

NIELS THYBO

ELEMENTS OF IMPROVISATION FOR CLASSICAL MUSICIANS

LINE PLAYING AND MORE

COMMISSIONED BY DANISH NATIONAL ACADEMY OF MUSIC

FINANCIALLY SUPPORTED BY THE MINISTRY OF CULTURE DENMARK

1. VERSION

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Relevant Sources of Inspiration:
 Folk Songs, Flamenco, Tango, Bolero, Danzon, Choro, Balkan,
 Cadenzas in Instrumental Concerts, Intervallic/Non-Tonal/Sound-Music

A: EMBELLISHMENTS

- Scale Notes/Passing Notes
- Approach notes/Target Notes, on the beat/off the beat (also: strong/weak)
 - Turns: Ornamentation of target note, chromatic/diatonic from below a target note, from above a target note, on the beat/off the beat...
 - Chordal Embellishment (≈ suspension)

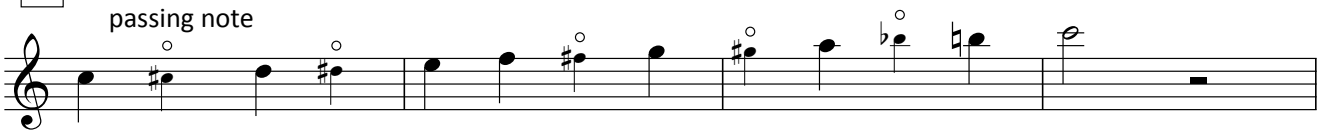
A1

Scale Notes (this ex.: Ionian Scale)



Passing Notes - thus creating a chromatic scale

A2



A3

Approach notes/Target Notes, on the beat/off the beat (also: strong/week)

Approach note
 on the beat,
 minor 2nd,
 from below,
 Target note

A4

Approach note
 off the beat,
 minor 2nd,
 from below,

A5

Approach note
 on the beat,
 minor 2nd,
 from above,

A6

Approach note
 off the beat,
 minor 2nd,
 from above,



(Obs. : Approach Notes played **on** the beat may also be part of a suspended chord, thus creating harmonic and melodic tension; though not to be confused w. tension notes = Extensions)

Turns

A7

Chromatically from below/above
 Approach note-line starts on the beat target note



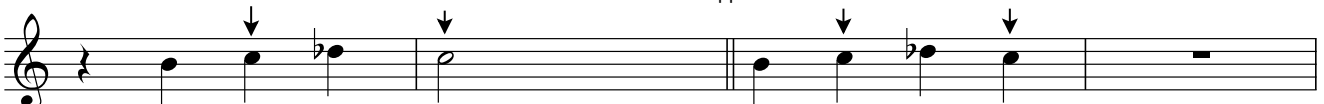
A8

Chromatically from above /below
 Approach note-line starts on the beat



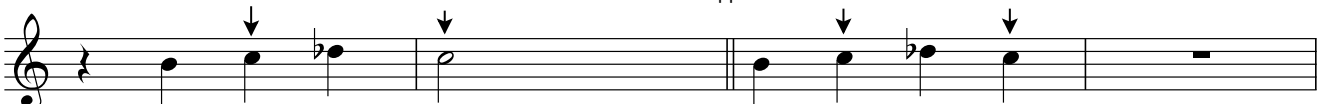
A9

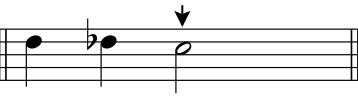
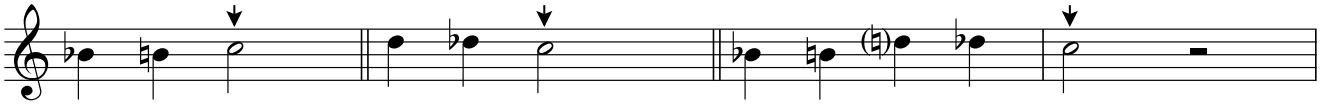
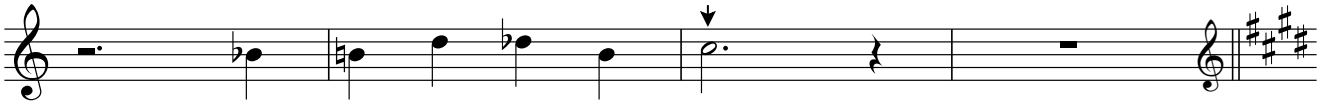
Chromatically from below/above
 through targetnote,
 approach notes off the beat



A10

Chromatically from below/above
 through targetnote,
 approach notes on the beat



A11Chromatic line from below
approach note-line starts on the beat**A12**Chromatic line from above
approach note-line starts on the beat**A13**Chromatic Bow from below/above
approach note-line starts on the beat**A14**Double Bow from below/above
approach note line starts off the beat**References (3 out off.....examples):****A15a**

Frédéric Chopin: Opus 25 Nr. 7, left hand line in Bar 1 (and further on...)

