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MICHAEL ORTA

Jazz pianist Michael Orta has been very active on the jazz scene. He recorded two albums with his jazz/fusion group The Wave on the Atlantic Jazz record label displaying his skill as a composer. In 1991, Michael toured as pianist for the Arturo Sandoval group as well as recording on Sandoval's American debut album on GRP, *Flight to Freedom*. Michael released his debut album, *Freedom Tower*, on the Fantasy/Contemporary label.

In 1993, he was chosen as one of five finalists in the prestigious Great American Jazz Piano Competition. The following year, Michael spent the year touring and recording with the Paquito D'Rivera group performing concerts and clubs in Trinidad, Curaçao, Mexico, Puerto Rico, Paris, Germany, Switzerland, Poland, Romania, Greece, Holland, and Slovenia.

Michael is currently assistant professor and director of jazz performance at Florida International University, teaching jazz piano and jazz improvisation, and directing both jazz and salsa ensembles. He is a contributing author for *Jazz Pedagogy: The Jazz Educator's Handbook and Resource Guide* published by Warner Bros. Publications. In addition, Michael has also been an active clinician, sharing his musical knowledge and philosophies with music students in the U.S., Europe, Africa, and South America.

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

2002 <i>Pan Con Bistec</i> (Breezewave)	1995 <i>Afro-Cuba</i> (Nascente)
2001 <i>Misty</i> (Sony International)	1995 <i>GRP Christmas Collection</i> , Vol. 2 (GRP)
2001 <i>Latin Like That</i> (Sony International)	1995 <i>Mestizo</i> (Sony International)
2000 <i>Ritmo Jazz Latino</i> (Breezewave)	1993 <i>40 Years of Cuban Jazz Sessions</i> (Messidor)
1999 <i>Random Hearts</i> (Sony)	1993 <i>Intersection</i> (Contemporary)
1998 <i>Salsa Jazz</i> (Max Music)	1993 <i>A Night in Englewood</i> (Messidor)
1998 <i>The Wave</i> (Atlantic)	1992 <i>The Dreamer</i> (GRP)
1997 <i>Latin Jazz Highlights</i> (Messidor)	1991 <i>Flight to Freedom</i> (GRP)
1997 <i>Latin Jazz for Lovers</i> (Messidor)	1990 <i>Dance of the Phoenix</i> (Verve/Forecast)
1996 <i>Double Talk</i> (Sony International)	1990 <i>Morning Ride</i> (Verve/Forecast)
1996 <i>Freedom Tower</i> (Contemporary)	1989 <i>Second Wave</i> (Atlantic)
1996 <i>United Nations of Messidor</i> (Messidor)	

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Web site: <http://www.fiu.edu/~ortam/>

E-mail: ortam@fiu.edu

INTRODUCTION

The following 15 jazz etudes are written for the intermediate to advanced jazz piano student. The goal of this book is to develop and improve a jazz piano solo through analysis. Each etude is based on a jazz standard melody followed by two or more choruses of improvisation. These etudes will positively affect the pianist's musical concepts and choice of notes when improvising. Keep in mind, however, that these 15 etudes are not a substitute for many other valuable jazz education tools, including solo transcription. As with any book, the rules specified are general ideas used to set parameters for the student. After the concepts are learned, the rules become less important. This book assumes that the pianist has some knowledge of chord scale theory. For the most effective use of this book, follow these three steps.

Three Steps to Using *Jazz Etudes for Piano*

First Step: Learn the Melody

The written melody of each etude tune is rephrased so that it swings, i.e., embellished with certain rhythmic, harmonic, and melodic liberties just as one would approach the tune if playing it on a gig. It is essential that the pianist understand how the melodies were embellished by first learning the melody exactly as written by the composer. A good fake book or real book will have these melodies written as the composer intended.

Second Step: Analyze the Etudes

Discover how to analyze the improvisation etude by focusing on three key elements: **voice-leading, phrase-linking, and sequences**. To demonstrate the analysis process, each of these three elements of analysis is discussed below and examples are provided to demonstrate their application.

