

Chapter 7

INTERVALLISTIC COMPING

If we look at contemporary jazz guitarists and their comping styles, we see a strong tendency towards note reduction – let’s call it “intervalistic comping.” It’s not only easier to comp with fewer notes, it also helps create “space” in the music. The old saying “too many cooks spoil the broth” could be interpreted musically as “too many notes kill the soloist.” It’s often better to comp with chords using three notes (or less!) than to fill everything up with thick voicings. You may not need to comp at all!

The space that a soloist has to develop melodic ideas is very much dependent on the comping. A lot of soloists even prefer playing *without* chords behind them all the time.

Guitarists like Bill Frisell or John Scofield often use intervals to express a chordal sound. This sort of comping is also popular in rock and country music. For example, to get a “major” sound we can use various intervals:

Musical notation showing two examples of intervallic voicings for a C major sound. The first example is labeled "C major" and shows three voicings: a triad (C-E-G), a dyad (C-E), and a dyad (C-G). The second example is labeled "add 9" and shows three voicings: a triad (C-E-G), a dyad (C-E), and a dyad (C-A).

To get a major 7th sound with extensions we can also try these:

Musical notation showing six examples of intervallic voicings for a major 7th sound with extensions. The first example is labeled "CΔ" and shows three voicings: a triad (C-E-G), a dyad (C-E), and a dyad (C-G). The second example is labeled "Δ⁹" and shows two voicings: a triad (C-E-G) and a dyad (C-E). The third example is labeled "#11" and shows two voicings: a dyad (C-E) and a dyad (C-A). The fourth example is labeled "Δ#11" and shows two voicings: a triad (C-E-G) and a dyad (C-E). The fifth example is labeled "Δ⁹#11" and shows two voicings: a triad (C-E-G) and a dyad (C-E). The sixth example is labeled "Δ#11 13" and shows two voicings: a triad (C-E-G) and a dyad (C-E).

Experiment by changing the order of the intervals used:

Musical notation showing three examples of intervallic voicings for a major 7th sound with extensions, illustrating different interval orders. The first example is labeled "CΔ" and shows three voicings: a triad (C-E-G), a dyad (C-E), and a dyad (C-G). The second example is labeled "CΔ#11" and shows two voicings: a dyad (C-E) and a dyad (C-A). The third example is labeled "CΔ⁹#11" and shows two voicings: a triad (C-E-G) and a dyad (C-E).

Here is an example combining some of these ideas:

Musical notation showing an example of a C Lydian chord with extensions, labeled "C Lydian (Δ 9, #11, 13)". It shows seven voicings: a triad (C-E-G), a dyad (C-E), a dyad (C-G), a dyad (C-A), a dyad (C-E), a dyad (C-G), and a dyad (C-A).

Here are some other chordal sounds:

D MINOR SOUNDS

D- add 9 D-7

Musical notation showing three chords on a treble clef staff. The first chord is D- (D, F, A, C). The second is add 9 (D, F, A, C, E). The third is D-7 (D, F, A, C, E, G).

D-Δ D-11 D-6

Musical notation showing three chords on a treble clef staff. The first is D-Δ (D, F, A, C, E, G, B). The second is D-11 (D, F, A, C, E, G, B, D). The third is D-6 (D, F, A, C, E, G).

D MINOR 7TH b5 SOUNDS

Dø Dø9 Dø11

Musical notation showing three chords on a treble clef staff. The first is Dø (D, F, A, C). The second is Dø9 (D, F, A, C, E, G, B). The third is Dø11 (D, F, A, C, E, G, B, D).

G7 WITH EXTENSIONS

b9 7^{b9} b9 #9 #11 #5(b13) 7 b9 #9 7^{b9} 7

11 7^{#11} 7 7^{#5} 13 7 7 13 b9¹³ sus b9¹³ b9

Musical notation showing two rows of chords on a treble clef staff. The first row contains: b9, 7^{b9}, b9, #9, #11, #5(b13), 7, b9, #9, 7^{b9}, 7. The second row contains: 11, 7^{#11}, 7, 7^{#5}, 13, 7, 7, 13, b9¹³, sus, b9¹³, b9.

We can see that there are unlimited possibilities for this kind of comping as long as we know what the "important" notes in a given chord are. To gain this sort of knowledge, it's important to practice arpeggios, as well as intervallic sequences based on scales. For example, playing the C major scale in thirds gives us that sweet "country" sound:

Musical notation showing the C major scale (C, D, E, F, G, A, B, C) played in thirds on a treble clef staff.

