SCOTT REEVES and TOM WALSH

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FIFTH EDITION

CREATIVE JAZZ IMPROVISATION

ROUTLEDGE

CREATIVE JAZZ IMPROVISATION

The leading textbook in jazz improvisation, *Creative Jazz Improvisation*, Fifth Edition represents a compendium of knowledge and practice resources for the university classroom, suitable for all musicians looking to develop and sharpen their soloing skills. Logically organized and guided by a philosophy that encourages creativity, this book presents practical advice beyond the theoretical, featuring exercises in twelve keys, ear training and keyboard drills, a comprehensive catalog of relevant songs to learn, and a wide range of solo transcriptions, each transposed for C, Bb, Eb, and bass clef instruments. Chapters highlight discussions of jazz theory – covering topics such as major scale modes, forms, chord substitutions, melodic minor modes, diminished and whole-tone modes, pentatonic scales, intervallic improvisation, free improvisation, and more – while featuring updated content throughout on the nuts and bolts of learning to improvise.

New to the Fifth Edition:

- Co-author Tom Walsh
- Additional solo transcriptions featuring the work of female and Latino jazz artists
- A new chapter, "Odd Meters"
- A robust companion website featuring additional exercises, ear training, play-along tracks, tunes, call and response tracks, keyboard voicings, and transcriptions, alongside Spotify and YouTube links to many of the featured solos

Rooted in an understanding that there is no one right way to learn jazz, *Creative Jazz Improvisation*, Fifth Edition explores the means and methods for developing one's jazz vocabulary and improvisational techniques.

Scott Reeves is Professor Emeritus at The City College of the City University of New York.

Tom Walsh is Professor of Saxophone and Chair of the Department of Jazz Studies in the Jacobs School of Music at Indiana University.

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CREATIVE JAZZ IMPROVISATION

Fifth Edition

Scott Reeves and Tom Walsh

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History of the Book and Philosophy

When I began teaching jazz improvisation classes at Western Washington University in 1976, my first question to myself was "how did I start to assimilate the jazz language?" and "how did the great musicians I admire learn to play so well?" With self-reflection and constant pestering of accomplished jazz musicians, I began to realize that there was no "magic bullet." Some people learned simply by listening to and trying to play with accomplished players; some transcribed solos of the past masters; others worked on scales, arpeggios, and patterns, and some musicians learned by practicing and memorizing much of the standard repertoire (e.g. learning Charlie Parker tunes can teach you a lot about the language of bebop). It became apparent to me that there was *no one right way to learn jazz, and each student of the art must find the path that best suits their talents, background, and mode of learning. Furthermore, I've found that these strategies may change over time as we grow musically.*

So how was I to teach improvisation in the context of a university classroom? I looked at jazz textbooks, which were just beginning to be published at that time. I found fake books with many tunes, published collections of transcribed solos, books with scales and patterns, and of course, many classic recordings to study. Trying to cover a bit of all the bases to find at least one pathway that would work for the majority of my students, I attempted to integrate all of these strategies into one single book, while trying to organize the materials in a logical, comprehensive, easy-to-use format. I spent a few years transcribing solos and extracting certain melodic fragments from these solos to be practiced in all keys, and I indexed the topic of each chapter to widely available fake books – primarily the Real Books and the Jamey Aebersold Play-a-Long series. At each step along the way, I would try these out with my students and in my own practice. My motto: *if it doesn't help, throw it out*. I was not seeking a compendium of 1,000 permutations of a scale or chord; instead, I tried to draw on the vocabulary that my heroes were actually playing.

After testing the materials with my students at Western Washington University, Virginia Commonwealth University, and the University of Southern Maine, the first edition of *Creative Jazz Improvisation* was published in 1988 by Prentice Hall (later called Pearson Education/Prentice Hall). Many universities in the United States and a few overseas began adopting the text for their improvisation classes. The book went through four editions during the time I was teaching at the City College of New York and the Juilliard School, until Prentice Hall delisted the text in 2018 in their move to go digital. I began to receive emails from students and instructors wondering how they could find the book, but in 2020, I retired from university teaching. Yet I felt the book had been of value to many students, and I decided that it needed to be improved, updated, and brought back into print. Invigorated by the fresh insights and experience in jazz education provided by my new co-author Tom Walsh, Jazz Studies Department Chair at Indiana University, the authors are grateful that the fifth edition has found a home with the Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group.

Organization and Features

Most of the chapters in *Creative Jazz Improvisation* contain four parts:

- Part 1: An overview of a certain scale, chord, chord progression, or form commonly used in jazz (e.g. The Dorian Mode; the ii-V-I Progression; the Blues Form; Melodic Minor Modes).
- Part 2: Exercises to be practiced in 12 keys. These are written out in one key (transposed for treble clef C, Bb, Eb, and bass clef instruments) to be played by ear over a given chord in the remaining 11 keys. In general, these are arranged in order of difficulty, *starting with basic scales and arpeggios and progressing to melodic phrases drawn directly from transcriptions of jazz artists' solos*, so that the user of the book can begin work at their particular skill level.

Preface

I realize there is some controversy regarding practicing scales, arpeggios, and patterns as a means to develop jazz vocabulary or technique. *However, the purpose of these exercises is NOT to memorize a series of "licks," but to develop the ear through repetition of the sound, and to connect the ear to the body's response – the "ear to horn hotline."* Even Miles Davis, widely viewed as a musician who did not play clichés, said in the PBS documentary *Miles Ahead*:

> *In order to become a musician, you have to learn a bunch of clichés. If you pick up an instrument and learn it, these clichés – these little melodies that you've learned – will come out of that instrument.*

- Part 3: A list of essential tunes that frequently employ the theoretical topic discussed in each chapter. These lists allow the user to apply some of the skills they have practiced to standard jazz repertoire. They also serve as a guide to songs jazz musicians should learn, memorize, and even practice in keys other than the original.
- Part 4: A transcription of an improvised solo (or portion of a solo) by a major jazz artist. These transcriptions have been transposed for treble clef C, Bb, Eb, and bass clef instruments. Segments of the transcribed solo may have been edited up or down an octave to stay within the range of the instrument(s) likely to be playing the transcription. In the fifth edition, the co-authors have attempted to transcribe and examine the work of artists over a wider historical range – from Louis Armstrong to Miguel Zenón – and a broad spectrum of racial and gender diversity.

Companion Website

A companion website with additional exercises, practice tracks, keyboard voicings, and transcriptions with links to listening examples can be found at www.Routledge.com/cw/Reeves.

New to this Edition

The 4th edition was published back in 2007 and there have been many developments in jazz and American culture since then, as well as new publications and teaching strategies. This necessitated:

- A new co-author, Tom Walsh, brings his expertise in recent developments in jazz styles, knowledge of online resources, strong connections with the Jazz Education Network, and years of experience as Chair of the Jazz Studies Department at Indiana University.
- Changes to Part 5, which the co-authors now call "Beyond Functional Harmony." It includes a new chapter entitled "Odd Meters."
- An update of the lists of tunes that correspond to the topics addressed in each chapter. These are drawn from the Aebersold Play-a-Long series through vol. 128 and *The New Real Book* vol. 1, 2, and 3.
- Inspirational quotes at the beginning of each chapter so that the artists whose solos we transcribed can speak to the reader in their own words.
- Highlighting the work of female jazz artists, with solos by Terry Pollard, whose work has not received nearly the recognition it deserves, as well as Renee Rosnes and Ingrid Jensen, two of the most accomplished jazz musicians of their generation. These transcriptions replaced those by established male artists in the fourth edition, particularly in places where those artists had already been represented elsewhere in the book.
- The Wayne Shorter transcription, which had appeared only in the first and second editions, was reinstated, with a much more accurate transcription and analysis.
- A companion website with additional exercises, ear training, play-along tracks, tunes, call and response tracks, keyboard voicings, and transcriptions, as well as Spotify and YouTube links to many of the transcribed solos in each chapter.
- The elimination of the chapter entitled "Essential Listening." There are many fine texts devoted to the history of jazz, which is ever-evolving, and the co-authors felt the need to keep the focus on the nuts and bolts of learning to improvise.
- The elimination of the chapter on "Rhythm." Much of this information has been incorporated into the subheading on rhythm in Chapter 1 and elsewhere in the text, and expanded on in the new chapter, "Odd Meters." The transcription of Max Roach's solo on "Blue Seven," used in the fourth edition, was moved to the website.
- All chapters retained from the fourth edition have been re-examined and, if need be, revised with regard to the choice of exercises, as well as adopting a more conversational tone in the text.

To the Student

Although having a teacher or resource materials such as this book can be a valuable catalyst at different points in your career, ultimately each musician has to become attuned to their own particular needs, learn how to diagnose problems, and devise strategies for overcoming weaknesses. This is not always easy, as the ego often overwhelms our honest self-assessment, in either an overly critical or overly self-inflated way. I feel that one of the most valuable things higher education can provide the student is *the insight to become his or her own teacher*. It is impossible to learn to improvise well in a few short years of

classroom study, so most of the growth must be done after schooling has finished, through years of reflection, practice, and on-the-job experiences. Along the way, we all encounter plateaus where we find our musical growth stagnating. At this point, it may be helpful to seek out a specific teacher or fellow musician who can help you break through this impasse. *The process of learning to improvise can take a lifetime, but the beauty of the discipline is that you will continue to grow mentally, physically, and spiritually throughout your life. Practicing music stimulates the brain, playing an instrument demands physical fitness, and the profound emotions that drew us to music in the first place can continue to enrich us into our later years.*

To the Professor

Until a few decades ago, most people thought it was impossible to teach jazz. The assumption, as expressed by Louis Armstrong, was *"If you have to ask what jazz is, you'll never know."* It was presumed that the only way to learn jazz was on the streets and by hanging out with older musicians (which is still a good idea). On the classical side, jazz was viewed by many teachers and musicians as not being "serious" enough to be taught, and many universities and conservatories prohibited jazz instruction. In retrospect, either they did not understand the difficulty of becoming a master jazz musician or perhaps their thinking was shaped by a racist view toward a music that originated as an African-American art form. But in the 1950s and 1960s, jazz musicians, such as Clark Terry and Stan Kenton began giving clinics on campuses, and pioneering jazz educators, such as David Baker, Jerry Coker, John Lewis, and Jamey Aebersold, demonstrated that jazz could be part of a university curriculum. As the "street scene" of the 1920s–1950s was disappearing, some universities took over the task of teaching jazz to future generations. Of course, as with many changes, when something is gained, something is lost. Many people decry the lack of unique individual jazz personalities, which were so ubiquitous in earlier generations, perhaps in part because so many students were given the same lessons materials to learn and artists to study, or perhaps there was more emphasis on mastering the assignments than developing an individual sound. Nevertheless, a new generation of jazz musicians began to emerge from university programs with technical prowess and depth of knowledge. Many of these musicians have gone on to find their unique individual identities. And increasingly, cultures from around the world have contributed to jazz's growth and development, adding their own cultural milieu to jazz language. From its beginnings as an innovation created primarily by African-American musicians, jazz is now a language spoken around the world with a multitude of regional accents.

This book is intended primarily as a text for a 1–4 semester undergraduate university jazz improvisation curriculum, but it can also be useful for advanced high school or even middle-school students as part of the band program. It is also useful for amateur and professional jazz musicians who might benefit from a step-by-step structural guide, as well as studio teachers working one-on-one with their private students.

Although every teacher has their own individual classroom style, consider the following:

- Keep the classroom pace lively and do a variety of activities, such as theoretical analysis; group performances of the exercises and transcriptions; ear training; and improvising on selected tunes.
- Encourage students to play the written exercises by ear, keeping analytical thinking to the minimum.
- Have students sing everything before trying to play the exercises.
- Suggest that students concentrate on the materials that particularly seem to address their weaknesses. *It is better to master only a few things than to learn a great deal of material poorly.*
- Encourage guitarists not to always practice chromatically, as they often tend to focus on their hand position instead of learning the notes. Use different types of chord progressions during group practice sessions.
- Assign transcription projects, starting with simple melodies and chord progressions and working up to transcriptions of improvised solos.
- Use the chapters in this book in any order that seems appropriate to your students' abilities and the number of semesters in your curriculum.
- Assess your students' progress with the assigned materials via periodic playing exams. I recommend NOT grading on how well the student plays (because everyone enters a class at a different skill level), but in how much improvement they have made during the course of the semester and how much attention they have given to absorbing the subject matter.

Acknowledgments

The co-authors express their great appreciation and admiration for the jazz artists whose works are examined in this book: Max Roach, Louis Armstrong, Miles Davis, Lester Young, Clifford Brown, Milt Jackson, Wayne Shorter, Charlie Parker, Terry Pollard, John Coltrane, Ornette Coleman, J.J. Johnson, Renee Rosnes, Bill Evans, Sonny Rollins, Woody Shaw, Chick Corea, Ingrid Jensen, and Miguel Zenón.

We are also indebted to the teachers who aided our own growth as musicians and educators: David Baker, Jamey Aebersold, Woody Shaw, David Liebman, Kenny Werner, Jerry Coker, and Mike Tracy.

