

Jazz Lesson 10

Technique

1. Playing 7th chords with different combinations.

- a. Playing seventh chords in different inversions is very important for developing your soloing ability and for creating unique voicings. Before playing chord arpeggios in different inversions, practice diatonic chords by arpeggiating them in this order of chord tones: 1, 3, 5, 7. After you've mastered this, then you can begin using different inversion patterns such as 3, 1, 5, 7 or 5, 1, 3, 7 (see figure 10.1).

Figure 10.1



This will help develop coordination and your brain-finger relationship. Your fingers will get use to going back and forth on the piano instead of strictly up and down.

Brenden's Key Point

The brain-finger relationship is a very important one for the aspiring pianist. When first learning the piano, this relationship is difficult because you are using your fingers in a new and unique manner. As you become more skilled, this relationship becomes deeper. Exercises like this not only help develop this relationship, but allow it to work on a much deeper level. After some practice, there will be much less brain, and your fingers will act as though they are on autopilot. You'll be able to see a chord and instantly play it (or arpeggiate it!).

Harmony & Theory

1. Modes of the diatonic scales – Beginner Harmony and Theory Series Part 2

- a. Now that we know the possible diatonic chords within one key we can look at the modes associated with a major scale. **Mode** is a term for scales created when starting on a different degree of a major or minor scale. Confusing? Yes, it very much is!
- We will learn all of the modes associated with the C major scale. We'll start in the key of C major with our first diatonic chord, I maj7th, and learn its corresponding mode, (scale). For the Imaj7th scale we are simply going to use the major scale for C major which is the key we are in and identify it as the **Ionian** mode, (see figure 10.2).

Figure 10.2

C MAJOR SCALE



That was easy right!? Now for our ii-7th chord, in this case D-7, we simply play our C major scale, but start on D and end an octave above D. We never change any of the notes from our C major scale, we simply change the starting point and ending point in order to better reflect the chord tones of the ii-7th chord. We call the mode starting on the 2nd degree of the scale the **Dorian** mode. (See figure 10.3)

Figure 10.3

STARTING OUR C MAJOR SCALE ON THE 2ND DEGREE OF THE SCALE (D)



Each mode has certain characteristics that separate it from the others. The **Dorian** mode has a b3 and b7. We conclude that it contains a b2 and b7 by comparing the scale to a D

major scale. A D major scale would contain an F# and C#. Since the **Dorian** mode has an F natural and a C natural, we call them b3 and b7. These are just for you to understand right now. You will not need to utilize this information until later in the courses. (See figure 10.4).

D MAJOR SCALE **D DORIAN MODE (b3 & b7)**

So far we have identified two modes for the major scale; the first degree (Ionian) and the second degree (dorian). There are 5 remaining modes in the scale. Will continue to use the C major scale as our reference scale but start the scale on the remaining degrees, (see figure 10.4).

Figure 10.4

III PHYRGIAN (b2, b3, b6, b7)

IV LYDIAN (#4)

V MIXOLYDIAN (b7)

VI AEOLIAN (b3, b6, b7)

VII LOCRIAN (b2, b3, b5, b6, b7)

It's important to remember that each mode uses the same notes from the major scale, they just begin on different degrees. You'll notice that each of these modes sound a little different from each other, and a little different from the major scale. It's amazing how many different sounds we can get just from one scale. Memorizing the names of the modes is the hardest part. Playing them is easy!

Brenden's Key Point - The Low Down On Modes

Most students I encounter have a real resistance to modes because they can be extremely confusing and hard to apply to their playing. But, I'm simply being as honest as possible when I say this: you can't reach a high level of playing without being able to understand modes and use them in your improvisation. That being said... are modes going through my mind when I solo? Absolutely not. I never think about them anymore. When you're first learning though, modes will be the foundation that will allow you to play the beautiful solos that you've always wanted.

Repertoire

1. Beginner Improvisation Series Part 2 – Modes

a. Soloing using the modes

- i. Now that we know the scales that go with the modes what are we supposed to do with them? Well, to start we still want to focus on our chord tones then we can start to add more notes from the modes in order to create smoother flowing lines rather than arpeggios. If you start off trying to think about all the modes as you're soloing your brain will explode. Instead, try thinking about playing your major scale over all the chords but with different starting points. This will allow you to easily conceptualize the mode and be able to play more complex ideas. Remember you can use any of the notes from the major scale, while still trying to focus on the chord tones. You want to begin by landing on chord tones on beat 1 of each new measure. This will ensure you are reflecting the harmonies properly. Use your new found notes from the major scale to try and serve as connecting notes for the chord

tones in order to add fluidity to your solos. (Examples of solo's using the different modes. See figure 10.5)

Figure 10.5

Figure 10.5 displays three musical staves, each representing a different mode over a specific chord. The first staff is labeled **CMAJ⁷ IONIAN** and shows a melodic line starting on C4, moving up stepwise to G4, then down stepwise to C4. The second staff is labeled **D-7 DORIAN** and shows a melodic line starting on D4, moving up stepwise to A4, then down stepwise to D4. The third staff is labeled **E-7 PHRYGIAN** and shows a melodic line starting on E4, moving up stepwise to B4, then down stepwise to E4. Each staff contains two measures of music, with a double bar line separating them.

b. Solo Over A-Train Using Chord Tones

- i. In order to prepare our self to improvise over a tune we want to familiarize ourself with the chord tones to the harmonies. Will do this by practicing arpeggiating the chord tones to all the chords in Take The A Train, (see figure 10.6).

Figure 10.6

Figure 10.6 shows a single musical staff with four measures of music. The first two measures are labeled **CMAJ⁷** and the last two are labeled **D⁷**. Each measure contains an arpeggiated sequence of the chord tones (root, 3rd, 5th, 7th) for the respective chord. The first measure of CMAJ⁷ starts on C4 and moves up to G4, then down to C4. The second measure of CMAJ⁷ starts on E4 and moves up to B4, then down to C4. The third measure of D⁷ starts on D4 and moves up to A4, then down to D4. The fourth measure of D⁷ starts on F4 and moves up to C5, then down to D4.

Before you begin to improvise on any new tune you will want to use this exercise. It will help you grow comfortable with the chord tones much faster.

c. Improvise Using The Chord Tones

- i.* Time for the fun part. Take chord tones from each chord and play them in any order you'd like. Begin with simple melodies that you like. There are no particular steps to this so be creative as you want. Remember nothing is wrong. You'll feel a little uneasy in the beginning but you slowly begin to enjoy the freedom that improvising provides. This is a chance for you to express yourself. (See figure 10.7 for chord tone solo example.)

Figure 10.7

