

1. Block Chords

- a. Block chords are often used by Oscar Peterson, Art Tatum, George Shearing, Bill Evans, and many others. They are voicings that are built directly below the melody note, and that also double the melody note in the left hand.

Any note can be harmonized using a block chord. “How High The Moon” begins with a simply melody containing the following notes: D, G, A, A, B in the key of G major. (See figure 31.4)

Figure 31.4



The first step to harmonize these notes using block chords is to play the melody in your RH and double the melody with your thumb in your LH. (See figure 31.5)

Figure 31.5



The image shows two staves of music. The top staff is a treble clef staff containing the melody from Figure 31.4: D, G, A, A, B. The bottom staff is a bass clef staff containing the same melody, with each note placed directly below the corresponding note in the treble staff. This illustrates the technique of doubling the melody in the left hand with the thumb.

The next step is to fill in the space between the octaves with chord tones from GMaj7, since that's the key we're in. The chord tones are G, B, D, and F#. If the melody note is a chord tone use the 3 remaining chord tones to fill in the space. If the melody is a non-chord tone, then you will have 4 additional notes.

The first melody note of “How High the Moon” is D. The chord tones that need to be added are: F#, G, and B. (see figure 31.5)

Figure 31.5

Musical notation for Figure 31.5. The treble clef staff contains a single note D. The bass clef staff contains a chord of F#, G, B, D. Text labels indicate "RH PLAYS F#, G, B, D" and "LH ONLY PLAYS ROOT".

The next note, G, is also a chord tone so the notes that need to be added are B, D, and F#. (See figure 31.6)

Figure 31.6

Musical notation for Figure 31.6. The treble clef staff contains a chord of B, D, F#. The bass clef staff contains a single note G.

A is not a chord tone of GMaj7 so G, B, D, and F # need to be added (see figure 31.7)

Figure 31.7

Musical notation for Figure 31.7. The treble clef staff contains a chord of G, B, D, F#. The bass clef staff contains a single note A.