Lento $\text{♩} = 66$ *pp*

p etc..

A15b

W.A Mozart: Rondo alla Turca, first 2 bars including pick up...

Allegretto

p etc..

A15c

J.S.Bach: Das Wohltemperierte Klavier I, Fugue nr.23 in B minor, first 4 bars (and further on...)

Largo *a 4* *tr*

etc..

Chordal approach lines. (Played on the beat also identical to suspended broken triads)

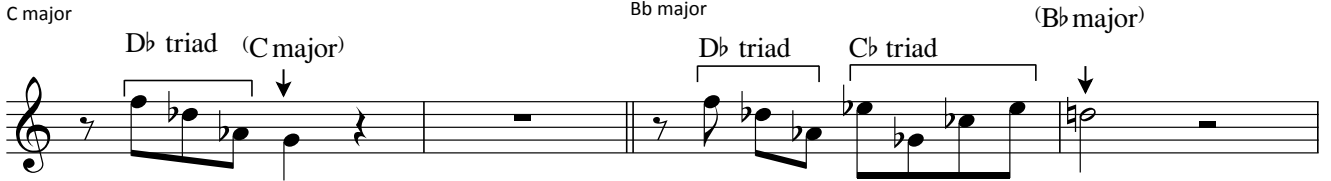
A16

Chordal approach line (major triad)
starts off the beat
resolving on the 5th (target note) of the
C major



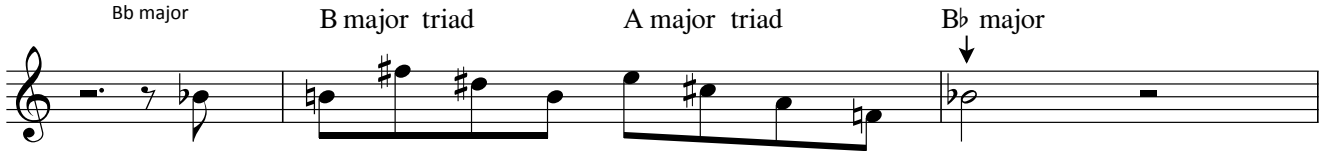
A17

Double chordal approach line (major triads)
starts off the beat
resolving on the 3rd (target note) of the
Bb major



A18

Double chordal approach line (major triads)
starts off the beat
resolving on the root (target note) of the
Bb major



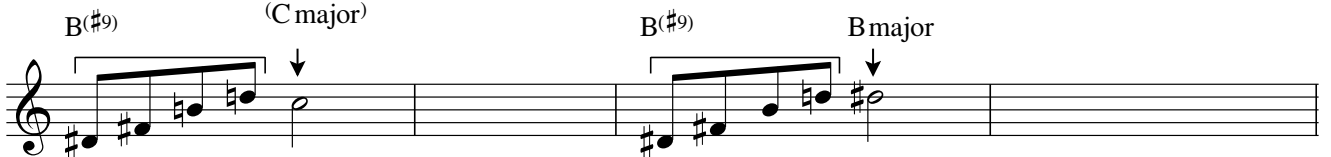
A19

Chordal approach line
starts on the beat
resolving on the 5th of a
C major chord



A20

Approch approach line
starts on the beat
resolving on the 5th of a
C major chord



B: MOTIVIC PLAYING

B1 Melodic Motif

(Relevance: Modal playing/temporary modulation/permanent modulation)

Variation of motif, quotation, sequencing of motif, alteration of motif, inside/outside main tonality

Example:

Cadd² Cminor G⁷(b⁹)

B major Bb major home...

B2 Embellishing of Melodic Motif.

Example:

B3 Intervallic Motif/Intervallic Playing

Relevance: non-tonal playing, "out" playing...

Examples:



B4 Embellishment of Intervals

The interval in question becomes a target motif

Examples:

Embellishing a minor second Embellishing a major second

etc.... etc....

Embellishing a minor third Embellishing a major third

etc.... etc....

Embellishing a perfect fourth Embellishing an augmented fourth/diminished fifth

etc.... etc....

Embellishing a perfect fifth Embellishing an augmented fifth/minor sixth

etc.... etc....

Embellishing a minor sixth Embellishing a major sixth

etc.... etc....