Third Step: Practice the Etudes

Play through the etudes slowly and thoroughly, and pay close attention to playing with a swing-feel, correct articulations, and fingerings, which are intentionally not provided. Gradually increase the tempo to the suggested tempo marking.

Results

Following these three steps will significantly build the harmonic, melodic, and rhythmic jazz vocabulary. As with any skill, it is when these concepts are internalized that they become a part of the vocabulary. Using internalized jazz vocabulary to create an effective solo is the point when a soloist can begin to create and improvise.

It is essential for the aspiring improviser to understand the significance of internalizing jazz vocabulary. The term *internalize* means that the pianist will know these concepts so well that he or she is not consciously thinking about them while playing.

After learning the melody, studying the sample analyses, and practicing the etudes, the pianist will have an understanding of concepts and an improved jazz vocabulary that will help develop and improve an improvised solo. Make these etudes a part of a daily practice routine and enjoy.

Three Types of Analysis

The process of analyzing these etudes will provide an opportunity for the pianist to think out of the box, expose the pianist to many different musical ideas, and allow the pianist to recognize many soloistic ideas that are vital to the art of improvisation.

Voice-Leading

Voice-leading is the ability to improvise a line smoothly from one chord to the next. It is also referred to as an approach tone. Voice-leading is a technique that will make improvised lines sound smooth. The general rule for voice-leading is to approach each new chord by a **half step** either above or below the target note, depending on the direction of the melodic line.

The target note can be the third, fifth, or seventh, or it can also be an extension: some form of the ninth, eleventh, or thirteenth. If the line is **ascending** to the target note, voice-lead by a half step **below** the target note. If the line is **descending** to the target note, voice-lead by a half step **above** the target note.

Examples 1 and 2 illustrate ascending and descending approach tones.

Example 1: Ascending voice-leading

$\text{♩} = 120$

$E\flat m7$ $A\flat 7(b9)$ $E m7$ $A 7(b9)$ $D m7$ $D\flat 13$ $C\sharp m7(\sharp 11)$

1/2 step to the $\flat 9$

1/2 step to the 3rd

1/2 step to the $\flat 13$

1/2 step to the 5th

1/2 step to the 13

1/2 step to the $\sharp 11$

Example 2: Descending voice-leading

$\text{♩} = 120$

$E\flat m7$ $A\flat 7(b9)$ $E m7$ $A 7(b9)$ $D m7$ $D\flat 13$ $C\sharp m7(\sharp 11)$

1/2 step to the $\flat 9$

1/2 step to the m7

1/2 step to the $\flat 13$

1/2 step to the 5th

1/2 step to the 9

1/2 step to the $\sharp 11$

Example 3, from the tune "I Should Care," demonstrates how the voice-leading principles are effectively used. Each approach tone is highlighted with an X. The target note to which the approach tone resolves is also specified. Play through the example slowly and listen to how smoothly the approach tone resolves to the melodic line. Remember that only the approach tones that lead to a new chord are highlighted.

Example 3: Voice-leading

I SHOULD CARE

Analysis

Words and Music by
SAMMY CAHN, AXEL STORDAHL
and PAUL WESTON

$\text{♩} = 130$

Chord symbols and intervals shown in the score:

- Staff 1: Dmi7, G7, Emi7, A7(b9), Dmi7, G7, Cmaj7
- Staff 2: Fmi7, Bb7, Emi7, A7(b9), Dmi7, Fmi7, Bb7
- Staff 3: Cmaj7, Bmi7(b5), E7, Gmi7, C7(b9), Fmaj7
- Staff 4: Bmi7(b5) E7(b9), Ami7, D7, Dmi7, G7
- Staff 5: F#mi7(b5), Fmi7, Emi7, A7(b9), Dmi7, G7, Cmaj7
- Staff 6: Fmi7, Bb7, Emi7, A7(b9), Dmi7, Fmi7, Bb7
- Staff 7: Cmaj7, Bmi7(b5), E7(b9), Ami(maj7), Ami7, D7(13)
- Staff 8: Dmi7, Dmi7/G, G7(b9), C6, F7, Emi7, A7(b9)

