

Brown first worked with the jazz pianist Oscar Peterson, in whose trio Brown would play from 1951 to 1966. Between 1957 and 1959, Brown appeared on Blossom Dearie's first five recordings for Verve Records. After leaving the Trio he became a manager and promoter as well as a performer. In 1966, he settled in Los Angeles, where he was in high demand working for various television show orchestras. He also accompanied some of the leading artists of the day, including Tony Bennett, Billy Eckstine, Frank Sinatra, Sarah Vaughan, and Nancy Wilson. He also managed his former musical partners, the Modern Jazz Quartet, as well as a young Quincy Jones, produced some shows for the Hollywood Bowl, wrote jazz bass instruction books, and developed a jazz cello. Also in Los Angeles he composed music for films and television shows.

Born in Chicago, Illinois, **Ed Thigpen** was raised in Los Angeles and attended Thomas Jefferson High School, where Art Farmer, Dexter Gordon and Chico Hamilton also attended. After majoring in sociology at Los Angeles City College, Thigpen returned to East St. Louis for one year to pursue music while living with his father who had been playing with Andy Kirk's Clouds of Joy. His father, Ben Thigpen, was a drummer who played with Andy Kirk for sixteen years during the 1930s and 1940s.

Thigpen first worked professionally in New York City with the Cootie Williams orchestra from 1951 to 1952 at the Savoy Ballroom. During this time he played with musicians such as Dinah Washington, Gil Melle, Oscar Pettiford, Eddie Vinson, Paul Quinichette, Ernie Wilkins, Charlie Rouse, Lennie Tristano, Jutta Hipp, Johnny Hodges, Dorothy Ashby, Bud Powell, and Billy Taylor.

In 1959 he replaced guitarist Herb Ellis in the Oscar Peterson Trio in Toronto, Canada. In 1961 he recorded in Los Angeles, featuring on the Teddy Edwards-Howard McGhee Quintet album entitled Together Again for the Contemporary label with Phineas Newborn, Jr. and Ray Brown. After leaving Peterson, Thigpen recorded the album Out of the Storm as a leader for Verve in 1966. He then went on to tour with Ella Fitzgerald from 1967 to 1972.

In 1974 Thigpen moved to Copenhagen, joining several other American jazz musicians who over the past two decades had settled in the city. There he worked with fellow American expatriates, including Kenny Drew, Ernie Wilkins, Thad Jones, as well as leading Danish jazz musicians such as Svend Asmussen, Mads Vinding, Alex Riel and Niels-Henning Ørsted Pedersen. He also played with a variety of other leading musicians of the time, such as Clark Terry, Eddie "Lockjaw" Davis, Milt Jackson and Monty Alexander.

Ed Thigpen died peacefully after a brief period in Hvidovre Hospital (Copenhagen, Denmark) on January 13, 2010. He is buried at Vestre Kirkegård.



# THE SOUND OF THE TRIO

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OSCAR  
PETERSON

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RAY  
BROWN

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ED  
THIGPEN

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RECORDED  
LIVE

**Oscar Peterson** was born to immigrants from the West Indies; his father worked as a porter for Canadian Pacific Railway. Peterson grew up in the neighbourhood of Little Burgundy in Montreal, Quebec. It was in this predominantly black neighbourhood that he found himself surrounded by the jazz culture that flourished in the early 20th century. At the age of five, Peterson began honing his skills with the trumpet and piano. However, a bout of tuberculosis when he was seven prevented him from playing the trumpet again, and so he directed all his attention to the piano. His father, Daniel Peterson, an amateur trumpeter and pianist, was one of his first music teachers, and his sister Daisy taught young Oscar classical piano. Young Oscar was persistent at practicing scales and classical études daily, and thanks to such arduous practice he developed his virtuosity.

As a child, Peterson also studied with Hungarian-born pianist Paul de Marky, a student of István Thomán, who was himself a pupil of Franz Liszt, so his training was predominantly based on classical piano. Meanwhile he was captivated by traditional jazz and learned several ragtime pieces and especially the boogie-woogie. At that time Peterson was called "the Brown Bomber of the Boogie-Woogie".