A similar effect can be achieved by 6th intervals:

Musical notation showing the C major scale (C, D, E, F, G, A, B, C) played in 6th intervals on a treble clef staff.

Here's an example of a standard chord progression using intervallic comping:

$E_b\Delta$ $Bb-9$ $E_b\Delta^9$ $D\emptyset^{11}$ $G7\#^{11}$ $C-9$

A_b^{13} $C-7$ $C-9^{11}$ $A\emptyset$ $D7\#^9$ $Gadd9$ $G\Delta$ A_b-7 A_b-9

$F-7$ Bb^{13} $C-9$ $C-9/Bb$ $A\emptyset^9$ $D7^b5^b13$

$G\Delta\#^{11}$ $G7sus$ $G7\#^{11}$ $G9sus$

$F7^{13}$ $F7^b9\#^{11}$ $F7sus$ $E\emptyset$ $A7^b9$

$E_b9\#^{13}$ $A-7$ $D7^b5^b9$ $B-7$ $E7\#^{13}$ $D-11$ $C\#-7$

$F\#7^b9^{13}$ $B-7/E$ $A-9/E$ $B-9$ $A-7/E$

E_b7sus $E_b\Delta\#5$ $A_b\Delta\#5/E_b$ $D\emptyset$ $G7\#^{11}$ $C-9$

The image shows a musical score for intervallic comping, consisting of 12 staves of music. Each staff contains a sequence of chords and their intervallic notation. The chords are written in a standard musical notation style, with accidentals and stems. The intervallic notation is written above the chords. The staves are numbered 1, 6, 11, 17, 21, 25, 30, and 35. The chords are: $E_b\Delta$, $Bb-9$, $E_b\Delta^9$, $D\emptyset^{11}$, $G7\#^{11}$, $C-9$, A_b^{13} , $C-7$, $C-9^{11}$, $A\emptyset$, $D7\#^9$, $Gadd9$, $G\Delta$, A_b-7 , A_b-9 , $F-7$, Bb^{13} , $C-9$, $C-9/Bb$, $A\emptyset^9$, $D7^b5^b13$, $G\Delta\#^{11}$, $G7sus$, $G7\#^{11}$, $G9sus$, $F7^{13}$, $F7^b9\#^{11}$, $F7sus$, $E\emptyset$, $A7^b9$, $E_b9\#^{13}$, $A-7$, $D7^b5^b9$, $B-7$, $E7\#^{13}$, $D-11$, $C\#-7$, $F\#7^b9^{13}$, $B-7/E$, $A-9/E$, $B-9$, $A-7/E$, E_b7sus , $E_b\Delta\#5$, $A_b\Delta\#5/E_b$, $D\emptyset$, $G7\#^{11}$, $C-9$.

OTHER POSSIBILITIES FOR CHORD CONSTRUCTION

Note that there is no third in the first row of voicings!

● Fifths

C6⁹ D6⁹ E^b9^b13 F6⁹ G6⁹ A9^b13 B^b5^b9^b13

VII or III D6⁹ IX or V E^b9^b13 X or VI F6⁹ I or VIII G6⁹ II or X A9^b13 IV or XII B^b5^b9^b13 V or I

● Possible Uses

C6⁹ D-11 D-6⁹ E11 #11 G7sus

X (9) D-11 VIII (9) D-6⁹ XII (9) E11 X (#11) #11 G7sus X (9)

● Sixths

construction:

III V VI VIII X XII

● Possible Uses

Cadd9¹¹ Cadd11¹³ CΔ¹³ CΔ9¹³ CΔ⁹

D-9¹¹ D-9¹¹ D-11¹³ D-9

FΔ⁹#11 FΔ⁹#11 F6^{#11} FΔ^{#11}¹³

G7¹³¹¹ G13(no 3rd) G9¹³(no 3rd) Gadd9¹¹

“SCALE SKIPPING”

A lot of us are familiar with the voicings within the major scale and the sounds that they can produce in a “modal” setting (Ex. 1). The idea is to follow a particular voicing through the scale (in this case a “root position” voicing) while keeping a steady or “pedal point” bass line.

