JAZZ PIANO STUDIES 1

John Kember

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Introduction

Jazz, rock and popular music use the same notation as the more established 'classical' forms, but are interpreted slightly differently: note values need not always be taken literally, but are used as a convenient way of indicating the rhythmic 'feel' of a pattern or phrase. Chords, broadly, function in the same way, but include various 'added notes' which give the harmony a jazz feel.

These progressive *Jazz Piano Studies* aim to help you to:

- recognise and perform commonly-used time patterns with stylistic phrasing
- understand anticipation (syncopation) of both notes and chords and to perform them within a rigid tempo
- play against the beat in either hand, whether with single notes or chords
- form chords and recognise the sounds, textures and movements of notes within chords
- use either hand to build and maintain a chord sequence

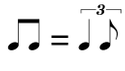
By playing these short studies and pieces, you should build up a repertoire of styles and techniques, and also develop the confidence to extemporise in a variety of jazz styles.

Aspects of jazz rhythm

Pulse

The importance of keeping a regular pulse, and of the necessity to count cannot be over-emphasized. You must always know where the first beat of the bar/measure is. This is particularly vital when improvising, where a similar sense of four- and eight-bar/measure phrase lengths is also essential. Using a metronome when you practise can be very helpful in developing a good sense of rhythm.

Swing rhythm

In this book, pieces to be played with a 'swing' feel are indicated: 

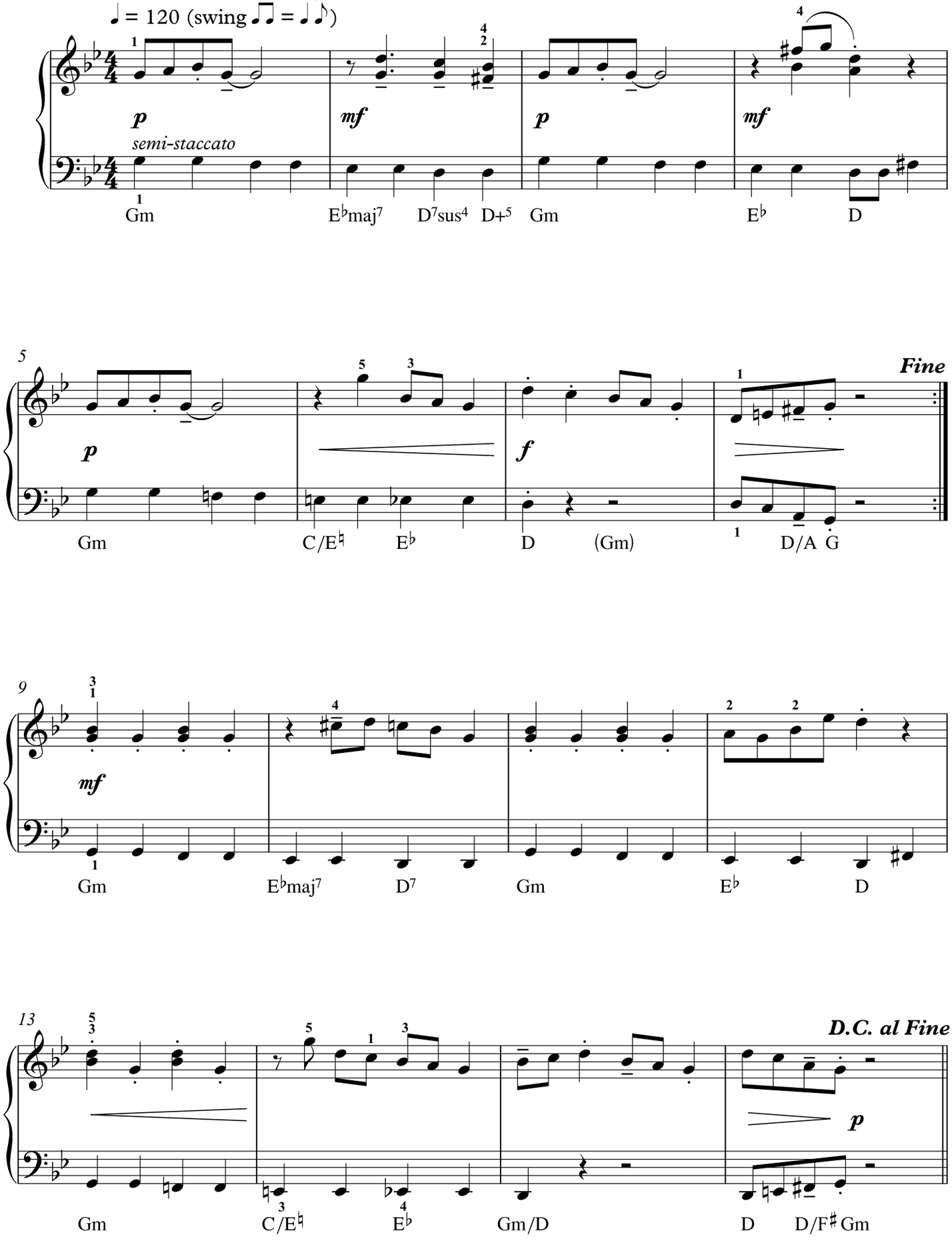
This will give a relaxed feel, particularly in right hand single note lines and melodies. In all other cases, quavers/eighth notes should be played straight.