The authors would also like to thank Constance Ditzel of Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group for her efforts in getting *Creative Jazz Improvisation* back in print in a new edition, and Thomas Schaller for copying all of the music into Finale. We would also

like to thank the reviewers of the fourth edition for their suggestions on ways to improve the fifth edition, particularly their comments regarding adding new information highlighting recent developments in jazz, creating a more concise and personal tone in the writing, suggesting online pedagogical aids and other ways to modernize the new edition, selecting a broader range of transcriptions in terms of gender and age, changing the inspirational quotes to reflect more diversity, as well as mentioning which features from the fourth edition should be retained. These were all quite helpful.

On a personal level, Scott would like to thank Ana Giovinazzo for her help in navigating the publication world and constant proofreading and editorial suggestions, Eric Reeves for his suggestions on playing in odd time signatures, and Janet Reeves for her help with the transcriptions of piano solos. And my deepest appreciation to my co-author, Tom Walsh, for his contributions to the fifth edition, especially his chapter, *Odd Meters*, as well as his meticulousness in solo transcriptions, and thorough and thoughtful collaborations in updating and expanding this text.

Tom would like to thank Scott for the opportunity to collaborate on this book, which he first encountered and utilized in its first edition. Tom would also like to thank Greg Ward and John Raymond for their input about new developments in the twenty-first century.

Scott Reeves
July 2021

Part 1
The Art of Improvisation

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Chapter 1: Practicing and Performing Jazz

The music of my people is...
Now, which of my people?
I'm in several groups...
I'm in the group of piano players,
I'm in the group of the listeners,
I'm in the group of people who have a general appreciation of music,
I'm in the group of those who aspire to be dilettantes,
I'm in the group of those who attempt to produce something fit for the plateau...
I'm in the group of those who appreciate a good Beaujolais,
THE PEOPLE...that's the better word...
Because THE PEOPLE are MY PEOPLE.

— Composer, pianist, band leader Duke Ellington, in response to a question asking him to define the music of his people. (American Masters, PBS)

When you ask jazz musicians how they learned the art of jazz improvisation you receive many answers including "listen... listen...listen," "try to play with more experienced players," "practice...practice...practice," "transcribe solos from recordings," "learn 200 tunes and play them in all keys," "practice scales, arpeggios and melodic ideas in all keys," "learn keyboard harmony," "learn to play drums," "play what you feel," "don't think, just play," and the list goes on...and on...and on.

There is truth in all of these statements. Most artists have explored the following concepts to some degree in their practice regimens:

- Jazz rhythm
- Jazz theory and forms, and the relationship between chords and scales
- Practicing scales, patterns, and melodic phrases
- Transcribed solos by master improvisers
- Practicing jazz compositions and standards
- Creating improvised solos
- Playing with other musicians
- Improvisation and the inner workings of the mind

Jazz Rhythm

Rhythm is the most important component of jazz. No matter how interesting the melody and chords may be, they are meaningless unless they are played in sync with the underlying rhythm. In the words of the Duke Ellington tune, "It Don't Mean a Thing, if It Ain't Got That Swing."

Styles of music that are derived from African-American rhythmic practices, such as blues, Gospel, soul, funk, hip hop, rap, and of course jazz, generally place a strong accent on the second and fourth beats of the measure, which are considered weak beats in classical music traditions. (Notice how different it feels when an audience claps to the music on beats 1 and 3 versus clapping on beats 2 and 4.) In addition, when the rhythm is "swung," as in many styles of jazz, an uneven division of the eighth note is used. In medium to slow tempos, eighth notes tend to be played *somewhat* like triplets with the first two notes tied:

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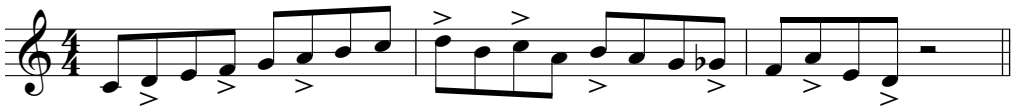
As the tempo increases, the triplet division of the notes tends to even out. Within these parameters, each musician finds their own unique interpretations. For example, listen to any recordings with alto saxophonist Cannonball Adderley and tenor saxophonist John Coltrane playing together. Trane's eighth notes are more "even" than Cannonball's, yet they are both swinging.

In addition to this triplet relationship, consecutive eights are usually played long (legato) and the upbeats are frequently accented:

Accenting the upbeats may seem difficult if you have not been immersed in African-American musical traditions. If so, it may be helpful to think of the word "doo-BAH," stressing the syllable "BAH." By accenting many of the upbeats (with occasional accents on downbeats), and "ghosting" or de-emphasizing certain notes, an underlying polyrhythm and infectious sense of swing can be created. When too many downbeats are accented, the music may sound non-swinging or "square." Try singing and playing the following example, with attention to the triplet feel of eighth notes, as well as the accents:



Jazz is a "big tent" and, depending on your perspective, may draw on rhythms from around the world, including the Caribbean islands, Central and South America traditions, Eastern European music (with its complex meters), and rock and roll, funk, and soul. In these styles, eighth notes are usually played fairly evenly. The two regions that have influenced jazz most profoundly are Cuba and Brazil. Each has created a diverse number of rhythms, including *Samb*a, *Bossa Nova*, *Partito Alto*, and *Baião* from Brazil, as well as *Mambo*, *Rumba*, *Son*, and other styles from Cuba that led to the development of Afro-Cuban Jazz. Latin-American jazz styles based on music from Cuba and the Caribbean (and ultimately Africa) are based on a rhythmic pattern called the "clavé." The "3-2" or *Son Clavé* places the accents on beat 1, the "and" of 2, and beat 4 in the first measure, followed by an accent on beats 2 and 3 in the second measure:

This pattern can also occur as a "2-3" or *reverse clavé*:

Another variation on this basic pattern is the Rumba Clavé, which displaces the third note by a half-beat. The Rumba Clavé can occur in "3-2" or "2-3" forms:

I had the great fortune to sub with the wonderful Chico O'Farrill Afro-Cuban Orchestra at Birdland. Most of my prior experience was with jazz bands, so it was a bit disorienting to hear bassist Andy Gonzalez hardly ever play on beat 1 all night! *Beat 4 was the new "beat 1."*

Although the notes we play help us keep our place in the rhythm, it is also necessary to feel the continuation of time *when not playing*. In fact, rests may be structurally more important than notes. Leaving space creates a sense of phrasing (which is rhythm on a longer scale) and provides an opportunity for the rhythm section to interact with the soloist.

Listening to and playing with accomplished jazz artists is essential in learning to internalize jazz rhythms. Some musicians and teachers have qualms about practicing with a metronome, believing that it is better to develop an "inner metronome." But if you feel your "inner groove" could use some work, try practicing with a metronome clicking beats 2 and 4, which emulates a drummer's hi-hat cymbal and forces the user to define beat 1. At faster tempos, you can set the metronome to click only on beat 3. Start slowly and gradually increase the tempo when you practice. It will not only help your inner sense of time, but it will also develop your technique and focus on time.

Another great tool is the app, *Drum Genius*. This encourages the user to concentrate solely on their hookup with drums. Too often, we concentrate only on ourselves or get seduced by the harmonic richness of the piano, but *the bass and drums are your lifeline*. Recording your practice sessions and dispassionately critiquing the results will also help you become aware of your rhythmic weaknesses. But do not beat yourself up too much!

Jazz Theory and Forms

Except for freer styles of jazz in which all the music is spontaneously improvised, most jazz compositions are based on a predetermined form that continually repeats. These forms can be categorized as either *sectional binary* (ABAB´ or ABAC), *sectional ternary* (AABA), the *blues form* (typically three phrases in a 12-measure format – with variations), and non-sectional or *through-composed* forms, which do not have repeated sections. Since you have to create your improvisations over this underlying blueprint, it is essential to know at any given moment where you are in the form. This knowledge of form has to be so innate that if you are playing with a band, you should be able to leave the room and return a few minutes later and know exactly where the musicians are playing in the form.

Within the form is a predetermined sequence of chords called a *chord progression.* Be aware of how these chords function within a key (which are notated with Roman numerals) and how certain scales relate to each chord. The essence of jazz theory is that *for every chord, there is at least one scale that best conveys the sound of that chord, and the notes in the chord must be found within the scale*. The chord tones and scale tones provide the raw materials for the improvisation, but they do not necessarily create an interesting melodic line, nor should you rule out the possibility of effectively superimposing "wrong" notes to add spice to the harmonic mix.

Understanding, either intellectually or intuitively, the chord/scale relationships will greatly simplify the harmonic demands of improvising on a tune. Many chord progressions, such as the I vi ii V I progression, may utilize the same notes in their corresponding scales. By recognizing these relationships, you can reduce a multiplicity of chords to a few basic key areas. For example, the first phrase of the standard "All the Things You Are" is based on this chord progression:

Fmi7 B♭7 E♭7 A♭MA7 D♭MA7 Dmi7 G7 CMA7

These chords can be analyzed as a vi ii V I IV progression in A♭, followed by a ii V I progression in the key of C. This simplifies the harmonic demands from eight chords to only two key areas: A♭ major and C major.

It is also important to *hear* these theoretical relationships, not just understand them intellectually. Once you have the sound of the chord progression in your ear, you will likely play better if you do not look at the chord changes. Although the analytical part of your brain certainly has a role in developing your skills, the intellect can overwhelm the part of your brain that listens to the other musicians and imagines things. Pianist Kenny Werner offered this analogy to explain the role of the intellect: "It is a good idea to have the armed forces to protect the country, but I don't want the generals taking over the government."

Practicing Scales, Patterns, and Melodic Phrases

Repeatedly practicing scales, patterns, and melodic ideas by ear in all keys aids in recognizing the harmonic/melodic vocabulary of jazz strengthens the connection between the ear and the body, develops technical dexterity, and, when practiced with a metronome at a variety of tempos, helps create a surer sense of rhythm. Some teachers and students oppose practicing scales and patterns out of fear that it will inhibit creativity and spontaneity. However, the practice of scales and melodic patterns need not interfere with the creative process if you don't view them as "licks" to be inserted into an improvisation in a conscious manner. Great athletes lift weights, spend hours on body-building machines, and do many repetitious exercises, but when they get on the court or field – they just play. Some of these scales and melodic patterns you practice may emerge spontaneously during an improvised solo, while others may never become part of your improvisational vocabulary. But they do have a role in training your body to respond to what you hear.

Here are some strategies to consider when practicing the scales, arpeggios, and melodic patterns given in each chapter.

- Practice in all 12 keys

  Use a metronome on beats 2 and 4 or apps such as Band-in-a-box, iReal Pro, Drum Genius, Garage Band, or Aebersold Play-a-Long tracks connected to the Amazing Slow Downer. For most chapters of this book, a 12-key play-along track is provided on the companion website.
- Sing and play everything

  When singing, imagine yourself playing your instrument. It will help develop a physical memory of what you hear.
- Practice slowly

  Speed up only after you gain mastery of the materials. Record your progress with metronome or tempo markings. An alternative to practicing slowly is to practice up-tempo right from the beginning, but only in small pieces. Once you have learned these small bits, hook them together into an entire phrase.

- Focus your efforts

  Work on a small number of materials for a long period of time. It is better to master a few things well than many things poorly. Pianist Bill Evans stated

  > If you play too many things at one time [while practicing], your whole approach will be vague. You won't know what to leave in and what to take out. Know very clearly what you're doing and why. Play much less, but be very clear about it. It's much better to spend 30 hours on one tune than to play 30 tunes in one hour.

  In schools, sometimes teachers have a tendency to give students great volumes of material. This exposes the student to some of the many options available for them to explore – in a smorgasbord manner – without sufficient time to perfect any of them. While it is helpful to have an overview of the material, the real work of choosing what you want to sound like and what to practice begins after school is over.
- Learn the vocabulary of jazz

  Transcribe short ideas and motives that you have heard great musicians play and practice those in 12 keys. Practicing scales and arpeggios is like learning the alphabet and verb tenses – boring, but necessary. But practicing Charlie Parker melodies and motives is like learning to write poetry.
- Be creative and experiment

  Once you have learned the basics, try to create your own exercises and ideas. This sets you on the path of developing your own voice.
- Practice for mastery

  Practice whatever you are working on until you can play it without thinking about it.

Transcribed Solos

Transcribing and practicing solos by master jazz musicians helps you learn the vocabulary and style of these artists in much the same way as children learn to speak by imitating their parents. In this way, the language and history of jazz is passed from one generation to the next. Many jazz musicians learned their craft using this approach almost exclusively. Here are three ways to do it:

- Learn a solo from a recording one phrase at a time, committing it to memory. Do not write the solo down, but play-along with the recording on a periodic basis to retain your memory of it. You should try to express the inflections, dynamics, and tempo of the original recording.