Embellishing a minor seventh Embellishing a major seventh Embellishing a minor ninth

etc.... etc.... etc....

B5 Rhythmic Motif/Variation of Rhythmic Motif
Convert a drum-like figure to a melodic motif

Examples:



try various changes/various tempo...

could become:



C: "TONICS"

The term "Tonic" is derived from such scalenames as "pentatonic" and "hexatonic".
Tonics are groups of notes being played, moved around, inverted and permuted without necessarily being related to the tonality in question.
(Permutation: Changing the order of the chord tones, randomly or on purpose)

All 3-, 4-, 5-, 6- note chords may be considered as tonics. We will deal with:
Tritonics, Triads played as Tonics, Tetratonics, Pentatonics, Hexatonics,
Tonics derived from diminished/8-tone scales, and Stacked Fourths played as Tonics.

Examples

C1 Tritonic (add2) **C2** Tritonic (sus4) **C3** Augmented triad-tonic

C4 Major tetratonic root position 1. inversion 2. inversion 3. inversion

C5 Minor tetratonic(add2) ...inversions... **C6** Minor tetratonic(add4) ...inversions...

C7 Major pentatonic ...Inversions... **C8** Minor pentatonic (min7) ...Inversions...

C9 Minor pentatonic (min6) ...Inversions...

C10 The Hexatonic structures may, though they are basically scales, be played as tonics

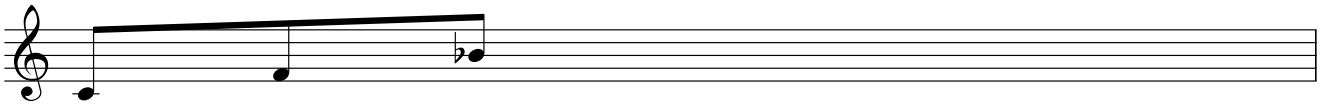
4-and 5-note groups derived from the diminished/8-tone scales may be played as tonics
(octatonic scales: chapter O, Scale Syllabus)

C11

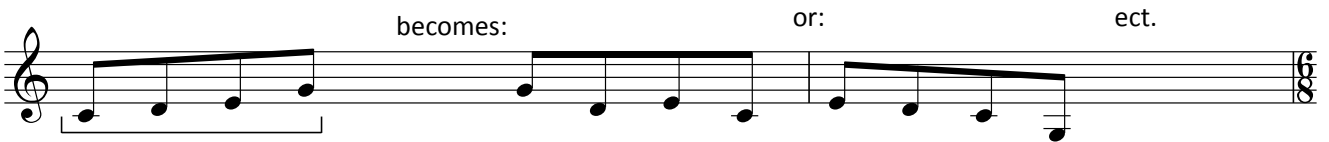


C12 Intervallic Tonics

Any interval may be played as a tonic, among others (often) the fourth



C12 Examples of permutation

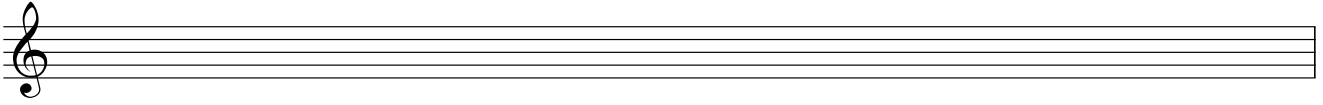


C13 Examples of motivic developing of a tonic (this x: Augmented Triad)

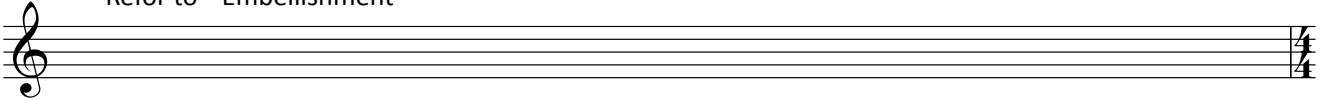


NOT DETAILED IN THIS VERSION

C14 Examples of embellishing of a tonic (this x: 5-note grouped 8-tone)



C15 Embellishment of Tonics
Refer to "Embellishment "



Broken Chords Playing/Chordal Motif (strings/keys)

Some of these examples will be similar to melodic motifs, intervallic motifs, tonics and more.