● Example 1: “Milestones” Vamp

C7sus

FΔ⁹

It is important to emphasize that any voicing can be taken through all the degrees of the scale to produce a unity of sound-texture which a random change of chord voicing cannot simulate. The advantage of this sort of comping is that the voicings lead to each other, rather than jumping around melodically:

● Example 2: Quartal Voicing (Dorian)

A-7

● Example 3: Cluster Voicing (Lydian)

CΔ^{#11}

We have looked at many possible voicing combinations in the previous chapters, from “four-note 4th chords” to “four-note clusters.” Let’s see what happens, when we change the source scale from the typical major scale to something like the melodic minor scale:

● Example 4: Root Position (Melodic Minor)

A-Δ

ALTERED SCALE VOICINGS

Here are some examples for altered scale voicings (E7 altered from F melodic minor VII):

● E7 Altered Scale Voicings

The first section displays three staves of musical notation, each containing eight chords. The first chord on each staff is the base E7 chord (G-B-D-F). The subsequent seven chords are altered voicings, showing various combinations of notes from the E7 altered scale (G, B, D, F, A, C, E♭) across different voicings.

● E7 Dominant Diminished Scale Voicings

The second section displays two staves of musical notation, each containing eight chords. The first chord on each staff is the base E7 chord (G-B-D-F). The subsequent seven chords are dominant diminished voicings, showing various combinations of notes from the E7 dominant diminished scale (G, B, D, F, A, C, E♭, G) across different voicings.

SONG FOR B

Peter O'Mara

This is a waltz using 3-note clusters and 4th chords.

Bbadd9 Ab⁹ 13 G-7 C#7alt.
 C-11 F7sus^b9 BbΔ⁹ D7sus
 GΔ⁹ B-9 E-9 CΔ⁹
 A-9 AbΔ⁹ F-9 DbΔ⁹ #11
 Bb-9 E/Eb C9sus C7sus^b9
 FΔ D-9 B-11 E7^b9 #11
 AΔ¹³ AΔ F#-11 E-11 D-11 AbΔ¹³

29 $G\Delta^{11}$ $Bb\Delta/F$ $D7\#9b13/F\#$

33 $G-9$ $E6\#9^{11}$ $C\#-13$ $C-9$ $D-7b13$

37 $Eb\Delta\#9$ $F9^{13}$ $D7\#9b13/F\#$ $G-9$

41 $E\Delta^{13}$ $C\#-11$ $C-9$ $D-7b13$

45 $Eb\Delta\#9$ $F9^{13}$ $Bb9sus$ $Bb9susb13$

49 $Bbadd9$ $Bbaddb13$ $Bb\Delta^9$

Chapter 8

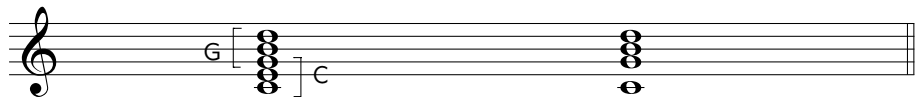
SLASH CHORDS

“Slash chords” are named after their notation: a triad and a single root divided by a slash (“/”). They are a convenient way to express polychord-like sounds on the guitar.

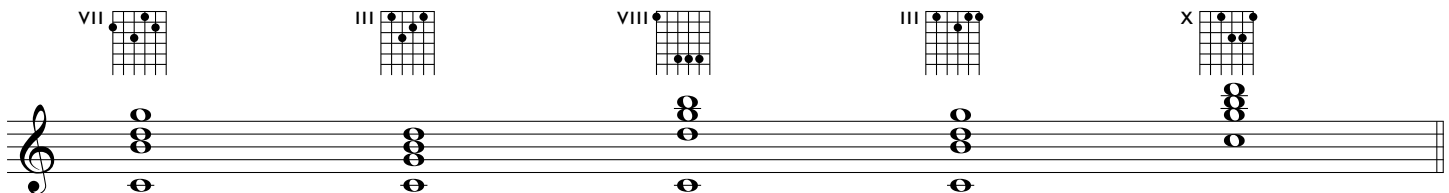
Polychords are, literally speaking, two chords superimposed on each other. However, the limited number of notes available for guitar voicings make it necessary for us to be economical. This sort of voice economy is useful in producing new “sounds,” for example:

Polychord: G/C

$C\Delta^9 \longrightarrow G/C$



Although we’ve left out the third (E), the result is still a “C major 7, 9 (C Δ 9)” sound, because our ear fills in the gap between the root and the fifth. That means we can use any G major triad to create a C Δ 9:



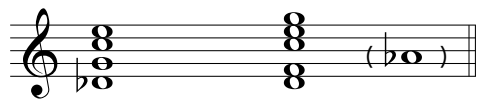
Here, our knowledge of triad shapes (see chapter 1) comes to fruition! Also, slash chords provide the guitarist with very resonant and “modern” sounds and voicings for the majority of modes as will be shown on the following pages.

