

CHAPTER 7 – DEVELOPING THE IMPROVISATIONAL EAR

Part 1: Creating improvisational melody lines based on speech patterns

One main objective of playing speech patterns in other ‘typical’ musical contexts, like ‘jazz standards’ is to make the newly acquired phrases fit into chord progressions seamlessly, where the listener can identify the phrase as a musical one, but is in fact derived from a speech source.

Discussed in the previous chapters, spoken musical phrases often resolve to the primary notes of any given chord. These include the 3rd, 5th, 7th, 9th and sometimes the 11th and 13th ¹

In this chapter I aim to demonstrate and present 6 phrases that can weave into harmonic situations.

i) *Developing ear training*

“ The ear has always been the way of documenting my culture so I always use it that way². ”

It is important to constantly “better” your ear. This will enable an improviser to be able to hear any note on offer in any performance situation.

There are many advantages to acquiring keen pitch perception on your instrument including, that it practically eliminates all errors involving pitch translation³. This is also true when applied to improving speech pitch perception.

Whenever we speak we are in the hands of fate: we “must” improvise. ‘

¹ Depending on the most important notes found within a *melodic and harmonic relationship*.

² Moran, 2018

³ Coker, 1964

“

Of course, there is in improvisation also a number of *conscious* choices, things we want to achieve or avoid’¹.

”

Aaron Goldberg² is an established improviser. He says that all those solos that we can sing along with are just literally one moment in time³.

Another great example of ‘being in the moment’⁴ comes from Pianist/Educator Kenny Werner. He spoke to Koninklijk Conservatorium⁵ about getting into the ‘space’ or the ‘being’⁶. ‘The Space’ is a feeling of not thinking, an automated emotion coming from your heart and not your head.

ii) *The jazz player’s improvisational performance*

Coker⁷ mentions five factors (intuition, intellect, emotion, sense of pitch, habit) that are responsible for the outcome of the jazz player’s improvisational performance. An ability to improvise depends, primarily on an understanding, developed from complete familiarity of the musical context. The path to music development comes through increasing confidence and the inevitable increase in musical awareness⁸. For instance, Hannaford is able to focus on the ‘Macro’, ‘Musical’ elements of the performance⁹.

Part 2: The New Spoken “Jazz Licks”

i) *Resolving to the 3rd*

This phrase comes from a CBS John F Kennedy assassination news brief read by Walter Cronkite¹⁰ B18-19 ‘Where their condition is as yet unknown’ (Figure 7-1).

¹ Johannes Bergmark <http://www.bergmark.org/why.html>

² Aaron Goldberg is a NY, NY based American jazz pianist

³ Seabright, 2017

⁴ ‘Being in the moment, content with what is’ Kenny Werner- The Space

⁵ September 10, 2018 KC, The Hague, Netherlands

⁶ Jon Kobat Zin: meditation guide, psychologist talks about the ‘being’ instead of the ‘doing’

⁷ Ibid

⁸ Bailey, 1993

⁹ Hannaford, 2017

¹⁰ “As The World Turns” was airing on CBS the afternoon of November 22, 1963, when Walter Cronkite broke in to tell the nation that President Kennedy had been shot. Coverage then went back to the soap opera, but not for long. CBS Sunday Morning Published on Nov 17, 2013

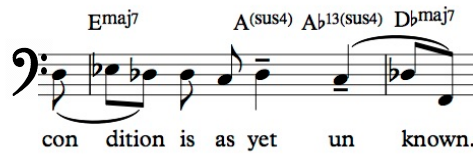


Figure 7-1 Resolving to the third

This phrase harmonically consists of a $^b\text{IIImaj7}$, $^b\text{VIImaj7}$, V7 , I chord progression, Emaj7 , Amaj7 , $\text{Ab7}^{13,11}$, Dbmaj7 (Tonic at B18-19). It ends quite conventionally on the 3rd of Ab^{13} to the I and III^{rd} of Db Major. This leap to the III^{rd} scale degree from the 1st degree gives the listener a strong feeling of resolution. This phrase could be used on ‘God Bless the Child’ Billie Holiday and Arthur Herzog or ‘In a Mellow Tone’ Duke Ellington (Fig 7-2).

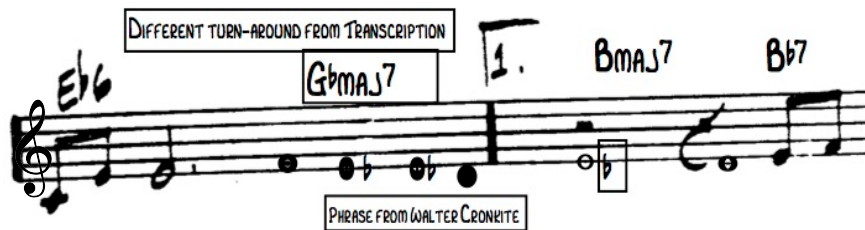


Figure 7-2 Finding the third in a new framework

ii) Resolving to the 5th

This phrase was taken from the ‘Keating, Sales and Whitlam’ transcription (see Chapter 4, Part 6). It is a V7, I progression, ‘Apart from Medibank’. The notes of the V7 chord are the III and the $\sharp V$ and back to the III. It then resolves to the i minor chord speaking the root then the 5th (Figure 7-3)



Figure 7-3 Resolving to the 5th

Uses of this phrase could include the V, I in Joe Henderson's 'Blue Bossa', Figure 7-4, (the phrase is inverted) or you can use the turnaround chord¹ at bar 32-1 of 'All the Things you Are' Jerome Kern or 'I love you', Cole Porter.