3-note chords: major/minor, sus2, sus4

4-note chords: major Δ /minor Δ , major Δ #5, minor Δ #5, add4, add #4, add9, add #9, add#11,

4-part/8-part diminished

5-note chords: major/minor 9th, diminished Δ 7,

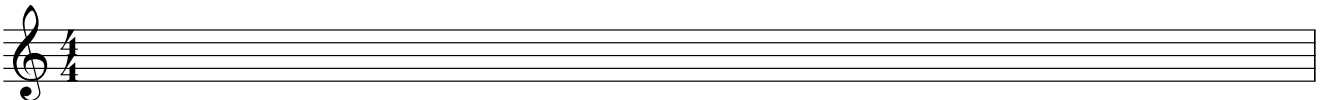
add interval to a 4-note chord, broken/as arpeggios,

changing direction, "pick up" triads, as "Tonics", as Upper-Structures,

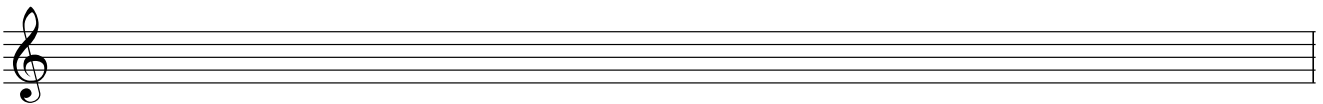
Inversions/Permutations, Inside/Outside

Embellishing of Chordal Motif

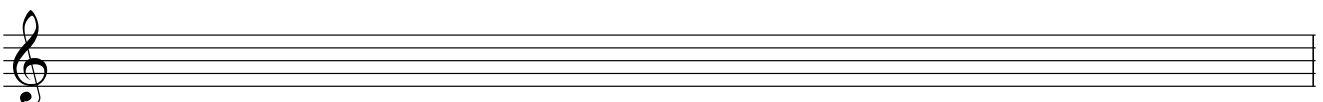
C16 3-note chords: major/minor, sus2, sus4



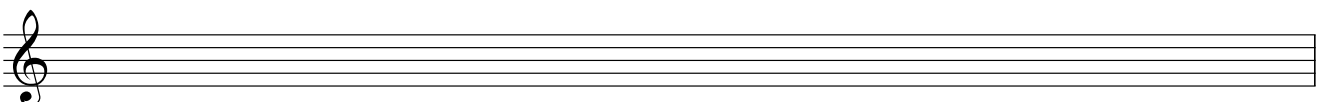
C17 4-note chords: major Δ /minor Δ , major Δ #5, minor Δ #5, add4, add #4, add9, add #9, add#11,



C18 4-part/8-part diminished

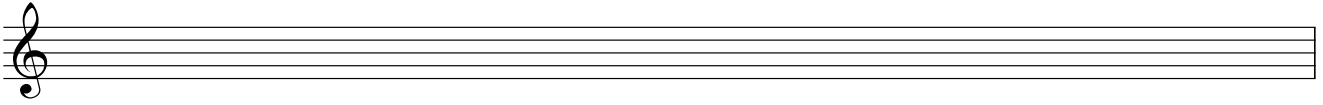


C19 5-note chords: major/minor 9th, diminished Δ 7,

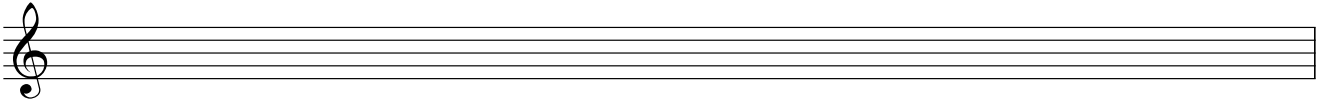


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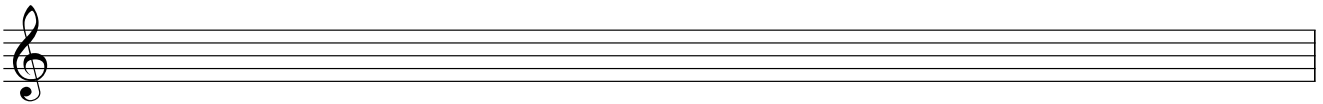
C20 Add interval to a 4-note chord,
broken/as arpeggios,



C21 Changing direction, "pick up" triads
"Tonics" as Upper-Structures,



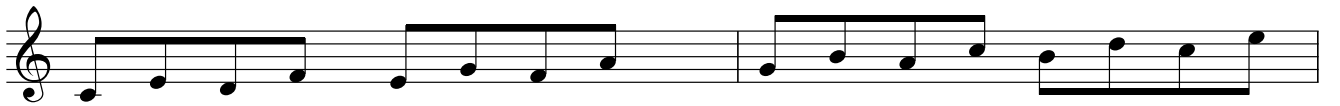
C22 Inversions/Permutations, Indside/Outside