MAJOR TRIADS AS "UPPER STRUCTURE" SLASH CHORDS


One way to learn to understand polychords is to take a triad, let's say "C major" and try every possible bass note under it. We can then analyze the chordal colours produced and establish the suitable scales for them.

MAJOR TRIAD WITH THE $\flat 2^{\text{ND}}$ ($\flat 9^{\text{TH}}$) IN THE BASS

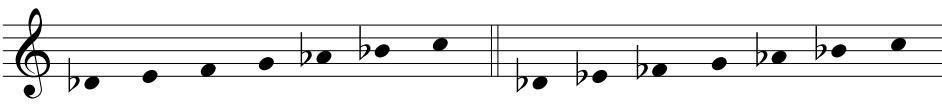
$C/D\flat = D\flat\Delta^{\#9\#11}$ (no 5th)




$= D\flat\Delta$



F Harmonic Minor VI $A\flat$ Harmonic Major IV

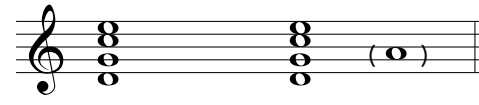


$D\flat$ Diminished

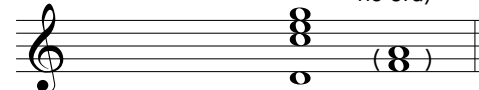


MAJOR TRIAD WITH THE 2^{ND} (9^{TH}) IN THE BASS


$C/D = D9^{11}$ (no 5th)



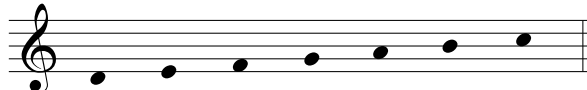
$= D-9^{11}$ (no 5th, no 3rd)



D Mixolydian




D Dorian

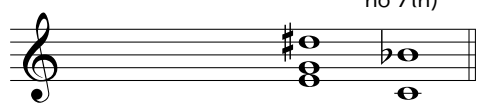


MAJOR TRIAD WITH $\flat 3^{\text{RD}}$ ($\#9^{\text{TH}}$) IN THE BASS

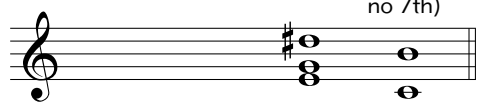
$C/D\# = E\flat 7^{\flat 9\#13}$ (no 7th, no 5th)




$= C7^{\#9}$ (no root, no 7th)




$= C\Delta^{\#9}$ (no root, no 7th)



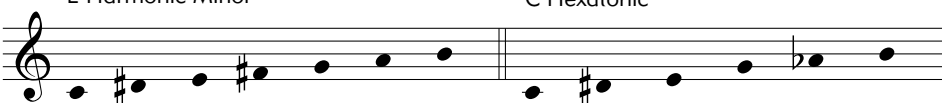
$E\flat$ Dominant Diminished $A\flat$ Harmonic Major V



C Dominant Diminished



E Harmonic Minor C Hexatonic



MAJOR TRIAD WITH THE $\flat 5^{\text{TH}}$ ($\sharp 11^{\text{TH}}$) IN THE BASS

$C/F\sharp = F\sharp 7^{\flat 9 \sharp 11}$ (no 3rd) F \sharp Dominant Diminished F \sharp Altered

$= C\Delta^{\sharp 11}$ (no 7th) C Lydian E Harmonic Minor VI

MAJOR TRIAD WITH THE 5^{TH} IN THE BASS

Here, just as with “C/E” we have an inversion of the triad, this time the second inversion with the fifth underneath. The possible chord-scales are the same as with “C/E”.