  I once witnessed saxophonist David Liebman have one of his advanced students play a memorized Lee Konitz solo along with the recording. Midway through the solo, Liebman turned down the playback volume, while the student continued to play. When Liebman turned the volume back up after a minute, the student was still in sync with Konitz's solo! This demonstrated not only a mastery of the notes but the timing as well.
- Transcribe the solo from a recording, writing it down on manuscript paper. Rely on your ear to transcribe the pitches, using the piano for verification only when necessary. (This practice is also good for your rhythmic notation skills.) After you have written it down, memorize the solo. It may be helpful to use a slower playback when transcribing. Try using a program like the Amazing Slow Downer or the ½ and ¼ speed options on YouTube recordings.
- Find a transcription online or from a book such as this text. Listen to the original recording and sing along until the sound of the solo is in your ear. Then, practice the transcription slowly, gradually speeding up until you can play it with the recording. After playing it many times, you may find yourself walking around hearing the transcription in your head or whistling it. That is new vocabulary becoming part of your own voice!

Jazz Compositions and Standards

Improvising on jazz compositions is fun and immediately gratifying, whereas practicing scales and transcribing solos may seem more laborious. As you develop as an improviser, seek a balance between playing and practicing. Too much time spent on technical exercises can take the pleasure out of the music, but merely "jamming" on tunes without learning any new vocabulary prevents you from progressing to another level of mastery.

Most of the chapters in this book have a list of tunes that use the theoretical concepts presented in each chapter. These are provided to encourage you to apply the theory you have studied to jazz compositions and *standards* (jazz interpretations of pop and show tunes written during the '30s to the '50s). These lists are not intended as definitive compilations but are restricted to a few of the most widely available sources of jazz repertoire: *The New Real Book I, II, and III* (legal fake books published by Sher Music Co.) and the Aebersold Play-a-Long recordings.

Professional musicians from all around the world know many of the same standards, and these songs have become a universal language among jazz musicians. *You may end up playing with someone who does not speak the same language as you, but you can both play the same tunes!* Furthermore, bringing fake books on the bandstand may signal to other musicians that *you have not done your homework*.

At first, memorizing tunes may seem like a daunting task, but the more you learn, the easier it becomes. Many songs employ similar harmonic progressions and modulations, and these formulas become very familiar over time. Make a list of 100 tunes you think you should know and, as you learn them, you will also find that your ear and memory improve. Try the following procedures when learning jazz compositions:

- Internalize the melody.
  Listen to a recording of the song by a major artist. play-along with the recording, trying to capture the style, energy, and rhythmic interpretation. Sing the melody and play it on your instrument. After learning the melody in the standard key, try playing it in other keys.
- Study the harmony and form.
  Sing the roots of the chords, then play them on your instrument. Analyze the chord progression and form. Simplify the harmony by identifying the primary key centers. Look for sequences and chord patterns that are similar to other tunes that you already know.
- Outline the chord progression using guide-tone lines.
  Guide tones are pitches that define the sound of the chord, typically the 3rds and the 7ths. Start by playing the 3rd or the 7th of the first chord and hold it for the duration of the chord. Then, move to either the 3rd or the 7th of the following chord, whichever is closest.
- Outline the chords with the corresponding scales and arpeggios.
  Practice the scales and arpeggios so that they are the same length as the underlying chord. In this way, you gain a feeling for how fast the chords are moving.
- Play the chords on the piano.
  In the words of trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie speaking to a young Miles Davis, "*Miles, you got to learn how to play the piano so that you can see the whole spectrum of the notes that you want to play, instead of playing one note at a time" (Miles Ahead, the Music of Miles Davis*, PBS documentary).
- Write a solo on the form of the tune.
  While writing out a solo is more like composition than improvisation, it is a useful intermediate step that helps you identify what you are really hearing.

Creating Improvised Solos

Once you have learned the basic elements, how do you turn the scales, arpeggios, and ideas you gleaned from transcribed solos into meaningful music? The transition from raw ingredients to developing a creative, original style varies from musician to musician and may take years. As Miles Davis remarked, "*…sometimes you have to play a long time to be able to play like yourself*" (*Miles Ahead, the Music of Miles Davis*, PBS documentary).

A good improvised solo often has a beginning, a peak of intensity, and an obvious conclusion. You should engage the listener, take them to another place, and then turn the conversation over to someone else. And when playing with other musicians, remember that your "solo" is not really a solo but a group conversation. You have probably had a discussion with someone who talks all the time and does not let anyone else get a word in edgewise. *Don't be that person when it's your turn to solo!*

In particular, horn players and singers should listen closely to the rhythm section. Try to hook up with their timing and leave space for them to respond to your ideas.

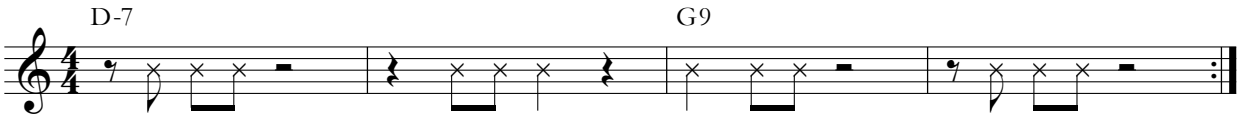
Remember that you are trying to express a musical idea AND a feeling. Think about varying the dynamics, using different registers of your instrument, and expressive devices such as fall-offs, pitch bends, and blue notes. Here are some things to consider and a few exercises to get you out of your "comfort level." Explore these to see what you can discover in the music. The companion website includes play-along tracks for several tunes that you can use to practice these exercises and concepts.

- Melody and motives
  Many jazz musicians tend to focus on the melody when they play, which is sometimes described as a *horizontal approach*. Lester Young, Ben Webster, Stan Getz, Thelonious Monk, Lee Konitz, Paul Desmond, Bob Brookmeyer, Miles Davis, and Chet Baker are but a few prominent examples. Lester Young referred to this as "telling a story." Monk and Brookmeyer took a more "compositional" approach to melody, often taking small ideas or "motives" and expanding them. Often these motives have a strong intervallic and rhythmic content, which is not dissimilar to classical composer Ludwig van Beethoven's approach to the opening theme in the first movement of his *Fifth Symphony*.
  I once took a lesson with Lee Konitz and he asked me to "play something," so I launched into the Charlie Parker tune "Confirmation." Lee stopped me in my 2nd chorus and remarked "in your second chorus, you are where you should be in your 10th chorus." He instructed me to play the melody of "Confirmation" over and over, varying it slightly upon each repetition. By my 10th chorus, I was indeed playing much like my original 2nd chorus, but the content was much more organic (private lesson between Lee Konitz and Scott Reeves at Western Washington University, 1980)!

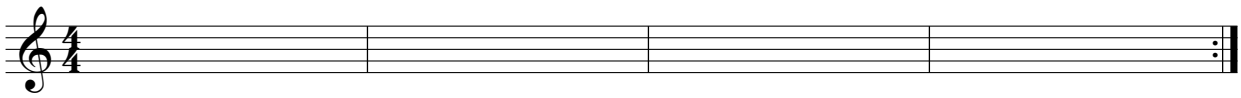
Exercise #1: Play the melody of a tune over and over, altering it each time until the embellishments outweigh the original melody.

Exercise #2: Improvise on a scale or simple chord progression, but limit yourself to one or two rhythms. Do not worry about the notes, just try to see how many ways you can use a specific rhythm. As Dizzy Gillespie said, "*you're supposed to set notes to rhythm instead of vice versa*" (interview with author Studs Terkel).

a 3-note motive

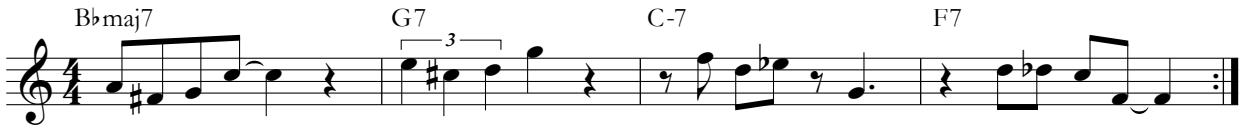


b Make up your own exercises based on rhythms



Exercise #3: Improvise a short melodic or rhythmic motive. Then, sequence that motive over the other chords in the song by transposing or varying the motive. See if you can play one or two phrases of music using only one motive ("less is more").

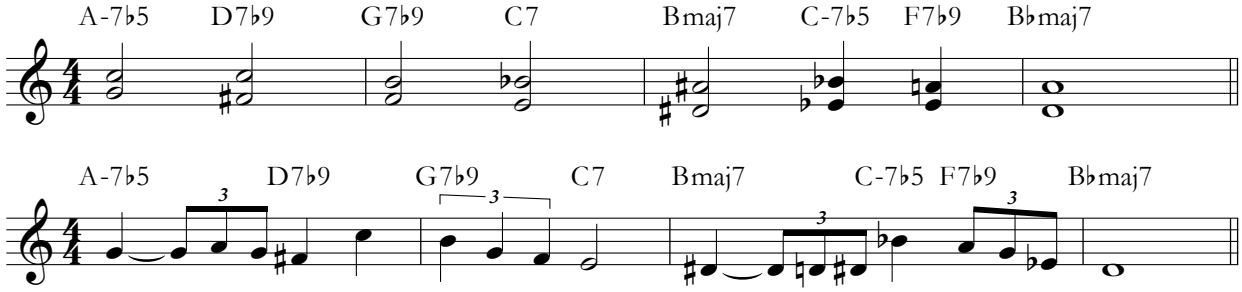
a Example:



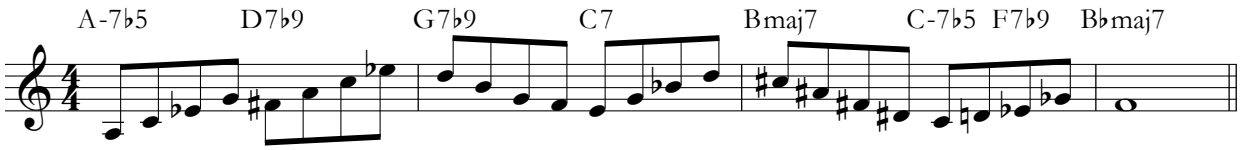
- Harmonic/vertical approaches

Other great jazz musicians have taken a more *vertical* approach – bringing out the underlying harmonic progression. Coleman Hawkins, Don Byas, Johnny Griffin, and John Coltrane (during his "sheets of sound" period) all play lines that clearly spell out the underlying chords.

Exercise #1: Play a guide-tone line consisting of the 3rds and 7ths on the downbeat of each chord. Then, create a solo by adding embellishments and fills around the guide tones, while still targeting the 3rds and 7ths at the beginning of each chord change. (The following examples are based on the first four bars of Horace Silver's song, "Peace.")



Exercise #2: Improvise on the chords using primarily chord arpeggios or 1-2-3-5 patterns, but in a very free, improvisatory manner. Your melodic lines should clearly define the harmony.



- Combining melodic and harmonic approaches

Most musicians use a combination of melodic and harmonic approaches. Bebop innovators, such as Charlie Parker, Clifford Brown, and Bud Powell, created melodic lines consisting primarily of eighth notes that also implied the underlying harmony. I am often struck at the similarity between Johann Sebastian Bach's *Cello Suites* and Charlie

Parker transcriptions. They both have great melodies, but the harmony is clearly defined, while having a strong rhythmic drive – it is all there!

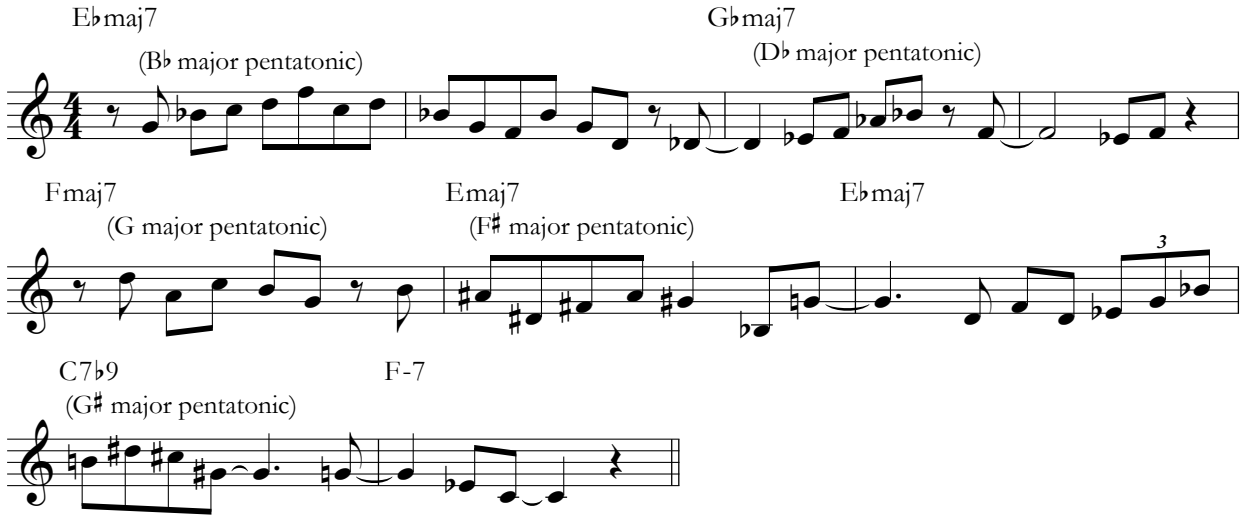
Exercise: Over the chord changes, improvise a continuous line of eighth notes for as long as possible (e.g. one chorus of blues).