D: LADDERS

Various Ladders; upwards/downwards (keys: also symmetrically)

D1 Try various Keys, Scales and Changes (See letter K for Examples)



D2



D3



D4



D5

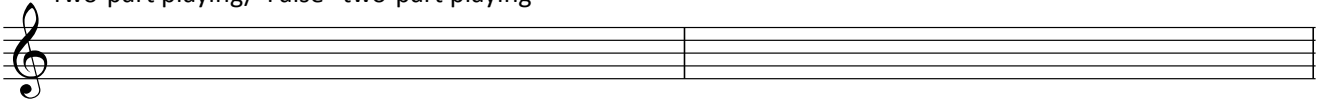


NOT DETAILED IN THIS VERSION

E. "POLYFONIC PLAYING"; "

Examples:

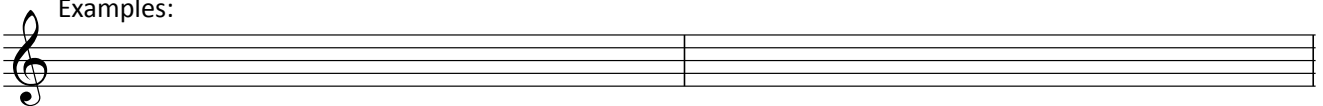
Two-part playing/"False" two-part playing



Try various Changes (See letter K for Examples)

**F ."TIME": Periods, tempo, Phrasing . . .
Starting point of Phrase, lenght of phrase, phrase dynamics,
legato/non legato/staccato . .**

Examples:



Try various Changes ...

**G. SUBDIVISIONS 4th's, 8t's, 16th's, Triplets, Fivelets...,
3-4-5-groupings of subdivisions/ rhythmic displacement,
Polyrhythmic phrasing .Free/random phrasing**

Examples:



try various changes...

NOT DETAILED IN THIS VERSION

H. ODD METERS, changing meters

Examples:



try various changes..(XIIIa./ XIIIb.)

**I. PERCUSSIVE PLAYING and Effects, Strings: Bow percussion,
Finger Percussion on Instrument, Sing while playing etc...
WoodWinds: Key Clicking, Slap Tonguing, sing while playing etc...**

Examples:



**J. More Sources of Inspiration: Impro based on natural sounds, concrete sounds,
overtones, electronics, visuals, gestures, phenomena, moods, colours, other art forms...
Improvisation based on instrumental technique Clusters, Stacked Intervals, No-key playing**



K. EXAMPLES

of often played Harmonic Sequences/Changes and Cadences

They should all be transposed, played in several meters, in varying tempos etc....feel free to explore...
(Changes: The Way the Chords change as you play a Song/Piece of Music...)

Modal Playing • Line Playing/Playing Changes

K1 Descending bass line, major: I - VII/3rd - IV/3rd - I/5th - IV - I/3rd - IImin - V7

C G/B F/A C/G F C/E D- G7

Folk Songs, Tango, Bolero, Danzon, Choro and more...

K2 Descending bass line, minor: Iminor - bVII - bVI - V7

C- Bb Ab G7

Folk Songs, Flamenco, Tango, Bolero, Danzon, Choro, Balkan,

One of more rhythmic patterns for the Danzon style

K3 Ascending bass line, major: bVI - bVII - Imaj

Ab Bb C

Folk Songs, Flamenco, Tango, Bolero, Danzon, Choro, Balkan and more...

K4 Ascending bass line, minor: bVI - bVII - Imin

Ab Bb C-

Folk Songs, Flamenco, Tango, Bolero, Danzon, Choro, Balkan and more...

K5 I - bII - bIII - bII - I

C Db Eb Db C

Flamenco, Tango, Bolero, Danzon, Choro, Balkan and more...

Turnarounds

K6 Turnaround, major: I - VI7 - II7 - V7 (Turnaround: Often the last 2 or 4 bars of the Chorus of a song)

C A⁷ D⁷ G⁷

Folk Songs, Flamenco, Tango, Bolero, Danzon, Choro, Balkan

K7 Turnaround, minor: Imin - VIø - II7(alt) - VII7(alt)

C- A^{-7(b5)} D^{7(b9#9)} G^{7alt}

Folk Songs, Flamenco, Tango, Bolero, Danzon, Choro, and more...

Cadenzes

K8 Major: I - IV - V - I

C F G C

Folk Songs, Flamenco, Tango, Bolero, Danzon, Choro, Balkan,
Cadenzas in Instrumental Concerts and more...

K9 Minor: Imin - IVmin - V - Imin

C- F- G C-

Folk Songs, Flamenco, Tango, Bolero, Danzon, Choro, Balkan,
Cadenzas in Instrumental Concerts and more...

