



Leading with Style:

*How to simplify teaching
jazz improvisation*



A bit about me

- Trombone professor at the Crane School of Music at SUNY Potsdam since 2020
- Grew up studying with freelance musicians in Los Angeles
- Exposed to, enjoyed, and learned a variety of musical styles
- Experienced a difference in quality between jazz in public school education versus jazz in community program, Jazz America
- Those experiences informed me on my approach to teaching music and especially improvisation



What we will explore today

- The “Rules” of Voice Leading/Part Writing
 - And how those “Rules” help us understand the **Changes** that are integral to jazz and jazz improvisation
- Applying those Rules to improvising in the Blues
 - Basic melody writing
 - Creating **lines** via “approach tones”
 - Musical puzzle-solving examples of each of the above
- Scaling up these principles beyond the blues to other tunes of more complexity
 - Approach tone Standards
 - Historical examples of this approach





What we will NOT explore today

- Elements of informed jazz style
 - i.e. How to swing with
 - Rhythm
 - Volume
 - Sound
- Comping
- Jazz Harmony
- Soloing on non-single voice instruments



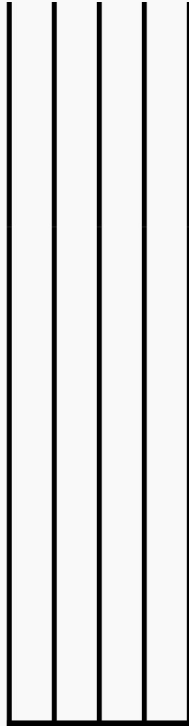
01

The “Rules”

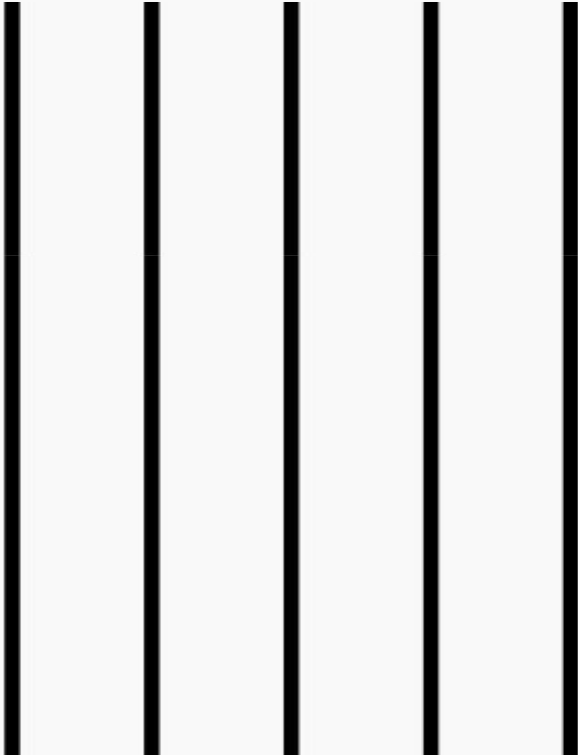
How voice leading helps us understand the **Changes**

Let's Imagine...

Let's Imagine...



Let's Imagine...



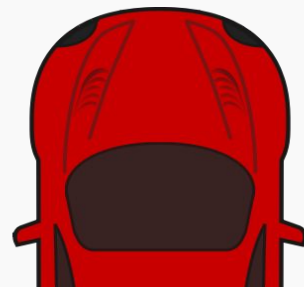
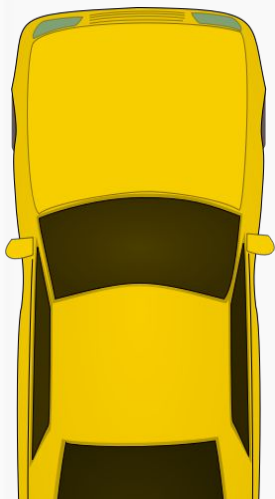
Let's Imagine...



Let's Imagine...



Let's Imagine...



Highway F7

E6

C

A

F



Great HS Improvisers





Coltrane

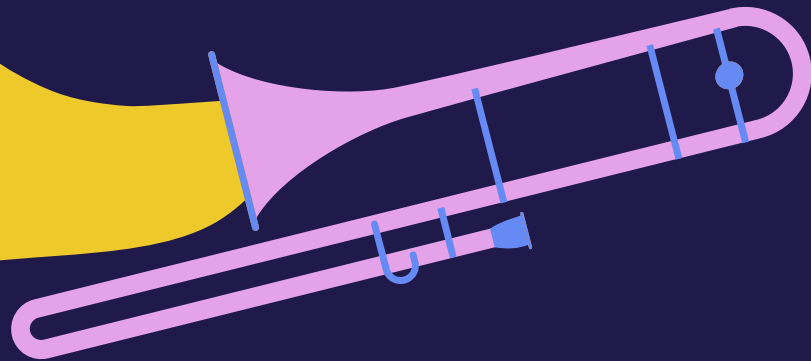




That beginner feeling...



