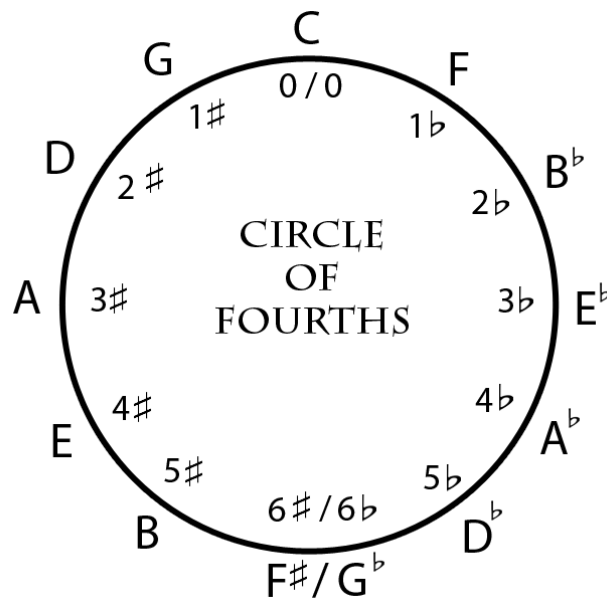


# Jazz Lesson 2

## Technique

### 1. Circle Of Fourths

- a. We are adding keys by following the circle of fourths. We add the new key by taking the previous key and progressing upward by the interval of a fourth. We started in the keys of C and F. From C to F is an interval of a fourth. Now we move from F to the key of Bb, another fourth, and from Bb to the key of Eb. If you look below you will also notice that one flat gets added to every key. C has no sharps or flats, F has one flat, Bb has two flats, and Eb has three flats. This pattern continues until we arrive at the key of B which has 5 sharps. We will continue this pattern until we have completed all of the major scales for all the keys. The Circle of Fourths is a great pattern in order to make sure you learn specific exercises in all 12 keys. I will refer to the Circle of Fourths frequently in future lessons.



## Harmony & Theory

### 1. Major Triads

- a. Chords are one of the best parts of jazz. They are the beautiful harmonic foundation that allows for melodies and solos to float over. They are extremely important to understand and master because they serve many purposes in jazz. Knowing jazz harmony and theory will enable you to play any and all types of songs including pop, country, blues, rock, and any style you could imagine.

- b. Traditionally chords have been built in thirds, by stacking major or minor thirds on top of each other. Chords and scales share a close relationship. Every chord can be linked to a scale and vice versa. We will start by using the major scale we just learned in order to build your first chords. Triads, (three note chords) are perfect to start with in order to progress to jazz chords.
- c. Let's build triads for the two major scales you know already, C and F. All major triads are built with three notes from its own respective major scale. We will use the 1<sup>st</sup> note of the scale, the 3<sup>rd</sup> note of the scale, and finally the 5<sup>th</sup> note of the scale. For a C Major triad, the 1<sup>st</sup> degree of the scale is the note C, but for theory sake we will refer to this as the 1<sup>st</sup> degree of the scale. Next we will add the 3<sup>rd</sup> degree of the scale, (also just called the 3<sup>rd</sup>), being the note E. In order to find the 3<sup>rd</sup>, start on C and play your C major scale while counting each note you reach 3. C is counted as 1. Finally, we will add the 5<sup>th</sup> degree of scale, (or the 5<sup>th</sup>), to complete our C major triad, (see figure 3 ).

In order to find the major triads for F, Bb, and Eb, simply follow the same steps using the respective major scales for each of the key.

\*WE BUILD MAJOR TRIADS USING THE 1ST, 3RD, AND 5TH DEGREE OF THE MAJOR SCALE

**C MAJOR SCALE**

1<sup>ST</sup> DEGREE      3<sup>RD</sup> DEGREE      5<sup>TH</sup> DEGREE      **C MAJOR TRIAD**

**F MAJOR SCALE**

1<sup>ST</sup> DEGREE      3<sup>RD</sup> DEGREE      5<sup>TH</sup> DEGREE      **F MAJOR TRIAD**

## 2. Major Triad Intervals

- a. After building our major triads we can now determine the types of thirds that make up our major third triad. Let's take our C major triad to find out our two intervals. C is the first note in the chord and E is the second so here we have our first interval. Let's count the whole steps and half steps between C and E to determine our interval. From C to D is one whole step, and from D to E is another whole step. Thus, we have two whole steps between C and E. By going back to Lesson 1 if needed and looking at our interval chart we determine that the distance of two whole steps equals a major third, ( see figure).

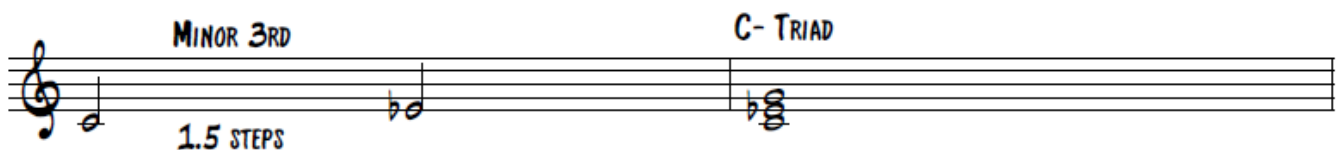


The next interval we have is between notes E and G. Let's count our whole and half steps. From E to F is a half step, and from F to G is a whole step, thus we have 1 whole step and 1 half step. By looking at our chart we see that this is a minor third, (see figure 5).