$C/G = G 6 \text{ sus}$ (no 3rd)

MAJOR TRIAD WITH THE $\flat 6^{\text{TH}}$ ($\sharp 5^{\text{TH}}$) IN THE BASS

$C/A\flat = A\flat \Delta^{\sharp 5}$

A \flat Lydian Augmented (F Melodic Minor III) A \flat Major #5 (F Harmonic Minor III)

A \flat Harmonic Major A \flat Hexatonic

MAJOR TRIAD WITH THE 7TH IN THE BASS

C/B = CΔ

B Locrian B Phrygian

C Hexatonic C Harmonic Major VII

This polychord type can also be seen as a “dominant 7th sus (11), b9, b13”:

B7^{b9}11^{b13} (no 5th, no 7th) E Harmonic Minor V

Some of these scales we have just seen may seem strange to the ear. Just remember: “Rome wasn’t built in a day.” What we “hear” is a result of what we have “heard,” so let’s keep our ears open!

MAJOR AUGMENTED TRIADS AS “UPPER STRUCTURE” SLASH CHORDS



MAJOR AUGMENTED TRIAD WITH THE b2ND (b9TH) IN THE BASS

Caug/D^b D^b-Δ

D^b Melodic Minor D^b Harmonic Minor F Harmonic Minor VI

A^b Harmonic Major IV D^b Hexatonic

MINOR TRIADS AS “UPPER-STRUCTURE” SLASH CHORDS

We have tried all the possible bass notes under major triads – now let’s do the same for minor triads.

MINOR TRIAD WITH THE $\flat 2^{\text{ND}}$ ($\flat 9^{\text{TH}}$) IN THE BASS

$D-/E\flat = E\flat\Delta^9\#11$ (no 3rd, no 5th)

$E\flat$ Lydian $E\flat$ Lydian Augmented

The diagram shows the chord D-/Eb in treble clef with a bass line. The upper structure is a D major triad (D, F#, A) and the lower structure is an Eb major triad (Eb, G, Bb). To the right, two scale lines are shown: the Eb Lydian scale (Eb, F, G, Ab, Bb, C, D) and the Eb Lydian Augmented scale (Eb, F, G, Ab, Bb, C, D#).

Although the most common use of this polychord is as a Lydian (or Lydian augmented) sound, it does also have a use as an extended diminished chord:

$= E\flat\Delta^9$ (no 3rd, no 6th)

$E\flat$ Diminished

The diagram shows the chord D-/Eb in treble clef with a bass line. The upper structure is a D major triad (D, F#, A) and the lower structure is an Eb major triad (Eb, G, Bb). To the right, a scale line is shown for the Eb Diminished scale (Eb, F, G, Ab, Bb, C, D).

MINOR TRIAD WITH THE 2^{ND} (9^{TH}) IN THE BASS

$D-/E = E-7\flat 9$ (no 3rd, no 5th)

E Phrygian E Locrian

D Melodic Minor II D Harmonic Minor II

The diagram shows the chord D-/E in treble clef with a bass line. The upper structure is a D major triad (D, F#, A) and the lower structure is an E major triad (E, G, B). To the right, four scale lines are shown: E Phrygian (E, F, G, A, B, C, D), E Locrian (E, F, G, Ab, B, C, D), D Melodic Minor II (D, Eb, F, G, Ab, B, C), and D Harmonic Minor II (D, Eb, F, G, Ab, B, C#).

As a “dominant 7th sus (11) $\flat 9$ ” chord there are more possibilities:

$= E7\flat 9$ (no 5th)

A Harmonic Minor V A Harmonic Major V

The diagram shows the chord D-/E in treble clef with a bass line. The upper structure is a D major triad (D, F#, A) and the lower structure is an E major triad (E, G, B). To the right, two scale lines are shown: A Harmonic Minor V (A, B, C, D, Eb, F, G#) and A Harmonic Major V (A, B, C, D, Eb, F, G#).

MINOR TRIAD WITH THE $\flat 5^{\text{TH}}$ ($\# 11^{\text{TH}}$) IN THE BASS

$D-/A\flat = A\flat^{\circ}\flat 9$ (no $\flat 3^{\text{rd}}$)
 $= A\flat 7^{\flat 9 \# 11}$ (no 3^{rd} , no 7^{th})

A Harmonic Minor VII A Harmonic Major VII
 A \flat Dominant Diminished

MINOR TRIAD WITH THE 5^{TH} IN THE BASS

This is another inverted triad, so we can use any scale that contains a D minor triad.

