

INTRODUCTION

The most common question asked of me by students concerns how to use pitches outside the stated tonality. Is there a system of thought which gives order to these choices, or is it just chance? Also, is there a method for developing one's ear and technique to facilitate these types of melodic lines? Over the years and after much trial and error, I have devised a system to be used in order that an interested student can begin these explorations on his own. In general, we refer to this type of harmonic thinking as a "chromatic approach."

Underlying chromaticism is the concept of superimposition: playing in one key over or against another; this is similar to the idea that an altered G7 (b9 for example) has more tension than just a plain G7, or that a C⁶₉ carries more tension than a C triad. Likewise, in chromaticism, varying degrees of tension can be predicted and therefore used artistically in a spontaneous, improved fashion.

Obviously, there are many complex variables that make a chromatic approach viable which can only be alluded to in this text: suitable phrasing and articulative nuances, the proper linking stylistically of melody and harmony, the use of a clear tonal center at critical junctures to insure that the tension/release principles are observed and more. These topics will be included in a full scale book on the subject which I am co-authoring with pianist Richard Beirach. Suffice to say, the point of this text and recording is to introduce the student to the use of chromatic principles in the area of choosing pitches.

CONTEXT

Although a chromatic approach can be used to some extent on a series of moving chord changes as in most standard tunes, this style is most suitable when playing in two related harmonic idioms: modalism and pedal point.

Modalism implies the extended use of a scale (mode) as the harmonic underpinning for creating melodic lines. The assumption is that the improviser uses the stated scale as the primary material to base his lines upon. Of course, passing tones between scale pitches are expected also. Pedal point playing is yet one step further away from tonal anchors. In this case, only the root is given without necessarily a scale or chord. Instead of D dorian, the improvising is based on D pedal, meaning that the harmonies and lines which spontaneously occur will be loosely centered around that tonal center. The D pedal could sound harmonically many ways at any point of the improvisation: minor, major, diminished, etc. In actuality, when an experienced pedal point musician improvises along these lines, he traverses many keys and scale qualities. But always in the back of his mind, you can discern at times a clear statement of the agreed upon root. This is necessary for obtaining a balance between tension and release, which is the goal of any artistic statement.

PRACTICE

- 1) Construct an "exotic" scale from any root using my parameters or any others you devise.
- 2) Find the common and unusual voicings derived directly from the scale.
- 3) Sing, play and write melodies over the voicings (make your own play-a-long tape to hear the sounds as you create melodies).
- 4) Take a polychord and construct a scale from it to practice with, as in #3 above.
- 5) Set up various bar lengths moving the scales and/or roots around as in a tune like Impressions. Use a rhythm machine to give some momentum.

The result of all this is to habitualize chromatic melodies in your ear. Eventually, practice away from a contrived scale or voicing and use only a pedal point as an harmonic basis. Also, write chromatic lines based purely on interval combinations and try to put harmony with it. The goal is to become free from a tonal anchor when desired and still maintain a sense of coherence, logic and beauty.

APPENDIX

MODAL AND PEDAL POINT TUNES

Recorded by John Coltrane

Miles' Mode - Impressions - Afro Blue - The Promise - Chim Chim Cheree - My Favorite Things - Resolution - Inch Worm - Lonnie's Lament - Transition - India - Tunji - Greensleeves

Recorded by Miles Davis

So What - Milestones - Agitation - Freedom Jazz Dance
most of his music from 1968 on

Peace, Peace - Bill Evans

Passion Dance - McCoy Tyner

Pendulum - Richard Beirach

Third Visit, Lookout Farm, Napanoch - David Liebman

Any blues can be treated this way; standards such as Green Dolphin Street, Softly, as in a Morning Sunrise, Invitation, A Night in Tunisia, The Night Has 1000 Eyes; a lot of fusion tunes and modern compositions have at least some sections of "vamping" or pedal point playing.

Special thanks to Bob Visentin for his help.

On the left channel, I clearly play the stated scale over all of these chords. The various degrees of tension and release heard melodically in relation to the chords shows how within a scale, either emphasizing or de-emphasizing a tone at a given juncture greatly affects the overall color of the line. My melodies range from close intervals in succession to wide leaps. For the purposes of this booklet and recording set, rhythmic momentum and variation have been understated in order to make the melodic and harmonic points even clearer.