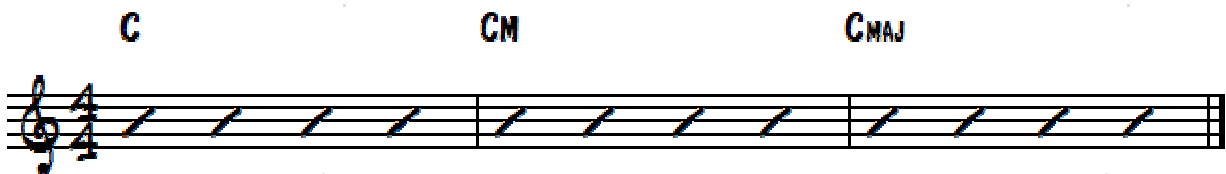
So our major triad is built by a major third, then a minor third on top.

This is a great time to point out that when the first interval of a chord starts with a major third then our chord will have a major sound and be called major. Likewise when the first interval of our chord starts with a minor 3<sup>rd</sup>, our chord will have a minor sound and be called minor, (see figure 6).



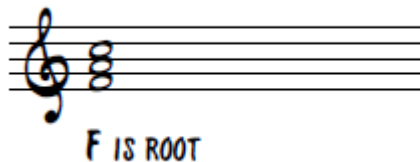
### 3. How Major triads are written

- a. In pop, and jazz charts you will always see major triad chords written as one letter that describes the root of the chord. For example you might see “C”. This means you would play a C Major triad, C,E or G. Or you will see the letter “F”, which means you would play an F major triad. You might also see “Cmaj”, but this is very rare. You also might see CM, but this is extremely rare as well. Look at the 3 bars below and look at the chord symbols above the measures for an example of this. See figure below.



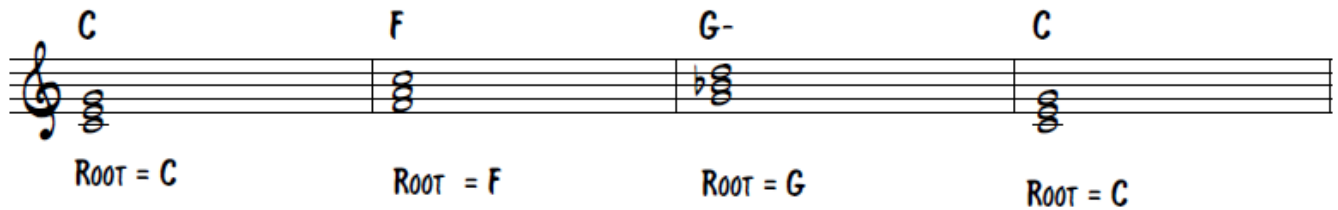
### 4. Bass Notes aka. Roots

- a. A root is a musical term for the bottom or harmonic anchor for a chord that is linked to the name. For example in a C major triad the root is C because it serves as the foundation for the other notes. The root of an F minor triad is, yup you guessed it, F, (see figure5).



Roots are important because they serve as the foundation for which a chord is built upon. Because of this the roots are regularly used as “**Bass Notes**”. Bass notes are often roots, but can be other notes as well, that are played in the extreme lower register of the piano, or any other instrument, such as a Bass. Well it sounds like it would make sense for a bass to play bass...notes... right? This is exactly what they do. A bass player in all your favorite bands is play roots to the chords the majority of the time. He lays down the harmonic

foundation for all other harmonies to be built upon. Let's say a pop piece had the first four chords of C, F, G-, C. Our roots would be C, F, G, and C, (see figure 6).



Pretty easy right? These are the notes the bass player would be playing on the bass. Notice how the root of a G- chord is just the note G even though the chord is minor. Again, the 3<sup>rd</sup> is the note in a chord that determines whether the chord is major or minor, so we need not worry about the quality of the chord when talking about the roots. All we must know is that the root is the foundation of the chord. When playing by yourself for fun or for friends, often you will not have a bass player to play the roots for you to give you a solid foundation. Do you know what this means? You have to incorporate the roots on the low register of the piano yourself! It is much easier than it seems and you will begin to practice playing bass notes in this lesson.

## Repertoire

### 1. *Pop Charts, Forms and Structures*

- a. Once you know how to read basic charts you'll be able to play any music you want. All charts have the same basic structure to them. Let's say you go into a music store and pick up an Elton John Book. Most pop charts will typically look similar to this format in which you will see a grand staff with RH and LH written notes. Above the staff you will most likely see guitar tabs for guitar players to play the chords as well as chords notated by symbols and letters like in figure 7. The chords above the music is what we are actually interested in as these are going to give us the harmonies to the piece without spending hours and hours practicing exactly what Elton John originally played. That can be fun but sometimes you want to just sit down and be able to play an artist's pieces with ease. The chords above the music allow us to do that. Playing the chords to the music allows us to

break out of the box that we are put in by the notes on the page. We are able to engage in self expression and that is the most fun part of music.