Intervals shown below the notes:

- Staff 1: m3
- Staff 2: #11, #11, m7, #11
- Staff 3: P5
- Staff 4: 9, M3
- Staff 5: P4
- Staff 6: 11, m3, 13
- Staff 7: #11

Handwritten musical score on ten staves, featuring various chords and melodic lines. Chords include Dmi7, G7, Emi7, A7(b9), Dmi7, G7, Cmaj7, Fmi7, Bb7, Emi7, A7(b9), Dmi7, Fmi7, Bb7, Cmaj7, Bmi7(b5), E7, Gmi7, C7(b9), Fmaj7, Bmi7(b5), E7(b9), Ami7, D7, Dmi7, G7, F#mi7(b5), Fmi7, Emi7, A7(b9), Dmi7, G7, Cmaj7, Fmi7, Bb7, Emi7, A7(b9), Dmi7, Fmi7, Bb7, Cmaj7, Bmi7(b5), E7(b9), Ami(maj7), Ami7, D7(b9), Dmi7, Dmi7/G, G7(b9), and C6/9. The score includes measure numbers 9, 11, 13, and 15, and various musical notations like triplets, accidentals, and articulation marks.

Phrase-Linking

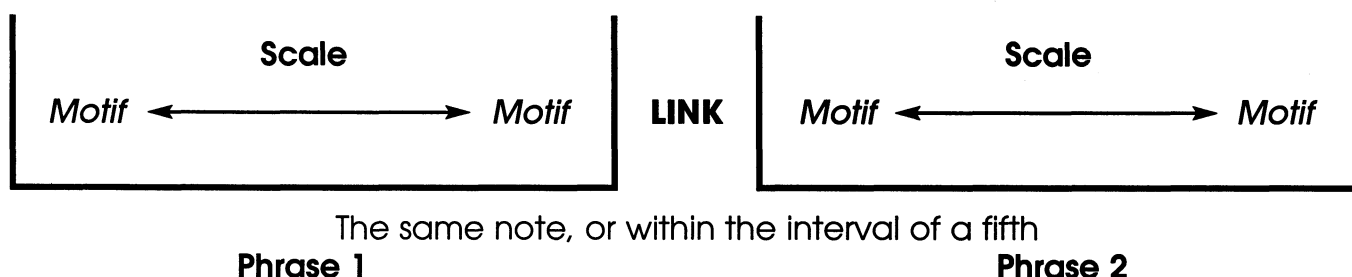
The author's definition of a phrase is: a motif followed by a scale and capped off with the motif. Diagram 1 illustrates the basic concept of *phrase-linking* and how the scale is used only as a connector (or transportation) between the two motifs.

DIAGRAM 1



Diagram 2 illustrates the bigger picture of phrase-linking: how to link two phrases together. To achieve smooth improvised lines, think in phrases and use motifs.

DIAGRAM 2



Phrase-linking is a technique to link two phrases together in order to maintain the consistency of a musical line or thought. The most important rule of phrase-linking is to start either on the same note you finished the last phrase on, or within the interval of a **fifth**. This will give the line consistency and cohesiveness. The goal is for each phrase to flow into the other.

Example 4: Phrase-link using the same note

$\text{♩} = 136$

Chords: Dmi7, Fmi7, Bb7, Cmaj7, Bmi7(b5), E7

Phrase 1 Last note of phrase 1 First note of phrase 2 Phrase 2

Example 5: Phrase-link using the same note

$\text{♩} = 136$

Chords: Dmi7, Fmi7, Bb7, Cmaj7, Bmi7(b5), E7

Phrase 1 Last note of phrase 1 First note of phrase 2 Phrase 2

Example 6: Phrase-link using the interval of a fourth

$\text{♩} = 120$

Phrase 1

Last note of phrase 1

First note of phrase 2

As you can see, the starting note of phrase two is a fourth away from the last note of phrase one. It is within the P5 rule.