- Pentatonic scales and 4ths

  After 1960, musicians such as John Coltrane and McCoy Tyner, and a bit later – Woody Shaw, Geri Allen, and Chick Corea, began using pentatonic scales in lieu of diatonic scales. This gave their melodic lines a different character than those of their bebop predecessors. An outgrowth of pentatonic (or modal) harmony was the frequent use of intervals such as perfect 4ths and major 2nds, instead of the 3rds so common in diatonic scales.

  I had the good fortune to take two lessons with Woody Shaw, whom at that point in my life was one of my biggest inspirations as a brass player. During the lesson, he wrote out many exercises based on pentatonic scales and intervals of perfect 4ths – moving chromatically, by major 2nds and by minor 3rds. Shaw also told me he got bored with playing all the chords in standard jazz tunes and told me "*as long as you make the V7 – I cadence at the end of the phrase, you can play anything you want*" (private lesson between Woody Shaw and Scott Reeves, San Francisco, CA, 1973).

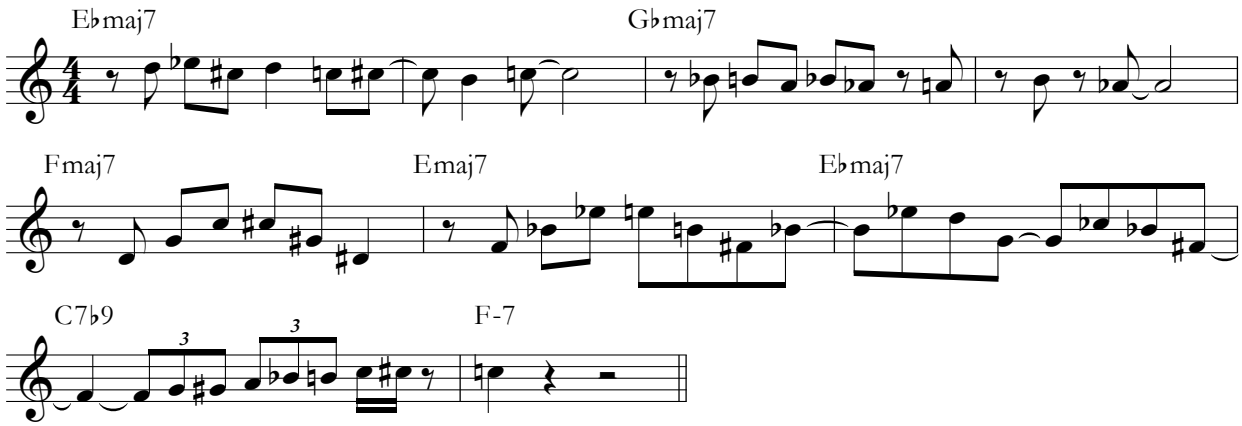
  Exercise: Improvise on a standard tune using pentatonic instead of diatonic scales. After gaining some comfort, try "violating" the chord by superimposing a pentatonic scale a minor 3rd away. Make sure to come back "inside" the harmony at the end of the phrase. The following examples are based on the first eight bars of Bronislaw Kaper's iconic tune, "On Green Dolphin Street."



- Chromaticism and other intervals

  Artists such as Eric Dolphy, Miles Davis, Dave Liebman, Anthony Braxton, and later – Dave Douglas, Marilyn Crispell, and Ingrid Jensen, began creating improvisations using other kinds of intervals. While Davis's playing in the late 60s became increasingly chromatic, Dolphy began using leaps of tritones, 7ths, and 9ths. Using intervals that do not conform to an underlying chord makes it possible to play a wealth of "non chord tones" and still sound true to the chord changes, provided you start and end your phrases on strong chord tones.

  Exercise: Improvise on a song using chromatic scales and small intervals that are not necessarily derived from the diatonic scales that fit each chord. Try to "land" on strong chord tones at key places in each phrase.

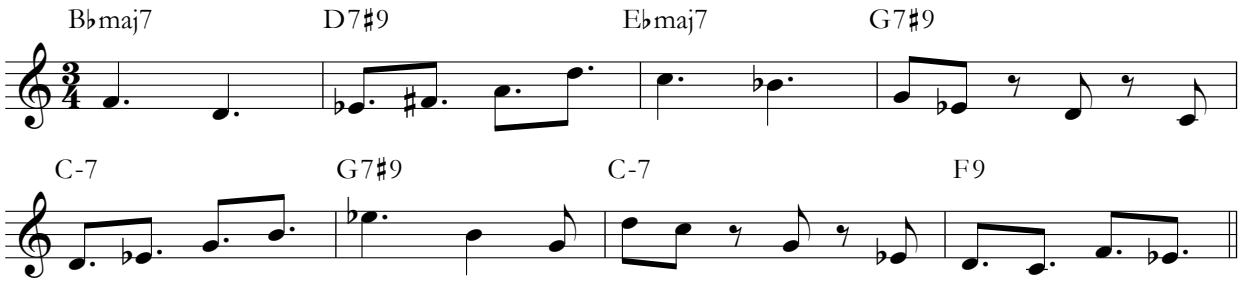


- Bitonality

  David Liebman, Carla Bley, Richard Beirach, Gary Peacock, and Jim McNeely began writing and playing bitonal chords, in which chords were stacked on top of different chords or bass notes. This is not dissimilar to compositions by twentieth century classical composers such Igor Stravinsky and Samuel Barber.
- Polyrhythms and odd time signatures

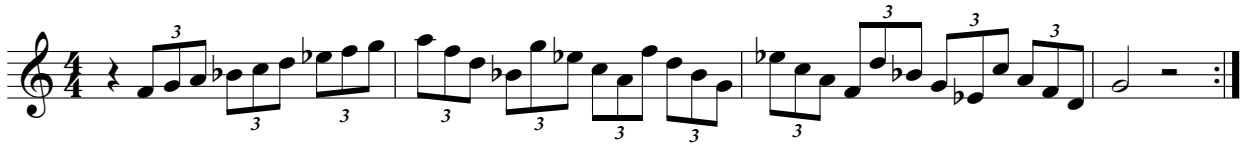
  Another post-bop development is the use of time signatures other than 4/4 and 3/4, as well as layering polyrhythms over 4/4 meters. Superimposing a 3/4 meter over 4/4 is a carryover from African rhythmic practices, which was explored in depth by John Coltrane and his drummer, Elvin Jones. After Dave Brubeck, Paul Desmond, and Don Ellis's early efforts to create jazz songs in time signatures other than 4/4 and 3/4, John McLaughlin, Dave Holland, Robert Glasper, Pat Metheny, and others explored more complex ways of layering polyrhythms over the basic time or improvising in unusual time signatures. (For more information, see Chapter 20 – Odd Meters.)

  Exercise #1: Play on a song in 3/4 using primarily dotted quarter notes or dotted eighth notes to create the sense that you are in 4/4. Notice how your lines fit against the underlying rhythm and be aware of when they come together. (This example is based on "Someday My Prince Will Come," featuring in the Disney movie *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*.)

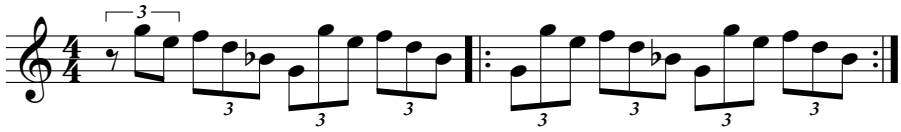


Exercise #2: Play on a song in 4/4 using primarily triplets. Once the triplet is well-established, accent them in groups of two by emphasizing the 1st and 3rd notes in the first triplet and the 2nd note in the following triplet.

a A Herbie Hancock idea that employs arpeggiated triplets, accented in four-note groups (Miles Davis, "My Funny Valentine")



b A Clark Terry idea based polyrhythms



Playing with Other Musicians

- What is a solo?

  As mentioned previously, your "solo" is NOT a solo. It is a group conversation with the rhythm section. You may be leading the conversation, but you have to listen and leave room for other's comments. In particular, focus your attention on the bassist and drummer.
- Starting and ending your solo

  You are standing on the bandstand waiting your turn to solo. Instead of thinking of what you want to play, listen intently. Get into the groove. If the soloist prior to you ends with a particularly attractive motive, perhaps you could start your solo with that idea? If the soloist before you played a lot of notes, perhaps you could start with very few notes? If the soloist before you played loudly, perhaps you could start softly? (As a brass player who often follows amazing tenor players, I find these approaches to be lifesavers.)

  Somewhere near the end of a chorus, you might want to quickly assess "have I said most, if not all, of what I wanted to say, or am I still in the midst of developing my ideas?" If you are "running out of steam," figure out how you are going to end your solo, perhaps by bringing down the volume, using fewer notes, or moving into a lower range of your instrument. Try to cover-up the "seams" in the form by carrying over your final idea into the first or second bar of the next person's chorus.

Sometimes I think that the only person who should be allowed to take long solos is John Coltrane. Coltrane practiced relentlessly and had so many ideas that he could play a long time without repeating himself. He is to jazz what Albert Einstein was to physics; there is so much new information that it boggles the mind. If you don't have the wealth of ideas that Trane had, end your solo sooner rather than later. *You will leave the audience wanting more and the rhythm section will greatly appreciate it.*

- Communication with the rhythm section

  Tenor saxophonist Stan Getz remarked, "*Jazz is not about flashy licks. It's a story with a beginning, middle and end. You first learn the vocabulary – scales, chords, etc.…then let it fly. And be sure to listen inside the rhythm section – that's the motor.*"

  As a horn player, I try to focus my concentration on what the rhythm section is playing. If you lock into what they are doing, everything you play will sound better. Don't depend on the rhythm section to keep time for you, that just restricts them, or even worse, they will tune you out. It may be helpful to play duets with drummers or bass players, to develop a rapport with each member of the rhythm section. Many good horn players have also developed functional skills on piano, bass, and drums.

Improvisation and the Inner Workings of Your Mind

- Creative jazz improvisation

  Creativity can flourish when you allow the vocabulary you have learned to flow out spontaneously with a minimum of premeditation. In the words of pianist Kenny Werner: "Don't make music, *let music*." In addition, the intellect cannot keep pace with some of the faster tempos at which jazz is commonly played, so overthinking may cause you to drag the tempo. Allowing your *trained* instincts to take over enables you to communicate your emotions and ideas through the music and to interact with the other musicians in the group. Music is a reflection of your personal growth and consciousness. *Ultimately, the way to improve your music is to improve yourself as a human being.*

  For more information, read An Overview of Kenny Werner's *Effortless Mastery* Method in Part VIII of the Appendix.

- Performance anxiety

  Most musicians experience performance anxiety or nervousness at some point in their careers. Here are a few suggestions for combating this problem:

  - Practice deep breathing by taking deep, slow breaths, and let the tension go out with each exhale. Exercising before a concert may also be helpful.
  - Avoid caffeine on the day of a performance.
  - Prepare the music on such a deep level so that even if you are nervous, the music does not suffer. After years of hearing students tell me "I knew that…" after playing poorly, I realized that there must be three levels of knowing something:

    1 I almost played it correctly (sort of) a couple of times.
    2 I played it correctly all of the time when I was comfortable and relaxed at home.
    3 I played it correctly, even when I was feeling sick or nervous.

    It is at this third level that you truly *know* the material.
  - Put yourself in performance situations often. Gradually, the experience becomes normal and routine. I used to hate going to jam sessions because it was hard to sound "good" after sitting around waiting to be called to the bandstand, only to find that I was no longer warmed up and the tempo was uncomfortably fast. However, years of forcing myself to do this really improved my playing. When tunes were called that I did not have memorized, learning those songs became my "homework." I wanted to be *ready* the next time I sat in.
  - Consider that a lack of confidence is just the reverse side of being arrogant. Either way, you are hung up on your ego. With this in mind, you just might relax and enjoy performing. Try to detach yourself from the whirlwind of emotions connected with the performance. Try to be an "observer" rather than a "reactor."
  - Saxophonist Dick Oatts once remarked at a clinic "instead of thinking '*what can I play that would sound impressive?*' think, '*what can I play that would add to what is going on in the music at this present moment?*'"
  - Stop trying to please people. If you are not worried about what other people think of you, you are free to play only what is best for the music.
  - Try meditation, watching your breath, yoga, prayer, biofeedback, sitting alone in the dark, or whatever suits your personality and beliefs in a way that stills the wild chaos of the mind. We are at our most creative when we play from this state of inner calm.

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Part 2
Diatonic Chords and the Modes in the Major Scale

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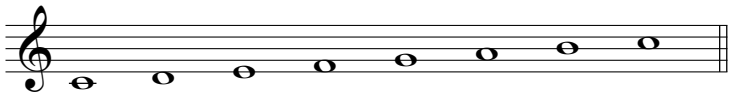
Chapter 2: Major Scales and Major 7th Chords

At the start of a recording session, Louis Armstrong…
stands in front of the mic and stamps out a steady rhythm.
As the band picks it up, Armstrong's foot doubles the beat
and starts tapping twice as fast. And as he sings and plays
the trumpet he stresses accents ***around and between***
the taps of his foot.