D-/A

MINOR TRIAD WITH THE $\flat 6^{\text{TH}}$ IN THE BASS

Here we can use any scale that fits a "B \flat Δ " chord (see "Major Triad With The 3^{rd} In The Bass").

D-/B $\flat = B\flat\Delta$

MINOR TRIAD WITH THE 6^{TH} IN THE BASS

D-/B = B \emptyset

B Locrian B Locrian $\sharp 2$
 A Harmonic Major II A Harmonic Minor II

DIMINISHED TRIAD WITH THE 5TH IN THE BASS

$D^{\circ}/A = A_{\Delta}^{\flat 13}$
 $D^{\circ}/A = A_{-}^{\flat 13}$

A Harmonic Major $\flat 2$ A Harmonic Major

A Harmonic Minor

DIMINISHED TRIAD WITH THE $\flat 6^{\text{TH}}$ ($\sharp 5^{\text{TH}}$) IN THE BASS

$D^{\circ}/B\flat = B\flat 7$

This is really no big deal, but let's just file this knowledge away for the sake of it!

DIMINISHED TRIAD WITH THE 6TH IN THE BASS

$D^{\circ}/B = B^{\circ} 7$

See chapters 2, 3 and 4 for a discussion of diminished 7th chords.

COMBINATION EXERCISES

Combining several slash chords can produce interesting results:

▲ Major Polychord Sounds

G/C (= CΔ⁹) D/C (= C6⁹#¹¹) F/C (= C6sus) E/C (= CΔ^{#5})

Musical notation showing four slash chords on a treble clef staff: G/C, D/C, F/C, and E/C. Each chord is represented by a vertical stack of notes on the staff.

▲ Minor Polychord Sounds

F/D (= D-7) E^b/D (= D-Phrygian) D^b/D (= D-Δ^{b5}) B^b/D (= D-7^{#5})

Musical notation showing four slash chords on a treble clef staff: F/D, E^b/D, D^b/D, and B^b/D. Each chord is represented by a vertical stack of notes on the staff.

▲ Dominant 7th Polychord Sounds

F/G (= G9¹¹) D^b/G (= G7^{b9}#¹¹) E^b/G (= G7^{#9}^{b13}) E/G (= G7^{b9}¹³)

Musical notation showing four slash chords on a treble clef staff: F/G, D^b/G, E^b/G, and E/G. Each chord is represented by a vertical stack of notes on the staff.

▲ Intro Using Pedal-Point Vamp

G/C F/C E/C D^b/C

Musical notation showing four slash chords on a treble clef staff: G/C, F/C, E/C, and D^b/C. Each chord is represented by a vertical stack of notes on the staff.

▲ Intro Using Pedal-Point Vamp

G/C (= CΔ⁹) F[#]/A (= A7^{b9}¹³) F/D (= D-7) D^b/G (= G7^{b9}#¹¹) G/C (= CΔ⁹)

Musical notation showing five slash chords on a treble clef staff: G/C, F[#]/A, F/D, D^b/G, and G/C. Each chord is represented by a vertical stack of notes on the staff.

▲ Intro Using Pedal-Point Vamp

D^b/D (= D-Δ^{b5}) A^b/G (= G7sus^{b9}) D/C (= C6⁹#¹¹)

Musical notation showing three slash chords on a treble clef staff: D^b/D, A^b/G, and D/C. Each chord is represented by a vertical stack of notes on the staff.

COSTA DEL SOL

Peter O'Mara

(as played on Peter O'Mara's "Avenue U", ENJA 6046, ENJA-TUTU)

Here is one of my own tunes for you to have more fun with slash chords. Again, the "scale-chords" behind the slash chords are written underneath.

1 C/F E-/A D-11 D/Bb
FΔ⁹ A-Δ⁹ BbΔ^{#5}

5 G-9 Bb-/C Bb/F G/F
C7sus^{b9} C6sus FΔ^{#11}

9 F/A F/Bb Bb/C A/C#
A7alt BbΔ⁹ C-11 A

13 D/E G/A D/G B-9¹³
E9sus A9sus GΔ⁹

17 D/C Eb/Ab Bb/Eb F/Eb
CΔ^{#11} AbΔ⁹ EbΔ⁹ EbΔ⁹

21 Bb/Eb F/Eb

D. C.