The "Rules"



#1

Keep the common tones between two chords



#2

Move by step if #1 cannot happen



#3

No leaps more than a 3rd



#4

Consecutive leaps outline a chord





02 Applying The "Rules"

Via the Blues form

The Blues in F



F7



Bb7

F7

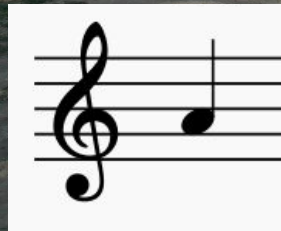


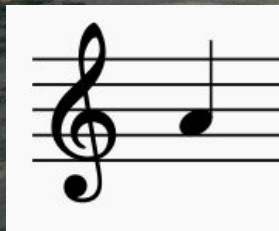
Gm7

C7

F7









*Change the melody
to play the Changes*



Movement by chord



F7	Bb7	F7	Gm7	C7	F7



The Blues in F



F7



Bb7

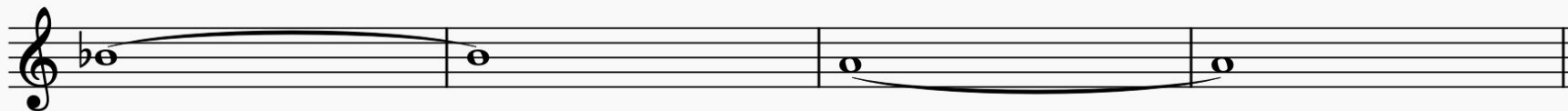
F7



Gm7

C7

F7



Movement by chord

F7 Bb7 F7 Gm7 C7 F7



F7 Bb7 F7 Gm7 C7 F7

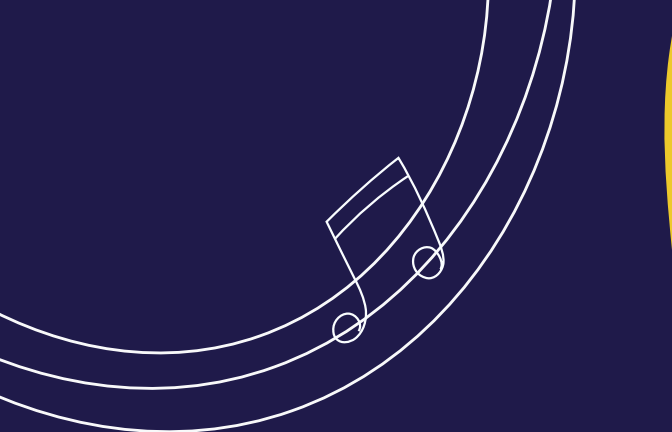


F7 Bb7 F7 Gm7 C7 F7



F7 Bb7 F7 Gm7 C7 F7





But how do I

Jazz?

Approach Tones!



The Blues in F



F7



Bb7

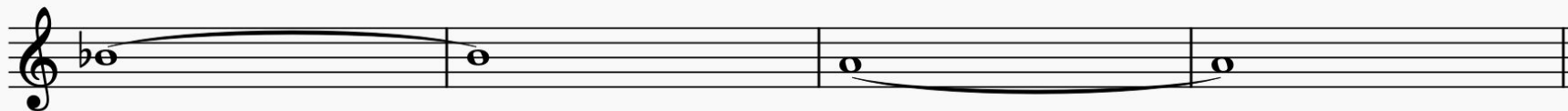
F7



Gm7

C7

F7



The Blues in F



F7



Bb7

F7



Gm7

C7

F7



Some Embellishments

Neighboring Tones

Stepwise motion away
and back to the same
target note

Appoggiaturas/Escape Tones

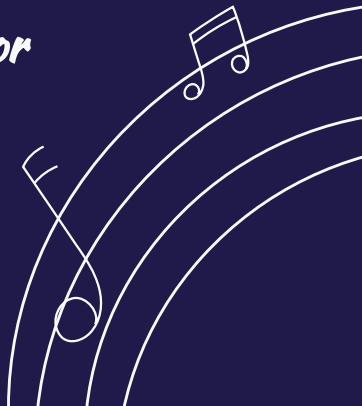
A leap followed by a
step to the target note
and vice versa