Example 7: Phrase-link using the interval of a minor third

$\text{♩} = 120$

Phrase 1

Last note of phrase 1

First note of phrase 2

The starting note of phrase two is a *minor third* away from the last note of phrase one. Again, well within the P5 rule.

Tip: Examples 4 and 5 illustrate phrase-linking using the same note. Examples 6 and 7 illustrate phrase-linking using notes within the interval of a fifth. Use the interval of a fifth as a guideline and expand the parameters as needed.

Sequences

Melodic and rhythmic development comes in many forms; one of the most useful forms is called a *sequence*. A sequence is the use of a similar melodic and/or rhythmic pattern played over a given set of chord changes. Examples 8, 9, 10, and 11 illustrate both melodic and rhythmic development in the form of sequences. Each example uses the same melodic pattern as well as the same rhythmic pattern, both of which are very common in sequences. Sequences can be two measures long or extended.

Example 8: Sequence using the same melodic and rhythmic pattern
Observe that this sequence includes a voice-leading example as well.

$\text{♩} = 132$

Fmi7

Bb7

E mi7

A7(b9)

#11

#11

Example 9: A more complex melodic and rhythmic sequence

Note that the melodic pattern is not exactly the same in each measure. Observe the voice-leading.

♩ = 132

Dmi7 G7 Emi7 A7(b9) Dmi7 G7 Cmaj7

b9 11 P5 m7 P5

Example 10: Both a melodic and rhythmic sequence

♩ = 120

G13 Bbm7 Eb13

Example 11: A rhythmic sequence

♩ = 120

Amaj7 D7(b9) Gmi7 G13

Example 12 contains a variety of examples of voice-leading, phrase-linking, and sequences. Identify each analysis example and mark them as follows:

- 1) For the voice-leading examples: **circle** the leading tone and identify the target note.
- 2) For the phrase linking examples: **underline** the two phrases and identify the linking notes.
- 3) For the sequence examples: mark the sequence in **parentheses**.

Example 12

TWO, FIVE, ONE

Music by
MICHAEL ORTA

Chords and measures for 'Two, Five, One':

- Staff 1: Gmi7, C13, Abmi7, Db13, Gmi7, C13, Fma7
- Staff 2: Emi7, A7, Bbmi7, Eb13, Emi7, A7, Dma7
- Staff 3: Dmi7, G7alt, Ebmi7, Ab7(#11)
- Staff 4: A7sus13, Eb7(#11), Eb7(#11)
- Staff 5: Gmi7, C7(#11), Abmi7, Db7(#11), Gmi7, C13, Fma7
- Staff 6: Emi7, A7, Bbmi7, Eb13, Emi7, A7, Dma7
- Staff 7: Dmi7, Abmi7, Gmi7, C13, Fma7

ALL THE THINGS YOU ARE

Words by OSCAR HAMMERSTEIN II
Music by JEROME KERN

♩ = 160
(MELODY)

The musical score is written for a melody line in a key signature of three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and a common time signature (C). The tempo is marked as 160 beats per minute. The score consists of eight staves of music. Chords are indicated above the notes. The chords are: Fmi7, Bbm7, Emi7, A7, Abmaj7, Dbmaj7, Dmi7, G7, Cmaj7, Cmi7, Fmi7, Bmi7, E7, Ebmaj7, Abmaj7, Ami7(b5), D7ALT, Gmaj7, Ami7, D7ALT, Gmaj7, F#mi7, B7ALT, Emaj7(b5), C7ALT, Fmi7, Bmi7, Eb7(b15), Abmaj7, Dbmaj7, Dbmi7, Cmi7, Bb7, Bbm7, Eb7, Abmaj7, Gmi7(b5), and C7ALT.

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BEAUTIFUL LOVE

Words and Music by
VICTOR YOUNG, WAYNE KING,
EGBERT VAN ALSTYNE and HAVEN GILLESPIE

$\text{♩} = 144$
(MELODY)

Chord symbols: $E m 7 (b 5)$, $A 7 (b 9)$, $D m i 7$, $G m i 7$, $C 13$, $F \# m 7$, $B b 7 (\# 11)$, $G 7 (\# 11)$, $A 7 A L T$.

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