— Author Marshall Stearns describing trumpeter Louis Armstrong
(*Louis Armstrong's New Orleans* – Thomas Brothers)

The *major scale*, also known as the *Ionian* mode, consists of the ascending pattern: whole step, whole step, half step, whole step, whole step, whole step, half step.

It is very helpful to use the major scale as a basis of comparison for all other scales by expressing them in scale degrees. The scale degrees for the major scale are 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8. Other scales presented in scale degrees show how the major scale can be modified to create those scales. Any scale degree can be raised a half step by adding a sharp, such as ♯2, ♯5, etc., except for scale degrees 3 and 7. Since, in the major scale, scale degrees 4 and 8 are a half step above 3 and 7, 3 and 7 cannot be raised without becoming 4 and 8. Likewise, any scale degree can be lowered a half step, such as ♭2, ♭5, etc., except for scale degrees 1, 4, and 8, since they are a half step above 7 and 3.



C Major Scale

The major scale is the first scale (or mode) in the family that also includes the Dorian, Phrygian, Lydian, Mixolydian, Aeolian (also called *natural* or *pure minor*), and Locrian modes. The notes of the major scale may be used when improvising over the following chords: major triads, major triads with an added 2nd, major 6th, major 6/9th, major 7th, major 9th, and major 13th chords.

The major 13th chord typically does not include the 11th. If the 11th is added to the chord, the augmented 11th is usually used. In jazz notation, the symbol of a triangle (Δ) or the abbreviation "maj" are the most common designations for major chords. Only the highest chord extension is used in the chord symbol, as the lower extensions are assumed to be part of the chord. The only exception is when there is an extension that is not found in the scale, such as ♯11.

It is important to understand the literal meanings of chord symbols and also to recognize that chord symbols are sometimes used in a way that is intended to be interpreted by performers based on context or style. If there is an understanding that all chords will have 7ths and 9ths, a composer may indicate "C" or "CΔ" with the understanding that the pianist or guitarist will play Cmaj7, Cmaj9, or even Cmaj13.

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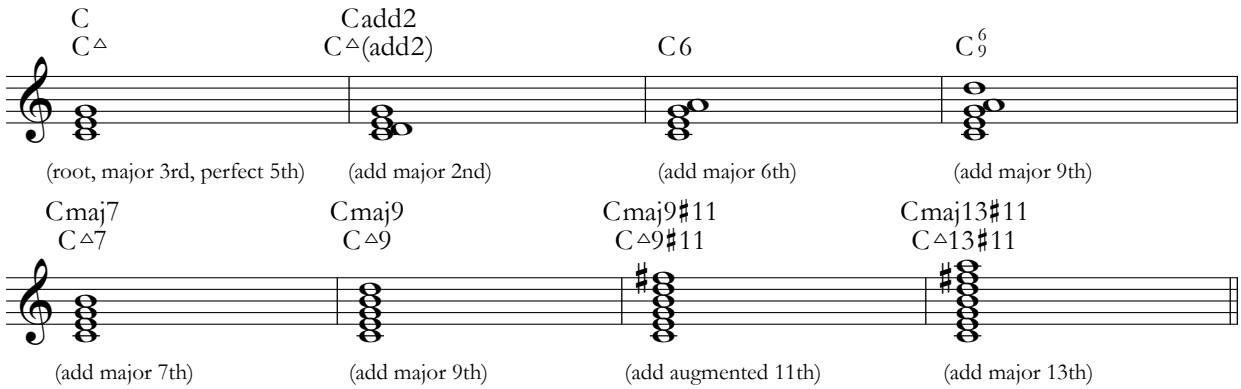
Part 2 – Diatonic Chords and Modes in Major Scale



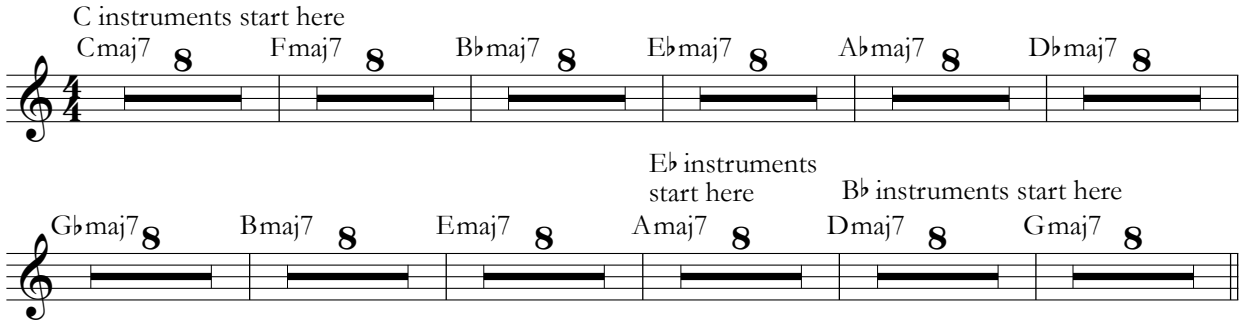
In a major key, major chords function as I or *tonic* chords (chords built on the first note of the scale) and IV or *subdominant* chords (chords built on the fourth note of the scale). The major scale is frequently used when the chord is functioning as a tonic chord, while the Lydian mode is often used when the chord is functioning as a subdominant chord. The first note of the major scale lacks tension and color and may not be an interesting choice, depending on how it is used. The fourth note of the scale clashes with the third of the chord and is usually used as a *passing tone* between the 3rd and 5th scale degrees or an *upper neighbor tone* to the 3rd.

Theory/Ear Exercises

1 Write major scales in all 12 keys.
2 Write major 9th chords in all 12 keys.
3 Keyboard skills: Play major 9th chords on the piano and listen to the sound or color that characterizes this chord.*
4 Melodic dictation: Have another musician or teacher play melodies based on major scales. Notate the melodies by identifying the intervals between the notes or by sensing the tendency of the unstable notes in the scale (the second, fourth, sixth, and seventh) to resolve stable notes (the first, third, and fifth).
5 Harmonic dictation: Have another musician or teacher play chord progressions of major 9th chords on the piano. Write down the chord progression by listening to the intervals in the bass line.
6 Transcription: Transcribe a melody, a chord progression, or an improvised solo from a recording.
* Visit the companion website for keyboard voicings and tracks that help you practice playing by ear, including random chord sequences and call and response (www.Routledge.com/cw/Reeves).

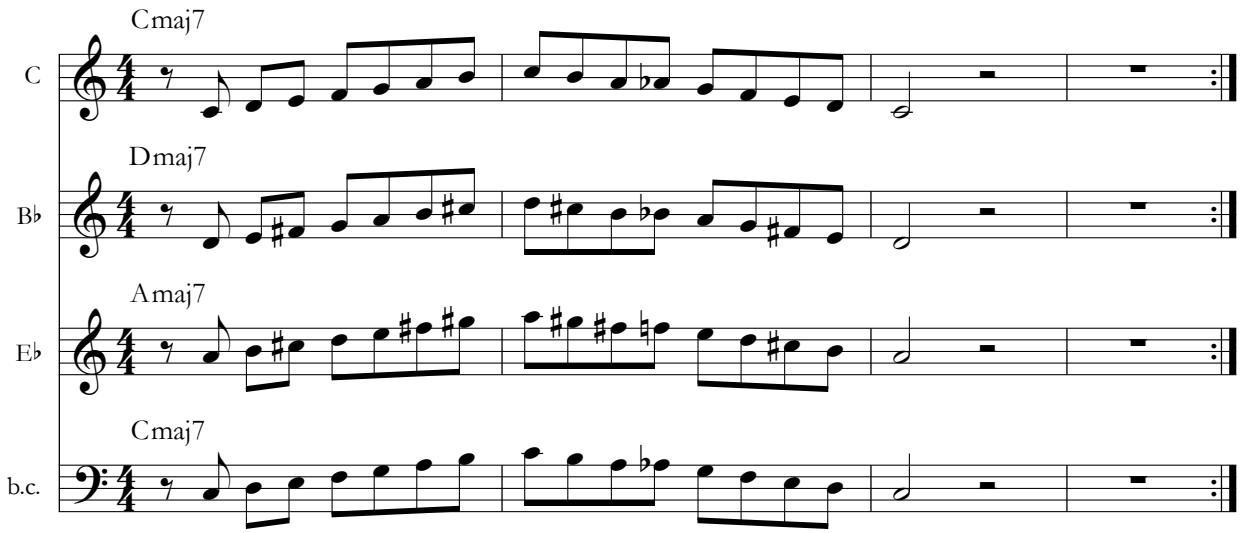
Gaining Facility with Major Scales and Major 7th Chords

Practice the following exercises over the chord progression below, using either a metronome, the play-along tracks "Major Scale Warm-Ups" and "Another Spring" on the companion website, or vol. 21 of the Jamey Aebersold Play-a-Long series. If you find yourself struggling with an exercise, slow it down, simplify it, or sing it while visualizing yourself playing it. After familiarizing yourself with the exercises, pick one or two to practice repeatedly until you can play them fluently in all keys at a variety of tempos.



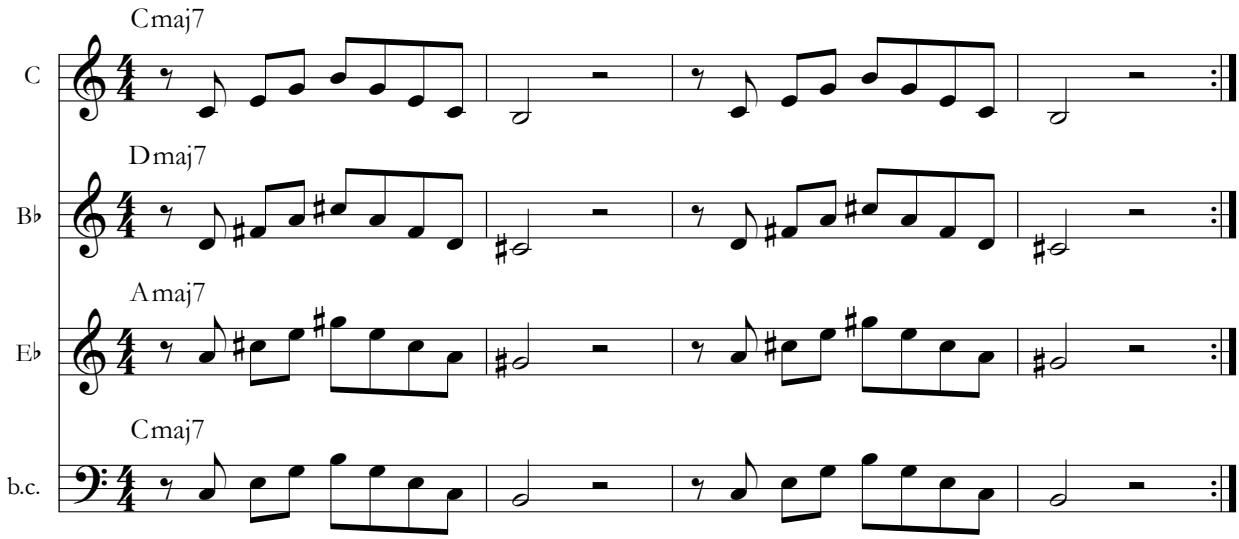
1 *Call and response warm-ups:* One musician improvises a motive that fits over the first four bars of each chord; the other musicians attempt to play it back during the last four bars.

2 The *major scale* ascending, and the *major bebop scale*, which adds a chromatic passing tone between the 6th and 5th scale degrees, descending.