Passing Tones

Stepwise motion to
the target note from
another chord tone

Enclosures/Double Neighbor

Approaching a target
note via neighboring
tones on both sides



Neighboring Tones

Stepwise motion away
and back to the same
target note



Passing Tones

Stepwise motion to
the target note from
another chord tone



Appoggiaturas/Escapes Tones

A leap followed by a
step to the target note
and vice versa



Enclosures/Double Neighbor

Approaching a target
note via neighboring
tones on both sides



Approach Tones



C7 F7 C7 F7 C7 F7

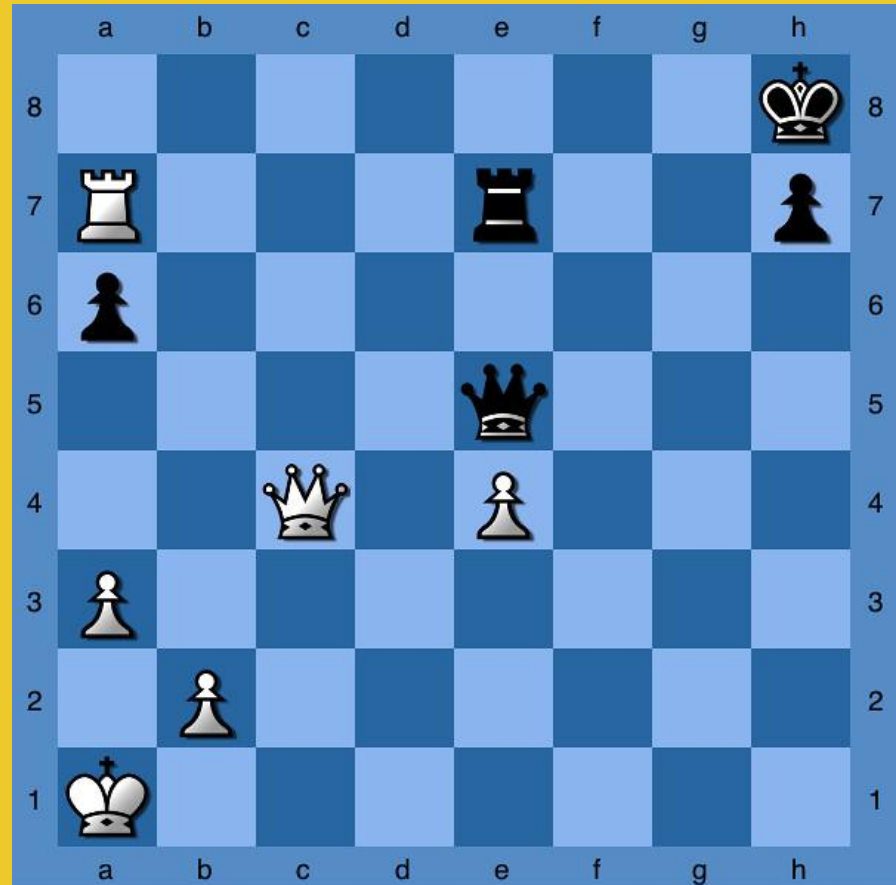
C7 F7 C7 F7 C7 F7

C7 F7 C7 F7 C7 F7



Approach tones
can be thought of
as musical puzzles
in rhythm





White to move. What is the best continuation?



The Coltrane of Chess

*Hikaru
Nakamura*

Approach Tone "Puzzle"

A musical notation puzzle on a single staff in treble clef. The first measure is labeled **C7** and contains a whole rest. The second measure is labeled with three question marks **? ? ?** and contains a quarter note G4, followed by a bar line and a bracketed area with four vertical lines, indicating a missing melodic line. The third measure is labeled **F7** and contains a quarter note F4, a quarter note G4, and a quarter rest. The fourth measure contains a whole rest.



Approach Tone "Puzzle"



F7



Bb7

F7



Gm7

C7

F7





03

Scaling Things Up

Looking to more complex tunes and jazz artists for inspiration

ALL OF ME

- SIMONE & HARRIS

(HORN SOUND)

A

Handwritten musical notation for section A, measures 1-4. The notation is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). Above the staff, the following chords are written: Cmaj7, E7, A7, D-, E7, A-, D7, D-7, G7. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1, 2, 3, 4. A repeat sign is present at the end of each measure.

B

Handwritten musical notation for section B, measures 5-8. The notation is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). Above the staff, the following chords are written: Cmaj7, E7, A7, D-, F, F#0, Cmaj7, E-7, A7, D-7, G7, C6 (Eb0), D-7, G7. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1, 2, 3, 4. A repeat sign is present at the end of each measure. The word "FINE" is written at the bottom of the final measure.

TAKE THE 'A' TRAIN

- ELLINGTON / STRAYHORN 421.

Handwritten musical notation for 'Take the 'A' Train', measures 1-4. The notation is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). Above the staff, the following chords are written: C, D7b5, D-7, G7, C, F, D7, D-7, G7, G7#9, C, D7b5, D-7, G7, C. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1, 2, 3, 4. A repeat sign is present at the end of each measure. First and second endings are marked with '1.' and '2.' and a circled 'C'.