Anticipation (moving a note or chord forward by half a beat)

Any beat can be anticipated, but the first and third beats (usually the strongest) are the most effective in giving a swing or jazz 'feel' to a simple melody or rhythm. If the tied or anticipated note is accented, the phrasing becomes clearer and more stylistic, particularly if the preceding note is shortened. If the anticipated note or chord is at the end of a phrase or is followed by a rest, it is better played staccato, or with an accented staccato.

1. BAH-BA-DOO BAH

Swing rhythm



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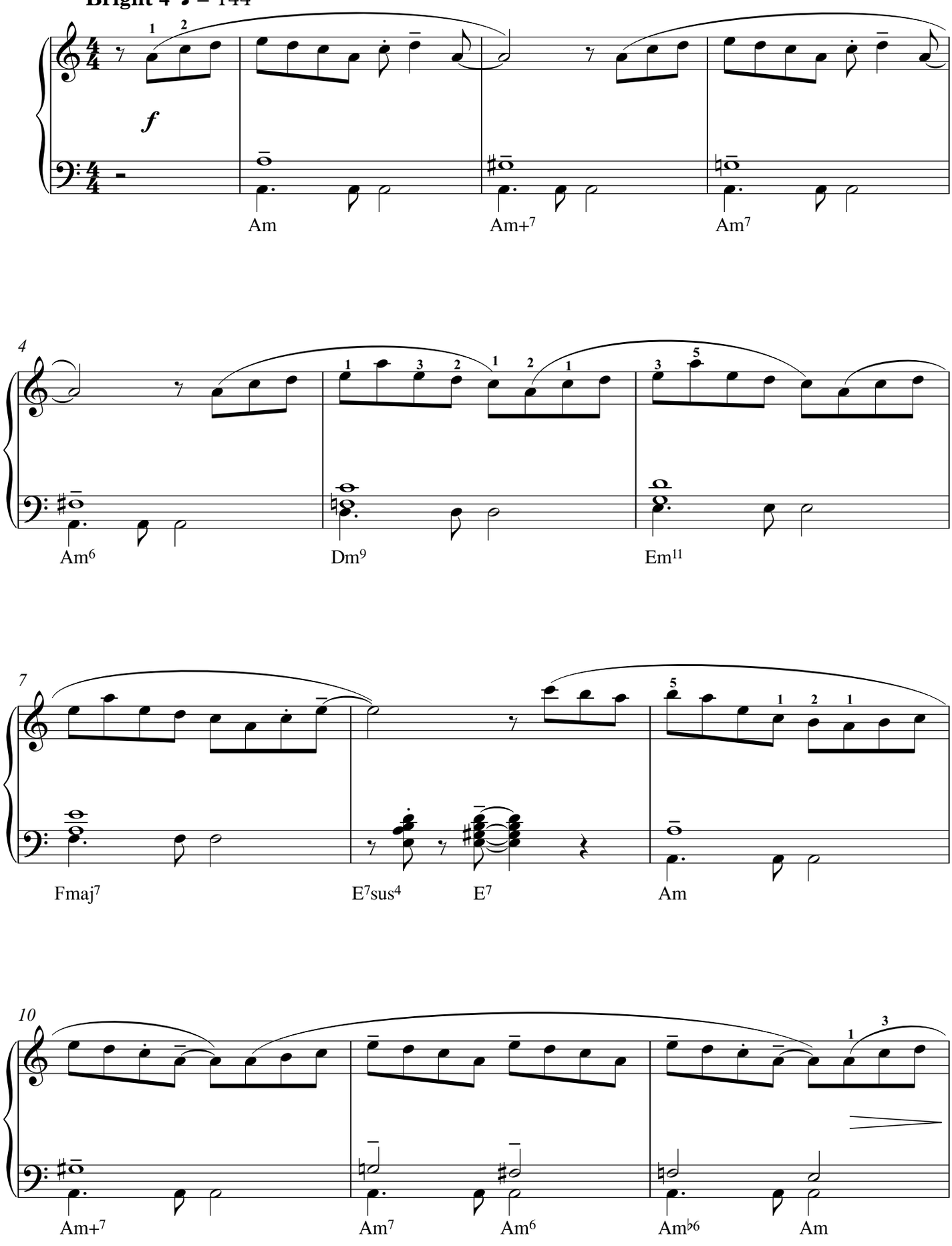
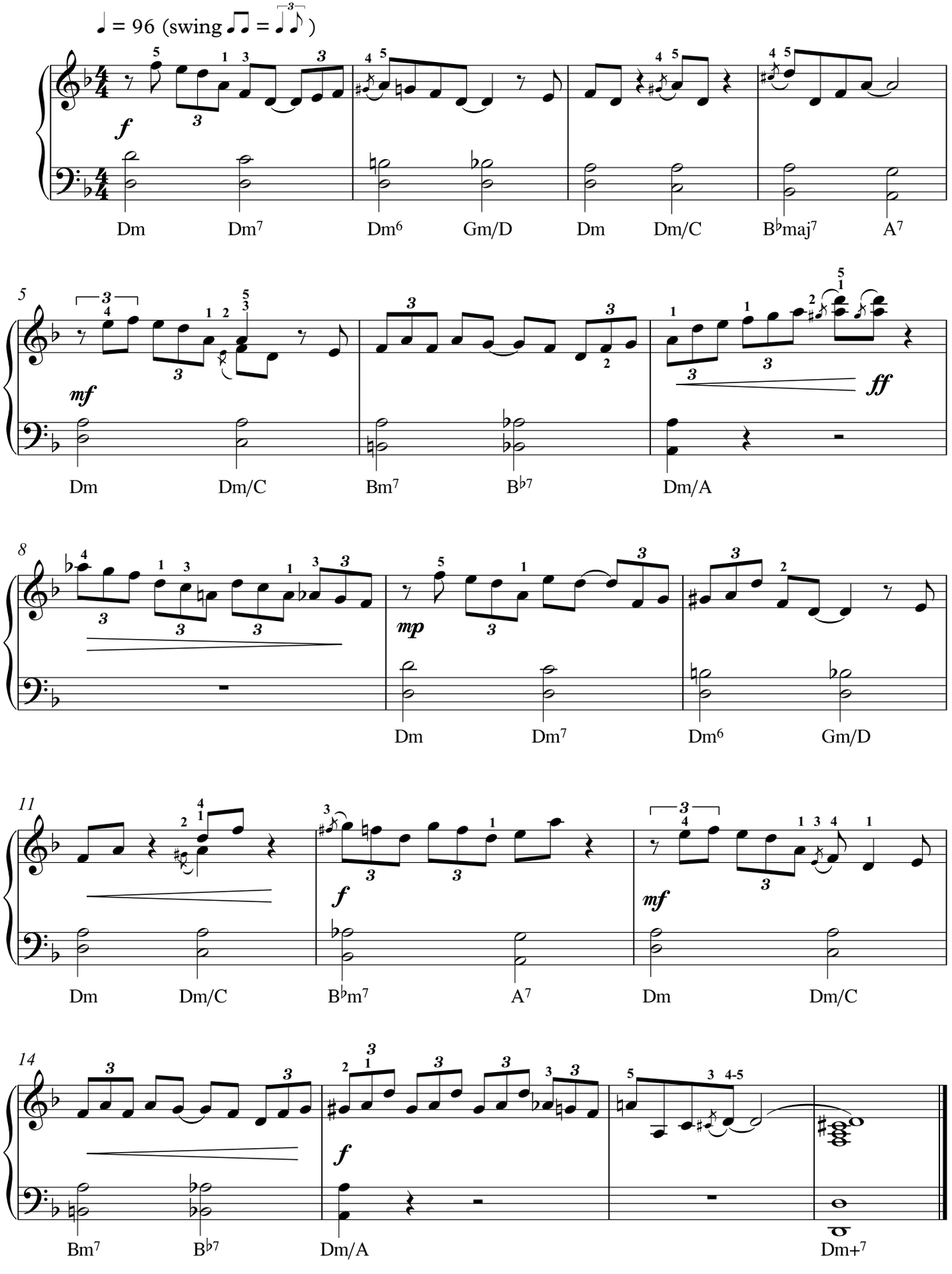
8. ALL WHITE ON THE NIGHT



14. ICE COOL


♩ = 96 (swing ♫ = ♩ ♪)
f
Dm Dm7 Dm6 Gm/D Dm Dm/C B♭maj7 A7
5
mf
ff
Dm Dm/C Bm7 B♭7 Dm/A
8
mp
Dm Dm7 Dm6 Gm/D
11
f
mf
Dm Dm/C B♭m7 A7 Dm Dm/C
14
f
Bm7 B♭7 Dm/A Dm+7