent opening bars, have you ever heard something like this?!

CHET BAKER QUARTET**Paris, Oct. 11, 1955**

Chet Baker (tp, vo), Richard Twardzik (p), Jimmy Bond (b), Peter Littman (dm).

Five titles were recorded for French Barclay:

Rondette	Solo 24 bars. (FM)
Mid-Forte	Solo 32 bars to acc. (b) 16 bars. Soli 4 and 4 bars. (F)
Sad Walk	Solo 32 bars. (SM)
Re-Search	Solo 64 bars. (M)
Just Duo	Solo 36 bars to acc. (tp) and (b). (SM)

Paris, Oct. 14, 1955

Same with Richard Twardzik (p, cel) on “... Greenland”. Four titles:

Piece Caprice	Solo 32 bars to acc. (b). (M)
Pomp	Solo 30 bars to acc. (b). (SM)

The Girl From Greenland	Solo 64 bars. (M)
Brash	Solo 32 bars to acc. (b). (M)

After the numerous concerts on the European tour, finally two studio sessions were organized in Paris. The tunes seem on purpose not to be from the concerts. The fine sound let us enjoy RT's piano soli more closely, and I dare say that rarely do we find a jazz artist consistently put something new and exciting into almost every bar. Note as a good example the opening bar of his magnificent soli on "Sad Walk" and "... Caprice"! And in spite of his strange melodic and harmonic choices in his improvisations, he knows how to swing oldfashionedly, as evident in "Re-Search", "Just Duo", "... Greenland" and others. These sessions are musts in the RT treasure chest, evidence of one of the most individual and creative pianists in 'modern' vintage jazz.

LARS GULLIN WITH CHET BAKER QUARTET Stuttgart, Oct. 15, 1955
 Personnel as above plus Lars Gullin (bar-except "Brash"), Caterina Valente (vo-
 "... April").

Four titles were recorded live at "Villa Berg":

Cool Blues	With ens 24 bars. Solo 24 bars. (FM)
Brash	Acc. (tp) 32 bars to solo 32 bars. (SM)
Lover Man	Intro 4 bars. Solo 8 bars. Coda. (S)
I'll Remember April	Intro 8 bars. Acc. (tp). (M)

The final session. Twenty minutes of music with the great Lars Gullin added to the quartet. This leads to less space for piano than on the other concerts, but nevertheless there are several magnificent moments. "Brash" has a sparkling solo, and as an adequate goodbye, "Lover Man" is perfect. Jazz has lost one of its most personal and creative piano artists, but his music is equally fresh and fascinating after sixty years.

Richard Twardzik died six days later in Paris from a drug overdose, 24 years old.

... ooo ...