Typical advice:

Use the melody

The melody can be used as a tool to help improvising. Start by using the melody as a framework and slowly exploring notes around it. Good because:

- Has voice leading lines built into the melody
- Notes outside of those tend to be in the key of the song
- Helps give a simple starting place with a written visual

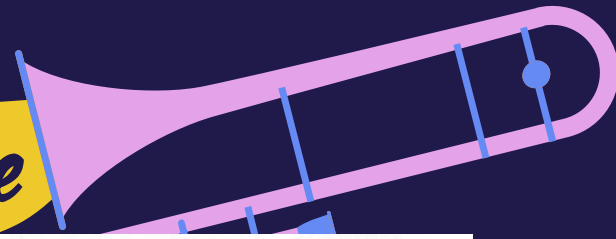


Charlie Parker's Solo on Au Privave

Handwritten musical score for Charlie Parker's solo on Au Privave. The score is written on five staves, numbered 4 through 8. The notation includes notes, rests, and various musical symbols such as accidentals, slurs, and triplets. Chord symbols are written above the staves, including F7, Cm7, B7, Bb, F, D7, Gmi7, C7, F7, Gmi7, Bb7, F7, F7+, Bb7, Ami7, and D7. The score is set against a background of a yellow circle on the left and a blue circle on the right, both containing white piano keyboard graphics.



John Coltrane's Solo on Blue Trane



Solo
Eb7#9

Ab7#11

DELAY

Eb7#9

Bb7#9

Eb7#9

The image displays a musical score for a solo on the blues standard "Blue Trane" by John Coltrane. The score is written in bass clef and consists of four staves. The first staff begins with a circled "Solo" and the chord Eb7#9. It features a triplet of eighth notes, a quarter rest, and a half note. The second staff is marked with Ab7#11 and includes a "DELAY" bracket over a quarter note. It contains several triplet markings. The third staff shows a change to Eb7#9 and then Bb7#9, with triplet markings. The fourth staff returns to Eb7#9 and includes a triplet marking. The score is set against a yellow and dark blue background.



Additional strategies



Listening!

Listen often and listen in a variety of ways, including live concerts, recorded albums, the same song over and over (aka deep listening), etc.

Transcriptions

Learning to play solos by ear, writing them down, or playing from transcriptions books. The more you do yourself, the deeper it sinks in and the longer it stays with you.

Play-along and other books

A variety of resources exist out there that allow someone to follow along and participate on their own time.

Other methods for improv

01

The Blues Scale

Great for introducing and getting students interested in playing jazz. Not the most helpful for learning the changes and how to navigate

02

Scales/Arpeggios

Looking at the various arpeggios and scales that you can play over and practicing them

03

Patterns/Licks

Great for wanting to seem knowledgeable, but can be limiting if you don't explore why those patterns or licks sound so good in the first place



The Blues Scale

The image displays three lines of musical notation for the Blues Scale in F major. Each line consists of a treble clef, a key signature of one flat (Bb), and a 12-measure progression. The first line is labeled with the chord F7. The second line is labeled with Bb7 and F7. The third line is labeled with Gm7, C7, and F7. The melodic line in each line is: F4 (quarter), G4 (quarter), Ab4 (quarter), Bb4 (quarter), C5 (quarter), Bb4 (quarter), Ab4 (quarter), G4 (quarter), F4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), D4 (quarter), C4 (quarter). The first two lines have a whole rest in the final two measures, while the third line has a double bar line at the end.

F7

Bb7 F7

Gm7 C7 F7

Scales/Arpeggios

F7



Bb7



F7



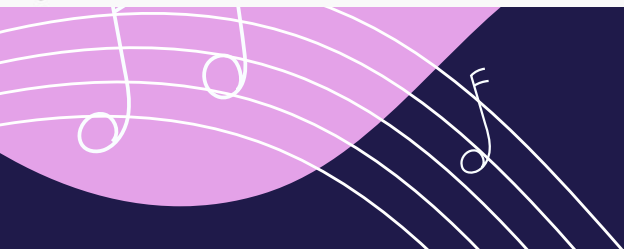
Gm7



C7



F7



Resources

Approach Tones

15 APPROACH NOTE AND ENCLOSURE EXERCISES FOR JAZZ MUSICIANS

ESSENTIAL PRACTICE FOR
BEBOP TECHNIQUE



CHAD LEFKOWITZ-BROWN

APPROACHES & ENCLOSURES

BY ANTON SCHWARTZ

Practice Tools



iREAL PRO

JAZZBOOKS.com

JAMEY AEBERSOLD JAZZ • SINCE 1967



Questions?



Thank you!

Reach out any time, happy to chat and answer any questions you may have!

hernaccf@potdam.edu
+1 (315) 267-2452
www.chrisheracki..com

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