### *Piano Man – Billy Joel Excerpt*

Moderately

*mf*

C F/C Cmaj7

With pedal

F C/E G C Em/B Am

1. It's nine o'clock on a Sat - ur - day.  
2.-4. (See additional lyrics)

The image shows a piano score for 'Piano Man' by Billy Joel. It consists of two systems of music. The first system is marked 'Moderately' and 'mf'. The melody is in the right hand, and the bass line is in the left hand. Chords are indicated above the staff: C, F/C, and Cmaj7. The second system is marked 'With pedal'. The melody continues with lyrics: '1. It's nine o'clock on a Sat - ur - day.' and '2.-4. (See additional lyrics)'. Chords are indicated above the staff: F, C/E, G, C, Em/B, and Am. The bass line continues with a simple harmonic accompaniment.

## 2. How to use the chords with the melody to play any music like a pro.

- a. The first step is to distinguish where the melody is. When we play a song our RH will play the melody most of the time while our LH is plays the written chords that are above the grand staff, (see figure 8.).

F- B<sup>b</sup>- E<sup>b</sup> A<sup>b</sup>

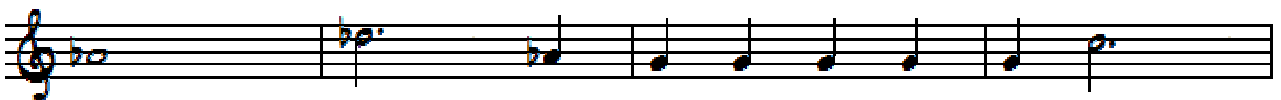
The image shows a musical staff with a melody line. Above the staff, four chords are written: F-, B<sup>b</sup>-, E<sup>b</sup>, and A<sup>b</sup>. The melody consists of a series of notes: a whole note F, a quarter note B<sup>b</sup>, a quarter note E<sup>b</sup>, a quarter note D<sup>b</sup>, a quarter note C<sup>b</sup>, a quarter note B<sup>b</sup>, a quarter note A<sup>b</sup>, and a whole note G<sup>b</sup>.

This way we are not spending hours upon hours perfecting every note. We can actually

take enjoyment from sitting down at the piano and opening up a music book of our favorite artist. When we put our RH melody with our LH chords, viola! We are now playing the piece in a matter of 2 minutes. But Brenden, I don't know all these chords? Well that's what I'm going to teach you. You already know about major triads from this lesson. There are only a couple more types of chords that you will need to know in order to start sounding like a professional. Just remember, practice hard!

### 3. *Learning Tunes Series Part 2 – The Formula (Steps 1-2)*

- a. *Step 1 RH Melody* - When Learning RH melodies we want to practice them slowly at first with a metronome going. This will give us a reference of time to use while practicing. The purpose of playing the melody alone is too obviously learn the notes but also to hear the melodic lines isolated without the harmonies. This will help us internalize the melody more so when we're soloing or comping, will still be able to hear the melody going in our heads. The melody is what creates the piece. It should be the main point of reference for any song. We also want to play the melody in different styles as well. Lots of people will just practice the melody in a bebop fashion at one tempo. If you give your brain and muscles more variations to learn from the melodic line will catch on much faster in the beginning and also as you begin to memorize it. We also want to make sure we are practicing in different registers as well. Another thing we want to avoid is getting too comfortable in the middle of the piano. It's amazing what happens when you shift your RH up and octave or two. It's like you're playing the melody for the first time all over again. This is exactly what we want to accomplish so we can familiarize ourselves with all the different and new ways to play a melody. This way we will have learned it so well that there won't be any chance for us to forget it.



- a. *Step 2 LH Bass Notes* - Like we learned already our LH Bass notes serve as the bottom of every chord. These are the moving anchors of the harmony. Practicing the bass notes of every song helps you to always remember the progressions of any piece. The bass notes will tell you where the progression is going. When you just practice the chords to a tune there are so many different movements your hands can make to create voicings that you miss the real movements of the progression. The bass notes are the framework for all the chords. It's much easier to know the bass notes well and fill in the harmonies. Usually one can hear if a chord is major, minor, or dominant. If you have practiced the chords and harmonies but haven't practiced your bass notes, I guarantee you'll have a harder time filling in the progression if you begin to forget some changes. Practicing the bass notes is just like practicing the melody and every other step of learning the piece. We want to create as many variations as possible in order to ensure we know the progressions as best as possible. We want to erase any chance of us not know where the next chord is going to be. Will practice the bass notes in different tempos, different styles, different registers, and different feels. If you can come up with more ways to practice the bass notes or any other steps please do so! This will only help you get better.