Figure 7-4 Resolving to the 5th in 'Blue Bossa'

iii) *Resolving to the 7th*

In the 2-3rd bar of the Samantha Ratnam transcription (See chapter 5, Part 3 section i)) a phrase that leads to the VII is shown. This could be transferred to the vii by changing the F to an E natural (F flat in the key signature). The scale degrees are as follows iii, III, III, II, I, VII (Figure 7-5)



Figure 7-5 Resolving to the 7th

This could be used in any 'jazz standard' with a Maj7th in the melody. I.e. The bridge of 'The Girl from Ipanema, Antonio Carlos Jobim' or 'Skylark', Hoagy Carmichael. (Figure 7-6)

¹ Turn around: From the end of the form to the start of the form via V7, I, or variations of V, I



Figure 7-6 Resolving to the 7th in 'The girl from Ipanema'

iv) Resolving to the 9th

In Donald Trump's inauguration speech sentence 2 (B 9-10) Trump says, 'All of Our People' (Figure 7-7). The progression can best be described as a ^bII major 7th chord ^{#11} resolving to a dominant 7th V chord ^{add #9,13}. This phrase could be used on 'Caravan'-Ellington, Tizol, or even 'Nardis' – Bill Evans (Figure 7-8).

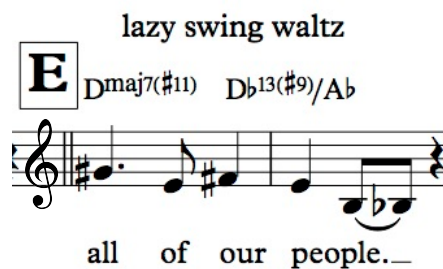


Figure 7-7 Resolving to the 9th

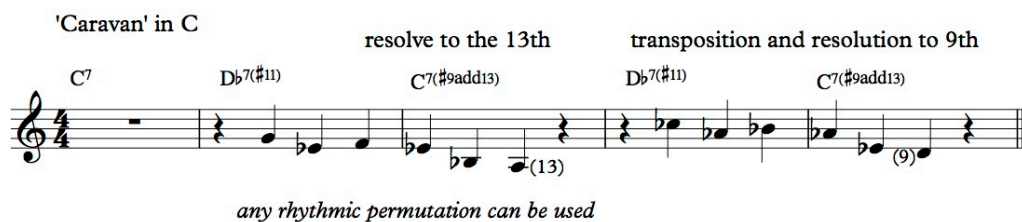


Figure 7-8 Resolving to the 9th in 'Caravan'

v) *Resolving to the #11*

In 'The Kings Speech' (See chapter 5, Part 3, section iii) in bar 11-12 King George VI speaks 'As if I were able to cross' with the chord A/G (II/I) and the notes G, C#, D, C#, D, D, D, C# (I, #VI, V, #IV, V, V, V, #IV) (Figure 7-9).

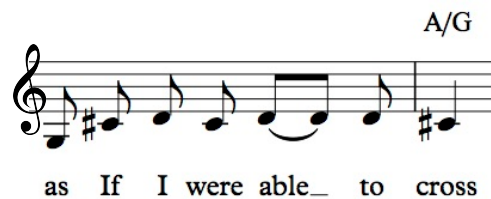


Figure 7-9 Resolving to the #11

This melodic phrase could relate to any tunes with $b7$, #11 chords featuring in the chord progression. For example 'There Will Never Be Another You' Harry Warren bar 13¹ (Figure 7-10).

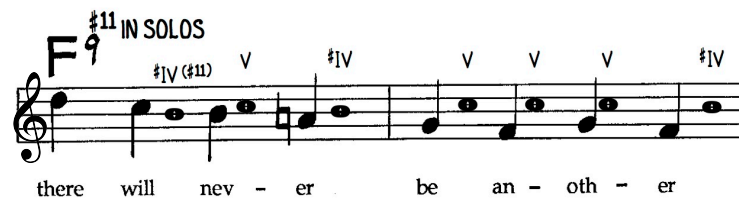


Figure 7-10 Resolving to the #11 in 'There will never be another you'

vi) *Resolving to the 13th*

In Bar 15-16 of Pauline Hanson's radio interview (See chapter 4, Part 7) she speaks the following IV (C7), I (G7¹³) phrase 'To me it defines the race of a person'. She lands on the IIIrd degree of the IV chord (C7 (E)) and speaks a phrase that alternates IIIrds and viiths in C and then lands on the E natural over the G7¹³ Chord (Figure 7-11).

¹ Blue in Green and or Bernie's Tune can also be used



Figure 7-11 Resolving to the 13th

This phrase could be used in any tune with IV, I progressions. I.e. The Parker Blues B2-3 'Down By The Riverside-Study War No More', Spiritual at the IV, I bridge (Figure 7-12).

Pauline Hanson Phrase



Figure 7-12 Resolving to the 13th in 'Down by the riverside'

Part 3: Summary

Any of the phrases explored in this Chapter can be adjusted to suit the given chords in a given piece. For example, the resolution to the maj7th can be changed to a minor 7th resolution, from iii, III, III, II, I, VII to II, iii, iii, II, I, vii particularly over a dominant7^{#9} chord resolving to i minor.

In improvisation, the ability to hear every note before it is played is a skill that needs to be acquired. It can be achieved through the same kind of patience and 'in the moment thinking' that Werner is talking about in 'Effortless Mastery'¹, and through the continuing practice of speech phrases in contextual situations.

¹ Kenny Werner, Effortless Mastery, 1996

By using that same effortlessness when playing as one does when talking, the improviser will master an ability to resolve his/her melodic phrases in a speech-like manner.

This may be another reason why Moran, Hannaford, Pascoal and many great improvisers look to the voice for guidance.