MM _____

3 Major 7th arpeggios, ending on the 7th scale degree.



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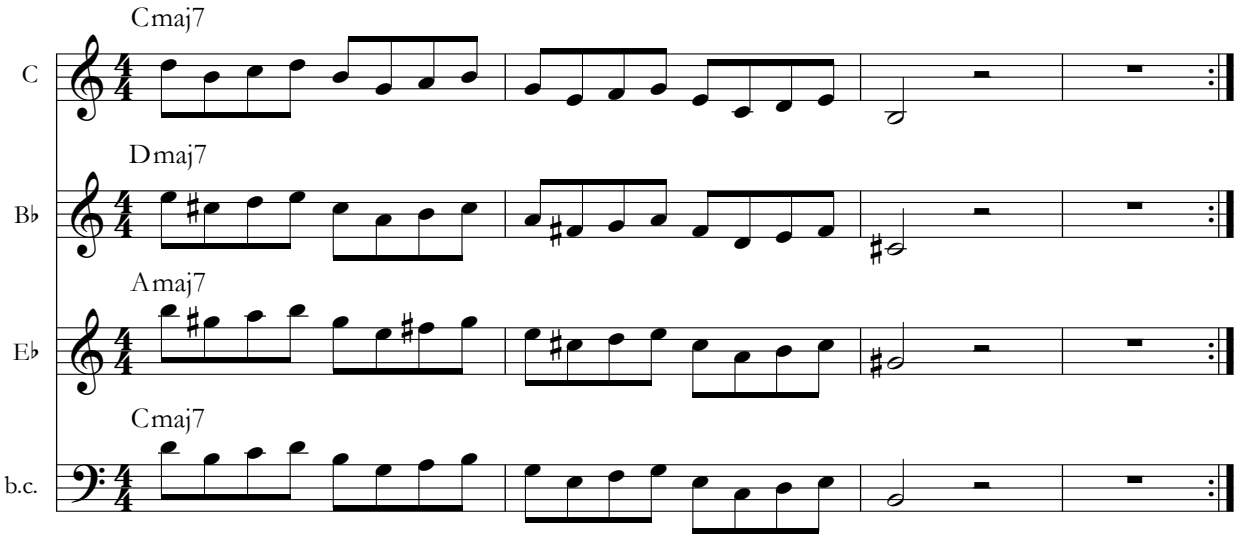
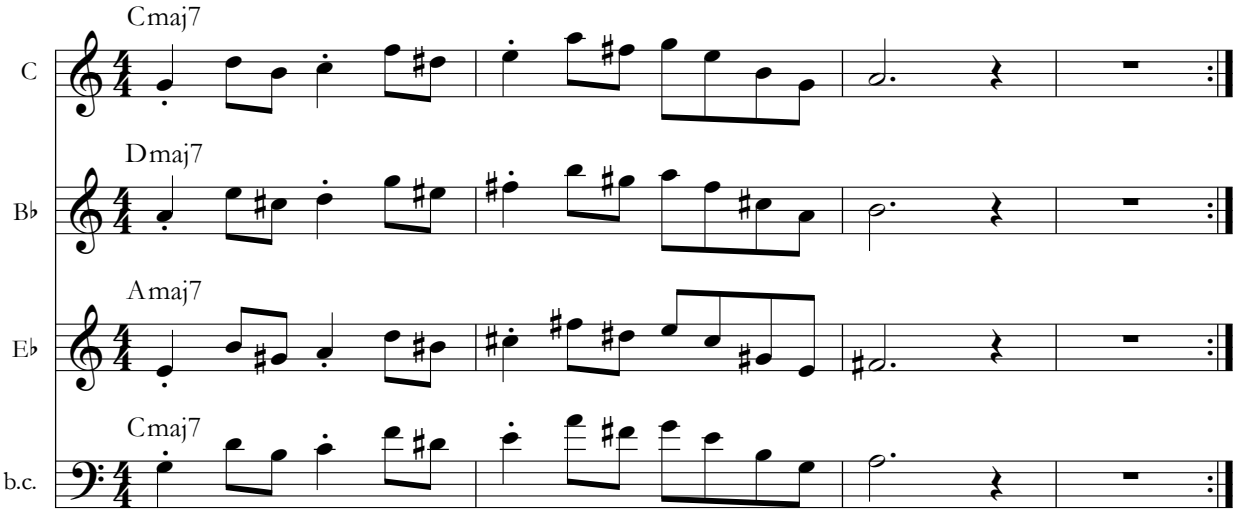
4 A descending stepwise pattern that outlines a major 9th arpeggio.



MM _____

5 A Sonny Rollins pattern from his solo on "Tune Up" from his recording, *Newk's Time*. This idea embellishes the major triad with the notes a step above and below each chord tone (referred to as *upper and lower neighbor tones*).



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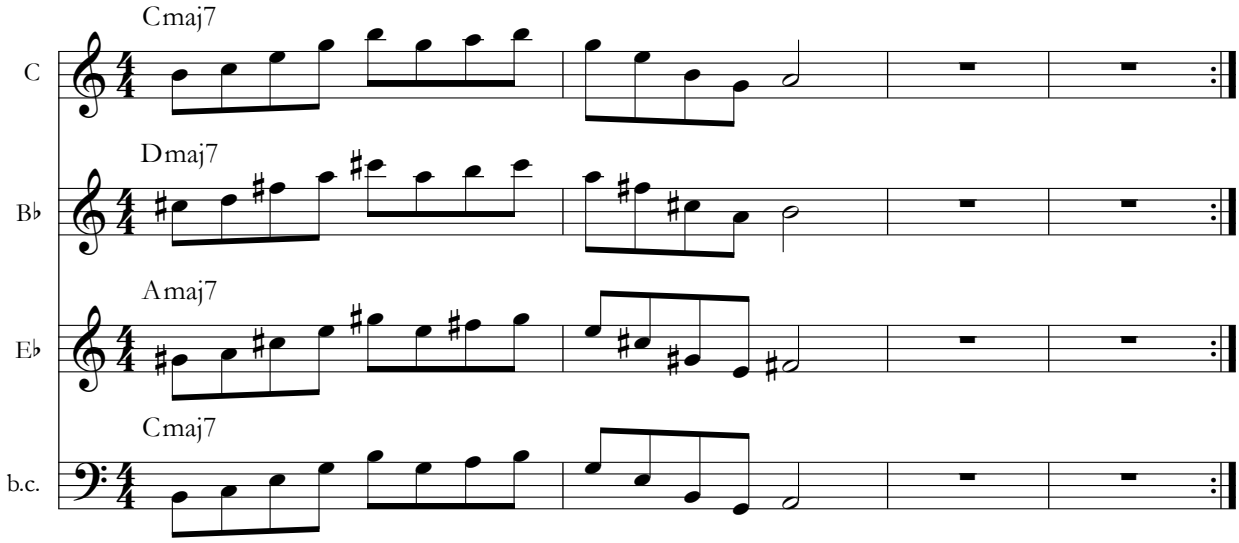
6 Another Sonny Rollins pattern based on a major 7th arpeggio, also from his solo on "Tune Up." This exercise can be simplified by practicing each measure separately.



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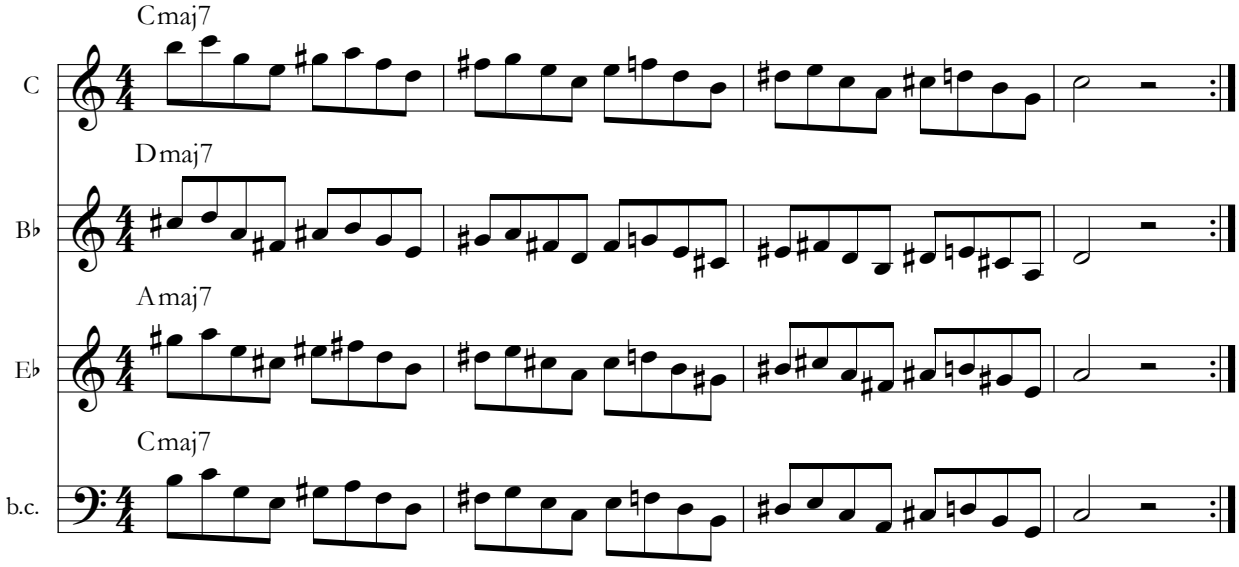
7 A John Coltrane pattern from his solo on "Oleo" from the Miles Davis recording, *Relaxin'*.



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8 *Creative jazz improvisation*: Improvise over the chord progression without looking at the book or thinking about the notes in the scale. Concentrate only on rhythm and let the notes take care of themselves.

9 Make up your own patterns and melodic ideas based on major scales and major 7th chords.

MM _____

Improvising on Jazz Compositions Based on Major 7th Chords

Following is a partial list of jazz compositions in which major 7th chords are frequently used. These compositions are found in *The New Real Books*, vol. 1 (NRB), vol. 2 (NR2), and vol. 3 (NR3), found at https://www.shermusic.com, or one of the volumes of Aebersold's Play-a-Long series (JA) found as book/CD, digital download, or streaming audio at https://jazzbooks.com.

Compositions Based Exclusively on Major 7th Chords

"Beatitude" – Jamey Aebersold (JA vol. 5)

Compositions in Which Major 7th Chords Occur Frequently

"A Child Is Born" –Thad Jones (JA vol. 91, NR2)
"After the Rain" – John Coltrane (NR2)
"Alexander's Ragtime Band" – Irving Berlin (JA vol. 100)
"Bill Bailey" – traditional (JA vol. 100)
"Dear Lord" – John Coltrane (JA vol. 28, NR2)
"Drifting" – Phil Woods (JA vol. 121)
"Fantasy in D" – Cedar Walton (JA vol. 35)
"Forest Flower (Sunrise)" – Charles Lloyd (JA vol. 74)
"Friends" – Chick Corea (NR2)
"Gemini" – Jimmy Heath (JA vol. 122)
"Jitterbug Waltz" – Fats Waller (JA vol. 72 & NR 3)
"I Mean You" – Thelonious Monk (JA vol. 56, NRB)
"Latin Quarter" – Dave Samuels (JA vol. 96)
"Little Sunflower" – Freddie Hubbard (NRB)
"My Favorite Things" – Richard Rodgers (JA vol. 25)
"On Green Dolphin Street" – Kaper/Washington (JA vols. 34, 59, 85, 90 & 93, NR3)
"St. Thomas" – Sonny Rollins (JA vols. 8 & 74, NRB)
"Southside Samba" – Benny Carter (JA vol. 87)
"Summer Serenade" – Benny Carter (JA vol. 87)
"This I Dig of You" – Hank Mobley (JA vols. 38 & 59)
"Valley" – Renato Vasconcellos (JA vol. 124)
"Well You Needn't" – Thelonious Monk (JA vol. 56, NRB)

Louis Armstrong's Improvised Solo on "Hotter Than That"

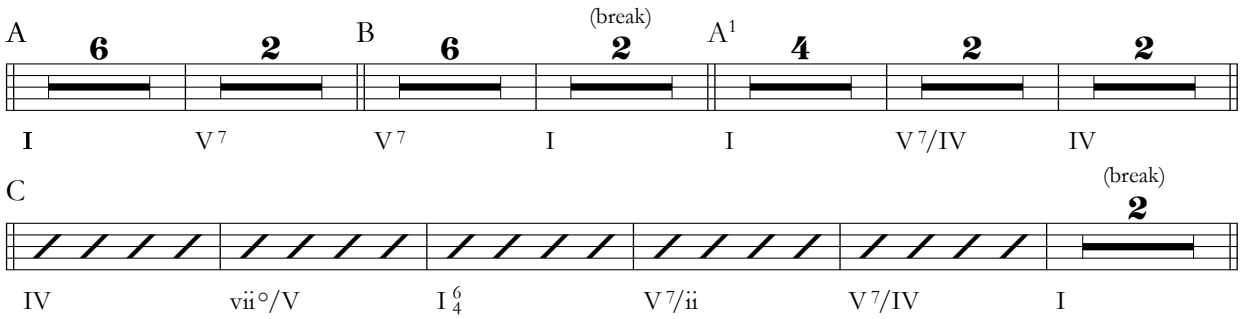
Historical Overview

Louis Armstrong defined what was possible in an improvised solo during the formative years of jazz. Born in 1901 in New Orleans, he developed his trumpet skills playing alongside his mentor Joe "King" Oliver and other New Orleans pioneers such as Kid Ory and Sidney Bechet, as well as the New York-based big band of Fletcher Henderson. He came into widespread prominence with the formation of his own groups the Hot Five and Hot Seven. In a series of recordings spanning 1925–1928, Armstrong virtually redefined the melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic vocabulary of jazz. His work was far ahead of its time; while many of his contemporaries in the 1920s played with a rhythmic conception closer to the dotted eighth–sixteenth feel of ragtime, Armstrong swung his eighth notes in a manner that anticipated Lester Young in the 1930s and Charlie Parker in the 1940s. He also demonstrated a penchant for implying polyrhythms and phrasing over the bar line, concepts that would not be developed extensively until the 1960s. During the 1910s and early 1920s, many jazz musicians limited themselves to paraphrasing the melody or short *breaks* (often previously worked out), but Armstrong created long melodies with angular contours that clearly defined underlying harmonies. This would have been enough to establish himself as the seminal artist of his generation, but Armstrong (also known as "Satchmo" or "Pops") went farther – establishing the *hot trumpet* sound that influenced the work of artists such as "Cootie" Williams, Roy Eldridge, Charlie Shavers, and "Dizzy" Gillespie. This was a sound legacy not broken until Miles Davis and Chet Baker redefined it in the 1950s. Armstrong also popularized *scat singing* (wordless vocal improvisation) and was that rare artist who was also a popular entertainer, becoming an ambassador of jazz throughout the world.