K10 Imin - IVmin - Vmin - Imin

C- F- G- C-

Folk Songs, Flamenco, Tango, Bolero, Danzon, Choro, Balkan and more...

K11

C- F-6 G7(b9) C-6

K12

Imin - IIø - V7 - Imin6

C-7 D-7(b5) G7 C-6

Folk Songs, Flamenco, Tango, Bolero, Danzon, Choro, Balkan and more...

K13

I - V/3rd - I - I/3rd - IV - V - I - V

C G/B C C/E F6 G C G

Folk Songs, Wiener Classic Style

Diatonic Circle of 5ths

K14

IImin7 - V7 - Imaj - IVmaj9 - VIIø - III7 - VImin7 - II9

D-7 G9 CΔ FΔ9 B-7(b5) E7(b9) A-7 D9

Folk Songs, Flamenco, Tango, Bolero, Danzon, Choro, Balkan and more...

Modulating Sequences (temporary or staying)

new sequence in F **OR back:**
 F B7 E-7 A7 D-7 G7 C
 V-VII7- IVmin7-VI7 - IImin7-V7-I

K15

I - bII° - IIIm7 - bIII° - IIImin7 - #IV° - Vmin7 - I7 > IV = new I

C C#o D-7 D#o E-7 F#o G-7 C7 F

Flamenco, Tango, Bolero, Danzon, Choro and more...

K16 Mechanical Circle of fifths/fourths: C7 - F7 - Bb7 - Eb7 etc...

C⁷ F⁷ B^{b7} E^{b7} A^{b7} D^{b7} G^{b7} C^{b7}

Folk Songs, Flamenco, Tango, Bolero, Danzon, Choro, Balkan

K17 Mechanical II-V's Cmin7 - F7 - Dmin7 - A7 etc....or descending

C⁻⁷ F⁷ D⁻⁷ G⁷ etc...

Folk Songs, Flamenco, Tango, Bolero, Danzon, Choro, Balkan, Cadenzas in Instrumental Concerts

K18 Extended Blues in 6/8 (One ex. out of many)

C B^ø E^{7(b9)} A⁻⁷ A^{b-7} G⁻⁷ C⁷ F⁹ F⁻⁷ B^{b7}

I VII^ø III⁷ VI^{min7} ^bVI^{min7} V^{min7} I⁷ IV IV^{min7} ^bVII

E⁻⁷ E^{b-7} D⁻⁷ G⁷ C⁹ E^{bΔ} A^{b9} D^{b9}

III^{min7} ^bIII^{min7} II^{min7} V⁷ I ^bIII ^bVI ^bII

K19 Bitonal and polytonal chords on chosen changes, modal or modulating.....

C triad/A triad F[#]/F E^b/E F triad/D^b 5th

Intervallic/Advanced Harmony - "style"...

K20 Music based on atonality, abstract music and concrete music etc. . .

Intervallic/Non-Tonal/Sound-Music

L. Ideas for practising improvisation on the chord changes in letter chapter M

"Playing Changes" - that is:

- Playing through the chords as they change according to the harmonies in a song or instrumental tune, following temporary or staying modulations : Stepwise (diatonic) playing • Horizontal/Vertical Playing • Changing Direction/Turning Point Target Notes/Goal • Sequencing • Transposing Ideas • Combining Scales/The "88-note scale" Anticipation/Delay when playing on Chord Changes • Combining Ideas • Inside/Outside

GENERALLY: Touch, Tone, Sound, Dynamics

L1 Circle of 5's waltz (sequencing motif)

variation of motif (almost mirroring)

Main scale/ tonality: G aeolian I - II - bIII - IV - bV - bVI - VII - VIII

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L2 *Sevilla!* (sequencing motif)

Musical notation for *Sevilla!* (sequencing motif) in G flamenco. The notation consists of two staves. The first staff shows a melodic line starting on G4, with a G chord above the first measure and an Ab chord above the fifth measure. The second staff continues the melody, with Bb and Ab chords above the first two measures, a G(b9 #9) chord above the third measure, and a triplet of eighth notes above the fourth measure. The piece concludes with a double bar line and a 4/4 time signature.