At the age of nine Peterson played piano with control that impressed professional musicians. For many years his piano studies included four to six hours of practice daily. Only in his later years did he decrease his daily practice to just one or two hours. In 1940, at fourteen years of age, Peterson won the national music competition organized by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. After that victory, he dropped out of school and became a professional pianist working for a weekly radio show, and playing at hotels and music halls.

Some of the artists who influenced Peterson's music during the earlier type of years were Teddy Wilson, Nat "King" Cole, James P. Johnson and Art Tatum, to whom many tried to compare Peterson in later years. One of his first exposures to Tatum's musical talents came early in his teen years when his father played a recording of Tatum's "Tiger Rag" for him, and Peterson was so intimidated by what he heard that he became disillusioned about his own playing, to the extent of refusing to play the piano at all for several weeks. In his own words, "Tatum scared me to death," and Peterson was "never cocky again" about his mastery at the piano. Tatum was a model for Peterson's musicianship during the 1940s and 1950s. Tatum and Peterson eventually became good friends, although Peterson was always shy about being compared with Tatum and rarely played the piano in Tatum's presence. Peterson also credited his sister—a piano teacher in Montreal who also taught several other Canadian jazz musicians—with being an important teacher and influence on his career.

Under his sister's tutelage, Peterson expanded into classical piano training and broadened

his range while mastering the core classical pianism from scales to preludes and fugues by Johann Sebastian Bach.

Building on Tatum's pianism and aesthetics, Peterson also absorbed Tatum's musical influences, notably from piano concertos by Sergei Rachmaninoff. Rachmaninoff's harmonizations, as well as direct quotations from his 2nd Piano Concerto, are thrown in here and there in many recordings by Peterson, including his work with the most familiar formulation of the Oscar Peterson Trio, with bassist Ray Brown and guitarist Herb Ellis. During the 1960s and 1970s Peterson made numerous trio recordings highlighting his piano performances that reveal more of his eclectic style that absorbed influences from various genres of jazz, popular and classical music.

**Ray Brown** was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and took piano lessons from the age of eight. After noticing how many pianists attended his high school, he thought of taking up the trombone but was unable to afford one. With a vacancy in the high school jazz orchestra, he took up the upright bass.

A major early influence on Brown's bass playing was Jimmy Blanton, the bassist in the Duke Ellington band. As a young man Brown became increasingly well known in the Pittsburgh jazz scene, with his first experiences playing in bands with the Jimmy Hinsley Sextet and the Snookum Russell band. After graduating high school, having heard stories about the burgeoning jazz scene on 52nd Street in New York City, he bought a one-way ticket to New York. He arrived in New York at the age of 20, met up with Hank Jones, with whom he had previously worked, and was introduced to Dizzy Gillespie, who was looking for a bass player. Gillespie hired Brown on the spot, and he soon played with such established musicians as Art Tatum and Charlie Parker.

From 1946 to 1951 Brown played in Gillespie's band. Brown, along with the vibraphonist Milt Jackson, drummer Kenny Clarke, and pianist John Lewis formed the rhythm section of the Gillespie band. Lewis, Clarke, and Jackson eventually formed the Modern Jazz Quartet. Brown became acquainted with singer Ella Fitzgerald when she joined the Gillespie band as a special attraction for a tour of the southern United States in 1947. The two married that year, and together they adopted a child born to Fitzgerald's half-sister Frances, whom they christened Ray Brown, Jr. Fitzgerald and Brown divorced in 1953, bowing to the various career pressures both were experiencing at the time, though they would continue to perform together.

Around this time Brown was also appearing in Jazz at the Philharmonic concerts, organized by Norman Granz. It was at a Jazz at the Philharmonic concert in 1949 that

# THE SOUND OF THE TRIO

- 1 Tricrotism 11:10**
- 2 On Green Dolphin Street 8:55**
- 3 Thag's Dance 5:40**
- 4 III Wind 5:33**
- 5 Kadota's Blues 11:05**

Oscar Peterson (Piano), Ray Brown (Bass) & Ed Thigpen (Drums)  
Recorded live by Verve at the London House, Chicago, in 1961  
Producer: Jim Davis    Engineer: Val Valentintt



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