Brief Analysis

Louis Armstrong's improvised trumpet and vocal solos on Lillian Hardin Armstrong's composition "Hotter Than That" were recorded in 1927 by his *Hot Five* ensemble. Listen to how the ideas in his trumpet chorus are very similar to those in his vocal chorus, which are separated by a solo from clarinetist Johnny Dodds. Armstrong's trumpet playing was truly an extension of his voice, and vice versa. Also note his use of what historians have called *terminal vibrato* at the end of many of his longer notes, as well as his use of shakes, pitch bends, and other expressive devices.

"Hotter Than That" is a 32-bar binary composition in an ABA'C form, with a two-bar break at the end of the B and C sections. In the first six bars of each A section, the major triad and its corresponding major scale predominates. A Roman numeral analysis is as follows:



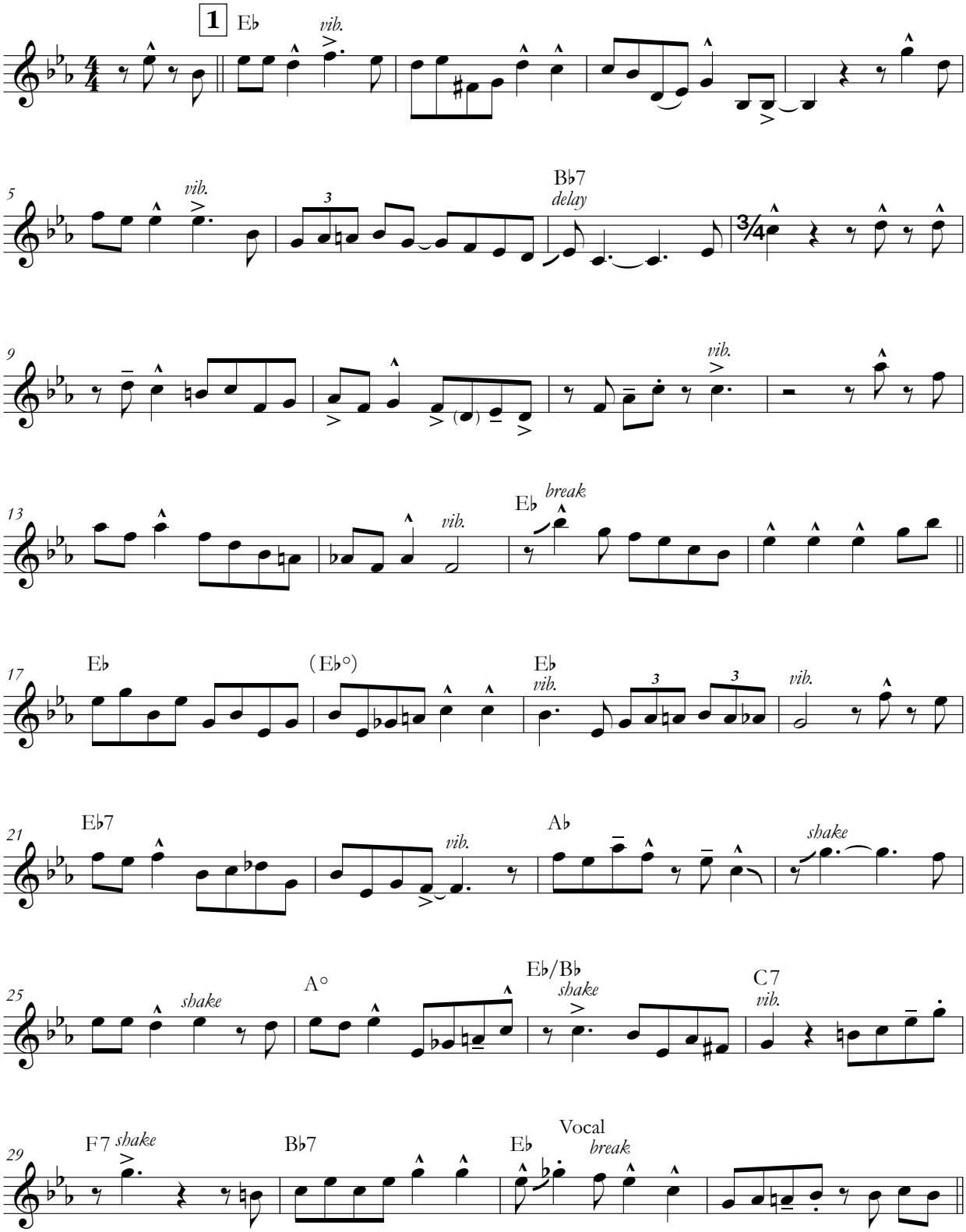
Although "Hotter Than That" has a worked-out introduction, there seems to be no set melody – only a chord progression, which serves as a basis for a series of wonderful improvisations, anticipating Charlie Parker's "Ko Ko" (a "headless" tune based on "Cherokee") or the Miles Davis/Bill Evans song "Flamenco Sketches," which comprises exclusively a series of modes for improvisation.

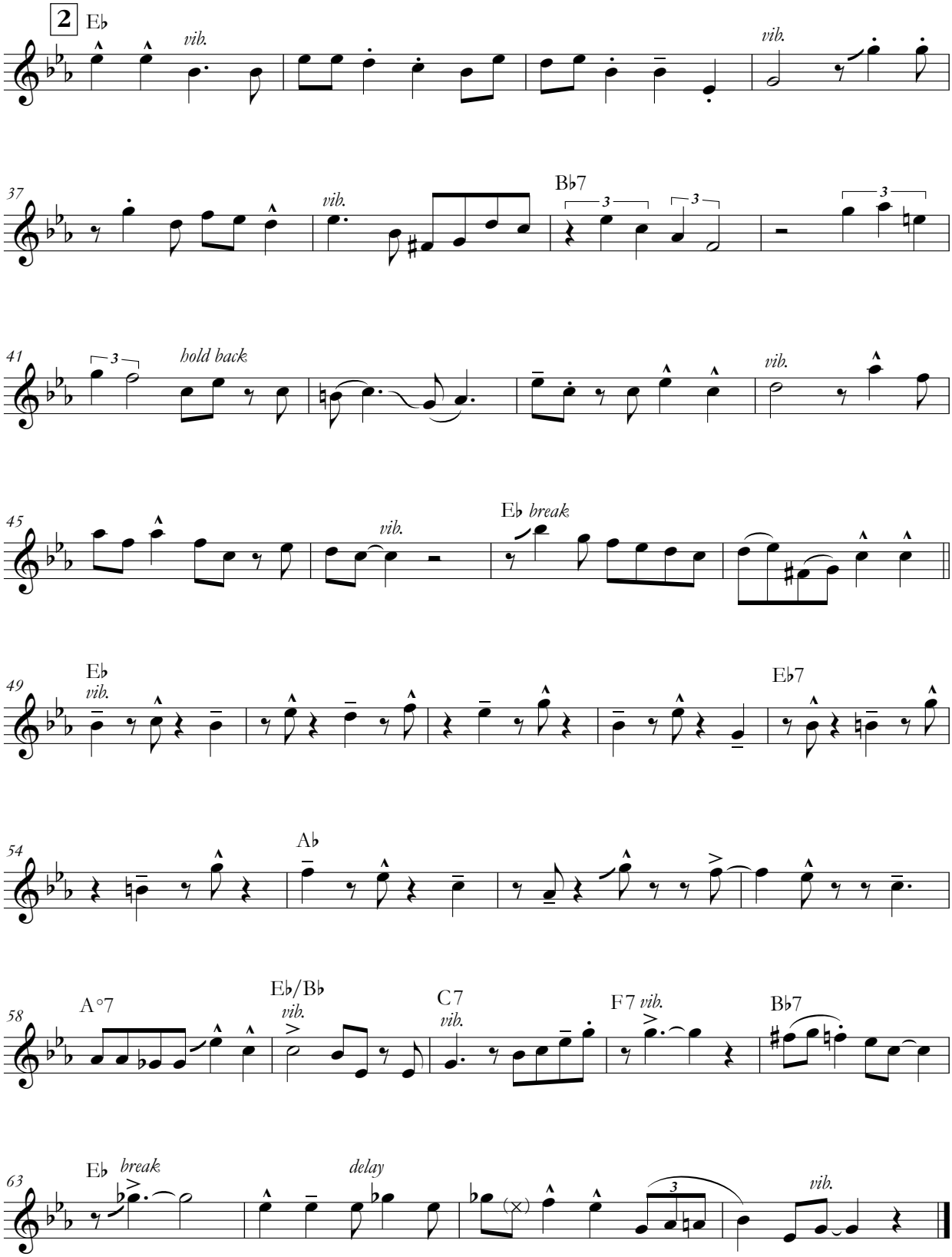
Armstrong's chorus on trumpet is characterized by its wide range and large melodic intervals. In bars 2 and 3, he sequences a motive using diatonic or chromatic approach notes to each member of the triad. His use of chromaticism is also found in bars 6, 19, and 32. Over the V7 chord in bars 7–14, he frequently implies the ii chord, as evidenced by his chromatic approach to the 5th of the ii chord in bar 9 and by arpeggiating the ii chord in bar 11. In his pickups to the second A section in bar 16, Armstrong plays the major triad in a stepwise descending manner. In bar 18, he implies a chord substitution – a diminished chord built on the tonic, which is not part of the song's chord progression. More chromatic approaches to chord tones are found in bars 27–29. He concludes his trumpet chorus in bar 32 with a hint of the blues scale, a color also found at the end of his vocal chorus in bars 63–65.

Other similarities between his trumpet and vocal choruses can be found by comparing the motives in bar 2 of Armstrong's trumpet solo with bars 38 and 48 of his scat solo, the motive in bars 28–29 with bars 60–61, his implication of the ii chord over the V7 chord in bars 11 and 39, and his frequent use of chromatic approach tones, which are intensified during the vocal chorus. The most distinguishing feature of his scat solo, however, is its use of phrasing over the bar line, as seen in bars 39–43 (making precise notation difficult), and the extensive use of a three-against-two polyrhythm in bars 50–57, daring even by modern standards. All of this drama and invention takes place at a brisk, driving tempo (♩ = 208).

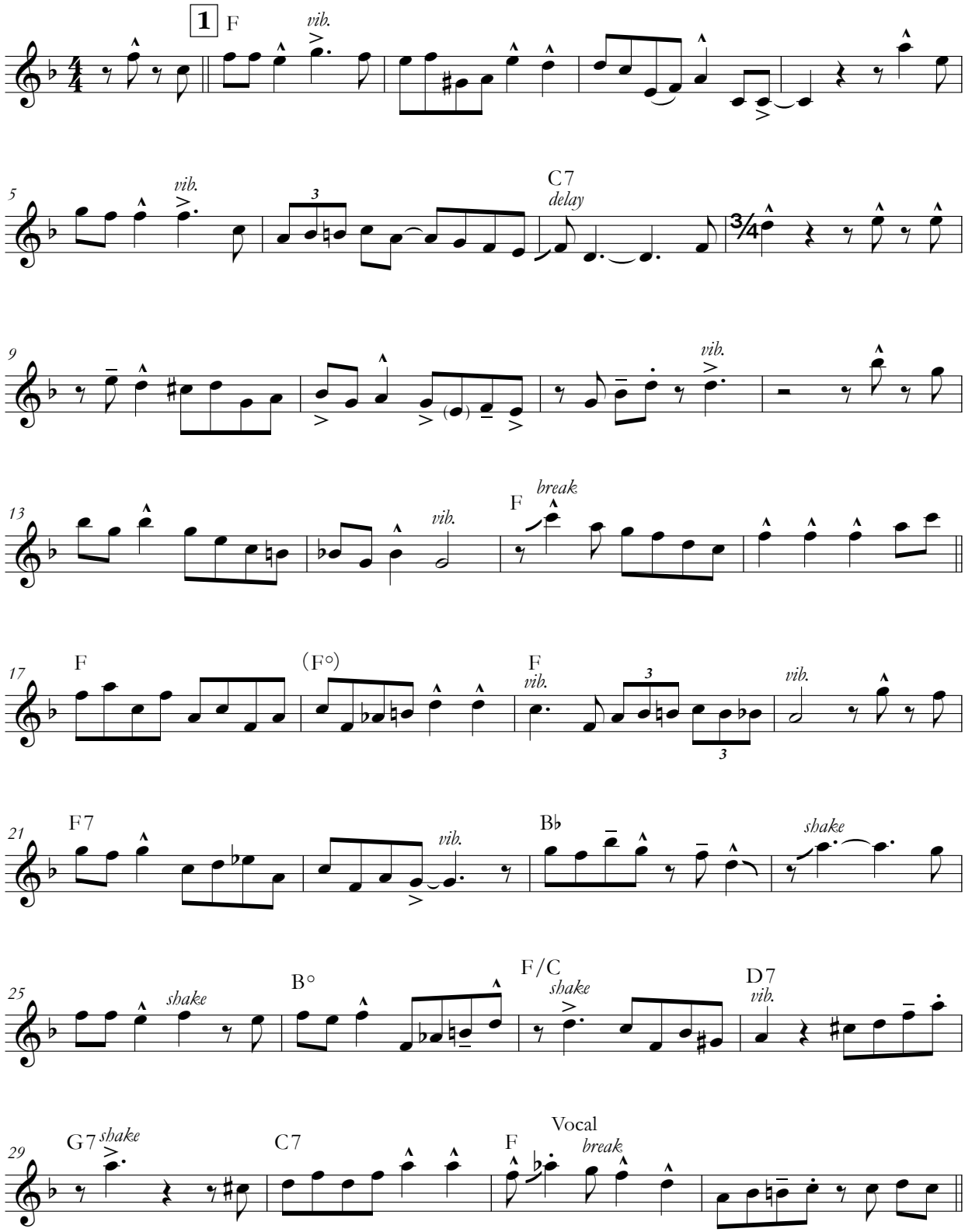
After listening to and playing along with Armstrong's solo, continue improvising on the chord progression in a similar style. You may also want to practice fragments of the solo in all 12 keys to further internalize some of the melodic figures.