Main scale/tonality: G flamenco I - bII - bIII - bIII - IV - V - bVI - bVII - VIII

L3 *Buenos Aires* (sequencing motif)

Musical notation for *Buenos Aires* (sequencing motif) in F aeolian. The notation is on a single staff in 4/4 time. It features a melodic line starting on F4, with chords F-, Eb, Db, and C7(b9) indicated above the first four measures. The piece ends with a double bar line.

same a third lower (diatonic)

Musical notation for *Buenos Aires* (sequencing motif) a third lower (diatonic) in F aeolian. The notation is on a single staff in 4/4 time. It features a melodic line starting on D4, with chords F-, Eb, Db, and C7(b9) indicated above the first four measures. The piece ends with a double bar line.

Main scale/tonality: F aeolian

MORE EXAMPLES TO COME.....

M. SCALE SYLLABUS covering this survey

Main Categories of Scales/Modes:

- Major Scales • Minor Scales • Dominant Scales
- Pentatonic Scales • Blues Scales • 6-tone Scales

Symmetric Scales: Diminished/8-tone • Whole Tone

Other Scale Types:

- Bebop Scale Types • Gypsy Scale Types

"Mother" Scales:

- Scales/Modes on the seven steps of The Christian Scale
- Scales/Modes on the seven steps of the Melodic Minor Scale

(..scales may have more than one name ..)

┌───┐ ≈ 1/2 step

Scales/Modes on the seven steps of The Christian Scale

♩ I: Ionian

♩ II: Dorian

♩ III: Phrygian

♩ IV: Lydian

♩ V: Mixolydian

♩ VI: Aeolian

♩ VII: Locrian

Harmonic Minor

Scales/Modes on the seven steps of The Melodic Minor Scale

© I: Melodic Minor

II: Phrygian Major 6th

III: Lydian #5

IV: Lydian Dominant

V: Mixolydian b6

VI: Locrian #2

VII: Altered

Pentatonic Scales

Pentatonic Major

Pentatonic Minor 7


Pentatonic Minor 6

Blues Scale

(...named according to structure...)

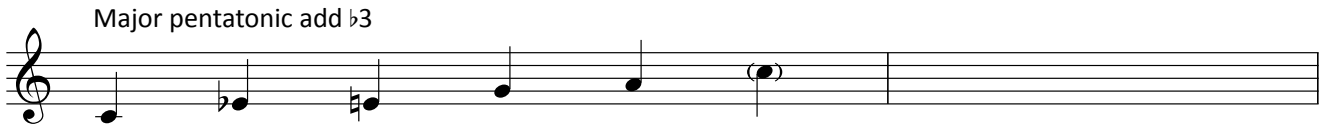
Minor Blues Pentatonic

Minor Blues add ♭3



The image shows two musical staves. The first staff is labeled 'Minor Blues Pentatonic' and contains a scale of five notes: C4, E4, G4, B♭4, and C5. The second staff is labeled 'Minor Blues add ♭3' and contains a scale of six notes: C4, E4, G4, B♭4, C5, and E♭5.

Major pentatonic add ♭3



The image shows a single musical staff labeled 'Major pentatonic add ♭3' containing a scale of six notes: C4, E4, G4, B♭4, C5, and E5.

Major Blues add ♭3

Same - played from the sixth:
Minor Blues Pentatonic add ♭5



The image shows two musical staves. The first staff is labeled 'Major Blues add ♭3' and contains a scale of six notes: C4, E4, G4, B♭4, C5, and E5. The second staff is labeled 'Same - played from the sixth: Minor Blues Pentatonic add ♭5' and contains a scale of six notes: C5, E5, G5, B♭5, C6, and E♭6.

Symmetric Scales

Hexatonic Scales

The 2 Wholetone Scales



The image shows a single musical staff labeled 'The 2 Wholetone Scales' in 4/4 time. It contains two scales: the first is C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4; the second is C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5.

Sixtone Scale, type 1

Sixtone Scale, type 2



The image shows a single musical staff with two six-note scales. The first is labeled 'Sixtone Scale, type 1' and contains notes C4, E4, G4, B♭4, C5, and E5. The second is labeled 'Sixtone Scale, type 2' and contains notes C4, E4, G4, B♭4, C5, and E5. Brackets are drawn above the notes to indicate the intervals between them.

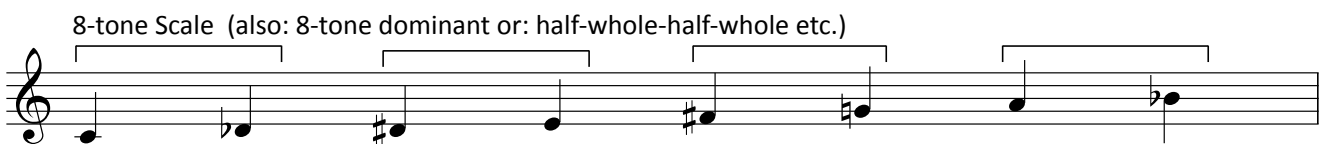
Octatonic Scales

Diminished Scale (also: whole-half -whole-half etc.)