SECTION B - POLYCHORD TRIADS AND DERIVED SCALES

I have included the twelve major triads over an F pedal as well as a few minors. The reason for these particular chords is that in contemporary jazz, these types of symbols and terminology have been commonplace. In chromaticism, these sounds may be viewed as polychords because the top part of a "slash" chord suggests a different key than the bottom part or root. This can be true even in a chord like Ab/F, which is also an F-7. For chromatic purposes, you are truly in the keys of Ab and F major. This bi-tonal approach is a more advanced concept than covered in this section, but I point it out to show where one can go with all of this. For the purposes of this set, I have constructed scales which include the root and triad chord members. All other note choices between these required pitches are open, so the examples here only touch the surface. Section B opposes Section A in that the chord is the source for scale formation, whereas in A, the scale came first.

Note: In listing "common scales", my terminology considers the following:

Diminished whole tone = 1/2, 1, 1/2, 1, 1, 1, 1.

Altered Dominant = 1/2, 1, 1/2, 1, 1/2, 1, 1/2, 1.

Whole-half diminished = 1, 1/2, 1, 1/2, 1, 1/2, 1, 1/2.

Each chord designated is followed by an arpeggio before the scales are played.

SECTION C - SCALES IN CONTEXT

Using the appropriate tracks from the Aebersold series, I have played three choruses each of **Impressions** and **Maiden Voyage**, two popular modal tunes. The scales used for each chorus are clearly notated. The only requirement was that the minor third of the chord be present. In advanced chromatic playing, even the thirds can conflict!! Remember that in an actual playing situation, the accompanying pianist's chords should reflect the altered scales that I play, possibly using some of the "other voicings" type shown in Section A. Even the bassist's lines should reflect my melodies. From a practical standpoint, these examples are unrealistic and quite crude because of the obvious nature of a play-a-long, but I included it so that even with an unsympathetic harmonic accompaniment, sense can still be made from chromatic line playing. In essence, this is where a truly spontaneous musical conversation takes place - in the harmonic give and take between the soloist's lines and the accompaniment.

B -
F

Common Scales: F Altered Dominant

Other Scales:

1)

2)

C# -
F

(F Δ 7 \sharp 5) Common Scales: F Whole-Half Diminished, Harmonic Minor

Other Scales:

1)

2)

Bb \circ
F

Common Scales: F Whole-Half Diminished, Harmonic Minor

Other Scales:

1)

2)

3)

Section C Use of Scales In Context

IMPRESSIONS

CHORUS 1 - Scale Used

D -

Eb -

CHORUS 2 - Scale Used

D -

Eb -

CHORUS 3 - Scale Used

D -

Eb -

Section B Polychord Triads & Derived Scales

$\frac{Gb}{F}$

Common Scales: F Phrygian, Major Phrygian, Locrian

Other Scales:

1) 2)

Two musical staves showing the first two scales. Staff 1) shows the F Phrygian scale (F, Gb, A, Bb, C, D, Eb, F). Staff 2) shows the Major Phrygian scale (F, G, A, Bb, C, D, Eb, F).

3)

Staff 3) shows the Locrian scale (F, Gb, Ab, Bb, C, D, Eb, F).

$\frac{G}{F}$

(G7) Common Scales: F Lydian, Lydian Augmented, Whole-Half Diminished

Other Scales:

1) 2)

Two musical staves showing the first two scales. Staff 1) shows the F Lydian scale (F, G, A, B, C, D, E, F). Staff 2) shows the F Lydian Augmented scale (F, G, A, B#, C, D, E, F).

$\frac{Ab}{F}$

(F - 7) Common Scales: F Phrygian, Altered Dominant, Aeolian, Dorian

Other Scales:

1) 2) (aeolian)

Two musical staves showing the first two scales. Staff 1) shows the F Phrygian scale (F, Gb, A, Bb, C, D, Eb, F). Staff 2) shows the F Aeolian scale (F, G, Ab, Bb, C, D, Eb, F).

3)

Staff 3) shows the F Dorian scale (F, G, Ab, Bb, C, D, E, F).

$\frac{A}{F}$

(FΔ7#5) Common Scales: F Lydian Augmented

Other Scales:

1) 2)

Two musical staves showing the F Lydian Augmented scale (F, G, A, B#, C, D, E, F) in two different phrasings.

$\frac{Bb}{F}$

Common Scales: F Major, Dorian, Mixolydian, Whole-Half Diminished

Other Scales:

1) 2)

Two musical staves showing the first two scales. Staff 1) shows the F Major scale (F, G, A, Bb, C, D, E, F). Staff 2) shows the F Dorian scale (F, G, Ab, Bb, C, D, E, F).

$\frac{B}{F}$

Common Scales: F Diminished Whole Tone, Altered Dominant, Locrian b2

Other Scales:

1) 2)

Two musical staves showing the first two scales. Staff 1) shows the F Diminished Whole Tone scale (F, G, Ab, Bb, C, D, Eb, F). Staff 2) shows the F Altered Dominant scale (F, G, Ab, Bb, C, D, Eb, F).