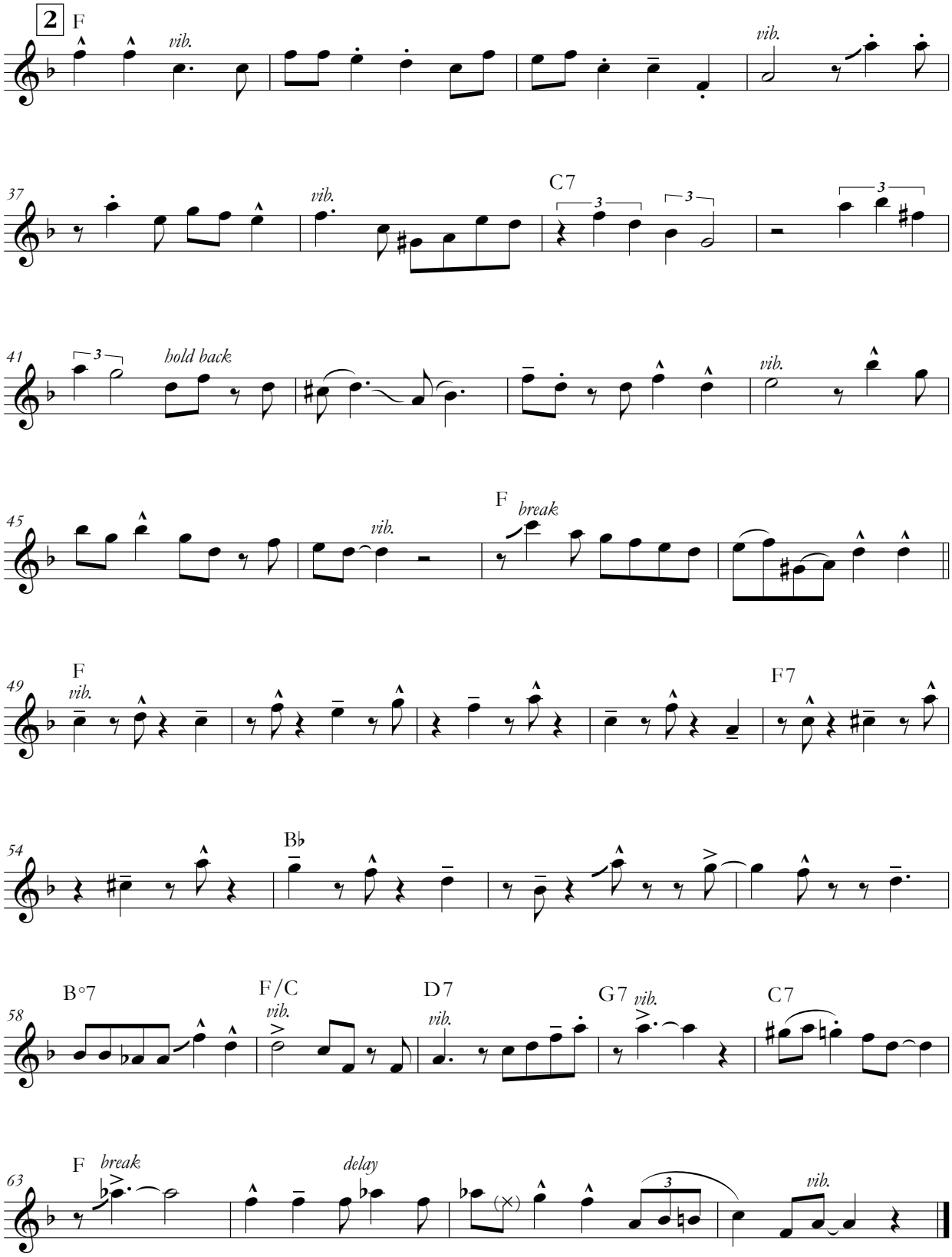
Treble-clef C instruments:



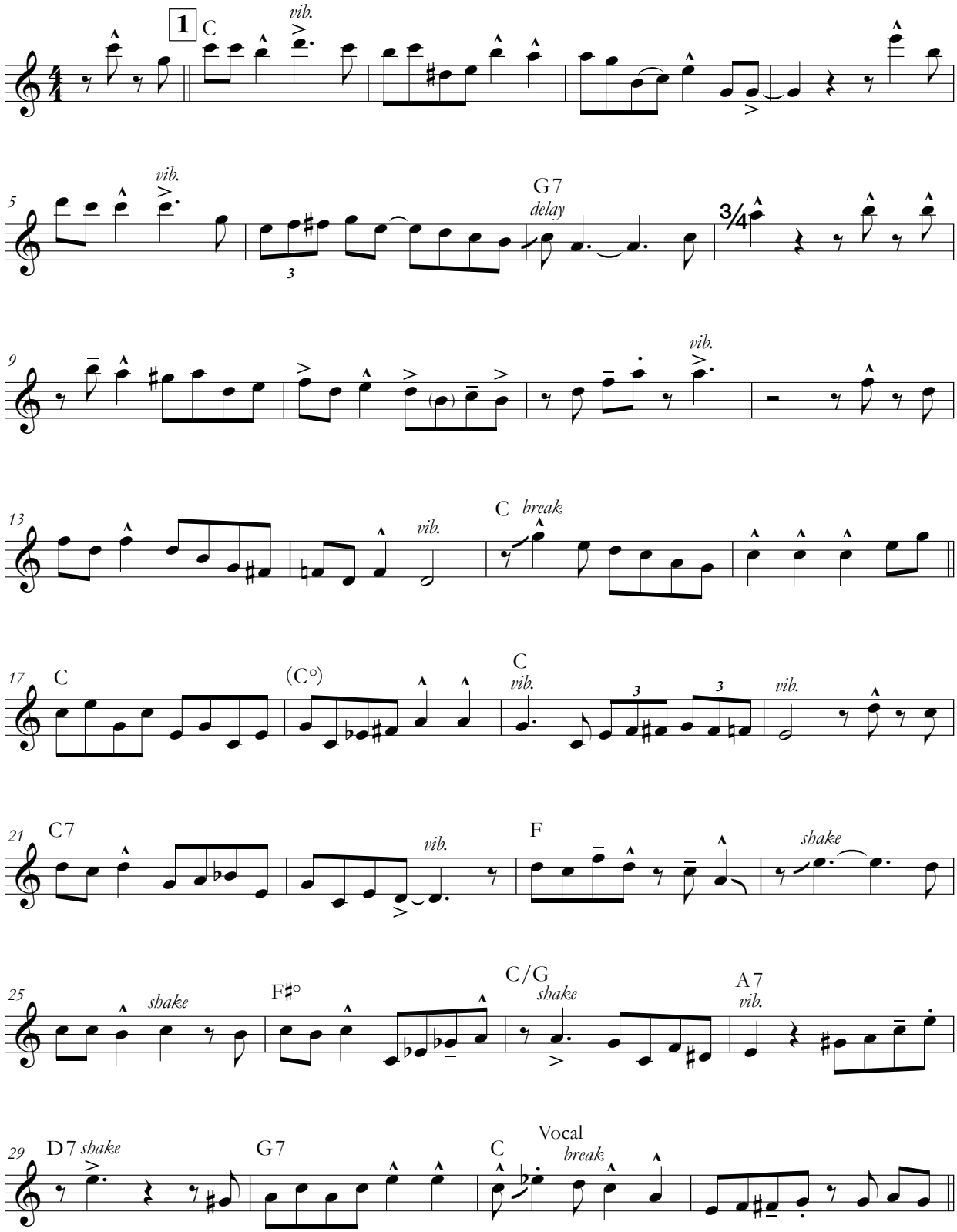

2
E♭
vib.
vib.
37
vib.
B♭7
41
hold back
vib.
45
vib.
E♭ break
49
E♭
vib.
E♭7
54
A♭
58
A°7
E♭/B♭
vib.
C7
vib.
F7 vib.
B♭7
63
E♭
break
delay
vib.

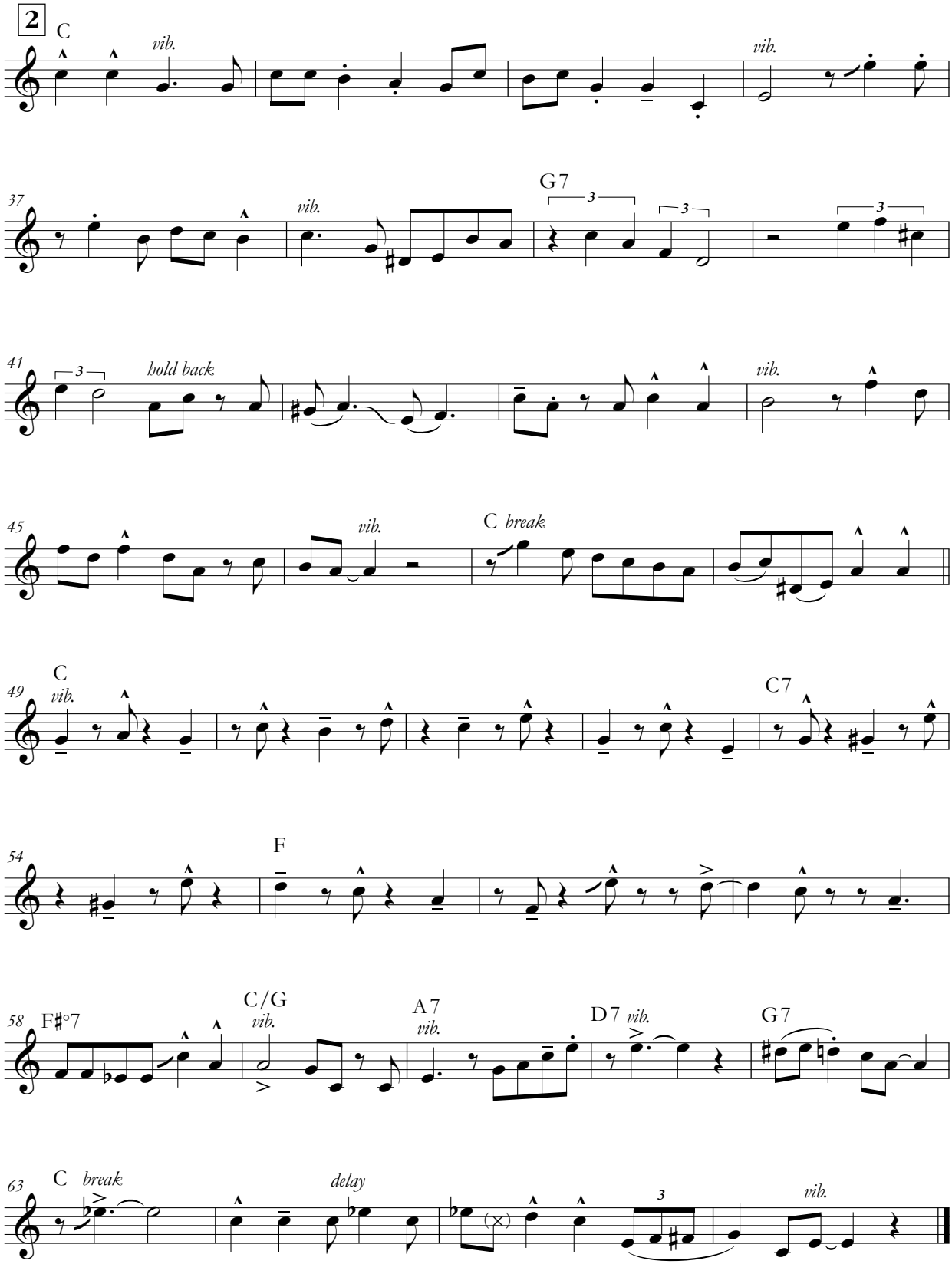
B♭ instruments:




2
F
vib.
vib.
37
vib.
C7
41
hold back
vib.
45
vib.
F
break
49
F
vib.
F7
54
B♭
58
B°7
F/C
vib.
D7
vib.
G7
vib.
C7
63
F
break
delay
vib.

E♭ instruments:




2
C
vib.
vib.
37
vib.
G7
41
hold back
vib.
45
vib.
C break
49
C
vib.
C7
54
F
58
F♯°7
C/G
vib.
A7
vib.
D7
vib.
G7
63
C
break
delay
vib.