The image shows a single musical staff labeled 'Diminished Scale (also: whole-half -whole-half etc.)' containing an eight-note scale: C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5. Brackets are drawn above the notes to indicate the intervals between them.

8-tone Scale (also: 8-tone dominant or: half-whole-half-whole etc.)



The image shows a single musical staff labeled '8-tone Scale (also: 8-tone dominant or: half-whole-half-whole etc.)' containing an eight-note scale: C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5. Brackets are drawn above the notes to indicate the intervals between them.

Bebop/Jazz - Type Scales

Bebop Major Scale

Bebop Dominant Scale (*the bebop scale*)

Bebop Melodic Minor Scale,

Bebop Minor7 Scale,

Mixolydian b9 b13 (≈ b2 b6)

Gypsy Type Scales

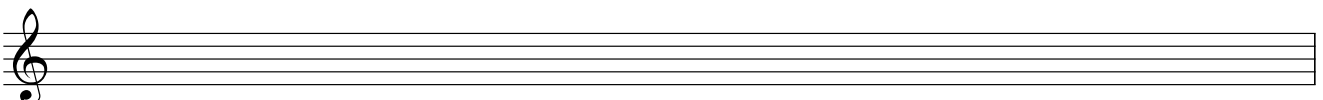
Mixolydian b9 b13 (≈ b2 b6)

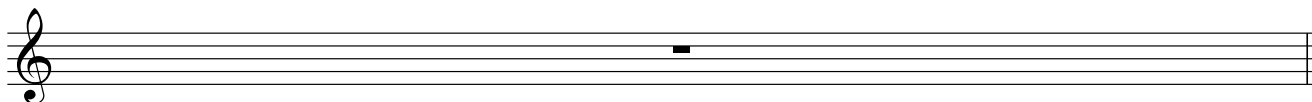
Harmonic Major b9

Mixolydian b9 #9 b13 *The Gypsy Scale (octatonic)*

N. SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR PRACTISING

- **LINE PLAYING::** Define tonality of the chosen song/chord changes, play "through" tonality, slow/fast , optionally by means of the "Fixed Range Exercise", that is:
Define lowest and highest note (the Range), keep playing and turn whenever you reach the lowest/highest note of your chosen range.
- Practise chosen elements on the chord changes of a song/composition you are working on.
- Practise chosen element by means of sequencing : chromatic, whole tone, minor 3rds, changing direction up/down etc.....
- **LISTENING inwards** ≈ transcribe yourself: Write improvisation
- **VISUALIZE** elements: intervals, chord tones, harmonies/chords etc.
Visualize whole passages, "transcribe " visualized passages...
- **LISTEN** to other artists and **TRANSCRIBE** a chosen improvisation in tempo or slower, in the original key or transposed.
- **ANALYZE** a chosen song, identify basic elements.
- Learn a chosen improvisation and: **TRANSCOPE** • **SING** • **PLAY** • **WRITE** in changing order - not always (but often..) all 4 ways
- **DEVELOP** the ability to distinguish between practising and playing.
- Develop the "ears of the fingers"
- Develop "Instant Visualizing" and the ability to listen simultaneously to the three sources: your own playing • the other musicians playing • the music as a whole.
- Practise sound-improvisation from whatever source: Electronics, traffic sounds, street talking, nature sounds, sounds from animals.....what do I know...





Short list of relevant songs, tunes etc.

Ack, Värmeland Byssan Lull	(Anonymous, lyrics Anders Fryxell) (Anonymous, adapted by Evert Taube)	Swedish Folk Music Nordic Tradition
Solveigs Sang	(Edward Grieg)	Norwegian Composer-/Folk Music
Betragt mit svage spind Jeg gik i Marken	(Cark Nielsen) (Cark Nielsen)	Danish composer-/Folk Music Danish composer-/Folk Music
Chorinho Pra Ele No Rancho Fundo Frevo de Orfeu	(Hermeto Pascoal) (Ary Barroso) (Jobim)	Choro/Chorinho, Brasil Choro, Brasil Frevo, Brasil
La Fiesta	(Chick Corea)	Flamengo Style., Spain
Scarbirough Fair	(Anonymous)	Irish/American Folk Music
Tabú Veinte Años	Margarite Lecuono/S.K.Russel María Teresa Vera	Cuban "AfroCuba" Bolero/Bolero Cha, Cuba
Imperial	Astor Piazzolla	Tango, Argentina